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EDITORS NOTES
A number of IMC Committee positions are becoming vacant this Autumn and as an energetic and enthusiastic committee is essential to the future vitality of the Club as a whole, the current Committee would ask people to think about coming forward and serving on the committee.

Peter Cooper from the Colmcille Climbing Club is looking for your input for the forthcoming Donegal Guide book, As well as poster girl-poster boy pictures. He is particularly keen on getting some historical pictures, route comments, description corrections are also encouraged through the comments facility on the website.

AGM NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Mountaineering Club will take place on Thursday 17th November 2011 at 8pm in The Teacher’s Club, 36 Parnell Square West, Dublin 2.

All members are requested to attend.

The AGM will be preceded by a Bring & Buy Sale at 7pm.
JOSS LYNAM

RIP

JOSS LYNAM: JOSS (JAMES Perry O’Flaherty) Lynam, who has died at the age of 86, was one of Ireland’s best-known mountaineers at home and abroad.

The London-born civil engineer was not only a keen hillwalker, orienteer and prolific writer, but was a family man, friend and confidant to many. He undertook many mountaineering expeditions to the Alps and to Asia’s Greater Ranges, made an outstanding voluntary contribution to the development of adventure sports in Ireland, and played a key mediating role in disputes over access to the countryside.

“Laocharlár” was how the former Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Eamon Ó Cuív described him this week, paying tribute to his “pivotal role” in Mhairle na Tuaithe, the countryside council initiated by the minister to deal with access and development strategies for recreational activity in rural areas.

He and his older sister, Biddy, were born in London to Galway natives Edward and Martha (née Perry) Lynam. His father was curator of maps at the British Museum, and wrote a number of books about maps and mapmaking. Both parents loved the outdoors, and took trips home to Connemara. It was on one of those trips that he climbed his first mountain – Knocknarea, Co Sligo – with an aunt.

At the age of seven, he was taken by a relative to see a documentary on a 1930 expedition to Kanchenjunga, the world’s third highest mountain, and he was entranced.

In 1942, at the age of 18, he was sent with the Royal Engineers on military service to India, where he learned to speak Hindi and spent time in the Himalayan foothills north of Delhi. He recalled later that he had a “quiet” second World War, being demobbed before Indian partition. However, he lost a close friend who had remained behind and was caught in the ensuing bloodshed.

He subsequently studied engineering at Trinity College Dublin, and both he and fellow student, the late Bill Perrott, founded the Irish Mountaineering Club (1948), initiating an appeal through The Irish Times letters page. They were out in Luggala in Wicklow on the day their appeal was published and returned to a sheaf of telephone messages waiting for them.

Writing in the golden jubilee journal to mark 50 years of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC), Lynam recalled how ropes then were “heavy manila or hemp, of doubtful strength and horrible to use when wet”.

The first meeting was held in Dublin’s Central Hotel in Exchequer Street, and Robert Lloyd Praeger, naturalist and author of The Way That I Went, was elected as first president. Lynam’s aim was to ensure it was mixed sex – at a time when many English and international clubs were male only – and cross-Border.

One of those first IMC members was his future wife, Nora Gorevan, whom he married on his graduation in 1951. Fortunately, Lynam’s career as a civil engineer...
brought the couple to work in a number of mountainous regions, including Wales, the English Lake District and India. At this stage, he had been to the Alps, and had already undertaken his first international mountaineering expedition – to Kolahoi in Kashmir at the end of the war. He described many years afterwards how much of his technique was self-taught and how he slipped away from base camp with a book to learn how to cut steps on ice. "How we survived, I don’t know," he observed later. "It was the first real mountain that any of us had ever seen."

He was leader or deputy leader of expeditions to Greenland, the Andes, Kashmir, Tien Shan, Garhwal and Tibet, including the 1987 expedition to Chang-tse (7,543m), which was the forerunner to the successful first Irish ascent of Everest in 1993. He was joint leader with British climber Mike Banks of a veteran mountaineering trip to the 6,632m high Jaonli peak in India in 1991 when an earthquake struck less than 15 miles away.

His sound mountaineering judgment, knowledge of different ranges, route-finding and navigation ability, perseverance and understanding of the mountain environment all contributed to his considerable leadership skills. He brought this experience to bear in his role as president of the Union Internationale des Associations d’Alpinisme’s expeditions commission in the 1990s, and was instrumental in making the case for greater involvement of the “host” countries, such as India and Pakistan.

Arguably, one of his finest legacies was the formation with others of a number of organisations supporting adventure sports, including the Federation of Mountainineering Clubs in Ireland, the Association for Adventure Sports, the Irish Orienteers, Bord Oiliúint Sleibhte, Tiglin – the National Outdoor Training Centre in Co Wicklow – and Outdoor Education Ireland.

He was a driving force in developing a national network of waymarked trails, as chair of the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee from 1984 to 2007. His vision of a representative body for hillwalking and mountaineering was realised in Mountaineering Ireland, which has grown from very small roots to an organisation of 10,500 members. He also created a “Celtic fringe” of alliances among Irish and British mountain training organisations in his role as chair of a joint consultative committee.

The early 1980s were a difficult time for him and his family; he was made redundant in 1983, but said afterwards that it was the “best thing that could have happened,” as he undertook consultancy work, lectured in Bolton Street and produced a number of walking guides for Gill and Macmillan while also editing Irish Mountain Log, which he had founded in 1979. In 1986, he had a coronary bypass operation, and his son Nicholas died the following year. However, there was some good news also with the arrival of his first grandchild, Christopher.

He served on Cospóir, the national sports council, from 1974 to 1984, and advised on curriculums for outdoor pursuits courses and organisation of outdoor education centres run by Vocational Education Committees. Dissatisfied with Ordnance Survey maps of Connacht at the time, he re-surveyed the region’s mountains in 1988 and published Mountains of Connemara, with an introduction by cartographer and writer Tim Robinson, under Robinson’s Folding Landscapes imprint.

He was also a contributor to Encylopaedia Britannica, and continued his civil engineering work – such as with the Office of Public Works at the Skellig Michael world heritage site off Co. Kerry, and on a number of pier and harbour schemes.

His natural style was one of “benign persuasion”, but he could be a tough and determined negotiator when required, though always willing to see the other’s perspective. In recognition of his extraordinary voluntary work and achievements, an honorary doctorate from Trinity College Dublin (2001) was conferred on him and he received the Irish Sports Council’s inaugural Sport Volunteer of the Year Award (2005).

He celebrated his 80th birthday climbing the Paradise Lost route, and abseiled down Winder’s Slab on his 82nd birthday. Both were to raise money for cancer research, as he had had treatment himself.

Friends and colleagues have spoken of his first belief that access for hillwalkers could only be sustainable in an Irish context through working with landowners and addressing their reasonable concerns. He was known for his incredible energy, his endless enthusiasm and as the inspirational mountaineer who followed the fortunes of younger climbers and kept meticulous statistics of Irish ascents at home and abroad. Nora, his selfless partner, supported his activities while rearing their family and maintained an open door for the many visitors to their Dublin home.

Joss Lynam’s ashes were scattered from the summit of his first mountain, Sligo’s Knocknarea, on February 12th. He is survived by his wife Nora, his daughters Ruth and Clodagh, his grandchildren Christopher, Ruairí and Conor. His son Nicholas predeceased him in 1987.

**Joss Lynam: born June 29th, 1924; died January 9th, 2011**

*The Irish Times Saturday 15th January 2011*
I first encountered Joss when I joined the Irish Mountaineering Club(IMC in 1970. In fact for some reason Joss was one of my proposers for full membership.

In those days it quickly became obvious that Joss was a ‘primus inter pares’—he was so fully involved in club and wider mountaineering affairs. He was the organizer of the 1971 Greenland Expedition, which included Se Nolan with whom I was friendly at the time.

He was a founder of Irish Orienteers in which I was involved as a regular participant and of AFAS, which offered training courses in adventure sports including mountaineering.

I recollect one bank holiday weekend course in Connemara in the early/mid 70s on which Joss and Paddy O’Leary instructed and which involved three intensive days of orienteering, hill walking and climbing Carrot Ridge in the rain as well as Sunday morning mass in Ben Lettery hostel celebrated by Fr. Aengus, a fellow participant. In 1976 Donal O’Murchu, Jim Butler, Bairbre Sheridan and I travelled by car to a club Alpine meet at La Berarde led by Joss who was accompanied by Nora, his wife and Clodagh, his young daughter.

While our group had a pleasant time climbing Aiguille Dibona (Boell Route) as well as standard routes on, Les Bans, Coolidge etc. Joss was busy climbing harder routes with Ingrid Masterson—they did the traverses of the Meije and of the Barre des Ecrins as well as some other fine routes. Joss later told me that 1976 was one of his most fulfilling seasons.

Later in 1982 I was delighted to be asked to travel overland in his car with Joss, Ingrid and Liam Convery on a climbing trip to the Val Bregaglia—a beautiful long valley in Italian Switzerland. Based in a wooded campsite at Vicosporano, a quiet but charming traditional village, we followed a structured build up of 4/5 climbs leading to a traverse of the Piz Badile by the North Ridge.

This was a classic 3-day mountaineering expedition starting with an overnight bivouac at the ridge foot, a full day’s traverse of the Badile from dawn to dusk followed by a night on a floor mattress after a late and hard-won scratch meal at the Gianetti Hut and then finishing next day with a long two-col return to Switzerland.

On that trip I climbed with Ingrid while Liam partnered Joss. I recollect Ingrid and I reaching the summit of the Badile to find Joss and Liam dozing in the sun—due to my more basic climbing skill we were a good hour if not two behind them.

After our Bregaglia trip I would have been involved in various trips and events in which Joss also participated—IMC trips to the Lakes, orienteering meets, Long Walks etc. but I did not climb with him nor was I particularly close to him until after I retired from full time work in 2002.

Then I was for a few years a part time Trails Inspector for the National Waymarked Ways Committee of the Irish Sports Council of which Joss was then (and until very recently) Chairman. I got to walk occasionally with Joss...
and also drove him on some of his out of Dublin projects (he was still working as an engineer) – eg in 2006 to Donegal to supervise restoration work for the Board of Works on the Grianan of Aileach fort.

I recollect also driving him in 2008 at Garech de Brun’s invitation to Luggala House for a guided tour and a chat. Even though I had a long personal to-do list of my own home projects I was persuaded by Joss to do some DIY projects at their home for himself and Nora but always under his close instruction and supervision. Joss was Project Manager and I was the tradesman.

Joss kept physically and mentally active and engaged up to the end of his life. In recent years as mentioned above I became a walking partner as Joss’s physical ability declined and we would go out on short outings in Wicklow and latterly in Dublin. Marlay Park and Bushy Park/Dodder trail were favourites. Joss always had a clear objective and would log his walk times faithfully.

A late preoccupation of his was to get to the cross on Bray Head under his own steam. During last summer we tried and failed to get there up the direct trail from the west beside the golf course near Bray- the final steeping of the trail defeated us.

