

The Gwydyr Magazine

August **2015**



Contents

Editorial	3
The Big List by Dave Gray	4
Preamble to a Cycle to Snowdonia by Geoff Brierley	11
Once and Future Munros: the CMC and the munros by Dave Gray	16
The Sandstone Trail by Chris Harris	22
Cycle to Snowdonia by Geoff Brierley	23
Winter in Assynt by Melanie Day	28

Editorial

Welcome to my first attempt at producing a magazine for the Gwydyr Mountain Club. It has taken much longer to produce than I originally envisaged, for two main reasons. First of all my own ineptitude in terms of desk top publishing and actually putting the whole thing together. There have been many frustrating hours spent in front of the computer while the air turned blue as I struggled to achieve what I originally thought would be a fairly easy task. Secondly, it has taken a while to generate sufficient content for the magazine. I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to those members who have taken the time and effort to produce articles for this magazine, without your contributions we would have nothing. I also hope that, having read what you have done, others will consider contributing to future editions of the magazine.

As you will see we have six quite different articles. They differ in content, in length, in terms of style and in their perspective. Some relate to recent activity, some are rooted in the past, while some look back but with the intention of looking towards the future.

The first article by Dave Gray sprang from an idea that he and Bryan and Mike Gilbert had last year. It is an attempt to list all the 'major' achievements of the club over the last five decades. I think this is an excellent idea, particularly as the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the club is just over a year away. I feel that is a very interesting way to help celebrate this important milestone in the club's history. In fact it is such a good idea that at the most recent committee meeting we discussed this and came to the conclusion that we should not only encourage members to get involved in this list but that we should take it even further and look to develop a digital archive which could act as a permanent and continuing history of the club. Given that the club has been in existence for nearly five decades and we have members who have been involved from the start and many others who been members for a long time, we should have a wealth of material which we could scan and digitise in order to preserve this for posterity. Therefore as well as encouraging as many members as possible to contribute to the 'Big List', I would ask members to look out any old magazines, club documents or even photographs that could be used in this digital archive. I would also welcome any ideas that people may have regarding how we could organise or arrange such material. I am happy to coordinate both the suggestions for the Big List and the gathering of material for the archive, at least initially. Depending on the amount of material we might need to establish a sub-group to deal with it all. However, in the early stages send any suggestions or material to me.

Geoff has submitted two related articles about a cycle trip to Wales. The first deals with the planning and the second the actual trip itself.

Dave Gray's second article relates to his experience of completing all the munros and looks forward to other club members becoming completers.

Chris Harris has submitted an account of a doing the Sandstone Trail in one day. A quite unique event, as I don't recall anything like this having been done by the club before, or at least not in my time as a member. Perhaps it may inspire others to think of new challenges?

The final article is an account by Melanie Day of a day on the two Assynt munros last winter. As you will see the views are spectacular. It is indicative of British weather that just a few days after Easter I was in Dundee which was enjoying an early heat wave. I was sitting out having coffee in my sister's garden. Alas as we now know it did not last long.

I hope you enjoy this magazine.

Pete Mann

GMC 50 YEARS 'BIG LIST'

FIRST WORKING DRAFT

Dave Gray

Back in 2014 when Mike and Bryan Gilbert and I were staying in Blairgowrie and were in the pub, we tried to make a list of 'everything major the Club had done'. I'd forgotten about it till Pete's recent appeal for articles. So here is a list based on our memories plus a quick glance through John's book, covering 1967 to now, as a first draft for people to add to and correct via Pete Mann if they want - maybe looking forward to 2017? I have put in a few blanks to start balls rolling perhaps...I believe there's a lot this list must miss out!

I've included things done by people who were members, future or past members at the times concerned; and like the great Sir Hugh Munro's list, this list is subjective; there are no rules as to what counts as major, and I've not tried to show exhaustively everything our most active members have done on grounds of showing peoples' achievements in relative not absolute terms. I've also on grounds of space left out the Welsh 3000's material. My apologies for any errors of commission or omission in all this, 'mistakes' are down to me (not Mike & Bryan)!

