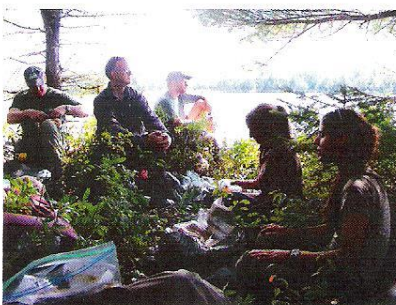




*It's in here somewhere....*

through the woods to the lake shore, where we proceeded to fill each canoe with two people and as much gear as was possible. I was a bit nervous in the canoes at first, but I soon realised that they were quite stable and I began to really enjoy the journey – so much so that I was slightly disappointed when we reached our destination. Where we landed, we had to fight our way ashore as the forest was fairly thick with scrub and young saplings. We found a clearing, stored all our equipment and had a well earned lunch.

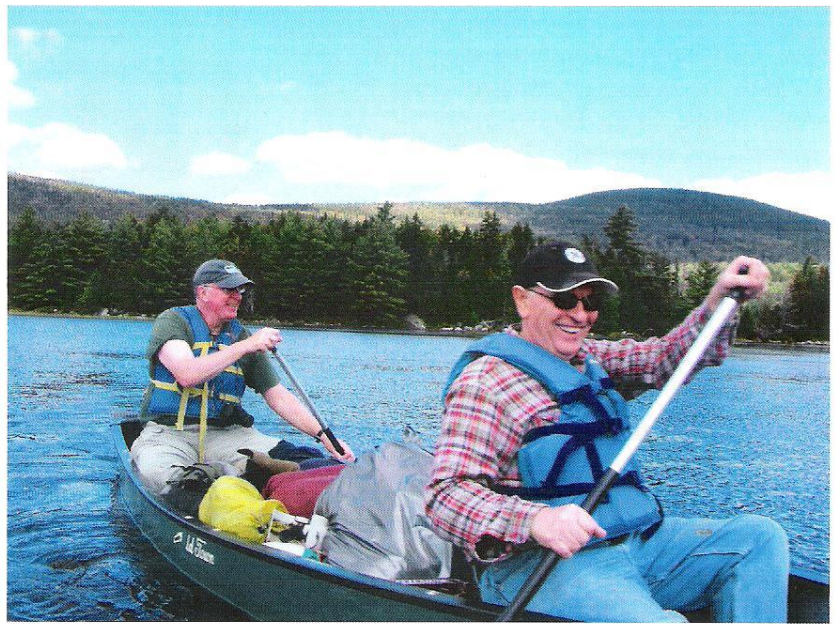
During the meal, the girls gave us the rundown on what was expected of us regarding safety at work etc. They were particularly strong on the 'leave no trace' message – we were given strict instructions on how to brush our teeth, how to wash, how to eat and even how to go to the toilet (which I won't go into but it was interesting to say the least). We were even told to pick up the crumbs after our meals, now it's hard to imagine what harm a few crumbs could do in a thousand square miles of wilderness, but as far as they were concerned, the place was to be left exactly as we found it.



After our meal, we got to work. Our first task was to clear and level three separate patches of ground, two of which were to accommodate a four-man tent, and the third, a bigger area, was to be for cooking and eating, and had to include a proper fire ring. When the cooking area was ready, the girls strung a tarpaulin shelter at one side of the clearing in case of rain. They also showed us how to go about putting up a 'bear hang'. This had to be located at least 100 metres from the camp site and was achieved by stretching a rope very tightly high up

sun was dropping low over the lake and surrounding mountains, and as it was autumn, the trees were turning startling shades of red and gold. The peace and quiet is something I will never forget.

Over the following days, we settled into a routine, up after 6am, breakfast at 7am and starting work at about 8.30am. As the campsite was completed on the first day, we turned our attention to making a trail. This was to link the campsite to an existing track about 1.2 km away through virgin forest. We had to clear a trail about a metre wide



*Transport*

between two trees, then throwing other ropes over it and tying the food sacks to one end and then pulling them up and securing the other end to a tree – all in order to ensure that bears couldn't get at the food from the ground or by climbing the trees.

