

# Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

## The Mourne Wall

The famous landmark celebrates its centenary

## Autumn Gathering

Together once again ... in Wicklow



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





The Rab logo, featuring a stylized 'R' symbol followed by the word 'Rab' in a serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the upper right. The background is a high-altitude snowy mountain landscape with a bright sunburst effect behind the text.

Rab®

# WINTER DEFINES US

Fresh footprints and untouched lines, the winter is full of possibility. With the landscape frozen, new routes are revealed. We dare to go further, steeper, and higher than before.

Demanding, fickle and often fleeting, nothing offers challenge like the winter season. Our range is designed to let you thrive in this hostility. Hewn from ice, granite, and grit, this gear is strong, protective, and refined. Built to help you meet the challenges of winter head on.







# Welcome

The Autumn 2022 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* highlights a return to normality for hillwalkers and climbers in their activities. However, what became obvious from early on in the pandemic was the way that, during the lockdowns, etc, we became deskilled in the practices that keep us safe in the mountains. This has resulted in a loss of confidence, as much as anything, to engage in our sport and particularly to lead and be responsible for others in the uplands.

In response to this, Mountaineering Ireland has been offering **leadership training programmes** for its clubs' members so that the clubs can continue to offer programmes of walks to their members. This initiative has proved very popular among the ninety-one clubs that have signed up for the training so far (see page 5).

The **Autumn Gathering** will go ahead in Wicklow this October, hosted by the **Wayfarers Hiking Club**. This will be the first chance for many of us to meet up in almost two years and promises to be great craic altogether! See the details on page 7.

This year's **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award** is going to an acclaimed British climber **Leo Houlding**, who will be giving a live lecture and receiving his



## The Autumn Gathering will take place this year, the first since the lockdowns

award in Dublin in December 2022. Houlding is one of the world's leading mountaineers and it promises to be a great lecture. See the details on page 6.

In repeated surveys, the *Irish Mountain Log* is one of the most popular benefits of membership of Mountaineering Ireland. It is a members magazine produced by a small team of volunteers from among the membership. We are always looking for material from our fellow members and, indeed, always looking for support. We would appreciate receiving suitable articles about any hikes or climbs that you have done. At the same time, we are also always looking for offers to join the editorial team. With material or offers of assistance, please contact me at [iml-editor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-editor@mountaineering.ie).

Autumn is here and the days are definitely getting shorter, but there is still time to get out and enjoy our wonderful uplands with our new-found freedom!

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

## ISSUE 143

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

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### PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

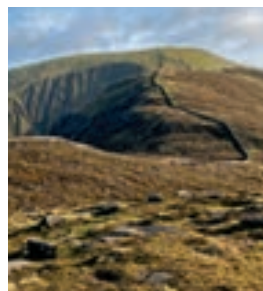


## Write for the Log

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

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

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



### ON THE COVER

The Mourne Wall snakes across the landscape from Slievenaglogh towards Slieve Commedagh in the distance

PHOTOGRAPH  
Dawson Stelfox

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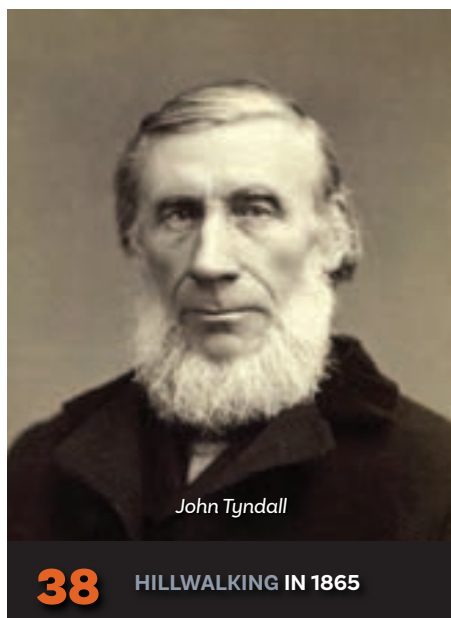
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# Newsdesk

## Supporting our clubs

### Mountaineering Ireland's Club Leadership Programme



#### By Ruth Whelan, Hillwalking Development Officer

Feedback from club support meetings, reboot series, members' forums and ongoing communications with club members throughout 2020 and 2021 highlighted a significant concern in our clubs over the shortage of leaders willing to lead hikes. Lack of confidence amongst existing leaders was a major factor in this. This needed to be addressed across all our clubs to ensure that they continued to be able to provide leaders for their walks, especially after the enforced inactivity during the lockdowns.

In 2021, Mountaineering Ireland responded by creating a programme offering free training with a qualified instructor to our clubs, tailored to each club's needs. The purpose of this programme was to provide informal training to club members, to build their confidence to lead and to develop more leaders within the clubs. The key objectives were:

- to increase the number of leaders available to our clubs;
- to support clubs in encouraging more members to step up and lead;
- to assist leaders in imparting information to members on skills and enjoying the outdoors responsibly.



Clare Outdoor Club members participating in the Club Leadership Programme in 2021

*'Thank you for the very successful training days, extremely interesting and useful, and really very enjoyable too! It's a great initiative, much appreciated by the club.'*

**Sligo Walking Club**

Although tailored to each club's needs, the main areas focused on were:

- group management;
- risk assessment and management;
- navigation skills;
- imparting training skills to members.

The programme was rolled out in 2021 and again in 2022, in response to demand and its success in achieving its objectives. By the end of 2022, the programme will have seen over **1,100 club leaders trained** from 91 different hillwalking clubs.

Thank you to all the training instructors who opted to be involved in this initiative, and well done to all existing and 'in training' club leaders who are stepping up to support their clubs in this important role. ■

*'Many thanks for letting us know about training for 2022. Our members found it very beneficial last year.'*

**Clare Outdoor Club**



# Lynam Lecture 2022

This year's Lynam Lecture will be delivered live by the 2022 Lynam Award recipient **Leo Houlding** on Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, at Chartered Accountants House, 47-49 Pearse Street, Dublin, D02 YN40. Doors open 6.30pm; talk starts at 7.30pm sharp.



By Ruth Whelan, on behalf of the Lynam Award Committee\*

We are delighted to announce that **Leo Houlding** will be the recipient of this year's **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award**. He will deliver the **2022 Lynam Lecture** live on Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Leo Houlding is one of Britain's top climbers and among the best in the world. He started climbing at an early age and won the British Indoor Climbing Championships in 1996.

He is now a veteran with a score of epic ascents, including Everest, but he specialises in free-climbing the most technical peaks and the biggest walls in the world.

At the young age of eighteen, Leo was the first British person to free-climb El Capitan in the Yosemite Valley, and he has gone on to climb many of its toughest lines. Leo is constantly pushing the limits of exploratory adventure, and

he is also an experienced base jumper who is at the forefront of para-alpinism (climbing up, then flying down!).

Leo has become an ambassador for the younger generation of climbers and has been named as one of Britain's top ten adventurers by *The Telegraph*.

An articulate communicator, Leo has captivated and inspired audiences around the world with his tales of adrenalin-fuelled exploits. He has accomplished more than most would in a lifetime from an early age, and we believe he is a very worthy recipient of the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award. We are delighted that he has accepted the nomination for the 2022 Award. For more information, go to [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).



\* \* \* \* \*

**Joss Lynam**, who was one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, passed away in 2011. The **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture** was inaugurated later that year in recognition of the enormous contribution he had made to the development of our sport on the island of Ireland.

Joss' own achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering over some sixty years, including his participation in many expeditions to the Greater Ranges,

made him one of the best-known mountaineers in Ireland. During his lifetime, Joss also initiated any number of developments in all aspects of our sport and he was an inspiration to several generations of Irish mountaineers.

Joss was known to many Irish and international walking enthusiasts for his many Irish hillwalking guidebooks. He was also the Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* for more than twenty years. Joss continued as the Literary Editor of the magazine up to the time of his death.

Since it was inaugurated in 2011, the Lynam Lecture has been delivered by leading national and international mountaineers: 2011, Harish Kapadia; 2012, Dawson Stelfox; 2013, Stephen Venables; 2014, Clare Sheridan; 2015, Ines Papert; 2016, Paul Swail and John McCune; 2017, Frank Nugent; 2018, Paddy O'Leary; 2019, Sir Chris Bonington; 2020, Dr Clare O'Leary; and, most recently in 2021 by Noel Hanna.

All of these have been outstanding lectures that have reflected on the development of various aspects of our sport and how it might progress in coming years.

Further information on the forthcoming Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture will be put up on the Mountaineering Ireland website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), in the ezine, and on our other social media platforms in the next month or so. ■



\*The Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award Committee is chaired by Noel Caffrey and includes members Ruth Whelan, Ursula MacPherson and Patrick O'Sullivan



# Autumn Gathering 2022



Mountaineering Ireland's 2022 Autumn Gathering will take place in Wicklow, based out of the Glenview Hotel, Glen of the Downs, from October 7-9<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the Wayfarers



the time you are booking, to avail of a special rate. Rooms are booking out fast, so be sure to book early.

The weekend will start with registration from 6.30pm on Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, at the Glenview Hotel. The welcome talk will take place from 8.00pm, followed by a talk on **Irish Peaks**.

Saturday will see a full programme of activities, including walks, climbs and scrambling in and around the Wicklow Mountains.

On Sunday morning, we will be holding a variety of workshops on topics including Emergency and Prevention Management with Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue, and a training workshop. We will

**T**his year, the **Wayfarers Hiking Club**, one of our larger long-established clubs, will be hosting Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering in October. This long-awaited, face-to-face Gathering will be based in the beautiful **Glenview Hotel**, which is ideally situated in the Glen of the Downs, Co Wicklow, close to the **Wicklow Mountains**. This weekend is a celebratory Gathering to reconnect and re-engage with members from all over the country.



The Wicklow Mountains form the largest continuous upland area in the Republic of Ireland. They occupy the whole centre of County Wicklow and stretch outside its borders into the counties of Dublin, Wexford and Carlow, providing wide-ranging and challenging walking routes to suit all abilities.

Registration for the weekend is €50, which is subsidised by Mountaineering Ireland, and includes, talks, activities, workshops, a three-course dinner on Saturday evening, buses where needed and some great gifts.

You should **book accommodation** directly with the Glenview Hotel. Please let the hotel know you are with the Mountaineering Ireland Gathering at

also have an Environmental Walk. Please book your choice of activities and workshops online at **[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)** at the time of booking, as places are limited.

► **Register for the Autumn Gathering now and let's all gather once again and enjoy our activities together! ■**

**DO JOIN US FOR THIS YEAR'S  
AUTUMN GATHERING  
FROM OCTOBER 7-9<sup>th</sup>!**



Some members of Wayfarers Hiking Club on a recent hike





## Niamh Ní Chonghaile has an amazing job!

**Linda Sankey** (Get Ireland Walking) talks to **Niamh Ní Chonghaile**, the new National Woodlands and Nature Project Lead with Mental Health Ireland

I recently met with **Niamh Ní Chonghaile**, the new **National Woodlands and Nature Project Lead** with **Mental Health Ireland**.

Her role allows her to spend her day connecting with a wide range of people and organisations, often in woodland settings with **Woodlands for Health**, a twelve-week walking programme for adults availing of mental health services and supports. Niamh has been in this inaugural role for seven months now and she told me how Woodlands for Health began.

“Woodlands for Health started way back in 2012, based on a programme called ‘Branching Out’ in Scotland and was inspired by that. **Charlie Burke**, then from Coillte’s Recreation Team, but who now works with us, heard about this programme in Scotland that was being run as a collaboration between the Scottish NHS mental health services and their National Forestry Board. They were running these programmes in forests and having an amazing impact on mental health. Charlie went to visit them, brought the idea back and then started a pilot in Wicklow. And here we are, ten years on. One large part of my job is coordinating this programme across the country.”

There are now an incredible thirty-two programmes running in twenty-one



Niamh Ní Chonghaile

counties across Ireland, with another nine programmes in the pipeline. The Woodlands for Health programme is offered by partner organisations **Coillte**, **Get Ireland Walking**, **Mental Health Ireland** and **Maynooth University**, and is run on a local level by local steering groups made up of local partners such as Local Sports Partnerships, Mental Health Ireland development officers, Coillte walk leaders, local transport organisations and mental health supports and services.

Each twelve-week programme in Woodlands for Health has about fifteen people, all availing of some sort of mental health support, who meet up once a week. They go for a walk for an hour or so in a forest or woodland setting, have a snack and a chat afterwards, and meet up again the following week.

Niamh said that evaluation of the programme has shown hugely positive results.

“The programme was evaluated in 2020 by the **Go Green Routes** research initiative at the **University of Limerick**, led by **Dr Tadhg MacIntyre**. Participants self-reported significantly improved wellbeing as well as feelings of being connected to nature and to the natural environment. This can be a great thing with regards to feeling well in



themselves but might also have some knock-on effects on people engaging in pro-environmental behaviours – making more conscious decisions about the environment and sustainability.”

We talk about the benefits of being outside in a green space. Niamh feels that the programme supports getting outside in a supportive and sustainable way.

“One of the great things about Woodlands for Health is that it’s a nice, supportive way of getting people outside and introducing them to the outdoors, to spending time outdoors, to walking, maybe walking a little further than they might have done before, and maybe introducing them to different areas. One of the things that is always provided with the programme is transport. It is really nice for people to get to dense woodlands that they wouldn’t normally have access to. It can introduce people to new places and, in some instances, people say things like ‘Gosh, I don’t even live that far away and never realised that this beautiful woodland was here!’

“Something we are looking into more is how people continue this contact with nature after the programme; where they go next. We want to help them progress to ideally some more nature-based activities, whether that is by themselves or with a group.”

Since she started, Niamh has met a variety of people who are interested in what she is doing and want to get involved in this work. Niamh told me:

“There is also a lot of work being done academically on the research and evaluation side. People want to see why this works. A lot of the time, it comes back to the idea that we are part of the natural world and feel better when we are connected to it. If it can improve our health, both mental and physical, then even better.”

Niamh is from west Cork and is an occupational therapist and a yoga teacher by training. I asked her where her favourite walk was and she told me that was like asking her which is her favourite child! She settled on Lough Hyne, the saltwater lake in west Cork, located in a fairly magical setting with woods around it. She loves to walk up the hill and pop into the lake afterwards.

I asked her if she has any walking ambitions and she told me climbing Carrauntoohil was very much on her list. However, her day-to-day goal is much more important and it is achievable for



Lough Hyne, Co Cork

## “WOODLANDS FOR HEALTH IS A WALKING PROGRAMME FOR ADULTS AVAILING OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES”

all of us: getting out walking as much as she can.

She tries to get outside for at least one walk a day, and that makes her feel good. A couple of walks is even better, and often possible, as she’s lucky enough to live in the countryside. She tries to get out first thing in the morning, which she finds the best way to kickstart her day. If she is working from home, she tries to go for a walk in the middle of the day too. For her, she could take three walks across the day, but they might be as short as five minutes in each direction, or a stroll around her garden while on the phone.

She believes in quality over quantity, not getting too tied up with how long a walk is, just enjoying it and appreciating it as time well spent.

Niamh made a good point regarding access to the outdoors:

“I think, for people who spend a lot of time outdoors, it can feel a bit obvious. ‘Of course, I’m going to feel better, if I’m outside!’ However, you may be stuck

inside looking at a screen all day and, depending on where you live and what your life looks like day-to-day, you may not have easy access to the outdoors. It is not part of everybody’s life and, even for the people who do have easier access, we usually think we could do with even more! That’s what my role is about: the connection between spending time in nature and how that impacts our mental health and wellbeing. I think it’s amazing that this is such a growing area of interest and that I am able to have a job that is totally dedicated to it; it really shows the appetite for it.”

Every time I talked with Niamh, I wanted to do two things: get outside immediately and also move to and live in west Cork! Sadly, I can only do one of those things at this moment, but I hope you enjoyed reading about the wonderful, impactful role she has and that it will inspire you to get outside today too.

The full conversation will be turned into a **Get Ireland Walking podcast** very shortly, so keep an eye on [www.getirelandwalking.ie/podcast](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/podcast).

► To find out more about Woodlands for Health and other nature-based wellbeing projects, you can contact Niamh directly on 087 765 4399 or at [niamh.nic@mentalhealthireland.ie](mailto:niamh.nic@mentalhealthireland.ie). ■



**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](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), contact us on (01) 625 1109 or email Linda Sankey at [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie).





Benlettery from  
Ballynahinch fishery

## Ben Lettery Hostel re-opens

Former youth hostel in heart of Connemara now an independent hostel catering for all

**T**he **Ben Lettery Hostel** reopened for business in July. A small, independent, local hostel operator has leased the premises from **An Óige** and invested significantly to improve and upgrade the hostel's facilities and decor.

The ethos of the hostel remains the same: to provide a safe haven for hikers to access the outdoors, while providing quality and affordable accommodation for the hiking community.

Nestled neatly at the base of Benlettery mountain and overlooking Ballynahinch Lake, the hostel is in an ideal location for people wanting to explore Connemara.

**Benlettery** (meaning peak of the wet hillsides) is 577 metres high and is the southernmost peak of the **Twelve Bens** mountain range in Connemara. It is an ideal base from which to explore Connemara and a great starting or finishing point for the **Glencoaghan Horseshoe** loop.



Access to Ben Lettery Hostel is via a stile to the left of the hostel as you face uphill. The stile was built in conjunction with **Mountain Meitheal West** with the agreement of **Mountaineering Ireland** and the **landowners**. The work was carried out by the **Galway Walking Club** in 2019, and they are responsible for inspection and maintenance of the stile. The stile itself and work involved are covered under Mountaineering Ireland's insurance.

The new operators of the hostel hope to attract hillwalkers from all over Ireland and Europe to experience the wonderful variety of hikes available in the Connemara region.

They welcome individual hikers on day-trips, but also groups of up to forty people, who can book out the hostel for private use at certain times of the year. There are a variety of rooms available in the hostel, including private rooms and shared dorms.

All facilities have been geared towards satisfying hikers' needs, including a purpose-built drying room for wet gear, laundry facilities, a large self-catering kitchen and free on-site parking. Maps of the local region, along with advice, are also available on-site. ■



► For further information for individuals or groups wishing to visit the hostel, please contact the hostel operators at [stay@benlettery.ie](mailto:stay@benlettery.ie), or check out the website [www.benlettery.ie](http://www.benlettery.ie).





Participants in the HER Outdoors Week event in Ballykeefe Quarry, Co Kilkenny, in August

# HER Outdoors Week 2022

HER Outdoors Week took place on August 8-14<sup>th</sup> this year. **Niamh Kavanagh** reports

**H**ER Outdoors Week aims to encourage more females to get out and enjoy the benefits of being in the outdoors, while bringing visibility to the opportunities for females to get involved in outdoor physical activity.

The week is a special initiative promoting activities for women in the outdoors. This year, we were lucky to have several rock-climbing events during the week, spread out over the whole country, with some top-notch female instructors.

**Kat Sleptsova** and I hosted an amazing day in **Ballykeefe Quarry**, in Gorteen, Co Kilkenny, sharing outdoor climbing skills with a varied group of women. The day was organised by **Eimear Lynch** from the **Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership**, and we led two sessions – one for teenagers and one for adults. The sessions were open to women of all abilities and we had a mixture of climbers, some who had experience and some who were complete



beginners. We even had two generations of climbers from the same household – a mother and daughter duo!

All of our climbers did themselves proud on a variety of different routes, working hard to figure out difficult sequences and pushing their comfort zones throughout our time together. The supportive energy was electric – everyone

cheering each other on, offering advice and guidance.

Some of the women learned one of climbing's hardest lessons: *you don't always succeed straight away*. Sometimes you have to take a step back and try again.

Lots of climbers went for multiple attempts on routes, and some routes were conquered with grit and joy;

others were left as projects for another day. This try-hard attitude can be hard to unlock, showing what a safe and expanding space we shared on the day.

