

WEST BROMWICH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



**JULY/AUGUST 2026
NEWSLETTER**

KYANGJIN RI
4700 M.

himalaya

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NEWS

Club news:

- To keep prices low for our paid members, non-member coach fees will be increased to £30 from September.
- It’s half-time for the coach meets and we have some stats. The first 6 WBMC coach meets of 2026 have carried 101 different people to the hills with the most frequent travellers and hot contenders for coach queen and king being Claire & Fred Hammonds, who have been on every meet so far. But it’s all still to play for! Robert Allen, Martin Conway, Bill Darling Aaron Foster and Ian Merther are the 5 people who have so far only missed a single meet and there are 12 individuals who have been on 4 coaches. 208 seats have been occupied at an average of approximately 35 per coach.
- The club has had a successful gift-aid claim for the past year - please see p12-13

World news:

- After nearly 30 years as a grisly landmark on the North Side of Everest, the body known as “Green Boots” is the target of a recovery effort by Indian authorities.
- A collaborative effort between the BMC, the Peak District National Park Foundation and Rab has transported 8 tonnes of aggregate by hand to refurbish worn and eroded climbing landings at the ever-popular Stanage.

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: Club President John Edwards on Kyanjin Ri in the Himalayas, with the WBMC flag at a height of 4,773-meter (15,655 ft)!

Have your say/Get involved

Volunteer roles:

- **August evening meet** urgently needs someone to volunteer to lead a walk or it will be cancelled. This is due to take place on the 6th August, can be anywhere within a reasonable distance of West Brom and can be a walk of 3-7 miles finishing at a pub. The rest is up to you! Contact the committee if you want more information or would like to volunteer.

Coach meet destinations:

The committee invite suggestions for new future coach meet destinations. The meet card for 2027 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 would be interested in putting together the newsletter please get in touch.

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...!

REGULAR MEETS AND FUTURE EVENTS

REGULAR MEETS

Coach Meets:

Sunday 12th July - Arans

Sunday 9th August - Cadair Idris/Barmouth

Sunday 13th September - Coniston

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?

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 (£30 from September), 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. This includes if you have said “yes” to Nigel on the previous meet!

Evening outdoor social walks:

Thursday 9th July - Compton, Wolverhampton, Dave Helyar leading

Thursday 6th August - ??**VOLUNTEER NEEDED!!**

Thursday 10th September - Clent Hills, Frank Bruce leading

Committee meetings/social nights at the Red Lion:

Thursday 16th July, 13th August, 17th September

Committee meetings start at 7.30pm Members are invited to listen in as observers - pop along to 190 All Saints Way, B71 1RH. Otherwise come along at ~8.30pm for a drink & a chat (or meal) as you can (almost!) guarantee others will be there, drop a message on WhatsApp to be sure.

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 Poultney 07779 366905 or peterpoultney@hotmail.co.uk.

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 6:00pm Mondays and 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 (Thursdays) 07973 405348/wbmc.dg@outlook.com or Darren Beards (Mondays) 07484 615257.

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

Scrambling/hut weekends:

4th-6th September, Toc H Chapel Stile, Langdale (Lake District)

With a capacity of 20, this is now **fully booked** but operating a reserve list.

Walkers, climbers and scramblers welcome. To join the reserve list please contact Claire on 07761571464, do not pay a deposit.

The cost covers 2 nights accommodation plus 2 cooked breakfasts and an evening meal Saturday night. Can you let Claire know if you are vegetarian please .

Women's weekend:**18th-20th September, Club Hut
(Snowdonia)**

Come and share a social weekend of hiking in the mountains. New and old members welcome. If you haven't been before and want to chat about it message Vanessa on 07709514180.

**European week:****24th-31st July, Dolomites**

Based in Badia, between Corvara and Pedraces, this is a fantastic area for climbing, mountaineering, via ferrata and walking. It is however very popular and books up quickly! As the trip is on a self-arranged basis, anyone thinking of attending, is advised to make their arrangements for travel and accommodation such as Air B&B ASAP. For any advice, contact Tony Emms (07793 008582).

Ice climbing trip:**17th-24th January 2027, Cogne, Italy**

Cogne is a beautiful small alpine town, located in the **Aosta Valley** on the edge of the **Gran Paradiso National Park**, is considered one of Europe's premier ice-climbing destinations. It offers **hundreds of icefalls**, reliable (or as reliable as anything is these days) winter conditions, and easy access to climbs within short approaches from the valley.

This is a multiple club trip as, in previous years, we've had members of Bromsgrove, Worcester, Banbury and The Vagabonds MC's join us. While primarily being an ice climbing trip the area is perfect for skiing, snowshoeing, walking or just sightseeing so it's thoroughly recommended for non-climbers as there is plenty to do. Due to the logistics and cost involved this is very much a self-arranged trip in that it's up to you to decide how you get there, where you stay, etc. Once there we all tend to meet up for drinks, meals, and discuss what we're going to get up to. Most tend to eat out twice and eat in the rest of the time. Usually, the final night is a group meal somewhere. We had 30 one year! WhatsApp is great for this kind of trip. I also recommend an app called 'splitwise' to manage group costs. In recent years, due to uncertain conditions, there has been much discussion about 'staying flexible' for these trips. Not booking flights etc til the last minute, being prepared to change dates and / or venue etc. If you have the flexibility to do this then I recommend it. This trip however will remain on these dates as for myself and most of the other already interested parties we simply don't have the flexibility to keep the dates as a moving target. Work, life etc get in the way. Cogne is also a mecca for cross country skiers and is a popular place for Italians, so we don't want to risk finding poor accommodation choices due to late booking.

