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It was at the 2005 AGM that Peter O Neill announced that he could no longer provide services for the IMC website . . .

Beginner’s Corner

A handy A - Z reference of definitions to help newcomers to the sport.
CROSSWORD No. 1

Across
6. ---------- your hook!
7. Climb in it or smoke in it
9. Something to jam in or shove up your hooter
10. We used to hang around on these as teenagers, "in France"?
14. Climbing without ethics some would say
16. Old tar's used before climbers
17. You can never use these enough!
18. God like Walls
20. Magic realism narrator of the Howling Ridge massacre
24. Grey IMC slaphead or Connaught mountain?
26. Used for horses or climbers (donkeys will do for both)
27. Just good pals
28. Good to fall on but the devils work for some
29. Wedge these well, can be painful for males
30. Lycra wearing terra firma lovers

Down
1. Clip here or just attach to leg
2. Ledge of dreams
3. Long HVS in quarry or pelvic action
4. Plant with 5 spiky leaves was used for old rope making now smoked by people
5. Posh hole in the ground
8. Giant Hi-Stacks
11. He would go to any lengths for a free heli ride
12. Make sure to leave this to your best mate
13. Used to aid climbers or specified by Architects
15. HVS stone coffin should be E1 according to KC
19. Iconic TV series re crime of protection in Baltimore
21. A gap in the quarry, perhaps?
22. Multi pitch in the o.c zone or signal modulation
23. Climb on this, slip and be laid out on it
25. On forest ledge you can't see the trees for him

(Solution on Page 35)
Well our Siberian springs gave way to some dry weather for the beginners program, which started with a bang for forty newcomers to the joy of rock climbing. (see back cover)

Our Siberian spring also gave a lot of members a chance to experience the joy of Irish ice, which we got plenty of. Lots of new routes climbed.

Carrot ridge also had a run out as a few from the 20 strong contingent who were on the Letterfrack meet made their way up, followed a few weeks later by Ken Doyle and his crew who managed to fall asleep on top! Hope we don’t fall asleep reading about it! (Sorry Ken, couldn’t resist it!). Read all about it on page 7.

The spring also brought twenty members down to the sunny (and sometimes rainy and snowy) Costa Brava and another group on a trip to Italy.

The winds of change are gently blowing over the IMC, after six years doing a great job running the website, and many other things, Tony Groves has bowed out leaving way for some new blood, (page 34), also some talk also of other changes among them changing the Thursday indoor meets venue.

Thanks to Angela in Gravity Climbing for her great coaching tips, here she concentrates on the most important of them all - footwork! (Page 5).

Thinking of heading off somewhere different climbing this summer? Gerry Moss has provided us with a great article complete with topos on climbing in Clare Island. Start thinking of route names as you might even put up a few new routes yourself! Speaking of new routes we have an interview with top Irish climber Ricky Bell, who has recently put up his latest route 'The spindle' 8A boulder problem at Fair Head.

As the wonderful Irish summer stretches out ahead of many plans are being hatched to get away from the Irish summer. Quite a few people heading off to the Alps, a trip to the Tatras has been planned, also south of France. Closer to home some great meets organized for the summer, Kerry in September (Howling Ridge anyone?), Glendalough in June, the Burren in August (fancy some Irish limestone?), the Mournes in July (Try out the long multipitch FM or the interesting crooked chimney on the Bearnagh slabs?), sports climbing in Ballykeefe, and the daddy of them all, the wonderful Lake District meet in June bank holiday, or why not take a trip up to the Fair head meet 31st May?

Its all ahead of you, as they say.

Plenty to look forward to!

Ian Christie
Article 2- Footwork (part 2)
Footholds & how to use them…
Footholds in climbing come in all kinds of shapes & sizes- in this article we will look at how to use particular kinds of footholds and how to be inventive with your feet for steeper climbing.

Edges & Smears
On edges, it is usually best to line up the edge of your climbing shoe along the hold. You will have to alter how you place your foot depending on the direction of the hold, and you'll have to decide whether to use your inside or outside edge (see part 1), but other than this, standing on an edge is usually pretty straightforward.

Often however, footholds are less positive and don’t have any ‘edge’ at all- they are simply lumps, bumps or even patches of friction on the rock itself- these footholds are known as ‘smears’ and they require a lot of precision and confidence in your feet (as well as spotlessly clean rock-shoes!) to work.

Some key important tips for using smears are:

- Try to place your foot so that your big toe points straight towards the rock- a common mistake is trying to use the inside edge of your shoe on a smear.

- Remember not to let you heels lift too high when on poor smears- you are trying to get as much contact between the sole of your shoe and the rock surface as possible.

- Don’t over-stretch to the next handholds- this lifts the weight off your feet and may cause them to slip- look for other smears to step up onto instead!

- Don’t hesitate! Poor smears often feel best when you first place your foot and get worse if you stand there for too long.
Footwork for overhangs
Heel-hooks and toe-hooks can be used in a variety of situations - they can be very useful when climbing arêtes, as they may allow you to balance while you move your hands. On steep rock a good heel or toe hook can really take the pressure off your arms and prevent your feet from swinging off.

The climber below is using a heel hook to allow him to work his hands along the poor holds on top of the boulder. When using your heels like this, remember that your calf muscles will need to work to keep your heel on - if you just place your heel on, but don’t pull with it, it will often slip off.

It can be difficult to get used to these techniques at first, so it’s best to practice somewhere close to the ground and with a spotter to make sure you don’t land awkwardly.
I searched desperately for a bivy ledge. My eyes darting about. Over there! No! There, better still, this one. I could just fit there; maybe two of us might fit.

Where would the others go?
I had to find someplace; I had to have a plan for when the others got up here. I stepped onto the ledge, a little cave at the back looked big enough for two; it would be ideal to shelter from a storm if we needed it. I quickly anchored myself in and shouted over my shoulder, “Áine, Safe”. I built a belay, thinking about what if all this goes wrong. The well-laid plans, coming down the day before, an early start this morning, everyone knowing where they were going, and what to do. Here I was high on Carrot Ridge, potential disaster loomed!!

"Áine, taking in". I hauled the rope in.

What would I say, what would I tell them if it all went wrong. We didn’t start early enough; the weather went bad; climbers moving to slow. A few weeks ago I was up here with Tony Barry, they’d never believe I came up here with him again!! Can’t blame Tony. Damn, this could be difficult.

