

# 30th Reunion



# The Old Wolves Network

I first mooted this idea back in 2009 as a “Clubs & Societies Network” when I was 10 years in my role as the Clubs & Societies Development Officer. The relationships, friendships and achievements of students has always been a source of inspiration for me, and the on-going relationships to this day with so many former students because of their deep connection to those memories, friendships and experiences from their time in the University of Limerick.

(Clubs & Societies Newsletter 2009-2010)

*“This edition however we do have a new section where we would like to reach back and develop our network with our former Clubs & Society members to see where they are now. This Network feature is about a former group of UL Irish Peace Society activists and how they found themselves on Washington’s Capitol Hill for Obama’s inauguration and indeed motivated Fiachra O’Luain to run for Europe in the most recent European elections here in Ireland ... As I have been here since 1998 I have maintained contacts with a lot of our former members and some have very interesting stories to tell, where it seems some of the inspiration behind the stories were at least to some extent derived from their involvement in our Clubs & Societies during their time here in UL, so hopefully I can develop on that theme in the next issue”*

<https://ulwolves.ie/media/newsletters>

We attempted to re-launch this idea back in 2018 with a “soft launch” of the “Old Wolves Network” broadening beyond just former C&S members but Covid removed any momentum and effectively put the idea back on the shelf until now. In the last 6 months we rekindled the idea with conversations starting with former members Michelle Daly-Hayes in the Strand Hotel foyer and then extended to include Eamonn O’Flynn and most recently Colin Clarke & Dee Dee Hosty

## But Why... Wolves? What is that all about?

Because the students in Clubs & Societies voted for this brand, identity in 2011 after a 2-year consultation period and later adopted organisationally in 2013. The characteristics of a Wolf, easily ebb and flow with the historical dynamic of Clubs & Societies in UL and the legacy of its Students and the Students Union right up to present day as UL Student Life

## What are those Wolf “Characteristics”?

In nature WOLVES

Exist in a highly social and structured society.. Like a University Campus

Intelligent... Universities are a place of learning

Supportive and capable of being gentle/caring in equal measure to its own community – Students Unions are all about their student community

Powerful - gets its strength in numbers (Wolfpack) ... Students when organised are powerful

Apex Predator (resonated with the competitive students in sport and that works well when we as a UL Student Life have to “fight” for the rights of students)

## OK So Why “Old” Wolves?...

Because it is widely acknowledged as you get “older” in your professional life there is an “old boys/ girls Club” where connections matter and bring about influence from knowledge obtained over years

## For Who?

**Anyone** who contributed to the richness of student life during their time in UL. The Students Union/ Student Life is in the business of delivering experiences, support, advocacy whether that’s within C&S, Class Reps, our former “Ent’s Crew” and of course our elected Sabbatical/Student Officers. We are not in the business of handing out parchments that is a UL function so you do not have to be an “Alumni” to be valued within YOUR Old Wolves Network.

Now in my 25th year working for students, the time has finally happened to bring this “network” to life once more. The Old Wolves Network is proud to support this humble celebration of a flagship Club of the University and the Students Union. It is very important to all of us to acknowledge the huge contribution of the Outdoor Pursuits Clubs extra ordinary 30 year celebration.

Paul Lee

Head of Student Engagement

UL Student Life

# The Origins of the OPC

Paul Butler

UL didn't have a Mountaineering Club or a Caving Club, but it did have a Scout and Guide Club which was the closest thing according to Donough Ryan, who I met on a warm September morning in 1990 at Clubs and Socs day in the Canteen. Clubs and Socs day was where their established members did their very best to attract new students for the paltry sum of £1 membership. This provided evidence for the Club to attract capitation from the Student Union, which would be forthcoming if you set out a programme of activity for the year. So, persuaded by Donough (who offered me the potential of receiving free climbing socks!), I parted with my hard-earned cash.

That year, the SAG club attracted 40 members, most of whom never turned up. But, it did get capitation which allowed them to print some more copies of their campfire song book (a best seller!) pay for a few outings to Keeper Hill and towards a weekend where a few of us supported a Scouting Event on the Galtees. All in all, it was a relatively uneventful year and by the end of it I was looking at other Universities and Colleges and seeing what they were doing. UCD had a well established Mountaineering Club who I had met on 'Luggala' that year (a bus load of them) and QUB a good Caving Club who caved in the Burren, but more often in Fermanagh where the caves were deeper and SRT (Single Rope Technique) was the method used to get down and more importantly back up again!

So, in the first week of the following academic year, I had a chat with Declan Slemon who had set up the SAG Club and was doing his PhD for Ted Little about the prospect of changing the name of the club, upping the activity rate but staying true to the guiding principles of Scouting. He gave his blessing and with the help of Bryan Rodgers, who came up with the name and logo, the Outdoor Pursuits Club was born, two days before the next Clubs and Socs day.

That year, we attracted 362 members.

Now the work started.... So many members meant that we would have to up the activity to secure the SU funding. An 'imaginative' programme was put together with a three-year plan involving Hillwalking, mountain

climbing and Caving. It was presented, interest won and we were in the money!

Our first outing was to... Keeper Hill on the wettest Wednesday imaginable. Paddy McElligott Coaches was able to rustle enough busses together for us to take 150 students (many of them Erasmus students seeking a cheap way to see Ireland) and bring them to the metropolis of 'Toor' from where we set off up the south side of Keeper. GoreTex was in short supply and it wasn't long before umbrellas were malfunctioning, socks wet and jeans soaked through. This didn't bode well for the journey. We did get to the top that day, but not all survived the journey who we picked up in the pub in Toor on the way back to the busses.

Given the wet and mud from that outing, Paddy's buses were not to be the Executive Travel Stock we had got that first outing, but something a little less salubrious thereafter.

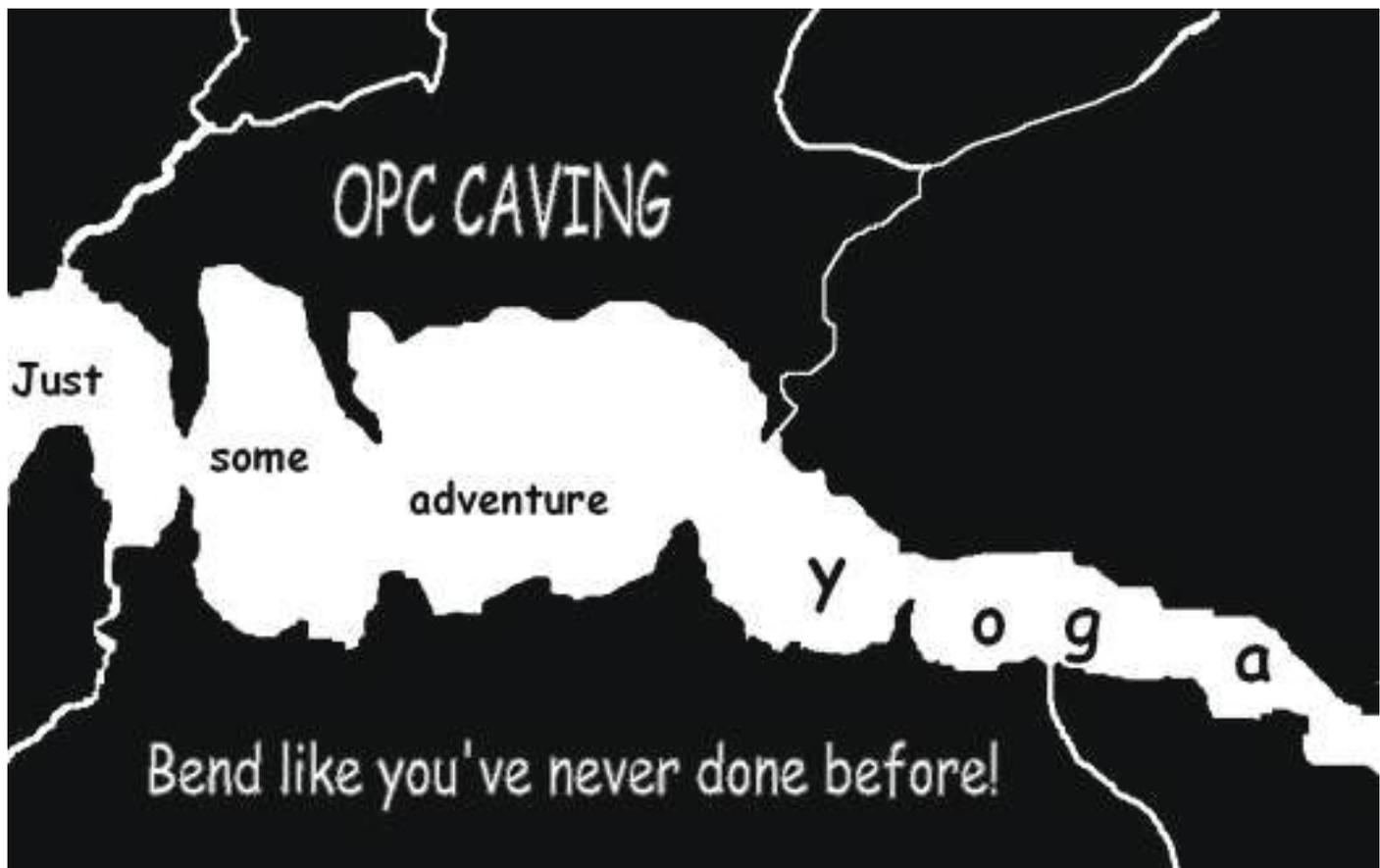
In those first couple of years, we went from strength to strength and became more adventurous in our activities. Roy Barton championed Orienteering in the Club and we got the opportunity to build a Climbing wall in the weights room in the sports building which we opened and ran for the public every Tuesday night. We had regular Wednesday climbing trips to Ailladie with a second bus, bringing cavers up to Cullaun II or some of the other caves above it. These trips were punctuated by winter climbing in Scotland and summer expeditions to Chamonix and opportunities to climb Mont Blanc.

One of my favourite trips was when we hired a minibus and drove to the South Wales Caving Club in Penwilit, in the Swansea valley, staying there and caving through Ogof Ffynnon ddu. and on to Pent Mawr a heath cave where not having a long enough ladder to get into the cave, we extended it by tying shoe laces together. Not particularly recommended, but, we're still here to tell the tale.

Thanks to all the Students and Members that followed us, making the OPC what it is today and through Paul Lee giving us the opportunity to all get together again after so many years.... It feels just like yesterday.

Here's to another 30 years.....





## OPC Caving and the Boathouse

Cillian Burke

The main focus of the boathouse project were facilities for the Rowing, Kayak, Mountain biking and Sub-Aqua Clubs. At one point later in the project the OPC was asked if they wanted to be incorporated into the boathouse and I believe it was deemed unfeasible at that point in the design stage by the OPC Club committee due to the design of the boathouse which had already been put together, lack of height for a full climbing wall and its location away from the centre of Campus (unlike the PESS building at the time).

However when the boathouse was built and being filled in 2007– it was realised very quickly that the OPC Caving gear would fit very well in the boathouse environment where it could be racked and given a chance to dry after trips – the Club had a trailer at that point – wellies, Oversuits, old helmets with mining lamps and a small amount of vertical caving kit but no on-campus location to store and sort.

Initially Colin Byrne in the rowing club was approached and asked if the OPC could use a corner of their space to store the Club trailer and gear. He was very supportive from the outset and a location just inside the door not suitable for storing boats was identified. Prior to this Adrian Thomas very Kindly used to keep the Club gear and trailer stored at his house in Lisnagry. The Boathouse management committee was approached to get formal permission to store the OPC caving gear in the Rowing section of the boathouse and have access. With a bit of persuasion and clarification permission was granted and a key supplied to the OPC.

Once the OPC got their foot in the door (and a Key) a grey roll of duck tape was used to mark out a footprint in the rowing bay– wooden presses and cupboards that were being dumped from the main building were rescued and recycled along with timber from a drama society production in the Johnathon swift and the storage racking and organisation of gear in the boathouse began. This was modified over the years and the college print room laminator was often used to waterproof all signage. The footprint where the club gear is stored was extended back by 2m to near the sink behind where the gear is stored.

With the ability to store the gear properly expansion was facilitated with new and improved gear being purchased using special Apps. The quantity and quality of Oversuits was increased, a large selection of Wellies were purchased, new helmets with LED lights replaced the old battery powered mining lamps that were used for years and many SRT kits and were bought and caving activities expanded exponentially.

Over the years the boathouse was used extensively by OPC cavers and for other club activities too such as washing climbing holds – washing and drying gear – multiple REC3 training courses.

Thanks to the availability of space in the boathouse –

- Midweek Caving trips ran for many years on Wednesday Evenings meeting at 17.50
- Longer weekend trips were also facilitated as the gear could be unpacked by club members quickly and easily on return to campus.
- Single Rope Technique (SRT) training could take place in the boathouse when the original PESS climbing wall was demolished.
- Vertical caving re-started within the Club – SRT kits and rope was purchased, and the club had many successful overseas trips to Yorkshire.

Thanks to the SU vehicles being available many Club trips for multiple activities took place- over many years.

- Original Blue SU minibus 02LK2256
- Replacement SU Minibus 12 LK 416
- Original Sprinter 7 seater 07 LK
- Toyota Landcruiser 7 seater 04 DL

#### Current Student Life Vehicles

- Replacement Sprinter –
- Hi-lux 151 L 3965
- People Carrier 171 Ky 615

Best Regards,  
Cillian

# Aconcagua Expedition Report

By Tom Earle

## Expedition Members

1. Barry Watts
2. Darragh Dolan
3. Ed Earle
4. Frank Cox
5. JP O’Gorman
6. Liam Gahan
7. Tom Earle

## 26<sup>th</sup> January (870m) 36 °C

So here we are in Mendoza. Frank and I arrived 2 days ago, after meeting Darragh and Liam during a 6-hour stopover in Buenos Aires by pure chance. What’s the probability of that in a city of some 16 million! Mendoza is an amazing city full of friendly happy people.

I am very excited about getting stuck into the mountain, and I am getting bored hanging around shopping all day.

We spent most of yesterday in a large supermarket purchasing the food and supplies we will need to sustain us for 20 days on the mountain. We are missing a few items and will have to look around in different shops.

Everything in Mendoza is very cheap and we are getting 4 course steak meals with beer for €4.

## 29<sup>th</sup> January (2760m) 33 °C

The last couple of days were hectic to say the least, getting all the food and supplies in order. Today we traveled to the trailhead, Puente del Inca. What hit me first here is how incredibly dry it is. It is very hot, and we are walking around with a water bottle in our hands to stay hydrated. We have mules arranged to carry our equipment from the trailhead to base camp. We finished packing our gear and food into duffel bags last night at 3am....talk about leaving things to the last minute! Puente del Inca is situated on the main road joining Santiago in

Chile with Mendoza and is a major tourist attraction due to its unusual natural bridge and ancient hot water springs which people used historically for recreation and bathing.

We are really looking forward to getting going tomorrow.

## 30<sup>th</sup> January (2850m) 36 °C

Today we hiked from the trail head to Le Leanas. We plan on spending 3 days hiking the 42Km to base camp to allow our bodies adequate time to acclimatize and therefore minimize the risk of getting altitude sickness. Everybody felt strong despite the debilitating heat as pale skins are not designed for. I had factor 30 sun cream smeared on my arms, but I still got very burnt on my left wrist from the reflection off my metallic watch...long sleeves tomorrow!

## 1<sup>st</sup> February (3400) 30 °C

Yesterday we moved from Le Leanas to Castra Lepdro. We all found it a pretty easy day and our confidence levels are high. We had to hop onto the mules to cross a deep river. This was great craic until Barry’s mule threw him off and he cut his elbow.

At Castra Lepdro the water supply is very dirty. Unfortunately, we didn’t bring a water filter and had to make do pouring the water through several layers of cotton t-shirts to remove some of the grit. The bacteria we zapped by boiling the water. In all we spent 3 hours preparing the 35 liters of water the 7 of us drink each day.

The final move to base camp involved ascending 800m, which was our toughest day so far. Some of the lads were beginning to get headaches. The initial part of the journey was tricky with a nasty river crossing. Jp tried the wading option and just made it before the current knocked him off his feet. Frank found a spot where he was able to jump from a slimy rock to an even slimier one. Luckily, we made it across using Frank’s solution without incident. Before this crossing I was searching further up the river, crossing ever-increasing steep slopes. At one stage as I was retreating after failing to find an easy river crossing, the stones I was walking across the slope on collapsed into the river and I had to dig in my walking poles and stand against the tips to get purchase...not nice considering the steep drop into the river.

After the initial problems, route finding became

much easier. When I arrived at base camp (4200m) I had a slight headache, which went away after a couple of hours. At base camp all climbers must report to the base camp doctor who checks blood oxygen saturation and pulse. I was well chuffed to have the highest oxygen saturation at 90%. Frank was low with 80% and was getting some dizzy spells. The other lads were in-between. The doctor was not too concerned with us. He and the park ranger had major reservations though about our age and by the fact that we were not being guided.... we'll show them! The next youngest climber in base camp was 31.

We discovered that the previous week a Spanish climber arrived at base camp feeling unwell rested for a day and then because he wasn't improving began to hike out of the mountain. The poor guy died from high altitude cerebral edema on the way out.

We planned to climb the mountain via the Polish Glacier. This involved ice and snow at an angle up to 40 degrees from camp 2. We have all climbed much more technical ground than this and we felt that it would be a much more interesting alternative than the regular normal route. Unfortunately, we are getting a lot of negative information about the current condition of the Polish Glacier. All season it has received only 2 accents because its surface consists of super-hard blue ice that was breaking ice axes. To make matters worse 2 weeks ago it received a meter of snow that has not yet consolidated. After talking to a down to earth Scottish mountain Guide who said he "would touch it with a barge pole" we decided to change our route to the summit by traversing from camp 2 to the normal route. This will make life somewhat easier because we don't have to carry technical gear and ropes. We think that we will even be able to get away without bringing up ice axes.

Tomorrow is a rest day in base camp to acclimatize and it will give us an opportunity to sort out the food and equipment we must carry up the mountain.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> February

I had a very good night's sleep. The temperature in the tent was around 0°C, which makes for a pleasant change from the brutal heat down lower. We had a relaxed day sorting out the gear and food for the carries tomorrow. We intend to leave at 7am to take advantage of the cooler temperatures.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> February

The leaving early plan didn't quite work out! We managed to get going by 8.30. I am sick of porridge. Darragh and I arrived at camp 1 (5000m) in 3.5 hours which is a well decent time. We had to negotiate some steep loose scree, which consists of 2 steps up and 1 step down. Also, we had to cross ice penitents, which are unique to the Andes. I think they are caused by the sun and wind?

The highlight of the day was meeting Ang Dorje, who is one of the worlds top high-altitude mountaineers. He was one of the head Serapes during the 1996 tragedy on Mt Everest. In all he has reached the summit of Everest 8 times and has climbed a string of other mountains over 8000m's. He is load carrying on Aconcagua while the Himalayas are out of season. I think he gets \$300 dollars per load carried from base camp to camp 2. Most other expeditions seem to have guides and porters hired.

Darragh Ed and I set up a tent to stash the supplies in. We found it pretty hard work at this height. The wind can be ferocious on the mountain, and we had to be very careful in how we set up the tent up. Darragh, Ed, Jp and I waited in camp 1 for a few hours to get extra acclimatization before descending back to base camp. Frank Liam and Barry had terrible headaches and descended without delay.

## 4<sup>th</sup> February

Today we made another carry to camp 1. I had a massive load and I found it very tough going.

Darragh, Ed, Jp and myself felt very good when we reached Camp 1 so we continued a further 400m for acclimatizing purposes. Darragh and I were pushing off each other and we climbed this height in 70 minutes! Tomorrow is a rest day.

## 5<sup>th</sup> February

I felt very impatient today to be climbing, but I realize that rest days are necessary.

Last week in Mendoza while eating in a restaurant, we noticed a group of Australians. One of them, a woman had her hands bandaged up. On closer inspection I could see that all her fingers were coal black. One of the guys with her was missing a finger and also had some black ones. We knew immediately that their injuries were a result of frostbite. Today while chatting with an Argentinean

guy we discovered that the group had got caught out in a bad storm high on the mountain and the women was going to loose both her hands...a very sobering thought.

## 6<sup>th</sup> February

Today we made a move to camp 1. I felt very lethargic and was carrying way too heavy a bag. I arrived pretty spent.

## 7<sup>th</sup> February

At this stage Ed, Darragh, Jp and myself were ahead of the other 3 lads by a day from an acclimatization point of view. This suits us nicely as it means fewer tents must be carried to camp 2! Today the 4 of us made a carry to camp 2 (5900). Despite the increased altitude it is a much easier carry than to camp 1 due to the more solid terrain under foot. Darragh and I were once again pushing off each other and arrived in camp 2 after 2.5 hours. The guidebook time is 5. It was difficult to watch some people going so slowly and in such pain.

