

West Bromwich Mountaineering Club Newsletter

September 2019

This month's photo: The Cuillin Ridge, by Dave Holland from BRMC

- 2 Noticeboard
- 3 Coming up
- 4 Skye and the Cuillin Ridge Traverse
By Ken Priest
- 5 Braithwaite Meet
By Dave Jones
- 6 Possibly the hottest GR20 on record
Part 3, by John Edwards
- 9 Coach meets
Sunday 13th October – Howgills
Saturday 9th – The Black Mountains

Hello readers,

Huge thanks as always to this month's contributors: Ken Priest, Dave Holland, Liz Reynolds, John Edwards, Jonathan Howells, Nigel Tarr, David Hind, and David Jones.

If you have anything that you'd like to be featured in next month's newsletter – whether you're selling gear, looking for a climbing or walking partner, you've seen an event that members might be interested in, anything at all – send it to 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

The WBMC meeting place



Horse & Jockey
49 Stoney Ln,
West Bromwich
B71 4EZ

Join us every Thursday night from 9pm for a chat and a drink.

Note that indoor meets are still at The Cricketer's Arms

BMC
AFFILIATED CLUB

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

Cotswold Discount Code: AF-WBMC -K3

Noticeboard

Membership Secretary Needed

Sadly our current Membership Secretary, Hazel Webb, has stepped down from her role. The committee would like to thank Hazel for her hard work, and ask any willing club members to contact the committee if they are able to take on the position.

Slideshow Hosts Needed

If any members are willing to put on a slideshow in the upcoming evening meets please contact the committee as soon as possible.

Multiple Summit Magazines

If a household has more than one individual member of the BMC they may be receiving multiple copies of the Summit Magazine. If these extra copies are not required members should contact the BMC membership department on 0161 445 6111 and the issue can be resolved. Ideally do it when the magazine is received and you will have your mailing sheet reference to hand.

Code of Conduct

There have been some complaints raised during the last few coach meets relating to unacceptable and obscene language being used. Please be mindful that there is a code of conduct as mentioned in the club constitution.

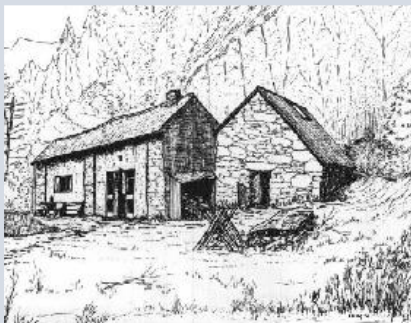
Social Evening at Akash

Annual "Akash Bash" Friday 29th November – if interested contact Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729.

Club members form a band

Joe and Ken Priest along with Henry Smith have formed a band playing some real old classics (The Doors, The Kinks, The Rolling Stones) so if you're looking for a night out come and see us at a charity evening at Claptrap in Stourbridge on Saturday 1st November. All donations in aid of the charity *Reverse Rett*.

Hut donations



Note the new prices:

Members - £6.00
 Guests - £10.00
 5-17 - £4.00
 Under 5s - Free

Stamped addressed envelopes are provided in the hut for payment.

To book

Email our new Hut Secretary Pete Poultney:

hut-secretary@wbmc.org

Please contact Pete *before* going to the hut.

WBMC members can purchase a hut key from Pete at a donation of £4

Coming up

22nd – 24th November 2019

Skills Weekend - Snowdonia



Venue: Club Hut, Nant Gwynant, Snowdonia

Course Aim: To equip club members and potential members with the skills, confidence and competence to walk in the British hills during summer conditions.

Course content:

- Clothing and equipment
- Navigation skills using map and compass
- Route planning
- Mountain Weather
- Mountain hazards and avoidance
- Dealing with Emergencies and Rescue Teams

So, if you would like to participate in the weekend, learn more and be independent on the mountains, or just want further information, please contact David (Geordie) Hind on either 07505364318 or geordiehind@gmail.com before 10th November 2019.

16th – 22rd February 2020

Scottish Week

Jonathan Howells: I have secured the Ben Nevis Inn hotel and leisure club for 2020 in Fortwilliam, but I could only get Sunday to Sunday 16th Feb to 23rd Feb.

Prices

- £35 pppn for twin/double
- £14 extra pn single room supplement.
- Children aged up to 4 are free.
- Children between the ages of 5 to 14 are half price when sharing with 2 full paying adults.

Unfortunately the hotel is not allowing dogs to stay over.

To secure a place I require 1 nights stay deposit.

