

# Smoke & Blazes

Volume 76, Number 4

Killington Section, Green Mountain Club

Winter, 2023-24

## Board Feat



*Wayne Flewelling totes some lumber up the trail on Long Trail Day in October. A small but hardy crew, with the help of passing hikers, put in a long day replacing puncheon over many a mud hole north of Route 4. See Larry's report inside.*



**KILLINGTON SECTION**



*Winter 2023-24*

**Killington Section Officers**

Wayne Krevetski, *President*  
Herb Ogden, *Vice President*  
Melissa Reichert, *Secretary*  
Maura Wildman, *Treasurer*

**Committee Chairs**

Amy Peacock, *History & Archives*  
Sue Thomas, *Outings*  
Larry Walter, *Trails & Shelters*  
Dave Coppock, *Trails & Shelters*

**Delegates to GMC Board**

Bruce Peacock, *Director*  
Ruth Hare, *Alternate*

**Web Site: gmckillington.org**

Andrew & Isaac Jones,  
*Web Masters*

**Smoke & Blazes**

Sue Thomas, *Editor*

**Killington Section Directors**

*Term expires 2024:*  
Ruth Hare\*  
Amy Peacock  
Maura Wildman

*Term expires 2025:*  
Bill Cooke  
Dave Coppock  
Herb Ogden

*Term expires 2026:*  
Wayne Krevetski\*  
Melissa Reichert\*  
Allison Henry

*\*Second consecutive 3-year term, not eligible for re-election.*

**Contact us:**

KillingtonSection@greenmountainclub.org

# The Extra Mile

**Herb Ogden** has been busy refreshing the blazes along the Killington Section of the LT/AT and its side trails. Herb is something of an expert when it comes to blazing, and you can bet where he applies paint to a tree it will be done with precision! Test your knowledge of the art of blazing with his (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) quiz, on page 6.

KS board member **Melissa Reichert** also puts in time on the GMC Land Conservation Committee, which oversees the club's land protection programs, ensuring permanent protection of the Long Trail, its side trails and parts of the Appalachian Trail. Melissa's experience working for the Green Mountain National Forest makes her contribution to the committee's work especially valuable.

Smokey House in Danby, a nonprofit working to advance sustainable agriculture and forestry, has been hosting the GMC's southern trail crews for several seasons. To show its appreciation, the club encourages members to volunteer at the farm for a day each September. This year **Larry Walter** represented the Killington Section, pitching in to create test plots in the fields and woods. Naturally he also sensed the presence of crosscut saws on the premises, and went home with several which he will return newly sharpened and ready for action.

\*\*\*\*\*

## In Memoriam

Former Killington Section member **Martha Donahue** passed away in August at the age of 95. Martha and her husband Bernie were avid hikers with the section in the 1980s and 90s, sometimes with grandchildren in tow.

\*\*\*\*\*



*Larry coaches Claire on the finer points of saw work along Kent Brook on the AT.*

# Trail Mix

The order of trespass was finally successfully executed at **Pico Camp** and the squatter who had taken up residence there has vacated. The shelter has been reopened for hiker use. The club will monitor the situation going forward and if anyone notices signs of inappropriate use, please notify the main club.

**Long Trail Day**, originally scheduled in August, was postponed due to summer flooding and took place on October 7. Weather again delayed the Killington Section's planned events, with Larry Walter's trail work moved to Sunday, and Wayne Krevetski's trail magic on Monday, but both were productive. Here's what they had to say...

