

# Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

## Galtees Gathering

Hillwalking Committee re-established

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## Celebrating the Comeraghs

Special places in the Waterford range

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



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

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

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

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October 12-14<sup>th</sup>

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Ireland**

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## Hosted by Galway Walking Club

Further details will be posted on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) (see also page 11, this issue)



# Welcome

**W**elcome to the Summer 2018 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. It has been a very busy time for Mountaineering Ireland since the hugely successful AGM and Spring Gathering in March in the Glen of Aherlow. Thanks to Limerick Climbing Club for a great weekend! Following a motion that was passed at that AGM, a working group has been established to develop the terms of reference for a Hillwalking Committee and an initial work plan for that committee. The new committee will support and develop hillwalking in Ireland.

At the same time, Mountaineering Ireland has recently become affiliated to the Olympic Council of Ireland on the basis that sport climbing will be one of the disciplines competing in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. This is a very important development for the sport of climbing in Ireland.

Then, while all this has been going on, and after a year-long consultation, a new Strategic Plan was finalised and launched by the new Mountaineering Ireland Board of Directors on Monday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

With all of this news, some updates, the features and our regular items, we have another very full issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. There are also a couple of competitions: a crossword competition for a pair of Merrell shoes kindly donated by Basecamp (see page 59) and the chance to win one of three copies of David Roberts' new book, *Limits of*



**Don't forget to visit the website to give your consent to continue receiving the *Irish Mountain Log***

*the Known*, thanks to the publishers, WW Norton and Company. That book is reviewed in our books section (see page 61).

In the features, we look at the joys of walking in the Comeraghs, of variously completing the Tour du Mont Blanc, of climbing with a baby and of exploring Iran's Mount Damavand.

Finally, while it may seem we have been hearing a lot about data protection recently, as the responsible custodians of members' personal data Mountaineering Ireland has to ensure that it has members' permission to send them information in future. This information includes copies of the *Irish Mountain Log*, so it is important that all members visit the Members & Clubs section of our website to give their consent to receiving information from Mountaineering Ireland in the future (see page 6).

We can only hope that we will continue to have a good summer this year, with lots of opportunities to safely enjoy the wonderful Irish uplands.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**, Editor



## Write for the Log

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

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

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



### ON THE COVER

Walking in the Glounreagh river valley in the Galtee Mountains during the Spring Gathering in March.

PHOTOGRAPH  
PAUL KELLAGHER

## ISSUE 126

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

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### PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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# Newsdesk

## How GDPR affects members



**IMPORTANT:** To make sure you continue to receive relevant information from Mountaineering Ireland, and your copies of the *Irish Mountain Log*, please follow the instructions below.

By Ruth Whelan (Membership Development Officer)

You may be aware that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018, replacing the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive.

Your trust is important to us, so keeping your personal information safe and secure remains our top priority. These changes will have an impact on how Mountaineering Ireland, at all levels, engages with its members. It is important that all members are aware of how the changes in the law will affect the ways in which members' personal information is collected and used.

All members can update the personal details they have given to Mountaineering Ireland and change their consent status by logging on to their account in the **Members** section of the Mountaineering Ireland website [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).

To log on, go to [www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/memberlogon](http://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/memberlogon) and enter your email address and password. If you have any difficulty logging on, please contact your club secretary or contact [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie) or the Mountaineering Ireland office on 01 625 1115.

Once logged in, you will find the page with your personal details. You should check that these details are correct and, if not, amend any errors. At the bottom of the personal details box, you are offered these options:

- I would like to receive information via email from Mountaineering Ireland to keep up to date with news and information.

In addition to receiving general communications from us, please let us know how else you would like to hear from us:

- By post (includes to receive *Irish Mountain Log*)  
 By phone

Please click the '**by post**' option to continue receiving your copies of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

Mountaineering Ireland has developed a **guidebook** for Mountaineering Ireland affiliated clubs to provide them with clear guidance on how to ensure they are compliant with the new data protection regulation. The guidebook can be accessed at: [www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/GDPRAndMembers](http://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/GDPRAndMembers).

Please read the full details of our privacy policy at: [www.mountaineering.ie/AboutUs/DataProtection](http://www.mountaineering.ie/AboutUs/DataProtection).

Thank you for being a member of Mountaineering Ireland! ■



# Mountaineering Ireland launches strategic plan

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland launched **Strategic Plan 2018-2021** at its meeting on June 25<sup>th</sup>. This followed a far-reaching consultation with the members and other interested parties, and feedback on the draft plan from members at the Spring Gathering in March.

The launch of this new strategy was the final step in a year-long process that had seen engagement with the membership, partners and other stakeholders in the development of the plan. The strategy provides a road-map for Mountaineering Ireland to follow in the next four years. It covers the five key strategic pillars identified during the consultation process by Mountaineering Ireland's clubs and members.

At the launch, Paul Kellagher, President of Mountaineering Ireland, welcomed the new Strategic Plan, saying: "It gives clear focus to our values of adventure, personal responsibility, respect, well-being and partnership. The plan is supported by a robust operational plan, which will allow us to deliver high-quality services to our members to support hillwalking and climbing. This is a special day for Mountaineering Ireland and I look forward to seeing the aims of the plan being achieved over the next number of years."



**Mountaineering Ireland Board (from left): Paul Barron (Chairperson), Irene Sorohan, Geoff Thomas, Imelda Buckley, Gráinne McLaughlin, Paul Kellagher (President), Trish Kane, Helen Donoghue, Colette Mahon, Simon Walsh. The Board members who were not present are Clare O'Connor, Michael Maunsell and Dawson Stelfox.**

A working group will be created to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan and it will report on its progress at regular intervals to the Board.

Murrough McDonagh, CEO of Mountaineering Ireland, said: "I want to thank all of those who contributed to the strategic planning process: the Mountaineering Ireland Board of Directors, the staff, club officials and volunteers, attendees at our regional meetings, respondents to the online survey, our funders, partners and other stakeholders, those involved in mountain training, the BMC

and Mountaineering Scotland. We gathered a great deal of information and under the direction of a Steering Group appointed by the Mountaineering Ireland Board, and led by Maeve Buckley from Line-Up Consultants, this process was guided to a successful outcome."

He added: "This new strategy will remain an active and live document up until its natural conclusion in 2021 and, with the support of our clubs, volunteers, providers, working groups, sub-committees, Board members and staff all working together, I am positive that we will have the ability to

support the delivery of this plan to the benefit of our membership and all aspects of our sport."

**FIND OUT MORE:** *Strategic Plan 2018-21* can be downloaded as a pdf from [bit.ly/2zgtkNs](http://bit.ly/2zgtkNs) ■



## STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

<b>VISION:</b>	Our vision is that hillwalkers and climbers will become more skilled, self-reliant and informed, that access will be improved, and that our mountain landscapes will be valued and protected. We aim to inspire all who engage in hillwalking and climbing throughout the island of Ireland, and encourage adventure and exploration in the mountains of the world.
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## STRATEGIC PILLARS

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>To promote responsible participation in all aspects of mountaineering</b>	<b>To promote mountain training and skills development</b>	<b>To strive for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers</b>	<b>To be a voice for the protection of mountain landscapes</b>	<b>To undertake a modernisation programme</b>
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# Mountaineering Ireland joins Olympic movement

Olympic Council of Ireland recognises Mountaineering Ireland as national sport climbing body.

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Mountaineering Ireland officially became affiliated to the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) and the World Olympic movement at the OCI AGM, held at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, Dublin, on Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.

President of the Olympic Council of Ireland, **Sarah Keane**, welcomed Mountaineering Ireland to the Olympic family as the representative body for **sport climbing**, which is one of the additional disciplines to be added to the programme for the Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo in 2020. The thirty-one out of the thirty-four sports federations affiliated to the OCI who were present at the AGM unanimously welcomed Mountaineering Ireland into the Olympic family as well.

Youth Climbing Team Coach **Terry O'Connor** and Youth Climbing Team members **Jessica McGarry, Matthew Smith** and **Sean O'Connor** were present at the momentous occasion, together with Mountaineering Ireland's Chief Executive Officer, **Murrough McDonagh**.

Representatives of ONAKAI (Karate Ireland) and Softball Ireland were also present on behalf of other new sports that have been included in the schedule for Tokyo 2020.

Speaking at the event, Mountaineering Ireland CEO **Murrough McDonagh** said it was a special and important day for everyone involved in climbing on the island of Ireland. "Mountaineering Ireland is now a full member of the Olympic movement. Sport climbing is on the schedule for Tokyo 2020 and there is a strong possibility it will be included in the programmes for the Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.



Pictured at the official affiliation of Mountaineering Ireland to the Olympic movement (from left): Murrough McDonagh (CEO, Mountaineering Ireland), Terry O'Connor (Head Coach, Mountaineering Ireland), Sarah Keane (President, Olympic Council of Ireland), Mountaineering Ireland Talent Development Squad members Matthew Smith, Sean O'Connor and Jessica McGarry, Peter Sherrard (CEO, OCI) and John Treacy (CEO, Sport Ireland).

"We must continue to support and develop the excellent work being done from grassroots to high performance level by our dedicated volunteers in clubs and Development Squads, to ensure that those wishing to take up the sport have the opportunity to do so and that those wishing to advance within the sport have the support they need," he said.

Under the leadership of the **International Federation of Sports Climbing (IFSC)**, competition (or sport) climbing has been included in the line-up for the Tokyo Olympics. The format for competition climbing in Tokyo will follow a combined format of the three competition climbing disciplines: lead, speed and bouldering.

Mountaineering Ireland's Head Coach, **Terry O'Connor**, said that being a part of the

Olympic Council of Ireland and having sport climbing on the programme for the Olympic Games in Tokyo was great for the sport. "We can see, on a monthly basis, the growing interest and the increasing numbers of young people going into climbing walls and taking up the sport. To see so many of our athletes compete at the highest levels, at both youth and junior levels in European and World Championship events, is extremely rewarding for all involved," he said.

Indoor climbing has experienced a boom over the past decade, seeing a massive increase in the number of people participating and soaring levels of performance. Globally, it is estimated that over 35 million people participate in indoor climbing and that the average age of those participants is 23 years.

Mountaineering Ireland supports young climbers who want to improve their performance levels by providing the opportunity to join the Climbing Development Squad.

**FIND OUT MORE:** For more information on getting involved, please visit [www.mountaineering.ie/Climbing](http://www.mountaineering.ie/Climbing) ■



# Spring Gathering: a report from the host club

The Spring Gathering took place in the Glen of Aherlow, Co Tipperary, in March.



Mountaineering Ireland's 2018 Spring Gathering took place over the weekend of March 23-25<sup>th</sup> in the Glen of Aherlow, below the beautiful Galtee Mountains. It was a very enjoyable Gathering due to a combination of factors, which included the enthusiasm of the host club, **Limerick Climbing Club**, the excellent service and facilities provided by the **Aherlow House Hotel**, the superb weather on the Saturday, which allowed us to appreciate the beauty of the Galtees, and the variety of walks led by members of the Limerick Climbing Club. A truly memorable weekend was had by everyone who attended. Here, **David McDonnell**, Chairperson of Limerick Climbing Club, reviews the Gathering weekend.

At a Mountain Meitheal South East workday, we innocently asked Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer, what was involved in hosting a Mountaineering Ireland Gathering? She replied with another question, "Would Limerick Climbing Club be interested in hosting a Gathering?"

Our club would be celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018 and, before we knew it, we were in planning mode for the 2018 Spring Gathering!

We quickly decided on Aherlow House Hotel & Lodges in the Glen of Aherlow, Co Tipperary, as the location for the Gathering. The Galtees would provide plenty of walking options with easy access from the Glen. A walk coordinator was appointed, **Tom O'Brien**, to coordinate the walks, with no shortage of club leaders willing to participate.

We were fortunate in our chosen speakers for the Friday night with **Jimmy Barry** and **Maureen O'Brien**, who are close friends of the club, more than willing to share their knowledge and experience. As the weekend approached we kept a close eye on registrations and the weather. We weren't disappointed by either.

## Friday night

Friday kicked off with an easy walk around Slievenamuck for those who arrived early, and we then prepared for the evening ahead. To a large attendance, **Jimmy Barry**, a man who knows the Galtees well and is author of *Under Galtee Skies: a pictorial journey through the Galtee mountains*, shared his appreciation and passion for the Galtee landscape with us.

Jimmy was then joined by **Maureen O'Brien**, a fellow South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) volunteer, and they gave us a good overview of their work and area of operation. It was great to be able to take the opportunity to present SEMRA with a cheque for €750, the proceeds of a quiz night run by Limerick Climbing Club earlier in the year.

## Saturday

An early start on Saturday saw buses departing to the various walk start-points, the first departing at 8.30am. **Mountain Meitheal South East** also ran a workday to give people an insight into the work they undertake. Over one hundred and twenty participants in the walks and the workday were greeted with blue skies showing the mountains in all

their splendour.

For the walks that took in Galtymore, there was the added bonus of traversing the tops through the snow; we had a fabulous day's hiking, building up an appetite for the meal that evening.

After the **Mountaineering Ireland AGM**, over 170 people sat down to dinner, and the hotel didn't disappoint with their top-class service and great food. In the background some of the photos from the day were shown, a reminder of the day's exertions and the fantastic scenery enjoyed. For some it was early to bed; for others the conversation continued late into the night over a quiet drink or two.

## Sunday

On Sunday, after a lively **Mountaineering Ireland Members' Forum**, a number of

workshops were organised.

**Ruth Whelan**, the Membership Development Officer, led a Club Development workshop; **Julie Reeves**, a qualified Mountain Leader and Skills trainer, ran a Mountain Skills workshop, while two members of Limerick branch of **BirdWatch Ireland** brought some members on a birding walk in the local woodlands.

For Limerick Climbing Club, hosting the Gathering was a great experience. Special thanks to Ruth Whelan for her support, to the speakers on the Friday night, to those who led walks on the Saturday and to those who hosted the workshops on Sunday. In addition, to everyone that travelled, a special thank you. No doubt many of our paths will cross on some mountain or at a Gathering in the future!



**AUTHOR:** David McDonnell is currently the Chairperson of Limerick Climbing Club. He has been a member of the club since he returned to Limerick in 2009. He has been hiking all over Ireland and abroad for over thirty years and still loves it!



**Jimmy Barry, left, and Maureen O'Brien on behalf of SEMRA accept a donation of €750 (raised in a club quiz night) from Limerick Climbing Club members Frank McMahon and David McDonnell.**





On a hillwalk during the Gathering.



On an ascent of Galtymore during the Gathering.

## Members' Forum

By Patrick O'Sullivan

The Members' Forum on the Sunday morning was well attended and valuable, with many different members contributing to the discussion across a variety of topics. Mountaineering Ireland's **Draft Strategic Plan** was debated at length. There was much discussion about the wording of the purpose, vision, values and strategic pillars, the core of the draft. Several changes were suggested, which would be incorporated into the final version of the plan, to be put to the Board for approval.

Members who attended the **regional meetings** had not received any feedback and it was agreed that it was important that Mountaineering Ireland continued to try to improve communications with the membership.

The relationship of the **Get Ireland Walking** initiative with Mountaineering Ireland was discussed. Get Ireland Walking is an initiative of Sport Ireland, managed by Mountaineering Ireland and funded by Sport Ireland and the Department of Health. Mountaineering Ireland employs the staff, but Get Ireland Walking has its own recently-launched Strategic Plan (see *IML 124*,

pages 8-9). No Mountaineering Ireland funds go into supporting Get Ireland Walking.

It was highlighted that the number of people engaging in activities on the hills continues to increase and that guiding the development of hillwalking, protecting the environment and maintaining access all need to be addressed in our Strategic Plan. Debate on challenge walks ranged from the value of these events in terms of sociability and introducing people to our activities, to the need to champion the quality experiences that people can enjoy when they explore the hills in small numbers.

There was a further discussion on the scope to foster self-reliance and that clubs should do more training in **navigation**.

One club was looking to provide **first aid training** for its members. Mountaineering Ireland does not list first aid training providers, because it doesn't accredit these trainers. However, in the interest of members, it was thought Mountaineering Ireland should list them on the website.

The issue of the **age profile** of hillwalkers was raised as a concern for clubs. In terms of the strategy, is it possible to address this and make the sport more attractive to young people? There was a

lengthy discussion on this topic. It was suggested that it was not a lack of interest in the sport among young people but rather that they don't walk regularly or feel the need to be part of a club.

We should also recognise that clubs go through a cycle and that new clubs will be formed as older clubs stop growing. There is also a natural cycle for individuals, with younger people socialising, then settling down and having families, before coming back to the sport in their late forties or fifties and maybe joining or rejoining a club then.

**Gender balance** is also an issue in clubs, as more women than men now seem to join clubs and go on club walks.

Clubs need to be trying actively to recruit new members, and various strategies were suggested, including 'bring a friend' days, targeting young people in college or when they are leaving college, having a separate youth section in the club, giving presentations about club activities in their local area, or targeting people who are hillwalking but not members of a club.

It was highlighted by various speakers that mountaineering is a lifelong activity that you can enjoy and benefit from throughout life. Clubs that develop successful strategies to recruit new members are asked to share their strategy with the Membership Development Officer. ▶



Approaching the summit of Galtymore.



Members approaching Galtymore summit during the 2018 Gathering.



## Treasurer's Report, AGM 2018

By Patrick O'Sullivan

The outgoing Honorary Treasurer, Nicky Hore, presented the Audited Accounts to the Annual General Meeting. He reported that the finances had been dealt with in an efficient manner by our financial administrators, Integral Finance and Technology (IFT), and that our accountants, Whiteside Cullinan, were satisfied with our accounting records.

There was a deficit €33,000 in the Income & Expenditure account, which was as budgeted. This deficit has reduced from €50,000 for the previous year, and the intention is to eliminate any deficit in 2018. A lot of work has been undertaken by our CEO, Murrough McDonagh, and our staff to have structured and measurable budgets within each section of the office. Our financial administrators have been responsible for streamlining the payments system and categorising all items to help ongoing budgeting.

The resources of Mountaineering Ireland remain in a healthy state. The grants from Sport Ireland and Sport NI have remained the same and, as we have kept a good relationship with both bodies, the prospect of maintaining or improving these grants in the future is good.

The Audited Accounts were then approved by the meeting and our current auditors were approved for the following year. Nicky thanked David Buggy of Whiteside Cullinan Accountants, John Slevin and Mark Tallon of Integral Finance and Technology (IFT), our CEO Murrough McDonagh and all the Mountaineering Ireland staff for keeping the Mountaineering Ireland finances in order.

Nicky Hore stepped down as Honorary Treasurer having completed four years in the role. He was thanked by the Board and the meeting for his excellent work in overseeing the accounts through some difficult years. Nicky also stepped down from the Board ■

Members on Galtymore summit during the 2018 Gathering.



### Breakdown of Income

2017

Membership Subscriptions	€288,281
Irish Mountain Log	€45,009
Irish Mountain Log Advertising	€18,310
Member Meets and Gatherings	€21,493
Training	€28,243
Youth Development Programme NI	€7,252
Publications	€11,758
Talent Development	€48,177
Other: Women With Altitude, Lectures, Library	€10,369
Sport Ireland Core NGB Funding	€193,000
Sport NI: Supporting Clubs Core NGB Funding	€39,659
Sport Ireland: Women in Sport Funding	€8,000
Environmental Defence Fund	€195
Bank Interest Receivable	–
Sport Ireland: Get Climbing (Dormant Accts)	€40,000
Sport Ireland: GIW (Core Programme Funding)	€145,000
Sport Ireland: GIW (Dormant Accts)	€130,000
	<b>€1,034,746</b>

### Breakdown of Expenditure

2017

Wages & Salaries	€303,626
Rent Payable	€13,568
Insurance	€79,081
Postage and Printing	€19,033
Marketing, Communications & Guidebooks	€2,856
Telephone	€1,824
Website and IT	€22,554
Professional Fees	€26,568
Accountancy and Audit	€11,861
Bank Charges	€4,518
Bad Debt Provision	–
Loss on Currency Exchange	€2,862
General Expenses	€27,317
Hillwalking, Access & Conservation	€9,539
Member Meets and Gatherings	€30,100
Board and Sub-committees	€13,195
Training and Coaching	€9,483
Expedition Grants	€1,333
Irish Mountain Log	€98,225
Youth Development Programme	€22,601
Talent Development	€81,841
Sport Ireland: Get Ireland Walking (GIW)	€244,216
Lectures and Library	€2,934
Sport Ireland: Women in Sport	€8,507
Sport Ireland: Get Climbing Programme	€13,274
Special Projects	–
Subscriptions	€5,926
Depreciation	€11,535
	<b>€1,068,377</b>

Net deficit

(€33,631)



Members of Galway Walking Club on Ben Beg in the Partry Mountains (Joyce Country).



# Autumn Gathering

Clonbur, Co Galway, October 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*Join us for a weekend of walking and climbing, talks and workshops*

## By Galway Walking Club

The village of An Fhairche (Clonbur) sits between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask in County Galway. Two kilometres to the west rises Binn Shléibhe (Mount Gable) where, according to legend, the Fir Bolg gathered on the hilltop before their clash with the Tuatha Dé Danann at the Battle of Moytura.

Joyce Country, a hilly region to the west of Lough Mask, takes its name from the Anglo-Norman family who settled here in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Joyce (originally spelt Joys from the French 'Joyeuse') emigrated to Ireland and settled here.

His son married an O'Flaherty and this allegiance allowed the Joyce clan to take control of the whole of the barony of Ross.

Close to Clonbur lie the remains of the Petersburg estate, seat of the Lynch family of Galway, one of whose members, Thomas Lynch Jnr, was a signatory of the American Declaration of Independence.

Located on the southern shore of Lough Mask, with Lough Corrib to the south and with the Maamturks and Partry Mountains to the west, Petersburg House is now the

## Galway-Roscommon Outdoor Education and Training Centre

, offering a range of adventure sports activities and challenges for all age groups. One of its specialisms is the study of the landscape and it offers a superb location for all types of field studies, including geology, geography and ecology.

The community of Clonbur is immensely proud of the natural resources on its doorstep. This village was a winner in its category in the **All-Ireland 'Pride of Place' Competition** in 2016. The community is now working hard to develop and promote these assets in a sustainable way.

Local farmers and landowners have been incredibly accommodating to outdoor enthusiasts, and the **Binn Shléibhe Pilot Mountain Access Project** is an example of this. This year, the community is launching its **'Clonbur Welcomes Walkers' campaign**, with five new or upgraded trails through Coillte land. This will include a timely celebration of underpasses or tunnels built in 1918 by the Guinness family of Ashford Castle, which help link the villages of Clonbur and Cong in a beautiful woodland walk.

Help support this campaign

by attending the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering in Clonbur in October, which is being hosted by Galway Walking Club.

## Galway Walking Club

The Galway Walking Club was founded in 1995. Its founding members were already avid long-distance walkers, so the club's aim was to provide regular extended rambles for its members.

By the year 2000 an increasing demand for hillwalking in the amazing Connemara mountains was evident, and by 2002 the option of two hillwalks per month was being offered by the club.

In 2018, with increasing membership numbers and a wider range of age and fitness levels, Galway Walking Club offers five different walk

options in a variety of landscapes in three counties (Galway, Mayo and Clare); three levels of hillwalks (A, B and C); rambles; and a short Sunday afternoon walk. The club has also been running an annual Connemara Marathon since 1996.

There has always been a strong social aspect to the club's activities. Galway Walking Club has an annual Christmas party, a summer barbecue, bank holiday weekends away in different parts of Ireland and trips to offshore islands, as well as a week's hiking holiday every year in a European location. Galway Walking Club now has a membership of over 300.

**AUTUMN GATHERING:** Registration details and the programme for the Autumn Gathering will be posted on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) ■





Get Ireland Walking Programme Manager Jason King (centre) with pupils and teachers of St Patrick's School, Corduff, launching Active School Walkway 2018.

## Active School Walkway initiative launched

Get Ireland Walking launches its new Active School Walkway initiative in partnership with Active School Flag ... for children, by children.

