



10 Jan - Annual General Meeting

The majority of the Club congregated at the Dolphin for the AGM. Bruce's Presidential speech reminded everyone of the Club's objectives (as enshrined in the rarely-seen constitution) and went on to review the 2003 club activities – all 25 trips. Ange's Treasurer report and accounts were all approved, and then elections were held for the new committee:

President: Bruce Wilson

Treasurer: Angela McDonnell

Secretary: Alan Tinkler

Committee: Rhoda Bashford (Comms), Andrew Cook (Web Master), Paula Bamber, Gavin Baxter, Bob Hotchkis, Katharine Sinha, Richard Spraggett, Mick Wilding, Dave Wilson

Next up was the awards for achievements (or otherwise...) in 2003:

Best Trip: Martin Butler, for the summer Alps trip and the small novel that resulted.

Altitude Award: Alex and Will for their exploits in the Himalayas: 4080m on New Year's Eve in 2002, and about 3700m on New Year's Day 2003. (There was competition from Bob using maths in the Picos – 10 people, so that's 10x 2598m for Torres de la Perdida...)

Golden Underpants: Paul Williamson, for falling off a route named Simian in Avon Gorge. Actually carried on climbing after ending up upside-down, but wasn't wearing a helmet...

Navigation Award: Bob Hotchkis. On the Picos trip there were two separate parties, one flying in the day after the others. Bob was in the second party, and his routefinding to catch up with the first party (half a day ahead) involved spotting a sign for a funicular train. This saved a few hours of walking!

Most Improved Climber: Dave Wilson

Most Forgetful Climber: Mike Broadfoot for leaving his video camera at the top of a route in Spain and having to go back the next day to retrieve it.

Fisherman's Friend Award: Andrew Cook, for saving the website from a digital death – the most heroic thing anyone's done this year. It was in risk of being switched off, so he wrestled with the service providers and got it moved.

Special mentions also went to:

Caroline Nunn because she wasn't thanked properly when she stood down as Treasurer in 2003 after several years of excellent work. It was also noted that she didn't attend any trips during 2003...
Phil Webb, who hasn't managed to go on a trip for two whole years...

18 Jan - Sunday Walk

Present: Alex (Organiser), Will, Paula, Maggie, Ros (and Simba), Andy, Sarah D.

We all congregated at Alex and Will's remarkably promptly for a Sunday morning. The weather was sunny, crisp and clear, and we had an excellent 15-mile walk which took us across the Parasampia golf course, out to Bagnor Manor and through the Mohican hills to Boxford Common. There was a variety of wildlife on show, including deer, woodpeckers and rabbits... and, to Ros's embarrassment, one confirmed kill when Simba crashed into the undergrowth in pursuit of a hapless pheasant.

We then carried on through open fields and wooded alleyways to Elcot before some welcome liquid refreshments in the Dundass Arms by the canal in Kintbury. The final part of the route was a squelch (there really is no other word for it) back along the canal to Newbury.

30 Jan-1 Feb - Ambleside, Lake District

Present: Dave W (Organiser), Bruce, Kath, Rhoda, Sara S, Tom, Tom's friends x 4, Alan, Paula, Dan, Louise P.

Peaks: Helvelyn

Rain, rain, rain... Who chose this weekend date?

After meeting up in the town in a local hostelry Friday night, we then saw in Saturday morning with a late night sing along with Tom (guitar God). Somehow we managed not to wake the rest of the Ambleside youth hostel with our renditions of Pink Floyd's 'Comfortably Numb' ...

Saturday morning it was, as forecast, raining - forces were split. The more feeble opted for a nearby circuit around Ambleside, stopping only to allow Sara to purchase much needed waterproof trousers. The second group led by Martin B headed for Helvelyn and the icy adventure of striding edge. The third group led by Dave W opted for a circular route nearby.

We all met later on for a meal in the hostel and retired to the local pub by the lake (some of us knew the pub already quite well having spent the afternoon playing scrabble whilst trying to dry out!).

Sunday morning the weather again looked threatening although blue sky did emerge for a few minutes and with it a great view south down lake Windermere. The majority of the group did the circular scenic walk starting from the hostel which was led by Kath, we managed to avoid the rain on this walk until our return to Ambleside, this meant a slightly enforced lunch in the Apple Pie Café and a 'Gear Shop' !!

