

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter



May/June 2020

This month's photo by John Edwards: *A very old photo from my YHA (pre WBMC) days of me "gaining the freedom of the hills"*

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An obituary by Debra Rawcliffe

Hello readers,

Please note we have moved to "double-bill" newsletters every other month, for the time being.

A huge thanks to John for keeping the newsletter going with his articles, and to Debra for her obituary for Ted Statham.

If you have anything that you'd like to be featured in next month's newsletter – whether you have an interesting tale to tell about a trip you went on, or are planning a trip for the future, anything at all – send it to newsletter@wbmc.org (or through our website if it's an article) before the 6th of the month.

If you've never written an article before, why not give it a go?

Cheers,
Joe

Noticeboard

Welcome new Members!

A warm welcome to Matthew Baker, Olivia Ives and Isaac Latham who joined us recently. We hope they are able to enjoy a long and happy relationship with the club once the COVID-19 crisis is over and we can get back out on the hills.

Boots found on last coach

Meindal boots with grey Salomon socks left on last coach. Please contact Taff if they're yours!



Communication with Members

The newsletter will now be issued every 2 months. However, there will be some messages regarding events and meets that need to be conveyed to members urgently. These messages will continue to be sent by Mailchimp and will be clearly identified as being sent by WBMC.

In addition, some of you have suggested that the minutes of the monthly committee meeting should be available to members so these will also be emailed. Members who receive a postal newsletter will get a printed copy of the minutes along with the current newsletter.

Please be aware that if you unsubscribe then this means you will not get any further emails from the club. So, if the minutes are not of interest then just delete them.

The committee are also considering using SMS texts and possibly WhatsApp to communicate with members.

Wendy (Membership Secretary) and myself are currently contacting all members to ensure that we have the correct contact information and that you are receiving newsletters (email and postal).

There are some members for whom we have no telephone number or email and so are unable to contact you. If members have not been contacted by myself or Wendy by 6th July then it is likely that we do not have the correct contact information for you so please mail them to me at secretary@wbmc.org. Please include a mobile number for SMS texting and WhatsApp.

The current situation means that events are likely to be added and possibly removed at short notice and we can only communicate with members who have provided us with their details. The information will remain confidential and only used by WBMC committee who will not pass on information without permission.

Go well
Jan Cox (Secretary)

Some more 'Golden Oldies'

From the late Ken Winkett

By John Edwards
With photos by Ken Winkett



This month's collage sees more 'classic shots' of WBMC members out and about in Snowdonia in the 20th C, enjoying themselves as usual.



Mountain Navigation Quiz

Test your navigation skills and knowledge and find out if you are good to go or just get lost!

