

Issue 103 ■ Autumn 2012 ■ €3.95 UK£3.40 ■ ISSN 0790 8008

# Irish Mountain Log

The magazine for hillwalkers and climbers

## WILD NEPHIN

Mayo Wilderness project launched



### AUTUMN GATHERING

Cooley Peninsula  
19-21 October 2012

### WHAT IS A LEADER?

Defining a leader's  
responsibilities

### NEW ROUTE

Walking route  
in the Cooleys



[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)





For more information visit  
**[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)**  
or contact the office on (01) 625 1115

**Serving the hillwalkers and  
climbers of Ireland since 1971**





## ISSUE 103

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

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### PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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



# Welcome

*"The idea of wilderness needs no defense; it only needs defenders."* –  
**Edward Abbey**

One of the feature articles in this issue focuses on an important proposal from Coillte that a wilderness area be established in the Nephin

Beg range in Co Mayo. This welcome proposal is reported on by Bill Murphy, the Project Manager for Coillte's Wilderness Mayo Project.

In a quote that could have been voiced to reflect the current situation in Ireland, John Muir said: "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilised people are beginning to find out going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity."

While we may all be able to empathise with Muir's sentiment, the proposed Wilderness Mayo Project by Coillte will take many years to be fully implemented. It is, however, a hugely important initiative that, even at this difficult time for us all, recognises the value of developing and preserving a wilderness area in this country.

In another way, it also emphasises the importance to us all of preserving the access to the upland areas that we currently enjoy courtesy of the Coillte estate. This is something that, whatever is done with the logging rights, must be preserved for us and for future generations, so that, as Muir said, we can keep "going home."



A hugely important initiative that recognises the value of preserving a wilderness area.

Apart from supporting the preservation of a wilderness area in Ireland, there is also much that we can all do to reduce our impact on the other upland areas that we visit for our recreation. However, given the increasing pressure of numbers, a more organised approach is now required to protect the most popular upland areas on the island of Ireland.

The principles underpinning upland path work were debated at a very successful Mountaineering Ireland conference in Wicklow recently. Experience was shared so that hopefully, going forward, a common approach will be used to this work that will reduce or slow path erosion while being aesthetically acceptable and avoiding damage to adjacent areas, which may themselves be vulnerable.

**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](mailto:iml-editor@mountaineering.ie)

Contributors' guidelines can be downloaded from the Mountaineering Ireland website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://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](http://www.mountaineering.ie)



### ON THE COVER

Looking northwest from Maumthomas, Nephin Beg range, Co Mayo.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY**  
RICHARD CREAUGH

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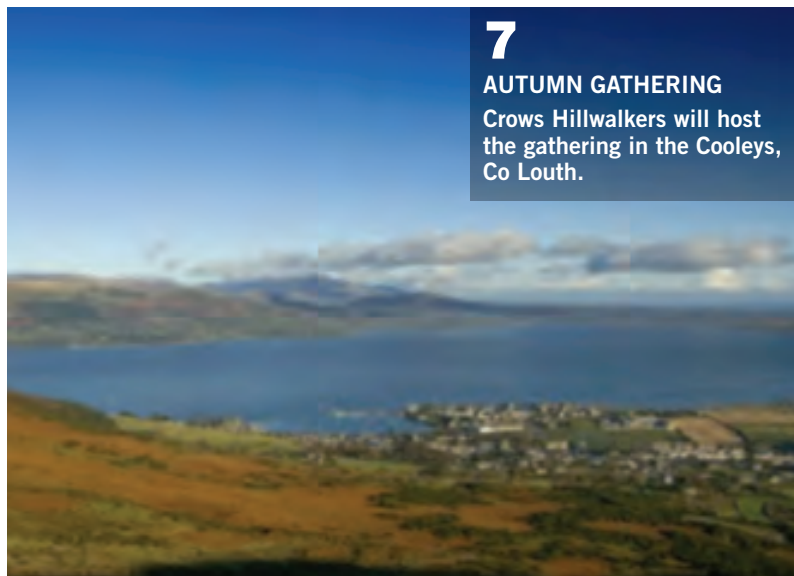
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#### WHEN IS A LEADER NOT A LEADER?

Take this test on your know-how

# PLEASE SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND



# HOW TO DONATE

Mountain Rescue Ireland and its volunteer teams provide life saving emergency services in wild and remote places in Ireland: 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This work is funded largely through fundraising and donations. There are a number of ways to help Mountain Rescue Ireland.

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- Become a Supporter (& receive regular updates including MRI's Call Out Magazine). You can pay by

Direct Debit or pay your subscription annually.

- Participate in one of MRI's National Fundraising Events.
- Organise your own fundraising event.
- Make a donation through our online Paypal facility.
- If or when the time is right for you to include a charity in your will – please remember Mountain Rescue Ireland.

## AS A BUSINESS

- Sponsor a National or Regional Event.

- Sponsor a Training Programme.
- Be a Company Partner to Mountain Rescue Ireland.
- Make a tax deductible Donation.

For further information please contact the MRI Fundraising Officer **Tel: (085) 2590290 Or Email: fundraising@mountainrescue.ie**

Mountain Rescue Ireland, Sport HQ,  
13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park,  
Dublin 12

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Please complete the Standing Order Form on the right and select your  
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Please send a bank draft, cheque or postal order to the address opposite.  
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Alternatively you can make a donation online at [www.mountainrescue.ie](http://www.mountainrescue.ie)

Your support will help mountain rescue teams in  
Ireland continue to provide life saving emergency  
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To the Manager: .....

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Address:.....

I hereby authorise and request you to debit my / our account

Account Number:

Sort Code:

with the sum of  €..... or  £.....

per month ☐ per year ☐

Starting date : .....

Signature: .....

Please tick which account you would like to money to be transferred to.

☐

Republic of Ireland  
Account: Irish Mountain Rescue Association  
Allied Irish Bank, Killorglin, Co Kerry  
Sort Code: 93-63-40  
Account number: 27101-264

☐

Northern Ireland  
Account: Irish Mountain Rescue Association  
First Trust Bank, 31/35 High Street, Belfast BT12AL  
Sort Code: 93-80-92  
Account number: 10557-148

Completed forms should be returned to:  
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## 'Helping the Hills' conference



Field trip led by Bill Murphy (Coillte), centre, discusses upland pathworks. To the left of Bill is Gerry O'Donnell while Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Elfy Jones and Stephen McMullan are to his right.

Mountaineering Ireland's much-anticipated 'Helping the Hills' conference was held in the Glendalough Hotel, Glendalough, on Thursday-Friday, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September.

The conference was officially opened by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan TD. The Minister for the Environment (Northern Ireland), Alex Attwood MLA, was due to jointly open the conference but unfortunately had to send his apologies. The objectives of this important conference were:

- To learn from those undertaking upland path management;
- To raise awareness of the challenges facing the mountain environment;
- To demonstrate the spectrum of interventions for managing upland path erosion;
- To emphasise the need for skills and ongoing investment;
- To establish a set of principles to underpin upland pathwork.

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank the event's sponsors, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (Rural Recreation Section), The Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland. Thanks also to Mountain Meitheal and Wicklow Mountains National Park, who each facilitated three of the field trips, and to all those who spoke at the event.

The speakers at the conference included: Dawson Stelfox, Mountaineering Ireland; Dr Caro-Lynne Ferris, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland; Elfy Jones, British Mountaineering Council; Bill Murphy, Head of Recreation, Coillte; Fran Pothecary, Cairngorms National Park; Wesley Atkinson, National Parks and Wildlife Service; Robert Grandon, Chair, Mountain Meitheal; and Matthew Bushby, Mourne Heritage Trust.

We would also like to thank the workshop facilitators, the workshop reporters and the site visit reporters, who all contributed hugely to the success of the event. We are also grateful to the landowners, who facilitated the site assessments: Pat Dunne (Glenmalure), Coillte and Wicklow Mountains National Park. Finally, we thank the participants, who contributed hugely to the event. The ultimate success of the conference depends on the participants applying the principles that were discussed to their own activities in the uplands.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank all the staff of Mountaineering Ireland – especially Helen Lawless, who did a fantastic job co-ordinating and making the conference such a success. All presentations from the event, plus notes from workshops and site visits, are available on [www.helpingthehills.ie](http://www.helpingthehills.ie). A fuller report will also be published in the next issue of the Irish Mountain Log. **Karl Boyle, Chief Executive Officer**

# Autumn Gathering 2012

## Ravensdale, Dundalk, 19-21 October

Crows Hillwalkers Club to host Autumn Gathering 2012 in the Cooley Mountains, Co Louth.



The Autumn Gathering will be based in the Carrickdale Hotel near Ravensdale, Dundalk, Co Louth, from Friday to Sunday, 19-21 October. The hotel is situated off Junction 20 on the M1 motorway, midway between Dundalk and Newry. It provides a perfect base for exploring the Cooleys and Mourne, with some

walks starting very close to the hotel itself. It has ample accommodation, dining and leisure facilities. Check in from 3:00pm to 11:30pm on Friday.

### Carrickdale Hotel & Spa

Carrickcarnon, Ravensdale, Dundalk, Co Louth  
Tel: (042) 938 0900

Website: [www.carrickdale.com](http://www.carrickdale.com)

€40.00 per night per person sharing

€20.00 single supplement per night

Packed lunches available €5.00 each. Please arrange at time of booking accommodation.

We would encourage participants to book in at this hotel, although there is alternative accommodation (see [www.carlingford.ie](http://www.carlingford.ie)).

### Walks

Walks over the weekend will take place in the Cooleys and Mourne, including one on Slieve Donard and another on Slieve Gullion. A couple of the walks on the Cooley Peninsula will follow part of the historic Táin Way. Separately, there will also be some climbing and bouldering opportunities.



The Cooleys and Carlingford Lough.

## Programme of Events

### Friday 19th October

7:00pm Registration begins at Carrickdale Hotel.

8:00pm Welcome from **Eugene Mulholland**, Chairman, Crows Hillwalkers Club. Followed by guest speaker **Dermot Somers**, the well-known writer and broadcaster on all things mountain. Dermot has a particular affinity with the Cooleys and will talk of his experiences there during the evening.



### Saturday 20th October

Variety of walks, climbs and workshops departing from Carrickdale Hotel. Further details and route maps available from Mountaineering Ireland now and on registering at hotel. Choose from:

- Walk 1** 8:30am Bloody Bridge, Slieve Donard, Commedagh, Shan Slieve, Newcastle (10.4km with ascent of 980m)
- Walk 2** 8:30am Carricklittle, Annalong Valley, Brandy Pad, col between Donard and Commedagh, along Glen River to Newcastle (11.4km with ascent of 500m)
- Walk 3** 9:00am Ravensdale Forest Park, Clermont Cairn, Carnawaddy, Long Woman's Grave, Foxes Rock, Eagle's Rock, Slieve Foye, Carlingford (17km with ascent of 950m)
- Walk 4** 9:00am Carlingford Village, 2 Mile River, Eagle's Rock, Slieve Foye, then Táin Trail to Carlingford (11.8km with ascent of 630m)
- Walk 5** 10:15am Lumpers Pub, Ballymakellett, Round Mountain, The Castles, Carnawaddy, The Doonan, The Lumpers (11km with ascent of 430m)
- Walk 6** 10:15am Carlingford, 'Famine Village,' Barnavave, then Táin Trail to Carlingford (9km with ascent of 364m)
- Walk 7** 9:30am Slieve Gullion Courtyard, up east side to Callagh Bearagh Lough, South Cairn, descend west side, return to Courtyard (8km with ascent of 462m)

9:30am **Bouldering in the Cooleys**, with Ricky Bell.

9:30am **Youth Climbing**, with Paul Swail.

9:30am **Club Environmental Officers Workshop**, with Maurice Eakin, NPWS, and Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland.

9:30am **Remote Expedition and Trekking Workshop**, with Alun Richardson, Training Officer, Mountaineering Ireland.

6:00pm **Members' Forum**, Carrickdale Hotel.

8:00pm **Evening Dinner**, Carrickdale Hotel.

### Sunday 21st October

9:30am **The History of Irish Mountaineering**, with Declan O'Keeffe.

9:30am **The Frontier Club**, with Ricky Bell.

11:30am **Patagonia**, with Rhys McAllister.

11:30am **The Cooley - Gullion - Mourne Geo Park**, with Brendan McSherry.

9:30am to 3:00pm **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for BOS Mountain Skills providers**, with Alun Richardson. Minimum of four participants will be required.

1:00pm Meet closes.



## Views sought on maps

**Ordnance Survey canvasses views on 'most wanted' 1:25k maps.**



Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) recently consulted a number of groups regarding the availability of OSi paper mapping products, specifically maps at the scale of 1:25,000.

A questionnaire was sent to approximately thirty people from a variety of interested parties, including Mountaineering Ireland, The Irish Sports Council and Scouting Ireland. This was followed by a consultation evening at OSi headquarters in Phoenix Park, Dublin.

***OSi has just re-published the 1:25,000 map of Killarney National Park.***

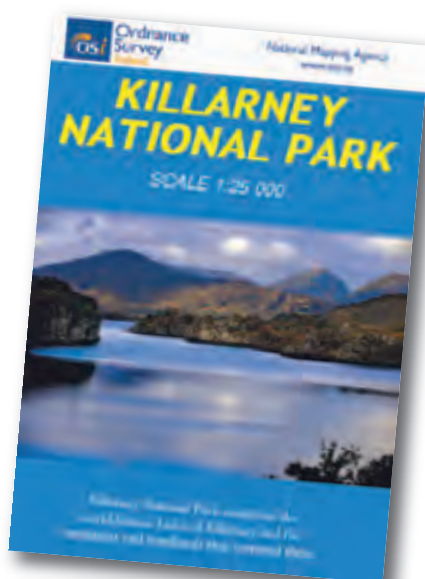
***Discovery Sheets 3, 6, 25, 26 and 68 are also now in stock.***

Some of the initial survey results show that over 90% of the maps were used for pleasure; 36% used them frequently and 37% of users replaced them every two years.

The feedback has prompted OSi to look at what new areas could be included at the 1:25,000 scale. Finding resources to actually publish additional maps can be difficult, but it is something OSi is considering and would like to do in the near future.

OSi would welcome your opinion as to areas you would like to have 1:25,000 maps for.

► Please email your suggestions to [brian.mcardle@osi.ie](mailto:brian.mcardle@osi.ie) ■



## Error in OSi map 68

**Ordnance Survey to replace faulty Sheet 68 maps.**

Paddy Looney of Tullow Mountaineering Club and South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association recently drew attention to a fault in Ordnance Survey Ireland Sheet 68, which features the Blackstairs. There are no grid lines on that sheet, so anyone navigating or trying to determine their exact location in that area would be greatly tested.

It is the third edition (2006) of Sheet 68 that is affected. Tullow Mountaineering Club was delivering

navigation training for new members when, going through the basics of reading grid references, it emerged that those with newer maps had eastings and northings but no grid lines.

Mountaineering Ireland requested OSi to withdraw any remaining stocks of the map, as they would make it difficult for people to navigate in poor conditions. OSi responded quickly that there had been a printing error and that the sheet was being reprinted. They intend to recall remaining stock and will also replace the map if people return the old map to them ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**BORD OILIÚINT SLÉIBHE (BOS) NOW FULL MEMBER OF MTUK**

At the June 2012 meeting of Mountain Training UK (MTUK), Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) was formally accepted as a full voting member.

There are still some constitutional matters relating to voting distribution that have to be sorted out, but this is an important step forward in the development of mountain training on the island of Ireland.

In 2009, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Policy stated that "as an all-island national governing body, Mountaineering Ireland favours a uniformity of training policy, structures and qualifications across the island. Mountaineering Ireland will work towards the achievement of such uniformity."

Following a 2008 report that provided advice on the options for the development of administration structures relating to mountain training in Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland established a working group to further examine the issues surrounding a possible merger.

Following a series of meetings, a joint working party of Mountain Leader Training (MLT) Northern Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland and BOS recommended that BOS make a formal approach to join MLT.

It said: "BOS membership of MLT has significant potential to benefit the MLT – through BOS contribution to review and discussion – and to benefit BOS through, particularly, mutual recognition of awards and standardisation of delivery and assessment levels. BOS membership of MLT will also be beneficial to users of award schemes."

BOS has much experience in the development of personal skills awards and modularisation of its Mountain Leader awards. It is looking forward to working closely with MTUK ■



Left to right: Sarah Ingham, Orla Prendergast and Cathleen Fergus examine erosion on Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo.



HELEN LAWLESS

➔ CROAGH PATRICK

## Helipad not needed on the Reek

### Mountaineering Ireland opposes Croagh Patrick helipad proposal.

Since this year's Reek Sunday on Croagh Patrick in Co Mayo at the end of July, there have

been various reports in the local and national media suggesting that Mayo County Council were planning to construct a helipad on Croagh Patrick. Speaking on RTE's *Morning Ireland* on July 30<sup>th</sup>, Mountaineering Ireland CEO

Karl Boyle said he was very surprised to hear of such a proposal and that it was certainly something Mountaineering Ireland would not support.

The principal function of a rescue helicopter is to hover

over and winch a casualty to safety into the aircraft; this is what makes helicopter rescue efficient.

Carrying a casualty to a helipad, especially if the casualty was located lower down the mountain than the helipad, could add to the challenges that the mountain rescue team faced.

Helicopter rescue is significantly dependent on suitable weather conditions; this also limits its availability.

If funds are available for Croagh Patrick, they would be much better used managing the significant erosion problem that exists on the mountain or supporting the local volunteers of the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team who are called out to assist climbers or pilgrims when they get into difficulty on the mountain at any time of the year.

Mountaineering Ireland recently facilitated an assessment of the erosion on Croagh Patrick, which has been caused or worsened by the large numbers who climb the 764m mountain each year – see *IML 102*, page 61 ■

## Habitat loss in uplands impacts on wildlife

### Planting of new forests in the uplands results in loss of semi-natural habitats.

All of us appreciate the natural habitats that are unique to upland environments, and many of us appreciate the access provided by state forestry in mountain areas. However, difficulties for the success of plantations in upland areas, such as thin soils, high fire risk and heavy fertiliser use, also pose risks to the ecological health of these upland environments.

BirdWatch Ireland has recently highlighted some conservation challenges in

upland areas for the consideration of a working group looking at land availability for new forestry.

Semi-natural grasslands found across the uplands are rich in specialised flora and fauna. Planting of new forestry in upland habitats is a land-use change that results in the loss of these habitat types. There has been a significant decline in the range and quality of semi-natural grasslands in Ireland in recent years and this is a concern for conservationists.

A collective approach is now needed to reverse the decline and to ensure that the extensive grazing that has

maintained these habitats for thousands of years continues.

### Breeding wader declines

Similarly, alarming declines in breeding wader populations have been recorded, as highlighted previously in this magazine (*IML 99*, p16). Multiple threats face Ireland's breeding Curlew, including the planting of new forestry in upland breeding habitats. Dunlin and Golden Plover are also impacted by direct habitat loss in upland areas.

Reduced water quality, loss of wildlife and damage to fisheries are very real costs to society, in terms of actual

damage to habitats and fisheries interests, as well as ongoing loss of valuable ecosystem services.

In order for forestry policy to ensure that it plays its part in reversing biodiversity loss and water quality declines in upland areas, ecological assessments need to be carried out on all proposed new forestry sites before consent and grant aid are given.

While Ireland needs timber, and forestry is an important industry here, new approaches are required which include careful and strategic planning of forestry to ensure that these needs are met in harmony with nature ■



Knockmealdown Mountains Forum members Trevor Riches, Lynette Harte and Chris Tyndall roast one of Trevor's organic pigs at Ballyduff Community Festival.

➔ FUNDRAISER

## Knockmealdowns Forum

**Ballyduff, Co Tipperary, are promoting the Knockmealdown Mountains Forum.**

Communities in the Knockmealdowns catchment area have come together to form the Knockmealdown Mountains Forum.

Last summer, the community of Ballyduff, Co Tipperary, hosted a festival to raise much-needed start-up funds for the Forum. This proved a useful way of promoting the Forum while showcasing local artisan foods and crafts.

The Knockmealdown Mountains Forum

has agreed an exciting vision for the area:

"To develop a vibrant, multi-activity destination, offering an authentic experience of Ireland's true culture."

The Forum's objectives include: co-ordinating all tourism activities and services in the area as a one-stop-shop for visitors; increasing economic activity, particularly in the tourism sector; and ensuring the sustainable development of the Knockmealdowns ■

► Visit the Knockmealdown Mountains Forum page on Facebook.

## Animal rescue

**Positive action by club members.**

Kevin Higgins (Tyndall Mountain Club) provided this photograph of a sheep injured by a dog near the Boola lakes in the Comeragh Mountains. The dog separated the sheep from the flock; the sheep then ran away but the dog followed. The sheep took refuge in a stream, under an overhanging bank.

When Tyndall club members approached, the dog was nearby with lots of blood on its head and the sheep was trapped in the stream. They got the sheep out of the stream and later told a local farmer, who contacted the sheep's owner. Their considerate action probably saved the sheep's life ■



➔ SHEEP WORRYING

KEVIN HIGGINS

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND MEETS SPORTS MINISTER

Mountaineering Ireland held a meeting with Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring TD, in July. The meeting focused on participation and the pilot Mountain Access projects (at Carrauntoohil, Co Kerry and Mt Gable or Binn Shléibhe, Clonbur, Co Galway).

