From climbing at five thousand metres in the Himalayas to sunny climbing overlooking Monte Carlo, we have a great selection of trip reports from members of the club. There is also a great article written fifty years ago about a climb in Donegal, some reports from our meets and training officers, some very useful information on Open Street Maps, some coaching tips and a great piece on the Cave in Luggala.

**NICE 2012**  
*Carol Ryan*  
Not since the Greeks of Marseille descended on the large inlet known today as Nice has a more audacious expedition arrived in the region!

**BIVOUAC IN A BACKPACK**  
*Tina Ennis & Luke Breathnath*  
Under the moon and stars, orange survival bags, windbreakers, a tent or two and bivi bags were dotted about the campfire that never really got going.

**SNOW CAMP ON LUG**  
*Vanessa Sumner*  
Vanessa's experience on a recent camping trip: “I was the only one stupid enough to have only brought a bivi bag!”

**GARHWAL EXPEDITION**  
*Gerry Galligan*  

**ALECK CRICHTON**  
*Paddy O’Leary*  
Aleck Crichton is now the oldest member of the club, but not everyone will have been aware of the significance of Aleck’s role in the history of Irish mountaineering.

The newsletter is about news from the club so please send in any trip reports news you have to: publicity@irishmountaineeringclub.org
IMC GARWHAL EXPEDITION 2012
L-R: Padraic Gibbons, Gerry Galligan, Santabeir Sherpa (Cook), Jemyung (Camp Asst.), Berndt Heim, Pemba Bhotia (Asst. Cook), Terence Clancy.
In the background: Peaks of the Obra & Dev Kir Valleys.

THE CAVE
Christy Rice & Paddy O'Leary
Talk to any of the climbers who climbed at fuggala over the years and they will recall the large cave under the boulders near the lake, about fifteen foot square in floor area with a higher and lower section.

OPEN STREET MAPS
Peter O'Neill
Santa brought you that Garmin GPS, but did not bring you that extra arm and leg you asked for for your mapping budget. GroundTruth (software) and OpenStreetMap data may be the answer.

COSTA BLANCA CLIMBING
Ian Christie
Having some time on my hands I made the decision to head south to the mountains just a few miles inland from Benidorm on the Costa Blanca in Spain.

BLAST FROM THE PAST
Padraic O'Halpin
A selected article from the newsletter archives describing the first ascent written over fifty years ago.

GRAVITY COACHING
Angela Carlin
Angela from Gravity Climbing Centre in Inchicore will be giving some simple climbing tips over the next few newsletters.
Not since the Greeks of Marseille descended on the large inlet known today as Nice has a more audacious expedition arrived in the region! After months of physical preparation and mental anguish (France for five days; this will be tough) we started our trip on the first evening at the well known crag of Trinity to the north – No, not for hours of hard climbing but for a long session of panic buying as we hit the mecca of sport bargains, Decathlon.

The next day saw us on our first climbing proper to La Turbie about 20 minutes up the coast from Nice, above the town of Cap d’Ail, bordering Monaco. It was sunny and warm, 16 degrees when the bus dropped us below the climbs. From here we had a 40-minute hike up; showing the first doubts of physical ability to shake the group!

When we arrived, more than warmed up, we all paired off nicely to begin on 3, 4 and 5 routes ranging from 8 to 20 meters in length. Basecamp for the day was in an idyllic spot in the sun, left and right of which were six different crags with 30 climbs at 4 plus, 130 - 5 to 6a, and 80 – 7 grades. It was a good call for our first day – this crag having the most 3 and 4 routes of all the trip’s locations.

The limestone had good grip with a few polished areas but generally routes had a nice mix of everything from slabs, massive rocks/boulders, vertical walls and some over hangs for the more adventurous. As a first day and first taste of climbing en France, everyone was more than happy.

The next day saw us descend on the pretty hill top town of St. Jeannet high up and approx. 20 kilometers from the coast. One train with bus, taking approximately an hour and a half got us to the crag where there is a famed 13-pitch route (not for this trip!). From the town there was a 20-minute hike up and the physical ability of a few was tested yet again. But we all easily made it to base camp located on the sunny side of this large mountain where there were 5/6 areas of approximately 230 climbs.

These routes were generally higher grades from the day before, mostly 5-6a grade and included some multi pitch. We all got a little shock at the challenging nature of the routes, but once everyone had had a go, we all knew what to expect and the rest of the day was pretty awesome. It was a little cloudy but the views from here were still stunning and as people climbed everyone took regular breathers to admire the town below and the rolling countryside stretching all the way to the sea.

Saturday we made our way to Gorbio, another tiny hill top village about an hour and a half outside
Four pitch La Sud Arete (5a) goes up this arete
Nice via 2 buses. Here we had a walk down rather than a walk up much to the delight of some expedition members. The area we stuck to had approximately 30 climbs ranging from 4-7 grade and 8 meters to a whooping 34 meters in length (70 meter rope required!).

The weekend arrived and with it brought local French and Italian climbers to the area. I’m sure they were more than surprised to see 18 crazed Irish, Polish and German climbers running around their isolated crag!

At the beginning of the day a mad scramble ensued for the handful of warm up, 5 grade climbs but all got on something here and there, and there were some lovely climbs to be had. Long and challenging at times, all routes started in a dense forest and opened up when you got above the canopy. The day started cloudy but as it passed it cleared to show the dramatic valley we were climbing in. The routes were mostly vertical but with some interesting sections of long cut out slab routes where water flow had carved the rock into dramatic curves and flows. It was easy to understand how one route translated as “mouth of the ear”.

Personally I found the day here challenging; leading being that little bit more challenging when there were dogs barking, gun shots going off, the odd abseil onto locals and Diarmuid maniacally running through the trees, off his head on adrenalin! Luckily nearly all found the grading
easier here than at the previous two crags, with some people attempting their first 6 routes.

On Sunday we lost the two Daves (Trunk and Madden) and Diarmuid, which was a real pity as this turned out to be one of the best days. Although loosing the ethics committee (Madden) for some meant a large sigh of relief as they felt they could now truly relax and not feel guilty about the odd extender or tree grab. Most of the group returned to the beautiful surroundings of la Turbie via the town above the cliffs, while Ian and Kevin C’s returned to St. Jeannet to suss out that 13 pitcher (or was that 13 pitchers?! Don’t want to ruin a good story by telling the truth now, do I?!)

At la Turbie it was the best day weatherwise hitting 21 degrees and as the sun shone and buzzards glided over head, all the girls were happy out in little tops, on large slabs with lovely sloping inclines. We also got to swoon regularly at the local Italian and French climbers who had decided to go partially au natural (tops off!) and we all thought of Diarmuid in his shorts and decided maybe that wasn’t something we wanted to see after all!

Luckily no one was around (well bar security guard impersonator Peter) to see the nakedness of myself, Claire and Ian going for a dip at the end of the day, where I am sure all the locals were swooning at our exotic northern European paleness.
There are lots more tails and details I could liberally add to this account but what goes on tour stays on tour!! But I can’t finish this without skipping lightly over Ian and his fetish for hairy eye-brows, food fights over Facebook, Barbara screaming at her belayers, Claire and her fear of any sort of hike, Diarmuid and his excitable nature, Maeve and the girls from Belfast and their excitable natures, Przemek and Karolina’s entertaining domestics pre, post and on route, Clodagh’s climbing a storm every day, dramatic bus runs and the making of new foreign and Irish friends from Mexico to Poland! In conclusion the large number and mix of challenging, varied, easily accessible sports climbs, in such a beautiful setting makes this a great spot for climbers.

However to really benefit you might want to avoid the weekends. The rock throughout was Limestone and was suffering from a little polishing on some of the more popular routes, which didn’t prove to hinder things too much.

All the crags were easy to access on public transport and most routes were well marked with hand written glazed tiles in the classic French white and blue.

All the routes appeared to be safe and regularly maintained. The excellent ROCKFAX guidebook Cote d Azur worked as a great bible for the whole trip with it’s large colour photos making routes easy to find and map out. Public transport, even
on a Sunday, proved to be very adequate for the purposes of getting to crags early, and home late. In terms of gear, a 70 metre rope is a must and in the lightest diameter required for safety, this with a couple of slings, crabs, 12 extenders and the ROCKFAX guide and your good to go.

Those who brought trad gear were happy to have it when bolts were just that little too generously spaced, so a few nuts and friends/cams might also be useful.

Thanks to Kevin as guide and organiser for leading us all with patience on a genuinely idyllic holiday, with one person even commenting it was their best holiday ever. Kevin organised tremendous weather and was expert throughout on where and how to go everywhere, so we can forgive him the odd tree/extender grab and red-wine fuelled character assassination!! To the whole gang I say thanks for great company, which made it a brilliant trip.
Editor’s Note

A number of what we could call bivicamping trips took place over the winter by a core group of bivicamp/nightnav stalwarts.

Below are reports from two of those trips, from IMC members Tina Ennis and Luke Breathnach on a bivouac camping trip last December, and from Vanessa Summer on a trip to Lug in the snow.

