CROSSWORD No. 2

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4. like Van Helsing with the stakes in the quarry
10. type of rock feared when damp
11. First man to 6135
13. Down and out in Dalkey or loose morals?
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17. A great Gatsby dance and a Dalkey climb
18. A crag with links to the beautiful game
20. lots of these are rusty on Nightmare ledge
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CONTACT US:
The newsletter is about news from the Club, so please send in any trip reports / news you have to: publicity@irishmountaineeringclub.org

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Ian Christie

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Ambrose Flynn

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Climbing Ramabang Review
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Front Cover Pic:
The Gouter route and the Bosses ridge (Ambrose Flynn)

~ This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Joe Reville ~
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What a summer! It looks like we finally got the summer we deserved this year with high temperatures and clear skies right through till October. And we made the best of it with a great beginners programme (page 8), and great meets at Ballykeefe (Page 26), Irelands Eye (page 24), The Mournes (page 37), the lake district, The Burren, a series of meets in Wicklow and a lot of interest in Fair Head from a few of our more experienced climbers (page 17).

There were many visits to the Alps too, a group joining the Mountaineering Ireland meet in Adamello, a group attempting the north face of the Piz Badille (to be continued next year) and a successful ascent of the ??? by Padraig Gibbons and ???. Vanessa Sumner and Sinead Rickerby spent two weeks in the Chamonix area training on several routes and the dream team of Ambrose Flynn and Vincent Astier had quite a successful few weeks. There was a couple of trips to the Himalayas, an ascent of Elbrus by Cliona McCarthy, sports climbing Spain (very hot), hut to hut walking in the Berchasgaden Alps, and a lot more besides. Also included are three articles from last winter trips abroad, to give you some ideas for escaping the winter.

Looking Ahead
Heading into the autumn and winter there are a lot of plans afoot, the very popular Wales trip next week, a sun rock climbing trip to Spain in March and France in November, a trip to El Chorro in Spain around Christmas, the very popular Connemara trip, ice climbing in Setesdal in Norway in February, and a rumored IMC Scottish winter meet in February or March which will be useful for all those heading to the Alps next summer. Speaking of the Alps next summer wouldn’t it be great to get an IMC meet there? Something to get in training for and to plan for. For more information about these trips contact the meets team meets@irishmountaineeringclub.org

indoors
The new IMC meets team of Vanessa and Sinead have organised an impressive calendar of Thursday evening indoor meets in the teachers club (see back cover). Something for everyone, high mountains, rock routes, and even a talk and slide show about caving. Gravity and Awesome walls will be busy with people trying to get their climbing grades up, and there’s even an IMC lead climbing competition rumored for late in the year. Sé O Hanlon has also been busy with some great improvements to the Hut with the aid of his many able volunteers.

Winter Hikes
There are a series of winter hikes organized by Noel Caffrey and a large number of IMC members either walking or running the Moonlight challenge on November 16 in aid of Glen of Imall Mountain Rescue. Also coming up is the Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Run The Line event on 30 November, which has a 10km or 33km option.

Sad News
The event which has shocked and saddened us all this summer was the passing away of our friend Joe. A warm, friendly good humoured man, Joe oozed enthusiasm for life. His passing is a huge loss to his family and friends and to everyone who knew him, but also a big loss to the club. It would be great if we could keep his memory alive in the club with the Irelands Eye Joe Reville meet, a day which Joe enjoyed immensely and an event that I am sure will continue for many years to come.

Ian Christie
A first visit to the alps - AMBROSE FLYNN

The Alps!
How can such a small word spark the synapses into a frenzy of imagery and possibility? Is it the majestic photos of white crystalline landscapes, the granite spires toppling upwards, or perhaps tales of epics and personal struggles have coaxed our egos to entertain the possibility of entering this abstract world? Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote, ‘Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.’

On the 19th of June Petra Tolarova and I met Vincent Astier at Camping du Glacier D’Argentiere for a two week trip. At the outset our minds were clouded by doubts due to the late snow fall in the Alps. But after chatting to the guys in Office de Haute Montagne in Chamonix and to Padraic Gibbons we decided to stay in Argentiere. On the 20th we decided to go the Albert Premiere Hut as a prelude to Table Couloir (PD+/AD-) on Aguille du Tour (3542m). Due to the recent snow there was barely a trail and the ascent to the hut was during a soft Irish Day! The Albert is a horrible hut with little redeeming features but it was better than bivying, just about.

As forecast the morning was stunning and we set off at 6am for the short walk to the du Tour using a map and breaking trail to the base of Table Couloir. Vincent set off in lead until the guided party behind us decided to play their part and break a little trail. Snow conditions were good and we moved easily up the couloir and then onto the ridge scramble for 150m to the summit. Not difficult climbing but rather mindful movement with three on a rope on a ridge. A great start!

The following day we conversed with Padraic and plans were hatched to visit the Geant Glacier via the Midi Station. We left the Midi, found the ridge quite soft due to recent late snow and headed for the wonderful Cosmiques Hut. At 3613m and still acclimatising our night was comfortable yet sleepless.

We ‘awoke’ for a 6am start as our route, Pointe Lachenal (AD-), was only an hour’s walk from the hut and the weather was perfect again. We split into teams of two and ascended the snow slope to the start of the traverse. Once again the climbing was not difficult but rather exposed in sections requiring mindfulness and communication. We pitched the final buttress, a fantastic piece of mixed climbing reminiscent of Scottish Winter due to recent snowfall. We then started the journey.
across the Geant Glacier to the Torino Hut on the Italian side of the Alps. The traverse of the Geant is a stunning place with so much beauty, mountaineering history and a few crevasses for good measure.

After another nights ‘almost-sleep’ we parted company with Padraic as he, Jack Doyle and Eva Veres headed for the North Face of the Tour Ronde (D II), while we went to the Aguille d’Entreves (PD+). The route starts with a snow slope and then a fantastic traverse with sections of exposure requiring concentration and a few moments of commitment; a superb route. On reaching the summit and starting the descent we realised there was something wrong! It seemed that there was a hoard of climbers coming towards us... oops... we traversed it the wrong way. After letting one party pass we decided it would be prudent to turn around and traverse the way we had come; a learning curve for all concerned.

Once again we traversed the Geant Glacier back towards the Midi Station but this time crossing through the crevasses as a good trail was established and it was still early in the morning. It was a great experience getting up close and personal with the yawning giants. By the time we reached the Midi we were shattered and sleep was badly needed. The following days were wet in Chamonix with 40cm of snow fall on the hills and high winds. Having been caught previously in an avalanche I have put time into understanding the white beast and the news of snow fall and high winds was a concern as the Trois Monts Route to Mt Blanc was in the back of our minds.

A break in the weather gave us the opportunity to use the Grands Montets Lift and go to the Petite Aiguille Verte (PD) for a fun day out. But on arrival we found that the route was a hive of activity with possibly over 40 people on it!! We decided we didn't want the hassle and as the avalanche warning was high we decided to practice ice axe belays, crevasse rescue and various tomfoolery. It was an enjoyable day out but witnessing three climbers avalanche a small section of the approach did not help ease our anxiety.

The following day was decision time.... Trois Monts or no?

Initially we decided it was too sketchy and there were other routes more worthy of our attention but it seemed that due to the new snow-fall even the accessible PD/AD routes we had in mind were avalanche prone. At the very last minute after consulting with the Office de Haute Montagne we decided to go the Cosmiques Hut. We arrived at the hut and started to consult with the hut warden, it seemed that quite a few teams were going for the Trois Monts Route in the morning and that the guides had carried out an assessment on the route the day before. The fact that they took the names of those attempting the route did not alleviate our anxiety.
After much looking, talking and reflecting we decided to give it a go. Leaving the hut at 2am we ventured into the darkness. There were seven teams ahead of us and possible four behind us well spaced out. By now we were fit and efficient and passed a few teams on the way up Mt Tacul. However, our focus was on the snow conditions as we were all too aware of past events on this face. The snow quality went from good too bad to worse to good again. The path was minimal and we fell silent as full concentration was required. Time to time the beam of the head torch would catch the side of a serac but there was no time to ponder.

We were quite relieved to be off Tacul but Mt Maudit and its 60 degrees exit slope was waiting for us. Once again the snow quality was the same but we moved quietly and at a steady pace. Just before reaching the exit slope we had to cross a bergschrund and due to the inexperience of several members of two parties in front of us we had to wait about ten minutes while we slowly froze. It was below -10 and wind chill was in the house in a big way. Finally we watched the team in front of us get their act together and we crossed the crevasse without fuss. But we were not super inspired to have them in front of us on the exit slope! A French guy behind me asked me ‘is this where the rope is’ to which I replied, ‘apparently’. There was no rope but the slope was in good nick. We made our way up the slope with little fuss but were glad to exit through the cornice as this was the last of the difficulties.

It was a spectacular scene as dawn broke on the horizon and a distant cumulonimbus cloud lit up with bolts of lightning, but the wind was now gusting to 70kph blasting spindrift into our faces, so we didn’t hang around. We moved slowly across the Col de la Brenva, up to the Mur de la Côte and the final, painful slog up Mt Blanc arriving at the summit before 8am. We tried to eat, difficult with a frozen face, took a few pictures and made a quick exit down the Gouter Route. We did not return via the Trois Monts Routes due to avalanche potential but rather finished with the traverse. Eventually, after 15 hours we hit our camp for a hot shower and food. Padraic was back from various alpine shenanigans and was delighted to hear about our venture to Mt Blanc treating us to a drink later that night. We departed Argentiere the next morning.

Our trip was at an end.

On reflection our trip was a huge success for us on many levels; the route choices, the conditions, the company, the beauty and above all the learning curve. We made minor mistakes as we went but we had the strength of partnership to share them and move on. Petra, who had minimal experience in climbing/mountaineering, was super inspiring with her strength, determination and progressive learning ability. The Alps it seems is not just for the Elite, it is for all who apply themselves with honesty and determination. We will be back.

Ambrose Flynn

Ambrose will be giving a talk - “Alps for the Ordinary” in the Teachers Club early in the new year.
The new members programme is important, it is the lifeblood of the club and you will find that nearly all members joined through this door.

The programme this year was quite successful, with more than usual newbies now still active in the club. A few of changes had been made to the programme, following some discussion and a survey, which had been done by a club member two years ago. This, and some great work done by Tony Barry Cillian Russell and others in keeping newbies involved were the main reason for this success. The wonderful weather we had this summer also helped.

In July I sent a mail to all new members asking for contributions to the newsletter. I asked for warts and all. I was pleasantly surprised to get the four articles below back . . .

They give a good insight on how the newbies experience the program and highlight mostly positive experiences. I would like to thank the four contributors.

