

WEST BROMWICH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



**JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026
NEWSLETTER**

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NEWS

Club news:

- ◆ **Membership fees are due in January**, for adults these have been held at £41 for the year. Send this to the club account by the 31st January with reference AM26, your initial and surname. Junior members (<18) fees are £26, full-time students are £28.
- ◆ On the 18th June this year Dot Wagstaff (a former WBMC member) was a member of a 6 person relay team to swim the English Channel in just over 18 hours. At 82 she is thought to be the oldest person to be part of a channel relay team. Incidentally the team raised over £25,000 for the Cosmic charity.
- ◆ A web browser who wishes to remain anonymous was shocked and surprised to see the Chairman Dave's alter-ego there for all to see on Facebook! Provided here for posterity
- ◆ A message from JE: Sue Judge and John Hipwood, active members from before the Millennium, have finally "tied the knot" and got married in 2025! On behalf of all Club members, WBMC would like to send them belated "Congratulations and Best Wishes". For those that don't know anything about them, having climbed 1450 out of 1556 Marilynns, John Hipwood is still 62nd in the '2024 Marilyn Hall of Fame' list of the 332 people who have climbed more than 600 hills/ mountains in the UK with a prominence of 150 metres or more. Sue Judge was WBMC Secretary from 1996 to 1999 and John served as a committee member from 1993 to 1999.
- ◆ Life member Brian Hartshorne sends "Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all the W.B.M.C. Members."



Climbing, hill walking and mountaineering can provide life-long physical, social and mental health benefits through exercise and adventure in amazing environments. The BMC recognises these activities involve a risk of personal injury or death. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Cover image: Pete Poultnay, Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa (no prizes for guessing which route!)

BMC Participation Statement

NEWS

Coach report 2025: Hail to the King & Queen by John Edwards

It's that time of year again when we can look back at a year of coach meets and say a big "THANK YOU" to our Coach Sec. Nigel Tarr and Honorary member/driver Gary Pritchard for getting us out to the hills every month and

keeping tabs on us so we all (usually) get home safely at approximately the expected time. And now that payment can be made online there is also more work for our Treasurer & **COACH QUEEN FOR THE 4th SUCCESSIVE YEAR : CLAIRE HAMMONDS!!** So thanks and many congratulations to her as well.



But that is jumping ahead a little. How did the year pan out? Well Mitch's Meet and the Saturday coach in May (to Aber/Ogwen) never took place due to weather & lack of bookings respectively. However, the 11 coaches that did get to the hills tempted 118 different individuals to book on them. In total, at least 411 seats were booked & paid for, with an average of 37.4 seats filled per coach - the highest occupancy since 2017, so you could say that we – as a Club – have finally recovered from Covid !!

Apart from Nigel, the only member to go on **every coach** and thus win the accolade of being our **COACH KING FOR 2025 IS DARREN BEARDS!!** Well done and thanks Darren. These days Coach Kings & Queens receive a bottle of wine & a certificate for their devotion.

Only Martin Conway & Andy Brown were level with Claire Hammonds with **10** coach meets. 5 members went on **9** coaches :- Rob Allen, Charles Brecknell, Bill Darling, Tony Emms & Fred Hammonds. The same number went on **8** meets, they were Jan Cox, Darren Groutage, David Hellyar, Geordie Hind & Sarah Wheatcroft. Appropriately 7 people went on **7** coaches and their names were Julie Atkinson, Hilary Jones (travelling all the way up from London to be with us), Dave Kirk, Ian Merther, Quoc Pham, Phil Smith & Peter Thorpe. Annette Cope, Lucy Groutage, Wesley Marks, Stefan Michniewski, Wendy Morris, Ryan Pang, Stewart Shaw & Steve Showell were the 8 who went on **6** coaches and the 4 who went on slightly fewer than half the coaches (**5!**) were John Edwards (must try harder in 2026!), Ben Hatfield, Hannes Truter & Neen Whitehouse (another who's not local to the West Midlands). The 8 who went on **4** coaches were Adari Abdullah, George Allen, John Banner, Paul Brindley, John Dale, Neil Loydon, Liz Perks & Richard Speake. Sandra Ceney, Gurinder Dulai, Stuart Fellows, Neil Gadsby, Yuk (Norris) Hung, Dani Kwok, Tye Kerlew, Paul Read, John Russell & Julie Thorpe were the 10 who enjoyed (we hope) **3** coach meets.



There were 29 who managed a **couple** of coaches, namely Vanessa Biddulph, Jason Brooks, Suzanne Byrne, Claire Charleston, Richard Cooksey, Sunny Dulai, Mel Evans, Becky Green, Noel Kelleher, Aleisha Lawley, Chris Lazaz, Matt Machin, Vidyasagar Meesala, Paul McAlley, Patryk Michniewski, Elena Norman, Gaz Peasland, Kerry Poston, Paul Riggall, Dee Sendeva, Claire Smith, Mike & Emily Smith, Andy & Caroline Snape, Graeme Stanford, Tim Wilkes, Phillip Wood & Alastair Woodruff.

And finally the 36 "**one-coach wonders**" were Stuart Ballyn, Christopher Barnett, Frank Bruce, Jo Cheung, Teresa Chilles, Dave Coats, Chris Dean, T. Edwards, Emma & Megan Groves, Graham Hadley, Sandra & Stuart Hampton, Imogen Harley, Taylor Harris, Jonathan Howells, Rowena Jones, Sophie Kellaway, Ian Kirk, Alarna Lawley, Olof Lee, Lily Lewis, Mindi, Maxine Pincher, Dom Piotrowski, Amelia Rahman, Sam Read, Sharon Roffey (all the way from Australia!), Nika Savenko, Guy Sheppard, Lana Sluart, Carl Smith, Kath Smith, Jim Tansey, Holly Thomas, Lionel Thompson & Chelsea Yau. I call them 'wonders' as I wonder if we will see some of them again?! I'm sure there are some familiar names who will want to come on more meets next year if only to save themselves the ignominy of being near the bottom of the page! (Editor note: OUCH, consider me suitably shamed!)

But, joking apart, thank you to everyone who supported our coach meets; we really do value your support and hope to see you out enjoying yourselves with us in 2026.

For the record the destinations in order of popularity were Tarrens/Cader 46; Langdale 45; Clywdian Hills & Castleton 41 (thanks to Sarah for the pictures of our K&Q at this meet); Settle/Grassington 42; Patterdale & Buxton 38; Corwen/Llangollen 32; Coniston 30; Brecon Beacons 29; Llanberis/Ogwen 27. Some surprises there maybe but time of year obviously has an affect.

BMC MATTERS:

Several members attended the BMC Winter lecture series on 16th December, where a wide range of topics around safe winter mountaineering were discussed. These events are heavily subsidised for BMC members (i.e. all WBMC members) and well worth keeping an eye out for.

There are several "Club Support Seminars" coming up for FREE via Zoom. Just register your place via their website www.theBMC.co.uk to receive the Zoom link nearer the time.



These are:-

12 January 2026. "Understanding Combined Liability Insurance for Affiliated Clubs" *

*There are also Webinars on this topic recorded in October 2024 and April 2022 available to view online at any time as well as the following:-

"Dealing with Serious Incidents" (May 2023), "Being a More Inclusive Club" (April 2022), & "Children, Young People, Families and Clubs" (April 2022)

REGULAR MEETS AND FUTURE EVENTS

REGULAR MEETS

Coach Meets:

Sunday 11th January - Llanberis & Snowdon

Sunday 8th February - Patterdale

Sunday 8th March - Clwydian Range

Reserve your seat with Nigel Tarr (07703 345729) or book on www.wbmc.org as early as possible. You will be guaranteed a great day on the hills or an amble through beautiful villages, with a chance to win a bottle of wine in a free coach raffle. You can now pay for the coach meet by card on the coach!

Fares: Members £25, Non members £25, Under 18's & Full time students £10

To book your seat contact Nigel Tarr on 07703 345729 or book on the website.

Cancellations after the Wednesday prior to the coach meet will still be charged £10 and failure to turn up without cancelling means the full coach fare will still be expected from you.

Coaches leave West Brom at 7am to give 5-7 hours on the hills. Multiple stops mean linear walks are often possible. If you don't fancy a long walk, how about a social day in beautiful surroundings, ending in the pub?

