



# The Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter

October 2018

PROMOTING AN INTEREST IN MOUNTAIN ACTIVITIES

## Editorial by David Lane-Joynt

We have not had a Gwydyr Newsletter for a while now, and I have volunteered to take over as editor to get the newsletters started again. So welcome.

My aim is to produce a newsletter about every three months, but this will depend very much on you, the members, and the material that you send me. We are a very active club, and there is a lot going on. So I hope to publish articles which reflect this and cover some memorable meets. There is some catching up to do so this issue covers some of this, and we may have some more newsletters initially

The extremely challenging Welsh 3000 event is one of the most important meets in the Gwydyr calendar. It was particularly close to the heart of John Huxley, one of our founder members, and each year the memorial plate, given in memory of John, is awarded for outstanding effort in this event. Last year this was awarded to Richard Smith, and we have his account of a particularly epic event.

We also have Paul Sinclair's account of his ascent of Kilimanjaro last year accompanied by Kevin McEvoy and nephew Tom.

Finally, to show that we are not just a walking club, I have written a small piece on a memorable afternoon's visit to Helsby

Apart from accounts of our meets, I also think there

is scope to include some articles that are more "magazine" in type and cover topics which I hope would be of interest to the members. Many of you go on holiday to mountain areas in this and other countries, and an article on this might be interesting to others in showing what that area or county has to offer.

So next month we will have an article from Dave Gray on a trip to the Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides.

I look forward to receiving your article(s) and some nice photographs to illustrate it

### Inside This Issue

The 2017 Welsh 3000 Event by Richard Smith	2
The Ascent of Kilimanjaro by Paul Sinclair	5
Climbing in the Gwydyr Club by David Lane-Joynt	8

## Welsh 3000's event – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017 by Richard Smith

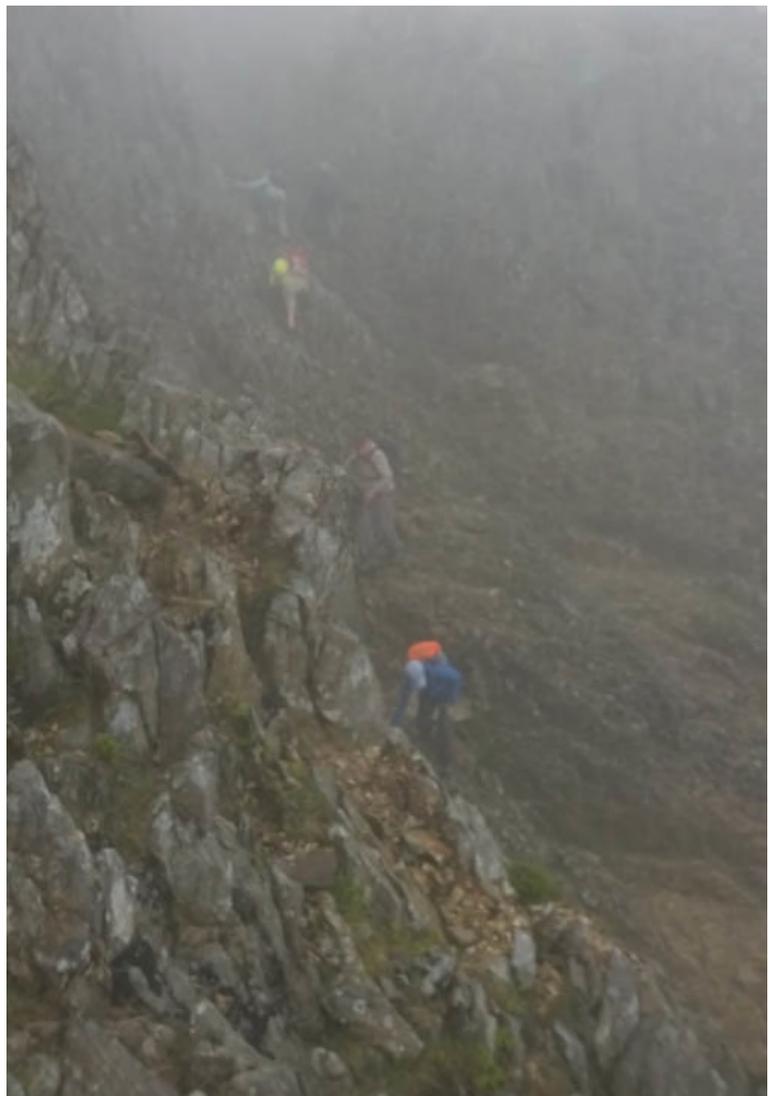
Ten members of the club attempted the Welsh 3000's event - a walking group of 8 (Paul, Ronnie, Steve, Kevin, Glenn, Helen, Kay and Richard), and two fell runners (Geoff and Simmo). The walking group was up at 2.30am, forcing down a hasty breakfast, before being ferried to Pen y Pass by the support team. We set off in the dark and scrambled up to Crib Goch as the sun rose, revealing a damp mist swirling around the summit. Glenn suffered a leg strain on the way up and wisely decided to head back down.