**IT WAS STILL A GREAT EXPERIENCE by David O Shea**

I suppose, my experience of the new member’s program might not have ended quite as well as I would have liked, but it was still a hugely positive one I remember arriving on the first Sunday in Dalkey, and the first thing that struck me was just how many people were part of the new members program. There was a massive group of us.

The day passed in a bit of a blur, but I had a go on Levitation, Mahjong and some routes on the Eliminates. I think I was lucky in that I was the last person to abseil down Yorkshire, right before the heavens opened and everyone hit the pub! The next few Thursdays flew by, and before I knew it the program had finished. A few of us endeavoured to get out climbing ourselves at the weekends, and again I was struck by how helpful the existing members were, as someone always showed up to help us out. As the new members weekend in Glendalough dawned, I was really looking forward to getting down there. I knew it was going to be an epic weekend and couldn't wait to get stuck in.

Myself and Martina got to climb with Gerry first thing on the Saturday morning, on Prelude Nightmare. It was an epic climb, and Gerry was a great leader, constantly giving advice and pointers on the more difficult moves. In hindsight, I remember some advice Tony gave us on the first Sunday - take your time. *I lost sight of this!* On the last pitch, I was the last person to leave Nightmare ledge. I was probably over eager, and just started rushing up. I didn’t chalk my hands, nor did I look at how to tackle what I knew would be a tricky enough move. I reached a certain height, poorly positioned myself and wasn’t in a secure position before reaching for the next hold. I took a fall back down to the ledge, nearly taking another climber out of it.
At the time, adrenalin kicked in and I managed to complete the climb, and abseil back down. However, upon reaching terra firma, my left ankle was a bit sore so I decided to head back home and rest it, with the intention of returning to Glendalough on the Sunday. Despite offers of help from club members, I assured everyone I would be ok and started off to the car park on my own. I made it about half way back before I reached the conclusion I was unable to walk further. Without the kindness of strangers, I would never have reached the car park - several random people ended up carrying me back, while others carried my bag and gave me extra water. Upon reaching the car park, it was clear I was unable to use the clutch in my car, and in the end Caroline, one of the other new IMC members, ended up driving me back to Dublin in my car. I must say a huge thank you to her, she did me a huge favour there that I will probably never be able to repay.

Turned out I had broken my ankle, and attempting to walk back had made it far worse. Surgery and a few screws later and I'm on the mend, but it's unclear what the prospects are for recovery. Hopefully I will be climbing again, but it's difficult to say for a few more weeks. So, all in all, the new members program didn't end for me quite as well as I'd hoped - I was aiming to be comfortably leading climbs at this stage, not laid up looking at funny pictures on the Interweb all day! However, despite the end, it was still a great experience. I loved every minute of it. Again, I must say a huge thanks to everyone I met over the course of the few weeks - everyone was so helpful and positive, and it's clear why the IMC is such a successful club.

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO THE IMC by Gary Smith

Let's be clear about this, I never intended to get into rock climbing. As a regular hillwalker I used to look up at climbers on crags and think, "Those guys are nuts". But, in the same breath, as a leader of hill walks, I was interested in the basic skills and when the opportunity came via a friend to take a spare slot on a weekend climbing course down in Dalkey last October, I took it. And so by chance the seed was planted and subsequently nurtured by a couple of highly enjoyable 'taster' sessions at Awesome Walls. Let's face it, climbing walls are basically the big playground you dreamed of as kids, what's not to like? And they're not cold, wet & windy, like Dalkey at the wrong end of October. But after a while you realise climbing walls are more than just glorified climbing frames for big kids. They are little puzzles that get progressively harder. Once you've solved one, there's always another one around the corner with just a bit more of a challenge to it. And always in the background was the nagging thought that these warm, colourful plastic holds are some way removed from rock.

Sunset over Dalkey
And just as those thoughts were bouncing around, a friend tipped me off to the IMC New Members Programme starting the very next week. So along I went to the Teacher’s Club and got my list of mandatory equipment and vouchers and looked around at all the other potential new members thinking, “There’s a lot of us!”

At home I started to decode the equipment list and learn a whole new vocabulary of HMSes & ATCs & what exactly is dyneema anyway...and why do shops not just sell one example of each . . . how do you decide which to get, do you just take the restaurant winelist approach (get the second cheapest)? But through a combination of talking to sales assistants in the shops and taking a wild fly at some online purchases, you get your basic kit together. (Top Tip: Don’t buy rock shoes online, you need to try these things on and you need to be able to go back to the shop and swap them when you realise your initial estimate of your pain threshold was way, way too ambitious).

First IMC meet is at Awesome Walls, and that little bit of prior experience pays off straight away, now that we’re climbing with people who actually own ropes we can try seconding and later leading some of the unroped routes. Yes, you get the feeling you’re being assessed as the evening goes on but it’s great to get a chance to lead on these walls straight away. It’s now that you realise that there’s a technique to everything, even the most simplest of things, such as simultaneously hanging on and clipping into a twisting quickdraw. And how easy it is to burn up all reserves of strength focusing on one and not the other.

Already you are learning how to move and rest more efficiently. You become aware that some moves you are getting away with through strength rather than technique and realise that’s a short-lived advantage. It’s interesting to climb with a partner who is the opposite and see how they move, negotiating problems through better technique and, it has to be said, more grace.

The next Sunday and we are down in Dalkey on a relatively warm & sunny day. And a whole new set of skills to learn – no, not the climbing on rock, that bit is relatively easy. More challenging is that suddenly everyone is talking in tongues about paradise puddings or yorkshire fighters or some such, street staircases & lost giant towers. But it’s alright, there’s a little book that explains all, except that when you look in the book it’s just pictures of bits of rock that look nothing like the bit of rock you’re staring at, together with a whole rake of even more bizarre names. But the climbing is great, good to be back on rock and to have so much help from all the IMC members.

Successful Thursdays and successive challenges. First doing leading (albeit on a safety rope) up Yorkshire Pudding and then a couple of 2 pitch climbs around Tower Ridge, both with Ken, who gives great advice throughout the climbs. Then, later on, climbing a couple of VSes with Jon, who is likewise constantly encouraging and helpful, giving a different insight into how things can be done but with a common emphasis on the theory & safety behind it all.

So to Glendalough for a weekend of climbing on longer, more challenging climbs. And more challenging walk ins! Dorota & I hook up with Jon who offers to lead for both of us and we head up into the valley on a nice sunny Saturday morning. After a brief look around at who’s climbing where, we opt for Prelude-Nightmare. After the sub-20m climbs of Dalkey this is something totally different with 4 pitches totalling closer to 80m of climbing. And the rock - you couldn’t wish for anything better, so wonderfully abrasive & grippy.
Although this cuts both ways, literally, as bits of knuckles get left behind on the way up. Suddenly a new found confidence, encouraged by this wonderful dry rock. Improving on my footwork, trusting to (what I perceive to be) the tiniest ledges in the rock face and learning what I can (and can't) get away with in rock shoes.

Sense of time is gone and it is just you and the climb. Once a pitch is done, get anchored in, swap gear over, have a quick chat, sort the ropes and off we go again, take the belay or just enjoy this new perspective on Glendalough and the view back down to where you started. Strange, but really at no point did I get any sense of vertigo looking down because I'm happily tied in, the only time I did feel a bit of a wobbly was gazing out across the valley and being aware of an airiness all around my peripheral vision. Topping out you get a chance to look around and take it all in. “What time is it?” No idea, but suddenly it feels like it should be lunchtime. It's actually late afternoon and as we arrive back at Acorn Buttress, so do the first drops of a rain shower.

Sunday morning we meet up with Jon again and head in, this time aiming for Fanfare/Spéirbhean and the infamous step-around. Well it all seemed a good idea on Saturday night. Climbing progresses well and soon it is my turn for the step-around. Being a bit taller than most, the actual stepping around does not seem too bad, after a bit of initial foot shuffling. But the problem then is where to go next as there are no obvious moves and what I am holding on to is feeling increasingly precarious. At this point Ken lands in on the other side of Spillikin via abseil, engages in a bit of (rather one-sided) banter, takes a picture of my near death experience and ab's away. Such moments are when you have both the doubts and the affirmation about rock climbing. Am I really doing this for pleasure? But then you know you can get past a section, it's just another puzzle, stay calm, work it out, get the reward of solving it and learn from it.

After a bit more foot shuffling and groping around, the holds are found and away I go up to Nightmare Ledge. As I top out from Spéirbhean the drizzle is just coming in and we set up an exhilarating abseil taking us all the way back down to the foot of the Main Face.

I'm not sure how many of those people I saw at the enrolment in the Teacher's Club actually saw the New Members programme through to the end but I'm glad I did. It's a superb way to get an introduction to climbing and the advice & help you get from all the existing IMC members is invaluable. I've always enjoyed hillwalking and the people you meet walking; you may come from varied backgrounds but you have this one thing in common, the folks you meet are generally sound and you often fall into an instant rapport. Now I find the same through the IMC climbing community and the willingness of members to take you on, to freely pass on their knowledge and insight and to put their trust in you. So this is where I say thank you to all those I have climbed with so far and to the other IMC members who made this such a great programme.

Since the official end of the New Members programme I've been up to the IMC Mournes meet and in a week or so time I'll be at the meet in the Burren. This is definitely the start of something, although I'm still not entirely convinced about the sanity of it all.
CLIMBING OUTSIDE OF TOP ROPE AND AWESOME IS GREAT by Michael Slattery

I joined IMC back in April at the evening in Awesome Walls. Good to see the more experienced climbers giving back and how responsible they were (Owen made a good point of double checking our abilities to belay). Made it to one Thursday evening in Dalkey, got some good tips from Dave (mad about ice climbing in Norway) on my first multi pitch. Seeing how easily the experienced climbers tie a variety of knots and set up anchors was great but also a little daunting. I've improved a lot since then and realize it is just practice after you learn the SAFE way. Even though my participation was sparse I highly recommend new members to join in and learn something/ have a new experience. Observing the technical and safety side is very beneficial but also hearing climber’s stories and experiences is inspiring and motivating to aspiring climbers.

My own trad climbing has progressed (body stretcher route probably the most scary/fun) and having another layer of climbing to explore outside of top rope and (indoor @ Awesome) lead climbing is great. No low points really but some safety tips I learned the hard way; don't let the belayer keep the rope so tight that the gear pops out! and even if a slab looks well protected it's not always the case (high velocity gardening on the masochist route not fun..)

CONFESSIONS OF A RELUCTANT CLIMBER by David Jacob

In the beginning.

It started innocuously enough last February, when Kevin Coakley issued an invitation on the Wayfarers GroupSpaces to a beginners group wall climbing session at Awesome Walls.