How to get there: Cogne is reached by flying into Turin, hiring a car, and driving North on the E612 / E25 to Aosta (toll road), then heading south on the SR47 to Cogne. Most of the journey is motorway then a good but winding road up into the mountains to Cogne. Jet2 run reasonably priced flights from Birmingham to Turin.

Where to stay: Personally, I recommend finding accommodation in Cogne itself rather than Valnontey or Lillaz. Both the outlying villages have little if any nightlife whereas Cogne has multiple bars and restaurants and the best pizza restaurant (Bar Licone) in the area. There are many air B&B options, and popular hotels/guesthouses include: Hotel La Barme (Valnontey), Hotel Bouton d'Or (Cogne), Hotel Bellevue (Cogne), Chateau Royal Residence (Cogne), Les Nigritelles (Lillaz).

Lots of information on the climbing itself in Cogne overleaf!

Specific information about Climbing in Cogne:

****La Barme Hotel, in Valnontey keep a 'climbing book' for people to record their climbs in. this is a very handy tool for gauging what climbs are being done and what the conditions are. You don't necessarily need to go there to read it as the entries are published online at <https://www.iceclimbingcogne.com/> just click on 'ice conditions' and look for the most recent entries. The website also gives pdf maps of all the climbs in the Valnontey and Lillaz valleys as well as an avalanche bulletin.**

Cogne's ice climbing is concentrated mainly in **two major valleys:**

1. Valnontey: This is the *largest* and most famous ice-climbing sector in Cogne. It has long multi-pitch icefalls, steeper lines and more technical routes. Beautiful south-facing approaches but cold, shaded routes.

2. Lillaz & Valeille: Closer to the village of Lillaz and easily accessible. **Lillaz Sector has: Cascata di Lillaz (WI3)** – one of the most famous beginner-friendly multi-pitch routes (often very crowded), short approach (10–20 minutes), good for practice and moderate climbing. **Valeille Sector:** More varied difficulty: WI3 to WI5+.

Ice Climbing Season in Cogne is mid-December → late February (With good conditions often extending into **mid-March** depending on temperatures.). **Why it's reliable:** Cold, high-altitude (≈ 1,500 m) valley, Many shaded north- and east-facing walls. Consistent freeze cycles. **January** is usually the most reliable month.

Experience and equipment: If you are interested in ice climbing it should be noted that experience will be required unless you have arranged to come with someone who is planning to 'show you the ropes', pardon the pun, as we can't guarantee how many people will be going with the experience to keep beginners safe. There are a couple of indoor ice climbing venues in the UK where you can have a go to see if it's for you. Ellis Brigham stores in London and Manchester both have ice walls as does 'The Toolbox' in Glasgow. (The Ice Factor in Kinlochleven is where I started but it's currently closed.) If you wish to access paid instruction in the area you can find links to guides here: <https://www.iceclimbingcogne.com/partners/> Ice climbing often involves multi pitch routes and the descent from many routes involves abseiling back down the route, often as other teams are ascending (or vice versa) so multi-pitch experience is essential. A very good reason to get out and get climbing this summer on club meets. Many routes in the area have bolt and chain belays already in place which makes life easier.

You will also need B3 boots and preferably C3 crampons (C2 will suffice on easier grade water ice but not the harder routes) and a pair of ice climbing tools / axes. Obviously also harness, helmet, belay plate etc. each climbing team will also require quick draws, ice screws, carabiners, slings and the kit and ability to make V-threads (abalokov threads) Oh... and don't forget ropes. 60 metre Twin ropes required on most routes. Many club members have the required gear so it's likely a lot will be available to borrow. There's also the option of hiring kit. I did some research and the two shops in Cogne which appear to hire gear are **Ezio Sport** (no website but phone +39 0165 74204 or e-mail eziosport2002@libero.it) and **Le Paradis des Sport** (+39 0165 74882 and leparadisdesport@mountain-shop.com) NB: make enquiries well in advance as it's unclear 'what kit' they hire out.

Climbing guidebooks: Up until 2019 there was only '*EFFIMERI BARBAGLI - Cascate di ghiaccio in Valle d'Aosta*' - by Matteo Giglio which is now rare as hens' teeth. While comprehensive it is only available in Italian. I recommend *Cogne Selected Ice Climbs* by Oxford Alpine Club (168 pages, English, ISBN 9781913167004) for its detailed maps and photo-topos of iconic areas like Lillaz, Valnontey, and Valeille. **Coverage:** The guide includes 400+ ice climbs ranging from single pitch to massive multi-pitch, covering Valnontey, Valsavarenche, and Rhêmes. ***NB:** There will definitely be a couple of copies of this book in the group so it's simple to sit in a nice bar talking about the next day's objectives and use your phone to photograph the relevant pages rather than spending £30 on the book.

Skiing: There is limited skiing available straight out of Cogne itself and all equipment can be hired there. No driving required at all, but it is very limited. I recommend driving down to Aosta. You can park at the gondola station in the town, hire equipment, purchase passes etc right at the car park then jump on the gondola up to the Pila ski resort (<https://pila.it/en/>) if you want a rest day from climbing this resort is perfect.

If you 'are' interested in joining us having read all that blurb, or just want some more information, my mobile number is 07846 281878, or e-mail grim212830@gmail.com There is a WhatsApp group but it's not a WBMC one due to the mixed nature of the group. I can only add people who are already looking at going on the trip so the multi-club chat doesn't get overwhelmed with WBMC stuff. I hope that makes sense.

