

THE GWYDYR No. 11 (Oct)

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB

October can be an indifferent month, the evenings seem to encroach upon us ever darker and the weather is invariably damp to say the least though sometimes a clear frosty morning lifts our spirits with the hope of a 'good' winter not far away.

This October has been decidedly average with a fair amount of rain and one or two cold and crisp days. Not that the Gwydyr members allow the weather to spoil their fun.....

The first official club meet was our Chapel weekend on the 9th & 10th October. After a late Friday night debate in the kitchen putting the world to right saw five members (Ronnie Davis, Pete Mann, Allan Mc, David Lane Joynt & Carol B) emerge from the Chapel bleary eyed into bright sunshine en route to Croesor and the lovely peak of Cnicht.

Certain formalities had to be observed first however and the delightful cafe in Croesor saw the club's caffeine levels restored to respectable levels before the walk could begin. Mention must be made of this cafe as it's one of nicest in Snowdonia. Like many of the new cafe's they are run on a Caban (Co-Op) basis to provide employment and funding for the local communities and some have shops / art galleries attached. The profits are ploughed into a local community fund and I think it only right that we do our utmost to support these ventures.

Have a look at the following link for more information on the cafe:-

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/northwest/sites/porthmadog/pages/croesor.shtml>

Also see the Cafe Nant Gwynant, another favourite of mine :-

<http://www.cafesnowdon.co.uk/>

Anyway, with the weather becoming increasingly sunnier we left the delights of Croesor Cafe and donned our boots for the walk up Cnicht. In the valley there was only a gentle breeze however as we climbed the rounded spur above Cwm Croesor onto the steep final ridge the wind increased and once on the summit merely to stand upright proved difficult. We did not linger long and descended the broad grassy ridge over to the col by Llyn Yr Adar in a wind that at times threatened to blow one over. It was tough going at times and we were pleased to finally find somewhere out of the wind where lunch could be taken. The walk over the moor to the old Croesor quarries was as wet and boggy as ever however the track leading from Cwm Orthin to Croesor was soon reached and drier ground made for easier going underfoot. A simple descent down an old grassy incline brought us to the small

Hydro Electric power station at Blaen Y Cwm. The path then levels out and half an hour later we were back in the Cafe after a good though short day out.



Cnicht

Phil Earl and Andy Odger had been climbing and managed three routes on Bochlwyd Buttress in the Ogwen Valley.

On the Saturday evening we were joined by Mark Cashman and Cynthia Jacques (Prospective Member) and a group confessional (!!) in the Chapel lounge rounded off a lovely day.

Sunday dawned beautifully with clear blue skies and hardly a breath of wind. There seemed to be an air of lethargy about the place and so it seemed a suitable day for the seeming Gwydyr standard of the lovely walk to Llyn Crafnant. The cafe was visited (of course) and I disgraced myself by having some crackers and cheese with my cup of tea and got a well deserved telling off from the proprietor who complained about people always eating their own food ☹

Elsewhere, outside of Snowdonia, John Murphy & Christy Miles had a nice walk in the Clwydian Range of some 8 or 9 miles. Dave Gray with Sue Taylor, Les & Mike Mc had a gourmet trekking weekend in Derbyshire managing walks in the Manifold & Dove valleys while staying at an apparently really good Youth Hostel at Sheen. Dave also walked along the Roaches on his way out there. Also with Christine Smythe Dave had a great day on Arenig Fawr.

Mike and Brian Gilbert have also been out in Snowdonia again with their 'keep-fit' friends they walked from the Crimea Pass to Dolwydellan and one assumes on a separate walk they did a section of the Anglesey Coastal Path. Roger & Judy Hughes also had a very good day with a rail based ascent of Hope Mountain near Wrexham.

Peter Smedley has recently returned from South America where he went walking in their Lake District visiting Puerta Varas and Lago Llanquihui (sounds welsh !) which is the largest lake in South America. Peter has promised some pictures and I will include them in the next newsletter when they arrive.

On Saturday 16th October there was a walk organised by Mark & Laura Barley around the Romiley & Compstall area of Greater Manchester. Dave Gray informed that this was a very good walk in an area little frequented by the club and provided a welcome change to the normal Saturday excursions.