We finished work at about 4.30pm and had some free time before dinner. Some used their time swimming in the lake, while others took to exploring the lake in the canoes, paddling the calm waters through narrow channels and reeds and seeing beaver lodges (though unfortunately no beavers). At that time in the evening, the

roughly following a route that had been marked with plastic ties. The trail meandered through the woods to avoid having to cut anything of any size.

Ari went first with the chainsaw, cutting the saplings down to about 1m high, and we followed with mattocks and spades etc., pulling the stumps out of the ground. This was much harder work than we had expected – despite the fact that the trees were only one or two inches thick, the roots were extremely deep and tough. After clearing, the surface had to be scraped, removing the organic layer to prevent new growth.



At the end of our first day on the trail, some of us followed the markers to the point where it met up with the existing track – it seemed a very long distance, and at times we had to struggle through dense undergrowth, so we had serious doubts about being able to finish the project in time. We needn't have worried though, because with our early starts (sometimes we would think it must be lunchtime, but then we'd look at our watches and see it was only 10.30am,) and the fact that we got quicker as we progressed meant we had no problem in completing the job.

Beth would cook and serve our evening meals at around 6pm. After dinner, we mostly sat around a big campfire and talked, and of course there was a fair amount of slagging and lots of laughter, but if you wanted a bit of peace and quiet, it was never far away– and it was nice to go and sit down by the lake to admire the beautiful night skies.

At one point on the track, it was decided that we needed a short section of bog bridge. To get the timber, Ari had to fell a quite substantial tree. The tree was then cut into eight foot lengths, and the bark was stripped off using sharp axes. The lengths were flattened on one side with the chainsaw and axes, and laid side by side on notched cross pieces – and the result was a pretty good bridge.

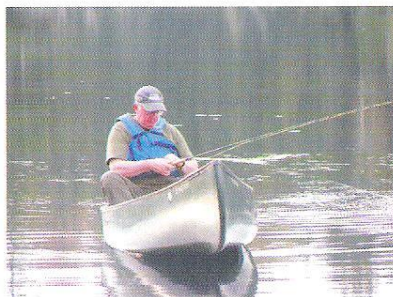
On the Friday morning, we started to break camp, and it took several hours to pack up all our camping gear, tools, food bags and all the rubbish we had accumulated, as well as taking down the bear hang. The last thing we did was to cover the areas where our tents had been pitched with dead leaves to hide all trace of our occupation. We loaded the canoes and set off, this time with much more confidence, but also with some sadness knowing most of us would



*Preparing short sections of bog bridge*

probably never be back to see the fruits of our labour.

We were picked up at the same spot we had been dropped and taken back to the lodges at Long Pond where we had a relaxing lunch, and then packed the car and set off for Little Lyford Pond lodges where we were to spend the night. We had a few hours to look around our new surroundings and soon found canoes on the shore of the lake. A few of us took advantage and set off out on the lake, Bill did a bit of fishing and actually caught something!



That evening, Ari and Beth joined us for a celebration dinner and we stayed up late into the night.

Next morning we were off again, this time heading for the town of Millinocket, close to the edge of Baxter State Park, where we intended to hike on Sunday and

