

THE GWYDYR No. 31 Aug/Sept 2012



Andy Chapman's photo of the sunrise from Mt Kilimanjaro.

Welcome to the latest newsletter and despite the seemingly endlessly indifferent weather it's not stopped us playing out whenever we can ☺

First up however is an article from Roger Hughes which found its way into an old email address of mine. Can members please note my correct address for any future articles or pictures :- allangwydyr@hotmail.co.uk

Rail excursion through Snowdonia

14 assorted members assembled on the platform at Heswall Hills station on a gloriously sunny spring morning to catch the 7.39 Wrexham train. When it arrived, only 2 minutes late, we found it bearing our 15th traveller, Brian Gilbert who had joined at Bidston. We had the train largely to ourselves as we crossed the Dee into Wales and through the small border villages to Wrexham.

The 7 minute change over was achieved without mishap but the luxury of empty carriages did not extend to the Shrewsbury train which seemed to be carrying half the Church of England ministers to

a conference in Cardiff. A further change at Shrewsbury station put us on the Aberystwyth train, this time it was busy with train “anoraks” and elderly ramblers; there was some meeting of minds as we struggled to conceal the fact that our excursion was altogether less demanding.

The route crossed back into Wales as we travelled south east to Welshpool and Newtown before heading east through barren hillsides and down the Dovey valley to Machynlleth. Most of the train carried on to Aberystwyth, and we stood in the sunshine with a large selection of expectant travellers carefully positioned on the platform where the doors of the next train would open. We had put our faith in Paul Jensen for this and lined up behind him so that when the train stopped with its door opposite him, we would be first on and all sit together. Sadly he got it wrong, we were standing exactly *between* two doors, so again we spread ourselves through the busy train.

The train travelled along the south side of the Dovey estuary to Dovey Junction and then crossed into the National Park to pick up the coast through Aberdovey and head north. A disappointment lay in wait as we came through Towyn, the hoped for view of Nuala waving to us on the platform did not materialise, and we had to be content with the spectacular views of Cader Idris as we crossed the Mawdach estuary into Barmouth.

The 1 hour 59 minutes in Barmouth was sensibly divided between the Tal y Don Hotel, the Last Inn and the fish and chip takeaway, and a suitably rejuvenated team reassembled on the platform to catch the next train north. A 28 minute delay was announced, but this was received stoically, it merely enabled Judy and Sue to go paddling, and the rest of us to enjoy an ice cream in the sun.

On up the coast we went, passing below Harlech castle where the train again filled up as school finished (early?) for the day, and catching views of Portmerion and Snowdon itself across Traeth Bach. We crossed Afon Dwyryd alongside the toll road and then Afon Glaslyn, past Tremadoc cliffs and into the top end of Portmadoc town where we allowed the train to continue without us to Pwllheli. A brisk walk through the town ensured time for a pint at the railway buffet before we joined the narrow gauge Ffestiniog Railway.

This part of the journey was undoubtedly the highlight. The views back down the estuary as we slowly climbed to Blaenau Ffestiniog were nothing short of spectacular, and the journey was made special by the announcement of Mike Davies’ 65th birthday and the production of 6 bottles of red wine (with plastic glasses) which he had so thoughtfully carried all day. A memorable journey indeed!

Back on Arriva trains, we passed through the slate mines and into the tunnel below the Crimea Pass before catching views of the east face of Moel Siabod and Dolwyddelan Castle as we passed (sadly!) the Gwydyr Hotel and on into Betwys y Coed. The train journey down the Conway valley gave us time to enjoy the fabulous scenery that you invariably miss when you are travelling by car. A brief wait at Llandudno Junction for the train from Holyhead and we were off again along the coast through Colwyn Bay and Prestatyn and then along the Dee to Shotton. The 37 minutes in the itinerary to get from Shotton low level to Shotton high level allowed us to divert to Wetherspoons Central Hotel (almost on the platform, happily) and served to demonstrate that it was really still only March and at 7.30 at night on a clear day, still jolly cold! We made it back to Heswall spot on time at 20.29 and an exhausted party shuffled off home.