**Larry:** *I was joined by two other hearty souls, Candy Jones and Wayne Flewelling. We had our work cut out for us as there was a big pile of planks and sills piled just off the north side of Route 4 on the AT/LT. Big thanks to Joe Gagnon for helping me unload all of that lumber from their flatbed truck. It always seems like a long way in there when you're packing wet hemlock planks (three 10-footers, two 6-footers and eleven 8-footers) along with six 3-ft. tamarack sills. Wayne and I had to double up on the 10' planks. Bloody heavy beasts. Most of the rotton stuff has been replaced in that section now, thanks to what Dave Coppock installed last year. There was one place where we chose to eliminate a 6-ft. section and add a 10-ft. pair just beyond that, where it was a lot wetter. No problem figuring out where the water was pooling. Candy did a great job of drilling and spiking the planks into place while Wayne and I packed new stuff in and deconstructed old, rotten installations. There were a lot of hikers out there, about half of whom asked if the trail got any drier up ahead. The main club had actually asked people not to walk on any of the LT due to a full day of rain yesterday. I managed to con several hikers into helping us pack some lighter sticks in and some tools back out. One hiker from North Carolina (McKenzie) even gave us a bunch of baked goods at the end of the day. She had taken a King Arthur baking class and had a huge container full of scones and biscuits. All three of us made off with family-sized goody bags. Looking forward to that after dinner tonight.*



**Wayne:** *This time the weather cooperated with a mix of clouds and sun. We were able to offer an enjoyable day of trail magic and information about the section and club to the hikers who came by the trailhead parking lot at Rt. 140 in Wallingford. Melissa Reichert, Sue Thomas, Michael Laude, Kathleen Krevetski and I were present to assist with the snacks, share section stories and generally enjoy the day. Though there was not a large number of hikers, there was a mix of day hikers, LT end-to-enders, and a couple of AT thru-hikers that stopped for a break. Most were Vermonters, and if aware of the Green Mountain Club, were not aware of the Killington Section. Club and section information were shared, and hopefully some new members will join. Supported by feedback from the club headquarters, I believe it was a successful day. Hope to see you there next year.*



Club-wide, the event raised \$67,000 for the Green Mountain Club, with more donations coming in after the fact. It's not too late to make a contribution, go to [www.GreenMountainClub.org](http://www.GreenMountainClub.org) for information. The money is especially needed this year to repair damage to the trails after the recent flooding. Locally, the **Homer Stone Brook Trail** in Wallingford and the **Old Job Trail** in Mt. Tabor need extensive rebuilding.

Looking for another way to contribute? Why not do your holiday shopping at the GMC store! T-shirts, hats, sweatshirts, water bottles, maps and guidebooks, tote bags and more for under the tree. Check it out at [store.greenmountainclub.org](http://store.greenmountainclub.org).

# Outing Reports

## **Summer as it Should Be** Kent Pond, Killington, August 6, 2023 by Sue Thomas

The planets, which have been seriously out of whack of late, miraculously aligned and gave us a perfect summer day, rare as hens' teeth this soggy season. The sky was blue, the sun shone, no smoke from Canada, and there was even a breeze to keep the hordes of mosquitoes loosed by the rains at bay. I'd taken the precaution of slipping a fiver to the resident loons ahead of time, and they put on quite a show for us, catching fish and feeding their offspring close to shore for our viewing pleasure. They've raised two this year, by this time almost as large as the adults, so mom and dad were kept very busy. Parents of teenagers could relate, I'm sure – "bottomless pit" came to mind. When a dog splashed into the water nearby and made a beeline for the birds, one of the parents swam between dog and family, flapping wings and shouting out that eerie trilling call, til fortunately the dog was called back to shore. The show over, we continued on, stopping for a short chat with a Canada goose family, and again to admire monarch butterfly caterpillars munching away on milkweed, putting us all in the mood for lunch, which we enjoyed by the cascades above Thundering Brook Falls. Then it was on to the base of the falls, where we didn't linger as it has become a popular spot. It's disturbing to see the damage being done by people leaving the trail to climb up the side of the falls, more signage is needed. We climbed back up on the AT as you're supposed to, and made our way back, happy to have spent a sunny day in such a beautiful place.