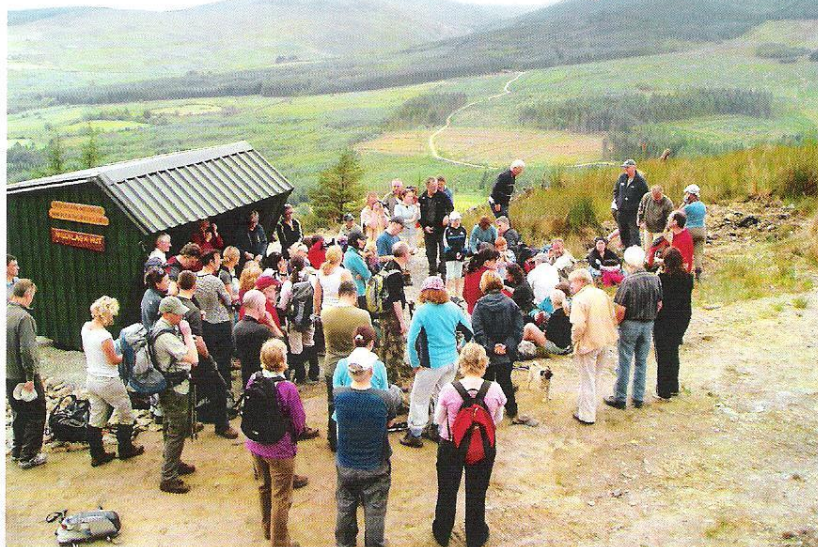
where Bill had an appointment to meet the head ranger to discuss trees or whatever it is two foresters talk about! We had a good night in the town and early next morning we drove into the park and spent four or five hours hiking to the top of Sentinel Mountain. Afterwards, we headed back to Millinocket, and after saying our goodbyes, we started our long drive back to Boston, stopping overnight once again in Freeport and of course paying another visit to LL Beans in the morning, after which we completed our journey to Boston airport.

In the immediate aftermath, all we could talk about was the great time we had, and when we might go back, but as time has passed, I'm not so sure. On this trip, everything went perfectly. Bill did a great job with the arrangements, the weather was absolutely perfect (if it had rained it would have been a totally different experience), the company was brilliant, there was not a cross word for the whole 10 days and the crack was mighty – we were laughing from start to finish. Personally, I think this was a one off that cannot be repeated, so I'm very happy just to cherish the memories.

Kevin Carroll



# The Glenwalk Mucklagh Hut



*The official launch of the new hut after completion of the work by Mountain Meitheal volunteers and members of the Glenwalk Hillwalking Club*

The Wicklow Way is the first and most well know of Ireland's long distance trails, walked by many and on the 'to do' list of many others. Traditionally accommodation along The Way was to be found in An Óige hostels, B&Bs and guest houses, but in more recent times Mountain Meitheal has provided an alternative type of accommodation. The Adirondack Hut was first designed and constructed in the US for those in need of a simple place to shelter from the weather. They are 3-sided huts with a roof and a floor and there are currently three of these huts along the Wicklow Way, constructed by Meitheal with another in Mayo along the Bangor Trail as part of the Wilderness Mayo project built in 2012.

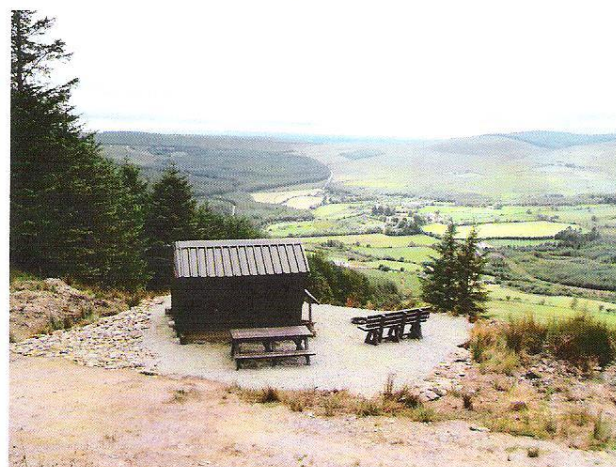
The third hut along the Wicklow Way was added in 2011 thanks to a generous donation from one of the biggest hill walking clubs in the country, Glenwalk Hillwalking Club based in Dublin. One of Glenwalk's long standing leaders, Ciarán King, who also lead walks for An Óige, died of cancer in July 2010. His loss was deeply felt by the club members and so the committee decided to mark his

passing in a way that club members could remember him and other members who have and will pass on, but not to leave a trace that would detract from the natural beauty of the Wicklow Mountains Ciarán loved so much. Rather than place a plaque in a beauty spot it was decided to ask Mountain Meitheal for a suggestion on how we thought a fitting memorial could be constructed. There were plans for a new hut at some stage but without the funding it would be a while coming. However, when Glenwalk approached Meitheal the solution seemed obvious – a Hut on the Wicklow Way to compliment the other two with a plaque inside in memory of Ciarán. It would be a hut that Glenwalk members could walk to and could help in its construction and maintenance.

