

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter



August 2015

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This month's photo of Mel on Clogwyn d'Arddu , by Ken Priest

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Lots happening this summer: from Friday 21st – Sunday 23rd August we have the Ennerdale Youth Hostel Weekend; on Sunday 30th and Monday 31st August we're manning a climbing wall/tower at the Sandwell Show to promote the club. There's also the outdoor meet (a walk around Penkridge) and the coach meet (to Howgills) to look forward to.

With regard to articles: We've John's coach meet report, an article by Mel from last September detailing his exploits on the South West Tour, and one by Ken about his trip up Cloggy for Mel's birthday. I'll also be launching a new monthly feature starting next month - watch this space...

My thanks to this month's contributors: John Edwards, Mel Evans, Ken Priest, and Nick Piotrowski.

If you have anything that you'd like to be featured in next month's newsletter – whether you're selling gear, looking for a climbing or walking partner, you've seen an event that members might be interested in, anything at all – send it to me at joe.priest@live.co.uk (or through our website if it's an article) before 15th August.

Cheers,
Joe Priest

The WBMC meeting place



The Wheatsheaf
379 High Street,
West Bromwich,
B70 9QW

Join us every Thursday
night from 9.00pm in
The Wheatsheaf for a
chat and a drink.



2015 Cotswold
Discount Code:
AF-WBMC-M8



www.wbmc.org

Noticeboard

Did you know...

...The club has group membership of the YHA? If you are taking a group hostelling, you can use the club membership card to get you a discount. Just call Paul Brindley for it!

...The club has a collection of training / skills DVDs from the BMC? If you'd like to borrow one or more, just ask any committee member.

...The hut has a toolkit? You will now find a small toolkit in the hut to deal with any similar issues to that with the shower block door.

Get well soon Mike!

Retired club member and our first munroist Mike Nicholls unfortunately suffered a heart attack a just over a week ago. We wish him a swift recovery.

Your help is needed...

On Sunday 30th and Monday 31st August the club is manning a climbing wall/tower at the Sandwell Show, with Sandwell Council, giving kids free climbs and abseils. We need upwards of 6 members at all times between 11am and 5pm on both days to belay the kids, hand out leaflets and talk to parents/potential new members.

You don't have to have SPA or similar accreditation to belay, but it would help, just bring your harness/belay kit. And if you can't belay because you don't climb, come along anyway - your help is needed to talk to potential new members.

To book in to help email Paul at paulbrindley@aol.com or text or call on 07813 102 014, telling him what you can do and when. All help, even if only for an hour or two, will be much appreciated!

Hut phone fixed, but door broken.

The phone at the hut has been fixed. Unfortunately there is a problem with the door to the hut showerblock - please use the key that is attached to the ballcock kept in the hut, *please don't use your own key*. It's being fixed, please bear with us.

Climbing Night - a reminder

The last Thursday of every month is climbing night at the Portway, where to all intents and purposes we have exclusive use of the wall. All are welcome, whether you are an expert, a novice, or have never climbed before.

These nights are suitable for members of all abilities so don't be afraid to come along if you have never climbed before. Equipment is available from the centre if you don't have any.

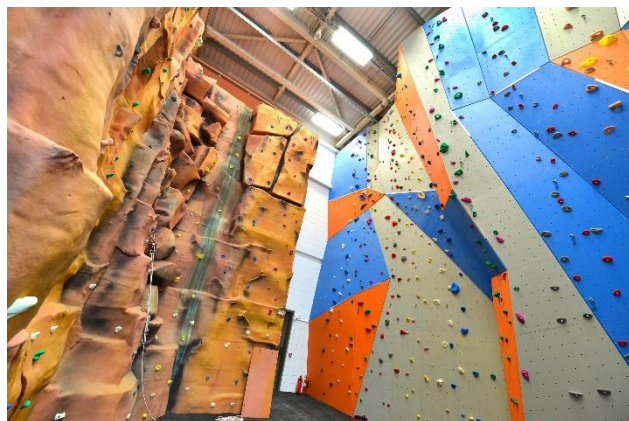
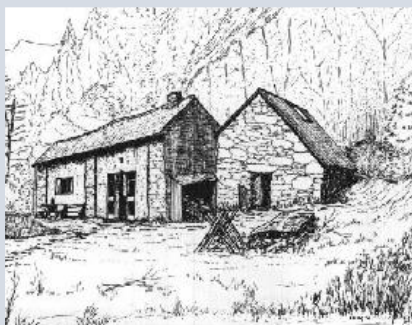


