

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter



June 2015

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Hi folks,

Apologies for the slight delay this month; the club has been as active as ever, so this newsletter contains no fewer than four two-page articles!

My thanks again to this month's contributors for their excellent prose and pictures: Jo Tansey, Chris Dean, Hilary Jones, Mel Evans, Tracey Cook, Ken Priest, and Dave Jones.

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 June.

Cheers,
Joe 'Dave' 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.



Cotswold Discount Code:
AF-WBMC-K3

Noticeboard

Welcome to new club member

Please welcome new member Jeanette Breckles to the club. Jeanette is Dave Jones' partner and has the primary role of keeping him in line. Some of you will have met her as she's been on various coach meets, social functions and the Scottish week.

The Malcom Collins award

This year the Malcolm Collins award was given to Andy Brown and Chris Dean for their completion of the Munros. Chris writes:

Malcolm Collins was a member of the club before I joined, and was active in the 80's. I never got to meet him, however there are numerous people still in the club who did and enjoyed his company out in the hills.

Receiving this award and completion of the Munros has led me to reflect on my years in the mountains. The first mountain day for me was going up Cadair Idris on 15th July 1989 as a scout. Since then I have been up many different ways, including by climbing Cyfrwy Arete, and up the bridleway on a bike. Ben Nevis was to be my first Munro on June 21st 1997 with my brother, we went up and down the normal way. Have also been up this mountain a number ways and stayed in the C.I.C. hut below it.

One evening I put my head around the door of the Globe in West Bromwich and found myself booked on my first coach meet to Yorkshire on April 10th 2005. Once on the coach I met the clubs first Muroist, Mike Nicholls, decided for a good day out would be worth sticking with him. A group of us did all the three Yorkshire peaks and had a great day out. Some of you may remember it as being it was the one with the confusion between the Manor Arms and Miners Arms! The last coach, this April ten years and a day later, was also to Yorkshire with a number of groups enjoying completing the three peaks.

Once in the club enjoyed being an active member going on various meets, with the Scottish winter week being one of them, which was one of the big attractions to joining. To me is the highlight of the meet card. It was on this years that I went up Gairich on 15th February 2015 and completed the munros for myself.

I would like to thank the West Bromwich Mountaineering Club for the friendships and opportunities that I have made for enjoyable times on and off the clubs meet cards over the last decade.

About the award



Malcolm was only 29 when he fell from a scramble in Ogwen in August 1989. He was a good club member, a regular on coach meets and socials, as well as an accomplished rock climber and runner. He was on the committee as Hut Secretary at the time and his accident had a massive impact on the club.

After meeting with his parents it was decided to commence a memorial in the form of an annual award covering either services to the club or outstanding mountaineering achievement. This is presented at the AGM with nominations coming from any club member. It can be for recognition of mountaineering achievement or contribution to the club.

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 this month

Thursday 11th June, 6:30pm – 7:00pm

Outdoor Evening Meet – Handsworth Heritage Trail



Photo by Handsworth

The Black Eagle
16, Factory Road,
Hockley,
Birmingham
B18 5JU

Back by popular demand is a chance to be guided around the Handsworth Heritage Trail. A 3 mile walk around Handsworth highlighting the importance Birmingham (and Handsworth particularly) has played in the development of industry. Because of numbers last time we have two guides available so please let Andy Brown know if you are intending to come so we can make sure we need both guides.

Food will be available at the pub afterwards if required. Meals need to be ordered before we start walking so if intending to eat please arrive in time to order and be ready to walk for 7.00pm.

For real ale fans the Black Eagle is well known for its excellent cellar and a few beers there never disappoints.

Please contact Andy Brown on 07870 145026 or speak to him at the Wheatsheaf.

