

# CYLCHLYTHYR BMC CYMRU

## NEWSLETTER

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### De South



#### Cadeirydd: Ollie Burrows

After a brilliant May which included the fabulous Pembroke Festival which was another roaring success with engaging talks, circus entertainment and of course THE best climbing in the world. The gorgeous

weather followed into June and July as people were getting out into places saved for the driest of times, seeing what is truly magical about Wales when the sun is shining.

However, not all was sunshine and ice-cream, with some issues with the recently bolted Cefn-coed hitting the local climbing headlines. In short, an old trad crag from the 1980s, that had been given a new lease of life by person's unknown, had been designated a SSSI and came into contention. Through excellent work by the BMC no prosecutions occurred and the crag has been returned to its original state. This is a stark and somewhat scary reminder of the brilliant work and support the BMC provides local area with access information and help when required. But also to check all available information when developing somewhere- even if it has been used historically.

Here's to a productive and dry autumn! See you out there on the crags or hills!

### Cyfarfodau Ardal-Area Meetings

**De South:** Tues 10/9/19, 7.30pm (food from 7.00pm). The Climbing Hangar, Swansea, SA7 9FH

**Gogledd North:** Tues 3/9/19, starting at 7.30pm (food from 7.00pm). YHA Snowdon,

### Gogledd North

#### Cadeirydd: Tim Jepson

Well, it was Eisteddfod week, so we had to expect plenty of rain and mud when Elfyn and I met on 'The Maes', just outside Llanrwst, to join Ramblers Cymru's annual Director's Walk. This walk, which I attended last year in Cardiff too, is offered as an opportunity for colleagues of like-minded organisations to meet, walk and talk together with no intention other than to recognise our common aspirations. This year there were representatives of Ramblers Cymru, The Open Spaces Society and BMC Cymru (along with NRW's Executive Director of Operations for North Wales) and yet again I was struck by the huge overlap in our interests, and the benefits available if we can find ways of cooperatively working together. We may each represent slightly different sectors of the outdoor community, but essentially we all want the same freedom for members to explore open-air environments and to experience natural landscapes unhindered. That spirit of cooperation was reflected on 'the Maes' itself as well this year, with Clwb Mynyddda Cymru successfully sharing its 40th anniversary stand with Mountain Training Cymru, The Outdoor Partnership and the BMC. It seems to me that the current, slow, faltering rate of progress towards securing a stronger sphere of influence for BMC Cymru in Wales signals the need for us to work in ever closer partnership with these companion organisations in future. Ignoring the history of how we got to this point, the fact is that an organisation like Ramblers Cymru already has an office in Cardiff housing a salaried staff team, and the Outdoor Partnership already has in place the necessary mechanisms for lobbying the Welsh Government and attracting project funding. With the best will in the world, BMC Cymru can't hope, on its own, to reach a similar level of authority, capacity or influence in Wales for many years to come. Incidentally, it rained just before we met on the Maes, and it poured over the following few days, but the sun shone on Elfyn and I as we rambled through the woods of Dyffryn Conwy, last Tuesday. Lucky or what?

Wnewch chi anfon eitemau, yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg (efo lluniau!) ar gyfer y rhifyn nesaf i Neal: dringo.cymru@gmail.com

Items for the next edition are welcome in English or Welsh. Please send (with credited pictures!) to Neal: dringo.cymru@gmail.com



The editor ski touring below Rosablanche. Llun: Xavier Dos Alpes



@BMCCymru



@BMCCymruWales

# Mountain Training Cymru



The last few months have been busy for Mountain Training Cymru. Interest in our new Rock Skills scheme continues to grow steadily across Wales. This mirrors the increasing success of the Hill and Mountain Skills scheme.

In April, alongside Ireland, Scotland and England, we launched a new high level rock climbing qualification called the Rock Climbing Development Instructor. Training courses have already taken place in Wales and we already have two qualified Rock Climbing Development Instructors who attended the first assessment in England.

The table below reveals how many individuals have either attended a skills course or become a qualified leader with Mountain Training Cymru since January 2019:

Scheme	Total attended
Hill and Mountain Skills	125
Rock Skills	65

Scheme	Total qualified
Lowland Leader	49
Hill and Moorland Leader	9
Mountain Leader	129
Indoor Climbing Assistant	25
Climbing Wall Instructor	39
Rock Climbing Instructor	61
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	10
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	0

Anne Vowles became the Chair of Mountain Training Cymru at our AGM in June. Mike Rosser stood down after four excellent years at the helm and he will remain a Director until the end of 2020.

