

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

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**Mountaineering
Ireland**

www.mountaineering.ie

What did you do last winter?



Winter Mountaineering 21st - 27th February, 7th - 13th March, 2010
Advanced Winter Mountaineering 28th February - 6th March, 2010
Snow and Ice Climbing 21st - 27th February, 28th February - 6th March, 7th - 13th March, 2010

Contact us for further information, or visit www.tollymore.com for full course details

T: 028 4372 2158 (048 4372 2158 from Rol) Email: admin@tollymore.com
Tollymore Mountain Centre, Bryansford, Newcastle, Co Down, BT33 OPT

Killary sunset, Co Mayo.
Photo: Ruairí Ó Conchúir.

That time of year!

Renew your support for your organisation

Christmas is looming and it is that time of year again when we have to cough up and renew our membership of our hillwalking/climbing club and when our clubs should be renewing their affiliation to Mountaineering Ireland. Of course, these days, paying out any money requires some thought. We have to consider the benefits of our membership against the cost. We also have to consider whether the objectives of the organisation continue to be relevant to us and to our clubs.

I may be biased but, in my opinion, for a fairly small membership fee we get very good value and benefits. There is a long list of the benefits of membership, which include having four copies of the *Mountain Log* a year delivered to our doors and access to Mountaineering Ireland's insurance policies. There are also

the less concrete benefits of having an organisation that is working to ensure that relevant training programmes are available to us so that we can enjoy our sport safely, and working to protect the environment that we cherish and our access to it. Despite the staff changes that have occurred this year, it seems to me that Mountaineering Ireland has continued to function well throughout the year in delivering on its objectives and serving the needs of its members. This is thanks in no small part to the sterling efforts of the volunteer Board, ably led by Chairman, Ruairí Ó Conchúir.

Now, as we move into the new year, there is every indication that our organisation will continue to serve our needs as we have now recruited an enthusiastic new Chief Officer who will join us in the New Year and help us to fulfil the various outstanding aspects of our five-year strategic plan.

This is our organisation and it is often overlooked that it is we, the club and individual members, who are Mountaineering Ireland, not the staff or the Board! We must take pride in and ownership of our organisation, and make it do what we want it to and be fully reflective of our aspirations. One way we can contribute is to attend the AGM. Few enjoy AGMs; however, it is our opportunity to participate in deciding the future direction of our organisation and to contribute to its continuing development. Hope to see you there!

Alan Tees
President
Mountaineering Ireland



WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 92

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

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Copy deadline for the Spring 2010 issue of the Irish Mountain Log is Friday, February 12th, 2010.

PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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



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Rescuers in need

Welcome to the winter edition of the *Irish Mountain Log*. It is always a bit of a rush to get this issue out on time before Christmas, so it is a bit of a relief to finally be writing this Editorial.

It has been a busy year for Mountaineering Ireland, of course, with a lot of uncertainty on the financial front with the downturn in the economy and with the staff changes that have occurred. However, with the recent appointment of a Chief Officer, who will join us in the New Year, and with a lot of hard work by the remaining staff members and the Board, we appear to be back on track as we head into 2010.

One of the articles in this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* emphasises the hard work and the commitment of the volunteers who provide the 24/7 Mountain Rescue service we all rely on for assistance, if we or our companions are involved in an accident in an upland area. While the Mountain Rescue Teams in the Republic and in the North get varying levels of financial support from their Governments, they do also all have to rely very much on voluntary donations to ensure that they can meet the full costs of running their teams. Frequently, to get those donations, Team members have to engage in fundraising, on top of the time they spend training and in answering call-outs. Over this Christmas season and as we move into the New Year, can I commend your local Mountain Rescue Team to you for your support, either by making a donation or by organising a fundraising event. You never know when you might need their help!

Having tried to encourage seasonal thoughts of giving, it only remains for me, on behalf of the Editorial Team, to wish you all the very best for the Christmas season and an active and safe 2010.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*



Christmas message

The Board and the Staff of Mountaineering Ireland wish all members a happy Christmas and a safe and rewarding New Year.

The Mountaineering Ireland office will be closed on 24 December 2009 and re-opens on Monday 4 January 2010.

ON THE COVER: The Great Tower on Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis, Scotland. See *The Joys of Ridge Walking* by Dan Bailey, page 26.
Photo: Dan Bailey.

THIS PAGE: The Matterhorn from Gornergrat (3,098m) in the Zermatt valley, Switzerland.
Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.

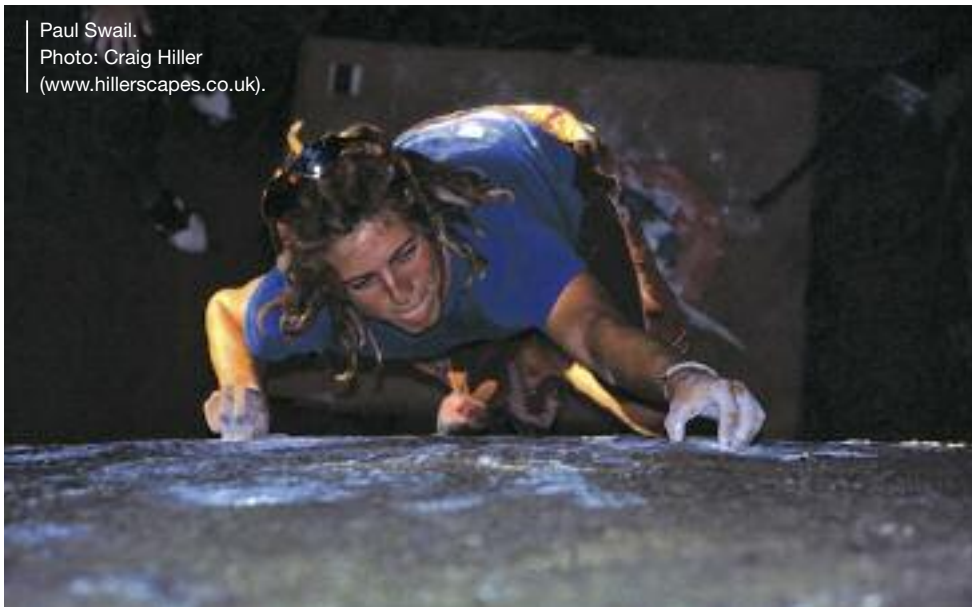
News

Get all the latest news at www.mountaineering.ie

New officer appointed

Paul Swail: NI Youth Development Officer

Paul Swail.
Photo: Craig Hiller
(www.hillscapes.co.uk).



WE WELCOME Paul Swail to the post of Northern Ireland Youth Development Officer. He replaces Angela Carlin, who did tremendous work in this post and who has now taken up the post of Coaching and Talent Identification Officer.

Paul was first introduced to the great outdoors in his early teenage years when he went out walking in the Mourne Mountains with his father. He progressed to the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and eventually got a job at the Hotrock Climbing Wall when it was first opened in 2000. That is where he developed a really keen interest in the mountaineering aspects of the outdoors. He started rock climbing indoors but soon progressed to climbing in the outdoor environment, where he says he found himself at home on steep single-pitch crags and exposed alpine ridges.

At that stage he realised that he wanted to be involved in the outdoors full-time. In 2001, he studied Outdoor Leadership and Instruction at the University of Central Lancashire, graduating with a BA Hons in 2004 and completing his SPA and ML. He then progressed onto his MIA and Winter

ML training. After University, he started working as a freelance instructor and he has worked with different local education centres and at the National Centre at Tollymore. He has also been involved in working with youth development programmes. After a year of freelancing, Paul developed a keen interest in skiing and spent the following four consecutive winters honing his skills in Serre Chevalier, France, returning to Northern Ireland for the other half of the year to continue his freelance instructing.

Paul's climbing and mountaineering experience is very broad. He has climbed extensively throughout the UK, as well as on sport climbing trips to Europe and on a few big road trips to the west coast of North America. Over the last couple of winters, he has enjoyed the vertical ice around the La Grave area and managed a few Alpine north faces. This summer was particularly productive for Paul, as he managed three of the six classic Alpine north faces. Most recently, he completed his MIA Assessment, and he has plans to complete his Winter ML and progress through to the MIC award.

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Saturday 6 March 2010, Glendalough, County Wicklow

THE 2010 AGM will take place in the Glendalough Hotel, Glendalough, 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 Mountaineering Ireland's priorities for 2010 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 5 February 2010. Motions may be submitted by any three full members and should be sent to Ross Millar, Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering 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 12 February 2010. Members without internet access can request a printed copy from the Mountaineering Ireland Office, (+353) 1 625 1115.

AGM 2010 Programme

- 09:30 Check in for walks and activities – these depart from the hotel car park (for details, see www.mountaineering.ie)
- 14:30 Members' Forum and presentation of reports on work in 2009 and plans for 2010
- 15:30 Tea and Coffee and opportunity to view materials on display (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

Wanted: Irish hill lists

Lists by Vandeleur and Lynam (1952) and any others sought

This is an appeal for information on two fronts. Firstly, are there any readers of the *Irish Mountain Log* who have ever compiled their own listing of the Irish hills?

Secondly, does anyone have, or know a person who has, a copy of the 1952 list to the Irish 2,000ft mountains compiled by the Rev Vandeleur and Joss Lynam? The date of 1952 is important, as this list was revised and published in the 1976 *Mountaineering in Ireland* guide – this publication is usually available on Amazon. However, only four copies of the 1952 list were originally made, with only one out of those four surviving to the present day. This copy is with Joss Lynam, who cannot find it at present. Fortunately, Joss has supplied photocopies of this 1952 list to a number of people over the years. Are you one of these people, or do you know of someone who has a copy?

You may ask 'Why the urgency?' My long-term goal is to write 'A History of Irish Hill Lists.' There are nearly fifty in existence, many listing different hills under a variety of criteria.

My short-term goal is to produce a Table to 'The

List of Irish Hill Lists.' This is much easier to achieve, compared to writing the history of them. I want to be as comprehensive as possible and, by their sheer nature, privately produced hill lists are difficult to find. In their own way, they are important documents and relate directly to the mapping of the day, as well as occasionally taking a leap in criteria evolution. The 1952 listing is an important historical document in the progression of Irish hill listings.

If anyone has information relating to privately produced hill lists or to the 1952 Vandeleur/Lynam 2,000 ft listing, can they please contact me with that information. It would be greatly appreciated. My contact details are as follows:

Name: Myrddyn Phillips

Email: myrddynphillips@yahoo.co.uk

Address: Myrddyn Phillips, 22 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys, Wales SY21 7BG

Telephone: 0044 1938 556043

Calendar of events

For more information about any of these events, please see the relevant section of this magazine or the events section of the website, www.mountaineering.ie.

Workshop re-scheduled

Volunteer Training Officers workshop, initially intended to take place in September, will now take place some time in the New Year. Ample notice will be given.

6-8 February 2010

Walking Group Leader Assessment, Mountain Ventures hostel, Co Wicklow (for further details see www.mountaineering.ie)

6 March 2010

Mountaineering Ireland AGM. Glendalough Hotel, Glendalough, Co Wicklow, 9:30am to 5:30pm.

14-21 March 2010

Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Winter Meet, Adamello Alps, Brescia, Italy.

July 2010

Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Summer Meet. Keep an eye on the website for details on venue and dates.



MCI promotes the principles of
Leave No Trace

IN BRIEF

Lost and found

A pair of Merrill Trail Shoes returned from alpine duty at Innetkirchen. Size 9 and answering to the name Dave (not sure what the left one is called). Owner can contact Alan Tees at +353 7493 79821 to arrange collection.

The 'Blade' falls

There are unconfirmed reports that the spectacular pinnacle "Stackamillion" on Owey Island, Co Donegal, has fallen. It was climbed some years ago by a Polish party, graded E2 and called "Blade."

Ben Whiskin now open

Ben Whiskin, a beautiful peak near Sligo, is now open. Access is via the forestry tracks south of Andy McSharry's house, traversing north above the cliff band/fence to gain the ridge. Michael Mulligan, Sligo Mountaineering Club, advises that there will be a better access trail shortly.

Launch of Garmin Eire Discoverer

Garmin has launched a new series of topographic maps, the Garmin Eire Discoverer, which offers full coverage of the Republic of Ireland.

These new maps allow users of the Dakota™, Oregon® and Colorado® handheld GPS devices to benefit from accessing 1:50K scale Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSi) map coverage of the whole of the Republic.

The Garmin Eire Discoverer is available in four regions – North West, North East, South West and South East.

For more information on Garmin Eire Discoverer mapping, visit www.garmin.co.uk.

For would-be ski instructors

A Laois builder turned ski instructor intends to put Irish ski instructors on the map. Henry Fingleton is starting a new gap programme based at Soldeu in Andorra which aims to take good social skiers to ski instructor level in one season. Soldeu is part of Grandvalira, one of the largest ski areas in Europe. It has 200km of pistes with great on and off-piste facilities.

Students will enrol in a 6-12 week programme with a view to becoming qualified through either the Canadian (CSIA) or British (BASl) systems. For those simply interested in significantly improving their skiing there are one to four week programmes available.

Henry has been based in Soldeu for the last ten winters and holds top International instructor and race coaching qualifications. He has a wealth of experience training high-end skiers and preparing candidates for instructor exams. For more information, visit www.proskittraining.com or call +353 86 2568863.

Should plaques be allowed?

Memorial plaques deface mountainsides

ON A LOVELY clear day last September, we were walking in Wicklow. It was a beautiful day, especially after the summer monsoon, and all was well with the world. Life felt good. We were drawing towards the summit and looking out for a pleasant spot for a lunch stop, when all of a sudden we were blinded by a flash up ahead from something shiny on a rock. Drawing closer, we wondered what it was.

"Bloody hell," said Sé, "a new plaque?"

And so it was – a shiny new rectangular, stainless steel plaque. A recess had been chiselled in the rock and a plaque cemented into it.

We said nothing for a bit, lost for words.

"Well, I suppose we may as well eat here, Sé", said Gerry.

"Well... alright then."

Little was said as we ate our sandwiches and sipped our tea.

"Who was yer man?" Gerry asked finally, pointing to the plaque.

"He was a fella who loved the mountains," answered Sé. "He was a good climber and character as well..."

"So why is there a memorial here to him?"

"That's a good question, Gerry," said Sé. "But there is no memorial to him. There is a plaque telling us that his friends had a good time here with him. Some, or maybe only one, of them felt that it was important to get a plaque made and come up here with a hammer and chisel, or a kango hammer, to cut a hole in the rock and mount the plaque, just to tell us that they had a good time. They did not tell us who had the good time, just fingered the guy they were with and who cannot defend himself now. You know I think anyone who loves the hills as much as he did would be cheesed off at seeing this natural wilderness that he loved defiled in such a thoughtless way. And this seemingly done by his friends, who also appear to share the same love of the mountains."

The lovely views around us no longer absorbed us over lunch as we discussed this matter.

In this man's time, there would have been no beaten tracks and very few walkers on the Wicklow hills. Being in the hills was an adventure and a challenge in those days. Now there are tracks everywhere and thousands of people walking in the hills. Also nowadays the pressure on the environment is huge. All of us can clearly see the litter, the erosion and degradation of the environment. It is a shame and a pity. As for plaques and the like? Well, isn't it tragic that well-meaning mountain people add to this pressure and desecration by senselessly harming the hills.

"If you ask me Sé, all these plaques on the hills are imposed without planning permission on public lands, by self-centred people who don't think and who don't care," said Gerry, agitated. "Frankly, it is litter and vandalism, and as such should not be tolerated."

"You're right there," said Sé. "If only others felt the same way."

We packed our bags and retraced our way back over the hills. This way, like many other ways in Wicklow and all over Ireland, is not the same adventure as it was in his time. But at least in those days he and his pals loved the hills for what they were – and respected them. Back in the pub in Roundwood, we continued the debate. We were of the same view; memorials and the like are best placed where they belong – in graveyards and in print. The wild lovely hills are best left undisturbed, especially by those who love them.

The infestation of plaques on Ben Nevis was such that in the Nevis Partnership took action to remove them and create a virtual Book of Remembrance on their website. If those who placed the plaques could be found, the plaque was returned to them. Otherwise, they were disposed of. Would it be possible for Mountaineering Ireland or Leave No Trace to give a lead on this subject in Ireland? –

(Gerry Galligan & Sé O'Hanlon)



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€650



MOUNTAIN SKILLS COURSE

Learn to Navigate and be confident in the Irish Mountains on an official Mountaineering (MI) Ireland mountain skills course

Mountain skills 1, 2

€145

MS assessment

€180

Locations: Kerry, Cork, Galway & Wicklow.

WWW.IRISHADVENTURES.NET

See website for List dates & prices of all courses and activities

087-4190318 info@irishadventures.net

Irish Adventures, Ballinaboula, Dingle, Kerry.



WINTER SKILLS SCOTLAND GIFT VOUCHERS AVAILABLE MOUNTAIN SKILLS TRAINING

Greater Ranges

Attempts and successes in 2009

Nanga Parbat
(8126m) from
Fairy Meadows.

Pakistan 2009

IN TOTAL, 63 expeditions applied for the climbing permits in Pakistan in the 2009 summer season. Of these, 18 were cancelled because of security concerns in Pakistan or their own financial problems. In the end, 45 mountaineering expeditions arrived in Pakistan with 335 climbers. In general, it was a bad climbing season. There were some successful ascents but sadly, five climbers lost their lives, all on the 8000m peaks.

K2 (8611m)

Following the tragic events of 2008 on this mountain, this was not a good year for climbing on K2, with only one Spanish climber out of the six expeditions on the mountain claiming to have reached the summit, following a solo ascent. An Italian climber died on K2.

Broad Peak (8047m)

Eight expeditions attempted Broad Peak this year, but again only one person was successful in climbing it. An Italian woman died on the mountain in July.

Gasherbrum I exclusively (8068m)

Two expeditions attempted Gasherbrum I exclusively, out of which three climbers reached the top.

Gasherbrum II exclusively (8035m)

This was a bad climbing year for GII. Seven expeditions attempted the mountain, but only two were successful, putting six members on the summit. One climber lost his life while descending the mountain.

Gasherbrum I (8068m), Gasherbrum II (8035m), Gasherbrum IV (7925m), Gasherbrum VI (7004m)

Three expeditions attempted a Gasherbrum double header (GI and GII), and two expeditions attempted a triple header (GI, GII, GIV and GI, GII and GVI). Six climbers succeeded in ascending one or more of these peaks.

Nanga Parbat (8126m)

There was more success on Nanga Parbat this year, with all three expeditions that attempted the mountain claiming success, and 19 climbers reaching the top. Two climbers lost their lives descending from the mountain, including one Korean woman who had successfully summited eleven of the 8000m peaks, including Nanga Parbat.

Spantik (Golden Peak) (7027m)

Three climbers from the seven expeditions that attempted Spantik this year claimed success.

Volunteer for Mountain Rescue

Dublin & Wicklow Team recruiting in New Year

THE DUBLIN & Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team are now recruiting new members. The team has a long history in mountain rescue going back to the An Óige MRT, and we celebrated our 25th Anniversary in 2009. The team recently launched the first mountain rescue base in Wicklow, which is located in Roundwood Garda Station. The team provide a mountain rescue service primarily in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains area.

The team are seeking enthusiastic individuals who are interested in working as part of a team to achieve high standards of casualty care in the mountains. The team are looking for people with a strong interest in mountaineering activities,

specifically with a hillwalking/climbing background. Good navigation and hill skills are required as well as the commitment to participate in regular training and callouts. The team provide 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 e-mail recruitment@dwmrt.ie before January 10th, 2010, to express your interest and to receive an application form.



New member selection and assessment will commence in January-February 2010.

• For more information on the team, please visit our website www.dwmrt.ie.



Mountain Ethics Declaration approved

THE UIAA GENERAL Assembly in Portugal in October approved a code of ethics that should serve as a beacon of mountaineering values, spelling out ethics of sportsmanship, respect for cultures and care for the environment. The Assembly named the document the UIAA Mountain Ethics Declaration.

British mountaineer Doug Scott was among those who worked on the document. He said that this updated statement on best practices in mountaineering was very timely, especially to help climbers in areas where there is no strong consensus of opinion as to the best way forward.

The declaration addresses mountaineering issues such as the responsibility to assist others in need, the factual reporting of ascents and the use of supplementary oxygen in high altitude climbs. The intent was to create a document that reflected the sport's high ideals and that could evolve with changing times.

"We are living in times of rapid change, not least the advance of commercialism into many areas of human activity, and pressures on the mountain environment from developments of many kinds," UIAA Management Committee member John Nankervis, a New Zealand mountaineer, said. "It is important, therefore, to impart to new generations of mountaineers the inspiration and values of past mountaineers."

The declaration builds upon the original Mountain Code. That code was updated and approved as the Tyrol Declaration at an international meeting of leading climbers in Innsbruck, Austria, in 2002.

The Mountain Ethics Declaration will now go back for editing and inclusion of amendments agreed upon by the General Assembly. The final version will be released and published on the United Nations' International Mountain Day, on December 11, 2009.

International Mountain Day 2009



THE THEME FOR this year's International Mountain Day, on December 11, is disaster risk management in mountains. Many mountain communities live under the threat of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, landslides or floods. This year's International Mountain Day aims to raise awareness about the large number of natural disasters in mountain areas and the vulnerability of mountain communities. It also draws attention to sustainable agriculture, pasture and forestry practices as the key elements in risk reduction.

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

Following on from the success of the International Year of Mountains in 2002, the UN General Assembly designated December 11 as International Mountain Day in 2003. The Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is the lead co-ordinating agency for International Mountain Day. For more information, visit www.fao.org/mnts/intl_mountain_day.