PLUS: Sunday 4th January - Mitch's (car) meet: The Wrekin

Evening indoor winter presentations:

All held at the Red Lion, All Saints Way, B71 1RH

Thursday 8th January

Fred & Claire Hammonds will be covering their climb up Triglav, Slovenia as part of the 2025 club European week. Check back to the September/October newsletter to whet your appetite!

Thursday 5th February

Wesley Marks will be sharing the tails from his trip up Manaslu in the Himalayas (8163m!). Check back to the November/December newsletter to see the start of the tale.

Thursday 5th March

Tony Emms will be taking us on an adventure through Patagonia that he has yet to go on...

Committee meetings/social nights at the Red Lion:

Thursday 15th January, 12th February, 12th March

Committee meetings start at 7.30pm Members are invited to listen in as observers - pop along to 190 All Saints Way, B71 1RH for the start, or do as some others do and arrive a bit earlier to eat there. Otherwise come along at ~ 8.30 pm for a drink & a chat (or meal) as you can guarantee others will be there.

Indoor climbing:

High Places, Kidderminster:

Members climb at High Places, Wyre Forest Leisure Centre, Siverwoods Way, Kidderminster DY11 7DT weekly on Tuesday afternoons/evenings. If you want to be added to the WhatsApp group for these meets or want more information, please feel free to get in touch with Pete Poultnay 07779 366905 or peterpoultnay@hotmail.co.uk.

Also see <https://www.placesleisure.org/centres/wyre-forest-leisure-centre/centre-activities/climbing/> for more details.

Redpoint, Birmingham:

Members climb at Redpoint Climbing & Bouldering Centre, 77 Cecil Street, Newtown, Birmingham B19 3ST at 10:30am on Thursdays. If you want to be added to the WhatsApp group for these meets or want more information, please feel free to get in touch with Darren Groutage 07973 405348 or wbmc.dg@outlook.com.

A new regular time slot of Monday 6pm has just been added to the calendar! Contact Darren Beards or Sophie Kellaway to be kept in the loop for this.

Also see <http://www.redpointbirmingham.co.uk/> for more details.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Scottish Winter Week:

14th - 22nd February 2026, Coyerbridge Hotel, Aviemore (Cairngorms)

Thanks to Jonathan and Vanessa Howells' organisation we're heading back to the Cairngorms.

- ◆ They are offering us £47 per person per night in a twin / double room (£94 per room, per night), with a £32 single-person room supplement making it £79/night for those not sharing. This price includes bed, breakfast & evening meal. Children aged 3-14yo are charged at 75% when sharing with 2 adults.
- ◆ Breakfasts will start early for us at 7am, but they don't mind if stragglers come down later. Evening meals to start at 7:30pm.
- ◆ Dogs are allowed, maximum 2 per room at a cost of £25 for the week and they are allowed in all public areas except the main restaurant.
- ◆ Free Wi-Fi is available in public areas and bedrooms but smoking and vaping is prohibited in all public areas and bedrooms. There are 2 pools, a sauna & a gym, although Jonathan believes the pool closes for a couple of days a week during low season.
- ◆ If you want to book, contact Jonathan on his email: jhowells42@gmail.com (or via 07859932389) to give your name and details of those in your party and transfer one night's stay as a deposit into the Club's account with the payment code SWW26 with your initial and surname. Full payment is due within the first two weeks of January. There is also a "Nev's Scottish Winter Week" WhatsApp group for news, updates and organisation.

Annual Away Dinner:

Arriving Friday, 20th to 22nd March, Aysgarth Falls Hotel (Yorkshire).

We enjoyed the venue so much this year we have rebooked the Aysgarth Falls Hotel in the Yorkshire Dales National Park for our annual Away Dinner in March.

The hotel is right on the doorstep of the beautiful Aysgarth waterfalls, with various routes to explore, including a 4- mile walk to Bolton Castle and around Wensleydale. For the more adventurous there are the Yorkshire 3 Peaks not far away. As always, this is a social event, meeting in the bar on Friday evening for drinks, and enjoying an A la carte Dinner on Saturday evening – the menu to be confirmed nearer the time. There are just 6 of 15 rooms remaining: **Superior double £425 x 3 (one dog friendly)**, **Suite Bed and Breakfast x 1 £495**, **Deluxe King Bed & Breakfast £472**, **Cottage Apartment Bed & Breakfast £495 x 1 (dog friendly)**. N.B. These rates are for a total of two nights stay, with breakfast on both mornings, A 3 course dinner and disco and based on two sharing) The hotel have a number of brand-new luxury garden suites that I have enquired for -price TBC. To secure a room, a deposit of £50 per person is required to secure your room with full payment due by 28th February. Please use the code AD2026.

If you require dinner at the hotel on the evening you arrive at the hotel (Friday 20th) please let Sarah know. Bookings, queries or expressions of interest to Sarah Wheatcroft please via s.e.wheatcroft@googlemail.com or on 07398365990. To see the venue check out aysgarthfallshotel.com.

SPECIAL EVENTS/ADVERTS

WBMC AGM

Thursday 19th March 2026, Red Lion, All Saints Way, B71 1RH

Annual General Meeting held at the Red Lion, starts 7:30pm sharp. Arrive early if you want to eat. Would all members please attend this important meeting.

Simon Yates (Touching the Void) - My Mountain Life

5th February, 7:30pm at Walsall arena, Leamore. Tickets £21 available via walsallarena.com

Fancy a Quick Trip to Nepal?

In November John Edwards booked to revisit the Nepal Himalaya with KE Adventure as it is now ~20 years since his only other visit (to the Tibetan side of Everest) and tempus fugit. He's gone for what he thinks is a relatively cheap (< £3,000 incl flights) and easy, scenic-but-not-too-touristy option of the Gosainkund & Langtang Trek which heads north from Kathmandu towards the Ganesh Himal and Shishapanga, with views of several other 8,000m peaks. His flights depart Birmingham Airport on **28 March 2026** & return there 14 days later. KE class the holiday as a "challenging" ridge walk, with the 4984m top of Tserso Ri the optional high point. It is guaranteed to run as there were 6 already booked on it but he thinks they'll be mostly much younger so if any other old / young / middle aged WBMC adventurers fancied it too they'd be welcome to make a booking and join him, but be quick, the maximum group size is 12! He can recommend KE Adventure as he did the GR20 with them in 2019 & found them very good.

One Scottish week not enough?

If one week in the Cairngorms is not enough for you, feel free to join Sophie Kellaway heading up to Aviemore **18th to 21st January**. This is a cheap and cheerful trip, staying in the youth hostel (£24 a night), with return train tickets costing £120. She will be doing a two-day winter mountaineering course with Highland Outdoor Adventures (20th-21st) which is the less cheap but hopefully still cheerful part, if you want to join this, get in contact with them directly to check there is still space! This course will cover safe movement on steep ground including gullies/ridges with crampons, ice axe and ropes as required.

Have your say

Coach meet destinations:

The committee invite suggestions for new future coach meet destinations. The meet card for 2026 is set with some regular destinations but if you have ideas for new places to try please write in. Please consider that a drop off and pick up will have to be "coach-friendly", if you're not sure why not have a chat with Nigel on the next coach.

Newsletter:

If you want to see your adventure, past or planned, in the next newsletter, contact Sophie on sophsky@gmail.com or WhatsApp 07980510356. Please send max. 5 photos and some text to tell me what you did, I'm happy to edit but need something to work with. Please, no videos...!

MITCH'S (CAR) MEET**SUNDAY 4th JANUARY: ROUND (AND OVER) THE WREKIN**

Again the same as last year after it had to be cancelled due to a blizzard! Hopefully we have better luck this year.

Meet: 10:00 –Ercall Lane Car Park, Wellington, Telford (TF1 2DY)

Grid Ref SJ 646 103 Free to park. ~ 40 miles from Birmingham, Exit M54 at Jn 7 due to the new one-way system.

