

THE MATTOCK

MATTOCK Spring Edition 2026



Looking back looking forward

Emer Cunningham, Chair, Mountain Meitheal Ireland



As another productive year is reviewed and our 25th Season beckons, I want to take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary commitment, collaboration, and care that continue to define Mountain Meitheal.

Across the country, our volunteers demonstrate, time and again, what can be achieved when a shared passion for our uplands is matched with skill, generosity, and teamwork.

The Mountain Meitheal Ireland committee strives to support the work of its branches, the following is a roundup of the work of MMI at a national level.

At the heart of Mountain Meitheal are our volunteers, and 2025 has been a year of tremendous achievement. Great work has taken place nationwide. Mountain Meitheal Southeast completed their project in the Glen of Aherlow, marking the occasion with a well-deserved opening ceremony that celebrated years of dedication. Mountain Meitheal Northwest successfully hosted our mid-summer event and training weekend led by Frank McMahon on Tom Earley's farm in Roscommon. Mountain Meitheal West undertook a variety of projects at Blackhead Loop in Co. Clare, along with continuing work on the Western Way and at Mám Éan in Co. Galway. In Wicklow, Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow volunteers repaired over 2 km of the Maulin Loop Trail, replaced a section of board walk with sheep wools trail at White Hill on the Wicklow Way and repaired a significant section of the Wicklow Way on DMP land. These projects reflect not only hard work, but a deep respect and passion for the landscapes we care for.

Excellence remains the foundation of all our project work. We continue to be guided by the standards set out in the Handbook of Trail Design, which is now available in PDF format, making this important resource more widely accessible to our members and volunteers. The Mountain Meitheal Ireland Policies & Procedures (Jan 2026–Dec 2027) document was redesigned this year and I'd like to sincerely thank Máirín Dolan (MMNW) for the tremendous work involved in preparing this edition. The updated document brings clear, consistent guidance for all branches, strengthens leadership, safety and governance, introduces useful templates, and includes important new technical resources—most notably a new illustrated trail construction guide and a project specification template—helping us maintain the high standards that define Mountain Meitheal Ireland.

As I finish up my time as Chair, I do so with immense gratitude. It has been a wonderful experience, and I am delighted to welcome Frank McMahon as the incoming Chair. Looking ahead, 2027 will mark the start of the next 25 years of Mountain Meitheal — a milestone truly worth celebrating. With continued collaboration, training, and volunteer commitment, the future of Mountain Meitheal is strong indeed.

Notice Board

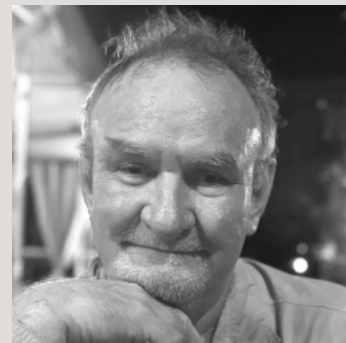


Leading the way in 2026

Frank Mc Mahon is the newly elected chair of MMI and will take over the mantle from Emer Cunnigham who has done sterling work for MMI over the last few years – Many Thanks Emer for all your dedication and hard work.

The following people have been elected /Re-elected as the Chairs of our active branches for 2026.

Top row from left: Bill Murphy **MM Dublin Wicklow**, Mike Keyes **MM Southeast**, and bottom row John Smith, **MM West** and Noel Pidgeon, **MM Northwest**.



STRIKEPAY

After sterling work by the treasurer of MMDW Susan White and our outgoing chair Emer, StrikePay our electronic donation, is up and running very successfully in MMDW's area of operation.

For those that don't know, StrikePay uses a QR code that guides people to a dedicated site where people can donate. At the site people are prompted to donate anything from €5 upwards. The operating company takes a small service charge with the balance coming to MM. Each treasurer can login to see how much funds have been accrued and can draw down at any time. The system is set up so each branch and MMI have their own QR code ensuring funds flow to where they were donated. In a world of diminishing use of cash StrikePay allows us to tap into the good will of passing hikers and users of our trails.