Scottish Winter Courses 2010

Winter Skills Intro 13th-17th Feb & 27th Feb - 3rd Mar €450
Guided Winter Walking 17th-21st Feb & 3rd-7th Mar €400
Combined Course Winter Skills & Winter Walking €900
Winter Mountaineering Week 21st - 27th Feb €650



<p>Price includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Instruction/Guiding • Airport transfers • Specialist equipment • Travel carbon offsets 	<p>Info/booking contact Darach O Murchu</p> <p>ELEMENTS outdoor training & adventure BoleChreith, BoleNa nGala/Ballydonnig, Co. Chiarraí darach@inmyelement.ie www.inmyelement.ie 087-2153758</p>
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Overseas trips

PAUL WHITING

IN RECENT MONTHS, the Irish Mountain Rescue Association has sent representatives to two major international training events to bring the latest techniques back to Ireland.

Four representatives went to Zermatt, Switzerland, in mid-September to attend the annual congress of the **International Commission of Alpine Rescue (ICAR)**. Dave Cleary (Dublin & Wicklow MRT) and Joe Dowdall (North West Mountain Rescue Team) attended the Terrestrial Commission, Dr Patrick O'Sullivan (Chair of the Medical Sub-Committee) attended the Medical Commission, and Jim O'Neill (WEMSI Instructor and Irish Coast Guard Helicopter Winchman) attended the Aviation Commission.

Later in September, Donal McNamara (South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association) and Diarmaid Scully (Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team) flew to Trenton, New Jersey, to attend the Inland SAR Planning Course organised by the **National Search and Rescue School of the United States Air Force**.

Reports from visits were presented at IMRA's November Executive Meeting, to ensure that the experience gained could be shared by all of the Irish MRTs and used in future trainings.

Training at home

THE **TRAINING and Development Group (TDG)** of IMRA has run three successful courses in recent months:

- **Operations Management Course** (Kippure Estate, Co Dublin; Sep 18-20). This course was

designed to prepare team members to become the next generation of team leaders. Participants were introduced to how to prepare, plan and manage a search and rescue operation. Topics covered included the Incident Command System (ICS), which consists of procedures for managing incidents of any size, the latest search and GPS technologies, Critical Incident Stress Management, and computer-aided tools for Operations Management. A number of role-playing scenarios were used over the weekend, including an impromptu "call out" of the fictional "Kippure Mountain Rescue Team" at 5am on the Saturday to manage a search for an alleged over-due mountain runner!

- **Technical Rigging Course** (Achill Island, Co Mayo; Oct 2-4). In June, four IMRA members travelled to Fort William to take part in the Foundation Rigging Course of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland. These four members, Colm Byrne (Mayo MRT), Ronan Lenihan (Glen of Imaal MRT), Richard McCarter (Donegal MRT) and Greame Stanbridge (North West MRT), then reproduced the Scottish course in Ireland over the October weekend with the assistance of Jonathan Hart (Course Director for the Scottish course) and Shaun Roberts (an instructor from Glenmore Lodge). Participants were introduced to safety principles and practices, anchors, knots, raising and lowering devices.

- **Party Leader Course** (Larch Hill, Co Dublin; Nov 6-8). In Mountain Rescue, the basic operational unit is called a Hill Party, which is a five-member team consisting of a party leader, navigator, second-in-command, first aider and safety officer. This course builds upon basic mountain rescue skills to train participants and to give them experience in these various roles within the hill party.

On the rigging course on Achill, Co Mayo.
Photo: IMRA.



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Other IMRA events

OTHER MAJOR **Mountain Rescue events** that have taken place in recent months have included:

- **National Emergency Pre-Plan Meeting** was held in Dublin on September 12. Following on from a number of incidents where every team in the country has been involved, we are developing the necessary procedures and documentation to support such events. A draft document is currently being prepared as a result of this meeting.
- The **Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team** celebrated their **Silver Jubilee** of service over the weekend of October 17-18. The team celebrated with speeches and a dinner at the Glendalough Hotel with team members (past and present), the families of the members and their supporters in attendance.
- A **regional training exercise** was held over the weekend of October 24-25 in the Wicklow hills under the auspices of the IMRA Training and Development Group. The joint exercise included the Dublin & Wicklow MRT, the Glen of Imaal MRT and the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association.

For more information about Mountain Rescue in Ireland, please visit www.mountainrescue.ie

Upcoming IMRA events

- The **annual conference** of IMRA and AGM will be held in Tramore, Co Waterford, over the last weekend in January 2010. This event will be hosted by the local Tramore Cliff and Mountain Rescue Team and the theme will be "International Mountain Rescue."
- Our return visit to the **Österreichischer Bergrettungsdienst** (Austrian Mountain Rescue Service) in mid-to-late November as part of the "EU Exchange of Experts" programme has had to be deferred until February 2010. This was to allow both the Austrians and ourselves more time to plan for the trip.
- In September 2010, Mountain Rescue Ireland will host the Ireland and UK **Mountain Rescue Conference**. This bi-annual conference is normally held either in Scotland at Stirling or in England at Lancaster. The last time it was held in Ireland was in 1996. Over 300 Mountain Rescuers from across the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and further afield will come to Dublin to discuss the latest rescue developments. The theme will be "Mountain Rescue: Our Future Role."

Smallest on top!

Pygmy shrew on Carrauntoohil

September this year brought summer sunshine, clear skies and a sense of great happiness to be out on the hills. After spending a night in my bivy-bag below Carrauntoohil, I topped-out via Curve Gully and was greatly anticipating mid-morning breakfast in the shelter next to the summit cross. Having completed a clean-up (no, cigarette butts, tea bags, sweet wrappers and plastic bottles don't disappear by magic if you leave them behind, even if you hide them under rocks), I was settling into breakfast when up popped the head of a tiny pigmy shrew. This is Ireland's smallest mammal, weighing as little as three grammes in winter when its food supply is at its lowest – but what on Earth was it doing on Ireland's highest, and indeed possibly coldest, mountain?

Because of their tiny size, pygmy shrews lose body heat rapidly, far more quickly than larger mammals such as rabbits and hares. They need to eat the equivalent of their own body weight in food every day simply to stay alive. It is claimed that they can perish if they go without food for more than two hours. They are active and feeding both day and night and must do so all year long, as they do not hibernate. They are insectivores with a varied diet, consisting mostly of spiders and bugs, insect larvae, woodlice and flies.

The king of kings atop Carrauntoohil was very fond of milk and the tiniest bread crumbs and seemed to be rather partial to the



The pygmy shrew on top of Carrauntoohil.
Photo: Ruairí Ó Conchúir.

smell of Shaw's crumbed ham. We shared breakfast for twenty minutes and it was only then that I began to ponder the questions of why here, and why all alone? – not me, the pigmy shrew!

While the upper body of the pygmy shrew is covered in thick brownish fur offering some degree of protection from the cold wind on the Reeks, its long pointed snout, long whiskers and small eyes are more commonly seen in low level grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows and bogs. So, why so high up in such a remote place? Could this little creature be the smallest mammal atop the highest peak in Ireland, a mammal with no fear of heights and no hang-ups about his size and importance in this world? Sarkozy, take note! – (*Ruairí Ó Conchúir*)

Leave No Trace

Principle 5 and Principle 6

BEVERLEY PIERSON

In this, the third article in the series on Leave No Trace, we discuss Principles 5 and 6, dealing with leaving what you find and travelling and disposing of waste properly.

Leave What You Find

"The earth, like the sun, like the air, belongs to everyone – and to no one." – **Edward Abbey**

The 'Leave What You Find' principle explores the idea that visitors to the outdoors should leave what they find undisturbed so that others can enjoy it and so that they are not harming the environment by removing important items such as fossils or flowers. It encourages people to foster an appreciation for the environment that they are in, preserving any special qualities that the area may boast. Ireland is very rich in cultural heritage – burial sites, charcoal platforms, monasteries, etc – all legacies of past generations that should be preserved.

Most people visit the outdoors to explore, discover and observe the natural and human history of an area. If all visitors to that area started to collect items from it, it would quickly be left bare, leaving nothing for other explorers to discover.

Another aspect of Leave What You Find is that many ecosystems rely on certain natural features and, if these are disturbed, so are the species that rely on them. For instance, some butterflies are dependent on a single flower species to survive, and a pair of antlers may assist some small mammals to survive the winter by providing minerals during lean times.

**"We
should aim to
observe without
interference"**

Simple things to remember: Leave natural objects undisturbed and avoid spreading non-native species by making sure you clean down equipment after every trip.

Dispose of Waste Properly

This principle highlights the issue of what to do with waste in the outdoors. Most people associate this principle just with litter, but this is a very limited view of what it actually involves. The principle really has two aspects: how you dispose of what you bring to the outdoors, and how you dispose of human waste in the outdoors.

Leave No Trace uses the saying "Pack it in, pack it out," meaning that everything you bring into the outdoors should be brought out of it, so that you are not leaving anything behind. Inspect your rest areas and campsites for rubbish or spilled foods. Pack out all rubbish and kitchen waste, including left-over food. *Don't* rely on a fire to dispose of it.

Litter is not only ugly but can be very harmful to animals. Animals scavenging for food could eat some food packaging and



Mute Swan with cygnets on nest on canal bank. Note discarded litter surrounding the nest. Never leave any litter, especially plastic, behind you. Plastic lasts for hundreds of years and kills wildlife indiscriminately, as animals can become tangled up in it, or worse, eat it. It can remain in their stomach for life and ultimately kill them.

damage their digestive system. Plastic rings and bags can be deadly to marine turtles and shore birds, as well as discarded fishing lines. One suggestion is to plan your snacks and meals and repackage the food you take with you in re-sealable plastic bags to minimise the amount of left-over packaging.

Disposing of human waste properly is the second aspect of this principle and is most likely the one where we can make most impact on the environment. 'Where's the toilet?' is an important question, especially in the outdoors, and the way we deal with our waste disposal when we are outdoors is potentially significant, not only for other outdoor users but also for wildlife which depends upon water sources.

**"Enrich
everyone's
experience by
taking away all
of your litter"**

The best method is to use a toilet before your trip into the outdoors. If you still need to go to the toilet outdoors, then 'cat holes' or 'slit trenches' can be dug to dispose of human waste, making sure they are far enough away from water sources so as not to pollute them, that is about 50 metres. Used tissue should be brought out with you. Always remember that the four main objectives of proper waste disposal are to avoid polluting water, minimise contact with insects and animals, maximise decomposition and minimise the chances of a social impact.

● For more information on Leave No Trace, please visit www.leavenotraceireland.org.

Look out for the final principle of Leave No Trace – 'Minimise the Effects of Fire' – in the next edition of the *Mountain Log*. – (Beverley Pierson, Development Officer, Leave No Trace)





Autumn Gathering 2009

9-11th October, Dingle, Co Kerry

Walkers gathering in Dingle before setting out on their Saturday walks. Photo: Ted Creedon.

DAVID CHIPPENDALE

Dingle was packed with hillwalkers and climbers during the second weekend in October as members of Mountaineering Ireland assembled there for the Autumn Gathering.

Dingle Hill Walking Club (Cumann Sléibhteoireachta Chorca Dhuibhne) hosted the event for the first time, and it attracted 160 walkers and climbers from all corners of Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland took the opportunity to hold the Irish National Lead Climbing Competition at the Play At Height climbing wall during the weekend, making for a real atmosphere around the town.

The base for the Autumn Gathering was Benners Hotel on Main Street, right in the heart of Dingle and ideal for access to the town, including many of Dingle's atmospheric pubs such as Foxy John's, Curran's and Dick Mack's. Benners has all the charm you would expect of a traditional hotel, and manager Muireann Nic Giolla Ruaidh and her staff did a fantastic job accommodating the Gathering.

Dingle Hill Walking Club had prepared a series of five graded walks for the Saturday and, after a deluge of rain on Friday morning, the day dawned bright and sunny in Dingle town but with a cloud base of around 2,000 feet. Those on Cosán na Naomh, an ancient pilgrimage route from Ventry to Brandon Mountain, spent their day walking in warm sunshine. The moderate walk from Brandon Point to Cuas (Brandon Creek), led by Bernie Firtear, also kept below the mist for most of the day.

The largest group was taken by Gene Courtney on a tour of the Coumanare Lakes (Locha Chom an Áir) from the Conor Pass car park. This took hillwalkers into a less visited area to the east of the Conor Pass, where a hidden valley at over 300 metres contains the three lakes, Loch Iarthair, Loch Meáin and An Loch Dubh.

Mount Brandon (Cnoc Bréanainn) was the destination of the two more strenuous walks. Noel O'Neill led a long march from the Conor Pass all the way to Brandon Creek, taking in the entire ridge of the Brandon massif. Meanwhile Pat Scanlon led a smaller group up the Garrán Ceoil ridge to the summit of Brandon Peak (Barr an Ghéaráin) before continuing to Brandon Mountain and coming down by the Paternoster Lakes.

The weekend's events also included the Irish National Lead

Climbing Competition, hosted by Play At Height. The competition was a great success, with a good number and excellent standard of entries (see page 18 for a full competition report).

The weekend was not all about walking and climbing. On Friday evening Andrew Goulbourne gave a presentation on insurance for mountaineers, and he was followed by local archaeologist Mícheál Ó Coileáin, who gave a fascinating slide show and talk on the archaeology of Chorca Dhuibhne.

Benners was the venue for the Mountaineering Ireland dinner on Saturday evening with after-dinner speeches and stories from Alan Tees, President of Mountaineering Ireland, and Tom O'Malley, President of Dingle Hill Walking Club.

Walkers on Garran Ceoil ridge.



Tom then introduced climber and broadcaster Dermot Somers, who captivated his audience with images taken from his film “Bealach an tSalainn ‘s an Yak,” which followed a family of yak-herding salt traders on their annual winter migration from the high Himalayas of Dolpo down into the valleys of Nepal. The talk and slides emphasised the ability of humans and their animals to survive in extreme environments. Visually, the handsome adults and children and their colourful clothes contrasted with the barren mountain landscape.

Sunday was an altogether gentler affair for those who had recovered sufficiently from the night before! The weather did its best to deter those who ventured out, with low mist, albeit brightening later.



Lunch in Cathair Deargain.



Participants on the ‘coast to coast’ walk via Mt Brandon.

Mícheál Ó Coileáin took a group into Loch an Dúin for an archaeological walk, while Gene Courtney took a small group to Foxy John’s ancestral home in Com Beag, Com an Lochaigh. Others went to Play At Height for a free climbing session, to Irish Adventures’ ‘Introduction to Mountain Skills’ course or to the Club Environmental Officers’ workshop.

All in all, it was a great weekend and special thanks go to Noel O’Neill, club treasurer, for his administrative skills, and Kate Hebblethwaite of Mountaineering Ireland for all her help and advice.

• *David Chippendale is Secretary of Dingle Hill Walking Club.*

Climber completes Irish 2,000ft+ peaks

Kevin Dockery completes his round

On the morning of Saturday 19th September 2009, Cavan-man Kevin Dockery was on a mission. A wet mist hung over the McGillicuddy’s Reeks and all the way down the Hag’s Glen to Cronin’s Yard, where twelve walkers were changing into their walking gear. This was no ordinary meet. The group, comprised of friends and work colleagues, members of the walking fraternity in Cavan and representatives from the Wee Binnions and Rainbow Hillwalking Clubs, gathered to accompany Kevin on his climb of Carrauntoohil, Ireland’s highest mountain at 3,414ft. Nothing extraordinary about this, but for Kevin Dockery it was a special day because, on climbing Carrauntoohil, he became only the 13th person to have climbed all 212 of the 2,000ft+ mountains in Ireland.

On reaching the summit of Carrauntoohil, champagne corks were popped and companions gathered around to offer well deserved congratulations. It was the weekend of the All Ireland Football Final, so Cork and Kerry flags adorned the large cross on the mountain. A Cavan flag was produced to add to the colour and to mark Kevin’s “All Ireland” achievement. The photo captures the moment, with a delighted Kevin at the far right of the group holding the flag. He now joins a small band of walking giants. Thirteen may be unlucky for some, but for Kevin, the number will always have special significance now.



Kevin Dockery and friends celebrate on Carrauntoohil summit.

Known to his friends as “Doc,” Kevin is a keen walker and is well known in walking circles in Cavan and beyond. His quest to climb all 212 peaks began in 1972 when he climbed Croagh Patrick in Co Mayo, but he only started getting serious about the quest in 1994 after reading Paddy Dillon’s book *The Mountains of Ireland*. Kevin’s quest was interrupted in 2006 when he had major surgery for stomach cancer. At that stage he had 160 of the mountains climbed, but his determination never wavered. In all, Kevin estimates that in achieving his goal he walked approximately 800 miles and drove some 20,000 miles, journeys which took him to some of the most isolated parts of Ireland. – *(Fran McKeon, Rainbow Hillwalking Club)*



Climber on the Play At Height wall in Dingle during the Autumn Gathering.
Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.



Lead climbing with Mountaineering Ireland

National Lead Climbing Competition to become annual event

ANGELA CARLIN

THE NATIONAL Lead Climbing Competition took place at the Play-at-Height climbing wall in Dingle on Saturday, 10th October, 2009, during the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Meet.

The competition was the first of its kind, not in the sense of being a first 'national' competition or a first 'lead climbing' competition, but because, for the first time, it brought together a new competition venue, Play-at-Height, and a new role for Mountaineering Ireland as the competition organiser. It was also the first in a series, as it is to become an annual event.

As for the day itself, proceedings kicked off with two qualifying rounds, which were demonstrated (unlike the final routes which were climbed on-sight). The routes were set by Jamie Cassidy, who has considerable experience of setting UK and international comps and who did a fantastic job!

The small number and high standard of junior entries in both the male and female categories meant that the logical step was for juniors to climb in the same category as the adults, with prizes for the highest-scoring juniors in each.

The first qualifying route for female competitors was the least overhanging of the routes on offer – a technical route on the featured section of the wall. Everyone reached a high-point within two holds of the top, but the final move stopped a number of competitors.

Next challenge for the female competitors was on the first section of the competition wall, a route which had doubled as the male first qualifier and which all of the men had topped. It gave a good spread of scores for

the women, with Maggie Chojan, Rachel Cooper, Joan Mulloy and Michelle O'Loughlin clipping the chains and Lucy Mitchell and Katie Maxwell not far behind.

With all the males completing the first qualifier, the second qualifier for the male category upped the ante significantly and only Sean Villaneuva and Eddie Barbour clipped the chains, with Nick Colton and Eddie Cooper coming closest on 19+ and 19- points respectively. Jake Haddock and Andrew Colligan were the next highest scoring, with Andrew being the highest scoring junior at this stage.

The finalists were selected on a combined ranking over the first two routes, with the top six females, three junior and three senior, and the top twelve males, two juniors, eight seniors and two veterans, going through to the final. After six minutes to view their final routes, they headed off to the isolation area while a growing crowd of spectators gathered to watch the action.

Many of the competitors had never entered a 'formal' competition before and there were a few nerves as they headed for the isolation area, but the atmosphere 'backstage' was friendly and relaxed, with plenty of support and encouragement for everyone as they stepped out to have their go.

COMPETITION CLIMBING: SOME FAQs

"I don't have a clue what competition climbing is all about. Can someone please explain it?"

Competitions normally fall into one of three categories: Lead Climbing and Bouldering Competitions are concerned with the difficulty of the routes/ problems. In a **Lead Climbing** competition, there will normally be three or more routes ranging from easier to harder, but also increasing in difficulty as you ascend the route. The winner will be the person who completes the most difficult moves. In a **Bouldering** competition, there will be a series of problems of varying levels. **Speed** competitions are exactly what they sound like – a race between competitors on identical routes.

"I fancy having a go at that! How can I get started?"

The **Irish Bouldering League** is a great introduction to competition climbing. It's a relaxed competition with plenty of advice and encouragement for new competitors. It's suitable for adults and juniors aged around 14+ (as there are no separate junior problems). Juniors will enjoy the **NI Youth Climbing Series** – a competition specifically organised for 8-16 year-olds, with three rounds in Northern Ireland in January to March. It includes both bouldering and routes (which are top-roped for younger categories). The **Intervarsity** is open to members of student clubs – ask your club secretary for details!

If you are interested in competing, ask at your **local wall**. They may have a leading ladder or some informal competitions to get you started!

The final route for females was a steep and difficult to read 7a+. Joan Mulloy was the first to make it past a difficult move at the second bolt, but it was Rachel Cooper (junior) and Maggie Chojan who got highest, both just failing to hold a poor pocket and making a super final necessary to separate them.

The male final tackled the steepest section of wall, with the powerful initial roof stopping most. Andrew Colligan (junior) was the first to pass that section, before being shut down by the moves as the angle, but not the difficulty, eased off. Sean Villaneuva made the next few moves before being stopped by a powerful crimp section, but it was Eddie Barbour who pulled the crimps and heel-hooked his way to first place as the crowd cheered him on.

Both the female and veterans categories were tied and a quick re-set was needed to adjust the routes for a tie-breaker. Rachel put in a brilliant effort, entertaining the crowd with the best fall of the day and securing first place in the female junior section. Maggie climbed superbly, powering all the way to the second roof to win the female competition. In the veterans, it was down

to Eddie Cooper and Nick Colton. Nick climbed first and struggled at a difficult clip before falling. Eddie made one more move clipped and then climbed on to win the first ever Irish veterans competition.

Post-competition entertainment was hosted by Mc Carthy's pub and provided by Sean Villaneuva, who gave a highly entertaining account of his recent trip to Baffin Island, and by Eddie Barbour, who put his prize money behind the bar!