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 **Explorer 242**

Telford, Ironbridge & the Wrekin

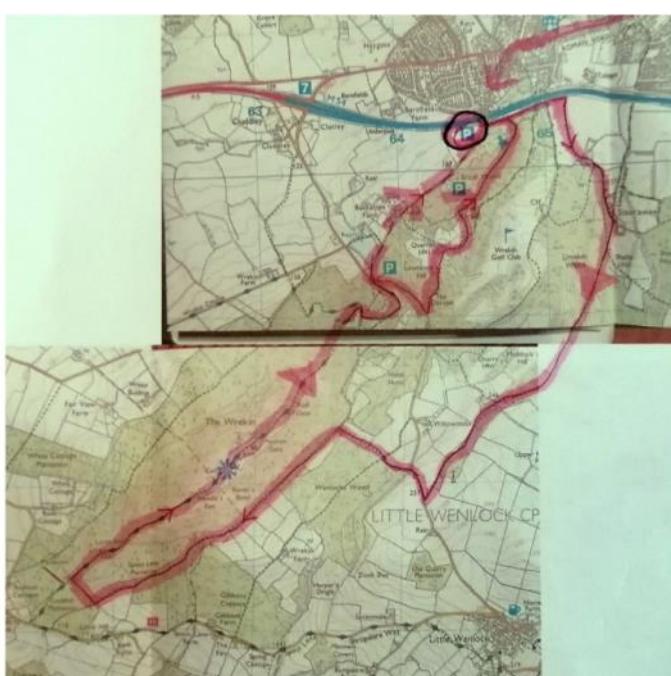
OS 1:50,000 **Landranger 127** Stafford & Telford



Route: ~ 7 miles SW through Limekiln Wood then N over Little Hill (761ft) before squeezing through The Needle's Eye to The Wrekin trig (1335 ft). Then down through Heaven & Hell Gates. and take the easy way back to the cars along Ercall Lane or finish off with a bang by visiting the summits of Lawrence's Hill (758ft) and The Ercall (869ft).

After the Walk Meeting Place: The Wickets Inn, 240 Holyhead Road (TF1 2EB) Probably from about 3.00pm This is a family & dog-friendly pub & restaurant run by Debbie & Lance. Cask Marque accredited, they offer an excellent variety of drinks & great quality home-cooked food.

See <https://wicketsinn.com/our-menu> for details of their Winter Menu. However, their Sunday Menu can change from week to week so we may not know the actual choices available until a week before.



- COME ALONG TO BLOW AWAY THE CHRISTMAS COBWEBS AND RAISE A GLASS TO JOHN MITCHELL & OTHER DEPARTED WBMC STALWARTS -

COACH MEET**SUNDAY 11th JANUARY: LLANBERIS & SNOWDON**

A classic winter meet, note that winter gear should be worn and carried. You must have ice axe and crampons if you plan to go above the snow line, and a torch and suitable clothing for all walks.

Depart: 07:00 – West Brom., Edward St
Car Park (B70 8NN)
07:20 – M54 J2

Drop Off: Pont Cyfyng (735572)
Capel Curig (721582)
Ogwen (656603)
Llanberis (583598)

Pick Ups: Llanberis (583598)
Nant Peris (606584)
Pen y Pass (647556)
Capel Curig (721582)



Photo from Llanberis meet Jan 2024, pinched from Stewart Shaw

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 OL 17 Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa
OS 1:50,000 Landranger 115 Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa

Suggested Routes:-**From Pont Cyfyng****Route 1) Moel Siabod (6 miles/9.5km, 3500ft ascent)**

Follow the track to a disused quarry (717555) then continue to Lyn y Foel (713547) from where you can climb the SE ridge of Moel Siabod (Grade1 scramble of Dear Ddu) . From the summit (705546) descend via the NE ridge to GR 713565. Then continue through the forest to Plas y Brenin & Capel Curig where there might / might not be a cafe open before pick-up. Online route for GPS [here](#).

From Capel Curig**Route 2) The Glyders and their Eastern ridge (10 miles/15 km)**

From Capel head west and follow the ridge to Gallt Yr Ogof (685586) and continue over Foel Goch (678582) and past Llyn Caseg-Fraith (670584). You should get a classic view of Tryfan's east face from here (made famous by Poucher). You can then ascend Glyder Fach (656583) followed by Glyder Fawr (642580) . Descend south to Pen-y-Pass pick-up or if you sort it with Nigel walk down the road to the Pen Y Gwryd Hotel (but check it's open first!)

From A5 near Llyn Ogwen/Idwal Cottage**Route 3) Tryfan and the Glyders (9 miles/12 km).**

A tough route in winter with 2 grade 1 scrambles possibly. Climb to Tryfan summit (664594) by N. ridge or Heather Terrace. Then climb to the summit of Glyder Fach (656583), possibly by the Bristly Ridge scramble. Continue along the plateau to Glyder Fawr (642579) and descend as in route 2.

Route 4) Y Garn, Foel Goch, Mynydd Perfedd & Elidir Fawr (optional).

For the longer route go into Cwm Idwal and follow west side of the lake to climb Y Garn's east ridge to summit (631596) Then north to Foel-goch (629612). Or you can miss out Y Garn and make the route shorter by taking the old A5 road on the west side of Nant Ffrancon and climb Foel-goch by « the mushroom garden » & its east ridge, Y Llymllwyd. Then north to Mynydd Perfedd (623619) and descend SW to the narrow Bwlch y Marchlyn which leads to the rocky summit of Elidir Fawr. Descend SSW to Nant Peris to avoid the Penrhyn slate quarries & inclines.

From Llanberis**Route 5) Snowdon by the Llanberis path (9 miles/12km).**

A straightforward walk close to the railway track. Just follow the crowds!

Route 6) Llechog, Moel Cynghorion, Foel Gron & Moel Eilio (10 miles/15km).

Go up Victoria Terrace to hit the Llanberis Path & divert to the left to summit Llechog (606568) Descend & cross railway to rejoin main path and turn off right before Clogwyn Station along the line of an old tramway. After 1/4 mile descend to Llyn Du'r Arddu & pass to left of lake before climbing to Bwlch Cwm Brwynog (590557) & up S ridge of M. Cynghorion to the grassy top (587564). Follow the ridge W, then SW & a wall up to Foel Goch (570564) & Foel Gron (560569). An easy descent NW & 400 ft ascent gets you to Moel Eilio (556577), then N & NE back to Llanberis. Or if you want to avoid 3,700 ft of ascent go an anticlockwise shorter route and just do Moel Eilio & Foel Gron, then descend to Llanberis on the path that goes N from the col at 573559.

LED WALK: With Dave Hellyar, potential route options are up Llanberis path to Halfway House or around Llyn Padarn, depending on weather conditions. Suitable for those without winter kit or less confident with navigation.

COACH MEETSUNDAY 8th FEBRUARY: PATTERDALE

A classic winter meet, note that winter gear should be worn and carried. You must have ice axe and crampons if you plan to go above the snow line, and a torch and suitable clothing for all walks.

Depart: 07:00 – West Brom., Edward St Car Park (B70 8NN)
07:20 – Penkridge

Drop Off: Glenridding (386 169)
Patterdale (391 181)

Pick Ups: Patterdale (391 181)
Glenridding (386 169)



Note: there will not be a drop off or pick up at Kirkstone Inn due to the Kirkstone Pass landslip/road closure

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 OL 5: The Lakes North East

*Striding Edge, Feb 2025 meet.
Possibly picturing Andy Brown.*

Suggested Routes:-**From Glenridding****Route 1) Catstycam & Birkhouse Moor (8.5 miles, 2600ft ascent)**

Take the path on the south side of Glenridding beck and follow this path all the way to Red Tarn. Make a right towards Swirral edge then a sharp right just before the edge to ascend Catstycam. Retrace your steps back to Red Tarn and continue straight across the Beck to the Hole in the Wall (359155) . Follow the dry stone wall to Birkhouse Moor, with a small out-and-back detour to the summit cairn. Regain the path and follow it to meet Mires Beck which leads back into Glenridding.

From Patterdale**Route 2) Striding Edge & Helvellyn (9 miles/14km, 3500ft ascent)**

Follow a track to where it turns right over Grisedale Beck (383157) and then climb steeply up to the "Hole in the Wall" which marks the start of Striding Edge - an airy grade 1 ridge which can be challenging in winter conditions for the uninitiated. A short descent to a col at the end is followed by a steep final climb to the summit 'shelter' and trig point (342152). Continue N to Lower Man (337155) and Whiteside (338166) and then take the lower path down to Glenridding Common (352166). A good track leads you past the Youth Hostel (366174) from where you head down Greenside Road to warm up at the Traveller's Rest in Glenridding.

