



This month's photo: "First rays of sunshine on Yr Wyddfa and Crib Goch" by Jethro Kiernan Winner of the Top Hillwalking & Mountain Photos 10/1 – 17/1 2021 in UK Hillwalking.com

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EDITORIAL: After the last bumper issue things are back to normal now, though sadly not with the Club's programme. Your committee meets via Zoom each month but sadly we can't see a way to becoming active on the hills as a group together in the immediate future, so we're trying to get some 'Online Meets' up and running using the same platform. Well done to Don Simpson and Richard & Ray Cooksey for being crazy enough to log on to Zoom at 7am on a Sunday to look at some winter videos of the Cuillin, and the 8 or so who came on for a chat and some Newtonmore Winter Week photos the Thursday before. We will be using the BMC 'professional' Zoom facility to hold our AGM in March and hopefully more members will log on for this!

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER: Hopefully you and your loved ones remain safe and well. Without being over optimistic we can look forward to a relaxation of the most restrictive aspects of the current lockdown by May 1st. Until then we need a mindset similar to the patience and doggedness needed to overcome a succession of mountain 'false summits'. Stick to it and plan for that first post-lockdown adventure!

WE ARE AFFILIATED TO BMC



The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.

www.wbmc.org

NOTICEBOARD**WBMC MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2021 ARE NOW OVERDUE!**

As a one-off, because COVID disrupted so much of 2020, this year's fees are set at £10 per adult and £0.00 (i.e. free!) for students, children, veterans & life members. However, anyone who wishes can still pay, or donate, the full, normal sub of £36 or any other amount over £10. Indeed the committee are grateful to 44 members who have done just that.

Any individuals joining as new members during 2021 will be required to pay this full subscription amount. Remember subscriptions should be paid **by end of January at the latest** either by bank transfer / standing order to A/C 93802159 Sort Code 40-47-11 or a cheque payable to 'WBMC' posted to Wendy Morris, 32 Essex Drive, Rugeley, WS15 1JX

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We have been notified by the BMC that the annual affiliation subscription for 2021 will only be £15 for any of our members who are either furloughed or sadly unemployed as a result of the pandemic (instead of the full £20.25). This means that if you paid £10 to WBMC this year, the Club could save £5.25 from the reduced BMC fee and if you paid more than £20.25 to WBMC this year then you could be entitled to a refund.

If you have been affected in this way or have any questions please contact Wendy Morris on 07950836862 or via membership-secretary@wbmc.org Any information given will be treated as confidential.

PIE IN THE SKY (at time of writing) "MEET CARD"

Events confirmed by MailChimp

Thur 11th March: **Virtual Indoor Meet** Glen Mountford & 'Bedford' will be presenting some "Mountain Tails", including a few Munros. Zoom link will be sent to all nearer the time.

Sat 13th March: **Car Meet to the Briedden Hills** led by John Edwards

Sun 14th March: **Virtual Coach Meet** at a normal time Videos of Glencoe & Aonach Eagach

Fri 19th – Sun 21st March: **Away Dinner in the Lake District**. Cancelled due to COVID

Wed 24th March: AGM ONLINE from 7.15pm for 7.30pm start via ZOOM (those without internet will have the opportunity to air their views by letter to the Secretary prior to this)

THIS EVENT WILL HAPPEN

Thur 8th April: **Virtual Indoor Meet** Volunteer to show 30 mins of photos please!

Sat 10th April: **Car meet to somewhere exciting and scenic**

Sun 11th April: **Virtual Coach Meet** Volunteer to show 30 mins of video / YouTube please!

16/18th April: **Skills Weekend at the Hut** led by Geordie Hinds (07505 364318)

23/25th April: **Introduction to Scrambling w/e at the Hut** led by Pete & Mel (07845 060043)

Sat 8th May: **Coach meet** (hopefully by now vaccines will have changed the picture)

Sun 13th June: **Coach meet** (or maybe car meet if above has proved over-optimistic)

18/20th June: **Midsummer Activities W/e at The Gower!** Or why not go Thurs to Wed & really celebrate the Summer Solstice with a week of walking, climbing, boarding, swimming, canoeing, running, drinking, socialising but still no hugging?! Pete P (07753 959770) is co-ordinator but everyone is responsible for booking their own pitch.

2/4th July: **Chairman's Challenge w/e: "Full Traverse of the Rhinogs"** In a day if you fancy an extra tough challenge. But normal mortals should park at Barmouth and take the train to Talsarnau or Llandecwyn and climb Foel Penolau & Moel Ysgyfarnogod before heading south to Rhinog Fawr and a wild camp near the Roman Steps. Continue over the tops the next day, finishing with Diffwys E & W tops and down to Barmouth. Meet back at the Hut for a celebration and, maybe, to collect your certificate! You should be very safe at the Rhinogs as it's a range where you are unlikely to meet many other souls!

WEST BROMWICH MC 2021 AGM CALLING NOTICE

There will be a virtual AGM held via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24th March 2021.

Details about how to access the AGM will be sent in an email nearer the time.

Information regarding the election of officers of the Club and Club reports will be sent on 26th February 2021.

Please note that further emails regarding the 2021 AGM will only be sent to members. If you have not paid a 2021 membership fee please do so ASAP if you want to remain a member.

If you are experiencing financial hardship please contact membership-secretary@wbmc.org.

The AGM will ratify the election of officers. In addition, three motions have been proposed:-

Motion 1) "Section 10 Life Members: Life membership of the club shall be open to any person having been a Full Member for five consecutive years" to be changed to read "**Section 10 Life and Veteran Members:** Current (pre 2021) Life and Vet members retain their status as members but new applications for Life or Veteran status will no longer be entertained."

Reasoning: The annual BMC Club affiliation fees have increased so much recently as a result of an exceptional, expensive insurance claim that the WBMC can no longer afford to subsidize an increase in the number of members not paying an annual WBMC membership fee. Although some members may feel they do not wish to receive BMC affiliation via the WBMC or the Third Party Insurance that goes with it, this is a necessary part of the WBMC's ability to affiliate, and this in turn is essential if the individuals on the WBMC committee are going to receive protection via the BMC's policy against possible financial claims. Joining them as individual BMC members does NOT give them protection should legal action be taken against the Club.