But on a later attempt by the green road/trail from just north of Windgate near Greystones we got to the summit ridge (although I had to remove the top rung of the stile near the top) and spent a pleasant interlude just below the trig point looking north to the Cross and down to the Irish sea and Greystones below and, of course, west to Glencree, Kippure and our beloved Wicklows. As far as I know this was Joss’s last high point and I was honoured to have been part of it.

As I have noted above, our outings in recent years were physically modest affairs taken at a gentle pace and yet they were not dull and dutiful for me. Joss had a wide range of interests – nature, heritage, literature, music, politics and yes, of course, mountaineering and travel.

On our walks he always had a sharp eye for flora and fauna, would take photos and at home check up on plants or birds we had encountered that he was unsure of. I didn’t realize it at the time but Joss over those last years was a role model for how to adapt to the inevitability of aging and that one must keep engaged with the present and indeed the future, must keep physically and mentally active and maintain the element of challenge and momentum in one’s life.

Thanks Joss for all you have given me, the IMC, orienteering, great days on the hills, companionship and your stimulating personality and presence… Farewell.
Out of many happy days spent in the mountains with Joss, I have three particular favourite recollections. Firstly, from the early eighties, him striding down out of the mist into Wasdale in the Lake District at the head of his flock, (an AFAS group, I think), white hair blowing in the wind, brandishing one walking pole, like an Old Testament prophet. A year or two later, when I knew him better, when, on a beautiful Summer day in Luggala, with wind shadows chasing each other across the lake surface, we did his classic route Pine Tree Buttress, followed by the Cligon / Claidheamh Solais combination. Amazingly, it was just before his bypass operation and though he tired easily we shared leads. I think we had the crag to ourselves, and his delight in the climbing and the situations was great to see.

In 1988, when he was sixty-four, I was privileged to accompany him and Mike Banks on the North/ South traverse of the Barre des Ecrins, which he had “had his eye on” for a number of years. It became a seventeen hour day, finishing in driving rain. We had the unusual experience on the summit, of exchanging shouted greetings with the pilot of a passing glider! Even after such a long day, he was well able for crossing the Col the following day for the long hike back to La Berarde.

I feel honoured to have known this indomitable man. Go deimhin, nibheidh a leitheidaris ann.

Bob Norton

Joss Lynam - RIP

Joss Lynam Memorial Question

With the passing of Joss earlier this year the club lost one of its founding members and leading lights. There can be no better tribute to the man that his club remains active and strong over 60 years. It is also a testament to him that mountaineering in Ireland is well structured and represented on various levels: politically, environmentally and socially at various club and youth level. Committee members have recently been discussing Joss’s life and the contribution he made, with a view of an ongoing tribute. Honorary meets and/or walks have been ideas mentioned to keep his name alive. An outdoor writing award another. Or an expedition fund. There have been more. But we’d like to hear what members think. If you have any ideas or suggestions, do let the IMC secretary (or a member of the committee) know. Perhaps the fact that the club is alive and well may be the very best tribute? Joss would have wanted that. Do let us know.

Gerry Galligan
Chairman.
Most walkers frequenting the Wicklow hills will be familiar with The Coffin Stone, that cluster of boulders just above the saddle between Djouce and War Hill.

According to the late J. B. Malone, it bears the distinction of being the only natural rock feature marked and named on the old O.S. Sheet 16, half-inch-to-the-mile map of Dublin and Wicklow (back in the old days Sheet 16 was the preferred choice of the impecunious Dublin hill walker as it covered almost twice the territory of the one inch Wicklow District map). If J.B. said so, then we can take it as being so, for there was no one knew the Dublin and Wicklow mountains better. He was, during his lifetime, regarded as the Doyen of Dublin hill walkers, encouraging and inspiring generations of Dubliners to take to the hills through his regular weekly article in the Evening Herald. This series ran for almost forty years, from the late 1930s right up until 1975, and each article included a sketch map, drawn by J. B. himself, of the route described. His first book on walking in the Dublin mountains, 'The Open Road', was published by Independent Newspapers as long ago as 1950, and is now something of a collector’s item. It was he who, way back in 1966, first came up with the idea of The Wicklow Way, and he persevered, to see its eventual opening, in 1981, as Ireland’s first long distance trail. After his death, in 1989, a memorial stone was erected in his honour near the section of the walk overlooking Lough Tay.

Recently, while out rambling in that area, I met an English couple just down off Djouce, and they expressed disappointment at the fact that there was nothing about The Coffin Stone that remotely resembled a coffin. I explained to them that this was a classic example of how, down through the centuries, an old, original name can sometimes become garbled beyond recognition (another example is the common usage of Kathy Gallagher for Carrickgollogan, that little hill above the Ballycorus lead mines).

The origin of The Coffin Stone’s proper name dates back to the dawn of history, to a time when those mystical, mighty hunter-warriors, Na Fianna, roamed across Erin’s green isle, in pursuit of deer, derring-do, dust-ups and damsels-in-distress (though not necessarily in that order), and I first heard the story of how it came to be named at my mother’s knee. I feel it is only right that I should pass this story on, so that the legend be kept alive. Are you sitting comfortably?

It seems Fionn Mac Cumhaill left his base in Glennasmole one cold winter’s morning, to go stag hunting. He was on foot, as was the great Fiannioct tradition, and was accompanied by his two faithful hounds, Bran and Sceolan (I imagine Bran may have been so called because of his regular habits, but I’ve no thoughts on the other one). Anyhow, they raised a stag on the slopes of Kippure, and it took off, across what J.B. used to call ‘the heather deserts’, in the general direction of the Tonduffs and Glensoulan, with Fionn and the hounds in hot pursuit.

Then, this being Ireland in winter, the mist came down and the rain came on, (which only goes to show that, global warming or no, some things never change) and, to cut a long story short, the poor divil got lost.

Now, before you start snorting in derision, it should be pointed out that this was long before maps were invented, so, no Sheet 16 or 1" Wicklow map for our hero, nothing more than a few scratched directions, in Ogham script, no less, on a bit of slate tucked into the waistband of his underpants.

True, as a young lad Fionn had
inadvertently been the first to chew on the Salmon of Knowledge, a snack that bestowed upon him a wide ranging fund of facts (which would have made him a popular choice for any team participating in a Pub Quiz but, alas, this was so long ago that, incredible as it may seem, pubs had not yet been invented). On that fateful day poor Fionn discovered something most of us would have guessed anyhow - salmon know damn all about navigating the Wicklow hills in thick mist.

As far as a compass was concerned, such a thing had never been heard of, not even those little brass roundy ones with the jittery needle, that seem to have been with us forever. Not that a compass would have been of much use anyhow, as this was so long ago that the North Pole hadn't even been invented. Of course, he, like the rest of us, was an expert at steering by the sun and the stars, but a fat lot of use that is when the mist is so thick you can hardly see your hand in front of your face. As regards this old wives' tale of moss being found only on the north side of the tree trunks, the truth is, here in Ireland, moss can be found all over the bloody shop.

So, let's take a closer look at the poor man's dilemma, for a dilemma it certainly was. For starters, he was very poorly equipped to deal with the harsh conditions and his outfit would certainly not have come up to the standards required of those striving for Mountain Leader Award qualifications. But, in his defence, it should be noted that this was long before the IMC, MCI, BOS, AFAS, the BMC or the MLA ever existed. Well, they couldn't have, could they, as this was so long ago that the alphabet hadn't even been invented. In fact, to give you some idea of just how far back we are going, this was long before Cliff Richards had even been born.

Fionn's colourful outfit was much the same as we used to see Irish dancers sporting at the Fleadh Ceoil and Irish dancing competitions up and down the country not so long ago (come to think of it, the lads in Na Fianna probably were responsible, willy-nilly, for the whole idea of Drag Hunts and, interestingly, the tradition of dressing in gaudy garb while stag hunting persists to this very day, as anyone who has witnessed the half-mounted gentry of The Ward Union Hunt in action can verify).

To begin with, on his feet Fionn was wearing, would you believe, open-toed sandals. But, fair is fair, while we are all agreed that these are notorious for letting the bog-water in, the more astute among you will be aware that they are equally brilliant at letting it back out again. This being long before buckles were invented, the sandals were held on by long thongs wound about the muscular calves of his legs, and tied off just below the knees. Fine for a big hefty lad like him, but how did us skinny little geeks manage? Needless to say, in those far off days our comely Irish maidens had not yet discovered an altogether more questionable use for the same thongs.

Above the knee he wore one of those familiar, but highly impractical, saffron, multi-pleated kilts. Can you imagine the state of him, coming home of an evening, having spent the day hopping and lepping across the bog, the brake and the mireland, and telling his poor Ma that he wanted all those pleats ironed back in before he stepped out for work again next morning? Those same kilts were a regular heart scald for Irish mothers, that's for sure, and it's no wonder that the popular ballads of the time depicted them as frail little women with silvery hair, toil-worn fingers and brows all furrowed and wrinkled with care. There is no doubt that the introduction of the ubiquitous nylon tracksuit bottoms was a major contributor to the disappearance of the traditional, long-suffering Irish Ma, and the emergence of your modern, care-free, Irish Mum.

Next, we come to that thorny old question, the subject matter of which has been a rich source of material for juvenile comedians since time began, namely, what was worn beneath the kilt? Well, let's not beat about the bush here, the man was wearing standard Na Fianna issue deerskin underpants. To find out more about how these were worn, we must turn to 'BrianO'Linn', that grand old ballad so popular in Fionn's time, and I quote:

Brian O'Linn had no boxers to wear,
So he got a deerskin for to make him a pair,
With the skinny side out and the hairy side in,
Sure they tickle me fancy, said Brian O'Linn.

Well, yes, I expect they did. Here, I believe, we have a pointer as to why, in those far off days, Ireland's population was at least twice what it is today. There's no doubt but that the introduction of the cotton underpants had a calming influence upon the young men of more modern times and brought great relief to our hard-pressed Irish colleens.

The kilt was topped off with a rather effeminate-looking, white, long sleeved blouse. But before you...
start in with the snide remarks, remember, he had to have somewhere to pin all his dancing medals. To complement the blouse he wore, draped elegantly over the shoulder, a short green cloak, fastened by a rather bling brooch of the finest gold, the long spike of which may have been useful for removing stones from horses' hooves. What useful function the cloak served has baffled folklorists and historians for years, but let's face it, they are not the most practical of people. To me, the solution is blindingly obvious. The clue is in the colour: snot-green, as James Joyce would have described it. Here we have nothing more than an extra large hankie, for an extra large man, in a very practical colour and, as there were no pockets in his outfit, he kept it handy there by his shoulder. The whole ensemble was topped off with a swish and highly fashionable hair band, keeping his gleaming, shoulder length locks in place. You see, it's not for nothing he was known among his mates as Finn McCool.

So, to keep a short story even shorter, just as it was getting dark, he stumbled upon what we now know as The Coffin Stone. By this stage the rain had turned to sleet and he was soaked to the skin, so he was only too glad to crawl underneath for a bit of shelter. As the darkness deepened, and the mist thickened, he resigned himself to spending the night in this dripping, confined and chilly refuge. What with the cold and the damp, he began to get a dose of the shivers, and felt a bout of flu coming on. To try and gain some crumb of comfort, he used one dog as a pillow and the other as a rudimentary hot water bottle. Not that hot water bottles, as we know them, were in existence back then, as rubber trees had yet to be invented.

