

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

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The next five years

The Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013

The five-year Strategy of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland for 2009-2013 is included as an insert in this issue of the *Mountain Log*. It is ambitious and has been informed by extensive consultation with the membership, partners and key stakeholders. I hope that you will find time to read it and be able to agree with the strategies listed in the programmes for action.

Mountaineering in Ireland includes rambling, hillwalking, bouldering, rock climbing and alpinism. This Strategy sets out a clear vision for the future growth and promotion of these activities, with a major focus on support to members and clubs primarily engaging in hillwalking, together with enhanced support for youth participation in our sport.

The Strategy will build on the real achievements of the last five years under the previous strategic plan. These include the establishment of our offices at Sport HQ, the development of a new organisational structure and the recruitment of highly motivated and professional staff, including the MCI's first ever Chief Officer.

The MCI intends to capitalise on these achievements through the appointment of a Hillwalking Development Officer with a core focus on developing a range of supports for our club and individual members whose primary interest is hillwalking. This will include increased efforts to make the services that the MCI provides of more direct relevance to more members.

The continued implementation of the MCI's environmental policy and support for the work of Leave No Trace will raise awareness and appreciation of how we can use the uplands of Ireland in a respectful and sustainable manner.

At all times the Strategy emphasises how mountaineering activities can contribute to our quality of life.

The Strategy places tremendous demands on the MCI. It sets targets which will grow the membership base of the MCI. This will help place the organisation on a sound financial footing. The MCI will continue to place volunteers at the core of its work. This is your organisation and its future development is, as has always been the case,

dependent on your active engagement. The MCI will continue to work in partnership with its members and all relevant bodies to promote mountaineering in Ireland.

If you have opinions on the new Strategy or would like to become involved in its implementation, then I would urge you to come along to our AGM which will be held on Saturday 21st February 2009 at the scenically located Knockree Youth Hostel, Enniskerry, Co Wicklow (see page 7 for more information). This is your opportunity to have an input into decision-making within the organisation.

The MCI Board and staff are committed to fully implementing the work set out in this Strategy for the next five years. With the continued support of all our members, funding partners and stakeholders, I have no doubt that the MCI will meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Ruairí Ó Conchúir
Chairperson



WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 88

The Irish Mountain Log is the membership magazine of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI). The MCI promotes the interests of hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland.

Mountaineering Council of Ireland

Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way
Park West Business Park
Dublin 12, Ireland
Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115
Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116
info@mountaineering.ie
www.mountaineering.ie

Hot Rock Climbing Wall

Tollymore Mountain Centre
Bryansford, Newcastle
County Down BT33 0PT
Tel: (+44 28) 4372 5354
youth@mountaineering.ie

Editor: Patrick O'Sullivan

Tel: (+353 1) 837 8166 (pm, wknds)
iml-editor@mountaineering.ie

Features Editor: Peter O'Neill
iml-featureseditor@mountaineering.ie

Literary Editor: Joss Lynam
Tel: (+353 1) 288 4672 (pm)
iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie

Advertising: MCI Office
logads@mountaineering.ie

Production: Cólín MacLochlainn
iml-production@mountaineering.ie

Printing: Kilkenny People Printing
Tel (+353 5677) 63366

The Irish Mountain Log is published by the Mountaineering Council of Ireland four times a year – in March, June, September, December. The material published in the Log by the voluntary editorial team and contributors must not be taken as official MCI policy unless specifically stated.

Copy deadline for the Spring 2009 issue of the Irish Mountain Log is Saturday, February 14th, 2009.

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. The MCI publishes and promotes safety and good practice advice and through Bord Oiliúnt Sléibhe (BOS, The Irish Mountain Training Board) administers a range of training programmes for walkers and climbers.



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Be prepared

"Only the Spirits of the Air know what awaits me behind the mountains, but still I travel on."

– Eskimo proverb quoted by Kurt Diemberger in *Spirits of the Air*.

Re-reading this excellent book by Diemberger recently, I was struck by the aptness of the proverb which gives the book its name. At one level, it is a reflection on life's uncertainties and how we have to continue on our journey despite those uncertainties. However, it is also very appropriate when applied to real mountains. There is a great deal of uncertainty in our chosen sport and we must try to make it as safe as possible by reducing that uncertainty and controlling the risks as much as we can.

One way of doing this is to ensure that we are as well prepared as possible and have suitable experience to tackle our objective. In this issue, MCI's Training Officer, Tim Orr, continues his excellent series about the various mountain training programmes that are available in Ireland. These are currently being reviewed and strengthened by the training boards, Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) and Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland (MLTNI). There is also information about the seasonal meets being organised by the MCI in the coming year so that members can engage in more informal training, learning from others, as well as participating in the more formal courses on offer.

As we get to the end of the MCI year, apart from the meets being organised in the coming year, we also have the AGM to look forward to. This year's AGM will be particularly important as the MCI is about to embark on the new five-year strategy which was recently approved at an EGM during the Autumn Meet in Macroom and in which the focus will be on trying to ensure that the National Governing Body for our sport remains relevant to the membership while enhancing its support for youth participation, providing safe ways into the sport for future generations of hillwalkers and climbers. If you have any opinions on how that should be done, then you should come along to the AGM, which will be held in Glencree on Saturday, February 21st 2009 at the Knockree An Óige Hostel.

On behalf of the Editorial Team, the MCI's staff and the Board of Directors, I would like to wish readers of the *Irish Mountain Log* a happy and enjoyable Christmas period and that the 'Spirits of the Air' will look after you in the hills in the coming year.



Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

Patrick O'Sullivan

ON THE COVER: Members of the "Last Degree" expedition team on their way to the geographic South Pole in December 2007 with a sun parahelion overhead in the night sky. Photo: Kevin Dempsey.

THIS PAGE: On the Caher ridge heading towards Carrauntoohil, McGillicuddy's Reeks, Co Kerry. Photo: Lee Campbell.

Changes in the Editorial Team

Rita Connell, News Editor, and Eoin Reilly, Pictures Editor, have both decided to stand down from their voluntary posts on the Editorial Team. I would like to thank them both very much for the significant contributions they have made to the *Irish Mountain Log* over the past few years and wish them well in the future.

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

News

Get all the latest news at www.mountaineering.ie

New MCI staff members

New climbing wall instructors

THE MCI has appointed two part-time climbing instructors who will be based at the Ozone Wall in Belfast. These posts are funded by Belfast City Council.



Paul Skeggs has been an active climber for over 15 years. His first climbing experiences were on limestone crags in the southwest of England in the Avon and Cheddar Gorges. He has also climbed on the Peak District's gritstone edges and the crags of Snowdonia, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands. He moved to Belfast in 2007 and is busy exploring the climbing that Ireland has to offer. His favourite route to date is Fair Head's Hell's Kitchen.

Paul worked as a solicitor before changing direction to work as an outdoor instructor. He feels that a day pushing paper around a desk doesn't come close in terms of job satisfaction to instructing people in the mountains or on a climbing wall. He currently also works as a freelance instructor at an outdoor centre in the Mourne and is looking forward to enthusing people about climbing and mountaineering whilst at the Ozone Wall.



Anja Jones is currently training to become a technology and design teacher. She has been climbing indoors for several years but only took it up seriously in the last three years. In that time, she has gone on trips to Fontainebleau, Buoux, Chateau Vert and the Peak District with the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team. One of the things she loves about climbing is that she can always push herself but that it's not necessarily about competing against other people, more about competing with yourself. As well as climbing, Anja likes a variety of water sports but these are now really only summer activities, when she is having a break from climbing! ■

Win these climbing holds

FOLLOWING ON from the success of the recent MCI Climbing Wall Managers' Seminar, we are delighted to offer climbing wall operators the opportunity to win 100

Entre-prises climbing holds. The competition is open to current climbing walls and those at the planning or development stage. Preference will be given to climbing walls that either have or propose to have open access to the general public and those walls that welcome young people. To enter, send us a description and overview of your wall and the current or planned operational status, what your plans are for the future and what you will gain from winning the 100 **Entre-Prises**

climbing holds. Photographs or drawings or plans of walls would be useful for the selection process. Entries should be sent to competition@mountaineering.ie. Closing date for receipt of entries is Friday, 19 December 2009. The judges' decision will be final. Winners will be announced in the next issue of the *Mountain Log* and in *Mountaineering Matters*, MCI's monthly e-zine.



GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@mountaineering.ie

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Alan Tees

president@mountaineering.ie

Chairman

Ruairi Ó Conchúir

chairperson@mountaineering.ie

Honorary Secretary

Ross Millar

secretary@mountaineering.ie

Honorary Treasurer

David Batt

treasurer@mountaineering.ie

BOARD MEMBERS

Tomás Alyward

tomas-board@mountaineering.ie

Ursula MacPherson

ursula-board@mountaineering.ie

Vincent McAlinden

vincent-board@mountaineering.ie

Deirdre McCarthy

deirdre-board@mountaineering.ie

Jerry O'Dwyer

jerry-board@mountaineering.ie

Patrick O'Sullivan

patrick-board@mountaineering.ie

Dawson Stelfox

dawson-board@mountaineering.ie

STAFF AT SPORT HQ

Chief Officer

Stuart Garland

stuart@mountaineering.ie

Administrator

Una Feeney

una@mountaineering.ie

Accounts Administrator

Terry Canavan

terry@mountaineering.ie

Training Officer

Tim Orr

tim@mountaineering.ie

Training Administrator

Kate Hebblethwaite

kate@mountaineering.ie

Access & Conservation Officer

Aodhnait Carroll

aodhnait@mountaineering.ie

STAFF AT TOLLYMORE

NI Youth Development Officer

Angela Carlin

angela@mountaineering.ie



Annual General Meeting

Saturday 21 February 2009, Knockree, County Wicklow



An Óige Youth Hostel at Knockree
with new extension to rear.
Photo: Stuart Garland.

THE 2009 AGM will take place in the scenic surrounding of the recently refurbished An Óige Youth Hostel at Knockree in the Glencree valley, Co Wicklow.

As the AGM is the main opportunity for members to have an input into decision-making within the organisation, all members are strongly encouraged to attend. In particular, all clubs are asked to nominate representatives to participate.

The Members' Forum, like the AGM, is open to all members. Come along, hear what's happening around the country, discuss MCI's priorities for 2009 and raise any questions or concerns you might have.

Any motions for discussion at the AGM must be received by the Honorary Secretary on or before Friday 23 January 2009. Motions may be submitted by any three full members and should be sent to Ross Millar, Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering Council of Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12; e-mail: secretary@mountaineering.ie.

The Agenda for the Annual General Meeting with any associated documents will be published on our website, www.mountaineering.ie, on Friday 30 January 2009. Members without internet access can request a printed copy from the MCI Office (+353) 1 625 1115.

MCI AGM 2009 Programme

- 09:30** Check in for walks and activities – these depart from the car park of the youth hostel (for details, see www.mountaineering.ie)
- 14:30** Presentation on Insurance by Perkins Slade
- 15:00** Members' Forum and presentation of reports on work in 2008 and plans for 2009
- 15:30** Tea and Coffee and opportunity to view Exhibition, etc.
- (Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members if required)
- 16:00 Annual General Meeting**
1. Adoption of Standing Orders
 2. Adoption of Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
 3. President's Address
 4. Honorary Secretary's Report
 5. Presentation and approval of Financial Statements
 6. Appointment of Auditors
 7. Nomination of representatives to other organisations
 8. Motions
- 17:30** End of event

'Your AGM. Your opportunity to air your opinions and to hear about the work of the MCI.'

View of Glencree from Knockree Youth Hostel.
Photo: Stuart Garland.

Calendar of events

For more information about any of these events, please see the relevant section in this magazine or the events section on the website.

Sat 5 Dec 2008

MCI Youth Climbing Competition & Coaching Day

Thurs 11 Dec 2008

International Mountain Day

Sat-Sun 10-11 Jan 2009

IMRA AGM Conference
Newcastle, Co Down

Tues 13 Jan 2009

MCI Scottish Winter Meet
Information Meeting
7:30pm, Great Outdoors, Dublin 2

Fri-Sun 16-18 Jan 2009

Belfast Adventure Show, Kings Hall, Belfast

Sat 24 Jan 2009

Irish Bouldering League
Midleton, Co Cork

date t.b.c.

MCI Youth Scottish Winter Skills Training
(contact youth@mountaineering.ie)

Tues 17 Feb 2009

Alpine Meet Information Meeting
7:30pm, Snow+Rock Store,
Dundrum Town Centre, Dublin 14

Sat-Sun 14-22 Feb 2009

MCI Scottish Winter Meet
Onich, Scotland

Sat 21 Feb 2009

MCI AGM 2009
An Óige Youth Hostel, Knockree,
Co Wicklow

Sat 28 Feb 2009

Irish Bouldering League
DCU, Dublin 9

Mon 2 March 2009

Southern Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, Mallow, Co Cork

Tues 3 March 2009

Southwest Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, Killarney, Co Kerry

Wed 4 March 2009

Southeast Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, Kilkenny

Mon 9 March 2009

Northwest Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, North West

Tues 10 March 2009

Western Area Members' Forum,
8:00pm, Galway

Wed 11 March 2009

Northern Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, Belfast

Thurs 12 March 2009

Eastern Area Members' Forum
8:00pm, Dublin

Sat 14 March 2009

Irish Bouldering League
DCU, Dublin 9

Fri-Sun 27-29 March 2009

Outdoors Show NEC
Birmingham

First National Trails Day a great success

Events held nationwide

THE FIRST EVER National Trails Day was a roaring success with over 5,000 people getting involved in 67 events organized on various trails around the country. The glorious weather encouraged people to get out and experience the diversity of walking and cycling trails available in Ireland.

The idea behind the initiative is to encourage people to use trails to become more active in the outdoors. Families were treated to exciting and fun events organised by voluntary and professional organisations. Walking, family cycling, mountain biking, orienteering and trail repair events were run in various forms, most with a specific theme such as nature, heritage or historical trails. Several events were held on multi-access trails, allowing those with push-chairs or wheelchairs to take part. Some events gave people an opportunity to try a new activity such as mountain biking or orienteering.

Several walking clubs got involved in organising events, including the Boyle Curlew Walkers, Nire Valley Bogtrotters, Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club and Dublin City Council's Let's Walk and Talk Group. Many of these walking clubs hold regular outings – details of your local club can be found on www.mountaineering.ie.

Events held on the day included:

- A 'Trail Repair Workshop' in Laragh, Co Wicklow, organised by Mountain Meitheal and Coillte
- 'Let's Walk & Talk' in the Phoenix Park, organised by Dublin City Council
- A 'Leave No Trace' awareness hike in Carrickgollogan Wood in south Dublin
- An Introduction to Mountain Biking at Ballinastoe in the Wicklow Mountains
- A guided walk with RTÉ presenter and nature expert Éanna Ní Lamhna in Oak Park Forest Park, Co Carlow
- An 'Edge of the World Walk' along the Atlantic coast in Ballydavid on the Dingle peninsula, Co Kerry
- A Family Orienteering Trail in Clonbur, Co Galway
- A 'Dusk Bat Walk' in Glengarra Forest, Co Tipperary.

The award for the most imaginative theme goes to the Cork County Bat Group who held the event in Glengarra Forest. Children were guided along a trail to study bats in their natural habitat as the sun went down on National Trails Day. Orienteering on a trail was the order



National Trails Day, Sligo Cormac MacDonnell from the National Trails Office greets some participants at the "Inclusive Family Adventure Walk" organised by Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership and Coillte.

of the day at Donadea Forest Park.

The partners involved in National Trails Day are Coillte, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Comhairle na Tuaithe, Fáilte Ireland and the National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council. National Trails Day will be held annually. If you would like to get involved in organising an event for National Trails Day next year, please register your interest with Dáithí De Forge on Daithi.Deforge@coillte.ie. – (Cormac MacDonnell)

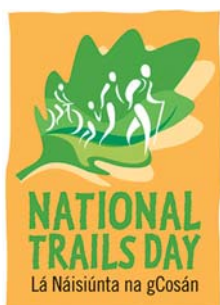
Large turn-out at Carrickgollogan

MY WIFE, NORA, is recovering from a broken femur and I am staggering along with two ski-poles, but we decided that National Trails Day should be supported and that we could manage a bit of the track from the Carrickgollogan (more familiar to us as Kathigallacar) car park.

Both car parks were more or less full when we arrived but, after waving my Disabled Parking card, a space was found for us. The event was not just a walk, it was also a beginners' course in Leave No Trace, with seven stops to explain the seven principles of LNT. We gathered just beyond the gate, perhaps sixty of us, all ages down to babies, to listen to Ann Fitzpatrick of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I looked around and saw one man wearing a good cag and hillwalker's boots, with his equally well-equipped wife. I went over to talk and found he was an ESB Hillwalking Club member and so a fellow MCI member. Well-primed on Leave No Trace, we set off, though not before Coillte's Bill Murphy had handed out pooper-scoopers to the dog owners amongst us.

Even the toddlers and baby-carrying-parents were going a lot faster than Nora and I, and from a felled area we saw the bare rounded top of Carrickgollogan suddenly populated by what might have been a growing forest, if we hadn't known they were humans – surely the largest number ever to stand on the summit at one time?





Participants on Carrickgollogan on National Trails Day.
Photo: Joss Lynam.

We stopped where the path starts to zig-zag and steepen. There was a very handy flat-topped boulder on which Nora could sit while we talked to the ESB hillwalker and his wife, who politely vacated the boulder. They had already been to the top and were waiting for the multitude to descend to see which way they were going.

We headed straight back to the car park and were passed by the multitude heading in the general direction of the Lead Mines Chimney, with no doubt a couple more stops for the inculcation of the remaining principles of Leave No Trace.

We chatted briefly with the lads at the car park and left while the going was good. A lovely walk in good company on a perfect autumn day. – (Joss Lynam)

Worrying erosion in Glenmalure

PAT AND MARGARET DUNNE, who own the very popular Zig-Zags route beside Carrawystick Waterfall in Glenmalure, Co Wicklow, have been in contact with the *Irish Mountain Log* to say that the route above the Zig-Zags, which leads to Cloghernagh and Lugnaquilla, has become badly eroded in recent months.

The area in question is the eastern spur of Cloghernagh down to the top of the Zig-Zags. Hillwalkers are asked to consider using alternative routes to Lugnaquilla over the winter months. Those using the Cloghernagh route should walk with care and keep to the centre of the path to avoid widening the damaged area.

The Dunnes also report that greater numbers of walkers have been using the Zig-Zags since completion of work on the agreed access route earlier this year. This, in combination with the very wet weather over the summer, may be contributing to the erosion on the open hillside above.



Erosion damage on the ZigZags.
Photo: Helen Lawless



Photo: Barry O'Donoghue

Hen harriers: have you seen any?

Request for reports of sightings

HEN HARRIERS live in habitats that are commonly visited by hillwalkers, including upland and off the beaten track areas. Anyone who sees one of these threatened rare birds in the coming months is asked to report the sighting to Barry O'Donoghue of the National Parks and Wildlife Service on 087-911 0715 or by email to harriers@environ.ie. There will be more information about these elegant birds in IML 89.

'Leave No Trace' skills and ethics manual

Leave No Trace Ireland has produced a new training manual, a Skills and Ethics booklet, as another useful aid for Leave No Trace Masters and Trainers to assist them in teaching the Leave No Trace principles. The booklet contains more in-depth information on the background of Leave No Trace, the principles, and the skills to employ when using the outdoors. Copies are available for free to use when teaching Leave No Trace. Please email info@leavenotraceireland.org to request copies.



MCI promotes the principles of Leave No Trace

Countryside Access & Activities Network (CAAN) news

Walk Northern Ireland

Brochure shortlisted for award



THE WALK Northern Ireland brochure, produced in March 2008, has been short-listed for this year's CIPR (Chartered Institution of Public Relations) Pride Awards in the 'Best Publication' category within Northern Ireland.

The brochure gives a taste of the vast array of stunning walking routes available in Northern Ireland. Each county receives its own section, with walks available in a range of lengths and

surroundings, as well as detailed information on start and finish points, the nearest town and points of interest and facilities including car parking and refreshments along the way. Also included in the brochure are a list of walking providers, for those people who wish to take away the stress of booking a walking break, and practical information including accommodation, safety and getting to and around Northern Ireland. The brochure is backed up with further information on CAAN's website, www.walkni.com.

Copies of the brochure are available via the Belfast Welcome Centre Tourist Information Centre for Belfast and Northern Ireland, and Tourist Information Centres throughout Northern Ireland. It can also be ordered online or downloaded from www.walkni.com or www.discovernorthernireland.com.

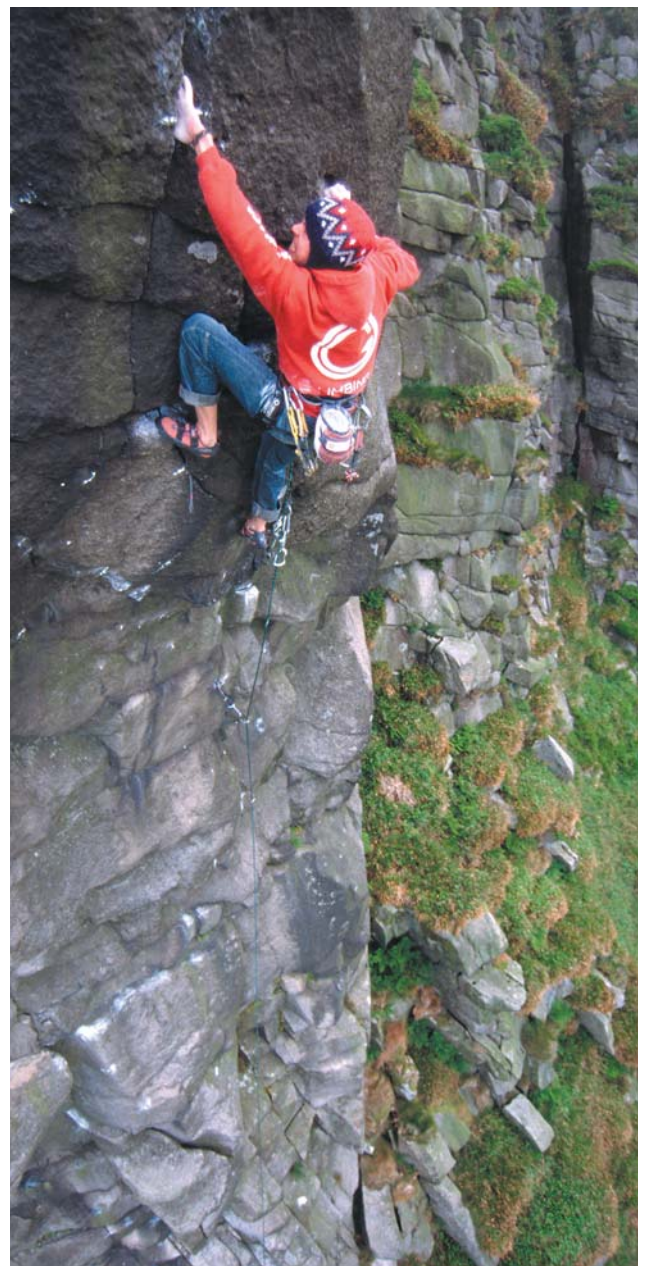
Return of the Ulster Way

ENTHUSIASTIC WALKERS will be delighted to hear that the long-awaited revamped Ulster Way is set to reopen this spring.

