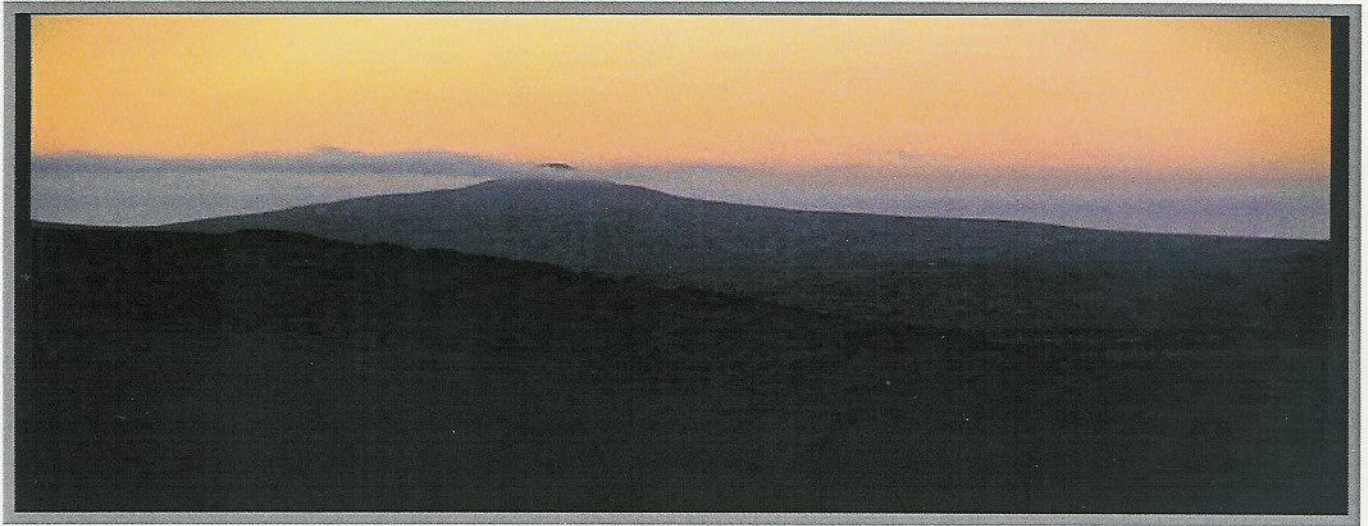


THE MATTOCK

NEWSLETTER OF MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL

No.3 July 2005

Get out, get dirty, give back! Have fun too



The Sugarloaf at Dawn

Mountain Meitheal is a club made up mostly of mountain lovers who have derived pleasure from their activities on the hills and crags of Ireland. On top of these common interests, they also share the desire to preserve our wonderful mountain landscape in a sustainable way. Production of mountains in Ireland stopped many years ago. The ones we have need some protection and maintenance from the many pressures we mountain goers put on them. The combination of more and more feet and wheels on very wet and soft hillsides is seen in the ever-increasing scars and erosion on mountain tracks. This is of concern to the landowners and National Parks. So much so that Connemara National Park closed off a mountain for several years for trail repairs involving consultant engineers and expensive contract building work. A job like this can leave a sour taste in

the mouth rather like pricey supermarket "gourmet" meals. The pictures on the packet look perfect but what do they really taste like? They don't compare with home cooking and there's little pleasure in the experience when you can do so much better yourself.

Some purists argue that that no trails or paths should be built as this makes mountains less of a wilderness experience. Oh, that this could be true. Worn trails are an inescapable reality. Just look at the physical damage caused to the beautiful but sensitive Irish landscapes by hordes of visitors on foot and regrettably more and more on motor bikes and quads. Path maintenance is the lesser of two evils. Trails should reflect rather than transform natural landscapes and "wear lightly" on the land. Using local materials wherever possible,

Mountain Meitheal attempts in a small way to repair some of the damage done to the mountains that provide us all with so much enjoyment.

In many other countries, particularly in the Alps, volunteers from clubs and individuals regularly undertake trail work, often supporting professional crews in national parks and forests making real contributions to conservation. Mountain Meitheal is an independent club working closely with landowners, mainly in the Wicklow area. Meitheal members come from all walks of life and are often joined by volunteers from other clubs and groups of work colleagues. Everyone enjoys themselves with a good day out in the hills followed by a well-earned drink and the satisfaction of giving something back to our lovely mountains.