COACH MEET**SUNDAY 12th JULY: ARANS/ARAN FAWDDY**

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

07:20 – M54 J2

Drop Off: Llanuwchllyn (880299)

Bwlch Oerddrws Car Park on A470 (803170)

Dinas Mawddwy (Layby) (858147)

Pick Ups: Dinas Mawddwy (Layby) (858147)



Aran Benllyn seen from Aran Fawddwy on a good day

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 OL 23 Snowdonia - Cader Idris area

Suggested Routes:-

From Llanuwchllyn

Route 1) The Arans Traverse North to South (~21 km/13 miles)

A long but great day out on the hills! Head south of town towards and where the road turns sharply NE near the river turn south along a track and after a couple of cattle grids take a bridleway on the right. After a few stiles the bridleway veers right but you should take a grassy path left alongside a wire fence, over Garth-Fawr (875284). The path climbs steeply over grassy moorland up the western slopes of Moel Ddu & Moel Ffenigl, then gets rockier as height is gained, passing Llyn Pen Aran to the summit of Aran Benllyn (867243). This is a fine summit perched on the edge of a cliff where there will hopefully be views of Bala Lake / Llyn Tegid to the N and Aran Fawddwy to the S. Take the path that leads due south to Aran Fawddwy, where a trig point marks the summit (863 224). Continue S before descending SE to a cairn, with a log book to sign ((863213). The path narrows & descends eastwards to the col at Drws Bach before ascending to the flat top of Drysgol (870213). Then descend by good paths SW to Cywarch (853187) & follow lanes some distance to Dinas Mawddwy and the Y Llew Coch – a very Welsh pub.

Route 2) The Arans Traverse North to South + Glasgwm (& maybe Foel Benddin) (24km/15 miles)

As Route 1 but instead of veering eastwards after Aran Fawddwy summit, descend SW for a considerable distance before the steepish ascent of Glasgwm (836194). From here one could retrace one's steps to a path which descends north of the Craig Cywarch cliffs steeply down into Cwm Cywarch where it's road walking down to Dinas Mawddwy. Or you could stay high going south then east round the S end of Craig Cywarch to go over Y Gribin (844176) and then on to Foel Benddin (854166) followed by a steep pathless descent directly to the caravan / camp site just N of the pub in Dinas.

From Bwlch Oerddrws car park

Route 3) Eastern Part of the Mid Wales Mountain Marathon (devised & run by our late Chairman Nev Tandy) (15.5km/9.5 miles)

Head South, climbing steeply to a ridge following a wall to a 659m spot height (795153). From here continue West to a col, then up over the north part of Cribin Fawr to the summit trig on Waun-oer (786148). Retrace your steps to the col you have just come up from and where the wall kinks (793151), leave it and head to Cribin Fawr summit (795153), then go round the top of the cwm to the top of Craig Portas (802141). Turn left at the wall T junction, descending to a narrow col with exposed cliffs to the left and follow the fence line all the way to the summit of Maesglase (817150) and its eastern top at 822151. Continue south on paths through heather moorland with cliffs on your left to the top of Craig Maesglase (827139) and then on round to the east at the side of a forest to drop down to some disused tips (837139). Follow the track north down into the valley and then head NE to the A470 main road (848159) from where a short road walk takes you to the coach at Dinas Mawddwy.

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.

COACH MEET

SUNDAY 9th August: CADAIR IDRIS & BARMOUTH

A slight variation on recent trips to Cadair Idris with something for the climbers, walkers and beach-goers

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

Drop Off: Dinas Mawddwy (856150)
Minffordd (729113)
A470/A493 (714182)
Barmouth (610158)

Pick Ups: Barmouth (610158)
Dolgellau (728180)
Cross Foxes (766166)

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 **OL 23** Snowdonia
(Cader area)
OS 1:50,000 **Landranger 124**
Dolgellau



Suggested Routes:-

From Dinas Mawddwy

Route 1) Climbing on Craig Cywarch (6 miles/10km)

A chance for rock climbers to get an early drop off (& late pick-up) and head for the climbs 5 km north of the village.

Route 2) Nev Tandy's Mid Wales Mountain Marathon – First Section (12 miles/19km)

A great linear walk made possible using the coach. Walk up to Bwlch Siglen (837137), then West & North to Maesglase (top now at 817150). Then turn South West to the narrow ridge of Craig Portas (802141), then North across the flat tops of Cribin Fach & Cribin Fawr (795153). Then SW again to col (790150) and on to Waun-Oer (786148). Then drop down NW to Cross Foxes to await coach at hotel or, if you're feeling fit, use the minor road to get yourself to the Dolgellau pick up (728180).

From Minffordd

Route 3) Cader Idris via Cwm Cau (8.5 miles/14 km)

The 'Classic route' starts beyond the gateposts by heading up steeply through woodland before emerging and curving left to Lyn Cau. Just before the lake (721124) take the left fork up a stony track to the rim of the Cwm. Turn West to reach the summit of Craig Cwm Amarch (711121) before curving North with one sizeable descent before rising to the summit – Pen Y Gadair (711130) with its shelter. Leave 'Idris's Chair' by heading E across the range to reach Mynydd Moel & Gau Graig to join the path going NW to Dolgellau at 754151 – a more 'interesting' route than the 'Pony Path' according to Mel.

Route 4) Cader & the ridge West (11.5 miles/19 km)

If you want to finish by the seaside check with Nigel first! If OK for pick-up follow Route 3 to Pen Y Gadair summit (711130) but then head West along Nev's Mid Wales Mtn Marathon – Final Section i.e. the grassy ridge over Tyrrau Mawr (677136), Craig Y Llyn (660115) & Braich ddu (645121) before dropping down to Blue Lake (621121), & Friog (618127) using rights of way before a final 2km of road to Fairbourne parking (611136).

Route 5) Cader from the East (9 miles/15 km)

Start at lay-by on A487 (753135) and head for white post (755151) before turning West to climb onto Gau Graig (744141) the easternmost peak on the Cader plateau with great views. Then SW & W to Mynydd Moel (728137) and on to Pen Y Gadair (711130). Descend to Dolgellau (728180) via Pony Path or the badly eroded Fox's Path.