A fun but very wet weekend was had by all! Please, please will someone book better weather for next year though!

Rhoda Bashford

12-16 Feb - Winter Climbing, Scotland

Present: Dave W (Organiser), Bruce, Kath, Richard, Paula, Dan.

Six members made the long trip up to Crianlarich and they were justly rewarded. The weather meant that little winter climbing was found in Scotland on the planned weekend so the trip was turned into a Munro bagging expedition in the Crianlarich hills. The party successfully scaled 6 Munros including Beinn a Chroin, An Caisteal, Ben More, Stob Binnein, Meall nan Tarmachan and Ben Vorlich. The weather was agreeable for the time of year with only light rain on two days, and the trip ended on the summit of Ben Vorlich with a superb view down the length of Loch Lomond.

Dan said of this trip, "It's the best ever club trip I've ever been on ever!". He could barely stand up whilst saying this, but believe every word!

Dave Wilson

NB: Editor's Note - Dave, you forgot to mention that this was all achieved despite missing your original flight? Yikes!

27-29 Feb - North Wales Hut

Present: Martin B (Organiser), Maggie, Andy Miles, Beckie, Ange, Mick

Brief trip notes are below. The overall impression of the weekend was snow... and lots of it.

Friday - walking up Y Garn, over the Glyders and down Y Gribin Ridge (winter grade II). Neck-deep snow in some places!

Saturday was a short day, which included Andy soloing up Banana Gully (winter grade I) on Y Garn. And on Sunday, the Llanberis film festival was a definite option...

Contributions from Andy Miles and Beckie Hamilton

16 March - Navigation Course Theory Part 1

Present: Mike B & Gavin (Organisers), Rhoda, Mike W, Sarah D, Bruce, Alan, Gaby.

A very useful 2 hours introducing Maps, scales, compasses, bearings etc. The evening included a few tests of our newly acquired knowledge.

Thanks to Mike and Gavin, especially for organising the room at Vodafone HQ.

Rhoda Bashford

19-21 Mar - Exmoor Navigation Weekend

Present: Mick (Organiser) Angela, Sarah D, Rhoda, Maggie, Bruce, Harry, Alan, Mike B, Gaby.

The aim of the weekend was to practise navigating around Exmoor using our newly acquired (for some of us) training.

On Friday night we all met in the local pub, the White Hart, only 100 metres from the Youth hostel at Exford, Somerset. No one had trouble finding that!! Mick's brother-in-law (Exmoor Search and Rescue) had promised some navigational exercises for us to have a go at as part of the weekend. This was postponed to Sunday due to poor weather.

Saturday we set off in the rain and wind to do a low-level river walk starting from Exford, during which we practiced finding and using directional bearings from the map. A great day's walk, despite the rain, included a death-defying trudge up a slurry-covered hill at one point (hey, that wasn't in the course!). We made it back tired and wet but the feeling amongst the newly-trained navigators was that we had achieved much that day. A meal in our favourite new pub rounded off the day but late night card playing and talking went on into the early hours...

On Sunday, news came that Mick's brother-in-law had the Navigational exercises for us but couldn't join us. Mick and Ange gallantly drove to get them, and then we all met up in a car park in the middle of Exmoor for 11am. Having negotiated this first navigational instruction we then split into four groups with four different sets of instructions. Five or six grid references were on the paper given to us and we had to navigate from one to the next. After arriving at the first grid reference point Rhoda, Bruce and Maggie were approached by a running youth who had come from a group of twenty or so walkers across the stream on a bank above the stream. "Do you know where we are?" he asked to our amazement. Was this part of Mick's brother-in-law's navigational exercise we wondered?! "Yes," we replied, "we do and as it happens you've asked just the right people!" (proudly brandishing compasses). It brought home the importance of map reading to us, how could twenty people be so lost in such a dangerous environment? Didn't any of them map read or know how to use a compass? Needless to say, we were able to show the lad exactly where he was. So could Harry (ex-president), but then GPS usage wasn't really playing fair.

The exercises took about two and a half hours, by which time an enormous rain cloud was heading our way. We gladly returned to the shelter of the pub in Exford (yes, the same one) and managed to catch last food orders. The day ended relatively early and we drove home around 3pm. For those that were there the quote of the weekend was ..."My name's Tucker" (see Alan for more details).

