

THE GWYDYR No32(Oct/Nov 2012)

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB



Snowdon Horseshoe 1st November 2012 ☺

Hello everyone, I hope you've all been busy on the hills and despite the somewhat changeable weather its good to see so many meets well attended and now that we've had the first of the winter snows in Snowdonia its time to dust of your winter clothes in anticipation of a great winters fun ☺

Dave Gray and Reg have recently returned from a fantastic trip to Canada and Dave has sent me the following which is great I am sure you'll agree – thanks Dave.

Walking the Canadian Rockies – Hot Tips for Cold Country...

This September Reg and I had a fantastic 3-week walking holiday in the Canadian Rockies. I'd recommend anyone to go.

I felt it was the most varied mountain area I'd ever been to; with much more difference in the scenery from place to place than say the Himalayas or the Western Alps. We had everything on offer from trekking past glaciated mountains, through almost desert like rock scenery towering above dense pine forest, a forest alive with autumn colour in the deep undergrowth, plus profound limestone canyons. Everything really bar the sea. Each day's walk was a delight and full of interest.

Here's some of our experiences that might interest anyone who's thinking of going to this part of the world, bits that aren't necessarily in the guide books.

1. When and Where?

We went in September and were glad we did so; we got around some of the worst of the "you must book a year in advance" problems as the schools had gone back; the days were very sunny but cool high up and we didn't have major problems with snow. That said, we were lucky with the weather, as there's not a lot to do indoors in this area and when it rains it's miserable. If I were going on just one North American holiday, I'd still recommend the dry US south west desert states over Canada for that reason.

There isn't a spring walking season – trails stay impassable with snow till late May.

Hiring a car allowed us to cover a range of areas. The big discovery was the rugged and quiet Peter Lougheed Provincial Park south of Banff National Park where we spent our first four days. We skipped Banff town and based ourselves for a week in Lake Louise within Banff NP, as it seemed a better walking base. Both Lake Louise and Jasper, our third location and third park, are also good bases in that there are nearby passes to drive through to the lesser-known Yoho and Kootenay NPs plus Mount Robson park, all in British Columbia. Yoho gave us two top-grade trails.

2. "No Nails?"... it's camping Jim, but not as we know it

Apart from our arrival and departure nights we camped. It was a success and the site in Peter Lougheed, by a huge lake surrounded by peaks, was idyllic. You get a nice big pitch with a picnic table to cook and eat on. Provided you arrived in the morning and mid week the sites seemed to have plenty of space and you could just turn up.

In Canada though you need to take or acquire on arrival some extra kit to cope with camping on gravel pitches – forget greensward, there isn't any! A big strong hammer for the pegs (and ideally some extra strong steel pegs or "nails"); and a tough groundsheet to take the sharp stones. You also need to buy a washing up bowl as sinks to wash up in aren't part of the culture. Facilities are generally basic.

We took Reg's big tent, and this effectively meant we couldn't camp in the back country. This tent was really comfortable and I felt much better overall than living the whole trip in backpacking tents, and for a first visit there's plenty to see based on valley sites.

3. Permitted Paths...

The other part of the culture one needs to adapt to is bureaucracy. The NP annual entry pass is great value and all parking is free so it's cheaper than travel than in the UK, but Canadians just love restrictions and permits and are very risk-averse.

So you might find your trail closed because of bears or because of weather damage. Some real highlights – like Lake O'Hara in Yoho – are subject to restricted numbers of hikers and hence aren't too flexible for people coming from the UK. Fortunately, there's plenty to see and do and petrol is cheap to get around.

50 Shades of Canadian Grey sums it all up as: "Christian tied me to the picnic table and applied for a permit to whip me. Luckily, I'd booked my orgasm three months in advance".

4. No brawling at the weigh-in please...

Funniest moments of the trip? Reg being asked to fill in his height and weight each time he bought a fishing day ticket. We both struggled to keep a straight face, as did the guy selling him repeated permits.