From Fairbourne

Route 6) Coastal walking on the Mawddach Estuary (distance up to you)

Take the edge of estuary path to Morfa Mawddach station and cross the 150 yr old bridge to Barmouth which should now have re-opened. Or carry on 'The Mawddach Trail' to Mawddach Crescent & Arthog, perhaps visiting the waterfalls before returning via paths or main road. Great for bird watching!

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.

COACH MEET**SUNDAY 13th SEPTEMBER: CONISTON**

A regular in the WBMC coach meet calendar, why not take the opportunity this year to try something new?

Depart: 07:00 – West Brom., Edward St Car Park (B70 8NN)
07:20 – Penkridge (ST19 5AP)

Drop Off: Torver (284 942)
Coniston (303 975)

Pick Ups: Coniston (303 975)

Required Maps: OS 1:25,000 **OL 6** The English Lakes - South Western area
OS 1:50,000 **96** Barrow-in-Furness & South Lakeland



Halifax LL505 crash site, Swirl How

Suggested Routes:-

Route 1) Dow Crag & Old Man (19km/12miles)

Leave the coach and head N to Old Quarries (278960) & onto the Old Walna Scar Road (274965). Head on up the cove to Goats Water - you could go up the RHS of the tarn to Goats Hause (265983) but a more spectacular route is to take the path on the LHS & head up to the mountain rescue post and the foot of Easy Gully. The East face of Dow Crag is very spectacular and not for walkers except for this steep but relatively easy breach, which heads diagonally upwards to exit just south of the summit of Dow Crag (262978). Then go N, then E, to Goats Hause & uphill in a SE direction to the summit of Coniston Old Man (272978). From the summit head E then NE (273977) & descend to Lows Water (275981), pass through old mine workings & cross path junction (284981) to Miners Bridge (293980). Keep on RHS of beck through the farm past the Sun Inn & into Coniston. If you wish to bypass Easy Gully or "bag" more tops, continue along Walna Scar Road, cross stream (271964) to path junction on RHS (258964). Follow path over Brown Pike (260966) Buck Pike (262972) to Dow Crag summit.

Route 2) Old Man, Swirl How & Weatherlam (14km/ 9 miles)

From Coniston follow the paths to the Miners Bridge (294980), and continue past Crowberry Haws to Low Water (275982). A steep path now leads to the summit of The Old Man of Coniston (272978). From the summit head N along the ridge to Swirl How (273005). Descend steeply to the East down the rocky Prison Band & continue on up to Wetherlam (288011). Descend the grassy ridge to Furness Fells (292000) & continue on vague paths to Hole Rake (293991). From here good paths lead down to Coppermines Valley & Coniston.

Route 3) Old Man & Swirl How (11km/7 miles)

Proceed as for **route 2** along the main Coniston ridge to Swirl How (273005) then descend steeply to the East down the rocky Prison Band to Swirl Hause (278008). From here take a more direct route South past Levers Water (282994) and along the Coppermines Valley back to Coniston..

Route 4) Relatively low level to Tarn Hows (10km/6 miles)

Head along roads to Shepard's Bridge (304976) and then hit the Cumbria Way to Tarn Hows. Then to the A593 at Oxen Fell High Cross (328017) and return to Coniston by paths that run to the right of the road.

Route 5) Wetherlam (14km/ 9 miles)

Head NW to Miners Bridge (295981) and then take the path through the disused quarries that lead to Hole Rake (293991) and then reverse route 1 to the summit of Wetherlam (288011). Leave the summit along the NE ridge and descend until you hit the path in Greenburn (295023) which heads off E, then S To Tiberthwaite (306010) from where minor roads lead to the A593 and a footpath running parallel to this takes you back to Coniston.

Alternatives and extras:-

- **Point of interest:** From Swirl How head West and North towards Great Carrs to see the remaining wreckage and memorial for the Halifax bomber which crashed in poor weather in 22nd October 1944.
- **Peak bagging:** For the Wainwright baggers, head West and North to collect Great Carrs, then South-West to Grey Friar - easily done as an out-and-back.
- **Climbing:** The east face of Dow Crag boasts a huge number of trad routes of all difficulties as well as a handful of grade 3 scrambles. Check out https://www.ukclimbing.com/logbook/crags/dow_crag_cumbria-355/ for route guides.

Fares: Members £25, Non members £30, 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.****

COMMITTEE MATTERS

President: John Edwards	07837 198355 jaejed@hotmail.com
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April Committee Minutes

Attendance: David Helyar, John Edwards, Sarah Wheatcroft, Wendy Morris, Neil Loydon, Nigel Tarr, Darren Beards. Apologies: Darren Groutage, Tony Emms, Claire Hammonds, Fred Hammonds, Will Read, Luke Austin, Jan Cox, Sophie Kellaway.

Acceptance of March Minutes proposed by Darren Beards and accepted by Neil Loydon as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising: deposit account, David has spoken to Claire following the AGM and it will henceforth be officially called the reserve fund, the other account is the current account.