Proposers: Mel Evans, John Edwards, Jan Cox, Liz Reynolds, Pete Poultney, Phil Matthews, Geordie Hind.

Motion 2) Section 7 Classes of Membership (a) (b) & (c) shall be changed to now read "Membership of the Club shall consist of :-

(a) Ordinary members aged over 18 years

(b) Junior members aged 11 to 18 years who have a parent /guardian who is a Full Member

(c) Young members aged under years 11 who have a parent /guardian who is a Full Member and **Clauses 8 (d) and 9 (a)** to now read

Clause 8 (d) Any Junior Member who, on reaching the age of 18 years of age, has met the membership requirements in 8(b) may submit an application for Ordinary Membership.

Clause 9 (a) Junior and Young Membership should be open to anyone under 18 years who has a parent/guardian who is a Full Member and who guarantees to take full responsibility for the Junior/Young Member at all times.

Reasoning: This change will simplify matters for the Treasurer and Membership Secretary and will affect relatively few individuals as less than 10% of our membership is under 50. In fact the numbers of Junior & Young members can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Proposers: Wendy Morris, Liz Reynolds, Jan Cox, John Edwards, Pete Poultney, Mel Evans, Geordie Hind, Phil Matthews.

Motion 3) Section 16 Entrance Fees and Subscriptions changed to now read

(a) The entrance fees and annual subscriptions shall be of such amounts as may from time to time be determined by resolution passed at the Annual General Meeting of the club or at a General Meeting called for this purpose. Every annual subscription shall become due on the first day of January in each year.

Reasoning: Bringing the date forward from 1st February is in line with the Club's financial year and will allow the Membership Secretary more time before the annual subscription to the BMC is due.

Proposers: Liz Reynolds, John Edwards, Wendy Morris, Pete Poultney, Mel Evens, Phil Matthews, Mary Duncan, Jan Cox, Geordie Hind, Joe Priest.

Depending on whether these motions are passed or not, **Section 10** might have to be changed to "Life membership of the Club was a class of membership prior to March 2021. Life members in position pre March 2021 retain their status" and **Section 16 (c)** would be deleted and 16 (d) re-numbered as 16(c)

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If you will not be able to attend the AGM via Zoom please send your 'For' or 'Against' votes on these 3 motions to the Chairman in advance of the meeting, by post, text, phone but preferably by email. **Mel Evans, 42 Summerfield Avenue, Kingswinford, DY6 9AR.**

Tel 07845 060043 or 01384 837525 or mel.gel@hotmail.co.uk

PLEASE REMEMBER YOU CAN ONLY VOTE (EITHER ONLINE OR BY POST) IF YOU HAVE PAID A 2021 MEMBERSHIP FEE BEFORE THE DATE OF THE AGM.

THESE WERE DUE BY THE END OF JANUARY !

Election of WBMC Committee Members 2021

Please print names and ensure that the nominees have agreed to stand for that position.

Please ensure all 3 spaces are filled in.

I _____ propose /second (delete as appropriate)
_____ for the position of West Bromwich MC
_____ (please write one position from the following

list:- *Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Coach Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Hut Secretary, Ordinary Committee Member (5 positions)*

Members can make more than one nomination but please use one form per nomination.

Please send these to secretary@wbmc.org or by post / email / text to the Chairman to be received BEFORE 17th March 2021. Any nominations received after this date are invalid. Nominations will be collated and checked and sent to members prior to the AGM Zoom meeting on Wednesday 24th March 2021

Please complete the form above if you want to propose someone for committee, or if you wish to stand yourself fill one in and someone will get proposers & seconders for you ! The committee are hoping that one of the 5 Ordinary Members will take on the role of Web & Media Manager.

THE MALCOLM COLLINS AWARD

Nominations received last year for the Malcolm Collins Award are being carried forward to this year's AGM but if you would like to nominate somebody please do so by sending their name with your reasons to the Secretary by the date mentioned above, 17th March 2021.

Some very sad news which I learned about too late for inclusion in the last Newsletter was the passing of one of our members from Poland, Goska Popiel.

MALGOSIA POPIEL (GOSKA) (16/01/72 – 15/10/20)

Goska was born in Poland in early 1972 and trained at the School of Medicine of Jagiellonian University, Krakow. As soon as the opportunity arose, she moved to the UK to live in the West Midlands and she joined West Brom MC around 2011. For many years she was a coach 'regular' and she also keenly supported the "Womens' Weekends" at the Hut, as seen (rear left) with a party on Snowdon. As some members may well recall, the first thing Goska would notice about you is your teeth. And she might well comment on them too! That was Goska - observant, direct, a dedicated dentist. She was



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also highly intelligent, delightfully eccentric, strongly independent, deeply caring, and proudly Polish. She gave generously, worked hard and threw herself into projects. When studying for her Masters necessitated taking macro images of teeth, she took up photography as a hobby and learned to play with light, and capture landscapes too. She loved her cycling, kickboxing and hill-walking. And she had a great sense of humour.

She married her fiancée Darren at a civil ceremony in Walsall in April 2016 and this was followed by a church wedding back home in Poland in the September. In January 2020, she and 'Daz' moved to the Shetlands to start, as she recorded on Facebook, "a new chapter in life ;-)" This was tragically to be cut short by an aggressive cancer and she died in October, age 48, seven weeks after diagnosis.

As so many people commented in their tributes on her Facebook page, "she was a lovely lady". Our thoughts and condolences go out to her husband Daz and her family.

My thanks to Hilary Jones for helpful information and photographs.

CLUB AGE PROFILE

We have dates of birth for most, but not all, our members which has enabled our Membership Sec, Wendy to calculate that around one third of our membership is over 70 years of age! Apparently one quarter are between age 60 & 70 and 30% are 50 – 60 year olds, leaving only 10% or so under 50 years of age. This seems to be a trend in many clubs these days, when few young people see the need to commit to belonging to a group, but it is also rather worrying and apparently 2 small mountaineering groups in the Midlands area have folded during the Coronavirus pandemic. The committee have some ideas to attract younger members but would welcome any suggestions from members on how to improve the club's age profile.

