

# THE MATTOCK

Welcome to the MATTOCK 2023/24



## *Welcome to the 2023/24 issue of The Mattock*

Emer Cunningham (Chair, Mountain Meitheal Ireland)

**2023 was a really productive one for MMI with a variety of projects across the country.**

**Mountain Meitheal depends on the work of its volunteers. What often goes unnoticed but needs to be acknowledged is the Trojan work of the secretaries of each of the branches who organise committee meetings, manage the agendas and minutes and monitor progress against what is agreed at the meetings and to all our committee members at both branch and MMI level.**

**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.**

### **Collaboration and Partnership**

MMI cannot do its work without collaborating with key stakeholders whether with Coillte, National Parks, County Councils or private landowners. Last summer, in response to requests by MMI branches for clearer modes of collaboration with state landowners/land managers, we presented the work of MMI to the Coillte Recreation Team in Lough Key, Co Roscommon.

This proved to be a fruitful meeting where it was agreed that a standard mode of communication between MMI branches and Coillte Area Managers would be set up. This will take the form of a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be written up between Coillte and MMI, the use of MM Project Proposal Forms (available on the website) for the submission of potential projects to Coillte and that the Coillte IT System will be updated to include MMI for Issue of Licences for agreed project work.

Another key partner in a number of projects is the Rural Recreation Officers (RROs). There has been a recent recruitment of RROs across the country and many of our branches report liaison with their new recruits. We have been in discussion with the Department of Community and Rural Affairs about the potential for MMI to provide training and resource material to these newly recruited RROs and we hope to finalise this to everyone's benefit in 2024.

### Maintaining Excellence in the work of MMI

Excellence is the basis of MM project work and we always strive to maintain a professional quality to our projects through training and mentoring. This year MMI held a training day led by Shay Walsh in the beautiful setting of Mount Melleray Abbey with wonderful hospitality from the Melleray MM team. Another training day, to be led by MMSE, is scheduled to take place in the spring of 2024.

Training can take the form of imparting technical skills, but mentoring is also key in ensuring there is quality assurance across the county where members have the opportunity to upskill. Mentoring is provided to branches by our more experienced volunteers, I would like to thank our volunteers who provide this valuable mentoring.

### Recognition for work done

Mountain Meitheal branches celebrate the contribution of their volunteers through the MM award system. The awards were in the form of buffs, hats, gilets and fleeces. This year the MMI Committee has decided, in keeping with MMI ethos of sustainability, to depart from this practice and move to the presenting of hour-specific award badges. After a design process and finding a supplier, these are now being manufactured and will be available to branches early in 2024.

### Donations

The collection box on workdays has been a steady source of MM funds for many years until the advance of the cashless society. The MMI committee has been exploring alternate cashless payment systems and in 2024 we will roll out the use of Strike Pay. Strike Pay is a cashless system designed to accept donations from the public that they can access via their smartphone using a QR Code. Thanks to Sue for all her work researching alternative pay systems.

## 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. Mountain Meitheal has very valuable relationships with the large land managers such as Coillte, NPWS and DMP and the Rural Recreation Officers and appreciates the mutual help and support we get and give those organisations during the course of our work.

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.

## Croagh Patrick and Mountaineering Irelands two day learning event

Mountaineering Ireland organised a 2-day Sharing & Learning event in Westport in May 2023 where we learned about the work of the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group to facilitate the much-needed repair and maintenance work on Croagh Patrick. A MM presentation, featuring MMI volunteers, looped during the coffee breaks. Participants also had the opportunity to climb Croagh Patrick on a beautiful day and meet with the 5 members of the construction team, one of whom is our very own Frank McMahon, who are constructing stone paths from materials on site, to improve safety, stop erosion and encourage vegetation regrowth.



