

The Mattock

Newsletter of Mountain Meitheal

www.pathsavers.org

December 2013



Working above the Miner's Village in Glendalough

2012 Statistics

In 2012, 89 individual Mountain Meitheal volunteers worked a total of 1,851 volunteer hours and completed two major projects. The work on the Miner's Track in Glendalough which began in September 2011 and continued right through 2012 was completed on 17/11/2012.

Also in 2012 we prefabricated and installed the Lough Aroher Hut in Co. Mayo. Prefabrication took place in Avondale in a total of 67 volunteer hours and the assembly on site took 291 volunteer hours.

The 2013 AGM

was held on 6 November in Taney Parish Hall, Dundrum, Dublin 14, marking the start of a new membership year.

Mountain Meitheal Committee members elected on the night:
Chairperson: Pauline Ryder

Vice Chair: Vacant
Secretary: Cliona Ní Bhréartúin
Treasurer: Pat Nolan
Webmaster: Shay Walsh
Members: Kevin Carroll, Robert Grandon.

The annual subscription of €20 can now be paid to the Secretary at 12 Beechview, Edmondstown Rd, Dublin 16.

Mountain Meitheal Mottos
when on a workday:

*If it's loose,
it's no use!*

Mullacor Hut Upgrade



The forest hut that was recycled in 2006 to build Mullacor Hut



The new cedar shingle roof fits well with the woodland setting

When we built the Mullacor hut back in 2006 it was an experiment. Would it be used? Would it attract undesirables? Would it be vandalized? Well, seven years on the Mullacor hut is probably one of our most used and well loved huts. It has, however, been showing signs of wear, and we needed to replace some of the recycled materials we used to construct the hut back in 2006.

Over the last year we replaced the galvanized roof – recycled from the old forest workers hut – with a new cedar shingle roof on felted oriented strand board (OSB). This has not only eliminated one or two little leaks but has also ‘insulated’ the roof and made it much quieter if you were unlucky enough to be sleeping in it on a rainy night. The cedar roof is expected to give years of service and has already developed a lovely silver colour that fits into the woodland scene much better than the old tin roof.



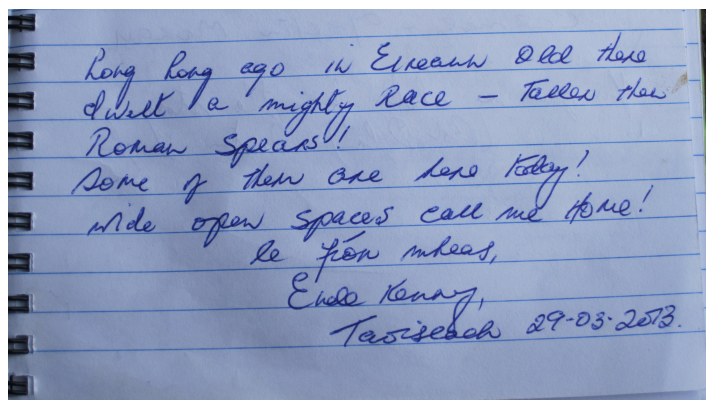
Our work crew admire their newly finished wall

Recycling a forest hut meant that its days would be limited

and signs of deterioration were beginning to show, particularly the upper side wall. So this summer we replaced that section with a new plank on plank wall using materials left over from our Mucklagh and Brusher’s Gap huts.

In 2014 we will be launching our ‘adopt a hut’ and ‘adopt a trail’ programmes and will be looking for individuals and small groups to assist in maintaining these important structures on a more regular basis.

Bill Murphy



A recent visitor to the Lough Avoher Hut in Mayo.



Lough Avoher Lean-to in the evening sun

Lean-Tos in Ireland's wilderness

Building a shelter in Ireland's first designated wilderness may seem like a contradiction but when it is part of the overall plan to encourage and manage visitors' impact on the wilderness its logic is more obvious.

Wilderness management is a contradiction in terms – how can something that is wild be managed? Most wilderness management is not concerned with managing the resource (the land) but with managing human impacts on the resource. The managers of Wild Nephin understand that the success of this, at present, prototype wilderness will be the careful disengagement of the current forest and land management practices while at the same time encouraging visitors to experience this extensive wild area on nature's terms.

So why build a shelter? The provision of primitive recreation opportunities is a key part of the Wild Nephin vision, but encouraging visitors into the more remote parts could lead to the 'development' of poor campsites leading to environmental damage. The trade off is the provision of designated overnight campsites and shelters. These will be located at sites where their impact on water and landscape will be minimised and where they can be monitored for long term impact. The Wild Nephin vision is to place between six and eight lean-tos and campsites across the range and the 'development' of trails linking these important hubs.

