

THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

November 2026: Editor Dave Gray



Introduction

Welcome to the November Newsletter!

This is an Extra! edition with an article that grew from the editorial material, about a November day that was more interesting than some of us would have wanted! It's by me with help and extra material from Laura Barley. Thanks to Adeline, Laura, and to Gill Eccles, Helen Grant, Mark Barley, Ray, Tom Humphreys and as ever to Brenda for their help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next edition, the final deadline for that is **November 24th**.

Looking Ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for November and December, 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 November	Tuesday Evening at Gallaghers – 'Arctic Circle Solo hiking in Kungsleden with a Labrador' – talk by Adeline
6-8 November	Hut Weekend – Bonfire Night Celebrations
17 November – 3 Dec.	Costa Blanca Trip
27-29 November	Hut Weekend
1 December	Tuesday Evening at Gallagher – 'Exotica' talk by Steve Swygart
17 December	Annual Climbing Competition at the Boardroom
24 December – 3 Jan.	Hut Weekend (Xmas and New Year)

Focus on Venues

The **Tuesday Evening** talk at Gallaghers by Adeline is based on her trip to the **Kungsleden in Arctic Sweden**. The Kungsleden is (per Wikipedia) a trail - in fact two, as there are seasonal alternative routes – of about 290 miles in all. Some parts are pathed and waymarked, others are very challenging walking.

Part of the Kungsleden goes along the eastern end of the Sarek National Park, which was one of the places on my bucket list I very much regret not doing. This Park is simply stunning as you can see overleaf, and epitomises arctic Sweden. The shot is of Rapadalen, the valley of the Rapa river, which I understand is deeper into the Park than the Kungsleden route. It's taken from the website <https://www.swedishtouristassociation.com/areas/sarek/> which offers advice about the hiking in the Sarek. It can be done on one's own but there are companies offering guided trips too.



Visiting Sarek is not for the faint hearted or to be rushed: so I put it off in my mind for when I retired, by which time I was no longer up to it!! So I guess the learning point is do stuff when you are able and don't hang around...

It was thinking about learning points, Adeline's work on promoting mountain safety, and the Club **Bonfire Meet** that took me to the material in the Extra! article below, thinking back to what I learnt then, and since. from the events of November 1995 when the Bonfire food chef – me – didn't turn up on time!

Member and friends on this years' meet will see a **Hut** that has had a lot of work done on it.



Tom Humphres writes:

'A special mention and very big thanks goes to Reg for all his weeks of hard work completing and decorating the recently fire boarded drying room walls and whole foyer comprising: fastidiously prepping the old stained wood, fitting new tongue and groove panelling to match our existing scheme, with all around skirting and numerous paint coats to all the woodwork and walls that he completed just in time for the Hut clean up. Everyone at the working weekend thought it looked great and we hope you do too - please don't forget to thank Reg when you see him.'

What strikes me about the new hall panelling is how the colour scheme massively brightens up the space. It reminded me of ones I've seen in older country houses which had relatively small windows and needed to use the light well. Having panelling like this throughout would for instance upgrade a Scottish bothy to become a 'lined bothy' – brighter and warmer than the basic model.

Tom also summarised the great work done at the recent **Working Weekend** 'Last weekend maintenance was supported by a small hard-core crew and a thorough Hut clean was completed with a few other small jobs, all thankfully in a nice warm Hut. Thanks to Lin we had a hearty soup and crusty breads lunch rounded off with a GMC bought dinner finished off with our own drinks and laughs. It was nice to see all enjoying the work and the craic to finish. So, thanks to Paul & Gill, Reg, Sue, Lindsey, Alan, Chris, DLJ and Lin.'

And thankfully he was also able to report that: 'For the **Bonfire Night** the good news is we can have a bonfire. Guidance says It has to be 15m from the bulk storage tank and of a modest size. The new fire site is a couple of meters further away than usual situated at the end of the septic tank. Chris got to work building a small drystone wall to level the ground there and has built the fire. Again, give Chris a thanks when you see him also.'



A Letter to the Editor

Amazingly, someone has written to me! I thought that only happened to editors of The Times! Via Brenda I've had an email from Mr Pawan Bhattarai, owner of a locally based trekking company in Nepal, who saw the newsletter and picked up on some of the mountains we have done. Their website is <https://www.spadehimalaya.com>, and I have had a look at it.