Bivouac In A Backpack

Tina Ennis

Freezing temperatures and icy winds were the inspiring conditions on the day. At the IMC Hut on 1st December we spread the map on the kitchen table to select a campsite. We all agreed on a site just above Lough Dan on the Inchivore River. A natural campsite with a handy water source and even a spot for a campfire.

Heading up the steep climb towards the Brokaghss straight away we were questioning any over packing and what items could have been left behind. Most of the group travelled light with just a bivy, for a night beneath the stars, one or two of us had smuggled a tent into our backpacks.

The main group practiced map and compass skills in the afternoon along the Brochaghss, followed by a night nav to the bivy site. Three of us waited until it was dark and took a moonlit route up Paddock Hill to Scarr and across to Kanturk. The night was very clear with stars popping out all around the moon. A slight breeze became a strong wind on top of Scarr.

Checking our bearing on top with a wind chill bringing the temperature to about -5c we eagerly headed towards the shelter of the valley for our overnight stay.

Traipsing across Kanturk was an exercise in avoiding deep wet bog holes. Aiming for a break in the forest we happily arrived at just the right spot. The forest is pretty overgrown and in some parts the ground very wet.

As we picked out the best sites we spotted a line of lights emerging through the darkness. It was a well-timed rendezvous and at 10.00pm definitely time for a hot dinner followed by a nightcap.

Under the moon and stars, orange survival bags, windbreakers, a tent or two and bivy bags were dotted about the campfire that never really got going.

The night was beautifully clear and crisp. In the morning we emerged well after dawn having slept well. Frozen boots soon thawed out with the activity of repacking and brewing
up hot chocolate for breakfast. Following the Wicklow Way back towards the IMC Hut we could see snow on the surrounding mountaintops.

Thanks to Tony Barry for organizing the trip, it was certainly a success and here's to the next one.

Bivouac In A Backpack 2

In the fall of last year acting in his new role as IMC training officer, Tony Barry organized a series of ‘Mountain Skills’ days out in Wicklow. These were loosely based around the BOS Mountain Skills 1&2 training syllabi that most of us had already done and were keen to put into practice or brush-up on.

The first of the days was on 17th November and a ‘tight’ number of 5 of us had a very successful day on the hills south of the upper Lake of Glendalough, starting out at Derrybawn and working our way around to Lugduff and back via the Spink.

We covered navigation basics such as pacing/Naismith’s Rule/map & compass work; we each had varying degrees of experience and it was great to re-learn what we had become lazy with over the years.

Following on from the successful first outing the bar was raised and the call was put out for a Night Navigation Hike and Bivvy.

So on the first weekend of December, 10 hardy souls met up in the IMC Hut; Tony Barry, Ian Christie, Niall & Tina Ennis, Dave McNeill, Eoin O’Neill, Martin Punch, Geoff Rowden, Vanessa Sumner and myself.

We promptly had a gear check and discussed what route we were to take. I was delighted to see others had as large a rucksack as I did, but a bit concerned to hear there were a lot of ‘Proper’ Gortex Bivvy Bags. The one I had, I picked up in New Zealand about 10 years ago and was more like an orange bin-liner, so I threw in my tent fly-sheet just in case.

We were to leave the Hut at around 2:00pm and planned to reach the upper end of Lough Dan at around 10:00pm one group of us via Tonelagee and Kanturk, the other via Scarr.

So off we set, at a steady pace, with the usual banter of getting to know
each other and sussing out what experience we all had, the usual ‘so how long have you been climbing?’ mantra that loosens the tongues. We crossed the road at the Hut and climbed north-east to Brockagh-East, the heart-rates going, temperature rising and the layers peeling-off as we rose.

It was perfect weather, dry and clear-skied, but a little Irish underfoot (i.e.: boggy & wet), a delightful way to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

As we gained our first height at Brockagh East (471m) we used this to orientate ourselves and set our plan of attack for Tonelegee, which loomed beautifully snow-capped above us. Maps were orientated, compasses set and a route agreed. We were to bear North-West to Brockagh, and then veer North-North-West to Tonelagee which we were to reach in darkness.

The going was easy and we used it to practice our pacing and timing between the obvious high points. Daylight was running out and as we approached the boggy plateau above Aska pond the temperatures dropped, rain-gear, gloves and hats were gradually donned and finally head torches as the night sky opened above us.

As the terrain rose up Tonelagee, so too did the effort, at first it was a patch of snow here or there then it was the fun of kicking our way to gain foot holds, progressing to a laboured snake of climbers, taking it in turns to make headway.

We stopped, panting, half way up for a break, took in the stunning night views and like good kit-monsters all, compared head-torches!

Onwards and upwards, we had estimated summiting at 6pm and were on time, we aimed for the wide contour line southwest of the summit so we wouldn’t miss it. As the ground flattened we set about forming a human chain, 5 meters apart from each other, and turned back northwest to find the Trig-station. Which we indeed did, bang on!

Up top and stopped we didn’t dally too long as the wind-chill was taking its toll; so with a few photos clicked of the semi-snow clad Trig-pillar and bearings taken, we were off again. The icy pause gave me time to ponder the Irish meaning of Tonelagee, Tóin le Gaoth, and fully appreciated that our ‘arses’ were indeed ‘with the wind’!

We descended Tonelagee, heading to the south end of Lough Ouler, a glaciated corrie. Here we had a proper break and tucked into the hang-sangwiches and tea, but the chat was minimal as we were more interested in conserving energy and keeping warm. Having said that, one of our members professed a love of wild swimming while looking longingly at the ‘Baltic’ lake, and muttered something about having brought her swimming costume for the following morning at Lough Dan!

Made of hardy stuff indeed this IMC lot!
Onwards we headed, with a beautiful clear sky above us and the lights of Wicklow town winking at us from the distance. We made our way along the spur of the hill, named ‘The Stripe’ on the EastWest Mapping series, aiming for the car park above Glenmacnass waterfall. Night navigation skills aside, I was glad of following somebody else’s lead when it came to finding the stepping stones to cross the river.

So with a few Tut-Tuts at the scattered remnants of some previous night’s bush-revellery i.e.: empty Buckfast and Dutch-Gold, we skipped across the river and headed up towards Brown Mountain / Kanturk (CeannToirc – Boar’s Head) (564m). The going was fine and we stopped to regroup and take pictures at the standing stones. Further up on the top, it became clearer why it was called Brown Mountain, or indeed a ‘Pig’ to walk through, huge boggy/mucky swathes were gingerly leaped over and no one got through without some expletive or other.

The welcome sight of Lough Dan appeared below us and we gauged our ETA to be impressively on target. A more direct route down to the flood plain above the lake was taken, and tired legs and concentration struggled with the slippery descent. Lake level reached, we swung left and followed the river course up stream to our agreed Bivouac rendezvous.

Even though we were in the supposed shelter of the valley floor,
After breaking camp, ready to hit the road again, Sunday morning.

we ominously crunched along the hoar frosted path. Plastic Bag Plastic Bag Plastic Bag ringing in my ears!

We reached the clearing of deciduous trees by the river bank as agreed, and at 10.05pm I was duly impressed by Tony’s calculations. Ian, Niall and Tina had already arrived ahead of us and we all set about picking a suitable spot to lay down for the night.

There were two tents (Eoin, Niall and Tina) and a further 7 Bivvy – bags, 5 of the modern gortex variety and 2 of the orange ‘Body-Bag’ type. I was delighted to see Geoff in a similar ‘Death-Bag’ to my own, at least I’d have hypothermic company!

I choose my spot carefully amongst two trees and hung a tent flysheet, or at least tried to. I had the idea of a tarpaulin bivouac in mind when packing my bag earlier in the day, but the modern geodesic / dome shape tent makes an origami exercise out of it.

About 5 meters away was a partially built fire, a pot with veg in it and worryingly an axe! I hoped the Buckfast drinking revellers from earlier wouldn’t make an appearance in the middle of the night.

Bedding laid-out, pots were produced and ‘Come Dine With Me’ ensued. There was an eclectic fare to be honest, from noodles, curry, soup, Mammy’s stew to a steak sandwich, it was camping gourmet style. Dinners devoured, some dived for their bags, while a few of us had dessert; homemade flapjacks & cookies, tea, whiskey, Tony even whipped up some style of French Coffee.

Finally I plucked up the courage and donned my Bush PJs, ie: every last item of dry clothing I had with me, I squeezed into my sleeping bag on top of the camping mat in the ‘Body-Bag’!

Therein lied the fatal mistake that I was tutored on the following morning, too many clothes, not letting enough room for a hot-air vacuum to develop! Who’d have thought! Therefore it was a restless night’s sleep, disturbed once or twice by gunshot! I prayed deer hunters didn’t drink Buckfast either!

The morning came quick enough, so I must’ve gotten some shut-eye. Camp was broken quickly, cuppa tea thrown back and we hit the road. A scenic route back to the hut over Scarr was discussed but the roughing it knocked a few of our adventurous edges off us and we opted for following the Wicklow Way instead.

