

ANNUAL NUMBER 10

**MOUNTAIN  
VIEWS**

PUBLISHED 2025

# THE SUMMIT

FOR HILLWALKERS AND WALKERS IN IRELAND

## INISHBIGGLE

A step back in time

## MOUNT SHAHDAG

An expedition in the  
Azerbaijan Highlands

## MAD IN MADEIRA

A mountainous trek through  
the island's interior

## SNOW DAYS IN DUN NA NGALL

Winter in the northwest

## DERRYGIMLAGH BOG

Connemara place in  
early-20th century history

## CLIMBING IRELAND'S HIGHEST HUNDRED

Inspired by the  
'Irish Peaks' book

## MEASURING MOUNTAINS

Out on a MountainViews  
surveying trip



**GALLERY**  
BEST PHOTOS FROM  
MOUNTAINVIEWS  
MEMBERS IN 2024







# THE SUMMIT OF IRELAND'S HILLWALKING CALENDAR

## WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

### SINÉAD POLLOCK ORR

**A Year in the Life of  
an Outdoor Practitioner**

With over 18 years experience working as an outdoor practitioner and educator, Sinéad will discuss the highs and lows of working in the mountains of Ireland as an outdoor practitioner.

### CLAIRE COTTER

**Mt. Brandon:  
Where two worlds collide**

Archaeologist Claire Cotter presents *Mt. Brandon Archaeology: where two worlds collide*, looking at what archaeologists can tell us about traditions on the west and east sides of Brandon Mountain.

### AIDAN ENNIS

**The Vandeleur-Lynam  
Mountains Through-Hike**

Aidan through-hiked all 275 Vandeleur-Lynam Mountains in one continuous expedition during May and June 2024, covering over 2,500km over 48 days.

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**PLUS THE AWARDS CEREMONY FOR COMPLETERS OF MOUNTAIN LISTS  
OR CONTRIBUTORS TO HILLWALKING OR MOUNTAINVIEWS**

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Don't miss this annual evening of fascinating talks, news about MountainViews, the awards for Ireland's best summiteers, spot prizes and a beverage or two.

**Where: The Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan Road, Co. Dublin, A94 V6K5**

**When: Friday 28th February 2025, 8pm (Doors open 7.30pm)**

Prebook tickets at <https://mviews2025.eventbrite.ie>

There will be a charge of €15 on the door, cash and Revolut accepted.

Directions: [www.talbothotelstillorgan.com/](http://www.talbothotelstillorgan.com/)



# Welcome to our tenth Annual

We have a varied selection of articles for this year.

Have you forgotten about the cold snap in early Jan? Let Iain Miller show you some epic Donegal pictures from then.

Martin Critchley and Sharron Schwartz describe a back packing trip to Madeira taking in much of the high ground of the island and walking along the network of irrigation channels.

HC Hart may well have been the first person to write with the modern hillwalker's perspective of Ireland in terms of what to do and where to go. Frances Leahy describes the memorial to him in the Dublin Mountains (which you can visit) and much more.

Another place (now in ruins) you can visit is described by Tom Barragry in our richly illustrated article about the Marconi telegraph station south of Clifden.

Fergal Hingerty, supreme adventurer, has added to his prolific writing by describing a difficult visit to high ground in Azerbaijan (Part One). He had to make difficult choices, but then that's part and parcel of serious trekking.

There's more on a new bothy in the Nephin Begs, Inishbiggle, Surveying, a newcomer couple's take on the Highest Hundred, running the County Highpoints, Mountaineering Ireland describe what they were doing in 2024 and we have a Hillwalker's Crossword.

We describe the Award Winners and include the Pictures of the Year.



*Simon*  
Simon Stewart,  
MountainViews.ie  
founder

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**Front cover:** Carnanelly, Sperrins **ADRIAN MCGLYNN**



The Summit Annual Newsletter 2024 is published by the MountainViews committee in February 2025.

The next MountainViews Summit Monthly Newsletter will appear in April. Should you wish to comment on any article then you are free to do so through the Motley Views General Forum within the usual terms of MountainViews.

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# THE 'MAD'

BY SHARRON SCHWARTZ  
AND MARTIN CRITCHLEY



# IN MADEIRA





*The words, unexpected and unwelcome, fall like thunderbolts. I look at Martin in despair. We are not just relying on the climber's hut below Pico Ruivo for a much-needed shower, but to replenish our water supply for the next day. Now we hear from a fellow trekker that it has been closed due to a break in its watermain. We are in Madeira's Central Mountain Massif midway between its two highest peaks, in arid volcanic terrain without as much as a tiny spring to source drinking water. If we cannot refill our bladders, we'll have to abort our trek...*

It's early-May 2024, and Martin and I are undertaking our toughest challenge to date: a 115km trek across Madeira, a semiautonomous Portuguese island 500km off the coast of West Africa. Dubbed 'the Pearl of the Atlantic', Madeira suddenly seems to be on every traveller's bucket list. Despite its growing reputation as a tourist Mecca, wilderness never feels far away on this island with its subtropical climate, jagged volcanic mountains, vertiginous sea cliffs, lush rainforests and fabulous flora. And to see it at its very best, you need to don a pair of hiking boots.

We are backpacking from the Punta do São Lourenço

in the east, to Porto Moniz in the west, traversing the mountainous spine of the island and summiting its two highest peaks en route. There is no designated cross-island route. But Madeira is blessed with a multitude of well-developed trails, many which run alongside its unique 'levadas' (irrigation channels), so the only limitation to devising a route is your own imagination.

Our main consideration is proximity to accommodation. Much of this is located in valleys or down on the coast. As we want to divide the route into reasonable daily distances without the need for unnecessary ascents and descents, we have chosen to camp for the majority of our week-long trek. Designated pitches, which are very basic (no toilets, not all have water) are provided across the island, but you must secure a free permit from the Madeiran authorities online beforehand. Wild camping is forbidden and transgressors are fined if caught.

### DAY ONE: THE DRAGON'S TAIL

The mercury is already pushing 26°C as we depart Funchal bus station late-morning bound for Baía d'Abra. This is the starting point of the Vereda da Ponta de São Lourenço (PR8), which traverses the easternmost peninsula of the

Our Terra Nova tent at the  
Punta do São Lourenço campsite  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY



Madeira's vertiginous north cliffs  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY



island colloquially known as the Dragon's Tail.

Less than an hour later, we leave the bus and don our heavy rucksacks, joining a throng of day-trippers who are heading to the Miradouro Ponta do Furado, 3.5km away. Our eyes alight on the red and white banded cliffs rising like a giant layer cake from the most azure-blue ocean imaginable. Shimmering between sea and sky are the islands of Deserta Grande and Porto Santo, and the undulating track threads its way precariously between the crests of the peninsula, which indeed resemble the armoured tail of a dragon. In places the path crosses hair-raising arêtes above the soaring cliff faces, offering breathtaking views of gnarly sea stacks and sea arches. There is no shelter, the sun beats down relentlessly, and the arid volcanic rock radiates the heat.

I am a stream of perspiration when, fifty minutes later, we reach the designated campsite at Punta do São Lourenço. As we are the first to arrive at the diminutive circular camping spot perched above a shingly beach, we claim the best pitch looking seaward. With our tent erected, we make for the palm-shaded terrace of the Casa

do Sardinha Sea Spot Café where we feast on a delicious meal of grilled limpets, parrot fish and chickpea salad, washed down with a few bottles of cool Portuguese stout.

Back at the campsite, we are joined by six trekkers, including a couple who cut short their journey across the island due to heavy rain in the mountains. The words of one — “It was really tough up there. It’s no walk in the park,” — run through my mind as I lie awake in my sleeping bag. We’re not getting any younger and I cannot shake the feeling that perhaps this time we have finally bitten off more than we can chew. I sleep fitfully, listening to the waves lapping the shingly shore of the beach below and the otherworldly cries of Cory’s Shearwater.

## DAY TWO: SKY-WALKING

The peaks of the island remain shrouded in ominous banks of cloud that have brought days of rain to the mountains, but we break camp with the early morning sun at our backs to retrace our steps to the car park. To avoid some dangerous and monotonous road walking, we catch a local bus to the village of Machico where we encounter our first levada. These ancient stone channels bring water from higher altitudes to irrigate terraced plots known as



Pico Ruivo, far right, as seen from the PR1.3 to Encumeada  
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*poios*. The Levada do Caniçal takes us past many of these lush man-made enclosures surrounded by basalt walls that form a natural mosaic against the backdrop of the lapis-blue Atlantic. Little lizards flee from our footfall, the drone of insects and birdsong fills the air, and the sides of the pathway are vibrant with spring flowers.

We leave the levada for a steep climb to the Vereda da Boca do Risco, a viewpoint offering a breathtaking panorama of the north coast of the island. Madeira has

## It feels as if we are sky-walking

some of the most impressive sea cliffs in the European Union, and we join a trail that undulates west across the

cliff tops towards the town of Porto da Cruz. The sea is so far below, the waves make landfall silently. The pathway clings to the very edge of the world and is so close to vertiginous drops, it feels as if we are sky-walking.

We leave the trail before it begins its descent to Porto da Cruz, and follow a brutally steep and rugged pathway up into the mountains. By now, dove-grey cloud has stealthily enveloped the entire sky. The humidity beneath the tree canopy is ferocious and our progress is painfully slow. We finally make camp at a small clearing where we are the only occupants.

## DAY THREE: REROUTED!

We hit the trail not long after dawn while it is still cool. The cloud that has made life so unbearably humid and brought rain to the mountains has dissipated, and we catch sight of the gnarly Central Mountain Massif we will be tackling in the coming days. Etched in pin sharp detail in the glassy morning sunlight, it looks challenging to say the least. We stop at a levada for water which we filter and UV treat with our Steripen, then head towards the viewpoint of Portela where we find the trailhead of the PR10 that will take us the 11km to the campsite at Ribeira Frio.

This trail is a delight. It ascends the terrain gradually via a series of wooden steps interspersed with lengthy flat sections, and always accompanied by a levada. This is sometimes languid and lazy, barely seeming to flow, or a roaring crystal cascade. At intervals, the globular heads of lilac-blue agapanthus form a guard of honour.

Halfway along the trail we pause at the Lamaceiros Forestry Station. Here we receive devastating news: the remainder of the PR10 is closed due to a landslip, making it impossible to reach the Ribeira Frio campsite. On a multi-day trek, there is always a danger of things going awry. A revolution now takes place in our plans. With GPS, a detailed topographical map, and a mobile phone, we hastily



devise a new route to the Terreiros Campsite alongside the ER202, which leads to the summit of Pico do Areeiro.

We take a forestry road that is unrelentingly steep, deeply rutted and slick with mud, and I am relieved when we finally emerge from the suffocating humidity of the forest and traverse an undulating ridge to the ER202. The lush mountainous landscape looks as if it has been draped in emerald-green velvet, and the distant Dragon's Tail shimmering in the heat haze could almost be a mirage. Fifteen kilometres later, we arrive at the campsite at Terreiros to find it deserted and select a shady spot to pitch our tent.

#### DAY FOUR: PEAK TO PEAK PURGATORY

One look at the vivid vermillion band fading to apricot and indigo blue in the cloudless pre-dawn sky, and we know we are in for a hot, hard day along the PR1. This traverses the Central Mountain Massif from Pico do Areeiro to the hut below Madeira's highest peak. We rapidly cover the 2km to the Casa de Abrigo do Poiso restaurant which opens at 8.00am. Our revised route has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Although we forsook the most scenic section of the PR10, we begin the hardest day of the trek at a higher altitude, and can indulge in a delicious cooked breakfast!



Entrance to a lengthy levada tunnel along the PR17  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

The ER202 soon leaves the shade of the forest, and the radar dome atop the summit of Pico do Areeiro looms into view like a giant golf ball ready for the tee-off. We skip a long section of the road by following a rugged trail over a heath-covered hillside flame-yellow with broom, before rejoining the ER202 close to the Poço da Neve, an old icehouse that once supplied Funchal, the island's capital, in the valley below. The final steep ascent up a flight of wooden steps to Pico do Areeiro (1818m) is horrendous in the merciless heat. Every lungful of air I inhale feels like I am breathing fire.

We are rewarded with cool stouts and succulent sweet mango on the terrace of the summit restaurant. The coast-to-coast views are stupendous. Pillow soft cloud billows out over the azure Atlantic and the chaotic volcanic mass towards Pico Ruivo, weathered into soaring slabs, pinnacles and spires, looks barely navigable. But I soon eye scores of figures swarming amid the contorted masses of rock like ants. The route is ridiculously busy.

We set off as ethereal wraiths of cloud begin wafting up from the valleys, wreathing the landscape in a ghostly pearlescence. The midday heat immediately subsides. The route is challenging; undulating continually across the spine of the island via hundreds of steep stone steps reminiscent of the Inca Trail. But it is also exhilarating, with plenty of exposure and a series of tunnels requiring headtorches. The spring flora is magnificent and we spot several red-legged partridges.

I sit awhile to peruse the majesty of my surroundings. It is entrancing to watch the cloud mystically curling around the rocky spires, while vistas of green valleys flash in and out of view. However, my musings are cut short by the arrival of some trekkers we had met at the first campsite. They are the bearers of bad news. The warden of the Casa de Abrigo do Pico Ruivo has phoned to tell them that the hut has been closed due to a broken watermain. He has been trying to contact us too. This bolt from the blue means if we cannot find another source of water for tomorrow, we are scuppered. As we are committed to the route, we decide to push on to the hut and camp in its vicinity.

#### Vistas of green valleys flash in and out of view

The remainder of the 7km trail up to the hut over steep stone steps and metal stairways is exceedingly onerous and my 16-kilo rucksack is a deadweight. After 17km and 1,100m of ascent, we set up our tent on the hut's patio. Jubilate Deo! Martin sources water in the hut's cistern. The crisis has passed and we celebrate with a wee dram or two. After sundown, the warden arrives, takes pity on us, and allows us inside. I collapse on my bed as though sleep is a weapon that has felled me at point blank range.





The gnarly spine of the Central Mountain Massif from the Paul de Serra Plateau  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

### DAY FIVE: THE GRUELLING GRIND TO ENCUMEADA

We stand in silent reverence at the summit of Pico Ruivo, as the golden orb of the sun breaks over the ocean horizon bathing the churning cloud and the rock of Madeira's Central Mountain Massif in salmon-pink light. Behind us, the shadow of the 1,862m conical summit falls on a cloud inversion like a mystic pyramid. We can see the distinctive radar dome where we were yesterday, and the windfarm on the Paul de Serra Plateau close to where we will be camping tomorrow night.

