

Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

Fair Head Meet

Annual meet resumes after Covid hiatus

Annual Review 2021

Good progress made in challenging year



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Welcome

The Summer 2022 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is another special issue, which contains Mountaineering Ireland's **Annual Review 2021** (see pages 29-40).

CEO **Murrough McDonagh** reports on a year in which he says Mountaineering Ireland has proved to be an extremely resilient organisation, despite the restrictions that were in place on the activities that are its *raison d'être*, and the National Governing Body (NGB) has maintained its membership numbers and remained relevant to its members.

Looking forward, Mountaineering Ireland has recently launched its **Strategic Plan for 2022-25** (see page 5). The plan, which will guide the NGB for the next four years, features a vision of making Mountaineering Ireland the 'go-to' representative body and the voice for hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers on the island of Ireland.

Mountain Rescue Ireland recently published its annual statistics for 2021, which highlight the fact that, in a year when the Covid-19 restrictions limited activity for some of the time, the eleven teams of volunteers saw an increase in total call-outs, responding to 408 incidents over the course of the year (see page 6). It behoves us all to be properly equipped and sufficiently experienced for the activity we are undertaking, so that



The new Strategic Plan will guide Mountaineering Ireland for the next four years

we can avoid getting in situations where we have to call out a Mountain Rescue Team and add to their workload.

In addition to the Annual Review 2021, this issue has a lot of other interesting material, including three excellent features: **John O'Callaghan's** account of his twelve-hour traverse of the Nephinbegs, **Don Baldwin's** walk in Clare to discover its link to the fabled Brian Boru, and **Fergal Hingerty's** climb on Mount Olympus. There are various other interesting pieces, including an important report on the **Fair Head Climbing Meet**, celebrating Ireland's longest-running climbing meet, which resumed on the June bank holiday weekend after a gap due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

We have now passed the summer solstice, but there is still time to enjoy the longer days and milder weather in the uplands over the remaining summer months.

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor



Write for the Log

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

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

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



ON THE COVER

Brian Dunne climbing on Blockbuster, E2, 5c, at Fair Head, Co Antrim

PHOTOGRAPH
PAUL KELLAGHER

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PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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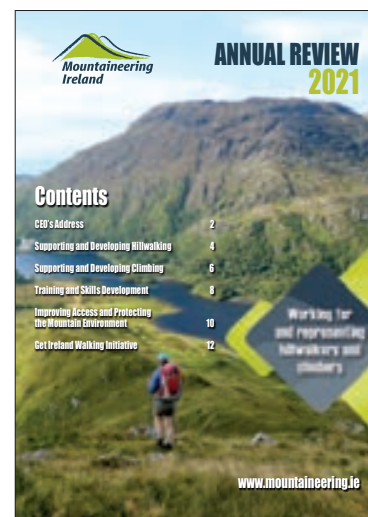
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Newsdesk

New Strategic Plan

Mountaineering Ireland launches Strategic Plan 2022-25



By Aron Hegarty,
Communications Officer

Mountaineering Ireland recently launched its ambitious new **Strategic Plan for 2022-25** at its offices on the National Sports Campus, Dublin. The plan features a vision to make Mountaineering Ireland the 'go-to' representative body and the voice of hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers on the island of Ireland.

The organisation states its mission is to champion personal responsibility, challenge, adventure and participation, while also caring for the places and environment in which members enjoy their activities.

The document, which has been signed off by the Board of Directors, lists the twelve core values of Mountaineering Ireland as follows:

- Member-focused
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Change and innovation
- Advocacy
- Inclusion, diversity and equality
- Sustainability
- Partnership
- Personal responsibility and accountability
- Transparency and openness
- Adventure
- Wellbeing
- Respect.



Speaking at the launch, the CEO of Mountaineering Ireland **Murrough McDonagh** said: "Our new Strategic Plan 2022 to 2025 sets out our vision and mission for an exciting new chapter for Mountaineering Ireland and its members.

"Essentially, our purpose is to represent and support our members to the best of our ability and, through this new plan, we intend to do that and more."

Imelda Buckley, Chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group for Mountaineering Ireland, said: "This plan sets out the roadmap to promote adventure and enjoyment of our activities, protect the mountain environment, improve access, develop training standards and supports, and ultimately encourage more people to participate in our range of sports and activities in a responsible and sustainable way."

Mountaineering Ireland's new Strategic Plan 2022-25 can be downloaded from the website, www.mountaineering.ie. ■



Mountain rescue call-outs in 2021

By Mountain Rescue Ireland

Any requests for emergency assistance in upland or mountainous areas on the island of Ireland are responded to by one or more of the eleven Mountain Rescue Teams that compose **Mountain Rescue Ireland** (MRI). These teams of volunteers are on standby 24/7/365 to respond to requests for assistance. These requests are tasked through the 999/112 emergency phone system.

The eleven teams that MRI represents are:

- Donegal Mountain Rescue Team
- Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team
- Galway Mountain Rescue Team
- Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team
- Kerry Mountain Rescue Team
- Mayo Mountain Rescue Team
- Mourne Mountain Rescue Team
- North West Mountain Rescue Team

- Search and Rescue Dog Association of Ireland (SARDA)
- Sligo/Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team
- South-Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA)

In its *Annual Report 2021*, Mountain Rescue Ireland states that its eleven member teams responded to 408 incidents in 2021, 114 of which were at night-time. In responding to those incidents, the volunteer members of the Mountain Rescue Teams contributed 14,405 person hours.

The incidents responded to included locating and assisting eighty-nine people who were lost, and searching for fifty-seven people who were reported as missing. For the incidents involving assisting injured people, one hundred and thirty-nine of the casualties had minor injuries, while thirty-nine had serious injuries.

Fourteen of the incidents involved foreign tourists, and twelve people were assisted because they were crag-fast. Sadly, there were twenty-one fatalities among the incidents responded to in this year. ■



Mountaineering Ireland offers its condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives in the Irish uplands in 2021

2022 AGM report

Mountaineering Ireland's 2022 AGM was held on May 10th in Irish Sport HQ and online



By Nicky Hore, Blayney Ramblers

The 2022 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Mountaineering Ireland was held on Tuesday, May 10th, 2022, at 7.00pm. It was the National Governing Body's first hybrid meeting, with members attending in person at Irish Sport HQ and online via Zoom. It was chaired by the Chair of the Board of Directors, **David Pollard**. Thirty clubs were represented at the AGM. There were fifty-three voting members present, which included eight individual members.

Agenda

- Adoption of Standing Orders
- Adoption of Minutes of the 2021 AGM
- Chairperson's Address
- Election to Full Membership of Aspirant Clubs
- Company Secretary's Report
- Approval of Financial Statements for 2021
- Appointment of Auditor for 2022
- Statements regarding Safeguarding and Anti-Doping
- Elections to the Board of Mountaineering Ireland.

The Chairperson, David Pollard, welcomed everyone to the AGM. The standing orders were adopted by the meeting, as were the minutes of the previous AGM, which had been held online on March 29th, 2021.

The Chairperson then presented his address. David said that he believed that 2021 had been a very positive year for Mountaineering Ireland, even though our activities had once again impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was great to be able to at least have a hybrid AGM, he said, and hoped we would all be able to meet in person at the Autumn Gathering later this year.



Last year was a very special one for Mountaineering Ireland, as it had marked 50 years since its formation as the **Federation of Mountaineering Clubs of Ireland (FMCI)** in 1971. While we had not been able to meet to celebrate the anniversary in person, a special **anniversary edition** of the *Irish Mountain Log* had been published.

Membership numbers during 2021 had returned to 2019 levels and it was a pleasure to welcome clubs that had affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland during 2021.

Despite everything, it had been an eventful year for our sport, with climbing making its debut in the Olympics.

At home, we had developed a **Strategic Plan for 2022-2025** and actively contributed to the development of a **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**.

Training had been provided for club leaders and we worked on addressing the lack of experience of many of the new people who had come into our sport during the pandemic.

David expressed his pleasure at the fact that our latest book, *Irish Peaks*, had won the **2021 Guidebook Award** at the prestigious **Banff Mountain Book Competition** and congratulated everyone involved.

He finished by thanking the staff, his Board colleagues and the many other volunteers who had helped Mountaineering Ireland to make all this progress in what had been another difficult year.

The AGM granted full membership to the following four aspirant clubs: **Belfast Youth Climbing Club, 12 O'Clock Hills Recreational & Heritage Project, East Clare Walking Club** and **WKD Wolves**.

The CEO, **Murrough McDonagh**, gave the Company Secretary's Report and then presented the audited accounts for 2021, which showed that there was a small surplus at the end of the year. The accounts were approved by the AGM. The audited accounts can be seen on **www.mountaineering.ie**.

The CEO then updated the meeting on the **Sport Ireland/KOSI report**. (See his comments in the Annual Review, included in this issue).

The re-appointment of **Whiteside Cullinan Chartered Accountants** as auditors for 2022 was approved. As per best practice, the audit will be put out to tender in 2023.

Mountaineering Ireland's statements on **Safeguarding** and **Anti-doping** were read and approved by the meeting.

The meeting then elected **Dave Ayton, Ian Lawler** and **Alistair Wilson** as ordinary members of the Board of Directors of the company.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland extended its thanks to the members who had participated in the AGM in person and online, and to those who had watched it live on YouTube. Thanks were also given to the staff team, who had organised the logistics for Mountaineering Ireland's first hybrid AGM. ■

New appointments



The Board of Directors of Mountaineering Ireland is pleased to announce two recent additions to the staff. The Board welcomes **Michael Duffy** as the new Climbing Development Officer, and **Aron Hegarty** as Communications Officer, and wishes them both the best for their work with Mountaineering Ireland.

Michael Duffy, Climbing Development Officer, Mountaineering Ireland



Michael Duffy was appointed as Mountaineering Ireland's new Climbing Development Officer in March 2022.

Michael believes that Irish climbing is about to enter an exciting stage in its development, and he is happy to be involved in that development going forward, through his new post with Mountaineering Ireland. He is grateful to **Damien O'Sullivan**, the previous Climbing Development Officer, for how he developed the role into what it is today. For the past eight and a half years, Damien has been the cornerstone for the development of the Irish climbing community, and he has played a huge part in its progression, specifically in areas such as sport climbing access, trad climbing camps, competitions and performance youth climbing. Michael says that it is from

these foundations that Irish climbing will continue to grow.

Having started climbing in Ireland at the age of twelve, Michael has always felt a strong connection to the Irish climbing community. During his climbing career, he has had the opportunity to develop many different climbing areas around the country, establishing some high-quality routes and discovering new crags along the way. As a former climbing coach and route-setter, he now hopes to support the development of all forms of climbing in Ireland, including high performance youth climbing.

Working with **Ricky Bell**, last year appointed as Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, Michael feels that the future of Irish climbing is now looking brighter than ever.

Aron Hegarty, Communications Officer, Mountaineering Ireland



Aron Hegarty was appointed to the new post of Communications Officer for Mountaineering Ireland in April 2022. The role will involve developing and implementing a Communications Strategy for the National Governing Body, to help increase awareness of what Mountaineering Ireland does and the supports it can offer its members. Ultimately, Aron hopes to get more people involved in hillwalking and climbing.

Aron previously worked as a Senior Account Manager for a communications agency, handling projects on behalf of JP McManus, such as the JP McManus Pro Am Golf Tournament, Team Limerick Clean-Up and All-Ireland Scholarships.

He has a background in journalism, communications and public relations and has also worked for organisations

such as the Rugby Players' Association and the London Youth Games. Aron has also worked in aviation as a customer service representative for Etihad Airways, Emirates Airline and Aer Lingus.

Aron enjoys walking and being in the great outdoors. He is keen to learn how best he can represent Mountaineering Ireland and its members, and showcase its range of events and activities to a wider audience.

His goal under the new Strategic Plan for 2022-25 is to make Mountaineering Ireland the 'go-to' organisation for hillwalkers and climbers, and accessible to everyone.

Aron welcomes members' ideas, feedback or suggestions, so that he and the organisation might better serve their needs. He can be contacted by email at aron@mountaineering.ie.



The team on the first Mountaineering Ireland volunteer day at Croagh Patrick, on March 30th this year (from left): Mary Murphy, Noel Brady, Frank McMahon (Croagh Patrick Path Team), Betty Walsh, Phil McHale, Brian Gillivan and John O'Callaghan

Croagh Patrick path-building

Phil McHale reports on his experience volunteering with the Croagh Patrick Path Team

The **Croagh Patrick Path Team** has been hard at work on the path up the Reek for well over a year now.

They have already made remarkable progress in their task to address the erosion that has resulted from the footfall on Croagh Patrick, through specialised path repair and habitat restoration techniques.

Ascending the path from the car park, you soon see signs of their efforts – natural stone steps, water-bars to direct run-off downhill, clean pathways and clear path edging to prevent further erosion. It is only when you reach an untreated stretch of the path that you can clearly see how badly eroded much of the path was before the work started, and how much work is needed to complete the repair of the route to the summit.

That is where **Mountaineering Ireland** stepped in and contacted several hillwalking groups to see if there were any volunteers willing to help the Path Team one or two days a fortnight. There was a positive response, and interested volunteers had a Zoom call

with the path manager, **Matt McConway**, who outlined the work to be done and what volunteers could expect. Undaunted – in fact, quite excited – I signed up and, on the appointed day, met five other volunteers and **Frank McMahon** from the Path Team, who issued us with work gloves and walked us up to that day's work site, just below the 'Shoulder,' the col halfway up.

We were warmly greeted by the other full-time Path Team members – **Matt, Dave, Bernard** and **Tulio** – already well into their day's tasks, and we were set to work. We were offered a variety of things to do and we rotated round as the day went on. I started working

with a partner on digging an uphill trench beside the path to divert surface water down to a lower water-bar and off the path. This involved pick-and-shovel work and sieving the loosened rock and dirt through an ingeniously re-purposed supermarket wire basket. Everything was recycled – the finer dirt was used to fill gaps in previously set rocks, and the pebbles and rocks were used to back-fill the stones set up to edge the path.

I also spent some time working on path edging, again using readily available rocks from beside the path. I was soon well able to bandy about path maintenance terms such as 'revetment' like an old hand!

We also spent one day working off the path, removing the intrusive rock graffiti spread around the hillside, so it was adios to 'Raphael' and auf wiedersehen to 'Hoffman,' among many others.

The hard work was relieved by welcome lunch and snack breaks, but even more so by the lively craic and banter among the team and volunteers, and the appreciative comments that we got from hikers going up and down the path. They were universally thankful for all the efforts made so far.

At the end of each day's volunteering, it was always a pleasure to look back up the path to where we had been working and to see the clear and tangible evidence of our efforts. I'll certainly be back up tomorrow!

► The Croagh Patrick Volunteer Programme is a joint initiative between Mountaineering Ireland and the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group, to help deliver the Croagh Patrick Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project. ■

AUTHOR: Phil McHale is a member of the Westport Hillwalkers.



Phil McHale and Mary Murphy at work on the Croagh Patrick path

Gráinne McLaughlin, Chair of the Mountaineering Ireland Hillwalking Committee, walking in the Dublin Mountains



THE HILLWALKING COMMITTEE

A report by Ruth Whelan on a meeting of the committee on May 9th

This was Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee's first in-person meeting for twenty-seven months. It was preceded by the introduction of three of our four new members, **Claire Brennan**, **Jim McHale** and **Brian Kennan**. Due to prior commitments, the fourth new member, **Peter Wright**, was unable to attend. Also in attendance were Chairperson, **Gráinne McLaughlin**, Secretary, **Ruth Whelan**, and members **Gerard Reidy**, **Marian Wallis** and **Pat Macken**.

Communications Officer

Aron Hegarty, Mountaineering Ireland's new **Communications Officer**, was invited to meet the committee. Aron spoke of his role to create a shop window for all strands within Mountaineering Ireland. Committee members offered suggestions for his priorities from a hillwalking perspective. Some ideas put forward included:

- Create a platform to encourage members to network and engage with each other.
- Promote a list of mountains to be hiked around the country, e.g. continue

to promote the Arderins (official list of Irish summits). This might also appeal to and attract a younger audience.

- Continue our connections with relevant organisations such as the Irish Girl Guides, one of whose core values is leadership. This would also tie in with the aim of increasing female participation at all levels of hillwalking.

Hillwalking Development Officer

Ruth Whelan, Mountaineering Ireland's **Hillwalking Development Officer**, gave an overview of her work on projects that would be of interest to the committee. These included:

- A pilot programme for teenage girls, **Summit Sisters**, which targets girls not involved in sports, to involve them in the outdoors and challenge them to bring their creativity to the hills. The pilot involves a group of Transition Year students from a school in County Waterford with activities in the Comeragh Mountains. Once the pilot is completed and evaluated, it is intended the project will be rolled out around the country.
- Ruth is currently collaborating with **Get Ireland Walking** to develop a **Hillwalking Community Programme**. A pilot is being run in Cork in conjunction with **Cork Sports Partnership** and the **Active Community** walking groups, and



will also incorporate local instructors and clubs.

- **Women with Altitude:** the latest event was held in Kerry on May 13-15th and was based in Cronin's Yard at the foot of Carrauntoohil (See report, p55).
- The **Mountaineering Ireland Strategic Plan 2022-2025** has been finalised and will be available online and in hard copy.
- Three new clubs have become affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland in the past month. Membership has increased and is now above the 2019 figure, standing at just over 15,000.
- The AGM on May 10th was recorded and is available on the YouTube channel.
- A **Members' Forum** will be held on June 7th for all questions arising during the year.

Communication platforms

Mountaineering Ireland's new **website** will be launched shortly, with improved sections on hillwalking. This will help promote messaging and increase Mountaineering Ireland's visibility.

It was suggested that photos of the new committee members be sent out on Instagram, Facebook and e-zine, with a short note about them.

A request was published in the spring issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* for clubs to submit club profiles for publication. A further reminder will be sent out to encourage clubs to participate in this opportunity.



Youth hillwalking pathway

Mountaineering Ireland launched a new subcommittee to increase the participation of young people in hillwalking. The main aim is to identify a pathway for young people (from age five to 26 years) to access hillwalking. Three Hillwalking Committee members volunteered to assist Ruth Whelan in identifying how best to progress this. We plan to develop this to a stage where an approach to Sport Ireland can be made for specific funds to promote the development of the pathway.

Engagement with Mountain Rescue

Due to a number of critical incidents on the hills over the past few months, resulting in fatalities, it is considered vital to have a plan to support members to deal with the aftermath of these. Ruth Whelan has contacted **Mountain Rescue Ireland**, who have guidelines for debriefing people after critical incidents. They are going to tailor these guidelines for use by Mountaineering Ireland's clubs. Once completed, they will be included in the club handbook.

Risk assessment and leadership

Discussions were held in relation to whether to have a risk assessment template for clubs. It was agreed that the best approach would be to provide best practice advice and to educate people to be personally responsible, rather than the emphasis being on the leader assessing all the risk.

Mapping

About one hundred members provided feedback on the OSi 1:50,000 maps (not gone to print yet). We have contacted OSi to arrange workshops to provide other opportunities for feedback. Two members volunteered to compile a list of what information should be presented on

hiking maps, based on previous feedback provided by club members.

Another query posed to the committee was on the matter of consistency of place-names on maps, and that errors should be rectified. Our priority is to give feedback to map-makers on the necessary information required for hillwalking.

The Arderins

A **logo** has been chosen to promote the Arderins list of mountain peaks.

Challenge walks

A list of challenge walks has been added to the Mountaineering Ireland website – see bit.ly/challengewalks. This is not an endorsement of the events but a calendar to provide information.

Only clubs affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland, who organise their own events and sign our commitment statement, can submit events to be promoted on our social media outlets and in the *Irish Mountain Log* and e-zine.

Hillwalking Committee meetings

The next two meetings of the committee will be held on September 19th and December 12th, 2022.

► If you have any feedback or suggestions for the Hillwalking Committee, please contact ruth@mountaineering.ie. ■



► **Ruth Whelan** is Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer.



Get Ireland Walking Annual Review 2021

By Linda Sankey, Get Ireland Walking

We report on our main campaigns in 2021 in the Get Ireland Walking section of Mountaineering Ireland's *Annual Review 2021* (see page 40), but here, we expand further on other areas of our work in 2021. Overall, despite the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a successful year and we had 2,463 registered walking groups and clubs by the end of it.

Campaigns

■ 'Keep Walking, Keep Well' walking campaign

In partnership with **Sport Ireland** and **Get Ireland Walking**, the **GAA, FAI, IRFU, Hockey Ireland, Athletics Ireland** and **Cricket Ireland** opened up community walking routes in their grounds around the country to allow people of all ages and abilities to have a safe space to walk.

■ National Walking Day 2021

A second annual **National Walking Day** took place on Sunday, September 26th, 2021, as part of European Week of Sport.



Strategies

Following consultation with our stakeholders, Get Ireland Walking's new **Strategic Plan 2022-2024** and our **Communications Strategy 2022-2024** were developed and launched.

Programmes

■ Woodlands for Health reboot webinar 2021

We held a **Woodlands for Health** webinar with national and local partners. The guest speaker was **Dr Eddie Murphy**, while other speakers included **Liam Cantwell, Limerick Sports Partnership, Tadhg McIntyre, Maynooth University** and **Miffy Hoad** from **Mental Health Ireland**.

■ Active School Walkway

Our **Active School Walkway** got a new uniform! The updated Walkway signs have lots of new challenges designed to help pupils to learn about colour, flags, time and shapes.

■ Active Community Walking Programme

The **Active Community Walking Programme** in partnership with **the Local Sports Partnerships** was rebooted in 2021.

■ Active Hillwalking Programme Prescription

A new programme was developed with Mountaineering Ireland and the Local Sports Partnerships, as a follow-on from the Active Community Walking Programme.

■ CONNECT Social Walking Prescription

Referral to this programme is through Social Prescribers.

■ Walking the Talk

In partnership with the **Men's Development Network**, a gender-specific walking programme was piloted.

Events and Communications

Summary: 'Keep Walking Keep Well' walking campaign (300 clubs); four-week National Walking Day campaign; promotion on RTÉ 1's *Nationwide* television show; Get Ireland Walking app; Get Ireland Walking podcast; 21-Day Walking Challenge; local and national radio, magazine and press releases, including four articles in the *Irish Mountain Log*, and continued website refresh.

■ App

An app was developed to support the 'Keep Walking, Keep Well' walking campaign, with 300 clubs registered. The 21-Day Walking Challenge is a permanent feature on the app. The app keeps a record of a user's walking every day. By tracking how long or how far the users walk, they will see proof of their improvements and receive tips and encouragements along the challenge!

■ Podcast

The Get Ireland Walking podcast was launched in May 2021. Presented by researcher **Dylan Power** and myself, the podcast shines a light on walking researchers, people who deliver walking programmes and events, and real walkers.