Rhoda Bashford

8-12 April - Southern Uplands Easter Trip

Present: Angela (Organiser), Mick, Bruce, Beckie, Alan, Paula.

Peaks: Merrick, Louthier, East Louthier

Long weekend in Scotland, First camping trip of the year!

Thursday night Bruce and Beckie, Angela and Mick arrived at the campsite, which was at Penpant village (midge free) much to the amusement of the owner who was not used to such early campers.

Friday morning saw a circular coastal walk organised by Mick. Two hours, 86 miles and one bike race later the walkers arrived at the coast! Just a little further than expected! Starting at Port Patrick (only 9 miles from the coast of Ireland) the walk took 4 hours.

On Saturday Alan and Paula joined the group. All then took part in a 15-mile walk led by Mick through the Louthier Hills. During lunch it was suggested that Alan should climb 'East Louthier' as he had too much energy built up from his training for the London Marathon; this he did whilst the others ate sandwiches and drank tea! After bagging this he then rejoined the group. Part of the walk that day joined up with the Southern Upland way; only four other people were seen all day. Paula was treated that night to Alan's 'Trail mix special' cooking, and Beckie terrorised the locals in the pub with her red spiky hat! And Bruce's dad made a special trip over from the East coast and cooked for everyone else on an open fire. And what were these sculptures wrapped in foil?

Sunday saw the ascent of the highest mountain in the southern uplands - Merrick - by Mick, Angela and Alan. This was a circular walk of eight and a half miles in total starting from Bruce's stone - where 700 English men were murdered!- and going past three lochs, with a sharp ascent, then views across to Ireland and the Isle of Man (the Lakes could not be seen on that day). Paula, Beckie and Bruce spent the day climbing at Clifton Crag.

Monday Alan and Paula walked to the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall (61ft, the highest in Scotland). Beckie and Bruce ended up in Moffatt, shopping, sweet eating and relaxing. Angela and Mick headed back to Yorkshire and fitted in a 5 mile circular walk at Malham visiting caves and crags before heading home.

Collaboration by Alan Tinkler & Paula Bamber, translated by Rhoda Bashford

15 April - Navigation Course Theory Part 2

Present: Mike B & Gavin B (Organisers), Rhoda, Mike W, Angela, Sarah D, Gaby, Sarah M, Ros, Maggie, Paula.

Round II of the mysterious world of maps and compasses. Again Gavin and Mike kept an enthralled audience entertained with an extremely professional presentation and a series of mind boggling exercises.

We covered Grid to Map bearings and how to measure distance using Naismith's rule. Also how to use the triangle of Error. A night navigation evening is planned to follow shortly.

Rhoda Bashford

22 April - Night Navigation Practical

Venue: Snelsmore Common 7.45 to 9.45 (allegedly...)

Present: Mike B, Gavin, Andy M (organisers), Rhoda, Sarah D, Ros, Simba (club mascot), Mick, Angela, Alan, Paula, Gaby, Beckie, Bruce.

A highly entertaining and essential navigational exercise was organised as part of the navigational theory courses. Groups of two were sent out to retrieve 7 coloured markers at set co-ordinates located with an 'X' on a 1:7500 map. The actual location of the marker, a small sticker, was described as "Stile", "fallen tree", etc. Each group had its own set of markers, and to assist the process, everyone checked the amount of paces they took over 100m before setting off.

We did have to wait till it was dark before we were allowed to go. It should, however, be noted that one pair had difficulty finding their first marker even while it was still (relatively) light...

It was frustrating and difficult to find your way around a dark boggy heathland to say the least but we mostly got the hang of it. Even Simba got the idea and found one of the markers too! Some of the markers were extremely difficult to locate, and we found that it was remarkably easy to get turned around, heading in completely the opposite direction from the one intended. The most fun was had when two groups met each other, torches betrayed their presence and much effort was expended in not giving away nearby locations that might help the other group! The two stiles near each other confused many a group...

The evening was concluded with beer and chocolate eggs. Unfortunately there was no time to get to the Winterbourne Arms as planned, as the exercise took a little longer than anticipated. This really should become an annual event!

Mike summed up the evening as follows:

Thanks to:

- * Gavin and Andy for helping me set up and clean the course.
- * All of you for attending and making it a fun evening.