Photo by Portway Lifestyle Centre

Their address is:
Portway Lifestyle Centre,
Oldbury,
West Midlands,
B69 1HE

Hut donations



Members - £4.00
Guests - £7.00
(Max. two guests per member)
16 & under - £1.50

Stamped addressed envelopes are provided in the hut for payment.

To book

Phone or email Alison Whitehead:
07530644874
hut-secretary@wbmc.org

Please contact Alison *before* going to the hut.

WBMC members can purchase a hut key from Alison at a donation of £4.50

Coming up

Thursday 6th August, 6:30pm

Outdoor Evening Meet - Penkridge



Meet at Clay Street car park at 6.30pm for a 7.00pm walk around Penkridge village. Food will be available at the Boat Inn (ST19 5DT).

To book please contact Mike Smith on 07793102770

Clay Street car park,
Penkridge
ST19 5AF

Friday 21st – Sunday 23rd August Ennerdale Youth Hostel Weekend

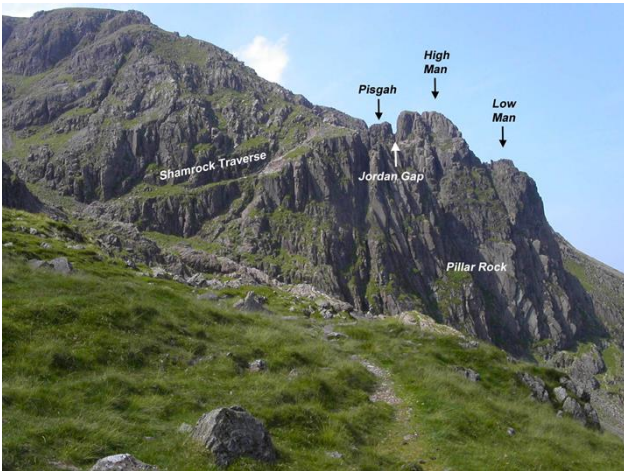


Photo from Wikipedia

Another visit to stay at one of the best youth hostels in the country. Ennerdale Youth Hostel is tucked away in the north west of the Lake District accessible by a private road alongside Ennerdale Water.

The hostel is ideally placed to reach some of the northern Nuttalls and also opens up the opportunity to get to Pillar Rock.

Protected by a classic moderate climb called the Slab and Notch route the mountain summit belongs to climbers with many walkers unable to complete the Nuttalls because of it. Rumours that the climb is hard to find are greatly exaggerated with a team of 4 members successfully finding and climbing it on this meet last year.

Anybody interested in coming along this year or for more details please speak to Andy Brown on: 07870 145 026.

Thursday 10th September

Fundraiser at the Pie Factory, Tipton

Mel Evans is quite close to a family in Nepal. We were devastated to hear that the family's home was badly damaged in the recent earthquake, but glad that no one was killed. We've decided to help them by raising the money they need to repair their home and get them back on their feet. All the money we raise will be going direct to the family - straight into their bank account with no intermediaries taking any cut - this is direct help to exactly where it is needed.

On the 10th, the evening will start around 7.30pm, so why not come along and have a pie, mixed grill on a

shovel or a rack of ribs, and a few pints or glasses of wine then dance the night away to the band (paid for by a club member), all we ask for is a donation - please be generous, these guys need help! There will also be a raffle - Ron and Jo Punccheon are offering a week's accommodation for 2 at their self-catering cottage on the Isle of Skye. For details see <http://alltmor.co.uk>

If you want any more information about the night, what we're doing or how you can help, just call Paul Brindley. *Note that this event replaces the evening walk that was on the meet card.*

Nantlle Ridge

3rd – 5th July 2015

Words and pictures by
John Edwards



If you had told me a couple of years ago that we'd only get 19 people on a coach to walk the Nantlle Ridge - probably the finest linear ridge walk south of the border - during a settled spell of weather in July, I'd have said you were bonkers, but that's what happened last month!