Research

The **systems mapping study** has progressed to the next phase. This has seen the development of an interdisciplinary steering group, who are putting structures in place to implement some of the solutions that arose from the workshops in June 2020. Data collection has begun for Study 2, which is an evaluation of the national level walking promotion network, including forty-two organisations. Timepoint 1 was in March 2021, with plans in place for a second Timepoint in March 2022.

It was then planned to conduct a local-level partnership evaluation in the first quarter of 2022, to compare with the national level.

Study 3 will focus on the nature of walking-related data collection in Ireland. ■



Dylan Power, Get Ireland Walking researcher



Jason King (Get Ireland Walking), left, with Minister Frank Feighan TD and others at the launch of Walk21 Ireland in TU Dublin, Grangegorman, on April 28th.

Walk21 Ireland launched in Dublin

By Linda Sankey, Get Ireland Walking

Walk21 Ireland was launched in Dublin by the Minister of State for Public Health and Wellbeing, **Frank Feighan TD**, on April 28th, 2022.

At the launch, the Minister, together with students from Dublin 7 Educate Together, celebrated the importance of walking with a lively morning walk around the grounds of TU Dublin's Grangegorman Campus. The **22nd Walk21 International Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities** will take place across Ireland in September.

The morning walk in Grangegorman included a Q&A with the students on the value of walking in their daily lives, and the benefits of walking for health, wellbeing and climate change.

The importance of the youth voice in leading the way on climate change will be reflected in the programme in September, with a Youth Forum kickstarting the conference.

Walk21 Ireland will bring together leading international visionaries and change-makers from across the world and local environmental experts, community and youth activists, academics and politicians, to share the very best of ideas and explore how walking can play a role in building a resilient, healthy, sustainable and safe future for all.

The conference is supported by the **Department of Health**, the **Department of Transport** and the **Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media**, on behalf of the Government of Ireland, and by non-profit organisations from across the sport, health and transport sectors, including **Get Ireland Walking**.

Minister Frank Feighan said, "We are looking forward to engaging with Walk21 attendees in our capital city, with its medieval centre, walkable streets, generous public parks, modern architecture and rich layers of history, literature and music. The mission of Walk21 fits very well with how TU Dublin

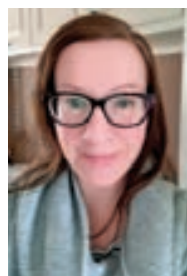
views the interdependent opportunities to embrace sustainability in the world around us, as described in our three strategic pillars of People, Planet and Partnership.

"A tangible example of our vision for sustainability at TU Dublin is our venue for this event today, the University's Grangegorman Campus, which was designed as a walkable, car-free, public transport-accessible part of the city centre. Grangegorman has incorporated sustainability principles from the outset, which encourage public permeability and use of the campus as urban parkland, with hundreds of walkers, runners, and cyclists using the campus each day."

Walk21 Ireland aims to advance the international agenda, inspiring countries across the globe to invest in walking as a mode of achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

It also aims to leave a lasting legacy in Ireland, empowering local authorities, agencies and community groups to support more people walking and to make places more walkable.

The event directly supports and actively implements key interdependent national policies and strategies in Ireland, including the Climate Action Plan, the National Planning Framework, the National Physical Activity Plan, the National Sports Policy, Our Rural Future, the Community Enhancement Programme, the Healthy Ireland Framework and the upcoming Sustainability Mobility Policy. ■



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

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

Native yellow rattle in
wildflower meadow

Beware wildflower seed mixes

A message from the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club, by **Rosaleen Fitzgerald**

In recent times, the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club has become concerned at the use of wildflower seed mixes in public places in very many towns and villages all over the country. Our concern is based on the fact that these seed mixes contain species that displace the native flora, often permanently.

The plant species that these mixes contain are often not of local or Irish origin and, while they may be colourful, they may offer little advantage by way of pollen or nectar to our native insects. In addition, they are not capable of sustaining themselves where they are planted, because they are not in their natural habitat.

Even where the seed mixes contain

species of Irish origin, they can still have a negative impact, as the seed may have been gathered in a completely different part of the country. Sowing this seed will introduce plants that may have different characteristics to those growing naturally in your area.

The **National Biodiversity Data Centre**, the promoter of the **All-Ireland Pollinator Plan**, has now discouraged the use of wildflower seeds. Its advice may be found at <https://pollinators.ie> (go to 'The Buzz' on the website and search for 'Wildflower Seed Mixes').

By simply changing the mowing regime, amazing wildflowers like **Dandelion**, **clovers**, **Self-heal**, **Cowslip** and **Bird's-foot-trefoil** may naturally pop up, year

after year, at no cost. These common flowers will provide nutrients for our pollinator-insects' needs. Remember that the majority of our native insects and other fauna are neither consumers of pollen nor nectar, and so have their own criteria for beauty!

Similarly, if you have an area that has been disturbed or remodelled, just leave it to colonise naturally. The initial pioneer species will soon be succeeded by a range of plants that are well adapted to your local conditions. You also would be helping biodiversity by doing this... and you may have to slightly modify your concept of a weed!

By reviving pockets of natural grassland meadows and verges, no matter how tiny, the collective benefit to wildlife would be enormous.

The Dublin Naturalist's Field Club has produced a position paper on this called **Wildflower Seed Mixtures**, which is available free on: bit.ly/dnfc-seeds.

If you are involved with a local Tidy Towns committee or a gardening club, we would be grateful if you would share that paper with those groups. ■



The native common dog-violet



AUTHOR: Rosaleen Fitzgerald is a member of the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club and the Irish Ramblers Club.



2022 pre-monsoon season on Everest

Two Irish mountaineers summited. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports



Jonathan Ruane

Six Irish mountaineers attempted to climb **Mount Everest** (8,848m) in the pre-monsoon season this year. Two reached the summit, but the others were forced to withdraw at various stages of the ascent.

Jonathan Ruane from Sligo was the first Irishman to reach the summit this year, getting there in the early hours of May 15th, the first ever person from his county to get there.

Robert Smith, originally from Tyrone and now living in Scotland, also got to the summit, on May 20th. He is a professional mountaineer and was guiding for **Madison Mountaineering**, an American company that organises guided expeditions in the Greater Ranges. This was Robert's seventh successful ascent of Everest.

Mícheál Brogan from Tyrone, **Diarmuid Morrissey** from Westmeath, **Miko Keane** from Galway and **James McManus** from Tipperary also attempted the climb, but unfortunately

had to turn back. This was Miko Keane's second attempt to climb Everest; previous to this he had successfully made the fourth Irish ascent of **Manaslu**.

As reported in the Spring 2022 issue of the Log, **James McManus**, director of the Irish adventure travel company **Earth's Edge**, was attempting to make the first Irish ascent of Everest without supplementary oxygen. His acclimatisation had gone well. He was on his third rotation on the mountain and planning to try for the summit the next day, when the weather deteriorated with very high winds, which made progress impossible and forced him to withdraw to base camp. However, James did very well to get to 7,850m on Everest without the use of supplementary oxygen and on his first attempt at an 8,000m peak. Unfortunately, he appears to have also developed pulmonary oedema, fluid in his lungs, and was subsequently evacuated from base camp to a



James McManus

hospital in Kathmandu. Happily, he recovered quickly and was soon able to return to Ireland, where he is already talking about a further attempt at an 8,000m peak without supplementary oxygen.

In other Everest-related news, it seems that the Nepalese government is preparing to move Everest Base Camp from its present location at the lower end of the Khumbu glacier to a site at a lower altitude, because the effects of global warming and human activity on the glacier are making it unsafe. Up to 1,500 people used base camp this spring.

Meltwater destabilises the glacier and climbers say crevasses are increasingly appearing at base camp while they sleep. Everest Base Camp is currently at 5,364m; the new site for the camp will be 200-400m lower, where there is no year-round glacial ice. ■



Robert Smith

With additional reporting from www.irishsevensummits.com

Women's Rock Festival in the Burren this July

Freja Shannon, Anastasija Strizakova and Aly Coyle extend an invitation to women climbers

Ireland's very first rock climbing festival organised by women, for women, will be held in the Burren, Co Clare, from Friday evening, July 15th, until mid-day Sunday, July 17th, 2022.

It will be a weekend full of outdoor rock-climbing (traditional and bouldering), participant workshops, morning yoga, inspirational talks, chats, laughter and so much more!

Our mission is to empower women to become more independent, courageous and mindful climbers. We strive to provide a safe space where women can learn and grow through the means of various workshops, a day out with a new climbing partner, or maybe just an insightful conversation with a friend.

We want to introduce women of all shapes, backgrounds and abilities to each other, so that they connect and network, plan exciting future adventures together or simply have someone to share a laugh with.

We hope to create a community of strong, like-minded women to encourage and inspire. So, head over to our website, www.womensrockfestival.ie, and have a look!

Happy climbing! ■



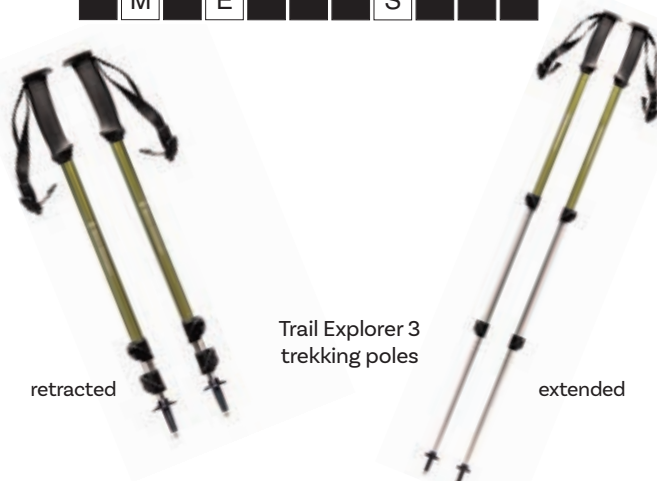
Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, presents the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, with a copy of *Irish Peaks* when he joined Mountaineering Ireland's recent Mountain Environment Walk in the Slieve Blooms. For more on this event, see page 56.



Crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 141 was **Tim McKenna** from **Templeogue, Dublin 6W**, who won a pair of Trail Explorer 3 trekking poles, a prize worth €100.00 from our crossword sponsor Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to inform him how to collect his prize.

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retracted

Trail Explorer 3
trekking poles

extended

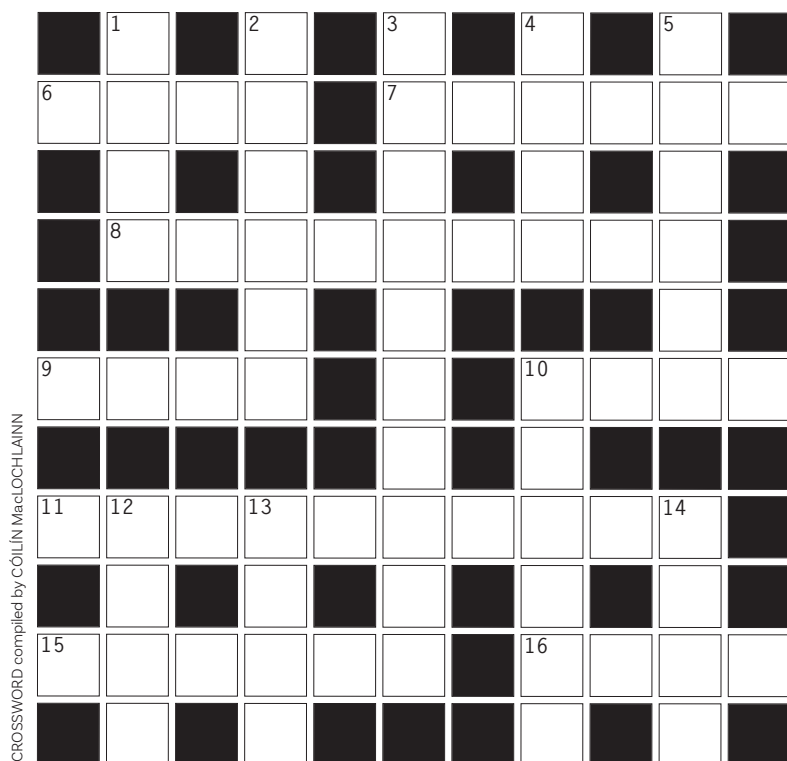




Crossword

Summer 2022 Competition

Win a great prize from **Basecamp** if your correct completed entry is the first or second drawn from the hat!



Clues Across

- 6 County where Wild Nephin is found (4).
- 7 The works of a writer or painter, taken as a whole (6).
- 8 Climbing equipment company founded by the late Douglas Tompkins and his wife Susie (5,4).
- 9 A great lake (4).
- 10 Prehistoric circular enclosure (fort or dwelling) (4).
- 11 Reptilian lake in Hyde Park (10).
- 15 Depression or cavity at mouth of volcano (6).
- 16 Walk that circles back to where it began (4).

Clues Down

- 1 Small mountain lake, often in 2 Down (4).
- 2 A cirque or hollow in the side of a mountain (6).
- 3 Second highest mountain in Germany (10).
- 4 Name of mountain range in eastern France, also Scottish island north of Islay (4).
- 5 The far east (6).
- 10 Irish Alpinist and mapmaker Anthony Adams-? (6).
- 12 Green and pleasant land; no, the Irish one (6).
- 13 A narrow walk or way travelled on foot (4).
- 14 Greek god of love (4).



WIN

A Jetboil Flash camp stove plus MSR gas canister, a prize worth approx. €160.00

Jetboil Flash camp stove
(it boils water in 100 seconds!)
plus
an MSR gas canister to go with it



How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth approximately €160.00 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.



Basecamp Outdoor Store, Dublin
Website: www.basecamp.ie

Cut out this page, or photocopy or scan it, and send your completed entry to The Editor, Irish Mountain Log, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, or by email to info@mountaineering.ie, to arrive not later than Friday, August 26th, 2022. Don't forget to include your full name, address and membership number with your entry as well as a telephone number and email address where you can be contacted. The winner will be announced in the Autumn 2022 issue of the Log.

Competition prizes

Basecamp is generously offering a prize of a **Jetboil Flash camp stove**, together with an **MSR gas canister**, for this competition, a prize worth approximately €160.00.

Living with Lyme disease

Lyme disease sufferer Angela Daly warns of the risk from tick bites

Like most people who are living with chronic Lyme disease, I cling to the memories of how I was before I became ill. Brought up on a farm and used to hard work, I was always strong and fit. Living in west Wicklow, I loved to walk in the hills, until I began to develop a mix of curious symptoms: not being able to run back up the stairs without breathing difficulties, needing to sleep a couple of times a day but feeling 'hungover' when I woke, the sudden onset of tinnitus, joint pain without exertion and, worst of all in my case, a mix of neurological symptoms that come with a constant sensation of having a swollen brain – giving me, at times, poor balance, failing memory, deteriorating handwriting and difficulty with simple cognitive processes.

I was a busy television producer with two very young children when I became ill. The challenge for the first two years was trying

to find medics in this country who could recognise and treat this multi-systemic attack on my body. I am still looking and, this is the critical point, you do not want to develop Lyme disease, because for the most part in this country it is a 'contested illness,' with no coordinated pathway to treatment and recovery.

Raising awareness is crucial – living with Lyme disease steals your life away. Six years in, I continue to struggle. I have not been able to return to my job. My children and husband have to work around my disabling symptoms.

Of course, you never know if a tick bite will infect you. If the tick is carrying the infection, the outcome may depend on your own immune system. However, do take those few seconds to check yourself for ticks, when you come in from a hike or from the garden. It could save your life. ■



Tick awareness project in Clare

By Eoin Hogan (Rural Recreation Officer, Clare Local Development Company)

Readers of the *Irish Mountain Log* are passionate about the outdoors. Ireland is generally a safe place for exploring the woods, forests and uplands, and you are very unlikely to encounter a dangerous animal during your day, if you take reasonable precautions. However, one of the often unseen dangers of the outdoors here is from ticks.

Ticks are tiny external parasites that are arthropods related to spiders, mites and scorpions. The adult form is 3-5mm in length and lives by feeding on the blood of mammals and birds, and sometimes reptiles and amphibians.

Ticks are common in many parts of Ireland. In temperate climates, they are more active when temperatures are higher.

There is a high-risk period for ticks and tick bites, which runs from April to October in Ireland, during which ticks are more active in seeking out hosts. When they bite humans, infected ticks may transmit Lyme disease.

In Ireland, Lyme disease is an increasingly common bacterial infection transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. Symptoms are wide-ranging and can include rash, fever, fatigue, muscle soreness, tingling, neuropathy, light sensitivity, headache, nausea, vomiting, heart complications, face paralysis and hearing loss.

I am the Rural Recreation Officer with **Clare Local Development Company** and I have just completed a **Tick Awareness Project**. The aim of the project was to increase awareness of the dangers of ticks. This was undertaken through a number of project elements:



■ Interactive marker posts

Signs were developed with near-field communication chips, allowing walkers to 'tap' the sign with their phones, in the same way you might pay in a shop with your debit card. This opens a dedicated website, **www.ticks.ie**, on your phone, giving you more information on ticks and Lyme disease. These interactive signs are installed at the end of looped and long-distance trails in County Clare.

■ Tickcards and holder

Branded tickcards were purchased and a tickcard holder custom-made to display the cards. The tickcard holders are located in cafés, restaurants and shops near the end of trails, or on the trail where this is not possible. If trail users are concerned they may have a tick, they can take a tick card to remove it.

■ Promotional poster

A promotional poster was

designed and printed and displayed in cafés, restaurants and shops near trailheads.

■ Dedicated website

A dedicated website, www.ticks.ie, was developed to host up-to-date information on the dangers of ticks.

The project was developed in partnership with, and part-funded by, the **Lyme Resource Centre**. Samples of the project elements have been distributed to other parts of Ireland that have recorded high tick numbers. The project is also being replicated in Scotland.

► The Tick Awareness Project was funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme. ■



Be tick aware! Ticks can carry disease

Most tick bites are sustained in spring and summer

By Patrick O'Sullivan

During the spring and summer months anyone who spends time in grasslands and woodlands should be vigilant against tick bites. Ticks are tiny, insect-like creatures that feed on the blood of birds and mammals, including humans. A small proportion of ticks carry a bacterial infection that causes **Lyme disease** or **Lyme borreliosis**, which may be transmitted to humans when they are bitten. In a minority of cases, Lyme disease can cause debilitating heart and nervous system disorders. About one hundred cases of Lyme disease are recorded in Ireland each year.

People who spend time walking through bracken or in woodlands in Ireland can reduce the risk of tick bites by covering up, tucking the ends of their trousers into their socks, or wearing gaiters, and using a DEET-containing insect repellent on exposed skin.

At the end of your walk, you should check your skin for ticks. If you find any, you should remove them carefully, trying not to leave any mouth-parts behind.



You should check the area of the bite from time to time over the following few weeks for any redness or swelling. If you develop these or any other symptoms in the following few weeks, you should consult your family doctor and tell them you were bitten by a tick.

Only a minority of ticks carry this infection. If the tick is removed within a few hours, the risk of developing Lyme disease is low. Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. Untreated, it can cause chronic health problems.

► Further information can be obtained about Lyme disease from the national **Health Protection Surveillance Centre's** website, www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/LymeDisease. ■

MountainViews' annual gathering returns

By Patrick O'Sullivan

With the easing of restrictions, **MountainViews** was again able to hold its annual gathering face-to-face. "An Irish Mountain Gathering" was held in the Lansdowne Hotel in Dublin on May 6th. It was a very enjoyable evening, especially as so many had not been able to meet for so long.

The gathering was treated to excellent talks by mountain ultra-runner **Richard Nunan**, MountainViews webmaster **Simon Stewart** and veteran Munroist **Anne Morrissey**.

There was then an extended awards ceremony, as MountainViews caught up with the backlog of awards to be given to the many walkers who had used the lockdowns to tackle one of the lists of highest mountains, as restrictions allowed.

The most important awards of the evening went to the three people who had completed ascents of all of the **Arderins**, a list of the 406 mountains on



Helen Lawless with her award for outstanding contribution to mountaineering, at this year's MountainViews Gathering.

the island of Ireland that are 500+ metres in height with a prominence of at least 30m. **Simon Stewart**, **Fergal**

Hingerty and **Eamon O'Callaghan** each received an award for completing this impressive achievement. Fergal and Eamon were also given an award for completing the **Arderin Bogs** as well!

Amongst the special awards that were given was one for an Outstanding Contribution, which was given to **Helen Lawless**, Mountaineering Ireland Access & Conservation Officer, for her work on the book *Irish Peaks*, published by Mountaineering Ireland in 2020. ■

Situations vacant



Basecamp are recruiting Sales Assistants and Assistant Managers for their shops.

If you are interested in applying, contact Basecamp at info@basecamp.ie.

Ancient amphitheatre at
Pinara on the Lycian Way

THE LYCIAN WAY: A TOP TEN WALK

Walking in the footsteps of ancient civilisations

Regina Flynn reports on a Galway Walking Club trip to the Lycian Way in Turkey

April 2022 saw an excited group of nineteen hillwalkers from **Galway Walking Club** set off on a 12-day trip to Turkey, to walk part of the Lycian Way and in Cappadocia. Cool cities, diverse countryside, captivating coastlines and new hillwalking challenges awaited us.

The **Lycian Way** is a marked long-distance trail stretching over 500 kilometres in south-western Turkey, spanning part of the coastline of ancient

Lycia. It is a stunning and beautiful walk and is a route of historical, archaeological and cultural significance. It has been described by *The Sunday Times* as one of the world's ten best walks.

The Lycians, who lived in the prehistoric Bronze Age, used this route as a footpath and a mule trail. According to historians, this strategic route enabled the Lycians to engage in sea-trading and piracy. In later times, the region was occupied by the Persians and then ancient Greeks, followed in turn by

the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Rock tombs in the steep hills and sarcophagi testify to the Lycian civilisation.

The route links twenty ancient cities along the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts. It stretches from Ovaçık to Konyaltii, near Antalya, and is way-marked in red and white stripes.