You can pay me several ways:

PayPal: my email is Jhowells42@gmail.com.

Cheque: made payable to J. Howells

Because now I can scan cheques on my mobile phone, this will make it easier for me. This year I handed back used cheques to the original owners so they could destroy the cheques themselves if anyone is worried about this method.

Or you can pay with online banking – please text me and I will give you my bank details.

If you want to share a room I will try and help you and pair you up with someone but I can't guarantee I will be able to. You will need to find someone before paying a deposit.

If you are new members and unsure about what to expect please don't hesitate to contact me:

07821544407 – Jhowells42@gmail.com



Photo by Mike Smith

Skye and the Cuillin Ridge Traverse

By Ken Priest

With Photos by Dave Holland



The one and only time I have visited Skye was in 1987 with Pete Goddard, Graham Clark and John Sumner, when, from recollection we never actually managed to get out of the tent due to persistent rain.

So when Dave Holland from the Bromsgrove club suggested joining an Austrian Alpine Club trip I thought a return trip, despite the 10-hour journey, was overdue. I have been a member of the AAC for many years and never bothered to join their trips, so I thought I'd give it a try.



We discussed the itinerary for the week - and agreed that a traverse of the ridge was our priority and anything else a bonus, given that the weather is fickle and we are old.

Pete Goddard was the last member in the club, to my knowledge to have completed it, so I used Auntie Google, YouTube and any other sources to start studying and it seems that the odds are stacked against you on a first attempt. This is due in part to the weather, route finding and that many parties underestimate the length, complexity and style needed for a successful attempt.



Pete had done it in a single push; we are old and opted for a two-day approach with a bivvi, but with the added weight of rucksack of what that entails, sleeping mat, bags, cooking stuff, food etc.

I also contacted Ron and Jo Punshon, former members of the club who I have climbed with, and asked for some top tips; Ron in his usual laconic way said I was too old and knackered; he makes a point very succinctly.

The route is not exact and all the information from the local guides state that as long as you get from one end to the other it is classed as a traverse. There are three peaks with climbing options if desired and we decided to give these a go even though a little more gear would be required. We carried a 40m rope needed for abseils which are best taken so long as you can find them. Most of the remainder of the ridge is walking and scrambling in very exposed positions.



If the ridge did not have the numerous escapes from cols, it would be classified as a serious alpine route.

The ridge is called one of the most sought-after mountaineering expeditions in the British Isles covering 22 peaks, 12km of concentrated scrambling, and more than 3000m of ascent and descents.

Well, in a sunny week in May we did it, and a few other things, so if you want to find out if we completed the ridge (with the gigantic efforts of Ron cussing and swearing as he deposited our water supplies!) and see one or two photos, come along to the slideshow at the Cricketers on 10th October starting at 7:30pm.

Skye is a magical island, you have to visit. Ron and Jo have a cottage available for holiday lettings throughout the year: find out more at <https://www.alltmor.co.uk>.

Braithwaite Meet

7th September 2019

By Dave Jones



It is always good to see new faces on the monthly coach meets and September was a first meeting for Clayton Howen-Williams.

Clayton was excited at being on his first meet with the club and was in safe hands with his grandad at his side Phil Williams.

Phil had opted to take Clayton up Catbells and the views did not disappoint because it turned out to be a glorious day.

It always good to see young people attending coach meets and Braithwaite had three younger gentlemen and we hope you all had a good day in the mountains.

As a welcome to the club and a first meeting I thought it would be good to carry out a profile.

Ever since Clayton was a little boy he has shown a great interest in nature and the environment. He is always happy when he is outdoors.

Clayton went on his first cable car ride when aged 4 at Llandudno Wales and absolutely loved the views he saw from the top.

He is a keen bike rider often cycling along the canal towpaths and local routes enjoying the fresh air and waterside.

Clayton is aiming to do a coastal route on his bike next year; he also enjoys sports such as badminton and rounders, as well as Rugby which he participates in at PE at school.

Also he enjoys playing on his X-Box but he is more than happy to give it a miss for a day doing something outdoors.

Clayton is 12 years old and attends Wodensborough Ormiston Academy in Wednesbury, and at the moment likes the idea of being a Fireman when he grows up. I'm sure that we have some current members that could help you out with that.

Clayton had a fantastic day with the club and wanted to share his photo on Catbells with fellow members.

We hope you had a great day out with WBMC and we hope to see you on further meets. We hope you didn't tire your grandad out too much!



Possibly the Hottest GR 20 on Record

Part 3

By John Edwards



Continued from Part 2...

