

ELSEWHERE IN BRITAIN

Snowdonia is an unforgettable place but there is a lot more of Wales to visit. For the GMC, two of the most accessible areas are the Clwydian Range and the Berwyn Hills, both ideal for worthwhile day-trips. The Clwyds, as they are colloquially known, are essentially a linear feature but with enough ground on their eastern side to create circular possibilities and some scope to the west also, depending on your inclination to descend steeply to the Vale of Clwyd. The Offa's Dyke Path runs right along the ridge and provides a spine for many of the walks. The straightforward Bwlch Pen Barras to Pen-y-Cloddiau and return, about 12 miles and well over three thousand feet of ascent, is an excellent walk if one is feeling jaded.



John Hall on Moel Famau in January 1982

The Berwyns, at over 2,700 ft, are a much more hearty proposition. The classic Main Ridge walk, based on Llandrillo, runs up to the remote Bwlch Maen Gwynedd and then along the ridge to Moel Sych before dipping down to Llyn Lluncaws. The route then passes under the cliffs before rising to the Bwlch again, over Cadair Bronwen, down to the Memorial Stone and back along a good track to Llandrillo, about sixteen miles. The pass of Milltir Gerrig, on the Bala to Llangynog road, provides easy access to the

Main Ridge for those preferring a high start (about 11 miles return to Cadair Bronwen) while there are also good walks to be had from the east side, including the ascent from Pistyll Rhaedr, a route used for Llyn Lluncaws high camps.

It was on one of these camps that a potential new member, who shall remain nameless, got rather drunk on whisky and had to be rescued from crawling about outside, on a freezing night, with not many clothes on. Such was his embarrassment that he failed to appear in the morning. After breakfast the rest of the party left the tents standing and climbed up onto the ridge. Towards the top, they looked down and saw him peering cautiously out of his tent. By the time they returned to the tents later in the afternoon he had gone. He appeared a few weeks later at the weekly meeting and insisted on buying a number of drinks, but in spite of assurances that his antics had been most entertaining, we never saw him again.

It was also on the Berwyns that members had the pleasure of guiding David Herbert, then Guide Dogs for the Blind Northwest Organiser, to the summit of Cadair Bronwen:

'It was a cold winter's day, with a heavy frost and excellent visibility. As the sheep were all down in the valley, David's dog was able to run free with our dogs. At the summit David, who had lost his sight in a road accident when he was sixteen, asked us to describe the view to him. It was a memorable day which made us feel both humble and very grateful'.

The Rhinogs are excellent walking country and many a high camp has taken place at Llyn Hywel, to the south of Rhinog Fach. Paul Jensen has done a solo wilderness backpack right across the Rhinog main ridge, starting at Barmouth and finishing at Capel Curig. Apparently



15th Anniversary Walk in 1982
Joyce Collins, Jan Coates, Elaine Green, Mike
Dagley, Lyn Jensen, John Hall, Mike Collins
On Berwyn Main Ridge



Don MacIntosh and Jeff Downey
On Berwyn Main Ridge



Dave Gray on Berwyn Main Ridge

the hardest part was getting to Barmouth from Capel by public transport. After some confusion at Blaenau Ffestiniog:

"Clearly, travelling by public transport requires a degree of expertise that I don't seem to possess as yet".

Eventually he got to Barmouth and headed thankfully north onto the ridge, arriving at the summit of Diffwys at 6p.m. Water was the next problem, so he descended Y Llethr to Llyn Hywel, rejecting the dodgy camping options available round the lake and heading instead for Llyn y Bi on the east side of the ridge:

"I found a patch of grass the size of a lounge carpet and pitched camp. I was very grateful for a slight breeze which kept the grey spectre of midges confined to the long grass as I prepared my evening meal of pasta and bolognese sauce. It was 10.15 when I eventually crawled into the tent with a cup of coffee and a most welcome glass of scotch. It had been a hard day".

