



West Bromwich Mountaineering Club

November 2006 Newsletter

Llanberis Coach Meet SUNDAY 12th November 2006

The photo shows LADAS on the Snowdon Railway in 1894, the line officially opened during Easter 1896. Named after Lady Alice Duff Assheton Smith, the wife of the mountain's owner. The first journey was on Easter Monday, so was the last for a while after the train's fatal crash on its inaugural journey. A year later it was carrying 12,000 passengers per year, now it's nearer 100,000



Ladas before the disaster. 1869. Work began on the Snowdon Mountain Railway on 15 December 1880

Depart: West Bromwich Police Station 7.00am M54 – Junction 2 7.20am

Morning Coffee Break: Llangollen

Dropping off at: Capel Curig 721582 Pen Y Pass 647556
Llanberis 583598

Picking up at: Llanberis 583598 Pen Y Gwryd Hotel 660558

Evening Pub Stop: Shifnal – time permitting

Required Map: OS. 1:25 000 Outdoor Leisure Map No.17 SNOWDONIA

SUGGESTED ROUTES:

Route 1 From Capel Curig, head west and follow the ridge to Gallt Yr Ogof (Continue over Y Foel Goch and past Llyn Y Caseg-Fraith After the view that this ridge affords of Tryfan (hopefully!) ascend Glyder Fach followed by Glyder Fawr Descend south to Pen Y Pass followed by a road walk to the Pen Y Gwryd Hotel to await pick up. **Distance 15km – 10miles**

Route 2 The classic 'Snowdon Horseshoe' from Pen Y Pass, returning to Pen y Gwryd via Crib Goch or Y Lliwedd. **Distance 13km – 8miles**

Route 3 From Pen Y Pass, ascend Snowdon via the Pyg track. Leave NW and descend via the 'Snowdon Ranger path' as far as Bwlch Cwm Brwynog A steep grassy climb then leads to Moel Cynghorion Descend to Bwlch Maesgwm then follow the easy path N to Llanberis (note: car park opposite Snowdon Railway station) **Distance 17km – 11miles**

Route 4 From Pen Y Pass, ascend Glyder Fawr and then drop NW to climb Y Garn, before continuing along the grassy plateau to Foel Goch, Mynydd Perfedd, Carnedd y Filiast & Elidir Fawr, before dropping down to Llanberis **Distance 17km – 11miles**

If interested ring MIKE SMITH on 0121 360 0553

Fares:- Members £11, Guests £13, Under 16's and full time students £6

Coach Mobile No 07704208248

Mike Smiths Mob 07793102770

The Ogwen/Aber coach meet was another 'cracker' in terms of weather (ok a trifle windy) and was also the best supported coach meet this year (so far). The meal at Aber Falls was also highly rated, more so than the one in the Lake District. Is there a case for increasing the number of Saturday meets in the year, we currently have 2 such meets??? LET US KNOW !!!

Editorial

Just a few bites to report this month, don't forget any feedback, positive or negative is always welcome.

The committee has taken an 'in principle' decision to give financial support to members who wish to undertake training in mountain skills. (Such as ML or SPA.). Mountain Leadership / Single Pitch Award etc. Whilst the exact details have not been worked out total support would be capped at say £500 pa. It would take the form of a grant towards the cost of the course. Members would have to pay the balance themselves, and of course put the time in. Eligibility is also under consideration, but say one year's continuous membership and a willingness to lead walks etc. might be a prerequisite. (in practice of course the latter would be binding in honour only) Interested ? Why not speak to a committee member so that we can gauge likely take-up.

The committee has also agreed to lend support to a change in the club's finances. Namely the re-establishment of a hut fund. The exact wording of the proposition to be put before the AGM will appear with the calling notice. This decision follows on from John Edwards initiative, first discussed at the 2006 AGM on the establishment of a 'bricks and mortar' fund. It will not involve a change to the rules of the club. We haven't yet decided where the AGM will be held. Disappointing attendance in the last couple of years has led to consideration of holding it in licensed premises, any ideas would be welcome

In order to try and boost recruitment of new members to the club about sixty A4 posters have been distributed to libraries in a 25 mile radius of the West Bromwich area.

Another issue that the committee has looked at which would require a change of rules is the status of the 'prospective member'. Some recent new members have not been over impressed with our current rules and their implementation and it doesn't do anything to make the membership secretary's job easier. One idea is to abolish the class of membership altogether. There was no overall consensus at the last committee meeting and it will be looked at again. Any ideas or suggestion....see any committee member.