By John Edwards



1. Three of you are going out for a day in the hills. How do you decide who should do the navigation?
 - a) Jane should do it, she was on a course last year and is the most experienced.
 - b) Jim should do it, he got lost last week and needs the practice
 - c) You should all pay attention to the navigation
 - d) Do it yourself, after all if you want a job done properly...
2. You are the last to leave the summit cairn and you can't remember which direction you came up, what do you do?
 - a) Look! There's a path. You can follow that
 - b) Wait at the cairn until someone else comes along and follow them
 - c) Get your map and compass out, check where you are, where you want to go and use them to navigate there
 - d) Walk over to each side of the summit to see which terrain looks the least steep
3. What size area does a grid cover on a 1:50000, 1:40000 and 1:25000 map?
 - a) One square mile
 - b) One square kilometre
 - c) One hectare
 - d) Different distances depending on the scale of the map
4. How do you choose which type of map is the best for hill walking and climbing?
 - a) Pick the least detailed scale – you get more mountains for your money
 - b) Whichever one is on special offer
 - c) Go for the one that is weather-proof to avoid it getting damaged in wet or windy conditions
 - d) Depends on the walk / climb – some routes might benefit from more / less information
5. Grid references are what you use when you want to pinpoint where you are or locate a feature mentioned in the route guide. When reading off a grid reference from map, which number should you read first?
 - a) The number along the bottom (eastings)
 - b) The numbers up the side (northings)
 - c) Depends on the make of map
 - d) It doesn't matter which comes first.
6. So what is the 6-figure grid reference here for the summit of Ben Alder?
 - a) 718496 b) 496718 c) 496722 d) 504712
7. Contours on maps show the relief & shape of the ground, linking equal heights above sea level. What is the vertical height distance or 'interval' between contours on a Ordnance Survey map in metres?
 - a) 1 b) 10 c) 15 d) 50 e) 100
8. What does it mean to 'set' or 'orientate' your map?
 - a) Familiarising yourself with the key on the side of the map to ensure you recognise all the symbols
 - b) Checking you have the right map and a working compass with you before you set off on a walk
 - c) The way you fold your map to ensure you can see your whole walking route when it is the map case
 - d) Lining up north on your map with north on the compass to see how features on the map fit in with the ground around you
9. What is magnetic variation?
 - a) The effect of holding your compass close to something metal
 - b) The effect of a thunderstorm on the accuracy of your compass
 - c) The difference between grid north and magnetic north
 - d) The difference between grid north and true north
 - e) I haven't a scooby!
10. What is Naismith's Rule?
 - a) A way to work out how long it will take to walk from A to B
 - b) A set of by-laws limiting wild camping on Clan Naismith's estate
 - c) The order in which you should climb the Cairngorm peaks
 - d) The forerunner of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
11. Why would you start counting your steps when walking in the mountains?
 - a) So that you can boast to your friends that you have done a bigger walk than them
 - b) It's a great way of checking you've reached your 10,000-step target if you don't have a pedometer
 - c) In case the mist suddenly comes down
 - d) It is a useful way of gauging distance travelled over short stages of navigation
12. What is the average number of strides (double paces i.e. left foot plus right foot) it takes to cover 100 metres?
 - a) 25 – 35 b) 35-45 c) 45-55 d) 55-65
13. Why should you not keep a phone or GPS device in the same pocket as your compass?
 - a) Because you will be tempted to use the GPS instead of the map and compass
 - b) Because a GPS held close to a compass can affect the accuracy of the compass needle
 - c) Because the GPS will not be able to detect where you are
 - d) Because if you have a hole in your pocket you might lose both of them
14. Which of these is NOT a technique you can use when navigating your way to a target location?
 - a) Attack points
 - b) Boxing
 - c) Hand rails
 - d) Catching features
 - e) Aiming off
 - f) Circling the square

Munros - the Best and Worst?

9th – 14th March 2020

By John Edwards



If you've got itchy feet while self-isolating you could do worse than to go online and get your "virtual fill" of some great Scottish mountains.

The site UK HillWalking had a well-illustrated article November last year, entitled "Scotland's 10 Toughest Munros?"

As it starts off by saying "Munro-bagging can have its exciting moments, but it's fair to say that it is usually at the less technical end of the hill-going spectrum. Even if there are harder options, most Munros can be achieved with your hands comfortably in your pockets - but by no means all of them. There may be a well-trodden path to the majority of 3000 foot high points, but some are a lot more challenging than others. From thrilling scrambles to remote summits that need real leg work and determination, there are some real tough ticks on the list. Of course Ben Nevis or Ben Macdui in a winter storm might be way more serious than any of the following climbed on a nice day. We're assuming good weather and summer conditions here!"

It goes on to list what it thinks are the Toughest 10 but rather than list them straight away I'll give you time to think of which ones you would include, before 'spilling their beans' at the end of this page.

It prompted a discussion as to which were the most boring to bag but a Harry Jarvis commented that rather than 10 dullest, we could have, in a more positive light, 10 MOUNTAINS WHICH ARE NOT MUNROS BUT WHICH MERIT CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION.

The list he came up with doesn't really contain many surprises:-

1. The Cobbler
2. Stac Pollaidh
3. Cul Mor and 4. Cul Beag
5. Ben More Coigach
6. Ben Stack
7. Ben Loyal
8. Quinag
9. Canisp
10. Suilven

What about the 10 DULLEST MUNROS?

I personally think it all depends on the weather and conditions underfoot as to what is the least rewarding Munro to climb. Even the Drumochter hills on a good winter's day can be very rewarding, especially if using cross country skies. So perhaps it is more instructive to try and think of the 10 EASIEST MUNROS.