These events were special – the glorious weather, the beautiful and unique setting of Ballykeefe Quarry, and the energy from twenty-four women enjoying and sharing climbing on rock.

Hopefully, this will be just the first stepping stone for many of these women to continue growing and learning through the outdoors. With more events like this, we can continue to engage psyched women in our sport and reach further afield to find brand-new lady climbers!

► Huge thanks to **Eimear Lynch** for organising such a wonderful event, and to **Mountaineering Ireland** for supporting and promoting women in the outdoors. ■

**AUTHOR:** **Niamh Kavanagh** is a qualified climbing instructor and climbing coach. She is the Co-head Coach of the Irish Youth Squad and also Mountaineering Ireland's Anti-doping Officer.



# Climbing on Real Rock 2022

**Samantha Kay Sobotker Meyer** reports on the latest Get Climbing Cork initiative

**T**he **Drishane Climbing Group** (from Millstreet Drishane Castle Direct Provision Centre) had been training for months at **Awesome Walls** in Cork with two of the most amazing climbing instructors, **Tirnan Kavanagh** and **Judit Katona (Vertigo Climbing)**. The group was then introduced to the **Get Climbing Cork** initiative, which is a **Mountaineering Ireland** social inclusion project coordinated locally by the **Cork Climbing Club**, whose support and guidance has been very important.

The ultimate goal for the group was to experience an outdoor 'climbing on real rock' adventure. On Saturday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, our goal was achieved!

Our destination was a crag in Clare. It was a long drive from Millstreet, Co Cork, but the drive was filled with absolute excitement and adrenaline – we were so ready to get climbing on real rock!

On arrival at the crag, the excitement turned to awe, with a slight hint of hesitation – we were actually here; we were really going to do this!

The views were amazing, looking across at the cliffs of **Ailladie**, and our crag was a bit daunting. However, after going over the rules and safety precautions, and then getting much-needed motivation from our incredible instructors, we were set. Laces tied, helmets on, ropes secured, knots checked – let's get climbing!

Our group had the most amazing day and I asked everyone to give me some feedback and insight into their experience on our Climbing on Real Rock adventure. Here are some of their comments:



“My first experience on real rock was amazing, and I owe it all to my instructors. It is an experience I will never forget and I liked it!” – **Dinsara**

“I like the feeling of climbing. It makes me happy. The more I climb, the more skillful I get. Thank you, instructors!” – **Sandira**

“I really enjoyed the physical and mental challenges of climbing. Rock climbing was an awesome experience!” – **Crystal**

“It's been amazing climbing, doing something I never imagined I would. All I can say is, every mountain's top is within reach, if you just keep climbing.” – **Fatima**

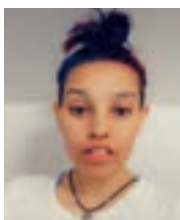
“Learning to wall-climb was amazing – working with Judit, Tirnan and Caro was so great – but outdoor rock climbing was the best experience I've ever had.” – **Jasmyn**

“I was really excited but a little nervous on the day. The outdoor climbing was very exciting.” – **Fridous**

“Start as a beginner, end as a pro. My favourite moment was when we arrived at our location. My mouth dropped, looking at the view; it was amazing. The abseiling scared me – it was like you're about to step off an enormous mountain.” – **Haiqa**

“Don't start off saying ‘I can't do it.’ You can do it if you try. My favourite moment was climbing the cliff and going to the top and watching everybody from there. I was nervous at first, then I did my first climb. It was great. It was a really fun day.” – **Bazil**

The Climbing Group from Millstreet Drishane Castle Direct Provision Centre are truly grateful for this opportunity to climb on real rock. They also hope to invite more youths to get involved. A special thanks to **Mairead** from the **Killarney Immigrant Support Centre**, who facilitated the inclusion of the young people from Drishane and also secured our transport on the day.” ■



**AUTHOR:** Samantha Kay Sobotker Meyer is a youth group volunteer from the Cork Migrant Centre and a parent supervisor from Drishane Castle Direction Provision Centre in Millstreet. Sam has made social inclusion her top priority for the last year and has taken part in various projects involving young people in direct provision.





# How we use our outdoor spaces

New CSO survey finds Irish people who like spending time outdoors most prefer going to the beach. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports

**T**he **Central Statistics Office (CSO)** has published a report on a survey it conducted in April and May of this year, which explored the relationships that people in Ireland have with the outdoors. The CSO Pulse Survey, **Our Lives Outdoors**, was an online survey of a large sample of over 9,300 people.

The key findings were that almost all respondents (98%) liked spending time outdoors, and 55% reported spending more time outdoors since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Of the 98% who liked spending time outdoors, the outdoor spaces that they reported visiting most frequently were beach, other coastline or /sea (62%), urban green space (such as a park, field or playground) (59%), river, lake or canal (47%), and hill, mountain or moorland (40%). Respondents could select more than one type of outdoor space in their answer.

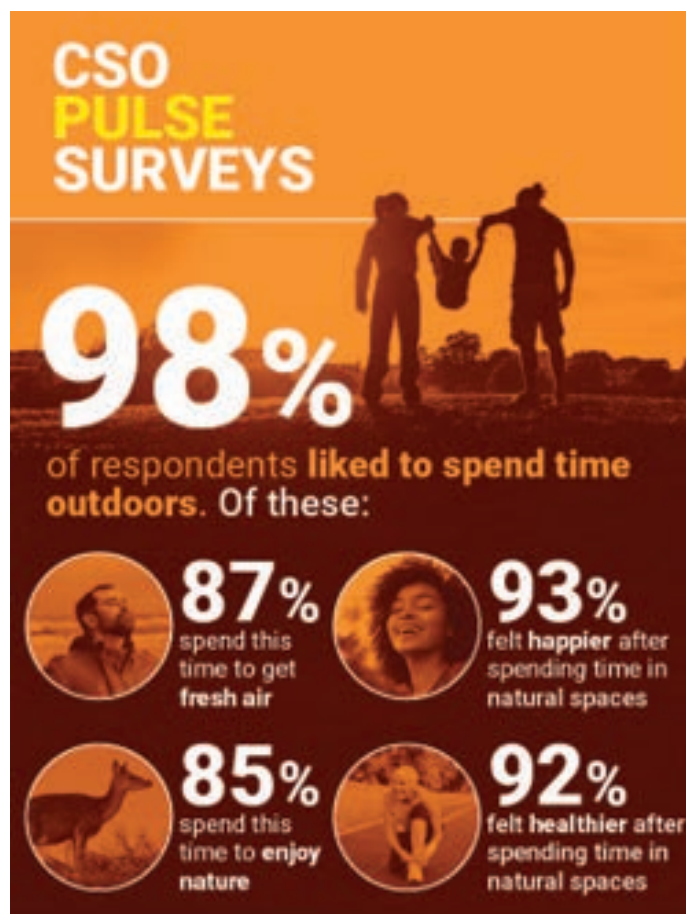
Spaces most visited	%
Beach, other coastline, sea	62
Urban green space (e.g. park, field, playground)	59
River, lake, canal	47
Hill, mountain, moorland	40
Field, farmland, countryside	38



Of the 55% who had spent more time outdoors, 70% felt that being outdoors was important for their well-being, a finding that further emphasises the value of outdoor activities to the nation's health.

A third of respondents (29%) had taken up new outdoor activities since the start of the pandemic. Hillwalking topped the list of new activities, with 26% reporting taking it up, and 24% reported taking up hiking. (Respondents could select more than one new activity they had taken up). Other popular new activities included running (24%), cycling (22%) and sea swimming (21%).

Of the 98% of respondents who said they liked to spend time outdoors, 85% (the second highest value, after 'getting fresh air') said they liked to enjoy nature. Of that 85%, 93% (7,240 respondents out of a total of 9,346) said they would like to increase their knowledge of nature. That is a really strong statistic and confirms the need for Mountaineering Ireland's environmental awareness-raising work.

► For further information, the CSO's *Our Lives Outdoors* Pulse Survey can be found on the CSO's website at [www.bit.ly/CSOoutdoors](http://www.bit.ly/CSOoutdoors). ■



## CROATIA


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Top of Cove Mountain, 2019

# Change in 'highest hundred' list

Cove Mountain in the Mourne joins the ranks, writes **Simon Stewart** of Mountainviews

**C**ove Mountain in the Mourne was thought to have a prominence or drop of less than 100 metres, but a new survey by **MountainViews** on August 4<sup>th</sup> of this year showed that the figure is actually 101.6 metres. This puts Cove Mountain into the MountainViews 'Highest Hundred' list at position number 94, just above **Muckanaght** in the Twelve Bens.

So, ten of the Highest

Hundred summits are now found in the Mourne. If you are trying to climb them all, or the list in Mountaineering Ireland's *Irish Peaks* book, which is now being updated and will be republished soon, make sure not to miss Cove Mountain. It is just north of **Slievelamagan**, which is another one in the Highest Hundred list.

The astute may ask which mountain has now been squeezed out of the Highest Hundred? The answer is

**Coomcallee** in the Dunkerrons on the Iveragh Peninsula. However, we expect perhaps a couple of other changes to the Highest Hundred, as the current round of surveying finalises things. Indeed, perhaps there will be 'demotions,' so maybe Coomcallee will come back?

In another recent list change, **Binn Mhór West** in the Maamturks becomes an **Arderin** because it has a prominence scraping through at 30.1 metres and a height of 595.8 metres. ■



Mountainviews.ie



Binn Mhór West in the Maamturks, Co Galway

## Watch Irish Uplands Forum lectures online

The **Irish Uplands Forum** hosted an interesting series of Tuesday evening Zoom talks over the summer. Some of these talks have now been uploaded to the Irish Uplands Forum's website, where they can be viewed online: just go to [www.bit.ly/IUFTalks](http://www.bit.ly/IUFTalks) and find 'Summer Lecture Series 2022.'

The talks include an excellent presentation on the formation of Ireland's mountains. Others discuss Ireland's bogs and the biodiversity of upland peatlands, the EU-funded Wild Atlantic Nature project, and the future of farming in upland areas.

The Irish Uplands Forum Summer Lecture Series was supported by the **Heritage Council**. ■



# New committee chair appointed

**Alan Lauder** has succeeded **David Pollard** as Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee

By Helen Lawless

**A**lan Lauder is a professional nature conservation and wildlife projects specialist. He has worked across state and non-governmental wildlife and conservation organisations in Ireland and the UK since 1989. This work has included site management roles for **Scottish Natural Heritage**, senior roles with the **British Trust for Ornithology** and **RSPB Scotland**, and a short stint as CEO of **BirdWatch Ireland**.

Since 2013, Alan has run a private sector ecology consultancy practice, based in Wicklow but working nationally. Alan has been an individual member of **Mountaineering Ireland** for a number of years.

Brought up near the Berwickshire coast in south-east Scotland, his experience in the mountains started at the age of thirteen when he went hillwalking for his Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the Southern Uplands.

While he was at Stirling University in the 1980s, he took up rock and winter climbing, with occasional trips to Wales and northern England. Alan continued trad climbing into his thirties and the onset of family life. More recently, he has been balancing a lifelong interest in birds and other wildlife with hillwalking and his other outdoor interests. He returned to occasional trad climbing and the odd foray on indoor walls in 2017.

Alan hopes to bring his knowledge and experience of managing and restoring upland habitats and species to his role on Mountaineering Ireland's **Access & Conservation Committee**. He is keen to encourage awareness amongst mountain users of their role in protecting and caring for the uplands, alongside their enjoyment of these special places. He recognises Mountaineering Ireland's influential role in encouraging and protecting responsible access to the uplands and other parts of the countryside.

The other members of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee are **Noel Caffrey, Séan Convery, Helen Donoghue, Fíona Gallagher, Vincent McAlinden, Áine McGil, James O'Farrell, David Pollard, Orla Prendergast** and myself, **Helen Lawless** (Secretary). ■



Alan Lauder



## Crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 142 was **Andrea Musumeci** from **Blarney, Co Cork**, who won a Jetboil Flash camp stove plus an MSR gas canister, a prize worth approximately €160.00, from our crossword sponsor Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to inform her how to collect her prize.

1	T		2	C		3	H		4	J		5	O	
6	M	A	Y	O		7	O	E	U	V	R	E		
	R		R		C		R		I					
	8	N	O	R	T	H	F	A	C	E				
			I		W						N			
9	E	R	I	E		A		10	R	A	T	H		
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11	S	E	R	P	E	N	T	I	N	E				
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15	C	R	A	T	E	R		16	L	O	O	P		
	E		H						Y		S			



Jetboil Flash camp stove plus MSR gas canister

## 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](mailto:info@basecamp.ie).





Aly Coyle, right, with Engagement Rangers Stephen Millar and Aaron walking out to Meelmore Lodge in the Mourne Mountains

# ALY COYLE, ENGAGEMENT RANGER

Helen Lawless interviews **Aly Coyle** about her work as an Engagement Ranger in the Mourne Mountains

■ **Aly, can you give us a brief outline of the Engagement Ranger role and how it operates?**

As many regulars in the Mourne Mountains will have noticed, the numbers of people heading into the mountains over lockdown increased significantly. While dropping off slightly post-lockdown, they are still considerably higher than at any time in the past.

Our role is to promote environmentally responsible recreation to the thousands of people, both experienced and new, using the Mourne Mountains each week, by offering information and advice.

While we have a day or two in the office liaising with groups and organisations using the hills, we spend the bulk of our time out and about along the key access corridors, chatting to people and answering any questions they may have – and they do have many!

We also run information sessions, so people can learn how to be more prepared, when spending time in the mountains, and to care for the places they go.

■ **What information do you find people are in need of?**

The many queries we deal with every day mostly fall into two categories. The first is general curiosity about what our

role is, and the second is to do with navigation and location.

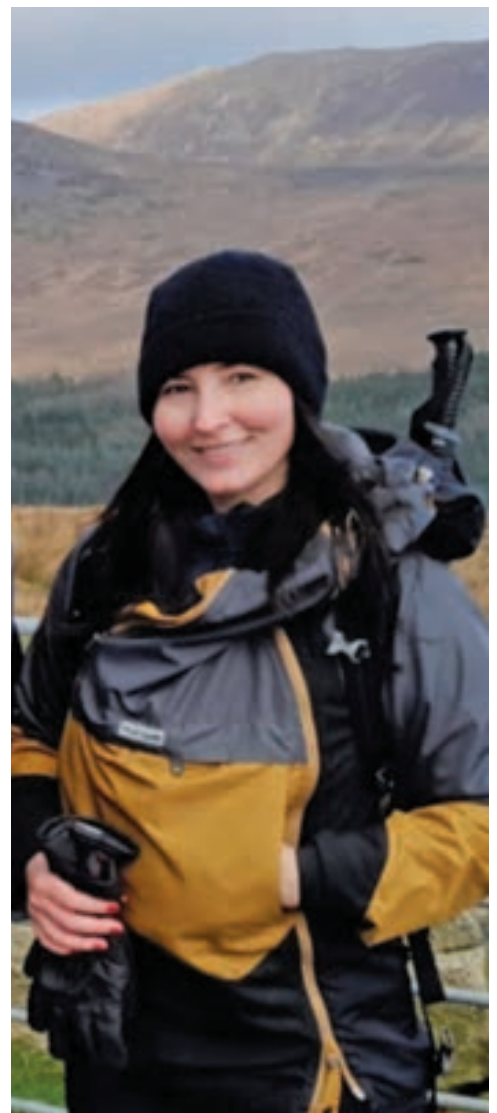
A lot of people are happy to follow the well-used paths but wouldn't know the names of particular mountains or places, so we often get asked "What mountain is that?" I was completely stumped one Saturday morning, though, when I was asked which one was Errigal!

We also get queries on what kit we would recommend and the best places to buy suitable boots and clothing.

■ **Can you give any examples of interactions which you found worked well?**

We find that interactions in the hills are generally extremely positive. We keep things informal and start by asking folk about their day. People are always very interested in our role and curious to hear more about who we are and what our day-to-day tasks entail. Sometimes they even ask to have their photo taken with us, and at least once every day we are told that we have the best job in the world, which we tend to agree with!

We find that people are more willing to talk with us on their way up the hill, glad to have an excuse to catch their breath, while towards the end of the day they are just looking forward to getting home for a cup of tea!







Aly helps identify some local wildlife



Helping hillwalkers with their navigation questions

One of the recurring issues we have had is with dogs being off their leads, which is a threat to both livestock and wildlife in a delicate ecosystem. We have found that when we explain the need for leads due to ground-nesting birds or grazing sheep, etcetera, owners are much more likely to respond positively.

We also take time to explain the impact on local communities of irresponsible parking and litter.

#### ■ How have your own skills and background helped in this role?

Having hiked, climbed and biked in the Mourne since I was a child, I have found that my knowledge of the area and passion for the mountains helps me to connect with people. Being able to answer questions on navigation, kit and equipment, and to provide local knowledge on the wildlife and heritage

## “THE MORE PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT A PLACE, THE MORE THEY WANT TO LOOK AFTER IT”

of the Mournes, is invaluable, as generally the more people know about a place, the more they feel a connection with it and want to look after it.

#### ■ What are your personal thoughts on balancing environmental care and recreation?

Being extremely passionate about the mountains myself, I really love to see people out enjoying themselves in the Mournes. It is particularly nice to see people out who have only recently discovered what an incredible place lies on their doorstep.

However, it is important that people spending time in the hills do so in an environmentally sustainable way, so that these wild places are still wild for years to come and can be enjoyed by future generations.

While we are there to offer advice and information, it is the responsibility of every hill-user to make the effort to educate themselves on how to adhere to Leave No Trace practices, how to safely look after themselves and, where necessary, others, when in the mountains, and how to lessen their impact on both habitats and local communities.

➡ **Aly Coyle** is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland and was one of the driving forces behind this year's **Women's Rock Festival** in the Burren. Aly has recently left the Mourne Heritage Trust to take up a role as a pilot with Aer Lingus. ■

Interpreting the landscape and its history



The Engagement Ranger team posing for a final group shot







Dam-building at Barnacullian. The photo includes Declan Byrne (SUAS) and Mountaineering Ireland volunteers John Burke, Brian Kennan and Vincent Mc Alinden.  
**Photo:** Helen Lawless

# PEATLAND RESTORATION

A project to restore eroded peatlands has got underway in Wicklow Mountains National Park. **Hugh McLindon** of the National Parks and Wildlife Service reports

Over the last twelve months, the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) in conjunction with the **SUAS EIP** (Sustainable Uplands Agri-environment Scheme European Innovation Partnership) has been carrying out peatland restoration

works at the saddle between the **Barnacullian** ridge and **Stoney Top** mountain, south of Mullaghcleevaun in **Wicklow Mountains National Park**.

The aim of these activities is to re-vegetate the bare, exposed peat on the Barnacullian saddle and to slow the flow of water across the surface, thus allowing an opportunity for the blanket bog to

return to being a functional, healthy habitat once again.

Scientists estimate that healthy bogs sequester around 0.7 to 2.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per hectare per year. Unfortunately, it is thought that across the Wicklow Mountains the level of degradation is such that, on average, the bogs there are



Hugh McLindon (NPWS), right, with SUAS Project Manager Declan Byrne, left, and Minister Malcolm Noonan at the trial peatland restoration site on Barnacullian.



Hugh McLindon at a dam on Barnacullian, showing how these 'leaky' dams slow the water flow and help re-wet the bog. Sphagnum mosses will be added to these pools to hold water and enable carbon capture.





Drone view of Barnacullian showing the extent of bare peat on the Barnacullian ridge in July 2021. **Photo:** Chris York

emitting in the region of 0.5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/ha/yr. Really extreme cases, such as at Barnacullian, can emit up to 30 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/ha/yr. This means that thousands of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> are lost each year from habitats that should be capturing carbon, emphasising clearly the importance of restoration projects and reversing such trends.

The NPWS has been carrying out restoration projects over the last thirty years and it is possible to visit some of these project sites to observe and record the results (such as at **Liffey Head Bog**). Of course, the benefits to us all are now more widely known, and it has been shown that protecting an existing peatland system is one of the most effective ways to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions.

