

# THE FORTNIGHTLY FAFF

The Periodical Journal of the Mercian Mountaineering Club

Jan 2015

## KALYMNOS

Stories of bolt clipping, and the meat sweats from the idyllic Greek sport climbing mecca

## CONNISTON MEET

Prospective members Emma and Tom Mead rate their first Mercian meet

## SCOTTISH + WINTER

Photos, ramblings and a watercolour from the New Year meet in Crianlarich

## AGM REPORT

Whoa there, don't be too hasty in turning to the next page, this is important stuff don't you know!

...AND A WHOLE LOT MORE



### A word from the editor

Happy new year everyone. I hope that where ever you were and whatever you did you had a good time of it. If you weren't lucky enough to be on the New Year meet in Crianlarich you really missed out on a great event. Even a bit of poor weather couldn't dampen the spirits of the 20 or so people we crammed into the Ochills Mountaineering Club hut. I missed out on the big first big mountain day when a few of our members bagged a classic grade III winter route in Glen Coe but I was pretty happy with the two days I went out on. Even those folks who arrived a few days after me and copped the worst of the weather still had a great time thanks to the fine communal cuisine, new year's eve ceileidh, games of fuzzy duck and trips to the pub.

For me the meets are the most important part of club life and thanks to our outgoing meets sec Karl Stewart, and incoming meets sec Julie Taylor we have a bumper year planned. Check out the club's calendar via the website to see what is going on and where. Personally I can't wait for the the Easter meet which will be at the Lagangarbh hut in Glen Coe. Lagangarbh is one of the best venues in the UK with a phenomenal location at the foot of Buchaille Etive Mor. Now then, Matt Kettle might say that "The Buckle" is an over rated Munro but that's because he's never stood on the summit after an ascent of the brilliant Curved Ridge (scramble grade III) or Agag's Groove (one of Scotland's most famous multi pitch Vdiff's). There's plenty of walking to be had too and the mighty Clachaig Inn is a only a short drive down the Glen. In fact, if you walk the Aonach Eagach ridge you happen to end up right by the Clachaig - I'm up for it!

Stew.



# Weekend Warriors

Fabian still smiling after the third almighty pull up the hillside at Bike Park Wales

Photo : **Stewart Moody**







## Weekend Warriors

Jodi partaking in a little cross country skiing in Norway

Photo : **Simon Hodgson**





## Weekend Warriors

With complete disregard for the paintwork of his car Huw secures the bikes onto the roof before setting off to Bike Park Wales

Photo : Stewart Moody





by Stewart Moody

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**One of the great things about the charming island paradise of Kalymnos is its location – it's a little off the beaten track.** You step from the aircraft onto the runway at Kos airport and the warmth of the afternoon sun and a fresh coastal breeze welcomes you. But you're not even on the right island yet. The airport is tiny and it takes only a few moments to waltz through customs, grab your bags and jump into a taxi bound for the jetty at Mastachari, 15 minutes away on the north coast of Kos. This is where the ferry to Kalymnos departs from. It's a little over an hour of sailing on an open deck ferry as the sun sets gloriously over the deep blue Mediterranean. The thirsty ones among you might grab a beer from the bar below deck. The ferry docks at Pothia, the small capital town of Kalymnos from where another taxi will whisk you away to the coastal village of Massouri on the other side of the island.