In May 2025, MMDW rolled out StrikePay for cashless donations. Susan reports "We have the QR codes on signs on some of the trails we worked on during 2025, on signs in the huts on the Wicklow Way and have also added the QR codes to the Mountain Meitheal Website. Donations trickle anytime of the day or night and during 2025 over €850 has been donated by people seeing and using our QR codes."

Branches wishing to use their code can contact MMI for details on the programme and its benefits.



AWARDS

It's always nice to get recognition for ones work and that's why we instituted the award scheme. Some branches have taken to presentation of the awards at lunch time on the trail while other wait until the AGM or some formal event. Whatever the custom in your branch remember we recognise contributions awarding pins for 50 hours worked to over 1000 hours. Don't forget to let us know who got awards in the annual report so we can recognise them in the Mattock.

Awards are available from MMI on request.



END OF THE TRAIL

Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow volunteers were sad to learn of the death of Gerry Patterson a stalwart of Mountain Meitheal over many years.

Gerry was one of the 34 that attended the original come and try day in Laragh back in 2002 and remained a long-time supporter.

He will be remembered for supervising the construction of the Brushers Gap shelter (prefabricated in his back garden) and the construction of the footbridge leading to the Zig Zags in Glenmalure ensuring the buttresses were high enough to withstand many a flood.

A forester by profession Gerry, he served as the forester-in-charge in Glendalough for many years and was well versed in all things related to the forest and the outdoors. He loved nature but was also extremely good with people as evidenced when he led the bunch of students from Michigan State University for a weeks long camp to improve the St Kevins Way organised by MM. Not only did they learn trail work but learnt how to cut turf by hand and Irish set dancing.

Gerry will be sorely missed by his wife Eileen, children and grandchildren and many friends around the country.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis



Another busy year in 2025

MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL DUBLIN / WICKLOW Roundup

2025 was another busy year for MMDW notching up over 1,522 hours of trail work in 2025, 200 more hours than 2024

TRAIL WORK

MMDW began the year on the upper reaches of Maulin Loop Trail which sits Maulin's summit and offer extensive views over Glencree, the Dublin Mountains and the city and sea in the distance. In all the branch spent

7 workdays building a simple foot bridge to traverse a particularly eroded and floodable section, installing new steps and water bars, clearing and repairing existing cross drains and cutting back vegetation encroaching on to the trail. A total of **2.7 km** of trail was repaired.

In May 2025 MMDW moved to White Hill, a heavily used section of the Wicklow Way to build a sheep wool-based trail replacing the existing bog bridge which had deteriorated after over 25 years of use. This project was carried out in collaboration with NPWS who supplied the materials. There were **8 full workdays** and **4** supplemental sessions to carry out preparatory works and get tools onto this remote site. **220m** of this type of turnpike trail were completed before materials ran out, leaving 80m, or so, to complete in 2026.

In September the branch moved to a **1Km** stretch of the Wicklow Way at Kilmashogue in the Dublin Mountains Partnership area of operations. Here crews cut back vegetation, cleared existing cross drains, installed several cross drains and water bars as required. Two of our volunteers Robert Grandon and Peter Wilkes carried out repairs to one of our shelters, Brusher's Gap Hut, to address some vandalism and graffiti on the interior walls. In July **11 MMDW** volunteers attended The MMI Summer Project, hosted by MMNW.

Training Delivered By MMDW

On 9th February 2025, MMDW delivered a **basic trail maintenance course** to 13 people signed up to support the Dublin Mountains Partnership Ranger programme with trail maintenance. The one-day course, delivered by Bill Murphy and Emer Cunningham was a combination of theory delivered in the National Scout Campsite at Larch Hill and practical session in Tibbradden Wood. There was very positive feedback from participants.



MMDW constructing a simple timber bridge on the Maulin Loop Trail



The completed section of the White Hill route. The picture also shows the removed old bog bridge.