The Lough Avoher Lean-To

The first lean-to, Lough Avoher Hut, was built just off the Bangor trail in 2012 to

celebrate Mountain Meitheal's 10 years of work. The Bangor Trail is Ireland's wildest long distance trail and follows an old drovers route that linked the Erris area north of Bangor with Newport, a once thriving sea port, in the south. Its existence is recorded on maps as far back as 1590. Lough Avoher is an anglicisation of the Irish Loch an Bhóthar – the lake of the road, or more correctly the cow track. The trail is the most important corridor into the wildest reaches of the park. Providing people with a destination on the edge of the primitive area encourages people to 'come in' and explore and maybe stay overnight. They can experience the night sky, wind, rain, sun and midges – experience wildness. The site was selected carefully – just off the trail – but within view. It is in view

because we feel there isn't a tradition of lean-tos in Ireland yet so it was felt that people wouldn't know it was there without loads of signs. The site was already impacted by over grazing so its impact on a pristine site is minimised. It is outside the Special Area of Conservation but close enough to the Maumatra valley where remoteness and solitude are in abundance. It's a good staging point for Nephin Beg and the more remote Corslieve.

Future plans

Mountain Meitheal plans to add a second lean-to next year. It will be located approximately 8-10km further north in a remote part of the forested landscape similar to those in northern Finland or Maine. If



Breakfast on a stormy morning in the Lough Avoher Hut

you are interested in helping or sponsoring part of the new

build we'd love to hear from you.

Mountain Meitheal South East

Mountain Meitheal South East started work on Sunday, 12th May, 2013. Behind that simple sentence lies a longer story, involving many people, much work behind the scenes and a lot of commitment and determination.

The seed was sown in Clonmel in November, 2011, during discussions at a Mountaineering Ireland consultation meeting on access and conservation. Seventeen interested people from across the south-east (Clare, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny), then attended a further meeting in Kilcoran Lodge and an ad hoc committee was formed. More committee meetings followed, leading to an Open Day on the northern side of

the Galtees in November, 2012. The aims of the Open Day were to review some previous work carried out by Mountain Meitheal (in late 2001) in order to assess suitability for a project, and to decide a future course of action.

The Open Day included a meeting at the premises of Aherlow Fáilte in Newtown, Co. Tipperary, where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Mountain Meitheal and Mountain Meitheal South East. The first committee was elected. Two volunteers from Mountain Meitheal South East then attended a skills training course in Wicklow, delivered by Mountain Meitheal.

Mountain Meitheal South East then identified a suitable initial project, which had the dual benefit of repairing a specific area while at the same time training volunteers in the requisite skills – for example cutting and laying brashing, digging and building water bars, handling and maintaining tools and, above all, working safely. The current project, the repair of the Saunders Lodge Path, started in May 2013 and will finish in November – seven volunteer days. On average, there were 14 volunteers out on any given day, and the weather was kind to us.

We wish to record our thanks to Robert Grandon and Shay Walsh of Mountain Meitheal for their advice and support



Bill Murphy giving a talk on Leadership Styles at the Leaders' Training Course held in Glendalough in 2013

from the very beginning, and for their generosity and commitment in working with us throughout the project. We would also like to thank the local people of Newtown for

their hospitality, and for their practical support in providing storage for tools. We look forward to the spring and the start of a new project.

Phil Fitzpatrick

Mountain Meitheal South East Committee 2013-14

Chairman: Jimmy Barry

Secretary: Máire Ní Mhurchú

Treasurer: Fergus Flynn

Time Logging Officer: Mary Neligan

Training Officer & Vice Treasurer :

Pat Lombard

Vice Chair: Frank McMahon

Vice Secretary: Vacant

The new Mountain Meitheal Website

Over the past year or so a team of Mountain Meitheal members have worked on the development and rollout of our new web site. Many hours of research and review led us to partner with a company called Exsite to deliver the new site.

Our journey started with friends and work colleagues being asked to critically assess the 'old' web site with a view to designing the new. Also we looked at the web site designs of likeminded organisations. The feedback gave us some good pointers, and helped us

understand the expectations people had of what the site should/could look like. We gathered all the feedback along with our own thoughts and met with Liz Clooney. Liz developed new templates which had the look and feel of what a new site could look like, and over many meetings and reviews the overall structure took shape and the new format was brought to life.

To move the process to the next level we met with the folks in Exsite, specialists in boutique type web site design, and they



Before ...



... and after

proved to be a good company to work with. Over the following months the final web site design took shape, and we launched the new site in September.

We believe the new site represents a modern and active Mountain Meitheal organisation, and allows us to further develop and enhance its capabilities over time.