Ian Kelly  
(Glenwalk  
Chairman) and  
Ray Williamson  
contacted Mountain

Meitheal's secretary who also happened to be a member of Glenwalk, and discussion began. Meitheal's committee selected three sites and Ray and Ian visited them to select the one they thought would suit the club best. The site at Mucklagh, overlooking the old Aughavanna Hostel of An Óige and now in new ownership, was selected due to the spectacular view over the valley to as far away as Carlow.

Construction began indoors in Glenealy to prefabricate the base and sides in preparation for removal to the site. On the next available weekend it was transported by truck along with its foundation supports to the site by truck, and Glenwalk members assisted Meitheal volunteers to carry the pieces from the truck to the site. Over the course of the weekend many people came to help and by the end of Sunday the hut was standing, painted and ready for use. The picnic table and fire ring came later but the log book was there from the start and entries have been written in it by people from countries far and wide. For some it is used as a picnic location, and by others it is a welcome shelter from the weather. But its main use is by people walking the Wicklow Way who need to stop overnight along their route. What a view to wake up to! We hope that all that pass that way enjoy the hut, and we'd like to think that Ciarán would have approved.





# Glendalough Trail Repairs

In September 2011 work began in Glendalough to repair the damage caused by the destructive flooding of 2010. The Wicklow Mountains National Park (WMNP) brought in the machinery to move the hundreds of tons of rock which surged down the river altering its original course. Much of the displaced rock was used to shore up the river banks and redirect the river to its pre-flood course. Along with the damage to the river, the zigzag track above the Miners' Village which runs parallel to the river was also damaged. By agreement with the WMNP, Mountain Meitheal undertook to repair the track. It is estimated that the track currently gets 50,000 visitors a year. The first and second phases of the project are now completed. The first phase was the construction of a ramp and buttress walls at the start of the track above the Miners' Village which included raising the level of the track to allow drainage. All the materials used were recycled from the flood damage. The second phase was the repair work on the zigzag track up the valley. About three quarters way up the track the flood waters had excavated three very large holes - the WMNP machine had partially filled these with rock but it still required another thirty six tons of rock to be flown in by helicopter. Mountain Meitheal has restored this section by filling the cavities

and constructing a stone pitched surface to form a durable and sustainable track capable of dealing with its large number of visitors. We have also reconstructed a section nearer the top of the track where it converges with the river bank; here we replaced a dangerous section of

While all this work was going on it was noticed that part of the lower track was being undermined and the machine had to be brought back to buttress up a section that was becoming a possible hazard to the public. Mountain Meitheal then constructed stone steps at the narrowest point to improve passage through this section without removing the challenge. The large boulders blocking the track at the narrow point had to be



*Meitheal volunteers hard at work on the zigzags above the Miners' Village as the public walk alongside.*

track by raising the track above the level of the river using large boulders which were already in the immediate vicinity. We also put in a number of steps where the track goes up to a higher level. By cleverly using the local materials this section of work looks like it has been part of the track forever.

split using our new drill and feathers. We have also constructed a number of waterbars and cleaned the drains to improve the water management in sections showing the effects of water erosion. To date the work has taken 1565 volunteer hours over 19 work days.

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## New Website under construction

Mountain Meitheal, like most modern organisations, has had a website which provided information for countless people at home and abroad for many years. This site was put together by Bill Murphy and his son, Finian, when a professionally commissioned website never

materialised. It provided exactly what Meitheal needed and we are indebted to Finian for the time and effort he put into the site over the years. However, in our anniversary year, we felt it was in need of an overhaul so over the last few months we have been working hard to modernise our

website. Liz Clooney has devoted much time and effort into creating a new look site to cater for the needs of Mountain Meitheal into the future. The site will go live with basic information to start with and over time other important components will become available. We trust you will enjoy using the new website and we welcome your feedback.





