

# THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

**June 2025: Editor Dave Gray**



## Introduction

Welcome to the June Newsletter! This is an Extra! edition with an article from Chris Harris on the successful February Scottish Meet. Many thanks to Chris, and also to Barbara and Sven, Brenda, Gill Eccles, Helen Grant, Mike Doyle, Mike McEneaney, Richard Smith, Zahida, and as ever DLJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **June 25<sup>th</sup>**.

## Looking Ahead

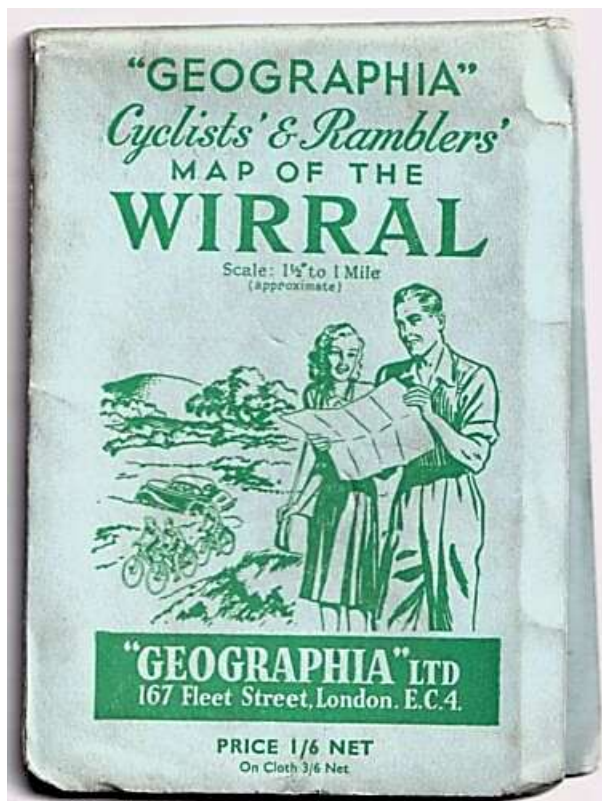
Here are the upcoming meets venues for June and July, details are on the Club Website. The meets list is constantly being updated, please **check it out regularly** on the Website. Meets added to the programme since the last edition are in bold as a reminder **in case you've missed them....**

3 June	Gallaghers – Talk on Air vs. Ground Navigation
4 June	Climbing – Castle Inn
7 June	Saturday Walk – Wirral: Mike Mc's 80 <sup>th</sup> Birthday
18 June	Climbing – Nant Dulas
20-22 June	Hut Weekend (Inc. Welsh 3000s and Snowdonia Slate Trail 3)
2 July	Climbing – Penmaenbach
4-6 July	Hut Weekend
14-18 July	Midweek Hut Meet (TBC)
16 July	Climbing – Oak Tree Crag
19 July	Saturday Walk – Sandstone Trail
<b>24 July</b>	<b>Evening Walk – Llanarmon yn Ial</b>
25/27 July	Hut Weekend
30 July	Climbing – Marian Bach

## Venues in Focus

Starting inside rather than out, a glance indoors to **Gallaghers** to highlight Paul Regnard's planned talk around navigation in the air '**Above the Clouds**'. A friend of mine was a fighter jet navigator in the RAF on Buccaneers, and then served as a battle commander in the Second Gulf War. I'll never forget being told just how scarily demanding a business air navigation is, especially at night – and being taken up by him in a tiny private plane to fly over Wirral, the Clwyds, and Liverpool city centre!

Hopefully no navvy problems on the familiar turf of the **Wirral** for **Mike Mc's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday walk**. Mike's route is both varied and interesting and covers quite a bit of ground.



Eighty years is a long time and in the days of Mike's early youth, we might have been navigating using this map... Mike tells me he has a (cloth I think) copy dating from before 1938!

