

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter



August 2016

This month's photo: "Times & Friends Remembered - The Elbrus 8" by Oliver Stephenson (sent in by John Edwards)

Hello everyone!

I'm pleased to report that both the evening meet walk along Netherton canal and the coach meet to Patterdale went well. About the coach meet, John Edwards sent in: "*There were reasonable numbers on the coach to Patterdale but it was most unseasonal weather for July, with cloud down to road level at Kirkstone Pass, where I and others got off to do Red Screes and the peaks towards Fairfield. Some groups managed to summit Helvellyn in spite of the strong gusting wind. cloud and rain; others did nice things around Ullswater with ferry trips etc. You can't win them all!*"

Huge thanks as always to this month's contributors: John Edwards, Dave Jones, Andy Brown, Nigel Tarr, Graeme Stanford, and Annette Smith.

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 newsletter@wbmc.org (or through our website if it's an article) before the 20th of the month.

Cheers,
Joe

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Saturday 13th August - Cadair Idris
Saturday 10th September - Aber/Ogwen

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.

**BMC**
AFFILIATED CLUB

2016 Cotswold
Discount Code:
AF-WBMC-M8



www.wbmc.org

Noticeboard

Thank you to club members

On behalf of the committee can I take this opportunity to thank everyone who gives up their free time to carry out work at the club hut, ensuring that members enjoy their stay.

Recently many thanks to John and Alison for cutting the grass. Unfortunately Alison came back with a different shoe - and not the ones you like to wear! She went over badly on her ankle and sprained it. The picture below shows the grass looking "good enough to play golf on", that's was John's comment.



Walking partner wanted

My name is Harry. Retired, nearly 63yrs and live in Walsall. Have done Snowdon recently a bit slow - 3 hrs up to summit . Not fantastically fit. Looking to have go with an experienced companion male or female up Ben Nevis before end of September, share costs. I'm a people person and my contribution will be - a great sense of humour with all sorts of tales - tall, short and unusual! Cheers

BMC name change

After more than 70 years trading as the British Mountaineering Council, the BMC have decided to "move with the times and change name". Their new name, *Climb Britain*, will be phased in over the next year, with official launch events at the Kendal

Mountain Festival and on their 72nd birthday on 2nd December.



According to the BMC's CEO, Dave Turnbull, "*Hill walking, climbing and mountaineering have evolved since the BMC was first established in 1944, and the name 'Mountaineering Council' doesn't quite cut it these days.*" The rebranding is part of an "ongoing program of modernisation", with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland set to rebrand itself as *Mountaineering Scotland*, and the BMC's presence in Wales becoming *Climb Cymru*.

WBMC discounts at Redpoint Worcester & Portway Walls

We have negotiated another year of club climbing nights at Portway. The last Thursday of every month is a club night, meaning entry for club members and their guests will be £4 *including gear hire* (helmet, harness, shoes etc) and club members who have passed a belay test will be able to supervise inexperienced climbers. In addition to the scheduled climbing nights all club members, on production of a membership card, will be able to use the wall *at any time for £4 and this still includes free gear hire*. The main difference being belayers must have passed the belay test and all other normal rules apply.

This is a great opportunity to entice friends and family along for a few hours at the climbing wall at a reasonable price and potentially create more interest in the club. If you're a climber or someone who fancies a go please support this monthly meet as often as you can.

We have also negotiated a discounted entry price for Worcester Redpoint of £7.50 (normally £9.50) and *no charge for annual membership* (normally another £5).

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

Coming up

23rd – 26th September

Isle of Skye Weekend

Fancy a long weekend to visit the best mountaineering area in the United Kingdom? Driving up to the Isle of Skye on Friday, returning on Monday, leaving you with two days to explore the Cuillin Hills, the Trotternish Hills or even make the short crossing to Raasay.

Staying in bunkhouse accommodation and sharing fuel costs should mean an inexpensive trip is achievable.

For more details please speak to Andy Brown on 07870 145026.

10th – 17th September

Croatia Trip

There's still one place left on the upcoming trip to Croatia. With walking, climbing, swimming, cycling and even sun bathing, there's something for everyone.

Get in touch with Pete Poultney for more information on 07779 366905. Act quickly though – there's only one place remaining!

Thursday 11th August

Outdoor Evening Meet at the Fingerpost, Pelsall

This month's outdoor meet will start at the Fingerpost in Pelsall.

Norton Road,
Pelsall
Walsall
WS3 5AU

We will meet promptly at 18:30 for an 18:45 start; the route will take us around the Wyrley & Essington Canal network, all relatively flat, with some woodland thrown in.