But, with true native cunning, the lads in Na Fianna had come with the ideal solution to those long, cold winter nights. Known colloquially as 'hot water bottles with ears' they had several advantages over your modern, synthetic article. Most importantly, perhaps, there was no stigma or embarrassment whatever for men in admitting to using them. Indeed, some hardchaws actually boasted of having more than one in the bed of a night. Can you imagine? Also, they were widely available and if you were unlucky enough to have mislaid yours, there was always the possibility of borrowing your neighbour's (especially if the boss happened to be away at the time). Best of all, they were made of long lasting, one hundred percent organic material, and had a wonderfully soft, natural feel to them, something which proved to be a constant source of delight to the lads. They were remarkable for retaining their heat too and, if you were really lucky, you might find yourself having one of those models that was even hotter in the early morning light than it had been the night before. Last, but by no means least, if they did show signs of cooling off itself, they could always be conveniently topped up, and all without having to put a foot to the cold floor.

On that bitter night in question, however, our poor hero could draw little comfort from all of this, as he lay stretched out on the cold, damp earth, his hair thick with mist and dog fleas; his chest white with frost; his feet like two blocks of ice and him shivering, sneezing and wheezing to beat the band. But perhaps it is best to let him tell it in his own words - for those very words have become enshrined in the annals of Irish folklore and handed down from generation to generation, for years and years and years.

It was only brutal - he said - sure I never got a wink of sleep, wasn't I awake all night with the coughin'.

And there you have it.
With the availability of the Internet and such web sites as Climbing.ie and the IMC web page, I (too) regularly keep track of activities. Unfortunately the use of usernames hides the originators of many of the forum comments and being “out of the scene” it is sometimes difficult to follow the threads. One recent discussion involved Drifter’s Escape and this leads well into the following.

Dalkey Grades – I guess this is one subject that at one time I thought I understood. As time passes, the difficulty of grading routes becomes clouded. Soon after my arrival in Ireland and the ascent of my first new route in the Quarry, Joss cornered me regarding the possibility of editing a guide book to update the O’Flynn edition that was now some 7 years out of date.

The only part of the process for publication that caused any concern to me was the need to list route lengths in metres. I wanted feet, it made the routes seem bigger! Imperial feet prevailed and after the guides publication (1974), the grading storm started. New route additions in the Quarry in the mid seventies went exponential and once again Joss was looking for an editor, there were no takers. Hoping to make more sense of the grading I issued a questionnaire to all the protagonists of the day along with a number of the Quarry regulars. All routes were listed along with their grades and columns for pitch grades and overall grade. I had hoped to come up with an “average” grade. Response to the questionnaire was poor but the results were used along with my own experiences of leading all routes below 5b in the hope of finding some form of agreement. I had hoped for what one person “on line” described as “global consensus”. But no, the disagreement continues to this day. New to this Guide and I believe new to Ireland at the time, I introduced the “numerical” system for technical difficulty that I had been brought up with in Cornwall after its introduction in the 1968 guide to Bosigran by Peter Biven. Annual visits to Cornwall were used to check my technical grading.

Route grades have to change with time, they can not remain constant, the rock changes, the equipment improves, techniques are developed, peoples needs are different etc. An interesting fact: Donal and I climbed together, we did the same routes but Donal wore out his boots every year, mine lasted two. The reason being Donal needed twice as many foot holds as me! This must effect the grade. Stephen McMullan in the Drifter’s Escape debate listed his favourite solo routes. It’s interesting that many of these were old IMC routes, done in big boots, no chalk and no protection but still carry the original grades! These first ascents were in fact “solas”. What I ask is will the grades change once the Gecko boots and Gecko chalk are available? The solution to guide book grades is to remove them, just describe the line!

Luggala

Sweet Erica: This was my first recorded new route in Ireland and named by Jimmy Leonard, that worldly scholar, after the preponderance of heather (Latin name) that streaked the route. Boy was he a mine of knowledge, anything from rockets to enhanced tomato soup. Being the only new route climbed at Luggala in that lovely month of November and having Dave Fawcett (supposedly Ron’s brother) as its only claim to fame, it was never destined to be a star route! So you may ask, “why climb such an ugly route”? I guess the original Perrot guide book was hard to follow, it was misty and wet, the day was running out fast and the view out from the end of the Terrace across the Main Face was too horrific to contemplate. After all, we had to do something to earn a pint!

Sun Chaser: An obvious name for another late in the day route, requiring speed to avoid a walk up the hill in the dark.

Bearcats: Named by Joe Mulhall after the popular RTE TV program of the time. I remember suffering from a wild sore throat that I was subduing with Strepsils. I did not read the instructions and scoffed down the tablets like candy. When I got up to climb, I swayed, the horizon rolled and the rock pulsated in and out! Somehow I got up this first pitch and then lead the continuation to the top. Big boots in March were a must.

Dance of the Tumblers: As it has been said, the route did not go without fighting back. The name came from the piece of music by Rimsky Korsakoff. I had the name in mind for a route in Cornwall at Carn Barra that I had...
tried and failed on a number of times. Later I was to find it was climbed around the same time as Dance and named Ra. Now to right some history. The route was originally written up in the IMC Newsletter in October 1972 with the first ascensionists listed as Richardson, Young, Harris and Mulhall. Pat Redmond’s 1973 guide gave the same list. Ken Higgs Guide in 1982 had us listed as Young, Mulhall, Richardson and Harris. This was perpetuated in the 1993 and 2009 guides. Here is what happened – the story, written for the IMC Journal but never published.

It’s a peach of a line up the side of Great Gully Joe spouted out between sups of Guinness, tried it with Alan Douglas, he fell off.

So one cold snowy Sunday in November 1971 Jim and I wandered over to Luggala to look up at Joe’s peach. He must be mad I scoffed at Jim, its all bloody overhangs.

A while later I was belayed agog as Joe led off up the ramp towards the menacing overhangs. Three hours later he was crouched like a frightened pigeon on a sloping triangular ledge surrounded by roofs. Bring up my ciggy’s is the only encouragement I get, are they to calm his nerves or does he expect this to be a long day?

The gentle ramp turned into a steep slab with overhangs pushing me out towards the gulley, the green slab angled up to give a barrel like formation. Stepping around the corner onto holds that John Gibson (our trusty photographer) swore were there, or had he got something against me after that Maestri like experience on Lugnaquillia during the winter. Now a short reach up to Joe and I took up a yoga position hanging from the peg below the triangular ledge. “Give me a ciggy”, he gasped. Like Arthur I tugged at my Chouinard Excalibur and like Arthur it came out of the anvil. I was not to be king and Joe was not to get his ciggy. I shot out on an arc and rapidly grabbed at the mass of rope rapidly moving in space. Joe had a shoulder belay and with only one hand on the rope, I did the breaking with his neck as the bollard! He then lowered me to the ground some 10’ out from the foot of the cliff, quite some peach. A shaken and rope burned Joe abseiled from his lonely perch as the sun gave way to the cool of evening. We never did see John’s photos, he must have a mine of climbing history pictures.

Months later we were back for my pitch, a quick variation aid route (never written up) led to the triangular belay ledge. Now with Joe once again ensconced on his perch, I lead off right. The drop below my feet seemed so steep, there was nothing, my hands pressed flat against the rock, I edged along the tip of balance at the point where all time seemed to stop. Fingers enveloped a jug, a pull at the green friction at my feet pushed be back into balance. A peg runner and on, tiny foot holds led across towards a crack. Far below on the brooding
lake, ripples lapped the shore, what peace to be had there, alas no Lady of the Lake.

A long step and with good friction I stood on nothing to reach a sharp edge, a layback and then with a shuffle, I reached a “green and pleasant ledge”.

With a bong belay in place, Joe came hurtling across like a fire engine with its bell ringing, oops, I forgot, the routes third tumble! We abseiled off, enough fun for the nerves!

After many abortive attempts to reach our previous high point from above including the famous Dave Walsh anorak eating epic, (the dangers of loose stuff and figure of 8 devices) I found myself once again at the “green and pleasant ledge”. This time in the company of an International team. Joe the local, fresh from Healy’s, Bob Richardson the American, laden with the latest Hexcentrics, and two “Brits”, Mike “Bomber” Harris, he had more “flying hours” in his Whillans than most Air Corps pilots and finally myself. The acceptance of new members on this route led to some controversy, not unlike rumours surrounding the original ascent of Spearhead back in the ’60’s. Over a pint or two, Joe invited Bob to join us on the completion of the route and somehow Bomber tagged along. I did not agree with this arrangement and through spite, I offered Bob the lead much to Joe’s annoyance. Bob (wearing shorts! a new sight on Irish rock) lead in superb style, across the slab to place a hexcentric, a brief layback to more protection placed. At regular intervals more hexcentrics were expended in an orderly and systematic manner, each move was thoughtful, deliberate and useful, a show of perfect control in this vertical environment. Traverse out left to the crux position, a #10 placed high, a swing over the lip, up the slab to disappear into the heart of the sun. I followed, cursed for not letting Joe lead and finally at the belay, I crawled up the grass and then crouched, very quiet and thoroughly subdued. Harris followed in a cloud of Gaulois smoke, reminiscent of the Paris Metro, and seduced the pitch with a combination of bad language and fear but no “air time”. Joe finished in fine form and complemented Bob on his inspirational lead. Now relaxing on the ledge, I gazed down at the dark waters glistening far below still looking for signs of the Lady of the Lake.

The first complete ascent with aid elimination was by Dave Richardson in 1973.

The Real Thing: A pretty obvious line leading to some most improbably situations where the line of the route follows the ground below to give a serious position apparently close to the ground! A classic large glass bottle of coke was trussed up like a chicken and hauled up the route as we went. The Real Thing seemed an apt name.
Psycho: The only new route I climbed with Pat I'm the leader of the gang Redmond. The line at the time appeared from below to be acceptable but the vegetation encountered was like a journey to the Lost World until the final mossy slab was reached. One poor peg for protection mid way across the slab gave me the confidence to proceed, its difficulties in its mossy form were confirmed by Pat’s lunge for the peg. His comment was “you must have been “Psycho” to lead that”! The 2009 guide shows the direct finish and not the slab pitch.

Golden Oldies/Decrepitation: A torturous explanation for these names. Competition was beginning to appear in Irish climbing. There was the Trinity Club, the UCD club, the Rapparees, Spillikin, the IMC and various non-connected masters and new routing and development was starting to boom.