I think we all agreed it was a fantastic day, virtually a complete circuit of Snowdonia with little or no walking but views to match any in the world. When do we do it again?



A couple of Roger's pictures from the trip !

The first club trip of note since the last newsletter was Kevin McEvoy's Rhoscolyn trip which was, as usual, well attended and we were graced with some good weather while Snowdonia took a battering with torrential rain !

Melinda Kinsman also sent me the following article after her 'interesting' attempt on Tryfan's North Ridge. Thankfully she escaped with relatively minor injuries (if a broken wrist can be described as minor !) and it could have been so much worse. I think I speak for all of us when we wish her to get well soon.

Lessons in gravity, a cautionary tale... by Melinda Kinsman

I'm pretty used to life constantly swinging from one extreme to another, yet so far this year seems to have been odder than usual.

Cancelling our trip to go ice climbing in Norway in January didn't seem unusual, my neck decided to have a flare-up, so that was that. Scrambling across Tryfan in February I was then to be amazed by streaming clouds, inversions and numerous Brocken Spectres. I felt privileged to witness such views. I don't remember meeting another soul out on the hill that day, and I enjoyed having nature's show all to myself. (I wonder if I'll feel that way about solitude in the hills again.)

In between the usual neck flare-ups, I was lucky to get quite a bit of climbing done in the good spring weather we were to experience, including my first trip to The Gower in April.

- a. Three Cliffs Bay, The Gower.
- b. Rich leading A Dream of White Horses.

Then, at the end of May, Rich granted me a birthday wish, taking me over to Gogarth on Anglesey to climb A Dream of White Horses. (Just the name of this route had inspired something inside me many many years before, at a time when it seemed most improbable that I would ever manage to walk up a hill again, let alone set my sights toward rock climbing.) We had the whole route to ourselves, with clear blue skies and sunshine. It didn't seem as if life could get any better.

Following more neck flare-ups, and a lot of wet summer weather, July saw Rich and me heading down to St. Just in Cornwall for 2 weeks. Despite a few damp days, we had some cracking weather, and Rich took me to climb lots of the nearby classics. I was climbing well, though I think Rich and I were both fairly relieved to discover that, at least when I'm leading, there is still a level at which I do fear for my own safety. (Poorly protected pitches of 4b come into that category for me!)

- c. Demo Route, Sennen.
- d. Ochre Slab Route II, Bosigran.
- e. Blue skies at Bosigran.

This may sound odd to the rest of you, but as the main medication that now allows me to get out and do stuff disrupts not only the nerve signals that cause pain but also those involved in "fear pathways", it has long been apparent to Rich, Tony and myself that I no longer feel even a respectable level of fear when looking down a rock face. Tony finds this particularly annoying, as he battles with his own vertigo only to watch me climbing "as if down on the ground".

Recovering from a short neck flare up at the start of August, I eyed up the weather forecast hopefully - a 4 day window of good weather seemed to be opening up for the 2nd week. I'd not been out to the Chapel for a few months by then, so a mid-week visit seemed in order. I apologise for boring those of you who have already heard what happened next - please skip to the next article!

- f. Heading for trouble, Tryfan 8/8/12

August 8th 2012 is the day gravity caught up with me. I'd meant to spend the day on Little Tryfan, top-roping and self belaying myself up and down the slabs so I could practise gear placements. Driving along the A5, however, the clouds seemed to have cleared to leave Adam and Eve highlighted by sunshine and a patch of blue sky. My eyes were instinctively drawn toward Tryfan's north ridge. Now, though, as it was the main summer holiday period, I reluctantly realised I would have to accept not getting the ridge to myself. (How grateful I would be for that later!)

Although the heathery bits were very wet, the rock was nice and dry, so as usual I entertained myself finding interesting new bits to scramble on, and following crampon scratches along the more direct ridge line, rather than the meandering easier normal north ridge route. I'd already overtaken several groups before reaching my highest point. I was on the vertical wall just below the summit plateau.