'7 Summits'

Mt Everest (Asia) Andy Chapman

Aconcagua (S. America) Sue Taylor

 Bill Sutherland

Mt Vinson (Antarctic) Andy Chapman

Mt Elbrus (Europe) Bill Sutherland

Kilimanjaro (Africa) Helen Beddows

 Andy Chapman

 Bryan Gilbert

 Mike Gilbert

 Pete Smedley

Mt Kosciuszko (Australia) John Huxley

Other 8000m peaks

K2 Alan Rouse

Chu Oyo Andy Chapman

Other (Overseas) Country Summits

Mt Alexandra (DR Congo)	Bryan Gilbert
	Mike Gilbert
Mt Kenya (Kenya)	Bryan Gilbert
	Mike Gilbert
Mont Blanc (Fr/Italy)	Chris Dunn
	Bryan Gilbert
	Mike Gilbert
	Christine Smyth
Djeb.Toubkal (Morocco)	Lindsey Fooks
	Bryan Gilbert
	Mike Gilbert
	Lin Jensen
	Paul Jensen
Mt Cameroon (Cam.)	Helen Beddows

Other Mountain 'Lists'

Scottish Munro Summits	Dave Gray
	Melinda Kinsman
3000's 'Furth of Scotland'	Dave Gray
Scottish Corbetts	Dave Gray
Irish 3000s in a day	Mike Dagley
English 2000s	Lin Jensen
	Paul Jensen
Welsh 2000s	Lin Jensen
	Paul Jensen
The Wainwrights	?
National 3 Peaks	?

Other Major Peaks/Routes

Jannu	Alan Rouse
Mt Kongur	Alan Rouse
Island Peak	Andy Chapman Mike Gilbert Melinda Kinsman Richard Kinsman
Naya Kanga	Andy Chapman Mike Gilbert
Mt Whitney	Reg Cromer Nuala Dunn Dave Gray Richard Kinsman Greg Leasor Mark Mitchell
Grand Jorasses (Walker Spur)	Fred Heywood
Gran Paradiso	Ronnie Harvey Mal Lamb Bill Sutherland
Eiger (Mittelegi Ridge)	Fred Heywood Alan Rouse
Aiguille du Chardonnet (Forbes Arete)	Alan Cowderoy John Hall
Mount Washington	Bryan Gilbert Mike Gilbert
Skye Cuillin Ridge	Andy Chapman

Long Distance Walks

Pyrenees Haute Route	Dave Cole Paul Smyth
----------------------	-------------------------

GR20 (Corsica)	Chris Harris
	Jan Harris
Haute Route (ski)	Roger Hughes
Tour du Mont Blanc	Nuala Dunn
	Dave Gray
	Christine Smyth
Bob Graham Round	Bill Sutherland
SW Coast Path	Neil Harris
Pennine Way	Brian Dibben
	John Huxley
	Mike McEneaney
	Rob Payne
England C 2 C	Dave Gray
	Mike McEneaney
Offa's Dyke	Neil Harris
	John Huxley
	Don McIntosh
	Sue Taylor
	??
Wales C 2 C North/South	Dave Gray
Hadrian's Wall	Helen Brady
	Bryan Gilbert
S. Upland Way	Pete Chreseson
Cotswold Way	John Huxley
	Pete Chreseson
Dales Way	Dave Gray
	Neil Harris
W Highland Way	??
E Highland Way	??
Fellsman Hike	??
Lyke Wake Walk	??

On the Water

Global Circumnavigation	Mike Gilbert
Atlantic Crossing	Chris Dunn
Fastnet race	Mike Gilbert
Grand Canyon descent	Nuala Dunn
	Christine Smyth
Devizes/Westminster canoe	
	Adele Blakeborough
R. Liffey descent	Nuala Dunn
	Christine Smyth

Cycling

Irish Grand Tour	Paul Jensen
??	

