



The Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter

August 2021

Edited: Chris
Harris

Coming soon:

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| 26 August | Thursday Walk: Central Clwyds - Dave Edwards |
| 10-12 September | Hut Weekend |
| 18 September | Saturday Walk: Blackstone Edge - Brenda Turnbull |
| 24-26 September | Hut Weekend |
| 24-27 September | Chairman's Luxury Meet |

Mountain Skills Course 25/26 September

A reminder that the club is running a mountain skills course at the hut on the weekend of 25th/26th of September at the hut. This commercial grade course is being delivered by Christy Miles especially for the club. It is suitable for members at all levels from those who want to consolidate their basic mountain skills to the more experienced who may want to refresh their knowledge. The syllabus includes

- Planning and leading
- Walking skills
- Clothing and equipment
- Weather
- Navigation
- Environmental knowledge
- Hazards and emergencies

The cost is £40 pounds per person for the weekend.

If you are interested please email Bill Morrison; gmc.secretary.1@gmail.com

Articles this month

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| 1) Thursday 22nd July | Carnedd Dafydd scramble - Richard Smith |
| 2) Thursday 29th July | Walk, The Wrekin and the Ercall - Chris Harris |
| 3) Saturday 6th August | Crimea pass circuit from the chapel - Chris Harris |
| 4) Adventures of Chris Ramsdem | |
| 5) Saturday 14th August | Long Mynd walk - Bill Morrison |

1) Thursday 22nd July Carnedd Dafydd Scramble - Richard Smith

On 22nd July, during the spell of very hot weather, a select group of five Gwydyr members enjoyed the airy scramble up the Lech Ddu spur. The North Wales Scrambles book describes this route as "a top-drawer scramble in a dramatic setting" and this is no exaggeration. The Llech Ddu Spur is a grade 1 scramble which climbs up to the summit of Carnedd Dafydd. The route follows a devious path to gain the crest of a striking ridge, which is perched above Cwm Llafar; a long secluded valley with a feeling of wildness that is unsurpassed anywhere in Wales.

From the summit of Carnedd Dafydd, we continued along the ridge to Carnedd Llewellyn, before dipping down and back up to Yr Elen. A steady descent down a grassy slope took us back to our start point in Gerlan, the only remaining challenge being to pass through a field with three bulls and two aggressive dogs in it. Well done to Chris, Nicky, Helen and Bill for completing the Cwm Lafar horseshoe in the heat. Richard



The Long walk in



The challenge ahead



Getting steeper



The fun bit



Nearly there



Dunnit

2) Thursday 29th July

The Wrekin and the Ercall - Chris Harris



The Wrekin is a Marilyn standing at 407 metres just south of Telford. Many people have driven to the Stipperstones and Long Mynd passing it but not stopping. But it is well worth checking it out. It's little sister The Ercall stands alongside it, although a large chunk was removed to build the nearby A5. The Ercall is of volcanic origin whereas the Wrekin is sedimentary. The area is full of industrial remains and names such as Limekiln woods are a clue to the past activities. The old limekilns are clearly visible from the main path in winter, however I totally missed them with all the summer thicket. I did make a deviation from the planned route so we could take in the Huntsman pub at Little Wenlock as the sun was shining. There seemed to be little resistance to my suggestion. We were blessed with fine weather which meant the extremely steep climb to the top of the Wrekin was worthwhile with its alleged views of 17 counties and ancient hill fort.



3) Saturday 6th August Crimea pass circuit from the chapel - Chris Harris

The plan was to follow one of the early GMC routes, first established in February 1978 on a slushy, damp winter's day, which ran from the Chapel to the summit of the Crimea Pass via Moel Siabod, Bwlch y Rhediad, Ysgafell Wen and Moel Druman, then east over Moel Farlwyd and Moel Penammen before descending below Carreg Alltrem to Dolwyddelan and finally back over to the Chapel, about 5,000ft of ascent. This route was used for the 1978 and 1983 walks and also for the 1992 walk which was solely for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

After the summit of Siabod the route follows fence lines rather than paths so it was necessary to be on the right side of the fence. The Welsh are great at building fences on near vertical hills so a few diversions to ease the descent/ascent were necessary, and in the dips there were a lot of boggy sections requiring careful navigation. All adding time and distance. There was a moment where Lindsey wished she'd brought her snorkel



Footpaths ? Ascent of Moel Siabod

Western descent of Moel Siabod, towards Snowdon

Zahida, Lindsey, Lee, Richard, Mike Wallis and Gill Eccles put their trust in me to lead them through the previously unrecied route.