Liaising With Partners

MMDW have become aware of an increase in recruitment of NPWS rangers and changes of staff meaning that there are a cohort of rangers not aware of our work. To address this, in April 2025, Bill Murphy and Emer Cunningham made a presentation on MMDW mission, vision and recent projects to approximately 24 NPWS staff. In July MMDW chair and secretary met with representatives from Coillte and the DMP. Both organisations were preoccupied with clearing the damage to forests from Storm Éowyn and this combined with changes to personnel demonstrated the need to work to ensure our partner organisations are aware of the value and quality of our work and the passion our volunteers bring to caring for the environment. MMDW Secretary, Emer Cunningham, attended a Wicklow Way Partnership Meeting via Zoom but again there was an emphasis on seeking ORIS funding to contract out works. MMDW are signatories to the Wicklow Way Partnership MOU with Wicklow Coco, DMP, NPWS and Coillte and are of the view that this should be an active forum to discuss volunteer activities.

Emer Cunningham attended a symposium on the challenges posed by recreation related visitor use in the Wicklow uplands. There were circa 40 attendees from a wide range of backgrounds including NPWS, DMP, Coillte, Defence Forces, Mountain Rescue, Mountaineering Ireland, etc. and the project was facilitated by Ben Lawhon formerly of Leave No Trace, US. The objective is to develop a 'Desired Future Conditions Statement' that can be adopted by all stakeholders associated with the Wicklow Upland district.

Mountain Meitheal In The Media

The Mountain Log published an article on the Carrickgollogan project written by Bill Murphy. Bill also wrote an article for the British Mountain Bothy Association Journal about the 5 Mountain Meitheal Huts in Wicklow and Mayo. There is increased interest in the UK in the possibility of bothying in Ireland.

Awards - Service Pins

The following MMDW Volunteers were awarded their Hours Service Pins in 2025:

- 500 hours:** Emer Cunningham
- 400 hours:** Tom Moran
- 250 hours:** Susan Jones
- 100 hours:** Seamus Dempsey and Phil Callan
- 50 Hours:** Dervla Murphy

A special award was made to Siobhan Murray official baker to MMDW for her many hours of baking to keep us all happy on workdays.



The completed Maulin foot bridge



Not always "summer lark in the clear air". The weather on this exposed section of White Hill varied from scorching sun to driving cold rain, none the less but the work got done.

Another busy year cont.

MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL WEST 2025 Roundup

The Branch organised 12 workdays during the year with an active and varied programme throughout their region. The Branch AGM was held on 18/11/2025 where John Smyth, Anne Brindley and Helen Sheridan were elected Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Trail Work

On the **Western Way** the branch replaced the existing stile with a 2-step braced stile, and upright pole at **Glencroff** at the request of the landowner James O'Neill. At **Luggatariff**, the Rural Recreation Officer marked out 7 flooded sections with bamboo canes and the Branch carried out the requested repairs. Upon completion the path was dry, the channels cleared and water drains fully operational.

At Fanore, on the Black Head Trail, the Branch repaired 2 stone stiles in consultation with RRO Eoin Ryan and James Hynes, landowner. The Branch also completed the raised pathway with stepping stones beside the cattle trough and cleared drainage channels. The drains are now working well, and the lower path is in serviceable condition.

At Gleninagh also on the Black Head Loop Trail the branch repaired 800m from the waterfall to the junction with the Black Head loop, cutting back briars, overgrown branches of blackthorn, hazel, bracken.

Near **Benlettery**, the branch constructed a new 2 step X-stile, 205m west of the original stile, at the request of the landowner (Thomas Joyce). The livestock-proof stile was constructed in accordance with BS standards, with one upright hand pole replacing the existing upper stile which is no longer in service.

The **Mamean Mass path** is a very important trail in the Connemara area of huge historical and religious importance. MMW constructed stone pitched steps, drains were cleared and cross-drains were rebuilt on the upper Mass path. Assistance with training and input was provided by Frank McMahon, a key worker on the Croagh Patrick Path Project and a member of MMSE and MMNW branches. All work was undertaken in consultation with RRO Adam Delapp.

Training

The Branch participated in two organised training events in 2025. MMW members attended the training and MMI Summer Meet-up organised by MMNW in Mountallen Farm Co Roscommon. Frank McMahon, MMNW, also led a training workshop on Mamean upper Mass Path, Connemara, to assist with the preparation of the location for stone pitching work carried out during the year.

Bad Weather

One workday was cancelled due to bad weather.