We are in the process of applying for our next development grant from Sport Wales for which we are writing a new Strategic Development Plan for the next three years.

Finally, the 2019 application process to become a provider, course director or tutor for Mountain Training Cymru has opened. Closing date is Friday 30th August and details can be found on our website: <https://www.mountain-training.org/cymru/provider-course-director-and-tutor-applications-2019>

If you would like any further information, please contact me:

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Tel: 01690 720272

Simon Patton

Executive Officer Mountain training Cymru



Pic: Tom Hutton

## **Mynediad a Cadwraeth** Access & Conservation **Elfyn Jones** **Swyddog Mynediad a Cadwraeth** Access & Conservation Officer

**The Diamond, Little Orme** – the birdies (well, just the Kittiwakes) were a bit slow to leave this year and the restrictions were kept in place until mid-August. Thanks to everyone who kept to the agreement, it really make a difference to influencing and negotiating access with land owners and conservation bodies when we can demonstrate that climbers can and do follow the agreements. The reason for the extended restriction is that kittiwakes are quite late nesters and as with many of the sea- birds that frequent our sea-cliffs they are in serious decline. Although surprisingly it's the most common breeding gull found in the UK, with population numbers exceeding 300,000, the birds are a Red listed bird of conservation concern, as numbers have plummeted by over 70% since the 1980ies. Established and historical nesting sites such as the Diamond are regarded as important "isolated refuges" in maintaining numbers and especially when the birds are facing significant survival issues in the long term.

**Gogarth** -RSPB are rebuilding the café and visitor centre at South Stack, following significant damage due to poor design and build of the old café (the roof collapsed just before the start of summer!). As part of the work, it's well known that parking meters and charges are being introduced here. Initially £2.50 per day this will rise to £5 per day from 2020 when the works are completed. While this was a very controversial move by the RSPB and has seen some very strong and some quite personal and quite nasty attacks on RSPB staff on social media, they state that the charity is struggling with income (seeing a drop of £11 million last year) and with much of their conservation work being funded by European grants that are coming to an end as Brexit bites, they need to continue to fund the work on their nature reserves. Anglesey residents can acquire an annual ticket for two cars for £20 and parking is free for all RSPB members. They also categorically state that surplus income from the car park will only be spent at the South Stack Reserve. At the other end of Holyhead Mountain, at the Breakwater Country Park, the local authority currently charges £3 per day and likely to rise significantly next year but there seems to be much less public objection to this?

**Gower** – The National Trust, who own and manage much of the coastline at Gower recently informed BMC that they wanted to impose seasonal restrictions on climbing at Lewes Castle, due to the presence of cliff nesting Swifts. Lewes Castle is one of the more popular and frequented trad climbing venues at Gower. It's unusual to see Swifts nesting on natural cliffs, their preferred habitats being in the eaves of buildings and man-made structures. However, in a sign of the times, with climate change and biodiversity losses accelerating, as with many species, numbers are declining rapidly across the world and the rock faces we climb on are becoming more important for these threatened species. As more and more species are becoming threatened, the crags we climb on are increasingly becoming more important as refuges for these threatened species (including rare plants as well as nesting birds) and we have a real challenge in balancing the needs of conservation with access.

**Cefn coed/Taff Fechan Nature Reserve, Merthyr.** BMC were informed by both the local Wildlife Trust and the Local Authority of potential and criminal environmental damage caused by climbers to this nature reserve. An old, unfrequented limestone climbing venue, originally developed in the 1970ies was given an overhaul and reequipped by climbers and it quickly became a popular local venue for sport climbing. However, the land owners and conservation bodies had not been informed and consent not sought for this redevelopment. Some mature trees at the base of the crag were felled using power tools, vegetation was cleared off the rock faces, bat roosts possibly damaged and evidence of birds' nest being destroyed were reported. As the site is also a legally designated Site of Scientific Interest these allegations are now being investigated by Natural Resources Wales and South Wales Police with a possibility of legal action under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Habitats Regulations being pursued. The whole situation took on a more serious note when it seems that climbing ropes and some anchors left on site by the original developers were deliberately sabotaged (ropes and slings partially cut through). It's impossible to know if this was done maliciously by local vandals or even by disgruntled militant conservationist (it was most definitely not done by the Wildlife Trust or the local authority). Some of the more accessible bolts and lower offs have now been removed by local climbers and discussions about the future of climbing and the next steps are under negotiation but the whole sad situation could have been avoided by seeking some advice prior to the wholesale redevelopment of the crag. We must acknowledge and recognise that as climbers, we simply haven't got the right to enter private land, especially a nature reserve and clear established vegetation, place multiple anchors and bolts and create a sport climbing venue and that in doing so we could be in breach of several laws as well as damaging important conservation sites.