Studies have also shown that it is more cost-effective to restore or protect wetlands within a watershed than to deal with the consequences of excess sedimentation or flooding downstream. Biodiversity levels will reduce or increase, depending on the quality of the habitat, so it makes sense for so many reasons to protect, enhance or restore valuable bogland habitats such as those found in the Wicklow Mountains.

On **Barnacullian** ridge, you can see large areas of brown peat completely without heather or grass cover. In places, you can see where the peat has been washed or blown away and all that's left is bare rock. In time, if restoration works aren't carried out, all of the bare peat will erode away, leaving us with a very poor, lunar landscape almost devoid of biodiversity.

Our aim is simple – reduce the grazing

## **“IF RESTORATION WORKS AREN'T CARRIED OUT, ALL OF THE BARE PEAT WILL ERODE AWAY”**

pressure, re-seed with heather and grasses to protect the bare peat from the elements, slow the water as it runs across the site by blocking gullies, and monitor to ensure success. Then, where resources allow, scale it up to tackle more and more degraded sites.

So, what have we been doing? Well, last autumn we collected 225 builders' bags of heather clippings (brash) on

Paddock Hill. Essentially, we mowed strips of heather, which both diversifies the habitat there and provides heather brash for use on Barnacullian.

The heather brash was transferred to Barnacullian by helicopter and spread across the bare peat by volunteers from **Mountaineering Ireland** and **ReWild Wicklow**. This had the immediate effect of stabilising the peat. We then spread grass seed, lime and fertiliser to kickstart the re-vegetation process. In time, we'll see native heathers and grasses fully colonise the site through natural regeneration.

We have also fenced off areas (approximately 2.5ha) to assess the effect of removing grazing pressure ➤



Hugh McLindon showing Minister Noonan dragonfly larvae in a bog pool adjacent to the restoration site, illustrating the potential for habitat restoration projects to provide more space for biodiversity.



## CONSERVATION



One of the fenced restoration plots on the col between Barnacullian and Stoney Top. Walkers are asked to support the restoration work by walking around the plots rather than crossing the fences.

from parts of the site. Walkers are asked to support the restoration work by walking around the fenced plots, rather than crossing the fences.

If the areas outside the fences recover as quickly as those inside, we may be able to restore future sites without the cost and challenge of fencing these remote locations.

Finally, timber dams have been erected

in the gullies to slow the flow of water from the site and to capture the mobile peat sediment. Also, signs have been placed to outline the aims of the project and to ask members of the public to contact us, if they see any damage to fences, etc.

While placing the project signs, I noticed fresh mountain biking tracks on the saddle. Mountain biking is not

## “WE ARE RE-SEEDING WITH HEATHER AND GRASSES TO PROTECT THE BARE PEAT”

allowed on fragile peatland surfaces, as it only adds to the erosion problem, so we would ask all recreational users of the mountains to play their role in protecting these precious and immensely valuable habitats. ■



➤ **Hugh McLindon** is a Conservation Ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Email: [Hugh.McLindon@housing.gov.ie](mailto:Hugh.McLindon@housing.gov.ie).

For general queries on Wicklow Mountains National Park, email [wmnp@housing.gov.ie](mailto:wmnp@housing.gov.ie) or [www.wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie](http://www.wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie)

A comment from **Alan Lauder**, Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee

**H**ugh McLindon's excellent article highlights the enormity of the task we face as a nation in protecting and restoring our peatlands in the face of climate change, damaging land uses and the pressures our own boots and other recreational users can bring to the uplands. This is not just an issue in the Wicklow Mountains, but across all of our uplands and peatlands. The mountains we walk on today are a shadow of what they could be in more natural conditions. They are less wild, less beautiful and less biodiverse, and they emit carbon. All of that is to our detriment.

The techniques being rolled out in Wicklow are tried and tested elsewhere and should work well. As highlighted to the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, **Malcolm Noonan TD**, on his recent visit to Barnacullian, commitments to projects like this cannot be a one-off; rather, they should be just a starting point. The scale of such tasks is substantial and the efforts, even at one site alone, require regular maintenance and further enhancement as peatlands start to re-wet. Long-term and large-scale projects in many locations are what are needed now.

As a result of wider and better efforts, we will start to see the recovery of our peatlands ... and their plant and animal communities will respond. We will see it in regenerating heather and mountain flora, and in healthier and wetter bog pools, supporting dragonflies and upland birds, and we will see less bare peat.



Ecologist Alan Lauder explaining the poor condition of Wicklow's blanket bogs to Minister Noonan on the Minister's recent visit to Barnacullian

As mountain users, Mountaineering Ireland members can help. By choosing better foot placements and routes when we go hillwalking, or even choosing less sensitive mountains to walk on, we can all assist in reducing the impact on soft, erodible peatlands.

Great guidance already exists on the Mountaineering Ireland website – see [bit.ly/walkwithcare](http://bit.ly/walkwithcare). I would encourage all readers to remind themselves of it, and even to pass it on to those who may not be members. ■



# Climbing

Rhyna Conroy competing in the Grand Final of the Youth Climbing Series in Southampton in November 2021

## RHYNA CONROY INTERVIEW

**Rhyna Conroy**, 17, is a member of the Irish Youth Team. A veteran of the Youth Climbing Series, she was on the podium every year that she climbed, going on to represent Ireland at the Grand Final in several locations around the UK. She has represented Ireland in European competitions, has made the finals of several competitions, including the British Lead Championships, and most recently took third place at the Welsh Lead Championships. Rhyna is also an accomplished climber on rock, having put up the first female ascent of The Lady of Owey at the age of 15. In between European Youth Climbing Cups this summer, she spent time exploring sport crags in Corsica. **Oona Frawley** talks to Rhyna for the Log.



Oona Frawley,  
Dublin Cliffhangers  
Youth Climbing  
Club

### ◆ How long have you been climbing?

About nine years but it wasn't until I was 12 or 13 that I really began to take it seriously.

### ◆ What's your favourite type of climbing?

I don't really have a favourite. It all depends on the season and how I'm feeling. At the moment, I'm finding myself particularly drawn to lead climbing, both in sport and trad.

### ◆ How much time per week do you spend climbing?

I try to go to the wall about three times a week, but, if I could, I would be there every day.

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

I had a great experience climbing on Cruit and Owey in Donegal, and in the Burren, but there is still so much for me to explore that I don't think I can pick favourites yet.

### ◆ What's your favourite place to climb abroad?

There's a whole world of climbing that I haven't seen and can't wait to, but from my experience of climbing abroad I really enjoyed sport climbing in Corsica. There are many sport venues not mentioned in guidebooks and it was quite exciting pulling on routes with little or no information about them.

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

Realistically, it would be my shoes, but you can never go wrong with a blue hex if it's placed right.

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

Since I have started climbing, I have achieved lots, but some of those achievements don't hold

the same weight now as they did back then. If you had asked me when I was ten, I would have said getting my first 7a or joining CDS [the Climbing Development Squad, which has now become the Irish Youth Squad]. Later on, it would have been joining the Irish team, or my first multi-pitch. So, I guess I'm proud of my whole climbing journey, from where I started to now.

### ◆ Most memorable route, boulder or climbing experience?

I think my favourite route was climbing the sea stack 'Lady of Owey' in Donegal. It was my first sea stack and I didn't know what to expect. Climbing on the new terrain was tricky, and I remember getting quite scared, but I'm so proud of having pulled through and gone on that amazing adventure. (Thanks, Iain Miller!)

### ◆ Next project or goal?

I had an amazing summer going to European competitions with the Irish team and I want to work hard for next year. I also want to push my trad climbing, when the weather clears.

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

I always admire someone with a good attitude and mindset, who's always happy to be out climbing, no matter how they perform.

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

There are too many. I would love to spend a year (or years) travelling and visiting all the known and unknown crags.

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

My homework. ■





# Climbing



Irish Youth Team members in Dornbirn, Austria, for the European Youth Cup in July, from left: Lilou Conroy, Rhyna Conroy, Seán Brown, Seán Henchion, Caelan Lenehan, Oscar Lenehan

## HIGH PERFORMANCE CLIMBING

**Oona Frawley** reports on the latest senior and youth climbing competitions, the setting up of the Irish Youth Squad and other climbing news



Oona Frawley,  
Dublin Cliffhangers  
Youth Climbing  
Club

**F**ollowing the introduction of rock climbing to the Olympic Games in 2020, support at all levels of competition climbing in Ireland became more important than ever.

One of Mountaineering Ireland's five pillars for its Strategic Plan 2022-2025 is "Achieve." As part of this plan, Mountaineering Ireland aims to "develop and implement a **Sport Climbing High**

**Performance Plan** for national and international competition, centred on supporting and developing our current high-performance athletes, and those in our development squads and youth pathways, in line with our membership of the Olympic movement."

### **International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) competitions**

As Ireland seeks to catch up

with its UK and other European neighbours in terms of supports, facilities and opportunities for high-performance athletes, our climbers continue to train with impressive resolve and commitment, self-funding the costs associated with attending international competitions. Given the fact that Ireland is only now beginning to plan development pathways, the achievements of these

athletes from around the island of Ireland are really incredible.

### **Senior Team**

The **2022 IFSC World Cup** season saw several Irish athletes competing with the best in the world. Between them, **Dominic Burns, Michael O'Neill, Ciarán Scanlon** and **Mark Scanlon** competed at the Bouldering World Cups in Meiringen, Switzerland, in April; at both Bouldering World Cups



The new Irish Youth Squad with their coaches in Dublin Climbing Centre



in Salt Lake City, Utah, in May; at the Bouldering World Cup in Brixen, Italy, in June; and at the Bouldering World Cup in Innsbruck, Austria, in June.

**Michael O'Neill** also competed in the Lead World Cup in Innsbruck.

The experience that the athletes gain in consistently participating in world cups is invaluable, with results improving over the course of the seasons. Having had a brilliant time competing on the IFSC circuit in 2022, Senior Team members are psyched to train and perform in next year's events.

## Youth Team

2022 marked the first opportunity that the current Youth Climbing Team has had to travel and compete on the IFSC circuit. **Seán Brown, Rhyna Conroy, Seán Henchion** and **Caelan Lenehan** represented Ireland at the European Youth Cups in Lead Climbing in Imst, Austria, in May; in Ostermundigen, Switzerland, in June; in Dornbirn, Austria, in July; and at the European Championships in Augsburg, Germany, in July.

**Seán Brown, Robin Casey, Rhyna Conroy** and **Caelan Lenehan** also competed in the European Bouldering Championships in Graz, Austria, in August.

As with the Senior Team, the Youth Team athletes gained valuable experience in their first season on the circuit, with both **Seán Henchion** and **Caelan Lenehan** narrowly missing semi-finals, and all athletes putting in strong performances. The Youth Team were incredibly fortunate to have the support of their brilliant coach, **Rob Hunter**, in both Imst and Graz, thanks to **Mountaineering Ireland**.

## Irish Youth Squad

As part of its strategy to

implement the High Performance Plan, Mountaineering Ireland recently set up the **Irish Youth Squad**. It is comprised of twelve talented youth climbers, ranging in age from 11 to 18 and selected by Irish Team coach **Rob Hunter** and Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Officer **Michael Duffy**.

The Youth Squad is overseen and coached by head coaches **Philip Duke** and **Niamh Kavanagh**, as well as by former Youth Team members and experienced competition climbers **Sean O'Connor** and **Victoria Watterson**.

Squad sessions take place at the Dublin Climbing Centre, where the Squad is currently preparing for **Youth Climbing Series 2022**.

With the establishment of the Youth Squad (which follows on from the former Climbing Development Squad), Ireland comes into line with other countries in having a development pathway for young competition climbers who wish to improve and focus on their performances.

Congratulations to Youth Squad members **Ciara Burgoyne, Zak Butler, Lilou Conroy, James Corbett, Oscar Lenehan, Ilmur Jonsdottir, Clara Katerina Meyer, Amy Rafferty, Jennifer Rafferty, Mylo Reilly, Olivia Scott** and **Archie Tolland**. Best of luck with the coming competition season!

## Other news

**Boulderworld Belfast** climbers had an impressive three semi-finalists in the British Bouldering Championships in Sheffield on August 27-28<sup>th</sup>, with **Saul Calvert, Rory Cummings** and **Lucy Mitchell** all looking super strong. Irish Youth Team athlete **Robin Casey** also put in an impressive performance to come 11<sup>th</sup> overall, having competed her final



Michael O'Neill competing in the IFSC World Cup in Innsbruck in June

competition at youth level in Graz several weeks earlier.

Also in August, **Seán Henchion** of the Youth Team represented Ireland at the World Children's Games in Coventry, placing in the top eight in Lead, Speed and Boulder, an incredible achievement after a busy summer of European competition.

Seven Irish youth athletes competed at the Welsh Lead Climbing Championships on September 3-4<sup>th</sup> in Caernarfon. **Lucy McClune** narrowly missed a spot in the finals in Youth D, while **Lilou Conroy** battled it out in the highly competitive Youth C category to come midway in the table.

On the second day of competition, Irish athletes **Séan Brown, Rhyna Conroy** and **Caelan Lenehan** advanced to finals, with all three taking podium positions (third, third and second, respectively). **Ciara Lawler** and

**Zak Butler** also put in solid performances to both come fifth in their categories.

Once again, the competitors benefitted from the presence of coach **Rob Hunter**, whose support and advice to the climbers was invaluable.

## Fundraising for the Youth Team

A series of fundraising initiatives are being launched with the goal of getting Youth Team members to the next **IFSC Youth World Championships** in Seoul, Korea. One of these is a **2023 Calendar of Irish Climbing**, with great photographs from around the island.

► You can follow news of the Irish Team and these initiatives on Instagram: @Ireland\_climbing. If you are interested in purchasing a calendar, or in sponsoring or supporting the team, please contact IrelandClimbing@gmail.com. ■





## Venues and dates for YCS rounds this season

The Youth Climbing Series is an ideal competition for intermediate and experienced young climbers to meet and compete at climbing walls around the island of Ireland. The venues and dates for this season's rounds are as follows:

Round	Round 1 <i>Bouldering</i>	Round 2 <i>Routes</i>	Round 3 <i>Bouldering</i>	Round 4 <i>Routes</i>
<b>Competition date</b>	Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> September	Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> October	Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> October	Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup> November
<b>Venue</b>	Boulder World Belfast	University of Limerick	Gravity Climbing Centre Dublin	Dublin Climbing Centre
<b>Entry opens</b>	Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> August 8.00am	Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> September 8.00am	Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> September 8.00am	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 8.00am
<b>Standard entry cut-off</b>	Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> September 8.00pm	Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 8.00pm	Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> October 8.00pm	Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> October 8.00pm
<b>Late entry cut-off</b>	Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> September 8.00pm	Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> October 8.00pm	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> October 8.00pm	Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 8.00pm







## Venues and dates for IBL rounds this season

The venues, start dates and finish dates for the Irish Bouldering League rounds are as follows:

Round	Venue	Start Date	Finish Date
1	Dublin Climbing Centre	Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> October	Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> October
2	Awesome Walls Cork	Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> November	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> November
3	Gravity Climbing Centre	Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> December	Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> December
4	Suas Climbing Centre	Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> January	Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> January
5	Awesome Walls Dublin	Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> February	Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> February



**WINTER MEET  
2023**

**Onich, Scotland**

**11-18th February  
2023**





# THE BLACK DITCH

*This year marks the centenary of the Mourne Wall*

Dawson Stelfox takes a look back at its construction and history

There are few truly wild places in Ireland and almost all of our mountain landscapes are etched with layers of human intervention. Some are subtle and are only revealed with careful observation – the soft undulations of ‘lazy beds’ or rigs, the overgrown stone rings of raths or cashels, the traces of old quarry or turf tracks.

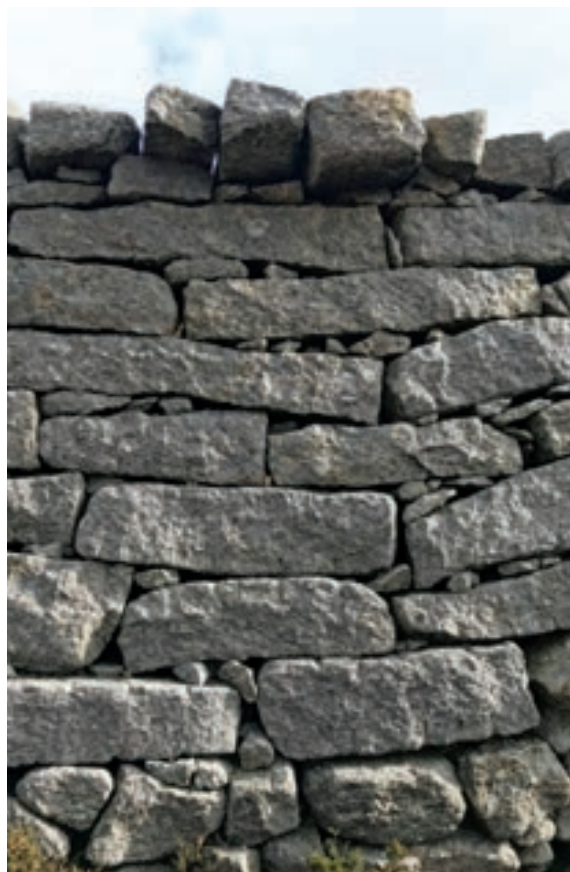
There is no such subtlety with the **Mourne Wall**, as it strides across the peaks, defiant of the natural topography, subduing nature, a statement of ownership and control, but also a thing of beauty and a monument to the stone men of Mourne who called it the ‘Black Ditch.’

➤ Dawson Stelfox is a longstanding member of Mountaineering Ireland and has served on the Board in various roles. He works as a conservation architect. He is currently part of a multi-disciplinary team working for the Mournes Partnership on a long-term strategy for the high Mournes. Dawson lives in Lambeg, Co Down, and the Mournes, and has been walking and climbing in the Mournes since childhood.



**Above:**  
The Mourne Wall striding over Slieve Corragh and on to Slieve Commedagh with the shelter tower on the skyline

**Right:**  
Squared granite blocks built in a slightly battered double-wall style with projecting coping stones. The majority of the Wall is built like this







## The search for freshwater

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapidly expanding city of Belfast was running out of freshwater supplies, and the **Belfast Water Commissioners** started to look further afield for clean water. In 1893, they bought 9,000 acres of the high Mourne as a catchment area and started on a pipeline to the **Knockbracken service reservoir**, above Belfast, with the first Mourne water flowing in 1901 from the Annalong River.

This was followed by the construction of a dam built across the Kilkeel River valley, which, after many years of construction difficulties and disputes, became the **Silent Valley Reservoir**, completed in 1933.

The engineering difficulties with this dam led to the planned, parallel one in the Annalong valley being changed to the remarkable pipeline under Slieve Binnian, diverting the Annalong River into the Silent Valley in 1951.

Capacity was increased further with the building of the **Ben Crom dam** in 1957.

## A boundary wall

From soon after their purchase of 9,000 acres of the Mourne, the Belfast Water Commissioners wanted to mark out their territory, so they commissioned the building of a substantial dry-stone wall around the catchment area. The boundary mostly follows the ridges of high peaks so that all the rain falling within the walled area ends up in the water supply.

As well as a statement of ownership, it also allowed sheep numbers to be controlled within the wall and so prevent excessive contamination of the water, all the more important in the early days of the supply when there was no treatment, just filtration through gravel beds.

**Above:**  
**View from Slieve Meelbeg towards Slieve Bearnagh. Snow often drifts against the Wall, highlighting it even more**

**Below:**  
**The traditional Mourne style of wall using rounded fieldstones, here seen on Moolieve above the Silent Valley**

The wall was built between 1904 and 1922 and by many different hands, reflected in the variety of building styles, influenced by the underlying geology in different areas.