Apologies:

- * For not getting to the pub!
- * For making the first point on the Blue route incredibly hard. If only you had headed in the opposite direction!
- * For adding mistakes into the co-ordinates in the Blue route.

My Observations:

- * It's good to plan the route first to know where you are going and verify the information you have is correct!
- * Night navigation is very difficult! (I nearly got lost recovering the markers with Gaby and Sarah after walking there in the light!)
- * Finding small objects in the dark is incredibly difficult and if we do the exercise again the targets will be more obvious and not hidden (Andy!)
- * Always know where you are. Bearings and pacing are essential at night as there are not always obvious features to work with. (Hint: the other person you were with could have been your obvious feature.)
- * Maps don't always have all the information you find on the ground and are sometimes wrong!
- * Map keys are very useful on strange maps.
- * Practicing the techniques will help you use them more effectively
- * Daylight knowledge of areas is a large bonus.
- * Work as a team to help others find their way if they get lost. You could have pooled resources and each of you headed to different points in the park and collected all the markers for all the teams, but I think in this case, the exercise was seen as "competitive"

Snelsmore is a reasonably safe environment, so I hope you can see the importance of practising these techniques, before heading out somewhere more risky and open. I am sure you will all have some comments to add, please do. We will then talk over them in the last lesson (from my knowledge) when we discuss route planning, itinerary and escape routes. I think you all got something out of the night, but hope you enjoyed it all the same. Thanks again!

23-25 April - Adhoc Climbing trip to Peak District

Present: Mike B (Organiser), Gaby, Rhoda, Bob, Andy M, Bruce

Friday - Stayed just outside of Sheffield with Mike B's sister Jo.

Saturday - Fantastic weather prompted the group to head straight to Millstone Edge where classic jamming cracks were the order of the day. Bob and Rhoda stayed at London Wall completing 3 routes. Andy and Bruce led some fine routes as did Mike and Gaby. The evening was spent on the town in Sheffield - quite an experience for all of us, including mastering the local tram system.

Sunday - again, there was fantastic weather. Stanage beckoned and we made our way toward Mississippi wall, where we met up with James (Alicante 2003 trip), friend of Mike B. James led an impressive E1 route seconded by Mike B, Bob later led this route and Bruce and Rhoda had a go too (although both lacked the style to complete it gracefully). Gabby, leading for the first time, led 2 routes. Andy made sure that Bruce doubled his leads so far this year, whilst Andy led 2 3*** Severe routes and dragged Bruce up a 2** VS.

I also need to mention that Andy muttered something about peanuts being legumes... but let's not bring that up again, as he is right! He also said how uncomfortable he felt with a friend up his bottom...but that's climbing for you. Thanks to Mike's sister Jo for putting us all up and coming out to meet us on the Sunday.

Andy Miles and Rhoda Bashford

30 Apr- 3 May - South Hams, Devon (May Bank Holiday)

Present: Bruce (Organiser, well actually Pokey did all the hard work) Beckie, Maggie, Will, Alex, Louise, Dan, Sarah M, David, Rhoda, Bob, Beatriz, Erika, Gavin, Ros, Dave W, Gaby, Sarah D.

Friday - Rain, rain, rain, dark, pub, wet tents, rain, mud, alcohol, late night partying...

Saturday - No rain !!

Most of the group did a long distance Coastal walk east toward Salcombe. A smaller group went west toward Hope Cove, spotting 3 seals en route. The day ended with a BBQ in the evening and kite flying with Will and Alex...which took on a more serious meaning as the kite dragged its owners at speed across a sheep turded field toward overhead power lines. So worried were the campsite owners that they raced round in a Land Rover to warn us. The evening drizzle sent us a mile down the flower-covered lanes to the nearest pub which was on the cliff top; here we basked in heat before it was time to roll back to our tents. On the way back Gavin checked our navigational skills in finding the Pole star.

Sunday - Beautiful weather allowed ten of us to go climbing. A lack of planning amongst the climbers resulted in a shortage of leading ropes being available. However this was only a temporary obstacle and a series of efficient 'chain' climbs were established to ensure everyone got a climb. Gaby gets a mention here for scaring herself and all of us watching her on a not so well graded route.