We reached the summit at 05.30 (see photo to right), so then the clock started ticking for our 3000's attempt.



On descending from the pinnacles of Crib Goch, we discovered that the route had been marked out with small red flags for a fell running race, so this assisted with navigation for the first part of the day. Heading up to peak no.2 (Garnedd Ugain), we realised that the fell runners, numbering about 200, were going the opposite way to us, requiring some careful passing manoeuvres on the narrow sections of the ridge.

We reached the top of Snowdon at 06.45 and headed down the railway track towards Nant Peris. Halfway down the railway track, we were overtaken by Simmo going at full tilt, clearly trying to put as much distance between himself and Geoff (who had decided to have a lie-in at the hut). A tricky descent down the side of the mountain saw us reach the first food support station in Nant Peris at 08.27. Here we were met by Chris and Janet, with mugs of hot tea and some excellent fruitcake.



Scrambling in the mist on Crib Goch

We took the opportunity of a brief rest before tackling what we knew would be one of the hardest sections of the day – the long slog up the grassy slope of Elidir Fawr. This is the longest stretch of ascent in the 3000's and half-way up Ronnie decided that discretion was the better part of valour and turned back towards Nant Peris. Also, we were overtaken by Geoff on this section, in hot pursuit of Simmo.

Having reached the top of Elidir Fawr, the next part of the challenge was reasonably easy, as there are no massive ups and downs over Y Garn, Glyder Fawr and Glyder Fach. That is, until you reach the horrible descent of the Bristly Screes. Here, you join a steady stream of people slowly abusing their knee ligaments and trying to slalom down the loose rubble. Upon reaching the col, you are then confronted with the sight of Tryfan's South ridge rearing up in front of you. Tryfan is a challenging scramble at the best of times, but when you have already been walking for 12 hours, it is soul-destroying.

When the summit of Tryfan is reached, a debate starts to form in your head – shall I keep on going or drop out when I reach the Ogwen car park? The thought swings back and forth like a pendulum; there is a momentary spark of energy when you think that you might be able to complete all 15 peaks, followed by a low point as one more knee-jarring step down the West Gully convinces you to call it a day. This debate was still playing out in each one of us, as we reached the welcome sight of a blue van, to be known henceforth as "Ronnie's Diner".

Overheard conversation:

*Helen to Kay:* "Are you carrying on?"

*Kay:* "I'm not sure, I'm knackered. What are you doing?"

*Helen:* "I'm not sure either, what are you doing Paul?"

*Paul:* "No, I've had enough, my knees are agony!"

*Steve:* "Well, it's quite sunny now, I think we can all make it. And I've got a wind-up torch just in case".

*Kev:* "I'm never ever ever going to do this again, so having come this far, I may as well press on!"

*Kay:* "OK, me too!"

*Helen:* "And me!".

