

# THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

**May 2026: Editor Dave Gray**



## Introduction

Welcome to the May Newsletter! A little later than usual 'cause I've been on holiday.

This is an Extra! edition, we have an article from Chris Ramsden on a recent visit he made to the Lake District. Thanks to Chris, and to Andrew Mitchell, Doug, Lindsey, Mike Doyle, Nicki, Paul Regnard and as ever DLJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **May 27th**.

## Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for May and June, 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...**

6 May	Midweek Climbing – Dyserth Castle Slab
15-17 May	Hut weekend – <b>John's Charity Event</b>
20 May	Midweek Climbing – Penmaenbach Quarry
<b>23 May</b>	<b>Saturday Walk – Birds and History at Marbury</b>
24-31 May	Scottish Meet – Aviemore
<b>2 June</b>	<b>Talk at Gallaghers – Trekking in China</b>
3 June	Midweek Climbing – Castle Inn
<b>13 June</b>	<b>Saturday Meet – High Berwyns</b>
17 June	Midweek Climbing – Nant Dulas
19-21 June	Hut Weekend – Welsh 3000s
<b>26-29 June</b>	<b>Pembrokeshire Lodge Meet</b>
<b>26 June – 2 July</b>	<b>Pembrokeshire Climbing Meet</b>

## Focus on Venues

In May Mike Doyle's **Midweek Climbing Meets** start again. The first the two trips planned is to Dyserth Castle Slab and the second to the Last Butt One Level of **Penmaenbach Quarry**, poised between the Sychnant Pass and the A55. Please note that Gail Smith is looking after this meet on behalf of Mike,

In Mike's guidebook he describes Last Butt one as 'A...pleasant venue above a large, flat, grassy plateau which has great views out of the Great Orme and out into the Irish Sea. It offers a large range of routes and grades from the lowest at F2 to stiffer, mainly in the high F6d... A few lower graded trad routes are also available... It is good for teaching climbing or as a first lead.'

A bit of casual googling on the quarry brought up this evocative picture of the view from the crag out to sea, taken by climber Ian Martin on an autumn climbing evening and shared on his blog (see photo credit) which is well worth a look.

(Photo credit <https://mountainlifestyle.co.uk/>)x

The blog may also interest those members who are camper van people, as Mr Martin has published a book, currently available on Amazon as a book and on Kindle, giving a different



angle on van life, far from the realm of lumbering US Winnebagos straddling two time zones and surrounded by artificial grass,,.

*The cover really appealed to me!*



High up on the agenda for May is the **Aviemore Meet**. The nearby Cairngorm summits will I guess be an objective – given we get the weather! Cairngorm is in fact not the original name of either the mountain or the range. The hills were originally known in Gaelic as the Monadh Ruadh, translating as 'red mountains'. At some stage towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the name Cairngorms started to catch on in the English language literature. 'Cairngorm' is itself an apparent shift in Gaelic from the original 'Carn Gorm' or 'blue rocky hill', that shift occurring at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Apparently lots of 'Carn' names became 'Cairn' around that time.

In some conditions the mountains do look red, but I've always seen them as blue – as in the picture below:



This is a blue Braeriach, third highest UK mountain, taken in August 1980 from the Ben MacDui summit plateau, reproduced from a slightly flawed old slide. The brooding existentialist figure in the foreground with the skinny Richard III legs is me. Everyone looked like that in 1980! This was on my first Scots Munro trip with my score standing on a massive two at that stage. My old mate Bob and I backpacked from Aviemore to Fort William. Once we'd left the Cairngorm ski grounds it was a remote trip, we only crossed one road, the A9.

A great walk in the area that is relatively less demanding which gives a great panorama of the blue northern slopes of the Cairngorms is a circuit from Glen More via Ryvoan of Meall a Buchaille and its satellite peaks to the north west. The main hill is at 2,657 feet and is a Corbett so the whole round is still a full day out.

On the other side of the Spey valley the hills – the Monadh Liath or 'grey mountains' - have retained their Gaelic name. This range features more Munro size hills, but the landscape is grassier and much quieter, and the hills have a great spacious, wild feel to them.

In contrast to all those hills the **Marbury Meet** is pretty much flat! I got it put on the programme for a change and for that contrast. It has lots of scope for bird watching, and the area is a great success in reclaiming a very large industrial site near the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

#### *Marina near Marbury - winter*

It is a great winter venue – most of the paths are all weather in the style of the Wirral Way, and the route has a lot of tree shelter too. Good for a reasonable length of walk when the weather isn't great, so I thought it was worth introducing the place to Club members who might not know it.



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



A big thanks to Chris Harris for organising the **Wrekin and Ercall Meet**. This was mostly new ground for me and the best walk I have done in this area.

At the start of the walk Chris took us through green spring woods around and up the Ercall.

We enjoyed a super sunny day, with a refreshing breeze on top of the Wrekin itself. The view from the summit was massive. Not only the South Shropshire Hills laid out nearby, but a huge stretch of country going south as far as the Malvern Hills. To the north west was Wales, with the snow capped ranges of the Berwyns, Arans, and Cader Idris laid out in a line. It was a bit crowded on top – we could see at least nine (traditional) counties!

The Ercall has been extensively quarried which has revealed its stormy geological history. The most coherent account of the hottest feature of this that I could find online was from <https://shropshiregeology.org.uk/wrekin-2/> and reads: ‘The Ercall is a hidden gem of Earth history. Standing at the bottom of the quarries you can see an obvious change in the rock, from a bright pink mass to pale grey layers. This change is internationally famous amongst geologists as it marks the change between the Precambrian, where there was very little life, and the Cambrian, where life suddenly exploded in lots of different varieties.’

You can see the change in this shot of the discontinuity between the two rocks. The division between the two geological periods happened roughly 550 million years ago.



The Wrekin itself has rocky outcrops, here's a photo of the rocky ridge taken from the east.



These are Precambrian volcanic rocks, when the land was part of a volcanic arc of islands similar to Japan today. On the summit itself, there are the eroded ramparts of an iron age hillfort.

Sadly Storm Dave (no relation!) put paid to any ventures on the hills on the **Easter Hut Meet**.



We had better luck on the **Tal y Fan** Saturday walk.

Fortunately Alan's weather forecast which was totally different to mine triumphed in the Battle of the Online Forecasts and we had a decent day with good view and a sunny descent.

This is Creigiau Gleision and Pen Llithrig yr Wrach seen from the summit.

We got to see the mountain ponies and when the sun came out on the descent the skylarks came out singing too.

We tried a new descent for me, through the old quarry, and on the way down also took in Llyn yr Wrach, the 'Lake of the Witch.' This lake can go completely dry in hot summers and its waters were already low despite the rainy winter we've had.

There's a suggest online that the Lake's name is in fact a corruption of Llyn yr Gyrach or 'Lake of the Marsh'

There's a stone circle cut through by the trackway which adds to the general air of mystery.

When we got back to Gwern Engan lake in the Sychnant Pass the car park where we'd shivered a few hours before was bright and sunny.



*Blue skies above us...*

*The Stone Circle*



*Llyn yr Wrach*



*View north across Gwern Engan*



In other news Doug posted 'Another excellent spontaneous day out. Persuaded Lindsey that going up the North Ridge of Tryfan was a good idea'.

I reckoned his photo (left) captures a lot of the character of this route and deserved sharing!

Doug has also posted a shot (right) of a practice abseil at Irby Quarry, with the Cuillin Ridge trip in view...



And another fine shot is Andrew Mitchell's panorama of Pt 403 (East) on a walk he did over Bryn Alyn.





The sun shone on the **St George's Day Hut Weekend**.  
Nicki writes:

'Fabulous weekend at the hut - Lindsey and I walked from Bangor to Llanberis via Bethesda along the Snowdonia Slate trail in glorious sunshine yesterday and then had a refreshing swim in the lake at Plas-y-Brenin this morning'

*Quarry Incline...*

*...And Llynau Mymbyr at Plas y Brenin*



## EXTRA!

### GLORIOUS KESWICK...by Chris Ramsden

I had a few days holiday to take in February so packed my bag and boots in the car and headed up the M6 to Keswick. I stayed in Keswick Park Hotel; great location and hospitality in heart of the town.

First day I tackled the eastern edge of Derwent Water Walla Cragg, Bleaberry Fell, High Street, Ashness Bridge back to Keswick. A 10 mile circular route offering majestic vista over the fells and beyond. Relatively low level, it was challenging day out along good paths and boggy tops.



*Derwentwater*

The following day fuelled with a hearty Cumbrian breakfast I took on the George Fisher Espresso Round (warm up act for the full 30 mile Tea Round). A 12 mile route starting/finishing at the George Fisher shop then out over Cat Bells, Rowling End, Causey Pike, Barrow and back via Braithwaite and Portinscale.

*A Selfie with the Sponsors!*



This was a challenging yet rewarding route particularly taking in the tops and dropping down into valleys to reach the next fell peak!! It took its toll on my legs especially after the previous day's outing.



*Grisedale Fells from Cat Bells*

The Wainwright Pub opposite the finish point is a great pub to rehydrate after a day on the fells. (Also tasty and hearty food).



The weather both days was fantastic with clear blue skies and lots of sunshine. I had planned a final day's walk up Skiddaw.

However, after a great night's sleep I woke to snow capped fells and low cloud. I'd enjoyed great walking and, needing to get back home for rugby training, I took that as a sign and reason to come back again soon!



**Chris Ramsden March 2026**



[**Editor's note** – further details of the Tea and Espresso rounds Chris mentions can be found at <https://www.georgefisher.co.uk/tearound> ]