'Difficult'? I'll say! It should have been graded at least as a 'Severe'. Bruce and Gavin came to her rescue (our heroes) and were able to practice rescue techniques in a real situation. After a gear-placing introduction/reminder we sent Beatriz up the same route. As only her second Traditional climbing route (she's only used to bolted Spanish routes), she flew up and placed gear with ease (this girl loves rock!). Later on Beckie and Gavin's First aid skills were needed for a lady who had hit her head on a rock nearby.



The rest of the group walked west along the coastal path via Hope Cove to Burgh Island, an 18-mile route which included a boat trip across the estuary, sunburn, sea mist, a pub, more sea mist, a cream tea and a hill called Sudden Death.

In the evening we all cooked at the campsite and a few beers were sunk. Rumours that a few people stayed up late,

drank most of the remaining alcohol and played frisbee in the sea mist at 1am are surely exaggerated...

Monday - Sunshine still prevailed but some of the club diverted to see the Eden Project.

Rhoda Bashford and Sarah Davies

16 May - Wye Valley Sunday Walk

Present: Bruce (Organiser), Rhoda, Mike B, Gaby, Paula, Sarah D, Odette, Chris, Lou, Alan.

We met up in Symonds Yat on Sunday morning - some had camped there the night before, and some had got up nicely early to drive down the M4. The weather was glorious, and Bruce and Rhoda led a 12-mile circular route which took in the River Wye (odd, that), stunning Welsh scenery, nettles, thistles, inquisitive cows, a small detour through somebody's back garden (!) and a falling-off-a-log competition. Towards the end of the walk, we followed tradition and stopped off for a refreshing drink and an ice cream in a usefully-located pub.

Sarah Davies

28-31 May - Pandy, Wales

Present: Paula (Organiser), Alan, Pokey, Annie, Bruce, Sarah D, Maggie, Mike B, Gaby, Julie & family, Rhoda

The second Bank Holiday trip of the month was originally going to be to Hay-on-Wye, but this was scuppered by some highly inconvenient International Book Festival or other... Instead we congregated at in Pandy on Friday night and headed almost immediately for The Skirrid Inn, one of Wales's oldest pubs... for historical reasons. Naturally.

Saturday was organised by Alan, with near-military precision - once all cars were where they were supposed to be, we set off along the Offa's Dyke path, taking in Hay Bluff and Lord Hereford's Knob (no vulgarity from us, no, not at all) en route to Hay-on-Wye. There was some... fluidity... to the actual length of the walk: estimates started at 10 miles, then rose to 14, then went up again. The final total (on Maggie's pedometer) was 18 miles. Once back in Pandy, we had a BBQ with Julie and family, and then wandered over to the local pub to partake in its mini beer festival.

Sunday involved a slightly more lethargic start: while Pokey and Annie went on a walk aimed towards a Good Pub, the rest of us set off to climb the Skirrid, which was wreathed in positively Tolkienesque clouds. We mostly managed to avoid the showers, but the last hour of the walk was done in a downpour - eventually we dripped into the Skirrid Inn and took over their pool room. Alan assumed charge of the jukebox, and the pub mysteriously emptied...

On Monday, Alan, Maggie, Paula, Bruce and Sarah walked up Sugar Loaf. Getting to the starting point was an exercise in three-point turns and reversing - as penance for her navigational faux-pas, Maggie was elected to lead the walk, which she did successfully. The views from the top were excellent, and the rain just about held off until we set off back to Newbury.

Sarah Davies

25-27 June - Brecons

Present: Paula (Organiser), Alan, Bruce, Sarah D, Will, Alex, Richard W



On Friday night, we arrived in Pencelli on a glorious evening. Unfortunately the good weather didn't last, and breakfast on Saturday morning was eaten in full waterproofs. Having decided not to attempt the likes of Pen-y-Fan in gale-force gusts and squally rain, Alex led us on a low-level walk to Brecon, where we had a pub stop and a spot of gear shopping before coming back along the river. Alan and Paula joined us on Saturday night, and the rain stopped just long enough for us to have a BBQ.

Fortunately the porch of Alex and Will's tent was big enough to accommodate all of us when the heavens opened once more!

On Sunday the weather was kinder to us, and Alan led us on a circular ridge walk. Just as we got back to the cars... yes, you guessed it - more rain! A good weekend nonetheless, despite the permanently wet feet...!

