



The Mountaineering Council Comhairle Sléibhteoireachta
of Ireland na hÉireann

Annual Report 2005

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Audited Accounts 2004-2005 (attached)

Mountaineering Council of Ireland

Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12.
Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115 Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116 E-mail: info@mountaineering.ie

Website: www.mountaineering.ie

Company limited by guarantee. Registered number: 199053

Mountaineering Council of Ireland

The Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) is the national representative body for the sport of mountaineering in Ireland. We cover the full spectrum of mountaineering activities including hillwalking, rambling, rockclimbing, alpinism and indoor climbing.

The work of the MCI includes:

- providing a range of services to members, including insurance and a quarterly members' magazine;
- promoting personal responsibility, safe practice and training amongst walkers and climbers;
- developing national standards for walking and climbing instructors / leaders, which are applicable to teachers, youth leaders and many others outside the MCI;
- initiatives to increase youth involvement in our sport;
- ensuring continued access to hills and crags;
- encouraging responsible use of the mountain environment.

MCI Membership is open to both clubs and individuals. The MCI has 9,500 members - made up of 125 affiliated clubs and 1,200 individual members. Benefits of MCI membership include civil liability insurance, a quarterly members' magazine, personalised membership card and a 10% discount in most outdoor shops.

In addition to membership subscriptions, the MCI is supported by government grant aid (Irish Sports Council and Sports Council for Northern Ireland). The MCI is run by an elected committee of voluntary officers, which in turn appoints sub-committees to deal with specific activities. The MCI has an administrative office with four staff in Dublin and a part-time Youth Development Officer based at the Hot Rock Climbing Wall near Newcastle, Co. Down.

MCI Executive Committee (elected February 2004 for 2-year term)

Declan O'Keeffe	President
Rita Connell	Secretary
Patrick O'Sullivan	Treasurer
Colin Gibbon	Chair – Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe
Sé O'Hanlon	Chair – Climbing Committee
John Cunnane	Chair – Environmental Committee
Gerard Mangan	Chair – Hillwalking Committee
Kevin Byrne	Chair – Irish Alpine Association
Vincent McAlinden	Chair – Youth Committee
John Healy	Member
Mary McInerney	Member (resigned March 2005)
Ross Millar	Member
John O'Callaghan	Member
Helen Osborn	Member (co-opted March 2005)
Danny McElhinney	Member (co-opted May 2005)

President's Message

The Mountaineering Council of Ireland's sets out to be the effective voice for hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland. We are committed to promoting the safe, enjoyable and sustainable use of the Irish uplands by hillwalkers and climbers. The organisation is undergoing a sustained period of growth and development and 2005 was our busiest year to date.

The MCI as one of the four trustees of the Irish Adventure Sports Training Trust (IASTT) has been endeavouring to drive the issue of Tiglin forward since 2004. The Irish Sports Council (ISC) commissioned a report on the future of Tiglin last autumn and this has resulted in considerably increased funding for the centre, which will ensure that it will remain open pending a more comprehensive review. We look forward to working in partnership with the ISC and the other members of the IASTT to ensure the future provision of mountain training in Ireland. At the same time, we are conscious that the MCI must be in control of its own destiny in relation to all aspects of mountain training. Accordingly we are embarking on our own review of policy, strategy, structure and funding of training and this will be a key issue for us in 2006.

Access to the hills and countryside is central to our ability to engage in and enjoy our sport. Recruitment of a full-time Access and Conservation Officer is well underway and an appointment should be made in February. While efforts have been made during the past year to source funding for this post, it seems likely that MCI will still have to cover at least half of the cost from its own resources. However, given the importance of access and the role this officer will play, we feel this 'price of a pint' increase will have your support and thus enable us to be proactive on Access and Conservation matters.

With much current debate on issues such as access, the environment, safety, liability and health it is vital that the MCI speaks with a strong, clear and effective voice for mountaineering in all its varied forms. To achieve this we must draw on our real strength, our membership. Following an internal review and a motion at their AGM, the Irish Ramblers Club decided not to renew its membership of the MCI this year. In challenging times it is more important than ever that the MCI as the national representative body has the full support of the hillwalking and climbing community.

