



The Mattock

Newsletter of Mountain Meitheal Ireland

Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow : Mountain Meitheal South East : Mountain Meitheal West

2020

www.pathsavers.org

www.mountainmeitheal.ie

Wishing all our volunteers and supporters a healthy and outdoor new year

Roll on 2020!

Throughout 2019 Mountain Meitheal (MM) had three branches actively working on developing, maintaining and repairing sustainable tracks and trails in counties Dublin, Clare, Galway, Limerick, Tipperary and Wicklow. Direct engagement with grass root individuals for the setting up of a fourth MM branch in the Sligo/Leitrim/Roscommon area brought real positive results and we are excited to be in a position to announce that Mountain Meitheal North West (MMNW) (mountainmeithealnorthwest@gmail.com) will be up and running, fingers crossed, by early 2020. There is a lot of foundational groundwork (no pun intended) yet to be completed but the enthusiasm of those involved is heart-warming and re-affirming. MM volunteers love and want to get out and get stuck in to the hands-on trail work that MM is known for, but for this to happen there is a lot of background organising that needs to be done that is hidden, easy to overlook, but is essential to keeping MM alive and operational. Membership committees are the backbone of MM and its unsung heroes.

The outdoor work undertaken by MM is done at the invitation of and in partnership with public and private land owners, and all project work undertaken is carried out to a specification that is agreed before a crowbar, a shovel, a spade or a wheelbarrow hits the soil at a site area. Since its inception Mountain Meitheal has developed strong relationships with public bodies such as Coillte, Dublin Mountain Partnerships (DMP), National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS), the Office of Public Works (OPW) as well as private farmers and individuals, and it cherishes and nourishes these relationships in the interest of achieving its central aim *'to protect and conserve the mountain and forest environment by repairing, maintaining and building mountain and forest sustainable tracks and related facilities while maintaining the challenge of recreational users and, preserving a sense of solitude and a wilderness experience.'*

Why not come and **join us** in 2020!

During 2019 MM contributed a total of **2,189** volunteer hours to constructing, repairing and maintaining upland tracks and trails.

Join us in 2020

Full calendar of dates
available at

www.mountainmeitheal.ie

Starting back dates:

Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow (MMDW) – Sunday 23 February back at Tibbradden, Dublin foothills. Contact: mountainmeithealdublinwicklow@gmail.com

Mountain Meitheal South East (MMSE) – Saturday 22 February to survey existing tracks, identify any winter damage and prioritise actions. Contact: mountainmeithealsoutheast@gmail.com

Mountain Meitheal West (MMW) – Date to be confirmed. Resume project on Western Way at Máméan. Contact: mountainmeithealwest@gmail.com

Current on-going projects

GALWAY: Western Way at Máméan – Water management is a fundamental part of the work undertaken, in particular creating trenches and constructing water bars to assist water to flow off track. It also involved putting in steps where necessary, and moving rocks and small stones to create pathways that encourages walkers to keep on the designated path in order to contain erosion.

WICKLOW: Tibbradden – Work commenced in September and will continue throughout 2020. MM received an official request to repair a section of this trail that had become a popular unofficial ‘bootleg’ trail on the eastern edge of this recreation forest area. In particular MM were asked to apply a variety of trail management methods so that the trail, when completed, could serve as an educational/interpretative resource for people using it and anyone wishing to gain knowledge of path repair techniques. Trail/Interpretative signage will be erected to facilitate this.

LIMERICK/TIPPERARY: Galty Castle/King’s Yard – Work continued on path repairs to the 860m track at Galty Castle, on the southside of the Galtee mountains. Work involved clearing drains, culverts, laying hardcore and placing large stepping-stones in order to make the track walkable for local and keen walkers alike.

The bad weather and heavy volume of rainfall in October created some landslides and a fallen tree across the track (since cleared). This project will re-commence early in 2020.



Working hard to create a sustainable pathway at Máméan



MMSE working on a very damaged track



Tibbradden bogbridge

Completed Projects

WICKLOW: Drumgoff recreational area – An environment impact report along with a hazard identification risk assessment report was carried out in advance. Repairs involved: 40 Ton 'Lusk' 804 gravel and locally sourced stone from permitted area adjacent to the path. The core work undertaken was work to the existing gravel path, rip rap, stone path, refurbishing long-neglected water bars and cross drains.

