



# Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter.

October 2023

Edited:  
Chris Harris

## Coming soon: (details on meets list on GMC website)

7 November	GMC Social Night at Gallaghers - Quiz night
16 November	Thursday Walk, Waun Garnedd-y-filiast - Dave Edwards
18 November	Bryn Alyn - Dave Gray
20 November	Scouse Panto - Adele Samuel
24-26 November	Hut Weekend: Rescue Emergency Care (REC) Course
12 December	Christmas Pizza Evening at Gallagher's - Dave Edwards
14 December	Thursday Walk, Foel Goch - Roger Hughes

## Articles this Month:

- 1) 15-17 September. Sorbie Tower, Galloway - by Chris Harris
- 2) 6-8th October. Gwydyr / Dundee joint meet by Kev McEvoy
- 3) 19th October. Thursday Walk, Arenig Fach by Chris Harris
- 4) 21<sup>st</sup> October. Sett Valley and Mellor Moor Meet by Dave Gray

## 1) - Sorbie Tower meet 15th - 17th September - Chris Harris



Christy Miles and Steve Hannah invited the club to have a meeting at Sorbie Tower, the family seat of the Hannay clan. Sorbie Tower is situated in Dunfries and Galloway an area known for it's Dark Skies status, The South West Coast 300, the Southern Upland Way and the Moffat Hills, Lowther Hills and Galloway Hills.

Sorbie Tower was built in the 16th century for Alexander Hannay of Sorbie, adjacent to a 12th century motte, on a raised site protected by surrounding marshland. In the 17th century the Stewarts of Garlies took possession of the castle, and the last occupant was Brigadier-General John Stewart who died in 1748. The castle became ruinous and was donated to the Clan Hannay Society by Mrs Jean Cummins in 1965. Over the next 35 years the clan spent about £40,000 conserving the ruin, but it became dangerous and required scaffolding. In 1972 the building was listed Grade A by Historic Scotland. Steve has been and is a key player in this restoration and is very passionate and active about the it.

In 2001 and again in 2005, successful bids were made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, with partnership funding from Clan Hannay and Historic Scotland . This enabled scaffolding to be erected to make good the wall heads, consolidate the stairwell, repair some of the lime mortar, and put a floor over the ground floor vaulting. In 2007

the surrounding woods were cut back, and in 2010 Historic Scotland agreed to put the tower on the register of castles and towers suitable for restoration.

In 2011 a Feasibility Study was commissioned consisting of a Condition Survey, Conservation Management Plan, Option Appraisal and Business Plan. It was concluded that restoration was the only sustainable option as it would generate income from the use of the tower. Funding for this would require a successful international appeal.

In 2015 the Clan Hannay Society launched the appeal to restore Sorbie Tower with a reception in London at the House of Lords. Funds raised were used for emergency repairs to the internal walls, to purchase scaffolding, and to extend the appeal to America where a reception in aid of the appeal was held in New York during Tartan Week in April 2017

Apart from the history it was a great location for a GMC meet with plenty of secure parking adjacent to the tower, a large lawned area for camping and a clean and bright modern shower and toilet block. Two miles down the road is Garlieston, a cosy seaside village.



We arrived on Friday evening and joined the others in front of a blazing fire on the ground floor in the vaulted kitchen with its huge fireplace and chimney funnelling the full height of the tower and discussed what we would do on Saturday and it was pretty well unanimous to "do" Merrick.

Not too early Saturday morning (no parking problems in D and G) we headed to the hills and parked above Loch Trool, near Bruce's stone.

Following a rough path upstream past waterfalls, after about a mile and a half we reached a plateau with a large sturdy bothy. From there we headed through a deer fence to start more ascent to Ben Yellery (719m) then we crossed the "Neive of the spit" a broad grassy ridge very much exposed to strong winds and squally showers then onward and upward to the trig point on Merrick (843m) where we had the option of return the way we came or descent into the wilderness (not a lot of paths there).

Unsurprisingly, we chose the harder option.

You may have noticed that the names are more English, lacking the excessive use of vowels that the highland Scots love. To me, the structure of the landscape was similar to the Lake District which was logical as it is only across the Solway Firth. Perhaps if there were cities nearby the Victorians would have added a few dams and created a second Lake District



Descending towards Loch Enoch, that looks like a squashed octopus, there were steep edges and no paths so progress was slow and cautious. Once on "level" ground there were hints of paths which, as we neared the loch, became a bit more obvious but paths in the area require good eyesight and careful foot placement. We were now in wilderness territory with no sign of habitation where good navigation (Christy) is essential. We headed downstream to Loch Arron, Loch Neldricken (with the "murder hole") and Loch Valley then following Gairland burn we passed a herd of beautiful Highland cattle of which all except one were alive. I said the paths were difficult but after a herd of cattle have tramped their way along them it is even worse. Anyway a bog at the bottom cleaned the mud of our boots.