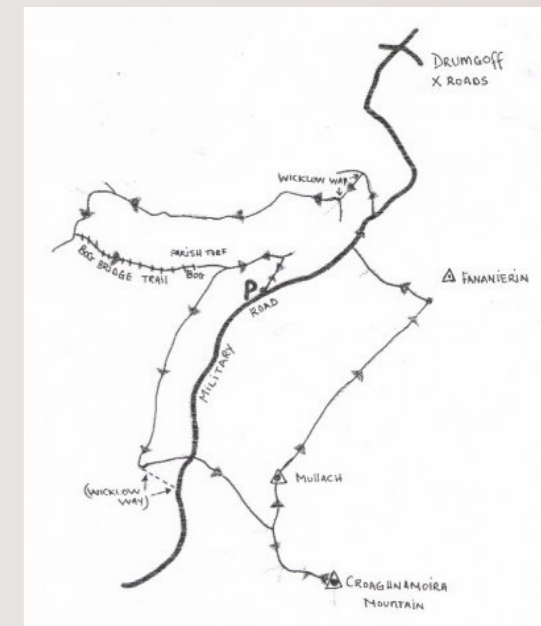
### My Favourite Hike

Grace Tolan, MMDW Volunteer

One of my favourite places to hike in Wicklow is in Glenmalure, a 20km long glaciated valley said to be the longest valley in Ireland. A very pleasant hike to Croaghanmoira and Fananeerin starts at the Drumgoff Recreation Area car park (T 094 889) just off the Military Road on the right, 3km southwest of the Glenmalure Lodge. The hike follows the Wicklow Way west, then south to Drumgoff Gap (T087 076), then crosses the Military Road into Ballinacor Estate. The ascent to Croaghanmoira with its distinctive pyramid shape starts on a nice grassy track.

Follow the grassy track south eastwards towards Croaghanmoira, keeping forest edge to your right till near the summit (664m). There is a Trig Point at the top and great views all around and as far south as the Blackstairs. Descend the same way as far as the forest corner and take the right track northwards to Mullach (580m) and continue along the Fananerrin Ridge for 2km to the saddle. It's rare to meet other hikers on this fine ridge walk.

At the saddle take the northwest track on left back down to the Military Road at T 103 893 and turn right. After a 400m road walk take the first left back into the forest at T 104 895. After another 400m on forest track take the first left onto the Wicklow Way, then the first right leaving the Wicklow Way. Follow this track westwards for 2.5km ignoring 2 tracks on the right. The track then turns south and shortly you will see a bogbridge on the left. Follow this bogbridge along the Parish Turf Bog, a beautiful area full of trees and pillows of sphagnum moss in colours of pink, red, copper and lime green. Coming out of the Parish Turf Bog there is a mapboard on the left. Take the left track eastwards here onto the Wicklow Way again. Pass the quartzite rock on the left and then turn right at the corner back to the car park. This is also a very pleasant hike in reverse.



Map: EastWest Map Lugnaquilla and Glendalough (1:25,000)

## Leading the year ahead 2024

Branches of MMI elect their committees each year at their AGM. Heading up branch committees for the year ahead are from left: Sean Donovan **MMW**, Peter Farrell, **MMNW**, and bottom row Fergus Flynn, **MMSE** and Mike O'Rourke, **Melleray MM**. Emer Cunningham, Chair of MMI continues as chair of **MMDW**.



# WATER MANAGEMENT

## A SIMPLE GUIDE

by Trail Blazer

The most basic rule for trail maintainers is “keep water off the trail and users on the trail”. Running water on any slope that is free of vegetation will cause erosion. The steeper the slope, the faster the water flows and the greater the volume of small particles and stone it will carry, resulting in erosion if the water flow is unchecked. Therefore, drainage and keeping paths free of running water is a key to path maintenance.

### HOW DO WE KEEP WATER OFF TRAILS

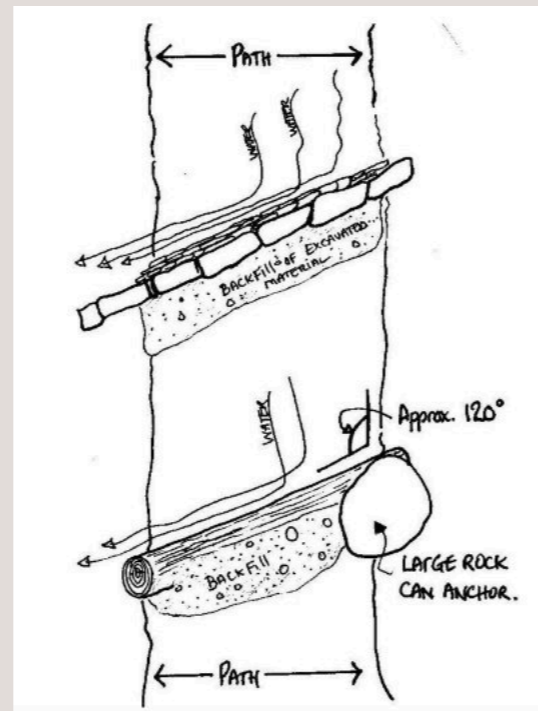
There are two techniques we use all the time to remove water from trails. Waterbars constructed from rock or log and grade reversals, also called dips or knicks.