LIMERICK/TIPPERARY:

Glengarra Track Southside of the Galtee Mountains – A revisit to this site required 2 work days to address water damage to the track as a result of excess water flowing from above onto the track.

DUBLIN: Ticknock – A re-visit to this site involved a continuation of repair of existing approx. 400m MM trail from 3 Rock Mountain toward Fairy Castle. Repairs involved: 40 Ton 'Lusk' 804 gravel and locally sourced stone from permitted area adjacent to the path. The core work undertaken was work to the existing gravel path, rip rap, refurbishing existing stone path.

In addition:

LIMERICK/TIPPERARY:

Maintenance Work – A keen eye monitored work previously carried out and time was allocated before year end to tackle required maintenance.

CLARE: Carron Loop Trail,

Burren – Inspection was carried out with the Co. Clare Rural Recreational Officer (RRO). Attention was given to way-marking the trail loop at approx. 300m intervals. Also repaired and cleared overgrowth to ensure trail markings are clear to follow.

WICKLOW: Mucklagh – In

partnership with Glenwalk walking Club organised a painting of the MM hut at Mucklagh.



Repairing the existing gravel path at Drumgoff with water bars

Interbranch Volunteering Exchange

GALWAY: Máméan – Two separate visits, one in June and one in September, were organised and undertaken by MM volunteers from established branches in Dublin/Wicklow and the South East to support the newly formed MM West Branch (MMW) in their mammoth undertaking of repairs to the Western Way in the Máméan area. Some volunteers camped in June in this beautiful but rugged setting. These exchanges provided important opportunities for volunteers to meet and network with each other.



Volunteers working together on Máméan



MMDW volunteers at Ticknock



MMSE volunteers hard at work

Other Highlights

TRAINING - A 2-Day Leaders Training course was designed and delivered in the Glendalough area of Co. Wicklow for new and potential Leaders. Training is essential in ensuring that MM volunteers and crew leaders can work in an enjoyable, safe, fulfilling and sustainable way. 20 volunteers from branches across the country participated involving a mixture of indoor and outdoor engagement. Day 2 was designed to incorporate a refresher course for existing leaders, which also provided an opportunity for volunteers from different branches to connect up.

MMW hits the BIG SCREEN

◆ Seán O'Donovan, Chairperson of MMW and his team of volunteers got great coverage for their work at Máméan, Galway when they were joined on a work day by representatives from TG4. Video can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/NuachtTG4/videos/381548715933182/>

◆ Robert Grandon, Chairperson of MMDW attended the formal opening of the rerouting of the Wicklow Way (WW) at Tinahely, Co. Wicklow. This track was completed by MM in the summer of 2018 and formally launched to great fanfare in 2019. RTÉ Nationwide features the new trail section that is due to be broadcast at a future date. Rumour has it that the new bogbridge has been given the title by some users as the 'The Devil's Staircase'.

<https://www.independent.ie/regional/wicklowpeople/news/new-section-of-the-wicklow-way-unveiled-37714703.html>

MM Network & Links

MM has a representative on the Wicklow Way Partnership (WWP). The Partnership met four times in 2019. Of note is the development of a WW trail-monitoring app to address the ongoing management and resource needs of this major national waymark route. Old trailhead signs are due for replacement and a major reroute of the WW is planned for the section at Glendalough, using the Spinc White Route and Red Route sections.

MM is a member of the ERA (European Ramblers Association ERA-EWV-FERP) and has been selected twice in the past for ERA awards for its work. The ERA monitor and set the standards for long distance trails in Europe including the E8 path from Turkey to Dursey Island in Co. Cork. Recent updates can be viewed at <http://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/e-paths/>



In the pipeline

Plans are in place to develop skill building capacity of members through the medium of both hands-on and video training methods starting with a training course in February.

Limerick/Tipperary: Southside of the Galtees – Cooper's Wood. This project will commence some time in 2020. It will involve clearing a defined track for walkers either by the exiting King's Yard area or via the forest entrance coming in from open land.

Wicklow: Miners' Path Glendalough – Recce carried out with representatives from WMNP to assess essential repairs and a start date has yet to be agreed.

*We invite you
to take a leap in 2020
Full calendar of
dates available at
www.mountainmeitheal.ie*

On a recent visit to the Nephin Wilderness area MM member Éamon Hanrahan reports that the shelter at Lough Avoher constructed by Mountain Meitheal back in 2012 is in good condition.