### By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD, along with Government Ministers Richard Bruton TD, Simon Harris TD and Catherine Byrne TD, welcomed **Active School Week 2018** and the introduction of the new **Active School Walkway** initiative.

Active School Week, which took place from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, is an initiative offering schools across the country an opportunity to work together with students, parents and communities, and with national sporting and health organisations, on a broad range of physical activities.

At the launch of the initiative in St Patrick's School, Corduff, Co Dublin, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said getting everyone living in Ireland moving was a priority for Healthy Ireland. "We have a

particular focus on children. There are many positive physical activity initiatives across schools. The new initiatives developed as part of the Active School Flag initiative, in partnership with Healthy Ireland, this year include the launch of the Active School Walkway initiative and partnership with thirteen new junior park-runs. We want to encourage and support children to have the best possible physical fitness

and mental wellbeing." An Taoiseach said. "We all know that being active also means having fun."

The **Active School Walkway pack** that has been developed includes signage that schools can erect on their grounds, as well as useful information on the best usage of the walkway, before, during and after school.

Posters are also provided for post-primary schools, designed by students as part

of our Dormant Accounts-funded Schools Walking initiative.

In preparation for this year's Active School Week and in partnership with **Active School Flag**, Get Ireland Walking distributed two hundred and fifty Active School Walkway packs to schools that had qualified for an Active School Flag or were working towards achieving it. The distribution of these packs provided additional walking opportunities for more than 100,000 students.

We are now exploring the expansion of this initiative to Phase 2, which will include reaching all special schools (primary schools with special needs capabilities) and all DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools across the country. This is a really exciting initiative, which we are





“Given the age demographic of Men’s Sheds members (50 plus), an emphasis on being physically active is of key importance. For the older age demographic of men, walking is the simplest form of physical activity to engage in, and brings about many health benefits, physically, mentally and socially. By providing the initial ‘Get Into Walking’ workshop directly to a Shed, it removes the daunting barrier many men often experience when wishing to take up physical activity.”

– Irish Men’s Sheds Association

delighted to support for the physical and wellbeing benefits of children and young people in Ireland.

This project is supported by the Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts Sports Inclusion Fund and the Healthy Ireland Fund. It demonstrates a solid example of national stakeholders coming together through a shared vision to deliver additional physical activity opportunities for the children of Ireland. We look forward to working closely

with Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Active School Flag and the Department of Education to expand this initiative further. Watch this space!

### Shedding the load

**Sheds ag Siúl** is a gender-specific programme for men in the Men’s Sheds programmes. The programme originated through a partnership between Get Ireland Walking and the **Irish Men’s Sheds Association**.

A focus group that was held with a number of Sheds indicated that less than 10% of the men were engaging with any of Get Ireland Walking’s programmes.

Following the focus groups, four walk engagement sessions were held across Dublin, Cork and Galway, reaching 113 men. Sheds resources were designed and disseminated. Pilot workshops were then delivered to Sheddors in two community locations, one in Dublin and one in Cork, bringing together Sheddors from around ten Sheds and involving thirty men. The finalised workshop was delivered with two Sheds, reaching a further thirty men.

Tutors in **Cork Local Sports Partnership** were trained in the delivery of the Get Into Walking workshop by the **Irish Heart Foundation**. Additional training was provided in how to engage with men in Sheds by the **Irish Men’s Sheds Association** and the **Men’s Development Network**.

One Shed has received the workshop and is starting the eight-week walking programme, encompassing a combination of fit poles, walking football and walking in the community. Ten individuals have signed up for eight weeks’ text-message

walking supports.

The same workshop will be delivered to a further seven Sheds in Cork over 2018, to ensure the programme is bedded in.

The programme enhances sustainability by enabling self-regulatory behaviour relating to walking, thus promoting the longer-term engagement with existing services on offer through the Local Sports Partnership and Get Ireland Walking’s **Community Walking Groups**.

One mechanism for this is through the identification of Shed leaders or Walking Champions. The same model will be delivered in Dublin, targeting an additional eight trainers and eight Sheds.

In line with successes in the Men’s Sheds and the **Woodlands for Health** programmes, Get Ireland Walking has identified further needs within the Irish community. These include much-needed walking programmes for those on the **Cancer Care** journey and those who have overcome addiction. The populations targeted are vulnerable adults in need of services that address their physical and mental wellbeing through the means of physical activity and walking ■

NUTRAMINO



Jason King (National Programme Manager, Get Ireland Walking), with host Vogue Williams and Emer O’Leary (Programme Coordinator, Get Ireland Walking) at the Nutramino Health and Fitness Awards ceremony in April.

### Get Ireland Walking picks up Nutramino Health and Fitness Award

Get Ireland Walking was delighted and honoured to win the innovation category in the very first Nutramino Health and Fitness Awards, held in the Mansion House, Dublin, in April. This was another giant step for the initiative and it was great to be recognised as a leader in health and fitness from a population perspective and within the fitness industry. There were many worthy winners within the shortlist. We would like to take this opportunity to commend every one of them on their efforts in promoting health and wellbeing.



**AUTHOR:** Jason King is Programme Manager of Get Ireland Walking. **Get Ireland Walking** is an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland and hosted and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland.

**FIND OUT MORE:** To find out more about Get Ireland Walking, visit the website [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), contact us on (01) 625 1109 or email [jason@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:jason@getirelandwalking.ie) with any questions you may have. Happy walking!

# Reading the landscape

Geological Survey Ireland has provided a very useful web viewer for reading the landscape.

**By Dr Siobhán Power  
(Geological Survey Ireland)**

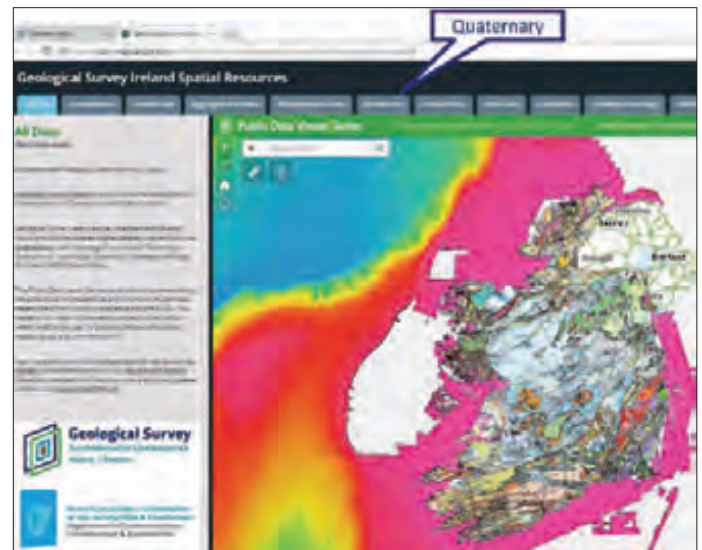
Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), a division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, has been mapping Ireland's geology since 1845. However, many people would still not be aware that all of their data and maps are free for use by the general public. This data would be of particular use to hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers who would like to get a better understanding of the landscape.

Ireland has a long and interesting geological history and, for an area of its size, an unusually high geodiversity. The mountains of Cork and Kerry are mainly 400 million-year-old desert sandstone. Connemara, Mayo and Donegal are composed of older rocks laid down on the floor of an opening ocean (Iapetus Ocean) and then deformed when the ocean was closing. Wicklow is a great, 400

million-year-old granite intrusion, also from the final closing of the Iapetus Ocean, and the Cooley Mountains in Louth are from the opening of the North Atlantic Ocean. The landscape itself was formed over the last 2.5 million years when ice sheets and glaciers covered the land and reshaped the land in their wake.

All data and maps are available on [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie) (the web viewer is found under 'Maps and Data'). Layers within the map web browser give different information and can be turned on and off to suit your needs. The base map can be changed also.

Possibly the most useful for reading the landscape is the Quaternary layer. The Quaternary Period is from 2.6 million years ago to the present. There have been many glacial events within that period and these glaciers have shaped our landscape. An example of the information available is shown here using a



map from the Glendalough area of County Wicklow.

You will shortly be able to use your Eircode to discover the glacial features around you.

We also welcome input from you, particularly in relation to **landslides**. Please contact us at [duty.geologist@gsi.ie](mailto:duty.geologist@gsi.ie) to report any landslides not marked on our maps ■

**FIND OUT MORE:** For more information on the geology of Ireland and on Geological Survey Ireland's activities, visit [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie) or visit its customer centre in Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin, D04 K7X4.

**OPEN DAY:** Geological Survey Ireland will be having an open day as part of **Heritage Week**, on Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018, from 11.00am to 4.00pm.

**AUTHOR:** Dr Siobhán Power is a geologist with Geological Survey Ireland.



Quaternary or glacial features of Wicklow area. The barbed irregular black lines show the corries (where glaciers are born). The blue arrowheads are the location and direction of meltwater channels. The red enclosed areas are moraine ridges. The green-and-white areas are nunataks (places that remained above the ice during the last glaciation). The fine black arrows are striations in rocks, indicating the direction of ice movement.

# The UIAA Mountain Protection Commission

Michael Maunsell reports on a busy year for the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission.

By Michael Maunsell

The **UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme)** is the international governing body of climbing and mountaineering and it represents climbers and mountaineers around the world on a wide range of issues related to mountain safety, sustainability and competition sport.

The work, as a full member of the **UIAA Mountain Protection Commission**, is varied, sometimes challenging, but always interesting. The Commission holds its annual general meeting in different locations during May each year: in 2017 it was held at the UIAA office in Switzerland and this year it was in the Lake District in England.

By having a full Mountain Protection Commission member, Mountaineering Ireland has direct input to sustainable development strategies internationally and can make full use of the opportunity to collaborate with experts in private and public sectors, and access resources and innovative practices, guidelines and training curricula content.

Some of the work I was directly involved in during the past year included reviewing and submitting content for the latest environmental section of the **UIAA Summer Alpine Handbook**. This received a very positive response and meant expanding the scope of the environmental section of the handbook dealing with summer Alpine mountain activities. The guide can be purchased online at [bit.ly/2MbE9IN](http://bit.ly/2MbE9IN).

As a judge on the **UIAA Mountain Protection Award**



UIAA Mountain Protection Commission members with hosts and guest speakers at the 2018 annual meeting in the Lake District, hosted by the Alpine Club (left to right): Rob Collister (Vice-President, Alpine Club), Pete Barron (John Muir Trust, guest speaker), Hussein Bagirov (UIAA MP Commission Member, Azerbaijan), Michael Maunsell (UIAA MP Commission Member, Ireland), John Paterson (President, Alpine Club), Carolina Adler (President, UIAA MP Commission, New Zealand), Steve Goodwin (UIAA MP Commission Member, UK, and Vice-President, Alpine Club), H el ene Denis (France, represented the UIAA Executive Board), Joop Spijker (UIAA MP Commission Member, Netherlands) and Rob Dyer (Access & Conservation Officer, BMC, guest speaker).

**Scheme**, I was tasked with assessing the Mount Everest Biogas Project application in 2017. Approximately 12,000kg of solid human waste is left on the mountain by the thousands of climbers and support staff that populate Everest Base Camp for several months during the climbing season. The project proposed to use an anaerobic biogas digester to treat the human waste. It will eliminate dumping of solid human waste and destroy pathogenic faecal coliforms that threaten the health of the local communities - lessening the impact of the tourism industry on a mountain that is sacred to the Nepalese.

This project was the eventual winner and recipient of the UIAA Mountain Protection Award 2017. The award was presented at the last UIAA General Assembly, held in Shiraz, Iran in October 2017.

## Important developments

Two important developments in the last year provided opportunities to advocate, at the highest level, for sustainable approaches and best international practice in mountain-based tourism. The first was when UIAA was accepted as official partner within the United Nations World Tourism Organization 10-Year Programme on Sustainable Tourism for Development.

The second occurred when the UIAA was invited to participate in a workshop dedicated to biodiversity conservation organised by the International Union for

Conservation of Nature (IUCN), held in Switzerland in April 2018. Involvement at this level also allows us to contribute to and learn from mountain research initiatives around the world.

All Commission members continue to play a key role throughout the year as speakers at major international conferences on many relevant subjects, from climate change to responsible tourism.

The 2019 UIAA Mountain Protection Commission annual meeting will be held in Azerbaijan. Further information on the Commission's work is available on the UIAA website. [www.theuiaa.org](http://www.theuiaa.org), or go to [bit.ly/2MafpKs](http://bit.ly/2MafpKs) ■



**AUTHOR:** Michael Maunsell serves as a member of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland and is Ireland's representative to the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission. He has worked in mountain environments worldwide as a mountaineer and scientist for 40 years. Michael is a lecturer in environmental and geographical science and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

# Uplands Partnership Management Board

By Helen Lawless

In October 2017, the Heritage Council, in collaboration with the Irish Uplands Forum, engaged Mary Mulvey as a national upland network co-ordinator to provide support to upland partnership groups and to enable networking between such groups. This three-year programme aims to assist community-based partnership bodies in upland areas to address the need for local, integrated and sustainable management of their respective areas.

The Heritage Council has also formed an Uplands Partnership Management Board to advise on and oversee the development and delivery of this programme. Helen Lawless



Attendees at the first meeting of the Heritage Council's Uplands Partnership Management Board (left to right): Carmel Fox, Michael Starrett (CEO, Heritage Council), Mary Mulvey (Upland Network Coordinator), Brian Dunne, James Moran, Pat O'Shea, Helen Lawless, Mary Tubridy, Frank Nugent.

from Mountaineering Ireland was invited to join the board representing recreation interests. The first meeting

of this new board took place in Kilkenny in May 2018. One of the first actions for the group is to develop criteria

for a small grants programme for upland partnership bodies ■

## Hillwalking working group on track



Members of the Hillwalking Working Group (from left): Russell Mills, Gráinne McLoughlin (Mountaineering Ireland Board Member and Chairperson of the group), Ruth Whelan (Mountaineering Ireland's Membership Development Officer), Christian Schaffalitzky, Trish Kane (Mountaineering Ireland Board Member), Declan Murphy, Helen Lawless (Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer), William Smith and Aine McGirl. Absent from the photograph: Paul Cherry and Margaret Tees.

By Ruth Whelan (Membership Development Officer)

At the 2018 Mountaineering Ireland AGM in the Glen of

Aherlow in March a motion (proposed by the **Irish Ramblers Club**) was passed that a Hillwalking Committee should be created and

supported, in recognition of the strategic importance of developing hillwalking.

Mountaineering Ireland's **Hillwalking Working Group**

held its first meeting at Sport HQ in Dublin at the end of June and started planning the group's work. The aim is for the group to develop terms of reference for a **Mountaineering Ireland Hillwalking Committee** and to develop an initial work-plan for that committee.

There was a strong response to the call for expressions of interest in joining the working group. The group has eleven members and is made up of people from different geographic areas and with a variety of backgrounds in hillwalking (see photo).

The group will be meeting again in July and is aiming to deliver a report about its work to the Board of Mountaineering Ireland before the end of November 2018 ■



# Mark Vallance: the man who made 'Friends'



By Patrick O'Sullivan

British mountaineer Mark Vallance, a former President of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and founder of Wild Country, a British company he set up in the 1970s to make and market 'Friends,' sadly passed away peacefully in his home in Switzerland in April. He was 73 and had been suffering from Parkinson's disease for many years.

Mark was born on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the same day as Reinhold Messner. After

college, he worked with the British Antarctic Survey for two years and later with the Peak District National Park Authority. While in Colorado teaching at an Outward Bound School, he met American climbing legend Ray Jardine, who had developed a revolutionary spring-loaded camming device, the Friend, that would have a lasting impact on climbing, pushing the limits of what was achievable. As Ray was unable to get support for their manufacture in the US, Mark

set up Wild Country in England in 1977 and manufactured Friends there, which he eventually sold around the world. He went on to establish the Outside outdoor equipment store in the English Peak District and was part of the team that built the Foundry Climbing Centre in Sheffield.

Despite the success of Wild Country, Vallance continued to climb and he thrived on physical challenges. In 1982, he completed the 115-kilometre Bob Graham Round in the Lake District in just 24 hours, during which he scaled 42 summits.

He was an extremely accomplished mountaineer, who climbed in all seven continents. In 1990, he summited on Shishapangma (8,027m), which he said was his "best moment," and he also scaled world-class rock-faces, including the Nose of El Capitan.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in his mid-fifties, Mark's further climbing ambitions were unfortunately somewhat restricted. However, in 2003, he took over the challenging role of President of the BMC at a time of major organisational and financial difficulties. Mark launched a wide-ranging policy review, which recommended a 'one person, one vote' system, instead of the club block vote which had been in place. Following Mark's negotiations with the major clubs, this was adopted at the BMC's AGM in 2006.

Mark also developed the very successful BMC British Mountain Maps, which were first published in 2005 in collaboration with Harvey Maps and of which Mark was very proud. They started with a map of the Lake District, eventually developing a series of sixteen maps of



JAREK TUSZYŃSKI

Wild Country Friends

mountainous areas in the UK. In 2016, Mark published his autobiography, *Wild Country: the man who made Friends*, which highlighted his life as an entrepreneur and, to quote BMC CEO Dave Turnbull, as "one of climbing's great innovators." The book was shortlisted for the 2016 Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature.

Beyond his achievements in the climbing world, Mark was a tough negotiator, but he was also ever the gentleman. As President of the BMC, he was always very welcoming to the Irish delegation who attended the Mountaineering Coordination Group meetings that were held at that time between the three then Mountaineering Councils. Mountaineering Ireland offers its condolences to Mark's family and friends.

May he rest in peace ■



The original Friend (1½) made by Wild Country





Members of Foyle Hillwalking Club get ready to go litter-picking along the Inishowen peninsula shoreline.

## Foyle Hillwalking Club undertakes coastal sweep

By Avril McAllister

Foyle Hillwalking Club carried out a litter clean-up along the shoreline from Moville to Greencastle on the Inishowen peninsula, Co Donegal on Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> last.

The organisers were most grateful to fellow club members and friends who turned out on the day to help with the coastal clean-up

along this beautiful stretch of Donegal coastline.

They were also grateful to Pearse McCrory from **Donegal County Council**, who provided all participants with top-class litter-pickers, bags, gloves and high-visibility vests (which gave them an air of authority!). They also used some bags and gloves remaining from An Taisce's **National Spring Clean**.

The team of community

volunteers for the day made a surprisingly large collection of rubbish, with everything from underpants, a stiletto heel, tyres, a carpet, a boot in good condition, numerous plastic coffee cups, plastic and glass bottles galore, Q-tips, plastic bits, wipes, etc. Twenty-three bags were left for later collection by the county council.

The good work of **Moville**

**Tidy Towns** group, who keep the path along this coastline clear throughout the year, must be acknowledged. Without their work the path and its surrounds would have been much worse. However, litter-picking is a never-ending task, so the hard work of Foyle Hillwalking Club members has played an important part in maintaining the beauty of this coastline ■

## Glenwalk annual clean-up in the Wicklow hills



Members of Glenwalk, a Dublin-based hillwalking club, held their annual clean-up day on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at the Shay Elliot memorial car park, located on a high mountain pass between Laragh and Glenmalure in County Wicklow. A fine spring day brought out a good attendance for the club's four levels of walks. Prizes were offered for the most unusual litter items collected, and the winning group, pictured above, carried back a large hydraulic pipe and an iPhone! The club thanks all who helped out on the day. A special thanks to Ian Davis of the PURE Project for supplying the clean-up equipment.

Photographs: Foyle Hillwalking Club, Linda Jordan (Glenwalk clean-up)

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inspired  
by our  
surroundings.



**Cirrus Flex Jacket.**

Designed for strenuous days in the mountains, the Cirrus Flex is a lightweight, synthetic jacket that perfectly balances breathability and warmth. This versatile layer can be worn as a windproof outer or lightweight midlayer making it the ideal partner for any alpine adventure.

## Club support meetings

As part of progressing Mountaineering Ireland's aim to support club committees and their officers, as outlined in our new **Strategic Development Plan**, we have organised four meetings in different locations around the country from September to December 2018.

Date	Location
5 <sup>th</sup> September	Derry
27 <sup>th</sup> September	Sligo
22 <sup>nd</sup> November	Bray
29 <sup>th</sup> November	Killarney

These meetings will be a great opportunity for club committees to meet Mountaineering Ireland officers and receive relevant information that will help in the running of their club. Our Membership Development Officer, our Training Officer and our Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer will all be in attendance to cover a range of topics.

We would encourage all clubs to send up to four committee members, or interested members, to these meetings. Venue details will be published on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) and emailed to Club Secretaries.

### Contact us with your topic ideas

If there are any specific topics you would like covered, please email [ruth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ruth@mountaineering.ie) ■



Alex Schweikart on pitch two of The Wasp, 455 G.a., Fair Head, Northern Ireland. Photo: Ray Wood

climb now  
work later



## Bolted climbs at Altnadue

By Kevin Kilroy

Tollymore National Outdoor Centre and Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) have recently completed extensive refurbishments at **Altnadue Quarry**, just outside the village of Castlewellan, Co Down, on the Altnadua Road.

For over thirty years, Altnadue Quarry has been leased from a local landowner by Tollymore as a rock climbing venue. The quarry has always been open for public access at all times and for other outdoor providers in the locality to use for introducing people to rock climbing. Altnadue Quarry is conveniently located by the road, providing easy access, and has stunning views across the western Mournes.

The refurbishments included extensive removal of rock debris from the quarry floor, installation of clear footpaths around the quarry rim, greater parking facilities and a shelter structure for fitting with a

tarpaulin for group use, in case of a change in the weather.

However, of most interest to climbers will be the addition of over sixteen **fully bolted sport climbs!** To our knowledge, this is currently the only sport climbing quarry in Ireland. This news has been received with great enthusiasm by the climbing community. Indeed, 'The Quarry,' as it often referred to by local climbers, has been buzzing for weeks now, since its official opening in May 2018 by **George Lucas**, Chair of Sport NI.

"2018 is proving to be an exciting year for Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, as it celebrates fifty years of operation," said George Lucas, speaking at the opening ceremony.

"With climbing set to become an Olympic sport for the first time in 2020, we are delighted to be launching this enhanced facility, which will be well used by individuals, clubs, charities and commercial



Aidan Bleakley climbing at Altnadue Quarry during a Mourne Youth Climbing Club event in May 2018. Photograph: Craig Hillier

providers of outdoor activities.

"The quarry will also play a part in delivering the **NI Outdoor Recreation Plan**, with partners in the **NI Environmental Agency** and **Tourism NI**, to promote and develop outdoor recreation here."

**Mike McClure**, Sport NI's Active Outdoors Development

Officer, has steered this project from the outset. On behalf of the Irish climbing community, Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank and congratulate Mike McClure, Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, Sport NI, project architect's Consarc and all the construction and bolting teams involved with this project ■

Seán Henchion, left, and Daire Oglesby with their trophies at the Edinburgh Arena.



DAMIEN O'SULLIVAN

## Success at Edinburgh

Seán Henchion and Daire Oglesby take first and third places at the Grand Final of the 2018 Youth Climbing Series in Scotland.

By Damien O'Sullivan

The Grand Final of the 2018 Youth Climbing Series took place on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena. Mountaineering Ireland was represented by 27 young climbers who had travelled to Edinburgh to compete with some of the best young climbers from all over England, Scotland and Wales. In all, almost two hundred and seventy young climbers took part, representing nine separate competition regions.

The highlight in terms of the results was, again this year, the three very strong results from **Seán Henchion**, **Daire Oglesby** and **Matthew Murray**, who took 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> places respectively in a very competitive Male

Youth D category. These three young climbers are no strangers to the podium at the Youth Climbing Series Grand Final. In 2016, they were placed an unprecedented 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Male Youth E. Last year they were placed 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in their first year in Male Youth D.

This year, at the end of the three boulder problems and three routes, Seán was tied for first place with Sam Hammond from the Midlands region in England. A Super-Final was needed to separate them. Sam set the bar very high, but Seán reached one hold further than him, which was enough to secure the top place on the podium ■



# Fair Head Meet 2018

The annual Fair Head Meet has become the social climbing event of the year.

