

# THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

**September 2025: Editor Dave Gray**



## Introduction

Welcome to the September Newsletter! This is an Extra! edition with an article from Sue Taylor on the Club's recent ascent of Jebel Toubkal in Morocco, the highest peak in North Africa. Thank you to Sue, and also to Bill, Carol, Helen Grant, Mike Doyle, Nicki, Tom Humphreys and as ever DLJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **September 27th**.

## 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...**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 5-7 September       | Hut Weekend  |
| 13 September        | Saturday Walk – West Yorkshire: Weets Hill                     |
| <b>25 September</b> | <b>Saturday Walk – Yorkshire 3 Peaks</b>                       |
| 25 September-16 Oct | Sports Climbing Trip to Sicily                                 |
| 26-28 September     | Hut Weekend (Work weekend for hut and gardens)                 |
| 17-19 October       | Hut Weekend  |
| 17-19 October       | Joint Meet with Dundee MC – Chapel Le Dale                     |
| 26 October          | Sunday Walk – North Berwyns: Corwen, Liberty Hall and Foel Lus |
| 31 October – 2 Nov  | Hut Weekend (Bronze Navigation Course)                         |

## Venues in Focus

White Rose! White Rose!

There's very much a Yorkshire flavour to our meets this coming September, with visits to famous – and less well known – hills on offer.

First up is the less well known in the form of a circuit of **Weets Hill** from Barnoldswick. The government think Weets Hill is in Lancashire – but I don't, it is in the historic county of Yorkshire.

This is a favourite walk of mine, a very pleasant day out of around 8 miles. Let's hope we get clear weather, it just scrapes into the little league at 1,302 feet, but like many small hills this one commands extensive views. The name 'Weets' always sounded to me like a rather limp and inadequate American breakfast cereal brand; but the best suggestion for the name I could find online is that it's simply a variant of an Old English word 'wæt' meaning 'wet'. A bit

surprising that I reckon, because compared to other nearby hills (see later on!) the top is comparatively dry.

*Pendle Hill from Weets Hill, with Longridge Fell in the distance*

I've just learnt that the road we'll initially use on our descent was the old, pre-turnpike road from Colne to Gisburn, and 'Weets House' near its crest was once called 'Stoups House'. A stoup in the local dialect was the word for a waymark post on a hill road.



The final third of the walk is along the Leeds-

Liverpool Canal. Some years ago the Club had two great trips on the canal organised by Sue, for me a highlight was steering the boat for part of our passage through the summit tunnel at Foulridge, nearly a mile long. The low point was my running the boat aground earlier!

What follows about the canal is a mix of material from the old book 'Navigable Waterways' by LTC Rolt, who was at the very forefront of preservation of our industrial heritage (available on Amazon), and the excellent website of the canal society at <https://www.leedsandliverpoolcanalsociety.co.uk>, also the source also of the photos below.

The canal was the first and most successful of three trans-pennine canal routes. We are not mucking about with narrow boats here, it is wide canal, the envelope for a boat that can do the whole historic route is 62 feet length and 14 feet 3 inches in beam. This is the last of these so called 'short boats' in working trim, 'Kennet', built in 1947 and now owned and preserved by the canal society. On the western section, boats could be up to 72 feet long.



Such a steam or motor powered short boat might tow two barges, giving an overall carrying capacity of around 110 tons if the cargo was coal. For context, that is seven of the standard short wheelbase railway coal wagons of the time. This kind of capacity meant the canal was reasonably prosperous in cargo trade terms right up to the 1960s, and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Carrying Company was one of two pre-eminent British canal trading companies. Though as you can see by the next picture, the old days looked a bit rough and ready!



In common with other trans-pennine routes, most of the traffic was in fact on the highly industrialised western and eastern sections of the canal, relatively little going right through. That, as well as the engineering challenges, is reckoned by Rolt to account for the 46 years it took to fully complete the canal, and in particular the delay in finishing the top level, as the two unconnected west and east sections did very well on their own from the start. The engineer of the top level, Richard Whitworth, made it as long as and as deep as possible to conserve water supplies, nevertheless Rolt expresses doubts as to whether the water supply from the summit reservoirs could have coped with much heavier traffic across the top.

The subject of heavy traffic and summits takes us to our other White Rose meet; the famous **3 Peaks of Yorkshire** walk. Pen y Ghent, Wharfedale, and Ingleborough give a superb long walk, each of the three hills is different in character. The most popular route is from Horton and does the hills in P-W-I order.

I still do these hills individually, but at around 24 miles and 6,000 feet of ascent the whole walk is beyond me to do enjoyably now. But there's great memories of past rounds...

Back in the day the moorland section between Pen y Ghent and Wharfedale was generally boggy, wet, and good to get done and over quickly in the day. A great moment on one occasion was seeing ducks actually swimming *along* the alleged footpath...