The following weekend was the club trip to the Wayfarer's Club 'Hut' in the Langdale Valley and a superb weekend it proved to be in an excellent hut with an hypnotic open fire that forced some members to do unspeakable things to get the best seat 😊.

Ronnie Davis, Dave Gray, David Lane & Dave Cole arrived early on Friday and walked along the Langdale Pikes before arriving at the hut drenched after having avoided the worst of the rain for most of the day. Phil Earl & Kevin McEvoy also arrived early and scrambled up Jack's Rake on Pavey Ark before also getting wet. Neil Metcalfe and Allan Mc displayed a greater degree of common sense and lit the fire. We were joined shortly by Mark Cashman who made some noodle sandwiches for an early tea and when Andy Odger arrived it seemed the right thing to do and go the pub. Mark offered us a lift to the Old Dungeon Ghyll, which was gratefully accepted at the time given the heavy rain, though in hindsight speeding up the Langdale Valley to the strains of Shirley Bassey accompanied by Marks bad singing and 'interesting' driving made us down the first pint with more gusto than usual.



The Wayfarer's Hut RLH



The Lounge

Another couple of pints followed in the New Dungeon Ghyll and a few games of pool where only by a cruel twist of fate and the laws of physics denied the Chairman a clean sweep of victories 😞.

Back at the hut everyone was drying off nicely and when Carol, Christy & the two John's arrived a great evening followed with John Murphy playing guitar and singing, though he didn't know any Shirley Bassey songs and so we were spared more of Mark's singing.

Saturday dawned cold and miserable though we hoped for better things as the day progressed. Dave Gray & Dave Cole decided to head up Bow Fell via the Oxendale Valley and John & Christy went 'ticking' Wainwright's. The rest of us went climbing and it is here that I must confess to 'setting-up' John & Carol in suggesting they get a lift to the top of the Wrynose Pass with Mark and sneakily told Mark that John was a BIG Shirley Bassey fan.

We raced up the single track road past Blea Tarn with Mark following closely behind and at one point we could have sworn he had all four wheels off the ground when we went over a slight bump though we could not be sure as we were laughing so much. At the top of the pass Carol's anger was palpable and John looked near suicidal and could not decide which was worse the music or the driving ☺

It was bitterly cold and windy, the rock was damp and greasy and to be honest far from ideal for climbing but we wound our way across the boggy moor to Long Scar. A small cliff some twenty minutes from the car and at its base quite sheltered.



The gang beneath Long Scar



Lunch beneath Great Knott

I set up a top rope for those who had not climbed before or hadn't done much for a long time and despite the greasy rock most got up something and it was good to see David Lane Joynt having a go some thirty odd years since he had last rock climbed. Ronnie had the decency to test my rope for me as he slipped off and Mark Cashman climbed as he drove with a lot of confidence though thankfully little singing. Carol kept the troops happy by taking the 'mickey' out of everyone. After an hour or so it became obvious that things were not going to improve and the occasional fall of light sleet convinced us that a short walk would be a good idea if only to warm us up. And so a motley crew wound their way up Great Knott and Cold Pike, two minor summits though on the former we were graced with a clearing of the sky with Bow Fell and Crinkle Crag looking particularly sombre. Carol & John with Phil Earl had shunned the walk and decided to go shopping instead though I'm not so sure they did so as to avoid the drive back with Mark and Shirley Bassey !

Another very pleasant evening was passed in the hut, after the obligatory beers in the New Dungeon Ghyll, and as the night progressed things began to get rather silly and I fear John may not be so keen to wear his Arcteryx hat in the future 😊

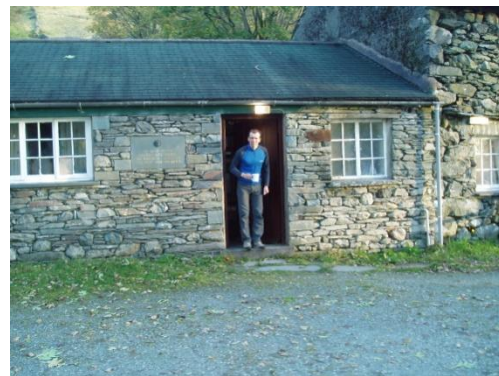
Sunday dawned glorious with a light blanket of frost in the valley and the summits for once were clear under a deep blue sky. Autumn is well advanced in the Lakes at the moment and the hillsides were alive with colour.