It was mostly built between March and October, and **WH Carson's** book, *The Dam Builders* (Mourne Observer Press, 1981), records the names of men who worked on it, though this is unlikely to be a comprehensive list.

The wall is 22 miles (35km) in length, crosses fifteen mountains and reaches up to twelve feet in height, but is mostly around 6-7 feet high and is interrupted in only a few places by cliffs or tors.

## Skilled stone men

In the southern end, it incorporates some earlier walls – traditional Mourne single-stone-wide walls of rounded field stones – but it was mostly built from scratch, especially over the highest peaks. ➤





## BUILT HERITAGE



Except for short sections of Silurian rocks around Slieve Muck, it is almost all granite, roughly squared and dressed blocks hewn from the adjoining bedrock and outcrops and built in a distinctive double-wall style – two skins with a small-stone core, with occasional through-stones and capped with large, full-width copings, projecting to each side for weathering protection.

### Quarrying and stone-cutting

All over the Mournes, there remains evidence of a once-thriving industry of quarrying and stone-cutting, not just for the Mourne Wall, but for kerbstones and setts that were exported in huge quantities to England.

Half-dressed stones and discarded chippings surround small shelter huts, where you can still see the hollowed out ‘fizz troughs’ used to temper the ‘plugs’ – short, iron chisels used with wedge-shaped ‘feathers’ to split the large blocks; the distinctive perforations of the drilled holes mark the bedrock and outcrops around.

In *The Search for Water*, the Belfast Water Commissioners history published in 1940, it is noted that the quarrying already had almost disappeared from the Mournes by then. The availability of cheaper concrete kerbs and ‘bitmac’ to replace stone setts was no doubt a significant factor, but even with that, it is still a bit of a mystery why so many finished stones were abandoned.

### Shelter towers

There are three ‘shelter towers’ found along the Mourne Wall – on the top of Slieve Donard (built 1910), on Slieve Commedagh (1913) and on Slieve Meelmore (1921) – though in each case not quite on the actual summit. With battered walls and a pyramidal

**Above left:**  
**Quarried bedrock with traces of the drills left after the stone split away**

**Above centre:**  
**Splitting stone – the distinctive pattern of the ‘plug and feathers’ technique**

**Above right:**  
**Abandoned copings or kerbs, a common sight in the quarries scattered all over the Mournes**

**Below:**  
**Quarryman’s hut with distinctive ‘fizz troughs’**

roof, they have a slightly Egyptian style about them, although on Slieve Donard the Ordnance Survey engineers took off the cap stones in the 1950s and placed the trig pillar on a concrete bed on the tower roof.

The shelter openings face into the catchment, but the outer faces still carry the admonishment from the Belfast Water Commissioners that ‘no trespassing’ is allowed, so it is difficult to see who the shelters were aimed at.

The towers were repaired in 2014 as part of the Lottery-funded **Mourne Landscapes Project**, as almost a century of being exposed to the elements was starting to dislodge the capping stones and erode the mortared joints.

### Mystery story

At the Meelmore tower, the stonemasons **Robert Skillen** and **Jonny Cousins** had left their mark. Their story is related in *The Dam Builders*, but it has an ongoing mystery. The author WH Carson had been told by the Skillen family that Robert





and Jonny had carved their initials in the projecting stone cornice, so, on a winter's day in 1981, he and his companions set off to verify the story. By the time they reached the summit of Meelmore, snow had set in and the tower was plastered in ice, but they scraped it off to reveal the 'RS' on the left-hand side.

The weather was getting worse, so, satisfied that the story was true, they beat a retreat to the valley. With the stonework repaired and cleaned, the initials became more obvious and the 'RS' is plainly visible to the left, above the 1921 datestone. But to the right, rather than the expected 'JC,' the letters are shallower and seem to be 'CC' instead. No one with those initials is recorded as having worked on the tower, and Jonny's family are sure it was him. Perhaps it was a simple spelling mistake, unable to be rubbed out, now set in stone!

## The Wall today

And what of the Wall today – a useful navigational handrail in poor visibility and a welcome windbreak?

Needless to say, planning permission would not be granted for such a structure in the high Mourne today, but it is now listed as a structure of special historic interest. **Northern Ireland Water**, successors to the Belfast Water Commissioners, are proud of it and the whole water infrastructure, and are committed to its ongoing repair and restoration. The most recent package of £2.5m for repairs has been announced, and the **Rooney family** of local stonemasons, with their long tradition of dry-stone walling, have been employed to work on it.

The Wall is robust, but vulnerable to storms. Stones are easily knocked off with careless treatment while crossing, and in some places the erosion caused by too much foot traffic, and consequent water gullyng, is undermining the wide stone foundations.

The **Mourne Wall Walk**, a long-standing challenge walk, grew so large in the 1980s that the erosion became unsustainable, and the then **FMCI**, now **Mountaineering Ireland**, with others, campaigned

successfully for it to stop, on environmental grounds. The challenge to walk or run it remains, but it is best done in small groups rather than as a mass-participation event.

The importance of the Wall is also recognised in the current **High Mourne Strategic Framework**, commissioned by the **Mournes Partnership** – the coming together of the **Mourne Heritage Trust**, **National Trust**, **NI Water** and the **Woodland Trust**. This will be setting out a blueprint for the long-term sustainable management of the Mourne, drawing on all strands of its built, natural and cultural heritage, enhancing, protecting and caring for this invaluable environment.

Understanding all aspects of the built and cultural heritage of the Mourne is crucial to their appreciation and protection; so, if anyone has family stories or records of the building of the Mourne Wall, we would be very grateful for them.

Manmade intrusions into the natural landscape have the ability to enhance or detract from its character and significance. The Black Ditch, hewn from the ground around it and shaped by hand by local skill and labour, with the passage of time has become an integral part of the Mourne landscape and a special part of its character. ■



**Above:**  
**View from**  
**Meelbeg towards**  
**Slieve Meelmore**

**Below left:**  
**Stone mason's**  
**initials on the**  
**Slieve Meelmore**  
**tower – RS on left**  
**and CC on right**

**Below right:**  
**The distinctive**  
**shelter tower**  
**on Slieve**  
**Commedagh**





# KING KIPPURE AND THE VIKINGS

**Don Baldwin** reflects on our Viking heritage as he enjoys a walk over Dublin's highest peak

**J**ust south of Dublin city, the soft, rolling outline of the **Wicklow Mountains** begins its steady advance to the south-west, marching inexorably through the counties of Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford and forming the largest continuous upland area on the island of Ireland. Beneath the mountains' soft exterior of deep blanket bog stretches the greatest expanse of granite rock to be found anywhere in Ireland or Britain.

Today, the Wicklow Mountains owe much of their topography to the dramatic effects of the last ice age, which gouged out steep-sided valleys and glacial corries, resulting in a rich collection of attractive lakes and striking waterfalls. The dominant habitats of these undulating hills are upland blanket bog, heath and grassland, while a mixture of deciduous woodland and coniferous

**Above:**  
Hillwalkers head off for Kippure

**Below:**  
Map of Kippure and environs

forest peppers the lower valleys. This is prime peregrine falcon country, while the angular outline and copper tinge of the reintroduced red kite also adds a welcome dash of vibrancy to this brooding landscape.

The Wicklow Mountains can roughly be divided into four separate groupings. At the southern end of the range stands solitary Croghan Kinsella in County Wexford, while Keadeen Mountain and Church Mountain protect the west. To the east, beyond the Vartry plateau, Great Sugar Loaf, Little Sugar Loaf



➤ **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.



Map: Cólín MacLochlainn





## “KIPPURE CLAIMS THE TITLE OF COUNTY DUBLIN’S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN”

### From Dublin to Kippure

Straddling the border of County Dublin and County Wicklow, **Kippure** (Ciop Mhór, ‘big place of the mountain grass’), is a short, twenty-kilometre drive south from Dublin city centre on the busy N11/M11. Exit and take the R117 for Enniskerry. This two-kilometre stretch winds its way through a darkened, tree-lined road until it finally enters the sleepy hamlet of **Enniskerry**. Here, veer right at the monument and climb steadily towards Glencree. This ten-kilometre stretch is a picturesque route, but don’t get too caught up in the scenery, as this narrow road is a busy artery.

**Glencree** village exudes charm, and seems to belong to some sort of historical twilight zone, as it includes the peculiar blend of a German War Cemetery, an old British military barracks and a modern Peace Centre, while also claiming to be the only village in Ireland not to have a pub!

After Glencree, slip cautiously left onto the R115 – (the old **Military Road** – and head south for two ➤

and Bray Head keep watch. Commanding the centre is the monarch Lugnaquilla, Leinster’s highest peak at 925m, flanked by her royal entourage of Camaderry, Tonelagee and Djouce.

**Kippure**, at a stately 757m, steadfastly guards the north, claiming the title of County Dublin’s highest mountain. This wild mountain fastness was the ancient Gaelic territory of the **O’Byrne clan**, who controlled the range to the south, and who were allied to the **O’Toole tribe**, who dominated the mountains towards the north.

**Above:**  
Lough Bray  
Upper and  
glacial moraine  
(elongated knoll)

**Below:**  
Moraine with  
R115 and car  
park in distance







kilometres until you finally reach a gravelled car park tucked in on your left (O 142 151). Even in this remote location, great care is required when crossing the road, as there is a blind bend to your left, on what is a surprisingly busy mountain road.

## The ascent

It is unusual to start any walk with a short, sharp descent, as is the case here, so it might be wise to break out your walking poles before you start, and make sure that those leg muscles are well flexed! Initially, the view before you is a little perplexing, for while the map (Discovery Series No 56) clearly indicates two substantial loughs either side of your proposed route to the north-west, all that can be seen for now is the tentative edge of a lake to your left.

Take heart and strike out towards this partly exposed lough, following the well-worn peat path, and avoiding the sections of quagmire that occasionally clog the trail. At the base of the lough, the ground gradually ascends towards an elongated knoll to your right, a welcome elevation which now allows you delightful views of **Lough Bray Upper** as it glitters on your left. After a pleasant half-kilometre trek, an abrupt promontory soon looms into view, the obvious scar down its side leaving you in little doubt about your direction of travel. This is one of those half-hike, half-climb sections, where a walking pole is as much a hindrance as it is a help, so plan accordingly.

After picking your way carefully to the top, you reach an incongruous looking granite tor which looks completely out of place in this rolling upland, and might be better placed amongst its bulbous brethren on Slieve Binnian in the heart of the Mourne! Of course, strenuous climbs seldom come without recompense, and the complete view of Lough Bray Upper, and the tantalising glimpse of **Lough Bray Lower**, is surely just reward.

**Above:**  
Improbable golden beach on Lough Bray Lower

**Below:**  
The 'Grimpen Mire' on the approach to the summit

From here, follow the trail north-west as it overlooks the enchanting Lough Bray Lower to your right, with its improbable golden beach cresting the further end of the lake. Have a care along this section, as brisk westerly winds can whip across this high, open heath on blustery days.

After a half-kilometre trek along this well-etched track, the trail then strikes out to the south-west towards the transmitter mast on Kippure, which is clearly visible on better days.

On days with poorer visibility, and with the scarcity of distinguishable features, you would be well advised to take a compass bearing for the mast, which will also ensure that you do not stray towards the deep channel which runs parallel to the access road.





## “THE TRAIL BRINGS YOU TO A POINT OVERLOOKING THE ENCHANTING LOUGH BRAY LOWER”

If you do not have your gaiters on at this stage, take a moment to fit them, as the next section to be traversed could easily resemble the ‘Grimpen Mire,’ that infamous Dartmoor marsh immortalised by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** in his atmospheric novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Stagnant pools, peat-scarred ravines and small, spongy plateaux, which give the illusion of drier ground, are the primary features that dominate this hostile terrain, as the ever-towering mast gives the constant impression that it is much nearer than it actually is.

Three hours at a reasonable pace will take you to the ‘trig’ point situated to the north of the compound surrounding the base of the mast. If you had hoped for the solace of some shelter after your sloppy slog to the top, then you will be sorely disappointed, as Kippure’s wind-swept summit offers very little comfort; even the mast’s wind-harried cables moan in lament! Still, by way of compensation, what Kippure’s exposed peak does provide is an unrivalled overview of Dublin to the north.

### Our Viking heritage

From Kippure’s height, you look down on the very site of the greatest battle in Irish history, the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. Clontarf was a seminal moment in medieval Irish history, comparable to England’s Battle of Hastings in 1066, and Scotland’s Bannockburn, fought in 1314.

The Irish victory in Dublin did not necessarily put an end to Viking raids, but it did halt further serious Scandinavian expansion in Ireland. The impact of their considerable colonisation is still clearly evident by the plethora of Norse place-names which litter Ireland’s east coast. To the north-east lies **Skerries**, from the old Norse word *Sker*, meaning a rock or reef, while to the north of Dublin is the former Norse enclave of Fingal, from the Irish language *Fine Gall*, meaning ‘foreign tribe.’ **Dublin city** itself – *Dubh Linn*, ‘dark pool,’ after a sleepy backwater off the river Liffey – was settled by the Vikings and provided ideal mooring for their sleek-keeled ships.

Towards the east lies **Wicklow** – *Vykyngelo*, ‘meadow of the Vikings’ – and further south is **Arklow** – *Arnkeall-lág*, ‘meadow of Arnkeall’ – and also **Wexford** – *Waesfiord*, ‘inlet of the mudflats’ – and **Waterford** – *Vedrafiord*, ‘winter fjord’ – which were all substantial Norse settlements established along Ireland’s south-east coast.

Off to the south lies stunning **Lough Tay**, which ironically doubled as a Norwegian fjord and home to the Viking village of Kattegat in the recent *Vikings* series filmed here in Ireland. This surely speaks volumes about the pristine condition of our



**Above:**  
Trig point beside transmitter compound

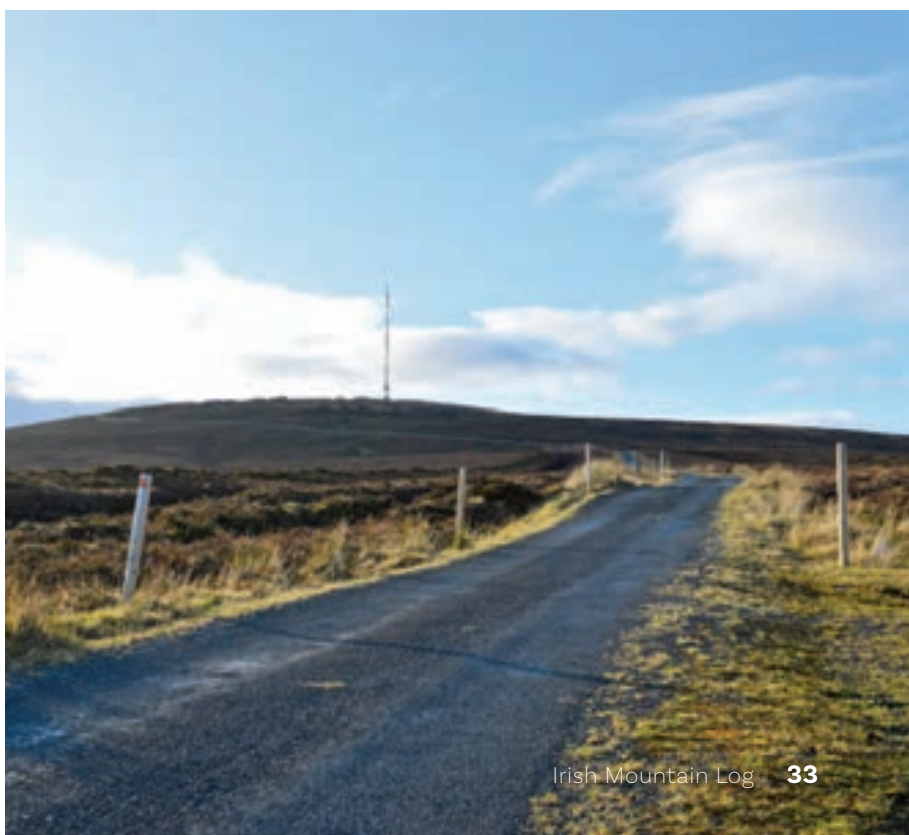
**Below:**  
On the descent: the road from the mast

mountains, that such a timeless saga could be filmed here today. Who says, “Beauty does not make the pot boil” (*Ní hí an áilleacht a chuireann an corcán ag fiuchadh*)?

### The descent

Your reverie of all things Viking completed, make your way to the access road which lies to the south of the fenced compound. In contrast to the final soggy ascent of Kippure, the four-kilometre descent on tarmac is a pleasurable stroll, which will bring you comfortably back to the **Military Road**. Then, take a left and continue on for one kilometre back to the car park, to conclude a moderate, enjoyable five-hour trek. Needless to say, make sure that you can be well seen on this busy road and watch out for speeding cyclists.

It’s hard to analyse the soothing effects of a peaceful day on the Wicklow hills. Perhaps the mountain’s unbroken silence is the very quiet we need, far removed from ‘the seductive siren of distraction,’ which now permeates every corner of our modern-day lives? ■







# LOUGH DERG CAMINO

## *Suggested pilgrim route visits many historical sites*

In August 2021, members of the Nenagh Walking Club, Aonach ar Siúl, completed a four-day camino exploring Lough Derg's lakeshore from Dromineer in north Tipperary to Mountshannon in east Clare. **Willie Keane** describes their journey and the many ancient sites, ecclesiastical and pre-Christian, they visited en route

**W**e started our camino at **Dromineer Castle** green on the August bank holiday weekend of 2021. Before setting out, we learnt that **Brian Boru**, as High King of Ireland, had ruled Ireland from Kincora (in Killaloe, Co Clare) from 1002 to 1014. He was the first Irish king to have a navy, with over three hundred longboats on Lough Derg.

Shipping traffic on the lake did not change much until the Grand Canal was connected to the River Shannon in 1804. It was the dawn of an exciting time for the commercial traffic on Lough Derg. The **Inland Steam Navigation Company** established its Killaloe

**Above:**  
A view of some of Lough Derg's islands from Castlelough, Co Tipperary, visited by the club on day two of their camino

headquarters in the 1830s, and the world-renowned **Lough Derg Yacht Club** was founded in 1835.

Plans were drawn up to build a canal linking Dromineer to Nenagh, and later to Youghal Bay. However, rising costs and the arrival of the railroad put an end to those plans, together with fear of flooding in Nenagh, according to local folklore.

Angling holidays became very popular as new hotels opened up around the lake. The Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme started in 1929, causing difficulties for the fishing business, and the gillies had to be compensated for loss of livelihood. Today, there is great concern for the ecological and environmental life of the lake with Irish Water planning to pump water from below Lough Derg to Dublin.

### **The Lough Derg Way**

**Dromineer Castle** was originally built in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and additional work was carried out on it in later centuries. The Canal Store, built in the 1850s, was in use until the 1950s.

At **Dromineer graveyard** we visited ancient 10<sup>th</sup>-century church ruins, originally built by the monks from Holy Island. Folklore has it that the monks left before the building was completed and that, at sunset on July 24<sup>th</sup> each year, the monks can still be seen sailing across the lake through that



➤ *Willie Keane has been a member of Aonach ar Siúl, Nenagh Walking Club, since it was founded in 2000 with great support from the Mid Tipp Walking Club. Over the years, with the support of club members, Willie has organised a number of hillwalking challenges, including the Munster Challenge, in which participants climbed to the highest point in each Munster county over one weekend, raising funds for African projects.*





**Note:** The route chosen by Aonach ar Siúl for their Lough Derg camino deviates in places from the Lough Derg Way and East Clare Way (see text for details)

illusive twilight zone. We also paid our respects at the grave of **Archbishop Michael Courtney**, formerly of Summerhill, Nenagh, who was murdered in Burundi in 2003.

From Dromineer, we followed the **Lough Derg Way**, with magnificent views to the north across Dromineer Bay to Urra Hill. We continued along the lakeshore by **Tomona**, up through **Shannonhall** and hiked on through the fields down to **Youghal Bay** and by the callows to **St Conlon's Well**. We reflected on the faith of the people who came to the Pattern Day for generations each year on July 24<sup>th</sup>.