The preceding two days were very wet as was the start of Saturday. The 8 am start was deferred until the rain stopped which it did just before 10am. This meant we would shorten the walk by leaving the ridge at Bwch y Rhediad and taking the path to Dolwyddelan. A quick check of the map showed this was about 7 miles less than the planned 20 miles. For some reason I told the group we would be doing about 11 miles it actually turned out to be 16.3 miles with 4400ft ascent. The fact that we were booked in to the Tyn-y for dinner at 0645 added more than a bit of pressure. As expected, the ground was wet but we have never seen so much water flowing down the path to the SW ridge of Siabod. The weather was light showers, a bit claggy on Siabod but the descent towards Snowdon, looking towards the Pen y Gwryd Hotel, was delightful. The rain started to approach at 3pm and from then on it was WET. I sent an advanced party to the Tyn-y to grab the table and explain the rest would be "a few minutes" late. As it happened we all enjoyed a leisurely meal washed down by good Snowdonia Ales.

Nobody seemed too traumatised by the weather, terrain and length of the walk and I think we will all attempt the full route next year.

4) Adventures of Chris Ramsdem



On 8-10 August I spent few glorious, and wet, days walking in Langdale Valley. Staying in New Dungeon Ghyll hotel. Walking from hotel I took in Slate Bridge route a moderate 6 hour trek and included some wild swimming in Blea Tarn. Also walked to Whorneyside Force (12 m waterfall with pools). It was a warm day with plenty of sunshine so inevitably I took a dip in pools and re-enacted, badly, the Peter Andre 'Mysterious Girl' moment in waterfall. It was a really enjoyable few days with Deb (fiancée) and Mojito



(Jack Russell). The hotel is brilliant and the location is stunning. The Old Dungeon Ghyll is also only a stones throw so made for a perfect post walk beer stop.



On Saturday 14 August I did a charity open water swim in Princess Dock, Liverpool. I swam 6km and in doing so raised over £300 for the Level Water Charity which provides 1-2-1 swimming lessons for children with disabilities. It is longest I've ever swam and I have to admit I did find it challenging but ultimately worth the effort. Afterwards I rewarded myself with a cheeky trip to Moose Cafe for pancakes. I'm not sure which was harder the swim or finishing the pancakes. Both were equally rewarding. Need to think of my next challenge now. If interested in open water swimming take a look at link below and may be come down for a dip whilst the water's still, relatively, warm.

<https://www.weswimrun.org/>



5) Saturday 14th August

Long Mynd walk - Bill Morrison

This was an excellent day spent in the Shropshire Hills, walking from Church Stretton across the Long Mynd to the Stiperstones nature reserve and back. There were 5 of us: Kay, Lee, Jane Jones, prospective member Debbie and myself. To avoid any parking issues we met at 8.00am in the National Trust car park in Carding Mill Valley; situated on the eastern side of the Long Mynd. The Long Mynd (the name means Long Mountain) is 7 mile long plateau of upland moorland and heath running north east/south west that lies to the west of Wenlock Edge. It's characterised by a series of steep valleys on its eastern borders and by a sharp escarpment on the western side.



From the car park our route took us up onto the Mynd via the narrow Light Spout valley, passing the waterfall and unexpectedly encountering two of the small horses, a mare and foal, that run wild on these moors. The weather was clear and the visibility excellent. Once out on the top our goal, the Stiperstones ridge, could be clearly seen in the distance with its distinctive quartzite tors plainly visible.

