

THE MATTOCK



Welcome to the MATTOCK Spring 2025



Chair's Address

Emer Cunningham (Chair, Mountain Meitheal Ireland)

As we close out 2024, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work of Mountain Meitheal Ireland (MMI) that was undertaken throughout the year by its branches nationwide.

First and foremost are our volunteers. Mountain Meitheal exists because of you - You are the engine that drives our mission, and without your passion and hard work, none of this would be possible. I wish to express my gratitude to each and every one of you.

In addition to the projects undertaken on the trails, there is tremendous work, that is carried out by volunteers at branch committee level and beyond. I wish to recognise the importance of this work and to acknowledge their contribution to keeping MMI going and working to sustain its longevity into future. This work is also greatly appreciated.

In April **MMSE** hosted a National Training Day at which 24 volunteers from MM four branches participated. It was an inspiring day, coming together to share knowledge and develop skills at Gleann na Sceach track Glen of Aherlow (see Regional Roundup).

In July **MMDW** volunteers (Robert Grandon and Peter Wilkes) showcased the work of Mountain Meitheal to members of the public at the DMP Open Volunteer Day event in the Dublin Mountains.

In September, I had the privilege of attending Ireland's inaugural National Trail Conference in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim. Organised by Leitrim Development Company in collaboration with the Irish Local Development Network and Rural Recreational Officers (RROs), the event brought together over 2,000 farmers, landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, and community groups.

Special recognition goes to Frank McMahon (MMNW & MMSE) for presenting on the evolution of **MMNW** and leading a practical session on the Sheep Trail Technique. In addition, Grainne Moynihan (Melleray MM) gave an inspiring presentation on "St. Declan's Way Trail Story".

At the request of the Department of Community and Rural Development, MMDW delivered a 2-day Trail Course for RROs in October. The programme combined theoretical classroom with practical outdoor exercises where participants visited existing Mountain Meitheal trails (See Training). Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and recognises the skills and knowledge that Mountain Meitheal has built up over the last twenty-five years. I extend my gratitude to the MMDW members who organised and delivered the course.

This year, we formalised our partnership with Coillte through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This strengthens our relationship with Coillte when carrying out trail work on Coillte lands, ensuring continuity even in the event of staff changes, while our training course has put us firmly in the RROs' sightline. Finally, we've transitioned to a more sustainable awards model and are now using Award Pins to recognise volunteer achievements (See MMI updates).

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to Mountain Meitheal. I look forward to 2025 with hope and excitement for what we can achieve together.

Warm regards,

Emer
Chair, Mountain Meitheal Ireland

Mountain Meitheal Ireland Updates

New Award Scheme replaces woolly hats and fleeces.

Mountain Meitheal recognises and celebrates the huge amount of time and effort our volunteers make to path conservation through our award scheme. In 2024 we moved away from buffs, fleeces and woolly hats to a more standard and sustainable award of service pins that can be worn proudly in civvy and mountain gear. The pins, (the 250 hour is depicted here) show our iconic mattock and the number of hours contributed.

If you feel you are due to an award, please speak to your branch Chair or Secretary.

Mountain Meitheal Awards



Hours Worked	Awards
(first day)	Mountain Meitheal pin
50	50 hours pin
100	100 hours pin
250	250 hours pin
300	300 hours pin
400	400 hours pin
500	Mattock & Spade pin
1000	Honorary member pin & membership

Go cashless with StrikePay

Putting the collection box out on workdays has been a steady source of funds for many years for MM until the advance of the cashless society. The MMI committee explored alternate cashless payment systems in 2024 and have selected ‘Strike Pay’ as an option that offers an easy way for the public of making donations via their smartphones using a QR Code. It will be available in 2025 for Branches who wish to opt into and avail of this potential source of income generation. Details from Secretary MMI or through your MMI Branch Rep.