Route 2b) Striding Edge & Swirral Edge

Follow Route 1 to the trig point, but as you head north keep an eye out for the branch right with a short steep (and potentially slippery) path down onto Swirral Edge, another grade 1 scramble but slightly shorter ridge than Striding Edge. Descend to red tarn, then fork left to follow the beck back into Glenridding. Due to its position, Swirral Edge can be more prone to amassing snow and ice, check conditions before committing. This route can also be easily reversed, to do Swirral then Striding.

COACH MEET**SUNDAY 8th MARCH: CLWYDIAN RANGE****Depart:** 07:00 – West Brom., Edward St Car

Park (B70 8NN)

07:20 – M54 J2

Drop Off: Bodfari (SJ 096 700)

A541 (SJ 172 680)

Loggerheads Country Park (SJ 199
626)

Llanferres (SJ 188 604)

Pick Ups: Llanferres (SJ 188 604)**Required Maps:** OS 1:25,000 OL 265 Clwydian

Range: Prestatyn, Mold & Ruthin

OS 1:50,000 Landranger 116 & 117 Denbigh & Colwyn Bay, Chester & Wrexham

**Suggested Routes:-****From Bodfari****Route 1) The length of the Clwydians (11 miles/18km, 1200m ascent)**

Follow footpaths east and climb to the top of Moel y Park (SJ 119 700). Then head south to traverse the ridge over the summits of Penycloddiau, Moel Arthur, Moel Dywyll, Moel Famau, Foel Fenlli & Moel Eithinen. From the final hill, head east down to a well-deserved pint in Llanferres at the Druid Inn. This walk can also be cut short at Moel Famau, reducing the ascent to 1000m.

From A541**Route 2) Moel Arthur & Moel Famau (6 miles/10km, 700m ascent)**

Follow footpaths west to climb Moel Plas-yw and join the main ridge at Moel Arthur. Then head south to traverse the ridge as far as Moel Famau before descending south-east to Llanferres.

From Loggerheads**Route 3) Easy, low level walk and a bad weather option**

Enjoy a stroll around Loggerheads Country Park where there are various trails and options.

Winter bag check: Stay safe. Remember, Cwm Cats (that's a Welsh valley of the cats, right?).

This is not a definitive list, your valley cats should also be kept warm and fed.

Compass**W**aterproofs**M**ap**C**rampons (and/or microspikes)**A**xe**T**orches**S**urvival bag

COMMITTEE MATTERS

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COULD THIS BE YOUR CHANCE??? FEEL FREE TO VOLUNTEER

October Committee Minutes

Apologies Darren Groutage, John Edwards, Neil Loydon

Minutes of September meeting – proposed by Tony, seconded by Will

Matters Arising Donation of £2000 kindly donated by Pat Mullett stipulated that she wanted it to be used to encourage young people in outdoor activities. Neil Loydon emailed the following in his absence; I still believe in the context of UK mountaineering clubs, 21 as a max age, is too narrow. 26 or even 30 seems much more in line with the general trend in this area. That said, and whereas indoor climbing is relatively accessible for children IMHO, taking younger ones outdoors, is more challenging, as even if parents know what to get, harnesses, helmets and shoes are somewhat expensive and rapidly outgrown. When Will's daughter came outside a few weeks ago, he had to 'scrabble' around for a harness and helmet. Rather than funding indoors, it would seem a better investment to me, and more in line with the club's interests (as majority of indoor climbers today, never progress to outdoors) protective equipment, but harnesses and helmets are, and we would need to look at what inspection was required, and how would we comply (alternatively, harnesses and helmets could be gifted to parents, and they could gift them on, thus removing the club from the loop?). FYI in case anyone is unaware, some other clubs hold kit, so this is not new territory and the BMC Tech and/or Club Committees should be able to help on inspection requirements. With some of this gear, we could run an outdoor climbing day, for some of the kids who climb at the wall, and their parents, etc, which might help generate new members. The BMC might well help financially and otherwise with an initiative like this, as they are trying to focus more on youth climbers and their families David has asked for Nigel's views as he knew Pat very well and the consensus is that over 21 would not have been viewed in her eyes as a 'young person'. The following suggestions are:- We do not currently have many juniors in the club, there are approx. 4 children that are either children of members or grandchildren using the hut and doing outdoor activities. Will and Luke have suggested doing something with DOE, new rucksacks? Boots? Previously suggested ideas were paying for membership for interested families to utilise an indoor climbing wall. In terms of buying equipment, where will it be stored? Who is responsible for maintaining it? The outcome of the discussion is that for now, we will put it out to the members in the newsletter.

Treasurer £20158 current account £31,570 reserve account No outstanding bills Brecon coach paid. We do have to pay Corporation tax – checked with HMRC, because we claim Gift aid, the current method of submitting has been retired. We will be using quick books to produce accounts to submit to HMRC and allow accountant to run off in the right format for hmrc. Costs £20 to use, the transactions link directly to quick books. Joel will be uploading the accounts from 1st Jan, by end of 25 we will be in correct format to submit tax returns ready for EOY returns if asked. In terms of the reserve fund the £31,000 do we want to look for a better account?. Currently it's on a 90 day interest account, Dave has suggested that we leave it as it. It hasn't been withdrawn on, only added to. Appreciation for Claire doing a fantastic job!

Hut Secretary 8 20/08 -21-09 Hut donation £624 21 members 7 guests and 1 child Paying out electric bill 156 units £53.71 New tariff in November going up, new heaters are starting to be used. Should be on track to cover the cost of hut outgoings. Chris Barnett has given good feedback on the new heaters. Some negative feedback but Fred will check out performance next time he is at the hut. New lot of wood coming, working weekend planned for 30th October to 2nd November preparing storing the 2 lots of wood being delivered at a cost of £220. Fire extinguishers have been serviced at a cost of £60. Hut lease paid £62.50 next one due December. It has been noted that the lease now reads as rent of premises. Archie has been to hut with a guest, lovely letter to John Edwards, he has made a donation and given thanks for the newsletter.

Membership Secretary Tony needs to be kept up to date with new member enquiries. Tony feels that he is left out of the loop at times, New member enquiries, standard practice to pass name, email, telephone. 230 members, Tony sent info to 5 potential members introductory letter inducting them to club, application form, meets card. 2 identified new members Matt Whitehouse & Gary Peabody, Tony didn't get chance to speak to them, there were also a couple of new faces at the slideshow which was great to see. Message from BMC, £29 at beginning of year, membership for WBMC is £11.67 plus depreciation on BMC fees. Do we charge full rates and expect another payment for members joining later in the year? It has been agreed to charge a lower fee with members fees due in full in January.

Coach Secretary £180 loss on September's coach meet. 30 people on coach, good day had by all. New coach attendee felt sick and turned back on his own. Andy went looking for him, Nigel called him and he said he was ten minutes from the top sounding out of breath, unfortunately he had to stop and returned to the main road and caught the bus to our meeting point. 16 booked on next coach to Tarrans, the last coach the week before Nigel almost cancelled because numbers were low, but held off and had the 30 attend with 6 cancellations. We need to consider changing the cut off date for booking onto future coach meets Coach meets are on second Sunday of the month, occasional Saturdays. Can we let members know that they need to book by the Friday prior due to the cancellation policy of Robinsons coaches, If we have insufficient numbers to fill the coach Robinsons cancellation cut off is the Monday prior to the coach meet. This is a significant financial loss if we are unable to cancel due to lack of interest.

Have the meet cards gone out yet? – no Nigel hasn't had access to the spreadsheet Is there any point in printing a meet card for events that are not going to happen. There are anomalies that Tony has pointed out that need changing – if Tony can send Sarah the information she can update the info on the spreadsheet. Nigel needs a couple of weeks to get the cards printed. Events are being booked on the meet card but they have no organiser. Nigel needs to be kept up to date with what is being advertised for the coach meets and bookings coming in via the website.