Mr Bhattarai gave an update on recent visitor numbers to some of the peaks concerned 'This autumn saw a varied picture : the Department of Tourism's report of 5 October shows 500 of the 788 climbers with permits were on Manaslu; and that season was closed without a summit success after weeks of heavy snow and avalanche risk (The Himalayan Times, 22 September). The same department's Facts and Figures 2026 report counts permits for 2,633 climbers on Mera Peak in 2025, 2,078 on Island Peak and 1,775 on Lobuje East.' Per the useful UK Foreign Office advice website the country is still open for tourism.

As we all know the people of Nepal have had a tough year; the letter reminded me that I wanted to respond to Roger's appeal for Doug Scott's charity (via Brenda on 7 September).

I've written back to Mr Bhattarai to thank him, and to (personally) wish his business success. I've explained to him that our members usually use UK based travel companies, and that we don't take commercial material for the newsletter, but as a strict one off I will make an exception this time for my first letter from a reader!

Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

Looking back to the very end of last month, Helen Grant posted 'Thanks Mark for an enjoyable 7 mile walk today over **Eccles Pike** and along the canal past Bugsworth Basin. Nice to be out in the sunshine'

Here's some of her photos...starting with one of Mark with Chinley Churn hill in the background:



We came upon a rally of steam enthusiasts – this is a reduced scale working replica of a fairground showman's traction engine.



Crossing the end of Bugsworth canal basin...



...and this is my own shot looking back at Eccles Pike as we got towards the end of the circuit.



A couple of stunning photos from Ray now who writes 'Thanks Bill for the walk today to **Teggs Nose, Shutlingsloe and Shining Tor**': This is Teggs Nose from the south...



...and here the group are seen ascending Shutlingsloe from Macclesfield Forest.

In this final picture near the top of Shining Tor, Helen Grant captures the brilliant weather the group enjoyed on this 13 mile day out!



EXTRA!

Dateline Glyders 1995...by Dave Gray, with Laura Barley

So why didn't the 1995 Bonfire Night chef (me) turn up?

The reason was that I was involved in an accident walking on the Glyders and was otherwise engaged...

The story – which some of you have heard before, or for which you were 'actually there' – was pretty simple, but I think it shows how experienced walkers (and not just young people!) can still get into trouble and can find themselves shall we say 'somewhat unprepared'.

Mark and Laura Barley, Laura's friend Julie, and me set off in good bright conditions to do Seniors Ridge which is a Grade 1 scramble above Cwm Cneifion on Glyder Fawr. We were an experienced team – Mark for example had wilderness trekked in America and Canada, I was well into the Munros and we were all into our 30s...



We walked into the Cwm, walked/scrambled the ridge to summit Glyder Fawr, and came round east over Glyder Fach to descend the Glyders Miners Track (see left – credit <https://www.walkupsnowdon.co.uk>) to Ogwen. It was now about 3 o'clock on a cloudless, still afternoon.

All went well until a few hundred yards down from the plateau Mark went off on to a subsidiary line of the braided track. Not a problem until for a second Julie looked up at him and not at her feet, slipped and fell heavily and awkwardly on the

steep, rocky main track. 'Are you OK?' and the reply came 'No, I've broken my ankle'.

As Julie is a vet, my heart sank. She tried to stand up and couldn't. Across Mark and my shoulders it took us about 20 minutes to move her one with her one good foot about 100 feet to a flatter section where she could sit down comfortably. Learning point #1– forget what you see in the movies, moving even slightly built injured people is very hard work. Clearly we were going nowhere fast and a decision was taken that Mark and I would go down and call out Mountain Rescue whilst Laura waited with Julie. This was a time just before mobile phones became common and none of us had one – more on that later.

We examined our material resources, which proved adequate but *only just*. Between us we had two orange survival bags, and one head torch, with no spare for its aged battery. Before heading off for Ogwen, Mark and I gave Julie and Laura the bivvi bags, the torch, plus our remaining food and all the clothing we could spare. In the excitement of the day I never saw my treasured trad woolly balaclava hat again (also my moustache unaccountably dropped off!).

Learning point # 2 – you – *i.e. everyone*, needs to carry some emergency gear on that level of walk. It's not that you will use it,



it's that it's needed when something goes wrong from left field. Since then I've never left the torch and bivvi bag behind. (A few months ago my bivvi bag nearly got used for an old lady who'd fallen and broken her wrist walking her dog at low level).

Mark and I went down as fast as we safely could and passed others on the way – 'do you have a radio or mobile phone?' – the answer was always no. We took a bit over an hour, and the light was fading when we rang 999 from Ogwen Cottage. Meantime, other walkers had helped Laura and Julie, giving them a spare battery for the torch, an insulated mat to sit on, and some more food.

Laura tells me that as soon as the sun set, a katabatic wind whipped up and it became very cold.

The Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue team were brilliant. They were with Mark and me in minutes as they had been doing a training exercise locally. They drove us back to their nearby base and questioned us closely – in particular whether Julie had hit her head in the fall. Meantime, two rescuers plus a dog were on their way to the plateau, they found Julie and gave her first aid and reassurance. Painkillers were declined as Julie did not want to delay surgery if that were needed. It only took them an hour to get there.

In the darkness an RAF Sea King helicopter was then summoned. It landed at the base and the crew dumped out all their marine rescue gear and headed off for the action.



Learning point #3 is to have up to date knowledge how to behave and stay safe around helicopters which are not called choppers for nothing! This is not necessarily straightforward and advice may change over time as technology does. At the time, Laura tells me that Laura and Mark had friends who were in Mountain Rescue in the Lake District. They had previously told them that the helicopters can locate people with night vision goggles. On no condition were they to flash their light at the helicopter as that could dazzle the pilot. So Laura and Julie shone a light on themselves, away from the helicopter. But the helicopter crew couldn't see and locate them at first. The best advice as of now (see the link on helicopter safety below) is 'Don't ever shine a light directly at a helicopter. If wearing a head torch, shine the light down.'

<https://www.mountaineering.scot/safety-and-skills/essential-skills/mountain-rescue/dealing-with-helicopters>

The wind continued to blow and the Mountain Rescue team explained that consequently the helicopter was going to be buffeted around, possibly into the cliffs and that winching of Julie was going to be quite hazardous. Nonetheless they managed it successfully. However, Laura and the mountain rescue team had to walk back up to the plateau in the dark where the helicopter could land safely on its wheels.

They all jumped on board; the helicopter flew down to Ogwen, unloaded the rescuers and dog; and recovered the sea rescue gear. Julie and Laura were then whisked off to Bangor hospital by helicopter - they were on their way less than three hours after her fall. Julie's ankle break was found to be a serious one, and we'd done well not to do any more damage by trying to

move any further. It was a 'Potts fracture' – as an aside, have a look online at the remarkable life of surgeon Percivall Pott, 1714-1788.

While all this was going on, I was quietly – as the moustachioed empire builder pictured earlier on would have said – 'going to pieces'. In the rescue base I was sitting on the floor, fully clad and dry and with my back to the radiator, with a mug of tea in my hand, but feeling stone cold, shaking and shivering uncontrollably. The people at the rescue base told me I was in mild delayed shock, and that the problem would pass, which it did after about half an hour.

That for me was learning point #4. The advice is true that in an emergency the uninjured party members can go into shock, and because of that be at greater risk of hypothermia themselves.

Thanks to some help from other GMC members, Mark was able to reclaim Laura's car and take it to Bangor hospital, and was driven back to the hut. Laura then drove Julie to her parents' house in Chester in the small hours after she had been plastered up in Bangor hospital.

Thinking back to the day, things we did right included checking the forecast and picking a route we knew we could do in the day; we therefore had – just - enough time to cope before darkness fell on us with inadequate torch backup and shelter. We were very lucky that the good weather forecast was right and we weren't in wind and rain, and had not been chilled already on the walk: either or both would have massively racked up the already present hypothermia risks. Also we were lucky that the helicopter happened to have no more seriously injured people to see to before us; and that it was good enough weather for it to be in the air at all!



(photo credit <https://hmcoastguard.uk>)

Today, the modern search and rescue helicopters have a performance edge over the old Sea Kings which might buy time.

And we would undoubtedly have mobile phones – that would in our story have bought an hour of time. Subject to getting a signal and not being in a blind spot. And of course dropping your mobile into mud or water, or onto rocks during the day, or forgetting to charge it up, may also land you back in 1995! So such a margin is by no means guaranteed. Also if Mark and I had stayed up high, help having been sought by phone, our shortage of emergency gear would have been very serious indeed when the sun went down, especially had the weather deteriorated.

More information on the Ogwen rescue team is at <https://ogwen-rescue.org.uk/> . Please do consider supporting them!

Good advice on mountain emergencies can be found on the BMC site, in particular two focused articles are:

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/en/what-to-do-in-a-hill-walking-emergency> and this links to <https://thebmc.co.uk/en/emergency-equipment>

And also on <https://www.mountaineering.scot> - here the information is more spread out across the site; the site also has the interesting idea of telling near miss stories – like ours!

Dave Gray with Laura Barley

October 2026

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