

Issue No 7

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December 2007

A ZIG, A ZAG AND A NEW BRIDGE TOO

“The Glenmalure Project” is a cooperation between the landowner and recreational mountain users which has been a resounding success.



Mountain Meitheal's willing band of volunteers started work on 11th November 2006. With now customary gusto, new drains were dug and water bars added to the old stalkers' trail built for the Parnell family in Glenmalure. Leading up Carrawaystick and on to Lugnaquilla, it is situated on land owned by farmer Pat Dunne and is better known to hikers as "The Zig Zags". After the winter break, more drains were added. On a glorious sunny April day, the rumblings of a mechanical digger



broke the tranquillity of this beautiful spot. Work had started on moving giant boulders on the bed of the Carrawaystick River in advance of building the new footbridge. Too big to move by hand, the club broke with tradition and borrowed a local farmer and his JCB to help out shifting these rocks. The bridge, designed by club member Phil O'Neill, started taking shape under the watchful eyes of Gerry Patterson (pictured left), joint

project manager with Phil (pictured right). Taking most of the year and with all the temperamental weather the mountains could throw at them, volunteers turned out to completely build the new bridge and associated access paths entirely by hand. Gerry Patterson, an old hand at bridge

building explains: "We picked the location of the bridge at a point in the river that best suited the path that would lead off from the bridge. A lovely aspect of this location was the river bed. It has beautiful granite boulders that the water has worn smooth and is bounded on both sides by an old sycamore and a European larch that lends a sylvan quality to the location." Complimenting the volunteers, he says: "it was great sharing the bridge building with so many lovely people, all of whom can now say 'I helped to build the footbridge over the Carrawaystick River in 2007.'" Gerry adds: "A wooden bridge was picked because the general opinion was that wood is a beautiful medium to work with and it would be the most fitting for the location". At the last count, 1,860 volunteer hours have been spent on this trail and bridge project and it was completed by the club in partnership with Mr Dunne and Wicklow Uplands Council. Next year, at the start of our new season, we will spend a few days wrapping up this successful project. Then the club will move on to pastures new with yet more worthwhile projects in Wicklow and hopefully beyond.



Mountain Meitheal is the first volunteer trail repair club in Ireland. It will soon be six years old. The club sets its own agenda and is master of its own destiny! Club volunteers always come first in every project undertaken, no matter where or who we work with. Here are some more **firsts**:-



- We undertook the first trail survey in the Wicklow Mountains.
- We built the Lough Dan access route at Oldbridge.
- We carried out Ireland's first reversal path repairs to the Wicklow Way in Glensoulan.
- We won the top award in the **CVI-ESB** Community Environment Awards for work on the Djouce summit trail.
- We undertook the first feasibility study for repairs to the Devil's Ladder route up Ireland's highest mountain, Carrauntoohill.
- We built the first Adirondack style mountain shelter on the Mullacor section of the Wicklow Way.
- We published Ireland's first trail repair guide.
- We are founder members of "Leave No Trace Ireland" which is responsible for outdoors ethics education programmes adopted by Government Departments and other national bodies.
- We have recently completed the new bridge and access route on the Zig Zags in Glenmalure.
- We have repaired over five kilometres of trails in five years. Over 7,000 hours of volunteer time have been spent working on these great projects.

None of this happens without you!

Without volunteers, nothing would have been done. This Christmas please give yourselves a great big pat on the back. The work might often go unacknowledged and sometimes it seems as though others may take credit for these projects. Reports in the media don't always paint the full picture. However no matter what is or isn't said, your efforts and support are truly appreciated. Volunteers do their work because they want to, not because they have to. The club is looking forward to many more years of activity conserving and protecting Ireland's mountains.

We wish you all a very happy new year!

Cabin's Log 2007



The Wicklow Way is Ireland's premier long distance walking route with thousands of local and overseas

visitors using it every year. Proof of this can be found in the log book kept in Ireland's first Adirondack style shelter built by Mountain Meitheal volunteers. In fact this is so well used we are now on our second log book since August 2006. There are hundreds of kind and complimentary comments left by visitors from all over Ireland, Europe, and beyond. There is the ongoing mystery of David Lloyd, a hiker missing somewhere in the imaginations of many foot sore travellers which would make a good plot for David Lynch's next movie. They also leave biscuits and chocolate for others. Here's a nice entry from January 2007:

*A place apart, to warm my heart
A place of peace, to gladden my soul
When life has torn my spirit apart
These hills restore me, and make me whole*

*A simple hut, voluntarily built
Just a shelter, a place to rest
But it's as snug as an eider quilt
It's welcome treats me as a favoured guest*

*If you're not bitter, leave no litter
If your heart's not dark, leave no mark
A scar is forever, so make one never
It's not your place, leave no trace!*

Altogether another huge Meitheal success.

