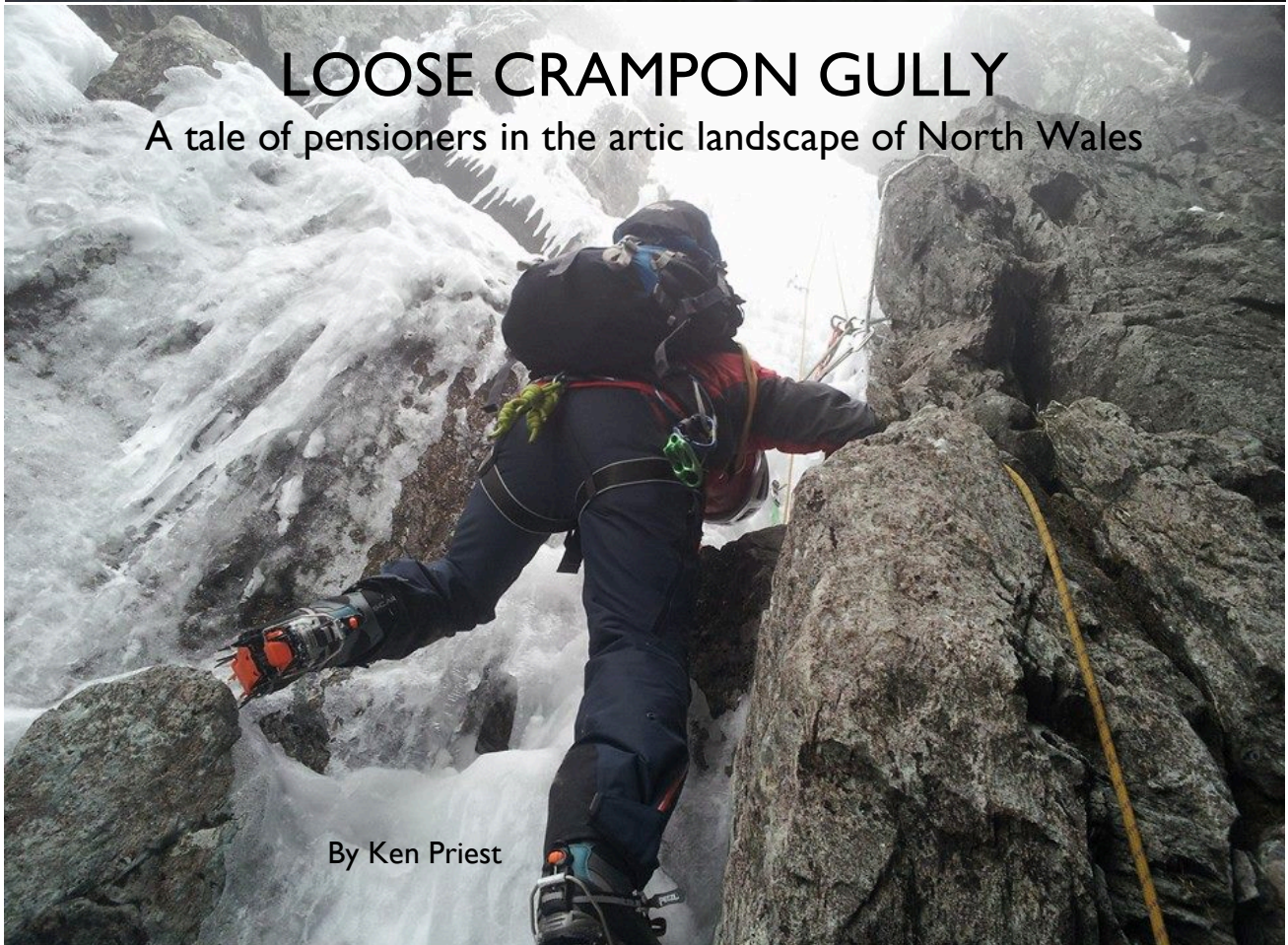




LOOSE CRAMPON GULLY

A tale of pensioners in the arctic landscape of North Wales



By Ken Priest

Cold Climbs by Ken Wilson is a brilliant, awe inspiring coffee table book rammed full of tales and adventures of the best of British ice climbing. It is a book to be enjoyed next to an open fire with a drink in hand, whilst planning future trips when the conditions allow. It is the closest I get to train spotting and Munro bagging; ticking the routes off.

One such route eluded me back in 1995 when I persuaded a colleague at work, a novice to winter climbing, but he had a car and a pair of crampons. This era was before the age of the internet and exchange of latest information on conditions and ascents. It just

seemed that the weather pattern would produce enough ice.