Last August the MCI appointed Robert Murphy as Members' Support Officer. Robert has already met with a number of clubs and will be continuing this process in the coming months. We are keen to engage with our membership on any issues of concern to them. If you or your members have issues or questions that you would like addressed please contact Robert at the Office.

We hope that all these changes will result in a more efficient organisation to better serve our members and allow us to spend more time on the mountains!

Declan O'Keeffe

Secretary's Report

The Elected Executive met five times during the year. Some of these were weekend meetings and some mid-week meetings. A management committee of the President, Treasurer, Secretary and Development Officer met between Executive meetings to deal with the day to day running of the organisation and other issues that arose during the year.

Executive members and members of staff attended meetings on behalf of the MCI with the Irish Sports Council (ISC), Sports Council for Northern Ireland (SCNI), Comhairle na Tuaithe (CNT), Irish Uplands Forum (IUF), British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS), the Mountaineering Co-ordination Group (MCG) and various other interested groups during the year. Our involvement in the first Irish Outdoor Adventure Show provided an opportunity to meet with many of our members and also to raise the MCI's profile amongst non-members who are active in the outdoors.

The MCI completed governance audits for both Sports Councils and was one of 10 governing bodies selected by SCNI to go through a modernisation programme. As part of this process Executive members attended a Springboard Day held by SCNI in June. The Executive Committee also met on three occasions during 2005 to look at the MCI's organisational structure, this process will be completed during 2006.

In August Robert Murphy was appointed to the new post of Members' Support Officer. A major part of Robert's role is to strengthen communications with the membership and advise the Executive and other staff of members' needs. The other main area of Robert's work is to support the essential work of the MCI's volunteers, who make such an important contribution to the overall work of the organisation.

MCI is currently in the process of appointing an Access and Conservation Officer. Applications have been submitted, interviews will be held shortly and an appointment will be made before the end of February.

At the end of October the MCI consisted of 126 paid up Clubs with 8269 members. In addition to this there were 1239 Individual Members, giving a total membership of 9508.

As this is the end of my five-year term as secretary I would like to acknowledge the work of the Elected Executive, Committees and all voluntary personnel who play an important role in the running of the MCI. Special thanks to Helen Lawless, Mike Dagley, Terry Canavan and Robert Murphy in the MCI Office in Sport HQ, and to Stewart Magill, MCI's Youth Development Officer in Northern Ireland for all their help and support to me over the years.

Rita Connell

Treasurer's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present the Mountaineering Council of Ireland's accounts for the financial year November 2004 – October 2005, as MCI's finances continue to appear to be secure. We have ended another year with a small surplus and are thus continuing to replenish our reserves, which had previously been eroded by several deficit years. These are challenging times for the Mountaineering Council of Ireland, as we strive to be the effective voice of hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland, and it is important that we are financially secure to be able to continue to do this and to address issues as they arise.

MCI's success this year is, as always, in no small measure due to the efforts of our paid staff and, of course, to the considerable amount of voluntary work contributed by many of our members. As always, I would like to sincerely thank Helen Lawless, Mike Dagley and Terry Canavan for their excellent work in our Dublin office, which has made such a huge contribution to our success this year, both organisationally and financially. This year we have also been able to appoint a Members Support Officer, Robert Murphy, to ensure that our members' needs are met and that the volunteers on whom we depend for so much of our work are facilitated and supported in their work. In addition, the part-time Youth Development Officer, Stewart Magill, who is based in Tollymore, has, again as a result of his energy and personal commitment this year, further developed the youth programme in the North. Terry's work as Accounts Administrator in keeping our accounts in order, under the guidance of our auditor, Mr. Ken Whitaker, is very important to our financial well-being, of course, but I have to say what a great pleasure and privilege it is to work with all of our staff.

Membership: MCI's membership has continued to increase in 2005 and we ended the year with 9,508 members, about half female and half male, in 126 member clubs and including about 1,239 individual members. The growth in membership this year has mainly been in club members and there has obviously been a corresponding increase in the workload for our staff.

