

The Mattock

Newsletter of Mountain Meitheal Ireland

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

Spring 2016

www.pathsavers.org
www.mountainmeitheal.ie

Meithealovsky

During 2015 we had unprecedented hits on our web site from Russia and the Russian Federation. For a number of months the Russian hits far outstripped the Irish hits. In May 2015 there were 615 hits from Russia and 385 hits from Ireland. We have no explanation for this phenomenon, perhaps they missed our explanation that the word meitheal means work party and that our work is voluntary. In December we had hits from exotic sounding cities such as: Vladikavkaz, Voronezh, Oryol and Yakutsk. If people from these places are planning to come out on a meitheal let us hope they are car pooling or that they are not expecting to be picked up.

Another strange occurrence was the number of e-mails received from rural France requesting summer work in our hotel. Social media is a wonderful tool but only if you are not depending on its translating services.

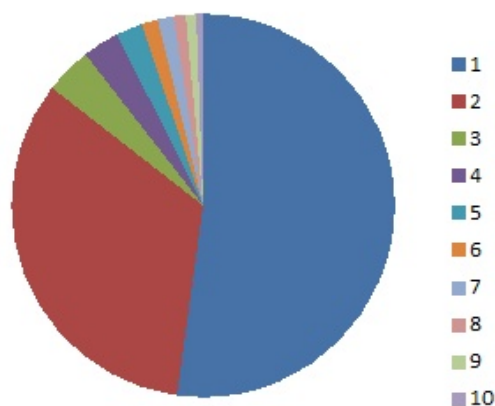
So, if the next time you are out on a meitheal and you come across a confused Russian speaking French badly, hand him a mattock and an application form, he is probably looking for us!

Stats

From the beginning of 2006 to the end of 2015 Mountain Meitheal volunteers contributed a massive 20,605 volunteer hours giving back to Ireland's mountains and forests. From the beginning of 2016 we hope to show the running total of volunteer hours on the front page of our web site www.pathsavers.org.

Statistics 2016

	<i>hits</i>	<i>%</i>
1 Ireland	283	49.39
2 Russia	181	31.59
3 United States	21	3.66
4 United Kingdom	18	3.14
5 Germany	11	1.92
6 Belgium	8	1.40
7 France	8	1.40
8 Kyrgyzstan	5	0.87
9 Ukraine	5	0.87
10 Brazil	3	0.52



The above list shows the top 10 countries in January 2016 making up 94.76% of the hits received.

Mountain Meitheal - The Trail Ahead

Bill Murphy, Chair, Mountain Meitheal Ireland

The Beginning

In 2000 I decided to hike part of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. (It was a personal millennium project!) In researching my route I came to realize that the entire 2160 miles of the AT were maintained by an army of volunteers, literally thousands of people who give their time in maintaining the special places they love and cherish. Tramping the huge trail network in the White Mountains I wondered could we do something similar in Ireland?

When I got home, inspired by those AT volunteers, I put a call out amongst my work

colleagues to see could we get a group going to do some work in Wicklow. A small group of volunteers responded and *Coillte Meitheal* (CM), our prototype organization, was born. We had about 6 or 7 work days in the period 2000/2001 and people began to see what we were doing and asked could they join? The simple message of *get out, get dirty, give back* was taking hold. That said it wasn't all straight forward – one day there were just three of us and the foot and mouth outbreak didn't help either, but seeing a personal website of some guy in New Jersey who was maintaining about three miles of the AT for years showed me the value of all contributions,

however small, and encouraged us to persevere.

The Next Steps

We quickly outgrew the Coillte Meitheal model and in February 2002 we threw membership open to all comers and had our first Mountain Meitheal workday on the Wicklow Way at Laragh. The day was a great success with over twenty volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. (We rerouted a section of the Wicklow Way, which is still in good order, and a popular section of the trail today.)

We immediately established an *ad hoc* committee and agreed a set of clear and simple



The first work day

objectives; we were primarily working to *protect our wild areas through trail work* while *respecting and supporting our volunteers*. If you supported those ideals you were welcome. In the early years we avoided being drawn into many of the side issues that some people have tried to draw us into. Our objectives have been our compass – if something doesn't support our objectives we probably shouldn't be doing it.

And it is about doing. We are a hands-on organization, building our reputation through solid good work, fun and caring for the environment. Over the years we have repaired and built many kilometers of trail; we have constructed and repaired bridges and huts in remote locations that help people enjoy the wild environment in a sustainable manner. We were a founder member of Leave No Trace Ireland, which in itself supports one of our objectives to *spread an awareness of sustainable recreation*. Over the years we have developed methods and work practices that have served us well while supporting our volunteers to do great work.