MMW volunteers working in Mameen



MMW volunteers doing stone work at Mamean Mass Path Trail



MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL NORTHWEST

Training and Summer Camp Event

Mountain Meitheal Northwest hosted a Mountain Meitheal Ireland summer event and training session over the weekend of the 5th and 6th July 2025.

Mountain Meitheal Northwest also started a new project in October 2025 near Dowra along the Leitrim Way. The project includes the construction of approximately 150m of crushed stone trail with the erection of a kissing gate and stone steps along the path. Work will recommence in March 2026 after the winter recess and will take the greater part of 2026 to complete.

MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL SOUTHEAST

Training and Summer camp Event

MMSE had another good year in 2025 with good attendance on each of the 9 main workdays as well as a few days for viewing and planning new worksites.

We completed our big job at **Gleann na Sceach** at the foot of Galtymore. This comprised a 300+ metre track was installed complete with extensive drainage and stonework. Never before has so much gravel been barrowed by so many. At least it was a constant downhill push.

MMSE are now working on the Bansha track in **Bansha Woods** between Tipperary town and Cahir. This is a popular walking route from the trail head in Bansha car park. Due to poor local drainage, it is exceptionally wet at times and has required serious groundworks to transform it into an all-weather walkable path.

Apart from the regular crew of trusty members, we have 3 new members from the Ukrainian community. We also had a visit from a group of UL Outdoor Club students who put in a phenomenal workday. We hope to welcome them back in 2026 when our work year starts again.

Our total hours worked for 2025 was 746, all in all another great year for the MMSE team.



MMNW volunteers Mairin and Elizabeth working on a sheep's wool trail



Great work by MMSE in Bansha woods

Awards - Service Pins

The following MMSE Volunteers were awarded their Hours Service Pins in 2025:

400 Hours: Catherine Quinlan.

300 Hours: Denis Bates, Phil Fitzpatrick, Máire Ní Mhurchú, Mary Neligan, Tomás O'Briain and Jim O'Neil.

250 Hours: Jimmy Barry, Fergus Flynn, Mike Keys, and Tom McCarthy.

100 Hours: John Paul Curtin, Eoin Fitzgibbon, Kevin Myers and Noel McGrath

50 Hours: Dave Kelly and Bernie Roberts.

A 100 Hour pin was presented to Pat Moylan's wife Geraldine to recognise his work at the Spring tree planting ceremony in Pat's memory.

From Coillte Meitheal to Mountain Meitheal

AN IDEA CONCEIVED ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

Bill Murphy

As I write this, I realise that I am starting into my 27th season of trail work in the Wicklow mountains and while I might think I have many more years to go, my knees definitely tell me otherwise! Mountain Meitheal will celebrate its 25 years next year but before Mountain Meitheal there was a prototype group called Coillte Meitheal. Some of our newer members and branches may like to know more of our origin story, so here it is in brief.

In 2000, to mark the millennium, a pal and I decided to hike part of the Appalachian Trail in New England. Doing some research before I went, I began to realise that the 2,600 miles of the AT was maintained for the most part by volunteers from clubs along the trail, clubs such as the Maine Appalachian Trail Club and the Appalachian Mountain Club. Hiking eight days along the AT in the Presidential Range in New Hampshire, I saw at first hand their work, much of it in remote and difficult to access places. They were building and maintaining water bars, building stone steps and scree walls, clearing blowdowns and generally keeping this iconic trail open while protecting the environment through which it passed. I wondered could a similar thing happen in Ireland.

Returning to my day job as a forester in Coillte I put out a call asking if any of my colleagues were interested in starting a group to maintain parts of the long-distance trails that crossed Coillte lands. To my delight I got quiet a good response, and we set up two work groups, one in Wicklow and one in Limerick/North Tipperary focusing on the Slieve Felim Way. Unfortunately foot and mouth disease that year got in the way and plans to do workdays had to be put on hold.

When we were allowed “out to play again” we had approximately 8 workdays over the next year and a half. During that time, we constructed about 50m of turn pike trail (a fore runner of the sheep’s wool trail where we used conifer branches as the underlay), a series of check dams to stop erosion near Glensoulan, we repaired off road sections of the Wicklow Way near Laragh and repainted and set way markers. On the Slieve Felim Way the crew repaired bridges, cleared back vegetation and improved water management. Coillte agreed to insure us as we worked and our colleagues around the country found and donated redundant tools such as mattocks, old spades and shovels that formed the basis for our later tool stache.