In the storm 2 weeks ago that caused all the frostbite, 12 tents were destroyed in camp 2 with many simply blowing away. With this in mind we set up a tent as best we could.

We planned on hanging around camp 2 for a couple of hours to increase our acclimatization, but after 20 minutes, without our down jackets we were getting very cold and had to descend to camp 1.

## 8<sup>th</sup> February

Today the 4 that made the carry yesterday to camp 2 rested in camp 1 while the other 3 lads did their carry. We had a pleasant day relaxing in the warm sun and slagging the hell out of each other! The lads felt good on their carry and were in good form when they returned to camp 1.

## 9<sup>th</sup> February

Today the 4 of us moved to camp 2 with the intention of summiting the next morning. We decided against having a rest day at camp 2 before summiting as many other climbers seem to do. At this height the body is generally degrading with greatly reduced appetites and extreme difficulty sleeping.

We met a group of 13 Canadians who were leaving camp 2 after attempting the summit the previous day. Of the 13, 7 couldn't get out of the tent due to the cold and wind. 2 of the 8 who left the tents reached the summit. We were discouraged by this record.

Also, the weather was showing signs of changing with clouds forming and reducing barometric pressure, indicating the possibility of bad weather. We decided to play it by ear and see what way the night went. It was extremely windy all night and it was impossible to sleep with the roar of the tent flapping. At this stage one feels quite vulnerable and I was quite happy we were in Tera Nova tents.... the best money can buy. Darragh and I nearly burnt down our tent several times as we tried to cook. Our gas stoves seemingly don't like the combination of cold and thin air. This would definitely be something I would investigate further before attempting another high mountain. Eventually the only way we could get it to work anyway satisfactorily was by keeping the gas canister inside our sleeping bags!

## 10<sup>th</sup> February

We looked out of the tent at 5am to see the wonderful sight of a sky filled with stars. After a brief discussion using 2 way radios with Ed and Jp in the other tent we decided to go for it. Overnight Ed had developed severe headaches and decided to wait and if his headaches went away summit with Frank and Liam a day later.

The temperature inside the tent was  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$  so I am guessing it was around  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  outside with a strong gale thrown in for good measure. We set off at 6.30 am wearing everything we could lay our hands on.

Our revised route to the summit involved traversing the mountain for approximately 3 hours to join up with the normal route. In the dark we managed to mess up our route finding and climbed too high too early, finding ourselves on a horrible combination of deep soft snow with icy frozen bits. The frozen parts were great, but we wasted much energy ploughing through the soft snow.

Around 30 minutes after leaving the tent I threw up the few bits of chocolate I had stuffed down for breakfast. I was feeling pretty horrible and was close to turning around. Jp gave me great support and I took a diamox tablet (medicine that can ease altitude sickness). The lads plodded on with the agreement that if I didn't follow, I had turned back. In order to take the tablet I had to remove a glove. As soon as the wind hit my hand it went numb. There is little point putting a cold hand back into a glove, so I had

to warm it under my armpit for a few minutes first. At this stage my feet were pretty much numb also. Crampons are notorious for sucking the heat from boots due to the high specific heat capacity of steel. There was little I could do about my feet, but I was sure that as the sun came up they would warm up. After a bit I felt better and continued after the lads.

We arrived pretty nacked on the normal route at a place called "White Rocks" after 2.5 hours.

Most of the rest of the route to the summit from the white rocks is scree covered and it was a great relief to be able to take off the crampons and give our feet a chance to warm up. The sun was after rising and the temperature was beginning to increase a bit.

We moved on at a slow steady pace to a spot called Independence (6400m). At this stage Darragh and myself were running on fumes, with Jp going very strongly in front of us. Darragh and I took another Diamox, which may have helped us.

From here we had to cross a few icy parts that required crampons. At least it was not such a problem at this stage to take off a glove.

We arrived at the final part of the climb, which is known as the Canaletta. Jp was waiting for us at the bottom of the Canaletta with a big grin and the camera out taking shots of us bent over gasping for air! The last 200m up the Canaletta was more difficult than all the rest of the summit day so far. We really had to dig deep, taking several breaths for each step. I remember at one stage Darragh was around 20 feet ahead of me sitting on a rock. I decided to try and make it to him with just one rest....it took me 3. After 2 more hours of pulling out every reserve, we reached the top. Just before the top Jp was beginning to develop difficulty coordinating his eyes with his legs. I felt ok but had pins and needles in my face and hands (I discovered after, this was because I overdosed on Diamox. The daily dose is half a tablet and I took 2 within a few hours).

Clouds were beginning to blow in and after taking a few photos we were eager to begin our decent. Jp was having further trouble staying on his legs, so Darragh walked in front while I tried to steady him from behind by grabbing his bag. After a short while I realized how wasted I was and could offer Jp little more than moral support. After descending a few hundred meters Jp improved which was a relief.

3 Long hours later we stumbled back camp 2. We were too exhausted to eat or drink and immediately fell asleep in our tent.

Summit day for me was the hardest thing I have

ever done. It was as much a mental challenge as a physical. So many times, it would have been so easy to turn back and I think without the support of Jp and Darragh I may have done this.

## 11<sup>th</sup> February

At 5.30am Frank knocked on our tent to say he was heading for the summit alone, because Liam was too sick to go with him. We mumbled our best wishes and promptly fell back asleep. Many people question the dangers involved for him to solo the mountain, but I had little concern about his safety. He has huge physical and physiological reserves and has soloed much more technically demanding mountains in the European Alps.

Jp made a good recovery and boiled up hot drinks for Darragh and myself, which I threw up after a few minutes. He also volunteered to wait with Liam in camp 2 for Frank to return from the mountain allowing Darragh and myself to descend to base camp and the thicker air it offers. We quickly packed up our gear and a tent. We had to melt most of the tent pegs from the frozen ground using hot water.

A long slog to camp 1 where we met Ed and Barry. We were determined to carry our fair share of equipment off the mountain in one go and thus avoid having to climb back up after to retrieve stuff. This involved huge ungainly loads, but it was well worth the effort. Everything from spare laces to duct-tape was used to strap tents and equipment onto our bags.

We got a radio call at 3.30 from Frank announcing that he was at the summit. Fair play to him for doing this alone.

## 12<sup>th</sup> February

Ed, Barry, Darragh, and I begin packing the equipment into duffle bags in preparation for the walk out tomorrow. Frank, Liam, and Jp join us in the afternoon after descending from camp 1. It was great to have all the team together safe and sound once again.

We find a few cans of beer and get half drunk on just one each!

## 13<sup>th</sup> February

The thoughts of a shower, decent food and civilization enticed us to walk the 42km from base camp to the trail head in one day. This involved

10 hours almost continuous hiking over rough mountain ground. After reaching the summit I had become complacent regarding taking care of my body and for the first time on the expedition I was beginning to feel stiff due to dehydration.

We skipped breakfast because all our stoves and pots were packed. For lunch we had a few squares of chocolate. To say we were hanging upon reaching the trailhead would be an understatement.

We finally got to Mendoza at 11.00pm. A long shower and we headed straight out for steaks and beers.

## 14-22<sup>th</sup> February

Ed and Jp traveled to Chile for a few days. The rest of us relaxed in Mendoza getting in some activities such as paragliding and white water rafting. We treated ourselves to a 4 star hotel (\$20 a night). This included a swimming pool and buffet breakfast. We often eat breakfast on the way home from partying! It was great to completely relax after such a hectic few weeks climbing. I don't think I have ever been as content in a big city for such a long period of time.

Argentina is a wonderful country teeming with culture and spirit. The people are very self confident and happy with their lives, placing little value on material items or the corporate rat race that seems to dominate the more developed world. They are very friendly and helpful and we made many good friends. It is a country well worth a visit and it will be on my short list to return.

**Tom Earle**

# Thank You

On behalf of the current OPC committee and everyone involved in organising the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ball, I would like to thank everyone for coming and making this event special. You have all played a part in the club's history, whether big or small, and it is a great pleasure to see you all here. Hearing your memories of OPC and stories of how it's influenced you in the years that followed your time with the club has been an absolute joy. I hope that you are all proud of where the club is now and have enjoyed chatting with friends, both old and new.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to all those that have helped to organise this event, in particular Paul Lee, Chantelle DeLoughrey and Shauna O'Holloran for all of their support. And to my committee, in particular Vesta, Raul, Anna, and Lauren for the many hours they put in promoting this event, collecting articles and memories for the booklet, displays and everything else in between.

Thank you again for attending and making this a memorable night! I hope to see you again somewhere in the outdoors.

Sincerely,

Christina McInerney and the current OPC Committee.

## Outdoor Pursuits

Last week saw the initial outing of the U.L. Outdoor Pursuits Club. This club proved to be one of the most active clubs in the college last year, and indeed one of the most active outdoor pursuits clubs in the country.

This year we are the largest club on campus with almost 150 members, paid up, card carrying members at that! Club plans for the year will ensure that we become the most active in the country.

Our initial outing was on Keeper Hill, in the county of Tipp. An "easy and relaxing little walk" to break us in after a lazy summer spent sitting on swelling bums and sipping the proverbial pint.

Any experienced climber, or walker, will tell you that the craic begins early with these affairs, before you get on the bus actually. "All that you do is stand back and watch them come strolling up the road. Blue jeans and jackets, runners and white socks, oh and the odd umbrella to keep the torrential rain off their little heads, in

the gale force winds that you find blowing around the summits of these little hills." This is not to say that you need a lot of expensive gear to take part in outdoor pursuits, any equipment required is provided by the club. But be practical folks! It rains in the mountains, and boy can it rain! If in doubt as to what to wear on an outing just ask, usually a list as to what should be in your kit will also be given on the advertising posters. But enough, down to converting you all to join our cause!

Outdoor pursuits is about being able to forget the pressure of the Q.C.A. for a few hours, or a weekend. It may be about getting fit in a relaxing way, if you wish. It is about becoming aware of the environment, very simple to achieve, surrounded by green rolling

hills, rushing rivers, and skys that vary in colour from black and blue, to, red and golden orange). Admit it, your sold! And if none of the above interest you, then it should be pointed out to you that at the bottom of every hill, there is a pub. Generally small country bars with only the best in liquid refreshments, but be warned, proprietors expect to be entertained with song and dance, fine examples of both were provided for Tour's (Tour, a tiny village at the foot of Keeper Hill) only hostelry last week by the international delagation which took part in the walk.

By the time that this issue of An Focal reaches the canteen our second event will have taken place, an orienteering competition to decide who we will send to the national orienteering event in November, however if you

missed the bus on Wednesday, and wish to represent the University, do not despair, contact Roy Barton, 1st Mech. Eng., or any member of the committee, and we will try our best to accommodate you. During the year the club will be organising a wide range of events, from mountaineering and hillwalking at altitude to canoeing and orienteering at sealevel, and of course there are the caving trips that we will be involved in, (at lease one this term) in the depths of the earth. Also for general interest we will be inviting a number of guest speakers through the year.

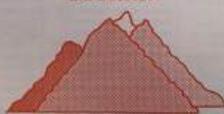
Finally anyone who wishes to join the club should contact Bryan Rodgers, at AM069 during office hours, or the committee. And keep an eye on the club notice board as to upcoming events.



# an Focal



ALPS '92 EXPEDITION



UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

Michaelmas Monday 9th November

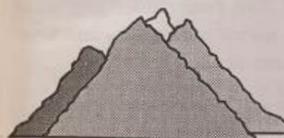
University of Limerick Students' Union Newspaper

Inside:

News  
Ents Preview  
Clubs and Societies  
+ Lots More

ALPS '92 was a joint expedition between both the Kayak club and the Outdoor Pursuits Club of the University of Limerick. It was the first expedition of its sort ever mounted by the University and as such acts as a model for future ventures.

ALPS '92 EXPEDITION



UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

The expedition was broken up into two teams, a kayak team, who set out to paddle some of the fastest and most dangerous rivers of the french alps, and a mountaineering team, who set their sights on Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in western Europe. The following is a summary of the mountain climb:

Our first day in Chamonix in the French Alps had us 'swimming' in our tents. The Alps are big enough to have their own weather system and the torrential rain was proving it. Day 2 started the same way, though the long range weather forecast for the region was for improvement in the afternoon. It did. After sorting out

insurance with the French Alpine Club which covered for airlift out in the event of an accident, we started out.

Our route took us to the Plan de l'Aiguille some 1250 meters above Chamonix (1035M), from there we trekked across the lower levels of the boulder strewn Glacier des pelerins to a deserted cable car station. The going was slow as we weaved in and out of gullies carved out by the cold streams from the melting snows above us. From there we headed into the Glacier des Bossons which extends well down into the valley from the Aiguille de Saussure. Crevasses extended both horizontally and vertically to the direction of glacial flow and these we successfully navigated either by routing around or by means of snow bridges. Night was fast approaching by the time we decided to set up tent (2550M). This was done while still on the north side of the glacier and well

## U.L. SOMALITHON

Last Thursday, the students of U.L. held a fundraising event in aid of the poverty-stricken people of Somalia. Several events took place during the course of the day, including a Slave Auction in which Enda Lonergan (S.U. Deputy President) offered his services as the slave and was sold to the highest bidders (a group of lively ladies) for the handsome sum of £6! Other fundraising events took place on the day including sponsored silences and fasts and also a generous donation from the Stables Club who contributed 10p for every pint sold which amounted to £235.40. Fr. P.J. Sommers, who will be holding on to the money until the last of it rolls in, said that he was very pleased with the support on the day - by the time all the money has been collected,

the total should hit the £3,500 mark. All services for the day were provided free of charge by the ULSU Ents Crew. The final amount will be divided equally and donated to Concern and Goal, two of the major Irish charity organisations involved in trying to get aid to Somalia. Thanks to everyone for participating, organising and donating, especially to Fr. P. J. for all his help, to the Film soc. for their exceptional donation from the Rocky Horror Show, to Ber for all his help through-out the running of the events, to the Stables', and the Student Union Shop, and a mega thanks to Sinead & Yvonne of 3rd. business fame for all the dosh raised during their sponsored silences. Finally thanks to Billy K. and Caroline in the Print Shop. Well done to all concerned!

## Life on the Icy Edge

It was only the night of Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> and John Hanly, myself, both representing the Outdoor Pursuits Club, found ourselves in the heart of the Glencoe mountains in Scotland. After setting up our beds in our little white chalets it was early to bed and early to rise, ready to begin six days of winter mountaineering with Tagna the Wicklow adventure centre.

Still shocked at having to get up at 7.00am next morning we set out for Duachaille Etive Mor for a day of learning all sorts of mountaineering techniques. Throwing ourselves head first down a mountain slope, picking up maximum speed was the best one. The idea was to stop yourself from plummeting into the rocks below with our vicious looking ice axes by ramming it into the snow. The day flew by, it was getting dark and we made our way back down to the bus, best and home.

Now the next day was a different story. A tough day in the snow was ahead of us and we all set out in three groups of four. My group wound up through the last valley, scrambling up over a huge, rocky outcrop, along a snowy ridge and on up to the summit of Stob Coire nan Lathen, followed closely by myself on all fours.

Personally I think I did a good job of trying not to die from exhaustion.

After doing the long and tough climb up through Broad Cully, John and the other two groups met with us near the top. We began the descent together. Unfortunately my skis jammed and I strongly after having been attacked by my wonderful new boots all day. Sliding down through the snow was a great

Beim a Chaoimhin was our mountain. With the snow going away beneath us and cloud all around us it was a relief to get off the top and begin the trek down into a beautiful mountain valley. Satisfied at having another Scottish mountain under our belts, I hopped into the couch and let John cook me another gorgeous dinner. Another scramble through



solution and being carried the rest of the way was another.

Back at sea level again, we head out for the Scottish New Year's Eve among the men in tartan kilts.

I took it easy the next day while John the mascot and I had the others hauled up another mountain.

The fourth day brought warmer weather, softer snow and another hard slog. This time

a valley over a ridge and down through the retroder roaming around on the other side and straight into the first pub to appear on the horizon, followed on Sunday.

All of a sudden it was our last day in the snow and we were back in Duachaille Etive Mor for more snow diving down the slopes. All sorts of rope and mountaineering techniques were learnt while John discovered how

### Windsurfing club news

Contrary to popular belief the surf'n'cun-times - the lunatics are still going out every Wednesday, and most week ends if numbers are sufficient.

A little reminder for ALL club members - PLEASE remember to sign your name on the club noticeboard before Wednesday if you are coming with us! Remember, the bus leaves at 2 o'clock on the slot each Wednesday!

The wine reception for club members in the student centre in week 2 was a great success. Thanks to the extraordinary talents of our chefs extraordinaire / resident alcoholics Owen and Peter! Every Wednesday from now on there will be tea/coffee and bikkies from 1 to 2pm - see noticeboard for details!

Tuesday night week 3 all members are asked to attend an intervalities meeting whether a beginner, intermediate, Robbie Nash or just on for a good piss-up. The intervalities has something for everybody, even Stephen Daries.

Just to keep you up with on going club affairs - not to mention Anthony and Black Beauty - Mr. Ed, eat your heart out!

The final figure, £600.



raised by club members in a windsurfing Marathon has been presented to concern in aid of the Somalia Appeal.

Eoin O'Grady has to be taken to hospital and treated for exhaustion on finishing the Marathon!

This year the club has a great boost by way of a £3500 sponsorship from Coca-Cola. This Sponsorship has been given in the form of 5 race rigs. These will be used by the club for the training of club members in racing techniques with a view to participating in events nationwide.

Come along and join us on our Wednesday outing - check noticeboard in the canteen for details. All new members are welcome!

Sinead Hurley PRO

to break the sound barrier, on his back while inverting in someone to keep hold of his rope and stop his descent. It sounded most of the time. That night called in a session in Cragsmore hotel to draw our scores at the thoughts of having

to go back the next day. Early next morning we would back through the mountains bringing back to Eire the great experiences of the Glencoe mountains.

María Kinella.

**ALPS '92 EXPEDITION**

Features

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK**

In the last issue of 'An Focal' the University of Limerick's ALPS '92 Expedition was summarised. The following is an extract from a diary kept during the event.

The return part of the journey proved more hazardous than the ascent. Low air temperatures with little wind were dramatically affecting the quality of the snow as well as recognition of our route taken up the mountain. We moved slowly down a steep section leading onto the Glacier, methodically digging our axes in while feeling ahead with the ski poles. This was how we had done it for the last 3,000 feet and it had worked well giving us forewarning of the quality of the snow ahead. Then disaster struck. I was leading while Dave was some 20ft behind me. My right crampon slipped in the slush snow and landed me on my pack. I automatically plunged my ice axe shaft in beside me but it didn't hold. I immediately started to hurt down the slope, pulling the axe after me. A quick tug behind me followed by a release on the rope told me that Dave was unable to hold my fall and was hurling down behind me. Suddenly all events seemed to slow to a snail's pace. I remember being quite calm as again and again I caught the head of the axe and tried to dig in the shaft. Snow and slush were being thrown up all over the place finding its way inside my jacket and into my eyes and ears. The glacier field was hurdling closer when on the fourth or fifth attempt, the ice axe held tight, but the momentum which I had built up however was sufficient to wrench my grip and cause me to let go. I remember shouting out, then yelling in surprise as my arm was pulled back and I tumbled to a halt. The strapping on the axe which was wrapped

around my wrist had caught me. I lay there looking up at the clear blue sky and spitting snow out of my mouth. Then my thoughts turned to Dave. Where was he? he couldn't be far behind me. I suddenly had visions of him ploughing his crampons into the back of my neck as he came crashing down the slope. I waited.



bracing myself, unable to move. After what seemed an eternity but on reflection could not have been more than ten seconds, I pulled myself up the slope kicking my crampons in to give support. I twisted around in the snow to see Dave sitting up, his ski pole in front of him and his axe dug well in beside him. "You OK," he said, "yes" I replied, "completely lost it." I looked to the front again and sat gazing at a crevasse that was no more than ten feet away. Had we not managed to stop ourselves we would have certainly ended up going over the edge and into the abyss.....

The ALPS '92 Expedition would not have been possible had it not been for the generosity and interest of our sponsors: Jacinta Duffy, the Sports and Recreation Officer, Dermot and Ray at Radar

Stores, Mr and Mrs Clifford at PRO-CLO, Donal Fagin of The Stables Club and the Bank of Ireland. Thanks are also due to Tom Gore-tex Toomey and Adam de Eyto for lending specialist gear.

**Footnote. The Outdoor Pursuits Club in the University is planning a major Expedition to Nepal and the Annapurna Sanctuary in 1995. This will be a wholly University of Limerick Expedition for both Trekkers and Climbers. Anyone interested should drop a note to: Paul Butler, c/o The Outdoor Pursuits Club, Students Union, University of Limerick, Plassey Technological Park, Limerick.**

## Outdoor Pursuits

Hail was through the Cappanias National adventure marathon the four of us felt like turds on the bottom of humanity.