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to the following people: Cian O' Driscoll and all at **Play-at-Height**, Jamie Cassidy and John Harrison, and also to **La Sportiva** for their generous sponsorship. Thanks also to Mike Raine, Kate Hebblethwaite and Aodhnait Carroll, who stepped in as volunteers at such short notice.



IDENTIFYING TALENT

By Angela Carlin

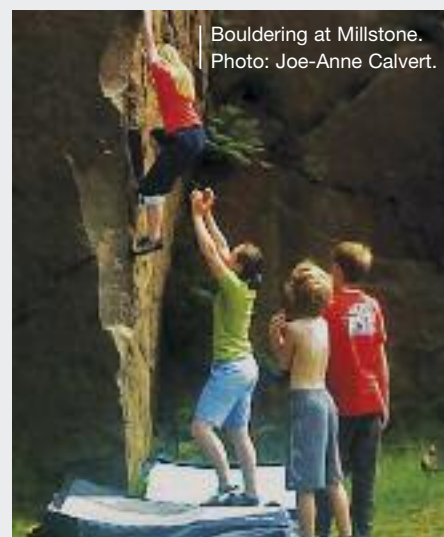
IN APRIL 2009, Sport Northern Ireland increased Mountaineering Ireland's grant support by agreeing to fund a new, full-time post, with a remit to develop 'Coaching and Talent Identification' on an all-Ireland basis. Many of you are probably wondering what such a job title could possibly have to do with mountaineering, so here's my attempt to convince you....

A number of years ago, as part of the MCI Youth Development Programme for Northern Ireland, a group of young climbers took part in a bouldering competition. Those who performed well were offered a six-week programme of classes with Eddie Cooper. This was our first attempt at a 'talent identification and development programme,' and as such there was plenty of learning to be done. Whilst all the participants came on in leaps and bounds over the six weeks, and were ready for more, MCI resources just weren't able deliver. Through the proactive approach taken by Eddie and the other parents involved, however, the programme grew into a club, the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team, which attracted funding from Belfast City

Council, organised competitions and trips, and trained hard. The Mountaineering Council of Ireland offered what support it could and the Club went from strength to strength.

Skip forward three years to 2008 and the youth team members are off to a UK Competition with Eddie accompanying them, in the role of coach, while I, as Youth Development Officer, am running a Talent Identification Day in conjunction with Sport NI, to recruit a junior squad aged 8-14.

One more year on and we have a fully funded, full-time post to develop further Talent ID and Development programmes, on an all-Ireland basis. Two of our young climbers, Rachel Cooper and Andrew Colligan, have competed at an international event, the European Youth Series. Mountaineering Ireland has run a National Lead Climbing Competition and committed to doing so annually from now on, and the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Series is an established annual fixture. It's also worth mentioning that at



Bouldering at Millstone.
Photo: Joe-Anne Calvert.

the National Competition, the overall 3rd-place Male and 2nd-place Female were both juniors from NIYCT. It's not all about competitions either – the NIYCT and the junior squad have had successes out on the rock as well; from Fontainebleau to Fair Head, the grades have been rising steadily....

A lot has been learned over the past few years, which should mean that a joined up, national approach is now possible. So, instead of looking at 'coaching' as a separate entity from talent identification, think of 'Coaching and Talent ID' as having this simple aim:

"A nationwide programme of events to recruit interested and talented young climbers and a nationwide network of people with the skills to help them to improve their performance."



Summer Meet 2009

Alan Tees, President,
Mountaineering
Ireland, on
Heumberg.

Summer Alpine Meet a great success

MARGARET TEES

July had arrived and once again husband Alan and I were bound for the annual **Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet**, an event which we don't like to miss. This year, however, various things had conspired against us, not least of which had been Alan unfortunately breaking his hand in a boating 'incident.' We had also just acquired a camper van. How would we manage to drive that huge distance in an unfamiliar vehicle with one disabled driver on the wrong side of the road? Two daughters, one boyfriend, a son and his girlfriend were also going to the Meet, so non-attendance was not an option!

To get to Innertkirchen, which is in the north-east of the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland, we chose to cross by ferry from Newcastle to Amsterdam where we arrived, well slept and well fed. We intended to drive down through Germany (the most direct route and toll-free) and were raring to get going after landing when the policewoman on duty at the gate queried Alan's bandaged hand and had us scuttling off on the

right road but in the wrong direction! It took us some time to get back en route and it was an otherwise uneventful but long journey. We arrived quite late at the dark, damp and dreary campsite, which seemed at that hour to be in the very back of beyond.

Of course, next morning it didn't seem so bad. The mountains came out of the clouds, and friends and family came out of their tents. The 'mother ship' was duly designated as the centre of the universe...well, in our particular corner of the campsite anyway! Chatting with other people and

browsing around the Mountaineering Ireland information room soon had us up-to-date, and plans for the first few days were already shaping up. As it was also Friday of the first week of the meet, a BBQ was being held for people to celebrate the successful outcome of their courses and for everyone else to socialise with friends, old and new. The evening turned out to be a very pleasant, balmy one and the socialising continued late into a starry night.

Despite a few thick heads, the following morning saw twelve of our group organised for a day

out on the Schwarzhorn (2928m), which is a reasonably accessible peak from Innertkirchen, via the Rosenlital, which climbs south westwards up to the Grosse Schiedegg. Our numbers now included Raja, a Himalayan mountain guide, a friend of ours who had flown in the night before from India and was keen to get out and try his hand at alpine mountaineering. Alan, of course, was keen to try out his hand too, but he wouldn't be attempting the klettersteg (via ferrata) ascent of the mountain, as most of the group did, but rather he would take the walker's option, which provided an airy and exhilarating path with just the occasional protective chain, cable and spike. He was enthusiastically accompanied by those of us who are less technically motivated. The summit was reached by the latter party first, which surprised the ladder-climbers, who assumed theirs would be the quicker route!

With a marked improvement in the weather, the next day saw the more ambitious members of the group heading off to climb the Monch and the Jungfrau via



Meet participants on
summit of Schwarzhorn.
Photo: Alan Tees
collection.

the Junfrauojochbahn. They were undaunted by the prospect of having to purchase the most expensive railway tickets in the world to get to the joch and certainly did leave with their fingers crossed for the weather to hold. Those of us who had already been to these mountains opted instead to enjoy a leisurely day in Meiringen, eating meringues, drinking beer and following the Sherlock Holmes trail.

The following day, feeling coffeed out and a little envious of others going off multi-pitch climbing, extreme klettersteging or bagging 4000m peaks, we headed up the valley towards the Susten Pass and walked into the Tierbergli Hutte (2795m), starting point for the high peak of the area, the Sustenhorn (3504m). This summit is a fairly short snow plod and easy enough to get to but, because of its accompanying (modest) glacier and the need of two hands to use ice axes and a rope, we did not attempt it. Nonetheless, the route to the hut was a great climb in itself. We had now acquired a further addition to our group, North West Mountaineering Club member Dennis Golden, who had flown into northern Italy and walked through various passes to reach Innertkirchen on foot. As he was travelling very light and had brought no hardware with him, he and Alan ascended the path



Campsite at Innertkirchen.
Photo: Alan Tees collection.

while I was able to do the klettersteg route with another new arrival, who was short of company and in need of a warm-up day. Again, the klettersteg approachers took longer to make the hut (it was a much longer climb!) but waiting around a hut is very pleasant, especially when it's warm and the sun is shining. Food always tastes so good when you are at height and it has been an effort to get there, and it's always a delight to sit out on the decking, admiring the view and resting the legs.

Having now got into our stride (and with everyone else happily doing their own thing), Alan and I struggled to keep up with the super-fit Dennis on a long route from the Susten valley to the Grimsel. Having decided not to wait the hour and a half to avail ourselves of the cable car up to UnderiTrift, we climbed up the steep path, convincing ourselves that this

was much better than waiting in a queue, and eventually arrived at the Windegg Hutte at 1887m, suitably exhausted. Welcome bowls of soup were devoured on the airy terrace where we were surrounded by great views down to the Trift bridge, across to the Trift Gletcher and up to the high peak of Vorder Tierberg. Much refreshed, we then traversed through the remote, snow-covered regions of the Trifttalli, and crossed the Furtwangsettel col at 2568m. We had hoped to walk all the way back to Innertkirchen, but time was running out, and the sun had taken its toll, so we descended directly down to the village of Guttannen, in the Grimsel valley, where we hadn't too long to wait for the inevitably efficient Swiss bus, which took us painlessly back down the valley to the campsite. Whereupon we found our group had expanded again, by the arrival of Hans, a Norwegian guy who used to work with Trish (a friend from previous meets) in Sligo. They had recently got in touch and

decided to meet up at this year's Alpine Meet. Not having had any alpine experience, he was keen to get as much out of the remaining few days as possible.

For a 'rookie,' the chance to mountaineer with a Himalayan guide is one not to be missed and even more so if you don't have to pay him! Therefore, Hans jumped at the chance to go off with Raja, who planned to climb the two summits to the west of the Sustenhorn. The following morning, Alan and I gave them a lift to the beginning of the Tierbergli Hutte walk-in and continued on ourselves to climb a top near the Susten Pass. The Heumberg Ridge (2785m) turned out to be somewhat akin to a section of the Cuillin Ridge, except that cables and rungs were thoughtfully provided. The holds were fortunately on the right-hand side, thereby enabling Alan to effectively use his good hand. This did also rather dictate that there would be no going back, so instead, on gaining an appropriate col after the high point, a rather tricky gully descent was undertaken, followed by a delicate crossing without crampons, of a 450 icy snowfield. Below this, a regular path emerged which duly took us down to the noisy highway which is the Susten Pass, and so back to pick up the boys, who were glowing with success, pleasure and snow burn.

The Swiss weather forecast for heavy rain on Friday night was ruthlessly accurate, so the second BBQ was held indoors. Music was played, party pieces performed, and then the céili dancing started. The rain continued the following day, and so thereby ended the 12th Irish Alpine Meet. ■

Above Susten Pass.
Photo: Alan Tees
collection.



AlpineMeet

Winter Alpine Meet, Adamello Alps, Italy, 14-21 March 2010



Winter Meet 2010 in the Alps

Note: Dates and venue for our Summer Alpine Meet will soon be announced on our website

Interested in learning or improving your winter walking, snowshoeing and mountaineering skills, in bright sunshine and with good food?

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND will be running its 2010 Winter Meet in the spectacular location of Ponte de Legno in the Adamello Alps, Italy, in March.

Just 100km northeast of Milan Bergamo (with direct Ryanair flights from Dublin), the Adamello Alps boast a stunning range of mountain vistas with enough winter mountaineering challenges to keep you occupied for months, if needs be. They also have a huge variety of waymarked snowshoe trails that criss-cross the valleys and hillsides so that even novice winter walkers are catered for. Not to mention an extensive network of Alpine refuges dotted all over the area, offering comfy beds with duvets and home-cooked three-course meals with wine. You won't be slumming it in these huts!

The Winter Alpine Meet is aimed at walkers and alpinists of all ages and skill levels. The purpose is to get people together in an Alpine area where they can walk, ice-climb, snowshoe, and climb snow-covered and rocky Alpine peaks.

The Meet will be based in the village of Ponte de Legno in the Adamello Alps. It is a quiet Alpine village but also the access point for some of the most spectacular walking and Alpine climbing in Italy. The area boasts some awesome Alpine climbing, winter and summer, with many peaks above 3000m, e.g. Mt Adamello (3020m), Cima Lavedole (3072m), Cima di Salimmo (3104m). The scope for alpine ascents of varying difficulty is also justifiably impressive, with routes from UIAA F through to TD-.

Full details regarding accommodation and travel options are available on www.mountaineering.ie.

For 2010, we are adopting a new

approach to the Winter Meet. It will, as usual, be a forum for improving winter skills, but we will also be incorporating a wider range of disciplines in order to make the Meet a more inclusive and organic event. All courses will be run by professional mountain guides or international mountain leaders.

A new element for this year's Meet will be a mandatory one-day course for all participants, which will cover avalanche awareness and transceiver skills. The registration fee for the Meet is built into the €120 cost of this course.

Meet Courses

Mandatory Avalanche Awareness Course

Monday 15 March

Avalanche awareness, transceiver skills, safe travel in winter Alpine terrain and avalanche assessment for all participants (walking and climbing). Course fee includes: Winter Meet registration, course, six-day hire of avalanche transceiver, and one-day walkers lift pass. Cost: €120

Winter Walking

Snowshoe Skills & Winter Navigation

16 March; 17 March

1 day, 8:1 ratio
Cost: €40

Winter Walking/Snowshoe Trip

16-17 March; 18-19 March

Overnight in Hut & ascent of Cima Verde
2 days, 8:1 ratio
Cost: €100 (includes dinner and Hut B&B)

Winter Snowshoe Trip

18-19 March

Overnight in snowhole, including snowhole building skills, emergency shelters, and backcountry cooking skills
2 days, 6:1 ratio
Cost: €100 (includes hire of -15°C down sleeping bag & food)

Winter Snowshoe/Walking Trip 20 March

To Cima Presena
1 day, 8:1 ratio
Cost: Free

For participants who want to undertake one-day self-guided snowshoe walks, detailed maps and route suggestions will be provided free of charge.

Winter Mountaineering

Introduction to Ice Climbing 16 March; 18 March

1 day, 2:1 ratio
Cost: €150

Winter Alpine Climbing 17 March; 19 March

1 day, 2:1 ratio
Cost: €150

Ski Touring

Introduction to Ski Touring 18 March

1 day, 3:1 ratio
Cost: €130 (equipment hire not included in fee)

Information Evening

- For those interested in learning more about the 2010 Winter Meet, there will be a briefing night at **Great Outdoors** on Wednesday, 20 January 2010, 7:00pm.

- For those unable to make this meeting, a **YouTube** information video will be available (link from Mountaineering Ireland website).

- For further information, course details, gear lists and a booking form, please visit the 2010 Winter Meet page at www.mountaineering.ie



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Ireland's lowest mountains

Aidan Dillon reports on his ascents of three Midland county tops

On the megalithic
cairn on the
summit of
Carnbane,
Co Meath.
Photo: Pat
Delaney.

Regular readers of the *Irish Mountain Log* will be well used to reports describing expeditions to exotic places. Our trek was much more modest, but it did bring us to what, for us at least, were unknown places. We saw new sights and encountered friendly natives. No vaccinations or expensive equipment were required, merely a packed lunch and a decent road map. Our plan was simply to climb three of Ireland's lowest county tops in one day.

We were inspired by Paul Clement's 2005 book *The Height of Nonsense*. This book describes a trip round the highest points in each county in Ireland. The county tops (the 'Clements,' perhaps?) include well-known mountains such as Errigal and Knockmealdown. They also include some much less prominent hills...but height isn't everything, as our daytrip was to prove.

Our expedition really began in a supermarket carpark in Drumlish. This small town in Longford made an unlikely site for our base camp. One of our team members was celebrating a significant birthday, so cake and coffee were consumed in her honour. We

could already see our first objective, **Corn Hill**, which is just two miles from Drumlish. A large television mast, visible for miles, considerably adds to Corn Hill's 278 metres. The only difficulty we encountered was finding the starting point. We circled round on bohereens for several miles, until a helpful local put us on the right road. Large steel gates guarded the entrance, though access had been left for walkers.

I was amused to see my companions Pat Delaney, Tess Cunniffe, Patricia Lynch and Noel O'Meara putting on their boots, gaiters, rucksacks, etc, in full 'day out on the Reeks' fashion. Within ten minutes we had walked up the tarmac roadway and were standing on the top. The television mast really dominates the summit and it is quite impressive in its own way. The summit

is also partly forested. While this helps conceal the buildings associated with mast, the trees also limit the views from the top. We caught glimpses of some more northerly hills, with the lure of further potential expeditions to Leitrim and Roscommon.

The biggest challenge of the trip was navigating the back roads towards our second objective. **Mullaghmeen** has the honour of being the 'lowest highest' – no county top is smaller. At 261 metres, it is the highest point in Westmeath, but it can't claim to dominate the skyline of the Lakeland County, and it is not too easy to find. Mullaghmeen Forest Park is on a back road about six miles from Castlepollard. A decent road map will be helpful, though there are a few road signs as you near the forest park.

Mullaghmeen was a very different

On the approach
to Corn Hill,
Co Longford.
Members of
Aonach ar Siúl
Hillwalking Club.
Photo: Aidan Dillon.



experience to Corn Hill. The forest is reputed to be the largest beech wood in western Europe. It is well maintained by Coillte and is obviously popular with local families, dog walkers and mountain bikers. If we had been better prepared, we could have printed a map of the forest off the Coillte website. In any case, there was a map of the park on the noticeboard at the entrance to the forest.

We had a pleasant walk of about a mile up through the beech wood. There was plenty of autumn colour about as we crunched over fallen leaves. Having spent enough time on other trips marching through miles of Sitka spruce, it was lovely to walk through this fine broadleaved forest. After a time, we left the main track and headed up through the trees to the summit. The area around the summit has been clear-felled and replanted in the past year or so. This has opened up the views, at least for the next few years. The top was broad and level, with a summit cairn consisting of an untidy heap of boulders.

There were wonderful views over Lough Sheelin. On that fine autumn day, it was an attractive spot to linger and enjoy the scenery. Later, on our descent back to the car park, there were signs pointing off to various local sights like the boleaving hut and the famine fields. But, like true explorers, we left those temptations for another visit and pushed on for our final objective.

If Mullaghmeen took a bit of finding, then **Carnbane** could hardly be easier to get to. From the fine town of Oldcastle we took the road for Kells and, after a mile or two, we turned right and followed the signs for Lough Crew. The road signs bring you to a carpark and a well maintained trail to the top. Carnbane is the only mountain I know with at least three names. As well as being referred to as Lough Crew, on some maps it is listed as *Sliabh na Cailli*, the hag's mountain.

Unlike Mullaghmeen, Carnbane was a grass-covered hill. A large, impressive cairn dominated the top. At 276 metres, it can claim to be the highest point in Meath. It is also part of a large megalithic complex, which includes remains spread across the neighbouring hills. Its summit and slopes contain various archaeological remains dating back 5,000 years. We rambled round it for a time looking at



some of the other historical remains, carved stones and such that dot Carnbane. The hill is well maintained and, while clearly popular with the locals, was thankfully litter-free.

The views from Carnbane were really top class, rivalling those off much loftier summits. To the north we could see Slieve Gullion. The Mourne were peeping out over the full range of the Cooley Mountains. To the south-east, the Dublin and Wicklow mountains seemed quite near, while further south we could make out the low broad profile of the Slieve Blooms. To the west we could again see Lough Sheelin and some of the other Midland lakes. It is claimed that 18 counties can be seen from this spot. Standing on a hill like this on a clear day makes you realise how small an island we live on.

Reluctantly, we descended back to our vehicle, sorry that our expedition was already over. All three hills were worth climbing. Corn Hill will hardly merit a second visit, but Mullaghmeen and Carnbane certainly will. The changing seasons will ensure that the woods at Mullaghmeen provide a different experience throughout the year. Carnbane could bring out the Indiana Jones in you, if archaeology is your thing. Alternatively, climb the hill on a clear day with a pair of binoculars and a map of Ireland and see how many hills you can identify and counties you can spot.

Doing the 'Clements' is a worthy challenge. They may not be in the same league as the Scottish Munros, but they are very enjoyable. Many of them are family friendly, an ideal way to introduce kids to the great

outdoors. They will bring you to some unconsidered parts of Ireland.

Climbing the county tops will also help reduce the pressure on some of our more popular mountains. Doing all three hills together involves a fair bit of driving, ideally with someone happy to navigate. One of our team now has only two county tops left to conquer. The rest of us have more days out to plan and hidden gems to discover. ■

Aidan Dillon is a member of the Aonach ar Siúl Hillwalking Club, based in Nenagh, Co Tipperary. Most of the club's walks are based around the Silvermines, Keeper Hill and Lough Derg, with occasional outings to Wicklow, Kerry and further afield.

Aidan with Tess Cuniffe and Patricia Lynch on the summit of Mullaghmeen, Co Westmeath, overlooking Lough Sheelin.
Photo:
Pat Delaney.

Aidan Dillon poses at a signpost for Carnbane, Co Meath.
Photo:
Pat Delaney





The joys of ridge walking

Dan Bailey sings the praises of some classic scrambles and climbs on the ridges of England, Scotland and Wales

Tryfan from the Gribin Ridge in the Cwm Bocklwyd Horseshoe in Snowdonia.
Photo: Dan Bailey.

Who could resist a ridge? Threading through bristling pinnacles; inching around an extravagantly fluted cornice; treading a stone tightrope in the clouds – these are among the finest climbing experiences. The strength of the pull is in the line, the compelling elegance of the chiselled crest. A ridge is a story in stone, a narrative unfolding from gradual beginning to climactic resolution via the twists and turns of plot along the way. When rock, sky and climber meet, a sort of spell is woven, blending vastness with detail, and mind-cleansing space with up-close intricacy.

These are some of the grandest trips to be had in the hills, each memorable

and unique. Their irresistibility was felt, too, by climbing's pioneers; the most prominent of our ridges were explored in the sport's infant days and have a rich traditional heritage built over decades of ascents.

On such venerable classics, gymnastic technicality tends to feature low on the list of potential difficulties – though it's not always a pushover – and old-fashioned mountaineering challenges like route-finding, exposure and weather come to the fore. In contrast to cragging or sport climbing, the moves matter rather less than the overall feel, the sense that we're having an epic in a high, wild place. Since the scale and beauty of the surroundings are integral to the endeavour, climbing ridges is as much an aesthetic experience as a physical exercise. That isn't to say we're not free to enjoy ourselves along the way, of course; that's the whole point. From strenuous walks with occasional hands-on moments, through the full range of scrambling grades to respectable (if not extreme) rock and winter climbs, there's a fantastic ridge out there for mountaineers of all stripes.