Leading the year ahead 2025

Branches of MMI elect their committees each year at their end of year AGMs. Elected to lead their committees for the year ahead are:

- Bill Murphy **MMDW**
- Mike Keyes **MMSE**
- Sean Donovan **MMW**
- Peter Farrell **MMNW**
- Mike O'Rourke **Melleray MM**



Bill Murphy



Mike Keyes



Sean Donovan



Noel Pidgeon



Mike O'Rourke

Four Ducks on a Pond

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing;
What a little thing
To remember for years-
To remember with tears!

William Allingham – Irish Poet

Branch Round Up

MM DUBLIN WICKLOW

MM DUBLIN WICKLOW worked on several throughout the year commencing with repairs to approx. 900m of the **Wicklow Way at Ride Rock**. This involved the cutting back vegetation, clearing of existing cross drains and the construction of new waterbars and grade reversals along with repairs to the fence close to the overlook.

In conjunction with **Wicklow Mountains NP** MMDW trialled 60metre of **sheep's wool (turnpike) trail** on St Kevins Way at the **Wicklow Gap** and in **Late spring** returned to the **Zig Zags in Glendalough Valley** to continue repairs to this popular trail. Existing water bars and drains were cleared, steps were constructed and repaired and rip rap used to close off a short sections bootleg trails.

In May, MMDW hosted a celebration at **Brushers Gap Hut** in memory of Anto Monaghan, RIP. Family members joined the event to share stories and Anto's wife was presented with his 400-hour pin.



MMDW's **Mid-Summer project** was repair and restoration of **Mullacor Hut**, in **Glenmalur Valley**. The hut, originally constructed in 2007, is very popular with both day visitors and overnight hikers. As part of the summer project, the crew camped on site and spent two days on extensive repairs. First all the overhanging trees that have grown up since the hut was built were pruned to open up the site to more sunshine and to reduce dripping from the trees. The cedar shingles on the roof were removed and replaced with a more durable tin roof. The internal panels were replaced with OSB board over a new membrane applied to reduce drafts. The external wall board-on-board was repaired, cleaned of moss and painted with 2 coats of "fence life" and the hut signage repainted.

At the **end of Summer**, MMDW returned to Crone **Wood** to carry out repairs to the **Maulin Mountain Trail** as it leaves the trail head car park and climbs towards Maulin. Here MMDW constructed a series of steps along with repairs to waterbars and grade reversals, a gentler end to the year spent in the shelter of the forest.



MM SOUTH EAST

MM SOUTHEAST continued their work on the **Gleann na Sceach track** in the Glen of Aherlow. Unfortunately, two workdays had to be rescheduled due to bad weather. Further work will involve the erection of chicanes at the entry points to the trail prevent cattle from gaining access and damaging the treadway.

In April MMSE planned and delivered a **National Training Day** on the theme of **WATER MANAGEMENT**. Twenty-four volunteers participated, from **four MMI branches**. Training consisted of a mixture of theory and practice. The day commenced with a short theory session which illustrated water management techniques (waterbars, cross drains, side drains as well as some stone pitching) and later a practical session on site, at Gleann na Sceach. **Workstations** were set up on site in advance of the training day, where MMSE members demonstrated a range of water management techniques and, in accordance with the design of the programme, divided participants into teams which rotated to give all participants the opportunity to gain hands-on engagement of working on all aspects of water management covered on the course. Questions from participants were welcome throughout.

The wonderful support of the **Lisvarrinane** community made it possible for MMSE to avail of the use of the **Community Hall** for the in-house component of the course and to provide participants with a hearty meal in the centre before hitting the road at the close of the event. **A big thank you to the Centre Committee** for the use of the hall and for looking after us so well on the day. And thanks also to our own members for their hard work not only around the training day but right throughout the year.

In July MMSE scattered the ashes of our friend and fellow member, the late Pat Molan and with Coillte's agreement, will be planting a memorial tree to Pat during the coming planting season.