We descended from Luggala over the boulders late on a Sunday evening to see Higgs and Co. on a new route. “No way will they get up that today, we'll grab it early next week end.” It rained, two weeks later we were back. Up at dawn and on the wet rocks at Luggala before the UCD hut was awake. With much squirming in the mud we completed the route. The young’uns appeared, we were ahead, obviously age and experience still ruled! Ken calls out, “how are you finding it? We reckoned 4c when we climbed it, was hard to be objective as it was dark” So Aqualung had been climbed, at least we did the second ascent! We knew the race was over, we could now just climb for recreation, the competition was too great. The traverse out left at about severe lead to a fine ledge and tree belay. As I abseiled the grass below my feet started to peel away to reveal clean white granite. With a little help the grass rolled away like a carpet to expose a dream slab and cracks. This was promptly climbed, we felt rejuvenated, Golden Oldies - Side One was born. Sean Windrim and Anthony Latham passed by, "where the f--- did that appear from". The 1993 Wicklow guide indicates that nature has reclaimed the rock. The 2009 guide describes it “as an expedition for the foolhardy”. Confusion in the guides as to the dates of these ascents, 1982 guide is correct. No doubt in our environmentally challenged climbing kingdom nobody will enjoy the pleasure that Joe and I sampled that day.

Decrepitation: I was beginning to feel pretty decrepit watching the “young’uns” at work, the name blended well with its neighbour and the age thing seemed to be associated with other routes for some reason, e.g. Geriatrix at the Rathdrum railway quarry now crushed and mixed with concrete into someone’s home! It has to be added to my “Memorable Routes of Destruction”, but that’s another story. Little did I know how decrepit you could really get and yet, still climb! I am currently working on a mathematical model for U.S route grade modification based on “ones physical condition”.

Why’s Dat Climb Called Dis? - Steve Young
Volunteers: Ken Higgs considered me to be a “volunteer” that day, I think I was “press ganged”. This was a masterpiece of hard steep on sight leading.

Time Passages: With Ken again, but I have no recollection of this route, maybe it should be renamed Alzheimer’s!

**Hyrax:** More Latin, I certainly never saw a rabbit, only a Mad Hatter and a March Hare! Massive gardening was required, we spent hours trying to decapitate a holly tree, which I see from the 2009 guide is still alive and well. Its shattered remains were used as a tied off runner!

**Off Spring:** Ken gave it the name, my Wife was expecting, so perhaps it was for the expected “Offspring”.

**Pentax:** My new camera accompanied us on our first outing onto the Main Face. I soon found a bulky SLR was more bother than it was worth. Fewer photos in the future.

**Pisces:** With my new trusty all metal, state of the art peg hammer I set off on the first pitch of what was to be a new “rambling route” somewhere up, across and around the Main Face. Somewhere en-route while trying to put in a peg, my hammer shaft broke, back to the drawing board, that is if we survive the Main Face. Across under the main overhang to the belay for the last pitch of Spearhead. The previous week, an ROV, the Pisces had been trapped off the coast of Cork but was luckily attached to the surface by a sturdy life line manned by a capable crew.

Dusk was fast approaching as Donal, that was well planned, set off around the Spearhead crux cursing for a sturdy life line to the top and disappeared out of contact. After what seemed an eternity, it was now dark, the rope was taken in, I set up a back belay, I did not relish a slip, swing and whoosh out over The Gannets. On reaching Donal, he pointed out his insecure belay. The descent in the dark down South Gully included a crawl through at least one dead sheep. We passed through Roundwood after closing time, Pisces seemed an apt name.

**Glendalough.**

**Georgia:** Some tune I kept on whistling to Donal’s annoyance.

**The Nest:** Donal and I spent hours hanging from the tree below the overlap, trying to free climb through a pile of loose blocks. Eventually aid was used to beat it into submission. Jim Leonard had observed us in the tree on his way up to the cliff in the morning. On his return in the evening we were still there. The following morning, we were again up in the tree, ready to finish the route, Jim calls out “Are you two nesting”?

**Cornellow:** After a Cornish climbing locale.

**Solitaire:** It could have been after seeing Cathy’s giant diamond ring or the fact that I started the route being belayed by an “en-plastered” Donal, still cast up after his flight off “Jackie”. Des Doyle came along in time to second the route. The initial finger crack caught my imagination after seeing photos of Yosemite’s “Cookie Wall” and all the fine finger lines. Just dreaming!

**Frigg:** Just “friggin” about as I watched Sean Windrim deal with his new and un-controllable double rope, designed to slow him down!

**Provo:** A letter to the MCI forum in 2005 indicated concern as to the political correctness of this name. So what was special about August 1974 - well children,
if you are sitting comfortably I will begin....... I lived in Avoca in Co.Wicklow, worked at the Avoca Mines, climbed on Bell Rock, bouldered on the Mottee Stone at Cronebane and listened to the RTÉ news on, “six of the 19 prisoners that escaped from Portlaoise prison” were seen in the Tina Healy area and heading deep into the Wicklow Mountains.

An army helicopter gave chase but ran out of fuel. Escape by sea along the Wicklow-Wexford coast was prevented by the eagle eyed sailors of the Deidre and the army searched the Avoca area. This was Friday August 23, 1974. On the Sunday, I headed to Glendalough and climbed the oh’so obvious line above what we called base camp with Donal Windrim. So as not to forget the event I called it “Provo”. Remember, “lest we forget”! As a Brit, I’m proud of the name.

Eden Wall: I guess the name is pretty obvious, the interesting facet was that it was lead by a child prodigy, Terry O Neill!

Rock Music: Seem to remember we carried a cassette recorder for “music while we climbed”

Caliph: Named after my faithful dachshund walking companion, who emigrated with me and helped suss out new rock in the Canadian Shield.

Xanthos: The call of the wild took Tom Wolfe and myself high up into the Upper Cliffs to a prominent yellow groove, hence the Latin name. A worthwhile expedition.

S.R. Young
Lac Du Bonnet, Manitoba, Canada.
youngfam@mts.net
What is a mountain CEO? Stephen Peel and Peter Norton have answered the call from Helen Lawless of the MI for the IMC to be represented on Mountaineering Ireland’s Environmental Committee. Helen calls us CEO’s - Club Environmental Officers - but we call us Stephen and Peter. (Remember the sketch about the man addressing a new teenager intake on his Adventure Centre? ‘Good morning, young ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Hardslog Adventure Centre. My name is Colonel Henry Dauntless Forsythe, but you can call me “SIR”. Stephen and Peter abhor that man).

You will be aware of the MI’s increasing activity on issues of Access and Conservation from articles in the Mountain Log and on its website www.mountaineering.ie. The IMC’s involvement reflects an acceptance of the pressures that exist upon the upland environment that we all use and enjoy in different ways. The aim will be to recognise, and act upon, current problems, to report natural phenomena (wildlife sightings, etc.) and maybe to anticipate future potential issues that might impact upon the upland environment.

Our remit includes issues like conifer Forestry impact, Hill Farmers’ interests, scrambler bikes, dogs on the hills, upland path erosion, scientific research on mountain animals and plants, access issues, pollution of water sources, litter, encouragement of curiosity about the mountain environment, unwelcome artefacts (we mean unnecessary cairns, etc. rather than ferrata or bolted crags)...

We invite all IMC members to contact us about your own relevant concerns in and beyond such matters as the above. We will put them on our agenda. Where appropriate we may share concerns with MI and with our opposite numbers in kindred organisations.

We will be reporting back, and maybe organising something like a walk-and-chat on environmental matters on-the-hoof (or rather, boot).

Stephen is at stephen.peel@iol.ie.

Peter is on pepnorton@gmail.com
AGM Minutes

Thursday: November 18th 2010

Teachers Club Parnell Square, 8pm

The President of the IMC, Kieran Kelly, opened the AGM by welcoming all who were in attendance and then followed with the following address.

1. President’s Address 2010

Now that my term is complete I would like to thank the members for their support over the three years, I have enjoyed the experience and was honoured to have been given the opportunity to become club president.

For a while after taking on the role as president I wrestled with what was required of me. I soon realised that all that was expected of me was the same as what is expected of any club member who takes up a position of responsibility and that is to do your best.

My term of office has been made up of both sad and happy times, sad to see members pass on and happy to see an influx of new members joining the ranks and to see them develop with the assistance of the old guard, these new members represent the future of the club so we must be mindful of our responsibility as club members to encourage and grow membership for the future of the IMC.

The driving machine of the club is the committee who do an amazing job in managing the club through the various officers without them we would be Router less. I have stated in the past and I will repeat because it is important “The success of the club is down to a strong management committee made up of volunteers who commit to growing the club. Every year positions come available and this year is no different there are positions to be filled it is up to us to step forward.

2. Auditor’s Report

Irish Mountaineering Club/
CumannSléibhteireachtaí na hÉireann

Notes on 2010 Audit

Insurance

In our 2009 report we noted and supported the Committee’s review of our insurance policies, particularly for the hut - regarding the adequacy of terms and cover. The Treasurer has assured us that is now complete and that the cover is satisfactory. Presentation of end year accounts to Auditors:
Last year we requested that the Treasurer should provide draft end-year accounts for audit at least 3 weeks before the AGM. We are happy to note that this was done in the current year.

**Surplus Funds:**

In last year’s report we asked that given the lost cause of a likely windfall from an Irish Nationwide sale and the unlikelihood of a similar outcome for EBS we should review the surplus fund holdings with a view to getting the best interest returns. The Treasurer has informed us that he is in the process of closing the EBS accounts and opening a new account.

We understand also that the Irish Nationwide account arrangements are being amended and regularized.

In compliance with best practice all Club accounts should be held in the name of the Club and should require a minimum of two signatories for withdrawals.

**Balance Sheet:**

The practice of preparing a Balance Sheet lapsed some years ago. As the Club is not a commercial organisation it is probably not necessary to prepare one but it is necessary to put in place some method of ensuring that Club assets are accounted for and do not inadvertently go astray. In recent years there have been queries about Prize Bonds and the Hargreaves Bequest that appeared on past balance sheets. More recently an old IMC Central Council deposit book a/c 26024377 has been unearthed – was the account closed twenty years ago when the Belfast Section was dissolved or do we have a few hundred Euro sitting in Bank of Ireland?

As a minimum we suggest that an Asset Register be prepared – a simple list of Club assets. Common sense would be used to determine what is listed – perhaps durable items with a purchase price in excess of €100, furniture, tools, also any bank accounts, the Hut, Library (list of books). The physical location / custodian of each item should be listed.

The purchase price of any new acquisition should be noted and and any disposal should also be recorded. The auditors should compare the Asset Register at the end of each year with the Register at the end of previous year and, where appropriate, verify the existence of specific items.

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**Auditor’s Report**

**Auditor’s Report**

**Year end 30th September 2010**

We have examined the financial records and accounts of the club for the period noted above. Proper records have been kept. The accounts are consistent with them and give a true and fair view of the financial position of the club.

Paul Donnelly  
Dónal Ó Murchú  
Honorary Auditors  
18th November 2010

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**3. Treasurer’s Report**

**Treasurer’s Report**

Lloyd reported that the club membership is now 222 which is a ten percent increase on last year of 201.

This year the Hut expenses were quite high resulting in an overall small deficit.

At the beginning of the year there was a potential problem with the Hut as regards insurance which affected the use of the Hut for a short time. The new insurance arrangements are a big improvement for no extra cost but much greater protection. Much work had to be carried out on the Hut, this work was a good investment and should produce additional Hut revenue from now on.

In response to a question from the floor, it was decided that the method of distribution IMC membership cards should be discussed by the incoming committee, at the next committee meeting.

