



Cyngor Mynyddu Prydain Cymru – Gogledd  
BMC Cymru/Wales – North

## Annual Report Adroddiad Blynyddol November 2019

### Chair's Report

Perhaps naively, I started 2019 believing that my BMC Cymru focus this year would shift from deliberating the complex issues of BMC organisation and governance to dealing with local matters such as access, parking, competitions, meets, clubs, and all the other issues of immediate concern to members. In the event, there was a shift in emphasis away from UK-wide BMC issues, but the clear focus of my efforts, especially in the latter part of the year, became the future of the BMC in Wales with long tele-conferences and the production of a detailed paper by Neal Hockley. Neal's paper outlines the current problems faced by BMC Cymru in exerting influence on Welsh Government agencies and he offers a range of development options for consideration. A draft of that paper has already been commented on by the BMC Board, and by the ORG. After consequent refinement, the final version of the paper will be presented to the membership in Wales in the New Year, in the hope that a way forward can be agreed and then submitted in the form of a motion to the 2020 AGM, in June at Plas y Brenin. Finding consensus won't be easy; even defining the section of the membership which should be consulted about potential changes in Wales is fraught with difficulty when you consider, for example, individuals who identify as Welsh but have English addresses, or English clubs which own a hut in Wales. Given the direction of the debate in Wales during the last year, I feel vindicated in having pressed ahead with our own small questionnaire during our November meeting, the results of which created a baseline of membership opinion from which discussion could make progress.

Whichever option for the future of the BMC in Wales is eventually agreed (except for retaining the status quo) it is likely that the requirement for engagement by volunteers in Wales will increase. It is important that our aspiration for Wales is matched by our commitment to Wales!

Notwithstanding any future changes, life goes on, and it has been an eventful year for the BMC in North Wales with an International climbing meet, a Youth trad-climbing meet, two UK-wide important indoor climbing competitions and the Llanrwst Eisteddfod Genedlaethol all being successfully held in our area. My only disappointment (with the notable exception of the Eisteddfod) is that the local area is not contacted at the outset of the organisation of these events. Earlier collaboration between the Manchester office and the local area could result in more well-briefed volunteers, media exposure for the BMC and an appropriate language/cultural input for attendees. The local area doesn't want to take over the management of these events, but it can add value to them!

As ever, my thanks go to all those local members who did volunteer at these events, and thanks too to all those who have helped to organise local meetings and represented us on various committees and boards.

During the last year we decided to experiment with a team-approach to the local secretariat which supports the Chair,. This has worked well, despite the Manchester office suggesting that a single secretary be elected, and has allowed us to isolate the job of reintroducing the Newsletter, which appears before each local area meeting, informing members and facilitating more focused discussion. The latest iteration of the all-Wales Newsletter is embedded in the BMC web pages,

increasing accessibility and decreasing the local production effort.

My personal highlights of the last year have been attending national events which have had particular relevance for N Wales, including the Buxton AGM where Dan Lane and Andy Newton were recognised for their volunteering contributions, the Beacon Climbing Competitions where Welsh youngsters excelled themselves and the International meet which show-cased the best of Welsh rock to enthusiastic visitors from all over the world.

There have been five local area meetings since the last AGM in November 2018, held at various venues throughout N Wales, with approximately 30 members attending each meeting. Meetings were well-supported by BMC officers and post-holders Elfyn Jones, Dave Stanley, Dave Turnbull and Gareth Pierce. Gareth Pierce, in particular, is well-connected in Wales and provides us with important links between the local area, the Manchester Office and relevant agencies in Cardiff, such as Sport Wales.

In 2020, only four local area meetings, and an AGM, are scheduled.

The forthcoming local area AGM will see a number of officers and reps. either standing down, or expressing their willingness to stand down, before finishing in 2020. If you would like to volunteer to support BMC Cymru (Gogledd) by chairing meetings, by attending National Council, by taking on an organisational role, or by representing us in the area of hill-walking, please do contact me to discuss the possibilities. A team-working approach is much more desirable than single volunteers ..... or a vacancy!

As to my aspirations for 2020, I would like to see a motion passed at the BMC AGM which will settle the future shape of the BMC in Wales, I would like to see the Welsh Government's radical access proposals enshrined in law, I would like to see N. Wales become a working model for the happy co-existence of trad. and sports climbing, and I would like to see the BMC declare it's commitment to policies and actions which acknowledge our Climate Emergency.

Tim Jepson  
(Cadeirydd BMC Cymru Gogledd)

## **Mountain Training UK**

The main outcome from this year has been the completion of the Rock Climbing review, including renaming of the key climbing and mountaineering qualifications. They are now moving towards a review of all the walking awards which is due to be completed by 2021, so if members are providers or directors for these course, inputs are very welcome.

Good collaboration continues between councils and the revitalisation of the working group that happens at MTUK meetings has increased dialogue. It is useful to hear what colleagues are doing north of the border and across the water.

MTCymru has had a successful year and have recently issued its updated strategic plan for the next 3-5 years.

There has also been in an interesting and useful body of work released by MTUK about enhancement of training pathways for outdoor qualifications, this is the result of an ongoing PhD project by Will Hardy and can be accessed via MTUK at Siabod cottage.

Ross Worthington

## **National Council**

In the last 12 months, National Council has been heavily dominated by the ODG, and the huge amount of work they have been doing. A lot of this work is highly technical, and centres around legal matters and governance (neither of which we know anything about!). So, it's been a tough year with lots to get through, including the sensitive issue of increasing membership subs. However, we do feel as though we are now beginning to come out the other side of the ODG work with several workstreams getting close to showing results.

We are feeling particularly positive with the Wales-related areas of work. The great progress here is thanks in no small part due to Neal Hockley and Gareth Pierce! With any luck, we might be able to turn our thoughts back towards something more climbing/walking related soon.