John Edwards input via email in his absence - Re Coach Meets: I think we need to spend more of Nigel's slot thinking about future coaches and not just the one that has just happened. Eg This Oct (& Sept) committee meetings should decide or firm up on coach routes and all drop off & pick up points and any Led walk for the Nov, Dec, Mitch's & Jan coaches as these all have to be in the Nov/Dec Newsletter. Nov & Dec committee meeting should do same for Jan, Feb & March coaches. Jan and Feb committees concentrate on getting March, April & May coaches right. March & April committees do likewise for May, June and July coaches. May & June committees check all details for July, Aug & Sept coach meets. July and, at the latest, August committees sort out Sept, Oct and Nov coach details. And the cycle restarts ... and so on to make sure that the details in the Newsletters (& now online) are always correct. It will also encourage people to volunteer to do a led walk which I think helps to fill the coaches and encourages people who otherwise would not have the confidence (but they hopefully gradually learn).

Newsletter – advertise routes and open up to members to suggest events for the coming year – to put on announcements. Must take name, contact for leading the event. Can we find somewhere new for the coach meets, suggestions are Saddleworth or Roaches, can we advertise in the newsletter for members to put ideas forward and potentially do a led walk. Neil- With regards to led walks: I'll write a paragraph or two for the next Newsletter, setting out what the BMC Club Member insurance provides to support this. Could we get the number of non-members and their breakdown per Coach Trip in the report each month, so we are all on the same page?

75th Anniversary: Neil- After sleeping on Nigel's remarks, that he was struggling to see how we'd get the ~100 attendees at the Summer event we'd need to break even, perhaps it makes sense for those who have been in the club a while, to make a rough list, of who and how many they think would attend, before we pay the deposit, lest we commit, and end up with the event making a 'significant' loss ?

Sarah (Organiser) I have emailed Gwynant Barns and left a voicemail requesting confirmation that we can book our preferred dates of July 2 & 3rd or June 25th & 26th 2027 and requested information on cost of deposit, we do not yet have any information on the deposit required as it's so far in the future, however, assuming that a 10% deposit will suffice, this will cost £500. The cost of the BYO tent and barn hire is covered by guests attending with entertainment and catering being paid for by the club funds. The breakdown of cost works out as follows: Full weekend camping, with full use of the Barn and facilities, 120 guests- £49.95 pp, 60 guests - £83.25pp with additional guests £20 each, not exceeding 120.

Winter dinner at the Hawthorns: Sarah has signed the contract and is waiting for them to send the invoice for the deposit to be paid.

Away Dinner: This is booked for Aysgarth Falls, there are already some names down and deposits paid. I will ask Sophie to put another advertisement in the next newsletter with the remaining available rooms. 9 taken out of 15, Total cost is for 2 nights B&B, 3 course dinner and disco for 2 sharing **Superior double £425 x 3 (one dog friendly)** , **Suite Bed and Breakfast x 1 £495**, **Deluxe King Bed & Breakfast £472**, **Cottage Apartment Bed & Breakfast £495 x 1 (dog friendly)**

BMC: No news to report

Gift Aid: John Edwards has requested that we discuss the following; Re Gift Aid: I have 33 completed forms (see summary attachment) but don't know how many Claire now has. Also I don't know who should be holding these for the club - Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Sec (or me as the person who is currently completing the Gift Aid forms? Can those who have agreed to Gift Aid be indicated on future membership spreadsheets by ticks in a column? This is what happened back in 2008 or so when we first started claiming Gift Aid. But who has the hard copies of those original forms? Wendy Morris said she gave all her papers to Tony! These are important if HMRC ever asks to see them!

Other Business: In Darren's absence, he is advising that we should only have members on the Whatsapp group. Donation re Ann Tandy's funeral on 24th October - at the request of her family – no flowers but decided to donate £50 to her preferred charity.

Invitation from Neil Loydon: It seems there are quite a few gaps in understanding amongst us, on climbing, especially Winter climbing. To try and close them: UK Winter Climbing can involve some ice climbing, but is more often these days, snowed/iced up rock and/or frozen turf, so does not depend on long, very deep freezes, to come into condition. Whilst climate change is affecting it, UK Winter climbing is more popular than ever, with a season that runs from November-April. If anyone is interested to chat more about it, or better still, try and get out climbing, rock and/or Winter, and we haven't already spoken about trying to make a plan, give me a shout.

November Committee Minutes

Present: Darren Groutage, David Helyar, Nigel Tarr, Sarah Wheatcroft, John Edwards, Tony Emms, Luke Austin, Will Read, Sophie, Darren Beard, Fred Hammonds, Claire Hammonds **Apologies:** Neil Loydon **Minutes of October meeting:** proposed by Claire, accepted by Fred

Matters arising: Pat Mullett Donation - Suggestions trickling in from members, leave it in the bank and raise again in December's agenda.

Treasurers report: Balance 12th Nov £20931 in Current account, £31570 in the Reserve account. No bills outstanding, coach already paid, received Easy Fund quarterly payment of £15.41. Progressing with Quick books. Amendment to October minutes, we do NOT pay corporation tax but we do have to complete the return when requested. Is it worth carrying on with Gift Aid? Yes. We will have all of 2025 transactions on Quick books, so in the event that HMRC ask for a Corporation tax return we have all of the info on a compatible database. John is going to get together with Claire next year to go through the process of loading gift aid information. Need a common list of those who say 'Yes' to Gift Aid, so put an additional column on the master membership excel sheet to have a tick if not already there (to be checked online)

Hut Secretary: Hut sheet 9 from 21/9/25 to 24/10/25:- 22 members stayed at the hut and Hut receipts £607. Fred has spent £507 on the below - Electric bill £83.18 (the Standing charge is now £30 per month). We need to replace fluorescent light in toilet block, Andy brown will get a price, LED preferably. Produced a lot of wood on Working Weekend ~ wood delivery, 2 cubic meters of wood £220 broken grate (log retainer) has been replaced @ £193.94. New Toilet brushes, 12 new soup bowls & whiskey glasses, restocked toiletries, fixed steam cleaner. broken internet hub (due to storm damage) should be back up & running within week or so. Thanks to all involved in getting this sorted out. On the mini working weekend tested new panel heaters, very good, instant heat in morning.

Membership Secretary: We have 212 members, potentially 20 more at various stages of commitment, Tony has sent a pack to everyone who shows an interest in joining with a welcoming letter, membership form plus a meet card, Will's flier & a self-addressed envelope. Poss add Gift Aid form. Club membership £41 from end of January, payment to BMC is pro rata: £29.33 (going up by £1.50) will be £20 after 1st July, now 1/3 after 1st October ie £10. Rates need to be added to the website to advertise different rates for Adults, Students, Juniors etc. David is suggesting that we keep the rate the same and absorb any rising cost from BMC

Coach Secretary: 46 on Nov coach, good day had by all. 2-3 new attendees on the coach. £211 knocked off deficit. Issue raised that quite a few came without head torch or torch and now that the darker afternoons are closing in we will be walking out in darkness and ideally all attendees should carry a head torch (plus a spare). 33 currently booked on next coach to Hathersage. Drop offs at Hathersage, Hope and Castleton. Dave is leading walk from Hope ~7 miles but Cave Dale, Mam Tor also possible. Nigel will speak to the coach driver re the coach for Hathersage via the fastest route.

75th Anniversary: Nothing new to report, Sarah has left messages for Steve to come back to us with availability for our preferred dates. The contract has been signed for the Hawthorns Anniversary Dinner in 2027 & we are now waiting for the invoice to be received for payment.

BMC: Personal accident cover can be got by paying £18 per annum to upgrade. From 2027 we will need to have a Safeguarding Officer for the junior members.

Newsletter & Social Media: Sophie and Will are both doing an amazing job of producing the newsletter and our social media pages. Sophie needs a deadline for following information to be incl. in newsletter. Will has the same issue for social media. Sophie will re-advertise annual Away Dinner to Aysgarth , Sarah will send updated rooming list. AGM advance notice needed.

Indoor meets: Fred and Claire - January, Tryglav Wes – Feb , Manaslu, Tony – March Patagonia, Will – April Rykanon

AOB: Jonathan to finalise the Scottish week. It's OK to advertise an Air BnB on Offas dyke. Meet card going in 14/11 for printing. Curry night is not in newsletter but it is on meet card; is it going ahead?