Grants: The Irish Sports Council's grant was €90,000 this year and was received in January 2005. This was approximately 20% up on the previous year to support the new staff position, the Members Support Officer. It is a significant contribution to our central costs and we are grateful to the Sports Council for this level of support. We have just received notification of the grant for 2006, which has been increased again, this time by about 15% to €104,000. We also received a grant of about £36,000 from the Sports Council of Northern Ireland to support the Youth Development Programme for 04/05. This is a 70% grant which requires matching funding.

Mountain Log: MCI continues to publish the Log itself and it remains one of the main items of expenditure for the Council. However, MCI now receives the advertising income from the Log and we are approaching a break-even situation, though in the present advertising climate, with a volunteer staff, it is difficult to see how we could completely offset this cost through advertising income.

Guide books: The long awaited Dalkey guide was published last year and has been selling well. Guidebook sales contribute to MCI's income. An updated Wicklow guide should be printed in 2006 and work is also underway on updating both the Burren and Mournes guides. The Environmental Policy and the Development Plan were also published and look very presentable.

Lectures: Overall, a small loss was made this year. The lectures that are held out of Dublin continue to have poor attendances. However, it is still seen as important to provide them and we should encourage the membership to support them as much as possible.

Office move: We are now well settled in Sport HQ. We paid a rent of over €10,000 this year for our office in Sport HQ and, with our increasing staff, we will have to rent a second office in the coming year, which will increase our rental costs to almost €18,000 per year.

Youth Development Officer: The grant from SCNI covers up to 70% of the costs of this programme and MCI has had to provide the balance. However, the programme has been generating income from the courses, etc. it runs and we have been able to include the contributions of the volunteers to offset the matching funding required.

Staff: MCI has five paid staff now and the second increment of the Sustaining Progress agreement was applied to their salaries in 2005. We have progressed a system of staff appraisal that has looked at their job descriptions and we will review the staffing organisationally and in respect of their terms and conditions in the near future. As has been mentioned, a Members Support Officer was appointed in August 2005 to work with the members and the clubs to support them and to support those who contribute as volunteers to the work of MCI. This post was supported through our grant from the ISC. However, they have indicated that they cannot support the post of an Access and Conservation Officer.

These are some of the main points that I would like to highlight about MCI's accounts for 2005. The accounts themselves are attached to this Annual Report as an Appendix. As you will see, the MCI continues to be in a relatively strong financial position, something that is essential if it is to be able to continue to develop the services it provides for its growing membership in the coming year and to address any other issues that arise. The planned review of our staffing and their terms and conditions will have implications for the expenses in the coming year, as will the necessary increase in office accommodation, and our costs are projected to increase significantly in 2006.

Patrick O'Sullivan.

Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe

Role and function of Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe

Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) is the Irish Mountain Training Board. BOS is responsible for the development, administration and monitoring of training schemes for walkers and climbers in the Republic of Ireland. Mountain Leader Training NI (MLTNI) performs a similar function in Northern Ireland. BOS also has a role in promoting training and providing information both to MCI members and the general public.

BOS's achievements during 2005 included:

Review of Mountain Skills Scheme

During 2005, BOS reviewed the Mountain Skills scheme. This personal skills course for hillwalkers, normally run over two weekends with an optional assessment, is BOS's most popular scheme. In November 2005 a weekend workshop, Chaired by Tomas Aylward, and attended by more than 20 Mountain Skills Trainers, took place at Capanalea OEC in Co. Kerry. Over the weekend participants shared teaching techniques, clarified the standard required for assessment and discussed the role of new technology such as GPS and interactive mapping. A revised MS syllabus will be prepared and introduced during 2006. The main area of change in the scheme will be around environmental awareness including incorporation of Leave No Trace.

BOS Awards

BOS sets the standards for instructors to deliver its schemes and at each meeting reviews reports from courses providers. Where trainees successfully completed assessments, BOS awards qualifications to hillwalking and climbing leaders. In 2005 6 people gained the BOS Mountain Leader Award, 21 people got their Single Pitch Award, and 1 person received the Walking Group Leader Award.

