

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA! EXTRA!

December 2025: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the December Newsletter - Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! This is a Double Extra! edition with an article from Milly Wright on her early cycling days – so lots of hills and lots of pedalling involved! And there's a super article from Kev showcasing the substantial improvements recently made to our Cottage. Thank you to Milly and Kev, also to Adrian Samuel, Brenda, Hew, John Driver, John Watson, Nicki, and Sue, and ever DLJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **December 27th**.

Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for December and January, 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....**

9 December	Christmas Meal at Gallaghers
12-14 December	Hut Weekend (Silver Navigation Course)
18 December	GMC Christmas Climbing Competition
20 December	Saturday walk – Wirral Solstice Strollette
24 December – 1 Jan	Christmas and New Year Hut Meet
9-11 January	Pennines Independent Hostel Weekend
30 – 1 February	Hut Weekend

Focus on Venues

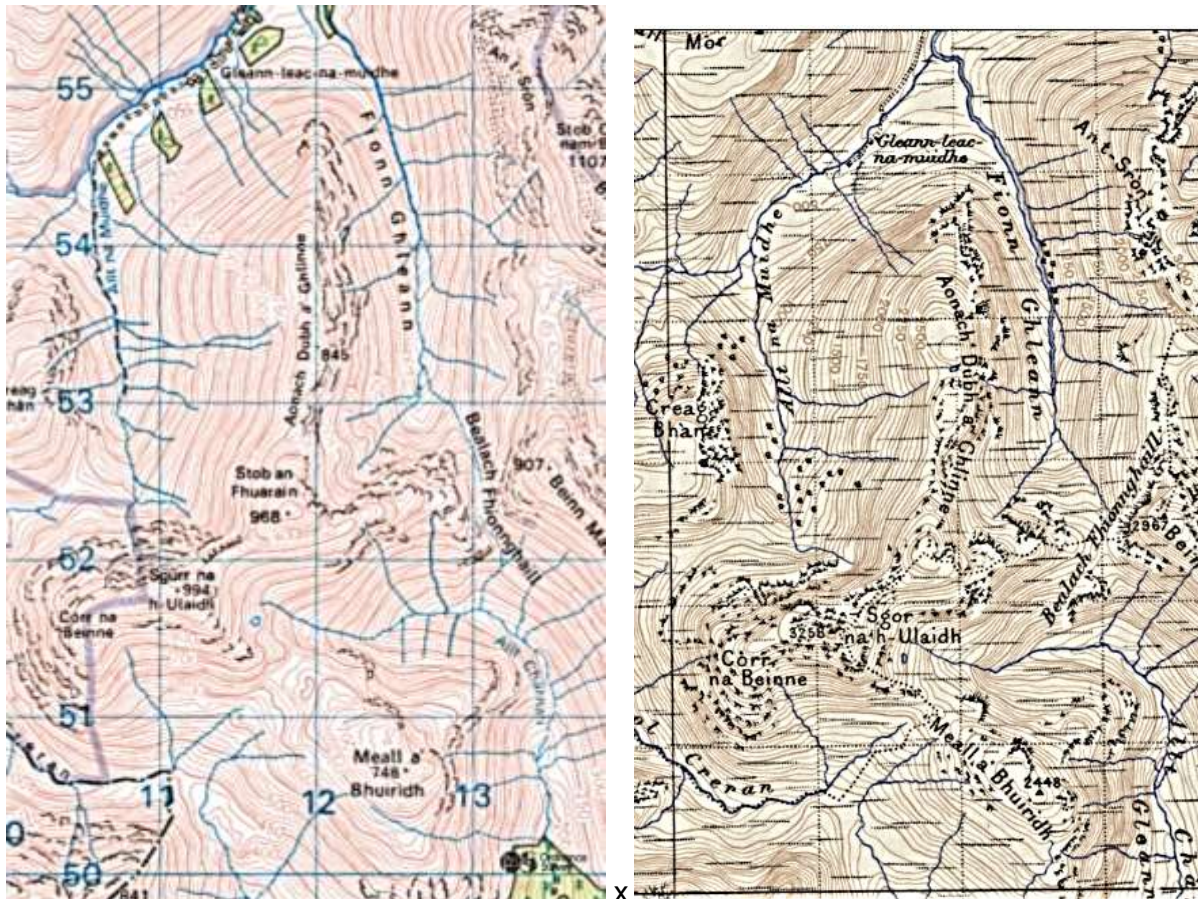
This year sees our second **Annual Climbing Competition** at the Boardroom in Queensferry! Richard Smith is organising the meet; as he was away in Costa Rica David L-J took me through what happened last year and he took me through the format.