### WATERBARS

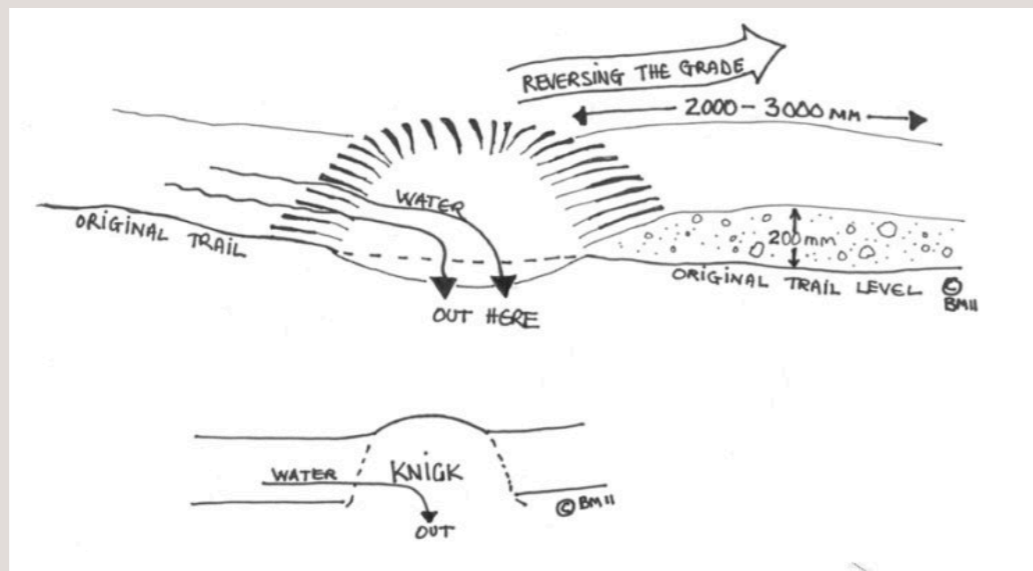
Waterbars can be constructed from either rock or timber and are very effective in slowing down and removing water from a trail. Waterbars should be set at an angle of approximately 120° to the main direction of the trail (see Figure 1). An angle greater than 120° will result in the water running off too quickly which can cause rutting at the back of the bar. If less than 120° the water will not run off effectively and could continue to flow down the path causing erosion.

### GRADE REVERSALS

On cycle or multi-use trails it is best to use grade reversals instead of waterbars. They can also be used where material is limited and when constructed properly are just as effective as waterbars. Grade reversals are easy and cheap to construct. A grade reversal is simply a shallow trench with a low berm on the downhill side of the trench. The berm reverses the general gradient of the trail and this causes the water to be shed off the treadway. The berm is constructed by adding approximately 2000mm of aggregate to the trail surface along the trail below the depression.



1. Plan view of waterbars showing their alignment on the trail. Note the 120° angle.



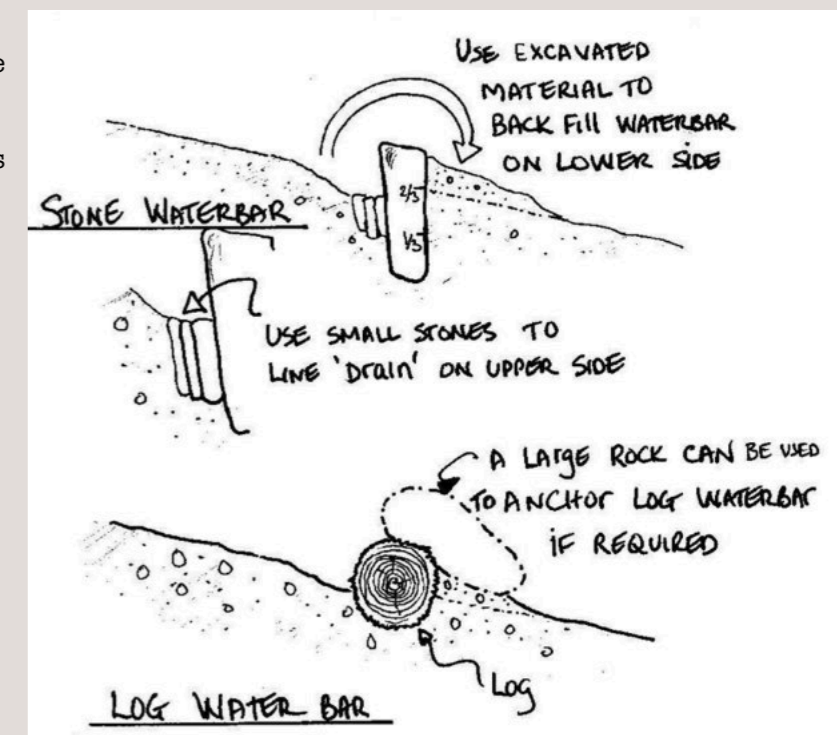
2. Grade reversals and KNICKS. Note the grade is reversed on the downhill side of the trail, directing water off the trail.