Wednesday (3/7): Col de Verde to Refuge d'Uscioulu A Two Ascent Full-mountain Day

The morning started with a long ascent up to the Bocca d'Oro (1840m) with wonderful views and then we crossed a plateau to the Refuge de Prati where we topped up our water. An undulating scramble due south along a high ridge took us close to many rocky peaks, none of which we visited, to another col, the Bocca di Laparo (1525m), where we spent just 20 minutes having lunch as dark clouds were building. Sure enough, within 10 minutes of setting off, heavy drops of rain started to fall and we had to put our cags on for the first and only time on the trip. Then thunder and flashed of lightning could be seen on the peaks ahead, so Martin took us down east from the ridge onto pathless slopes; just as well as I now see Abram's book says "there have been lightning fatalities along this ridge"! After about 45 minutes the rain ceased and the black clouds moved away so we were able to climb back up to the ridge at the Bocca di Furmicula (1950m) from which we could see our refuge for the night. On the descent I slipped and cut my thumb, plus my left little toe was hurting so at a stop I put on 2 pairs of new dry socks and that sorted that problem. You really do need to pay attention to your feet, knees, nether regions etc. and get them sorted asap or they'll get much worse the next day! The Refuge d'Uscioulu was our highest overnight of the route at 1750m and also one of the most 'primitive' with just 2 showers and 2 toilets for the 80+ people stopping the night there. I was 6th in the queue for the upper (cold) shower so walked 5 minutes down to the lower one where I was 5th in line, necessitating a 30 minute wait in the hot sun. To stop the wooden shower door swinging open you had to get the next person in the queue to hold the door from the outside and hope they'd let you out again when you'd finished! However, our meal on the hut terrace had 4 courses and the guardian came round at the end with a 'Mirto digestif' - a nice drop of myrtle liqueur - so I have happy memories of the place as well, especially as the bivvi was an extremely comfortable one.

Thursday (4/7): Refuge d'Uscioulu to I Crocci gîte *The Easiest Day on Our GR20 crossing the Manganu Plateau ☺*

Breakfast at 7am meant a late start 45 minutes later and a short climb brought us out onto the Arete a Monda, a superb rocky ridge, which we crossed sometimes on the E side in the sun and sometimes on the W side in the shade. This didn't affect me as much as usual as I'd decided to wear a white, long-sleeved shirt! So, although I say it myself, I almost certainly looked the smartest person on the trail that day! We then

descended through beech woods to the Bocca di l'Agnonua (1570m) and then crossed the highest & largest undulating moorland plateau on Corsica where we saw grazing cows, sheep & pigs.



We stopped for a riverside picnic with lots of blue damselflies flitting around and then passed several bergeries and ancient trees on our way to a very friendly private gîte run by some young Frenchmen. They were very proud that their establishment was one of the few not to have bed bugs (reputedly) so the only thing that walkers were allowed to bring into the dormitories was their sleeping bag. Needless to say this didn't affect me but my attempt to bivvi was delayed somewhat by a photographer trying to get a snap of the sun setting under the a***hole of a friend who was holding a one-legged yoga pose!



Possibly the Hottest GR 20 on Record (continued)

Friday (5/7): I Crocci to Col de Bavella

MEGA Tough & Amazing Scenery + A Summit

Probably the highlight day of the Southern Section of the GR20, with a gentle uphill leading to a col just below the summit of Monte Alcludina (2134m). For once our guide Martin offered us the chance to dump our rucksacks and go to the summit! It felt great to climb unencumbered for once and we were soon snapping summit photos by the huge cross.



A steep, slabby descent took us down to the Refuge d'Asinau and it was on this that we had another surprise – our sure-footed guide slipped and ended on his backside like the rest of us had done! After filling our water bottles we dropped down even further to 1300m before turning off left to the yellow-fleched Variante Alpine. A stiff steep ascent saw us reach a spectacular pass called the Bocca di u Pargulu (1662m) where there was a cave with a perforated wall through which the views were amazing. We lunched with a cool breeze drying our sweaty brows. A climb up a steep slab, assisted by a chain followed some descent and then more very tiring descent to a road. About 10 minutes before reaching the col my left foot slipped back on some dust and I felt my Achilles tweak. Maybe I had imagined it but, no, as we crossed the road to our accommodation someone asked if I was limping.



With just one day to go I was determined this wouldn't stop me so popped some ibuprofen before dinner and took it easy before turning in to our 5-bed dormitory.