Food is reasonable priced; (menu will be sent in a later email) the committee are working hard to find good venues with reasonably priced food and drink. Orders must be given to Dave Jones by the 8th August at the *very latest*.



Photo from tripadvisor.co.uk

5th – 7th August

Hostel Weekend – Buttermere

Hostel bed & breakfast is £26.95 per night. If you fancy a good day out why not try the Via Ferrata at Honister Slate Mines on the same weekend? £45 per person, with a 10% discount for a group of 12 or more.

Book through Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729

Please call Dave on 0775 925 9163 or e-mail davidjones840@gmail.com to place your order in advance due to this request coming directly from the pub.

We hope that you can join us for this meet; the two last previous meets have been very successful. We look forward to seeing you on the above date.



The Netherton Canal

Thursday 7th July – Outdoor Evening Meet

Words and pictures
By Dave Jones



This outdoor evening walk took us along the Birmingham Canal network; it was pleasing to see that we had around 25 members turn up. Bob Duncan had prepared the walk, the logistics side of this took some arranging, because we had to have various cars in two locations to transfer individuals from their start or finish location, but on the night everything went according to plan.

Everyone had been informed that it may be beneficial to wear boots for this walk due to the amount of rain that was had some days prior, also individuals were informed to bring an torch or head torch due to the tunnel being 9,081 feet long (2,768 metres or 2.4 miles).

The tunnel was constructed at 453-foot elevation with no locks. It was the last tunnel to be built in Britain during the canal age, opening on 20th August 1858 to provide a waterway connection between the black country towns of Netherton and Tipton. It was built to relieve the bottleneck of the adjacent Dudley tunnel which was very narrow and had waiting times of eight hours or more.

The tunnel allows two narrow boats through and is brick lined throughout. The air vents that run along the line of the tunnel provide ventilation and a shaft of light into the canal, these are better known by locals as the “pepper-pots” because of their shape.

The tunnel cost £302,000 as opposed to the £238,000 estimate prior to construction; the extra cost was due to the condition of the ground.

Everyone walked down the towpath and started to enter the tunnel, head torches being turned on. As predicted it was a little wet in places going through the tunnel and as the person in front of you made a sudden move or minor adjustment, you tended to follow them to dodge the puddles. You could imagine how it was some years previous, with horses being used to pull the boats through the tunnel; at the end of the tunnel there is still evidence on where the ropes were threaded through.

Everyone was having general conversation as we continued along the canal, Bob often stopped to tell us some interesting facts about the tunnel.

We could see daylight at the end and everyone exited and made their way onto the footbridge waiting for the arrival of the rest of the group. We then made our way through the housing estate carrying on through the park arriving back at Mar Pardoes (The Old Swan Inn) meals had been ordered prior to speed up the process for hungry WBMC members.

Graeme Stanford was celebrating his 50th birthday so we had organised a little birthday cake in true WBMC fashion to celebrate the event.

As always thank you to everyone that turned up for the event and we look forward to seeing you on the next outdoor meet on Thursday 11th August, see information attached in this newsletter.

Also special thanks to Bob Dean, for leading the walk and ensuring that lifts were available.



John Churchill

1932 - 2016

By Annette Smith

At John Churchill's funeral, his partner Janet's son, Richard, read a Robert Burns poem. The first line is "*An honest man here lies at rest.*" How appropriate – John couldn't lie, which sometimes led to disconcerting or humorous pronouncements.

His brother told us that, as a boy, John had enthusiastically helped the war effort by wasting nothing, and cultivating every available plot. John continued doing this, said Rob, for over seventy years.

His is the only coffin I've seen crowned with vegetables (from his allotment).

"Generous and hospitable, he liked to entertain"

