

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

June 2024: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the June Newsletter! I'm pleased to say this is another Extra! edition, with an article on the successful Little Langdale meet from Teresa, and taking us further afield one from Gail on trekking and climbing in the Verdon Gorge area. We also have our three regular pieces covering the Club scene as we go into Summer.

Thanks to Gail and Teresa, Helen G, Janet Coates, John D, John S, Mike Doyle, Richard Smith, and also of course to David LJ, for help with this edition.

Looking ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for June and July, details are on the Club Website. The meets list is constantly being updated, please **check it out regularly** on the Website. Meets added to the programme since the last edition are in bold as a reminder **in case you've missed them...**

4 June	Social Event at Gallaghers: New Zealand Talk
4 June	Climbing Irby Quarry
7/9 June	Hut Weekend
15 June	The Criggion 3 Peaks
18 June	Climbing Dyserth Castle Slab
21/23 June	Hut Weekend: Welsh 3000s
2 July	Climbing Llandulas Cave
11 July	Evening Walk – Chester Walls from Countess Park
12/14 July	Hut Weekend
16 July	Climbing Castle Inn
19-21 July	Yorkshire Dales – Chapel le Dale
26/28 July	Hut Weekend
30 July	Climbing Helsby

Venues in Focus

As you can see above there are four **Hut Weekends** in the offing. Capel Curig has 'form' weatherwise and I'll take a punt that – as Bob Dylan might have put it - Some Rain's Gonna Fall. We are lucky that there are some good mid-level walks near our Hut if that happens, here's a sketch of my favourite, which is very peaceful.

It's a varied circuit in the Gwydyr Forest. It starts at the car park by Llyn y Sarnau at GR777592. Here's a map at 1:50K to set the scene; 1:25K is much better in the field.



In brief, the route follows a track around the north end of Llyn y Sarnau (left) and takes tracks SE passing above the farm of Coed Mawr to emerge at the S end of Llyn Parc. Then go N on the east side of Llyn Parc and keeping left at a track junction, descend. Roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a kilometre after the north end of the lake, another track goes ENE in a loop to the minor road just by Hafna Mine. Beware of overexcited

mountain bikers here!

Hafna Mine has the best preserved mine remains in the area, and was worked until 1919. You get a good sense of the processes involved at the mine from the signage on site.

And on YouTube there are a couple of videos of cavers exploring the very wet insides of Hafna.



Ascend through the mine workings themselves following the signage to emerge at the house of Pen y Gwaith. From there a good path goes around the S end of Llyn y Glangors to head broadly SW and emerge on the minor road NW of Llyn Bodgynedd.



Go SE on the road to the Cors Bodgynedd nature reserve and follow the path in the reserve SW to the shores of the larger lake. About 200 metres along the rough shore, just before the island, a rough path cuts away from the lake to go into the forest and pick up a track. Then follow tracks SW and WSW to meet the minor road about 1 km SW of the car park.

Most of the lakes around here have been subtly altered to meet the needs of the local lead mining industry. The website

<https://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/cors-bodgynydd-nature-reserve> shows that mining hereabouts started around 1625. The site also details the rare species found on the Bodgynedd reserve, including the emperor dragonfly pictured above.



Staying in Wales, my eye was drawn to Mike Doyle's **Dyserth Castle Slab** meet. When I was a reluctant Cub Scout the pack went all too frequently to Dyserth Camp. There was too much football at Cubs for me, and I managed to avoid the Camp by using a policy of total *Omerta* on the subject with my parents! As you can see from the photo left my lips were sealed...

The quarry where Mike plans to climb is there alright, but the castle isn't.

The website

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/418341?term=dyserth%20castle> indicates the castle was built by King Henry III from 1241 after the Treaty of Gwernigron with Dafydd ap Llewellyn, Prince of Gwynedd. It was destroyed in a siege in 1263.

And that job was more or less finished by extensive quarrying in WW1. Old postcards show the remains prior to that time, but now only mounds in the soil and a few scattered pieces of masonry are left.

See <https://www.castlewales.com/dyserth.html> for some more pictures of the bits and pieces.



Looking forward to the **Welsh 3000s** meet, this magnificent photo of Y Lliwedd was taken by John S on a recce walk... Let's hope for this kind of weather on the big day!



Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights



Sticking with life at the Hut, the **St George's weekend** went very well.