Thursday 25th June, 6:00pm – 10:00pm

Climbing Night at Portway Leisure Centre

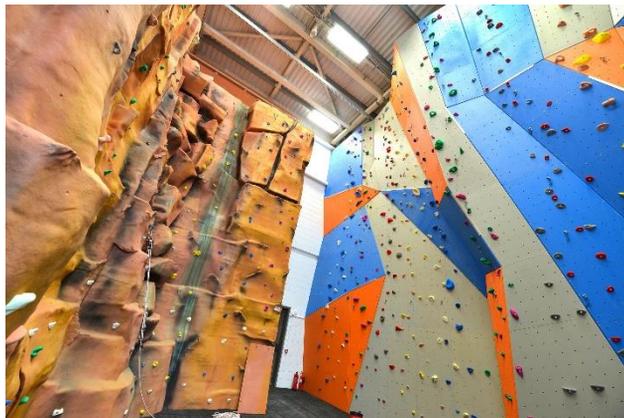


Photo by Portway Lifestyle Centre

Portway Lifestyle Centre,
Oldbury,
West Midlands,
B69 1HE

On the meet card this year, and to try and introduce more people to climbing, we will be holding a climbing night on the last Thursday of every month (except December). The nights have been included on the new meet card and will be held at the Portway Leisure Centre.

The climbing wall is new, very clean and unlike most climbing walls, warm! To encourage members to come along and to promote the centre, the club has negotiated a special price of just £4.00 a night. There will be tea and coffee available for 50p per cup (but you'll need to bring your own cup). Sessions run from 6.00pm to 10.00pm.

These nights will be 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.

When going in the main entrance to the leisure centre the climbing wall is right in front of you. Don't pay at reception – pay in the climbing room.

Meet card 2015 - 2016

Here are the dates from this year's meet card, which details the club's events up until the end of May 2016.

If you know someone who isn't currently a member, but has expressed an interest in any of these activities, then please give them a copy of this page or direct them to the club website.

June

Thurs 11th: Outdoor Evening Meet
 Sun 14th: Coach - Coniston
 19th - 21st: Challenge Weekend - 3 Peaks
 Thurs 25th: Climbing Night at Portway
 26th - 28th: Family Weekend

July

3rd - 5th: Gower Weekend
 Thurs 9th: Outdoor Evening Meet
 Sat 11th: Long Coach Meet - Nantlle Ridge
 17th - 19th: Family Weekend
 Thurs 30th: Climbing Night at Portway

August

Thurs 6th: Outdoor Evening Meet
 Sat 8th: Oggie 8
 Sun 9th: Coach - Howgills
 14th - 16th: Family Weekend
 21st - 23rd: Youth Hostel Weekend
 Thurs 27th: Climbing Night at Portway

September

Thurs 10th: Outdoor Evening Meet
 Sat 12th: Long Coach Meet - Blencartha
 18th - 20th: Women's Weekend
 Thurs 24th: Climbing Night at Portway

October

Thurs 8th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sat 10th: Long Coach Meet - Rhinogs
 Thurs 29th: Climbing Night at Portway
 30th - Nov 1st: Bunkhouse Weekend

November

Thurs 5th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sun 8th: Coach - Llanberis
 20th - 22nd: Skills Weekend
 Thurs 26th: Climbing Night at Portway
 Fri 27th: Social Evening

December

Thurs 10th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sun 12th: Coach - Edale
 Thurs 17th: Christmas Social at The Wheatsheaf

January 2016

Sun 3rd: Mitch's Meet & Social
 Thurs 7th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sun 10th: Coach - Ogwen
 15th - 17th: Scottish Weekend
 22nd - 24th: Hostel Weekend
 Thurs 28th: Climbing Night at Portway

February

Thurs 4th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sat 6th: Coach - Patterdale
 13th - 20th: Scottish Week
 Thurs 25th: Climbing Night at Portway
 29th - Mar 6th: European Winter Week

March

Thurs 10th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sun 13th: Coach - Arrans
 Thurs 17th: AGM
 18th - 20th: Away Dinner
 Thurs 31st: Climbing Night at Portway

April

Thurs 7th: Indoor Evening Meet
 Sat 9th: Long Coach Meet - Braithwaite
 15th - 17th: Scottish Bunkhouse Weekend
 Thurs 28th: Climbing Night at Portway

May

Thurs 5th: Outdoor Evening Meet
 Sun 8th: Coach - Brecon Beacons
 13th - 15th: Family Weekend
 20th - 22nd: Skills Weekend
 Thurs 26th: Climbing Night at Portway

Speeding through Scotland

WBMC Winter Week February 2015

By Hilary Jones

With pictures by club members



At least Two of Us couldn't wait to get there - caught speeding along the M74 (beware the Motherwell police). On the very first morning, One of Us nearly forgot her boots and was cautioned for speeding across the hotel car park too (on foot, I hasten to add). On the second morning, Someone had packed two right boots but was swiftly rescued as Someone Else produced a spare pair: Size 9's? Got these at Christmas - they need wearing in...