"Áine, you’re on belay, climb when ready!!"

I took in the slack as Áine climbed, I cast my eyes about searching for a spot for the rest of them. There on my left, another ledge, a grassy one. It would be big enough if we needed it. Best to be prepared. It’s almost big enough for a tent actually I thought. I had packed my head torch, spare dry clothes, my underpants, dry inner layer, spare gloves, wooly hat and most importantly, spare socks. All packed in a dry bag. I had a first aid kit and a bar of chocolate.

A bivy bag? I had just bought a new one, one of those big orange ones you get for a fiver in Great Outdoors with the word “EMERGENCY” printed in big black letters. Where was it? The Bivy Bag? …. Good god, I had given it to Rowena to carry. I leaned out to search for her. She was at least a pitch and a half away. Would she get to me in time before I needed the bag?

Áine paused, the rope went tight. I knew what was happening. Melissa was now beginning to climb. I now had two climbers on my rope. Áine had tied into a bight of rope and now Melissa climbed on the end of the rope. Both moving together, both communicating and watching each other, keeping the same distance apart, allowing each other space to climb. I took in the slack at an even pace.
If this all went wrong what would I do? Christ!! I'd never live this one down. Stuck on Carrot Ridge! How would I get out of this, who would I blame? I had planned the trip. We were staying at The Old Monastery Hostel in Letterfrack. Six of us. We even had a dry run the day before up Diamond Hill.

Earlier in the week I had consulted some of the more knowledgeable (and older more experienced) members of the club (the ones that had built such a fine reputation for the IMC) about potential spots to keep us amused for an afternoon in Connemara. Keeping in mind the mixture of experience, enthusiastic youth and baldy guff you may get in a group like this it is always best to have a plan. That way it’s much easier to recognise when things are going wrong.

Not that things ever go wrong on trips like these, they merely don't go as planned. Having consulted the IMC oracle, checked all the weather forecasts, considered the talents of our group and the apparent lack of fitness of just about everybody we settled for a pleasant hike up Diamond Hill. There is a boardwalk almost all the way to the top! Even better, Diamond Hill is conveniently placed just outside the front door of the Old Monastery Hostel in Letterfrack where we were staying.

The weather was excellent and if we lost our way we could stop and ask directions of one of the hoards of visiting foreign teenagers as they rushed down hill celebrating their successful ascent. Rumor had it that we were actually going new routing on Diamond Hill so we brought a couple of racks of gear and a couple of ropes. We eagerly sought out a slab on the northwest corner where some routes had been put up.

While the remainder of the task force rested in a sheltered spot in the sun, I explored the very windy northwest
corner. Not wanting to encourage the watching students into unhealthy activity, we decided to explore routes on the other side of the hill...out of the wind and in the sunshine...we were on holidays after all!!

We weren't on holiday now I though! All this planning, the extra gear, the discussions on safety, communication, escape routes, this could get nasty. The escape routes were well discussed, the "Scree Slope" to the side of the ridge. Dangerous. Deadly. Could turn into a stone avalanche!

Wouldn't like to be coming down that in the dark I thought. Luckily it wasn't dark just yet. We had hours left, maybe even eight or nine! Navigation, that's what I'll say. My nav has always been a bit dodgy. I'll claim everything was under control until we decided to nav off. Magnetic Realignment!! That's a current topic. As the clouds descended my compass broke due to magnetic realignment!! Perfect!

At least Melissa would have a good story to tell when she got back home. Drama on Carrot Ridge! Another ill-conceived adventure. Bloody embarrassing for me! Melissa had gatecrashed one of the IMC meets a few years ago and had returned every year since. At least this time she had brought her harness!

Below Melissa were the Polish team. Kris and Barbara. Nicknamed for the day "Poles Apart". They were usually apart by about 30 - 40 meters of rope, some of it slack!

A constant topic of conversation and cause of some gesticulation. The cracks were beginning to show in our group. Bill and Rowena were a pitch further down. Bill coveting my orange bivy bag, planning to have it close at hand in the ensuing emergency. A crisis could possibly be looming!

The pressure began to show at my belay stance. Someone approached, "Hello!! Beautiful up here isn't it". It was a hazy figure, I wasn't sure, but it might be Áine.
"Bloody Sunshine", I thought, "Blinding me!!"
Beads of salty sweat rolled from under my helmet towards my eyes only to evaporate in the light warm breeze.

I could have slipped if it wasn't for the excellent grip on the rock under my feet.

"Make yourself safe Áine!". I'd seen one helicopter too many recently!! "How was that?" I asked. "Lovely...Really...Really Nice!"
This was going too well, I looked up into a cloudless sky. A black bird circled on the horizon!! Melissa emerged over the edge, beaming a huge smile. "Guys. This is frigging Awesome!!" The bird circled!!

After a seamless change over of belay I climbed on! "Awesome!!" I thought, "Just frigging Awesome!!"

The valley dropped away, into a clear day. "I have to nav off this!!" I thought. I reached the top of the second step. I could see my car clearly across the valley floor! In an emergency we might have to descend the deadly scree slope to get to it.

"Áine. Safe!!"

The rope moved in a steady rhythm. Áine and Melissa had never climbed together before.

Their chatting and joking reached me on the breeze. Each one watching the system, not moving too fast or slow, pausing for me to catch up with the belaying as they moved on. This was going too well.
I search the horizon for that bird.

They emerged onto the rock beside me. "Lunch Time!!"
We shared our lunch treats while we watched the progress of the other teams.

Barbara topped out the pitch below us. Kris sitting relaxed in the sun. They engaged in a discussion in polish. Something got to do with a slack rope I think! Bill and Rowena moved up behind them. Bill leading now. The sweat from the walk in had almost dried from his t-shirt. Rowena swung around a corner of rock, Bill belayed furiously, intent on staying as close as possible to my orange bivy bag!

Gleninagh spread out below us, suspiciously dry for this time of year. In fact the walk in was practically dusty. I began to worry about gorse fires. Anything could happen up here. Be prepared! I suggested we move on, we might have a tough descent. When you get to the top you are not even half way there!!

