

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

September 2024: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the September Newsletter! This is an Extra! Edition with an article from Chris Harris, which celebrates his completion of the Wainwrights. Congratulations and thanks to Chris; thanks too to Doug, Helen G, Kev, Lin, Mark Barley, Mike Doyle, Neil Metcalfe, Ray, Richard Smith, 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 27th September.

Looking Ahead

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

30 Aug – 1 Sept	Hut Weekend
7 September	Saturday walk – Hague Bar and New Mills Circuit
14 September	Saturday walk - Graig Fawr and Moel Hirradug
20/22 September	Hut Weekend
20/23 September	Joint GMC/Dundee MC Meet, Glen Prosen
4/6 October	Sorbie Tower, Galloway
11/12 October	Hut Working Weekend
18/20 October	Hut Weekend
30 Oct/17 Nov	Ecuador - 'Triple Crown'

Venues in Focus

I would so loved to have been able to join our friends from Dundee Mountain Club at the meet in **Glen Prosen**.

In part because in all my trips up to Scotland I never got to go there! Searching online I reckon there's at least a week's walking on the hills in the area, with plenty of paths and tracks, and the glen has a reputation of being a peaceful and remote place.



(photo flickr.com)

Clearly, we'll have expert advice and company on hand to guide us. But what immediately caught my eye on the map was the Kilbo Path to the Shank of Drumwhalloe, passing the farm of Runtaleave and the scarily named Cairn of Dye. This old path gives access to the fine munros of Dreish and Mayar. I did those hills on a dank day from the other side, Glen Doll, partly through forest, and in contrast the Glen Prosen route looks generally more open and bracing.

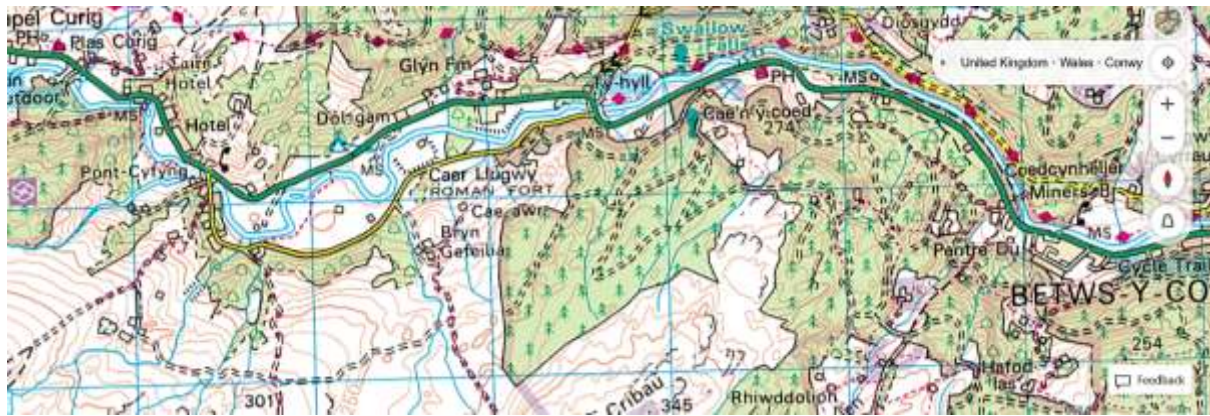
But what names! Runtaleave is perhaps where those cattle too weak to go over the pass were left to their fate... Seriously now! Drum is probably from the Gaelic 'Druim', meaning a ridge or a camber, and I guess Kilbo might come from the Gaelic word 'Cill' meaning a holy place, monk's cell, or church. 'Bo' in Gaelic means cattle, bull etc. so perhaps figuratively Kilbo meant church of the cattle? Another idea I found online is that it's from 'Cuil Bo' which means 'cattle nook' in Gaelic. Whatever the answer, it seems that people in this glen were once Gaelic speakers.

Who spoke what in early medieval eastern Scotland seems to have kept scholars in jobs for years. Overall the thinking seems to be that the original Pictish tongue of the east was akin to Welsh (as in Aberdeen); and that the people adopted, and to some extent adapted Gaelic around 800-1000 AD as the merger of Gaelic and Pictish kingdoms formed a new Scots kingdom.



Staying with history, if the weather in the hills doesn't play ball, one option might be to drive the 30 miles or so to the historic town of Arbroath, and walk on its impressive coastline (photo flickr.com). I had a great day there years ago with Bryan and Mike.

There are a couple of **Hut** meets in September so let's return to looking at walks based there. This is what I reckon (at about 3-4 miles) is the shortest 'hill' walk from the Hut. It's a pleasant easy stroll and has potential for good views. I've often done it on summer days when I've arrived late in the afternoon, or to 'beat the system' on changeable rainy days.



Just go up the track at the back of the hut till it flattens out at the crossways north of Pt 301m on the map. Turn left and descend the track to the east, then go left again at the track T-junction and go north to pick up the footpath just south of Bryn Gefailiau farm. This neatly avoids the farm but joins its access track (still shown as a path on the 1:50K above but a track all the way on 1:25!) which descends past Cae Awr to the lane leading to the hut.

I then always used to go east to the Ugly House (Ty Hwll) before turning back on the lane for the Hut. And if this walk is done in poor weather, maybe it will clear for you and you can then extend things down to the Swallow Falls (Rhaeadr y Wennol) and perhaps beyond. Back in the day another possibility was to go across country east from the T-junction, cross the forest fence and pick up the network of tracks going towards Betws y Coed. I don't know if that still works, but if it does it allows the walk to be substantially extended.

Several midlevel walks from the hut involve going over to Dolwyddelan. I often did this with John Huxley, drawn on by the prospect of a drink at the **Y Gwydyr Hotel** in the village. I'll never forget one trip where the participants played beer fuelled volleyball with a plastic wrapped packet of toilet rolls over a gate on the track on the way back. Happy Wet Days!



So it was great to read Neil Metcalfe's post on Facebook - 'Hi Everyone, just thought I'd let you know...the Y Gwydyr Hotel in Dolwyddelan has been beautifully refurbished whilst keeping its traditional look. The bar area and beer garden has been recently opened with the kitchen and accommodation to follow...'

On the subject of bars and new things – 7th September is a chance to join Mark Barley for the day on a **Hague Bar and New Mills circuit** in the Peak District, taking in the spectacular walkway through the Torrs Gorge on the River Goyt. The sound and atmosphere of the river crashing through is very impressive when the river is in full flow.





Occasional Section – Members' Personal News

Congratulations! to John Simpson who has finished the Munros! He did number 282, Ben Lomond, on 31st July. Ben Lomond whose summit ridge is pictured left, is the southernmost peak on the list.

John did some very big, determined days in his Munros campaign. I may be wrong but I think this news makes him the 5th person in the Club to do the Munro summits.

In this edition we remember **Paul Jensen 1947– 2024**



Paul and Lin joined the Club in 1972, having met some members in the Kinlochewe Hotel. One of my great walks with Paul was on nearby Slioch in 2006, when that meeting was fondly recalled.

He was a strong walker, and loved challenges, for example a solo backpack across the Rhinogs, and an ascent with Lin of Jebel Toubkal (13,671') in Morocco. A keen climber and caver in his younger days, Paul took us underground at Gaping Ghyll, Britain's biggest pot hole – a great experience.

Latterly Paul and Lin did big trips in their camper van, they went to France but most often to Scotland, to the wild places such as the Far North and Ardnamurchan that they loved. Paul and Lin also did the 'Nuttall' 2000' summits together, finishing the Welsh summits on Tryfan in 2003, and the English ones – with a big GMC turnout on Great Whernside – in 2006.

When I first knew him Paul was a fireman: like many in the emergency services he didn't talk much about his work, but I know he did things like fire prevention work in hazardous industrial settings. Prior to that he was a joiner: and for us his skill lives on in the Hut – the bunks, bunkroom floor, and the original drying room were largely built by him. He was also site supervisor for the massive amount of work done on the initial Chapel conversion.

Paul was Chair of the Club, but his contribution to its development majored on the Hut. He was Hut Warden for four years and Hut Secretary for a staggering 18 years. The lettings achieved in that time made a big difference to our financial security. They also helped a lot of people, particularly young people, get access to the outdoors through staying at Tan y Garth.

So Paul lived a very active and fruitful life. Many of us have great memories of days on the hill with him, and we have all benefitted from his great contribution to the Club over more than half a century.

Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights



It's not often this Newsletter recalls the glories of Hollywood choreographer Busby Berkeley, whose work is seen here in a still from 'Gold Diggers of 1933'.

Now that was a guy who could really 'do' a set of steps!

But he now has rivals - in the GMC - thanks to those members who helped with the grounds maintenance work during the **26/28 July Hut Weekend**.

As Richard Smith said on Facebook '...the grounds are now looking very neat and we even have a re-laid patio'.



...And *that*, Mr Berkley, is what a *real* set of steps looks like!



We enjoyed a lovely sunny – but very breezy - day on Chris Harris's **Bosley Cloud and Mow Cop** walk. This turned out at over 15 miles, and much to my surprise – given we were on outlying Peak District Hills plus chunks of Cheshire Plain – well over 2000' of ascent. I also felt the descent from Mow Cop on the Gritstone Trail through rocky and aromatic pine woodlands had a lovely wild and almost 'this is really France' feel to it.



Here is a group of us on Bosley Cloud, testing out the credentials of various chunks of rock that are candidates for the 'true summit'!

The far end of the walk was the summit of Mow Cop, an area split between Cheshire and Staffordshire. On the



top is a folly castle, built in 1754 as summer house by the splendidly named Randle Wilbraham (eat your heart out, Jane Austen!) of nearby Rode Hall.

The rugged summit ridge of Mow Cop gives massive views across the plain.



Remaining on rock, Mike Doyle writes 'An excellent turnout (14!) and good weather made for a successful meet at The Last Butt One Level at **Penmaenbach Quarry**'.

I think that has to be a record number for a GMC outdoor climbing trip?

The photo next is of Gail and David in action.



And the approach route to the quarry looking great in full summer colours...



Roger Hughes epic **'Tour of Snowdonia By Train'** trip attracted 27 starters on what Doug described as 'Quite a logistical feat considering the unreliability of rail services' and Helen G called 'an excellent eventful train and bus adventure'. The weather was pretty wet but everyone looks in fine fizz in the Facebook photos...



Including the engines!

This is a great shot from the trip of the Festiniog Railway's brand new loco *James Spooner* which is the seventh engine they have built at Porthmadog, and the seventh on the railway to the classic 'Double Fairlie' design.

This 19th century design, using two separate sets of powered bogies (wheel sets) and a double ended boiler with a central

firebox, was the first successful loco of this type and drove narrow gauge railway expansion worldwide. This was because it worked reliably to allow really powerful locos to take tight curves, and could be driven with equal ease in both directions. The 'Double Fairlie' is in fact the ultimate ancestor of most modern diesel and electric engines and multiple units as they are designed on the same principles.

Now for a big thank you to everyone who joined my **Llantysilio Hills Saturday Walk**, and made it such an enjoyable day with lots of good laughs! This below is 'Hats off to Moel Gamelin' which at 1,893' is the highest hill on the ridge.



As you can see from the shot left, taken on the descent of Moel Gamelin, the sun started to come out for us. We went on to take in Moel y Gaer and Moel Morfydd at 1,653' and 1801' respectively before retracing some of the route and then heading back along the northern foot of the hills.

After 7 miles and over 1750' of ascent we were ready an off-hill pint which we had at the Crown in Llandegla – very good beer and a friendly pub.

Helen G writes on Facebook 'Thanks Teresa for organising the **Roaches Meet** at Don Whillans hut. Great location below the crags. Despite the mixed weather we did some good walking - up Hen cloud, a 12.5 miler Roaches and Luds church with a brewery lunch stop yesterday, and tearoom stop today'

Here's some of her shots of the trip – wet and dry!



EXTRA!

FINISHING THE WAINWRIGHTS - by Chris Harris

I don't really do New Year resolutions but at the beginning of this year I said "I really must finish the Wainwrights this year".

I realised early in the bagging process that Wainwrights are best done on a fine day - it's all about the views not the altitude. Janet and I had trudged up Carrock Fell and High Pike on a very cold mid July day with a strong, unseasonably cold Northerly wind and the rain was persisting down. Janet said "We should not start a walk in rain when there's no chance of it letting off". I agreed.

I think most people start climbing Wainwrights rather randomly, as did I. So, near completion, I was left with hills scattered across the Wainwrightdom. Fortunately last year I managed to tick off Bakestall and Great Calva which are tucked in behind Skiddaw. The remainder looked do-able with a series of day trips from home.

The advantage of day trips is that you can choose a day with good weather. So this year's mission started with 14 peaks to do. Ironic really as I said last year it was my last 14 peaks (Welsh 3000's)...

So on the 2nd of May, Richard Smith joined me on a nice close trio of hills about two and a quarter hours drive from home - Dollywagon Pike, Nethermost Pike and Catstycam, starting from Dunmail Raise.



Unfortunately (or fortunately) we had to cross Helvellyn to get to Catstycam and then again on the return journey. I'm not sure if that counts as an extra two ascents of Helvellyn - a fine day cool but dry it was surprisingly busy up there. Apparently we were not alone in thinking this was the first decent weather of 2024. We even crossed a mountain biker descending from Dollywagon Pike on our first ascent.

Off the hill pint was taken in The Watermill Inn and brewery at Ings.

Looking towards Catstycam from Helvellyn.

On the 8th May Helen Grant was able to accompany me climbing Raise and Whiteside from Glenridding.

It is a two and a half hour drive to Glenridding so not too bad and we had great views of the previous week's peaks Helvellyn and Catstycam.

Once again we met mountain bikers but they were pushing their bikes up the track to Raise.

On interrogation we discovered that they were not wimps as they had started from Thirlmere, done Helvellyn, down Swirral Edge! to Catstycam, and were then heading back over Raise and Whiteside to Thirlmere.



Descent from Raise back to Glenridding

11th of June it was over to the other side of the Lakes to Wasdale with Helen.

This was a long day so a 6 o'clock start from home was needed as it is just over 3 hours drive to Wasdale Head.

We had 6 big ones to do, **Pillar, Scoat Fell, Steeple, Haycock, Caw Fell, Red Pike.**



Looking back to the undescendable Dorehead Screes



Great Gable(left) and Scafell Pike (right) viewed from Pillar

Highlight of the day (apart from amazing views) was the Typhoon fighter jet that flew up valley at eye level as we neared the top of Pillar. We reckoned he (she?) had seen us as it did a 90 degree tilt salute, confirmed when it came back round and flew directly over us, again tipped at 90 degrees.

As we left Wasdale Head we spent quite a lot of time looking at Dorehead Screes from all angles in the hope that we could drop back down into Mosedale from Red Pike rather than circumnavigate Yewbarrow. There is a path marked on the map but about 1000ft of descent at more than 45 degrees, on or alongside scree was not worth the gamble. A shame really as it would have saved 3 miles.

Steeple is one of the nicest Wainwrights I have done - a mini-scramble to a mini-peak, off the side of Scoat Fell.

No time for an off the hill pint as we got home about 8pm - after 15.5 miles with 5000ft of ascent!

20th of June 2024 - My next victim was Lindsey who accompanied me on Mungrisdale Common and Lank Rigg.

Boggy ascent to the top of boggy Mungrisdale Fell



Top of the Fell marked by a mini cairn. The Wainwright is a couple of hundred metres ahead, marked with a proper cairn and with good view

Mungrisdale Common is in NE lakes tucked in behind Blencathra, Lank Rigg is over the other side of the Lakes overlooking the Sellafeld power Plant.

The problem with Mungrisdale is it's about two and a half hours drive from home to the end of a track at Mosedale. Not many people go there so the paths are indistinct. Add in a lot of rain for most of 2024 and the ground was somewhat boggy. There is a stream to cross (sorry Lindsey, I didn't warn you) outward and return).

Having negotiated the stream we zig zagged the bog to the top, only it's not really a top, more of a side of the hill. Having reached the "top of the side of the hill" you have to descend to a cairn where you are rewarded with views of Blencathra, Skiddaw and Derwent Water so it's not so bad after all. As, always seems to happen, no matter how remote you are you always meet someone on the top. This time 2 gentlemen ambled up as we were having lunch. After talking to them it turned out they did not know each other but had met on Blencathra and teamed up to do Mungrisdale Common then split to do Great Calva and Bowscale Fell.

A quick lunch back in the car then it was a 45 minute drive to the start of the Lank Rigg walk.

I should have bagged this one with Janet when we did Grike and Crag Fell in 2017 but the weather was so grim I said " we'll come back on a fine day"



We took the regular route on a good path walking past the base and approaching from the rear (North East). The map shows no path off the West side but it's not steep, rocky, or forested so not difficult to achieve - apart from the bog traps.

Lank Rigg, looking towards the Irish Sea

Back in the car, it was just over 3 hours back to Wirral. No time for a pint on this one either.

5th of July 2024 - Brock Crag - The Final Wainwright ! - Victim, Richard Smith.



Actually this was a more leisurely day, just over 2 hours drive away and it's a nice hill to finish on.

This was not planned years ago but last year I realised I had overlooked this one and thought it would be the ideal finisher.

Starting from Hartsop at the foot of the Kirkstone pass this was a civilised walk on a good path up the valley, crossing the stream should have been on a footbridge but it was bit storm damaged so a quick paddle rather than a wade was required, Then up a grassy slope and across a boggy bit took us to Brock Crag where we celebrated with lunch and a glass of fizz.

The views from the top are great - South to Hartsop Dodd, West to Saint Sunday Crag, North to Angle Tarn and Pikes and East to High Street.

After lunch it was a bit of off-piste to Angle Tarn then Angletarn Pikes and the descent back to Hartsop via Boredale Hawes, where we encountered a mountain biker on his way up, with a very small child strapped to the cross bar.

And – at last! - an off the hill pint in the Queen's head in Troutbeck!



My thoughts on Wainwrights:

- Well worth doing in good weather, the views never disappoint.
- Bagging Wainwrights is a great excuse for taking regular holidays in the Lakes.
- You will discover so many of the quiet areas of the Lakes where you seldom meet another walker.
- A.W. recorded all the hills walked in a magnificent set of books. Each hill having suggestions for many different ascents so once you have ticked them all off you can go back to the best ones and try alternative routes.
- I have a great deal of respect for the likes of Bryn and Teresa and John (Simmo) who have bagged all the Munros in only a few years. Many Wainwrights can be done as a day trip from Wirral but the Munros are much less accessible and take a huge commitment in time, travel, and physical effort.