Thus it was that five of us put our boots back on and hobbled towards Pen Yr Ole Wen in the early evening sunshine. Little did we know what was in store



The ascent of Pen yr Ole Wen took nearly two and a half hours, the last major ascent of the day. At the top, we had good views back across the valley to Tryfan, but some ominous looking clouds were beginning to appear on the horizon

We pressed on over Carnedd Dafydd, across to the out-on-a-limb Yr Elen, and up to the summit of Carnedd Llewellyn, peak number 12. It was 21.40 and still three peaks to go. I looked across at the encroaching gloom and threatening clouds and urged the others to hurry! We looked across to the next summit, Foel Grach, and could just make out its vague summit. The first drops of rain hit our weary heads. Waterproofs on! Within a matter of minutes, it was pitch black and the wind was picking up strength. We hurried on as best we could and reached the rocky outcrop of the summit. It was several years since I last visited this peak, but I had a vague recollection that there was a small shelter just below the summit. The thought occurred to me that we could shelter in there for a while, have some food and drink, and see if the weather improved. Upon rounding a rock, we saw the welcoming light of a window and the shadow of a door. We pushed open the door and looked inside. A tent had been erected inside which covered the whole floor. There was barely room for one of us to squeeze in through the hut door. It turned out that the tent belonged to two other guys attempting the Welsh 3000's.

We exchanged a few comments about how bad the weather was; they told us that the next stretch was a "featureless bog and difficult to navigate in the dark", so they had decided to sleep in the hut and wait until daylight before completing the route. It was clear that they weren't about to take the tent down and make room for us. In any case, it was debatable whether eight people could fit in and we knew that our support team would be waiting at Two Stones for us to arrive. So it was back out into the storm! Two more 3000ft peaks to do!

We took a compass bearing for Garnedd Uchaf and set off, counting double steps, 60 for every 100m. Stop – record the number on the knitting counter attached to my compass string. Then the next 60 steps. Stop. Record. And so on. Eventually, the vague top of Garnedd Uchaf appeared through the rain by the light of our headtorches. One more summit to go, just over a mile away. Foel Fras.

Foel Fras has a stone wall running close to the summit, which also gives the direction of de-

scent. Struggle to get the map out in the wind and rain. Then set another bearing for the corner of the stone wall. Then off we go again, compass held out in front, each turn of the knitting counter telling us that the stone wall was 100m closer. 800m done, should be close to the wall now.

No sign of a wall. Head torches vainly attempting to pierce the darkness and rain.

50m further on – what's that? Thank God, it's a wall. We love you wall! Another 300m following the wall, and there it is – the trig point of Foel Fras – the fifteenth and final peak. It's 23.30 and we have completed the Welsh 3000's. It's exactly 18 hours since we were on the top of Crib Goch. Now all we have to do is get down.

We tramp on in the rain, shouting above the wind to make sure we stick together. By now, we are tired and soaked to the skin. To paraphrase Ernest Shackleton "I could tell at this point that the team's morale was beginning to fade".

We stumble on in a zombie-like state, the sound of Steve winding up his wind-up torch beginning to fray our nerves. Keep on following that lovely wall. Downwards. Eventually, we see a faint light across the hillside – could it be Glenn flashing his headlights? We reach a track with a gate and regroup. Kevin attempts to carry on along the wall – he seems very attached to it. We persuade him to follow us through the gate and along the track. Before long, we are met by Glenn and DLJ. "Are we pleased to see you"! Turns out they were giving us another 30 minutes before alerting mountain rescue. Soon, we are sitting in Doug and Gail's campervan drinking hot chocolate and experiencing the warm glow that is only appreciated after a significant hardship. The hardship of 29 miles, 12,000ft of ascent, 12,000ft of descent, all in 22 hours of walking. What's not to like!

Many thanks to all our support team, who were up at 2.30am to get us to the start and were waiting at Two Stones at 2.00am the following day. We could not have done it without you.

## The Roof of Africa - by Paul Sinclair

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Kev, Tom and I finally landed in Tanzania to be greeted by 33 degree temperatures and a minibus that transferred us to our hotel for the night. The evening was spent getting to know our fellow trekkers. The following day it was back on the minibus to take the long and dusty track to the western edge of the Kilimanjaro National Park at the Lendorossi Gate and on to the trail head of the Lemosho route, where we finally met our team of Tanzanian guides, porters and cooks.

At last the trek could begin as the trail headed steadily up through the pristine rainforest of the Lemosho Glades towards Mt Mkubwa Camp where after a large dinner we attempted to sleep, surrounded by the screeches of rival troops of Colobus monkey's.