The top of the third and last step was similar to the top of second step, except warmer and more comfortable with better views. The 'Poles Apart' team were progressing to the foot of the last pitch. I might be mistaken but I still think to this day I heard laughter!!

Bill and Rowena ambled across a small nose of rock. The day stretched away in silhouettes of sunshine.

As the teams regrouped at the top, we reappraised the situation. The descent offered a choice. A short sharp shock down the scree slope or a hike across and up to Bencollagh (Bin Dhu), with a descent on the far side to a saddle and then a sharp turn north back into the head of Gleninagh to pick up an obvious track high on the north side of Maumina Stream.

Bill gave into the urgent call to replace lost calories and liquid and navigated safely down beside the edge of the scree just under Carrot Ridge itself. We all felt that his hasty descent was contrived to bring about an emergency situation requiring him using my bright orange bivy bag. It seems he made it to a local pub without any undue effort or accidents and replaced the calories there!

The remainder of the team, plotted an escape route up to Bencollagh. Kris leading the way, barely visible in the startlingly bright sunshine. Our team, strung out now across the dry rock, navigation almost impossible due to the constant requests to stop and take photographs. Above us, high in the air, a bird called.
We moved on, orientating ourselves as best we could, the views, miles distant, difficult to comprehend. The last leg home is always the most dangerous. Our conversation was limited. Recent fashion trends, college trips, youthful mishaps and what Stephen would have prepared for dinner in the Old Monastery Hostel were all we could discuss.

High on the footpath leading back to Gleninagh the stress and strain of the day began to show on the team. At last my endless preparation was paying off. A compeed was required for a possible blister. We paused just long enough to administer the first aid, redistribute the weight in our pack and sent a vital text message.

"Stephen, keep dinner, we will be half an hour late!"

Notes:
The day following our trip up Carrot was wet and windy and not one for climbing. The day previous was perfect. Carrot Ridge is not to be taken for granted and while this article is mildly humorous (I hope), I’m not suggesting the climb is one to be undertaken lightly.

Stereo Tentacles, Mahjongg, The Shield, Siesta, Damocles, Provo, what have all these classic climbs got in common?
They were all put up originally by Steve Young who was holidaying in Ireland recently from his home in Canada.

Seen here chatting with Ricky Bell.
Though Clare Island is often bypassed in favour of its larger and better known neighbour, Achill Island, it has a lot going for it and is up there with the best of our offshore islands. For instance, there are some pleasant walking routes on the island and you can choose to ramble up to the highest point, Knockmore 462m, which provides wonderful views of Mayo’s coastline, or you can opt to walk along the top of some spectacular seacliffs, home to rare flora and fauna, and visit the lighthouse, perched on the edge of the cliffs. Add in a blue flag beach and a very friendly set of locals, and you have enough to make a visit well worth while. As if that wasn't enough, we have now added some fine rock climbing on the seacliffs to the mix.

Jane Byrne, Joe Reville and myself paid a visit during a brief and rare dry spell last July, to check out some cliffs I had spotted on a previous visit with my wife. The result is a collection of easy climbs (nothing over Hard Severe) on perfect rock, and all with good protection. We have only scratched the surface here - with only limited time available we concentrated on the most accessible and most obvious lines - there is plenty more to be done.

Given all that the island has going for it, I think it could merit a club weekend meet and, taking the distance from Dublin and the ferry timetable into consideration, this would probably be best over a long weekend. Getting to the Island. Contrary to what some of the websites indicate, there is now only one company running a ferry service to the island,
see www.clareislandferry.com. The service is not ideal for parties travelling down from Dublin on a Friday night, as the last sailing from Roonagh Pier is at 17.30. It is possible, however, to charter a smaller boat for groups of from four to twelve passengers, at times outside the scheduled sailings of the regular ferry. Check with the ferry company for rates (obviously, the more travelling, the cheaper the cost per person).

Accommodation. You have a choice. Less than five minutes walk from the landing pier, and directly above the blue flag beach, is the island's only campsite. Small and basic, campers have the use of the community centre's toilets and wash-hand basins, located just 50m from the campsite. Alternatively (and this was our choice and highly recommended), you can opt for the spanking new hostel situated just beyond the campsite, check out www.goexplorehostel.ie. The hostel has a bar attached, and serves meals, specialising in fish freshly caught each day by the manager, Carl.

Campers should note that the ferry company, in keeping with all the ferry companies serving the inhabited islands, and as a result of unruly and disruptive behaviour by campers, does not allow visitors to bring alcohol on to the island. So leave your six-packs at home and support the local economy. Getting around the island. You can walk, hire a bike (or bring your own) or, if there is a group, hire the island’s only minibus. The nearest crag to the harbour is 5k away, not a huge distance, but time consuming if walking. There are bikes for hire at the harbour, but they don't open until 10am so, if you want to get off early in the morning, hire your bike the night before (they have good bikes and old crocks and they usually try to pawn the crocks on the innocent, so insist on a decent bike). During our stay, we were discussing hiring bikes when Carl, the manager, intervened and insisted we borrow his van, which he wasn't using at the time. But this was a once off offer, and should not be considered as an option.
The climbs described.

Toormore.
Approach. Follow the road leading west from the harbour for about 5k. to a cattle grid. A short distance beyond this there is a gate in the wall on the left. Go through this (closing it after you) and, bearing to the left at first to avoid a wet section, head down to the bottom right of the field, to cross the fence at the lowest point. Follow the clifftop west to a point just short of another fence coming down at R-angles to the clifftop. The climbs are described from L to R and are on 3 separate sections, as shown on the photo detailing the line of approach. A = Arch Buttress, B = Arch Buttress Wall, C = Choc-a-Block Wall.

Arch Buttress. GR 665 842
The first route is on the buttress with the prominent arch, almost directly below the end of the fence. Access is gained by scrambling halfway down the sloping ramp which starts a few m. E of the fence, stepping across the narrow channel (easier at low tide), and scrambling up and back right to reach the foot of the arete on the R side (facing in) of the seaward face. N.B. There is scope for more routes on this buttress.

1. Arch Arete. V. Diff.
The right arete of the seaward face of the arched buttress. G.M., J.B., J.R. 26/7/12.

Arch Buttress Wall.
The next five routes are on the wall to the east of Arch Buttress and are reached by scrambling down the sloping ramp mentioned above. The climbs are described from L to R.