A straw poll by the Vice Chair of the Committee Members and Members present at the March Committee meeting, showed clear support for the proposal that we return to the long running practice of Non Members being charged more for joining the coach, than Members. In the discussion it was clear that there was unanimous agreement that whilst we all of the Committee wish coach attendances to go from strength to strength, everyone sees that sustaining and growing the membership of the club, is the overriding priority. It was acknowledged that in addition to altering coach fees, all Members, including the Committee have a role to play in further promoting the benefits of: 1. Membership to Non Members (in addition to BMC Membership, full access to the rich community and activity program of the club) 2. Additional coach attendance to Members On potentially altering coach fees, several ideas were discussed: A. All non-members pay more in the form of a FLAT fee - Risk it may put off potential members, which is obviously undesirable B. Non-members pay more after a number of attendances (~3 maybe ?) in the form of a FLAT fee - Felt was more in line with encouraging potential members along, and supporting encouraging their joining the club, but how much would a flat fee have to be, to really encourage membership, C. Non-members pay more after a number of attendances (~3 maybe ?) in the form of a RISING fee - Felt would create an increasing incentive to join, but probably too complicated to implement, D. Prior members attending pay more in the form of a FLAT fee - Felt avoids the risk of putting off potential members, whilst encouraging existing members to remain members due to the need to move onto other business and as attendance at the meeting was only just quorate, the Treasurer was missing, the Vice was missing (who currently manages the Website), etc, the continuation of the discussion was deferred until the next meeting.

Officer reports

Coach Secretary: Keswick Coach meet 12th April, We lost £50 on Sunday, £30 of which was fuel, there were a couple of no shows, cancelled last month. There were 38 attendees on the coach. It came to light after the meet that there were a couple of people who wanted to get off at Threlkeld and complained that they weren't allowed to do so as the coach driver can only make two stops. In actual fact, the coach did make the stop at Threlkeld but only Andy Brown disembarked at that point. Next trip is Ogwen, 19 signed up so far including 2 new members.

Membership secretary: Membership numbers currently stand at 216, an increase of 5 since AGM with 4 brand new members and one former member renewing 19 Life members including 176 Ordinary members Four brand new members since the AGM Svitlana Stuart, Emily Goupillon, Maskeen Ali, Jack Robinson and one renewal from former member: William Bolton. All new members, new enquiries, and new coach bookings referred to me are invited to Monday Redpoint: whether novices, in need of refresher or experienced climbers Basic demographic analysis: Median age of membership is 60 Quite a cluster of members aged between 55 and 71 inclusive, making up 51% of the membership, this cluster means the median is unlikely to change much anytime soon. If ten 18-21 year-olds joined tomorrow, the median would only drop to 58 under 40s make up 18% 80s and over make up 15%. Membership: 32% Female, 68% Male 68 F, 147 M.

April minutes ctd.

Future events: Sarah is leading the evening walk at Enville on Thursday 7th May, meeting at the Cat Inn carpark to leave at 6.30pm. Neil– June, Sedgley, David – July, Wolverhampton canal and railway. August – tbc, Frank – September Clent Hills.

AOB: New member Jack had booked the YHA directly for an upcoming scrambling event not realising that it was not going ahead due to lack of interest. The event was still being advertised on our website, and we have subsequently reimbursed Jack via the Coach fee. We need to take stock and learn from this; communication is key with organised events and needs to be clearly updated on our website and social media platforms. BMC- Meet in Worcester 7th May, coincides with the first outdoor meet of the season. Couple of webinars running safeguarding courses, Will & Sarah have signed up. Ken has provided the committee with a development pathway for members which provides structured learning and mentoring, this has been deferred for further discussion for the next meeting to include an Indoor meet to be set up to educate on winter gear.

May Committee Minutes

Attendance: David Helyar, Darren Groutage, Jan Cox, Fred Hammonds, Claire Hammonds, Darren Beards, Will Read, Luke Austin, Neil Loydon, Sarah Wheatcroft. Apologies: Wendy Morris, Sophie Kellaway, John Edwards, Nigel Tarr, Tony Emms

Minutes of April meeting proposed by Darren Beards, accepted by Will Read as a complete and accurate record.

Matters arising: Account name shall be referred to going forward as the strategic reserve fund, in place of the reserve fund.

Treasurers report: Current account balance stands at £22,433. Coach fees have been paid to include a £30 fuel supplement, introduced in April. Loss of £270 against 39 people attending. To cover the cost we need have 49 on coach, 47 would mean that we would break even. Strategic reserve fund stands at £21,888, received interest of £317 in April. Chapel stile Scrambling weekend - 19 out of 20 places filled. Gift aid is being prepared with the help of John, there are a number of people signed up for gift aid that we don't have forms for. Gift aid amounts to just under £400 per annum currently.

Hut Secretary report: Hut sheet 2, 06/03/26-12/04 26 donations £624 71 nights, Electric £74.45. Hut sheet 3 12/04/26 -23/04/26 £463 in donations, 62 nights, 27 people, Electric £132. We have had trespassers at the back of the hut, they set a fire, took the small table round the back and chair. Faeces on floor, tent pegs, chip papers left behind. Fred has spoken to some of the locals, and they witnessed a car parked at the hut, a man, 2 women and a dog. Dan Shepherd (Plas Gwynant) will keep an eye out. If we get a chain saw licence to enable us to cut our own wood the cost would be £300-£500, we use 4-5 cubic meters per year. (£110 per meter). Fred is going to ask one of our members who has a licence already if he can cut some wood up for us for now. Hut will be closed on 8/9th June for the pat testing, the Electrician was ill for the May dates booked and unable to attend.

Membership Secretary: 2 new enquiries, great feedback from a new member who attended the coach on Sunday. Darren is trying to sort out the contacts on whatsapp and contacting old members.

Coach: In order for us to help and support Nigel, it is necessary to think about sharing responsibility for each coach meet going forward. There has never been a need to advertise the position in the past and no one has ever expressed an interest in taking over the running of the coach should Nigel feel that he is unable to continue with it.

Points to consider

We do not have a dedicated coach mobile number, can we book solely through the website / whatsapp.

The responsibilities of the Coach Secretary cover quite a lot of areas, collecting payment, advising driver on routes, drop offs, making sure that the people are on board. Contacting Mountain rescue etc.

We need an online booking system as currently we are dependent on Nigel's book for some of the future attendees.

