Welcome to the Winter 2015/2016 IMC Newsletter

It's been a busy few months again with a healthy crop of new routes being put up by IMC members. First off, the Deer Park Crag in Howth went public this summer after extensive development by Colm Peppard, Kevin Coakley & Ian Christie. In August, Alan McDonagh managed to find a new route in Dalkey, some achievement in itself! Gerry Galligan, Barry Watts & Conor Warner made a series of visits to Aill na Cronain, Co Clare and put up some lovely looking routes and in October Christy Rice & Kryzstof Kozlowski put up new routes at An Scoltach, Co Mayo. Finally, throwing the gauntlet down at the start of the year, Gerry Galligan & Barry Watts climbed a new route on the Molinet Tower in Western Amhara, Ethiopia.

In addition, last July Gerry Galligan (yes, him again) joined an expedition which completed a first ascent in Greenland, further details within.

Since the Summer the Club has run a number of meets including trips to Norway, Nice & Snowdonia (all reported within these pages) as well as Kerry and Fairhead plus the 'new members' organised their own trip to the Burren at the end of September (see report on the blog); if ever there's a sign of a successful New Members Programme, that's it.

Individual members were off on jaunts of their own too, many to the Alps, with reports from Peter & Kevin and from Cearbhall & Dave on the blog. John Duigan made an Autumnal dash to Snowdonia and was rewarded by ample sunshine and John Costigan went further afield trekking up Mount Toubkal in Morocco under his own steam (both reported on the blog). As we go to the printers, various winter trips are being planned, indeed, the unstoppable Dave Keogh is already back from a intensive visit to Scotland.

Special mention must go to Niall Hedderman who is about to head off to attend the BMC International Winter Climbing Meet in the Cairngorms.

Meanwhile the Club's winter activities are in full swing with some great evening meets already gone and more to come. We closed out last year with another great talk from Andy Kirkpatrick that managed to be irreverant, touching, inspiring and funny, sometimes simultaneously. Noel Caffrey's Winter Walks are well under way. Plus Jon organised a very successful dry tooling session at Awesome Walls to help start off the new year.

In the near future we have a bouldering weekend lined up for March 4th-6th plus the usual meets are starting to fill the IMC calendar, please check the Events web page for further details.

So, I hope you enjoy the content herein and, as ever, with a view to future Newsletters, please don't forget to write!

Gary Smith, IMC Publicity Officer
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Credits

Front Cover: Sinéad Rickerby on Cathedral Peak, Tuolumne [Photo: Sinéad Patten].
Back Cover: La vérité du mentor at La Source, Saint-Jeannet [Photo: Gary Smith].
Inside Front Cover: Another collection of images from Dave Keogh’s adventures in the Alps, partnered here with Cearbhall Daly.
Inside Back Cover: Cillian & Mags on the 4 pitch Lighthouse Arete** VS 4b at Castell Helen, Gogarth [Photo: Gerry Moss]

This Newsletter would be nothing without you, the writers & photographers, as well as the organisers of all the IMC trips & events, so many thanks to everyone for their contributions.

Newsletter compiled & edited by Gary Smith.
It was with some excitement that I set forth on the IMC’s annual June Bank Holiday trip to the UK Lake District. The Lakes’ is truly a fantastic venue that gives an entire wealth & breadth of experience to any climber whatever your abilities or the grade you climb. It truly has it all for everyone.

It has its fair share of top quality mountain & roadside crags with fantastic single and multi-pitch lines set amongst stunning views with grades from V.Diff to the Extremes. A visit is guaranteed to boost any climbers skill-set, never mind inspire you; you are quick to learn the importance of precise foot placement whilst climbing polished rock, plus just the novelty for some people of climbing on a rock other than granite.

Memories of long days of climbing in glorious sunshine, fantastic crags with amazing routes, and lots of laughter with friends enticed me to re-join the trip in the first place.

Well it wasn’t to be that way this year. It’s not that I believe in jonah’s or the like. However some Jonah seemed to bring along the weather systems that have been following him around on at least three of the last trips he’s gone on, i.e. pissing rain and gale-force winds. So he confessed on the boat. He also gave us a return journey to remember with crashing waves and rough seas, cheers bud. Mental Note: Always check who else is going on your trip.
I guess the water to fill those beautiful lakes has to come from somewhere. But not in one weekend, yeah?

Despite that, Gerry out did himself this year with the standard of accommodation & its central location; Low House in Coniston. It even had its own private “cow-shed” attached except much nicer than our one. It’s really ideal; very well set up for self-catering but within walking distance of local pub with its own micro-brewery attached. Herbert & Brian kindly quality control tested every single beer for everyone else…and a few times, just to be sure. It’s all give with those two.

Oh yeah, it’s also great for reaching all of the major climbing areas and crags; the walk in to Dow crag and the crags of Langdale are within short driving distance and other crags are very accessible too by car. This makes a considerable difference for the length of your day and the amount of climbing you can get done given that the approach for some mountain crags can be considerable.

But for some of the group, ehm.....names have been changed to protect the guilty, that wasn’t enough. The two boys decided to spend the night together outdoors, clinging together in a warm-ish embrace under the lashing rain, fighting about who gets a go of the duvet jacket next. Awwww, that story would melt the coldest of hearts considering the recent referendum and all. It didn’t cut much ice with the rest of us curled up in our warm sleeping bags that night.

On Friday evening some people got some climbing in after the drive from the boat on Raven Crag, Great Langdale, despite the near winter
temperatures. There is a fine line between dedication, obsession and compulsion. If it hadn’t been so cold I would almost have admired them – they were certainly cutting it fine for dinner at the Old Dungeon Ghyll pub. Gerry meanwhile guided his followers to the more amendable Wallowbarrow Crag in the Duddon Valley.

The next day most of the group revisited Raven Crag to climb Bilberry Buttress, Revelation & Original Route in cool sunshine. Revelation was a cracker of a route so Gary & Dorota, flushed from a long battle on Mendes, jumped on it later. Herbert & Brian also tackled Original Route & Centipede, another classic. Dave & Ian decided to join us late in the day after get blown out of it having completed Arete, Chimney & Crack at Dow Crag.

No-one could believe the forecast we got for Sunday – high winds, rain & even snow. Ah jaysis, this is supposed to be a climbing trip. Some hardy souls decided to get their values worth between the heavy showers and climb at Shepherd's Crag in Borrowdale on such classics as Little Chamonix and Donkey's Ears. Whilst others went for pleasant walk around the nearest lake even though its supposed to be a climbing trip. Dave & Ian then ran in to climb in Shepherd's afterwards, dodging the heavy showers whilst the rest of us had coffee and cake.
Monday was effectively cancelled for everyone due to the weather although Gary & Dorota, who were staying on for a few more days, made a morning dash to Raven Crag at Walthwaite, getting in **Route 1** and an enjoyable **Route 2** before the rain hit.

Everyone else was bumped onto the 2pm sailings. So we just had to make the sprint back to Holyhead. Some had a quick wander around the top of Gogarth South Stack, where it was blowing a houlie, to make plans for next time. The sailing was pretty intense. Ian Christie shared the secret of his youthful good looks and put his head down with his eye mask on and all and slept through the crossing. It was rough. I looked out the window one minute and was sure I saw Iain Miller rowing an Aldi dinghy in 20ft waves at one stage but thank God I was only hallucinating from the sea sickness.

Next year I have a feeling it's going to be very different; the weather will be great as Jonah isn’t allowed go and everyone else will be tucked up in their bed at night sleeping like a baby. Make sure you book a place.

Sunday morning at Shepherd’s Crag in Borrowdale:
(Left) Mags takes on the final pitch of Little Chamonix in the rain whilst Gerry awaits by the saddle [Photo: Ian Christie].
(Below) Kieran belays Gerry up in the sun [Photo: Mags Casey]

The sun comes out in the afternoon, Dave Trunk on the ‘saddle’ of Little Chamonix [Photo: Ian Christie]
The website has undergone a bit of reorganisation recently to try to expose things that were hiding away, remove some clutter and simplify its use. We have reworked the "Join IMC" page to clarify the process of joining & renewing membership. In addition there are two new web pages, detailed below.