Clogwyn Ddu sits in the upper part of nameless cwm above Idwal and usually provides good climbing conditions. Nowadays it is the area of the hard men where routes at grade V11 exist in the modern style of mixed ascents. The classic route I wanted was the Left hand gully given a grade IV in the old guide book. 120m consisting of 4 pitches, the second one being the crux. My partner for the day assured me he had the latest lightweight crampons and I had given him a spare pair of axes so we were all set.

The first pitch is a gentle affair at about grade 3 with plentiful rock runners and a good appetiser up for the main course. This next pitch can be a bit of a shocker as it is solid water ice and rises up a vertical 30 metres. Anyway with my partner anchored to a solid rock belay off I set placing what limited screws I had with the occasional rock runner, very reassuring as I edged up until the belay stance, thankfully another rock spike. On bringing my second up his crampon fell off which ended our day. So I was pleased with the two pitches I had climbed, but disappointed we had not topped out.

Loose Crampon Gully Continued

20 YEARS LATER

Keeping an eye on the internet, the climb was again in condition and what better choice of companions that Pete (photographer) Poultney and Mel (have a go at anything) Evans.

Leave home 5.30 Ogwen 8.15 walk in 2 hrs. What could possibly go wrong? Geraldine has always been intrigued what we all talk about all day when we're away climbing, well Gel prepare to be disappointed!



The walk in time is 2 hours and the topic of conversation for one hour 50 minutes was the benefits of keyhole surgery over "the full Cut" in hernia operations. In addition to this delightful topic, I was also enlightened on recovery techniques and timings, a full list of club members who had joined the salubrious club, (perhaps we should suggest a tie), and a full description of the different specifications of the diverse meshes available.

Whilst thinking for a moment I was on the set of "Last of the Summer Wine", to my surprise in the middle of this misty secluded cwm, Pete's phone started to ring. "Gorra take this it's the hospital." Were due a break before the last rise into the upper cwm, so we sat down listening in to Pete sweet talking the hospital receptionist attempting to get an earlier appointment.

"Hang on love, just gorra put on a crampon" is probably the first time Russels Hall staff have heard such a phrase. After 10 minutes of discussion Pete decided on the key hole.

"Good decision" says Compo, "you'll recover much better". I considered my meagre first aid kit and really did wonder if it would cover emergency crag side hernia operations!

THE CLIMB

Finding the start of winter climbs is

often the first difficulty and so it proved in a heavy mist, but after 10 minutes of searching we set off up the first pitch. It was as I remembered: pure delight, steady climbing with good runners and a rock main belay.

Compo and Clegg followed me up each on a separate rope about 10 metres apart. Ensnared on our cosy belay, I asked Compo to take a look at the next pitch, 30 metres of gleaming solid vertical ice, just in case he didn't fancy it, but as I expected, no decision needed onward and upward. So off I set, armed with several ice screws and a full rock rack. This pitch is very steep and started with a section of mixed climbing, fortunately with a couple of runners and then onto the ice. I placed screws into the ice when I felt comfortable and spotted a rock wall where there appeared to be a crack which would take a couple of wires. Once these were in, I was just about to step back onto the ice wall when I noticed my left crampon flopping around.

Putting a crampon back on one handed whilst getting tension from the rope proved to very problematic. Needless to say, after 10 minutes of expletives and grunting I managed to secure it back on.

Fortunately there were no further dramas as I continued up using all of

my screws and reaching the belay to find another solid rock spike around which I placed large sling. Mel and Pete followed me up, hernias temporarily forgotten, and joined me on the cramped stance.

"Well I've never climbed anything like that before" says Compo, "Flippin Steep" says Clegg.

Anyway, the third pitch eases off a little up the gully before another steep wall of ice and the final chimney, but as I

worked my way up I noticed the final section was bare so I belayed over to the left near the Pillar Chimney stance, wondering what to do to complete the climb. I shouted down I was safe and Mel and Pete set off again climbing about 10 metres apart. Mel's head pops up first and just as he prepares to tackle the ice section he shouts: "watch out Pete!", as his crampon hurtles down the gully out of sight. Only one decision possible and that is to lower Pete back to the stance, he re makes the belay, followed by Mel. Once they were both secured, I rearrange the double ropes for a 30 metre abseil down the gully to join them on the stance. Pete had a good belay of two slings on separate blocks, we did some maths and calculated that we could get down with one abseil of 55m with our 50 m ropes!

By the time we were all safely down and found Mel's crampon, it was 4.55pm, dark in 30 minutes, headtorches at the ready and pockets full of food we set off on the descent. We reached Ogwen at 7.15.