2. Generous John. V. Diff.
The lefthand and narrower of two cracks near the bottom of the sloping ramp. J.R., J.B., G.M. 26/7/12.

3. PeuJoe V. Diff.
The righthand and deeper of the two cracks near the bottom of the ramp. J.B., J.R., G.M. 26/7/12.
The next 3 routes are reached by scrambling on down to the bottom of the ramp and stepping across a gap to reach a ledge at the foot of a L-facing corner.

4. First Gear All The Way. V.Diff.  
Climb the continuous crack in the corner. J.B., J.R., G.M. 27/7/12.

5. Red Van Man. HS 4b.  
Start as for 4. Step out R and climb the crack just R of the overhang, moving back L beneath the small overhang higher up the face. J.R., J.B., G.M. 27/7/12.

6. The Pirate Queen. HS 4b.  
Start as for 4. Hand traverse horizontally R along a thin crack and step up to a good ledge. Climb the thin crack above the R-hand end of the ledge, finishing over jammed blocks. G.M., J.R., J.B. 27/7/12.

Choc-a-Block Wall.

The following 7 climbs are on the next face to the E and are accessed by scrambling down through a gap in the cliff top about 30 m E of the fence and moving L (facing out) to reach a good ledge system well above the highwater mark. The buttress is characterised by several blocky overhangs.

7. No Brakes. Diff.  
This climb follows a line just left of the line of overhangs, to finish up via a notch in the skyline near the L edge of the face. J.B., J.R., G.M. 26/7/12.

Start just R of 7. Climb up through a gap in the overhang to gain, and follow, the crack in the upper face, 2m R of 7. J.R., J.B., G.M. 26/7/12.

Start 3m R of 8, below a short, L-facing corner capped by a blocky overhang. Climb the corner to the overhang, surmount this on good holds and continue straight up. G.M., J.B., J.R. 26/7/12.

10. Two Car Family. Diff.  
Start 3m R of 9, below a short R-facing corner capped by an overhang. Climb up just R of the overhang and step L to a good ledge. Move a little L and finish up just L of a projecting block. G.M., J.B., J.R. 26/7/12.

11. Go Explore. V. Diff.  
Start 2m R of 10, below a line of sharp projecting blocks. Climb straight up over the blocks to the top. J.R., J.B., G.M. 26/7/12.
12. Sucking Diesel. V.Diff.
Start 2m R of 11, below a wide crack 2m in from the R edge of the face. Climb straight up through the crack to the top. J.B., J.R., G.M. 26/7/12.

13. Vantastic. V. Diff.
This climb follows the R edge of the face. G.M., J.B., J.R. 26/7/12.

Craigmore Area.
From the cattle grid mentioned above, walk back E along the road to a dip in the road, where there is a gate on the seaward side of the road. Go through the gate and, keeping to the left of the fence, follow it around to a small stile. Cross over here and continue east for a short distance, until it is possible to scramble down to sea level. There is much yet to be done here. In particular, we passed above a tall, narrow buttress on the way in, ignoring it because we thought it was covered in guano, but we realised on the way out that it was, in fact, large patches of quartzite!
The first route follows a dark, narrow, undercut slab just above the high water mark.

14. Van Diesel. HS 4b. Climbed in two pitches to avoid rope drag.
i/ Gain the slab from the left and climb it to a broad platform.
ii/ Move back to the juggy corner behind and climb it. J.R. J.B. G.M. 25/7/12.

15. Three Point Turns. Severe.
This climb is found at the foot of a series of corners around to the E of 14. Start at the foot of a biscuit-coloured corner just L of a dark overhang. Climb the corner to a good ledge and continue up to finish through a break in the skyline. J.B., J.R., G.M. 25/7/12.
The trip to Costa Brava had been on my must do list for years; Ever since reading Gerry Moss’s description of the Magical Mystery Tour – a se acliff escapade – I was hooked.

Ian Christie linked up with the famous Rowland father and son team last year and wrote of his exploits. This inspired a large happy IMC party to Calpe this Spring. The Costa Brava had so much to offer – Trad or Sports climbing, scrambling or hiking and each climber had his/her dream plan. It was a relief to leave the glum recession and grey rainy skies in Ireland behind - even if the weather for the week ahead was mixed. Hugh (Reynolds) my climbing partner had trained hard for this and his ticklist of potential routes was inspiring - but would I be up to it? A trip chasing ice in January left me nursing a tendon injury and dubious about my chances of recovery. Early rock routes on the trip were fun but worrying. Marin County and Echo Valley had fine memorable climbs but my arm still was weak. What was I doing on a sea cliff climb starting with a free abseil into a stance 50 feet above the sea with no way out other than a climb rated HVS/E1 at it’s crux?

Midway through the week promises sunshine; It is now or not at all. No pressure from Hugh but a beaming smile as we head off from our mountain home to the coast. The walk in is stunning, as we drop lower and lower to the clifftop, curving around a mountain and out of sight. Even Benidorm Skyline looks beautiful as we wend our way amongst the gorse along the famous Toix cliffs. There is nothing to beat the feeling of sitting at the top of your chosen route, basking in sunshine and getting ready to abseil into a seaciff; The warm wind carried the music of seabirds. Hugh goes first and in mid abseil remembers that one of our ropes is short after being chopped after a fall– would they be long enough?

As I follow the famous rickety ladder used by bold Fishermen of old comes into view and then I am abseiling drymouthed in free air ... I yelp as I land... on a large cactus; The stance is large – a seacave above amplifies the music of the
seabirds. The cliffs are undercut by the sea far below.

A scramble traverse before the climbing starts. The rock quality is excellent and the views impressive with a golden sun lighting a path on the calm blue sea. The seabirds are our sole companions for the day. The warmth, the views and the music of sea and seabirds are hypnotic – I am stoned with pleasure.

The first pitch is easy and the delicate traverse. The route is a mainly Trad with some bolts where protection is sparse. We swap leads again and I continue traversing left. I smile, thinking of Gerry and Liam’s trip here. Gerry (Moss) wrote in a Newsletter of old of this pitch with increasing difficulties with height. As he sweated in the heat, Liam finally called up to him that he had solved the problem – he had torn the wrong page out of the guidebook and they were off route. No problem like that for us – we have the latest picture guidebook, I think smugly. Moving around an arete, I see a loop of tat marking the base of a wall – clearly the way to go. The climb steepens and I can find no gear placements for twenty and then thirty feet. I fight to place a single wire. It’s dark and cold in this corner and I hear Hugh shuffling below trying to keep warm. Try try and try – now each time I make a move, I can’t stay in balance. My spirits sink – If I can’t climb this, what is the future? Hillwalking and via ferrata and be grateful for my lot?