I remember as a child my parents having it, and being fascinated by the cover - particularly the little car - and the contents. The latter seemed to major on pubs, so I think it was aimed at the less severe end of the rambling and cycling spectrum. The lady on the cover is certainly not it seems expecting a rugged day out, and I can imagine her bright smile fading as her companion mansplains the rigours ahead.

Did she hit him with her handbag at the end of the day?

Given Mum and Dad only came to England in 1953, this puts a date on when these maps were still very much in use.

The cover picture does emphasise though how very different things really were back then. Here's Mum and Dad on their honeymoon on the Isle of Man in 1951, when I know they did coastal walking around Douglas...

Dad's new status as a mature married man is emphasised by the *reliable* 1950s pipe - well before he gave up smoking he'd reverted to disreputable rollies I'm afraid! As you can see a lot of people didn't have what we'd see as casual or outdoor clothes back then, and many would have ventured into the outdoors in their ordinary clothing, and unlike Mum and Dad here, perhaps old and worn out ordinary clothing at that.



Not so much of a problem for casual country rambles, but in the mountains things were more serious. Tatty and/or inadequate clothing went surprisingly high up the social scale – these are the words of one of the distinctly upper crust Scottish Mountaineering Club members involved in recovering the victims of the Corroir tragedy of December 1951: ‘I was wearing an old Home Guard great coat, cut to jacket length, which I had proudly thought to be my personal suit of armour plate...proof against anything. But its hidden qualities included a large capacity for absorbing moisture and...we were only too ready to sink our pride and beg the shelter of the estate bothy.’

At Corroir those men avoided death themselves by a hair's breadth through being delayed lower down the valley. Higher up the pass, four men died of hypothermia in hurricane force conditions, leading climbers of the day well clothed by then standards in what we'd see as 'Barbour Jacket – style' kit. The female member of the party, an exceptionally strong and determined hill walker, succeeded in getting to safety. The most easily accessible online account is brief one at:

<https://heavywhalley.wordpress.com/2011/12/29/the-corroir-tragedy-60-years-on>

Taken overall, whilst old fashioned clothing contributed to the deaths by reducing the timespan the victims had to think clearly and make their escape, even modern clothing would have eventually failed in the conditions that day.

More decisive was the lack of knowledge of hypothermia and how to deal with it that prevailed at that time: the actions one needs to take if hypothermia strikes are important to know, are somewhat counter-intuitive, and can be challenging to put into practice. I'll confess that on reflection there have been a couple of times when I've perhaps not made the best call, and it was fortunate that things didn't turn out badly.

There is a good advice on hypothermia, including a link to an authoritative article and mini case studies on: <https://www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/essential-skills/weather-conditions/hypothermia>

A BMC article by an equally authoritative person starts from a different perspective and is also worth a read at: <https://services.thebmc.co.uk/mountain-incidents-what-to-do>



On a lighter note, rediscovering the old map took me to the history of the tank top worn by the man on its cover. Nothing to do with tanks in WW2 like I thought, but a name derived from the top part of Edwardian and 1920s swimming costumes. Apparently an old term for a swimming pool was a 'swimming tank'. 'Tank' is derived from Gujarati and Sanskrit words for an artificial body of water, that is often used for temple pools, and reservoirs, in South Asian countries today.

And returning to where we started, on the Wirral, Mike Doyle writes on Facebook 'There is some excellent walking to be had on the Wirral and no less than 3 dedicated walking guidebooks! This photo is Thurstaston from Carl Rogers's book'. (*'Circular Walks on the Wirral'*, available on Amazon).





I'm very much with Mike on this, I reckon there are at least 10 good full day/decent length walks here, some of which can be done by train.

And with Wirral's varied habitats you've got a good chance of seeing a lot of wildlife on the way.

There's a lot on at the **Hut** this summer, not least the Welsh 3000s walk. As you may recall, I am after some pieces for this newsletter *please, pretty please*, on '**my best walk based at the Hut**' to showcase what we can do based there. So to show what sort of thing I'm after (though full length articles are always welcome!) here is mine. As you can see, if you don't have photos easily to hand I can always get some on line.