There seem to be quite a few Club members who have dogs that they like to take on the hills and Facebook tells me a couple of households have had new puppies for Christmas, so I thought the following article might be of interest and give them a target to aim for!

THE FIRST DOG ASCENT OF A 7,000-METRE HIMALAYAN PEAK

From an online article by Anna Callaghan, with photos by Don Wargowsky

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On November 9, 2018, a dog named 'Mera' became the first of her kind to reach the summit of a Baruntse, a 23,389-foot peak in Nepal's Himalayas, located just south of Mount Everest. Other than a brief human-aided zip line down a short section of fixed line, 'Mera' made the ascent completely unsupported.

According to Billi Bierling (of www.himalayandatabase.com)

there have been a few cases of dogs at Everest Base Camp

(17,600 feet) and some have followed teams through the Khumbu Icefall up to Camp II (21,300 feet), but this seems surely the highest-recorded elevation ever reached by a dog anywhere in the world so far. He is quoted as saying "I just hope that she won't get into trouble for having climbed Baruntse without a permit!"

Mera, age unknown, is a 45-pound Nepalese mutt, maybe a cross between a Tibetan mastiff & Himalayan sheepdog who tagged on to a team from 'Summit Climb' led by Seattle-based mountain guide Don Wargowsky, during the 10th day of its month-long expedition. The team members were descending from a successful summit of Mera Peak (21,247 feet), before heading to Baruntse, & were just above the fixed lines at around 17,500 feet when 'Mera' came bounding along passing about 30 climbers on the way up and bee-lined it for Wargowsky. From that point on, the two were inseparable.

He gave her a sleeping pad & jacket for a bed nest, and in return she fashioned herself into the ideal tent partner for 3 weeks:- quiet, cuddly, agreeable & with a small stomach!! She very quickly became the team's mascot and followed Summit Climb's Sherpas as they fixed ropes to Baruntse's camp one (20,100 feet), climbing steep snow to a section of easy rock scrambling.



On the way down, however, she appeared spooked by the steepness and wouldn't follow them back to base camp. So she spent two nights at Camp 1 out in the open, alone on the glacier! She survived and decided to accompany the Sherpas as they worked their way up to 22,500 feet before going back to Base Camp. At first it seemed like the Sherpas only tolerated Mera because



Wargowsky liked her so much, but as they witnessed her climbing prowess, they began to treat her with reverence, thinking that maybe she brought luck to the expedition. The next day, Wargowsky took the team up to Camp 1 to start the summit bid. The route features steep ridgelines that drop thousands of feet off either side so Wargowsky tied Mera up at Base Camp so she couldn't follow them back up the mountain. But she chewed through the rope & caught up with the team less than an hour after it had left! He said "She just tucked in right behind me, and it's not like I could leave the clients to take her back, so it meant she was going with us." After a 4 day lie up at Camp II the 60-70-mph winds abated and the team set out for the summit at 2 am. When the team left, Mera was still sleeping & Wargowsky was relieved. Though she had shown strong climbing skills, using her claws as crampon spikes, he still didn't want her following them. He'd already seen her slip once. However, Mera slept until daybreak, then ran off to find the team. She moved quickly over a moderately steep, glaciated section of the route, taking just 2 hours to cover what took the humans 7 hrs to complete! She seemed unbothered by the exposed ridgeline and huge drop-offs, bounding ahead of the group and then running back as if annoyed by its slow pace. It turned into a clear, blue-sky day, but temperatures were cold, with strong gusts of around 30 to 40 mph and a windchill of -20 degrees. The humans were well wrapped up in down suits but Mera had nothing – not even booties. (For reference, the official Iditarod rules require mushers to carry 8 booties per dog to offer abrasion protection from the snow & ice.) On the final ridge to the summit, Mera ran ahead of Wargowsky & the sole client who was able to continue and waited for them on top, tongue out and panting. "I'd never been on top of something like that with a dog. She was leaning up against me and wanting to be petted. It was pretty surreal."

At an altitude where even humans in the best shape of their lives are slowed to a crawl, Mera could run.

Lakpa Rita Sherpa, a senior guide for Alpine Ascents International, remembers a dog on Mount Everest who followed him to Camp II and tried to go to Camp III but didn't have enough grip. He ended up becoming snow-blind, and a Sherpa had to carry him back to Base Camp. If Mera could speak, she might credit that two-night bivvy in the open as



the key to her successful acclimatization but dogs, like humans, are susceptible to altitude sickness: the extreme fatigue, headaches, and vomiting, as well as killers like high-altitude pulmonary and cerebral oedema. Wargowsky's Baruntse team started with six climbers, but only one was in good health to climb on summit day. It's a tough environment.

Still, everyone who climbs mountains knows that the summit is only the halfway point; most accidents happen on the descent. Yet Mera went down on her own and was clipped onto a rope just once.

Mera became an instant celebrity. People came over from other camps to meet the dog who'd summited Baruntse and luckily, the team had plenty of photographic evidence. "Back on the trail, walking toward home, it dawned on me: we'd have to go back to Lukla and leave Mera on the street," Wargowsky says. "I was sick about it. I told Kaji it was breaking my heart to think of leaving her. He said, 'No way, she's special. She's coming with me.'" Mera couldn't fly, so Kaji paid someone \$100 to walk three days to Lukla to pick her up and then three days back out with her to a village with bus service to Kathmandu.

On Christmas Day, Kaji sent photos to Wargowsky. He's renamed her Baru, since she climbed Baruntse. Baru has put back on the weight she lost from the climb and is happy and well-fed. She possessed an extraordinary level of confidence relative to her small frame.