Lloyd Moore

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Dónal Ó Murchú  
Paul Donnelly  
18th November 2010

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Irish Mountaineering Club/  
Cumann Sléibhteoireachta na hÉireann
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**Total Hut Income** | €9,280 | €10,484 | **Total Hut Expenses** | €12,416 | €5,064 |

**Surplus / (Deficit)** | -€3,136 | €5,420 |

### Movements on Savings Accounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Gross</th>
<th>Dirt</th>
<th>Net</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EBS Club Account</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBS Hut Savings Account</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Nationwide</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>€827</td>
<td>€151</td>
<td>€676</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bank Balances at 30th September 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance as per A/C’s</th>
<th>Sept 30th 2010</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Sept 30th 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Club Current - Bank of Ireland</td>
<td>6,925</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Petty Cash</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncashed Cheques</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Current Accounts</td>
<td>6,991</td>
<td>-1,085</td>
<td>8,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club EBS Savings Account</td>
<td>5,306</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut Current - Bank of Ireland</td>
<td>8,575</td>
<td>-3,136</td>
<td>11,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut - EBS Savings Account</td>
<td>1,380</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut - Irish Nationwide Deposit</td>
<td>36,522</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>35,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>€58,774</strong></td>
<td><strong>-€3,545</strong></td>
<td><strong>62,317</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Change for Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>€58,774</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treasurer’s Report for Year Ended 30th September 2010

**CLUB**
Membership increased from 201 to 222 this year (+10%).
income from fees was up 3%.
Expenses included €1,305 (MI) and €280 (Teacher’s) owed from previous year.
Adjusted surplus for year was €46 less than previous year.

**HUT**
Hut Income - Fees down 11%.
Deficit on Hut activities for year was €2,462 due to continued investment and exceptional once off cost.
Exceptional once off cost of €750 for road subsidence.

**GENERAL**
Closed the two EBS accounts as there was no benefit in keeping them open. All savings will be consolidated for ease of access.
Indoor Meets

Last winter we had a series of indoor meets on Thursday evenings at the Teachers Club.

The attendance varied. Some indoor meets were very well attended – some not so well. We had ‘full houses’, but we also have had barely half a dozen members attending the presentations. Some of the meets were very memorable.

Outdoor Meets

Again, a successful series of meets. A couple deserve particular mention.

a) The New-comers weekend in Glendalough. This helped contribute to the success of the Introductory Course in April.

b) Lake District Meet – very successful with perfect weather and wonderful climbing. By my account, we had 25 members attending. Led by Gerry Moss.

c) Connemara in February led by John Duignan and August led by myself.

d) Kerry – good climbing: led by Tony Barry.

e) BBQ: a good night was reported – I wasn’t there.

I have enjoyed my year as Meets Secretary and could recommend the position in the club to those who would like to take on the role.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those members who helped to organise outdoor meets, and also to thank all who gave a presentation on a Thursday evening.

Peter Wood

Peter also said that meets are easy to organise and encourages members consider take the plunge and set up a meet.

Peter explained, following a question from the floor, that the reason for the late start on a Thursday evening is that there is no other room available in the Teachers Club at an earlier time.

5. Librarian’s Report

The IMC library continues to be developed, with the aim of making it better known to the club members, easier to browse and more convenient to use.

There has been an uptake in interest in the library this year to date, with frequent requests for books to the librarian email address.

We have recently received a number of guide books back into the library, which is a great boost, as many of the sought after titles are guide books. These books are being catalogued and will be made available on the IMC Library Online listing, a link to which can be found on the IMC Website.

If you have any books which may have been a part of the IMC Library and which you have been kind enough to store, please feel free to return them to the Library at this point, as they will be catalogued and made available to the club. Alternatively, if you have any climbing/hiking/hill-walking etc related books which you would like to donate to the library, feel free to contact me and we can arrange it.

As usual, you can browse the available books via the online listing, or you can email me a query regarding a particular book or subject. You can then either drop over to my house to pick a book up (Dublin central), giving a little notice first, or the book can be mailed to you if you live a bit further away and that is not convenient for you.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to email the library or give me a call... the contact details are available on the IMC website under “Who’s Who”.

Aoife Grant

6. Training & Development Officers Report

This was my first year in the role of Training Officer and I would first like thank Declan Craig for his advice and a good handover which meant I was up and running in the new role quickly.

Initial interest in the “Introductory Rockclimbing programme” was low but closer to April a big surge in enquiries and applications resulted in a packed presentation in the Teachers Club at the end of March. The list of course participants had to be capped at 40 with a further 15 being held on a waiting list.

The course ran over 5 weeks in April and May. We profited from fantastic weather on every occasion. In the end about 25 new members participated in the
various sessions.

There was as always in the spirit of the IMC a great turnout from existing members to act as mentors, impart the basic skills and simply enjoy some “hot rock” a la Dalkey.

Friendships were made, climbing partners sussed out and plans made for the rest of the summer. Particular thanks should go those members who actively took the new members under their wings at the end of the Introductory course, both at the quarry and further afield. Special thank here to Gerry Moss, Rob Davies, Declan Craig and Rowan Kavanagh.

Also thanks are due to Edwige who ran the “Spring Meet” at Glendalough in May which provided some of the new members with their first taste of climbing in a mountain environment.

In June we ran an Introduction to Bouldering evening at 3 Rock which was attended by eight new members. Thanks go to Terry O’Neill who provided the coordination for this and to Alan McDonagh who ran the session on the night.

Also in June the IMC ran an Anchor Building and gear placement workshop at Bullock Harbour. Twelve members worked with Rowan Kavanagh, Declan Craig, Willie Whelan and myself and practised setting up all types of belay that would be useful in a single-pitch / multi-pitch setting under blue skies and to the sound of techno music from the locals. Well done guys!

In August we ran a Mountainskills day in Glendalough. This was attended by three members and was run as in previous years by Liz Murray. Many thanks to Liz.

In summary it was a very enjoyable and productive year for all concerned, able assisted by the weather gods. This is borne out by the fact that we have a good 12 participants from the Introductory Programme who have stuck at it, are well integrated in the club and are even leading at a good level in some cases.

Due to work commitments I am unfortunately standing down from the role of Training Officer. However I will be handing over the mantle to Edwige for next year so the post will be well looked after.

Thank you.
Dave Madden.

7. Hut Warden’s Report

It has been another good year for the Hut.

A lot of work was done during the year on maintenance and improvements, and thanks are due to all those members and friends of the IMC who generously gave their time and skills for the benefit of the Hut and Club.

The main jobs done during the year were:

- The installation of a new hot-water system with two hot showers and cubicles, which makes a big difference to Hut visitors after a cold and dirty day on the hills
- Emergency repairs to the driveway following the flooding in January
- Plumbing repairs following the January freeze
- Replacement of the fencing
- Replacement of one gate and improvement of another
- Disposal of a skip full of junk
- Replacement of a window
- Wiring improvements, with some new lights
- Painting, plastering, varnishing
- Restoration of the kitchen fireplace
- ... and much more

So, the Hut is in good shape and getting better, and well worth a visit by those members who haven’t been there in a while.

I’m happy to report that use of the Hut by IMC members has been steadily rising, to an estimated 16% of overnights this year, compared to something like 5% in previous years.

Hut income is holding steady, slightly down on last year’s record takings. The amount of work done on the Hut during the year has resulted in a deficit this year instead of the usual substantial surplus, but I’m confident the investment will produce dividends, in terms of both income and facilities for members, in years to come.

The Hut insurance cover was extensively reviewed and updated during the year by a group led by chairman Gerry Galligan, and I’ve no doubt that we are now well covered.

After three years doing the Hut warden job, I’m stepping down tonight, and I would like to thank all those people who have helped during that time to keep the Hut as such an asset to the club. As well of being of service to IMC members, there is no doubt that the Hut brings to the club a lot of prestige and goodwill within the mountaineering community, and long may it continue. However, there is still quite some way to go until the Hut matches the standards that we expect, and see, in other club huts, so I would urge my successor to continue the improvements, and I will be happy to help out in whatever way I can. It should be noted that the Hut has substantial cash reserves sitting in bank vaults, which could well be put to good use.
I’m afraid this report is being made up on the spot, firstly because I left my AGM preparations until the last minute, and secondly because there’s not a huge amount to report.

The website is ticking over nicely. The forum remains very active, and there is a constant stream of high-quality material coming in from members – trip reports, gallery photos, and more – which makes the site a wonderful place to browse and a great resource for people planning trips. I would also like to thank Barry for providing articles from the Newsletter for use on the site.

The website is not without certain problems though; the picture gallery is awkward to use, and also the forum sometimes. I have been meaning for some time to address these issues, so I hope that this year, now that I have more time on my hands, I will manage to completely revamp the site by transferring to a new content-management system. It will be quite a bit of work, but should be well worth it.

Finally, as always, I urge members to continue making good use of the site, and to let us know any comments, suggestions or complaints they might have, in any form they like, public or private.

Barry paid great tribute to Declan Craig for the printing of the latest Newsletter in colour. Barry thanked Tony Groves for his help on the supply of photographs for the Newsletter. The Newsletter has ten articles and a length of thirty five pages.

Barry sees the Newsletter as a ‘catch all’ – something in it for everyone’s interest in rock climbing and mountaineering. Barry wants the Newsletter to operate in tandem with the IMC website – the articles in the Newsletters being available on the website.

Each edition of the Newsletter costs between €380 to €400. Address Booklets were sent out with the latest Newsletter. Barry thanked all the contributors to the Newsletter.

There was great praise from the floor for the high quality of the latest Newsletter. The chairman commented that the format was well received.

Edwige carries out many activities so valuable to the club. Edwige ‘takes care’ of new members making them feel welcome and important at the Wall in UCD, in Dalkey Quarry and Glendalough. Edwige has restarted the ‘First Monday Night Of The Month at the UCD Wall for Beginners’ where she is available to offer advice climbing techniques.

Edwige has impressed us all with her efforts to develop a friendly social atmosphere during training. This is greatly appreciated by her organization of ‘food and drink’ at these occasions.

The fleeces with the embroidered club logo have been a huge success – again an Edwige initiative.

Edwige informed the meeting that Leanne Cooke is organizing a ‘small’ Christmas Dinner at the Hut on Saturday the eleventh of December. The attendance is being capped at 35 so if you wish to attend you must let Leanne know well in advance - cookiec@hotmail.com

A midday walk is proposed for the Sunday.

It was commented from the floor that the Spring Meet in Glendalough was a great success with the crag packed with IMC climbers and the ‘refreshements and dinner’ back at the Hut of superb standard thanks to Edwige’s involvement.

Edwige Ducher
Chairman's Report

I’d like to thank all committee members for their dedication and hard work throughout the year: for new officers that came on board getting to grips with their roles, incumbents, and retiring members. I’d like to thank all non-committee club members for their contributions in political, commercial and all other club matters.

We had 7 committee meetings during the year – all well attended and much debate and some great initiatives and ideas, most put into action.

I’d like to thank particularly outgoing officers (3 + President):

- Tony Groves for an exemplary job of looking after the hut – it’s bookings and maintenance – particularly after a harsh winter with much damage, and also for improving it i.e. with new plumbing and a new hot water system.
- I’d also like to thank Tony Barry as ordinary member and former treasurer, for his value-added input to debate and quality handover of financial matters to the current Treasurer.