My previous climbing experience consisted of an unfortunate incident in Dalkey quarry so far in the dim and distant past that the details are long forgotten. It was however such as to render it probable that my climbing experience would remain thus limited, indefinitely.

Dolomites.

However with the passage of time memories fade and maturity sets in. Then on hill walking holidays to the Dolomites, I had the opportunity climb a few via ferrata. On Cirspitze, 2,520 m, which seemed quite airy, I was surprised to find that I really enjoyed the exposure, the view points and moving on rock. On Piz Da Lec, 2,910 m, our ascent was extremely slow which caused us to miss the last cable car back down the mountain. We got caught in a thunderstorm and eventually arrived in the valley after a ten-hour day.

Awesome Walls.

After this I decided to learn something about climbing but this was still with a view to climbing via ferrata. After all this is much safer than rock climbing! Isn't it? Since via ferrata in Ireland are few and far between and I had too
many other places to see before returning to the Dolomites this experience could readily be long fingered. I made a few halfhearted enquiries, but my knee was bothering me, I was under pressure of time, the weather was unreliable, etc. and progress never amounted to anything. Finally Kevin’s message arrived in my inbox. I had never heard of Awesome Walls but it is completely weather proof, there was very little commitment and if my knee bothered me I could pack it in there and then. In short I was now absolutely out of excuses.

The arranged evening arrived and a group of about twenty Wayfarers arrived at AW. Again I was surprised to realise just how much I enjoyed indoor climbing. Regular Friday evening visits to AW followed. I was beginning to see that with the arrival of Awesome Walls climbing might become a regular activity rather that an occasional visit to the Dolomites or other location where via ferrata are found.

**Introductory program.**

This position lasted all of eight days before another email dropped in my inbox. This was from Frank Creedon, another dual citizen who, prompted by my enthusiasm, forwarded Tony Barry’s email about IMC’s Introductory Programme. Before I knew what had happened I had joined IMC and booked a place on the Introductory Programme. I missed the first Thursday evening session in AW and also the all day Sunday session at Dalkey and at the time the latter was a more significant omission. I was reading Tony’s Introduction to Rock Climbing notes and noted amongst other things that if going to the Glendalough meet in June new members should have the ability to second on a number of VS grade climbs. I was also looking at what I was climbing in AW and the approximate equivalence charts and thinking yes that looks attainable.

So it was that on the second Thursday evening of the introductory programme I arrived in Dalkey for my first taste of the real thing. This was not without some trepidation however there was also an underlying feeling that there were ghosts of the past to be confronted. For this introduction I was fortunate enough to have the undivided attention of Chris Crolly as mentor. We climbed some of the usual D and VD routes. I found the rope work fascinating, if a steep learning curve. I managed the climbing but was taken aback by just how difficult I found out it. The transition from indoor to outdoor climbing was not turning out to be as seamless as I had expected. The next Thursday was more rope work, more anchor building and my first introduction to multi-pitch climbing but still at the same level. The rope work for multi-pitch I found both logical and confusing.

The next Thursday the weather was poor and those who turned up adjourned to Bulloch harbour to practice anchor building and placing gear. This served to confirm what I had long known. It is one thing to be shown how to do something and quite another to do it yourself. The introductory program could put more emphasis on new members actually doing supervised rope work as well as just being shown it, but then again it could be six months rather than an already very generous six weeks.

After that I was climbing with a mentor and one or two other new members, all of who seemed to be far more experienced than I. Attempting a HVS route on my third time out did not seem like a very good idea. I did climb as far as the first difficult move, took one look and retreated. I was even less ready for this in spirit then in body and that’s not saying a lot.
After that we regularly moved up a grade or two. I continued to find the climbing challenging while all around me other, more experienced, new members seemed to be ready for anything, including lead climbing. I was however getting a tremendous buzz from the success I was having, and the greater the challenge, the greater the buzz. Gradually I realised that confidence was growing slowly and that the ghosts of the past had been well and truly exorcised. The elephant in the room however was Tony’s note about should have the ability to second on a number of VS grade and the Glendalough meet was coming up fast.

**Barnbawn.**
Around this time I had the opportunity spend a day climbing with Ian Christie, another dual citizen. Ian had intended going to Glendalough and I thought a might get a quiet, private, sneak preview. After quizzing me thoroughly Ian decided Glendalough was not a good idea. He was probably right. Instead we went to Barnbawn. We had the place to ourselves apart from a couple who had things other than climbing on their minds. The sun shone all day, we had some great climbing and I learned much including an introduction to double ropes.

**Glendalough.**
The Glendalough meet came around much too quickly. I had very limited experience on VS routes and a little more on routes with 4b moves managed with varying degrees of difficulty. It would be untrue to say I could second VS routes never mind do so and be of help to the lead climber however there was no stopping now. Initially I was to climb with James Aitken and another new member, a young lady, but before starting out she left and joined another group. Whether it was James or I she didn’t fancy was never revealed. The selected route was Quartz Gulley which, along with its move left and then back right crux on the second pitch had cropped up in conversation so many times in the previous few weeks. This was in fact the route that Ian had considered a few weeks previously. As James started up I asked myself just what was I letting myself in for. Soon James called climb when ready and I replied climbing like an automaton. The first pitch went well and I began to get into it. I watched carefully as he started up the second pitch and through the crux, but from below I couldn’t see how he made the moves, particularly how he placed his feet. Then it was my turn. I started up the second pitch, reached the crux, saw how it looked from that level and followed James at the first attempt, almost without pause or hesitation. It was almost elegant, at least that’s how it appeared to me. I breathed a huge sigh of relief and cautiously started to relax and replace trepidation with real enjoyment. I even found time to pause and admire the view. I looked down at the brightly coloured ants wending their way up the Miners track below, as so many times before I had slogged my way up that track looking up at the brightly coloured ants on the crags. Never for a moment did I imagine that I would be one of the ants on the crag. The rest of the meet passed in somewhat of a blur but Quartz Gulley turned out to be one of the many highlights of the last few months.

**Summer Climbing.**
July arrived and the season previously known as summer turned into an actual summer for the first time in what seemed like living memory. Long weekend days and weekday evenings were spent in Dalkey, slowly improving my skills and constantly learning. So many people gave so
generously of their experience, advice and encouragement that is would be impossible to name them all but I have to single out Cillian Russell in this regard. Is there a better place to be than Dalkey when the sun is shining, the rock is dry and warm and a glorious sun sets red over the city? There were many evenings when I topped out at dusk and left the car park in darkness. In early July, at the Mournes meet I was introduced to the delights of the incredible friction of the rock on Bearnagh Slabs. On the Sunday we went to Lower Cove. The rock there is looks like giant Jenga bricks stacked one on top of the other or even improbably balanced or cantilevered, held in position only by their own mass. The arête of First Corner felt particularly airy and exposed. As I fumbled my way up this the thought that I can’t do this gave way to the discovery that yes I can and another highlight wrote its way into my log.

Conclusions.
In this article I have described several highlights, indeed in some respects the last few months could be described as one long highlight. Personally, though there have been many moments of trepidation, self doubt, and perhaps even fear, thankfully there have been no incidents of terror or panic and I have managed to keep a clear head throughout even when for a time I did not know what I was going to do next. Long may it continue. The time however has not been without its lowlights. One of them was the injury, through a simple accident, of a fellow new member, with whom I had formed a friendship and had climbed with on several occasions. Another was the injury of lead climber, not an IMC member to the best of my knowledge, in Dalkey following a fall onto a ledge. A broken ankle was the result.

My initial thoughts on the Introductory Program were that a lot of the people on the program were well beyond needing an introduction to climbing. I did find that the climbs, and various other activities and the matching of mentors and new members appeared to depend on who arrived at Dalkey at the same time, more than which new members had similar strengths and weakness and which mentor intended to address those weaknesses and climb at an appropriate level. Perhaps there is some scope for matching on future programs though it is difficult to see how this could be achieved.

The over arching impression created though was the patience and infectious enthusiasm that so many established members displayed in the face of what at times must have seemed like an endless stream of daft questions and indifferent performances. At the same time they attempted to instill a sense of the importance of learning essential safety skills correctly but in a fun and enjoyable manner. It was and is a steep learning curve and I sincerely hope we are all learning it all well.
Gerry Galligan’s enthusiasm for mountaineering and for life itself catches the reader’s attention from the very first pages. In some ways Gerry is an unlikely mountaineer, having, led a life, if not exactly of dissipation, then of a certain aimlessness and of what would once have been called a hippie existence, before settling into a conventional career, and later taking up mountaineering in his mid-thirties. But, of course, many famous mountaineers in their most productive years, particularly Americans, perhaps I should say Californians, led lives not that far removed from their flower-power contemporaries.

Gerry is patently one who seeks that which is different, challenging, interesting. Hence, he looks beyond the usual round of the quarry, the climbing wall, the club meet. He seems to have quickly realised that ‘the big adventure’ as he calls it must be sought in higher ranges, in little-visited valleys and unclimbed peaks. So, in 2008, he travelled with like-minded companions to Spiti in India’s Himachal Pradesh to climb a previously unclimbed 6135m peak which they would eventually call Ramabang. But not content with just climbing, Gerry was keen to explore, to look for previously untrodden glaciers and to traverse new passes across the Himalayan divide into the neighbouring district of Kullu. And furthermore, perhaps sensing he would not again have the opportunity, he intended then to travel back overland on the famous Indian version of the old Enfield ‘Bullet’ motorbike.

The first part of the book which deals with Gerry himself, his childhood, the successful climb on Ramabang, the subsequent finding and crossing of a pass into Kullu is, to my mind, the most interesting section of the book and it adds to one’s pleasure that it is well-written. Gerry, from research and then experience, has learned, that mountain travel and exploration in the Himalaya can be enjoyed by ordinary club climbers who are experienced, competent, adventurous all-rounders. His experiences in Spiti and later when he was alone in Ladakh illustrate that point very well.

Gerry found himself in Ladakh because his plan to travel home solo by motorbike was not really feasible and he was further convinced in changing his mind when he had a trial run on a ‘Bullet’ on busy mountain roads. As one who barely survived six months touring India on just such a bike I can but nod positively and emphatically at his decision. His time in the mountain deserts of Ladakh was worthwhile and he managed another summit, besides learning something of the culture of that bleakly beautiful place. We learn more here about Gerry, his approach to life, to romance, to people and mountains.

Gerry then sets about travelling overland back to Europe, by train, bus, and hitch-hiking, having many experiences on the way. But here he has to contend with the fact that this has been all done many times and that his forerunners in many situations include such masters as Dalrymple, Newby and Dervla Murphy. His comments on different ethnicities, countries and religions may interest some readers.
I venture to say that many will disagree with his thought-provoking analysis of events, politics and religion.