So we encourage you to jump in and look at the site – feedback is always welcome.

*Web design subcommittee
(Shay Walsh, Pauline Ryder, Laurence Lynch, Pat Nolan, Liz Clooney)
www.mountainmeitheal.ie*

The Blue Route Project

The Blue Route Project in Glendalough was proposed to Mountain Meitheal by Wesley Atkinson of WMNP. The project was to construct a bogbridge from the forestry road up to the existing bogbridge on the White Route on The Spink in Glendalough. This section of the Blue Route is a desire line following an old forestry ride line, which had suffered greatly from erosion by weathering and the feet of walkers and other users over the years.

This section of trail commences on Coillte land and finishes on top on WMNP land. The bogbridge was considered the best solution for this job although most of the organic soil has disappeared from the route over the years. The length of the repair was 325 metres uphill. We started with stone steps at the bottom of the trail and then laid

the first section of bogbridge above that.

Hard work

We commenced the project at the end of Feb 2013 in very cold weather which lasted well into April. We also put in water management measures using check-dams and waterbars to assist with the recovery of the trail. Many volunteer hours were spent on the project carrying timber sleepers, sawing these into suitable lengths and digging out soil to position the sleepers for the bogbridge steps. Although we had the assistance from the WMNP staff who supplied the materials, sleepers, staples, nails and galva band, on a number of occasions when the machine that was used to drop the sleepers broke down the Mountain Meitheal crews had to haul the timber by hand uphill. Much credit must go to them for their efforts with this heavy work.



The three sleeper wide bog bridge

The unusual width

The work progressed well through the spring and summer and finished early in August 2013. This bogbridge is different to previous ones built by Mountain Meitheal as it is three sleepers wide rather than the usual two. As well as being a durable tread for walkers, Mountain Rescue teams use this section for quick access to The Spink to assist any injured walkers. The extra width to the bogbridge allows the Mountain Rescue teams to place the wheels of their stretchers on it and in this way facilitate rescues. Many volunteer hours went into digging, sawing, nailing, cutting and placing galva band and many thousands of staples into the wood.

During the work we had a visit in early March from Niall Martin from RTÉ Nationwide to film Mountain Meitheal in action. We waited in anticipation for the programme to be aired and we were pleased with the result.

It was great to complete the platform at the top of the trail on the last day of the project. This joins it with the original White Route bogbridge. A job well done with positive feedback over the months from the people who use the trail.

Robert Grandon

Mountain Meitheal Mottos
when on a workday:

*When it's steady,
then it's ready!*

Hut Talk

Mountain Meitheal has now constructed four Adirondack Shelters over recent years. Three are located along Ireland's most well known long distance trail, the Wicklow Way, at: Mullacor (2007); Brusher's Gap (2009); and Mucklagh (2011). The fourth shelter, Lough Avoher (2012) is situated on one of Ireland's oldest trails, the Bangor Trail in Mayo. This latter shelter was constructed as a contribution to the Wild Nephin Wilderness Project in Mayo which was formally launched in 2013 by the Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

The shelters were constructed from start to finish solely by Mountain Meitheal volunteers. From the visitor books in each shelter, we get a first-hand understanding of what they mean to all who use them.

It is important to volunteers to know that the shelters serve their purpose and are put to good use. The content of most visitor books are full of appreciation and thanks. Travellers wish and ask that we build more. A quick glimpse at the visitor contributions will confirm this.

The first visitor book at Mucklagh on the Wicklow Way which covers roughly a 14 month period has 450 entries made by people from far and near. The entries from outside Ireland came from Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Peru, Poland, Slovakia, Spain,

Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA. Contributions were expressed in a variety of languages and scripts along with several sketches which are difficult to replicate here. The erection of the Mucklagh shelter is itself very special in that its construction was sponsored by Glenwalk Hillwalking Club in memory of the passing of their long standing Club leader, Ciarán King, himself an avid lover of the hills and ardent hill walker. And he is remembered by those who pass by, what some term 'the tribute hut'. I hope you enjoy reading the visitor comments below!

Keeping the Candle burning! Shining a light!

'Aoife King, Ciarán's sister, came up to remember Ciarán in this beautiful, spectacular place. View magnificent! So peaceful here, Ciarán would have loved it.' RIP' (Rory & Rachael Ciarán's nephew and niece)

'A great idea and a really fitting way to remember Ciarán', John

'Hello Dear Glenwalk Friends! Your hut have made me so happy during (my) Wicklow Way – windy, wet, cold and a dry place out of the wind to have my lunch was really a nice present', Brigitte (France) ☺

'Loving the View! What a way to remember someone. Well done to Glenwalk Hillwalking Club', Laura, Niamh, Claire & Melissa were here!