The main adventure over, we plodded along and chatted our way back to the hut. It was a fantastic bit of hiking and the night-hike element with Bivvy added an extra dimension that I’d definitely repeat again. Of course before any adventure is over, the one thing that needs to be agreed on is when are we doing this again?!

The bar has been raised, and a winter camp on the top of Lugg is called for mid-January. Of course we’re wishing for snow.
Myself, Dave, Frank, Tony, and Geoff set off from the Glenmalure Lodge around 2.30pm on Saturday. Initially had been whittled down to 4 men and a lady!

I was the only one stupid enough to have only brought a bivi bag. Overly confident after the success of the last bivi I think but kinda realised as soon as we got outta the car in the car park this one was gonna be much colder!! Anyways, Dave had a two man tent so I was saved :-)

We went up through the woods and past Kelly’s lough, Geoff did a great job navigating and Frank led the way in his snow shoes, which left nice massive duck like prints to follow but it was still tough going because we had to break trail after him as the snow shoes didn't make much of a dent in the knee deep snow.

It got very cold the closer we got to the summit. We fanned out when we knew we were close to find the cairn and then set up camp about 100 metres away. Pitching the tent was very cold with all the clearing the snow away and having to take off gloves to clip in some of the tent loops. It was great to get out of the wind though when it was up.

Dave read the temperature as -5 in the tent so we reckoned it must have easily been -10 outside with the wind chill. Our tent was supposed to be the party tent and some had whiskey and even peach shnapps ready to roll, but no one came to the party!! I think everyone was a little beat up after the hike, and probably freezing!

The night was ok, but I wouldn't exactly say cozy! For the first time ever camping, I felt leaving the tent for a bathroom break before morning was simply not an option. Tony left bright and early the next day at 6.30am so that left only 4.

The morning on the top was very cold with no visibility because of all the spindrift. My socks had got wet the night before and were frozen solid. As were all our boots (and laces!), was a serious struggle getting into them. I felt like we could be anywhere when I stepped out of the tent. It was great, felt like an Everest expedition or something! So we had a bit of a tent photo shoot before we broke camp.

Geoff had taken a bearing in his tent but the descent was always going to be tricky because we couldn't see a thing. We concluded afterwards that we probably should have gone back up to the cairn from our camp before we left so we would have known exactly where we were.

We were afraid of descending into the south prison so whenever the going seemed to be getting too steep we had to head back up again - going up when you should be going down is very disheartening! Anyway we got low enough that we could see
again, and realised we were coming down into Fraughan Glen. Not where we wanted to be at all, but brilliant all the same!

So we went down that way, met lots of people out enjoying the snow on the way down. It was gorgeous. And Dave targeted some people descending who we thought might have a car parked in the car park. He was a man on a mission to get a lift back along the 4km or whatever it is on the road to our car at the Glenmalure Lodge.

And hats off, he achieved his goal and nabbed them so we were spared the trudge along the road at the end.
A report on the attempted first ascents of peaks in the Obra and Devkir valleys of the Garhwal Himalaya, India. 23rd September – 21st October 2012

**Background**
After a successful expedition to Spiti in 2008, I had a desire to return to the Indian Himalaya, to another region, to attempt first ascents of mountains below 6000m in height. Expeditions to peaks of this size require fewer permits and hence, are easier to organise. In 2011, with some research, I located an area in the Western Garhwal worth exploring, namely the Obra and Devkir valleys in the Har Ki Dun district, near the border with Kinnaur and Himachal Pradesh. Two British teams had visited here previously, the Alpine Club in 2008 and the Imperial College in 2010, to different degrees of success. Also, several Indian teams had visited the area with varying levels of success. The following section provides an overview of the climbing and exploration history of the area.

Thus early in 2012 an IMC team of four was assembled and plans made for an expedition in the post monsoon season of September/October.

The team comprised Terrance Glancy, Padraic Gibbons, Berndt Heim and myself.

**The Obra & Devkir**
The Obra and Devkir lie in the Uttaranchal state of India, to the north of Delhi and close to the border with Tibet (60km approx). The western part of this mountainous state comprises the Garhwal, while the eastern part is Kumaon. Geographically the Obra Gad (river) originates from the Devkir glacier and is a tributary of the Supin River. Together with the Rupir, the Har-ki-dun and Ruinsar rivers, the Supin in turn feeds the Tons River which irrigates the Western Uttarkashi district of the Garhwal.

**Planning and Preparation for the Expedition**
On preparation, monthly meetings were held with members designated specific tasks i.e. Gerry Galligan (GG) on project management and agent handling, Terrance Glancy (TG) on flights, insurance & technical communications and training preparation, Padraic Gibbons (PG) on gear and food, Berndt Heim (BH) on medical/first aid. Mountaineering training weekends and sessions were held in Wicklow, Mournes and Dalkey. REC3 First Aid was done by all members. Finally, all team members individually maintained physical fitness through a combination of running, climbing, cycling, gym-workouts and hillwalking with heavy loads.
Expedition Support Staff
For all in-country supplies, logistics, accommodation and base camp management, an agent, Rimo Expeditions was used. Rimo are based in Leh, Ladakh – a company owned by Chewang Motup and Yangdu Gombu, both experienced mountaineers who know the mountaineering expedition business exceptionally well and who provide an excellent service. Administration was carried out by Alka in the Rimo Haryana office. Initial airport pickup was handled by Rimo staff member, Dawa, with logistics co-ordination by Nima Bhutia. Nima ensured porterage, transport and satisfactory arrival in base camp.

On the ground, base camp management was provided by cook Santabir Sherpa and assistants Pemba Bhotia and Jemyung. It must be stressed the standard and quality of food and service provided was superb at all times.

Logistics & Related Information
On Saturday, 22nd of September, the four of us left Dublin and flew Lufthansa via Frankfurt to Delhi. Our weight limits were 1 x 23kg bag per member (hold) plus 1 x 8kg carry on bag. Two large Alpine bags were used by the team at 32kg maximum costing an additional €215 each way.

An estimated fifteen days of hill food for four men was brought. This consisted of a mixture of ‘Exped Foods’ brought from Ireland and Indian heat and eat packs sourced through Rimo. On arrival in Delhi early Sunday morning, Rimo provided transport from the airport to the YMCA at Jai Singh Road, near Connaught Place. Other food and provisions were bought by the team on Sunday. AA and AAA batteries in the bazaar under Connaught Place, and other food/provisions at the Oriental Fruits Mart Store at 23-E Connaught Place. This shop is located around the corner from the United Coffee House. The owners name is Bal and is a great character. Money was also changed in the Forex bureau next door to this shop. Early Monday morning we took the Shatabdi Express train from New Delhi, north to Dehra Dun, a journey of approximately five hours. Rimo then drove us by jeep to the hill town of Mussoorie, approximately one hour, where we spent the night in the Green Castle Hotel.

At 8am the following morning we departed by jeep to the village of Jakhol for the start of our trek into the Obra. This was a full day’s journey with refreshment and lunch stops en route. A one hour delay on the dirt road a few kilometers outside Jakhol due to road blockage caused by falling rock on account of earlier, heavy rains saw teams of men clearing the way with shovels, crowbars and dynamite. On arrival in Jakhol we met our Base Camp staff, Santabir, Pemba and Jemyung, and we camped the night on the village outskirts. Rimo had all food, fuel and tents for the expedition ready on-site. As the Obra-Devkir is within the Govind Pashu National Park, a permit is required for access.
This was also handled in advance by Rimo.

We learned late monsoon flooding had caused serious landslides in the Obra, making access along the Obra Gad impassable. Therefore, it was necessary to take a high gaddi route through Deodar forest on the SE flank of the ridge hemming the Obra-Supin Gad.

The next morning, Wednesday, 26th September, after an initial shortage of porters, Nima dispatched his contact to round up more men. We had twenty but needed twenty four. Eventually twenty eight showed up. We loaded up and all set off. A three-day trek on this high route brought us to our Base Camp (BC), directly below our first objective peak, Dhodu, at an altitude of 3915m. Co-ordinates: N 31° 11’ 16’’, E 78° 21’ 39’’. Base Camp was situated by a small feeder nala on the true left of the Obra Gad. Prior to reaching BC we gained a good altitude of 4042m. We also got a fine view of the peaks surrounding the Obra and Devkir valleys. Note, we found the Garhwal porters unused to hard work and diligence. Regularly they stopped and slacked off en route. However they were spirited men.

When cajoled by their leaders – two men, Darsan and Portab, they did their job. The first night all tents were erected at BC and the following morning all food and climbing kit was organised. Porters were tipped R400 per man (R600 each to Portab and Darsan), after which they returned to Jakhol. Weeks later on exiting the valley, the Obra Gad was passable and we returned to Jakhol.
by this direct route which took 2 days. Hence a scenic and enjoyable high and low circuit of the valley was made.

**Other Findings**

Weather was mixed for our stay; mostly clear mornings with cumulus cloud building up around midday with frequent light hail and snow falls. Temperatures varied a lot, from \(-15^\circ\) C at night on the mountains to \(+25^\circ\) C at noon in Base Camp some days. Flora was rich in the lower valley, with all manners of broadleaf and perennial trees and shrubs, and a fraughanberry-type shrub found in abundance at higher ground. Fauna was scarce at BC and beyond.

