



An excellent turnout for the Bryn Alyn meet, the first meet of the year

The Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter

January 2019

Editorial AN INTEREST IN MOUNTAIN ACTIVITIES by David Lane-Joynt

This month we follow on from Mike McEneaney’s account of how the early club members found the Hut to Roger’s account of how they raised the money to pay for it.

Chris Harris seems to specialize in walks that are challenging, to say the least. Last year he and 6 others chose to take on the Llangollen Round—just 33 miles and 6,600 ft of ascent

And Dave Chadwick tells us about walking with the French.

So keep the articles coming, and the next newsletter will be when I get back from New Zealand



In the Lakes for the Kendal Mountain Festival weekend

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It is winter now on the last club weekend at the Hut

How we raised £2,000 to pay for the hut and the cottage by Roger Hughes

I take Mike's first line from the last news letter "From the very outset of the club, it was always the members' ambition to own a property, preferably in North Wales".

So - to really understand how we raised the money, we need to go back to the very start of the club in early 1967.

Beer had just gone up from 2 shillings a pint to half a crown, two and sixpence; that is 12.5p in today's money. This reflected the huge move over to mass production by the big breweries, the introduction of Whitbread Tankard and Watneys Red Barrel and the disappearance of cask ale.

As we wrote the constitution we agreed we needed to start saving, that there should be some sort of subscription to belong to the club, and beer played a very large part in those early discussions.



The picture of the Hut and Cottage that hangs in Roger's house

It seemed a good idea to collect half a crown off every person who came to the weekly pub gathering, and a further half a crown off each person on each meet. This way, we began to accumulate funds steadily rather than asking for an initial subscription to an organisation which might not continue. This became a bit of a chore for the treasurer, and after a couple of years we moved to an annual subscription of £4. I realised how successful this policy had been when in 1971 I was working in Cardiff and went to a South Wales Mountain Club meeting in the pub in Taffs Well. They were agonising over the cost of work on their hut at Deiniolen above Llanberris and I asked them what their subscriptions were. They were struggling to collect £1.10 annually. They were incredulous when I said our subs were £4, and I was able to tell them rather grandly that £4 had been a substantial reduction to our members who had been paying half a crown a week until recently!

This then explains how we had £300 in the bank after 5 years – worth £4,070 in today's money.

But it was £2,000 we needed, so I made an appointment with our bank manager to arrange a loan.

Thus John Huxley, Les Fowles, John Beamer and I were ushered into the manager's office at NatWest Bank 22, Castle Street to borrow £1,700 to make up the £2,000 needed to buy Tan y Garth.

The manager pursed his lips and talked a little about our ability to repay, and asked us what security we had. We asked what he had in mind, and he said "Stocks and Shares, Property, Insurance Policies maybe". We said we had none of those, and he tapped his finger tips together, looked at each of us in turn and said "you are what we in the bank call men of straw". We were shown out.

Back on Castle Street, I was asked what we were going to do now. I said we should go round to Brunswick Street and review the situation in the Slaughter House over a pint or two.

The solution we came up with was to go to the members and ask each of them to apply for an unsecured loan of £100. This would be like borrowing just under £1,500 today, but of course there were no credit cards that you could simply run a debt on, you had to go to your bank and apply for a loan.

History tells us that 14 members were able to come up with the sum one way or another, and we had the great pleasure of going back to the bank a fortnight later with £1,700 and able to say “here is £1,700, now will you lend us the other £300?”.

Happily, he did!

For the record, a number of the 14 who raised the money agreed to leave their £100 with the club for it to be treated as purchase of life membership, and this is the origin of a few life members still with us.

The Llangollen Round—4th August 2018 by Chris Harris

This is a long walk, perhaps the most challenging of the one day summer walks I've organised, 33 miles with 6600ft of ascent. The walk normally starts in Llangollen but this adds on an extra ascent and descent of a few hundred feet so I decided to start and finish at Carrog where there is easy parking and a good pub for the off the hill pint.

7 walkers (right) volunteered for this challenge Dave Chadwick, Kev McEvoy and John Simpson, Richard Smith, Chris Harris, Bill Morrison, and Helen Grant, with Janet Harris and Kay Smith joining the group for the 12.4 mile section



from the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct to Ponderosa cafe at the top of Horseshoe Pass. Once again Glenn was able to support us as he was recovering from yet another injury (is that why he's called the chair man ?) allowing us to travel light and refuel at the aqueduct and the Ponderosa Cafe.

After my pep talk "no faff stops, just keep moving" we managed to start on time at 0530 hrs from Carrog in cool misty conditions. The first section of the walk from Carrog to the top of Moel Fferna, 2.7 miles with 1,650 ft ascent is the longest climb and the highest point of the walk but not necessarily the hardest. Walking through the woods there's about a mile section passing through a grouse farm where dozens of birds honked and flapped as they flew into the fences trying to escape us. The route meanders along the ridge South of Llangollen, an area new to most of us. The misty conditions meant few stops for photos and we arrived at the aqueduct in just over 5 hours as estimated, moving average 3mph.

Possibly the hardest part was negotiating the jelly-legged tourists on the aqueduct path.