Expansion

In 2013 we took the momentous step to expand Mountain Meitheal and began working with a group based in the Glen of Aherlow that has now become our second and very strong Mountain Meitheal South East branch. Mountain Meitheal in Wicklow generously made a considerable amount of resources available to the new branch not only mentoring manpower but also funds and resources that helped sustain

and guide MMSE through its early development.

Over the years we have had queries from groups around the country interested in forming branches. At the very least they require follow-up and often a visit. The expansion of Mountain Meitheal into the southeast required considerable resources from Mountain Meitheal Wicklow and it was the view of the committee of MMDW that this could not be sustained over the long term if further branches were to be added, which we believe is the ambition of all Mountain Meitheal volunteers.

So how do we go forward?

At the Mountain Meitheal AGM in November 2015, members voted to change the constitution to create a *branch structure* and *national representative group* with the passing of the constitution of Mountain Meitheal Ireland. With incorporation of these changes MMI now takes on the role of expanding, developing and steering the organization on the next chapter on its story. This will allow branches to concentrate on hands-on work at a local level, doing great work on trails.

The discussions around the new constitution, however, raised some interesting perspectives as to how people envisioned Mountain Meitheal Ireland. MMI will work for all members of all branches but relies on all branches and members to support it. It will not survive and prosper and do what I believe all members want it to do if we don't support it with time, resources and good will.

We have got to see beyond branch concerns and budgets.

Mountain Meitheal promotes an ethos of service to our wild places.

I recently looked back on some old emails and notes from 2000/2001. Several (prominent) people in the outdoor community said that Irish outdoor people wouldn't volunteer and anyway it was the job of the state to do trail work. Many years and many kilometers of trail later Mountain Meitheal is well known for doing some very 'professional' work because its volunteers give generously of their time, knowledge and in many instances financially to protect our sensitive wild places. There are still many places that require our work (despite an increased understanding of and considerable investment by state land owners in trails and related projects.) We have a growing part to play as advocates and champions of our trails and wild places. Let's now move to the next stage of our development and spread our message to new and aspiring Meitheal branches by supporting in a very real way the work of Mountain Meitheal Ireland.

One of the other great strengths of Mountain Meitheal is that we are all volunteers; we all have a part to play.

It's worth paraphrasing President John F. Kennedy when he spoke about service – *ask not what Mountain Meitheal Ireland will do for our branch, but what we can do for Mountain Meitheal.*

'Get out, Get Dirty and Give Back in 2016'

Last year in 2015 Mountain Meitheal South East volunteers gave 510 hours working on projects to help our environment. We had on average 15 people working on each of our work days, on one day 22 people. This year, 2016, we are starting two projects that have been approved by NPWS, Coillte and a private landowner.

'We are people that want to give something back, and in doing so we help our environment, it's that simple. We want to help protect and conserve the mountain and forest environment by repairing and maintaining mountain and forest trails while striving to preserve a sense of solitude' said Jimmy Barry, PRO of MMSE.

In 2015 the group (all volunteers) were back working on a trail in the Coillte forestry just under Galtymore Mountain in Co. Tipperary. 'This year has been all about STONE' said Frank McMahon from Limerick

and chair of MMSE. 'We were using all local sourced material to repair this trail that has becoming eroded and water logged over the last few years. Where we were working is one of the most beautiful locations anywhere in Ireland. I hope we have done something in keeping it that way.'

'We ask people to come out, get dirty and give back, we provide the tools, projects, leadership, and a good experience' said Máire Ní Mhurchú from Cork, the volunteer coordinator with MMSE. Our volunteers come from all over the South East of Ireland and beyond. Last year we had on average 15 people out every day, and we had a job for everyone. You don't have to be as strong as everyone else, all you require is a willingness to help our environment that we all take so much enjoyment from; now it's time to start giving back.'