Rising at first light the trail took us through more rainforest before we ascended a long ridge known as The Elephant's Spine that ultimately emerged from the dense forest onto an alpine moorland of tree heathers that forms the vast Shira Plateau. By the end of the day we had crossed the entire plateau and ascended to 3,868 metres.

The following day saw us take a slow trek through a beautiful but barren moon like landscape until we reached an altitude of 4,631 metres where we stopped for lunch at the impressive and imposing Lava Tower. From here we descended through steep ravines, lined with Giant Senecio trees and cacti until we reached our camp for the night nestled beneath the mighty Barranco Wall.

In the morning we enjoyed a fun scramble up the volcanic rock of the Barranco Wall at 4,059 metres before dropping down into the Karanga Valley to camp at 3,865 metres.

Next day saw another steady climb. This time towards Barafu Camp perched on a narrow ridge. Barafu Camp turned out to be cramped, filthy and smelly. We were only too glad that our guides had secured permission from The National Park Authority for us to bypass Barafu and camp at the unofficial Kosovo Camp which our group had to ourselves. After a hot meal it was early to bed to attempt to sleep before we were woken at midnight to make the overnight trek to the summit.



The view over the African plain



The Lava Tower



Paul and a view towards the mighty Barranco Wall (also below)



By torchlight we zig-zagged our way up an unrelenting scree slope in pitch black and bitter cold. The pink glow of sunrise emerging over the crater rim as we appeared on Stella Point was a very welcome sight. Seeing the awesome glaciers that surround the crater rim bathed in orange light was jaw droppingly stunning. From Stella Point we then traversed the crater to the summit of Uhuru Peak, the 5,895 metre 'roof of Africa' where Kev produced a GMC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mug that was hastily put into use with a nip of Bushmills Whiskey.



With summit conquered we made a rapid descent down the scree to rest at Kosovo Camp before pushing on down the mountain to sleep at Millenium Camp on the edge of the rainforest.

The last leg of the trek took us from Millenium Camp down through the verdant forest to Mweka Gate for a celebration meal and our first cold beer in almost a week. The traditional tipping ceremony for our porters and guides provided our hosts with one last chance to regale us with singing and dancing as we all looked forward to a hot shower and (of course) more cold beer.



Kev at Karanga Camp with our clearest view of the summit

## Climbing in the Gwydyr Club by David Lane-Joynt

The Gwydyr Club has always covered a wide range of activities. Our meets range from relatively easy walks rights through to really challenging events like the Welsh 3000, but most meets are walking meets with maybe some scrambling involved.

A relatively small number of us have been doing any rock climbing, but recently there has been increased interest in going climbing. We have regular Tuesday evening meets at the Awesome Walls indoor climbing centre in Liverpool, and we plan to alternate this sometimes with going bouldering at the Hanger. These sessions are proving popular, and if you want to join us we usually meet up at the Stork at 6.15 to share transport across to Liverpool

The photo shows Richard at Awesome Walls on the “pinnacle”, which is sadly no longer, and has been replaced by a “Click and Climb” centre.



When possible and the weather is suitable, a few of us are going climbing outside. I remember one memorable afternoon in late July when Oli had a free afternoon, and we decided to go to Helsby. We were then joined by Jon.

Helsby has a long history as a training ground for some very fine climbers. The sandstone rock can be fragile, and leading is a serious business, so we decided to try out some of the routes on a top-rope.

The most famous route at Helsby is “Flake Crack”, a steep crack up a corner which is best tackled by jamming, although it can be done with a strenuous layback. We all had a go at this route. With modern rock shoes the route is now a lot easier, and can be protected with camming devices, but it is easy to see why it was such a challenge in big boots long before such things as camming devices were ever dreamed of. In those days the only way to get any protection at all was to try and jam a stone in the crack to form a choc-stone.

Jon at the top of Flake Crack, climbing in fine style

To the left of Flake Crack are two fine VS's, Twin Caves Crack and Dinnerplate Crack, which we all climbed. Twin Caves Route is described in the guide-book as "An enjoyable, well protected tussle up the steep crackline. I can certainly confirm the steep bit, as shown by the photo on the right of me climbing out of the first of the caves—enjoyable also. Oli enjoyed it too as shown by the photo below with him in the second cave.

