

10 Year Anniversary

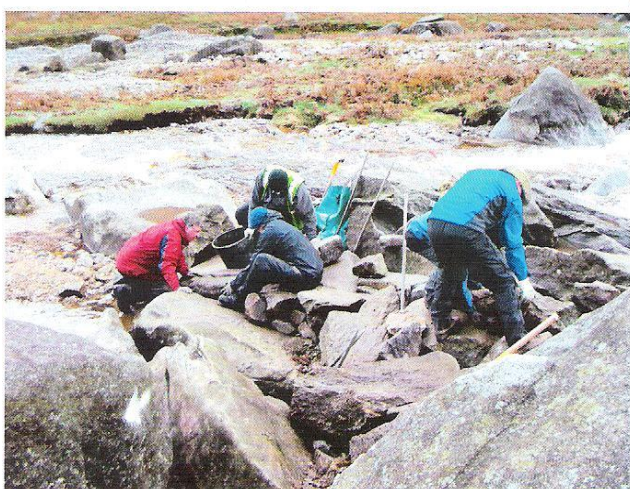
2012 is an especially important year for Mountain Meitheal. It was ten years ago, during the International Year of the Mountain, that Bill Murphy of *Coillte Meitheal* opened up the membership to include the hillwalking community to give everyone a chance to be involved in giving back to the mountains. Subsequently a day of trail repair work was organised for the Wicklow Way in Laragh. The 34 volunteers who turned out that day completed 600m of trail clearance and upgrading of a section of the Wicklow Way. Towards the end of 2002 a committee was formed

formalising Mountain Meitheal as a separate entity with Bill as the first chairman. With the dedication and the commitment of this group, Mountain Meitheal took on more project work as well as sponsoring surveys of paths in the Wicklow Mountains and with Heritage Council sponsorship organised a survey and recommendations for repair to the Devil's Ladder on Carrauntuohill. This showed the strategic imagination and philosophy of the group. Throughout the years since 2002 Mountain Meitheal has continued to pursue best practice (e.g. two published editions of the



Trail Repair Handbook) when it comes to path repair and conservation of the uplands. But Mountain Meitheal

would be nothing without the continued dedication of all its volunteers. It's their commitment, good humour and generosity of spirit that stands out as the greatest achievement of Mountain Meitheal. With this in mind we look forward to the next ten years and beyond, to the continued presence and relevance of Mountain Meitheal's Volunteer work for the mountains.



No. of volunteer Hours = 2549
No. of individual Volunteers = 153
No. of work days = 30
Average no. of Volunteers per work day=18

2011 Statistics and Achievements

2011 Work & Achievements

Completed repair of section of Wicklow Way at Knockree.

Published 2nd edition of *The Mountain Meitheal Handbook of Trail Design and Construction*.

Commenced repair of zig-zag trail above Miners Village at Glendalough.

Constructed Andirondak type shelter at Mucklagh.

Won 2nd prize at the ERA ECO Awards.

Received the ERA Certificate of Honour for Walking and Environmental Issues.

Repaired the bridge on the Dargle River at Glensoulan.



Karl Boyle (MI), Lis Nielsen (ERA), Robert Grandon (Mountain Meitheal)

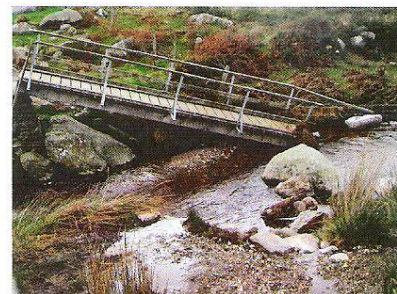
ERA Prize

Mountain Meitheal received recognition for their work from the **European Ramblers Association** in 2011. We entered the Eco Award competition, promoted by the ERA and sponsored by GDF Suez. Early in 2011 we were contacted by Karl Boyle, Chief Officer of Mountaineering Ireland. He encouraged us to enter the competition as he felt it suited our aims regarding our environmental work in the mountains. We decided to enter the competition and submit the work we did for the Dublin Mountains Partnership as our entry. We chose our work on the Cruagh Woods Spur (Bogbridge), the Cruagh Woods (Raised Treadway) and Three Rock (Raised Stonepitched Treadway) for our entry. Shay Walsh prepared a very comprehensive dossier of information, including photographs, maps and technical details and statistics about the three projects for our entry. We completed the application form and sent the complete package to the ERA. Then we waited for some time and actually put all thoughts about our entry to the back of our minds and got on with our ongoing busy work projects.