Training Grants 2005

The MCI places a high value on training and skills development for walkers and climbers. Recognising that cost can often be a barrier to undertaking training, the MCI (through BOS) administers grant schemes to support members doing formal and informal training. The following clubs were approved for MCI training grants during 2005: Bishopstown Orienteering & Hillwalking Club, Cork Backpackers, Dunmanway Hillwalking Club, Letterkenny IT Hillwalking Society, Midleton Hillwalking Club, Spartan Red Sox, Westport Hillwalkers, UCC Mountaineering Club. The total value of these grants is almost €2,000.

Environmental Awareness Day

In May 2005 BOS organised an Environmental Awareness Day for hillwalking leaders at Capanalea, Co. Kerry. Participants enjoyed a hillwalk with botanist Therese Higgins, followed by dinner and a discussion and slide show at the centre. A similar event is planned for the last weekend in May 2006 at Gartan OEC, Co. Donegal.

Joint events with Tiglin

BOS, in conjunction with Tiglin, BOS ran two 'Expand Your Horizons' slide shows in Dublin and Letterkenny during spring 2005. The purpose of these evenings was to provide information on the training opportunities for walkers and climbers in Ireland, and where that training can take people. In August 2005, Tiglin and MCI in conjunction with Wicklow Mountains National Park delivered a second Discover the Hills weekend. Over two days 6 participants did basic and refresher navigation training, and spent time exploring the hills with a ranger from Wicklow Mountains National Park. Tiglin also delivered two Youth Skills courses during summer 2005, a 3-day rock-climbing course and a week-long mountaineering course. Both these were subsidised by MCI.

Work with MLTNI

In December 2005, as recommended by the MCI's one-day review of Mountain Training in 2004, there was a joint meeting between BOS and MLTNI to discuss the feasibility of forming a single training board for Ireland. A further meeting will take place in March 2006 after which a report will be prepared for discussion by both boards, the MCI and SCNI.

Membership of BOS

Unlike MCI's other sub-committees, BOS's membership includes representatives from other organisations. The current members of BOS are:

Tomas Aylward, Jane Carney, Cormac Doran (National Youth Council of Ireland), Colin Gibbon (Chair), Helen Lawless (Secretary), Ronan Lenihan (Irish Mountain Rescue Association), Ursula MacPherson (Outdoor Education Ireland), Charlie McManus (CDVEC), Orla Prendergast, Bren Whelan (Tiglin – Technical Adviser), Calvin Torrans (MCI Climbing Committee), Shay Walsh (MCI Hillwalking Committee).

Helen Lawless

Climbing Committee

The big contributors to Irish climbing in 2006 and the people who made it interesting are (in no particular order):

- Guide book editors and their helpers
- Geoff Somerville and fairheadclimbers.com
- Mark Rocks and mournesclimbers.com
- Pete Smith and colmcilleclimbers.com
- Dave Hunt and Steve McMullan and climbing.ie
- Other people who maintain websites that we have not yet found
- Dave Flanagan and The Short Span (even though the boulderers remain resolutely outside the MCI)
- The organisers of the women's meet in Glendalough
- The Kerry men (and women) who put together Sléibhteoirí Óga Chiarraí,
- Colmcille Climbers, organisers of the Climb Fest in Donegal
- The organisers of the Irish Bouldering League
- The activists who keep clubs running and interesting for their members
- Lots of other people who do the housekeeping and gardening that makes climbing possible for the rest of us.
- The elite climbers who push the grades and raise standards for everybody
- The sponsors who provided finance for activities

Way back behind all of these is the Climbing Committee of the MCI. When we think of the scale of what the people listed above are doing it becomes quite clear that no committee of 6 people* could do all of these things. All it can do is provide back-up for other peoples' efforts when back-up is needed.

During the year the 7th edition of the Dalkey guidebook saw the light of day, thanks to the work of Howard Hebblethwaite and Ronan Browner. Calvin Torrans has started on an update of the Burren guide and Ian Rea is working on an update to the Mournes guide. Finally Joe Lyons has almost completed work on the Wicklow guide and it should be ready during summer 2006.