By John Orr

The 2018 Fair Head Meet will be remembered for the background sounds of singing birds and whirring helicopters, a superpod of dolphins, an eerie fog, stunning sunsets and the great social atmosphere in **Sean McBride's** barn and fields. That is without even mentioning the world-class climbing and bouldering that was enjoyed by all of the participants who attended the meet.

This year's meet, in association with **Dal Riada Climbing Club**, saw nearly three hundred climbers come together to enjoy what is now the social climbing event of the year. On Friday evening, **Kevin Kilroy** gave an informative chat on the continuing cleaning efforts at the crag and provided encouragement for others to get involved. It is worth remembering that, if it wasn't for the cleaning efforts that started some fifteen years ago, Fair Head might not be the popular crag it is today.

**Rob Hunter** followed up with a great, inspiring chat about the bouldering developments over the years and encouraged climbers to sample the top-quality bouldering that exists at the base of the Fair Head crag.

A foggy start on Saturday morning didn't do much to dampen anyone's enthusiasm. **Rob Hunter** and **Veronica Lee** headed up their now established tour of the boulders from Murlough Bay, while over the course of the day climbers took advantage of the eerie conditions to discover and rediscover the many classics that Fair Head has to offer.

In the evening the **McBride**



James McHaffie on the Rathlin Effect on Fair Head, the first E9 at this location.

family provided a much-appreciated barbeque before visiting speaker, **Calum Muskett**, took to the stage to take the audience on a humorous whirlwind trip of the highs and lows of climbing in North Wales, the Shetlands and further afield.

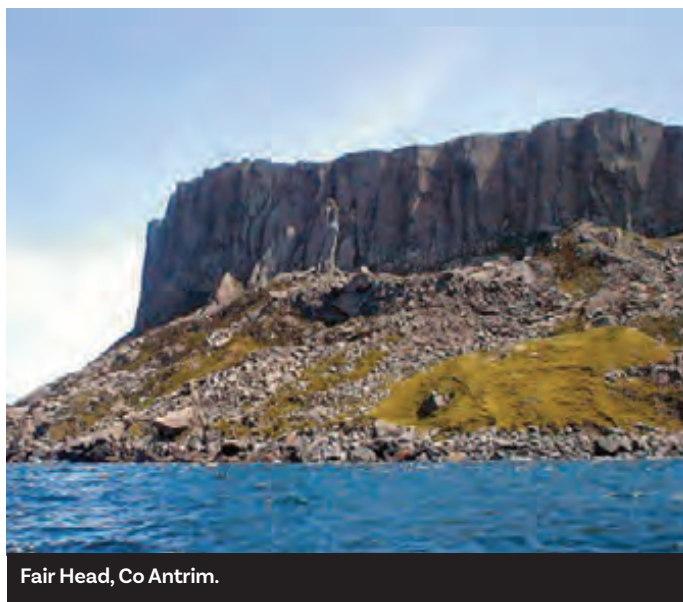
Sunday dawned bright and sunny and there was a great buzz as the hundreds of climbers enjoyed the climbing and socialising at the crag. **James Mchaffie** had quite the audience as he attempted a repeat of **Ricky**

**Bell's Rathlin Effect**. He succeeded a couple of days later, describing it as the best and wildest single pitch of climbing he has done and confirming it as E9, Fair Head's first at that grade.

Unfortunately, there was an accident involving two climbers on Hell's Kitchen, but it is great to report that they are both making a full recovery from their injuries. The immediate response of climbers nearby to assist highlighted how, as a climbing community, we are

more than willing to come together to help each other out, when the need arises. Huge thanks to the **climbers** who gave assistance, to **Ciaran Kinney** of Ballycastle Coastguard, and to all of the Coastguard and rescue team members who were involved in evacuating the injured climbers.

A special thanks to **Paul Swail** and the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** for organising a great meet, and to the guest speakers, **Calum Muskett**, **Rob Hunter** and **Kevin Kilroy**, for giving a variety of interesting and entertaining lectures. I would also like to thank **Rab Equipment** for their continued support of the event in sponsoring the guest speaker; **Causeway Coast and Glen Borough Council** for supplying the toilets; and **Mountaineering Ireland** for its support for the meet. However, the biggest thank you of all goes to **Sean** and the rest of the **McBride family** for once again being so welcoming to everyone who attended the meet and enjoyed the climbing at Fair Head ■



Fair Head, Co Antrim.

# Donegal Climbfest 2018

By Geoff Thomas  
(Chairperson, Colmcille Climbing Club)

Colmcille Climbing Club's annual Climbfest took place on the May bank holiday weekend at Malin Beg. Good weather was forecast and Donegal did not disappoint: the sun shone every day!

Climbers came from all over Ireland and beyond, some even from as far as Chile.

Saturday saw groups from two newly formed clubs in Sligo and Belfast arrive in numbers; it was great to see the enthusiasm of both clubs. It was also great to see so many climbers from Foyle Arena indoor wall, complete with shiny new racks of gear, venturing onto perfect Donegal rock for the first time.

On the Saturday, activity centred on the Malin Beg cliffs, with climbers taking the opportunity to meet up with friends old and new, and to

compete to find the most sheltered sun-traps.

A large number of novice climbers were in attendance, making use of the top ropes on the superbly fluted Neptune Wall. The tides on the day meant that many had to take their first steps 'en rappel' to get down to the start of the climbs, always an anxious experience.

On Sunday, a number of parties set out to enjoy the vibrant seascape and brilliantly juggy, muscular climbing at Muckcross. Others headed for the superbly exposed Sail Rock and a number were seen on Main Mast, arguably one of the best E2s in Ireland.

For the first time, boulderers were seen at the Climbfest each day, enjoying the sunlit steeper walls of the seaward platforms.

Participants ranged in age from nine-year-old Ava McLaughlin to some over seventy. Among the more

experienced members was Marty McGuigan, who showed us all up by climbing the harbour sea stack and then jumping off. Equally adventurous was Kevin Kilroy, who broke the world record for the 5-metre swim to set up a Tyrolean traverse to the island.

All in all, the Climbfest was a great introduction to sea-cliff climbing generally and the wonderful climbing to be had on the Donegal coast.

The Climbfest always makes a donation each year to a local community association and this year it was made to the **Glencolmcille Folk Village**. They will use the donation to run a weekend to teach children local handicrafts.

The Climbfest is organised each year by the Colmcille Climbing Club, which is based in and around Derry and Donegal. It is aimed at climbers who are making the transition from climbing indoors to climbing outdoors, introducing them to



Sail Rock

the spectacular coastal cliffs in the area. The club also arranges meets on the islands and welcomes new members. See the website [www.colmcille-climbers.com](http://www.colmcille-climbers.com) for information on joining the club and for an online guidebook with comments on quality and grades for each route on every crag in Donegal ■

## Report your lizard sightings

By Kieran Flood (Irish Wildlife Trust)

Are reptiles roaming our uplands? Well, thanks to help from Mountaineering Ireland's members, we now have a much better idea!

The Irish Wildlife Trust has been surveying the distribution of our native **common lizard** *Zootoca vivipara*, as well as the introduced lizard, the **slow worm** *Anguis fragilis*. The common lizard, also known as the viviparous lizard, is our only native species of reptile.

Unusually for reptiles, it is a species of lizard adapted to colder climates, being found throughout Eurasia as far north as Arctic Norway.

Last year we asked Mountaineering Ireland members, through this



magazine, to let us know of any sightings they had made of these reptiles in the hills, as well as anywhere else. We received scores of reports from all across the island. Thanks to these records of sightings, we can tell you that our native

common lizard is a mountain lover and part of our upland wildlife. We recorded this little lizard in the uplands of Carlow, Cork, Donegal, Down, Dublin, Fermanagh, Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Sligo and Wicklow. Quite a spread! Thank you to

everyone who reported a sighting.

So, once more this year, we are asking you to send us your lizard sightings to support our reptile research. To report a sighting, please email us at [research@iwt.ie](mailto:research@iwt.ie) with the following information: (1) your name, (2) date of the sighting, (3) location of the sighting (GPS coordinates or grid reference, please), (4) a photo, if possible, (5) habitat where you saw it (e.g., bog, scrub, etc).

Please keep your eyes open and keep the records coming in to [research@iwt.ie](mailto:research@iwt.ie) ■

**FIND OUT MORE:** For more information on this project, see <https://iwt.ie/what-we-do/citizen-science/national-reptile-survey> or just go to [bit.ly/2t360ks](http://bit.ly/2t360ks).

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## New members of staff



**Laura Griffin** (pictured) has recently taken on the role of Training Office Administrator. She not only brings a genuine enthusiasm for mountaineering and climbing to the post as a climber herself, but in addition she has a broad range of skills and expertise as an administrator and is a natural “people’s person.” Laura is now enjoying getting to know our members and providers, and

welcomes them all to contact her with their training enquiries. Mountaineering Ireland is very pleased to have her on board.



**Natasza Berlowska** (pictured) has recently taken on the role of Project Coordinator, Indoor Climbing/Social Inclusion Project. Natasza is originally from Toruń in central Poland. Although she lived far from the mountains in Poland, that didn’t stop her from becoming a passionate hiker. When she started, she was carried by one of her parents. That was the start of her interest and involvement in the outdoors. When

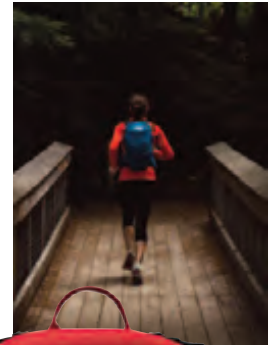
she was a teenager, she would head off from her home with just a backpack to go to summer camps in the mountains. In the last fifteen years, Natasza has hiked all around Europe.

She started climbing while she was studying in Poznań in Poland, but truly fell in love with climbing when she moved to Ireland in 2010. It helped her to find her own space in a new country and to meet people, who showed her the beauty of Dalkey, the Mourne, the Burren and the cliffs of Donegal. Apart from trad climbing, she really enjoys sport climbing now in sunny locations across Europe.

Natasza has recently joined Mountaineering Ireland’s staff to coordinate the **Get Climbing social inclusion project**, replacing Gráinne O’Brien, who has left. The project aims to introduce young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to the sport of climbing. The project has been running for a year now and is gradually educating a new generation of climbers, who hopefully will find a passion for outdoor activities. Mountaineering Ireland warmly welcomes Natasza to her new post ■

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Kippure (left) and Seefingan from Corrig Mountain.  
 Photo: C  il  n MacLochlainn

# WILD, BUT CLOSE TO DUBLIN

**C  il  n MacLochlainn** describes Upper Glenasmole, north of Kippure, a recent welcome addition to Wicklow Mountains National Park.

In August 2016, the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) acquired 1,983 hectares (4,900 acres) in the Dublin Mountains to add to **Wicklow Mountains National Park**. It was an inspired purchase, being very close to Dublin city while adjoining the existing area of the national park.

The lands were acquired from NAMA (the National Asset Management Agency), which was selling property it had rescued during the financial crisis of 2008. Mountaineering Ireland had pushed hard for this acquisition, for its scenic, environmental and hillwalking value, and the government must be commended for adding this exceptional property to the national parks portfolio.

The property covers the northern slopes of **Kippure** – Dublin’s highest mountain at 752m – and partly surrounds the **Glenasmole** valley. The **Featherbed**, where in the past Dubliners saved turf on plots rented from Powerscourt Estate, adjoins it to the east, while in the west it is book-ended by afforested hills and

open heath. Much of the land is designated as a **Special Area of Conservation** for its rare upland habitats, and as a **Special Protection Area** for peregrine falcons. The NPWS is surveying the lands to find out more about what they contain and how they might be managed for conservation. It is an area of great interest from a biodiversity point of view and offers opportunities for innovative management.

The acquisition will not offer very many new opportunities for hillwalkers, as access to this land is already relatively unrestricted, but it is likely the footfall will grow. Indeed, being so close to Dublin, it has the potential to become one of the more popular parts of the park.

Oddly enough, hillwalkers using this area seldom stray far from the Kippure to Seechon ridge, so much of it is rarely visited and feels very empty and remote. Were it not for the impact of grazing sheep and deer, and the frequent burning (illegal in an SAC without the NPWS’s express permission), it would probably be much richer in upland wildlife.

The higher ground is

mountain blanket bog, though this is heavily eroded on the summit of **Kippure**. North of the summit the peat is deep, and unusually deep gullies are found along **Slade Brook**, where peat deposits or alluvial drifts up to 20 feet deep are found.

Ravens, hooded crows, skylarks and pipits are the most obvious birds, but it’s an important hunting area for **peregrines** and **merlins** (with potential breeding habitat for the latter, rarer species). The signature species, however, is **red grouse** – it occurs sparingly throughout the area.

## Red grouse

A shooting estate was formerly managed by the Cobbe family (of Newbridge Demesne, Donabate, Co Dublin) from **Glenasmole Lodge**, covering

some 3,238 ha (8,000 acres) from Glenasmole across to the Featherbed and Glencullen. Interestingly, records show that as many as 659 red grouse were bagged in just seven days of driven shooting on the estate in 1896. It seems likely that for such densities to have occurred predators such as foxes, crows and hen harriers were ruthlessly suppressed and the heather managed for grouse. The same shoot also took many hares and small numbers of snipe and woodcock; all are still found today, though, sadly, harriers are now very rare visitors.

As recently as the 1970s a small herd of **red deer** inhabited the Seefingan to Kippure ridge, descending in winter to the Coronation Plantation south of it. Sadly, the herd no longer exists, with



Red grouse: still found nesting in the Dublin Mountains but much rarer now than in the past. **Photograph:** Andrew Kelly



➤ **C  il  n MacLochlainn** is the designer of the Irish Mountain Log.

Photographs: C  il  n MacLochlainn (Kippure, Alpine clubmoss), Andrew Kelly (red grouse)



**A wild and remote area, not far from Dublin city but with some good hillwalking and some great views.**

shooting and hybridisation with **Japanese Sika deer** the likely culprits.

## Native woodland

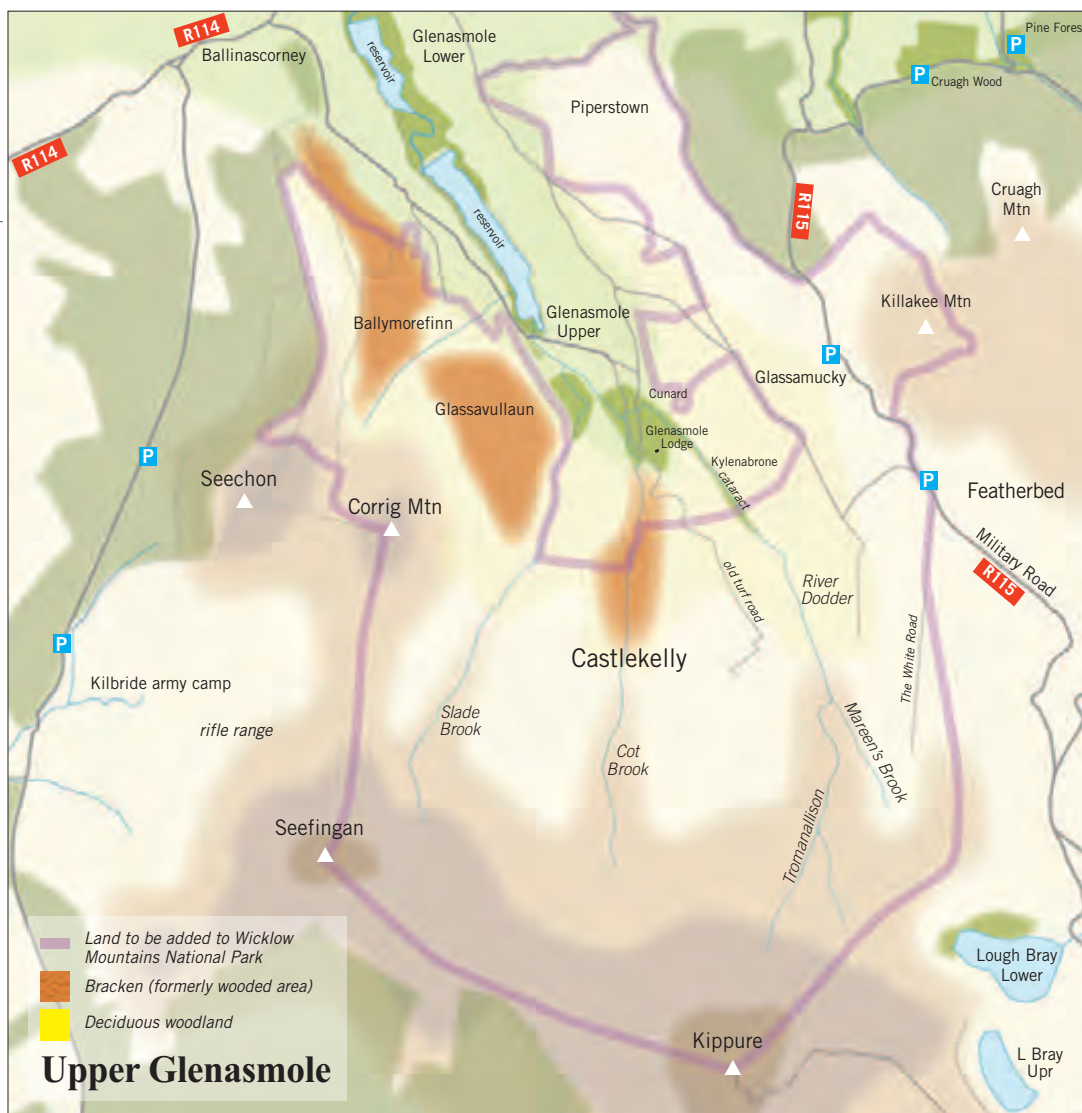
The heather bog gives way to rough grassland, furze and bracken as we descend to lower ground. Here, the placenames Glassavullaun and Glassamucky (meaning the pastures of the bullocks and the pigs, respectively) mark areas of drier ground. Today, some of these areas are covered in bracken, indicating places with dry, mineral soil that once held native woodland.

Sadly, no native woodland survives today, though the streams feeding the River Dodder babble through declivities flanked thinly with rowan, birch, holly and alder. **Kylenabrone** (meaning the woodland of sorrows) near Glenasmole Lodge is a narrow finger of oak woodland running up a narrow defile (with a little-known cataract) on the Dodder stream, though unfortunately it is being choked by rhododendron, a garden escape spreading out from the lodge.

There is scope for restoring native woodland, especially along the **Ballymorefinn** and **Glassavullaun** stretches. The area's future sustainable management needs to be achieved in cooperation with the farmers who still have rights on the land.

## Walks

**Kippure** with its TV mast (erected in 1960) is well-known and recognisable from a great distance, but it has a flat and unattractive summit. Hill-walkers who take the route from the Military Road to its top can follow the ridge west to **Seefingan**, from where there is an impressive view of the Coronation Plantation. From here, you can proceed to **Corrig Mountain** and **Seechon**, but



Map: Cóilín MacLochlainn

there is no easy round route to get you back.

**Seechon** is more easily reached from the Ballinascorney to Kilbride road, from where you can make your way up through the forestry. From the top, there is an impressive view of Kippure, Seefingan and mountains to the south. An ancient plant species, **fir clubmoss**, is found on this hill along with the rare **Alpine clubmoss** (pictured) while the rarer **stag's-horn clubmoss** is found sparingly



on Kippure. The 'heather desert' panorama rising to the south-east would once have held woodlands of birch, willow, rowan and pine.

From here you can continue on to **Corrig Mountain** or to **Ballymorefinn Hill**, with views over **Glenasmole** and **Piperstown**. Looking down at them, note how old field boundaries are still present, with tiny walled or hedged plots. Some traces of Famine-era lazybeds can still be seen, notably on Ballymorefinn.

**Piperstown** and **Killakee** are two low, heathery hills on the eastern side, with good views to Kippure. They are vulnerable to wildfires, and Piperstown is almost bare at present, though it still attracts red grouse.

In Glenasmole itself, outside the park boundary, a narrow **bóithrín** weaving through **Cunard** features rustic stone cottages, hawthorn hedges and drystone walls; it won the **PURE Mile** title in 2015, an

award that assesses the litter-management and nature-friendly aspects of rural roads in Dublin and Wicklow.

The White Road, sometimes called the 'Old Bog Road,' starting from the Featherbed, provides a pleasant short stroll and the experience of being in a wild mountain area, with plenty of challenging terrain beyond the end of the track.

For a short walk to a dramatic view, leave the Military Road and follow the ridge overlooking **Lough Bray Lower**; it offers a stunning view of the lough and upper Glencree.

Support is needed for developing a new management plan for Wicklow Mountains National Park. The current plan expired in 2009, and both the area and the management challenges of the park have since expanded. The acquisition of the Kippure lands may provide the impetus needed to develop a new management plan ■

# HIKING ON LA GOMERA

La Gomera in the Canary Islands has few beaches but it is a walker's paradise. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports.

I have been lucky enough to have been walking in the Canaries twice before, once on a short trip looking at hiking possibilities on Tenerife and then, another time, for a week on El Hierro. I say 'lucky,' because the islands seem designed for walkers from Ireland. Generally, there is easy access by plane, the climate is subtropical with hot summers and generally mild winters, and there are several islands to choose from, with plenty of great walking. The hiking possibilities range from coastal walks up to alpine hikes on Tenerife's Mount Teide, Spain's highest mountain and the third tallest volcano in the world at 3,718m.

The Canary Islands are a Spanish archipelago located 100 kilometres west of Morocco in North Africa. There are seven main islands - in decreasing size Tenerife, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro. The archipelago's climate, beaches and other natural attractions make the larger islands in particular popular tourist destinations. There are more than two million people living in the Canaries, varying from 900,000 on Tenerife, down to 24,000 on La Gomera and 11,000 on El Hierro.

The islands have a hot desert climate, but there is also a subtropical humid climate in the middle of some of the islands, supporting rich forest growth.

La Gomera, the greenest of the islands, is thirty kilometres from Tenerife, a short hop on the ferry from Los Cristianos. I went there on a week's holiday organised by Shane Gray. I had been to El Hierro with Shane, the main island that he

**Above: Walkers on the track back along the coast towards Agulo.**

**Opposite, top right: Conical rock spire (volcanic plug).**

**Opposite, centre: Bird's-eye view of the village of Agulo from a glass-bottomed viewing platform at Mirador de Abrante hotel.**

**Opposite, bottom: Walkers following track above Vallehermoso.**

organises walking holidays on, and had heard about the delights of walking on La Gomera, where he also does occasional trips. He kindly invited me to join a group going to La Gomera in February this year.

Shane is an interesting man. A retired army officer, during his career he was Aide-De-Camp to the President of Ireland. Now aged 80, he initially established the first dive centre in Ireland in Dublin in 1974 with his wife, Olli. They moved to Connemara, where they established Scubadive West in 1992. Their Irish dive centres are now run by their sons.

Shane first went to the Canaries on holiday and then established a dive centre on El Hierro. Some years ago, he started offering walking holidays, mainly on El Hierro but with occasional weeks on La Gomera and La Palma. Like other Irish operators in the Canaries, he offers packages where you arrange your own flights to Tenerife and he takes care of the rest, the self-catering accommodation, the transport and the walking.

La Gomera is about 370 square kilometres in area (roughly 19km wide x 19km long). **Garajonay National Park**, which was established in 1981 and named an **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1986, covers just over 10% of the island. The national park is named after the rock formation of **Garajonay**, the highest point on the island at 1,487m. Other attractions in the national park



► **Patrick O'Sullivan** is the Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



are the massive, cone-shaped rocks that are found there. These are volcanic plugs, exposed by erosion of softer rocks surrounding them.

The national park is crossed by eighteen paths, trekking being one of the main tourist activities on the island. The walking on La Gomera is as varied and interesting as it was on El Hierro when I went there in November 2016. This time, we took a ferry from the port at Los Cristianos across to San Sebastian on the east coast of La Gomera; it took about one hour. La Gomera is a small island with a rocky coast, making it less attractive to beach-seeking tourists. The strikingly dramatic mountain scenery of volcanic peaks is scored by around fifty deep gorges. The mountains are bedecked with laurel forests, with cultivated terraces in the valleys.

