

2: Paths

2b: Gravel Path

A full account of the construction of a new gravel path to an ideal standard can be found in *Upland Pathwork: Construction Standards for Scotland, 2015*. It is not intended here to deal with path construction to that standard. This is because, in Iceland, we are not called upon to build new trails to this specification, nor have we the resources to do so. Usually, it is our task to improve, repair, redefine or reroute part of an existing path.

Basically, a gravel path is made by cutting a tray about 25cm deep along the route. The width is decided according to the kind of use it will get and is usually between 60 and 120cm.

Layers of stones are placed in the tray, with larger ones on the bottom then reducing in size by degrees until a thick layer of fine gravel is laid on top. (It needs to be thick so that the larger stones do not push through from below.) The stones should be packed tightly together for stability.



The opportunity to do it exactly like this rarely happens. Usually we find ourselves dealing with paths already constructed using other materials and specifications – or we have to use whatever we can find nearby. It is helpful though, to keep this outline in mind as a guide, getting as close to it as possible under the circumstances.

River gravel and pebbles should not be used. They are smooth and rounded which makes them slippery so that they do not hold together. They slide about when walked on, making walking difficult, and they get pushed sideways off the path.

It is never right to make a path by simply laying a strip of gravel on the surface of the ground. This would immediately begin to spread out as it is walked on, and sink into the ground under the pressure of footfall. In a short time it would become a wide disfiguring eyesore, and no use as a path.

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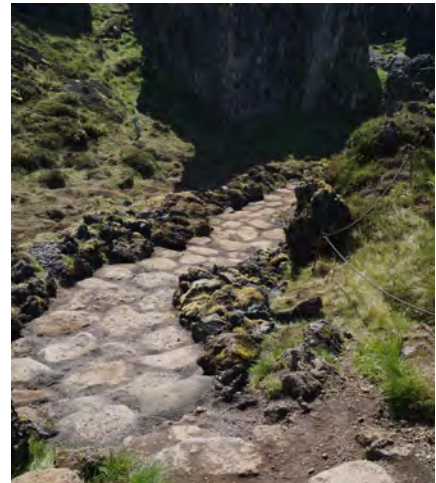
2c: Stone Pitched Path

A very durable path can be made by fitting together flat-topped paving stones (pitching).

(i) One way of doing this is to adapt the technique used for pitched steps, by laying the stones so that surfaces are level with each other instead of stepping upwards. This method is very labour intensive and requires a lot of stone. For more information see *Appendix 2 – Guides to Construction, 2: Stone Pitching*.



(ii) A more realistic approach has been devised by Icelandic professionals Gunnar Óli Guðjónsson and Guðjón Stefán Kristinsson. This work was done at Djupalon in Snaefellsnes by ICV trainees under their direction.



The paving stones, which are plentiful in this area, are laid on a bed of gravel, which is spread in the bottom of the path tray.

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2c: Stone Pitched Path (Continued)

This allows for flexibility and precision in setting and jointing the stones as levels can be adjusted.

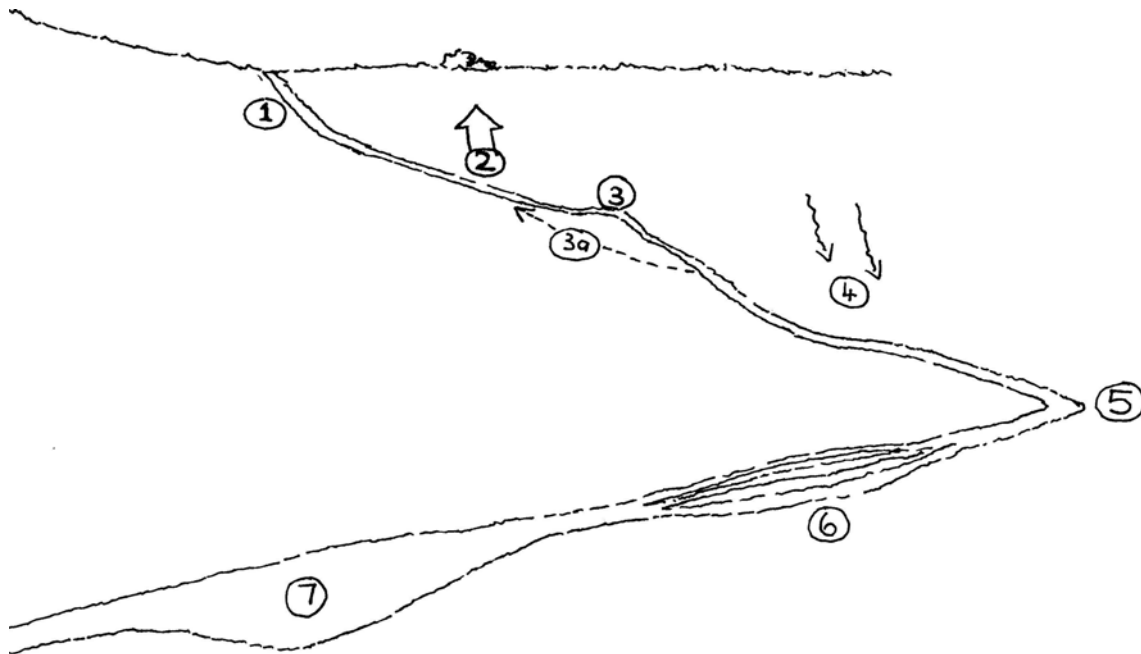


Here, the path has come up a flight of steps, laid by the same method, and will continue on the level.