All comments & suggestions regarding the website are welcome, together with any requests for help, to Cearbhall at webmaster@irishmountaineeringclub.com

The Environmental Officers Page

This can be found under the CLUB main menu item. It gives a description of who our Environmental Officers are, what their role is and how it effects you as a climber. Expect to hear more from Síle, Paddy & Ray in the near future as they promote this role.

The Expeditions Panel Page

This can also be found under the CLUB main menu item. The IMC Expeditions Panel was formed a few years ago to offer financial support plus advice for those members planning more adventurous endeavours.

The Blog

The Blog has been getting a lot more contributions recently, so thank you all for that. We have added new buttons for creating & editing blog posts (together with a handy link to the article explaining how easy it all is). There were some configuration issues in the past that meant some of you did not have the right permissions to create blogs but this has now been resolved. If you do have any problems in the future, please don't hesitate to get in contact with the IMC Publicity Officer at publicity@irishmountaineeringclub.com.
In 2013 the IMC Library of around 600 books was amalgamated with the MI Library to form a collection of over 3000 publications and is under Mountaineering Ireland's care in Blanchardstown.

On the Library web page (again under the CLUB main menu item) you can find a link to the Collectorz website where you can browse & search that entire catalogue (this quick link will also get you there: http://goo.gl/9cDMgw).

If there are any books that take your fancy, please get in touch with Ruth and she will be happy to arrange a lending (library@irishmountaineeringclub.org).

Do you have a favourite climbing book?

Readers of Mountain Log will know that the MI Library is frequently updated with new books that get reviewed in that journal.

But what of the other 3000 odd publications already there?

In order to promote what we have, we would like to know if you have any favourite climbing or mountaineering books that have perhaps been forgotten and deserve more attention?

Such a library is a wonderful resource, a common treasury for all, so have a dig around in there now to jog the memory, and if any such books come to mind, please contact the IMC Publicity Officer.

You can just let us know the titles if you want, but ideally if you could also submit a few words saying why a book appeals to you (more a personal appraisal than a formal review), then that would be much appreciated. Book titles and appraisals will be published in a future Newsletter.
This August I was one of a group of six IMC members headed to Norway; return visits by Dave Madden and Dave Trunk who organized the trip and a first summer visit for Jane, Martina, Cillian and myself.

The organizers had planned to visit two climbing areas Setesdal and Nissedal. They briefed the rest of us on the climbing – which were slabs with a huge choice of single and multi-pitch routes and stressed the need for 60 metre ropes to deal with abseils on the long pitches. We were also aware that these areas were still being opened up for climbing – mainly by German climbers. I did not know what to expect from Norway when we started but the scale and number of the mountain crags, combined with the possibility of the climbing routes being opened up, would make this an inspiring trip.

Over the week we saw a great deal of Southern Norway, the landscape is very mountainous with vast rivers, lakes and forests. The roads are undulating and maintained to a very high standard. Southern Norway is a great place to visit but low on shops, ATMs and no great bars.

Our first destination was Jeffs in Konigsberg. First discovered by Declan Craig in 2009 this roadside venue has seen many an IMC party leave happy over the years. We can confirm that the kebab plate is still as good as ever, although the vegetarians in the party were perhaps not quite so enamoured with their introduction to Norway!

After a long drive we arrived at the campsite at Flateland near Valle – it had cooking facilities and friendly atmosphere. The climbing venue was Setesdal and we used the "Setesdal: Climbing in Southern Norway" guide book. This guide book provides grades, number of pitches, bolts per pitch and an E grade which indicated the severity of the runouts relative to the
climb. The highest E grade was E3 where the runout would be at the grade of the route going down by one E number (as far as E0) for every grade the runout dropped below the route grade. The area was mainly sports but if trad gear was required the guide marked that and for routes that were a mixture it highlighted the predominant protection mode.

We arrived at the campsite just as it started to rain heavily. It rained the next day (as forecasted) but also the next night, which was forecasted to be clear. We were starting to worry but day two was clear and the rest of the week was rain free. On our way to Løefjell we passed through the village of Valle, very close to a possible climbing area of Bo and the Monsterwand and Neverland slabs, home to some classic 400-800 metre mountain crag routes, but they were seeping and would remained a bad risk for the rest of our stay. Continuing on, a short time later we arrived in Løefjell where we were to climb for the next three days.

Løefjell, Setesdal

On the Monday at Løefjell, Dave T and Dave M climbed in Sector Open, the routes of note were Sprostekt Lok*** 5+ (130m) & Smykkestein*** 5+ (450m). Jane, Martina, Eric & Cillian climbed in Sector Brokkestoplen & Sector Skole, the main routes were in Skole - Note 4+, Bachelor 5+, Kaspar 6- and Primus 5+.

On the Tuesday Dave T and Dave M climbed in a new area, not in the guidebook, called Sector Secret. The routes were on superb Gneiss in contrast to the Granite slabs on the rest of the mountain. Jane, Eric, Martina & Cillian climbed in Sector Kaiser, the main routes being Norske Experience 5-, Wolle 6- (E3 runout), Zetter 4+ and JA 5.
Unfortunately Jane had a bad reaction to mosquito bites and her foot was starting to swell.

Returning again to Løefjell on Wednesday Dave T and Dave M climbed in Sector Paradise where the main routes were Regnpause 5+, Clean 4+ and Pretender 6. Jane, Eric, Martina & Cillian climbed in Sector Fix on FRA Papa 4, Harte Nuss 5, Lefse 4+, Fix 5, Nahmashine 5 & Ristreppe 4.

Haegefjell, Nissedal

We then drove to Nissedal with more spectacular Norwegian scenery en route and used the ferry crossing which thankfully was running as late as we were. We saw one dome like mountain on the way - Haegefell - which is a hugely impressive and visible from a long way away.

On Thursday Martina drove Jane to doctor, our basic medication was not enough to bring down the swelling and her climbing on the Wednesday was more than most people would have attempted. Haegefell had a more remote vibe than Løefjell and some hardy types did camp at its base. It is a magnificent mountain with forest around the base and very clean rock.

But all that slab climbing takes it's toll [Photo: Dave Madden]
We climbed **Via Lara** which was graded Norwegian 4+ [French 4b+/4c] and 380 metres. The first pitch traversed outwards at 45 degrees and the second pitch moved us onto a crack line that would take us to the summit. All the pitches were 50 metres and the rock had very high friction. It was a very sunny day and we went up in teams, Cillian and myself in the first team and Dave T and Dave M in the second. Once on the route proper the climbing remained very consistent in difficulty with Cillian taking the lead on the crux pitch which was vertical. The climbing was very enjoyable throughout and we protected with trad gear as there was no bolts. We had taken Friends [medium/large] which we used with large/medium nuts and 10 extenders for protection. On topping out we took in the views and packed up for a two hour walk down. All of us agreed this was a classic route and lives up to its billing as possibly the best easy grade multi-pitch climb in Europe.
Fjone, Nissedal

With one day remaining and a flight at 06.00am the next day, we decided to head towards the airport with a view to arriving late that night rather than leaving the camp site at 02.00am. We aimed for a crag near Fjone. This was close to the campsite but we mistook a crag that we saw through the trees for the planned one, however, we checked out the crag that we had arrived at and decided to give it a go. Martina teamed up with Cillian and myself and we rotated leads, the routes were all good with vertical first pitch and slab for second pitch – all were challenging and we did not have the grades, so it was adventure climbing and a fitting end to our trip. We did three routes there with Dave T and Dave M doing a few more again. After that we had a roadside picnic before heading to the airport with a stop off for Pizza on way. ♦
The Irish Mountaineering Club was barely three years old when Paul Hill, a young medical student at Trinity College, joined the IMC - the club that had been reborn in 1948 from a tiny group of earlier pioneers of the sport. Paul was born in India and when his family returned to Ireland he, as a young student, was a member of that small band of enthusiastic rock climbers in the early years of exploration of Irish hills.