Three attempts later and I back-climb down and dejectedly hand Hugh the sharp end of the rope. Hugh moves up smoothly to my highpoint but no further as the
moves now defy him too; Good to see that the moves are not that obvious. Metal glints way above and to the right of my belay - I see a bolt and call Hugh back and we swop leads again. We too have gone off route!

Grinning and whistling I take the lead above on a beautiful rising traverse on excellent rock; This leads to a small cave before the crux pitch: The views along the route we have come and to sea are stunning. I watch enviously as Hugh cranks strenuous moves on the final pitch – and dream of leading it next year. We are sad to leave but enjoy the beautiful walk out along the Toix cliffs; This Rowlands climb – given a three star rating as a must do in the guidebooks – ranks with Dream of White Horses in Holyhead and Sliabh League’s Sail Rock. It was extra special to make the same mistake route finding as the great Bard of Irish Seacliffs – makes me feel we did it in true IMC style!

Back at Finestrat, we enjoy the evening group meal, hearing each other’s tales and enjoying great food and wine amongst friends; A big thanks to Ian Christie for organising this IMC trip which I hope will be a regular part of the club calendar.
The Crux Exit Pirch

Enjoying the sun before climbing
How quantum hiking became Newtonian hillwalking and why we can never go back.

Evolution of equipment changes the nature of what people do. The effects of this evolution are particularly obvious in the way in which walking the hills has changed since I first put on a pair of boots and took to the hills a little over 50 years ago. In this time-span hillwalking has changed from an activity governed by rules similar to quantum mechanics – the principles of uncertainty and duality - to a pastime governed by rules that have more in common with Newtonian mechanics.

“Round compasses with wobbly needles“

Maps are the basis of our navigation and the maps used by hikers 50 years ago were either half-inch or one inch to the mile. On the one-inch map contours were shown at 100' intervals up to 1000' and 250' above that height. This style of map showed very little detail of the ground in the higher lands and called for a certain amount of imagination in its interpretation. It was impossible to be sure of exact location at any time, unless you were at a summit or the junction of two streams. Going into a new area was like going into the unknown, only sketchy details were shown on the map and every walk in an unfamiliar location was a voyage of exploration.

Fine compass work was impossible because of the limitations of the maps and compasses. We worked on bearings like “a bit off northwest“ because the people who used them had round compasses with wobbly needles and only about 8 bearings marked – the four cardinal points and the four intermediates. It was much more effective to be tuned to wind direction and cloud movement.

In those days it was common for people to get lost when walking the hills but because they were involved in an adventure activity this was almost something to boast about, particularly when the getting lost was followed by recovery and eventually getting back to base, maybe a different base. Being out after dark was part inconvenience and part adventure but never a cause of concern - unless you missed the bus home.
“Navigation became more a question of mathematics”

Increasing availability of Silva-type compasses marked the first phase of the navigation evolution from dead reckoning to fine navigation. It became possible to set a very accurate bearing from one known point to another known point. Of course there was a shortage of knowable points on maps but nonetheless navigation became less dependent on intuition and abstract skills and more a question of mathematics. Phrases like “a bearing of 44 degrees” became current and magnetic deviation became part of the calculation.

In the late 1980s the first “Discovery” series maps arrived. This was a whole new world in our pockets. For the first time it was possible to calculate from the map where we were on the ground., even in thick mist. It was possible to plot a course from any point through a series of points to a destination.

The old school marveled at the excellence of what was available but mainly stuck to their accustomed methods. People who took to the hills after these developments quite rightly accepted them as the norm. Navigation stopped being quantum and became Newtonian. The challenge was changed. It became important to plot every foot of the march, always to know where you were and never to get lost. Mistakes that in the past had been the doorway to even more adventure became badges of shame. Who could admit that they had not got a complete grasp of the science of navigation? Getting back to base after dark became a sign of incompetence to be avoided at all cost, and anyway it is dangerous. Walking the hills admiring the scenery or letting ones mind wander unfettered became a minority pastime. After all there were paces to be counted, Naismith’s Rule to be calculated, bearings to be calculated and followed. There was no more setting out into the unknown because the unknown was abolished by a printed sheet.

“Leaders need people to lead “

In the early 1970s there were several fatalities in Britain when school teachers and scout leaders brought parties of schoolchildren into the hills without the necessary skills to cope with deterioration in the weather. This led to the setting up of a British board to supervise the teaching of mountain leadership skills to the people in charge of youth groups. This Board has stayed in existence right up to the present and has expanded its remit to teaching mountain leadership skills to
as many people as possible. BOS was set up in Ireland to carry out similar functions and it has continued more or less unchanged, apparently taking its training inspiration only from Britain and remaining blind to the rest of the world. It is startling to see that Irish mountain training has consisted of only one personal skills training programme (Mountain Skills training which issues no certificate but does impart knowledge) and 4 leadership awards (which only indirectly improve personal skills but certify that individuals are competent to look after beginners and young people in various mountain situations).

The combination of the improvement of equipment and the emphasis on training of leaders has had a strange result. In the days of quantum hiking this training of leaders had no particular impact on numbers on the hills. This changed as equipment improved and navigation became Newtonian. More and more people felt competent to strive for the status of “leader”. Leaders need people to lead and have an interest in finding them and maintaining their dependent status. This has resulted in the size of walking groups ballooning with consequences for the environment. Tracks across the hills became ubiquitous and this, in a form of feedback, reduced the need for navigation skills. Once it was difficult to follow ridges on Irish hills in the mist but now it does not matter whether there is mist or not on a ridge, just follow the track and keep out of the quagmires where it crosses soft ground. Bad selection from the infinite number of choices of direction from the summit of a mountain is no longer likely because there is always a track to follow.

“Walking has lost its adventure element”

Walking the Irish hills remains a mix of social activity, athletic performance and aesthetic pleasure but has completely lost its adventure element and of course the introduction of GPS will push this processes further. As adventure receded the social element expanded to fill the vacuum and this contributed to the growth in the size of groups and erosion.

