



SWMC Newsletter

Autumn 2005

I came relatively late to climbing.

Despite being born barely a rope's length from the majestic sea cliffs of South Pembrokeshire, I thought the beach was best for parties, picnics and maybe a spot of fishing.

In college, my girlfriend was a climber. We had little in common, but she was fit and active, good enough reasons for me.

For five years I lived in the shadow of The Castle, one of the best climbing centres in the country. I once poked my head around the door, and ran scared at the sight of all those beautiful young things.

Maybe if I'd started younger I'd be climbing harder now. But I couldn't be enjoying it any more. After all those wasted years, I don't want to miss even one weekend.

But if you really want a lesson in the art of life appreciation, go to page three and read Chris Wyatt's story, The Climb to Recovery.

Simon Williams
Newsletter editor

Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to the Annual General Meeting at the Royal Oak, Whitchurch, 7pm Wednesday 16th November.

There'll be a bar and the first drink is free, so come along and have a say in the running of your club.

If you want an item included on the agenda, go to the website www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk, log on to the forums and add a message on The Joiners Arms under the 'Agenda items for the AGM' post.

Annual dinner

The club event of the year is set for Friday 18th November at Sketty Hall in Swansea. The cost of £24.95 per head includes dinner and entertainment.

If you want to go (and who wouldn't), send a cheque payable to SWMC to Nik Goile, Flat 3, 66 Walter Rd, Swansea SA1 4PT. Nik can be contacted at nikgoile@gmail.com or telephone 07919 312 505.

Membership cards

The new SWMC membership cards are still on their way. From the last newsletter: "Not only will they be in a durable, crag-friendly laminate, but being credit-card size will actually fit in the wallet, so you need never be caught without yours again."

So they're definitely worth the wait.

Questionnaire

The data has been analysed, and it can now be said without doubt that nine out of ten SWMC members can't be bothered to return questionnaires.

So expect it in your inbox again soon, and this time *please* send it back. It's your chance to say what you want from the club, and gives the club a chance to find out a bit more about it's members. And besides, Llio spent so much time making it look nice and getting all those buttony things to work.

The committee

Chair

Nigel Lewis [nrl1al@aol.com]

Secretary

Alan Rosier [alan.rosier@capita.co.uk]

Treasurer

Llio Elgar [lloielgar@yahoo.com]

Barn Warden

Bryan Smith [bryan@bhsmith.fsnet.co.uk]

Newsletter Editor

Simon Williams [williamssj6@cf.ac.uk]

Membership Secretary, East

Sylvia Noorbhai [snoorbhai@hotmail.com]

Membership Secretary, West

Tim Hoddy [tim.hoddy@ntlworld.com]

Ordinary Member, East

Paul Rogers [fathorsepig@yahoo.ie]

Ordinary Member, West

Nik Goile [Nik.goile@cdsm.co.uk]

Llety Llwyd, the club hut

Bryan Smith is still hut warden, but has a new bookings helper. Bookings are now through Steve Lucocq, email hut@swmc.ath.cx or telephone 07789 551 591.

That troublesome water boiler has been replaced. After six SWMC members spent a week without showers, it was felt to be only fair to the population of Gwynedd. Just turn up the thermostat when you arrive, and turn it right down again when you leave. And please replace what you use on the gas meter - it's needed for frost protection while the hut's empty.

The kitchen has one new cooker. One of the two

showers is still not in use, but there are plans afoot for a complete redevelopment of the washroom facilities. Underfloor heating? Heated towel rails? It's all possible.

And who fancies a sauna in the outhouse?

Upcoming...

The next newsletter will be Winter 05/06, due out in the new year. If you have anything to contribute - trip reports, news items, letters, photos, rants etc - email Simon Williams [williamssj6@cf.ac.uk]

Changes to the constitution

18th October 2005

Dear member,

The purpose of me writing to you is to highlight some changes the Committee are proposing to the constitution. These build on the changes that were voted in last year and our commitment to provide something for young climbers that does not compromise other members.

The constitution can't be changed unless two thirds of members present and voting at a General Meeting agree. Obviously any changes could involve some debate and the committee are keen for you to consider our proposals in advance in order that the AGM doesn't last for a couple of days!

Of course, these are only proposals. You may have some ideas of your own. If so, I would ask that you circulate them prior to the AGM so that everyone can consider them in advance. There is absolutely no requirement for you to do so and you can just turn up at the AGM on the night and join the debate. However, this may lead to a very long meeting! If you want a committee member to circulate the details for you, please don't hesitate to contact me (or any other committee member you like the sound of).