# Membership / Renewal Application Form

Please return this form with the requested details  
with your subscription to  
Pauline Ryder, 47 Synge Street, Dublin 8

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. (home): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone no. (work): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no. (mobile): \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (if under 18 years): \_\_\_\_\_

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? \_\_\_\_\_

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

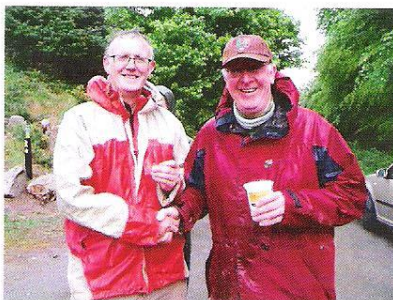
I wish to apply for / renew my membership of *Mountain Meitheal* and enclose my subscription of €20 (cash, PO or cheque) and agree to support the aims and objectives of the club.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chairmen

In 2009, long standing volunteer Robert Grandon joined Mountain Meitheal's committee. He not only joined as a committee member but he was elected as Chairman that year and re-elected each year until his term in office ended this November. Over the last three years Robert has steered the club through some big changes, the biggest was the introduction of Branch Status for interested groups countrywide; he has

worked tirelessly and well beyond the call of duty. We would like to thank Robert for the huge time and effort over the last three years



*Robert Grandon and Bill Murphy*

and wish him well in his retirement from this role. We are delighted, however, that he has agreed to remain on the committee to take on other duties working alongside the incoming chairman, Bill Murphy. Robert will continue to represent Mountain Meitheal on the Wicklow Way Partnership. Bill takes on his second tour of office in this role; it was he who established Mountain Meitheal 10 years ago this year and was our first Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen!



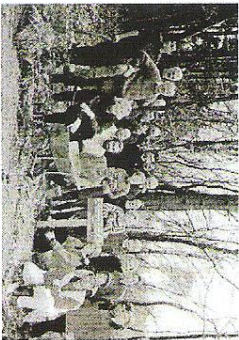
# Mountain Meitheal's very first Newsletter in 2005 - history in the making!



Mountain Meitheal is a group of volunteers who work on the conservation and maintenance of mountain and forest paths and tracks.

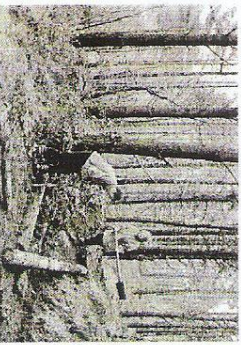
In other countries volunteers undertake path and track maintenance – often supporting the work of professional crews in national parks or national forests and make a real contribution to conserving the environment by maintaining the track network.

Mountain Meitheal Volunteers (meitheal is the Gaelic word for the work gangs that went from farm to farm to help with the harvest in years gone by) are attempting to counteract some of the pressures that are evident on our mountains by working with the various landowners, including Duchas (the National Park Service), Coillte (The Irish Forestry Board) and with private landowners.



## Mountain Meitheal Objectives

- To protect and conserve the mountain and forest environment by repairing, maintaining and building mountain and forest tracks while
  - maintaining the challenge for recreational users
  - striving to preserve a sense of solitude and a 'wilderness' experience
- To spread an awareness of sustainable recreation
- To provide enjoyable projects and activities for its volunteers

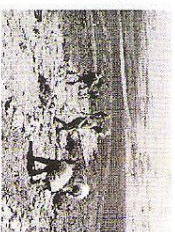
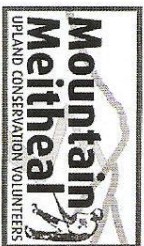
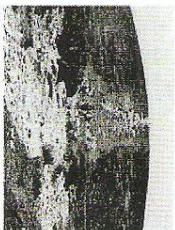


Mountain Meitheal is supported by Coillte, Mountaineering Council of Ireland, Wicklow Upstream Council and Wicklow Mountains National Park.