Reg had three fine days fishing and we ate freshly caught trout from waters draining to the Pacific and Arctic oceans. His third day was at a beautiful lake packed with monster pike.

5. Those Bear Necessities...

What was really great about Canada, and very different from other mountain areas I'd been to, was the wealth of chunky wildlife.

At about 400m (Reg says 200!) we saw 3 grizzly bears, a mother and two yearling cubs, rippling with muscle and peacefully getting through their 35,000 calories of berries per day. Bighorn rams and ewes (a sheep the size of a red deer) came to within 10 yards just grazing as if we weren't there.

In Jasper campsite, bull elk (a male deer the size of a large cow) undertook their rut, also as if we weren't there, shrieking all night and settling fights, yards from the tent on one occasion.

Other sightings were marmots, bald eagles, a beaver, and plenty of squirrels – these are clever enough to steal food from the boot of your car even when you're around the site.

Yelling out things like "Paging Mr. Roughass Badbear, telephone sir!" regularly kept us free from close bear encounters on the trails. We bought bear spray which gave a bit more of a sense of security as well as the thrill of carrying dangerous things round in dangly holsters normally denied to us Brits.

6. Editing the highlights...

You can't hope to do everything and we found the park rangers helpful with advice on good trails, to put the flesh on the bones of what you get in books or the net and to help sort out some priorities.

The (Gem series) large scale maps are a bit hit and miss in what features they name but seem accurate and have useful trail guides on the back; you could just about get away with the free trail maps from the parks if you knew where you were heading, as the trails are clear.

For me, the top walks out of the 20 days we did were:

- Burstall Pass (Peter Lougheed PP) – brush up your John Denver songs for a wild rock and glacial peaks and huge views
- Ptarmigan Cirque (Peter Lougheed PP) – a rocky, Tibetan style desert and our (8,000' plus) high point
- Plain of 6 Glaciers (Banff NP) – what it says on the packet, huge glaciers, crevasses, moraines, soaring peaks, avalanches, rock towers and pinnacle-girt lakes
- Yoho Pass -Wapta Highline- Burgess Pass circuit (Yoho NP) – high mountains and long waterfalls plus passing close to the Burgess Shale, fossil repository of the earliest complex life on Earth
- Iceline Trail (Yoho NP) – even bigger waterfalls, white mountains reflected in high mirror lakes, and a walk in a recently glaciated wilderness
- Sulphur Skyline Trail (Jasper NP) – deep colours and crisp views over the Fiddle River Canyon, for me the wildest, most romantic mountain area we saw, you just longed to trek and trek through it
- Parker Ridge (Jasper NP/Banff NP border) – spectacular peaks below the biggest icefield outside the polar regions.

And now the pictures



First meet was the CLM self catering meet and Chris Harris kindly provided me with the following article, thanks Chris.

CHAIRMAN'S LUXURY MEET

Stanley House, Eskdale

5 – 8 October 2012

This was the meeting that put the luxury into the Chairman's meet. A house that will hold 30, we were 24, the rooms were large with excellent bathrooms, 3 lounges, 1 massive kitchen with dining area, a drying room, views of the fells all around and it was lovely and warm. Two pubs in Boot, 15 minutes walk and the Woolpack and The King George IV about half an hour in opposite directions from base.



There is tremendous choice of walks from the doorstep:

Scafell via Burnmoor Tarn, returning across Slightside and past Eel Tarn

Burnmoor Tarn and over Illgill Head and Whin Rigg.

Harter Fell from Jubilee Bridge, returning via Hard Knott.

Blea Tarn, Hollinghead Bank, Bull Crag

Stanley Force and Birker Fell

Along the Esk to The Woolpack

It didn't matter which way you went you were guaranteed some water logged ground and indistinct paths – the drying room was much appreciated.

Who did what rather depended on what time you got up. Mostly a case of “which way are you going?” – “Oh, I'll come with you.”