The three Dave's went for a walk up Lingmoor Fell, Christy & John disappeared to do more Wainwright's one presumed (they did tell me but I've forgotten !). And so there were nine of us left to go climbing and so, with apologies to Enid Blyton ,the Nutty Nine made their way to Scout Crag.

It was a glorious few hours climbing on warm rock with just a gentle breeze to remind us it was autumn. After a short play on Lower Scout Crag we made our way to meet Phil and Kev who were just getting to the top of Route II as they had decided to distance themselves from the rest of us for some reason. We thought that rather rude and so we left a little present in Phil's rucksack which he kindly brought all the way back to the Wirral – it wasn't a big rock but it was well hidden and will look nice in his rockery 😊 !



Ronnie on Cub's Wall (V. Diff)



Phil outside the Annexe to RLH



The View from our front door on Sunday



John, Carol, Neil, Andy, Ronnie & Mark

All in all a really good weekend and sadly one that cannot be repeated till 2012 as the hut is fully booked for next year. I will keep you all posted if and when I can get a booking.

Katie Harris has also had a busy month, getting in some good climbing in both North Wales and the Lake District. Sadly she is unable to present her talk on the recent Baffin Island trip on the 2nd November and it will be postponed till later in the month and we will email the membership to advise as and when we know when she is available.

ADDENDUM



Chris Harris has just forwarded to me the above photograph of Brian & Mike on the summit of Moel Siabod on their birthday weekend as mentioned in the last Newsletter. I am sure they won't mind me putting it in a month late !

Meets List 2011

This has now been sent out by email and you should all have a copy but if not please email Mike Dunn to request a further email. In any event it will be on the club web site soon.

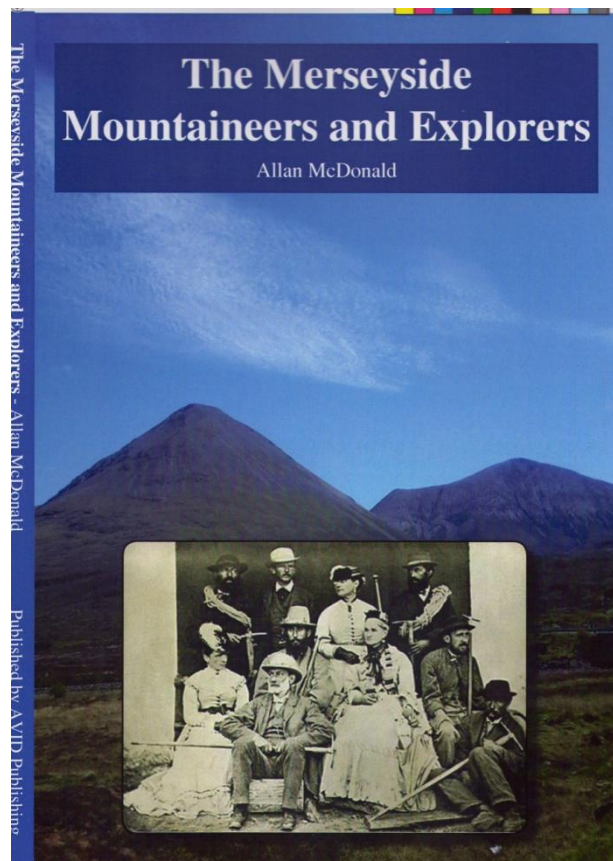
Forthcoming meets :-

NOVEMBER 2010	
05-06	HUT -Bonfire Party
20	Sat Walk - Rawhead Mark Barley
26-27	HUT Weekend

The Bonfire meet is now fully booked in that there are now no bed spaces left in the Chapel though floor space is available for those who wish to do so. Dave Gray as kindly given the club funds to provide booze by way of a celebration of his 50th Birthday earlier this year so a good night is guaranteed as always at this event.

Merseyside Mountaineers and Explorers !

