



Book to celebrate Gerard's life and heroic death on K2

■ Limerick mountaineer was an inspiration - compassionate, loyal and full of fun

Norma Prendiville

A NEW book on intrepid mountaineer Ger McDonnell, from Kilcornan, will tell the story of his life and not just focus on his death. The book, *The time has come*, has been written by Ger's brother-in-law Damien O'Brien and will be published this March.

Already, in advance of the book's publication, Ger's friends from the Irish traditional music scene, Kila have signed up to play at the launch in Kilcornan. Members of Kila also played at the memorial Mass for Ger in Kilcornan in August 2008.

Ger died on K2, on August 2, 2008, the day after he became the first Irishman to scale the world's second-highest - and notoriously dangerous - peak. He died in an avalanche as he attempted to lead a number of other climbers to safety.

Explaining the background to the book this week, first-time author Damien said the initial reason was to gather together the very many stories Ger's friends had to tell about him. In 2009, the family had traveled to Dublin City University for the launch of the Gerard McDonnell scholarships where Ger's friends had recounted various stories of Ger's student life in Dublin. Damien's first thought was to gather these together as a keepsake for the family but, as he explained this



Ger McDonnell holds the tricolour aloft in triumph as he became the first Irish person to climb K2 on August 1, 2008. He died the following day while helping others descend 'the savage mountain'

week, "one thing led to another".

"I was amazed by the response and support from people from all over the world, sharing their stories of Ger, sending on video clips and pictures," Damien said.

Over the past two years, he has been piecing all of this material together. "I wanted to get Ger's story out there and to tell Ger's life story. It is more about his life than his death," he said.

A number of other books have been published since about the biggest-ever disaster on K2 which claimed Ger's life and that of 10 others. But, Damien said, these books concentrated solely on events on the mountain.

On Friday, August 1, 2008, Gerard made history by becoming the first Irishman to scale K2 - having already scaled Mt Everest in 2003, one of only four Irishmen ever to

do so. But within hours, that triumph turned to disaster when a fall of ice set in motion a series of events which culminated in 11 deaths.

It took several months of painstaking and heartbreaking investigation by his family, his partner Annie Starkey and his mountaineering friends before the full and true story of the disaster became known.

But Ger emerged as

a hero because of his action in retracing his steps, going back up the mountain to try and assist three other climbers who got stuck on ropes. The four were later photographed by satellite making their way down the treacherous slopes where they met a Sherpa, Paseng ascending to help them. Tragically however, another avalanche swept all five away.

For his bravery, Ger was posthumously hailed

as a hero and awarded the Best of Explorers Web 2008 Award by the mountaineers' website, Explorers Web. And since then, his name has been honoured in death in various ways. A scholarship fund has been set up in his name at Dublin City University where he was a student; a special fund to help the families of the four Sherpa guides who also lost their lives on K2 has been set up by The Mountain Fund in association with his family and in his name and Limerick County Council held a special ceremony to honour him.

But the book will also elaborate on the Ger about whom so many kind words were spoken following his death - a man who was warm, big-hearted, loyal, full of fun and compassionate. "He was an inspiration for us. He had a smile that lit every room he entered. He had a passion for life that made all our lives brighter and fuller," his brother JJ said at the memorial service which took place in Kilcornan in August 2008.

"Gerard saw the best in all situations and in all people. He wanted us all to share in his joy for life."

A college friend, Shay Walsh, described him as unbelievably kind. "He was also incredibly humble and there was no bravado about him. What you saw was what you got. He was a massive personality and nobody ever could say a bad word about him."

Beer kegs stolen from pubs in city

Leader Reporter

THIRSTY thieves have robbed three different pubs in recent days following truck deliveries.

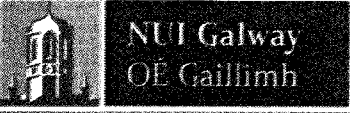
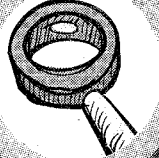
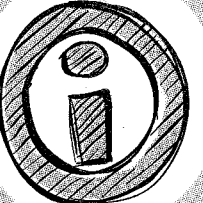
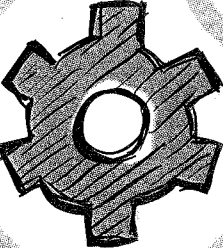


Two kegs of Heineken and two kegs of Beamish were stolen from outside a pub on Wickham Street and two kegs of Budweiser were stolen from outside a pub on the Dock Road on January 4.

On the following day a truck delivered beer kegs to a pub in Annacotty at 8.15am and approximately ten minutes later a silver Toyota Avensis estate, possibly Dublin-registered, pulled up outside the



pub. Two men got out and stole three kegs of Heineken.

Anyone who was in the area who may have seen the silver Toyota Avensis is asked to contact the gardai at Castleconnell at 061 377105 or Henry Street at 061 212400.

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