It has to be someone who gets on at the first pick up in West Bromwich

Coach routes need to be shared by the Coach secretary to the newsletter/ website.

Sarah Wheatcroft has volunteered to help out with the Langdale coach in June should Nigel feel that he is unable to be there and has advised that she will call him to offer her support. Nigel would need to run through his routine with her prior to the coach so that she is aware of drop off /pick up points and contact numbers etc. The offer to do this was initially passed over and conversation continued as to 'who' was willing to volunteer to look after the coach in Nigels absence - this was not resolved until Sarah asked why her offer had been ignored and was supported by two other committee members that also questioned why her offer had been overlooked.

Coach fee for non-members: There has been some discussion around increasing the coach fee for non-members with some committee members wanting the fee to stay as it is, however, to encourage people to become new members it makes sense to keep a lower cost as an incentive to join. The number of non-members attending the coach is relatively small, Vote in favour -In effect from September non-member charges will increase to £30.

Tourist tax: An email confirmation has been received to advise that our hut would come under the criteria for visitor taxation. There is only one area of Wales that have confirmed that they are implementing the tax at the moment (Cardiff) so there is no further discussion needed unless Gwynedd decide to go ahead.

Future events: Jan needs a deposit for the Christmas meal, £450 which Claire will organise. Chapel stile looks set to be a success with a good mix of long term and newer members. 10 people booked for the scrambling weekend at our hut 4/5 June. Outdoor evening meet- Sedgley Beacon Thursday 11th June.

Newsletter: Sophie might need to step away from doing the newsletter due to personal circumstances.

BMC: Ian Wyatt has an open forum that he's chairing. Neil will forward the link if anyone wants to watch him.

AOB: August evening meet - No one has come forward to volunteer a walk as yet.

WBMC GIFT AID CLAIM FOR 2025

Thanks to Claire Hammonds who collected as many Gift Aid forms as possible from members in the early part of the year, and John Edwards who compiled the numbers of coach meets attended by folk in order to work out the Coach King/s & Queen/s last year, it was possible for them to complete the Gift Aid Return to the HMRC online at the beginning of June. HMRC were amazingly efficient and the Club received a 4-figure sum into it's accounts from them within a week!

The purpose of this short article is twofold. First to thank those members who gave donations during 2025 and, second, to explain a little about why most members who have to fill in tax returns should put a tick in the box that says they gave gift-aidable donations in the previous 12 months and maybe give a rough estimate as to what the Club put them down as donating. Of course if they know they have given to other charities during 2025, they should put down the total of all their donations together. And if they no longer have to fill in an annual tax return it obviously does not apply to them.

WBMC is very grateful indeed to the 10 Life & Veteran members who still paid membership fees during 2025, even though they were not obliged to under our rules, or otherwise made donations during that year. However, these alone would not have enabled the Club to claim the full amount of the Hut Donations for that year under the Gift Aid on Small Donations Scheme (GASDS). They were supplemented, as in the last several years, by what could be classed as donations collected as part of the coach fees. In 2025 the coaches cost the Club £875 or £900 per meet, depending on the venue. With a 48 seater coach, this means that the cost of a seat would work out at an average of around £18.50 and as we charged £25.00 per seat, an average of £6.50 could be classed as a donation on top of what was required for the Club to break even. So Mr or Ms X who had signed a gift aid form and attended, say 6 coaches, would be put down as having given gift-aidable donations of £39 (6x£6.50).

When these were added to the 10 aforementioned, it meant the "main claim from gift aid signatories" consisted of donations from 71 named individuals ranging from £6.50 to £200 per person and totalled £2396.96. This enabled the full amount of the Hut Donations for 2025 to be entered anonymously for Gift Aid under GASDS.

We think members should be able to work out approximately how much was entered against their name, thus saving the hassle of having to contact everybody individually, but if they really want to know they can always ask or email.

Finally, a plea for those existing & new members who attend coach meets and do pay tax but have not yet completed a Gift Aid form if could you please complete the form on the next page and send it to clairehammonds@btinternet.com Because of increased coach costs, the likely amount claimable per coach seat in 2026 is likely to be quite a bit less than in 2025 so unless more coach users complete a form for us, our Gift Aid claim and GADS on hut donations will be significantly less next year.

Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) Gift Aid Declaration – multiple donation

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to:

Name of CASC _____

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

My Details

Title _____ First name or initial(s) _____

Surname _____

Full Home address _____

Postcode _____ Date _____

Please notify the CASC if you:

- want to cancel this declaration
- change your name or home address
- no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Member trips

El Presidente John Edwards: Himalaya trips 20 years apart

Part 1: Knowing I was heading off to Kathmandu in a few days time, on 28th March I had a quick look through my photos from Sept 2006 when I visited Tibet to climb Lakhpa Ri and get above 7,000m with Adventure Peaks and I came across this shot of our leader, Ben Bradford on his first lead with Adventure Peaks (left) chatting to a guy from another group (right) who popped into our tent at the foot of the North Col the night before we set off to make our summit attempt. He was from a Jagged Globe team a day behind us – one that never got to even try for the summit because of a really heavy prolonged snowfall that started as we were descending – and I was startled as I thought it looked a bit like Rolfe Oostra, who gave us such a great talk at The Red Lion last November at the joint BMC/WBMC indoor meet. So I emailed the photo to him at 360-expeditions.com saying "It couldn't be you.....could it?!" While sitting waiting for my flight to Delhi at Bham airport I picked up his reply:-



"Dear John,

Ha! A blast from the past! That is indeed me... albeit a lot fresher! I was leading a team of 6 for Jagged Globe at that time.... Time sure flies! I guess our paths must have crossed here, small world.