It all started when we (Catherine, Eoin, Rob and myself), decided to enter the 50 mile marathon in Cappanias, Co. Kerry for a bit of a laugh. Then we saw the opposition: army cadets, All-Ireland champions and generally people who were made from elastic and small engines. But, March. We orientated around mountains and lakes for two and a half hours only running into trouble when the savage sheep ate the clue on one of the controls. We went back to base, showered, ate, had a quiz, built a raft that didn't work and tried to direct people to direct people around an orienteering course over a radio in the dark. That didn't seem to work either.

Any intentions of going to the nearest pub were totally abandoned when we were told that the next day began with a 5am start.

Saturday morning at 7.30 we were starting up at Mangerton Mountain with our team briefing notes in our hands. We were supposed to run up the mountain! We didn't. We walked quickly up and over the top through the snow and tumbled down the other side while orienteering around a river. We stopped for ONE sandwich, put on dry boots and socks, took a deep breath and head off for another mucky 8.3km hill walk at 11.30am. We staggered into the hotel courtyard and had one more sandwich, a cup of coffee and pushed our four man kayaks into the water for 3 hours of hell for leather paddling. Then blissful eating took over for a couple of hours in a restaurant in Killarney. We poured ourselves into the seats around the tables and ate lots to say the least. We relaxed for a while and then we were bused to a forest for a night's orienteering. We arrived back to the start explaining that we should have been faster if we hadn't been mugged by seven huge, hideously disguised men. We crawled into bed again to snatch a few hours sleep before our next day.

The lights were switched on at 6am and the breakfast was eaten quickly. We picked out four mountain bikes for our team and we eventually had off on the "cock through bog, carry the bike over boulders and through three feet of mud and pack it up the hills" saga.

The end of the weekend was fast approaching, thank God, and all that was left was two and a half miles of a time trial on the bikes. I was sure that the stage was never actually going to end. I thought that they had tricked us and were making us cycle all the way back to Limerick. But we finally made the 50th mile and silently dismounted those bikes that had been with us in the face of thick and thin and battled on in the face of tough obstacles unconcerned for their own safety. We handed them back at Cappanias where they were coldly piled up ready to be collected by some one who didn't care, and I was never more glad to see the back of that bike.

The new climbing wall is open from 7-10pm every Mon. to Fri. every body with at least one limb is welcome to try out the rockclimbing. The wall is in the table-tennis room in the P.E. building. It cost 50p for a night's rockclimbing for students and staff within the college and £1.50 for outsiders.

chance of continuing the journey upwards. We were later joined by a Korean / Nepalese Expedition who were back from an assault they were making on the north face. They were extremely disappointed in the weather, having come from the other side of the world, they knew time was running out as the weather seemed to get worse, not better. We slept fitfully that night in the stuffy communal bunkbeds at the top of the hut.

The following morning we had breakfast of brown bread, goats cheese and black coffee. The Korean and Nepalese seemed to have accepted their fate and had not stirred outside. After breakfast, we decided to go back down the mountain in the hope that we would climb the nearby peaks of the Brieiborn and Klein Mutterhorn. Outside the hut the weather was bitterly cold, minus six degrees C according to the thermometer. The night had brought a fresh fall of snow and this had covered the route we had taken up. The driving wind and snow cut visibility to five meters and this made the going slow and tenuous. We picked our way down the route using both axes, the crampons biting into the hard snow beneath. By midday we were back on the shale ridge and heading down to Zernan.

That afternoon Dave and Rob got the Brieiborn and Klein' under their belts as Tom and Paul returned to collect the gear in Zernan.

**Conclusions:** Expeditions of this nature take a lot of time and effort to organise. People must be consulted, books read, maps acquired and specialist gear bought or leased. The work was made a lot easier by the fact that the University mounted a similar expedition in 1992. This year, the weather played a significant role in the outcome. This year we set our objectives on a larger scale and found ourselves again being foiled by it. However, in comparison to our friends the Koreans and Nepalese, at least we succeeded on three of the four mountains we set out to do. Sponsorship this year was of significant benefit and frankly made it all possible for without it, the costs would have been prohibitive. To all our sponsors, we say a hearty

Thank You".

Finally, we must thank the University and Students Union for their support of the club and its activities, although it has been achieved in so little time.

**Equipment performance:** The tents were not used at altitude though the Odyssey was taken up. The cookers performed well though when used for melting snow they took ages, proper shielding from wind is vital. All cameras worked well at altitude but by far the best shots were taken with a Pentax PC505 compact. Oregon packs are rubbish! Completely overpriced. The Gore Tex clothing performed well, best with thermal tops worn underneath. K2 articulated Crampons are very durable and cope well with a flexible boot, though they would not be suitable for ice climbing.

**Food:** Where possible we tried to get a balance between carbohydrate and protein. Bread and bananas are excellent for this, cheese contains fat which is also good. We also used hard boiled eggs because of their high protein value. We found Kitchen Classics to be extremely filling and they were full of carbohydrates. Instant energy was obtained through eating chocolate and Marsbars. Where possible we carried our own water from the valleys as melted snow has no minerals.



### Travel:

Travel was organised by Limerick Travel. We travelled Irish Ferries, Rosslyn-Cherbourg and Cherbourg-Cork.

**Acknowledgement:** We wish to acknowledge the following for their help and sponsorship:

- Jacinta Duffy, Sports and Recreation Officer, University of Limerick, (Continued support)
- Donal Fagin, The Stables Club, University of Limerick (Finance)
- Baker Place, Limerick, (Finance)
- Allied Irish Bank, O'Connell Street, (Finance)
- Limerick Travel, Ann Marie (Finance and travel help)
- Golden Vale, Charleville, (Finance)
- Bank of Ireland (Finance)
- Radar Stores, Foss Bow, Limerick (Gear)

Robin Archer Promotions, Limerick, (Embroidered Sweat-shirts)

Dr Darragh M.J. Little (Medication)

Outdoor Pursuits Club (Finance and Gear)

Students Union and Carmel (T-Shirts and a budget!)

The lads in M+PE Dept for their help in making specialist gear.

Our Parents for putting up with this carry on!

**The Expedition team were:** Paul Butler, Rob Mc Donald, Dave Roche and Tom Toomey.



## Success for UL Climber.

The new "Boreas Wall" ascent by Dawson Stead as seen at University. Stead, is the score for the first success by a climber from UL. John Hawkins climbed very easily to finish 2nd in the recent University Competition. The competition was on by GUB on the 10m high craggy overhanging wall of chalked limestone. The route was provided by the quality routes which allowed 120 members through to the summit. The first route also consisted of overhanging craggy rock.



Added very few people with difficulty. The second route was a different story, with only six competitors reaching the final hold. An unexpected slip on the bottom of this route nearly saw John's competition come to an early end, but he hung on and reached the top soon afterwards.

The top 12 climbers qualified for the semi-final. For both the semi-final and the final isolation was enforced, which means that the competitors couldn't watch the other competitors climb the route. This has the effect of providing the last climber with no advantage over the rest. The semi-final consisted of one route using much smaller holds than the previous two routes. Only Norman Thompson of GUB reached the top of this route with John being the best of the rest. This route allowed the top five to reach the final.

The final route consisted of a bouldering move to start, this saw the competitors straggling out of one hold to launch their right hand at a foot outside their reach. This move was to lead to much excitement later. The route then continued on reasonable

holds for three routes where it turned around the corner of the wall to finish on a tiny hold. Stead was the first to climb and he reached a new high point on the wall when he turned the corner onto the vertical face. The next move allowed him through as he tried to get up onto one of the tiny holds. The next climber was Peter from Thompson Street College, he tried to reach the corner and that left Norman stepped on the first wall and made the final two moves to bring him to the

March level of Week 9 when he turned around the corner of the wall to finish on a tiny hold. Stead was the first to climb and he reached a new high point on the wall when he turned the corner onto the vertical face. The next move allowed him through as he tried to get up onto one of the tiny holds. The next climber was Peter from Thompson Street College, he tried to reach the corner and that left Norman stepped on the first wall and made the final two moves to bring him to the

## Chembio Society

Thank to those who attended the general meeting on Wednesday week 8. Provisional plans for next term were discussed. There will be a trip to Merck, Sharp and Domes and a guest lecture. Also, next term we will have a presentation on the UCL. A full report on this weeks lecture will be given next week.

## The U.L.

U.L. 0-13 Waterford R.T.C. 2-2 We entered into this main heater run so far this season demonstrated from the throw their forwards receiving very well. A full report on this weeks lecture will be given next week.

## The following is an extract from the Outdoor Pursuits Club expedition report on their climb of Mount Blanc and other Alpine mountains.

# Mount Blanc

Mount Blanc is situated on the border between south east France and Italy. It is the highest mountain in Europe and rises 4,807m (15,770ft) above sea level. The top is permanently covered in snow making climbing above 3,000m strenuous and difficult underfoot.

On Thursday morning we set off from Nid d'Aigle (1,923m). The climbing on this section on the mountain is over small scree slopes and rock fields. By midday we had ascended some 1,200m. An hour later saw us at the Tele Rouse hut at a height of 3,167m. Group form was good and so we decided to press on to the Gouter hut. The nature of the climb changed and the effects of walking in high altitudes became noticeable. The route up to the Gouter hut was a slow and strenuous climb on a large steep rock buttress. There was constant danger from falling rocks, dislodged from above. As the air thinned the temperature dropped, breathing became more difficult and stops more frequent. At around 5pm on Thursday we reached the Gouter hut which stands at an altitude of 3,788m.

By 5pm we had cooked dinner and settled down to sleep. Sleeping at those high altitudes proved difficult as symptoms of AMS (Altitude Mountain Sickness) began to surface. AMS is caused by the reduction of oxygen levels at high altitude, typically above 10,000ft. The first signs are headaches and nausea. AMS in its extreme can cause cerebral and pulmonary oedema eventually leading to death.

hangovers from AMS while Catherine and Paul were less affected. After forcing ourselves to eat we roped up, fixed on our crampons and ice axes, switched on our headlamps and began the second day on Mt Blanc.

Climbing at this hour of the morning is exhilarating. At altitude the atmospheric pollution is minimal, visibility superb as the background light of the moon and stars is bounced by the flat snow. Temperatures have also dropped forming a crust of ice on the deep snow and making the trek easier.

The first part of the climb is relatively level across the top of a flat ridge to the foot of Dome du Gouter. Visibility was aided by a full moon. Once we reached the lower slopes of the Dome our progress became slower. The group were feeling the effects of AMS and the previous day's quick ascent to high altitudes. It became necessary to stop after every 100 paces as the slope increased. Dehydration was also evident and was kept in check to some degree by regular drinks of water.

opportunity. Tom, at this stage was suffering badly from the effects of altitude, we had stopped some 300m below and rested while Tom took some Diamox, a diuretic which often helps AMS but it hadn't seemed to improve his headaches and upset stomach. Now on top of the Dome, he collapsed and threw up.

Because AMS can be life threatening (pulmonary oedema, cerebral oedema), Paul decided to break the climbing party in half and allow Eoin and Catherine to continue on. In the meantime, he would try to get Tom down as fast as possible, this being the only possible option at this stage. Eoin and Catherine dropped down into the col between the Dome and the summit but after half an hour's ascent, Eoin was too fatigued to go any further. Reluctantly they turned around and by 9am they had rejoined the others and began the descent down along the Glacier de Tacouaz to the Grandes Mulettes hut.

Catherine jumped a 4 foot wide crevasse jumping from standing position, her crampons got tangled and as she was committed, attempted to make the opposite side. She fell just short, breaking through the snow lip and plunging into the abyss. But the day warmed up considerably as the sun bore down on us from a cloudless sky. The snow on the valley floor trapped and reflected the full glare of the sun. Descending in the snow was like walking through a sauna. As the afternoon wore on we saw several avalanches crashing down the steep valley walls on either side of

us. The warming effect of the sun posed other dangers as crevasses appeared more frequently. We reached the Grandes Mulettes 3,051m but walking ahead of us. Having dropped over 1,000m we felt our breath returning and AMS gradually waning away. The crevasses widened and it proved many difficult to jump across. We roped up in pairs and jumped the bottomless pits one by one, each partner anchoring the other into the snow. It is possible to stop your partners fall into a crevasse by looping the rope around the axe and driving the shaft fully into the snow. Catherine tested this method while jumping a 4 foot wide crevasse. Jumping from standing position, her crampons got tangled and as she was committed, attempted to make the opposite side. She fell just short, breaking through the snow lip and plunging into the abyss. Eoin felt the sudden tug on the rope and dug the axe deep into the soft snow. Catherine in the meantime had come to an abrupt halt. Looking around her, she could see the cool blue walls of ice on either side of her drop off into a dark seam below, while a thin 9mm rope pointed towards the blue and much more inviting sky above. Each climber, in anticipation of such an event always carries two prusik loops which will allow them to climb the rope should they find themselves in such a position. However because there was a slight angle on the side of the crevasse, she was able to drive the front forks of her crampons into the wall and

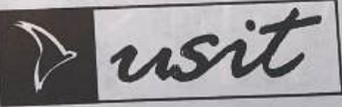
driving the ice axe home, slowly climb up and out. A few yards on lay the lacier des Bossons. It also contained the widest crevasse we met on the mountain which measured it to 9 feet in width! With help from other climbers and some good ropework we all got across without further incident except for an irate Italian whose rucksack disappeared into the abyss. It took us a further hour to cross the glacier which continually threw crevasses and narrow snow bridges in our path.

Climbing at this hour of the morning is exhilarating. At altitude the atmospheric pollution is minimal, visibility superb as the background light of the moon and stars is bounced by the flat snow. Temperatures have also dropped forming a crust of ice on the deep snow and making the trek easier.

The walk across the glacier proved the most enjoyable part of the climb as we were walking on gentle sloping ground and around beautiful ice formations. We discarded our thermal clothes, ice axes and crampons on the other side of the glacier and were back to walking on scree and solid crevasse free rock. It was 5pm when we reached the telepherique (cable car) station at Plan d'Aiguille at a height of 2,223m which marked the end of two tough days on Mt Blanc. In all we climbed 2,300m, descended 2,000 in two days, walking for 10 hours on the first day and 15 on the second, each of us with 17kg loads on our backs. The Expedition team were: Paul Butler, Eoin Fitzgerald, Catherine Enright and Tom Tooney.

## THE CLIMBERS

# OUTDOOR PURSUITS TRIP TO SCOTLAND



A bad nights sleep in Dublin airport and a beautiful sunrise while flying across the Irish sea is enough to make any Outdoor Pursuits member of the University of Limerick realise that this was no ordinary trip to the Burren. Our destination was in fact Glasgow with an onward journey into the Scottish Highlands and a town called Fort William. Our goal was simple enough: climb Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain and Ireland. This was made slightly more difficult with the fact that we were dealing with winter conditions, which manage to take a few lives every year in that area.

The team comprised of John Ringrose and Roy Barton (both who know the mountain and were experienced in winter conditions), Ed Earle, Frank Cox, Tom Earle, Anne Donohoe, Barry Watts and JP O'Gorman. We knew we were a brave bunch of people after surviving the exchange rates on offer in the local banks. Life threatening situations up mountains seemed no problem in comparison.

On arrival in Glasgow we connected our rental van and set off immediately for the highlands. A childish excitement not even found in 5 year olds grew in most of us as the snow line on the mountains moved downwards and we moved progressively north. Everyone felt a bit better, with the exception of our driver, Roy, when we arrived in Fort William. Immediately, the group was struck with the amount of ultra fashionable mountaineers, strutting their stuff in their GoreTex jackets and tight pants. Our group wasn't one bit intimidated though as we had brought some fifty gear of our own. That day was spent setting ourselves up properly, buying food for the coming days, renting gear such as ice axes, crampons and plastic boots (no not the welly type!). We then retired to what was going to be our base for the next few days; a small mobile home a few

miles away. After some route planning for the following day we packed our gear and got an early nights sleep. Awoken next morning at some ungodly hour we quickly got prepared for what was to be a training day, allowing us to get used to the gear and practice some ice axe technique. We headed for Aonach Mor (1221m), which had a ski slope on the side of it. Weather conditions were bad with strong rain in the car park. We make the decision to get the ski lift up to the snow line and skip the tundra up the path which could be found on any Irish mountain. With the shame of this hanging over us all we could console ourselves with was the fact that everyone else was doing the same thing. We started walking and were soon into deep snow. A steep slope was found and ice axe stopping technique was practiced (handy if your falling down a mountain). A snow hole was dug (just for fun really - excuse enough!) and some unfortunate members found out their gear was not crampon proof... With that practise done we gained more altitude and decided to have a bite to eat. Conditions were bad with strong winds driving snow towards us and visibility was down to 20 metres. Oh, and it was cold!

Moving on towards the summit we experienced storm force winds which were driving sleet into our faces. Outch! Some careful navigation was called for so as to avoid corniced snow (overhanging and dangerous) but we found the peak without much difficulty. We had time for a quick photo opportunity and headed back down. The weather cleared up as we descended and with a lovely empty ski slope ahead of us we did the next best thing to skiing and took out our survival bags (big plastic bags), sat on them and away we went. Good fun. One sensible member of the team led the survival bag blow away and in a foolish attempt to protect the environment ran some way across

the slope to recover it. Little did he know the ski poles above him on the slope were actually avalanche warning poles. Note that one for future reference.

The next day was spent climbing Mulla nan Coirean (939m). It was a hard slog to start with having to make our way through forest and then onto a steep slope until we finally reached the ridge which led to the summit. We soon entered the snow line but most decided against the use of crampons. It was a nice walk to the top but unfortunately the weather was not with us again; but what else can you expect from Scotland in winter? That night was spent in the pub relaxing as the following day was a rest day in preparation for climbing Ben Nevis. There was an amazing lack of sore heads the next morning and except for one sore stomach everyone was ok. We paid a visit to Fort William's Climbing Wall that day and it gave us a bit more of a challenge that what we were used to in UL.

We started at an even ungodly hour than the previous days and along with good weather and an increased amount of snow on the mountains we soon realised we had selected the correct day for Ben Nevis (1344m). As usual the first hour was where most of the suffering was done and we then entered a routine. Snow was in plentiful supply and we soon reached a lake set on the side of a col. We entered cloud which stayed with us until we descended to the same altitude a few hours later. The snow deepened and after a hard slog we reached the ridge which led to the peak. Due to white-out conditions and comices we decided to rope up and arrive at the top in style. We were later proved somewhat correct in our decision when some unlucky/lucky mountaineer plunged through a cornice in the same area only a few hours later ending up a thousand feet down and surprisingly unhurt. There was



Pictured out and about on the top of Ben Nevis clockwise from top left - Tom Earle, Barry Watts, Ed Earle, JP O'Gorman, Anne Donohue, Frank Cox, John Ringrose

a great sense of achievement on reaching the top and we rewarded ourselves with a comprehensive photo shot. We all crowded into a small hut and ate lunch. Shortly afterwards the top filled up with a large group of mountaineers so we were only too happy to set off down the mountain. Our task complete we were able to take things easy and managed to build a pretty good snowman for people who should have forgotten a long time ago. In all it was a very successful day.

Motivation to get up the next morning wasn't as great but we still managed an early start. The rain had stopped but there were high winds as we left out of our van. The mountain was Squirt a Mh'inn (1099m). We climbed for an hour and a half and got to about 500m before we had to slow to a snails pace due to gale force winds. After a period

of nearly having to crawl up the mountain it was decided to abandon the attempt least one of us arrive back at the van thanks to the power of the winds. A wise decision considering we had not even arrived at the exposed part of the climb and knowing that the wind would only pick up as we gained altitude.

Even with the last day everyone agreed that the trip was a success, both in what we achieved and the amount of experience we gained with gear and conditions. Hopefully it will establish a strong foundation for a trip to the French Alps in the summer of 1999.

We would like to give a special thanks to Joanne Ryan in Usit and Dave Conway in the University Sports Department who supported us in this trip and without whose help the trip could not have taken place.

# UL Outdoor Pursuits Club In Welsh Banana Scandal



The OPCs who did the whole tour of Wales

The Outdoor Pursuits Club had a very successful trip mountaineering in Wales. The group, which consisted of 15 students, left Dublin port on the 24th of January.

There were a few minor hick ups, like some students going to the wrong port! The whole group was reunited in Holyhead and then Llanberis, in North Wales, was our destination

On our first day in the mountains we rose at 7.00am. By the time breakfasts had been cooked and eaten, lunches made, rucksacks packed and the bus taken to Plas Y Pas it was 9:30. Already it was looking like a good day. There was a bright winter sun shining on us from a clear blue cloudless sky. We were lucky that the weather stayed like this for the whole day and this gave us spectacular views of much of North Wales.

All morning a large RAF helicopter was flying around above us training and this, along with the views, distracted us from the effort of the climb. Finally we arrived on the peak, which was carpeted in snow. Snowdon at 1,085 metres is the highest mountain in England, Wales and Ireland.