On another trip I was with my Bradford friend and colleague Sharon Callaghan, who was and is a strong hill goer, but had never attempted the walk. At the start of the steep initial rise up Pen y Ghent a minibus belonging to a police force (which shall remain nameless) was



parked, full of the Old Bill. Sharon and I were pacing ourselves, and as they surged past in a blur of lycra and superiority one of the police team asked superciliously 'Doing the 3 Peaks?' 'Maybe' I replied, keeping options open.

I knew the way that in those days, at the expense of a little more distance, avoided most of the bogs between Pen y Ghent and Ribbleshead. On that magic path, I observed to Sharon that the coppers could be seen on the horizon, well off any route and apparently proceeding in a north westerly direction in a suspiciously uncertain fashion. And so we composed a wry and derisory song to the tune of 'A policeman's lot' as we trudged on.

That was great schadenfreude, but pure magic was when we exited the pub at Ribbleshead after a mid walk pint of orange juice and lemonade. In staggered the police, covered in peat with sodden boots and sagging lycra. 'How the hell did you two get here?' was their bitter question. My reply? 'Experience...'

Sharon's personal recipe for first time success on the walk she summarised as:

1. Decent weather!
2. No alcohol at the Ribbleshead pub – rehydrate instead.
3. Defer main lunch till the top of Whernside - to feel you've done 2 peaks in half a day
4. Realise that if you can then get to Ingleborough summit it's cracked – from there it's all downhill in fantastic limestone scenery
5. Take and consume at least 6 Mars Bars!

*Ingleborough from Whernside*



Rockwise, the upcoming meet for September/October is **Sport Climbing in Sicily**. I visited the island as a tourist a few years ago and was very impressed. The plan for the meet is to have some time to do the sights. This for me was top of the shop on the island – the Palatine Chapel of the Royal Palace in Palermo:



(Photo credit - by Fintan Corrigan of <http://friendly-hotels.com> - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35670228> )

Built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the chapel includes work by Byzantine, Latin Christian, and Islamic artists and craftsmen. It was begun under the tolerant rule of the Norman Roger II 'The Great' (lived 1095 -1154), Count then King of Sicily, in some ways a man far ahead of his time and still ahead of many people today. Consecrated in 1143, it was added to by his successors William I and William II.

## Occasional Section – Members Personal News

A couple of fine individual achievements I thought we should celebrate!

On Facebook Tom Humphreys posted '**Sandstone Trail, very very late comer!!!** - I missed the group walk having to work so got it done on my tod a few days later. Not exactly on my own: the texting support from the group was amazing, I thought no one would be interested. Glenn and Dave even turned up to meet me at 01:30, both were willing but Glen got me back to my motor in Whitchurch after 02:00. I thought I was nuts till i met the GMC. What a club hey!'





Nicki writes 'This evening I swam the **Chester Mile** race with my lovely friend Lindsey - it was absolutely fabulous and we were very happy to make it to the end 😊x' This is the route of the swim...

The event has been going almost uninterrupted each year since 1922. The swimmers go downstream and the race is over 1.25 miles not two! So finishing times vary each year depending on river flow.

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

We had a **evening walk** on the southern Clwyds starting at **Llanarmon in Ial**. Many thanks to Clare for organising and navigating this walk. For me it was great to do new ground in this area and also to explore paths I'd not done for many years.

As you can see from Nicki's picture below, taken looking west from the Offa's Dyke Path below Moel Llanfair, we had gorgeous evening twilight, with pallid sunset colours and fine cloud formations. It was lovely and cool after a hot day, and after many years of not walking on into the evening, it was a joy to be out.



Several of us had a drink and a meal afterwards in the Raven, the community-run pub in Llanarmon.

Carol posted on facebook 'Big thanks to Glenn leading a lovely walk on Anglesey yesterday. We started at Molfre, headed up to the **highest point on the Isle of Anglesey**, then circled back along to coast to Molfre.

The sun came out as we headed towards the coast and the seas were sparkling, reminding me why I love this Island so much.

Thanks to Dave Gray, for providing the back story to the monuments, burial grounds and ancient settlements we viewed along the way.

Beautiful views and great company. A happy day 😊'

Thanks for the vote of confidence Carol! Amongst the giants whose shoulders I stand on is Wikipedia...!

It was indeed a super day out: the photos that follow are of us going up to the summit of Yr Arwydd, and of Moelfre Harbour, by Carol, and one in the middle from me of the sands of Porth Mor.









Mike Doyle writes that 'Four of us had a fine afternoon at The Last Butt One Level at Penmaenbach Quarry.'



The Carneddau mountain ponies dropped in too to take in the action!