The book is well produced, illustrated and edited, and includes adaptations of maps drawn by Sé O Hanlon. I recommend it to the adventurous of spirit, even if it’s of the armchair kind, and to those who want to argue over a pint about Gerry’s world view.

Fair Head Meet - NIAMH MC GREEN

The last time I visited Fair head was about 10 years ago. Over the years, I stayed away, scared by Fair heads reputation of being steep and difficult. This year though I’ve been really enjoying my climbing and decided it was time to brave it at Fair head. I talked about going so much that I was encouraged by others, to stop talking and just pick a date and open it up as a club meet! So, that I did.

A good crew expressed interest in coming and by pure coincidence the chosen weekend of 12th July was in the middle of a period of very fine weather. The meet had 10 members in total by the end of the weekend. We camped in Sean’s field amongst some ruined buildings, less than 10 minutes walk from the crag. It’s wild camping, but a portaloo had been installed for the earlier MI meet (a bit gross by end of weekend) and there was a water in the car park closeby, so it wasn’t completely uncivilised. I was a bit worried about the midges since the weather was so warm, but they really weren’t a problem that weekend.

So, the first morning we got up nice and early - first rookie error. The seasoned fair headers (i.e. Conor and Nick) had a nice sleep in, leisurely breakfast, and arrived down at the crag just in time to see the sun come around to warm the north facing main crag; we, on the other hand, were in shade for our first 2 climbs. We were lucky it was a warm day; any other weekend we would have been frozen stiff.

Us rookies started at the Ballycastle Decent Gully end of the crag. Again, we made a rookie error - bringing our bags to the base of the crag. Anyone who has done that decent regularly knows to kit up before descending to avoid another decent and ascent of the gully to collect your bag at the end of the day. Another benefit is that you have your lunch in the sun at the top of the crag!

Ken and I started with a couple of classic 2 pitch VS’s, Girona and Chieftain. We both found the 1st pitch of Girona quite thoughtful, and I managed to get thoroughly stuck in the gap between the wall and the pinnacle at the start of the 2nd pitch; it must have taken 10 minutes and endless energy to squeeze myself through the gap and onto the pinnacle (Ken cleverly climbed on the outside of the gap and looked far more elegant!). Both climbs are to be thoroughly recommended. Peter, Dave Keogh, Bruce and Kris went across to the Prow, to try a couple of shorter VS’s there.
Black Thief was climbed. A couple of the lads had to go have a little sleep after! Later Peter and Dave enjoyed Chieftain in the sunshine.

Nick and Conor arrived down the Ballycastle gully and calmly knocked off an E2 (Blind Pew) close by, and proceeded to start up Hells Kitchen, a very impressive 2 pitch HVS corner.

Ken and I, feeling brave and seeing the practically endless gear placements, decided to give Hells Kitchen a go ourselves. Dave Craig appeared out of the blue and joined us for the climb. It had turned out a fantastic sunny day, and Dave and I basked in the sun at the top of the first pitch as Ken tackled the difficult second pitch. I was well impressed with Ken’s lead on that pitch - the top was very challenging; some say it’s closer to E1 than HVS.

Meanwhile, the rest of the lads were treated to an awesome display of E5+ climbing by an eminent Dublin climber who seemed to have just dropped in to do that one pitch and away off again. Actually, we were very surprised to see so few people in Fair head on such a wonderful day - Where was everybody?

Buzzing after our first day, we wandered back to the camp for a very pleasant evening, barbequing (i.e. burning) a mass of burgers and sausages over a couple of beers, and some of us were treated to expresso in posh little cups. Dave Keogh, not having expended enough energy that day ran down to Ballycastle to buy himself some eggs, but he sensibly hitched a lift back. We all went to bed happy, looking forward to more great weather and great climbing on the Sunday.

Sunday morning turned out to be cold and misty, such a disappointment. But as we had our breakfast and packed up out tents the weather started to improve. So we headed off to the crag. Peter and Dave Madden, who had arrived Saturday night, headed for another recommended VS, Roaring Meg. Bruce, Dave Keogh and Kris went to do Chieftain, while Dave and Sile headed for the Prow. Ken and I
wandered to the other end of the crag to the Grey Mans Path a good 20-30 minutes walk along the top of the crag. We were going to have a go at Burn Up, a 75m 3-pitch HVS.

Looking up from the bottom of Burn Up, the route looked amazing - one continuous steep corner, cut in two by a short overhang. I set off on the 1st pitch; steady climbing, steepening a little as it progressed. I was slowed down of course by the overhang. A couple of moves, inching my self a higher got me through and I set up my belay. As it turned out, I set myself up on the wrong ledge for the belay missing a much comfier belay further up; a mistake I regretted as I hopped from foot to foot while I belayed Ken on the long 2nd pitch.

The second pitch of Burn Up was a long continuous crack of almost the same width all the way. Ken found that large cams and hexes were essential kit for this pitch, having to use the same large cams repeatedly during the climb. This was pretty time consuming (and tiring) as he had to place some gear and then reach down to remove the cam or hex he placed earlier. Something to note for future visits - you can’t have enough large cams or hexes! Ken belayed on the large ledge at the top of the second pitch and I led the last 5m to the top. A lot of people run these last two pitches together, but on this occasion we were happy to do it as two. When we got to the top of the climb, we were buzzing. What an amazing route!

Satisfied with our day, Ken and I walked back along the top of the crag to suss out other routes, and to meet up Peter and Dave Madden after their climb of Roaring Meg.

The lads were enthusiastic about the 1st pitch of Roaring Meg, but not so of the remainder. It was a beautiful day by then, and there were
lots more local climbers about. But unfortunately, it was time for us to head on home. I think everyone who came on the meet would agree that Fair Head is an amazing climbing venue. It is a crag not to be afraid of; there are plenty of VS’s and HVS’s to keep you occupied for a few weekends, and endless amounts of climbs at higher grades. The gear is fantastic (lots of large cams and hexes very useful). Pitches are long and sometimes steep, so stamina is required; it’s important to take any rests you can get on the climb. But with the gear so good, it’s a safe place to challenge yourself.

The walk around to the base of the multi-pitch climbs on the main face can be long and tedious; we noticed that most local climbers had 100m abseil ropes which allowed them to ab. directly into the multi-pitch climbs. Availability of an abseil rope of this length would be a great asset for future Fair head meets.

Personally, I came away from the Fair Head meet buzzing, and determined to get back up there as soon as possible. Unfortunately, that didn’t happen for one reason or another, but I’m still trying to get there before the season’s end. I have a tick-list that I need to get started on!

Starting up the 2nd pitch of Burnup
(Photo courtesy of Ken Doyle)
We were wrapped up in our down jackets, wandering dim streets looking for someplace to get dinner.

It was chilly, wooly hat weather and the forecast was threatening rain in a day or two.

We found a pizza place. It seemed appropriate as we were on the Italian Mediterranean coast at Finale for a sports climbing trip.

It was early in the season, but even so, it was definitely colder than expected.

Six of us were travelling but only three had arrived yet so the following day we could take it easy between routes.

We found our crag up a narrow winding road on the side of a valley.

The drive was short. I expected an easy introduction day.

I was climbing with Terry and Alan. Eleven pitches each later I flopped into the front seat of the car.

Terry sat in the back, supposedly avoiding having to navigate but really sitting in the back to avoid me throwing up over him as we negotiated the narrow roads back to Finale. Alan likes to drive, so I was happy to let him, and the others were happy to let me let Alan drive!! "You're going off the road!!" was a memorable phrase from our last sports climbing trip to Spain.

The next day Niamh, Sile and Dave arrived. The day after that so too did the rain. Not to worry we got some routes in before we had to abandon the rock.

Niamh and I had barely climbed together so we had a chat about how we would communicate and what we expected of each other before we started.

It is easy to get confused when you are only used to climbing 'trad'. What does "safe" mean in the context of sports climbing? The answer is anything you like, as long as you both agree what that meaning is. Bolts are great but they do not offer any extras safety against confusion and inexperience.
As it happened the only thing that "happened" to me was on the fourth day, a beautiful corner of rock offered a good spread of 5+, 6 and 6a routes. As I pulled on a small edge the rock gave and I went flying. "Hey, the system works!!" I was hanging sideways looking down at Niamh. "Some of that dust got in my eyes you know!!" "Sorry about that Niamh."

A bit of mild sunburn later, we relaxed in one of the many available restaurants in Finale, discussing the next day's crag. There was such a choice that it seemed ridiculous to have to plan. Couldn't we just drive out of town a few kilometers and find one; there was even a town crag at the back of the local supermarket. There was also a sea crag a few kilometers along the coast. But we preferred the higher crags up the valleys, ones that required hard 20 minute hikes. Grueling!

We didn't want to be crowded, no fear, the busiest day was the second last, there were three teams on one long ledge and everyone was very sociable. Not that I noticed too much as I was having my crisis. That morning I was unable to step across onto a small overhanging slab with a good ledge. I had nursed myself through the first few days making sure not to encourage any injuries, but now here I was climbing worse and there was only one more full day to go. Thinking too hard? But you should think hard about potentially dangerous activities, shouldn't you? I couldn't do it. My arms were tired, my toes were sore, the sun was in my eyes, and I don't think the colour of my helmet suits me. I came down.

On the sociable ledge I watched Terry and Alan as they in turn disappeared up a climb, both raving about how great it was.

"Give it a go, it has everything". I doubted the start. I felt weak as I struggled up the open corner, reached the first bolt then the second, and on a safe ledge I couldn't find the third bolt. I don't have to climb higher do I? My eyes refused to see what my mind didn't want to find. If I found the bolt I'd have to go on. "Terry! Where is the bolt up here on this ledge?" "On the left, a meter over". There it was, shiny and new in the sun. I clipped and moved up. On a small slab with plenty of cracks, I moved left, then right. I couldn't reach! My feet were slipping. The cracks just weren't big enough. Where did the others go? This is horrible, is this what it's like to climb and not enjoy it? I'm going to have to come down again.

I glanced down the rock and imagined my strength and courage dribbling down to the foot of the crag. I began to tell myself I hadn't suddenly turned bad. I stopped thinking and climbed.
It’s funny what mindlessness will do for your climbing. The rain lasted two days. The rest of the days were warm and dry. The rock offered little pockets, some sharp edges, the odd crack and of course the nice shiny bolts. Bolted routes were what we had come for. The guidebook warned of routes with old bolts but most places we went we found good bolts and in some place brand new bolts. If we did find old bolts they were obvious and we avoided the route. The grading I felt was harder than I expected. The climbing was excellent. Hard and demanding in places. Lots of single pitch and some two and three pitch.