The 585-mile circular route around Northern Ireland will provide a great opportunity to view the scenery, encounter myths and legends and sample the local culture along the way.

The original route has changed significantly, since it is now divided into Quality and Link sections. The Quality sections are mainly on already established Waymarked Ways, which are predominantly off-road and pass through Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Walkers will be encouraged to use public transport along the Link sections as they are mainly on public roads. However, the really keen will be able to walk these sections as well!

CAAN's website, www.walkni.com, will have its own designated section for the Ulster Way, including interactive mapping, route descriptions and printable maps. Trip planning will be made easy with up-to-date information on public transport, walker-friendly accommodation and places to eat along the route.



Ricky Bell completing the first Irish ascent of Divided Years in the Mourne Mountains last summer. Photo: Craig Hiller (for more of his photos, see www.hillerscapes.co.uk).

December eleventh

International Mountain Day 2008



INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY, December 11th 2008, will focus on Mountains and Food Security. It will address the vulnerability of mountain areas and the communities that live

in them, and in particular the effect of soaring food prices on household food security among those mountain communities. It will also emphasise the potential for supporting traditional production systems and promoting niche products.

International Mountain Day is an opportunity to create awareness about the importance of mountains, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build partnerships that will bring positive change to the world's mountains and highlands.

The UN General Assembly designated 11 December as International Mountain Day in 2003. This followed on from the success of the UN International Year of Mountains in 2002, which increased global awareness of the importance of mountains, stimulating the establishment of national committees in 78 countries and strengthening alliances by creating the Mountain Partnership. The Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) is the lead coordinating UN agency for International Mountain Day. For more information visit: www.fao.org/mnts/intl_mountain_day_en.asp.

Ousland 'inspirational'

Polar explorer enthalls audience



BORGE OUSLAND, the Norwegian explorer, gave an impressive presentation about his polar journeys at an evening in the National College of Ireland on 18th September. Ousland's journeys included the Antarctic Traverse, the Arctic Traverse (solo) and the North-South Traverse of the Patagonian

Ice Cap. Finally, we were shown his hardly believable journey from Franz Josef Land to the North Pole in the darkness of winter, which included team members having to swim across leads towing a sled with their food and gear.

The audience of around 200 was stunned by the presentation, but not into silence as there were plenty of questions. Watching the audience leave, they seemed to be inspired, if not to emulate Ousland, at least to push their own targets a little higher.

Ousland had also gone to Everest with a commercial expedition, stopping at the South Summit when his oxygen ran out. This seemed out of character with his polar trips and, when asked, he said: "Oh, it was a holiday." – (Joss Lynam)

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North Face of the Eiger with the South West Flank and West Ridge on right of picture, the route followed by Barrington in 1858.



Remembering the first Eiger ascent: an Irish success story

150th anniversary commemorated in Bray

IRISHMAN CHARLES BARRINGTON made the first ascent of the Eiger in August 1858. Barrington was born in Fassaroe, Co Wicklow, in 1834 and arrived in Grindelwald in the course of a European tour. Seemingly on the spur of the moment, he engaged two guides, Christian Almer (later Coolidge's guide) and Peter Bohren, two of the best guides in Grindelwald, and did a tour of the Oberland, finishing with an ascent of the now standard route on the Jungfrau.

On his return to Grindelwald, it appears Barrington boasted about this ascent and was told that he ought to do something difficult, like the Matterhorn or the Eiger! He accepted the challenge and set off for the Eiger at 3:30am on 11th August with the same guides. They climbed what is now more or less the normal route, the SW flank and West Ridge, now graded AD. They reached the summit at noon and were back at the hotel at about 4:00pm. He described the climb in a letter 24 years later to his brother, the naturalist and mountaineer R.M.

Barrington, and it is clear from the letter that at one point he had to do the route-finding and take the lead.

He ended the letter by writing: *"Thus ended my first and only visit to Switzerland. Not having enough money with me to try the Matterhorn, I went home."* Just supposing he'd had the money....

Historically, Barrington's ascent of the Eiger is undoubtedly the most important Irish first Alpine ascent.

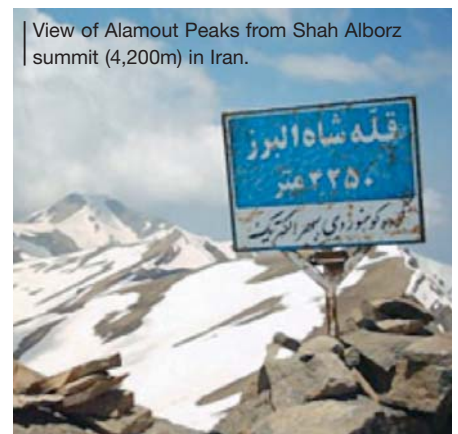
Back in Wicklow, Barrington married and settled down, not engaging in any more Alpine adventures after this.

The 150th anniversary of his ascent was commemorated by the unveiling of plaques in Grindelwald and Bray. Two representatives from Bray went to Grindelwald, and the Mayor and several others from Grindelwald came to Bray on 31st October for the unveiling there of a plaque at the Heritage Centre. The Barrington family was there in strength. Joss Lynam represented the MCI. – (Joss Lynam)

UIAA news

General Assembly success

The 2008 General Assembly of the UIAA (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation) was held in Teheran, the capital of Iran, from 16-18 October. It was opened by the Vice-President of Iran. The meeting's agenda included elections to the Management Committee and the Executive Board, discussions on the significant increase in the number of items of mountaineering and climbing equipment carrying the UIAA Safety Label, as well as issues related to competitive sports. The Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) voted not to become a UIAA unit member.



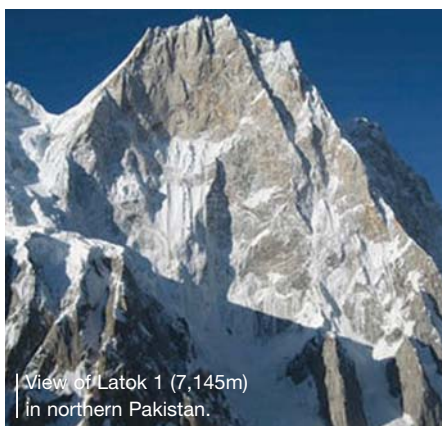
View of Alamout Peaks from Shah Alborz summit (4,200m) in Iran.

The Commissions reported on successful UIAA events and ongoing projects such as youth camps, the updating of the Tyrol Declaration, research into mountain medicine and an assessment of the use of mountaineering themes in advertisements.

Peak fees in Pakistan

The Ministry of Tourism in Pakistan has announced that the prices for peak fees will remain at the same reduced levels as in the past two years.

The Ministry will charge no fees for peaks up to 6,500m. Climbers will only have to pay 10% of the normal fee for mountains situated in Chitral, Gilgit and Ghizar, except on Spantik/Golden Peak, 5% of the fee for any peak during the winter season (December-February) and 50% of the normal fee for all peaks except for those already mentioned.



View of Latok 1 (7,145m)
in northern Pakistan.

Mountain medicine

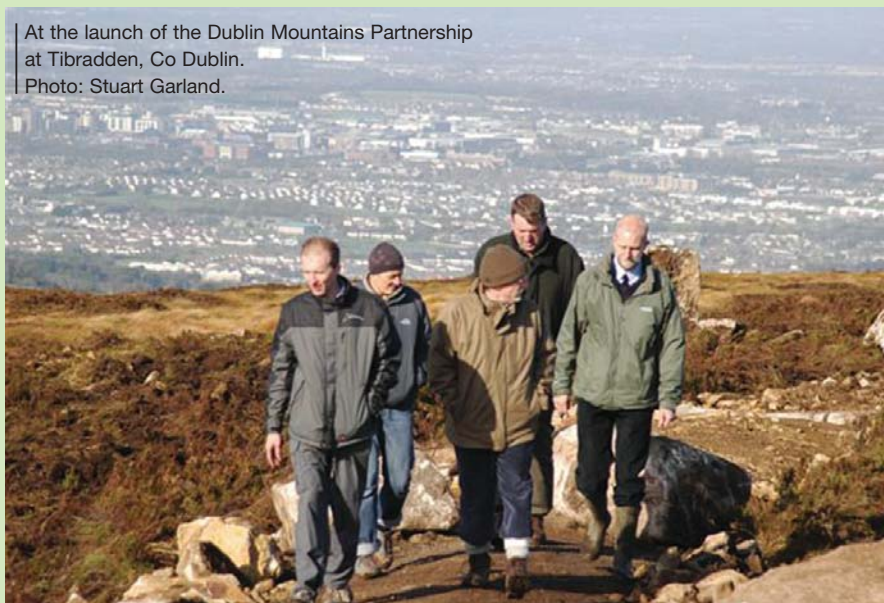
The UIAA Medical Commission held their annual meeting in October. Doctors from 15 countries met in the Czech Republic to discuss mountain medicine and how to better spread accurate information amongst UIAA members. Among the topics was the continued expansion of the joint Diploma in Mountain Medicine for doctors, which the commission manages together with partner organisations ISMM and MedCom ICAR.

The commission is also keen to spread health information among mountaineers without medical training. The advice booklet *Travel At High Altitude*, written by the UK organisation Medex and partly funded by the UIAA, is being translated into various languages.

Dublin Mountains plan

Dublin Mountains Partnership launched

At the launch of the Dublin Mountains Partnership at Tibbradden, Co Dublin.
Photo: Stuart Garland.



The Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) was officially launched by the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Mr Eamon Ryan, TD, at an event in Tibbradden Woods on Friday, 24th October, 2008.

The partnership has been established to improve the recreational potential of the public lands in the Dublin Mountains, while balancing that recreation with the objectives of the various land-owning organisations.

The members of the DMP are Coillte, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, the Dublin Mountains Initiative (of which the MCI is a member), the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and South Dublin County Council.

At the launch, the Minister said that the Dublin Mountains are one of the greatest assets of the city and that in no other capital is it as easy to get out into the mountains and away from it all as in Dublin. He emphasised that we have to work together to protect and develop this asset in a way that best serves everyone's interest.

Bill Murphy, Chairman of the Dublin Mountains Partnership, said that the initiative brings together the key stakeholders to address the many issues faced by forest and other land managers in managing access to lands for recreation on the urban fringe. The partnership has agreed a management structure, which will include staff and volunteers, and has set out a ten-year vision and plan of action to improve the facilities and manage recreation and other uses of the area. The partnership will also tackle antisocial and unauthorised use of land through a range of programmes – from the promotion of the Leave No Trace message and the development of a volunteer ranger service to the development of areas for scrambler bike use.

The DMP will be upgrading trails, improving signage, working to improve public transport links and addressing antisocial behaviours such as dumping. The work on the ground of the partnership will be headed up by the Dublin Mountains Recreation Manager, who has just been appointed. – (Carol Ryan)

• For more information see www.dublinmountains.ie.

IMRANews

Get all the latest news at www.mountainrescue.ie



New sponsor announced

Ordnance Survey Ireland sponsors IMRA

PAUL WHITING

A RECENT SPONSORSHIP agreement between OSi and the Irish Mountain Rescue Association puts OSi data at the centre of the life-saving search and rescue activities of IMRA's member Mountain Rescue Teams.

Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi), the national mapping agency of Ireland, operates in the public and commercial interest to create and maintain the definitive national mapping and related geographic records of the State. The organisation feels that it has a central role to play in the social and economic development of Ireland. Its mission is excellence in providing quality mapping and geographic information services to meet society's needs.

OSi data has many uses and applications across a broad range of

industries, but they are proud to also be able to facilitate IMRA's Search Management Programme and to contribute to the outstanding work carried out by the Mountain Rescue Teams.

The Irish Mountain Rescue Association relies on accurate map data to coordinate search and rescue operations. The provision of OSi Discovery Series data to IMRA's teams will enable them to respond to call-outs with greater speed and to manage their search operations with increased efficiency and precision.

OSi produces a complete range of digital and paper mapping products



including urban, rural and tourist & leisure mapping in a variety of scales. The Discovery Series 1:50, 000 scale and OSi Trail Master interactive route planning software have long been the mainstay of hillwalkers, climbers, cyclists, tourists and outdoor enthusiasts in Ireland.



Members of An Garda Síochána Hillwalking Club along with Garda Commissioner Fachtina Murphy donate the proceeds of their recent sponsored walk of the Wicklow Way to IMRA (represented by Mary Mullins, Secretary of IMRA, centre) and the Laura Lynn Hospice.



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Dublin & Wicklow volunteers wanted

Join the Dublin/Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team



THE DUBLIN/WICKLOW Mountain Rescue Team is now recruiting new members. The team has a long history in mountain rescue going back to the An Óige MRT. It recently launched the first mountain rescue base in Wicklow, which is located in Roundwood Garda Station. The team provides a mountain rescue service primarily in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains area.

The team is seeking enthusiastic individuals who are interested in working as part of a team to achieve high standards of casualty care in the mountains. It is looking for people with a strong interest in outdoor activities, in particular with a hillwalking or climbing background. Good navigational and hill skills are required as well as the commitment to participate in regular training and call-outs. The team provides



a varied and interesting internal training programme with opportunities to attend specialised external training courses in mountain rescue techniques.

If you are living in Wicklow, south Dublin or surrounding areas and are interested in becoming a mountain rescue volunteer, please email

secretary@dwmrt.ie before 31st December 2008 to express your interest and to receive an application form. New member selection and assessment will commence in January 2008.

For more information about the Dublin/Wicklow team, please visit the website www.dwmrt.ie.

Ways you can help IMRA this Christmas

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OPTION 2 Put our sticker on your car

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Order Form

Please pay by bank cheque or postal order made payable to "Irish Mountain Rescue Association (IMRA)" and sent to the following address

'Call Out' Magazine, Irish Mountain Rescue Association, SportHQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12, IRELAND

• Please tick your required choice

Option 1 ☐ Option 2 ☐ Option 3 ☐ Option 4 ☐

• If purchasing a t-shirt please specify your size by ticking the box below

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Tollymore provides a full range of skills and leadership courses. These include introductory **hillwalking** and **climbing** courses, **winter mountaineering** and Single Pitch, Multi Pitch, Walking Group Leader, Mountain Leader and Mountaineering Instructor Award training and assessment courses.



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www.tollymore.com

Tollymore Mountain Centre is Sport Northern Ireland's National Outdoor Training Centre.

MCI Autumn Gathering

A great time was had by all in Gougane Barra in west Cork

Gougane Barra.
Photo: Christine Hughes.

OVER THE YEARS, I have enjoyed attending a number of MCI's Autumn Gatherings. I have found that they get you off the routinely trodden paths to gather with friends and meet new faces in areas that you may not have visited before.

When I arrived in Macroom for this year's Gathering on 10-12 October, I still didn't really know where it was! It's in an area that I have previously overlooked while concentrating on its well-known neighbours, the Galtees and the mountains of Kerry. Stepping inside the Riverside Park Hotel on the Friday evening, hosts Cork Mountaineering Club soon put paid to my ignorance. The weekend's walk leaders were waiting there with maps and pens in hand, eager to sign up participants for a choice of walks in the area over the following two days. Many of the other walkers seemed enthusiastic for the Gougane Barra Horseshoe, so my mind was quickly made up.

People who had arrived earlier were emerging from an illustrated talk on bats by Conor Kelleher, chair of the Irish Wildlife Trust. However, we were able to join a very enjoyable 'Seisiún' later with Pat Speight, a great storyteller, after which we relaxed in the bar, catching up with acquaintances among the other walkers and climbers attending.

On Saturday morning, there was a *melée* outside the hotel, with buses and cars going this way and that, but eventually we were all sorted and heading for the hills. The morning's thick fog soon evaporated to reveal the beautiful Cork countryside as we approached the Sheehy Mountains on the Cork/Kerry border.

Gougane Barra has a strong attraction for Cork people as it is the source of the River Lee and the hermitage site of St Finbarr, now marked by a little chapel on the lakeshore. The horseshoe walk around the lake takes in the summits of Bealick, Conigar and Foilastookeen. Our bus party split into three groups and, led by Ella Dineen of Cork MC, our group was soon tramping across open ground. We crossed a stream and ascended in warm, sunny weather. On top of the large grassy plateau there was a great view to Bantry Bay and the many mountains around us, including the Paps. We went past some lovely small lakes and then climbed further,



Hillwalking in Gougane Barra during the Autumn Gathering.
Photo: Stuart Garland.

with more fantastic views. After that, we spent a lot of time lying in the sun and ended up being the last of the three groups to get back to the bus, but we did make it back in time for the EGM.

The EGM was the "official" part of the weekend, the purpose of which was to formally adopt the new MCI Strategic Development Plan for the next five years. I had recently attended an MCI area meeting with our Club Secretary, so I was aware of the importance of the new Strategy to all MCI members. Usually, these meetings start late but, due to the MCI Board's efficiency, I was practically pulled out of the shower to ensure that there was a quorum of clubs in attendance. In the end, there was a fairly good turn-out of club reps, who all gave 'The Plan' the thumbs up. I hope the MCI Board, staff, clubs and members will be able to support one another in carrying out all the proposed actions, which will ultimately improve everyone's enjoyment of the mountains.

Shortly after the EGM, food and drink were served and downed by many hungry mouths, appetites no doubt sharpened by the EGM and possibly the day's activities. Full marks to the Riverside Park Hotel's staff for an excellent meal. The MCI dinners always have interesting guest speakers and this was no exception. Pat Falvey is a great adventurer and his exploits are well known. For a full hour, he took us on a whirlwind journey through his life, 'From Cork to

Everest to the South Pole,' using slides and video clips in a highly energetic presentation. Pat certainly seemed to motivate people to get off their seats that night for, as soon as the band struck up, many a weary leg was seen weaving around the dance floor.

Despite a late night, there was a good turn-out on Sunday morning for an early fry and then on to either a gentle GPS session or a relaxing Environmental Officers' (EO) training workshop. The EO training started with a talk and a discussion on liability insurance and access issues, pertinent topics for the MCI. There was also the opportunity to go on a walk and, outside the hotel, the mobile climbing wall was put to good use by many of the local youngsters.

With northern lands beckoning, I headed back home after a great weekend, but I was hardly home when I received a full report by e-mail from the EO of the North West MCI. That prompted me to send a report to my own club, the Blaney Ramblers, which is what I think these weekends are all about: communicating the MCI message and socialising with fellow mountaineers.

Thanks to Cork MC and the organising committee, Margaret Kennedy, Joan Fitzgerald (Treasurer/Membership Secretary), John Paul Curtin (President), Ella Dineen and Máire Ní Mhurchú, for a very enjoyable weekend. They even arranged the weather for us! – (Nicky Hore, Blaney Ramblers)





Girls Outside event at climbing wall.
Photo: Stuart Garland.

‘Girls Outside’ project grows

Girls go outside again in County Sligo

IN 2007, the MCI and the Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership ran “Girls Outside,” a programme of hillwalking and climbing for teenage girls in the Sligo region. Over 200 participants got a first taste of the outdoors, with forest walks, days out to Carrowkeel, a chance to try out climbing on a mobile climbing wall and a trip to Petersburg OEC.

This year (and next), thanks to continued funding from the Irish Sports Council under the Women in Sport programme, Girls Outside is getting even more adventurous.

The project will offer girls the chance to build on what they’ve already learned, with a six-month programme of activities including weekly visits to a climbing wall and opportunities

for hillwalking, climbing and scrambling. The project will have a strong emphasis on developing skills and it is hoped that, by the end of the programme, participants will have gained sufficient experience to be able to take part in both hillwalking and indoor climbing with minimal supervision. The ultimate aim is to develop a youth mountaineering club in the area which will offer both the Girls Outside participants and other young people in the area the chance to participate in these activities on an ongoing basis.

This programme, like many MCI Youth initiatives, needs volunteer support! Experienced walkers and climbers can be a great asset and inspiration to novices taking up the sport. We’re looking for people with a range of skills – you might be able to show some inspiring slides of a mountaineering trip at a Girls Outside social evening, or maybe you’d be willing to join in a walking or climbing session, or to offer some help with establishing a club?

If you would be willing to volunteer a little of your time and experience, please contact the project coordinator, Deirdre Cunningham: email girlsgooutside@mountaineering.ie; telephone (+353) 86 109 2663. – (Angela Carlin & Deirdre Cunningham)



Wee Adventure Film Festival

Friday, Feb 13th, 2009

EXHILARATING, INSPIRING, breath-taking, thrilling! Like what you are hearing? How about kayaking down the roaring, crocodile-infested Nile, breaking the Irish Sky Diving Formation record, tackling 15ft waves on a windsurfer or hurtling down a rockstrewn hill on a mountain bike? If this is what you like, then you’ll love the Wee Adventure Film Festival.

We are delighted to be holding the Wee Adventure Film Festival (WAFF) again this year. At last year’s festival we screened sixteen adventure films, including *Base Jumping*, *Kayaking and Bouldering*, that captured the essence of adventure sports; the rush, exhilaration and fun. This year, we are excited to see what the amateur film-makers of the adventure sports world can come up with again!

We are currently looking for films for the 2009 festival. We want good quality, well-edited short films, up to 10 minutes long, to show at the second Wee Adventure Film Festival.

The event is taking place on Friday the 13th of February, 2009, in The Sugar Club, Dublin. Doors will be opening at 7:30pm and films will begin at 8:00pm sharp. Keep an eye on our website for further updates.

Please go to www.waff.ie for more information or contact John Connolly at john@waff.ie for info on film submissions.



New climbing wall scheme

NICAS launched in Ireland

STUART GARLAND

The National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme (NICAS) was launched in Ireland at the MCI's Climbing Wall Seminar on October 1st. This new proficiency scheme to develop and accredit the skills of indoor climbing will be delivered shortly at a number of climbing walls around Ireland.

NICAS is supported by the Mountaineering Council of Ireland, British Mountaineering Council, Mountaineering Council of Scotland, Mountain Leader Training England and Mountain Leader Training UK.