## **Mountain Goats** Bald Peak, Pittsford, September 16, 2023 by Larry Walter

We had a nice weather forecast so I was joined by three other brave souls to hike from Goat Farm Road up to the northern peak lookout. About half of us took a more direct route that cuts up to the base of the cliffs and then follows the base of the crag, hiker's left, on up to the main lookout. The other, more sane splinter group followed the marked trail up over the



summit and then back down to the same lookout. We all arrived at about the same time. It's always so peaceful up there. I don't even remember hearing a lawn mower down in the valley. On the way back, we took a quick side route to another lookout above the ice caves and a couple bolted climbs. From there we walked back down the western side of the loop trail to a recently logged area and then back up the hill on the Goat Farm Trail before descending back to the cars. The air was very clear and there was a hint of color starting to show in the upper elevations.

*Nancy Gaudreau taking in the view atop the Ice Cave on Bald Peak in Pittsford.*

## **History & Sweet Potato Cookies** Beechwood, Mendon, October 14, 2023 by Sue Thomas

Eight of us set off from the Mendon recreation area for the grueling trek to Beechwood...well, OK, it was actually a pretty short distance and mostly downhill, but the autumn woods were lovely, and we stopped to admire some impressive big trees. Our focus that day was on history. We were joined by several members of the Martin family, descendants of Rufus Lyman Perkins, who founded Rutland Fire Clay on the property in the late 1870s. Tom Martin had graciously agreed to give us a tour and tell us more of the history. (see the fall issue of S&B for details). We began by walking along a pathway where once rail cars carried clay to the drying sheds, and had a look at the now water-filled pits, first dug by hand and later by steam shovel. We followed the old railbed from the north pits to the south pits, which had been dug out of the hillside, climbing up along the rim to get a look from above, then back down to the sheds where the clay was loaded onto screens to dry. The barn across the road housed a forge which produced the hardware needed in the operation. Then it was time for a break, and yes, sweet potato cookies, yum. Our last stop was the house, "Beechwood," where workers were fed and many years later Killington Section events were hosted by several generations of the Perkins/Martin family. So, you could say our hike was carrying on the tradition. Many thanks to Tom and the Martin family for preserving and sharing this important and interesting bit of local and club history.



*Most of the group on the railbed near the north pits.*

## **Mercky Weather** Merck Forest, Rupert, October 22 – 23 by Larry Walter

The weather forecast was somewhere between dismal and disastrous for our planned hike and overnight into Merck Forest, so we had no calls. Viv suggested I call someone who's REALLY crazy, and who'd risk soggy socks for a chance to tromp around the 3,000-acre expanse. We immediately thought of my cohort, Dave Coppock! He took me up on the opportunity to stay at the restored Clark's Clearing Cabin. It's a delightful little structure, with a very efficient wood stove and lots of decently dried wood to use. Our packs were light, since we only had to pack in some pre-prepared food and a stove for hot water in the morning. Check. Except we forgot to bring a pot. Lucky for us, someone left a warped, but usable frying pan, so that worked fine for making oatmeal and coffee in the morning. We managed to get to the top of Antone on day one, where Dave ran into an old friend from the mid-90s. The rain held off until we were safely under the roof, when it immediately turned loose. Great timing! The next day, after listening to mice scamper across the wood stove in a failed attempt to reach our food bag (lots of alarmed squeaking), we packed up and headed back up towards Antone



and then walked south on the Masters Trail, which switchbacks (24) all the way back down to the brook. We then headed up the brook along the Hatch Trail, which became more and more grown in. It doesn't get used much. Eventually we popped out on the Gallup Trail, which took us all the way back around to the barn and then to the visitors' center. A sad note: the official Merck cat, Ellie, had gone missing five days earlier, so I hope she's hanging around another farm nearby. She's 16 and quite the regal little girl. Some may remember her following a GMC hike years ago, way up into the interior and back. She even tried to herd those who were lagging behind and was upset when we didn't return on her planned route. We'll miss her.

