



A Chris moss tree

The Gwydyr Mountain Club Newsletter.

December
2023

Edited: Chris
Harris

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

5-7 January	Hut Weekend
12-14 January	Yorkshire Dales Weekend - organiser Barb Reynolds
20-21 January	Silver Navigation Course
26-28 January	Hut Weekend: Burns Night
6 February	Social Event at Gallagher's: Corsica GR20 Talk -
16-18 February	Hut weekend: Mountain Skills Course
18-22 February	Scottish Winter Meet - organizer Chris Harris
2 March	Froncysyllte Aqueduct and Trevor Rocks organizer Dave Gray

Articles this Month:

- 1) Thursday walks by Chris Harris
- 2) Bronze Navigation weekend 16th-17th December - by Helen Grant
- 3) Rescue Emergency Care First Aid Course, 25/26th Nov 2023 - by Melinda Kinsman
- 4) 'Walking with Geordies' – a trip to Whitley Bay by Dave Gray

1) Thursday walks update - by Chris Harris

Moving on from the Castle Walks which covered extensive areas of mud and barbed wire in North Wales Roger Hughes has devised a plan covering 18 months of Thursday walks. That is, to visit 6 different Welsh ranges over the next 18 months, doing three walks on each range. The trio of the lesser Arenigs have been completed now and a trend is noticeable. These are mountains that many of us did not know existed and we are not alone as it would appear from the lack of distinct paths not many others go there. However, the fact that we rarely meet other walkers is a big bonus and the views so far have been excellent as it feels that we have been in the dead centre of the North Welsh mountains with views of Snowdonia, The Rhinogs, the Berwyns, the Clwyd ranges and others that, in the absence of Dave Gray, we have not been able to identify.

19th October, Arenig Fach - see October Newsletter.

16th November Carnedd-y-filiast (669 metres):



A fine, sunny (10C) and calm day, Dave Edwards had made an extensive reckkie of the route so we were well warned of what lay ahead. The route from a car park on the A4212 on the banks of Llyn Celyn was in fact a broad bridleway nearly to the top of Carnedd-y-Filiast. After months of heavy rain this was a good thing. There was one obstacle in the shape of a ford which at most times I would think is easily shallow enough to walk through in good boots. However, there were differing opinions on where and how to cross but despite my taking a few videos nobody fell in.

After a pleasant lunch on the summit we descended to recross the ford (again no accidents) to a split in the track. This was where Dave's reckkie paid off as he

recommended a return via the outward route as the alternative route had indistinct paths, marshy areas, and deeply furrowed forestry tracks flooded with water. Having taken on board Dave's warnings the majority voted for the more challenging route and we were not disappointed.

Leaving the track after about a mile of numerous mini-fords we entered nopersons land. The first warning signs were the lovely new galvanised gates and fresh barbed wire fences. There were in fact plenty of gates and stiles but due to the nature of the land the farmer had apparently moved the original boundaries to more even ground and they did not match well with the maps. The route was challenging but this is what the Gwydyr is good at and we overcame all obstacles without damage to those involved.

The stats.; 8.4 miles and 2040ft ascent.

The Bridge Inn at Pontblyddyn supplied the off the hill pint.



14 December Foel Goch (611m) :

For the third consecutive month, Roger managed to find a fine weather window for our walk. However, once again we were warned of soggy conditions.



There's a path there, somewhere !



An actual path from bwych to summit



The instructions in Roger's guide book were clear, unfortunately some of the paths weren't. However we made good progress to the top of Foel Goch, walking up a rather pleasant valley to cross a small ford and continue on the near invisible path to arrive at the boundary stone at a small bwyllch. A short discussion about what the boundary was of was inconclusive. We had time for a first lunch then made the final ascent to the summit for a brisk second lunch. Once again the views (a bit hazy this time) were of seemingly all the North Wales mountains.



Leaving the summit good ridge path with regular stones marking the boundary of who knows what. We then had to choose a point at which to start the decent. Basically the map shows a bowl surrounded on three and three quarters of the side by steep hills. The map also shows a lot of marshy terrain, explained by additional features of at least 10 streams flowing towards our target exit. Throw in all the rain we have had in recent months and the information from Roger's guide suggesting that we would be following a pleasant grassy slope seemed doubtful. The were 2 trains of thought, 1) take a direct line 2) stick to high ground. We did a bit of both. The guide said we should cross Foel Fach which I guess means "small hill". Anyway it wasn't on the map supplied with Roger's guide. After, a fair amount of bog, stream jumping and tussock negotiation we emerged onto a solid track tacking us back to the cars after 6 miles and 1275ft ascent.

Conclusion: A great short challenging walk on one of the shortest days of the year but probably a lovely afternoon walk on a sunny summer day.

Once again the Bridge Inn at Pontblyddyn supplied the off the hill pint in front of the log fire.