As people saw these early and modest efforts, they began to enquire about joining. I felt that if this was to happen then Meitheal would need to establish itself as an independent organisation whose sole focus was trail repair and management. Early in 2002 assisted by Gay Needham and Mike Dagley we put out a notice that Meitheal would run a come and try workday. The workday aimed to construct a new section of the Wicklow Way running alongside the Glenmacnass river from the footbridge to where it would rejoin the forest road. The turnout was great with over 34 people attending. They included Mountaineering Ireland members - Frances Hannon, Milo and Shiela Kane, Gay and Mike and others; Coillte staff - Clodagh Duffy, Alistair Pfeifer, Aileen O’ Sullivan, Finnian McEvoy and the late Gerry Patterson (RIP) and Wicklow Upland volunteers including Cara Doyle and Lorcan Sweetman. Incidentally we successfully cleared and built over 600m of new trail that day.



Spurred on by this response and achievement we decided to look at setting up Mountain Meitheal as an organisation dedicated to trail work, and an ad hoc committee meeting was organised in Coillte's Newtown office some weeks later. This resulted in agreement of the structure and the objectives of Mountain Meitheal, objectives which have served us well to the present. We later applied to Mountaineering Ireland to become an affiliated club and set about the process of setting up what is now an active and very "professional" organisation.

Mountain Meitheal has thrived and grown because it is driven entirely by volunteers with no bosses and no minions; the chair or secretary of the branch will often be the person that is working alongside you on the trail. We work to harden trails to make them more sustainable not easier for people to traverse; we promote more sustainable recreation through example not preaching. We specialise in trail work as that's where we are needed and there are lots of other organisations doing other conservation work, we stick to our speciality.

We owe those involved in the early days, Gay, Frances Hannon, Chris and Mary Solan, Shay Walsh, Pauline Ryder and Robert Grandon a debt of gratitude for the hard work they put in laying the foundations of Mountain Meitheal and now Mountain Meitheal Ireland and to all our volunteers who make the idea a reality.



2001 - One of the early Coillte Meitheal workdays - volunteers repairing drainage on the Wicklow Way just above the Glenmacnass bridge, Laragh.

*My Favourite Hike***KILLARY FJORD CO. GALWAY**

Anne Brindley, MM west volunteer.

The hike is 17 km, 4.5-5 hours on minor roads, green road and Famine road with stunning views of sea, mountain and bog. Scooped out of the earth by glacial erosion to a depth of 45 metres, Killary Fjord at 15km in length, is part of the UNESCO Joyce Country & Western Lakes Global Geopark. The townland names, Killary – An Caoláire rua, and Rosroe – Ros rua, reflect the red mudstone and sandstone in the area.

Starting from the gravel pit on the N59 (Grid REF L8227 6077), cross the N59, and take the second right onto the L5102, in the direction of **Tullycross**. Follow this road for 4.5 km along **Lough Fee**.

To the left in the distance, you see the 12 Bens, on both sides bogland, covered with the fluff of bog cotton in early summer, fuchsia, crocosmia and footed turf in late summer. As you pass **Ilaunroe**, you might glimpse, hidden behind the trees, a fishing lodge leased by Sir William Wilde, father of Oscar Wilde, in the 1850s. With **Lough Muck** now on your left, leave the **Tullycross/Glassilaun** road and take the road (GR L7790 6211) uphill to the right. Downhill, you come to the sea inlet of **Little Killary**. There is a track to the right which leads to two graveyards. On the left is the Church of Ireland graveyard with the tombstone of Colonel Alexander Thomson and family, on the right, the more populous Catholic graveyard. Known as the **Pipe Cemetery**, the custom was to light a claypipe after the burial, smoke it and then knock the ashes on the mound of stones, leaving the pipe behind. Back on the road, a small gate and steps lead up to the Church of Ireland (now closed) built in the 1840s.