### KNICKS

Knicks are now thought to be the best and most effective way of removing water off a trail. Knicks are simple semicircular depressions on the trail above the berm. Water flows into the knick and sheds off the trail through the open side of the knick (see Figure 2). The opening is constructed on the lower side of the trail. Grade reversals and knicks are simple to clean and repair however their use is limited on trails with gradients above 1-in-5.

### CONSTRUCTING STONE WATERBARS

First dig a trench and place rocks in the trench to about 2/3 of their depth. Rocks should typically be set about 300mm deep so approximately 150mm (6 inches) only should protrude above the trail surface before back fill. Line the drain bottom with small stones to protect the bottom of the waterbar from rutting. This also helps to wedge the waterbar in place. Use the excavated material to backfill on the lower side of the waterbar. To ensure the full capture of water on the trail make sure that the bar extends slightly beyond the edges of both sides of the trail. See Figure 3.



3. Cross section drawing of stone and log waterbars.

### CONSTRUCTING TIMBER WATERBARS

Timber waterbars are a very effective method of constructing water diversion and are faster and easier to install than stone. Typically the log should be approximately 250 - 350mm in diameter and of a durable timber such as larch or treated stainer posts. Dig a trench approximately 150mm in depth. Place the log in the trench and backfill on the downhill side with the excavated material. See Figure 3.

### HOW DO WE KNOW WHERE TO PLACE WATERBARS?

Walk the trail on a wet day. Inspecting a trail on a wet day is a great idea you get to see where water is coming from AND where water is causing a problem on the trail that's where you put your water management!

### HOW FAR APART SHOULD WATERBARS OR GRADE REVERSALS BE?

Install a waterbar for every 10 feet of rise along the trail. So for a 1-in-10 gradient install a waterbar every 100 feet. For a 1-in-5 gradient install a waterbar every 50 feet

# Finlands Trails & Huts

## Another perspective By Liam Ó Murchú

Finns enjoy the Nordic tradition of Everyman's Right and as a result spend a lot of time in the outdoors with family and friends hiking, skiing, camping, foraging for berries and mushrooms and cooking. Finland boasts over 41 national parks, 12 wilderness areas in the far north, 7 national hiking areas and many municipal hiking and outdoor recreation facilities. Finland is a landscape formed after the great glacier sheets retreated northwards leaving behind a landscape of glacial till, moraines and rock outcrops that is slowly rising, creating a mosaic of forest, lake, mires and fjells. Metsähallitus, the Finnish Parks and Forest Authority (see <https://www.nationalparks.fi>) manages these areas providing managed trails, lean-tos and huts and fire sites. Because the landscape is glacial in origin much of it consists of low glacial till hillocks and moraines with occasional rock outcrops that add cliffs and crags to this otherwise relatively flat landscape.

### Trails

Creating a trail network on these dry well drained glacial soils can simply be a matter of removing loose rock and boulders and clearing blown trees to keep the treadway open, (see Figure 1).

The topsoil on these hillocks is thin over the underlying glacial till with a very shallow moisture retaining organic layer. The tree roots and rocks, soil and boulders of the till provide a strong and mostly durable surface for hiking, although in places progress can be slow due to the unevenness of the treadway. The cool and drier climate in Finland, means that water (either water logging or running water) does not cause the same problems we experience in Ireland.

However, between these glacial hills are extensive bog areas of what the Finns call *mires*. Often, a hiking trail will cross a pine clad hillock where the trail would be similar to the trail in Figure 1 and then drop a metre or two and traverse a mire. Here the trail managers use duck boards (bog bridges, figure 2).

These duck boards can be very simple rough-cut lumber often only one board wide. These type of trails are used in more remote areas where traffic is light (Figure 2). Note the surface has no protruding staples or added non-slip surface.

On heavier use trails two or more planks are used. Again these duck board trails do not have any anti slip surface typically found in Ireland. The trail shown in Figure 3 has crossing points which allows all-terrain vehicles, used in bog conservation work, to cross without damaging the trail. These are in situ approximately every 500m. In some places upgraded trails (See Figure 4) are built on top of the existing trail and this provides additional buoyancy and support for the new trail and reduces the need to remove old materials off site.

### Huts and fire sites

Despite the cold weather conditions for almost half of the year Finns like to cook and eat out in the forest and as a result there is a preponderance of huts for both overnight and day use. These can range from simple day use structures such as that illustrated in Figure 5 or larger shelters such as those used by forest schools or scout groups, Figure 6. All these shelters have a fireplace, a woodpile of seasoned timber and an axe and a bush saw. Great care is taken to leave the place as they found it.