Dave Hunt and Steve McMullan are making good progress in putting all known routes onto a database accessible on climbing.ie.

The committee itself has been involved in various pieces of administration which mostly involves heading off possible problems (caused by outside forces) which might arise in future years. Despite much effort no progress has yet been made in persuading the owner of the crag at Hollywood, Co. Wicklow to be more welcoming to climbers. It is very hard to overcome a fear of litigation.

* Moira Creedon, Eoin Fitzgerald, Gay Needham, Sé O'Hanlon, Alan Tees Calvin Torrans,

Sé O'Hanlon

Environmental Committee

Role and Function of the Environmental Committee

The Environment Committee (EnvCom) advises the MCI Executive on a range of environmental and conservation issues. EnvCom activity is twofold: a) being responsive to issues; b) development, publishing and promotion of MCI Environmental Policies. Access issues have been dealt with directly by members of Executive over the past two years. It is possible that with the employment of an Access and Conservation Officer both access and environmental issues will be considered together by an enlarged committee.

Members of the Environmental Committee in 2005: John Cunnane (Bootleggers) – Chair; Mike Dagley (MCI Administrator); Milo Kane (Irish Ramblers Club); Marian O’Shea (Irish Ramblers Club); Paul Scott (Individual member); Derek Sergeant (Glenwalk).

Marian O’Shea resigned from the Committee in late 2005 for personal reasons. The remaining members of EnvCom wish to express their appreciation for the many years of service that Marian has given to the MCI and its environmental work.

Main Achievements in 2005

Environmental Policy

The MCI Environmental Policy has been published. A total of 2,000 copies were printed. The Policy is being distributed in three stages:

Tranche One (November 2005): Affiliated Clubs, MCI Committee Members and Key Volunteers (250 copies).

Tranche Two (January 2006): Government Department and County Council Officers, Planning Board, Public Libraries, TD’s, Senators, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Local Sports Partnerships, farmers’ organisations, outdoor centres, wildlife organisations, heritage groups, activity holiday providers etc. (650 copies)

Tranche Three (February 2006): Contributors to MCI Environmental Defence Fund. (c250 copies)

The policy is also being distributed at MCI events and will be valuable to our new Access & Conservation Officer in their work.

Planning Issues

In line with MCI Environment Policy on Built Development in the Uplands, EnvCom made the following submissions:

Meenteog Wind Monitoring Mast Proposal 04/3676 (Iveragh Peninsula Co. Kerry). Our formal appeal against the Planning Inspector’s decision was upheld by An Bord Pleanala.

Caunoge Wind Monitoring Mast Proposal 05/2589 (Iveragh Peninsula, Co. Kerry). EnvCom submitted an Objection to this project which is currently being considered by Kerry County Council.

Barnastooka Wind Factory Proposal 05/3632 (South East Kerry). EnvCom submitted observations on this huge 42-turbine project, close to Kilgarvan. Currently under consideration by Kerry County Council.

As part of an Environment Impact Assessment EnvCom made observations on a proposed wind energy project in the Mullaghareirk Mountains, Co. Cork.

A local MCI member raised the issue of the unauthorised intensification of quarrying to the west of Muckish Gap, Co. Donegal. EnvCom raised the issue with Donegal County Council. There was a successful prosecution and quarrying has now ceased.

Thanks go to Ordnance Survey Ireland who supplied the MCI with a free set of 49 maps for all upland areas and a demonstration copy of its interactive 3-D mapping. These maps will assist EnvCom and other MCI work.

Access & Conservation Projects

The joint Mountain Meitheal/Hillwalking Committee trail restoration project in Glensoulan (grant-aided in 2004) was completed in June 2005. An article on this appeared in IMLog74. A call for new Access & Conservation projects appeared in the same issue and to date there has been just one application, from Dal Riada. MCI has offered a grant to create a small car park in the disused quarry close to Fair Head. The work will be carried out by/and with agreement of the landowner. The project is currently going through the planning process.

