

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter



April 2016

This month's photo: The WBMC on the Scottish Week March 2016, by Dave Jones

- 2 Noticeboard
- 3 News from the BMC
- 4 Coming up
- 6 WBMC AGM
Dave Jones
- 7 Blown Away by Banff Blue
John Edwards
- 11 Nev's Scottish Week
Dave Jones
- 15 Cairngorms Climbing Trip
Graeme Stanford
- 17 Coach meets
Saturday 9th April – Braithwaite
Saturday 9th May – Brecon Beacons

Hello readers,

Hope you're all doing well. This month's (slightly larger than usual) newsletter includes a report on the AGM by the new Chair Dave Jones, along with three cracking articles by John, Dave, and Graeme.

I've also attached the club flyer at the end of the newsletter, so please feel free to print a few off to distribute at work or give to friends – anyone who you think might be interested in the kind of things we do.

Huge thanks to this month's contributors: John Edwards, Nigel Tarr, Dave Jones, Graeme Stanford, Andy Brown, 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 20th April.

Cheers,
Joe

Appendix

WBMC Poster

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.



2016 Cotswold
Discount Code:
AF-WBMC-M8



www.wbmc.org

Noticeboard

New members

Please welcome new members Peter Kane and Lee Rogers to the club. Having completed their probation during the wettest six months I can remember for a while they must be keen.

Mandy and Tina would like to thank the floor of the AGM for their kindness and warmth in welcoming them as new honorary members and they look forward to helping the club at this years summer shows. Meanwhile they look forward to their first coach meet to Braithwaite where they will happily do some cheerleading at the layby as well as giving advice on the latest nail extension trends(!)

Hut keys

Just a reminder from Alison that the door of the hut has been replaced and the old keys will no longer gain you access. New keys can be purchased from the her for the bargain price of £4. This key will give you access to the main door only. The key for the toilet / shower block is hanging in the main hut, attached to an old ballcock.

Club fees by standing order

For those members who use online banking to pay their club fees thank you as it makes the admin surrounding club fees much easier. It has been noted however that some members, who have set up standing orders in the past, may have forgotten to change the standing order to the new rate. When you get a moment please adjust your standing order. If this is you also please remember to pass Jo Cheung the missing money (it's only be £1 or £1.50) as soon as you can. Obviously if she has to send out letters to this effect it will cost half of the money she is chasing. This obviously won't affect those who use online banking but do a bank transfer every year rather than a 'fire and forget' standing order. Thanks.

Free raffle on coach meets!

On coach meets there will now be a free raffle for participants, and the winners will receive a bottle of wine and a thermos flask.

Belay test passed!

New club members Phil Cox and Noah have recently got round to doing their belay test and successfully passed. Well done from WBMC! Be good to see you at the Portway, last Thursday of the month.



Hut donations

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

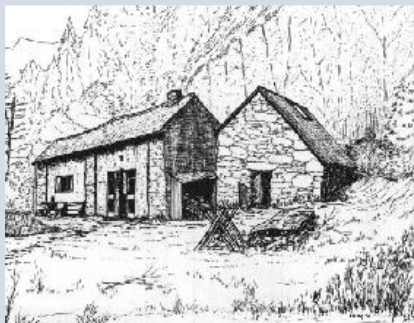
Stamped addressed envelopes are provided in the hut for payment.

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



News from the BMC

Tremadog rockfall danger on 'One Step in The Clouds' and 'Hail Bebe'

An imminent threat of a serious and substantial rockfall has been identified on the first pitch of the popular route "One Step in the Clouds" at Craig Bwlch y Moch. Climbers are warned not to climb the first pitch of this route!

The climbing route 'One Step in the Clouds', a VS graded climb at the BMC-owned crag of Craig Bwlch y Moch, is one of the most popular and frequented rock climbs in Wales. However, the left hand retaining wall of the tricky groove on the 4b graded first pitch is in imminent danger of collapse. Inspections by the BMC and a number of experienced climbers have identified a recent rockfall where part of that retaining block has fallen away and the remaining rock, while appearing sound, could collapse at any point.

Climbers are strongly advised not to climb the first pitch of this route or the adjacent "Hail Bebe" route until remedial work has been carried out. Both routes can still be climbed but the advice is to only approach them from "The Fang Gully" on the left, thus completely avoiding the first pitches.

The remaining block which forms the left hand side of the groove is approximately 3.5m high by 1.5m² (at least 10 tonnes in weight) and is perched on a small unstable plinth that is less than 30cm². The BMC is looking at the situation with specialist experts to identify a solution - which may involve a controlled removal of the remaining block. Climbers are strongly urged not to take matters into their own hands here by attempting to remove the block themselves both due to the danger to others and particularly as it appears that there is other material lying above these blocks that could become unstable.



BMC calls on the public to help "Mend Our Mountains" amid fears of footpath decline

Sir Chris Bonington, Doug Scott CBE & Julia Bradbury are supporting a major new British Mountaineering Council (BMC) crowdfunding campaign launched to raise money for environmental projects on some of Britain's most iconic peaks: *Mend Our Mountains*.

Booming visitor numbers and smaller budgets, compounded by the extensive damage of recent flooding, means that national park authorities and conservation bodies are struggling to keep up.

Working with eight national parks, the BMC aims to raise more than £100,000 to repair damaged paths on some of Britain's most popular peaks, including the respective highest mountains of England and Wales - Scafell Pike and Snowdon.

The campaign will also feature Ingleborough (Yorkshire Dales), Kinder Scout (Peak District) and part of the Brecon Beacons Horseshoe, as well as vital

repairs to moorland on Dartmoor, Exmoor and the North York Moors.