Any way, that's enough of the

Judith Chalmers tourist rubbish,

we're here now so bring on the climbing

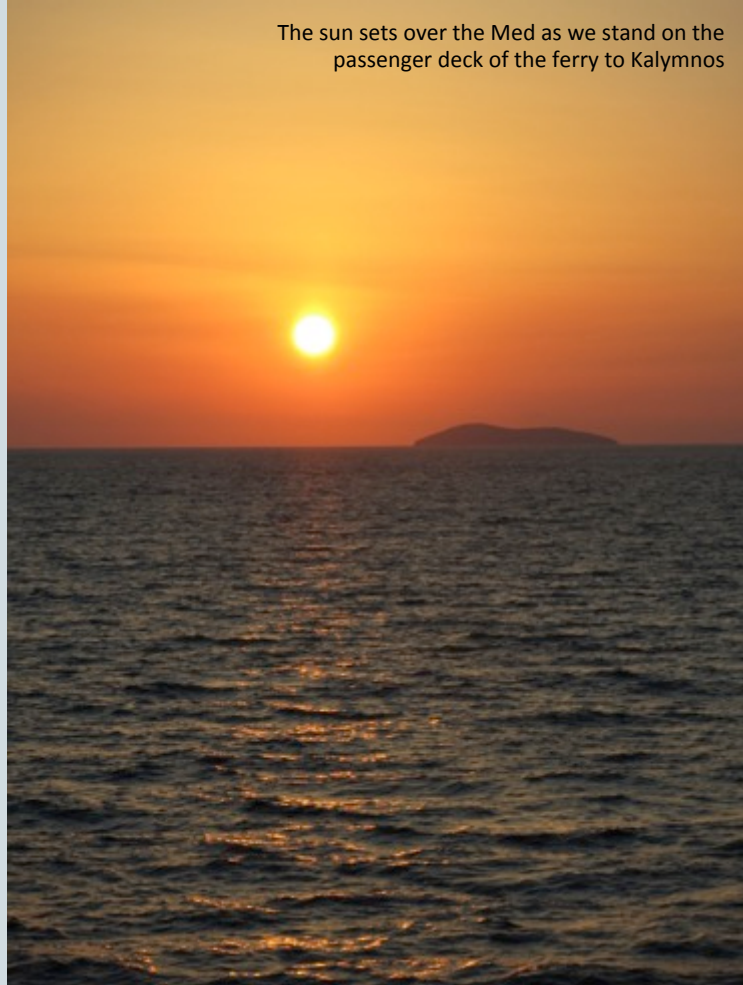
and bring on the good times.

## ARHI

**Day 1 was a warm up day at Arhi, a sweep of red and grey rocks with a good combination of gentle slabs and fun tufas.** We stocked up on snacks from the local shop and then Pierce who had rented a car for the week drove us 15 minutes down the coastal road to the crag. The fact that this was our first day didn't stop me bagging a 6a+ which I was delighted with. The quality of rock is magnificent and the bolts are nicely spaced. The crag caught the sun from early morning and we did several routes before eating lunch to the sound of braying donkeys in the village below. We climbed for the rest of the afternoon, swapping climbing partners from time to time until the sun hung low enough in the sky that a sense of cold crept in. Satisfied, we headed back to Massouri and made straight to Snack Bar Fatolitis for a few high value beers. Thirsts quenched and tales of climbing derring-do shared we popped back to the apartment to shower, then back to Fatolitis for another beer and then on to a restaurant. You'll see a pattern of our evening activities emerging in due course; it would seem that we climbers are creatures of habit.

**On day 2 we caught the boat across to the small island of Telendos to see what the climbing there had to offer.** Pierce and Tom got off first at the island's only village (20 houses, no cars, no roads - you get the idea) as they had plumped for the 9 pitch classic of Wild Country (6a) which would take most of the day to reach, climb and descend. Fran jumped off here too for a walk along the island's coastline. Vicki, Luke and I stayed on the boat a while longer before hopping off onto the rocky coastline immediately below Irox. Time to climb. I was pretty pleased with my dogged 6b+ attempt on Swordfish, a thin tufa followed by a steep headwall whilst Luke flew up Helveltyx (6c+) with ease. Fran joined us for lunch and Tom and Pierce arrived later in the afternoon wearing big smiles. The boat returned to pick us up at 4:30pm and we repeated our evening ritual – beers – shower – beers – dinner – one last beer – bed. In fairness to ourselves we did mix it up a little, on this particular evening Pierce had an Ouzo, and then he had a beer.