After descending to the hut for a couple of hour's rest, we set off along the 11km PR1.3 to Encumeada. We think this will be a relatively easy day, but are quickly disabused of that notion! The route undulates relentlessly over the rocky spine of the Central Mountain Massif and progress is slow. The sticky brown Madeira cake purchased at the hut and made from local sugarcane, proves to be a delicious and welcome energy boost.

The terrain has been damaged by fire, and tree heather and besom heath give way to the bleached branches of laurel, which throw open their ghostly white arms in a frozen embrace. Puffs of cloud sail across the mountainsides

and brilliant blue spikes of echium, dazzling white ox-eyed daisies, and saffron-yellow buttercups enliven the landscape.

We are relieved when the cloud descends to take the edge off the heat. It billows across the highest points of the ridge like smoke, swallowing all sound. Although the route is marked 11km from the hut, our GPS logs it as nearer 14km. We finally spot the Encumeada Saddle, but the lengthy descent to it over a series of eroded stone steps is exhausting, and the 1km trudge down a tarmac road to the Valley View Hotel is punishing. After 1,500m of descent, I am ecstatic to shed my filthy clothes ringed white with sweat, for a long hot shower. We then enjoy a bottle of fine Madeira wine and a delicious three course meal in the restaurant.

### DAY SIX: JURASSIC JOY!

Today's 14km route from the Boca de Encumeada along the PR17 to a campsite on the Paul de Serra Plateau is the most scenic and thrilling so far. The landscape has changed markedly, and instead of open mountainside, we are now in a Jurassic Park-like rainforest surrounded by



lush tropical vegetation and stunning waterfalls.

The route follows a levada and passes through two long tunnels, one around 2km in length, requiring a headtorch. Care must be taken not to collide with the low uneven ceiling of the tunnel and fall from the narrow path into the inky-black water of the levada flowing silently alongside. Predictably, we meet several people coming in the opposite direction which proves exceedingly awkward!

## We are now in a Jurassic Park-like rainforest

After following the levada along relatively flat terrain, past patches of electric-mauve geranium and shaggy knots of *Laurobasidium lauri*, an endemic parasitic fungal growth on the laurel trees, we descend sharply for around 80m only to have to ascend the final 630m to the plateau.

The slog to the campsite follows wooden steps uphill then contours round the mountainside following a pretty section of disused levada, before we leave the PR17 to join a new zig-zag road cut through the forest to service the windfarm atop the plateau. It is dusty and monotonous, but we arrive in good time at the wooded campsite where level pitches are at a premium.

## DAY SEVEN: FANAL'S FAIRYTALE FOREST

We awake to a riotous dawn chorus and are treated to the most spectacular sunrise imaginable. The sky is on fire as the pyrotechnics of dawn explode on the eastern horizon in shades of cerise-pink, vermillion, chrome-orange and saffron-yellow. It promises to be an absolute scorcher.

We break camp early to cross the exposed plateau, the only one on the island, before the sun's ferocious rays begin to bite. We pick up the PR13 to our final campsite at Fanal which takes us through dazzling green ferns and head-high heather for most of the way. The heat and humidity are tremendous, and we are grateful to flee into the shade of stands of laurel en route.

The campsite at Fanal is situated amid the remnants of Madeira's once-extensive Laurissilva forest. This remarkable ecosystem, grazed by crème caramel-coloured cows, dates from the Tertiary and once covered 90 percent of Southern Europe and North West Africa. Madeira means wood in Portuguese, and this World Heritage Site contains trees gnarled and bent with age, some up to 600 years old. It is the best surviving example of this once widespread ecosystem, found only in Macaronesia. We make camp under a magnificent



Round the bend on the PR14's Levada dos Cedros  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY



Madeira's Iceland: the Ilheus da Ribiera da Janela  
© ETHEREAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY





ancient laurel alive with the sound of Madeiran chaffinches.

## DAY EIGHT: DASTARDLY DESCENT TO PORTO MONIZ

I poke my head out of the tent to be greeted by another divine dawn. The glowing orb of the sun is soaring out of a cloud inversion into a sky of purple, indigo, crimson and egg yolk-yellow. We break camp early, heading for the PR14 and then the PR15 that will take us down to the coast, entailing a brutal descent of around 1,200m. On leaving Fanal, we encounter a series of knee-crunching wooden steps before we follow the pretty Levada dos Cedros which meanders through the lush subtropical rainforest.

Eventually the forest thins and we encounter the *poios* of the picturesque village of Ribiera da Janela with its red-roofed white-washed cottages clinging to the steep hillsides amid roads set at wickedly steep 45° angles. Cloud lies draped across the mountains like an ashen-hued shawl and there is not a breath of wind. The humidity is sapping as we trudge down through the village to the only place that sells beer: the Café da Ponte at the mouth of the River Janela. It's perched above an unexpectedly 'Icelandesque' black pebble beach fronting a gnarly group of basalt sea stacks named Ilheus da Ribiera da Janela.

My feet are absolutely crucified after the relentless descent, and I greedily quench my thirst with a couple of cool stouts before we set off on the final 2km of the trek along the disused coast road to Porto Moniz. This brings us rapidly to our hotel opposite some heavenly-looking tidal rockpools popular with bathers. These will be perfect for soothing our aching muscles after what has been a truly demanding trek, which tested our mettle to the limits. But the pools can wait. For first, the mad in Madeira have a wee bit of celebrating to do...

Watch our film on You Tube:

[youtu.be/H1bz8\\_M7BbA?si=McAhpvyx2dX12kmQ](https://youtu.be/H1bz8_M7BbA?si=McAhpvyx2dX12kmQ)

## POSTSCRIPT

Only the first 1.2km of the PR1 is currently open due to severe wildfire damage. The authorities have also imposed a 3 euro charge to walk all PR routes to restrict numbers. Information on booking tickets and campsites:

[simplifica.madeira.gov.pt/](https://simplifica.madeira.gov.pt/) ■





# SNOW DAYS IN WESTERN DÚN NA NGALL

**IAIN MILLER** EXPERIENCES THE DELIGHTS  
OF WINTER IN THE NORTH WEST



Winter in Ireland is a very fleeting mistress, with a sudden drop in the ambient air temperature followed by an even swifter rise in temperature; Winter conditions in the Irish mountains can come and go in a single day. It is when a period of extended cold weather hits the Emerald Isle, it is then that its mountains and, indeed, its countryside are transformed into a true winter wonderland.

I live at the base of the north face of Errigal in the middle of the huge blanket bog that is *Tulacha Beigile*,

Tullaghobegly. When Donegal gets an extended taste of winter, the countryside, and mountains around me become a pristine white and frozen playground. Just last week we had a three-day spell of snow-covered roads, closed schools and deep snow high in the hills around our home.

With the early am “School Closed Today” text, my 11-year-old son Luke and I prepared for our first day of a three-day winter adventure. Luke is no stranger to such days and is a sea stack and mountain climbing veteran



of 8 years now. He was up getting ready long before the official no-school text arrived, having already decided the night before he was calling in sick.

Our mission on day one was simply to visit *Loch an Ghainimh* (Lough Agannive) at the far southern end of our blanket bog at *Caiseal na gCorr* (Cashelnagor). We left the house and followed the long abandoned snow-covered railway line, which took us to *Caiseal na gCorr* (Cashelnagor) train station (abandoned). With us was Lokí, our two-year-old border collie, who considers himself a working dog, and he kept us ploughing through the snowy landscape at a brisk pace. Once we were at the station, we joined the wee matrix of bóirín that zig-zag across the back county away from any national roads. We arrived at our Lake, and it was an unfrozen mirror with the north face of Errigal reflecting on its pristine mirrored surface. With a quick lunch of brownies and peanut butter crackers, we made the return journey home. Whilst we were returning home, we devised a very cunning plan for the following day.

With a good 3 to 6 six inches of snowfall overnight, we waited until noon before driving cautiously towards *Gleann nan Deor* (Glennaneore) and *Mám na Mucaise* (Muckish Gap) at the base of the south face of Muckish.

Driving as far as we safely could, we dug out a roadside trench and left our van there. We then continued on foot for a 3-kilometre walk along an arctic tundra-style R256. As we gained height, the snow deepened, and several abandoned vehicles made us glad we left the van where we did. As we gained the road high point at *Mám na Mucaise* (Mamore Gap), we left the road and began to ascend the deep snow-covered slopes up a very wintry south face of Muckish. Leading the way as usual was Lokí, breaking trail through the nearly 3-foot snow drifts in the lower slope's terrain traps. We fought our way upward with no one else in sight and deep, pristine snow all around us. We arrived at the southern tip of the high plateau looking south towards Errigal and even *Slieve Tuaidh* (Slievetooley) in the uber far distance. One of the great joys of living so close to the hills is simply moments like this: the three of us









alone on the top of a snowy hill as the sun begins to set. We finished our second lunch and another round of brownies, donned the head torches, and began to descend. As had been promised all day, we arrived at the chip shop in *An Fál Carrach* (Falcarragh) at 8pm. Eating our chip shop dinner in the van, we made cunning plans for the following day.

With the forecast arrival of high temperatures and buckets of rain, we knew we were at the last day of the cold snap. Our wintery landscape was about to disappear for a wee while once again. Once more, the three of us left the house on foot in the dark this time, as our cunning plan was a winter ascent of Tower Ridge. Tower Ridge lives high on the north face of Errigal and provides an excellent steep and exposed day out. We were carrying all the ropes and climbing gear in our rucksacks as we once more headed across the fully winterised blanket bog around *Caiseal na*

*gCorr* (Cashelnagor). It took us a good while to arrive once more at *Loch an Ghainimh* (Lough Agannive), which is where we begin the ascent to Errigal's north face. As we arrived at the Loch it was now surrounded by much more snow and was in a truly spectacular winter condition. We sat for ages looking over the Loch towards Errigal. Finally, Luke summed up the situation perfectly: "It does not get much better than this!" he said. We had lunch, a snowball fight with Lokí and headed home.

*The online winter climbing guide for Donegal is found at [www.uniqueascent.ie/winter\\_climbing](http://www.uniqueascent.ie/winter_climbing)*

*Iain Miller is a rock climber living, working, and playing on the sea cliffs, sea stacks, uninhabited islands, and mountain ranges of County Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. His website is [uniqueascent.ie](http://uniqueascent.ie) ■*





# THE HC HART COMMEMORATIVE STONE

## FRANCES LEAHY ON THE LEGACY OF AN INFLUENTIAL 19TH CENTURY NATURALIST AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST

There is a commemorative stone to the Irish naturalist, guide writer and long distance endurance walker **Henry Chichester Hart** located on the Dublin Mountains Way before entering Cruagh Wood and beside Glendoo Brook (Grid Reference O12624 22243, [Map](#)). It is clearly marked on the East-West maps. Unfortunately this historical marker is now moss and lichen covered and it is difficult to read the inscription, which gives his name and shows a stylised figure. Ferns and brambles hide the stone carving. H.C. Hart was born in Raheny on July 29th 1847 and was the inspiration for the long distance **Hart Walk**. The section of the trail beside the inscribed stone was built by **Mountain Meitheal** with financial support from the **Irish Ramblers Club** and **Dublin Mountain Partnership (DMP)**.

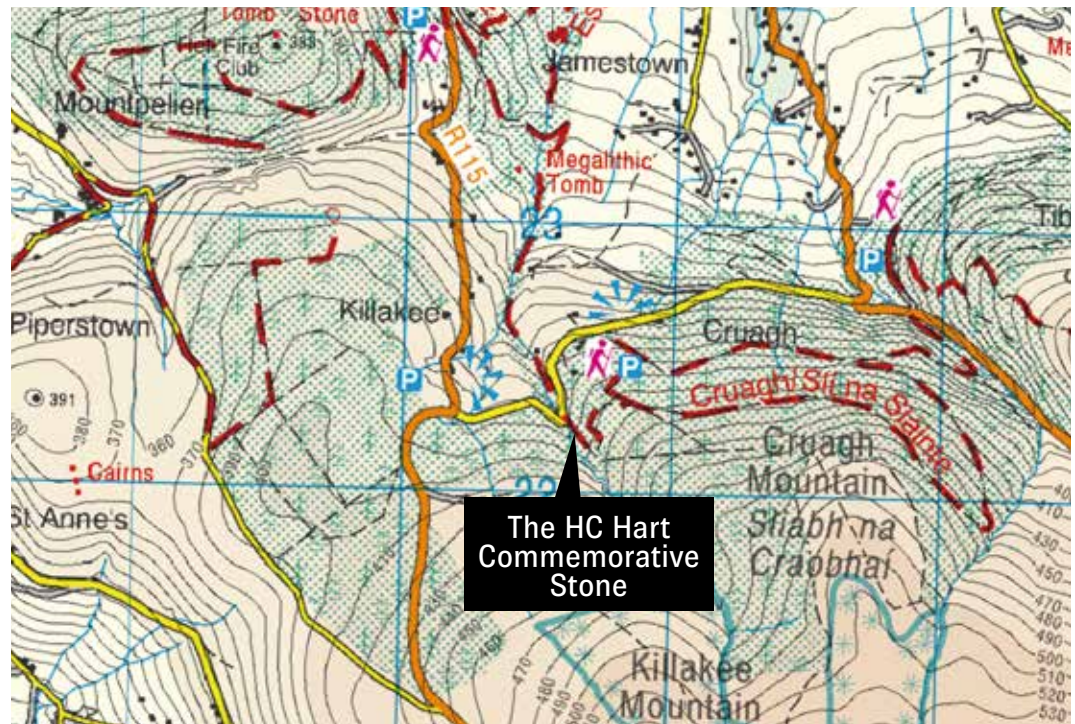
In 1886 H.C. Hart made and won a bet that he could walk from Terenure in Dublin to the summit of Lugnaquilla in Wicklow, and back, in 24 hours. The wager was for 50 guineas (almost €8,000 today). Hart (then 38) managed to complete the walk on the 21st of June 1886 with 10 minutes to spare! The Hart Walk is approximately 116 kilometres in length and 3,200m ascent.

Many of the late 19th and early 20th century Irish naturalists and plant collectors such as H.C.Hart, Robert Lloyd Praeger and R.M.Barrington were prodigious hillwalkers. Hart's interests were wide-ranging. He explored the Arctic and Palestine. He was an avid naturalist interested in both zoology and botany. He collected plant material in many regions of the world including North America, North



Africa and Eastern Asia and he published a *Flora of Howth* in 1887; *The animals mentioned in the Bible* 1888; *The Flora of the County Donegal* 1898 he also contributed to *Climbing in the British Isles* by Haskett Smith in 1895. He was also a Shakespearean scholar. He was High Sheriff of Donegal, a member of the Linnean Society and the Royal Geographical Society.