'The hut provided us with nice views and protection from the wind. We ate our banana and met a few nice travellers. Thanks Ciarán King Memorial Hut! Rolf & Jonas, Belgium

'The Lord have mercy on Ciarán, a very nice person. He would have been proud of the work. Keep walking and Enjoy! Eilish, An Óige & Tallaght Walkers

'This is our third day on the Wicklow Way when we came upon this cabin. What a wonderful way to remember a fellow hiker.' Scott & Lori Coombs (Park Rangers in the US.)

The First Timers!

'Captains Log – 13.07.12 (11.30 am) Lived in Dublin for many, many years and it's my first time walking the Wicklow way! Loving these units and the fact that no one has vandalised them. Will be coming back to stay in these units again. Go Wicklow! Big cheers to the Mountain Meitheal!' Ana-mhaith ar fad! Jim

The Big Timers!

'Lovely Day. Day 4 of the E8 from Ireland to Poland via UK, NL, Germany, Austria, Slovakia. Still a long way to go ☺' Ruth & Geoff from Sunshine Coast, Old Australia

'We have walked from Dursey Head on Beara Peninsula along the Irish E8 long distance walking route. It has taken 18 days to walk the 520 or so kilometres. It is a big country when you have to walk across it.' Colm & Eoin (Rathgormack Climbing Club and WTT Mountaineering Club)

'Greetings from Holland to all who may pass and many thanks to the Glenwalk Hillwalking Club! We had our soup and bread here while it's pouring! Summer in Éire!?! More huts like these would be a great

improvement for walkers/
campers! We're off to Valentia
Island doing a coast to coast
walk hoping the weather will
improve!' Liana e' Joost (Gouda)

Under the Stars!

'We slept here for the night.
Thanks for this amazing shelter.
We loved it! Going to
Glendalough today. It's great to
meet people from all over the
world in the middle of
nowhere.' Tamara & Hilda,
Netherlands, Brabant

'I spent last night at Brusher's
Gap Hut so Mucklagh Hut now
provides a very opportune
moment for refreshment both
food wise and body wise. Many
thanks.' Patrick (Belfast)

'I stayed a night, thank you.'
Photographer Gatoshi (Japan)

'Chaitheamar Gayle agus
Tiarnán on oíche anseo aréir.
Bhí sé go hiontach ar fad! Maith
sibh ar fad as an sár obair atá
déanta agaibh! Tá an radharc ón
mbíne lasmuigh ar cheann de
na radharcanna is fear ar an slí.
Na Dubs abú! Up the Dubs!
Ádh mór agus go raibh maith
agaibh! Gayle & Tiarnán, BÁC

Come Hail, Rain or Snow!

'It's snowing here so what
should we do, this is the
warmest place in Wicklow at the
moment. Thank you Bob the
Builder'. Polish Hiking Team

Making the most of it!

'We have been waiting 2 hours
for a bus but I think it's not
coming! ☺ The walk is great
and the view is perfect! Happy
travelling! Russ & Clare (Wales)

'Raining really hard today (my
fingers are even clamped from
the cold so it's hard to write!) so



The Mucklagh Hut and its magnificent views

this shelter is a present from the
gods! Day 3 of Wicklow Way.'
Lino (Belgium) & Ginbane
(Lithuania)

The Romantics

'Always a wish to walk the
Wicklow Way! Now our
children are older we are doing
the trail with backpack. It's nice
to have a place like this.
Thanks!' Bert & Annette
(Netherlands)

Short & Sweet!

'I am enjoying walking a lot
around these beautiful hills.
Take care of them.' José (Spain)

'This is a beautiful place, a really
good idea to build on this hill.
Thank you very much for this
comfort. De la part de trois
francais venant découvrir votre
si beau et accueillant pays (The
Three French)

The Young

'Lovely place to stay. Just
passing by on a walk. Might
have a picnic here some day or
camp here.' Dervla (age 10 – I
live just below here)

'The students from Avondale
Community College, Rathdrum
on their Gaisce Hike'. Sinéad

The Wishful

'Very nice surprise and lovely to
get out of the wind for a bit –
thank you.' Ann (USA) P.S. - A
bathtub would be nice.

Thanks again!

'This is a great little hut. So nice
that we couldn't miss out on the
opportunity to stay a bit (had a
plan to walk all the way to
Moyné). Luckily we are so cosy
with the shelter, a small fire, hot
tea and coffee from the pot. We
feel in heaven, so a BIG
THANKS to the shelter
keepers from the two sisters.'
Ria & Dina (Copenhagen,
Denmark)

The last word

'This hut is a credit to those
who built it.' Steve, Wladek,
Anto (Mountain Meitheal
volunteers).

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