SOME FILMS FOR WINTER WHEN WE CAN'T BE OUT THERE ON THE HILLS

Most of the links below are courtesy of the UK Hillwalking website which recognises that this 2021 winter is hugely frustrating for the majority of Britain's hillwalkers. So they got Dan Bailey to search for some spectacular winter videos out there on the web. However, the first link comes thanks to an email from Bob Duncan. It's from the British Film Industry archives and was made in 1959 by Fred Purcell, seen filming left. Fred's son Andy flies aerial photography drones for the "Friends of Rowley Hills" of which Bob is a member and that is how this fascinating piece of history has come to light. It features **the early days of Plas Gwynant** and one of the first mountain training courses when Pat Tweedale was in charge of the centre. Older members might also recognise Bert Wright, who was Head of Physical Training in West Brom, as well as WBMC member Glyn Hughes, who was a local Junior School Head master & friend of Pat. Some of the footage seems to have been taken up behind our Hut and early on you might be able to spot it as the 'barn' it used to be, as the camera pans to the left. If

you are young you'll be fascinated by the 'style' of tents, rucksacks & climbing gear (as well as the commentary); if you are 'old' you'll remember the equipment well! One of Bob's comments was: *"I think health & safety has a lot to answer for - the old courses were much more beneficial for the kids!"*

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-plas-gwynant-1959-online>

Now pour yourself a dram, get cosy & imagine you're out there in crisp snow in Wales or Scotland.

Winter Hillwalking: If Only They Knew <https://youtu.be/oMeJxvZ6HQ4>

A BMC film shot in the Cairngorms. But of course we do know the hills in snow are magic!

Helvellyn's Winter Edges https://youtu.be/5gQv9DMD_w4

Dave, the 'Solo Summiteer', combines the classic round with an ascent of Y Gully.

Stunning Sunrise on Crib Goch <https://youtu.be/KiFC75xSXwE>

(Some great aerial footage of an alpine-looking Snowdon massif)

Arctic Scotland <https://youtu.be/06aVfMMDtUCc>

(Film maker Murray Wilkie captures a superb hike in the Eastern Highlands)

Nevis faces <https://youtu.be/f5nbZ6C804g> In the 1st of 6 short films on characters who work and live near Ben Nevis, Jamie Hageman walks along the Devil's Ridge to find the right spot to paint in the pre-dawn light and capture a magnificent sunrise.

Fairfield (Horseshoe) in winter <https://youtu.be/nomBO3VSILM>

Just pre 1st lockdown Athena Mellor takes on deep bogs & strong headwinds, on the Lakes classic **A Sense of Place - the Cairngorms** (more wildlife than walking) <https://vimeo.com/219077406>

Beautifully-shot film by Max Smith captures the snowbound majesty of the high Cairngorms

A winter's dream – the Skye Cuillin Traverse in snow <https://youtu.be/euizVPtU15U>

John Fleetwood & Adrian Trendall snatch a prime winter plum with a traverse of the Skye Cuillin

Winter mountain hiking <https://youtu.be/4GGKLWoCb8g>

Murray Wilkie walks Beinn a' Chruilaiste, with its unrivalled outlook on GlenCoe & The Buachaille.

Winter on Liathach <https://youtu.be/CperWihIPns>

(Drone footage of the grade II winter ridge in achingly beautiful northern light)

Quinag <https://youtu.be/ehY1EJOxfTw>

(Murray Wilkie gets about a bit. Here he is again, this time on a snow-dusted Quinag)

Ski Touring <https://youtu.be/JdIytj6FnUs> (Rob Johnson's Vlog in a hostile-looking Carneddau)



PLAS GWYNANT - HOW AND WHY IT CAME INTO BEING

Remembered by Bert Wright , Physical Education Advisor 1951 – 1976 (a document found in WBMC material, originally in John Henk's suitcase)

At the interview for the post of Organiser of Physical Education in 1950, one of the questions I was asked by Mr Turner, Director of Education [for West Bromwich], was:-

“The Authority has a nebulous place called Shenstone Lodge near Lichfield. How do you think this large house could be used?” I well remember giving all the reasons I could think of why children from an industrial West Bromwich should camp in the grounds of Shenstone Lodge and use the facilities of the area such as rivers and Cannock chase for canoeing and mobile camping etc. Incidentally, Shenstone Lodge would not have been quite right for the job, would it? A short time after I began working in West Bromwich, I discovered a piece of information which to me was like finding a tiny rare flower of a gold mine at the bottom of the garden. One school - Lyng -had camped in the National Forest Park, Beddgelert, and had three or four ex U.S. Army tents and a small garden party type marquee. I had been introduced to camping and walking in the Welsh mountains when I was a scout, and here I was working for an Education Authority which was prepared to spend money to extend the camping programme.

Equipment suitable for the Beddgelert site was purchased and there began the gradual build up of schools who wanted to camp. Without going into too many details this was not as easy as it seems now that I come to write about it. There were many factors that had to be considered before a school could camp. Some of these are relevant to this article:

- (a) Camping had to be for a period without any breaks. Schools had to be found who were prepared to camp in the Whitsuntide holidays.
- (b) Teachers had to have some basic knowledge of camp cooking, care of tents, and other basic elements of camping.
- (c) Teachers had to have some basic knowledge of walking and safety in mountains.

I had to organise courses for Teachers on site in North Wales and shorter sessions in West Bromwich. Gradually a “hard core” of teachers who were excellent campers came together and gave great stability to the camping programme. Apart from camping, the mountaineering aspect had to be tackled. I had many friends who were mountaineers and I knew a little about it myself. The result was many one week courses at the Climbers’ Club Hut, Helyg, near Capel Curig, and one or two at Ynws Ettws near Llanberis. Gradually the camping programme became so much in demand that the ‘season’ often ran into the August holidays.

In all these efforts I was supported by Mr. Turner, the Director of Education, who visited the camp and sometimes helped to dismantle the camp. The Councillors visited the camp and the Mayor and Mayoress paid an annual visit. All of us who were involved with camping and our many visitors saw the value of children living and working together for a week. Schools placed their own emphasis on the activities they did in camp apart from essential camping duties. Some visited castles as part of a historical study, others visited the coastal areas, some walked in the mountains, and very often this study was continued when they returned to school,

The main weakness of the camping organisation was that there was no camp warden to foster good basic camping standards, to look after the canoes, & to be the advisor on safety in the mountains etc. We were very fortunate to get the Authority to agree to the appointment of a Camp Warden. This was a difficult job because three months living in a tent is fraught with all sorts of difficulties. However, the work done by Eric Amery and Pat Tweedale lifted the standards of camping and was an important link in the move towards a residential centre.