We had found a great apartment in Finale. Warm, comfortable, within walking distance of the town centre, close to supermarkets and with dedicated parking. On the couple of wet days that we had we were close enough to other towns for the odd trip to other supermarkets. And maybe on the way back a quick stop off at another supermarket. Who was eating all this food? I know I had "my fair share" of the fried potatoes. I was only interested in maintaining my energy levels to sustain me on the wet days inside the apartment. Have you ever tried climbing under a kitchen chair without touching the floor? No! Well it requires a lot of fried potatoes!!

**Trip information:**
Fly to Nice, hire a car and drive along the coast into Italy to Finale.
**Return flights:** €90-€120. Aerlingus.com
Car hire for 10 days between four people, including extra insurance! €360.00 rentalcars.com
**Apartment:** www.glicini.it.
Our apartment could have slept 5-6 people at a squeeze. Cost for 9 nights including parking: €500.00 http://www.maremare.net/g9/it/
The owner is close by and speaks English and we found him very pleasant and helpful.
**Guidebook:** Finale Climbing. Author Marco Tomassini. Get the English version.
There is a free pdf on line at http://www.coronn.com/ but the grading in the pdf is ‘easier’ and there is a bit of confusion regarding some route placement. I’d use the book.
**Food:** lots of supermarkets, just lots of them. Plenty of reasonably priced restaurants.

**Recommended Climbs:**
Page 45: Parete delle Gemme, Rocca di Perti, Climb 24: il Pilastrino 20m 6a+
Page 283: Monte Cucco-La Torre. Climb 16. Moby Dick 23m 5c
Page 283: Monte Cucco-La Torre. Climb 7. Panino Al Prosciutto 20m 6a+
Well it was that time of year again when we all head to the scary North-side and out to Ireland’s Eye. There was a massive turnout, of old and new members to the club, in memory of our good friend, Joe Reville, who had organised this meet in the past.

The level of danger emanating from the North-side only increased as the ferry man tried to pack as many climbers and their massive rucksacks into one tiny little boat as possible. Cearbhall took one look at the overcrowded vessel and wisely said I’ll get the next one. Thoughts about life jackets started to develop en-route but no-one had room to fish one out, never mind put one on, without the risk of capsizing the boat.

Introductions and catch-up with friends were made as it was very cosy on the boat. The crack only kept increasing as the ferry man’s mate gave us plenty of exposure to his own as he tried to land us all on the Island. It’s something none of us ever want to see again, shudder. After disembarking with some of the largest rucksacks I have ever seen, we were all marching single file, like a bunch of scouts, to the base beside the sea stack.

The Island certainly has a unique atmosphere. The sea stack is strictly inhabited by gannets and the smell and the racket from them notched up and down throughout the day, in case we forgot they were there. You could almost be entertained alone by the soaring antics of the parents working hard to keep the juveniles happy. To add to the entertainment two boats full of lads on a stag party were “fishing” below the stack i.e. drinking beer and cheering loudly every now and again. Odd. This only set the gannets off even more. The weather gods were also playing a stormer as it was tropically warm while the sea glistened all day. So the atmosphere was pretty great to start with but it only got better as we enjoyed the climbing on offer. It was a beautiful leisurely day.

While Gerry set up the abseil line and handed around topos Peter wood and his partner nimbly sprinted into the base of Hamilton Crack and started climbing getting well ahead of the queues. Smart. The rest of us scattered like pellet shot but all seemed to end up in the same place. Many of us arrived at American Express & the base of the broad South-east ridge together. Soon the rock was like spaghetti junction with ropes leading everywhere but all arriving at the crows nest. Luckily it’s a fine ledge to enjoy the incredible views, the sun and to be entertained by the birds. It also has some massive loose blocks just sitting there waiting to be knocked off it on to climbers below.

Great care has to be taken while climbing some of the routes due to looseness of the rock and the fact that it can be a bit run-out in places. There are some foul smelling chimneys thanks to the birds;
Dave K thought he was going to save a fortune with this natural chalk. Oh dear. Some of the routes criss-cross each other which means that it’s a bit awkward for large groups but that didn’t really stop us on Saturday. Otherwise you’d be waiting around all day. It was a bit crazy with the queues on Saturday and the criss-crossing alright. Two absolute brats skipped the queue ahead of Niamh Gaffney on Hamilton Crack near the end of the day. You know who you are, but they got criss-crossed so they got their comeuppance.

The day and the time flew in and soon it was time to go home. The ferryman had arranged to collect us from the other side of the Island which meant we all tramped around to the Martello Tower. It’s beautiful over there with little tiny coves and a great view of Howth. Gary said it was a perfect romantic picnic zone and I couldn't agree more myself. It was still extremely warm so some people even had a quick dip in the sea before getting back on the boat. All in all it was a magical day and everyone enjoyed themselves with memories of our old friend not too far away. Gerry had printed off some great pictures of me boyo himself and he would have had an absolute ball chatting to everyone on Saturday.

Here’s to you pal and Ireland’s Eye.
If I’m to be truly honest Ballykeefe was not to be my first choice destination for this weekend of climbing, more of a weather driven fall back. The original plan was for a full weekend of climbing on the scenic cliffs at Fair Head but as with most Irish summers our forecast was to be mild and overcast with showers and occasional patches of sunshine. With all the weather boxes ticked how could Met Eireann ever get it wrong.

As I had not been to Ballykeefe before and with not too many climbing years or crags behind me, I am always keen to check out new areas around the country. Getting to Ballykeefe was to be organised in a lazy manner though utilizing modern day technology as we know it, in my much relied on Iphone 5. Rather then following the excellent directions posted on the IMC website I choose to request Ken, my partner for the day and a Kilkenny man no doubt, to use his Iphone mapping app and send me the pin mark for the car park at Ballykeefe. On approach to Kilkenny and with Iphone in hand following my pin directions and possibly carrying out a traffic violation I was unconcerned and suspected I would be one of the first ones to reach Ballykeefe.

Not likely, ending up on a lane way looking into a field of cows I had to make that call that no male likes, as we usually know exactly where we’re going, and ask for directions to our meet location. On receipt of my call Ken again provided me with directions, the traditional way, and said he’d stand out by the road side so I could see the entrance on approach. With this in mind I continued driving along eye’s pealed and soon after notice a long, thin pole with an orange top on the side of the road up ahead. Initially I though this may be a street light or lamp post but then it was 10am?? As I got closer though I was delighted to see it was actually Ken standing out waiting for me wearing his favourite orange wind sheeter. I got the usual slagging for getting lost and my only come back was to criticise someone’s Iphone skills in sending me a pin location that was nearly 2 miles out. Needless to say I was told were to go!

After a short walk in we discovered that we were not to be the only group in the quarry for the day. The local Civil Defence would be there for a days training and not to provide free gear which some of the older IMC members thought when they notice all their trays of karbs and ascenders. While we all stood in out of a brief shower both groups shared in a bit of light banter, with us advising them to keep an eye on their gear and also that there was the real possibility that we could provide them with some real life rescue opportunities for the day.
One of our members would state that he wished to opt out of this though, as he had provided this opportunity before and because the lads had no helicopter either! As we waited for the rock to dry out after a brief shower, Declan was very helpful in providing his knowledge and walked us through the climbs the quarry. Starting on the far left of the quarry at Entrance Wall we moved along right with Declan pointing out the best lines and advising, while most of the climbs had bolted protection there are certain climbs that require some trad gear so it was wise to assess your climb in advance. As you approached the centre of the quarry wall know as the Main Terrace Area the climbs appear to be shorter and it was recommended that an abseil is what’s most efficient to get off the Upper Terrace Ledge were these climbs top out.

Once the rock had dry off and I was still drinking his coffee, Ken made movements to stake his claim on our first climb “Aardvark” HVS (5a). I felt it was only fair I let him take the first lead seen as he did free climb up a few metres to place the first piece of protection while I was still drinking his coffee. I could tell he was keen. With a handy large bolt belay at the top of the climb which we could place the rope through, it wasn’t long until I was lowering my partner back down to the ground and I got my go to lead.

For me, it has to be said lead climbing using bolted protection was a totally different head space than trad leading. I think the biggest fear one has while leading is experiencing a ground fall, effectively falling off completely from the rock or mountain as a result of a piece of placed protection ripping out. Having played plenty of sports over the years the thought of sustaining a few bumps and bruise’s if I was to fall down as far as my last fix bolt protection didn’t overly concern me and allowed me to climb quiet comfortable at a grade that maybe I would be getting a little sweat up somewhere else.

Realising we were climbing quiet well using the bolted protection and without having to set up a top belay each time, the climbing came thick and fast. With our new confidence, we then had a go a “Makin Whoopee” E1 (5c), “Kevin’s Corner” HVS (5a) requiring some placed protection, “Miss Piggy” E1 (5b) and “Cliffhanger” HVS (5a). Ballykeefe was turning out to be a place were once you get moving a lot can get done but in similar fashion to the climbing wall it very suddenly sneaks up on you and you then realise a time out is needed.

On our break my very generous climbing partner was to take out a big bag of mixed goodies or so I though. After realising that most of what was on offer was nuts but not wanting to seem ungrateful I swiftly tried to pick out the nice squares of dark chocolate but unfortunately this was noticed.
I had to point out that I done away with the idea of healthy bags of nuts while out climbing, as recently while on a climbing trip in the Alps I started the week off with the good intentions of carrying a bag of nuts each day but very soon this was literally binned for jellies and chocolate. I was only codding myself, they’re just way nicer!

Since Ken had little coffee left, for some reason, it wasn’t long before we were all back climbing. We decided to mix it up a bit with Ken pairing up Alan and I teamed up with Aine and Martina to have a go at a tasty VS on the Entrance Wall called “Oggy and the Cockroaches” (4C). It would beg believe who the hell would call a climb this but the only possibility was maybe “Oggy” had at some stage experienced some cockroaches creep out of the dirty looking deep corner which was the climb, just maybe. Jon was very nice to offer me his sledge hammer of a cam size 6 I think, to protect the crux move. Only once before had I ever had something as heavy on my harness but that was on a building site in Chicago. I was very grateful all the same. With the sun still shining on this very pleasant summers evening we decided to get one last climb in, “White Elephant Direct” VS (4c). A perfect climb for this part of the day, nice and sustained but not to strenuous.