The campaign has been developed in conjunction with the BMC Access and Conservation Trust and funds will be channeled through it. It has been generously sponsored by Alpkit and Steep Edge.



You can find out more about this campaign at: tv.thebmc.co.uk/videos/what-is-mend-our-mountains

Coming up

6:30pm 5th April

Evening Meet – Wrens Nest Walk

The first Thursday in May sees our first outdoor meet of the year. Bob Duncan has offered to lead a walk around Wrens Nest. Meeting at the Park Inn, Sedgely Road, Woodsetton at 18:30 with a 18:45/19:00 hours start time.

You can find out more information about the pub at [fb.com/pages/The-Park-Inn/139105929477592](https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Park-Inn/139105929477592)

I have contacted the Park Inn and they will forward a menu choice onto me.

Anyone wishing to attend please let Dave Jones know on 07759259163 or e mail davejones840@gmail.com



Photo from whatpub.com

8pm 7th April

Adventures in the Caucasus and Carpathian Mountains.

Nick Piotrowski will present a lecture on last year's trips to the two ranges in preparation for a club expedition in September 2017. The talk will feature his attempt on the 5047m Kazbegi in the southern Caucasus following a meeting with a Polish climber on the 2502m Rysy club expedition. The trip to Georgia was a cultural extravaganza and involved a crevasse fall and further teeth escapades as well as a trip to the northern Svaneti town of Mestia, which is a UNESCO heritage site with its centuries old defensive towers and a look at the amazing Matterhorn of the range Mt Ushba and its twin peaks at 4690m and 4710m. The most amazing friendly but tough people and a very cheap trip. Very good Georgian beer at £1.50 and hotel accommodation at £12 per night. Following the precedent set by John Edwards, Nick will also be revealing the layering system he used on these trips – those easily shocked please stay away.



Photo by Armen Movsesian

Hut Weekends

13th - 15th May

Family Weekend

With the weather getting better and the temperature slowly rising, now's a great time to spend a weekend at the hut.

Anyone wishing to book please contact Alison Whitehead on 07530644874

20th - 22nd May

Skills Weekend

Oliver Stephenson is carrying out a skills weekend at the hut on 20th - 22nd May at the club hut. Oliver will teach skills based upon the needs/requirements of the attendees, so do get in touch soon if you'd like to go.

If anyone is interested in booking, please contact Oliver on 07805418027

Coming up

7:30pm 23rd May – B'ham Town Hall

Simon Yates – My Mountain Life

On a remote mountain in Peru in June 1985 mountaineer Simon Yates found himself in an unenviable position. He was slowly being pulled off the mountain face by his injured partner – Joe Simpson – dangling on the rope far below. It was an experience that would have put many off the sport of mountaineering, but remarkably thirty years later Simon is still at it. From the Arctic to the Antarctic, Alaska to Central Asia there is hardly a significant range of mountains that he has not visited.

Come along and witness Simon's tireless journey from that mountain in Peru to some of the remotest on the planet and share with him the drama, excitement and beauty of modern, lightweight, alpinism. Told with wit, dry humour and lavishly illustrated with images and video collected on his great climbs, Simon both entertains and inspires.



Photo from thsh.co.uk

17th 19th June

National 3 Peaks Challenge

The club challenge walk this year will be an attempt at climbing Ben Nevis, Scaffel Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours.

We will be leaving the Midlands area on Friday morning (8.00ish) to drive to Fort William in order to start the challenge at 6.00pm on Friday night. After

doing Ben Nevis we will drive overnight to Seathwaite to climb Scaffel Pike before driving to Pen Y Pass for the climb of Snowdon. Saturday night will be spent in the hut before driving back home on Sunday.

If you feel you would like to take up the challenge please speak to Andy Brown (07870 145026) as soon as possible so all the logistics can be finalised.

Alternative coach destinations?

Following my suggestions at the AGM to vary the nature of the coach meets by maybe one or two trips a year to slightly different areas in conjunction with an interest at the club in Nuttalls and Marilyns and the problems with the summer meets. Suggestions included Llanwrtyd Wells, Aberystwyth with drops for Plynlimon and Devils Bridge, Porthmadog with drops from Bedgellert downwards to take in the back of Tremadoc as well as Portmeirion with a seaside walk as an August alternative. Trefor on the Lley Peninsula with Gryn Ddu and Bwlch Mawr. Betwys-y-Coed with the hills behind Nebo and lastly Llandudno with the cracking Gt Orme to get lost on as well as another potential August 'seaside' meet for families and old timers.

Fell, Windermere with drop offs to the eastern side and ice cream and boating at the finish, or all day. Grange over Sands or Newby Bridge with head of the lake views from minor tops. Ulverston, a great market town, with drop at Grizebeck. Millom for Black Combe as well as seaside potential and lastly Pooley Bridge for the other 'head' of Ullswater.

These are all suggestions and would not detract from the 'greater ranges' that will still take up the majority of the year. This in no way detracts from the superb efforts of coach secretaries past and present but as at Malham where a lower level walk is still attractive to many it may raise a fresh interest at the club. Any suggestions, proposals or views please talk to the committee.

Lakes alternatives could include Kendal with Llambrig

Yours 'without treading on toes' respectfully,
Nick Piotrowski

WBMC AGM

Appointment of new committee

By Dave Jones



The AGM took place on Thursday 17th March and was well attended by club members.

Due to being appointed chair for WBMC firstly I would like to thank our former chairperson Andy Brown for carrying out the role over the last four years. Andy will be an hard act to follow. Now that Andy has more spare time I feel more Corbetts will ticked off his list.