Stats, 8.02 miles, 3310 ft ascent took 8 hours which for a small, reasonably fit group shows the difficulty of the terrain.

Saturday night saw us in the grand hall of Sorbie tower with much food and drink and a blazing fire so a late start on Sunday. Some were heading home but the rest of us did a bit of sightseeing in the area followed by an evening in the Harbour Inn in Garlieston ably helped by "Grants Taxi".

In summary Dumfries and Galloway has a lot to offer, mountains, wet bits, amazing scenery but you can walk all day and hardly see anyone. This can be nice but unlike the Lakes where you can descend a hill in any direction and meet civilisation, in D and G, get it wrong and you might never be seen again. Janet and I continued the week following the SW coast 300, looking at castles, great coastal scenery and pretty villages.

## **2) - Gwydyr / Dundee joint meet - Kev McEvoy**



As I'm sure you're all aware when our ex chairman Pete Mann returned to his native Scotland he joined the Dundee Mountain Club and became their president.

On his sad passing a number of our members attended his funeral and were warmly welcomed by the Dundee members. And so the idea of a joint meet at Tan-y-Garth was born.

Friday 6th October :

Friday afternoon was spent preparing the meal for Saturday evening and welcoming the guys from the Dundee club with a few drinks and making plans for our walks.

Saturday 7th October:

Saturday saw the group choose 2 walks.

Sue Taylor along with Greg and Alan from the Dundee club headed onto the Eastern Carneddau via the Waterboard Road onto Pen yr Helgi-du and following the ridge onto Pen Llihrig y wrach and back to the hut via the Tyn-n-coed.



Myself, Bill, Andy, Dave and Lindsey along with Dundee members Jim, Neil, Suzanne and Paulina headed for Llyn Idwal and up through the Devils Kitchen, up to Llyn y Cwn and after the slog up the scree we reached the summit of Glycer Fawr.

Our efforts were rewarded with one of the best cloud inversions I've seen for a long time and it lasted all day.

From Glyder Fawr we headed across the summit plateau to Glyder Fach, where we stopped for a few photos of the Dundee members on the Cantilever.



At the top of Bristly scree the group split into 2. Bill leading a group down the scree and up the South ridge of Tryfan and myself leading the rest of us over the boulder field and onto the miners track down to Bwlch Tryfan.

Here we meet Bill's group and took the path down to Ogwen Cottage.

Saturday evening I, with the help of Nicky, Sue and Sonja cooked a meal for the group with a toast to Pete and our new friends from the Dundee club.

Sunday 8th October:



A few of us headed home while Nicky lead the group to Llyn Mymbyr at Plas y Brenin for a wild swim in the Lake, after this they headed to the Siabod cafe for a hearty breakfast and a warm!!

All in all this weekend went really well and the feedback from the Dundee team was excellent. We have already started planning a return meet to join the Dundee club in Scotland next year.

### 3) Thursday 19th October, Arenig Fach - Chris Harris



The first of the trio of walks in the Arenigs was lacking one vital component - the leader Roger Hughes. He did wave us on our way and wish us luck when I went to collect him from Mike Mc's house. He also explained that there were no route notes and no map of the route. Fortunately Dave Antrobus had an app on his phone with a picture of some contour lines and a squiggly line.

Suitably armed with this information Dave Antobus, Dave Edwards, Mike McEneany, Pete McEvoy, new prospectives Paul and Mark and myself set off from Llyn Celyn. The walls in the area are well built and a good 6ft tall which meant that we needed good information to find stiles and gates. Luckily my OS app was working OK which helped a bit.

Having followed a route parallel to the A4212 for a couple of miles through bog, woodland and barbed wire we turned inland to start the ascent, guided by a crescent of sheep. After a while the grass ran out and we started the steeper ascent through thick heather, breaking for lunch on Yr Foel with



great views, before continuing to Arenig Fach as the cloud and mist closed in. The summit is decorated with a Trig point, unusually constructed from stone rather than the usual concrete blob, and a sturdy shelter with unusually high walls to shelter us from the wind and rain. Two sides of the hill dropped away almost vertical and are not recommended for descent. So a bit of discussion followed to establish a return route and the decision was to follow most of the outward route. To the north and east ( the route we had hoped to achieve ) there was no sign of paths, tracks, habitation or animals and it looked boggy. Arriving back at the cars the stats were 5.89 miles 1860ft ascent in 5 hours. Considering we spent very little time on breaks the time/distance shows the difficulty of the terrain.

The day ended in the Bridge Inn at Pontblyddyn where we enjoyed a pint, happy in the knowledge that we had climbed a Welsh mountain that not many people had climbed before us.