From Richard Smith's Facebook post it was pretty full on – 'Great weekend...Ascent of Tryfan via North Ridge, Penrhyn Castle Parkrun, rock climbing in Moelwyns - all rounded off with bangers and mash! Thanks to Linda and Tom for a lovely meal.'

Again via Facebook John Driver, Carol and party also went up Moel Siabod.

The **Summer Barbeque weekend** at the hut enjoyed fine sunny weather both by day and night. Part of the hill menu was Cnicht – below is a magic view of Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa and Y Lliwedd) from the ascent...and next up the team enjoy the view down to Porthmadog.

Big thanks go to Kev and Vanda for a fine BBQ and a super meet!





On rock, Mike Doyle's **Helsby Climbing** mid-week meet saw the team enjoying a gritty session on traditional routes. Lines done included *Flake Crack* (VS 4c).

The weather was warm and sunny, but the challenge was in the long term condition of the rock – sandy, gritty, and with a covering of lichen. This is a consequence of the crag being a relatively quiet place.

Mike reckons they could have done with a yard brush to clean things up. Good news for the lichen that they hadn't got one!

The routes relied on friction climbing so they decided to use top roping as a precaution, but even then the climbs proved harder than the grades suggest.

We enjoyed Janet Coates' **South Clwyds** Thursday walk.

OK it rained heavily in the valley towards the end but we had pleasant sunshine on the tops. Plus wide if hazy views of the hills to the SW as far as Cader Idris.

Plenty of spring flowers and birdlife too – we not only heard cuckoos calling, but Jane actually saw one!



Finally here's an impressively scary shot taken by and of one of the Fab Four on Mike's **Dyserth Waterfall Crag** mid-week climbing meet. And this doesn't even show all the overhangs that are on Mike's full post on Facebook.

This sort of thing convinces me I was wise to give Dyserth a wide berth back when I was a 9 year old!

The team had an enjoyable meet and got some sunny conditions.

From what I can glean online the grade range of routes on the crag go from 5a to 8b. As a former history student my favourite route name is *Suleiman the Insignificant* at 5a. You wouldn't have dared call it that in the 16th century!

EXTRA!

LITTLE LANGDALE MEET: GREAT CARRS, SWIRL HOW, AND WETHERLAM – by Teresa Peddie

The weather was dry, bright, and very breezy, perfect weather for walking.



After a bit of a walk in, we had to cross a narrow footbridge over a gorge, followed by an initial steep climb.

A long gradual ascent, that went on and on and on, with lots of false summits - quite a challenge! Lots of awe inspiring views to take our mind off it!

Looking back at Little Langdale...



...Great Carrs and Swirl How in the background



After a final scramble, we reached the top of a very cold great Carrs, which had all to ourselves (amazing considering it was Easter weekend)



These are the Scafells from Great Carrs...



The 'quiet day' didn't last!!

After a quick stop off to look at the WW2 Aircraft wreckage, we then approached the bedlam of Swirl How and the Prison Band descent to Swirl Hawse... soooo many people, where did they all come from?

We then proceeded up the gradual slopes of Wetherlam, which we had pretty much to ourselves. The breeze had dropped, and it was almost balmy in the sun, time to lose a few layers.

Then came what turned out to be an **epic** descent from Wetherlam. There was no proper path, and the terrain was very rocky, wet, scrambly, slippery, loose and very very dodgy!!...no time for pictures, 100% concentration required!!



Lower down, the Epic-ness progressed from very dodgy indeed, to just plain dodgy, which meant zigzagging on steep ground through slippery bracken and boulders back down to the footbridge!!



On this descent, we very nearly achieved the 10% loss which is acceptable on all GMC walks, but just didn't try hard enough, and managed to scrape by with all of us intact!! (bar a few bumps, bruises, and sore knees!!)



We all hobbled back from the footbridge, very weary, to a very welcome beer and a hot shower, back at the hut!!

As well as a love for the hills, the GMC are notoriously famous for their love of food and drink, and 'a good time was had by all' on this trip.

Here's some of the full team on the meet, at Sunday dinner, courtesy of Hew and Jane.



FANCY THE VERDON? - by Gail Smith

Doug and Gail went to France for about a month in April/May. The “meat” of the holiday was to be climbing and trekking in the Verdon Gorge, between visits to chateaux, Roman remains, dolmens, menhirs, restaurants, long walks in the hills and woods, patisseries, visiting friends, maybe a few *via ferratas*, art galleries.... However, we had a lot of rain, Doug had awful shoulder pain and Gail had eye trouble so the outcome was a bit lower on outdoor activities than we hoped, and a bit higher on huddling under umbrellas in old villages. What follows is a brief description of the bits that might be of interest to GMC people, some of whom might be thinking of doing the gorge walk.