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Making Tracks in Glensoulan



section of the Wicklow Way has
 ssed beautiful Glensoulan beneath
 ulin and Djouce in the Wicklow
 untains for more than twenty years.
 s became a worn out scar as the trail,
 ch is very popular with weekend
 kers, also crosses soft and vulnerable
 d. Mountain Meitheal volunteers have
 ght to make amends.

ork commenced in March 2004 with
 nstruction of five major water bars on
 hillside above the Wicklow Way exit
 ving very successful during periods of
 vvy rain. The water bars and drains
 lect most of the water into the
 ounding vegetation preventing further
 sion lower down the slope. Then work
 gan on the track itself. On each outing,
 ection of track was designed and
 mpleted, causing little disruption to the
 using public. Dead brushwood from
 adjacent forestry is used to outline the
 ck as work progresses. Known as
 shing, it is not aesthetically pleasing,
 has the added advantage of allowing
 etation to recover. The track was
 igned in zig-zag fashion, taking into
 nsideration the slope of the land, and
 most likely course favoured by
 kers.

cavating boulders in the immediate
 a of the trail makes it possible to
 nstruct steps and stone pitching. Large
 ilders used as "anchor" steps are very
 cult to dislodge, serving to "hold back"
 track on the hillside and keeping
 aller steps in place. Mineral soil dug
 n temporary nearby "borrow pits"
 ch are filled in again later, is used to
 face the track. Alluvial sand brought up
 n the river tops this off.

Meitheal volunteer crews
 vary from six to eighteen
 volunteers. Every new
 workday begins with a
 safety talk and advice on
 lifting techniques, especially
 with large boulders. Through
 the summer and into the
 autumn, work continued
 constructing steps, stone
 pitching, water bars and the

maintenance on a regular basis and
 stand up to increasing traffic for the
 foreseeable future.

Glensoulan Statistics:

Length of track	160 meters
Steps:	111
Stone pitching	22 meters
Water bars	10
Rip-rap	as necessary
Drains	as necessary
Brushing	as necessary

Volunteer hours over 900!

all-important drains. The
 club suspends operations in
 the winter except for the
 Christmas Party!

With work recommencing at
 the steepest section in
 March 2005, existing
 ridgelines were followed
 with "crib" walls constructed
 on the outer side of the track
 using logs from the adjacent
 forest. Bench cutting the
 inner side of the slope using
 gravel, mineral soil and
 sand compacts to form a
 durable walking surface.
 There is now a sustainable
 track that should require a
 minimum amount of

Leave No Trace (LNT)



A LNT **workshop** will take place on
Saturday 17th September 2005 for
 Mountain Meitheal members and
 associates.

This date suits Ann Fitzpatrick, Education
 Officer with the National Parks and
 Wildlife Service, who will be giving the
 workshop. Partly indoors and mainly
 outdoors, the day will finish up with a
 barbecue if the weather permits!

Further details of the day with the
 programme and other details will be
 advised in due course. Keep an eye on
www.pathsavers.org or contact Shay
 Walsh on 087 238 2581 or
shaymwalsh@eircom.net

What is the Leave No Trace Centre for Outdoor Ethics?

The conservationist's most important task, if we are to save the earth, is to educate.

- Peter Scott, World Wildlife Federation

The Leave No Trace Centre for Outdoor Ethics is a national non-profit organization in the United States dedicated to promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. Leave No Trace (LNT) builds awareness, appreciation and respect for our wildlands.

Other countries have also begun adopting or adapting the Leave No Trace programme or have developed their own educational counterparts. For example, staff from The National Outdoor Leadership School in the US, have worked with managers and organizations in Mexico and other Central and South American countries to initiate 'No Deje Rastro' (Leave No Trace) programmes. The programme stretches into Australia and many other countries.

Hopefully LNT is now developing in Ireland. Ann Fitzpatrick, Education Officer with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) went to America and is now an accredited LNT trainer. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in Northern Ireland, Scouting Ireland, NWPS, Coillte, Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) and others, along with Mountain Meitheal, are working towards formulating a LNT Ireland programme.

The goal of the Leave No Trace educational programme is to avoid or minimize impacts to natural area resources and helps ensure a positive recreational experience for all visitors. America's public lands, like Ireland's, are a finite resource whose social and ecological values are linked to the integrity of their natural conditions and processes. Land managers face a perennial struggle in their efforts to achieve an appropriate balance between the competing mandates to preserve natural and cultural resources and provide high quality recreational use. Visitor education designed to instill low impact ethics and skills is a critical management component and is seen as a light-handed approach that can reduce the need for more direct and regulatory forms of management.

"Wilderness management is 80-90 percent education and information and 10 percent regulation." Max Peterson, former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, 1985.