Continue on the road as it turns uphill to the left, on the right is **Salrock Pass**, a steep climb which descends on the fjord side. Before **Rosroe Harbour**, take a turn to the right (GR L7753 6478), a 'No Dogs allowed' sign at the access point to a green path and stone wall that you follow to the fjord itself. As you reach the end of the stone wall, the drama of **Killary Fjord** reveals itself! To the west, at the mouth of the fjord, stand the beacons on **Doonee** and **Inishbarna**, erected by the Congested Districts Board to guide boats to the harbour; to the north across the water in Co. Mayo, with Mweelrea, the highest peak in Connacht at 814m and **Ben Gorm** at 700m. All along the fjord, one can see the mussel longlines for which Killary is famous, sheep dotted on the hillsides, and the undulating lazy beds of pre-Famine potato cultivation.



Killary Fjord

A perfect spot for lunch!

From here, as you head east along the fjord, enjoy the stunning views all around, you walk on for 4km on the Famine road, constructed during the 1850s, then 3km on a minor road. You will pass a few ruins of cottages on the hillside, a community known as **Foher**, then Killary Fjord shellfish, Killary sheep farm. Arriving at the N59 take care crossing the road to your left. The gravel pit is 100m on your right.

NOTE:

*Car parking: 5 km outside **Leenane** on the N59 towards **Clifden** there is a gravel pit on the left. It's a working pit so parking may not always be possible on weekdays. The terrain along the Famine road is uneven, boots and poles are advisable.*

Where sky on sunny days unfold

A POEM AFTER A LONG GREY WINTER ...

This poem will be familiar to anyone who has struggled while hiking in the Irish winter, but it looks forward to those sun filled mountain days of summer when all that is heard is the skylark, a babbling clear mountain stream and the sound of the gentle mountain breeze.

MOUNTAIN COL

*We cross a subterranean pond, high on the
mountain ridge where rivers begin,
where saplings are scarred,
denuded by falling ice and up-ranging deer.*

*We descend over boulders
clinging to small branches,
roots; look across the gap to another wall
of rock and scrub. Somewhere deep
in that grey-green mass a trail
slabs to the summit plateau.
But first the col, where sky on sunny days
unfolds its wings and birds soar through –
not today. Clouds boil up from the gap toward
the valley to the west, tepid rain dashes
snow to slush.*

*We pause, wriggle boots in icy mush, breathe.
Ahead lies a warming scramble,
a summit spun in whirlpools, a caress of air.*



Kathadin from Chimney Pond, Baxter State Park, Maine, USA

Parker Towle

Training Weekend

Mountain Meitheal Northwest's Training Weekend

5th & 6th July 2025



When Emer Cunningham, Chair of MMI asked if Mountain Meitheal Northwest (MMNW) would host a training weekend demonstrating how to construct a trail using stone and sheep's wool we were more than happy to oblige and spread knowledge of this trail building technique to other branches. Using raw sheep fleeces and stone to construct trails was first developed by the Romans, but it was MMNW, under Bryan Fennel the RRO for Leitrim who first pioneered it among MM branches in Ireland in 2021. In Summer 2024 we started our third sheep's wool trail, only this time the trail was to be located at Mountallen Eco Farm, just outside Drumshanbo, Co. Roscommon. The farm is owned and run by Tom Earley, a member of MMNW

Tom provided an area on the outskirts of his farm for parking and overnight camping. He also kindly provided us with the use of a room in his house for indoor slide presentation. Silvia Borbein and Elisabeth Mattheis organised the evening meal from Sconlans in Drumshanbo, while Máirín kept everyone up to date on the communications front.

The weekend kicked off on Saturday 5th July with representatives arriving from Mountain Meitheal Dublin/Wicklow (MMDW), Mountain Meitheal Southeast (MMSE), Mountain Meitheal West (MMW) and of course members from MMNW. Máirín introduced Frank who gave a quick presentation outlining the theory behind the training session. Frank's presentation was followed by a brief questions and answers session before we all made our way to the trail for the hands-on practical session. Tom greatly facilitated the work by bringing all the materials to the worksite ensuring that we were ready to go from the start. Before we all got down to undertaking the dirty work of the weekend Tom gave a quick guided tour around his Eco farm. What a pleasure and an insight it was to listen and learn how conservation of the natural habitats on the farm is nurtured to allow biodiversity to flourish. The tips on methods and ways of growing organic vegetables without the use of fertilisers or pesticides were witnessed firsthand by the wealth of healthy vegetables shooting up. We were divided into two groups in order to give everyone get a chance to participate in all aspects of constructing a trail made with sheep's wool and great progress was made extending the trail.