In saying this I admit to a certain nostalgia for the past. I admit that I always carry an EastWest or OS map (preferably EastWest because it gives more names and background info) and a Silva compass but I try not to take them out of the bag except in an emergency and only use one or other unless it is vital to use both. At the same time I am very aware that time marches on and there is no going back and that nostalgia is pointless. I have written simply to record the changes.
Younger readers can expect to see a similar quantity of change in their lifetimes. Watch the world change slowly around you. Remember that the Buddhists are right, everything is in a state of becoming, nothing is permanent. Enjoy the present and look forward to the future.

A “Discovery” map marked for micro-navigation and a 1” map on which micro-navigation was impossible.
The words of Ricky Bell, Irelands top trad climber as he fell from ‘spastic’. From the age of 10 Ricky could be found in his back garden on a climbing frame made from Telegraph poles, cargo nets and a rope swing constructed by his dad. Just 2 years later Ricky completed his first lead climb, Crooked Chimney on the Bearnagh Slabs in the Mourne Mountains, graded HS. I had watched videos of some of Ricky’s ascents, which made me feel slightly inadequate as a climber. He seemed to defy gravity and move with such ease you would be forgiven for suspecting an optical illusion. From here he went on to climbing E8 Trad, Font 8A and sport climbing at 8A.

I met Ricky at Awesome Walls Climbing Centre in Finglas to chat about his climbing career.

So many questions for this talented climber, I got stuck straight in.

Q How is training going, what does your training regime consist of:
A. It is more important to be flexible and good with movement then it is to be strong so I would stretch a lot I would do a lot of finger board exercises and one handed hangs, I am quite a light build so its hard to put strength through entire body so that is my goal at the moment.

Q Until recently we have had to make do without facilities such as awesome walls and gravity, how will this bring on the standard of climbing in Ireland
A. Massive difference. For the masses it’s massive, not so much for me. Anyone who has huge interest in training will have made the best out of what you have. We have always climbed on walls 10 years behind uk so the introduction of these walls is fantastic.
Q Fair head is spot you can be seen climbing regularly. Tell us about some of your memories there.

A. I took my first lead fall of GBH E3 6a, I didn't fall of a route at the Head for almost ten years after, until I took a bit of a whipper trying to open a new route on the Rathlin Wall. I've never gone back to do GBH clean. I've been lucky enough to have sampled some of the worlds most brilliant bits of rock. I try and travel a little always every year and have wee adventures or go about trying to achieve a wee goal, but right now I'm most passionate and inspired by finding new routes and boulders in Ireland. I love the whole process of it. I spent a lot of time in my early twenties climbing on the Rathlin Wall at Fair Head and Binnian and Buzzards Roost in the Mournes. Repeating the classics and then spending time developing new routes. I’m really lucky here because there are just so many cool things to try. I’ve a list of projects that I may never get through but I’m enjoying the process . . .

When your new routeing you tend to spend a lot of time by yourself at the crag. For example that route The Rathlin Effect, it took about six sessions to actually find the line and clean it before I could climb on it. It's climbs through so really steep terrain and so I had to aid climb the bottom section and clean it that way. It can be quite intimidating being at the crag by yourself. You get to really know the place well, get comfortable with being in even the most exposed positions. It's always a bit surreal. I think you really get a true feeling of how these places really are when your there by yourself, you get to know the walk ins, the features on the crag, the holds, you figure out all the intricacies of the moves and you never you so you never look at that bit of rock the same again. You remember the gear placements, the plants, smells and sounds, you sometimes even get to recognise the local, sheep, goats even seals! Wee birds start to look familiar then you realise that it was the same wee dude from last week just seeing how you’re getting on. It's mad you invest so much time and effort into these
routes or boulders or whatever it is that is your 'project', spend weeks training specifically for them, nights thinking about them and dreaming up a name that fits your experience. You climb up it in 30mins and it's all over. You take one last long look at it as if shaking hands with a close friend that know you'll never really see much of again. And that's it, you move on to the next wee project. Simple and extremely brilliant at the same time.

Q A lot of climbers will say climbing is mostly a mind game. How do you stay focused and 'headstrong' when climbing?
A. You can build into your routine lots of ways of not getting distracted, I am easily distracted. I’m bad when loads of people are climbing together. If there was someone shouting up to me I would have to get off the rock and ask them to stop. You are there to climb and once I am on the rock I am very focused.

Q. It is common to hear a climber say they will not push themselves beyond a certain point because they have a fear of falling, what advice would you give.
A. It's important to attempt to analyse yourself, ask why it happened and ask how you can avoid it again. Before you climb have a 5-minute conversation with yourself as to what you are looking to achieve

Teach yourself how to fall off. Go down to Awesome Walls and start on the overhang where you are not going to hurt each other and practice falling off, some people are bad at falling off we are what we practice. The fear of falling is really simple, teach yourself how to fall.
**Q Climbing v bouldering. You have excelled at both, where do you feel most comfortable.**
A. For me it doesn’t matter, I do one at one time and one at the other. I have always been more comfortable off ground I like height and the aesthetic feel of climbing. The better at bouldering you will be the better climbing you will be.

**Q. What advice would you give to every day climbers looking to improve their grade.**
A. It’s all about preparation, spend 2 minutes having a conversation with yourself “why am I doing this, what am I going to get out of this?”

Some people don’t think about it until they get there and then they are on the route and they fall. It’s all about getting relaxed and comfortable.

And so ended my humbling interview with Ricky Bell.

I hesitate to call it an interview as I felt like I was sitting down with a climbing friend chatting about climbing.

I even managed to extract some personal climbing advice which I will definitely be taking on board.

Ricky is very grateful for the support he has received from his sponsors Marmot, DMM and Scarpa.
Day 1

Alun moved to the edge of the cornice, and jumped to see if it would break. I wondered what he was doing. A moment later, he jumped off the edge, disappeared from view, and reappeared further down the slope. Uh-oh, I thought to myself, I don’t have to ski that!

"Don’t hesitate!", Alun shouted. I did. “Jump!". I know that when skiing steep slopes, hesitation and fear are the enemies. I jumped, landed made the turn, and stopped 30 metres down the slope beside Alun.