Thank you for the memories! Best regards, Rolfe"

While on the subject of Rolfe – who incidentally holds the record for the most ascents of Kilimanjaro by a foreign guide and

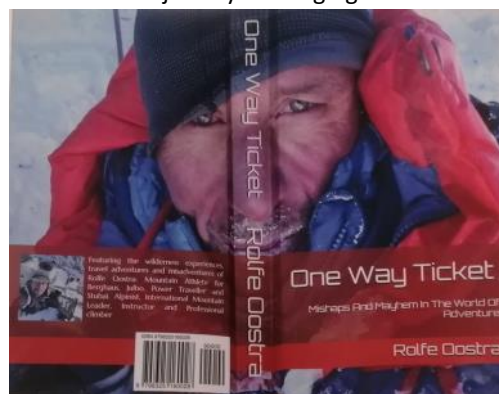
also for the world's highest single-handed rescue to date – I must give a plug for his book "**One Way Ticket: Mishaps & Mayhem in the World of Adventure (Book 1)**" I've now reached number 36 (of 52 short chapters) and it is **a great, if often horrifying, read** as each chapter usually contains a fatality or near-miss!

For example Chapter 1: Alpine Apprentice - 2 mates bum-sliding down a mountain died when this triggered an avalanche; Ch 2: Alpine Junkie – a new friend falls to his death soloing Mt Cook; Ch 3: Wazza – Rolfe climbs Mt Cook with him after they accidentally meet while stealing food from a NZ Alpine Club Hut. Sadly Wazza ends up dying in a helicopter crash in the Canadian Rockies; Ch 6: Congo – After buying a canoe in Zaire to paddle down the Congo river, he ends up hitch-hiking a lift in a truck but as this passes another on a deep-potholed road, several natives, who've also hitched lifts, end up being crushed to death between the two vehicles; Ch 20: Swept Away – Rolfe is saved from a reed bed in the Amazon by Eduardo after his canoe accidentally drifted awayetc etc. You can see why the book has it's title!!

The editor sub-titled it (Book 1) because "I'm superstitious and told Rolfe that he has to live long enough to write a book two, three or even four." And as Rolfe says on page 188 "A professional mountaineer is exposed to a lot more danger than a domestic climber who lives for the thrill of bagging a few sport routes on the weekend. The mountain, cold or extreme altitude, combined travelling through impoverished, politically-unstable countries, with limited health care facilities, over miserable roads & on badly-maintained aircraft that, almost daily, threatened my survival."

I really recommend you get yourself a copy!! Published in June 2024, you can pick up a new paperback copy from Amazon for £14.99 (& 2nd hand ones for less).

Part 2: Having done Corsica's GR20 with KE Adventure ("Grade 10: Tough") back in 2019 it seemed natural to make KE my 1st choice for my return to the Himalayas, probably for the final time, 20 years after my first visit. Back in 2006 much of the trip involved travelling across Tibet in a Toyota Landcruiser and I didn't get to see much of Nepal apart from Kathmandu. This time I fancied seeing the scenery, teahouses and culture of Nepal and KE's "Gosainkund & Langtang Trek" seemed to fit the bill – minimal driving and 12 days trekking with the option of climbing a peak almost 5,000m high near the end if you were up for it. It was graded "7: Challenging" but it was something I felt my ageing body could cope with so I booked. However, the more I looked at the daily schedule of distance, ascent & descent, the closer & closer it seemed to resemble the GR20 – only at a higher altitude!! At 12 days with 85.2 miles & 30,741 ft ascent (compared to the GR20's 124.8 miles & 42,109 ft ascent in 13 days) I began to wonder if I had bitten off more than I could chew. So I trained as hard as I could on the UK hills and hoped for the best.



As it turned out my Air India flight to Dehli which was originally due to leave BHX, (I detest flying from Heathrow with a vengeance!) at 20:30 on 28th March finally ended up being cancelled at 00:40 on the 29th, so I went home thinking my Nepal trek was a write-off. However, thanks to a flight the next day & a £212 private-hire, 6 hour 4-wheel Jeep ride from Kathmandu, I ended up meeting the 7 others at the village of Kutumsang (right) having missed the first 2 days of the trek. Very disappointing as the trek up the Sheopari Ridge & the ridge-top trail through Helambu province was supposed to have great views. But not devastating as those 2 days are extremely tough and the weather was misty so there were no views of distant snow-capped peaks.



Luckily the weather brightened for my first day walking, which again had almost 4,000ft of ascent, before the first 'easy' day of 5 miles with only 1,706 ft of uphill. This easy day was included because the next involved much zig-zagging upwards to reach the great viewpoint that is the summit of the Laurebina La pass (left) at 4,610m (15,125ft), before descending to the pilgrimage lakes and gompa at Gosaikund. There was plenty of snow on the north side of the pass and microspikes came in useful.

After a 6,000 ft descent day to a guesthouse that actually had en suite showers & toilets (!) we crossed a suspension bridge and headed up the Langtang valley alongside the thundering river. The number of guest/tea houses was amazing, especially

so as they all have to be supplied by porters or mule trains but food was plentiful and bottles of beer incredibly cheap (~£3.60 for 600ml). This region, Nepal's first Himalayan National Park designated in 1976, was badly affected by an earthquake in 2015 which killed 10,000 Nepalese. This was shortly after Mel & Geraldine Evans had visited and, as a result, WBMC organised a special fundraising night to help the locals. I took details of this to show our Head Guide, Phurba, and he was impressed that we raised £1617 for a sherpa living in Mahankal to distribute around the village, although he did not know the family even though he too came from the Khumbu. Appropriately, on a dismal, rainy afternoon we passed the memorial to the earthquake (r) just outside Langtang and the following day reached the village of Kyanjin Gompa (3,900m) at the end of the valley, surrounded by magnificent peaks.