Liaison with other Stakeholders

Hugh Lee (Irish Ramblers Club) represent the interests of MCI on Coillte's Social and Environmental Panel (Eastern region).

There has been ongoing discussion with Wicklow Mountains National Park on issues of mutual interest.

EnvCom made a submission to Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) in Northern Ireland for observations on their recently published Mountain Bike Code.

Helen Lawless represents MCI on the ad hoc group looking at the introduction of the Leave No Trace (LNT) outdoor ethics programme to Ireland. The LNT group (which consists of more than 12 organisations) has secured funding for the appointment of a full-time co-ordinator, so we're certain to hear more about this during 2006.

Need for Volunteers

The Committee is actively seeking new members and regional volunteers to assist the Committee in its expanding work programme for 2006.

John Cunnane

Financial Strategy Group

Membership: 2005/2006:

Patrick O'Sullivan (Chair)
Sé O'Hanlon
Helen Lawless

Declan O'Keeffe
Mary McInerney
Dawson Stelfox

Role and Function of the Financial Strategy Group:

- To assist Treasurer with financial planning and the overseeing of MCI's accounts;
- To prepare grant applications;
- To advise MCI on fundraising, marketing and in the identification of other sources of income, as necessary;
- To devise and develop the systems necessary to administer MCI's finances;
- To negotiate and oversee MCI's insurance arrangements;
- To oversee all matters relating to MCI's paid staff;
- To advise MCI on its financial strategy.

In 2005, the FSG met formally three times during the year, though there were many informal meetings and much ongoing work throughout the year on various issues related to MCI's finances.

The issues considered during the year included: the overall financial planning for MCI; the financial arrangements for the lectures; the Mountain Log's finances; the costings for the various other publications proposed; financial support for the various workshops, meetings and events held throughout the year; approving grants agreed by the various Committees; reviewing the finances of the NI Youth Development Programme; finalising the MCI Expenses Policy for volunteers; funding for Access and Conservation grants; the decision that MCI should take over the operation of Joss Books; the need to increase office space to accommodate new staff, sponsorship for the Alpine meet; possible support for the Irish Mountain Rescue Association; reviewing the membership fees for the coming year and working with the MCI's Auditor on the preparation of our annual accounts.

The FSG approved the Irish Sports Council (ISC) grant application in November, an important part of our annual income. Job descriptions, salary scales and recruitment strategies were agreed for the recruitment of a Members Support Officer and an Access and Conservation Officer. Possible funding strategies were considered for the Access and Conservation Officer's post. It was agreed that part of the strategy would have to be an increase in the membership fees above the previously approved annual increase related to inflation. A motion was prepared for the AGM, together with one proposing that a category of Youth Member be introduced.

Future plans for Financial Strategy Group:

- Continue to monitor the financing of the lectures and the Mountain Log;
- Support publication of guide books that are being prepared;
- Consider proposed Committee budgets for coming year;
- Continue to research possible funding sources for Access and Conservation Officer post;
- Review job descriptions, policies and procedures, staff salary scales and benefits;
- Review position re additional staffing needs in area of training and necessary funding in the light of ISC response to grant application and to review of Tiglin;
- Work with Development Plan Implementation Group to advise re budgeting;
- Further develop financial planning systems and controls.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Hillwalking Committee

The following is a brief outline of the Hillwalking Committee, its makeup, role and function.

Role and Function of the Hillwalking Committee

- To support and promote the interests of hillwalkers within the MCI
- To represent the MCI on the National Waymarked Ways Committee
- To represent the Hillwalking Committee on BOS
- To liaise with the European Ramblers Association on behalf of the MCI
- To identify and develop good practice in hillwalking
- Assistance to all MCI Clubs especially Aspirant Cubs
- Liaise with other MCI groups on hillwalking issues
- To advise MCI Executive regarding lectures, articles and events of interest to walkers
- To advise Ordnance Survey Ireland

The members of the Committee are: Loretto Coyle; Nicky Hore (Secretary); Shay Walsh (BOS Rep.); Ronnie Carser and Gerard Mangan (NWWAC Rep.). The Committee has been in contact throughout the year by email.