The meeting provided an opportunity to make the Minister aware of the concerns of Mountaineering Ireland members throughout Ireland regarding the potential change in ownership of the Coillte estate.

The Minister was interested to read, in *Irish Mountain Log* No 102, of the recent path assessment on Croagh Patrick ■



### BLACKSTAIRS DEER TRAP OVER 2,000 YEARS OLD

Readers may recall the article by Mick Monahan in *IML 100* (page 13) describing the discovery of an ancient deer trap on the top of Blackstairs Mountain on the borders of Carlow and Wexford.

Following radiocarbon-dating of the alder wood material used to make the deer trap, the National Museum of Ireland has reported that the trap dates from the first or second centuries BC.

So, next time you see a piece of wood protruding from a peat hag, take a closer look at it! ■





Liffey Head Bog.

## LANDSCAPE PROTECTION

# For peat's sake

**The Irish Peatland Conservation Council has been thirty years protecting Ireland's peatlands.**

In 1982, a group of academics with a shared passion met in Dublin – their passion was to protect Ireland's peatlands.

At a time when the peatlands were considered valuable only for their economic uses for domestic fuel, generating electricity and as compost used in gardens, these academics recognised the potential impacts of the loss of peatland habitat. They saw peatlands for their biodiversity and were fascinated by their functioning ecosystem.

Following the meeting, they set out on a mission to conserve a representative portion of peatlands for future generations to enjoy – and so the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) was born.

2012 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the setting up of that charity; and down through the years it has done much work to achieve its mission.

Members of Mountaineering Ireland will have explored peatlands around the country and experienced at first hand these wonderful habitats. You may have

heard the cry of the curlew during summer walks as they were busy feeding their young. You will have seen the carpet of snow-white bog cotton as you moved through the hills in June; or watched a skylark high in the sky before it dived towards the ground to catch an insect or return to its nest. Maybe a darting dragonfly landed on your jacket as you approached wet areas on your journey? Let's ensure these special habitats are enjoyed for many years to come. **Tadhg O'Corcora**

► If you would like to support the work of the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, why not join as a **Friend of the Bog** or learn more by visiting [www.ipcc.ie](http://www.ipcc.ie).

**Black darter dragonfly (female): a species closely associated with Irish peatlands.**



CATHERINE O'CONNELL

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### TOP RANKING FOR DOMINIC BURNS

Dominic Burns, from Belfast, is now ranked number one in the world following his successes in the European Youth Cup bouldering series.

Dominic started off his year at the European Bouldering Competition by winning the first round of the European Youth Cup held at Grindelwald in Switzerland on 2<sup>nd</sup> June against a very strong field.

This followed wins earlier in the year at the Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships and at the Irish Bouldering Championships, Senior and Junior.

In late June, Dominic competed in the European Youth Cup at Linz in Austria, where he qualified for the final. He was placed 11<sup>th</sup> overall against very strong competition.

In July, at the British Bouldering Championships in Sheffield, Dominic won the male youth B and went on to win the overall Junior Championship.

Dominic has been supported by Sport Northern Ireland's athlete development programme and this support will see him compete in the IFSC World Youth Championships in August.

Dominic is a member of the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team, Belfast, and is coached by the National Coach, Eddie Cooper. Dominic's parents, Antoinette and George, also give him fantastic support and encouragement ■



Walkers on St Kevin's Way, Glendasan, Co Wicklow.

➔ MOUNTAIN TRAILS

# Ireland celebrates its trails

Try a trail this National Trails Day on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

National Trails Day is a celebration of the wonderful variety of trails that we have on the island of Ireland. It is a chance for everyone, whatever their age or ability, to enjoy some of our most beautiful countryside, forests, mountains and lakes. With miles and miles of trails to explore, there is a trail to suit everyone. Now in its fifth year, this cross-border celebration of local trails continues to go from strength to strength.

This year, National Trails Day will be held on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The objectives are:

- To promote awareness of the recreation trails (walking and biking) and allied outdoor recreation facilities that are currently available in Ireland
- To promote understanding of the need to manage and adequately resource the trails and other facilities
- To promote awareness of the work of key agencies in delivering trails and other facilities

- To show that communities and interest groups are really important local resources for trails in their area.

National Trails Day is a cross-border partnership supported by: Coillte; Fáilte Ireland; Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; Irish Sports Council; Inland Waterways of the Northern Ireland Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure; Sport Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Environment Agency; National Trust; and Forest Service of Northern Ireland.

In the Republic, there is a large range of events being organised all over the country, in every county.

In Wicklow, walkers can go on a guided tour of the Vale of Avoca; on a hilltop trek to Maulin via Powerscourt Waterfall; on a historic walk in Glenmalur focusing on the Wicklow aftermath of the 1798 rebellion; get a taste of the Wicklow Way at Knockree; or go on a woodland walk in

Avondale Park with Coillte.

In Offaly, walkers can go on the Slieve Bloom Walk or on the Clara Bog Walk, where they can learn more about the history of this significant bog and about the plants and wildlife that can be found there.

In Limerick, they can go on the Lough Gur and Bruff Walk or on a Limerick County Sports Partnership Trails Walk.

In Tipperary, they can go on the Kyle/Emmel Loop Walk in Cloughjordan, or another Loop Walk in the Glen of Aherlow.

There are many other excellent walks on offer, for people of all ages and abilities, so they can experience the various trails that exist all around the country safely. All of the walks are guided.

## Northern Ireland

In the North, building on the success of 2011 when over 2,000 people took part in over fifty events across Northern Ireland, Outdoor Recreation NI (formerly CAAN) is once again coordinating the events.

This year will see a huge variety of new and exciting events. Those interested can

improve their photography skills in the Mourne; increase their knowledge of local history on an historical ramble of Ring of Gullion; or join the experts and a few feathered friends for an informative tour of Oxford Island on the shores of Lough Neagh.

Families can take part in an eco-trail challenge at Lurgan Country Park; or head to Tollymore for a forest adventure walk.

For something a bit more relaxed, you can get up close and personal with the much-loved squirrels at Glenariff Forest in the Glens of Antrim; or enjoy a guided stroll with a bird expert around Castle Espie on Strangford Lough.

With events happening across every county in Northern Ireland, National Trails Day 2012 is perfect for families and adventure seekers. Visit [www.nationaltrailsday.ie](http://www.nationaltrailsday.ie) to register for a free event ■

► For information on trails near you, visit:  
[www.irishtrails.ie](http://www.irishtrails.ie)  
[www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie)  
[www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie)  
[www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com)





Mournes biking trail under construction.

➔ TRAIL BUILDING

## Biking trail for Mournes

**Mournes to become world-class mountain biking destination.**

Construction has started on a £1.9 million development of purpose-built mountain bike trails in the Mourne Mountains. When completed, 45 kilometres of bike trails will wind through Castlewellan Forest Park and Kilbroney Forest Park in Rostrevor.

Former Irish Downhill Champion Glyn O'Brien believes the landmark trails will establish Northern Ireland as one of the world's top mountain biking destinations.

"Mountain biking has enjoyed a real surge in popularity in recent years and, despite having an ideal landscape for world-class trails, we haven't yet harnessed the opportunities that mountain biking holds here.

"These trails, which are due to open next spring, will mean that mountain bikers will no longer have to travel over the border or across to Scotland and Wales to find purpose-built trails that fit the bill."

Split over two sites, these sustainable mountain bike trails include Ireland's first official downhill trails in Rostrevor Forest Park, which has recently been selected as a site for next summer's World Police and Fire Games.

With the cross-country trails through Castlewellan Forest Park also hosting the

European Single Speed Championships in 2014, this project is already delivering on its potential to make Northern Ireland the next must-visit mountain bike destination in the UK and Ireland ■

► The Mournes Mountain Bike Trails project is an initiative of **Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland** (formerly CAAN). It is being led by Down District Council with partnership funding from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board; Down District Council; Newry & Mourne District Council; and Sport Northern Ireland. The project is being supported by the Forest Service of Northern Ireland.



WWW.FLICKR.COM/PEOPLE/SIGSEGV/

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### CAMPAIGN SEEKS TO BAN WINDFARMS FROM SCOTLAND'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) recently launched a campaign to save scenic mountain areas from industrialisation by wind farms.

The MCofS is calling for an immediate moratorium on commercial wind farms which encroach on Scotland's highest mountains – the Munros (peaks over 3,000ft) and the Corbetts (2,500-3,000ft). These are Scotland's finest mountain landscapes and among the last parts of the UK free from obvious, or extensive, human presence.

At the launch of MCofS's Manifesto on Onshore Wind Farms, David Gibson, MCofS Chief Officer stated: "We are not opposed to wind farms; however, we are in favour of conserving our mountains.

The Scottish Government could give real meaning to the 2013 Year of Natural Scotland by working with those who care about the environment to create a clear policy on what will be permitted and where."

► Mountaineering Ireland will be reviewing its Environmental Policy documents in 2013, including developing position papers on landscape and renewable energy developments. If you'd like to contribute, please contact Helen Lawless at [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) or phone the Mountaineering Ireland office ■



Robert Grandon (Chair, Mountain Meitheal) puts the finishing touches to the new hut on the Bangor Trail.

➔ GIVING BACK

## New shelter on Bangor Trail

### Mountain Meitheal completes shelter on Bangor Trail, Co Mayo.

Mountain Meitheal has completed a new mountain shelter near Lough Aroher on the Bangor Trail in Co Mayo. The hut is Mountain Meitheal's contribution to the Wilderness Mayo project (see pages 32-36).

Beginning on 8<sup>th</sup> July, sixteen volunteers constructed the remote shelter in a week-long workcamp. They also did some trail maintenance and repair on site.

As reported in *IML 102*, preparation for this project commenced some time ago. Mountain Meitheal wished to celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in a practical way in accordance with its aims.

The carpentry and initial preparation of the shelter was done off-site in the workshops of Coillte Teo in Avondale, Co Wicklow. The shelter was first built and then dismantled in Avondale, and then transported to Co Mayo. The materials were dropped 300 metres from the shelter's final position. They were then moved by hand over the 300-metre stretch to the construction site in extremely wet weather and poor underfoot conditions over the first three days.

While the materials were being brought to the site, the shelter site was levelled and a retaining crib wall was put in place by the volunteers.

When the materials were finally on site, the building commenced. It progressed well, although the weather was initially very inclement. It improved over the final days of the project.

After the workdays, the volunteers returned to their forestry-based campsites. They had the use of an old Forestry

Service tractor-shed for their mess hall, where there was a good fireplace to dry out their wet gear and add to the bonhomie of the group.

Mountain Meitheal is very proud of the effort and commitment of all of the volunteers involved in the planning, preparation and construction of this shelter. The group hopes the shelter will be enjoyed by all who pass that way (grid ref F 938 073). Reports of it being used were received within a day of the work being completed. **Robert Grandon, Mountain Meitheal**

► More information on the project and Mountain Meitheal's work can be found on [www.pathsavers.org](http://www.pathsavers.org). Repair work continues on the White Route in Glendalough; new volunteers welcome.

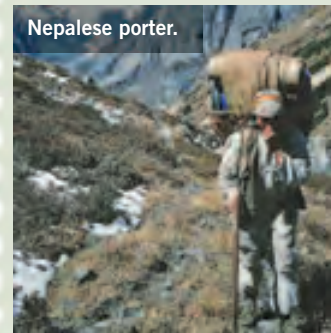
### New Meitheal branch emerging in Munster

Following a good show of interest in the proposal to form a Munster and south-east branch of Mountain Meitheal after the Galtee Clean-up Day in the Glen of Aherlow last April, a meeting was held in July to get the ball rolling. The idea was first mooted at the Mountaineering Ireland Spring Gathering in Clonmel last March.

A steering committee has been formed with the aim of working with Mountain Meitheal to develop a group of volunteers who can repair and maintain paths and access facilities in the local uplands. It is likely the initial work will be in the Galtees.

► Anyone interested in getting involved should contact **Jimmy Barry** at email [jimmybarry@gmail.com](mailto:jimmybarry@gmail.com) or phone 087 297 5178.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



Nepalese porter.

### NEPAL'S BAN ON INDEPENDENT TREKKING PUT ON HOLD

It was reported earlier in the year that, following attacks in Nepal on solo trekkers, authorities there were developing legislation to ensure that all independent trekkers would in future have to be accompanied by an official porter or guide at a cost of \$10 a day. They hoped this would improve the safety of foreign trekkers in Nepal after one independent female trekker from Belgium was found decapitated in Langtang National Park in June this year. Solo trekkers have also been attacked in other parts of Nepal and muggings in trekking areas appear to be increasing.

The authorities were going to insist that all solo trekkers hire a guide or porter to accompany them on their treks from the start of the post-monsoon trekking season this year. However, after various stakeholders protested about the likely negative impact that this significant additional charge would have on the numbers of trekkers in Nepal, the Government has decided to put the decision on hold until further notice. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation said it was holding discussions with stakeholders towards ensuring the security of trekkers ■



# Appalachian trail reaches Ireland

## Nature knows no boundaries!

An historic meeting of walking organisations from either side of the Atlantic took place in Iceland from 15th to 19th June. The occasion was the first ever annual general meeting of the International Appalachian Trail (IAT) to be held outside North America. It culminated in a symbolic straddling of the Mid-Atlantic Rift in Thingvellir National Park (see photo).

The Appalachian Trail, established in the US in the early 20th century, stretches in a continuous line from Georgia in the south to Maine on the Canadian border in the north, a distance of more than 3,300 kilometres.

Between 1995 and 2001, this continuous trail was extended by 1,085km into Canada to form the new International Appalachian Trail (IAT). When it reached



Appalachian Trail representatives at the Mid-Atlantic Rift in Thingvellir National Park, Iceland, in June.

the coast, it didn't stop there. The trail started 'island-hopping' and thus included Newfoundland and Labrador and then changed into a trail network with varied classes of trails.

## Crossing into Europe

In 2009, the idea of connecting landscapes, people and

cultures by means of a hiking trail took another step forward when an Appalachian Trail delegation travelled to the eastern side of the Atlantic to visit countries that share a unique geological history with North America: some 420 million years ago they were all part of the Caledonian-Appalachian mountain belt.

In Britain and Ireland, this idea was met with enthusiasm, and both Scotland and the Republic of Ireland have committed trails as part of IAT Europe. In Ireland, the route extends from Slieve League in Co Donegal to the border with Co Tyrone, using parts of Slí Cholmcille and the Bluestack Way. It is hoped that the route will soon continue through Northern Ireland to Larne, where the walker can take the

ferry to join the IAT Scotland route at Cairnryan/Stranraer.

Inga Bock (RRO), Donegal Local Development Co Ltd and Mark Flagler (Flagler Films) represented the IAT Irish Chapter at the recent historic meeting in Iceland. The Irish attendance was supported by the National Trails Office and Fáilte Ireland.

A website will be developed shortly. In the meantime check out the Irish page on the IAT website, <http://iat-sia.com/index.php?page=ireland>.

This is not the end, it is just a beginning. The IAT is negotiating with some of our 420 million-year-old neighbouring countries (see map) with a view to making the International Appalachian Trail the biggest trail network in the world. **Inga Bock**







➔ PHOTOGRAPHY

Overall winner: Tonelagee Mountain, by Pawel Pentlinowski.



Photographic Merit Award: Sledding by Sophie Loscher.

## Photo competition celebrates wild Wicklow

### Winners of Wicklow Uplands Council photo competition announced.

The Wicklow Uplands Council in conjunction with the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council held a photographic competition in August to celebrate National Heritage Week 2012 and International Year of the Rural Landscape. The theme was "Wicklow's Living Landscape."

From 85 entries received, 31 were selected for a ten-day photographic exhibition at County Buildings, Wicklow. The exhibition beautifully illustrated the components that make up a living landscape, including the people living, working, recreating and visiting the area; iconic Wicklow views; and the nature and biodiversity that make up its fabric. It provided an opportunity for local people who may not venture often into the hills to appreciate the splendours that lie on their doorstep.

Wicklow Uplands Council is an independent, voluntary organisation representing the shared interests of over 50 member groups, including Mountaineering Ireland, and individual members. It successfully operates on the basis of consensus, community participation, and partnership and collaboration.

All the competition entries can be viewed on the Wicklow Uplands Council website, [www.wicklowuplands.ie](http://www.wicklowuplands.ie), or on [www.wicklowuplandscouncil.blogspot.ie](http://www.wicklowuplandscouncil.blogspot.ie). The blogspot includes other interesting posts and articles on issues affecting the Wicklow uplands ■



People in the Uplands category winner: Lunch Break on Moanbane, by Ned Fleming.



Biodiversity and Nature category winner: Frog Mating Season in Arklow Marsh, by Liam Burke.



# Avalanche in Alps kills nine climbers

**Casualties include international mountain guide Roger Payne, previously of the BMC and the UIAA.**

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, nine climbers were killed in a massive avalanche on Mont Maudit in the French Alps near Chamonix, on a popular climbing route to the summit of Mont Blanc.

It was reported that a "wall of snow" swept them away. It was suggested that one of the climbers stepping on an icy patch may unwittingly have triggered the giant slide.

The dead climbers were three Britons, three Germans, two Spaniards and one Swiss.

Among the British casualties was **Roger Payne**, an experienced mountain guide who is thought to have been leading a group when the avalanche struck.

About 38 climbers were on the mountain at an elevation of 4000m and heading for Mont Blanc in the early morning when the avalanche hit them without warning in fine weather conditions. Many of the climbers were roped together for safety. One of the climbers who managed to escape alerted the authorities.

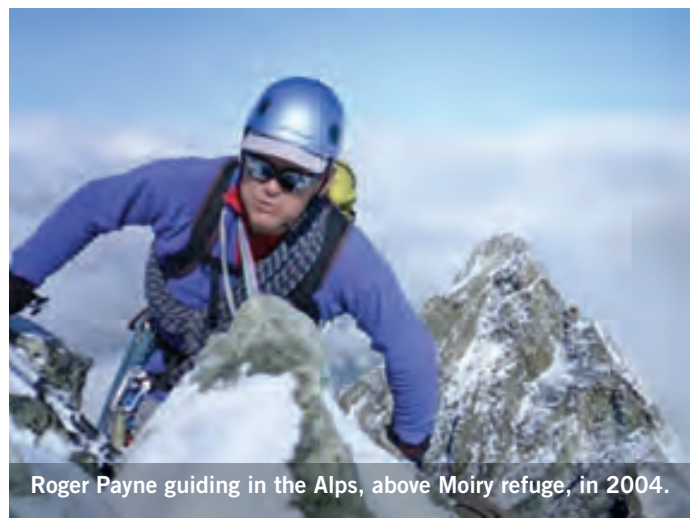
Some 20,000 climbers attempt to reach the summit of Mont Blanc (4810m) every summer, with up to 500 a day during peak times.

This is the most deadly avalanche in the French Alps since 2008, when eight climbers were swept away after blocks of ice broke off Mont Blanc du Tacul, causing an avalanche.

The scene of the most recent tragedy, Mont Maudit, which translates from the French as 'Cursed Peak,' is one of the two most popular access routes to Mont Blanc.

A local expert commented: "It's a steep mountain face. There are big plates of snow we know of, where an avalanche can easily occur. But this morning we had no reason to expect an avalanche of this size and such a tragedy."

Roger Payne was a former secretary general of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and ex-president of the British Mountain Guides Association. He left the BMC in December 2001 and the following year became the first sports and development director of UIAA, the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation. In this capacity, he was part of a movement to strengthen mountaineering's links with the Olympic



Roger Payne guiding in the Alps, above Moiry refuge, in 2004.

JON WIGG

movement and with United Nations agencies as well as the World Conservation Union.

Roger had climbed all over the world, including in the Himalayas. He is survived by

his wife, Julie-Ann Clyma, who is also a climber.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland offers its condolences to her and to our colleagues in the BMC. **Patrick O'Sullivan**



Mont Maudit viewed from Mont Blanc du Tacul.

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Peter White, right, holds the Dublin Fire Brigade 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary flag on the summit of Denali (6,140m), North America's highest peak, with team mate Jeff Furman, a former US Marine.

## Irish ascent of Denali

Following on from Lar Fant's successful climb of Denali last year (see *IML 102*, pp51-53), we received word of another ascent by an Irishman this year. Peter White, a member of Dublin Fire Brigade and of Dingle Hillwalking Club and Mountaineering Ireland, summited on Denali, North America's highest peak, on June 18th. He made his climb to mark the 150th anniversary of Dublin Fire Brigade. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports

Peter White has been a keen hillwalker and climber for many years, and completed the Four Peaks with Dublin Fire Brigade about 13 years ago. He went on to climb Kilimanjaro in September 2000 and then summited on Aconcagua, the highest mountain in South America, in 2007. The same year, he climbed Mount Elbrus in Russia and then started to think about completing the Seven Summits. By that time only two other Irish people had done that. In 2008, he attempted Mount Everest, reaching 8,100m before being forced to descend.

Subsequently, Peter has focused on climbing in the Alps. This year, however, he decided to make an attempt on Denali (aka Mt McKinley, 6,140m/20,320ft) to mark the 150th anniversary of Dublin Fire Brigade.