Also stepping down from Vice Chair is Mike Smith, I would also like to thank Mike for the time that he has given to the club and to the committee. I believe that Mike will be spending more time with the grandchildren. I'm sure that both Andy and Mike will still be ever present on future coach meets.

And the last individual stepping down that I would like to thank is Barbara Challinor, who gave up her spare time as secretary to insure that minutes were always accurate and sent out to the committee on time.

Congratulations goes to Ken Priest who was nominated by fellow club members for the Malcolm Collins award for services in climbing and mountaineering.

I'm sure all our members would like to say a very special thank you to these three individuals for their time and services given to WBMC and congratulate Ken in his award.

With three individuals stepping down I would like to welcome new members onto the committee. Graeme Stanford has been appointed vice chair and Sue Goddard as secretary. Also welcome to Joe Priest who has now stepped into the newsletter editor role. Joe is no stranger to the role, having filled the position unofficially since last May.

I would like to welcome new committee members David Hind and Sam Goddard.

The committee is as follows:

President
John Eadon

Chairman
Dave Jones

Vice Chair
Graeme Stanford

Treasurer
Paul Brindley

Secretary
Sue Goddard

Coach Secretary
Nigel Tarr

Hut Secretary
Alison Whitehead

Membership Secretary
Joanna Cheung

Newsletter Secretary
Joe Priest

Committee
Richard Cooksey
Nick Pitrowski
Mike Thompson
David Hind
Sam Goddard

Malcolm Collins 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.

Blown away by Banff Blue

Words and pictures
by John Edwards



The 7th Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour came to Birmingham Town Hall on Saturday 5th March, with their Blue programme of 7 films showing at 2.30pm and their Red programme of 6 films at 7.30pm. I chose to turn up on 'spec' (thus saving over £3 on booking fees) for the afternoon programme as I'd already seen the main climbing film in the evening set at "Reel Rock 10" at the Crescent Theatre last September. 370 films entered the 9 day Canadian Festival last November and the best of them are given 1,000+ screenings when they tour 40 countries. The estimated worldwide audience is over half a million and I thought I'd give a flavour of this year's tour as you may be able to catch it somewhere else. It's at Keswick 27 - 20 April & it finishes in GB in Kilkenny on 28th May; plus lots of clips and images end up on YouTube & other internet sites.

1st up was "55 Hours in Mexico" - a 9 minute film which explores 'the limits of the 'weekend warrior'. It follows 4 friends who's crazy plan is a weekend from sea level California with the aim of climbing and skiing down the 3rd highest peak in North America - the

continent's highest volcano Orizaba, which at 5636m (18,490 ft) is just 6 metres lower than Elbrus. They fly to Veracruz, hire a car (should have been a 4x4 - AND they forgot a road map!) and drive up to the Piedra Grande Hut to start the climb, after 2 hrs kip, at 4260m. The 'net says "a fit team should be able to summit in 6-10 hrs" and, because they were lucky with the weather and didn't suffer from mountain sickness (much), they succeeded and were able to enjoy a spectacular ski descent down 35 degree slopes before returning to work on Monday morning. Now there's a challenge to WBMC's weekend warriors!



Photo from the film "Eclipse", by Reuben Krabbe

2nd film "Operation Moffat" was the BMC's tribute to Britain's first female mountain guide and author of "Space Below My Feet", who celebrated her 90th birthday 12 months ago with an ascent of Great Dodd. After 6 years in the Land Army & Auxiliary Territorial Service, Gwen Moffat met a climber in 1946 and deserted, so that she could dedicate her life to the pursuit of mountains and steep rock. The 20 min film explores how 2 young female climbers are inspired to live more like Moffat: to try to worry less about the future & go wild more in the 'now', by alternating sequences of them climbing colourfully with B&W footage of Gwen doing the same routes. The famous 'stills' of bikini-clad, barefoot Gwen on sea cliffs are there, plus some great quotes from the great lady: "I didn't climb hard but I did climb well"; "I was very much in love with the mountains"; "I think I was only benighted 3 times!"; "I don't miss them (the climbs & mountains) because I have my memories so they're a part of me" and one that might apply to us all sometime, "Looking back it feels like it was somebody else!"

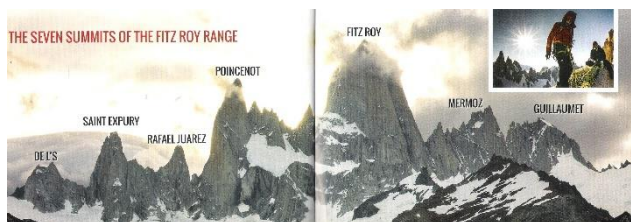
Extracts of the BMC film are available free via the web.

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Blown away by the Banff Blue

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Film number 3 was a 9 minute short "Builder" which showed the fun some mountain bikers get from constructing ramps & walls so they can perform jumps, loops and mid-air turns on their downhill runs. The first part showed the fun a 'dad & lad' can have moving earth with shovels & buckets to make relatively simple ramps that the 12 year old and his precocious friends could enjoy to make incredibly hairy jumps. The second part showed the heavy machinery brigade involved in bigger projects, which included some rickety wooden structures that opened up the potential for really flying on a bike. I wish I had their guts - or should that be 'death wish'?