On the decent we used our survival bags to slide down the snowy slopes and this raised eyebrows with the more conservative Welsh and English mountaineers. It was good craic but there were a lot of sore and bruised bodies afterwards. A few of us were then lucky enough to see the rare natural phenomenon called a Brocken Spectre. It is a giant shadow of yourself projected onto the clouds with a circular rainbow around your head.

On Wednesday our aim was to traverse the

entire horseshoe of Snowdon. This is a classic mountain route, which is arguably the finest and most satisfying in the British Isles. To get onto the ridge we first scrambled up the steep rocky slopes of Crib Goch. From here through intermittent fog we could see the Crib Goch ridge before us. It was about 1 foot in width with a 400 metre drop on either side of the ridge and a splash of snow and ice thrown in for good measure. So it was out with the harnesses and we roped together in 2 separate groups. Moving over the ridge some people were pretty terrified while others just got a rush but everyone worked together as a team.

From the summit of Snowdon the group split up with some people heading straight back to the hostel while those who had not yet received enough punishment continued on to complete the horse-shoe. They managed to reach the track by darkness and made the walk out to Plas Y Pas by the aid of headtorches.

After 2 days of peak bagging it was time for some celebrations so the OPC hit the pubs of Llanberis. Of course after the night had been whiled away, with random vegetable attacks, and high-level traverses of the climbing frame in the children's playground, Thursday was our day off. Most people spent the day bouldering or walking around the lake and taking in all the sights.

That night it was time to check the weather for our planned route in the Glyders. It didn't look good; strong winds, rain, fog and low temperatures but we decided that the weather forecast is not always right and that we should make an attempt anyway.

After about an hour of climbing through exactly the weather which had been

forecast it was decided to retreat to the warmth of the hostel. But a few persistent members did make it to Adam and Eve, the summit stones on Tryfan.

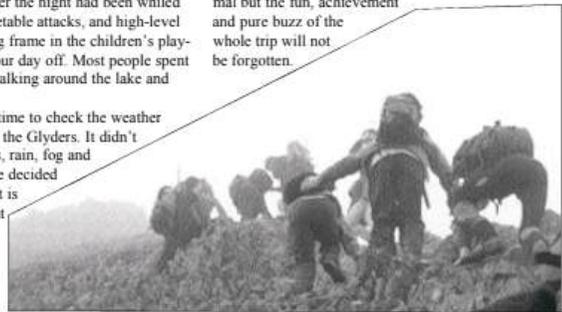
And so after warming up and drying out at the hostel it was decided to make something of the day and head to the local climbing wall. The bus journey there was quickly passed with a classic rendition of 50 green bottles, which finished at -5, by Miguel and Thomas. Everyone was quite impressed with the wall and immediately set about using all of their energy trying the problems.

The next morning we awoke to even more bad weather and so the day was spent exploring the gear shops of Llanberis. That night a group headed out into the wind and rain to the summit of Snowdon while others reacquainted themselves with friends like "Stella Artois" and "Bananas". Come 4 in the morning after the return of the first batch a few more hardy souls ventured up Snowdon to catch the sunrise.

After all the activity of the night before, it was after midday the next day before everyone was active. So it was back to the climbing wall to use our last reserves of energy to show the Welsh climbers how we Irish do it.

Then it was all over, our bags packed and we were ready to go. Because of the stormy seas it looked like the ferry might not be sailing. Luckily we were put onto another ferry and although it was a very bumpy ride we arrived back on Irish soil in one piece.

From here, the 15 of us disbanded and went our separate ways to try and re-integrate back into civilian/student life. Some members have returned to normal but the fun, achievement and pure buzz of the whole trip will not be forgotten.



scaling the dizzy heights

# Outdoor Pursuits Club Win Climbing Intervarsities In Belfast

On Sunday, the 5th of March 12 students from the University of Limerick managed to prove themselves as the best young climbers in the country.

The weekend began with the team meeting in Shannon Airport to get our AerLingus sponsored flights to Belfast. On arriving it was straight to the Climbing Wall in the Ozone Leisure Centre. The final of the Irish Bouldering League was taking place at the same time as the qualifiers for day 2 of the intervarsities. The wall was pretty packed with almost 200 climbers. Everyone had 3 hours to attempt as many of the 20 routes as possible. Points were awarded with 10 points for a successful 1st attempt, 7 for a second and 3 the 3rd time. After a few stretches it was time to figure out how we were to get to the top of what at first glance looked mighty difficult or even impossible. But determination or even sheer stupidity helped us to the top of many routes. Once all the climbing was over and we were nursing sore muscles the results were announced. This was mostly to do with the IBL but it did sort out the qualifiers for the next day. And the gang from UL did pretty well on Spot prizes at this stage. Then it was to the Pub and from there a late night Party.

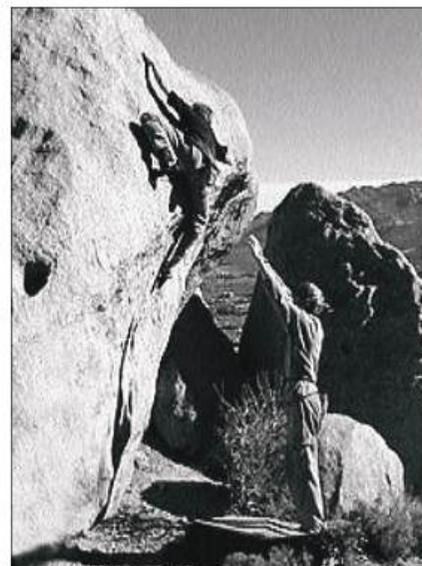
The next morning it was to the climbing wall in the Queen's University, Belfast. With sore heads from the night before, we examined the routes that we had to attempt. The points system was the same as the day before but the

routes were longer and roped. It took a good few bottles of the free Lucozade to get most of us going but then it was to the wall. Barry Watts from UL took an impressive fall in which he narrowly missed giving a large group of spectators a "hair cut."

Soon after the climbing had finished the results were announced. Winners of Male A, Female A and the beginners sections were announced and prizes awarded. And then it came to the overall team winner. It was announced that Queen's and UL had drawn. There was talk of a climb-off between the best climber from each university or examining the scores in more detail. But then a climber from Queen's pointed out to the judges that her score-card had been added up wrong. And from then it took only about a minute for UL to be announced the winners. We were presented with the trophy, which is a (very heavy) piece of engraved granite.

That night was one long celebration, which dragged on long into the early hours of the morning. And then it was that we had to get up and get the AerLingus flight back to Shannon and return to Limerick victorious.

Also on the Sunday Catherine Quinn won



not quite belfast, but you get the picture

the Hillrunning Intervarsities. It was held near Powerscourt in Co. Wicklow and the course was 9km long with almost a 500-metre climb. All in all it turned out to be a great and very successful weekend for the Outdoor Pursuits Club.

## Outdoor Pursuits The Year So Far.....

### Millennium Youth Initiative



'On reflection after my recent trip to the Himalayas in Nepal, I realise that the past three years have indeed encompassed a multitude of unforgettable experiences. It was a sheer privilege to have been selected back in 1998 from over 400 applicants to participate with seventeen other young people from North and South of Ireland, in a three year mountaineering programme called 'The Millennium Youth Initiative'. It was a prestigious and high profile undertaking ran under the auspices of The Mountaineering Council of Ireland and we had as our mentors and instructors such leading climbers as Dawson Stelfox and Frank Nugent, members of the First Irish Everest Expedition in 1993.

Following several training weekends in Ireland our initial introduction to winter mountaineering came in 1998 with the Scottish highlands as our base for a week. Here on Ben Nevis and the Glencoe region we familiarised ourselves with the technicalities of items such as crampons and ice axes. Our next adventure saw us amidst the Swiss Alps for a fortnight in July for our first taste of alpine mountaineering. The rugged and spectacular setting of the Swiss Alps provided our first introduction to serious altitude with heights of over 4000m being accomplished (that's over four times the height of Carrountohil!) Features such as crevices, cornices and seracs were now familiar yet surmountable obstacles. By now a U.L student holidays were dexterously utilised, and post exam relaxation necessitated a trip to the French Alps in January! With plenty of ice-climbing and rock-climbing being availed of, this action packed trip saw us flavour the thrills of other fantastic winter pursuits such as snowboarding, skiing and blading.

Unavoidably, a week of college was tearfully sacrificed last February for another winter trip to Scotland, with the cream of Irish and British mountaineering in the vicinity to advise on routes and conditions. Last July the French Alps once again played host

to Irish mountaineers seeking the challenges and thrills of alpine climbing. Here John Harrison, a fellow U.L student and I, got in some final preparation before our expedition as part of the MYI this September for five weeks to the Himalayas in Nepal.

The fact that when questioned about the trip I respond in a single breath using words such as spectacular, amazing, unbelievable, is but a mere indicator of how fantastic the trip really was. My head, still freshly laden with vibrant images and memories finds it difficult to accentuate specific moments, for the trip in its entirety was the most amazing experience thinkable. As we trekked, the ubiquitous presence of the sublime peaks of the Himalayas was awe-inspiring. The cultural insight we received was enormous, from the inhabitants of desolate villages to the gregarious and highly talented team of thirty Nepalese who worked with us. Unforgettable was actually climbing peaks in the Himalayas, scaling heights of 6000m saw dreams being largely realised in the most uniquely superb environment in the world. Vivacious images such as watching the sunrise on Everest from the splendid position of Kala Pattar, a 5586m trekking peak and gazing at the world's highest mountains such Nuptse, Lhotse, Cho Oyu, Pumori and Ama Dablam looming tall starkly contrasted with the ethnic experience of Kathmandu. The jovial interaction with our eclectic staff are also memories which still captivate my thoughts and will undoubtedly be perpetually engraved on my mind forever.

John and I would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the U.L Sports Department and the Outdoor Pursuits Club for their generous support and encouragement.'

### Deirdre Mc Carthy

#### Diary of a first year climber

Oh, what a year it has been. Unfortunately, it has gone by all too quickly. Last October,



I wandered into the climbing wall to see what it was all about, and found myself going back night after night. Within a week or so, the lads in the Outdoor Pursuits Club asked me to be the 1st year Rep. Naturally, I accepted and was thrilled with my position within the club, and was determined to do a good job. Before joining the club I hadn't even walked up a hill much less climb a mountain, which it appeared was all the guys ever seemed to do. I had also been smoking like a chimney up to this point. This was all to change drastically, as I set off for my first day in the hills.

Destination: Caher Mountain, in Kerry. Fortunately, I survived this trip (only just) and after that I was a regular attendant. It was the first of many trips and within the following months, a strong 1st year base was built up. There was also a great sense of camaraderie among all of us. This could be clearly seen during our expedition to Wales, in January, during which we conquered Snowdon, not once, not twice, but three times - the last being on a stormy wet night. Trips like the traditional Christmas as trip to Doolin, and the Intervarsities in Belfast brought many funny stories, as well as many drunken climbers. (No smart comments Dodgy!) The Intervarsities was a great trip, as we surprised our opponents and ourselves, by winning the overall team award. It was one of the final club trips before the summer and a great way to wrap up our college year, but the activities didn't stop there. I am going to give you a glimpse of what my summer of outdoor pursuits was like.

I had secured a job with Wild Country Ltd. (a climbing equipment manufacturer) in England. The company was situated in the heart of rock-climbing in England - The Peak District. I started work in early June, working in reception. It didn't take them long to load me down with tonnes of filing!!! My co-workers were obsessed climbers; two of them are legends in their own time - Basher Atkinson and Richie Patterson. Even though I was very intimidated by them, I went climbing with them to some of the world's most famous crags. These included Ravens Tor, Stanage, Froggatt, The Coaches, Millstone, and of course Burbage - home of the first gritstone E10, erected by Neil Bentley. The Peak District can be divided into two distinct areas - the White Peak and the Dark Peak. This signifies the main stone or minerals in each area i.e. White Peak contains limestone, and Dark Peak contains gritstone. I found it strange climbing on gritstone for the first few times, having only ever climbed on limestone, but soon came to love it and all of its friction. If only there was a gritstone crag nearby.

At the end of July, I headed off to

### Continues on from Page 37

France for 2 weeks. My destination was Ailefroide, in the French Alps for the MCI Alpine Meet. After spending the night in Charles de Gaulle airport, I met up with my friends and we caught the train down south. It was an overnight train, so we got a chance to get some shut-eye. There were 5 UL students at the Meet, consisting of myself, Dee McCarthy, Barry Watts, John Harrison and Miguel Nicolau. We all had varying levels of alpine experience. This was my first time in the Alps, so I decided to sign up for 2 courses - Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering, and Hut-to-Hut Walking. I found both courses extremely beneficial and I learned how to use crampons, rope-work for glacier walking, crevasse rescue, ice climbing and numerous other things. I was also involved in an epic while I was rock-climbing. My climbing partner and myself had to climb the last pitch of a 9-pitch route in the dark and then wait at the top for somebody to show us the way down. We had not expected that the route would take us so long and had brought no provisions with us. Luckily, some guys who had also been caught in the same situation a few days previously, came up and brought us down. I learned

a valuable lesson - that you shouldn't start a 9-pitch route at 1.00pm, having only done your first multi-pitch the day before and having only one person leading. In any case the trip for me was very successful, I was dead chuffed at summiting the Roche Meane, at a height of 3762m.

After my alpine trip, I returned to England to continue working for Wild Country. In the following weeks, I led my first trad climb and was progressing quickly until my climbing partner hurt his wrist. I then turned to bouldering, of which there is an abundance of, in the Peak District. It is also something that doesn't require a climbing partner. I left the Peak District with a promise that I would return as soon as possible.

My first year in the Outdoor Pursuits Club has been highly successful. I have progressed from never walking up a hill, to scaling the heights of the Alps. I have also made a fantastic lot of friends both within and outside UL. I would like to thank all the members for making my first year in the OPC so memorable, and here's to many more.

Joanne Hession



## Climbing Mt Brandon with Outdoor Pursuits Club

There is only one word for what we were all feeling that day - MISERABLE!!!! It was cold, wet and windy. Nothing unusual in that you might say given the climate we have here in Ireland, but the thing about Mt. Brandon is that it is right on the coast, totally breathtaking on a clear day I'm told, but that fact however also increases the wind chill, giving the body a somewhat numb feeling even though you are moving.

We set off from the Stables around 9.00am and arrived at our destination at around 11.30am. By 12.00 we were ready to set off up the mountain. Some of us seasoned club members, who knew what to expect with the weather, were a little dubious of the foreigners among us, as a lot of them were ill-prepared, with quite a few wearing trainers. But they were determined to go on.

The climb up Mt. Brandon is a slow, gradual ascent, following a path, which is well marked throughout. We had plenty of visibility to start with, but we were aware of the mists in front of us. The pace was kept very steady throughout and breaks very short. After about 1.5 hours of walking and about 45mins from the summit, we stopped for a break and people had the choice to go on or turn back. Most people were soaked through and quite cold at this stage, so 8 decided to return to the bus. The return 12 remaining chose to slog on up the steepening path to the summit.

It had been arranged to meet 3 other club members; Frank, Dodgy, and Darragh on top, as they had camped there the night before (Saturday night). However, the tent was deserted when the group reached the top. Tom, who was leading the group knew that the lads had no food, so he left a note to tell them that they were there and some fruit cake (its amazing what you will eat when you're hungry, eh Frank?) in the tent. Then they made their way back down the path.

At this stage, those of us who turned back were now snug and dry in the bus, wondering where Miguel and Gen had gone. Earlier they had escorted a member, who wasn't feeling well back to the bus and then took off up the hill again. However, they took another path up, unbeknownst to the rest of us. As a result, they didn't cross our path on our descent, which we thought was unusual. The other group also didn't see them. But, we had faith as both Miguel and Gen are very competent in the hills.

Surprisingly enough, Frank, Dodgy and Darragh arrived down not long after the last group, completely shattered and starving (even after eating the fruitcake). Once everybody was safely down and changed into a dry change of clothes (some people forgot this), we headed off to the pub in Tralee, where we had some well deserve drinks.

## 2001: The Scottish odyssey



The date was 21st of January, the time 8:00pm. 16 brave members of the university of Limerick's outdoor pursuits club took their first cautious steps towards the bus, which was to be their home for 15 hours. 15 hours with less oxygen than your average tomato. After an argument over who was to get the best seats we left the university. Looking forward to a smooth ferry crossing we sat back and enjoyed the view. One of the many things we learnt on the trip was how to survive a rough ferry crossing. This is now a costly guarded secret known only to survivors of Scotland.

We arrived at our base camp in Orich near Fort William, which was to keep us warm and dry for the next 10 days. As a result of overbooking, the bunkhouse we had planned on staying in was replaced by 4 chalets. No complaint! We had some new arrivals that night who increased the size of the group to 20.

We arrived around mid-day on a Monday so it was too late to do anything. We packed our bags and got a good night's sleep. The next day we went to the ski slopes of Aonach. More where we practiced snow techniques such as ice axe arrest, setting anchors and learning how to walk (on snow). We were ready to tackle anything the mountains could throw at us. That night we got together and decided that the next morning we would tackle Ben Nevis the highest mountain in Britain and Ireland at 1,344 metres. We felt that the conditions were reasonable and we would have achieved our main goal. Had we waited, the weather might have deteriorated and we would have lost our chance. Fortunately the opposite was true and the weather improved all week.

The day the O.P.C. conquered Nevis. Conditions were reasonable, the wind was low but visibility was poor. The avalanche warning for the day was level 3, which meant we would have to be careful. The group split into two groups, one took a slightly easier path up the

summer tourist path, and the rest took a more adventurous route. Both groups had to get used to the snow very quickly. Those at the front soon realised how long it is to kick steps and those at the back found it difficult to walk through snow that was broken up by those ahead of them. It quickly became necessary to put on crampons and rope up. This was an awkward job when you are standing on a 45-degree slope with spindrift and snow covering everything. The group taking the more adventurous route reached the summit around 1:00pm. Gaining back some pictures, got a bite to eat and continued on down the mountain. Unfortunately the second group had to turn back when their map blew away before they reached the difficult section near the summit. This area in winter is difficult to navigate in poor visibility because you are passing near two gullies. Everyone got down safely and were able to return to the chalets and a hot shower. That night we agreed to have a rest the next day and do an informal course on crevasse rescue and rope techniques.

The rope techniques and crevasse rescue are important skills on mountains and can get you out of trouble. Everyone was glad to have the opportunity to practice. We met again that evening and decided that some of us would go ice climbing near Aonach Dubh, while others would climb another mountain somewhere in Scotland.

We decided that if we were to get a good days climbing, we would have to leave early, so we decided to leave at 8:00am and be on the bus by 9:00am. After a walk in of around 2 hours and a quick search we found somewhere suitable for an introduction to ice climbing. However, conditions were terrible, there was heavy snowfall and visibility was poor but it wasn't dangerous yet. Our bravest member set up a guide-rope and 5 top ropes. Meanwhile the rest of us started to build a shelter against a rock face. We soon took our turn edging over to the crabs, using the guide rope for safety. The conditions were atrocious. Those climbing and belaying experienced 'wulfs' (from wulfschnee) regularly every 1 or 2 minutes, some bigger than others. When these wulfs became less frequent and larger we started worrying, as this was a warning that a bigger avalanche was building up. We stripped the ropes and packed up the shelter and gear. Carefully checked that everything was packed and got the hell out of Dodge. We packed the sleds away down from the ice climb and packed our way through a local field. Gradually the snow turned to rain and we were going to be soaked if we didn't find somewhere dry. We had descended earlier than we had planned so the bus was not ready

but thankfully were offered shelter in a farm shed by one of the locals. We took the opportunity to change into dry clothes and review what we had experienced and learned in the tough conditions above on the mountains.

As a result of worsening weather conditions we had to leave a break the next day. Everyone had different plans for their holiday. Some spent the day climbing at the indoor wall in Fort William, while others decided to rent mountain bikes. The next day we planned to bring our group, mainly those who didn't reach the summit of Nevis, to Ben Nevis again and the other group would tackle a mountain called Murch on the other side of Glen Nevis. This time, conditions were absolutely perfect. From the summit of both mountains, you could see for miles. There were no hurry to get up and down, we had left early and the conditions meant we could move faster. Both groups reached their summits earlier than expected. To fill some spare time we practiced the sport of slinging down the snow slope in your survival bag. More fun than it sounds.

For our final day in Scotland we decided to abandon our ice axes and crampons and took to the ski slopes of the Glenelg ski range for a bit of snowboarding. This sport is just as exciting as it looks on TV, it involves balance, strength and a daredevil mentality. We started falling before we were strapped into the boards and by time we were finished 8 hours later we could just about manage to use the beginner slopes. It's very difficult to get the boxes of snowboarding.

We got back on the bus the next morning and returned home, exhausted and brushed back to the green fields of Ireland.