His talent as a rock climber soon led to his first ascent of the smooth slab in Dalkey Quarry named, naturally, Paul's Edge. He was still in his novice years as a rock climber when, again in the 1950’s with Frank Winder, he climbed Seventh Heaven, one of the earliest ascents of the 330m route in Connemara, then considered the best climb in Ireland. In Paddy O'Leary’s book "The Way That We Climbed" the author stated “Winder and Hill were lucky to survive when a vegetated ledge high up on the route collapsed, leaving them hanging on a line casually looped over a small rock knob”.

In 1954 Peter Kenny, Frank Winder, Paul and I, made the first ascent of Spillikin Ridge on Camaderry, Glendalough. The spillikin was a huge tooth of granite sticking out from the face and it was a precarious resting place for the final pitches. Fortunately for future climbers it collapsed at a time when nobody was around. Peter Kenny led the highly exposed crux pitch near the top and at the time the climb was considered the hardest route on the crag. Paul's first Alpine season was in 1953 to that Mecca of Alpine
climbing, Chamonix. I remember meeting Paul on the summit of the Requin where we had ascended by two different routes. Later we had to retreat from the Geant because of severe iced conditions on the rocky tower.

The Irish Mountaineering Club expedition to Greenland in 1968 was delayed by pack ice for a couple of weeks from reaching their goal on Cape Farewell but still succeeded in four first ascents. Paul, as well as his climbing role, was the group doctor and was involved in some interesting physiological research.

Many climbers left Ireland in those later years of the 1950’s and 1960’s, although emigration was a factor for some, seeking adventure in far-off places was also a motive. Paul drifted to the Far East and finally settled in New Zealand where he met and married Leslie. He was a doctor and physiologist in the Auckland University Medical School for many years. His days as a rock climber may have been over but in his retiring years he became an enthusiastic hillwalker. When he revisited Ireland in later years he climbed again most of the hills of his early youth.

More recently he set off on a project of walking, or tramping as the New Zealanders say, to do most, if not all, the great New Zealand tracks; wilderness walks such as the Routeburn, the Milford and many others. His last of these, the Kepler Track in the Southern Alps, was a huge delight for him in his final year.

Paul had just celebrated his eightieth birthday by completing the famous Kepler, but shortly after returning to his home in Wellington he was lost in a tragic accident: a bizarre event when a torrential downpour hit the Wellington area. Paul’s car was submerged in the flooded Hutt River, where he was swept away and drowned.

His family described him as “a much loved husband, father and grandfather, brother and uncle”. All who knew him will sorely miss him.
As a youth I hitch-hiked around a lot, but the best lift I ever got was the one going to Greenland this summer. Sailor Paddy Barry and his regular crew were planning a sailing-climbing trip to Iceland, onward to East Greenland and back to Iceland again on his boat, Ar Seachrán. There was one free space aboard. Several years ago I tried to organise a climbing trip to Greenland but the high cost and difficulty of getting aircraft and insurance made it prohibitive. Now here was another chance to get there – this was a boat I wasn’t going to miss.

Paddy’s trip was part of a wider journey of island-hopping from Ireland to Greenland and back by way of the Hebrides, Faroes and Iceland; re-tracing the likely voyages Irish monks such as St. Brendan made, centuries ago. This overall project was given a name, The North Atlantic Crescent Adventure 2015; our scope, one leg of it, was to sail to Greenland, attempt some climbs, ideally first ascents, of the coastal peaks of the Lemon mountain range, then sailing 240 miles down the coast to the village of Tasiilaq before turning back for Iceland. The seven of us were: skipper Paddy, blacksmith and rifle-man Ronán Ó Caoimh, myself and four old IMC hands: Frank Nugent, Harry Connolly, Peter Gargan and Paddy O’Brien.

On 26 July we assembled at Isafjordur on the Northwest tip of Iceland. We learned the weather forecast was good but sea ice conditions all along the East Greenland coast weren’t. Nonetheless with a boat full of equipment and provisions we motored out of Isafjordur at midday, under blue skies and calm winds. We passed fishing boats long-lining for cod, flocks of seabirds – guillemots, fulmars and puffins, escorting dolphins and a minke whale on patrol with a frenzy of birds overhead. The sailing watch system kicked in – two men on deck for three-hour stints, one at the wheel, the other on lookout. Then six or nine hours off, depending on roster. A rota for cooking and cleaning duties followed. Slowly Iceland receded, as day drew toward evening and then night, but never at any time did it get dark. The North world of the Midnight Sun.
The Denmark Strait separates Greenland and Iceland by 200 nautical miles. The currents alternate, with warm water flowing northeast past Iceland being off-set midway by a cold polar current tracking south along Greenland. The switch is sudden. We noticed the water temperature falling sharply from 8.5°C to 4.5°C within an hour.

Enduring the cold on deck, particularly through the night before dawn can be difficult. And for mountaineers used to hours of steady movement and activity in order to keep warm, having to accept cold and monotonous boredom is especially hard. Peter Gargan and I were feeling this way on watch, 7am the second morning. The grey mist, poor visibility, light rain and swell merely dampened this mood further. But all that changed in an instant. 60 metres off the port stern, on the surface, we spotted a water spout – a vertical spray of water and air. Moments later another spout. Then the black, arched back of a large humpback, surfacing. Just one breach and then he was gone. A rare sight by anyone’s standard.

‘He’s a big-fella!’ exclaimed Peter. He was big alright. 50 feet long we reckoned, bigger than our boat. ‘Yeah, good job we didn’t hit him, and he’s heading away.’

As the day worn on the sea grew calm. We were to find this calmness to be common with the warm tropical air masses further south having little effect in these higher, cooler latitudes. Through the mist later in the evening we came to the first of the ice. Small pieces initially – flotsam. And we overtook two terns resting on a log; probably driftwood originating in Siberia, and over seasons having floated past the Pole and was
now drifting south. A reminder of the interconnected nature of our entire planet.

The bergs became bigger and more plentiful. Blue ice, green ice, dirty ice, brash ice and surreal-shaped growlers. Some pieces the size of office blocks, and all of it the leavings of Greenland’s glaciers. None appeared to be the product of salt water. Although we couldn’t yet see it because of the mist, we sensed the coast very close up ahead. Then another surreal sight – the optical effect of a white, arched cloud, similar to a rainbow, a perfect semi-circle rising from the water and retreating on our starboard side. ‘Ah, The North Atlantic Crescent, lads.’

We continued, weaving through the channels of brash, and soon the mist lifted to reveal an assortment of impressive peaks right in front of us; steep faces, bare ridges, talus slopes and technical buttresses stretching for miles up and down the coast – a mountaineer’s paradise. There was only one problem ... getting at them. Slowly we motored into a wide fjord named after the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, the brash grew in abundance and the channels got tighter. It didn’t take long to get accustomed to the sound of brash scraping off the aluminium hull. The small stuff Ar Seachrán could handle, thuds from the big stuff were another matter. Everyone was on edge. There was no room for complacency; one wrong turn, a delayed or mistimed decision could spell disaster. ‘I hope the tub’s insured, Paddy.’ Up the fjord we went, one man at the bow, another at the wheel and seven sets of eyes on look-out. A tense atmosphere in a strange, eerie, magnificent place.

Families of taciturn seals dived for cover as we approached them. And then another surprise – a polar bear sunbathing on his back, on a floe less than 100 metres away from us. The sound of our voices and the engine must have woken him. He rolled over, got up, shook himself and looked at us with all the alacrity of an overweight labrador lying on a doormat. ‘Look at that lot. A smelly bunch too and not one seal among them. No thanks.’ We were privileged. There are people who have lived their whole lives in the Artic and never seen a polar bear. We had only been here an hour and any closer to it meant we could call ourselves lunch.