The Tool Talk

You have all been on a work day so you know what this is about . . . well could you do it? It's normally delivered at the beginning of the day when we are upbeat and clean. For many it's their first introduction to mattocks and hazel hoes and the proper usage of a spade and shovel. It's also the time when the uninitiated are told to bend their knees, not to lift things that are too heavy and for many it's the following morning, as they gingerly raise themselves from the bed, that those words of wisdom come flooding back. On each work day the plan is to have one leader and one deputy. The deputy will then lead the following week and so on. The training for this post is extensive (ahem!), the pay non-existent and the abuse beyond your wildest dreams. On the plus side, you get to call lunch time and home time. So if you think you might like to have a go in 2008, why not let one of the Committee know. This year they are:

Shay Walsh Chair	087 238 2581
Gerry Patterson Vice Chair	086 855 5799
Chris Avison Secretary	087 263 8243
Bill Murphy Treasurer	086 259 1518
Ciara Hinksman	086 319 9515
Angela Sweeney	086 807 2192
Frank Leetch	087 678 1818

or log onto www.pathsavers.org and click on "Contact Us"

Congratulations



The following members earned their fabulous Berghaus fleeces recently for their contributions to the club's voluntary work:- Kevin Carroll, Milo Kane, Frank Leetch, Cliona Ní Bhréartúin, Tricia Sheehy-Skeffington and Kiervi Riou.



Five Mountain Meitheal members became Leave No Trace Trainers: Ciara Hinksman, Robert Farrelly, Robert Grandon, Cliona Ní Bhréartúin and Angela Sweeney. These five join the

ranks of the club's existing three LNT Master Educators, Shay Walsh, Helen Lawless and Darach O'Murchú



The annual "Golden Mattock awards in recognition of service to the conservation of Ireland's upland trails were presented at the Christmas party to: Gerry

Patterson, Phil O'Neill, Frances Hannon and Chris Avison.



McMeitheal's Annual Christmas Party

Another enjoyable party took place last weekend at Avondale

House Rathdrum Co Wicklow. Organised by Ciara Hinksman and Inma Chincoa, proceedings started with a hike in Glenmalure followed by a guided tour of the house. A mulled wine reception preceded an excellent dinner after which Shay Walsh gave a photo presentation. Party goers were then invited to participate in a hugely enjoyable and loud African percussion session before commencing a long night's dancing to music kindly provided by Frank Leetch. Next day, after breakfast, some of the more able bodied folk went for a walk around Avondale's beautiful grounds. Many thanks to all the many contributors to the party's success.

(Kilts Optional)



- We're lovin' it!

NEWS BRIEFS

The Leave No Trace message is now being rolled out across the whole of Ireland from the offices of



Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) The Stableyard, Barnetts

Demesne, Malone Road Belfast BT9 5PB. Beverley Pierson is the new Project Officer. E-mail: beverley@leavenotraceireland.org Telephone: +44(0)2890303930

www.leavenotraceireland.org

Don't miss your opportunity to get a beautiful new fleece from Berghaus. All you have to do is be



a current member of Mountain

Meitheal and simply do 20 hours of volunteer work! If you have not already received yours, just wait for the exciting new programme starting in February 2008!

Meitheal AGM

At the recent AGM, Chairman Shay Walsh reviewed yet another successful year for Mountain Meitheal. Treasurer Bill Murphy gave his financial report and circulated audited accounts showing that the club's finances are in good shape. However expenses are up. (see chart showing main items in Euro)

A big thank you!

The continued generosity of these clubs helps tremendously: Irish Ramblers Club, Glenwalk, Countrywide Hillwalkers Association, HF Walking Club and the Wayfarers. Mountain Meitheal's sincere thanks goes both to their members and to every other unnamed person who has kindly contributed to our volunteering efforts.

Where the money goes