During winter hunting or backpacking trips finding shelter from the elements is essential for survival. All national parks and wilderness areas have overnight shelters. Some can be old log building such as the one illustrated in Figure 7, once an overnight shelter for fishermen now a one room refuge that accommodates about eight.

Other shelters such as the simple *Laavu* (see Figure 8) are based on traditional Sammi shelters and like the shelters built by Mountain Meitheal in Wicklow and Mayo provide a simple sleeping platform with a fire site located out front. These *Laavu* provide essential shelter for winter use.

The Finns have a very interesting traditional outdoor ethic for the use of shelters. If the shelter is full when others arrive, those that arrived first, and were in the shelter for some time and therefore hopefully warmed up, are expected to vacate the shelter and allow the new arrivals to enter and get warm and dry. This is a deep cultural tradition that reflects a long history of engagement with wild nature.



1. A trail constructed with minimum intervention on a well drained site.



2. A trail in a remote area where traffic is light.



3. A duckboard trail in a heavy use area. Note the crossing points for all terrain vehicles.



4. An upgraded trail with the existing trail left in situ and still providing support for the new trail.



5. A simple day use fire site for use by small groups.



6. A larger day use shelter / fire site for use by youth, school and scout groups.



8. A Laavu in northern Finland.



7. An overnight wilderness shelter. This two-hundred-year-old cabin was once used as a shelter by fishermen tending lines on lakes in northern Karelia.

# Hut Talk

LOUGH AVOHER, NEPHIN WILDERNESS, CO MAYO.

The views are just amazing. An experience never to be forgotten - the good and the bad. There were tears and giggles all the way. ... Much harder than the Wicklow Way... The sight of the hut made us all cry with joy! We spent the night here all cosy huddled together after eating awful pasta and soup (Laura isn't a very good chef ha! Ha!). To wake up to this view is priceless! Thanks to the volunteers who built it ... We will 100% be back. ... Best hike I've done! Absolutely spectacular!

**Laura C, Darragh, Dublin**

This landscape is astounding. I hope we are very lucky with weather and midges. It's hard to get up and leave this place but then something even more astounding is round the corner. (Peter R, Hampshire, England) - stopped for a cuppa.

Lovely night walk to here calm, and dry, good visibility and didn't need a torch for the first half of one hour. Got here and had dinner at 00.10h. The moon - a half moon rose over the trees to the left. Without my torch the only lights are the moon and stars! The only sound is the stream below. There is an owl calling now as I write this, a fox came around earlier to have a look, perhaps the smell of food attracted it.

Woke at 06.00h to a bright morning, had breakfast and spent some time researching the plants in the vicinity of the shelter. 07.30h rain for 30 minutes, departed for Scardaun Lough Grid Ref. F925 112 to camp there tonight.

**Mike M, Mountain Research Ireland.**

What an excellent idea to provide this booklet! ... This shelter is indeed great, although we will not sleep here (we have slept in the Bothy last night, after trying to chase away the midgets with a smoky fire). ... Now I am lying on the bench here under the roof of the shelter: very glad because it has just started raining after several reasonably sunny and warm hours... Hope that it will not be

raining till sunset (although it seems to chase the midgets).

The platform in the shelter is excellent, when we arrived, we used it as a "second row" bench (because the table was occupied by six other travellers). For sleeping it's of course better than the bare stone floor in the Bothy. On our hill walks on the continent we have never seen a shelter with such a feature! The idea about clamps is OK.

We think that the excellent simple concept of this shelter should be used more in camping sites; much better and easier to clean than real huts with beds and mattresses (always smelling badly).

**Ross & Johannes, Utrecht, Netherlands**

Lovely hut. My brother and I are walking the Bangor Trail with our father. He has done segments before but not the whole thing. We are staying in the Fishing Lodge in Bangor Erris and walking back 28km to it. The trail features prominently in the book, 'Wild Sports of the West' and we are reading extracts from same as we go along.

**Nicole C.**

What a place, nice and remote! An excellent site for our stroll gathering, our once yearly adventure with our auld fella and us, his two expat sons. Approaching 11 am we are still watching walls of rain drifting across the sky. Occasional glimpses of the ridge in front is tempting us to leave, but it may just have to wait for another year. Thanks for the warm dry hut, a great effort by Mountain Meitheal. A few hooks would be nice for drying gear and hanging a lamp. Thanks,

**Deco, Dave and Niall Dublin/ London/Osaka**

The following are some thoughts and memories recorded in our hut logs by visitors to our hut at Lough Avoher in the Nephin Wilderness in Co Mayo. They provide a brief glimpse into the beauty of the place and the experiences that people have had there. There is also a hut at Altnabrocky on the Western Way.