Group working in Lough Innagh Valley

MM WEST

MM WEST commenced their year by undertaking a reconnaissance hike along the **Western Way (WW)** to identify water issues. Two areas in need of attention were identified, cross-drains on the upper Mass path at **Máméan**, and water management in the form of channels and cross-drains at **Luggatarbh** at the western end of the **Inagh Valley**. The upper Mass path was repaired first and later in the year, with the support of Adam Delapp, RRO, the landowner and the NPWS, MMW returned to **Luggatarbh** where they completed a big dig of water channels and cross-drains. The Luggatarbh section attracted the support of the Galway Conservation Volunteers which was really appreciated.

A recce of 4.5Km of the **Western Way** from N59 **Leenane** to **Tullyconor Bridge** and back was conducted to identify repairs required to this trail where some of the waymark posts (9) needed upgrading. Tullyconor Bridge was closed. In February MMW upgraded the reflective yellow waymarks along this route and a lovely day out and a good walk was had by all! At the request of one of the landowners of that section of the Western Way, the MMW stile construction team were back on the **WW** in July and August to replace two stiles with user-friendly, sheep-escape-proof, two-step stiles close to the junction of the **WW with the N59 at Leenane**. Maintenance was also carried out on the **Black Head-Fanore path at Gleninagh** and on the **Ballyvaughan Woodland loop, Co Clare**.

Two Committee members set up a recruitment table at the **Galway Volunteers Recruitment Fair** in Salthill in February and attracted plenty of inquiries, a good awareness-raising initiative.



Branch Round Up

MM NORTHWEST

This year MM Northwest returned to work in March after the winter break with the planting of native Irish saplings in **Ballinagleragh**. This project was part of National Tree Week and was facilitated by Joe Gowran, CEO of Woodlands of Ireland. Last year, MMNW carried out hedgerow weaving at this same location and it was great to see how the hedgerow had naturalised, and the native flora had reestablished itself.

In July MMNW started a new project at **St. Hugh's Well and Sweathouse** in **Ballinagleragh**, Co. Leitrim. This workday consisted of clearing away rotten timber picnic tables and cutting back overgrown vegetation. Future remedial works will involve laying drainage pipes and improving the access path to the well. MMNW continued to erect and rebuild timber and steel stiles at **Tullyskeherney**, near Manorhamilton which included erecting additional way markers on the Leitrim Way, replacing signage and constructing approximately 10 meters of sheep's wool trail over a particularly boggy section of ground.

At the end of August, MMNW commenced the construction of a new sheep's wool trail at Mountallen Eco Farm. In September, Ireland held its first ever National Trail Conference in Leitrim and Frank McMahon (MMNW volunteer) gave a presentation - *'How to Build a Sheep's Wool Trail'* - and demonstrated the technique at Mountallen Eco Farm. MMNW have constructed approximately 50 meters of sheep's wool trail that will form a loop walk at Mountallen Eco Farm.

Silvia Borbein – Volunteer of the Year for Environment and Heritage. On 22nd November 2024, the Leitrim Volunteer Centre recognised the outstanding contribution of volunteers across a range of different areas in the community. Silvia Borbein of MMNW won **Volunteer of the Year 2024** for Environment and Heritage. Silvia is the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of MMNW, co-founder of MMNW and has over 300 volunteer hours to date. Silvia also holds the exclusive record of never missing a Mountain Meitheal workday since the branch had their very first workday. This is living testament to her dedication and outstanding commitment to the environment. Congratulations Silvia!