A British woman, **Kate Clow**, living in this part of Turkey, conceived the idea of the trail and, with the help of volunteers, the route was opened in 1999. Her

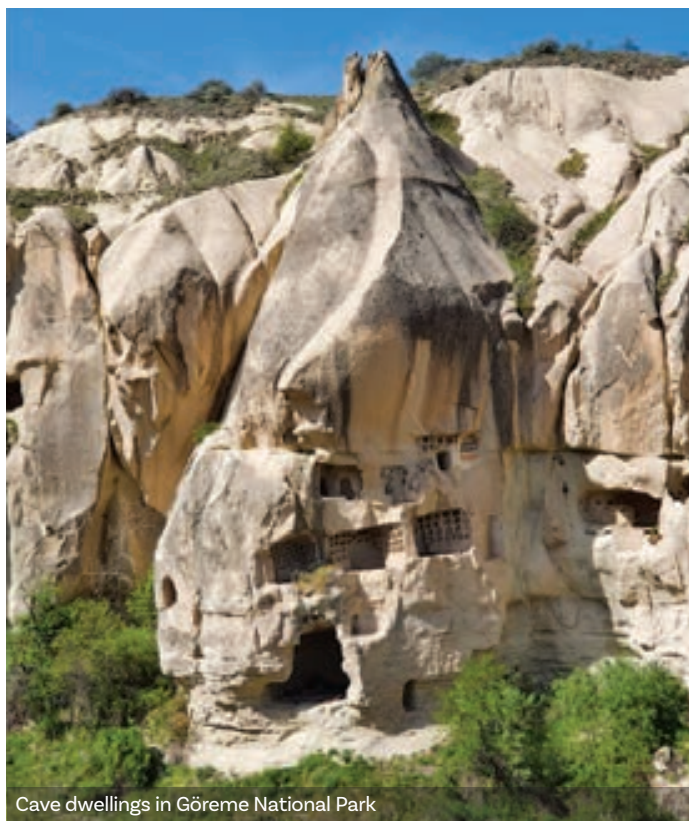
guidebook, *The Lycian Way: Turkey's first long distance route*, describes each stage of the trail.

Our guide, **Ismet**, a dynamic Turkish woman, and our driver **Şukrû**, were waiting at Dalaman airport to transport us to our hotel for the next two nights in **Ovaçık**. Our hotel was beautiful, furnished in traditional Turkish colours and décor. Fresh, bountiful food each day was served up to us by friendly, efficient waiters.

We had an exhilarating, diverse six days of

View from amphitheatre along the Lycian Way

Club member Tom Rea in the largest amphitheatre in ancient city of Myra



Cave dwellings in Göreme National Park

challenging walking on rocky mule paths and limestone trails. The terrain varied from steep, rocky footpaths to cobbled paths. Ascents ranged from 150m to 550m and, on average, a distance of 12 kilometres was covered each day.

Highlights of the route included the Blue Lagoon, the Butterfly Valley, the ancient

city of Pinara, Simena Sunken City, the ancient city of Myra – which has the biggest amphitheatre on the Lycian Way – and the Flames of Chimaera (flaming rock). Ismet kept us enthralled, recalling the fascinating background, history and culture of the Lycian civilisation.

The second week we were



Club members at the Fairy Chimneys in Göreme National Park



Myra city on the Lycian Way

driven 500 kilometres by minibus to **Göreme** in **Cappadocia**. We stopped in Konya to visit the incredible, hidden city of **Derinkuyu** (with eight floors, 64m underground) which was carved as a shelter in times of siege and continuous raids, under the plains of Central Anatolia.

We spent two days walking in nearby valleys from our hotel base in Göreme.

Cappadocia is a region of incredible beauty and is famous for its enchanting cave dwellings. All across the region, particularly throughout **Göreme National Park**, one will find former homes carved into the rock faces, where Christian communities lived up until 1952. The formations and colours of the cave dwellings and complexes in the Meskendir and Red Valleys were mesmerising.

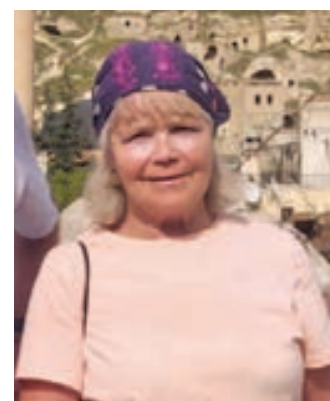
We finished there with a thrilling, sunrise, hot-air balloon trip that swept us up and over the volcanic peaks and the alluring honey-hued, hard rock formations that are widely known as **Fairy Chimneys**. Our pilot expertly steered the balloon onto a trailer at the end, much to the awe of the group. A champagne breakfast awaited us on our descent to terra firma.

Finally, at Kayseri airport,

we bade farewell to Ismet, our wonderful, knowledgeable and super-fit guide and leader.

We finished off the trip with a few days in **Istanbul** with guided visits to the Topkapi Palace, the Hagia Sophia Mosque and other cultural and historical places. Walking continued to be our daily activity in Istanbul and none of us had any problem sleeping soundly each night!

This trip was a memorable and somewhat intense experience, filled with captivating, diverse scenery, interesting walks, and layers of history and culture. Steep cliffs, mysterious caves and balmy temperatures contributed to the immense joy we experienced and the memories we will cherish of this walking holiday. ■



➤ **Regina Flynn** is a member of Galway Walking Club.

Áine McGuinness, Daragh Pender, Jack Hogan, Áine Collins and Niamh Sheehan on their Winter Skills training course in Glencoe, Scotland



A YEAR OF TRAINING

Niamh Sheehan reports on UCD Mountaineering Club's training programme

This year has been a whirlwind one for **UCD Mountaineering Club**. As the club resumed its activities post-Covid-19, the club's committee has been busier than ever. With the increasing number of people wanting to try something new and explore the outdoors, the year saw over one thousand students sign up to join the club!

As a club, we have climbing sessions four times a week, a weekly club hike in the Wicklow Mountains and a number of club trips throughout the year, around Ireland and to Wales.

With the large number of new club members, it was essential that training was provided to all committee members so that they would be able to teach at the climbing wall and to lead club hikes.

Summer 2021 saw the beginning of the training for the incoming committee. As Club Training Officer, my job was to organise the necessary courses by linking in with various training providers. The first course over the summer was a

Mountain Skills 2 course with **Brian Bateson**. For me, this was my first time ever using a map and compass in practice, so it was safe to say I learned a lot!

This course took place over two days in Glendalough, hiking and navigating around Camaderry and Derrybawn. We learned a number of skills, from navigating in different conditions, pacing and safety in the mountains, to movement skills over

steep ground. These skills were extremely useful for us all when we resumed club hikes in September.

The next course for the committee was a **Rescue and Emergency Care Level 3 (REC3)** course with **Pat Reid**. Over two days, we learned basic first aid and wilderness care skills. The first aid was taught through theoretical and practical elements. We learned about the protocols for calling mountain rescue

and the necessary first equipment to bring on our club hikes. These skills came in handy on our second club hike of the year, to Djouce, when we had two injured hikers, one of whom required first aid intervention and a call to Mountain Rescue.

The next training course we undertook was a site-specific one at the UCD Climbing Wall with **Brian Bateson**. Brian taught us how to correctly instruct

Áine Collins and Áine McGuinness being instructed by Fionnuala Donnelly in Dalkey Quarry



new members on tying in and belaying for both top roping and lead climbing. This course was invaluable for getting to know the best way to instruct new members, with a strong emphasis on safety. As a committee, we instruct new members during training times until they are competent to pass their belay test. The training we received from Brian was a great way to learn how best to deliver instruction to new members.

Another course we completed late in the summer was 'Learn to Lead' with **Johnny Parr**. This course was aimed at both committee members and competent lead belayers, to learn the basics of climbing outdoors. This course was well-received, as it gave climbers the confidence to begin to climb outdoors.

In September, we received an email from **Damien O'Sullivan** regarding Female Trad Mentoring with the support of Mountaineering Ireland. We jumped at this



Members of UCD Mountaineering Club on top of Mullaghcleevaun in the Wicklow Mountains

opportunity and six of us received a day of mentoring in Dalkey Quarry with **Fionnuala Donnelly**. We learned more about placing trad gear and building different types of anchors. It was great to work with a female instructor like Fionnuala, as she gave us the confidence to progress our outdoor climbing skills.

With funding from

Mountaineering Ireland, in November, a number of club members took part in **Fundamentals 1 and 2** in Gravity Climbing Gym. This course was great for club members to learn about movement skills and climbing techniques.

The most exciting training of the year was the **Winter Skills** course in Glencoe, Scotland. For this, I organised two training courses, a beginners group, who did three days of training, and an advanced group, who did two days of training. As a participant in the beginners group, I learned how to use crampons and ice axes, and how to build snow anchors. The advanced group worked on more technical winter skills. We were all blown away by the size and beauty of the Scottish mountains and are very keen to head back there again.

Overall, these training sessions have been great in the development and upskilling of both committee and club members. Heading into the end of the college year with a new committee incoming, the training continues. Before summer, we will have twelve members taking part in Mountain Skills 2 and eight taking part in Learn to Lead with **Ambrose**

Flynn. July will see a number of us heading to the **Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet** to take part in various Alpine training courses. With the support of funding from both **Mountaineering Ireland** and **UCD**, these trainings have been extremely accessible to us.

Being the Training Officer for the club has been an absolute pleasure. I have worked with amazing training providers to organise fantastic courses for the club and have had the opportunity to attend many of these courses to develop my own climbing and hiking skills. ■

Áine McGuinness, Niamh Sheehan, Ciadhla Mulloy and Jack Hogan on their Mountain Skills 2 training in Glendalough



➤ **Niamh Sheehan** is a final-year physiotherapy student in UCD and currently the Training and Development Officer for **UCD Mountaineering Club**. She began climbing with the club as a fresher and started hiking last year.

Sunset at Rathlin Island off the north Antrim coast

SUNNY, SONNIE, SUNNY

A report on the Fair Head Meet from **Damien O'Sullivan** (Dal Riada Climbing Club)

Back in March, when we started planning in earnest for the **2022 Fair Head Climbing Meet**, we had a good feeling about the weather... and for once we were right! In planning for an event like Fair Head Climbing Meet, you can spend plenty of time arranging the event, only to have the weather foul up the whole thing. In the fortnight leading up to the June bank holiday weekend, the forecast was monitored on a daily basis, causing the spirits of the organisers to rise and fall, as it varied from perfect to wash-out. As the meet drew closer, our mood soared as the forecast settled to what looked like an amazing weekend's weather at Fair Head.

The Fair Head Climbing Meet has been running since the mid-nineties. It was instigated by the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** to give a focal point for its own members and to promote the world-class climbing at Fair Head. It is a bold thing to attach the description 'world-class' to anything, but when a crag stretches for 5km and maintains a height of almost 100m for much of that distance, and the rock is of

excellent climbing quality – well, it would be hard to argue against the conferring of that title.

As well as being home to a superb trad-climbing crag, Fair Head is now also home to an amazing bouldering area. For years the climbers looked down on the boulder field below, sometimes wondering how recently any of those boulders had come to rest at the bottom of the crag and whether they should have any concerns about the dolerite behemoth under their feet crashing down! A dedicated group of boulderers have been steadily making their way through the boulder field, leaving many excellent boulder problems in their wake.

The meet has evolved over the years. After the initial success of the meets, there was a lull in activity until **Paul Swail** took up the mantle in 2010. Under his stewardship, the meet grew in size and stature to become a staple of the Irish climbing calendar and a well-known event across the globe. The meet is now again being run by the Dal Riada Climbing Club and is being organised by **Chloe Condron**, with assistance from **Clare Sheridan**, **Neil Byrne** and myself.

One of the very special things about the Fair Head Climbing Meet, and the climbing at Fair Head in general, is the incredible hospitality of **Sean McBride** and his family. The McBrides have welcomed climbers onto their land since the earliest days of the development of climbing there. The relationship between the McBrides and the climbers is something that is remarked on by almost all

visiting climbers. The climbing community is constantly indebted to the McBrides for their hospitality and generosity. It is something that we should never take for granted, and we must always treat Fair Head with the same very high standards that the McBrides themselves do. Sean has often remarked that, to this day, he has never had any problems with climbers, nor has he ever had to pick up even a single



Sister and brother, Áine and Paul Collins, climbing at Fair Head

Summer 2022

piece of litter – let’s keep it that way.

This year’s meet attracted around one hundred and seventy climbers, mostly from across Ireland and Britain, with a few people from further afield too. It was, however, the men from the Kingdom of Kerry who maintained that they had spent the longest time commuting – technically it’s hard to disagree with that and, as most people know, there is little point arguing with a Kerryman anyway!

The guest speaker for the meet was a Canadian climber, **Sonnie Trotter**. Known for his ascents of very hard trad climbs, Sonnie’s most notable ascents include the first ascent of **Cobra Crack** in Squamish, Canada, and an ascent of Dave McCleod’s **Equilibrium** at Dunbarton, Scotland. Weighing in at a hefty E11, Sonnie’s ascent of **Equilibrium** gives us a good indication of the level he operates at. For all of his ability and accomplishments, you could not hope to meet a more down-to-earth, humble and laidback person. As it turned out, we discovered that one of Sonnie’s grandparents came from Enniskillen and another from Omagh, so he’s pretty much a local already!

Sonnie’s talk on Saturday night gave us an insight into how he got to achieve so much in climbing and how he now balances climbing with being a parent. He managed to hit a perfect tone for the audience, and the only heckling came from the sheep in the barn next door.

A huge part of the meet in recent years has been the boulder tour led by **Rob Hunter** and **Veronica Lee**. Rob and Veronica have spent years climbing and developing a multitude of problems in the boulder field at the foot of the crag. There are no better people to share their knowledge and love of the place.

Despite being composed of excellent-quality rock, there is always a chance of some loose rock at Fair Head. As the meet brings so many enthusiastic climbers together at the one time, the risk of rockfall and



Pictured in front of the barn at the 2022 Fair Head Meet (from left): Calvin Torrans, Chloe Condrón, Neil Byrne, Sonnie Trotter, Clare Sheridan and Sean McBride

resultant injury increases. Climbers manage this risk by always treating the rock with caution, wearing a helmet and keeping as clear of fall zones as possible. On Sunday afternoon, however, events conspired to result in an injury to a climber at the Prow area of Fair Head. The local **Ballycastle Coast Guard** unit were on the scene very quickly. They stabilised the casualty and prepared them to be taken to hospital for further care.

The nature of the ground at Fair Head makes it extremely difficult to remove an injured person and, because of this, helicopters are often used, as

was the case in this situation. Thankfully, the injury was less serious than initially suspected and a full recovery is expected.

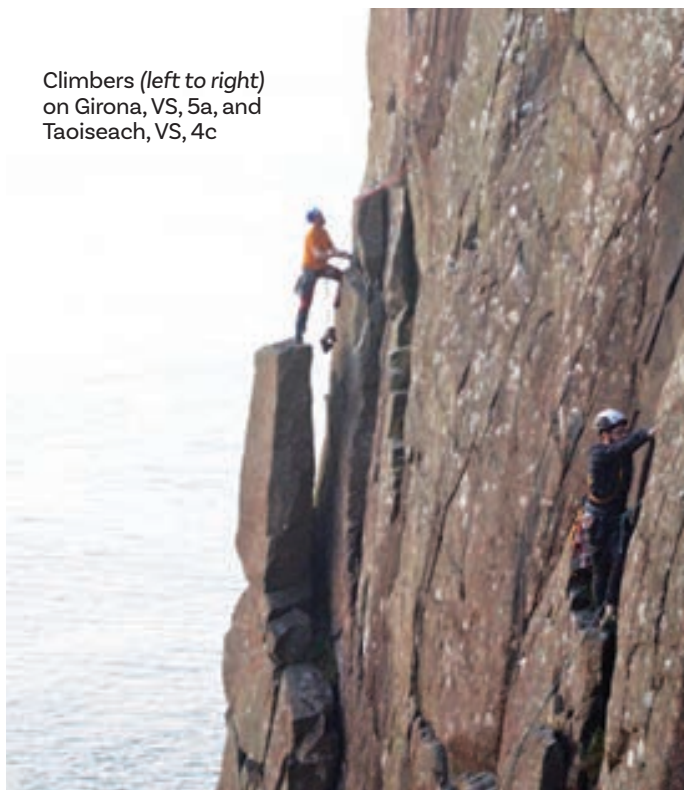
Incidents like this serve as a reminder to all of us of the risks inherent in our sport and of the amazing people, like **Ciaran Kinney** and the entire team at the Ballycastle Coast Guard, who are there for us when we need them.

Climbing at Fair Head is *physical*, and three days of perfect weather in a row meant that by Monday afternoon there was a high degree of fatigue setting in. As climbers readied for home, plans for next year’s meet were already

being spun in the barn. You can certainly go ahead and mark the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th of June, 2023, in your diaries now.

The Dal Riada Climbing Club would like to thank all of the climbers from near and far who attended the meet. We’re grateful to the **Causeway Coast and Glens Council**, to **Mountaineering Ireland** and **Rab** for their support of the meet and to **Rob Hunter** and **Veronica Lee** for leading the bouldering tour on Saturday. We would also like to thank the **Ballycastle Coast Guard** team and the helicopter team, who evacuated the injured climber on Sunday. The club is very grateful to our guest speaker, **Sonnie Trotter**, who added so much to the event. Last, but by no means least, we would like to thank **Sean** and the entire **McBride family** for their amazing hospitality. ■

Climbers (left to right) on Girona, VS, 5a, and Taoiseach, VS, 4c



► **Damien O’Sullivan** is a member of the Dal Riada Climbing Club. He was Mountaineering Ireland’s Climbing Development Officer 2013-2021.



Fionn Buckley, Daniel Shine and Oscar Lenahan on the podium after taking 2nd, 1st and 3rd places respectively in Male C, Irish Bouldering Championships, at the Dublin Climbing Centre in May

COMPETITION CLIMBING

Oona Frawley reports on the latest youth climbing competitions and on Irish Youth Team news



Oona Frawley,
Dublin Cliffhangers
Youth Climbing
Club

Following on from the successes of last autumn, climbers from around the island have been enjoying the return to fully-fledged competition as Covid-19 restrictions have been eased.

G-Force

On the home front, 2022 competitions kicked off with the return of **G-Force** at **Gravity Climbing** on March 5-6th. G-Force, running since 2017, has become a must-attend competition for boulderers in Ireland, also regularly drawing in international athletes. After a year's hiatus due to Covid, G-Force returned with two days of amazing climbing and a cracking atmosphere. The qualifiers on Saturday, March 5th, saw one hundred and

ninety climbers (fourteen years of age and upwards) tackling thirty problems with zeal, before the field was whittled down to twenty climbers in the male and female categories for the semi-finals.

Route-setting was by an Olympic bouldering route-setter, **Percy Bishton**, and by **Rob Napier**, another regular setter at high-level international competitions such as the Rab Climbing Works International Festival. The problems faced by the semi-finalists and finalists were very exciting, and that excitement was amplified by the pumping music and the brilliant master of ceremonies, **Ciaran Mulhall**.

The podiums were dominated by Irish senior and youth team members, **Dominic Burns** winning an

impressive third male title in a row, with **Ciarán Scanlon** and **Michael O'Neill** hot on his heels in 2nd and 3rd place.

Caelan Lenahan, competing in G-Force for the first time, took 1st place in the female category, with **Victoria Watterson**, a previous G-Force winner, and **Jessica McGarry** in 2nd and 3rd.

Congratulations to all of the climbers and to **Terry O'Connor** of Gravity for such a fantastic competition. Not only was the climbing thrilling to watch, there was a vegetarian feast to be had between the semis and the finals, and a gorgeous T-shirt, designed by **Tommy Myles** of the Irish team, to buy, the profits of the sales going to the **Ukrainian Red Cross**. G-Force 2022 embodied so much of the brilliance of the Irish climbing community!

Four Nations Bouldering Series

This year has seen the start of a new series of bouldering competitions for youth climbers, with the **National Championships** in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland combining into a **Four Nations** competition. The cycle kicked off on March 26-27th with the **English Youth Bouldering Championships** at Rockover in Manchester. It was attended by Irish climbers from the Youth Team, as well as from Dublin Cliffhangers, Winders Climbing Club and Cork Youth Climbing Club.

The second round, at Eden Rock in Edinburgh on April 30th, also had strong Irish participation, while the Welsh round, held at Roc Bloc in Cardiff on May 14-15th, saw only two Irish climbers, **Ilmur Jonsdottir** and **Olivia Scott** of

Dublin Cliffhangers, participating. The new format means that young Irish climbers are getting exposure to a high level of competition, on different climbing holds and in different settings. The Irish climbers did extremely well, often just missing finals, and are gaining crucial experience for the rest of the season and the years to come. At all of the competitions, the youth climbers have been a fantastic support to each other and, as in the past, it has been noted by judges and event organisers that the Irish competitors are sporting, polite and great fun.

Irish Bouldering Championships

The Irish Bouldering Championships saw 123 competitors descend on **Dublin Climbing Centre** for a brilliant two days (May 14-15th) of competition, organised by Mountaineering Ireland's newly-appointed Climbing Development Officer, **Michael Duffy**, and **Ricky Bell**, Mountaineering Ireland's Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland.

Since the competition also formed the final leg of the **Four Nations** series for youth climbers, there was a large contingent over from Scotland, Wales and England, contributing to a crackling energy in the building from the moment the doors opened. With setting by **Adam**

Pracownik, Chloe Condron, Neil Byrne, Damien O'Sullivan, Ricky Bell, Philip Duke and Rob Hunter, the competition began with climbers facing eight bouldering blocs in a scramble format over two hours, followed by finals on a new set of four blocs.

The Youth D, C and B categories competed on the Saturday. The skill and strength of young Irish climbers amid a challenging international field was simply amazing. In Male D, **Calum O'Connor** and **Conor Pierce** both made the finals by flashing all eight qualifiers, with **Caleb Shine** unlucky to miss the finals by only one attempt. In Female D, **Lucy McClune** also flashed all eight qualifiers to nab a spot in the finals. In a particularly tough category, Female C, two Irish climbers, **Ilmur Jonsdottir** and **Olivia Scott**, powered through to finals.

Male C saw four Irish climbers through to finals and three podium finishes, with 1st place taken by **Daniel Shine**, 2nd by **Fionn Buckley** and 3rd by **Oscar Lenehan**. In Male B, **Mylo Reilly** and **Archie Tolland** podiumed in 2nd and 3rd respectively, while in Female B **Eve Buckley** missed out on the podium by a zone, with **Clara-Caterina Meyer** also making the finals and looking really strong. To have delivered such performances against some of the top climbers in the UK was a great achievement and these young climbers all deserve a tremendous amount of respect. The climbers were also very lucky to have **Rob Hunter**, the Irish Climbing Team coach, present over the weekend for support and encouragement.

Sunday saw Youth A and Senior climbers battle it out for the podium. Once again Irish climbers did extremely well on challenging blocs, with **Sean Brown** taking 2nd and



Jessica McGarry competing at G-Force in Gravity Climbing Centre, Dublin

Tom Nickels 3rd, while **Caelan Lenehan** and **Rhyna Conroy** took 1st and 2nd, with great performances as well by **Ciara Lawler**, **Amy Rafferty** and **Ciara Burgoyne** in 4th, 5th and 6th places.