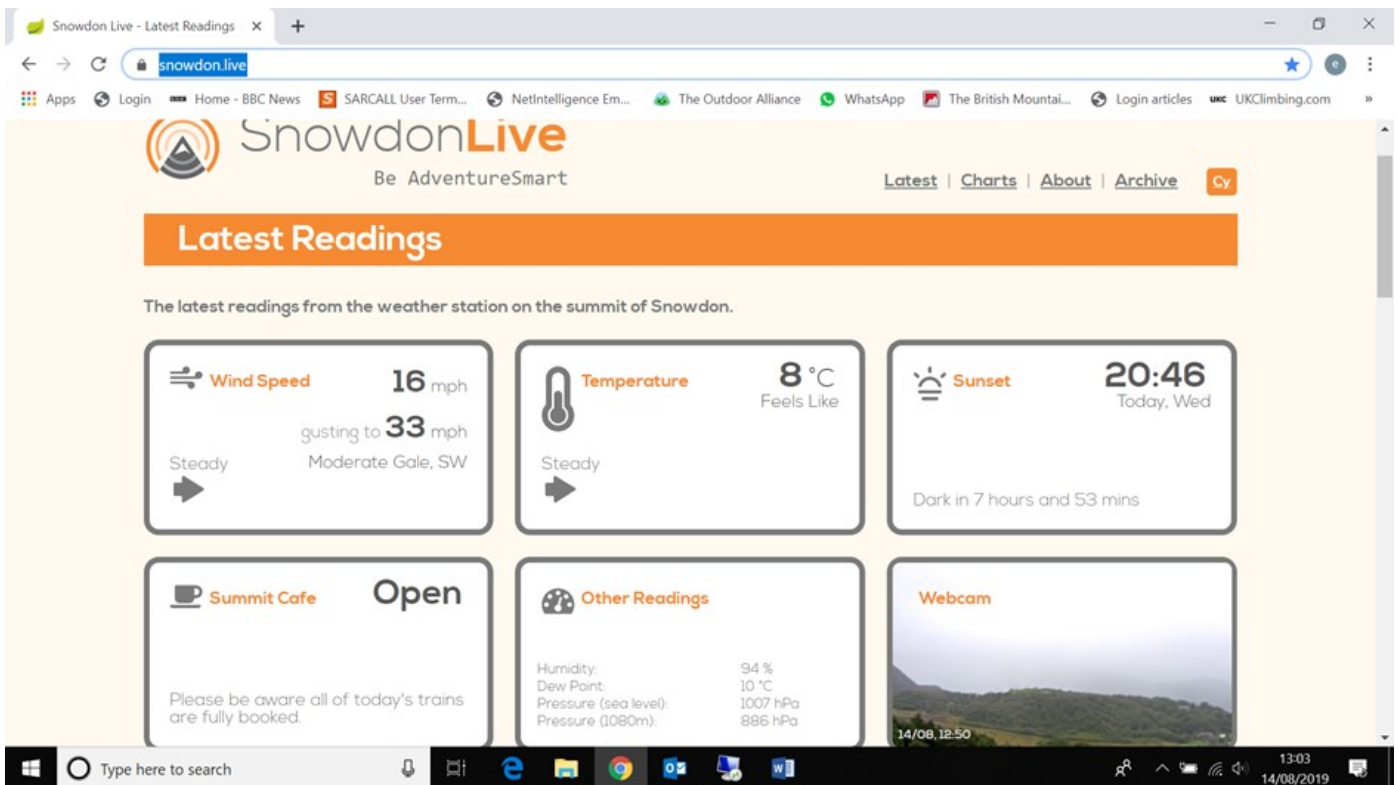
## ... Mynediad a Cadwraeth Access & Conservation....

**Craig y Merched- Rhinogydd** - A remote but quick drying, gritstone escarpment in the idyllic and scenic Cwm Mynach in the southern Rhinogydd is now part of a Woodland Trust Reserve. The BMC's local access volunteer Dave Williams has been working with the Trust's wardens and National Park Wardens to establish a new path to this crag as the existing approach has become unusable for various land ownership and woodland development issues. The Woodland Trust were happy for BMC to erect stiles, some simple directional signs and employ a contractor to clear vegetation to re-establish an old path to this crag. With a new Rhinogydd guidebook likely in the next year or so, this could become a great little venue.

