

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – SPECIAL EDITION

October 2025: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the October Newsletter! This is a Special Edition as it accompanies the **2025 GMC Mountain Art Exhibition** – for technical reasons available in a separate companion document. Thank you to artists Gail Smith, Margaret, Milly, Nuala and also to HM The King, Alan Johnson, Gill Eccles, Gill Potter, Kev, Ray, Simon, Tom Humphreys, and as ever DLJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **October 27th**.

Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for October and November, details are on the Club Website. The meets list is constantly being updated, please **check it out regularly** on the Website. Meets added to the programme since the last edition are in bold as a reminder **in case you've missed them....**

17-19 October	Hut Weekend
17-19 October	Joint Meet with Dundee MC – Chapel Le Dale
26 October	Sunday Walk – North Berwyns: Corwen, Liberty Hall and Foel Lus
31 October – 2 Nov	Hut Weekend (Bronze Navigation Course)
7-9 November	Hut Weekend (Bonfire Meet)
28-30 November	Hut Weekend (Asian Themed Weekend)

Venues in Focus

I'm hoping that our planned walk towards the end of October, to **Corwen, Liberty Hall, and Foel Lus** will be new ground for people. Ground which takes us to things aristocratic...

The views from Liberty Hall are very good, and are said to be why this shooting lodge, now a ruin with only the wall footings in place, was built in the early 20th century, by Lord Newborough. That said, 'Liberty Hall' is an expression used since the 18th century for a place where guests could please themselves, so perhaps this fairly small house was simply a place to go and relax away from the formality of Edwardian life. The phrase was apparently first recorded in the 1773 comedy by Oliver Goldsmith 'She Stoops to Conquer', which is one of the few plays of that time to still staged.

Apparently difficult of supplying the place meant that Liberty Hall as a shooting lodge was short lived.

The Newboroughs are old money, the Wynn family having been aristocrats in various shapes or forms since the 16th century. They own the Rhug estate, as in the big farm shop and bistro on the A5. For you keen aristo-spootters out there, a newer model was the 1st Viscount Devonport, Hudson Kearley, 1856-1934, who built what was perhaps the most

iconic shooting lodge in North Wales, Gwylfa Hiraethog, otherwise known to many as 'Dracula's Castle'. Older members will remember its gaunt ruins standing against the western sky on the Denbigh Moors near the A543. The name means 'Hiraethog Watchtower'.



Gwylfa Hiraethog in 1997 (based on original photo from <https://www.welshruins.co.uk>)

Devonport made his money in importing tea and through a chain of 200 grocery stores. His public service roles included chairing the Port of London Authority from 1909 to 1925, and being the first Minister of Food Control in the UK in World War One in 1916, generating the first proposals for rationing in the face of the German U-Boat campaign.

An original wooden building was rebuilt in stone in 1908 and Lloyd George, Devonport's future political boss, is said to have addressed crowds from its balcony.

Again supply issues, and getting servants to work there, were a problem, and with car transport making access to the moors quicker, the lodge was sold in 1925. After being occupied by gamekeepers for years, it was abandoned in the 1950s.

A former shooting lodge you can visit and stay in, and one that I wish I'd gone to back in the day, is Feith Uaine. Also known as the 'Tarf Hotel', high up the River Tarf in the Grampians:





It is now an open shelter maintained by the Mountain Bothies Association see <https://www.mountainbothies.org.uk> , and the gentle rises behind the building in their photo are in fact fully fledged Munros. It was an outpost of the Duke of Atholl, in pre land rover days 15 miles each way by pony from Blair Atholl and his castle. That kind of distance meant the shooting parties would sometimes have stayed overnight, and the essential book '*Mountain Days and Bothy Nights*' (available on Amazon) describes it before its renovation 'three star[s]...in its day with five large rooms, plumbing, and the remains of a hot water system with the old boiler rusted away...' It's called the Tarf Hotel because someone carted old yellow AA hotel signs up there.

The book – hard to get hold of – '*Mountain Bothies – Celebrating 50 years*' tells some tall tales and shows it had a hip bath, so plenty of hot water! (Photo by Graeme Hunter)

puThe scenery nearby is not all as bleak as the photos suggest, this is a painting of Queen Victoria crossing the pool below the Falls of Tarf by W. Leitch in the Royal Collection - see <https://www.rct.uk> . I'm dead excited at having my first opportunity as editor to credit HM The King, for this picture! Seriously the royal family do support bothying – there is one at Gelder Shiel on their estate.



There's now a bridge over the pool for when the river is in spate – as you can see it's waist deep even in early autumn, and the bridge was built in memory of someone drowned in the ford. What amused me in this painting is that instead of splashing over the ford with boots in the water like the heroes of old, the male members of the party have their legs up at a silly and uncomfortable looking angle so as not to get wet...snowflakes! Unlike the two pipers in front who are bravely risking Severe Sporrán Shrinkage!

