

BMC CYMRU NEWSLETTER: MAY 2012

NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 29TH MARCH 8:00 P.M. DOORS OPEN – FOOD SERVED AT 8.30 P.M. PROMPT FOR MEETING TO START AT 9.00 P.M.

SOUTH STACK RSPB VISITOR CENTRE, ANGLESEY.

ALL WELCOME

1. NATIONAL COUNCIL, BRIXHAM, DEVON 18th FEB

Wales was represented by Ray Wood, Stuart Llewellyn and Gareth Tucker all present – Tom Hutton was absent as he was still on crutches.

Reports from the various areas had a common access theme, with success stories concerning re-opening or maintaining access to important resources, but concerns were voiced regarding the potential for loss of access to some sites.

Of most concern was the possible intention of the Peak National Park to sell the lease for the North Lees Estate, which contains Stanage. It was agreed that BMC talk to other bodies who may be interested in managing the estate, e.g. The National Trust, to ensure that we have representation in the management process, and that also we should be prepared to fund a part-purchase of the lease in partnership with other bodies. General concern was voiced regarding the proposed disposal of a publicly owned asset!

BMC Cymru North, Mid and South all reported opposition to the NT Ambassador Scheme and it was agreed that Dave Turnbull (DT) would ask Elfyn Jones to circulate an update to National Council members.

BMC Cymru received mild censure for spending £5 to £6 per head on providing meals at meetings – other areas spend £2 to £3!

The issue of fixed equipment was also discussed and DT noted that the BMC would not be able to take formal responsibility for placing, monitoring or maintaining such equipment. Ethics and fixed equipment had also been discussed at a number of area meetings; it was agreed that there is a need for an up-date to policy, as the 1992/93 policy is effectively out of date. Dave Turnbull will prepare a draft statement.

Charles Gameson suggested that the BMC should set up a Hill Walking Committee. It was agreed that the BMC should use the Keswick (May) and Kendal (November) Festivals as a sounding board to gather views from hill walkers on what they wanted from the BMC.

Andy Boorman

2. NATIONAL COUNCIL, MALHAM 25th APRIL

Andy Boorman represented Cymru after the Chair's car broke down.

The revised Strategic Plan was presented and agreed after further minor amendment.

Dave Turnbull reported that the Sport England grant application process was nearly complete (in by 14th May) and all indications are that this significant application will be successful. This includes funding for the appointment of several new regional officers, starting with one in SE England this spring.

The Peak National Park has still not made a decision regarding the disposal of the North Lees Estate; Peak area reps are keeping a close eye on the situation. Neil Foster reported that Peak Park have appointed a 'disposal of assets' officer!

A very successful Tremfest was commended to the meeting, but concerns were raised about theft of fixed lower-offs from several of the A55 crags (see Tremfest report elsewhere in this newsletter).

At the AGM Rab Carrington completed his term as President and Scott Titt was duly elected as his successor.

Andy Boorman

3. BOLT FUND

We're really pleased to report that the Bolt Fund has had some very generous donations to Paypal via the link - £220 so far this year. Credit must go to UKClimbing.com for running a feature on bolt funds – see <http://www.ukclimbing.com/articles/page.php?id=4578>

We've also had a very generous donation of lower-off clips from a Staffordshire based working at height specialist company – much appreciated.

But other than this the fund is very low on funds so it would be good to discuss fund raising ideas at the coming round of meetings – any/all ideas welcome.

We do, however, have a reasonable supply of bolts and resin at the moment so anyone keen to do some re-equipping should get in touch.

Remember new routers can get help with advice, equipment and highly subsidised bolts.

To add much needed contributions, click on <http://northwalesboltfund.webs.com/>

Chris Parkin

4. TREMADOG GOOD NEWS

After a year off, Tremfest returned in April as strong as ever. Over 60 climbers braved the not-so-helpful weather to enjoy a combination of extreme gardening and climbing,

and plenty of good work was done as well as routes climbed. The beer and prizes went down a storm too. A huge thanks to Jim and Julia Kelly for organising it.