A truly great mountaineering day out with some tough technical climbing, bostin' company, and a safe multi abseil out with no panic. Memorable, indeed, but I still haven't completed the climb! Any takers for next year must undergo a full medical and a hernia check.

WBMC TO BECOME THE MIDLAND'S PREMIER RAMBLING CLUB



It has been on the cards for some time but a month ago WBMC Vice-chairman, John Edwards, recently became the new Chairman of the Shirley-based rambling group known as the Wednesday Walking Club and he has lost no time in introducing some of their practices to the West Bromwich club. Interviewed last week by your Newsletter reporter, John, aged 86, revealed his vision for the future of WBMC saying "I was delighted when WWC members elected me to lead them for the next 2 years. They're a very friendly group with a tried & tested formula for success. Each of their days out includes a morning stop for tea or coffee, a pub stop at lunchtime and an afternoon tea stop, at which thanks are given to the walk leader. The route is always 7 – 8 miles and crosses the minimum number of stiles and fences. They even have a back-marker to ensure stragglers don't go astray or get lost! I believe that if we adopt this formula for our coach meets, it will surely not be long before the WBMC becomes the greatest rambling club in the West Midlands." The WBMC group, which meets every Thursday night at "The Wheatsheaf", has been struggling sometimes to fill the coaches it hires in recent times and has made financial losses because of this on more than one occasion.

"I'm no longer a spring chicken", John said, "but before I go on that last great ramble in the sky, I hope to be able to give the club a golden future. I can envisage a time when every Sunday we'll be taking 2 full coaches to the mountains of England & Wales. And don't forget the valleys and attractive villages – I'm certain they'll be equally popular! By making such a profit on the coach meets I would hope to make all overnights at the Hut free to all, something I'm sure will prove very popular with the membership."

Mike Smith, the WBMC President, was unavailable for comment last night but sources close to the committee have suggested that both he and the club Treasurer were backing these new proposals to the hilt. However, there has been some dissent over these radical changes and a rather inexperienced member very new on the committee, who did not wish to be named, told me that he was concerned that the club might be moving too fast in the wrong direction; something member's rarely admit to! One thing is for sure, there are exciting times ahead for the WBMC and the rambling scene in the West Midlands

THE WBMC MEETING PLACE



The Wheatsheaf - 379 High Street, West Bromwich, B70 9QW Join us every Thursday night from 9.00pm in The Wheatsheaf, High Street, West Bromwich for an informal chat and a drink!

CLUB MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015

Membership - £26.00, Students - £11.50, Junior members ages 16 – 18 years - £9.00

Young members (under 16 years) - £2.50

Subscriptions should be paid to the Membership Secretary, Joanna Cheung by cash or cheque.

Cheques should be made payable to: "West Bromwich mountaineering Club"

and should be given to Jo on Thursday evening at the Wheatsheaf or posted to:

J Cheung, 551a Walsall Road, Great Barr, Birmingham B42 1LS

For anybody interested in joining the West Bromwich Mountaineering Club please contact Jo and she can provide you with an information pack which details the requirements for membership.

jo.cheung@hotmail.co.uk

or telephone 07808 030577

PAYMENT IS NOW OVERDUE. YOU CAN PAY ONLINE USING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION: NAME: WBMC, SORT CODE: 40 23 03, A/C NO: 41139827 . PLEASE LET JO CHEUNG KNOW IF YOU DO THIS. SEE HER AT THE WHEATSHEAF OR POST AS ABOVE.

HUT DONATIONS

Members - £4.00 per night Guests - £7.00 per night

(Maximum two guests per member)

16 yrs & under - £1.50 per night

Stamped addressed envelopes are provide in the hut for payment

To book ring or text Alison Whitehead: 07530644874 or

email: wbmchutbooking@gmail.com

(When you are a fully fledged WBMC member you can purchase a hut key from Alison at a donation of £4.50)

PLEASE NOTE - Please phone or email Alison

BEFORE travelling to the hut.



APRIL HUT

AVAILABILITY

(Please ring Alison to check availability. Below is just an indication.)