*Dave renews an old acquaintance on Mt. Antone.*

# Board of Directors Report

9/16/23, Waterbury

*Submitted by KS Rep. Bruce Peacock*

Board President Nancy McClellan called the meeting to order. CQ Strategies conducted a 2-hour session on identifying bias and discrimination in the GMC environment, which was a continuation of the program started a year ago. A senior staff member then recounted incidents of sexism she has endured at GMC over the past nine years culminating in the April 2023 executive committee meeting, when she was told to stop speaking, despite the executive director trying to support her. There has since been a shake-up of the executive committee. The primary issue is not among staff, but between volunteers and staff, and volunteers and other volunteers.

**Staff Reports** – Everyone reported that this has been the wettest summer in recent memory, with catastrophic flooding, smoke pollution requiring a phased work reduction protocol, and the law enforcement issues with Pico Camp and David Logan Shelter. Following the July 9-11 floods, field and office staff fanned out across the state in groups of three to assess trailhead access and major infrastructure like bridges and shelters. They covered 100 of the 500 miles, This was augmented by trail adopter reports for a full picture. They found evidence of scouring and erosion on bridges and many other sites but no complete washouts or catastrophic losses. Flooding recovery management will continue through the coming quarter.

**Other Accomplishments** – Completion of the Seth Warner, Stratton View and Sunrise Shelters, as well as renovation of the Stratton Mt. caretaker cabin.

**The Financial Report** was given, and everything is on target. We also heard from GMC's auditor, who declared no red flags on the 2022 financial audit.

The following plans were reviewed and approved:

**Planned Giving Policy Update** – Now designates 10% of gifts toward funding of development

**Strategic Plan** – with small tweaks

**Code of Conduct** – for all volunteers (staff are already covered with policies)

**Strategic Conservation Plan**

Staff is working with Nancy McClellan to replenish the executive committee and select a new vice president.

## TRAIL BLAZING

*by Herb Ogden*

Having painted trail blazes on trees since 1965, and wanting to encourage more people to mark the trails, I would like to share my experience in the form of a quiz that is not entirely serious.