'Best of the Rest'

South Pole	Andy Chapman
'Pole of Maritimity'	Mike Gilbert
'Pole of Continentality'	Mike Gilbert
Sahara Desert Crossing	Helen Beddows

Overall World Mountain Ranges/Areas Walked/Climbed

Asia

Himalayas
Karakoram
Pamirs
Tien Shan
Wadi Rum

Africa

Kilimanjaro
Kenya
Ruwenzori

High Atlas

Mt Cameroon

Drakensbergs

The Americas

Andes

Sierra Nevada (Calif.)

Rockies (Canada)

Rockies (US)

Baffin Island

Coastal Range (US)

White Mountains

Antarctica

Ellsworth Mountains

Graham Land

Australasia

New Zealand Alps

Australian Alps

Europe

Caucasus

Western Alps

Dolomites

Julian Alps

Pyrenees

Scandinavian Mts.

High Tatras

Picos de Europa

Alpujarros

Vosges

Harz

Eifel/Hunsruck

Iceland

Corsica

Canary Islands

Madeira

Mallorca

Preamble to a Cycle to Snowdonia

Geoff Brierley

I originally wrote this article during 2007 to be published once the Wirral to Snowdonia cycle was complete, however I never wrote up the final piece – that of the main event itself and so this article has remained on my PC unpublished.

The account of the cycle appears elsewhere in this magazine, this article appears as it was left by me, waiting for us to get on our bikes, back in 2007.

23/07/07

I sit here currently with several maps laid out in front of me, a veritable new carpet on my sitting room floor. It's Monday evening and the rain has just eased off, a rain which has been seemingly continuous for what must, surely, be over a month. Certainly there has been the odd day of sunshine, but not enough for June or July and certainly not enough to have dried out any of the tracks I could have ridden down tonight for practice. The maps and bike you see are entwined, I know I need to get fitter on my bike, and I also need to try to piece together a route through the Welsh hinterland, from Liverpool to Snowdonia.

The original madcap idea came from Mr Russell, who, many years ago came up with a journey from the Wirral to the Mountains by bike as the latest in his "Russell's unpopular methods of punishment" book. This year, however, the crown had been pursued by Mr D, with such horrific ideas as "North Yorkshire, a 63 mile burn out." Not to be outdone I decided that I would be the next in the triumvirate to piece together a plan of beauty as yet unsurpassed. Or a cycle. So I mooted the idea of a cycle from Liverpool to Snowdonia, with the Chapel as our final destination.

22/08/07

Nearly a month on from my last scribblings and I have re visited Llandegla, vastly superior second time around, been to the Marin with John and been up and down the canal paths on several occasions. This weekend will hopefully see at least one outing on the bike, all being well to the Marin, this time if I'm lucky without the rain that accompanied us for the full five hour journey last time.

A slightly longer journey than normal as we started in Betws, in the car park by Cunningham's outdoor shop and cycled straight up the hill. For the record, a perfectly feasible start point, and one I recommend for the Snowdonia Cycle itself as a much more favourable route into the mountains than simply to follow the A5.

Also now completed, after a pub meet in Chester alongside the canal, is the route plan. After much deliberation and a lot of map reading and shuffling, we have with the impressive assistance of Mr D and his mini maps, put together a route across country.



Originally, you see, the idea had simply been a one day journey, going from the Pier Head in Liverpool, across Wirral and then around the Welsh coast, weaving our way into the foothills following the Vale of Conwy and from there into Betws and then to Capel and the Chapel.

However, after Mike had got to hear of the idea, changes were afoot and before I knew it I was being tempted and teased from my first idea into something far more poetic – and something longer, and, yes quite possibly, harder too!

We considered a revised plan, the same start, the same crossing of the Wirral, but now, instead of following the coast, to make inroads directly into the Welsh landscape, away from the busy coastal towns, and on to the Clywdian Hills. We would be taking longer time, but this path would lead us into more oft forgotten places than our normal routes in and out of Wales did, oh yes, this would be a route of old Welsh villages, tricky route finding perhaps, and a definite crossing of the Clwyds. Even a camp on Moel Arthur had been put forward by Mike, as he has long wanted to spend a night there, on that hill of ancient fort, I certainly was intrigued with my love of all things archaic, and I found that particular suggestion one too difficult to pass up.