The Committee has continued a programme to support MCI Aspirant Clubs by sending a letter offering information on the MCI, assistance in organising hillwalks and in general offering a helping hand. We understand that it may be a daunting experience for a club to join a long established organisation such as the MCI, so we would like to help to smooth the process if possible. Responses have been made to a number of individuals from both at home and abroad who requested information on walking clubs and walking routes in Ireland. Contact is still maintained with Euro Rambling Association.

On a personal note I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members the Hillwalking Committee, Office Staff and the Executive for their assistance during my term as Chair. Unfortunately due to a rather large increase in my own workload during the past term I was unable to take or make as much time as I would have liked for my work as Chair of the Hillwalking Committee. Indeed my own enjoyment of days on the hills were severely curtailed. But then work is the curse of the hillwalking classes! At a time when there are many issues facing hillwalking in Ireland this committee needs a person with time to confront and deal with them. I wish the Committee every success in the years ahead.

Gerard Mangan

Irish Alpine Association

The role of the IAA is to promote climbing and expeditions in the Alps and the Greater Ranges through assistance with funding and training.

The members of the IAA are: Darragh Curran, Joss Lynam, Frank Nugent, Harry O'Brien, Sé O'Hanlon, Calvin Torrans, Dawson Stelfox & Kevin Byrne.

Over the course of 2005:

- Four candidates were selected and subsidised to attend an Advanced Alpine Course in Chamonix in July. A total of 19 applicants applied to participate in this programme.
- One candidate was subsidised to attend the Ice Climbing festival in Argentiere le Bessée in January 2005 and at the time of writing two have been selected for subsidy to attend the same event in January 2006.
- Two candidates were selected to attend the BMC Winter climbing meet in Glenmore Lodge in Scotland in February 2005 and
- Three candidates were nominated for subsidy to attend the "Chicks Unleashed" event in Scotland.

Two climbing expeditions were awarded grants. These were

- the Ak Su (Kyrgystan) Expedition (Donie O'Sullivan) and
- the Irish K2005 Expedition (Terence "Banjo" Bannon). The former was a big wall climbing expedition and the latter was to climb K2.

Both were successful, though the summit of K2, universally recognised as the most difficult 8,000m peak was not attained. The high point of 8,158m was less than 500m below the summit which is at 8,611m. Very few ascents of K2 were made in 2005 due to poor weather conditions – a common occurrence on K2. The Kyrgystan expedition succeeded in opening up a number of high standard trad rock routes in the E4 – E7 range.

As noted in previous reports, climbing activity in the Greater Ranges continues to expand – due to a variety of factors such as increasing affluence, ease of travel and availability of information – but for the most part these explorations are mainly confined to established venues and objectives. This trend is not unique to Ireland but seems to be a universal phenomenon.

The 2005 season in the Alps was again poor weather-wise. While no statistics are compiled, there is anecdotal evidence that the level of interest in the Alps as a climbing/walking location is as high as ever. The MCI's own Alpine meet, reported elsewhere, was very well supported. However, like the trend in holidays generally, people appear to be taking a number of shorter breaks instead of one 2/3 week holiday. So, variation of experience be it winter ice climbing, summer hot rock and/or shorter alpine climbing trips is now the order of the day. Minority activities such as ski-mountaineering and winter alpinism continue to grow in popularity.

Kevin Byrne

Youth Committee Report

Members of MCI's NI Youth Steering Group: Stephen Ferris, Trevor Fisher, Helen Lawless, Ian Luney, Stewart Magill (MCI's part-time Youth Development Officer), Vincent Mc Alinden (Chair), Dawson Stelfox.

2005 was the second complete year of our NI Youth Development programme. It has again seen most of the energies of this committee directed northward. Whilst not ideal, this reinforces the need for further volunteers to take an interest in leading youth development across the rest of the isle. The continued focus of MCI's youth work is the development of skills and independence within young people. This is accurately reflected in the youth goal in our new development plan 'To promote responsible participation in hillwalking and climbing by young people'.

