

The Pinnacle

Newsletter of Gwent Mountaineering Club

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Fostering
mountaineering
In South East Wales
for
over 25 years

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Meerbrook Meet

Friday 16 June turned out to be a lovely sunny day. Dawn picked me up at 9.00am and Carole Fereday and Sara Dickinson travelled up with us. We were very lucky as we encountered no traffic problems, and after a tea stop, arrived at Dovedale at 1.00pm where we were meant to rendezvous with Stuart and Keith. However, due to lack of mobile phone signal, we were unable to contact each other and missed the connection.

Dovedale is very picturesque and, having picnicked by the river, we girls decided against climbing Thorpe Cloud (too hot) and took the easy option of a river bank walk. We had to cross the famous Stepping Stones of course and passed rocks called the Twelve Apostles, Lovers Leap, a huge cave called Dove Hole and ended up in Mildale, a pretty little village with an old pack horse bridge.

Robbie and Ian stopped on the way to the hostel and cycled the Manifold Way.

Dawn's entourage arrived at the hostel about 6pm to be greeted by a friendly volunteer warden named Ivor. Ivor told me that the hostel is one of those earmarked for closure because the Water Board, who own the land, have put up the rent from £1,000 p.a. to £30,000 – rather a hike in anybody's language. The hostel is an old school in the small village of Meerbrook,



Meerbrook Youth Hostel



On Kinder Scout (Photos by Peter Salenieks)

pleasantly situated near Tittesworth Reservoir. It was nicely set out – but the problem was that there is only one shower for the 22 beds available, which caused a bit of queue on Saturday night in the rush for the pub!

On Saturday Steve Warr led a 13 mile walk up Kinder Scout. Eleven of us followed him for a climb and scramble up Grindisbrook Clough at the start but, once on top, it was flat. The plan was to do the edges as it is very peaty and boggy in the middle. The views were spectacular, with loads of rocky outcrops and of course, the ladies in the group just had to have a photograph taken on Mad Woman's Stones. We also passed rocks named Ringing Roger (our own Rocking Roger was on the Baltic at the time). For the most part the peat was fairly firm as we had had a spell of good weather. Unfortunately Ted took a giant leap into a not-so-firm bit and sunk up over

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his knees. Whilst he stood there, unable to move with only his sticks to hold him up, his own party were in stitches laughing and searching for their cameras (sorry Ted!). It took another (temporarily displaced) group to actually take charge of the situation and pull him out, with a deal of difficulty. We did get the photos of course, and it was the talking point of the weekend. It was decreed that henceforth from that day forward Ted should be known as Swampy of the Peat District. Bless him, he took it all in good



Mad Woman's Stones

part and joined in the fun, but he will never live it down. Steve did an excellent job on the navigation because it was very difficult terrain. He guided us across the top amongst peat hags some 8 feet high in places which looked more like Hampton Court Maze, and then descended via Grindislow Knoll. Well done Steve, and thank you.

In traditional hostelling fashion, we spent the Saturday evening in the Lazy Trout pub, a stone's throw from the hostel, where 21 of us ate a hearty meal and imbibed liquid refreshment. Besides the members in the hostel, we also had members who camped. These included Trevor and Anne Marie, Keith Anderson, John Balmforth and a new member Steve Brady. Roberta Cameron



The Roaches and Hen Cloud from Tittesworth Reservoir

and Dave Beer came over from Macclesfield to join us for the meal. There was an equal mix of climbers and walkers and we all sat around drinking and chatting. It was great to see so many people and there was a lovely atmosphere in the pub, where we had a room to ourselves. (No gossip to report, everyone behaved themselves – even me.)

Unfortunately though, it was at the pub we discovered that Gareth had fallen whilst climbing during the day and he was in pain with his ankle. The landlady of the Lazy Trout looked after him by bringing him ice to reduce the swelling and he went off early on Sunday morning to get it checked out.

On Sunday I was due make my debut by "leading" (I use the term loosely) where I hadn't done a recky, and where I would have to think on my feet – always dangerous! Having cleaned up the hostel, we left about 9.30am for a walk in and around The Roaches and Hen Cloud. I waved goodbye to Trevor and Anne Marie who were parked in the road and set off with my 12 followers with great gusto towards the reservoir – which was totally the wrong direction! The correct route was back past the hostel where Trev and Anne Marie were still parked. I did try to convince them that we had done an 8 mile walk and why

were they still there, but they weren't convinced. Did I feel silly! In my defence, I have done very little leading and did it show! When we did eventually get to The Roaches, with the help of my friends, we met up with some of our climbers. Trev and Eli were on The Roaches and a larger party on Hen Cloud. We ate our lunch on Hen Cloud where we watched the climbers doing their thing. You know, the v. diffs, severes and E6 thingies !!?? Judging by the number of people on the rocks and the number of cars parked up the road as far as the eye could see, it is obviously a very popular area for climbing.

Once back at the hostel, we sat in the garden eating our final indulgence of a lovely chocolate cake, which Eli had kindly brought up for us, before all going our separate ways. Dawn dropped me off about 6.30pm on Sunday after another trouble free journey home.

I for one had a lovely relaxing time, made all the better for the good company I was in. I hope everyone enjoyed it. Thank you all for coming and making it such a pleasant break.

Dave Simcock recounted that the climbing contingent spent a very happy couple of days there. For some it was their first venture on the famous gritstone. These are the crags of legend, where Don Whillans, Joe Brown and others cut their teeth 50 years ago. It was certainly very different from our usual limestone to climb on! Great friction, but a distinct lack of positive holds. Lots of strenuous crack and chimney work, and friction slabs with a definite scarcity of protection. At the end of the day, you knew you had been working hard, as those in the pub on Saturday night will have observed! Very interesting, and very enjoyable. Many classic 3 star VS's and other routes were climbed. Alas, no one ventured on the fearsome looking *Sloth*. Maybe next time!

BBQ Launches Celebration

Over forty members gathered for the annual BBQ in July, which was combined with a walk over Craig-y-dorth led by Roy Silverthorne.

Dave Simcock, Club Chairman, announced that the BBQ is the first event in a series planned to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Gwent Mountaineering Club.



Special thanks are due to Ian and Carol Wixon for putting on a magnificent spread. Slices of a special cake, which was baked in the shape of a rucksack, were shared out as climbers and walkers swapped stories in the gathering dusk whilst the red orb of the sun sank over the Black mountains.