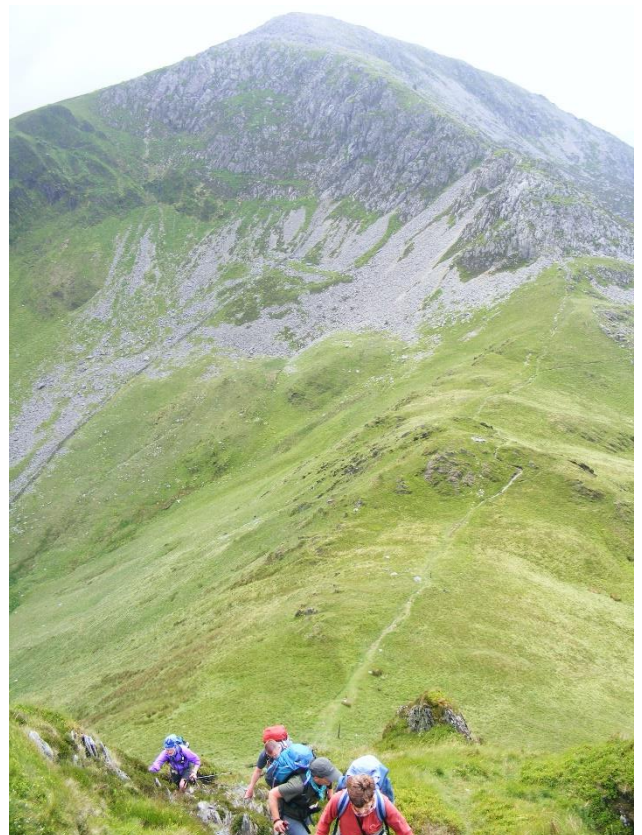
Maybe the fact that it was initially advertised as a "Long Meet" put some folk off, something that was rather unnecessary as most people can complete the full ridge (7 peaks if you include Mynydd Graig Goch) comfortably in 6 hours.

Maybe it was the distraction of the Club's attempt on the "Three Peaks" a few weeks before, although this can't really be the case as 5 of the participants, 4 of whom finished the challenge, were actually on the coach and did the 8.5 mile 'feature' walk.

Whatever the reason, those absent missed out on a lovely day out - mild conditions with a stiff, cooling breeze and great views intermittently hidden by high cloud what occasionally swept over the ridge. 10 members alighted at Nebo to do the ridge while others on the coach stayed on until Rhyd Ddu to tackle Mynydd Mawr, where the approach paths seem to have become very overgrown, or do Route 1 in reverse. The latter headed up towards Yr Aran before dropping down into Bwlch Cwm Llan and the Watkin path to the Hut or Beddgelert. The forecast was for rain to come in from the NW at around 3.30pm and this proved exceeding accurate, but it wasn't very heavy and we only had around 1 hour with cags on before we hit the pub.

There was an excellent selection of real ales on tap at the Cwellyn Arms and for once we had time to sample most of them - Bragdy Conwy Brewery's "Clogwyn Gold" (3.6%) "West Coast Pale Ale (3.9%) & "Welsh Pride" (4.0%), Great Orme Brewery's "Welsh Gold" (3.6%) & "Orme" (4.3%) & Grafton Brewing Company's "Jazz" (4.0%), "Prowler" (4.3%) & "Lady Mary" (5.0%)

Needless to say the meet made a large loss, wiping out whatever profit had been returned from the first 6 month's coach meets. Hopefully next month's trip to the lovely Howgill Fells will be better supported.