The changes are all to section 3. To make the changes easier to identify, new text has been highlighted. The only other changes are re-numbering of some of the paragraphs.

The current committee fully supports the proposals and the work that has been carried out principally by Linda Jensen, John Goodwin and Gary Lewis. As the Club Chairman I also fully support the proposals and hope they are successfully incorporated into the Constitution.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM and this year's Annual Dinner.

Nigel R. Lewis
Chairman

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Full membership of the club is open to everyone over the age of 18.

Young people aged between 7 and 18 can apply to join the Club's Youth Section.

3.2 Applicants must complete an application form and pay the appropriate subscription.

3.3 Membership will be refused or revoked for any grossly negligent, criminal or anti social behaviour that affects other members of the club or the reputation of the club. It is recognised that this is a serious step and the committee will make any decision of this nature. Anyone whose membership is revoked has the right of appeal at a general meeting and may be reinstated by decision of that meeting.

3.4 In addition to revocation, the Committee may suspend membership. The committee may reinstate membership.

3.5 A suspended member has the right of appeal at a general meeting and may be reinstated by decision of that meeting.

3.6 The club will form a Youth Section Sub Committee which will consist of the Child Protection Officer and Youth Section Volunteers.

3.7 The Youth Section sub committee will supervise all youth activity in accordance with the terms of the Child protection Policy and operating schedule.

3.8 Membership of the Youth Section will be available to those who show commitment to climbing and prove that they can conduct themselves appropriately at climbing meets. Membership will be approved by the Youth Section Sub Committee.

3.9 Not in use.

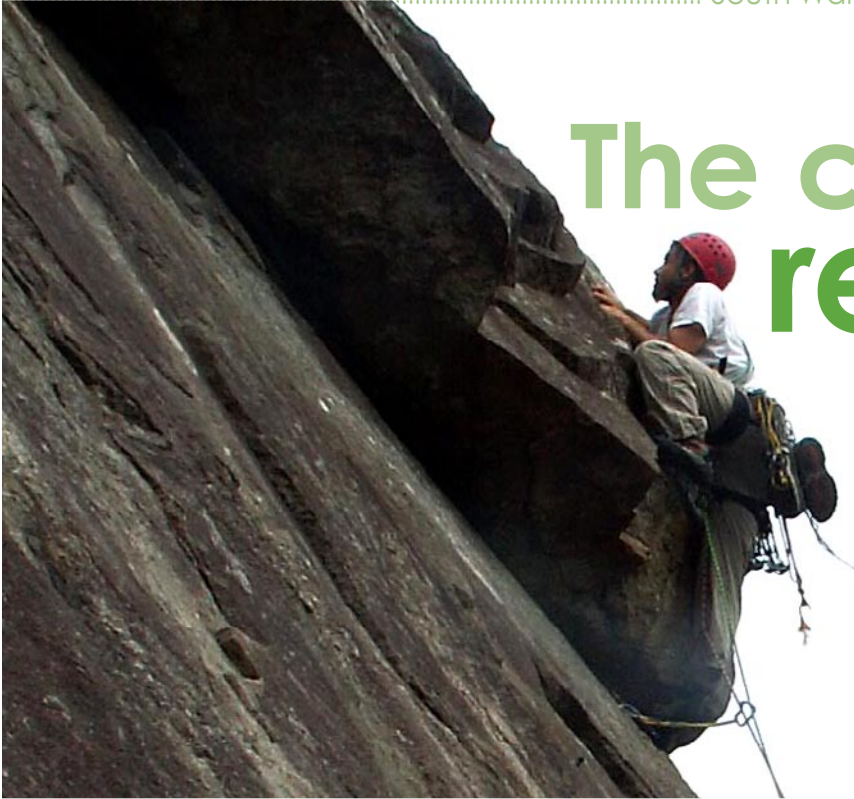
3.10 There are three categories of Full membership:

- Honorary
- Waged
- Unwaged

3.11 All Full members are entitled to full voting and other rights. Members who share an address are asked to consider asking for a single copy of any publications or papers to save on costs and materials.

3.12 Members of the Youth section are not entitled to voting rights.

3.13 The Committee may vary the category of membership if the circumstances of the member change.



The climb to recovery

Early this year **Chris Wyatt** was told he had a brain tumour and needed an operation to save his life. By the end of the summer he was leading HVS again.