Club trips

November's Coach to Cader & the Tarrens

a report by John Edwards

By the time we finished picking up the last couple of passengers at Dobbie's World there were 46 of us on the coach and, with the weather forecast looking better and better, we were all anticipating a great day out on the hills. And that is what we got. :-)

Andy B was the first one off the coach at the Bwlch Oerddrws to do a solo ascent of Y Foel & Pen y Bwlch-coch (Tumps either side of the A470). Almost exactly half the coach decided to do Cader Idris with some getting off at the top of the A487 and heading west across the range before dropping down to The Railway Inn at Abergynolwyn, while others went up the 'normal' route past Llyn Cau, headed east and ended up at "one of Wales' BEST Posh Pubs" as The Cross Foxes at Brithdir is now styling itself! Alas the views they enjoyed heading up disappeared at the summit as this was shrouded in cloud but there was no rain.



The coach emptied completely at Abergynolwyn, leaving driver Gary & Nigel to spent the day alone down near Tywyn at Dolgoch. Dave Coats' group left the village and climbed Tarren-y-Gesail before descending to Dolgoch via Foel y Geifr, Tarrenhendre & Tarren Nantymoel. The Led walk attracted 14 including several coach newcomers, who enjoyed a scenic stretch of river en route to the bridge which crossed to river to Nant Gwernol railway station before the hard work started. Rob Allen's phone with its downloaded OS map proved very helpful in deciding when to turn on a couple of occasions - there was no phone signal so detailed app maps wouldn't upload & John & Anne Nuttall's Cicerone book description / map was very vague in places. The steep scramble through the conifers to the right of the Tarrenhendre cliffs got most folk gasping and the 600 ft of steady

upward plod across boggy grassland to the summit split the group up somewhat, with the last member arriving about 2½ hours after we left the coach. Nine of us spent 10 minutes or so at the post-marked summit, having a rest and a bite to eat, before catching up with the three who had stopped for lunch a little further on. Rob & George were by that time well ahead and on their way to the second Tarren!

With 4½ hours until pick-up time down in the valley, we continued steadily eastwards, passing to the south of Foel y Geifr to save extra climbing, and finally arrived at the edge of the forest at the head of the valley. It was starting to get dusk; not everyone had torches with them; and not everyone liked the look of another 600 ft steep uphill (which Tony E had told us had 'endless zig-zags'!) So Amelia R, Elena N, Lana S, Jason B & Ben H turned left with Wes M and descended to Pont Llaeron & the remains of the Bryn-Eglwys quarry down in the valley, while Martin C, Alistair W, Mark Sunny D & Teresa C continued upwards with John E to the trig & the true top 30m of Tarren-y-Gesail, where they had another 10 minute rest. The first group arrived at the pub in time to have a leisurely 30 minutes unwind +/- drink and the second group made it back - just about without having to use torchlight - with 10 minutes to spare, having made maximum use of their time on the hills. Some of the tracks down the valley were well-flooded, with stretches of deep mud, which caused us some amusement and resulted in Sunny declaring that he was henceforth to be known as 'Swampy'!

The journey home saw an award ceremony, with Darren Groutage, having held the Malcolm Collins Award for 6 months, passing the silver rosebowl over to the President to present to the 2024 joint winner Wesley Marks, for him to hold for the remainder of the year. The award was for climbing Baruntse but, as most people in the Club & on the coach know, he has since gone one better and sat on top of an 8,000m giant !! Wes said he really appreciated the congratulatory messages folk sent him, which reached him as he was sitting feeling rather alone & rather tired - the only Englishman in the 8K team.



Geordie's skills weekend

a little write up by Neen Whitehouse, who found it to be a totally worthwhile course and great weekend!



7 students and 3 course leaders gathered at the club hut to share knowledge and learn navigational skills and what a lovely bunch we were. The weekend commenced with a presentation familiarising ourselves with grid references, map features and how to use a compass and map before we were let loose into the field. The course leaders were really patient, informative and as the weekend progressed their knowledge really became apparent. The weather for the weekend was lovely if a bit chilly, but the rain held off. The task for day 1 was to navigate a series of grid references, it has to be said some of the students demonstrated a greater understanding of map reading, we had a charted surveyor in the group and he was streets ahead of little old me. I did however identify early on the our end point would finish somewhere around Cnicht, unfortunately though I needed to be retrieved by Graeme as my end point differed from everyone else's :) but the exercise really did hit home the importance of double checking your co-ords and compass bearings to avoid the trap I fell into. Back at the hut, more presentations and route planning for the following day reinforced the skills I was learning and I felt pretty confident that I had accurately planned my route. It has to be said that when asked to estimate the timing of the route I left the more competent students to assess map contours and calculate timings whilst I warmed soup and crusty rolls for tea.

I surprised myself on day 2, I was able to identify map features so much more easily than the previous day, something clicked and I felt more confident in making decisions that I would usually leave to more experienced people, I was reluctant to take a path that veered away from a river and found an alternative route that would keep us closer to the river, again go me! All in all it was great weekend, a great group of people, lots of hearty food and so many belly laughs shared. Following the safety presentations I now have a Christmas wish list that includes an emergency shelter (just in case).

In conclusion, I would recommend the weekend to anyone, I feel more confident in planning routes, albeit I still stick to well trodden paths but my time will come where I venture a little out of my comfort zone.



So many thanks to Geordie, Graeme and Dave for sharing your knowledge and hosting a fab weekend. I loved learning with our student group Claire, Sarah, Elena, Tracy, Tony and Ashwin. So grateful to WBMC for running the course and helping novice walkers like myself progress.



BMC Midlands area AGM @ WBMC November indoor meet a report by John Edwards

A healthy turnout of BMC members from other Clubs and around 17 WBMC members, plus 4 for whom it was their first visit to a WBMC event, gathered in The Red Lion Conservatory (right) at 7.30pm to hear Neil Loydon, the Midland Area Secretary, welcome everyone and then proceed at pace through the BMC Area AGM Agenda, aided by Solihull MC's PA which Phil Simister kindly brought along. He introduced the 2 other members of the committee who were able to attend, Ian Wyatt & Saqib Yasin, and ran through how far the BMC had come since its financial crisis a few years ago. The Committee for 2026 was elected as follows:-



Neil Loydon (Chairman & Members Council Rep 2); Ian Wyatt (Club's Rep); Lauren Bean (Members Council Rep 1); Andy Harper (Access East); Richard Law (Access West); Chris Sweetman (Hill Walking East) Ben Watson (Hill Walking West); Saqib Yasin (Wall Rep) and the **Secretary role remained vacant. Volunteers wanted!!** The committee meets 4 or 5 times a year & it's easy-peasy - I did it for 6 years!

Before the evening's main speaker, Rolfe Oostra took centre stage, Neil handed over to WBMC Chairman Dave Hellyar who said a few words about our Club and then announced the "2025 Chairman's Challenge" prize winner was me! I don't think he was inundated with entries for his challenge *"to create and undertake a two-day walking journey of no less than 20 miles, with one night spent in any selected mode"* but my effort (21.2 miles with 2,350ft ↑↓) from Ilmington in Warwickshire to Mickleton in Gloucestershire and back, visiting the highest point in Warwickshire on the second day, seemed to fit the bill, especially as I dined at the Friday Night 'Pudding Club' on 18th July before bivvying at the top of Meon Hill – an Iron Age Hill Fort close to the site of a grizzly, unsolved, pitchfork murder. The prize? A copy of "Brian Blessed on Everest" and the expectation that I will give a presentation of the walk & route sometime during the 26/27 Indoor Meet programme!! If anyone would like a copy of the details of "Peaks, Puddings, Pitchforks & Plants" so that they can have a go at it (& enjoy 7 different pudding with custard) before then please get in touch via jaejed@hotmail.com.

The Forgotten Himalayas - Rolfe Oostra's Presentation

Those not able to make the joint BMC / WBMC Meeting missed one of the best mountaineering talks many of us had heard for a long time, delivered by a self-styled Aussie 'Dirtbag', Rolfe Oostra who had left the Himalayas just 4 days previously and kindly diverted to West Brom after his sold-out show in London the previous night, interrupting his journey back to his home in the Pyrenees. Rolfe spends 7 – 8 months each year leading clients on "360 Expedition" trips and his talk explained how this came about and shone light on to what a great outfit this mountaineering company is.