"...the forecast for the week...was liberally scattered with phrases like 'incessant rain', 'no chance of sun', 'appalling visibility'..."

In fact, the forecast for the week promised generally deteriorating conditions (most notably Wet Wednesday), and was liberally scattered with phrases like 'incessant rain', 'no chance of sun', 'appalling visibility' - so Everyone was in a hurry to get going and enjoy the best of it.

A Certain Person wasted no time in setting out to bag his final - 284th - munro, Gairich. Half of Us (fifty or so at the hotel this year) sped up with him, but Half of Us were blown back by even speedier winds at 725m. Well done, Completer Chris and fellow summiteers; thanks for organising, Graeme.



Photo by Emily Smith

A Certain Young Woman also had reason to celebrate, having clocked up 21 years (Cake, Anyone? - many happy returns, Jess), while Ice Climber Tristan topped out on Ben Nevis, then raced home for his daughter's 1st birthday.



Photo by Hilary Jones

Old Hands and Newcomers, Regulars and Stalwarts of the club all purposefully set about climbing a challenging array of beckoning peaks, munros, marilyns, corbetts, arêtes and tops - with the odd swift unplanned descent now and then, by ice axe, bumslide or even avalanche. But there were also planned expeditions by bike and train, visits to distilleries, lighthouses, commandos, Cotswold and, of course, the Clachaig Inn. The Corran ferry that nips back and forth across Loch Linnhe proved popular too.



Photo by Hilary Jones

Elsewhere, Others set the pace in the hotel pool (try keeping up with wounded Triathlete Dot... or trainee Outdoor Pursuits Instructor, Heather) and along the West Highland Way (try matching the speed of fit Ramblers Helen and John... or Heather, running it).

Continued overleaf...



Photo by Chris Dean

So that's just a fleeting glimpse and quick whizz through some of the happenings on another great winter week in Scotland. Big thanks to Everyone, especially Jonathan for arranging it, and to the staff of the Ben Nevis Hotel & Leisure Club for looking after us so well.

Roll on next February! Meanwhile, must dash... fine to pay. But not before mentioning our superb final day on Buachaille Etive Beag, with absolutely stunning, snowy panoramas – enough, in fact, to provoke Seasoned WBMC Mountaineers to burst into song: Flash, bang, wallop... 😊

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.

National 3 peaks challenge



Last call! We're taking part in the national Three Peaks Challenge at the end of the month, attempting to climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours.

If you would like to take up the challenge please speak to Andy Brown (07870 145 026) as soon as possible.

CIC Hut

April 2015

By Mel Evans

With pictures by Ken Priest



Sunday 18th April saw three West Midland based cars converging on the North Face Car Park, Torlundy, in readiness for a five night stay in the CIC Hut on the west bank of the Allt a' Mhuilinn under the north face of Ben Nevis. Apart from a gunshot type retort from beneath the key-carrying vehicle as it entered the car park (broken spring), the group of eight WBMC members had enjoyed an uneventful journey.

"The sheer scale of a perfect winter panorama dominated our thoughts."

Although loaded with two rucksacks each the slog into Coire Leis, on what was a beautiful evening, came as welcome relief from the long drive. The lowest buttresses were soon in sharp focus, *"never seen it like this in April, more like the conditions expected in January"*, failed to raise a response. The sheer scale of a perfect winter panorama dominated our thoughts. Slowly we climbed, eyes glued towards Coire na Ciste, No4 gully came into view, then No3 gully, then The Douglas Boulder, Tower Ridge, North East Buttress, all were dripping with ice and snow. At last I was able to superimpose mental images onto this iconic landscape. It was my first visit. The scene was awe-inspiring. I felt extremely privileged.