We were greatly surprised and delighted to receive news in August 2011 to tell us that we had taken second prize in the competition. 17 entries in total competed for the prize. The ERA has members in 30 countries. We were the smallest group to enter. The group from Germany that took first prize has 90,000 members. Just to prove that a dedicated, committed and focused group like Mountain Meitheal can achieve great things the prize of €1,000 and Certificate was deserved recognition for the dedicated and hard work of all Mountain Meitheal Volunteers. On 23rd October Lis Nielsen, President of ERA, accompanied by Karl Boyle, visited us at our project in Glendalough where she warmly addressed the gathering of Volunteers and presented us with our prize and certificate. To mark her visit we presented her with a Mountain Meitheal T-shirt, hoodie and cap. (We later sent her on copies of our trails repair handbook as well). Lis kindly brought some chocolates which were swiftly devoured on the day. All in all it was a wonderful tribute to Mountain Meitheal Volunteers. And we are delighted to say that we came second again in 2012 with a second submission. Well done to all who volunteered!

Wicklow Way Partnership

In 2011 Mountain Meitheal continued with and expanded its philosophy of partnership by joining with others to set up the Wicklow Way Partnership. The aim of the group is to bring together organisations with an interest in and a dedication to better management of the Wicklow Way, (Ireland's 1st and premier national waymarked way). We joined with Coillte Teo., Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Partnership, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Dublin Mountains Partnership to achieve this. A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed and signed by all. To prove its effectiveness as a group and with regular meetings and consultation the Partnership drew up a Strategic Plan for the Wicklow Way, completed a reroute of the Wicklow Way in Ballinastoc and upgraded the Way from Tibbradden Mtn down to the Glencullen Road before the end of 2011. With Mountain Meitheal Volunteers' assistance the Partnership repaired and restored the badly damaged bridge, returning it to its place over the Dargle River on the Wicklow Way at Glensoulan in time for the busy 2011 Christmas season.



To have a dedicated management partnership for the Wicklow Way is very important and already it has proved its effectiveness.

Hut Talk – Brusher's Gap, MM Volunteers take a bow



The hut at Brusher's Gap on the Wicklow Way (WW) was constructed by Mountain Meitheal in 2009. Examining the entries that visitors made to the latest visitors' book two things are clear. Firstly, visitors are unanimous in their praise for the merits of the 'oasis' that the hut offers them in all kinds of weather and secondly, visitors are crying out for more. Over the seven month period from July 2010–January 2011 approximately 300 entries were made each proclaiming their appreciation and thanks for the benefits they derive from its existence. A third of all entries are from travellers outside Ireland from countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Italy, Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and the USA. Many contributors write in verse, some with humour, others draw and etch but one thing we can be very sure of is that all hold the Wicklow Way in high esteem. The collection of the comments taken together tell a wonderful story of the people passing

through and of the fun, the friendship, the self-discovery, the source of achievement but especially the peace and solitude that walkers find from using the WW. Let me share with you the joy that is to be had from browsing through these good tidings and give you a glimpse into what they, the users, hikers, travellers, have to say about this tranquil haven.

The humour

'Jim brought us here on the way home from the West of Dublin to be the first visitors of 2011. Alec ate all the chocolate. (Big Al). 1st January.'

'I lost my glasses and I injured my leg but the view is super! Perfect!' Alex

'Why is 6 afraid of 7? Because 7 ate 9 © Greetings from Gummersbach' Christoph & Jan (Germany)

The verse

'Hello!

Once upon a time there was a Wicklow Way

If we could, we would definitely stay

*Look ahead to see the sea,
And you'll be amazed just like me.
Treat the Wicklow Way as your friend,
For it will never end.'*

(5 youngsters from Belgium. Els, Frederic, Dennis, Stefan, Jue).