We moved on, deeper into the fjord until the ice was so thick any further progress was impossible. Moreover any shift in wind or current could trap us. The boss turned the boat around and we meandered tentatively back out to sea. Free from the anxiety of ice, we slept like logs that night. The next morning was a clear blue, perfect day. The sea was calm and the air still. Scores of jagged peaks, none much higher than 1200 metres, braided with glaciers, filled the coast and extensively inland. The Lemon range. We felt like the first explorers of this place. But we wouldn’t be exploring anything if we didn’t make landfall. This time we aimed for the Mikis and Kangerdlugssuaq fjords, 40 miles west of Nansen. But again the ice repelled us. Small chunks giving way to large, denser stuff the closer we
made for the coast, with the gaps between narrowing exponentially. Speed was reduced to a crawl. Five miles out we stopped and the boss strapped into the bosun’s chair and was winched up to the stays on the mast. Spying through binoculars he declared access to the fjords impossible. This wasn’t in the plan. Although we were aware the ice reports for the season were bad, we didn’t think it would be this bad.

What next? What next indeed. But then another stroke of luck. The only other vessel within 100 miles, a French schooner, La V’limeuse, just happened to be passing by. She was heading south, saw our mast and out of curiosity, drew up a mile away. Radio contact was made. The French had managed to access nearby Jacobsen Fjord, where they found anchorage, got ashore and spent a few days. Hence they recommended it. Months earlier while planning, Paddy and I looked at this fjord on the map but we never gave it serious consideration, assuming deposits from the glacier at its head would be too problematic. But fortunately we were wrong, as the French proved, and as we were about to find out. Merci, La V’limeuse. ‘We got a rub of the green there, Chief,’ I said.

The fjord was a gem. We spent five days there, anchoring Ar Seachrán at its head, and using it as a base camp for daily excursions. It was remarkably free of ice. The dingy was used to get us ashore each day; different parties setting out on the hills, while others remained on-board doing maintenance activities – sewing the fore-sail, fixing the steering mechanism – plus the usual cooking, baking, cleaning and fishing, or simply resting. Fishing wasn’t all that successful. Several lines were over the side at any time but we only managed to catch one fish, a 3 pound Artic Char.

The hill days were physically and mentally satisfying, trekking up nearby peaks of granite and poor basalt-type rock. We scrambled up and down ridges and took in the fine alpine scenery. From the summits we looked across neighbouring fjords and glaciers. And then a superb mountaineering day out. From the boat we had studied a chain of peaks running Southeast to Northwest on the Northwest side of the fjord. A sizeable glacier covered this their Northern side, appearing to stretch to the crest at a couple of points offering possibilities for ascent. But there was only one way to verify this. Early on Sunday 2 August, four of us set out – Frank, Harry, Paddy O’Brien and myself. We hopped into the dinghy and the boss ferried us to the shore at the base of the peaks. The weather was settled and clear. We started centrally up the snout of the glacier, stepping through debris and runnels, to get to the ice proper and a large cwm on our left-hand side.

Progress was straightforward. We roped up and traversed rightwards on the glacial system, avoiding the crevasses where possible, and below a rocky headwall. The snow quality was moderate. At the end of the headwall we found a long, snow-filled gully, with an icecap to its left above it. The gully was enticing and after a short debate about the risk of serac fall from above, we decided to give it a go. Up we went, zig-zagging as normal. As it turned out, this gully was sweet; about 250 metres long, dead straight and 53 degrees at most. Scottish Grade II, we reckoned. Overcoming a steep section at the top, we found ourselves on the chain’s crest, where we continued, southeastward up snow slopes to reach a short rocky section where we stopped for lunch. The wind-
chill made us cold but the short rest and sustenance fortified the body and spirit. Harry led the whole time and the pace for all of us and what we were doing seemed ideal. Steadily we moved up, zig-zagging as needed and changing direction in a gradual arc northwards to gain a snow and rock plateau at the base of a snow dome – one of the peaks of the chain. Two rocky peaks stood a distance away, either side of the dome. We wondered which way would we go for next? Cloud came down at this point obscuring the view. Given the rocky peaks were a sizeable time and distance away, we agreed to aim for the dome.

Onward we went, ascending the dome’s narrowing spine, which formed a cone, with steep run-outs down either side. Soon we were at the top. The cloud lifted and we enjoyed excellent views of summits and valleys for miles in all directions. Although chuffed, we weren’t hanging around … there’s only so long a man can stand on a knife-edge ridge. Delicately we turned around and carefully re-traced our steps to the plateau. And then continued down to the top of the gully. Initially we thought there may be an easier descent northwest of the gully but when we went to investigate we only found vertical cliffs; thus proving the gully was the sole weakest part of the chain. Back down the gully we went, belaying three pitches before reaching easier ground midway. Past the base of the gully and safely away from the icewall up above, we fixed a brew. Our spirits were high. We had explored a fine route (later researched and established as a first ascent) in good weather, good conditions, good company, in an Artic wonderland. And the view all the way down, across the fjord, to the boat and beyond to the countless peaks, was sublime.
Through binoculars, the boys on the boat had been watching our movements. Ronán was waiting in the dinghy as we got to the shore, and in no time we were back in the comfort of the boat. What a day – from sea to summit and back, this was exploration at its very best.

The following day we weighed anchor and left Jacobsen, hoping to explore neighbouring fjords before heading south to Tasiilaq. But ice reports relayed over the satellite phone indicated ice conditions all the way south was poor. Prospects were apparently better further north, so with that, plans were changed. We would head north 250 miles along the Blosseville coast to Scoresbysund and try and access fjords en-route, before heading back to Iceland.

The Blosseville coast, otherwise known as 'The Forbidden Coast', is well named. It’s a land of spectacular mountains of the Watkins and Sortbrae ranges. Some mountains are ice and snow covered and perfectly symmetrical; others are mixed and gnarly – their peaks, ridges and pinnacles resembling ornate Buddhist and Hindu temples. More climbing mecca. But yet again we found them impossible to reach – maddeningly so – the ice persisting its blockade. We could only admire from the deck, watch them go by, shiver and drink coffee. Moreover it was impossible to overlook, this Greenland is a remote place, a sensational, unspoilt wilderness, but also an exceptionally dangerous place for those who flounder or are ill-prepared.

We couldn’t land at Scoresbysund either, the ice took care of that. Out of luck and out of diesel, there was only one option: Paddy turned the boat south, the main went up and we sailed back to Iceland. Despite only having spent a short spell in Artic East Greenland and achieving one new route on the hills, there was no doubt about it, the great adventure and experience we all had would remain with us for years.
With Dalkey blood in my veins how could I resist the invitation to attend a Thursday evening meeting? So far during my holiday in Ireland I had seen my grandson, Bram, christened in the Glen of Aherlow, I had walked in the Galtees with Christy Rice, staggered in the Burren with David Walsh, been punished on Mournes granite with Donal O’Murchu, and eaten my fill of “full Irish breakfasts”, soda bread and sea food dishes out west, all washed down with endless cups of tea and Clonmel cider.

So apologies to all those confused by my Gitmo orange CAC T-shirt. No, I had not been released by Obama, it's Climbers Against Cancer, so remember all you guys, get that finger test before the little walnut becomes aggressive.

Now for the Quarry, boy has it changed, just look at the photo of Joe Mulhall in 1974 on Great Eastern and the comparison to June this year. The trees are massive, the furze bushes look like something from Jurassic Park and the numbers filling the area has increased beyond belief and seeing action on Ripsnorter that was originally one of my aid routes although never completed, frightens me as to the standards now being climbed.

Continued on Page 21...
Steve Young returns to Dalkey:
On Honeypot Crack (above)
[Photo: John Duignan]
Revisiting Mahjongg 42 years on with Dave Mitchell, Donal O’Murchu, John Duignan and Diarmuid O’Colmain
[Photos: Gary Smith]
It was great to meet “names from the forum”, an exploring mountaineering author and
the many old faces, some almost unrecognizable through their use of anti ageing
creams and potions, but where was the Turin Shroud? All climbing at grades they never
thought they would see there grandfathers climbing at! A fleeting request for Newsletter
stuff from Gary Smith was stashed away in a mental corner for the future. But alas,
where was Ambrose? The paparazzi were obviously waiting for him to complete The
Shield!

Climbing Honeypot crack in the dry was something different and having Dave Mitchell
on the rope with John Duignan and myself was forty years in the making. It was
amazing that David had no recollection of our exploits in Co. Mayo, obviously a severe
case of PTSD for John to analyze.