And the bad...

Also at Tremadog – issues have arisen with climbers (and others?) camping and having fires etc. at the rough parking area below Vector Buttress. The BMC does not own the roadside here and the landowner and Eric Jones are getting increasingly annoyed at people leaving rubbish, lighting fires, and blatantly using Eric's campsite facilities without paying. It's be great if any climbers there could remind anyone they see camping there that it's not allowed!

Also on Vector Buttress, were hearing increasing complaints from the farmer that climbers are crossing the fence at the top of the cliff and descending through his farmyard. Discreet signs have been placed along the fence, but don't really want to be putting signs all over this site! Please advise anyone you see that may be a little confused...

At Pant Ifan, the owners are having problems with (mainly groups) taking a short cut along the private access track to their house in order to gain access to Upper Tier, and disturbing their guests. Can we remind everyone that access on foot to Upper Tier is either directly from Tremadog village following the public footpath or alternatively by ascending the main Pant Ifan descent path – again, please point out the error of their ways to anyone you see taking other routes.

Also at Pant Ifan, the built descent path is starting to show some serious deterioration – BMC will look to obtaining quotes from contractors for some remedial works before it gets to the stage of require a complete re-build. The BMC undertook with the landowners to take responsibility for this path in order to allow access for climbers following the end of CCW's occupation of the site.

Elfyn Jones

5. RESTRICTIONS AT THE ORME

A reminder that the annual Upper Pen Trwyn summer restriction will be in force for all bank holiday weekend and during the period July 15 to September 8th – i.e. no climbing above the Marine Drive before 6pm other than at Parsiella's Cave.

Elfyn Jones

6. SOUTH WALES VALLEYS

Following deliberate damage to bolts at Tirpentwys by contractors working for the landowner, a meeting and a possible access agreement are being discussed and we are reasonably optimistic at this stage.

No further progress at Edwardsville where we are still awaiting a reply and a draft agreement from the landowners. Officially the landowners do not allow climbing, but they do not currently seem to be enforcing the ban. However it is worth restating that access should always be low-key. Don't drive up the track to the quarry – park on the roadside at Edwardsville (it's only a 5 min walk!). And don't light fires or damage vegetation.

Good news at Llangattock, where the BMC met with the Brecon Beacons National Park to discuss and renew the access agreement. The difficult and aggressive grazier appears to have moved away and BMC belay stakes will be provided, eliminating the need to place and replace stakes on every occasion.

7. CARNEDDAU

We are in discussion with Forestry Commission regarding the new Carneddau guidebook and the possibility of cleaning overgrown and vegetated routes on cliffs the Gwydr forest - watch this space.

8. THE CROMLECH PATH

We will shortly be drawing up a new specification for these much-needed improvements that will create a durable climber's path to the iconic crag. We will then start the process of obtaining formal consents and estimates for the work.

9. MYNYDD DU

At Black Mountain (Mynydd Du) in the west of the Brecon Beacons, the BMC Access & Conservation Trust have financially supported footpath erosion work carried out by the National Park at Bwlch Blaen Twrch between Fan Brycheiniog (the high point of the range) and Bannau Sir Gaer. Feedback from members would be welcome on this work.

10. CRAIG Y FORWYN

Llanddulas: no progress with access to the main central part – Mr Webb is still the owner and still aggressively opposes access for climbing. But Mr Jones and CCW have agreed to a 5 year agreement for climbing on the left hand side.

Elfyn Jones

11. PEMBROKE

Range West briefing dates – June 2nd, June 23rd, July 28th.

Castlemartin Range access has been good in April but another CALFEX exercise is starting soon meaning that the range (incl. St. Govans) will be shut weekdays up until 4pm Fridays through most of June. It will be open at weekends as normal – details on the BMC site.

There have been access issues at Needle Rock in north Pembs as the landowner has only recently discovered that there is climbing there and is not keen on the idea. A belay stake that had been placed there last summer has been removed and he seems to have come around to the idea as long as no fixed gear is placed. Climbing here is restricted until after 1st Aug anyway and climbers should keep a low profile after this – avoiding it altogether if seals are pupping in the cove on east side.