Phil Matthews.....Welsh 3000' ers

Decided at 7pm on Friday 23rd June to head up to the hut for an attempt at the 15 3000ers, something I've been meaning to do for awhile. Arriving at the hut alone at around 10.30 it was a quick bite to eat and then off to bed. Up at 3am, I left for Snowdon at 3.20am. I arrived at the summit at 5.20am (from memory). Weather was mostly overcast. It was largely dry underfoot. Coming off Tryfan I meet up with a group from the South East who conveniently were staying at the Midlands Association of MC (or something like that) in the trees at Tal Y Llyn Ogwen (can't find it on multimap! After stopping there for a mug or two of tea we headed onto the Carneddi. The weather was drawing in and the map needing to come out to be sure of navigation. I was my intention to either bivvy on the last summit (or in the emergency shelter is space) or descend back to the road in Ogwen. However the group I was walking with had a minibus booked to take them from the car park at the far end back to their cars at Pen Y Pass. This proved ideal, so after arriving at the final summit at 9.20pm (16 hrs after the start on Snowdon) I continued on to the car park at Aber. A lift was much welcome from Pen Y Pass back to the hut where I duly arrived at 1am. A long day, not helped by the fact that the only food I took with me was a 1kg bag of mixed fruit which I'd quickly tired of!

A FIRST 7,000 METRE SUMMIT by John Edwards

I first saw Lhakpa Ri advertised as “the most climbable 7,000 m peak in the world” on the Jagged Globe Expeditions website back in March 2004 and the more I read about the historic route up the East Rongbuk Glacier pioneered by Mallory, the more convinced I was that this should be the target for my first trip to the Himalayas. I already had the Jagged Globe forms filled in and ready to post when I chanced to look at the Adventure Peaks website and found they did the same trip. Two things persuaded me to switch organisers: one was that Adventure Peaks offered a 3-day extension to climb to the North Col for an extra £500, the other was that they had an itinerary that seemed to be better suited for acclimatisation. Rather than flying directly into Lhasa at 3650m (apparently 84% of people so doing suffer symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness!), the Adventure Peaks’ route was overland with overnight stops at Zhangmu (2300m), Nyalam (3750m) & Tingri (4340m) before driving to Everest North Face Base Camp (5150m) and starting the climb proper. Ultimately success or failure can (& did) depend on such a chance decision, for it will determine the strength of fellow expedition participants and the weather on likely “summit” days.



After struggling to get most of the necessary gear into an expedition sac with a total weight of 20kg and the rest in a floppy day sack that could be squeezed into the airline's 40x30x15 cm hand-luggage box. I was ready for off at midnight on 1st September. 7 of us were supposed to meet up at Heathrow but one of the two Hungarians was ill in hospital so 5 of us ended up in Kathmandu courtesy of Gulf Air. The city is almost as big a culture shock as Africa but it is the bustle, traffic chaos and 'in-your-face' commerce that strikes you rather than the poverty. We hired a guide to show us a huge Hindu temple complex with burning ghats alongside a holy river and then visited a massive 130 ft high Buddhist temple. The next day was taken up with the 125 km drive into China (breaking down twice) and at Nyalam we did our first acclimatisation walk. The object was to try and climb to 4,000m and we ended up having to do this twice, the second time in the dark with head torches as we tried to find one of our team who had got lost on the hill (without a torch or survival gear!) Next day our Landcruisers crossed the Tong La pass (5,200m) from which we saw our first 8,000m giant, Shishmapanga. Two nights at Tingri turned into three as Ron, a 71 year old ex-marathon runner, had problems acclimatizing to the altitude and then followed an amazing 3½ hour cross-country drive across the Tibetan plateau in Toyota Landcruisers which ended at Everest Base Camp. The weather was beautiful and we had some superb views up the Rongbuk Glacier to the huge north face of Everest. After 2 nights at this altitude a Landcruiser was called in for Ron and he was driven back to Kathmandu, where he eventually ended up spending a week in hospital. Two more days and Stefan from Wolverhampton made the same journey as he developed problems with his vision, possibly the first signs of HACE (high altitude cerebral oedema). That left Ben, the 24 year old leader, David from Scotland (54 years old) and myself (59) to try and make the ascent. Our previous high points were 6,400m, 6,100m & 5,895m respectively but Ghombu, one of the Sherpas, had climbed the peak previously and, as Younghusband wrote in his 1920's "The Epic of Mount Everest", *we approximated to a certain type which experience has shown was the best adapted for climbing the mountain. That is they were light and wiry rather than heavy and muscular. And they were intelligent men of a good class so as to stand the stress of high altitude conditions!!*