If you would like to help or make a contribution to our work please contact:

Mountain Meitheal needs volunteers.  
 Bill Murphy (Chair): 086-259 3518.  
 email: mupb100@eircom.net  
 Gay Neesham (Hon. Sec): 01 490 3112.  
 email: gneesham@eircom.ie

Frances Hannan (Project Management Secretary) Tel: 01 832 9070  
 Coim O'Callaghan (Hon. Treasurer) Tel: 01 286 3321  
 25 Ripley Hill, Kilnary Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow



## Case Study Djouce Summit Path

### The Problem

The Djouce path has developed into a scar that can be seen from many miles – in some cases the "path" has now widened to over 14 metres. Over the last few decades, feet have trampled the vegetation with the result that the underlying peat is exposed and the ground is eroded to bare rock in some places.

### The Solution

The first step in solving the problem was to limit walking to the already exposed and durable rock surface. With research we found that the use of track definitions such as **score walls** or **tip up** limit walkers to a track. (A study in alpine areas of the White Mountains of New Hampshire found that score walls limited over 85% of walkers to the track). These are easy to construct and are a low impact solution and the least obtrusive on the landscape. (A further study found that over 84% of users found score walls *unobtrusive in the mountains*.)

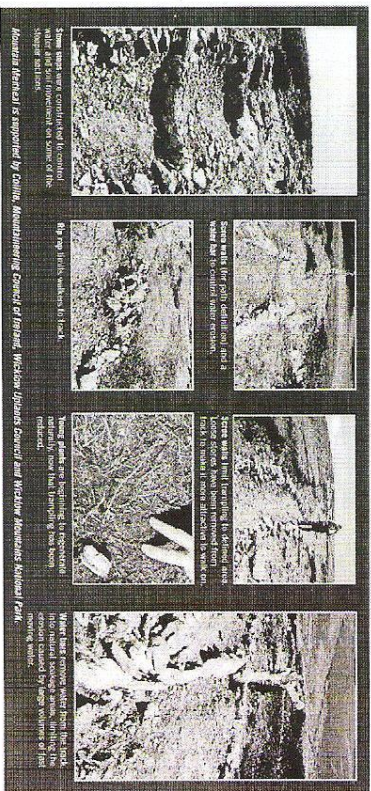
Once the track is defined there is a need to control water – the biggest problem on Irish mountain tracks. For this, we use **waterbars** and **water dips**. Water bars and dips divert water from the track, which limits the erosion caused by large volumes of fast moving water. Stone was used to construct these waterbars as it is a natural material and is the lowest visual impact solution.

Stone steps were also constructed to control water and soil movement on some of the steeper sections where waterbars were not suitable.

Following on from limiting path spread and water damage, the next element will be to begin the re-establishment of vegetation. In future it is hoped to replant areas with container grown heather and/or transplanted squares. Examination has shown that some plants are regenerating naturally now that boot trampling damage is reduced.

### The Volunteers

Most of this work was undertaken by volunteers with assistance and co-operation from Duchas – the National Park Service. Before work began a small group from Mountain Meitheal met with the National Park staff to discuss options and agree a strategy for the project. During the project Duchas visited the site to help with direction and advice and to give a helping hand. With a very open discussion we are confident that we found the best option for this mountain track and a vehicle where conservation minded users can make a contribution to the protection of the natural mountain environment.



1. The Djouce path has developed into a scar that can be seen from many miles – in some cases the "path" has now widened to over 14 metres. Over the last few decades, feet have trampled the vegetation with the result that the underlying peat is exposed and the ground is eroded to bare rock in some places.

2. A close-up of a stone waterbar.

3. A close-up of a stone water dip.

4. A close-up of a stone step.

5. A close-up of a stone waterbar.

Mountain Meitheal is supported by Coillte, Mountaineering Council of Ireland, Wicklow Upstream Council and Wicklow Mountains National Park.