The UK's only alpine style hut was cosy and warm. Two friendly Glaswegian climbers were the sole occupants and so with 24 bunks there was plenty of space to go round. Soon we were settled in with a cuppa-on-the-go, guide books and weather forecast to hand. The decision was made; one group of four to Observatory Gully, the other to Coire na Ciste as early as possible, since a weather front was due to roll

in from the West sometime during Monday afternoon. Crampons were fitted outside the Hut. Observatory Gully was deep in powder snow. We leapfrogged rock bands on the eastern side of the Gully but progress was amazingly slow. However it was a lovely crisp morning and the numerous rests, (after every couple of upward steps!), made it possible to really appreciate the magnificent surroundings. Reaching a rock face level with our climb we roped up and traversed the Gully to the rock barrier which held 'Tower Scoop' a 65m ice climb leading to a broad hanging snow slope directly below Tower Gully. It had taken over 3 hrs! The climb itself went well with a very unusual belay at the end of the first pitch, a small tunnel, the outside wall being of solid ice formed by melt water running over a small overhang and freezing as it hit the rock. Our intention was to continue via Tower Gully but in a very short time the weather changed and we found ourselves retreating in whiteout conditions. Meanwhile Ken and Andy were heading for 'Comb Gully' with James and Sam battling their way to 'Green Gully' on the other side of The Comb.



Both ropes made it to the start but conditions were such that they were forced to retreat, ken and Andy making their way round to 'Green Gully' just as the lads were abseiling from the second pitch. By late afternoon all were safely back having enjoyed a superb mountain day. With our two fellow climbers now gone the CIC Hut reverted to a WBMC Hut.

It proceeded to rain for 36 hours! Tuesday was a write off. The Grosvenor clan spent the day in Fort William bringing back some very welcome bacon while the remainder 'put-the-world-to-rights' over endless brews.

Continued overleaf...

By Wednesday morning the rain had stopped, most snow and ice on the lower slopes had gone, the 200m Douglas Boulder was now bare rock, the tops were shrouded with mist but things were improving as per the forecast. Ken and Neil walked to the car and sorted its repair. That steak must have tasted so good! I opted to stay in and around the Hut while the others climbed the steep slopes leading to Carn Mor Derag and the CMD Arête before topping out and exploring the summit's emergency shelter. Guy and Tracy returned via the Halfway Lochan, the others via the abseil posts into Coire Leis.

"... the rest of us set off at about 9am for the Ridge, which, according to the guides is, 'perhaps the finest mountaineering expedition in Scotland'..."

The final day dawned bright and clear. It was perfect for Tower Ridge. Ken opted for 'North Castle Gully' a 230m grade 2 hoping his 30 year old disintegrating 'plastics' would hold out. Guy and Tracy stayed local to the Hut while the rest of us set off at about 9am for the Ridge, which, according to the guides is, "perhaps the finest mountaineering expedition in Scotland" and likely to take 6-10 hours. The snow was now hard and icy, an absolutely amazing change in 48 hours and we were soon in crampons climbing 'East Gully' in the Douglas Gap between the Douglas Boulder and the main ridge. We were moving steadily; enjoying the banter, the blue skies, and the windless conditions. It was idyllic.



On the knife edge separating East and West Gullies we roped up to tackle the awkward chimney which led to the ridge proper. We were soon up and taking crampons off, in the space of 50m they were back on and they stayed on for the remainder of the route. The pace was unhurried every opportunity was taken to enjoy our amazing perch.

Negotiating the more difficult rockier sections became easier as rock climbing in crampons became more familiar. On a wide, flatter section approaching 'Little Tower' two lads from Inverness climbed past. We saw them again on the approach to 'Great Tower' and the infamous Eastern Traverse, a narrow two foot ledge banked out to quite an off-putting angle. They were stuck. The leader had gone, the rope was tight, the second would not budge and they could not hear each other! It was a classic situation. We waited and waited. Sitting on top of my sac watching the sun slowly sink towards the Western horizon the guide book warning, "Benightments occur with monotonous regularity" began to have a different resonance. After well over an hour Sam was finally moving. It had been a long wait. As Neil and I crossed the knife edge ridge leading to Tower Gap we agreed, 20 minutes to sun set! Head torches were primed, extra layers added and last food consumed. This was rapidly developing into an 'epic classic'. We crossed the Gap in almost total darkness, it was surreal. Once on the final steep slopes the sense of total isolation was almost overpowering. All contact was lost except for the frozen rope like a black umbilical cord leading into total blackness; no sounds could be heard, no light from torches was visible, I was totally alone, crampons and axes working against hard ice, then without warning the snow softened and I was over the small cornice and on the summit plateau.



It was 11.30 pm, there was not a breath of wind and the temperature was well below zero. The lights of Fort William twinkled far below, the lights above twinkled as I'd never seen them and the almost mythical Northern Lights appeared as if to acknowledge a perfect day. There were congratulations all round, frozen gear was stashed, GPS and maps consulted, base contacted and the long way off agreed. Ken and Guy met us at the Lochan with drink and food and we finally entered the cosy and warm Hut at 3am to be greeted by Tracey with the best cuppa ever.