Some of the acclimatization walks from Base Camp were very rough with lots of possibilities to twist or break ankles but after 5 days there we were ready to set off on the 3-day trek to Advanced Base Camp. 20 Yaks and their handlers arrived to carry the bulk of the gear and, plastered in sun cream, we set off up the rough moraine. That night we camped at 5,800 m and the next day saw us amongst the weird ice seracs of the East Rongbuk Glacier, reaching 6,200m, and on 17th under a scorching sun we reached ABC at 6,350m and camped amid very impressive scenery. Two days of gentle acclimatization followed, walking up towards the foot of the North Col at 6550m and an 'école de glace' trying out our crampons and plastic boots. Wednesday 20th was a day of rest and zzzzzzzz we were to set off on our summit attempt at midnight. Around 2,000 ft of ascent would be nothing a sea level but would we be able to manage it at 21,000 ft? At around 3am we arrived at the tent of a Japanese lady climber, sited 3 km up the glacier at 6450m. Her party were just setting off as we rested before the toughest part of the route – a steep 300m slope which I had to tackle 20 steps at a time, each effort followed by 10-20 gasping breaths. At the top of the slope there was a section of fixed rope to clip onto for protection between some crevasses and as dawn started to break, we got some good views of our surroundings. A gentle but steepening ridge led obviously to the summit of Lhakpa Ri while opposite cloud swirled around the NE ridge of Everest, on which Tasker and Boardman had come to grief. Time just passed so quickly as we plodded upwards in the soft powder snow and eventually we crossed with the Japanese climbers heading down. Not far to go and suddenly at 1115 Nepal time (0630 GMT) we were on top, the ground falling away steeply to our north and south. Our two altimeters and the GPS confirmed we were over the magic



7,000m (23,000 ft) mark at somewhere between 7020 and 7030m. The 7045m east summit could just be made out in the cloud along a narrow powder snow-encrusted ridge to our left, too risky a venture with the unstable snow conditions. After a few summit piccies we carefully started to make our way down. What took 11¼ hours to climb took 4½ hours to descend, searching for our tracks and the marker flags in the deteriorating visibility.

We hoped the weather would improve for our 2 'spare summit days' so we could climb the Raba La pass for a view down into the neighbouring valley but, alas, it snowed gently but persistently for the next 48 hours. The Jagged Globe team were ready to make their summit attempt but never got the chance to

leave their tents. We spent our last night at Advanced Base Camp listening to the avalanches thundering off the invisible North Col 1 – 2 km away. We never did see Everest again. The next day we walked out along the "Magic Highway", so called as it provides a relatively flat, ice-free route which avoids the worst of the seracs on the E. Rongbuk glacier. With legs feeling as though they were 'running on empty' it was a very tough day and the 10 mile route which descended over 3,500 ft took 10 hours to complete. We only just got out in time for that night saw a further heavy snowfall; so heavy that the Tibetan organiser at Base Camp felt that the yaks would be unable to make the journey up to help the 'evacuation' of the 3 groups still at ABC! However, Toyota Landcruisers just about go through to pick us up and we enjoyed an easy end to our trip, relaxing during the 12 hour trip to Lhasa and then enjoying aerial views of Everest and the high Himalaya on our flight back to Kathmandu.

A truly memorable month with so many sights and experiences, topped off by successfully reaching our target. Yet if I'd gone with Jagged Globe

Don't forget

MITCH'S MEET on SUNDAY 7TH JANUARY 2007

Based at the Red Lion Hotel at Llangors.

Great choice of activities:- From Llangors you could take the road west and then the path south to go round western half of Llangors Lake to Llangasty-Tallyllyn church. Then retrace your steps back to the pub or take to the roads round the east side to complete an easy 5 mile circuit.

For those who fancy two big ascents and a bit longer distance there's the two Mynydds. - Mynydd Troed (1997 ft) & Mynydd Llangors (1690 ft). Or you could get off the coach at Bwlch and tackle the Marilyns Tor y Foel (1807 ft) and Allt yr Esgair (1290 ft) or trespass through the woods on Myarth (959 ft)

Then there are activities available from the nearby Multi-Activity Centre at Gilfach Farm, Llangors. There's Indoor Rock Climbing (Experienced climbers with their own gear can pay £2.00 for Life Membership of the Centre plus £5.00 for a day's climbing on their wall which is over 50 ft high, plus indoor bouldering on natural rock and man-made cave surfaces.)

There's also the possibility for Horse Riding (Trekking for the beginner or novice rider costs £13.50 for 1 hour or £21 for 2 hours), Pony Rides (20 minute lead rein ride for £7), Riding & Cantering for the person who has some experience (1 hour £16.50, 2 hours 26.00) or Hacking set at a faster pace for experienced riders only (2 hours for £31.00) See www.activityuk.com for more details.