With over thirty competitors, Senior Male was a real battleground for talent from across the island and further afield. Finals saw **Michael O'Neill** take the win, with **Ciaran Scanlon** in 2nd and **Rory Cummings** in 3rd. In Senior Female, the podium was wholly comprised of Irish Climbing Team members, with **Victoria Watterson** in 1st, **Robin Casey** in 2nd and **Jessica McGarry** in 3rd.

From problems demanding delicate footwork to those requiring coordination and dynamism, the Irish Bouldering Championships delivered it all. All of the climbers put on a terrific show, and support from spectators and all of the volunteers made the weekend a tremendous

success. Particular thanks to **Conor O'Connor** at Dublin Climbing Centre for hosting the event.

Senior Team in action

With the return of IFSC events, senior Irish Team members **Michael O'Neill** and **Dominic Burns** recently competed in the **Climbing World Cup** at Meiringen, Switzerland, with **Michael O'Neill** and **Ciarán Scanlon** also competing at the Climbing World Cup in Salt Lake City, Utah, in May. To be able to compete at this level takes many years of dedication and practice. The aim is that more Irish athletes will be competing on the world stage in the coming years. ■

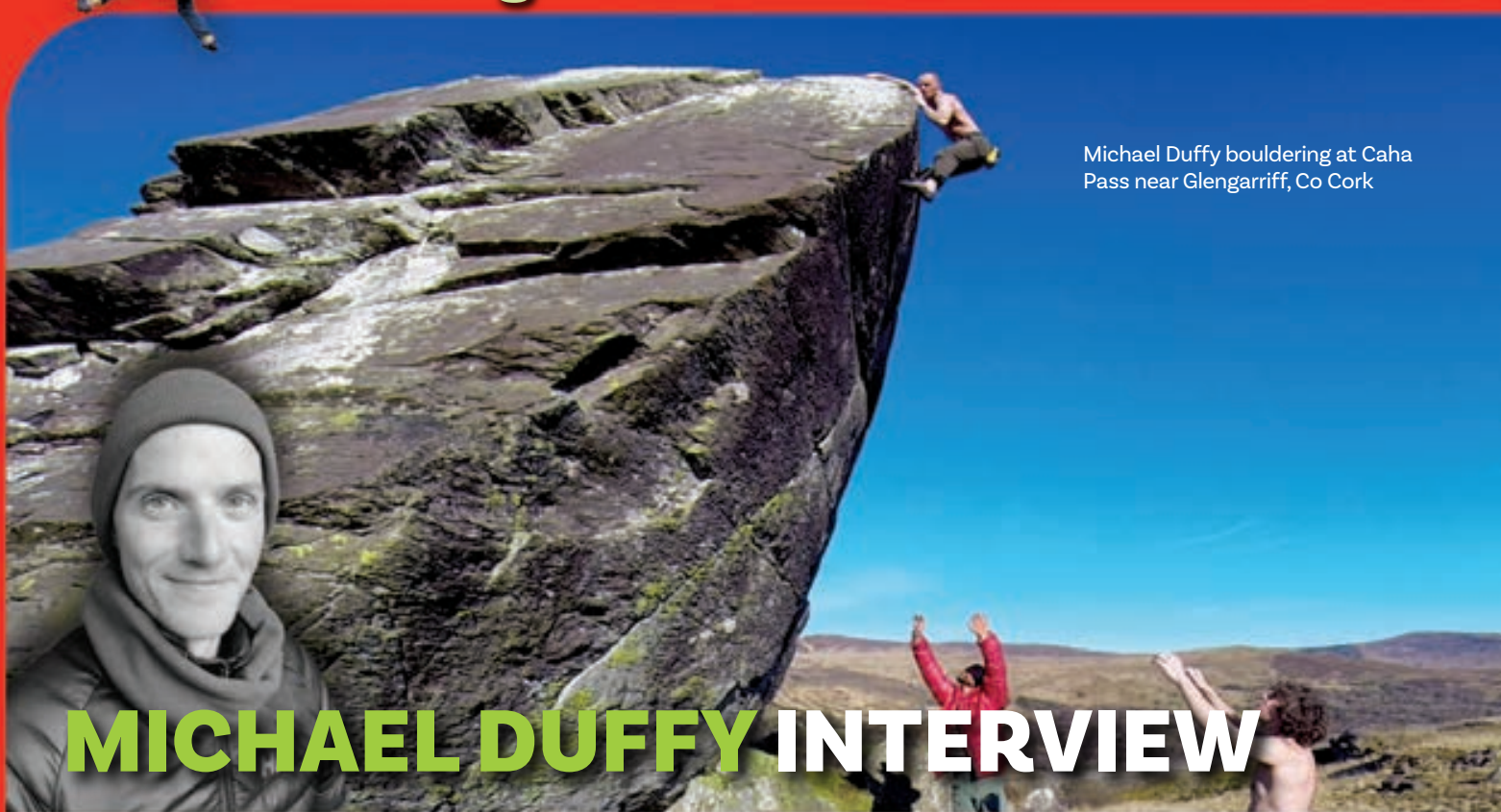
AUTHOR: Oona Frawley is a member of Dublin Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club with a particular interest in supporting talent development and competition climbing. An academic and writer, she lives in Wicklow.



Victoria Watterson competing



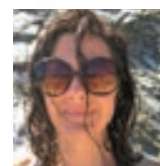
Climbing



Michael Duffy bouldering at Caha Pass near Glengarriff, Co Cork

MICHAEL DUFFY INTERVIEW

Michael Duffy is an Irish climber, who has put up hundreds of first ascents on now-classic boulders and lines around Ireland. These include problems pushing the limits of Irish climbing such as Wonderland 8b, Soul Revolution 8b+ and Metropolis 8c. Since emerging onto the climbing scene in his early teens, Michael has continued to be one of the most significant climbers on the island. An architect by training, he is also a coach with particular expertise in youth climbing. He was recently appointed Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Development Officer. He talks to **Oona Frawley**



Oona Frawley,
Dublin Cliffhangers
Youth Climbing
Club

◆ How long have you been climbing?

I started at twelve, so twenty-eight years.

◆ What's your favourite type of climbing?

Rock climbing, but I do love training hard on steep old school boards. If I had to choose a favourite, it would be soloing around on easy routes outside on a lovely sunny day.

◆ How much time per week do you spend climbing?

It all depends really. If training, 3-4 days per week. If projecting, I might only climb once or twice per week. I think quality and enjoyment are more important than the time spent.

◆ What's your favourite place to climb in Ireland?

By the sea. I'm at home in the mountains, but some of Ireland's best climbing is by the sea.

◆ What's your favourite place to climb abroad?

Fontainebleau. I spent my youth there with friends and it feels like home. It's a very special place, where technical climbing is at its finest.

◆ What piece of climbing equipment could you not do without?

Climbing shoes. I've a serious fetish.

◆ What are you most proud of, in terms of your climbing achievements to date?

I'm proud of my first ascents. I was really lucky to be in the right place at the right time and with the right people. To have had the opportunity to establish some classic lines and raise the bar has been a real privilege. As time goes by, finding the time and energy to climb becomes the crux of it all. So my proudest achievement to date is that I'm still climbing well, that I'm still as

motivated as ever and that I'm still progressing Irish standards.

◆ Most memorable route, boulder or climbing experience?

I remember being in Sheffield with a friend and we wanted to try the boulder problem **Deliverance**. It is a classic test piece on Stanage Edge, and it was on the front cover of the movie *One Summer*, which was released in 1994. I was obsessed with that video! **Ben Moon** was on the front cover, defying gravity, flying like Superman up the problem. We were about fifteen years of age and we had hitched out there, armed with a tent, tins of beans and climbing shoes. We tried the problem until dark and pitched up beside the boulder. First thing in the morning before breakfast I did it first go. It was like magic. It was graded 8a at the time and, back then, that was a big number. It was the first time I had worked a

problem and it gave me the confidence to try hard, fail, and try again. I went on to climb loads of problems from the video on that trip. Great memories!

◆ Next project or goal?

I'm really enjoying sport climbing and I want to see what I'm capable of. I want to repeat the hardest sport lines in the country and then add my own.

◆ What climber do you look up to as a role model or particularly admire?

I admire people who push themselves for the love of it and those who are evolving the sport. **John Gill, Wolfgang Güllich, Lynn Hill, Fred Nicole, Moffatt, Moon, Sharma, Ondra....**

◆ Is there a place where you'd love to climb that you haven't visited yet?

Yosemite. When my boys are old enough, they're going to drag me up El Cap!

◆ If you weren't climbing, what would you be doing?

Thinking about climbing. ■

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**Working for
and representing
hillwalkers and
climbers**

Mountaineering Ireland Annual Review 2021

As we move closer to normal life with every passing month, 2021 will hopefully be remembered as the year which saw the final significant disruptions caused by the global pandemic of Covid-19 and which saw us move to a level of minimum restrictions in our activities.

Mountaineering Ireland has proven to be an extremely resilient organisation throughout the pandemic, as we have maintained the majority of our membership and remained relevant to our members, even during times when we were not able to enjoy the full reach of our interests. Over this time we have been financially prudent and we have also made significant improvements to our governance and procedures.

That is not to say that we did not face some serious challenges. A small number of our clubs decided not to affiliate due to concerns relating to Covid-19, and we saw some of the places we visit in the outdoors come under greater pressure from an access perspective, due to the higher than normal levels of footfall. Another challenge was maintaining our relevance during this time, when we were unable to have physical connections with our members and the outdoors.

On a positive note, 2021 was a year that represented a huge milestone for the organisation, as we celebrated our **50th Anniversary**. We were unable to provide the physical platform to openly celebrate this occasion with our members. Instead, we worked to offer a special 50th Anniversary edition of the *Irish Mountain Log*, the Winter 2021 edition, delivered by a working group chaired by **Ursula MacPherson**, with **Patrick O'Sullivan**, **Kevin Higgins**, **Dawson Stelfox**, **Ruth Whelan** and myself as members. This edition was a wonderful collage, representing insights, stories and events of significance on our journey over the past five decades towards becoming a National Governing Body. This unique edition was also offered to new individual members upon joining.

We started the year 2021 with increased restrictions, as Covid-19 remained to the forefront after the holiday period. During this time, we requested expressions of interest to bring new volunteers into our **Hillwalking Committee**, and we also undertook to seek new climbers for our **Youth Climbing Team**.

As we moved into February, we continued the excellent work carried out in 2020 by offering a second series of **Zooming Round the Mountains**, which saw 7,300 registrations overall. This was an amazing feat, which demonstrated the importance of having a strong virtual presence during the pandemic, to ensure our members

remained connected, supported and informed. We also focused on promoting positive mental health awareness via the **Minding Your Mental Health** initiative. We then delivered a series of events called **Club Reboot**, with virtual meetings to help prepare clubs to return to normal activities.

With Sport Ireland's support in March, we launched our **Club Membership Retention Scheme**, with €70,000 awarded as a rebate of club members' affiliation fees. In April we commenced the **Gearing Up to Get Moving Again** initiative to ensure our clubs were ready to get back to activities. We also promoted our new **Climbing Development Guidelines**, to ensure best practices are adhered to in the development of climbing areas.

By May 10th, Covid restrictions had, for the greater part, been removed. In June, we promoted the public consultation on the formation of a new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**, for our membership to provide feedback. It is due to our position with Comhairle na Tuaithe, Sport Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development that our Access and Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, was requested to act as Vice-Chair of this extremely important working group, with ultimate responsibility for providing the Government with a new outdoor recreational strategy for the Republic of Ireland, covering a period of five years. I want to thank all members who contributed to the consultation - every contribution received was greatly appreciated. During this time, we actively promoted the key messages of the **Love This Place, Leave No Trace** campaign.

Another highlight of the year was celebrating **sport climbing's** Olympic debut in Tokyo. The standard of the athletics in this new Olympic sport was enthralling and captured the minds and aspirations of many. We will be keen to see it develop further in the next Olympic Games in Paris in 2024.

“ 2021 was a year that represented a huge milestone for Mountaineering Ireland as we celebrated our 50th Anniversary.”

Mountaineering Ireland gratefully acknowledges the funding that it receives from Sport Ireland, its Women in Sport programme and the Dormant Accounts Funding, and from Sport Northern Ireland, and from Healthy Ireland for the Get Ireland Walking programme.



During the second half of the year, we aimed to deliver as many events and programmes as possible. Under the **Women With Altitude** initiative, we held a series of events in August as part of **HER Outdoors Week**. We also continued publicity about the **Happy Hiking** campaign about staying safe on the hills, as the increased numbers enjoying staycations and going hillwalking resulted in a great number of callouts for the mountain rescue services. We launched new individual membership rates and, in September, celebrated **National Walking Day** on the 26th. In October, we offered a series of **Club Committee Support Meetings** ahead of the new season. We also supported the **Fair Head Climbing Meet** and presented the **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Medal 2021** to **Noel Hanna** following a virtual lecture.

In April, we commenced work with external auditors appointed by Sport Ireland, to review our governance, policies and procedures, and this process was completed in November. The auditors, **KOSI**, produced a report highlighting sixteen findings. By the end of the year, thirteen of their findings had been addressed or were being progressed and we aimed to complete work on the final three after the AGM, scheduled to be held in May 2022. This was a challenging process and one that required strong leadership. I want to thank the Chair of the Board, **Mike Maunsell**, for his direction in this process and **Geoff Thomas**, who took over as Chair in November.

On July 7th, we commenced work on a special project that only comes around every four years, the creation of a new **Strategic Plan**. A Working Group was selected by the Board, chaired by **Imelda Buckley**, facilitated by **Noel Caffrey** and supported by **Colette Mahon** (all Board members) plus staff members **Jane Carney**, **Damien O'Sullivan**, **Ruth Whelan**, **Helen Lawless**, **Jason King** and myself. Both **Mike Maunsell** and **Geoff Thomas** also supported the Working Group during their respective times as Chair of the Board. I would like to thank everyone involved for their time and commitment to this process.

I would especially like to thank the Board members who served the company in 2021. **Trish Kane**, **Clare O'Connor** and **Paul Barron** stepped down from the Board in February and March after many years of service. I thank them all for their time and support for Mountaineering Ireland, particularly Paul Barron who served for many years as a Board member and as Chair of the Board. It was much appreciated. To **Paul Kellagher**, **Kevin O'Callaghan** and **Mike Maunsell**, who stepped down from the Board in October, I want to wish them the very best with their busy professional careers and continued enjoyment of the hills, mountains, crags and walls. Thank you all very much for your service, particularly Paul Kellagher, who was President and National Children's Officer for many years, and Mike Maunsell, who was Chair of the Access and Conservation

Committee for a number of years and, most recently, Chair of the Board. Special thanks go to **Imelda Buckley** for her time, energy and focus over the past four years covering a number of new projects. Thank you very much for your work as Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group, as Board member and, more recently, Vice-Chair of the Board. To **Geoff Thomas**, for his many years of service, including during 2021 as both Chair of the Climbing Committee and Chair of the Board of Directors, thank you very much as well.

Thanks are also due to **Gerry Gorman**, our National Children's Officer, for his support and direction, to the members of our five Sub-Committees, to the Strategic Plan Working Group, to our coaching teams in the sport competition sector and to our members and volunteers, who deliver so much toward the successes of Mountaineering Ireland - thank you all very much. To our funders and partners, **Sport Ireland** and **Sport NI**, thank you for your continued support and much appreciated assistance.

Finally, I want to say a special thank you to **Patrick O'Sullivan**, **Peter O'Neill** and **Nicky Hore**, the editorial team behind the *Irish Mountain Log*, and **Cóilín MacLochlainn**, who does the layout. The *Log* is an important asset for Mountaineering Ireland and is highly prized by our members. I commend them in particular for their skilled work in putting the 50th Anniversary edition together.

A warm welcome to **Ricky Bell**, our new Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, who started in June 2021. I want to thank **Damien O'Sullivan** for his excellent service over the past eight years, and as our Climbing Officer for many of those years, who moved on in December 2021. I want to wish him all the very best for the future. I also want to thank **Kevin Kilroy** for his service to the company and in driving forward our youth and club structures over the past four years in Northern Ireland, as he completed his four years with us at the end of March.

To our amazing staff team, who all combined to deliver an extremely high standard of work on behalf of Mountaineering Ireland - thank you all very much for your contribution during 2021. I look forward to continuing our work together in 2022.

It has been a pleasure to work and serve with you all in 2021 and I'm looking forward to more positive outcomes in the years ahead.

Murrough McDonagh
Chief Executive Officer
Mountaineering Ireland



“ Membership remained roughly the same as last year. The figure on October 31st 2021 was 13,619 (10,976 Club and 2,643 Individual Members). In the circumstances, that is no small achievement. Credit must go to club volunteers, for their steadfast support, and the staff team.”



Supporting and Developing Hillwalking

Last year was a year of two halves. Activities in the first six months were limited by the Covid-19 restrictions, while the second six months was a period of great activity amongst our members and clubs, and in Mountaineering Ireland's initiatives and programmes in general, as the restrictions were eased. Here are some of the highlights.

Zooming Round the Mountains

By popular demand, **Zooming Round the Mountains** came back for a second series to keep everyone entertained and engaged when activities were restricted.

There were lots of topics: a look behind the scenes of mapping with **Barry Dalby**; **Kathryn Fitzpatrick** prepared us for getting back to the hills; and we were able to ask **Paul Kellagher**, an experienced trainer, anything and everything about hillwalking. Other highlights were talks on the Fei Sheehy Challenge, flora of the Irish uplands, and access. **Jane Carney**, Training Officer, introduced the joys of winter hillwalking, covering equipment, navigation and skills.

We ran a series of workshops in March to support clubs and their committees as they started planning to return to the hills.

The Hillwalking Development Officer ran four further **Club Committee Workshops** during October, focusing on (1) committee roles and club AGMs; (2) Mountaineering Ireland's online membership system and GDPR; (3) insurance and accident reporting; and (4) youth in sports. Over eighty-five clubs attended overall.

Club Leadership Programme

A need for informal training in the clubs was identified, as there were significant concerns regarding the limited number of club walk leaders available and the confidence of current walk leaders after their inactivity during the lockdowns. We obtained funding through Sport Ireland to run the **Club Leadership Programme** throughout the summer and autumn. Over 440 club leaders from over 60 hillwalking clubs took part in a full day of skills training with a qualified instructor, tailored to the club's needs, with emphasis on leading groups.

Hiking Skills Day for Parents

Hiking Skills Day for Parents (family support programme) ran over the

month of September, with over 72 parents taking part.

We provided informal training with a qualified instructor with an emphasis on promoting the **Happy Hiking** campaign, with information on basic skills required to keep themselves and their families safe on the hills. The feedback was extremely positive and it was hoped that we could run similar programmes in 2022.

OSi feedback

Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) has recently consolidated all of its digital mapping data across all scales in a single database named Prime2. This enables OSi's map products and



services to be generated and updated with minimal human intervention. OSi sought Mountaineering Ireland's feedback to ensure their maps continued to be relevant to hillwalkers. Over one hundred members engaged in the process, which, with Mountaineering Ireland's continued involvement, will hopefully help OSi enhance their product range for hillwalkers.

Club resources

There is now a **toolkit** of resources available exclusively to our clubs. Administrators can access these resources through the club database to share with their members. There is useful information on running clubs, attracting new members, running club evenings, organising introductory walks and recruiting and supporting walk leaders. There are also key resources in the toolkit, such as the club handbook, GDPR for clubs, Happy Hiking and lots more.

Hillwalking grades

Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee identified a need to provide a standardised system for **hillwalking grades**, to provide a national benchmark for anyone who is selecting routes for club walks, gatherings or events, group walks, etc. This grading system is now up on the hillwalking section of our website and also available in the toolkit for clubs.

Get Ireland Walking

We worked closely with **Get Ireland Walking** to reach the wider community that may be interested in heading into the uplands. We developed a follow-on programme aimed at people who have participated in the active community walking programme, to provide them with the supports and tools they need to head into the hills.

The Hillwalking Development Officer also got to chat with **Linda Sankey** on the **Get Ireland Walking podcast**, an opportunity to reach new people, impart hillwalkers' love for the hills and give useful tips on staying safe in the hills.

Happy Hiking communications on safety continued through online campaigns and hard-copy promotion. Over 1.4 million Facebook and Instagram-targeted groups of people new to the hills were reached.

National Walking Day

The second annual **National Walking Day** took place on Sunday, September 26th, 2021, as part of European Week of Sport. Many of our clubs and members got involved and organised walks locally to celebrate the day.



Women in Sport Programmes

These programmes, run over the summer in conjunction with Local Sports Partnerships, aimed to provide participants with a safe, positive and fun environment to practise skills, and to build their confidence and ability to be independent on the hills.

The **Shed to Summit** programme was run in partnership with **Wicklow Sports Partnership** and **Blessington's Women's Shed**. Participants took part in three initial half-day experiences and two additional training days, which aimed to provide them with key skills to be able to hike self-sufficiently on certain terrain in their local hills. There were two groups, each led by an MTBI Training Provider.

Another programme, **She Summits**, was run in Kilkenny in partnership with the **Kilkenny Recreation & Sports Partnership**, following the same format.

Overall feedback from participants was very positive.

Women With Altitude

Covid restrictions meant that our annual **Women With Altitude** event could not be held in its usual format in 2021, so our enthusiastic team of instructors went to different counties to provide women with an opportunity to expand their hillwalking and climbing experience and skills.

HER Outdoors Week was the first of its kind in Ireland and was a great opportunity for females to try something new. There were eighteen activities organised across ten counties during the week, with around one hundred and thirty women taking part overall, including many new participants.

Lynam Lecture

Due to the restrictions, the **Lynam Lecture** went virtual in December, with 312 members registering for the event. **Noel**



Hanna was the recipient of Mountaineering Ireland's 2021 Lynam Medal in recognition of his remarkable accomplishments in mountaineering. He presented an enthralling lecture filled with adventure.

Hillwalking Committee

A lot of the above activities were guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee. In 2021, the members were: **Grainne McLaughlin** (Chairperson), **Ruth Whelan** (Secretary), **Senan Foley**, **Veronica Kelly**, **Pat Macken**, **Russell Mills**, **Louise Nolan**, **Marian Wallis** and **Gerard Reidy**.

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Ruth Whelan, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer, on ruth@mountaineering.ie.



Supporting and Developing Climbing

At the start of 2021, climbing activities across Ireland were still very limited as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, as restrictions were gradually lifted during the year, clubs, which had not had the opportunity to meet during the winter, began planning ahead for the spring and summer. There was an optimistic feel about returning to regular club meets.