It had been a memorable day, a fitting end to a memorable week. The weather could have been better but we couldn't really complain, the CIC Hut was great (with full beds it would be very crowded) and the company typical of WBMC, excellent.

Seatoller

Saturday 9th May 2015

Words and pictures by
Dave Jones



This was the consecutive monthly Saturday coach meet in the last two months and the previous meet to Yorkshire proved to be very successful with lots of WBMC members having successful attempts at the three peak challenge.

Saturday 9th May arrived and personally for me I always like going back to the Lake District. The destination was Seatoller and the normal proceedings of departing West Bromwich at 07.00am and 07.20am pick up at Penkrudge. A very young guest joined the coach at Penkrudge: Tom Keeling, aged ten, was accompanied by fellow member Andrew Wright (more to follow on Tom's first experience with WBMC later) A brief stop off at Richard Charnock services was had with the normal breakfast bap for some of our members.

The weather on the journey up was a little hit and miss with heavy rain and some dry to dull spells, however I was being informed by my fellow walking companion Phil Smith that the weather was going to be the clear in the afternoon. (yeah right Phil) looking out the coach window with heavy rain.

The first drop off was Keswick where we dropped off climbers Graeme Stanford, Ken Priest, Peter Poultney, Mel Evans, Joe Priest, Tony Emms (apologies if I missed anyone) at Shepherds Crag, these individuals completed the Brown Slabs section. The third and final drop was Seatoller.

Mike Smith was leading a party up Scafell Pike, this consisted of Emily Smith, John Wagstaff, Hilary Jones, Dave, Janet, Liz. Full credit to Mike and the rest of the team, this was the last drop off and they did not start walking until 11.40am.



Myself, Dave Hind & Phil Smith arranged to complete route 1 but we started from Seatoller instead of Keswick because Dave had come up with the

suggestion that there was no pub at Seatoller. Don't you just love great planning and navigation skills!! We started the pull up the Honister pass, after ten minutes various layers were coming off from me in the attempt to keep good body temperature. We passed the YHA and then made our way up to Dale Head, a steep climb up but I knew that the first section is the hardest due to completing this route before but that time we headed back to Buttermere being late for the coach, hopefully that would not apply again.



Our discussions heading up to Dale Head were about the via ferrata on Honister and contemplating about that being a future possibility. Also a little banter was had with "Geordie" due to him purchasing a new camera, normally each month he has something new, which me & Phil pick up on relatively quickly.

We arrived at Dale Head, 2,470 feet (753m), which stands immediately north of Honister Pass. The summit is marked by a cairn standing on the brink of the northern face. There was a fine view of the Newlands valley, to the North, backed by Skiddaw, by this time it was still a little dull and we had walked through a little hill fog. Some photos were taken and by this time I was putting layers back on, due to it feeling a little chilly. We started to head towards High Spy by now most of the ascent had been completed and we headed off but had to make a steep descent down towards the tarn, due to not taking the correct path. Once at the bottom we made our way around the Tarn and headed up to High Spy, when we arrived at this cairn we was greeted by fellow WBMC members, Stewart Shaw Fred Hammonds, Ann Parrot, Angie Murdoch, Andy Wright, Tom Keeling (the young Tom looking fitter than everyone), Mark Stephens.

Continued overleaf...

By this time the sun had come out and great views could be seen across Derwent Water looking onto Catbells, Helvellyn could be seen in the distance & Skiddaw. We decided to have some lunch on the cairn, before heading onto Catbells, and by now layers had come off again due to a glorious afternoon of sunshine with near perfect views.

Dave Hind has a fantastic knowledge of the lake district area and named every single summit, but again more banter we thought he was just bluffing and naming anything that came to mind. We had a fantastic view of our path leading onto Catbells, which we started to head for. It has a modest height of 451m (1,480 ft) but this is one of the most popular fells in the lake district area. Catbells is situated on the western shore of Derwent Water and within three miles of Keswick.

We arrived at the summit which is all rock with many loose lying amid the small outcrops. The view from the top was panoramic which was dominated by the aerial view of Derwentwater, We descended via the well trodden path with fellow walkers passing us on route to the top.