Thanks to all those who helped organise the visit, to our sponsors and to the staff of Scotland. Also our sponsors Nevada Simms and Ocean Recruitment, the Stables, the Schoons, the Lodge, the U.S. Sports Department and Bank of Ireland and a special thanks to Mc Nulty's coaches for driving us all over Scotland.



## Outdoor Pursuits Club report on the year's of activities

It's almost over. Both the college semester and the foot and mouth restrictions are ending next week. For those of us interested in all things outdoors, it's been a hard few weeks. However against the odds, the Outdoor Pursuits Club battled through it all.

In the last few weeks, we have tried to improve the club's profile and training. During rag week we took part in the courtyard events with our Tyrolaen Traverse, which was very successful and helped improve awareness of the club. The following week, we held a caving SRT (single rope technique) training session at the climbing wall. This was good fun and will no doubt, prove invaluable in the future, allowing more adventurous caving trips to be planned. The next weekend there was a



climbing trip to Dalkey Quarry in Dublin. This is the only climbing area open during the foot and mouth crises. Despite early problems in planning the trip, it went ahead as planned. However, poor weather meant that most of the climbing took place at the indoor

wall at UCD. The night before leaving for Dublin, the club decided to wash the climbing wall. The main aim of this was to improve the texture and friction of the climbing holds. The fact that it brightened the grips as well as improving friction was an

added bonus.

With the summer break quickly approaching, all O.P.C members are turning to the Alps for some snow and rock fun. Plans are already in place for next semester where we will hope to make up for our forced exile from the countryside this semester.

So if you want to join the most exciting, adventurous, fun-loving club on campus, look out for our stand during orientation week September 2001.

GOOD LUCK TO EVERYONE IN THE EXAMS

**The Club**  
The UNIVERSITY of Limerick's Outdoor Pursuits Club continuously provides its members with the skills, develop freedom and mountaineering sports, carried out by the University Club's officers rock climbing, caving, hill walking, mountain skills courses and international expeditions.



LIMERICK Outdoor Pursuits Club has been running for twelve years providing its members with the opportunity to learn enjoy the pleasures of the outdoors. The club offers a broad spectrum of people of all ages. With this in mind, the club offers a range of courses and international expeditions.

**The Mountains**  
The 2001 expedition is to Mt. Aconcagua, in Argentina, South America. It is the highest mountain in the world, outside of the Himalayas, standing at a colossal height of 6962m. As these outdoor climbers find the summit it's also physically debilitating. A tremendous amount of training and preparation has to be undertaken to ensure personal safety.



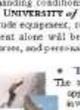
The team will use a steep low route, ascends the establishment of 4200m, and higher camps at 4900m and 5700m. With temperatures well outside of 0°C, the team will have to wear special gear for prolonged periods of time at this altitude.

**The Team & Equipment**  
To meet these demanding conditions the twelve team members have already begun training. The team is made up of LIMERICK Outdoor Pursuits Club. The rigours of this expedition will require specialist high altitude equipment, such as storm tents, kitchen cookers and down filled clothing. The cost of this expedition equipment alone will be €10,000. All training, which consists of a season in the Alps and several mountain skills courses, and personal climbing equipment has to be self funded by the individual team members.



**The Cost**  
The total cost of this expedition is €40,000, while this is an appreciable amount of money, we feel it is a worthwhile investment in the future of Irish mountaineering. This is the first time that any Irish college club has undertaken such a venture.

**The Future**  
It is now planned to organize such an expedition within the UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK Outdoor Pursuits Club every two years. This will be made possible by the experience and equipment gained for the club, from the Mt. Aconcagua 2001 expedition.



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"The stage is set, please take your seats..."

## Intervarsities 2002 Belfast

Intervarsities 2002 Belfast

Another win was recorded this weekend to the increasing success of U.L. clubs and societies as the O.P.C. won but couldn't lift the granite trophy (in excess of 3Kg) over our heads.

The climbing Intervarsity was hosted by The University of Ulster, Jordanstown in the beautiful city of Belfast, which is much loved by our members. As we walked through the streets of the city centre I could see the eyes of the more experienced amongst us looking sharply at the surrounding buildings. I too was looking at the impressive Georgian architecture, but where the experience showed they were scanning the buildings for possible climbing routes to be attempted later.

We left Limerick at 4:15 on Friday evening and before long we were making good headway up the country before being forced into a stop which would "Only be for 5 minutes" for another member of our team, a vital contributor for one of us at least (have to be careful coz was the president's demand to stop). We waited and waited and waited and 40 minutes after arriving at the car park in McDonalds the engine was cranked up, the handbrake disengaged and the wheels rolled on with the extra weight of the awaited one.

Just past Dublin we had another unscheduled stop, kidney junction as some of us had taken the large coke at McD's. By the side of the road - no that's illegal, at a conveniently placed lay-by we let loose our flows and broken the seal to honking horns and dubious smiles from drivers of both sexes. Onward we motored toward the border where upon watching the diesel flow into the bus we heard had a bladder inspection followed by currency conversions before finally hitting Belfast at about 11:00pm.

A quick phone call and ten minutes later we were enjoying the company of the U.U.J.M.C. and president Johnny Conroy, at a party hosted in honour of our arrival. We were delighted but not surprised at the hospitality shown to us by the ever-friendly club. We joined them in the celebrations and long into the small hours of the morning we sang and danced with them, and much to the amusement of the Jordanstown club, Stevo Williams performed his version of 'Angels', 'Anals'.

After the long night came the early morning, and the purpose of the welcome party soon became evident. Splitting headaches and heavy eyes were in abundance throughout the U.L. crew, myself no exception. The Jordanstown contingency, were rightly smiling at the ease and success of their plan, to subdue the main opposition. Nonetheless we climbed through our pain and the majority of both the U.L. and U.U.J. climbers displayed some great performances, with Queens, D.C.U. and Colombia also getting in on the act. Unfortunately the pain was too great for one member of our team who after only 6 out of 11 routes retired to the shower room and fell asleep for over an hour and upon waking had a 20 min shower, refreshing. How do I know all this? Guess!

After day 1 of the competition we returned to our accommodation, which was slightly better than what was originally quoted (internal joke), got changed and headed toward Belfast city centre. We entered a hall and a great night of Irish dancing followed with several members thinking that they were Michael Flatley; the only similarity was that they fell flatly on their arses. With tired and bruised bodies we vacated the premises with sighs of relief from the locals and ventured to a club. Unfortunately we left the Ceili hall in little groups so losing people was a certainty. Some took the direct route to the club while those in my group of 5 solely U.L.'ers walked aimlessly through the city centre asking for directions. When we finally got to point B we decided to walk the 1 mile back to the Ceili hall beyond it to point C, where we hoped the others were. We found them there and so more dancing followed. Again leaving the club split the groups but this time I made sure I had at least one U.U.J. member with me. Walking home led to some of the climbing of the routes, which were spied earlier in the day. Upon arriving home most of us dove into our sleeping bags but one of us decided there

must be more to Belfast than she hadn't already seen so she took off to find another party. Several hours later she returned unbeknown to her where she was or had been.

Day 2, as usual, followed day 1 but the days climbing was for some more rigorous while for others possible. Again great performances were witnessed including the not so good (not me this time). We saw a guy literally run up a wall in 8 seconds and our very own John Hamson take the prize in the expert male lead, which for a mere mortal would be like climbing up a pane of glass. We also had an injury in our midst, which took the brilliant Damagh Dolan out of the competition, maybe we wouldn't be taking the trophy after all, but we overcame our crippling disadvantage and raised our standards.

With 4:00pm quickly approaching we finished up loaded our bus and returned to the hall awaiting the results. The Jordanstown gang really did spend too much time watching Alfred Hitchcock as their display of suspense really did have us biting our nails into extinction. Our deadline for leaving was 4:30 and at 4:29 the result was announced, we grabbed the trophy and ran to the bus and homebound, but, of course not before saying goodbye to the excellent U.U.J.M.C. and thanking them for their hospitality and in a few cases their over friendly welcome (Our 3 members know who they are along with their other halves). The bus journey home was the quietest of any Intervarsity winning team in history. Instead of roaring and screaming loudly, we sat quietly, spoke softly, but did snore loudly, with fewer toilet breaks. The long journey ended outside the pub but the thought of bed strongly outweighed the lure of even the coldest, creamiest, free Guinness, so home to bed for a satisfying sleep dreaming about how we WILL win again next year.

For a full list of results check out [www.go.to/uajmc](http://www.go.to/uajmc)



by Paul Stephenson

It took about six months of prudence, strong determination, stubbornness and moments of self doubt to finance this trip, and within 4 weeks, I was broke.

Somewhere along the way someone said "C'mon lets become alpinists and do a few weeks in the French and Swiss Alps it should be a bit of craic it won't kill you". But it wasn't a few weeks, it was several and no, it didn't kill me but worse, I am in debt. I sank to an all time low. I rang home and asked a friend of mine to send on some money. Read on then you can judge me. 6 weeks of healthy living is very taxing on the body and the mind.

To see huge pillars of snow-covered rock towering over 4 k.m. high, really does show you how small and insignificant you really are (but im not saying that you cant make a difference, anyone can!) the sheer size and vastness of these giants is breathtaking and awe-inspiring, it has me writing this piece hasn't it!

The place is Europe, the people are Darragh Dolan, Liam Gahan, and Paul Stephenson, the mountains were high, but so too were our aspirations.

Our journey commenced with a short car ride to Shannon where Ryanair flight Fr-133 piloted by Cptn. Ray Malone, "with the drink problem" flew us majestically to Paris without a single hitch, well done Ray.

After the car and the plane, came the train. An eleven hour journey from Paris to Chamonix, in the south east of the Rhone-Alps region of France,



to be exact. Here, we set up base camp and got much needed gear (no, not that type) before getting our first nights sleep in the confined space of a three-man tent with a full quota of 3 people and several rucksacks full of our necessities. It had its moments, but I wouldn't do it again, no offence to the others- they feel the same way.

Our third day of the holiday was perhaps the most eventful of an epic season. It started with the first cable-car to 3800m. "If you want to walk it that's fine, see you in 2 days". Anywho, we saddled up and marched down to our new home for

the next 3 days, the Valée Blanche. We pitched the tent in a pre-dug wind shelter at 3600m, we were satisfied with our work, and so set off to do the first mixed alpine route, with Mr. Dolan our guide. The Cosmiques Arête posed some challenges but we completed the PD+ route with relative comfort. A beautiful introductory route except we were thrown into the deep end by its finishing move, the crevasse descent. This part of the route was never attempted before and probably never again, due to its potential fatality, thus the increase in grade from PD+ to TD+. Our problem lay in the fact that a 40Km wind chose to ignore our wind-shelter, and turn our tent into a kite. After toying with the tent, the wind decided to deposit a nice deep crevasse, how kind. Long story short, we got it back, hooray!

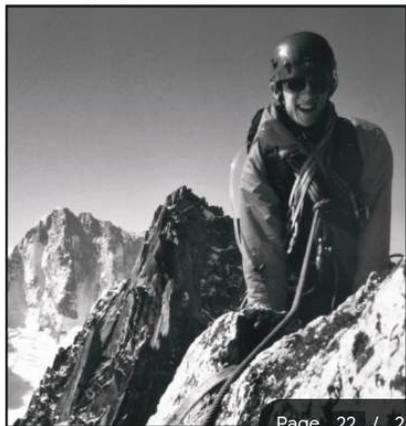
We stayed for the three days at the altitude to acclimatise but for me it didn't work as we found out half way up Mt. Maudit, when after the 15th stop in dangerous circumstances I said "There's no f\*\*king way I'm going any further, I'm b\*\*oxed", to which the reply "Go f\*\*k yourself, if you f\*\*k up my climbing again then you can just p\*\*s off". After all that we never made it. But did do Mont Blanc du Tacual instead. Looking back on the 3½ weeks in Chamonix I see that we didn't get a whole lot done, due to the intervention of University of Ulster, Jordanstown Mountaineering club and bad weather. However, we did Mont Blanc (4810m) twice. Frontier range on both occasions (35m), Mont Blanc Du Tacual (35m) twice,

South Face of the Midi(3842m), Traverse of the Nun(3340m), Pointe Adolphe Ray(3536m), The Midl-pan traverse, and the Cosmiques Arête three times.

Tempers they began to rise, patience wearing thin, we decided to pack up and move abroad to Switzerland. We had a choice of the Eiger or the Matterhorn. Due to it being the 2nd most expensive train in the world we said: "f\*\*k the Eiger", Matterhorn it was. We arrived in Zermatt, Switzerland, to see and attempt this classic pyramidal peak that shadows the typical Swiss alpine town. After getting the feel of the town, we stocked up on provisions of the usual mars bars, pasta, rice, couscous and accompanying sauces.

Then came the walk-in for the Matterhorn, which is very reminiscent of the Jordanian Wadi. When we reached our target of the Hornli hut, we chose our bivouac site, deposited our gear and walked to the first rock band that signalled the start of the ascent, to memorise the path which would bring us our success.

Before bedding down that night under the stars, we had a difficult choice to make; who would be attempting the mountain with Darragh, Liam or myself? A simple coin toss would decide, but for my decree. After seeing and hearing Liam's eagerness I decided that he should go. Early next morning at about 3:30 am both set off and were not seen again until 28 hours later. I had 28 hours of anxious waiting for the voices in my head deliberating on the worst case scenarios, but instead



## Outdoor Pursuits Club Assault on Aconcagua

By Frank Cox

A team of seven climbers from the University of Limerick will be leaving this weekend to start their expedition to climb Aconcagua (6962m) in Argentina, the highest mountain in the Southern Hemisphere.

The planning for this expedition has been ongoing for the past year in preparation for this highly demanding four-week expedition. During the time the team will have to deal with the conditions associated with climbing at these very extreme altitudes but also the overall physical demand on the body to survive at these heights.

The team of seven that will travel to Aconcagua are all either past or present students of the University of Limerick. Frank Cox, Darragh Dolan, Barry Sheela, Ed Clarke and Tom Eerie all of whom are from Limerick with John Paul O'Donnell from Cork and Liam Gahan from Waterford. There is a wide range of experience in the team, including previous experience of Kilimanjaro, Mt Everest and the Matterhorn. The members have been training continuously in the Galway and Kerry mountains.

The team will climb the mountain via the Polish Glacier, which is a relatively technical route and the use of ice axes and crampons will be needed.

The climbing of the peak will involve a three-day hike and the use of mules to carry our base and gear (500kg) on for our Base Camp (4,100m).

From Camp 2, the team will start their summit attempt, which should be happening around the 14th or 15th of February. The summit day will start at 10m with a large portion of the climb being done during darkness and planned to reach the summit at around 1pm. A 6-hour descent is then involved before the team can reach the safety of Camp 2. From here they will then start to carry down all the equipment from Camp 1 and Camp 2.

The expedition will be the first student organised expedition of its size to leave an Irish University and will be a unique challenge for the whole team.

The expedition members would like to thank the sponsors - The University of Limerick - Students Union, Sports Department and Foundation, United Drug, Coscote Designs and Castle 1 Furniture.



The OPC outside the Students' Union before they left

### Expedition Report

Hi there,  
It is now 5:20am in Mendoza and tomorrow the team of 7 will leave for the start of the approach to Base Camp.  
Since I finished last night the rest of the team arrived from Ireland (Barry, Ed and John), we were all up early this morning to sort out the food and fuel and to pack up the last bit that we need to get before we leave for Puerto del Vaca where we will start our Base Camp. The trail to Mendoza today matched a high of 30°C and with cloud over the humidity was very high.

Today there was a lot to be worked with all the equipment, food and fuel being packed (not exactly so that it can be transported to Base Camp) on our trip with out any damage. Today we have not met any problems with the approach but the weather is not the best at the moment. A number of team have submitted but the conditions are reported very cold and windy at the moment.



Mount Aconcagua

We will enter the Aconcagua National Park on Thursday morning and this will allow us 20 days to reach the summit and descend again. We should be back in contact for the night of the 17th of Feb. As I will be able to then tell you all how the expedition went.

The team at the moment are all well and healthy. Today we the start of us having to all really work together and then on working best and effectively. I think that we are all starting to feel the nerves and tomorrow morning will be really the start of it. We are all hoping for improved weather at the moment.

Till the 17th of Feb. I say by goodbye from me and the team and we are all hoping that things will go well. Once again to all the people who have helped us out for the expedition we are all very grateful and I hope that a successful expedition will follow as always.

Till the 17th, I hope that all the OPC in Ireland and hope to talk to you all soon.

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of sighs of relief and tears of joy, were words of a condemning nature; "Ye f\*\*king c\*\*ts, ye had me S\*\*ting me pants". They did successfully summit the loose slopes of the Matterhorn and well done to them on that.

During my anxious wait I naturally had to find something to take my mind off the 'ifs and buts', so I planned our next route: the Breithorn-Monte Rose traverse, which would take in another five 4000m peaks in four days. Liam's words were not of a pleasant nature, understandably, but as usual, Darragh was enthusiastic. We returned to town together with me carrying most of their gear but I didn't mind, it was a kind of congratulations from me to them. They took a day's rest in which Darragh had a proper look at the route; he came back to me

with: "That route you want to do is doable but not the way you said" It was an ambitious task, five peaks in four days. Darragh's was slightly more ambitious, **FOURTEEN 4000m peaks in THREE days.**

"Yea we'll give it a go, nice way to finish the holiday", my response. After all we were returning home in five days later. So after the usual preparations we headed off to do this very ambitious task. To cut a long story short, knackered, tired and ultimately shagged we arrived back in Zermatt triumphant we did it. What a way to finish probably the most amount of peaks done in that time, that season by any Irish Climbers.



# '03

by Frank Cox

"There is still a hundred metres to go..."

"You have been waiting two and a half years to be in this position. You know that the summit is up there and all you have to do is move step by step".

"Step by step? You make it sound like it's easy. If only it was that easy, I just need to stop for a minute and then I will be off again".

"You know that one minute will be 5 minutes"

"But I feel so tired up here"

"Are you going to leave it at that? All these days on the mountain and you're thinking of giving up. You have one chance at this mountain so take it"

"I know. Step by step, as you said"

At 6,800m, I was in the open scree chute called the Ganaleta. This was the last obstacle before the summit of Aconcagua. I felt that my thoughts were divided. One part was the motivation that accompanied me as I left Camp 2 that morning. It was the part that made me get out of my tent and stand into the cold air outside. This part was strong willed and knew that it wanted to get to the top.

The second part was a fatigued mind and body. The part that felt that it would be so much easier to just turn around now and walk back to Camp 2. As I climbed the last 200m to the summit, the constant conversation between each part continued. As I stood onto the summit, there was only one voice left and that was the strength inside my mind. This was the strength that had just got me to the summit of Aconcagua.

At 3.00pm on Monday the 10th of February

## Aconcagua 2003



The expedition team at base camp

Darragh Dolan, Tom Earle and John Paul O'Gorman reached the summit of Aconcagua (6962m). At 3.15pm on Tuesday the 11th of February, Frank Cox also climbed to the summit of Aconcagua.

June 2000

Here is where it all started. Sitting around with a broken ankle asking myself questions. Let's organise an expedition. Where? Aconcagua sounds good. Nearly 7000m's and it is relatively developed regarding access. Aconcagua it is.

September 2001

Initially there were 22 people interested in going to Aconcagua. At this stage I was down to 16 people and we were all working together to start raising money for the expedition. We needed sponsors

and support to make it all possible. Constant meetings and arrangements were the order of the day.

September 2002

It was time to decide on the team so I rang all sixteen members to tell each member, who was going to be part of the final team. The final team consisted of seven members.

December/January 2003

The planning was happening so fast, that some days it was just too much. All the parts were starting to come together but nothing was finalised. Medical, finance, sponsors, equipment, travel, food, insurance and training. We needed to finish

continued on next page

## Hanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlntysillogoch

by Damian Purcell

hanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlntysillogoch - That's Welsh for "OEC trip to Wales"

The Outdoor Pursuits Club can now boast an extremely successful mountaineering winter trip to Wales. I was one of the lucky 18 students who began the legendary trip from Dublin port on the 27th of January. I evaded the 5am bus journey from Limerick by staying over in Dublin the night before. Having met up with the lads we all boarded our ferry at 9.30. Arriving at Holyhead around one o'clock we hauled our gear from ferry to train. After a short train journey we arrived at Bangor.

Here we picked up some essentials that being food and a mode of transport (you could call it that!). Next we hit the road in our rented van skilfully driven by Colin with the aid of pretty much everyone else shouting directions. Jesse James Bunkhouse was our destination and our humble home for the trip. It proved to be a very comfortable place to stay. Our first night together was spent setting in and preparing for the hike the following day.

Rising early the following morning we had high expectations of leaving the Bunkhouse by 8.30. However this was not to be and a late start was made even later by my failing to turn up with hiking shoes (sorry guys!). Finally a hectic morning we began up Snowdon which stands at 1,085 metres. It greeted us with a severe wind and a biting cold. On the summit we were denied the spectacular view of North Wales by a heavy fog. However spirits remained high and our descent via the famous railway track to Llanberis was marked with our chants of military songs.