TURNPIKES AND SHEEP’S WOOL TRAILS

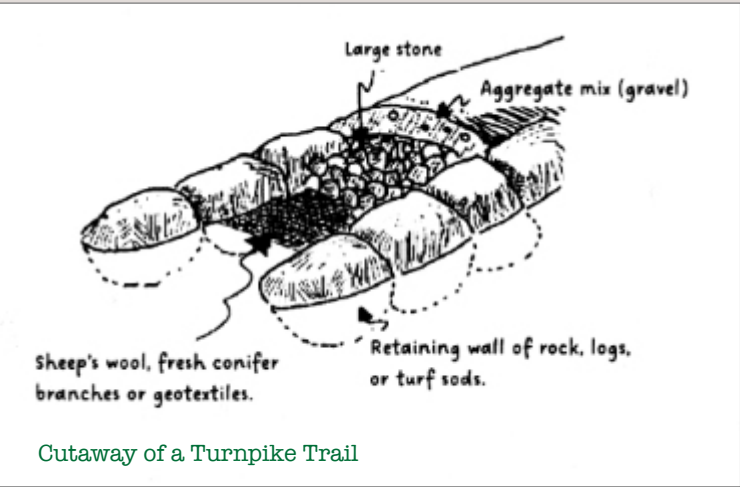
by Bill Murphy

On sites with a high-water table and soft terrain an alternative to bog bridges is to construct a turnpike or sheep’s wool trail. A turnpike allows the walking surface to “float” above the soft ground creating a durable trail minimising erosion because of damage to the peat layer and the tendency to spread the width of the trail.

Constructing a turnpike is simple. It is best to leave the surface of the route intact as the vegetation (and roots) of the bog surface helps to decrease the ground pressure (See Side Bar) and performs the same function as the sheep’s wool or branches.

First construct a retaining “wall” both sides of the proposed route. The retaining “walls” can be either rock, the most sustainable; logs in a forest environment or turf sods (harvested away from the trail) across a bog. Between the retaining walls place a layer to allow the trail to float on the bog. This layer can be sheep’s wool (about 250mm deep) - a method pioneered by our Northwest branch- a geotextile or a layer of brashing (for example fresh conifer tree branches). This layer increases the footprint, decreasing the ground pressure (See sidebar) allowing the trail to float. Next add the structural layer of rubble or crushed stone to a depth of approximately 200mm. Finish with a layer of gravel or crushed stone and compact well. There should be a slight crown on the surface to ensure water runs off both sides.

Ideally use a local stone – for example in granite areas use granite fill and finish layers.

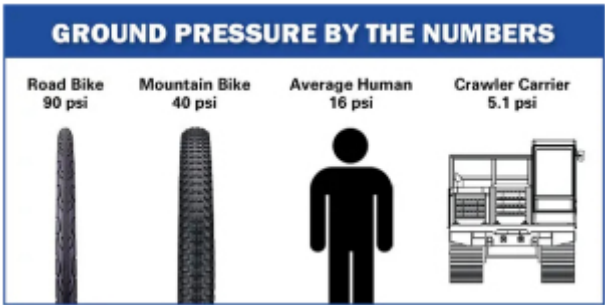


GROUND PRESSURE

Increasing the size of the contact area on the ground (the *footprint*) in relation to the weight **decreases the unit ground pressure.**

Decreasing the ground pressure increases the flotation, allowing easier passage of people and terrain over soft terrain.

This is exemplified by use of equipment such as snowshoes or tracks on heavy machinery.



A turnpike trail using sheep’s wool as the underlay. Note the mix of turf sods and rock used as the retaining walls.

Maintaining Excellence Through Training

Excellence is the basis of all Mountain Meitheal work, and we always strive to maintain a professional quality to our projects through training and mentoring. While training is often the more formal imparting of technical skills through courses, mentoring is also key in ensuring members have the opportunity to upskill. Mentoring is constantly provided by more experienced MMI volunteers to branches and individuals. A special thank you to our volunteers who provide this valuable mentoring.

This year MMI held several training events run by the MM Southeast (which is covered in our branch round up) and Dublin Wicklow who provided a two-day training course to 17 of the newly recruited Rural Recreation Officers at the request of the Dept of Community and Rural Development, Peter Wilkes reports...

MMDW’s Bill Murphy, Emer Cunningham, Robert Grandon and Peter Wilkes hosted this two-day course in The Brockagh Resource Centre, in Laragh, Co. Wicklow, which, was attended by enthusiastic RRO’s who had travelled extensively from far & wide.

The first day commenced with an introduction to Sustainable Trail Building & Management. A pdf version of The Mountain Meitheal Handbook

of Trail Design and Construction was provided to the RRO’s and was the “bible” for the course. From theory indoors, after lunch all proceeded to The Wicklow Gap / St. Kevins Way car park to see the turnpike/causeway trail using sheep’s wool constructed by MMDW volunteers in collaboration with Wicklow Mountains National Park. A further field visit, to see key trail features - water bars, cross drains, side drains, bench cuts, bog bridges, and more, was made to Brockagh, near Laragh where MMDW volunteers had constructed a link trail to The Wicklow Way / Scarr Mountain some years ago.