Our actual route took several attempts before we had a feasible working plan, and as yet I would guess some further work still needs to be completed before it will be ready for use, however, I'm really pleased about it so far. One thing that does strike me at the present moment is the thought that, some years ago, when the original idea was put forward, I thought it was almost impossible, perhaps for some other much

fitter, and perhaps slightly “wired” individual, not for me...but now, here I am, in the company of The Dangerous Brothers, ready to do it.

25.08.07 – The Marin Trail

The day was, unusually, much brighter in Betws than back home. I wasn't going to complain. I cycled from St Marys down the hill to the A5 and then up to the bridge of the cauldron – Pont Y Pair, my bike responding to my requests for speed with what felt like effortless ease, transporting me along the road past throngs of people. It seems many were taking full advantage of the glorious weather, and why not? For me however, my reverie was soon interrupted as I found myself in all too familiar territory once more, toiling away on an uphill slope. I guessed the distance from the car park to the nearest section of the Marin to be about 1.3 miles or thereabouts and I wanted to see if my earlier recollection of this back road being slightly easier on the ascent than I expected, would still hold out. It did, which was a bonus as I hoped to use this quiet road into the hills as the option to avoid the A5 out of Betws and up in to Capel come the Snowdonia Cycle itself.

So, this was optimistic news, unlike the section of this track which leads one on to the single-track of the Gwydyr Forest, a green sign warns motorists that cyclists are about and then, as you turn the corner the gradient becomes so much more serious, reminiscent of the Ugly House ascent where you really have to bring your face close to the handlebars of your bike and just slog away. This section however is missing the fear of your bike tipping backwards, with you on it, as the Ugly house section offers in its final moments.

I continued, and the forest allowed me to journey through it. The moment you start at this stage you feel a total change, the road, such as it was, is now behind you, and stretching round corners in front of you is amazing single-track. It is darker in here, noticeably so, and your surroundings have changed from a myriad of different colours to a brown, the like of which is particular to the inside of a coniferous plantation. But no sooner have you started than you are into broadleaved woodland, and a much brighter proposition develops. The Gwydyr did not disappoint, up-hills, as hard as they were, gave way to descents worthy of high praise, and with weather that could hardly be argued against. I found out, whilst I cycled in the sunlight, back home conditions were dull.



07.09.07 The Flintshire Challenge

The day had come for the Flintshire Challenge; this had loomed large in my mind for some time, a challenge in many senses of the word. Over the past few weeks I had increased the training I was undergoing, visiting Llandegla again, travelling out to the Clywds to work my way round a new route out there and then again a week later, both occasions, it turned out prepared me for route finding on the Flintshire itself, it can sometimes be an advantage to know a part of a trail in advance, perhaps one of the greatest advantages is that of knowing one can actually do it, that it is, indeed, possible.

We nearly started on time, but just missed that, so settled instead for slightly behind schedule, which seemed almost as good...flying down the A494 from Cadole we arrived at Mold Leisure Centre, registered and departed. The weather was good, sunshine flowing down upon us as we ascended up into the hills of the Clywdian range and the scenery, rich reward in itself, continued to delight. The day consisted of grinding ascents, incredibly fast flowing descents and many other variables, not the least of which was the aptly named Mud Field of Death, not to be undertaken lightly, (if you'll pardon the pun.)



The day proceeded to give us a truly memorable experience, difficult, true, but it was also a success as we all succeeded in what we had set out to achieve. Medals were handed out, and The Dangerous Bros (on the day referred to in less reverential terms – delicate bo*&£ks perhaps being closer to it...!) walked away with a gold each.