Many of the separate groups seem to have merged at the various pubs on their return. Janet and I certainly had some successful mergers.

Following the walks on Saturday there was a serious night of eating and drinking. The timings were challenging with so much variety and limited cooking utensils. The meal turned into a superb Tapas experience.



Posh Nibbles selection

Soup – caramelized French Onion

Pasta with chorizo
Salmon encroute
Stuffed vegetables with garlic and rosemary potatoes
Chilli chicken with salad and bread
Forest fruit crumble with custard or cream
Baked Apples with custard or cream
Cheese (of all colours) and crackers
Port



Amaretto

The Morning after (see above)

Coffee and mints.

All washed down with large amounts of wine and beer.

The success and variety was all down to the effort made by the diners themselves in purchasing and preparing the food.

Unfortunately some of the Party had to leave on Sunday evening but not before Sue's Fondue party.

Monday dawned bright and sunny again most of the remaining group managed a short walk, reluctant to leave the sunny Lake District in a hurry.

REPORTS;

From Lin and Paul:

Saturday - Lindsey, Lin and Paul - circuit of Harter Fell inc. Hardknott Roman Fort.

Sunday - Paul and Lin Cycle ride - 55 KM circuit from from Eskdale to Ravenglass and Seascale. Returning via Gosforth, Wasdale and Santon Bridge.



From Janet Coates – Saturday walk

Illgill Head and Whin Rigg Jan Coates, Heather Bliss & Milly Wright

Heather, Milly and Jan Coates left Stanley House and set off for Burnmoor Tarn, Illgill Head and Whin Rigg on the beautiful, clear, warm and sunny Saturday morning of the Eskdale meet, Jan having assured her companions that the planned walk was only seven miles of easy walking.

We reached Burnmoor Tarn and then started up the ridge towards Illgill Head. Finding a sunny sheltered spot with wonderful views we stopped for lunch and were then likened to cats by a group of passing (male) walkers for finding such a warm and comfortable spot.

On reaching Illgill Head, we had fabulous views of the south western Lakeland mountains and down to Wasdale Head. Then on to Whin Rigg, with its impressive views down the gullies and screes to Wast Water.

Having met a group of DofE walkers, young and fit, we decided that DofE awards should only be given to those over 60yrs as it much harder work for us than for the usual recipients.

We carried on along the grassy ridge to find that our path through the forest was “Closed due to timber clearance”. We continued through the forest anyway and luckily the path was walk-able. The lower path through the deciduous woodland, down to the River Mite was especially scenic. So down to the valley and a couple of miles walk back along the road to Stanley House.

Oh and the walk was around 12 miles long – oops sorry girls.



Heather and Milly



Burnmoor Tarn



Wast Water from Whin Rigg

Mike McEneaney

Sunday Joyce & I walked up to Stanley Force water fall, then descended to the river Esk & followed the river as far as Doctors Bridge.

Returning by road we chanced upon Bryan & Mike Gilbert enjoying a pint in the Brook House Inn so "felt obliged " to join them.

A fitting end to a most enjoyable weekend

Chris and Janet

On the Friday afternoon after driving across the Wrynose and Hard Knot passes (the driving equivalent of Crib Goch) we stopped at the Roman Fort and walked back up to Hard Knott – another Wainwright bagged,

On Saturday we set out with Mike Gavin, Dave Gray, Joy, Sue and Reg to walk up Scafell. Taking the old coffin road towards Wasdale promised good walking conditions – wrong! After first lunch at Burnmoor Tarn we headed up into the mist to Scafell. Fortunately the cloud did clear enough to get some magnificent views. Descending via Slightside (another Wainwright) the views opened up. Then on past Eel Tarn where the paths were invisible and the water and bog was waiting for us. A slow and sloppy descent took



us back to Boot where after a short debate we decided to stop for a drink in The Brook House Inn where it appeared that most of the GMC were gathered.