Day two started with further presentations by Bill & Emer in The Brockagh Centre and a field trip to Djouce Woods where the RRO’s walked a bootleg trail with the MMDW team. The RRO’s then broke into teams of four, with each team allocated a section of the “trail” and the opportunity to apply their own knowledge with the coursework to draft their own trail specification. A final revision session back in Centre gave the RROs the opportunity to review and discuss their proposed trail specifications. This was followed by a short multiple-choice exam. The day closed with a presentation to each of the RROs with a well-deserved Certificate in Trail Construction & Maintenance.



Participants and trainers on the Rural Recreation Officers’ Training course at Laragh

The Life Of A Pathworker

Mattock: When did you start trail work?

Frank: I have been volunteering as a trail worker since 2012 with Mountain Meitheal's Southeast and Northwest branches and continue to do so. In 2020 I got the opportunity to do this type of work full time, firstly on Croagh Patrick and then on the Great Sugarloaf. It was through the Croagh Patrick Project that I also got to work on Slieve Donard and the north Tor of Wee Binnian in the Mourne. I also worked on Connick Hill part of the West Highland Way in Scotland.

Mattock: Have you learnt a lot?

Frank: These were great sharing experiences and skill builders. For the last 5 years I have been shadowing Matt McConway who has over 30 years' experience working in Scotland, England, and Ireland.

Mattock: How do you approach a project?

Frank: The first thing we do when we are offered a project is to meet and walk with the clients and interested parties, we get a good look at the layout of the land, where we can source materials from, do we need to bring in materials? Can we dig borrow pits for material, type of landscaping needed, how many cross drains, metres of stone pitching all these are discussed, sometimes a plan is already drawn up and we work to these, with maybe minor adjustments.

Mattock: How do you prepare for your days in the mountains?

Frank: Preparation starts with packing the rucksack with all the gear needed to keep ourselves comfortable for a day's work, even in summer it can be quite cold and windy high up, so all the rain gear comes along with suncream and midge nets. Plenty of food and drinks as we are isolated most of the time too far from creature comforts. When we reach the parking area we unload tools for the job, which consists of several lump hammers, shovels, long pinch bars, buckets, winch and straps. This is probably one of the hardest jobs as in summer the work is carried out high up while we have good weather, retreating to lower sections as winter approaches.

Mattock: Tell us about your work on site

Frank: After tools are sorted, we source any stone that is available and useable on site. An hour or two maybe taken to carry, roll, or slide big stones to site and then we begin to dig out a tray to work in, most of the stone will be buried with only a fraction showing above ground like icebergs. Depending on the width of the path we would be pitching 1 to 2 metres per day each. After tightening up everything all gaps are packed with smaller stone and hammered tightly, covered with surfacing and landscaped at the sides. Revetment walls are built at either side to add weight and stop the path from spreading and loosening. This is typical workday with the addition of digging side ditches and constructing cross drains. Keeping water off the path is our goal and should be the goal of any good pathworker, constantly reviewing and tweaking as the work continues.

Mattock: How long is the workday?

Frank: The workday from Mar to Nov is usually a 10hr day from 7am to 5 pm, we do 40hrs in 4 days and this gives us Friday off. Three days off at weekends are needed to recover from all the heavy lifting and pulling, plus it's nice to know if it's very wet and cold we only have 4 days to suffer and not 5. The winter months of Dec to Feb we do 5 days of 8hrs because of daylight hr.

Mattock: Do you enjoy the work?

Frank: The feedback on both Croagh Patrick and the Great Sugarloaf has been very positive and it's nice to hear and also nice to know we are protecting the mountains for a more sustainable future. We do like to engage with people who are wondering what we are doing and who do we work for. Common questions asked are do we walk to work every day? Yes, we do, no helicopter lifts or quads, we walk. Do we work for the council? No, we are contractors and we work for whoever pays us. Do we take the winter off? No if we have work, we will work through the winter.