2) Bronze Navigation weekend 16th-17th December - written by Helen Grant



Setting out from the hut on the first day

Eight members, myself, Glenn, Lindsey, Sonja, Sven, Barb, Adrian D and Dave E arrived at the hut for our 2 day Bronze Navigation course leading to the NNAS Bronze Navigation Award run by our very own Christy. There was a mix of experience between us with some of us after a refresher and others completely new to navigation.

Here's what we covered on the course:

The Bronze Navigator Award is designed to train individuals in the navigation skills needed to navigate gentle rolling terrain in lowland areas with well defined boundary features where navigation will be primarily on roads, tracks and well defined paths. It is a great starting point to consolidate and

put into practice basic navigation skills which will help build a solid navigation skill set. Areas covered are as follows:

- Navigate using a variety of maps and scales.
- Use 4 and 6 figure grid references with worded descriptions to define the position of a map feature and to locate a feature on the ground.

- Orientate the map using handrails, obvious point features and major landforms.
- Use linear features (e.g. paths, tracks, clear boundaries) as handrails in simple navigation exercises.
- Relate prominent landforms such as large hills and valleys to corresponding contour information on the map.
- Orientate the map by aligning a compass needle against grid north and be aware that magnetic variation causes an inaccuracy.
- Use an orientated map to confirm the direction of travel.
- Use clearly identifiable features to confirm position along the route and to recognise when the target has been overshoot.
- Measure horizontal distance on the map and estimate distance on the ground using timing, pacing and simple visual judgements e.g.100m.
- Plan and implement simple routes and navigation strategies based on the above skills.
- Recognise a navigation error within a few minutes and apply simple relocation techniques using handrails and prominent features.
- Be aware of the use of mobile phone location apps as a backup to map and compass and in emergencies.
- Demonstrate an awareness of local and national access issues, access legislation, personal responsibilities, the Countryside Code and sustainability.
- Demonstrate appropriate knowledge of walking equipment, safety equipment and emergency procedures



Working hard Saturday evening planning our route for the next day

The course started in the hut at 9am on the Saturday morning before venturing outside to do various activities and finished by 5pm on the Sunday. There was an evening session on the Saturday where we all planned a route together for the Sunday and a fun quiz to test our knowledge together with Bamber Gascogne style buzzers for teams to answer questions to test us on what we had learnt during the day.



Second day successfully navigating are way around the forest



Christy setting out the cones for our exercise in orientating

I would really recommend this course to other members who would like to learn navigation. We all learnt loads and had fun while doing so.

Thanks Christy for a great weekend.

3) 25/26th Nov 2023 - Rescue Emergency Care First Aid Course - written by Melinda Kinsman



The end of November saw Allan Shaw and his large gang of resuscitation dummies return to the hut to hold a 2nd excellent First Aid course for GMC members. As the course was surprisingly not full, I jumped at the chance to attend again, feeling it was a subject I wanted to learn more about and to keep myself updated on.

As last year had been the first time I'd ever attended a First Aid course, I'd found the huge amount of information we'd been given then to be a bit overwhelming. I was hoping this year would feel easier, and that my scrawled notes would make more sense afterwards!

Saturday started with First Aid question and answer cards, and discussions about our answers. I'd not made notes on many of these last year, and was surprised how many topics I didn't even remember we'd covered!

As we passed round dud Epi pens to stab ourselves and each other with, it was good to be reminded that it was the outer thigh we were aiming at, and that you switched to the other leg if a 2nd dose was needed. An important nugget I'd also forgotten from last time was not to stick your thumb over the end of the Epi pen. (A painful mistake if you are holding the thing the wrong way round, as you'll get a needle straight through your thumbnail!)



With the forecast for Sunday being cold and wet, we went outside on Saturday afternoon to do casualty checks, to practice getting each other into the recovery position, and to practice CPR and using various defibs on Allan's varied gang of resuscitation dummies. Allan even had a brand new portable defibrillator to show us. (Small enough to carry in your rucksack...) As Saturday drew to a close, I felt I'd forgotten and relearned a lot of important stuff, but, unlike last year's course, my head didn't feel like it was about to explode!

On Sunday morning, we were kept busy tackling gory wounds on mannequin heads and foam limbs with various bandages and sanitary products. I like to think I'd a better idea of what to do, but suspect I really still need to get more pretend practice in bandaging up a willing volunteer!

I felt I'd at least improved at bandaging a head wound using the "Capelin bandage" technique - until I tried later to bandage poor Jane's head up outside with a mock gaping head wound, and with no thick crepe bandages on hand!



After discussing "catastrophic bleeds", we had a go with a variety of tourniquets, as well as trying out pressure bandages and passing around various haemostat products.

The hut kitchen was where we further discussed hypothermia, and turned Christy into a human burrito! I was pleased to see the new laminated cards that Allan had given us to clip to our rucksacks included instructions on this. The exact details had been bugging me since last year!

