

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER

March 2026: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the March Newsletter!

Produced in the short month of February, this newsletter is itself shorter than of late, partly 'cause I've other good things on at the end of February that prevent me working on it. There are articles in the offing though for future editions and late February stories will feature in the next issue. Thanks to Brenda, Chris Harris, Helen Grant, Kev, Lindsey, Mike McEneaney, Ray, Sue, and as ever DLJ for their help this month. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **March 25th**

Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for March and April, 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....**

7 March	Saturday Walk – Northern Clwyds
20-22	Hut Weekend (Annual Dinner)
24 March	Annual General Meeting
26 March	Thursday Walk – The Wrekin and The Ercall
3-6 April	Hut Weekend (Easter Weekend)
18 April	Saturday Walk (Tal y Fan)
24-26 April	Hut Weekend (St George's Night)

Focus on Venues

Taking March from the top, first off is my own **Northern Clwyds** circuit, which all being well will start at Rhuallt, right by what was once the A55.

Ah the A55! Dubbed – see - <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/brief-history-a55-north-wales-10660722> - by the Daily Post 'North Wales's most notorious road'. And they're right, I've sat eating noodles on the Karakoram Highway with hardened Chinese truckers, and the mere mention of the A55 shocks the slurping to a standstill. Personally, roadwise, I reckon the Daily Post needs to shape up its ideas with a tour of duty in Somerset...

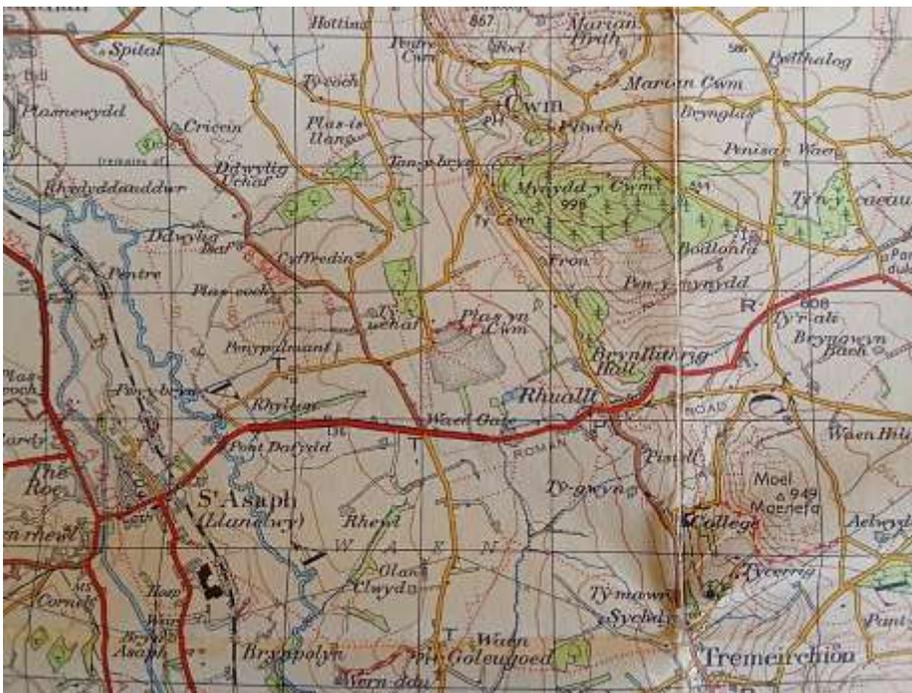
Seriously, we tend to take the A55 we see today for granted and moan about roadworks along with the Daily Post, but I can remember as a boy when it took four or five hours to drive from

Wirral to Anglesey. 40 minutes just to get through Colwyn Bay. We had our lunch break ham sandwiches from foil packets to celebrate once we'd got through Colwyn Bay's jams. One other highlight for me was passing the Hotel 70 Degrees above the town, now sadly gone and redeveloped as housing.

Here is the hotel, photo courtesy of sextonstravels.blogspot.com . It was the epitome of early 1970s chic, constructed with angles of 70 rather than 90 degrees. I've always imagined that the inside was like something out of Jason King, all dry martinis and kaftans. The TV series (Jason's photo courtesy of <https://ar.inspiredpencil.com/pictures-2023/jason-king>) came out at about the same time as the hotel.



Getting back to Rhualt, you can from the 1959 OS map below see why the old road's traffic jams were 'legendary'.



In just this short section, the entire weight of traffic rams through tiny Rhualt and then knocks chunks off historic St Asaph.

Not only was the road down from the top of the Clwyds single carriageway, it also went into Rhualt on a set of sharp bends. These must have challenged the brakes on the lorries at that time!

The website below gives many insights

into the challenges of modernising the road.

<https://ukmotorwayarchive.ciht.org.uk/motorways-by-region/a55/>

The website is from the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation, so focuses on the engineering achievements side of road building. I learnt a lot from it, not least the struggle to make the new A55 pass safely over a landscape dotted with old mine shafts and natural sinkholes, with dangers from potential cavities in the ground which could not be accurately predicted.