One piece of work that has been quietly progressing in the background is that of refreshing the make-up and formation of the Council itself. That work will be implemented at some point in the next 12 months (hopefully!).

Although we are both happy to continue as NC reps for N Wales until the next area AGM, we do feel as though the transition to the new form of NC may be an appropriate point at which to step down from our roles, especially as attendance at meetings is becoming more difficult for each of us. Thank you Neal for stepping into the breach twice in the last year! For those of you keen to become a rep, now is a good time to show your interest .... just please don't all shout at once!

Dan Lane  
Anthony Eccles

## **Youth Development**

It's been a very productive year for the youth of North Wales. Finn Hayward has had an outstanding summer, ticking off the Brute (8b) at the Diamond in just two sessions. He also climbed Mind Control and Fish Eye (both 8c) at Oliana in Spain.

James McHaffie successfully hosted two BMC North Wales Youth meets with a total of 28 attendees, who spent the weekend trad climbing at a range of crags across North Wales.

The Beacon hosted the BMC's Welsh Championships and the BLCCs. In the Welsh Champs, Ruby Wood comfortably secured victory (and also a place on the GB Team) and Maisie Guilhem and Nel Owen both finished with bronze medals in their respective categories.

The BLCCs saw Jamie Jenkins make the final, in fine form. He is hoping to make selection for the GB Development Squad. Finn Hayward also secured a well-deserved third place.

Iona-May Lewis, Dylan Pye and Tom Healy have put in lots of great performances, frequently making the podium, at events such as the Adidas Rockstars, the Battle of Britain and the Boardroom Lights Out Competition.

The North Wales Youth Climbing Academy are a strong, enthusiastic and motivated bunch of climbers and we would hope that several of them will make the YCS final in Sheffield. Both the Boulder Hut (25th Jan) and the Beacon (9th Feb) will require as many volunteers as possible to help out with our future generation of aspiring athletes.

Jemma Powell

## Hill-walking

In June, the BMC's first Hillwalking Development Officer, Carey Davies, moved on to edit TGO magazine, after six years in the job. That post will not be replaced at present, but existing staff will cover key aspects of hillwalking work, including the final stages of the Mend our Mountains campaign.

The BMC Board asked the Hillwalking Implementation Group to organise a follow-up event to the 2018 Hillwalking symposium and this has now been arranged for 14+15<sup>th</sup> March 2020, in Ambleside, after no suitable venue could be found in The Brecon Beacons.

The Changing Behaviours conference in Manchester (14 November) will address the environmental 'big issues' and therefore be of great interest to hillwalkers wanting to reduce their impact on the uplands.

At the September National Council meeting, a motion was passed which urged the BMC Board to ... ' .... ensure that future work plans and resource allocation ..... properly embrace the hill walking aspects of (the) strategic plan .... '

Local areas are encouraged to appoint more than one hill-walking rep. to help support hill-walking interests.

I will be standing down as hillwalking rep. at this 2019 AGM, so we will urgently need a volunteer, or volunteers, to take my place.

Anthony Eccles

## Mountain Training Cymru

Mountain Training Cymru introduced their new Rock Skills courses this year which may be of interest to members looking to improve their climbing skills. For those that like their TLAs, the MIA is now the MCI or Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor.

A review of the MT walking qualifications has begun and will continue through 2020, it will look at pathways, aligning syllabi and developing a 'Leadership and Decision Making' model.

Matt Woodfield

## Access (N. Wales Limestone)

1) BMC worked with British Trust for Ornithology and the Great Orme Country Park wardens to agree a climbing restriction on Mayfair Wall, upper Pen Trwyn, that resulted in three young choughs successfully fledging. A great result for climbing and conservation and climbers also assisted with the ringing of the choughs at the end of the season.

2) Lower Pen Trwyn descent path - lots of meetings and discussions that didn't really seem to get anywhere but it seems that in principle we can go ahead and build some steps on the lower part of the descent gully, as long as they are not visible from above in case they encourage "tourists" to try to get down the gully!

3) Pigeon's Cave seals - Seals were breeding here in autumn 2018 and again in 2019 and again climbers observed the restrictions and at least one seal pup was successfully reared here.

4) Bolted belay stations on upper Pen Trwyn - the BMC has an obligation to maintain these in order to maintain access for climbing above the Marine Drive. These are inspected on a rolling, three-year programme by volunteers from the North Wales bolt fund. A few more volunteers are really required to help with this to keep this going. Without this, the BMC's insurance becomes invalid and climbing would be banned above the Marine Drive!

5) Seals at Angel Bay - this has become one of the most important seal breeding colonies on the North Wales coastline and it's likely that further restrictions may be required here in the spring time

when the seals haul out to moult and breed.

6) Craig Ty Newydd Dyserth - the previous owner sadly passed away and in addition there are new owners of the Pheasant pens below the crag. Access for climbing is still permitted but the restrictions starts slightly earlier, on Sept 1st.

7) Craig y Forwyn - situation unchanged. Bob Jones still allows access to the top of the crag, for parking and to the left hand side. Hogans own the central section but at this time state that they cannot allow access for climbing and are not currently in a position to agree a sale or lease of the land to the BMC but will be open to further discussions if/when planning issues at the caravan park are resolved. The right hand side was owned by an absentee owner who seemed to tolerate climbing access but it seems that very recently the farm, (Pentre Du) was sold. BMC will be contacting the new owners to attempt to negotiate an access agreement.

8) Parking at Llanddulas Caves. There were some complaints by residents about climbers parking in front of houses in the streets below the crag. Some friendly discussions with the resident and advice on parking away from the houses seems to have resolved the issues.

Andy Boorman  
Elfyn Jones

## **Climbing Walls**

No report