How about (in no particular order)? :-

1. Carn Aosda and The Cairnwell
2. Glas Maol
3. Buachaille Etive Beag
4. Cairn Gorm
5. Meall nan Tarmachan
6. Stuchd an Lochain or Meall Buidhe
7. Mount Keen
8. Ben Lomond
9. Carn na Caim or A' Bhuidheanach Bheag
10. Fionn Bheinn

If you want to see what the above hills look like and read a bit about them take a peek at

https://www.ukhillwalking.com/articles/destinations/scotlands_10_toughest_munros-11263

But before you do, have you come up with list of SCOTLAND'S 10 TOUGHEST MUNROS? The author (not me) came up with the following (some of which are actually 2 peaks so they managed to get 14 in!):-

1. Inaccessible Pinnacle
2. Sgurr nan Gillean
3. A' Mhaighdean and Ruadh Stac Mor
4. Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan and Mullach na Dheiragain
5. Sgurr a' Mhadaidh and Sgurr a' Ghreadaidh
6. Liathach
7. Bidein a' Choire Sheasgaich & Lurg Mhor
8. Aonach Eagach
9. Ladhar Bheinn
10. Beinn Mheadhoin

WBMC Timeline

Part 2

By John Edwards



WEST BROMWICH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Indoor Meets have been arranged as under:-

Thursday, 14th January 1954.	at the Y.M.C.A. (E. Jutton.) Pyrenees.
Thursday, 11th February 1954.	"Focus on Mountaineering" at the Grammar School.
Thursday, 25th February 1954.	at the Y.M.C.A.
Thursday, 11th March 1954.	at the Y.M.C.A.
Thursday, 8th April 1954.	at the Y.M.C.A.

Outdoor Meets have been arranged as under:-

Saturday, 23rd January 1954.	Kinver/Bridgnorth area. ✓ (Dovedale).
Sunday, 21st February 1954.	Gotswolds (starting from Broadway)
Saturday, 20th March 1954.	Kinderscout, Derbyshire. ✓ Hayfield.
EASTER MEET.	Capel Curig (Tinny Shanty for 10 persons) ✓
Sunday, 25th April 1954.	Stiperstones. (Could be by Public Transport.) ✓
Saturday, 22nd May 1954.	Ogwen. ✓
Sunday, 27th June 1954.	Cader Idris. ✓

Full details of these Meets will be circulated to Members at a later date.

1954

January: The Club's first (?) full programme, covering Jan to June is circulated to members.

Thurs 25th Feb: The first Annual Dinner took place at The Sandwell Hotel and was a formal affair with guest invitations given to the Director of Education, officers of The Mountaineering Association and 3 local mountaineering clubs.

Thursday 18th November: Third AGM Membership fee was reduced from 7/6 to 5/-. Total membership had increased by 18 to 45. Club badges, designed by Barry Phillips who was serving with the RAMC, were available at 3/-. The programme since 1st Jan had included 7 Indoor Meets (with attendances of 19 – 25) and 11 Outdoor Meets (attendances 11 – 33) but July & Septembers had been cancelled. The 'Meets Secretary' thought that "it might be possible to arrange Rambles if there were insufficient numbers to justify a coach". Easter was spent at Tyn-y-Shanty hut near Capel Curig. Bert Wright proposed the motion "that the profit resulting from the present

raffle... to begin a fund for the purpose of founding a Club Hut in North Wales or any place suitable to the Club's needs".

1955

Club book: Page 23 quotes Geoff Robinson "Coach fare was around 5 shillings (=25p), coaches were seldom full and cancellations, due to poor support or road conditions, were not unusual". As cancellations were often literally at the very last minute, various excuses & ruses were used to save club funds and a variety of coach companies were used! These were pre-motorway days so day trips to the Lakes was out of the question and, as few members had cars, coaches were vital.