Funnily enough, I'd just decided I didn't fancy the bit above me without a rope, so was down climbing a few metres when I fell, planning to then reascend an easier looking line to my right. I was slowly sliding myself down using 2 opposing friction holds with my hands when it happened. I realise now that I must have somehow missed the foot hold a foot below me that I was aiming for, and I just kept on going.

You think you will scream out when something like that happens, but I just remember swearing inwardly as rock rushed past in front of my face.

I'm told I fell 30ft straight down before landing across a rock with my lower back. I remember that the landing was excruciating, but that I was then incredibly relieved to find that my legs still moved. My body curled up into an awkward kneeling position.

I first started walking and scrambling on my own as a student, after reading the book "Touching the Void", and deciding that if Joe Simpson could crawl for days back down to his climbing partner in such a battered condition then, as long as I was conscious, I could crawl 5 miles or less down a Scottish glen to get help. I also always held the opinion that if I chose to be stupid enough to go out in the hills on my own, then I had no right to expect anyone to go out of their way to rescue me if I got into trouble (so I'm embarrassed to admit that I wasn't even carrying a mobile phone when I did fall.)

Strange how reality doesn't fit with your ideals. After the landing, all I could manage was 3 low groans, and I realised then that I should stay as still as possible in case my back was broken (as, indeed, it deserved to be). Thankfully 3 people behind me saw the fall, and called out to me that they were coming. I was so relieved that other human beings were coming to me, that I wouldn't be out there alone.

I can never really express how grateful I am to the RAF helicopter crew and the Ogwen Mountain Rescue team members who came out to me, nor how wonderful the Bangor ER staff were once I'd made it to hospital. With so much adrenalin in my system, it didn't really hit home how serious my accident had been until hours later when I was awaiting CT results of my spine. I found Wendy, the nurse with me, "keeping everything crossed".

I felt so lucky to walk out of that ER later the same evening with just a broken wrist. When this cast is removed, I plan to keep it in the room with our climbing gear. To remind me to always carry a mobile phone. To remind me to take easier routes when I'm alone. To remind me to check how far off the floor I am. To remind me that gravity has consequences...

I don't come from a religious family, but I'm wondering if guardian angels maybe do exist. My mum thinks that's what all the Brocken Spectres were that I saw round Tryfan back in February.

Since the accident I keep getting asked just one question. I'd almost made it out of my GP's door yesterday before it came. "Were you flown by Prince William?"

The answer is that I don't know, and I don't care. Who ever flew me off Tryfan that day is a hero in my book, and I don't want them to feel any less important if they didn't happen to be royalty.



A



B



C



D



E



F

The letters underneath Melinda's photographs relate to the letters in her text – if that makes sense ☺ Thanks for the article Melinda.

The first club meet after the last newsletter was Kevin McEvoy's Rhoscolyn meet which was well attended despite a rather miserable forecast. Seven members went walking along the coast during the Saturday under clear blue skies with great views over to the rather wet looking Snowdonia mountains. An interesting diversion developed in the late afternoon when I managed to lock Bethan's keys in the car..... it took a fair bit of effort and imagination from the mechanic sent from Holyhead to rectify matters. A cracking barbecue was held on the Saturday night but not before Neil Metcalfe, Kevin McEvoy & Helen Avison had been persuaded by John Driver to try their hand at Coasteering which was apparently great fun. As the barbecue progressed we were literally on the edge of a massive storm cloud though thankfully no rain fell to spoil the proceedings. The next day we learned that Trearddur Bay was flooded so it was a close run thing. Sunday saw some leaving for home while Neil, Bethan and I with Hollie went to Rhosneiger and had a great time exploring the burial mound at Barclodiad Y Gawres (well worth seeking out !) and scrambling on the rocks of the bays around the village. Neil Metcalfe is now a firm advocate of flip – flop scrambling (see pictures below



The following weekend saw a great number of us out on Dave Gray's Black Hill walk in the Peak District. We started from Crowden campsite and walked up to Laddow Rocks where I persuaded a few intrepid souls to drop down into the famous cave for a bit of lunch out of the wind. I sneaked away to snatch a climb in on a crag I'd not climbed on before. I espied an easy route though had a bit of a time on it and lamented not being more patient and taking the time to put my rock boots on. Needless to say half way up I had to remove my walking boots and climb in socks as the rock was greasy and lichen covered. It was awkward and at one point had to throw my boots up to the next ledge as they got in the way being tied around my neck. It was great fun though and I soon caught the rest up as we made our way up to Black Hill itself and returned back to the cars and a delightfully rustic pub in Tintwistle for the obligatory 'off the hill'.