Mountaineering Ireland participated in a series of **online seminars** for climbing walls in Ireland. This was developed in cooperation with the **Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC)**, the **British Mountaineering Council (BMC)** and **Climb Scotland**. The use of online platforms also helped members of Mountaineering Ireland to re-engage in their sport through the second instalment of **Zooming Round the Mountains**.

Irish Youth Team members also partook in a series of **online training workshops** led by **Rob Hunter**.

Youth Trad Camps

The Youth Trad Climbing Camps were able to go ahead in 2021. These camps, held at Dalkey, the Burren and Glendalough, were great learning experiences for participants. Social occasions such as these also allowed young climbers from all over the country to reconnect with their peers and to learn again from experienced and passionate outdoor instructors.

Meets

The **Fair Head Climbing Meet** took place in August despite the evolving Covid-19 restrictions. The event was capped for numbers, and ticketed for the first time. The Saturday night event was an outdoor tractor-trailer sofa podcasting comedy gig delivered by the Irish duo **Paddy and Brendan** of the **5.9 podcast**. Many laughs were had and it was a brilliant re-connect for the Irish climbing community at their flagship event. Well done and a big thank you to **Dal Riada** and the **McBride family** for making it possible again.

Competitions

Youth Climbing Series

The **Youth Climbing Series (YCS)** saw a keen and competitive return in the autumn. Young climbers from the age of nine up to seventeen completed four rounds across Ireland, testing their skill in bouldering and route climbing, with the goal of competing in the YCS Grand Final.

A big thank you to all of the volunteers and to the climbing walls, **Boulderworld**, **University of Limerick** and **Dublin Climbing Centre**, for enabling these competitions.

Category	Irish Youth Climbing Series Overall Winners 2021
Male A (age 16-17)	Sean Brown
Female A (age 16-17)	Faith Blaney
Male B (age 14-15)	Archie Tolland
Female B (age 14-15)	Caelin Lenehan
Male C (age 12-13)	Daniel Shine
Female C (age 12-13)	Lilou Conroy
Male D (age 10-11)	Caleb Shine
Female D (age 10-11)	Ilmur Jonsdottir
Male E (age 8-9)	Samuel Mayer
Female E (age 8-9)	Eve Craig

At the Grand Final in Southampton, a strong Irish representation gave it their all. Particular congratulations have to go to **Caelin Lenehan**, who finished second in Female B, and **Rhyna Conroy**, who came fourth in Female A, with some super performances! It was a fantastic event and it was great to see old friends again and make plenty of new ones along the way.

Climbing developments

Sport climbing development on Inis Mór in the Aran Islands moved forward, with new routes added by **Hugh Hennessy**. In Fermanagh, access improved at Knockmore, thanks to a concerted effort with main developer **Andy Marshall**. At Galboly Crag near Carnlough, Co Antrim, **Lucy Mitchell**, who was in top form, also opened a new 8b, a test piece for the crag. Access and relationships remain positive and we ask the climbing community to respect these.

Get Climbing

The **Get Climbing** programme focuses on working with hard-to-reach youth groups by engaging them in climbing and hillwalking activities, as per the conditions of Sport Ireland funding under the Dormant Account Funding Scheme. The aim of the initiative is to offer participants the basics of indoor climbing so that they can operate independently on climbing walls.

The programme follows the **National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme (NICAS)** syllabus, but 2021 was a challenging year, with limited access to indoor walls.



Climbing Committee

The **Climbing Committee** continued to meet online throughout 2021. It played a key role in getting the clubs to meet again, improving access, coordinating the **Irish Bouldering League** and creating a more cohesive climbing network in Ireland.

The Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Committee members in 2021 were: **Geoff Thomas** (Chairperson), **John Healy**, **John Harrison**, **Peter Wood**, **Ricky Bell**, **Kelley O'Reilly-Smith**, **Chloe Condron** and **Damien O'Sullivan** (Secretary).

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank **Damien O'Sullivan**, who stepped down as Climbing Development Officer at the end of 2021. Damien developed the role into what it is today. For over eight years he was a cornerstone for the development of the Irish climbing

community. He played a huge part in its progression, specifically in areas such as sport climbing access, trad climbing camps, competitions and performance youth climbing. It is on these foundations that Irish climbing can now continue to grow.

New Appointment

Youth Development Officer: Ricky Bell

Ricky Bell joined Mountaineering Ireland during the summer of 2021 as the newly appointed Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland. He took over from **Kevin Kilroy**, who had done brilliant work over the previous four years, supporting and growing the youth clubs and climbing network in Northern Ireland.

Again, Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank Kevin for all his work and the enthusiasm he has shared in introducing young people to climbing.



FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about Mountaineering Ireland's work in climbing, please contact: **Ricky Bell**, Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, ricky@mountaineering.ie or **Michael Duffy**, Climbing Development Officer, michael@mountaineering.ie



Training and Skills



Mountaineering Ireland's strategic objective in this area is to promote mountain training and skills development. Its aims are:

- To realise the potential of **Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI)**.
- To promote a range of **courses, awards and training pathways**, and to support **informal training** to meet the needs of hillwalkers and climbers.
- To support our **training providers** in ensuring training awards and courses offered are of the highest standard.
- To be a reliable source of **advice and information** in relation to safety and good practice in mountaineering.

Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI)

Mountain Training Board Ireland's provision of quality assured, internationally recognised mountain training awards and schemes, delivered by qualified and experienced trainers, was at an all-time high by the end of 2021. This was partly due to the aftershock of the Covid-19 lockdowns and the increase in numbers taking to the hills and crags of Ireland. The Training Office and training providers maintained a blended approach to training provision, involving both online and a return to face-to-face training for members and the ever-growing participant audience.

The international meets for winter and summer were unable to go ahead in 2021. Online skills workshops, club training officer workshops and provider meetings took place, helping fend off the inevitable skills fade we all experienced. There remains a suite of training recordings that can be accessed on the Mountaineering Ireland website and YouTube channel.

MTBI is in a unique position, providing and developing both formal and informal training, and consulting with stakeholders to review what is currently provided and determine the way forward. The Board promotes self-reliance and inspires participation and adventure through skills development, thus facilitating enjoyment and supporting safety.

Despite the many restrictions of 2021, it was a positive year for training and training providers, who were innovative in producing blended learning opportunities, developing fresh ideas



on training delivery and maintaining their professional approach in difficult times. This resulted in fewer emissions, less fuel and resource consumption and better participation and attendance at meetings, learning we will continue to apply to the way we operate in the future.

Training for clubs

Club officer meetings, presentations, webinars and workshops were appreciated by over 2,500 participants and supported in-club training. They brought like-minded people together to share ideas, inspired training plans, promoted clubs and encouraged new members and participants. Thank you to the numerous volunteers involved.

The doubled training grant fund continued to support members towards safer enjoyment of the mountains. A post-lockdown focus on training grant promotion via the well-attended online regional meetings prompted a rise in applications to pre-Covid levels. This essential refreshing of training provision and heightened awareness of the availability of training grants helped further improve the training ethos within clubs. The successful role models that emerged will serve to inspire others to follow.



Skills series and training resources

The online **skills videos** have now had over 150,000 views. Videos range from 2-4 minute recaps to taught 60-90 minute sessions, including the Winter Skills Series, the Map Skill Series, the Youth Skills Series and a Poor Visibility webinar. Participant engagement with the existing and new skills videos keeps growing. The Taking a Bearing video still tops the charts with over 60,000 views. There are also several presentations, the members' library and training literature to help participants upskill and refresh: they can be found on the Mountaineering Ireland website (www.mountaineering.ie) in the Training Downloads section. They are being used by clubs, individuals, candidates, providers and participants.

Training providers

The growth in training providers on the island of Ireland has increased the provision and diversity of courses. Providers have been updated and inducted in the new and revised climbing awards. Candidate numbers continued to grow despite the restrictions of the pandemic. Training and assessments were back in high numbers, making up for the ban on courses for several months. Many providers saw an abundance of work, and continued to work extremely hard to meet the demand for courses. The new cohort of participants are seeking skills training and leadership training to support their newfound interest in the outdoors.

Annual providers workshops delivered by the Training Officer support high

training standards. The benefits of gathering providers together are many and allow for updates, sharing of learning, development of skills and techniques, discussion of syllabi, teaching and instruction methods, and induction for revised and new awards. Continued professional development (CPD) events are essential to not only meet association and training board requirements, but also to feed the desire for knowledge and address the enquiring mind.

Links with Other Organisations

Mountain Training UK and Ireland

The **DLOG system**, which runs in parallel with the Mountain Training UK and Ireland Candidate Management System, continued to evolve and increase functionality for our organisation. Communication between the two systems allows for transparency within the home nations' training boards and transferability for candidates of UK and Ireland shared awards.

Mountaineering Ireland and Mountain Training Board Ireland continued as full voting members of **Mountain Training UK and Ireland**. The Mountain Training Walking Scheme review is ongoing and focusing on the leadership and camping elements. The collaborative work between all of the training boards across the UK and Ireland has maintained the consistent momentum essential to develop the existing awards and add new schemes and awards to the suite of shared awards already on offer.

Sport Ireland Coaching

Mountaineering Ireland has four awards on the Sport Ireland Coaching Adventure Sports Framework and one award on the Sport Ireland Coaching Framework. Work continued throughout 2021.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Registrations for Awards & Schemes							
Mountain Leader Award	94	98	76	124	87	85	59
Hill & Moorland Leader	2	2	6	20	26	10	9
Lowland Leader Award	45	88	77	71	75	74	121
Expedition Module	-	-	48	71	75	74	121
Rock Climbing Instructor	69	122	142	116	95	85	90
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	0	2
Multi Pitch Award	7	3	2	10	2	5	7
Climbing Wall Instructor	28	34	53	77	97	41	73
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	6	7	2	36	17	4	12
Level 1 Climbing Coach	9	18	2	23	16	0	1
Indoor Climbing Assistant	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	15
Mountain Skills Registration*	1,236	1,187	1,089	1,120	574	862	1,162
Rock Skills Registration	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	56	38	66
Total Registrations	1,496	1,559	1,495	1,668	1,094	1,297	1,738
Mountain Skills Participants	1,236	1,187	1,089	1,120	774	891	1,238
Rock Skills Participants	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	16	32
Total Participants For All Awards	1,496	1,559	1,497	1,668	1,246	1,211	1,705
FUNdamentals	112	73	90	192	-	-	-

*Mountain Skills participant numbers used 2015-2018, as registration not recorded pre-2019

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on any aspect of training, please contact Jane Carney, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, on jane@mountaineering.ie.



Improving Access and Protecting the Mountain Environment

The mountain, crag and coastal environment, and access to these places, is fundamental to hillwalking and climbing, and to the quality of the experiences we enjoy. Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation work concentrates on two **strategic objectives**:

- To strive for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers.
- To be a voice for the protection of mountain landscapes.

During 2021, our work in this area had a strategic focus, with Mountaineering Ireland fulfilling a leadership role in the development of Ireland's new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**, and also with input to the development of Mountaineering Ireland's **Strategic Plan for 2022-2025**.

Improving Access

Looking across the island of Ireland, there is a general picture of greater pressure on access due to increased numbers taking to the outdoors. From Donegal to Connemara to Kerry, there are more gates with 'private property'-type signs. The reality is that most of the land in upland and coastal areas is privately owned, either by individuals or jointly owned as commonage. Our enjoyment of the mountains and crags is due to the goodwill and tolerance of the owners.

That goodwill can be undermined by the poor behaviour of a small proportion of people, sometimes leaving residents feeling that walkers are invading the place. Mountaineering Ireland (usually in cooperation with local members) has engaged with landowners at a number of locations where issues have arisen recently. However, once goodwill is damaged it is difficult to get it back. Parking in a way that obstructs farm or home access is a recurrent factor in access problems, as is fear amongst some landowners of being sued if someone gets injured on their land. Continued respect and consideration for landowners and other local residents is needed to maintain and protect the access that we depend upon for our activities.

Mountaineering Ireland is also devoting considerable time to working with

policymakers and other recreation bodies, north and south, to improve opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors, including the examples below:

- A key priority was our leading role in the development of a new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**. The strategy will guide and support the development of this growing sector, with a focus on making outdoor recreation work well for everyone. Our involvement has provided opportunities to discuss the needs of hillwalkers and climbers, and to build relationships with a wide range of national stakeholders.
- **Mountain Access Project** – an insurance policy has been put in place to provide added protection for landowners in Comhairle na Tuaithe's two pilot Mountain Access Areas – the **MacGillycuddy's Reeks**, Co Kerry, and **Binn Shléibhe** near Clonbur, Co Galway. Mountaineering Ireland is participating in a group formed to review the Mountain Access Project, with the aim of expanding this model of agreed access to a number of other areas.
- Mountaineering Ireland engaged with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on a **review of access legislation in Northern Ireland**, seeking fresh legislation to support the growth in outdoor recreation activities.
- Progress was made on formalising access for climbing at **Moor Hill Quarry**, with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council removing the quarry from its list of assets for disposal and agreeing to lease the quarry to Mountaineering Ireland.



Mountaineering Ireland's credibility in engaging in discussion about access and the management of outdoor recreation is bolstered by the responsible attitudes displayed by Mountaineering Ireland clubs and members, for which we are grateful. A key part of our strategy on access is working in partnership – to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

Mountain Environment

Ireland's mountains inspire, shape and enrich the recreation experiences enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers. However, the character of the mountain environment is being altered all the time by changes in land use, including changes associated with recreation activity.

Helping the Hills

The greatest impact of recreation on Ireland's hills, mountains and coastal landscapes is the impact of our cumulative footfall, ever more visible through erosion scars along popular lines. The year 2021 saw welcome progress to address upland path erosion in a number of key locations, with much of this guided by the **Helping the Hills** principles instigated by Mountaineering Ireland:

- We continue to support the sustainable access and habitat restoration work on **Croagh Patrick**. The Croagh Patrick project has become a hub for sharing experience and skills in upland path construction, thereby benefitting other upland areas.
- In the **Wicklow Mountains**, we provided input to an upland path condition survey led by the Wicklow Uplands Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and we maintained regular contact with the National Trust and the Mourne Heritage Trust regarding path work in the **Mourne Mountains**.

Awareness and education

Littering in the outdoors grabbed public attention during Covid-19, and in response Mountaineering Ireland launched **One from the Hills**, a challenge to all walkers and climbers to remove one item of litter from the outdoors each time



they're out. This simple concept was proposed by a Mountaineering Ireland member.

Much of our environmental awareness activity in 2021 was through Zoom events, social media and the *Irish Mountain Log*, though we did manage to hold two Mountain Environment Walks during HER Outdoors Week in September.

Working together

In our work to care for the mountain landscapes, Mountaineering Ireland is engaged with others – a host of interests from individual landowners to government departments. In a year that involved much online work, two in-person events stood out:

In August, the **SUAS Upland Agri-Environment Project** hosted a farm walk at Kilmashoge in the **Dublin Mountains**, to showcase the project's work with farmers to improve habitat condition in the uplands. Looking down on Dublin city while discussing how changes made in farming practice will help protect water quality, it was easy to see how projects like this can benefit everyone in society.

In October, **Blackstairs Nature**, a small group of volunteers concerned for the future of biodiversity in the **Blackstairs**, brought together a panel of high-profile speakers for a really stimulating event. The discussion examined Ireland's upland environment through the lens of the Blackstairs, with a good balance between reality and positivity. The event was live-streamed and is available on the Blackstairs Nature YouTube channel.

Mountaineering Ireland also participated in a range of consultations including: the review of NPWS; the development of a Masterplan for Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park; Coillte's draft strategic plans for its forests; Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan; and Northern Ireland's draft Environment Strategy.

The submissions mentioned above can be found on Mountaineering Ireland's website

at: www.mountaineering.ie/accessandenvironment/Downloads/default.aspx.

Collective Effort

All this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's **Access and Conservation Committee**. Our committee members in 2021 were: David Pollard (Chairperson), Noel Caffrey, Fiona Gallagher, Ursula MacPherson, Vincent McAlinden, Aine McGirl, Orla Prendergast and Helen Lawless (Secretary).

Mountaineering Ireland extends thanks to the members of our Access and Conservation Committee, and the many other members who contribute to our Access and Conservation work, as Club Environmental Officers, as Mountaineering Ireland representatives on other organisations, and importantly, through personal action to protect access and the mountain environment. This collective effort is vital if Mountaineering Ireland is to deliver on its strategic objectives.

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, on helen@mountaineering.ie.



Get Ireland Walking Initiative



The year 2021 was a challenging but rewarding one for the Get Ireland Walking programme. Not having the opportunity to engage physically, as we should, with partners was the biggest challenge. Most of our work from January to September was online, utilising technology and communication platforms to carry the Get Ireland Walking message and implement our work.

From campaigns to new programmes, we continued to strive to meet the needs of all of the groups and stakeholders whom we engaged with, either physically or virtually. Through creative and innovative thinking and planning across the Get Ireland Walking team, and with and through stakeholders, we are very proud of our work in this difficult year.

With our partners and stakeholders, we continued to place walking as a key attribute or tool to maintain positive mental and physical health and showcase the activity as a social tool to address isolation and sedentary habits. We did this through campaigns, where everyone played a part and contributed. And we identified new programmes to meet the needs of special populations.

Get Ireland Walking would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Steering Group for their support throughout the year: **Paul Brosnan** and **Fiona Mansergh** from Healthy Ireland, **Ciara Munnely** from Sport Ireland Outdoors, and **Murrough McDonagh** of Mountaineering Ireland. A special thank you also to our outgoing Chair, **Emma Jane Clarke** of Sport Ireland, who has guided and directed our work over the past four years. We welcome Emma Jane's replacement as Chair, **Louise Burke** of Sport Ireland.

'Keep Walking, Keep Well' walking campaign

In partnership with Sport Ireland and Get Ireland Walking, the GAA, FAI, IRFU, Hockey Ireland, Athletics Ireland and Cricket Ireland opened up community walking routes in their clubs' grounds to allow people of all ages and abilities to have safe spaces to walk during the restrictions. An app was developed by Get Ireland Walking specifically to allow management of walking slots.

Participating clubs had specific allocated days and times detailed on the app. Walkers registered for their walking slots on this app for both public health and insurance purposes. The app facilitated booking of a slot for an individual or family pod, ensuring all were kept separate.

National Walking Day 2021

The second annual National Walking Day took place on Sunday, September 26th, as part of European Week of Sport. Before that, we had a week of

celebrations of walking, including a Ways to Walk Day, an Accessibility and Inclusivity Day, a #HappyOut Mental Health Day, and a Walk to Work Day.

Our ambassadors this year were **Minister of State at the Department of Health, Frank Feighan TD**, adaptive adventurer **Nikki Bradley**, Olympian racewalker **Olive Loughnane** and leading mental wellbeing expert, clinical psychologist **Eddie Murphy**. They joined us in celebrating a wonderful week.

We asked people to #WalkHikeRunPushRoll on National Walking Day. We were featured on the RTÉ 1 television programme *Nationwide* and our four-week social media campaign reached over two million people.

We couldn't have made National Walking Day such a success without the help of our amazing partners, including Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Mental Health Ireland, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, the GAA and the Local Sports Partnerships.





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NEPHINBEG TRAVERSE

Crossing the Nephinbegs from south to north

John O'Callaghan and friends complete this challenging 40km hike in twelve hours

I had been planning to do this walk for years. The two previously documented accounts were both by Derrymen – **Joey Glover** in *Irish Mountaineering* in 1960 and **Seán Convery** in the *Irish Mountain Log*, Issue 119, Autumn 2016. They both opted for a north-south traverse, starting in Bangor Erris and finishing in Mulranny. I decided to attempt the route in the opposite direction.

I used four maps: mostly **Wild Nephin**, 1:25,000 scale, by **EastWest Mapping** (2015); **OSI Discovery Series 30**, 1:50,000 scale, 5th edition (2015); **OSI Discovery Series 23**, 1:50,000 scale, 5th edition (2015); and **Clew Bay, Croagh Patrick and Clare**

Above:
Slieve Carr
viewed from
north side
during descent
to Bangor

Right:
General map
of the region
by EastWest
Mapping



Island: OSI Adventure Series, 1:25,000 scale, 1st edition (2017). The last one was useful in naming the first 'Arderin' on the route, Claggan Mountain NE Top (501m), which is called Greenaun Mountain on the Wild Nephin map.



➤ **John O'Callaghan** is a member of Clare Outdoor Club and is Mountaineering Ireland's representative on the Irish Uplands Forum.

We set off

On a dry, cool morning in late April, four of us gathered in the car park behind the Mulranny Park Hotel, on the site of the long-disused railway station and now the **Western Greenway**. My companions were **Miko Keane, Noel Brady** and **Tom Bourke**. Shortly after 7.30am, we made our way out onto **Claggan Mountain**, following the waymarkers for the 'Lookout Hill Loop' for the first 200-300 metres.

Our first two target features were **Loch Creag a'Duileasc** and **Lough Glennamadoo**. Once you locate these two lakes, you are on the Nephinbeg 'haute' route, and it is then a question of following the high ground all the way along the ridge to Claggan Mountain NE Top (aka Greenaun Mountain, 501m), from there to Maum Thomas, Corraunabinnia, Glennamong, Nephinbeg, Corslieve, Slieve Carr, Maumykelly and Knocklettercuss, and finally into the village of Bangor Erris.

The plan was to complete the traverse in daylight, and I had estimated about twelve hours of walking to cover the distance of almost 40 kilometres and the more than 2,500m of cumulative ascent.

South-north traverse

The Nephinbeg wilderness and some of the individual peaks listed in the previous paragraph will be familiar to active hillwalkers and readers of the *Irish Mountain Log*. Two walks in the Nephinbegs are described in *Irish Peaks: A Celebration of Ireland's Highest Mountains*, published in 2020 by Mountaineering Ireland. There are other accounts of horseshoe walks in many of the popular guidebooks that include these principal tops of the range. However, this article is the first documented record of a **south-north traverse** that I am aware of.

By staying a little to the east of **Lough Glennamadoo** and making for spot height 353m, the ascent to **Greenaun Mountain** (501m) is made a little easier underfoot. There are fine cliffs on the north face of this Arderin and splendid views into Loch an Aifrinn on Coire an Aifreann – named in remembrance of a Mass Rock, located below the re-entrant named **Gap of Currafrin** on the Wild Nephin map.

A dog-leg of 900m to the stream at the 'Gap,' followed by 400m uphill to **Maum Thomas SW Top** (477m), sets one up nicely for the almost 1km ridge to Maum Thomas NE Top at 440m, named **Cruach Buí** on Wild Nephin.

Names of peaks along the ridge do vary depending on which side of the mountain the local inhabitants live and from whom one hears the name. Therefore, I think it may be 'stretching it a bit' to call Greenaun Mountain "Claggan Mountain NE Top" while 'southsiders' refer to it as 'top of Glennamadoo' or 'Cnoc an Aifrinn.'