It involves a number of climbs at various grades on the wall, with points being awarded on a handicap system, and last year points meant prizes in the shape of a bottle of fizz. The winners then were Paul Ross with Alan Johnson a close runner up – let's see who are the rockstars this year!

Our indoor climbers usually meet for sessions at the Boardroom (<https://www.theboardroomclimbing.com/>) on Monday and Thursday mornings. Everyone is welcome, please talk to David Lane-Joynt if you are interested.

Also up in December is Christy's **Silver Navigation Course** at the **Hut**. I reckon after 50 years plus now hill walking including doing a lot of navigation, I for one am still learning and most importantly still have to keep my brain firmly switched on.

I thought it was worth sharing my greatest navigation foul up (to date!) Picture Glencoe on the last day of September in 1988, on a drizzly still day with mist on the hills. Bob and me were in our late 20s and mad keen to up our Munros tallies, so we settled on the single hill of Sgurr na Ulaidh south of Glencoe, which the guidebook told us was a relatively straightforward walk up its broad north and north east ridges. I'd been navigating in some form for about 14 years and had done 48 munros; Bob had had more experience than me, so we weren't newbies. To the left is the area at 1:50,000 on today's map (*credit osmaps.com*), and on the right is a 1947 one inch map of the same area (*credit National Library of Scotland*) – our one incher had fins on being of late '50s vintage but looked pretty similar in terms of detail.



Imagine our delight when we came upon a line of old fence posts that our compasses confirmed were leading up the ridge to the top. After a brief halt on the relatively flat, mist shrouded summit, we followed the posts downhill into the murk.

Shame they weren't the same posts we came up beside. The lights were on in our heads but no one was at home – in our brief time at the summit we'd got disorientated and hadn't noticed the fact. 'Snafu #1'.

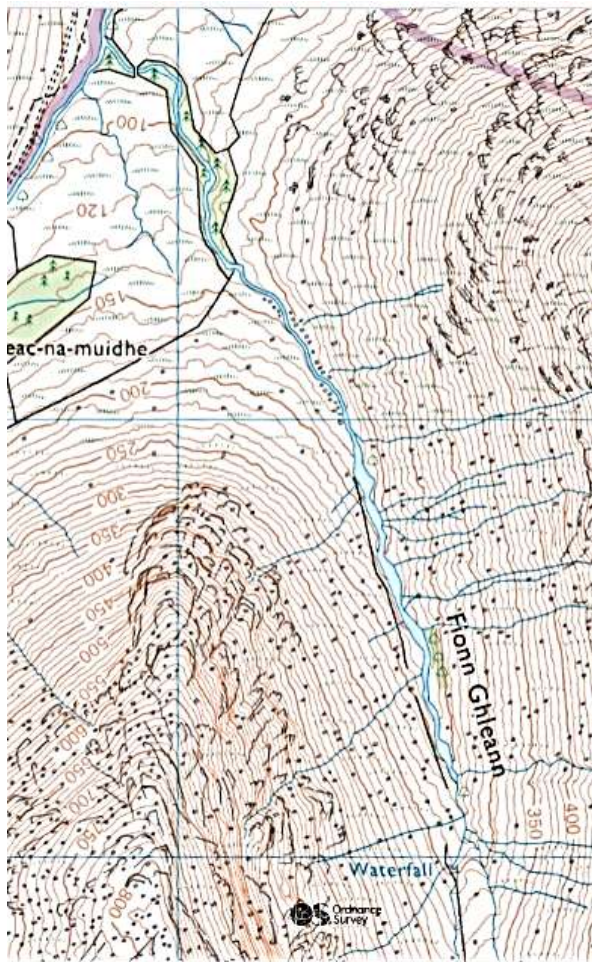
After a bit I felt vaguely uncomfortable, and said to Bob 'this doesn't feel like the way up' but he reassured me all was OK and I accepted that. 'Snafu #2'...still no lights on up top...