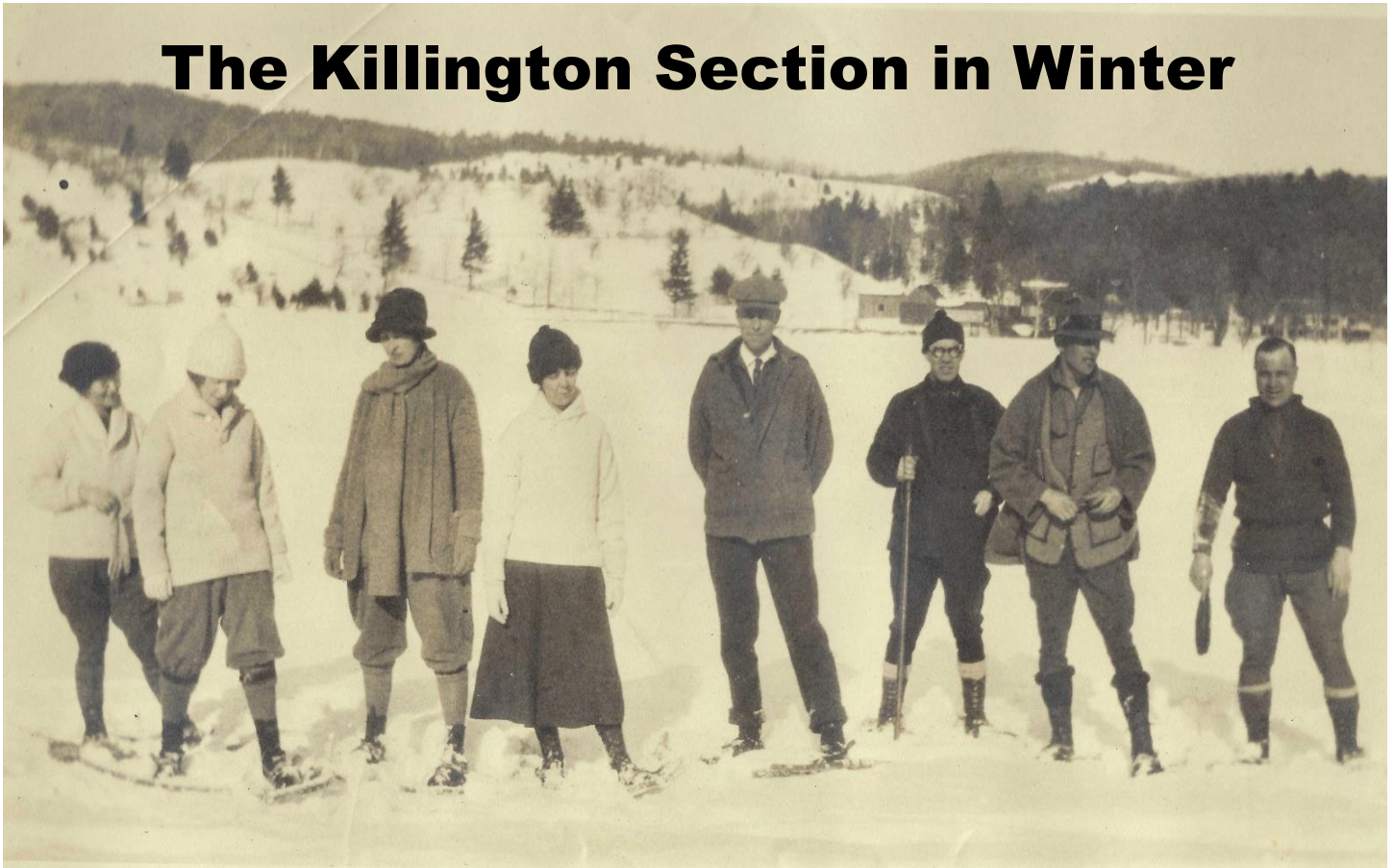
- 1. The Green Mt. Club standard for blazes is that they must measure**
  - a. 6" tall and 2" wide.
  - b. 2" tall and 6" wide.
  - c. 6' tall and 2' wide.
  - d. 5" tall and 1.5" wide.
- 2. The color of blazes on GMC trails is generally**
  - a. whatever you have left over on your paint shelf.
  - b. white for the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, gray for side trails.
  - c. white for Long Trail, blue for Appalachian Trail if not also the LT.
  - d. white for the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, blue for side trails.
- 3. Blazes on trees should usually be**
  - a. 6' above the base.
  - b. about as high as a 5'6" tall person can reach.
  - c. 9' above the base in areas with heavy snowfall.
  - d. horizontal if the tree lies horizontally blocking the trail.
- 4. The frequency standard for blazes in the K Section is that usually**
  - a. someone hiking at 2 mph will pass one every five minutes
  - b. someone hiking at 6 mph will be out of breath every time they see one.
  - c. in summer foliage, a hiker should be able to see from one to the next.
  - d. in designated night hiking areas, every other one is reflectorized.
- 5. If available, blaze a tree that**
  - a. is wide enough so that the blaze is surrounded by darker bark.
  - b. is about as wide as the blaze.
  - c. has smooth bark.
  - d. is adorned with carved hearts and initials.
- 6. Before deciding whether to blaze a tree,**
  - a. look up.
  - b. look down.
  - c. have a snack.
  - d. recite a poem by Joyce Kilmer.
- 7. Which of the following is better than all the others to blaze on the LT?**
  - a. white birch.
  - b. sugar maple.
  - c. wild cherry.
  - d. swamp maple.
- 8. When blazing a tree with a rough bark,**
  - a. ascertain whether its bite is worse than its bark.
  - b. for a more visible, longer lasting blaze, first chop a smooth place in the bark.
  - c. remove all the bark from an area the size of the blaze.
  - d. use spray paint.
- 9. Which of the following are useful tools for trail blazing?**
  - a. paint scraper.
  - b. short handled lopper.
  - c. hatchet.
  - d. all of the above.
- 10. Blazing a mile of trail in both directions can take as much as**
  - a. one pint (½ liter) of exterior paint.
  - b. one quart (1 liter) of exterior paint.
  - c. two quarts (1.9 liters) of exterior paint.
  - d. one gallon (3.8 liters) of exterior paint.