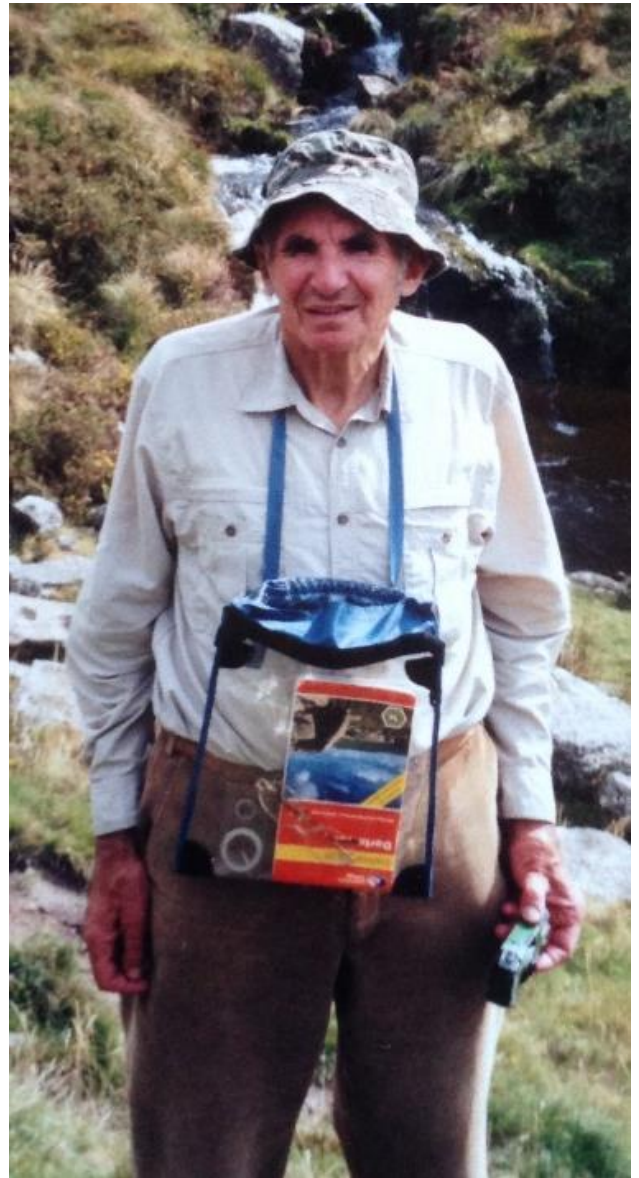
John did voluntary work for many years after his retirement, at the Oxfam bookshop in Worcester. He organised and led walks and activities in the town too.

Membership of WBMC gave him great pleasure. He was a regular on the coach and at walks and social functions for many years.

Generous and hospitable, he liked to entertain, always using food he'd grown on his allotment.

He was, in Robert Burns' words:

*The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age and guide of youth.*



Ever bitten off more than you could chew?

Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon

by Graeme Stanford



Crossing the finish line at the end of day 1 of your first mountain marathon and the marshal says "well done". I'd been looking forward to that moment for a few months. I wasn't expecting to answer that we were withdrawing from the event.

"Middle aged, a little overweight, not particularly fit... what could possibly go wrong?"

A few months ago Sam Goddard asked me if I fancied joining him to have a go at the Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon. He'd done it when he was thirteen with his Dad, Pete, and wanted a go as an adult. Of course I said I'd join him. Why wouldn't I? Middle aged, a little overweight, not particularly fit... what could possibly go wrong?

The event in question is a two-day event and is run as an orienteering mountain race rather than a traditional marathon. Competitors are only told where the start is one month before the start. They're not given the course, or the location of the mid-way campsite, until they've actually crossed the start line. Each competitor must carry a minimum kit list including two days' food, full waterproofs etc. Each team (all but the top two classes are teams of two) must have a stove and a proper tent, with ground sheet and poles. There are no GPS' or phones with GPS or sports watches allowed. If you're seen using any electronic nav aid you'll be disqualified.

In short the only way you can assess the difficulty of the event is to look at previous year's event details and decide which course is suitable for you. There are eight classes to choose from. We chose the Carrock Fell class, the fourth one, which has the following description:

'Winning time 8-9 hours total. If you have previously finished this course in a time 80% longer than the winners time, then you should enter the Harter Fell Class. Entrants must be over 16. Where one of the two runners is under 18, the other runner must be the parent or guardian of the junior runner.'

Looking at previous years the Saturday would be around 16km and the Sunday around 12km. Easily within Sam's capabilities. Manageable for me. I've run those kind of distances over mountain terrain in reasonable times. Easy enough? I can hear the obvious questions... "Did you factor in the time for navigation? Did you train for mountain running with that kind of weight? Are you totally mad?" The answers are "yes, no, apparently" in that order.



The event start campsite was at Pooley Bridge, on the shore of Ullswater, and the weather wasn't great. Sam and I got settled in then registered. I was fitted with our team electronic tag. (The old days of stamping a card at each checkpoint are long gone. Now you carry a tag which is 'swiped' at each checkpoint. When you get to the finish your whole performance, with splits, is uploaded instantly.) Then we had a ubiquitous beer and turned in for the night.

