

## SHREWSBURY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB: COMMITTEE LIST

www.shrewsburymc.com

Email: mail@shrewsburymc.com

Chairman	Mike Jones	01743 884592
Secretary	Jan Campbell	01743 236692
Treasurer	Frank Maiden	01743 246904
News Editor	Dave Laddiman	01694 771439
Committee Member	Jackie Eyre	01743 236877
Committee Member	Matt Akers	01743 236441
Committee Member	Steph Williams	01743 232561
Committee Member	Pete McAree	01743 850339
Committee Member	Annie Blayney	01743 367092

### HOUSENOTES

- Well, never thought I would see a proper winter again like we have just enjoyed, it was quite like the old days (1980's). North Wales has had its best winter climbing season for nearly two decades, as has the Lakes, and Scotland. It's been a real pleasure to get the snow and ice hardware out again... and I even managed some cross-country skiing on Wenlock Edge. The downside though is that there have been a number of fatalities, particularly in North Wales, a harsh reminder that respect, competence, and good judgment remain essential in the winter hills. Now lets look forward to a good summer.
- **The AGM** was well attended as usual, even if there were a few less of us there this year. The full minutes are available near the end of this edition, but those of you who usually skip reading it will want to know that Seamus McCann won this years Harry Gregory Trophy for rock climbing above and beyond what might reasonably have been expected of him, on the magnificent Motorhead, in Switzerland. Also, we managed to get the four trustees of Clwt y Bel in the room at the same time, so above is a photo so you will know them next time you see them. They are, from left to right – Roger Skews, Gordon Croxton, Mike Jones, and Arthur Osbourne. They have regular meetings every 49 years!!

- **Clwt y Bel Work Weekend 27-29 March**

The club cottage now has plastic double glazing throughout, and more improvement and upgrading is anticipated throughout the year. There is therefore lots to do on this work weekend, both inside and out, and easy and technical. Please come if you can to help out with the work. As usual, Rose will on Saturday be providing lunch, and a table will be booked at the Vaynol for the evening. If you can only make Sunday, there will probably still be quite a lot to be done. Alternatively, if you would prefer a bit of mountaineering, Jan will be organising a traverse of the Glyders on the Sunday, starting from Ogwen Cottage at 10.00am (but check with Jan to be sure.)

- **SMC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Club Clothing**

As you may have seen, a number of club members are now turning up at the Tuesday evening pub wearing their new kit. If you would like some yourself, Steph will be happy to show you what is available (there is a lot of choice) and take your order. See him on any Tuesday evening, or contact him on 01743 232561...(Or Email him on [kingotheroad@hotmail.com](mailto:kingotheroad@hotmail.com)).

- **Make a date for a May Bank Holiday break at Clwt y Bel (1-4 May)**

Club members will have free and exclusive use, and Jan will be planning things to do on each day if you want to be organised. Contact her as soon as you can.

- **Argentiere, Chamonix Mont Blanc. 11-25 July**

As it's the anniversary year we are anticipating a good turnout for this fortnight. The area is one of the most dramatic in Western Europe with unrivalled opportunities for everything and everybody; from full on mountaineering, to gentle walks, mountain biking, parapenting, shopping, and so on. Its not too early to get organised, and Mike Jones (01743 884592) has already booked some self catering accommodation in the village, and will book more on request; and if you are thinking of camping, there is a handy site on the edge of the village. So, make a decision to come for all or part of the fortnight, and make it a memorable holiday!

**Dave Laddiman**

## **LAKES MEET – ACHILLE RATTI HUT 16-18 January – Liz Carr**

Several people asked if I was going on this weekend to "Kill a Rat Eh"? Surely not! I googled the name to find that the location was not in Scotland or Ireland as I imagined, but at Dunmail Raise, in the Lakes. An easily identifiable listed building stood outside – "The AA Box"- I expect some SMC members are of an age to have an original AA key to open the box where they used to pick up their AA Book?!

Despite an unfavourable weather forecast, several walks were accomplished.