We headed back through the forest heading towards Keswick where we came across, Andrew, Tom, Ann & Angie, who were going to take the boat back across to Keswick. We thought this was an excellent idea and decided to join them and this would get us back quicker to have a drink in the centre of Keswick. We caught the boat from Hawse End jetty which took us back to Keswick.

Keswick was very vibrant due to a jazz festival taking place in the town where marquees had been set up. We arrived at the pub with fellow members coming in after completing whatever they were doing. Adrian Shaw & Simon Grove arrived after completing Skiddaw (Well Done Lads). Dave Hind, then decided it was chip shop time and took orders prior to heading off to collect and distribute. We then headed back to the coach to start our journey back.



As mentioned previously a big well done should be given to the young Tom Keeling who came on his first coach meet accompanied by Andrew Wright. Tom informed me on the coach that he had previously done Snowdon and was looking forward to doing Catbells and High Spy. By the end of the day Tom you had made lots of new friends and eaten your way through numerous bags of crisps that individuals had given to you. West Bromwich Mountaineering Club hope to see you on future meets and I'm sure that your Mom will be very proud of you completing the walk and how you conducted yourself on the day.

Also thank you to my fellow companions, Dave Hind & Phil Smith.

Dave Jones.



Welsh 3000s – Fail!

Saturday 9th May 2015

Words and pictures by
Graeme Stanford



Starting my newsletter entries with the word 'fail' seems to be an emerging theme recently. The old adage "you should always be prepared to turn back" rings very true however...

Chris Dean and I decided to have a crack at the Welsh 3000's on a spur of the moment. Busy schedules quickly brought us to May bank holiday as a date for the attempt. All we needed was semi decent weather. I think we both agreed that "as long as it's not p**sing down we'll do it!". How prophetic that was to be.



The plan was simple. Leave one car at the north end of the route with food, water and warm clothes in it. Leave the second car in the Llanberis pass with more food and water in it. Bivvy on Snowdon. Start the challenge at dawn, descend to the car and dump bivvy kit, re-fill with food and water etc., then go for it. We were going to carry all the food we need and get more water at Lyn Y Cwn and Pen Yr ole Wen. We reckoned on 15ish hours for the whole thing.

We met in Betws Y Coed, on Friday, as planned and then Took Chris's car north to its overnight resting place. The weather at this point was lovely. Hopes were high. The Mountain Weather forecast predicted a weather front coming in Saturday afternoon / evening but clear, if a little windy, until then. We had a quick faff to make sure the right kit was left in Chris' car and then headed for the club hut to dump gear for Saturday night. More faffing and a little later we were sitting in the Vaynol Arms, in Nant Peris, having some food and a pint before starting up the hill. Still the weather was with us... lulling us into a false sense of security.

We left my car halfway up the pass, near the wooden bridge at the climbers hut. This left us a stroll up to Pen Y Pass and 2030 hrs saw us starting up the Pyg

Track. It was a thoroughly pleasant evening and we wandered along putting the world to rights. We stopped and read the warden's 'conditions report' which also led us to believe all was well. Onwards and upwards. Not even cold enough for a jacket. As the light faded we crossed into the inside of the valley and started the slog up to 'the zig zags'. Darkness fell and out came the headtorches. Near the top of the path we heard voices and two chaps appeared out of the gloom. No headtorches and no gear as far as we could see... it takes all sorts I suppose. We said hello, as you do, and left them picking their way down the track by dim moonlight. As we approached the slate marker the wind started to pick up so we donned jackets before coming over the rise by the railway. The night time view from here, of the lights in the valley, is breath-taking and gave a dramatic backdrop as we wandered up to the summit café.



Once there we looked in vain to find a sheltered spot, around the café, out of the wind. We settled on the plinth in front of the café. It was too cold and windy to enjoy the location so we sorted our bivvy bags etc. out and climbed in. After I'd spent ten minutes mucking about inflating my Gucci new mat Chris was finally able to stop taking the mickey and get his head down. About 0230 I woke to light pitter patter of what I thought was rain on my bivvy bag. When the alarm went at 0430 and we sat up we discovered it had been snowing. The wind had picked up a little so we had something to eat while packing up and were touching the summit by 0500. At this point the weather still wasn't too dramatic although snow was falling lightly. Visibility was around 50 metres but our spirits were still high. We headed towards Garnedd Ugain and pretty quickly found the trig point. From here we took a bearing to make sure we were heading onto the ridge proper.