WBMC Timeline

19th May: Committee meeting puts together the idea of an early start (6am) with a breakfast break at Llangollen before a drop off at Ogwen to enable a mass traverse of the Glyders, eta Pen-Y-Gwryd by 4pm so that dinner could be eaten at the Bryn Tyrch Hotel before a late return to the Midlands. The basic format of a WBMC coach meet has been invented! This could also have been the start of the idea of an Away or Mountain Dinner, which started off as single day coach meets. In the Club book p 26, 'Mitch' recalls a dinner held at Beddgelert, "probably in 1958. The Club travelled up on the Saturday, leaving the hotel for the return journey around 1am the following morning & the coach arriving back in the West Midlands sometime after 4am!"

1956: Meets Card: Shows that the monthly walking and climbing venues were mostly in Derbyshire & North Wales and that the 'Tinny Shanty' hut was still in use by the club.

May: Around this time Bert Wright notices a "For Sale" sign at Plas Gwynant. (Club book p84) and thinks the derelict gatehouse lodge looks to have possibilities. Many surreptitious exploratory visits are made by him & others during the summer camping season.

Tues 9th October: Committee meeting decided that a hut should be bought - not rented - at a purchase price of £200 max.

1957: Spring: Bert Wright is asked to present a report on why the LEA should have a permanent building for outdoor activities, as opposed to running courses during the camping season from a temporary base. It appears the Director of Education favoured having an outdoor centre in the Lakes if any was to be acquired but is swayed by the fact that there is property in N. Wales that could be purchased immediately.

10th September: WBCM unsuccessfully tries to buy Tyn-y-Shanty hut.

December: On Bert Wright's recommendation West Bromwich Education Authority purchases Plas Gwynant together with various outbuildings, grounds and parkland for less than £5,000.

1958: Summer: Wright moves the school camp from Beddgelert to Plas Gwynant, where the first pilot course based on those of the Outward Bound schools is held, staffed mainly by club members including Pat Tweedale, Glyn Hughes, Fred Purcell and Bert himself. The derelict Dutch barn there is thought to have potential for conversion into a hut but is owned by a tenant farmer, John Watson. Attempts are made to curry favour with him, hoping he will be persuaded to relinquish it to the club. "Quite a few members treated John to a whisky or two in the Prince" according to Wally Cheeseborough (Club book p82)

1959: Sometime during the year WBMC moves from the 'Star & Garter' 252 High St, West Brom (which closed in 2016 after police warned 'someone could be seriously

hurt or killed there"!) to 'The Globe' on Reform Street as it had a rear room (now sadly no more after it modernised to become a Smokehouse Bar)

Tues 22nd Sept: Committee minutes note still no success, as yet, in finding a club hut.

1960: Wed 2nd Nov: Hon Sec, Pat Tweedale writes letter to the Director of Education, J.H. Turner, which says "The West Bromwich Mountaineering Club has observed with enthusiastic interest the beginning and growth of the West Bromwich Adventure School at Plas Gwynant. A most pleasing feature of the development has been that many Adventure School graduates have joined this club. We feel that the establishment of closer links between the WBMC and the Adventure School is very desirable and that mutual benefit would be obtained. The club has not been able to secure premises in North Wales for the establishment of a club hut. This has been a disappointment to the younger members in particular. Any assistance which your Committee could render in the finding of premises would be sincerely appreciated. Representatives of our committee would be most pleased to meet you, if you would care to discuss any of the above points".

Tues 13th Dec: Committee meeting agreed 7 negotiating aims of the Hut Sub-committee:- to secure a long lease (5 years minimum), ensure WBMC does all bookings & receives all the fees, people using any hut would do so as Club members, if any building has only one room the Club would expect permission to convert at a suitable time, a sum of £50 & current value of beds (the club bought 12 beds at a cost of £6 in May 1958) be considered when discussing aids to interior fittings and no undertaking to guarantee supervision of boys be given.

1961: Friday 28th April: A 10th Anniversary Dinner Dance is held at The Swan Hotel, Lichfield, 7.30 for 8.00. Letters of invitation were written to all members, as well as some influential guests: Mr JH Turner (Director of Education), the Secretary of the BAIMC, Harry Barlow and Mr J.Reynolds (of Don Everall Ltd Passenger Transport Specialists, Paradise St). Expected attendance was 75-100 and Harry Bates & his Band were booked at 12 guineas to provide music for dancing from 9 - 1pm. The 6 course menu was :- Soup, Halibut in Shrimp Sauce, Roast Norfolk Turkey, Peach Melba, Cheese & Biscuits, Coffee at a cost of 15/6d a head.