'Great spot, haven't seen anything like this on the mountains in Ireland. Eco Plastic are fantastic, Ha! Ha! ☺'

The hardcore

'First New Year's Wicklow Way Hikers 2011. Yes we are hardcore people! Clonagall to Marley Park about 90K done 40ish to go...YAY! HAPPY NEW YEAR! Ok quick reflection: WW hike is much harder than expected. Two tips: wear well-worn comfortable boots and carry as little gear as possible e.g. 10Kgs or so. Go layered with dry breathable clothing, and finally there's a makeshift hut of a transformed horse box with table inside which was great as a hut resting stop for food etc. beside Aughavannagh on the trail at Km 75 East West Mapping Lugnaquilla & Glendalough Grid Ref: 074861 at the track junction inside Carrickashane Forest.'

'After 5 days of hiking through Ireland in beautiful weather, we knew, we have the luck of the Irish! We fell in love with this country and this view proves it once again. Thank you Ireland and all the fantastic Irish folk! We will be back....' Kristiaan & Sabine (Belgium)

'Sat here for a short break on the way. Nice little hut, great view and great air! The Wicklow Way is beautiful and the people on it are great! Thanks a lot!' Anat & Yuval (Israel) Joringel (Netherlands)

'Surprise to see the hut on our 2nd night on the Wicklow Way. Need more of them. Had our evening meal of pasta and Nan bread and a cup of tea + biscuits. Went further to camp, too many midges!!!

45KM done 87KM left. Ger & Bid, Pat (69) and Stephen.

'Hut is a godsend.' Ulrius, Ann & Gerry 2nd day of WW Journey.

'Great walk, 9 boys from Dublin having a ball walking the WW' Tony, Jack, Dave, Sean, Andrew, Gary, Maurice, Paul, Gerry.

'We weren't hard-core enough to camp out in the wilderness but if there were more spots like this, we would definitely consider it! Thank you to the developers of the WW and Coillte for making the route so pretty and walker-friendly. Keep it up everybody!!' Niamh and a very sore and tired Laura.

'Everything was great! Thanks for keeping this track in a good # ? don't know the word "Versassing /Zustand" = condition. The Irish folks are very friendly! Greetings to Dick (GALA in Rathdrum), hostel owner in Rathdrum, the old man living near the iron bridge with the two BIG dogs, strange hippie/Mr Spirit in the souvenir store in Glendalough, the shop owner in Laragh. And no greetings to the Midges! Sebi, Peer, Bashi, Hamburg, Germany.

'I had to count which day it was, lost notice really. Slept at the river near Laragh, beautiful spot. Tip: for people heading to Glendalough. Be sure to climb the Camaderry Mountain. A track leaves behind the education centre. There is no route set out, no people there, only a pack of deer at the top. Could see the coastline for miles. Absolutely unreal!' Robert

The inspired

'We are all dutifully and enjoyably practicing leaving no trace – except our foot prints!' Ingrid M

'Group of 50+ a little heavy after the Christmas but another year, another diet. Lots more walks pg. This is really lovely to come across and we will have our picnic here

next time we come. Forget the economy, forget the government. Live & Enjoy. Walking is free, free, free!

The regulars

'Two local ladies shedding the pounds and eating choc at same time. Having a therapeutic walk with sis and woodie the dog.'

'Live on road to Laragh–Lough Dan. Out for a walk. Took a rest at the hut. View great as always. No sound makes us realise how lucky we are to live here. Lovely day, sunny. Clare & Nuala

The first timers

'Bloody knackered 25K is definitely too much for two newbies like us. This was one of the many greatly appreciated rests. Cheers!' Conor and David.

'45K down, hopefully only about 4 to go, but well worth stopping here to take in the view and rest for a while. Great idea, let's have more of them!! Thanks!' Ed and Sara

The day trippers

'Amazing hut! With my father and step mum, walking from Enniskerry to Glendalough ... this hut is a welcomed rest! A lovely way to spend my last day of youth!!' (unsigned).

The over-nighters

'When I woke it was a lovely morning and the hut made it even better. I was able to eat and relax at the same time which I love doing. Had a lovely and comfortable sleep but too bad there was lots of spiders (licking lips). The hut was a great idea and I think there should be lots more around Wicklow.' Luke (Ireland)

'Here we came, here we warmed ourselves at the fire, enjoyed the landscape while taking a rest for the night in the hut. Very good idea, it has been a nice surprise to us to discover the hut, thanks! Two suggestions:

-indicate the next hut with a widespread coordinated system
-something to sweep the ground.
Anyway great place!' Jocelyn

'Great initiative! Thanks a lot.' Tanguy 'Fament, Merci! Thibaut (France)

'Hey Ireland, this hut is a very nice birthday present for me. Today it's my 19th birthday and it was very cold and rainy. The view is not very nice because the clouds are around. [Next day] Today it's cloudy and the wind blows. The view is better than yesterday and the hut was a wonderful bed.' Greetings from Essen, (Germany).