After settling into some well-appointed apartments, we set off on our first walk. After a perhaps 25km drive across the island to the north-east coast, we set out to walk up to the Mirador de Abrante, with its glass-bottomed viewing platform jutting out over a 400m drop, overlooking the village of Agulo below. We walked up a good path at the back of the ridge in about two hours and, after lunch in the Mirador, descended more steeply on the Agulo side of the ridge. From the Mirador, you could see the impressive snow-capped Mount Teide on Tenerife island.

## ONE OF THE MEMORABLE FEATURES OF THE HOLIDAY WAS DINING TOGETHER IN LOCAL RESTAURANTS EVERY EVENING.

That evening, the group was invited to Shane Gray's apartment for a 'happy hour' before we all went to one of the local restaurants for a meal together. We did that every evening and this social aspect was one of the memorable features of the holiday.

Another walk also began near Agulo on the north-east coast, climbing steeply up paths used by the locals and walking back along the coast. The following day we drove up into the mountains to a cone-shaped peak and set off to walk down towards the coast and to Playa Santiago. An initially steep descent levelled off as we got into the valley system, which we followed downwards on a clear track. We had lunch in a restaurant at the roadhead.

We also did a forest walk, partly on some of the circular route around Garajonay National Park. Starting high in the mountains, after clearing the striking forest, the valleys we walked down through were narrow and steep-sided. Eventually we passed another impressive rock spire, the Roques de San Pedro, and soon reached the roadhead, ending our walk close to the sea.

The next day, we drove to Vallehermoso in the north-west of the island. From there we set off on local tracks, leading up and around a prominent rock spire and heading up a valley, still walking on good trails.

The following day, after visiting one or two places of interest locally, we caught the evening ferry back to Tenerife. We had some time the next day before we flew home, so we were able to drive up to the cable-car station on Mount Teide. The cable-car was closed for weather reasons, but we went for a short walk on the snow up towards a mountain hut on Teide. It was a great finish to a very varied week in the Canaries. Despite the mixed weather at that time of the year on La Gomera, the walking was very varied and highly enjoyable.

.....  
**FIND OUT MORE:** Please see the **advertisements** on page 67 for more information on walking holidays in the Canaries ■



## ICE CLIMBING



# ICE CLIMBING WORLD CUP

**Eimir McSwiggan** reports on how she fared in this year's UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup.

**W**ith two hundred and twenty-five registered climbers from twenty-six different countries, the 2018 Ice Climbing World Cup was the biggest and most successful UIAA ice climbing season to date. This is a strong indication of the growth in popularity of competitive ice climbing.

The season kicked off on January 18-20<sup>th</sup> with the opening competition in the picturesque ski village of **Saas-Fee** in Switzerland. Being the only indoor venue of the circuit and set in the central void of a ten-storey underground car park, Saas Fee boasts notoriously technical routes on hand-cut granite holds. It also offers the best close-up action for spectators, who can get within arm's reach of the competitors as they navigate their way up the wall.

Unfortunately, Saas Fee proved a difficult start to the season for me in the lead category of the Ice Climbing World Tour, as I was unable to make it through the qualification round. After months of training, this is not

**Above: Eimir McSwiggan competing in Rabenstein in Italy in January.**

**Below: Eimir takes third spot on the winners' podium in Hohhot in February.**

the result any competitor is hoping for, but that is how competitions go, sometimes. It is important not to lose heart!

Within a few days, we were on the road again to round two of the competition at **Rabenstein** (January 25-27<sup>th</sup>), in the beautiful Tyrol valley in Italy. This is the favourite venue of many competitors, with a good mix of ice and technical terrain. Conditions were good; the weather was cold enough to keep the ice in firm condition but warm enough to give optimal conditions for the climbers.

I was relieved to make it through to the finals and secure fifth place overall. Korea's Song Ha-Na Rai took gold in the women's category.



➤ **Eimir McSwiggan** is originally from Gortin, Co Tyrone, but has been living in South Korea since 2010. She currently teaches English in Kyungbok University and spends every other free moment rock climbing or training for the ice climbing season. She has been competing for Ireland in the Ice Climbing World Cup since 2013 and was placed fifth in the overall Ice Climbing World Cup rankings for the 2016/2017 season.



## IT WAS A GOOD SEASON FOR ME, FINISHING SEVENTH OVERALL IN THE WORLD RANKINGS

The highlight of the event was Mohammadreza Safdarian storming past the top-ranked men to take home Iran's first ever Ice Climbing World Cup gold medal.

The next round was in the contrasting environment of **Hohhot** in Outer Mongolia, China (February 2-4<sup>th</sup>). A huge shining white-domed wall towering over a sea of yurts, in the middle of the most isolated and barren of landscapes, was the competition venue. A 20m Genghis Khan and his myriad of warriors looked on from a distance. Temperatures ranged from -10 to -20°C throughout the weekend.

It was the city of Hohhot's first time to host an Ice Climbing World Cup round and, as to be expected, there were some teething problems. With no heating in the warm-up areas and poor lighting as night approached, the qualification round did have a certain natural alpine feel to it. A new wall with such unique conditions created a level playing field and everyone was ready to fight for a place in the next round.

The angle of the wall in Hohhot and the Russian route-setting style suited my training perfectly. I felt a strange lack of pressure. Before I knew it, I had topped the semi-final route and gone into the finals of the round in second place. The final route was much harder; every move seemed so far away. As I reached the roof section, I was losing dexterity in my hands from the cold. I struggled for almost one minute to clip one quickdraw. Finally, I made it and latched onto the top hold, a few seconds over the nine-minute time limit. Yoonsun Shin of Korea and Russia's Maria Tolokonina (who was last year's world champion in the speed category) both topped the route within the time limit, leaving me in a very contented third-place podium spot.

The following week, we moved to **Cheongsong** in South Korea (February 9-11<sup>th</sup>), home ground for me and also my favourite competition venue. The routes were, as usual, long and sustained, with lots of transitioning between ice blocks and dry tooling. Day one of the two-day competition was quite exhausting, with a long time spent in the isolation zone in preparation for both qualification and semi-final rounds. I was relieved to qualify for the finals.

After a good night's sleep, we were back for the finals. The route was long. I climbed as fast as I could, but I knew time was running out rapidly. A misplaced foot set me off balance as I moved from an ice barrel onto the roof and, before I knew it, I was in mid-air. However, it was enough to secure a fifth place finish for me and, at that stage, I was sitting in overall fifth place ranking for the season.

The final competition of the series was scheduled at **Kirov** in Russia, three weeks later (March 2-4<sup>th</sup>). With the distance, time and expense involved, I was very much in two minds whether to go or not. I had never competed in Russia before, but had heard so much about the uniqueness of the structure and competition there. In the end, I made a last-minute decision to book a ticket. A seven-hour flight and a fourteen-hour train journey later, I arrived in Kirov.

Set on the underside of an old ski jump, the Russian venue was as impressive as it had looked in the photos and videos I had studied. The weather was mild and the qualification route looked straightforward. I felt confident.

Summer 2018



**Above: Eimir makes us proud to be Irish in Hohhot in Outer Mongolia in February.**

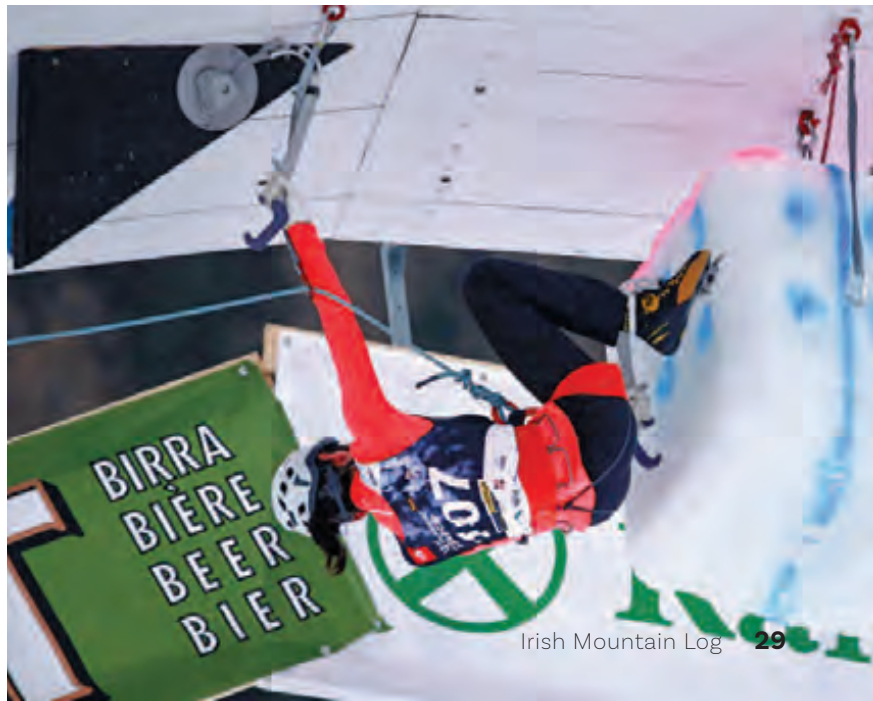
**Below: Eimir competing in Rabenstein in Italy in January.**

I was tenth out to climb. Maybe it was due to my complacency or just a lack of focus but suddenly, just three metres into my climb, I made a mistake and pinged off the wall. That was that, the end of my Ice Climbing World Cup season! It was a long way to travel, but perhaps I had learned the most valuable lesson of all.

In the end, South Korean world champion Woonseon Shin won the women's lead title, despite fierce competition from compatriot Hannarai Song and Russia's multi-talented Maria Tolokonina.

The men's crown was claimed by another Russian, Maxim Tomilov. Russian Ekaterina Koshcheeva won the women's speed ice climbing competition with fellow Russian, Nikolai Kuzovlev, winning the men's category.

All in all, it was a good season for me, finishing in seventh place overall in the world rankings. I would like to thank **Mountaineering Ireland** and the **Irish Association of Korea** for their support, and everyone from the climbing community at home who sent messages of encouragement ■





Pictured on a multi-pitch trad climb during the Mourne Youth Trad Climbing Festival (left to right): Luka Hallissey, Rory Cummings, Benedict Thurston, Daragh McConvey and Caelan MacNamara. **Photograph:** Kevin Kilroy

## NI YOUTH PROGRAMME

The Northern Ireland Youth Development Programme is now in Year 2 of a four-year programme. In this article, **Kevin Kilroy** reviews its progress in Year 1 and reports on its further plans.

The scope of the Northern Ireland Youth Development Programme, as set out by the funders, **Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI)**, is to develop and support new and existing mountaineering clubs across Northern Ireland, to grow club membership, and to provide training and support for club volunteers, coaches and officials. These clubs could be youth climbing clubs, existing adult mountaineering clubs or any other clubs involved in mountaineering (namely hillwalking or rock climbing) within Northern Ireland.

In addition, clubs will be supported to engage with Sport NI's **Clubmark NI** accreditation scheme to ensure quality structures are in place to sustain mountaineering clubs across Northern Ireland.

This is quite a change in scope from the initial programme submission as a solely youth development-orientated programme. The

focus of the programme broadened significantly after meetings between Mountaineering Ireland and Sport NI at the end of Year 1. The reason for this change is to help ensure that the targets of Sport NI's **Sporting Clubs 2017-2021 programme** are met. Nevertheless, Mountaineering Ireland is committed to sustaining

support for youth climbing clubs across Northern Ireland as a primary programme aim.

In Year 1, the Hanging Rockers, the North West Youth Climbing Team, Gilford Youth Climbing Club, Coleraine Youth Climbing Club and Mourne Youth Climbing Club all received support and training opportunities from Mountaineering Ireland. In

terms of training opportunities for club volunteers, coaches and officials, there were 1,157 individual learning opportunities in Year 1 of the programme, significantly greater than the target of 106 set by Sport NI. These learning opportunities included formal training courses, such as Route Setting (RSA 1 and 2), FUNdamentals 1 and 2 and Level One Climbing Coach Award Training, and informal training opportunities, such as mountaineering instruction at club events, a route-setter mentor scheme and 'learn to belay' courses for parents actively involved with youth climbing clubs.

Sport NI's Clubmark NI scheme is Northern Ireland's quality standard for sports clubs. Mountaineering Ireland plans to encourage and reward clubs that wish to engage with the Clubmark NI scheme over the next three years. For more information on the scheme, please visit [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net).

If your club is interested in



Part of the group at the Mourne Youth Trad Climbing Festival after a great day's climbing at Spellack. Top row (left to right): James Kellagher, Cathal O'Boyle, Caelan MacNamara, Kieran O'Hara, Eabha Hallissey, Stephen Ferris. Bottom row (left to right): Bonnita Thurston, Rhyna Conroy, Paul Kellagher. **Photograph:** Shane Black

the scheme and in discovering the benefits and rewards of engagement, please email [kevin@mountaineering.ie](mailto:kevin@mountaineering.ie) to express your interest as soon as possible.

## Recent club activity

A group of young climbers from **Coleraine Youth Climbing Club**, who climb at North Coast Integrated College's climbing wall in Coleraine each Wednesday night, took a trip to Murlough Bay on April 14<sup>th</sup> this year for their first outdoor climbing experience. The group was led by volunteers John and Hamish Wilkinson and Tony, Peter and Jack McGonigle. For most of them, it was their first time rock climbing outside after a year or so climbing indoors at their school wall. The weather was fantastic and everyone climbed lots of problems.

Our thanks especially to John Wilkinson for organising the event and to Tony McGonigle for driving the mini-bus. Also, thank you to Tollymore National Outdoor Centre for the loan of extra bouldering mats.

Rory Cummings and I provided instruction to the group on bouldering safety

Rhyna Conroy abseiling at Spellack. **Photo:** Oisín Hallissey



Mountaineering instructor and Irish climbing legend Paul Dunlop passes on his flared granite wire placement wisdom to Eabha Hallissey on her first trad lead at Spellack. **Photo:** Oisín Hallissey

and etiquette. There were numerous demands from the young people participating to 'climb on the big cliff next time,' inspired by the sight of Fair Head in the background.

The **Mourne Youth Climbing Club** has successfully gained affiliation to Mountaineering Ireland as an Aspirant Club. The club committee comprises Claire Hardy (Captain), Vanessa Woods (Secretary), Michael Murphy (Treasurer and Children's Officer), Emma Owens (Children's Officer) and Oisín Hallissey (Trips Officer).

On May 26-27<sup>th</sup>, the club hosted several events for young climbers of all abilities in the Mourne. A group of ten experienced young climbers teamed up with ten highly experienced volunteers for a weekend of traditional climbing. This was the first ever **Mourne Youth Trad Climbing Festival** and it is intended that it will become an annual event, hosted by the club, to allow young climbers from around Ireland to experience the delights of the Mourne granite. Thanks to Oisín and Emma Hallissey for hosting the event and providing fantastic

hospitality for a big team of hungry climbers!

Also, on Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, several younger members of the Mourne and Gilford Youth Climbing Clubs went to the recently redeveloped **Altnadue Quarry** near Castewellan, Co Down, where they got a taste for sport climbing. They had a great time there, as did their parents. Our thanks to the team of instructors, Eamon Quinn, Michael Murphy and Sinead Murray.

The **Gilford Youth Climbing Club** now meets weekly at Gilford Community Centre on Tuesday evenings from 6.30pm until 8.30pm. These weekly sessions have been organised and supported by Mountaineering Ireland for several months to help young people locally to gain the skills and confidence to become independent indoor climbers. When that is achieved, it is



Written by Kevin Kilroy, Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland

hoped that a youth climbing club will be formed, which Mountaineering Ireland will support over the following three years of the programme. If you are interested in getting involved as a young climber, parent, volunteer or coach, then email [kevin@mountaineering.ie](mailto:kevin@mountaineering.ie) to register your interest.

## Events this summer

Over the summer, there are a host of events for climbers of all ages to attend. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, several **workshops** will be delivered by top Irish climbers Ricky Bell, Michael Duffy and Lucy Mitchell, at the Outdoor Learning Symposium, based at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre.

On August 13-17<sup>th</sup>, Tollymore will host a **Youth Mountaineering Week**. Check the events page on the Mountaineering Ireland website for booking information.

There will also be several other trips and events organised through the local youth climbing clubs, which will be open to members and guests. Get in contact with your local club to find out more.

A big thank you to the volunteers who coached and inspired the young climbers at the Mourne Youth Trad Fest - Ali Moles, Stephen Ferris, Shane Black, Peter Reid, Kieran O'Hara, Paul Kellagher, Leman Lemanski, Rory Cummings, Neeku Shamekhi - and to the team of instructors - Eamon Quinn, Michael Murphy, Sinead Murray - and volunteers Neeku Shamekhi, Richard Morgan and adventure photographer Craig Hiller ■

## Contacts for NI youth climbing clubs

<b>Mourne Youth Climbing Club:</b>	<a href="mailto:mourneyouthclimbingclub@gmail.com">mourneyouthclimbingclub@gmail.com</a>
<b>Gilford Youth Climbing Team:</b>	<a href="mailto:kevin@mountaineering.ie">kevin@mountaineering.ie</a>
<b>Hanging Rockers:</b>	<a href="mailto:caolan.hrcc@gmail.com">caolan.hrcc@gmail.com</a>
<b>North West Youth Climbing Team:</b>	<a href="mailto:northwestyct@gmail.com">northwestyct@gmail.com</a>
<b>Coleraine Youth Climbing Club:</b>	Tel: 07722 018457
<b>Belfast:</b>	<a href="mailto:kevin@mountaineering.ie">kevin@mountaineering.ie</a>

## 2018 YOUTH CLIMBING SERIES

Alison Treacy reports on the 2018 Youth Climbing Series and her participation in the Grand Final in Edinburgh.

For the past three years I have competed in the Youth Climbing Series. These competitions have given me some of my most vivid and enjoyable climbing experiences.

The Youth Climbing Series consists of three regional rounds followed by the Grand Final, which takes place at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena in Scotland, where the top three Irish climbers in each age and gender category compete with the top climbers from Wales, Scotland and six different regions of England.

Each year, I was driven around Ireland by my dad to take part in the three regional rounds to try to qualify for the Grand Final. This year, the regional rounds took place in Awesome Walls Dublin, Awesome Walls Cork and the

Dublin Climbing Centre. You have to bring your 'A' game to every round.

Competitors in my category, **Female Youth A**, are required to lead-climb three routes and to boulder three problems. The higher you climb on each route or boulder, the more points you earn. At the end of each round your points are tallied and you are ranked based on how many points you earned compared to others in your category.

At the end of the regional rounds, the three climbers from each category with the most points qualify to compete in the Grand Final.

One of the reasons the Youth Climbing Series is such a positive experience for me is the atmosphere at the events. Of course, it brings out the competitive edge in everyone, but the support from not just

IAN LAWLOR



Caoimhe Broderick competing in Round 3 of the Youth Climbing Series at the Dublin Climbing Centre in March.

your family or club but also from other competitors is massive.

When you are making a move that might decide your chances of qualifying for the Grand Final, there is no doubt your ears will be flooded with encouragement. It was not uncommon for me to leave each round with no voice after cheering on all my friends and shouting myself hoarse.

In an average week I probably train for about six hours, which means three trips back and forth to Awesome Walls Cork. After earning my spot to compete in the Grand Final, I was even more motivated.

### My training

For the six weeks between qualification and the Grand Final I trained four to five

times every week, following a programme I was given by my Cork Youth Climbing Club coaches. For the first three weeks, my training was strength-orientated; it then progressed to strength endurance training for another two weeks. Strength endurance is really important for Edinburgh as the walls can reach up to twenty metres in height.

The final week was a 'taper' week, where my sessions became more moderate. Rather than leaving my sessions feeling exhausted and drained like I had for the two weeks prior, I focused on just enjoying climbing before heading over to Edinburgh and nailing the harder routes there.

My dad and I flew over the day before the Grand Final. As soon as we landed and

IAN LAWLOR



Brian McDonald competing in Round 3 of the Youth Climbing Series at the Dublin Climbing Centre in March.





IAN LAWLOR

Jude McInerney competing in Round I of the Youth Climbing Series at Awesome Walls Dublin in January.

collected our rental car, we went straight to the competition venue. Every time I go there I can feel my jaw hitting the floor. The place is just spectacular, to say the least. As soon as I walked in I could immediately spot other climbers preparing for the Grand Final. I did some light climbing to just engage my muscles, settle my mind and get used to the height I would be climbing to the next day.

## Competition day

On the morning of the competition, I got up bright and early, leaving our hotel at about 8.00am. The competition did not start until 9.30am, but we had to allow ourselves time to sort out our registration and do a proper warm-up with the rest of the team. I had prepared well for the Grand Final and I was confident in my abilities, but I was still nervous about the challenge of the day ahead of me.

During the competition, I met so many amazing

climbers, some of whom I had met in previous years and others I had never spoken to before. We would discuss how we might make a move on the crux, offer beta from a previous climb, and cheer each other on when climbing. I remember all of us freaking out together, too, when our demo climber had to take four rests on our second route!

The difficulty of the climbs themselves for Female Youth A was as to be expected in such a prestigious competition, the minimum being 6c and rising to about 7b. **Caoimhe Broderick** and **Jessie Smith McCarthy**, the two other Irish climbers in Female Youth A, had never been to Edinburgh before. I think the level they were climbing at for such a new environment and high standard was incredible.

In my honest and entirely objective opinion, I think that every member of the Irish team performed outstandingly! Our team at the Grand Final was **Lilou Conroy**, **Tara Henchion**, **Ilmur**

**Jonsdottir, Joe Feeney, Dylan Murray, Joseph Convery, Eve Buckley, Napsugar Judit Bodi, Seán Henchion, Daire Oglesby, Matthew Murray, Bonita Thurston, Ciara Burgoyne, Eimear Henchion, Daniel Creedon, Joshua Hoare, Reuben Aiken, Faith Blaney, Amy Orr, Matthew Smith, Luka Hallissey, Dillon McLaughlin, Caoimhe Broderick, Jessie Smith McCarthy, Darragh Hoare and Daniel Samoylenko.** I was overwhelmed with pride every time I saw someone I could call my team-mate giving it their all on a climb.

One of our greatest achievements this year was **Séan Henchion's** win in Male Youth D, aged 11. A Super-Final had to be put in place for Séan and **Sam Hammond**, as they had both climbed all three routes and three boulders on their first attempt. Both climbers were amazing on the Super-Final route and were



Written by  
Alison Treacy,  
Captain, Cork Youth  
Climbing Club

separated by the narrowest of margins. Having placed third last year, and second the year before that, Seán finally finishing on top was a huge accomplishment.

This year's Youth Climbing Series was probably my favourite and has given me a lot of memories and new friends. To all those reading this, I would definitely encourage you to become involved next year, whether you enter with your school or your club or maybe you enter your own child. I can't wait to see you all next year!

➤ Alison Treacy is the Captain of the Cork Youth Climbing Club and a member of the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Development Squad ■



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Tierna Hartrey competing in Round I of the 2018 Youth Climbing Series at Awesome Walls Dublin in January.

## BOULDERING CAMP

Keira Blaquez-Burke reports on a Mountaineering Ireland trip to Fontainebleau.



Written by  
Keira Blaquez-Burke,  
Cork Youth  
Climbing Club

Last Easter, as part of the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Development Squad, I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to go to Fontainebleau for the Outdoor Bouldering Camp. I went with three other girls and four boys from various parts of Ireland, under the guidance of two amazing coaches, **Terry O'Connor** and **Claire Comiskey**. It was my first trip away from my family, so I was a little nervous, but mostly very excited.

On the first day, we got up at roughly 8.00am and, after breakfast, headed out to the **Rocher du Potala** area. As part of our warm-up, we climbed problems on the yellow circuit (grades 2-3) and the orange circuit (grades 3-4). As I found my feet, I then went on to the blue circuit (grades 4-5).

CLAIRE COMISKEY



'Le Gang' in Fontainebleau.

with no rain, so we were out climbing all day, which was awesome! I climbed some really cool red boulder problems and some slabs. The outdoor bouldering really improved my footwork, which is great, because footwork is very important in climbing.

The Fontainebleau sandstone taught me how to be more precise with my feet and how to use the tiniest of holds.

