Annals of Glaciology

The edges of glaciology

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An Editorial

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An IGS international symposium on 'The edges of glaciology' was held in the University of Limerick from 2 to 7 July 2023, and this article is the preface to the resulting issue of the *Annals of Glaciology*.

The edges of glaciology are most obviously those parts of the study of ice and ice masses which involve boundaries: grain boundaries, ice cores, the glacier bed, the glacier surface, shear margins, crevasses and calving, but these and other subjects also sometimes involve philosophical edges, where different presumptions and practices can lead to controversy: for example, theories of drumlin formation or till deformation. And yet again, there are territorial edges, where glaciology lies at the interface with other disciplines, as for example in ice shelf–ocean interactions, rheology of granular materials, firn sintering and compaction. The aim of the conference was to explore and encourage discussion of all such edges. In keeping with this theme, the present preface also treads the edges of acceptability.

This special issue includes a sequence of papers which are related to the overarching theme described above. At the end of the conference, we revived the long-lost final open discussion, which used to be a regular feature of IGS meetings, and which then appeared in the volume of the proceedings. In that spirit, the final discussion is reprinted in this *Annals* issue. We hope that this will encourage the younger generation to revive this custom in future IGS conferences.

The conference programme is included here as electronic supplementary material. There was no post-symposium tour, but a pre-symposium excursion to Skellig Michael was planned. Skellig Michael is one of a pair of islands (the smaller, uninhabited one is shown in Fig. 1a), which lie about twelve kilometres off the coast of Co. Kerry, Ireland, and are famous for the remnants of an early Christian monastery, dating from the 5th or 6th century, and which was maintained there up until the middle ages.

On the day, stormy weather prevented us getting there, as an ocean swell of several metres would have prevented landing (which is exciting at the best of times), and we had to extemporise as we went. One of our boat owners, Jamie Duff of skelligcoastadventures.ie, had offered two of his boats to sail us up and down the harbour strait, and this we did, seeing nice views of subglacial till on Valentia Island, and experiencing the mounting swell at the mouth of the strait. After lunch at the Skellig visitor centre on Valentia Island, our rather intrepid bus driver took us down the single track road to the tetrapod trackway (Fig. 1b).

With a limited participation of about fifty, we had the luxury of allowing thirty minutes per talk, and the following questions and discussion were untrammelled by time constraints. As it turns out, this is a real bonus, and much preferable to the more rushed time-constrained fifteen or twenty minute talks where the speaker is rushed out the door. In any such future conference that we might run, we would actually aim for this timetable, perhaps allowing for expanded poster sessions as a consequence—which is no bad thing in itself.

The conference followed the usual IGS format, three and a half days of talks, the icebreaker on the Sunday evening with a full day mid-week excursion on the Wednesday. This took the form of a journey out to west Clare past the drumlinised terrain near Ennis. In the morning, there was a boat trip from Kilrush marina out to Scattery Island (*Inis Cathaigh*), a low spit of an island in the Shannon estuary with nice exposures of till (Fig. 1c), not to mention extensive ruins of a monastic settlement whose building likely dates from the 11th century or thereabouts. The original settlement is supposed to have been founded by St. Senan (who is also reputed to have cast out an indigenous beast from the island) in the sixth century; he also probably provides the name of the Shannon river and estuary.

Returning to shore, the bus made its way to Kilkee, where Darren Ryan opened his bar, the Greyhound, specially for us. After that, Felix led the participants along the cliffs, past Bishop's Island, an offshore sea stack on which there are ruins of another early Christian oratory and beehive hut. Bishop's Island is illustrated on the front cover of this issue.

In the end, the conference ran fairly successfully. Informal feedback from the participants was positive. For the people on the ground who actually make things work, we are indebted to them; in particular, we want to thank Dermot Madden and Beata Szymanska in the

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Figure 1. (a) The small Skellig island, en route to Skellig Michael. (b) The tetrapod trackway on Valentia Island, here viewed in 2011. (c) Inspecting till on Scattery Island. (d) Two of the editors at the conference dinner.



Figure 2. Felix's poster for the conference; €1.10: ice sail on Baltoro Glacier (A. Lambrecht); €1.35: Hintereisferner; €2: Franz Josef Glacier; 25c: Bishop's Island (all A. Fowler); 48c: snow flake (A. Burden); 55c: Sveabreen (A. Chapuis); 75c: DEM of drumlins in the Scottish Borders (C. Clark).

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Kemmy Business School, Patrick Moriarty in the Stables and Kate McSweeney in the Scholars'. Arrangements in the Pavilion are done more remotely but with effort that worked too.

A. C. F. is also particularly indebted to his friends and colleagues Iain and Sonia Moyles, Mark and Sandra McGuinness, Guy and Susi Kember, Felix Ng, Sarah Mitchell, Norma Bargary, Ena Brophy and James Gleeson. Each of them will know what they did, and it was of immeasurable help, not to mention crucial support. As he will know, Magnús Már Magnússon deserves a medal for his support and patience.

This issue of the *Annals* was edited by Associate Chief Editor Andrew Fowler and Scientific Editors Felix Ng and Ian Hewitt, all under the guidance of the calm but authoritative IGS Chief Editor Hester Jiskoot and the unutterably patient Editorial Assistant Lynsey Rowland. Two of the editors are pictured in Fig. 1d at the conference dinner, which was held at the Strand Hotel in downtown Limerick. At the end of the dinner, the other editor (at the other end of the room) was presented with the IGS Seligman Crystal. In his acceptance speech, he commented that one of the congratulatory emails he had received, from Pete Nienow, had suggested writing a song for the occasion.

This didn't occur as such, but as it happened, the ending of another monumental task, the production of the 'Karthaus book' in 2019 (edited by Fowler and Ng) had led to a song, 'The Last Karthaus Song', and this was sung at the end of the conference dinner. The music (as originally written for a gathering of instruments) is appended as electronic supplementary material, as is also (with luck, it is a very large file) the recording (in a performing version for voices and guitar) at the dinner.

The conference poster was designed by Felix and is reproduced in Fig. 2. Participants at the conference got two postcards of this in their conference bags, and one wonders how many of these have been used. As Darren Ryan commented, 'it is a dying art'. The Associate Chief Editor (A. C. F.) has lots more, and any would-be correspondents should contact him if they want a further supply.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/aog.2025.2.

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