NICAS is run by the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) and aimed primarily at youth climbers (aged 7 to 25). The scheme improves training, boosts participation and increases recognition of achievement in the sport.

Indoor climbing has reached such a level of popularity that many schools, scout and youth groups regularly use climbing as part of their programmes. Now there is a uniform scheme for climbing development, with recognised awards that participants can show for their efforts.

Aims of the scheme

- To develop climbing movement skills and improve levels of ability.
- To learn climbing rope-work and how to use equipment safely.
- To develop risk assessment and management skills in the sport.
- To work as a team, communicate with, and trust a climbing partner.
- To develop an understanding of the sport, its history and future challenges.
- To point the way to further challenges in climbing beyond the scheme.
- To provide a record of personal achievement and accreditation.

Climbing walls are where most people, young and old, are now introduced to climbing for the first time. Youth are particularly attracted to indoor climbing as it is much more accessible than outdoors. Consequently, many climbing walls

have thriving junior clubs. The MCI is keen to promote good practice in climbing and to advance technique so that new climbers can catch the bug of what climbing is really all about – vertical movement.

The NICAS scheme is split into five levels. Each level progressively introduces skills, knowledge and responsibilities which build upon the previous level. The whole scheme requires over 100 hours of climbing for a motivated student, depending on aptitude. Candidates receive a colourful log book which guides them through the scheme. Once each level is completed they receive a certificate which is recognised by the MCI and the ABC. You can join the scheme at any level and it is fully transferable throughout Ireland and the UK.

The scheme in more detail

- **Foundation climber.** An entry level award aimed at complete novices that recognises their ability to climb safely under supervision (approximately three hours).
- **Top rope climber.** A top rope proficiency award aimed at promoting best practice in climbing and bouldering on an artificial wall (approximately eight hours).
- **Technical climber.** A more advanced

climbing and bouldering award that focuses on developing technique and movement skills (approximately 20 hours).

- **Lead climber.** An award that concentrates on the skills required to lead climb and lead belay proficiently (approximately 30 hours).

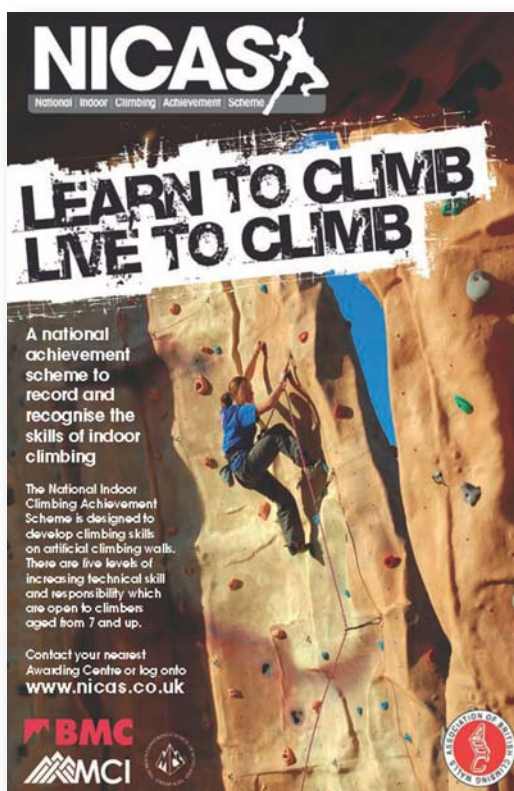
- **Advanced climber.** The top level award that focuses on improving performance with a deeper understanding of the sport and the wider world of climbing (approx 50 hours).

The scheme has been developed and trialled over nearly three years in the UK and is now being launched in Ireland. There has been wide consultation within the industry, including an 18-month pilot that saw over 2,000 youngsters go through the scheme in ten ABC climbing centres. This was a great success, and schools, colleges and universities have been particularly keen to take it up. The scheme has also been designed to complement the new national Climbing Wall Award (CWA) for instructors, to give them a uniform template to train budding wall rats with.

To deliver NICAS, the ABC has established a network of Primary Centres around the country whose role is to train, advise and supply materials to other climbing walls and instructors in their area. Most of the Primary Centres run outdoor courses so NICAS graduates can have the opportunity to apply their newly honed skills to real rock. Any school or organisation with a climbing wall can apply to become an Awarding Centre by contacting the ABC Training Trust.

So, look out for the young climbing stars of the future. They are found in climbing walls all around the country and NICAS will find many more of them and help them to develop their full potential – wherever it may lead. If you see a young climbing lizard at your wall eagerly filling in a log book in between climbs, you'll know they're on the right track....

Details of the scheme and how to participate in it as a candidate or Awarding Centre can be found on www.mountaineering.ie or www.nicas.co.uk. ■



Irish Bouldering League 2008-2009

Youth climbers take IBL by storm

ANGELA CARLIN

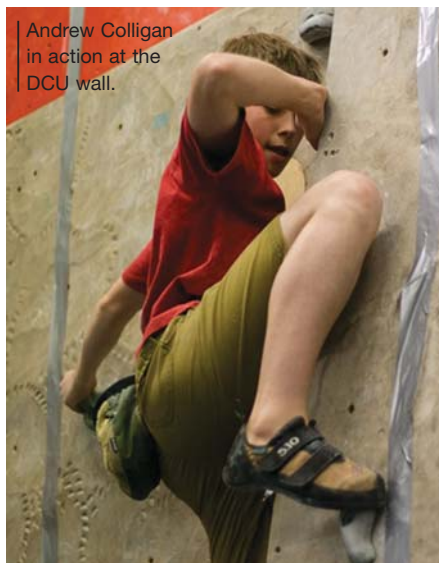
THE FIRST ROUND of the 2008/09 Irish Bouldering League took place on October 11th on the DCU wall. This year, there was a healthy number of entries in the youth category and a very high standard was achieved.

The junior winner was Andrew Colligan, aged 14, who stormed to victory with a total score of 244. Andrew has gone from strength to strength this year, with leads on the routes 'Rose de Sable' (Fr7a) and 'TCF' (Fr7a) in Buoux, as well as succeeding on the Fontainebleau boulder problem 'Musclor' (Font 7a).

First in the female juniors and second junior overall was Katie Maxwell, aged 14, with 200 points. Katie flashed an impressive total of six of the 20-point option problems and eight of the easier versions.

Third place overall and second junior male place went to Scott Larkin, and fourth place overall and second junior female place went to Tara O'Neill, with 180 and 167 points respectively.

This meant that the top four places went north of the border this time but, with the next round in Dingle, it's still a very open competition in the youth category. Perhaps the next round will see some of the younger climbers do well: there were some impressive performances on Saturday from young



Andrew Colligan in action at the DCU wall.

climbers that didn't make the podium (yet!). There are definitely some future rock stars out there....

The IBL male and female categories also saw some very notable performances from climbers who are still young enough to get a mention here: Juan O'Raw was the third-placed male on 316 points, with all points scored on the 20-point versions – no half measures there! Conor Craig was just one point behind Juan to take joint fourth place.

In the female category, Hannah Fogg put in a great performance to come second on 239 points.

Thanks to all the event organisers and route-setters for their hard work. ■

Irish Bouldering League results

The results of **Round 1** (held in DCU on October 11th) were as follows:-

Male: 1. Gary Lawler. 2. Andy Kelly. 3. Juan O Raw.

Female: 1. Joan Mulloy. 2. Hannah Fogg. 3. Maggie Chojan.

Juniors: 1. Andrew Colligan. 2. Katie Maxwell. 3. Scott Larkin.

Round 2 was held at the PlayAtHeight Climbing Wall in Dingle on November 1st-2nd 2008. Excellent venue, great routes, great crowd, a very enjoyable round! The results were as follows:-

Male: 1. Kevin Power. 2. Ricky Young. 3. Harry Fogg.

Female: 1. Maggie Chojan. 2. Angela Carlin. 3. Anna Cronin.

Juniors: 1. Peter Wainwright. 2. Naoise Ó Muircheartaigh. 3. Ciaran Rogers.

Upcoming rounds

Round 3: NUIG, Galway, Saturday, November 29th 2008.

Round 4: Midleton, Co Cork, January 24th, 2009

Round 5: DCU, February 28th, 2009

• For further information and results, see www.climbing.ie.



The UCD wall, Dublin.

Jake Haddock wins in UK

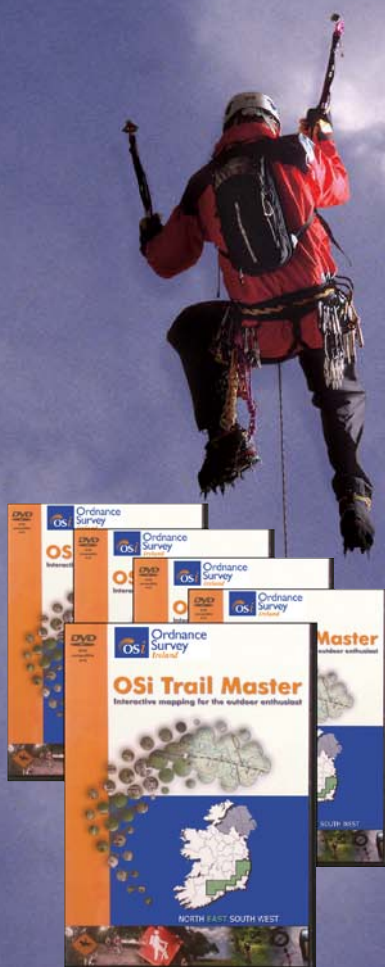
AFTER THE Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team's successful debut at the Manchester round of the Youth Climbing Series in April, and wins for Katie Maxwell and Andrew Colligan in the IBL junior section in Dublin, we entered three young climbers in the Resin Juniors Bouldering Competition in Rochdale, near Manchester.

Jake Haddock (16), Andrew Colligan (14) and Tim McGlinchey (15) headed to Rochdale on 15th November to compete against some of Britain's best young climbers in the 14-16 age category. With five problems completed, first place was a four-way tie. With ever-increasing tension, Jake held his nerve to win on the sixth and final problem, Font 7b, by two points; just one hold! Tim and Andrew finished a very creditable fifth and sixth and, having two years to go in this group, their future looks very bright. – (Eddie Cooper)

Mountain Log Christmas Quiz

€1,500 of prizes to be won!

Prizes sponsored by



Discovery Series Sheet 83 and 78, 1:50,000. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey Ireland.

How to Enter

Simply answer all the questions correctly (you can photocopy if you like) and send to:

Mountain Skills Quiz, MCI, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way,
Park West Business Park, Dublin 12.

You can also send your answers by email to quiz@mountaineering.ie
(If entering by email please put **Mountain Log Quiz** in Subject Line
and number your answers 1-10, (a), (b), (c) etc.

Closing date for receipt of entries is 16th January, 2009.

The winners will be the first all correct answers pulled out of a hat at the MCI's AGM in February. The winners and correct answers will be published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Irish Mountain Log*.

1st Prize: €500 worth of Berghaus Vouchers

2nd Prize: €300 worth of Berghaus Vouchers

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5 Runner-up Prizes of OSI's Trail Master DVD
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No cash substitute for prizes.

Competition open to MCI members only.

One entry per person only.

Mountain Skills Quiz

Refer to opposite page for map questions.
OSI Discovery Series. Sheet 83 & 78. 1:50,000

- What is the height gain (within 10m) from the shore of Eagles Lough to the summit of Knocknagantee?
a) 340m b) 360m c) 380m
- What is the closest translation of the name Knocknagantee?
a) The hill of the talking/chat
b) The mountain of the eagles
c) The hill of open view
- What is the height (within 10m) above sea level of the highest house/building on this section of map?
a) 130m b) 210m c) 495m
- What is the correct six-figure grid reference for the summit of Knockmoyle?
a) 665749 b) 749665 c) 675751
- What compass bearing would you walk on to travel from Knockmoyle to Knocknagantee?
a) 175 degrees b) 356 degrees c) 260 degrees
- While walking this bearing between Knockmoyle and Knocknagantee, what best describes the feature that you pass through halfway?
a) Valley b) Re-entrant c) Saddle
- Starting at the shore of Eagles Lough and following the course of the stream past Lough Coomanassig and then directly on to the summit of Knockmoyle, how long would it have taken Mr Naismith on one of his good days (5km per hour and 10 min per 100m gain)?
a) 1hr 32min b) 1hr 10min c) 52min
- The row of lakes running west into Lough Adoolig are commonly referred to as what?
a) Partitioned lakes
b) Paternoster lakes
c) Particularly nice lakes
- Who first climbed a famous rock/gully route on the East face of Knocknagantee?
a) Frank Kelly
b) Frank Winder
c) Frankly I don't know
- If you were to follow the source of the river Inny along its full length, to where it meets the sea, what Bay would you find yourself standing at?
a) Dingle Bay
b) Derrynane Bay
c) Ballinskelligs Bay

Name: _____

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Club/MCI Membership No: _____

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AlpineMeet



MCI Summer Alpine Meet, Innertkirchen, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland, July 4-18th, 2009

A new adventure starts here

Walking in the Alps.
Photo: Robbie Fenlon.

The Bernese Oberland has been described as the “playground of Europe” and is the birthplace of alpine tourism, especially in its eastern part with the famous tourist resorts of Interlaken, Lauterbrunnen, Grindelwald and Meiringen. The region at the foot of the trio of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau is amongst the most popular walking and mountain areas in the Alps today.

The 2009 MCI Summer Alpine Meet is aimed at walkers, rockclimbers and alpinists of all ages. The purpose is to get people together in an Alpine area where they can walk, rockclimb, boulder and climb snow-covered or rocky Alpine peaks. They can meet old friends and make new ones. It is a grand gathering of active, independent mountain people.

The Meet is an occasion to share information, learn new skills, find climbing partners, join walking groups and generally share in the exploration of an Alpine area. Many people return to the Meet from year to year, using it as a base to take on new challenges in a new area. Others may be visiting the Alps for the first time, joining more experienced friends or taking part in one of the MCI courses that supplement the

meet. The Meet has a social aspect, with some organised events but mostly informal get-togethers. Musicians are encouraged to bring their musical instruments.

What the Meet is *not* is a way to have your holiday organised for you. The courses that the MCI organise are to introduce people to the skills needed for walking and climbing in the Alps, with the long-term aim of making participants capable of independent activity in Alpine areas. There are also courses for people who want to refresh or upgrade the skills learnt on previous meets. A natural progression is for people to participate in courses in the first few years and then return to the Meet as independent walkers/climbers.

The professional mountain guides are at the Meet not only to run training courses but also to share information with Meet participants on mountain conditions and recommended routes in the area.

This year, we will also be encouraging experienced climbers and walkers to share some of their expertise and knowledge with other participants through the medium of conversation and informal trips to local walking and climbing areas. Anyone interested in participating should contact the Meet organising team at email: summermeet@mountaineering.ie.

The Meet will be based in the village of Innertkirchen in the Bernese Oberland. It is

a quiet Alpine village but also the access point for some of the most spectacular walking and rockclimbing in Switzerland. The campsite is a short drive from Grimsel pass, Furka pass and Susten pass. Nearby is the start of the renowned ‘Via Alpina,’ a

Rockclimbing instruction
will be available at
the Alpine Meet.



multi-day walking trip from Meiringen to Kandersteg.

There are numerous spectacular walks within easy reach of the campsite. The excellent Swiss train service allows for easy access to nearby walking areas as well as providing train services to and from Zurich Airport.

Alpine peaks around the Innertkirchen area are numerous. The Sustenhorn (3,504m), Gwachtenhorn (3,420m) and Tierberg (3,091m) are all easily accessible from the very friendly Tierbergli hutte and make excellent introductory or acclimatisation peaks prior to attempting some of the bigger Oberland 4,000m peaks, which are just round the corner over the Oberaar joch. There are several other snowy peaks within easy striking distance above the Susten and Grimsel passes.

The area is also world famous for its rockclimbing, including the extraordinary granite walls of Grimsel and Eldorado. Other well known climbing areas are Handegg, Englehorner, Mittagsflu and Wendenstock and the Furka pass. There is a local single-pitch crag at Meiringen. Rockclimbing grades in the area span from grade 3 to 9a (a Fred Nicole route in the Grimsel area). As far as bouldering is concerned, we are in the process of establishing contacts with local climbers and will have an update soon.

For 2009 we are adopting a new approach to the Summer Alpine Meet. We will be keeping all the main features but we have developed and incorporated a wider range of disciplines in order to make the Meet a more inclusive and organic event.

There will be a wider range of courses, trips and workshops, together with informal outings specifically designed for the walking, sport climbing, trad-climbing and bouldering communities. These new aspects of the Meet are being developed at the time of print. For the latest updates see the MCI website.

Information Evening

Are you considering attending the 2009 Meet? Well, join us at the Summer Meet Information Evening in the new Snow+Rock Store, Unit 3.2-4.2, Dundrum Town Centre, Dublin 14, at 7:30pm on Tuesday 17 February 2009. This will be an opportunity to meet some of the people involved in this year's event, to see a presentation and to get full details on all the courses available on the 2009 Meet. Staff from the shop will be present to give an insight into the gear you will need for the Meet. The store is located near the Tesco Petrol Station (map and directions on the MCI website). Book your place at the information evening now: summermeet@mountaineering.ie.



Pick your Alpine Meet Course for 2009

Walking courses

Adventures off the Trail (1 day with an International Mountain Leader) 8:1 ratio - €45
 Alpine Flora and Fauna (1 day with an IML) 8:1 ratio - €45
 Alpine Walking Navigation and the use of Maps and GPS (1 day with an IML) 8:1 ratio - €45
 Alpine Walking Trip with overnight in Hut (2 days with IML) 6:1 ratio - €125
 Alpine Trek from Meiringen to Kandersteg (5 days with IML) 6:1 ratio - €315

Climbing courses

One-day Introduction to Rockclimbing (with UIAGM guide) 6:1 ratio - €100
 One-day Improvers' Rockclimbing (with UIAGM guide) 6:1 ratio - €100
 One-day Multi-pitch Rockclimbing (with UIAGM guide) 2:1 ratio - €200
 One-day Bouldering Workshops (with UIAGM guide and climbing coach), ratio 10:2 or 5:1 - €50

Alpine courses

Adventure Walking 5 days (with Union Internationale des Associations de Guides de Montagnes guide or IML) 6:1 ratio - €500*
 Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering 5 days (with UIAGM guide) 4:1 ratio - €670*
 Intermediate Alpine Mountaineering 5 days (with UIAGM guide) 2:1 ratio - €995 *
 Advanced Alpine Mountaineering 5 days (with UIAGM guide) 2:1 ratio - €995 *

* All these courses will be five-day courses, commencing at 18:00hrs on Saturday 4 or Saturday 11 July, and run over a six-day period with one rest day. The rest day will be agreed at the time on the basis of weather conditions.

Further information

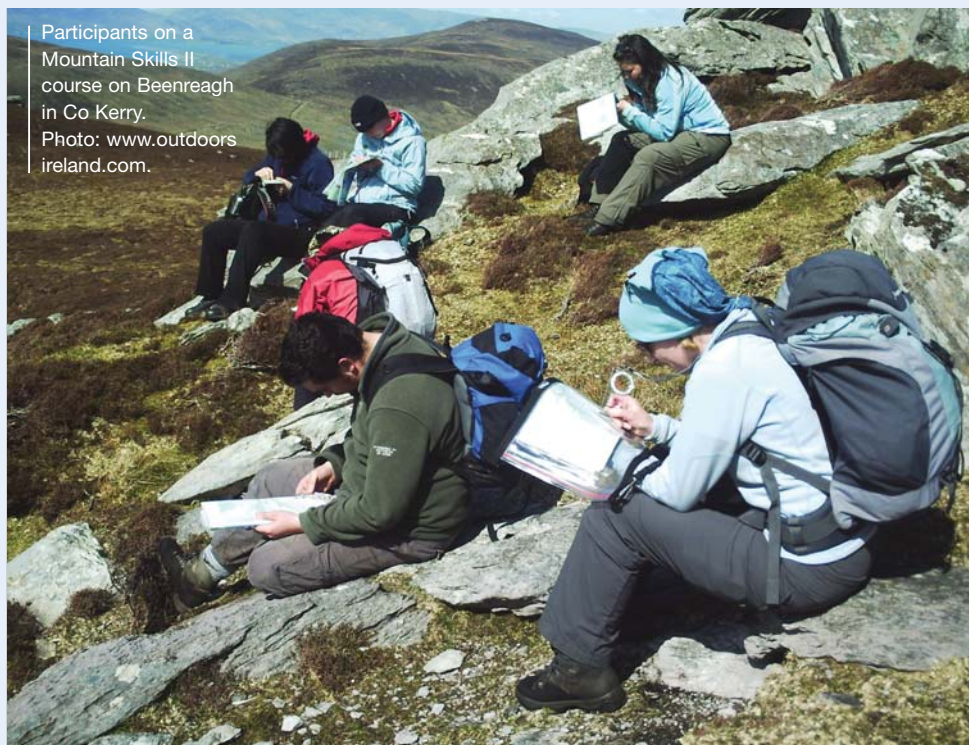
Information packs and details on all the courses can be downloaded from our website www.mountaineering.ie. Please note that the closing date for applications is Tuesday 31 March 2009.

Walking in the Alps
 near Kandersteg.
 Photo: Cara Shields.



Snow+Rock are sponsoring the information evening in Dundrum on February 17





Participants on a Mountain Skills II course on Beenreagh in Co Kerry.
Photo: www.outdoorsireland.com.

Acquiring mountain skills

Eimear Daly learns to be self-reliant

This time last year the only trekking that I was doing was the kind of hard slog one does when searching for the perfect shoes for an evening out! Excursions up and down the aisles of the shoe shops were my only adventures and the satisfaction of a perfect fit and coordinating colours was my driving force. Sweat would pour from my brow, adrenaline rushing as I contemplated the horrors of inadequate footwear...but for entirely different reasons to most hillwalkers.

So, you can understand that I am probably not the first person you would think of as a hiking partner. However, this didn't stop a friend from asking me to be theirs, to go up Carrauntoohil, no less. With no concept of height, distance or the Devil's Ladder, I was marched to the summit on a beautiful June afternoon...and I was hooked!

Since then, I have always been heavily reliant on the aforementioned

friend to lead me blindly up and down various tracks, hills and peaks. When a work colleague mentioned that they were going on a Mountain Skills course, I sat up and took notice. Independence! The importance of independence is not lost on me, as I work at Irish Guide Dogs For The Blind, where visually impaired people regain theirs. We spend a lot of time teaching guide-dog clients how to work best in their partnerships with their dogs, as well as about dog welfare. The Mountain Skills course saw a sort of reversal in these roles, with guide-dog mobility instructors, trainers and kennel staff finding themselves back in the classroom...not to teach, but to learn.