South West Tour

September 2014

Words by Mel Evans

With pictures by Ken Priest & Nick Piotrowski



This month pride of place must go to the 'South West Climbing Trip' organised on behalf of WBMC by Ken. Initially ten beds were booked in the Climbers' Club Hut, 'The Couthouse', at Bosigran, half way between St Ives and St Just, on the North coast of Cornwall but, for a variety of reasons, just Ken and myself left late on Sunday afternoon for what turned out to be an absolutely fantastic week of climbing.

"... I set off up what the guide book describes as, 'the perfect Cornish climb'..."

Monday saw us wake to see dense sea mist clinging to the cliffs, but as the morning wore on this slowly evaporated to reveal a gloriously clear sky. These conditions were to be repeated for almost the entire week. By 8.30am our number had grown to four! Dave Covington, a member now living in Cornwall, had joined us for the day and, after spending the night on an adjacent car park, Nick emerged refreshed and rarein' to go. He had driven down in the early hours after spending an exciting weekend at the 'Gower Climbing Festival'. Over breakfast he proceeded to whet our appetite with tales of climbing with local activists on 'King Wall'.



By mid-morning we were strolling beneath Bosigran Main Cliff on a terrace 45 metres above Porthmoina Cove. On the opposite side of the cove ran the long, pinnacled, Bosigran 'commando' Ridge. What a fantastic landscape.

Dave and I began by tackling 'Doorpost', a 3-star 60m climb detailed in the iconic book 'Classic Rock'. I set off up what the guide book describes as, 'the perfect Cornish climb', following a rightward rising traverse-line to the first belay. Dave followed through and up twin cracks before the final rib was finished on large knobbly holds. By the time we topped out Ken and Nick were already back down after completing 'Ledge Climb'. They then followed us before moving to a third route 'Ochre Slab Route II' on the Seaward Cliff while Dave and I enjoyed a leisurely chat before 'Ledge Route'. He then returned home leaving me to savour the late afternoon sun while sitting high above a perfectly calm sea. A fantastic setting and a fantastic first day.

Walking off, the stillness was suddenly shattered by an increasingly angry voice gradually taking on a more and more desperate quality. First to be spotted was the young leader sitting comfortably at a top-out with seemingly not a care in the world, enjoying life to the full, living the dream; directly below and underneath an overhang, jammed in a large corner well out of sight was his female companion. Was she mad? She was livid. She was literally hanging on for dear life, completely stuck, while her partner seemed more interested in enjoying the late afternoon sunshine? Finally, after what seemed an eternity, there was movement and, chuckling, we left them to complete their route and further explore a somewhat fraught relationship!

Tuesday morning saw us on 'Commando Ridge' which, at 210m, must be one of the best VD / scrambles going. The afternoon saw us drive to 'Chair Ladder' southeast of Land's End. The base of these cliffs is tidal so we planned to arrive in time to scramble down and be ready to climb at low tide, 5.30pm. The short walk in saw us acknowledge the coastguard in the lookout on the headland; it was good to know that our presence had been noted.

Our aim was 'Bulging Wall' and the 3star 60m route 'Pegasus'. Leaving sacs on the cliff top we descended

Continued overleaf...

the East side of Zawn Rinny picking a route down the various walls and ledges. The guide suggests this is a moderate climb, if the easiest route is found! We ended with an abseil down the final section to large platforms which the retreating seas had just exposed. Had we missed the easiest route? I sat knackered on top of the largest boulder I could find, well above the gently lapping waves, leaving Ken to traverse across still soaking slabs to where we thought the climb started. Once moving I soon realised that although parts were still sea washed the rock's friction remained superb and confidence gradually grew. How privileged we were to be in this timeless landscape. Ken was soon on his way up the initial steep corner crack and heading for an overhang and belay ledge. He was in his element, totally alive and in tune with the surroundings whereas I was still in awe. As I belayed, with feet subjected to the occasional rogue wave, an inquisitive seal popped up no more than 5 metres away! We topped out just before dark to the sound of a not so distant fog horn, it had been a close call for by the time we arrived at the car it was almost pitch black.