Leaving Scafell towards SlightSide

Sunday saw me Janet, Sue and Dave heading up Harter Fell (another Wainwright !). A superb, clear day with amazing views to the IOM, Scotland and Wales. We came down via HardKnott Pass, the Roman Fort then followed the Esk to the Woolpack Inn where we met Lin and Paul recovering after a surprisingly hilly (Lin) ride.



Planning the route up Harter Fell



From Harter Fell looking out to the Isle of Mann.

Sunday saw me, Janet, Sue, Mike and Linda Gavin walking up to Stanley Force and onto Birker Fell, descending once again on soggy paths to return in time for a lunchtime departure back to Wirral.

For one reason and another we have rarely been down at the Stork on a Tuesday evening for the past few weeks and so Dave Gray has manfully stood in for me at 'OB' and took notes as to what members have been up to – thanks Dave :-

2 October

- Adrian has had a munro-bagging trip to the Highlands tackling Ben More and An Chasteil, he got good weather his score now stands at 29!
- Sue, Mike Mc, Joyce and Les had a weekend in Hathersage with Sue's Gourmet Trekker group, again they got decent weather and the highlight was a day on Stanage Edge
- Doug and Gayle have had a successful week's trip doing via ferrata routes in the Dolomites

9 October

- Jon and Christy had a fine multi day trip to Cross Fell. Jon found the area very impressive.
- David Lane-Joynt and Gayle have had a climbing trip to World's End, top route was at severe (but they fell off a VS)
- Doug and Gayle have additionally done a Derbyshire trip.

The next meet was at the chapel though unfortunately I am unsure as to what many people did though Geoff and Neil did the classic Marin Mountain Bike trail from the chapel. The following weekend was the work meet at the chapel which was very well attended with the place getting a really good spring clean and a new retaining wall being built by

Geoff, Neil and myself. Fiona Langton sent me the following pictures and it's great to see our Welsh base looking so good 😊



Men at work !!!!!!!!!!!



It all got too much for Geoff.....

Bethan Hines and I have been busy having the chance to spend quite a few days at the chapel and we've managed to get some good walking done including the Nantlle ridge, Moel Elio (again) and the small but delightful Sygun hills above Beddgelert.

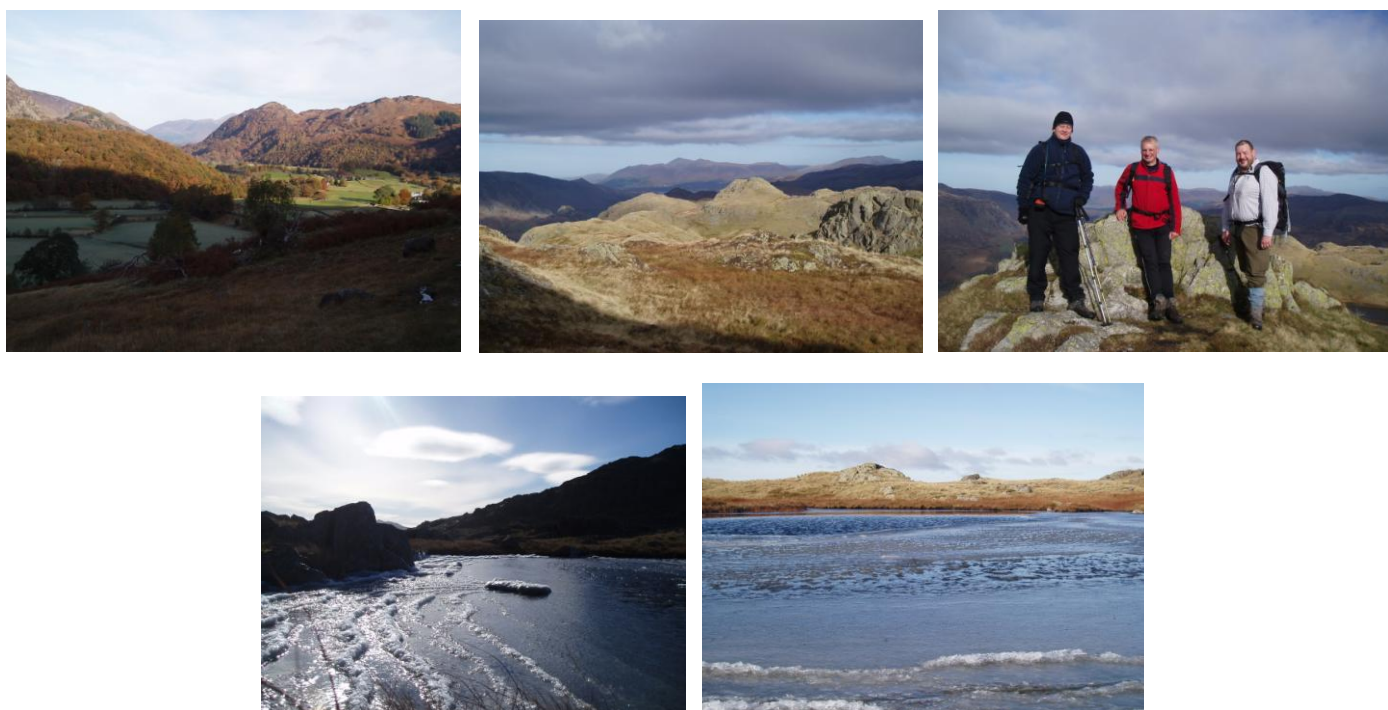
John Murphy and Christy Miles also had a good little break in the Lake District doing some fifteen peaks in six days which left John, as he put it, shattered. Having done the Wainwrights himself Christy must now be close to finishing surely