Glenn, Kay and Janet were waiting in the carpark with socks, food and drink.



After a leisurely early lunch we started the second section to The Ponderosa cafe. Logically it is up hill to the Horseshoe pass but the gradient is really fairly gentle. The skies had cleared and it was perfect walking weather. The route is very well way marked with "Llangollen Round " markers but we (I) managed to make an error at Trevor Hall, missing about 6 footpath signs pointing the way. Perhaps distracted by the "Guests This way" sign pointing away from the magnificent entrance to the hall.



Upwards onto the moors we reached the Panorama, thus named for obvious reasons and then onto a path looking down onto Castell Dinas Bran with amazing views across to the ridge we had walked earlier and rather disturbingly a good view of Llantysilio mountain covered in smoke.

"We'll worry about that when we get there", I said. As we neared Worlds End Richard stopped to check a painful blister which had developed at a surprising rate. He declared that he did not think he could manage to walk to the end and was struggling to walk much at all. We phoned Glenn for support, fortunately 4G exists at Worlds End. Glenn was able to meet us but not without difficulty. The Fire Brigade were at The Ponderosa and the road was closed but he managed to get to us via the old Horseshoe pass. We dumped Richard, drank water and continued on our way. We decided against the additional couple of hundred yards to visit the infamous Sir Watkin Tower.

As we passed the radio masts above the Ponderosa we could see the full extent of the mountain which had been burning for 2 weeks. There was no way we could continue from the Ponderosa over the top. Fortunately Glenn had managed to get back to the Ponderosa so we were able to refuel. We had made it in plenty of time, 1600 hrs as it closes at 1700 hrs. Glenn went in grabbed some cups of tea to be told that they were closing early. Well, there were no customers as the road was closed.



We continued by contouring round Llantysilio mountain on the low level path. A bit longer but missing about 600ft ascent. We walked through scorched pasture and a surprising number of dead sheep. If you could not see them you could certainly smell them. Presumably victims of the prolonged dry spell.



A final sharp descent through the woods brought us to the finish in Carrog at 1940hrs. Pretty good as my optimistic estimate was 1900hrs finish. A quick change of footwear and those that did not have more pressing engagements retired to the Grouse Inn for a very well earned off the hill pint. 33.5 miles and 5500ft ascent total .

At least I did learn that the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct is at Froncysyllte, one is the place the other the bridge. Not that I can pronounce either.

Les Sommets d' Espinouse by Dave Chadwick

This September I stayed for a month in Abeilhan, a village near Beziers in the province of Occitanie in southern France. Like many villages in the area it has an organisation known as the Foyer Rural. This is a voluntary organisation which organises a variety of educational, recreational and social activities for the people in the village. It has within that structure an active walking group of 15-20 people. They do one walk of 10-20 miles each month on a Sunday. It has a sub group which does Wednesday walks. It's profile in terms of age and gender is similar to the GMC. I was able to join them on their first walk of the season.

We assembled in front of the Mairie at 07.30 (in darkness) on Sunday 16th of September. M. Guy Chapez, the leader, briefly described the Walk. His wife then allocated walkers to cars indicating how much to pay the driver- 4€ on this occasion. Our first task was to get to Douch, which involved narrow roads, hairpin bends and occasional road signs. This took just under an hour to the car park (right)



The Walk was set in the Caroux Espinouse Massif starting in the hamlet of Douch (which is on GR 7' a footpath of the French national footpath network). The massif of the Caroux Espinouse is located on the southern edge of the massif Central. The highest point is the summit of the Espinouse, which rises to 1 152 m altitude. The aerial currents coming from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean make this massif an exceptional landscape. On the one hand the plants typical of Mediterranean regions, populate the southern slopes (Green Oak, Heath and Brooms), and on the other side rather on the tops the forest consists of a beech and reforestation in coniferous (fir, spruce and pine).



We set out at 08.30 on a clear day with the temperature starting to rise. We walked NW through a series of crags and gorges leading to the valley of the Vialais, overlooked by the Montagne d'Aret and then N through the Bois de Aret. The terrain here is largely woodland and Mediterranean scrub, which provided some welcome shade as the temperature increased.

We had a brief stop at the Pont de Vialais (right), and then started the climb up onto the Espinouse ridge from where we had an excellent view over to the Med and the hills and country side in between. Once on the ridge we were open to the sun with



temperatures about 33C for the rest of the day. The paths were quite stoney but there was a complete absence of stiles.

We followed the ridge south to the highest point of the day and stopped for lunch (15 mins) and siesta (20mins).

The walk continued south along the ridge back to Douch and the cars. It was about 14.00pm when we reached Douch. We had covered about 9 miles and about 1000 ft of ascent in about 5 1/2hours, depending on who's GPS you looked at. I got through 2 litres of water in the course of the day. The walk concluded with cider and biscuits and a swift return to Abeilhan.



The most challenging part of the walk was being the only native English speaker. I thought I could get by with my conversational French but I quickly realised that it was woefully inadequate. We managed with a mix of French and English plus many gestures.

I'll certainly join them again, if they'll have me next time we are in Abeilhan and I'll have to join their French for the English course.



Les randonneurs abeilhanais