Mattock: What is the worst thing?

Frank: It's a toss-up as to what are the worst conditions; to work in cold wet, freezing conditions or hot, calm midge infested days, it is tough to call.

Mattock: What keeps you motivated?

Frank: I have to mention having some music that keeps us motivated on the hill and provides interesting discussions on musical tastes in between work tasks.



Frank (in yellow)
with his fellow
trail workers on
Croagh Patrick



The view from Brushers Gap Hut

Hut Talk

Brusher's Gap

All of our five huts have log books and our visitors (many from around the world) leave very interesting stories, comments and sketches relating to their adventures and stays ... here's a few...

“

Went hiking in Glendalough and decided to split onto the Wicklow Way specifically to camp in Brushers Gap because it's class. Day 2 and the weather sucks but it's been a good trip.

“

Majja K, Lukas (I was here too!!) (I changed pens but it's still me) Have a nice day traveller.

“

Bonjour, Merci très belle endroit. Un moment ou nous avons pu nous arreter manger à l'abri. Prisca et Lucile (Normandie & Rouen, France). Durant notre premier voyage en Irlande.

“

It's a beautiful place with a very nice view. We had a 32Km walk yesterday so we were really glad we arrive here: We had a good night rest, ready for the 85Km left on the Wicklow Way. Bencit & Jerthe (Belgium people)

“

Jack here again. Stayed last night with my girlfriend Amy for her first camping trip. Just finished breakfast, rasher and egg sambos and a nice coffee. Weather has been great. Since my last entry, I have a new (working) sleeping bag. Amy here (Jack's gf). This was my first camping trip ever. Some highlights; got stung by a nettle while taking my first wilderness piss. Learned to set up a tent. Climbed and sat on a glacier rock. Had my first campfire vibe session. Froze my feet while sleeping. Jack scaring the sh#t out of me when it was pitch black (beware the white lady) and the best till last Jack said he has planned when he'll propose to me. Too excited about it (spoiler when he asks, I going to say yes. Best first camping trip ever. Jack & Amy

“

Thanks for the break in this hut – Lovely view. Louisa & Annick, Belgium (Artist of sketch to left).

“

My bf and I came up here for my first camping experience in Ireland. We had such a lovely evening, and we also met 2 nice hikers who decided to stay here for the night as well. I am Italian, so of course we cooked pasta and had tiramisù as desert. Looking forward to doing this again. Simonetta (Italy) Luke (Dublin)

“

4th day of walking the Wicklow Way. It's amazing how lovely it is here. Now going to Glendalough and climbing the Mullacor saddle next where we're probably going to sleep at the Mullacor hut. Shout out to the volunteers who placed these huts! Greete, Emma & Tim (Belgium, Gent, Maldegem).

Greetings from Germany, Stayed here for lunch. Nice hut!

“

Finishing my 3 months trip to Ireland with the Wicklow Way. What a great way to end a journey. I'm proud of myself for taking the chance & I'm grateful to everyone who has helped along the way. Ireland is such a magical place and the people here have touched my heart with their kindness and words of wisdom. I can't wait to come back to explore more of what this beautiful country has to offer. Stay small Ireland. Renee R (from Tennessee – USA)

“

The view was amazing. Me my dad and my brother all loved it. The Powerscourt Waterfall was beautiful. The lakes and rivers had nice fresh water. The first day we did 28Km and slept by the Powerscourt Waterfall. The next night we camped here after a 20Km walk. Tomorrow we will go to Glendalough and have a celebration after two tough days. Then we will go home to Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork.

“

Sarah (11), Nathan (8), Sabastion (42). Hope you have a nice time here the same as we did.

“

A little stop before kayaking down the Avonmore. Perfect for our break before we meet the Kayak and continue our little adventure back home to Arklow. Eireann & Pádraig

“

Our third day heading to Glendalough. This hut is amazing! Wishing everyone safe travel. It's a beautiful day to be alive! William & Monica. PS William said his feet hurt.