There were some small birds, griffons and one shy weasel that made two cameo appearances. Rock types varied from granite and \(\text{XX}\) in the Upper Obra and Devkir, and gneiss lower Obra. A small Hindu shrine was found in a natural cantilever rock cave at the start of the Devkir at the base of Kimdar, honouring the local god ‘Shomeshvar’. Gaddi shepherds tended their flock of sheep and goat in the valleys. We found numerous gaddi shelters i.e. large boulders built up at the side by drystone walls and earth for cavern shelter. The pre-dominate crop surrounding the villages of Jakhol, Darra and Pitara is the red coloured millet which the women harvested and tended.

We also found animal footprints in a cave in the Devkir belonging either to a large dog or a snow leopard perhaps. We asked the local gaddi if he could confirm what they were. At best he could say they were not dog. Hence snow leopard?

Although we were not successful in making any summit (see next section), we found plentiful boulders in the Obra and had an excellent time climbing their quality granite. Apart from the gaddi shepherds, the only other persons we met during our stay was a Canadian couple trekking from the Obra Valley over a col to Har Ki Dun. They were unsuccessful in this endeavour and exited the valley via Jakhol.

**Climbing & Exploration**

Based on knowledge gleaned from earlier expedition reports i.e. The Alpine Club 2008 and

*Some of the jovial porters during the walk in.*
Imperial College 2010, we had two objectives. One was to attempt a first ascent of Dhodu (5418m) in the Obra valley. The other objective was an attempted first ascent of Peak 5760 via its Northwest ridge, at the head of the Devkir valley. We situated Base Camp on the true left of the Obra Gad, centrally beneath the north side of Dhodu. Weather conditions were favourable. Having seen a photograph of Dhodu (from Imperial College) its eastern ridge which we had considered, looked particularly technical, so our plan became a recce of its western ridge to see if it was more amenable.

The spurs, gullies and ridges of its Northern side looked especially steep and difficult. Over two days we made gear stashes and sited a camp on its Northern moraine rubble at 4677m. Access from BC to here was easy. We progressed the following day further up the moraine and onto snowfields of the West/ Northwest ridge to a high point of approximately 5000m.

We were keen to establish if the ridge or any possible snowfield beyond it, or a further ridge, would provide a line of weakness to the summit. A 50 metre rock band prevented easy access onto the ridge proper.

However by this time we had established there was no snowfield or further ridge beyond the W/ NW ridge leading towards the summit, and the W/NW ridge posed substantial problems, being quite broken and with large onerous gendarmes. A summit attempt this way would be very long, technical, committing and time-consuming.

The only feasible line we could identify was a NW-facing ramp-couloir of approximately 300m length leading to a shoulder from which a westerly line up a snowfield and short rockband might provide access to the summit. Again this route, though more feasible in appearance, would be long and committing, particularly on descent and especially given likely poor snow conditions as per the snowfields we had encountered so far.

Later we learned, on seeing the full aspect of Dhodu’s Northern side after progressing further up the Obra Gad, that the peak’s summit was not an innocuous looking snow dome as we had guessed but a steep, tall rock pillar, beyond another smaller rock pillar to the dome’s east.

With this evidence we could all see that any attempt on this peak would be exceptionally difficult, although the NW ramp-couloir remained the best option on this side of the mountain.

We all agreed it would be unwise to attempt any line, at least not until acclimatisation was attained and should time permit. With that Camp 1 was broken and all returned to Base Camp, retrieving the last of the gear stashes in the late afternoon. Our second and main objective was to attempt a first ascent on the NW
ridge of Peak 5760 at the head of the adjoining Devkir valley.

This attractive peak was first sighted on the walk-in, visible for miles. It had been unsuccessfully attempted once before via the same route in 2008 by a team from the Alpine Club, UK.

On October 4th after a rest day, the four of us plus help from our cooks Santabir Sherpa and Pemba Bhotia carried loads to the Devkir. Weather was good and venturing further up the Obra was extremely pleasant, passing wide pastures of red-brown grasses and granite boulderfields between Kimdar and Ranglana.

The space and atmosphere was comparable to the plateaus north of the Himalaya in Mongolia and Tibet. Turning right at the head of the Obra we reached the Devkir terminal moraine. Up and across this to the long, lateral moraine on the true right-hand side of the gad we continued. At a point halfway up the valley (4372m) we made a gear stash before returning to BC. The next day the four of us brought more gear up the Devkir from BC and established Advanced Base Camp (ABC) at the head of the lateral moraine, approximately 9.5km from Base Camp and 2km from the base of Peak 5760m. We also retrieved the stash from the previous day. Here we passed the night.

The night’s atmosphere was dark, quiet and very remote. This was just what we had come for.
In the morning we set out to recce the col, the main weakness of the cirque, to establish a route to its top and hence an attack point for the NW ridge. We descended the lateral moraine onto the Devkir glacier proper, both of which were a jumble of mountain rubble. Halfway up the glacier a prominent boulder served as another gear stash for tents, climbing equipment etc. Sadly we soon found evidence of others. An assortment of rubbish left from an earlier expedition towards the head of the glacier. Thankfully this act of ignorance isn’t too common.

Having roped up we marched centrally up the glacier zig-zagging over steeper ground and avoiding numerous crevasses to reach the base of the ice headwall and col. A final gear stash was made here. On inspection getting to the top of the col looked tricky and with reference to the Alpine Club ’08 expedition, we reckoned a line halfway up the headwall on easy ground followed by a traverse of a rock rib to enter a rock and snow gully would provide the best and likely safest line onto the col (as per AC). With that we returned to ABC and then to BC.

After a rest day, Berndt, who knee returning to BC, decided to leave the valley for medical help. Arrangements were made and he left. Later thankfully his injuries proved to be minor. Down to three, we returned to the Devkir with several days food. Weather deteriorated as we headed to ABC in the afternoon – snow and driving...
wind. Poor afternoon weather was to be the pattern for the following days. Four inches of snow fell throughout the night. Originally we planned to get from ABC to the col in one push, but soon we realised this would be over-ambitious. We retraced our steps up the glacier, picking up items from the rock-stash and reached the base of the col. At midday weather portents were not good. Dark cumulus cloud was amassing in the Southeast and from what we had experienced to date we knew their payload would be deposited in our direction. Therefore we thought it wise to make camp where we were on a flat section of the glacier between crevasses and attempt an ascent of the col the next day. This was a sensible decision. No sooner were the tents up when the weather broke.

Wednesday morning October 10th was very cold. An hour was spent melting snow and ice for tea and water. Gas canisters froze. We roped up and resumed our ascent. Up a ramp and traversing beneath ice falls to gain the rocky rib. Terrance led. However moving from the ice to the rock was difficult as we found a wide, deep, hidden crevasse, open at one end, between both. A combination of belaying, moving together, lowering, downclimbing and abseiling on an abolokov saw us on the rock rib. All of this was tiring and time-consuming. Padraic led the next pitch across the rib, then Gerry led the up the snow and rock gully, moving together up 200m approximately. This was made up of lots of very loose snow and rock at a very manageable angle of 35 degrees. On reaching the col bereft of flat sections, we dug a snow platform and set up the tents. Clouds quickly built up and rolled in. Snow and spindrift fell and persisted, forcing us to spend a long day and night under the canvas. Again, several hours were spent melting snow and ice. The next day we planned a push on the ridge.

Another cold morning. We roped up and Terrance led across the col. A wide buttress, 100m high, of rock and snow awaited the start of the ridge.
Quickly we found conditions tough and unsafe. Half a metre of very granulated powder snow had us wading up to our waists. Moreover the large granite rocks it surrounded were also unstable, some having air pockets underneath. There was no solid layer of snow or ice underneath to gain purchase. As the gradient increased there was no improvement. With protection sparse, time ticked by. All agreed conditions were unsafe for further progress. We knew we had very little time, especially given current weather patterns. There weren’t many options other than backing off. We set up an abseil and descended, then trudged back to camp.

Soon we broke camp and descended, choosing a direct line down the snow and rock gully we ascended earlier. We walked halfway down, then set up two 60m abseils which saw us safely back on the Devkir glacier. We retrieved the last of our gear near the col base, roped up and descended the glacier to the rock-stash, adding this gear to our load before returning to ABC. Reflecting at ABC we concluded Peak 5760 would not give up easily to anyone and we re-affirmed our decision to back off was a wise one. Friday October 12th, we packed essential gear and returned to base camp. The rest was collected days later.
Loose dangerous terrain approaching the ridge.

Padraic, Gerry & Terance in a jovial mood
**Bouldering**
Wes spent two days exploring and bouldering in the vicinity surrounding base camp. The lack of bouldering mats meant the climbing was never too serious. Many problems were completed.