Nathan Kingerlee was our instructor. He runs an Adventure & Training company based in Kerry and specialises in hillwalking, rockclimbing, mountaineering, kayaking, canoeing and team building.

Each day began with a quick presentation about the skills we would be practicing that day. Anyone who knows us will know that we can be a tricky bunch, but our instructor successfully dealt with our comments, queries and occasionally unruly behaviour. During our mountain

safety discussions, we tried to imagine every possible situation that could arise on the mountain. To give you a general idea of the way we were thinking, one of our group voiced the seemingly genuine concern that, if the Mountain Rescue Team is supposed to come get you, and they are all voluntary, what if they were all invited to a wedding? What if everyone on the Mountain Rescue Team ate a really hot curry the night before and they were all indisposed?

After that, we were whisked off to the Glenbeigh area or the Gap of Dunloe to practice our compass skills and map reading. It soon became clear that some of us couldn't read maps, and most of the group had little sense of direction but, with a little patience on our instructor's part, we soon got the hang of it. Although compass skills won't help you find your car in a busy car park, they can prove immensely useful when your view is obscured by the mist at the top of a mountain.

Among the group, physical fitness varied. I started as I meant to go on: at the back! As shameful as it sounds, I was even outrun by the vegetarians in the group. I was sure that they would be hanging back, muscles weakened by the lack of protein. Not at all! They seemed to be buoyed up by their trail mix and spurred on at the thought of the healthy fruit and wholegrain sandwiches that they were going to have for lunch.

As part of the course, everyone was encouraged to think about the safety of the group, as well as their own safety, so that nobody would get left behind. Everyone was encouraged to look for the signs of hypothermia in themselves and in each other, and to carry enough equipment to cope with the common problems that occur when you are mountaineering.

You would think that wandering around on the tops of mountains at night would be another 'no no,' but part of the course was a night navigation exercise. Take away all the visible features and you discover pretty quickly how good your compass skills are and how useful our instructor's helpful hints could be, such as 'don't head left over the cliff!' We all took turns at guiding the group in the dark and at one stage we almost ended up in someone's back garden!

Another test of the skills we were acquiring took place on Tomies. We

**“I started as I meant to go on:
at the back! I was even outrun
by the vegetarians...”**

were asked to drop other people's bags at different points on the mountain, according to the map. It resulted in complete chaos, with one particular bag being declared 'MIA.' I concluded that as a group we were far less talented than our canine trainees, who can seek and retrieve with ease.

I don't want to give the impression that this course was all fun and games. It was hard work at times and our muscles really felt it at the end of each day. You become a really cheap date because even a small drop of wine in the evening leaves you slightly blurry-eyed. But there is nothing like the sense of satisfaction at the end of a day when you are exhausted but thrilled at your achievements.

If you want to broaden your mind and stretch those muscles, then look no further. I'm already looking for the next mountain to climb, when I will

be my own guide. After all, there will always be the Mountain Rescue Team to help me out if I get into difficulty. Hopefully, that is less likely now that I have acquired my Mountain Skills, but let's just hope that no one gets married or has a bad curry the day before, just in case! ■

• **The aim of the Mountain Skills Scheme is to give hillwalkers the ability and confidence to look after themselves in the mountains. Mountain Skills provides training in Equipment, Map Reading, Navigation, Mountain Hazards, Moving on Steep Ground, and Emergency Procedures.**

• **Nathan Kingerlee can be contacted on +353 (0) 86 860 45 63, or you can find out about the courses he offers on www.outdoorsireland.com.**



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Ag siúl i La Gomera

Tugann Seán Ó Fearghail cuairt ar na hOileáin Chanáracha.

View of Roque el Cano (hound's rock) at Vallehermoso. Photo: Seán Ó Fearghail.

Lroinnt blianta anuas, téann grúpa againn ag siúl in áiteanna éagsúla gach Cáisc. Ach i mbliana bhí an Cháisc an-luath ar fad, díreach tar éis Lá Fhéile Pádraig, agus bheadh sléibhte uile na Mór Roinne fós faoi shioc. Ní raibh le déanamh ach dul go dtí na hOileáin Chanáracha.

Nuair a scaipeadh an focal go mbeimis ag dul go Tenerife, agus ar ndóigh, chuig oileán eile nár chuala aon duine mórán tráchta faoi (is é sin, La Gomera), b'éasca go leor an freagra a shamhlú: "Ó sea, ag dul ag déanamh bolg le gréin ar an trá, ag ól fiona, srl." Ach ní mar sin a bhí. Bhí La Gomera iontach maith ó thaobh na cnocadóireachta de, agus iontach suimiúil ó thaobh an dúlra de – agus bhí grian agus fion le fáil comh maith, ach gan mórán deise againn luí ar an trá.

La Gomera

Chaitheamar seachtain, san iomlán, ar La Gomera, agus muid ag stopadh sa phríomhchathair San Sebastian agus ag siúl gach lá.

An chéad lá, rinneamar siúlóid ó San Sebastian féin. Bhíomar ag úsáid léarscáile agus leabhair le Discovery Walking Guides, agus chuireamar dhá shiúlóid as an leabhar as a chéile an lá sin; is é sin, chuamar amach ar chuid de cheann amháin agus tháingamar ar ais ar an gceann eile. Ach tá na fánaí níos géire ná a shamhlófa, agus an talamh an-chrua, de bhunús bolcánach. Chaitheamar i bhfad níos mó ama ar an tsiúlóid ná a bhíomar ag siúl leis.

D'fhoghlaimíomar cúpla ceacht fóinteach an lá sin, agus ní dhearnamar na botúin chéanna arís. Seo iad na botúin:

- Agus tú ag siúl ar La Gomera, tosaigh ag an pointe is airde den tsiúlóid, más féidir leat, agus caith an lá ag dul le fána. (Tá bua eile ag an bplean seo: má thagann tú

amach ar thrá ag an deireadh, tig leat dul ag snámh!)

- Bí an-chúramach ag dul le fána, agus déan go mall é. Tá na clocha beaga an-sleamhain, agus an-gheár, má thiteann tú orthu.

Tar éis an chéad lá, rinneamar iarracht cloí níos fearr leis na treoracha a bhí sa leabhar, agus rinneamar iarracht dul ar an mbus (nó *guagua*, mar a deirtear ar na hoileáin) go dtí tús na siúlóide.

Ach ní bhíonn busanna ann rómhinic, agus ar lá amháin ní raibh ceann dá laghad le fáil. Déardaoin Mandála a bhí ann, agus ina dhiaidh sin Aoine an Chéasta, Domhnach Cásca, Luan Cásca, agus ní bhíonn busanna ann ar na féilte móra. Rinneamar socrú le cúpla tiománaí tacsáí teacht faoinár ndéin agus muid a thabhairt chuig tús na siúlóide. Ar an mbealach sin, bhíomar ag siúl gach lá roimh 10:00 r.n.; ní fiú a bheith ag iarraidh siúl níos luaithe ná sin, ní sa Ghearmáin atá tú! In ionad €3 nó €5 a chaitheamh ar bhus agus cúpla uair

an chloig a chaitheamh ag feitheamh uirthi, b'fhearr tacsáí a fháil láithreach ar tháille idir €5 agus €10 an duine, ach ceathrar a bheith inti.

An dúlra

Tá foraois bháistí i lár an oileáin. Cuirtear an bháisteach ar an sliabh is airde (Garajonay, 1,487m) agus bíonn sé fliuch ansin i gcónaí. Is cuid iontais é, ach is féidir luí ar an trá, bolg le gréin, agus fiche nóiméad níos déanaí a bheith ar Garajonay, sna scamail, sa cheobhrán, agus tú ag iarraidh seaicéad lomra breise a chur ort féin. San fhoraois sin, fásann an fraoch ina chrainn mhóra, 10-15 mhéadar ar airde (*brezos* a thugtar orthu sa Spáinnis). Tá na hoileáin uile scartha óna chéile comh fada sin go bhfuil sainfhlóra acu, éabhlóidithe i gcaitheamh na mílte bliain. Tá breis is 500 planda eindéimeach sna hOileáin Chanáracha (i.e. ní fhásann siad áit ar bith eile ar domhan) agus tá cuid acu le fáil in Garajonay. Tá Garajonay féin

agus an chomharsanacht ina páirc náisiúnta anois, agus tá siad ag iarraidh í a athchruthú sa chaoi ina raibh an ceantar cúig chéad bliain ó shin.

Cúpla siúlóid

Bhiomar amuigh ag siúl gach lá, agus seo iad na turais is fearr a rinneamar:

(1) Garajonay (i lár an oileáin go Hermigua sa tuaisceart)

Mura bhfuil an t-am agat mórán eile a dhéanamh, bí cinnte go ndéanfaidh tú an tsiúlóid seo. Thosaíomar ag siúl gar do bharr Garajonay – is féidir dul ann i mbus nó i dtacsáí. Bhíodh láithreán searmanais ag na Guanches, áitritheoirí bundúchasacha na n-oileán nuair a tháinig na Spáinnigh, díreach ag an mbarr. Rinneadh tochailt seandálaíochta ar an láithreán sin le déanaí agus tá sé atógtha sa chaoi ina gceaptar a bhí sé tráth. Is fiú roinnt bheag ama a chaitheamh ansin,

leis na bláthanna agus na radharcanna chuig na hoileáin eile a bhreathnú. Ina dhiaidh sin, leanamar an chonair ar an ardchlár, ag fánaíocht tríd an fhoraois bháistí. Uaireanta, fuaireamar radharc ar an tírdhreach, ach is iondúil nach raibh le feiceáil ach na *brezos* os ár gcionn, agus tá sé iontach doiligh a shamhlú go bhfuil gaol aige seo leis an bhfraoch beag a fhásann i gCo Chill Mhantáin. I lár na siúlóide, stopamar le haghaidh cupán caife i mbialann in El Cedro a raibh cuma iargúlta uirthi, ach a bhí lán de shiúlóirí agus turasóirí eile – ár leithéid féin. Díreach tar éis El Cedro, d'éirigh an cosán an-sleamhain agus an-ghéar ar fad, ach ar a laghad bhí cosán ann. Rinne an cosán fiarlán, ag ísliú leis cois easa, an t-aon eas amháin sna hoileáin a mbíonn uisce ann i gcónaí. Má bhíonn an veirtige ort, ní cóir duit dul an treo sin – bhí duine nó beirt inár ngrúpa a raibh an-fhaitíos orthu, agus nach raibh aon rogha acu ach greim géar a choinneáil ar an aill an

A wayside landmark.
Photo: Seán Ó Fearghail.





Ancient cave dwelling.
Photo: Seán Ó Fearghail.

bealach ar fad.

Ach ina dhiaidh sin tháingamar amach i dtuaisceart an oileáin. Aeráid thais bhogthe a bhíonn sa taobh sin, agus sin an ceanntar ina bhfuil an talmhaíocht agus na feirmeoirí uile. Tá sé glas le dambaí agus canálacha beaga uisciúcháin ar gach taobh. Ag an deireadh, in Hermigua, chuamar ar bhus ar ais go San Sebastian.

(2) Jerdune go Santiago sa deisceart

Sa deisceart atá an tsiúlóid seo, agus í go hiomlán difriúil leis an gceann thuas; ní bhíonn mórán báistí ar an taobh seo, agus tá sé ina fhásach, nach mór.

Arís, shiúlamar ón bpointe is airde go dtí an fharraige. Ba chosúil go mbíodh daoine ina gcónaí go hard

sna cnoic uair amháin, ach anois tá cuma thréigthe ar an gceantar. Bhí na fánaí clúdaithe le seanléibhinn talmhaíochta, agus bhí cróite agus bóithigh tógtha i roinnt des na pluaiséanna, ach bhí gach rud ag titim as a chéile agus ní raibh deoraí ann.

Ag teacht chuig an deireadh, baineadh geit asainn – rinne saithe beach fiáin ionsaí tobann orainn. Cúigear a bhí sa ghrúpa an lá sin, agus cuireadh cealg phianmhar i gceathrar dinn. Ní fhacamar in am an fógra a bhí scríofa ar chloch: *Abejas peligrosas!*

Nótaí

Ní ionad mór turasóireachta é La Gomera; ní ionad saoire ach Valle Gran Rey. Sna bailte eile mar San Sebastian, tá cúpla óstán beag agus árasáin. Sna bailte seo, ní thiocfá ar aon duine a mbeadh aon teanga eile acu ach amháin an Spáinnis. In Valle Gran Rey, is féidir teacht ar dhaoine a bhfuil Gearmáinis acu. Níl Gaeilge le cloisteáil áit ar bith, faraor.

Níl ach corr-shráidbhaile i lár an oileáin – ní mór duit do lón, fleasc agus uisce féin a iompar leat.

Tabhair leat:

- Cúpla focal Spáinnise agus foclóir Spáinnise.
- Léarscáil agus leabhar treorach: molaím na cinn ar scála 1:40,000 ó Discovery Walking Guides, agus má tá Córas Suite Domhanda (GPS) agat, is féidir na bealaí a íoslódáil ón dlúthdhiosca.
- Buataisí siúlóide atá caite go maith: ar chlocha géara bolcánacha a bheidh tú ag siúl.
- Cóta báistí agus seaicéad lomra; ná déan dearmad ar an bhforais bháistí.
- Leabhar leis na bláthanna agus na plandaí a aithint.

Brief synopsis

The island of La Gomera in the Canaries turned out to be a big surprise when a group of us went to walk there at Easter, when the mountains of mainland Europe would still be iced up.

On our first walk, we learnt some useful lessons. You have to travel slowly and carefully as the slopes are steep and the small pebbles underfoot are sharp, if you fall on them. Also, if possible try to walk from the highest point of your

“In the centre of La Gomera there is rainforest; the north is rainy and lush; while the south is warm and dry.”

walk. This way you will always end up near the sea and can go for a swim afterwards.

To get around the island there are buses – but they are not frequent and even less so on feast days. We ended up making an arrangement with a taxi driver to pick us up each morning. Shared between four of us, this cost twice as much as the bus fare, but gave us the independence to go where and when we wanted. It also gave us a chance to practise our Spanish over a 40-minute trip and to learn a lot about the island.

The environment

La Gomera has three main natural divisions. In the centre there is rainforest where it is always cloudy and misty. The north is temperate, rainy and lush – all of the agriculture is now there. The south is warm and dry and everywhere there are abandoned farm buildings and terraces. The Canaries have been isolated for so long that they hold more than 500 endemic plants, not found anywhere else. Some of these are found only on La Gomera.

Sample walks

There are lots of good walks on La Gomera, so best to mention just a couple of the best.

(1) Garajonay (in the centre of the island to Hermigua in the north)

This starts in the centre of the island, on the highest peak, Garajonay, where there was a Guanche ceremonial site. This has been excavated and rebuilt. On a high plateau you walk through a forest of heather trees and try to imagine that these are related to the humble heather of Wicklow. Coming out of the forest the path drops very steeply – vertiginously, according to the guidebooks – and zig-zags alongside the only waterfall in the islands which always has water. Eventually you arrive in the north of the island, on farmland where you walk along dams, irrigation channels and agricultural terraces to arrive at the village of Hermigua. From there, we took a bus back to San Sebastian.

(2) Jerdune to Santiago in the south

This walk is totally different, as the south has little rain and is almost a desert. At one time people lived in the hills here, but they are now deserted. The terracing is falling apart and there are deserted sheds and byres in the caves. We also got stung by a swarm of wild bees before we saw a sign painted on a rock: *Abejas peligrosas!* After this walk, we had a swim in the sea and then took a ferry back to San Sebastian where we were staying. ■



El Sombrero.
Photo:
Seán Ó
Fearghail.

Leis Na Cnocadóirí (féach an suíomh www.cnocadoiri.com agus r-phost cnocadoiri@yahoo.com) a bhíonn Seán Ó Fearghail ag siúl. Is í an Ghaeilge gnáth-theanga labhartha an chlub seo. Tá taithí aige ar an chnocadóireacht in Éirinn, ar fud na hEorpa agus sna Himiléithe leis na blianta fada.

Seán Ó Fearghail walks with Na Cnocadóirí (website www.cnocadoiri.com or email address cnocadoiri@yahoo.com). He has had extensive experience of walking in Ireland, throughout various mountain ranges in Europe and in the Himalayas.

Note: The normal language of Na Cnocadóirí is Irish, not just during their walks but also during their social events and weekend walking trips. The club welcomes new members and any walkers who would like to practise their Irish in the mountains – there is no better place.

Foclóirín
[Some vocabulary]

- Aeráid:** climate
- Áitritheoirí bundúchasacha:** aboriginal inhabitants
- Ardchlár:** plateau
- Athchruthú:** re-create
- Cealg:** sting
- Conair:** path
- Cróite agus bóithigh:** huts and byres
- Déardaoin Mandála:** Holy Thursday
- Fiarlán:** zig-zag
- Foraois bháistí:** rainforest
- Seaicéad lomra:** fleece Jacket
- Sainfhlóra:** distinctive flora
- Saithe beach:** swarm of bees
- Seanléibhinn talmhaíochta:** old agricultural terracing
- Uisciúchán:** irrigation

*"A feel of warmth in this place.
In winter air, a scent of harvest.
No form of prayer is needed,
When by sudden grace attended.
Naturally, we fall from grace.
Mere humans, we forget what light
Led us, lonely, to this place."*

John Montague

Jewels of Connemara

Adrian Hendroff walks in the Twelve Bens and the Maumturks

Loch Doire an Chláir
(Derryclare Lough)
with Binn Doire Chláir
to the rear on a cold
November morning.

Photo: Adrian
Hendroff.

The N59 Galway to Clifden road always fills me with an air of expectancy and anticipation as I approach the crossroads of Maam Cross. Nestling in the shadows of Leic Aimhréidh and surrounded by beautiful lakes both large and small, the roads from Maam Cross lead to the four corners of Connemara. For me, it is a gateway to a hidden heart of Ireland where the wind and rain is cleansing; where spirits are lifted by sunlight filtering through layers of cloud scudding through the valley, often filling the Connemara skies with rainbows.

On passing Maam crossroads, the view on the right is filled with a vision of a conical, beehive-shaped mountain rising steeply from the bog. Beyond it,

two more summits loom, one grey-green, the other rising like a great peak and completing the sweep of this mountainous stretch.

The silvery ribbon of road leads further west past Recess and then takes several bends before the contrast between the glittering lakes on the left and rugged mountain summits on the right appears sudden and dramatic. These are some of the oldest mountains in the world, the quartzite peaks of Beanna Beola, the Twelve Bens, or "Pins," as some call them.

The Irish for Connemara is Conmhaicne Mara, meaning "people of the sea." These people were a branch of the Conmhaicne, an early tribal grouping that had a number of branches located in different parts of Connacht. When traversing high-level ridges and rugged mountain tops in the wilderness of Connemara, perhaps like the Conmhaicne, the closeness of the sea and majesty of the landscape fills me with a spirit of wanderlust. However, in the end, they always leave me with peaceful contentment.

To me, the mountains of Connemara are precious, special and priceless, like jewels in the crown. These jewels are spread rather

inconveniently on three OSi 1:50,000 maps. The bulk of them can be found on OSi 37, which covers all of the Twelve Bens with the exception of Binn Leitrí, which is tucked away in the top corner of OSi 44. Most of the Maumturk Mountains, or Sléibhte Mhám Toirc, a horseshoe-shaped range of mountains that sits immediately to the east of the Twelve Bens, can be found also on OSi 37. However, three of the eastern Maumturks – Binn Mhór, Mullach Glas and Corcóg – are split between OSi 44 and 45. The advent of OSi Trail Master software has made it possible to include all the details on a single printed sheet, but there is also the Harvey Superwalker Connemara 1:30,000, which covers the whole of Connemara National Park in a single spread, including all of the Maumturks and the Twelve Bens.

Gleann Chochán

One of the finest walks in Ireland, if not *the* finest, is the Gleann Chochán Horseshoe. Encompassing 16km and approximately 1,500m of total ascent, it is a high-level ridge walk traversing six tops: Binn Dhoire Chláir, Binn Chorr, Binn Dhubh, Binn Bhraoin,



Binn Gabhar and Binn Leitri. In my opinion, it is a tough but rewarding walk, taking in some of the most outstanding mountain scenery in Ireland. The Irish historian Roderick O'Flaherty suggested in his writings that the mariners of old called these mountains the "twelve stakes."

Starting at the recently refurbished Ben Lettery (Binn Leitri) Youth Hostel,

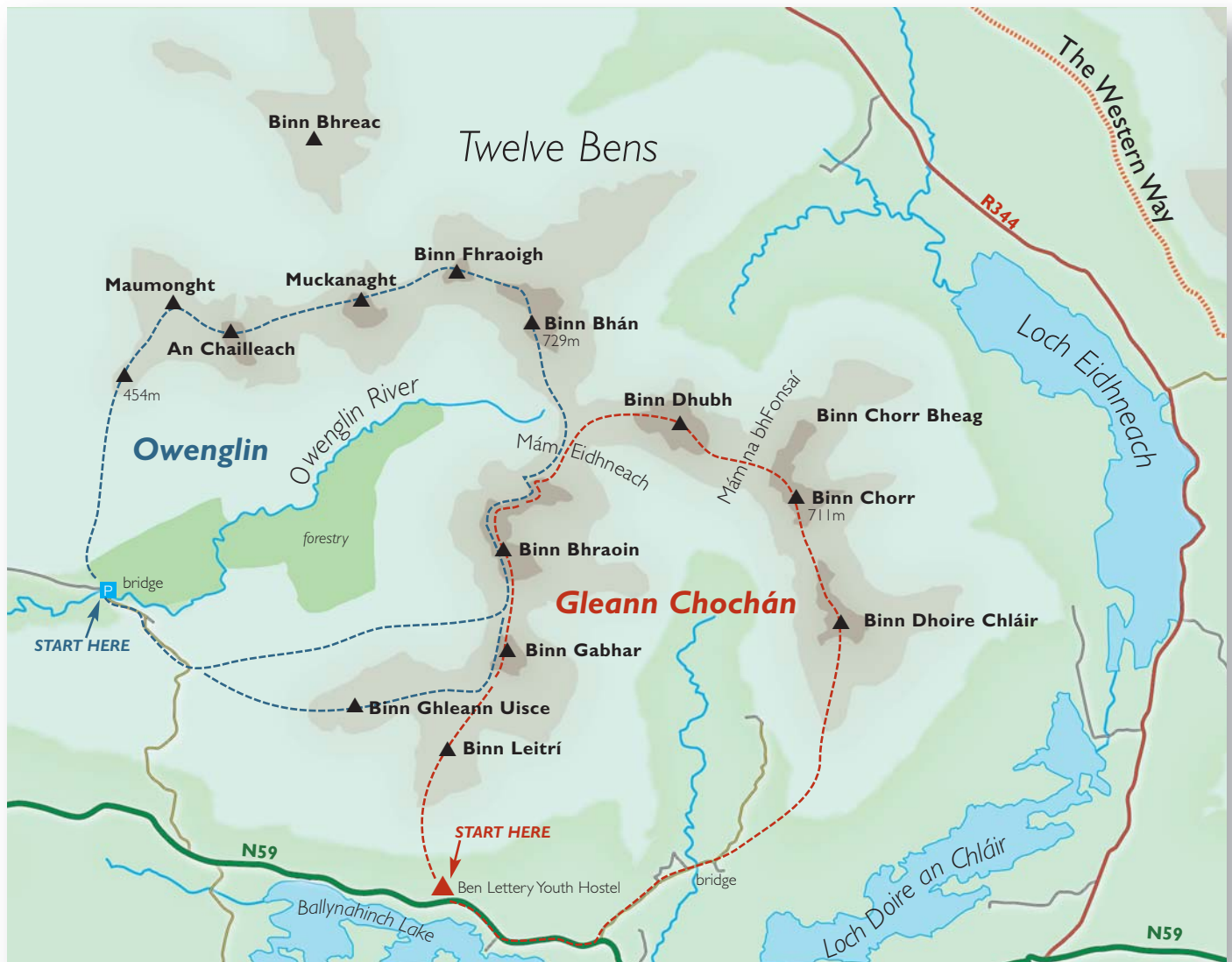
my preference is to do this horseshoe in an anti-clockwise direction so as to get the tarmac walk out of the way at the start. From the road, turn left onto the bohereen, cross the bridge, strike out towards open mountainside at any convenient point *before* the farmyard, and finally head up the slopes of Binn Dhoire Chláir.