“

My first long run in Mountain Meitheal Brushergap Hut. Just amazing place. Thank you God. Geane Bela.

“

A lovely lday up in the hills. Did Kanturk & Scar. Beautiful views. Great hut, thanks so much lfor building it! Great company. Phil & Kat.

“

The trees are being cut down! I really hope they don't cut too close to this hut or take away all the nearby firewood. I have so many memories here. Cathal, not a happy camper.

“

Two day hike with one nights camp. Jumped off the bus in Roundwood with all intentions of camping here but I just felt I needed to keep walking. So walked to Lough Dan, then up to here for a break and a well needed coffee and then into Glendalough for the bus back to the city. Spent an amazing night under the stars. Crafty Beer Phil.

This is a “Hiding Hole” if ever I saw one.



My Favourite Hike

by Máirín Dolan MMNW

One of my favourite hikes in Sligo/Leitrim is exploring the Dartry Mountain range, approximately 18km north of Sligo town. The highest peak of the Dartry Mountains is Truskmore at 647 metres, while other notable peaks include Tievebaun at 611 metres, Benwiskin at 514 metres and of course Benbulbin at 526 metres. Benbulbin is Sligo's most iconic mountain, standing solemn, majestic and beautiful. Benbulbin was formed during the Ice Age when large parts of the earth were buried under glaciers. Glacial action sculpted Benbulbin's distinct formation and it is Ireland's only table-top mountain. The elements erode the limestone over time, but Benbulbin is forever immortalised in the poetry of W.B. Yeats as well as in other notable works of art and literature.

One of the most accessible and relatively straightforward ways to climb Benbulbin is to start at Lukes Bridge, Irish Grid ref. G698 473. Walk along the track until gently ascending up the gully until you reach the plateau and then turn Northwest towards the summit. The trail takes approximately 3.5 to 4 hours round trip to complete. It is a moderate climb, with some steeper sections that I would recommend using hiking poles particularly on the descent.

On the way to Benbulbin's trig point at 526m, don't miss the cave at Cartronwillamoge that is situated at an elevation of 500 metres (sometimes referred to as 'The 500 Cave'), Grid ref. G694 464. This cave is quite spacious and provides ideal shelter and a resting place for a bite to eat or to take refuge from the wind and rain during inclement weather. Upon reaching the summit, on a clear day, one can enjoy breath taking views of Donegal Bay, Slieve League and the Blue Stack Mountains in Donegal. The Dartry Mountains, including Benbulbin are home to some rare varieties of flora such as Tea Leaved Willow, (*Salix phylicifolia*). This is a species of willow native to Northern Europe, Scandinavia, Finland, Russia, Western Siberia and Iceland. It can be seen on Benbulbin's north face gully overlooking the Gortarowey Walk. Fringed Sandwort, (*Arenaria ciliata*) can also be found on Benbulbin. This perennial alpine plant with its characteristic small, white, star shaped flowers predates the Ice Age.

For those visiting north Sligo, who want to experience some of the Benbulbin countryside, but would prefer not to take on the altitude why not explore the Benbulbin Walk, also known as the Gortarowey Walk, Grid Ref. G675 460. The 5.5km walk is relatively flat and takes on average 1.5 hours to complete. The walk would be considered easy for anyone with a moderate level of fitness and provides some stunning views of Benbulbin from below.



A Wildflower Walk on the Ireland Way

Anne Brindley MMW

Review by Grace Tolán, MMDW

This book, published in 2024, tells of Anne's journey along The Beara Breifne - Ireland Way, which starts on the Beara Peninsula in West Cork and continues for approx. 950k to the Causeway Coast in Co. Antrim. It commemorates the march taken by Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and his supporters in 1602.