On Denali, Peter reports that the biggest challenges were the severe cold and the fact that all of the equipment for the three-week expedition had to be carried by the

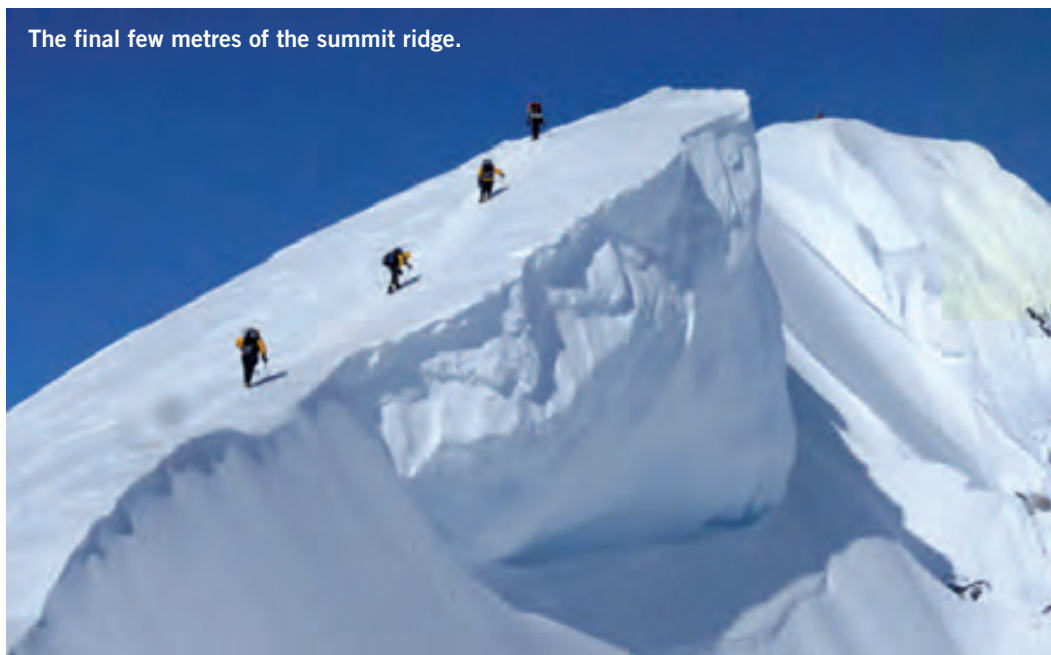
climbers themselves. Initially, the supplies and equipment were split between a sled, which was towed, and backpacks that were carried, but higher up on the

mountain, when it was too steep to use a sled, everything had to be carried in the backpacks, making about a 50kg load. Furthermore, in June, Alaska is in almost permanent daylight, which makes it difficult to sleep.

Peter was in a team of twelve, which included three guides and one female climber. Apart from the climatic and technical challenges of the ascent, Peter feels that waiting for the right weather for the summit day and the summit day itself were the biggest challenges. There were other teams at High Camp, before Peter's team arrived, who had waited a week to summit but hadn't got an opportunity due to weather. Heartbreakingly, they had had to turn back without making a summit bid. Peter's team waited for a window in the weather, for two days, in their tents at High Camp, and fortunately they got one.

It was one of the best summit days that Peter had ever had on a mountain because of the good weather they got and the spectacular views in every direction. To be able to see for miles above the clouds across the mountain ranges in Alaska was very special ■

The final few metres of the summit ridge.



Photographs: PETER WHITE



## UIAA ALERT: Via ferrata sets failures

The UIAA has issued a worldwide warning to users of via ferrata sets (or klettersteig sets) to check the manufacturer's website in order to find out whether the set they are using is safe.

The warning follows a fatal accident in August on a via ferrata in the Austrian Tirol, where a climber fell several metres and both lanyards on the energy-absorbing devices

(EAS) on the climber's via ferrata set broke.

The manufacturer carried out an investigation after the accident. This probe found that the lanyard's strength was dramatically weakened after intensive use, not only because of its specific construction but also due to the material used.

A meeting of the UIAA Safety Commission took place

in early September in Bern, Switzerland, to review the accident, because the via ferrata unit involved met the safety standards as set out by the UIAA Safety Commission. As a result of the meeting:

- Users are advised to visit the website of the manufacturer to check if their via ferrata set is safe to use.

- A decision was made to review UIAA 128, the safety standard used to test via ferrata sets.

The last review of this standard took place in 2008 when a wet test was added. The goal of the review is to update the existing standard for via ferrata sets that will include fatigue testing.

## UIAA ALERT: Fixed anchor failure

Climbers must evaluate the quality of the anchors in place on any route they are attempting and realise that there is a risk of anchor failure due to corrosion.

The issue of the environmental degradation of fixed anchors or belay points was first reported by the UIAA in 2009. The initial study found that up to 20% of anchors in more extreme locations, such as in tropical or marine environments, were at risk. However, cases of anchor degradation have been reported in other locations, and any fixed anchor may be subject to corrosive degradation.

There has always been some risk of anchor failure due to improper installation, corrosion or stress corrosion cracking. Salt deposits on some types of stainless steel can cause chloride stress corrosion cracking faster than expected, in some cases within a year. The affected anchors do not always show any visible signs before their often sudden, and potentially disastrous, failure.

Unlike in the construction industry, climbing anchors are not generally installed for any specified lifetime and there is generally no system

of inspection and replacement through their lifetime. These things make it more difficult to make recommendations about the best anchor to use. The UIAA Safety Commission has recommended that anchors be classified in terms of their resistance to corrosion and stress corrosion cracking.

Another complication is that climbing anchor selection tends to be cost-sensitive, sometimes with selection based on short-term goals and not on the potential lifetime of the anchor.

The Safety Commission's warning from October 2009 is still in effect. In the absence of standards for the corrosion resistance of specific anchors and recommendations for their inspection and retirement, climbers may manage the risk of corrosion degradation if they:

- Talk to local climbers and the people who equipped the routes to determine the quality of the anchors
- Find out if a climbing area is regularly re-equipped. Experience shows that if anchors are less than three years old they are less likely to be weakened by corrosion ■

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Climbers hike past the area where an avalanche swept a Japanese climbing team to their deaths during their descent from Denali (Mount McKinley) in Alaska on June 15th. The team of five was roped together. One of the team survived after falling into a crevasse, which he was able to climb out of to go for help.

This year, 1,223 climbers attempted Denali and 498 summited (41%). There were six deaths, including the four Japanese climbers who were killed by the avalanche. This accident happened just four days before Peter White summited on Denali.

Last year was the third deadliest year for the mountain, with nine deaths. In 2011, during the three-month climbing season (May, June, July) on Denali, 1,232 climbers (including 131 women) attempted to climb the mountain and 687 (56%) reached the summit.

## Mike Westmacott dies

Mike Westmacott, a member of the successful 1953 expedition that put Hillary and Tenzing on the summit of Everest, died in June, aged 87.

A leading figure in British post-war mountaineering, Westmacott was one of three surviving Western members of the 1953 Everest expedition. New Zealander George Lowe and the English *Times* correspondent Jan Morris now survive him.

After serving with the Indian Army Corps of Engineers in Burma at the end of the war, Westmacott read mathematics at Oxford, where he became involved in mountaineering. He became president of the university mountaineering club. Subsequently, he worked as an agricultural statistician before joining the Everest expedition.

Westmacott's role on the expedition of establishing and maintaining the route through

the Khumbu icefall was not glamorous but was none-the-less crucial to the expedition's success. He also ensured that news of the success reached the outside world as soon as possible by escorting Jan (then James) Morris down through the icefall. Despite his involvement in the expedition, he remained modest about it, rarely talking to others about his time on Everest.

After his return from Everest, he met Sally, who became his wife and his climbing partner. In the following years, they climbed in many different parts of the world, including North America and the Andes. In Peru, Westmacott made the first ascent of Huagaruncho.

In the early 1960s, Westmacott joined an oil multinational and the couple moved to North America, where they explored the Bugaboos and the Selkirks in Canada, and the Wind River

range in Wyoming. In 1964, they joined an American Alpine Club expedition to the unexplored Arrigetch Mountains of northern Alaska where their team made half-a-dozen first ascents.

Four years later the couple, based in London again, travelled to the Hindu Kush, exploring the Ushnu Gol mountains of Chitral. With Hugh Thomlinson, they made the first ascent of a peak near the Wakhikah Rah, one of the finest summits, Westmacott wrote, of his long career.

In later years, Westmacott's contribution to world mountaineering increased with his development of the Himalayan Index, a computer record of 2,850 peaks in the Himalaya, which is now a valuable tool for exploratory mountaineers. He was also president of the Alpine Club and of the Climbers' Club, and oversaw the management of



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the Alpine Club's library.

After he retired, Westmacott and his wife moved to the Lake District where he remained active on the fells for many years.

*Mike Westmacott, born April 12<sup>th</sup> 1925, died June 20<sup>th</sup> 2012*



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# MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND

## INCIDENT REPORT 2011

The annual numbers of incidents requiring an emergency call-out are on the increase

**T**he twelve voluntary Mountain Rescue Teams on the island of Ireland responded to 269 incidents in 2011. While this total is significantly up on the earlier years when records were kept, the total number of incidents dealt with in the previous two years was unusually high. In 2010, it was over 350, compared to 296 in 2009. These figures were considerable increases on the previous years' totals, when the figures were in the low 200s. These increases in annual numbers of incidents could relate to the increase in participation in mountaineering activities seen in recent years or perhaps to other factors, such as the weather.

Accidents are not predictable and may occur at any time, on any day of the week and in any month of the year. To be able to respond to calls for assistance that may come in at any time, the volunteer members of the twelve Mountain Rescue Teams must be available on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2011, of the incidents for which the information was available, more than half of the call-outs were over the weekend, on Saturday or Sunday. This is logical, in that there is more activity in the upland areas over the weekend when more people have free time. The peak months for call-outs in 2011 would also follow that pattern, the busiest months being April (coinciding with the Easter holiday, perhaps) and August, a peak holiday month.

The majority of emergency calls are received via the Garda Síochána or PSNI who then alert the Mountain Rescue Teams.

The Mountain Rescue Teams were called to assist with eight fatalities in 2011, something which is always stressful for the team members, whatever the nature of the unfortunate fatality.

Of the 261 other incidents responded to in 2011, 104 involved people with injuries, which would have had to be stabilised before the casualty could be



Members of Donegal Mountain Rescue Team on a training exercise.

JIM McSHANE (DONEGAL MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM)



**In an emergency, call 999/112 and ask the emergency operator for “Mountain Rescue.” You will then be put through to a Garda or PSNI station where the situation will be assessed and, if necessary, a mountain rescue team called out.**

evacuated. Mountain Rescue Teams may be called upon to treat a wide range of injuries and illnesses, usually in a remote or hostile environment. They are trained to be able to provide varying levels of medical care *in situ* where they locate the casualty before evacuating him or her. This early care may, in fact, be life-saving. As in previous years, in 2011, lower limb injuries were the most common type of injuries dealt with.

Serious injuries must be evacuated to hospital as quickly as possible. Helicopter assistance was available for one-fifth of the incidents in 2011, but such assistance is often impossible, given the weather conditions or the location of the casualty. In that case, the casualty has to be stabilised and then manually stretched to the nearest road.

If a search is required for persons reported missing, lost or overdue, considerable input may be required from

the teams in terms of the numbers of team members who may be involved in the search and the time involved. Frequently, teams will assist each other in conducting a search.

Mountain Rescue Teams may also be requested to assist communities during local emergencies or to search for vulnerable people who are missing. In 2011, this accounted for about 40% of the call-outs received. All of the teams make their expertise available, to differing extents, in order to assist with these incidents which are outside of the core remit of mountain rescue. This adds considerably to the already significant time commitment of the volunteers.

► Mountain rescue is a 24-hour 999/112 emergency service provided by unpaid volunteers. Mountain Rescue Ireland is a registered charity (CHY10412) ■



# Club Cualann: 30 years and climbing!

*Club Cualann Mountaineering Club celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. James Linnane discusses the origins and history of the club and its current activities.*



Club Cualann members on War Hill, above Powerscourt.

As a relatively new member, it was only in researching this article that I discovered the full story behind the origins of Club Cualann Mountaineering Club. One of our longer-standing members kindly sent me some of the old *Ceangal* newsletters that dated back to the very first days of the club and they provided a fascinating insight into how the club came to be formed and how it has developed to its present strength.

In September 1982, some of

the graduate members of UCD Mountaineering Club began to meet and walk independently from the college club in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. In the early days, a walk was carried out on the first Sunday of each month. However, it was not until January 1984 that the name 'Club Cualann' was officially adopted as the name of the newly formed group. Meanwhile, the club had grown and the frequency of walks had risen from once a

month to twice monthly during winter months, and the number of participants had also increased.

The name 'Cualann' derives from the word 'Cuala,' the name given to a large swathe of land stretching from the southern end of the Dublin Mountains, possibly as far south as Newcastle and incorporating much of north-east Wicklow. In the early times, a major route through Wicklow along the eastern side of the mountains was called 'Slíghé Cualann,' while the main centre of population was located to the west of the mountains. For a club whose main area of activity was the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, what name could be more appropriate?

## 'Welcome Walks'

By October 1983, walks on the first Sunday of each month were allocated as family and beginners' walks. To this day, the club still operates a monthly 'Welcome Walk,' which remains a popular walk

amongst new and old members alike.

Annual navigation courses and occasional skills days are also organised for new and prospective members.

## Rock climbing

Rock climbing was an important part of Club Cualann's activities from the beginning, as most of the members had transferred from UCD Mountaineering Club and carried on climbing as before. Among the more active climbers were Cormac Maloney, Eamonn Walls, Philip Boughan, Lorcan O'Sullivan, Peter and Mick O'Shea, to mention a few. However, as members got involved in raising families, the numbers actively climbing dropped off and climbing became something of a minority pursuit within the club.

It was in the early nineties that a recruitment drive began to widen the membership base of the club and some of the new members were drawn to rock climbing, which was being promoted at the time by Jim Sheehan who was working on getting his Mountain Leadership and Rock Climbing Leadership awards. The Wednesday sessions in Dalkey Quarry and trips to Glendalough, the Mourne and the Burren began to be well supported by a new intake of members, such as Brendan Donegan, Noel Walsh, Gerry Ronan, Maria Duffy and Martin Hughes, as well as some of the old guard.

Trips to the Alps began to include more technical routes, such as the Index above Chamonix, the Aiguille du Midi, The Marmolada, Mont



Club Cualann members on the footbridge in Glenealo valley, above Glendalough.





Bridge over troubled waters. A damp day in the hills.

Blanc, Monte Rosa and the Alallinhorn (4,027m), as well as crag climbing in places like Lac Galliard, Vallorcine and Resti near Taesch.

An annual beginners' **Open Day** in May and an **Introduction to Multi-pitch Climbing** in Glendalough in September became parts of the climbing calendar.

Coupled with coaching and encouragement at the weekly meets, this resulted in a core of committed climbers in the club. The current climbing season is going well, with a very keen cohort of up-and-coming climbers, and the future of rock climbing in Club Cualann is looking good.

## Trips abroad

Over the years, Club Cualann has organised frequent trips further afield. Scotland and Wales were favourite destinations during the St Patrick's and Easter holidays and these are enjoying a revival as destinations for trips.

The annual **Christmas Meet** takes place from December 27th to New Year's Day at various venues from Beara to Donegal, affording members an opportunity to work off the excesses of the festive season.

Cualann members have taken part in all of the famous challenge walks...the Maamturks, Lug and the Art O'Neill all spring to mind. One of my favourite stories comes

from Ned Fleming...he, along with Philip Boughan, famously turned up a week late for the Art O'Neill walk in the Wicklow Mountains years ago. Being dressed and packed already, they decided to finish the walk anyway but not before picking up a few drunk stragglers along the way who, despite contrary advice, joined the two men for the long trek from Dublin Castle to Glenmalur.

## The South Wicklow Traverse

A challenge walk called the South Wicklow Traverse was and remains a traditional walk within the club. It was, I believe, first walked by Cualann members. Starting in Greenan village in south Wicklow, it traverses the southern summits of Wicklow, taking in some of the less-summitted peaks including Ballinacor, Croaghnamoira, Keadeen and Carrig, as well as the more popular Slievemaan and Luqnaquilla, to name but a few, before finally finishing in Rathdangan village having travelled some 30km in over ten hours.

## Influx of members

One positive effect of the current financial crisis is that it has resulted in a massive increase in participation in mountaineering activities, and Club Cualann has seen a large influx of fresh blood in recent years. This has led to an

increase in the numbers attending the weekly walks and there has also been a dramatic rise in regular climbers.

Looking back on the newsletters from almost 30 years ago, I can see many similarities to the club of today. The same welcoming spirit exists where new members are encouraged to come along on walks or on climbs in Dalkey Quarry to see what the club is all about and to enjoy the company and humorous chatter. It was this welcoming reception I received when I joined in 2009 and it is what made me return for more.

Over the years, members have come and gone. Some are now unable to participate in the more physical aspects of our activities but still come along for the social gatherings, and some have sadly passed on to the big mountain in the

sky. Each and every one has contributed something to this great club.

Poet Joseph Campbell wrote: *"The ancient district of Cualann belonged for the most part to the County of Wicklow...wild and unspoilt, a country of cairn and crowned hills and dark watered valleys, it bears even to this day something of the freshness of a heroic dawn."*

We celebrated our anniversary in Glendalough Hotel on Saturday, the 1st of September, following a day spent in the hills and on the rock faces overlooking Glendalough and St Kevin's Bed, doing what we enjoy doing most.

Here's to many more years of adventure for Club Cualann and its members!

► James Linnane, Secretary and Training Officer, Club Cualann Mountaineering Club.



Club Cualann members on Djouce, Wicklow Mountains.



## Irish Peaks guidebook

The collection of route descriptions for Mountaineering Ireland's guide to Ireland's 2,000ft+ mountains, *Irish Peaks*, is nearing completion. At this stage we are no longer looking for contributions of route descriptions for the peaks that will be included in this guide. The photographic competition has also finished and the winners have been

selected. The winning photographs will be published in forthcoming issues of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

Below, we present our sixth sample contribution, this time from Paul Collins (UCD Mountaineering Club), describing his favourite approach route to Tomies and Purple Mountains in the Reeks of Kerry.

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

#### Sample contribution No 6: Tomies and Purple Mountains, McGillicuddy's Reeks, Co Kerry

##### Names of mountains:

Tomies Mountain (*Na Tóimí*), McGillicuddy's Reeks, Co Kerry.  
Purple Mountain (*An Sliabh Corcra*), McGillicuddy's Reeks.

##### Heights:

Tomies Mtn: 735m (2,277ft); Purple Mtn: 832m (2,644ft).

##### Grid references:

Tomies Mtn: V 895 867; Purple Mtn: V 887 852

##### Ordnance Survey (OSi) Discovery Series map:

Sheet No 78 (OSi 1:50,000)

See also, OSi 1:25,000 McGillicuddy's Reeks

Harvey Map 1:30,000 McGillicuddy's Reeks

##### Introduction:

Purple and Tomies Mountains are located about 10km outside Killarney, on the eastern side of McGillicuddy's Reeks. The four mountains in this area – An Chathair, Tomies, Shehy and Purple – are separated from the rest of the Reeks by the Gap of Dunloe. The walk across Purple Mountain and Tomies Mountain and back through the Gap of Dunloe is one of the lesser known routes in the Reeks. While most head for Carrauntoohil and the other more popular or busier mountains, these two mountains in the eastern Reeks tend to be overlooked. Expect to see very few other walkers on your way along the ridge, even in the height of summer.

**Note:** There is some disagreement between maps as to which high point on the route is named Tomies. The latest edition of the OSi McGillicuddy's Reeks 1:25,000 Sheet marks Tomies as point 568m, and marks Tomies Mountain 735m (V 895 867) as An Chathair. All other maps name the point 735m (V 895 867) as Tomies Mountain. Future map editions may provide clarity.



Looking south-west from Purple Mountain over the Black Valley to the McGillicuddy's Reeks.



Purple Mountain, viewed from Glas Lough, McGillicuddy's Reeks, Co Kerry.

### Route description:

Approach from Killarney or Killorglin on the N72, turning south to cross the Beaufort Bridge east of Fossa and thereafter following the many signs for the Gap of Dunloe. The walk starts at the car park across the road from Kate Kearney's Cottage. From here, follow the road north for 600m until you reach a right turn onto a small dirt road (V 881 894). Follow the small road as it does a wide loop and begins to climb towards Tomies Mountain. At V 888 893, leave the small road and follow a deer fence up onto Tomies, keeping to the west of the fence. The rough track ends once you reach the end of the fence. From here it is advisable to follow a bearing as you set off on the scramble across the heather towards point 568m and Tomies beyond. At point 568m there is a broad flat top with two large cairns about 200m apart (1hr 50mins, 3.75km, 520m ascent). Here you get your first proper view down onto the Lakes of Killarney and you get to see the summit of Tomies.

From point 568m there is a well defined path across the wide col to the base of the climb up Tomies, which is steep in parts with the path coming and going as it crosses areas of large scree. Tomies Mountain, at 735m (2hrs 20mins, 4.55km, 720m ascent) is a much smaller summit than point 568m. There are great views in all directions and a circular wind-break for stopping for a cuppa.