I favoured a direct ascent of Helvellyn from Dunmail Raise, and learnt about the local sheep, which were rounded up for me by Jess for closer examination. Views appeared between storm clouds in all directions. A large party targeted the Dodds, cunningly going south to north in order to be going in the same direction as the (high) wind almost all the way, although it did involve a walk back along the road afterwards. Runners gave the impression of major exercise, which included teashops at Grasmere. A select party reported on the Kenmore Horseshoe.

Congratulations to Rose, who provided food by proxy, a veritable feast enjoyed by all 31 or 32 people attending this meet. Evening entertainment consisted of after dinner activities arranged by our resident games mistress (Annie). Lounge games consisted of hand crafted giant Jenga, and much whisky drinking into the wee small hours. The hut was quite warm by Sunday when the open fire had heated the walls.

The location of the weekend provided easy access to retail therapy for some. On the Sunday I enjoyed a recommended trip to Blackwell House, whilst mountaineering pursuits were achieved by other members, and included Blencathra.

Overall, a well-attended meet, a chance to catch up on traditional SMC stories and get to know people better. There is an array of impressive mountaineering achievements within the membership, which also has a variety of talents, including Seamus singing a memorable song about a mallard. I look forward to the next meet.

## **AND DODDERING ROUND THE DODS – Jeff Morton**

"We want to do some hills with the wind behind us today" said Jan.

"Good idea" said the other dodderers, hoping for some wind assistance.

So, off we went up the side of the Stanah Gill stream to Sticks Pass.

Clear views south to a snow covered Helvellyn, including a ski tow !

The wind strengthened and we weakened !

Early stop for lunch behind a wall, but the wind was causing white horses on my Earl Grey tea.

June had one of her many comfort stops, then tagged along with another group going in the wrong direction. She soon realized her mistake, as they were walking at a normal pace.

There was a debate about which way to go down.

John Howard headed off to find a way, disappeared, and didn't look back for his companions.

I was concerned for his safety, because I had lent him a pair of socks.

The rest of us walked to Clough Head then down a reasonable descent to an old road, then back along the main road to the cars.

## **THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CLWT-Y-BEL WAY – 1 February**

When the first leg was walked from the Severn footbridge by the Guildhall in Shrewsbury all the way to Nesscliffe, by over 30 members, a number of children, and as many dogs. The weather was kind, and the children were keen. Lots of congratulations to Jackie for carrying out this mammoth task so well!!!!

## **IF YOU ARE A MOUNTAIN BIKER KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT – Rick Robson**

Mud contaminated with sheep faeces made 161 mountain bikers ill after an event at Powys, says the National Public Health Service for Wales. The NPHS and environmental health colleagues at Powys County Council launched the investigation earlier this year following information received from riders who took part in a Mountain Bike Marathon in Builth Wells on 5 and 6 July 2008. Staff at the NPHS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in Cardiff launched an internet based questionnaire to investigate the outbreak and e-mailed an invitation to participate to 664 of the mountain bikers who took part in the event. A total of 355 responses were received, with 161 reporting symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting following the event. All responses were used to investigate the risk factors to which the race participants were exposed. The report gives details of this investigation and concludes that the outbreak was probably caused by *Campylobacter*, spread to the cyclists by mud, which was contaminated with sheep faeces. The heavy overnight rain is likely to have contributed to the outbreak by increasing the amount of liquid mud on the course. The report concludes by making recommendations for both the participants and organizers of such events with the aim of reducing the risk of similar outbreaks in the future. Dr Sian Griffiths of the NPHS said: "We have been delighted with the help we have received from the mountain bikers when investigating this outbreak of illness. We would also like to thank the race organizers for their co-operation and our colleagues in Environmental Health at Powys County Council. We hope that this report and the recommendations within it will help reduce the risk of something like this happening again."

## **BHUTAN BIKING ADVENTURE – Jean Bollom**

This was going to be a special trip for me as it was the first time I could plan a holiday during `term time`, having just retired from teaching.

And so it proved to be.....