Although I was pleased to finish the 3000's way back in 1988, that wasn't my most enjoyable Hut-based day out – too much like hard work for one thing! My best day in summer conditions was in the '90s with Reg and Geoff, when we did the 'Greater Glyders' route from end to end, on a lovely sunny day.

We got up at 6.00 to place cars – one was left at the end of the walk on the minor road under Carnedd y Filiast below Cwm Ceunant, just short of Bethesda. We then drove the other car to the car park at Capel Curig at the back of Joe Brown's in the village centre.

Then we started with the twisting path up between the outcrops of Cefn y Capel before heading west over Gallt yr Ogof, Y Foel Goch (aka Nameless Peak), and the two Glyders. I always love the bit where you go past Llyn Caseg Fraith with its great prospect of Tryfan and Bristly Ridge. Geoff and Reg were much stronger on the hill than me, but we paced ourselves and stayed together well.



Llyn Caseg Fraith (photo credit [www.mudandroutes.com](http://www.mudandroutes.com) )

The beauty of this walk is while there is a lot of up and down, the only really major height lost and to be regained is coming down the screes of Glyder Fawr to Llyn y Cwn and up again to Y Garn to begin the northward leg of the day. I think this, and the fact that no roads are crossed, makes this walk feel more 'integrated' than the Welsh 3000s is with its three distinct sections.

Once up Y Garn its then on to Foel Goch, Mynydd Perfedd, and above the sweep of the Atlantic Slabs rock climbing area onto the main summit of Carnedd y Filiast. We then when down the ridge to Point 721m and worked our way down NNE and then SE over heathery ground and back to the car. We made it by the end of the afternoon so not too long a day.



*Atlantic Slabs (Photo credit Dawn Edmonds on Flickr.com)*

The walk gives great views all the way – some of itself as it were, due to the almost right angle bend in the ridge, and of the Carneddau, Elidir Fawr and Snowdon, the fellow members of the Welsh 3000s crew, and across to Moel Siabod and far to the south across the ridges of Snowdonia/Yr Eryri.

So – my best day at the hut – please let me know about yours!

## Occasional Section – Members Personal News

A couple of big achievements to celebrate this month!



Zahida has finished the **Wainwrights** in a lightning campaign. She's posted '...finished the Wainwrights with [@teamwalking\\_hillskills](#) and [@the\\_nimmo\\_life](#)...one week for each book. Epic journey, great achievement, fabulous time. Huge thank you to you both.'

I make that a six week bonanza of hill walking over 214 summits.

This shot from Zahida's round is taken above Ennerdale.



The website <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com> indicates that 'The route measures around 515 kilometres [322 miles] and involves a total ascent of 36,000 m [118,109'] – more than four times the height of Everest.' The fastest round to date is in '5 days 12 hours 14 minutes, achieved by John Kelly (USA) on 2–7 May 2022'. Mr Kelly is a data scientist.

And Stop Press! News from Fort William that Barbara and Sven have completed their backpacking journey along the **West Highland Way**.

Here's Barbs with Buchaille Etive Mor in the background.

The Long Distance Walkers Association website takes a quick breather to tell us that the route is 93.2 miles, 12,946 feet of ascent, with a maximum elevation of 1,811 feet. Barbs and Sven did the route over 7 days so a good fast time with backpacks.



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



Gill Eccles writes 'Another super weekend on the **Slate Trail**, thanks to Sue and Steve. It was a challenging couple of days, where the trail took us to new paths in Snowdonia.

The weather was great again, so clear skies meant beautiful views on both days. Two thirds completed now, just one more weekend on the trail'

Here's the party in some shade – welcome I guess - en route.

The pictures on the next page are of Cnicht from the trail, and of old slate workings also in the Moelwyns area,





Brenda posted 'Some pictures from the **80th's weekend**' .