After another bit we came upon a river – the Allt Charnain in fact, and I repeated my concern, on the basis that the river was evidently per my compass going south not north to Glencoe like wot it should 'ave done. Given the compass evidence I still can't understand why we carried on down for some distance: to the point where we found a mature pine plantation where none had existed on the way up, indicating we were on the fringe of Glen

Etive, about 20 miles by road from the car. I guess you have to remember that back then there was no GPS or OS maps App back up to actually check one's position if one can get a signal, and we had been following a path, but that was really no excuse.

We stopped and did some thinking, but – 'Snafu #3' - sadly in retrospect didn't take the right call. We didn't weigh all the options fully and overlooked the fact that all maps are limited by their scale – in the case of 1 inch ones very limited. This is no joke – if you walk today in the US for instance the best maps available might well be half inch ones! With hindsight, the best course of action in the conditions which weren't that bad would have been to retrace our steps to the top and follow our known and clear outward route. We had plenty of time to do so. Had conditions been much worse we would – in free and easy 1988 at least – have been better going on into Glen Etive and trying to hitch round to the car.

Instead we followed an understandable desire not to do so much re-ascent and decided to head back north up the Charnain valley and cross the pass of Bealach Fhionnghaill, to then go due north down the Fhionn Ghleann back to the car in Glencoe. On the map that looked straightforward, and despite the pass's name in Gaelic meaning in terms 'Pass of the Mythical Superhero' we got over it OK.



The problem was the glen to the north. It was pathless, and instead of the relatively smooth and straightforward route shown on the map – and indeed still implied on this modern 1:25,000 one (*credit osmaps.com*) – it contained a boisterous uncrossable river about the size of the Afon Llugwy with numerous bends. We went down the east bank, every time the river bent to the east side of the valley it had eroded a small cliff, too small to make it onto the map, with a scree slope underneath.

The repeated boulders and the constant tussocks meant that progress was worryingly slow and as time went by the rain worsened. We made it to the road just after six pm, at the very point it was getting really dark. We each had a headtorch but I doubt if we'd have got far by torchlight in the terrain in the glen.

We did do some things right. We had enough gear for the conditions, we both had those working torches and plus robust bivvy bags, so we would have survived a wet and miserable enforced autumn bivouac had it come to that. Also, our initial objective had

been a sensible one given the poor weather, and we therefore had enough – just enough – time and energy to cope with our mistakes.

I think what is key in this story is that we had trouble not because we couldn't navigate, but because we didn't. We'd learnt the techniques, but on this occasion we didn't fully apply them, and were just that bit too casual.

Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

Nicki posted 'Another great meet up with the **Dundee Mountain Club** at **Ingleton** - lots of great walking, laughs and eating.' The weather on the trip was mixed with the Saturday the only decent day.

A number of the Dundee crowd did the whole 3 Peaks walk, which was new to a number of people. A fine achievement on not the easiest of days weatherwise.



Meantwhile a joint team set off for what Nicki called 'a little amble around Dunsop Bridge'. They got good views over to Ingleborough and also encountered this footbridge which suggests the beck concerned runs pretty high!



This next shot might look like a piece of experimental Scandinavian cinema - in fact it's the group battling the high winds even on this mid level walk.



After everyone had got back to base there was a fine dinner of dishes brought along by the GMC members, the Dundee people having been hosts for dinner on the previous meet.

On my **Moel Findeg and Maeshafn Circuit** we also defied a poorish forecast to have an enjoyable day out, with decent views, fine autumn colours and very little in the way of rain. The photo on the next page is Moel Famau from the top of Findeg. We ended the walk with a pint in the Bridge Inn at PontyBodkyn, under new management and expanded, still featuring some good beer.



The **Bonfire Party Hut Weekend** enjoyed some dry weather for the evening do itself.



Brenda writes 'Thank you to Sue and Ange for the fabulous food, to Chris for the Bonfire, Sven for helping with the parking, and everyone for a really fabulous weekend.'

The weekend also saw some fine days' walking. A number of people did Pen Yr Helgi Ddu by way of Fynnon Llugwy and the scrambly ridge. Here's some great views of the ridge, the view to Tryfan, and a picture looking back across the lake.