Saturday (6/7): Col de Bavella to Conca

No Let Up: Relentless to the End!

We were told today had to be an early start as a minibus would be waiting for us at Conca at 2:30pm. So it was that we ate breakfast by headtorch on the terrace as the sun rose over the sea away in the distance. I took another 2 ibuprofen, along with my multivitamin & glucosamine tablets and treated myself to a couple of UK gingernuts! We set off at 5:40am and for the first 30 minutes it was all downhill through a pine forest but then came a climb to a col and a 50-minute level stretch to the Refuge de Paliri – the last on our route and a final chance to top up with water. Saw a sign saying 'Conca 5 hours' but it certainly wasn't downhill all the way; we had a significant ascent to the Bocca di u Sordu (1040m) followed by a lovely slabby descent to a ruined bergerie. The route certainly undulated and at noon we hit some very noisy pools on the Punta Pinzuta river – DoE and other parties were having a great time swimming and showing off in them!



It was scorchingly hot and my shirt, shorts & underwear was ringing wet with sweat so I didn't feel much like paddling in the full-on sun or eating much. After a very hot traverse we were still climbing at 1:15pm but when we turned a corner at Bocca d'Usciolu (587m) we could finally see the village of Conca (250m) below us. A few minutes more and we came across a dog in distress at the side of the path, panting & heaving in the shade.

Possibly the Hottest GR 20 on Record (continued)

We gave it some water and a piece of sausage and thought we'd have to leave it were it lay, but I tried a little 'come on then' and up she got and started trotting down with us. Shortly after we were overtaken by another group of walkers and it shot off down to civilization with them, such is gratitude! At 2:05pm we arrived at the sign signalling the southern end (or start) of the GR20 so we stopped for photos before the long walk into the town centre and La Tonnelle bar where we saw that it was 33°C in the shade. As I expected we had some time before the minibus came (at 3:30pm) to whisk us north to Hotel La Madrague near Bastia airport so we had beers & ice creams. Alas, the 2-hour journey along the coast didn't have the spectacular views I expected.

We checked in and, while Martin tried to get Wimbledon on the TV, I had a quick shower, then joined some of the others in the outdoor pool. And that was it really; all that remained was to enjoy the evening's food and drink and make it home the next day with minimal stress, not helped when we were seated in the plane and told we'd be sitting on the runway for the next 3 hours due to flight complications over Europe! However, this was all bluster, like so much to do with Europe is these days, and we took off within about 10 minutes!

The feeling of satisfaction at having successfully completed such a tough walk intensified over the next few days, although the 120 miles (190km) with 42,000 ft of ascent (& descent) – average 3,230 ft per day – had taken its toll and I was hobbling for around a fortnight back in UK. Although our daily distances varied from 8 - 28km (5 to 17.4 miles) the days were long, with the shortest day's walking taking 5 minutes under 7 hours and the longest 11 hrs 45 mins.

Our food on the trek was basic but nourishing & plentiful:

- Breakfast usually consisted of bread & jam with a bowl of tea or coffee and sometimes a fruit juice.
- Lunch was generally pasta, rice or couscous with various vegetables, + bread with cheese & sausage + maybe an apple or orange
- Evening meals were generally 3 courses with soup or salad starter, a pasta main dish with cheese or chocolate mousse to finish.

Although going with a company meant that we could not go off and climb some of the peaks that were very close to our route, it did mean we only had to carry overnight essentials such as a sleeping bag and a change of clothes, wet weather gear, first aid items, our lunch and snack items & around 3 litres of water as we had access to our main bags on 8 nights, which meant we could swap some gear around and enjoy the luxury

of 3 days with even lighter packs when we didn't have to carry overnight gear. Like Phil Matthews, with hindsight I feel it would have been better to have had 3 weeks to do the walk so one could have the odd rest day and others free to go peak-bagging.

All in all it was a tough, very spectacular walk that needed determination and careful attention to what one's body was telling you. One that gives great satisfaction to look back on, especially as there was only around 10 hours of easy 'normal' walking on the flat. Nowhere is the route as exposed as, say, Crib Goch and it is not highly technical: basically one needs the ability to be able to rock hop confidently and walk up and down granite slabs of varying degrees of slope without slipping - a technique soon learned. That and where it is very steep, a little bit of down climbing. If that sounds your cup of tea perhaps you should give it a go; you don't have to be 'superhuman' but maybe you should be aware of some 'Quick & Dirty Facts' from the internet:

"It's long and tough, not a walk in the woods! Don't underestimate it; you need to be fit, well-trained but most of all highly motivated. You'll often hear everything is pretty 'basic' – the path is basic, in fact there's no real path underfoot for 98% of the time and on many occasions if you don't see the next waymark or cairn you won't know where to go. Seriously. The huts are rudimentary and the toilets and cold showers are very primitive & overloaded. The dormitories are suffocating, noisy (snoring), smelly & crammed, plus most have bed bugs. I'm not kidding; they are a recurring issue. Many prefer to camp outside!"