Another day another mountain - Tryfan - which although not as high as Snowdon, is considered a much harder mountain to climb. Tryfan, helped by a heavy dumping of snow the night before brought with it my best day on the mountains. To summit this mountain on a good day requires a keen head for heights. We however ditched onto rocks covered with ice and snow and scrambled over some precarious routes which called for some rope work to come into play. While walking surrounded by cliff faces one tends to be mindful of every footstep. Our persistence paid off and I wasn't long before we made it down and left the summit

miss because they were covered in a thick layer of ice.

After a quick bite to eat (and some Hot Stuff!) we made our descent under the guidance of Dave and Derek. The day was to hold another surprise for me, as we came to a steep descent which required us to once again put our trust in the ropes and abseil down. We reached up a snowball fight at the base of the cliff, which turned out to be a great battle after which we made our easy descent back to the van.

Snowdon was to be climbed twice



The OPC during their trip to Wales

Our days off were spent on a local climbing wall, which everyone was pretty impressed with. So much so that every ounce of energy was spent solving climbing problems. It was time for the newcomers to the sport, such as myself, to learn skills such as belaying and leading. It wasn't long before we were showing up the British Defence Forces, who happened to be training at the same club, by doing routes that they couldn't.

The evening times on this trip allowed for some crazy antics to be carried out. When you place 20 college students under the same roof you only need imagine what went on. Among the challenges invented was table climbing and the chef with the most imagination (battered cricketers was the one that did it for me!).

Events sticking out over the next few days on the mountains, had to be training with our ice axes. A handy bit of knowledge if you were to take on

watching RAF fighter pilots dog fighting through the valley's beneath us. This was pretty impressive to say the least. We came across some amazing snow and ice features during our trip. My personal favourite had to be the waterfall that had frozen solid. I was told that some lunatics actually climb up such features using ice axes and crampons (the spikes for your feet). However, on this occasion we were happy enough to just pause for a moment and take in its beauty.

Snowdon was to be climbed twice

backtracking we would continue and drop down on the other side of the horseshoe and follow the valley back to the road. By this time we were a long way from the van but thanks to Alwyn's charm (or was it Colin's) who hitched to bring the van to us, we avoided a boring mad walk.

The night hike presented something new to me for I had never hiked under the cover of darkness before. During a night hike a lot more concentration is spent on navigation and keeping the pack together. It was a welcomed experience. Our hike back to the van this time was all the sweeter because it wasn't my dinner I was looking forward to, my bed was also calling out to me.

The following day was to be our last day. There was a mixed opinion in the group of just what to do with it. A few hardy souls decided to hit the mountains one last time after almost just arriving back on the night hike. The weather was the best yet and the clear skies allowed this lucky few to take in the beautiful scenery that the area has to offer. Others including myself felt it an obligation to conquer some of the routes that the local climbing wall had to offer.

On departure day we all rushed around packing bags and so forth. The journey back home allowed us to reflect back on our trip. The trip brought with it some unique challenges which anyone with any sense of adventure should seek to achieve. At no point did anyone feel overcome with the challenges that faced them. Speaking for the group as a whole, I can say with confidence that it was an ultimate experience, one which I myself will seek again!

For information on the Outdoor Pursuits Club's trip to Aconcagua, see the article on page 12



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continued from previous page

each section one by one but each day they changed.

On the 24th January 2003, Tom Earle, Darragh Dolan, Liam Gahan and myself arrived in Mendoza, Argentina to buy all the food and supplies needed for the expedition. On the 27th of January, Ed Earle, Barry Vials and JP O'Gorman arrived in Mendoza. The team of seven was together and all the food and supplies were ready.

On the 30th of January we entered the Aconcagua National Park (2700m). For US\$200, we were permitted to climb in the park for a period of 20 days. With already walking, we reached Base Camp in 3 days with a night spent at Pampa Las Lajas (2800m) and Casada de Piedra (3500m). As we hiked into Base Camp (4200m), our food and equipment was being transported with us by seven mules each carrying 60kg's.

We reached Base Camp on the 1st of February, which was to become our home for a period of five days. During these five days we rested to acclimatise to the altitude and also carried supplies to Camp 1 (5000m). On the 3rd of February the team of seven carried their first load to Camp 1 and departed again to BC. The next day we repeated this carry so that Camp 2 (5000m) could be successfully established.

On the 6th of February, all seven members moved the Camp 1 leaving the relatively rich air of Base Camp behind. The following day Darragh, Ed, Tom and JP carried loads to Camp 2 at 5900m. Myself, Liam and Barry were a day behind with respect to acclimatisation so we used this day as a rest day in Camp 1. The next day we carried our loads to Camp 2 while the others had their rest day in Camp 1.

At this stage of the expedition, Darragh, Ed, Tom

## Aconcagua 2003

approximately 7pm and rested there for the night, planning to descend to Base Camp the next day. The following morning, I awoke at 4.30 to attempt the summit. Liam did not leave Camp 2 for the summit because of severe altitude headaches. At 5.30am, I left Camp 2 and started the ascent. By 6am, I was at base camp and was testing the status of the altitude but still felt strong. The wind was cold but overall the weather was perfect. At 6.00m, I made the last contact with the lads in Camp 2 and kept moving for the summit. Moving up steadily I reached the summit of Aconcagua at 3.15pm. The last 100m to the top had taken me around 2 hours to complete having to breathe around 6 times for every step or two. I reached to Camp 2 to say that I was on the summit and then started my descent. At around 7pm, I reached Camp 2 and then descended to Camp 1 with JP and Liam who had waited for me in Camp 2.

The day after we were all reunited in Base Camp with all the equipment retrieved from Camp 1 and 2. The next day we walked out the 42km to the start of the National Park, in 19 hours and where back in Mendoza for 11pm. The next few days we stayed in Mendoza resting and sampling Argentine life.

From all the team, and myself, I would like to thank you all our sponsors who without their help and support this expedition would not have been possible.

University of Limerick Students Union  
United Ding  
University of Limerick Sports Department  
Cascadia Designs  
University of Limerick President's Fund  
Crestle T Furniture  
O'Grada Gals  
Murray O'Leary Architects  
Blasch and Lene

At 3pm, we had our last contact with Darragh to say that himself, Tom and JP had reached the summit and that they were all feeling tired but in good form. Tom, Darragh and JP returned to Camp 2 at



## OPC End of Year Report

by Jennifer Ryan

Let's face it you don't get much for your Euro these days. Yet sometimes I managed to buy myself a whole new set of friends and experiences when I parted with my five quid back in September. Having attended NUI Galway last year for a brief (every) period I felt I had sufficient experience to survive making it through the mean autumn without being robbed by clubs and societies. Naturally I was wrong. I joined two clubs, hockey, which I thought I played for years and the Outdoor Pursuits Club. I did hesitate though when I was told to join the OPC would set me back 5 quid. For 5 quid I expected to be carried up Mt. Everest. I questioned the girl behind the stand as to what exactly the club had to offer me, after all I could have joined 5 other clubs for that price. Eventually I realised I was missing the girl's enthusiasm so I lost the run of myself and handed over the cash. When in retrospect was probably the most productive trip I did all year.

Over the next few weeks I became more involved in the club and gladly took a place on the committee when it was offered to me (a low note). Trips included the Knockedownes, Mt. Brandon, the Galtees, Caranahall along with caving and rock-climbing in the Burren. The more trips I went on the more people I met and the more people I met the more trips I went on, so things worked out good. A very merry Christmas indeed was had by all who attended our festive weekend trip to Doonin. We managed to get in a Christmas dinner, some caving, rock-climbing and even a spot of night golf! The January holidays saw a group from the club head off to Snowdon in Wales for a week of mountaineering in snow and ice. By the time you read this 6 of us will have represented UL in the national student-caving forum. Caving is amazing, everybody should at least try it once!



Mt Brandon

The big news in the club this year was the Aconcagua Expedition that saw 7 lads push themselves to the limits to conquer the highest peak of the Western Hemisphere. For those

I had a little experience of hill walking and rock climbing before joining the OPC, but became intimidated listening to others talk about all the stuff they'd done. However all was well when that same week I went on my first trip with the club, we ventured to the Burren. Some went rock climbing, most hill-walking and a few caving. I copied for the hill walking and had great crag with the crowd in that group. (The walk wasn't bad either) By the time I got home that night I was shattered but definitely hooked.

Over the next few weeks I became more involved in the club and gladly took a place on the committee when it was offered to me (a low note). Trips included the Knockedownes, Mt. Brandon, the Galtees, Caranahall along with caving and rock-climbing in the Burren. The more trips I went on the more people I met and the more people I met the more trips I went on, so things worked out good. A very merry Christmas indeed was had by all who attended our festive weekend trip to Doonin. We managed to get in a Christmas dinner, some caving, rock-climbing and even a spot of night golf! The January holidays saw a group from the club head off to Snowdon in Wales for a week of mountaineering in snow and ice. By the time you read this 6 of us will have represented UL in the national student-caving forum. Caving is amazing, everybody should at least try it once!



The OPC in Aconcagua

of you who haven't heard about the expedition, it was a roaring success, with 4 of the 7 lads reaching the 6,962m summit. A big congrats to all involved, in particular to Frank Cox who worked tirelessly to achieve what had started out as a dream. The award for Best Event acknowledged this achievement of the Club's 50th. Best. It is true we are going from strength to strength. Next year we

plan to expand our boundaries even more and get orienteering up and running in the club. So come next September if you find yourself confused by the extensive choice of clubs, give the OPC a shot and if you are unhappy by the end of the year we will give you your \$5000! Anything is possible in the Outdoor Pursuits Club.



**UL Outdoor Pursuits Club**  
Rockclimbing, Hillwalking,  
Mountaineering and Caving  
website at <http://www.can.ul.ie/~opc/>  
email [opc@can.ul.ie](mailto:opc@can.ul.ie)

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!  
VISIT THE CLIMBING WALL IN THE OLD SPORTS BUILDING  
OPENING HOURS: MON, TUE & THUR 7-10PM

'03

## UL Outdoor Pursuits Club Disasters in Chamonix



This is what OPC do

Girls, picture yourself in the sunny south east of France with 4 men at your beck and call. Sound good. I thought so too when I signed up for 3 weeks in Chamonix with 4 boys from the outdoor pursuits club. I might even climb a mountain or two. I started to worry however, when, the night before we travelled I was ordered to remove all cosmetics, shampoos, conditioners and even my "going out outfit" from my bag.

If Michael O'Leary has anybody to thank for paying off his recent wedding, it is the UL outdoor pursuits club. We were charged €6 per kilo over 15kgs. Liam was so disgusted at loosening the tight purse strings that he swore he would wear every item of clothing on the return flight. He was nearly caught out trying to add an extra 20 kg to his bag after it had been weighed in.

Ryanair are great for letting anyone fly with them. With or without a passport. However Easy jet was not as compliant. One of our group was put up on a very uncomfortable bench in the airport for the night, after travelling in to London to get an emergency passport. He had to sleep with one eye on his bags however as we jetted of the previous afternoon.

Beware of the buses in Chamonix to however. I thought the

Raheen bus was unreliable. I waited for an hour for a bus that never came. If I understood a word of French I would have noticed that there was an annual marathon preventing buses travelling that day. Just my luck.

But to take the attention away from my mistake I will tell you about a day Liam decided to lead us on a trip to l'Index. A nice route that required a cable car trip. 15 minutes of walking to snow and loose stones in my sandals and we were waiting to get started. We decided to ask fellow climber if this in fact was the right spot. Grinning, he said that it was 6 miles up the valley and that we had got the wrong cable car. We should have got the l'Index cable car funnily enough. Liam is a great man for a laugh but he doesn't like it when we laugh at him for a half an hour for his mistake.

A bit of warning, when sleeping at altitude. Flappers decided to tell me about high altitude flatulence. Which he suffered from badly. I also thought there was such thing as high altitude snoring but it turns out that is normal for some people.

Unfortunately we did have our share of injuries too. Mike was stuck sunning himself and examining the shops for five days and he had a sore foot. He is now an encyclopaedia of gear and can even quote catalogue numbers. We had the finest gear when we travelled. Our tents could withstand blizzards, however some members of the group still managed to have a midnight flood in the tent even when it was 20oC outside.

The highlight of my holiday would have to be smuggling up between two men on my second last night. We slept in a hole in the snow but I was kept nice and cosy as we watched the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen before everything around us froze.

All in all it was a great holiday with lots of great memories and hopefully I will return with a few less disasters occurring next year.

## Outdoor Pursuits Club UL Climbing Intervarsities 2004



I remember back in January when I was told that we the OPC would be hosting the National climbing Intervarsity here in Limerick, UL to be exact. From being at two other intervarsities before, Belfast and Dublin, I thought this wouldn't run too well with the size of our wall. But I was proven very wrong. A team of 5/6 headed by our slave driving president, Aoife Nagle, pulled off the best varsities so far (only a little bit biased). We had the most colleges representing themselves at ours, including UUI, DIT, ITT, DCU, UCC, and NUIG.

The whole weekend started off on Friday night, when all the Colleges arrived and were shown to their impressive quarters, Groody student village. After settling in, we escorted them to the Scholars where we had finger food as per arranged and of course a lot of craic mingling with the represented colleges. Before too long, we were herded onto a bus to bring all 50+ of us on a little mystery tour. It turned out to be to Eoin Fitzgerald's house, somewhere where past Corbally if my memory serves me correctly. The whole night was a blast even after enjoying Alwyn's cooking. Thanking you Alwyn!

With the introductions over, came the sleeping/recovery. Saturday arrived as expected after Friday and so the competition was to begin. At 11am all were to be signed up and score cards to be issued. To be fair I believe most contestants were pretty much on time but some of the host climbers weren't. Some arrived at 1pm others at two, some people were even finished climbing for the day by that stage! However, the day went without a hitch, and from the reactions of the competitors, they were very impressed by the challenging grades and the wall, which I had feared would be too small.

Saturday's climbing done, the night's festivities followed, where we would try getting the opposition to falter and climb poorly the next day. Again we started in the Scholars and enjoyed the atmosphere there before wandering into town to the Trinity Rooms, where again we had arranged a party. We all enjoyed a great night, with some



scoring (ye know who ye are you hooligans) and lots of revelling.

Again an early start to Sunday was required to get all 50+ out to Shannon to the impressive new climbing wall out there. After an amusing bus journey, we arrived in Shannon and disembarked the wonder bus driven by madman Eugene.

A room was set up for us to change our clothes and for the climbers to wait for their turn to climb (they weren't allowed to see how others climbed the route). Of course with all the tension they started playing rugby inside in the room. That was all fun and games until someone kicked it up and hit the light, smashing it to bits. With Coxy from UL up first for the men and Aoife for the ladies there was a big cheers from everyone. Everyone found the male route quite difficult and only one person got to the top. Stevo found it particularly hard with him being half dead and only went about two feet before he came off. At the end of the competition the winners were

Ladies A: Aoife Nagle UL

Male A: Kevin Marnane DIT

Overall university: IST University of Ulster Jordanstown

2nd University of Limerick

Beginner: Vincent O'Brien UUI

A special thanks to everyone who organised the event and also to our sponsors River Deep Mountain High

'04

## Outdoor Pursuits Club Review of the Year



Another year gone and while most clubs are winding down for the summer we would of course have to do the opposite and go rockclimbing nearly every weekend in preparation for our trip to the Alps. As usual the OPC has had an eventful 12 months since the clubs and societies ball last year where the Aconagua 2003 Expedition, in our opinion, deservedly won Best Event. Over the summer seven OPC members headed to the Alps. It was the first time there for four of them and two attended a 3-day training course designed specifically for climbers without much experience while another attended an advanced alpine course to develop his mountain skills. All benefited hugely from this as it gave them valuable knowledge and confidence. Over the summer two new sections were added onto the climbing wall and the existing main section was repainted and regripped. UL can now boast of having one of the best bouldering walls in

Ireland.

In September we recruited/bribed over 350 unwilling people to join the club. There were 3 weekend trips to Cliften, Doolin and Killarney as well as rockclimbing trips to the Burren and Kilkenny. Numerous day hillwalking trips to Tipperary and Kerry also took place. Some members participated in a supervisor course for the climbing wall and rock-climbing leadership training. UL climbers also actively competed in national indoor climbing competitions. The icing on the cake last semester was the 10-day mountaineering trip which 18 people took to the Scottish Highlands. This was a fantastic experience for everyone! On the first day a group of beginners and a group of more experienced people were taken out by guides and shown everything from walking in crampons to avoiding avalanches. Mountains such as Buachaill Etive Mor, Stob Corra Na Lochan and of course the mighty Ben Nevis were climbed. Early mornings and long days weren't enough to deter the enthusiastic bunch! For many people this trip only whetted their appetite for mountaineering with many setting their sights on the Alps this summer.

Orienteering and caving are emerging as very popular alternatives to rockclimbing and mountaineering. Orienteering is a sport in which orienteers use an accurate, detailed map



and a compass to find points in the landscape. It can be enjoyed as a walk in the woods or as a competitive sport. Over the course of the year two people attended a training weekend in the forests of Offaly and another five went to the Intervarsities in Galway. Regular caving trips to the Burren were held throughout last year with the highlight being the caving forum in Fermanagh last Easter.

Then there were the rockclimbing intervarsities where climbers from colleges from all over Ireland competed for a big (heavy) piece of granite! We didn't get it this year but at least Aoife won the female category.

In the past year and a half the OPC has helped about 80 people stand on top of

Ireland's highest mountain - Carrauntoohill (1039m), 19 stand on Ben Nevis - the highest mountain in Britain and Ireland (1344m), 2 people stand on the highest mountain in western Europe - Mt. Blanc (4810m) and 4 people stand on the highest mountain in the western hemisphere - Aconagua (6962m). Some members are hoping to stand on the roof of Africa by attempting Kilimanjaro (5800m) this August and after that the sky is the limit!!

We would like to thank River Deep Mountain High for their continued support throughout the year. If you have any queries please contact [opc@csn.ul.ie](mailto:opc@csn.ul.ie) or check out our website at <http://www.skynet.ie/~opc/>.

# '05-06

## UL Outdoor Pursuits Club

### It's official: WE'RE THE BEST CLUB.

The Outdoor Pursuits Club won the award for the best club at the Clubs and Societies Ball. It's a credit to all the hard work that numerous people have put in over the last year. A lot of time and effort was put in to make the OPC the best club on campus. It's not until you're on a committee that you realise the amount of hours that have to be sacrificed for the smooth running of such a large club. Special mention has to go to Aoife Nagle, former captain over the last year, Tony Ryan, our new captain, Alwyn Kinane for making such a good presentation at the hustings and all the lads who laid the foundations of such a great club over the years.

First off, the climbing intervarsities were held in UCC this year in Week 2. UL OPC sent down a lot of climbers, both experienced and beginners and they all did the club proud with a 4th position for one of the more experienced climbers and 9th position for one of



our beginners. The competition was tough but 'Team Ossum' gave a great effort and all the hours of practice paid down at the wall showed.

Over the Easter weekend, all the club members went to various parts of the country and abroad to climb. Frank went off to Gogarth in Wales for a week of sea cliff climbing. Liam went up to Fairhead in the north for some of the best climbing that Ireland has to offer. About fifteen other members went to the Burren to rock climb. All had a great weekend.

If you want to try some indoor climbing, come down to the wall in the old sports building Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 7pm to 10pm.

## "We'll Always Have Peru!"

Frank Cox travelled to Peru with the Outdoor Pursuits Club over the summer. Here is his account of climbing eleven peaks.

Seven hundred metres up from the glacial plateau below and the only thing that joined us to the glacier was the exposure of the southeast face on which we stood. We'd been climbing since 5pm the previous night and at it was now nearly 6.0am, which meant sunrise.

Moving quickly up the steep snow couloir, we were both waiting for the heat of the sun to warm our cold bodies. Just as we reached the summit ridge the sun rose, spreading its rays across each of the mountains. At 8am, after 11 hours of climbing from our bivouac site far below, we reached the pyramidal summit at 6,576m. All we had left to do now was the 8-hour return to the bivouac and then the 28km walk back to the nearest road the next morning. A standard request while climbing in the Cordillera Blanca.

Walking into the isolated base camp on the shores of the glacial lake the evening before, we left our camp at 2am and climbed the glacial moraine to the bottom of the face.

After climbing in the European Alps, the Cordillera Blanca in the Peruvian Andes is where the peaks just get bigger and better. When you arrive in Huaraz, the snow capped peaks of this majestic mountain range stand in the distance. Our plan was to climb a number of peaks in the range over the period of two months.

We started our acclimatisation in the Ichhu Valley for eleven days, with ascents of Uras, Illimani and Tullucayo.