If you want to contact or join us for a day, please look at our



Galty stile in March

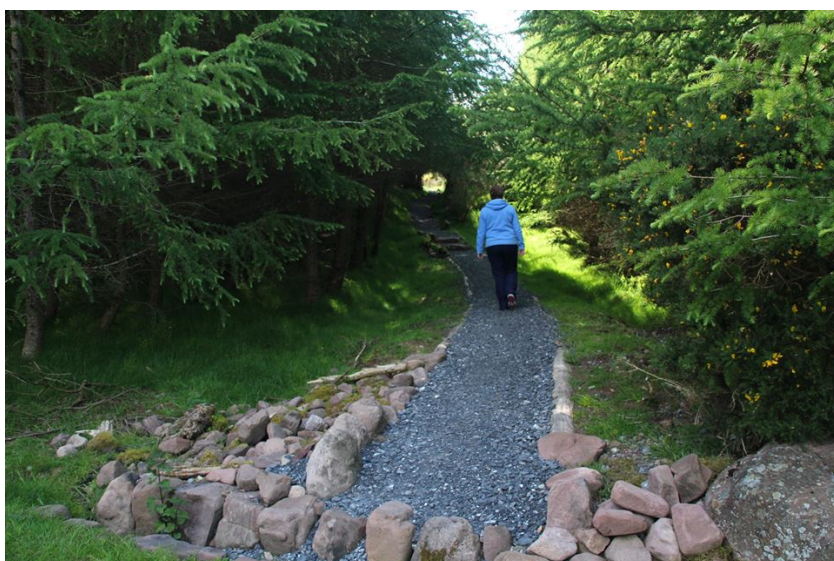
FaceBook page for upcoming work days in 2016, or email us at mountainmeithealsoutheast@gmail.com

Regards
Jimmy Barry
PRO MMSE
087 2975178

The following officers were elected for the coming year:

Frank Mc Mahon: Chairperson
Pat Lombard: Vice Chairperson
Fergus Flynn: Secretary
Mary Neligan: Assistant Secretary
Denis Bates: Treasurer
Máire Ní Mhurchú: Membership Secretary
Jim O'Neil: Training Officer
Jimmy Barry: PRO (MMI Vice Chairperson)

The following committee were elected: Michael Keyes, Catherine Quinlan (MMI Committee member), Paul Gadie



Lough Curra stile track, August

Voices from the Nephin Wilderness – Mayo

Mountain Meitheal has constructed two Adirondack shelters (huts) in recent times in the 11,000 hectares area designated for the Wild Nephin Project in Mayo. The shelter's visitor book is full of comments from those who come to stop and take a breather, have lunch and/or stay the night. It is interesting to note that the visitors come not just from down the road but from across the island and from many places across the globe. They are struck by the beauty of the wilds of Mayo and are appreciative of the shelter (huts) afford them in this rugged landscape. The following is just a snapshot of what some have to say about their experiences in this beautiful area.

Lough Avoher Shelter (54° 0' 14.23', -9° 37' 11.56", F 938073)

Hadn't known about the shelter till I happened on it a week ago! It's just fantastic! Fair play Mountain Meitheal! Came up again last night to spend the night. Amazing place. Gutter/

drainpipe was broken – I repaired it with string. Thanks for great shelter!

Gary L (Newport)

Left Bangor 11.30, arrived to Shelter eight hours later, hot, thirsty and suffering from weight of packs. But exhilarated after 22Km of stunning trail – did not meet a single person, only one house on the way – such fantastic wild country. Massive gratitude to Pathsavers.org for this super shelter, witness to a banquet of rabbit, pasta, chicken, rice, red wine and much whiskey.

6 sore hikers

Arrived to Letterkeen/Bothy car park around 6 p.m. Monday. Hiked along the Western Way and camped by a small lake on the edge of the forest under Nephin Beg, Lough Namroon – not a great camping spot! Very wet! On Tuesday I followed an old stream's course back to the Western Way and startled a red deer along the way. Spent a few hours exploring the forest by following streams. This is a great way to see the interior of the Nephin forests. Tough going though! Followed one stream all the way up to Scardaun Lough and then headed down towards Bangor Trail. Spotted a common lizard en route. The view over Slieve Carr, the Owenduff bog, the Nephin Bogs and west to Achill water falls astonished me. Followed Bangor Trail to hut yesterday evening. New

stone/timber section of the Bangor trail seem very obtrusive but if they prevent trail erosion then all the better. I'm sure they'll blend in given time. Midges swarming so I erected my inner tent inside the hut. I have not brought a car so planning to hike to Mulranny and catch a bus back to Westport tomorrow morning. Going via Glenamog then either the mountain ridge or Western Way Achill spur if I get lazy. OK I'll shut up now. P.S. Thank you Mountain Meitheal! This is my third time sleeping in the hut, can't get enough of this place.

Lenny A

(also left his email)

Started out from Westport two days ago at 7.30 in the evening. After getting waylaid in a café in Galway by a couple of fairy folk walked up on this old railway track now a bike trail but beside this road and loads of traffic ... through Newport took the wrong road out but then came round the corner to view this lake and suddenly this journey took on a new dimension. This landscape is astonishing. I have been very lucky with the weather and midges and I am amazed at the paths. It's hard to get-up and leave any place but then something even more astounding is around the corner. Beautiful, beautiful land. I hope I am able to return one day.