We made good time on this first third of the traverse and, once we had passed Loch Fidgeal on our left, it was a long slog to the top of **Maol Rua** (687m) and the second corrie of the morning, **Coire na Binne**, with its accompanying Lough Corranabinnia. Topping out on Maol Rua at 11.00am meant we had shaved



Above:
Looking into
Coire an Aifreann
from Greenaun
Mountain

Below:
The razor-sharp
ridge of Coiscéim
Chorrach
connecting
Maol Rua to
Corraunabinnia

half an hour off our projected time at this point.

The most exciting section of our walk was next: a short arête, about 500 metres long and 100 metres down, connecting **Maol Rua** (687m) and **Corraunabinnia** (716m). Appropriately known as **Coiscéim Chorrach**, 'unsteady step,' a determined and focused approach and a little easy scrambling is required to land safely across. The arête features on a 200-year-old map by **William Bald**, spelt Cuscamecorrough, and is mentioned in some early hillwalking accounts from the 19th century, notably in *The Saxon in Ireland* by **John Hervey Ashworth**.

Once we had safely arrived at the first of three trig-pillar-tops, **Corraunabinnia**, it was time for a well-earned early lunch break and time to take stock of our progress and the route ahead.

Glennamong to Nephin Beg

It was almost 3km to the next top, **Glennamong** (or Glannamu) (628m), an unusual name for a mountain-top, named after the sedgy-swamp ground or 'muing' in the surrounding glens, or after





the cows (Glannamu = Gleann na mBó, 'glen of the cows') that were grazed in the vicinity. One local scholar is adamant that the latter is the correct one and that the peak was misnamed on all the OS maps until EastWest named it 'Mamer Dougher, Curranyarry, Glannamu Mountain' in 2015.

En route to **Glannamu**, as well as the heavily-forested eponymous valley on our right (east), we had the egg timer-shaped **Coire Dá Loch**, or **Loch a'Phoill**, on our left to the west. This lake is the principal source of the highly-prized **Owenduff River**, one of four salmonid rivers in the Ballycroy/Nephibeg catchments area.

We did not linger very long on Glannamu, as we were now facing the longest valley crossing of the day, **Maumaratta**, the 'Pass of the Hares,' that would take us over the Bangor Trail and up the peak from which the range gets its name, Nephibeg mountain itself. A friend of mine, **Tom Dempsey**, had advised us to bypass Cruckgarra (410m) and take the much

Above:
View over the
Scardaun lakes
from slopes of
Nephibeg with
Slieve Carr in the
distance

Below:
The author on
the summit of
Nephibeg
at 2.30pm on
the day of the
hike, roughly the
halfway point

“IN TWELVE HOURS WE SAW NO FENCES AND NO PEOPLE... IT WAS A TRUE WILDERNESS”

prettier, stream-filled valley a little further to the north-west along the trail, leading up to **Mám Gearr**. This turned out to be a far more pleasant approach to the seemingly unending plod to the summit of **Nephibeg** (627m).

Once there, apart from taking a few photographs and having a drink of water, we lost no time in retracing our steps a little, across the summit plateau, in order to line ourselves up for the least steep descent route to the saddle overlooking the Scardaun lakes. When we reached the relative warmth of the saddle, we finished our remaining food and topped up our water supplies in the crystal-clear stream flowing from the **Scardaun lakes**.

The challenge now was to reach the highest summit in the range, 4km north of here. The final hulk itself, **Corslieve (Slieve Carr)** (721m), stretches over four kilometres from south to north and, if the shape of Nephibeg on the Wild Nephibeg map is a leaping salmon, then Slieve Carr is a performing bear, on its hind legs, nodding its head in the direction of Bangor, the final destination of this odyssey. Once again, determined and resolute, we commenced the initial climb.

Ascent of highest point

Locally, and again depending on which side of the mountain range you live on, people have





traditionally tended to refer to the first minor summit (541m) as **Corslieve** and the principal summit as **Slieve Carr**, though the names are used interchangeably. Famously referred to as 'Ireland's most remote peak,' this mountain takes a while to reach, even from the closest road or forest track. What makes it special for me is that it is topped by an enormous cairn, known as Laughtdaughybaun or Leacht Dáithí Bán, 'the flagstone (burial tomb) of fair Davy.' Who he was or what he did is anyone's guess. Legend holds that he was a great chieftain and his genealogy goes back to Niall of the Nine Hostages. Others say he may have been nothing more than a warrior or highwayman. Further north along one of the main east-west roads there is a lake of the same name, Lough Daughybaun, so he is well-commemorated in this area.

The ascent of **Slieve Carr** was gruelling and I needed every breath to get myself to the summit, where we paused to reassess the final three hours of walking that would take us across two 'lesser' hills, called

Above:
Miko Keane,
Tom Bourke and
Noel Brady on the
summit of Slieve
Carr

Below:
View back to
Slieve Carr on
descent to
Maumykelly and
Bangor

Maumykelly (360m) and Knocklettercuss (370m). I noted that at this hour of the day they were not as 'insignificant' as they had seemed during the planning at home.

So far, our wildlife sightings had consisted of some grouse, one hare, ravens and smaller birds and some otter spraint.

Final leg

The descent from Slieve Carr to **Maumykelly** was very pleasant, and the windfarms of Bellacorick, where once a peat-burning station powered the region, came into view. Being at a remove from the wind turbines, they appeared innocuous enough over to the north-east, albeit not so pretty up close. Rather than continuing to burn the turf that used to be harvested from the bogs in this area, the realities of global warming and rapid climate change decree it is better for all our futures to leave the peat in the ground as a carbon sink and 'mine' the air instead.

Down in the low boggy ground between Maumykelly and Knocklettercuss, the going suddenly became a lot tougher than it had been all day. The heather was higher, the 'turtógs' (tussocks) more difficult to negotiate, and the drains and holes more numerous. A raucous exchange was in progress overhead. A raven was doing its best to drive a white-tailed eagle away.

My energy levels plummeted to an all-day low and I could only manage to contour around **Knocklettercuss**.

We ploughed on until finally the unsightly quarry that forms the backdrop to **Bangor** came into view again. Slowly, but surely, and gratefully, we completed our final descent to the village.

Twelve hours, forty kilometres, no fences, no people – a true wilderness! ■





BORU COUNTRY

A walk to County Clare's highest point reveals a wealth of history about one of Ireland's ancient heroes, writes **Don Baldwin**

Just west of the River Shannon, blended into the soft folds of the **Slieve Bearnagh Mountains**, unassuming **Moylussa** quietly claims the title of County Clare's highest mountain at a modest 532 metres. This type of mountainous landscape, which borders the Shannon in south-east Clare, is by no means typical of the terrain which cradles the river, but it is certainly the most dramatic.

Killaloe, the birth place of **Brian Boru** in 941 AD, is an ideal location to climb nearby Moylussa from, and to explore the surrounding area itself, steeped in ancient history as it is. For a while, at least, Killaloe could call itself the capital of the country, when Brian Boru, the High King of all Ireland, ruled from here in his royal palace at Kincora.

Above:
Moylussa's
soft outline

Below:
Béal Boru

A five-minute drive north from Killaloe on the R463, past the remains of Boru's strategic fort at **Béal Boru**, quickly takes you towards your access point at **Ballycuggaran Forest Park**. There is a spacious car park on the opposite side of the road near Rinnaman Point, complete with well-maintained toilets.

Having nipped nimbly across the busy road, you quickly slip into the serene surrounds of the forest (at R 686 760). The name Ballycuggaran comes from

➤ **Don Baldwin** started mountaineering over thirty years ago, with the Irish Defence Forces, in the Cooley and Wicklow Mountains, and served in the mountains of South Lebanon with the UN. He is also an avid diver and a writer, and he draws his inspiration from both the sea and the mountains as, he notes, did poet William Wordsworth.





“MOYLUSSA OVERLOOKS THE LANDSCAPE WHICH CHARTED THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BRIAN BORU”

foretold his imminent death at that epic onslaught. Curiously, an adjacent mountain is called **Glennvagalliagh** or Sliabh Ghleann na gCailleach, ‘Witch Valley Mountain.’

A long lead-in

Moylussa is a surprisingly tough climb, although its modest height of 532 metres would tempt you to consider it to be little more than a gentle stroll. There is a long lead-in to the actual foot of the mountain itself along a forest track that begins with an unrelenting ascent right from the get-go. As you rise steadily, you are absorbed by the beauty of the mixed woodland that presses in on either side of the meandering track: a vibrant, almost unchecked profusion of deciduous trees, pines, shrubs, ferns and wild flowers that assault the senses with every step, while the soothing sound of hidden streams helps to complete the overall effect. This relative wildness certainly gives you a sense of the great oak forest that originally covered these hills in bygone times. Occasionally, a break in the trees to your right reveals sumptuous views of **Lough Derg** as it stretches off towards the north-east. ➤

Baile Ní Chogaráin, ‘Homeland of the O’Cuggarans,’ an important family at the court of Brian Boru.

The forest park itself is situated on **Crag Hill**, on the lower slopes of the Slieve Bearnagh Mountains, overlooking Lough Derg. On the southern side of Crag Hill is a fort dating to the early Christian period, which was the original home of the O’Briens, ‘the descendants of Brian.’

The craggy pinnacle known as **Aibinn’s Rock** is the highest point of Ballycuggaran. This rocky outcrop was the purported abode of the bean-sídhe or fairy-woman Aibinn, who was said to have appeared to Brian before the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 and

Above:
Neat marker
stone on
summit of
Moylussa

Below:
View from
second summit,
with stone
marker in the
distance.





Lough Derg is the largest lake on the River Shannon. The lake's name evolved from the Irish Loch Deirgdheirc, which was one of the names for The Dagda, an Irish god, and literally means 'red eye.' It is a long, narrow lake peppered with small wooded isles, little changed in eons, where reintroduced **white-tailed eagles** have nested since 2012.

Eventually, the forest track straightens out and continues its steady rise towards the west, following a section of the **East Clare Way**. Some older books refer to this as 'The Bog Road.' However, Coillte created a new shale track here in 2016, completing the final section across the open moorland at the top of the mountain with a path of tastefully-laid timber sleepers. Coillte also placed a neat marker stone on the actual summit.

Current Ordnance Survey maps indicate that Moylussa appears to have a twin summit, but recent surveys have revealed that this second peak has in fact reduced over time. To complete the effect of this overall transformation of the walk, some thoughtful soul has placed 'Moylussa' signs at strategic points along the way.

A one-hour hike will take you to a substantial fork in the track (at R 665 763). Go left here and head south for about fifteen minutes until another 'Moylussa' sign invites you to take a decent trail south-west through the forest itself. Another fifteen-minute amble will take you through these woods to a broad shale track (at R 661 754) which hugs the tree-line as it ascends steeply west towards the summit. This is a short, stiff climb, the wet, jagged slivers of compacted shale grinning maliciously up towards you, fairly focusing your attention.

Soon, you reach the improbable sight of a sturdy set of steps that lead you up onto an even more unlikely timber trail, which stretches off across the open moorland. Well-constructed,

Above:
View over Lough Derg with the Arra Mountains to the right

Below:
Tasteful timber trail

the narrow track gives you solid footing across the soggy terrain and makes for an interesting balancing act on a windy day!

Two hours in total will bring you to the marker stone. It must be said that both marker stone and timber track blend well into their wild surroundings.

Twin summit

The twin summit is listed a short distance away to the north-west and, if you wish to extend your walk, that does seem like a logical step. The ground is particularly boggy right across the summit, even in summer. With care, fifteen minutes will take you across the wet, windswept ground to the second, unmarked summit, rewarding you with a broad view of the wild open moorland that you have just traversed.



Having made my way back across the elongated summit, and reluctant to leave the mountain top, I paused to drink in the expansive vista of **Lough Derg** stretching off to the north-east. To the east, are the brooding **Arra Mountains**, while **Killaloe** nestles against the Shannon towards the south-east.

Moylussa does provide you with an unrivalled vantage point overlooking the actual landscape which charted the life and times of a quite remarkable Irish hero. It was from a hill such as this that the young **Brian Boru** and his older brother **Mahon** looked on helplessly as the Limerick Vikings attacked their settlement at Killaloe, killing their mother and two of their brothers.

Rebellious youth

Later, as a rebellious youth, Brian would not make peace with the Vikings, unlike his brother, King Mahon, and took to these same mountains with a small group of warriors to wage guerrilla warfare on his enemy. For almost two years Brian and his followers fought with considerable success, but the constant hunger and exposure finally took its toll and only fifteen gaunt fighters reluctantly returned to Killaloe. Upon his return, Brian berated his Dalcassian tribe for their acceptance of the Vikings on their ancestral lands; his rousing speech was to great effect.

After defeating the Danes at the **Battle of Sulcoit** in 967, King Mahon and his Munster army quickly sacked their Limerick stronghold on **Inis Sibtonn** (King's Island). "Every one of them that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved."

Turbulent life

Warfare was to mar much of Brian's turbulent life. Taking over the crown of Thomond after the assassination of his brother Mahon in 976, and going on to wrest the kingship of Munster a year later, Brian wasted little time in exerting his power. That same year he led a "great naval expedition" up Lough Derg and into Lough Ree, where he met **Máel Sechnaill Mac Domnaill**, the High King of Ireland, and "they concluded a peace there," dividing power in Ireland between them, the High King ceding Leath Moga (the southern half) to Brian.

Having consolidated his position in the south, Brian then made his move on Leath Cuinn (the northern half). Later, in 1002, Boru peacefully deposed Máel Sechnaill and elevated himself to Árd Rí, High King of all Ireland.

Looking to the east, the **Arra Mountains** loom large. The 'Graves of the Leinster Men' are hidden in the distance, a sombre tomb for the Leinster warriors who were executed at Gormlaith's behest, when she was Brian's queen at Kincora.

As his estranged wife, the infamous Gormlaith proved to be one of Brian's most ardent adversaries in a real 'game of thrones,' which culminated in the pivotal **Battle of Clontarf**, a brutal clash of armies that ended with the inglorious murder of the elderly Boru, on Good Friday, April 23rd, 1014, aged 73.



Above:
"Ford of the Cattle Tribute," with Béal Boru hidden in the trees to the left

Below:
Killaloe nestled against the Shannon

Shaking myself from my historic reverie, I then headed south-east, back towards **Killaloe**, a squat little town congested around the narrow end of Lough Derg, where the river funnels itself once more into the tight confines of the Shannon. It was as a result of this strategic ford, **Áth na Bóraime** ("ford of the cattle tribute"), that Brian Ceinnéidigh (Kennedy) received his byname Bóraime, anglicised as Boru. Put simply, 'Brian of the Cattle Tribute.'

Boru is considered to have been one of the most successful and unifying monarchs in medieval Ireland. Above all, he will forever be remembered as the warrior king who finally brought an end to the Vikings' Irish expansion.

This climb is a basic out and back affair, offering the rambler a nice mixture of woodland and moorland, with some truly spectacular scenery. Allow three to five hours to complete Moylussa, depending on how long you wish to explore the extended summit. Don't be fooled by Moylussa's benign contour lines. It is a decent trek to the top, but well worth the effort. The map I used was the Ordnance Survey of Ireland's Discovery Series No 58. ■





HOME OF THE OLYMPIANS

Fergal Hingerty goes to climb Mytikas, Greece's highest peak, located in the Mount Olympus range

Mount Olympus, citadel of the ancient Greek gods, has long been a fabled mountain, which has largely been inaccessible to mere mortals. In fact, the highest point, **Mytikas** (2,917m), where Zeus himself was supposed to live, was only first climbed in 1913 by a local, **Christos Kakkalos**, along with a Swiss duo, **Frédéric Boissonnas** and **Daniel Baud-Bovy**. Kakkalos then became the official guide until his death in 1976.

These days, around 10,000 people a year climb the mountain, most going only as far as the peak of **Skála** (2,865m) and not continuing on to Mytikas. The last section up to the top of Mytikas is a rock scramble, treacherous in parts, even in good weather, and there are, on average, ten deaths there a year.

Above:
View of Mytikas summit (2,917m) from Skála

The twelve ancient Greek gods, known as Olympians, made their home among the fifty-two peaks in this extensive range, which contains many peaks over 2,000m. **Mount Olympus National Park** supports a considerable amount of flora and fauna, with over one hundred bird species and thirty amphibian and reptile species. High up on the slopes, there are many wild horses, from where the legend of Pegasus, the winged horse, arose. The ancient Greeks believed the horses must have flown up there. On the steep and precarious climb up Mytikas, I could have done with Pegasus in places to reach the summit!

I had flown into **Thessalonica** in the north-east of Greece, and from there proceeded by car to **Platamonas**, where my Polish climbing partner, **Karolina Sypniewska**, had arranged an apartment by the sea. The first morning, after a swim in the Aegean, we drove to **Litochoro**, the last town before **Mount Olympus National Park**. This is where we bought last-minute supplies before driving the final seventeen kilometres up a winding narrow road to the car park at **Príona**. (Should you get a bus or train to Litochoro, the best way to Príona is by taxi).

Príona is at a height of 1,100 metres and, from there, the long and winding trail to the refuge winds through pine trees. Plentiful amounts of the Belladonna herb could be seen along the way. There were numerous types of butterflies on this trail, especially when we went through the **Enipeas Canyon**. The canyon is where Orpheus was devoured



➤ **Fergal Hingerty**, who lives in Mullingar, has walked extensively in Europe. In addition to all the main peaks in Ireland and Britain, he has climbed Mount Elbrus (5,642m) and Mount Kazbek (5,047m) in the Caucasus, as well as Monte Perdido (3,355m) in the Pyrenees. This year, he finished a seven-year project to climb all of the nearly 1,500 recognised tops in Ireland, listed on Mountainviews.ie.

by the female followers of Dionysus (the god of ritual madness and ecstasy), so we kept a wary eye out when on the trail.

The E4 trail (a European long-distance walking route) is clear, and is around six kilometres long to the **Refuge Spilios Agapitos** (2,100m). The route to the refuge has an ascent of around 1,000 metres and is well-marked. Should you be unsure of the route, the horse manure from the bell-wearing packhorses that supply the refuge is another indication of the way to go!

After three hours, we arrived at the refuge, one of seven scattered around Mount Olympus National Park. They are open from March to October; the rest of the year they are closed due to the many avalanches, the mountains being particularly steep and prone to these dangerous conditions.

The people staying there that night were from Greece, Russia, China, USA and many other European countries as well. Naturally, before lights out at 10.00pm (like most refuges), the talk was of Mytikas and the climb from Skála. Most people were going to ascend Skála, but only a few were contemplating the final scramble to Greece's highest point. The majority had brought helmets because loose rocks often get dislodged by climbers, a constant hazard on Mytikas.

We arose early at 5.45am and, as others were brewing tea, I was already *in situ* on the terrace to see the sun rise over the Mediterranean; like all sunrises in the mountains, it was a magical sight.

We assembled our gear and proceeded up the trail, aiming to reach Skála's summit first. This was a long hard slog of around 2.7 kilometres and, as we climbed, the terrain got more exposed and the wind was more noticeable.

We passed above the tree-line and, at the first junction, headed up the small, scree-lined path towards the summit, admiring the other peaks around us. Snow was scattered around in pockets at this height, as we viewed the coast to the east, which had been 34°C when we left it.

Finally, after an ascent of about 800 metres, we reached the summit of **Skála** (2,865m) about three



Above:
Approaching the final stretch to summit of Mytikas

Below:
View from Mytikas towards Skála and over the Mount Olympus range

hours after leaving the refuge. Others had already gathered there, but most chose not to continue from this point.

The scale of the task ahead appeared overwhelming and Karolina decided not to continue to Mytikos. We had discussed the possibility the night before. She returned to the refuge with some other Polish climbers we had met.

Then, with my bandana on and helmet adjusted, it was a fifty-metre drop into the **Kazánia chasm** through a narrow nick in the ridge (or abyss, depending on your point of view), and a slow, torturous scramble angled to the right, following the many red-and-yellow markings which zigzagged across the chasm.

Then suddenly, at the first gap, barely ten metres from us, two Chamois leapt out and amazingly bound down the chasm as if glued to it, completely sure-footed... but nothing I was going to try and copy!

Eventually, the down-climb finished and there was another narrow gap, with another narrow traverse, and the final 100-metre ascent awaited.

Here, I met three young Germans, one of whom was crying in shock at the considerable exposure, and the other two trying to reassure their friend. The exposure is considerable and there were recently



MOUNT OLYMPUS



two fatalities at this spot, so his fears were fully justified. They found a spot sheltered from the wind, where two of them rested; the third decided to climb on with me.

We crossed the treacherous traverse and the smooth rock, polished by many climbers over the years. Not a place to be on a wet day.

Now the interesting part started. The sun was scorching and sweat dripped into my eyes as the rock crumbled away in my hand. This threatened to send me hurtling nonstop into the abyss. Fortunately, I stuck to the 'three points of contact' rule of scrambling.

I turned and manoeuvred my body slightly to the left, while being careful not to over-extend myself as the 25kph wind gently reminded me a firm grip was essential. I fixed my gaze on another point and this time my grasp held, as a rock from another climber higher up tumbled down a little bit too close for comfort. I moved my left foot to another tiny ledge and then my right foot and continued my move upwards as I climbed the **Kakí Skála** (Evil Stairway), which has an exposure of over 600 metres in places. A total focus on grip is needed or it won't be the Throne of Zeus you will be visiting, but the depths of the River Styx, with the waiting Charon to help ferry you to Hades instead.

The climb up from here is complicated by loose rockfall from other climbers and some very slippery rocks, so even more care is needed. At this height, at around 2,800m (or 9,186ft in old money), the thin air is very noticeable and the breathing inevitably gets somewhat more laboured.

Once you reach the top of this section there is a narrow neck and awkward corner with a via ferrata-type chain for grip, and just 100 metres away is the summit itself. A down-climb of ten metres, followed by a thirty-metre ascent, brings you to the summit of **Mytikas** (2,918m).

Above:
Climbers
ascending the
Kakí Skála or Evil
Stairway

Below right:
Another rocky
chasm on the
descent of
Mytikas

It is a narrow, airy summit with a trigonometrical pillar, a Greek flag and a visitors' book. How did all the twelve Olympian gods manage to fit here at the one time when visiting Zeus for a cup of tea?

After the numerous photos (taken by a Serbian who had also summited) and after signing the substantial visitors' book, the down-climb awaited. Helmet now carefully back on, I started back down. The height exposure was now more noticeable on the Kakí Skála, should you choose to acknowledge it, of course. I was too busy focusing on my grip to notice the considerable drop!

