

THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS

This is the history of the Gwydyr Mountain Club since its foundation on March 7th, 1967, by Les Fowles, Penny Wilson, myself, and all those who attended the inaugural meeting. Like any history it will no doubt be taken to task for subjectivity, error, omissions and many other things. It is, however, the history of the Club seen through many eyes. The final decision as to what to include and not include, and the style of telling, has remained my sole prerogative: this is the privilege of the volunteer, but the opinions of others have been sought along the way and information has been gleaned from many different sources. Although this is a big, even rash, claim to make, I have tried to ensure that no one has been left out because everyone has contributed to the Club in different ways, some more than others due to inclination, circumstance and geography.

This Club has always fully embraced the play hard/work hard ethos and this is reflected in the various anecdotes. Underlining the fact that members make a club, we have a whole chapter on them. Over two hundred and fifty people are or have been members of the Club. A number have died, some on the mountains, some from the scourge of cancer, others from old age. In this chapter they are all remembered. There have been many other friends associated with the Club, people who never quite got round to joining, and they too figure in the story.

I would like to extend my grateful thanks to those who have read through sections of the history and offered helpful suggestions; to those who over the years have written articles for Club magazines and thus provided a rich store of information and memories; and to those who have helped in many other ways. Any quotes not attributed to members writing in the various magazines or elsewhere are from my personal diaries.

Finally I would like to thank Les Fowles for, among many things, reading the final manuscript; Hilary Cooper for the Index; Richard Kinsman for his help with the printing; and Fred Heywood for his help with the illustrations and in many other ways. So there it is. I can only appeal to readers to judge the book as a whole. I hope you enjoy it.

John Huxley
Heswall, Wirral
13th April 1999

ABOUT THE CLUB AND ITS NAME

Gwydyr (possibly from *Gwaed Erw*, Bloody Land) is a prominent proper name in the Betws-y-Coed area. Gwydir Castle, 16th century home of the tyrannical Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, lies in the Conwy valley just opposite Llanrwst. The name also occurs, although with a slightly different spelling, in Gwydyr Forest, Y Gwydyr, the pub at Dolwyddelan, and the Gwydyr Hotel at Betws-y-Coed, after which the Club was named at random when passing one winter's day in 1967. "Mountain" rather than "Mountaineering" was chosen largely at the instigation of Bruce Jensen, the Club's first President, who thought that while there was no doubt that the Club's major activity would be mountaineering in all its forms, nevertheless using "Mountain" would cast a broader net and involve people who liked wild places for whatever reason. Hence the famous first line of the constitution, unaltered to this day:

"The Club shall be known as the Gwydyr Mountain Club and shall exist to promote an interest in mountains and activities thereupon".

The Club was founded on March 7th 1967 and soon thrived. It now owns a substantial property at Capel Curig which provides an excellent base for both mountaineering and social activities. The Club is a mountaineering club in the broadest sense of the term: it welcomes everyone from gentle hillwalkers to climbers with ambitions for the Alps and further afield. There is an annual Meets Programme, based roughly on fortnightly meets with every other one being at Capel Curig; there are also a large number of "off-programme" events organised by smaller groups as well as a number of social events during the year. The Club meets every Tuesday at the Crown Hotel in Birkenhead and new members are welcome at any time.

ABOUT THE SECOND EDITION

By David Lane-Joynt

After the successful launch of Dave Gray's History of the Gwydyr Mountain Club from 1999-2019, I decided to publish a second edition in the same digital format of John Huxley's book about the history of the Club from its foundation in 1967 up until 1998.

I have scanned the book and converted the text into Word format, as well as scanning the photographs in the book. My thanks are due to Neil Harris for providing me with a copy of the book to potentially destroy. A big thank you also to Dave Gray for proof reading all the text; no mean task given all the Gaelic and Welsh names in the book.

Since John's book was published, digital technology has moved on, and publishing the book in digital format has freed me from the cost of producing colour photographs in paper format. In addition Photoshop can now do wonders to enhance the quality of old photographs. I am replacing as many of the old black and white photos with their better quality original colour photographs wherever I can get hold of the originals. I have also added a number of additional colour photographs.

I am particularly grateful to Mike McEneaney for making all his old photos available to me, and I have included a number of his photographs. Mike has written the profile on John Huxley. Peter Smedley and Mike/Bryan Gilbert have also given me access to some of their photographs, so thanks to them as well

Lastly I am grateful to John Huxley for providing me with a highly entertaining read, and also for making me realise again just how much the current members of the GMC owe to the founders and early members of the Club.

David Lane-Joynt
June 2021

[Return to Contents page](#)

[Go to next Chapter](#)