We continued on over rich, rolling green pastures with spectacular views across the lake to Slieve Aughty, and then down to charming **Garrykennedy Castle** beside the lake and the once-renowned slate quarry pier.

## Day Two

The next morning, at **Castlelough graveyard**, we paid our respects at the grave of **Fr Tom Seymour**, former parish priest of Nenagh, who died in August 2019. There we noted a headstone with a carved seashell resembling the emblem of the Camino de Santiago.

We hiked up by the lookout and climbed up to the Millennium Cross on the enchanting **Laghtea Hill**, enjoying wonderful views out over the lake to Holy Island and Mountshannon.

We recalled the legend of the Leinstermen killed in this area on the orders of Brian Boru's wife, **Gormlaith**. Then we saw a stone circle **court tomb**

**Above:**  
The routes of the **Lough Derg Way** and **East Clare Way**, shown in part. The 'camino' described by the author deviates in places from these routes

**Right:**  
Aonach ar Siúl members at **Garrykennedy Castle** at the end of day one

dating back thousands of years to the Neolithic period. Court tombs were constructed for rituals, social gatherings and burials.

Hiking over the **Arra Mountains**, we got 360-degree views of the surrounding countryside as we made our way down the hillside to **Ballina**, opposite Killaloe. We crossed the **Washer Woman's Bridge** (over a now-disused railway line) and visited the ancient church and graveyard at **Templeachally**, perched high up, overlooking the River Shannon. ➤







### Day Three

The following morning, we crossed the River Shannon from Ballina to **Killaloe** and carried on over the canal bridge to the 13<sup>th</sup>-century **St Flannan's Cathedral**.

Beside the cathedral is a 12<sup>th</sup>-century oratory named after St Flannan, patron saint of Killaloe diocese. Killaloe derives its name from **St Lua** – also known as **Molua** – who founded a monastery here in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Walking up the steep, timeworn **Aill Bhán**, an ancient pathway with views across the canal to Ballina, we began to get a sense of ancient **Kincora**. At the site of Brian Boru's Kincora palace stands **St Flannan's Catholic Church**, built in 1839. Beside the church is the 9<sup>th</sup>-century **St Lua's Oratory**, which originally stood on Friar's Island on the River Shannon, just south of Killaloe. When the Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme began, Friar's Island was flooded and St Lua's Oratory was removed and re-erected in Killaloe.

Back on the ancient pathway of Aill Bhán, we headed down to **Tobermurragh Well**, named after Brian Boru's son **Murrough**, and continued along the lake to **Brian Boru's Fort** – also known as **Béal Ború** – a huge Iron Age earthen fort.

Above:  
**Members of Aonach ar Siúl setting off from Ballina on the River Shannon on day three of their camino**

Below:  
**The 12<sup>th</sup>-century St Flannan's Oratory in Killaloe**

## “HOLY ISLAND WAS THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF OUR CAMINO”

A club member, **Shay Hannon**, played a few enchanting tunes right there in the centre of the earthen enclosure, which overlooks a former ford on the River Shannon where the O'Brien family collected tariffs from people driving their livestock across the narrows here at the end of Lough Derg.

The rapparee **Galloping Hogan** crossed here with **Patrick Sarsfield** in 1690.

### The East Clare Way

Rain was our fellow traveller over the next few hours as we made our way to join the **East Clare Way** along backroads across the foothills of **Slieve Bernagh** and down to **Tuamgraney**.

Tuamgraney derives its name from the legend of Gráinne, who drowned in Lough Graney (Loch Gráinne) some miles to the north. Her body floated down the River Graney and, where it washed up, a mound was raised. **St Cronin** established a 6<sup>th</sup>-century monastery there, where a 10<sup>th</sup>-century church now stands, believed to be the oldest church in Ireland in continuous use.

At the **East Clare Heritage Centre**, we watched a most informative film about the history of the area. Walking on through Tuamgraney village, we visited the amazing memorial park there, dedicated to the men and women of east Clare who fought for Irish freedom. It is set on an outcrop of rock encircled by the roadway.

### Day Four

The following morning, on a beautiful sunny day, we set out for **Scariff Harbour** and went up through Scariff village to the riverside park. We had a look at the Scariff Union Workhouse water tower. The 1840 workhouse itself was burnt down in 1921. We then made our way through the village to the 1884 market house and out along the Connacht Road.







Hiking up along backroads, we were treated to most wonderful views out across the lake to Dromineer and north Tipperary's rich landscape. Then it was down by **Middleline** to **Woodpark**, along the enchanting woodland pathway to **Knockaphort pier**.

## Holy Island

**Holy Island (Inis Cealtra)** was the jewel in the crown of our camino. As we were ferried across to the island, we learned that it was one of Ireland's most famous monastic sites, founded in 520 by **St Colum** of Terryglass. Brian Boru's brother, **Morcan**, was Abbot of Holy Island until his death in 1003.

The island has the ruins of six churches, a round tower without a roof, a graveyard, a pilgrim path and a holy well. Pilgrim tradition says that if you see your reflection in the water of the well your sins are forgiven.

Our boatman, **Ger Madden**, gave us a fascinating tour of the monastic sites. Ger tells the story that, in 1014, as workmen were preparing to put the roof on the round tower, word came of Brian Boru's death.

**Above:**  
**St Caimin's and St Brigid's Churches on Holy Island, Lough Derg, with the medieval round tower in the background**

**Below:**  
**Round tower and church on Holy Island**

Work stopped and, to this day, the tower remains roofless.

Back on the mainland, our overjoyed group of walkers made their way through **Woodpark** to **Mountshannon** village and **Aistear Park**, with its amazing labyrinth.

We then went along by the pier and beach, over by the entrance to the once-noble **Mountshannon House** and up to the extensive market house. It was built in 1742 by **Alexander Woods**, along with fifty houses, a church and a schoolhouse, as a Protestant settlement.

Alexander set up a linen business employing the settlers, but the business failed in the 1780s. The **Reade** and **Tandy families** then became the landlords and revived the fortunes of the village. The Tandy family lived at Mountshannon House and the Reads at Woodpark House. **William Reade** built two piers to avail of the Grand Canal traffic and the Inland Steam Navigation Company business.

## Planning ahead

This was the end of our journey. We intended, in April 2022, to continue from Lough Derg on an Easter camino, to Roscrea and the onetime 31<sup>st</sup> wonder of the world, Monaincha Abbey, which was formerly a monastic pilgrim 'island,' largely surrounded by peatlands and bog pools. ■



## Club notes

**Aonach ar Siúl, Nenagh Walking Club**, offers a wide variety of outings each week to its 121 members. On Sundays, the club takes to the hills, and every second Sunday it is a social scenic walk. During the summer months, the **'Tracks and Trails'** members take to the hills on Tuesday evenings while the **'Last of the Summer Wine'** members do different adventure hikes on Thursdays. On Saturdays, once a month, club members hold an Irish-speaking hike. A few adventure caminos are held each year exploring the Irish countryside's rich heritage and history.





# EXPLORING DONEGAL IN 1865

**Kevin Higgins** delves into the journal of Thomas Hirst who, along with his friend John Tyndall, the famous mountaineer, explored the north coast of Ireland in 1865

**J**ohn Tyndall is often regarded as Ireland's first great mountaineer. He was a leading climber during the golden age of Alpinism and he recounted many of his exploits in a number of popular volumes, which went to many editions.

Compared to such adventures in the high Alps, any accounts of his climbing in these islands would hardly merit publication. Nevertheless, he did visit Ireland on a number of occasions, to visit his homeplace in Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow, and to explore some of the country's wild places. One such visit was with English mathematician **Thomas Archer Hirst**.

Thomas Hirst had become a firm friend of Tyndall's after they had met while working as

**Above:**  
Slieve League  
cliffs in Donegal

**Right:**  
Thomas Hirst

surveyors for a railway company in the north of England. Although not a mountaineer to the extent that Tyndall was, Thomas did enjoy hiking in the hills. He kept a journal, and it is in this journal that one finds an account of a walking holiday they took together in Ireland over Easter 1865, **by chance the same year as Whymper's first ascent of the**



➤ *Kevin Higgins is a founder member of Tyndall Mountain Club, set up in 1981. He served on the Mountaineering Council of Ireland executive in the late 1990s and he has chaired the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society.*



## John Tyndall's mountaineering titles

*Mountaineering in 1861*

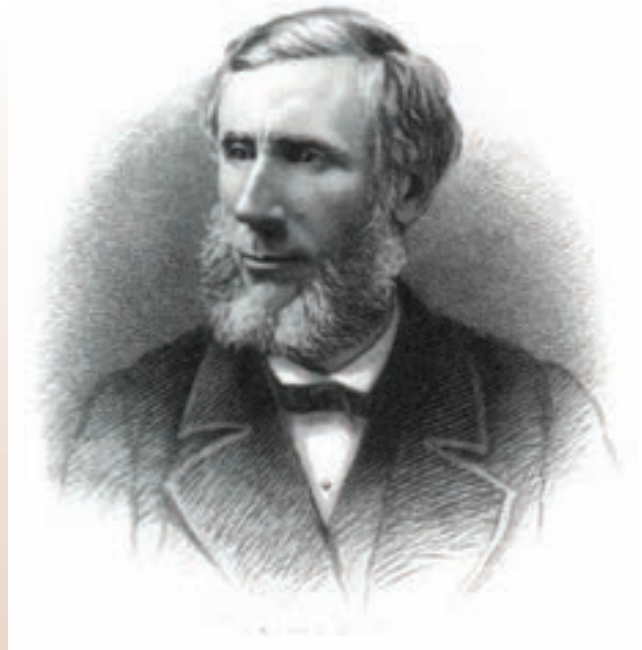
*The Glaciers of the Alps*

*Hours of Exercise in the Alps*

*The Forms of Water in Clouds and Rivers, Ice and Glaciers*

Right:  
John Tyndall

Below:  
Giant's  
Causeway



**Matterhorn.** The trip also seems to have included quite a bit of climbing.

Hirst may have been the instigator of the trip, which seems to have been undertaken to allow his friend some relief from the stress and strain of his intense working life in London, as a famed scientist. As Tyndall wrote to another famous scientist friend, **Michael Faraday**, "I have been much worried of late and have come over here to have a run and strengthen my nerves."

## Antrim Coast and Glens

In any event, they took the mailboat to Dublin on Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1865, with tickets for a month. They went by rail to **Belfast** and on to **Larne**, from where they walked to **Glenarm** along the coast.

The next day's walk over the moors to **Cushendall** had a positive effect on Tyndall's health, and from there they continued by rail to **Ballycastle**, where they spent an uncomfortable night.

## Causeway Coast

The magnificent weather on Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, saw them going by car (horse-drawn, presumably) past

**Carrick-a-Rede** and **Dunseverick** to the excellent **Causeway Hotel**, from where they explored the wonders of the region.

Hirst's first impressions of the **Giant's Causeway** were as follows: "At a little distance it is utterly mean, but actually standing amid its columns it is as utterly wonderful."

Just as in the Alps, they used a knowledgeable local man as a guide, here a **Mr Dixon**, and they went clambering over the Causeway and wandering from headland to headland along the coast, though no mention is made of getting to Fair Head. ➤







Tyndall was not impressed with the guide's abilities and felt that "he was no climber and, though but four and twenty and exceedingly fresh-looking, he complained of palpitations of the heart."

Maybe the visitors were setting a fast pace or trying some interesting scrambles; they make no mention of how much the guide was paid.

### Derry to Donegal

Continuing on their journey, they went through **Bushmills** and **Portrush** to **Londonderry**, where they toured its walls and discussed its history.

They went on from there to **Fahan** on the Inishowen peninsula and crossed to **Rathmullan**, from where they continued on foot to **Milford**, to spend the night. The dinner menu, presented by a pretty waitress, was "the hind leg of a turkey or the heart of a pig." Tyndall chose the turkey but remarked to his friend that, as to the heart, he expressed a preference for a slice of her own!

Although Hirst claims that the remark was not overheard, the waitress was replaced by "a sufficiently safe and tough-hearted specimen of womankind."

### Horn Head

Next day saw them on an eighteen-mile walk over wild country, lunching at **Glen** and taking shelter at '**Creslagh**' [Creelough], where they chatted with a Catholic priest. They arrived at **Dunfanaghy**, near **Horn Head**, which they planned to explore. This they did with a young boy as guide and were impressed by the **McSwyne's Gun** blowhole, and by the sea

**Above:**  
**Errigal**

**Below:**  
**Muckish**

arches, where the boiling waves reminded Hirst of Friedrich Schiller's poem *Der Taucher* (*The Diver*).

### Muckish and Errigal

On Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, they climbed **Muckish** "with a young fellow to carry our coats," and managed to get some magical views when the mist cleared on the descent.

Next day, they "walked upwards of 17 miles" to **Gweedore**. After lunching at **Gortahork**, they continued through very wild country where "Errigal was a beautiful object for the last six miles," and reached the excellent **Gweedore Hotel** at 4.30pm.

Their Sunday walk was to climb **Errigal** in three hours and 45 minutes, from the hotel. The mountain was clear from base to summit: haze prevented distant views, but they felt it should "truly be called





## “IN EUROPE, THERE IS NOT SUCH COAST SCENERY AS THAT WE TRAVERSED THAT DAY [AT] SLIEVE LEAGUE”

the Matterhorn of Ireland.”

Ironically, within three months of this climb, Tyndall would be deeply involved in the aftermath of the tragedy on the Swiss Matterhorn in July 1865, in which four climbers died on the first successful ascent of this famous Alpine peak.

### Slieve League

They rested on Monday and Tuesday, taking only short ten-mile walks to **Bunbeg** and back, and over a wild, stony region towards Dungloe.

On Wednesday, they took an eleven-hour drive through **Dungloe** and **Glen**, over wild, dreary countryside to **Carrick**, where they spent some time.

**Daniel Ward** acted as their guide on Thursday in exploring **Slieve League**. Hirst, afflicted by a stomach upset and not in good climbing order, had to turn back at one point, feeling giddy, where “there was a precipice on each side, broad enough for walking.” However, he felt it was his friend’s most enjoyable day, even if he himself did “not share Tyndall’s desire to stand on one leg on a peak with a precipice on every side.”

Despite his lack of enthusiasm for such excitement, the grandeur of the scenery enthralled him and he felt that “in Europe, there is not such coast scenery as that we traversed that day between Bunglass and the summit of Slieve League ... it was a sight I shall never forget.”

To add to the charm, an eagle “swept past us with widespread wings ... its back chequered with gold ... its broad wings ten feet from tip to tip.”

### Climbing at Bunglass

On Thursday, Hirst took a quiet stroll alone to **Bunglass Point**, while Tyndall and the guide went off together. “John [Tyndall] descended one of the steepest portions to the water’s edge, and then ascended again, at a still steeper place. The guide dared not follow him, but had to make a detour, whilst John emerged safely at the very highest point of the cliffs. His wondrous feats of climbing already forms the subject of talk in the whole neighbourhood,” Hirst wrote.

### Further adventures

Next day, they took a rowboat and explored the coast and caves of **Carrigan Head** and **Slieve League**. Hirst writes lyrically about the architecture and colours of the rock features. This was also an opportunity for some hunting, and they shot numerous seabirds, some of which could not be recovered. They even took unsuccessful potshots at a seal. This was Hirst’s 35<sup>th</sup> birthday and one of the most pleasant that he could recall.

The pair remained at Carrick for most of the



Above:  
**Temple Arch,  
Horn Head**

following week. It is very likely that they explored the region on foot, but no further climbing is recorded.

On the last Saturday, they were both ill. This they blamed on poisoned whiskey and improper food that “had completely neutralised the effects of the fine weather and exercise.” This may have been the reason for their not continuing to Galway, as they had earlier planned.

### Back to ‘civilisation’

They left for **Killybegs** on Monday where, Hirst felt, they were “back to civilisation,” because “we heard Irish no more ... and had the prospect of good food”!

From there they went back, via Ballyshannon and Sligo, to Dublin and **Kingstown** [Dún Laoghaire], where they stayed at the **Royal Hotel**.

On Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, Tyndall left for Holyhead and London, while Hirst returned to Dublin to visit friends at Trinity College.

So ends an account of an early walking holiday in Ireland. Not alone that, it may very well be the story of the first recorded ascent of the Slieve League sea-cliffs, if not the actual first ascent. Furthermore, that it was done by one of the pioneering mountaineers of the day, who is thought to have done little or no climbing in Ireland, adds a further dimension to the story. ■

*The above material was made available by courtesy of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (Journal XI. 1865. p215. Typed Folio 1728)*





# TAKING ON JEBEL TOUBKAL

In the summer of 2018, **Deirdre Mangaoang** took on a challenging hike in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco

“**R**emember, you chose Option B,” I said to my companion, as we looked outside the cabin windows and caught our first glimpse of the High Atlas peaks. We had been hiking for the previous two years, working our way through **Joss Lynam’s Best Irish Walks** and also climbing a few Scottish Munros. Now, in the summer of 2018, we wanted to take on a more challenging hike.

Option A had been Albania and Mount Korab, but indirect, expensive flights made that unworkable. Option B was Morocco and **Jebel Toubkal** (4,167m), the highest peak in North Africa. The more we read about the High Atlas mountains, the more irresistible they became. I willingly agreed to Option B and booked the necessary flights to Marrakesh, departing in early June.

**Above:**  
Final path to  
summit

**Below:**  
Start of hike on  
the first day

A taxi brought us from **Marrakesh** to the small town of **Imlil** (1,800m), where **Mohammed**, our guide for the two-day trek, met us at a local guesthouse. He was soft-spoken but oozed confidence and experience, as well he might, having reached the top of Jebel Toubkal a few hundred times. He loaded our rucksacks, containing sleeping bags and overnight gear, onto a donkey and sent it ahead of us. We had one final glass of fortifying mint tea, slapped on some sunscreen and started to hike.



➤ **Deirdre Mangaoang** is from County Wexford and lives in Dublin. Her first introduction to hiking was an impromptu hike up Croagh Patrick. Since 2016, she has hiked regularly and more preparedly around Ireland. In 2019, she completed Mountain Skills 1 and 2 with Fia Mountaineering and highly recommends both courses for anyone wanting to get more out of the mountains.





Mohammed set a fast pace through a forest and past a waterfall, before the trail entered a wide, stony valley covered in yellow wildflowers. After about an hour of following a clear trail through pinky-grey landscapes and past the occasional house selling river-chilled bottles of Fanta, we reached a sign welcoming us to **Toubkal National Park**. From here the path grew steeper, but I found the main challenge was the strong odour of donkey droppings strewn across the trail!

We took a lunch break an hour later at **Sidi Chamharouch** (2,350m), a cluster of a dozen wooden stalls and small buildings around a rock and shrine. Lunch was bread, salad, fish and Mars bars, eaten beside the river. For ten dirhams (ninety cents) you could buy a glass of freshly-squeezed orange juice. I would happily go back to Morocco and do the hike again, just for that juice; it was heavenly.



The next leg of the hike was to the refuge (3,207m) where we would stay overnight. This was the tough part of the first day, as the temperature increased to the mid-twenties and the trail became both steeper and narrower. I was extremely grateful that we had sent our rucksacks onwards by donkey. I was also very grateful for the mini-rests we were able to grab each time we had to step off the trail to give way to donkeys descending. The imposing stone refuge came into view two hours after leaving our lunch stop and we reached it twenty minutes later.

There are two refuges and some camping grounds that serve climbers heading for Jebel Toubkal's peak.



**Above:**  
**Ascending the trail on the first day**

**Left:**  
**Imlil**

**Below :**  
**Refuge du Toubkal, the hostel used for overnight stay**

We stayed at the slightly higher one, **Refuge du Toubkal**, the French Alpine Club hut, which was basic but fine: it has hot showers, provides filling dinners and has a shop that sells or rents nearly all the essentials. What it didn't sell or rent were towels, and unfortunately that was the one thing that we had forgotten to pack. Despite his best efforts, Mohammed was unable to magic one up. We made do with a small, quick-dry towel and a spare tee-shirt. 'Towelgate' and donkey droppings were the low points of the first day.