Dave Gray also emailed me the following for the week ending 23rd October 2012 :-

- Derek, Ross and Mike Dunn were at the Newfield Inn in the Duddon valley, they had decent weather and did valley walks
- Dave Gray, Milly and Christine Smyth spent last Monday week going up Moel Sych, Craig Berwyn and Cader Berwyn from the Milltr Gerrig. They had a fine sunny day, if a bit chilly, with great views of all the North Wales mountains around.

The next club meet was the St Johns in the Vale camping barn trip in the Lake District. This is now an annual trip and is always well attended as it's in a great location. Sadly at the last minute four of the eight had to cancel so it was, so I am told, a manly affair on this occasion with much machismo and testosterone bandied about ahhhhmmmm.

Kevin McEvoy kindly sent me the following pictures :-



On the 1st November Beth and I had a great little walk from the top of the Crimea Pass over to Moel Druman via Allt Fawr and back by the bump of a hill called Moel Dyrnogydd. We trod snow for the first time this winter and had a quite heavy snow shower while trudging up our last peak. John Simpson came out mid Friday morning and had a good walk up Pen Yr Ole Wen and Carnedd Llewellyn in snow and hail showers with a bit of thunder and lightning thrown in for good measure. Dave Gray and Ronnie also came out to do some painting and build a cover for the gas bottles at the side of the chapel – thanks guys 😊. More members turned up in the evening and with a promising forecast plans were made for the next day.

Bethan and I were up and out early and walked into Capel by the river path before heading out onto the ridge of Cefn Capel aiming for the high Glyders. It was exceptionally boggy underfoot though we trugged onward reaching the summit of Gallt Yr Ogof in deep snow. The views were amazing, almost alpine like, though little were we to know at the time but several people were in real difficulty on Tryfan and Ogwen MRT only rescued the final unfortunate at 11.00pm that night !!!! We then made our way over Foel Goch and then Glyder Fach in increasingly heavy snow showers before descending via the Miner's path (with a character building and somewhat esoteric variation !!!!) back to Pen Y Gwryd. We were somewhat dismayed to find it closed however a short wait (for the bus) was delightfully interrupted by Roger Hughes passing in his Alfa Romeo after climbing Snowdon via the Llanberis path with his friend Neil. Grateful for the lift we thanked Roger by buying him an 'off the hill' in the Tyn Y Coed before retiring to the chapel for the festivities.