Of the men who carried out extensive field-work, H.C. Hart stands pre-eminent. He ranged over the mountains of Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Tipperary, accumulating new localities for alpine plants and a mass of altitudinal data for plants of all kinds. The Irish alpine plant species *Saxifraga Hartii* was named in his honour.



**More information on the Hart Walk:** See [MountainViews Challenge Calendar](#) (right down at the bottom) – it was last held as a public walk in 2007.

Outside Port lies Tormore Island, one of a group of boulders, a rock which, though hardly half a mile round its base, is a tremendous sea fowl breeding-place, second only to Horn Head. At low water Tormore can be reached from the shore, and it is scaled in many places by lads in search of eggs. One native was on the Great Tor when a storm arose, and cut him off from the shore and from all help. After a week he died of starvation and exposure. It is, perhaps, about 500 to 600 ft. high. Pursuing our way along the ever-varying cliffs, most interesting in a storm, the curious promontory called Sturrell is reached in about 4 miles. The knife-edged saddle is very rotten, but leads to a firm block of rock nearly 1,000 ft. above the sea. So defiant is the challenge of this rock that no cragsman can pass it by. The passage is not pleasant, yet even on a second visit the writer was powerless to resist temptation. The tottering wall of rotten rock gives the impression that the whole connection may slither down. Considering what desperate Atlantic storms this crumbling cliff withstands annually, such fears must be exaggerated. Nevertheless it would be improper to recommend this climb. It is dangerous as well as difficult, very exciting, and exceedingly delightful—after it is over.

**An addendum by the Editor about the writings of HC Hart:** As hillwalkers we learn about Ireland's wild landscapes and their attractions largely through what has been written about them. H.C. Hart was one of the first to vividly capture these natural wonders, and his writings remain strikingly relevant even today. Here, he describes the dramatic coastline of Donegal, including features like Tormore Island, and offers a refreshingly modern perspective on one of the most challenging scrambling feats: *the Sturrell*. He writes, "very difficult, very exciting, and exceedingly delightful after it is over."

From "*Climbing in the British Isles – Ireland*" by H.C. Hart (1895). This classic work, reprinted in 1974 by Mountaineering Ireland's predecessor under the guidance of Joss Lynam, demonstrates the grandeur of Ireland's climbing and hillwalking heritage. Hart's Victorian flair for exaggeration shows in his description of *The Sturrell*, which in reality measures 130m (426 feet). *Tormore Island North* is recorded as being 139m (456 feet). ■



# DERRIGIMLAGH BOG CLIFDEN, AND ITS UNIQUE HISTORY

BY TOM BARRAGRY



Derrigimlagh Bog, the Twelve Bens in the distance

## The Early Telegraph

The mid-19th century marked the beginning of the era of wired telegraph communication. This magnetic system operated by closing an electric circuit, sending a pulse along a copper wire to activate a magnet at the receiving end. This pulse could then be used either (a) to deflect an indicator needle on a scale (a method used on railways in Victorian England) or (b) to activate a brass spring hammer, clicking out Morse code for the receiver (a system adopted in the USA). This was a land-based system.

The subsequent laying of the first (short-lived) Atlantic telegraph cable in 1858, followed by more successful attempts from 1865 onwards, enabled near-instant communication between Europe and America for the



City telegraph wires, 1895

first time. Messages that had previously taken eight days by steamship could now be transmitted in minutes. The Atlantic cable, running from Heart's Content in Newfoundland to Valentia Island in County Kerry, made Valentia a hub for global telegraph traffic and the centre of



world communications at the time.

Despite the unsightly mass of overhead wires, the telegraph system worked perfectly. A major drawback was that there was no communication from shore to ships.

Years later, Ireland would again lead in communication innovation, this time with Guglielmo Marconi's wireless station in Clifden. A genius was needed to invent an offshore system —and that genius was Guglielmo Marconi.

### Guglielmo Marconi and Ireland

Marconi was born in Bologna, Italy, on April 25, 1874, the second son of Giuseppe Marconi, a wealthy landowner, and Annie Jameson, an Irishwoman from Daphne Castle in Enniscorthy. Annie, daughter of Andrew Jameson of the Irish whiskey distillers, was in Italy training to be an opera singer when she met her future husband.

Annie Jameson's business connections greatly aided Marconi's experimental and commercial career, bringing him into contact with major Irish corn merchants and grain suppliers. She doted on Guglielmo and encouraged his early scientific experiments. On her visits to London and Enniscorthy, she often brought Guglielmo and his brother along.

The Marconi family lived in a big house and estate at Villa Grifone outside Bologna, where young Guglielmo built a laboratory in the attic. At 20, inspired by Heinrich Hertz's earlier work on electromagnetic waves, Marconi began his experiments with spark-gap circuits and large aerials. He successfully transmitted radio waves across rooms, and later across his father's estate, with reception marked by a gunshot on the other side of a hill.

Unable to secure funding in Italy, Marconi's mother brought him to London. With backing from his Jameson cousin and seven Irish corn merchants, he founded the Wireless Telegraphy and Signal Company in 1897 (later renamed Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company). That same year, he patented his wireless system. Guglielmo's Irish connections were further strengthened when in 1905 he married an Irish woman, Beatrice O'Brien, of Dromoland Castle, Co Clare. The marriage however eventually



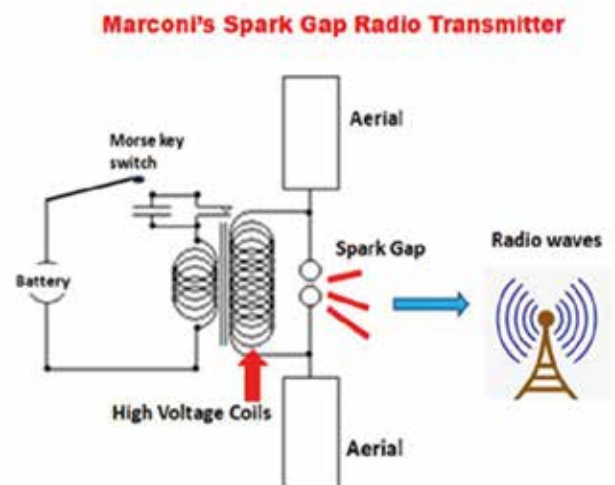
ended in divorce.

His system included a Morse key and there was a large battery to generate an electric charge, an inductance coil to increase and magnify the voltage, a breaker in the high voltage circuit, called a spark gap, which gave off radio waves when it sparked, and a large aerial (originally a sheet of copper), to beam the resultant electromagnetic radiation.

Determined to achieve even greater transmission distances, such as across the English Channel, Marconi used higher voltages and massive antennae sometimes hoisted by kites. These improved transmission distances from 400 metres to 50 miles and more, and Marconi quickly realised that he was then on the way to removing the necessity for wires and pioneering the advent of wireless telegraphy.



Marconi's original wireless with copper sheet aerial



The sparking system allowed Marconi to send pulsed messages of radio static, which, when received at a distance sounded like Morse code. No voice was transmitted, just intermittent bursts of electromagnetic waves which crackled in Morse code pulses at the receiver's end (similar to radio interference). It was wireless telegraphy. See the diagrams and pictures.

### Experiments Over Water

Marconi prioritized maritime communications, initially focusing on ship-to-shore and ship-to-ship transmissions. In 1898, he transmitted signals from Ballycastle to Rathlin Island in Ireland. Later that year, during a regatta near Kingstown Harbour (now Dún Laoghaire), he sent race results to shore, marking the world's first live broadcast of a sports event.

Marconi's groundbreaking work led to a grant from the Canadian government to establish a station at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

He made his big breakthrough in 1901 when he succeeded in transmitting a wireless message (the letter "S" in Morse code, which is three clicks or dots) from his station at Poldhu in Cornwall to Newfoundland. However he experienced extreme difficulty in providing a commercially reliable communication system and so he decided to move his easterly station as far west as possible and decided on Clifden.

### The Clifden Station



Derrigimlagh Bog, Connemara



The original station in 1912 (NLI. Colourised & enhanced by TB)



Huge storage capacitors in condenser house

Marconi selected Clifden, specifically Derrigimlagh Bog, as the site for his transatlantic wireless station. Officially opened on October 17, 1907, it became the world's first commercial transatlantic wireless transmitting station, connecting Clifden to Glace Bay.

The station covered several acres and included a high-voltage generator building with six boilers, a spark-gap transmission house, and a capacitor house with massive ceiling-high capacitors. The station also featured eight 210-ft (64m) masts for antennae, which were visible for miles. It employed over 200 people and operated its own steam railway to transport peat for the boilers.

The Clifden station played a pivotal role in maritime safety. Among its operators was Jack Phillips, who later served as the Titanic's wireless operator in 1912. After the Titanic struck an iceberg, Phillips sent SOS signals that





Steam train which delivered peat to the boiler house (in distance)

helped the Carpathia rescue over 700 survivors. Sadly, Phillips was among the 1,500 who perished.

The station remained a critical hub during World War I, transmitting vital messages between Europe and America.

By 1919, advancements in wireless technology such as the invention of the triode valve allowed the transmission of spoken words across the Atlantic. In that year it was Marconi who transmitted the first spoken words from Ireland across the Atlantic.



The eight huge antennae from the station

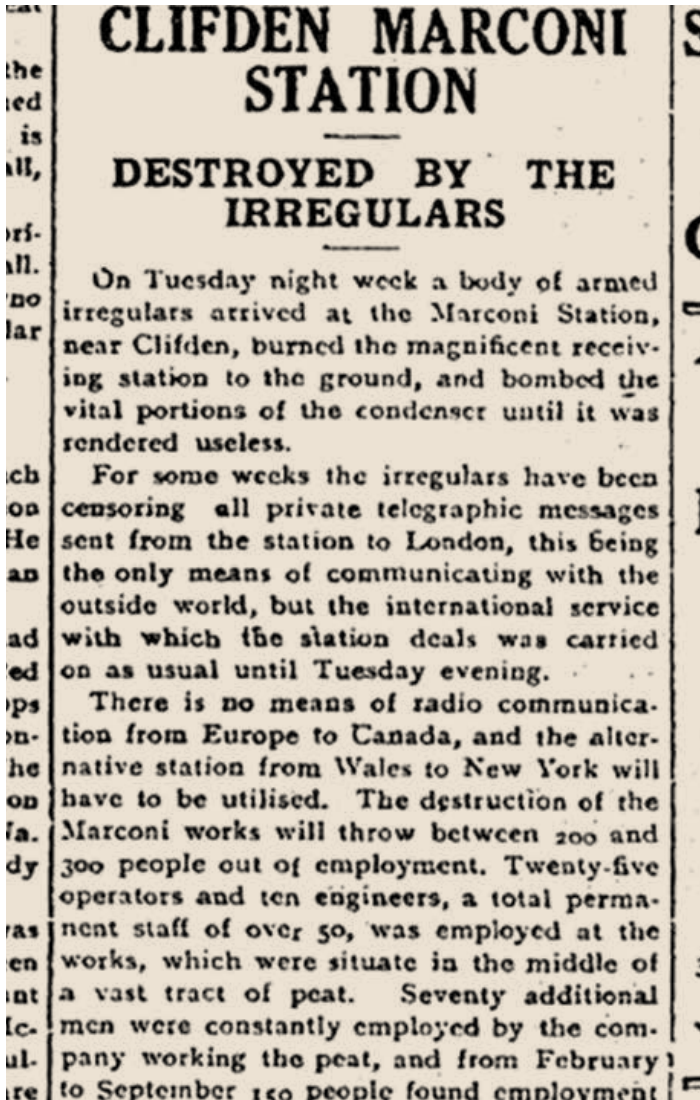
### **Alcock and Brown's Landing**

In June 1919, Alcock and Brown made the first non-stop transatlantic flight. After 15 hours and 58 minutes of flying over water they landed on Derrigimlagh Bog. Uncertain of their location upon reaching Ireland, they identified the Clifden station masts as their landmark. News of their historic flight was transmitted worldwide by the Marconi station.

Although the station was badly damaged by the anti-Treaty side during the Irish Civil War in 1922, its legacy endures.

Today, Derrigimlagh Bog is a magnificent wetland habitat





Civil War destruction, Irish Independent Aug 6th 1922



Remains of Marconi Station in 1944 showing narrow railway track leading to boiler houses (Courtesy of NLI. Colourised by TB)



Remains of the station today

along the Wild Atlantic Way, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Twelve Bens mountains. This blanket bog, rich in archaeology dating back over 6,000 years, features small lakes and diverse wildlife.

A looped walk around Derrigimlagh Bog highlights its history. This 5.3 km trail includes boardwalks and audiovisual stations, showcasing the locations of Marconi's station and Alcock and Brown's landing site. Six of the stations are shelters and indicate the location of landmarks such as Marconi's generating station, the condenser / capacitor building and the transmitting station itself. To commemorate Alcock & Brown's historic flight, two memorials were erected near Clifden. The first one is a sculpture of an aircraft tail-fin on Errislanann Hill, about 2 km north of the landing site. It was dedicated on June 15, 1959, on the 40th anniversary of the flight. It offers a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape and the

Atlantic Ocean. There is also a white stone cairn marking the exact landing spot on Derrigimlagh Bog.

Visitors can experience the area's history and natural beauty, reflecting on a time when Clifden was the centre of global communication.

**Location:** Derrigimlagh is 4.3 km south of Clifden on the R341. From Clifden, take the Ballyconneely Road, cross three bridges, and find it on the left. Coordinates: 53.461474° N, 10.023652° W or in Irish Grid: L65699 47608

For driving details [Derrigimlagh Bog](#) You can combine a visit to Derrigimlagh with a visit to other features highlighted on MountainViews such [coastal hill Maum](#) ■





Viewpoint displaying Alcock & Brown loading



Remains of station today



Boardwalk to the Alcock & Brown landing site



Alcock & Brown memorial on Errisland Hill



# RUN32 - RUNNING IRELAND'S COUNTY HIGH POINTS

BY DILLON LYNCH



Heading back to the car after ticking off Galtymore

When I set out on the RUN32 Challenge, the goal was clear: reach the highest point of each of Ireland's 32 Counties faster than anyone had ever done before. Patrick Curley's record of 53 hours and 13 minutes loomed large, but I secretly hoped to finish in under 50 hours. It was a lofty target, and I knew success would depend on thorough planning, effective preparation, and resilience when things inevitably got tough.