I travelled to North Wales many times in a camping season and it was in about May 1956 that I saw the “FOR SALE” notice at PLAS GWYNANT. How long it took to realise that “this was *the* place”



Bert Wright (in suit)
with Ray Mullet (l) &
Ray Highfield (centre)

I cannot remember, but there was a further incentive to look at the property.

In 1952 the West Bromwich Mountaineering Club was founded at one of the West Bromwich Authority's teachers' courses in mountaineering. A high priority for the Club was a mountaineering hut and the Lodge at Plas Gwynant was one of the buildings we looked at. Plas Gwynant was not lived in and it was a short step towards finding a way to examine the property without attracting too much attention. On this first visit it was obvious that Plas Gwynant was the only place for an Adventure School of West Bromwich. Many other exploratory visits were made during the camping season of 1956, but with nothing put in writing in the Education Office. However, Mr. Turner had been kept informed and several Councillors were told about what was still only an idea. Councillors Fred Phillips and Philip Taylor showed a lot of enthusiasm. 1956 went by and the camping season of 1957 was soon with us and the "For Sale" notice was still staring me in the face. Of course the winter had not been wasted because in the West Bromwich Authority the meetings between members of the Education Committee and those who worked in the office were frequent because the Committee room was in the office. Opportunities to talk were many.

Mr. Turner favoured a centre in the Lake District, but during the Spring of 1957 I was asked to present a detailed report on why the Authority should have a centre in a permanent building, as against working during the camping season from a temporary base. This report was completed and presented to the Education Committee with the knowledge that there was a property in North Wales which could be purchased at once.

In the meantime an arrangement was made with the Outward Bound School at Ullswater for the Director, two Councillors and me to pay a week-end visit. As a social occasion this week-end was a great success, and one of our Councillors was taken down a cliff face in a mountain stretch, and two important points were discussed. Firstly, a lot of people we talked with thought that were two Outward Bound Schools in the Lake District and that was probably enough. This placed Plas Gwynant into the number one position for any future consideration. Secondly, the Director offered my services as an Instructor for December 1957 at

Ullswater where they were having their first course for Secondary Modern Boys. I learned a lot in the thirty days at Ullswater which was to prove invaluable at our own centre. Whilst I was at Ullswater, Plas Gwynant was bought by the Authority. The next phase was to get Plas Gwynant into use as an Adventure Centre. This is another fascinating story.

My thanks to all those people who helped in their small ways to make the purchase of Plas Gwynant possible. Because they are not mentioned, I would not like them to think they have been forgotten.

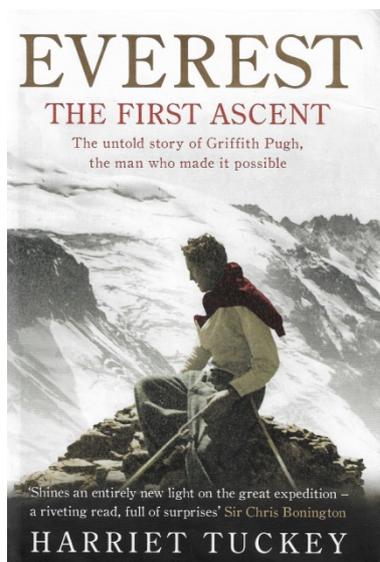


Plas Gwynant today (Westminster School photo)

WBMC "WHATS APP" GROUPS

In order to help members who are seeking to find a partner or small group to walk, climb or go to the hills with once COVID restrictions are relaxed, and to give members another way to stay in touch, the committee are proposing to set up two 'What's App' groups. Both will be restricted to WBMC members only. One will be specifically for events & requests and the other will be for sharing photos & gossip. If you would like to be included in either or both groups, please let Jan Cox know the mobile number you would like to use by emailing secretary@wbmc.org If you are finding you are getting too many communications via these and wish to remove yourself this is very simple.

BEST WISHES The Committee would like to send their best wishes to Joe Wood and all other members having to undergo medical treatment and hope they are back to normal as soon as possible.

"EVEREST, THE FIRST ASCENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF GRIFFITH PUGH. THE MAN WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE" by Harriet Tuckey. A Review by John Edwards

BMC Area Meetings are generally not the most exciting evenings but in June last year, two of the Zoom participants mentioned what a 'great read' the above book was. So the next day I went on-line and picked up a hardback copy for £3.50 and discovered they were not wrong! I would recommend it to anyone, for it shines a light on how "official" accounts and films of "big expeditions" can be totally misleading, and also how much our hill-walking practices today were influenced by the anachronistic Pugh. His daughter Harriet openly admits she hated him as a teenager, as he neglected and behaved abysmally towards her and his wife. It was only at the 40th Anniversary Meeting at the Royal Geographical Society in May 1993 that she and the nation first heard (from expeditioner Dr Michael Ward) about Pugh's vital contribution. Sir John Hunt had never given him credit in his book or subsequent lectures and the film portrayed Pugh as a typical 'mad scientist'. The same thing happened to him with Edmund Hillary's Yeti-hunting, 'Silver Hut' expedition to Makalu in 1961 and the British Olympic Association did likewise with his research for the 1968 Mexico 'at altitude' Olympics.