'Spent the night here – Absolutely brilliant hut! Water and windproof, clean and tidy. Hikers please keep it like that! We started a small fire, then put the white stone into the embers and dried our socks on it. Silent night New splendid breakfast – THANKS to Mountain Meitheal for this gorgeous hut! Max, France, Henning (Germany)

The fund raisers

'Running 26Km from Crone Car Park. Doing it for Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue, Wow!' Stephen, Mark, Donald, Rebecca.

The well wishers

'Just came to check it out, cool place, very impressed and will use it with scouts sometime.' Emily, Aoife and Jasper

'A piece of heaven! But requires a second table due to popularity.' Sylvia and Trish from Poppies of Enniskerry.

'My soul gives thanks for this beautiful world. A solitary moment of bliss...'

'Tranquillity in a time of change, Peace to all!' Donal & Jude

In winter

'First snow day of the year and we're here.' 179th Huntstown Scouts!!

'Big Whirr world, 30cm snow in a virgin landscape. Perfect. Into the wild! Many thanks.' Marcal W. (Netherlands)

In summer

'Sunday 29th August, beautiful blue sky – had lunch here and enjoyed the lovely views. Thank you to all of you who built this – great work!'

Year end

'We went walking up here today and had an amazing walk today. Thank you whoever came up with the idea. Happy New Year Everyone (Mazie 6, Conor 8, Áine, Donal, Sue and Declan). 31st December'

JP Malone's edition of 'The Complete Wicklow Way – A step-by-step Guide first published in 1988 contains the following passage. "Anyone with a sense of history soon feels the long centuries behind Wicklow's landscape, but across these hills have marched many figures who left no trace of their passage, save perhaps an obscure place name, a bit of folklore, or some forgotten volumes in a dusty library. A gentleman with the almost too appropriate name of J.B. Trotter seems to have been the first to walk for pleasure in Wicklow, or at least the first to record his journeys, in his Walks in Ireland .1812-1817. in a series of letters." (Page 23).'

Here are some of the comments from visitors from across the globe – i.e. globe trotters – making journeys through Wicklow:

AUSTRALIA 'Great way to spend my last two days in Ireland & celebrate my 30th Bday!! Just a quick two days Knockree to Rockwood, Rockwood to Glendalough. Left a bit of chocolate in the box. Instant energy ... Enjoy.' Joes E, Western Australia

BELGIUM '80Km behind and we are still on the way to Dublin'. Regards from Berlin

'Day 3 of our WW. It was a beautiful day with lots of sun and a little bit of rain. Our feet hurts but the nice view takes it away. We come from the other hut at Glenmalure yesterday, too bad there isn't one waiting for us tomorrow. It's a lovely hut but the view is better here. See ya Dublin! 3 girls from Belgium Anneka, Marjan, Jakeba.

CANADA 'Bons baisers de Montréal.' Nicolas

DENMARK 'Ate lunch here. Nice view! The Wicklow Way is beautiful and it could be nice with more of these huts along the way, for those who spent more time to walk it and does not reach city every night!! Greetings from Denmark. Anja & Alexander'

ECUADOR 'Un via perfecto para un desempleado como yo, soleado y tranquilo'. Silva

CZECH REPUBLIC 'We are 4 Czech people travelling on Wicklow Way. Great idea to make here a hut. Thank you!'

FRANCE 'Ah que c'est bon l'Irlande et les irlandaises sur tout!!! Magnifique paysages... Nous ... 2 parigo et 1 breton'

GERMANY 'Hey folks, this hut is awesome! Should be on a map or so... We don't have our sleeping bags with us unfortunately – so we have to continue our way to the next hostel. Wicklow way is legendary!' Nico, Fabian, Mutze.

'And all we want to do is wander through the heather on the hills. WW is perfect and absolutely necessary to digest a good Irish Breakfast. Blessed Be! Sylvia & Chris (Cologne)

ITALY 'An Italian and a San Marino guy are looking at this beautiful view into the wild. A PRESTO!' Vick and Luca.

'Bubu é stato qui! Bafara wonderful Irland!' from Santarcangelo di Romagna, Italy.