The next day, we went back to Gorge aux Chats, where I climbed loads of blue problems. Again, the weather was great, even a little sunny. I was really enjoying myself and did not want to be leaving the next day, even if I was also looking forward to seeing my family again. I got lots of videos of myself climbing. When we got back to the house there were ants all over our bags; they had hitched a ride from the forest, but why would they have wanted to leave?

On our final day, our flight home was not until late in the evening, so we could still go climbing. We went to the **Roche aux Sabots** area, which is where the classic '**L'Oblique**' is located. Although I didn't complete this classic problem, I did give it a really good try!

To sum up, I had an amazing time and would love the opportunity to return some day. I learned so much from the coaches but also from the other climbers I was with. I would say now that outdoor bouldering in beautiful surroundings is so much more enjoyable than indoors! Going on this trip inspired me to want to climb more outdoors. Thanks again to Terry, Claire and my fellow climbers!

► Keira Blaquez-Burke is a member of the Cork Youth Climbing Club and the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Development Squad ■



CLAIRE COMISKEY

Matthew Smith tackles a boulder problem in Fontainebleau.

In Fontainebleau, the boulder problems have a little spot of paint to let you know which circuit you are on. Unfortunately, it began to rain after lunch and, although we tried to wait it out, the rock remained wet and we couldn't climb any more - the sandstone gets delicate when it is wet. This was my first taste of outdoor bouldering; it felt very different to indoor climbing, but I absolutely loved it!

For our second day of climbing, we went to a different area, **Gorge aux Chats**. I climbed lots of blues and even a couple of reds (grades 5-6). It rained for a while after lunch, but we were able to climb for longer than the previous day, though not as long as we would have liked.

Day three was my favourite day of all and in my favourite area, **Franchard Isatis**. The weather on this day was great,

## ADVENTURE DEGREE

Learning Through Adventure: GMIT is offering a BA Honours degree in Outdoor Education at the GMIT Mayo Campus.



**G**MIT's BA Honours degree in Outdoor Education contains an exciting combination of academic work and practical training for National Governing Body-level qualifications in adventure sports.

One day a week is spent taking part in adventure sports on the mountains, lakes, rivers and sea. In Year 1, the focus is on gaining personal skills in adventure sports and then, in the following years, on leadership-level training in those sports. There are also optional trips throughout Ireland and further afield, which allow specialisation in a range of adventure sports.

The rest of the week is spent in the classroom or on field trips, with an emphasis on active learning.

### What subjects will I study?

There are modules in five core areas:

- Adventure Sports Leadership and Safety Management
- Developmental Psychology and Teaching/Facilitation Skills
- The Irish Geological and Cultural Landscape
- Environmental Studies and Ecology
- Health and Fitness, First Aid and Water Safety.



Outdoor Education course participants in the uplands.

Students gain an understanding of the developmental role of outdoor education and they build experience in designing and running educational programmes. Through field trips and lectures, students explore and examine Irish landscape, heritage and ecology, and realise the potential of adventure tourism, green exercise and nature therapy. Safety management, first aid and rescue are other core elements.

These core areas are supported by a

wide range of elective modules, which allows students to tailor the programme to their specific interest.

### What career opportunities will I have?

The therapeutic, educational, developmental and recreational aspects of outdoor education are now widely recognised and utilised within many sectors in Ireland, such as schools, social care organisations, adventure tourism and youth services. Graduates find employment as instructors, managers and field studies officers in outdoor education centres and organisations offering adventure sports, adventure tourism, outdoor learning and environmental education.

There are also employment opportunities within educational organisations and youth services as facilitators, youth development officers and managers. Forest schools, green exercise and nature therapy are significant growth areas. Graduates are also employed in the area of rural development, countryside recreation and rural or eco-tourism.

► For more information, see [www.gmit.ie/outdoor-education/bachelor-arts-honours-outdoor-education](http://www.gmit.ie/outdoor-education/bachelor-arts-honours-outdoor-education) ■



Outdoor Education course participants in the Mournes.



# CELEBRATING THE COMERAGHS

**Michael O'Donoghue** describes two of his favourite spots in the Comeraghs in Waterford.

**T**here is no doubt that humans, especially hillwalkers, have special places that affect them in indefinable ways. As Nicholas Crane puts it in his book *The Making of the British Landscape*, we have a predisposition to invest locations with attachments. Why do we become attached to certain places? That is the sixty-four thousand dollar question! Do these places fire the human imagination or lift the spirit? Do they help us accept, if not understand, our place in the cosmos?

However it works, as sentient beings, we seem to have a need to switch off from the treadmill of modern life and, for however brief a period, visit our special places, usually on our own, perhaps not the most advisable thing to do in a mountain environment, to experience the tranquillity and pleasure they give us.

**Above: The Boolas paternoster lakes seen from the Comeragh plateau.**

Our special places vary; for one person it may be a remote mountain-top, for another a picturesque river bend, for a third an evocative ruin. It is not surprising to my mind that many of these special places are found in mountains. Mountains have a sense of timelessness about them, a sense of permanence that make us humans all too aware of our own mortality. They seem to speak to our souls and draw us back time after time to imbibe. Is there anything, for example, to beat 'the serenity of a clear blue mountain lake', as John Denver put it in his song *Rocky Mountain High*?

**Below: Overlooking Ned Curran's farm with the shoulder of Leacanthimlay behind.**



► **Michael O'Donoghue** lives near Rathgormack in County Waterford. He is a founder member of **Rathgormack Ramblers Hillwalking Club** and a member of **Mountaineering Ireland**. He is an experienced hillwalker, having led walks in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.

Photographs: John Power (the Boolas lakes), Michael O'Donoghue (Ned Curran's farm)

# NED CURRAN'S ABANDONED FARMHOUSE IS A MAGNET FOR HILLWALKERS.

## My local passion: the Comeraghs

My local mountains are the Comeraghs. With their tremendous glacial heritage, the Comeraghs are a special mountain range. For walkers, they are an absolute treasure trove with so much to choose from: windswept ridges, squelching peat bog, towering cliffs, serene lakes, interesting Bronze Age sites, secluded valleys with whispering streams, brooding coums on cold winter days.

I have been visiting these mountains for over thirty years, and below I describe two Comeragh places that are special to me.

## Ned Curran's evocative ruin

Ned Curran's is probably the most evocative ruin in the Comeraghs. It is situated on the banks of the Tay, in the jaws of Coumtay, Coummahon's lesser-known, westerly neighbour. To get to it from Leamybrien on the Dungarvan to Waterford road, take the R676 towards Carrick-on-Suir. After five kilometres turn left at Mahon Bridge and follow the minor road, sign-posted 'Comeragh Drive.' The first turn right is to Mahon Falls. Ignore that, but take the second right, 1km further on. Seven hundred metres up this road, park carefully at the start of the path on your left (OS Map 75, grid reference S 311 067).

As you commence your walk along the path, you are looking due west towards the Monavullagh Ridge. You can see dry Coum Éag (the hollow of death) on your left. The dip in the skyline is Bearna na Madraí saddle, while the highest point on the ridge to its right is Seefin. Further right again, two glaciated holes in the mountains beckon. The one on the left is Coum Knockaun; the one on the right is Coumtay. The grandeur that is Coum Mahon is largely blocked out by the Comeragh Mountain-Davmore shoulder.

After 300 metres' walking, pass by the path on your left. Take the right fork at the Y-junction, 400m further on. At this point you should start to notice the walled fields and the cluster of Scots pines to the left of Coumtay. You are looking at an old abandoned farm known to hillwalkers as Ned Curran's. Soon the path turns right and reaches a T-junction. Turn left and 200m later you reach the end of the forest path or track. A grassy path can be made out and, 100m along this, you come to the remnants of what looks like a walled boren, leading all the way to Ned's. You cross a small stream, head over the brow and will reach it after 500m, at S 297 076.

## A temple to a bygone way of life

You hear the Tay River before you see it. Cross it and tarry awhile at Ned Curran's old ruin. Behind you, to the south, the Waterford coastline calls, while to the north lies Coumtay. This abandoned farm is a



**Above: The ruins of Ned Curran's house on the bank of the Tay, with Coumtay behind.**

magnet for hillwalkers. One visit and you can see, or should I say, feel why. Its situation by the banks of the Tay and backed by the majestic coum is idyllic. It comprises two small fields and two larger ones, enclosed by stone walls dotted with Scots pine and holly trees. At its heart is the atmospheric ruin. As John O'Donohoe said in *Eternal Echoes*, 'A ruin is never simply empty. It remains a vivid temple of absence.'

**Below: Ned Curran's from the front, surrounded by holly and pine trees.**

This particular ruin is a powerful place; it almost forces you to empathise, to walk in someone else's shoes from over a hundred years ago. The tumbling stones of the field walls and buildings bear silent but eloquent witness to a family's attempts to eke out a living on the mountainside in distant, harsher times. The farm was abandoned just three generations ago, not a long time in the greater scheme of things. The first time I rambled down the boren to Ned's and rested awhile on its ruined walls, I cried. You may too. ►





### The Boolas: coum extraordinaire

The Boolas (Coum Iarthar on OS maps) is, at one kilometre in length, the longest coum in the Comeraghs. It houses four ribbon or paternoster lakes, the innermost one being the highest lake in Waterford, at over 550m. These lakes are sited at ever-decreasing elevations from the backwall to the impounding frontal moraine, and so the Boolas is one of the best examples outside of Kerry of a glacial staircase. The Boolas is flanked on one side by Crotty's Lake, another coum, and on the other by the Gap, a glacial col or saddle.

The origin of the name Boolas is very interesting. It comes from the Irish word 'buaile,' which means a herding or milking place. Place-names experts tell us that this is a very ancient root word, suggesting

**Above: Looking across Coum Iarthar and the Boolas ribbon lakes towards the Gap (the half-hidden col) and Knockanaffrin Ridge.**

**Below: View over Crotty's Lake (the Boolas' easterly neighbour) towards Knockanaffrin.**

human occupation from well before Viking times. If this valley was a former herding place, it must have been a very rocky one, but then it says so in the townland name, Boolacloghagh, meaning stony milking or herding place.

To get to the Boolas, first go to Rathgormack near Carrick-on-Suir. Travel west from the village towards Clonmel along the R678 for 3km to Clondonnell Cross. Turn left (south) here and travel for another 3km to a sharp right-angled bend at Curraheen. Parking is available in an old farmyard, 50m up the boren, at S 306 154.

There is a way-marked walk to the Boolas, so you can follow the markers all the way to the coum. Curraheen is a very pleasant approach to the Comeraghs, so the outward journey is almost as





## I GET THIS SENSE OF AWE AT NATURE'S MAJESTY IN THE HEART OF THE BOOLAS.

special as the destination itself. Go south along the old boreen, cross a stile, a couple of fields, another stile and one more field, until you reach the open mountain after about fifteen minutes. The dramatic Knockanaffrin Ridge now stands proudly before you. The dip in the ridge, on the left, is the Gap. A large moraine to the left obscures most of the Boolsas coum at this stage.

Now turn left (south). Cross a couple of streams and, when you reach the corner of Graigavalla forest, keep the trees on your left and you soon pass a huge boulder on your right. This boulder, according to archaeologists, marks a Bronze Age cairn field site. It also marks the bottom of the ancient Bóithrín na Sochraide funeral path across the Gap from the Nire to the west. Ahead, Crotty's Rock and the large chasm of the Boolsas loom large. William Crotty was a robber hanged in Waterford in 1742.

Continue along the edge of the wood until you reach the Douglas stream, which issues from the Boolsas (S 315 123). Turn right now and follow the stream uphill for about 1km into the coum. When you reach the first small lake, the marked walk veers right. You may wish to follow sheep tracks across the moraine to explore the inner coum, which I would recommend.

When ready, you can either retrace your steps or follow the waymarked route for another kilometre or so to the head of the Gap and, from there, turn right (north-east) and proceed downhill along Bóithrín na Sochraide, until you meet the huge boulder you passed on your way up. Turn left there and follow the markers back to the start.

**Above: Evening at the Inner Boolsas.**

**Below: Descending from the Gap along Bóithrín na Sochraide (the funeral path).**

### Awe-inspiring natural cathedral

What is so special about the Boolsas? It is just one of the fourteen coums on the Comeraghs. It is not as big as, nor does it have as large a lake as, Coumshingaun. Its vista is not as dramatic from a distance as, say, Mahon Falls. Yet, there is something about it that draws me back again and again.

Maybe it is the fact that you rarely meet other people there. Maybe it is the peace and sense of timelessness you feel when you rest on the bank of the innermost lake. Maybe it is the variety of hump and hollow, of lake and moraine (the geographer in me!). Maybe it is the stark brooding beauty of the place under winter snow.

These coums are nature's wondrous cathedrals and, for me, nowhere in the Comeraghs do I get this sense of awe at nature's majesty as much as I get it in the heart of the Boolsas ■





# TOUR DU MONT BLANC

**Declan Alcock** experienced some bad weather but also some good on the Mont Blanc Tour.

**T**he Tour du Mont Blanc has long been billed as one of the world's classic high mountain treks. Starting at **Les Houches** in the Chamonix valley in France, the route covers 170 kilometres through the French, Italian and Swiss Alps and crosses nine cols. Over the course of eleven days, it takes the walker through some of the most spectacular scenery in the Alps, while making a circuit of Mont Blanc.

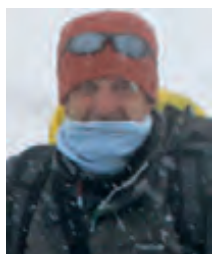
It is not necessarily the distance but the cumulative ascent and descent each day that makes this a tough trek, with a total height gain of about 11,000m. My brother Kieran and I tackled the traditional, anti-clockwise route. Having reduced our packs to 8kg, plus water, and not wanting the extra weight of tents and sleeping bags, we booked all our accommodation in self-catering gîtes and mountain refuges before we left. This also allowed us to enjoy each day's trek without having to try to book places for the night each morning.

**Above: Kieran Alcock (Declan's brother) in Val Ferret, Italy, on the eighth day of their Tour du Mont Blanc.**

The first two days from **Les Houches** (1,008m) to **Refuge Nant Borrant** were relatively easy, being mostly through valleys in good weather, passing the occasional hamlet of wooden chalets along the way. While there was some rain towards the evening, it was a nice introduction to the region before we entered the higher mountains.

**Below: Walking towards the climb to Col du Bonhomme.**

From Nant Borrant the weather deteriorated rapidly. We woke to heavy rain, which got progressively heavier while we walked up the valley towards the climb to **Col du Bonhomme** (2,329m). As we passed the glacier on the way up, the rain turned to snow and we stopped to layer up, with the weather closing in further.



► **Declan Alcock** is director of the NGO Engineers Without Borders Ireland. He is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland and has trekked in the Nepalese Himalaya, the French, Swiss and Italian Alps, the High Atlas of Morocco, the Scottish Highlands and Ireland.

Photographs: Declan Alcock Collection



## AS THE WEATHER WAS BAD, 120 PEOPLE STOPPED AT THE REFUGE THAT NIGHT.

Visibility was very poor as we ascended and the snow was getting heavier, so we stopped at the small hut on the col for a brew. As the temperature dropped, it was obvious the weather was getting worse, so we decided to move on, knowing there was a refuge below the next col about 1½ hours away. We moved across the saddle, trying to pick out a trail through the snow and rock for the climb to **Col de la Croix du Bonhomme** (2,479m).

On reaching the refuge, we decided not to stop but descended to the village of **Les Chapieux** instead. We heard later that one hundred and twenty people stopped at the refuge that night, as the weather was too bad to continue.

### Spectacular views

The fourth day started with a wet two-hour walk up **Valle de Glaciers**, before crossing the **Col de la Seigne** (2,512m), which forms the border between France and Italy. The only other signs of life we saw on the way up were some marmots peering out of their burrows and flocks of sheep with jingling bells around their necks. Apparently, the views from here are spectacular but, with driving snow and rain, they didn't make an appearance.

We stopped briefly at the top before continuing the long descent into Italy and our next stop at the **Rifugio Elisabetta**, which is owned and operated by the Milan section of the Italian Alpine Club. When the sun appeared that evening, there were spectacular views down the valley of **Val Veny** and **Glacier d'Estellette**, situated beside the rifugio.

All through the night the wind was whistling around Rifugio Elisabetta. We awoke to a white-out, the scenery unrecognisable from the previous evening, with neither the valley nor the glacier visible. That day's section of the tour was to **Courmayeur**, a centre for mountaineering in Italy, where, after five long days of bad weather and 60km covered, we planned to take a day off to recharge. We delayed our start, hoping the weather would clear, but eventually set out into the teeth of the wind and snow. We had been warned of the risk of rockfall on the high route along the Miage Glacier, so we went through the scenic valley of **Val Veny** instead. After another long day, which raised a few blisters, we were looking forward to the simple luxury of dry clothes.

On our day off in **Courmayeur** we paid a visit to the excellent museum in the Society of Mountain Guides, which had displays from the pioneers of alpinism right up to the space-age high mountain refuges of the modern era.

### The Walter Bonatti rifugio

On the seventh day, feeling recharged, we were on the trail early for the climb to **Col de Sapin** (2,436m). At the top, we stopped for a quick snack and had a



**Above: Declan on the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme (2,479m).**

great view of Mont Blanc and the Brenva Glacier. A bolt of lightning on a nearby peak made us cut our break short and move on.

**Below: Declan crossing Brévent Mountain.**

The trail followed the wall of the **Aosta valley**, with the jagged peaks of the Grandes Jorasses visible on the other side. It was an atmospheric walk through patches of forest, bilberries and wildflower meadows, with low cloud swirling up the valley and only the occasional rain shower.

We stopped for a break at **Rifugio Bonatti**, named after the famous Italian mountaineer Walter Bonatti, whose legendary climbs are recalled in his many excellent books. As the refuge was full, we had booked into **Hotel Lavachey**, an hour downhill. This rustic mountain inn is operated by relatives of the Grivel family. Numerous black-and-white photos adorn





the walls showing their ancestors on various Alpine peaks and Alberto Grivel working at his forge as he fashions some of the earliest crampons, which bear the famous family name.

## The beautiful Val Ferret

We set off up **Val Ferret** the following morning in more settled weather, heading towards **Grand Col Ferret** (2,537m), the crossing to Switzerland. It was a long but spectacular climb, passing the **Pré de Bar Glacier**, with great views back into Italy. As often happens on high mountain passes, the weather on either side was completely different, with a large snowfield on the Swiss side. After negotiating this, we spent the afternoon on the downhill walk to **La Fouly**.

In order to have a rest day at the end, we completed two stages on the ninth day, going from La Fouly to Col de la Forclaz. This started out with a pleasant climb on a forest path to **Champex**, a nice Swiss village with a lake at its centre, but it turned into a long testing day. The climb to **Bovine Alp** (1,987m) in the afternoon was done mostly in rain, ankle-deep in mud, in heavy, low-lying cloud with no views to reward our efforts. Once we were over the top and on the way down, it brightened up and we arrived at **Col de la Forclaz**, overlooking the town of **Trient**, in time to see the sun set over the Swiss Alps.

The morning of the tenth day brought sunshine, blue skies and a hint of summer in the air, providing a reminder of why I love the mountains. One day you're fighting through cold and snow, the next you are ankle-deep in mud and driving rain, and then there are days with blue skies and glorious sunshine, where sitting in the shade of a boulder when the sun is high and just taking it all in is one of life's pleasures.

**Above: On the way up the Grand Col du Ferret for the crossing from Italy into Switzerland.**

**Below: View of Mont Blanc from the Col du Brévent.**

We started early, as usual, with a nice walk down the valley, passing the beautiful **Glacier du Trient** as we crossed the meadows. We then climbed out of the valley through the welcome shade of a pine forest. When we left the forest, after about three hours, the views back got better and better, as we climbed towards **Col de Balme** (2,195m) and the route back to the French Alps.

On our way down to **Trelechamps**, we decided to add a second climb by crossing **Aiguillette des Posettes** (2,201m) where, on the summit, a kestrel swooped in and hovered a few metres in front of us, eyeballing his prey far below.





**Above: Lac Blanc in the French Alps, on the Tour du Mont Blanc.**

**Below: Completing the tour with the final descent to Les Houches in the Chamonix valley, with Mont Blanc (4,810m) in the background.**

### **The mountains were saving the best till last**

As we started our eleventh day with a climb to **Col de Montets** (1,461m), a chamois, obviously used to seeing walkers, sat on a rocky outcrop enjoying the morning sun and observing us as we passed. It was going to be a sweltering day, as it was already hot, and we were glad of the shade from the few trees on this otherwise exposed climb.

Once at the top of the pass, the route ran along the side of the valley directly across from Mont Blanc, with spectacular views every step of the way. We diverted off the trail to climb to the beautiful lake of **Lac Blanc** (2,532m), with its

surface reflecting the snow-capped peaks surrounding it. The mountains were saving the best till last and rewarding us for the days of mud, rain and snow with glorious weather for the final few days.

The final day was perhaps the toughest, starting at 7.00am with a tough climb over rockfall and boulders, before taking an ever narrower and higher path to **Col du Brévent**, with a reassuring rock wall on one side and a half-mile drop on the other. From here we climbed further along a rocky path, up some fixed ladders at a steep section, and then through snow to the summit of **Brévent** (2,525m), the final climb of the trek. We took a break here to enjoy the famous view and, while it was very tempting to take the cable car down to Chamonix, we were determined to walk every step.

The 1,500m descent from Brévent to **Les Houches** was a long, long afternoon through never-ending switchbacks, first on the mountainside, then through the forest. After eleven hours on the mountain, we were almost out of steam but, as we eventually broke out of the forest, we caught a glimpse of the church spire in Les Houches. This gave us our second wind to push on and, twelve days after we set out, we were back where it all began! ■

**AFTER RAIN AND SNOW,  
WE HAD GLORIOUS  
WEATHER FOR THE FINAL,  
EXHAUSTING FEW DAYS.**





## BACKPACKING ROUND MONT BLANC

**Michael Guilfoyle** describes his experience of the Tour du Mont Blanc.

**T**he morning of day five of the eleven-day circular Tour du Mont Blanc in September was always going to be something of a crux. We had hiked up and down for four days from Les Houches, the starting point of the tour near Chamonix, and had reached the beautiful Italian town of Courmayeur. Our backs and shoulders were still resisting the rough intimacy of our heavy rucksacks, and our feet and boots were still not getting on together.

In terms of the balance sheet of moments of quiet desperation versus those of 'high five' elation, we still weren't quite sure where we stood. Courmayeur presented an all-too-easy exit opportunity. We could just hop on the bus back to Chamonix through the Mont Blanc tunnel or, better to explain an early exit back home, take a wonderful cable car sky-ride over the shoulder of Mont Blanc to Chamonix via the totally improbable Aiguille du Midi sky station.

**Above: Below Elisabetta Refugio in Italy.**

**Below: Custom post in Praz-de-Fort on the Swiss frontier, not far from Chamonix (France) and Aosta (Italy).**

However, the walk, the location and the people had already begun to cast their spell well before we'd arrived in Courmayeur. As we traversed the 2,500m Col de la Seigne, from France into Italy, on day three, the picture-postcard perfection of Italy's Val Veny below us had probably done the trick. That and a good meal and sleep in Courmayeur sealed our fate: we would complete the remaining seven days of the tour, going on from Italy into Switzerland and back to France on easily the most beautiful long-distance trek on the continent.

In terms of footfall, the Tour du Mont Blanc comes second only to the longer Camino de Santiago de Compostella. Hundreds, probably thousands, of walkers trek through its valleys and villages and over its high cols each year. They start arriving in June, when the snows clear, and finish in late September, when the snows return. Like the Camino, it is a matter of strong boots, two sticks and a broad-brimmed hat. Also, there is the often similar experience of multilingual, crowded and chaotic eating and sleeping conditions along the way.

Motivation, however, may differ quite a bit: the pilgrim probably has more complex, often inner and deeply personal reasons for their pilgrimage. For the Tour, though, the draw is more simple – it is the prospect of eleven days' or so walking and just being within the 360-degree beauty of an incomparable mountain wonderland.