While the rest of the club disappeared Beth and I stayed over to recce the campsites around Edale for the meet at the end of the month. We managed to secure some places at Field Head campsite however the forecast for the bank holiday weekend was not great so I don't blame members for bailing out so to speak.

The following week Beth, Hollie and I went out to the chapel as my sister and her family were staying at the cottage. The weather was sadly not brilliant but we did have a stunning day at Llanddwyn Island on Anglesey. For those who have not been it is a beautiful place and we were blessed with the warmest and sunniest weather imaginable, we even saw some porpoises leaping out of the water 😊. Later in the week we all climbed Snowdon via the Llanberis path in less than perfect weather but you can't have everything I suppose. The cottage and chapel are ideal places for a family trip as evidenced this year by increased members booking 😊



Beth scrambling at Llanddwyn Island



The McDonald clan on Snowdon summit.

The following weekend Beth, Neil and John Simpson went up Cregiau Gleison from the chapel and had a really good long walk with a short sleep near the waters of Llyn Cowlyd.



John & Neil doing a Usain Bolt on the summit 😊

The following weekend a group of us went to the chapel to meet up with the Burnley Mountaineering Club. Much was done (and drunk !!) despite the weather which improved as the weekend progressed and on the Sunday Andy Odger came out with Helen Smith and we all went climbing at Craig Caseg Fraith Isaf in the Ogwen valley. The weather was good but sadly Neil was a tad tired after a long night at the chapel !!!!!

On the next weekend at the beginning of September was a club weekend at the chapel. Beth and I came out a few days earlier and had a stunning couple of days walking with an overnight high camp near the summit of Moel Siabod. We left the chapel late afternoon on the Tuesday evening and camped a mere 100m from the summit, a simple meal preceded a gorgeous sunset and as the air cooled we took shelter in our tent with a glass of red and listened to music on the MP3 with a speaker – all very relaxing 😊

So relaxing did it prove that we slept in and missed the sun rise which was no doubt as beautiful as the sunset the night before. We packed up after breakfast and made our way along the grassy ridge, following the never ending fence line all the way to Moel Meirch before enduring the horridly wet and trackless path from Llyn Edno to the Gwynant valley. The sun was not far from setting as we approached Beddgelert and the weight of my pack was telling as we took to the road in the vain hope of catching the bus back to Capel Curig. Clearly we'd missed it so it was time to break out the 'Golden' thumb and try to hitch back.

In my younger days I hitched everywhere and my thumb had acquired almost legendary status with my friends who no doubt often questioned how I managed to get all over the place at no expense. On this occasion I was quite anxious as the last time I hitched was with Neil and it took ages to get a lift however I need not have worried as the first car that came stopped. Sadly he was only going a couple of miles up the road to the Gwynant campsite so I waved him on his way and stuck to my guns. We were rewarded some ten minutes later when we managed to get a lift all the way back to the Tyn Y Coed for a much needed 'off the hill'. It was a great long walk with perfect weather and boded well for the next few days ☺

Andy Chapman was at the chapel and was spending his time scrambling amongst the more obscure Ogwen and Carneddau classics. We were pretty tired after our walk and so spent some time bouldering at the RAC boulders before having a good day on the Milestone Buttress with Andy climbing Pulpit Route (avoiding the Ivy Chimney – YUCK !). Beth spent the afternoon reading while Andy and I climbed an esoteric classic called BOOT CRACK which certainly gave us both food for thought (me more than Andy I reckon !). We both agreed it was certainly at least a grade harder than that given in the guidebook !