The Stackpole and Lydstep CC guide is now in printing phase. North Pembs and Range East could be out later this year.

Steve Quinton

12. COAST PATH LAUNCH

I attended launch of All Wales Coastal Path at Flint – a good day with lots of networking. We are now pressing for continued Welsh Government support to improve and safeguard access to the coast, especially to the sea cliffs and for more open access.

I've also been heavily involved in responding to several consultations on the creation of a new statutory environmental body for Wales which will take on the roles of CCW, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency in Wales and which has the potential to take a more formal and regulatory approach (inc. licensing) of recreational activities on SSSI and other protected sites. More as things develop.

Elfyn Jones

13. MEIRIONNYDD GUIDE

The definitive guide to mid-Wales is now 10 years old and although appreciated for being 'off the beaten track,' some areas are suffering from vegetation and lack of traffic. For this reason a fully updated version is probably not a feasible project. So the CC's Publications Sub Committee (PSC) have been considering options which will also address recent developments both within the Meirionnydd guide area and outside it in mid Wales proper.

Following discussions with the Mid Wales Outreach group, local activists have decided to collaborate in researching a possible replacement for the Meirionnydd guide and yesterday an initial planning meeting was held of the CC Mid Wales Guidebook Team. A dozen members attended and it was decided that the team would initially research two projects:

- 1.) The Moelwyns – a fully updated definitive guide to the area currently covered by the Moelwynion and Cwm Lledr sections of Meirionnydd. To include all new routes on south & east flanks of Moel Siabod, but excluding Betws-y-coed area which now forms part of The Carneddau guide.

2.) Mid Wales Supplement – a supplement of all new developments in the remainder of current Meirionnydd area (Berwyns, Arenigs, Arans, Rhinogs, & Cader Idris) plus those many crags, quarries, and outcrops south of these areas. The precise geographical coverage yet to be confirmed – but Mid Wales suitably describes this venue.

Many vegetated crags (parts of Craig Cywrch, for example) may be worthy of some crag cleaning forays to reveal some of the classic lines. So it is hoped that this coming season's research will also reveal the possibilities of a somewhat more long term third option namely:

3.) A Selective Guide to the best routes in Meirionnydd and the area covered by the Mid Wales Supplement. If this proves feasible then it is proposed that the historic definitive record would still be available as a download on the CC website.

Don Sargeant

14. MOUNTAIN LEADER TRAINING UK/MOUNTAIN LEADER TRAINING WALES

The March meeting of MLTUK at Glenmore Lodge was extremely well attended as there were a number of important items on the agenda, not least of which was the chance for us all to wish Allen Fyffe a very happy retirement from his lead role at Mountain Leader Training Scotland. He has been replaced by the experienced mountaineer and instructor George McEwan, previously Head of Mountaineering at Glenmore Lodge.

Voting members decided on an important name change for the Mountain Training Organisations; this will coincide with the launch of a new website and database in late May. The word Leader has been removed from the titles in order to reflect the varying nature of the awards offered; the organisations will now be known as Mountain Training Cymru (MTC), Mountain Training England (MTE), Mountain Training Northern Ireland (MTNI), Mountain Training Scotland (MTS) and Mountain Training UK (MTUK). It was also decided that the Mountain Training Association would be the new name for MLTA. In line with these changes it was also decided that a single structure will be developed for the operational management of Home Nation Board staff under a MTUK Chief Officer.

Andy Boorman

15. THE MOUNTAINEERING COMMISSION OF UIAA MEETING APRIL 21-22

The UIAA is the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (the acronym comes from its French title) and it provides services and coordination at an international level for the benefit of the mountaineering community. Recently the Mountaineering Commission met to discuss various issues: the BMC was represented by Doug Scott, (also a member of the UIAA Management Committee) and our own Steve Long, Chair of

the Training Standards Panel. Doug Scott produced a report for the BMC which contains some elements that may be of direct interest to BMC Cymru members:

“Personally I can vouch for the whole-hearted support the Traditional Values Working Group has received from [this] Commission... Many useful points were raised and recommendations suggested towards helping Federations preserve rock in its natural state for Traditional Climbing. The various definitions of Traditional Climbing were also discussed and the one that was most acceptable being “Adventure Climbing”.