On our tour in September, we opted to backpack. Thus we were independent of the refuges and had the great (but not always legal) freedom to stop, start and



➤ *Michael Guilfoyle is a founder member of the Lung Gompas Hiking Club. He lives in Dublin and is married with two children, both married. He has hiked extensively in the Alps, the Pyrenees, Scotland, Wales and Iceland (where he attempted a north-south crossing of Vatnajökull ice-cap in 1990). He has trekked in Kashmir, the Canary Islands, Nepal, Morocco, Vancouver Island and Patagonia. He has summited many Alpine 4,000m peaks, including Mt Blanc and Gran Paradiso; also Toubkal and Ouanakrim (Atlas Mountains) and most Pyrenean tops over 3,000m.*

## IT IS EASILY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LONG-DISTANCE TREK ON THE CONTINENT.

stay where and when we liked. As with the Camino, it is possible to do the Tour in style, with pre-booked hotel and refuge accommodation, as well as having your gear transported more or less from point to point.

We were unreservedly happy that we backpacked, despite serious pre-trip apprehension. We came across people, often Irish, who had relied on refuge accommodation and who had booked, say, the first three refuges of the route. Many found, as they progressed, that all onward refuges were full. Attempts to buy tents were met with frustrating end-of-season, sold-out or prohibitive price responses. That is not to say that we were entirely indifferent to having to make and break camp twice in rain and to deal with a night-time rampage by an unidentified, food-robbing animal.

The feel of this walk and its gifts to the memory are special. The sight and sound of wild, glacial rivers tumbling through deep, chaotic chasms, carrying with them the smell of high-up ice on their chilled breath; the 'stop and stare' moments on high cols; the being almost shocked by the stark, shattered beauty of the high Alps, their smooth summit snow-caps contrasting with high blue skies and cracked, precarious pillars and towers were all deeply impressive. In contrast, the gentleness of chocolate box-cover valleys of meandering rivers, Alpine meadows and wild flowers, and the prettiest of wooden, flower-bedecked chalets, was also memorable.

Sometimes the walk is processional and conversational. At other times it is one of special moments on high, sunny crests or ridges, with only the freshest and coolest of playful breezes and the sound of cold meltwater cascades for company.

The route is safe; at its worst it is no more technically challenging than our own Croagh Patrick. It is also easily navigable, though maps and a guidebook are strongly advised. There is plenty of helpful company along the way and well-marked opportunities for easier, lower-level options or variants. Most importantly, frequent, sunny coffee-stops, picnics and even stops for sustaining soup, omelettes and chips are possible en



**Above: Aongus Ó hAonghusa and Michael Guilfoyle overlooking les Grandes Jorasses (picture taken from near Courmayeur, Italy).**

**Below left: Sean McBride, Aongus Ó hAonghusa and Michael Guilfoyle at Fenetre d'Arpette, Switzerland.**

**Below right: Sean McBride descending from Le Brevent, Les Aiguilles Rouges, iFrance, with Mont Blanc towering in the background.**

route.

The route does get up close and personal with the mountain, though. On occasion, it allowed us into places where we could witness the end-game in the long 100,000-year war between ice and rock. Global warming seemed certain to us in these places; the last clinging, skeletal fingers of the glaciers were clearly seen there to loosen their cold grip and release more and more pristine, smoothed rock surfaces to feel their first warmth from the sun.

Then, of course, there are the people. There is that special supportive camaraderie of like-minded people. The swapping and sharing of backgrounds, stories, craic, experiences and perceptions all help to get one's feet, with sense of humour and dignity intact, over the high cols. For us, their company definitely enriched and enlivened that glass of wine or beer and the conversation after long days.

Fly to Geneva and easily bus it to Les Houches. Get Kev Reynolds' excellent guidebook and a couple of 1:25,000 French IGN maps. The rest will be up to you, your legs and your inclination.

If you do it, there is absolutely no doubt that this loveliest of walks through the heart of Europe will not only captivate you during the walk but will continue to reward you well after. The images and stories and the feelings of well-being will be a constant and self-congratulatory reminder of how yours was indeed an excellent choice of holiday experience ■





# CLIMBING WITH BABY

Can you continue climbing when you have an infant in the family? **John McCabe**, who is a paediatrician by profession and has recently become a father, discusses his concerns.

**W**hen climbing is a massive part of life for you and your partner, how do you continue with your passion after having a baby? This was a significant concern for my wife Katherine and me.

We didn't want to lose the life we had, but we were keen to have a child too.

I met Katherine while climbing at our local wall. After a little persuasion, she agreed to go on a date. What followed was a fantastic few years of dating, trad climbing, camping and spontaneous adventures around the globe, from County Clare to New Zealand. Eventually, I plucked up the courage to ask her to marry me.

Early in 2017, Katherine had a positive pregnancy

**Above: John and Katherine abseiling.**

**Right: Katherine, six months pregnant, carries bouldering pads up Slieve Binnian in the Mournes.**



➤ **John McCabe** is a consultant paediatrician. He is a member of Mountaineering Ireland and has been climbing for twenty years, initially with a passion for trad climbing. This has evolved into an interest in sport climbing trips and a love of bouldering. He has enjoyed (or endured!) several Scottish winter adventures. He is the social secretary for the newly established **Belfast Climbing Club**.



All photographs by John McCabe with the exception of the abseiling photo above, by Carl Whinnery

## CLIMBING HAD GIVEN US SO MUCH THAT WE WERE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE, BUT WITH AIDAN INVOLVED.

test. We were ecstatic. We had been trying for a baby and so, although not a surprise, the emotions were immense. Are we ready for this? Will I be a good dad? How do you be a good dad?

From the time of the good news, for the safety of the baby, Katherine stopped climbing. She continued with regular kettlebell and yoga sessions. Most health professionals advise against rock climbing during pregnancy, although I feel this is because of a lack of insight into the true risks involved.

Katherine has had very few falls in the past while climbing, so there was a very low risk of bodily impact affecting the baby. Nevertheless, her stopping climbing was a personal choice that was correct for us but might not be right for everyone. Moreover, remaining active and fit during pregnancy is strongly encouraged and will make adapting to your changing body easier. There is evidence that active women are less likely to experience problems during pregnancy and labour.

However, Katherine encouraged me to continue climbing, even carrying bouldering pads up Slieve Binnian when she was six months pregnant, and into the Fair Head boulder field when she was eight months pregnant, much to the consternation of her obstetrician!



**Above: The 'Beast from the East' cold snap strikes in Margalef in Spain in February 2018: Aidan requires extra layers to keep him warm and toasty.**

**Left: Katherine and John take Aidan to BoulderWorld in Belfast at six days old.**

After the nine months of her pregnancy and thirty-five hours of labour, Katherine delivered a healthy baby boy, Aidan. After the delivery, Katherine remained in hospital for two days and I got my last eight hours of uninterrupted sleep! Then our lives truly changed. No one can prepare you for it. We were a family, in equal measures unbelievably happy and terrified.

Climbing had given us so much that we were determined to continue - but with Aidan involved. So, at six days old, Aidan came with us when we went, as a family, to BoulderWorld Belfast. We took it in turns to watch him sleep, which is what babies mostly do for their first few days. Katherine was content to do low-level traverses. The return to climbing will differ for every woman, depending on whether there were any problems with the pregnancy, the method of delivery and any associated complications. If in doubt, you should discuss this with your obstetrician and heed your own body.

We were epically proud of ourselves, not least for simply getting out of the house! I daydreamed of engaging in further climbing adventures as a family. However, when I thought about it, I realised it would be challenging. I had three main concerns. ▶





## LAYERING IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE IN THE OUTDOORS, BUT IS VASTLY MORE IMPORTANT FOR BABIES.

converse is true, too; leaving them in a stroller without a cloth over it for shade may result in their temperature increasing rapidly.

Infants have very limited or no language ability. Information must be gleaned from non-verbal cues (facial expressions and postures). You must use these cues to know when to feed them, change them or simply entertain them. Awareness of their routine may enable a feed before starting a climb. Katherine breastfed Aidan and so we were lucky, as initially no bottles were needed. Infants are constantly evolving, so what works one month may not work the next. As Aidan got older, we started to bring 'nibbles' and a warm bag with a bottle of formula.

Next: changing your baby. I have not discovered a secret here; just be as quick as possible, shade them from the wind or sun and bring disposable bags to store the used nappy in.

Finally, good communication with the lead climber is mandatory, as is their ability to make themselves safe quickly, if your baby needs attention from the belayer. Always be prepared to sing a song, play peek-a-boo or have a toy to hand; this leads on to my second concern.

### Other people's perceptions

Healthy babies are extremely resilient. They yearn for entertainment, for their view of the world to be expanded. They love being outside, to look at trees, listen to the birds and watch the clouds. Nevertheless, we worried about distracting other climbers. It is also amazing in today's social media-driven world how many people will give their opinions on the appropriateness of climbing with a baby.

Thankfully, our experiences have been positive. We first went to our local bouldering gym, BoulderWorld



### Can we keep our baby safe?

I am a consultant paediatrician with extensive experience in acute paediatrics, and an instructor on Newborn Life Support and Advanced Paediatric Life Support courses. I also have significant outdoor training. I felt that Aidan would be safe in the hills with us. However, I should use this opportunity to state that, despite my knowledge and experience, nothing prepares you for your own baby. I also don't want to excessively encourage unprepared families to go into the mountains.

Infants are a diverse group, varying in weight, size and intellectual and emotional responses, much like climbers. However, children are not simply 'small adults.' Their anatomy and physiology differs dramatically and changes significantly.

The most important factor when taking your baby to a crag is keeping it warm. Babies have a high body surface-area to weight ratio and are consequently more prone to lose heat and to hypothermia than adults. Outdoor enthusiasts will be aware of the importance of layering; this is vastly more important for your baby. They are not as active as you are, so remember to monitor their temperature. The

**Above: The family at Altnadue Quarry: Katherine, Aidan and John with family dog Gabe.**

**Right: John climbing in Altnadue Quarry.**



Belfast Climbing Centre. The staff there were fantastic and supportive. Trips to Hotrock Climbing Wall and Awesome Walls rapidly followed.

We began to feel confident and agreed to attempt a foreign trip. Aidan got his first passport; sitting for the photographer was an adventure in itself!

Then we had to consider our destination. Straight away, we ruled out a trip involving multi-pitch climbing. Bouldering or sport climbing were the obvious options. However, it was late winter or early spring and we wanted a short flight, so we found ourselves in glorious sunshine at a crag in Margalef, in Spain.

We hired a guide, for their local knowledge and to belay, as we took turns entertaining our son. We were worried that we would annoy fellow climbers with a screaming baby, but our fears were misplaced. There were several other families at the crag; we no longer felt like the first people in the world to try climbing with a baby; the relief was awesome.

If you go abroad, ideally, your destination should have enough shade to keep your baby out of the sun at all times. Aidan, with his Irish complexion, was constantly lathered in infant sunscreen irrespective of the shade, with a sun hat also and a down jacket, put on and taken off repeatedly. A travel cot is also a very useful item.

On returning home, we endeavoured to continue climbing. BoulderWorld continued to be a fantastic destination. However, we wanted to get outdoors again as a couple. The boulder field at Fair Head was an unattractive option with a baby learning to roll over. He was also getting too heavy to carry up to the Binnian slabs with nappies and bottles, never mind our own gear. Then, we heard about the work Sport NI and Tollymore National Outdoor Centre were doing at Altnadue Quarry. With a family-friendly ethos and a short walk-in, it was perfect! We could have our son sleeping in his stroller beside us while we climbed, nip back to the car to change his nappy and feed him at the picnic tables. The routes are fantastic though they would not be pushing my limit, and this leads to my third issue.

## Changing goals

I stopped chasing self-made goals. This was liberating. Somewhere along my years of climbing, it had become about the grades. Aidan arrived and then we were simply happy to get our climbing shoes on, be with friends and get a climb in between nappy changes and feeds.

Pulling my thoughts together at the end, we are extremely lucky. We have found what makes us happy and we are now pursuing it as a family. We simply hope to create safe and fun experiences.

I know there will be many other climbing parents reading this, many with far more experience than us. If you have any useful tips, please share them! For those of you who do not have children, I hope we have reduced some of the mystery and apprehension about climbing as new parents.

Our views may change again, if we decide to try for number two! ■



**Above: Aidan's first climb, assisted by John, at Altnadue Quarry.**

**Below: Katherine tackles Midnight Lightning on the Columbia Boulder in Yosemite National Park.**

## Acknowledgments

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- Obstetric team in Antrim Area Hospital
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- Casa Catalunya and Ian 'Mac' Macdonald
- Sport NI
- Tollymore National Outdoor Centre.





# IRAN'S HIGHEST PEAK

**Padraig Hogan** completes a tough ascent, and even tougher descent, of Mt Damavand in Iran.

I first heard about Iran's Mount Damavand from a neighbour, who had climbed it in 2014 and rated it highly. With an altitude of 5,610m, it is the highest mountain in Iran, and it is the highest volcano in Asia. Iran also sounded like a unique country to explore.

Having lived in Jordan for two years, my only chance to get into the hills had been during the summers at home in Connemara, so I was itching for a challenge.

The school I teach at in Jordan has a focus on community service, and so, along with a fellow teacher, Mike Nolan, I decided to raise some money for Syrian refugees while doing something that would be a mountaineering experience.

Arriving in Tehran in September 2015 was not the culture shock that I expected. The absence of other tourists was noticeable from the outset, but the

**Above: Mt Damavand (5,610) in Iran.**

**Below: Donkey porters, the real heroes of Damavand.**

people were extraordinarily friendly. That warm feeling was the foundation for one of the most memorable trips I have undertaken.

We spent the first night and half of the following day in Tehran, looking at some of the main sights and gathering food supplies for our trip. Tehran has lots to offer, but I have never been keen on capital cities. I was enthusiastic to get out and explore the country.



➤ **Padraig Hogan** is originally from Loch Na Fooyey in the west of Ireland and has been teaching internationally for the past seven years. He is currently head of sixth form and teaches geography at an international school in Amman, Jordan. He has previously worked as an outdoor educator in Kenya, Spain and New Zealand.

Photographs: Padraig Hogan



## I RELISHED THE FACT I WAS ON THE SLOPES OF MOUNT DAMAVAND, HIGHEST PEAK IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

The plan was to spend the first four days climbing Mt Damavand and then to spend another four exploring Shiraz, Isfahan and Persepolis.

Mount Damavand can be tackled from a number of directions, but the popular and most accessible route is from the south, starting at Camp Polour (2,270m). This is more of a hostel than a camp and has good facilities, including wifi. Traditionally, climbers would have started their walk in from here, and many still do, although driving up the modern '4x4' track to Base Camp (3,040m) is now the norm. That was what we chose to do.

Our first full day of hiking involved walking from Base Camp to Camp 3 Bargah (4,220m), a four-hour walk that is best taken at a nice easy pace to help the acclimatisation. Upon arrival at Bargah, we ate, slept for a few hours and then continued up to 4,500m to further aid with our acclimatisation. We then returned to the hut at Bargah and cooked a big meal. Our intention was to get an early night and then start for the summit at 4.00am the next morning.

Bargah is a busy hut and best avoided at weekends, when many locals are on the mountain. We met a mixed group of people in the hut. There was a group of ten climbers from a Russian mountaineering club, who were spending six days there. They wanted to let their bodies gradually get used to the altitude to give themselves the best shot at summiting. There were also a couple of groups

**Above: Pdraig Hogan, Farhad Khalafi and Mike Nolan at Base Camp, with Mt Damavand in the background. The mosque must be one of the highest in the world!**

**Below: A steep snow and ice ramp on Mt Damavand.**

from eastern Europe and a lovely Japanese couple who had taken a year off to travel around the world and were bagging as many big peaks as they could fit in on their travels. We invited them to join us the next morning, as they had no guide and were unsure of the route.

After a restless sleep disturbed by climbers getting up to be sick due to the altitude, loud snoring and the cold, I was reminded why I normally like to stay in a tent, being self-sufficient, rather than in a mountain hut.

After a slightly late start at 5.00am, we slowly made our way up the mountain. The sunrise was beautiful and it reflected off the snow and ice. I took a moment to take it all in and to relish the fact that I was on the slopes of the highest peak in the Middle East. As the morning wore on, it became evident that Mike was struggling with altitude sickness. He was suffering with headaches and nausea. ▶





## OUR NIGHT'S SLEEP WAS BROKEN BY HALLUCINATIONS AND CRAZY DREAMS.

I suggested that we move from the rocky ridge onto the snow and ice field, so that he would be able to glissade down, using his walking poles as brakes. Farhad and I argued over the merit of this approach but – with no other better option – Mike started to descend the mountain by sliding on his backside.

### Altitude sickness

I continued walking down the side of the snowfield with Farhad and we made slow progress down the mountain. As I descended, my dizziness receded a little but I still felt quite out of it and found it difficult to concentrate on where to put my feet. This was the first time that I had felt altitude sickness to such an extent that it affected my judgment, and there were some moments when I would have been happy just to sit down and not bother moving again.

Five hours later we reached Camp 3. It was well after dark and Mike was in a pretty bad way, with ripped waterproofs, broken walking poles and a sore backside being the least of his worries. We got some soup that was on the go and we all collapsed into our sleeping bags. The night's sleep that followed was the worst I have ever had. It was broken up by hallucinations, crazy dreams and very little sleep.

The following morning, we slowly descended back to Camp 2 and took a jeep down to Camp Polour. After a brief discussion, we decided to head straight back to Tehran and have a rest day before boarding the flight to Shiraz in the south of the country.

Mount Damavand is a spectacularly beautiful mountain and a moderate climb. My only advice would be to take at least one extra day and acclimatise sufficiently before the summit day.

### Exploring Iran

Iran is an amazing country. Other highlights of my time there included visiting the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, which is 28 kilometres square in size, and Isfahan, which feels very European and even has a

The pace was very slow and our guide Farhad was worried that we would miss our 1.00-2.00pm summit window, after which we would have to turn around to make it back to Camp 3 before nightfall. At 12.30pm, Farhad encouraged me to continue on my own as otherwise a successful summit attempt would not be possible.

Although I felt guilty for leaving my climbing partner, it was obvious he was not going to make it. However, he was in safe hands with Farhad.

### Push for the summit

The final 300 metres of the climb were the most difficult, as there was a very steep slope covered with deep snow. Compounding the altitude, there was a vent at the top of the mountain, releasing sulphurous fumes. Both the smell and the irritation to the nose and lungs made for a unique summit experience. After a quick circumnavigation of the summit and a few obligatory photos, I started straight back down the south side of the summit.

I was now feeling quite dizzy and unwell myself. I realised that there was still a lot of walking to do before I would get to Camp 3. When I reached Farhad and Mike, it was apparent that the latter had no energy left and that we had a difficult descent ahead of us. Mike was unable to walk very far without having to sit down, and daylight was running out.

**Above: Padraig Hogan on the summit of Mt Damavand.**

**Below: View of the summit with sulphurous fumes escaping from vent.**





**Top: Panoramic view from slopes of Mt Damavand.**

**Above left: Mosque in Shiraz.**

**Above right: Mosque in Isfahan main square.**

free bike system, which we took advantage of to explore the city. We spent two memorable days cycling around, visiting beautiful mosques and absorbing the friendly Iranian atmosphere. I would highly recommend visiting Iran, and soon, before it opens up too much to the west and loses some of its unique charm ■

## Practical information

### Mount Damavand

- Elevation: 5,610 metres
- Time needed for climb: 3-7 days

### Guide

- Local guide Farhad Kalafi (fdkhalafi@gmail.com)

### Website

- Website: [www.damawand.de](http://www.damawand.de)

### Visa

- Available on arrival for Irish citizens. British passport holders need a government-appointed guide with them at all times

### Budget

- Accommodation: €15 per night
- Guide: €45 per day
- Internal flight: €60
- Average meal: €5
- Visa: €50



## NEPAL IRELAND DAY 2018

**Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park, Dublin**  
**Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 12.00pm to 5.00pm**

The Embassy of Nepal in London, Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal Ireland Society and NRNA Ireland are jointly organising this year's Nepal-Ireland Day on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Promoting Nepal Tourism Board's campaign, 'Experience Nepal – Cuisine and Culture,' and enhancing relations between Nepal and Ireland, the event will take place at Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park, Dublin.

Nepal-Ireland Day will include a cultural programme, with performances from both Nepalese and Irish artists, an exhibition of photographs taken in Nepal by Irish tourists, stall promoting Nepalese handicrafts, travel agencies and airlines, and a mountaineering talks programme.

The Nepal-Ireland Society has been organising Nepal-Ireland Day since 2013 with support from the Office of Public Works.





## Walking in the Sperrins

Recent Sperrins initiative may provide a model for other areas.



Written by  
Helen Lawless,  
Hillwalking, Access  
& Conservation  
Officer

During spring 2018 Mountaineering Ireland, in cooperation with the **Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs** and **Sport NI**, facilitated a series of meetings with representatives from walking clubs that are regularly active in the Sperrins. The purpose of the engagement was to provide support to walking representatives on working groups formed following the **Sperrins Future Search** event, held in September 2017 (see *IML 124*, p55).

The **'Walking in the Sperrins'** discussions were both enjoyable and fruitful, and it was soon agreed that there would be value in engaging directly with the Countryside Officers in the four councils that cover the Sperrins: **Causeway Coast and Glens; Derry City and Strabane; Fermanagh and Omagh; and Mid Ulster.** A programme was planned, presentations prepared and an afternoon event was successfully delivered on Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, at An Carn, near Maghera.

### Presentations by hillwalkers

**Séan Convery** (Colmcille Climbers) opened proceedings, providing insights both as a hillwalker and a landowner.

Séan's passion and love of the Sperrins was echoed by the speakers from other clubs.

**Michael Gilmour** (Mid Ulster Walking Club) used Davagh Forest as an example to illustrate the value of good quality low-level walks.

**Ita McCrory** (Foyle Hill Walking Club) spoke about intermediate-level developed walks in the Sperrins, such as the Vinegar Hill Loop and Hudy's Way, emphasising that more work needs to be done on maintaining these before developing additional routes.

The last club representative, **Brendan Adams** (Sperrins Hillwalking Club), focused on higher-level hillwalks. Like the previous speakers, Brendan reiterated the tranquil, unique and stress-busting attributes of the Sperrins. He also set out some issues, including questions over permission, liability, access points and fencing.

**Mike McClure** (Sport NI) and **Richard Gillen** (Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council) made the final presentations, after which there was a very useful group discussion.

Mountaineering Ireland Board member **Geoff Thomas** formally closed the event by thanking all those involved and saying how great it was to hear



Anne Reid (Parks & Countryside Development Officer with Mid Ulster District Council), left, pictured with Michael and Lorraine Gilmour (Mid Ulster Walking Club) during a site visit to Davagh Forest, in the Sperrin Mountains where they identified a number of walks within the forest which could be waymarked and promoted with little cost. This meeting arose from the Walking in the Sperrins event.

the speakers' passion for the area and its landscape. He also commented on the sense of optimism about the future.

### A model of cooperation

All four councils, **Northern Ireland Environment Agency**, the **National Outdoor Recreation Forum**, **Outdoor Recreation NI** and **Sport NI** were represented at the Walking in the Sperrins event. This initiative may provide a model for other areas, in terms of Mountaineering Ireland facilitating local hillwalking clubs to work together, articulate their views and engage with councils and other relevant bodies. There has already been follow-up engagement between local walking clubs and Countryside Officers.

Positive as this is, the prospect of greater progress hinges on the four local councils agreeing on the formation of a management body for the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and committing funding for the appointment of an AONB

Officer. Despite the fact that it celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, at the time of writing the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty remains the only one of Northern Ireland's designated AONBs which does not have a management structure, any staff or a management plan.

Speaking after the event, Séan Convery said: "What we got today was probably a first for hillwalkers in the Sperrins and a first in terms of communicating our passion and desire for this landscape to local council staff and Government bodies. The second element is to bring this passion and desire into an active management plan that sees the Sperrins AONB being given the resources that this unique area demands."