The Verdon was our destination because our daughter (Heather) had a IML (International Mountain Leader) job coming up leading a week-long walking holiday along the gorge and, although she had spent a lot of time climbing there, had not previously done the trek. We were to be her mock “clients” while she sorted out good picnic spots, water supplies, answers to the questions clients usually ask, critical navigation points, and what would happen if you took the wrong path in various places. However, the weather forecast was **dire** – heavy rain and snow on the first and only “climbing” day. So Heather suggested we stayed a bit further north and had a day in Orpierre.

Doug sorted out a long ridge walk, and Heather took Gail up the local obvious classic climb, which runs up the nose of the cliff - Le Dièdre Sud , a 7-pitch 5c.



The day started cold, but there was very little wind, and the feeling soon came back into my fingers after the first pitch. I wasn't leading so we were super-efficient and the only other group on the climb kindly let us overtake whilst being very complementary about my skills (She is *how old?* And still climbing so *well?*)

It was interesting all the way up and the couple of places that were rather more interesting than I would have liked were well protected - in one case by an “extra” bolt that must have been put there entirely for the piece of gear to hang on to. It was a 3-pitch abseil back down including a hanging rap-station that I found a little alarming due to lack of recent practice. It only started to snow/hail a little just as we got down. What a great climb!

We were going to do a modified version of the Verdon trek that didn't involve nights in hotels – just one in a gite, -and missing out the first “acclimatisation” day. We checked with tourist Information in La Palud and stayed in their recommended car park in our vans for 3 nights. The weather was horrible when we arrived and the forecast not much better.

Day 1. We took a local taxi (55 Euros) to Castellan, and started walking up the tarmac to a delightful path/old Roman road through wet snowy woods, via a village where you can sometimes get coffee, and eventually out onto high pastures. The sun came out ! We did get a good view of the gorge before descending, although it was hailing by then. Down to Rougon where we spent the night in Gite de Mur des Abeilles.



Day 2. This was the longest day spent walking the main gorge. We were surrounded by huge stunning limestone cliffs and following the line of a fast, big turquoise river, although often fairly high up on the gorge walls on the well-engineered Sentier Blanc-Martel.

The path runs through some tunnels and a couple of places with 1930s handrails or iron staircases that seem to go up for ever, but is mostly in good condition and you get spectacular views of the scenery and vultures, with occasional places to dip your toes in the river. Heather's commentary was illuminating ... "that's the last place I cried on a climb" ... "supposed to be 7b but it was much harder and I hung off the gear" ... "that's where Nathan jumped in the river and it was shallower than he expected and he broke his foot".... "Stunning place to bivvy watching the Milky Way".



We soon found that the walk is officially upstream, but Heather would have to lead it downstream, so she planned on hiding her "leader" status if challenged and hoped that big parties were not coming the other way on the narrow bits. The path eventually winds up to the lip of the gorge and a conveniently-located Refuge/Café where we recovered by drinking Orangina. Heather then "hitched" back to our vans in one minute, by just asking people who were leaving if they could give her a lift back to La Palud.

Day 3. This day runs from La Palud to finish at Moustiers.

Another hard day and it actually felt hot at times, although there was still a bitter wind blowing when we were out of the sun. This part of the walk is mainly along the high edge of the gorge with occasional glimpses of the river (which I believe runs underground for part of its route) and is pleasant walking, some woodland and spectacular views. Moustiers is a nice, touristy town. Above the main street is a gold-leaf-covered star – the first one was put up after a crusade, and this is its 11th iteration. Another easy hitchhike back to vans.



Day 4. The final day was a Lower Gorge circuit, and a much easier day.

We set off from the nice parkup by the lake at Quinson, at the entrance to the lower gorge. We came here on a family holiday many years ago when it was much hotter and not as rainy and had a fun day with kayaks and pedalos.



The first part of the walk is along the old canal beside the river, followed by a return over the hill via a chapel. The last hour returning to the vans was a bit wet, but other than being surprisingly cold, we had the best weather of the holiday during the trek. Very substantial meal at the little restaurant on the other side of the river.

A lovely little trek. Highly recommended.