Scotland is the undisputed acme of ridge climbing in these isles; but while there's nothing further south to equal the immense Cuillin or the majestic An Teallach, the rugged post-glacial ranges of Cumbria, Snowdonia, Kerry and Connemara lack neither quality nor variety. And superb adventures can be found elsewhere, too, even in surprisingly un-mountainous seaside locations – proof that there's climbing gold beyond them thar hills. From the rolling Derbyshire dales to the sun-kissed south coast of England, the diversity of the climbs on offer is matched only by the variety of landscapes in which they are found.

Ireland's contribution to the genre includes what must be two of the finest routes of their grades anywhere. Howling Ridge on Carrauntoohil (VDiff) and Carrot Ridge in the Twelve Bens (Diff) both combine scale, setting and quality climbing to optimum effect. There are other worthy objectives in Ireland too, of course, but since members of Mountaineering Ireland will probably already know their Irish favourites intimately, here are three of the best from the neighbours across the sea.

Snowdonia

Cwm Bochlwyd Horseshoe; Grade 1 scramble

Maps OS Landranger (1:50000) 115; OS Explorer (1:25000) OL17; Harvey British Mountain Map (1:40000) Snowdonia

With its grand austerity, atmospheric positions and endlessly varied rocky ground, the circuit of Cwm Bochlwyd is unquestionably the finest, easy, all-day ridge scramble south of Scotland. Better still, it's just a short hop from the Holyhead ferry. First comes Tryfan, the figurehead of Snowdonian ruggedness. From some angles it resembles a giant stone dorsal fin dwarfing the ant-like traffic on the A5; from others, the buttressed ramparts and crumbling turrets of a decaying fortress. Tryfan doesn't have a boring side. The North Ridge is of a size unlike anything else in Wales, offering 600 metres of top quality scrambling that is none the worse for its overwhelming popularity. A well-worn line (or rather, an intertwining collection of lines) weaves up the broad crest via a succession of craggy walls and generous ledges that minimise the sense of exposure. Every tier offers variations, from polished easy options to short tricky pitches that can feel a lot harder than grade 1. You're unlikely to find exactly the same route from one visit to the next, which is part of the attraction. In descent, the South Ridge proves rather gentler entertainment.

This outlying peak safely negotiated, an ascent of the fittingly-named Bristly Ridge is the natural next step, exposed-but-easy clambering through a coxcomb of spectacular pinnacles. A wander over the otherworldly boulder graveyard of the Glyder plateau follows, a moonscape of stark but striking beauty. Just beyond the highest tor the plateau narrows and rears up into a sheaf of stone spears. This is Castell y Gwynt, Castle of the Winds, a natural adventure playground that is much better scrambled than avoided. As if all that wasn't enough, there's still more to come, with the airy and criminally underrated Gribin Ridge providing plenty of hands-on entertainment en route back to the Ogwen valley, and a gradual wind-down from the day's many excitements.

Lake District

Sphinx Ridge, Great Gable; Grade 2 scramble

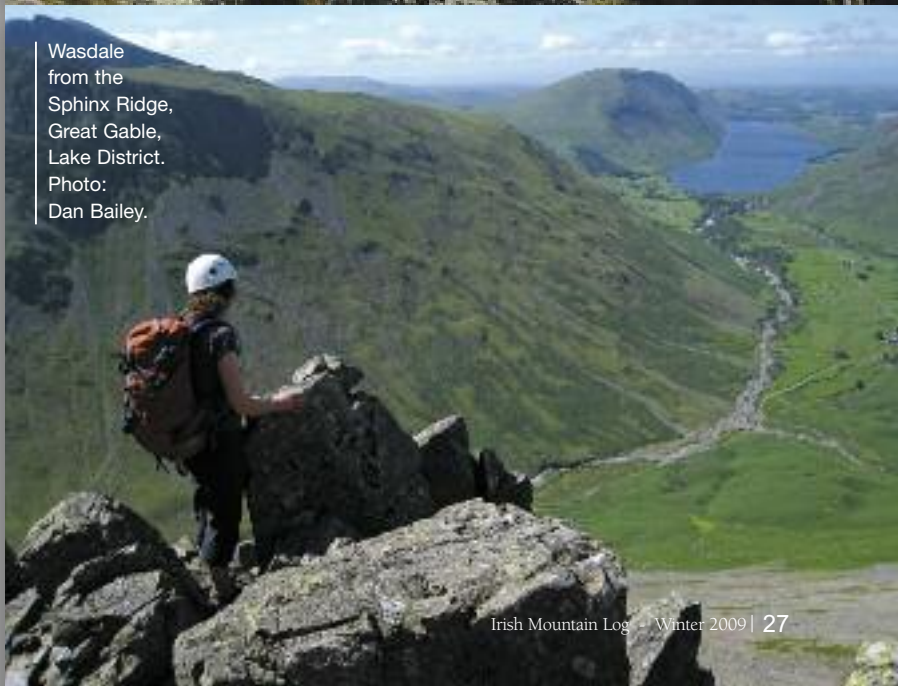
Maps OS Landranger (1:50000) 90; OS Explorer (1:25000) OL 4; Harvey British Mountain Map (1:40000) Lake District

The massive lump of Great Gable is England's answer to Carrauntoohil. Okay, it isn't the highest in the land, but in common with Ireland's crowning peak Gable sports a formidable array of ridges unmatched by any other hill in the country – four in total.

Splayed hand-like across The Napes crag, high above Wasdale, these routes may lack the sheer scale of the Pippets, Howling and Primroses trio, but they offer climbing every bit as memorable, and on cleaner better rock to boot. Three are true rock climbs, but the westernmost of the group is suitable for scramblers of more modest abilities. Accessed via the famous **Climber's Traverse** and finished by a less well-trodden line up the tottering confusion of Westmorland's Crag, Sphinx Ridge makes for one of the longest and most worthwhile of Cumbrian

hillwalking ◀

The Napes Needle
from the Climber's Traverse.
Sphinx Ridge, Great Gable, Lake District.
Photo: Dan Bailey.



Wasdale
from the
Sphinx Ridge,
Great Gable,
Lake District.
Photo:
Dan Bailey.



Christmas competition

We have five copies of Dan Bailey's excellent book, *The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland: Scrambling, Mountaineering and Climbing*, published by Cicerone, to give away. (See page 52 for review of book.)

Simply answer the question **'Which two Irish ridges does Dan Bailey consider to be the finest anywhere?'**

Send your answer, together with your name, address and membership number, to: Ridges Competition, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12. Entries must be received in Sport HQ by **January 31st 2010**.

The first five correct entries drawn at the AGM on March 6th will receive a copy of Dan Bailey's impressive book.

Approaching the Charles Inglis Clark (or CIC) hut with the Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis, on the right.
Photo: Dan Bailey.

clambers. The terrain is dauntingly complex, and though discontinuous and in places avoidable, the scrambling is both excellent and diverse.

The Climber's Traverse runs across steep scree below the well known climbing venues Kern Knotts and Tophet Wall to reach the pillar of Napes Needle, the most iconic chunk of geology in Lakeland and the singular point in space and time (1886, to be precise) from which the sport of rock climbing is said to have exploded. The scrambling starts with a bang, too – a crossing of the steep and extremely polished gap between the pinnacle and the main crag – a manoeuvre known as *threading the needle* (the Needle itself is a thrilling Hard Severe climb, the most exciting bit of which is getting off again in one piece). Scrappy but by no means trivial ground then leads to the remarkable natural statue of the Sphinx, marking the start of the eponymous ridge. Once gained, the crest continues in a series of little teeth, then a slabby rib, before interesting short walls and grooves lead to a curious grassy arête that links The Napes to the parent mountain. With Westmorland's Crag barring a direct route to Gable's summit, the day is still far from over; but since half the fun here is finding a way through the crazy towers I'm not going to spoil it with a full description.

Further reading

These routes and many more are detailed in Dan Bailey's two books *The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland* (see review, p52) and *Scotland's Mountain Ridges*, published by Cicerone.



Lochaber

Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis; Grade Diff in summer or III in winter

Maps OS Landranger (1:50000) 41; OS Explorer (1:25000) 392; Harvey British Mountain Map (1:40000) Ben Nevis & Glen Coe

Tower Ridge has all the cachet and atmosphere of a world classic. With superlative length and exciting situations throughout, it ranks among the grandest routes in Scotland. Rising in a series of rocky steps from the massive conical buttress of the Douglas Boulder (usually avoided, though it needn't be) right up to the Ben's summit plateau, its profile is instantly recognisable, its line irresistible. This is a route for all seasons. The summer climbing is largely easier than the appearance suggests, making Tower Ridge a fitting choice for aspiring mountaineers. Sans snow, confident groups will remain unroped for much of the time; others will opt to move together, though on the trickiest and most spectacular sections it's not a bad idea to climb it in pitches.

Whatever the season, this epic should grace everyone's ticklist; but it is arguably as a winter ascent that Tower Ridge is most coveted. Because of its unusual length, complicated escape and the variable conditions-related difficulties that may be met at this time of year, it needs to be taken seriously by even the most

accomplished mountaineers. Powder snow and verglas add considerably to the challenge and, in imperfect conditions, benightments are common. Recent guidebooks reflect this by awarding the route grade IV and, while the upgrade is debatable, the intention behind it certainly isn't. Spectacular named features provide the meat of this climb – the Eastern Traverse, the Great Tower and the infamous Tower Gap. A big step down into a tight slot with what feels like the full height of the mountain dropping off on either side below, this latter is the scene of many a wobbly moment in ice or high winds (hopefully not both at once). Care is obviously called for but, just as on long Alpine routes, this has to be tempered with a degree of urgency. Go too slow on Tower Ridge and a cold night out on a snowy ledge awaits! ■

Fife-based outdoor journalist Dan Bailey is the author of guidebooks *Scotland's Mountain Ridges* and *The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland*, both published by Cicerone, and *West Highland Way and Kingdom of Fife*, published by Pocket Mountains. When not researching books, he snaps and writes about mountain sports for a variety of publications. He has hiked and climbed in mountains around the world but he still reckons that the hills of home are tops.

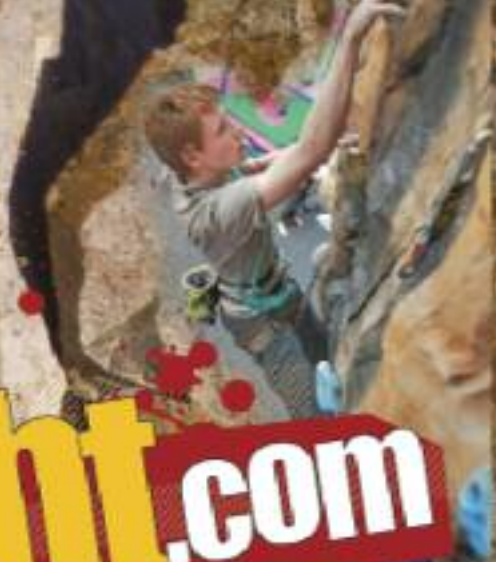


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‘Ar Seachrán’ in Lofoten

Frank Nugent and Harry Connolly climb in the magical islands of Lofoten in Norway

Photo 1:
Approaching
Trolltinden
aboard Ar
Sheachrán.
Photo: Harry
Connolly.

Frank Nugent writes:

Paddy Barry and I have had many adventurous outings together aboard Paddy’s Galway hooker, *St Patrick*, starting with a trip to the Isle of Skye in 1996 when we walked on the islands of Eigg, Jura and Skye. When the irreplaceable *St Patrick*, which had famously voyaged to New York, Spitsbergen and Greenland, was broken up in a storm in West Cork, Paddy purchased a 45-metre ex-racing aluminium sailing boat to continue his sailing and climbing adventures.

Paddy named his new craft *Ar Seachrán*. Paddy tells us the name translates from the Irish to ‘on the wander.’

This year, Paddy decided to sail to Norway and he invited a number of his regular *St Patrick* climbing veterans to join him there in June, to explore the magic of the Lofoten Islands. I have long harboured a desire to visit the famed, unspoilt Arctic archipelago with its unique combination of narrow fiords out of which green hills and steep crags, topped with glaciers and snow peaks, rise up to no higher than 3800ft in sun, mist or more often in rain, with 24 hours of daylight available during the summer months. A sailing boat with an adventurous skipper provided the ideal platform for a Norwegian climbing adventure.

Peter Gargan and I flew to Oslo (Torp) where we met with Harry Connolly, who lives and works in Luxembourg. We changed airports (Gardermoen) to fly north to Tromsø; already there aboard *Ar Seachrán* with Paddy was Ruaidhrí Breathnach, who had travelled by train from Oslo, and new boy Mark Lennon from County Down, who had joined Paddy at the Orkney Islands and who, with two other guest crew, had done some days

of hard sailing to deliver the boat inside the Arctic Circle to Tromsø. Ruaidhrí, a veteran of many St Patrick voyages, had already taken complete command of the galley and with Mark, another aspiring master chef, they combined to our gastronomic delight.

A visit to the most engaging and compact polar museum that I have ever visited set the scene for our Norwegian outing. It exhibited the lives and achievements of Norwegian polar heroes Amundsen and Nansen, as well as the lives and ways of many pioneer trappers and seal, walrus and polar bear hunters. Outside, it was six degrees Centigrade in bright sunshine, compared to the near 20 degrees heat Dubliners had enjoyed the day before. Such perfect walking weather helped motivate a walk, which started out innocently from our waterfront pontoon. It soon turned into a furious 6½-hour, 26km hike and ascent of Tromsøtinden (1238m). The pace never relented as we ascended through forestry towards the distant summit and it culminated in a clockwise rocky ridge leading to a most rewarding snow-capped peak from which 360° views of Norway’s Arctic mountains and seascape rewarded our competitive enterprise. Back at sea



level, very expensive pints followed our dinner on board, at Tromsø's convivial Scarva and Railway Bars.

We sailed next morning to off-anchor at Bjornskin on the Island of Andoya, from where we did a 5½-hour, 18km loop through a most pleasant hill and seascape in sunny, yet perfectly cool, temperatures for walking. We continued our journey southwest towards the Lofotens, fit and primed for more severe challenges.

Harry Connolly writes:

It's Monday night, June 8th, and *Ar Seachrán* lies alongside the service jetty at the end of the Trollfjord. We are happy to be here and are looking forward to a big day on the hill tomorrow. We are on the island of Austvågøya in Lofoten, a dream land of sea and mountains about 200km north of the Arctic Circle. We are southbound towards Svolvær, Henningsvær and Bodø, with plans to walk and climb in areas that we can reach under sail, and tomorrow's plan is Trolltinden, a peak of 1036m just south of our fjord anchorage (see *photo 1*).

The next morning, we dinghy

across to a pebble beach and a walk through thick scrub vegetation to the Trollfjordvatnet at 185m, a lake still ice-clad and one of the thousands that contribute to Norway's hi-tech hydro-electric capacity. Our peak is a ridge reached by a couloir, a traverse and some steep mixed ground to a rock top in a snow-capped summit. A quick change from shorts to britches, harness and rope, and we start up this dubious couloir in soft snow.

However, progress is good and, metre by metre, the surrounding landscape unveils the wonders of Arctic Norway's northern waters. We reach a col at about 600m, a window overlooking the south side of our peak offering views of Storemolla and a myriad of islands in Arctic water.

Moving upwards while traversing steep snow towards a rock arête, we find a shelf to leave crampons, axes and ski-poles and move onto rock. The rock is dry and easy but quite exposed and we eagerly put the natural flake belays to good use. It's a warm summer's day here in Lofoten and the steep rock leads us to a final ridge of snow, gently corniced, leading to a rock-cairned summit about 100m distant. We reach the cairn on our "troll peak," a vertical kilometre above

our boat below. Peaks all around, snow still abundant at this time of the year, and our day on the top is a bonus because we realise that for this area we may be a little too early in the season. Winter's snows still cover north-facing slopes, and couloirs still retain enough ice and snow to warrant caution despite the atmosphere of "summer treks on friendly alps" (see *photo 2*).

A hot cup of tea, some great photos and part two of our day begins – how to get off this hill! Short rope technique is put to good use as we weave and back-climb the route to our crampons, ski-poles and wide welcoming snow slope – mostly reassuring, but one never knows! The snow is quite soft in our large couloir but safe enough to afford a quick glissade to Trollfjordvatnet and *Ar Seachrán* in the cold waters of the fjord below. I deliberately hang back to enjoy the last metres alone before reaching the waterline and dinghy. It's early evening but with no relenting in the northern sun, the waters of the fjord are dark blue and shadows scale the vertical walls opposite. This fjord is one of Norway's best boasts and most people only get to see it "bottom up" from the deck of a cruise ship. We

Photo 2:
Frank Nugent
and Paddy Barry
on the summit of
Trolltinden.
Photo: Harry
Connolly.



Photo 3 (top): Harry Connolly and Frank Nugent on 'The Horns of the Goat.'
Photo 4 (inset): Harry takes the leap.
Photos: Peter Gargan.

had just experienced it from summit to waterline! A great day in the hills with promise of more....

As we climb aboard *Ar Seachrán*, Peter and Ruaidhrí haul the outboard on deck, Paddy shouts out "throw off that stern line, Harry!" True to form, Paddy's on a mission... we were underway for Svolvaer and the bright lights of Lofoten. I still have my boots on! Two hours later, cups of tea in hand, Svolvaer looming up off the bow, rumour of beers tonight and Frank's suggestion to try the Svolvaer Goat – the route to do on Lofoten; all's well with the world and we're happy men at sea!

The Svolvaer Goat

Well, we did it. After his first pitch, Frank pointed me at the bottom of

this large flaked chimney and we eventually made the top in three pitches. Paddy accompanied us on the first two pitches and afterwards decided to let the "Goat" deal with Frank and myself alone (see photo 3)!

The penultimate pitch was a route-finding oversight on my behalf, leaving good memories, but it was the "obvious line" – famous last words! It was a more direct line, an airy crack on the main face with a good rising traverse to a belay just between the horns of the goat. The last short pitch took us into the shadows, around the base of the large horn to finally summit on a top the size of a double bed. There was a nice shiny belay chain just over the edge. The two of us chained together on this double bed, Frank fed me just enough rope to do the *jump*. I landed in a cold sweat and a clatter of hardware on the lower horn. The deed was done, Frank was still on belay and we were both upright!

On the abseil, Frank almost left his little finger in the belay chain on the top pinnacle, bleeding all over me, 20 metres below. It was more like "the Goat getting us by the horns" ... but we survived!

The route is about 4-5 on good rock with a memorable 1.5-metre descending leap from the upper block to the lower top (the horns). A good landing is the prerequisite. A "must" for an intermittent rock climber with a

death wish or a love for a "buzz," wishing to holiday in Lofoten (see photo 4)!

Svolvaer, the capital of the Lofoten Islands, boasts a whole host of mountain and sea activities, both winter and summer. For anybody interested in rock-climbing and mountaineering, a must-read is Ed Webster's *Climbing in the Magic Islands*.¹ Frank had a copy of this with him on board the boat. I thought on several occasions over the two weeks that this guidebook was going to be the death of us! In retrospect, it proved a blessing! The Lofoten Islands are also a very fine location for backcountry skiing, ski mountaineering and ski touring. Well worth the effort!

Frank Nugent writes:

The first ascent of Nordre Higravtinden, the first recorded mountaineering ascent in the Lofoten Islands, occurred in 1871. Remarkably, that first ascent was completed by William Spotswood Green from Youghal, Co Cork, who was then aged 24 and had been conferred with an Arts degree at Trinity College just three days before he departed for the Lofoten Islands. He was later ordained and became the Church of Ireland rector at Carrigaline, Co Cork. His pioneering made him a notable first to the

summit plateau of Mount Cook in 1883 and, in 1889, he recorded first ascents in the Selkirks range in British Columbia. Unfortunately for Green, the summit he gained climbing solo in Lofoten was not, as he thought, the highest in the range, as he was himself to reflect:

*“Only one drop of bitterness was in my cup and that was the presence of a neighbouring crag that evidently overtopped my own. It was too far off to try, also it looked quite inaccessible, at least I should be sorry to try it by myself.”*²

Our ascent to the true summit of Store (or Great) Highgravtinden (1161m), the highest peak in Lofoten, was via its western flank. Our starting point was from our anchor at the head of the Austnesfjorden, about one kilometre south of the village of Eide. After some very steep climbing up through a craggy stunted forest, we encountered some route-finding difficulties; we were too far left and looking up some very unpromising crags towards the summit; this caused many in our party to become discouraged. Having backtracked right, Harry, followed by Peter Gargan and myself, kicked deep steps up a very long snowfield to reach a high frozen col around which we carefully contoured a number of buttresses to come out on a quite spectacular cairned rock summit. The view was truly exquisite. It was for us exactly as Green described in his 1871 diary:

“The view was magnificent; I have yet to see the Alpine view that surpasses it. The mountain chain of mainland in view, I should say, for 100 miles, then the Westfjorde studded with islands. The whole chain of the Lofoten Islands and islets, the crowd of the most fantastic peaks that I ever beheld” (see photo 5).

However, it was also clear to us that another cairned summit, a hundred metres north of us, was higher. To get there meant descending into a deep gully and carefully climbing up steep blocks and an uninviting chimney to come out on the top of a cairned gendarme which was clearly the highest point of the range. Views of Trolltinden and our route to its dramatic summit made it truly worth the extra physical effort.