**Future Climbing & Exploration**
Overall we found the mountains in these valleys technically harder and more challenging than we thought they would be, but that didn’t detract from our enjoyment of them. The Imperial College team of 2010 have been the most successful party to visit this area to date with three first ascents. However, subject to good snow and ice conditions and from what we can determine, there are potential new routes to be done on Ranglana. Dhodu and Kimdar await their first ascent, as do all peaks of the Devkir. There are thousands of boulders in the Obra Valley. More than enough for a lifetimes bouldering. There is also potential for big wall climbing. The Jarai rocks sit at the foot of the Obra Valley and would be an adventurous objective for any big wall climber.

**The Jarai Rocks.**
On leaving the Obra we met Cyrus from Mumbai who attempted and failed on Dhodu on a previous visit, co-incidentally on the NW ramp-couloir we had identified. But he was planning to attempt the first ascent of the prominent subsidiary peak Pk 5640m to the SW of Dauru, centrally visible in the Obra.
Research
The following expedition reports were studied. Both are available from The Alpine Club:
Maps: Soviet topographical 1:100,000 of Obra/Supin/Maninda valley region.
Leomanns 1:200,000 of Garhwal (Gangotri, Kedarnath, Har Ki Dun and Mussoorie)

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In July of 1947 he and his brother-in-law made the first Irish ascent of Carrot Ridge, which may well have been the first post-war rock-climb done in Ireland. He was also one of those pioneers who was at Luggala on the day Pine Tree Buttress was first climbed by Joss Lynam. Aleck was on what is now Crevasse Route and fielded his leader, Brian Hilton-Jones, when that worthy parted company with the climb and “ran down the rock like a goat” to land on Aleck’s belay ledge.

He was one of only five members who had previous experience of roped climbing when the IMC was first formed in 1948. He had acquired his expertise as a member of Cambridge University Mountaineering Club when he was at King’s College from 1936 to 1939 and was one of that slightly disreputable band who engaged in illicit night-time ascents of various college buildings and whose exploits were the subject of a well-known book.

Recently, he recalled taking Eric Shipton up a chimney at the back of the Fitzwilliam Library.
He has also recounted his attendance at one of the last of the famous climbing and literary gatherings hosted by Geoffrey Winthrop Young in North Wales when the great man told him of his ascent of Mt. Brandon with George Mallory of Everest fame.

Aleck Crichton was brought up in Sligo as a member of a long-established land-owning family and a scion of the Jameson whiskey distilling family. His father was a shooting and fishing man, so rods had to be brought to Connemara as a kind of alibi when the ascent of Carrot Ridge was intended.

He was educated at Uppingham, a well-known English public school. He served in the Guards Tank Regiment during the Second World War, landed in Normandy on D-Day +1, was wounded and ended the war as a Lt. Colonel with the substantive rank of major.

With that background it might be expected that Crichton would turn to England or to the Alps for most of his climbing, ignoring the Irish hills as so many of his status had done but, in fact, he was to join the IMC at the outset and contributed substantially to the success of the club.

Aleck Crichton can thus be seen as a noteworthy link between the earlier mountaineers of the Anglo-Irish leisured classes and the modern Irish rock climber, making him a historical figure of some importance. Aleck went on to become one of this country’s most successful businessmen, as the head of Jameson’s and the brains behind the formation of Irish Distillers, as well as being Governor of the Bank of Ireland where he was an instigator of the merger of that institution with the National Bank. He continued climbing and there is an amusing account in the Club Journal of 1958/9 of a busy visit to Skye where the party was chivvied along by the great Peter Kenny. Aleck was instrumental in obtaining funding for the acquisition of the Glendasan hut and was of considerable help to the first Irish Himalayan Expedition in 1964.

He is now the oldest member of the club at 95 years of age and lives in Sligo where he is much involved in the cultural life of the county.
Many climbers over the years have stayed in the cave and some just have knowledge of its existence, but have never found it. It has become almost mythical by now, talked about but never seen, and very difficult to find.

Last summer three IMC members, including Christy Rice who had climbed at Luggala around 1971 and had stayed in the cave many times, determined to find this cave and scoured the area until a large hole in the rocks was followed down into a chamber and then, with the aid of head torches, the larger sleeping chamber was found.

Imagine Christy’s emotions when he stepped into the cave, where he had slept many a night in his youth but had not been in for forty years. To cap it all he spotted his old Billy can, after forty years!

The following two articles are the recollections of Christy Rice and Paddy O’Leary.

Drum up time, Christy outside the cave in 1971, by a driftwood fire, waiting for his billy to boil.
My first climbing trip to Luggala was with Joss Lynam and Doug Milnes back in 1969, I was in my late teens then and needed a tight rein to be held back.

On that first trip we climbed Pine Tree Buttress and some other climb (no memory of it now) and finished off the day with a visit to the cave. Over the next twelve months or so, the climbs on Camaderry saw a lot of activity, over nighting in the hut at weekends, with the occasional trip back to Luggala.

Back then transport was our greatest problem or the lack of it. With few active members owning cars it was difficult to get about so we relied on the St Kevin’s bus service, until some of us got ourselves motorbikes.

The usual way to get to Luggala was to get the bus at 6pm Saturday evening from St Stephens Green, get off at Scraghmore cross roads a couple of miles outside Roundwood and walk the road to the gate piers and down into Luggala to bivouac in the Cave.

Of course, things did not always go to plan. Sometimes you got off the bus in Roundwood and went into Sean Kavanaghs or Sé Healy’s pub and stayed there until closing time.

By the time you got to Luggala gates you would have sobered up a bit ok, but you still had to stagger down to Lough Tay and cross over the stepping stones. The stepping stones are where the lake empties to become the Avonmore river and I remember crossing one night with badly lit lamps and Doug Milnes falling in up to his chest in water.

The Cave is not a cave as such but a rather large boulder, concaved on its under side which you have to climb down under. When it rains outside you remain dry underneath as it drains the water out and away. We had a billycan, pot, frying pan, a kettle the type that whistles when it boils and a one point Primus Stove for cooking on. Lighting was by whatever means as it is quite dark underneath. I did notice an old oil lamp on a visit there earlier this year.

There is polythene sheeting as a ground sheet, a large piece of 2 inch foam, enough to cover the ground sheet and enough room for 2 or 3 climbers, 4 at a tight squeeze depending on how big you are. There is another cave in Luggala somewhere close to and above Gareth Browns.

The climbing day was short enough in Luggala when you consider you had to finish climbing early, probably get a bite to eat and make your way
The entrance to the cave, taken 2012
back over the road to Scraghmore cross in time to catch the Kevin’s bus back to Dublin.

On a number of occasions people have asked me where the cave is located in Luggala. Some have searched, but failed to find it. If you take a downward line between the climb Banshee, a big Birch tree and the waters edge, roughly halfway between the water and the tree and a few meters north of this line, search this area, it is difficult to find for the first time.

There was also another bivouac shelter in the coum under the North Prison of Lugnaquilla, called the Gite. This was built by some I M C members back in the early 1960s when in general we got harder winters. The Gite is long gone now, but I did have the pleasure of boarding there on a couple of occasions in winter and climbing in the gullies the following day.

It was built between 2 or 3 large smooth faced boulders as walls and these were built up to the same level using rubble rock with peat and heather as a mortar to hold them together. It had a corrugated iron roof and a hinged timber door and frame. To get to the Gite you simply got the 65 bus at 3pm Saturday afternoon from Aston's Quay, got off in Dunard, and let your legs do the rest, stopping at Fentons as a halfway house along the way.

However, with the rising costs of transport fuel, austerity measures and high unemployment we might be all going back to the good old days of the St Kevin’s Bus, full overnights at the Hut and the Climbers Cave might even be reopened for business.

Just think about it, wouldn’t it be great, even the Wicklow car muggers would be out of a job!!
Paddy O'Leary also has some memories of the cave, going back a bit earlier to the early sixties, and another cave at Luggala, (noted on east west mapping of the area,) where in 1937 a 1798 musket was found.

The caves in this area most likely have been used for centuries for shelter but also as hiding places. Paddy also recollects climbing at Luggala, and meeting lady Oranmore and Browne.

When I returned from a few years in the UK in the early sixties, some of the top climbers of the time had found and prepared sleeping places under a boulder near the lake shore at Luggala.

Emmett Goulding, Tony Ingram and Kevin Shelley were involved. There were four sleeping places separated into two 'apartments'. There were mattresses and blankets.

The entrance was difficult to find and when I tried a few years ago I could not trace it, but Christy managed to do so. We used it a lot as, with almost no cars, we were obliged to stay overnight in order to get anything done.

Despite much trying we did nothing new except a traverse of the Main Face by Kevin Shelley and myself; we reversed the traverse done by Betty Healy and Frank Winder. We did most of the existing routes.

I remember sitting on the ledge outside the cave cooking a meal when Lady Oranmore and Browne (the owner of Luggala) came by in a fishing boat rowed by a Gillie. We chatted a while and she seemed more interested than put out by our being there.

We used the cave sporadically during the sixties and it came to be used by a new generation in the seventies, a generation which included Christy.