The final film before the interval had won the 'People's Choice Award' & featured an even greater 'death wish': paddling a canoe over Niagara Falls - apparently Jesse Sharpe paddled over the edge in a decked canoe in 1990 without a helmet or lifejacket and his body has never been recovered! This 30 minute film follows 24 year old Mexican professional kayaker Rafa Ortiz & his team of fellow canoeists & photographers from the time 3 years ago when he decided he wanted to be the first to successfully descend the 167ft Horseshoe Falls from the Canadian side in a kayak. To train for this he & his team repeated the descent of the 189ft Pelouse Falls in Washington on which Tyler Bradt set the world record in April 2009 (see video at <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/ng-adventure/adv-american-adventures-hiking>)

and completed the World Record Steepest descent on the Santo Domingo River, Chiapas in Mexico. Amazing head-cam footage on this, and on Ague Azul nearby which they descended a few days later, during which the Gerd Serrasolses almost drowned. The first 60ft big fall should have been routine but the Spaniard missed a couple of hand-rolls to right himself and ended up floating lifelessly at the bottom of the falls 3 and a 1/2 minutes after going over the top. The team got him ashore and Rush Sturges & Ortiz started

giving CPR. As the internet account says, and the "Chasing Niagara" film shows, 'the scene, captured inadvertently by Serrasolses's helmet-mounted camera, is almost unbearably raw.' 4 minutes later life flickered back to Gerd's face and he made a total recovery after being helicoptered to hospital and given oxygen.

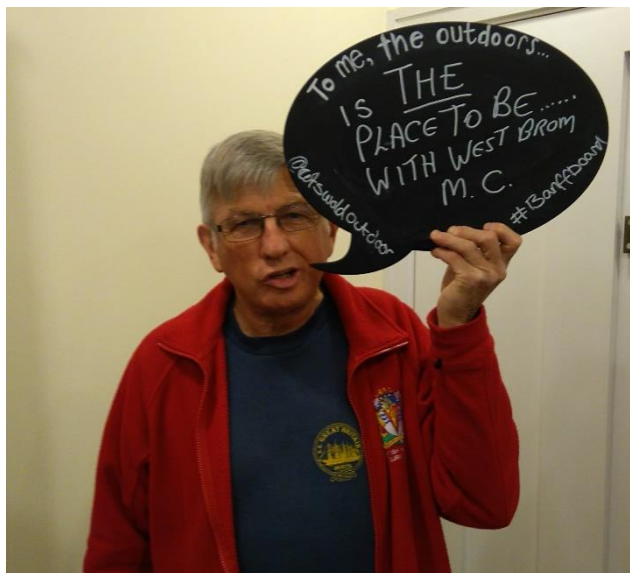


Photo from "Dinali", a film by Ben Knight

This near-miss had consequences, for when day zero for Niagara arrived Ortiz decided he didn't feel like it. It wasn't just the drop, although the positive vibes on this had gone, there was the possibility of a \$10,000 fine and a ban from the authorities that would exile him from Canada where he worked as an instructor. And if something went horribly wrong, his mates could be charged with manslaughter & get a life sentence. So Niagara Falls await a kayak descent but the sponsors, Red Bull, had invested a great deal of money in the project so the remarkable film was completed, along with archive footage of 63 yr old Annie Taylor going over in a barrel in 1901! The film also pointed out that a 'flat landing' is possible in a kayak on drops of up to 40 ft but anything higher than that and there is a risk of a broken back, so kayakers must get the nose down and enter vertically. Some ditch the paddle on the descent to avoid the risk of it smashing into their face, but that makes the roll to right the vessel at the base of the fall far riskier. Fascinating stuff!

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During the interval Cotswold were giving out 'goody bags' (I got one) & several raffle prizes were given out (I was unlucky). I also tweeted a plug 'n photo for the WBMC!



The 5th film "Eclipse" was my favourite as it showed fantastic images of Svalbard, a place I loved when I visited in 2009. Photographer Reuben Krabbe became famous when he captured a skier descending with a backdrop green curtain of Northern lights and his dream was to capture a skier silhouetted by a total solar eclipse. He estimated there would only be 3 opportunities to do this in his lifetime and the 1st would be on 20 March 2015 when a total eclipse would be visible from the Faroe Islands & the mountainous Norwegian archipelago. The latter's terrain creates a much more spectacular backdrop for skiing so he and 3 skiers spent 2 weeks camping on the Fridtjov-breen Glacier, scouting and preparing for the shoot. In Svalbard during March skies are cloudy 60% of the time but they were lucky and Krabbe, positioned over a kilometre away from the skiers got many brilliant images before, during & after the 2 mins 28 seconds of totality. Should you & I have taken the chance too and been there?! No matter, as you can see his great photos easily if you Google him...and the full 30 minute film I paid to see is available free online at <http://biglines.com/categories/ski/eclipse-freeski-movie>

The penultimate film "The Important Places" won the 'Best Short Mountain Film' but no mountains featured

during the 10 minutes! Rather it followed a son trying to get his father on a journey to recapture the past. 43 years ago Doug had paddled the Grand Canyon and his son hoped repeating the trip in November 2013 would help him learn what his father was like as a young man and re-discover something about 'the important places' that form our memories. It was a good film but annoyingly Forest Woodward kept stressing how old his father was - and he was only 70 ish (well 77 actually) and the ageism spoilt it for me.

I did like the Heraclitus quote, however: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.'