Mountaineering Ireland extends its thanks to all the speakers at the Walking in the Sperrins event, to all those who attended, to **Sport NI** for covering refreshments, and to **Avril McAllister** (Foyle Hill Walking Club) who provided notes from the day ■



Goles valley in the Sperrins.

Photograph: Lorraine Gilmour (top), Brendan Adams (bottom)

# RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

## Smart parking

Your club arrives at your designated start point to find the car park already full; what to do?

Many places where we walk and climb have limited parking space. With increasing numbers enjoying the outdoors, congestion has become an issue in popular locations including Connemara, the Burren, the Mourne and the Wicklow Mountains.

It is tempting to park on a verge, in front of a forestry barrier, or at the side of a gateway, but doing so could block access for larger vehicles such as an ambulance or a tractor with a trailer. Attendees at a Mountaineering Ireland meeting in Galway in early May heard how badly-parked cars recently prevented a lorry with a fodder delivery getting into a farm in the Maumturks. Situations like that could easily result in landowners closing off access.

Rather than saying 'the Council should provide more parking space,' let's look at how we can take some responsibility ourselves. The Galway discussion generated lots of ideas for how groups of all sizes can help ease the pressure for parking:

- Park carefully - avoid wasting space between vehicles when parking in an unmarked car park.
- Commit to car-pooling - it saves money and reduces emissions too.
- Apps like What's App are useful for arranging lift shares.
- Be flexible about changing your route and starting elsewhere.
- Park at a suitably large area close to the hills and hire a local bus or car-pool.



- Use public transport where it's available.
- Avoid parking in front of field gates; remember that many farmers move livestock at the weekend.
- Park a little further back from the hill or crag and walk in.
- Ask permission to park outside a house, farm or other premises.
- Steer clear of honeypots; make a point of exploring quieter areas.
- Share your walks calendar with other clubs in the area to avoid two big groups being in the same area on the same day.
- Where there's an honesty box in a car park, make sure to contribute.

If you have other ideas in relation to parking and responsible access to the areas where we walk and climb, please email

[helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■

## Mountain environment walk in the Galtees

**Matt Joy** led an inspiring environmental walk across the Galtees as part of the Mountaineering Ireland Spring Gathering last March. Matt, who is well-known as a member of the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association and the Mid Tipp Hillwalkers, holds a degree in environmental and natural resource management.

The walk focused on helping hillwalkers to see how they can enjoy the mountains with care. The group traversed the Galtees from the Black Road car park, up and over Galtybeg and down to Clydagh Bridge. In addition to enjoying an excellent mountain day, participants came away with lots of ideas, advice and information to share with others.

Thanks to Matt and all those who participated, including



Matt Joy below Galtymore, Co Tipperary, with participants in the Spring Gathering Environment Walk.

change-maker **Katie Mahon** who shared the quote of the day, from Brazilian writer Paul Coelho: "The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion."

Mountaineering Ireland's

environmental days are of particular value to Club Environmental Officers and Mountaineering Ireland Training Providers. However, subject to availability of space, all interested members who are in

a position to share the knowledge they acquire with others are welcome to participate. For details of upcoming events, see [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) or email [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■



## Recent and upcoming events

Brief reports on training events of note run by the Training Office



Written by  
Jane Carney,  
Training Officer

### Club Training Officers' Weekend Workshop

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

■ The next Club Training Officers' Weekend Workshop will be held on November 16-18th, 2018, in Galway. Please contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, at the Training Office for more details, to register or to book ■



## Women With Altitude

“Mentoring Mountaineers: Realise Your Potential”

The annual Women with Altitude initiative this year took place in Glendalough, Co Wicklow, in May.

The event opened with an orienteering session led by **Maïke Jurgens**. This was followed by presentations from two speakers, **Ann Fitzpatrick** of Wicklow Mountains National Park and **Cindy Doyle** of *adventure.ie*, both of whom are also members of Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team.

The weather was the star of the weekend, with uninterrupted sunshine from start to finish. This enabled all participants to bask in warm sunlight and climb on dry granite. **Julie Reeves** entertained all as our guest keynote speaker, describing her progression from beginner to trainer over the last five years in the mountains.

This year's event included some new offerings such as **trail running**, **forest bathing**, **bivouacking** and a **Mountain Meitheal** workshop.

The **Great Outdoors** shop, represented by **Carrol Masterson** and **Aoife Leahy**, provided over €500 worth of prizes, promoted the event and set up an extensive pop-up shop for the event. **Cindy Doyle** of *adventure.ie* also set up a pop-up shop and extended their in-shop offer of 'try before you buy' trail running shoes.

Funding for the initiative comes from the **Sports Council** through **Women in Sport**, targeting the increased participation of women in sport.

Women with Altitude offers bursary places, which this year went to **Lia Peare** and **Christina McInerney**, both of whom are



Climbing on the Women With Altitude weekend in Glendalough.

currently climbing at an extreme standard. They both took full advantage of the Glendalough weekend to get out on the skills workshops in Competent Second, Rock Climbing and Bouldering, while meeting many female role models ■

## 2018 Alpine Meet

July 7-21<sup>st</sup>, Val Di Mello, Italy

This year, Mountaineering Ireland's annual Alpine Meet will be returning to Italy, not only for the fine coffee and cuisine but also to access the superb walking, climbing and mountaineering adventures it

has in abundance.

As always, we expect a core of independent walkers, climbers and mountaineers of all ages and aspirations to attend. As Mountaineering Ireland members, if you

attend, you can access the regular suite of alpine skills courses and hut-to-hut trips, or just register and come along to meet other like-minded practitioners of our sport. The website has full details.

**Val di Mello** is a mecca for boulderers and is famous for the annual bouldering event, 'Mello Bloc.' Val di Mello is also

wonderful for the full range of mountaineering activities, with a huge offering of walking, mountaineering and climbing in the valley and up at altitude.

We welcome younger members and their families, as the area is ideal for engaging the next generation of walkers, mountaineers and climbers ■





Bouldering on the Women With Altitude weekend in Glendalough.

## News for providers

■ Providers are reminded to continue to submit evidence of assessment forms for all pass candidates of the ML, SPA/RCI, MPA, LLA and Level 1 Climbing Coach courses.

■ **Data Protection Slides.** Providers are reminded to use these slides when delivering any ML, SPA/RCI, MPA, LLA & L1 CC courses.

■ Dates for CPD opportunities are on the 2018 calendar (see alongside).

■ Providers are reminded to save venues when completing the course report and to add candidates before the course. This will flag any issues pre-course, such as candidates with lapsed membership, those not registered and those using the wrong email address or membership number ■

## News for members

■ The **Digital Logbook** is available to all members to record their activity in the mountains, valleys and crags. Images and files can be uploaded, thus enhancing your log entries. It also serves as a guidebook, with drop-down boxes offering the climbs or mountains in any given area. Please see the website for guidance.

■ **Skills Workshops** are offered to our members over two weekends annually. These workshops are ideal for enhancing your skills and knowledge, which can be brought back to share with your club or applied to your personal mountaineering adventures.

■ We are receiving great feedback on the **revised Climbing Awards**. Trainers are reporting that the courses are benefiting from the new modules and the longer course time, which allows participants to spend time climbing in the evenings and to visit a climbing wall during the course. The recent opening of Altnadue Quarry will facilitate the additional sport climbing requirements (see also, page 20).

■ Please see the **National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders** and the **Good Practice Guidelines for Hillwalkers**, available on our website: go to Training pages, and Training Downloads ■

## Changes to rock climbing modules on training courses

Outdoor courses available in Ireland that offer Quality & Qualification Ireland (QQI) awards and modules need to be aware of the upcoming changes to the Single-Pitch Award QQI Level 5 and Level 6 modules.

Mountaineering Ireland has four modules within the QQI listings: the Level 5 Mountain Skills; the Level 4 Rock Skills; the Level 5 Single-Pitch Award Training; and the Level 6 Single-Pitch Award Assessment.

The changes to the climbing awards need to be adopted by those offering the Level 5 and 6 Single-Pitch Award. The key changes are:

- the experience requirements pre-training and the assessment to

## Key dates 2018

- 22<sup>nd</sup> June MTBI Training Meeting
- 22-24<sup>th</sup> June MTUK Meeting, Tollymore Mountain Centre
- 6-8<sup>th</sup> July Outdoor Learning Symposium, Tollymore Field Study Centre
- 7-21<sup>st</sup> July Alpine Meet, Val Di Mello, Italy
- 31<sup>st</sup> August MTBI Training Meeting??
- 14<sup>th</sup> September MTBI Training Meeting??
- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Sept Skills Workshop, Navigation, Co Kerry
- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Sept Skills Workshop, Scrambling, Co Kerry
- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Sept Skills Workshop Rock Climbing, Co Kerry
- 17<sup>th</sup> September Mountaineering Instructors Award (MIA) Workshop
- 21-22<sup>nd</sup> Sept Mountain Skills Providers Workshop, Wicklow
- 5-7<sup>th</sup> October MTUK Meeting, Plas Y Brenin
- 12-14<sup>th</sup> October Autumn Gathering, Clonbur, Co Galway
- 2-5<sup>th</sup> November Mountain Leader Assessment Club Training Officers' Workshop, Galway
- 16-18<sup>th</sup> Nov Train the Trainers, Wicklow
- 24-25<sup>th</sup> Nov Winter Meet Lecture, Basecamp, Dublin, 7pm
- 28<sup>th</sup> Nov MTBI Training Meeting
- 3<sup>rd</sup> December Lynam Lecture, Trinity College, Dublin
- 6<sup>th</sup> December Senior Providers Workshop Wicklow
- 7<sup>th</sup> December MTBI Training Meeting Club Training Officers' Workshop
- 30<sup>th</sup> January Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 2-3<sup>rd</sup> February Spring Gathering (TBC)
- 17-23<sup>rd</sup> Feb Mountain Leader Assessment. (Venue TBC)
- March
- 8-11<sup>th</sup> March

*Please book early! Please see the website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), for further details or contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, on +353 1 625 1112.*

include indoor and outdoor sport climbing leads (the fully bolted outdoor sport climbing venue Altnadue Quarry is now open);

- the duration for the training course has been increased from two to three days (from 20 to 24 hours), to include one full day at a climbing wall;
- the introduction of two new and additional modules: (1) Teaching Skills and (2) Managing an Assistant.

Please contact the Training Office to discuss the transitional arrangements for candidates and course requirements for trainers and those managing outdoor course provision ■

**Stay safe out there!**

Hen Mountain in the Mourne: scene of RCI training from the Tollymore Mountain Centre

# THE NEW INSTRUCTOR AWARD

Liam McCarthy describes the recently launched **Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)** award, replacing the SPA.

The new Rock Climbing Instructor syllabus arrived in April 2018 and has replaced the old Single Pitch Award (SPA). The new award has been designed by Mountain Training, which is the over-arching body for climbing courses and qualifications in Ireland and the UK.

I registered for the Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI) training in Tollymore, one of the three national mountain training award centres in the UK and Ireland. It is situated just outside Newcastle, Co Down, conveniently less than an hour from Belfast and two hours from Dublin by car.

The training is broadly similar to the training for the SPA. It is still all about achieving a high supervisory standard for safe and enjoyable single-pitch climbing.

Supervising climbing requires a high level of understanding, as it is a significant responsibility. It is still aimed at experienced rock climbers who will be comfortable leading outdoor 'trad' climbs at Severe or above. The overall structure remains unchanged – namely, Registration, Training, Consolidation and Assessment.

## How it differs from the SPA

So, what has changed? Well, firstly the name Rock Climbing Instructor communicates

better what the award involves. 'Instructor' emphasises the teaching and managing of others to develop their skills. It is also possibly a gentle reminder of the need to set a good example at a crag or climbing wall!

Secondly, the training is now carried out over three days rather than two. The scope of the award may also be broader, to reflect the reality that outdoor sport climbing, indoor climbing and bouldering have all risen hugely in popularity in recent years. Climbing has now become a spectrum of activities carried out at a range of locations.

Sport climbing experience is now also a prerequisite for the award. As regards problem-solving, the focus is more on prevention rather than cure. Proper planning, appropriate choice of venue or route and good communication are the keys to avoiding problems.

The course I attended had a 1:3 instructor to participants ratio and I had two fellow students, Tim Rogers and Jared Purvis – both good climbers. Tim had just completed his Mountain Leader Award and was impressively working towards adding the RCI to his list of qualifications. Our course director was Trevor Fisher, himself an E-grade climber, MIA-holder and talented sailor.

**Day 1: Friday.** We outlined our climbing experience and reviewed access and conservation issues. The Tollymore centre is fortunate to have an outdoor granite block wall where we reviewed nut, hex and cam placements, scoring our own efforts for quality. We then set up and attached to some anchors for belay.

Satisfied that we could rig proficiently,

Trevor drove us to Hen Mountain in the Mourne and we hiked up to the impressive granite tors at the top. The climbing there was mostly easy, but the protection was sparse enough. As the exercise was about anchors, placements and belays, we each led easy VDs with Trevor rating the protection placed and the quality and efficiency of the anchors/belays constructed.

Later, back at the centre, we practiced some strategies for helping a stuck climber from the top of the outdoor wall (after encouragement had failed, of course!). The centre has a very nice rigging area above the outdoor wall, which allows realistic simulations in which participants can alternate the roles of stuck climber and resourceful belayer.

**Day 2: Saturday.** Out to the mountains again. We set up bottom ropes and reviewed the importance of protecting oneself and others at the top of crags during set-up. Constructing bomb-proof anchors is obviously a key skill and we practiced equalising many anchors using a range of equipment at the top of a crag. We practiced setting up releasable abseils for novice groups. Now we needed to start thinking!

Although most climbers will regularly set up fixed or retrievable abseils, few will have rigged backed-up, releasable ones. A strong wind – fairly typical for that area of the Mourne – was blowing and that made this mountain-top session even more realistic.

Late in the day, we travelled to Bloodybridge to look at an extensive bouldering area along the coast. We reviewed effective spotting and positioning of crash pads, rock quality and stability,



► **Liam McCarthy** works in Trinity College Dublin and is a member of Mountaineering Ireland, the Wayfarers and the Irish Mountaineering Club. He enjoys challenge hiking, single- and multi-pitch trad climbing, sport climbing, and general and Alpine mountaineering.

and the protectability of the various routes.

Some hazardous landings certainly raised a few issues in my mind. My view – for what it's worth – is that by the same rationale that the RCI scheme is limited to the supervision of groups on non-serious rock-climbing routes, very high bouldering routes should be excluded. This would provide clarity and would be in instructors' interests overall.

In the late evening we returned to the centre to practice rigging various direct belay systems. For general interest we also looked at some interesting gear videos, with some surprising data on the breaking strength of Dyneema slings with knots!

**Day 3: Sunday.** It was wet all day so indoor stuff was scheduled for the day. We reviewed getting information, guidebooks, warm-up routines and climbing-wall rules and etiquette. We covered these issues at the indoor Hotrock climbing wall, which has a lead wall, autobelay devices, a bouldering area and finger boards.

We all tried and failed to do one of the corners with very delicate smearing and bridging, so there is room for improvement on teaching climbing technique! The fibreglass wall in the centre is twenty years old but looks as good as new. We studied fall factors using the centre's useful small

model. Finally, we all sat down with the course director and reviewed the three days' training.

### How I rate the RCI training

Overall, I was very impressed with Tollymore as a training centre. The combination of indoor and outdoor walls, together with the proximity of the real crags of the Mourne Mountains, is perfect for a training weekend. The centre was also in the final stages of bolting a local quarry, Altnadue, which will provide training opportunities for sport climbing (for more on this, see news item on page 20).

In summary, I think the revised award has achieved its aims. The training isn't too prescriptive about how to do things. Most of us would be of the view that each situation is unique and for any given operation there's no single technique that'll cover all eventualities. On top of technical competence, sound judgment and good decision-making are the key things. Mostly, this needs to be obtained through experiential learning, for which there's no substitute.

The training is an opportunity to bring a wide range of issues together in an encouraging environment. This facilitates a realistic self-appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses at the end of the training.

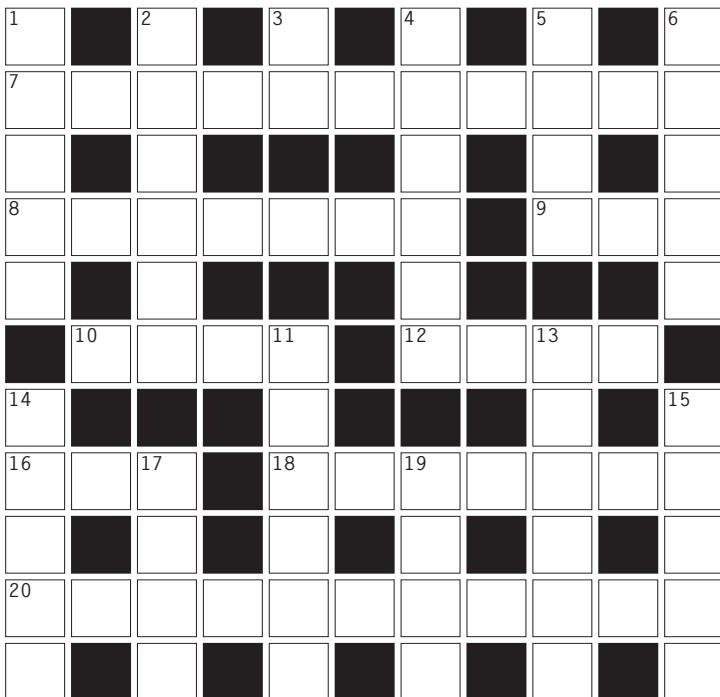


Liam McCarthy training

A plan can then be put in place for further practice prior to the assessment. More generally, the three days of RCI training is a great opportunity for learning, revision and sharing of information and experiences with other climbers and mentors. It is as enjoyable as it is worthwhile ■

## Crossword Competition

Win a pair of shoes from Basecamp if your correct completed entry for this crossword is the first drawn from the hat!



### Clues Across

- 7 Africa's highest peak (11).
- 8 Highest peak in the Himalaya (7).
- 9 Dear me, that's a big animal, found in 6 down, for example (3).
- 10 It is where the sun sets (4).
- 12 The pointed top of a mountain (4).
- 16 Common name for simple accommodation in the Alps (3).
- 18 First name of explorer who confirmed the New World to be a continent in its own right, separate from Asia (7).
- 20 Located on the Pakistan border in the western Himalaya, the ninth highest peak in the world (5,6).



### Clues Down

- 1 A person who glides over snow using long, slender runners (5).
- 2 A coat of wool or a lining used for warmth (6).
- 3 This afternoon, Prime Minister (2).
- 4 You might march in this, the arch of the foot between toes and ankle (6).
- 5 See 15 down (4).
- 6 These mountains form the spine of North America (5).
- 11 Jewelled ornamental crowns traditionally worn by women (6).
- 13 With reference to limbs, flung out widely or haphazardly (6).
- 14 Country where you will find Shishapangma, the fourteenth highest peak (5).
- 15 With 5 down, the name of Eiger climb (5,4).
- 17 You will need one for camping (4).
- 19 Made backwards, Dutch cheese (4).

CROSSWORD compiled by COLIN MACLOCHLAINN



Complete the crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a pair of Merrell All Out Blaze 2 GTX shoes (pictured) from Basecamp, available in both mens and womens styles and worth €145. Send your entry to: The Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 to arrive not later than August 17<sup>th</sup> 2018. The winner will be announced in the next issue.



## Seilg i measc na n-iolar (a search amongst the eagles)



### EAGLE COUNTRY

By Seán Lysaght

Little Toller Books (2018), 272pp,  
€15.00, ISBN 978-1-908213-54-9

*Eagle Country* explores the wild places of Mayo and the west of Ireland, focusing on

the logainmneacha (placenames) that are associated with 'iolar,' the Irish word for eagle. The author, poet Seán Lysaght, describes the walks he undertook in pursuit of eyries in the mountains and along the coastline of Mayo between April and October 2014.

If personal accounts of walks in familiar landscapes appeal to you, then this is a lovely, companionable book to take with you next time you visit Mweelrea, the Nephinbegs, or Croaghnaun and Slievemore on Achill Island. Places like Drumilra (Eagle Ridge); Cregganilra (Eagle's Rock); Mount Eagle; Eagle Island, Screigiolra and Barr Nead an Iolraigh (Eagle's Nest Top) are just some of the

'eagle' sites to be found in Mayo. Partly autobiographical, at times philosophical, and liberally peppered with the impressions and insights of people he meets along the way, *Eagle Country* is a delight to read.

As well as brief forays into Clare, Cork and Kerry, the final chapter of the book, entitled 'Donegal Epilogue,' assesses the current status of the wild eagle reintroduction programmes for both the golden eagle and the white-tailed sea eagle, underway since 2000. The Donegal golden eagle population is now in a precarious position: in 2014 there were three nesting attempts with a single bird fledged; none of the breeding attempts in 2015 succeeded; a

single bird fledged in south Donegal in 2016, though things improved in 2017.

Sea eagles, the author informs us, are secure at a handful of locations in the south of Ireland. Accompanied by Lorcan O'Toole, current Director of the Golden Eagle Trust, Lysaght visits one of the active nests in Donegal.

The overall conclusion is at best cautiously optimistic: it will be many years before sea eagles and golden eagles become widespread again in the skies above Mayo's mountains, but *Eagle Country* serves as a gentle reminder of how prevalent these magnificent birds once were.

**John O'Callaghan** Active member of Clare Outdoor Club and advocate of all things wild in Co Mayo

## Very impressive detail in new EastWest map at 1:25,000



### LUGNAQUILLA & GLENDALOUGH

By EastWest Mapping

EastWest Mapping (April 2018),  
1:25,000 scale map, €12.50 (on map paper) or €19.50 (laminated)

This map is the latest in a new series of 1:25,000 maps for the Wicklow area from EastWest Mapping. It holds great interest for hillwalkers, given the area that it covers,

stretching all the way from Tonelagee in the north to Aughavannagh in the south and from east of Laragh to the N81. It covers some of the prime walking areas of Wicklow, from the busy areas like Glendalough and Lugnaquilla to quieter areas ripe for exploring with such an accurate and detailed map.

The new 1:25k scale will feel more natural to most navigators than the old 1:30k. However, the most exciting development with this new series is the contour interval of 5m. The level of detail available from such a contour interval is very impressive indeed.

The map is printed on a quality map paper, which appears to cope well with being folded and re-folded. An encapsulated (laminated) version is available for total

weatherproofing.

Wicklow Mountains National Park and the military firing ranges are marked in a new way on this map, with the national park area marked with small green circles and the military lands by subtle red 'x's. While the marking of the firing ranges might be a bit low key for some, it seems a good way to get around the 'what's in, what's out' problem arising from the very complex Wicklow Mountains National Park land holding. Overall, I think it works well and is not too intrusive.

Other useful information is provided about ground conditions, with areas of peat hags, gorse, marsh, etc, shown, giving a good indication when planning a route of what might be expected in an area.

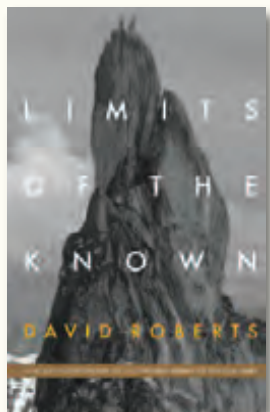
As we've come to expect

from the excellent maps by EastWest Mapping, the accuracy of the forest tracks and other on-the-ground features is every bit as good as the previous series. The work that has gone into gathering place-name and historical data is very evident from the long list of people thanked in the heritage and place-names section, and the inclusion of features not previously shown on maps of the area.

EastWest Mapping has plans to republish its other Wicklow maps using the 1:25k scale and 5m contours, and these should be available in the next year. This new map, and the others to follow, will be very valuable aids for any keen explorer of the Wicklow hills.

**Mairead Kennedy** Member of the Bootleggers Hillwalking Club, lives in south-west Wicklow

# A life well lived in search of adventure



## LIMITS OF THE KNOWN

By David Roberts

WW Norton & Company (2018),  
306pp, no illustrations, hdbk, £18.99,  
ISBN 978-0-393-60986-8

The author of *Limits of the Known*, David Roberts, is an experienced mountaineer and explorer in his own right and an author of some account. In his almost thirty books he has documented journeys to some of the remotest places on Earth, and some of the toughest climbs, and even rewritten history a bit in *True Summit*, when he looked at the first ascent of Annapurna in 1950, the first 8,000m peak climbed.