Tues 20th June: Club book says a letter is received from V.H.Turner of the Education Committee arranging a joint visit to Plas Gwynant 4 days later.

Ted Statham

1929 - 2020

By Debra Rawcliffe



A few of you may remember Ted Statham who was a very active member of the club from the late 60s to the early 90s. Ted sadly passed away recently after a short battle with cancer at the grand old age of 90!

Ted was born in September 1929 in Birmingham to mature parents. He described his childhood to be quite lonely and was left to his own devices pretty much all of the time. Being a lively child with little adult supervision he enjoyed lots of naughty escapades. He discovered the joys of camping at an early age and spent many a night under canvas in nearby parkland with friends terrorising the local policeman and was often in trouble.

When the war broke out he described the childlike excitement of watching the city burn at night and when he was evacuated from the city to a farm he saw it as the ultimate adventure, getting away from his dull household to learn to work on the farm, playing on tractors and riding horses bareback.

He returned to Birmingham and unfortunately during his school life suffered many childhood illnesses missing a lot of school and consequently fell behind academically. He seemed to be a constant disappointment to his father especially when he got expelled from school for shooting a firework at a teacher through the window.

After leaving school his Father found employment for him in the engineering company he was himself a manager in. Once again he distressed his father by his general misconduct, including making a ballister that knocked holes in the office wall.

During this time he started courting Marjorie who was working as a tracer in the engineering firm. After a short

courtship she agreed to marry him in 1954... little did she know what she was letting herself in for! They were married for 65 years and enjoyed many adventures together.

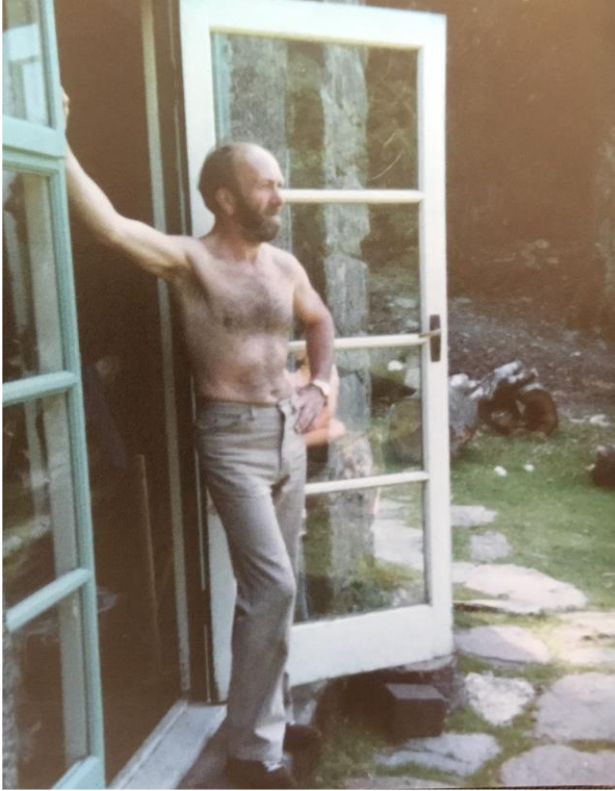
He took a break from working when he was conscripted and thoroughly enjoyed a few years in the army where he luckily never had to actually fight anyone at all but just had lots of fun playing with guns on the pretence of maintaining shipping guns.



Ted was passionate about his hobbies. From a young child camping out on in the nearby parkland he could not get enough of adventure. When he was 17 his friend's older brother told of a road called the A5 where if you cycled along for long enough you would find some mountains. Him and his friend decided to do just that, they joined the youth hosteling association and set off on their bikes along the A5. After 120 miles they did indeed find the welsh mountains and from that day onwards he was obsessed with scaling every mountain he could find and spent every weekend he could away in Wales. Not just content with walking up the hills he found a willing friend to try and climb up the rock faces. They tied a hemp rope around their waists and fashioned some basic gear ... what could go wrong?