Gail's **outdoor climbing meet at the Hut** enjoyed good weather, the party did routes on Idwal Slabs, and Carreg y Foel Gron (pictured below), the latter being a new venue for most of the party. Thanks to Gail for the meet and Helen Grant for the photos!





## EXTRA!

### A TRIP TO TOUBKAL...by Sue Taylor

The intrepid GMC team of Adele, Adrian, Ang, Hew, Kev, Roger, Steve, Tom and I left Manchester in June for the High Atlas mountains (see below!), with Toubkal at 13,671ft (4,167m) our goal.

We arrived in Marrakech too late to meet the rest of the group, so we immediately went out and found a restaurant that would serve us beer. Being sensible, we had a reasonably early night at a pleasant hotel and got ourselves ready for the trek. After breakfast, we met our two guides, the rest of the group and support team.

We piled into a minibus which took us to the start. A pack of mules set off with our luggage. The climb up to the Tizi N'Tacht (6,560ft/2,000m) was very hot and hard work, so we summoned a mule to transport Hew. It did not look like a comfortable ride! After a rest at the top, we descended into the Azaden Valley, stopping at a gite type building where our cooks had prepared a delicious lunch for us. Overnight accommodation was in tents next to a river. We all took advantage and had a paddle. Tom went for the full body plunge.





On day 3 we had the option to see a waterfall and / or climb a small peak. As the waterfall in the plan had very little water, our route was changed to see one that did have water. A pop-up stall had been set up at the base of the mini peak and we were able to purchase freshly squeezed orange juice. Perfect for such a hot day. Hew and Roger decided to skip the trek and got a taxi round to the hostel we were staying in that night. The hostel wasn't great but did the job. Showers and a lovely meal ended the day.

Next day, our group set off on quite a steep climb across the Aguelzim Pass (11,645ft/3,550m) where we had views of the Toubkal massif and down to the plains that surround Marrakech. Stopping for coffee and freshly squeezed orange juice was a bonus. After Hew declined the offer of a 5-hour donkey ride, he and Roger opted to explore the local villages. Strong winds meant our tents would not make it through the night, so we moved into a small dorm in the Club Alpin Française refuge 10,522ft (3,207m). Cosy! One of the ladies (not GMC) in our group complained about having to sleep with us all in a dorm, so her tent was put up outside. Don't think she got much sleep out there.

Day 5 and summit day had arrived. An early-ish start saw us climbing steeply through scree before traversing the southern ridge to reach the summit at 13,671ft (4,167m). To make sure Ang made it to the top we put her in a sandwich – Kev in front, Ang in the middle and me at the back.

We all got there for the summit shot, even though there was a bit of confusion as to where the summit was. Adele and Adrian have the video.

Our guide told us that the people trying to summit the day before only got halfway as the wind was too strong to carry on. Coming back down was a bit treacherous in parts. Ang slipped on some scree and tried to take Steve out. He fell on top of her rather than get knocked off the side. Hopefully all the bruises have faded by now.

Back at base camp, our tents had been erected outside the refuge. Following afternoon tea and then dinner, we had a reasonable sleep.



Before heading down, a small group went off on a very fast macho walk to see a lake. The rest of us enjoyed the walk out, stopping at our favourite orange squeezing bar, where the others caught us up. A pleasant stroll took us back the hostel. We met Roger and Hew who had wandered up to meet us. After a quick freshen up, our guide took us down to explore the local village of Aroumd (6,247ft/1,904m). After the guide left us, Roger gave us a private tour of all the places he'd discovered.



Our last day with the full group involved a short walk down to Imlil and a drive back to Marrakech....





...We then had time in Marrakech for a guided tour which took in the main sites, history, culture and architecture of the city as well as the main square and souk. Our celebratory evening meal was in a rooftop restaurant with stunning views across the city.

Now we were free of the bigger group and guide, it was time to move on to our luxury riad - a traditional Moroccan building with rooms and common areas around a central courtyard. It did not disappoint and provided some welcome luxury after the trek. The minibus couldn't get down the small alleyways, so we were met by a man and a cart to transport our luggage. Then the cart couldn't get down even smaller alleyways, so the team from the riad came and carried our stuff. They could not have been more friendly or helpful.



Marrakech was very hot, so we mostly kicked back at the riad and explored some local stalls. We had a visit to the Yves St Laurent gardens:





Hew had a rub down in the hamman and came back looking very glowing. While wandering round, we found a café which had a resident tortoise motoring round the place. Breakfast at the riad was delicious, as was the evening meal we had there. We tried a couple of local restaurants for the other evenings. Adele & Adrian braved the nighttime souks and recommended the experience. Unfortunately, we ran out of days and it was time to fly back home.

**Sue Taylor**

**August 2025**