On Sunday afternoon, we moved outside to tackle some of Allan's famous "realistic" scenarios. I initially hung back, worried that I may already know most of the scenarios, but with fake blood and fake



casualties all over the place, it felt as if everyone left standing was needed! I wish I could say I didn't let anyone die, but, sorry Mike, I left us both next to that burning car that was about to explode!!

In summary, all I can say is that this was yet again a brilliant course, and I felt redoing the course after even just a 1 year gap made me feel I'd already forgotten and relearnt a lot of material. So I'm very glad I redid the course this year, but hope there will be even more interest from other members in future, and that the GMC will start making this an annual event.

4) 'Walking with Geordies' – a trip to Whitley Bay - by Dave Gray



Where???

Going on holiday? Can't make up your mind? Well forget Yorkshire Airlines and go ShearerAir to Whitley Bay!

Let me sell it to you. Whitley Bay is the Hoylake or West Kirby of Newcastle on Tyne, a pretty and genteel seaside resort. I went there on one of my 4-night solo static caravan trips early in spring 2023, on the basis that it looked a good base for coastal walking in a new area.

Also, it gives access to Newcastle which is a splendid city I used to visit in my working days – massive bridges on the Tyne, access to

the arts centre in Gateshead, and the beautiful Grey Street (no relation!) are just a few of the things to see there, so there is much to do if the weather turns rough. Whitley Bay is on the Newcastle Metro railway so one doesn't need to use the car to get into town, and could in fact do most of this trip by public transport with a bit of planning.

As it happened the three full days I was there were fine so I didn't have to play the city card.

Some time inland

The day I drove over, however, saw a good weather forecast collapse into clag as I went north on the M6. So I abandoned plans for walking in the North Pennines en route, and went instead to the Derwent Walk Country Park near Blydon on the eastern edge of Newcastle.

This is a walk on an old railway line by the River Derwent, and I headed upriver from a car park at Thornley Wood almost as far as Hamsterley and back again, the deep woods sheltering me from the occasional shower. It's a pretty walk whose main historic highlight is the 'Nine Arches' viaduct. There are also some interesting sculptures on the trail, I particularly liked one of an otter – see below.



On the day I drove home the same happened weatherwise, I just had a short dry weather window in the morning. So I did a couple of hours on the Tyne Trail which goes west from the city. I walked from Wylam to Ovingham Bridge and back. The riverside woods and wetlands are attractive and again there's an impressive old railway bridge on the trail at Hagg Bank.



Walking the coast

On the three fine full days I did three varied walks.

The **first** was straight from the caravan park down to St Mary's Island and lighthouse, along the cliffs to Seaton Sluice, and then a loop north and then inland, to circuit back to Seaton via the bird reserve of Holywell Pool and then Holywell Dene valley to reach Seaton and regain the outward route.

The picture below is of St Mary's and the cliffs at high tide, but the tide was out on my outward leg, and I crossed over a causeway to the island where there's a good view of grey seals hauled out. Geordie people I found chatty and friendly and here a local lady expressed her shock and awe at my hatless – and #1 cut! - state on a cold morning. Surely a first, wearing fewer clothes than a Geordie!



Seaton Sluice is not a horrible piece of NHS hospital equipment, but a quirky little town, built around an artificial harbour dating to the 17th century. The 'sluice' name is because they saved on dredging expenditure by having a sluice damming the river going into the harbour: cattle were used to churn up the mud at low tide, and then they opened the sluice to release the water to sweep the mud out to sea.

If you worked for HMRC in the 1750s you clearly needed heavy protection – this is the semi- fortified customs house down near the harbour.



Maybe the Customs men were afraid of the ghosts of the local Vikings! Like I said a quirky place...



For my **second** walk I drove about 30 miles north to High Hauxley at the southern end of the big Northumberland beaches, and by beach and coastal dunes path, and inland nature pools, walked the ground between Druridge Bay Nature Reserve and Amble village, as out and backs.



Even on a sunny day the vast lonely beach and shelves of rock felt almost forbidding at times, the sea was angry in a very strong wind. Dark stooped and hooded figures collecting shellfish or bait laboured in silence against a dark background of waves.



There were good views out to Coquet Island and its lighthouse, and Amble is a pleasant scene set on a sandy bay with low cliffs.



Walk **three** involved my first trip through the Tyne Tunnel! I drove to the southern edge of the Newcastle conurbation and used my National Trust card to park at and visit Souter Lighthouse, which was built in 1871 high on a string of cliffs. Using the excellent coast path I covered the cliff tops as out and backs from the lighthouse. The cliff scenery is top of the range and the pictures tell the story – south to Whitburn...



...and then north to Frenchman's Bay.



Whitley Bay? – Wey Aye Man!

I hope this article has shown you the possibilities of this area, it's not massively extensive but it is great for a short break, or could be blended into a longer trip to the rest of Northumberland. I was impressed by coastal scenery that exceeded my expectations!

Dave Gray