Training for such a challenge wasn't straightforward. With school, karate, and other commitments, I had to be flexible, squeezing in runs whenever I could. My focus was on building endurance rather than following a strict plan, and while most of my training happened on roads, years of hiking had prepared me for the varied terrain I would face. Planning the route was just as important. Using GPS tools

and data from previous attempts, I optimized each section to save distance and time, leaning on my experience to make smart decisions. Starting with Mweelrea at 7 pm allowed me to tackle the tougher peaks in daylight and reserve the easier ones for nighttime.

## **Mweelrea start**

From the first descent of Mweelrea, the pace was intense. I flew down in 17 minutes, a full five minutes faster than planned, though my legs immediately felt the impact. This set the tone for the entire challenge: balancing speed with strategy while staying adaptable to whatever the mountains threw at me. On Carrauntoohil, for instance, thick fog and a failing head torch turned what should have been a familiar route into a nerve-racking ordeal, while Knockboy tested



my patience with relentless cramps.

Driving between the peaks presented its own challenges. My dad, who acted as both driver and logistical mastermind, kept everything running smoothly, from navigating back roads to preparing gear and food. The transitions were quick, jumping out of the car to run and returning just as fast to refuel on the move. There was no time for lingering, but this efficiency saved us hours over the course of the challenge.

### Cuilcagh via Benbeg

Each peak brought its own personality. On Cuilcagh, I chose the Benbeg route, which offered a shorter and less steep climb compared to the popular boardwalk. On Truskmore, fatigue led to a poor decision to cut across a steep, rocky slope, resulting in scrapes, lost gear, and valuable time wasted. By contrast, smaller peaks like Cupidstown Hill and Corn Hill offered much needed reprieves, their simplicity a

stark contrast to the punishing climbs of Slieve Donard and Benbaun.

**Slieve Donard was by far the toughest.** Late in the challenge, the steep climb was made even harder by sheer exhaustion, but the sight of fellow runners cheering me on at the summit was a huge emotional boost that stayed with me all the way to the finish on Errigal.

The journey wasn't without moments of humour and camaraderie. Crossing bogs often meant losing shoes, as happened on Carrauntoohil, when I found myself standing in socks in the dark trying to retrieve them. Supporters along the way also added a lighthearted element - like my sister's attempt to run alongside me on Galtymore, which ended in a spectacular face-plant into the turf. Dinner and treats delivered by Mam along with massive family support at the base of Knockmealdown was another great boost. These moments, though brief, brought levity to an otherwise grueling challenge and reminded me of the incredible community cheering me on.

Heading down the Black Road from Galtymore  
BRIAN TOOMEY, IJKA



### Mental Resilience

RUN32 wasn't just a test of physical endurance; it was also a lesson in mental resilience. There were moments of doubt—steep climbs that seemed endless, stretches of tarmac road that dragged on forever, sleep deprivation and the ever-present challenge of keeping the momentum going. The physical toll was significant, with cramps and fatigue setting in early and persisting throughout. Yet, there was something special about knowing that each step brought me closer to the finish line.

Support played an enormous role in getting me through. My dad's meticulous planning meant I didn't have to think about anything beyond the next mountain. He made sure I had everything I needed, from food to fresh gear, and his encouragement never wavered. Seeing friends, family, and even strangers cheering me on at various points in the challenge reminded me of the bigger picture: this was not just about setting a record, but about raising funds for Barretstown, a cause close to my heart. Knowing that this effort would help make a difference for children and families added a sense of purpose that carried me through the hardest moments.

### Lessons

Every mountain taught me something. Mweelrea's descent reminded me of the importance of pacing myself. Knockboy taught





Leaping back to the car at the base of Knockmealdown

me to push through discomfort, while Truskmore reinforced the value of sticking to the plan, no matter how tempting shortcuts might seem. The smaller peaks, like Cupidstown Hill, were opportunities to catch my breath, while Slieve Donard and Errigal demanded every ounce of energy I had left. By the time I reached the finish line, I had not only achieved my goal but also gained a deeper appreciation for Ireland's mountains and the incredible support of the people who helped me along the way.

When I ascended Errigal and stopped the clock, the feeling was indescribable. At **49 hours, 45 minutes, and**

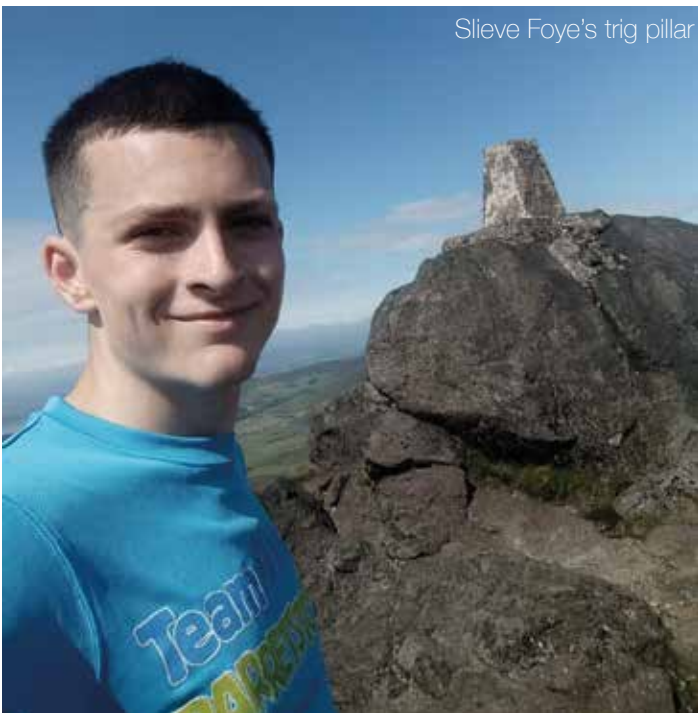
**17 seconds**, I had smashed the record and achieved my goal of a sub-50-hour finish. It was the culmination of months of effort and the support of so many people. RUN32 wasn't just about setting a record - it was about seeing the beauty of Ireland's mountains, testing my limits, and raising over €9,000 for **Barretstown**, a charity that gives so much to families in need.

Looking back, I'm incredibly proud of what we accomplished. It was a journey filled with challenges, triumphs, and lessons learned. To anyone considering this challenge in the future: plan well, stay adaptable, and savour every moment. It's an experience like no other.

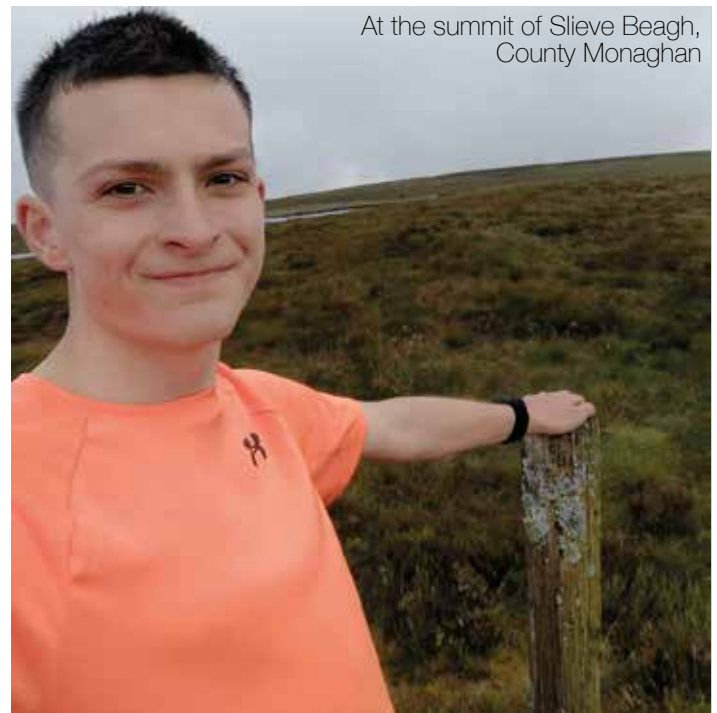
You can see the official FKT Record at <https://fastestknowntime.com/route/irelands-county-high-points-ireland> and you can read my full writeup at <https://fastestknowntime.com/fkt/dillon-lynch-irelands-county-high-points-ireland-2024-07-13>

**Editorial Note:** *We have included this because it is an interesting personal account of the rigours of preparing for and visiting the County Highpoints. Interesting choices were made such as reaching Cuilcagh via Benbeg. At times it sounded like "Ireland's Fittest Family."*

*Running time was around 21 hours, Driving 28. This therefore is to a large extent an achievement of driving and logistics. MV has strong reservations about challenges that are likely only to be bettered by faster driving and which require running over land at night since that could disturb landowners and animals. MountainViews has a list of the [County Highpoints](#) here, dating back to the noughties and it is a popular challenge for which we give completion awards, including the one we gave Dillon in 2017. ■*



Slieve Foye's trig pillar



At the summit of Slieve Beagh, County Monaghan





Benbaun summit in the Twelve Bens



Job done! Celebration on top of Errigal





Snow Peak  
FERGAL HINGERTY

# MOUNT SHAHDAG

## AN EXPEDITION THROUGH AZERBAIJAN'S REMOTE HIGHLANDS

WORDS BY  
**FERGAL HINGERTY**

### Caucasus, Shahdag National Park and “Summit Fever”

“Summit fever” is a mountaineering term that describes the drive or compulsion of a climber to reach the summit of a mountain no matter what the cost and later I will show its relevance to this trip.

The Caucasus mountains cover a wider area than just Georgia, Russia and Armenia, it also includes Azerbaijan. Therefore, to explore more of these towering mountains I took a plane to Azerbaijan on the south eastern edge of the Caucasus mountains. This trip into the Caucasus mountains was nonetheless as always full of many twists and turns and ups and downs. The Caucasus area is home to 40 different ethnic groups, so between the mountains, valleys, food and culture there are many things to see and do in this area.

The Caucasus it is said by the local folklore was created when God flew around putting mountains all over the world and the devil cut a hole in his bag and some fell out here. It



Map shows the position of Azerbaijan with the Black Sea to the West, the Caspian Sea to the East, Russia to the North and Iran to the South. The upper marker is Khinalig village and the southern one is the entrance to the park.





The road to Khinalig **FERGAL HINGERTY**



Khinalig village **FERGAL HINGERTY**

is home to 8 mountains higher than Mont Blanc and many more dramatic high mountains besides those ones as well. One thing for sure there is always much more going to happen here than what you anticipate beforehand.

Shahdag National Park is in the north east of Azerbaijan. It is also known as Şahdağ Milli Parkı in Azerbaijani.

### **Arrival in Azerbaijan and Journey to Khinalig Village**

On the first day I flew into Baku and arrived early in the morning due to a flight delay, which meant that very little sleep was had. We then spent the rest of the day sightseeing



Khinalig from above **FERGAL HINGERTY**

around the new and old towns of Baku, before we had a meal and then went early to bed. Unfortunately, I had a mosquito in the room in Baku which kept me awake again that night which was to have consequences later on. The following day we travelled by jeep to the remote village of Khinalig which is on the UNESCO list.

The people in this village have their own language 'Ketish' which is only spoken there due to the remoteness of the village surrounded by the towering Caucasian mountains. It has an incredible 49 letters which is many more than the 26 currently in the English language. It is also situated halfway along the Köç Yolu route between the Shahdag highlands and the Shirvan lowlands. The people here have lived in isolation to the surrounding Azerbaijan countryside as the village as very remote and inaccessible.

### **Acclimatisation Hike: Khari Bulbul Peak**

After arriving and getting rooms in the guesthouse, we proceeded to prepare our gear for the days ahead. Soon, we were out on our first acclimatisation walk. Khinalig is at a height of around 2,100 Metres and the first evening



Summit Kharibulbul **FERGAL HINGERTY**





The descent from Kharibulbul  
**FERGAL HINGERTY**



Road to perdition  
**FERGAL HINGERTY**

our 4 hour climb was to the peak of Khari Bulbul which has a height of 2,743 metres. This was a modest seven Km climb really of a little over 600 metres, however all acclimatization helps. It was misty and a straight forward gentle enough climb to the marker pole with the number 2,743 on it. A swift descent and finally I had my first good night's sleep in 3 days.

#### **Entering Shahdag National Park**

The next morning after an early breakfast we were picked up by a truck and a jeep. The truck was full of most of the expedition and the second bags as well as the rucksacks.





Road into Shahdag National Park  
FERGAL HINGERTY

I declined the dust of the lorry for the bouncing around of the jeep, not much of a choice really. A brief stop at the entrance to the park and we had to hand the passports over to the Kalashnikov totting soldiers of the Azerbaijan army at the entrance to the Shahdag National Park. The Shahdag national park is on the border of the Russian Federation and the Azerbaijan Republic, so special border passes were required. This is the largest national park in the Caucasus region and the plans so far were to climb both Shahdag (4,243 Metres) and Bazardüzü (4,466 Metres).

After a short while, the passports were handed back and we proceeded to go up the dirt track. This had a raging river beside the track and steep drops as well, which made the journey interesting to say the least. We were bounced around a lot in the jeep and the driver kept stopping to throw water into the radiator. To be truthful it was more the brake fluid I was worried about and not the water in the radiator. The views were wonderful and with Azerbaijani Pop music (similar to Disco Polo) blaring from the radio it was certainly atmospheric to say the least.

Eventually we reached the pass at around 2,800 metres and waited for the lorry to catch up and then the

long descent. We descended on a narrow track until we reached the valley floor and swept onto a wide plain. We stopped briefly and got out to stretch our legs in all directions, there was a light sprinkling of snow on all the towering mountains surrounding the valley and the sun was shining. The green grass of the valley was sprinkled with numerous wild flowers of all colours and varieties and numerous butterflies fluttered around, what a perfect moment in essence really!

Back onto the truck and into the jeep, now for the river crossing, the lorry with a high wheel base crossed easily. We in the jeep however had the water lapping against the doors of the jeep which made it somewhat interesting. We drove on for a few more kilometres over the flattish ground and stopped at a corner of the valley where the horses were waiting. The bags and ourselves were unloaded from the jeep and the lorry and the second bags were placed on the horses back.

### **The Campsite Experience**

Now the final climb up onto around 3,100 metres where the campsite was located. After around one hour we reached





The view from the campsite  
FERGAL HINGERTY

the campsite on a small raised area near a waterfall with unbelievable scenery down the valley. Once again, a carpet of blue, yellow and purple wild flowers was scattered all around and with the sound of roaring water, this wide ledge for the tents was an ideal camping spot really. The horses were waiting with the tents and our second bags, quickly the tents were unloaded along with the second bags and we made sure our sleeping places were erected in a suitable flattish spot. After a short while it was time to get out the 'jetboil' (gas stove) and cook the evening meal, as immediately afterwards we did our next acclimatisation hike.