Arrived here at about 4.30 pm. Had hoped to spend a few days hiking (and even painting!). Alas weather deteriorated as I returned from a short evening hike to Letterkeen Crags (095 085) - an excellent short (4km return) walk that is to be recommended.

After dinner of pasta and tea I settled in for a stormy and wet night. Awoke about 6 am to sound of the cuckoo very close and started breakfast of pancakes at about 8 am.

Forecast talks of rain becoming more persistent - so I think I'll call it a day and head home. I'll be back soon.

**Bill**

What a wonderful trail! Just passing by on my way south. Perfect sunshine, no rain whatsoever. Enjoying the hike all by myself quite a lot. Bridge is no problem at all!

**Viel Spab! Jochen H, Hamburg, Germany.**

God's own place

**First Sunday Group (Wicklow)**

Blissfully happy walkers from Curlew Walking Club in Boyle + 1 Bog Snorkeler. Fabulous day, heavenly surroundings.

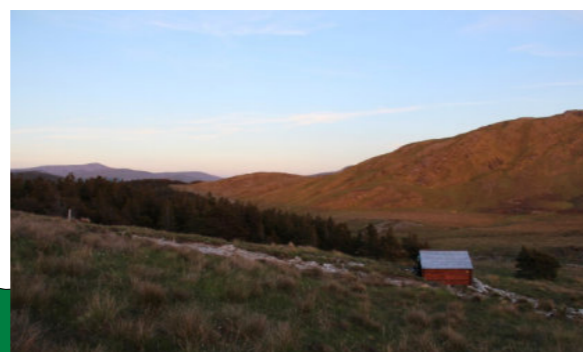
**Eileen C**

Now I know what they are talking about. Great project by Mountain Meitheal. Affords walkers the chance to enjoy "a little piece of heaven". Good work guys!

**Anonymous**

What a great way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day out in this wilderness - makes you spiritual. Did not meet a soul, except sheep. Wonderful hut. Thanks to Mountain Meitheal."

**Almut, Dublin**



The Lough Avoher hut on the Bangor trail in the Wild Nephin Wilderness Area.

## Irish Trail Users Preferences

Bill Murphy

As part of research into the experiential dimension of wilderness in Europe, 307 Irish outdoor recreationists completed a survey that sought to understand what type of experiences they might expect to have when visiting wild places. This research looked at challenge, solitude, remoteness, freedom, and the experience of wild landscapes. Here is a short summary of people's preferences for trails and solitude which might interest Mattock readers.

### What do Irish people think about trails?

Trails can be a controversial topic in wilderness literature. Some argue that trails (including bridges) have no part to play in wild landscapes, that visitors should rely entirely on their own resources and that trails are an unnecessary modern man-made intrusion. Others argue that trails are important to provide a better experience for visitors, to protect the environment and also provide an added "safety net".

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement that trails are "essential to give access to wilderness", scoring their responses from "strongly agree" (7) through "neutral" (4) to "strongly disagree" (1). The results demonstrate that in general the Irish outdoor public view the provision of trails into a wilderness as essential with a mean score of 5.3 (mostly agree) and a median score of 5. Only 25% of respondents indicated they disagreed or were neutral (4 or less) on the provision of trails, while 25% strongly agreed that trails are essential.

When asked what type of trails they preferred to hike, (see Figure 1) over 40% indicated they preferred to use a combination of "all trails" which included primitive and constructed trails, forest and mountain roads (gravel) and to travel cross country. 20% indicated a preference for primitive trails, although a similar cohort indicated constructed trails as their preference. Only 10% indicated they preferred to go off trail (cross

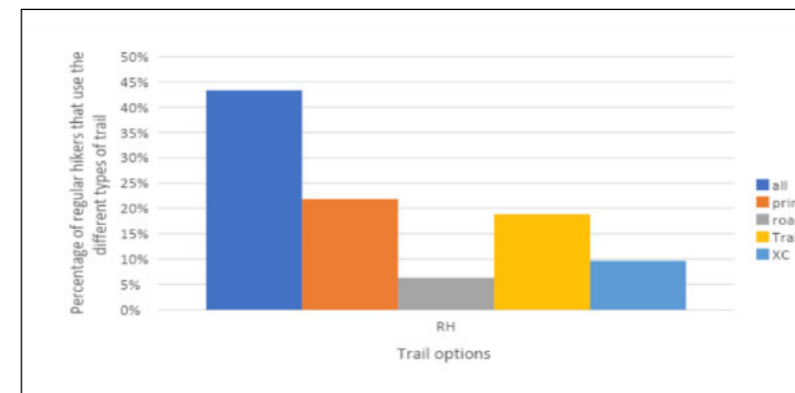


Fig 1. Preference for Trail types by regular hikers/hillwalkers

country) and approximately 6% indicated they preferred to use roads.

