



The big new project for 2007

Cara Doyle of Wicklow Uplands Council & Shay Walsh sign up for the Zig Zags



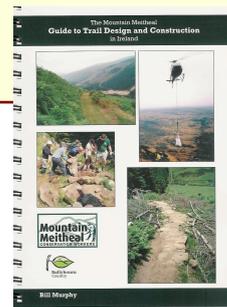
Meitheal volunteers are a keen bunch. As soon as news broke about renovating the old stalkers trail from Glenmalure up Carrawaystick, they were up and at it to get started. On 11 November a Memorandum of Understanding was signed allowing the Club to start work. Over twenty keen folk did sterling work building 92 metres of new drain. Two weeks later 16 more good people completed a further 80 metres of drain and completed a section of stone pitching. The project is an initiative of Mountain Meitheal and Wicklow Uplands Council. Shay Walsh, Chair of Mountain Meitheal, says "this is an exciting project packed with potential goodwill for both landowner and mountain users.

It's an ideal job for volunteers. We hope many more will want

to get involved. There's plenty of work whether anyone wants to join us just for a day or over a longer period." The project includes the construction of a new footbridge to facilitate recreational access to Carrawaystick, where the landowner has agreed access to his land on a strictly permissive basis. The new route will be closed for one day each year and permission is initially for a period of seven years. He reserves the right to close the route in the short term for any reason if he is ever required to do so. Wicklow County Council will provide insurance for the walk once the route has been approved to the standard accepted by the National Waymarked Ways Advisory Committee. Work resumes after the winter break on **February 25th** and everyone is welcome to help. If you want to find out more go to: www.pathsavers.org to see details of next year's programme, how to join Mountain Meitheal and how to claim your free **Berghaus** fleece.

Mountain Meitheal Guide to Trail Design and Construction in Ireland

Bill Murphy, the indefatigable and hard working founder of Mountain Meitheal has just published this guide to voluntary trail work and good practice. Using knowledge gained from other countries where similar work is carried out by volunteers and his own experiences in Mountain Meitheal, Bill has produced this concise and easy to follow book. Proving invaluable for like minded trail workers, it should become the definitive guide for all Irish trail repair and maintenance! Free to members, it is **€15** or **€10** for batches of **10** or more (including postage in Ireland.) Get your copy from: www.pathsavers.org



Hard work rewarded at Christmas Party

Yet another success story for the Club, a night with good food, good company and plenty of good cheer! As in past years, Avondale House played host to the Christmas Party and made us all feel very welcome. A mulled wine reception under the watchful eyes of Charles Stewart Parnell started the ball rolling. Dinner was served in a

room beautifully decorated by committee members Inma Chinoia and Ciara Hinksman. After a slap up meal, new Chair Shay Walsh presented the retiring Chair Bill Murphy with a bog oak clock with traditional ogham numerals on the face. That dynamic duo Ciara and Inma then led the fun and dancing into the wee small hours. After breakfast, a Sunday morning's bracing country walk in the fine forested grounds alongside the Avonbeg river cleared the heads and rounded off a very enjoyable weekend. Thanks must go to Ciara and Inma for their arrangements and to Bill for organising Avondale for us.



(Photo: Bill being clock watched by Shay and Gerry Patterson)

Good News from AGM 2006

Bill Murphy, giving his "last" Chairman's report, confirmed another successful year for the club at a well attended AGM. But it won't be his last word. He was voted Hon. Treasurer replacing Frances Hannon who retired due to commitments in her day job. Frances was unable to attend the meeting due to a family illness. The club's finances are in good shape. Any members who want a copy of the 2006 audited accounts can contact Chris Avison, (01 2986085 avison@eircom.net). **THE GOOD NEWS:** subscriptions remain at an incredible value **€20** including membership of the MCI with its associated benefits. **THE BAD NEWS:** there are still some folk who have not renewed for this year. **IT IS NEVER TOO LATE!** Subs are necessary for tools, club insurance and administration. This year's committee was elected as follows: Shay Walsh (Chair 087 2382581); Gerry Patterson (Vice Chair 086 8555799); Chris Avison (Hon. Secretary 087 2638243); Bill Murphy (Hon. Treasurer 086 2591518); Ciara Hinksman (086 3199515); Frances Hannon (086 8385101) and Inma Chinoia (087 690 3920). As all are volunteers, please be considerate about the time when any calls are made.