A lack of US national leadership, funding, and training had limited the effectiveness of early minimum impact educational efforts in the 1970's and 80's. By 1990 the clear need for visitor education, coupled with increasing knowledge about visitor impacts from research, prompted the US Forestry Service (USFS) to approach the National Outdoor Leadership School to develop hands-on minimum impact training.

The "Leave No Trace" phrase had been designated within the USFS as the name for minimum-impact messages targeted to non-motorised recreational activities. The intent was to promote a single message in the place of various permutations of recreational good practice codes developed over the years.

2005 is the tenth anniversary of the LNT Centre of Outdoor Ethics which is celebrating this with the **10 Million Challenge** – their goal is to educate over ten million people this year in outdoor conservation.

Education...is a preemptive strike...to teach the American people how to enjoy the wilderness without destroying it. All other methods merely try to repair the damage after it is done. Stronger wilderness education programs would dramatically decrease the need for law enforcement and cleanup. James Bradley, Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, U.S. House of Representatives.

LNT programmes and education are now used in more and more places

having been adopted by leading outdoors associations, government departments and commercial companies.

Leave No Trace "Principles"

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimise campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

For further information about **Leave No Trace** go to www.lnt.org



"Away, away, from men and towns, To the wild wood and the downs, To the silent wilderness, Where the soul needs not repress its music." – Percy Bysshe Shelly, 1820

Mountain Bike Code for Northern Ireland

A sensible new initiative has been drawn up in Northern Ireland for mountain bikers in the shape of a Code, which is awaiting ratification. Off road cycling is fun but comes with certain responsibilities for the bikers themselves, others, and the countryside.

Bikers:

Wear a helmet and suitable clothing

Carry a basic first aid kit and water

Carry a mobile phone

Have a working bell fitted to your bike

Ensure your bike is safe to ride

Test your brakes – well adjusted brakes work better and are less noisy

Cycle with care and control and within your capabilities

Use lights after dark

Carry ID

Tell someone where you are going

ers:
ep to trails where cycling is allowed – if
doubt check where you can and can't

any trails are shared access – be
onsiderate of all other users, stay to the
t and make sure your presence in
own.

ve way to walkers – on approaching
e your bell or call out a greeting.

ve way to horse riders – approach
wly and call out a greeting.

not ride in a group in such a way as to
copy the whole width of the trail.

**in the countryside and those who live
and work there:**

oid braking sharply and skidding

oose your route carefully – especially
the wet – avoid soft ground. If you
me across a muddy section do not ride
ough it – get off, and wheel your cycle
ough the driest line, to minimise
mage to the surface.

ke care not to frighten animals

ollow the Country Code

rotect your future access by ensuring
at you and others follow the
ountain Bike Code of Conduct.

Meitheal days for remainder of 2005



Want to try a day out with us?

list of dates - for certainty, please check
th Laurence Lynch, Hon. Secretary
ountain Meitheal, on **087 912 2876** or
mail: **lplynch@eircom.net** in advance
the meeting point so that we know how
any people will be there and also we will
ow to wait if you get delayed. We
ormally meet in the hills at 10.30am.

hat to bring - normal gear for a day out
the hills - e.g. walking/hiking boots,
iters, waterproof jacket and pull-ups,
t, drink/lunch/food, etc.

ere is no need to bring tools/equipment
work-gloves (unless you prefer your
n!) as they will be provided by
ountain Meitheal.

you need a lift - do not hesitate to
ntact Laurence and we will try to
commodate you.

09th July

24th July

13th August

28th August

10th September

25th September

08th October

23rd October

12th November

27th November

04th December

Would you like to join our club?



Meitheal members enjoying
lunch

Please return the form or a
photocopy with the
requested details and your
subscription of €20 to Chris
Avison, Membership
Secretary, Mountain
Meitheal, Brandon, 6 Upper
Churchtown Road, Dublin
14. If you have any queries
please 'Phone him on:
01 298 6085 or send an e-
mail to: **avison@eircom.net**

For more club information
and details of our
comprehensive trail survey
in Wicklow go to:
www.pathsavers.org



Application for membership

Surname:

Forename:

Postal Address:

'Phone Nos:

(Home)
(Work)
(Mobile)

E-mail address: (if any)

Age: (if under 18 years)

For insurance purposes, are
you a member of The
Mountaineering Council of
Ireland?

If so, are you an **individual**
member or a **club** member?

If you are in a **club**, please
specify which one?

Can you bring any relevant
experience to Mountain
Meitheal (e.g. engineer,
forester, farmer, previous
voluntary trail maintenance
experience, etc.,)

I wish to apply for membership
of Mountain Meitheal and
enclose my subscription of €20
and agree to support the aims
and objectives of the club.

Signed:

Date: