

# THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER

August 2024: Editor Dave Gray



## Introduction

Welcome to the August Newsletter! And to the end of July, which must be the British Monsoon Season. Many thanks to Chris Harris, Gail, Gill Eccles, Helen G, Mark Barley, Mike Doyle, Ray, Sue, Teresa, and as ever David LJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next Edition! The final deadline for that is 27<sup>th</sup> August.

## Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for August and September, 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...**

3 August	The Cloud and Mow Cop
6 August	Climbing: Marian Bach
<b>8 August</b>	<b>Club Meeting 8pm at Gallaghers</b>
9/11 August	Hut Weekend
12/16 August	Mid week Climbing (based at the Hut)
17 August	Llantysilio Hills
20 August	Climbing: Penmaen Head
23/25 August	The Roaches Weekend
30 Aug – 1 Sept	Hut Weekend
20/22 September	Hut Weekend
20/23 September	Joint GMC/ Dundee MC Meet, Glen Prosen

## Venues in Focus



Starting on rock, our successful series of meets are poised to continue at the limestone crag of **Marian Bach** near Old Colwyn, pictured below on a nice sunny day! (*photo* [www.ukclimbing.com](http://www.ukclimbing.com))

There's a bit of a Midlands theme to August's walking meets, as we twice venture into the hilly bit of deepest Staffordshire.

Chris's **The Cloud and Mow Cop** meet takes in two prominent Peak District outliers between Congleton and Stoke on Trent. It's over 30 years since I did Mow Cop, in the days when my old mate Bob lived in Stoke, and days out were rounded off with food and beer in the magical Zarka's Balti House, near one of Stoke's canals. I've just googled it and Zarka's is still there! A tsunami of nostalgia...

Fast forward to last September when I had a great day out with Mark Barley on The Cloud, aka Bosley Cloud which is a super hill with a rocky summit and big views. I'm looking forward to visiting again.



This is not 'Stig of the Dump'! It's me, captured by Mark at the Bridestones neolithic chambered tomb at the southern end of The Cloud, which Chris plans to take in. This impressive site is very vegetated and I found it hard to get a sense of it on the ground.

Looking now at Wikipedia reveals that the two stones behind me are just two of the four portal stones of the stone circle surrounding the tomb. One portal stone has been but back together allegedly after being vandalised in Victorian times. The tomb itself had three chambers, of which one survives. This chamber was a big compartment – 20 foot long by 9 foot wide. So room for plenty of bodies, and a big complex overall. The Historic England write up says it's an outlier, most similar structures are in southern or south west England or in Scotland.

These were communal burial sites, either for families or social groups who were distinctive in some way within a larger population. This might have involved complex burial customs.

There is evidence from Wayland's Smithy on the Berkshire Downs that the bodies in such tombs were sometimes removed and rearranged, and it's possible that the ancestors' bones were taken out and displayed periodically, rather as saints' relics are in some places today. It's also suggested that shamans might have entered the tombs to communicate with the ancestors. There is also evidence that the bodies may have been reduced to bones before being deposited, by being excarnated first, resembling the traditional customs of the Indian Parsi community, with their 'Towers of Silence'. Neolithic people had strong stomachs!

Historical interest takes us on to the **Roaches Weekend** organised by Teresa. As she says on the website this is a great area for both climbing and walking straight from the door. One of my favourite walks has been to go over the main Roaches ridge, to Roach End, then NW along the continuation of the ridge, and then loop back via Lud's Church to the start. This takes in two of the places of interest described in the material Teresa has posted on the website, Lud's Church, and the Doxy Pool. These are magnets for a lot of legend and speculation.



Lud's Church is a deep and atmospheric gorge in the sandstone (*photo*, [www.walkmyworld.com](http://www.walkmyworld.com)) apparently caused by landslides after the glacial period. There would have been a lot of meltwater in the environment I guess leading stuff to become unstable and slip, and there are a couple of other minor cracks in the landscape nearby. But what about supposed links to secret doings of Lollards and Luddites?

Mmm...I'm not so sure about those legends. From what I've read the main known centres of enduring Lollard beliefs were around London/the South East/East Anglia. My challenge would be how a sparsely populated place like late medieval Staffordshire could generate a critical mass of Lollards to have a meeting at all. And all that an internet search on

Staffordshire Lollards seems to bring up is the speculation about Lud's Church, so is that it?

As for Luddites, yes there was a mill and no doubt scope for trouble at t'mill at Gradbach nearby, and Luddites did meet and drill in remote places. But again the main centres of Luddism *as such* were Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, and again 'Staffordshire Luddites' yields little online apart from the Lud's Church issue.

I'm with the simplest of the theories. That both the Church and Luddism simply have a *common* source for their names in the mythical King Ludd (as in Ludgate in London). Ludd himself is believed by scholars to derive from Lludd Llaw Ereint (Lludd of the Silver Hand), a Welsh mythical hero, whose persona is ultimately derived from the Celtic healing god Nodens. Another contender for the name Ludd is the Celtic god Lugh. Basically then Lud is a name people stuck onto mysterious things, like the alleged leader of the Luddites, and Lud's Church is very possibly an ancient sacred site whose memory lingered locally. As a portal to other worlds it feels pretty convincing! Perhaps Lud's last iteration was seaside mystery newspaper man 'Lobby Lud' in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, whom I just remember – google him!