NETHERLANDS 'We really enjoy walking WW.' Lydia and Marso

'Just passing ...not sleeping but next time I will! Enjoy your stay. © Licke

POLAND 'Marek and this stronger guy are here at 5.30 pm but it is totally windy. We are trying to get to the finish of the Wicklow Way but it is not easy. We are glad to be here writing a few simple words for the universe of humanity.' Marek

SLOVAKIA 'Thanks Bohuš for nice place! We love DUBAKY and the shelter is very nice and clean. Everybody keep it in order. Thanks to the organisers.' Alan & Robert CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

SPAIN 'Grand little hut! Muchas gracias' Maua and Stefan

NEW ZEALAND Kiaora! Cuzzies! Awesome views, great hut for tired feet if only I had some beers. Michelle & Todd, Christchurch.

SOUTH KOREA 'My name is Tina ♥. Here I am wonderful with rain!! My name is Julee. Brilliant, Terrific!!! I love the Wicklow Way!!

UK 'Perfect timing. Weather coming in a bit. Loving the Wicklow Way & Irish hospitality.' Brightonites!

USA 'Amazing walk! Gorgeous scenery. Great weather.' The Luther Family, Denver, Colorado.

'Debra & William of Buffalo, New York, USA, on our way from Lough Dan to the monastic ruins at Glendalough. Inspiring spot and views here.'

Final words

'Great shelter on a wet and windy day: Thanks a mill Bren & Dennis (the Brats). PS Will all you silly people stop asking for a litter bin – TAKE YOUR RUBBISH HOME WITH YOU! NOBODY WANTS IT, OK!

'Céard í an tslí chun an teachín liath. Beimid go deo ag fiafraí.'
Liam agus Tomás

Maine Trip

Last September, eight members of Mountain Meitheal headed off to the remote woods of Maine to spend a few days doing some trail work. The trip had been organised by Bill Murphy in conjunction with some friends of his in the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). So it was a very excited bunch who met up in the early hours of September 16th at Dublin Airport. There were seven of us there: Bill Murphy, Robert Grandon, Anto Monaghan, Stephen O'Shea, Gay and Fergus Curran, and myself. The eighth was Federico Sogaro who was already in Maine visiting his parents and who would join us when we got there. The flight passed quickly and within an hour of landing we had picked up our car and were heading north through the Boston suburbs.

We drove as far as Freeport, where Bill had arranged for us to meet his AMC contact Andrew Norkin and his wife Joy, so after checking into our motel, we headed out and found the restaurant where we had a great evening with them. In Freeport, there happens to be a store called LL Beans, they are one of America's biggest stockists of outdoor gear, the store is huge and is open 24 hours, so this is where we found ourselves at 7.30 the following morning, running around like kids in a candy store. When Bill eventually managed to get us out, we continued on our way to our destination at Gorman

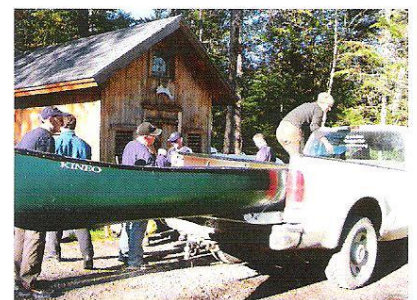


Gorman Chairback Lodges

Chairback lodges where we would stay for the next two nights. The lodges are situated on the shore of Long Pond and the whole area is absolutely beautiful. We had only settled in when Federico arrived with his parents, so it was a happy reunion as we hadn't seen him for quite a while.

Being free the next day, we decided to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail, so after a hearty breakfast, we set off. Well, the trail turned out to be a lot more difficult than we expected – and what we thought would be a Sunday stroll turned into an eight hour slog! Saying that, it was really enjoyable and it gave us a great first impression of the area. That night over dinner, we were introduced to the trail supervisors Ariana and Beth who would be our mentors for the following few days.

The next morning, we were up early getting organised for our real adventure – the pickup truck was loaded with everything but the kitchen sink (actually I think we had one of those too), canoes, tents, tools, bags and boxes of food, as well as all our own backpacks, sleeping bags, etc.



After checking that we hadn't forgotten anything, we set off on what seemed an endless drive on dirt tracks. We were dropped on the side of a remote forest road with all our equipment and food which we then had to carry