Off to the left, veteran Diarmuid O’Colmain was making a smooth leap from the comfort
of Awesome Walls to rock for the first time on Yorkshire Pudding under the watchful
eye of Donal O’Murchu. Check the gear placement, I need to know how I’m doing
asked Diamuid. Later his placements were well tested on Levitation!

The clouds threatened but John insisted it would stay dry for us to climb Mahjongg. Off
across Dublin Bay the rainbow arced above the practicing Mountain Rescue Team and I
got to meet Nick Keegan from page 211, and yes you were right, I did need a hair cut
and a stylist back in 1974 while beavering at the Dalkey Guide, there was no time, it
had to get to the printers!
I enjoyed the route, a sprinkle dampened the foothold at the overlap, John kept the rope “taunt”, the looseness of little blocks had gone and protection points seemed to be in abundance, certainly very different from when the “famous five” had originally climbed it, I had hoped for “7 Up”! Oh no! Autographing guide books at the top. How could this be?

Now it was a brief rush to The Queen’s for a strong coffee and a few stolen chips, a kind gift of an IMC fleece from Jonathan Smith that will be worn with pride on the granites of Central Canada. Then I was off to my old haunts in Redcross, and it’s worth a visit, it is home of the Wicklow Brewery and its craft beers.

Thank you all for making it such a memorable evening. ♦

P.S. I seem to remember somebody saying they would pay my flight over next time for a slide show!
Thursday morning. The alarm goes off at 4:30am, we shuffle around, gathering gear together, too early to talk, too early to consider breakfast. A quick wash, get dressed - what to wear? - it’s cold now but it will be warm later - lift up bags onto shoulders, heavy with rope & climbing gear and head out into dark morning, trudging through the rain.

After a short while we reach our destination...O'Connell Street and the Aircoach to Terminal 2.

Hardy mountaineers may sneer, but there’s something very satisfying about leaving wintery Ireland for some shorts & T-shirt climbing overlooking the Mediterranean, you feel like you’ve cheated Nature.

We land in Nice shortly before 11am and get buses up to St Jeannet. After dumping the bags and slogging up to the crag in the heat, we arrive at the First Tier by 2pm to find Niamh & Jane who’d flown over at the start of the week.

Dorota and I had been here last year and I remembered the first
climb had given me trouble then but foolishly thought I’d start with it this time. **La una** is supposedly a mere 4+ (according to Rockfax) but short progress was again followed by an ignominious retreat. A pause for lunch & reflection and on to **L’oral** (4+), another repeat from last year, but one I remember enjoying. And indeed, this was more like it. As with most popular sports climbs, the starts can be a bit polished but thereafter thoroughly enjoyable.

I had a feeling I’d done the climb next door, **La colle** (4+), last year. It looked nice, so up I went, a slabby friction-affirming start led into a nice steeper, blocky section and a small terrace. From here a nasty polished bulge to a ledge and chain beyond. The climb below was unpolished, but this section looked smoothed by the perennial action of a water channel. Feet slithering, desperate for friction (perhaps this is why the climb is called *Glue*), a pumpy, gruntly finish with a final indecorous lunge for a hold by the chain.

I’d definitely have remembered this one if I’d done it before! In the end a great little climb with much variety in its 25m...but are these really just 4+? After a fairly lazy summer is this where my abilities lie? In answer, yes and no, the Rockfax grading at Saint-Jeannet is notoriously erratic as later comparison to the local guidebook reveals.

Next door was **Le pilier du bac** (5), recommended by Niamh. Of all the climbs attempted here, this looks the most imposing with a couple of small roofs to negotiate and good exposure. But the holds are all there making for a very
satisfying climb, even if one move at the last bolt did elude me resulting in a sneaky pull on a quickdraw for fear of benightment/belayer boredom.

A cool damp cloud had now encircled the Baou and dusk was imminent so we head down to the gîte. Joining the rest of the group, there since Monday, we pop across the road (literally, and a narrow road it is too) to the pizza restaurant. For those who haven’t been, Saint-Jeannet is a lovely little village, tucked on a terrace under the limestone escarpments of the Baou commanding views up and down the Côte d’Azur. Whilst climbing on those sunny escarpments your senses are aware of the smells; hot rock & herbs. Thyme grows everywhere and the occasional whiff of aniseed reveals wild fennel pushing out of a crack you are trying to squeeze your fingers into. And so, with our meal that evening, those very same smells as the chef grabs herbs from a jug on the counter whilst preparing our meals. The next day he is seen walking through the village with fresh bunches, thyme & lavender, for that evening’s service.

Dorota & I make a tentative plan that evening to do *L’arête sud* the next day. Come morning, Niamh & Jane are up and organised with *L’arête* on their minds. We make a significantly more leisurely start but some time after 9am are starting that haul up the path to the Tiers when the heat of the morning sun hits (and perhaps an inner glow from last night’s wine). I swiftly find a highly rational reason for dithering; we did it last year…but we didn’t climb anything at La Source…it would be a shame not to sample the climbing there now we’re back in Saint-Jeannet…?

The strength of my logic was irrefutable. That La Source was down the road (yes, down) and scattered amongst shady oaks obviously had no bearing on our choice.
The first sector in La Source is called *Exocetoprix*. Here we find the amusingly named twin routes, *Les doigts dans le nez* (4+) & *Les doigts dans le cul* (4+). (Fingers in the Nose & Fingers in the Ass, respectively). To be honest, sticking your fingers in either end didn’t looking very appealing, I tentatively started on the latter but the risk of suddenly being farted out onto the twisted roots and rocks beneath deterred me. With tail beneath *cul*, I looked at the route to the right *Les sables emournants* (4) but it turned out scrappy & unrewarding. Next right on the arete was *La verité du mentor* (5) (see back cover) which looked interesting, in that thoughtful kind of way, “…a balancy section and a steep pull”, says Mr Rockfax. Right, let’s give it a lash.

Surmounting the balancy bit leads you onto a little ledge, squashed against an overhanging bulge and an eternal embrace with wide open arms whilst your brain starts negotiating with the rest of your body as to which appendage is willing to move next. After a few initial refusals from all points, a groping hand finds an acceptable hold, facilitating repositioning to survey the possibilities. Well, I can see where I’m *meant* to go but I’m not sure I like the idea of it, there must be some holds up there on that flat grey sea of limestone? Ultimately the climb to the left doesn’t look so “scrappy & unrewarding”, I traverse, move up and at the last moment traverse back to the chain for my original climb.

I top rope it, all goes well (there are a couple of camouflaged 2 finger pockets that enable the crux move). The heart is pumping, the nerve still raggy. I wouldn’t want to do that off top rope. Dorota top ropes it and is happy to leave it at that. I’m half way to taking the shoes off...ah, feck it, I’ll lead it. Up I go again, it’s not got any easier, but I know where to go, teeter right, around the bulge, some *could-be-better* hand holds and commit, step up, don’t stop now, heart *definitely* pumping, step up again, breathe, reach and relief. Sure, it was only 12m, only a 5, top roped prior - but it was fun, and this is how we learn.
We move further along to La Knubel sector. **La mummery** (4) first, the edge of a flake all the way up, Rockfax has a jamming symbol ("graunchy...wide...awkward...thrusty"). Yes, all of that...and cleaning, lots of it. The plants from above had filled the crack with dried leaves & fruit which must be dug out and swept away to reveal holds and foot placements. Up at the chain, the guilty bushes are beautiful (whatever they are?)

We finish off with **La niche** (4+) 3 stars! It must be good. I remember I enjoyed it, but now cannot recall it, whereas the irrefutable **La vérité du mentor** is still crystal clear in my mind today.

We head back into the somnolent village; it's that time of day when nothing is open, no one about. Only a cat, high in a window box, to nonchalantly acknowledge our existence. We collect bags and transfer by bus into the city bustle contrast of Nice. Kevin Coakley, who organised the whole trip, had arranged accommodation in a quiet, clean hostel full of friendly staff just off Place Masséna called Villa Saint Exupéry. I immediately like the place for its name and recall **Wind, Sand and Stars**, read years ago.