A map at the start of the book shows the route passing through twelve counties south and west of the River Shannon. Anne's journey in sunshine and showers, wind and driving rain starts in West Cork in September 2019 but was interrupted by Covid. She then resumed her walk in September 2020 picking up where she left off in Kealkill near Gougane Barra. Each Stage of the walk starts with a brief history of the march over 400 years ago and then the route taken by Anne and her companion. The wildflowers they come across each day are illustrated in pencil on the page opposite. Bluebells, Daffodils, Foxglove, Wild Roses, Ash, Oak, Hawthorn, Brambles and Thistles, Heathers and Ferns are all beautifully drawn.

She describes the wonderful scenery and places of interest walking through bogs and woodlands and hedgerows alive with birdsong and wildflowers. They come across bulls and electric fences and at times have to seek alternate routes. There are little snippets of history on the old Churches, Mass Rocks and Castle ruins they pass. At Stage 3 they climb to Castle Philip with its spectacular 6 county panorama. Stage 9 brings them to the Cavan Way and the UNESCO Cuilcagh Lakelands Global Geopark. They cross onto the Ulster Way in Co. Fermanagh which is linked to the International Appalachian Trail. The final stage

takes us along the Causeway Coast Way and another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Finally, to the Carrduff Tourist Office where Anne collected her well-earned Certificate for completing the Ireland Way over 45 days between September 2019 and July 2023. This slim book of 31 pages is a memoir and not a guidebook. It is easy to read and can slide into the back of a rucksack, though an A5 pocket size would be handy. Also, the addition of colour in the drawings would be a bonus. Anyone interested in hiking and wildflowers will relish this book.

Anne lives in Galway and is a member of Mountain Meitheal West, Galway Walking Club and the Irish Society of Botanical Artists.

The booklet is available from: wildflowerwalkirelandway@gmail.com for €12 plus postage. It is also available in Charlie Byrne's Galway, Brigit's Garden Roscahill, The Bookshop Oughterard, Liber in Sligo and Books Upstairs on D'Olier Street.



End of the Trail

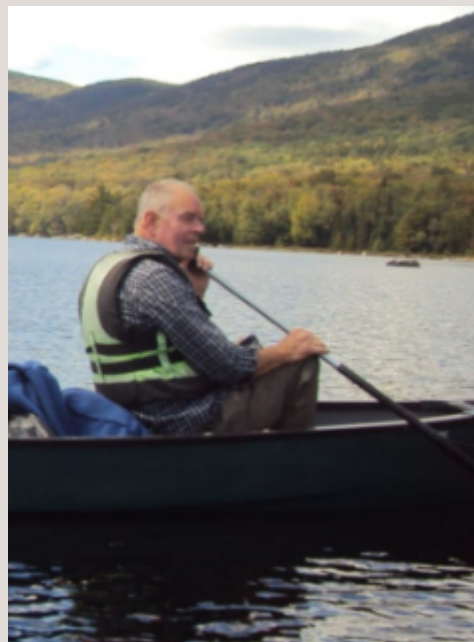
Gay Curren

2024 saw the sudden passing of our good friend Gay Curren. Gay was one of the longest serving Mountain Meitheal (Dublin/Wicklow) volunteers and until recently, despite being well into his eighties, he was still a regular on our workdays.

Gay Curran was an honorary member recognised for his outstanding contributions to mountain conservation. Gay also volunteered with several other organisations with environmental concerns and even persuaded his brother Fergus to join Mountain Meitheal.

Gay will always be remembered for his quiet demeanour, dry humour, love of the countryside and exceptional work ethic.

He was one of the best and he will be sadly missed.



Get Out Get Dirty & Give Back

Mountain Meitheal has 5 branches: in the Dublin/Wicklow region, in the Southeast, in the West, in the Northwest, and Mountain Meitheal Melleray.

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.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

In addition to our dedicated volunteers Mountain Meitheal Ireland (MMI) is very thankful for the support of the general public and the hill walking community who assist MMI with donations through individuals and through their clubs. Mountain Meitheal has very valuable relationships with the large land managers such as Coillte, NPWS, DMP, with the Rural Recreation Officers and private landowners and appreciates the mutual help and support MM gets and give those organisations to help protect our environment.