From Tomies, continue south across the wide ridge to point 757m. Here the ridge divides. You head south-west along the pronounced ridge up onto Purple Mountain. At 832m, Purple Mountain (3hrs 10mins, 6.55km, 930m ascent) is the high point of the walk. It has a long narrow summit with several cairns. There is a circular wind-break, making it a good place for a short break, and it has great views in all directions. Looking north, you see the route you have taken. To the west you see the Gap of Dunloe and most of the McGillicuddy's Reeks (*Na Cruacha Dubha*). South, the Black Valley and the Upper Lake of Killarney. To the east, Lough Leane and Muckross Lake with Torc Mountain and Mangerton rising behind (but you need a clear day).

From Purple Mountain, continue south-west to point 793m (V 883 850). From here, follow the small track towards Glas Lough. The path descends steeply as you approach the small lake. At the lake, follow the water's edge until you reach the southern tip. Here, the path descends beside the stream flowing from the lake, taking you down to the head of the Gap, where you rejoin the road. From here, it is a 6km walk back through the Gap to the car park. The walk back to Kate Kearney's Cottage is easy and downhill through a scenic valley.

### Alternative:

One possible alternative would be to leave the main ridge at point 757m (V 894 858) and follow the lower ridge as it descends to Shehy Mountain. This alternative gives great views of the Lakes of Killarney and passes near O'Sullivan's Cascade, a waterfall well worth a visit. You descend from Shehy into Tomies Wood and follow forest roads back to the main road to the Gap of Dunloe. This would obviously not include Purple Mountain, which could be done separately from the highest point in the Gap.



### Total time, distance, ascent and type of terrain:

5 hours; 15km; 950m ascent.

*Terrain:* Good overall. The leg from the end of the deer fence to point 568m has no visible path. The ridge from Tomies to Purple Mountain has well-worn tracks, as does the leg from Purple Mountain to the head of the Gap. The road through the Gap is single-lane and safe for walking.

### Access advice and issues, if any:

No known access issues.

*Parking:* good.

### Contributed by:

Paul Collins, UCD Mountaineering Club





# Learn the ropes

Choose your ropes with care and replace regularly



## Dynamic?

Climbing ropes slow the falling climber by stretching. By doing so they reduce the forces on the climber and on their protection.

The continually increasing popularity and diversification of climbing has led to a broader selection of climbing ropes, each with its own characteristics. This choice undoubtedly has benefits but it can make it difficult to decipher what is on offer and how it relates to your climbing.

For instance, I have ropes for indoor, alpine, sport and traditional climbing, and I also

have short lengths for specific routes and walking. In addition, I have static ropes (non-stretchy) dedicated to abseiling or ascending.

To help you make your choice, here are some of the important characteristics of the different types of ropes and what they mean in terms of their possible uses.

## Diameter and weight

Ropes are categorised by diameter and weight:  
8.9-11 mm single rope  
(52-77 g/m)

8-9 mm half ropes  
(41-53 g/m)

7-8 mm twin ropes  
(37-42 g/m)

The thicker the rope, the heavier it is, the more durable it will be and the greater the friction created when it passes through a belay device, making it easier to hold a fall.

Unless you are a cutting-edge climber or want to reduce the weight you are carrying, don't worry too much about weight. You won't fail on a route because of the weight of rope behind you.

## Length

The 'standard' length of rope is 50m and, if you are buying one rope to do everything, it is probably a good length to go for. If you are 'sport' climbing, 60m or even 70m



Don't take your old ropes with you. With big-wall climbing, you rely on your ropes far more than at any other time. Here, Alun Richardson is seen jumaring on The Nose, El Capitan.



Rope labels carry a lot of useful information.

Rope diameter (mm)	Characteristics	Uses	Downsides
<b>Durable Single Ropes</b> 10.1-11mm	Can take abuse and, when combined with a thick sheath, will give the best sharp-edge protection.	Big walls, climbing walls, top-roping, working sport routes, extreme use.	Heavy and big.
<b>All-round Single Ropes</b> 9.5-10mm	Average diameter, not too light, nor too heavy.	Sport, trad, alpine, winter	None, unless you are climbing fast and light or big-wall climbing.
<b>Thin Single Ropes</b> 8.9-9.4mm	Lightweight and thin but not so durable.	Fast and light in the Alps, for on-sights and hard sport climbing at your limit.	More risk of rope cutting over an edge. Holding a fall is more difficult.
<b>Half Ropes</b> 8-9mm	Designed to be used together to limit rope drag and fall potential by clipping alternately into gear. Two strands to cut and longer abseils.	Rock, ice or mixed. Wandering traditional or multi-pitch routes that you may need to abseil from.	Extra weight and bulk of two ropes. More complex to use and belay with.
<b>Twin Ropes</b> 7-8mm (both must be clipped into each krab)	Lighter and less bulky than half ropes. You must clip both strands through each piece of protection.	Non-wandering ice and rock climbs where abseiling is needed.	More rope drag than with half ropes. Easier to cut over an edge.



will be more useful for lowering off. 50m is fine for alpine climbing, but a lightweight 60m may be better. A pair of 60m half-ropes is best for traditional rock and ice climbing. A short 30m 'walker's' rope is carried to overcome short rocky steps in descent.

### Dry coating

'Dry-treated' ropes are better because wet ropes are less dynamic, abrade more easily, stretch more and, when frozen, are up to 40% weaker. Make sure the dry treatment is in the core as well as the sheath.



### Kink-free ropes: Uncoil as per instructions!

To keep ropes kink-free, avoid abseiling on a new rope until the sheath and core have settled. Kinks can be removed by running the rope through your hands several times, by hanging it down a cliff or by 'daisy chaining' it.

### Fall ratings

All ropes pass a UIAA prescribed minimum of five laboratory-simulated falls (or 12 for twin ropes). A higher number may indicate a more durable rope but, because the drop test does not simulate real falls, do not worry about the published number of falls a rope can withstand. It is more important to look at 'Impact Force.'

### Impact Force (IF)

Impact Force, or IF, is the force transmitted to the protection, climber and belayer when the rope arrests a fall. A rope with a higher IF is more durable, but a rope with a lower IF will stretch more in a fall, reducing the force transmitted to the runners, which is better for traditional climbing. Thinner ropes generally have a lower IF and are easier to clip into karabiners when lead climbing.

### Sheath slippage

In some ropes the outer sheath can move over the inner fibres. Zero sheath slippage makes a more durable rope but stiffer and less soft to handle. High sheath slippage makes a rope less durable but decreases the likelihood of it cutting over a sharp edge.

### How long does a rope last?

A well looked after climbing



When you are in mid-flight, you want to be sure your rope is in good condition! Trevor Massiah takes a fall.

rope cannot break in a leader fall. It will only ever break if loaded over an edge or if exposed to chemicals such as acids.

The problem is that a rope's ability to hold a leader fall over a sharp edge will reduce as it ages and after many small falls. Therefore, as ropes get older or if they have taken lots of falls, reduce their exposure to sharp edges.

Check your rope visually

before each and every use, and wash it regularly – run it through your hands as you coil and uncoil it, checking it for damage and deformities. Acids and bleaches damage nylon rope irreparably, yet petrol, diesel and oil have minimal effect at normal temperatures.

Ultimately, if you don't trust a rope, relegate it to top and bottom roping or abseiling, where the IF is less ■



Take your time coiling your rope. Coiling in a circle introduces kinks, so use lap coiling instead.



When you're dangling in a crevasse...that is not the time to wonder if you should have bought a new rope.



# In Cúchulainn's footsteps

Two walkers traverse the Slieve Foye ridge in the Cooleys.

**DON BALDWIN** devises a moderate 25-kilometre hike through the Cooleys in County Louth which he proposes be called 'The Cúchulainn Way' (see map, p31)

**L**ocated on a quietly secluded peninsula in the northeast of County Louth with the shimmering backdrop of Carlingford Lough, the Cooley Mountains have long been a jewel in this land of legends. Well-trodden tracks attest to the popularity of these hills with generations of hillwalkers. The benign spirits of those who etched these paths long before us offer encouragement to lonely trekkers on winter days when the restless wind seems to whisper 'Cúchulainn' – a name synonymous with these mountains.

Cúchulainn was the legendary warrior who single-handedly thwarted Queen Maeve's Connaught army, until the warriors of Ulster finally came to his aid. This is recorded in the ancient epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge* – The Cattle Raid of Cooley – Queen Maeve's ultimate

ambition being the seizure of the famed Brown Bull of Cooley.

## THE CÚCHULAINN WAY

The walk which I will describe, and which I will call the *Cúchulainn Way* in honour of the famed warrior, begins at grid reference J 160 105 on the Discovery Series Sheet 36, where a sign for the Tain Way points towards an inviting lane leading immediately up into the heart of the hills.

Way-marked posts lure the walker on from here, over a gurgling stream to a sheep-manicured grass track which ascends gently towards the southeast foot of Slieve Foye (Irish: *Sliabh Feá*, 'mountain of rushes'), the highest point in the Cooley range, standing proudly at 589m. Locally, the name is understood as '*Sliabh Fathaigh*,' mountain of the giant, which accounts for the anglicised form, 'Foye.'

The main track itself continues down into the picturesque village of Carlingford, an alternative starting point.

On the saddle directly before Slieve Foye is a more subtle way-marked trail. This beckons the walker on up into an obvious cleft in the mountain, before the track itself melds into the folds of the hill. A steady climb of moderate effort then brings the hillwalker up well-worn tracks that veer to the right. The established trail is clearly indicated here by way-marked posts, which guide the walker through impressive formations of rare, gabbro rock.

On a good day, the trig point on Slieve Foye is quite visible above in the distance as it draws the walker



Trig point on Slieve Foye.



ever onwards. On overcast days, the hillwalker must be content with the knowledge that a one-hour hike will take him or her easily to the top, from where a gently descending ridge stretches out into the distance, allowing the mountaineer to consume air and views in equal abundance.

Although not a ridge in the classic sense of some of the knife-edge sections on Carrauntoohil, the Slieve Foye ridge is more expansive in the space it affords the walker, as he or she meanders through a landscape strewn with huge sentinels of stone. These sentinels evoke an image straight out of an Emily Brontë novel, complete with raucous ravens patrolling the skies above.

Here, again, the most useful route tends to veer to the right as it snakes off across the ridge. The route is conveniently marked by what were small luminous squares, affixed strategically to boulders, but which are now painted over with grey paint, so as not to offend anybody's sensibilities.

Care is needed on days of poor visibility. A compass bearing will keep the Rambler well clear of the few nasty drop-offs on the right of the mountain as he heads northwest across the ridge to the aptly named Eagle's Rock. From here, there are stunning views of the traversed ridge, the Mourne Mountains and Carlingford Lough, as it stretches out towards the Irish Sea.

## CARLINGFORD LOUGH HISTORY

The entrance to the lough is guarded by the Haulbowline Lighthouse, located near the site of the worst maritime disaster ever to occur in the Louth-Down area. This was the loss of the *Connemara* and the *Retriever*, on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1916, when, due to stormy weather, the two ships collided with each other at the entrance to the lough. Ninety-four souls were lost and the only survivor was James Boyle, the fourteen-year-old cabin boy of the *Retriever*.

Carlingford, or '*Cairlinn Fiord*,' meaning 'steep-sided fiord,' is a name which comes from the Norse. There was a massive naval battle here in 851 between the Norse and the Danes for control of the emerging strongholds of '*Linn Duachill*' (Anagassan) and '*Dubh Linn*' (Dublin), strategically located on the Irish east coast.

The battle raged for three days and three nights before the Danes, under their leader Gorm, finally won the day, forcing the Norse leaders Jargno and Lain and all their forces from the lands of Louth.

Carlingford Lough is now thankfully home to more peaceful pursuits, as is evident by the many sailing craft which cruise these sheltered waters, keeping alive the maritime skills inadvertently passed down by our Viking ancestors.

## FROM WHITE BOG TO WINDY GAP

Leaving our lofty perch on Eagle's Rock, we strike out west down towards the brackish pools, which indicate the spongy morass of the White Bog. Beyond the bog is an obvious track which ascends the volcanic outcrop of Raven's Rock, from which the trail quickly descends and then climbs once more, up onto the Fox's Rock. From here, the skeletal remains of a



Carlingford Lough from Slieve Foye with Slieve Donard in the distance.

timber fence guide the Rambler to some degree down through the steep terrain, where due care and diligence is most certainly required. The trail finally peters out at the Windy Gap and the Long Woman's Grave, where a tombstone eloquently elaborates on this poor woman's demise.

## UP TO THE MAST

Continuing northwest from the Windy Gap, bearing left at the fork in the road, the walker follows in the footsteps of Queen Maeve's army as the road gently descends down and around Clermont Pass Bridge.

From here, a narrow tarmac road swings up to the left and winds its way on up to The Mast, where there is a telecommunications aerial. Historically known as the Cadger's Pad, this steadily rising boreen was used by the herring sellers of Omeath over a hundred years ago to transport creels of fish on their hardy donkeys to markets further afield.

Standing at a deceptive height of 508m (1,666ft) and topped with its distinctive communications mast, Black Mountain gives commanding views over the surrounding lands. In particular, the brooding bulk of Slieve Gullion is visible to the northwest. This is



Plaque at the Long Woman's Grave.



The track from the Mast out towards Carnavaddy.

known as one of the two most enchanted mountains in Ireland, Benbulbin [Co Sligo] being the other.

## HOW CÚCHULAINN GOT HIS NAME

Slieve Gullion has long been steeped in Celtic folklore. The *Calliagh Berras* or 'Witches Lake' at its summit is where the great Irish hero Finn McCool of the Fianna was magically transformed into a withered old man after plunging into its waters. This was all because of the jealousy of Miluchradh of the Sidhe, as Finn had given his love to her sister Áine.

It was also from Slieve Gullion that Cúchulainn received his name. Gullion is a name that comes from the Irish '*Culann*,' which refers to the Celtic chieftain who lived on this mountain and whose slaving hound suffered that most infamous death at the young Setanta's hands, Setanta having been Cúchulainn's childhood name. The hound destroyed, Setanta then offered to take its place until a

replacement could be found, hence Setanta's new name, '*Cú Chulainn*,' or Culann's Hound.

## CARNAVADDY

Tucked inconspicuously between Slieve Gullion and the Cooley Range is Killeen Hill, where the causal episode of *The Fate of the Sons of Tuireann* occurred, specifically the murder of Cian, father of Lú (Louth), King of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Also known in Celtic legend as *The First Sorrow of Irish Story-telling*, this fabulous tale recounts the trials and adventures of the three sons of Tuireann as they travelled the western world in search of fabled treasures in order to pay the heavy blood fine imposed upon them by Lú.

Passing the unexplored sepulchral chamber of Clermont Cairn on the right, a rugged path sets off across rolling hills guided by painted yellow boulders strategically placed for the annual '*Poc Fada*' contest. This national hurling competition re-enacts the young Cúchulainn's trek across these hills, hurling to amuse away the miles.

Perched atop the highest point of this undulating range at 475m is Carnavaddy (Irish: *Carn an Mhadaidh*, 'cairn of the dog'), the reputed burial place of Finn's favourite mastiff, Bran. The hollowed-out cairn offers the hillwalker a welcome respite on these windblown heights.

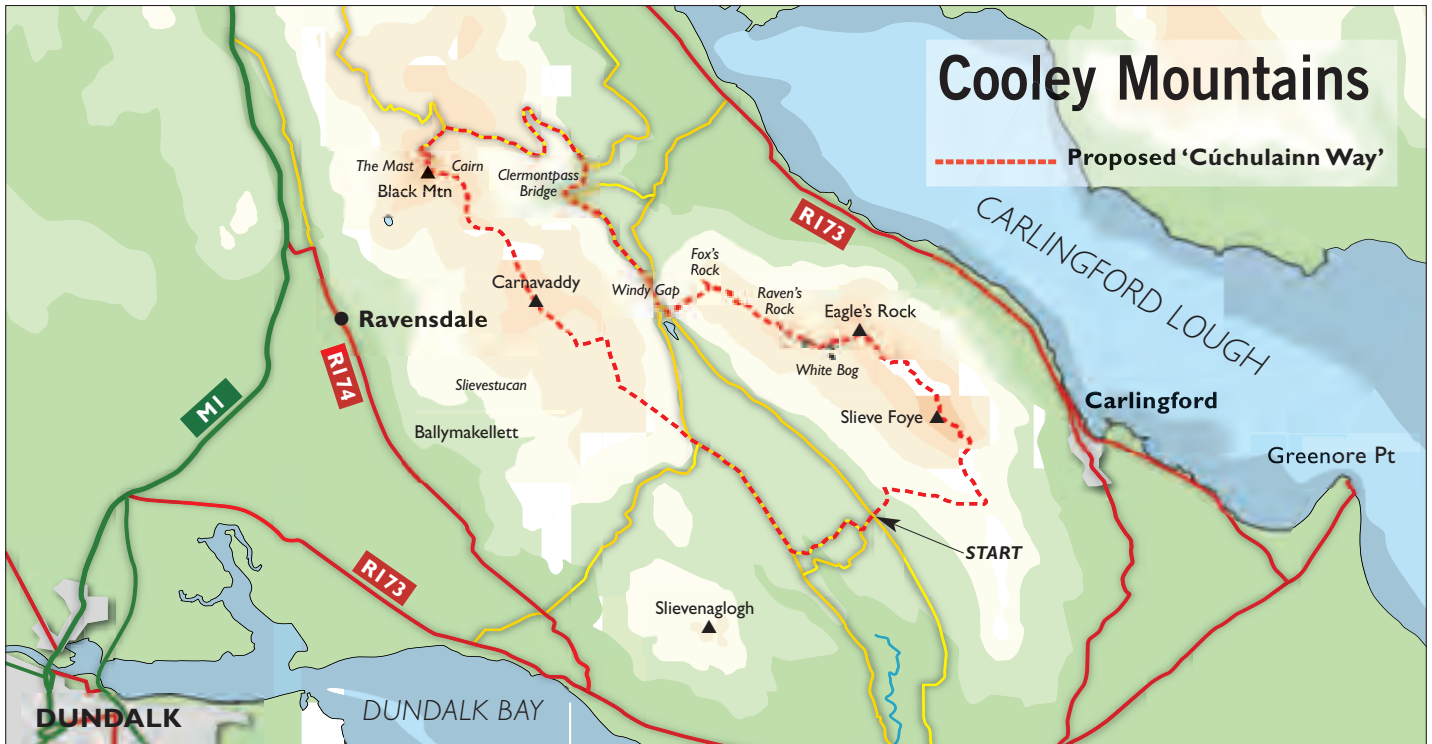
## DUNDALK BAY

To the south lies the expanse of Dundalk Bay, where Cúchulainn unwittingly slew his only son, Conlaoch, in single combat on the shores of Baile Strand (Seatown, Dundalk). Inconsolable with grief, Cúchulainn battled the waves for three days and three nights until he eventually collapsed with exhaustion. This was all as a result of the treachery of



Carnavaddy summit. (Note yellow 'Poc Fada' markers).





Conlaoch's mother Aoife, Cúchulainn's spurned lover.

Dundalk Bay was also the site of a great Irish naval victory over the Vikings, when Muirchertach, King of Aileach, captured the entire Norse fleet in 929. A few years later, Cellachan, King of Munster, was also rescued from the Vikings here, after a decisive naval battle in the bay.

Continuing southeast, the trail descends into scattered bogland where a discerning eye can detect several narrow pallet-type footbridges which assist the traveller to traverse the marshy ground.

Eventually the trail comes to a modern forest fence and a possible way-marked escape route down Slievestucan to The Lumpers Pub at Ballymakellett.

At this point the Cúchulainn Way continues along the track to the left, running parallel with the forest fence and slightly ascending until the well-worn path strikes off at a right angle. From here, the path stretches off across a peaty land draped with gorse and heather, offering ideal habitat for mountain hares and meadow pipits, amongst other wildlife, while hungry tadpoles make good use of the sparsely dotted pools.

Directly ahead and isolated in the distance is the solitary mass of Slievenaglogh where, on 27<sup>th</sup>

September 1941, three men of the Royal Air Force's Ferry Command lost their lives when their Hudson AE577 aircraft crashed into the side of the mountain in dense fog. The men's remains were taken to Dundalk Army Barracks under a full military honour guard by the local Irish garrison. The crew consisted of Royal Canadian Air Force pilot, Louis R Dubuc, aged 34; navigator, Frederick J Goodwin, aged 20; and radio operator Samuel K Raymond, aged 22. A small, poignant memorial stone marks the site of the crash on the flanks of this quiet mountain.

After a one-kilometre trek, a clearly designated way-marked trail strikes off to the left and, after a 1½-kilometre descent, the trail alights back onto a substantial road.

From here, simply follow the Tain Way signs back along the main road for a short distance until you slip onto a more serene back road. This bears off to the left, where the Tain Way signs lead you all the way back to your starting position.

## IN SUMMARY....

Overall, the Cúchulainn Way is a moderate hike, with a few strenuous sections. The walk takes approximately eight and a half hours at a reasonable pace, a time which includes stops and is by no means a record. The distance covered is roughly 25 kilometres as the crow flies, but then, what do crows know about climbing mountains?

I devised the Cúchulainn Way to take a route through the very heart of the Cooley Hills, as opposed to the Tain Way, which in my experience tends to skirt the mountains and involves a great deal of road work, no criticism intended.