Continued overleaf...

Once on the ridge the route couldn't be more obvious but care needed to be taken with the scrambling as snow isn't the most grippy substance in the world. Garnedd Ugain quickly became Crib Goch and the snow continued to fall. When there's no visibility the ridge seems to be over quicker than expected and very soon we found ourselves picking our way down the North ridge. (I've never been on the North ridge before and to say it's a little narrow at the top is an understatement.) As the angle decreased and the narrow ridge became steep scree we took another bearing to ensure we didn't end up on top of the crags looking for the descent. We quickly found the route down and were soon descending out of the clag. Unfortunately this also meant the snow was turning into rain.

We arrived, damp, back at my car two and a half hours after touching Snowdon's summit. Well within our plan. This gave us some confidence in completing the challenge despite the weather. We had a longer faff than we would have had if the weather was better. We rearranged clothing, loaded up with food and water and, most importantly, shed the weight of the bivvy kit. Once sorted we headed of down the pass towards Nant Peris. By now it was steadily persisting it down. We reluctantly passed the pub (not without discussing a pint or two) and soon found ourselves on the flanks of Elidir Fawr. From this point on things started to go downhill while we struggled uphill. There were a few other walkers splashing around and they were warned not to follow us. We slogged uphill slowly and as we slogged the wind increased.



As we approached the 700 metre contour the gusts were getting up to 40+ mph I'd say. The kind of wind where you occasionally have to stand still for a moment while waiting for the gusts to pass. We had a quick conflag about the route to the summit and I made the mistake of recommending getting straight onto the ridge so the angle of ascent would be easier. Sadly this led us into a 400 metre boulder field. Added to this it was now snowing steadily but the wind was

turning the snowflakes into something more reminiscent of airgun pellets. The boulders were slippery with snow and the ankle breaking gaps were being rapidly hidden by snow. Our progress slowed rapidly. We stopped behind a large erratic (the only shelter on the ridge) for a quick bite to eat and for the first time we discussed the possibility of retreating. From here it was another 300 endless metres to the summit where we sorted out our route and made the firm decision to descend to the car. We were heading straight in to the wind so Chris was looking down and walking on a rough bearing while I followed, also looking down, his boot prints in the snow.



The conditions continued to worsen so we were never in any doubt about our choice to retreat. Once on the col below Elidir Fawr we headed straight down the valley toward Nant Peris, picking up the path along the stream as we went. We noted that the snow was falling at a lot lower altitude than earlier but once below 500 metres it helpfully turned back into rain.

As we approached the village we said hello to a young chap who looked like a poster boy for Cotswold outdoor. He was wearing all the latest 'top of the range' fell running kit. It all looked brand spanking new. He asked what it was like 'up there' and we gave the honest answer "it's shit" Chris helpfully added "it's like a Scottish winter day". The lad cheerfully ignored this and set off up the mountain to scare the sheep with his brightly coloured kit.

For us it was another interminable slog in the rain up the Llanberis pass. We looked at all the same roadside rubbish that we'd passed earlier in the day. The car soon came in to view and by 1330 hrs we were heading north to collect Chris' car.

It was disappointing not having completed the challenge but that's the good old British weather for you. The 3000's will still be there when we try again.

Coach Meet - Coniston

Sunday 14th June

Depart

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

07:20 - Penkridge (ST42 4EB)

(Brief toilet stop at the M6 Services)

Drop off

Torver (284942)

Coniston (303975)

Pick up

Coniston (303975)

Required maps

OS. 1:25 000 Outdoor leisure map No 6: The English Lakes - SW area

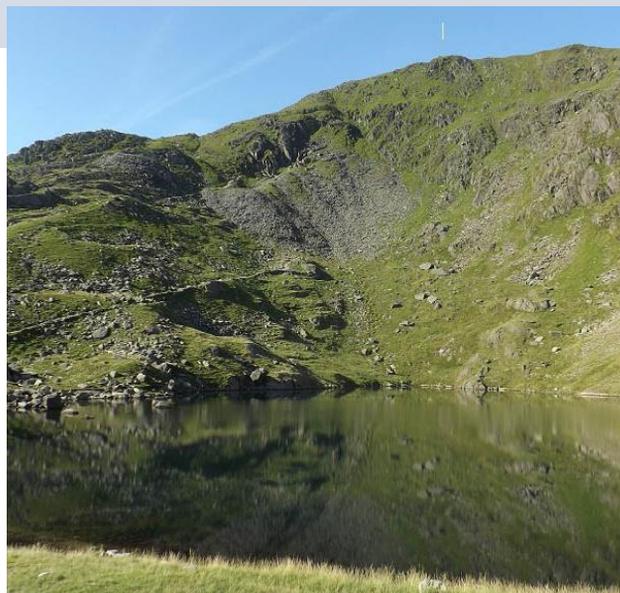
Suggested routes

Route 1 (15.5km- 9.5 miles)