The final film "Showdown At Horseshoe Hell" I half-remembered from Reel Rock 10 - maybe I dozed off in places then! In 20 minutes it describes the wildest event in the climbing world, held in September at Horseshoe Canyon Ranch in Arkansas, when elite climbers and novices alike try to amass as many 'points' as possible in 24 hours of continuous climbing. Teams of 2 get points for every climb they complete (without a fall) & points based on the difficulty of the route. Last year ace climber Alex Honnold & his girlfriend (who was more of a runner than a climber) were up against Nik Berry & Mason Earle, who had Tod Johnson - the 1st ever champion in 2007, as a trainer plotting their campaign. To beat the record points total his schedule for them to complete a route every 3 minutes! At 10am on the Friday a shotgun started the teams running to the cliff face. Honnold couldn't be bothered to climb anything easier than 5.7 and the film showed the shock & amusement caused when he fell off one! By the time head torches had to be switched on for the overnight climbing, most climbers' fingers were well masked in tape & chalk and muscles were aching with lactic acid. By the time dawn broke, the climbing problems during last 4 hours exacerbated by lack of sleep & problems with motivation. At 10am on the Saturday everybody crashes out, waking in the late afternoon to hear the results which are followed by a full-on climber's party. For the record, the individual points record was 34,000 & team total 67,690 set in 2014 by a team that did 201 routes during their 24 hours of climbing.

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Blown away by the Banff Blue

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As you can read on www.neverstopexploring.com Honnold regained the individual points record, completing something like 150 pitches, averaging around 5.11c, worth 43,490 points. However, Berry (39,410 points) & Earle (37,900 points), with the help of Tod Johnson, set a new record for team score of 77,310. The film ended with 24 yr old Nik looking straight into the camera, smiling and saying "I will never return.....EVER!"

You might also be able to catch something of the Red Programme online so here are the films that were shown in the evening at the Town Hall:

- "A Line Across The Sky" (40 mins) The Fitzroy Traverse (7 summits spanning 4 miles with 13,000 ft of extreme climbing) was completed during a rare extended weather window by big wall climbers Tommy Caldwell & Alex Honnold in a 5-day push & this won them the Piolet d'Or award. A great film I'd seen before (and you can watch a 7 min trailer on patagonia.com or buy the whole film from Vimeo for \$19.99.

- "Denali" (8 mins) Celebrates the bond between humans (Ben Moon) and dogs (Denali). The latter wouldn't move from Moon's hospital bedside when he was being treated for cancer in 2004 so, years later,

when Denali's health started to decline (cancer again) Ben repays his 4-legged friend by visiting some of their favourite places one last time. Quotes include "Life isn't always how you expect it, but when you're there for each other, that's what matters," & "I like the smell of balls" Unless you hate dogs you MUST have a look at this one! Typing "Denali dog" will find it on YouTube!

- "Pretty Faces" (11 mins) An all-female ski film celebrating women who thrive in the snow, featuring big mountain skier Rachel Burks' first ever visit to Alaska.

- "Curiosity" (13 mins) About ultra-marathoners Bosio, Olson & Koerner as they prepared for the Ultra-Trail du Mont Blanc. It's another one that's on YouTube!

- "Unbranded" (43 mins) Four young Texans adopt, train & ride a string of wild horses 3,000 miles from Mexico to Canada, with the aim of proving the worth of wild horses and raise awareness about their plight.

- "Unreal" (12 mins) A mountain-biking film for 'the dreamers, the rule-breakers, the ones who never grow up, the ones who know the way into the unReal world' made by Teton Gravity Research.



Photo from the film "Eclipse", by Reuben Krabbe

Nev's Scottish Week

Words and pictures
by Dave Jones



Always very popular on the meet calendar and 2016 was no different, with 51 members booked in at the Ben Nevis Hotel Fort William. I think this is very popular with members for being reasonably priced, the services the hotel has to offer, and the great quality of food.

If no one has previously been on this week, I would strongly recommend that you give it a go based on the qualities mentioned above. As always thanks should be given to Jonathon Howells for organising and liaising with the hotel to make the week possible.

Originally I was going to travel up with Nigel Tarr, but Nigel informed that his car may be a little "cosy" due to already having three other individuals travelling up with him, so I was informed that Dave Hellyar & Mike Nicholls were travelling up so I arranged that I would go with them. On the day prior to departure (Friday) I got a text from Simon Grove stating that he was travelling up on his own, so to avoid Simon going on his own I decided to accompany him. Thanks to Nigel & Dave for being accommodating and offering transportation.

"... members were up relatively early to get an early start on the hills.

Simon picked me up at 09:30am on the Saturday morning and we started our journey north bound on the M6. We decided to stop off at Carlisle and have an all day breakfast at the local Morrison's. The weather was sunny which makes the journey more enjoyable. We arrived at the Ben Nevis Hotel at around 17:30 hours, were we met other members and then checked into our rooms. I opted for a single room this time around, ensuring that I would get good nights sleep with no snoring. (No offence to one of my mates, I won't mention names ☺)

My room as always was very nice and quite spacious; ensuring that any wet gear could hopefully be dried overnight. On the Saturday night we had arranged with the hotel to have our evening meal a little later at 20:00 hours giving sufficient time for people to settle in, or more importantly if anyone was arriving late they would still get their meal.

Everyone tends to meet in the bar or the reception area and conversation normally revolves around what

individuals are doing the following day or the week ahead. Normally books, maps, routes are being discussed.

We went into the dining room and the table I sat at consisted of Ann Parrott, Angie Murdoch, Andrew Mitchell, Nigel Tarr, Dave Hellyar, Mike Nichols, and Simon Grove & I. The menu choice always gives multiple choices and the food is excellent at the hotel.

Some weeks prior Chris Dean had kindly offered to do a winter skills day, and on the Saturday evening Chris informed that this event was going to take place on the Sunday. So the following day the majority of members were up relatively early to get an early breakfast and early start on the hills.

The skills group consisted of Chris Dean, Graeme Stanford, Hilary Jones, Pater Kane, Simon Grove, Adrian Shaw and myself, we were heading to Ben Challum, we parked the cars and started to get our gear and rucksacks on, there was a light covering of snow on the ground.