Completing this walk is a challenge, or at least I thought it was, albeit a very enjoyable one. Naming this particular walk after Cúchulainn seems wholly appropriate, as his presence is forever fused into the Cooley Hills, his spirit still whispered on the wind ■



## THE AUTHOR

Don Baldwin started mountaineering over thirty years ago in the Cooley and Wicklow Mountains with the Irish Defence Forces, and climbed in the mountains of South Lebanon where he served with the UN. He has been involved in mountaineering ever since and has completed several courses at Tollymore, including the Walking Group Leader scheme.

## Footnote

The Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering will be based in Ravensdale, north of Dundalk (see map, above) from 19-21 October (see article, page 7).



Statue of the Brown Bull of Cooley.

# Nephin Beg Wilderness

Photograph: BILL MURPHY

## BILL MURPHY announces Ireland's first wilderness area

*"To those devoid of imagination, a blank space on a map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part"* – Aldo Leopold

In 2010, Coillte and the National Parks and Wildlife Service began to explore the concept of wilderness in Ireland. They examined the Nephin Beg forest and the adjacent national park lands as a potential wilderness area.

The project team defined wilderness as an extensive wild landscape that protects and enhances nature conservation and provides opportunities for primitive recreation. They then set out a series of tests that could be applied objectively to any landscape to test for these qualities.

The Nephin Beg range was found to exhibit sufficient of these characteristics to have the potential to be a wilderness, following a conversion programme. Coillte designated the area a *candidate wilderness*. A conversion programme, when implemented, will see the forest and large sections of Ballycroy National Park develop the characteristics of a fully functional wild landscape.

**IN MANY COUNTRIES WILDERNESS IS REGARDED AS A HUMAN NEED – ON A PAR WITH THE ARTS, BUILT HERITAGE AND MUSIC.**



## WILDERNESS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Wilderness is a challenging and often ambiguous word in the English language. For centuries, it defined a place apart, a dangerous place, although often a place of redemption or re-creation. It was only in the early half of the twentieth century that the value of wilderness began to be recognised as an important component of modern society and a key part of man's connection with the natural world. Wilderness is where man can understand his place in ecology and where humanity can exercise humility in its relationship with the natural world.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century American philosopher Henry David Thoreau began this change in our understanding of wilderness with his famous phrase: *"In wildness is the preservation of the world."*

Thoreau was not arguing for a return to a primitive life but that society needed wild places as a balance to the modern world. He saw wilderness as places where the human spirit could be re-created.

Since Thoreau, wilderness has sparked the imagination of other thinkers and naturalists, ultimately leading to the creation of the National Wilderness System in the United States in 1964. Other developed countries followed suit and set aside areas as wilderness, and now in many western countries wilderness is regarded as a human need – on a par with the arts, built heritage and music.

The European Parliament recognised the value of wilderness in 2009 with the publication of a landmark report which calls on member states to set aside areas as wilderness. Wilderness is now an important part of the Natura 2000 programme, and organisations such as Pan Parks ([www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)) and Wild Europe ([www.wildeurope.org](http://www.wildeurope.org)) are at the forefront of a drive to set aside 1,000,000 hectares of wild land in Europe by 2020. ►



### THE AUTHOR

Bill Murphy is the Head of Recreation, Environment and Public Goods with Coillte and project manager for the Wilderness Mayo project. He is a professional forester with a Master's degree in forest recreation from University College Dublin, and is a member of Mountain Meitheal.







Owenduff River and Bog, Ballycroy National Park. This is one of the largest intact and active blanket bogs remaining in Europe.

Photograph: RICHARD CREAGH

In an increasingly developed Europe, wild places have never been more needed. Wilderness offers people an opportunity to step out of their modern lives into a wild environment where they can challenge themselves and experience the natural world on its terms.

## WILD NEPHINS

In 1938, the naturalist Robert Lloyd Praeger described the area around the Nephin Beg range in Mayo as the “loneliest place in Ireland,” and yet he described it as “not depressing but inspiring. You are thrown at the same time back upon yourself and forward against the mystery and majesty of nature.”

In this observation Praeger mirrored the contemporaneous thinking of the founders of the US Wilderness Society (Bob Marshall, Benton MacKaye, Aldo Leopold) who were concerned that the relentless development of wild lands (for tourism, energy and logging) would eventually lead to a loss of the very things that people sought from outdoor recreation – solitude and challenge and a real connection to nature.

Praeger recognised the uniqueness of the Nephin Beg range in the Irish landscape and in so doing he, too, briefly outlined the benefits of wilderness and in particular its importance as a place apart that could inspire and uplift the human spirit.

With the rapid development of infrastructure in Ireland over the last ten to twenty years, this part of Mayo is one of the few places in Ireland that offers the unique opportunity to set aside a landscape of scale to be shaped by wild processes free from human influence. The wilderness project is an ambitious and innovative one that aims to set aside almost 9,000 hectares of forest and national park lands as a wilderness area that will provide challenging and primitive recreation experiences, protect a unique landscape and enhance nature conservation for the enjoyment of future generations.

## THE NEPHIN BEG FOREST AND BALLYCROY NATIONAL PARK

The Nephin Beg area is dominated by Atlantic blanket bog on the western side of the range and an extensive area of forest dotted with open bog and a myriad of lakes and rivers on the eastern side. Nephin Beg, Corslieve and Slieve Carr dominate the central spine of the area.

The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a very difficult time economically for this part of the west of Ireland. Jobs were at a premium and any opportunity that brought the potential of sustainable jobs was grabbed with both hands. In the 1940s, the then Forestry Division took over part of the Borrischoole estate and began to experiment with forests on western peatland soils. During the 1950s and ‘60s, 4,600 hectares were acquired and planted by the Forest Service, giving much-needed employment but also creating the vast landscape of forest, bog and lakes now under consideration. In the last two decades the state also acquired approximately 11,000 hectares to create Ballycroy National Park, bringing almost 16,000 hectares into public ownership.

## HUMAN IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE

The team’s archaeologist failed to reveal any significant or long-term human occupation across this mountain range in recorded human history. The Bangor Trail is the most significant evidence of human activity (other than forest activities) in the landscape. While the forest undoubtedly changed the nature of the eastern side of the mountains, it also created a “wilder” and often more diverse landscape. Over 24% of the forest area is currently designated for biodiversity, with some excellent examples of pristine bog and upland wet heath along with maturing woodland that is creating new habitats for a variety of animals and birds.

## DEFINING WILDERNESS

Some may argue that wilderness is a North American concept and one that does not fit into the Irish landscape or psyche. The project team met this challenge by setting out a definition for an Irish

Photograph: RICHARD CREAGH





Glennamong reflected in a bog pool, Ballycroy National Park.

wilderness that would be rigorous, objective, culturally connected, meet scrutiny from an international perspective and be repeatable and applicable in other candidate landscapes.

The definition, in summary, sets out that a wilderness should be *wild or perceived wild landscape of scale, capable of providing challenging and primitive recreation, while protecting and enhancing nature conservation and biodiversity.*

A review of international law suggested that, on a size basis, the core of any wilderness needed to be a minimum of 2,000 hectares (or 5,000 acres) with an adjacent landscape that although not primitive or fully wild could act as a buffer to the core area.

So, how do you decide if a landscape is wild? A key element of our definition is that the landscape must be a wild landscape – which is not the same as a natural landscape. Current thinking on wildness versus naturalness suggests that there are very few truly natural areas globally, with intact ecosystems that are untouched by human actions. However, man by his actions can allow landscapes to be wild – what is now termed “free/self willed.” We adopted this position.

## MEASURING PRIMITIVE RECREATION

To assess wildness, our landscape architects (Cregan and Associates) developed a set of six objective criteria that were applied to over eighty locations across the area. This approach rated each location on its “wildness,” taking into account the landscape integrity and quality (positive) and the presence of human artefacts (negative) – roads, power-lines, houses, etc – and human activities (negative) such as forest harvesting, turf cutting, etc.

An aggregate score for each location allowed the spot to be rated wild or not. These points were then plotted onto a mapping system to give a composite map of the land that could be regarded as wild.

An important consideration in our definition was

## THE PROJECT AIMS TO CREATE A WILDERNESS THAT WILL PROVIDE CHALLENGING AND PRIMITIVE RECREATION EXPERIENCES AND PROTECT A UNIQUE LANDSCAPE.

the need to allow human interaction, i.e. to provide an opportunity to experience primitive or challenging recreation. We needed to be able to assess this in an objective fashion. Using a North American model called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, it is possible to use roads, houses and topography to divide a landscape into landscape zones that range from urban to primitive. With this approach, we found that in the forest alone there were 2,870 hectares of potentially primitive and semi-

Photograph: BILL MURPHY



Remote camp sites and shelters (such as this one built by Mountain Meitheal near Lough Avoher on the Bangor Trail) will encourage but manage overnight trips into the core of the wilderness.



Sunset from Corranabinnia, looking west towards Achill and the Mullet peninsula.

Photograph: RICHARD CREAGH

primitive landscapes that could provide primitive and challenging recreation. Much of the national park lands also exhibited this quality.

### NATURE CONSERVATION VALUES

To assess the nature conservation value of the area, we took national designations such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and combined them with ecological assessments of the forest area. With over 24% of the forest currently designated for biodiversity management and additional land suitable for restoration, the forest and the adjacent lands exhibited a high value for protecting nature.

The project presents real opportunities to increase nature conservation values, not only in the existing forest but also in the area of adjacent national park. The nature conservation element will aim to develop a matrix of forest, bogland and other habitats that have the potential to sustain their existence without human intervention.

Over the next fifteen years, the process of conversion to a wilderness area will focus on opening vistas onto the mountainous terrain and lakes, improving the boundaries between forest and adjacent open land, and transforming areas for bog and riparian zone restoration. Through selective harvesting, the natural regeneration of the forest and the development of “old growth” naturalised forests will be encouraged. Rhododendron control will be a key element in the southern part of the forest.

### CHALLENGING WILDERNESS RECREATION

The primitive and semi-primitive zones will encompass some 6,870 hectares of forest, mountain, lake and bog. They will offer visitors an unique opportunity in Ireland to experience a two to three-day backpack or long day-hikes in remote and

challenging country. Backpackers will be able to experience a landscape free of vehicle traffic, houses, power-lines and, at night, light pollution.

To enhance this experience, it is proposed to re-engineer the forest roads as trails. New routes and trails will be laid out to minimise environmental impact. These trails will have limited way-marking to provide an authentic recreation experience. It is proposed to construct a number of designated overnight campsites with the provision of primitive shelters, tent platforms, etc.

### SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITY

The project team is conducting a consultation with local and other stakeholders as part of the programme. This wilderness project provides an opportunity for Co Mayo to build on the scale and uniqueness of its landscape. It will be able to offer a different but exciting tourism product that will attract visitors and strengthen Mayo’s status as Ireland’s adventure tourism destination.

### MANAGEMENT AND TIMESCALE

The proposed conversion of the forest to a full wilderness is expected to take fifteen years. In that time, selected areas will be converted to wild woodlands, boglands and riparian zones. Recreation facilities will be developed on a phased basis with the provision of designated camping in the core area and visitor facilities in the developed area a priority. Roads will be removed or re-engineered to trails as the zone moves to a “no-management regime.” Once the conversion is complete, the management of the area will focus on managing human activities to ensure the protection of the environment and the recreation experience.

➤ For further details, contact Bill Murphy, project manager, at [william.murphy@coillte.ie](mailto:william.murphy@coillte.ie) ■





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The team on the summit of Scafell Pike (978m), England's highest peak. Mountaineering Ireland Board Member Susan Jago (Irish Ramblers Club) is second from left, while the author, Derek Tracy, is fourth from left.



# Success on Three Peaks

**DEREK TRACY** and friends tackle Britain's highest peaks.

**T**he challenge we set ourselves this year involved climbing the highest peaks in Scotland (Ben Nevis, 1,345m), England (Scafell Pike, 978m) and Wales (Snowdon, 1,085m). Get the weather and the company right and the Three Peaks Challenge will give you memories that may last until your rocking chair days!

The ultra-challenge requires completion of ascents of each of the three peaks within 24 hours and typically relies on taking the shortest routes up and down each mountain, and climbing and driving at night. However, we made a six-day plan that included horseshoe routes and a day of travelling between each climb.

Weather for the two weeks prior to departure was abysmal and we came back home to rain. However, for the whole six days, we had bright sunshine and clear blue skies.

We set out on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Using the Stena Line ferry, we left Belfast at 11:30am, arriving in Cairnryan two and a half hours later. A few hours later, Glasgow was behind us and we were driving

through beautiful valleys and along the western side of Loch Lomond. At 7:00pm, we checked into Glengyle House, the bed and breakfast accommodation we had booked in the shadow of Ben Nevis. By 8:30pm we had completed a recce of our two optional starting points and were having pre-adventure celebratory pints in the local hotel.

## BEN NEVIS

The ever-challenging Ben Nevis (1,345m) had two metres of snow on its summit and, on foot of local advice, we decided to take the Tourist Track the following day and not the Carn Mor Dearg Horseshoe, as planned.

Starting at the Achintee car park, we began our long, slow trek up Ben Nevis. It was a beautiful day and the views were simply stunning from start to finish. On reaching Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe (at about 700m and also known as the 'Halfway Lough') we took a few minutes to take in the views. There wasn't a single cloud in the sky and visibility was only restricted by each individual's eyesight.



With an envious glance at the rejected optional track for the horseshoe route, we turned right, away from the lough, and continued upwards toward the summit.

At about 1,000m we encountered snow...and thereafter every metre gained was done so with considerable effort. The soft, deep snow blurred the track and slowed progress significantly.

On reaching Five Finger Gully, the very real dangers of Ben Nevis became abundantly clear. This is an area with sheer drops on both sides and where many fatalities have occurred. We had a real sense that up to a metre of snow could be overhanging the edges and would collapse if we stood on it.

Winding to the left, we made our way up several short rises to the observatory ruins and trig point on the summit. From there, the views took in much of the Highlands and, to the northeast, the Carn Mor Dearg arête.

Looking at the snow-capped arête, it was obvious that the local advice had been sound and the horseshoe would have been a very dangerous route to take on the day. On the deep snow carpeting the top of Britain's highest mountain, with panoramic views to die for and without a cloud in the sky, or a puff of wind to upset us, we celebrated our victory by eating our packed lunches before beginning the long trek back down to Fort William.

## SCAFELL PIKE

The next day, we made our way down from Fort William to the Lake District. The roads were excellent and the biggest challenge was not exceeding the speed limit.

We stayed in the Eskdale Valley, at Stanley House in Boot, which was ideally located with local pubs, restaurants and the hike starting point within walking distance. Local attractions included a privately-owned steam train with tracks linking a number of local villages.

At 978m, Scafell Pike was the smallest of the three mountains in our challenge. However, beginning at Boot and taking in a number of other peaks, we managed to achieve a total ascent in excess of 1400m.

With perfect hiking conditions, we set out at 9:30am and decided to take in the lesser-visited Scafell as part of an 18.5km horseshoe. The terrain for the first 6km or so was soft, slowly undulating and sometimes boggy. Once we reached Horn Crag, the terrain changed to well-rooted boulders and rock. On Slight Side, the views of the countryside opened up and we caught our first sighting of Scafell and its slightly taller sister, Scafell Pike.

The ridge of Long Green took us to the shelter at Scafell's cairn where we took a mini-celebratory break. From the cairn we could make out the tiny matchstick figures of people standing on the trig point of what appeared to be a tantalisingly close Scafell Pike.

A big knuckle of mountain with a sheer face sits tidily between the two sisters and, without ropes, the only safe way forward is by dropping down a steep gully into Foxes Tarn, circumnavigating the base of the knuckle and scrambling up an equally steep gully onto the ridge of Scafell Pike. Although the summit is only a 20-minute haul from the top of the gully, the previous 90 minutes of clambering and scrambling had taken its toll and the going was slow. The last



### THE AUTHOR

Derek Tracy, a former prison governor, worked in the criminal justice system for 35 years. His great escape was getting out into the hills and mountains. Although only a recent addition to the hillwalking community, he has completed the Maamturks Challenge, the Lug Challenge and a 36-day hike along the Camino de Santiago. He is President of the Irish Ramblers Club.



On summit of Ben Nevis, Scotland.



On Ben Nevis ridge. In the foreground are Ruth and Brendan Treacy who provided the photographs for this article.

thirty metres of the climb is over an explosion of loose rocks and boulders.

Shortly after 1:00pm, we reached the gigantic circular cairn of our second summit. Once more, under a cloudless sky, we thanked our lucky stars as we ate our lunch on a carpet of magnificent views.

Heading northeast to the col of Broad Crag, we took in the last views of the domed massif of Great Gable and its connected mountains before dropping south-east down a narrow gorge to the Esk River. Although the bulk of our climbing was finished, the long winding route home along the river offered amazing views of the surrounding hills, waterfalls and an old Roman bridge and roadway.

## SNOWDON

The next day's journey between the Lake District and Pen-y-pass was short enough to give us a half-day of rest and relaxation in the nearby, picturesque village of Betws-y-coed. The best possible place to stay is at the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel. Built in 1810 and a fifteen-minute walk from the starting point, the hotel is steeped in history and was used as the training headquarters for the first successful Everest expedition in 1953.

The hike over the Crib Goch ridge comes with serious health risk warnings. Edmund Hillary and his team trained on it and all the associated literature suggests it should not be attempted in poor conditions; a serious climb in winter, it is dangerous in high winds at any time of the year and it includes the knife-edged arête of Crib Goch. However, conditions were perfect, our spirits were high and we went for it. A short, steep 15-minute hike from the hotel and we were at the starting point at Pen-y-pass.

The Pyg track, a deceptive, beguiling, well-manicured pathway, led uphill towards a summit that looked like it might be Snowdon, but which was actually Crib Goch, the first summit en route.

A little over half an hour into the hike, the vista to the south opened up to reveal Llyn Llydaw (a reservoir), the lower lake, the Miners' Track and the mountain range that makes up the Snowdon Horseshoe. This is the point of choice and the wary hiker should continue on the Pyg track.

Abandoning caution, we scrambled upwards away from the Pyg track, via a steep trail that was more intuitive than actual. This somewhat scary scramble was a mere preamble to what lay ahead.

On reaching a top of sorts, we braced ourselves in preparation for tackling the infamous arête. The knife-edged arête stretched out like a series of hanging rope bridges with supporting rock towers or



Train on the way to Snowdon summit. The top of the Pyg Track comes up to join the railway line.

All photographs by: RUTH AND BRENDAN TREACY



## THE KNIFE-EDGED ARÊTE ON SNOWDON STRETCHED OUT LIKE A SERIES OF ROPE BRIDGES WITH SUPPORTING ROCK TOWERS OR PEAKS SHAPING THE ARCS.

peaks shaping the arcs. The left-hand side appeared safest, but who could say for sure. This is not a place for the faint-hearted and we held on with hands, knees, elbows, feet and any other parts of our body to gain a grip as we inched our way across the ridge. Tackling the supporting towers or peaks was also quite difficult.

Although the footing was solid, the drops were awesome and on each peak serious decisions had to be made. Do I stand on this footing or that one? Do I use this hand-hold or that one? And do I go around it clockwise or anti-clockwise?

On reaching the Bwlch Coch plateau, it looked like the worst part was over as the track ahead appeared stable and easy to follow. However, it led directly to another knife-edge arête which threads itself onto the trig point of Garnedd Ugain, the second highest mountain in Snowdonia.

From here, the going was easy and a wide rocky pathway led to the Snowdon railway track and from there to a tall standing stone, a marker for where the Pyg and Miners' tracks come up onto the ridge and on up to Snowdon's summit (1,085m).

Exhilarated, we reached the summit trig point, congratulated each other and headed for the café that is tastefully carved into the top of the mountain.

Wild, windswept, Garmin-toting, haversack-carrying hikers mixed with ice cream-toting children and well-dressed, handbag-carrying ladies in this strange environment. A purist complained that the invasion of city life robbed the mountain of its naturalness. I saw a guy in a wheelchair and thought 'Wow, this is fantastic, for both of us.'

The weather was too good to eat inside and we had our lunch outdoors on a warm concrete plinth under the big viewing windows of the café. A short while later, our itchy feet were raring to go again. We walked around the summit, taking in the view of a wider horseshoe that we hoped to come back to some day. Then, it was back to the standing stone that leads onto the Miners' Track.

Just before reaching the lower lake, the only accident of the trip occurred when one of the team lost his balance and took a nasty fall. Thankfully, the damage was limited and the cuts and grazes were manageable.

At 5:00pm, we were back at the hotel having a quick shower before departing for Holyhead and Dublin at the end of the sixth day of our challenge. The weather window we had enjoyed was already closing but we were well pleased with our success ■



From Snowdon peak, looking around the second half of the Snowdon Horseshoe to Y Lliwedd.

At Snowdon's trig point.





# Keeping healthy with cancer



Chris Avison at Annapurna Base Camp in November 2011.

## CHRIS AVISON is coping with cancer by continuing to climb.

**M**y involvement with mountains began early, encouraged by my family. Like so many, we went on camping and walking holidays in all kinds of weather. My high point from those days was reaching the top of Snowdon in north Wales with my brother and father during the summer holidays before starting secondary school in 1956.

Again, like many others, hiking and cycling continued through my teenage years and developed into rock climbing and mountaineering as the years passed. I am lucky enough to have climbed and trekked in many places around the world as well as spending most weekends variously climbing in the Peak District, in north Wales or, when I lived in England, on the southern sandstone outcrops.