We sailed that night to

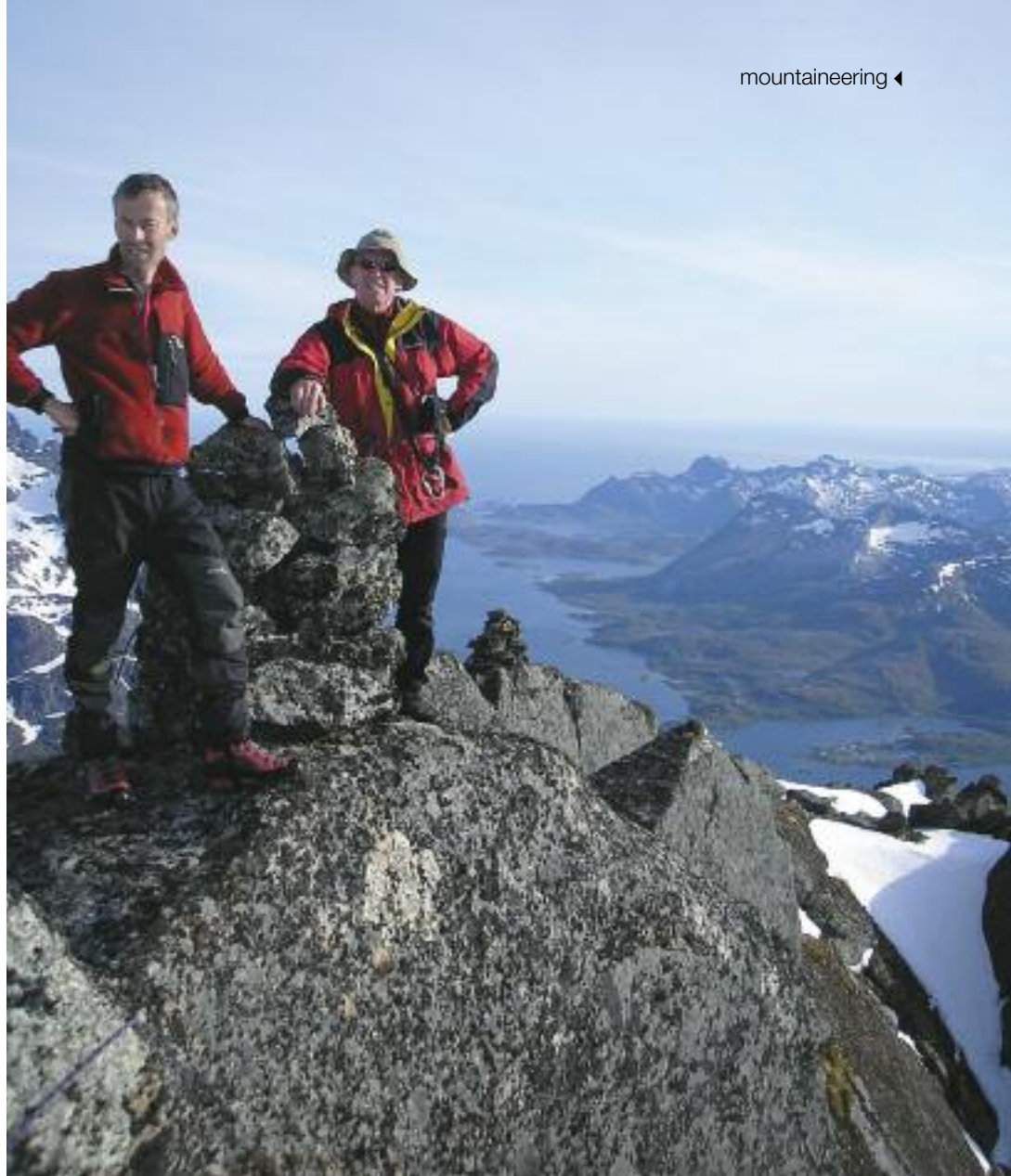


Photo 5: Harry Connolly, Frank Nugent and the two summits of Highgravtinden.
Photo: Peter Gargan.

Henningsvaer, the reputed ‘Venice of the North,’ in time for pints, crack and music in the only ‘climbing pub’ in the Lofotens! And so our voyage went on for another glorious week; we enjoyed beautiful unspoilt places, wild climbing and rich experience among good friends and the many lovely people we met – “a rich store of happy memories from which we will all draw, but never exhaust.”³ ■

Harry Connolly is originally from Dublin but now lives in Luxembourg. He is a very experienced climber and sailor. He has been on many trips to the Alps and Greenland, and has also participated in many voyages with Paddy Barry on his Galway hooker, *St Patrick*.

Frank Nugent is an experienced mountaineer who has been involved in many expeditions to different parts of the world, including the Himalayas, Greenland, the Arctic and Antarctica. He is the author of *Seek the Frozen Lands: Irish Polar Explorers 1740-1922*.

Maps

1:50,000 Vågan no 2671 and Vestvågøy no 2673.

References

1. *Climbing in the Magic Islands*, by Ed Webster. ISBN 82-993199-0-0.
2. Extract from William Spotswood Green’s diary, 1871, quoted in Frank Nugent’s forthcoming *A Mere Matter of Detail: A History of Irish Alpine Pioneers*, to be published by The Collins Press.
3. From writings by William Cecil Slingsby, a British pioneer of Norwegian alpinism, quoted in Ed Webster’s guidebook *Climbing in the Magic Islands*.

Photo 6: Harry approaches summit of Trolltinden.

Written in stone

What the mountains can tell us

**Bernie Lafferty
and Peter Wilson**
continue their series
about the evolution
of the Irish mountain
landscape.

Harsher times in the uplands: glacial deposition



Glaciers and ice sheets profoundly modified the Irish

landscape by the way they altered the topography and transported eroded material across the land surface. As the ice gradually melted, it revealed many new features. In addition to the glacially eroded landforms discussed in our previous issue, 90% of the land surface of Ireland was draped with glacial deposits.

Being able to recognise these suites of associated features and understand the processes involved in their formation can provide tantalising glimpses of an environmental past that was remarkably different and much more hostile than exists today.

Depositional glacial landforms tend to form in close association with wasting ice masses that, in Ireland, had to all intents and purposes disappeared by around 11 thousand years (ka) ago. In the intervening millennia, weathering and erosion

have taken their toll, often making identification and interpretation of distinct ice-related features a difficult task.

However, perseverance has its rewards. Understanding the significance of each feature and its position relative to other landscape elements can heighten appreciation of the impacts of former cold climate conditions on our mild, temperate uplands. It can also help bring into focus contemporary climate change and its implications for these areas.

Most depositional landforms were created during one or other of the last two glacial episodes. These occurred between 30 and 15 ka (Last Glacial Maximum), when Ireland was covered by an extensive ice sheet, and between 13 and 11.5 ka (Nahanagan Glaciation), when glaciers were of restricted extent and occupying mainly cirques, valley heads and possibly some high plateau areas.

Ice masses acquired and entrained rock material by abrasion and plucking processes. This entrained material was carried away from its place of origin and deposited elsewhere, giving rise to the depositional features that we can see

today. Sediment deposited beneath moving ice is generally termed *till* (*boulder clay* was the previously used term) and tends to be more prevalent in the lowlands.

Moraines

Ridges and mounds deposited at the ice margins and broad expanses of irregular forms created during periods of ice stagnation are generally referred to as moraines. What is unfortunate is that this basic term suggests a relatively dull, 'advance-retreat' picture of ice movement and moraine formation. In reality, there are many types of moraine, and being able to distinguish them can reveal so much more about the evolution of the landscape of which they are a part.

One commonly used system of moraine characterisation is based on the processes that caused the debris to accumulate. Accordingly, four types of moraine are recognised: *thrust*, *push*, *dump* and *ablation* moraines. This nomenclature is frequently applied to moraines that are forming on and around glaciers today. In fact, much of our understanding of the origin of our mountain landscapes is informed by observations at the margins of deglaciating modern ice masses.

In areas like Ireland, where glaciers have long since disappeared, the terminology used usually relates to the position of moraines in the landscape and their alignment in relation to former glacier flow paths. So, we refer to *terminal*, *recessional*, *lateral* and *medial* moraines (see diagram). These ice-marginal-related terms are useful in that they effectively echo the changing configuration and position of glaciers during deglaciation. Another way in which moraines are categorised is by reference to their morphology: terms such as *hummocky*, *arcuate* and *saw-tooth* moraines are in common usage.



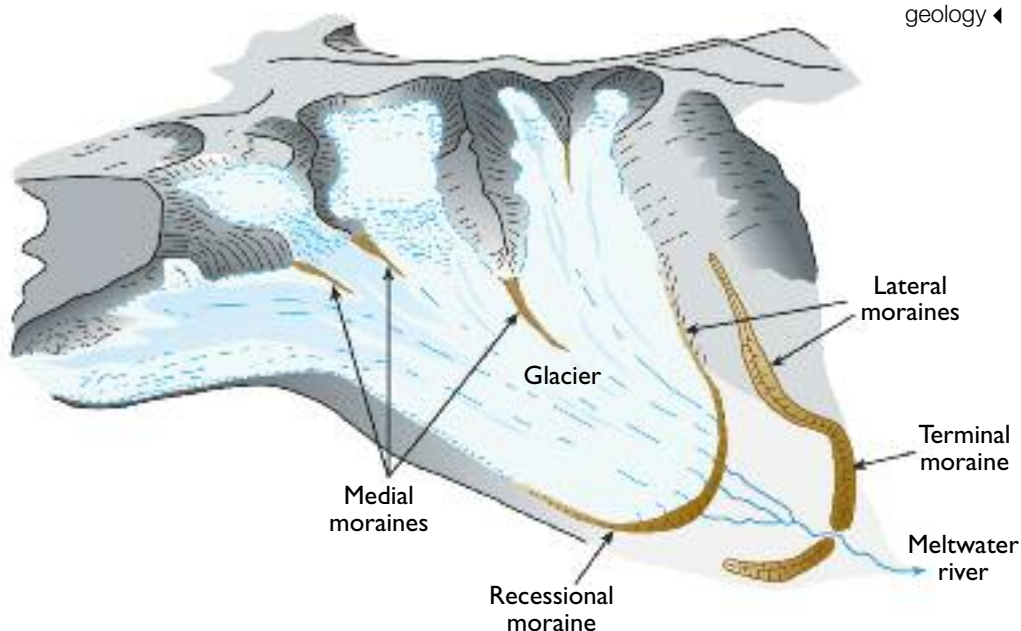
Photo 1:
Leenaun, Killary
Harbour, Co Galway.
The higher of the two
horizontal surfaces in
the middle distance is
a terminal moraine, the
lower horizontal
surface and its steep
flanking slopes is a
palaeodelta that was
created when the
waters of Killary
Harbour stood 80
metres higher.
Photo: Geoff Thomas.

It has to be said, though, that despite the fact that these apparently precise terms can be used for moraines, it is no shame to be completely confused, on occasion. Time and post-formation erosion processes often conspire against immediate identification and understanding of a particular moraine. After all, it took over 100 years and many dedicated and distinguished specialists to get to grips with the complexities of glacial and deglacial events. Even today, our knowledge is evolving in tandem with the wealth of new information coming on-stream courtesy of remote-sensing technologies. On-site interpretations are further complicated by the fact that evidence for the processes that created moraines is often embedded within the deposited materials. Most moraines in Ireland have been colonised by vegetation, and their form is often masked by bog, leaving very few exposures that allow us to 'see' inside.

The four types of moraine commonly encountered in the Irish uplands include *terminal* moraines, *recessional* moraines, *lateral* moraines and *hummocky* moraines. Although very few have been dated directly, they have, depending on their location, been associated with one of the two most distinct events at the end of the last glacial cycle. Those that occupy cirques and the upper reaches of valleys are generally attributed to the **Nahanagan Glaciation**. Moraines farther downvalley are regarded as having formed as ice of the **Last Glacial Maximum** wasted away.

Terminal or end moraines are usually arcuate in plan form and mark the maximum extent of valley glaciers (see Photos 1 and 2). Moraine morphology can be complex because conditions often fluctuate around a quasi-stable state and a combination of processes including thrusting, pushing or dumping can combine in creating the initial feature. The rate of ice withdrawal upvalley is usually controlled by climatic fluxes, with **recessional moraines** marking glacier still-stands as amelioration is halted. In the event of brief returns to cold conditions, re-advances of the ice may occur and existing recessional or terminal moraines in the path of the reactivated glacier can be easily destroyed.

Lateral moraines develop alongside cirque and valley glaciers and often



adjoin terminal moraines. They form as debris falls, slides or flows from the ice surface to its edges. Some debris in lateral moraines can accumulate by rockfall from crags on exposed valley sides. Although lateral moraines can form on both sides of a glacier, a marked difference in their relative sizes may be evident. If one side of the valley has a greater extent of crags, rockfall debris may have made a major contribution to lateral moraine development on that side. As glaciers shrink during melting, sets of lateral or recessional-lateral moraines can develop. In some situations lateral moraines are removed almost as quickly as they accumulate by

powerful flows of ice-marginal meltwater.

Not all moraines are formed by progressive retreat of an ice front. In some situations ice masses simply stagnate and downwaste in situ. The landscape surface then comprises a range of forms including isolated mounds, ridges and depressions of different sizes and shapes, and is typically referred to as **hummocky moraine**. Hummock development is favoured where a melting glacier is covered by an extensive amount of thick debris. (Photo 3) As ice blocks become isolated and differential melting proceeds, the debris cover assumes a chaotic appearance as

Sketch showing the relationship of moraines to mountain glaciers.

Photo 2:
The bouldery debris is the terminal moraine of a valley glacier in the Jotunheimen (Norway) that has recently retreated up-valley, to the right.
Photo: Peter Wilson.





Photo 3:
A valley glacier in Switzerland covered with debris. Some of the debris has 'melted out' from the ice, and some has fallen onto the flanking slopes.
Photo: Peter Wilson.

material slumps and eventually stabilises.

Erratics

Many moraine surfaces are littered with large boulders, and while some can be attributed to local sources, having fallen directly from unstable crags, not all can. Some are known to be *erratics* (from *errare* (Latin) meaning 'to go astray'). Traditionally, the term has been used for large boulders that occur some distance away from their place of origin and their transport can only be explained in terms of carriage by ice.

Many erratics in the uplands take the form of perched boulders, so called because they are sitting on flatish rock slabs and rise above their immediate surroundings (Photo 4). In the 19th century, the Swiss geologist Louis Agassiz used the distribution of erratics to demonstrate that Alpine glaciers had previously been much more extensive.

Photo 4:
An erratic of Galway granite sitting on limestone in the Aran Islands.
Photo: Peter Wilson.



A similar argument for boulder transport by former glaciers was presented to explain the occurrence of 'foreign' stones in various parts of Ireland. Pieces of granite from Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde have been delivered by glacial transport as far as Cork Harbour. Not only do erratics inform us that glaciers previously existed, but they are good indicators of ice-flow direction and patterns of movement as well.

Deltas

Not all glacially eroded material was deposited directly by glacier ice. As ice masses began to break up and retreat in response to rising temperatures, meltwater flow and ponding became an increasingly dominant control on sediment movement and deposition. In places, temporary lakes impounded by ice dams and ambient topography became an additional landscape feature. *Deltas* began to develop where flowing meltwater discharged into these lakes. As debris-laden meltwater enters a lake, flow velocity dissipates and the debris begins to settle out. Heavier, coarser materials 'rain-out' near the shoreline while the finer particles are carried farther and deposited in deeper water. Often the build-up of sediment results in the emergence of a tract of land projecting from the shore into the water body.

When ice-dams melt or collapse and the water drains away, the only indication that a lake existed at all is the body of 'perched' delta sediment that is left behind. Excellent examples can be seen at the head of Killary Harbour, above Leenaun, and in the

Carey Valley, east of Antrim's Ballycastle.

Palaeodeltas are remarkable features and it can be quite a challenge to reconcile their rather subdued modern hinterlands with the very dynamic formative environment of dominant ice masses, impounded lakes and powerful, debris-laden meltwater flows. Other than being considered to have been short-lived features, the temporary lakes within which the deltas formed are relatively poorly understood. Palaeodeltas therefore are important diagnostic features. They testify to events and phases of rapid environmental change at the end of the last glaciation that would otherwise be much more difficult to identify within the landscape record.

Tailpiece

This and the previous article have outlined just a selection of the features created by glacial erosion and deposition. However, once understood, care should be taken to avoid the temptation to treat landforms as isolated, distinct entities. Doing so will at best provide only snap-shots of glacial Ireland.

Looking beyond an individual feature and interpreting it holistically, as part of the glacial landscape system, is much more satisfying.

Understanding the relationship between different features will reveal much about the dynamics and characteristics of the entire ice mass and provide greater insights into the dramatic environmental changes associated with the long-disappeared glaciers and ice sheets that once dominated the Irish landscape.

Under present climatic conditions the highest summits would require about another 1,000m of elevation in order to have permanent snowfields. With the present trend towards increasing warmth, the chances of renewed glacial activity influencing the Irish landscape in the near future are rather low. However, it is evident that the effects of past glaciation have contributed in large measure to the diversity of our current upland scenery. ■

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Mountain Rescue: from training to reality

Liam McCabe of the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association goes training in Scotland with Arrochar Mountain Rescue Team, then responds to a call-out in Wicklow.



On the last Friday in January, I, three colleagues from the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) and Paul Whiting, the development officer for Mountain Rescue Ireland, boarded a plane for Glasgow. We were going to join the Scottish Arrochar Mountain Rescue Team at a weekend winter training camp in the Cairngorms near Aviemore. When we arrived at our bunkhouse at 1:30am we were greeted by Mark Leyland, team leader of Arrochar Mountain Rescue Team, and some of the other team members, offered a welcome cup of tea and sent to bed.

My colleagues Maureen, Gráinne and Tristan and I are all volunteer members of SEMRA with varying levels of experience. Paul Whiting is a professional development officer who supports the Irish Mountain Rescue teams. It would be fair to say I knew very little about snow and ice work prior to this trip. Winter conditions in Ireland generally do not lend themselves to extreme snow and ice conditions, so this trip was aimed at increasing our team's winter skills.

That night reminded me of

Christmases past – the anticipation and excitement of what lay ahead made sleeping difficult. We were up at seven o'clock and by eight we had been briefed and split into groups with an assigned party leader. Ross was my party leader. He was an Arrochar Team member and I could tell from the outset that he was good fun but very confident. I found out during the morning that Ross is a professional outdoor instructor and, boy, could he teach....

The trip to Aviemore and the funicular railway (which is what

they call the train) took about 10 minutes but felt like an hour. We were booked on the first train up and we planned to make our way to a quiet training bowl beyond the top of the train line. However, like most well made plans, this one only lasted until we reached the train station. The trains weren't running, due to high winds. This meant that we had to walk into our training area, which was not a problem but it did burn up valuable training time and also energy. The groups then split up, as each needed to find a quiet spot with a safe piece of ground to practice the use of an ice-axe and crampons and to learn how to do an ice-axe arrest.

The training we got was great because the Arrochar Team are not a Highland Team and this training camp was an annual team refresher to up-skill and refresh their personal winter skills. This meant that the Irish delegation could blend in easily and comfortably with our hosts. There is no doubt that we were on a steeper learning curve than our hosts, but their

Searchers on Lugnaquilla during the emergency call-out on February 10th 2009.
Photo: Conny O'Connell.



Liam McCabe
sitting in his
snowhole.
Photo:
Brian Cook.

professionalism certainly did not make us feel uneasy – far from it; we felt we were truly part of the group.

I quickly learned how to move with crampons on – John Wayne’s walking style was mentioned more than once – how to hold my ice-axe and how to arrest a slide head first, head last, head down, head up, on my stomach, on my back, without any ice axe and grabbing an ice-axe as I slid. It was great fun, but hard work, and I still had the bruising two weeks later to testify to the ordeal.

Practising
probing.
Photo:
Brian Cook.



A sudden emergency

It was still only 11:00am in the morning, and then things changed. Mark, the team leader, was with our group when his radio “lit up.” One of the groups training higher up the mountain had witnessed a woman being blown off the Coire Cas ridge. She had taken a serious fall down a steep snow-covered slope into a boulder field. Mountain rescue first aiders were at her side in minutes, but now they needed more oxygen at the incident site, and they needed it fast. Charles, a member of our group, had oxygen in his personal first-aid kit and he headed immediately up to the incident location. The rest of our group closed up the training site and then made our way up the hill. Mark was on the phone and on the radio, coordinating the mountain rescue response. I have been involved in hundreds of mountain rescue incidents in my time, but this was very different; to me it felt like I was a fly on the wall watching the Arrochar Team “wind up” a rescue response. We slotted into the team and awaited instructions.

When our group arrived in the holding area just short of the incident site, the group that had witnessed the accident, as well as another Police Mountain Rescue Team who were training in the area, were delivering first aid to the casualty. Very quickly, the Ski Patrol and a tracked vehicle arrived. The

casualty was transferred to the tracked vehicle and, as the vehicle passed our location, I could see that Charles and a group of first aiders were working hard to keep the casualty alive. It was a sharp and timely reminder of the seriousness of the environs we were working in.

Not long afterwards, as we regrouped and had a hot drink, we watched the RAF helicopter touch down in the car park below in very windy conditions. We could see the stretcher being immediately loaded into the helicopter and it quickly lifted off again and went to the hospital, where specialist medical assistance was on stand-by. When our fellow rescuers returned they brought news that the casualty was alive and that she had made it to hospital. They also brought news that the woman was Irish. Not that that should make any difference, but it did to me and to my Irish colleagues. The spirit of the entire group was lifted on hearing she was still alive, and Mark immediately got us back into our training groups and back into our training programme.

