



Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)

Established 1988

Newsletter #57

May 2014



Published by Cioch Mountaineering Club (Dunfermline)
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Meet Report: Gwern Gof Isaf, Capel Curig, North Wales. 2nd, 3rd and 4th May

Contributions from Hazel Tout and Richard Christie

After the Cioch's first successful foray to Wales in 2013 consensus was that there should be a return visit this year with the only proviso that another bunkhouse should be used. Based on the website the 2013 accommodation should have fitted the bill however the lack of a working wind turbine to power the underfloor heating led to a couple of damp nights – better was hoped for in 2014. Olly and Jim were first away from Dunfermline, leaving on the Friday morning and arriving before 15:00. Hopes about the Gwern Gof Isaf bunkhouse were dampened a bit when, on his arrival, Olly sent out a text suggesting that it could not be compared favourably with the Ritz. However no one was put off and all continued on the long drive southwards.



The journey for Steve, Mags and Richard (getting a lift in the Grey mobile) went very smoothly until the M6 gave way to the M56. Everything then ground to a halt as Englandshire tried to empty itself into North Wales for the bank holiday – or so it seemed. Steve did his best to make progress by sampling various lanes on the motorway but forward speed was still at a snail's pace once they reached the A55 dual carriageway with no sign of it getting any better. Something radical was needed so it was out with the map book and a cross country route was worked out starting with heading off the A55 for Mold. Once a caravan was passed all was very smooth and scenic across to the A5 and up to Betws y Coed with the Campsite housing the bunkhouse reached in a relaxed 50 minutes after leaving the traffic jam. The cross country route was doubly justified when a hot and bothered Brian and Reg

rolled in 15 minutes later. They had left Dunfermline an hour and a half earlier than Steve but Brian had persevered with the A55 which had indeed stayed nose to tail all along the North Wales coastline. Everyone else had ok journeys apart from Dave and Marion. They had no problem getting through Wales – their fun had been at the other end with a one hour hold up on the Edinburgh Bypass.

It had to be agreed that the bunkhouse was not palatial but it was clean and dry with some character being located in a converted barn. Once the owners put the central heating on it was also soon quite toasty – allowing the cooker rings to be turned off from max. Space wise it was ok but would have been a bit of a squeeze had Mags not gone exploring and found out from the owner that the adjacent six bed bunkhouse was available and that the Cioch was welcome to expand into it. The girls all then decamped to create a girl's dorm leaving the boys to their own devices. After the long journey you could have expected everyone to be ready for an early night – this was not quite the case when Brian produced four litres of Chateau Mitchell – one red and one white. Neither demijohn, nor indeed the odd other bottle of wine, survived into Saturday.

With some slight surprise it can be reported all arose with a reasonable degree of sprightliness on Saturday morning with more brightness inside the bunkhouse than the thick layer of cloud, which was hanging just above the surrounding hill tops, allowed outside. The bunkhouse location was ideal with various mountain route options available from the 'doorstep'. The basic choice was either head North or the main road to The Carneddau or South of the road to The Glyders and there was almost a 50:50 split amongst the meet attendees as to who went where.

Olly, Jim, Stuart, Neil, Sharon, Steve, Mags and Richard opted for The Carneddau driving three miles West to park at Pont Pen-y-benglog 'Pay and Display', Richard observed that they were serious about collecting the money when he saw that the P&D machine took credit cards - leaving Brian no excuse. Brian and Reg had also driven to the car park but were targeting the Glyders.



email contributions to newsletter@cioch.co.uk



With Olly and Jim already in a distant lead, Steve led rest on a mild scramble up the shoulder of 3211m high Pen yr Ole Wen – a route he remembered last doing some 20 years earlier when he used to take Naval engineering apprentices to Wales for a week of outdoor activities. Although there was no sun it was quite close and everyone had a sweat on by the time the summit was reached but the hard work of the day was mostly done. They then continued on, and up, to Carnedd Dafydd (3425m) followed by Carnedd Llewelyn (3490m), the highest top of the day. They caught up with Olly and Jim at the summit shelter and stopped for a bite to eat. The party then split up again with Neil, Stuart and Jim deciding to bag two outlying tops: Yr Elen and Foel Grach to the West and North respectively of Carnedd Llewelyn.