We started to make our way up, the plan was to tackle one of the gullies and head up onto the saddle. The main scenario of the day was to give individuals a refresher on how to be prepared in the mountains in winter conditions, so the group was shown how to check for avalanches by cutting out snow and testing the layers to check the condition of snow to see if it was safe. This is often referred to as snowpack tests or stability tests.

Chris tasked us to cut out a small cylinder of snow with our ice axes and then wrap your arms around it and then pull on it, this is a quick way to test how well the surface snow is bonded to the underlying snow.

I have to admit there were some real pieces of art out there with individuals making masterpieces with their axes. The group was also shown how to put on crampons, and Chris recommended that this be done with gloves on. We were also shown different walking techniques with crampons on and then we ditched our rucksacks and had numerous attempts at doing ice axe arrests, unfortunately the snow was a little soft which stopped us from sliding, however fun & laughter and learning was had in an abundance.

Continued overleaf...

We had originally wanted to tackle one of the gullies, as we approached we could see that the snow was at risk of avalanching, little did we know that some days later some climbers got avalanched in the same area.



We then started to head up towards the saddle testing ourselves with the incline, remembering the techniques that Chris had taught earlier. By now the weather had started to get worse with snow and wind, we got to the top of the saddle, got our breaths back and opted to call it a day and head back down. Everyone enjoyed the day and thanks to Chris for giving up his time, everyone learnt something from the day. We headed back along the long winding track back to the car park, encountering a good snow blizzard prior to just getting back at the cars. Also I would like to thank Adrian Bates who had kindly lent me a climbing helmet prior to going on the skills day. We made the short drive back to the hotel in preparation for our evening meal.

The weather forecast on the Sunday evening suggested that Monday was going to be a nice day, so a large group opted to do the CMD Arête and then head up onto Ben Nevis and descend via the tourist path. Again another early start, breakfast out the way, we headed off to the North Face car park, the group consisted of Graeme Stanford, Geraldine & Mel Evans, Chris Dean, Heather, Adrian Shaw, Adrian Bates, Mike & Emily Smith, Vanessa Howells, Hilary Jones, Gary Winton & Pete Poultney.

After getting gear on, we started up the winding path. Little did any of the group know that a couple of days previous two climbers had gone missing on the North Face and had not arrived back at their tent at the foot of the CIC hut. To date these individuals have still not been found and our thoughts go out to their next of kin.

The weather was perfect with clear blue skies, snow-capped mountains, the group was first heading up onto Carn Mor Dearg which is the eighth highest mountain in Scotland with elevation at 1,223 metres, but is completely overshadowed by Ben Nevis. It is the perfect viewpoint from which to admire the Ben's magnificent North Face. When heading up to the CMD you get a lot of false summits, you keep looking up thinking that you are there, but there is then another summit!

Prior to just getting to the summit everyone opted to put on their crampons and have a quick drink/bite to eat. The group avoided some of the cornices that had formed nicely on the left side, arriving at the summit everyone was overwhelmed by the views, with Munros, Corbetts, as far as the eye could see, to the left you could see the skiers on Aonach Mor. The Arête was clearly visible with the vast ridge onto the top of the Ben. Everyone made their way across in single formation, some individuals were taking photos and video footage, there was one area particular area that was a little testing having to work your way around a large lump of rock, however everyone got past it safely and headed onwards towards Ben Nevis.



Continued overleaf...

I said to Adrian Shaw approaching the summit "*this could be a few steps forward and rest*", he promptly stated "*I'm following you*" just before getting onto the top I spotted Heather and she said well done, she was the first person to arrive at the summit.

"... Arriving back at the car park everyone had a very enjoyable day in perfect conditions."

Waiting at the summit the group all started arriving with friendly gestures of shaking hands and sharing of chocolate etc. The group had a nice photo taken at the summit [see photo at end of article] and then headed down, the only issue was Hilary had a crampon snap and had to come down a step descent with one crampon (well done Hilary) We got by the halfway lochan and picked the path up back towards the car park, by this time the helicopter was hovering overhead looking for the missing climbers. Arriving back at the car park everyone had a very enjoyable day in perfect conditions.

That same evening the forecast for the following day (Tuesday) was the complete opposite with rain coming in. True to word it was very wet, some individuals opted for a rest day, with a slightly later breakfast, Simon Grove & Adrian Shaw and myself headed into fort William and later on went to the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe for lunch. The rain and high winds lasted all day.

The following day a group went down to Glenfinnan, Dave Hellyar, Simon Grove & Chris Dean headed along the long path under the viaduct and attempted Sgurr nan Coirechan at 956 metres, this is after we had met the estates manager, a very eccentric gentleman by the name of Alastair who notified us that some young individuals would be coming back along the track after getting a telling off from him due to them driving their car up to the bothy, a little later three of them passed us in the car with grins on their faces. The group went into the bothy and had a look around and then carried on route. Chris, Simon & Dave, headed off to the left to Sgurr nan Coirechan,

the other group consisting of Geraldine & Mel Evans, Sara & Gary Winton, Adrian Shaw, Adrian Bates, Graeme Stanford, Pete Poultney and myself was attempting Sgurr Thuilm at 963 metres, a couple of hundred feet from the summit the group got hit by a snow blizzard, the group was buffeted and virtually knocked off our feet.

It was good to hear that when we got down, Chris, Dave & Simon had got to the top of Sgurr nan Coirechan, well done Gents.

Continued overleaf...