In 1998, some years after my move to Ireland, I had

my first clash with what was euphemistically termed 'a health problem.' Some complicated kidney surgery had to be carried out and this affected my dorsal and abdominal muscles, putting me out of mountain action for about six months. Climbing became quite problematic, mainly due to an increasing lack of confidence in my agility, which this surgery had caused. However, a trekking trip in Patagonia the following year, along with regular hikes in Ireland and the Alps, continued to meet my need for enjoyment in the hills.

The human body is unique and we are all very different. Everyone reacts to and deals with things in their very own way, both physically and mentally. This article is based on my own experience of ill health as a layman, with no medical qualifications, which cannot be compared to that of others.



## THEY TOLD ME THAT CANCER PATIENTS HAVE TO STAY HEALTHY AND EXERCISE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

At the end of 2006, I had reached a significant age for men. Although I had no symptoms of any kind, my GP advised that the usual checks should be conducted for prostate cancer. Following a blood test and a physical examination, I was referred to an urologist for further precautionary investigations. Three biopsy procedures, involving hospitalisation and general anaesthetics, were carried out between 2007 and early 2009. Each time, with a huge sigh of relief, nothing untoward was found.

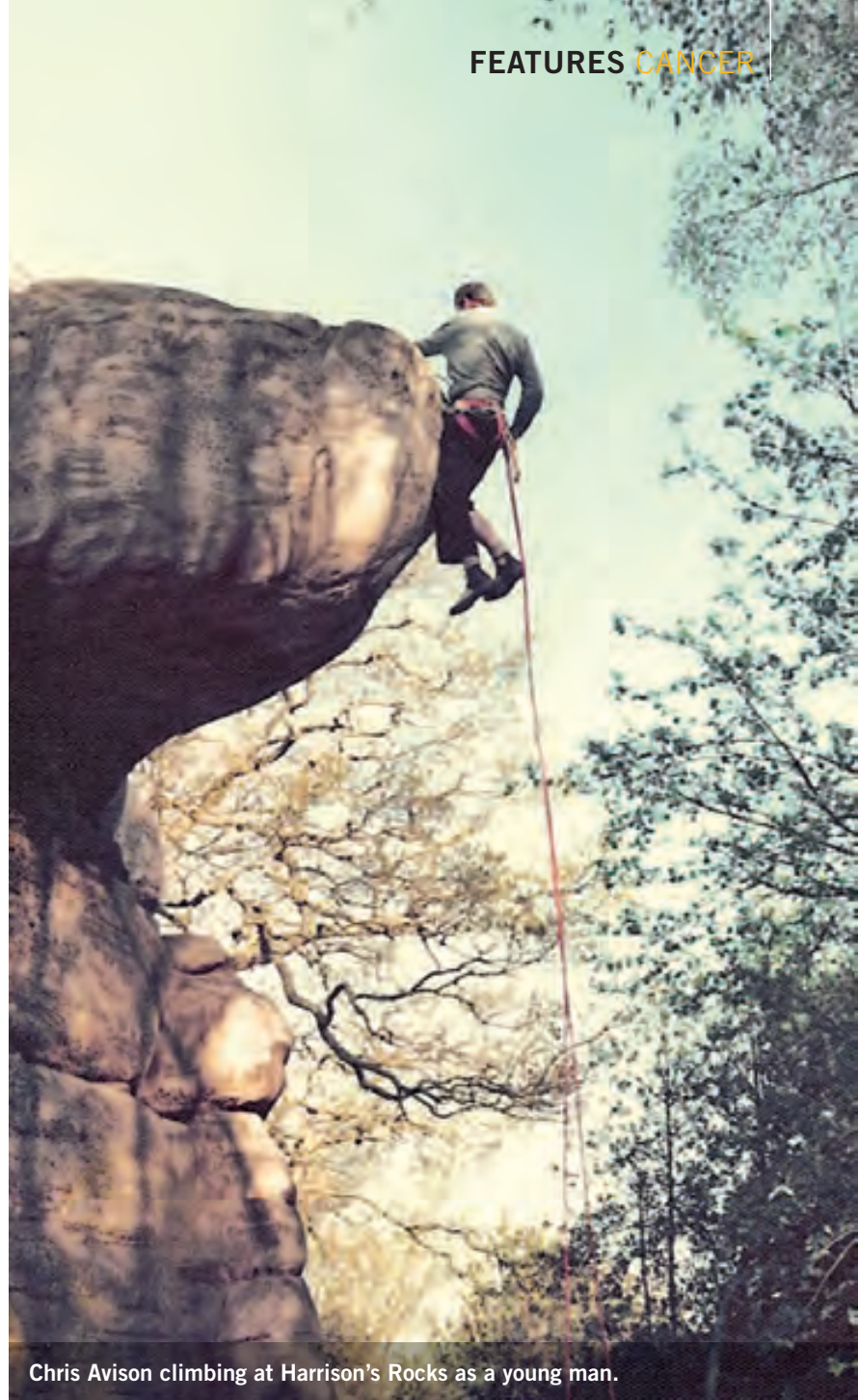
### SMALL TUMOUR

However, the urologist was still perturbed. After a fourth 'saturation' biopsy towards the end of 2009, he found a small but aggressive tumour. If you dig deep enough...?

I underwent radical surgery in early 2010 and this should have cleared things up. It did not. This was followed by nine weeks of radiotherapy with a similar non-result. Since then, there have been follow-up MRIs and bone scans with regular blood tests every three months.

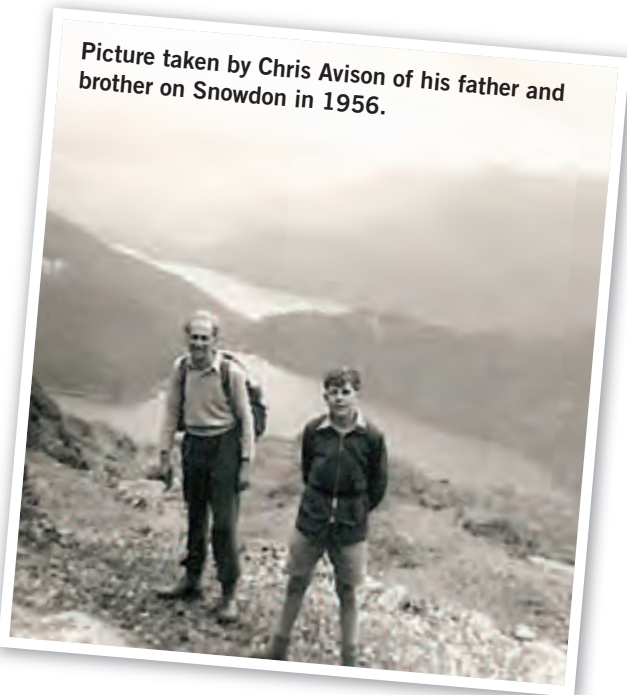
The urologist and radiotherapy oncologist have scratched their heads regarding future treatment plans. However, the one definite medical view they both share is that cancer patients have to stay healthy and exercise as much as possible.

I always try to walk everywhere that I can and keep active on holidays. Following my cancer surgery, I was up in Donegal walking. During the daily radiotherapy visits, I walked to and from the hospital, which was relaxing and good for my morale. I also got



Chris Avison climbing at Harrison's Rocks as a young man.

Picture taken by Chris Avison of his father and brother on Snowdon in 1956.



to know most of the bushes and open spaces in south Dublin. Prostate cancer treatment plays terrible tricks on the bladder!

As readers of the *Irish Mountain Log*, you are already aware of the benefits, both physical and mental, from days out in the hills. The Irish Cancer Society advocates physical activity to help reduce the risk of cancer, both for the first time and for recurrences. They suggest there are three ways that physical activity fights cancer:

**(a)** Being overweight is a big risk factor for cancer, especially if you hold your weight around the middle. Physical activity can help you lose weight and keep it off.

**(b)** When you are physically active, the cells in your body are more prepared to fight cancer. ▶



### THE AUTHOR

Chris Avison is a former editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* and a volunteer director of The Irish Nepalese Educational Trust ([www.inetireland.ie](http://www.inetireland.ie)).





Chris Avison in the Sella Dolomites, Italy.

**(c)** When you are active, food moves through your digestive system much more quickly so, if anything is harmful in what you eat or drink, you are exposed to it for a much shorter time.

Macmillan Cancer Support in the UK advocates that patients having cancer treatment should, if physically possible, try and do about two and a half hours of exercise every week. The charity's chief executive, Ciarán Devane from Dublin, says exercise can help people overcome the effects of cancer and its treatments, such as fatigue and weight gain.

"The evidence shows that physical exercise does not increase fatigue during treatment and can, in fact, boost energy after treatment," he says.

Professor Jane Maher, Chief Medical Officer at Macmillan Cancer Support, says "The advice that I would have previously given to one of my patients would have been to 'take it easy.' This has now changed significantly because of the recognition that, if physical exercise were a drug, it would be hitting the headlines."

However, on a note of caution, Martin Ledwick, Head Information Nurse at Cancer Research UK, says: "Anything that improves wellbeing and reduces treatment side-effects for cancer survivors has to be a good thing, but the evidence that exercise has a bearing on survival is not conclusive. It is important to remember that no two cancer patients are the same, so rehabilitation programmes that include

physical activity will need to be tailored to the individual."

The way cancer patients go about exercising will be different depending on the toll that the disease and the treatment have taken on their bodies, says Josie Gardiner, a personal trainer who co-wrote *The Breast Cancer Survivor's Fitness Plan*. Chemotherapy and radiation treatments are cumulative, meaning that the more treatments you have, the more fatigue you will feel. She adds: "You have to listen to your body. If you're totally fatigued, then give yourself permission to take a day off. But if you feel like you're only slightly or moderately fatigued, anything you do is better than nothing."

She warns that cancer patients should always consult their doctors before undergoing strenuous exercise.

## SEAN SWARNER'S EXPERIENCE

Sean Swarner was diagnosed with two different and unrelated forms of cancer, one at the age of thirteen, the other at the age of sixteen. Despite a prognosis of just weeks to live, Sean astounded his doctors and survived. Later, Swarner went on to climb Mount Everest with only partial use of his lungs and was the first cancer survivor to do so. Sean has since completed the Seven Summits, climbing the highest peaks on all the continents. He continues to defy the odds and test his endurance in different challenges, sharing his message of healing, hope and triumph with cancer patients worldwide. Founder of a non-profit organisation, the CancerClimber Association, he wrote the book *Keep Climbing* and he is a motivational speaker to corporations, universities and other organisations around the world.

In 2010, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland commissioned a report, *The Benefits of Mountaineering and Mountaineering Related Activities*, from the University of Sterling. It concluded that specialist research evidence on the direct

Chris Avison climbing at Willersley Castle, Crag, in England's Peak District.





benefits of mountaineering and rock climbing to physical health is limited. However, based on the known benefits of physical activity, the demands of mountain walking and climbing can have an impact on cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, metabolic, endocrine and immune systems. Put very simply, it confirms what we already know: activity in the mountains is good for you.

On my birthday in 1956, my father gave me Maurice Herzog's classic book, *Annapurna*. This was my first mountaineering book and an inspiration and encouragement for a lifelong hobby. While trekking in Nepal late last year, I bought a new reprint of the book in a small shop in Ghorepani. This edition had a new introduction by Joe Simpson, who says: "For me, it is quite simply the greatest mountaineering book ever written."

I do not entirely share Joe's view, although it really is an excellent read. However, I had just trekked up to Annapurna Base Camp, a place I was not too sure I would ever reach following my operation and subsequent treatment. For several days beforehand, we had weather as wet as a bad day in Wicklow. Up in the Annapurna Sanctuary, it was the classic mountain day of sunshine and sparkling frost under a clear blue sky, surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the world.

## SIXTY YEARS' MOUNTAINEERING

After nearly sixty years' activity in the mountains, a question a reader could possibly ask is what did a healthy lifestyle do for me? Of course, the answer is we do not choose our genes, but exercise and fresh air are also essential for a healthy heart and head too!

Maurice Herzog ends his book *Annapurna* with the words: "There are other Annapurnas in the lives of men," which is true both in the mountains and in one's own progress through life.

I have been lucky in my travels and some of the most enjoyable have been in Nepal. Although a very under-developed country, it has some of the best mountains in the world. The people are hard-working, cheerful and friendly. We can all take a leaf out of their book. Many Nepalese people base their lives on kharma, dharma and fatalism. Again, putting it very simply, in everyday Nepali life they tend to accept the situation they find themselves in and not necessarily be concerned about what it ought to be, what it might have been or what they would like it to be. In the West, we would probably call this making the best of a bad lot.

As soon as I finish this article, I am off to the Dolomites for some healthy mountain exercise – and there is a handy toilet at the top of Piz Boè at 3,152m! ■

### USEFUL LINKS

- The Irish Cancer Society [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)
- Macmillan Cancer Support [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- Cancer Research UK [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)
- Sean Swarner [www.seanswarner.com](http://www.seanswarner.com)



Chris Avison on Tory Island, Co Donegal, after cancer surgery in 2010.

Chris Avison shows a little Nepalese girl her photo, November 2011.





# A climbing exchange

Mountaineering Ireland and Club Alpin Belge organised exchange visits to Ireland and Belgium.

**DAMIEN O'SULLIVAN** reports.

Belgian climber Guillaume Lion climbs Midnight Lightning on The Prow, Fair Head, Co Antrim.

*An Irish climber, a Belgian climber and a donkey walked into a bar....*

Photographs: DAMIEN O'SULLIVAN



Ah, the Belgians, there they are." Huddled together outside the arrivals area of Dublin Airport, trying to avoid the rain...an airport rain, a rain that makes your passport vibrate with want of escape to fairer climes. Emigration rain, I call it. Team Belgium must have been having second thoughts about coming to Ireland to climb! "Bonjour. Hello. How's it goin'?"

Quick exchange of pleasantries before we shoved them into the waiting cars. Eight Belgian climbers and seven Irish.

We checked the weather. We checked again. Eventually we stumbled across a satisfactory forecast; bless their Norwegian optimism at [www.yr.no](http://www.yr.no). The meteorologists suggested that our best chance of dry weather lay in the northeast of the

country. We consulted Paul Swail who was in Donegal. 'Horizontal rain and sea-spray,' was the word from the west.

The decision was made. We reloaded the wagons and struck out northeast, to Fair Head in Antrim. Driving through torrential rain, wipers at full 'rally' speed, the car rocking in the gusts, my four Belgian passengers must have thought they were in for a rough week.

At Fair Head, the skies cleared. Séan McBride, the local farmer, confirmed for us that, as if by divine intervention, there had been no rain all day at Fair Head.

We made our way as quickly as possible to the western end of the crag, the Prow. We shared out the racks of gear, and set off.

"Any chance you giving me your nuts?" Séan O'Driscoll asked.

"They're the only ones I have," I replied. "You give





## ON FAIR HEAD, ROUTES WERE RATTLED OFF INCLUDING MANY OF THE CLASSIC E2s, E3s AND E4s. THE BELGIANS WERE CLIMBING LIKE LOCALS...



### THE AUTHOR

Damien O'Sullivan lives in Cork and helped set up the Cork Youth Climbing Club in 2010. He recently returned from a one-year sport-climbing trip to France and Spain. Enjoys all types of climbing which do not involve frostbite!

down the line of 'Primal Scream' gave les Belges an idea of what harder Fair Head climbing might entail.

*'Pas de prises, pas des trous, pas de fissure. Ou est les fissures pour les coinceurs? Pas de fissure, pas des coinceurs, pas de spits. C'est fou. Fou. Allez!'*

The day began promisingly enough – a half smile and a wink of sunshine across a crowded room of clouds. Routes were rattled off; many of the classic E2s, E3s and E4s were climbed.

*Les Belges* were climbing like locals, like they had done it before. Belgium might not be the first place that springs to mind when you think of climbing, but climb they do. A mixture of quality ragging, well-run indoor walls and a spirit of adventure have combined over the years to produce a number of high-performing climbers, including some of the members of our exchange group, Séan Villanueva O'Driscoll, Stephane Hansens and Siebe Vanhee. These guys were really keen to try the harder routes at Fair Head, but the weather was not facilitating. Cloud built and dropped, shrouding the crag. The dampness failed to dampen the enthusiasm, although damp, lichenous rock made for some gripping, total-body-tension climbing experiences.

On Tuesday, Norwegian optimism gave way to Irish reality. The weather was broken beyond repair up north. The forecast indicated that the weather might be better on the west coast, so we decided to decamp and make a break for Ailladie.

As the last of the tea was swilled, the wet tents packed and the bulging cars stuffed, the sun re-

me your balls and I'll give you my nuts."

"Keep the nuts. What would you want for a cam?"

Buffeted by a stiff but miraculously rain-free westerly wind, the afternoon blasted by. Les Belges climbed, the Irish climbed, the sun shone, hands were jammed, fingers were locked, nuts were wedged.

The sun sank away to the west, giving a beautiful sunset. Our international brigade retreated to the clochán [clachan] at the McBride farm. What an amazing place for the Belgians to stay on their first night in Ireland – amidst the ruins of a centuries-old settlement in such an amazing corner of the country.

### FAIR HEAD

Monday morning: eat that muesli, drink that tea, pass the jam! Come on, let's go climbing. Abseiling



Participants in the 2012 Irish Belgian Youth Climbing Exchange at Fair Head.





Daniel Flynn enjoys his first multi-pitch lead at Freyr quarry, Belgium.

appeared. This reappearance inspired Paul Swail to suggest we try a bit of bouldering at Murlough Bay, after all. It turned out to be an excellent day. Lots of bouldering, lots of fun and even a bit of swimming – a very, very effective cool down.

Tuesday's victuals came courtesy of Morton's fish and chips shop in Ballycastle, a deep-fried cultural experience. It seems to be a source of Belgian national annoyance that chips are known as French fries in many parts of the world.

"They are not French fries, they are frites, Belgian frites! We invented them, not the French," I was admonished.

## INTO THE WEST

We headed west, buffeted by head-winds and driving rain. Arriving at Ailladie, the skies cleared, the sun came out; divine. The Belgians were in full trad-climbing mode at this stage. Aran Wall and Mirror

Wall the perfect playground for the remainder of the trip. It was great to see so many people on the harder routes. I might venture to say that the majority of routes between Roller Ball on the left and Quicksilver on the right had ascents over the four days.

By Saturday, and with a full week of steady climbing behind us, bodies were beginning to tire, fingers were getting raw. The weather for the week had been brilliant, allowing us to climb every day.

Sadly, our ears were also suffering. Though the Belgians had taken to the Irish style of climbing like ducks to water, they failed miserably when it came to the singing. Far from sounding like four birds on a wire, the Belgian quartet of Nathan, Merlin, Cedric and Guillaume sounded more like skinning day at a cat farm. For the sake of our auditory health we sent them off on the rocky road to Dublin for a night out on the dirty old town and some liquid culture.

## OFF TO BELGIUM

We flew out from Dublin Airport on Sunday morning, bound for Belgium. Again, the weather gods seemed to be with us. I was informed that the day before was the first sunny day in Belgium for weeks. I turned on my phone and got a text message from Richard Cussen: "Driving back to Cork, it's pouring down, started an hour after you left. Have a good week."

Monday, we packed the cars and headed toward Freyr. Beautifully situated above a meandering river, its high-quality and compact rock lends itself to technical, challenging climbing. Freyr provides climbing at almost all angles, from slabs to roofs, short single pitch to longer multi-pitch routes.

The climbing lived up to its reputation, tough grades and very technical climbing. It was great to see the young Irish lads managing so well on what was a very novel rock type for them.

On Tuesday, we went to a slightly different area in order to get some shade. Mozzet is a hyper-technical climbing area, with all the holds oriented in the wrong direction. Again, though, the young lads just got on with it and got up the routes with their typical style and panache.

That evening, it was the Belgians' turn to provide the deep-fried cultural experience. They had talked their 'frites' up a lot over the previous week, but I have to say that they did well and the frites had a good crispiness, not too oily; nice flavour. 'Mr Morton, maybe you should make a trip to Belgium to compare?'

We were knackered; even Séan was tired. We took a proper rest day on Wednesday. Stretching, slack-lining, reading and yoga in the meadow above the crag.

With our bodies recovered, we decided to get up early on Thursday and Friday to avoid the sun on the longer south-facing routes. These long routes provide an excellent introduction to multi-pitch climbing. For the younger climbers, it was either their first time on a multi-pitch route or their first time leading and building anchors on a multi-pitch route.

By Friday, the lads had gotten the hang of it and were very competently route-finding, leading and building anchors.

Photographs: STEPHANE HANSENS



Séan Villaneuva O'Driscoll climbing with Jack Ryan at Freyr quarry, Belgium.



## THE EXCHANGE AFFORDED YOUNG CLIMBERS FROM BOTH NATIONS AN OPPORTUNITY TO APPRECIATE EACH OTHER'S STYLE OF CLIMBING AND TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

The weather broke with style on Friday evening, with a thunder storm followed by torrential rain. Saturday morning dawned dismally, but youthful enthusiasm could not be dampened and Séan used his local knowledge to find the only dry rock in Freyr.