Mark was next. “Jump!” shouted Alun. He didn’t. “Don’t hesitate!” He did. Realising that pride was at stake, he gathered his courage and made the jump. Alun and myself watched as he jumped, disappeared for a second in a cloud of snow, and reappeared a moment later, but without his skis. He eventually stopped his slide close to Alun and myself, covered in snow. Mark had shown me a youtube clip a few days before which outlined the four basic methods of Ice axe arrest – Even though he didn’t have an ice axe I think he used his one remaining ski pole to try each of the four methods on the way down that slope.

We were in Chamonix on the Mountaineering Ireland Ski Touring and Snowshoeing meet. Alun had suggested that we ski together before the actual meet started, so we were skiing in the ‘La Tour’ area of Chamonix, off-piste, and trying to find the sunny slopes. I have skied for many years, and had long considered doing one of the classic ‘Haute Routes’ across the Alps. When I saw that Mountaineering Ireland were organising a three day Ski Mountaineering and Snowshoeing meet, I felt it was the ideal way to gain some of the necessary skills. Alun had suggested we meet on the Saturday for an ‘informal’ ski - I actually suspect he wanted to suss out or level of skiing. By the end of the day we were split into two groups - the bad, and the not so bad. I’m still not sure which group I was in.

Day 2

The second day dawned bright and clear – not a cloud in the blue sky. Today we were going to spend time working on two of the safety skills necessary for ski-mountaineering – crevasse rescue and avalanche search. I’ve done crevasse rescue a number of times on courses – I thankfully never have had to do it for real. It’s one of those skills that you have to practice, over and over again, so that when you need to use the techniques and skills for real, they are close to second nature.
After a belated start, we caught the mid morning Grand Montets cable car, put on our skis, and descended towards the Argentiere Glacier. Half way down, we found a nice ‘crevasse’ in the sun, took off our skis, and practiced crevasse rescue. We looked at two methods of rescue – one for rescuing an injured skier, and a slightly more complex method for rescuing a skier who was injured or unconscious.

That afternoon we spent time working on avalanche search and rescue, skills absolutely essential to anyone who skis off-piste or tries any form of ski mountaineering. I’ve done it before, but have never found it easy. It’s like using a map and compass – it’s easy to do in inside on a warm and dry evening, but using a map and compass on a cold, misty day is not as easy. Using electronic equipment outside seems wrong – your mind seems to operate in ‘outdoor’ and ‘mountain’ mode.

Alun skied ahead of us, out of our sight, and buried his avalanche transceiver in the snow. On his signal, we began a search for his transceiver. The idea is to search methodically from the ‘last seen’ position, backwards and forwards across the slope, until you pick up a signal, and then start a more detailed search from that position. Unfortunately, due to inexperience, I had come too low, and began the search in the wrong position. We dug in the wrong position, and after 15 minutes of shovelling snow, found nothing.

It was a salutary lesson in avalanche safety. In a group that skis together in the mountains, everyone should have the ability to search for his or her companions in the case of an avalanche. In the back-country, rescue services are too far away, and the only help can come from your companions.

I’ve already bought an avalanche transceiver, and intend to practice using it before I next go off-piste.

**Day 3**

On the third day we skied the fabulous Vallee Blanche. It descends from the Aguille du Midi at over 3840 metres, to the Montenvers train station at 1900 metres. In years with better snow cover you can ski the whole way back to Chamonix. The Vale Blanche is probably the most famous ski route in the world. For anyone who skis at an intermediate standard or above, it must rate as one of the great one-day adventures on skis.

We had a group of six – Mark and myself, Alun and Owen, and two entertaining Americans called Ron and Rob (or little and large). Most skiers ski the normal route down the Vallee Blanche, but we were to take the more difficult ‘Envers du Plan’ route. An early start saw us at the top of the Aguile du midi cable car before 10 o’clock.
Roping up and donning crampons for the initial descend along the ridge gave us all a real sense of adventure.

This was a day of superlatives – fabulous scenery, fabulous snow and fabulous skiing. The skiing was of a black run standard, but a black run that goes on, and on, and on. Relief comes when you reach the glacier – the skiing goes from being very difficult to very easy, all in the space of a couple of metres.

The run finished at the end of the glacier. The final hurdle of the day is a series of steps that need to be climbed to reach the train station and civilisation. As you climb, there are indicators on the rock walls of the valley indicating the height of the ice in past years. I had skied the Vallee Blanche about 20 years ago, and it was sobering to realise how far the glacier ice had retreated in that short space of geological time.

That evening we met some of the other course participants for a beer and a meal. We had very pleasant chat about our own past mountaineering experiences. Gerry, Liam and Eugene were planning their agenda for the week ahead – they seemed to plan to take vows of silence, and to retreat into a monastery. The last word we heard from them was that it was ‘Pretty Good’ and ‘Excellent’, although I think that might have referred to the skiing.

Day 4

This was one of the big days of the course. We planned to get the Cable car to ‘Le Grand Montet’, ski down to the Argentiere Glacier, cross it, and then climb on skins to the ‘Col de Tour Noir’. We caught the first ‘Le Grand Montet’ cable car, and by 10:00 we were descending towards the Argentiere Glacier. On the glacier, we had a break, took our skis off, turned them over, and stuck our climbing skins to the bottom. In olden days, climbing skins were made from real seal skin – hence the name – but are now made from mohair and nylon. A seal can move forwards easily across ice and through the water – moving backwards is harder because a seal’s fur points one way. In the same way, the artificial skins on our skis allowed us to slide our skis forwards, but would not let the skis slide backwards down the slope.

Now it began to get tough. I had checked out the height difference the night before to know what I was letting myself in for. On paper it had the altitude gain of a long walk in Wicklow, but heavy packs, the altitude, and the novelty of the activity made it much more challenging. We stopped for a well earned sandwich mid morning, and as we got higher the going got tougher. It was mentally demanding and physically very tough - I had to count 30 paces, stop, breath, recover, and then do it all again.
The general calculation for ascents on ski tours is to allow one hour per 300 metres to ascend - I believe we took close to twice that. The satisfaction on finally reaching the col was worth the effort – the views north and eastwards of the Swiss Alps were spectacular, and we had the promise of an exciting ski back to Argentiere.