If you think having pipers out in front even in the water is cool, well what about being the Duke of Atholl – the go to guy Europe-wide for a private army! (True! – see <https://atholl-estates.co.uk/blair-castle/atholl-highlanders/> - it's thanks to Queen Victoria having presented them with official colours as a thank you for acting as her guards at Blair Atholl.)

Our **joint meeting with the Dundee MC** is in **Chapel Le Dale**. A very good base for days out, including without driving anywhere. Maybe the area will be new to some of our Scots guests and some might be tempted by the 3 Peaks walk itself!

A great walk I've done from Chapel le Dale – I had a lift to the start by the Hill Inn– was to do Whernside up from Bruntscar (i.e. the usual 3 Peaks descent route), then along to the summit, down to Ribbleshead again reversing the 3 Peaks route via Grains Head, and back along the valley paths under the viaduct to the start. Much pleasanter that way round I found.



Whernside from Ingleborough

I've not done an Ingleborough circuit from Chapel, but have done both the normal 3 peaks ascent, and have on another trip gone down the bridleway route from the summit SW to Crina Bottom and Ingleton, the route over the SW crag is just a steep stony path between crags and is OK. One could finish a circuit tramping up the minor road on the NW side of the River Doe back to base (I've been on the lowest bit of that road and found it pretty quiet), or alternatively have a lift back arranged?! Personally though I think the Ingleborough circuit from Clapham via Trow Gill, Gaping Gill, and Little Ingleborough, and down via the 3 Peaks route turning off down the Sulber Gate bridleway to Long Scar and Long Lane is possibly the best walk of its length in the Dales being a mix of cave, hill, and limestone scars.

Should the weather demand a short hill day, one could do the drive into Dentdale, park up on the lane above the station which I remember as a wide road, and go up Great Knoutberry, following the fences SE over the summit to the Artengill Beck Col and back on the bridleway to the start. That walk – and a slightly longer variant of the Clapham circuit – are in the Nuttalls 'The Mountains of England and Wales Vol. 2'.

If a mid level day is needed, a good one – but exposed to the weather – starts at a good sized community car park in Langcliffe and goes around the limestone scenery centred on Langcliffe Scar. I did a full article on this which is in the October 2021 edition of the Newsletter on the website if you want more. And there's another article on a valley walk from the same car park in the April 2022 edition.

The **Hut** has benefitted from some recent major renewals which will make meets there more comfortable and enjoyable. Simon posted on Facebook 'I was very impressed by the new heating system...and the coats of paint to the front make such a difference it really uplifts the buildings' outside. The new mattresses are an improvement as well.' Thanks to Tom Humphreys and all others involved in getting these things done.

Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

Aran Fawddwy, which is only 9.5 metres (31 ft) short of being a member of the Welsh 3000s, is the highest peak in the Arans range and the 16th highest summit in Wales, and the highest point in the UK south of Snowdon.

It's a remote and demanding day out, our recent meet was described by Gill Eccles as 'our lovely hike up Aran Fawddwy yesterday. Thanks Chris. It was good fun, despite the rain in the afternoon 😊'.

Here's Ray's shot of the group going up the ridge from Llanuwchllyn -



Chris' route then took the team down the steep grassy ridge of Erw y Ddafad Ddu to return via Cwm Llwyd and Cwm Croes. In the next shot Ray captures the first part of the descent and the magically remote setting of Craiglyn Dyfi, the source of the River Dyfi.



We were lucky to get a mostly dry and bright day for our **Weets Hill** circuit. It was cold on the top though!

We had great views of Pendle Hill –



- and also further afield to Ingleborough, Pen y Ghent and the Forest of Trawden.

Thanks to Ray for these great photos of historic Barnoldswick, the team on the summit, and then the moorland and canal sections of the day...



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...and a number of wrapped the meet up with a pint in the traditional Anchor Inn on the canal at Salterforth.

Finally I have heard from Sue that the members who went **walking in Tuscany** had a good time. It may be we'll have an article on that in due course.

Occasional Section – Members Personal News

Big Congratulations to Gill Potter and Alan Johnson on their recent wedding!



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SPECIAL EDITION – GMC 2025 MOUNTAIN ART EXHIBITION

This is a chance for everyone to see some of the mountain-centred art produced – or discovered – by members! The exhibition appears on the website in a separate document from this main newsletter for technical production reasons.

Please note that the copyright in the images remains with the artists concerned. If you want to make or print off copies, you should please discuss this first with the person concerned, as captioned below. Firstly for reasons of courtesy, second because some of our contributors sell/may in future sell some of their work commercially.

If the exhibition idea appeals, we might run another such piece in the future – you never know, we might have our own Biennale! If you want your paintings or other forms of art concerning mountains to appear, please send me a photo and we'll see what transpires.

Thank you once again to our contributors!

Dave Gray

September 2025