Sarah Davies

23-25 July - Elan Valley Navigation Weekend

Present: Gavin (Organiser), Ros, Mike B, Gaby, Mick, Ange, Callum, Sarah D, Paula, Bruce, Maggie, Alan

With all the classroom work and preparation out of the way, ten of us arrived in Rhayader on the Friday night. It would have been twelve - however, Paula developed an irresistible urge to take a train to from Reading to Taunton and back again instead of Reading to Newbury (it's a long story - just ask Paula!) and Bruce decided to go on a balloon trip at the last minute (as you do!). The plan was for an early start on Saturday to allow us maximum time on the hills, so despite protests from Maggie we set off in two groups at 9am. Each group was supervised (rather than shepherded) around a 12km route that very quickly managed to test everyone, despite the clear weather. Without the usual landmarks of tracks, paths, well-defined mountains, houses and... anything really, each group had to quickly start trusting their maps and compasses. They also quickly discovered why Elan Valley is renowned for its 'elephant heads', as distinct from 'babies heads' found elsewhere - these are the huge tussocks of grass that cover the hills and make walking in a straight line all but impossible!



Both groups met up at a trig point, swapped leaders (who were probably due a change by that stage) and headed back down over a route of the leader's choosing. Quite why the groups were asked to navigate to 'kinks' in contours probably remains a mystery to them even now, but by the end of the afternoon everyone was feeling more confident in their own ability to find their way in the hills. Once safely back at the campsite, despite covering around 20km over very hard terrain, most people managed one (or maybe two) small beers before saying goodnight!

Official word of the day: Re-entrant

Campsite gourmet/Lofty Wiseman award (for cooking two steaks over the equivalent of a tea-light): El Presidente (aka Bruce)

On Sunday, Ros and Callum headed to Wintour's Leap, leading their first ever Hard Severe climbs - well done! They would probably have fallen off their first E3 as well, if their route-finding error had not been spotted in time!! Meanwhile, Mike and I took to the hills again, this time on our bikes for a very bumpy trail with the added bonus of both sleeping and suicidal sheep to contend with whilst doing some of the faster descents! The rest of the group took advantage of their new-found confidence and went for a walk around Elan Valley (including an unexpected lesson in "what to do when the mists descend") followed by a visit to the Red Kite centre. All in all a very successful weekend - thanks to everyone for their enthusiasm.

27-30 August - Teesdale

Present: Ange (Organiser), Mick, Bruce, Maika, Sarah D

Just five of us ventured northwards to County Durham for August Bank Holiday. The campsite, bordering the river at Holwick, was on the basic side, which meant Sarah became fairly popular as the only person who had packed toilet roll!

On Saturday our walk was very water-based: from the campsite to Low Force and High Force (England's highest waterfall) and then up to Cauldron Snout, taking in part of the Pennine Way. A couple of people encountered the water at rather closer quarters, as there were a lot of rivers to get across - Mick's comment to Ange of "Don't worry, the worst that can happen is you'll get your boots wet" was famous last words as mere seconds later she was in the water up to her waist! Later on Sarah's method of crossing rivers as quickly as possible had similarly damp results - thank goodness for quick-drying walking trousers...

On Sunday we walked along the river to Middleton-in-Teesdale, and then across Crosthwaite Common in a large circle back to the campsite. At the end of the day, with the weather forecast not looking good for the evening, Bruce, Maika and Mick headed back to Newbury. Sarah and Ange stayed up north and did a walk on Urra Moor (North York Moors) on Monday before driving back.

Sarah Davies

26-30 August - Isle of Arran

Present: Gavin (Organiser), Ros, Alan, Rhoda, Bob, Karin, Louise, Andy M, Zoe

Meanwhile, a few others headed north to the Isle of Arran, coming back with cautionary tales of the dodgiest B&B ever encountered. No words; just a few photos courtesy of Andy M.



8-10 October - Bethesda, Snowdonia

Present: Gavin (Organiser), Ros, Callum, Martin B, Louise, Eleanor, Erika, Sarah M, Sara S, Dave H, Alan, Paula, Sarah D, Dave W, Martin L, Pam, Mike B, Gaby

The trip was based in the small village of Bethesda, which lies just north of the national park boundary, in a bunkhouse owned by the JMCS. The bunkhouse was, in effect, a converted cottage in the centre of the village, about 100m from the nearest pub (and about 110m from the next nearest!). The house managed to squeeze 14 of us in, although 4 more stayed in the nearby Youth Hostel at Idwal Cottage, making this a very well-attended weekend.