The day of the race we packed up everything we didn't need for the race and dumped it in the car. Our start time was 09:30 so we'd had plenty of time for eating and ablutions (ah the queues at portaloos... how delightful.) before heading for the start. On the way out of the campsite we were issued with a Harveys 1:25,000 map of the event area. We were then given a quick kit check and allowed to continue on the 20 minute walk to the start line. Once at the start competitors wait to be called forward according to their start time. Once you're told to start you 'swipe' the first check point and then move forward 100

Ever bitten off more than you could chew?

continued...

metres to where the route cards are handed out. You then have to mark the various check points on your map (obviously getting this right is crucial) before setting off. There's no point in even thinking about trying to follow anyone else as they start a pair from each class together. Each class has a different route and there are people wandering about all over the fells in all sorts of directions for the whole day.



I won't bore you with a complete description of the route. Basically it wound its way south over varying pathless, boggy, terrain towards High street. It was hard going but we hit all our checkpoints spot on so we were happy with our navigation. The terrain coupled with the ascent and descent was challenging and by the fourth hour I was getting cramp on every uphill section and Sam had knee pain on every downhill section. We finally got on to paths, where we could make up some time, at about the halfway point. Typically, at this point, the weather took a turn for the worse. Rain and 35 - 40 mph gusts. We were heading over Kidsty Pike, High Street, and winding round to Hartsop so I knew the area well but Sam's knee was getting worse and by then there was no question of running. Even walking fast was causing him real pain.

On the steep descent towards Hartsop we had already decided that we would not be able to climb back up out of the valley for the last two checkpoints and it was doubtful we could do a second day.

"Typically, at this point, the weather took a turn for the worse. Rain and 35 - 40 mph gusts."

When we descended to the finish area there was a rescue in progress. The descent from the last checkpoint was very steep and a competitor had fallen into a ghyll off the path suffering head injuries. Mountain rescue took two hours to get him down off the hill and he was taken away in an air ambulance.

We checked in at the finish and informed them we were withdrawing from the event. Once given our stats for the route it became clear just how much we'd struggled. Our route card said 19.5 km and this was another lesson for me. The distance for the class is the direct route irrespective of terrain. Once you add a sensible navigation strategy (i.e. taking slightly longer but faster routes to avoid the shorter but harder routes) the route becomes considerably longer. I checked our route choice on memory map and we had covered 27 km. When we reached checkpoint 2 we were in 58th position, out of the 105 in our class, but by the time we got to checkpoint 3 we had dropped to 83rd. By the time we hit our last legitimate checkpoint we were in 82nd. It took us 8hrs 20 mins to get to the finish. The winners of our class did the route in 4.5 hrs. The advice had been "drop a class if you took 80% longer than the winning time." We had taken 50% longer due to injury. Had we not had the fitness problems could we have actually been in the right class?

Would I recommend the event to others? Yes but with the caveat "do your research and train on pathless fells while carrying weight. Would I do it again? The next day I said "never"... two days later I texted Sam and asked "shall we drop a class and have another go next year?" ... How quickly the brain forgets pain !!

Coach Meet – Cadair Idris

Saturday 13th August

Depart

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

07:20 – Service road just off M54 Junct. 2 island

(Brief toilet stop at the M6 Services)

Drop off

Dinas Mawddy (856150)

Minfford (729113)

A470/A493 (714182)

Barmouth (610158)

Pick up

Barmouth (610158)

Dolgellau (728180)

Cross Foxes (766166)

Required maps

Cadair Idris OL23 Outdoor Leisure OS 1:25000

Dolgellau Sheet 124 1:50:000

Suggested routes

From Dinas Mawddy

A chance for the rock climbers to get an early drop off and late pick up, which should give a chance to tackle routes on Craig Cywarch about 5km north of the village. For details of routes see "Rock Climbing i Snowdonia" by Paul Williams or Steve Redding's article reprinted in 2003 Newsletter

To try a large chunk of the Mid Wales Marathon

Walk up to Bwlch Siglen (837137) from Dinas Mawddy and then head west and north to Maesglase (whose top has been moved from 823152 to 817150 !!). Then turn SW to the narrow ridge of Craig Forlas (802141) and then north to the flat tops of Cribin Fach & Cribin Fawr (795153). SW again to col at (790130) and then to Waun-oer (786148). Then drop down to NW to Cross Foxes and await coach at hotel or use minor road to reach Dolgellau About 19km/12miles

From Minfford

The Cadair Via Cwm Cau Classic

Follow the path through the gate into woodland. On emerging it curves left to Lyn Cau but just before the lake (721124) take the left fork up a stoney track to the rim of the cwm. Turn W and onto the summit of Craig Cwm Amarch (711121), curving N with one