Bhutan... The Land of the Thunder Dragon, is no ordinary place. This is the country where the rice is red and where chillies aren't just a seasoning but the entire dish. It's a deeply Buddhist land, where men wear a tunic to work, where giant protective penises are painted on the walls of most houses, and where Gross National Happiness is deemed more important than Gross National Product! Tourism is seen as 'low impact' but 'high value' for which you pay a premium! At least you feel that your hard earned money is being put back into the country's infrastructure with 60% of the cost of the holiday going towards free education and health care for the Bhutanese.

To see Western Bhutan by leg power rather than from a tourist vehicle was the way to go. We were able to experience the most amazing scenery ..... *long uphill climbs, 35 to 60 km, on single switchback roads reaching high passes, the highest being at 3984m, and looking across the deeply gorged and forested landscape with 7000m snow capped Himalayan peaks beyond* and then ..... *long descents into the valleys, seeing monkeys, yaks, amazing birds and vegetation, and prayer flags everywhere.*

In the valleys we encountered the friendly local people and children going about their daily routines. It was harvest time and people were out on the terraces threshing, cutting, collecting and bailing, without a machine in sight. Chillies were drying on the rooftops of the highly decorated houses. The children were keen to practice their English and would run alongside us asking "What is your name?" and "Where are you going?"

The Bhutanese were constantly amused at the sight of 12 pale-skinned, helmeted and lycra-clad cyclists weaving through their villages and descending local footpaths and trails! But we felt close to the landscape and the people, and each day brought new experiences and appreciation of this very special place. We visited many of the wonderfully decorated Dzongs and Goembas. The highlight being 'The Tigers Nest' which is perched high on a cliff top and involves a precarious 1000m uphill climb to reach it.

We cycled up three major passes, all over 3000m, and descended off-road single tracks through Chir pine forests, and covered over 400km and 7000m of ascent in 10 days cycling. We were able to feel some of the pride and love the Bhutanese people have for their King and Country. The young king's coronation happened whilst we were there and the flags and celebrations added to the immense colour and spectacle of this beautiful country.

But for me the highlight was cycling down into the Phobjikha valley as the endangered and rare Black-necked cranes were arriving on winter migration from China. We camped in below freezing temperatures but enjoyed shooting stars by the campfire at night and ate breakfast outdoors amongst the cranes the next morning. Magic moments!

I feel very privileged to have been able to visit such a place and the amazing views of Everest and most of the other 8000m Himalayan Peaks as I flew out of Bhutan was the icing on the cake.

## **A NICE WINTER'S STROLL – Gerry Adams**

Oh God will it never end! This interminable powder snow, knee deep and no support for the slightest body weight, I imagine that if a tiny wren were to attempt to land it would slowly sink from view never to be seen again until a thaw set in, it's weight too great for this gossamer surface. So my thoughts ran as I ploughed through the glorious scenery attempting to reach the summit of Beinn Chabair. I had set out from the Drovers Inn in mist, the roads clad in a coating of hard ice and trees rimed with ice. It had dropped to -8 the previous night and everything above 200m was quilted in perfect whiteness, how I love walking in winter, the day promised much and delivered more. I slipped and slid up the mountainside, hard ice underfoot and just a little higher I anticipated cramponing my way up firm crisp neve to another Munro summit. I reached the snow line, it was so beautiful, the low morning sun made the snow scintillate like a million lost diamonds scattered carelessly across the mountain side, days like these are to be savoured, it was a delight to be there, a delight to be alone surrounded by utter winter perfection. The snow was unconsolidated and deep as I strode along the gurgling Ben Glas Burn, no path to be seen and no other footprint to sully this wonderful scene. I was the first to walk this way since this snow had fallen. It was my virgin trail to break so break it I did.

After a mile of this, oh so soft oh so deep, virgin snow I began to wonder when it would begin to firm up, It was getting slightly tedious having to churn through this stuff. Oh well it'll be easier going higher up I naively thought. And so higher I went. I struck out and up towards the slopes of the Meall nan Tarmachan. The snow refused to get firmer, but willingly became deeper; knee deep and now crotch deep. 'Crikey' I thought, 'this is rather blooming tiring' as I slogged up the steepening mountainside (In reality of course I had recourse to, language of a rather more Anglo Saxon flavour). This beautiful day was rapidly deteriorating into a character building challenge.