President Childers once drew me a sketch showing the location of what he called the Croppy’s Cave which is on Fancy Mountain, around the corner from the climbing crag and facing towards Luggala Lodge. He was a friend of Lady Oranmore and Browne and probably learned of its existence from her. The terrain there is rough with limited visibility because of the dense brush and trees so one would need to be shown the site. Those now living in the house – Gareth Browne – may know of its existence. I’ve often kicked myself that I didn’t keep the sketch.
OpenStreetMaps on your Garmin GPS

Santa brought you that Garmin GPS, but did not bring you that extra arm and leg you asked for for your mapping budget. GroundTruth (software) and OpenStreetMap data may be the answer. Compare the screens below from my Garmin eTrex Summit HC, which has 24MB capacity for uploaded maps. (This unit does not support screenshot download, so these are photographs of the 1.3” wide x 1.7” high screen)

Abisko – Abiskojaure (saved track on Garmin eTrex Page 39)

The additional detail in these maps using OpenStreetMaps is immediately obvious. You can check what will be available by viewing the area of interest at http://www.openstreetmap.org – as this is a project which depends on users to input map data, coverage will vary from area to area. You might later even consider adding map data yourself for areas where you find detail missing, using the traces on your GPS.

24 MB for map storage may seem rather small to readers accustomed to modern electronic devices (to put that in context for younger readers, it exceeds the total capacity of all disks held by my first employer for their IBM mainframe computer), but this is sufficient to simultaneously hold maps of Wicklow, a good chunk of the Pyrenees, most of the Lot, and a chunk of the Alps. You are not limited to uploading a map of a single area, and can easily replace one set of maps by another set.

The colour schemes used in different areas for linear features in OpenStreetMap data can be somewhat quirky, as can be seen in the Turlough Hill screenshot — blue for example is more usually associated with water features rather than tarmac — but in practice I’ve not found it worth bothering to fine tune the colour scheme, although possible in principle, for each area processed for transfer to the GPS.

You may need to add detail which is missing in the OpenStreetMap data: for example, there is a marshy area with a small lake/large pond, Lago di Fontana Fredda, just before Col Bousson on the route from Capanna Mautino, and some smaller ponds on the French side, which are not mapped in the OpenStreetMap data, but which might be a problem if disguised by a thin layer of snow (not a problem though when I crossed last time — there was a good 150+ cm). I simply add a waymark, the small blue flag labelled “Lago” near the bottom of the screenshots, as a reminder to avoid such missing features. (See the end of this article however for a note regarding the latest data). These two screenshots also show the rather rough nature of linear features such as country boundaries, seen here near that small lake, in the built-in mapping.

The third pair of screenshots show that a useful map may still be obtained even when contour information is not available. Contours used here come from a
NASA dataset, but this dataset only covers a range from 56°S to 60°N. The main features in the area shown are water features in any case, with some tracks near Abisko. If that track across the lake, Abiskojaure, leads you to doubt the accuracy of the mapping, rest assured that it is accurate — you simply didn’t know that walking on water was one of my many talents.

Of course, it did help that that lake was still frozen solid (with an appropriate “own risk” warning), other than at the small inlet at the south-western end, where care was needed approaching the shore at the Abiskojaure huts (warden’s cottage plus two huts).

So, how do you process OpenStreetMap data to obtain maps which can be uploaded to a suitable Garmin GPS? A fuller version of this article, with the steps below described in detail, and illustrated, will be found shortly on the club website, at http://irishmountaineeringclub.org/openstreetmap-on-garmin (watch for a Forum post announcing that the full version is available).

**Once GroundTruth and one other associated utility have been downloaded and installed:**
- Select a rectangle defining by latitude and longitude the extent of the map to be produced
- Download the contour data for this rectangle
- Download the OpenStreetMap data for this rectangle
- Combine the downloaded data to produce the map, making sure that the map files produced can be
used without conflict with the files for any other map:

- Add the map produced to the set of maps installed for Garmin MapSource Trip & Waypoint Manager or Garmin MapSource which was included with your Garmin GPS.

Use the Garmin software to upload maps to your GPS (note that contours are often not visible in MapSource at higher zoom levels, as seen here, but do appear when uploaded to the GPS)

**Getting the latest OpenStreetMaps data**

When I referred earlier to adding missing features by using waymarks I mentioned “latest data”. The data downloaded using the command file described in the longer website version of this article lags behind the latest map data available at the OpenStreetMaps website.
There is however a certain logic behind this apparently stupid decision to use older data. There is an “Export” option on the OpenStreetMaps website which can be used to download the latest map data.

But the area which can be downloaded at any one time is limited. This may be fine for a trip abroad to a similarly limited area, but may not be fine for example if you finish up with multiple overlapping map files to cover a larger area such as Wicklow, which could not be downloaded as a single data file from the website. In theory the command file could be changed to make its bulk data download from the latest data at the OpenStreetMaps website, and I have occasionally succeeded in doing so. But in practice this operation will virtually always timeout before the full data has been downloaded, usually in fact before any data whatsoever has been downloaded.

So, at least to get started, I would suggest accepting the fact that the data you download from the alternative server which almost always provides a bulk data download without timing out may have some of the latest map data missing.

To see what this might mean in practice I have repeated the map screenshots shown earlier, but now using the latest data, and in addition modifying the default GroundTruth hiking map rules to include some data in the map which would otherwise be omitted using the default rules.

In the Turlough Hill map the reservoir now appears filled with blue, as the rules needed to be modified to treat an area described as “landuse|reservoir” in the same way as an area described as “natural|water”. In the middle screenshot the small lake is now included in the latest data, and the vegetation at the bottom right is treated now differently. In the screenshot on the right vegetation is now shown which was missing earlier, here again as a result of a couple of changes to the default GroundTruth hiking map rules to avoid loss of such data.

Read the detailed version of this article on the club website and try the process for yourself. Post any questions you may have on the General IMC Forum, and I’ll try to answer.
End of February in Dublin. Bouts of rain interspersed with cold damp cloudy days. Having some time on my hands I made the decision to head south to the mountains just a few miles inland from Benidorm on the Costa Blanca in Spain.

I signed up for a weeks climbing course with a company called Compass West. Although they had no other people booked for the course on the week I wanted, they suggested that they would run a course just for me, which although it might be a bit lonely, suited me fine.

Since taking up climbing two years ago I have spent many a day climbing in Dalkey quarry, sometimes in Wicklow, and a few of the classics like Howling Ridge in Kerry and Great Gully Ridge in Wicklow. I enjoy climbing immensely because for me it combines the sense of exhilaration from the climbing with a sense of freedom and adventure especially on the large multi pitch mountain routes.

But I felt some of total immersion is what I needed and some sharpening up of my rope handling, systems, knots etc., so I booked for the week. Also what drew me to this area in particular is a huge lump of rock 1400 metres high called the Puig Campana. Obviously 20 degree sunshine helped.

A Saturday afternoon flight to Alicante and I was picked up by Betty and Rowland Edwards, who, along with their son Mark, run the climbing school.
A short drive and at 11pm I was shown into my home for the week, a self catering bungalow on the grounds of the climbing school compound in the pretty Spanish countryside about one kilometre from the small quiet town of Finestrat. A nice bungalow, wall to wall climbing magazines, books, guides and DVDs, but best of all a beautiful terrace looking straight up onto the massive which is the Puig Campana. I was excited as I looked forward to the week ahead.

10 a.m. next morning after a sunny breakfast on my terrace I was met by Mark, my instructor for the week. Now in his forties Mark has been rock climbing since he was a child and instructing for over twenty years. An easy going friendly chap, originally from Cornwall, he now lives all year round in Spain. We went through various knots and methods of tying on, also some explanation and examples of types and properties of different ropes.

After lunch we visited a local crag where Mark went through movement on rock and using some of these techniques we climbed a number of v. diff routes.

The second day and the pace was turned up a notch. We visited the famous climbing area of Sella about 8km away and did some sport climbing on a crag called the Rhino, so named as the ridge formation is shaped like a giant rhino. Beginning
at sport grade 4+ I gradually climbed harder and harder routes until we got to "my level". At this stage I was falling off a lot and was at my limit, tiny footholds, not much rests, near vertical climbing on long 25m routes. We did ten routes in all, finishing on a 6c route in which the rope above me played a large part in my ascending to the top!

After good nights sleep the next day Wednesday was a less physical day. In the morning we did various ways of ascending a rope with the aid of a large pine tree outside my bungalow. Then we did escaping the system and hoisting a second climber. All this took place in beautiful sunshine and was explained by Mark in a very straightforward and easy to understand way. In the afternoon a visit to a nearby crag where we went through racking gear and placing protection and I lead some routes.

The Castellets, a 5km knife edge ridge just out of Finestrat was our destination the next day. We were joined by Marks dad Rowland, and also by a friend of Marks named Ian, a very accomplished E5 climber, and a keen surfer. Ian spent some years instructing climbing with Mark in Cornwall. Using his climbing skills he moved over to rope access work, and now travels the world descending into chimneys, bridges, dams, etc for a living. He was heading off the following week for a month long stint in the Ivory Coast.
The Castellets south face, which we were climbing on, has over 160 routes. There is also the unclimbed north face, with massive untapped climbing potential. A lot of the routes are in fact first accents by Mark or Rowland and we got to work knocking them off.