- I’d like to thank Dave Madden who took on the Training officer role, mastered and expanded it. And it’s to his credit and that of his predecessor that training courses remain popular and oversubscribed. It’s a pity work commitments have forced him to step down.

I would also like to thank our outgoing President, Kieran Kelly, for his contribution, particularly on external organisational matters. We as a club and committee had a great year. And I have to mention the people and actions behind the scenes that made this happen:

First Barry Watts (Publicity officer) who produced two fine newsletters on the new and very popular A4 format. Wide-ranging interesting articles and reports. Good historical stuff, for example. And long may this continue. Could I ask all members to keep contributing? Also thanks to Declan Craig and EdwigeDucher in our print and distribution room.

Joe Reville who took on Secretary role and got to grips with the essential admin tasks the job entails quickly. Joe is a model IMC member. An active climber, a figurehead for the greybeards of the club and an effective committee man. Lloyd Moore who, although had to be captured and shackled into the Finance role at the last AGM, made short work of managing the cash flow – honestly I have to say. He did this quickly and he continues to do so. He keeps us all in check and has good ideas for the future e.g. on-line payment.

Peter Woods as Meets Secretary again gave his full commitment and dedication as Meets Secretary. He was instrumental in facilitating excellent indoor and outdoor meets this year. Indoors ones that stuck with me were talks by Frank Nugent, Helen Lawless and Alan Tees for example. Outdoor ones were Lakes, Wales, Donegal, Kerry, Burren and more. Also can I thank the members who organised these meets in the field e.g. Gerry Moss, Tony Barry, John Duignan, Tony Groves, Peter etc.

Library continues in its development by Aoife. And its to her credit it remains in place and accessible, with the on-line catalogue and in physical form at her house – not easy given the renovation work at her house. She’s open to ideas members have for the library’s development. Edwige was a great contributor as Membership office. She appeared everywhere: helping at indoor and outdoor training, organising meets, organising meals, fleeces, postal communications, assisting Treasurer with member lists etc.

I’ve mentioned the two Tony’s who will be missed. Glad to report Tony Groves is willing to look after the club website. Also thanks to Eoin O’Neill for his excellent attendance and particular help on recent
Insurance matters.

This brings me to insurance. Early in the year questions were raised about the coverage of our policy and its adequacy. The concern was largely around hut use to non-members, plus director & officer indemnification. Thus a sub-committee was formed to deal with this matter through our broker. We got these matters solved, with a revised and amended policy – with no additional premium charge. Success here was down to the key involvement of Antoinette Gough, Kevin Byrne, Tony Groves, with support from myself, Eoin O’Neill and Lloyd Moore. Thankfully we are in a more secure position now, in our minds and on paper.

Dalkey Quarry. We all know of the damage done earlier this year. Again the IMC was heavily involved in conjunction with MI in preventing any further damage, as well as leading a strategy in the preservation of the quarry in general. Valuable work was (and continues to be) done by a sub-group: Terry O’Neill, Sean Barrett, Donal O’Murchu, John Duignan.

We have also strengthened relationships with MI officers & board, which has been positive and productive. MI under the leadership of Karl Boyle continues to drive this matter and the IMC continues to support him.


IMC Climbing Notes

Membership has grown also. Approximately 10% since last year. A good sign.

Note the sad passing of members during the year: Luke Brady, Maura Lynch, Rosaleen Rice.

Chairman would like members to remain involved in all aspects of the club i.e. committee, meets, training, slide shows, social events, reports for the Newsletter, Environmental and Preservation matters. And most of all to keep climbing, hillwalking, mountaineering and exploring.

The outgoing president, Kieran Kelly, then thanked the Chairman for the work carried out on behalf of the club and praised him for being a ‘very good leader’.

The minutes of last year’s AGM was proposed by Sé O’Hanlon, seconded by Declan Craig and adopted.
During the snowy weather in November the hut was only used once and this was for an IMC function in December. Four other planned weekends were cancelled. Pipes burst during the freeze-up and were quickly repaired by Shay Fitzsimons.

January just brought a scattering of small groups and cancellation of one big group.

February brought an MI Youth Group a few individuals and Dublin University CC. The latter did a small amount of damage to the ceiling in the common room but they reported it before I saw it and paid for repairs. They are to be complimented for this.

In March we welcomed climbers from all parts who attended the Bouldering Meat and a full house from the Royal College of Surgeons CC plus more small parties.

At the end of March Shay Fitzsimons, Tony Groves, Eoin O’Broin, Conor O’Conor, Terry O’Connor and Ultan Lacey came down for a work weekend and were fed by Ed Hicks.

Necessary repairs were done after the ravages of winter – slates replaced, gutters repaired, ceiling repaired, stepping-stones reinstated, pipes lagged, bulging wall on driveway repaired.

We have had three full houses in April with one more full weekend to come. All 5 weekends in May are full houses. One weekend in June and one in July are booked.

Although use by IMC members was sparse we can take pride in providing an excellent facility in an idyllic setting which helps the development of mountaineering in Ireland.

The future

We need assistance from experts in the club.

A painter to advise on the best way to prepare and paint the internal walls and woodwork

A carpenter to make a list of materials needed for putting doors (and maybe a new roof) on the outhouses so that they can be used for storage.

We missed out on an offer a few years ago from the Air Corps to give us surplus mattresses which would have completely outfitted the hut. At present we have airbeds but these have a relatively short life and their replacement is a financial drain. Does anyone know where we could source almost free mattresses from a zombie hotel or hospital or the Army or the Gárda in Templemore who would have reasonable quality mattresses surplus to requirements? If you don’t have an answer now just keep the question in the back of your mind.

Sé O’Hanlon

HUT NEWS

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Sé O’Hanlon
Commando Zeke Deacon leads the first climb through the overhang, Luggala, August 1959.
The photo he took on the climb hung in Frank Winder’s study during his lifetime.

Frank befriended Zeke Deacon and Vivian Stevenson on their visit to Ireland and invited them to Luggala to look at the Main Face. Frank, along with other IMC members, ensured that they got a good welcome on their trip. Deacon and Stevenson, along with two other Royal Marine Climbing instructors, spent a fortnight that summer in Ireland. Stevenson wrote a superb article about their visit in the IMC 1960 journal – now available on the IMC club website archives.

Their visit was a tour de force – new routing in the Poisoned Glen Donegal with the Drasdo brothers; battling their way up Seventh Heaven in Connemara in the rain and then travelling East; In Wicklow they put up “Spearhead”, rated Hard VS, in Luggala and “Cornish Rhapsody”, rated Extremely Severe, in the Upper Cliff in Glendalough. The New routes section of the IMC Journal reviewing the climbs of 1959 salutes their Luggala climb and its importance in Irish Climbing.

Looking at the picture, I can’t help wondering about these men. Deacon is seen balancing on boots, hemp rope coils around his waist. He has made a thin hand traverse – no positive footholds, only smearing with his boots – and edged out over space and made the strenuous move around the corner into the unknown. There is no way to reverse the move. Beneath him the climb drops away for over two hundred feet. What did he feel at the time?

Re reading the IMC 1960 Journal “The Wearing of the Green” by Stevenson, I see he gives his rank as Lieutenant and Deacon as Corporal. How did this team work? Did rank mean you point the way and bark an order?

Did the IRA campaign in the late 1950s give them any concern coming to Ireland?

Frank Winder passed away. I tried to find Zeke Deacon but he was not in the phone book. Worse – when I tracked down Harold Drasdo, he was under the impression that Deacon was dead. He did put me in touch with Vivian Stevenson.

Vivian Stevenson spoke in a strong voice that belied his years. He quoted Tom Patey as saying that Zeke Deacon in his prime ranked with Joe Brown as one of the strongest climbers of his day. He recalled the terror of poorly protected moves on Seventh Heaven in a rainlashed Connemara and contrasted it with the beautiful day in Luggala, looking over the Guinness estate and Lough Tay. He spoke of receiving a warm welcome in Ireland and in particular of the IMC member’s hospitality. “One of the best climbing trips we had”. Happily he assured me Zeke Deacon was alive and well.

A few days later, Zeke Deacon phoned. He recalled being twenty nine years old – four years older than Stevenson- and at the peak of his climbing career at the time of the visit fifty years ago. They had only known each other for five months but worked well as a team. There was no pulling rank and he continued to climb with his friend Stevenson over the next forty years. He had gone back into civilian life within a year of the climb. He too remembered idyllic weather on the day. The hand traverse crux at Spearhead had caused him to fall three times – “Vivian caught me each time as I fell into space.” The physical fatigue was matched with the mental strain of not knowing what was around the corner after the crux swing without protection.” It was a point of no return – what I warned against as an instructor “.

It was great to talk to these two great climbers and revisit their trip to Ireland. Frank Winder was wise to skip work that Monday and must have got great joy looking at this picture on his study wall. Our thanks to his widow Jeanne for donating it to the club.

PS

Sincere thanks to Mrs Jeanne Winder for sharing this photo with the club. If there are any other photos relating to earlier IMC climbs I would be delighted to help research these and will ensure that the photos are returned to their owners. I can be contacted at duignanj@gofree.indigo.ie

JOHN DUIGNAN
SPEARHEAD
FIRST ASCENT

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Sincere thanks to Mrs Jeanne Winder for sharing this photo with the club. If there are any other photos relating to earlier IMC climbs I would be delighted to help research these and will ensure that the photos are returned to their owners. I can be contacted at duignanj@gofree.indigo.ie
This was to be no slouching tourism trip, after the poor weather of his first trip. There must have been something in the Irish air that August of 1959; some very significant new routes were to fall that August.

After a hectic car ride up to The Poisoned Glen, Viv attempted an early, if not the first, repeat of Allan Austin's party’s renowned route Nightshade’. Alas it was very wet and Viv was to take quite a fall, his ankle took a few days to recover. Viv was able to clearly recall how the Drasdos congratulated him on even thinking about repeating this particular route. They had observed his attempt from across the valley, where they’d been climbing. Viv’s recovery took place in the bar at Dunlewy. Old IMC journals inform that a new routes book could be found at the Lodge, Dunlewy.

he still has the distinction of twice serving as the IMC’s President.

6 Allan Austin and Brian Evans, his regular climbing partner, got in the coveted 2nd ascent of Spillikin Ridge. Austin was only in his 2nd year of climbing and had achieved a considerable reputation on his native Yorkshire gritstone, with onsight solos of his own new routes – which provide very stiff E2 challenges. Evans (and Austin) new-routed in Yorkshire, Cumbria and Wales; he was a co-founder of the Cicerone Press and also contributed artwork to the Classic Rock series of books in the UK. Which coincidently contained a route by a team which included Stevenson!

7 Climbed in 1957, Nightshade’s reputation seems to have gone astray in recent years but for some it is regarded as one of Ireland’s finest climbs; its status as a Donegan classic was recognized in the IMC’s Changes and Newcomers column, mentioning it in his second of 59.