Next day we drove to Sennen Cliffs in steady drizzle. A quiet coffee and long chat saw off the rain and, as predicted by the car park attendant, the afternoon saw us enjoying perfect climbing conditions. Nick had rejoined us for this expedition. We abseiled to the large, non-tidal platform which formed the base of numerous climbs. We each led climbs, nothing too strenuous, just very enjoyable on the warm, grippy, Cornish granite. This time other climbers were about and everyone was in a relaxed chatty mood. One pair of characters from Pembroke seemed to be in a continual state of rolling their own and puffing away with not a care in the world.



This mood continued as we enjoyed a pint in a St Just bar, enjoying banter with others in from a day on the cliffs. By next morning Nick had returned home. Our stay at The Counthouse was also over and we set off on the long drive to Portland and some Sport Climbing! On the way we stopped off at the 'Dewerstone', Dartmoor's premier crag. Located 8 miles north-east of Plymouth this sheltered wooded valley proved to be an absolutely magical climbing venue. In the Devil's Rock area, the largest exposure of granite on Dartmoor, Ken led a superb VS, 'Leviathan', steep and sustained it proved a real challenge. This was quickly followed by another staired route, 'Route B' which had an excitingly airy top pitch. It had been a great few hours.

Arriving in Portland we met up with Jo, Jason and Mark who had arrived early and spent the day climbing and generally getting a feel for the place. Next morning we headed to an area they identified and enjoyed ourselves on a couple of fine sport routes. In the afternoon we made for the 'Cuttings', a much talked about popular area but found the climbs difficult and in many cases the bolting was suspect. Perhaps Ken and I were simply climbed out. Perhaps we had been somewhat spoiled by natural landscapes. Either way, climbing at Portland failed to tick many boxes. It had been a great week and the 'Dewerstone' is certainly worth a second visit.

NVQ Level 4

Mel's Birthday trip up Cloggy

Words and pictures by
Ken Priest



What can you get a man for his birthday who already has everything he needs? This was the dilemma I was faced with when Mel Evans turned seventy something earlier this month.

"Clogwyn d'Arddu is the mecca of the climbing world – well, North Wales..."

Perhaps he needed some more climbing gear, a new chalk bag? Sleepless nights passed until I was reminded of a saying that an old climbing partner used to tell me: *"you're not a proper climber until you've run the Dovedale Dash and climbed on Cloggy"*. In Mel's case I thought his pedigree and CV in athletics would qualify for prior accredited learning and we could dispense with the run, but a route on Cloggy would certainly go towards his NVQ / apprenticeship in climbing. Has there ever been an older student?

Clogwyn d'Arddu is the mecca of the climbing world – well, North Wales – and has held a formidable reputation for decades. It lies on the side of Snowdon to the right of the Llanberis path and usually takes a couple of hours to walk into. A history of the Black Cliff, as it is known, can be found in a book of the same name and tells the story of the who's who in climbing from the early days of the Abrahams, Longland, Kirkus, Linell, through to more familiar names such as Brown, Whillans and Boysen.



I have a copy on my shelf and it is one of three books that I treasure and often re read. In short, it is an awe inspiring cliff of almost Alpine feel and can be very imposing as it poses all the challenges of a big mountain in route finding and weather watching.

When I mentioned the idea to Mel he bit my hand off over the phone (if that's possible) and the weather watching commenced, as the routes do need a period of dry weather.

The route I had in mind was Great Slab a Colin Kirkus VS route of 600ft which winds its way up and across a steep slab. It was first climbed in 1930 with Graham Macphee who pioneered many routes on Ben Nevis.

The day was chosen and we set off from the Midlands around 9am, with the plan to walk in about 1 pm and commence climbing at 3, hoping if all went well topping out before 9 to walk out before it got too dark.

Using his charm Mel managed to get a parking space at the café at the bottom of the hill and the walk went to plan and we actually started climbing at 3:15.



The first pitch can be the crux, with an awkward traverse before getting established in a crack once called the caterpillar due to the amount of grass. This pitch went well and the next pitch should have been straightforward except for me taking too high a line,,,

Continued overleaf...