We hope to get many more of our leaders and volunteers trained in this method during the coming seasons.

2: Paths

2d: Some Common Issues



1/ There is an unavoidable steep section.

Provide a way up using stone pitching. Do landscaping around it to deter downhill walkers from going along the side of the path (this is a common cause of surface damage to a slope).

2/ Walkers leave the path and go straight up the slope, aiming for a prominent feature, creating a desire line. The slope is steep and unstable. Grass is getting worn and soil is washing out.

Obliterate the desire line and do landscaping on the slope to make it uninviting to walk on. Make the official path comfortable to walk on and use extra landscaping at the side to deter people from stepping off it.

3/ and **3a/** Path goes up and over a poor, unstable, surface. There is a firmer, more gradual, slope nearby.

Obliterate the existing path and put in deterrence if necessary. Create a new path along the more gradual slope.

For information about all of these see *Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping*.

2: Paths

2d: Some Common Issues (Continued)

4/ The path goes below a slope down which water runs.

Protect the path with waterbars and/or side drains. In some cases it might be possible to create grass-lined gullies or hollows higher up to intercept water and reduce the amount of water lower down.

See Appendix 1 - Drainage

5/ A sharp bend is inevitable.

Use landscaping to prevent walkers from cutting the corner.

See Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping

6/ Braiding (secondary paths running alongside the official path), caused here by people walking in groups or by passing each other widely.

Create a good path wide enough to realistically carry the number of people using it. If there are islands of turf between the braids they can be taken up and used to make the edges of the new path. Use landscaping along the sides to deter walkers from stepping off.

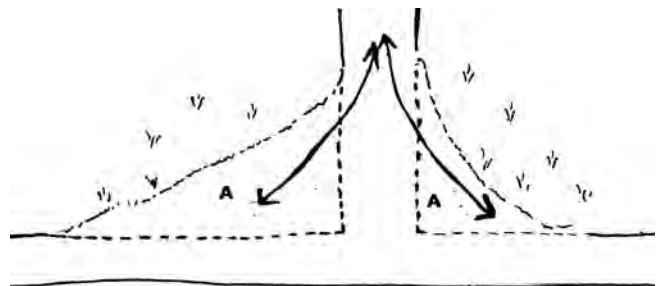
See Trailwork Basics 3d - Landscaping: Braiding

7/ In a level area walkers are spreading out and there is now a wide area of bare, worn, stony ground. It gets muddy and slippery when wet, so walkers step even further to the side, making the problem worse.

Create a path through the area which is comfortable to walk on and which follows an inviting line. Restore the rest of the damaged area using turf, vegetation and rocks. Use landscaping at the sides of the path in a way which will deter people from stepping off it.

See Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping

8/ At a T-junction of paths walkers cut the corners, wearing the vegetation away to leave bare ground (A).

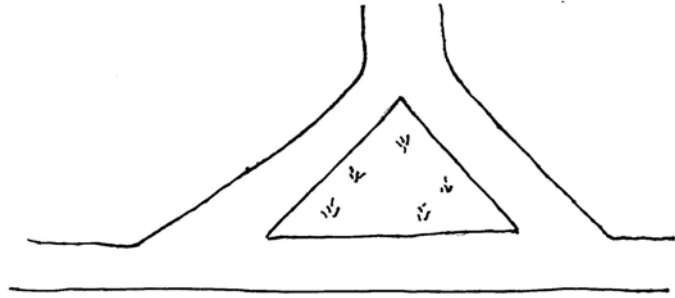


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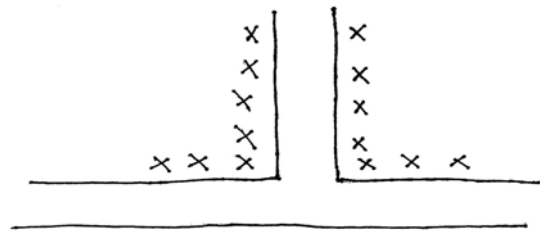
2: Paths

2d: Some Common Issues (Continued)

One solution to this problem is to create a 'godcake'. The side path is split into two, following the ways taken by the walkers. This leaves a triangle – known as a godcake – between the paths. This is then restored with turf and vegetation. It is unlikely to suffer wear as there is no advantage to be gained by walking on it.



An alternative method is to redefine the edges of the original paths, restore the eroded ground, and put in strong deterrents (e.g. banking, boulders, bushes) to stop people going off the path. However this a difficult objective to achieve as usually someone, sooner or later, will make a way through and erosion will begin again.



See *Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping* for more information.