LEAVE NO TRACE IRELAND TAKES OFF



As one of the first promoters of the Leave No Trace message in Ireland, Mountain Meitheal is very pleased to have been involved in setting up a new all island wide LNT initiative. At the recent launch of LNT Ireland held at the National Scout HQ, well known TV presenter

and environmentalist Duncan Stewart

praised the work and encouraged everyone to spread the message. He

said "I am very excited about this new organisation and I wholeheartedly endorse it!" A similar launch followed in Belfast. The LNT education programme promotes good practice by everyone using Ireland's outdoors, whether it's up in the mountains, fishing by a lake, playing on the beach or going for a stroll in the park. Other organisations involved in LNT Ireland include: Scouting Ireland; CAAN (Northern Ireland); Gaisce; Duke of Edinburgh



Award Scheme (Northern Ireland); National Parks and Wildlife Service; Coillte; the Heritage Council; Comhairle na Tuaithe; NWWAC and the MCI. For information contact LNT Co-ordinator Jane Helps at info@leavenotraceireland.org or **01 473 6283**.

Check out: www.leavenotraceireland.org or [www,LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org) or www.pathsavers.org

IRELAND'S FIRST ADIRONDACK SHELTER?

In yet another first for the Club we constructed a new mountain shelter on a section of Ireland's premier walking route, The Wicklow Way in Glenamlur.

These shelters are quite common in North America and

Scandinavia where hikers use them as simple overnight accomodation. For our annual



summer weekend camp this year, we built the shelter to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Wicklow Way. Based on a disused foresters' hut, and with Coillte's permission, useable material from the old building was moved to the new site nearby. It took over 120 hours of voluntary work to construct (not including the prefabrication off site) and Mountain Meitheal spent nearly €1,100 on new materials. Despite very poor weather, a barbeque was enjoyed during building work. The project is now complete and open for

business at **Grid Reference: T093 923**.

Already many trail and mountain users have



enjoyed this rustic retreat judging by the many encouraging comments left in our visitor's book. We ask all who use the shelter to treat

it with respect and please practice the principles of "Leave No Trace"



DO YOU KNOW this old Irish proverb? - *Ar scáth a chéile a mbaireas na daoine* - "People live in one another's shelter."

The Irish word *scáth*, translated here as shelter, has many meanings including: a shadow, a shade, darkness, a screen, a curtain or veil, sake (as in "for the sake of") or good (as in "for the good of"). A

group of neighbours, helping a farmer to save the turf or hay, or to finish some other work on the farm before the good weather broke, was called **a meitheal**. The group of helping neighbours, usually included the farmer's brothers or cousins or other members of the extended family. Another old proverb says -

Is fearr beagán den gbaol ná mórán den-charthanas - "A little relationship is worth a lot of charity" and the first aspect of such family connection was the duty of material help. *Combar na gCombarsan* - "co-operation



of neighbours" was a much used phrase and a much practiced act. Happily this spirit still lives on. From the first Mountain Meitheal work day near Laragh in 2002 (**pictured here**)

volunteers have been carrying out valuable trail repair work in Ireland's mountains. Next year the Club will be only **FIVE YEARS OLD** with an already very impressive list of achievements under its belt. As well as building on a pool of knowledge, the club has organised projects involving approximately 200 volunteers who have put in nearly 5,000 voluntary hours working on trails and who have completed approximately four kilometers of path repair. All this great work has saved someone or somebody many thousands of Euro compared to commercial operations. This leaves a very big unanswered question - without volunteers would any of this happened at all!



From the Chair

"I would like to express my appreciation to all the volunteers who gave their time, energy and hard work during 2006. The fruit of their labours will benefit our mountain landscape for years to come, adding to the enjoyment of the many thousands of recreational users. I hope you'll all be out again in 2007. We look forward to another great year. Meanwhile may I wish you all the compliments of the season." - **Shay**.

AND A BIG THANK YOU TO



All of the approximately ninety volunteers who turned out with Mountain Meitheal in 2006 and completed 1,522 hours of voluntary work contributing to the good of Ireland's beautiful mountains. This vital work needs muscles more than money but sincere thanks must also go to: Irish Ramblers Club, Glenwalk Hillwalking Club, Wayfarers Association, CHA Hillwalking Club and HF Walking Club for their valuable financial support. This is always well spent on tools, insurance and administration. Ballyhoura Fáilte and Ballyhoura Development gave generously to the publication of "The Mountain Meitheal Guide to Trail Design and Construction in Ireland".