Peter R S (Hamshire)

La France est belle mais
l'Irlande aussi. (France is
beautiful but Ireland is as well).

Eln groupe de randonneurs –
Sud Paris

What an excellent idea to
provide this booklet! More
useful than the stamps that are
in alike boxes in 'gites
d'eteppes' or such sites in the
Alps. It is interesting to read the
experiences of other hikers,
especially concerning the
wildlife they've seen/heard. The
shelter is indeed great, although
we will not sleep here (we have
slept in the Bothy last night
after trying to chase away the
midgits with a smoky fire ...)
We wonder about the life of
those rascals, they seem to be
sleeping until 15.00... or do
they hide for the great
dragonflies? We fancied that
they die at sunset, and each new
day a new generation starts,
growing fast on the blood of
their victims.

We walked a large stretch of the
trail from the Bothy barefoot
and took a bath in the river just
on the first bridge after
rounding the forest. 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 midgits).

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 which such a feature!
The ideas about clamps is OK.

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

Suggestion: the table needs a
triangular reinforcement before
it breaks and needs repair (its
Swinging). Now I'll stop writing
and start enjoying sitting in the
rain without getting wet. It's
pouring now and I'm looking at
the landscape that still is
beautiful although it's wet and
misty now! 19.30 Rain is almost
stopped, we'll go further – back
to Bothy

PS Thanks for the way marking
of the trail; making this shelter;
and all!

Ross & Johannes,
Utrecht, the Netherlands

What a place, nice and remote!
An excellent site for our small
gathering, our once yearly
adventure with our auld fella
and us, his two expat sons!
Approaching 11.00 am, we are
still watching walls of rain
drifting across the sky.

Occasional glimpses of the
ridge in front is tempting us to
leave the shelter, 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. Also maybe
fixing a metal angle along the
edge of the platform OSB
sheeting will along the life of
the material, stop it breaking,
flaking.

Thanks,

Deco, Dave and Niall –
Dublin/London/Osaka

Fantastic walk in excellent
weather. WalkingJ with 'Wild
Nephin Walking'. Lovely spot
for a lunch break.

**Jane, Eileen, Ann,
Richard & Kathleen**
(From England and Spain)

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 S, Jochen H,
Hamburg Germany

Bangor Trail of Doom!
What an experience! We set off
from Bangor Erris, rucksacks
and all prepared for the bog,
little did we know it would be
the bog of DOOM! Wilderness
at is best. The views are just
amazing. An experience not to
be forgotten, the good and the
bad. There were tears and
giggles all the way. Darragh
found a sheep stuck in heavy
bog almost dead. He was our
hero and saved the sheep he
named Woolly! We watched as
Woolly and her baby lamb were
reunited.

We were blessed with a great
day only one shower of rain.
We were really worried we
would get lost but the markers
are great. We also found (well
Laura did) a lizard named Lizzy.
We had a few falls along the
way but no injuries bar
exhaustion! Much harder trail
that we are used to on the
Wicklow Way.

We thought we had finished and
a lot closer to the hut with an
hour left which was walked in
silent bar the tears from me.
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.

We have left the hut and area spotless. I hope everyone does the same to keep this area beautiful.

LauraLee (Dublin, Santry)

And the last words go to: Thank you Mountain Meitheal for the lunch shelter. All 18 of us got in! A wonderful walk

Belfast U3A walking group

Now I know what they're talking about. Great project by Mountain Meitheal affords walkers the chance to enjoy 'a little piece of heaven'. Good work, guys!

That's a funny name ...

The Pulaski

Did you ever wonder how one of the tools we use for trail work got its name? Well the pulaski is a hand tool like an axe mattock that is used extensively in north America for forest firefighting and trail work. It combines an axe and an adze in one head, similar to that of the axe mattock, with a rigid handle of wood, plastic, or fiberglass.

The pulaski is a versatile tool for clearing firebreaks, as it can be used to both dig soil and chop wood. It is also well adapted for trail construction as it is useful for digging holes in root-bound and rocky soil. The invention of the pulaski is credited to Ed Pulaski, forest ranger with the United States Forest Service, in 1911. He took a double headed axe and had one side forged to turn the ax head to form an adze. Fire fighters now only needed to carry one tool instead of two (a double headed axe and a shovel).

Ed Pulaski was famous for helping to save the lives of a



crew of 45 firefighters during some disastrous forest fires that occurred in Idaho in August 1910 which made national headlines. His tool may have been a direct result of the disaster; he saw the need for better firefighting tools. Ed Pulaski further refined the tool and by 1913 it came into general use in the Rocky Mountain region of the Forest Service. In 1920, the Forest Service began contracting for the tool to be commercially manufactured, but use remained regional for some years. The tool became a national standard in the 1930s.