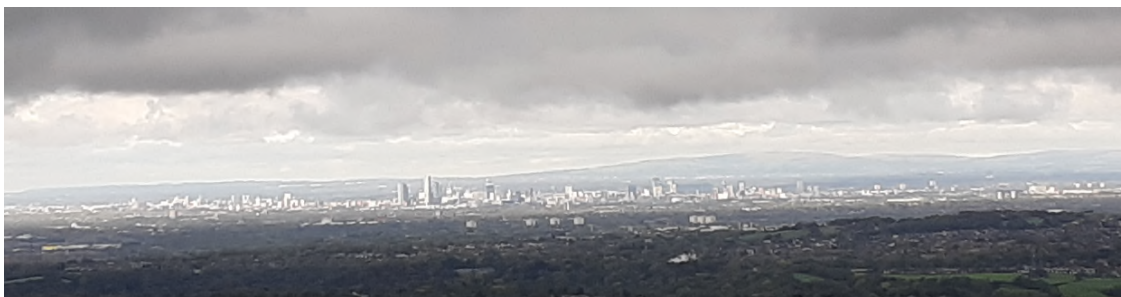


#### **4) Sett Valley and Mellor Moor Meet 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023 - Dave Gray**

Storm Babet made the weather prospects for this walk bleak to say the least and numbers were therefore low. Further reduced to two when Reg pulled out suffering from a painful toothache. As the Duke of Wavertree he would have had to yield precedence for once, to the Tsar of the South Pennines, Mark Barley, whose walk this was. I've enjoyed Mark's walks in this area for years, it's a great one to enjoy the shorter days and more intense colours of autumn, winter, and the early spring.



Mark gave me a lift on from Bowdon and we decided to postpone the start time to give the nasty weather time to clear. This was a good move as we had a dry day and even got some bursts of sun. Our way to the (free!) car park at Hague Bar near New Mills was sped by the 'magic road', the A555. This makes getting to the southern part of the Dark Peak from Merseyside a lot easier as one avoids the slow traffic through Stockport. From the car park we started uphill on the Goyt Way, going NW through Brook Bottom on a hidden network of paths and tiny lanes edged with drystone walls. The route slowly bent north till we arrived just below the highest point of the day, the summit of Mellor Moor, Pt 327m, or 1,072' in old money. There is an attractive overgrown old quarry here, where we ate our sandwiches.



Up at the summit we got fine views west. A burst of sunlight illuminated Manchester and the hills to its north:



South and east were further hills – Alderley Edge, Sponds Hill above Lyme Park, and the Shining Tor ridge beyond. We could see hills we'd done together, like Coombs Edge towards Buxton, plus 'to do's' for later trips like Black Hill at the back of Lyme, photographed below.



A great website and associated app for potential new hill days in the Peak District is the 'Ethels' list (<https://ethels.uk/>) named after 20<sup>th</sup> century Peak National Park and Green Belt pioneer Ethel Haythornthwaite.

Here is Ethel: © CPRE

On a clear day you can see Kinder Scout from this walk, but we had high cloud and only the northern edge of the plateau emerged later on. A few years ago I did the circuit of the of the Kinder plateau rim with a couple of work friends, it's a fine day out and quite an ask in one day!



We continued on along Black Lane and Primrose Lane, both green lanes, over Mellor Moor. The moor is quite wild and bleak in feel. Then a short road section to Broadhurst Farm and down on paths to the Sett Valley. This bit was very muddy indeed after Babet; a possible alternative might be to take a wider sweep east on green tracks and lanes around and down to Thornsett, which is where we joined the Sett Valley Trail to New Mills. Our walk was 6 miles long so it's well possible to extend it if one wishes.



The Trail is an old railway line and is woodland beside the River Sett. It's very attractive.

At one point it is lined with stones that children have painted. They are fading now with the years but I loved this sleepy rainbow stone...



At New Mills the Trail segues into the Goyt Valley Way. New Mills, like Bristol, is a town with its own on-site gorge. This is carved by the Sett and the Goyt rivers through a rocky channel called The Torrs. The rivers were harnessed to power industrial mills, the area is now a park with some fearsome looking bouldering opportunities – also E grade climbs - on the gorge walls. Powered by Babet, both rivers thundered scarily along...this is the Sett above the confluence:

And here is the Goyt below the Millenium Walkway. An airy path this, it'd be a great location if they ever make a Geriatric 007 movie – Bond and Blofeld in a mobility scooter chase/shootout!



The Goyt then calms down a little – and luckily for us was not flooded – below the town. We crossed the pleasant flatter meadow and woodland of Mouseley Bottom, before a short walk uphill to the car park. A very varied and enjoyable walk! Thanks to Mark for organising this, and for some of the photos in this article.  
**Dave Gray**