Some notable youth developments during 2005:

- Winter Skills: In January 2005 22 people attended the winter skills training weekend in Tollymore and 12 went on to complete a very successful week in the Cairngorms. Some of those who took part went on to the Alps in the summer;
- MCI supported a portable climbing wall day at a Bray primary school to showcase climbing as an accessible challenging sport that Local Sports Partnerships could get involved in;
- Cliffhangers youth climbing club created in Dublin (associated with Westwood climbing wall);
- Con Moriarty and friends sets up Sléibhteoirí Óga Chiarraí as a pilot project. The group is now an MCI-affiliated club and going from strength to strength with a key feature being a high level of parental input;
- The 2005 Hotrock Youth Bouldering competition at Tollymore was a great success with over 50 participants;
- MCI has formed a Youth Climbing Squad, selected on the basis of performance in the Youth bouldering competition and IBL;
- Child Protection Training is ongoing; MCI's two tutors delivered four courses in 2005;
- Hotrock Volunteer Programme – now have a pool of approx 35 (31m/4f) qualified volunteers. SCNI grant has enabled MCI to provide training bursaries to volunteers to do winter ML, SPA, ML and MIA;
- Total number of skills days provided through NI Youth Development Programme (participants from all over the isle): 2004 – 1,005 days, in 2005 – 1,404 days;
- Membership of the 14–18yr old Hotrock club at Tollymore increased to 25. Total 305 person days of activity in 2005;
- 10-14yr old Pebbles sessions run at the Ozone (Belfast) & Tollymore total 675 person days of activity;
- Proceedings of MCI's Youth Forum (Nov 2004) are about to be published on CD;

- Motion at AGM to introduce reduced rate for under-18 Individual Membership of MCI (standard rate less 30%).

As well as two FUNdamentals of climbing courses which took place during January and continuation of our successful Winter Skills programme, two key MCI youth events planned for 2006 are an inaugural Youth Alpine Meet and the first visit of an Irish youth squad to a BMC youth climbing competition.

To enable all this activity to happen in a safe environment, for both the young people and the adults looking after them, the MCI has been rolling out its Children's Policy and Child Protection Training. Some good progress has been made with quite a few clubs appointing Club Children's Officers and an increase in those accepting UI8's. The Children's Policy is available on www.mountaineering.ie and from the MCI Office. To find out more about the 3hr child protection training course please email or phone the Office.

The current round of SCNI funding finishes in March 2006 and I would like to formally express all your thanks to Stewart who has worked way beyond the call of a part-time officer for over 2 years. During which time he has learnt roles not quite explicitly mentioned in his job spec: juggler, psychiatrist, social worker, mentor, accountant and of course time magician. Thanks must also go to all the MCI NI Youth Steering Group who recently submitted an ambitious 3-year strategic plan to SCNI under the guidance of Dawson Stelfox. I'd also like to pass on the sentiments from some who attended the recent Winter Skills weekend in Tollymore:

"THANK YOU(se), I had a fantastic weekend... Tuition and input from all ye teachers / coaches / gurus / masters was deadly, reckon I've benefited loads from it... Again I can't say it enough, THANKS"

"Just a quick mail to say I got back to Cork through the bad weather safe and sound. Thanks for an invaluable training weekend - learned loads and really enjoyed the centre, definitely worth the long drive. Please pass on my thanks to the instructors, very different styles, all brilliant. I'm over the age limit for the selection so best of luck to everyone going. Even without the Scottish trip the Training weekend was invaluable in itself so I really appreciated the chance to partake. There was nothing like this being organised when I was 17 so it's great to see it happening now, huge lack of info and training opportunities available up to a few years ago, so ye deserve a clap on the back for committing so hugely to something like this. Someone in the south should take the same initiative."

The quotes above aren't uncommon, it reflects what can happen when energy, organisation and experience are combined. The MCI now really needs volunteers to help spread the great experiences some of our young mountaineers are getting across the country. All it takes to make a difference is an interest, some spare time and ideally access to the internet. If you'd like to know more, Robert in the MCI Office will gladly help.

Vincent Mc Alinden