Richard, Sharon, Steve, Mags and Olly continued on the natural round towards Penyrhelgi-du (2733m). Olly and Sharon descended via a path from the col before Penyrhelgi-du leaving Richard, Steve and Mags to do the enjoyable scramble up to the summit. From there a pleasant grassy ridge lead the trio south before dropping down to catch up with Olly and Sharron as they walked down the last bit of a private tarmac road to reach the main road just to the East of Gwern Gof Isaf. They were all showered and cleaned up by the time Neil, Stuart and Jim arrived back a couple of hours later. The Showers, which also served the campsite as a whole, adjoined the bunkhouse and were token operated at a cost of 50p for five minutes. Showering time was maximized by arranging for someone to insert the token once you were stripped off and ready

to go. As it turned out five minutes was plenty of time, although the pressure dropped off a bit when all three showers were going together there was enough water and it was certainly hot enough. Cars were retrieved and a shopping trip to Bethesda made to purchase BBQ provisions for the Saturday evening meal.

Hazel takes up the story of the main Glyders party:

Dave, Marion, Hazel and late addition Iain Hay set of to tackle Y Garn (3104m) one of the Western Glyders. "An easy one" says Dave - but Marion and Hazel take his word with a pinch of salt. However once we got started and saw the hill rising in steps towards the top we were more positive, although the return route down a boulder field looked daunting.

With many a stop to admire the view and take pictures we made it to the top, Dave sprinting ahead to get a photo of us heading towards him rather than the back views he had been getting earlier. Iain was heard to remark that it was nice to have company on a walk especially with someone in the group who was slower than him - gave him a confidence boost 😊 (The fact he has a few years on the rest of us does not come into it!).

Coming down the boulder field had its moments especially for those of us who are vertically challenged and some of the steps had us resorting to bum scrambling to get down [it is a known fact that all path builders are tall and long of leg]. We also met an older man who very helpfully "got out of our way" by stopping right in the middle of the exit route from a waterfall crossing.



Also out and about in the Glyders were the aforementioned Brian and Reg who followed the 'miners track' to the col Bwch Tryfan and from there climbed up to the summit of Tryfan and its famous 'Adam and Eve' monoliths - which Brian duly climbed and stepped between. Their day had just begun as they then continued on the bag Glyder Fach, Glyder Fawr and finally Y Garn before finding their separate ways back to the car park.



Unfortunately a cool breeze sprung up just as the BBQs were reaching cooking temperature so although the food got cooked out-doors, it was eaten in-doors. Sharon came to Steve's aid with her magic BBQ fuel gel which certainly got the coals going – Steve's eyebrows will recover in time. Olly

and Jim headed off for the bright lights of Conwy where they found a good live band playing in one of the local hostelrys.

The weather on Sunday morning was brighter with well broken cloud greeting people as they surfaced. Having gone North on Saturday the obvious choice for Steve, Mags, Richard and Jim was to head South on Sunday. A shorter drive this time was made to the base of the North ridge of Tryfan which certainly lives up to the guide book description of being: *“Narrow crested, unremittingly steep, isolated, generously garlanded in heather and bilberries, it is a scrambler’s paradise to its very roots... there is no better scramble than the North ridge...”* [Cicerone Guide, Hillwalking in Wales Vol 2, page 61]. The start of the climb up from the free car park was made on a series of well constructed steps but it was soon time to get the hands out the pockets and start a bit of scrambling. Nothing hard or particularly exposed but enough to make you think which was good. The climb was split into natural sections with short plateaus every so often – one of these allowed a short diversion to climb up on the cannon rock outcrop. Nearing



the top Jim lead the way away from the main ridge and around to a slightly more straight forward line which soon emerged just short of the main top and Adam & Eve. Steve and Jim performed the required stepping between the stones whilst Richard and Mags were happy just to clamber up on to Adam.