I had a two-hour hike back to the refuge, where Karolina was waiting, and from there a three-hour hike back to the car. A much-needed swim followed to cool down. The well-earned celebration involved a long, cool pint (well okay, maybe more than one!) of, inevitably, Mytikas beer. ■





Films

Three new films of particular interest to hillwalkers and climbers have been shown at the Irish Film Institute (IFI) in Temple Bar, Dublin, so far this year. They are reviewed by **Patrick O'Sullivan**.



Clare Sheridan and Calvin Torrains in a still from the film

CALVIN & CLARE

A film by **Cormac Campbell**

38min

The first screening of this film in the Irish Film Institute (IFI) in February was introduced by the director, **Cormac Campbell**, who is also a climber. This short documentary offers an insight into the lives of two of Ireland's most accomplished rock climbers, **Calvin Torrains** and **Clare Sheridan**, who have been climbing and life partners for over 45 years now.

The film follows Calvin and Clare on a weekend when they are climbing at Fair Head in County Antrim and Clare is attempting the first ascent of a new route. Poignantly, Clare recalls a time when young women were told 'girls don't climb,' something she has certainly disproved! Calvin talks about changes in the gear and the techniques used, since the time when climbers simply tied the rope around their waist and set off up a route.

This film is certainly very enjoyable and well worth watching, particularly if you know something about Calvin and Clare, and the other leading Irish climbers who contribute to the film. It uses a soft touch as Calvin and Clare go about their business and talk about their experiences, filming without seeming to

intrude on their special relationship, on and off the crag. There are also some impressive shots of the cliffs at Fair Head.



Moose's Tooth, Alaska

THE SANCTITY OF SPACE

A film by **Renan Ozturk and Freddie Wilkinson**

1hr 42min

Climbing partners **Renan Ozturk** and **Freddie Wilkinson** were inspired by **Brad Washburn's** early black-and-white aerial photographs of the mountains in Alaska to attempt a traverse of the **Moose's Tooth** massif, a ferocious-looking range of mountains twenty-four kilometres south-east of Denali, north America's highest peak.

The **Tooth Traverse** is a five-mile alpine route across the

skyline of the Moose's Tooth massif in the Central Alaska Range. It is highly technical and daunting. The film documents how Ozturk and Wilkinson spend the better part of a decade endeavouring to complete the Tooth Traverse, in the face of accidents, injuries and a number of close calls. Some of the film is devoted to a biography of explorer and photographer **Bradford Washburn**, whose photographs originally inspired their obsession. While interesting, it does make the storyline a bit disjointed at

THE VELVET QUEEN

A film by **Marie Amiguet**

1hr 32min

This film documents a quest to get images of one of the most elusive of animals, the **snow leopard**, high up on the remote Tibetan plateau. **Vincent Munier**, a renowned wildlife photographer, takes novelist **Sylvain Tesson** with him. For several weeks the pair explore the plateau, often at 5,000m or higher in fairly extreme conditions. They come across other often rare animals, and Vincent, through persistence, captures some amazing footage. Eventually, they do see a snow leopard and get some impressive images of that beautiful animal as well.

The mountain photography by itself is impressive in the vastness of the high Tibetan plateau. Most impressive, however, are the amazing images of the various animals that the photographer manages to capture. Pride of place has to go to the images of the snow leopard that he finally gets, and particularly a sequence from a hidden camera he leaves by a trail that he suspects a snow leopard is using. All in all, a very enjoyable and absorbing film with some very striking wildlife and mountain photography.

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



Snow leopard



Hillwalking



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

Get more involved in 2022!



Written by
Ruth Whelan,
Hillwalking
Development
Officer

■ Club Committee Support Meetings

We will be hosting four online meetings tailored for club committees in the autumn.

These workshops are aimed at club committee members who are new to their committee, or at those who just want to refresh their skills or learn something new. Each of the four workshops will cover a different topic. The aim is to help support committees to run their clubs more effectively. This will be a great opportunity to engage with the Mountaineering Ireland staff and to ask any questions that you might have on the specific topics.

The dates and focus of the workshops will be as follows:

September 28th, 2022, 7.00pm **Membership System and GDPR**

This workshop will provide you with key information you will need for managing your members' data.

October 5th, 2022, 7.00pm

Committee Roles and Club AGMs

This workshop aims to provide you with an overview of the role of the committee as a whole and will discuss in more detail the various roles and responsibilities of members of the committee. This will be particularly useful for new members of a club.

October 12th, 2022, 7.00pm

Insurance and Accident Reporting

This workshop will focus on providing information on club insurance, what's covered, taster sessions and accident reporting.

October 19th, 2022, 7.00pm

Toolkit for Clubs

This workshop aims to provide information about the resources that are available to clubs. It will focus on how to attract and retain members, and will provide an opportunity to link in with other clubs and share ideas.

Please register for any of these workshops on
www.mountaineering.ie/homepage.

■ Information Evening

Why join Mountaineering Ireland as a club?

We are having an information evening for non-affiliated clubs on Wednesday, August 24th, 2022. If you know of any clubs who are unsure of whether to join Mountaineering Ireland, but who would like to get more information about what we do and what is involved in setting up a club, please let them know about this evening. Join us on Zoom on August 24th at 7.00pm. More information on www.mountaineering.ie.

■ Club profiles sought for the Log

We are looking for club profiles to feature in the *Irish Mountain Log*. During various workshops many clubs have asked for greater networking opportunities amongst our clubs. Although





you can reach out to any club on mountaineering.ie/localclub, we would like to showcase more of our clubs by featuring one or more of them in each issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. This will also give clubs an opportunity to provide potential new members with key information to encourage them to join.

All we need is a minimum of 400 words about your club, including its size, some history, how long you are established, what you do and where you walk, together with some good photos. Please send them to me at ruth@mountaineering.ie.

■ Women With Altitude weekend

“Push Your Boundaries”

After a two-year sabbatical, we took a chance, did something totally different, and it paid off! **“Push Your Boundaries,”** the Women With Altitude weekend event for 2022, saw over one hundred and ten women arrive at Cronin’s Yard at the foot of Carrauntoohil with their tents, campervans and the right attitude, despite the dubious weather forecast.

After the tents were pitched, everyone took to the marquee for registration and received a Women With Altitude gift, some delicious Oaties from Stable Diet and a beautifully crafted name tag created by a number of talented volunteers from Wexford.

Trisha Dean, Project Manager with the **MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project**, gave us a friendly welcome to the Reeks, providing us with lots of useful info about Kerry and helping us to settle in for a weekend of fun. Although there were a few familiar faces, the majority of attendees were experiencing Women With Altitude for the first time.

Female hillwalkers and rock climbers of all levels came from all over the country, even from as far as Donegal and Down. There

was a huge mix of experience. Those who were just starting their outdoor adventures participated in activities such as introductions to the hills, navigation, environmentally-focused walks, scrambling and rock-climbing. The more experienced had the opportunity to develop their skills even further by taking part in improvers’ navigation and scrambling courses, Lowland Leader taster sessions, a Mountain Leader refresher course, environmentally-focused walks and learning to lead rock-climbing courses. The pure breadth of age, knowledge and experience on display throughout the weekend was amazing to see.

After a delightful curry and cakes provided by **Esther Cronin** and the team at Cronin’s Yard on Saturday evening in the marquee, we relaxed and enjoyed the keynote speaker’s talk. A big thank you to the remarkable **Clare Sheridan** for a truly inspirational and motivational talk. She not only delighted us with an insight into a variety of expeditions, first ascents and climbs she had accomplished, she also talked about confidence in the mountains from a female perspective, which, by all accounts, motivated all of her audience to go out and ‘walk, climb and lead like a woman’!



Clare Sheridan entertains the gathering

Prior to another day full of activities on the Sunday, all participants were put into groups based on their level of experience and activity of interest. This was to get some feedback from the participants, but predominantly to facilitate networking between participants and to encourage them to continue to work on developing the skills learnt over the weekend.

A special thank you to **Colette Mahon, Ursula Timmins, Laura Griffin, Maike Jurgen** and **Rita Connelly** (who, although she couldn’t be there in person, was there in spirit!) for their help in the lead-up to event and throughout the weekend. Thanks also to the inspiring role models who were our instructors and leaders: **Michelle Casey, Askea Calnan, Brona Duddy, Trisha Dean, Maura Kennedy, Helen Lawless, Colette Lawlor, Colette Mahon, Ursula MacPherson, Clíodhna McArdle, Lisa Murdiffe, Sinead Pollock, Orla Prendergast, Ann Murphy** and **Fiona English**, and all the wonderful Mountain Leader and Rock Climbing Instructor trainees who came to observe and help out.

Thank you to the **Great Outdoors** for the great photo competition prizes and fun all weekend. A very special thank you to **John** and **Esther Cronin** and the team at Cronin’s Yard for looking after us so well over the entire weekend. Of course, the event would not have been the same without all the wonderful participants whose positivity and enthusiasm to push the boundaries all weekend was infectious. The atmosphere was electric from beginning to end, which was helped by the beautiful backdrop of the Kerry mountains. ■





Access & Conservation



Heritage Minister Malcolm Noonan TD, Orla Prendergast (Mountaineering Ireland) and Tom Daly from the Ardara Hillwalking Club during the Slieve Bloom Mountain Environment Walk, with NPWS Conservation Ranger Robert Edge (at telescope) and NPWS District Conservation Officer Aine Lynch (using binoculars).

A special day in a special place

Heritage Minister participates in Mountaineering Ireland event



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Access &
Conservation
Officer

What's that large bird with long grey wings with black tips? **Padraig Comerford** from the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS), whirled round and scanned the hillside, but the bird had disappeared from view. One of the participants in Mountaineering Ireland's recent **Mountain Environment Walk** in the Slieve Blooms had described a male **hen harrier**.

Mountaineering Ireland was delighted that the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, **Malcolm Noonan TD**, had accepted an invitation to join our environmental walk on the **Slieve Bloom Mountains Nature Reserve**. At over 2,300 hectares, this is Ireland's largest state-owned nature reserve and one of the best and least disturbed mountain blanket bog systems in the country. The Slieve Blooms are also of special conservation interest for the **hen harrier**, a rare bird of prey. The area also has Ireland's highest density of another emblematic upland species, the **red grouse**.

The purpose of the day, which was hosted in conjunction with the NPWS, was to learn about the species and habitats in the Slieve Blooms and to consider how a balance can be struck between the conservation and recreational enjoyment of this special environment. The event was attended by representatives from local walking groups and other clubs that walk regularly in the Slieve Blooms.

Wetting the bog

Crossing the blanket bog (as gently as we could), the fragility of this environment

was clear. Getting the blanket bog wetter is important for habitat condition and to improve resilience to fire. Actions to achieve this include the blocking of old drains on the bog. This needs to be methodical and done on a more widespread scale than current resources allow. The removal of conifers that are self-seeded from neighbouring plantations is also a priority as these dry out the bog. We discussed how walkers could help, by pulling up small conifers and putting them into drains where they will not grow, or possibly by joining an NPWS-coordinated volunteer day targeting problem spots.

Preventing damage by off-road vehicles

The route we followed across the plateau gets some walking traffic, but is not heavily used, probably because of its wetness. We saw evidence of **quads** and **scrambler bikes** using the route. The NPWS team explained that vehicle activity is illegal and a concern because of the damage it can cause. Walkers are encouraged to contact the NPWS if they see vehicles on the reserve, providing as much detail as possible, including photos (people should not place themselves at risk taking photos). Please email **SlieveBlooms@housing.gov.ie** or contact **Robert Edge** on **085 873 6496**.

Helping to protect the harrier

The Slieve Bloom hen harriers have struggled to successfully fledge chicks in

recent years, with losses largely attributed to weather and predators. Large groups of people can also cause disturbance to hen harriers and other nesting birds. The hen harrier nesting season is from April 1st up to mid-August. Walking groups are encouraged to keep groups to fifteen people or fewer and to contact the NPWS (details above) if group numbers may exceed twenty.

Walking groups are asked to walk within existing tracks, to prevent the widening of damaged areas and also to avoid the creation of new tracks. New tracks through the heather fragment the habitat and make it easier for predators such as pine martens and foxes to reach hen harrier nests.

The information shared on the day and the evident passion of local walkers for the Slieve Blooms showed the value of greater cooperation and how walkers can help in caring for Ireland's natural environment. We were impressed to hear of the work the Minister is doing, including increased funding and restructuring of the NPWS, strengthening legislation and increasing nature awareness. Thank you to all who contributed to this special day! ■

FIND OUT MORE

► For more information visit
<https://slieveblooms.ie>

► Watch Ireland's Skydancer, a short video on the hen harrier, at
<https://bit.ly/hen-harrier>

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Pause before you post

Let's take care with what we share

For lots of us, capturing images of our outdoor adventures and experiences, and sharing these on social media, is part of the fun. Social media has become a powerful driver of where people go and what they do in the outdoors. By taking care with what we share, we can help protect the places we love. These pointers may help:

- It is best to avoid geotagging the locations in your photos or videos, especially where increased visitor numbers could place strain on access or parking arrangements.
- Route maps shared online may be used by people that are less careful than you were about safety, access and parking.
- Including a dog in photos from mountains and crags, even where dogs are allowed, may prompt others to take dogs to places where they could cause disturbance to wildlife or farm animals.
- Stacking stones for photos can disturb habitats and leave soil exposed to erosion; it also takes from the experience of others by reducing the sense of wildness.
- If photographing wildlife, approach slowly and take photos from a distance. If there's a response to your

presence, you're too close and may be affecting their behaviour or their ability to feed. **Note:** a licence is required to film or take a photo of any bird or other protected wildlife species at or near its breeding place.

- Could you use your post to encourage positive behaviour, e.g. by mentioning your engagement with the landowner, or the skills and equipment you used?

Let's use social media as a vehicle to celebrate Ireland's mountains, crags and wild spaces, in a way that inspires responsible enjoyment of these special places.

Peatland restoration day



Hugh McLindon, Conservation Ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, demonstrating the spreading of heather brash to Mountaineering Ireland volunteers helping out with a pilot bog restoration project between Barnacullian and Stoney Top in the Wicklow Mountains.

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

Thanks to all those who responded to the second public consultation on the new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**. The strategy will be finalised over the summer; all going well it should be approved by the Cabinet and launched in September. ■

Kerry access issues

There continues to be an access issue affecting much of the Black Valley in County Kerry, including Stumpa Dúloigh, Broaghnabinnia and Knocknabreeda.

Also in Kerry, there is an access closure on the first part of the Knocknabobar route published in the *Irish Peaks* book. For an alternative start, visit the Irish Peaks section of www.mountaineering.ie.

Anyone who encounters difficulty climbing Purple or Tomies in the Gap of Dunloe is asked to contact helen@mountaineering.ie. ■



Training

News for members

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



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

Summer Alpine Meet 2022

The **2022 Summer Alpine Meet** is going ahead and will take place from 17th to 30th of July in Saas Grund, Switzerland. **Youth bursary places** are available for this UIAA Youth Commission-supported event.



Training Officer Jane Carney and student Hannah Gibney on a recent Scrambling Workshop in Glendalough

Training awards, registration and provider news

- **Provider applications for the new Camping Leader Award** are still being received. Forms are available on the website. We are pleased to report that we already have two groups of newly-qualified Camping Leaders. Well done to them all!
- The first **Rock Climbing Development Instructor** training was delivered by training provider **Jonny Parr** in the Mourne in May and early June. This award is designed for experienced instructors who want to teach the many building blocks and progressions required for trad lead climbing and to develop and support the pathway towards competent lead climbing. The two candidates, **Claire Comiskey** and **Anastasia Strizakova**, are experienced Rock Climbing Instructors who presented logbooks that met and surpassed the not insignificant minimum requirements for registration:

- x60 trad leads of VS/4c or above
- x60 sport leads of 6a or above (50% can be outside Ireland and the UK)
- x20 post RCI varied group sessions

Both climbers brought extensive coaching and personal climbing experience to the four-day training course, making for a very intense but informative and enjoyable course to observe.

- Following the review of the Mountain Training UK and Ireland Walking Scheme Awards, we are pleased to announce the launch of the revised **Mountain Training Walking Awards**. The changes can be seen in the walking award handbooks on the relevant website pages. The key items include developed sections on leadership, teaching and learning, and the aligning of the three walking award descriptions and experience guidance notes. Please see the website for details. ■

News for members and candidates

- **Training Grant applications.** Applications for support for trainings from July to December 2022 are being received now and will be reviewed in the MTBI June meeting. Thank you for your applications for grants of up to €250 to support training activities.

- **Club Training Officers Online Workshops.** Club Training Officers are invited to attend an online Club Training Officer session on October 10th from 7-8.30pm, to support, develop and refresh in-club skills. Please confirm attendance and update details of new Club Training Officers. ■





■ **Be AdventureSmart today!** Please continue to share the three key AdventureSmart questions with those less experienced than yourselves in the outdoors:

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

By supporting and sharing the AdventureSmart campaign you are helping to reduce the number of call-outs and shouts to land and sea rescue services. AdventureSmart is partnered with Mountain Rescue, RNLI, Mountain Training, a number of NGBs and many other outdoor organisations across the UK and Ireland. For more information, see www.adventuresmart.ie. ■



Providers: news, reminders

■ **Insurance provision for award holders and providers.** Holders of Mountain Training awards who are members of one of the three mountain training associations – **Mountain Training Association (MTA)**, **Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI)** or **British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML)** – require professional insurance cover to run their businesses. The provision negotiated by the associations for the UK and Ireland is both comprehensive and very competitive. There is additional cover for other activities, such as multi-pitch climbing for Multi-pitch Award holders, along with employee insurance options too. Please contact the Training Office for further details as required. Please share this information with your course candidates.

■ **Please ensure all candidates are registered for the skills schemes and awards.** Candidates will need your support through the registration process. The registration fee covers the cost of the scheme packs.

■ **Please note: only eligible staff can work on courses.** To check if a person is eligible, try adding them to the course report as staff before you employ them, as this will permit eligible staff only. Contact the office for further information or to request staff status. The Provider Handbook staffing section lists the details.

■ **Please ensure you continue to display logos appropriately.** If you are unsure, do contact the Training Office for advice.

■ **Please check your Safeguarding certificates and First Aid certificates and Provider agreements for renewal dates.** Online renewal is possible for Safeguarding. ■

Key dates 2022

- 15-17th July Women's Rock Festival, The Burren, Co Clare
- 17-30th July The Summer Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland
- 5th September Online MTBI Meeting
- 9th September Online Providers Workshop
- 24-25th Sept Skills/CPD Workshops Teaching Navigation, Scrambling, Rock Climbing. Venues: Kerry, Mourne, Galway, Wicklow
- 2nd October Online Club Training Officers Meeting, 7.00-8.30pm
- 18th October Online Winter Meet Information Evening
- 28-31st Oct Mountain Leader Assessment, venue tbc
- 1st November Online MTBI Meeting
- 13th November Online MTUKI Meeting
- 27-28th Nov Train the Trainer Workshop (blended option)
- 5th December Online MTBI Meeting (year-end Training Grant review)
- 6th December Senior Providers Workshop

Key dates 2023

- 21-22nd January Train the Trainer Workshop (blended option)
- 28th February Online MTBKI Meeting
- 11-18th March Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 24-26th March Mountain Leader Assessment, venue tbc

Please see the website for events and bookings or contact the **Training Office** for further details. Please book early!



Please contact the **Training Officer, Jane Carney**, for further details or with any training queries, on 01 625 1112.

Stay safe out there!



CLIMBING SAFELY

Part 4: Pacing beads

How useful is a pacing device? Continuing his series on climbing safely, mountaineer and big-wall climber **Andy Kirkpatrick** discusses the usefulness of pacing beads

“How much is a babyccino?” and “Have you ever actually used those pacing beads?” are two questions I ask whenever I’m given the opportunity; not really questions, but rather invitations to self-indictment.

On the former, I remember when a babyccino (Aussie frothy milk for middle-class children) used to be free; after all, it’s just froth, but there has been a huge price inflation due to middle-class parents not asking what the going rate is (or not asking the price of any coffee). When you ask the barista, you’ll get a range of prices ranging from 30 cents (rare) to four euro (far too common). I don’t buy babyccinos, but I just like to ask.

On the latter question, most will look down at their Silva 4 compass, cord locks stacked up on the lanyard, and admit they never have. “Have you never got lost?” I ask them then, to which the reply is generally, “Yes.”

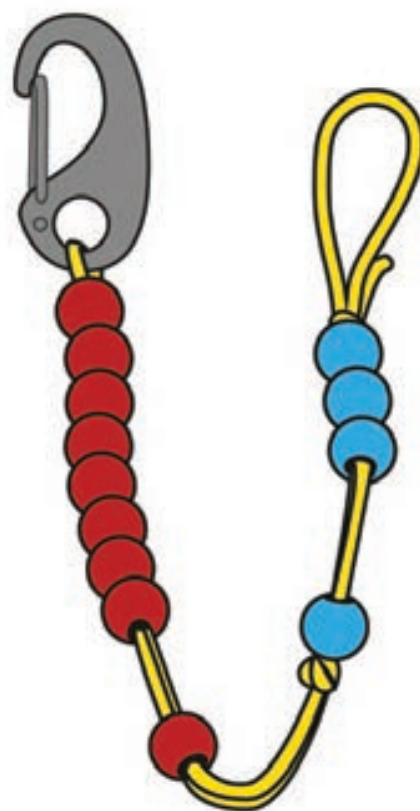
Although I have no time for babyccinos, I do think pacing beads are fantastically useful, but only useful like a reserve parachute, as in, when you need one, you’d better have one and know how to use it.

What are pacing beads?

The most common form of pacing beads is a stack of cord locks fitted to the lanyard of a compass, the idea being that every hundred metres, or even every ten metres if things are really bad, you move one bead to remind yourself of how far you have gone.

To anyone who has only ever navigated on a perfect day, under bluebird skies, butterflies dancing across the hillside, the need for such tools may sound over the top, but it isn’t!

Winds that send you to your knees or onto your backside, stinging snow, hail or rain, fog, darkness, fatigue, stress, or all of the above, can render your ability to count and retain a number impossible.



This becomes an issue when micro-navigating, such as when you need to hit the right descent gully or the right buttress in the dark, or some tiny Alpine hut in a storm. Yes, timing works well most of the time, but generally, the harder the navigation legs, the more important beads become.

Setting up your beads

There are countless ways to set up your beads, from four beads, five, ten, thirteen or fifteen.