ONCE AND FUTURE MUNROS – THE GMC AND THE MUNROS

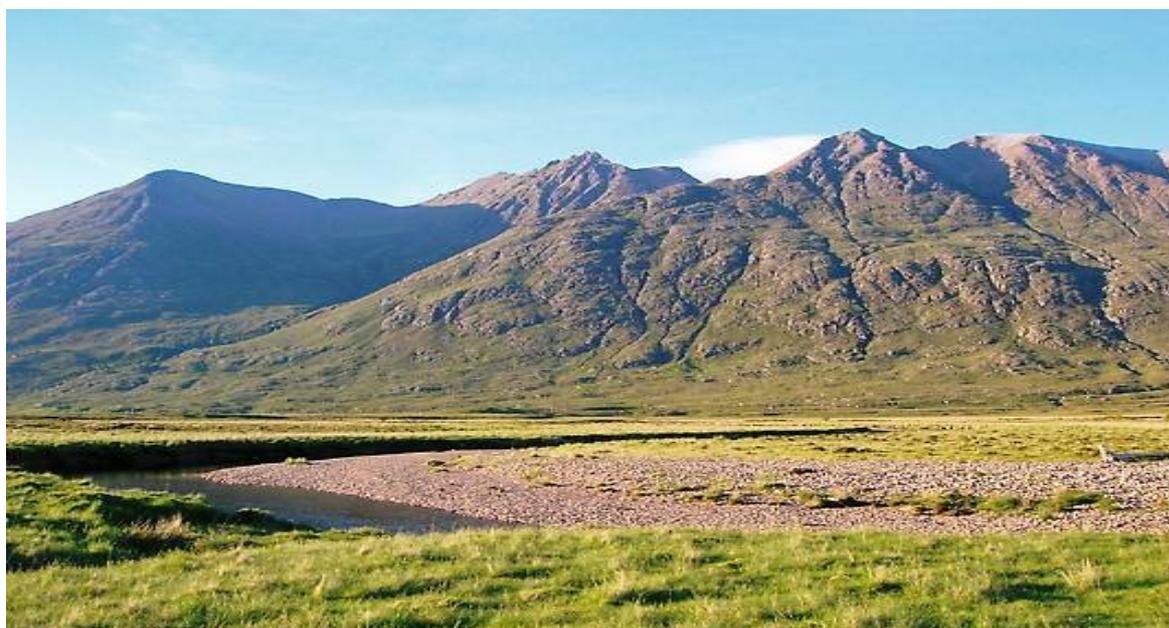
Dave Gray

It's been good to see a real revival of interest within the club towards Sir Hugh's famous list over the past couple of years.

For a long time we've stood on just the two 'compleat' munroists – Melinda Kinsman and me, but I'm willing to bet that that will change over the coming years as list fever takes hold and people return in force to a feature of hill walking that was prominent in the Club from the early days. That got me thinking back and comparing and contrasting now to then as an excuse for digging out a few photos.

I guess the cast of this show falls into broad three groups at the moment – those people like Bryn, Teresa and Geoff who are going for the list; then people like Pete Mann and Andy Chapman who've racked up a big score of summits and who may press home their completion plans sooner than we think, and a large number of us who just do the Scots hills that they fancy, and which appeal most, and who often feature in the more sustained campaigns of the munrotistas.

What's common to all is the determination needed to get things done against the odds – in Ullapool this May several of the more demanding peaks got climbed in some dreadful 'on and off weather' – including the mighty An Teallach. For those who saw it just in black and white, here's one of the best of the hills in colour – in early summer conditions from Fisherfield forest.