The walking on the plateau was good and firm underfoot, consisting of formal tracks and well trodden paths. 2 hours into the walk and we had crossed the Mynd and began our descent down into the hamlet of Ratlinghope. This is little more than a farm, a church, some stables and a campsite. Some readers may remember this hamlet as the location of the BBC sitcom "Green, Green, Grass". Passing through we crossed Darnford Brook and followed a steep track up and over Ratlinghope Hill. It was on the far side of the hill we came unexpectedly across "Farmer Phil's Music Festival". Hidden away in these hills is a small annual music event. T'pau was this year's headline act apparently. A bit of a come down from their glory days maybe but there seemed to be a decent sized crowd there. Walking up the track by the festival site we had to

explain to the stewards that we were just passing through, not trying to sneak in and that we did not want to buy any tickets.

Further along we came to Near Gatton Farm where Farmer Phil has parked his rusted old Chieftain tank (with its main gun in place; presumably decommissioned). This is a sad resting place for such an iconic piece of 1960s militaria - left to rust away in a farmyard. The hatches were open however and we grabbed the opportunity to climb up for a photo.



Leaving the farm behind, we crossed over another small hill by way of a rough narrow track that brought us to.... Far Gatton farm. From here our way took in some lesser used paths along field boundaries and past a small herd of curious alpacas. Eventually we emerged at a small track that lead us directly up to Stiperstones.



Manstone Rock



The view across to Wales

In all it had taken us about 4 hours to reach the Stiperstones nature reserve. Here the vegetation dramatically switched from grassland to thick purple heather with swarms of bees filling the air as they went about collecting nectar. Stiperstones itself is a quartzite ridge crowned by a series of rocky tors. The tallest of these, Manstone Rock, rises to some 536m. On ascending the ridge we were rewarded with far reaching, panoramic vistas across central Wales to the west and over to the Long Mynd behind us. This ridge is a real treat to traverse, gifting an opportunity to appreciate the breathtaking beauty of the Shropshire countryside. Stiperstones is certainly to be recommended; the scenery, the sense of space and distance it affords and the rugged natural beauty of the place makes for a wonderful experience.

We stopped for lunch in the shadow of Manstone Rock, the highest point of the day, and a couple of us took the opportunity to climb up to the trig point on top. After a short rest it was time to start our return leg towards Church Stretton. Descending off the south western edge of the Stiperstones we could see small, localised rain showers moving through the distant valleys in front of us. The weather had been good so far, maybe we would be lucky and these would pass by. Upon reaching the road we walked along it for around 100 yards before striking out along the network of footpaths that criss cross this countryside. Following faint paths we climbed small hills, walked through farmland and over old foot bridges. The way was marked on gateposts for much of

the route. However these gateposts and signs were sometimes hard to find - sited behind small coppices, hidden in hedges or simply knocked over. To be fair, in all cases after a bit of searching, and the use of the OS map, we did manage to find the right route without too much difficulty.



We did have a bit of rain on the way back but nothing major, the sort of drizzle that stops as soon as you put your waterproofs on. The weather was mostly warm and a little humid on the return leg. About halfway back to Church Stretton we decided to take a detour to Bridges for a drink at the Horse Shoe Inn. The obvious route there would have taken us along a small country road. Not a problem normally, but at this time of year there was a lot of farm traffic driving up and down - large tractors pulling large trailers as fast as they could go. This being Shropshire it wasn't difficult to find a path that took us away from this road and on to the Inn for a well deserved drink in the sun.

Leaving the Horse Shoe it was straight into the climb up the western escarpment of the Mynd. We followed a metalled farm road to start with, then rough tracks taking us up onto the heathland with outstanding views along the Mynd's western edge. At one point we were lucky enough to see six red kites flying around a field of newly mown hay. Nice to see these beautiful birds return to the countryside in ever increasing numbers.

From the top of the Mynd it was a relatively quick trek back to the Light Spout valley and then down to the car

park. A total distance of 17 miles for the day with a combined ascent of 3,600 feet.

I would fully recommend this walk. If you want a shorter trail there are lots of options, you don't have to start at Church Stretton, you could cut the distance in half by starting at Bridges of Ratlinghope. The Shropshire countryside is truly beautiful.