“They have thus given their support to the big issues at the heart of the mountaineering community, namely preserving Traditional Values by taking a stance on preserving rock in its natural state for Adventure Climbing and opening up the debate on competition climbing in the high mountains. In the document we have just prepared there are definite suggestions made for helping Federations with all matters concerning mountaineering including route setting on sport climbs in a safe and ethical manner.”

The UIAA should be proud of the work [the Training Standards] Working Group has done towards helping the Federations have a credible training scheme. Who else but the UIAA is in a position to put this together and to advance it? “

Steve Long

16. MOUNTAIN HERITAGE TRUST

Two members have stepped down as Trustees: Richard Lemmey no longer works for University of Cumbria who are host to the archive; and John Porter, a founding member of the Trust and its company secretary. Ron Kenyon, a long serving member was appointed as the new company secretary and Jeff Ford will be invited to fill one of the vacant places. Further consideration will be given to fill the other vacant position.

Maxine Willetts, the archivist reported on the acquisition of the Lord Chorley library and several items from George Band’s estate including his camera used on the Everest expedition. Discussion continues regarding the Jim Curran archive.

Future funding continues to be a matter of concern. Various items were discussed for a Heritage Lottery Fund application along with a possible fundraising event for 2013.

K. C. Gordon

17. GRANTS UPDATE

The Welsh Sports Association's Overseas Expeditions Panel met on an inauspicious Friday 13th April to interview expeditions for possible support funding in 2012. In recent years the total grant available has dropped from £12,000 to £10,000 to this year's £9,000, and its future is far from certain.

Fortunately, only seven expeditions applied, so it was possible to keep individual grants meaningful.

Unusually, the majority of applications came from climbers. Tom Ripley (with Tom Livingstone) is going to Alaska with several objectives in mind, notably a new route on the Father and Son wall of Denali. Olly Sanders (with Lee Roberts and Dave Rudkin) is planning to put up new rock routes in the Upernavik region of North West Greenland, an area he's visited before and one much publicised recently after the spectacular lines climbed by an American-Belgium team in 2011.

Nick Bullock (with Andy Houseman) hopes to climb the striking unclimbed North Face of Chamlang from the Hongu Valley in Nepal, while Rob Greenwood (with Jack Geldard) will also be in the Hongu at the same time, attempting the technical North Face of Peak 41.

Two caving trips were also supported; a team diving the moulins in the Gornergrat Glacier above Zermatt, and a group pushing exploration of a previously visited cave system in the Picos de Europa. A six person team with various ages and experience is making an open canoe journey in North West Ontario

The eligibility criteria - only Welsh members of the team are considered for funding, and Welsh means either being born, or have a parent or grandparent born in Wales, or have permanently lived in Wales for at least two years prior to the application - meant that from the mountaineers only Bullock, Greenwood, Ripley, and the three man team of Roberts, Rudkin and Sanders could be considered, and their expeditions received the following grants: Chamlang £2,000, Peak 41 £1,250, Denali £1,500, Greenland £1,250.
Lindsay Griffin

18. DAY WALKS IN SNOWDONIA

A new guidebook featuring many of the best Snowdonia hillwalking circuits. Written by our Chairman, Tom Hutton it is a pocketable size and makes planning your route straightforward while providing plenty of inspiration.

From Sheffield-based independent publisher, Vertebrate Publishing, it has twenty circular walks in Snowdonia, between 9 km and 19 km in length. When you open the book you'll quickly realise the title is a bit of a misnomer - in a good way! Two bonus routes involving easy scrambling are included at the end: the Bochlwyd and Snowdon Horseshoe. Day Walks in Snowdonia is available direct from www.v-publishing.co.uk.

ENDS