Four beads are an ideal number for attaching to your compass lanyard, as they’re unintrusive, and can be used to count in fives, meaning at five (fifty metres, or five hundred), you reset the beads and begin again (the reset



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

“USEFUL LIKE A RESERVE PARACHUTE, AS IN, WHEN YOU NEED ONE, YOU’D BETTER HAVE ONE AND KNOW HOW TO USE IT”

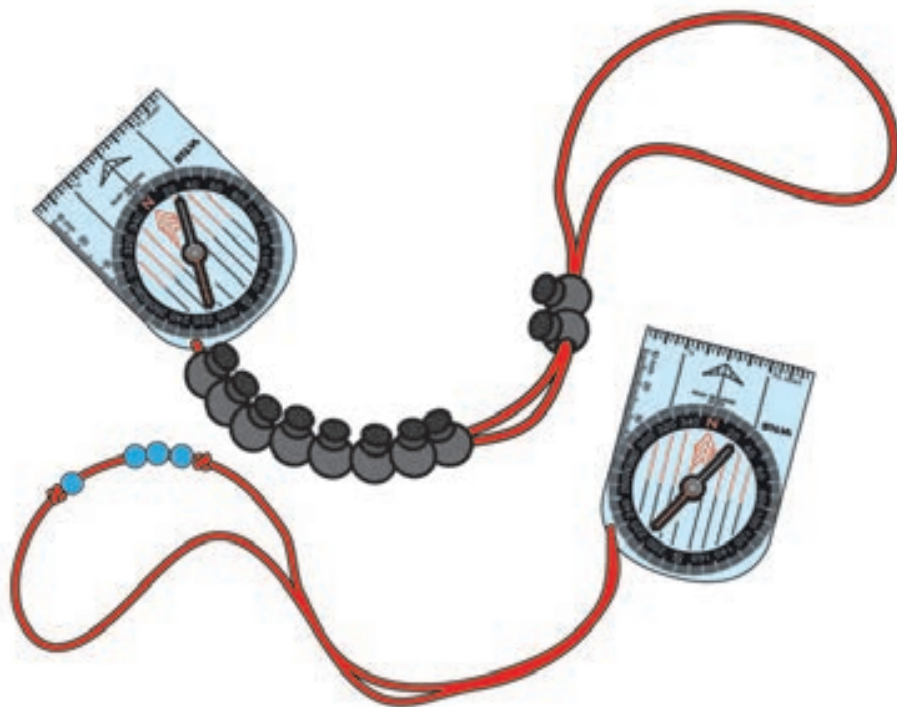
replaces the fifth bead). Having four beads on your compass means they’re always at hand, but for more serious navigation, such as in winter, thirteen is the lucky number.

For this set-up, you have two groups of beads on the same cord, ideally different colours: nine beads (red, for example), for tens or hundreds, and four beads (blue) for hundreds or thousands.

Once you have no red beads left to push up, you reset and start again, pushing up a blue bead to mark the reset. When you run out of blue beads, you’ve either gone five hundred metres, or five kilometres.

I prefer to carry the beads on a separate cord from my compass, and will attach it where it’s easy to see and manipulate, either hanging from a chest strap, or clipped across both straps. I’d also recommend having them set so you can secure both ends of the cord (you can have a karabiner at one end, and lark’s-foot-knot the other end to something), otherwise you might lose a tooth in super windy weather.

Cord locks are too bulky to stow away in a pocket, and I’d recommend buying either micro-cord locks, or beads designed for 550 Para-cord, making use of reflective cord and glow-in-the-dark beads for night navigation. If you really struggle with numbers, you can also get numbered beads!



If a leg is life or death, then consider having multiple people pace the distance, and just average it out.

Pacing demo

A real-life example of how to use a cord would be navigating down from the summit of Carrauntoohil in a white-out, aiming for the top of the Devil’s Ladder.

From the summit, you have to travel south-west for 200 metres, which would be approximately 140 strides (280 steps), then turn south-east for 650 metres; so 481 strides. If things were particularly hellish, you might want to break down the

first leg into 10-metre chunks, pushing up a bead every seven paces (you might have to work out what speed you crawl at).

Once you’ve pushed up either your second red bead (200 metres), or your second blue bead (two resets of your red beads), you should be at the start of the next leg, and would begin again.

Although most people would imagine it is easy to just hold these numbers in your head, such a descent, even over a very short distance, might take a very long time, with several stops and starts, compass checks and the odd prayer.

Knowing to within ten metres how far you have gone, even if you find yourself hitting something unexpected (like a cliff), will at least allow you to work out where you are (measure the distance off from your compass baseplate, then rotate it from where you were to where you seem to have ended up, taking into account slope aspect, etc).

What if you don’t have any beads?

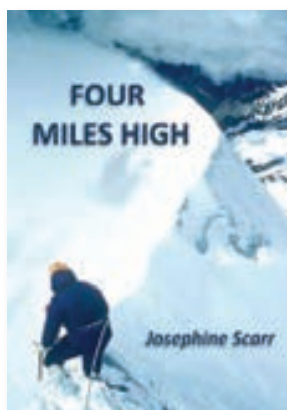
Unlike an emergency parachute, you may well find yourself without any pace beads when you need some. There are many alternatives you can use. You can pick up stones, tie knots in your compass lanyard or a sling, or clip wires from a full karabiner to an empty one.

If all else fails, the next thing to practise is learning how to get unlost! ■





Gripping account of two womens' expeditions in the 1960s



FOUR MILES HIGH

By Josephine Scarr

The Pinnacle Club (1921), a reprint of a book on an early women's Himalayan expedition first published in 1966, 227pp, 20pp colour photos, 4pp b/w photos, maps, £12.95 (ppbk), ISBN 978-0-9513967-4-2

Four Miles High was originally published in 1966. This revised edition is published to mark the 100th anniversary of the **Pinnacle Club**, a UK-based club of women climbers. Members of the Pinnacle Club undertook two ground-breaking Himalayan expeditions in the early 1960s, which are documented in this book.

Written by **Josephine Scarr**, the first section is an account of the **1961 Women's Kulu Expedition** by two young members of the Pinnacle Club, **Josephine** herself and **Barbara Spark**. After driving overland in a Land Rover from the UK to India, they hired porters, mapped an unexplored glacier and made first ascents of two 6,000m peaks. The story tells of their trip preparation, gaining sponsorship, gathering funds and supplies, hand-making equipment and facing numerous challenges along the way, and the ultimate exhilaration that their climbing provided.

Following a winter in India, where the pair taught,

travelled and planned, the second half of the book is a record of the **1962 British Jagdula Expedition**, where **Scarr** and **Spark** joined **Dorothea Gravina, Pat Wood, Nancy Smith** and **Denise Evans**, also from the Pinnacle Club, for a second incredible adventure into the unknown. Together, this extraordinary assembly of brave and resilient women, ranging in age from 24 to 56, set out on a journey that lasted over a month, exploring, mapping and climbing in north-west Nepal, including summiting **Lha Shamma** (6,412m) and six other virgin peaks.

Tales of dealing with extreme weather conditions without modern technical gear, the challenges of making fire and cooking in such wild terrain, coping with bouts of altitude sickness, the gruelling physical tasks faced, overcoming language barriers, and negotiating pathless cliff edges and bridgeless river crossings make for intriguing and jaw-dropping reading that is simultaneously humbling and inspiring.

I greatly enjoyed reading this book. It had me hooked from the outset due to the author's lively and down-to-



The 1962 Jagdula Expedition team. Left to right, back row: Josephine Scarr, Pat Wood, Dorothea Gravina. Middle row: Ang Temba, Pemba Norbu 1, Mingma, Dawa, Pemba Norbu 2. Front row: Barbara Spark, Denise Evans, Pasang, Katcheri, Ang Pema, Nancy Smith, Krishna Rana (liaison officer).

earth style of writing. Scarr elaborates on the details of these pioneering expeditions in such a carefree, passionate and matter-of-fact way, you need to pause and reflect upon what was actually accomplished. The two expeditions took place during the early 1960s, when the technical clothing and equipment we have access to now simply did not exist, so how they managed to achieve so much is fascinating.

The thing that really shone from the pages was the way in which Scarr manages to so

beautifully capture the dynamics of the relationships – within the all-female British climbing party itself, with the Sherpas, the porters and numerous kind hosts and friends they encounter along the way. While the telling is honest about occasional disagreements, which are more often than not short-lived and humorous, it really is testimony to the tenacity of the human spirit, unwavering team commitment, the generosity of strangers and a willingness to overcome and continue in the name of exploration.

There are some magnificent photos to accompany the two marvellous narratives in *Four Miles High*. Together the words and images capture the heart of these 1960s expeditions by the most astonishingly accomplished and courageous women, whose zeal for climbing and discovery emanates throughout.

Kelly Hargie A member of Mountaineering Ireland, who writes about her own adventures in the mountains at everytreasure.blog



Josephine Scarr, Mingma and Barbara Spark on summit of Lha Shamma (6,412m), looking north towards Tibet, May 13th, 1962

Selected walks in the uplands and lowlands, from the tried and trusted to some lesser known gems



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



50 BEST IRISH WALKS - EASY TO MODERATE

By John G O'Dwyer

Currach Books (2020), 234pp,
numerous photos, €16.99,
ISBN 978-1-78218-915-2

One of the good things about this book is that the reader or walker quickly learns what type of walk the writer is presenting, all laid out before each route description: easy or moderate level, time (1½ to 4½ hours) and distance, underfoot conditions, any navigational difficulties and what map, if any, is required. A basic map, showing the route, accompanies each walk description.

The routes are generally, but not always, way-marked, but the writer uses his knowledge and experience to formulate his own variations. The majority are looped walks in both upland and lowland areas, with a few linear ones where the obvious route follows a river.

I liked the writer's storytelling (you may remember his book *Wild Stories from the Irish Uplands*, reviewed in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Log*). Every walk has a little tale: every corner of the countryside seems to

echo the ancient saints, scholars and soldiers, from Fionn Mac Cumhail to the Cistercians of Mount Melleray, with a motley bunch of Normans, Jacobites, Elizabethans and others in between. Sometimes he is in the company of locals who add to his own great interest in the history of old castles, abbeys and bridges.

Some of the walks are well known for their beautiful landscapes – Cliffs of Moher Walk, The Hag's Glen, Slievenamon, The Spink Loop, Slieve Gullion, The Causeway Coast – while others sound like little gems that the writer has unearthed and will, no doubt, prove to be more popular as word spreads – walks like Mulranny Loop, Inis Meáin, Dromore Nature Reserve, Ballyhoura Hills, The East Galtees, Mauherslieve, Lough Boora and Slieve Beagh.

The writer also gives credit to the work done in recent years to improve our walking

areas, like the Suir Blueway, the High Bog Walkway on Abbeyleix Bog or the only community-run hotel in the country in the Slieve Beagh uplands.

John G O'Dwyer has been a strong supporter over the years of the need for investment in our uplands as a recreational resource, whether proper car parks and toilets or sustainable pathworks.

A quick look at the map of Ireland at the front of the book shows you where all the fifty walks are. This is when you might think about where you will be doing most of your walking, or think about giving this book to a visitor.

As a Tipperary man, the author brings the reader to plenty of nearby places that might otherwise be bypassed, and the Tipperary/Waterford area does have the benefit of lovely mountains and river valleys. He obviously has a love of the Burren and has

Buy now

This is the book we
recommend most
highly from our
summer 2022
reviews

also included six island walks off the west coast. These two regions in the book, South East and West, have thirty of the walks, the rest split between South West, Midlands/East and North.

This is a welcome book that meets the needs of many walkers who are looking for a half-day outing, maybe as an introduction to hillwalking, walks with lovely scenery and places of interest for the curious.

This book shows that walking in Ireland, with its varied landscape, can be an exciting journey into the country's varied history.

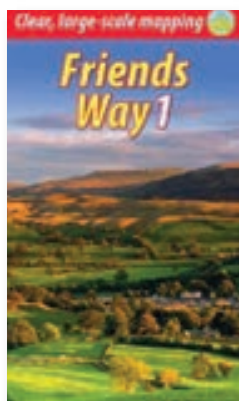
Nicky Hore Features Editor of the
Irish Mountain Log



Glendalough from the Spink Loop



Historic 100-kilometre walk in north-west England



FRIENDS WAY 1: GEORGE FOX'S JOURNEY

By Martin Budgett
& Jacquetta Megarry

Rucksack Readers (2022), 72pp,
over 100 colour photos, 17 maps,
£14.99, ISBN 978-1-913817-06-0

This Rucksack Readers' guide has four sections – planning, background information, the way in detail and references. The planning information is well thought out for all levels

of walkers, from beginners to experienced. It also provides good information on transport routes to and from the walk. The facilities table gives vital information for walkers, such as accommodation and food sources (as of 2021). The guide emphasises that the walk is not waymarked, but uses other marked walks.

The walk is 62 miles (100 kilometres) long, from Barley in Lancashire to Sedbergh in Cumbria. Given the detailed maps and location photos of the route, navigation should not be a problem, provided attention is given to any directional changes or access gates and stiles.

The guide gives good advice on what to wear, when to walk and where to camp. The historical information provided is also very interesting and gives a good

insight into **George Fox's** original journey in 1652, on which this walk is based, and its role in the founding of Quakerism. The historical aspect will add to the enjoyment of this walk.

The fifty-page main section of the guide is devoted to describing the walk in five sections, which can be taken in five days or further subdivided, depending on the walker's ability. At the start of each section there is a synopsis of what to expect: Distance, Terrain, Grade, Food and Drink, and Summary. I can imagine a walker studying each section of the walk, taking notes of crucial points and putting the guide in their pocket while enjoying the views.

The route description is very detailed, giving precise directions to follow. The use of over one hundred photos,

diagrams and seventeen maps to show features on the route is very handy, especially where there are crucial changes in direction. Photos of houses, farms, stiles and gates help to give confidence on route-finding. The use of a mileage bar, combined with mileage points on the route, is excellent.

Overall, this is a well-laid-out, easy-to-read guide. It is also a nice handy size to fit into the pocket of walking trousers. The links provided in the guide to websites connected to the walk are worth visiting prior to starting the walk. A second volume, *Friends Way 2*, will be published in 2023, to complete the journey from Sedbergh to Swarthmoor Hall.

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

Crime thriller with Himalayan climb central to plot



BREATHLESS

By Amy McCulloch

Penguin Fiction (2022), 394pp, £12.99,
ISBN 978-0-241-53483-0. Also
available as a Kindle eBook and as
Penguin Audio from Audible.com

When struggling journalist Cecily Wong is invited to join an expedition to climb one of the world's highest mountains (Manaslu), it seems like the

chance of a lifetime. She doesn't realise how deadly the climb will be. This *Sunday Times* **Crime Book of the Month** avoids the nonsense which has dogged some mountain fiction on screen and in print. No infamous bolt guns, *Cliffhanger*-style, here.

Author **Amy McCulloch** became the youngest Canadian woman to climb Manaslu in September 2019. This is her adult fiction debut, having previously written for children and young adults.

Nevertheless, some suspension of disbelief may be called for. Would famous mountaineer Charles McVeigh, on the last leg of his record-breaking series of summits, invite a blogger to join his expedition, whose claim to fame is her climbing blog documenting her string of



Manaslu

climbing failures, most famously a failure to cross Crib Goch? Would the career-making opportunity of an exclusive interview, conditional on her reaching the summit of Manaslu, be enough to sway the better judgement of said blogger and lead her to give up everything for this story – her boyfriend, her life savings and the peace she has made with

her climbing failures in the past? Would other expedition members feel happy to continue as part of this team?

The premise around which this novel is developed is encountered half-way through: could accepting the inherent risk of climbing on Manaslu mean that murder is going to go unnoticed? After all, with no regulation, the mountains are a wild frontier. Could they also be the perfect killing ground?

Things start to go wrong. Is what everyone else assumes is a freak accident actually foul play? Is the note pinned to her tent – 'There's a murderer on the mountain' – genuine, or is Cecily suffering from paranoia at high altitude?

A well-written and worthwhile read.

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

Two excellent manuals for both climbers and trainers

In recent years, there has been a necessary expansion in sources of information about training for rock climbing to meet the demands of climbers who want to know how to get the most out of their time on rock and to provide an outlet for a fast-growing body of knowledge.

The literature providing for this field has been greatly added to by one publisher in particular, the Sheffield-based Vertebrate Publishing. Two of their recent offerings show the range and quality of their output, as they both earn a place in the canon from different ends of the spectrum of speciality.



BEASTMAKING: A FINGERS-FIRST APPROACH TO BECOMING A BETTER CLIMBER

By Ned Feehally

Vertebrate Publishing (2021),
224pp, numerous colour photos
and diagrams, £20.00,
ISBN 978-1-83981-009-1

The cover of *Beastmaking* is eye-catching and a lesson in the proverbial stay of judgement. If you have been around climbing and are interested in training, you're likely to have encountered the Beastmaker brand of training equipment. You might assume, therefore, that the brand was going to feature

prominently in the content or at least that similar devices would, a reasonable expectation given the name, the cover photo and the fact that the author is co-founder of the company.

However, the book is potentially a more comprehensive guide to training, with good chapters on anatomy, skincare for climbers, fingerboards and tactics. I say 'potentially' because the promise of the early chapters is undermined by a bias towards bouldering, mitigating against it offering enough for anyone particularly interested in developing the climbing fitness or tactical nous for longer or sustained routes.

The lack of advice on that aspect of climbing is fairly glaring too, endurance training is 'dull' and 'tedious,' and the author hopes ten pages out of 200+ isn't going to 'bore your socks off.' That is a shame, because the knowledge is there and it doesn't seem like it would have taken much to expand on it to create a more useable chapter and a more comprehensive book.

The author tells us he finds the fitness of high-grade sports climbers impressive, but, given that it is a book about training for climbing, perhaps it would have been more useful to tell us a bit about how they achieved it. If you are primarily a boulderer or you are buying into the finger-first model to improve your climbing, then there's lots in this book and personally I benefited from reading it, as I needed more knowledge of training for bouldering. If you don't fit into those categories or you are looking for something more comprehensive, then it may not be the one for you and you might want to read on to the next part of this review.



THE CLIMBING BIBLE: PRACTICAL EXERCISES

**By Martin Moberaten
& Stian Christophersen**

Vertebrate Publishing (2022),
368pp, numerous colour photos
and diagrams, £20.00,
ISBN 978-1-83981-104-3

The second of Vertebrate's recent offerings is *The Climbing Bible: Practical Exercises*, a follow-on from *The Climbing Bible*, their training manual from 2020. The earlier of the two is a great training manual, comprised of the basics done well. Their new offering is both an expansion on that and a more easily referenced guide to putting the advice of the previous book into action.

The authors have a wealth of climbing and coaching experience to share, and while obviously there are limits to how much of that can be shared on paper for any pursuit, particularly one like

climbing, this is a very good stab at overcoming that limitation. It really does what it says on the tin. It looks like a book you could open up, pick out some exercises and get to work on improving aspects of your climbing ability. Job done.

It has also got a very comprehensive chapter on training for younger climbers, something that seems to have been missing from the literature until now. The combination of the two volumes of *The Climbing Bible* forms a very good manual for any self-coached climber. This 'Practical Exercises' volume in particular is probably even more useful for any instructor or coach looking for something to add to their repertoire, especially those working with children.

Buying the two volumes is a slightly expensive initial outlay, but it is the kind of good, solid, basic knowledge that will change little over time, so it will be well repaid, if you stay in climbing long enough. As a coach, you can look on it as a good investment in a tool of the trade.

Kevin Duffy Recently retired to become a full-time climber, until he runs out of money or mountains. You can see how that works out for him at www.kevinandedel.com



Ned Feehally, author of *Beastmaking*, on Jack's Broken Heart, Magic Wood, Switzerland.

James Milledge

Leading expert in high altitude medicine

Dr James 'Jim' Milledge passed away in February 2022, at the age of 91 years. He was often referred to as 'the father of mountain medicine' and had been involved in research in high altitude medicine and physiology for more than fifty years.

Born in the early 1930s, Jim Milledge went to school in North Wales, where he was first introduced to the hills. He went on to attend medical school, where he started rock-climbing. After qualifying, he trained in respiratory medicine, and his experience in lung function testing led to a lifelong interest in respiratory physiology.

In the 1950s, Jim spent three years with the RAF in Hong Kong on a commission (in lieu of National Service), which gave him a taste of aviation medicine. He then became involved in high altitude medicine and physiology after taking part in **Sir Edmund Hillary's** Silver Hut Expedition in 1960-61.

After the Silver Hut Expedition, Jim spent ten years as physician and physiologist at Christian Medical College in Vellore, India. From there, he was able

to climb **Mount Kinabalu** (4,095m) and to trek in Nepal during his holidays.

Jim returned to the UK in 1972. He was appointed to Northwick Park Hospital's Clinical Research Centre as a consultant physician and a Medical Research Centre Scientific Member. He continued altitude research at intervals, mainly on expeditions to the mountains in Nepal, China, Kenya and throughout South America. In 1981, he was a member of the **American Medical Research Expedition to Everest** (AMREE), led by **John West**.

For the last four years of his time at Northwick Park Hospital, Jim served as Medical Director there.

He retired in 1995 and was able to pursue his interest in mountain medicine full-time. With two friends from the Silver Hut Expedition – **John West** and **Mike Ward** – he published the standard text on the subject, *High Altitude Medicine and Physiology*, now in its 5th edition. He was a founder member of **Medex (Medical Expeditions)** and a faculty member of the **Diploma in Mountain Medicine** in the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. He



was also President of the **International Society of Mountain Medicine** between 2004 and 2008.

In his final years, Jim's short-term memory failed, causing him some frustration. However, he was still able to enjoy describing potential routes in remote valleys in Nepal.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

James Milledge: born 1930, died February 9th, 2022

John Dunne

Chef and avid hillwalker

A 61-year-old chef from Thurles, Co Tipperary, was found dead in the McGillicuddy's Reeks on Friday, June 3rd, 2022. **John Dunne**, an experienced hillwalker who regularly walked on his own in the Reeks, was reported missing on the Wednesday evening, when he failed to return to his accommodation. His body was subsequently found near Lough Cummeenapeasta after an extensive ground and air search by members of the Kerry Mountain Rescue Team and Rescue 117, an air asset of the Irish Coast Guard, providing rescue helicopter cover.

Initially, it was unclear where John had been hiking but, following media reports featuring his photograph, rescuers were contacted by separate walking parties who remembered seeing him at different times on Carrauntoohil and Cnoc na Toinne. Mr Dunne's body was

subsequently found at the back of Lough Cummeenapeasta, near steep ground around Knocknapeasta, after a search lasting over 24 hours involving Kerry Mountain Rescue Team volunteers, a Rescue 117 helicopter, search-and-rescue dogs, the specialist Iveragh Coast Guard drone team and residents from Lisleibane and Coolroe.

John was not a member of Mountaineering Ireland, but he was clearly a kindred spirit who enjoyed exploring the Reeks. Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to John's family and friends on their tragic loss.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

John Dunne: born 1961, died June 3rd, 2022





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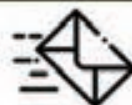


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