As a result of the incident we were now much higher up the mountain and so we practiced “moving on steep ground.” We started by taking off the crampons (it’s amazing how quickly you learn to depend on them) and cutting out steps with the edges of our boots, then cutting steps with the ice-axe. Finally we put back on the crampons and learned the French and American techniques for walking in crampons. We practiced on easy ground and built up to some serious ascents using crampons and ice-axes. Anybody who has ever used crampons will know that going up steep ground is child’s play when compared to coming down. But our instructors were amazing and we all progressed at our own pace and to our own levels. The final hill training for the day involved building snow bollards and belaying members up and down steep ground. After this, it was time to work our way down the hill, and home.

Sadly, I learnt later that day that the casualty from Ireland had died and, as always in these situations,

our thoughts were very much with her family and friends in their tragic loss.

Back in the bunk-house, we discovered the full extent of a Scottish team leader's responsibilities. The duties of a team leader in Scotland and in Ireland are very similar in almost every way, but with one exception. Never in fifteen years of mountain rescue have I seen a team leader coordinate the delivery of a five-course meal for almost 30 people with such military precision. That Saturday evening, we enjoyed a great night's entertainment, including a magnificent meal (with a haggis starter), a few drinks and a five-minute presentation by all of the Arrochar team members on a

practising the various avalanche tests that had been discussed the night before. We got a very good "hands-on" feel for layering and snow compaction.

The second workshop was based on using the various electronic avalanche transmitters and receivers. These devices are the best chance a person caught up in an avalanche has of being saved. The principle is that all members of a group wear the devices and they are set to transmit while on the hill. If one member is caught up in an avalanche the remaining group change their setting to 'receive' mode and can quickly locate the buried member. It was a real eye-opener to see just how effective these devices are.

it certainly warmed us all up.

We made our way off the hill and, in the car park, the Irish delegation said their most sincere thanks to our hosts, and now friends, from the Arrochar Team. The drive to the airport took four hours and we all arrived home well after midnight. We thought that was the end of our winter training for 2009. How wrong we were....

Centre:
Digging
snowholes.
Photo:
Brian Cook.

Call-out in Wicklow



**t around
midnight on
Monday,
February 9th,
my pager went off. It was a
request for support from
the Glen of Imaal and the
Dublin Wicklow Mountain
Rescue Teams. The South
Eastern Mountain Rescue
Team (my team) is located
next to these teams, so it is
not unusual for them to call
on us if they need support.
I kissed my family
goodnight, packed my bag,
filled my flask and headed
off to the Wicklow
Mountains.**

When we arrived at the rescue base at the Army Information Centre, we got a feel for the major incident that was building up. Two experienced climbers were stranded in the Lugnaquilla area. They had been out since early the previous

**Maureen
in her
snowhole.
Photo:**
Brian Cook.



pre-nominated area of avalanche awareness. It was hugely interesting as much for the learning as it was for the "not so dignified" audience response to the speakers. By the time this was finished we were all fit for bed.

Then, after what appeared to be about ten minutes, it was seven o'clock in the morning and time to get up again. Our Sunday training included a train trip to the top and a short trek to a small bowl just northeast of the summit of Cairn Gorm. It was a wonderful training location because it was sheltered, safe, full of clean snow and big enough for our three groups to work in. We rotated between three workshops, digging trenches to evaluate the snow layers and

The final workshop was the most interesting: it was an avalanche probing workshop. For years I have watched on TV as groups of rescuers walked forward inserting probes into the ground on snow-covered hills. Learning how to do this, and how effective it really is, was an eye-opener.

After the workshops, Mark called for a lunch break and by now the cloud cover had lifted. The scenery was spectacular as we dined on sandwiches and hot tea. The last task of the weekend was to dig an emergency snow-hole. This is a cave in the snow that allows a stranded walker to escape extreme weather conditions and await help or choose a better time to move on. It was hard work but it was great fun and





Irish Air Corps helicopter drops off rescuers on Lugnaquilla. Photo: Conny O'Connell.

day and were now apparently disorientated, unable to move due to steep ground and exposed in freezing conditions with zero visibility and deep snow cover. The Mountain Rescue coordinators as well as trained Wilderness Emergency Medical Technicians from the Ambulance Service talked to them throughout the night.

At 4:00am, my hill party was tasked to search an area to the south of Slievemaan Mountain, southwest of Lugnaquilla. We were dropped off by army transport and commenced a gruelling three-hour climb along exposed ridge-lines in deep, soft snow. When we arrived at the top of Slievemaan, we conducted a sweep search of the summit and a hasty search of the southwestern side of Lugnaquilla. After an unsuccessful attempt by the Irish Coast Guard helicopter to pick us up from the summit because of the poor visibility and, with the onset of fatigue and tiredness, it was time for our group to start the difficult trek back to our pick-up point.

RAF rescue helicopter drop-off. Photo: Conny O'Connell.



As we descended, we followed the progress of the search over our VHF radios. We all got a big boost around midday to hear that our colleagues from the North West Mountain Rescue Team had located the two casualties on the opposite side of Lugnaquilla from our search area. The first phase of the operation was over. However, all of us on the mountain that morning knew from the grid reference quoted that the operation was far from over. It was going to be a major exercise to extract the casualties because of the deep snow and the steep ground involved.

It was only during our descent that the true scale of the operation started to register with us. Although we were monitoring the emergency channels as we searched uphill, our focus had been on navigation and on searching. It was only when we had heard our call-sign "Sierra 2" that we actually tuned into the radio. Now, as we descended, we were glued to the radio, trying to make out the status of the casualties. We were impressed by

the strange call-signs that we heard from the RAF Sea King helicopter and the Welsh accents on the radio from the RAF and Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Teams. We could also hear the reassuring familiar voices of our friends from the Glen and Dublin Wicklow, the Mourne, SARDA, the North West, the PSNI, the Kerry and the Mayo Teams.

As we descended through the cloud cover, we could finally see the helicopters that we had been listening to all morning flying over our heads. The Air Corps AW139s, the RAF Sea King and the Coast Guard helicopters were buzzing like bees overhead as they ferried the mountain rescuers and the Army Rangers up towards the casualty sites. None of the helicopters were able to penetrate the cloud but they saved hours of manhandling by bringing the rescuers and their gear up to the base of the clouds. As we listened to the operation in full swing, myself and my colleagues were very proud to be associated with the small family that are the Irish Emergency Services.

The army transport on the road below was a welcome sight as we broke cloud cover, as was the canary yellow of the RAF Sea King helicopter. When we returned to the Army Information Centre, the area was alive. A full-scale rescue operation had swung into gear immediately after the North West Team located the casualties. Nobody in the base was underestimating the difficulties facing them.

One of the incident coordinators from the Dublin Wicklow Team



approached us to see if we were available to go back on the hill. It was about 2:00pm and, although there were a lot of people on the hill, darkness was turning into the number one enemy. As we got ready and those of us available to return were waiting on helicopter transport, word filtered back that the teams on the hill were now mobile with the casualties and that our services were no longer

required. We were glad to strip off our gear, say a quick goodbye and return home.

It was around 4:00pm on February 10th and I was delighted to be able to ring home to say to my children that I was going to be able to make it home, after all, for my 36th birthday party. What a day it had been, and it ended with a great party and a very long night's sleep! ■

Liam McCabe is a volunteer member of the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Team. He is also the Chairman of Mountain Rescue Ireland which acts as the representative organisation for the twelve mountain rescue teams which operate across the Island of Ireland. If you would like to find out more or support the voluntary work of the Irish Mountain Rescue Teams, please visit the website www.mountainrescue.ie.

The drop-off point for the teams during the Lugnaquilla rescue.
Photo: Conny O'Connell.



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Via ferratas in the Dolomites

Jim Sheehan tackles the via ferratas of the Sentiero SOSAT and scales the Forcella di Marmolada (2896m)

Jim on Sentiero
SOSAT S 318
with Cima Tosa
to the rear.
Photo:
Jim Sheehan
collection.

Noel Walsh and I decided that we would head to the Dolomites to try our hand on some via ferrata routes. We set out on July 8th and flew into Bergamo and drove our rental car to a camp-site near Madonna di Campiglione.

The next morning, we set out for the Vallesinella car park in the Brenta National Park. From there, a two-hour trek up the Sentiero S 317 brought us to the Rifugio del Tuckett at 2273m. After our evening meal, we explored up the valley to find the start of the Sentiero SOSAT S 305, which was to be our via ferrata route the following day. The guardian of the hut told us that most of the higher via ferrata routes were impassable due to late-lying snow, but the SOSAT, being lower and more sheltered, was

passable. It was graded *d* on a scale from *a* (easy) to *g* (extremely technical) and could be done in 2½ to 3 hours.

After breakfast, we set off up the valley to pick up the start of the route. We ascended our first short ladder and climbed along an unprotected path that rose gradually until it turned south into a snow-covered boulder field. We made our way carefully between the boulders, following the red-and-white markers and occasionally sinking through the softening snow. We descended into the ravine of the Punta di Campiglio via a ladder and further down on cables, and climbed out of it up a 51-rung ladder and then along a protected narrow path hugging the steep cliff face. We crawled on all fours through a short tunnel, open on the right side, before stopping for a snack and to admire the stunning scenery. Soon we were looking over the Val di Brenta with the pinnacles of Gli Sfulmini to our left. We then descended through a gully that brought us to the junction of

S 318, by which we could go down to the Rifugio Brentei, but we stayed with the S 305 up through a snow field and branched right towards the Rifugio Alimonta (2580m), which we reached four hours after leaving the Tuckett.

After another comfortable night, and suitably rested and fed, we set off up to the Bocca degli Armi without packs, knowing that we would be returning soon. We climbed the ladders to access the Bocchette Centrale and looked into the Val Perse with its many towers and spires. Knowing the route ahead to be impassable, we retraced our steps, descending the ladders and making our way carefully down the snow slope, which had frozen overnight. Back at the Rifugio, we had cappuccinos and grappa before hoisting our packs for the descent to the Brentei hut. The path dropped into a snow-filled valley. At the end of the snow we picked up the S 318, which passed the Rifugio Brentei, crossed an exposed snow chute and went through a cave, before turning north and

dropping towards the Rifugio Casinei, where we enjoyed a couple of cold beers to speed us on our way back down to the Vallesinella car park.

Sunday was a rest day for us, but Monday found us back at the Vallesinella car park, now reversing our steps as far as the Brentei. After a short stop for lunch, we continued up the valley, passed a little chapel and headed towards the Bocca di Brenta (2552m). The path to the Bocca was under snow, so we donned our crampons for the last part. A short drop down the far side brought us to a rocky path that led to the Rifugio Pedrotti, which looked out over the Val d'Adige, separating the Brenta group from the main Dolomite range.

Next morning, we dropped down past the Rifugio Tosa and crossed the valley to the left to pick up the Orsi (S 303), which led back towards the Bocca del Tuckett below and to the east of the Centrale and the Bocchette Alte. The route was straightforward, rising steadily to the north until we passed under the flanks of the Cima di Molveno. Here there was protection in situ for a couple of hundred metres. However, at the end of the cables we had to make our way down some steep and loose scree to regain the path across the scree slopes. We came to an icy chute of snow which made crampons advisable and, suitably equipped, we made our way over alternate stretches of snow and scree until the path swung west and uphill to the Bocca del Tuckett. Soon we were on the terrace of the Rifugio del Tuckett, beers in hand and discussing the relative difficulties of the SOSAT, graded *d*, and the Orsi, graded *b*. We agreed that the Orsi presented more of a challenge, where the descent from the wires was unprotected and on the steep snow chutes, but while the SOSAT was steeper, it was well protected where needed.

We set out the next morning down the S 317 as far as the Rifugio Casinei, where we had cappuccinos and strudel. From there we diverted along the S 317b which brought us down by the spectacular Cascade or waterfalls that emerge from the side of the cliff high above the valley floor. The path zigzags down, crossing and re-crossing the two branches of the river between the cascading waters. The detour was very worthwhile.

Our time in the Brenta was over and we packed up and drove across the Val d'Adige and up to Pozza di Fassa,

“The biggest problem that you might have to contend with would be the exposure on some parts of the routes.”

where we based ourselves in the Catinaccio Rosengarten campsite. The local language and culture here was Ladin, and we were delighted to experience a street festival of music and dancing on our second night there.

We drove up the valley and parked our car at the téléferique station at Alba. From here we followed the S 602 up through the forest by a series of steep switchbacks. Thirty minutes later the path levelled off to a gentle walk alongside the Contrin river. Soon after crossing the river, the path

steepened again before the Rifugio Contrin appeared. The vast bulk of the Gran Vernel and the Marmolada dominated the skyline to the north and northeast. We resumed our walk along the S 606, up the Val Rosalia, rising steadily to the junction with the S 610 at 2400m. Now we followed this path over the scree to the east, eventually coming to the Pas de Ombreta (2702m). Ahead, the view stretched across the Val di Cordevole to the other Dolomite giants, the Pelmo (3168m) and the Civetta (3220m).

Noel Walsh
on the long
ladder in the ravine
of the Punta di
Campiglio.
Photo:
Jim Sheehan
collection.





The Forcella di Marmolada (2896m) from the Contrin hut. Photo: Jim Sheehan collection.

We retraced our steps to the Contrin hut with the rumble of distant thunder adding urgency to our progress. We just made it back to the campsite before the thunder and rain set in. The storm lasted through the night and it was midday before the weather cleared to reveal fresh snow down to 2000m on the surrounding hills.

With a good forecast for the next few days, we set out on the Sunday afternoon for the Contrin, this time by bus. We paced ourselves better on the walk in as we were carrying all the gear we needed for our attempt on the Marmolada. The two of us and one other were the only guests in the Rifugio Contrin that night. After breakfast, we were on our way at 7:45am. We followed the S 606 back up the Val Rosalia, but then stayed on this unrelentingly steep track all the way to the Forcella di Marmolada (2896m). The terrain was almost lunar in its desolation, with virtually no vegetation. The path crossed under the Forcella and steepened over less stable scree at the foot of the Picol Vernel. Here we donned our helmets and harnesses and scrambled towards the

Forcella, where we could now see the first ladders of the via ferrata. We climbed up the ladder to the Forcella proper and were joined by a number of climbers who had come from the north side.

We were now in a line of climbers clipped into the cable and moving up the via ferrata, graded *c*. The climbing varied from moving up over smooth rocks with just the cable for protection to climbing up on stemples (U-shaped iron steps cemented into the rock) or iron stakes. The latter presented a possible hazard to anybody losing their footing as they could hit quite a few of them in a fall before the harness leashes met an arresting peg.

We took advantage of two iron pegs just off route to rest for a while and let the people behind us pass. The views in all directions were stunning and we had a snack there as we watched the group ahead wend their way along the ridge. We resumed our progress and soon the route levelled off somewhat. The via ferrata ended where the rocky ridge met the summit glacier. Here we fitted our crampons and made our way up the last 100m in the soft fresh

snow that was the legacy of the recent thunderstorm. At last, the iron cross and summit trig point came into view. We made our way over for the obligatory photos before retreating to the small bivouac hut for a welcome cup of hot sweet tea.

Soon we set off down the snow slope towards the descent gully. When we got there, we found to our delight that it had been rigged as a via ferrata, so we scrambled down to the right with the security of the new cable. The cable disappeared into the snow 200m below, so on went the crampons again and we set off on a wide arc down the glacier, confident that if we stayed on the well-trodden track we would be safe from hidden crevasses. It was interesting to recall that this very glacier once housed a network of ice tunnels that was home to up to three hundred Austrian troops between 1915 and 1917. Some of this City of Ice still remains under the lower reaches of the glacier, but the fresh covering of snow meant that there was little chance of us coming upon any evidence of it.

We were now in sight of the Pian

dei Fiacconi (2650m) with its two rifugios and, more importantly, a cable lift down to the Lago di Fedaiia. We hurried down, fearing we would miss the last lift, but made it with time to spare. The lift was of the continuously moving type, with individual cages which were entered from the rear at a run and then closed by the attendant. On our arrival at the bottom, 600m below, two attendants emerged from a hut, opened the door and eased us out onto terra firma. We made our way to a nearby café bar and ordered two beers to toast our safe return.

* * * * *

This trip was our first experience of the Italian Alps and we were very impressed with the Rifugios we stayed in. They were very comfortable and with good sanitation, some even providing showers. The food was excellent, with a wide selection

available both for residents and casual callers.

The walking trails were excellent, in the main. They were well signposted, with red-and-white markers at regular intervals and wooden sign-posts at all major junctions, giving path number, destination and time to be allowed. Of course, when there is snow lying on the route, some difficulty in route finding can be encountered. This year, the snow was lying very late, obliterating some paths and markers.

We found the via ferratas to be variable in the amount of protection provided. Generally, there was good protection where needed, but not always, as in the case of the Orsi that we mentioned. On a few occasions we encountered anchors that had pulled from their positions and on one occasion a cable end that was not secured. Frayed strands of cable did not seem to be a big problem. The cables seemed to be well maintained,

but perhaps this was because we were in the more frequented areas.

The grading of the via ferrata routes seemed to us to be conservative, but this might be because we both had some rock-climbing experience. The biggest problem that non-climbers might have to contend with would seem to be the exposure on some parts of these routes. With this in mind, I would suggest that anybody thinking of doing any via ferrata routes should get some outdoor climbing experience prior to setting out. ■

Jim Sheehan has been a member of Club Cualann since 1998. He is a keen hillwalker and rock climber. He has walked and climbed extensively in Ireland, and has also walked in the Lake District and Scotland. While this trip was his first to the Italian Alps, he has climbed in the French and Swiss Alps as well.

On the via ferrata. Note abseil ring. Photo: Jim Sheehan collection.



Useful information

Travel

RyanAir to Bergamo. Sports bag (up to 32kg) @ €30 each way.

Car

Fiat Punto from Avis through Auto Europe.

Guidebooks

Via Ferrata Scrambles in the Dolomites by Hofler/Werner, translated by Cecil Davies (Cicerone). Comprehensive, but dated, lacking maps and with stilted language.

Walking in the Dolomites by Gillian Price (Cicerone). Useful information, more maps than above, and readable.

Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites (Vol 1) by Smith and Fletcher (Cicerone). Similar to above, more maps and it covers North, Central and East.

Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites (Vol 2) by Smith and Fletcher (Cicerone). Covers West, including the Brenta, and South.

Maps

Dolomiti di Brenta, Adamello-Presanella, Val di Sole 1:50,000, Sheet 10, Tabacco Series.

Marmolada-Pelmo-Civetta-Moiazza 1:25,000, Sheet 015, Tabacco Series.

Val di Fassa - Marmolada 1:25,000, Sheet 06, and Sella 1:25,000, Sheet 07. These also cover the Marmolada and the areas to the west and north, respectively.

Kompass maps of the area are also available in 1:25,000, 1:30,000 and 1:50 000.

Maps available from Stanfords of London (www.stanfords.co.uk).

In the footsteps of giants

Derek Fanning goes trekking in Garwhal province, India

"...as if we had stepped into heaven."

The view of the Badrinath peaks from the Kuari Pass.
Photo: Derek Fanning.

In October 2008, I spent two weeks sightseeing and trekking with an English friend in India. After visiting Delhi and the Taj Mahal, we took an overnight train to Rishikesh, which is an important Hindu centre located on the banks of the Ganges. From Rishikesh, we drove into the beautiful Himalayan province of Garwhal, once a popular stamping ground for famous British mountaineers such as Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman in the 1920s and 1930s. From Rishikesh, we drove for twelve hours to the hillside village of Lohjung, where our nine-day trek was to begin.

could see great snowbound peaks in the distance and we did not see another trekker for six days. The weather was cloudless and warm, and I felt a strong sense of contentment in this lovely valley.

We met some local men, who were friendly, and chatted with our guide Sunil, who told us that the Garwhali men sit around a lot while the women work in the fields. Some of the men we saw were attired in an army-style peaked beret and woollen jumper. Sunil chatted to us about the habits of the bears, leopards, boar and musk deer inhabiting this region. He said the bears had an unpleasant way of

killing humans, adding that there were no tigers in the region. The schoolchildren in the valley were smartly dressed in their school uniforms and when passing greeted us with "Namaste," their palms placed respectfully together in a prayerful fashion.

Two days later, on our way to Bednibugyal, a campsite perched at 3400m, the good weather disappeared and was replaced by very loud thunder, sheet lightning and a hailstone shower. The temperature dropped below zero and, when we reached our campsite, it was sited on two inches of snow.



"We rose as usual at 6:00am and set off at 7:30am to make the ascent of Kuari Pass."

Photo: Derek Fanning.

The road was winding and often poorly maintained, and we witnessed two car crashes during the trip. The following morning, we began our nine-day trek through this unfrequented and gorgeous region of the Indian Himalaya. As we set off, we

As we ascended towards the lovely pass of Kukiin Khal (3121m), we were perspiring heavily. Sunil advised me to lie down and try a yoga exercise. I followed his advice and stretched out my arms and legs. I then breathed in deeply and exhaled. The breathing in was anxiety and the shadow; the breathing out was the releasing, the shedding of it from my person. With each exhalation, I removed obstructions from my true being.

As we walked along day after day, we frequently passed attractive Garwhali women dressed in their traditional clothing and accompanied by their happy children. One evening when we arrived at our campsite the muleteers had already erected our tent on a green clearing in the forest. A large group of black-faced langur monkeys swung from branch to branch, sometimes making spectacular leaps from tree to tree. Sunil produced a bottle of rum; I produced a bottle of brandy. Nick brought out a pack of cards and we played Whist, Speed and Beggar my Neighbour, while drinking our alcohol.

As we ate our spicy food, seated beside the campfire, we heard a musk deer barking somewhere in the forest. Sunil commented that it could be barking in alarm because it was being hunted by a leopard. Each night in the forest, our muleteers lit a fire to keep the leopards at bay and tied their mules to a stake beside the mess tent to stop them wandering into the forest and into danger.