For those of you that don't know already I've managed to find a publisher for my book however I am having difficulty in finding a suitable picture for the cover (see below) and was wondering whether any members have something that they feel is good enough.



The small black and white photograph is from the Alpine Club archives and I've paid them for the rights to use it however the main picture (it's of Glamaig on Skye) I took with my mobile and quite simply it's not 'crisp' enough for a front cover. Does anyone have something suitable preferably of Snowdonia or Skye, I'm looking for something eye-catching and dramatic and preferably with a lot of blue sky in it.

I've got to get something in the next two weeks and the picture will need to be of super high quality (300dpi minimum). It does not have to be a digital image as a photograph can be sent to my publisher for scanning and I'll return your original I promise.

Hoping someone can help and I will give full acknowledgment in the book.

With winter fast approaching and the dark early nights only a day or two away this is a time when many of us start getting stuck into a book or three. I've recently re-read the climbing essays by Jim Perrin and reproduce below a short essay which I found interesting. Jim Perrin is one of, if not the best, outdoor writers we have and this essay was written way back in 1981 shortly after Mrs Thatcher said there was no such thing as society. NOT that I wish to make a political point here however the essay evokes a time gone by, which some of our members, may recall themselves and it would be interesting if some of you could put their memories to 'virtual' paper for inclusion in a later newsletter.

TRAINS, CAFES, CONVERSATIONS (1981)

An hour or two ago I was sitting on the back step of a new house in Heaton Mersey, wondering if it would rain, whether I would get to Pex Hill for some climbing tomorrow night, and what the streets would be like a century from now. Gazing vacantly across a neatly mown and boundaried square of lawn at the disused and trackless railway embankment beyond, it occurred to me that this same embankment must have carried the railway from Manchester's Central Station along which the ramblers' specials to Chinley, Miller's Dale and Matlock rattled most Sundays in a period over 20 years ago when I first took to going out into the Peak District at weekends.

This train of thought once invoked, the most vivid memories came flooding back: of eager crowds waiting on gas lit platforms in the dusk of a wet Sunday, and the comforting, warm, misty-windowed atmosphere of a carriage full of people come in from the rain, their flannels and cotton anoraks steaming, light patches spreading across the darkened fabric as the conversation, the incessant, friendly conversation flowed. And then the streaming out from Central or Victoria Stations into the city night and the buses for home.

I'm not basing this railway idyll on the celebration of such delights of a pre-Beeching era as might appeal to the Steam Buff – the blackened architecture, hissing and polished pistons, gusts of smoke swirling across platform ends, the dusty smell of third-class carriages, names of long-forgotten stations and the like. I feel no particular sadness at their passing, but what has gone, along with all these, and what had a special meaning for lovers of the outdoors, is the subtle sense of community which this mode of transport brought about.

It wasn't, of course, confined to railways or transport. I wonder how many readers remember Ma Thomas' Hathersage cafe in the days of her prime? When Ma Thomas died, a year or so ago, there were no notices or obituaries in the outdoor press, yet her influence on my generation of Peak District climbers was momentous. We all of us have scintillating memories of this ferocious South-Walian woman. Her tongue was razor-fine, her politics sturdily Labour, her wit was fast yet kind, and her food.... Well, I dare not say, perhaps less out of respect for her memory than from a sort of residual fear of ever daring to complain to her face. I remember Martin Boysen did so once, about an egg afloat in a sea of grease littered with the flotsam of white and sodden chips. The Prussian hauteur of Martin in his

youth was speedily discomfited by Ma's summary rejoinder that if her food was not good enough for him, his custom was certainly not required by her.

I could write a great deal on the subject of Ma Thomas – the way, for example, she ejected Major Something-or-other, canvassing for the Conservative candidate, from her premises one weekday, when I was playing truant from school to go climbing on Stanage: 'if my 'usband was alive you wouldn't 'ave dared set foot in this 'ouse, and you buggers needn't think I'm any different from 'im.' All this as she chased him down the hall with a frying pan. And there was her partisanship for Richard McHardy, thrusting her daughter upon him, or him upon her daughter, I can't remember which, in preference to another suitor who, in her frequently voiced opinion, 'hadn't got the brains of a rat'. The slapstick and the bias aside, there was something more about the place. Obviously you went to Ma's to eat and drink, but not just for that. She was a catalyst to good conversation, would listen in when she was not too harassed, and drop a cutting phrase across what, to her, was an inflated argument, or a commonsensical anecdote into a sympathetic theme. It was her personality which drew us there each Sunday to sit around the big tables after a day on Stanage or Burbage in a second-family atmosphere, the talk fizzing along, tea leaves floating idly and an hour to go before the train.