After a quick abseil and back on solid ground I checked my phone and I was pleasantly pleased to find out that awaiting my return home was some home cooking and a lovely freshly make cheesecake. Question was what time would I be home so to have everything ready. I, at the time, genuinely advised a little over an hour as all I had to do was sort my gear out, say my goodbye’s and hit the road. Unfortunately, on driving back towards Kilkenny, yet again I ended up taking the wrong direction and ended up right in the middle of the city. Cursing my sense of direction I quickly pulled out my Iphone to find the quickest route home. At this stage now and making quick progress on the right track with one eye on the clock and looking forward to my tea I was then alarmed to notice just as I was about to hit the motorway I was almost out of petrol. To say I’d had better days behind the wheel was an understatement and as I rapidly returned to Kilkenny for fuel it was safe to say that some of the strawberries on top of the cheesecake would soon be pick off and even the cream may be going off too.

On arrival home quiet later than planned or advised, I decided to go on the counter offensive and immediately voiced my annoyance with my Iphone for directions, Irish roads, tractors, Kilkenny & Kilkenny people in general. This was to try a deflect blame from myself. Unfortunately, none of this worked and I was promptly told, I don’t believe you and why didn’t you just say you were still climbing and wouldn’t be home for dinner!! My only response I could think of was “Where’s the cheesecake??”

I thoroughly enjoyed my day in Ballykeefe and being able to push my grade a little on fixed bolt protection. For me the climbs I completed were challenging and most pleasing with their fair share of uneasy moments. Assess to the quarry is only a short walk so this is a good trade off for the drive required to get there.

I’d like to finally mention that this was unfortunately the last time I had the pleasure and enjoyment of the company of the late Joe Reville.
I’m a relatively new member to the IMC but I had great fondness for Joe. Joining any new club can be for most people a little daunting and even though I only met Joe for the first time last October in Wales, Joe always had time for me, involved me in conversation and spoke to me as if he knew me a lot longer. This is a great quality in a club member and the IMC, as I know they are, should be very proud of this past member.

I come from a strong gaelic football back ground and I’m not really climbing that long but I’m thoroughly enjoying my new pursuit and I’m grateful people like Joe have helped me with my initiation into the world of climbing. On reflection of our IMC Ballykeefe Meet and after the wonderful day of climbing with friends and new friends, it’s fair to say for me there was only one “Man of the Match” on that day. Take a bow Joe, it was a pleasure.
I never do as much climbing as I’d like. So it was with a light heart, that I collected my climbing buddies (Niamh McGreen, Karolina and Przemek Martyniak) on route to the airport on a Saturday last February. Both Aer Lingus and Ryan Air had flights to Alicante around the same time so we had an IMC posse at both terminals. It felt like going on a school tour, without the teacher. At Alicante, there was a re-grouping for rental car pick-up for the one hour drive north to the small town of Finestrat where we were staying. James Aitken had arrived earlier in the day and stocked each apartment with oranges, milk, bread and wine. He also had cooked meat and vegetarian stews for us. It was a thoughtful and welcome contribution.

We got off to a good start the next day with most people choosing to climb at Sierra de Toix, a well bolted series of buttresses on a ridge on the coast south of Calpe. It’s a spectacular location with many easy grades for people starting to lead and more challenging longer routes on the upper cliffs. Peter Keane, Margaret Burns, Jenny Siung and Sean O’Brien all used the opportunity to get more experience at the sharp end of the rope.

On the southern side is a classic trad cliff climb called Magical Mystery Tour (HVS) that John Duignan and Hugh Reynolds enjoyed on another day, and made us all envious. Across the way is the gorgeous Mascarat Gorge that beckons.
We were twenty in all, and in the usual IMC style, people went off in all directions chasing their vertical dreams meeting up in the evenings and occasionally on route. My climbing buddies were better climbers than me so I had plenty of challenges and got some great climbing in. Przemek had a free sat nav from Nokia on his phone, who we named Jane. Jane did an excellent job of guiding us to the location of each crag with gentle but persistent reminders to observe the local speed limit.

On the Monday we did some hard climbing at Vall de Guadar (Echo Valley). It was quite windy so we abandoned our plans for a multi-pitch and choose the Paret de Bassa cliff which was sheltered and had some morning sun. Niamh warmed up on a 6A which set the tone for the morning. It’s a smaller crag with gorgeous rock. The routes were newer then our guide book, so we were amused later to see the grades. Sometimes, it’s no harm not to know. We finished the morning on Tris Tras Trus (6a) which is one of those climbs you just want to keep going.

The next day we went to Sella, a valley surrounded by rock on the sides of a terraced hill with views of Puig Campana in the background. This was my favourite place even though much of the climbing was above my grade. It has hundreds of routes in a prime location.

I would highly recommend spending a few days camping in the valley and climbing at will. I should think it could easily occupy a whole summer full of fun projects. At this point, I could hardly lift my arms above my head so I decided to take a day out. My buddies had a fun day on Esther’s chimney in Guadalest, a trad route that Ian Christie and Colm McMahon had done the day before and shared the route details. It started in a chimney that opened up to a traverse and finished with an airy abseil.

The same day Ian Christie, Kevin Coakley, Aine O’Reilly, Graham Strahan and Colm McMahon had a great day out on the Castlettet Ridge. There are some lovely ridge routes in the area which have dramatic aspects. Driving along one can see long spines of rock that you just want to follow from start to finish. Earlier in the week John, Niamh McGreen and Karolina Martyniak on Esther’s Chimney in Guadalest.
Hugh and James came back with big grins after completing the Bernia Ridge. The temperature was unusually cold for that time of year and we had some unsettled weather on the Thursday. We took a day off to drop some early leavers to the airport, do some shopping in Decathlon and the local Alicante climbing shops and had some fun being tourists for a day. Some of the party went for a snow hike on the same day.

Friday was overcast with snow on the mountains, and a lot of cloud. We drove south with a positive attitude and a good local weather forecast from http://www.eltiempo.es/ for Marin; a rapid-drying crag north west of Alicante. It was mostly dry and we were delighted to be climbing again as we were going home the next day. Marin is a slabby crag with lots of pockets. On our second climb of the day, I followed Przemek on Novatos Con Gato (5+) which required tiptoeing on the edge of a pocket full of rain water. We got some enjoyable climbing in and finished the day with a bold lead from Karolina on Prats (4+). We had an adventurous day out and went home tired and happy. We were too late for the group dinner but stopped by to say hello and trade tales.

The sun returned in full force on Saturday. Our flight was late so we returned to Sierra de Toix and got some good climbs in before heading to the airport.

It was a fabulous trip and I'd certainly go back. A big thanks to Ian Christie for organising.

I hear he is organising another one next March. One for your diaries!

Costs: Flight: 184, Car: 50 (between 4), Apartment: 60 Euros each (for 6 people)
With cloud down, and some snow showers we decided to go ice at an area known locally as the ‘creamier’. I don’t know where the name comes from but you can be assured there is no milking parlour or processing plant on the side of this mountain. The ice climbing area is found by following a track which starts behind the cable car station for the Grand Montets Mountain. Turn left around the back of the chair lift station for the Grand Montet. Follow the snow track, over the road, passing the bridge on your right. The path leads up a road passing following signs for the ‘Chamonix Mont Blanc helicopter’ pad. After the heli’ pad you continue up the snowy track leading into the valley, with the river on your left. After approximately 30 minutes from the Grand Montet station the valley opens up and the ice flows and steep ground can be seen on your right, with trees high above. The area is below the ‘Pierre a Ric’ red run above which runs in parallel above the valley.

This open expanse area is a little gem really in the area. On this day, mid afternoon we found it very quite with just one other pair of climbers. As you go up the hill on your right heading up right towards one the ice flows, it gradually steepens, into grade WI territory. Here is where we decided to belay for our first pitch on a wide ledge beside a boulder. The beauty on this hidden gem, besides having it to ourselves, with one other party, you can choose your route as you go. Padraic lead on up grade W I ground, then to steepening ice, grade II, for a short section of very good ice, with good solid ice screw placements all day. The belay was off two handy bolts in a boulder. The second pitch went up again, easy grade I ground with more and a slightly lengthier grade II ice. This pitch finished over to a tree belay, which added to the atmosphere for the route when you have a long traverse over to the tree out left, with great views to the valley below. The third pitch, went straight up, again easy enough grade I steps, quickly steepening to approx. 10 m+ ice, quickly changing with each step from grade I to II to III and possibly IV over the top, where the ground reverses in grade quickly before finishing up at a tree belay. The abseil from the tree was from a mallion hanging off various pieces of good looking ‘tat’. Two abseils on a 60 m rope, both off trees, got us back onto easier ground, where we walked down to the track and had lunch overlooking the valley, whilst observing a party of 5 who had skied from the top of Grand Montet, off piste down the narrow twisting snowy path back down to the grand montet ski station.

Springer leashless axes I used for the first time and found them preferably, offering more advantages than the wrist leashes.

Steeper, longer ice climbs are out left, if desired.

Ideally if you only want to be out for a few hours and an easier day, before maybe taking in a longer, more sustained, chilling Alpine route, such as the ‘North face of the Dru’ nearby.
The county of Donegal off the north west tip of Ireland contains more rock climbing routes, venues and rock than anywhere else in Ireland.

Ireland's longest rock climb, Ireland's longest recorded ice climbing route, Ireland's highest mountain cliffs and Ireland's highest sea stack can all be found in Donegal. But it is to the coast we turn our attentions as living off the western free board of Donegal lives a collection of gothic leviathans which stand guard at the entrance to the abyss. The rock is mixture of quartzite and Granite, and running the entire coast is a band of basalt, which features heavily on many of the sea stacks. Many of the stacks have access issues in the form of 200m loose sea cliffs overlooking and guarding access to them, followed by varying length of sea passage across truly atmospheric seas.

Donegal has over 100 sea stacks dotted along its coastline and islands providing over 170 recorded climbs to their summits. Many of the stacks found along this coast will require you to use considerable nautical, vertical and spiritual guile to reach the summit of these beasts. Prior planning is essential including a forensic study of the previous week’s wind and swell forecasts. An adventurous spirit and a sense of humour are essential components of a day in the company of Neptune, Gaia and the forces of nature. An adventurous spirit and sense of humour I may possess but I was going to need the company of someone who possessed a little knowledge of these soaring rock formations if I had a good chance of standing on one of their summits. Iain Millar of Unique Ascent was just the man. I headed north to meet Iain and as I approached the far north west coast my attention was being pulled from the task of driving by the looming presence of the Donegal sea stacks. To some, the Donegal sea stacks may represent no more than fragmented, lost pieces of the original landform, to those with even a hint of a sense of adventure, they are there to be climbed, their taunting summits willing you to stand atop.

Donegal Sea Stacks - NIAMH GAFFNEY
The rock is a mixture of quartzite and granite, and running the entire coast is a band of basalt, which features heavily on many of the sea stacks. Many of the stacks have access issues in the form of 200m loose sea cliffs overlooking and guarding access to them, followed by varying length of sea passage across truly atmospheric seas. Prior planning is essential including a forensic study of the previous week’s wind and swell forecasts. Our plan for this trip was to climb the seastack ‘Bristi’ standing 50 metres high and 30 metres from the coastline. Luckily I had left all the finer details to Iain as it turns out there is a little more planning to be done than your average day out.