Cracks, faces, chimneys, hand jams, foot jams, they had it all, and sometimes in the same route.

One route I particularly enjoyed was “Dogtown”. A step right onto a near vertical face, but with small two finger size pockets in the rock, typical of limestone. This face then forms into a laybacking crack. After 5 meters this crack widens, the rock bulges out and presents a strenuous overhang to finish. A fabulous climb, we’d give your eye teeth for it in Dalkey!

We also did a great bolted 40 metre arête “Edwards Edge”. Other climbs were Nostradamus and Independent. The last we did was El Mossel (the owl). This one so named because on Marks first accent he was surprised by an owl in the crack half way up! Each one of these climbs classics. A great day but at this stage my knuckles, fingertips, shoulders, feet, arms and various other parts of my body were starting to feel the strain.

The next day, our last day of climbing, and we were to do a long multipitch on the Puig Campana. This is the mountain I has come over to climb, a massive with many facets and many many climbs, 80 in total, from the 20 m single sports route to the 34 pitch “Bivvy route” which is 1650m long and is usually completed in two days with an overnight bivvy on the way. Mark has climbed them all but one and has first accent on many.

If allowed he will talk for hours about the mountain and clearly is in love. One day while climbing he told me about the day he soloed the 13 pitch epsilon central in 22 minutes while waiting for his lift home. Climbing
Edwards Edge (6a+), sustained with three tricky bulges near the top.
is his job and you can see it in his professionalism, but climbing is also his love, and that is fairly obvious also. That night I hit the bed early, I was tired and I had a big day ahead.

6.30 a.m. and the familiar crackling sounds of the expanding roof tiles as they are hit by the first rays of the hot morning sun. The cockerels have been crowing since early and the dogs, well the Spanish insomniac dogs have been up all night.

I waken to my last day in Spain and it's going to be a long one. Nervous expectation I suppose you would call it.

Mark and Ian collect me early, a short drive through the sleeping town, an hour walk and we are at the vertical base of the Puig. We will do a four pitch E2 climb called Anglada/Cerda/Gallego, named after the three climbers who climbed it first. We rope up and we are climbing pitch one, a nice easy introduction, but the second pitch gets meaty. We climb through the morning and by early afternoon we are topping out with a marvellous view over the mountains into the Manhattan like skyline of Benidorm, and down the coast to Alicante overlooked by the cliff-top Castillo de Santa Barbara.

A few long steep abseils and we are are back down having our lunch and chatting about seventies disco.

On the way home Mark dropped me off and I had a wander around
the narrow streets of the town of Finestrat and a coffee in a cafe with wifi. I checked my emails, plugging back into life back home. I have had a great week, strenuous climbing but also in another way very relaxing. That evening we all had lovely paella at a local restaurant. Rowland and Betty Edwards, Mark and his girlfriend Andrea, Ian and his girlfriend Di. A lovely evening in great company. I chatted for a while with Marks girlfriend Andrea. Although from Holland and with no Irish roots, she speaks Irish fluently and is quite the accomplished Irish dancer, having spent two years living in Ireland and embracing all things Irish. Afterwards, a beautiful evening and a full moon, and we drive back to the house. As we stand in the garden saying our goodbyes and chatting Rowland recollects the many times that himself and Mark were called out to rescue people on the mountain. One particular bright full moon night they climbed without the need for head torches to rescue a benighted man on the upper slopes.

After our goodbyes I am left alone gazing up the moonlit mountain for a few minutes.

The air is warm and a light breeze blows down through the valley but otherwise the night is still. I am struck by the beauty and sheer complexity of the mountain, the north face with its many intricate nooks and crannies, its large pine-clad ledges, and the sheer cliffs of the south face, with its difficult long multi pitch climbs and all day sunshine. The magic of the moonlight mountain grips me and for a moment I am transfixed. I made a promise to myself that I would return.

**Travel Details**
Flight Dublin to Alicante with Ryanair
Bus from Alicante to Benidorm - 50 minutes
Benidorm to Finestrat – car pick up or taxi _ about 10 minutes
Blast From The Past

Below is a short article written by Pádraic O’Halpin describing the first ascent by Betty Healy and himself over fifty years ago. A very simple subject, a four pitch climb, but described very well. Pádraic, a man who at 38 had come late to the sport but who was obviously very taken with it. When this climb took place he had been climbing less than a year and was a novice climber. He speaks of the “fear of fear itself”, and the panic of not having any holds as his hands ”pass fruitlessly over bare rock”. He talks of pitons and a very long run out as he waits belaying his leader until he hears “the click of a piton hammer from above”. It is very difficult to write well about the actual process of climbing, but this guy does it perfectly.

First Ascent

Pádraic O’Halpin

First Ascent
(by Pádraic O’Halpin, from Irish Mountaineering, 1962)
The first ascent of Ploughshare on Bingorm West, Co. Donegal

At thirty-eight there cannot be many serious first ascents left. Not that any thought of such a thing was in my conscious mind as we looked upwards at Bingorm above Lough Barra that day. About us in tents people prepared for their day of walking or of climbing, some on the known routes of Bingorm, some for the very steep virgin faces of Lough Veagh, some for a tramp across to the Poisoned Glen. We knew that many had tried to find a route up the centre of the main face; some months ago, with better climbers than I, we had prospected along the high heather ramp that bounds the foot of the face and found it difficult even to get off the ground sufficiently to see what difficulties lay in the moves ahead.

As we looked up from the camp site beside the stream we could see on the left the Delta face, where many fine routes had already been done; then the Thin Gully, conquered last year; then the complex of slab and crack that Hugh Banner and Jim O’Neill had linked some months before. Watching them on that route, it became clear that the characteristics to be faced were holdless friction on stepped slabs with overhanging rises at head height, high enough to shut off the upward view but not so high that if unseen holds existed they could not be over reached. On the main face itself these were the dominant features, and no cracks or gullies as on the left of the main face could
be seen until some hundreds of feet towards the right the face once again showed vertical rather than horizontal faults; on these vertical faults Betty Healy, who was climbing with me today, had made new routes in the past.

These faults looked tiny from where we stood. Climbers now beginning on the Delta face were no larger than match heads.

A year before, when I had never climbed at all, I had seen as something inconceivable those figures moving slowly under great overhangs and could not imagine the quality of that neural itch. Now I was myself taken.

That there was a route—that there would in ten years be many routes—was not to be doubted. So in that mixture of hope and fear we set off. Before most climbs, and before
every new climb, I am afraid. I have now been on enough new climbs to know what is most to be feared. When I began to climb first, I had no conscious fear at all.

Now the greatest fear is that of being afraid: the mindless panic that any of us who climb badly know well, the hurried feverish search and search for holds, the growing realisation that there are no holds or if there are they cannot be seen, the free hand passing fruitless over bare rock, up and down, up and down over the same rock, then in the instant before fall the saving nick or the surge of body power that sweeps over the overhang—or the fall. And how everything is speeded up, as on that chimney on Brant when I called out “Frank, take me,” and as my body swung slowly out into space I watched with detachment my right only hold which would save the body from its fall.

Yet I have never fallen; if I had, or, if one can say it, when I will, perhaps I will be less afraid. I doubt it. So with fear and hope the path up to the climb was taken. We crossed the road and leaped onto the tussocks of the bog; wetness overran our boots. It is a short slog up to the steep heather slopes, themselves quite strenuous, and among them the bare bones of very steep rock, a sober reminder of what was to come. For some reason one thought of Menlove Edwards on the Llanberis cliffs, the rocks and bones of innocence declared.

Nothing looked tiny any more. The cliffs now waited above us as we gained the heather along the base. At one part the terrace reached up a tongue under a series of wrinkled overhangs and here I drove in a piton in the rock to belay Betty for the first pitch. She moved out on friction surfaces, such as I had not seen in the only Welsh rocks known to me, Cyrn Las and the Three Cliffs in Llanberis. The Welsh characteristic is multiplicity; as if cut by a jeweller the rock presents planes to the eye which may or may not be holds; here the smooth unbroken sweep of granite with only curious wrinkles or folds and somewhere, but not here, a vertical quartz intrusion. Here there was only friction.

She advanced delicately on footholds invisible to me; after about fifteen feet she put in a piton. This was some comfort; the terrace was very narrow and away from under her line of advance; she walked on a steep roof slab whose eaves projected well out over the steep heather face vertically below. Now she was protected for a time. She rested on the piton, then faced again something there.

Nothing very much obviously, for as she pulled up she was clearly searching. This was the passage which had defeated others. No one
had advanced beyond where she now stood, never in the thousands of years before.

On such a platform where there is no clear way of advance or of later retreat after the move, great determination is necessary. As she fought with this circumstance I was crouching to take the strain of her fall. While I was crouching she had made the move.

She now stood on footholds above the overhang looking not down in victory but along the thin ramp up which she was to move. Up this, over another above it and then out of my sight she went. She was well above her piton now.