Meanwhile another group enjoyed the autumn colours on a mid level walk around the Llugwy valley. This shot is of the north side of the valley.



Occasional Section – Members Personal News



No, this isn't Pxxxce Andrew's new home! It's **John Watson's** tent somewhere in South Wales I think! I couldn't identify the castle, the square towers are telling me it started early-ish, possibly 12th century, square towers are easier to attack or demolish than the later round ones you see at say Conwy. I'm thinking maybe it's a Marcher Lord jobbie.

John was there on a 230 mile *section* of a long term epic walk (see below), photos of which he posted on Facebook, which he's doing in aid of Claire House Children's Hospice, a very good cause see <https://www.clairehouse.org.uk/> .



Another great cause is that of the Samaritans (see <https://www.samaritans.org/>) and members will hopefully have seen **John Driver's** moving email, forwarded by David LJ, about a sponsored walk up Snowdon in aid of the Samaritans and in memory of his late sister, scheduled for 16 May 2026.

John is a Samaritans listening volunteer, and is hoping as an initial step to get together a group of people to take part with him in this fundraising effort. If you are interested in helping on the Snowdon venture, please get in touch with John.

EXTRA!

CLARION CALL...by Milly Wright (intro by Dave Gray)

'A rambler is a man improved' said the stern admonition on the little plaque on 'Ward's Piece', near the summit of Lose Hill in Derbyshire. This greatly disconcerted Mark Barley and me, given the light hearted approach we'd taken to our day's walk thus far!

The plaque commemorates George Herbert Bridges Ward FRGS, who founded the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers in 1900 and who with his wife, Fannie Bertha Ward, was a champion of access to the hills. The 'Clarion' concerned was '*The Clarion*' an innovative socialist newspaper aiming at a popular market, which generated a large number of rambling, cycling, theatrical, and social clubs bearing its name.

From when she was twelve to about seventeen in the mid-1950s, Milly – then Milly Hayes - rode with her home town Bolton Clarion Cycle Club. She takes up the story below...

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...Escaping from the house, which as an athletic pre-teen was a necessity led me to join the Clarion Cycling Club and acquire a sports bike. Every Sunday I would get into my cycling regalia, put up my sandwiches, which consisted of fourteen slices of bread filled with Sandwich Spread in a plastic bag in my saddle bag, and 'twiddle' down into Bolton town centre to meet the club. The meeting place was on Deansgate outside the Wood Street Socialist Club, the Clarion Clubrooms.

There was an A, B, and a C section depending on how fit you were and how well you could ride. I started out with all the old men, Ken, Tommy, and Johnny who took me under their wing and showed me the ropes.



What is a 'twiddle' and what is twiddling? My first sports bike was a fixed wheel one, a bit like in this picture. Fixed wheel bikes are still popular today and are used in track racing in velodromes; they lack gears, have no capacity to freewheel, and in our day your feet were strapped into the pedals. 'Twiddling' refers to the fact that you can't stop pedalling down steep hills! Coping with this is a skill that one acquires...

After a while I got a three speed Sturmey Archer mechanism fitted to the bike and twiddled no more!

The Club became the focal point of my life and I regularly rode up to a hundred miles every Sunday, joining the B section, leaving the old men behind and acquiring new friends, boys and girls, nearer my own age. My girl friends were Norma and Olwyn and they were my favourite companions in the Club. Norma lived near me but Olwyn lived on the other side of town and extended my horizons.

Every Friday night the Club met in Wood Street Socialist Club. Setting out from my house in the dark and often in the rain was always exciting. In the Club there were often residual

occupants still ensconced in the bar from that day's drinking – nothing to do with cycling. The Club operated as an all day drinking club, frequented by socialist artists, writers, and politically inclined individuals. They were always interested in us and often engaged in long intellectual expositions of their views, very often political.

Club night consisted of an occasional film show followed by the serious business of the evening's entertainment which took place upstairs in the bar around a very competitive dartboard.

I loved cycling passionately and rode all year round in all weathers and in all the counties accessible to Bolton – Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, The Lakes, Yorkshire.