Here Chris tells the full story

Chris makes the crux of Scratch Arete (HVS). Tremadog 10/9/05

Walking on, the man came across a wide river. What should he do? He thought for a while. Should he wait for the boatman or attempt to swim? Being confident in all things, he swam.

He was doing fine, when suddenly he noticed the current change to a swirl. Before he could even think, he was trapped in a whirlpool. The voices in his head cried, "Be confident and you'll be ok!"

Round and round, inexorably down and down. His confidence collapsed.

He cried for the boatman to rescue him. Just as he gave up, a strong arm reached down and grasped his lifted hand.

He lay gasping on the back of the boat.

"Why didn't you call me at the bank?" asked the boatman.

"You knew I would come."

"I didn't think I needed you," the man replied.

"Well, clearly you did," exclaimed the boatman with a smile.

This little parable gives a glimpse of how I felt during my recent illness. I will leave it to you to work it out!

The illness first showed up last summer by making me deaf in one ear. I ignored these initial symptoms, simply transferring the phone to my good left ear.

During the autumn I kept on getting dizzy spells and, at my mother's command, decided to see the doctor just after Christmas. The blood tests all came out ok, yet the symptoms persisted. I made another appointment with the doctor, but two days before the date I was vomiting and giddy. I couldn't eat or drink anything.

The doctor diagnosed Menieres disease, a problem with the inner ear. He referred me to the ear, nose and throat specialist and gave me some pills. The illness stabilised and a couple of weeks later the specialist diagnosed a

viral inner ear condition and told me the symptoms would pass. He also referred me for a precautionary x-ray. The symptoms did not get better and I chased up the x-ray which eventually took place six weeks later.

Diagnosis

The x-ray showed a large "benign" tumour in my brain and I was referred to Neurology. While the paperwork was going through I checked out a few things on the internet and realised that a further MRI scan would be needed. I arranged this privately but still needed to wait another couple of weeks.

I was very lucky to have a mate who is a consultant at Morriston hospital. He was able to tell me that the radiologist had diagnosed an acoustic neuroma 3.5cm round. This, apparently, is one of the 'easier' brain tumours, although it still kills if not treated.

It was great at this stage to realise that I actually had a pretty good chance of survival. But I still needed to get the neurology department to take any notice! I nagged for a week but nobody could see me. A private outfit in Bristol said they could get me an NHS operation within two weeks of a consultation, which I duly booked. But the two weeks vanished into thin air as soon as I walked through the door, as they advised me to stay with Swansea! I immediately phoned the Swansea consultant's secretary who told me that as I'd gone to Bristol I was no longer on his list!!

Have you ever felt up the creek without a paddle? Anyway, by involving my excellent GP we eventually got the matter resolved and I was called in to see the consultant

with an hour's notice! He offered me an operation in a further two weeks if a bed was available. I think these were probably the longest two weeks in my life.

The operation

A bed was available but my operation was nearly cancelled due to an emergency. We started a couple of hours late, but five hours later I was in intensive care regaining consciousness and high as a kite on morphine. I loved everyone to bits! I'm sure the nurses found this amusing.

At first I couldn't move and was seeing double. Three days later I was seeing single which was a relief. Day four was brilliant as the sister finally allowed me to take the catheter out. My personal belief is that catheters are an instrument of female domination in a hospital setting. Day five I managed to walk two steps and by day seven I went home!



Chris spots some trouble ahead. Scratch Arete, Tremadog

Recovery

Recently I had a fantastic day out on the B team butress in Pembroke. We did six VS climbs of which I led a couple. We then went to Ma Westons for tea and cake. A perfect day.

I've been camping, cycling, bouldering and Gower cragging, and it's all coming back.

My progress through the grades in climbing matches the best of beginners. Last week I top roped a couple of E2's at Pennard and yesterday I was in St Govans again leading three HVS climbs. So I'm not quite up to fighting speed but it feels really good to be improving all the time.

It's also great to be just enjoying the outdoors. The sunset over Pennard last week was fantastic. The Pembroke cliffs never cease to amaze me. Rivers, leaves, mud, flowers, birds – it's all good stuff.

I've invested in a gym ball and a wobble board. I'm faithfully doing my balance exercises every day. I can't manage the wobble board yet and will bring it to the next party to let the rest of you have a try! I reckon it's as least as hard as riding a unicycle.

My face is suffering from paralysis, but there are signs that recovery will take place. In the meantime I have rather a strange set of quirky facial expressions which you can all have a good laugh at when you see me.