While waiting for the communal dinner, we watched the mist snake its way up the valley and surround us. After a bit of star-gazing, we headed into the 24-bed dorm and managed to get some sleep.

The second day began with the alarm buzzing at 3.45am. Breakfast was bread and coffee. Mohammed recommended that we rent trekking poles from the refuge, though I was unsure, as we had never used them before and thought they might be more of a hindrance than a help. However, within ten minutes of leaving the refuge in the grey dawn, we were very appreciative of the extra balance the poles gave us. ➤





## HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS



The 900m climb to the summit was more challenging than I had expected. Even in June, there were deep banks of snow that had to be carefully navigated. We were in the shade at this stage of the climb and it grew colder with every few metres gained.

Having a guide for the climb was vital. There were many rocks to clamber over and the path was not always obvious. Mohammed was very careful not to go too far ahead, so that we could literally follow in his footsteps. In doing so, we avoided loose scree and sprained ankles. We met many people climbing without a guide. Frequently they asked Mohammed to point out the right direction, and once or twice he called out to correct climbers who had strayed into dangerous territory.



**Above left:**  
**Start of hike on second day**

**Above right:**  
**On the summit of Mount Toubkal (4,167m)**

**Below:**  
**View from summit of Mount Toubkal**

Two hours after leaving the refuge, we emerged from the shade into bright sunshine and onto the col between **Jebel Toubkal** and **Jebel Toubkal West**. The view was incredible, a 360-degree panorama of peaks jutting through the clouds. I took oodles of photos, knowing they couldn't possibly do justice to the real thing but wanting to have something to spark memories later.

We had a short rest to catch our breath and bask in bright morning sunshine. We had also gained another team member, an Australian girl whose companion was suffering from altitude sickness and needed to descend with their guide.

I now willed my legs to keep going and, thirty minutes later, Toubkal's pyramidal summit marker suddenly came into view. Knowing that I was going to make it – something I hadn't been confident of when struggling in the cold a few hours earlier – was a pretty good feeling.

The mood at the summit was fantastic, the sun was bright and warming, and the views in every direction were stunning. The only spoiler was the unmistakable mechanical burr of a drone flying







overhead. However, the owners agreeably cut the flight short and we were able to enjoy the summit pretty much as nature intended for about 45 minutes.

Reluctantly, we began our descent. Once again Toubkal threw up a surprise in just how challenging the descent was. In Ireland, descending is my forté and usually takes me half the time of the ascent, but descending Jebel Toubkal took two full hours and one hundred per cent of our mental and physical concentration for every moment of that time.

We made it back to the refuge by 11.00am, amazed, dazed and slightly incredulous at what we had achieved. There were more glasses of mint tea and Mars bars from the shop, followed by a quick change into lighter layers. We then set off back down the trail. Mohammed somehow had the energy to take this section at a run, while we ambled along behind him and wore out our phone batteries taking photos.

Lunch in **Sidi Chamharouch** was a veggie omelette – which we wolfed down – and a glass of that divine orange juice. After a brief rest, we set off on the final leg to **Imlil**.

My companion and I said a heartfelt thanks to Mohammed for getting us to the summit and back safely, and watched him bounce away as if he'd just been out for a stroll. We staggered towards our waiting taxi for the journey back to Marrakesh. ■

**Above:**  
Deirdre on the descent of Jebel Toubkal on the second day

**Below:**  
Village built into mountainside near Imlil

## Trip notes

### Transport

You can fly from Dublin to Marrakesh.

### Tour

We used **I Go Morocco** – see [www.igomorocco.com](http://www.igomorocco.com). They arranged taxi transfers from and to Marrakesh, the guide, the accommodation and all meals on the trek. We bought our own water – there are shops along the trail from Imlil to the refuge and a well-stocked shop at the refuge. Just remember to bring some small change! It is customary to tip the guide at the end of your trek.

### Health and fitness

A good level of fitness is needed for this hike, but no technical climbing skills. It is good to have a consultation with your GP or a travel clinic before you go, for advice re vaccines, health on the trek and how best to avoid altitude-related problems.





# STARTING SPORT CLIMBING

**Simon Walsh** has some advice and tips to make your first foray outdoors onto the crags safer and more fun

**C**limbing in Ireland is fantastic. We are lucky to have amazing climbing on a huge variety of rock here, and all within a small(ish) area. Our weather can be fickle, though and, during the depths of winter, it can all be a bit too much, sometimes!

Thankfully, there are lots of places a short flight or ferry trip away, where we can escape to better climes (excuse the pun!).

## Where to go

Where are some good destinations for your first trip? One of the nearest is **Portland**, in the south of England. The climate there is warmer and sunnier than ours, and you can often get good weather during the winter. It also has good climbing at a huge range of grades.

Further afield, there is the **Costa Blanca** in Spain, a large area with thousands of routes, but you need a car to get around there. A similar flight time will take you, via Nice, to **Finale Ligure** in Italy. Sun, sea and

**Above:**  
**Cliffs in Portland,**  
**Dorset, England**

**Below right:**  
**San Vito Lo Capo**  
**in Sicily**

climbing, along with pizza and ice-cream – what's not to like?! As in Spain, a car is essential to get around.

Sicily is good too, though a longer flight away. With the number of crags immediately surrounding **San Vito Lo Capo**, you don't need a car once there, but you will probably need one to get from the airport. A little further away, the Greek island of **Kalymnos** is another brilliant venue, and one where



➤ **Simon Walsh** is originally from Belfast but spent the last fifteen years living and climbing in California. He recently moved back to Northern Ireland and now lives in Ballycastle, within sight of Fair Head. He is a climbing coach and guide and runs **Vertical Ascents**, a coaching and training business for rock and alpine climbers.

➤ **Simon Moore**, who took many of the photos that feature in this article, is a climbing coach and guide for **Vertical Ascents**.







you don't need a car at all, as quite a few of the crags are within walking distance of the main climbing hub of **Masouri**.

## What to bring

Once you have decided where to go, what should you bring, gear-wise?

Obviously, you'll need a **harness**, **rock shoes** and a **chalk bag**. It is also a good idea to get a **guidebook** for the area that you are visiting.

You will need a **rope**, the longer the better, if you are doing single-pitch climbs, and it should be relatively thin. An 80m to 100m single rope in the 9.1mm to 9.8mm range would be perfect. Why so long? Well, there are quite a few 40m to 45m climbs in all the destinations mentioned above, and you will need a rope that is at least double the length of the climb to get back down safely to the ground. If you only have a shorter rope, a 60m one for example,

**Above:**  
**Ricky Bell on The New World (f7a), Inishmore, Aran Islands, Ireland**

**Below:**  
**Pete Harrison on Sterrenstof (f7c+) at Garron Point, Carnlough, Co Antrim**

then take care that you only climb routes that are half the length of the rope (30m in that case) and definitely tie a **knot** at the end of the rope (described below).

Why should the rope be thin? As you climb, you pull up the rope to clip it in. As you get higher, this gets harder, as the amount of rope below increases and, therefore, it weighs more. A thinner rope reduces this weight, and so clipping, as well as moving, becomes easier. However, make sure you choose a rope compatible with the limits of your belay device (for example, current GriGri devices take 8.5mm to 11mm ropes).

Ideally, you should bring a **rope bag** or a **tarp** with **loops** to tie the rope to. Why? Well, firstly it keeps your rope off the floor, so it doesn't pick up grit and dirt. In addition, it can help prevent one of the most common causes of accidents in sport climbing, which occurs when lowering a climber off the end of the rope. If you tie one end of your rope onto your rope bag or tarp, then, as you lower the climber down from the chains, the rope cannot run through your belay device, as it might do if the rope was too short.

Although you might think this couldn't happen to you, it is surprisingly common. Tying your rope to a bag or tarp is a quick and easy way to prevent it. If you don't own a rope bag, at least be sure to tie a knot in the other end of the rope, so that it can't run through your belay device. The danger of this probably cannot be overstated. Accidents like this happen far too often and this is an easy way to prevent them.

Another reason to bring a bag is that, if you tie one end to the bag, once you finish climbing you just need to tie the other end to another loop on the bag. This way the rope cannot knot itself and you won't ➤





## CLIMBING SAFELY



need to flake the rope the next time you climb.

You will need a **belay device** and a **locking carabiner** to attach it. A device like a GriGri or similar is ideal, and will definitely help, if you try to 'work' some harder routes.

Some **quickdraws** are also vital. How many? Depends on the lengths of the routes you will be climbing, but usually around 12 to 14 is sufficient. You might need 16 to 18 draws on a longer pitch. Remember, you need a couple of extra draws for the anchor, if you want to top-rope the route too. If you think you might need to 'work' a route, draws with **thicker dogbones** are better, as it's easier to grab them. It's tricky to pull on thin Dyneema dogbones!

In addition, there are a few other optional things that can make your trip easier, or at least less stressful. **Belay gloves** are useful, especially when lowering a climber. A few (two or three) **slings**, racked like alpine draws, mean you can extend awkwardly placed bolts. A short sling with two locking carabiners acts as a useful connector while at the anchor. A **maillon** or an extra carabiner (that you don't mind losing) can be used to lower off a climb without having to reach the anchors.

A **clip stick** means you can continue to the top, even if the climb is difficult, or clip an awkward clip from below (make sure you know how to do this safely). Obviously, you can clip a very high first bolt with a clip stick too – don't be afraid to do this; much better to pre-clip rather than risk an injury, especially if it is your first trip.

**Belay glasses** are useful as well, and will help avoid neck strain. They might look funny, but that's better than a sore neck from two weeks of looking upwards! **Climbing tape** is handy too, as is a small **first aid kit**.

**Helmets** are optional but I'd suggest using one, especially if you're at a busy crag. People kick loose rock down all the time, and drop quickdraws, etc, so wearing one makes sense. You don't have to wear

one, but try to be mindful of what's above you.

### What to practise before you go

If you've never climbed outdoors on a sport climb before, the one skill you need to check before you set off is **how to lower off safely**.

Not all outdoor climbs have a carabiner that you can just clip your rope into at the top; in fact, the majority don't. Most will have a ring connected via a chain to two anchors.

To get back down, you need to thread the rope through the ring, which generally means untying from the rope while remaining connected to the anchor. If you don't practise this beforehand, it

will be stressful if you end up doing this thirty metres off the deck for the first time.

There are a few different ways of rethreading – the important thing is practising while still on the ground. Once you choose a method, stick to it so you don't get confused later. Never be afraid to double-check before lowering – it doesn't matter if it takes a couple of extra seconds; you can't afford to get it wrong.

### Tips and tricks

If this is your first trip outdoors, don't just jump onto harder climbs. Instead, start by climbing some easier routes. Odds are, it will feel harder than indoors, but it is really just about becoming used to climbing outdoors.

A good habit to develop is **double-checking each other's knots and harnesses**. It's super easy and quick to do, and ensures that no one sets off with an

**Above:**  
**Massimo Da Pozzo on an unknown f7c at Bèco d'Ajâl, Italy**

**Below:**  
**Liliana on Mantis f7b+, The Grail, in Arizona, USA**





## “THE ONE SKILL YOU NEED TO CHECK YOU HAVE IS HOW TO LOWER OFF SAFELY”

incorrectly tied knot, or one only connected to part of a harness. It's no harm to check that the rope is properly inserted into the belay device too.

If you are **belaying**, be careful around the first two or three clips. This is where you should stand close to the rock, without a lot of slack out, as you are trying to make sure the climber can't hit the ground in the case of a fall.

Don't assume all the **gear** is good. Take a moment to check it – especially the lower off. If a bolt hanger is loose, you can finger-tighten it. If you feel the gear is terrible, lower off, and don't worry about abandoning a couple of draws. Luckily, this isn't a common occurrence, especially in highly trafficked areas.

When you're acclimatised to the climbing, you can push the grades more and maybe think about taking a **practise fall** or two. This can be really beneficial to your climbing, as it gets the anxiety surrounding a fall out of the way. However, make sure you do it safely and in a controlled fashion. If the thought of doing it terrifies you, practise indoors before you go. Practise falls are a great exercise for the belayer too.

If you are **seconding** a climb, and **stripping the clips** as you ascend, don't strip the last draw before the anchor. Instead, unclip it from the climber's side of the rope and clip to the other side, and then continue to the anchor. That way, you keep a backup below you while stripping the anchor.

As well as practising lowering off before you leave the ground, it's also useful to practise **clipping**. Besides getting smoother at actual clipping, making your overall effort on the climb easier, there are a few other reasons.

**Do not 'z-clip.'** This is when you reach down and pull up the rope, from below your last clip, and then clip the next draw – it forms a characteristic 'Z' shape. The resulting rope drag will stop you moving up. It happens most often on a closely bolted section of a climb, and ideally your belayer will spot it before you move off past the offending clip.

Similarly, **don't back clip**. In this case, you won't get any sign that you have mis-clipped other than that the rope will run through the draw 'backwards' (the rope to the climber will exit the draw on the side nearest the rock). However, it means the rope can now unclip itself more easily in the event of a fall, so it is important to recognise when it has happened. Again, an attentive belayer can help.

Try to place your draws so that the gates face away from your direction of travel. That way, the rope is more likely to impact the strongest part of the carabiner (the spine), if you fall.

Finally – have fun! You will be in an amazing area, with beautiful scenery and great people. Enjoy yourselves! ■



Above:  
**Mikko Maekele on  
Visa Pour Bielsa  
(f8a) in Bielsa,  
Spain**

Right:  
**Jacquelyn Moore  
climbing on the  
blue limestone at  
Bèco d'Ajål, Italy**







# MY SUMMER ALPINE MEET

Neeku Shamekhi reports on joining Mountaineering Ireland's meet for the first time

In early April this year, shortly after I had completed a five-month trip around the continent in my campervan, I received my copy of the *Irish Mountain Log* and found out that this year's **Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet** would be in **Saas-Grund** in Switzerland in July.

I have been a member of Mountaineering Ireland for nearly a decade. Despite being very interested, I have never been able to attend any of the summer or winter meets. From work and personal life matters, to visa difficulties and the pandemic, there was always an obstacle,

but I was determined to go this year!

There was only one small issue: my campervan needed to be repaired. The mechanic promised to do it in two or three weeks, but the weeks went by and the repairs weren't done. I had two options: stay at home and brood or get a last-minute flight. That was an easy decision to make!

It has been a few years since I moved back to Dublin, but my Mountaineering Ireland membership remains through **Colmcille Climbing Club** in Donegal. There were a few of us on the same flight to Zurich. Fellow club members **PJ** and **Nigel** were

driving out in their campervans to pick the rest of us up at the airport. We had a pleasant ride from Zurich airport to the Saas Valley. We even got on what I would like to call a 'drive-through train,' where you drive onto the train in your vehicle and stay in it for the duration of the ride!

Not having my campervan for the trip and not knowing about it until the last minute meant that I was only able to secure accommodation for the first two nights. I was staying with a couch-surfing host in **Saas-Fee** (the next

town up the hill from Saas-Grund), who worked at the ski service.

After getting there and taking a shower, I walked down through the woods to the campsite in **Saas-Grund**, which was the base for the Mountaineering Ireland meet. It was Friday evening, the end of the first week of the meet, and there was a cosy get-together going on in the wigwam when I arrived.

There were many friendly faces from various Irish climbing walls, ClimbFests and Women With Altitude events, and I felt very welcome.

The wigwam at the Summer Alpine Meet base camp in Saas-Grund



➤ **Neeku Shamekhi** is a member of the Colmcille Climbing Club and of Mountaineering Ireland. She works in Dublin as a software engineer. She was born in Tabriz, a mountainous city in Iran, and is a lifelong nature enthusiast. She was introduced to mountaineering at an early age and started climbing more seriously after she moved to Ireland, mainly in Donegal and the Mourne, where she trained and qualified as a climbing and outdoor activity instructor. Neeku has hiked, skied and climbed in the Alps, the Pyrenees and Greece, as well as in Iran and Ireland.





Panoramic view from summit of Jegihorn

Some people had already been there for the first week and they were wrapping up to head back the following day. I was chatting with **Elaine** and she told me that she'd be leaving in a couple of days and she kindly offered to let me stay at the apartment **Gerard** and herself were staying in. I was happy to take her up on that. It would leave me with two more nights to figure out. The Colmcillers, **Nigel, Andrew** and the **Ó Murchú family** were the last of the rescue angels to offer

me a tent, a down sleeping bag and a mat. I don't remember sleeping that well in a tent before!

### Choice of activities

The great thing about Mountaineering Ireland meets is that there are lots of resourceful people there, who are willing to share their knowledge, and there are many different activities to choose from. This was especially important this year, given the fact that all of the guided activities were

## "THERE WERE SO MANY DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES TO CHOOSE FROM..."

cancelled, due to insurance problems.

On Saturday morning, **Sarah** and I went for a 1km wellness walk, followed by a nice hike to **Saas-Almagell**. We started the walk with a few yoga poses and hand/foot dips in the water, and even some goat petting, until I was stabbed by one of them!

The hike was very enjoyable and we finished up going for a dip in the water at the base of a waterfall. It was rather refreshing, as long as you could tolerate the ice-cold water.

On Sunday, we went sport climbing on the local crag by the river at **Feechi**. I hadn't climbed anything outdoors since 2019, and I wasn't sure about my physical and mental fitness, but I was happy with my performance once I got on the rocks!

Being surrounded by a lot of passionate people, who value the mountains, means that you can do as much as you want, i.e., multiple rounds of activities per day! So, in the evening we went for a second round of sport climbing in **Saas-Fee**.

The next day, we went for a hike through the **Monte Moro**

**Pass**, an Alpine pass on the border between Switzerland and Italy. The weather wasn't as warm as on the previous days and, by the time we got to the Italian side, there was no visibility. However, the tasty pasta meal and the espresso that we had up there reassured us that we were in Italy!

The following day was a rest day for me. I went for the wellness walk again and did a few climbs on a slabby crag in the evening.

### Jegihorn via ferrata

On the fifth day, Wednesday, we went on the spectacular via ferrata on the **Jegihorn** (3,206m), the highest via ferrata in the Western Alps. It is very exposed and has breathtaking scenery. What I really liked about it was that with the right pair of boots (rigid soles), you could forget about holding onto the wires and steel ropes, and solely focus on your climbing and movement techniques, except on the fairly long suspension bridge connecting **Vorgipfel** to **Jegihorn**!