The Doxy Pool (*photo* [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk)) is a small affair but is a surprisingly deep one at 3 metres, and apparently never dries out. It's allegedly home to a water sprite, known as Jenny Greenteeth, which is also a name for a water monster elsewhere in the UK. Last seen in 1949 by an early-adopting wild swimming local lady called Florence Petit, Jenny glowering over her at 30 foot high. Perhaps Ms Petit had grown faint on the meagre rations of 1949...



Water sprite legends are common – think all those nymphs in ancient Greece – think Lady of the Lake. Archaeologists have found offerings sunk in pools and bogs to be widespread and persistent, pools being thought to be gateways to the world of the gods. Again my guess for what it's worth is that the pool is another ancient sacred site whose memory has lingered on and morphed into scary legend.



Someone who probably knows the truth of all this mystery is the 'Winking Man'. (photo [www.atlasobscura.com](http://www.atlasobscura.com))

He is a rock formation on Ramshaw Rocks, a rugged little ridge about a mile east of the Roaches, and accessible by footpaths from there. It's a different walk to do in the area and the crag has lots of climbing, a quick internet search shows grades from moderate to E8.

An optical illusion leads to him being seen winking at drivers on the Leek to Buxton road below the crag.

Locals simply know him as 'Winky'!

## Occasional Section – Members' Personal News

This edition is a chance to remember **Neil Harris 1950– 2024**



Neil joined the Club in 1984 so was a member for 40 years.

He was educated at Oldershaw School in Wallasey and was a geology graduate of Edinburgh University.

Pictured left (*credit – Broker Direct*) is 'Neil the businessman': he had a very successful career. Having been a senior executive in the Royal, he ran his own business specialising in handling insurance claims, taking him as far afield as Nauru in the Pacific. He then became a founder director of Broker Direct, a major company in the industry, serving on their board for 17 years.

'Neil the walker' was big presence on Club Meets across the UK and overseas.' From camping in Glencoe and outside the Tan Hill Inn (he did like beer!) to the anniversary trips to the Himalayas, Majorca, and Aconcagua. He also did long distance walks with GMC members, with his brother Pete, and with the 'Gourmet Trekkers'. I did one of my top hills, the Taillon (10,314') in the Pyrenees with Neil on a Trekkers trip. In later years he was a stalwart of Club Thursday walks.

More on beer – Neil was a longtime member of CAMRA. He loved classical music and his taste in opera tended also to the 'beer end of the market': Wagner was a favourite and he actually visited Bayreuth to enjoy it.

'Neil the friend' was, with Sue, a generous host on many occasions. They supported my late Mum and Dad when Dad was disabled, by letting them stay at their first holiday home in Tregarth. Neil was a vital part of the group of friends supporting Les Fowles in his final years,

when Les suffered from Parkinsons Disease, which showed Neil's strength as well as his generosity.

## Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

The new programme of midweek evening meets in lovely sunshine with Gill's trip to **Halkyn Mountain**. Eight of us enjoyed a couple of hours out, from the southern end of the ridge at Rhosesmor. The ridge is a favourite of mine, good parking, pleasant walking, and very wide views. The next shot is the team facing the view of the Clwyds, bathed in a beautiful light.



This is the highest point in the range, Moel y Gaer, 'fortress hill', at 994 feet. On a very clear day one can see the Isle of Man from here. The iron age hill fort on the summit is well worth a visit, the ramparts are a good 15' high in places. 1973 excavations showed three phases of occupation and building types.

Our team also took in the lower summit of Halkyn Mountain itself.



Second up in the same series was Bill's 6-mile circuit based on and around **Chester City Walls**. The weather held dry and the walk rounded off with a pint in the Little Owl pub.

I don't know whether any Romans – or Cavaliers for that matter – were spotted on the way!



On rock, Gail has had couple of days climbing in North Wales with David LJ, Lee, Les, and another friend Bee (see left). First off at **Clogwyn Bochlwyd** and then at **Tremadog**, where *Grim Wall* (VS) was on the menu.

Meantime Mike Doyle was in action on **Craig Caerfai** in Pembrokeshire. To the right is *Armorican*, as Mike says 'arguably the best VS in Britain'.



And yielding more scary pictures of rock climbing, was Mike's **Castle Inn** meet. Eight of us did 'intensive sessions' on the Wilderness and Bantam Walls sections of the crag. And the team also practised 'lower off threading'.



As a non-climber I've just learnt that that is an important skill on sports type climbs – have a look at the BMC's website to find out more!

On Facebook Helen G writes... 'GMC does Yorkshire! Big thank you to Sven and Barb for all their hard work organising a brilliant weekend in **Chapel le Dale**. Local walks included 14.6 miler Sven's route around Ingleborough with great views and others did Pen y Ghent. Great

grub provided Saturday night with Sven's signature dish steak pie and veg followed by Sue's tiramisu.'

Here the Ingleborough team relax above Crummack Dale, Pen y Ghent in the background.