The best thing of all is to be alive and enjoying the things we are given. Thanks to all members of the club who helped out, visited, thought, prayed or simply showed concern for me during this rather difficult time. It is really appreciated.

I must go down to the sea again

Climbing in Gower can still surprise the most experienced, according to **Gwyn Evans**

The wave-washed platform of White Pillar is just that, with water slopping over it. It's a few hours until high tide, we can just start the route from a higher ledge.

Tom Palfreyman is going to lead West Kante so I casually drop my sling around a substantial spike and tie on. Katja Lauenstein clips in and we sit and chat as Tom goes about his business.

Every so often there's a slap as a wave washes over the ledge below. I look up and see a wall of water. It crashes down, knocking us into the rocks and breaking skin before retreating, trying to take us with it.

"Where did that come from?" The sun is still shining but it isn't warm any more. Tim Hoddy and Nick Goile are on a higher ledge and can't stop giggling. Tom is completely unaware that anything untoward has happened, gets to the top and takes in the rope. Katja follows with cold hands and then I shiver my way up.

Katja and I decide we've had enough for the day. Gallantly the men look away as Katja divests herself of her saturated top and puts on a fleece - this is no time for a Miss Wet T-Shirt session. To warm up we jog to the car and turn on the heater for the trip back.

First among leaders

Two novice leaders and three old club hands dodge the rain in North Wales. (Nearly) novice leader **Rob Howell** reports



Katja and Rob swapping leads

Nik Goile, John Escudero and Tim Hoddy joined myself and fellow first time leader Katja Lauenstein for a short trip to the club hut near Llanberis for the "First Lead Weekend".

Tim and John were both injured, John having dropped an engine on his foot in work and Tim breaking his leg climbing, so they were just aiming for a limp around Llanberis.

The first morning we woke to it pissing down, so headed to Llanberis for a couple of hours around the gear shops. Then monstrous hot chocolates in the famed Pete's Eats, full of other walkers and climbers seeking refuge from the bad weather.

After Pete's we explored the old slate mines, appreciating the raw beauty of the almost alien landscape of man-made mountains of slate off-cut. Being an intelligent bunch we jumped a gate with a danger sign and were treated to breath-taking views of water falls, tunnels and some of the world's hardest climbing.

After a few hours exploring, a break in the weather sent us hurrying to Little Tryfan, a small but colourful crag over-shadowed by its big brother and swarming with climbers. Nik led a line at the extreme left of the crag and Katja and I followed to warm up and get a feel for the rock. We completed the route in two pitches, then looked for something for Katja to have her first taste of leading. Nik assured us that the crag had only routes of severe or below and we should pick a line we liked the look of and just go for it.

Katja set off up the route with Nik offering advice and guidance as he soloed up alongside her. At the top of the first pitch he helped her set up an anchor. I seconded, then Nik walked up to meet Katja topping out, grinning from ear to ear.

Nik assured us we should pick a line we liked the look of and just go for it.

We regrouped at the bottom for one more route, this time my turn. Having done a bit of leading before I was confident but excited, and thoroughly enjoyed the climb on the solid North Wales rhyolite. On topping out I was greeted by Nik and John, who offered useful advice on setting up a bomber anchor from which to belay Katja.

Day two began dry, so we set off to conquer Tryfan. The approach to our planned route Grooved Arête took an hour of calf-burning effort. As we made our way up the weather slowly worsened and we arrived at the bottom of the route to find the rock soaking and slimy and visibility less than 20 metres. Nik decided we should abandon the route and instead hike to the top. Very disappointing, but definitely the correct decision as climbing the route in these conditions with two relatively inexperienced climbers would have been dangerous.

Half way back down the weather gave us a break and we headed for Idwal Slabs only twenty minutes walk away. On arrival we were greeted with the fantastic scenery of the mountain Cwm Idwal and the lake Llyn Idwal. Nik and I climbed Hope (v diff) leaving a knackered Katja at the bottom. We climbed the route of a couple of hundred feet in four pitches, and although enjoyable it was tricky in places due to seepage. We were entertained half way up by Cwm Idwal's very own climbing sheep, standing on a ledge on another route! We topped out after two and a half hours and down climbed a dodgy polished and soggy descent.

Overall the trip was a success and enjoyed by all, although it might have been even more enjoyable and worthwhile with more people. I'd like to extend a personal thank you to John and Tim for all the driving and to Nik for his instruction and patience with Katja and myself. His infectious enthusiasm is a credit to the club.