On Thursday a group was going to attempt Aonach Beag which is the second highest summit in the Nevis Range, but is hidden from most views by the lower but more bulky Aonach Mor, attempting this was Oliver Stephenson, Peter Kane, Dee Sehdeva, Adrian Shaw, Jonathon Howells, Simon Grove & myself, another group had started just before us consisting of Mike & Emily Smith, Heather & Hilary Jones, we followed the route up and then followed the boggy path.

The day was a little grey with light rain lower down, we caught up with the other group who had decided to turn back due to the weather getting worse with snow blizzards and high winds, Simon Grove decided to head back down with the other group, the rest of us worked our way through the crags, and finally got to the summit but we could not find the cairn, we opted not to find it due to it being near to cornices, and visibility being very poor.

We had got to the top apart from finding the cairn (honestly) we headed back down and needed to head down a steep gully, the best way to attempt it was to face inwards and come down backwards. This was the first time that Peter Kane had done anything like this, so numerous individuals were helping and supporting him, we got back down at the half way stage where we had previously stopped on our ascent going up.

We had some food and drink and carried on down. It was a very long walk in and we obviously had a long walk back.

It had been agreed for Simon to wait in the car park for us, however due to numerous hours passing we thought that he may go back to the hotel and come back later on. The light was starting to fade and just before getting back we had to put on our head torches, when getting back to the car park, the support team of Mike Smith & Hilary had come to pick us up. We made the short trip back to the hotel for a well-earned shower (well that's what I did). I would like to say a very well done to Peter Kane who encountered a tough winter's day.

The last day arrived and various people were doing different activities. I had a late breakfast and went into Fort William.

A great week was had by all and we look forward to next year, as mentioned previously if any member has not done this before give it a go, it's a good location to do whatever you choose.

Thanks again to Jonathon Howells for organising.
Dave Jones.



Cairngorms Climbing Trip

Words and pictures
by Graeme Stanford



We had an RAF managed bunkhouse booked just south of Aviemore. A place called Feshiebridge Lodge. The intention was to spend four days climbing as many routes as possible in Coire an t-Sneachda. We travelled up in three small groups on Tuesday 8th and by early evening we were all settled in the lodge poring over guidebooks, maps, weather and avalanche reports (and a couple of beers !) and generally getting all enthusiastic about the coming few days. The previous weeks weather had been great for climbing and we were hopeful. As always, where UK weather is concerned, our hopes took a hit once we'd seen the mountain weather report for the next day.



We awoke to snow falling outside but our spirits weren't dampened. Once everyone had sorted out their admin we set off for the ski centre car park on Cairngorm mountain. Once 'booted up' we set off along the path for the Coire. The watchword for the morning was clag. Visibility was poor and the snow was soft adding time to the walk in. Once in to the Coire it quickly became obvious that simply finding the routes was going to be difficult. As it turned out there were a fair few locals in the Coire (Glenmore lodge staff and a local mountain rescue team member) and we soon had our location pinpointed.

Mel Evans and Pete Poultney had decided to climb a gully called The Runnel. Guy Harris and Tracey Cook headed for The Slant. Sam Grosvenor and Ian Merther were planning on tackling Jacobs Edge and Ken Priest was leading me up Hidden Chimney (oer !). We all split up for our respective routes quickly discovering that the snow apron below the crags was softer than ideal making the approaches strenuous. Our routes, with the exception of The Runnel, all started from the entrance to Jacobs Ladder. We had been advised, by Glenmore Lodge, to avoid that route due to the volume and condition of the snow in it and once we got there it was obviously loaded. There were already two groups ahead of us for the first pitch and our three groups made the queue even bigger.

Once everyone had done the first pitch Sam and Ian decided to follow Guy and Tracy up The Slant and we split up as Ken and I headed up into Hidden Chimney. The snow conditions weren't ideal and those on The Slant were taking one step backwards for every two forwards. In the chimney there was plenty of protection and less snow so the going was easier. Personally this was my first winter climb, having only done a couple of grade 1 gully's previously. I felt a great sense of achievement when Ken belayed me safely to the top. Guy and Tracey weren't far behind with Sam and Ian following behind.



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Cairngorms Climbing Trip

continued...

Mel and Pete found the conditions much harder on their route and, having reached the top had to down climb again as their exit was too risky due to the condition of the snow. Once down they decided to walk out of the Coire back to the ski centre.



Once we had all safely returned to the car park we headed back to the lodge, via Aviemore, for tea and medals. Mel cooked a massive batch of spag bol with assistance from Pete and then it was time to plan the following day's activity.



Day two saw a complete change in the weather. As we walked in to the Coire the biggest problem was having enough sun block on. Blue skies were the order of the day. Ian was planning to head across the Fiacail Ridge. Guy and Tracy were heading for Goat Track Gully. Ken, Sam and Myself had chosen The Spiral and Mel and Pete were having an admin vortex. Mel had managed to leave his ice axes at the lodge so they had

returned to fetch them. (They returned later in the morning and had a pleasant climb up The Slant.)

The amount of spindrift being blown off the plateaux made the top pitch of the spiral a less enticing bet once we could see it so the rest of us all ended up converging on Goat Track Gully. The first pitch was climbed in a spindrift shower culminating in a short ice pitch. The second pitch also included a short ice pitch before climbing out onto a ramp in full sunshine. The beautiful sunshine then prevailed for the last two pitches. We met up with Mel and Pete on the walk out and found Ian waiting at the car park when we arrived. Once again it was back to the lodge for tea and medals.

Day three saw the weather finally break for the worse. It was raining steadily when we awoke and that continued all the way up to the ski centre. The forecast was no good for climbing so we hoped to walk the Fiacail ridge. Once there, in the wind and pouring rain, we decided to just walk up to the top café on Cairngorm and see what the weather did. When we got there the weather hadn't abated so, after some refreshment, half of us headed back down the mountain and half of us decided to touch the summit first. Being on the summit was like being in a gentle spin cycle so we didn't hang around and also headed back down.