One word of warning: once on the

high ridge, with the exception of back-tracking your steps, there is no easy escape route down into Gleann Chochán. You could descend from the col at Mám Eidhneach, or the one between Binn Bhraoin and Binn Gabhar, but the valley floor is notoriously boggy and there may be access issues lower down; so it is best avoided. Many years ago, I was lucky

The rugged monolith of Binn Gabhar as seen from Binn Bhraoin. Photo: Adrian Hendroff.





Routes for the
Gleann Chochán
Horseshoe and the
Owenglin Horseshoe
in the Twelve Bens.
Map: Cólín
MacLochlainn.

enough to tackle this circuit on an exceptionally fine day. It made up for a lot of frustrations, as only the weekend before I had been soaked by deluges while exploring the hills of Kerry.

The summit of Binn Dhoire Chláir is rewarding in itself, if you intend to bag just one Ben on the day. To the east, the magnificent Maumturks lie invitingly, with the deep blue waters of Loch Eidhneach decorating the midground. To the southeast, Loch Doire an Chláir is one of the more prominent lakes dotting the plain. To the west, the solid masses of Binn Leitri, Binn Gabhar and Binn Bhraoin greet the eye and, to the northwest, the rugged, rocky terrain of Binn Dhubh and Binn Chorr awaits. What an all-round panoramic view!

The rest of the horseshoe involves steeply rising and dipping terrain over bare quartzite rock. A rocky and bouldery slope leads up to Binn Chorr, the highest point of the horseshoe at 711m, and then steeply

down to the col at Mám na bhFonsaí, followed by another rise over a broad expanse of smooth bare rock to Binn Dhubh, the 'black mountain.' From the summit, there are commanding views of the white cone of Binn Bhán.

The descent off Binn Dhubh is steep again, with an easy rock step to be negotiated, down to the col at Mám Eidhneach. In a previous article (*Climb Every Mountain*, IML 86), I described this col in the heart of the Bens as "remote and surrounded by a fortress of peaks in all directions." From here, another sustained climb follows up a broad and rocky ridge which dog-legs to the summit of Binn Bhraoin. 'Braon' can mean 'drip' or 'drop,' but this mountain could also have been named after someone called Ó Braoin or MacBraoin (anglicised as Breen and McBreen). Beyond the summit, descend down a steep, scree-covered slope to the col between Binn Bhraoin and Binn Gabhar.

At the col, a well-deserved rest is recommended before the steepest

ascent of the entire horseshoe.

Sections of the route up this mini-face or gully require hands on rock, but taken slowly and steadily it is not difficult as there are plenty of good holds. The summit of Binn Gabhar, 'mountain of the goat,' is normally decorated in pink thrift in late spring and is a good place to take in the surroundings and to reflect back on the day's adventures. The end of the horseshoe is soon reached, after Binn Leitri is surmounted, and a steep and rocky descent, partially through rough, wet vegetation, eventually leads back to the youth hostel.

Owenglin

Although the Gleann Chochán Horseshoe is one of the classic routes in Connemara and in Ireland, I generally prefer walking the Owenglin Horseshoe, simply because it offers a variety of escape routes, but ultimately I also find it quieter and its terrain more varied than the Gleann Chochán Horseshoe.

“With its mountains, bogs, lakes, rivers, glens and intricately indented coastline, Connemara is almost a world of its own.”

Starting by the bridge over the Owenglin River at L744513, head back down the road, away from the cul-de-sac, towards a bend in the road at L747509. At this point, choose a convenient point to leave the road, either striking across the bog towards the col between Binn Bhraoin and Binn Gabhar, if it is a dry day, or ascending the spur up the rough slopes of Binn Ghleann Uisce, ‘peak of the glen of water.’

On the former route, towards the col, you will feel like a speck on the planet as you trudge along the wide valley floor with mighty peaks rising in front and around you. If you choose the latter route, up the slopes of Binn Ghleann Uisce, you will have

to descend the gully from the summit of Binn Gabhar to the col before Binn Bhraoin.

On either route, you should summit Binn Bhraoin from the col and then drop down to nirvana at Mám Eidhneach, where an escape route (if needed) could be plotted through grassy and boggy ground on either side of the forestry.

If you are fit and willing, however, then continue on arduously up the unremitting treadmill slope of Binn Bhán until you reach the summit, at 729m, the highest point in Connemara and County Galway. Views from its trig point are extensive. All the main ridges of the Bens can be comprehensively observed, together

with the lake-strewn Roundstone Bog, islands, sea inlets and the hills across Killary Harbour.

After Binn Bhán, there are four other ‘bumps’ to be surmounted, namely grassy Binn Fhraoigh, schisty Muckanaght, stony An Chailleach and its subsidiary summit Maumonght (for purists like me). It may be useful to note that escape routes are possible at the three cols between these summits and, with care, a descent down to the valley floor may be safely negotiated from any of them. If you choose not to head down early, simply go south at the end of the ridge from point 454m, following a fence and then reaching a track at the foot of the slope. Whichever way you plan to tackle the Owenglin Horseshoe, expect a full day in the hills and leave prepared.

Loch Eidhneach

East of the Bens is the R344, an off-the-beaten-track road that winds its way along the edge of picturesque Loch Eidhneach, a five-mile stretch of water reflecting the day’s moods and lying in a broad, flat valley that is flanked by the Bens on the west and the Maumturks on the east/northeast. Halfway along this road is a minor bohereen leading uphill, away from the lake and gradually intersecting the Western Way. Dotted along this section of the trail are remains of old, ruined farm dwellings and the outline of small fields and cultivated ridges, a stark reminder of the Great Famine of 1845-49. If you follow this minor road (R344) southeast and then

Classic view of the Maumturk ridge from Binn Idir an Dá Log. Photo: Adrian Hendroff.

The Twelve Bens and Lough Inagh as seen from Binn Mhór in the Maumturks on a fine autumn day. Photo: Adrian Hendroff.





The author on Binn Chuana summit in the Maumturks with Cnoc Maol Réidh behind him.
Photo: Úna Hendroff.

southwest, it will eventually lead you back to the N59.

On my first visit to Connemara many years ago, I did a recce on this road-loop to sort out potential starting points for future forays in the Maumturks. It was a changeable sort of day on which the clouds cast eerie shapes over Loch Eidhneach, in an atmosphere interspersed with light and shadows, and the mist gradually peeled away to reveal steep slopes and searing gullies of the closer Maumturks and the chameleon-like silhouettes of further-away Bens. This gave the area a mystical feeling which was overpowering to the senses. Since then, I've frequented this stretch of road several times, over peaches of days and gloomy mornings, but always never ceasing to be overwhelmed by the surrounding atmosphere.

The Maumturks

I think of the Maumturks as the Twelve Bens stretched out in a single line, along with some interesting dog-legs in between. In fact, it is possibly the roughest walking terrain in the country and should always be treated with respect. For the Sonia O'Sullivans among you, there is an annual marathon walk, which traditionally takes place in spring, over 24km of tough mountainous terrain, a total ascent of approximately 2,400m and taking in the entire length of the Maumturks from Maam Cross to Lennaun. I personally have never been a fan of challenge walks, as I prefer the whole mountain experience rather than rushing through the motions.

To get the most out of this classic mountain scenery, my advice is to break the Maumturks up into three

(or four) sections, depending on the conditions of the day and/or your experience. These are only ideas, but in my view the three eastern Maumturks – Binn Mhór, Mullach Glas and Corcóg – could be tackled as a linear point-to-point walk requiring two cars (or a car and a bicycle) or a mammoth circuit starting from the bend in the road at L894491.

The middle Maumturks, traditionally the hardest, can be broken up into one or two circuitous walks involving a combination of any of these summits: Binn Bhriocáin, Cnoc na hUilleann, Binn Idir an Dá Log and Binn Chaonaigh. I have used slopes leading to cols at Mám Éan (the one due north of Cnoc na hUilleann) and Mám Ochioge in the past as access points, the Western Way to Cillín Phádraig (and holy well) as a high-point to trudge up the steep slopes of Binn Chaonaigh, and the northwest spur from Gowlaunard as an escape route, over several occasions in the past.

Last but not least, the grassy and boggier section of the Maumturks comprising Meall Dubh, or 'black knoll,' can be attempted rather easily by striking south/southeast from the Western Way towards Bucán. Another good reason to break the Maumturks up into sections is that a well deserved pint (or pints) may be enjoyed at the end of each rewarding day.

You don't really have to be a Joe Simpson of the hillwalking fraternity to scale peaks or enjoy rewarding views in Connemara. There are easier and lower hilltops, such as Maolan, Cnoc Breac, Maolchnoc and Binn Ghuaire, that may be attempted using the standard guidebooks or descriptions from the Mountain Views website (www.mountainviews.ie), a

database of 400m to 600m+ mountains in Ireland).

Two 500m+ hills that I strongly recommend are Duchruach and Binn Chuanna. Both of these summits offer sensational views and can be done as a V-shaped circuit starting/ending at the Our Lady of the Wayside chapel in Creeragh.

Duchruach rises steeply above Kylemore Abbey and has a broad top composed of hummocky outcrops of rock splattered with small lakes; it has a summit cairn that can be navigationally tricky to find in thick mist.

Binn Chuanna, on the other hand, is a lovely little hill whose summit offers magnificent views in all directions. The unmistakable island of Inis Toirc sits proudly in the Atlantic and there are a host of rocky islets to be seen. To its north, Loch Muc, An Caoláire Rua and the massive bulk of Cnoc Maol Réidh dominate. To the northeast, Loch Fidh sweeps the foreground with the big hills of Binn Ghorm and Cnoc Shiofra behind. And to the south/southeast, the majestic quartzite mountains of Connemara are a sight to behold.

But Connemara is not only about mountains. Tim Robinson, in his book *Connemara: Listening To The Wind*, describes Roundstone Bog, with its 143 lakes and multitude of ghost stories, as follows:

"I can stand on the little summit just above the ruined house for an overview of all the complications of the land and water I have described – dazzling when the sun is in the south, as if half a sky had been shredded and strewn over black earth, impossible to read as a geography of named and storied places, and scarcely to be believed in as a reality, an interweave of death and life, that can, with care, be walked across safely."

On the Celtic fringe of Europe, and with its mountains, bogs, lakes, rivers, glens and intricately indented rocky coast, Connemara is a landscape so rich in scenery that it can be almost considered as a world of its own. The west's awake! ■

Adrian Hendroff is an MCI member and enjoys hillwalking. Besides the Irish hills, he has climbed in England, Wales and Scotland. His mountain travels abroad have taken him to Iceland, Romania, the French Alps, the Pyrenees and the Dolomites.

The Coomloughra Horseshoe

Lee Campbell takes on Caher, Carrauntoohil and Beenkeragh

Still drying out from a horrendous downpour experienced on the hills the previous afternoon, the blue skies and light winds of the new day were a welcome relief. In contrast, from the top of Cnoc na Péiste the previous day, you could barely see 20 feet in front of you and you could forget about getting any dramatic views of the McGillicuddy's Reeks!

Today couldn't have been more different. Although the weather forecast had been good, my cynicism had got the better of me as I turned in for the night after the soaking on the Eastern Ridge. However, the storms finally blew off at around 5:00am, leaving a beautiful morning to wake up to. Well-stocked up with a full Irish breakfast in Killorglin, we set off for the traditional starting point for the Coomloughra Horseshoe – the Hydro Road. This abandoned quarry path (no cars can access it) can be found just off the main road, northeast

of Lough Acoose. Parking is limited, though, but fortunately, as this was early October, walkers and cars were thin on the ground.

The Hydro Road was a steep and tough start to the morning after the seven-hour slog 24 hours earlier. After passing a couple of barred gates, the views to the northwest and the Dingle peninsula started to open up. Mount Brandon could be seen in the distance with its characteristic tuft of mist just obscuring the summit. As it was a clear day, the air was crisp with a definite autumn bite to it.

Soon enough, we reached the mouth of the smallest of the three loughs – Lough Íochtair. Only now was the full horseshoe circuit visible – and what a sight it was! Caher, Carrauntuohil and Beenkeragh were all in clear view – not something that is too often seen in this part of the world. Many experienced hillwalkers have trodden this ground countless times, tortured by the Kerry mists, and returned home having seen nothing. We were going to tackle the Coomloughra horseshoe, starting with Caher, onto Carrantuohil and then Beenkeragh. Once on the ridge, we would not drop below 950m until we started our final descent. The horseshoe can also be attempted in

the opposite direction, making for an easier descent from Caher.

Turning southwest over some boggy ground, we climbed a gentle slope that led directly to the shoulder of Caher. Upon reaching the start of the ridge, the ground was already beginning to dry out and become rockier. As we climbed, the wind started to pick up a little. However, there were no signs that the fine weather was going to turn in the next few hours – it was perfect walking weather. As we ascended the wide ridge, the dizzying drop to our left above Loughs Com Lothair (from which the walk gets its name) and Eighter became apparent. After a few pauses for photographs, the ground became increasingly steep and the boulder-strewn path narrowed as we climbed. It was now a case of head down and push ahead to reach Caher, the first summit of the day and Ireland's third highest peak (1,001m).

Caher consists of three tops, the first of which is marked with a small stone shelter which is actually a shrine. As we took our last few strides to the first top, the scenery in all directions was magnificent – you could truly see for hundreds of miles. The eastern ridge of the Reeks was straight ahead with the Black Valley

Towards Caher at the start of the Coomloughra Horseshoe.
Photo:
Lee Campbell.

and Cork mountains filling the frame far and wide. We decided to push on for Caher's true summit where we would stop for lunch. Any wind had now almost died away. It was October, but the temperature felt more like June. Indeed, we were quickly running out of superlatives to describe the views and our luck with the weather!

Lunch came and went all too quickly as it was difficult to leave such a dramatic resting spot. Navigational skills were certainly not required today and the ridge path ahead was very clear. To our left, the three loughs lay hundreds of feet below, leading the eye back to the starting point of the walk at the top of the Hydro Road. The rocky descent from Caher brings you to a col between it and Carrauntuohil. From here, the volume of walkers increased considerably, with many making their way up from the Hag's Glen and the Devil's Ladder. Both routes converge just before the final slope towards the summit of Ireland's highest peak (1,039m). The summit was crammed with Sunday walkers and some four-legged companions.

From here, the route to Beenkeragh looked impossible. The knife-edge ridge between Ireland's two highest

Climbing Carrauntuohil.
Photo: Lee Campbell.



New discounts for MCI members

WE ARE delighted to announce three new discounts available to MCI members:

Snow+Rock (10%*)

Snow+Rock recently opened their first store in Ireland at Dundrum Town Centre, Dublin. The store, comprising 14,500 sq ft arranged over two floors, has a full range of snow sports and outdoor products including ski, snow-boarding hardware and climbing equipment.

Snow and Rock, Unit 3.2-4.2, Dundrum Town Centre, Dundrum, Dublin 14.

Web: www.snowandrock.com

* Discount only available on hillwalking and mountaineering items in the store.



Map and Compass (10%)

Map and Compass, outdoor equipment retailers, offer a shopping experience second to none, with highly trained professional staff who are walkers themselves.

Map and Compass outlets:

- 5 Church Street, Gorey, Co Wexford
- Cornmarket, Wexford, Co Wexford
- O'Connell Street, Clonmel, Co Tipperary.

Web: www.outdoorclothingireland.com



Sleepzone (20% & 10%*)

Sleepzone has outlets in the Burren and in Connemara. In the Burren, Sleepzone is situated in the spa town of Lisdoonvarna where it boasts close proximity to some of Ireland's most famous areas of natural beauty. In Connemara, Sleepzone is spectacularly situated in the heart of the region, overlooking Killary harbour, Ireland's only fjord.

Sleepzone locations:

- The Burren, Budget Accommodation, Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare
- Connemara, Budget Accommodation, Leenane, Co Galway

Web: www.sleepzone.ie

* Discount of 20% applies from November 1st until March 31st, 10% discount applies from April 1st through October 31st.

Remember, you must show your valid MCI Card to avail of these and all other MCI discounts. Additional retailers are being added all the time to the list of discounts.

● For full list of discounts, see pages 61-62, or visit the MCI website www.mountaineering.ie for updates.





peaks had only been a spectacular sight most of the day until this point. Now it had become a dizzying reality which had to be crossed. We descended from Carrauntuohil's summit cross and began to follow the relatively steep path downward that would lead us onto the ridge itself. Once on the ridge the path picked its way left and right, providing some magical views into the Hag's Glen and of the iconic rock formation of the Hag's Tooth at the head of the valley. There were a couple of noticeable gullies along the way which provided steep access points directly onto the ridge from the Glen.

The high point of the ridge (959m), which consisted of a number of large rock slabs, was the most challenging part of the route. We were fortunate that in such good weather the rock was dry with the numerous footholds presenting no major problems to anyone in the group. The ridge then dropped down onto a small col where we began our ascent to the summit of Beenkeragh. This col offered one of the best perspectives of the day, with the ridge in all its glory and the cross of Carrauntuohil still visible. It is

understandable how this would be an intimidating and exhilarating sight for those descending from Beenkeragh when tackling the horseshoe in the opposite direction. The summit of Beenkeragh (1,010m) came quickly after the excitement of the ridge.

The descent from Beenkeragh was awkward as it went over some large rock and loose shale where careful footing was required. Following this, the route over the three final peaks was significantly gentler. The first peak that we came to was Stuaic Bharr na hAbhann (851m) and after a short dip and a climb we reached the rocky top of Skregmore (848m) which framed some final views of the horseshoe and its lofty peaks and ridges. We felt sorry to be leaving the hills after such a magical day.

Following the short clamber up the smallest and last peak, Cnoc Íochtair (747m), one last sting in the tail was the descent to Lough Íochtair below. Unfortunately, I wasn't carrying any walking sticks and my legs and knees had little strength left to deal with the steep slopes covered in thick heather. However, after a few stumbles, the ground eventually flattened out to the

lough. The icy water at the dam was a deserved tonic after our eight-hour circuit.

From here it was a half-hour walk back down the Hydro Road to where we had left our cars, which would take us back to Killorglin. The light was now starting to fade and, as we made our journey back to the town, the Reeks were bathed in a warm autumn glow. There would be plenty to discuss over a few pints that evening! ■

Lee Campbell is a member of the MCI and of the Mourne Ramblers Club.

Carrauntuohil and Beenkeragh.
Photo: Harry Goodman.

“This col offered one of the best perspectives of the day, with the Beenkeragh ridge in all its glory and the Carrauntuohil cross still visible.”

The team's tracks stretching back over the Antarctic horizon.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.

Journey to the South Pole

Kevin Dempsey returns to Antarctica to walk in the footsteps of Amundsen and Scott.

"We wanted to experience what those great explorers had gone through in their quest for the geographic South Pole."

The giant, Russian-crewed Ilyushin 76 cargo plane finally came to a halt 2km from where it first touched down on the blue-ice runway at ALE's Patriot Hills seasonal base deep in Antarctica's frozen wastelands. The passengers disembarked into the dazzling sunlight and took their first tentative steps into a strange new world. Among them, on my third visit to Antarctica, I thought, 'It's good to be back!'

It was Tuesday, December 4th 2007, and I also thought back to almost 12 months before to the day when, with my fellow climbers, I had escaped from Antarctica's icy grip, retreating from Mount Vinson in a katabatic storm (See IML 86, *Retreat from Mount Vinson*), fighting for a number of days

to stay alive in the eye of a storm high on Mt Vinson following a serious crevasse accident.

Now, I was back for some unfinished business. I still wanted to live my dream of "Walking Lightly in the Footsteps of Amundsen and Scott," and to experience just a little of what those great explorers went through in their quest for their holy grail – the geographic South Pole at 90 Degrees South.

Saturday, Dec 8th 2007, 1:00am.
Just short of the 89th Degree South.
2,600m above sea level.
Bright sunshine, wind 6 mph,
temperature -35°C.
Conditions: 'Good.'

The Twin Otter that had dropped us off disappeared from sight and, in an instant, the full realisation of where we were settled on us. There was no

going back now and we could not afford any mishaps in this, the most desolate and harshest of places on our planet. We were on our own and on our way to the South Pole.

Pat Falvey and his Irish team had already set out on their marathon 50+ day journey from Hercules Inlet to the Pole, but by flying to 89° South, or 'the Last Degree' (i.e. one degree short of the Pole), we had leap-frogged ahead of them and were now the team furthest south so far this season. A Last Degree journey is a 'light' version of the classic full traverse of the Polar Ice Cap but is not to be underestimated. Being suddenly dropped into an extreme environment so deep into Antarctica is a shock to the body and mind, and you have no time to acclimatise or adjust. Because of the latitude we were at, the relative altitude was closer to 3,600m, so the lack of oxygen was an immediate problem, along with the 24hr daylight and the -35°C temperature. Because of these factors, the best way to approach a Last Degree journey is to treat it like a sprint and to get stuck in from day one and just go for it!

