



TESTEMALE

# the first woman to ride **AILLEENS**

AT THE END OF APRIL **EASKEY BRITTON** TOWED IN AT IRELAND'S PREMIERE BIG WAVE SPOT, **AILEEN'S (OR AILL NA SEARRACH)**. THIS IS HER FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF THAT HISTORIC DAY.

My friend Peter in Co Clare called me saying, "The Cliffs are on, you've got to get down here!" I had never even seen Aill na Searrach, the infamous big wave break at the Cliffs of Moher, working. A crew of big wave surfers were over from Hawaii, the Malloy brothers were flying in from California, and local tow-in legends Richie Fitz, Gabe Davies and John McCarthy had all seen the chart and were planning a tow-in session. I had to catch up with college work, but it's not every day you get the opportunity to see Ireland's version of Jaws in action. It didn't take me long to pack up my van and head south. The plan was that I'd go out on one of the jetskis and have a look at the wave up close and personal and get a feel for it.

I met up with Keith and Chris Malloy in Doolin. They were frothing too and said it could be the perfect opportunity for me to tow-in with some of the best in the world. I could make history as the first woman to surf Ailleens! I hadn't even thought of it like that. All I had were the stories and images in my head of this beautiful, dangerous and

powerful wave. I went out there to soak up the energy in the ocean with an open mind and no expectations.

It's such an unbelievable set-up. The highest cliffs in Ireland rise vertically out of the ocean and dark shapes move in from the horizon, hitting a ledge in the reef, pitching all of a sudden and detonating at the bottom of the cliffs. Just sitting in the water watching it all is thrilling. It was mind-blowing watching the masters of tow-in set themselves up really deep in the barrel on 15-20 foot faces.

After about three hours it started to get dark and I was getting really cold. I was about to give up on the possibility of catching a wave – I'd never towed in before and I didn't have any of my own equipment – when my friend Dylan from New York managed to hijack a jetski and borrow a tow-board. He called me into the water and I thought, what the hell, I'll never know if I don't go, right? The straps on the tow board were too wide, I was stiff from the cold and I was wearing Chris Malloy's life jacket which was miles too

