

Friends of St. Declan's Way

E-zine

Issue 1

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Welcome

Welcome to the first e-zine of the Friends of St. Declan's Way. This is a new network for all those who wish to support and promote walking along St. Declan's Way, the ancient pilgrimage route from Cashel to Ardmore. Knockmealdown Active in County Tipperary and Knockmealdown Mountains Forum in County Waterford have joined forces for this venture and have already linked with many interested communities and individuals along the route in Ardmore, Cahir, Cashel and places in between. We aim to make St. Declan's Way a premier pilgrimage and walking route, building on previous work by Ardmore Enterprise Coop in the 1990s, when the route was approved as a long-distance walk. Our e-zine will be published and circulated quarterly and aims to keep readers updated on events and activities associated with St. Declan's Way.

The Gathering 2013 Pilgrimage Walk: July 24th—July 28th

Knockmealdown Active, with the help of Knockmealdown Forum, are organising a 5-day walk of St. Declan's Way as part of The Gathering. The walk will start in Cashel on July 24th, the feast day of St. Declan, and will conclude in Ardmore on Sunday July 28th coinciding with the final day of the Ardmore Pattern Festival. It is the first organised full-length walk in many years and will be led by experienced walkers. Knockmealdown Active can provide information on accommodation along the route and will arrange transport over the course of the walk. More details are on the [Knockmealdown Active](#) and [The Gathering](#) websites. We would like to acknowledge the support of South Tipperary & Waterford County Councils towards this event under The Gathering Fund.



National Trails Office assesses St. Declan's Way



Darragh O' Sullivan of the National Trails Office conducted an assessment of the proposed route over four days from February 4th-8th. This is an important step in seeking NTO approval for St. Declan's Way. In spite of inclement weather and snow, Darragh set off across the Knockmealdown Mountains on Tuesday 5th, accompanied by Kevin O' Donnell of Knockmealdown Active. He was welcomed into Waterford by Tommy Veale and

met Chairperson Gerard Walsh in Lismore. Dick Lincoln of Ardmore guided Darragh on the final day of his assessment. We are now awaiting the NTO's report and will circulate details in the next edition. Our photo left shows Darragh (centre) with Tommy Veale of KMD Mountains Forum (left) and Conor Ryan of South Tipperary Development Company (right).

For further details on the Friends of St. Declan's Way contact Conor Ryan, Conservation and Trails Animator, South Tipperary Development Company. Phone: 087 7378123; E-mail conorjryan@gmail.com

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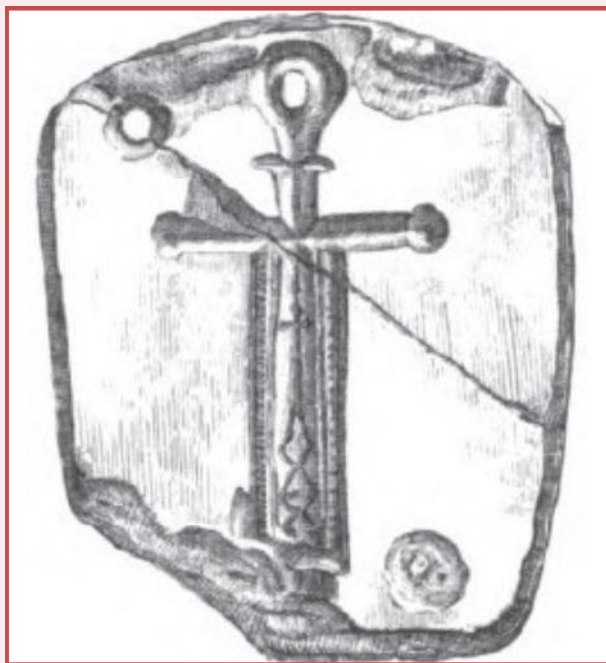
The Life of St. Declan: *An Duibhín Deagláin*

Pictured right is *An Duibhín Deagláin*, literally the little black relic of Declan. The *Life of St. Declan* relates the following story about this unique artefact:

*“Declan having commenced to say mass in a church he met on his way (in Italy), a small stone was sent to him from heaven; it came through the window of the church and rested on the altar in his presence. Declan felt greatly rejoiced on seeing it and gave praise and glory to God for it ... the name by which it is known in Ireland is *Duibhín Deagláin* i.e. Declan’s Black Relic. It is from its colour it received its name, for it is black according to colour. Many miracles were performed by its means, through the grace of God and sanctity of Declan”.*

The sketch was made in 1860 by E. Fitzgerald and appeared in an article by him in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*. The relic was still in existence until the early 20th century in the Dungarvan area, but has since been lost.

In our next issue: Declan meets St. Patrick



Clearing St. Declan’s Way



On Saturday, January 12th last, members of Knockmealdown Mountains Forum were out in force clearing a section of St. Declan’s Way at Ballygalane just north-east of Lismore. This off-road section of the route had become overgrown and impassable but thankfully was cleared in time for the National Trails Office assessment. Knockmealdown Forum members have identified further stretches of St. Declan’s Way where clearing work is needed and plan to tackle these in the near future. Our photo (left) shows group members taking a short break from their exertions.

About St. Declan’s Way

St. Declan’s Way is a modern walking route linking the ancient ecclesiastical centres of Ardmore in County Waterford and Cashel in County Tipperary. It is 56 miles (96 kilometres) long and crosses the Knockmealdown Mountains at *Bearna Cloch an Buidéal* (Bottleneck Pass), an elevation of 537m. Apart from this stretch, the route passes through undulating farmland and through the valleys of the Licky, Blackwater and Suir rivers.

St Declan’s Way utilises a number of ancient and medieval pilgrimage and trading routes such as the *Rian Bó Phadraig* (Track of St. Patrick’s Cow), *Bóthar na Naomh* (Road of the Saints), *Casan na Naomh* (Path of the Saints), *Bóthar na Riológ* (Road of the Bog Willows) and St. Declan’s Road. The current route was mapped out and developed by Ardmore Enterprise Cooperative in the mid-1990s and tries to remain faithful to the ancient highways.

Declan was a fifth century saint who brought Christianity to the southern part of Ireland and was particularly associated with the Déise tribe in Waterford and south Tipperary. He established his monastery in Ardmore and his grave there remains an important place of pilgrimage. Cashel was the seat of the Kings of Munster in Declan’s lifetime and St. Declan’s Way follows the route he would have taken from Ardmore to Cashel.