Tip Raising the tool above head height while swinging is discouraged as this wastes energy and creates a safety hazard.

Miners Village Path

Mountain Meitheal were approached by Wesley Atkinson, manager WMNP, with a proposal to define and repair a path in the Miners Village in Glendalough. We surveyed the area and agreed to place the path along the line of the remains of the buildings on the north side of the site. Stone was procured by Wesley and his staff, which was dropped at the work area. We were really spoilt for choice with the stone delivery, as we had minimal time searching for good stone material.

We commenced the job in August 2014 and completed it in May 2015. During this time we cleared the line of the path and stone pitched the delivered stone to make a very sustainable tread.

We uncovered an original stone pitched section of path created by the miners when they built the Village. We were pleased to incorporate this section into the path line. We put in drains for water management and large stepping stones for areas where water flows through the Village frequently, especially during very wet weather. We also closed off different paths that had evolved over the years which were degrading the area of the Village.

While working on the project we were passed by thousands of walkers. We had many opportunities to explain our purpose in making the path to those who asked. We received very positive feedback which was very satisfying. This path will be well used.

Galtees Clean Up - 9th April

Limerick Climbing Club (LCC) have been organising a clean-up morning of the Galtees for a number of years and this year was no exception.

As part of An Taisce's annual 'National Spring Clean' initiative, 22 adults and one junior scout member gathered for 10.30am at the Glen Hotel, Glen of Aherlow, Co. Tipperary in warm spring sunshine. We had teams from LCC, Galtees Walking Club and Cork Mountaineering Club, along with Helen Morrissey from the Glen of Aherlow Fáilte Society. Two trailers, gloves, refuse bags and litter pickers (reachers) were distributed among the teams to

tackle Christ the King area, Muskry car park and Cush car parks. Refuse bags and gloves were provided by An Taisce, 17 'reachers' recycled from last year (which helped ease the back-ache) came from the Limerick County Council, and

the refuse collection was undertaken by Tipperary County Council. We finished with our last dump at Muskry car park at 13:00 and headed to the Aherlow Bord Fáilte office where we were treated to tea/coffee, home-made cakes, sandwiches and scones. Many thanks to everyone who came out to help on the day.



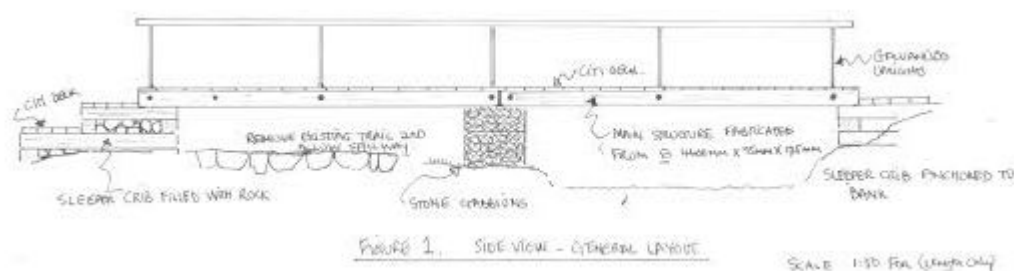
Construction begins on Gleanealo Footbridge, Glendalough

In recent years sporadic floods have washed out some of the minor bridges along the very popular White Route in Glendalough resulting in the route becoming impassable particularly after long periods

of rain. The old simple sleeper bridges were simply not high enough to avoid higher water. Early in 2016 the national park management asked Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow to build a new bridge. Work began

at the end of February and work is now approaching completion.

A full account of this interesting construction project will appear in our next issue.



Membership application

⇒ Dublin/Wicklow branch ☐ (select branch)
⇒ South East branch ☐

Please return this form with your subscription to:
Kilronan, The Birds Nest, 20A York Road,
Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Any queries to:
contact.meitheal@gmail.com



Surname: _____ Forename: _____
Postal Address: _____

* Phone no. (home): _____ Phone no. (work): _____

* Phone no. (mobile): _____ *Email: _____

* Date of Birth: _____

* If the above details have been sent to Mountaineering Ireland through another club, the details on this application MUST be the same.

For insurance purposes, are you a member of Mountaineering Ireland? Yes No

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

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

Mountaineering Ireland Membership number: _____

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

The activities of Mountain Meitheal can involve risk of personal injury or death. Volunteers should be prepared to accept such risks when volunteering and take responsibility for their own safety.

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: _____