Day 8 was down as "a day for exploration, with the option to trek to the top of Tsergo Ri for spectacular views" but I was shocked when 6 of the group chose to take it easy and explore the village (mind you they had already done ~7,500 ft more ascent than me!) and I was one of only 2 to opt to try for a peak. It turned out Tsergo Ri was "off" as there had been too much snow for anyone to enjoy success on it this season - and that was even before the dumping we had had the night before - but lots of folk were zig-zagging up the Kyanjin Ri peak behind the Buddha Inn where we were staying. Fon, from Malaysia, & I had our two young Sherpa guides with us as we set off at 8am - a bit of a late start I thought. The route was very steep but we got to a 4,400 m top (left) @ 09:35 from where I could

see a lovely, fairly gentle, snow-covered ridge leading up to the proper summit at 4773m / 15655 ft. I don't think the other 3 were thinking of doing it but I said I fancied it and was prepared to say I'd go it alone at my own risk, but thankfully Umi decided to come along too. I led off, took a back-bearing in case the cloud descended, and by 11:05 we were at the summit, where Umi picked up a phone call from his wife! Coming down was slippier & harder but we were back at the "Inn" at 13:05 - none too soon as it had manked in by 13:25 and visibility was very limited even at 3,900m. It continued to snow for the next 18 hours and I found the dismal afternoon & evening quite boring, so I don't know how the folk who hadn't been out much in the morning felt!



We set off back down the valley the next day in glorious sunshine with over a foot of powder snow underfoot but it was still warm enough to be walking in a Lifa vest. Overall it was a very well-planned trip where we walked most days from 8am until 4pm with stops for optional morning coffee/tea and pre-paid-for lunch. The days were not long distance-wise but were tough with 1,500 – 4,000 ft of hot & sweaty uphill most days. And not uphill like in UK where you swing one foot after the other! No, much of the route was up zig-zagging “Sherpa steps” which for most people meant step up with one foot, bring the other foot up level and pant or take a deep breath before repeating the processover and over and over again. The tea / guest houses were friendly, if primitive compared to UK standards. We had amazingly diverse choices for soup, main meal & breakfasts, plus the opportunity to buy WiFi access most nights for a £2 of so. Two of our Sherpa guides took our orders, delivered these to the kitchen & then acted as waiters bringing us our choices when they were ready. Pemba always led at the front each day, Umi was always somewhere in the middle of the group and chief guide, Phurba, always stayed with whoever was the tail ender. The “taxi” transport to and from Kathmandu was memorably jolting – never will I complain of UK potholes ever again!! The scenery was stunning and wildlife, porters, mule trains amazing.

Looking back I realise I'm dead lucky at my age to still be able to walk well and not get too knackered going uphill. Personally I've never suffered from thin oxygen levels during the daytime unless I've really over-exerted myself. And I'd know I had because I'd start to feel a bit giddy - so it's stop and pant & take deep breaths for a minute or so. The nights are a different kettle of fish, however! As I remembered from 2006, sleeping at altitude is not nice. I'd say the hours of darkness are the worst part of a visit to the Himalayas..... Cold, unheated rooms, the need to get up for a pee (using a pee bottle of course!), get back in the sleeping bag and suddenly you're panting & breathless with the sound & feel of your heart pounding. Thoughts of how many more nights / what tomorrow holds etc all prey on the mind and prevent you getting to sleep. Then you wake up for another pee and you realise you have slept / dozed for a couple of hours – great!! The cycle repeats but this time you only have 2 or 3 hours to go to daybreak and hopefully a gloriously warming shaft of sunlight as it rises above the peaks on the skyline. I don't remember sleeping in a pyramid tent in the Antarctic being as hard. *Below: (l to r) Penguins get everywhere, this one's near Thulo Syabru at 28°15'N! Descending through the rhododendron woods; Two weeks after only one night with a sink & shower; Trying my hand at being a porter (for half a dozen steps).*



Coach trips

THE LONG-BECAME-NORMAL MEET

June's coach to Ambleside and Langdale was originally put on the programme as a Long Meet on a Saturday to give folk an extra 2 – 3 hours on the hills but take up after a week was still in lowish single figures so the committee decided to make in a conventional Sunday meet and, sure enough, bookings started to pick up. In the event the weather was clear and warm and, when the sun came out, a bit too hot. There were even midges on the summits!

The most popular route taken by 10+ was to take the Cumbria Way from the car park at the New Dungeon Ghyll (NDG) and climb up to Pike O' Stickle, returning over the tops of some or all of Harrison Stickle, Pavey Ark, Bright Beck & Easy Gully – an approximately 7 mile circular.

Darren Beards, Mark Sullivan, Aaron Foster, Martin Conway, John Edwards & Chris Gillett, on his first coach meet, decided to do this in reverse so that after they arrived at Stickle Tarn they could scramble up Jack's Rake. Alas this made the return along the 2.5 mile return along the Cumbria Way seem even longer and the pub only became visible at the very last minute.

Dave Hellyar did Rossett Pike and Andy Brown Lingmoor Fell, Blea Tarn & Kettle Fell while Jonathan & Vanessa cycled a route from Ambleside that took in Wilson Knott, Scar House Lane, Chapel Stile & Rydale.

Steve Showell and Ian Merther ticked Pike O'Blisco, Hannes Truter did Wansfell, Phil Williams went for Loughrigg Fell and John Dale, Paul Riggall & Nick Piotrowski walked to the NDG from Ambleside via Elterwater, Skelwith Bridge & the Old Dungeon Ghyll respectively. Tony Emms & Julie Atkinson went to Raven Crag and climbed Middle Fell Buttress.

Back at the coach at the end of the day Darren Beards set up his slack line and while many were rehydrating in the pub, Sarah Wheatcroft and Martin Conway had a try at this tricky sport.



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