Typically, a Last Degree journey is about 120km and takes 10-12 days, but knowing that sleeping would be difficult and that our appetites would

suffer, we planned to attempt a sprint, reckoning that we could reach our objective in eight hard days without a break. In fact, seven days would have been great because we would have arrived at the Pole on December 14th, the anniversary of Amundsen's arrival.

A typical day

By 7:30am, I'm awakening from a restless night's sleep and thinking about beginning to get out of my -50°C rated goosedown sleeping bag and starting the day. By 8:00am, we're all up and, over the next two hours, we prepare and eat a hot breakfast, drink a full litre of hot tea and melt enough snow to provide about 10

litres of hot drinks for the five of us during the day ahead.

By 9:30am, these tasks are all done, we've packed up our personal gear and started to move outside. Getting all our protective clothing and boots on in the confines of a small tent is a routine that we get used to very quickly. We now have about 15-20 minutes to get the two tents down, get the sleds loaded up, get our skis on and be ready to start the day's hauling at 10:00am.

At 10:00am, we start hauling. Not at 9.59 or 10.01, but at 10.00 on the dot. Routines are very important and everything is timed down to the last minute. In single file formation, like ducks in a line, compass aimed at 90 Degrees South, we head off.

We take as straight a line as the sometimes formidable sastrugi [wind-formed ridges of snow] will allow us to, our skis gliding, sliding and scraping along beneath our insulated boots. Our laden sleds, attached to us by ropes that are like umbilical cords, bob and crash, up and over the crusty sastrugi, pulling and dragging on us for hour after hour.

After 50 minutes – not 49 or 51, but 50 on the dot – the signal goes up from the front man that we are stopping for our ten-minute break. The lead man pulls to one side and we all then line up side by side. Without removing our skis, we sit on our sleds with backs to the ever present wind

Tim Hewette has a welcome cup of tea.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.



The Twin Otter departs against the midnight sun after dropping the team off at the Last Degree (89°S) on the 8th of December 2007.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.



"Being suddenly dropped deep into Antarctica is a shock to the body and mind."



Heading for the South Pole.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.

and unzip the sled cover. We slip on our down jackets, grab some snack bars, chocolate or whatever, and get some much-needed fluids on board. When we are replenished, we might take a few photos before getting our down jackets off and packing them away. Then we have a quick pee (an unpleasant procedure in these temperatures!), adjust our clothing and protective face masks and we are ready to roll again.

Get all this done in 9 minutes 59 seconds and we are ready to move off again, 10 minutes after we first stopped. Mistime it and we could be standing around for a few minutes, getting cold.

For 8-9 hours every day the routine is exactly the same. During the 50 minutes of marching and hauling, conversation with our team mates is impossible because of the lack of

vision and the noise of the wind, skis and sleds, so each of us fills those 50 minutes with our own thoughts on our chosen 'subject of the hour or day.' If you don't have something to think about, your mind wanders, doubts creep in, tiredness overtakes you and you start to feel the pressure. Best to keep your mind busy. Even during the ten-minute breaks, there is little conversation as each of us hurries to get sufficient food and drink on board.

At 6:00 or 7:00pm (on the dot), regardless of where exactly we are because the terrain never varies, the lead man's hand goes up and we stop for the 'night,' moving seamlessly into our end-of-day routine.

Working as a team, within 30 minutes we have the two tents up, the sleds unloaded and secured against the wind, our gear in the tents and a

toilet pit dug. Then we start the never-ending process of melting snow for a brew up, preparing and eating dinner, and sorting ourselves out.

Two hours after we stop, we can settle down for a quick read, a game of cards and a bit of laughter and banter before it's time for the eye shades and the much-needed sleep to ease legs and backs that are tired from burning up the 4-5,000 calories that we eat during the 8-9 hours of hard physical effort, along with the 2-3 hours spent breaking and setting up our camp each day. We live like nomads, moving our home on a daily basis. After seven hours' sleep, we start the daily routine all over again.

Every day, I take 30-60 minutes before bed to write my daily website report, attaching a few photos and using the HET expedition communications kit to get it emailed off to everyone logged on to receive the daily news bulletin from the ice world that is Antarctica.

Regardless of the weather, or whatever trials or problems we may encounter, we simply have to make some progress every day. We cannot sit out bad weather days, no matter how bad they are. Rest days are out – we can have all the sleep we want when we have achieved our objective. If we do this every day for 8-12 days without much variance, we will reach the South Pole. Sound easy?

A recent report by an accomplished climber after a Last Degree trip described it as being as physically tough as doing a 7,000m peak summit day...every day for 10 days in a row. Mentally, it's tougher than that and, in my experience, success on any polar travel expedition is all about overcoming the mental challenge!

Friday, Dec 14th 2007

We must be close now, but in this white-out we can't see more than 2-3m ahead. Then, as if by magic, at about 3:30pm, the low-lying cloud cover lifted for about an hour and, with eyes straining the horizon, we searched for 'Our First Sighting.' We'd been told to expect to be able to see three tiny black dots close together from about 25km out.

Suddenly, the man at the front shouts out: "There, there it is... The South Pole Station... two or three dots on the horizon dead ahead!"

We all stopped dead in our tracks, staring ahead. Then, one by one, we all roared out, "Yes! Yes!... I can see

them!” But they couldn’t be 25km away. That was another day and a half of marching and hauling?

We continued for another three hours after that sighting, before setting up camp, as once again the cloud descended and enveloped us, wiping out our view of the holy grail. That night, we went to bed like excited six-year-olds on Christmas Eve, unable to sleep with the expectation of our dreams being fulfilled the following day. In some ways, deep down inside each of us, a part of us didn’t want this quest to end...what would life be like when the years of wondering, planning and waiting were all over?

Saturday, Dec 15th 2007

We were up and off in record time today but soon had to settle back into our steady, even-paced routine. We were still a very tiring day away and increasing the pace now would mean pain later in the day. So patience was called for.

We were in a complete white-out again, which was probably a good thing because the little black dots would have seemed to be moving away from us if we had had sight of them all day long.

All day long, I imagined we were Scott’s polar party, moving step by step closer to our goal. Scott, Evans, Oates, Bowers and Wilson all together. Now we were so close that we could

smell it in the air. My mind worked overtime on trying to get a sense of what had gone through the minds of my heroes during their final day of marching.

By 4:00pm, we knew we had to be close.

Then suddenly the ground beneath us seemed to level off and become carpet-like in its smoothness. We realised that, in the misty gloom, we were now actually standing on the runway at the South Pole used by the giant Hercules aircraft, hopefully not just now!

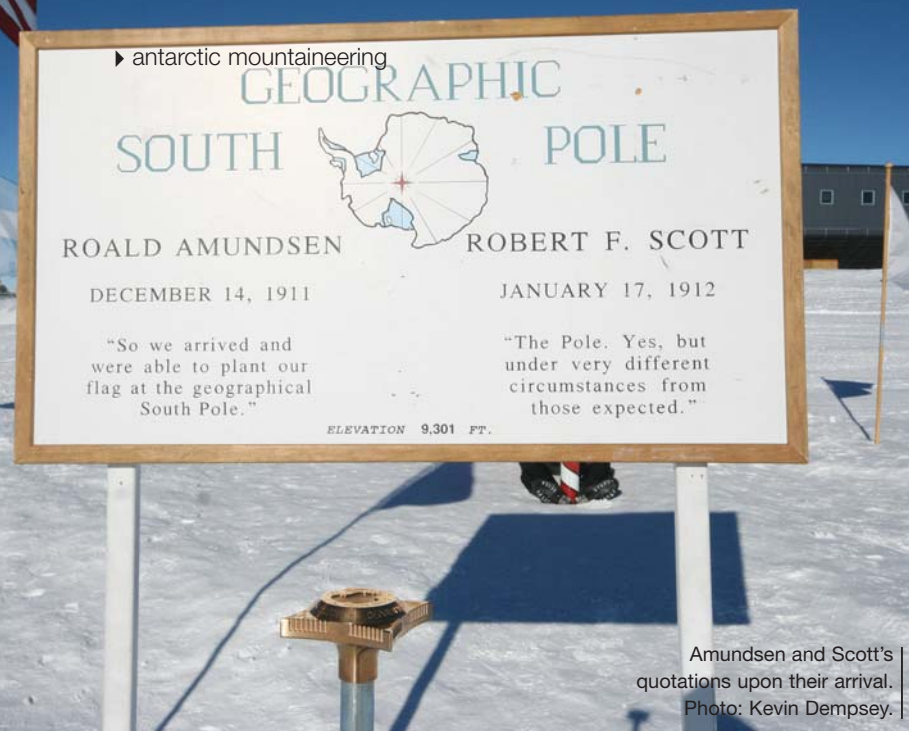
My heart raced, bursting to get out from my chest. I stopped along with my team mates as we lined up side by side, staring into the fog, searching for a sighting of the South Pole marker. Someone was looking down on us

The dreaded sastrugi. A frozen choppy sea of snow ridges. Photo: Kevin Dempsey.

Nomads in the Antartic wasteland.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.



“We could see the South Pole, but it was still a day and a half of marching and hauling away.”



Amundsen and Scott's quotations upon their arrival.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.



The ceremonial South Pole marker.
Photo: Kevin Dempsey.

Fact file

Trip organisers

You can book this trip through Jagged-Globe in the UK (www.jagged-globe.co.uk) which has a longstanding relationship with Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions (ALE), the ground operators. You can also book directly with ALE (www.antarctic-logistics.com), the only fully approved and licenced operator in Antarctica and which provides the logistics for virtually all private expeditions and research operations there.

Timing

The Antarctic season is short and for Last Degree expeditions the time period is end November to mid-January. You must allow a minimum of 3 weeks for the trip plus a week for getting to and from Punta Arenas, say 4 weeks in total. Delays are a part of life on Antarctica and you could be stuck there for an extra couple of weeks.

Cost

The cost of a Last Degree trip is c \$42,000, excluding the cost of travel to Chile and accommodation while there, which may cost about an extra \$3,000. Then you have to add the cost of any specialist gear and clothing that you may need to buy, say another c \$2000.

Tips

For travel to and from Punta Arenas (Chile), I would advise avoiding going through the US and Homeland Security. Jagged-Globe can organise all of this for you. For other information check out the experts in extreme adventure travel and expedition communications kits: www.thepoles.com.

kindly that day because within minutes the gloom started to lift. We all looked along the line at one another, giving thumbs-up signals, with wide grins and tears in our eyes. Then we started on the final 400m towards the Pole marker, which was now visible and beckoning us towards it.

Step by step, we eventually got there and, as we gathered around the marker, we burst out into a strange but wonderful mixture of whoops of joy and tears, jumping around on our skis and pumping our tired arms into the heavens above.

The time was 16:26 hours on Saturday, December 15th, 2007, a moment frozen in time for ever for me and locked away for instant recall whenever I wish to go back there.

By South Pole Station time it was 8:26am, and within minutes of our arrival we had been spotted by the 'Polies' at the station. We were the first team to arrive at the South Pole that season and we were welcomed as heroes.

We then spent a most surreal 36 hours at the South Pole, during which I made no attempt to get any sleep. I wanted to savour every moment of this experience before we began our long multi-airlift homeward journey. We hand-cut blocks of ice from the ground, built and opened 'Paddy McGinty's Irish Bar' and celebrated in style with our new friends, the Polies. The temperature was a balmy -30°C, at which the beer in our bottles froze unless supped copiously.

Before our departure, I left a bottle

of Jameson's Irish whiskey, which I had carried with me all the way, for Pat Falvey to receive on his arrival in a few weeks' time. He assured me afterwards that he and his team enjoyed every single drop of the golden nectar.

What else can I say about this incredible journey? It was a hard-won battle and took some time to achieve, but it was worth every moment of the hardship. It was one of my Big Dreams fulfilled and now it's on to live out the remaining dreams on my ever expanding list. My belief is that you should live your dreams because no one else is going to do it for you. ■

Kevin Dempsey Kevin is a member of the Beanna Beola Hillwalking Club. He has been on numerous trips to the Alpine 4,000m peaks and has also climbed in Bolivia and Chile. He participated in expeditions to Antarctica in 2004, 2006 and 2007 and plans to go to the North Pole in 2009. For further information about Kevin's expedition, check out www.south2thepole.com or you can contact him on kevin@kdd.ie.



A Moroccan winter ascent

Deirdre McCarthy climbs North Africa's highest peak

Jebel Toubkal, at 4,167m, is the highest mountain in Morocco and in North Africa. Situated in southwestern Morocco, it forms part of the Atlas mountain range which extends about 2,400km across northwest Africa, through Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and separates the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastlines from the Sahara Desert.

While Morocco would normally conjure up thoughts of camels, sand dunes and blistering heat, the idea of making a winter ascent of Mt Toubkal necessitated packing crampons and ice axes and multiple thermals instead of sarongs and sandals. And so it was with this somewhat paradoxical kit list that Claire Michael, Aoife Byrne and I escaped the turkey sandwiches and touched down in Marrakech on St Stephen's Day for a winter mountaineering trip to the wilds of Morocco.

Marrakech is indeed everything you have ever heard about and so much more. The chaos of the main square, Djemaa el-Fna, provides one of the

world's most 'must see' spectacles. From vendors selling everything from dried fruit, sheeps' heads and mint tea laced with enough sugar to rot your grandmother's false teeth, to storytellers, snake charmers and benign lunatics, it is all there.

We, however, had a task in hand and, after stocking up on supplies, headed promptly to join the rest of our group. Our group was headed by Irish mountain guide Des Clark, whose company, Nomadic Morocco, has been running all types of mountaineering and trekking trips in Morocco since 2000. After haggling with a one-toothed Berber (the indigenous peoples of the Atlas Mountains), he escorted us in his taxi, a clapped-out jalopy of a Mercedes, to Imlil, a small outpost in the heart of the Mizane Valley, which, at 1,740m, is the most popular trailhead in Morocco. It was also the location for Martin Scorsese's 1997 film *Kundun*, which depicted the life of the Dalai Lama.

Here in Imlil, we got our first taste of the cold nights which lay ahead, as we slept in a little guesthouse in our down sleeping bags, each beneath three woollen blankets. The Richard Branson-owned hotel, about 10km

down the valley, was regrettably slightly outside our budget.

The following day, we set out along a mule track that took us out of Imlil up through walnut groves and past another exclusive hotel called Kasbah's, for those who wish to ensure that a trip to the mountains does not involve skimping on creature comforts. This part of Morocco is predominantly Muslim and very traditional. This, coupled with the chilly day-time temperatures, meant the head scarves we had brought with us came in very useful. As we ambled along, we passed the little Berber village of Aroumd, where young children played along the path and people worked in the terraced fields. This insight into rural Moroccan life was a pleasant respite from the hustle and bustle of Marrakech.

As we left the valley floor and trekked along the zig-zag trail the expanse of the Atlas Mountains was exposed for the first time. It seemed to stretch as far as the eye could see. We met very few tourists along the way, only stopping occasionally to side-step mules ambling upwards with loads for the refuge ahead of us. By late afternoon we had reached the snowline. Within minutes, the sun

Mt Toubkal
in winter.

Deirdre McCarthy, Claire Michael and Aoife Byrne on Mount Toubkal.
Photo: Deirdre McCarthy collection.



had slipped behind the clouds and temperatures had dropped dramatically. However, we had reached our destination for the day, the Nelter refuge at 3,207m, which was to be our base for the next four to five days. By far the most frequently used of all mountain refuges in the Atlas, its popularity is due largely to its location at the foot of Mt Toubkal. It is open throughout the year, although new snow can make it harder to reach in winter. The Nelter refuge is named after a French climber and geologist who helped raise money for the original construction. Campsites are available for those wishing to camp in summer months. We, on the other hand, were availing of the indoor facilities and a sumptuous meal of couscous and tagine awaited us, with copious amounts of mint tea on hand to combat the evening chills.

Our next day, New Year's Eve, was a 6:00am start, a somewhat civilised hour compared to that of Alpine starts. For some, it was their first time using crampons and they fumbled in the morning's icy temperatures. For others, it was like tying shoe-laces with a quick tie-in and away you go.

“We stood on the highest point in North Africa with a panorama of mountains as far as the eye could see.”

Mt Ouanoukrim

Our mission for the day was to climb the Ouanoukrim peaks, considered a good warm up for Mt Toubkal. Ouanoukrim is the second highest mountain in the Atlas and it consists of two summits: the North summit (4,083m), known as Ras n'Ouanoukrim, and the slightly higher South summit, called Timesguida (4,088m). An easy scree field separates the two summits.

From the refuge, we headed up a snow field and, with daybreak just upon us, coupled with good snow conditions underfoot, progress was steady. With no need to be roped up, we ambled onwards and upwards. We weren't long passing some other groups up ahead, mainly wheezing Britons who seemed for some strange reason to have forgotten their crampons. As the sun now radiated overhead we emerged from the valley and were greeted on top of the col by an absolutely stunning view. For miles upon miles mountain tops stretched as far as the horizon, most with unpronounceable Arabic names, and it made us realise that we were barely tapping what Morocco had to offer in terms of trekking and climbing.

From the col, we ascended up along a rocky ridge, which provided some excellent scrambling and a nice drop on either side to remind us to concentrate. After a while the gradient relented and a vast scree slope opened up. From there it was a hop, skip and a jump to the summit. Temperatures had by late morning warmed

considerably, but the multiple layers were staying on. With not a cloud in the sky, the summit of Ouanoukrim afforded a wonderful 360-degree panorama of mountains to gaze at. Perched on the summit, we also had a perfect view across to Mt Toubkal and were able to clearly see our intended route for the following day. The descent took no time at all and was even quicker with the lure of a three-course spread awaiting us at the refuge.

As we seemed to have thought of everything except a hip flask, we were left with little option but to have a somewhat sombre New Year's Eve and, along with the rest of the refuge's occupants, we were curled up in our sleeping bags by 9:30pm to ward off the -10°C outside temperatures that seemed to permeate through every nook and cranny in the not-so-well insulated refuge! However, it is not what we did for New Year's Eve that counts, but what we did on New Year's Day itself.

Mt Toubkal

Up again by 6:00am, we left the refuge before any other group and snaked our way up towards Mt Toubkal along a route called South Cwm. The steepest climb was at the beginning and, once that got us warmed up, we plodded along at a steady pace, enjoying the view down the valley from the opposite side to the day before. Once again the sunshine was most welcome to ease the early morning chills. We were amazed that even on this snow-covered terrain birds abounded and chirped incessantly, venturing daringly close for any crumbs of food. As we made it to the col below the well-defined path to the summit, we stopped to gaze down some amazing gullies. They looked like they could provide some serious fun for ice climbers if they froze over, which apparently they do every now and again.

As we neared the summit, Des directed a few of us along a little detour and we found ourselves edging along a little ridge while peering down a rather steep and expansive drop. It added to the excitement, of course, and we were all more than game to get off the main route to the summit for a wee while. Throughout, Des was on hand to answer our endless questions about the area, its



Stone-built
refuges
used at
base camp.

mountains and peoples, rattling off the name of any mountain top, gully or protruding spur we pointed to, highlighting the knowledge of the area he has acquired over his years as a guide and a resident of Morocco.

We headed to the summit to rejoin the rest of our group and as we gazed at our surroundings we realised that this really was a fantastic way to start the New Year, standing on the highest point in North Africa with a panorama of mountains stretched out before us as far as the eye could see.

It turns out we weren't the only clever Irish with notions of spending New Years in a far-flung land. That night, all around the refuge Irish accents could be heard, with card games aplenty and the usual coincidence of someone knowing half your relations or friends of friends.

Mt Akioud

The next day, while the rest of our group headed back to Marrakech for some well-deserved luxury and pampering, Aoife, Claire and I, not quite finished with what this wonderful area had to offer, decided to stay on for another climb. We went up a mountain called Akioud (4,010m), which is the next peak north from Ouanoukrim. Although there were tracks in the snow already, we were the only ones on the route that day and the sheer tranquillity of our surroundings was blissful, affording plenty of scope to set out those New Year resolutions and, most importantly, plan where we will spend next New Year's Eve.

Our trek down the valley the next day followed the same route back to

Imlil and on to Marrakesh. While our trip could also have been done in summer, it is an entirely different experience in winter as much of the snow-covered terrain we walked over turns into interminable scree slopes during the summer months. Climbing Mt Toubkal and its surrounding peaks in winter is a great introduction to mountaineering, providing the basics of crampon and ice axe use, some rocky ridge scrambling and, most importantly, an insight into how your body functions at altitude, as circa 4,000m is certainly high enough to induce altitude sickness.

We left Morocco with a strong sense that we will definitely be returning. Morocco is a veritable playground for the outdoor enthusiast. It not only has enough mountains to explore for years, it also has thousands of

kilometres of ocean coast, making it a destination for surfing, kite-surfing, mountain-biking, trekking and even skiing. Added to that, it is definitely the closest non-western country you can get to from Ireland. At just a three-hour flight from Gatwick (and now direct flights from Dublin to Agadir with Ryanair), you can have breakfast in Dublin and be in Morocco in time for lunch! ■

Deirdre McCarthy was a member of the Millennium Youth Initiative run by the MCI in 1999 and has been traipsing up and down mountains on various continents ever since! She is currently a member of MCI's Board of Directors.

• For more information, check out www.nomadicmorocco.com.

Deirdre McCarthy
en route to Mt
Jebel Toubkal.
Photo: Deirdre
McCarthy
collection.



TrainingLog

The latest advice and information from Tim Orr, MCI Training Officer



TIM'S BLOGSPOT

When I was working as a mountain training provider, I had a mantra that stayed with me through my work: "When I stop enjoying my chosen profession, I will move on to something new and hold on to mountaineering as a hobby." I still think this is a sound bit of advice for all

instructors, trainers and leaders. If they don't enjoy it any more, then it's time to move on. Introducing others to the mountains should be done with passion, enthusiasm and understanding. I should quickly point out that this is not the reason I took on the job of MCI Training Officer. That was based on a genuine interest in developing mountain training in Ireland. I saw it as an opportunity to create a network of support for trainees and trainers alike. I saw a need for someone to delve into the depths of an administrative process to support all sides, from professional mountain training providers to casual ramblers.

An important aspect of providing this support for mountain training is to try to ensure it has adequate funding. To that end, a significant part of my work recently has been devoted to completing the 2009 submission to the Irish Sports Council for training support grants, a process that caused more than a little anxiety. It is now finally completed, signed and delivered. With the anticipation one feels when caught in the middle of a Scottish snow gully on a fifty metres run-out, surrounded by swirls of spindrift, loose, brittle rock, we must now wait to see what the economic times we live in will bring.