Under the tab ‘sea stacks’ on Iain’s website uniqueascents.ie is the heading adventure climbing. Iain’s description.. ‘Adventure climbing is the sport of seeking out unclimbed rock in unusual, remote and difficult to access locations. So that’s what we did.’ Iain and I set off for the day’s adventure in perfect weather conditions. Our roadside parking spot gave us a perfect view of the summit and as I looked out to sea I couldn’t help but think this had all the ingredients of a perfect day. Ascent of one of these sea stacks involves knowing a thing or two about tidal conditions and behaviour, reading sea indications, paddling techniques to name but a few, so I left that bit to Iain! However I had begun to adopt my own radar which proved very accurate in determining what exactly was likely to happen and how conditions would turn out. It did not involve any atmospheric, nautical, or meteorological predictions. I used Iain Millar’s choice of vocabulary to alert me to what fun and games lay ahead. Phrases such as ‘it’s going to be emotional’ when referring to the sea crossing, or ‘there are a few big boys coming in’ alerting me to sea swell which was approaching. Another personal favourite of mine was ‘that was suitably atmospheric’ although this one usually came after some event and offered no help in predicting the fun and games just around the corner. Sometimes dialog was omitted completely and a hearty, some might even say evil laugh could be heard like the one which could be heard as he summited the stack and took a look around at the awesome beauty surrounding the summit. The climb itself was the easy bit. Negotiating the tides and white water in the rubber dingy took most of the organisation skills from what I could see. Iain got to work on our mode of transport out to the stack. I tried not to concentrate too much on the size and vulnerability of the rubber dingy. Within half an hour it was blown...
up and we were carrying it to the waters edge. Iain’s spirits remained high, my thoughts switched from the climb to the sea. While I am a strong swimmer, small boats and the mighty Atlantic Ocean is not my idea of fun. It was time to place myself in the capable hands of Iain and enjoy the journey!

Two trips were necessary as the climbing gear and two climbers would not fit in the boat so as Iain made the trip out to the stack I stood and watched him negotiate the waves. Although the distance between the shore and the seastack was small it was necessary to take a deviating route to avoid white water and uncooperative nature of the tide. A short time later it was my turn to jump on board and paddle to the large tidal ledge on the seaward face. Iain watched the horizon monitoring the pattern of waves approaching and when he was happy enough we were not going to be pum-melled by a wall of water he instructed me to jump in, hold on, and enjoy the crossing! I jumped in, held on, not sure I enjoyed the crossing though. Time to avert our attention now to the task of our climb. A first ascent of the north route. Iain led, I followed on a very reassuring rope and it wasn’t long before I knew exactly why Iain let a hearty laugh as he stood on the summit, the views forced every emotion you could possibly imagine from the sole of he or she who stood to take them in.

I anchored myself in and took a moment to enjoy this moment. Every climber knows the satisfaction of standing atop a climb having made a safe ascent. This was completely different. I felt like an intruder, too deep within nature for any human to be allowed to enjoy. Perched high above the sea on rock stood on only by two other people, raging seas any way I could turn my head. My climbing partnerbusied himself preparing our abseil decent from our rocky perch, I sat in silence and thought of a name to suggest for our new route. Ned Gaffney’s perch came into my head without any thought. Eddie Gaffney, Ned to those who knew him well, had aspired to set some routes on Ireland’s sea stacks but his untimely death in a climbing accident in 1996 left a number of climbing goals unachieved. And so it seemed only fitting to name this climb in my father’s honour, I’m sure he would appreciate this moment perched atop this sea stack as much as I did.

Information for ‘sidebar’ or ‘information tab’ alongside article. The Donegal sea stack guidebook and the online Donegal guide provide all the information on the Donegal sea stacks. Niamh’s climb was relatively easy there are any number of technically difficult multi-pitch to ones suitable for complete beginners. Log onto www.uniqueascent.ie for guided climbing options.

All photos courtesy of John Rafferty

Many thanks to Iain Miller of www.uniqueascent.ie
My first visit to the Mournes was to climb ‘Grand Central’ on the Bearnagh Slabs with Dave McNeill. I recall that we left Dublin at eight in the morning and were home again by half six that evening. It was late in the year and we did not want to loose the light and both of us needed the be back in Dublin at a reasonable hour. Our approach was military, a forced march in to the slabs from Meelmore Lodge, identify and climb the route a quick bit of lunch and back to the car. Hasty as my first visit may have been the beauty of the place stayed with me both the landscape and the friendly people we met both at the lodge and the walkers on the path, as did the challenge of climbing on the very rounded features and holds compensated by the extraordinary texture of the granite, the renowned Mourne friction. Very different from what I was used to in Dublin and Wicklow.

I was very pleased to return for a club meet organised by Eoin O’Neill at the beginning of July, this time traveling with another David, David Jacobs. Saturday, a beautiful sunny day saw us back on the Bearnagh slabs. The walk in from Meelmore lodge our ‘base of operations’ is about an hour. It brings you up through the valley past Hares Gap as you turn left for the less than gentle climb up to the base of the slabs and the adjacent section of the Mourne wall. As we approached the slabs were already the dotted with IMC members. A queue had formed at the top of the first pitch of ‘Grand Central’ and there were pairs of climbers at various stages of a number of other climbs ‘Crooked Chimney’; ‘Directissima’ the afore mentioned ‘Grand Central’ proving to be very popular. As David and myself got ready to climb more small groups arrived in. I would estimate that there were more than 30 IMC members climbing on the day many of whom were new members.

We started with ‘Grand Central’, as I have climbed it before it allowed us to ‘find our feet’ so to speak. We climbed its 70 meters in three pitches; the allotted 5 in the book seemed a little excessive. An Excellent climb, all feet and little or no hands, graded very difficult and I thing David’s introduction into multi-pitching, he will I am sure correct me if I am wrong about that. We handrailied dawn the Mourne wall to get back to base camp where we had a bit of lunch and consulted to guide book regarding our next effort.

Hypothesis is an excellent climb, 78 meters and graded severe, it is worth every bit of its two stars, and indeed I would have given it the full three. Two 30 meter pitches topped by an 18 meter climb up a wide crack. Not a lot of protection but amazing traction. We climbed alongside a keen gardener for the first pitch, Noel Caffrey cleaning as he went gallantly took on a very overgrown ‘Crescent’ seconded by another David (Keoghe), before escaped sideways beaten by the mass of vegetation.
The group started to head back from about five o’clock onward many heading back home. The remaining gathered in the campsite to eat and chat until driven inside by midges and darkness.

On the Sunday a much reduced group, twelve in total, seven of whom were new members headed for the Lower Cove crag. The walk in, about one hour from the Carrig Little car park takes you passed the badly fire damaged edge of Annalong wood up to the foot of Lamagan where you turn right to reach the South facing Lower Cove Crag. On this morning the valley was covered by a white mist which cleared as the day wore on.

Lower Cove is a long crag divided into five sections with some 96 recorded routes mainly single pitches with some multi pitches. Many of the grades are in the extreme range but there are plenty of difficult and severe options. We settled for the half corner and first corner at the West end of the crag which have a good selection of 10 to 25 meters routes in the very difficult to very severe range. In contrast to the slabs the climbing is on steep walls with horizontal rounded cracks. A very enjoyable day was spent climbing ‘New Decayed’ 25m Severe with a tricky finish, ‘Tyro’ 18m Very Difficult, ‘North Wall’ 25m Severe, ‘Munching Mandy’ 10m Severe and the excellent ‘First Corner’ 25 m hard Severe led by Willie Whelan and bottom roped by I thing everyone in the party.

So next time you are thinking of a day’s climbing - and maybe looking towards Wicklow I suggest you consider the Mournes less that a 2 hour drive from Dublin, excellent range of climbing options in some of the most beautiful landscape in Ireland.
Gravity Climbing Tips - ANGELA CARLIN

Below is the latest in the simple coaching tips from Angela Carlin at Gravity climbing centre in Inchicore.

Gravity do a free general adult coaching session on Mondays 7.30. A free womens only coaching session on a Friday 7.30 and can arrange other coaching sessions on request

Climbing efficiently can make a huge difference to your success or failure on a route. When we talk about efficiency, there are a lot of different things to consider, depending on the climb in question . . .

If you were on a long trad route with several pitches, then efficiency in the sense of having a neat, fast system for changeovers at the belays would be hugely important. In this article however, we will look at efficiency in terms of climbing movement and at the tactics you can use to save your energy for when you need it most.

Climbing with straight arms . . .

On overhanging terrain, it’s important not to waste energy by using your arm muscles more than is necessary. The following techniques are used a lot on overhangs, they allow you to make upward progress without having to bend your arms by bring your hips close to the wall and driving upwards from your legs.

1. Egyptian/ drop knee
2. Flagging
By using these techniques, you can vastly reduce the amount of times you pull up with your arms, thereby saving energy in those muscles for when you really need them.

Climbing at the right pace
Climbing very slowly on overhanging sections will really reduce your chances of getting up the route. Even on vertical walls and slabs, it’s definitely possible to spend too long hanging around, which means that when you come to do the hard moves, you’re simply too tired to complete them.

It’s good to experiment with your pace to find what’s right for you and for particular climbs.
Try to climb a route as fast as you can, or try to complete a whole circuit of 20+ boulder problems in 20 minutes to see at what point your footwork & technique deteriorates. You may find that you can climb very well at a pace that is much faster than your normal one, which is a handy skill to have in your repertoire if you find yourself running out of steam but with the chains in sight!

**Finding rest positions**
Finding positions of rest is an essential skill on routes of all kinds. On a pumpy sport climb, a good rest can allow your arms to recover enough to get you to the top, while placing fiddly gear on trad is obviously best done from a position where you can get the weight off your arms. Finding rests is a real creative skill & involves a lot more than finding a ledge to stand on!

Finding rests allows you to break a route into sections making the whole thing a much less daunting prospect. From the ground, try to identify rest positions and sections of the route which are likely to be tiring, pumpy or powerful. Use your rests to the maximum effect and climb through the hard sections without wasting time and energy. Always remember that if you find yourself getting pumped, you may be able to climb back to your last rest position, reassess the moves from there and have another go . . .
In preparation for climbing Aconcagua in January Noel Caffrey will be spending lots of time in the hills of Wicklow over the Autumn and Winter months rain, hail, snow…or shine of course!