The next day was the last day of the Meet and by then most people had already left. ➤



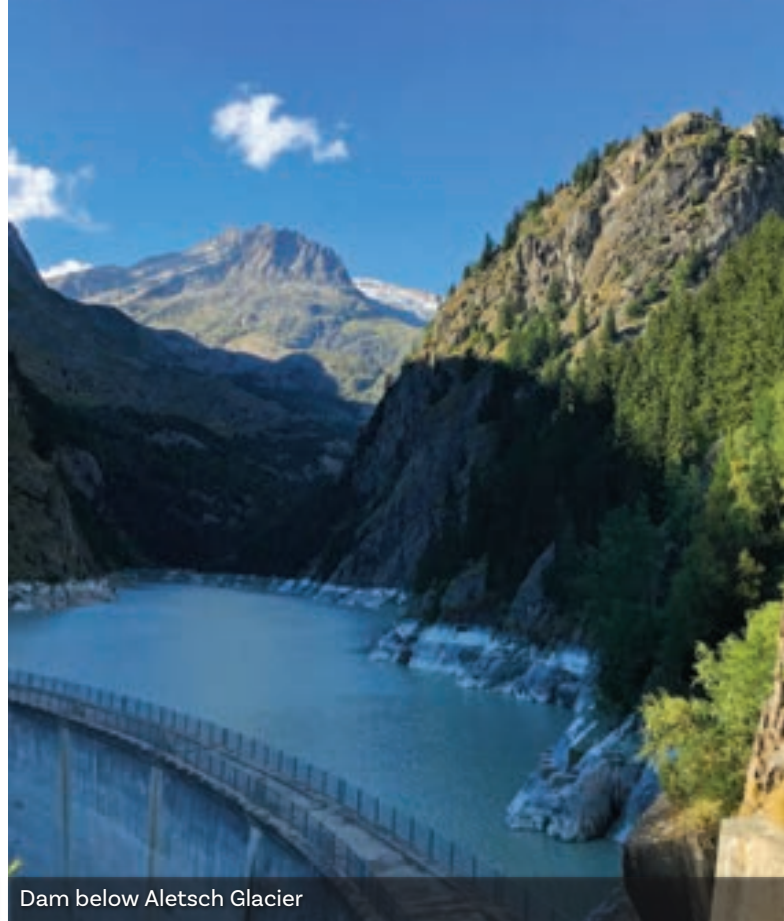
View of Saas Valley from summit of Jegihorn



## ALPINE MEET



Neeku at Alfardan Lake on the way to Sparrhorn



Dam below Aletsch Glacier

I was planning to stay on a bit longer in Switzerland and spend some more time in the mountains. Another couchsurfer from **Brig** invited me over. It was a top floor apartment with panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and the drive-through train! The host and pretty much everyone else I met there were mountain junkies, who were into mountain biking, paragliding, mountaineering and, of course, skiing.

For the following day, they suggested that I hike to **Sparrhorn** (3,021m), which was easily accessible by bus and a cable car to **Belalp**. It was another fine day and the view of the mountains was exhilarating. As I walked higher up the mountain, I could see the **Dom** and the **Matterhorn**, along with many other beautiful peaks.

### Tyndall monument

Halfway along the path, I noticed a monument and went to check it out. As expected in Switzerland, the inscription was written in four languages and, surprisingly, one of them was Irish! The monument was to **John**

**Tyndall**, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Irish scientist, mountaineer and educationalist from Carlow, who had studied the **Aletsch Glacier** and had built a holiday home at Belalp, facing the glacier.

I was rather intrigued by this chance encounter and wanted to know more about it. On my way back, I stopped to get

some food and found out a memorial service was taking place on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to commemorate Tyndall's 202<sup>nd</sup> birthday with the presence of some representatives from **Carlow County Council**. Since it was only two days away, I decided to stay and attend the event, which was open to the public. The event was

followed by a rather unexpected, yet memorable evening with great people from Carlow County Council at Hamilton Lodge and Spa, which is a nice hotel in Belalp owned by a lovely Dutch family.

### Aletsch Glacier

While I was in the area, I took



A retreating Gabelhorn Glacier as seen from Wisshorn. Glaciers are speaking to us. Let's listen to them and take action. Global warming is real.



the opportunity to do another via ferrata, **Klettersteig Aletsch**, which is built around the dam that collects the water from the rather fast-melting Aletsch Glacier.

My next destination was **Zermatt**. I was there just over a year ago for a couple of brief end-of-season glacier skiing sessions and I was rather keen on going there again to do some mountaineering this time.

## Mammut Schweifen

I did the **Mammut Schweifen** via ferrata and, thanks to the suggestions of local staff at the Matterhorn Sport store in Zermatt, I had a nice via ferrata and hiking plan for the day.

The Mammut Schweifen via ferrata consists of three routes, the first one, route A, graded as K2 (moderately difficult) and the other two, B and C, graded as K4 (very difficult). In order to save time for the hike, I skipped route A by starting at the bottom of

route B and went in the opposite direction until I reached the intersection of the three routes and then continued on route C.

## Wisshorn

Once I got to the top, at 2,095m, I started hiking towards **Wisshorn** (2,936m). By the time I got to the summit, the rain had started and it continued for the rest of the day. I walked back to Zermatt via **Trift** and through the woods, while foraging for berries and thyme.

**Bern** was my last stop before flying back to Dublin from Zurich airport. I was invited there by a climber I had met in Brig. While there, I visited **Albert Einstein's** house, as well as the **Alpine Museum**, which hosts different exhibitions around alpinism. There were three exhibitions on when I visited: Raclette, Women on the Mountains and Let's Talk About Mountains (North Korea).



The Aletsch Glacier

My personal favourite was the Women on the Mountains exhibition, with a wonderful collection of photos of women alpinists dating as far back as 1885. The aim of the exhibition was

to showcase these women, who climbed the mountains with the same enthusiasm, virtuosity and fearlessness as men, but largely went unnoticed in the past. A fitting end to my trip. ■



John Tyndall monument with Aletsch Glacier in the distance



Neeku on via ferrata





On the summit of Weissmies (4,017m) in the Swiss Alps during the Alpine Meet (from left): Aaron Graham, Rowan Keating, Adam Ó Ceallaigh, Chris McGivney and Josh Flanagan



Josh Flanagan belaying Rowan Keating at Feechi

# OUR SUMMER ALPINE MEET

Young mountaineers **Adam Ó Ceallaigh** and **Chris McGivney** look back on their achievements at the Meet

**M**ountaineering Ireland's **Summer Alpine Meet** had an air of mystery to it for the six young adults in our group. As none of us had been to an Alpine Meet before, we weren't sure what to expect. Would the other people there be young or old, experienced or novices? Our anticipation was palpable!

With **Rowan Keating**, a Mountain Leader (ML) and Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI) based in Tollymore, being the most committed alpinist, he arrived a week before the meet was due to start. Soon after, he was joined by outdoor education student **Rónán Smyth**, lifelong hiker **Beck Vining** and her friend, **Chris McGivney**, an avid climber, RCI and aspirant ML. Following that came **Josh Flanagan** and **Aaron Graham**, two school friends turned climbing partners. Last but not least, **Adam Ó Ceallaigh**, a climbing partner of Chris McGivney's, joined the group, excited about the adventures to come.

## Laengfluh Glacier

Our first day out together was inspired by crevasse rescue training which Chris and Beck had taken part in, guided by

**Kevin O'Neale**, along with experience that Rónán had picked up with guide **Chris Ensoll**. We took the mountain train up to the **Laengfluh Glacier**. Once roped up, we ventured onto the rapidly melting ice. After finding our feet, we began the hunt for a suitable crevasse, of which there were many. Chris, on his travels through Europe, had impulsively purchased a number of ice screws, which proved very useful for this exercise as volunteers were

lowered into the glacier (with a back-up safety rope). After many successful simulated rescues, our group of now cold and wet climbers retreated to the safety of base camp in Saas-Grund.

## Jegihorn (3,206m)

The group bonded rapidly over our passion for the outdoors. Further planning promptly ensued, with potential adventures over the coming days being discussed. Based on Beck and Chris having

previously done a multi-pitch climb up the **Jegihorn**, a quick consensus was reached: this was to be the next objective. However, a number of routes were to be taken. Rowan would head up the via ferrata. Adam, Chris and Rónán planned to attempt the fourteen-pitch **Alpendurst** (4c). Josh and Aaron, feeling the psych, planned not only on climbing Alpendurst, but also on running back down to tackle **Panorama** (5c).

The day posed many

Beck Vining at a belay stance on the Jegihorn





challenges and led to much learning, especially for Adam, as it was his first time sport climbing and also his first time on a multi-pitch route.

## Cragging at Feechi

The more time we spent in the mountains together, the more the excitement grew, as well as our ambitions. A rest day followed, spent at the riverside crag **Feechi**. Testing our limits on safe sport routes, we led a number of climbs averaging 6b. The river is controlled by a dam upstream, from which water is periodically released. This was made especially clear to us when we needed to rapidly lower off a route and evacuate the area, as the rising river flooded our belay spot! Despite this drama, the picturesque setting of Feechi is not something we will soon forget.

woke to a guide passing us at 3.00am, setting the pace for the day ahead. Our competitive side setting in, we rapidly caught up and overtook the guide on the ridge climb (PD). As we ascended, the sun rose, breaking into a beautiful pink sunrise, allowing us to see all peaks around us and even some Italian lakes. We summited at 7.23am. After a quick photo, the long descent of more than 2,000m to Saas-Almagell began. Twelve hours after starting that morning, we landed back at base camp in Saas-Grund, very tired but satisfied, having climbed our first 4,000m peak as a team.

## Allalinhorn (4,027m)

Not wanting to waste their last day in the Swiss Alps, Josh and Aaron decided to go for the **Allalinhorn**, with Rowan



Aaron, Josh and Rowan on the summit of the Allalinhorn (4,027m)

## Weissmies (4,017m)

At this point, we had to say farewell to Rónán and Beck, who were heading back to Dublin. Nevertheless, we still had big plans, and the following day led to our biggest adventure yet: **Weissmies**. This would be no easy feat and we planned to break it into two days.

We bivied just above the **Almagellerhuette** at 3,200m. After the briefest of sleeps, we

tagging along too. Being an accessible peak, this had both pros and cons. It was quick to reach, but the heavy traffic and hot sun caused some of the snow bridges to deteriorate substantially. Nevertheless, after some hairy crevasse crossings and diligent ropework, the lads summited the peak, even making it back in time for lunch! A very successful day, all in all.



Chris McGivney on the Lagginhorn Ridge

## Lagginhorn (4,010m)

Aaron and Josh had already climbed the **Lagginhorn** via the AD route. However, due to recent snowfall, the remaining mountaineers (Adam, Chris and Rowan) opted to ascend and descend the PD ridge in one final mega-day. Hopping on the first lift, they were up high in no time, but the long and arduous climb after that highlighted how two weeks in the Alps had taken a toll on their bodies. Despite this, they all reached the summit, but more importantly, they also caught the last lift back down! After three 4,000m peaks in three days, Rowan, along with the other two, was very tired. It's safe to say that a good night's sleep was had by all!

## Looking forward

As a group of young adults and aspiring alpinists, the Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet facilitated us to learn about climbing in the Alps from professionals and experienced alpinists, as well as each other. It broadened our horizons and showed us what the world of alpinism can provide. We are a driven group of individuals, who look forward to continuing our development and progressing as a team in the mountains, whether that be at home, in the Mournes, over in Scotland, or further afield.

► We are grateful to Mountaineering Ireland and the UIAA for the support and for the platform which they have provided us. ■



► Chris McGivney studies geography and German in Trinity College Dublin, where he is involved with the Hiking Society. He is an RCI and is working towards his ML.



► Adam Ó Ceallaigh studies geography and political science in Trinity College Dublin. He is a Senior Volunteer with Scouting Ireland and, earlier this year, was part of the Crean Challenge Expedition Team, which took 32 scouts to Iceland. He will do his MSA in October.





# Hillwalking



Transition year students from Ard Scoil na Mara, Tramore, Co Waterford, along with artist Anouschka Joyce, participating in the Summit Sisters pilot programme in the Comeragh Mountains in May

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

## Hillwalking developments



Written by  
Ruth Whelan,  
Hillwalking  
Development  
Officer

### ■ Summit Sisters "Create your own path"

This programme evolved from a group I put together for a hackathon for **Girls Get Active**. It consisted of four members – myself, my colleague **Laura Griffin** and two teenage girls, **Jane** and **Suzanne Whelan**. The aim was to come up with a concept to encourage teenage girls to get active.

That concept has since been developed into a programme called **Summit Sisters: Create your own path**. During the summer, we delivered a pilot programme with transition-year students and teachers from **Ard Scoil na Mara**, Tramore, Co Waterford, local artist **Anouschka Joyce** and musician **Joey Whelan**, and led by local training instructor, photographer and flora and fauna enthusiast **Mario MacRory**.

The theme was adventure, the location was the hills, but the goal was not all about going up peaks. It was an immersive programme, which involved

bringing teenage girls' individuality and creativity to the hills. The students were selected from a creative group in transition year who were not actively engaged in sports.

The programme ran over three weeks during school hours as part of transition year activities. Each day brought the girls to a different location, and different themes were introduced, including art, music, photography, flora, fauna and geology, wellbeing, navigation and key hill skills, which were tailored to the group's main interests.

The girls then chose the creative piece that took their interest the most, such as creating a photo, writing a song or a poem or painting a picture. On the final day, they brought their finished piece with them and shared it amongst the group.

The evaluation of the pilot programme showed that it had had a positive impact on the girls' engagement with the outdoors and particularly with hillwalking as an activity in itself. The highlights for

the girls were being immersed in the mountains and being allowed to explore their creative side while building a greater bond with each other through their shared experience. We now have more teenage girls that were not engaged in activities who, after this experience, intend to go hillwalking again and have a greater understanding of the uplands.

The pilot provided the opportunity to evaluate the programme to ensure it met its objectives, with a view to scaling it up for nationwide delivery. We believe the programme provided an experience for teenage girls, who do not naturally gravitate towards traditional sports, and gave them an opportunity to engage in physical activity. Not only this, it helped develop young spirits, allowing them the opportunity to engage in their own personal interest while being active.

If you have a transition year school group or a group of inactive teenage girls whom you think will benefit from this programme, please email your interest to [ruth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ruth@mountaineering.ie). ■



## ■ HER Outdoors

**HER Outdoors Week** ran from August 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>. It was a fantastic opportunity to re-ignite and reintroduce females to the outdoors. It was all about 'Finding Your Outdoors,' aiming to inspire, educate and encourage more females to get out into the great outdoors. By all accounts, the week met its objectives.

**Mountaineering Ireland**, working collaboratively with **Sport Ireland** and **Local Sports Partnerships**, saw this as a great opportunity to build on our **Women With Altitude** event held earlier this year, and provide women with another opportunity to build their confidence on the hills and link in with peers and instructors in their local area.

Twelve hillwalking-based activities took place in ten different locations around the country, with a total of 85 women in attendance. The aim of the week was to encourage women to embrace the elements, immerse themselves in nature and, most importantly, have fun!

Each day was run by our wonderful female instructors and was aimed at those who were new to hillwalking, to help increase their confidence and provide them with key skills to stay safe on the hills, and for those more experienced to develop their skills even more.

**She Summits**, a programme run in partnership with **Kilkenny Recreation & Sports Partnership**, ran over a number of weeks and throughout Her Outdoors Week, giving women with little experience of hillwalking the opportunity to develop their skills over the course of a number of weeks.

All the women really embraced this opportunity and fully immersed themselves in hillwalking. Their experience was made extra fun, with lots



Finding their outdoors

of learning from all of our wonderful instructors. A big thank you to **Askea Calnan, Deirdre Cunningham, Michelle Hughes, Maureen O'Brien and Helen Lawless**, who instructed and inspired the participants throughout the week.

## ■ Happy Hiking programme

Our **Happy Hiking** programme has been running since the end of August. It offers a great opportunity for anyone new to the hills, or who wants to learn navigation, to join a qualified instructor for a day's training, gaining useful information and skills that will help keep them safe on the hills. Thirty-four days have been organised so far, at seventeen locations around the country, and 110 participants have completed the programme.

Currently, there are more than 170 people booked to take part, including a number of transition year students. The programme will run throughout **European Week of Sport** and up to the end of October.

Some spaces are still available. To check availability, go to [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).

## ■ Club Committee Support Meetings

We will be hosting four online meetings tailored for club committees this autumn. These workshops are aimed at club committee members who are new to the committee, or at those who just want to refresh their knowledge or learn something new.

Each of the four workshops will cover a different topic. This is a great opportunity to engage and ask any questions that you might have on the specific topics, to help support committees to run a club effectively. The dates and focus of each workshop are as follows:

### September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7.00pm **Membership System and GDPR**

This workshop will provide you with key information you need to know about managing your members' data.

### October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7.00pm **Committee Roles and Club AGMs**

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

### October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7.00pm **Insurance and Accident Reporting**

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

### October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7.00pm **Toolkit for Clubs**

This workshop aims to provide information about the resources 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 on [www.mountaineering.ie/homepage](http://www.mountaineering.ie/homepage). ■



Happy hikers enjoying hill skills in Wicklow





# Training

## News for members

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



Written by  
Jane Carney,  
Training Officer

### Alpine Meet 2022

The **2022 Summer Alpine Meet** took place in Saas Grund, Switzerland, in July. The weather was spectacular, with high temperatures and dry conditions. The one thunderstorm added atmosphere to the electric Meet BBQ, held in a large wigwam.

The good weather meant dry conditions for climbing, mountaineering, trekking and running, but it also meant stripped glaciers, diminished snow cover, exposed snow bridges and widening crevasses. Caution was required to work around and avoid these hazards, with Mountain Guides ceasing guiding on the Matterhorn in response to the same conditions there. That said, much activity took place safely. Courses were run with Guides and with an International Mountain Leader for the Hut-to-Hut Trek.

Youth strongly featured this year, with four under-18 and a further ten 18-26-year-old participants. They formed a solid group, who took the lead in making a proposal for future Alpine training plans and making a request for support from Mountaineering Ireland to do this. We have youth-subsidised places on the **2023 Scottish Winter Meet**, and there are several **UIAA international youth camps** available on the UIAA website, in the Youth section.

This year's Summer Alpine Meet also hosted a **UIAA International Youth Meet**, and we were privileged to receive some UIAA gifts and a visit from UIAA's Director of Operations, **Nils Glatthard**. Youth bursary places were taken up at this UIAA Youth Commission-supported event.

There are reports about the Summer Alpine Meet from both youth and adult participants elsewhere in this magazine. ■



Enjoying the Summer Alpine Meet barbeque in the wigwam

### Training awards news

■ **Mountain Training UK & Ireland Walking Scheme.** The review of the Walking Scheme is now complete and the revised walking awards can be viewed on the website. Extended leaders and teaching and learning components have been added, and the three walking awards handbooks and the guidance notes for candidates, trainers and assessors have been formatted. A new Camping Leader Award was also an outcome of the review; it replaces the Expedition Skills module.

■ **Camping Leader Award.** Inductions took place for the providers of this new award; another date will be advertised for trainers still wishing to deliver this award. Provider application forms are available on the website.

We are pleased to report that, since the March launch, there have been 31 registrations and 15 newly-qualified Camping Leaders, with a 50:50 male:female split. Well done to you all!

■ The **Rock Climbing Development Instructor** module is gathering momentum. Registrations for this relatively new award are growing. It is hoped that a second training course will be run this year. The award is designed for experienced Rock Climbing Instructors who want to teach the many building blocks and progressions required for trad lead climbing, and to develop and support the pathway for competent lead climbing. To register, please ensure that your logbook demonstrates the 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-Rock Climbing Instructor varied group sessions

These requirements will enable you to get the most out of the four-day training course, which is quite intense but very informative, making for an enjoyable course. ■



Participants on a course during the Summer Alpine Meet





Saas Grund view

## News for members, candidates, providers

■ **Training grant applications.** July-December 2022 applications for support are being received and will be reviewed in the MTBI November meeting. Thank you for your applications for grants of up to €250 to support training activities.

■ **Club Training Officers online workshop.** Club Training Officers are invited to attend an online Club Training Officer session on October 10<sup>th</sup> from 7-8.30pm, to support, develop and refresh in-club skills. Please confirm attendance and update the details of new Club Training Officers on the club administration section on the website.

■ **Website and training record management.** A new website will be launched soon - details to follow.

■ **Insurance provision for award holders and providers.** For 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)** - professional insurance cover is required to run your business. 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 who may be seeking insurance in the future.

■ **Please ensure all candidates for skills schemes and awards are registered** and are current **Mountaineering Ireland members** (where applicable) before each course. Candidates will need your support through the registration process. The registration fee covers the cost of the scheme packs. Mountaineering Ireland membership is not compulsory for the Skills schemes or the Camping Leader Award, but is compulsory for the award schemes.

■ **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. Any MT course should display the logo to show it is an MT-administered course.