Unfortunately the ski back down proved not to be so exciting. Heavy, wind blown snow and the warm sun had, by late afternoon, created a crust in the snow. I think we all found the conditions difficult – it wasn’t a case of skiing down with grace and style, rather a case of skiing slowly and steadily, and reaching the glacier with safety. We had a well earned beer in the Grande Montet middle station, skied the piste back to Argentiere, and then caught the bus to Chamonix.

Ski Mountaineering by its nature draws on many mountain disciplines – planning, mountain awareness, route finding, self reliance and fitness to name some. Tackling a route, even a one day tour, is a real challenge, and completing that route gives a real sense of achievement and accomplishment.

Doing this course for the four days was physically tough and mentally challenging, but there is something about skiing untracked snow that is addictive, and even more so when you’ve worked hard to get there. I’ll be back next year.
It was at the 2005 AGM that Peter O Neill announced that he could no longer provide services for the IMC website and we found ourselves looking for a new home and a new format for the site. Peter had set up the first IMC site and maintained and hosted it for years but circumstances outside his control made it impossible for him to continue.

In April 2006 a new site was created by Ciaran Clissman and Edwige Ducher took over as Webmaster. During 2007 Edwige moved to a new position and Tony Groves took over and he has done this job right up to March 2013 when he retired of his own volition saying, quite reasonably, that he had done enough and that it is time for new ideas.

During his tenure Tony went far beyond what was expected of him. He sought out copies of the Club’s Newsletters and Journals right back to the first Journal in 1950 and up to 2003. Many hours or even weeks of work over a hot scanner resulted in an easily-accessible archive of the activities of members through the years.

If that had been the only thing Tony did with the site it would have been earned high praise but he continued to glean members’ writings from various sources and showcased them in the ‘Articles’ section of the site. The photo gallery contains a wealth of pictures of members’ activities and even films going back to the 1950s. The fact that these are on the site now proves that they had not been lost but they might have well been lost because they were available to very few until Tony made them accessible.

For three years Tony was Hut Warden and in this role he masterminded a leap forward in the quality of the Hut. The most startling thing I found out when I took over from him was that as well as being a computing expert Tony is also an accomplished plumber and electrician. He very seldom needed to call for help to deal with an emergency but handled everything himself. As if that was not enough, he showed himself to be a very accomplished dancer late in the night at a club barbecue in the hut.

All of this was done against a background of climbing constantly at a consistently high level. We also have Tony to thank for removing tons of dirt and making Yorkshire pudding available to generations of climbers after it had been lost, or maybe even only previously climbed as a vegetable expedition.
One of the most striking things about Tony, apart from his dancing skills, is his no-nonsense, something needs to be done, let's get and do it, attitude. Tony is not one of those who spend hours discussing what should be done and how it should be done but don't actually do anything. Tony sees the need, offers to do the job and after that, silence. But the silence is not noticed because the results pour out. Actions speak louder than words and Tony's actions speak louder than most.

This is not an obituary but rather an appreciation at a stage along the road (or should that be a stance on a climb?). We haven't seen the last of Tony and maybe we haven't even seen the best yet.
Club MEETS

**July 6th/7th - Mournes**
Organised by Eoin O’Neill
A great time had by all at this meet last year at the Bearnagh slabs.

**August 3rd/5th - Burren**
Organised by Peter Woods, The Burren is well known for its rocky limestone. This meet is a great opportunity to sample the limestone climbing.

**August 10th - Hut BBQ**
Hut BBQ - Organiser Conor O’Conor – date to be confirmed

**August 18th - Ballykeefe**
Organised by Declan Craig. Ballykeefe Quarry Co. Kilkenny, trad and bolted climbing on limestone.

**September 1st - Barnbawn**
Organised by Declan Craig. Well protected single pitch climbing, ideal venue for those new to or wanting to try the pointy end of the rope.

**September 14th/15th Kerry**
Organised by Tony Barry. Howling ridge, Dunsheen head, Gap of Dunloe, Benkeragh Ridge walk, try them out at this meet.

**September (Date TBC)**
Ireland’s Eye Meet

**October 4th to 6th - Scottish Hillwalking Meet**
Organised by Declan Finnegan
Ben Nevis and surrounding area

**October 25th to 28th - Wales Meet**
Organised by Gerry Moss, the October Bank Holiday meet to Snowdonia, in North Wales, is a long-standing, and popular, IMC tradition.
Beginners Corner

A handy A - Z Reference of definitions to help newcomers to the sport.

Cut this out and stick it in your belay device!

A Quick Draw - A rudimentary hand drawing of a climbing route, mainly used to instruct new climbers!

Layback Climb - A nice easy going climbing route.

Running belay - A very frightened second.

A Camming Device - Mainly used for to control over exited beginners on a exposed multi pitch climb.

Ab Seil - Fitness device guaranteed to tighten up that tummy!

Permanent ab Point - Bellybutton!

Hand Jamming - A method of removing skin from ones hands.

Fist Jam - A hand made preserve!

Soloing - A climber falling rapidly.

Moving Together - two climbers falling rapidly.

(Also called roped soloing)

Italian Hitch - traveling around the Dolomites on a budget.

Prussik Loop - famous loop walk around Mount Prussik in north west Leitrim

French Prussik - mountain of the same name near Marseilles.
Deep Water Soloing - a developing fusion sport of climbing underwater using various weights (seek instructions from an experienced IMC climber before attempting this, requires strong lung capacity!)

Sea Cliff Climbing (also called Guano climbing) - ask G. Moss for instructions on this strange climbing deviance.

Fair Head Climbing - A climbing company on the Greek island of Bigbos exclusively catering for blondes.

Crash Pad - a climber’s apartment in the south of France.

A Runner (sometimes also called running belay) - a new climber given the job of passing messages between climbers on a large crag (must be quite fit).

Fall Factor - A way of measuring how far you will fall without looking down.

Multi Pitch Award (MPA) - An award given to those who can sing and climb at the same time.

Single Pitch Award (SPA) - An award given to those who cannot sing and climb at the same time (much more prevalent)

An SPA Observation - A Ronan Keating concert.

Colmcilles Climbers - A motley crew of underachieving, overweight, and best-avoided climbers from the northwest (not to be confused with Club Cualann, similar characteristics, different faces)