The party did the beautiful walk over from the **Hut** to Llyn Crafnant in shifting cloudy conditions.



*Llyn Crafnant*

Later on, Fiona helped with blowing out some of the birthday candles!





## EXTRA!

### FORT WILLIAM WINTER MEET – FEBRUARY 2025...by Chris Harris

Once again, I was very pleased by the turnout for this meet - 20 of us in the Alexandra Hotel and 2 in an Airbnb by the station.



We'd changed our base from the Ben Nevis Spa Hotel to the sister hotel, the Alexandra, in Fort William as the Ben Nevis had not recovered from the storm damage last year. The hotel is in the town with a good car park, and meal deals (for lunch) are readily available from Tesco, across the square and Morrisons only a few minutes walk away and of course pubs and other shops are very close.

The Alexandra is significantly better in many ways, from the Ben Nevis. Although we lose the Spa on site we can still use the Ben Nevis Hotel Spa, although I don't think anybody did. The Ben Nevis was getting progressively more shabby year by year.

The Alexandra is a bit tired around the edges but clean and much better organised. We were able to all eat at the same time, on a choice of 3 reserved tables and the service was very quick. Whilst the food is not restaurant exciting, it is good fuel for mountain walks, especially the breakfast.

Most people stayed the core days Mon, Tues, Weds..

Monday and Tuesday were too windy for 1000m tops. Wednesday brought fresh snow down to 500m, low winds, no further precipitation and occasional sun.



*Planning tomorrow's route*

## SUNDAY:

### Druim Fada:

John (Simmo) was in Fort William a day early and ran Druim Fada(744m) in rain and high winds. The rest of us were driving north through Amber Warnings for flooding and high wind!

## **MONDAY:**

### **Meall Nan Damh and Glas Bheinn :**

On Monday, John suggested a 'gentle' day on Meall Nan Damh (723m) and Glas Bheinn (636m) from Graigag Lodge, South East of Glenfinnan with me, Richard and Melinda Kinsman, Paul Ross, and Bill Morrison.



High winds, 5 degree temperatures at sea level, a few squally showers, a challenging river crossing below a dam and a few deer fences to climb over contributed to a challenging day out, managing 9.31 miles with 5125ft of ascent.

### **Creag Meagaidh:**

A larger party headed for the Lochan in the sheltered cwm below the mighty Creag Meagaidh.

On their descent they chatted to a group from the Scottish Avalanche Information Service (SAIS) resulting in an entry on the SAIS website which is a good summary of their day out:



'Came across a very friendly and cheery bunch from a mountaineering club on The Wirral in NW England.

Well met, folks! There was undoubtedly quite a lot of 'hoods up, heads down' today but this group were undeterred by the poor overhead conditions...

...Winter hillwalking/mountaineering in Scotland is, shall we say, a bit of an acquired taste and they'll have had a full measure of misery for a time today! Just hope your experience of Creag Meagaidh didn't extinguish your enthusiasm for the planned mountaineering day in Glencoe tomorrow.'

## **TUESDAY:**

The forecast was better than Monday with little precipitation but still rather gusty on the high tops, with fresh snow above 600m.



### **Curved Ridge:**

Helen and Richard climbed Curved Ridge on Buchaille Etive Mor, with a guide, in snow and ice.

I lifted pictures from Helen and Richard's Facebook entries, which say more than a thousand words.



Curved Ridge is regarded as a classic hard scramble (Grade 3 - or Moderate rock-climb) - it requires careful route-finding and most would use a rope to aid security. It is beyond the difficulty of those that Walkhighlands feature on their route descriptions.

### **Pap of Glencoe:**



John and Paul Ross joined me on a 'gentle' day out climbing the Pap of Glencoe, a hill that I have driven past many times and commenting 'must do that some day soon'.