His books have all been

very well researched and authoritative, but this latest one is more personal, more autobiographical, as personal life events are interwoven into the various chapters.

In 2015, at the age of 72, Roberts was diagnosed with throat cancer. This book is a reflection on a life well spent, but he also describes various expeditions and climbs, his own and others, and looks at the reasons that drive people to journey into the unknown and take extreme risks.

He begins by looking at the attempts of Nansen to get to the North Pole, and the bravery that allowed him and his party to head off into the then unknown, when return was uncertain.

He then considers the importance of Shipton and Tilman's partnership and their explorations, considering what drove them on and why they were so successful.

In the next chapter, he looks back at the history of climbing. He also introduces his own growing interest in early cultures and their relationship with mountains and other wild places.

The chapters that follow reflect on a disillusionment with mountaineering, as he feels his ability waning, and a growing interest in canyoning and descending remote and previously unexplored rivers. Whatever he does, he seems to do at an extreme level. He also introduces his cancer diagnosis in recent years as evidence of the uncertainty of life.

Roberts looks at some of his own explorations of remote cultures and then considers Leahy's exploration of Papua New Guinea, where he was making 'first contact' with tribes in remote areas. All the time, Roberts is reflecting on the differences between cultures, the violence that is perpetrated by one culture to 'control' another, and the feeling in the past that to fully control another culture you had to make them adopt your practices. I am not sure, however, that I can agree with the laissez-faire attitude he expresses with regard to female genital mutilation.

The last major chapter looks at the future of



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

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This is the book we recommend most highly from our summer 2018 reviews

adventure and the possibilities for exploration that still exist.

He also looks at his own life, still married to his original life partner as he is, and the adventures he won't have now. There is no sense of being hard done by. He recognises that he has been fortunate and lived a full life and reflects that there will always be places we have not visited and things we have not done.

All in all, this book is an excellent reflection on what drives man to explore, by a man who has lived a very full life. This book is a very insightful and thought-provoking read by a great author.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

## Competition

WW Norton & Company, publishers of David Roberts' new book, *Limits of the Known*, have kindly offered three copies of this hardback book as prizes in the following competition:

**Question:** What was the name of the first book David Roberts wrote, which is still in print, about his 1965 first ascent of the West Face of Mount Huntington in Alaska?

**Answers by post to:** Limit of the Known Competition, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.  
Closing date for entries: Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (4.00pm).

The winners will be announced in the Autumn 2018 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



## 25% discount offer

If you would like to purchase a copy of the book *Limits of the Known*, it can be ordered, postage free, from the WW Norton website via this link:  
<https://goo.gl/BTK2dc>.

WW Norton & Company are offering a 25% discount to all readers of the *Irish Mountain Log*, if you use the code **WN548** when ordering. This code will remain valid until February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



## History of heroic climbs on a Himalayan giant



### THE OGRE: BIOGRAPHY OF A MOUNTAIN AND THE DRAMATIC STORY OF THE FIRST ASCENT

By Doug Scott

Vertebrate Publishing (2017), 192pp, many colour photos, topos and maps, £20.00, ISBN 978-1-911342-79-3

Often, mountaineering books can be formulaic: an expedition plan and preparation, an approach, a climb, a description of dangers and drama and obstacles overcome, if any, followed by success or failure,

then a retreat. Such accounts can be cumbersome to follow and repetitive in theme. Not this book. In a somewhat new departure for the genre, the author Doug Scott broadens the literary scope, concentrating on a 7,285m mountain in the Karakoram he became very familiar with while attempting its first ascent, but also through his research on the history of the region. The result is very worthwhile.

*The Ogre* is a book of two parts. In the first, we learn about how the Himalaya and Karakoram were formed, followed by the onset of early European exploration and then commerce via the East India Company. Politics is covered with the intrigue between expanding and competing empires, Russian and British, for control of the Karakoram, along with the surveying and mapping efforts vital to those influences.

Scott's light, matter-of-fact style makes for an enjoyable

read. In particular, he provides interesting pen sketches of the early explorers: Younghusband, Conway, *et al.* Unfortunately, he does not give a moral view on the effects of imperialism, though to be fair he does not condone it either.

Part II is the author's account of his and his team's formidable first ascent of the Ogre in 1977, via its Southwest Spur and West Ridge, a fine technical achievement in its own right. However, the expedition is better known for the accident Scott had while abseiling from the summit, when he broke both his legs, and the subsequent rescue and retreat carried out by his climbing companions in a heroic battle for survival, at odds against the mountain, the weather and a lack of food. It's a well-known story, but it gives fresh insight here into the characters involved – Bonington, Estcourt, Antoine, Rowland, Braithwaite – including the minor tensions that existed between them, not unusual when undertaking

such ambitious objectives. How they all survived is remarkable: Scott with his broken legs, crawling down to base camp; Bonington suffering broken ribs and pneumonia; the others rescuing them without food or immediate support; and then the helicopter evacuating Scott to hospital crashing on landing.

The combination of the accounts of both the history and the climbing given here works very well. It is part of a forthcoming series by the author on prominent mountains he has climbed. Notable also is the high production quality, with many colour photographs, topos and maps, which greatly enhances the book's value to the reader. Overall, this slim volume is a gem, leaving this reviewer impatient to discover more in the series.

**Gerry Galligan** Climber, explorer and a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club. Gerry is author of *Climbing Ramabang* (Vertebrate Publishing).

## Useful pocket guide to staying safe from hill weather



### MOUNTAIN WEATHER: A FIELD REFERENCE

By Jeff Renner

Mountaineer Books (2017). Folded card pocketbook in eight sections, printed on both sides, with colour photos and diagrams. \$4.95.

This handy little pamphlet seems to cover all the key points about the ways weather can affect us in the mountains. In fact, for a postcard-sized pamphlet, it has a surprising amount of information in it.

The early sections give a good basis for recognising weather patterns. Readers are encouraged to look for a source for national weather

forecasts, such as our own Met Éireann. Severe weather events are defined. Then there is a checklist of things you can do or look for to assess the weather you will experience before you go out.

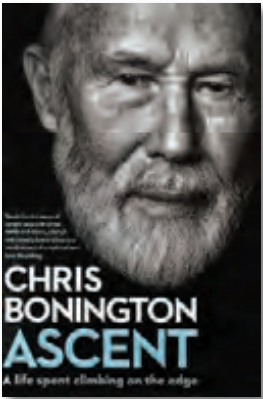
The minimum essential gear is listed. First aid for weather-related issues is outlined, evaluating cold and heat dangers. A couple of the panels illustrate and explain the significance of various cloud formations. Then several panels describe and illustrate severe weather events such as fog, windstorms, thunderstorms and lightning, wildfires, flash

flooding and snow and avalanche hazards. The final section covers staying safe in the mountains, a quick guide to weather safety.

All in all, this seems a very comprehensive and handy guide to severe weather events, certainly useful information to have to hand when planning a day out in the mountains, particularly in the bigger ranges, where severe weather is more likely to occur.

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

# Bonington reveals personal sacrifices behind triumphs



## ASCENT: A LIFE SPENT CLIMBING ON THE EDGE

By Chris Bonington

Simon & Schuster (2017), 423pp, colour photos and maps, £20.00, ISBN 978-1-4711-5754-7

This book, Sir Chris Bonington's twentieth, is an interesting and honest account of a life spent mountaineering. It is also a story of family life, of triumphs and defeats, losses and friendships, and of personal tragedy.

Bonington achieved many firsts in a career spanning over sixty years. In the opening chapter, he

describes climbing the Old Man of Hoy. He first climbed this sea stack forty-eight years earlier at the age of thirty-two. So now, aged eighty, himself an old man, the author very nicely ties together the start and the end of his career as a mountaineer.

The book is not just for mountaineers, although those familiar with Everest or the Eiger will be able to identify with the logistical headaches, the elation and the hardship associated with reaching these summits. Bonington also describes lesser known peaks such as Mt Kongur in China and the Ogre in the Karakoram range. Descriptions of these and numerous other challenging ascents, complete with sketches, photographs and maps, make for a real page-turner. The author was particularly drawn to previously unclimbed peaks, the more remote the better. It is apparent from his writing that his sense of adventure has not dulled with age.

PHILLYACCT



The Old Man of Hoy

Bonington offers honest reflections on the toll his adventurous life took on those closest to him. Several times throughout the book he acknowledges the sacrifices his wife made for his career, moving to London

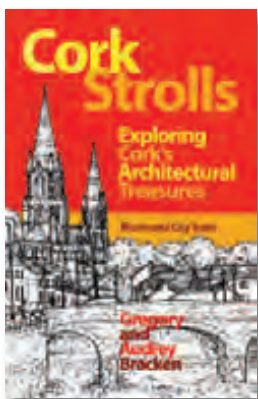
though she preferred the countryside, spending birthdays alone and raising their two sons in her husband's long absences. Bonington recounts with painful honesty his son's troubled teenage years and later struggles with addiction.

At times I could not help but wonder if the life of the modern adventurer, jetting off to climb unexplored mountains, was a way of avoiding troubles at home. Certainly, climbing offered Bonington not just an escape, but a profession, when other career attempts failed. He has made a living from the mountains, through writing, lecturing and photography, and by age 18 he confidently announced that "climbing now completely fills my life."

This book is not just for anyone interested in climbing; it is for anyone interested in an outdoor, adventurous life and who enjoys a good autobiography.

**Pamela Harbison** Hillwalker, a member of Tredagh Trekkers Hillwalking Club

# Cork strolls more about the architecture than the walks



The Collins Press (2018), 190pp, many detailed line drawings and hand-drawn sketch maps, €12.99, ISBN 978-1-84889-342-9

This book is perhaps misnamed because the words 'Cork Strolls' are in large print on the cover, but it would have been more appropriate to have 'Cork's Architectural Treasures' in the larger print. It is really a book about the architecture of Cork and it explains the history of many interesting buildings around the city and its environs.

There are eight city strolls described, typically taking 1½ to 2½ hours each, but most of

that time is devoted to viewing the buildings, rather than actually walking. Naismith's rule would have these walks as 10-15 minutes each.

There is also a three-hour stroll around Cobh and a six-hour one in Kinsale. Another eight buildings are described that are further afield. Some, like the Waterworks and Blackrock Castle, are a brisk walk from the city centre, while others, like Blarney Castle or Ballyvolane, are much further away - not within walking distance.

There are no photographs in this book, but it is lavishly

illustrated with black-and-white line drawings of all the buildings described, and all the maps are similarly hand-drawn.

This is a fine book for visitors to Cork, and I suspect even natives will find it very useful. So, while these are not trails as we usually know them, and no hillwalking gear is needed for these strolls, it is a nice book and a useful companion to the earlier Dublin book from this brother and sister team.

**Paul Walsh** Hillwalker, a member of Glenwalk Hill-Walking Club since 2004 (where he is doing his third stint as walks coordinator)



## Popular hill routes for Dublin-based cyclists



### CYCLING SOUTH DUBLIN & WICKLOW: GREAT ROAD ROUTES

By Ian O'Riordan

The Collins Press (2018), 152pp, colour photos & maps throughout, €14.99, ppbk, ISBN 978-1-84889-344-3

Ian O'Riordan is a sports writer for *The Irish Times*, best known for reporting on athletics, his specialist subject, but also covering cycling, notably the Tour de France, Giro d'Italia and the Rás annually. A keen cyclist himself and living in Glencullen in the Dublin Mountains, he is very familiar with the better cycling routes found in the

south Dublin and Wicklow hills and, in this guidebook, he provides a compilation of arguably the most scenic cycling routes in the area.

For each of the twenty routes described, O'Riordan sets out the very realistic expectations of the road ahead, with distance, gradient graphs, maps and tantalising photographs for each one. At the same time, he arms you with route-related information on natural landmarks and historical features, most notably the Military Road, which is central to many of the cycles. He also imparts his own personal thoughts and experiences of the routes.

There is a route to suit every ability, from the complete beginner to the seasoned cyclist: routes incorporating climbs to keep the legs pumping – such as up Cruagh, Bohernabreena, Killakee, Glencullen, Kippure, the Sally Gap and up to Glendalough and through the Wicklow Gap – to routes of lesser height gain for a more relaxed day out on the bike.



COLLIN MACLOCHLAINN

Indeed, once you have this guide in your hand you will have bought yourself a challenge to cycle each and every one of the routes Ian has thoughtfully planned for you.

The beauty of the guide is that you can choose to cycle one particular route on a given day or choose to cycle two or more of the routes for a more challenging day out.

The routes are fairly well known in the cycling world and, to be honest, a hardened cyclist would not specifically drive to an area to cycle them, as suggested for some. Seasoned cyclists would travel a minimum of 100 kilometres (60 miles) on a day out, so the routes outlined in this book would only be part of their spin.

The routes would give one an idea for a section to incorporate into a longer cycle, but that's about it (for the harder cyclists).

I have no hesitation in recommending this guidebook to all cyclists, and I wish it had existed eight years ago when I first took up cycling with the Orwell Wheelers.

Buy it, treasure it, it will open your mind to the true beauty and hidden treasures of our south Dublin and Wicklow roads, a cycling haven of deep glens, forested mountains and wild scenery. Indeed, dare I say it, it could also be used as a guide for tourists travelling on foot or by bike or even car.

**Eileen Byrne** Dublin-based cyclist from Wicklow and member of the Orwell Wheelers cycling club

## Leinster cycling routes, often on small country roads



### CYCLING NORTH LEINSTER: GREAT ROAD ROUTES

By Hugh Halpin

The Collins Press (2018), 158pp, €14.99, ISBN 978-1-84889-345-0

This guidebook is intended for use by cyclists who also travel by rail. Each route starts and all but one finishes at railway stations on the Dublin-Belfast or Dublin-Sligo lines. The twenty-nine routes vary in distance from 24km to 131km, so there is something for everyone in the audience.

Theoretically, the countryside visited is flat, but this is a flatness found only in

geography books. The reality is rolling roads and short, sharp hills. The hillwalkers who transfer to wheels will find that they are being led into the equivalent of a mature forest full of texture and secret gardens, with a play of light, rather than to high ground with long views. This can be a special pleasure and has the added benefit of hedges to offset the braking power of the wind.

Routes are carefully selected and, even in the east coast area, where the weave is tight, the author avoids afflicting us with repetition by using the

network of small roads to the full. Directions are given in few words so that it is not necessary to cycle with the guide in one hand. Considerable stretches of road can be covered by consulting the guide and then using the contents of one's memory.

If you think you know the area already, be prepared to be surprised.

**Sé O'Hanlon** Relict\* mountaineer and a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club.

\*Relict: "A thing which has survived from an earlier period or in a primitive form." – Oxford English Dictionary



## Elizabeth (Betty) Healy

### Pioneering climber, editor and author

Elizabeth ('Betty') Healy, who died peacefully at her home in April this year at the age of ninety, was a pioneering climber and an editor and author of guidebooks about Ireland's natural and built heritage. In many ways, Betty was a woman ahead of her time, who climbed on an equal footing with her male counterparts.

The middle of five children, Betty was adventurous from an early age. She left school at fifteen with a basic education and told her mother that she was never going to marry, because she wasn't going to stand at a sink and cook food twice a day. She never did marry.

She worked in a shop in Cork, moved to London for a year and then returned to work in Dublin. It was when Betty went to work for Bord Fáilte that she found her true passion. She became editor of Bord Fáilte's bi-monthly magazine, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, a post she held from the early 1970s until 1986. Writers and poets such as Séamus Heaney, John Montague and pioneering female author Mary Lavin were commissioned to write pieces for the magazine, which captured the essence of a modernising Ireland.

Betty had a hunger for adventure and the outdoor life. In his book *The Way That We Climbed* (The Collins Press, 2015), Paddy O'Leary described her as "the country's leading woman climber for many years, and the pioneer of many fine routes."

Author, climber and broadcaster Dermot Somers said that she climbed as an equal among an unconventional group of gifted men, including biochemist Frank Winder, physicist Peter Kenny and architect Seán Rothery.

Betty pioneered climbing routes in Glendalough and on Luggala in Wicklow



and in Glenveagh, Lough Barra and the Poisoned Glen in Donegal. She also went on climbing expeditions abroad, including one to Monte Rosa in the Swiss/Italian Alps, where she was stranded in an Alpine hut for four days.

Brian McCall remembers that what first drew his attention to Betty was her capacity to create climbs, to find a weakness in a crag or on a mountain rather than fighting her way to the top. He says that Betty also cared about the particularity of rock types, the feel of granite under the sun and the challenge of quartz in Connemara, and about the warmth of the land and the land's people. A climb for Betty was a love affair with a mountain, not a battle.

He recalls that the ways Betty and he climbed were quite different, it being for Betty a question of balance rather than of force. Betty loved a long, open rock-face with a trace of a layback, hopefully leading to the top. She was always a careful climber, never having a serious fall over the years.

She was known for her well researched guidebooks, in particular *The Book of the Liffey from Source to the Sea* with Christopher Moriarty and Gerard O'Flaherty (1988) and *A Literary Tour of Ireland* (1995).

Her other guidebooks included *The Wolfhound Guide to Dublin Monuments* (1998), *The Wolfhound Guide to the River Gods* (1998) and *In Search of Ireland's Holy Wells* (2001).

Betty also contributed to *Sunday Miscellany*, the RTÉ Radio 1 Sunday morning programme.

Her painting and her interest in poetry, in particular the poetry of WB Yeats, resulted in an exhibition of her paintings inspired by WB Yeats' poetry in the Sligo Yeats Museum in 2011.

Betty Healy remained fiercely independent throughout her life and never lost her thirst for adventure. She swam daily all

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



year round at White Rock on Killiney beach and continued to live in her home in Monkstown until her death.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Betty Healy. May she rest in peace.

**Patrick O'Sullivan (with thanks to The Irish Times of May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018)**

*Elizabeth (Betty) Healy: born November 27<sup>th</sup> 1927; died April 17<sup>th</sup> 2018*

### First Ascent

#### In memoriam Elizabeth Healy

By Robin Norton\*

Camaderry,  
A rock-star in worn tennis-shoes and aran sweater  
Miles above  
Swings to a hold  
Glides with Pavlova steps  
From a granite edge  
To a rib of quartz  
Pauses - all eyes on her  
Looking ahead  
Leaning backwards over the steep grey void  
Leans and with a swift recoil finds fresh poise  
By a tiny heather tuft.  
Carefully we turn to eye the lake  
And miss the crowning moment  
A yodel of delight  
And she is up.

\*Robin Norton and Elizabeth Healy were members of the same poetry group

## William (Bill) Hannon

Rock climber, mountaineer and hillwalker

William Hannon passed away in the early hours of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at the age of eighty-eight. Known to his friends as Bill, he was a friendly, gregarious man, who had had a lifelong passion for hillwalking, rock climbing and mountaineering.

Born in October 1929 and raised in Drumcondra, Dublin, Bill was the second eldest of seven children. After his education at O'Connell Secondary School, he embarked on a career in the public service, starting in the Land Commission and with subsequent periods spent in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs and the Department of Labour, before he became Director of the National Manpower Service. When that service was absorbed into FÁS in 1988, Bill undertook a series of manpower services projects overseas on behalf of the UN's International Labour Office (ILO) in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Kyrgyzstan.

Bill joined the **Irish Mountaineering Club** in 1960

and climbed with some of the club's pioneers – Frank Winder, Betty Healy, Sean Rothery, etc. After they left the club scene, Bill continued climbing with the club for nigh on fifty years. He had an ability to mix easily with old and young and to forge new climbing partnerships. Alpine trips, Scottish trips, the annual meets in the Lakes and Wales, snow camps, night hikes, winter routes in gullies and rock climbing on crags from Kerry to Donegal were all grist to his mill. He was a man for all seasons and all aspects of mountaineering, from putting up new routes in Wicklow and Connemara to climbing in the Teton and the Dolomites, to backpacking in the Lairig Ghru in Scotland and walking the Camino de Santiago.

After he married Mairéad in 1961, it was Bill's passion for rock climbing that determined the location of their first home, which was conveniently close to Dalkey Quarry for a man whose only mode of transport then was a motorcycle. When



they acquired their first car later, regular trips could be made further afield to Wicklow, the Twelve Bens, the Comeraghs, the Mournes, etc.

In the 1970s, a group known as the **Dalkey Walkers** evolved and Bill became a regular participant in their hillwalks, along with other locals, such as Derry O'Hegarty and Bob Curran. When **Trekkers Mountaineering Club** started up in the early 1980s, he joined that too.

Bill's pioneering spirit in his younger days brought him on a series of impressive overseas forays. On his trips to the Alps, he climbed Mont Blanc (4,810m) and the Matterhorn (4,478m), amongst other peaks, and climbed in the Himalayas and Greenland. However, the trip that perhaps had the most enduring memories for Bill was his trip to the Rockies, where he tackled Grand Teton (4,199m), the highest mountain in the 310,000-acre Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

More of an all-rounder than a rock specialist, he was actually climbing better in his sixties than earlier. He made his first VS leads at a stage when most of his contemporaries had called it a day. Eighteen years ago, he decided to mark his

seventieth birthday by leading Quartz Gully, a classic but demanding three-pitch HS on Twin Buttress in Glendalough. Initial attempts were thwarted by bad weather but, some time after his seventy-first birthday, he finally succeeded. In later years, trouble with his knee joints ruled out rock climbing for Bill, but he still went hillwalking regularly.

Thanks to the unstinting support of his wife, **Mairéad**, a retired Dalkey GP, and his family, Bill remained moderately active until his final days, meeting his old pals regularly for a drink and a chat and strolling in the vicinity of his home or along the Dalkey seafront. He participated in Trekkers' walks until the onset of his final illness. Bill's was a life well led.

Our sympathies are extended to Bill's wife, Mairéad, his daughter Iseult and sons, Maurice, Stephen and Hugh.

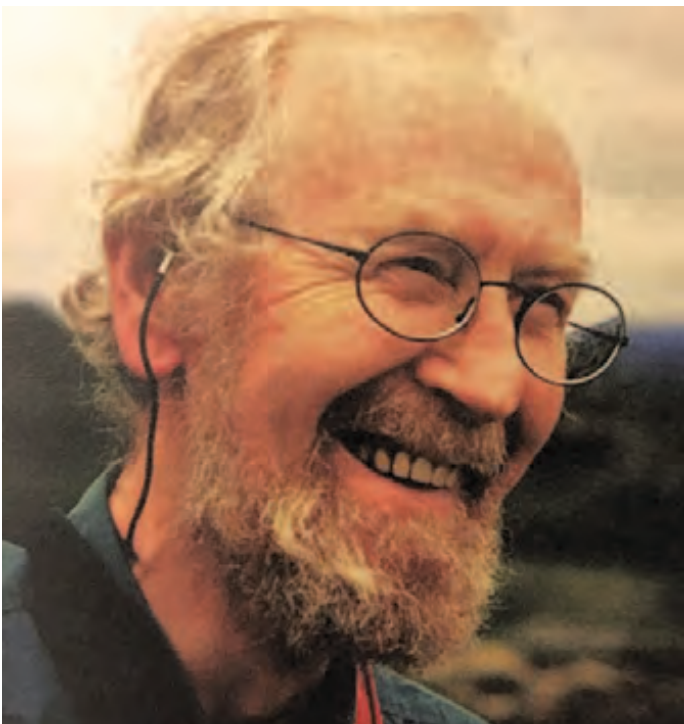
Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

**Myles Duffy, Chairperson,  
Trekkers Mountaineering Club,  
Glenageary**

*Additional material from:*

**Gerry Moss, Irish  
Mountaineering Club**

*William (Bill) Hannon: born 1929;  
died April 5<sup>th</sup> 2018*



# The Canary Islands

The Canary Islands, away from the tourist beaches, are a Mecca for hillwalkers who want to enjoy gorgeous scenery in subtropical climes, especially in winter. There's lots of great walking in these islands. Check out these advertisements and book your holiday soon!

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