Fri. 3rd April – places

Fri. 10th April – places

Fri. 17th April – places

Fri. 24th April - places

Photo of the Month

In the absence of any entries for Photo of the Month this month, here's one sent in by Mark Wood

Brock the Badger

Says

VOTE WISELY



WHAT'S ON IN APRIL

Indoor Evening

Meet

9th
The Wheatsheaf
20.00



**Toubcal (and
other trips)**
Sue Perks presents

Coach Meet

Saturday
11th



Yorkshire 3 peaks
Pick one, two or three
peaks or just a
pavement potter
see back page

So Long And Thanks For All The Fish – 2015 AGM

The newly elected Officers and Committee of WBMC are:

President – John Eadon
Chair – Andrew Brown
Vice-Chair – Mike Smith
Treasurer – Paul Brindley
Secretary – Barbara Challinor
Hut Secretary – Alison Whitehead
Coach Secretary – Nigel Tarr
Membership Secretary – Joanne Cheung
Newsletter Editor – VACANCY

Other Committee Members – Su Goddard, Mike Thompson, Richard Cooksey, David Jones, Nick Piotrowski, Graeme Stanford

As indicated in previous newsletters, your newsletter editor had decided to stand down this year. Unfortunately nobody, as yet, has volunteered to take up the position. Consequently the position appears as vacant. This edition of the newsletter has been composed in Microsoft Word and is available as a template should any of you feel you'd like to take up the dropped baton!

Thank you to those of you that have contributed to this newsletter. Keep up the good work!

Closing date for copy for the May newsletter will be Wednesday 8th April 2015

All contributions gratefully received!

Send to (for now) Mark Wood

63 Douglas Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 9HG

Tel: 07828 099127 e-mail: mark.c.f.wood@gmail.com

COMING UP

Lundy Trip

Sat 16th- Tue 19th May 2015



About 4 years ago some members of the club had another trip to Lundy Island just off the Devon coast. A further trip is being organised. The Barn is already full but places are available for camping. Last time some people travelled down on the Friday night and stayed in a Bunkhouse on road out from Ilfracombe to Woolacombe, while others drove down on the Saturday morning, catching the ferry from the harbour at Ilfracombe to Lundy (approx 1 1/2 hrs trip). If too rough a helicopter is provided at an extra cost of about £20 (which we have had to use before).

The main theme on Lundy is climbing, but you don't have to be a climber to enjoy the island. Lundy is a protected nature reserve with a host of different birds to view, so come on you twitchers (Ade), Or just come for a break and walk/run around the island which is about half mile wide and 3 miles long. Another incentive on the island is a pub, which if I remember right do breakfasts and evening meals, so no need to cook if you don't want to.

Any interest then please get in touch with myself although you can now book camping yourselves via website on www.landmarktrust.org.uk. I will book Friday night bunkhouse in a block so would anyone who books camping please let me know as well then I can book it for those who want to travel down on the Friday night and add extras as and when.

The ferry trip was an experience especially following a full English down in the harbour area. PS The Ferry has a bar!

This is a not to be missed trip which was enjoyed by all previous visitors. Further info can be obtained via internet or Pete Poultney

peterpoultney@hotmail.co.uk or phone 07779366905

Club Challenge Weekend 2015 - National 3 Peaks Challenge

June 19th – 21st

The club challenge walk this year will be an attempt at climbing Ben Nevis, Scafell 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 Scafell 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.

Kalymnos

September 2015

A further trip is being considered for Sept 2015 following our first trip last year to "Kalymnos" Greece.

This is in the early stages so could interested parties please say what weeks you could be available as a majority vote may well decide what week we go out. Again the main interest on the island is climbing, but none climbers went last year and enjoyed the trip. We usually climbed to mid afternoon and then met the rest on the beach to chill. We also hired bikes the one day and had ride to the end of the island, there's plenty to do.

further info can be obtained from Pete Poultney

peterpoultney@hotmail.co.uk or phone 07779366905

Seatoller Coach Meet

Saturday 9th May 2015

Depart:
West Brom. Edward St Car Park (B70 8HU) 07.00
Penkridge 07.20

Brief Toilet Stop: M6

Dropping off at: Keswick (264235)
Shepherds Crag (262184)
Seatoller (246137)

Picking up at: Seatoller (246137)
Shepherds Crag (262184)
Keswick(coach st)(264235)

Required Map: OS. 1:25 000 Outdoor leisure maps
No 4 The English Lakes – NW area
No 6 The English Lakes – SW area



SUGGESTED ROUTES:

Route 1

From Keswick head West to Stormwater bridge (255239) into Portinscale. Following part of the Cumbria Way south to the foot of Catbells, and then climb steeply to the summit (244198). Continue south along the ridge over Maiden Moor to High Spy (235162, enjoying the views back over Keswick to Skiddaw. Descend to Dale Head tarn (230152) and turn west to the summit of Dale Head (223153). Make the most of the view as its all down hill from now on back to Seatoller via Tongue Gill and the Rigghead quarries (240152) **Distance 15.5km – 9.5 miles**