I decided to take the gentle approach from the Bridge of Coe moving anticlockwise and following Allt a Mhuillinn, summiting from the North East where the clag cleared to give us great views.

John chose the return route which was virtually a straight line back to the car park.

The first part into strong wind scrambling down steep rock soon eased to grass and mud made for an entertaining descent.

Stats: 4.9miles and 2540ft ascent.

## WEDNESDAY

### Devil's Ridge:



At last the day we'd all been waiting for - fresh snow down to 400m, little wind and no precipitation.



For a few years now I've wanted to do Devil's ridge, part of the Ring of Steall, from Achriabhach in Glen Nevis, ticking off the Munro of Am Bodach first then across Devil's ridge to the second Munro Sgurr a'Mhaim. I couldn't find much information about Devil's Ridge either from Google or people so assumed there to be no really tricky bits and "fly through" on OS maps looked OK.

Perhaps I should have listened to myself when I say 'don't do a winter route that you have not done in summer'!

So Gill Eccles, Richard and Kay Smith, Helen, Glenn, Richard and Melinda Kinsman, and Paul Ross gamely followed me 5k up the Allt Choire a Mhusgain valley to the ridge where we were into lovely soft fresh snow. Ascending to Sgurr an Iubhair (1001m), a Munro subsidiary Top, the cloud had lifted and we had a good view of Am Bodach as we had our lunch. It looked big and far away so sensing the mood of the group I suggested Plan B i.e. head straight for the ridge and Sgurr a'Mhaim. Nobody objected as it was rather windy and cold up there.



The descent off Stob Coire a Mhail (990m), another Top, was steep but doable then we were onto a nice ridge. Just as we felt we were almost on Sgurr a'Mhaim the ridge dropped steeply. I didn't like the look of it as it was soft snow direct on rock which I feel doesn't give me much confidence with or without crampons, So I sent Richard Smith down to check it out and he suggested it would be better to turn back.

Richard and Melinda Kinsman and Paul decided to carry on and summited Sgurr a'Mhaim. I was now on Plan C - return the way we came. Fortunately Richard S. came up with Plan D which avoided the steep re-ascent of Stob Coire a Mhail and instead followed a delightful path around a lovely lochan, and back into the valley to have us arrive back at the car park only about 10 minutes after Richard, Melinda and Paul.



Stats: 8 miles, 3540ft ascent and descent

Thank you to those who, without knowing, contributed pictures I lifted from their Facebook - Gill, Richard S., Helen,

### **Goat Track Gully:**

Bill Morrison and Lee, meanwhile drove over to the Cairngorms for some winter mountaineering, here's Bill's report:



'The weather was perfect, blue skies, sun and zero wind. After parking up at the ski centre car park we met our guide Tom and headed on up to Coire an t-Sneachda. Conditions were promising with a good amount of ice on the ground.

It's a popular location for winter climbing and there were a number of groups already started on their routes when we arrived. After some deliberation we decided to tackle Goat Track Gully on the south side of the Corrie. Making our way across a frozen lochan we started up the approach, Tom leading the way followed by Lee with myself bringing up the rear.

The ascent up to the ridge was fairly straight forward but steep with the ice in good condition. It required ice axes and front pointing on the crampons all the way with Tom setting up the belays. Having someone

to manage the rope work allowed Lee and I to enjoy the climb itself. It was a really great route albeit tough on our arms and calf muscles.

The views from the ridge were awesome. To the west we could see the Lochaber mountains, to the north the Moray Firth and to south Ben Macdui and Cairn Toul. The walk out was a pleasure in itself, the warm winter sunshine meant that most of our thermal layers went into the backpacks.

By the time we got back to the cars it was around 5.00pm and getting dark. Lee drove us back to Fort William and we made it just in time for dinner. A five star day out!!'

So a fine finish to a very varied meet. Fort William is a good 'hub' for days out in different directions, and we had a wide range of successful days out at different levels on this trip.

**Chris Harris**

**April 2025**