This was to the left of the campsite and we took a three hour hike up to around 3,400 metres to prepare for the following day's hike as we were getting up at 3 am and leaving at 4 Am. It gets dark early here and everyone was in their tents and asleep by ten PM. Fortunately I had surrounded the bags left outside the small tents with a big black plastic bag, as a thunderstorm started around 11 PM and with thunder, lightning and rain it was going to be a restless night at best. There was no room in the tent for the gear, however at least my gear was kept dry.

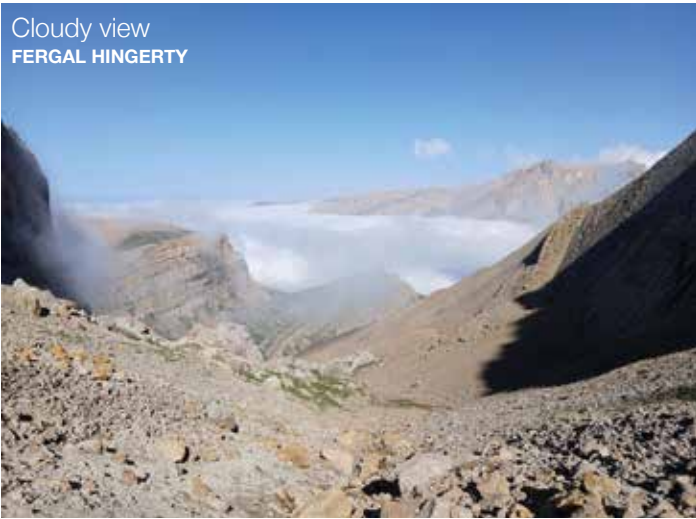
After a restless night in a cramped tent with thunder and

lightning, I groggily woke not feeling the best, I prepared water bottles, tea and the breakfast porridge. All the water was filtered from a nearby stream around 200 metres away. I had one good night's sleep in four days and was very concerned how the day was going to go, as I felt not great at all and not so strong. I put on my headtorch and headed up the mountain trail following the others. At this stage the weather was dry and clear and shortly afterwards on our ascent the sun's early morning powerful rays spread some warmth over us. After a few hours we reached Shahdag pass at around 3,600 metres and the chill had gone out of the day a little.

We rested and took water, snacks and tea, most of us shed layers as the second part of the climb which involved a traverse of a scree field and ice field valley was to come. As this was sheltered the heat of the sun and the snow ensured that extra layers were not needed. Also, at this point our helmets were put on for safety reasons and the ice cleats were also at the ready for the ice fields traverses. This valley was around two kilometres wide and this was going to be slow and difficult and a lot of concentration would be needed too. We crossed around ten or eleven



Cloudy view  
FERGAL HINGERTY



ice fields and also at least ten scree fields. The slope was at a severe angle and the potential for a serious accident was very high, so intense concentration was needed at all times.

After an hour we stopped at around 3,800 metres for a water break and a rest. I had not been feeling well earlier due to a lack of sleep over the last few days. I had

recovered a little but now the sheer fatigue of one and half day's sleep in 4 days hit me. Maybe the food had an effect as well?

### **The Key Decision Point**

I was at a key decision point (KDP). The basic 3 principles of KDP were to

- (1.) stop and
- (2.) rest which i did (as well as re-fuel) but the most important thing was to
- (3.) assess the situation.

Like all the mountaineers out there reading this we have all reached this point and in common with you all in most cases, we sometimes take a bad decision but mostly a good decision. I knew even though I was exhausted, I was still capable of reaching the summit. Then, the old adage springs to mind "to reach the summit is optional, to descend is mandatory."

**The Cliffhanger. The rest of this article will be in the next MountainViews Quarterly. ■**

Mount Shahadag  
FERGAL HINGERTY





# NEPHIN BEGS BOTHY: MCCANN'S COTTAGE – A FAMILY VISIT



## TOM SWEENEY TAKES THE FAMILY ON A 24-HOUR BOTHY EXPERIENCE

The National Parks & Wildlife Service seem to have managed to renovate and open a new bothy in the Nephin Begs, with little fanfare, in late 2023. The cottage



The unfurnished bothy interior TOM SWEENEY

was originally home to Paddy McCann and his family, until their death during the great famine. Although it now seems like a beautiful and spectacular place, it would have been very remote and a hard living off the poor soil. Location: Grid Ref: F99319 06180 and map on MountainViews: [mountainviews.ie/location/F9931906180/](https://mountainviews.ie/location/F9931906180/)

After hearing about the bothy, and a failed attempt to organise a lads trip, I headed for an overnight with my wife and 2 kids (aged 6 and 5).

Although early September, it was a beautiful summer day, as we departed from near the Letterkeen Trailhead. The walk-in to the bothy is about 1 hour for a family of four, with overnight kit, on good forest tracks. The route is well marked and there's little chance of not finding the bothy.

On arriving at the bothy, it's not setup as you'd expect a Scottish bothy. There's no furniture or fireplace. However, it's clean and dry, with some yellowy water available from the nearby stream. Similar to Scottish bothies, you can't book the bothy, and it is based on a first come first served



Breakfast **TOM SWEENEY**

and boggy ground to link back onto the boardwalk, and then reverse our route back to the car.

The bothy is in a strange location, but could be used for an overnight from the Western Way or Bangor Trail, with significant diversions. It also could be used as a stop on an off-the beaten track route to Bireencorragh ([mountainviews.ie/summit/112/](http://mountainviews.ie/summit/112/)) from the NorthWest, but there are more interesting ways up that mountain. The bothy could also be accessed via mountain bike or bike packing.

We had a great trip, even if it was less than 24 hours. When planning the trip, we had been expecting to be stuck inside, sheltering from the traditional north Mayo weather (last summer was not exactly inspiring!). However, approaching the weekend, the forecast gave dry settled weather and we then enjoyed 2 days of spectacular warm, dry and sunny weather.

Planning the overnight in the bothy allowed us to not carry a tent, and carry the odd luxury. Our rucksacks were still quite full, as each my wife and I each had 2 sleeping mats, 2 sleeping bags, etc. My kids thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and request to go back at every mention of it.

With the warm weather, the kids were outside playing in the stream most of the time, or doing what kids do in the outdoors; collecting sticks, stones and pine cones. In the event of bad weather, and for some calm time, we also had Uno card game.

However, for those of us based in the west, it is ideal for a family overnight in the outdoors. ■

Hiking out **TOM SWEENEY**

basis. Considering how unknown this bothy is, I was not concerned, but my wife was fully prepared (to return home) in the event that it was already fully occupied. In the evening we did have 2 walkers pause at the bothy, but they were simply looking for a toilet. There is no toilet!

Trying to cook outside, we were inundated with flying ants, and so cooked indoors and returned outside after dinner, to admire the sunset.

The next morning, we continued up the track to Jamsie's Well. The water from the well allegedly cures kidney stones, but it is currently an unglamorous series of Wavin plastic pipes! Although the loop walk was not finished construction, we persevered through some rough

Towards Jamsie's Well **TOM SWEENEY**



# TAKING THE MEASURE OF THREE MOUNTAINS

## MICHAEL GUILFOYLE PACKS HIS TAPE MEASURE FOR A MOUNTAINVIEWS SURVEYING TRIP

It would be fair to say that most people go into the hills for the fun and the challenge and the beauty and the camaraderie of it. And sometimes, some of us will go alone to “feel” in our hearts or souls the privilege and the wonder of just “being” in our wild places. We would try to hush our minds and let our wild places tell us of their stories in their quiet way, and unveil their beauty for us. Some of us again, if we are brave enough, seek both our own selves and that deeper personal experience by sometimes lingering long and alone on some well-loved hollow or hilltop.

And for those of us that do endeavour to see these places in the times and at the hours when few others do, the rewards are many and can include, especially, the magical failing of the light that Yeats conjures up in his evocative poem *The Clothes of Heaven*:

“- the blue and the dim, and the dark clothes of night,

and light, and the half light...”

But various times this year, I was on three surveying trips, where three and four of us, accompanied by various supporters and hangers on, went into the Hills of Donegal (Bluestacks), and of Mayo (Sheeffrys and Croagh Patrick) on a focussed and single-minded expedition. There was to be no mindless indulging on beauty or story - no, this was to be a scientific, not a romantic or spiritual, experience. We were there to take the measure of some obscure, unremarked and unremarkable mountain masses, below our horizon of interest, hiding hitherto in the wild fastnesses of these counties!

And so on January of last year, on the first of these 2024 expeditions, Simon and I and three supporters (including my son Eoin) set off on the most beautiful of calm sunny January days to measure the altitude of awkwardly situated Croaghbarnes in the Bluestacks. The OSI map showed its altitude as 499 m, a metre below qualifying as an Arderin, and Simon, ever the tidy, curious mind, wanted to be sure that this was not another candidate for inclusion on his fascinating MountainViews lists. The fact that this top was virtually inaccessible for List Baggers, and would only add to their misery in adding on this one, was lost on Simon! [Ed: you have no idea what summiteers can and will do!] That said the expedition was saved from being a mindless technical exercise by the beauty of both day and place. The pink granite was at its warmest, the



Measuring Crott,  
Croagh Patrick behind  
MICHAEL GUILFOYLE



Sheeffrys  
MICHAEL GUILFOYLE



ground conditions were firm and often granite-paved, the craic was good and the views up north to Errigal and down south to Benbulbin were truly stunning. And the descent down the Corrabber River Valley, a tricky river crossing, a January darkness finish and the need for a hastily constructed car split gifted us all the familiar old challenges that can accompany both a non-conventional trip into the hills and properly soaked boots.

And then in July, a far less dramatic and much more relaxing cartographic expedition into the Sheeffrys happened. This time we were joined by John A Burke, whose eminently practical engineering bent well complemented Simon's quest for surveying exactitude. This time Simon's inquisitive mind sought to be satisfied as to the exact location of the highest point on the narrow, sinuous pre-glacial plateau surface on the core of the range.

This time the weather was glorious, as it should have been given it was high Summer. We parked in beautiful Glenummera and soon found a lovely elegantly curving spur that delivered us at John's fast pace to high ground in no time. Simon and indeed John's enthusiasm levels went hyper [Ed: steady on there], as I indulged in dreamy romantic internal musings on the beauty around our high perch. The air was clear and calm and great lazy showers brushed the mountains with dark shadow shadings and all the deeply incised glacial coum edges stood out in sharp relief.

I could enjoy all this despite John and Simon's determined leapings from one high point to another perhaps more or less high, shouting out altitudinal judgements to each other like some version of Alpine mountain yodellers! John had a train to catch in Castlebar and so the pace down was fast again, but the easy ground conditions and firm footing allowed for a lovely relaxed perusal of lake and mountain and sky.

The massif that is Croagh Patrick is probably the most dramatic and eye-catching in Ireland. However, when anywhere near it, one's eyes and boots are inevitably drawn to that iconic cone that is our Holy Mountain. [Ed: yes, well not all of us are into religion]

Simon's eagle eye, however, had long lingered over Crott Mountain to the east of Croagh Patrick, tantalisingly topping out at 500 m on the OSI map of the area. Was it really 500m and an Arderin or a bit short?

So we went to find out, four Ramblers and a stray Englishman intent on making his mark currently by climbing every hill in Britain and Ireland topped by old trig pillars. [Ed, Rob Woodall is a professional summiteer and legend in Britain, [for example see here](#)]. We parked at the Mayo Mountain Rescue Station just to the south of the cone of Croagh Patrick and set off along the Western Way, all four of us members of the Irish Ramblers Club in awe of the stories and achievements of this stray Englishman whom Simon had liaised with after he heard there was a group of English summiteers in the area. After about 2.5kms of the Way, we broke off up the "Pilgrim's Walk" and climbed steadily to our 500m destination, where Simon and John set up their stall and commenced measuring prominences and tops. Meanwhile Clodagh and I sat and just soaked up the great unfailing beauty of Clew Bay, its Islands and that great mountain barrier of the Nephin Begs hiding from us the wild and wonder filled fastnesses of North Mayo.

A de rigueur ascent of the cone by John, Clodagh and me in cold incessant rain followed. Inadequate gear, however, saw a soaked and miserable me wrapped in one of Clodagh's towels eating cold soggy chips and battered cod in Clodagh's 4 star accommodation in Westport, rented for the occasion of the expedition. Not that anyone cared. The job was done and both suffering and/or enjoyment were irrelevant!

Note from Simon Stewart. Results for the summits mentioned:

Mountain	Height, metres	Prominence	Result	Track
Croaghbarnes, Bluestacks	498.8	54m	Demoted from Arderins	<a href="#">Track</a>
Tievummera	759.6	7.9m	Changed name to Tievummera Trig and demoted from Arderin etc	<a href="#">Track</a>
Tievummera Highpoint	760.3	37m	Created this, because it's higher than the trig pillar and is now the Arderin, VL and Highest Hundred.	<a href="#">Track</a>
Crott Mountain, on N Ridge of the Croagh Patrick area.	499.7	Over 75m	Just misses being an Arderin	<a href="#">Track</a>

Various other summits were surveyed on these and other 2024 trips in MountainViews's continuing effort to substantiate our lists where there could be an issue of validity. And have a good time doing it with anyone who wants to come along. There will be more this year. ■



# EXPLORING INISHBIGGLE ISLAND: A STEP BACK IN TIME

**DAMIAN MCDONAGH** VISITS A LESS-TRAVELLED ISLAND ON MAYO'S NORTH COAST



Inishbiggle shoreline  
ADOBE STOCK

In May of 2024, I spent several hours exploring Inishbiggle Island. It's that small island sandwiched between Achill Island and the mainland area at Ballycroy National Park in County Mayo. I can only describe it as the quintessential

off-the-beaten track hidden gem here in the west of Ireland.

Up to the late 1800s, Inishbiggle Island once housed over 180 inhabitants more or less evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants.

Now with a small population of 12 inhabitants, Inishbiggle Island ticks all the boxes for anyone seeking a day away from all the hustle and bustle most of us now experience on a daily basis. Arrive prepared as there are no shops and certainly no bar/restaurants. The small post office closed over twenty-years-ago.

There are two ferry departure points, Bulls-mouth on Achill Island and Doran's Point off the N59 Road near Mulranny County Mayo. For Doran's Point the left-hand-side turn is just after Keane's Post Office and Foodstore. It's well signposted coming off the N59 Road.

Google ferries to Inishbiggle Island and all the relevant information will be there. Inishbiggle-based Michael Leneghan operates from Doran's point with boats departing each day at 9am except Tuesday which sees a 12.30pm departure and Thursday I believe it's 10.30am His phone number is on the website and he's usually out and about; he may not immediately answer. Ideally, you'd need to book day or two or two beforehand.