Some days were very hot as we trekked, and we perspired heavily as we walked. One afternoon we descended a steep slope and entered the remote village of Gingee where Sunil picked green chilis, which he said were very hot. Lammergeier vultures flew close to us after we left Gingee, surfing the air currents as they swooped around a giant green 3700m hill, beyond which rose the mighty white and grey facade of a peak called Nanda Ghunti. At the same moment, the clouds cleared from Trishul and revealed the mountain in all its magnificence.

That evening, we camped above the village of Pana, 25km from the nearest road. Sunil informed us that the previous year he had met two German trekkers in Pana who had started the Curzon trail from the settlement of Auli, armed with a map. The maps of this region are poor and



they became lost, and for two days they couldn't find the trail. When Sunil met them, he said they looked very weary.

On the penultimate day of the trek, we rose as usual at 6am and set off at 7:30 to make the ascent of Kuari Pass, which, at 3600 metres, was to be the highest point of our trek. As we were preparing for the ascent, five mules and their attendant muleteers began to descend from the pass towards us with the usual tinkling of mule bells, which excited the dogs, who ran barking towards them. These men lived in the same Garwhal region as our own staff, and there was a friendly atmosphere, with several men gathered about the fire and chatting.

We reached the pass after just an hour, which was good going, and the view of the Badrinath peaks was stupendous, as if we had stepped into heaven. From the pass, we could also see the peak called Kamet (25,447ft),

first climbed by a party that included Frank Smythe, Eric Shipton and RL Holdsworth in 1931, the first 25,000ft peak to be climbed.

Having seen no other trekkers en route, bar some at Bednibugyal, on our descent from the pass we now saw 30 or 40 people. That evening, our final camp was in a delightful location in the forest. As I relaxed there, through the trees I could see the mighty peak of Nanda Devi (7816m), first climbed by Bill Tillman in 1936, and I basked in the pleasure of having been able to tread in the footsteps of such famous mountaineers. ■

Derek Fanning lives and works in the Midlands where he is Deputy Editor of a local newspaper. He is an experienced mountaineer and has climbed three of the Seven Summits – Mt Elbrus, Kilimanjaro and most recently Aconcagua.

The Kuari Pass.
Photo:
Derek Fanning.



The latest information from Kate Hebblethwaite, Training Administrator

Getting our bearings in 2010

Kate's Korner



Kate Hebblethwaite,
Training Administrator

It may just be advancing age, but recent winters have made me covet a roaring fire and a big packet of Werther's Originals more than a windswept peak or ridge.

Postponing a cold and, more often than not, wet adventure in the mountains seems to get easier as the days get shorter, and it is only the certain knowledge of a hot shower and that self-satisfied afterglow of demanding exercise that makes me don the running shoes or wrestle the bike from its muddy corner.

Happily, not everyone is as easily led astray as I am by branded butterscotch sweets and, as 2009 draws to a close, Mountaineering Ireland HQ seems to be busier than ever. Our location out in Dublin 12 (quite possibly the flattest part of the city) hasn't deterred many of our members from popping in to pick up log books, buy climbing guides, or just find out about forthcoming courses and events. It's always great to meet people from the mountaineering community, hear about their latest adventures and swap ideas about routes.

This year has certainly been an eventful one for the Training Office. From the highs of the Summer and Autumn Meets to the sadness following Tim Orr's decision to move on, I've reached December wondering if 2010 could ever match the year just gone for sheer relentlessness.



| On a Walking Group Leader training course.

Upcoming events in February and March

A number of exciting events are currently in the pipeline for 2010. The Mountaineering Ireland **Winter Meet** will take place in the Adamello Alps, Brescia, Italy (see page 22). This Meet will be held in March 2010 and will be a fantastic opportunity to experience the majesty of the Alps in winter conditions, as well as sample legendary Italian cuisine and hospitality. We have just finished putting together a training plan for this and will be offering a full range of snowshoeing/winter walking and winter mountaineering skills courses, as well as opportunities for winter peak-bagging, snow-holing and ice climbing. The Training Office has worked hard to ensure that a full and exhilarating programme of events are on offer at very affordable rates, and are confident that many of you will be as excited as we are at the opportunity of tackling Italian snow and ice. Further details and a booking form are available on the Mountaineering

Ireland website. Book early to avoid disappointment!

The Training Office has also organised a **Walking Group Leader Assessment** for 6-8 February 2010 (further details on www.mountaineering.ie). A few places are still available for this course, which will be run from the Mountain Ventures hostel in Co Wicklow. Anyone who has completed their WGL training and who feels ready to challenge themselves with the assessment stage is encouraged to sign up.

Mountaineering Ireland will also be welcoming a new Training Officer in the coming weeks, and I am looking forward to working with the appointee on many new projects. Indeed, with such an eventful year drawing to an end, and with the promise of many more adventures on the horizon, Werther's Originals will feature large on my Christmas list, as energy levels will need to be maintained in the months ahead!

Participants at Autumn Gathering on summit of Mount Brandon following walk from Conor Pass.
Photo: Noel O'Neill collection.



Autumn Gathering

Providers training course a 'sell-out'

The Autumn Gathering, held in Dingle, Co Kerry, was a resounding success and many congratulations and thanks are due to Dingle Hillwalking Club for organising such a wonderful weekend. Over 100 people came down to Kerry for two days of hill-walking and craic, making it one of the most successful Autumn Meets in recent years. Wonderful talks by Dermot Somers and local archaeologist Mícheál Ó Coileáin added a sense of civility and culture to the proceedings, while the unfailing hospitality of Benners Hotel meant that we had a very popular focal venue for the event.

Also taking place in Dingle that weekend was a 'Train the Trainers' course – a 3-day workshop for candidates looking to become first-time BOS approved providers. Encouragingly, this was a sell-out course, with 14 participants. This certainly bodes well for the continued development of mountain training provision in Ireland, and we look forward to facilitating these individuals' further progression toward attaining provider status.



Participants from Autumn Gathering at Baile Breac.
Photo: Ger Dowling.

Provider update

Surge in course applications

There are currently fifty-nine BOS approved providers in Ireland, offering a wide range of both formal and informal training courses in both hillwalking and climbing. These providers are dedicated professionals who are themselves continually working to develop their own skills and qualifications.

To this end, many congratulations to Carl Maddox for recently being awarded his **Mountain Instructor Award (MIA)**. MIAs are qualified to instruct on mountaineering in non-winter conditions, including all aspects of rock climbing, both single and multi-pitch, plus hill-walking and scrambling.

Lower down the formal awards ladder, but by no means less important, the phenomenal uptake for **Mountain Skills**, **Mountain Leader** and **Walking Group Leader** awards in 2009 was an encouraging sign that, even in an economic downturn, when people may be relinquishing expensive gym memberships, they are still looking for healthy and challenging hobbies to fill their spare time.

As testimony to the increasing popularity of such schemes, for the first time the Training Office organised two **Mountain Leader Assessments** this winter, in Connemara (October) and Donegal (November).

On a daily basis, even the steadily increasing number of inquiries received by the Mountaineering Ireland office on how to get involved in mountaineering or how to join a local club indicates that more and more people are taking to the great outdoors. The sense of freedom and relative low-cost of a day in the mountains, combined with its social aspects if undertaken as part of a club or group, make it a fantastic way to escape the daily routine and offers benefits far in excess of the hope of good views – or the promise of wet socks!



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MountainSkills

Rachael Hinchliffe (MLTA Project Coordinator) reports on the Mountain Leader Training Association

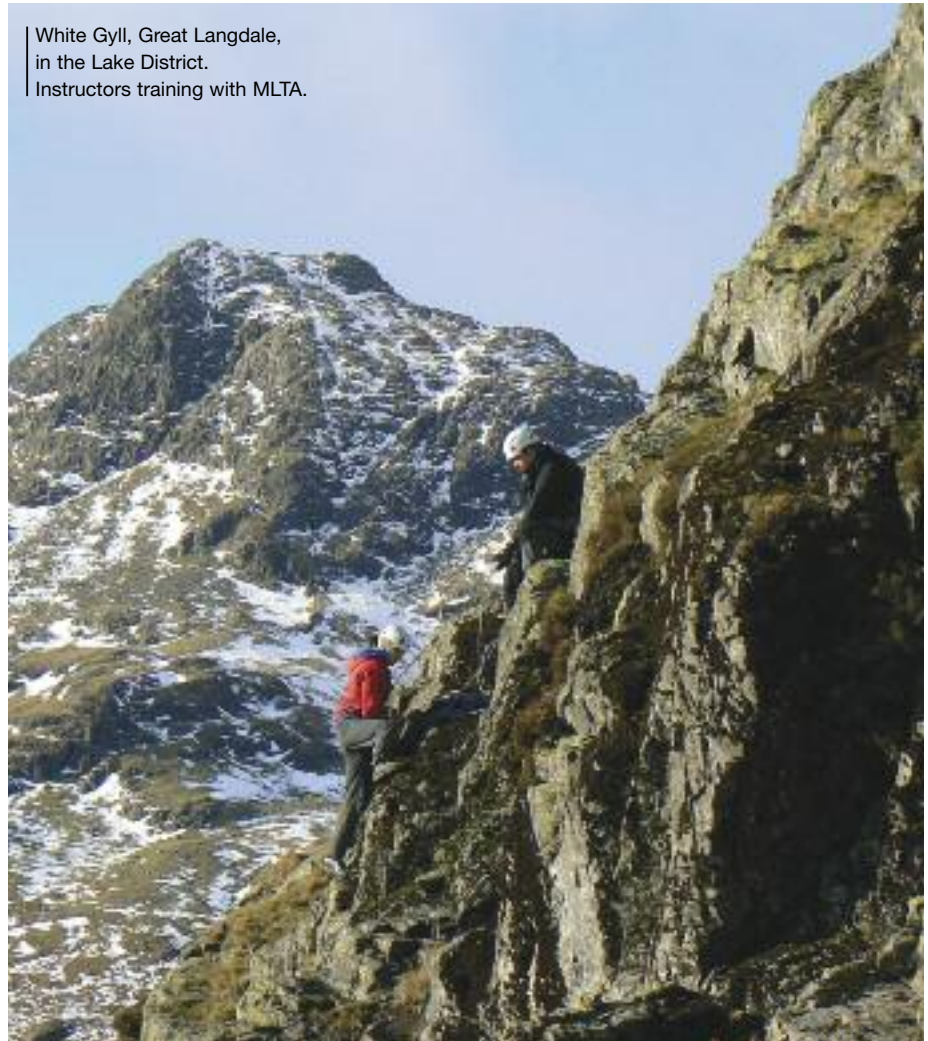
Mountain Leader Training Association

If you are an outdoor instructor or are involved in leading groups in the mountains in a voluntary capacity, or have done any of the UK mountaineering awards out of personal interest, then you may already know about **Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA)**. For those still to be enlightened, here's a potted history!

Traditionally, anyone gaining an outdoor leading award has not been obliged to participate in any ongoing training, and there have been no formal requirements to continue practising skills, beyond a recommendation to keep the logbook up to date. There is no intention to change this underlying premise. However, in recent years a need was identified for award holders to have access to more formal opportunities for maintaining and improving their skills and gaining wider experience. People also wanted the opportunity to keep in touch with like-minded folk.

As a result, the Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA) was formed in 2005 with the aim of providing training and networking opportunities for anyone going through the UK-based award schemes.

Mountaineering Instructors, Guides and International Mountain Leaders are already taken care of by Association of Mountaineering Instructors, British Mountain Guides and British Association of International Mountain Leaders. Having no wish to compete with these organisations, the focus for MLTA is strongly on those involved with ML, Single-Pitch Award, Walking Group Leader and the (fairly) new Climbing Wall Award. There are approximately 4,500 people registering for these awards every year. Members working or volunteering within the remit of these awards have specific needs – keeping their



White Gyll, Great Langdale, in the Lake District.
Instructors training with MLTA.

technical skills up to date whilst often working in an isolated environment. They want support to develop their knowledge and skills, and the reassurance of the backing of the mountaineering training boards.

What's happening now?

MLT was keen to ensure that those original aims were still valid and so, last year, a review was carried out, a sort of health-

check of MLTA. The aims of that exercise were to assess the strengths and weaknesses of MLTA, to find out whether there was still a need for such a body, and last but not least, review what members really wanted. The overwhelming response was that members most definitely do want MLTA but that it could be working more effectively and providing more services to its members. Interestingly, people reported high levels of ongoing professional and personal development, especially in the voluntary sector.

Your guide to mountain skills training



As a consequence of these findings and confirmed commitment from the Mountain Leader Training Boards, 2009 has seen some feverish activity, including a new website, increased marketing to attract new members and, most significantly, work on developing a full programme of training and networking events for 2009. We have a specially negotiated insurance package for members, and special discounts for equipment and publications. The website provides a steady flow of news, job opportunities and downloadable resources.

This has been the first time that such a full schedule of workshops has been available for members. A weekend conference event has been held in north Wales for the last couple of years, but the day workshop

programme has been very much aimed at reaching out to members in the regions where they live, or at the very least making provision at more convenient locations. Workshops have included a wide range of subjects, as befits the mountain and climbing environment, including technical skills and environmental workshops.

The challenge for MLTA in Ireland is multi-faceted. The geographical location combined with low membership numbers makes CPD events difficult to organise. However, we are committed to providing a full service to members located in any part of Ireland. One pilot currently underway, a members' regional group in Scotland, could well be extended to Ireland in the future, provided there is sufficient interest.

On the positive side, MLTA is first and foremost a web-based organisation and, as such, recognises no geographical boundaries or impediments! The forum is available for *all* members to contribute and to join in the community, and the download section of the website will be used increasingly to provide online training opportunities for members.

How do I get involved?

If you would like to find out more about what's going on, check out the website by following this link: **www.mlta.co.uk**.

Contact details

If you have any specific queries, please contact us on **Rachael@mlta.co.uk**. We'd love to hear from you!



Security on steep ground.
Participants on an MLTA course.

Books

Literary Editor Joss Lynam presents reviews of some recent publications

Airy rock ridges in England, Wales and Ireland

Gerry Moss



The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland: Scrambling, Mountaineering and Climbing

By Dan Bailey, Cicerone, 252pp
Numerous colour photos, maps and topos
Stg£17.95
ISBN 978-1-85284-539-1

I'm guessing that when you were an infant scooting around the kitchen floor on all fours, your parents, just like mine, put a barrier across the bottom of the stairs to

stop you clambering up. We weren't able to walk but we could tackle those stairs like nobody's business. It's in the blood. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why a day spent scrambling up rocky ridges appeals so much to the mind and body. The joy of continuous upward movement, the satisfactory feel of rough rock beneath the hand, the airy situations and the slight hint of danger all combine in a heady mixture that appeals to the primitive side of us.

There was a time when most climbers came to the sport through a natural progression from hillwalking to scrambling along exposed ridges, before pressing on to the stage where a rope became

desirable. Nowadays, many young people get their first taste of climbing by signing up for a course at an outdoor centre, college or climbing wall and become proficient climbers without ever sampling the delights of the airy rock ridges to be found in the mountains of these islands. This is a shame. But don't just take my word for it. Even a cursory dip into this guidebook will show you what wonderful outings are on offer.

A sister volume to *Scotland's Mountain Ridges* by the same author, this book is of a similar high standard. Forty-eight routes in all are covered: sixteen scrambles, twenty-six rock climbs and six winter routes. The bulk of the routes described are in Wales (twenty), with sixteen in The Lake District, a handful in the rest of England and six in Ireland. Okay, so we would have liked to see a few more routes from here at home, but let's face it, when it comes to guidebooks covering Britain and Ireland, we are always the poor relation.

The scrambles are graded from 1-3, while most of the climbs are in the Moderate to Severe range. Each route description is accompanied by several colour photos, a section of the relevant OS or OSI map and, in some cases, a topo. The photographs are excellent, capturing the atmosphere and dramatic situations admirably.

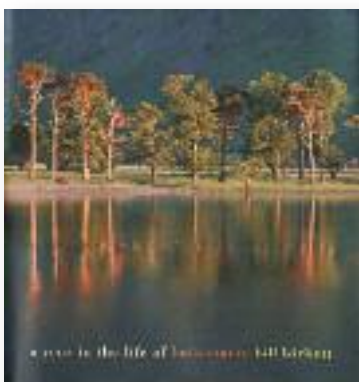
Information is given on the grade, overall distance, height gain and the time required to complete the route. There is also info on the maps needed, local accommodation (including options for camping) and the availability of public transport.

Dan Bailey writes well and his enthusiasm for mountaineering shines through on every page of this useful guide. Drop a hint now. It's a good one for the Christmas stocking.

For a chance to win a copy of 'The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland,' see Climbing Competition, page 28.

One of the loveliest places on Earth

Joss Lynam



A Year in the Life of Buttermere

By Bill Birkett
Frances Lincoln, 112pp
Very numerous full page colour photos
£16.99 ISBN 978-0-7112-2987-7

This is Birkett's fourth book in his Lakeland valley portraits and he has chosen a valley that is rarely visited but is well known to him, since his father worked in the Honister slate quarries (as a "river" who split the slates) and was also a pioneer rock-climber.

It is a valley that the author thinks is "quite simply one of the loveliest places on Earth." Neighbouring Borrowdale is well-known to Irish mountaineers, but I think few of them go over Honister Pass even to admire the spectacular view down Buttermere, which is a pity because the valley has something for everyone. There are great walks along the ridges – Haystacks, Mellbreak and Robinson are names to play with – excellent rock climbs of all grades on the crags in Birkness Comb and Buckstone How, and relaxing strolls beside Buttermere and Crummock Water.

The book is a photographic guide to the valley in all seasons. Some of the

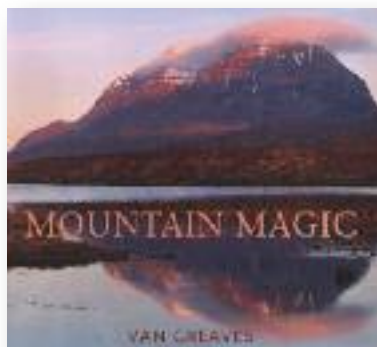
photographs are there for a purpose rather than for their intrinsic beauty. So while there are very many excellent photographs, there are some that are dull and a few two-page spreads that do not deserve the space. On the good side, out of many I would pick out: a mountain ash with red berries and silver branches, caught by the evening sun, with the valley behind in near darkness, and Buttermere Lake, wind ripples silvered by the sun, a foreground of rowing boats and the knobbly summit of Haystacks behind.

This book will attract you to Buttermere, whatever time of year you are in the Lake District, and will entice you back if you've been there before.

Rockclimbers will be interested to know that Bill Peascod, a coal miner, and Jim Birkett were putting up hard climbs in Buttermere years before Brown and Whillans were hailed as the first working-class climbers.

Magnificent images of British mountain landscapes

Sheila Willis



Mountain Magic

By Van Greaves

Frances Lincoln, 192pp

£25.00 ISBN 078-0-7112-2858-0

Van Greaves is the author of this magnificent collection of mountain photographs taken in the upland areas of Britain. The book is a large-format, coffee-table-style book with nearly 190 pages of photographs. Most of the pages have a large picture with a description of where the picture was taken and what prompted the author to capture the image. Occasionally there is a large picture across two pages. These pictures are of amazing technical quality and often very attractive.

In his introduction Van Greaves describes the origin of his interest in mountains,

painting and photography. The photographs have been taken over a forty-year time-frame, most in the last twenty years.

The author gives us minimal information about the technical details of his photography other than to say that he prefers the 35mm format and that digital photography has replaced his use of film from earlier years.

Of course, the main points for discussion in a collection of photographs are the images themselves. Reflections are a major focus of the collection. There are a number of very clear examples. The photo of jet tracks above Bowfell on page 53 is one I particularly like. While some of the reflections are within the pictures themselves, at other times the reflections are matching pictures on opposite pages. The photographs of Tryfan in autumn and winter on pages 42 and 43 are examples of images that are similar in composition, while the photographs of Great Gable on page 56 and Pen-y-Ghent on page 57 are matched in colour balance.

The majority of pictures are landscapes. Their attraction is in their composition and few depend on a focus on detail for their impact. However, in some instances there is a focus on the texture of rock that particularly appeals to me. Examples of this include the Bleaklow Stones from the Peak district on page 164 and the little and large rock on Pen yr Ole Wen in Snowdonia,

which is a clever picture of a rock detail in front of the outline of Pen yr Ole Wen. On the opposite page the image of gritstone on limestone is very similar to pictures from the Burren, even if the rock is of a different type.

The author tells us that he is always conscious of design in photographic compositions. This is true in this collection where the photographic eye is very much in evidence. Most of the images are not the classic ones we know from these mountains, and some of the pleasure will be gained from trying to identify angles and wonder what the author had to do to succeed in gaining such magnificent images or how long it took him to get the lighting conditions just right.

This book will be attractive to those who want to recall the pleasure of walking in these mountains and will perhaps act as an inspiration to those who have yet to experience the magic of mountains.



Essential guide to rock-climbs on Pembroke coastline

Sean Murnane



Pembroke: A rock climbing guide to the best areas on the Pembrokeshire Coast

By Alan James & Mike Robertson

Rockfax.com, 232pp

Full colour photos and sketches

£20.95

ISBN 978-1-873341-12-4

Fourteen years after the original *Pembroke* from Rockfax, author and publisher Alan James has teamed up with climbing photojournalist Mike Robertson to update the 1995 edition. With 232

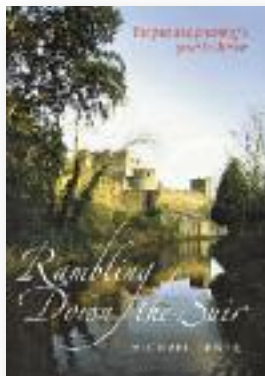
pages in full colour, the new edition is almost twice the size of the original Rockfax version. It focuses on twelve of the most popular areas on the Pembrokeshire coastline and has detailed route descriptions for more than 650 climbs.