He started climbing as a 14 year old in Australia and was clocking up around 1,000 routes a year when, at 18 he went on to the New Zealand Alps. He realised early on, however, that his true passion was for mountains off the beaten track, so he soon went off guiding in Africa & South America for a dozen or so years, rather than the crowded Alps. But to make money he needed to do some mainstream peaks so he got involved with helping folk climb the "7 Summits" and this took over his whole life for 10-15 years. Rolfe said he always used oxygen when guiding 8,000m peaks as the responsibility of making decisions fell to him so he always needed a clear head. I jotted down that he was the 5th person to have guided all the 7 Summits, with multiple completions of most of them:-

Carstensz Pyramid 1 x	Kosciuszko 8 x	Kilimanjaro 62 x	Mt. Elbrus 17 x
Mt. Everest 1 x summit in 4 expeditions *	Aconcagua 22 x	Vinson Massif 10 x Antarctica	Denali 1 x (guides need to be local)

(* in 2014 there was an ice wall collapse; in 2015 there was an earthquake & they had to evacuate from Camp 1 @ 6,100 m; in 2016 he got to the summit and in 2019 Rolfe was involved in the highest altitude single-handed rescue to date) For a full list of his ascents and expeditions check out the 360 Expeditions website :-

<https://www.360-expeditions.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Rolfe-updated-CV-APRIL-25.pdf>

But the 7 Summits gradually became ever more expensive for clients. It costs around £200,000 to do them today (£70 – 80,000 alone to attempt Everest!) due to the countries they are in capitalising on them through permits. So they are super elitist now, something brought home to Rolfe on a trip to Antarctica, where clients had paid £60,000 for a 14 day window to attempt Mt. Vinson and they succeeded after just 3 days. There were endless possibilities on how to spend the 11 spare days but none of the clients wanted to use them to go sledging or climb other peaks!!

This poor mentality led Rolfe to rethink *"Why am I doing this? Some of the mountains are very busy, ethics are sometimes questionable and clients often have a single-minded goal rather than enjoying the journey."*

A trip to the Tibetan side of Everest reinforced this when he saw a company training people with little or no experience on how to use ice axes, crampons etc before setting off to climb their particular peak. He thought that seemed



much more fulfilling and reflected on the mountains that had shaped him. A slide showed these to be Mt Cook (3,755m); Mt Tasman (3,498m); Mt Kenya (5,119m); Masherbrum (7,821m); Anchorma (6,427m); Illampu (6,368m); Illimani (6,403m); Alpamayo (5,947m); Huascaran (6,768m); Huandoy (6,395m) & Mus-tagh Ata (7,485m) – none of them mainstream.

So in 2008 he decided to set up “360 Expeditions” together with Marni Southby-Tailyour, to try and get back to a more fulfilling type of lifestyle – training clients properly so that could tackle more remote & challenging, but cheaper, peaks. Back in the Pyrenees he started doing some testing routes and found them more excessive than being on an expedition. He realised that, though fit, he was out-of-shape for real mountaineering through many days just jumaring up

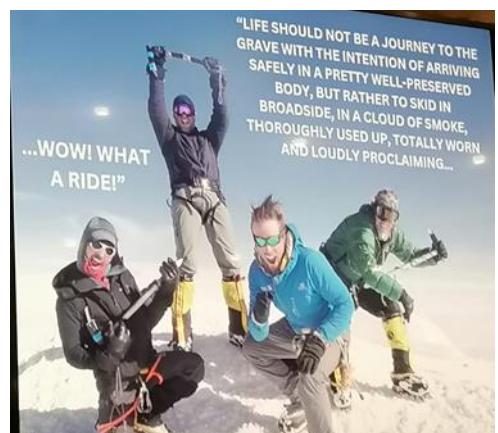
the fixed ropes on big peaks. He and ~18 other guides got together to see if they could “reconnect with the mountains that shaped them” and start taking clients to places that are a step away from the mainstream. He handed over all the 7 Summits work to 2 or 3 other guides and went to Pakistan to (successfully) attempt the Great Trango Tower (6,284m) in Pakistan. They bivvied in snow depressions, hauling & relaying big loads - pure Alpine-style ascents. And they realised they could guide mountains like this so they went higher. They thought of K2 but felt it would be too crowded with ~600 people at base camp so opted for Gasherbrum 2 (8,125m), so remote there would only be around 30 at Base camp. This has an 8-10 day walk-in along the Baltoro glacier, with no tea houses etc, just to get to base camp. Although 75 porters were needed to bring their equipment and supplies to basecamp, this was a completely unsupported expedition higher up, where the team found their own way through a very complex icefall, carried their own supplies & climbing equipment, fixed the ropes themselves and were completely self-sufficient, eventually reaching the summit several weeks later. Another off-grid peak mentioned was in the Amazon, 4,000m high, but as it was expected to take 6 weeks just to get to the base of the mountain it would be a costly one for clients.

They also decided to offer basic level clients the chance to climb in Ladakh, travelling to the north Indian town of Leh, which was a significant hub on the Silk Road, close to lots of accessible 6 & 7,000m peaks. With the mix of cultures & religions there it makes a trip to Ladakh a pretty awesome whole experience – not just ticking a box. The company use horses belonging to exiled Tibetans to help transport their gear and decided to make Kang Yatse 2, at 6,250m one of the most beautiful mountains in the region as one of their chosen expeditions. This is a similar height to Kili but whereas 50-60,000 people climb Kili each year only a few hundred climb Kang Yatse 2. It is also a very accessible mountain which Rolfe and a client in his 60's did for fun in 2 days! His [“Climbing a 6,000-metre mountain in a weekend”](#) blog explains that they climbed from the roadhead (3,700m) to basecamp (5,200m) in a very quick 7 hours, spent a comfortable night there and early the following evening went to the top. Their return time from basecamp to summit & back was just 9 hours! Another peak they selected was Nun Peak (7,135m), similar in height to Baruntse but with far less of an avalanche problem.

In order to prepare for these peaks 360 Expeditions decided to create a preparatory training week to teach vital mountaineering techniques such as abseiling, snow anchors, snow science, crevasse self-rescue, using transceivers, building snow shelters and, of course, self arrest – head first, feet first, on back, front & side – emphasising how to do this instinctively, for “if you don’t get into the correct position within 2 seconds you’ll have picked up too much speed to be able to stop”. Having “put tools in the tool box” for clients, he was determined they would be fully involved in the decision-making process, unlike ‘normal’ expeditions where the sherpas & guides take charge of everything. On the 7 Summit trips he often heard clients say “I couldn’t have done it without you”, which he felt was not always a nice thing to hear. A client proudly saying “I did that myself” seems far nicer to him. He ended by warning about some expeditions organised from Delhi, where both guides & clients seemed to have relatively little mountaineering experience. He encountered one such group last season when, because 3m of snow fell in 24 hours, things snowballed from bad to catastrophic for them as a consequence of them not being prepared. His party tried to help as they realised there was only a small window to get off the mountain but one still died. In all a record number of 150 people were killed because of the conditions.

I think we all came away feeling we had heard a presentation from one of the most genuine of mountaineers, several of us wishing we were starting out again but many years younger! His final slide with its philosophy on life is shown opposite, or you could do as the website says:- “Dream it, Plan it, Live it”!

I have just ordered a copy of his book “**One Way Ticket (Book One): Mis-haps & Mayhem in the World of Adventure**” (~£14.99) as a Christmas present for myself and look forward to reading it over the holidays. Notes made on the night by John Edwards & checked by Rolfe.



Member trips

Snowdon from the Club hut - Pete Poultney



Just below the summit

Looking at the forecast Pete decided to go down hut a day earlier than intended - and what amazing luck, snow up high and sun all the way! Pete has shared these incredible photos of the weekend and told me,

"We met Les and Neil (over from France) on the Thursday at the hut, Gary, Sara n Alfie came later that night. On Friday we all went up Watkin Path but with only three finishing because due to injuries. On the Saturday we decided on Aberglaslyn walk (Clockwise) and were very lucky with weather again, before the rain returned for Sunday to see us off!"