It's a small boat going back and forth each way. The journey over takes around ten minutes. I guess it carries around six passengers.

Michael is both a gentleman and scholar and is an







Abandoned homestead  
DAMIAN MCDONAGH

absolute wealth of knowledge and information on the island's history. He's really flexible on the return trip so agree on a time. In my opinion around five hours should suffice.

If an Ireland of a past time still exists, you'll certainly have stumbled upon it on Inishbiggle Island. The easy walking trails follow the only paved roads on the island and there are times when you'll feel like you have hopped onto a time machine and transported you back to a distant Ireland. The trail has two starting points on both sides of the island where the boats berth. It's well signposted throughout and you can pick up the trail beside either pier.

Throughout the trail, the fields that envelop the island are noticeably empty and silent now. Abandoned cottages are a last standing testament to the island natives who emigrated to far off lands, many never to return. Clusters of sheep and several donkeys converge in fields beside small lakes offering up the most nourishing grass feed.

Some beautiful beaches combined with a stunning series of unforgettable vistas make this island a true joy to explore on foot. The scenery looking over towards Slievemore Mountain and Croaghaun on Achill Island is heart-stopping.

Built in the late 1800s to accommodate the Protestant community on the island, the Holy Trinity Church is a standing testament to that once thriving populace that is now no more. It's situated in a lovely pastoral setting shrouded in a colourful array of pink rhododendrons. I was nothing short of enraptured to spend some time here listening to the chorus of birds nesting around the enclosed church and its environs.

A view that combines both Achill Island and Croagh Patrick, I can truly say it is one of the best on the island. It's the last stop before continuing onwards to Gobnadoogha

Quay and back over to the mainland at Doran's Point. I'd also recommend taking the slight detour on the right-hand-side heading towards the beach. On the left you'll see the former residence, now a ruin, of the Protestant school teacher.

Taking the return boat back to Doran's Point, Michael talked about the long-term future and viability of the Island. He mentioned a paltry population of 12 men over the age of 50 and never married, it certainly doesn't give hope.

This day trip is easily accessible from Galway with some spectacular scenery throughout the drive up to County Mayo.

#### **Further information:**

[MountainViews Island Page](#) This includes a mention of the 14 knot (26km/h) tide at the west end of the island. ■



Main road, Inishbiggle  
DAMIAN MCDONAGH



Protestant church, Inishbiggle  
DAMIAN MCDONAGH



# SCALING IRELAND'S HUNDRED HIGHEST MOUNTAINS

A COUPLE'S JOURNEY,  
INSPIRED BY "IRISH PEAKS"

BY **NUALA BANNON  
& PAT MACKEN**

June 10 2024 was '**Centenary Day**' for us – we completed summitting Ireland's "Highest 100" as listed in Mountaineering Ireland's '*Irish Peaks*' book. This beautifully produced book is lovely for anyone to browse through but for us it was the inspiration to visit new places and challenge ourselves now that we had the gift of time in retirement. We have been active walkers since the early 1990s, including walking on the continent especially in France and Italy. Our membership of Siúl (a club associated

with Nuala's former workplace) and MS1 and MS2 training greatly expanded our experience and capability.

"List Completion" started for us with the publication of the Collins Press - '*Ireland's County High Points: A Walking Guide*' which piqued our interest when we realised we only had one "tough" one left to accomplish (Benbaun in Connemara). We resolved to complete the list and, in doing so, to explore areas we might not normally visit. COVID put a stop to our gallop, but once we were released again in



Final climb to Stumpa Dúloigh  
PAT MACKEN



2020, we completed the outstanding County High Points by October 2021.

The idea of “List Completion” as a source of inspiration for new walks had been kindled. We purchased Mountaineering Ireland’s *‘Irish Peaks’* book in March 2020. We also started utilising the [www.mountainviews.ie](http://www.mountainviews.ie) website which allowed us to log peaks visited. The many downloadable .gpx tracks (often with walker’s comments on issues) proved to be an invaluable tool in completing our “Top 100”. The website

also has lists such as “Vandeleur-Lynams” (peaks > 600m), “Arderins” (peaks > 500m), and one that may be of interest to many – the “Local 100” list (the nearest 100 summits to one’s home address).

When *‘Irish Peaks’* arrived, we discovered that we had already completed 51 tops – all the Wicklow, Mourne and Cooley summits and most of the Galtee, Knockmealdown and Comeragh peaks. We resolved to chase down the remaining 49 – mostly on the western seaboard which was





Onwards to Stumpa Dúloigh



Final climb to Beann **PAT MACKEN**

a bit of a desert for us. The last 4 years have been wonderful discovering the delights of Ireland: its beautiful flowers and fauna (including Donegal's Golden Eagles soaring over Dooish), and its wild and varied terrain from the rocky Bens of Connemara, the bogs of Mayo and so many magnificent, and frequently unseen, lakes. We finished in Jun 2024 with Stumpa Dúloigh followed by Beann.

So what did we learn?

• **Planning & Safety** – we spent many wet days pouring over

maps (EastWest where available) and combing the [www.mountainviews.ie](http://www.mountainviews.ie) website for routes. Checking for gradients and measuring climbs became particularly relevant when doing out and back walks and had to re-climb peaks! If we were concerned about crossing an arête, we did the circuit in whichever direction would lead to the earliest crossing of the arête so if we didn't like the look of it, we could turn back at the earliest opportunity.

• **Talking to local farmers** – we had many really nice engagements with farmers when asking if it was acceptable to park and access land. We were told how to avoid difficult river crossings and advice on how best to get to the open hillside was willingly provided. Our seeking permission was much appreciated. One particular memory

is seeing a farmer coming towards us after a tough 7 hour circuit on the Beara peninsula. The prospect of being told we were not welcome was concerning ... but all he wanted to ask was why we hadn't crossed a fence at the point where he had lowered the wiring and removed the barbs to facilitate walkers!! In 4 years, we only had one access issue with a farmer and we found an alternative route the following year that didn't involve his property.

• **Weather forecast** – the Met Éireann mountain forecast app is now our most used app! As we were hiking in areas





Setting out on Top 100 Day

that were new for us, and at times in terrain with elements of exposure and steep ground, visibility and wind were important aspects to keep an eye on. Winds of 50km/h while scrambling on the Bens could be less comfortable than 80km/h winds on the grassy rounded hills of Wicklow.

• **Yes we can** – we feel now that we can successfully hike in any Irish mountain range. While we would still like the support of a professional guide for particular ridge walks in Kerry we haven't yet traversed, in general we are happy to continue exploring new peaks ourselves with our trusty Garmin, the Hiiker app (including its EastWest maps) and the [www.mountainviews.ie](http://www.mountainviews.ie) website resource.

**A favourite walk?** - it is impossible to pick a particular area or mountain as a favourite, but we could classify a few along the following lines:

• **Interesting** – the Miner's Path up Muckish in Donegal is a short hike but seeing the remnants of the mining equipment and understanding the story behind it opened our eyes to the historical significance of the place. It was an important source of high-quality silica during the two World Wars. The YouTube video 'The Glass Mountain' gives a brief insight.

• **Challenging** – we traversed the six summits of the Glencoaghan horseshoe in Connemara over two days. These mountains probably took more planning time than anywhere else. We sought escape routes in case of unease with the scrambling and scree that would have to be encountered and waited for near perfect weather conditions for any attempt. In the end, over a few glorious days in the Aprils of 2023 and 2024 we completed all the tops in two excellent linear walks...and have the bruises to prove it!

• **Wild and Empty** - Slieve Carr in Mayo is said to be the most remote Irish mountain. The sheer expanse of bog and its isolation from population was an experience.

• **Beautiful Coums** – the Comeraghs in Waterford are renowned for their beautiful Coum lakes but a less well-known area with spectacular high lakes is the Dunkerron range behind Sneem. There is excellent walking to be had here – including Mullaghanattin, the 'Matterhorn' of Kerry.

• **Shapely** – the Mourne mountains provide great walking with plenty of accessible tracks and their distinct shapes and tors make them among the prettiest of mountains.

So, what's next?

• **"VL Day"** started on 12 June 2024! – the Vandeleur-Lynams list will inspire us to visit new areas and enjoy our beautiful landscape over the next year. 26 out of 275 to go as of Dec 2024.

### Editor's Note

*This article was based on the first edition of Mountaineering Ireland's "Irish Peaks" book. This uses the MountainViews Highest Hundred list. The second edition of Irish Peaks, published in November 2022, has a few small changes from the first version after some of our surveying such as Mullacor being dropped (prominence below 100m) and the addition of Seefingan which scraped in with 101.4m prominence. The most recent version of the Highest Hundred is here.*

*Following on from the Highest Hundred. MountainViews has a new option that might be of interest for those wanting a further challenge in the **Highest Fifty by Province**. Visiting all four provinces gives 50 X 4= 200 summits, doubling the number in the Highest Hundred. ■*

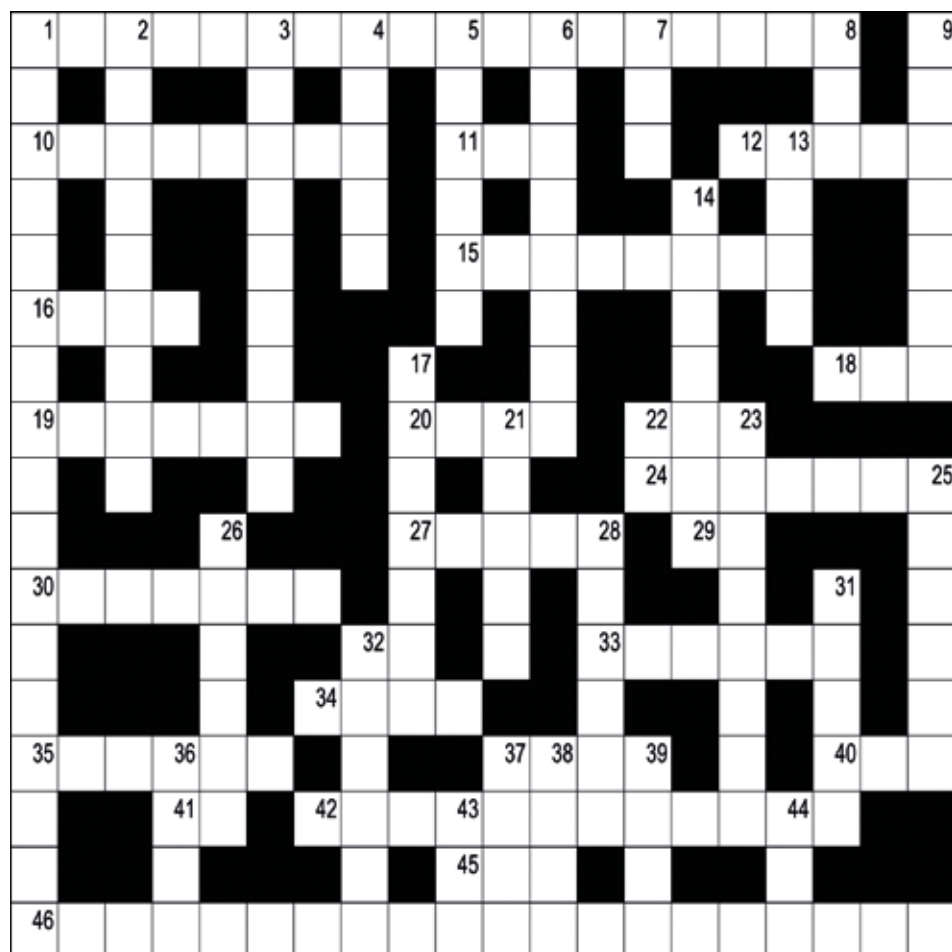


Beann summit ridge **PAT MACKEN**



# HILLWALKERS' CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

By Brian Kennan (Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland, Hillwalkers's Committee)



## Across

- 1** Popular Connemara Challenge walk (9,9)  
**10** Seen in rain but never on hikes (8)  
**11** Help, assist (3)  
**12** Rambo eats like a horse (5)  
**15** Water runs up and down this Wicklow mountain (8)  
**16** Once in a lifetime adventure (4)  
**18** Wait in line for snooker, sounds like (3)  
**19** Empowered, made possible (7)  
**20** They form a cage (4)  
**22** Hillwalker's chart (3)

- 24** For example: rubber bands (7)  
**27** Sun block? (5)  
**29** One or any (2)  
**30** Foul, poisonous, harmful (7)  
**32** That man (2)  
**33** Irish number (6)  
**34** Feature of a meandering river (4)  
**35** These gripping soles sound shaky (6)  
**37** Tool of neanderthals and golfers (4)  
**40** Half a quartet (3)  
**41** @ (2)  
**42** Reeking serpent peak (4,2,6)

- 45** French rock (3)  
**46** Popular Tipperary Challenge walk (12,8)

## Down

- 1** Popular Northern Challenge Walk (6,5,6)  
**2** This cord is no good for climbing (9)  
**3** Boundless, unrestricted (9)  
**4** Special talent or flair (5)  
**5** Medical records (6)  
**6** 408 Irish peaks (8)  
**7** Haul a rucksack up Wicklow's peak (3)  
**8** Historical epoch (8)  
**9** Dublin County Highpoint (7)  
**13** Funny great house ditch (4)  
**14** A fancy Wicklow estate (7)  
**17** This spectre sounds faulty (7)  
**21** Obstruct, impede, veto (5)  
**22** Half of we (2)  
**23** Wild cats out of breath (8)  
**25** Birdbrained clock (6)  
**26** A dairy cow deposits 15 tons of this per year (6)  
**28** Noisily get interest (4,2)  
**31** Goes before a fall (5)  
**32** Common injury for weightlifters (6)  
**36** Speed contest (4)  
**37** Quintessential Irish mountain (4)  
**38** Be without (4)  
**39** Second Greek letter (4)  
**43** French vineyard (3)  
**44** Small palindromic songbird (3)

**Answers on page 55**



# THE MOUNTAINVIEWS AWARDS FOR 2025

**2025**

**(WALKING YEAR 2024)**

## VANDELEUR-LYNAMS

Aidan Ennis (*Aidan\_Ennis*)

Daniel Cooney (*discovering\_dann*)

## COUNTY HIGHPOINTS

John Conroy (*purpleknight*)

Fergus Holohan (*JordanF1*)

Tony Hegarty (*chelman7*)

Sinead Hannon (*sineadh*)

Claire O'Donnell (*claireod5*)

Joe Lonergan (*westside*)

Dave Whelan (*Tuigamala*)

Rob Woodall (*rhw*)

Daniel Cooney (*discovering\_dann*)

Martin Richardson (*oakesave*)

Agnieszka Kilbride (*agakilbride*)

Caitríona Cartwright (*ccartwright*)

Miriam Owens (*Miriamowens*)

Mike Knightson (*knightsonhikes*)

Philip Knightson (*hikingofireland*)

Emily Gleeson (*Arcticaurora*)

## HIGHEST 100

Rob Woodall (*rhw*)

Pat Macken (*nupat*)

Nuala Bannon (*nualab*)

Aidan Ennis (*Aidan\_Ennis*)

Daniel Cooney (*discovering\_dann*)

Andrew Cawley (*ansarlodge*)

Rosalind Duke (*rosduke*)

Orlaith Fitzgerald (*orlaithfitz*)

## LOCAL 100

Pat Macken (*nupat*)

Nuala Bannon (*nualab*)

David Kerins (*daitho9*)

Kate Kantoch (*Kaszmirek78*)

Michael Seaver (*michaelseaver*)

Moirá Burke (*Moiraburke*)

Emily Gleeson (*Arcticaurora*)

Damian O'Neill (*Nailer1967*)

## MUNROS

Edwin McCullagh (*Lauranna*)

Mel O'Hara (*melohara*)

## CONTRIBUTOR AND SPECIAL AWARDS

Mark Trengove (*marktregrove*)  
for Contributing to International  
Summiteering

Barry Dalby (*Barry*) for Creating  
hillwalker friendly maps

Tony Hegarty (*chelman7*) for  
Correcting summit positions

Dara Connolly (*hibby*) for

Numerous place comments

William Baggins (*billbaggin*) for  
Numerous tracks

Pat Macken (*nupat*) for Place  
comments and tracks.