■ **Please check your Safeguarding Certificates, First Aid Certificates and provider agreements for renewal dates.** Online renewal is possible for Safeguarding. ■

## Key dates 2022

- 24-25<sup>th</sup> Sept Skills/CPD Workshops Teaching Navigation, Scrambling, Rock Climbing. Venues: Kerry, Mournes, Galway, Wicklow
- 2<sup>nd</sup> October Online Club Training Officers Meeting, 7.00-8.30pm
- 18<sup>th</sup> October Online Winter Meet Information Evening
- 28-31<sup>st</sup> Oct Mountain Leader Assessment, venue tbc
- 1<sup>st</sup> November Online MTBI Meeting
- 13<sup>th</sup> November Online MTUKI Meeting
- 27-28<sup>th</sup> Nov Train the Trainer Workshop (blended option)
- 5<sup>th</sup> December Online MTBI Meeting (year-end Training Grant review)
- 6<sup>th</sup> December Senior Providers Workshop

## Key dates 2023

- 21-22<sup>nd</sup> January Train the Trainer Workshop (blended option)
- 28<sup>th</sup> February Online MTBI Meeting
- 11-18<sup>th</sup> March Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 24-26<sup>th</sup> 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!*



Phil and Chris Fee scrambling in Saas Grund

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 5: How to get killed

Continuing his series on climbing safely, mountaineer and big-wall climber **Andy Kirkpatrick** discusses the most important ways to prevent climbing accidents

I recently saw an old wartime instructional film on YouTube called *How to Get Killed in One Easy Lesson*. In the film, an American soldier captures two Japanese snipers who have just decimated his unit. Rather than just bayonetting them, which I expect was the protocol in the Pacific for both sides, he begins asking them to justify killing ten of his men. Instead of pleading for their lives, the two soldiers point out – very helpfully – the dead soldiers killed themselves, as good American soldiers are very hard to hit. They then go on to list the eight avoidable ways these soldiers died.

Seeing as my job in this series in the *Irish Mountain Log* is to cover climbing safety, from the point of view of someone who is no one to talk, I thought it would be interesting to apply the “How



Phones can be a godsend, but they can also be a dangerous distraction

to get killed” concept to Irish crags and mountains, and look at the avoidable ways mountaineers die.

Getting reliable data on how and why accidents occur is difficult, as many accident reports don’t cover specifics, meaning much of what I have to go on is anecdotal or based on personal experience.

### Ground falls

I will start with **ground falls**, something I have seen several times while climbing in Ireland. For every resulting fatality, there are probably ten ground falls where the climber is carried off breathing, and another hundred who are lucky enough to hobble away – the walking wounded. Why people take ground falls is a subject in itself and, although sometimes it is beyond the control of the climber, most times it is not.

One observation is that perhaps 20% of novice climbers tend to demonstrate a very gung-ho, kamikaze-like attitude, as if they don’t really understand how hard the ground is or how easy it is to break bones. Such climbers all have an appointment with a big fall sooner or later. If they’re lucky, by the time that fall arrives, they will have all their life support skills squared away, such as how to place solid runners, found a



➤ **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.





Vanessa Kirkpatrick pushing her boundaries on Prince of Darkness (5.10c), Red Rocks, Nevada

sound belayer, see the fall coming and be on terrain that will not punish even a small fall.

Sometimes this fall comes before these things are in place, and somehow they escape serious harm by the skin of their teeth, with falls that strip an entire pitch, or full on deck, not that uncommon.

In most cases, this big fall scares the bejesus out of the climber, and they either pull their necks in, square those skills away, or give up and take up paddle-boarding.

The ideal pathway to a no-fall progression is the mini-scare, the non-fall fall, where you suddenly have blinding clarity what's going to happen if you don't take the game seriously (it's not a game for starters, or a sport).

Unfortunately, for some, the fact that they survive such a near-death experience just encourages them more, and makes them feel invincible, which will be proved wrong sooner or later.

I should also note that there are also novice climbers who take ground falls because no one took the time to teach them how to avoid such things, a type of self-made climber, instructed via YouTube, who is all too common these days. Such climbers, if you see them putting their necks on the block, are the moral responsibility of the climbers around them.

### Pushing your limits too hard

At the other end of the scale, you have experienced climbers, who are hitting the ground or hitting 'stuff' on the way. These

## “BOLDNESS WITHOUT SKILL AND STAMINA CAN BE MORE LIKE RUSSIAN ROULETTE”

falls generally reflect a climber pushing their limit but on ground where limits are best not pushed too hard. A 'death route' can give the impression that you're improving as a climber, as you get the points, but boldness without skill and stamina can be more like redneck Russian roulette. Five times out of six you'll get away with it, but sooner or later you'll get a loaded chamber.

Instead of rolling the dice, sometimes it's better to consolidate your gains, or try harder, safer routes before you do yourself some damage. Yes, I know you can jibber up The Ghost in Dalkey Quarry on your first day as a fresher climber, but your climbing will be well set back by two broken legs.

And then you have **solo ground falls**, the climber either climbing up the rock or soloing down it. Again, soloing accidents require their own subcategory and come about due to many physical, psychological and environmental factors. Young climbers can often view this as a test of their mettle, that it's the ideal, but is climbing well below your grade, generally on a route you've already done twenty times, so great?

As for accidents in descent, very often climbers unrope far too early, fearing







Vanessa Kirkpatrick climbing Hangover Layback (15) in Moonarie, Australia

they'll look like wimps, and will follow some old-timer down some death descent, only one in which the old-timer knows every hand and foot hold (as well as the loose and polished ones). "Where there's rope, there's hope," so best use one, if you have one.

## Rockfall

The next way to die would be **rockfall**, either triggered by mountain gremlins, or by your climbing partner. The best way to avoid rockfall, is to avoid crags with loose rock, which isn't easy, as many multi-pitch Irish crags are all loose rock.

The novice will often fall foul of rockfall due to complacency, believing that, as others have climbed up there, it must be all solid, when it isn't. A skilled climber can navigate a loose pitch with care, testing, feeling, smelling and probing their way up, understanding what cracks will take protection and what cracks signify weakness. They know where to place belays so as to protect the second, as well as how to run their ropes so only one might get chopped by a falling block.

The old phrase, "Good judgment comes from experience; experience comes from bad judgment," demonstrates how these

## "WHERE THERE'S ROPE, THERE'S HOPE, SO BEST USE ONE IF YOU HAVE ONE"

skills are developed, with a climber starting on a route with just one loose block, one day able to climb a route comprised of only loose Jenga blocks.

One way to avoid dying, that ties into all the ways already mentioned, is to **wear a helmet**, be it on a single-pitch route or a multi-pitch mountain. A helmet protects your brain from both rocks hitting your head and your head hitting the rock or the ground.

## Rappelling

The next danger would be **rappelling**, which gives the unwary ten more ways to die, but which seems to afflict both novice and pro alike. The combination of ego, exhaustion, hurry, complacency, corner-cutting and a lack of pride in foundational climbing skills can all result in an accident. However, most often, it's a combination of two together.

Although I've penned a 300-page book, *Down*, on the subject of how not to die rappelling, a single-sentence prescription for not having an accident would be: "employ a back-up prusik, use a closed system (knot your ropes or clip into the ends) and don't be a cheap ass with your anchors."

## Distraction by phone

One unusual way to die is death by **phone**, which can kill you in all sorts of ways. A phone, or social media, can distract you from reality very easily, make you a magical thinker, believing that anything is possible, when it's not. It can stop you from being present, can stop you from focusing on climbing – your head full of how to get a great TikTok selfie – or stop you from focusing on belaying when you check the price of your Bitcoin stash as your mate runs it out up some moss-covered death slab.

The ability to be present, even the necessity, is one of the fundamental reasons why you climb rocks and mountains, and checking your emails or commenting on Facebook can detract from that in both subtle and serious ways.

## Wet and dirty rock

Wet and dirty rock, as well as grass, tussocks and vertical bogs, also all add

Sinead Rickerby on Great Pumpkin (5.8R), Tuolumne, Yosemite, California







Vanessa Kirkpatrick going into the depths of Shangri-La (14) in Moonarie, Australia

an unusual level of danger to Irish climbing. Just like with loose rock, understanding this style of terrain comes down to experience, and just like loose rock, it can be equally as dangerous.

Knowing when to belay at the very top of a climb, even if it's not ideal, is often far better than questing off looking for a belay on a fifty-degree bog in your ice skate-like rock boots, is just one thing you learn early on (as is how much more dangerous is down-climbing said bog, back to the top of the climb). Yes, modern rock boot rubber is remarkable,

but no one has yet invented a boot that will stick to wet rock, or to holds covered in lichen, things that can easily make a pitch upgradeable.

### Your gender

Although I often feel like the last non-woke person standing, I do need to point out that men are more likely to have accidents than women. In my experience of climbing dangerous climbs with men and women, men often seem more likely to try and fall, whereas women are more likely to try and back off before they fall.

To put it another way, men say they

can, but can't, but women say they can't when they can. Such things are hardwired into both our softwares, but it's worth acknowledging if you're a bloke that often your drive to push it may be irrational, your ability to pull it off delusional, while as a woman, you might defer, when you should act. This is one reason why I've always found mixed teams very effective, even when it comes to experience levels: an effective team, be it a team of one or a team of five million, helps to find the balance between many competing elements. This stuff weighs on success and failure, life and death.

### Lack of skills and fitness

In this list of ways to kill yourself, I suppose you could throw in poor, or non-existent, navigation skills, a lack of weather-preparedness and fitness, and not knowing what you are capable of. We also live in a society that assumes someone else will rescue us from hazardous situations. In my experience, more often than not, when you need them, they aren't coming.

At the end of *How to Get Killed*, the soldier hands over the Japanese prisoners and tells the soldier guarding them how his men are going to do better next time. When asked how, he tells him he will hammer a lesson into them, the lesson being 'how to get killed'! ■



If you take climbing risks seriously, then climbing doesn't have to be risky

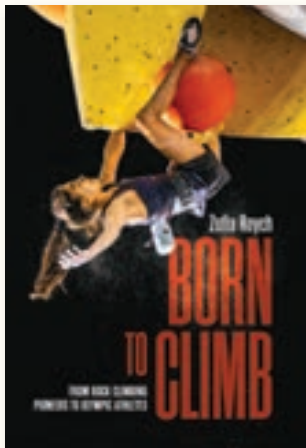




## An enthralling history of rock climbing from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day



Literary Editor Peter O'Neill presents a review of a recently published book



### BORN TO CLIMB: FROM ROCK CLIMBING PIONEERS TO OLYMPIC ATHLETES

By Zofia Reyech

Vertebrate Publishing (2022), 296pp, 7pp colour photos, 1pp b&w photos, €24.00, ISBN 978-1-83981-152-4

Do not be misled by the photograph of **Meta Brevoort**, **WAB Coolidge** and the Almer guides on the back of the dust cover of this book. Author **Zofia Reyech**, climber and anthropologist, has written a climbing history unlike most you may have read before. The emphasis here is on the cultural and socio-political aspects of climbing rather than just recounting details of people, climbs or expeditions, although accounts of the early exploits of pioneers such as the **Wordsworths** and **Samuel Coleridge** are included, not just more recent climbers.

The issues of class origin of people climbing, capitalism, mass media, philosophy of leisure, amateurism and professionalism and motivation for climbing all figure in this book. Climbing topics less often covered also come to the fore – women, gender, elitism, the average climber, among others – and,

as befits an accomplished boulderer and a founder and director of the Women's Bouldering Festival, there is heavier coverage of free climbing, sport climbing and bouldering, although not completely at the expense of trad rock climbing. Ethics controversies inevitably feature here as well.

Interspersed with climbing history and sociology, we also have Zofia's personal story, from being brought hillwalking in Zakopane from age three on, taking a climbing course in the early 2000s in her mid-teens, at a time when "the Polish climbing community was still gripped by institutionalism, a hangover from the times when, for the state, mountaineering was a matter of politics," and on to a career largely based around climbing – in Sheffield, Chamonix, Bulgaria and now Fontainebleau.

I had already encountered the bureaucracy of Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, and saw first-hand the difficulties of adapting to post-Soviet life, as an advisor on an EU project in Bulgaria in the early 1990s. However, the contrast described between the informal mentorship approach to climbing in Ireland and the UK and, even a decade after the demise of the Soviet Union, the regimentation in Poland still came as a shock. A six-day course is still regarded as a mandatory step in Poland, followed by a practical exam, then a centralised theoretical exam to earn a green laminated card known as the Rock Climbing Licence, which entitles the holder to climb independently.

This history covers a range of more than two centuries,

participants from early pioneers to Olympic athletes, and the development of climbing in areas such as the USSR, which may sometimes receive less attention than they deserve, as well as in our neighbouring island, the Alps, France and the USA.

Following a brief account of the founding and development of the modern Olympic movement earlier in the book, the emergence of climbers as media stars, the rise of competition climbing as a mainstream spectator sport, and Olympic climbing, all feature at the end of the book. This may be the part of the book of most interest to the general reader, curious to learn more about the

emergence of climbing as an Olympic sport after an earlier, fitful start with medals for alpinism awarded at four Olympics.

The good index and glossary will help the general reader to dip into other topics. However, climbers may want to read this book from cover to cover.

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



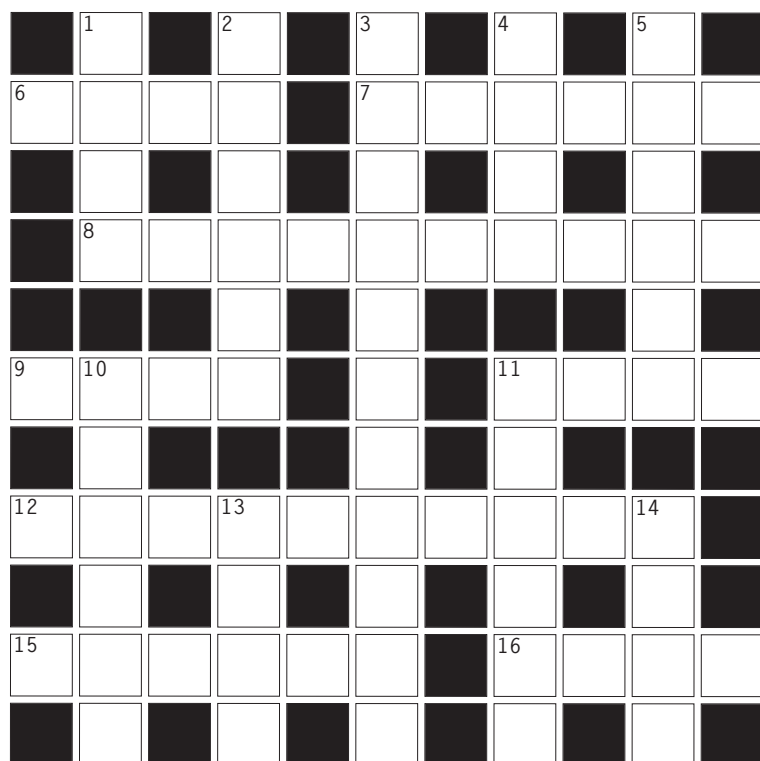




## Autumn 2022 Competition

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

CROSSWORD compiled by COLIN MACLOCHLAINN



### Clues Across

- 6 Two people climb as a set of shoes (4).
- 7 Village in Wexford, 'Ubhallghort' in Irish (6).
- 8 Famous stone edifice in Northern Ireland, features prominently in this issue (6,4).
- 9 Having the power, skill or means to do something (4).
- 11 At liberty, or a form of rock climbing in which the climber may use ropes but only to protect against injury during falls and not to assist progress (4).
- 12 Range of chalk hills stretching across south-eastern England from Hampshire to East Sussex (5,5).
- 15 Mayo island popular with tourists (6).
- 16 Active volcano on east coast of Sicily (4).

### Clues Down

- 1 Famous 'Cross' road in Connemara (4).
- 2 Gamebird associated with heather moors (6).
- 3 Prominent 19<sup>th</sup>-century physicist and Alpinist from Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow (4,7).
- 4 What the wind does, or for that matter a whale (4).
- 5 Kerry town famous for roses (6).
- 10 Ornamental pin with clasp to attach it to garment (6).
- 11 Surname of mountaineer who wrote *On Thin Ice: Alpine Climbs in the Americas, Asia and the Himalaya* (6).
- 13 A journey or to stumble (4).
- 14 In rock-climbing jargon, to reach top and finish (4).



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A Leatherman Rebar silver-fanned penknife with multiple tools, a prize worth €105.00

### How to enter

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Basecamp Outdoor Store, Dublin  
Website: [www.basecamp.ie](http://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](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie), to arrive not later than Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 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 Winter 2022 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

### Competition prize

Basecamp is generously offering a prize of a **Leatherman Rebar silver-fanned multi-functional penknife** for this competition, a prize worth €105.00.



## Irishman dies on the Matterhorn



By Patrick O'Sullivan

**Anthony Ryan**, a fifty-one-year-old Irishman who was originally from Drimnagh, Co Dublin, but had lived in London for some years, died while descending on the **Matterhorn** (4,478m) in late July. He was seemingly descending alone and was unroped when he fell over 350m from about 4,000m. An air search and rescue team later found his body on the east face of the mountain.

The summer of 2022 saw several climbing deaths in the Swiss Alps, with

two other people losing their lives on the Matterhorn in early July. There was a period of a week or more of very hot weather in late July, when conditions became very dangerous in the Alps and the mountain guides suspended climbing on the Matterhorn for the first time in a century.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its condolences to the family and friends of Anthony Ryan on this unfortunate accident.

With additional information by Paul Cullen of *The Irish Times*

## Man dies in fall at the Devil's Chimney

By Patrick O'Sullivan

A man in his sixties sadly died after falling twenty metres while walking on a trail near the Devil's Chimney waterfall in Glencar, Co Sligo, at the beginning of August. **Anthony Doorhy** from Loughrea, Co Galway, had apparently become disorientated and had strayed 500m from the actual trail. The emergency services were called out, including the Sligo-Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team and the Strandhill-based Irish Coastguard helicopter R118. Despite the challenging weather conditions prevailing, they

located the man in a search that lasted only forty minutes. The man's body was removed from the water and CPR was administered, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

The Devil's Chimney is also known as *Sruth in Aghaidh an Aird* ('stream against the height'). It is located in the Dartry Mountains in north Sligo, close to the Leitrim border. At 150 metres, it is Ireland's highest waterfall.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its condolences to the family and friends of the deceased on this tragic accident.

With additional information by Marese McDonagh of *The Irish Times*



## ADDENDUM – James 'Jim' Milledge

Since publishing our piece on the late **James 'Jim' Milledge** (1930-2022), 'father of mountain medicine', pictured right, in the Summer 2022 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (IML 142, 'The Last Word', p66), we have learned that he had Irish connections.

**Paddy O'Leary** of the **Irish Mountaineering Club** has provided the following addendum:

"**Jim Milledge** was on the Saga Anglo-Irish expedition to **Jaonli** [a 6,632m peak in the Garhwal Himalaya] in 1991. He and I climbed together and I am convinced that we would have reached the summit were it not for an earthquake. We had journeyed together from Delhi to base camp and spent most of our time on the mountain together.

"I learned a lot about high-altitude



medicine in long chats with Jim in the high camps. He carried out some research into the effects of high altitude on older people during the expedition, and even did an ECG on me. His services as a physician were called upon when a porter fell into a crevasse and emerged with bruises all over his body.

"Sadly, we learned on our return to Delhi that Jim's wife had died at his hospital in England while undergoing a simple varicose veins procedure. We flew back to Heathrow together and were met by Jim's then adult children.

"While in Delhi, we met a retired senior army medical man who, it was thought, had then had the most hands-on experience in the world of treating people with various forms of high-altitude illness. He had treated Indian soldiers during the Sino-Indian war of 1962, when large numbers of troops were flown to a high altitude in Ladakh to stem the Chinese invasion."

► **Paddy O'Leary's** new book, *'The Hindustan-Tibet Road'*, will be published in November, a book exploring the peaks, passes and culture along that road.





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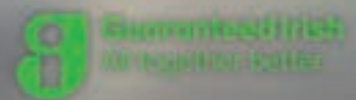
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