Nuala Mulholland and Christine Rowlands did something similar, only south from the Chapel and ending up at Machynlleth. Arenig Fawr and Moel Llyfnant, south of Llyn Celyn, make an excellent little horseshoe and of course the Arans, southwest of Bala, are excellent walking country, Aran Fawddwy being the highest summit in Wales outside central Snowdonia.

Andy Davies has lived in Bryncreg (Tywyn) for a number of years with his wife Ann (sadly, no longer with us) and their daughter, Nia. One day, on Andy's birthday, Ann dropped Andy and John Huxley off at the highest point of the road over to Cross Foxes, the idea being to walk back to Bryncreg via the long, westerly ridge heading towards Cardigan Bay. It was a hot August day and, about five miles beyond Penygadair, water supplies were running low. Andy indicated a very dry-looking valley to the north. "We'll get some down there" he said. It looked pretty unpromising but he was proved right: three feet below the surface of the bog was a fairly lively little stream. It was a life-saver. There have also been some excellent high camps on Cader.



Mike Gilbert, Mike McEneaney & Bryan Gilbert
Solva in 1980

South of the Arans and east of Cader lie an interesting line of hills above the north edge of the Dyfi Forest. The Club had an excellent day there in October 1995, crossing a number of 2,000ft summits (including Maesglase, 675m and Waunoer, 670m) and passing by a superb and virtually unknown waterfall.

The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path and the sea-cliff climbing to be had in the area occasionally cause the climbers and the walkers to come together: this happened in May 1995 when the climbers, arriving at dusk, spotted Hilary Cooper on her way

to join the rest in the pub. They slowed down and Bryn Roberts said "How's it going, sister?".

"..... off!" shouted Hilary, convinced she was about to be abducted by strange men. Her mistake only came to light later on when the climbers, having pitched their tents, arrived at the



On the Brecon Beacons



Also on the Brecon Beacons



Mike Davies, Mark Barley, Mike McEneaney, John Huxley, Marilyn McEneaney
Hilary Cooper, Zoey Ryan and Derek Burrows in Dovedale

pub and said "How's it going, sister?". Apparently they had been too convulsed with laughter to explain their true identity. Quite long days were had on the Coastal Path, often arranged around a visit to the pub at Solva or to the Sailor's Safety Inn. There was also the range of Mynydd Preseli, inland, and the brooding starkness of Pentre Ifan, the neolithic burial chamber.

In the eighties the Club stayed at Llanthony Priory in the Black Mountains, a strange place which must be one of the few ancient monuments to have a cellar bar. That was the night of Vikki Melbourne's interview nerves. Her condition later on was solely due to the interview she had endured earlier that day and nothing to do with the three pints of Stella Artois she had consumed in rapid succession. Anyway, a most pleasant day was had on the long ridges of the Black Mountains. The following day, Huxley led the party (by car) up onto Mynydd Eppynt, where there was, he said, a marvellous little pub which took one back to the eighteenth century. Disaster! The pub had been "improved", all the gas lighting had gone, and the two-century flashback ruined for ever. Depressed, they had a quick drink and descended to Llandindrod Wells where a putting course provided afternoon entertainment. The weekend was rounded off with dinner at the Three Tuns at Bishop's Castle.

The Club has been to the Brecon Beacons on a number of occasions. The earliest recorded meet was to Ystradfelte to stay in the Croydon Caving Club hut, courtesy of Brian Dibben who was a member. Just opposite the hut was a rather unusual pub with a peculiar, set-back hatch affair through which the drink flowed. This was the famous occasion which saw the re-emergence of Dave Davies (Dave the Puke), who had met the Gilberts (who had just joined the Club) at university. For some reason, probably the weather, the action day was on the Sunday when the Beacons were ascended.

Later, Hilary Cooper organised a camping meet to the Brecon Beacons, camping by a pub. An excellent eleven-mile day was had on Pen-y-fan.

In England, there have also been good walking meets in Shropshire (which offers many day-trip opportunities), the Malvern Hills, the Ridgeway and Cornwall.

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