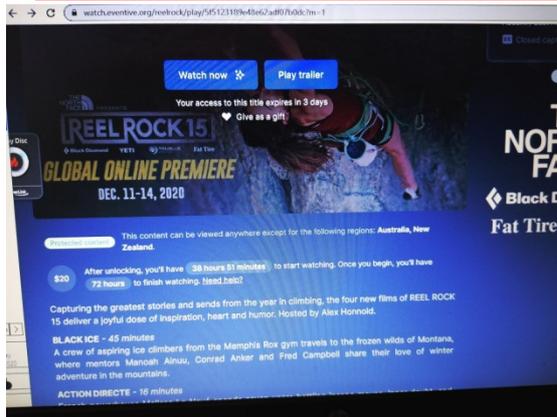
Griffith Pugh died a year after that RGS meeting and Harriet had still not had any meaningful conversations with her father about his research & adventures. So it took her 8 years of meticulous research, trawling through documents and interviewing his companions to produce her account which sets the records straight and reveals the power struggle and skulduggery behind the scenes for the British quest for Everest. Eric Shipton is revealed as a shambolic leader during the 1952 Cho Oyu expedition, yet was still the establishment choice to lead the 1953 attempt. Hillary becomes a glory-seeking egotist who would have died on Makalu if Pugh hadn't insisted on medical oxygen being taken up to altitude. I can now understand how David Bedford failed so disastrously in the 5,000 & 10,000 metres in the Mexico Olympics of 1968 - because he ignored Pugh's advice. It is because of Pugh that we all carry (or should do!) a survival bag / storm shelter in our rucksacks and don't wear jeans on the hills!

Yet Griffith Pugh still comes across as an unthinking, selfish, womanising husband & father: a man with a very short fuse. He was certainly not a self-publicist, believing his scientific papers would be enough to ensure his legacy, which maybe they are to researchers into human physiology under extreme conditions. However, thanks to his daughter, his legacy is at last revealed for all and the general public can finally learn of the battles he fought and his vital contribution to the successful ascent of Everest in 1953. I lost count of the number of times I exclaimed "That's incredible!" whilst reading the book and feel that, if you only read one mountaineering book this year, it should really be this one.



Pugh in the laboratory shed by the running track in Mexico City with Mike Turner on the stationary bicycle.

REEL ROCK 15: ONLINE CLIMBING FILM FESTIVAL (Global Online Premiere was available online for 72 hrs from 11th Dec 2020 but maybe it'll be available later in 2021)



Reviewed by John Edwards

Even though I've really only dabbled at roped climbing, I love to watch Reel Rock and Banff films that feature at the Alex Theatre etc every year but, of course, this would not be possible during COVID, so I coughed up my 20 \$US to watch 145 minutes of climbing-related footage on my laptop. Despite the streaming intermittently glitching / freezing, I was able to enjoy 4 fantastically inspiring films, 'hosted' by Alex Honnold from his van out somewhere in the Californian desert. I'll review the films in case you can find bits on the Internet at a later date.

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First up was **"Black Ice"** –(35 mins) a film of *"how a 'crew' of young climbers from the Memphis Rox climbing wall got to travel to the frozen wilds of Montana where Manoah Ainuu & Dr Fred Campbell (2 black professional ice climbers) and Conrad Anker shared their love of winter adventure in the mountains"*. There were 2 females and 8 men in the party (all back), including a Chris Dean, who helps run the Rox climbing gym (see www.memphisrox.org)

This is a non-profit making community / family facility which excludes no one, regardless of ability to pay; people entering being asked *"How much would you like to pay today?"*!! Others included Malik (The Martian) Martin (an aspiring film maker), Tye, Josh, Champ, Elisha, Aerial & S'Lacio, an unloved 19 yr old ex-gang member who was almost killed at 17 in a shooting, which meant he could no longer raise his left arm above his shoulder. Coming from Memphis, Tennessee where, as one of them said *"you can't act like a kid; if you do you'll get into trouble"*, they were all a bit overwhelmed with their first experience of sub-zero temperatures, altitude, quietness & deep snow. Especially as they were camping in tents around a log cabin out in the middle of nowhere, using snow as toilet paper. But out there they could have fun without having to look cool. They could breathe & play and see other possibilities in life demonstrated by Fred & Manoah, two of the few black guys in Bozeman,



north of Yellowstone. The first day they ice climbed on a frozen waterfall with mixed success. Next day they skied before returning to the ice and having a speed climbing completion.

Dr Campbell had recovered from breaking his neck as a college line-backer and took especially keen interest in trying to get S'Lacio up the vertical ice, even though his gunshot wounds prevented him from swinging his ice-axe properly. By using his hip to help him swing the axe, that day he did manage to 'top out' and felt a success for possibly the first time in his life. Really moving, especially as he celebrated his 20th birthday with his new-found friends that evening! There was quite a bit of wood splitting (à la Hut), 'rapping' in the cold, pondering why 'black ice' is so called, and horrified reactions to the stinking, frozen, outside loo. They returned to Tennessee to find that COVID-19

had really taken a hold and they knew they were really back to 'city-life' when George Floyd's murder took place a few days later

A very enjoyable film which made one wonder about the issue of diversity in rock climbing. When Honnold commented that *"the climbing community hasn't made much effort to be more inclusive"*, my thoughts turned a little to WBMC!

"Action Directe" (25 mins) was a 'short' about how *"French powerhouse Melissa Le Nevé spent 7 years of her life battling insane moves, inner doubts, and the burden of history to become the first female to climb the most-revered sport route on earth"*. In 1991 Wolfgang Güllich (1960-92) made the first ascent of what was then the hardest climb in the world - 'Action Directe': only 45m of ascent & 16 moves, but graded 9a/5.14d. Güllich is the guy who invented indoor finger-training for climbing

(<https://blog.momentumclimbing.com/innovations-in-climbing-the-hangboard/>) Since then the route has only been climbed by 25 people, one of whom, Kilian Fischhuber, declared that the first move was so hard that he didn't think a woman could do the route! Some men never learn!!!

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_Directe_\(climb\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_Directe_(climb))

That spurred Melissa to try it for the first time in 2013. It starts with a 'power leap' *'Wolfgang gulich on original campus board* from a 1 finger hold to a 2 finger hold and she tried it 3 or 4 times each week without success. By filing her fingers (!) she found she could get 2 fingers into the 1st finger hold and that, plus a higher foot placement, meant she succeeded – only to fall off higher up. Melissa found that she could now make the initial move once in around 30 attempts.

She had been runner up several times in the World Climbing Championships but in 2017 the French trainers told her that she'd have to stop outdoor climbing if she wanted to stay part of their Competition Climbing Team. She decided she would sacrifice her career in competition climbing just so she could do this one route! Having quit World Competitions in 2017, she got her trainer to replicate the moves on an indoor wall and little by little solved the problems on the real cliff in Germany's Frankenjura. In 2019 she got to within 3 moves of the top before falling. This happened another 20 times or so before in 2020 she finally became the first woman to climb the problem and prove her friend Kilian wrong. She claims they've *"been the best 6 years of my climbing life"* although at times she had wondered why she continued in the face of so many failures. She decided she *"continued as she loved the learning process"*. It was 16 minutes of film which left me agog at how obsessed some people can become!