Ted Statham

After many wash out camping trips he learnt in the late 60s of a few men from the midlands who had formed a mountaineering club and actually had use of a basic but dry(ish) hut! He soon became a member of the WBMC and was totally smitten with the hut and all the fascinating characters. He was a regular attender and enjoyed the company of Les Elsmore, Bob Duncan, John Wagstaff, Jake Shaw, Alan Plant, Baz Farmer, Stan, Nev Tandy, Graham Sockett and many many more old timers.



He joined in with many exploits, winter weekends, away dinners, working weekends and the welsh races. He supported John Wagstaff's famous 14 peaks 3 times over, although he failed to stay at his post to deliver refreshments to Waggy who endured a swig of stove fuel instead of juice by accident from Ted's empty tent! He was heavily involved with the building of the toilet block and was there the day Jake fell off the roof breaking his leg after too many pints at lunch time! He joined in with Bob Duncan's idea for the family weekends and we were all introduced to the magical hut, my sister Alison and I spent many years visiting the hut on family weekends and had endless fun being dragged up mountains and introduced to rock climbing in our formative years. By the time Ted was an established member he was an accomplished mountaineer and was always welcoming and friendly to new members. He was however well known for enjoying getting a good political argument going and then retreating to watch the uproar while making his supper. He will also be well remembered for the many

stories he told and had a great talent for entertaining everyone around the fire at night as I well remember from being up in the loft as a child to being in the thick of it all as an adult.

As well as his obsession for mountaineering Ted dabbled in a variety of sports and hobbies, he enjoyed competitive cycling, golf, model making, target shooting, water polo, tennis, badminton, ice skating, horse riding, playing the violin and sailing. His sailing hobby was the only one that came close to his love of the mountains and he taught himself to sail in a tiny folding boat progressing to dinghy racing in a local club before gaining the necessary qualifications to sail sea going yachts allowing the family to enjoy many sailing holidays. He finally bought a modest sailing yacht which he kept into his 80s.

His main passion for the mountains never ceased, he continued his love of the mountains when he moved to Scotland in 1994, climbing many Munros, including the Cuillins on Skye and enjoyed cycling and walking trips towing his tiny caravan up North well into his late 80s. He enjoyed many backpacking trips to the Alps with Marjorie, often with Bob and Mary Duncan doing a variety of famous routes during his 60s and 70s. His finale was a solo trip to Chamonix alone with his rucksack at 80 years old. We were very worried dropping him off at the airport but he returned a few weeks later full of stories of his exploits and people he had befriended.

After moving to Scotland in 1994, he and Marjorie took up Scottish country dancing and enjoyed many years with the accompanying social events and friendships. He became an avid vegetable gardener and joined a number of traditional music groups and enjoyed fiddle playing till he was 89 and when he was really bored he worked at model making and over a period of 20 years he made a huge replica of a famous Swedish 17th century ship.

Ted Statham



Despite the endless hobbies that Ted enjoyed, one interest never ceased throughout his life and this was his study of history. He never tired of learning new historical facts and spent some part of every day studying new aspects and enjoyed imparting his knowledge to anybody who had the time to listen. His favourite saying was "the more you learn ..the more you realise don't know" His last history book accompanied him into the hospice and he was still studying it until he no longer had the energy to read.

Without a doubt Ted has used his 90 years to the full from start to finish, enjoying all his favourite pastimes into his very late years. Ted was able to regale us all with wondrous stories of his adventures. In his final months, Ted was the first to say how lucky he was to have created so many happy memories and have the opportunity to share them with such loving friends and family. For us, he has left behind a vast myriad of exciting tales coming from each corner of his full and colourful life.

He is survived by his wife Marjorie, daughter Debra and eight grandchildren. A trip to North Wales to scatter his ashes off his favourite mountain Tryfan is soon to be arranged.

The final hobby he took up was in his mid 80s (after having been turned down for scrambling motorbike insurance) was model aeroplane flying. There he once again made many new friends who helped him become the oldest person in their club ever to have gained a flying licence.

GOODBYE TED, DAD AND GRANDAD X

