

# News

## Limerick's Ger takes on unforgiving peaks of K2

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Alan Owens

KILCORNAN native Gerard McDonnell will this Thursday attempt what no other Irish person has ever achieved by attempting to scale the summit of the second highest mountain in the world.

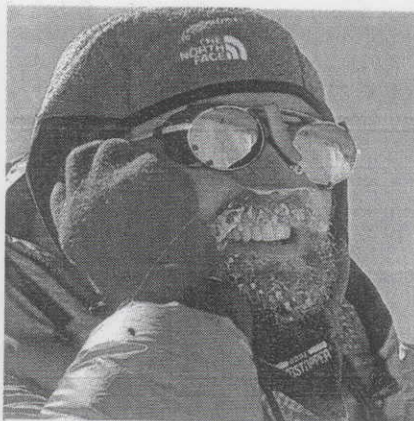
K2 stands at 8,611 metres and is the second in height only to Mount Everest, but it is considered one of the world's most dangerous mountains.

Located in the Karakoram range of the Himalayas near the Pakistan-China border, this will be the second attempt the Limerick man has made in two years to conquer the fearsome mountain.

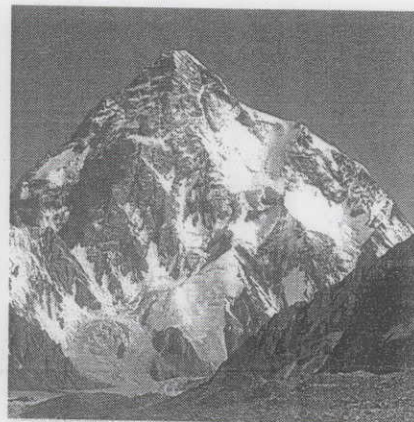
In dispatches from his website McDonnell has confirmed that the weather conditions will allow an attempt for the first joint summit bid this Thursday.

"July, 31st that's the target date for the first joint summit bid - all weather forecasts jived. Let luck and good fortune prevail, fingers crossed. Since anois a chairde, ta an t-am ag teacht," said Gerard.

McDonnell, who famously pucked a sliotar from the top of Mount Everest in



Limerick mountaineer Gerard McDonnell



K2: 'the killer mountain'

May 2003 when he became only the fourth Irishman to conquer the mountain, previously came within 600 metres of being the first Irish person to climb K2 in 2006. That attempt, in July, ended in McDonnell being caught in a rockfall and having to be airlifted to safety by helicopter.

On that occasion McDonnell was climbing with fellow Irish climbers Banjo Bannon from Newry and Mick Murphy from Cork.

This time he is part of the Norit K2 Expedition team, headed by Dutchman Wilco Van Roijen and there are eight

members on the climbing team, five Dutch, one Australian, one Nepalese and McDonnell.

K2 is considered a far more treacherous mountain than Everest because of the constant risk of avalanche and the dangerous weather conditions. It is known as the "killer mountain" because of the fact that for every five people who reach the summit, one does not survive.

While nearly 3,000 people have climbed Everest, only close to 200 have made it to the top of K2 and an estimated 53 people have been killed attempting the treacherous climb.

Despite these facts, McDonnell and the team seemed in good spirits when the decision was made to go for the summit this Thursday.

"The meeting had primarily a humorous tone," said McDonnell. "Spirits were high. Hopes are high. It was joked that the next meeting would take place at camp 4."

The 37-year-old oil company employee, who now lives in Alaska, is a native of Kilcornan and went to school in Askeaton, before attending university in Dublin.

Alan Owens

A LOCAL duo are to set off on a hitchhiking adventure throughout the Mid-West next week, with the aim of recording their exploits for a one-hour programme that will be broadcast on Spin South West FM in October.

Newport's Ciarán Ryan, currently living and working in Limerick, and Ennis Mark Keane, are to set off next Tuesday on a hitchhiking trip that will see them attempt to travel from Borris-In-Ossory to their final destination of Dingle (An Daingean) the following Friday, with a stop-off in Limerick on the way through.

"The Hitchhikers' Guide To The South West" will see the duo attempt to thumb their way down to Dingle, hopefully meeting drivers, locals, and other