Leave the coach at Torver, head North to old quarries (278960) and on to the Walna Scar Road (274965). Head on up the cove to Goat's Water. You could go up the right side of the lake to Goat's Hause (265983) but a more exciting route is to take the path on the left side and head up to the Mountain Rescue Post and the foot of Easy Gully (263977). The East face of Dow Crag is spectacular! Follow the steep but relatively easy breach which heads diagonally upwards to exit a little to the South of the summit of Dow Crag (262978). Then it's North and then East to Goat's Hause and uphill in a SE direction to the summit of the Old Man. Head East, then NE from the summit to descend to Low Water where the path heads East to Coniston village.

Route 2 (16km - 10 miles)

From Coniston follow the paths to the Miners Bridge (294980) and continue past Crowberry Haws to Low Water (275982). A steep path now leads to the summit of the Old Man of Coniston (273005). Descend steeply to the East down the rocky Prison Band and continue onto Wetherlam (288011). Descend the grassy ridge to Furness Fells (292000) and continue on vague paths to Hole Rake (293991). From here good paths lead down into Coppermines Valley and back towards Coniston.



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 June.

Route 3 (11km - 7 miles)

Proceed as for Route 2 along the main Coniston ridge to Swirl How (273005) then descend steeply to the East down the rocky Prison Band to Swirl Hause (278008). From here take a more direct route South past Levers Water (282994) and along the Coppermines Valley back to Coniston.

Route 4 (10km - 6 miles)

Head on roads to Shephards Bridge (304976) and then hit the Cumbria Way to Tarn Hows. Hit the A593 at Oxen Fell High Cross (328017) and return to Coniston by the path that runs to the right of the road.

Route 5 (14km - 9 miles)

Head NW to Miners Bridge (294980) then take the path through disused quarries that leads to Hole Rake. Reverse Route 2 to the summit of Wetherlam (288011). Leave the summit along the NE ridge and descend until you hit the path in Greenburn which heads off East and then South to Tilberthwaite (306010). Minor roads lead to the A593 and a footpath running parallel to this takes you back to Coniston

Coach Meet – Nantlle Ridge

Saturday 11th July

Depart

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

07:20 - Penkridge (ST42 4EB)

(Brief toilet stop at the M6 Services)

Drop off

A487 (for Nebo) (467508)

Beddgelert (591481)

Nant Gwynant (629508)

Pick up

Rhyd Ddu (571526)

Beddgelert (591481)

Required maps

OS. 1:25 000 Outdoor Leisure Map No.17 Snowdonia

OS. 1:50 000 Landranger No.115 (for Nebo drop off)



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 (8km – 5 miles)

For a relatively easy walk from the drop off by the club hut; start up the Watkin path opposite. Where this forks right (622520) through the quarry towards Snowdon, stay on the left side of the stream and continue on up to Bwlch Cwm Llan (605522). Cross this col between Snowdon and Yr Aran then keep heading West down into Rhyd Ddu.

Route 2 (12km – 7.5 miles)

From Beddgelert, follow the path leading SW to Moel Hebog (566470.) Leave the summit along the NW ridge and take in Moel yr Ogof (55479) and Moel Lefn (553485) before descending via Bwlch-y-Ddwy-elor to a track through a forest to Rhhd Ddu.

Route 3 (13.5km – 8.5 miles)

The feature walk of this meet is a linear traverse of the Nantlle Ridge. From the drop off, walk through Nebo and head for Garnedd Goch (512495.) This is the start of an interesting ridge offering a variety of terrains (quite narrow and impressive in places) leading NE over Craig Cwm Silyn (526503,) Mynydd Taly-mignedd (536514) and ending up on Ygarn (552526.) Descend to Rhyd Ddu.