Neil, Fiona, John Simpson, Andy and Helen (Smith) had a good walk up into Cwm Lloer before retiring to the fleshpots of Betws Y Coed for some shopping and hot drinks. Dave Gray led a cast of thousands (well a few at least)

on a very wintry ascent of Moel Siabod while Carol Boothroyd did some serious shopping for gear in Betws before walking back to the chapel laden with heavy bags not quite realising there was a bus at five 😊

The weather had progressively worsened as the day wore on and it proved to be a real effort to get the bonfire going given the seemingly incessant snow and hail showers accompanied by the odd clap of thunder and lightning. However the diligence of the few proved to the benefit of the many as it eventually erupted into life and a roaring fire was available for all though most sought shelter in the chapel during the showers.

Geoff had, once again, done sterling work on the food (ably assisted by Reg one must add !) with the starter and dessert coming in for particular praise. I am sure I speak for all when I thank Geoff and Reg for their efforts – it's not an easy thing to do and coupled with the sacrifice of a day on the hill we do appreciate the efforts of all who volunteer for these things. Bryan Gilbert also arranged the obligatory barrel of beer which was duly drunk dry by the morning though a few pints were 'lost' I understand by an inappropriate insertion of the tap into the barrel 😊

Sunday dawned somewhat hazily (nothing to do with the weather BTW) and so some people went home and others went a walking. Beth and I together with David Lane Joynt and Ray Baines trod the path up Moel Hebog from Beddgelert and had some great views from the summit before the mists closed in. The descent down to Bwlch Mellionen passed easily enough though the interminable forest path was as damp and slippery as ever however good time was made back to the chapel for another bonfire at the Tyn Y Coed which proved slightly more flammable than ours. We then had a lovely evening in the Tyn Y Coed as we were joined by Dave Gray, Ronnie and Geoff (whose birthday it was and he made some serious inroads in the Tyn Y Coed whisky battle against Neil Metcalfe 😊).

The following day Dave Gray and Ronnie went up a (still) wintry Moel Penamnen while Beth and I had a great walk up to Gallt Y Wenallt which I had, mistakenly, thought I'd been up before. Beth and I then had a good day out when we climbed the Horns between the PYG track and the Miners path on Snowdon and then we enjoyed some good climbing and bouldering on Lion rocks and Fachwen near Llanberis.

Our final day of the short break was a low level walk around Llyn Gwynant where we espied some useful esoteric / obscure climbs for a future day as the weather proved less than kind thus making a mockery of our heavy sacks laden as we were with ropes and other paraphernalia gggrrrrrrrr. All in all it was good walk of some eight miles often over rough and boggy terrain.





Some pictures from Bonfire meet days out !

Sadly I didn't get many pictures of the bonfire meet itself so if anyone did can they send them to me for inclusion in the next newsletter – thanks ☺

FORTHCOMING MEETS :

NOVEMBER 2012	
02-03	HUT Weekend Bonfire Party
16-17	Sat Walk: Peak / Pennines (Mark Barley)
23-24	HUT Weekend
DECEMBER 2012	
08	Sat Walk: Wirral (Jan Coates)
21-31	HUT (Christmas / New Year Meet)

One meet not listed above is the club Christmas Dinner on the 8th December 2012 at the Peerless Brewery in Birkenhead (same as last year !). It's usually a cracking (sorry about the pun!) affair with as much booze as you can drink for £18 (I think, an email confirming has been or will be sent out) including a hotpot and crackers and cheese. Wine drinkers can bring their own wine and last year we had 40 plus members so one hopes for a similar turn out this year. I am not sure, though do hope, that Jan Coates walk earlier in the day will go ahead as planned.

So there it is another newsletter done and dusted though please please feel free to email me any pictures or articles you would like the club members to read about.

The next newsletter will be out sometime in mid December I hope.

Happy walking and climbing everyone 😊