These results support the response (above) that Irish hillwalkers view trails as essential and acceptable in wild landscapes.

When asked to rate the acceptability of different trail types from ideal (7) to unacceptable (1) using a series of photographs, users indicated that easy aggregate trails and hardened rock trails were the most acceptable, scoring over 6 in both cases (see Figure 2). Hiking off trail also score highly at over 5.9. Surprisingly bog bridges scored the lowest at 5.5 (but still very acceptable). The lowest rating for bog bridges reflects responses elsewhere where the "fit in the landscape" was often given as the main reason for selecting a trail.

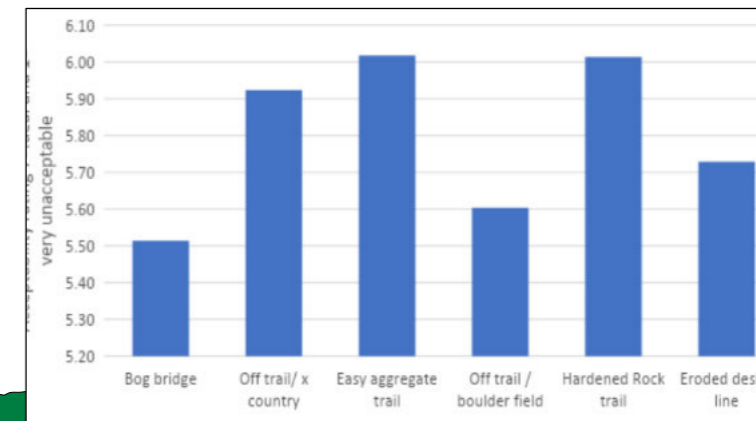


Fig 2. The acceptance level for a range of trails found in Irish wild lands

### Irish Outdoor users like company

Interviewees were asked to indicate the acceptable time between encounters with others on a trail. They were offered times ranging from "less than 15 minutes" to "never" (24 hours). The mean time for all users was 58 minutes (median 60) with only one respondent indicating never (once every 24 hours). In a similar survey carried out in Finland with a cohort of 50 users the mean recorded time between encounters was 422 minutes with a median score of 120 minutes reflecting the strong cultural differences that exist between Ireland and Finland in their outdoor culture.

## Seasonal Regional Round Up

**MM Dublin Wicklow** worked on three different projects over a total of 21 days during the 2023 season. The season commenced with the Zig Zags above the Miners Village in Glendalough Valley, Co. Wicklow continuing on repairs to a 700m section of a heavily used trail where there is considerable erosion from use and water damage. The main repairs concentrated on stone pitching using rock dropped at intervals by a helicopter on contract to the NPWS. Existing water management such as drains, rock culverts and water bars were repaired, and new water bars were constructed at points where water damage was evident. Bootleg trails were blocked with rip rap to discourage further use. These repairs will continue in 2024.

**The summer project was the restoration of the Brushers Gap Hut** on the Wicklow Way. This was a two-day event and volunteers camped overnight on site. The hut, originally erected in 2012, was selected for repair and restoration in memory of Anto Monaghan, a long-standing active member of MMDW who passed away in 2023. The hut is very popular and has had a lot of use by both overnight and day visitors over the last 11 years. The interior lining of the hut was originally marine ply that was now badly damaged in places. This was replaced with 9mm OSB boards over a breathable membrane which eliminated drafts (to some degree). The external wall timbers got a really good brush down with wire brushes and an application of 2 coats of wood preservative to give it protection for another few years. The existing decking at the front of the hut was replaced and extended, the fire pit was moved to a more appropriate site and fixed into the ground to discourage people from bringing it too close to the hut. Finally, the hut's name sign was sanded and repainted.

**The Wicklow Way**, Ride Rock to Glensoulan section, is one of the most popular trails in the country and gets hundreds of walkers each weekend. Over the last few years, the vegetation on this trail has begun to close in restricting walkers' passage and there was evidence of water damage that needed to be checked before it caused serious damage. Work commenced in September at Ride Rock and continued southwards towards the forest boundary at Glensoulan, a distance of just over 900m. The work involved clearing dense vegetation, pruning back trees (to the stem, no coat hangers), constructing waterbars and grade reversals and clearing existing cross drains. It also involved repairs to the fence close to an overlook for the Powersourt waterfall. The branch also held 5 Committee Meetings and its AGM and Christmas get-together in November 2023.