The 3rd film **"First Ascent / Last Ascent"** (20 mins) featured *"best friends Hazel Findlay & Maddy Cope journey with filmmaker Jen Randall on an quixotic search for new daring routes"*. They felt they had 'missed the boat' for making trad first ascents in the UK so went to the rocky outer reaches of Mongolia to try and find some, even though they might never be climbed a second time. After spending the first 3 days looking for some descent rock on which to make "proper hard" routes and



managed to start climbing on the 4th. Hazel was the main instigator of the trip, who reckoned she brings out the more adventurous side of Madeleine Cope, and wanted to support her on a first ascent. On day 11 Maddy got her first-ever 1st Ascent and shortly after they got marched off by 3 or 4 fierce Mongolian tribesmen for climbing on the one really sacred rock in the district! After praying for forgiveness they were accepted into the homes of the



locals and ended up playing a local board game with them, using sheep's vertebrae as dice. After days of amazing adventure and real personal challenge they made their last 1st ascent on day 21 and then headed for home.

The final film *"Deep Roots"* (35 mins) told *"the story of California climber Lonnie Kauk's personal journey to honour his indigenous Yosemite roots, and to connect with his legendary father by repeating his iconic climbs"*. "Magic Line" is a 5.14c trad route in Yosemite first climbed by Ron Kauk in 1996 which hadn't been repeated in 20 years. Being Ahwahnechee Indians and native to the deep, grassy valley, the climbing there has special significance to them but having a dad who was really famous as a climber made Lonnie decide to forge his own way in different sports. He started skating & skateboarding, eventually ending up getting paid for his snowboarding. However, he came full circle and started to climb in 2013, "as though it was written in his DNA". He started by climbing "Midnight Lightning", another of his father's classic climbs, and did it with the help and support of his father who returned to the valley to help him. Gradually improving his technique, he turned his attention to "Magic Line" - a climb of small holds & balance, not just strength - and kept coming back to it for 3 or 4 seasons but could never get past the 1st crux. By then he had 'gotten into' free soloing, although this drove a wedge between him and his father who didn't think soloing was a good idea. They didn't talk for a while but eventually Ron came back to being his support & partner. Ron had pre-placed all his protective gear before making the 1st ascent but Lonnie placed his as he climbed. As he got beyond the last crux onto the easier ground that led to the top of the climb Lonnie stopped, admired the view and decided that was enough, he didn't feel he wanted to 'touch out' onto the top protection piece and abseiled off instead. This was something that really made a big impression on Alex Honnold who felt it made a statement about respect & motivation amongst climbers.



Ron (left) & Lonnie at the foot of 'Magic Line'



**HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING A WBMC MEMBER?
HERE'S AN IDEA THAT WILL REKINDLE ALL SORTS OF MEMORIES!**

Get online and get yourself some useful gear with the Club logo on it!!

It's been some time since we last mentioned it but thanks to Acorn Printing's special site www.tshirtuk.com you can order decent gear with the WBMC logo on it anytime you like – no need to wait for a bulk order. Just scroll down the left hand "Categories" panel and you will find West Bromwich MC. If you click on this to enter the site you can choose the gear you want and even personalise it further with your name or initials if you so wish. The fleeces etc are good quality and not unduly expensive.



A WEST BROM MOUNTAINEERING CLUB TIMELINE : Part 5 by John Edwards**Feb 1964: The first entry in the WBMC hut log books now lodged in the Sandwell****Library Local History Archives** Weekend Friday 21st – Sunday 23rd (Written 23/2/1964)

"In spite of the adverse weather conditions (it rained) a party of 9, consisting of Mike Aldritt, Mike O'Neil, Baz Farmer, Mike O'Neil, Owen Tandy, Roger Wynne, Ernie Pickard, Sam Silvester and Jack Dodd, conquered Moel Druman and Allt Fawr. Towards the summit of Moel Druman beautiful ice conditions (the lake was frozen) prevailed. The summit afforded a wonderful panoramic view of most of the peaks in Snowdonia (Moel Hebog - to mention but a few). On Sunday, the weather returned to normal (it rained – again!) and one member of the party reported seeing footprints of web-footed Homo sapiens."

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It is not clear who wrote this, nor who is the missing 9th person, because Mike O'Neil gets mentioned twice! Someone, possibly Mr O'Neil, who definitely wrote the entry the following weekend, has written in red biro:

"It was a large duck!" Ernie & Sam also featured in the Away Dinner saga recorded in Part 4 of the timeline & were pictured on p33 of the Club book

A few pages further on in the log book is

"The Novices Lament"

*I sit in the hut with knees that burn
And fingers cramped and tight,
Wondering why I'm not at home
On this drizzling Saturday night.*

*I've sweated and sworn on greasy rock,
And dangled like a dummy.
Slipped and scrambled, scraped and shambled,
Man! It isn't funny.*

*They tell me that it comes with time,
Someday I'll be a leader,
But it's going to be a sticky road
'Cos I'm a clumsy idiot.*

This is followed by someone writing *"I'll give it 5!!"* something that fans of "Thank Your Lucky Stars" will understand. [Ed: For our younger readers this was the way top marks were awarded to pop releases in the 1960's by Wednesbury lass Janice Nicholls. Only she said it properly " Oi'll give it foive" and it became the best-known catchphrase of its day]

1965: 18th May: Despite having the leased Hut at Plas Gwynant the Club was still interested in buying a property of its own because a letter was sent enquiring about the possibility of purchasing the School House at Nant Gwynant School. Caernarvonshire Education Committee misunderstood and thought the Club wanted to buy the School itself, replying that it was still in use and, *"although they had it in mind to close it, if this were to happen it would most likely be sold to one of 3 LEA's who had already expressed an interest."* When the Club said it was the actual School Room they were enquiring about, they were told it had been sold 3 years earlier to the Assistant Director of Education for Brighton!