Of course, these weekends are also about volunteers from the different branches getting together to get to know one another and have the crack. In the evening, Silvia and Elisabeth organised the food while the rest of us made our way to one of Tom's sheds, which was set up beautifully and extremely well appointed for an evening meal and social gathering. After dinner, those of us that were camping pitched our tents down by the lake before gathering in Tom's hut with its welcoming turf fire. Music and song were provided by Chair of MMNW Noel Pidgeon and Akash Murthy. The joy of the chat, the music and the singing with volunteers from other branches, next to a big turf fire while watching the night descend on Lough Allen and to wake up next morning to witness the haze clear over the Lake was a real special treat. To top it all, some brave hearts even ventured a pre-breakfast swim. Where would you get the like of it!

The second day of work was much shorter, but just as rewarding as we managed to finish what we set out to do. There were long journeys home for a lot of people, so there was no need to delay and some availed of Tom's organically grown vegetables before they hit the road.

A weekend like this doesn't happen without a lot of planning and organisation. It goes without saying, a big thank you to Máirín, Silvia, Noel and Elisabeth for all their help, to Gerry Bambrick who supplied turf for the campfire and to Tom Earley for his generous invite to his farm and his open and warm welcome to all. Our sincere thanks to each and every Mountain Meitheal volunteer who showed up, gave generously of their time and labour and made the weekend special.



Forest workers construct a forest road in Pettigoe, Co. Donegal 1960s



Máirín Dolan wheeling sheep's fleeces to form the trail sub structure

MM huts in Scotland

Mountain Meitheal's Hut design being used on the Southern Uplands Way in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.

Last year we had contact from a gentleman in Scotland, Eddie Webb, who had used our huts while on holiday in Ireland and was impressed with their design and usefulness. He was asking if we had any plans that they could use to construct similar huts on the Southern Uplands Way in Scotland. As it happened, Bill Murphy had prepared the draft of a book on hut construction which will be available online later in the year. We were able to send him this draft to allow him to explore the idea further

Eddie contacted us recently and this was his update:

"I thought you might be interested in progress on the huts. We are targeting putting up 3 on the SUW, one at Glenwhan. One a mile or so beyond Clatteringshaws reservoir (w-e) and finally at the Water Meetings just beyond the Dalveen Pass. Dumfries and Galloway (I assume council) have agreed to match fund, and we intend to apply for wind farm funding, which is opening early Feb. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Activity Trust will likely front the application for funding as they are properly constituted as an organisation. Forestry and Land Scotland (formerly the Forestry Commission) have given us agreement in principle for the first two sites, and we are in positive discussions on the third with a private landowner. Dalbeattie men's shed are putting the final touches to the CAD drawings and have taken on extra room to construct them. With a good outlook we hope to put all 3 up this walking year, which feels a stretch but that's the plan."



Brushers Gap Hut in the snow.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

Mountain Meitheal could not exist without its volunteers, their dedication and hard work. Volunteers are the engine that drives MM. Mountain Meitheal also appreciates the support of the general public and the hill walking community who assist MM with donations through individuals and through their clubs.

To all of our volunteers and supporters we offer our many, many thanks and appreciation for your contributions and on-going backing. We wish you all good health and safe keeping. Enjoy our wonderful hills and other outdoor spaces.

Get Out Get Dirty & Give Back

MMI is a group of volunteers who build and repair paths and tracks through our forests and upland area with the aim of protecting our fragile environment. MMI currently has 4 branches. In the West (MMW) and Northwest (MMNW) in the East Dublin/Wicklow (MMDW) and in the Southeast (MMSE).

Why not come and join in on one of our workdays.

A full calendar of work dates, news, and useful

RESOURCES is available on our website:

<https://www.mountainmeitheal.ie/>

Join us and support our work – it's just €25 and application forms are on our website and available from the branches.