...traversing into a corner below a damp pitch which often provides the crux. By now we were conscious of keeping to our schedule and had to keep an eye on the weather which was increasingly becoming threatening, with heavy clouds and the occasional drop of drizzle. This was a real worry as retreat down this route is very difficult.



The damp corner proved challenging but once we had done this the difficulties eased: two long pitches traversing back left up to the final arête. We continued to make steady progress and Mel wasn't fazed by the big mountain feel and the exposure.

Finally by 7:40 we had reached the top after 5 long, testing pitches. It had started to blow heavy, driving rain and as we had travelled very light we did a quick handshake, rammed our pockets with energy bars, drank the remains of our bottles and were grateful that the weather eased off as we began our descent.

Going downhill has never been my forte and the path seemed to go on forever but eventually at around 9:45 we made it back to the car, tired, satisfied, but very hungry.

Cairngorm Trip



Photo from mountain-expertise.co.uk

Fish and chips, food or beer? As it was technically a birthday trip we drove swiftly into Llanberis and celebrated in a fitting manner and promptly drank two pints! After a quick visit to the Pen y Gwryd and a disappointing pint, we reached the hut at 11pm, showered, put the kettle on, feasted on beans on toast and slept like babies.



Well done Mel on a memorable climb and magnificent achievement; he really does set the benchmark! Just wondering what I can plan for Pete Poultney's birthday?

P.s. I'm hoping to do the Dovedale dash in November, so Mel and I can submit our portfolios together.

Would you like to see your article in the newsletter? You can now submit articles and photos through the club's website! Log in to the members' area and click "Submit an Article".

Accessing the website

If you haven't had an email from the club with your password, contact Joe and he'll sort you out – it might be that the club doesn't have your current email address.

Ken's looking to go on a four-day winter climbing trip to the Cairngorms in March, hopefully staying in bunkhouse accommodation, with dates to be decided. Easy access from the ski area makes for nice, simple walk-ins, and the routes are meant to be fantastic.

If this interests you then please get in touch with Ken on 07708 908 708

Coach Meet – Howgills

Sunday 9th August

Depart

07:00 - West Brom. Edward St Car Park (B70 8HU)

07:20 – Penkridge

(Brief toilet stop at the M6 services)

Drop off

Wath (684051)

Sedburgh (657922)

Pick up

Sedburgh(571526)

Beddgelert (591481)

Required maps

OS. 1:25 000 Pathfinder 607 and 617

1:50000 Series, sheets 91, 97 and 98

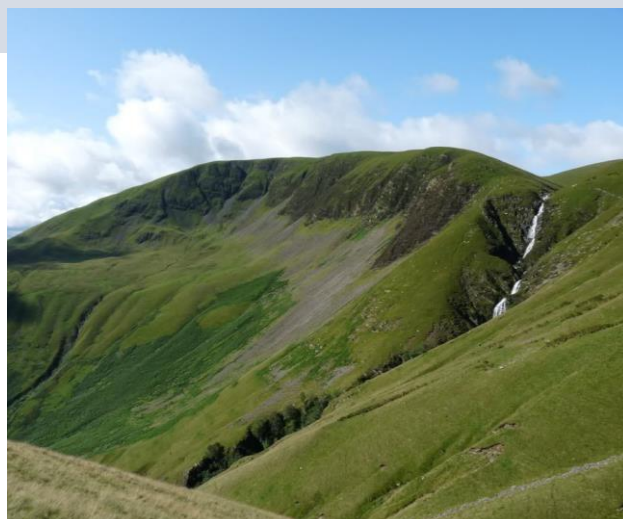


Photo from lonewalker.net

Fares

Members £20.00

Guests £22.00

Under 16's and full-time students – £8.00

To book ring Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729

£5.00 pp cancellation charges apply: You must cancel by 7pm on the 8th July.