At the weekend we were all joined by several club members and a couple of prospective members and a great day was had on Cnicht from Nantmor on a walk organised by Geoff Brierley. The only down-side to the walk was that we had to come down the same path we had walked back earlier in the week though thankfully it was a bit less wet. We had a lovely 'off the hill' in the Saracens Head in Beddgelert so Sue Taylor could join us before retiring back to the chapel for a pleasant evening.

Sunday dawned a bit grey and damp so Beth and I had an easy day pottering around Betws and Llanfairfechan while Neil, Geoff, Richard, Lindsey et al went on Tryfan's North Ridge. Andy Chapman went to Craig Lloer with Tony Lamberton and had an interesting time climbing Kirkus Climb which has apparently not got any easier since I did it many years ago.

The next club meet was Mark Barley's walk however I don't have any details as to how it went but if anyone wants to email me I'll sort it for the next newsletter.

On the weekend of the 21 / 22 September we were booked into the brilliant Wayfarer's club cottage at Langdale in the Lake District. The weather was brilliant over the weekend and eleven members and prospective member Chris went up Scafell Pike from the valley via Rosset Gill and Esk Hause. It proved to be a long day though the sun shone and there was hardly a breath of wind, the views were fantastic with all the peaks clear of mist and even the Isle of Man could be discerned from the busy summit cairn. At the end of the day a much needed beer was sought in the Old Dungeon Ghyll by most and more 'off the hills' were sought in the New Dungeon Ghyll and the Stickle Barn pubs by some.....

John Murphy had decided not to come with us up Scafell and had spent the day practicing his navigation skills walking from Ambleside back to Langdale in preparation for his forthcoming ML course.

The log fire was blazing in the hut and much good food and wine was drunk by all after a really good day out though in hindsight Ronnie may regret breaking out his bottle of Whisky towards the end of the evening.....

Sunday dawned dry and sunny though there was some more cloud high above the summits. The general consensus was to head up to Stickle Tarn and from there some chose to head up Pavey Ark via the classic Jack's Rake scramble while Beth and I with Mike Mc went up Harrison Stickle. Mike then chose to head over to Pavey Ark while we carried on over to Pike O Stickle and Long Crag before heading back down to the New Dungeon Ghyll and the hut. Neil, David, Ronnie and Geoff joined us soon afterwards after completing all the summits mentioned.

All in all it proved another great meet at this hut and one that I am sure members will like us to book again next year 😊



The above two photographs were provided by Mike Mc from a club meet to Langdale in 1968 !

Here's some from the latest meet 😊



'RLH' – Wayfarer's club hut



At the foot of Rossett Ghyll



Pike O Stickle from Rossett Ghyll



Beth near Angle Tarn



Skiddaw & Derwent Water



Mike et al nearing Scafell Pike



Geoff with Scafell Pike behind



Great Gable from Scafell Pike



On the summit ☺



At the shelter near Esk Hause



Waterfall



The Langdale Pikes

FORTHCOMING MEETS

OCTOBER 2012	
05-06	Autumn Self Catering (Sue Taylor / Lin Jensen)
12-13	HUT Weekend
26-27	Lakes Camping Bard (Dave Gray)

Note:

The self catering meet is now apparently fully booked and the weekend after the hut weekend mentioned above is now a work weekend at the chapel so if you can help please contact Margaret – thanking you.

Ps. While Dave Gray is a word lover I am sure that Bard should read Barn ☺

50th Anniversary celebrations.....

Quite a few ideas have been put forward ranging from a trip to Peak Lenin in the Pamirs and the Alps down to more UK based trips / events. Please continue to think about it and let me know and we will discuss at the committee meetings over the coming months with a view to putting a firm proposal to the membership in due course.

Meets List 2013

The meets list for next year is doing its usual Tuesday night rounds at the Stork but please feel free to email Les Fowles with your ideas and suggestions as to where we can go next year. There are a few good meets planned but please don't just rely on the usual suspects and have a go at organising a meet yourself ☺

Well that's all folks but please feel free to email me any articles or photographs for inclusion in the next newsletter which I hope will be out mid November (ish)