This guide itself is beautifully presented, containing an impressive collection of action shots, photo topos, overview diagrams and some entertaining text to whet the appetite. The route descriptions and photo topos have been integrated into the same page, allowing for more elaborate and lavish illustrations of the routes. Only routes considered either interesting or of high quality have been included.

In typical Rockfax style, there is a variety of useful features and symbols to assist in quickly selecting a suitable area, navigating to the crag and choosing a route. These include things such as route style, abseil length and position, sun exposure, walk-in time and where the high tide mark is on a particular crag. There's also a helpful colour-coded table at the beginning of each section indicating the grade, quantity and quality of routes for that area. Once at the crag it is easy to find the right page, with tabbed chapters visible along the edge and page markers incorporated into the front and back covers. For those who are new to *Pembroke*, it's worth looking through the authors' recommended list of top 50 climbs. With grades from Moderate to E9, this guide has something for every level of ability, from the weekend warrior to the climbing elite. All in all, this is a superb publication and an essential purchase for anyone who climbs, or plans to climb, in Pembroke.

Follows the River Suir through time and history

Bill Hannon



Rambling Down The Suir: The past and present of a great Irish river

By Michael Fewer
Ashfield Press, 288pp
Numerous colour photos, paintings
and sketches
€25.00 ISBN 978-1-901658-74-3

Michael Fewer has written widely on leisure walking and on environmental matters. Here he tells the story of a great river and the people who live and lived on its banks. He has a

special affinity with the River Suir. He was born on its banks in Waterford and remembers watching the river and its ships as a child.

Fewer's research has been thorough. To do justice to the river's rich and varied history and topography, he used aircraft, boat and car, and where possible he walked. The result is a tapestry of colourful people, historical figures, successive waves of invaders with strange cultures and languages – all set against pleasant landscape and national wilderness areas.

There is a profusion of archaeological remains along the way reflecting history and cultural change over time. Descriptions are illustrated by excellent photographs and by paintings and pencil sketches.

Holy Cross Abbey is one of the earlier sites encountered. Founded in about 1169 by Donal Mor O'Brien, it was subsequently developed by Cistercian monks who cleared and drained the land, established agriculture and fisheries and civilised what was until then "an untamed and wild landscape." Times changed, and by the 19th century it had become a neglected ruin. In 1971, restoration work began and by 1975 it was opened again as a parish church. I holidayed there with the family in the late 1970s. Exploring the river by kayak, we little appreciated the history of the church, the fine stonework or the gracefulness of its roof vaulting. To quote the author: "The complex is a remarkable survival from a period in Ireland when the destruction of such fine structures, deliberate or by neglect, was commonplace."

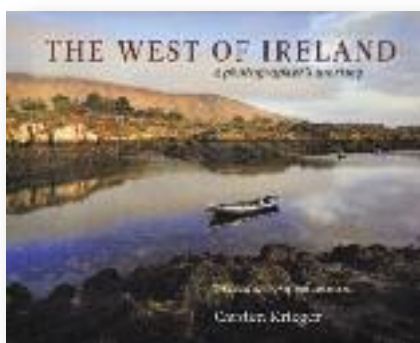
Downstream, at Athassel, is the Priory of St Edmond, one of the most picturesque of Ireland's many ruined monasteries. Along the way are sections of the Tipperary Heritage Walking Route. Ruined castles and tower houses are frequent, each with its own legend. Towns along the river, such as Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir, all have considerable histories.

By the time it reaches Waterford, the Suir has been joined by many tributaries, including the Barrow and the Nore. It has indeed become "broad and majestic." It has seen so much, from the founding of Waterford by the Danes in 1169 to the farcical siege there during the Civil War in 1922 – surely a first and a last in the story of strife in Ireland.

This book is very well written and illustrated so that it is both a pleasant and fascinating read. It would grace any library and I strongly recommend it.

Photographing the light on the landscape

Tom Fox



The West of Ireland

By Carsten Krieger
The Collins Press, 160pp
166 colour photos
€27.95 ISBN 13: 9781905172894

Saying that one photographs the landscape is not quite correct. In fact, you are photographing the light on the landscape. The light enhances the colour, shape and form. To get that light, one must be in the

right place at the right time. There is no doubt that Carsten Krieger spent time planning and waiting to get the best light.

Here, we have a selection of his best photographs – his vision of the west of Ireland, which he considers to be one of the last unspoiled and most beautiful parts of Europe.

He divides the book into sections covering Kerry, the West Clare/Shannon area, the Burren, Connemara, Mayo and Sligo/Leitrim. The photographs of Clare and the Burren, his adopted home-place, come in for special mention as this area, being close at hand, was the easiest for him to photograph.

This book will appeal to all who love the outdoors and they will easily associate themselves with the photographs of land, sea and sky. While not specifically a mountain book, there are lots of fine mountain images that will appeal to mountaineers. On perusing the book specifically for mountain images, I was taken with the photographs of the Twelve Bens from Lough Inagh, the Reeks from

Ballaghisheen, Slíabh Mish Mountain (Caherconree), Knockanes Mountain (Burren), the Sheeffry Hills and the Nephin Beg Range.

Apart from these fine photos, lake, bog and coastal images dominate the collection, and the tremendous range of pictures in varying light will keep your attention as you wander through the book. The image *Winter Morning in Killarney National Park* and *Clearing Weather in Delphi* are my personal favourites.

What is missing (from a photographer's point of view) is a section on the cameras and lenses that he used over the years to capture these images and whether he used film or a digital camera. However, this does not detract from the book in any way.

The Collins Press must be complimented on a fine production, which received support from the Heritage Council's 2009 publications grant scheme. An ideal gift at any time of year, it would make a great stocking filler for outdoor people for Christmas.

One of the main players in advancing technical climbing

Stephen McMullan



Jerry Moffatt: Revelations

By Jerry Moffatt with Niall Grimes
Vertebrate Publishing, 242pp
16pp colour photos
£20.00 ISBN 978-1-906148-11-9

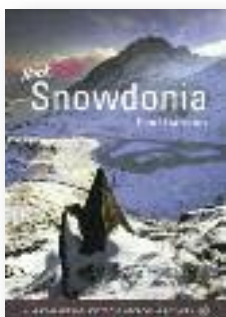
I had very high hopes for this auto-biography, co-written with our own Niall Grimes. In my early climbing years Jerry Moffatt and his peers provided well-documented inspiration to every budding climber in magazines such as *Mountain* and *On The Edge*. Without a doubt Jerry

Moffatt was one of the main protagonists on the world stage in the

advancement of technical rockclimbing in the 1980s. However, there's something that falls a little short of the mark in this well written account that I can't quite put my finger on. Moffatt describes well in this book how he mastered every format he turned his attention to. He repeated the hardest technical traditional climbs of the day before turning his attention to the sports climbing revolution and then heralded this in an era of professionalism with sponsorship, publicity and advertising, riding the wave of international level indoor climbing competitions. In the 1990s, he focused on pushing the standards of bouldering with some remarkable test pieces which still stand up to modern scrutiny in terms of difficulty. However, I believe that Moffatt's story is but one aspect of what was a much broader golden age of technical progression in climbing rock in the 1980s and early 1990s. Lack of widespread nostalgia is perhaps the unfair criticism that I level at this well written, yet at times overpoweringly self-promotional, account of a climber who had a fair claim to being labelled "the best."

Walks exploring Snowdonia's geology...

Linda Ó Loideoin



Rock Trails: Snowdonia

By Paul Gannon
Pesda Press,
240pp
Over 200 colour
photos,
diagrams &
maps
£14.95
ISBN 978-
906095-04-8

The sub-title of this book is "A hillwalker's guide to the geology and scenery." The first

half of the book is on how the scenery and hills of Snowdonia developed, and the second half of the book details thirteen walks there.

Snowdonia is a volcanic area and it is the volcanoes that shaped this amazing area, followed by the ice ages. I had always been aware that Snowdonia National Park was a good example of glaciation but until now I hadn't realised how volcanic the area was. If, like me, you wonder about the scenery that you are walking in, then this book is for you, as the writer Paul Gannon has gone into detail on how exactly the scenery of Snowdonia was formed. Yes, there were occasions when I had to reread a section a couple of times to understand the point he was making, especially in the volcanic section, but it was well worth the time.

The second half of the book has thirteen walks ranging from fairly easy to severe. Paul Gannon has used his own rating system on the walks. His system is fairly similar to the one normally used and is well explained.

You will need an OS map to cover any of these walks. The author has covered the standard walks around the Snowdonia area. Some of them he has split into more manageable walks to allow time for you to examine the geology that he explained in the front section. Much to my delight, he has come at some areas from a different direction and in effect created walks that you wouldn't normally find in a guidebook. My one complaint is that, even though there are a lot of quarter-page photos, some are too dark and some too detailed.

...and walks exploring Lakeland's geology

Ruth Lynam



Rock Trails: Lakeland: A Hillwalker's Guide to the Geology & Scenery

By Paul Gannon
Pesda Press, 260pp
Many large & small colour
photos and diagrams
£14.95 ISBN 978-1-906095-15-4

Paul Gannon is an established science writer and leads geologically-oriented landscape walks in Snowdonia. This

background shows in his flowing, readable style and in his clear simple explanations of the sometimes pretty complex geology.

Just over half the book is taken up with telling the story of the Lake District, and the geological and glacial forces which shaped its landscape, including an interesting chapter on the human influences.

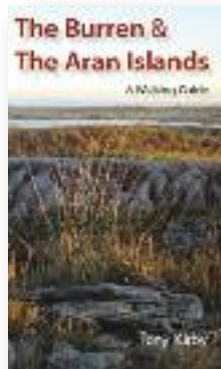
Many glacial features in the mountains are quite obvious. U-shaped valleys and corries, for example, are easily recognised – but the underlying geology can be more difficult to see. Gannon has overcome this difficulty with straightforward explanations and plenty of fine diagrams and annotated photos to illustrate the geological basics and relate the geology to specific landscapes.

The remainder of the book details fifteen walks. Gannon's enthusiasm is infectious as he describes the great corries on the east side of Helvellyn, the slaty tuffs in a quarry on Lingmoor and the (distracting) views on the slopes of Bowfell. Almost all the walks are quite serious undertakings, with estimated times of 5 or 6 hours and being fairly difficult, according to his grading system. They seem chosen for their scenic and mountaineering merit as much as for the geology, and are described in great detail but are very much related to the first section of the book. Often-neglected details are included – a place name index, map and grid references, a suitably simplified geological map, map recommendations – but distance and height-gain should also have been stated for the walks.

Overall, this book is a terrific substitute for a personal landscape guide when hillwalking in the Lake District.

Low-level walks in the Burren and Aran Islands

John O'Callaghan



The Burren & The Aran Islands

By Tony Kirby
The Collins Press,
169pp
31pp colour
photos, 8pp b/w
drawings, 16pp
maps
RRP €14.95
ISBN-13-97819
051729-9

This book is a very well-researched, broad-ranging introductory guide for anyone

planning low-level walks in the Burren or on the Aran Islands. There are good descriptions of fifteen individual, highly-accessible walking routes in and around the Burren and on the three Aran islands. Six of the walks are graded as strenuous, four moderate and five casual, and they range from 1½ to 6½ hours. Each description comes with a map (scales: 1:20,000 to 1:71,000), showing the route and a short summary of distances and estimated walking times. Perhaps direction of travel arrows and numbers on the route maps corresponding to the numbered paragraphs in the text would have been beneficial.

The selected walks are not difficult. The author's timings are quite generous and his gradings may be a little exaggerated for the

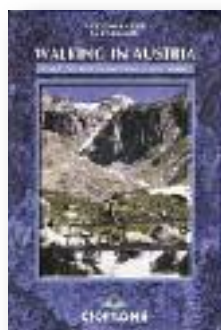
experienced hillwalker. However, for anyone new to walking across limestone karst, with its associated clints and grykes, caution is advised and walk timings can tend to be a bit longer than on more typical Irish hill terrain.

In addition to the well-described routes, the author provides the reader/walker with detailed background information on the local flora, fauna and topography of the Burren, which makes the whole experience more interesting and enjoyable.

Some new waymarked looped walks have been established recently in the areas covered and Tony Kirby's book helps raise awareness of these and complements older guidebooks that contain descriptions of walks on Gleninagh Mountain, Turlough and Abbey Hills and parts of the east Burren.

Walks in Austria from the Ratikon to the Karawanken

Joss Lynam



Walking in Austria

By Kev Reynolds
Cicerone, 427pp
Numerous colour photos & sketch maps
£15.00
ISBN: 978-1-85284-538-4

This guide covers ten Austrian mountain districts from the Ratikon and Silvretta Alps on the border of Switzerland, to the Hohe Tauern and the little known

Karawanken on the borders of Slovenia. A lot to put in one book by one author, but the ubiquitous Kev Reynolds has been walking the mountains of Austria for forty years and I am confident he is the author to do it.

Each area has up to a dozen walks, many quite short, 2-3 hours, others 5-6 hours, but generally also offering some multi-day treks, so the book is suitable for all classes of walker. There are 102 walks, described in detail with grade, length, height gain and loss, time, and with a sketch map. Along with most of the walks, additional short walks are suggested.

The introduction is as ample as we have come to expect from Cicerone. One unusual item in particular struck me – Hut Etiquette, a subject I would have found very useful on my first climbing trip in Switzerland 60 years ago. In addition, each District has its own introduction, with information about access, valley bases and mountain huts. The colour illustrations, mostly half-page, give a good idea of the mountains and the huts. All this for £15.00!

I wonder a little about the usage of this guide. It is pocket size (A6), but it is nearly 3cm thick and weighs more than half a kilo. If I'm going to the Kaisergebirge (13 walks, including two multi-day), yes, it's worth carrying its weight; but for the Karawanken (three short walks)? A superb book for planning, but I fear that some unscrupulous walkers (who are concerned about weight?) might do some photocopying.

Books, guides and maps to meet your Christmas gift requirements...

Mountaineering Ireland continues to provide the book service previously operated by Joss Lynam.

We can supply you with guidebooks and maps to almost any part of the world. For the walker, there is a large collection of Cicerone guides and books, or the wider selection of books and guides distributed by Cordee which also includes many climbing guides.

Books reviewed in the Irish Mountain Log can usually be purchased through Joss Books with a members' discount. To place an order, ring the Mountaineering Ireland office on (01) 6251115 or email info@mountaineering.ie.

Joss Books



www.playatheight.com



Christmas Climbing Quiz

Mountaineering Ireland has teamed up with Play At Height and Great Outdoors to bring you the 2009 Christmas Climbing Quiz. Answer the questions correctly and you could be in with a chance of winning fantastic climbing gear and free entry to Ireland's largest climbing wall.

Prizes

1st prize Two passes to Play At Height, two Play At Height hoodies, plus pair of *Red Chili Spirit Impact* shoes.

2nd prize Two passes to Play At Height, two Play At Height T-Shirts, plus pair of *Red Chili Spirit Impact* shoes.

3rd prize Two passes to Play At Height, plus pair of *Red Chili Spirit Impact* shoes.



How to enter

Answer the questions, complete this form, cut it out or photocopy it and post it to: *Christmas Climbing Quiz, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12.*

Alternatively, you can send your answers by email to kate@mountaineering.ie. If entering by email, please put Christmas Climbing Quiz in the 'Subject' line and number your answers 1-9.

Closing date for receipt of entries is 31 January 2010. The winners will be the first three all-correct entries pulled out of a chalk bag at Mountaineering Ireland's AGM in February 2010. The lucky winners will be contacted soon after this event and announced in the Spring 2010 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

Terms & Conditions: No cash substitute for prizes. Competition open to Mountaineering Ireland members only. One entry per person only.

Enter your details here:

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Club/Mountaineering Ireland Membership No:

.....

Email:

Tel:

Quiz questions

Q1. What type of rock is found at Fair Head?

.....

Q2. Who made the first ascent of 'The Ghost' in Dalkey Quarry?

.....

Q3. On which crag would you find the routes 'Nutrocker,' 'Skywalker' and 'Gallows Pole'?

.....

Q4. Name this crag (pictured below):

.....

Q5. Which route in Kerry fits the description below?

.....
 "This spectacular route is a popular rock scramble/easy rock climb with some very exposed moves (V.Diff). The rock is reasonably sound, but there are some loose sections. The climb rises from the Heavenly Gates out rightwards over a short step to gain the outer (right) edge of the ridge. Continue upwards, taking the line of least resistance but sticking to the rock at all times. Below a short but overhanging wall, the route is turned to the right briefly before coming back onto the now narrow ridge. From a small col the first of the two final pitches are climbed directly. The obvious 'Finger' (like a closed left hand with index finger protruding) is the final pitch, reached by easy moves around to the left of the pinnacle. From the top of the Finger a narrow horizontal ridge leads beneath the upper reaches of Collins Gully to the northeast ridge (Primroses) which is followed over a couple of towers into the notch at the top of Collins and onto the upper slopes to the top."



Q6. What are 'the Fin,' 'Chillax' and 'The Rails' and where would you find them?

.....

Q7. Who won the senior male category in the recent Irish National Lead Climbing Competition?

.....

Q8. Name this piece of equipment (pictured):

.....

Q9. For many years the hardest traditional route in the UK and Ireland was an E10 located in the Mourne Mountains.

(a) What was it called?

.....

(b) Who made the first ascent?

.....



Ernest Lawrence

Pioneer of adventure sports in Ireland

ERNEST LAWRENCE attended the King's Hospital School in Palmerstown, Dublin, but left at the age of 15 to join the RAF. This took him to Christmas Island in the Pacific where he serviced radio equipment on the bombers used in the H-Bomb tests – and took up snorkelling.

Returning to Ireland, Ernest longed to get into water sports again and in 1959 he joined Ireland's first canoe club – The Dún Laoghaire Canoe Club. He became involved in the development of canoe clubs and, in 1961, with Derek Martin, founded the Irish Canoe Union.

Through canoeing, Ernest met his wife Audrey. In sport and in business they were always partners and they set up the first kayak manufacturers in Ireland.

In 1969, Ernest joined with members of other adventure sports to form AFAS, the Association for Adventure Sports, and became involved in a variety of activities including hill-walking and rock-climbing. He was involved in the creation of the first Leader qualifications in Ireland for mountaineering and kayaking.

After Paddy O'Leary's move to Tiglin, Ernest became Chairman of AFAS and in that capacity took the then President of Ireland, Erskine Childers, for a canoe trip during his visit to Tiglin.



Ernest Lawrence (left) canoeing with President Erskine Childers during his visit to Tiglin.

He represented his club and country at home and internationally, including on a 225-mile paddle down the Colorado River. He also had an important role in the development of the Liffey Descent.

He put his AFAS experience to good use when he joined Wilson's Hospital School in Westmeath as the first full-time outdoor education teacher appointed to a school in Ireland. He introduced GAISCE at that school.

Ernest and Audrey retired in 2002 and settled down in Cahors, France, where he continued to engage in several adventure

sports. Sadly, he died suddenly on 26th of August this year.

He was a great character, full of fun, with a mischievous sense of humour, who brought enormous enthusiasm to everything he tackled.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland offers its sympathy to his wife Audrey, daughters Louise and Emma, sister Elizabeth and brother Leslie.

May he rest in peace.

Ernest Lawrence, born 1937, died August 26th, 2009.

Roseleen (née Kinsella) Rice

Avid hillwalker at home and abroad

I SUPPOSE IT WAS FATE, that Saturday in late summer of 1966, when Roseleen and I met up with Frank Doherty on the St Kevin's bus to Glendalough. We were en route to the Glendalough An Óige hostel for the weekend but Frank persuaded us to stay instead in The Hut in Glendasan close by, and before long, after being introduced to the great sport of rock-climbing on the crags of Glendalough, and with map reading lessons from Mick Colgan and Peter Shortt, we both became full members of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC).

The following year saw Roseleen and I in Dalkey Quarry every Thursday as enthusiastic participants on the rock-climbing course given by members of the IMC. Roseleen, true to form, was always ready to try anything and when Joss Lynam handed over to us a climbing rope given to him by Harold Johnson, we used

it regularly in the quarry throughout the summer months. One damp Thursday evening Roseleen slipped while leading Winders Crack and broke her arm...but that didn't curtail her for long.

Singing folk songs went along with her climbing. I remember Eddie Gaffney leading us both up Holly Tree Shunt in Glendalough while we sang our way up in harmony. I still have visions of Roseleen and Joss dancing wildly their version of a Cossack dance at a céilí in Jack Walsh's Climbers Inn!

Over the last twenty years, Roseleen was active on walking holidays with her husband Niall Rice, with myself and women friends, and we had some great 'alternative' walking holidays in the Tramontana Mountains of northern Majorca, and in Montenegro, and in 2007 Gráinne Hayes (Leonard), Roseleen and myself had an unforgettable holiday in the

rain forest, ridges and barrancos of northern La Gomera.

Roseleen planned this holiday and researched the walks, which were not always clear, but there was never any turning back with Roseleen in charge.

This was to be her last time to walk abroad as her illness took hold very quickly early last year, but up till then she was on the hills most weekends, hail, rain or snow.

*"Forget-me-nots among the snow
It's always been and so it goes
To ponder her death and her life
Eternally."*

May she rest in peace.

Kathleen (née Kinsella) Bent
(Roseleen's twin sister)

Roseleen Rice, born 1945, died 2009.



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