

SECTION 15:

“Tomorrow’s Clear Blue Skies” Looking Forward



So this account of the Club’s past 20 years draws to a close. Time then to take stock, and most importantly start looking to the future. This latter is a bit of an ask when, at the time of writing in the late autumn of 2020, the Club is grappling with the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic, and life is strange to say the least.

As of 2020 our Club is in very good health after two successful decades, as I hope the previous sections show!

We have an increased absolute level of membership, and are successful in attracting new members. We have built on the aims and work of the pioneers, and have a better gender balance in the Club in membership, level of activity, and involvement in running things. We have maintained and further greatly improved our property at Tan y Garth, the base for so much of what we do.

Taken overall, having been a member since 1983, I feel we are as active or more active than ever, and with a wider range of activities that promote “an interest in mountains”. Nothing demonstrates this more than our current efforts to get back on the hill as a Club, in a safe way, given the continuing and fluid challenges of Covid.

Having a laugh, having fun, and being there for each other hasn’t changed, and the bonds between members remain strong. For me personally, in a year when I have been unwell and convalescent, this has come across in the great support I have had from my Club friends And in the sense of loss I have had, in being unable for a time to take a direct part in the things I enjoy so much in the same way as before.

These twenty years have seen strong currents of social change, some new, and some flowing on from the last century, which we have navigated successfully. These have included the wider range of leisure and sports activities available; increased affluence and consequent demands for “higher standards”; increased government regulation; and the “industrial revolution” of the internet.

I’m hoping to rejoin people out on the hill as soon as we can, and I asked Tom McEvoy, our Membership Secretary, to help me look forward more generally.

New members are our future and we started talking about our newest members, elected in his time in the role, and what they have brought to the Club - not least Pete McEvoy, Tom’s dad...!

“Well Dad’s been on a good few walks and has got stuck in now on a couple of working weekends too, I think it’s important that family links bring us new blood like that – Kev, then on to me, and then on to Dad. It’s not all about the internet even now. It’s been the same with Daisy and Fi Langton as well.

Links with other members through different activities are there too in getting people interested. Liz and Paul Humphries both knew Geoff and Jane through Geoff’s running weekends and that’s what brought them along. They’re both strong walkers and have other interests too – Liz is a qualified Lowland Leader and is looking to expand this into the Mountain Leader role, and Paul’s a triathlete and open water swimmer.

That we've got a range of activities attracts new people. Neil Macfie is a keen cyclist and he took part in the cycle out to the Chapel. Then he came to the working weekend and he also linked up with Bal Singh who's a prospective member, to do the coast to coast cycle ride."



On the Nantlle Ridge – in sunshine!

That took us on to the classic walks other new members had done with Tom himself: Clare Domeny on the Nantlle ridge in poor weather conditions, and Kath Morris on Cader Idris, Tryfan, and the Snowdon Horseshoe.

Tom also talked to me about prospectives...

"Things are clearly a bit different to say the least right now with Covid, there are a couple of strong new people in line – Zahinda Khan, she's been out to the hut and has done walks too with Carol Boothroyd and John Driver - she's a doctor so will add another layer to our rich line of medics! And Gavin Crompton, he's a climber who's been along to the wall a few times, and he also has an ML qualification which is good."

Covid 19 has led to the cancellation and postponement of most of the 2020 meets programme. There were some innovative meets on that list which will I hope come good, once we find a way of living with the virus.

There are new venues for meets, places the Club hasn't specifically targeted for a good while – Chee Dale and the Kentmere Horseshoe. I've never done the latter round in its entirety and would love to be there when this one happens.

There's strong interest in overseas trips too, as Club meets, with prospective meets to the Dolomites, to do the GR20 in Corsica, and to Javea in Spain, which has sunny climbing crags and walking opportunities too. Names like Mont Blanc, Elbrus and Aconcagua are also in the air.

Tom took me through other new ideas on the meets list...

"The Sea to Summit Biathlon meet involves a cycle from the coast to Snowdon and then an ascent on foot – something different, people could do the whole thing as a bit of a challenge, mixing the two things, or could just join in for either part. And the Solstice Party – well that's an idea of Neil Connolly's who took on the 2020 meets programme, something to add in on the lines of the Burns Supper."



GR20 - The ascent to Punta Crucetta
From Glenn and Helen Grant's trip in July 2019

So lots of new ideas, and maybe those St Piran's and St Bernard's day parties aren't too far off after all – life has already started to imitate art it seems!



Sunny Javea beckons...

One other new area both Tom and Glenn Grant discussed with me is trying to engage more with the BMC. Our affiliation gives us access to vital insurance products, but we might well explore getting more engaged with them, and getting more from a stronger relationship with both the BMC itself and with other affiliated Clubs. This is around raising our profile and also perhaps encouraging and supporting members to enhance their hill skills through the courses the Council provides.

Covid has been a catalyst and we've been involved with

other Clubs and the BMC in online meetings which are practical and easily accessible to busy people.

So, an exciting future is out there for the taking, subject to our getting through the tangles of Covid, one that blends the achievements and traditions of Club since 1967, through 1999 and then on with new ideas too into the future.

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