After this trip, we set our sights a little higher and decided on climbing the southeast face of Chang, which stands at 5,300m. After walking into the isolated base camp on the shores of the glacial lake the evening before, we left our camp at 2am and climbed the glacial moraine to the bottom of the face. From here the true climbing begins, with long technical sections of mixed (snow and rock) climbing to reach the upper sections of the face. The upper face consists of long steep snow slatings, which finally ended allowing us to exit onto the small vertical snowfield.

However, after reaching the summit, there was still a long way to go to get back to our base camp. After around nine hours - 45 metres each - and long sections of down climbing we returned to our camp at midnight after 22 hours of climbing. The next day we next trip into the mountains.

By the beginning of July we had just completed just over half of our trip and we were doing well after climbing 4 peaks over 5,000 metres and 1 peak over 6,000 metres. As the conditions in the mountains got better over July, we summited Vallunaraju via the East Col and then set our sights on the peaks of Quitaraju and Aricochañu both 6,000 metre peaks.

After a two day walk into the Santa Cruz valley, we reached Alpacayo base camp which is also the base camp for Quitaraju. The next day we left the luxury of base camp moving higher to camp on the edge of the glacier at 4,200 metres. We again moved higher reaching high camp (5,100m) on the other side of the col between Quitaraju and Alpacayo.

Climbing as two teams of two, we climbed the face quicker than we expected, reaching the summit before midnight. We decided to try and stay on the summit till sunrise but with temperatures in the range of -10°C with the added effect of a stiff wind, we took our photos just before sunrise and started our descent back to high camp. After around 5 hours we were back in high camp eating and resting in the full intensity of a high altitude sun.

After two days out at base camp, two of us decided to stay with the plan of climbing Aricochañu via the Northwest face. The rest of the team left base camp and returned to Huaraz for some rest while we crossed the valley, climbing up into the vast moraine at the base of Aricochañu. After spending the next morning waiting the face for potential dangers, we left at 9pm and quickly made our way up the face reaching the spectacular summit at 6am the next morning, and then returned back to our bivouac site for 4pm that evening. The next day we returned back to Huaraz after a 25km walk back out of the Santa Cruz valley for a well-earned slab of ice-cream. It had been 12 days since we had left Huaraz.

After the 12 days in the Santa Cruz valley, we only had 7 days left in our trip, so we decided on one last ascent. This was to bring us into the Pávon valley at 4,400m where we decided to climb the granite tower known as La Esfinge (The Sphinx in English) at a height of 5,325 metres. This tower was first climbed in 1985 by two Spanish climbers which took 2 days and we planned to climb via the same route. The climb was 750 metres high and we aimed to climb it



The granite tower known as La Esfinge

within the day and without the use of artificial climbing to progress (i.e. free climb). As we reached the ridge line on the approach to our base camp, we first had a view of La Esfinge we wanted to see. Eight hundred metres of vertical granite which we were to climb the next day? The next morning we walked to the base of the tower and got prepared. After a quick picnic of rock, paper, scissors, I was the one to start climbing the first pitch (1 rope length, i.e. 50m) at 6:45am. By 7:00am we were high up the face at pitch 5 with 15 remaining. By 4pm we had reached the ledge at the end of pitch 9 but we knew that we could not make the top before sunset. At around 7pm, darkness fell but we climbed on using head-lights, reaching pitch 18 at 11pm after 16 hours of climbing. After one head-wash (steep working), we decided to sit at the night at 5,200 metres till first light when we could finish the climb. So sitting on a rope with just a down jacket as a blanket, we slept lightly till the sun rose at 6:30am with the occasional fit of shivers. After warming ourselves in the sun, we climbed the remaining two pitches to get to the summit ridge and then walked easily along the ridge to the true summit, happy with our achievement.



Vallunaraju peak

In total, 11 peaks were climbed all over 5,000 metres which included 4 peaks over 6,000 metres, during the period of two months making this one of the most successful expeditions for the UL Outdoor Pursuits Club.

The team would like to thank the ULSU Clubs and Societies for the support of the Outdoor Pursuits Expeditions over the past three years which has allowed the OPC to organise

expeditions to Argentina and Peru. This support is greatly appreciated and needed to make these expeditions a success.

To see more on this expedition, please attend the Peru Expedition 2005 slideshow on Thursday, 6th of October (Week 2) at 8pm in Room D1050.

## Touching the void

Conor Leahy

IT CAME WITHOUT WARNING, a sudden burst of pain as if someone had blown open my knee with a hammer. I fell to the ground in agony, trying to figure out if it was true or dream.

I knew the pain of a dislocated patella (kneecap) all too well, I was unfortunate enough to have previously suffered this trauma.

Unfortunately, when on the side of a mountain, what they teach you in the Red Cross doesn't apply. You have to take matters into your own hands. With the help of two other members of the group, my kneecap was relocated.

With my leg splinted walking down was an option but a hazardous one. Our location was such that it would have been easier to get to the top of Carrantuohill and walk down the easy way then go back the way we came. Though we were trained and had the right equipment for

night navigation, it simply wasn't an option for that day. The call was made to Kerry Mountain Rescue for advice. They took some time to analyze the situation and determine the best way to get to us. Eventually they called back to confirm our location and told us a chopper was en route. Kerry

Mountain Rescue were also deployed in case the chopper couldn't pick me up. Fifteen minutes after getting the callout, the coast guard helicopter was in the air heading for the Reeks. It arrived soon after and the mighty S-61 circled our location checking the winds. We could see the Winch man

and the Para-jumper sticking their heads out the door formulating a plan of action. Once on terra firma, he unclipped himself from the cable and began to diagnose the situation. Daragh went up first and was ripped up like a rag doll. I was next, Gary (the Para-Jumper), joined me for safety reasons. I was also ripped up into the sky fighting the downwash as I rose to the door. It was only ten minutes to Tralee Hospital.

I would like to dedicate this article to the members of the Irish Coast Guard and Kerry Mountain Rescue. Every day they put their own lives in danger to rescue others in danger. It's an absolute travesty that these organizations have to operate as a charity. As a result, the OPC will be fundraising for these groups. Check out the website for exclusive video footage of the helicopter rescue. [www.skynet.ie/~opc](http://www.skynet.ie/~opc)



## OPC Visit Croagh Patrick

## OPC's feat for Telethon

The OPC is a club of people who are interested in the outdoors and who enjoy climbing. The club has a long history and has been successful in many areas. The club has a strong focus on safety and has a good record of successful climbs. The club has a good reputation and is well known in the area.

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MEMBERS of Outdoor Pursuits Club soared to the top of Everest in the PE and Sports Science Building last Wednesday to highlight their activities on campus and as a contribution to the Clubs and Societies fund that took place in the afternoon as part of Walkout Wednesday.

Over a hundred participants scaled the climbing wall in the PESS to match the height of Everest while also making a contribution to Telethon. Between the climbers they successfully soared 8848 metres over 1180 climbs of the wall, equivalent to the height of the world's tallest summit, as well as collecting almost €1000 for the cause.

Asking OPC President Fergal Dempsey if the club has any plans to venture the height of the Asian mountain, the 'Iron' and 'Proud' member responded, 'Yes the club is looking forward to an adventure to the Himalayas within the next two years and to being the first University club to make it to the top of the mountain, but for now our feat at the wall is done.'

The Club collected contributions from climbers and onlookers on the day for Telethon, including a €160 donation from Clubs' Officer and OPC member Aine Marley who won the bid to make the final climb to the top. She told An Focal, 'It was for a brilliant cause and it was great to help out. We're all exhausted now though.'

Climbers had reached the

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### RWC 2007 Preview - New Zealand Won't Have It All Their Own Way

FOR THE RWC 2007 Preview - New Zealand Won't Have It All Their Own Way. The article discusses the challenges New Zealand faces in the upcoming tournament, including the need to improve their performance in the Six Nations and the impact of the new World Cup format.

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OPC member John Sadler raced up the climbing wall against UL Kayaker Sean McTiernan as part of the charity climbathon. The kayakers won. The An Focal editor is now in hiding for revealing that piece of information.



UL Music Soc member afternoo away in the courtyard

## OPC Assists Pilgrimage Climb

By Aislinn Deenihan and Cillian Burke

The Irish Cave Rescue Organisation (ICRO) issued a call in July to all caving members to assist the Mayo Mountain Rescue team in administering first aid during the annual Croagh Patrick Mountain Pilgrimage. Six members from the Outdoor Pursuits Club in UL - Cillian Burke, Paul Loundes, Mike Jordan, Aislinn Deenihan, Eoin Fahy and Jessie O'Shaunessy - volunteered to assist on the mountain for Reek Sunday.

Croagh Patrick is a mountain in North Mayo considered to be St. Patrick's mountain and is most commonly called 'the Reek'. Legend has it that St. Patrick fasted for 40 days on top of the mountain. Each year on the last Sunday in July over 20,000 people ascend the mountain as a pilgrimage to Ireland's national saint.

Croagh Patrick is 762 metres high, but it has one of the most distinct mountain profiles in the country. The Reek itself can be extremely dangerous in wet weather due to its rocky terrain, with the last 400 metres ascension similar to hiking up a vertical mound of sharp shale at the bottom of a deep trench.

New pilgrims on the route are often unprepared for the hazards of the mountain and some deaths and serious injuries have occurred on the mountain over the last 10 years. Traditionally pilgrims do it in their bare feet to get extra forgiveness for their sins but this year only a few hardcore climbers were on the mountain.

The ULOPC members were initially scheduled to be on the mountain on the Sunday from 10am till 6pm, but due to terrible weather conditions by the veteran Mountain rescuers as the worst experienced during a Reek weekend for 20 years, with driving rain and hail and force 6 to 7 winds. Weather conditions deteriorated

to such an extent that Mayo Mountain Rescue team advised to wait out the worst of it and wait for some clearance before pitching the secondary hospital tent.

Conditions improved around 2am and relieved people slowly made their way up the summit again. The pilgrims doing the pilgrimage at this hour ranged from the well trained and prepared hill walker to the drunk trying to ascend using a mobile phone as a light. The ULOPC group were able to descend from the mountain at 4am after having pitched the tent with the other 14 people who had been sent up the mountain six hours previously.

The second shift began at 10am the next morning, with continuing poor weather conditions. However over 2,000 people an hour were attempting to climb the summit. Incidents that were encountered on the second shift included distended cases of children suffering from hypothermia, elderly people requiring assistance descending the mountain and people with blisters and cuts and bruises from minor falls. The ULOPC/ICRO team were relieved from their shift at 4pm.

The participating ULOPC members described the experience positively, particularly the camaraderie among the rescue groups and the pilgrims and they are all looking forward to next year's pilgrimage already. It was an eye-opening experience and heightened the awareness of group leadership and responsibility when out on the hills.

The OPC is one of the largest clubs on campus and offer five activities to their members, hill walking, climbing, caving, mountaineering and orienteering.

Keep up to date with OPC activities by visiting [www.ulopc.com](http://www.ulopc.com). Visit them at their stand at the Arena Wednesday of Week One at the PESS building any Monday Tuesday or Thursday from 7 to 10 pm. All levels catered for and all are welcome.



## OPC International Caving Trip to Yorkshire



By Gillian Burke

At the beginning of graduation week fourth years were getting organised to collect their degrees and move on to the next stage of their lives and careers.

The OPC cavers were getting ready for their first training trip to the Yorkshire Dales. Seven club members made their way to Yorkshire with the Students' Union minibus and all the gear needed carefully inventoried and packed on board. The first leg of the journey was the drive from Limerick to Dun Laoghaire port leaving at 8.15am. On the drive from Holyhead to the hostel in Yorkshire massive traffic jams were met with two accidents close to each other on the M6. It took nearly an hour and a half to travel 25 miles with the tailbacks so a relieved group of cavers finally reached the hostel around 10.30pm that night.

Yorkshire was organised to be a fulfilling training trip for everyone who went from the complete beginner to the more advanced rigger. Two instructors Duncan and Kevin members of the association of caving instructors and local cave rescue team were hired to train the group on all safe practices in the entry and exit of more technical caves. Single rope technique (SRT) was the main focus of the training. This is the means to ascend and descend large vertical pots or shafts safely using caving gear. You literally can be hanging on a rope with 30 or 40 metres of space under you with the closest wall 6 or seven feet away.

Even the strongest headlamps cannot penetrate the distance to view the bottom of the pot. The training began on the first day at an SRT platform in the village of Clapham. This was the controlled environment where the necessary SRT skills were thought to all. Under the supervision and guidance to the two instructors safe practise and techniques

were imparted to all the OPC group. With the instructors happy with everyone's competency it was time to go underground and explore the depths of the Yorkshire dales had to offer. The Cave systems entered in Yorkshire were 'Lost Johns', 'Lancaster Hole' and 'Sell Gills'. These trips were enjoyed by the entire group.

There were educational challenging and everyone got a chance to increase their skills with rope work especially. Gear was checked, cave pots and pitches were rigged, different peoples techniques scrutinized and the pitches de-rigged on exit.

The progress was marvellous and the discussions around the dinner table each night were exciting and often heated as contrasting views on knots, equipment and technique were presented.

On the last day of the trip the OPC cavers bumped into a group of DCU cavers underground and following a friendly gathering and lunch in the depths of the opportunity to make a through trip in the cave by exiting by the different entrance they rigged 'the Goblin route.' That night there was a great take over of the local pub with dance floor as the cavers from both Irish colleges gave the dance floor socks. The trip lived up to everyone's expectations and all in it was a positive, exciting and fun learning process similar to the annual winter mountaineering trip to Scotland run by the OPC at the beginning of the year. The camaraderie was mighty, the hostel was cosy and it all worked out well in the end. For a first year the trip surpassed all expectations.

For more information on any of the five activities (Caving, Hillwalking, Mountaineering, Rockclimbing and Orienteering) of the OPC check out our website at [www.ulopc.com](http://www.ulopc.com) or call down to the climbing wall any Monday Tuesday or Thursday from 7 to 10 pm in the PESS building.



# '10-'11

## OPC ADVENTURERS BRAVE THE ICY MOUNTAINS OF CHAMONIX

Written by **OPC PRO**

"Often going up seems so much easier than coming down."

THE Outdoor Pursuits Club travelled to Chamonix in France during the summer to do some sport climbing and bolted climbing amongst the glaciers and snow covered peaks and improve their climbing skills. The OPC explored multi-patch rock routes or snow and

ice-covered ridges and climbed from 3,000m and above. On rainy days, the members relaxed and looked for shelter from the torrents of water that rolled up the valley during violent weather.

They reached the summits of several routes and had something to eat or drink while enjoying the scenic view. Often going up seems so much easier than coming down. On descending, the club practiced climbing, abseiling, sliding in the snow and kacking steps. The descent took some time but they successfully found their way home in time to relax with a hot meal.

The members enter the hostile world of

snow and ice and found their way back safely through the glaciers and snow fields. Neither harsh terrain, torrential rain, ice tunnels, hard mountain rock surfaces nor the unpredictability of the elements deterred the members of the Outdoor Pursuits Club from exploring this new, exciting environment and honing their orienteering and mountain climbing skills.

If you want to become part of an OPC adventure like this, call to the climbing wall, located in the PESS building, between 7 and 10pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.



An OPC member descending the dangerous slopes of Chamonix, France.

## OPC DOES DONEGAL AND DERRY IN "BEST WEEKEND EVER"

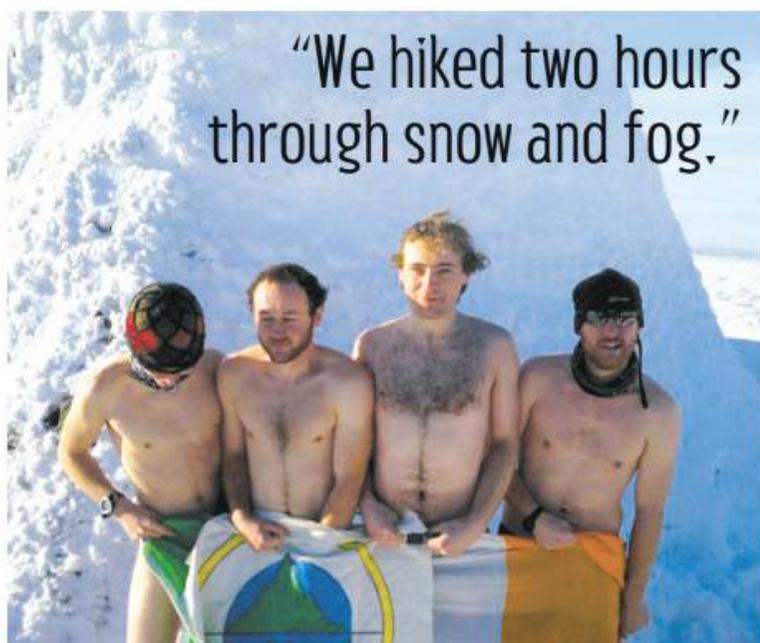
Written by **Janika Walter**

LET'S start at the beginning Saturday, 5:00am. Anticipation got us out of bed and to the Stables Archway, welcomed by fantastic bus driver Pat. Following the long journey, we reached Donegal and our first stop was the highest sea cliff in Europe, Slieve League. It was time for our hiking boots and cameras for some spectacular, panoramic views around the Cliffs. Back to the bus as we headed to Dunlewey hostel at the base of the highest mountain in Donegal: Mount Errigal. As a lovely voice announced, this would be our goal for Sunday. The more immediate goal for the night was the delicious Spaghetti Carbonara cooked by Italian chef Luca and crew. It suffices to say "The OPC craic was

on". For those who weren't there, you definitely missed out. Hangover or not, we enjoyed breakfast on Sunday. The weather was good for this 752m challenge as we hiked through muddy swamps and rocky, steep paths. Backed by a new temporary member, Caesar (Our shepherd dog), our leaders got everybody up the muscle-challenging way. But standing at the summit, the amazing landscape made the whole day worth it. The day didn't finish there. For those who think people only go for a swim in summer, think again! 10 or 15 went into the sea with -30C water but the sunshine welcomed them out. The romance of a beautiful sunset then saw us off for another glorious OPC night.

Monday's destination was Derry. I reckon we all learned more about Bloody Sunday than any history book could teach. Seeing the real setting, crossing the street where 14 year old children got shot and getting a tour by a man who lost friends in the events can't compare to a book. Derry itself would be incredible even without being so well-known for such a terrible event.

There is only one thing left for me to say. OPC doesn't only stand for Outdoor Pursuit Club but Obviously Perfect Club!



"We hiked two hours through snow and fog."

No better time to take your clothes off. OPC members freeze in publicity stunt.

## OPC VISIT A VERY CHILLY SCOTLAND

Written by **Kelsey Hutton**

Written by **Tomás Walsh**

WHEN the OPC presented me with the opportunity to travel to Scotland for a bit of mountaineering, so many things were against me, funds, moving out of my apartment, and missing classes back home but going was the best decision I've ever made. I have no bad memories from the day we began the journey until the moment we left.

Living in a tiny, dirty bunkhouse and climbing mountains with such a diverse group demonstrated how people can work together at their best. Without everyone's help and my own determination I would have never accomplished what I did. Every view was breath taking and every effort was worth it no matter how hard. From the first day of training, getting soaked, to the summit of Nevis on the most beautiful day for years, I learned so much I couldn't have learned anywhere else with anyone else.

I will never again underestimate the power of encouragement or doubt my abilities. I will never forget a single second of Scotland.

WITH Ben Nevis still in their legs, five weary climbers braved one last early morning to climb Stob Coire nan Lochan. We hiked two hours through the snow and fog to the base of Dorsal Arete, a 150m climb up a fin like ridge and for many members of the group our first lead climb.

We split into two groups, each member having the opportunity to lead and place their own gear. At the daunting crux of the climb one must tip toe out on a slender ledge and scale a column of rock with not much in the way of hand holds and a shear drop on either side. After scaling this, it was a short walk to the summit of Stob Coire nan Lochan, 1115m. Our decent was made easy by a 200m slide down Broad Gully, racing the setting sun and the day was rounded off with haggis, whisky and ale.

The supervisor will tell you what we have coming up this semester, where we will be going and our amazing international trips. We also wish a fond farewell to Stina Björjesson and Kelsey Hutton, we'll miss ye.

# '11-'16

## Outdoor Pursuits Club

Katherine Davis

The Outdoor Pursuits Club's Halloween weekend trip of the semester kicked off at 6am on October 29, on a miserable and dreary morning. Despite the early hour, everyone was in good form and we had all the gear loaded to be on the road for six fifteen.

Looking along the bus you could see that just about everyone was in various states of slumber or unconsciousness as we began the lengthy trip north to Donegal. Besides a brief stop to allow ourselves a leisurely breakfast, we didn't halt until we reached Ireland's highest sea cliffs at Slieve League, situated on the Atlantic coast of Donegal. Though not as famous as the Cliffs of Moher, they stand nearly three times higher and we were blessed with clear weather and an awe-inspiring view as we went on a short hike in the vicinity. Our journey wasn't over yet so we trooped back onto the bus to reach our hostel in Donegal.