And so it went on. The ridge to Beinn Chabair is a broad roller coaster of a route and in firm snow I can believe an absolute delight. In these conditions it was an appalling torture. When I reached the top of Meall nan Tarmachan, I was tired. Surely in these temperatures the snow must get firmer, please PLEASE. It didn't. This was becoming really tough. 'I'm not sure I can do this', 'go on, push on just a little further'.

The snow was not beautiful now; the snow was a foe, a sworn enemy whose only intent was to tear every ounce of energy from my rapidly tiring body. This is not fun, this is not pleasure, this is hell. I must stop, but I don't. Just a little further just a little higher. 'I really must stop, this is just too hard, I can not possibly reach the top and get down in daylight' My world had now reduced to an argument with myself and a whole universe of pain, a fierce burning in my thighs and bursting lungs, 'why am I doing this, turn back turn back'; but I don't.

And then miraculously I see the summit cairn, two hundred yards and it is mine. I cheer and whoop in triumph and pain when I reach the Summit. No time to savour this hardest won summit, only time for a photo or two and to watch the sun begin to plunge toward the horizon. All I have to do now is endure the descent. A descent wreathed in exhaustion and cramp and watched over by the glittering stars. After eight and a half hours and two and a half hours later than anticipated I limp into the bar of the Drovers Inn and order a pint of the finest beer I have ever tasted.

## **ESCAPE FROM DANGER MOUNTAIN OR HOW TO GET LOST IN THE CUILLINS – Dave Laddiman**

It was a sunny summers day on Skye, so we thought we might just wander up a couple of the Red Cuillins to enjoy the views. The car was left on the main road by the rather lovely Loch Rainort; and we flogged up the almost endless bog and tussocky slopes towards our first objective, the modestly sized Belig at 702m. The NE ridge, when eventually reached, was nicely rocky, and the summit offered a little hollow out of the rising wind to sit and gaze westwards at the Cuillin panorama before us

After a while we thought we should continue our little odyssey, and started down the surprisingly steep NW ridge to the col below the rather bigger Garbh Bheinn, (806m). We noticed that a cloud had come along, and the summit of our next objective had disappeared. No problem, the steep scree covered SE ridge was obvious enough, with steep craggy cliffs on either side to keep us from straying. In the descending clag, it started to get cold, and the visibility got rather poor. But the ridge levelled out near the top, just like the map said it should, and we followed a faint path just below the ridge crest, to stay out of the now cold NE wind blowing in from Raasay. Our path ended in a steep drop into nothing, but a little scramble up right led us onto the top of the ridge, and what was obviously the summit. We sat down for lunch, facing the NE wind, and if it hadn't been for the clag, we would have seen Raasay and our car 800 metres below us

We knew from the map and the route description that we had to carefully descend the North edge of a huge and precipitous NE facing coire, so we retraced our steps a little and tried to descend in the required direction. Cliffs! Back to where we had had lunch. Try directly eastward. Cliffs! Return to lunch spot to start worrying. This wasn't what we had anticipated. We eventually concluded that the only safe thing to do in the circumstances was to retrace our route of ascent, so we walked SE towards the path we had walked up. It wasn't there, but a cliff was!

We returned to our lunch spot, and sat down facing the NE wind as before, and did some serious worrying. Then we noticed that the wind had gone round 180 degrees, and was behind us. Was this possible? After a tense discussion we concluded that it was very unlikely, but we remained convinced that we were still sitting facing NE. But we could easily check by looking at our compass. It said we were facing SW! But hang on, this is the Cuillins, compasses don't always work here, so we checked with the other compass, it said the same thing.

So there we were, on top of an increasingly cold and damp Cuillin that appeared to have no way down it, close to a big and very steep coire (we had seen it on the way up), and we didn't have the faintest recollection of which way we were facing. To try and descend the wrong way could be serious, it really was getting rather cold and damp now, and we weren't dressed for these conditions; so we had to do something, the right thing, pretty soon. We concluded we had no option but to trust our compasses, and hope that the Red Cuillins did not compromise their accuracy as much as we had been told that the Black Cuillins did.