A long ride I remember took us through the Trough of Bowland and down to Preston – on the A6 – via a stop at the Unicorn Cyclist Cafe. There was generally a gathering of the clans and in depth cycling conversations, usually lounging in the walled garden. Then it was off again for a hard climb over Belmont back to Bolton for a 7.00 or 7.30pm finish.

We'd regularly go over on a Sunday into Derbyshire and the Peak via Stalybridge on 100 mile rides. Sometimes though we'd stay over in a youth hostel. One early weekend away was in the Peak in winter, and it involved me at one point cycling up the steep snow covered Mam Tor road and 'twiddling' down the other side on my fixed wheel bike.

All the rides, A, B, or C, would have a leader and we would ride in line two abreast with the leader in front. Though if it was windy we would swap round leaders to share the front position rather like a flock of geese do. Punctures were an everyday thing. We would always wait as a group for the puncture to be fixed.

There was no Lycra in those days! For touring we wore shorts and a knitted wool top, rather like these cyclists, on another poster from the '50s. That would be supplemented by a windcheater and against the rain our defence was an enormous cycling cape. The rainwater would collect in front of me in the dip in the cape between my body and arms, and every so often I'd have to push the cape up and fling the water into the road – and into the face of the rider behind me. In cold weather we wore plus 2 trousers.

Later on I took up cycle racing, and for that the clothes were different, being special racing shorts with a chamois leather lining, and a silk top. The races were either 10 or 25 miles long and would take place on the East Lancs Road.

In 1957 I acquired a boyfriend who built me a special racing bike, putting together selected components from the frame upwards, sourced from the local



bike shop, which was a place we often spent ages in. This was a faster affair altogether with an eight speed derailleur gear mechanism. Because I was racing, I had more contact with other clubs and joined a wider cycling fraternity.



The Clarion newspaper has long gone, and sadly the Sheffield Clarion Rambling Club folded in 2015, but the good news is that my old cycling club is going strong. It is apolitical now, and can only admit adults as members, but it keeps to the tradition of my time in being open to cyclists of all abilities and being very active across a wide range of cycling pursuits. Its website <https://www.boltonclarion.co.uk/> has a wealth of information and attractive photographs,

including this one of members on a ride very much like the ones I used to do.

Do you want to see some real live socialists? A few years ago on one of his TV railway programmes Michael Portillo dropped in at the Clarion tea rooms that still survives - Clarion House - near Pendle Hill and chatted with the people there. Well worth a look via this link...

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0700z75>

Milly Wright October 2025

EXTRA!

TAN Y GARTH COTTAGE UPGRADE: NOVEMBER 2025...by Kev McEvoy

I guess everyone staying at the hut will have noticed that it, together with the cottage, have recently been painted! This has brightened up the appearance and 'feel' of our property both on the ground, and in the pictures prospective members and customers see online.

There has also been a great deal of work completed in the gardens to improve the general appearance of the grounds. Thanks to Tom Humphreys for all his work on these projects.



Now I'd like to take you **through the door** to see the results of a week of decorating the inside of the cottage including the dining room and the two bedrooms. New furniture was installed, and other pieces of furniture were refurbished and updated.

This is the Double Bedroom...



...and here's the Twin Bedroom...



... and the Dining Room, Kitchen, and Lounge.



I hope you will agree that there is a big improvement with the fresh new look to the cottage. We are aiming to build on the many positive reviews we receive from customers which focus on how 'cosy', 'well equipped' and 'clean' the cottage is. Customers also regularly comment on the fantastic location.

There is still a lot of work to be done, for example we are aiming to change the capacity offering of the cottage to 4 people, as the size and layout of the cottage does not comfortably accommodate 6 people throughout. We are also planning new furniture for the dining room and lounge and installing central heating. These future upgrades are dependent on increased revenue from letting the cottage and will be a rolling programme as funds become available.

Our goal is to enhance the experience of members and customers at the cottage, and to maintain and improve its position in the lettings market.

So please bring your family and friends for a cosy get away in Tan-Y- Garth! As you may be aware the cottage has a discount of 30% for members, provided you the member stays there; please *Contact Angela Price (Booking Secretary) for more information on booking the cottage.*

I would like to give a massive thank you to Vanda for all her hard work and support. Thank you also to Angela for her hard work during the decorating week.

Kev McEvoy (Cottage Warden)

November 2025