8th July: Committee decides with some opposition to connect the Hut to mains electricity.

17th August: An Emergency General Meeting is held to discuss the committee's decision to bring in mains electricity. Despite more opposition this is eventually ratified.



*Clive Taylor, Ernie Picard & Sam Silvester
at the Moelwyns in November 1963*

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT MAJOR TRIPS / ASCENTS YOU KNOW WERE MADE BY CLUB MEMBERS, PLEASE MAKE CONTACT (jaejed@hotmail.com or 07837198355) ESPECIALLY IF THESE ARE UNRECORDED IN THE "50 YEARS" BOOK.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS: FIRST WINTER ASCENT OF K2 – TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY



The first big mountaineering news of the year was that K2 has been climbed in winter for the first time since the first attempt 38 years ago. Around 5:00 pm on Saturday 16th January, a team of 10 Sherpas & Nepalis stood at 8611m on the summit of the world’s second-highest mountain on the border of Pakistan & China (237m lower than Everest). They are positioning the summit as a victory for Nepal and the Sherpa nation as all 10 climbers stopped 30-feet below the summit on a relatively safe spot – a 40° snow slope at 28,200-feet! - so that they could

Sona Sherpa posing on summit for Times of India photo summit together in a sign of solidarity with no individual listed as first. Led by Mingma Gyalje Sherpa & “Nimsdai” Purja Pun Magar the other 8 Sherpas were Gelje Sherpa, Mingma David Sherpa, Mingma Tenzi Sherpa, Dawa Temba Sherpa, Pem Chhiri Sherpa, Kilu Pemba Sherpa, Dawa Tenjing Sherpa, & Sona Sherpa. First ascents of the 8000m peaks have been the mainstay of European & Asian climbers and Nepali & Tibetan climbers, especially Sherpas, have long supported these efforts but for all the other 8000m winter ascents there was no Sherpa in the summit team. In recent years, Sherpas have sought to be recognized as world-class climbers in their own right so this was seen as an opportunity for them to demonstrate their strength.

The team of ten left Base Camp on Tuesday 12th Jan and followed a fixed rope already installed by Icelander John Snorri Sigurjonsson’s team to Camp 1 at 6050m. They went on to Camp 2 (6700m) with lines set by Mingma G’s team and on Wednesday they followed ropes established by Mingma G & Nimsdai over the Black Pyramid and set up Camp 3 at 7200m. On Thursday, they made great progress and got fixed ropes up to 7,300m near Camp 4, aka “High Camp”, the only flattish spot on the entire route. They established a camp a bit lower but winds were so high that night that some climbers took cover in shallow crevasses rather than set up tents. To get to the summit they took advantage of a short weather window when winds were less than 10 mph - unheard of for K2’s summit in the summer, much less the winter.

There have been six previous winter attempts, none successful but in 2002/03 14 climbers from Poland, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan & Georgia got to Camp 4.

Why was this Nepali National team able to accomplish what world-class teams since 1987 have not been able to? That they worked as a unified team to get the camps & fixed lines in early helped, plus they got lucky with the weather, especially on the summit push (winds were back to 40 & even 100 mph later in the week). They also had a strong support team on supplemental oxygen breaking trail and fixing the lines and Mingma G & Nimsdai were really determined to show the world’s that



Nepali climbers were amongst the best in the world!

Photos of the team at Base Camp. I’m grateful to Paul Read for drawing my attention to the Facebook post (right). I’m sure Villa & Baggies shirts made it to the summit too!



This winter, with Pakistan’s borders open & with few other places to go, an unprecedented 4 teams totalling around 60 climbers have converged on K2, more than all previous expeditions put together. Sadly 2 have died in falls and now 3 : John Snorri (47), Ali Sadpara (45) & Juan Pablo Prieto (33) are missing with no trace. They left camp 3 for their summit push 23:00 on 4th Feb and were last seen around noon the following day, 300m below the summit by Sadpara’s son Sajid, who had to turn back due to a malfunctioning oxygen mask

DOUG SCOTT'S COMMUNITY ACTION NEPAL CHARITY

It's been revealed that Nottingham-born Doug Scott, who died of cancer at his home in Caldbeck in the Lake District on 7 December, aged 79, had raised thousands of ££ for his charity Community Action Nepal during the 2020 lockdown by encouraging supported to join him climbing Everest via their staircases. Doug climbed his wearing the climbing suit from the 1975 Everest SW Face expedition and holding his original ice axe and his youngest fundraiser was 10 month old Lenny who crawled the challenge.

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The Charity has now raised more than £6m for people in Nepal by building schools and backing smaller projects such as goat-rearing & mushroom production but still needs to raised around £400,000 a year to maintain and develop their projects and now have a large hole in their fund-raising strategy since losing Doug. Sir Chris Bonington, who spent many happy hours climbing with his friend Doug in Cumbria, recalled the drama of July 1977, when they became the first climbers to reach the summit of The Ogre, a 23,901ft (7,285m) high craggy mountain in the Karakoram. During their descent they fell, Sir Chris smashing his ribs and Chris breaking both legs, and they spent almost a week battling to get back to base camp thanks to their team and the help of locals. Sir Chris said it was this battle for survival that inspired him to take up charitable work to help local people, many living in areas where child poverty death rates were more than 50%.

**TAIL ENDS:****INFORMATION WANTED**

The editor would be very grateful for sight or copies of the WBMC Treasurer's Reports (income & expenditure and balance sheets) for the following ten Financial Years 1969, 1970 (slim hope here!) 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012. The reason will be revealed once some of the more recent ones are found.

EDITOR'S APOLOGIES / ERRATA

I'm very sorry but I got the Chairman's address wrong in last issue. It is actually 42 Summerfield Avenue, Kingswinford, DY6 9AR. Tel 07845 060043 or 01384 837525. Also a number went missing from my mobile number – it should have been 07837 198355. If you want to text a note or article to that number please do so, or post a letter to 157 Welford Road, Shirley, B90 3HT or email jaejed@hotmail.com. Many thanks.