Deirdre Moriarty (*DeirdreM*) for  
Place comments

## PHOTO OF THE YEAR

Colin Murphy (*Colin Murphy*) for  
Binn Bhán – Nature's Light Show  
[mountainviews.ie/track/5185/](http://mountainviews.ie/track/5185/) (last  
picture)

## INTERNATIONAL PHOTO OF THE YEAR

Edwin McCullagh (*Lauranna*) for  
View of the Càrn Mòr Dearg Arête  
and Ben Nevis  
[mountainviews.ie/summit/B282/](http://mountainviews.ie/summit/B282/)

## VIDEO OF THE YEAR

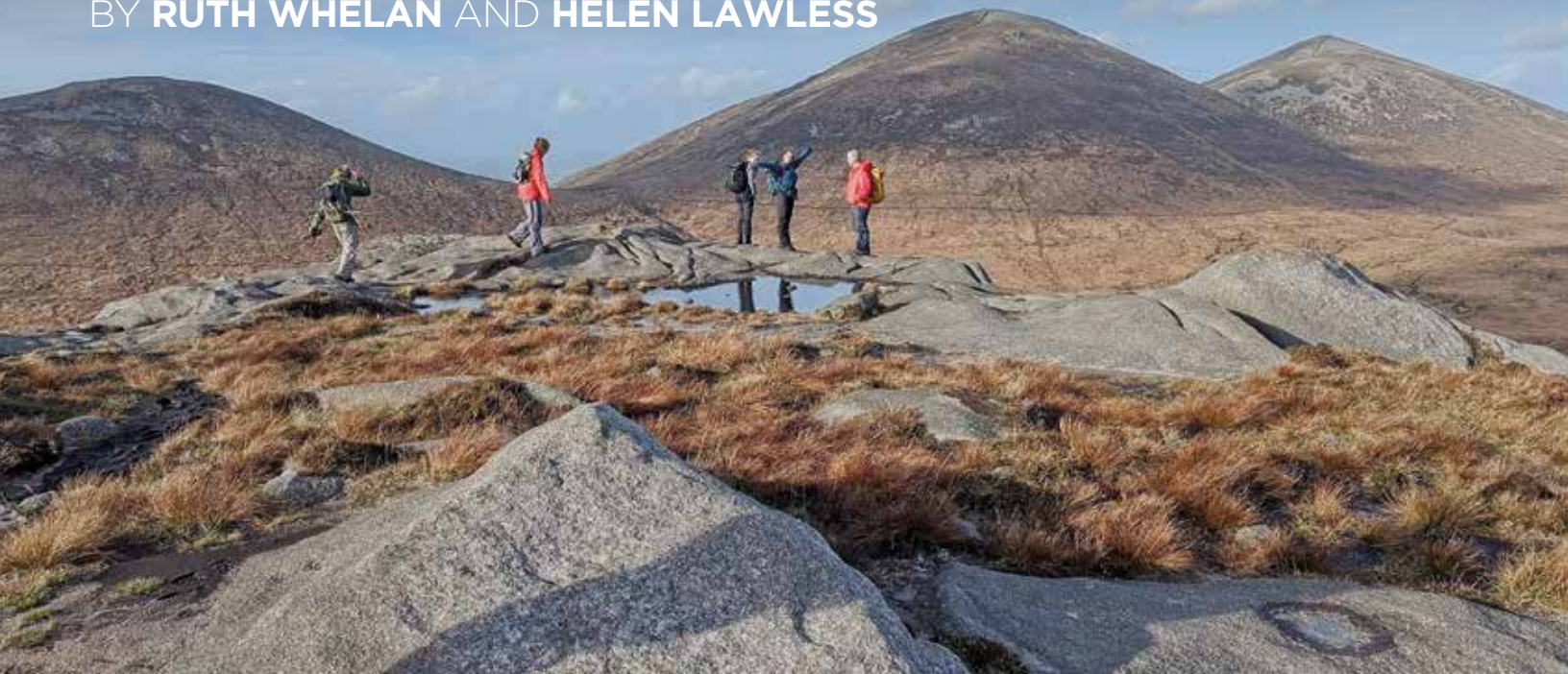
Miriam Kennedy (*miriam*) The Gap  
of Dunloe and Purple Mountain  
[www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=zAwMs\\_xp0yc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAwMs_xp0yc)





# 2024: A YEAR OF GROWTH, CONNECTION AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND

BY RUTH WHELAN AND HELEN LAWLESS



2024 has been another year of exciting developments and significant achievements for Mountaineering Ireland (MI), with a focus on enhancing member engagement, building club leadership, fostering inclusivity within the hillwalking community, and working to protect access and Ireland's mountains.

## Hill Skills Days – 37 Sessions Across Ireland

One of the standout programmes this year was our Hill Skills Days, with 37 events held across the country. These days were open to both members and non-members, providing participants with essential hillwalking skills to ensure they can enjoy the outdoors safely and confidently. The success of

these sessions is a testament to the growing interest in outdoor activities and MI's commitment to supporting hillwalkers at every level.



Women Upskilling at WVA

## Club Leadership Programme – Empowering Clubs with Knowledge

In 2024, the Club Leadership Programme continued to thrive, with 63 clubs participating and over 500 individuals attending training sessions. More than 74 days of training were completed, equipping club leaders with the tools to foster strong, sustainable clubs and lead their members with confidence. This programme remains a cornerstone of MI's mission to develop effective and passionate leaders within clubs.



Clubs come together at Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering



### Autumn Gathering – A Weekend of Activities and Connection

Our Autumn Gathering saw over 160 attendees gather for a weekend of walks, workshops, and networking. Hosted by Sligo Mountaineering Club and supported by MI staff, the event provided a fantastic opportunity for learning and exchange of ideas. The diverse range of walks and workshops, which included skills workshops, club support session, club training and a well-attended discussion on the

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy made the gathering an enriching experience for all involved.

### Club Workshops – Building Stronger Clubs

Mountaineering Ireland also rolled out a comprehensive Club Workshop Series, a structured set of online sessions aimed at helping MI clubs thrive. Designed specifically for club committee members, these workshops provided valuable insights into how to effectively manage and lead clubs, ensuring they remain vibrant and engaged. This series has proven to be a valuable resource for the MI club community.

### The Club Toolkit – Supporting Clubs Every Step of the Way

The Club Toolkit continues to evolve, providing all MI affiliated clubs with essential resources to operate efficiently and effectively. Recently, MI added a new Club Code of Conduct template and Complaints Guidance to help foster a positive and respectful environment within clubs. MI encourages all clubs to adopt these guidelines, ensuring that all members are aware of the standards and procedures in place to maintain a supportive and welcoming atmosphere.

### Summit Steps Programme – Connecting Communities with Clubs

Building on a pilot in 2023, a brand-new initiative, the Summit Steps Programme, was launched this year to further support clubs and increase their membership. Supported by Get Ireland Walking and local sports partnerships, this programme targets community walking groups, offering a structured pathway to help participants build confidence, skills, and connections with fellow walkers allowing participants to experience hillwalking in a safe environment.



Her Outdoors with Trail Criú

### Women in Hillwalking – Empowering Women to Lead and Explore

2024 also saw a focus on increasing the visibility and leadership of women within the outdoor community. Through Women With Altitude events, Her Outdoors workshops, and the Summit Sisters programme, MI provided opportunities for women and teenage girls to engage in hillwalking, develop skills, and gain confidence on the hills. Additionally, MI supported the progression of women through formal training schemes, offering grants to help increase the number of female leaders, instructors, and providers within the sector.





MI volunteers on Barnacullian

### Lynam Lecture – Celebrating Excellence in Mountaineering

November saw the much-anticipated Lynam Lecture, with over 300 members attending to witness Dermot Somers receive the prestigious Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award. This annual event is a highlight for the MI community, celebrating the achievements and contributions of individuals who have made a significant impact on the mountaineering and hillwalking world.

### Connecting with the Next Generation of Hikers



Hillwalking Committee members on Galtymore

Mountaineering Ireland is connecting with younger hikers through engaging social media content. Inspirational visuals of Irish hiking locations are shared on Instagram and Facebook, while educational content like skills tutorials and inspiring stories are shared on YouTube. This visually-driven, interactive approach on platforms popular with younger demographics is helping to grow and engage a new generation of mountaineers. The success of this has seen through increased reach and response rates on our social media channels.

### National Outdoor Recreation Strategy – Mountaineering Ireland's Continued Involvement

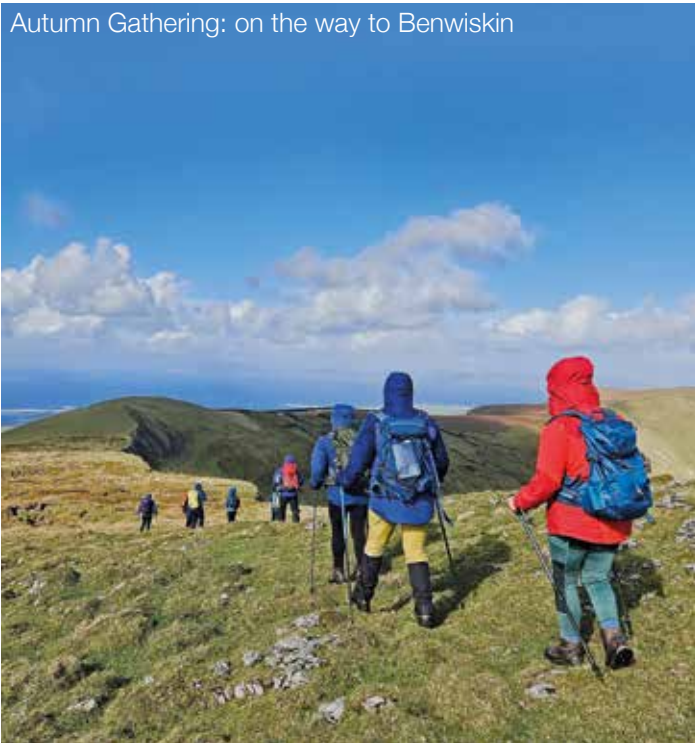
Mountaineering Ireland remains a key stakeholder in the implementation phase of Embracing Ireland's Outdoors, Ireland's National Outdoor Recreation Strategy. This ongoing collaboration helps shape the future of outdoor recreation in Ireland, and ensures that the needs of the hillwalking and mountaineering communities are represented at national level.

2024 brought progress on a number of projects that MI is directly involved in. National guidelines for organising outdoor activity events were launched early in 2024 and the finalisation of criteria for the Mountain Access Project meant that this model of agreed access was opened to other areas for the first time (it has been piloted in the MacGillycuddy Reeks for some years). Mountaineering Ireland has led the development of a booklet for landowners and participants in outdoor recreation to communicate recent changes to the Occupiers' Liability Act; this is due for publication in spring 2025.

Perhaps the most significant progress in the implementation of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy in 2024 was the commencement of the process to develop County



Autumn Gathering: on the way to Benwiskin



Outdoor Recreation Plans. These new county plans should align with national objectives, while reflecting local recreation opportunities and community needs. Mountaineering Ireland is encouraging and supporting members to get involved, in the counties where they live, or where they do their outdoor activities.

### Protecting the Mountains

April 2024 saw the completion of the erosion control work on the Croagh Patrick path, which has now moved into a maintenance phase, with MI volunteers continuing to help out. Two of the Croagh Patrick path team then brought their skills to Wicklow to work on the Great Sugarloaf path, which is also worth a visit if you haven't seen it. Throughout the year Mountaineering Ireland volunteers continued their trojan work with Wicklow Mountains National Park, mainly in building sediment traps to assist the restoration of peatland habitats. If you'd like to help out with this, or at Croagh Patrick, please get in touch.

Mountaineering Ireland has been to the fore in opposing the gondola and visitor centre proposed for the lower slopes of Slieve Donard and in calling on Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to consider alternative options that would support sustainable activity tourism and protect the natural heritage of the Mournes.

Mountaineering Ireland also hosted a number of environmental awareness events during 2024, to help members better understand the environment where we walk and climb and to motivate members to become part of the conversation about the future management of the places that inspire and enable our activities.

### Thank you

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that 2024 has been a year of growth, connection and achievement for Mountaineering Ireland. All this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Board and sub-committees, particularly by the volunteers on our Hillwalking and Access & Conservation Committees.

**Hillwalking** - Brian Kennan (Chair), Claire Brennan, Ger Reidy, Jim McHale, Pat Macken, Alannah O'Callaghan, Elaine Nic Réamoinn and Rhys Mahony.

**Access & Conservation** – Alan Lauder (Chair), Aine McGirl, David Pollard, Fíona Gallagher, Helen Donoghue, James O'Farrell, Noel Caffrey, Orla Prendergast, Séan Convery and Vincent Mc Alinden.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank these, and the many other volunteers who contributed to Mountaineering Ireland's collective efforts for hillwalking and Ireland's mountains during 2024. Here's to another year of adventure, empowerment, and progress in 2025!