8 This building is no longer used, it still stands opposite the present bar in Dunlewy; across the road. The old bar is where in the late 60s’ Harold Drasdo bumped into Chris Bonington and Nick Estcourt – before showing them the line of Obituary Column; which they climbed. Another Everest connection with The Glen.

10 I wonder whatever happened to that!? Now that’s a book I’d like to study. Does anybody know of its whereabouts? The Lodge at that time...
The 9th of August the visitors first new climb: Commando’s Route was climbed on the West Buttress, a 300ft VS by Marines Thompson and Morrow. Another 300ft VS, Serial Slabs, was climbed the same day by the Drasdos.

August 10th and the Drasdos’ were on The Glen’s Ballaghageeha Buttress - producing Dexterity (VS) on the steep slabs to the right of the buttress;

was occupied by a Mr & Mrs O’Donnell, a fine Donegal name; were they related to the saintly Daniel? Donegal’s a small place and was smaller still in the 50s’.

whilst over in Glen Veagh Andrew Maxfield and R. Fryer added Empathy, a 330ft VS.

11 Now a National Park, Donegal’s Glen Veagh saw its first new route, added by Harold Drasdo and Eric Langmuir, Catriona (VD), in the Easter of 1959. Langmuir was also on the team that climbed Route Major in The Poisoned Glen that April. Langmuir’s Handbook of Mountaineering and Leadership has never been out of print, he was first head of Derbyshire Education’s White Hall – where Joe Brown was his Head Instructor – before going on to Head of Glenmore Lodge in the Cairngorms’.

12 In a phone call with Harold Drasdo, he recalled Max as being a really nice guy and a member of the CC. Maxfield produced an article The Poisoned Glen in the CC Journal 1970. Harold informed me that Max died in an accident on the Aberdeen sea cliffs in 1970; the same year Tom Patey was lost abseiling from the Maiden seastack off Scotland’s Sutherland coast.

13 This was Glen Veagh’s second route, and by a visiting party from over-the-water. The fol-
Following April (1960) a third route was added: Billikins (VD) by IMC members: Betty Healy, Bill Hannon and Miss U. Moore. Irish Pride restored.

Climbers’ Club member and one-time instructor at White Hall, Buxton, Maxfield was obviously taken with Donegal, the then art lecturer, made trips over-the-water in the April, June and August in 1959.
The 1960 IMC Journal records that on the 11th of August H. & N. Drasdo and V. Stephenson (sic) climbed the 800ft VS Linear B, on the Bearnas Buttress. Its infamy comes from the encounter with the legendary midges that can afflict The Glen. Drasdo recalls that the sky had turned black and then fallen upon their skin, the climbing became impossible. After hitting in some pegs an abseil escape ensued, once on the ground they didn’t stop running until they got to the marines car – they didn’t get out of the car until reaching the pub at Bunbeg! Despite the midges lines were falling thick and fast.

There is no mention of other, or existing, routes which were climbed by the marines. Viv cannot recall either. After this date Thompson and Morrow disappear from the tale. This didn’t stop the new-routing activity though. On the 12th H. and N. Drasdo recorded their 9th new route together in The Poisoned Glen; Flanker (VS) on the Bearnas Buttress. This appears to have been The Glen’s last new route that year.

Stevenson and Deacon then travelled to Glen Inagh, in Connemara’s Twelve Bens region and climbed Seventh Heaven (HS) in appalling conditions. An epic tale of five or six hours battling up the route, which had quickly become a waterfall; it caused quite a stir at the time. It certainly left the IMC guys wondering what kind of maniacs had come to visit?

Then they fled to Dublin:

‘to the most painful memory of all, a riotous evening with three Irish Mountaineering Club members – Hilary Quinlan**, Sean Rothery and Frank Winder. We had started out on stout,

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14  Harold recalled in his book how when asked when last orders was, the barman, after consideration, replied “about September”.
15  It was some year in The Glen, a dozen new routes were put up across the months March, April, June and August.
16  Thompson later made Captain and was to die on a combined-services trip to Everest in 1976, aged 29. Whilst snowblind he fell into a crevase during the night. He is buried on Everest.
17  Harold would finally close his Glen adventures with a total, an unequalled tally, of 20 first ascents, unsurprisingly earning himself the title of ‘Old Grand Master’ of The Glen (in the CC Journal).
18  This 13-pitch, 3 starred, climb was first climbed by IMC members P. Kenny, A. Kopczinski and J. Morrison, 17/10/1951.
19  Quinlan was IMC Secretary for 1959/60.

progressed to Irish and ended up at Hilary’s home at three in the morning’ (Stevenson, 1960).

Then it was onto Wicklow’s Glendalough. Over a couple of days, they climbed: Prelude, Nightmare, Scimitar and Scimitar. Then as Stevenson put it:

“We were certainly on form and we felt it was time to realise our mission and look for new routes”.

Having spotted a potential great route on an unclimbed section of the cliff, they stopped for refreshments at the hotel near the climbing hut and were surprised to receive a phone call from Frank Winder! Winder said ‘he would desert his laboratory if we could go out to the cliff of Lugalla tomorrow’. The offer was readily accepted as the task ahead was going to be formidable, Viv and Zeke being aware that other well-known British climbers had been, looked and turned-away from this challenge.

It wasn’t to be a push-over. Zeke needed several attempts and eventually got the crux, without the need for a peg or any other aid, after a long final rest and a cigarette: clearing moss off the small holds as he led. The crux involved a finger-tip traverse above space, with feet swinging free and followed by vicious swing to enable the move around the corner. Viv chose not to waste any time and climbed as quick as he could, Zeke had sensed this and enjoyed a happy laugh at Viv. Frank was not to get the line so easily, due to a height difference it took him several attempts.

Ireland’s, still very young and very small climbing scene was thriving; with some modest input from some British climbers’. Winder was Ireland’s leading climber of the time and showed the way by new-routing frequently with the likes of the Drasdos.

The 1960 IMC Journal records that:

“At last the defences of the Main Face at Lugalla have been breached. This is by far the most

20  Harold Drasdo and Frank Winder first met in the Alps in 1953, also in the IMC party were Peter Kenny and Sean Rothery. Harold and Frank were to remain friends, communicating regularly, until Frank’s death in 2007. Whilst chasing Donegal information, it was myself who confirmed that Harold that Frank had died. Afterwards I forwarded print-offs of Frank’s obituaries from the Irish papers, Harold (and later, Viv) was shocked by how much Frank had achieved professionally; because they just loved the climbing and the craic together – their work-lives didn’t intrude.
In a telephone conversation this March (2011) I asked Viv whose idea was the Irish trip, as this is not told in his IMC article. The answer was a little different to the one I expected to hear. It was Stevenson’s and Morrow’s idea, the Drasdos were contacted. Also, Morrow’s father was head of the Automobile Association (AA) in Ireland, living comfortably in Dublin. The offer of accommodation was readily accepted. Morrow was a naturally good climber but wasn’t to pursue it. After the 59 trip they lost touch, until 3 years ago when they were both stunned to meet again; at a Royal Marines re-union dinner in St Ives, Cornwall.

So who is Viv Stevenson?

Via the Colmcille Climbers’ Club (CCC) then secretary, Al Millar, I became aware of, and later bought, Harold Drasdo’s 1997 autobiography: The Ordinary Route. Cropping up in its pages, and in the Donegal guide, was one Vivian Stevenson. In 2009 Harold Drado had happily confirmed his friend of over 60 years was still alive and had just visited him. Whilst only a minor figure in Donegal’s climbing history, curiosity got the better of me and I wanted to know more of him.

Whilst researching Donegal’s climbing history, I found Stevenson’s Wearin’ o’ the green article in the IMC Journal of 1960. It conveys the fun and excitement of the time very well, also it overlaps with the Donegal tales in Harold’s autobiography.

24 A Donegal native and a leading light of the Donegal/Derry climbing scene from the late 80s’ onwards and often climbing with his friend, Derry-lad, Niall Grimes. Younger brother Dave is also a leading light on the Donegal scene and CCC member. In fact, Al went over to Wales and interviewed Harold in 2002, regarding his Donegal exploits. But has yet to produce anything from it, c’mion Al!?

25 Reading some on-line reviews it became apparent that there was a feeling that the book should have been short-listed for the Boardman-Tasker Award, and that it had been a shocking omission to some. It takes risks with the accepted format of the autobiography, successfully so – it is an engaging read.

26 They also were sat next to each other, that year, at the launch of the CC’s 100 years anniversary of CC guidebooks book launch. Both Harold and Viv have written guides for the CC. Viv has been a member since 1959 and still enjoys receiving his copy of the annual journal.
An exchange of e-mails with Neville Drasdo in late 2010, on another topic, led me to being in possession of Vivian Stevenson’s telephone number, which I promptly did not ring. A short while after I received an e-mail from Stevenson’s step-daughter, Lucy, regarding the recent *Poisoned Glen* articles in the IMC Journal. Lucy was gathering information about Viv’s climbing exploits, for his upcoming birthday. This did prompt me to strike while the iron was hot, so shortly after his 76th birthday, in the November, we spoke.

Viv had been expecting to hear from me and his recollections were very clear, informative and he is a very engaging character. Recalling the highly enjoyable visits of 1953 and 1959, having had a great time with the Irish climbers and enjoying their warm hospitality. I knew from his birthday (76th) that he must have started climbing at an early age, Harold Drasdo recalls climbing with him at the end of the 1940s; so this was an opening question.

Born at Todmorden on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border but describing himself as coming from Whitehead, near Belfast; where his father, a graduate of Queens, was a GP. So perhaps he wasn’t exactly a stranger to the Irish turf after all. His father had an accident – he fell out of a tree; this somehow necessitated the family’s move to Lancaster. Viv attended Lancaster Royal Grammar school, whilst there he started climbing. He was on the doorstep of a very special place and was up for some great adventures. At the age of 14/15 years old he would hitch to the Lake District, Cumbria. He would hang out with older climbers at the Wall End Barn in Great Langdale. For Northern-English climbers’ this was the place to be, great craic and hard climbing.

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27 Perhaps Lancaster is the place to go if you’re an arboreally-injured-Irishman?
28 For the curious: his first route was *Middle-fell Buttress* on *Ravens Crag*, Great Langdale. A route he did with Dolphin and Greenwood went on to inclusion in *Classic Rock – Dunmail Cracks on Deerfield Buttress* (1953). It was to be Dolphin’s last route. Alas this part of the crag has now fallen down.
29 Pre-1974 the Lakes were in the three shires of Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland. An annual fell race still celebrates this old fact by racing up to the cairn on the fell top which separated old counties. If you’re tempted, be fit – ‘eets a reet bugger’ by all accounts!
was to be had every weekend; in those early post-war years

Famous amongst the post-war working class climbers from The North were the Bradford Lads, amongst them was a top-flight climber of the time, one Peter Greenwood, and he took the young Stevenson under his wing. Viv was keen that it be pointed out that he was never a member but up until very recently he used to attend their annual meal at the Old Dungeon Gill. A brief prowl of Lakeland climbing guides will reveal he was on the first ascent of some significant climbs. Viv described Greenwood as “the maddest motorcyclist I ever knew”. Greenwood was often partner to famed climber of the time: Arthur Dolphin. Viv told me he was a partner on Dolphin’s last climb, before he was killed in the Alps; aged just 28.