Everyone is welcome on these walks and they will include some informal Mountain Skills (MS) training. The following are the dates for October:

**Sunday 6th**

**Sunday 13th**

**Wednesday 16th**

**Saturday 19th**

**Monday 21st**

**Sunday 27th**

**Wednesday 30th**

Meeting time on all dates:
9.30am in Laragh, Anne's Cafe  *(if open, if not … her car park)*
I have been asked on a few occasions, “Where would be my favourite place to hike”? Having hiked for over 50 years, I would say, without hesitation, Glendalough. To be looking down on the lakes from the Spinc on a clear day, well you know yourselves what it’s like, awesome!

My favourite mountain in Wicklow, wouldn’t be ‘Cleevaun’ or ‘Tonlegee’or even Lug. The mountain I would like to be on would be Keadeen or Croaghanmoira, but especially Trooperstown. To be on this after a shower of rain when the air is crystal clear, well you can almost reach out and touch the mountains before you. Writing in the Irish Times, Tony Doherty described the view of the Reeks from Torc mountain as ‘opulent’. Well the view from Trooperstown is just as opulent. One can see right up Glendasan to the waterfall and if you stand on your tippy-toes and look over the shoulder of Derrybawn you might even see some eejits trying to scale Prelude Nightmare. A good challenge here is to try, without the aid of a map, to name all the mountains you can see.

Part 1: Mweelrea tops them all.
My favourite mountain in Ireland is definitely Mweelrea, the highest in Connaught (814m) which at one time was in the top 10 highest but with the new Lynam Vandelour grading has been relegated into the 20’s. From the top, one has 360deg view which is unequal in Ireland. To the west lie the islands of Bofin with Inishshark behind it and then Inishturk, and further north, Clare Island watching the traffic going into and out of Clew Bay, then Achill with Slievemore, and Corraun Hill on the peninsula. The quartzite bulk of Croagh Patrick, the most climbed mountain in Ireland, stands guard over the drumlins and partly hides the Nephin Begs. If you have binoculars with you, you might be able to see Slieve League in Donegal.

Next, going clockwise, the Ox Mountains in Sligo, then between the Sheefreys and Bengorm, it is possible to see the Partrys overlooking Lough Mask. Are you taking all this in? I’m on a roll, I’ll keep going. Looking down the Maam valley you will see Lecknavrea near Maam cross. Then, between the Turks and the Bens, looking down the Inagh valley, it is said that the Cliffs of Moher are visible 80km away. Where in Ireland would you get such a panorama?

The Devils Testicles:
Now, I’m sure you thought I had forgotten one mountain, namely the Devils Mother overlooking Leenane. If you look at the name on the OSI sheet 37, it is Magairli An Deamhain. It translates to ‘Testicles of the Devil’ or ‘Demon’. It apparently was called this by the locals because of two knobbly bits on the ridge which I don’t remember seeing. Incidentally, this word ‘Magairli’ is a very appropriate expletive to use on this mountain as I have never found an easy way up or down. It is believed that the name was changed when the British were mapping Ireland in the 1800’s. Talking about place names, I was fishing with a local man at the mount of Killary harbour, and he pointed to some rock outcrops which were named Magairli Mor na Muca Mora agus Magairli More na Muca Beaga. When East West Mapping come to map this area, this man would be a great source.
of information for Barry Dalby to contact. Hurry up Barry, this area needs and deserves a good map! Now back to Mweelrea, the first time I did it was in the late 50’s, I was on a cycling holiday with my best friend Kevin, who some years later became my best man. The warden of Killary hostel, Festy Mortimor, rowed us across from Rosroe Pier in his currach, (which he had built himself) to the base of the mountain to a place called Gublugnagheereagh. The top of the mountain from here is only 3k but it is a real lungbuster of a climb. We were only wearing cycling shoes with paper thin soles with no grips. I remember sliding most of the way down on our arses!

**Choice of Meelrea routes:**

In later years I did it a couple of times from Thallabawn, once with my son Declan who was only about 12yrs old at the time. (To read more about Thallabawn, read Michael Viney’s column in Saturday’s Irish Times). To do it from the East, that is, from the Owengarr River is quite tough at the start. The route up the Lugmore Coum is quite challenging and I wouldn’t advise it if you intend returning that way as it is lethal. À la: Devil’s ladder. There was a fatality here in recent years. The route I like to take is recommended by Gareth McCormack in Walking World Ireland magazine. Delphi Mountain lodge will allow you to park in the area nearest the road if you ask them. A good idea is to leave a route card with them with your ETA for return. Incidentally there is no mobile coverage in the valley and is only sporadic in the Leenane area. From the lodge, go north around the forest to reach the Owennaglough River and follow it upstream. Watch out for the girders crossing the river, because you will need to cross here on the return from your hike. Follow this river upstream (wet in places) until you reach the tributary called Sruthaunbunatrench (what a mouthful!). This stream flows down from the corrie lake (Luga loughan) over flat rocky slabs forming lovely cataracts after heavy rain.

From a height of about 300m, head for the col west of spot height 495 but prepare yourself for the vista that awaits you. It will take your breath away, if you have any left. From the col, the view from here over Connemara is, well...opulent! Given good visibility, this should be a WOW moment. Looking down from here the Killary is spoilt somewhat by all the mussel rafts and fish farms. This is the most spectacular and longest fjord in Ireland which formed during the ice age 70 thousand years ago. It is 11km long, very shallow at the mouth, but 45m deep inside. A great thrill for me years ago was to see dozens of dolphins going up the fjord towards Leenane and we launched the Currachs and rowed out to the narrows at the mouth to watch them return to sea. The house nearest the pier at Rosroe was the An Oige hostel but before that was the home of the famous philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. A plaque to him was unveiled here some years ago by President Mary Robinson (a similar plaque to him is in a greenhouse in the Botanic Gardens). The green road from the pier, running east along the shore was built as a famine relief road and is a lovely walk if you want an easy walk the day after doing Meelrea. You might even see Magairli na Muca.
If you can tear yourself away from here and continue in an arc, keeping well back from the drop on your right until you reach the cairn at 814m. Now you are at the top, look around you…. wasn’t I right about the view????? Continue from here to Ben Bury, or skip it if you want to shorten the walk, but I never do as I want to get my ‘full value’. The next bit is tricky on the way to Ben Lugmore in SW winds or poor visibility (see above).

**Some famine relief:**

From Ben Lugmore you will be overlooking Dhulough pass and the road to Louisburgh. Spare a thought for the famine victims, many like living skeletons who had to walk 16m from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge in 1849, to register for famine relief, only to be turned away by Inspector Colonel Hargrove. The Colonel was busy dining with his friend Captain Primrose, so the group; men, women and children had to head back to Louisburgh in atrocious weather conditions, many dying on the way. The next day many corpses were found with grass in their mouths and there was evidence of dogs and ravens having fed on them where they lay. This event has been commemorated since 1999 (the 150th anniversary) by a walk from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge (not to be confused with Delphi Mountain Lodge down the road).

This walk has been led by such people like Desmond Tuttu, Gary Whitedeer (of the Choctaw tribe), Christy Moore and more, including Kim Phuc (who features in an iconic photo of her, when a child, running naked down a road in Vietnam having being bombed with Napalm by the US army). A monument at the head of Dhulough has the inscription, “*How can men feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings?*” – Mahatma Gandhi.

**Coming back down:**

Now, where was I? From Ben Lugmore 803, head for spot 760 and descend SE between Sruthaunboy and Sruthaunprompoge and cross the Owennglogh on the girders mentioned above. Careful! And now for the best part. Tell them in ‘The Lodge’ that you have returned from one of the best hikes you have ever done, and of course, have a pint. I always do, as a thank you gesture. That’s my excuse and I’m sticking to it! This is a lovely place to stay with its spa and dining room and bar facing up the valley towards Mweelrea. There are other places to stay in Leenane, if you enquire in Hamiltons Bar, the two brothers Tony and Sean run the Convent B&B and the Blackberry restaurant, I don’t think you will be disappointed in either.
The Irish Bouldering League is back for the 2013-2014 season.

There are four rounds scheduled for this year’s league.

Round 1 - Gravity Climbing Dublin - 12th of October.

Round 2 - Cork - 30th of November.

Round 3 - Belfast - 11th of January.

Round 4 - Awesome Walls Dublin - 1st of February.

The entry fee is €10. Climbing starts at 10:00am and finishes at 4:00pm.
The Annual General Meeting of the Irish Mountaineering Club will be held in The Teacher’s Club, Parnell Square, on Thursday November 21st at 8pm.

At this meeting all aspects of the running of the club will be open for discussion. It will be an open meeting at which any member of the club may express their views. If you would like an item placed on the agenda please forward it to the Secretary at least three weeks before the AGM.

Any TWO FULL Member’s of the club may have a motion placed on the agenda. Notice of the motion must be submitted signed by the Proposer and Seconder to the Secretary three weeks in advance of the AGM. Only Full Member’s are entitled to a vote on such motions.

The committee for the coming year will be elected at the AGM. There are several forthcoming vacancies, please consider giving of your time for the benefit of the club.

The Secretary
All meets will be at 7.30 pm in the Teachers Club, Parnell Square (except December 12)
One or two dates are provisional, so any changes will be clearly notified on the website.

Thursday October 10th - Benedicte Reau- The talk is about the GR20 in Corsica, mainly the South part of it: 6 days walking on my own and carried all my stuff (incl food). It'll also be an informative talk about Corsica as many people would be interested in going but don't know this island. (walking tips more than climbing tips!)

Thursday October 17th - One of Ireland’s most respected cavers, Tim Fogg will deliver an overview of caving, including equipment and techniques.

Thursday November 7th - Naomi Sturdy - Yoga and Pilates (see website for details)

Thursday November 14th - Gerda Pauler - An inspirational lady, Gerda is travelling from Norway to deliver this talk for the IMC on her many many mountaineering adventures. Including the Great Himalaya Trail and Seven Summits Of The Alps.

Thursday 21st November - 21st - IMC AGM

Thursday Nov 28th - Vincent Astier and Ambrose Flynn - 'Visiting the French Alps for the first time can seem a daunting prospect. A multitude of questions arise about training, gear, time of year, location, routes, safety, guides. Etc . . . Join Vincent Astier and Ambrose Flynn as they discuss the preparation, decision making and reality of a non-guided Alpine adventure.

Thursday December 5th or 19 - Ricky Bell

Thursday December 12th - Lynam Lecture (TCD)

Thursday January 23 - Karen Doyle - Physical Therapist - will be a practical session including injury prevention stretching

Thursday January 30th - Peter Woods- ski mountaineering

Thursday February 27th - Dermot Shiels - Rock Routes

Thursday March 6th - Noel Caffery on Aconcagua