Route 2

Leave the coach at Seatoller and follow the road east to Strands Bridge (252137). From here follow the path up to Thornythwaite Fell (245118) and on to Glaramara (245105). From the rocky summit head north east to Comb Head and Combe Door (252109). Now you'll have to pick your way through the rocky outcrops and small tarns to Rosthwaite Cam (256118) and the trig point of Bessy Boot (258125). Finally descend west into Combe Gill to retrace your steps back to the coach. **Distance 10.5km – 6.5 miles**

Route 3

From Seatoller follow the road to Seathwaite (235121). Ascend Green Gable (215107) via Sour Milk Gill and continue to Great Gable (211104). Leave NW to Beckhead tarn (205107) and onto the summit shelter of Kirk Fell (195105), revealing good views of the Scafells and your recently visited summit Great Gable. Retrace your steps to Beckhead tarn and traverse below Green Gable to Brandreth (215119). From here tick off Grey Knotts (217126) and walk down to Honister Pass (225135), where a short road walk leads back to Seatoller. **Distance 19km – 12 miles**

Route 4

Reach the summit cairn of Great Gable as route 3, then descend to Styhead (220095). Continue past Sprinkling Tarn (226091) to the Esk Hause shelter (235083), and onto Allen Craggs (235085). Following the undulating ridge to Glaramara (247104), and continuing north over Thornythwaite Fell (245118) back into Seatoller. **Distance 15.5km – 9.5 miles**

To book on the coach please ring Nigel Tarr on Tel: 07703 345729 after 18.00 on 13th April.

Fares: Members £20.00, Guests £22.00, under 16's and full time students £8.00

Please put the coach mobile in your phone before you go out on the hills 07724 316311

£5.00 pp cancellation charges apply: You must cancel by 7 p.m. on the 6th May.

Yorkshire 3 Peaks (Long) Coach Meet

Saturday 11th April 2015

Depart:

West Brom. Edward St Car Park (B70 8HU) 07.00
Penkridge 07.20

Brief Toilet Stop: M6

Dropping off at:

Ingleton (695730)
Ribblehead Viaduct (765793)
Horton in Ribblesdale (807726)

Picking up at:

Horton in Ribblesdale (807726)

Required Map:

OS 1:25 000 OL 2 Yorkshire Dales Southern & Western Areas



SUGGESTED ROUTES:

From Ingleton

Route 1: Head east on the Crina Bottom and climb Ingleborough. Descend eastward to Sulber Nick and Horton in Ribblesdale. **Distance 9.5 km (6 miles)**. Can also combine routes 1 and 4 **Distance 20 km (13 miles)**

From Ribblehead Viaduct

Route 2: Less classic 3 peaks route - Follow route 3 from the viaduct, then route 4 from Horton. **Distance 32.5 km (20 miles)**

From Horton in Ribblesdale

Route 3: Classic 3 Peaks challenge route - Clock in at the Penyghent cafe to register your time, climb up to Pen-y-ghent (838734) via Brackenbottom then down via the Pennine Way before, near Hull Pot, heading west over boggy ground to rejoin the Pennine Way at Sell Gill Holes (813744). Choose the Pennine or Ribble Way to reach the Blea Moor Road then take the tarmac to the Ribblehead Viaduct (765793). Follow the track North before crossing it, heading NW to a wall which you follow West then South to the summit of Whernside (738814). Continue South to Philpin Farm. Head up the road past The Hill Inn and take the path South to Ingleborough (741746) from where you have a simple 6 miles Eastwards stroll to Horton. Don't forget to clock off! **Distance 40 km (25 miles)**

Route 4: If you fancy a shorter day head for Brackenbottom and pick up the path through Brackenbottom Scar to the ridge which leads to Pen-y-Ghent. Return to Horton by heading north and picking up the Pennine Way path. **Distance 10.5 km (7 miles)**

Route 5: Head South out of Horton along the Ribble Way to Helwith Bridge (812695). Cross over the river using the road then take a left. When the road turns North go straight on at a track signposted Dale Head. At a path junction take the left path which climbs to the summit of Pen-y-ghent (838734). Head North then West off the summit on the Pennine Way. A short diversion will take you to impressive Hull Pot (824745) before heading South on the Pennine Way to Horton. **Distance 15.5 km (9.5 miles)**

To book on the coach please ring Nigel Tarr on Tel: 07703 345729

Fares: Members £20.00, Guests £22.00, under 16's and full time students £8.00

Please put the coach mobile in your phone before you go out on the hills 07724 316311

£5.00 pp cancellation charges apply: You must cancel by 7 p.m. on the 8th April.