*How did you do? Find the answers on the Killington Section website:*

**[www.gmckillington.org](http://www.gmckillington.org)**

# Backtracking

## The Killington Section in Winter



▲ A Killington Section snowshoe outing in 1927. Winter hiking fashions have evolved considerably since then – note the necktie! There are three Catozzis in the photo but I can't identify them, and does anyone have a guess about the location?

◀ Gale Spaulding on the Long Trail in 1940, when the snow was so deep it buried the blazes. (refer to Herb's quiz for how deep that is!)

An annual Winter Weekend at Spruce Cabin, Merck Forest in 1983. Rob and Sue Carey on the toboggan, Steve Pulling and Rob Badger launching with help from Piñon, Carolyn Badger supervising. ▼



## TRAIL BLAZING QUIZ ANSWERS

1.a. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy standard is the same, by the way.

2.d. Gray is used to hide blazes on abandoned trails or nonstandard blazes. 2.c was correct until sometime in the 1970s or 1980s. Since the LT predated the AT, the AT was a side trail.

3.b. For the best visibility, blaze as high as a person of fairly average height can reach. But something like 3.c was once correct for the Ascutney Trails Association's higher altitude trails. They wanted blazes they could see on snowshoe hikes, and they painted them on warm days when deep snow still lay on the trails. 3.d is wrong because that tree will be removed.

4.c. Some folks in the GMC choose 4.a except in confusing areas. We think that more blazing is needed, particularly to reassure novice hikers and for hikes in winter or after a windstorm has made a chaos of what used to be a perfectly obvious trail. We have no designated night hiking areas.

5.a. This gives maximum visibility on all four side of the blaze. 5.c is wrong because some trees with smooth bark, like birches and swamp maples, either do not provide much visibility or shed paint.

6.a. Look up to see if the tree has foliage and is therefore alive. Don't blaze a dead tree unless it's the only choice. When the bark falls off or the tree falls, the blaze will disappear. This means you must sometimes add a blaze on a living tree next to the dead one. To avoid the appearance of overblazing, you may want to scrape off the old blaze. Often the bark on the dead tree is loose and you can just remove the bark that has the blaze. 6.c and d are optional and may substantially increase the time needed to blaze the trail. I find that, even without such diversions, it may take 80 minutes to blaze one mile of trail in one direction. It may take even more if you are standardizing a trail that was not sufficiently blazed or has old blazes on dead trees, so that you have to create many new blazes.

7.b. White paint shows up poorly on a white birch, and the bark peels relatively fast. I've occasionally seen white birches on which someone has first painted an oversize black or red blaze and then painted a standard white blaze on top of that. Wild cherries and swamp maples shed paint faster than most trees. If you want your blazing to last ten years, blaze a tree that will hold the paint.

8.b. 8.c is wrong because it makes the tree more susceptible to infection and insects and the sap of some trees, especially evergreens, discolors the blazes. Spray paint tends to run down the crevices of rough bark beyond the standard blaze area and look messy.

9.d. Use the scraper when you want to smooth out a place for a blaze on a tree with moderately rough bark and before repainting an old blaze whose paint is failing or is covered with lichen or fungus. Use the hatchet to chop a smooth place for a blaze in a tree with rough bark. Use the lopper to clear branches that obstruct the view of the blaze. Trail maintainers should have trimmed back any such branches but often they consider only whether the branch gets in the way of hikers.

10.a. Paint consumption depends on several things. If a trail runs straight through mature woods, blazes may be far apart and still follow the rule in 4.c. If trail was originally well blazed and only a few of the blazed trees have died, so that all one must do is repaint old blazes, less paint is needed. On the other hand, a trail that was originally poorly blazed and winds through a lot of undergrowth will need lots of blazes and lots of paint.