The next day we all get tram & bus up to La Turbie, a walk up from the village to the top of la Tête de Chien gives great views down on Monaco before we descend again on zig-zagging paths. It is Saturday and the crags are busy, from leisurely top-roping family parties to serious shirts-off shouty types on the steeper walls. Kevin brings us down lower & lower until we finally duck off the path at La Loubière sector (it is possible to walk up from Cap-d’Ail but this approach is preferable, if only for the views). The first area of amenable climbs are very busy so we settle, cuckoo-like, in **La Roche à Roche** at the far end of the crag.
Looking down on Monaco from the top of La Tête du Chien before heading down to the La Turbie crags [Photo: Niamh McGreen]

La Roche à Roche sector, looking down from La col[lege invisible** (5) [Photo: Gary Smith]
It’s hot. We’ve arrived at midday and our first instincts are to sit under the shady bushes, taking in the views over Cap-d’Ail and the sun glinting Mediterranean. But after a snack we start off with Recreation** (4) a nice introduction to the crag (and more realistic grading than St Jeannet). La college invisible** (5) is next, 25m of wonderful mixed climbing with a section of beautifully sculpted limestone midway. Next door is La rampe du college** (5) which, contrary to Rockfax, seems more pumpy than its invisible counterpart; no matter, both are great little climbs. L’etude* (5) is shorter with a mantel that defies silence and then Ecole buissonniere* (5) easy for the grade, despite a little sting in its tail.

(Left) Niamh on Ecole buissonniere* (5)  
[Photo: Gary Smith]

(Below) An soothing evening swim at Cap-D’Ail  
[Photo: Dorota Ruszczak]

By now the feet are stewing in the shoes and the lure of the Mediterranean becomes too much for some of us. We wind down paths and roads to Cap-D’Ail railway station and an underpass to the sea. Not everyone takes up the challenge, content to dip the feet, but for me there’s only one option, a quick dive off the rocks circumventing any unmanly faltering and instant relief. ♦
Logistics

Transport

Both Ryanair & Aer Lingus fly to Nice.

The bus service around Nice is superb, a single ticket costs only €1.50 and will cover any one way journey involving multiple trams or buses. For longer stays it’s worth buying a ten journey La Carte for a mere €10 (more than one person can use a single 10 journey Carte, just validate it repeatedly for each passenger). See http://www.lignesdazur.com/ for details and easy to understand timetables that link to Google maps.

From the airport, the Promenade des Anglais is just a 100m walk where you can catch a 52 bus eastbound into Nice or, on the same route, head 2 stops west to Centre Commercial and then catch the 55 bus up to St Jeannet.

From the centre of Nice, get the tram (Ligne 1) to Pont Michel and from there either the 116 or T66 bus to the village of La Turbie. The 116 bus route also passes La Trinité (also reachable if you get off Ligne 1 at Vauban and get the 6 bus).

Guidebooks

France: Côte d’Azur [Rockfax] is much like all Rockfax publications with quality photos and good approach info, a ‘best of’ the climbs in each area mentioned above plus many more. Just the one caveat about the inconsistent grades for the St Jeannet area.

L’escalade dans le Alpes-Maritimes [Alticoop] gives much more detail with hand drawn topos and much more reliable grading.
“Red, red wine..........goes to my head........”, and so our once intelligent conversation had descended into Vanessa’s ‘charming’ (and barely recognisable) rendition of that UB40’s hit as she fought to keep herself awake and on the ‘wrong side’ of the road while navigating her way through the darkness to Tuolumne Meadows’ Camp (3000m). Sinéad Rickerby, the second co-pilot, having passed out in the back of the car, was blissfully oblivious to all, including my occasionally voiced concerns that perhaps we should have, maybe, booked the campsite in advance!

We arrived at what felt like some un-earthly hour, a feeling further compounded by the absolute darkness and the un-manned kiosk, but the barrier was up, surely a sign?? We made our way through the maze that was the campground and eventually laid our eyes on a vacant space complete with a fire ring and a vacant bear box, one of the “bear” necessities when your car, laden with food supplies, is nothing other than a mobile feast for a bear!! No doubt, but the ‘Bear Habitat’ signs were firmly etched on our brains!

The morning brought with it expressions of utter disbelief as we emerged from our tent to see that which had lay shrouded by the night’s darkness. The sheer beauty of
Tuolumne cannot be captured in words, a beauty we never tired of during our six weeks there, a beauty that never ceased to amaze. There, we really were privileged guests of nature, being given a chance to live within this wilderness and experience all it had to offer. The morning also brought with it the realisation that we had taken up residence in an RV spot! However, the park warden eventually succumbed to our pleas and granted us a permit for two weeks; the maximum stay, which unknown to him at the time, would grow into six weeks!!

On our first day we decided to hit the ground running and made our way to a dome named Bunny Slopes. The views that had been shielded from us by the trees of the camp now lay bare before us; the various sized granite domes scattered across an alpine landscape that was dotted with lakes and broken only by rivers. Simply breath-taking. On arrival at the dome, it quickly became apparent that route finding was going to be a fairly all-consuming activity in itself! No doubt, but we had arrived in ‘slab climbing heaven’ with long run outs between the bolts and gear placement an impossibility, the ‘tacky’ granite was very welcome!

Every morning we would take a quick hike or run before our daily intake of porridge! Our camp was the start point for many trails and one of the busiest collection points on both the Pacific Crest Trail and the John Muir Trail. The various lakes and rivers we met along the way allowed us both a chance to swim and take what became commonly known as, a ‘nature bath’, given that our camp had no electricity, hot water or showers! As the days passed, we moved from dome to dome, sampling the climbing and trying our hand at crack climbing!

However, it was the multi-pitch routes, which, for me, were the most rewarding in many ways, rewarding in the many vistas they afforded us as we progressed upwards, rewarding in the people we encountered, the climbing we experienced and the rope management skills we developed! Our first, Tenaya Peak (3133m), a 14 pitch climb, really offered us an appreciation of the paradise we were climbing in. Our first attempt at Cathedral Peak, (3327m), a 6 pitch climb, had to be abandoned at the 5th pitch due to an oncoming lightening storm which afforded us some amazing
fork lightening displays together with the quickest abseil I have ever undertaken!!

Our second attempt of this route brought us to within 10 feet of a wandering black bear. Following an inquisitive look on behalf of both parties, some mumbled suggestions from Sinéad Rickerby that we should make ourselves ‘look tall’ (hardly necessary when you have Sinead on your side!) and my discreet attempts to unearth my camera from my back pack, he merely wandered off about his business. My quest to see a bear in the wild had finally and unexpectedly been accomplished!

On this occasion we reached the top of Cathedral Peak and weren’t really prepared for the gobsmacking 360 degree views that awaited us from the tiny platform.

While most of our days were spent scaling rocks, the arrival of Andy heralded the possibility for myself and Sinéad to undertake some hikes as we could leave ‘rock obsessed’ Vanessa in his capable hands!!
Cloud's Rest (3027 m) was one of the most memorable hikes which allowed us spectacular views of Half Dome and Yosemite Valley along with the opportunity to mark the occasion with a beer thanks to a fellow hiker who had carted a 6 pack to the top. Similarly, a hike to the summit of Mount Hoffmann (3309 m) presented us with an amazing lightening display as a storm rolled in over Yosemite.

Our six week climbing spree was punctuated with the odd trip to civilisation, namely Lee Vinning, home to Mono Lake, a large saline soda lake out of which rises unusual tufa rock formations and also home to the famous gas mart and Whoa Nellie Deli, an experience not to be missed!! On other occasions we made our way to the town of Mammoth Lakes to purchase supplies and sit fixated on our phones as we made contact with the outside world, the only words between us concerning the strength of the wifi signal available!

Our trip to Tuolumne had all the ingredients to make it a trip of a lifetime. It was an enriching experience in nature’s playground where you need very little to happily exist, although a JetBoil does help!! ♦

(Above) Tenaya Lake from Tenaya Peak with Cathedral Peak
(Right) Sunset from Sentinel Dome, Yosemite [Photos: Sinéad Patten]

[Photo: Uinseann Mac Eoin]

John Murray passed away on 10th December last and in the days following many kind words were spoken of him - one of the most telling of which was that - he lived until he died!