We returned to the lodge once again and had a quick meeting about plans for the last day. It didn't take long to decide to head home. The weather report for the Saturday was even worse than Friday so climbing was out and getting soaked walking didn't really appeal. With that decided the whole group headed for Aviemore to do some blatant gear fondling and have a few drinks. We finished off with a meal in the Ski'ing Doo before bed.

All in all a great few days. We didn't get half of what we wanted done but had a good time anyway. Feshiebridge Lodge turned out to be a great facility and at £380 for five nights, between eight of us, was surprisingly good value. We'll definitely be using it again.

Coach Meet – Braithwaite

Saturday 9th April

Depart

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

07:20 – Penkridge

Drop off

Scales (340268)

Keswick [Roundabout A66/A591] (264244)

Braithwaite (236236)

Pick up

Braithwaite (236236)

Keswick Coach Station (264234)

Scales (340268)

Required maps

OS 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure

No4 The English Lakes NW - Ennerdale & Derwent

No5 The English Lakes NE - Ulleswater & Haweswater



Photo from cambrianway.org.uk

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.

Suggested routes

Route 1 (15km - 9.5 miles)

From Scales Farm (340268) follow the path past Mousthwaite Comb (344275) and then turn NE to Scales Tarn 9329281). 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 top of Blencathra then continue along the grassy ridge to Knowe Crags (312270). Finally head NW to 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 Distance Approx 15km / 9.5 miles

Route 2 (16km - 10miles)

Follow the road from the roundabout (264244) to Briar Rigg (267241) and follow the Cumbria Way past a carpark 9283255). 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 3 (17.5km - 11 miles)

The Coledale Horseshoe. From Braithwaite ascend the long ridge to Gridale Pike (199226). Descend the ridge to Hobcarton Crag following the edge to Hopegill Head (186222). Descend south and then climb over Sand Hill to Coledale Hause (189211), from here walkSW to the top of Grassmoor. Leave the summit and continue East over Crag Hill, down the Scar and over Sail. At the col (205205) you have two choices depending on the time available, either ascend Causey Pike (219209) then descend to Stoneycroft (233213), this leaves a short road walk into Braithwaite.

Alternatively from the col descend via Stile End (221219) back into Braithwaite (approx. 16km - 10 miles)

Coach Meet – Breacon Beacons

Sunday 8th May

Depart

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

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

Drop off

Pencelli (094250)

Storey Arms (983203)

Pick up

Storey Arms (983203)

Tair Bull (995260)

Required maps

Land Ranger Sheet 125 - Bala and Lake Vrnwy

Explorer OL23 - Cader Idris and Llyn Tegrid

Suggested routes

Route 1 (18km – 11miles)

From Pencelli follow the road West, then turn left at the second road junction (090251) Follow this a while then leave the road (081245) & start the steady climb SW over Gist Wen (064218) to Bwlch Ddwyallt (055203) The path now follows the cliff edge to Fan y Big (036206). A steep descent West to Bwlch ar y Fan is followed by a steep ascent to Cribyn (024213). Another descent and climb takes you to the highest summit in the National Park, Pen y Fan (012216) From the summit a short walk leads over Corn Du (007213) to Bwlch Duwynt (006210) before dropping to Storey Arms and the coach. Alternatively after Corn Du descend to the Lyn Cwm Llwh and head North until reaching the road and Tair Bull.

Route2 (23km – 14miles)

Nuttall Baggers might like to follow Route1 but where the ridge narrows at Rhiw Bwlch y Ddw Yallt (057206) veer off left to climb to the summit of Waun Rydd (062206) then head SE for just over a mile to Alt Lwyd (079189) Retrace your steps to the Bwlch then left to Bwlch y Ddwyallt (055203) and onto Tair Bull again. After Corn Du (007213), head NW to Tommy Jones Obelisk (000218) then follow bearing 260 to Y Gyrn (989216) then follow a fence South to a path junction (990211) which descends gradually to Storey Arms.



Photo from breconbeacons.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.

Route3 (9km – 5.5miles)

From Storey Arms walk down the road to a carpark and find the start of the path (988198) .The path climbs to the col of Bwlch uwynt then a short steep section takes you onto Corn Du (007213) and finally Pen y Fan (012216). Retrace your steps to Corn Du and descend to Storey Arms.

Route4 (14km – 8.5miles)

From Storey Arms head SW to climb the ridge of Fan Fawr (970193) The summit is a small pile of sandstone blocks not the trig point half a mile to the East!!! Then head NNE over bleak moorland to a depression from where a path leads to the impressive cliff of Craig Cerrig- Gleisiad. The summit is at the left hand side of this (961218) Continue North to the trig point on Fan Frynych (958228) then off down the track on the NE ridge. At a wall junction a permissive path goes South and then East to a picnic spot by the A470 .the road will get you quickly back to the Storey Arms or take the path to your right on the opposite side of the road and climb to Y Gyrn (989216) then follow a fence South to a path junction (990211) which descends gradually to Storey Arms.



West Bromwich Mountaineering Club

We're a friendly club with over 200 members throughout the UK. We run events for almost every outdoor activity there is, and we put on monthly coach meets to great walking and climbing destinations in England and Wales.

We meet at The Wheatsheaf in West Bromwich every Thursday night from 9:00pm – come and say hello!

membership-secretary@wbmc.org

We welcome complete beginners and experienced mountaineers alike.



wbmc.org