After the usual late arrivals on Friday night (and some idiots trying to finish a bottle of Talisker), everyone headed out on various routes and activities on Saturday. 12 members of the club set out for a long walk in the Carneddau mountains on Saturday morning in 3 groups. The walks varied from a short walk up Carnedd Dafydd to a long walk and scramble taking in the hills of Carnedd Dafydd, Carnedd Llewelyn and Yr Elen. Despite the strong winds and cold conditions, a great day was had by all with superb views appearing once the clouds had lifted in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, Mike and Gaby walked from Idwal Cottage, around Lynn Ogwen and up Tryfan via Little Tryfan and Heather Terrace. (Beware the goats, they butt you off the mountain and steal your lunch!) The mountain mist cleared, so they headed up Glyder Fach and Glyder Fawr, and bumped into a lady Mike was in college accommodation with from York University (10 years ago!). After playing on the cantilever rock, they headed down past the Devil's Kitchen to Idwal Cottage.



Callum and I headed over to Gogarth, on Anglesey, to try some of the sea cliff climbing there. Unfortunately, Manchester University Mountaineering Club had the same idea, and proceeded to teach people how to abseil on the descents to the climbs, and generally climb slower than growing moss. On a more positive note, the weather was excellent and we managed a classic route, called Rap (VS 4c), before wimping out of doing anything more serious on

the excuse that I was meant to be cooking dinner for everyone! (And it had taken us 4 hrs 30 mins to climb 2 pitches, stuck behind the students.)

The bunkhouse on Saturday night saw some strange sights, and even stranger sounds, courtesy of the resident LP collection, which contained such classics as Bruce Springsteen, Pink Floyd, Slade, Fleetwood Mac, Genesis, Simon & Garfunkel, Genesis, Rod Stewart and some more Genesis. Some idiots managed

to finish off the whisky from the Friday night, and the adventures of the day became the stuff of legends after being re-told for the umpteenth time.

On Sunday, Mike, Gaby, Martin and Pam walked from Capel Curig onto Moel Siobod via the East ridge (very good!). Mike reports that he climbed with one arm at every opportunity (presumably 'cos he was holding hands with Gaby using his other hand?), in the mountain mists; no rain, but no views either! Ros, Callum, Erika, Louise and I headed to Little Tryfan to do some easy multi-pitch climbing with the highlight being Erika leading her first climb! And the others went for a walk above Betws y-Coed, followed by a tea shop...

Gavin Baxter

10-12 December - Coniston, Lake District

Present: Dave W (organiser), Ros, Callum, Sarah D, Bob, Rhoda, Bruce, Alan, Paula, Mick, Ange, Jay (Mick's grandson)

The venue for the weekend, solely for our use, was Coniston Coppermines youth hostel, tucked away at the end of a 2-mile track and ideally situated for getting out in the hills. (Not that we could see them most of the time, but that's December in the Lakes for you.) Following the usual late arrivals on Friday night (and Callum demonstrating a novel but effective way to clean out a Platypus drinking tube), everyone was up on Saturday morning for a prompt departure. Led by Ros and Callum, and despite extremely wet conditions (Bob's golf umbrella wasn't really adequate protection from the elements...) we did a circular 6-7 hour walk taking the Old Man of Coniston and Wetherlam, eventually dripping back into the youth hostel literally soaked to the skin.

Several of the group spent the remainder of the afternoon in the pub, enthusiastically sampling the local brew. Dave then "project-managed" (note: this doesn't involve doing any of the actual cooking) dinner for everyone - chilli in varying strengths of not-so-mild, hot, and scarily hot! The remainder of the evening involved mince pies, competitive card games, and the destruction of another of those bottles of Talisker.

Sunday's weather was, if anything, worse than Saturday's, so the planned scramble up Jack's Rake at the Langdale Pikes was abandoned in favour of various other plans. Sarah, Ange, Mick and Jay completed a low-level walk around Coniston Water, Dave, Ros and Callum headed for the climbing wall at Kendal, and Bruce and Paula headed off for a couple of days' trekking and bivvying out in the area.

Sarah Davies