John turned 78 in July last and in the year before his death he climbed Errigal, went skiing in the Alps with his family and only a few weeks before he died spent three days with me and two others in Tipperary, tracing the course of the River Suir from its source near The Devil's Bit to Waterford City. John was not only a mountaineer but he enjoyed skiing, cycling (as widely as the Outer Hebrides and the south of France), canoeing (Canadian and kayak on the Slaney, the Nore, the Suck, the Barrow and many more) and a bit of sailing – in fact anything outdoors of a non-competitive nature. In his last months he used his Honda 250 (his “wheelchair for the adventurous”) to get out to the Wicklow Mountains, even as late as November 15th crossing the Wicklow Gap.

However the mountains were his first love. He used to describe arriving in Dublin as a “callow youth” in the late 1950s to study Quantity Surveying and the freedoms it gave him from the relative constraints of Ballinasloe. This included “the pictures”. On one
night he went to see Third Man On The Mountain which so besotted John that the following day he joined the IMC. John grew into an all-rounder in that there was no aspect of mountaineering at which he was not competent. His knowledge of weather, his navigational skills and his rope and safety abilities were of a level that made him the ideal climbing partner so that when the Dublin Section IMC set up a cliff-rescue team - the first south of the border - John automatically played an active role and headed it up for a year or two in the late 1960s.

In the 1960s (which was long before Ryanair opened up places like Spain to Irish mountaineers) Scotland was the obvious easily-accessed overseas climbing venue and John was a devotee. He climbed widely including the Cuillins, An Teallach, Glencoe and Ben Nevis. With his wife Patricia he winter-climbed Creag Meagaidh and Stob Coire nam Beith.

In the 1970s John had a few very good outings. In 1973, he and I went first to the Dolomites where we climbed each of the Vajolet Towers after which we went to Venice for some R+R then to Zermatt where in company with the legendary Polish climber Jan Mostowski (we met, as one does, in Biners) we climbed the Alphubel by the route that Sean Rothery was on a few years earlier when he had his now-famous accident. In 1977, he and I and Uinseann MacEoin went to the Julian Alps where we climbed Triglav (the highest peak in former Yugoslavia) and four other peaks. Two years later saw John and Uinseann climb The Dom (see photo) about which Uinseann wrote “Switzerland’s highest summit, the surface only the size of your dining room table; a group of soldiers had fallen off days before”.

In the late eighties John got together with Peter Shortt, Helmut Clissman and I to honour the memory of Dermot Bouchier-Hayes, a friend of all four of us, who died in 1969 having spent nine months in a coma as a result of a mountaineering accident in Austria. A Trust was formed and money collected. At that time the only available map of Carrauntoohil and its environs was the almost useless half-inch or 1:126,720 scale. Ordnance Survey, wished to bring out a 1:25,000 scale map (the European norm for mountain areas) but were unable to get the detail needed to create the map. The Trust used the money collected to pay people to gather the necessary information and the map at 1:25,000 scale was born. It was decided to sell it as part of a set - the map and a guide book to Carrauntoohill. John - a voracious collector and reader of mountaineering books - was the obvious person to do the book and for many years the book and map were sold together in a plastic folder. The book was a collection of twelve safe routes up the mountain and would undoubtedly have saved lives. The profits which accrued to the Trust were used to benefit mountain rescue teams around the country and a primary school in Saraswati in Nepal.

It is not possible to get into a short article all the mountaineering achievements of one such as John Murray. Suffice it to say that this only touches on John’s mountaineering life and is only a taste of it. Irish mountaineering has not so much lost a mountaineer but a true gentleman whose like we will not see again. To Patricia and all John’s family we extend our deepest sympathies. Ar dheis De...
The October Bank Holiday brought with it an action-packed and fun-filled weekend in North Wales. Since joining the IMC we had heard great stories about the annual trip which is a longstanding tradition in the club, so a number of us newer members decided we would take the opportunity to get in some climbing experience before the outdoor season finished for 2015. I volunteered to be dessie and the car quickly filled with enthusiastic newbies - Derek, Michela, Cedric and Thierry. We headed off on the last Irish Ferries sailing on the Friday night. To say it was a tight squeeze would be an understatement - trying to pack ourselves and all our bags & gear into the Fiesta was the first challenge of an adventure packed weekend.

We landed in the early hours of Saturday morning and followed Vanessa and Andy to the Glen Dana hut in the Ogwen Valley. It was straight to bed to rest up for Saturday’s activities. Luckily for Michela and I, Sinead sternly informed the boys that the IMC runs a “Ladies do not cook on meets” policy so we just had to wait for a knock on the door in the morning for breakfast.

We woke up to a rainy morning in North Wales. Undeterred, a group of us decided the best option would be to ascend Tryfan which is a nice Grade 1 scramble. It stood up to its reputation of needing to use hands to ascend and en route we got guidance in mapwork and mountain navigation skills by Peter Wood. We ascended via the north ridge to reach the stone monoliths of Adam and Eve. When we reached the top Jon gave us a bit of background information on Adam and Eve and we took in a few snaps before starting our descent down the mountain. When we returned to Glen Dana it had dried off but we didn’t have enough daylight to get a climb in so we headed off to the picturesque town of Betws-y-Coed to have a look around the shops and get a bite to eat. It was back to the hut then to relax by the fire and hear everyone’s stories from the day and make plans for Sunday. The hut was snug and comfortable and had a great
drying room which proved to be essential. The clocks went back Saturday night but on Gerry’s orders we were to stay on summer time until we got back on home soil to get the most from our days.

On Sunday (again after getting a knock to tell us breakfast was ready - thanks boys), the weather was looking a bit more promising so the majority of climbers headed for Tremadog to experience the delights of various multipitch routes. Tremadog offered countless routes to suit all levels of climbing. It was easily accessible from Eric’s Café where the groups met during the day to swap stories and fill the bellies. Jon and Sean took a group to do some training in the crags of Pant Ifan. The Sineads (Rickerby and Patten) took me under their wing and I seconded as they led the pitches of “One Step in the Clouds”. After another night of swapping stories by the fire with the gang (and what a great bunch they are) and a few drinks, we retired to get a good night’s sleep before our last day in Snowdonia.

Monday brought with it a dry day so we were determined to get some last climbs in. Some climbers headed for the sea cliffs of Gogarth while a few of us headed for the breathtaking crags of Llanberis Pass. Jon, always in Training Officer mode, looked after us newbies making sure we had a partner to climb with and as a result we got to climb some multi-pitch routes. The climbing was followed by a hearty lunch in the renowned ‘Pete’s Eats’ in Llanberis. Alas, for most of us our trip had come to an end. A few of the members were staying until Wednesday but it was back to Holyhead for us in time for the 5.15 ferry back to Dublin. The sailing back was an adventure in itself and there were a few green faces as we landed back in Dublin Port. Everybody had thoroughly enjoyed their trip.
For anyone who has not experienced the Snowdonia Meet, I’d recommend you get your name on the list for next year as it is one not to be missed. The more experienced members of the IMC were able to share their wealth of local and climbing knowledge of Snowdonia which ensured we all got the most out of the weekend.

Huge thanks to Gerry Moss for organising a super meet and especially for being so welcoming to the newer members on the trip. Jon Smith played a blinder in looking after us and we cannot thank him enough. Thanks to the great bunch of more experienced climbers on the trip for partnering up with and sharing your expertise with us. It was an unforgettable weekend and I can see why the Snowdonia trip is such a longstanding and popular meet. Looking forward to next year’s one already!

Fat Gits by Síle Daly

“I’m a fat git” says Dave, “if you want to do hard stuff, you’ll have to lead it all.” He is also sporting a very square arse and hands that would have got him guillotined in the French revolution. The ravages of academia are hitting him hard…. We had both last climbed in Glendalough on one of those sunny September weekends, and neither of us had been near an indoor wall since 2014.

So off we went on the ferry to Wales on a wet, windy October morning. Everybody who is anybody was on the boat. We all sat around a table with guide books, discussing our plans and hopes for the next few days. The rain beat on the windows as the boat cut its way through the white horses.