Even if these are turbulent times financially, as motivated escapists, we will have more and more reason to take to the hills and seek out the challenges that attract us to our sport, whatever form they take. The year ahead is already looking to be a full one, the busiest yet for mountain training within the MCI. With our four seasonal meets, numerous regional workshops, free taster sessions nationwide and the usual platter of BOS training and assessment courses being run in just about every upland region, it's time to start planning where, when and what new horizon you will be striving for in the coming year.

Find out more about training

If you visit the Training and Safety section of the MCI website, www.mountaineering.ie, you will find the complete guide to what is going on in the world of mountain training. With regular updates and new information added regularly, this dynamic section of the MCI website should hopefully assist and inspire you to get involved and develop your skills.

BOS headings Here you will find all the information required to assist you through the more formal structure of BOS awards and qualifications. Information on types and levels of training, lists of approved training providers' contact details and information about upcoming courses and assessment are all there under these headings.

MCI headings Information about mountaineering meets, training workshops and free taster sessions will be found under the MCI headings of the Training and Safety section. These are regularly updated to provide members with the most up to date sources of information and reports on all events taking place.

Training headings Under the training headings, we have presented all other kinds of mountain training and safety issues and events: everything from downloadable application forms and syllabi to top tips from our training providers. We have also built a dedicated area for those of you who deliver training to others. For those of you wishing to get a little more involved with the ins and outs of the mountain training structure and to have your voice heard, you will find plenty of opportunity under the "Current Open Issues" section within the Training Providers section.

Please take the opportunity in your own time to visit these sections, work your way through the pages and see what you can find. If you need further information or have suggestions about what else needs to be presented, let us know in the MCI Training Office and we will see what we can do about getting that information onto the website.

Volunteer Training Officers on workshop in Co Wicklow.
Photo: Tim Orr.





Participants in the Volunteer Training Officers' Workshop held in Co-Wicklow.
Photo: Tim Orr.

Despite the soggy weather, spirits remain undampened in the Training Office. The paper mountains are gradually being scaled and regular dispatches from the outside world indicate that, outside our sealed cube, mountain training – both formal and informal – continues to thrive.

Mountain Skills

The newly regenerated **Mountain Skills** scheme has been the main focus of attention. While the three-stage structure of the training scheme will remain largely the same, the new candidate course pack, including a log book, and new methods of course reporting will ensure a more substantial identity for the MS course as an award in its own right. Considering the huge number of Mountain Skills course and assessment reports that are flooding into the Training Office, the newly regenerated scheme is proving extremely popular with providers and candidates alike.

Other mountain training schemes are also attracting record numbers of registrations and 2008 looks set to surpass any previous year in the number of candidates undertaking formal training. Recognition must be paid to the work of our providers whose enthusiasm has ensured the continued popularity of BOS courses.

Forthcoming events

The Training and Safety section of the MCI website is the first port of call for walkers and climbers looking for information about forthcoming courses, workshops and events. From training tips to registration

forms, the BOS webpages are a great resource for your mountain training needs. Further details about the 2009 Scottish Winter Meet are also there.

Volunteer trainers

There is a new page on the website for Volunteer Training Officers, the **VTO** section. Establishing a Volunteer Training Officer network throughout Ireland's walking and climbing clubs may seem like a very tall order. Our aim to have trained individuals willing to pass on informal mountain training within each club is, however, one step closer to becoming reality after the great success of the two VTO weekend workshops held in November. We will be working closely in the forthcoming months with those who attended the workshops to establish such a network and will be holding a number of similar weekend workshops throughout 2009 to welcome new club VTOs.

As always, the Training Office is on hand to answer any of your mountain training queries, so please do get in touch if you have any questions or feedback.

Kate Hebblethwaite,
Training Assistant

BOS awards

The BOS providers continue to maintain the highest standards of formal training. Over recent months many new climbers have successfully gained BOS Awards. BOS would like to extend its congratulations to the following:-

Mountain Leader Award (ML)

Eva Veres	Rob Coffey
Neal McAloon	Stephen O'Shea
Mario MacRory	Pádraic Halligan
Ferghal O'Grady	Gerard Cullen

Single Pitch Award (SPA)

Michal Dorcicz	Simon Dowley
Craig Padnitz	Shane Kilcoyne
Juraj Georgievshy	Gavin Burns
Patrick Gethings	Melissa Eades
Jessie O'Connor	Ruairi Leddy
Karolina Wierzbowska	Terrance Clancy
Lisa McDonagh	Anthony Boxwell
Brian Arthur	Calliam Johnson
Derek Brady	Sarah Crowley
Rhys McAllister	Karen Kirby
Michael Maqamya	Niamh Burke
Karl Daly	

Multi Pitch Award (MPA)

Liam Calnan

Walking Group Leader Award (WGL)

Terry Lambert



MountainSkills

The BOS Single Pitch Award Scheme is aimed at those promoting and supervising rockclimbing by others. MCI Training Officer Tim Orr reports.

BOS Single Pitch Award Scheme

What is it?

The Single Pitch Award (SPA) is the recognised qualification within Ireland and the UK for rockclimbers who want to introduce and supervise others in the single-pitch rockclimbing environment. It is also currently recognised within the Republic of Ireland as the most suitable award for working within the indoor climbing wall setting. BOS, the Irish Mountain Training Board, is currently looking at introducing a specific Climbing Wall Award (CWA) which is currently available in the UK and Northern Ireland.

Who is it for?

Before booking onto an SPA training course, candidates must first register with BOS. Candidates registering with BOS must hold a minimum of one year's climbing experience, be current active lead climbers and be able to show evidence of leading at least 15 recognised climbs on traditional placed protection. The minimum age for registration is eighteen years old and an emphasis is also placed on the candidate's desire to become a supervisor and leader of others.

How long is the course?

The SPA training is run over twenty hours, usually during a two-day period. All teaching sessions are run within small groups through practical based lessons both indoors and outdoors. Through concentrated and realistic workshops, trainees gain individual guidance and



Participants in the recent Mountain Leader Refresher Workshop in Connemara.
Photo: Tim Orr.

feedback from their trainer on both their own personal climbing and on the safe supervision of others.

What does the syllabus cover?

The training and assessment covers such skills as: choice of venue, rope management, correct use of equipment, group management, emergency procedures, crag etiquette, access and conservation.

Training courses will also endeavour to include an evening session at an indoor climbing wall. At the end of their training course candidates will be given a briefing plan for the required consolidation period before going forward for assessment.

Between training and assessment

This important period of consolidation is when trainee candidates develop their own personal styles and awareness of all aspects presented through the syllabus. A minimum of one year is recommended for all but the most experienced candidates, during which time they will strengthen and secure their knowledge through practical observations of other experienced SPAs. Trainee candidates must also demonstrate their continued personal development as climbers by keeping a log of their own climbing progression, and are required to present evidence of an additional minimum amount of lead climbs.

Your guide to the BOS Single Pitch Award Scheme

The SPA assessment

Similar to the training, assessment is normally run over two days. The first day of the assessment is generally given over to personal climbing and safety, where the assessor will clarify that the candidate is working above a minimum acceptable safety standard. Having reached this level and successfully demonstrated their ability and understanding of all safety issues, on the second day of assessment candidates are given a real group to supervise and look after. Under the watchful eye of the assessor, candidates are expected to organise and deliver a safe, enjoyable and progressive learning experience for their group.

On completion of the assessment each candidate will be given an individual feedback report from the director of assessment. Log books, first aid certificates and written papers will all be checked and the candidate will be presented with further training guidance and their overall assessment result of pass, defer or fail.

Who delivers the training and assessment?

The MCI does not directly run SPA training and assessment courses but



approves independent providers to do so. There are currently nine providers in the Republic of Ireland, all experienced and qualified mountaineering instructors. Through ongoing moderation of standards, the MCI and BOS are able to assure an exceptionally high standard of delivery for this important national qualification.

In Northern Ireland, the SPA scheme is overseen by Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland (MLTNI) and delivered through Tollymore Mountain Centre.

Booking and costs

A full list of upcoming SPA training and assessment dates can be found under the Training and Safety section of the MCI website. Once you have registered with BOS, the providers should be contacted directly and will look after you from there on. Courses are priced by the individual provider and are listed on the MCI website. Providers can also be contacted directly to facilitate group bookings and may also be able to arrange accommodation, food and transport for you, if necessary. ■

Frequently asked questions

What is a single pitch rockclimb?

For the purposes of this scheme a single pitch route is one which:

- is climbed without intermediate stances
- is described as single pitch in the guidebook
- is non-tidal
- is non-serious and has little objective danger
- presents no difficulties on approach or retreat, such as in route finding, scrambling or navigating.



Participants in the recent Mountain Skills Providers Workshop in Cork. (Photo: Tim Orr.)

basic rope work and introduction to climbing courses.

What grade do I need to climb at?

For training, you should be comfortable lead climbing at v. diff (vd) on leader placed protection. During the assessment you will be expected to lead climb at minimum grade of severe (S).

What training can I undertake before SPA?

All of our SPA providers also specialise in training courses to help bring you up to the pre-required level for SPA training. These courses could include learning to lead, rescue and emergency for climbers,

Where to after the SPA?

There are a number of routes that can be progressed once you have gained the SPA award, most notably the Multi Pitch Award (MPA). The MPA is again a leader/supervisory award but it specialises in allowing you to take clients into the more serious environment of the multi-pitch environment.

Beyond the SPA and MPA, candidates can complement these awards with their Mountain Leader (ML) and then later progress onto the Mountain Instructor Award (MIA).



The latest news from Aodhnait Carroll, MCI Access & Conservation Officer

How to walk and leave no trace

Considerations when planning a walking festival or challenge walk event

ALWAYS FOLLOW the Leave No Trace principles of outdoor ethics. These are as follows:

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Use the Environmental Impacts and Areas of Conservation checklist, as follows:

(i) Establish whether there are any other events planned at the same location and time. Consult with other charities that are known to have an interest in this form of fundraising. Start your planning early so that you can still change in the event of a clash of dates.

(ii) Plan and map all potential walking routes in the area of your planned event. This should be done in conjunction with local walking club representatives (where appropriate), if they are active and familiar with the terrain. The following should be taken into account when identifying your route: range of walks required, level of difficulty (type of terrain and distance), time of year (likely weather conditions, daylight hours, and availability of walkers) and walkers' ability.

(iii) Find out if the lands concerned have a legal Natural Conservation Designation. For example, the land may be part of a Natural Heritage Area or a Special Area of Conservation. This can be checked by talking to local National Parks and Wildlife staff, at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. They will advise you what to do, if this is the case.

(iv) Make an assessment of how the festival may impact on the environment. Walking festivals should be underpinned by the principle of conserving the environment. Minimising impact on fragile vegetation and soft ground is important. This type of terrain can only take small numbers and only at certain times of the year. Tramping on plants during the growing season, for example, will have a greater impact than later in the year, and untold damage can be caused by 200+ people walking along a riverbank or close to a nesting site.

(v) The Festival Committee should be mindful of and promote the principles of Leave No Trace when planning a walking festival. It should be distributed and explained to each walker and festival worker.

(vi) Take measures to limit the number of participants in the event (e.g. by using pre-booking).

(vii) Departure times could be staggered and the groups should not follow each other on the same route – this will reduce the impact on the environment. However, it is better to avoid vulnerable sections of terrain altogether.

(viii) Take into account the level of use of the area (an area that has little activity throughout the year will recover better from the impact of one large event than an area that is subject to heavy use on a regular basis).

Participants gather for the Mourne Marathon.



(ix) Does the area have a heavy seasonal tourist influx? If so, it is important to understand that there will be many other users. Bank holiday weekends must be avoided. Avoid weekend events at busy locations, especially in summer months.

(x) After each festival, in the debriefing stage, there should be an assessment of the environmental impact. This should feed into and guide the next festival. The aim should be to leave no trace of the existence or passage of the event.

The Mountaineering Council of Ireland's Environmental Policy includes a section on organising events. Remember, it isn't smaller groups that do less damage but fewer boots over the route per day. In other words, there is no difference between sending 100 people over a single route on one day and sending the same number out in five groups of 20 at intervals. The key principle is dispersal of impact (where erosion is an issue).

A challenge event gets underway.



Be Considerate of Others

Share our trails, yield to all, treat another's property as you would treat your own, let nature's sound prevail.

- Inform and consult with the relevant authorities to establish environmental and social concerns for the area. If they do not approve or support your proposal, look elsewhere or revise aspects of the event.
- Most of the countryside (including the hills) is privately owned. Ask landowners for permission to cross their land. Ensure they fully understand the nature and scale of the groups involved. Ensure all landowners are indemnified against any accident or injury that may arise from the walking festival.
- Start walks at venues with car parking. Ensure drop-off/pick-up points are accessible by coach.
- Cause no disturbance or inconvenience to the local community or environment. Consider the impact of numbers taking part on narrow roads, limited parking, toilet facilities, waste disposal, water supplies and local people. Look realistically at the capacity of the local facilities. Seek and follow local advice where necessary.
- Manage the event to avoid the accumulation of too many people at any one place or time. A challenge will probably attract numbers of spectators who may cause as much or more disturbance as the participants.
- Consider other users and be prepared to look elsewhere if your event will spoil other people's enjoyment of the area.
- Keep participants away from local settlements during antisocial hours and respect the local community.
- Consider making a donation towards environmental maintenance.
- Any damage caused by your event must be reported immediately to the landowner.

Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

- Avoid busy farming environments and land where livestock (ie sheep/cattle) are grazing.
- Local farmers can be the worst affected. Organisers must realise that the countryside is a working landscape in which people live. In particular, be aware of activities such as lambing, sowing or harvesting, and the need to close gates properly and not climb over walls or fences.

- Dogs should not be allowed on any walk where any farmland is included.

Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

- Examine the environmental impact, particularly erosion, of any route proposed.
- Consider alternative event formats with reduced impact on vulnerable terrain.
- Vary the route, e.g. arrange a number of different walks in the area; change the route from year to year.
- Consider scheduling the event for later in the year to avoid damage during the peak growth season.
- Different walks should start from different points in the area and vary each day.
- Route selection should avoid areas where it is likely that significant damage may be caused. For example, some areas can take high numbers, e.g. forest tracks, while bog areas can not.
- Ascending vulnerable sections of a route will cause less impact than descending. Consider altering route direction.
- It is not always necessary to avoid routes that are already damaged. The important thing here is for organisers to request that the walkers do not widen eroded routes by walking on the vegetated margins.
- All participants should be expected to use agreed routes and be briefed on the need to avoid the damaging impact of short cuts or crowding on footpaths.

Leave What You Find

- Introduce the Leave No Trace principle of 'Leave What You Find' to all people involved in your event.
- Are the participants aware of the value of not taking "souvenirs" away from the areas that they visit?
- Have you encouraged all your members to take photographs of interesting objects rather than taking the objects themselves?

Dispose of Waste Properly

Pack it in, pack it out

- The assistant leader, taking up the rear of each walking group, should be responsible for ensuring that no litter is deposited, especially after stops. Litter includes biodegradable items such as tea bags and fruit skins.
- Ensure all litter and markers are removed after the event.
- Try to ensure there are services at the start and finish of each walk, e.g. toilet facilities and bins for people to place their garbage.
- Are you and your club aware of the many options that are available to minimise the impact of going to the bathroom when in the out of doors?

Minimise the Effects of Fire

- If your event is in the summer months you should be aware of the fire hazard potential and alert the Fire Service of your presence and carefully brief all participants. You may wish to introduce a no smoking rule. This is not a common issue for Challenge Walks as fires are rarely lit at these events, but if you should want to light a fire, you should ensure that it will cause minimal impact.

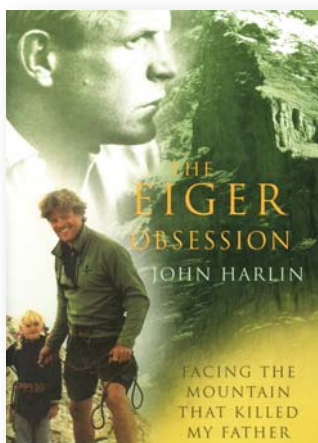
*If you are unsure about how to answer or address any of the questions above, please feel free to contact the MCI Access and Conservation Officer to organise a Leave No Trace Awareness day for your event organisers. ■

Books

Literary Editor Joss Lynam presents reviews of some recent publications.

The mountain that killed his father...

Paul Harrington



The Eiger Obsession: Facing the Mountain that Killed My Father

By John Harlin III
Hutchinson, 284pp
16pp colour photos
h/b £18.99 ISBN 978-0-091-92558-1

This is a book of two halves. The story of John Harlin II from the family perspective

occupies the first half of the book, while the second half is about his son – the author, John Harlin III, John Harlin I being the author's grandfather.

John Harlin II was famous for making the first American ascent of the 1938 route on the North Face of the Eiger. A few years later, he went back in winter and led an international team which established a second route on the face, the Harlin Direct. Sadly, John Harlin II was killed high on the face during the ascent of the route, when a fixed rope he was jumaring on gave way.

The first half of the book gives a good insight into the character of John Harlin II. Initially, the author seems harsh in describing his father's motivations and manner, particularly when one remembers how young he was at the time. But, as the chapters progress, you see the softer side of John Harlin II and his inspiration to and effect on those around him. You also see him maturing as a father and becoming more receptive towards the needs of his wife and children. As a hard-core mountaineer, he was quite rare in that he had his children at a relatively young age, his son at the age of 21

and his daughter when aged 23. The book deals with the constant juggling of family life and mountaineering projects up until his death at the age of 31.

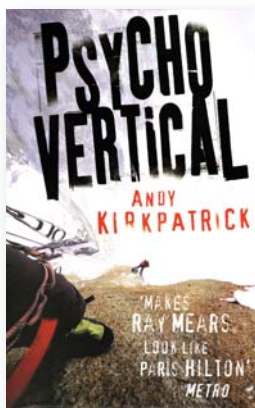
The second half of the book deals with the adult life of the author, John Harlin III, who is himself a competent climber and editor of the *American Alpine Journal*, but who has always had to live in the shadow of his famous father... "Are you the real John Harlin?"... "When are you going to climb the face?" Eventually, at the age of 49, John Harlin III decided he could no longer hide from the Eiger and he climbed it with Robert Jasper and his wife Daniela under the scrutiny of an IMAX film crew.

Parts of the book are slow going, but other chapters move you along quite quickly and make excellent reading. Those who are well read on the leading mountaineers of the time and their exploits will enjoy the climbing chapters. Many prominent figures crop up and are cast in a different light than that shown in other publications.

In summary, an enjoyable read and a valuable addition to the historical mountaineering literature.

A life less ordinary...

Stephen McMullen



Psychovertical

By Andy Kirkpatrick
Hutchinson, 277pp
16pp colour photos, many b&w sketches
h/b £18.99
ISBN 978-0-091-92096-8

From humble beginnings, Andy Kirkpatrick

charts a life less ordinary. This book gives a very honest and sometimes uncomfortable account of growing up in a broken family, of the struggle of a mother to raise her child alone, of being branded slow and stupid

throughout his school days, only to discover he was a classic dyslexic in later life, and finally chronicling the dilemma of marriage and parenthood whilst participating at the very sharp end of big wall and alpine climbing.

The threads of his life are interwoven with a pitch-by-pitch account of a 12-day solo ascent of the Reticent wall of El Capitan in Yosemite Valley, USA, at the time probably the hardest and most dangerous big wall in the world. From slow, stumbling steps, Kirkpatrick's climbing career developed from grit edges to Alpine epics to extreme Patagonia to showing up for the initial pitches of the Reticent unfit and full of self-doubt and the silent accusation of leaving behind a wife and two children to take on a route so difficult that the risks involved in climbing most of its pitches are deemed to be unjustifiable by most.

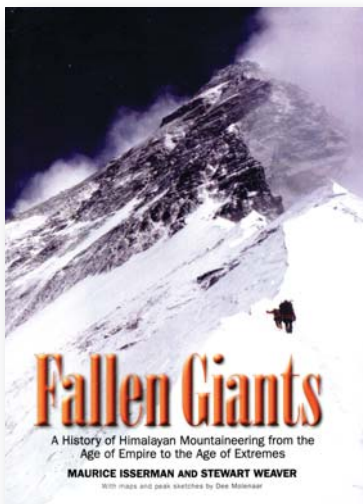
As the climb and the narrative behind his

personal life builds to its crescendo, the tension is almost unbearable. The weight of responsibility to his family and loved ones burdens the approach to the final pitch of the Reticent. Building a makeshift crash pad on a ledge from empty water bottles with tops half unscrewed to cushion the death fall 3,000 feet up El Capitan illustrates the state of Kirkpatrick's mind at this point. That state of mind is what is required to succeed on routes like the Reticent. It took Kirkpatrick his entire life to realise that he was not ordinary but rather a quite unique and special person and a world-class climber.

Kirkpatrick's last challenge was to overcome his dyslexia and produce this superb book which will inspire, entertain, horrify and uncomfortably reflect to each of us the question of balancing one's responsibility to others with what one must do for oneself.

The important Himalayan ascents

Joss Lynam



Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes

By Maurice Isserman & Stewart Weaver
Yale University Press, 579pp
Numerous b&w photos, maps and drawings
h/b £25.00 ISBN 978-0-300-11501-7

Two American mountaineers have taken the brave step of trying to encompass in a readable book the important Himalayan ascents, from those of the Schlagintweit brothers in the 1850s to multifarious climbs in the early 1990s.

The authors, Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver, have certainly studied the subject – there are more than a thousand notes, easy to reference, not just quoting sources, but full of information that is well worth reading on its own. They have found some unexpected sources. For instance, files found in Berlin after the war reveal that Paul Bauer was a Nazi official, often at odds with other German mountaineers such as Merkl (Nanga Parbat 1932, '34, '37).

The authors are a little addicted to rows. The Diemberger-Buhl versus Schmuck-Wintersteller row on the successful first ascent of Broad Peak and the multifarious rows on several American expeditions (and others) get more than their fair share of space.

On the other hand, there are omissions. Shipton's Blank on the Map trips before and after Everest 1938 are dismissed in a sentence, the East Karakoram is hardly mentioned, nor are the mountains of Lahul and Spiti, nor are routes other than the

first ascents on most 8000ers. There is a slight tendency towards American and UK climbs – the 1956 ascent of Muztagh Tower by the NW ridge by the British is (deservedly) described in full, while the (equally deserving) ascent by the SE ridge by a French party almost simultaneously gets two lines. Apart from the Poles, the Eastern Europeans are under-represented.