Also in period before Viv took up his Marines commission he was invited to go climbing for a couple of days on Scafell’s East Buttress by Joe Brown. Aged just 15/16 this was some offer – Brown was at the height of his powers. They proceeded to climb the classics and the weather came in just before they could look at the project Joe had in mind.

30 War-time petrol rationing in the UK didn’t end until 1950 and therefore climbing was predominantly done within your region. National Service didn’t end until 1960.

31 And of course they were not all from Bradford and they were not all lads.

32 Denis Gray’s books, recalling his early years of climbing, celebrate the Wall End Barn climbers, the Bradford Lads and the likes of Greenwood. Some great times and I recommend his volumes of memoirs, if you like post-war climbing history. Greenwood famously, on the eve of getting married, gave away all his climbing kit to Don Whillans – who called him a fool for giving up, but still took his kit.

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33 The Gritstone Club has recently, Nov 2009, (book was launched Jan 2010) published a book: Memories of Dolphin: The Life of a Climber Remembered edited by Thomas Greenwood. Celebrated for being a visionary climber with his boundary-pushing climbs: on the gritstone of Almscliffe Crag, Yorkshire such as the 4 starred Great Western (HVS 5a, 1943) and Birdlime Traverse (HVS 5a, 1946). In Cumbria, he led Kipling Groove (HVS 5a, 1948) – Joe Brown had had to use a peg to get the 2nd ascent and Peter Greenwood famously spat on it, not using it as he repeated it. Also in Cumbria on Scafell – Hell’s Groove (E1 5b) and Pegasus (HVS 5b) both 1952.

40 Photo of Poisoned Glen Donegal courtesy of Andy McInroy photography www.andymcinroy.com
Via Harold’s book I knew that, in 1959, he was a Lieutenant in the Royal Marines within the Cliff Assault Wing. Deacon was a Corporal, obviously the climbing camaraderie superseded rank; once off duty. The other two members of the Marines to come over with him were also from the Cliff Assault Wing. Instructors: Sergeant Terry Thompson and Corporal Bill Morrow. I learned that he was to stay in the Marines for over 25 years and attained the rank of Major, impressive enough but it is his climbing exploits and who he climbed with which really impressed me.

Viv also mentioned having great fun climbing with Tom Patey on a number of occasions, in the UK and Norway. Patey’s posthumously released collection of stories – One Man’s Mountains is still Viv’s favourite climbing book. Viv climbed with him in Norway and in the Cairngorms, among their winter climbs together was the Troll Wall; Patey’s third attempt at the line. During our conversation Viv remembered he’d been with Patey on an early attempt on the Troll Wall no less! Getting within 300ft of the top they had to give up, finding themselves trapped beneath ice overhangs they had the mother-of-all-abseils back down. A full account of this is in One Man’s Mountains. Also in the reserves’ for some years and known to Viv was Alan Blackshaw.

By Helicopter to Paget By 1960 he was a Captain and in command of marines onboard HMS Protector, the UK’s guardship for its Antarctic territories. Stevenson knew of Mt Paget (2,934m) and that it was the South Georgia’s highest mountain. Being a climber he planned an expedition to climb it. There is a lovely picture of the porters being selected on board the ship, Stevenson wearing a ceremonial plumed-hat and carrying sword! What else would you do with the Royal Navy’s facilities and personnel at your command in the Antarctic – and an unclimbed peak? Previously, two expeditions had failed to climb Mt Paget and there had been numerous reconnaissances. Mt Paget’s approaches and arctic weather pattern were notoriously poor. With the advantage of the ship’s helicopter he planned an untried southern approach to the summit. In the December of 1960 they were given a five day window to climb and return to the ship. Eight airlifts were required to get all the equipment and a team of sixteen men established in a base camp. Four days were then left to cover fourteen miles of glacier travel and climb nearly 3000m of snow and ice to reach the summit; and get back. A day’s bad weather lost

34 In 1953 he received an officers’ commission into The Commandos; following his first trip to Ireland – but not as a result of it.

35 A casual glance of first ascents on Cornish rock show that The Cliff Assault Wing were very active new-routers, Zeke’s and Viv’s names crop up in the 50s’ and 60s’. The Marines were also the original pioneers of Lundy Island and produced its first guidebook; Zeke with Admiral Keith Lawder climbed one of British Isles most famous lines - Devil’s Slide.

36 A lesser-known fact about Tom Patey is that he was in the Royal Marines as a Surgeon Lieutenant for 5 years and made several visits to Norway for arctic and mountain warfare training; which was a principle motive for joining. Viv recalled an very enjoyable night in the pub with Patey and Joe Brown for drinking partners. In the 50s’ Patey made the first ascents of the Muztagh Tower (1956) and Rakaposh (1958). The latter with Mike Banks author of the book Commando Climber. Banks at 77 became the oldest climber to climb the Old Man of Hoy in 2000. His new routes number in the hundreds (Thompson, 2010).

37 Blackshaw climbed and skied, wrote the BMC’s guide to climbing in the 60s’, became its President at one time, a secretary of the CC and sat on committees of the UIAA. Blackshaw was Viv’s proposer for membership of the CC.

38 Argentina has long disputed the UK’s ownership of these territories, The Southern Sandwich Islands and The Falkland Islands; despite the Falklands’ conflict of the 1982.

39 Named after Admiral Sir Alfred Wyndham Paget (1852-1918).

40 South Georgia Island is the largest in the group of islands known as South Georgia. Mount Paget is the highest of 11 peaks above 2,000 m in the Allardyce Range.

41 Polar explorer, Ernest Shackleton lies buried to the north of Mt Paget, near the whaling station at Grytviken. As a serving member of the Royal Navy, Irishman Tom Crean (1877-1938) had been a valued member of Shackleton’s (successful 1914-17) and two of Captain Robert Scott’s polar expeditions (1901-04 and the fateful 1910-13). Crean has a glacier named after him in South Georgia and Mount Crean (2,630 m) is in Victoria Land, Antarctica. Viv visited the Shackleton grave whilst at South Georgia, likening its stunning location to being like the sea approach to Falmouth.
them time and caused their descent from camp 3. The following day’s improved weather allowed a 7.30am start. A lightweight, alpine-style, dash was made for the summit by the fittest members of the team: Lieutenant Commander Malcolm Bierley, Corporal Reverley Todd (Cliff Assault Wing Instructor), Dave Beck and Stevenson. By 2.30pm rucksacks were dumped and a traverse was made across the main avalanche track of the SW spur; 610m of ascent and a traverse was required to make the west peak. With the weather changing for the worse, temperatures dropping and light failing the true summit could not safely be attempted. A hard choice to make, the summit being within half-a-mile and after such a hard push. With no bivouac-gear they couldn’t risk benightment in the open at altitude in the Antarctic. Summit photos were taken and a descent was made in darkness. On return to their rucksacks, they had food and bivied overnight before their return. Stevenson produced a full account in the Climbers’ Club (CC) Journal, By Helicopter to Paget, and recalled in it their bitter disappointment at the time; however in hindsight they were grateful to have gotten so far up the unclimbed peak; the highest to that date (2,915m). He additionally noted that the majority of the team had in fact barely set foot on a mountain or glacier before. Ultimately it was more a factor of weather and being late in the season, but they’d achieved a lot. In 1964, Stevenson’s team member, Lt Cdr Brierley led a further expedition to Mt Paget, which finally saw the true summit reached.

One aspect of the trip that couldn’t be reported at the time was that Johnny Cunningham, a famous Glaswegian climber from the CreagDhu CC, was Head of a British Antarctic Survey base on South Georgia. Viv and Johnny knew each other from their Wall End days, therefore it was no problem to make use of the base’s helicopter and they got in a couple more 2nd ascents and on ‘Cloggy’ too. Despite their times together, Viv did not know Crew was a Yorkshireman until I mentioned it; he had assumed he was a Welshman because of his Welsh route names! The climbing came first.

Having read up on the many climbing connections that come in and out of Donegal, I had come across Stevenson’s exploits in Cornwall with Zeke Deacon* and knew that he had edited the (1966) Cornwall Volume 2 guidebook for the CC. In that guide the new developments were dominated by a couple of climbers we may now familiar with. Of 150 new climbs, Zeke appeared in about 1/3rd of them and not too far behind was Viv who was in over 1/5th of the new routes. What I didn’t know, until speaking with him, was that when his guidebook came out he was lying in a hospital bed with a broken back, whilst skiing in the Cairngorms winter 1965. It was after this serious accident that Stevenson began to wind-down his more adventurous climbing activities - not out of fear but because he couldn’t climb at quite the same grade! Indeed he and Zeke were still climbing together a recently as 2005. Climber, guide and ex-marine John Barry acknowledged Viv and Zeke’s contribution to Cornish climbing, after an encounter with one of Zeke’s routes, stating that Zeke and Viv were ‘climbing as hard as any!’ (Barry, 1985).

Viv was also eager that it should be noted that: few recall nor publicise the fact that Harold Drasdo in the late 40s’, and into the 50s’, was climbing at the limit of what was possible at the time. Despite publishing an autobiography and many climbing essays down the years, he describes Harold as a modest man when considering them to be wasted years.

45 In 1961 Zeke famously shared the rope with Admiral Keith Lawder on the first ascent of The Devil’s Slide on the Isle of Lundy in the Bristol Channel, UK. Not hard by Deacon’s standards but one of the climbing world’s most iconic routes. Viv, climbing with Pete Biven, added Albion (HVS) on Lundy in 1963. Zeke continued to climb with Viv, they share an impressive tally of Cornish climbs between them. After leaving the Marines he became a steeple jack. He is now retired (he turned 80 in 2010) and lives very close to his old Cornish climbing haunts near Sennan.

42 An unnamed summit in South Georgia subsequently became Mt Burley (893m)

43 Cunningham worked on the British Antarctic Survey, after his death in 1980 he had a South Georgian Mountain named in his memory: Mount Cunningham (1,220m).

44 Crew was a very driven climber on the UK scene, for a while he was regarded as Joe Brown’s successor on the hard new routing front. His routes remain test pieces. Crew eventually edited the Llanberis South guide for the CC in the mid 60s. Later he gave up climbing completely –

guide I found he’d climbed Gardd (HVS 5a) on Dinas Mot with Crew and his regular partner Baz Ingle.

When I mentioned this to Viv he was surprised, he didn’t recall the climb and made a note of it for his own record. He climbed often with Crew because “Crew had no wheels and I had a ‘services’ Land Rover”. At Tremadoc Viv and Crew made many important 2nd ascents and on ‘Cloggy’ too. Despite their times together, Viv did not know Crew was a Yorkshireman until I mentioned it; he had assumed he was a Welshman because of his Welsh route names! The climbing came first.

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### MEETS

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<td>17th July</td>
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<tr>
<td>30th July - 1st August</td>
<td>Gola Island, Co. Donegal</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th August</td>
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<td>9th - 11th September</td>
<td>Kerry Meet</td>
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### IMC COMMITTEE 2010-2011

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