That evening, we were treated to amazing hospitality by Léon's parents. They gave us a sumptuous meal, complete with home-made ice-cream topped with melted Belgian chocolate. It was a great way to finish off what had been an amazing two weeks.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Richard Cussen has to be commended for making the exchange happen. Richard put in a trojan effort, from the initial concept, recruiting people to assist, to the day-to-day tasks of getting food and water for the climbers.

Thanks also to Paul Swail, Howard Hebblethwaite, Kieran Kinney, Séan McBride, Peter Linney, Richard Duggan and the Del Maso family in Belgium. A final word must go to Mountaineering Ireland and Club Alpin Belge for their support.

SEÁN VILLANEUVA O'DRISCOLL



Dave Cussen sport-climbing at Freyr, Belgium.

DAMIEN O'SULLIVAN



Belgian buddies. Daniel Flynn, Jack Ryan, Dave Cussen and Léon Dal Maso.

To my knowledge, this may have been the first ever international youth climbing exchange. It afforded young climbers from both nations the opportunity to appreciate each other's style of climbing. It allowed them to learn from each other, and to increase their knowledge of each others language and culture. With the first exchange proving such a success, I hope it might become an annual event in the future.

About the Irish climber, the Belgian climber and the donkey that walked into the bar.... We never made it to a bar: there was too much climbing to be done! More about the donkey later ■



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# Books



## WALKING THE CORBETTS: VOLUME 1: SOUTH OF THE GREAT GLEN

By Brian Johnson

Cicerone (2012), 340pp,  
Many colour photos and maps, ISBN  
978-1-85284-652-7, £16.95

This neat little pocket-sized  
guide to the Southern Corbetts,

isolated Scottish hills that are  
over 2500 feet in height but not  
sufficiently lofty for Munro  
status, is in the usual style and  
of the same high standard as  
the other Cicerone guides.

Complete with waterproof  
cover, it gives detailed route  
descriptions for all the Corbetts  
south of the Fort William-  
Inverness line, including such  
gems as Cir Mhor on Arran and  
the Cobbler.

It describes 95 routes, and  
112 hills in total, by dividing  
the area covered into eleven  
regions, each with a location  
map showing the Corbetts  
within the given region.

Two or three pages are  
devoted to each of the  
descriptions and a clear colour  
map indicates the route, using

the now standard red line for  
the route. Distances, amount of  
ascent and times are given for  
each route as well as grid  
references for important  
features. Times are always  
controversial, but the figures  
are perhaps misleadingly  
precise: why, for example,  
should it take 6hrs 5mins, and  
not just 6 hours, for the 15  
miles and 2900ft of ascent  
required for Glas Bheinn above  
Kinlochleven?

In addition to the route  
descriptions and maps, other  
essential information given  
includes: advice on maps and  
access; websites for weather  
information and public  
transport; more books to read  
for background on the  
Corbetts; and a photograph of

the distillery at Dalwhinnie (in  
case you miss it!).

There is also a two-page  
description of the history of the  
Corbetts, followed by brief  
descriptions of the geology and  
the natural and human history  
of the region. These latter are  
necessarily so short that  
anyone with a real interest in  
them must be prepared to look  
elsewhere.

On the whole, this is an  
excellent guide and would be  
very useful for both the casual  
hillwalker visiting Scotland for  
the first time and the serious  
Munro bagger looking to  
broaden his (or her) horizons.

**Brian Dolan** Hillwalker, climber and  
a member of the Irish  
Mountaineering Club (IMC).

## Boardman Tasker Prize 2012: shortlist announced

Bernard Newman, chair of this year's  
Boardman Tasker judging panel, has  
released the shortlist for the prize. The  
winner will be announced at the Kendal  
Mountain Festival, to be held in the  
Cumbrian town of Kendal in the Lake  
District on 15-17 November.

The Boardman Tasker Trust was  
established to promote mountaineering  
literature by providing an annual award of  
£3,000 to the authors of suitable books.  
The prize commemorates the lives of Peter  
Boardman and Joe Tasker who were last  
seen alive on Mount Everest in May 1982  
attempting to traverse The Pinnacles on  
the unclimbed North East Ridge at around  
8250m. Boardman and Tasker were  
leading British mountaineers with an  
impressive record of bold, lightweight  
ascents of important peaks, including  
Dunagiri, Changabang, Kongur,  
Kangchenjunga and Everest. They were  
both successful authors who left an  
important literary legacy.

The judges for 2012 were Bernard  
Newman (Chair), Lindsay Griffin and  
Shannon O'Donoghue. There were 22  
entries for the award and the judges said  
that, overall, the standard was particularly  
high this year. The subjects included  
biography, autobiography, fiction, historical  
material, travel and spiritual journeys.

**Patrick O'Sullivan** Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

### Shortlist for 2012 prize



**Here, there and  
Everywhere** by Jim  
Curran. Edgebrook  
Publishing, 384pp, £30,  
ISBN 978-190-614-836-  
2.

A revealing and  
sometimes deeply

emotional autobiography that spans  
much of the history of UK climbing from  
the 1960s to the  
present.

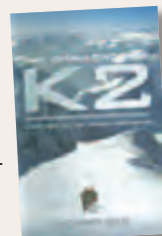


**Into the Silence** by  
Wade Davis. The  
Bodley Head (The  
Random House Group  
Ltd), 655pp, £25, ISBN  
978-847-92184-0.

A comprehensive  
history of the 1921, 1922 and 1924  
British Everest expeditions, culminating  
in the loss of Mallory  
and Irvine.



**Cold Wars: Climbing  
the Fine Line  
between Risk and  
Reality** by Andy  
Kirkpatrick.  
Vertebrate



Publishing, 72pp, £20, ISBN 978-  
1-906148-25-6. A second  
autobiographical volume from  
Kirkpatrick, describing epic  
winter ascents in the Alps and  
Patagonia, and the conflicts of the  
lifestyle with family life.

**The Challenge of K2** by Richard  
Sale. Pen and Sword Ltd, 227pp,  
£19.99, ISBN 184-884-2113-9.

A detailed account of the  
complex history of climbing on  
K2 from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century up  
to 2011.



**FIVA: An Adventure That Went  
Wrong** by Gordon Stainforth.  
Golden Arrow Books, 211pp,  
£9.95, ISBN 978-0-9570543-0-1.  
The story of a climbing epic on  
Store Trolltind in the Romsdal,  
in 1969.



**The Wild Within** by Simon  
Yates. Vertebrate Publishing,  
236pp, £20, ISBN 978-  
190614-8423.

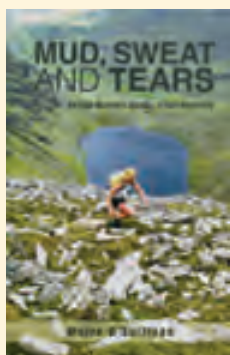
A further autobiographical  
account of Yates' climbing  
adventures in the world's

remote ranges, including the Cordillera  
Darwin, Alaska and Greenland.





Wicklow Mountains 'heather desert' near the Sally Gap.



**MUD, SWEAT AND TEARS:  
AN IRISH WOMAN'S JOURNEY  
OF SELF-DISCOVERY**

**By Moire O'Sullivan**

More Information Paperbacks (2012),  
277pp, one b/w sketch map  
ISBN 978-0-615-50515-2, \$12.99

In 2009, Moire O'Sullivan became the first person to ever complete the Wicklow Round. For those who have never heard of this challenge, it is hard to find words strong enough to describe this achievement.

One hundred kilometres of

## The Wicklow Round is run for first time

**Female hill runner describes her gruelling path to success**

running across some of the toughest terrain and most of the summits in Wicklow – the height gain, according to the Irish Mountain Running Association (IMRA) website, is nearly 6,000 metres and the challenge has to be completed in less than 24 hours. The names along the route, from Kippure to Djouce, will all be very familiar, but tracing the route on a map shows the enormity of the challenge and will leave you in disbelief that it has been done in a single day.

Unlike many other major sporting achievements, completing the Wicklow Round will not trigger an invitation to Farmleigh, let alone fame or fortune. I am always fascinated to understand what motivates anyone to put themselves through such gruelling

training for such an esoteric goal.

This is an unusual book in the mountaineering library. It is not a guidebook – there is a single hand-drawn map and the reader is then helpfully directed to the IMRA website. It is not a training manual, though the aspirant Wicklow Round runner will certainly get plenty of helpful tips from timing to training, to food, to attitude.

What the book really does is put you right inside Moire's head, from the time she arrives back in Ireland from Kenya unsure how to settle back into Irish life, through the first hesitant 6km run up Corrig, all the way to completion of the Wicklow Round – via some fascinating detours into the Adventure Racing World Championships in Scotland, early morning

runs in Kigali and multiple other wacky exploits along the way.

Moire's work brought her to Laos, Rwanda, Haiti and the Congo during the crucial run-up period to her Wicklow Round attempt. The descriptions of running every morning in the dusty streets of Port au Prince bring that world instantly to life and give a welcome respite from the relentless weather in the rest of the book.

Moire's writing is vivid and precise throughout, but above all, astonishingly honest. She describes the sense of trepidation and inadequacy as a newbie on the IMRA evening runs and the impact of 'selfish runner syndrome' on her relationship with her supportive and obviously very patient boyfriend.

Self-effacing throughout – even the picture on the front cover is of another woman running – the book is also very funny in parts as Moire puts the worst of her personality out for all to see.

Moire also hopes that the book and her achievements will encourage other women to get involved in hill running. It's certainly a warts and all presentation of the sport, which will inspire some and probably deter others. Lurid descriptions of bleeding toes and battered lungs open the book, but the excitement is nonetheless contagious.

Whether you are even vaguely interested in hill running or just happy to meander up Lug at a leisurely pace, I would strongly recommend this book as a really great read and an insight into a parallel universe.

**Moira Creedon** Hillwalker, climber and a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC).



# Books



**SPORT CLIMBING +: THE POSITIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING YOUR CLIMBING**  
By Adrian Berry & Steve McClure

Rockfax (2011), 192pp, many colour illustrations, b/w illustrations, sketches and three maps  
ISBN 978-1-873341-86-5, £19.95

When I was asked to review this book for the Irish Mountain Log, I suspected I was being set up as a promoter of bolts – but I decided to take the chance. I was glad I did!

There is no shortage of “How to climb” books and they are all excellent at teaching us the things we should know about our sport and how to improve our skills. Even the most experienced amongst us can learn something from these volumes, and knowledge is no burden. Novices, especially, can learn much faster when reading is combined with hands-on learning with more experienced climbing partners.

Although this book is specifically about sport climbing, there is plenty of advice that is equally applicable to every facet of the sport and which can only further any climber's education.

Throughout the book, there is a sub-text of “If this is what you want to do, this is how you can do it better” that lifts it above the run of the mill “How to climb” books.

I think that most of us share

my belief that sport climbing is just trad climbing with less gear hanging from our harnesses, and that it gives freedom from watching out for good gear placements. Reading this book has shown me that my knowledge was sadly deficient.

We are told, first, about moving to sport climbing from indoor walls, trad climbing and bouldering, and the changes we need to make to our techniques and equipment, including essential ropework skills.

Gear is discussed next, and you will learn some surprising lessons here – or at least I did! The authors then move on to ropework and cover the different techniques for the different environment, including how to retreat safely before a climb is completed. The different requirements of multi-pitch sports route are also discussed at length.

Valuable sections deal with redpointing, onsighting, planning a climbing holiday, improving climbing technique, overcoming fear and lack of confidence, training, self-care and climbing destinations.

All of this is invaluable for many reasons, not least because it emphasises the fact that we should be trying always to get better at what we have chosen to do and make the most of our abilities. Even bumbler will be reminded that climbing, like any sport, is something from which we can get greater satisfaction from by working to become better, while still enjoying the other pleasures of our sport.

Remember, the better you can climb, the more places you can climb.

**Sé O'Hanlon** Hillwalker, climber, a member of IMC and past Secretary of Mountaineering Council of Ireland.

**Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe**  
Irish Mountain Training Board

## Movement skills for climbers

**WHERE AND WHEN?**  
GRAVITY 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012 9am-6pm  
HOT ROCKS 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013 9am-6pm

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[alun@mountaineering.ie](mailto:alun@mountaineering.ie)

If you think great climbers are born that way, think again... everyone can learn to move well. These workshops are for SPA holders and providers who want to learn how and what to teach to students to help them to move efficiently.





## LAKE DISTRICT MOUNTAIN LANDFORMS

By Peter Wilson

Scotforth Books (2010), 210pp,  
Many colour photographs and a  
number of colour illustrations  
ISBN 978-1-904244-56-1, ~€25

My first reaction to this book was to think that every mountain range should have a book like this. Peter Wilson has a particularly rich palette from which to paint his picture of the Lake District, since the Lake District is blessed with a variety of rock types, each of which contributes its own character to the landscape.

Wilson takes us through the different geological rocks, showing the influence that they have had on different mountains. He delights in the ubiquitous effects of glaciation – from the smoothing and rounding of mountain profiles to the incision of U-shaped glacial valleys, to the formation of corries and crags. Then, of course, the debris resulting from these activities: scree slopes, sands, dammed lakes – and – moraines, eskers and drumlins. Once Wilson has opened your eyes to these factors, you'll see roches moutonnées, erratics and meltwater channels everywhere you go.

As a lecturing geomorphologist at the University of Ulster in Coleraine, Wilson is particularly good on rock and



Buttermere valley: a classical glacial trough.

deposit movement, through rock slide, rock talus, rock avalanche and rock deformation. He deals with debris slides, but unlike in Ireland, the Lake District does not seem to have our particular variation of bog bursts.

So, if you are interested to find out that the shape of Ullswater is due to the influence of three bedrock faults, or that the Wainwright boulder is a volcanic erratic, or that Striding Edge is a classic glacial arête, or that Dove Crag has a distinctive boulder slope below it, here is the book for you.

For me, the most interesting part of the book is the chapter on the Pre-Glacial Landscape. This is the most difficult to read but, as a geologist, it is the one I am most comfortable with. Wilson deals with all the

geological influences, looks at what vestiges remain of the pre-glacial landscape, analyses them and disentangles the later glacial effects. Whilst not committing to a particular version, Wilson does us all a big favour by presenting us with theories involved.

You would be unwise to take this book on to the heights of the Lake District, if you had any interest in preserving it from damp and wear, but it would be essential to have a copy back in the hut to reference all the features that you came across during your day's walk.

Gareth LI. Jones Geologist

**Editor's footnote:** Peter Wilson wrote an excellent series of articles on the effects of glaciation in Ireland, which were published in issues 90-96 of the *Irish Mountain Log*, Summer 2009 to Winter 2010.

## UPCOMING TITLES

### FREEDOM CLIMBERS

By Bernadette MacDonald  
Vertebrate Publishing

The story of how Polish climbers emerged after the rigours of the Second World War and the Russian occupation to dominate high-altitude mountaineering. Winner of the 2011 Boardman-Tasker Award.

### ECHOES: ONE CLIMBER'S HARD ROAD TO FREEDOM

By Nick Bullock  
Vertebrate Publishing

A journey of discovery, which takes Nick Bullock from life as a prison officer in a maximum-security jail to a less regimented life devoted to the mountains.

### BOULDER BRITAIN: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO BRITISH BOULDERING

By Niall Grimes  
Ape Index

An ambitious guidebook that covers the best bouldering in England, Scotland and Wales. It describes more than 3,000 of the best problems at 180 venues in the UK.

### CLIMBING THE SEVEN SUMMITS: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE CONTINENTS' HIGHEST PEAKS

By Mike Hamill  
The Mountaineers Books

A guide to climbing the Seven Summits that covers everything you need to know to be successful.

### NORTHERN IRELAND

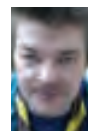
By Helen Fairbairn  
The Collins Press

A guide to the best walking routes in Northern Ireland, from challenging ascents to coastal walks, to shorter woodland and waterside excursions, covering every part of the region.

### DONEGAL, SLIGO AND LEITRIM

By Adrian Hendroff  
The Collins Press

This guide describes thirty walks in the northwest of Ireland, from the wild, untamed landscape of Donegal, to the gentler hills and green valleys of Sligo and Leitrim.



## ViewRanger



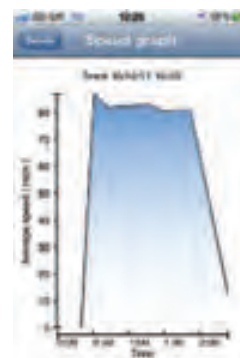
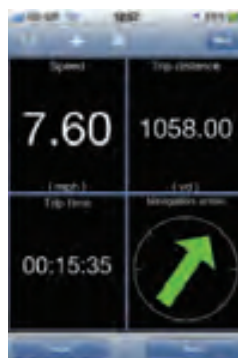
The ViewRanger will turn your smart phone into a fully functional GPS device. It has everything you would expect from an expensive outdoor GPS. You can plan, plot, navigate, track, locate and record along with a few extras that make this app unique.

This powerful piece of kit

uses free web maps or you can upgrade to more specific detailed maps including the OSI Discovery Series for Ireland. Your location and direction of travel is clearly displayed on 1:25k or 1:50k maps.

If there is no phone reception, don't worry. ViewRanger makes use of all the enabled positioning services on your phone, which typically include internal GPS, assisted GPS and Bluetooth GPS.

There are plenty of features with this app that will entertain and interest walkers. "Buddy Beacon," for instance, will allow you share your current location with friends. This is great for tracking the progress of walkers in multiple groups or supervising nervous



navigators.

On the downside, however, most smart phones are not built for the mountain environment. Protective cases to withstand water and impact are essential but sometimes these interfere with the operation of the phone. Gloves and touch screens are a disaster!

The dismal battery life of smart phones is only compounded by the continuous running of the app.

The rationing of battery power on long mountain days does limit many of the features.

What this app does offer is power for your buck. Its accuracy, reliability and functionality are all impressive and, at just €10.99, it's a fraction of the cost of an equivalent GPS unit; sure to impress even the purest of navigators!

➤ **ViewRanger can be easily purchased from the App Store and the Play Store.**

## Apps

## Crags: Climbing Log Book



"Crags: Climbing Log Book" is designed as a quick and easy way to log your climbs at the crag side. Developed by James Duchanan (on the train to work!), it allows climbers to quickly set up new crags, annotate routes and log climbs for yourself or a whole group of climbers.

This clever app invites you to enter a photograph of the route and, using the built-in tools, it is easy to mark the precise line taken and to pinpoint specific areas of interest such as the crux, the belay position, any protection issues, and so on.

Where this app excels, though, is in allowing you to share your routes with the climbing community. This has started a global database of crags and routes complete with climbers' comments, opinions and, of course, hi-res photographs of the routes. This feature makes the app into a kind of micro-guidebook where move sequences can almost be visualised prior to arrival – well, not quite, but you do get very excited!

The crag itself can be easily found using the Crag Map tool

which uses Google Maps and a pin to locate the crag, but the app does not provide much assistance on locating the route once at the crag, so a guidebook is still essential.

You can generate a report of your climbs, which appears in a table format that can be exported in an email to yourself or to any other email recipient, although you cannot share your log book with the climbing community in the same way that the crags and routes can be shared.

As this app gets popular, content management might also become an issue. Currently, each route is shared separately, but the app does not recognise that the same route is shared multiple times, albeit with a different route description.

However, none of these snags seem particularly complex and I would expect



that they will be resolved in later versions.

All climbers should have a play with Crags: Climbing Log Book. Not only is it a practical and fun way of logging your climbs but it also provides a wealth of hidden knowledge on routes and crags.

➤ **This app is available from the App Store and, best of all, it's free.**



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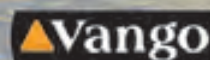
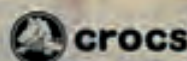
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## Books, guides and maps to meet all your needs...

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

For the walker, there is a large collection of Cicerone guides and books, or the wider selection of books and guides distributed by Cordee which also includes many climbing guides. Books reviewed in the Irish Mountain Log can usually be purchased through Joss Books with a members' discount. To place an order, ring the Mountaineering Ireland office on (01) 6251115 or email [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie).

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

## Mountaineering Ireland expresses concern about future of Coillte

Representatives of Mountaineering Ireland met with officials from the Department of Agriculture and from New ERA – the body established in 2011 to advise the Government on the sale of state assets – in Agriculture House on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

The Department officials said the aim in any possible sale of Coillte is to preserve the benefits of the state assets but to bring in money early, as far as possible achieving the best of both worlds. The officials stressed that “Taoiseach Enda Kenny and four Ministers, including Minister Simon Coveney, have given assurances that Coillte’s land will not be sold.”

Amongst the options under consideration is the sale of Coillte’s future forestry crop. There has been a policy of open access to Ireland’s state forestry for almost fifty years. If the forestry crop is sold, how can we be sure the new owners will continue to allow public access to the forest?

Mountaineering Ireland raised serious concerns regarding any change to the future management of Coillte’s land and sought a guarantee that the current open access policy would be maintained.

Coillte’s estate represents 7% of Ireland’s land area, with much of this landholding in upland areas. The important role that the Coillte estate plays in providing informal access onto higher ground for hillwalkers and other recreational users was emphasised.