South ridge (descent)



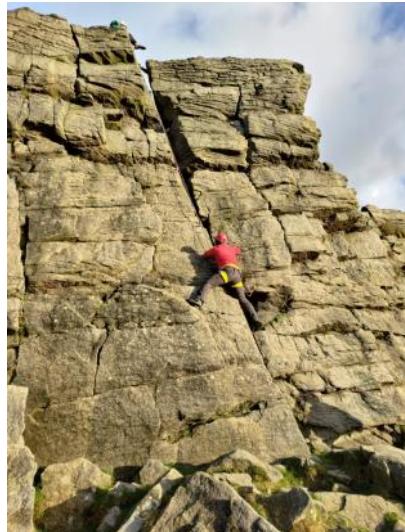
Looking back at Les and Yr Aran



South ridge (descent) in the clag

Club climbing - Sophie Kellaway

Making the most of possibly the last sunny day of the year, a small group of Neil Loydon, Sophie Kellaway, Will Read and Ben Watson skived off the November coach meet to head



up to Windgather rocks in the peak district. Neil was kind enough to do all of the hard work given that the rest of us are trad novices (this was, for me, the first outdoor climbing trip after a 15-year hiatus!). The day started off overcast, but gradually brightened up without warming up happily confirming that this would be the last outdoor climbing day for the non crazy-winter-mixed-climbing folks until next spring!

Three Passes (Well, Almost) and a Sensible Retreat: Our Nepal Trip - Paul Brindley & Dave Nock

Six years ago Dave and I decided we wanted to do Nepal's Three Passes Trek. We'd booked for March 2020... and then Covid killed it. This autumn we finally went, flying to Kathmandu mid-October and then on to Lukla to start walking.

The plan was: follow the Everest Base Camp (EBC) trail first to acclimatise, then leave the busy route and do the quieter, more remote Three Passes circuit anticlockwise. The passes are **Kongma La (5,535m)**, **Cho La (5,420m)** and **Renjo La (5,360m)**. We didn't do all three.



From Lukla the early days were relatively easy: forests, suspension bridges, villages, and then Namche, a proper town with big views. Tengboche was a highlight: the monastery, the prayers, and a huge Himalayan backdrop. The main EBC trail was busy (people, yaks, ponies, cattle, everything), but it's still spectacular.



We acclimatised properly and it paid off: no altitude sickness and no illness. Day 5 was an acclimatisation climb up **Chhukung Ri (5,545m)** - our first Himalayan peak - and then Day 6 we crossed **Kongma La**, the highest pass. It was long and hard, and we were glad of microspikes for the descent and the glacier crossing afterwards.

We went to Everest Base Camp as planned. Dave and our porter MP then went up Kala Patthar for the classic view while I took a very welcome afternoon nap at Gorak Shep.



Then the weather turned. A cyclone system came over the Himalaya and dumped snow across the high ground. Progress slowed and we were often breaking trail. **Cho La** became a much tougher day than expected - near white-out at times, fixed ropes, microspikes, and a lot of plodding. Our porter, in trainers, still got in early and came back up with hot drinks. These guys are something else.



Crossing the **Ngozumpa Glacier** to Gokyo was next. Several groups had tried and turned back, and more snow fell overnight. We went anyway and reached Gokyo late afternoon, exhausted but delighted.

The turning point came there. Our porter developed snow blindness and we had to stop. It was still snowing and the third pass, **Renjo La**, was likely unpassable, with worse conditions forecast and an even more remote exit ahead. We made the sensible call and retreated back to the main trail and out to Lukla.



Because we'd built in spare time, we then enjoyed a "bonus week": sightseeing in Kathmandu, a safari in Chitwan (and some proper rest), and Pokhara, including paragliding.

We self-funded the trip, but we're raising money for **Mary Stevens Hospice**. If you feel able to donate, our JustGiving page is here:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/msh-nepal-trek-1025>

We'll also be doing a slideshow at one of the club's evening meets - photos, route notes, more stories included.



CAPTAIN CAG, THE MAN YOU CAN'T GAG IS BACK IN THE UK !!!

He writes "Hello there all you West Brom MC members. I'm guessing some of you have missed me, and I must say I have missed hearing from you too while I've been "indisposed". It's all been rather 'hush, hush' but I was arrested while visiting Russia because they thought that, just because I lived in a flat in GCHQ, I must have been some sort of spy. So I spent a few years out in the cold in Siberia at Putin's pleasure before I managed to get hold of a copy of Slavomir Rawicz's 1956 book "The Long Walk". If you've not heard of it, it's a must read as it explains how a young Polish cavalry officer made his escape from a prison camp (near to where I was) with 6 companions and their journey across the Gobi desert to Tibet and freedom. So I copied how they made their escape and made it south to a Tibetan monastery where I hid for 3 years before making it back to Blighty. Just in time it seems as some of your letters requesting my help have been building up."



Dear Captain Cag,

I feel worthless & stupid. Is there anything you can say to me to help me maybe get my confidence back?

Tristan Woe,
666 Dark Place,
Bell End
The Black Country

Cag says: Dear Tristan,

So sorry to hear that. Nobody should feel worthless; everyone has something to give the world and should be able to get enjoyment from life. Always remember that even some of the greatest names in history are pretty useless at times. One of the lesser known passages in the Bible tells us that as the Great Flood was receding Noah landed on an island and decided to let most of the animals off the Ark, saying "Go forth and multiply". A year later he returned to the island and found there were dozens of monkeys, around 10 elephants and multitudes of rabbits but still only 2 snakes. So he told the snakes to get a move on and that he'd come back in a years time to see how they were doing. 12 months later when the Ark sailed past he was shocked to see there were still only the 2 original snakes and only then did it dawn on him. "Oh, sorry, excuse me for being so stupid", he muttered as he went off into the wood and chopped down a tree. Pointing this out to the snakes he again told them to "get to it, let's be seeing some little 'uns'". This time when he returned a year later he was pleased to see the place crawling with snakes but Mrs Noah was flabbergasted. "How come they bred so profusely this time?" she asked Noah. "Well", said Noah, "at last I realised that the snakes were Adders, so they could only multiply using a log table!" You see even the guy who saved almost every living thing on earth has felt stupid at times.

Dear Captain Cag,

You keep on making really cheesy jokes that really aren't that Gouda. Please can you desist!

Monterey Jack
Gruyère
Switzerland

Cag says: Dear Jack,

I've just spent a weekend in France at Camembert and just edam it back to UK to try some of my favourite Red Leicester so it's hard cheese & fondue regards I'm afraid. Yours creamily Cag

Dear Captain Cag,

I've heard you are safely back in UK and, as I know you're a 'wiz' at all things to do with the Internet, I wonder if you could explain to me why it not recommended, apparently, to use "Beef Stew" as a password?

Ms Silly Cone
Wyn Dows II Avenue
The Doughnut, Hubble Rd,
Cheltenham GL51 0EX

Cag says: Dear Ms Cone,

How weird, you live quite close to where I once did!! But that's an easy one! Pretty obvious really; it's just not Stroganoff.

Yours Cag

Dear Captain Cag,
I was born a natural blonde and always thought this was a very attractive look, but I've recently become very disenchanted with all these dumb blonde monikers that have become so prevalent, that I trace back to the days of Marilyn Munroe. Can you say something that will lift my spirits?

Sandy Shore,
5 Golden Rings
Fairlight,
Kent

Cag says: Dear Sandy,

I surely can because it's a little known fact that back in the 1930's blondes were always thought to be the bright, quick-witted ones and it was brunettes who were slow & dim. This is clearly shown in a true story from 1931 when an American farmer sent his two daughters off to buy a bull at the local market. The brunette, Gorm, dropped her blonde sister Sandy off at the auction rings and carried on into town to buy some much needed supplies, telling her to send a message when she needed her to come back. Sandy had just \$1000 in cash and finally got the animal she wanted for \$999.

When she went to the Wells Fargo stand to send Gorm a message she was told it would cost a dollar a word. She thought for a moment, then quick as a flash, told the guy to send "Comfortable". "How on earth will your sister know what that means?" the operator asked Sandy. The blonde replied without hesitation, "Well my sister Gorm isn't very bright and struggles with long words, so she'll break it down into syllables and will soon see I'm telling her to COME FOR T'BULL" !!

Now there's a super-smart blonde!

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