Things that have gone ! Sitting here now, I wonder if I actually do remember, or only dream I remember, being in Bala Station in about 1960 and seeing a train pull out on its way to Trawsfynydd ? I certainly remember the stations at Bala, Corwen, Llanberis and Bethesda, and that are now all long gone. And with them the facility to transport the walking population of a city *en masse* to some particular outdoor venue. You might think that this was not much used – maybe these days it would not be – but you would be wrong. One such excursion comes back to me with great clarity. Again, it would be 1960 and I was 13 at the time.

There was a ramblers' special to the Dee Valley from Manchester Exchange. I remember city streets deserted in the early Sunday morning except for groups of ramblers resolutely converging on the station. The train was packed, 12 or more to a compartment. We went to Bala and the fare for me was, I think, two-and-sixpence. At that time I used to go out walking with a group of people from Oldham who called themselves the Kindred Spirits – there must have been hundreds of such walking clubs in the Northern cities. From Bala we raced up Milltir Gerrig road at a steady four miles per hour before trailing along the Berwyn ridge in Len Chadwick's wake, to end up running along the last two miles of road between Cynwyd and Corwen to catch the train on its way back.

But most of all I remember the journey home, the carriage packed full and every other one likewise and all of them ringing with animated conversations, between people white-haired and ruddy, young and fresh-faced, friends and strangers, all clad in regulation garb of old flannels tucked into socks, cotton or gabardine anoraks, heavy skirts for the women, Timpson's boots. Once the details of the day's activity had been recounted, discussed, and

consigned to the vaults of memory, the talk started. There was a great, brown, jovial fellow, eccentrically clad in leather shorts, called Lees Shaw and he held forth in grisly detail about industrial accidents and the need for legislation on safety at work as the stations – Llangollen, Rhiwabon, Wrexham and Chester – clacked past. You could take that as the type of these conversations – a drift from the particular to the general – the telling of a tale and then its taking apart, its being held up to all sorts of differing viewpoints, from that of a jejune 13-year old with no life-experience whatsoever to those of 50 or 60 year olds who had spent their lives working in cotton mills, taking WEA classes in the evenings, and walking at weekends and holidays. The tone was universally helpful, amiable, interested, courteous. In that train on that day there was a mood of light-heartedness, friendship, exultation, attentive consideration and community such as it is one of the great joys of humanity to achieve. And like the stations to which we were bound that day, it seems largely to have gone. We are no longer entrained together in humour, good fellowship, and joint purpose. Our television age and newspeak have undermined the capacity to talk. We no longer have the presiding spirits of Ma Thomas in our cafes. Our clubs are not the same. The barrackers and the comics, the apprentices, the orators, the wise men and singers of songs have all been swept before the grey tide of personal, individual ambition at all cost, battered on the rocks of cynicism, or frozen out by the wintry sneer. We go out in our cars and strict couples, enjoined to secrecy, to lick the lists and climb the status ladders and the sense of community has gone.

Or has it ? Have I grown older and gone beyond and forgotten, lost touch with all the good of it, or have my roots truly gone ? I cannot see them, but perhaps I cannot see them for looking. There are times, on the outcrops, say – perhaps on Pex Hill tomorrow if it stays fine – when an easy camaraderie will exist. But the times are rarer, surely, now ? We are all intent on self realisation rather than the sharing and comparing and learning from the wider experience. Our new modes of education from the earliest age accent it thus. I cannot but think that in all this the last two decades have wrought another of those subtle and grievous losses in which our rich and progressive age abounds. And I cannot but wish I was wrong.

Well, Mr Perrin, I think you are wrong. The last couple of paragraphs clearly don't apply to the Gwydyr 😊