For more info see gr20corsica.wordpress.com/about



Coach Meet – Howgills

Sunday 13th October 2019

Depart

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

07:20 – Penkrigde

Drop off

Wath (684051)

Sedberg (657922)

Pick up

Sedberg (657922)

The coach will leave Sedberg at 17:30

Required maps

OS 1: 25 000 Outdoor Leisure No 1 – Dark Peak

OS 1: 50 000 Landranger 91, 97 & 98



Photo from visitcumbria.com

Fares

Members – £20.00

Guests – £22.00

Under 16's and full-time students – £8.00

To book contact Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729.

Should you need to cancel do so no later than the Wednesday prior to the coach date or a £5.00 fee will be charged. Fail to turn up and the full coach fare will be expected.

Suggested routes

Route 1 from Wath (~17km / 10.6 miles)

Follow lane turn left at junction to fork Take left hand to path (676046) continue to path junction (669035) follow left hand path along Bowderdale Beck past sheepfold (675018) continue on to more sheepfolds on left hand side (678002) continue to junction (672975) continue S to join path (668967) Bear left to Calders path junction (672961) turn right follow path to sharp left at cairns continue past Swere Gill (664946) then at (658937) follow path to Sedberg.

Route 1 alternative

At (669035) take the right hand path over West Fell (669018) Hazel Gill Knot (672996) and the Calf (676970) Bran Rigg Top (668964) at Calders (672961) then continue as Route 1.

Route 2 From Sedberg (17km / 10.6 miles)

Leave Lockbank Farm (651924) up Settle Beck Gill (659928) across the flank of Arant Haw (662946) Continue to Calders (672961) turn NW to Bram Rigg Top (668964) continue to to The Calf (667970) Descend NE to small tarn turn E via Bowderdale Head and track E of Cautley Spout and onto the foot bridge (693968) going Sto Beck Side (690955) Fawcett Bank (684939) Under Bank (668925) and onto Sedberg .

Route 3 From Cross Keys (~7km / 4 miles)

Leave road at Footbridge (698969) and turn left on A Pennine Journey to footbridge (693967) Head NW along a path to Cautley Spout (681976) From here head to Dales High Way (671975) then go S to the Calf (667970) going S over Bram Rigg Top (668964) and continue on to Calders (672961) following Dales High Way back to Sedberg.

Coach Meet – The Black Mountains

Saturday 9th November 2019

Depart

Note the different pickup time at Edward St

07:00 – Penkridge

07:30 – West Brom. Edward St Car Park (B70 8NL)

Drop off

Crickhowell (215190)

Castle Inn (174296)

Pick up

Crickhowell (215190)

Required maps

OS 1: 25 000 Outdoor Leisure No 13 – Brecons East



Photo from breconbeacons.org

Fares

Members – £20.00

Guests – £22.00

Under 16's and full-time students – £8.00

To book contact Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729.

Should you need to cancel do so no later than the Wednesday prior to the coach date or a £5.00 fee will be charged. Fail to turn up and the full coach fare will be expected.

Suggested routes

Route 1 (~20.5km / 13 miles)

Crickhowell to Table Mountain (225207) path to Pen Cerrig Calch (217224) NW to Pen Alt - Mawr (206224) Descending steeply N follow ridge over Pen Twyn Glas (213257) and Mynnd Llyiau (202278) and the col (205286) Descend to Cwm Forest (183292) and the coach at Castle Inn.

Route 2 (~12.7km / 8 miles)

From Pungenford (173301) climb the ridge over Y Grib (193310) to Pen y Manllwyn (208311) Follow ridge SE to summit of Waun Fach (215299) Descend over Pen Trumau (204294) to col at (205286) Return as Route 1 to coach via Cwm Forest.

Route 3 (~8.5km / 5.5 miles)

From Castle Inn follow footpath past Heollgoden climb to summit trig of Mynydd Troed (166293) Follow ridge SE descend to A479 and the footbridge over Rhiangoll (185271) From here follow the track N back to the Castle Inn.