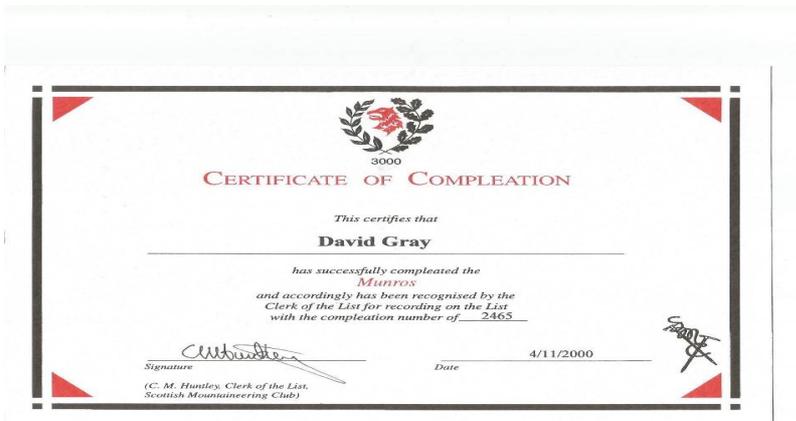


And for Pete Mann and Lindsey Fooks who mastered the complexities of the Meall nan Tarmachan in mist this April, here's part of what you did captured in stunning sunshine just a couple of weeks later.



My own completion day in July 2000 was tough too, with pretty constant rain over the two summits of Crucachan. I was supported by several friends that day including Helen Beddows, Neil Harris, John Huxley and Christine Smyth from the Club. Club people featured in another completion trip: Simon and Joy Mills came up to Scotland with us when my friend Andy Pearson finished on Buchaille Etive Mor back in August 2004. That was a poor weather day which we gratefully spent with my friend Jenny and her children at low level. Young David unwisely tried to play fight with Simon and wondered why his every move was gently and expertly blocked about two yards out!

What do you get on completion? Well I got a certificate (here it is folks!)



...and the chance to acquire a stylish polyester tie which I declined.

Turning to style, one of the memorable old munro days was our full traverse of Beinn Eighe up in Torridon in May 1987 – here's Reg Cromer and Sue Taylor, costumes, hair and make up for both sponsored every inch of the way by Harry Enfield...



We had a full week of sun, based in cottages on the shores of Loch Torridon, and did all the big peaks. Reg and I repeated the two main Beinn Eighe summits in bright sun in 2005 and David Lane-Joynt and John Simpson did the full traverse again in fine conditions in 2012 as part of the very fine trip we had with me, Reg and Geoff staying at the Youth Hostel. Like in 1987 between us we did all the big hills in the area – here's John Simpson in action on Beinn Alligin.



Sunny days like these are never more welcome than when you're having to backpack and wild camp. For the more remote hills, there's often no other option than to dig out the big bag.

I'm trying to repeat some fine hills as a project and was really happy to accompany David Lane-Joynt on a very long two day mini-expedition to Fisherfield Forest in May 2014, to do A Mhaighdean, arguably the most distant of the munros. We were up at 4.00am, on the hill at 5.30am and finished the day in a very remote camp, having done the summit, at 8.45pm. Here's David approaching the final stage of the ascent, about eleven hours out from our start.



And this is the splendid view from our camp site, looking over the Fionn Loch towards the climbing cliffs of Cam Mor.



One thing that makes back packing easier these days is having decent 5-day forecasts. The previous year, David and I abandoned Fisherfield plans in the face of the dreaded double rain drops and *buffet* lunches, and ended up on visiting the Grampians south of the Cairngorms, where we did three munro summits over as many days. We had an equally idyllic wild campsite, but one very different in character, at the site of the old ruined Altanour Lodge.



Looking further back, times was 'ard. With no reliable forecasts, one had to take one's chances and that's just what Mikes Davies, Gilbert and McEneaney and I did in 1986 when we walked in from Cluanie to spend a week based wild in Glen Affric. Luck was against us and it was quite the wettest and roughest trip ever for me, we only had one successful summit day, on An Socach, and were driven off Mam Sodhail the same day by horizontal snow. Here we are setting off – note the big boots, external frame packs and the presence of actual canvas in some of the gear.



I know that way back John and Heather camped wild on the summit of Ben Hope which is taking things further than I reckon anyone has done since. But that was before my time.

So I'll finish with a shot of my first GMC munro trip, showing I think John Hall and his dog, by Loch Pattack with Carn Dearg in the background, and toast the success of our future munroists!