PLEASE NOTE IF YOU WANT TO CLIMB OR RIDE YOU MUST TELL ME, AS PLACES HAVE TO BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE. All this plus a good choice of meals from £4.95 or traditional Sunday roasts (1 course £6.95, 2 courses £8.95 or 3 courses £10.95.)

Contact John Edwards (0121 744 7340) to reserve your space on the coach asap as last year was oversubscribed.

Are we **overcooking** the extent of the infiltration of the US-style of blame culture in the UK ?? Article from this autumn's SUMMIT magazine.

EVEREST CASE DISMISSED..The case against Jonathon Tinker, Henry Todd and Michael Smith was finally dismissed in Southwark Crown Court this July. The defendants, all involved in the Everest expedition in which Michael Matthews died in 1999 had been accused of manslaughter in a private prosecution. It's assumed that Mr. Mathews fell to his death, though the body has never been recovered. The judge stated that " ***IT IS NOT THE PURPOSE OF THE CRIMINAL LAW TO STIFLE THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE***" The judge also commented that while there was no doubt that the deceased and his family, whilst understandably expecting the expedition to be as well organised and safe as reasonably possible, were fully aware of, and undeterred by, the possible dangers that lay ahead.

Of course this was a criminal case, albeit private, and cannot be compared directly to claims for compensation, where the burden of proof may be less onerous.....but !!!!

[illegible]

On a more trivial note it was interesting to see the forum on uk climbings' website at <http://www.ukclimbing.com> regarding the worst crags to climb in the UK. A contributor writes regarding Woodhouse Scar (wherever that is ?) It would be lovely if located elsewhere but ' I can't switch off from the graffiti, needles, small-mammal-killing children and general ambience of the place. **On the plus side, it does have a multicultural ethos, as you can have your gear stolen by youths of all races'**

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Apologies.....again to those who were misled in the electronic mail out re the date of the skills course down the hut. However there's a wider issue and as some people will know, the mail out was sent due to poor response to the skills weekend, in the end the course was cancelled. The committee is trying to find ways to raise skill levels in the hills, hence the idea of subsidy for certain courses (see editorial) The idea of a hut weekend is to give a basic appreciation of map reading to those who haven't got it. It's nothing to be ashamed of, my skill level is still fairly basic after 10 years with the club, map reading isn't my favourite pastime. However I'm confident if I did get lost I could get myself off the hills. If you're not that confident you should consider doing something about it, either a hut skills course or ask the committee if there's an alternative....geoff hill

Ok...what are you doing this winter. The club is offering the following fayre up to and after the festive season. If you can't find anything here that suits your requirements.....well you may just have to try shopping at grade 5E

NOVEMBER	What's on	Where	Contact
3rd/4th	YHA Weekend	Brecons	Alison 01384254110
9th	Slide Show (Geraldine)	Globe 8.00 pm	Just Turn Up 20.00
12th (Sun)	Coach Meet	Llanberis	Mike 0121 360 0553
17th/18th	Bothy Meet	Lakes (Chapel Stile	Mike Nicholls 01902 751998
24th	Home Dinner	Wolverhampton Novotel (£26.00)	07739694079
DECEMBER	\$ \$	\$	\$
10th (Sun)	Coach	New Radnor (Black Mixen etc)	Mike 0121 360 0553
21st (thurs)	Christmas Social	Globe (to be confirmed)	Just Turn Up
27th. til 3rd Jan	New Year Scotland	Fort William	John Eden 01547 540466
JANUARY			
7th	Mitch's Meet	Llangorse See advert	John Edwards 0121 744 7340
11th	Indoor Meet Slideshow	Globe	turn up 8.00pm
14th (Sun)	Coach	Ogwen	Mike 0121 360 0553
25th	AGM	Venue T.B.C.	
26th/27th	YHA W/E	TBC	John Hipwood
FEBRUARY	\$	\$	\$
1st	Indoor Meet Slides	Globe	Turn Up 8.00pm
4th (Sun)	Coach	Patterdale	Mike 0121 360 0553
10th/17th	Scottish Winter Week	Newtonmore	Nev 01562 885634
March 2nd/3rd	Away Dinner	Grasmere	Sara 01562 66635

Articles welcomed, geoff hill, laurel cottage,holy cross green, clent DY9 0HG,
geoffreybbb@btinternet.com or tele 01562 730944. Last date for December Newsletter is November
 23rd ...normal disclaimers re contents apply.