Errigal is the highest mountain in Donegal, part of the Derryveagh mountain range and we got to stay in a hostel right at the foot of it, surrounded by beautiful scenic countryside, as well as the majestic peaks of the 'Seven Sisters'. The quartzite exposed on its upper slopes, gives the mountain a particularly imposing appearance. After a long tiring day, with a journey worthy of Amundsen behind us, we settled in for the night to prepare for the hike the next day. For once Daylight Savings Time did us a favour, allowing us an extra hour of rest before we had our breakfast and began our day. Conditions were cloudy but dry. For the beginning of the hike we had to endure severe boggy terrain before finally making it up onto the scree of the mountain as we continued

uphill. Mist came in, along with heavy winds but we were able to negotiate the route to the summit without much difficulty. Unfortunately we weren't able to receive the view we deserved after our labours, but there was a great feeling of accomplishment none the less that kept everyone's spirits up as we began our descent.

The trip back across the bog didn't matter as our next port of call was the beach at Carrickfinn to enjoy the sea one last time before winter. I'd hesitate to describe the northern Atlantic as warm, but a word like bracing or refreshing might be more fitting. Fair play to those who braved it (the majority of us I am proud to add).

Our physical exercise over for the day, we headed back to the hostel to prepare our evening meal and decorate the place for our Halloween party that night. With an excellent spaghetti Bolognese dish served up by some able volunteers to save our hunger, we adjourned to put on our costumes before attending our Halloween soiree.

Our hall suitably decorated to ensure a festive flavour, we were lucky enough to have music courtesy of Marco Peters, our own resident DJ who was happy enough to take requests all evening, including unusual requests such as 'It's Raining Men' and of course the classics like 'Thriller'.

Regardless, it was a fantastic night and I for one, knew I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

And of course the costumes worn by the members on the trip were in the spirit of the evening, an impressive standard all round. The next day, it was with some regret we departed Donegal, the fact we had another long



Members of OPC on their latest hike

bus journey ahead of us may have contributed to it! But it wasn't a day wasted entirely on transport back to UL. We took several scenic stops, the most significant being the site of W.B. Yeats grave at Drumcliff, in the shadow of Ben Bulbin, the mountain fittingly described in his last work. It was with some relief that our weary group eventually arrived in Limerick around 10pm, fortunate not to miss too much of the festivities. Bidding each other our farewells, it was the conclusion of another successful trip this semester and a great way to celebrate the long weekend. Congratulations to everyone who went, I hope you had a great time. And a special thanks to everyone who helped organize it.

of this achievement was carried through to our Glendalough trip where over 100 members, mostly new, braved the Wicklow Mountains for a weekend of stunning views, stunning attire and unrepentable company. Though the weekend was terminated by an unexpected bus, some of our newest members left with the experience of learning how to make the absolute most of a bad situation and even more

CONOR WHELAN

THE OPC considers itself its own toughest critic. The standard set by each committee year in year out far exceeds the expectations of even its members and this year has been no exception. With a record number of members for the semester, ground breaking trips and brand new events, both the present and the future look good for our daring and wonderful club.

At an extremely successful equipment drive led to the OPC growing to over 650 members, more than the club has reached in the previous few years. The momentum

of this achievement was carried through to our Glendalough trip where over 100 members, mostly new, braved the Wicklow Mountains for a weekend of stunning views, stunning attire and unrepentable company. Though the weekend was terminated by an unexpected bus, some of our newest members left with the experience of learning how to make the absolute most of a bad situation and even more

so our committee left with a better knowledge of working together than any team-building exercise could possibly offer.

During week 5 the OPC held its first ever OIBympics climbing competition. On that evening over 31 members participated in a series of fun challenging events in an attempt to become the inaugural OIBympics gold medalist. The night was both cooperative and grueling with plenty of slow motion running while other members stood in the background chanting the Charade of Five theme song. Eventually, the magnificent Ed prevailed above the rest, fighting tooth and nail against a plethora of amazing climbers to become our one and only champion. Ed, we salute you!

As the OPC semester steamed onward, at the end

of week 8, 12 of our climbers ventured down to the mysterious Republic of Cork to enter in this year's intervarsity 1, in keeping with the club tradition of fun before glory, a relatively inexperienced group of climbers were brought to the competition so they could witness some of Ireland's best climbers in action. The OPC fought valiantly with David Schmitt, an Erasmus student from Germany reaching the final round of the Dyrco Competition and Niall O'Connell, our Gear Officer, narrowly missing out on a podium place in the female beginner's

category! Overall however we are extremely proud of our members who gave up their time to compete for the betterment of the club.

As typical with every semester, our infamous Sunday hikes have continued, venturing across the various mountain ranges of Cork, Tipperary, Kerry and Waterford. Each trip has sold out in a matter of hours, a tribute to the high standards to which the OPC holds itself. Our intentions remain ambitious as we plan to hike Carrantoish, Ireland's highest peak along with training up

## The OPC: A semester of new heights, shenanigans and your typical levels of craic!



order to raise awareness for mental health.

Why stop there? During the Easter break we will carry out our amazing trip!! Firstly our members will visit the beautiful island of Sardinia for a week in between over some of the most stunning backdrops to be found throughout the world. Our daring cavers will also travel to Yorkshire to train in some of the most challenging and beautiful crags.

As you can see we've been busy. Our hard work has not gone unnoticed with nominations this year for Best Trip: our Kilmanjaro/Tibet expedition, Best Club Person: Tim Quinlan and of course Best Overall Club in this year's Student Union Award. If you'd like to join in on the action why not email us at [uloutdoorpursuitsclub@gmail.com](mailto:uloutdoorpursuitsclub@gmail.com) or follow us on Facebook at [UL Outdoor Pursuits!](https://www.facebook.com/ULOutdoorPursuits/)



with the Psychology Society as annual Cough Patrick in

order to raise awareness for mental health.

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## The Outdoor Pursuits Club

- The 25 year old Alps traipsing, walls climbing, hills hiking, social night having, general great craic club.

BY EOGHAN CAREY

Outgoing PRO of the Outdoor Pursuits Club. 2016. We've had Morocco, Spain and just recently the Alps. It's been pretty amazing. There was some serious ice climbing and mountaineering and what not occurring in Chamonix over a two week period. And this year the OPC turns 25 years old so it's a great milestone for us and it promises to be a great year ahead as well.

We are really looking forward to another year with the club, welcoming new faces and seeing old faces back again and to all of the trips we're planning in the mountains and hills and climbing walls and caves and hostels and flights and gashy and craic of the highest degree.

On July 23rd a group of ten gallant OPCers set off on the annual summer trip to the French Alps in Chamonix for two weeks. Clad with hurleys, ice axes, ropes, helmets, tents, sleeping bags and members, they set off to the snow-capped peaks. Below are two slick pics that our members captured while up in the peaks. One is of Tomás Walsh, club veteran carrying two ice axes and the other is David, Eoin, Siobhán, Imogen and Tomás atop Mont Blanc.

OPC TURNS 25!!!! YURT!!!!!! We celebrated a huge victory for the club back in April when the referendum to build a new Student Centre passed with an overwhelming majority. We got an early birthday present from the student body as this means that we will be getting a brand new climbing wall along with a complete renovation of our current student centre and sports facilities. Work to build these facilities is or will be commencing this year. Last year was a very productive year at the climbing wall with plenty of charity competition events. We hope to keep that up this year and maybe have more social gatherings like we had at the end of last year. Srsly it's gonna be pretty cool. You won't want to miss out. Along with our general banter at our climbing wall which is open three nights a week. (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 7-10).

To anyone who is interested in joining the club (DO IT), we

will be at the recruitment drive on Wednesday Week 1 (September 7th). There will be a big group of us at the stand in the sports arena. More details of this will be posted soon. The big annual trips to far and away destinations such as Letterfrack, Glendalough and the Mourne will all be taking place again this year. We are also looking forward to holding caving trips to the Burren as well as orienteering/treasure hunting all over the place. We will be able to fill you all in at the recruitment drive where you can meet us to ask any questions you may have and as well at our AGM which will be taking place shortly afterwards. You can find us on Facebook at "UL Outdoor Pursuits Club" or on Instagram @ulopc. Can't wait to meet you all and to some of you who aren't new, welcome back :)



Club OPC Kilmanjaro with Wolves Flag

## Alpine interglacial hurling

SEAMUS TOOMEY

THE Outdoor Pursuits Club made a video of their trip to the Alps this year and with a couple of hurls, an editor's eye and the help of a glacier they've gone somewhat viral, being featured on many Irish news websites including joe.ie.

What they did was bring a couple of hurls over to the Alps - a great idea given to Ryan Hanlon (the man behind the video) by Cormac Kelly.

Ryan O' Hanlon who donated his time to the making of the video said: "Yeah, the idea was that Kilkenny were playing the All-Ireland - the initial idea was maybe to get it up for the match or something crazy like that. It got like 800 shares and joe.ie got another 200.

"It wasn't really planned, we just said we'd send it in, I gave it to a fella

on joe and he said it was an amazing video and we did an interview and they posted it up and that was cool. We hit it off."

With this simple idea and about 5 days worth of editing (as well as a month long trip) Ryan managed to get the club plenty of advertising and this was seen at the recruitment drive.

Ryan mentioned the amount of people that brought it up when joining saying: "Multiple people came up not just to me, to the other guys saying 'Ohh I've seen your video can I join?'"

If you haven't seen the video I implore you to watch it now, a quick google of "hurleys glacier" will find it. It's about four minutes of joy and my personal favourite part comes right at the end.

As revenge for a slap into the face that split Ryan's lip open he added in a short clip of Clare man Tim Quinlan

struggling to climb to the "summit of [Tim's] dreams".

Tim who has now been seen by a large portion of UL has been humiliated but in Ryan's own admission Tim had the wrong crampons on and the video is "deceitful in that there is actually a large overhang there, so we just lowered him down and walk of shame out of there".

Poor Tim.

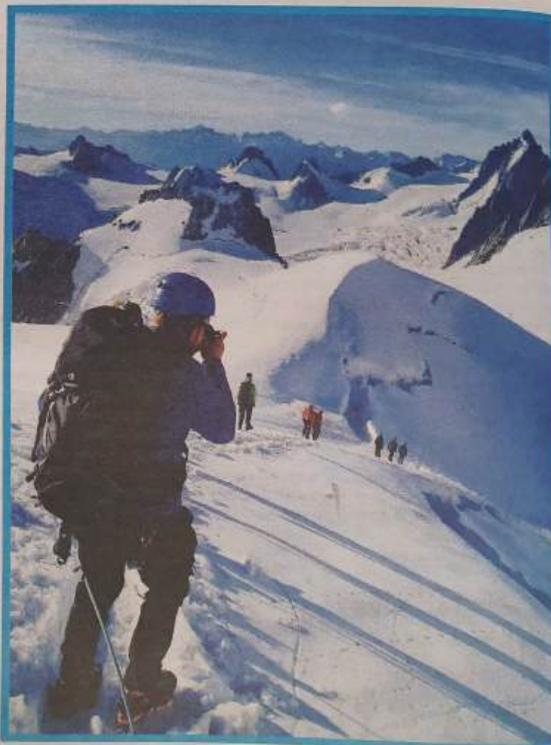
It was Ryan's first video and bar the "lack of jerseys" he was very pleased with it but the editing was a difficult process. Ryan explained: "First I made an attempt at the GoPro software - it crashed on me. I had the whole video already made and it crashed and lost everything.

"Then I downloaded Sony Vegas pro, very detailed, it's a fairly tough ol' thing but ploughed on with it and got it done. I easily sat down for five days and did it because three days were wasted on the last one. It was totally worth it."

So when did they film? Ryan explained: "If we knew we had a little window of two hours or an hour we'd bring up the hurls with us and puck around for a bit just for the craic really - that was the main idea. It was just pucking about but it got serious. I got a dirty slap to the face and I was bleeding. My lip got split open by Tim Quinlan, the Clare lad."

Somehow I still think Tim got the worse deal.

#PrayForTim.



## Outdoor Pursuits Club Wins C&S Awards

AOIFE O'SULLIVAN

We say it all the time, but this has certainly been one of the Outdoor Pursuit Club's busiest ever semesters.

The highlight was undoubtedly our incredible success at the Clubs and Societies' ball, where we scooped the award for Best Club, Best Club Individual and Best Club Trip or Event.

We did not let ourselves get overly confident, though, ditching the make up for chalk the very next day.

At the end of Week 9, two groups of our climbers headed to Belfast to compete in the annual climbing intervarsities.

With the Sprinter van stocked full of ropes, harnesses and hen party paraphernalia, fourteen of our crew took off on the Friday night. In keeping with OPC

tradition, our travellers were plagued by much car trouble.

Eight hours after leaving Limerick, they rolled into Belfast city more psyched than ever to climb.

With the sun shining, the climbers headed in to a smelly gym for a long weekend of bouldering, top-roping and exploring.

Not to put our last-place finish in orienteering intervarsities to shame, one of our dedicated members continued the trend and placed last in the entire competition.

Our younger climbers, however, did us proud with one of them placing in the top ten of the beginner male category.

While the academic year may be coming to a close, we at the OPC are gearing up to celebrate our 25th anniversary.

After plenty of intense preparation we are delighted to announce that the Clayton Hotel in Limerick will host a ball for us on April 29th.

Raincoats and hiking boots will be exchanged for blazers and high heels in honour of the occasion.

OPCers young and

old will have the opportunity to come together and trade tales of epic adventures, whilst showing off their technique on the dance-floor.

Our ever-popular hikes will take place every Sunday up to Week 12.

The climbing wall will remain open even

during study week on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-10pm.

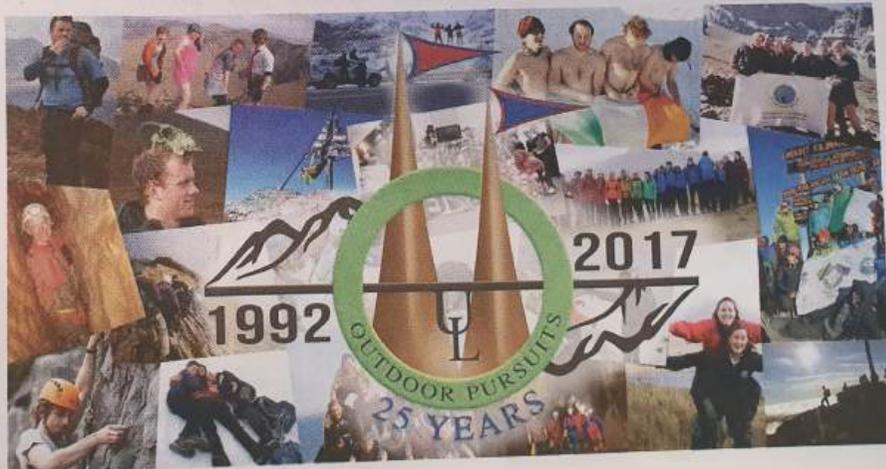
The OPC AGM will take place on Thursday of Week 11, followed by a table quiz in the Sports Bar next to the arena.

We are excited to welcome a whole new committee to continue

the legacy.

The current committee would like to wish them all the best in their endeavours, and hope that they celebrate the remainder of the 25th year in style.

For more information contact us at uloutdoorpursuits@gmail.com or through our Facebook.



# '16-'17

## Outdoor Pursuits Club Scotland Adventure

ANTHONY DAWSON

After months of planning and preparing, our group of intrepid mountaineers began our journey to Scotland on the 3rd of January in what would be an 18-hour trip by minibus, ferry, and minibus again to the town of Aviemore.

It was on this journey that I and the other beginners were introduced to ultra competitive board games with Eduardo, one of the mountaineering guides.

Those of us not horizontal on the ferry were crowded in a circle around a sheet of cardboard arguing over imaginary pieces of wood.

Eventually at almost midnight we arrived and settled into the

hostel that would be our home for the next 10 days.

After spending day two recuperating and buying last minute gear, on day three we finally set off into the stunning Cairngorm mountain range.

The beginners of the group donned our axes and crampons for our first taste of winter mountaineering with our guides.

We were not disappointed as after many hours of hiking and learning, we were directed to hurdle head-first down snowy slopes and use our axes to come to a stop.

Meanwhile, the intermediate mountaineers of our group learned to lead their own climbs and our advanced group made their own way.



By day five we said goodbye to our guides and rejoined our group with the skills necessary to trek the mountains safely - more or less!

Without hesitation experienced members of the group led us on a hike of the second tallest mountain of the British Isles, and showed us some basic snow school skills.

At the peak we were treated to spectacular views of the surrounding highland and a pair of Irish lads having a puck about across the mountain with a tennis ball.

After three long days of hiking, training and climbing we were treated to a much needed rest day.

For the Outdoor Pursuits Club (OPC) however, a rest day comprised of spending the day rock climbing and learning rope skills at a crag in the stunning Scottish countryside.

After a hurried briefing and revision of equipment and skills, we were ready for our first traditional winter climb in the Cairngorms the next day.

We split our group of 21 into smaller teams of two or three, each led by at least one experienced climber, each tackling its own route at a different time.

My own team of two

was led by the games master Eduardo, whose roles included planning the route, placing equipment, and ensuring I didn't die in the event of a fall. Thanks Ed!

Encouraged by our success, on day 8 we packed ourselves into the minibus and travelled to Ben Nevis in search of new adventures and not yet thawed snow.

Once again we split into teams of two or three and tackled our routes this time on the tallest mountain in the British Isles.

Our routes this time around were much longer and made more challenging by worsening weather conditions as the day went on, contributing to an unforgettable climb.

One team was even forced to spend the night on the mountain, in a story that will be retold in The Scholars pub for years to come.

We were eventually reunited the next morning and with fingers and toes fully intact, we took the opportunity for another rest day; this time at an indoor climbing wall.

To round off my time in Scotland I decided to go on a straightforward hike with half of our group while the rest spent the day resting or climbing.

Due to some confusion with navigation, a snowstorm, and avalanche risks we found ourselves going up another mountain in our efforts to get back to the minibus.

On our return, day had already turned to night and our eyebrows completely frozen, earning roars of laughter from those left waiting in the minibus.

It was generally agreed that there was no better way to spend our final day in the mountains.

After 10 incredible days, our group of mountaineers finally said goodbye to Scotland the following morning with heavy hearts and heads after a traditional OPC final night of celebration in the hostel.

Armed with new experiences and stories to tell, we made the journey back Ireland all of us looking forward to another semester with the OPC!

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## The Outdoor Pursuits Club

25 Years of Climbing, Hiking, Caving, Orienteering and Mountaineering

BY AOIFE O'SULLIVAN, PRO

The OPC grew from humble beginnings. Founded in 1992 by a group of friends with a passion for the outdoors, it has gone from strength to strength over the last quarter of a century. With over 500 members, it is now one of the biggest clubs in UL.

Between our busy schedule, bubbly committee members and can-do attitude it's not hard to see why!

The outdoors offer people a fantastic chance to escape their hectic lives for a couple of hours a week. Our Sunday hikes are always popular. Rock climbing is one of the fastest growing sports in the world at the moment, having recently been added as an Olympic event for Tokyo 2020. We have been promised a new climbing wall within the next few years to help meet the demand for climbing! We also run midweek caving and orienteering events. These give people a chance to explore a lesser-known side of Ireland, be it underground or racing through forests! Our activities cater to people of all abilities.

Whether you're a pro climber or have never read a map before, we love to have you at all our events.

Over the Christmas break, 20 of our members headed to Bonnie Scotland for some winter mountaineering. While there wasn't as much snow as was expected, the high winds had us feeling like we could turn to ice ourselves! Many of the people on the trip were complete beginners who hadn't even climbed before coming to UL. Despite this, they all managed to get out every day and had great fun on the routes. Everyone made it back with as many fingers and toes as they had left with, a sign of a successful trip!

This semester promises to be one of our busiest yet. We intend to go caving in Yorkshire in England, mountaineering in the French Alps, and rock climbing in El Chorro in Spain. With a bit of luck we may even experience outdoor activities in the sunshine! Along with our annual pilgrimage to Glendalough for sightseeing and dancing hiking and climbing, and our cosy weekend up north in the Mourne Mountains,

we intend to celebrate our 25 years of pursuing the outdoors in style. Charity events, fancy dress hikes, climbing competitions and even a ball are in the pipeline for 2017!

If you would like to be part of our year of celebration, come talk to us at the recruitment drive on Thursday of week 2! You can find us at our stand in the Foundation Building, and we will be more than happy to answer any of your questions. We are hosting our own information night in week 3. Alternatively you can join online at [ulsu.ie](http://ulsu.ie) and confirm your membership by calling into the climbing wall (located across from the arena) any Monday, Tuesday or Thursday between 7 and 10pm. If you would like more information about the club, you can contact us on our Facebook page **UL Outdoor Pursuits Club** or email us at [uloutdoorpursuits@gmail.com](mailto:uloutdoorpursuits@gmail.com). We can't wait to see you at all our events!