We walked/scrambled very carefully NE; down dauntingly steep loose ground; until we came to a cliff. Could this be the edge of the coire? We couldn't see much in the murk, but carried on down following the edge of the cliff for what seemed ages.....until the wind blew a patch of cloud away, and there, far below us, was a road. And a car, our car, which, after another hour or so we very gratefully climbed into, still mystified as to how two climbers with over 70 years experience between them could have got it so wrong.

## SPRING EVENTS

<b>27 - 29 MARCH</b>	<b>CLWT-Y-BEL WORK WEEKEND</b>	<b>Mike Jones – 01743 884592</b>
	Always sociable. Work on the cottage on Saturday (Rose usually provides lunch), evening in the Vaynol and on Sunday get out on the hill with Jan.	
<b>4 - 11 APRIL</b>	<b>SPAIN</b>	<b>Dave Laddiman – 01694 771439</b>
	A week of sun-kissed rock climbing or hill walking on the Costa Blanca, staying at the delightful seaside town of Calpe. Apartment accommodation 5 minutes from the sea and adjoining the town centre. Contact me soon to arrange flights etc.	
<b>18 - 19 APRIL</b>	<b>BLACK MOUNTAINS</b>	<b>Steph Williams – 01743 232561</b>
	A weekend (or day) walking and/or biking in this rather neglected but delightful area of the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons . . . and camping next to a rather nice pub.	
<b>1 - 4 MAY</b>	<b>CLWT-Y-BEL</b>	<b>Committee</b>
	May Bank holiday weekend in the quiet of our club cottage, close to all the walking, climbing and biking in Snowdonia. Clwt-y-Bel should have double glazing by then too!	
<b>10 MAY</b>	<b>ARENIG FAWR</b>	<b>Jackie Eyre – 01743 236877</b>
	A day walk over the big Arenig, possibly taking in Moel Llyfnant in a wonderfully empty area!	
<b>23 - 30 MAY</b>	<b>ISLE OF SKYE</b>	<b>Jan Campbell – 01743 236692</b>
	A week on the majestic Isle. The big island that's got the lot. The best mountaineering in Britain. The Black and Red Cuillins, Portree. The Old Man of Storr, The Quiraing, The Trotternish Ridge, beaches, islands, eagles and a distillery. The week will be based at Portree either camping or hiring one or more cottages.	
<b>14 JUNE</b>	<b>SNOWDONIA</b>	<b>Dave Laddiman – 01694 7714397</b>
	Walking, scrambling, or climbing, or even all three; probably meeting at Capel Curig Pinnacle Café to decide what to do on the day. More information nearer the time.	
<b>26 - 28 JUNE</b>	<b>WELSH 3000s</b>	<b>Jan Campbell – 01743 236692</b>
	A weekend at Clwt-Y-Bel to go walking and climbing in the North Wales hills on some of the longest days of the year or you could attempt the best mountaineering challenge in North Wales, the 14 3000s with backup from club members if wanted. If you call yourself a mountaineer you have to do this at least once!	

<b>11 - 25 JULY</b>	<b>ARGENTIERE FRENCH ALPS</b>	<b>Mike Jones – 01743 884592</b>
<p>Join Mike for up to a fortnight in one of the most famous areas of the Western Alps. Argentiere is a fairly small village with a choice of camping and apartment facilities (Mike has done a lot of research, so contact him for all the base camp information). A few miles up the valley from the bustling resort of Chamonix . . . with stunning views of the Dru's and Mont Blanc. The area is a big outdoor playground, with big mountains, high and low level walks, mountain and valley rock climbing, mountain biking, and much more.</p>		
<b>26 SEPTEMBER</b>	<b>SMC 50TH BIRTHDAY DINNER</b>	<b>The Committee</b>
<p>A date for your diary. All the information in the May edition.</p>		