HELEN LAWLESS

Mountaineering Ireland also expressed concern that the recreational value of Coillte’s estate is only partially reflected in its eleven forest parks and approximately one hundred and fifty designated recreation sites. The officials were asked to convey to Government the fact that all Coillte forests are used for recreation, most often by those who live locally, and that these recreation opportunities must be secured for the benefit of current and future generations ■



### Staying online

*By keeping within the line of existing paths, we can prevent the erosion scars on our hills becoming wider.*

If there’s a visible path, the vegetation and soil have already been impacted on, so it’s better to follow that line. On narrow paths this means walking in single file. It might feel anti-social but, when we walk on the edge of paths, vegetation gets damaged and over time this exposes soil, leaving it vulnerable to erosion by natural processes and human footfall.

As muddy paths are already damaged, it’s better to walk on the path, rather than alongside it. Wearing gaiters makes it easier to follow wet or muddy paths. It may not always be pleasant, but you’re doing your bit to protect the mountain environment! ■



MATTHEW BARKER

### The role of farming in the uplands

Protection of the mountain environment has been one of Mountaineering Ireland’s objectives since the organisation was formed in 1971 as the Federation of Mountaineering Clubs in Ireland.

While overgrazing was a problem on the hills in the 1990s – and still is in some areas – land abandonment is now recognised as a threat to the quality of Ireland’s upland environment, with gorse and bracken becoming dominant in some areas that are not grazed.

Hillfarmers are on average older than other farmers and in many cases the younger generation is unwilling to farm the hills, due to the work involved and the low return. With the withdrawal of the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), many hillfarmers have experienced a sharp drop in their incomes, and the labour-intensive nature of hillfarming doesn’t combine well with off-farm work.

While the background to the decline in hillfarming is complex, it is clear that farming activity, particularly grazing by sheep, should have a central role in the sustainable management of Ireland’s upland areas.

As nearly all hill land is privately owned, either by individuals or jointly owned as commonage, the most practical and cost-effective way to look after these areas is likely to be in ►





On Slieve Carran in the Burren, Co Clare, archaeologist Michael Gibbons points towards a prehistoric settlement on Turlough Hill that includes the remains of 156 hut-sites. He was leading a field trip on the rich history of the Burren's upland landscapes as part of the inaugural Learning Landscapes Symposium hosted by the BurrenBeo Trust in August.

co-operation with the people who own and work the land.

### ***Delivery of public goods***

Mountaineering Ireland is currently working with other upland stakeholders, including BirdWatch Ireland and the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), to explore the opportunities for an upland agri-environment programme under the next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Such a scheme could support continuity in low-intensity hillfarming to deliver farm produce, but also reward farmers for the delivery of public goods such as landscape, biodiversity and recreation opportunities.

Pedestrian recreational activities (non-commercial) should be permitted on land that is managed under the proposed scheme, provided that participants act responsibly.

While mountain land is typically referred to as marginal land, and in policy falls within 'less favoured areas,' our upland landscapes are a huge natural asset. It is Mountaineering Ireland's view that the uplands and the pattern of low-intensity farming traditionally associated with these areas are of high

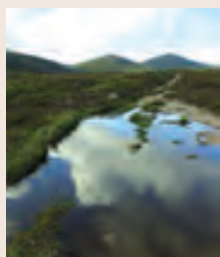
value to society, and that this should be reflected in future agricultural programmes.

► If you would like to comment on Mountaineering Ireland's involvement in this process, or if you have any observations, or particularly any photographs that show how the mountain environment has altered over recent decades, please email [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) or phone the Mountaineering Ireland office on **01 625 1115** ■

Wood white butterfly, Burren, Co Clare.



RYAN McDONALD



### **New policy for management of designated sites in Northern Ireland**

Early in September, Mountaineering Ireland participated in a Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

consultation on the future management of sites designated for nature conservation.

The new Designated Site Management Policy will result in a more integrated approach between government and stakeholders to the management and protection of designated European and national sites of conservation importance.

The sites referred to are Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs – currently 347 sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs – 57 sites) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs – 17 sites). These areas represent the best of Northern Ireland's impressive

natural heritage, ranging from expansive upland areas such as the Mourne and Sperrins, to Antrim's rugged coastland and Fermanagh's loughs and islands.

The emphasis to date has been on site designation, but NIEA's focus is now shifting towards positive site management. As most of the sites in question are not owned by NIEA, and all are affected by other Government policies, NIEA is looking at developing and delivering its new policy on a partnership basis with other organisations and with individual landowners. Due to the cross-departmental co-operation that is required, the new policy will go before the Assembly for approval, probably in the latter part of 2013.

Mountaineering Ireland welcomes this initiative by NIEA and will be participating in further consultation over the next year. Mountaineering Ireland members with views on the management of designated sites are encouraged to contact [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) to have their concerns incorporated in the organisation's response ■



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

*"If it's a good idea, then go ahead and do it; it's much easier to apologise than to get permission." – Anon*

**M**ountaineering Ireland's 2012 summer Alpine meet was a roaring success. With over twenty-five Irish reaching the top of Mont Disgrazia, a challenging Sentiero Roma trek, the Piz Badile seeing a few ascents, and a plethora of other peaks being climbed, it was a great two weeks.

Thanks must go to **Berghaus, Thorlo, Haribo** and **ROS Nutrition** for their help and support for the meet. The Val di Masino venue was excellent, the locals friendly, the scenery superb, the peaks brilliant, the bouldering world class and the rock climbing awesome. Oh, and it was damn cheap!

We were lucky this year to have an Italian mountain guide working for us, and he told us stories of a wonderful range of mountains a short distance to the east. He spoke of snowy tops, great valley cragging, fantastic and easy trekking and alpine rock. I then discovered that some of the stalwarts of Mountaineering Ireland loved it so much they had bought an apartment there.

We have to visit it, so, to cut a long story short, Mountaineering Ireland has chosen to run next year's summer meet in the Adamello-Presanella Alps, from 6th to 21st July 2013.

The Adamello-Presanella Alps are located in northern Italy, in the provinces of Trento and Brescia. The name stems from its highest peaks: Adamello (3554m) and Presanella (3558m). The base is the small village of Temu, 1144m above sea level and 3km from the larger town of Pontedilegno. It is surrounded by green meadows, coniferous forests and the snow-capped peaks of the Parco Dell Adamello.

We may also hold the next winter meet in the Adamello region, from 16th to 24th February 2013...what do you all think? Email me. We will hold an info evening in the Great Outdoors on 26th November.

Alun Richardson is the Training Officer with Mountaineering Ireland.



ALUN RICHARDSON

## ■ Coaching awards on the way

It has taken 15 years, but there is light at the end of the tunnel for climbing coaching in Ireland and the awards to support it. But why do we need coaching awards?

The existing BOS awards in climbing and mountaineering focus on the ability of instructors and leaders to safely manage individuals and groups, and to pass on safe practice rather than develop performance.

We all know that instructors 'coach' and coaches 'instruct,' but with world championships and possible Olympic medals in the offing, the development of a coaching awards scheme is overdue.

Climbing, however, is not an élitist sport – it is enjoyed by people from all walks of life – and climbers at all stages of development enjoy improving what they do. Everyone has the right to the highest quality of coaching whatever their level of performance; and coaching is not for the gifted few.

The development of coaching awards is the first step towards developing the skills of coaches and helping those that work with young people and adults to better develop the potential that every individual has as a climber.

To this end, Mountaineering Ireland Talent Development Officer Neal McQuaid and myself, Alun Richardson, with help from Coaching Ireland, have been preparing a Long-term Participant Profile and the first draft of a syllabus for coaching levels 1 and 2. The remit of these awards extends to climbing walls and sport routes. More information as it becomes available.

## ■ Club Training Grants

Club Training Grants are still available for 2012. Mountaineering Ireland supports training of both individuals and groups through a grant scheme. We can work with you to assess what's needed and to make sure you get the most out of the day. Please visit the 'Training & Safety' section of the Mountaineering Ireland website for more details or ring Mountaineering Ireland on (01) 625 1117.

## ■ Leaders within clubs

We have been running some workshops for the Irish Ramblers Club, examining leadership within clubs. This has brought up some interesting points about the role of 'leaders' within a club and what responsibilities they have for other members going for a walk. Should they actually be called leaders – or organisers? And what responsibilities do they have when things go awry? For more on this, see article, page 60.



## ■ BOS Providers: notes on registering

ML/SPA/WGL registration fees have increased from €35 to €40. Please download the new registration forms from the Mountaineering Ireland website: we won't be accepting the old forms from October 31st 2012 onwards.

To help us moderate the courses that will be running, please upload all courses to the course calendar on the website. If they are 'full' or 'college' courses, simply select the 'full' option from the drop-down menu for the relevant course. If you have any problems, please contact Rozanne at Mountaineering Ireland on (01) 6251112.

ALUN RICHARDSON



## ■ Aspirant Mountaineers Weekends

30<sup>th</sup> November – 2<sup>nd</sup> December, IMC Hut, Glendalough, Co Wicklow  
18-20<sup>th</sup> January, Queen's Cottage, Mourne Mountains, Co Down

### Who are the weekends for?

17-23 year-olds who are interested in developing the skills needed to cope with the Irish and UK mountains in a range of conditions. These weekends will allow University Mountaineering Clubs to meet like-minded young people who are interested in the outdoors and in developing their mountaineering skills. They will be an excellent opportunity for participants to look at the skills needed to be safe and confident in the mountain environment, especially in winter conditions.

### What will be on offer?

Two exciting weekends looking at the elements of navigation, route choice, leadership, mountain hazards, mountain weather and emergency rope work. *Price:* £30 or €35. To book a place, email paul.swail@mountaineering.ie. The weekends will be self-catering.

### Scottish Youth Winter Meet

Participants in these training weekends will get the opportunity to express an interest in attending the five-day Mountaineering Ireland Scottish Youth Winter Meet in February 2013. Eight people will be selected to attend the Scottish Meet.

## ■ Lowland Trail Walk Leader Scheme

The Lowland Trail Walk Leader (LTWL) scheme is now in its final stages of development. The previously planned September training date has been moved forward, for a variety of reasons.

Mountaineering Ireland is now arranging an awareness day for all interested stakeholders on 24th October. If anyone would like to receive the LTWL scheme syllabus and provide some feedback, contact alun@mountaineering.ie.

## ■ Urgently needed: ML exam questions

Last call for suitable questions for the Mountain Leader exam. Please send your suggestions to: [alun@mountaineering.ie](mailto:alun@mountaineering.ie)

## ■ Winter Meet info evening

*Great Outdoors, 2 Chatham St, Dublin 2; 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012, 7:30pm*  
We need a good idea of how many are going to be there, so please register at [www.greatoutdoors.ie/WinterMeet](http://www.greatoutdoors.ie/WinterMeet) if you intend to come along.

## ■ Club Training Officer Workshop

*3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> November – Wicklow (€60)*

Those attending should have good navigation skills and also be keen to support the development of skills within their club.

## Training Calendar

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

- **Club Training Officer Two-Day Workshop (€60)**  
Wicklow 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> November

### BOS COURSE DATES:

- **WGL Assessment** 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September (€350)
- **ML Assessment** 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> October (€350)
- **Movement Skills Workshop for SPA holders and CWA providers** 8<sup>th</sup> December (€50) (minimum 4 people)
- **ML/WGL Workshop** 20<sup>th</sup> October (€50)
- **SPA/ML/WGL Reviews (all free):**  
Cappanalea, Co Kerry – 12<sup>th</sup> November  
Petersburg OEC, Connemara – 14<sup>th</sup> November  
Gartan OEC, Co Donegal – 16<sup>th</sup> November  
Sport HQ, Co Dublin – 19<sup>th</sup> November

## ■ Register for review of Single Pitch, Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader schemes

*If you don't register, we won't hear your views!*

Mountaineering Ireland is to review the SPA/ML/WGL schemes. To ensure that everyone's views are considered, feedback sessions are being organised in Kerry, Connemara, Donegal and Wicklow when we will talk with mountain skills providers, holders of the awards and anyone with a constructive opinion on the awards. On each day, the morning session will look at the SPA and the new Lowland Trail Walk Leader scheme, while the afternoon session will look at the ML and WGL schemes. The meetings will take place on:

12<sup>th</sup> November – Kerry  
14<sup>th</sup> November – Connemara  
16<sup>th</sup> November – Donegal  
19<sup>th</sup> November – Dublin

Please contact Mountaineering Ireland to register your attendance. If nobody registers we will not travel and your views will be missed. Alternatively, email your opinions to: [alun@mountaineering.ie](mailto:alun@mountaineering.ie).



# WHEN IS A LEADER NOT A LEADER?

Alun Richardson imagines a walk where all kinds of things go wrong and poses questions on what the correct course of action should have been for a leader. Pencils and paper at the ready...

*"Hill walking, climbing and rambling are activities that can be dangerous and may result in personal injury or death. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement."* –

**Mountaineering Ireland participation statement**

As Training Officer for Mountaineering Ireland, one of my roles is to talk to clubs and run workshops supporting leadership on club walks. I have found that fear of being sued is a common thread in discussions, and even though instances of successful litigation are extremely rare, this fear seems to affect the way clubs run.

Leadership within clubs is a subject that evokes many opinions and even some emotion. In this article, I want to challenge your perceptions of what a club leader is, leaders' responsibilities and even whether 'leader' is the correct word.

First, we will examine a club walk with a concentration of events that can, and have, happened all on one walk. Then I will pose some questions raised by the events, for you to think about.

## Before the walk

■ Jane, 41 years of age, is a stalwart member of the 'Figment of My Imagination Walking Club' (FMIWC, a member club of Mountaineering Ireland). She has volunteered to organise a club walk of 5-6 hours in the Maumturks during August. She is an experienced walker and has done BOS Mountain Skills 1 & 2 but doesn't hold any national walking leadership awards. She organises the meeting place, advertises it in the newsletter and provides as much information as she can, but does not prepare a written risk assessment for the walk.

■ The weather forecast is for a fine start to the walk, but it may rain a little later. The wind is light SW all day.

■ Jane arrives at the meeting point



I want to challenge your perceptions of what a club leader is.



Where does responsibility lie?

where there are twenty walkers waiting to start the walk. Jane knows some of the walkers. Some of the group look well kitted out in branded gear, but others are not so well kitted out. One walker has a plastic bag for his gear, and another fit young man has trail shoes on, even though the club rules state that they must wear walking boots. Two are not club members but are interested in joining the club, and there is a 17-year-old son of one of the club members who dropped him off an hour ago; the son is a member of the club.

■ Jane informs everyone that she is leading the walk and asks someone to assist her. She informs the guy with the running shoes of the club rules, but he says he has forgotten his boots and is adamant he wants to do the walk. Jane shares the kit from the guy's plastic bag amongst some of the group and allows

him to come along. Jane decides that the 17-year-old can come along on the walk too and doesn't want to argue with the guy in the trek shoes, so he also comes along. The two newcomers join everyone and they set off.

## The walk

■ The walk initially follows a well trodden track for an hour, passes a chapel and then turns left to head steeply uphill. The rest of the group are relaxed and most follow along, chatting to each other. Two of the team, however, are much faster and quickly head off in front. After an hour more, the faster two decide they want to go ahead and will find their own way back to their cars. Jane tries to stop them as they are the best navigators in the club, but they are adamant they want to leave the slower group and they go off on their own. Shortly after this,



one member gets a phone call that his mum is ill and sets off down on his own at a fast pace.

■ At one o'clock, the group stops for lunch and the rain starts. The fit young man with trekking shoes announces that he has also forgotten his waterproofs. Jane decides he should go down but he wants to carry on with an extra top and a black plastic bag as a waterproof jacket. Jane reluctantly agrees. They continue on the walk and the rain slows down a bit.

■ After another hour and a half's walking, one of the new members realises he has left his keys and wallet back at the lunch spot when he went to the loo. He is adamant he wants to go back for them, but the mist is coming down. Despite Jane's insisting that he should not go back unaccompanied, he turns and heads off. One of the group decides to go with him, but Jane knows that the person is not a great navigator. Jane continues the walk.

■ About one and a half hours from the end of the walk, someone in the group who is wearing old boots, with poor grip on the sole, slips and injures his ankle. He is pretty cross that he wasn't told the downward section was slippery. He can't put his weight on it but is happy to be helped down and doesn't want to call Mountain Rescue.

The responsibilities of organising the walk start to weigh heavily on Jane's shoulders. After all, she is an amateur walker herself who just wanted to go for a walk in the hills! The two who went back for the keys and wallet arrive back three hours after the group have all gone home! Jane has missed her dinner date that evening and is not happy. She doesn't want to lead another walk ■



The Training Officer's face when he realised the rain had turned his map to mush on his solo jaunt around the Glencoaghan Horseshoe recently. The 'blithely blunder' technique was perfected to get him down safely. It was a chastening experience.



Students on the recent GPS workshop in Connemara, a superb course run by Kevin O'Callaghan.

## The questions

Jane is pretty unlucky for all these things to have happened in a single walk, but all these events have actually happened. The questions to consider are below, but remember, there are many correct answers.

- 1 Does being a member of a walking club increase Jane's responsibilities to the participants on the walk?
- 2 Are Jane's responsibilities to the people on the walk greater because she organised or led the walk?
- 3 Does Jane have to be the leader?
- 4 Does Jane or the group have to look after the less experienced members?
- 5 Was she right to let the two non-members come along?
- 6 Should she have allowed the guy with the plastic bag or the trek shoes to go on the walk?
- 7 Who is to blame should somebody slip or should Jane's navigation result in the group becoming lost?
- 8 Are twenty people too many to have in the group?
- 9 Should Jane have done a written risk assessment?
- 10 Should Jane have allowed the under-seventeen to come on the walk?
- 11 Was Jane or the group correct to let the two faster guys go off on their own?
- 12 Should Jane have sent someone down with the guy who was rushing off to see his sick mum?
- 13 Was Jane's course of action with the guy who had forgotten his waterproofs the correct one?
- 14 Should Jane have called the mountain rescue team to help the guy who hurt his ankle?
- 15 Could Jane, or the club, be sued by the guy who slipped?
- 16 Did Jane have to wait for the two guys who came down late?

## The answers

To find the answers to these questions and one perspective, go to [www.mountaineering.ie/trainingandsafety/viewdetails.asp?ID=36](http://www.mountaineering.ie/trainingandsafety/viewdetails.asp?ID=36). We will also have these in the next *Irish Mountain Log* ■

# Noel Walsh

Hillwalker and climber with a passion for wilderness camping

MARTIN HUGHES



Noel Walsh from Oughterard, Co Galway, a member of Club Cualann and the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC), died in April, aged 64.

Noel was a relative newcomer to the club scene, having only joined Club Cualann in 1999, but his love of mountains and of climbing went back much further.

Born in Dublin in 1948, Noel moved to Mitchelstown, Co Cork, at an early age. His grandparents farmed at the foot of the Galtees in Anglesborough (a few miles north of Mitchelstown) and it was there that he got his first taste of hillwalking. Indeed, the Galtees held a special place in his heart for the rest of his life.

Noel joined the Air Corps as an apprentice aircraft mechanic at Baldonnell and, while he was there, he developed an interest in gymnastics and an appreciation of precision engineering and technical manuals.

Later, while working in Arklow, Noel joined the local rugby team and continued to play that sport for many years as a hooker. He was also a keen sailor but, when he really wanted to unwind, he would go off into the hills and camp in some remote spot, with just his radio, a ration of whisky and whatever food he could rustle up.

Wild camping was to be his real passion. Noel loved the

idea of being in the wilderness, whether alone or with like-minded friends. If he was with friends, they would be endlessly entertained by his jovial nature and infectious enthusiasm. Over the years, he acquired a selection of tents and camping equipment, always chosen for their technical advantages and never for their style.

When Noel joined Club Cualann he took to rockclimbing enthusiastically, bringing both his gymnastic style and his technical approach to equipment and protection to bear. He quickly progressed to leading and soon joined the IMC, so that he could avail of the activities of both clubs, in particular the trips to Norway with the IMC for ice-climbing in Rujken.

Noel then turned his attention to the Alps, making his first trip there to Chamonix with Tollymore and subsequently returning with Club Cualann to visit Zermatt, Saas Fee and the Brenta Dolomites. Among the summits he reached were the Index in Chamonix, the Alallinhorn and the Alphubel in Valais, and the Marmolada



Noel Walsh on summit of Breithorn (4164m).

in the Dolomites.

It was after his 2009 trip to the Dolomites that Noel began to experience difficulties with the movement of his limbs, and was subsequently

diagnosed with motor neurone disease. Throughout his illness, Noel remained cheerful and optimistic, determined to continue to be as involved as much as he could in his outdoor pursuits. He died peacefully in Galway University Hospital, surrounded by his wife and family.

Noel will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him, whether through Club Cualann or the IMC, or from chance meetings in the hills or on a crag.

Noel is survived by his wife, Jess, his daughters, Amber and Heidi, his grandson, Eske, and his son-in-law, Poul, to all of whom we extend our sympathy at their great loss.

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.*

**Jim Sheehan, Club Cualann**

*Noel Walsh, born January 28th, 1948, died April 18th, 2012* ■



Noel on Club Cualann trip to the Dolomite Alps, Italy.





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## Irish Uplands Forum

### Fórum Cnoch na hÉireann

Promoting sustainable management of the Uplands  
A spreagann fothairí iomparthas ar na hArd Tallois

### The Irish Uplands Forum is looking for volunteers. Are you any of the following?

- 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.

To find out about the activities we're engaged in, visit our website [www.irishuplandsforum.org](http://www.irishuplandsforum.org) or e-mail [enquiries@irishuplandsforum.org](mailto:enquiries@irishuplandsforum.org)



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