Suggested routes

Route 1

a) From Wath take the straight forward route from N to S and continue along Bowderdale and keep to LH track at (678989) proceed to footbridge near dors at Cautley Beck (663968) turn Southwards and follow trancks and lanes to Sedburgh.

b) Once in Bowderdale take RH track at 669035 taking high-level route to “Calf” (667971) descending to Sedburgh via Bram Top Rigg and Calders (672961)

c) From Bowderdale take the RH track to the Calf and return to Seburgh as in (b)

Route 2

Leave Sedburgh via Settleback Gill (602925) across the south-eastern flank of Arant Haw and continue to Calders (672961) north-westerly to Bram Rigg and “The Calf”. Descend NE to small tarn, turn East via Bowderdale Head to track East of Cautley Spout and on to footbridge (663968) going South via tracks and lanes to Sedburgh.

Coach Meet – Blencathra

Saturday 12th September

Depart

07:00 - West Brom. Edward St Car Park (B70 8HU)

07:20 – Penkridge

(Brief toilet stop at the Charnock Richards services)

Drop off

Scales (343269)

Threkeld (325254)

Keswick Coach Station

Pick up

Keswick Coach station

Scales (343269)

Required maps

OS 1:25 000 OL No.5 English Lakes North Eastern Area

OS 1:25 000 OL No. 4 English Lakes North Western Area

Suggested routes

Route 1 (~15km - 9.5 miles) From Scales

From Scales Farm (340268), follow the path past Mousthwaite Comb (344275), then turn NE to Scales Tarn (329281). As you arrive Sharp Edge is the obvious Ridge on the skyline, this is your next destination, a grade 1 scramble. At the top an easy walk takes you to the summit of Blencathra, then continue along the grassy ridge to Knowe Crags (312270). Finally head NW to a footbridge over Glenderaterra Beck (296278), then climb to the path junction of the Cumbria Way (293279). Follow this South, past Lonscale Crags and eventually into Keswick.

Route 2 (~14km - 8.5 miles) From Scales

From Scales follow the footpath west and cross Scaley Beck and Doddick Gill until Gate Gill where a little path twists north up Hall's Fell right to the highest point of Blencathra, Hallsfell Top. Baggers might want to go south west for 600m to tick Gategill Fell Top. From Hallsfell Top follow the ridge north to Atkinson Pike and eventually to Bowscale Fell. Now head south, using the crags as a handrail to Bannerdale Crags before returning to the col at the head of the Glenderamackin River and following the stream south east back to Scales..

Route 3 (~20km – 12.5 miles) From Threkeld

Head up the road to Blencathra centre (304256)



Photo by Alan Novelli/Alamy

Fares

Members £20.00

Guests £22.00

Under 16's and full-time students – £8.00

To book ring Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729

£5.00 pp cancellation charges apply: You must cancel by 7pm on the 8th July.

around Blease Fell, up Glencathra and back to join the Cumbria Way (293279) up to Skiddaw Hause (297291). From here, the circuit of Great Calva (291312), Little Calva (282315), Knott (296330) and Coomb Height (311328) is possible before heading back to Skiddaw Hause then to the Cumbria Way back to Keswick.

Route 4 (~16km – 10 miles) From Keswick

From the coach station follows roads to Briar Rigg (267241) and then follow the Cumbria Way north east to a car park (280253). Start climbing steeply to the summit of Little Man (266278), continue on a good path to Skiddaw. Descend the very steep west face of Skiddaw to Carlside Tarn (256283), and if time permits walk out to Ullock Pike. Retracing your steps climb to the summit of Carlside and descend south to Millbeck (256262). Follow the road into Applethwaite and follow the Allerdale Ramble (265255) back into Keswick.

Route 5 (~20km – 12.5 miles) From Keswick

Follow the Allerdale Ramble NW through Thornthwaite Forest to eventually reach Ravenstone Hotel (236297). From the right side of the hotel, follow a steep path through a conifer wood then take the long heather-clad ridge to Ullock Pike (244287). This was Wainwright's favourite route up Skiddaw. Continue along the slate rocks of Longside Edge to Skiddaw and then descend via the Cumbria Way and the Allerdale Ramble back to Keswick.