**MM Southeast** held eight workdays in 2023 and worked in Co Tipperary on the track at Gleann Na Sceach up to Lough Curraaccess route to Galtymore. The project involves building cross drains, side drains and clearing vegetation. Over the year there is visible improvement in water management on the trail. Membership is strong with plenty of newcomers. MMSE has placed emphasis on mentoring new members and ensuring that they are doing meaningful work. In 2024, they will return to this track but also plan to revisit previously completed tracks in the district to carry out maintenance there. AGM was held 18th November 2023. Our thanks though to our own local farmers and landowners who have been so supportive of our work here in the south east.



**MM West** organised 16 workdays throughout the year. On the **Carran loop**, Co. Clare, MMW surveyed 10km of the loop taking photographs and making notes on missing waymarks, additional waymarks required, etc. Follow up maintenance was carried out on 150m that involved trimming of the overgrowth, clearing briars and hazel scrub on old bog road section.

The **Ben Lettery** upper stile was inspected, and the upright hand post replaced, while in the Inagh Valley 5.5km was surveyed and minor repairs effected. On the Gleninagh Black Head loop. MMW carried out a recce and followed up with repairs to the cattle trough section on the Black Head/Gleninagh loop, always a muddy section. This was light maintenance and the cementing in of loose capstone and the fitting of 4 stones in the muddy area just before the stile.

The ballcock installed last year is functioning well, and there is no overflow. The lower diverted path is accessible and being used by hikers. This project involved discussion with the RRO and the local landowner.

**Slieve Carron loop.** 31 stone slabs were transported from IGS Ennis to Cassidy's Carran and then transported up the hill where they were cemented in place. Briars and hazel scrub on the section from St. Fachnan's Holy Well to the Templecronan loop were cut back and the waymarking with stone slabs was completed.

In **Máméan** repairs and maintenance was carried out on cross drains and waterbars damaged by heavy rainfall. MMW also carried out a recce on the Moylussa trail in Clare with technical support from MMI, however this is a trail almost 900m in length and requires reshaping of the path, multiple water bars, cross drains, new drains through the adjacent bank. The branch AGM was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**MM Northwest** commenced work in March and from then until November constructed stone, steel and timber stiles along The Leitrim Way near Tullyskeherny, Manorhamilton and built approximately 10m of sheep's wool trail.

MMNW returned to Ballinagleragh to carry out further work on the hedgerow weaving project. Hedgerow was backfilled with layers of topsoil to prepare the ground for planting native treesaplins in 2024.

The Summer Project saw MMNW volunteers, joined by volunteers from MMW and MMDW, headed West to the Wild Nephin area in Co. Mayo to paint the MM built Adirondack shelters. The weather was extremely wet, cold, windy and the midges came in their swarms, but the MM team kept their spirits up, worked away and demonstrated their tenacity.

**Mountain Meitheal melleray** held several workdays in 2023 and closed the year with a very successful launch of the Mount Melleray Pilgrim Paths project on 29th November with a special event in Melleray. Michael O'Rourke will continue as Chairperson in 2024.

### Transition year students hit the trail

Not resting on his laurels MMNW Member Frank McMahon spent 3 months working with transition year students in Kiltimagh constructing a sheep's wool trail through a bog and for which a defibrillator was donated to MMNW as per Frank's request.



# End of the Trail

## Anto Monaghan

MMDW members lost their friend and fellow volunteer Anto Monaghan after a long battle with cancer in January 2023. Anto's enthusiasm for Mountain Meitheal was only matched by his encyclopaedic knowledge of music and his constant sense of fun and devilment. Anto was always fun to work with and contributed much to the work of MM before his battle began. His catch phrase "hold it, hold it, hold it" will go down in the annals of MMDW for as long as we are on the hills.

## Charles Golden

MMNW were deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic death of Charles Golden of Manorhamilton in May 2023. Charles was a true gentleman. He was congenial, supportive and facilitated MMNW every step of the way in getting the initial project for the aspirant branch started. An absolute pleasure to work with, Charles will never be forgotten; he will live on in our hearts forever.

## Pat Molan

MMSE were equally saddened by the death of Pat Molan on 27th October 2023. Pat was a regular member and one of MM stalwarts from the Southeast. Pat was known as a big fan of the outdoors and "a gentleman". He will be missed by all who knew him in the MMSE Branch.

## Prelude

*Still south I went and west  
and south again*

*Through Wicklow from the  
morning till the night*

*And far from cities and the  
sites of men*

*Lived with the sunshine and  
the moons delight.*

*I knew the stars the flowers  
and the birds*

*The grey and wintry sides of  
many glens*

*And did but half remember  
human words*

*In converse with the  
mountains moors and fens.*

J.M. Synge

# 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 5 branches. In the West (MMW) and Northwest (MMNW) in the East Dublin/Wicklow (MMDW) and in the Southeast (MMSE) and Mountain Meitheal Melleray (MMM). **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 €20 and application forms are on our website and available from the branches.