I examined the piton closely, not in anxiety of its security, but to spill over some of the tenseness. It was well driven and the hammer marks had bruised its head. It would very likely hold a long fall. The rope ran out slowly, up and over the overhang and out of sight. What holds were found I supposed I would soon see. Then the rope halted. It moved a little and stopped. Even before I heard her voice call that she was coming off I had faced outwards, dug my heels in as well as I could and braced hard against the piton, crouching and waiting, realising that I was not wearing gloves.

As I worked paying out the rope, the up-tilted roof waited; then I realised that the rope was still moving and that she had not come off.

I called out to ask how things were. There was no reply. The rope stopped again, perhaps sixty feet run out and with relief I heard the clink of a piton hammer. At least there was no longer danger of a hundred foot fall, five times the height of a two storey house. This piton I later pulled out with my fingers. She called out, asking how much rope was left; then the rope ran out again, stopped for several minutes, moved on again and stopped finally. There was a shout of delight. I stood up and could not stop smiling.

She shouted to come on.

Climbing over her route, I was so elated that the difficulties vanished, noting only the bareness of the route, and the oddness and necessity of the few holds. Ahead the piton at the end of her sixty foot run-out came into view and to reach it there existed only the smallest wrinkle along the face, a minute beetle’s balcony; my fingers searching for holds almost penetrated the blank faces. The piton was inserted behind a vertical overfold; I reached down to it, worked it up and down and pulled it out.

Just above me the rock face changed; a horizontal band of whorls and curved water shadows such as one sees in a stream bed—but now vertical—allowed a right hand traverse of a different quality to the massive tongue of long-haired marshy plants, on top of which I now
saw Betty sitting jubilantly. A runner around this vegetation had been her last ‘protection.’

When we had discussed the pitch in every possible way, we had to think about the next pitch. Projecting over our heads was the great line of overhangs clearly visible from below; no way there. A clear line over the band of whorls lay as a traverse out under the overhangs to heather ledges and was very likely an escape route.

Behind the wall of the great niche we sat in there might be another vertical possibility. I moved out on this relatively easy rock, so sculptured that just on the corner there was a natural runner unusual to find in Lough Barra, and as I came round and stopped, the overhang problem was drastically solved.

A high triangular slab pockled with tiny studs of crystalline rock ran its apex up to a break in the skyline. It was delicate, beautifully exposed, and the enclosing walls overhead of the overhangs constrained it like an arrow; to have tried another easier route would have been sacrilege. It went with delight; I did not know that my runner had come off. From a little cave I took Betty up, and after a rest we led through alternately on easier and shorter pitches to where we sat victoriously relaxed, the main face of Bingorm under our feet.

The main features of the climb were its delicacy and exposure. Despite the first few moves on the first pitch, it was not very strenuous, but it did require steadiness on very small holds with little protection. If less serious, perhaps we could call it a hard severe, but such a grading on such a long run out was unjustifiable. Certainly the initial moves were being downgraded at that.

We settled for Very Severe, perhaps harder, and when it is climbed as often as it certainly deserves and when all those hidden holds that are brought to light by each new ascent are seen we can think about regrading.

We built no cairn above or below, but certainly as we moved over the mountain top and down through the Deep Gully shouting up at the climbers on the Delta face there was the thought that this was a day that we would remember.

This was on Ploughshare in May 1961.
Article 1- Footwork (part 1)

This is the first in our series of coaching articles and we’re going to begin with something which is crucial to all types of climbing and to climbers of all shapes, sizes & grades... Footwork. How you use your feet when you climb is really vital - the more weight you can get onto your feet, the less you’ll need to pull and the more you trust your feet, the more your grip can relax.

In this issue, we’re going to look at just 2 important aspects of using your feet and give you a few exercises to try out yourself...

- **Accuracy:**

  Learning to use your feet precisely is one way to radically improve your climbing and a really key skill if you want to make progress on rock, rather than just at the climbing wall! Try to place your toe exactly onto the part of the foothold that you want to use, without having to re-adjust it. Remember that as you place your feet, you need to keep focusing on (and looking at!) the foothold, before...
shifting your attention to your next move.

*Precision is key when the footholds become smaller.*

- **Your inside / outside edge.**

Another important aspect of improving your footwork is learning how to use your feet (and climbing shoes) correctly in many different situations, so that you can make good use of different types of footholds in different positions.

**Firstly, it’s good to be aware of a few basics.**

Using the inside edge (left foot) and outside edge (right foot)- Note the exact position of the foot, with the big toe still in contact with the foothold.

Using the outside edge on steeper ground allows you to turn side-on to the rock; this brings your hips closer, allowing you to reach further.

The movement of the climb may require you to twist your body around, in which case you will pivot from inside edge to outside; don’t place too much of your foot onto the hold, or it will simply roll off as you move!

Next time you’re warming up, listen out for your feet making noise. Are you placing your feet quietly and precisely onto each foothold, or is there a lot of noisy scuffling and scraping?

*Using the inside edge (left foot) and outside edge (right foot)- Note the exact position of the foot, with the big toe still in contact with the foothold.*
Try to climb with silent feet- you’ll suddenly become much more aware of your foot placements. If you reckon your footwork is pretty good, you can make this harder by also climbing quickly- the eventual aim is to be able to make fast, precise foot placements every time.

**Gravity also do group and individual coaching sessions.**

In the next issue we’ll be looking at smearing and edging on footholds and at how to use your feet when the climbing gets steeper!

*Using the outside edge on steeper ground allows you to turn side-on to the rock; this brings your hips closer, allowing you to reach further.*
Club News

Club Dinner
A great attendance and a great night at the club dinner in the Glendalough hotel in November. Calvin Torrens was presented with a souvenir hex. Calvin gave a short but interesting acceptance speech, which was followed by an equally short speech from John Town of the Alpine club.

Our esteemed president Declan Craig was the master of ceremonies at the occasion. Thanks to Conor for the organising.

Night Nav & Bivvy
Saturday 2nd December saw nineteen brave souls turn up for Tony Barry’s night Nav mountain skills and bivvy. A good seven hour hike from the hut was followed by a drop of brandy and a frosty night under the stars down by Lough Dan.

Awesome Walls & Gravity Climbing Centre
The big brand new climbing wall in Finglas, is drawing large amounts of IMC members, and an average evening there a large percentage of the climbers are IMC drawn by the 13 metre walls, the interesting routes and the general spacious atmosphere. Standards of climbing can only go up with this new facility.

Meanwhile a lot of IMC members are making use of top coaching sessions and great climbing at Gravity climbing centre in Inchicore from Angela and Terry.

Nice Trip
A mixture of IMC and Colmcille climbers headed off to Nice for five days of mainly sport climbing in late November. By all accounts a very enjoyable trip! (a full report by Carol is in this newsletter).

IMC Himalaya
Three IMC members, Gerry Galligan, Terance Glancy and Pairic Gibbons spent three weeks climbing new routes in the Obra and Devkir valleys of the Garhwal Himalaya, India on an IMC sponsored expedition. They gave us a very informative slide show of their trip in the teachers club, highlighting the difficulties and complexities, but most of all the enjoyment, of climbing in that area.

Lug Overnight
The night nav/bivvicamp people were back at it in the new year with a overnight in the snow on top of Lug.

So, spring is on the way, a great meet as ever is organized for Connemara, and a two fabulous looking sun climbing trips organized for February/March.

With all the training going on in awesome walls and gravity it looks like Dalkey it going to be very busy come the good weather.

Plenty to look forward to.
Anyone can drop in and borrow books from Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm. The loan is up to two months.

Many books are available, not only the IMC ones but also the Mountaineering Ireland or Joss Lynam's books. From old publications such as:
Memoirs of a Mountaineer from F. Spencer Chapman 1945,
High Adventure from Edmund Hillary 1956,
I Chose to Climb from Chris Bonington 1966

to more recent ones such as:
Into Thin Air from Jon Krakauer 1998,

And many more....

You can also find maps, climbing guides for Ireland, UK, Wales, France, Spain...

If you cannot make your way to the library you can also search and request your book via the MI website:
www.mountaineering.ie section Members & Services --> MI Library
Send an email to:
info@mountaineering.ie
or give them a ring and they will post the books to you (stamp fee apply).

Note:
The library will be accessible until 1st March 2013 when Mountaineering Ireland will move to their new headquarters to Sport HQ, Abbotstown.

More details to follow on the IMC website.
Thursday 7th February 2013
Teachers Club 9pm
Talk on Pilates and Yoga, to help your climbing
Naomi Sturdy

8th-10th February 2012
Connemara Spring Meet

Thursday 14 Feb 2013
Teachers Club at 9pm
Gareth Ll. Jones
The Grand Canyon Rim to Rim

Five days trekking from the North Rim to the Colorado River through amazing rock structure and geology. Then the two-day climb out to the South Rim. Plus a few associated shots of aerial Greenland and the Rockies.

Thursday 21 Feb 2013
Teachers Club 9pm
Albert Connaughton - Everest

23rd February 2013
Climbing in Spain
Week long climbing trip to costa blanca

15th-24th March 2013
Rock climbing trip to Finale Italy

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