But overall, this is an excellent book, and the omissions are due to the authors' concentration on the development of Himalayan mountaineering, as the introduction makes clear. The British ruled India, so it is not surprising that the great majority of early climbers were Imperial. They kept Everest for themselves but they permitted the Germans to go to Kangchenjunga in 1929. Other German, French and American "heavy" expeditions to the 8000ers followed. But change was already happening: first Smythe on Kamet and then Tilman and Houston showed you could climb a 25,000ft peak with a small party, and then Tilman and Shipton showed you really could organise a trip to the Himalaya on the back of an envelope.

Then came the World War, and after it the "heavy" ascents of Everest and the other 8000ers. With them out of the way, lighter expeditions became the norm and in such numbers that the authors could only chronicle those they believe "are either particularly notable in their own right or particularly revealing of the time and place from which they emerged." Others may have different choices (I, for instance, would have concentrated less on Everest).

In "The Age of Extremes," the final chapter, we see large expeditions to difficult routes, with members sometimes pursuing their personal ambitions, while at the other extreme, there are successful solo and two-man trips to the great peaks. In the middle, sadly, is the development of commercial ascents.

This is a very readable book; I enjoyed it greatly, particularly since, unusually for mountaineering books, the authors give us a lot of interesting biographical information about the mountaineers themselves, and also their cultural background.

The route sketches are by Dee Molenaar, himself a Himalayan mountaineer, and the many black-and-white photographs included relate well to the text.

books ◀

Christmas is coming...

Food prices are up, but book prices aren't – everything below is £25 or less.

If you're a Falvey fan, you have to have *A Journey to Adventure* for its superb photographs (€27.95) (reviewed in IML 84).

Just across the Irish Sea there are dozens of trails, and who better than Paddy Dillon to describe them in *The National Trails* (£16.99) (IML 85).

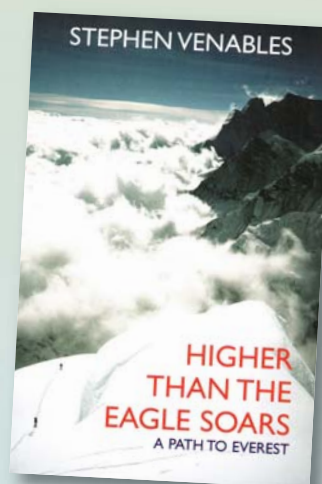
In the Summer 2008 issue (IML 86), we reviewed a sheaf of walking guides to three continents, from the English Lakes to Bhutan....

We thought you might like to try some other activities – canyoning? Or cycling in the Alps? (see IML 87)

Not forgetting, in the same issue, the astonishing biography of Tomaz Humar, and the ground-breaking *Burren Guide*.

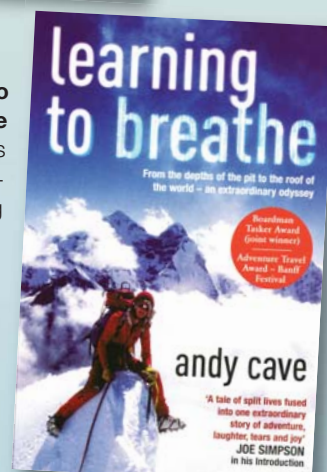
Then there are paperback editions of award-winners Venables' *Higher than the Eagle Soars* (IML 84) and Andy Cave's *Learning to Breathe*.

There are so many interesting books out this Christmas that you'll need a roomful of aunts and uncles to buy them for you, but beware; they might keep them! – (Joss Lynam)



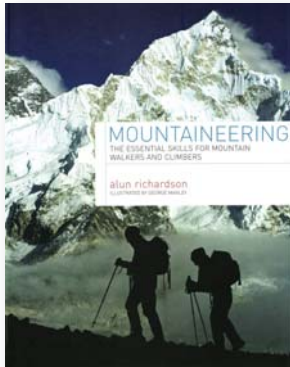
Higher than the eagle soars
Stephen Venables' autobiography culminating in his solo ascent of Everest is now out in paperback for a mere £8.99, well worth buying.

Learning to Breathe
Andy Cave's award-winning tale.



Essential skills...

Calvin Torrans



Mountaineering: The Essential Skills for Mountain Walkers and Climbers

By Alun Richardson
A&C Black, 362pp
Very numerous photos and sketches
h/b £25.00 ISBN 978-0-7136-8692-0

I pinched a book once from an old bookstore in Smithfield Market in Belfast. It was the late fifties and the book, more of a booklet really, was on mountaineering and had an illustration of a climber on the cover, showing how it's done – in this case showing how to hammer a piton in using a rock. My first thought was, 'why doesn't he use a claw hammer?' Well, equipment has come a long way since then; the hammer has been and gone, and the evolution of instructional books has eagerly kept pace. Unfortunately most of them are compiled by people who spend too much time instructing and not enough time climbing, but recent publications from Libby Peters, Alan Fyffe, XXXX?? Cunningham and Alun Richardson have broken that mould.

Now Alun Richardson has upped the ante again with this superb volume which sweeps across all aspects of mountaineering from hillwalking to major

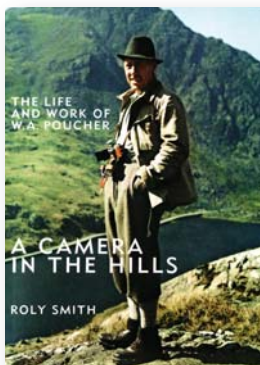
expeditions. The massive amount of information given is presented in a very attractive and clear format. Intelligent sub-headings and generous illustrations make dipping into it a pleasure, and the advice and expert tips given are useful, whatever your level of experience. All those things you mightn't have thought of, such as dealing with depression on expeditions or seeing off a polar bear – Richardson has thought of them all.

The sections on ski mountaineering, snowshoeing and expeditions to remote areas are particularly valuable as there is a lot of interest in these activities among Irish mountaineers and not much accessible information.

As well as being a superb instructional manual, this book looks so good that someone might like to give it to you for Christmas, so drop hints early and often!

The man behind the lens

John I. Murray



A Camera in the Hills: The Life and Work of W.A.

Poucher

By Roly Smith
Frances
Lincoln, 192pp
72pp b/w
photos, 30pp
colour photos
h/b £20.00
ISBN 13: 978-
0-7122-2898-6

Lavishly illustrated with many of Poucher's finest pictures and full of anecdotes, this well researched biography explores the man behind the lens.

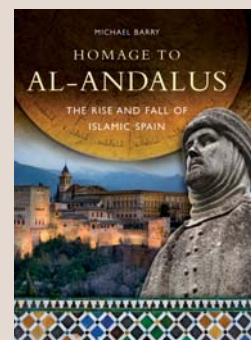
Born in 1891, on leaving school William Arthur Poucher joined a local firm of chemists. This introduced him to cosmetics and photography. He qualified as a chemist, winning a bronze medal in 1913. At that time he considered medicine as a career. World War I intervened and he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps. The carnage of the Somme turned him against medicine but left him with two ambitions: to marry his sweetheart and to make his name in cosmetic pharmacy.

His first wife Hilda bore him a son, John, born in 1920, whose own life mirrored his father's – action in World War II and a career in cosmetics. WAP's progress in cosmetics was meteoric. By 1925, he had his own firm and had written *Perfumes, Cosmetics and Soaps*. A standard work, it has run to ten editions, is still in print and made him a world authority. In 1934, he joined Yardley and stayed until he retired in 1959. He foresaw the potential in toiletries for men and didn't hesitate to wear his own products. His new position gave him the money and time to indulge his other passion – mountain photography.

A stylish dresser, teetotaler, connoisseur of fine cigars and fast cars, WAP used Leica 35mm cameras – the best, and what an advance on earlier heavy cameras using glass plates. His first books were large-format black-and-white picture books of Britain's mountain areas giving details of exposure, films and filters. The illustrated guide books to Wales, the Lakes and Scotland followed in the 1950s and '60s. Next, the colour books, his last being a re-issue of his book on Ireland in 1986. His favourite book: *The Magic of Skye*; his favourite view: the incomparable panorama of the Cuillins from Elgol. All who have seen this glorious vista would concur.

Poucher is now seen as a meticulous recorder rather than as a photographic

genius. However, his legacy stands and was confirmed by Wainwright who, on hearing of his passing, said: "A future without a new Poucher book is a bleak prospect for me and countless others."



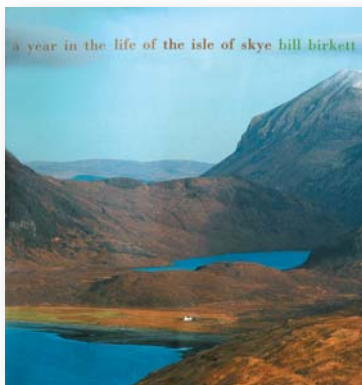
Homage to al-Andalus: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain

By Michael
Barry
Andalus Press,
256pp
hdbk €35

Michael Barry (a member of the Marley Hillwalkers) tells the story of al-Andalus, its rise to splendour and sophistication, and its decline. Full of photos and illustrations, this book is aimed at all, including those interested in Spain and its rich heritage, exploring an intriguing story that has relevance for today's world. Centuries of Islamic presence in Spain and Portugal left an indelible stamp, like the wonders of the Alhambra and the Great Mosque of Cordoba. The legacy also extends to the rich seam of learning, in science, medicine, literature and philosophy that was later transmitted to the rest of Europe.

There is more to Skye than the Cuillin Ridge

Tom Fox



A year in the life of the Isle of Skye

By Bill Birkett
Frances Lincoln, 128pp.
115pp colour photos,
1 diagrammatic map
h/back £14.99
ISBN 978 0 7112 26449

The Isle of Skye is more than the Cuillin Ridge for which it is famous, and Bill Birkett attempts to

highlight the many facets of the island in this photographic essay, which focuses on three key areas: the Red Cuillin, the Black Cuillin and the peninsula of Trotternish.

The trouble with this type of book is that text takes second place. Many of the topics are not dealt with in enough detail – he hasn't the space – and the text does not do justice to the subject. The articles on people and culture, climbing and mountaineering, flora and fauna and the historical introduction would send you scrambling

for more detailed books. His short account of island weather, however, is spot on!

Birkett opens with a detailed account of getting around the island, highlighting what is worth seeing, but you would need a 1:50,000 map to hand to follow his detailed descriptions. The diagrammatic map is too lacking in detail to be of use with his text. The description is more suited to a travel guide than a coffee-table book.

He gives a concise account of the island's complicated history, from the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers to the final revolt that put an end to the infamous Clearances, but he can only touch on the subject due to space limitations.

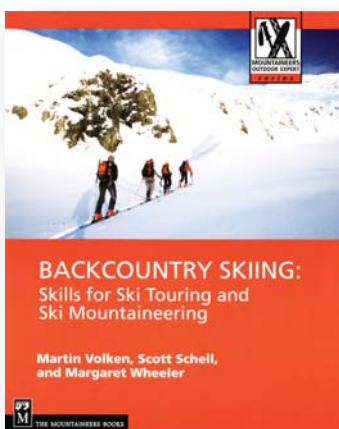
But it is a photographic essay and, from the fine collection of photographs, we see that he has an in-depth knowledge of the island after his many visits over the years. The extensive captions do make up, somewhat, for lack of text.

Birkett's extensive knowledge of rockclimbing on Skye comes through, as this is what brought him to the island first, and he includes many of the popular climbing spots in the extensive collection of photographs, many of which have not been reproduced to the standard that we have come to expect from coffee-table books nowadays.

As a photographic essay, the author has covered the island extensively, but I feel that justice was not done in the printing to the fine collection of photos. The book did not work for me.

Skiing beyond the piste

John A.C. Breen



Backcountry Skiing: Skills for Ski Touring and Ski Mountaineering

By Martin Volken, Scott Schell
& Margaret Wheeler
The Mountaineer's Books, 344pp
Numerous photos and diagrams
s/b £15.95 ISBN 978-1-59485-038-7

Despite the massive development of ski resorts throughout the Alps, many areas remain relatively untouched. These untouched areas are the preserve of ski mountaineers/tourers. To the inexperienced,

backcountry skiing may seem difficult, daunting or downright dangerous. However, as the ski resorts become increasingly crowded, a growing number of experienced skiers are viewing the wide open spaces beyond the piste as attractive alternatives with new challenges.

For experienced skiers that take up backcountry skiing, it means adding new skills to those that have been acquired over the years, skills such as navigation and route finding, assessing snow condition and avalanche risk, and being proficient in the use of avalanche transceivers and rescue techniques. But for those in love with skiing and the mountains, it offers the reward of being one of the most enriching experiences that there are, combining as it does the joy of skiing on untracked snow with that of travelling and living in wonderful snow-covered mountains away from the maddening crowds.

In the introduction to this book, the authors indicate that their aim is to provide an in-depth explanation of all the various skills, knowledge and techniques that are crucial to safety and success in the diverse activities of ski touring and ski mountaineering. The book introduces the various skills involved in a systematic way,

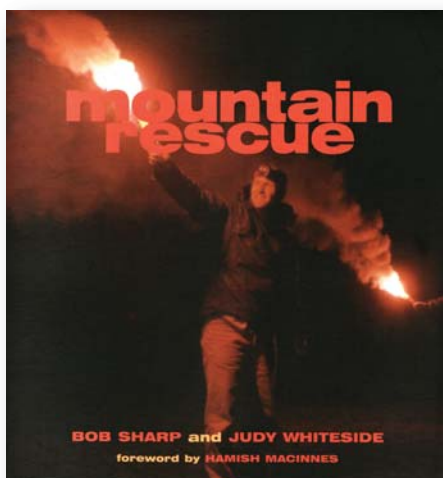
including choosing the necessary equipment, navigation, uphill movement, various ski mountaineering techniques, knowing the mountain environment, decision-making in avalanche terrain and taking care of oneself. It finishes with an all-important topic, which we hope we will never have to use but need to be fully familiar with – namely, rescue techniques and emergency preparedness.

I particularly like the easy writing style and the practical way the various subjects are covered. The use of highlighted tips and photo diagrams throughout the book to illustrate particular points helps to convey the intended messages in a clear and concise manner. Good reference books in English for ski mountaineering/touring have, with the exception of a few classics, been limited.

This book, with its broad but practical coverage of the equipment and the skills that a skier should be aware of in transferring from the semi-controlled environment of piste skiing to freedom of the wilder backcountry environment, is to be welcomed. It fully meets the aim the authors set themselves and outlined in the introduction and is a must buy for anyone interested in backcountry skiing.

What it's really like in mountain rescue!

Paul Whiting



Mountain Rescue

By Bob Sharp & Judy Whiteside
Hayloft Publishing, 264pp
Very many colour photos
s/b £20 ISBN 1-904524-39-7

Flicking through the pages of this book, I was initially disappointed. The title, *Mountain Rescue*, is a little misleading; I was expecting a manual on mountain rescue but, on consideration, a more appropriate title would have been "What it's really like in mountain rescue." However, once I began reading, my disappointment soon disappeared.

In the description of how mountain rescue was introduced into Britain, there's an excerpt from a 1939 article by Dr Donal Duff, the father of mountain rescue in Scotland. The article is informative and instructional on the training mountaineers should undertake. Update some of the institutions mentioned and it would be as useful and sensible today as it was nearly seventy years ago!

A chapter concentrates on pure mountain rescue, with accounts of Mountain Rescue Teams (MRTs) responding to those injured while climbing or walking in the mountains. It looks at a number of incidents, what led to the injuries and how the teams involved responded.

One chapter covers search management; another covers remote rescue medicine, tracing the development of stretchers, the medical equipment used by teams and the drugs that teams can administer; a third is dedicated to the Royal Air Force MRTs, describing some of their rescues and also discussing the use of helicopters in mountain rescues.

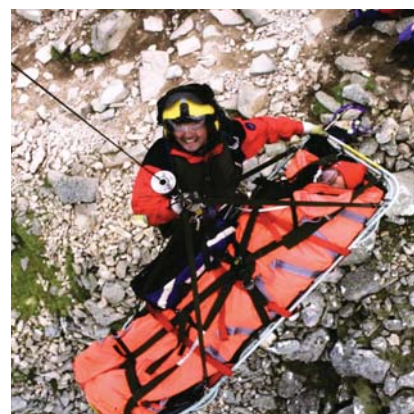
The chapter on team training includes risk assessment, operating procedures for working with helicopters, avoiding avalanches, and other skills required according to the National Training Guidelines for Mountain Rescue (England and Wales).

The chapter "It's a dog's life" is the best description I've seen anywhere of the use of

dogs in mountain rescue. It traces the history of their involvement and the creation of the various Search & Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) groups in the UK. It highlights the special relationship between the handler and the dog, the training, and how the dog searches and finds casualties.

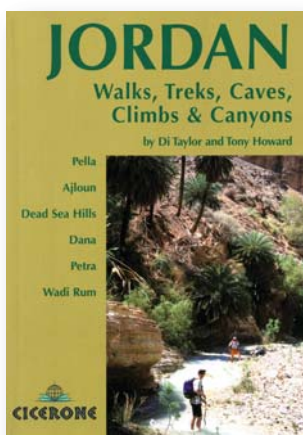
What is really good about this book are the countless interviews with mountain rescue team members and casualties. Each chapter contains at least four or five incidents told through the eyes of the team members involved.

In my opinion, *Mountain Rescue* is a 'must read' for any hillwalker or climber. It helps to put into perspective the huge amount of time and commitment that the volunteers in mountain rescue teams put into their training, the planning and preparation, and into the call-outs they respond to.



Spectacular canyons

Joss Lynam



Jordan: Walks, Treks, Caves, Climbs & Canyons

By Di Taylor & Tony Howard
Cicerone, 331pp
Numerous colour photos
& sketch maps
p/b £17.00
ISBN 978-1-85284-520-9

This is the 2nd edition, but a vastly enlarged edition, of a book which was published in 1999. It is mainly walks, treks and canyons; caves are rare, and the main rockclimbing area, the

Wadi Rum, has its own guidebook, *Treks and Climbs in the Wadi Rum*, 4th ed, 2007. But with those exceptions, this guide, by the experts on the area, covers everything else in 150 routes, some very short, others one day or multi-day.

Most people think of Jordan as a bleak desert; it is actually a land of unexpected beauty and great variety. In the north, the visitor will find meadows and woodland; the south has spectacular canyons (Petra is only one of many) and towering sandstone and granite mountains.

There is a short, but very comprehensive introduction. It has the usual sections on getting there, the best time to go, food, clothing, maps, etc, but the sting is in the tail! 'Be prepared' is not a heading you expect in your average guidebook. This one warns you of flash floods, tells you the maps are probably not available and that sandflies are more dangerous than mosquitoes, and warns that mostly there are no rescue facilities!

Nevertheless, the authors paint a picture that Jordan is a wonderful country to visit, with very friendly inhabitants. The photographs would also attract you; hillsides, canyons and more canyons, and interestingly, a couple of shots of the authors taking food with locals (can you sit cross-legged?).

Their writing shows that the authors love the country and hope that visitors will also "be as good to this land and its people as they will be to you." Finally, this is the first guidebook I've seen with the foreword by a queen – HM Queen Noor of Jordan.

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George Barry

Climber and Munroist

GEORGE BARRY, who died in April 2008 at the age of 88, devoted much of his long life to walking and climbing. Originally from Cork, George spent his working life in the Department of Education in Dublin and became involved in various outdoor activities, including cross-country running and mountaineering. He was a member of the Civil Service Harriers team which won the AAU Junior Cross-Country title in 1954. He climbed extensively in Ireland, Britain, the Alps, Tatras, Pyrenees and Dolomites. A climb of particular satisfaction to him was the ascent in the 1950s, as a member of an Irish group, of Mont Blanc from the Italian side.

However, George's most notable achievement was his completion of the Scottish Munros in May 1999, being at that stage only the second Irishman to complete that challenge. In fact, he was predeceased by a few months by the first Irishman to complete the Munros, the late Uinseann Mac Eoin (see *Last Word*,

IML 86). Remarkably, he achieved this objective in the period of ten years following his retirement and was almost seventy when he scaled the daunting Inaccessible Pinnacle on Skye. He climbed most of the Munros alone, wishing to savour to the full the feeling of isolation provided by solo climbing. On Slioch, his final Munro, however, overlooking Loch Maree, he was joined by a group of close friends who travelled over from Ireland to share a congratulatory dram on the summit.

A graduate of UCD, George was an accomplished linguist and taught French and German at St Columba's College, Rathfarnham, for a year after his retirement. He travelled extensively and, with his wide range of interests and enthusiasm, was always lively company and a stimulating raconteur.

George passed away unexpectedly at home on the evening of Sunday, the 6th of April, while watching, appropriately enough, a television programme about



| George Barry.

the English Lake District whose fells he knew so well.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

George Barry, born 26th November 1929, died 6th April 2008.

Bob Bates

Outstanding American mountaineer

BOB BATES, who died in September of last year aged 96, was one of America's most outstanding mountaineers. He attended Harvard, where he was part of a group of climbers known as the 'Harvard Five,' which also included Bradford Washburn and Charlie Houston, and which raised the standards of American mountaineering in the 1930s.

Bates's early first ascents were in Alaska and the Yukon, and included the first ascent of the Yukon's isolated Mount Lucania, the highest unclimbed peak in North America, which was followed by an horrific, unplanned 100-mile plus walk out, as the plane to take them out at the end of the climb couldn't land. The story was the subject of a book, *Escape from Lucania*, by David Roberts in 2002.

He was a member of Charlie Houston's 1938 expedition to K2, which opened the route up the Abruzzi Ridge to the shoulder at 8,000m. Bates was back on K2 again in 1953 with Houston. The

climb ended in the attempted evacuation of Art Gilkey with thrombophlebitis from Camp VIII, just below the shoulder. The rescue almost resulted in a near-fatal fall for the rest of the team, who were only saved by the strength of Pete Schoening, who was the last man on the rope. It is probable that if Gilkey's stretcher had not been carried away by an avalanche that the others might have died in the attempt to rescue him. With Houston, he wrote two classic books about their expeditions to K2, *Five Miles High* and *K2: The Savage Mountain*.

During World War II, Bates served in the US army where he worked on the development of improved equipment and clothing for the mountain divisions. In later life, he was Director of the Peace Corps in Kathmandu and, at 74, with Nick Clinch, led a Chinese-American expedition which made the first ascent of Ulugh Muztagh in western Tibet. He also served as President of the American



| Bob Bates.

Alpine Club. He visited Ireland twice with an Irish-American friend.

May he rest in peace.

Joss Lynam

Bob Bates, born 1911, died 2007.



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