Photo from www.trekkingbritain.com

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 at least 7 days in advance.

sizeable descent before rising to Pen Y Gadair (711130) - the highest point of "Idriss Chair" Then head W then NW to Cyfwy (704134) & descend Pony Path to the col at (691135) then head NE to Dolgellau About 14km/8.5miles

As route 3 but from Pen Y Gadair (711130) continue W along the grassy ridge over Tyrrau Mawr (677136) and Craig Y Llyn (660115) from where you drop down using rights of way and roads to Barmouth About 18.5km/11.5 miles

Start at a layby on A87 (753135) and head for the white post at (755151) and then turn West to climb up onto Gau Craig (744141), the easternmost peak on the Cadair plateau. Then head SW & W to Mynydd Moel (728137) and reach Pen Y Gadair (711130) from the East. Nearest pickup is then Dolgellau via Pony Path (or Foxes Path if you like denuded scree- runs!) About 15km / 9miles

Mawddach Trail

Leave carpark at junction of A493 (713183) along old railway to road toll bridge and pub (694184) continue along estuary to Atrhog (640148) continue on to Morfa Mawddach Station (628141) cross the footbridge into Barmouth through the town to coach park near the Fun Fair (610158)

Coach Meet – Aber/Ogwen

Saturday 10th September

Depart

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

07:20 – Service road just off M54 Junct. 2 island

Toilet/coffee stop to be arranged

Drop off

Abergwyngregyn (655727)

Coach will stay at Abergwyngregyn

Pick up

Ogwen Glan Dena (668605)

Helyg (691602)

Capel Curig (721582)

Betwys-y-coed

Coach will leave Betwys-y-coed 21.00hrs

Required maps

OS 1:25.000 OL17 – Snowdonia

OS 1:50.000 Landranger No 115 – Snowdon and surrounding area

Suggested routes

1 From Aber (655727) to Bera Bach, Foel Grach, Carnedd Llewellyn (634644), Craig yr Ysfa down to Helyg (691602)

2 Aber to forest track (664718), to Marian Rhadr Fawr, Llwtmor Bach (681699), Bera Bach, Garnedd Uchaf (687699), Foel Grach, Carnedd Llewellyn, Carnedd Dafydd, Pen yr Ole Wen east to Clogwyn Mawr/Afon Lioer and follow track to Glan Dena

3 (19.5km – 7miles) From Aber a north Carneddau Circuit to Foel- Ganol, Drum, Foel Fras, Garnedd Uchaf Bera Bach, Drosogl, and Gryn Wigau is one possibility, before returning to Aber over Moel Wnion and the North Wales Path on its NW slopes

4 Try the North Wales Path from Aber to Llanfairfechan and return along the footpath that follows the coastline, no hills and a relatively short distance that would still give you time to visit the Aber Falls

5 (14km - 9miles)

From Abergwyngregyn to Capel Curig

From lay-by on A55 (GR:SH655727) follow minor road through the village SE towards the car park for the waterfall Rhaedr Fawr. At the car park, stay on the minor road crossing the bridge and ascending steeply for just over 1km to the higher car park at SH676716.



Photo from Wikipedia.org

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 at least 7 days in advance.

Now follow the North Wales Path E across open moorland, following the route of the old Roman Road to reach the pass of Bwlch Ddeufaen. At the large iron gate turn to the SW and ascend parallel to the wall to reach Carnedd Ddelw at 688m, then continue S again keeping the wall on your left to reach the summit of Drum. Using the wall to your left as a handrail continue SW to reach the summit of Foel- Fras at 942m.

Approx 300m SSW of the summit of Foel-Fras the wall turns sharply to the SE. From this point follow the obvious path for 1.2km to reach the summit of Carnedd Gwenllian. Head S now, descending into the col, then climbing on steeper ground to reach the shelter/ hut just below the summit of Foel Grach.

To reach the summit, ascend around the small crag above the hut. From Foel Grach there is an obvious path first descending S then from the col ascending SSW to the small plateau summit of Carnedd Llewellyn at 1064m. Descend v carefully along the ridge SE – take particular care on the rock-step below Pen y waun wen – eventually reaching the col at Bwlch Eryl Farchog.

Locate the path descending steeply into Cwm Llugwy heading S on the east shore of the Reservoir and follow until you reach the metalled track at the outflow. Follow the metalled track S to reach the A5 at Gwern Gof Isaf. Walk through the campsite and follow the old A5 E towards Capel Curig, arriving at the car park behind the village at Joe Browns shop (GR:SH720581)