The Pocket Rocket is the best piece of equipment I have ever bought. It lives in our car. We had pulled in to the car park at the South Stack Café where a strong southerly gale
Gerry, Cillian & Mags on the 4 pitch

_Lighthouse Arete** VS 4b_ at Castell Helen, Gogarth (see also, Inside Back Cover) (Photos: Gerry Moss)
was firing needles of rain on our windscreen and rocking the car as we sat in the
greyness. The café was closed so I positioned myself in the passenger seat, steadying
the pocket rocket between my feet as it boiled up the water in our camping tea pot and
steamed up the windows in seconds flat. The rain was forecast to blow over soon.

By the time we reached the Main Cliff the rain had stopped and once down at the
bottom of the crag we were well sheltered from the wind. Our quarry was **Gogarth**, a 5
pitch classic E1 which was the first climb put up on the Main Cliff way back in 1964. I
paid little attention to route finding as Dave set off on pitch one... it’s always easier to let
someone else make the decisions.

He had already realized we were on the wrong climb by the time I joined him at the
belay. We were on a single pitch VS called **Simulator** and a good few meters south of
the start of **Gogarth**. It was now too late to set off on a 5 pitch odyssey so we abseiled
down and I headed up **Emulator**, a stunning E1 open book corner of twisted, contorted
quartzites typical of the Gogarth crags.

I struggled more than the last times I had climbed this route but put it down to the cold
along with the weight and restriction of extra clothing. Its main pitch is fantastic, on
perfect rock with wonderful friction. Its climbing style is a mixture of jamming, lay-
backing and fancy footwork, and it seems to go on for ever. It has a feel of Fair Head
about it in its length and ability to swallow gear of the same size in its corner crack,
setting it apart from other climbs on the crag.

By the time we finished **Emulator** the light was fading and we scrambled back up the
steep, narrow, meandering, beaten track to our bags in the twilight and back to the car
in darkness.

The following day, Saturday, it was pissin rain. Nobody at the hut ate a hurried breakfast
to leg it out the door and beat the crowds to the crags. Dave and I left early enough
though to avoid the marathon runners, for whom certain roads are blocked off, and
headed for Tremadog. The weather forecast had promised a clearance from the south
by late morning, and we hoped the dolerite there would dry quickly and still give us an
opportunity to get on **Vector**, the classic E2 of the crag.

We sat in Eric’s Café for an hour. The rain poured down steadily, steadily. We were now
on the wrong side of the marathon to get to the gear shops, which was just as well
because I **HATE** shopping.

Having decided **Vector** was going to have to wait until next year, we headed for the
**Hyll-Drem Girdle**, a HVS traverse along the bottom of a very steep felsite crag not far
from Tremadog. It stays dry in the rain as it is sheltered by the overhanging rock. The
intrepid Gerry, Mags, Cillian and Kieran were already on the route. We could hear them
calling from the road.

By the time we started climbing the rain had stopped and the sun was out...yet, I stood
in a continuous stream of water coming off the top of the crag while belaying Dave on the first pitch. We did the climb in 3 instead of 4 pitches albeit with a lot of rope drag.

Sunday brought a bright, crisp morning. Milestone Buttress on the north west side of Tryfan, only a hens trot from the road, offers Superdirect, a classic HVS 5a in 3 pitches up the rounded rib and arête with a stunning airy final pitch. We were at its start by 9.30. The crag was still in the shade and the rock was very, very cold. I followed Dave up the first pitch without discarding my thick down jacket. My hands were numb by the time I reached the belay. The rock was a beautiful rhyolite, pristine but very polished in places. We were hoping the sun would warm us when it came around but cloud was already building.

Pitch 3 of Superdirect is guaranteed to 'scare the shih owaya'! It was my lead. I stared across at a blank, vertical slab with only crimps for the hands, nothing for the feet and only a measly small wire placement, which would most likely fail in a fall. A fall here was out of the question. It would mean a drop and pendulum down into the corner below with a hard smack into the right-angled wall. How could this be HVS? It looked like E20! Cold as it was, I jettisoned the down jacket. It is a short pitch so I jettisoned some gear too. This sequence of moves would require a lightweight approach. I regretted the big 'stuff up' I had had the night before and the morning's pot of porridge even though it was all suddenly moving through me at a rate of knots!

The spits of rain that had begun on the previous pitch were now falling in earnest. By the time I was ready to step out over the abyss they had turned to a steady drizzle and the rock was gleaming with wetness.

Climbing for me is a compulsion. Once I have set my mind on a climb, I have to do it at all costs. The cold, the twilight, a hurricane, will never stop me. I was bitterly disappointed but secretly relieved to have to bail out of this one.

We exited the climb via a V Diff chimney. Much like the crux of Lockwood's Chimney in the wet, the only way to climb it was to thrutch up inch by inch, cursing and blaspheming all the way to the top. Santa Claus would have managed it with more finesse and grace!

Following lunch back at the car, we set off to scramble up Tryfan and the Bristly Ridge. We topped out in twilight and navigated off the mountain by an unintentional, circuitous route in darkness.

We had booked the 8.30 ferry home so could take full advantage of our last day. Back at the South Stack car park, thick, thunderous clouds spat rain in the brisk, southerly wind. The sky over Snowdonia was clear and blue. My obsession with Gogarth was as strong as ever. I pushed the nagging thought that we should have stayed in Snowdonia to the back of my mind.

The gods were smiling on us as Dave set off up the beautiful pinnacle of the first pitch.
The cloud dissipated and the sun warmed the rock. I wished I had brought my shorts. The crux pitch was to be mine and I felt confident in the warm sunshine that I would fly up it no bother. This climb has 5 stunning pitches on fabulous rock. The 2nd pitch traverses way right in a spectacular position, and then up and back left, to end up only 8 meters directly above the belayer. Dave ran pitches 3 and 4 together to a second pinnacle while I sat on a sun baked ledge watching a party of kayakers navigate their canoes from the big swell onto the boulders way below.

Pitch 5 begins with an airy traverse off the pinnacle & out onto the face. The rock disappears undercut beneath your feet. It feels far more ‘out there’ than ‘out there’ can ever mean. I may have made a meal of it, or chosen a more difficult set of moves than necessary, but those just had to be the crux moves of the pitch! “Afraid not” said Dave from the security of the belay. “You are just below it now”

The description in the book says the holds improve with height so I pulled myself together and set off up the steepening rock. Up and up I went, past several good placements expecting to find a comfortable position from which to place some gear. Up and up I went, looking for ANY position from which to place gear! The situation was now desperate! Where were the jugs? The contorted nature of metamorphic rock means a jug can appear anywhere randomly or not at all. It was getting harder and harder and I was getting more and more pumped! The consequences of a fall from here would have been dire! I was so high above my last placement that it was a question of how hard I would hit the ledge below and not IF I would hit it. I began to back-climb, frantically searching for the hidden footholds, my hands rapidly losing power and shaking uncontrollably. It took every ounce of strength I possessed to make it back to the safety of the ledge and shortened outlay of rope.

Jayses did I curse the 6 helpings of shepherds pie, the cream buns, the Lindt Lindor chocs, the Xmas pud and brandy butter that are now stuck to my middle, arse and thighs. Jayses did I regret my disdain for indoor climbing gyms, and Jayses was I glad to have made it back to that ledge without the broken metacarpal (or worse) I had sustained in Finale when I kept telling myself “you always chicken out too soon”.

Alas I did not get it clean. I became so tired going up and down, up and down, up and down that eventually I had to rest on gear and aid past the crux.

The worst of it all, is that one move above my first foray found me on my feet in a good stance for placing gear. Had I just had a smidgen more bravery, it would have taken much less energy to make that placement and continue, than my desperate back-climb that nearly went so horribly wrong.

We topped out just before the dusk as spits of rain were beginning to fall.

Back at South Stack the Pocket Rocket flared alight and we brewed up the most delicious cup of tea I have ever tasted. We stuffed in olives, tomatoes, avocados, crisps, bikkies, cake and chocs as the driving rain pelted our little car in the darkness. ♦