Finally, if you're already a Mountaineering Ireland member, thank you for your support. If you're not currently a member, please consider joining the national organisation working on your behalf. Every additional member helps us to be stronger and more effective in the work we do.

To find out more, visit [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), phone 01 6251115 or contact:

Ruth Whelan, Hillwalking Development Officer:

[ruth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ruth@mountaineering.ie)

Helen Lawless, Access & Conservation Officer:

[helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■

Minister Humphreys at Croagh Patrick path completion





# IN SEARCH OF ERRIGAL'S 'STONE ARCH'

WORDS AND PICTURES BY **ADRIAN MCGLYNN**

These are probably the most notable photos, taken on a walk up the North face of Errigal, with the goal of finding the "window" stone arch. Credit to Gerry M and Miriam Kennedy, both of whom had youtube videos showing the arch – wouldn't have thought it possible to ascend on

that side if it wasn't for them, and the excellent quality of the videos made me want to try the route myself. Very steep climb on scree, and on the edge of what I would be comfortable walking- I'd say its for experienced walkers only, and preferably in good weather.















### Crossword Answers

#### Across

- 1 Maumturks Challenge
- 10 Umbrella
- 11 Aid
- 12 Champ
- 15 Turlough
- 16 Epic
- 18 Cue
- 19 Enabled
- 20 Ribs
- 22 Map
- 24 Elastic
- 27 Cloud

29 An

30 Noxious

32 He

33 Uimhir

34 Bend

35 Vibram

37 Club

40 Duo

41 At

42 Cnoc Na Péiste

45 Roc

46 Slievenamuck

Marathon

#### Down

- 1 Mourne Seven Sevens
- 2 Umbilical
- 3 Unlimited
- 4 Knack
- 5 Charts
- 6 Arderins
- 7 Lug
- 8 Era
- 9 Kippure
- 13 HaHa
- 14 Luggala
- 17 Brocken
- 21 Block

22 Me

23 Panthers

25 Cuckoo

26 Cowpat

28 Drum Up

31 Pride

32 Hernia

36 Race

37 Cnoc

38 Lack

39 Beta

43 Cru

44 Tit



# IRISH GALLERY

Outstanding photography from MountainViews members in 2024



**2024 WINNER** Binn Bhán – Nature's Light Show 📷 Colin Murphy  
[mountainviews.ie/track/5185/?RWD](https://mountainviews.ie/track/5185/?RWD)



# IRISH GALLERY

Outstanding photography from MountainViews members in 2024



**2024 RUNNER UP** Snow Moon over Aghla More An Cnoc Glas, Derryveagh Mtns 📷 Martin Critchley  
[mountainviews.ie/track/5044/?RWD](https://mountainviews.ie/track/5044/?RWD)



Superb view of Mweelrea and Ben Lugmore from the summit of Ben Gorm  
📷 Shane Ringwood (srr45) [mountainviews.ie/summit/110/comment/24142/](https://mountainviews.ie/summit/110/comment/24142/)





# INTERNATIONAL GALLERY

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Outstanding photography from MountainViews members in 2024



 **2024 WINNER** BinView of the Càrn Mòr Dearg arête and Ben Nevis from the summit of Càrn Mòr Dearg.  
 Edwin McCullagh (*Lauranna*) [mountainviews.ie/summit/b282/comment/24115/?rwd](https://mountainviews.ie/summit/b282/comment/24115/?rwd)



# INTERNATIONAL GALLERY

Outstanding photography from MountainViews members in 2024



2024 RUNNER UP The Blue Eye, Muzinë, Albania 📷 Colin Murphy  
[mountainviews.ie/track/5165/](https://mountainviews.ie/track/5165/)

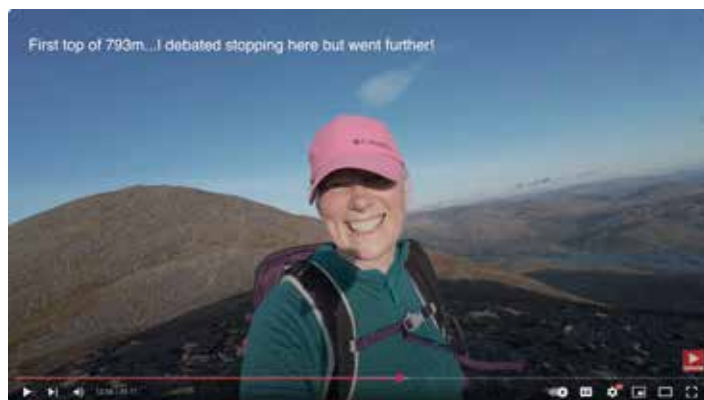


Beach near Cofete Fuerteventura, Canary Islands 📷 Simon Stewart (simon3)  
[mountainviews.ie/track/5057/](https://mountainviews.ie/track/5057/)



# VIDEO OF THE YEAR

The outstanding video from MountainViews members in 2024



**2024 WINNER** An overnight trip to cycle through the wonderful Gap of Dunloe and climb the spectacular Purple Mountain in Kerry. First trip following chemotherapy and surgery for breast cancer.

📺 **Miriam Kennedy**

[youtube.com/watch?v=zAwMs\\_xp0yc](https://youtube.com/watch?v=zAwMs_xp0yc)



# VIDEO OF THE YEAR

The outstanding video from MountainViews members in 2024



**2024 RUNNER-UP** A collection of drone footage from Sligo & Leitrim  
**Mountain Mac**  
[youtube.com/watch?v=SDvhKSv8rjI](https://youtube.com/watch?v=SDvhKSv8rjI)



# Your guide to the Highest Hundred



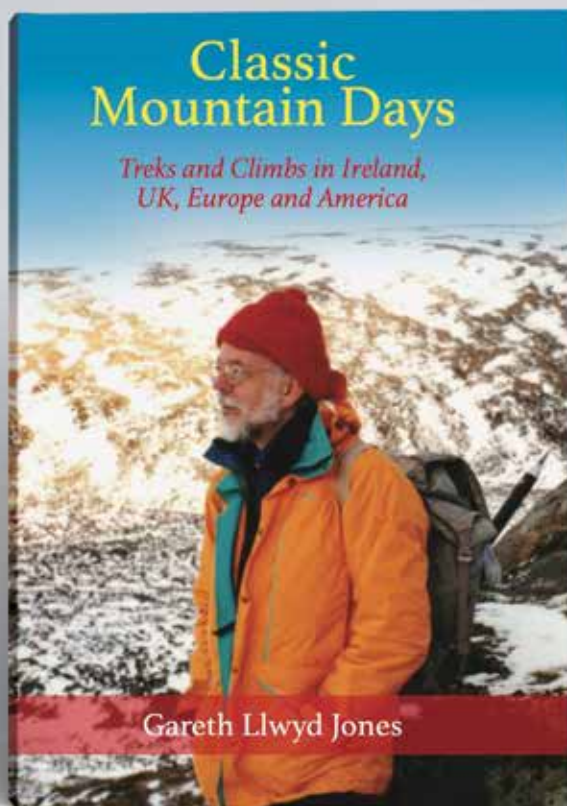
This revised and updated second edition of Mountaineering Ireland's award-winning *Irish Peaks* book is now available through [www.irishpeaks.ie](http://www.irishpeaks.ie) and from selected bookshops and outdoor stores – see list on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

This beautifully illustrated, large-format guide to Ireland's Highest Hundred mountains makes a lovely gift and will inspire hiking trips to all our main mountain areas

*Irish Peaks* retails at €39.95. Mountaineering Ireland members get a substantially reduced rate of €29.95 when purchasing online through [www.irishpeaks.ie](http://www.irishpeaks.ie) plus packaging and delivery charges of €9.95 or collect from Dún Laoghaire

This second edition has:

- Latest MountainViews Highest Hundred list
- Over 50 new photographs
- Minor changes to 10 routes
- Additional route in Wicklow – Seefingan
- Updated safety advice
- New section on landscape change after glaciation



## Classic Mountain Days

Treks & Climbs in Ireland, Europe & America  
**Gareth Llwyd Jones**

Gareth Jones has produced a pictorial mountain memoir that illustrates over 60 years of mountain exploration and adventure. He has seen the hills change from wild landscapes with few trails, to popular, heavily tracked mountains. These treks recognise the geology and glacial activity in the hills. It will appeal to all people with an interest in the mountains.

Gareth started hill walking in Wales before he came to Ireland in 1962. He has since been climbing mountains in Ireland and around the world. The book illustrates over fifty walks from Wicklow to Kerry, from Clare to Mayo and from Donegal to Down, as well as treks in the UK, Europe and America.

Classic Mountain Days not only records the changes in the mountains but chronicles inter alia various hill walking groups including the Saturday Walkers and the "Old Farts" hiking groups - that he still treks with. He was a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club and of the Spillikin Club, and a Founder Member of the Cavern Rock and Fell Club, RCSI. He is a member of Mountaineering Ireland and of MountainViews.

302 pages. Hardback.  
240x170mm  
ISBN: 978-1-3999-7588-9  
Publication Date: 20 March 2024  
Price: €26.00 + p&p

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# WE HAVE BOOTS WE NEED TO FILL.

MountainViews provides data to users in smallish chunks. You look at a page about a summit say with an area map. There are symbols, descriptions of aspects of the summit, routes shown etc. People want to be able to visualise what's there without reading the chapter of a guidebook.

So the Vision of MountainViews is to provide a series of smallish pieces of data built together to form a useful page.

But getting to the vision of useable data for hillwalkers in Ireland requires database entries. For a summit we have information like height, area, Grid Ref. Much of this was entered by volunteers years ago. As time has gone on, we are expanding everything. It often starts with putting data into a spreadsheet, which is then put onto the website. So, many of the volunteer projects are about expanding information, into areas such as "Starting Places" – for which MV already has the bones of a national list of places you can start from – unique as far as we know.

Perhaps you have always wanted to help in these supporting tasks and have some time now. Perhaps you found MountainViews useful and would like to give back. We have projects that could use more people and will help the sport of hillwalking.

Compensation? No money but we can offer satisfaction for a job to do well with community recognition. Sometimes gathering information gives you fascinating suggestions as to where to go that will enhance your future exploration. Sometimes you will learn background to where you have been.

Here's some projects we could use help with:

## PROMOTIONAL AND ADVOCACY WORK

Many of the volunteer tasks suggested here require "spreadsheet level" tech ability. But we have other tasks, for example the promotion of our lists to other institutions and websites, answering queries, talking to other agencies.

## STARTING PLACES

As we mentioned before MountainViews is building a comprehensive list of places where in practice you can start from to visit specific ranges or mountains. They appear on the map in our new interface as the red walker. This enables you to visualise what your options are to get to a top or start a route. We need volunteers to research these places (often using information we already have) and enter them into MountainViews. Needs experience,

common sense and persistence. Its rewards include having a great idea of where you can start in places you might like to visit.

## SHORT SUMMARIES

These provide brief practical information about places. We want to make sure every summit on the island of Ireland has a concise and appropriate description. Currently all Highest Hundred summits have a Short Summary (though some could use revision). We want to expand this to all Arderins. This is a task that takes time and patience. It rewards through its connection with what you have already visited or are thinking of visiting in future.

## PRONUNCIATIONS

We are preparing pronunciation files for Irish and English names of the places that MountainViews features. If you are able to do this, preferably a native speaker and interested in helping please let us know. This project is coordinated by Paul Tempan. (Sample sound file here: <https://mountainviews.ie/summit/148/>) Currently we have files for most Kerry summits and some for Donegal.

## IN BRIEF, SOME MORE HEADINGS:

Lake Islands, List of Heritage Hills, Researching a British+Irish list of summits, Characterising our extensive library of photos, Updating our list of maps of hillwalking interest for Ireland, Video Indexing, Climate Change implications for hillwalking. Researching Navigation Apps such as Maps.me, Gaia GPS, Hiiker, OSMand, Locus.

## VERY EXPERIENCED HILLWALKERS OR OTHER SPECIALISTS

We have some fairly open-ended projects we would like to progress with experienced hillwalkers, particularly where they have previously done research, GIS or photographic work, etc.

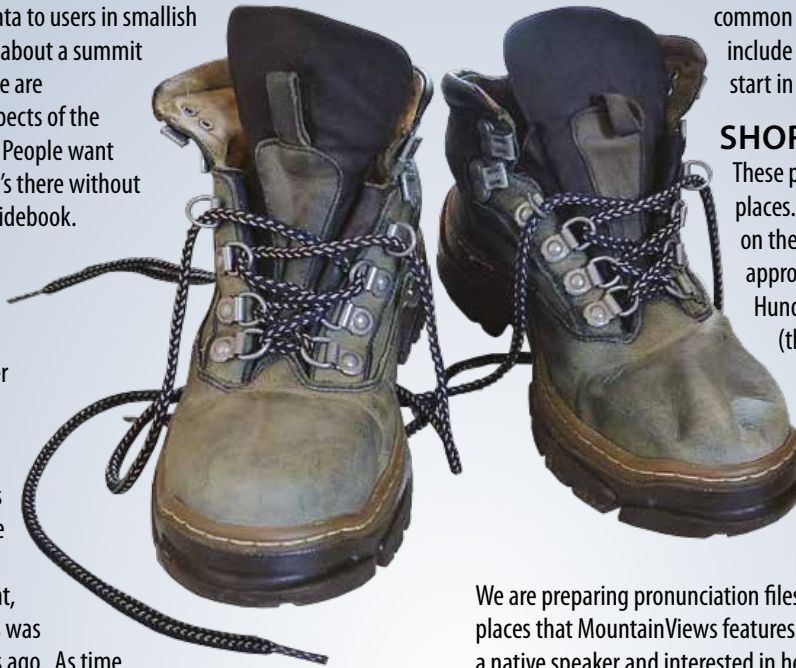
## YOUR PROPOSAL

If you have a good suggestion we will listen.

## PROGRAMMERS

As always, we are keen to find people willing to donate time and experience, to adding features to and maintaining our software. This uses a mostly opensource stack, including modern PHP, JavaScript to ES6, Webpack, OpenLayers, Git, Gitlab, Bootstrap 5.3, MySQL, Linux etc. You don't necessarily have to understand the entire codebase. For example, we are also looking for algorithm developers particularly for GIS tasks.

**To Discuss Volunteering, contact us at:**  
**[admin@mountainviews.ie](mailto:admin@mountainviews.ie)**





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Thousands of place pages, stories, routes, photos, videos & starting places.  
Mobile App, newsletters, awards.

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**MOUNTAIN  
VIEWS**

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Hillwalking website & community