Of the changes at Rhuallt which we see today, which were made in 1992, the site says –

‘Formation of the two major cuttings on the Rhuallt Hill Improvement scheme - the deepest being 27m - required excavation of over 900,000m³, over half in rock. Much of the excavated material was used for embankments and landscaping, and there was great emphasis on environmental solutions to minimise visual impact along the 4.3km stretch. As at Travellers' Inn, geotextiles were used where cavitation was suspected.’

Finally, another place to see the old A55 is at Old Warren near Hawarden, where there is a section not used by vehicle traffic after the new road was cut through in 1984. 40 years since have not made much impression on the road. Useful perhaps in appreciating how the Roman road system may well have persisted in Britain a lot longer than one might imagine!

At the **Annual Dinner** we'll have our regular favourites including:

- Saturday walk organised by Kev
- Photo competition - the subject this year is Animals of North Wales
- Chairman's speech given by the Chairman
- Speech to Absent Friends by Margie as Roger is otherwise engaged
- Stand up / sit down bingo by Hew
- Raffle with stunning prizes
- Possible wild swim on Sunday followed by breakfast at the Siabod.

Now more on day trips, namely Chris Harris's Thursday walk on **The Wrekin and the The Ercall**. Chris tells me that he's going to do The Ercall first and then circuit around to ascend The Wrekin.

The Wrekin is a feature of views from far and wide – apparently it can be seen from the Beetham Tower in Manchester. It gives views, according to Chris, of seven counties. On top is a hill fort, a 1973 excavation (reported in the Archaeological Journal Volume 141 in 1984) suggests that the site was occupied from around 900 BC to its abandonment around the time of the Roman invasion, in around 50AD. There is an extensive website <https://explorethewrekin.co.uk> giving a wealth of information on this area. This website says of the Ercall that it is ‘Famed for its exposures of Precambrian and Cambrian rock, the geology on display here is of international significance, while the verdant quarry floor is hugely important for a wide range of flying insects and a significant site for mosses and liverworts.’

Moving closer to our own time, in 2018 these two hills helped resolve a legal dispute. Apparently Poundland marketed a chocolate called Twin Peaks, around the time Toblerone reduced the size of their bars - their peaks shifting apart without the benefit of plate tectonics. The American owners of Toblerone threw their toys out of the cable car over this new kid on the slopes and went to law in 2017. It's worth saying in their defence that if companies aren't seen to defend their trademarks vigorously they risk gradually losing their rights to them. The Twin

Peaks bars were removed from the shelves, but thankfully matters were settled when Poundland changed the shape of their bar – to resemble the profile of the Wrekin and the Ercall rather than multiple Matterhorns; and Twin Peaks came back on sale in 2018.

Here is a bar of Twin Peaks (photo from www.express.co.uk)



Occasional Section – Members Personal News



The padel courts at Heswall Rackets Club were officially opened by its president Colin Winstanley

The Wirral Globe recently reported the opening of new Padel Tennis courts at Heswall Rackets Club. Their photo and report featured our own founder member **Roger Hughes**, who clearly has made a great contribution to the project, honoured with a plaque. The Rackets Club does have a link with us – way back in 1992 we gave a slide show there on our first Himalayan trip.

Padel (pronounced 'paddle') is very popular, it's a bit like a cross between tennis and squash. This match is in Munich.





I also wanted to share this fantastic shot of Tan y Garth taken by **Kev** and posted on Facebook.

Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

Brenda posted 'Thank you to Sue for the fabulous food last night for the **Burns Night** celebrations. Thank you to the ambience team too, fabulous décor!'

Sue tells me that most people got involved with food prep, the peeling and the chopping. Angela and Margaret were the ambience team.

The weekend also sadly featured some pretty rotten weather, so it was great that Gavin and Co. succeeded in their ascent of Moel Siabod.

A couple of us also had a good day on Anglesey with some decent weather – always a good bet when it's wet is Anglesey. Another party visited Bodnant Gardens.



Staying inside for now, Steve had a good turnout for his **Dolomites Slide Show** at Gallaghers. It covered much more than the skiing, and Helen Grant, a Dolomites aficionada, said 'it reminded me of just what a beautiful area it is'.



Moving on out to the **3 Peaks of Bryn Alyn** meet, Helen G posted 'Thanks Dave for an enjoyable walk today despite it being rather soggy at times'. I was grateful to everyone who came along for staying with the meet given the poor forecast, and we were lucky that it was only 'soggy'. It was murky on top, but the actual rain held off till we were under the shelter of trees and hedges, and things actually dried up and gave us some views of the hills and of the Clwyds at the end.



As so often with poor days you look at the subtle things, it was lovely that all the birch twigs bore rain drop jewels that caught the light. We had some good laughs, and a number of us rounded off the day with a pint in The Druid at Llanferres, a friendly pub with a welcome fire. Thanks to Ray and Helen G for these photos!



Dave Gray 21st^h February 2026