By now the cloud had thickened and was encroaching down on to the summits ahead. This led to some discussion of calling it a day when they had descended down to the Bwch Tryfan Col but it did not look like it was going to rain so everyone pressed on up a scree zig zag path which bypassed Bristly Ridge and on to Glyder Fach. The cloud was now well down on the summit preventing any views but there was plenty of interest provided by walking out on the cantilever rock for photos and then a scramble around the citadel of Castell y Gwynt. One thing Welsh hills certainly are not is quiet – particularly on a bank holiday weekend – there were lots of people going about but you could still find some space to yourself. The blanket of cloud continued on the walk over to Glyder Fawr and only gave way



after the initial descent on the other side. Y Garn beckoned beyond Llyn y Cwn tarn after the steep loose descent from Glyder Fawr but the day had been really good and there seemed no point in being greedy so a right turn was made and the steep stone step path down to Llyn Idwal began. There were a few stops on the way down to admire the views and give the feet & knees a bit of a rest. The final part of the walk was to cut across the grass slopes lower down to get back to the car and then the day was rounded off with an ice cream.

After Y Garn on the Saturday an easier walk was the order of the day for some as Hazel describes:

Iain enjoyed our company so much on the Saturday that he decided, along with Stuart, to join us again on the Sunday when we did a forest walk to Swallow Falls. The first challenge on this walk was to get to the car park which was situated $\frac{3}{4}$ mile up a single track road hemmed in by high stone walls. We encountered one female driver, who backed up comments about women drivers, by making Iain reverse a good 50 yards where she only would have had to go back about 10 feet. A further reverse to allow a couple of land Rovers though and we finally made it to the start.

A good deal of groaning was heard from Marion and Hazel until the leg muscles stiffened from Saturday had warmed up and the walk then progressed at a reasonable pace. We headed downhill to the waterfall where we had a good view, at no cost, unlike the people coming down the other river bank from the Swallow Falls Hotel who had to

pay £1.50 for the pleasure. We then headed back uphill to another viewpoint which looked out over the valley in both directions before the final climb back to the car park and lunch.



The waterfall crew then headed into Betws y Coed for a spot of retail therapy and an ice cream before returning to the bunkhouse.

The majority of those on the meet opted to eat out on the Sunday evening with nine heading off to the Swallow Falls Hotel with the car parking fee thankfully being redeemable for those buying food and drink! The food was judged good by all although Richard had to settle for a Rib Eye Steak after Mags and Steve snaffled the last two Sirloins. Back at the bunkhouse the wine rations had been restocked but this time it was Stuart's bottle of Jura which failed to last through to Monday morning.

Monday saw departures home by club members from an early hour. However Stuart and Hazel had elected to stay in the area for the rest of the week and managed to cram visits to the Vintage Vehicle Rally in Llandudno, NTS Bodnant Gardens, RSPB Conway, a road trip followed by a trip on the steam railway from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog on wet Wednesday, RAF Cosford Museum and finally a trip to Chester Zoo before heading home on Friday evening. Unfortunately that part of the week was more eventful than they really wanted with a faulty temperature sensor resulting in a call out to the AA before finally arriving home in the early hours of Saturday.

The consensus on the weekend was that it was good to visit somewhere different and that the bunkhouse had fitted the bill well enough to be considered again for next year – although a president may have been set with the girls looking for their own dorm again. Rumor has it that the girl's dorm was not a snore free zone it was just a more genteel form of snoring.....



2014 Meet Dates

Jan 10 th /11 th	Strathspey Hostel, Newtonmore
Feb 7 th /8 th	Tulloch Station
March 7 th /8 th	Ochils MC hut, Crianlarich
April 4 th /5 th	Ariundle Centre, Strontian
May 2 nd /3 rd /4 th	Gwern Gof Isaf, Capel Curig, N Wales
June 6 th /7 th	Skywalker Bunkhouse, Portnalong
July 11 th /12 th	Ling Hut
July 25 th / 26 th	Lake District
August 8 th /9 th	Sail Mhor, Dundonnell
September 5 th /6 th	Invergarry Lodge
October 3 rd / 4 th	Inver Croft, Achnasheen
November 7 th /8 th	Mill Cottage, Feshiebridge
December TBC	Christmas Meet Inchree