### **Snowdon Live** - <https://snowdon.live/>

At last the live weather and conditions update from the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) is now fully accessible. Part funded by the BMC's Access & Conservation Trust, it's hoped that this will be used (in conjunction with AdventureSmart messages, <http://www.adventuresmart.uk/>) to inform people walking on the hills of what to expect in terms of weather and help them plan their day better, hopefully reducing the number of avoidable callouts to rescue teams!).

A sample page from the Snowdon Live page:



**Access Reforms** – Welsh Government has now announced how it intends to move forward to implement the radical reforms to access legislation announced earlier in the year. A panel of law makers, civil servants and other professionals will make up the “Access Reform Group” to look into the details and come up with either new legislation or the changes required to existing legislation to implement the proposals. This will be in place by early autumn and then a further number of so-called “expert” sub-panels will be formed to look at the details of specific proposals, with a view to reporting back with new draft legislation to be put before the National Assembly by early 2020. The BMC will be particularly interested in developments and inputting into the group tasked with looking at opening up access to the coast and sea cliffs of Wales.

## ... Mynediad a Cadwraeth Access & Conservation....

**Gower Climbing Festival.** This is held on weekend of Aug 30th, 31st and Sept 1st. a great chance to get out and about on Gower, with lots of guidance from local climbers on the best venues, the best routes, the hidden secrets and also loads of workshops and evening talks. Oh ...and some free bacon butties for breakfast (but some donations to local charities are fully encouraged!). All the info is on the Gower Climbing Festival website <https://www.gowerclimbingfestival.co.uk/gcf/>

**Hillwalking at the BMC** – The BMC's first and only dedicated Hillwalking Officer, Carey Davies has moved on to new pastures, becoming the editor for TGO magazine. At this time the BMC is not intending to fill this post, partially due to the unprecedented financial pressures the BMC faces this year and partially as it's felt that Hillwalking as an activity by BMC members should by now be fully enshrined as a major area of work and included and considered in the work programmes of all the staff the BMC and not simply seen as an add-on activity. The bulk of the work will be absorbed by the current team of three Access and Conservation staff (Elfyn in Wales, Cath Flitcroft and Rob Dyer in England).

**BMC Access & Conservation Conference 2019.** This will be held at a venue in the Manchester area on November 14th. The theme will be the challenging one of "Changing Behaviours" for climbers and mountaineers, within the overall context of the impacts of climate change, environmental pollution, carbon usage, loss of biodiversity and more specifically sustainable transport, sanitation in the hills, erosion and the direct environmental impacts of our activities. With high profile speakers and some strong messages, some of the conference topics and themes may not make for a comfortable day for many of us but as supposedly strong advocates of the natural environment it may be time for us to face the realities of a changing world and we may need to change some of our behaviours and actions? Keep an eye out for more details in the Autumn edition of Summit magazine and on the BMC website.



# Clwb Mynydda Cymru & Eisteddfod 2019

## Clwb Mynydda Cymru & Eisteddfod 2019

With a membership of around 300 people from all walks of life across Wales (and beyond!) Clwb Mynydda Cymru is the only all Wales mountaineering club and the only one that actively promotes the enjoyment of the mountains and crags through the medium of Welsh. Established back in???? it celebrated its 40th anniversary by hosting a number of events at the National Eisteddfod at Llanrwst this summer. The BMC along with Mountain Training Cymru and the Outdoor Partnership were proud to support their activities at the Eisteddfod with financial support towards the stand and staff presence. The week started with a very early, 4am start, long distance walk from Caernarfon, directly to the stand at the Maes of National Eisteddfod, taking in the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) on the way. Even more inspiring is that many of the founder members completed this mammoth walk! A live and televised question and answer session with a panel some of the founder members, including the BMC's very own Chairman Gareth Pierce, recalling their best (and at time worst!) moments in the hills was chaired by Welsh TV pundit and long term club member Gerallt Pennant at the "Babell Len" (The Literary Tent) and attracted a considerable and interested audience, that was later followed by the cutting of the birthday cake at the stand.

The BMC wishes the club well and looks forward to supporting its activities for the next 40 years and beyond!



Clwb Mynydda Cymru at the summit of Yr Wyddfa on their anniversary walk.





Clwb Mynydda Cymru's live discussions at the "Babell Len" at the National Eisteddfod at Llanrwst.



The joint BMC, Clwb Mynydda Cymru, The Outdoor Partnership and Mountain Training Wales' "Mountaineering" stand at the National Eisteddfod.