## IROX





# GRAND GROTTTO

**Day 3 or "Big Friday" as we called it was due to be something special.** Not only was it Pierce's birthday but we were planning on walking upto the Grand Grotto, a cave of cathedral proportions and the cornerstone of Kalymnos's fame. Here we hoped to lead some of the hardest routes we had earmarked for the trip. First up to lead was Vicki who bagged Happy Girlfriend (5c+) which is known for having one of the best top-out views on the island. Like so many good routes the crux was right at the top and so excited was Vicki to reach the chains that she wholly forgot to turn around for the view and lowered right off. Not so happy girlfriend! Tom was up next, so she clipped her camera onto his harness with firm instructions to take a photo from the top. Pierce the birthday boy armed with an emergency maillion we'd presented him with that morning along with his card was obviously wearing his best pair of testicles as he decided to go for Elephantenhimmel (7a+). This might be the most 3D climb you'll ever see and travels through 30 meters of tufas, stalactities, jugs and holes before the crux at the last bolt. Luke who had led this 2 years ago was the encouraging belayer.

Luke - "that's it mate, you're doing well"  
Pierce - "is it that way, up there?"  
Luke - "left mate, keep left"  
Pierce - <much grunting>  
Luke - "that's it mate, your doing well"  
Pierce - "Jesus, Mary and Joseph"  
Luke - "keep going left, nice one"  
Pierce - "round here?" <pointing>  
Luke - "yes, keep left"  
Pierce - "Are you sure?"  
Luke - "Yes mate"  
Stew - <scratches his head>  
Stew - "erm, don't you mean right Luke?"  
Luke - <uncomfortable pause>  
Luke - "Oh! Yes to your right, sorry"  
Pierce - "Eh?"  
Luke - "Mate, go right"  
Pierce - <much grunting>  
Pierce - "TAKE!"

Pierce did make it to the crux but was defeated despite a valiant effort.

Pierce reaches the crux of the incredible Elephantenhimmel (7a+) in the Grand Grotto





Now that the Pierce show was concluded Luke took center stage. For the past few days he'd been talking about Trela, a super hard, super steep 7a+. With a small amount of trepidation he walked to the base of it and tied in. In true Luke style he cleaned it – an amazing effort. Never have I seen such joy in a face as I lowered him the last few meters to the ground. For my part I seconded it with much grunting, flailing, and one call for a bit of “tactical pulling” on the rope to get me over a ridiculously difficult section. I defend this poor climbing ethic by imploring you to understand that Luke placed over £90 worth of my quickdraws on the route and if I didn't reclaim them no one else was going to. Dripping with sweat and with forearms set to burst I lunged for the chains and lowered off. It's only when you reach the ground again, 8 meters or so meters behind your belayer that you realize how overhanging the route actually is. As the Grotto turned bright orange with the setting sun we trotted back down the hill to Massouri and the welcoming chairs of Fatolitis.



That night I bought myself a splendid pair of bright green trousers (you my have seen them since at the wall, awesome aren't they!) that I was sure would add at least a grade to my climbing ability. For dinner that night Pierce and I challenged Tom and Luke to a meat eating competition at a restaurant that served a mixed meat grill sharing platter. May the best carnivores win! I'm sorry Pierce, I let you down dude.

Top - Luke basking in the glory of success as he lowers of Trela (7a+)  
Bottom - Tom contemplates the last meaty morsel on his plate during the meat eating competition



# PALIONISIS

With the efforts of the Grotto taking their toll on our bodies we declared day 4 a day of rest. As no rest day would be the same without a little climbing we took ourselves to Palionisis, a newly developed crag that truth be told wasn't so great. After a few hours we grumbled about the heat as justification to head down to the beach and jump from the jetty into the sea. After a late lunch of home made local cuisine we returned to the car to find it had a flat tyre! Hmmpf! We made a call to the rental company who said to sit tight for a while which we dutifully did back on the beach. It all got itself sorted out after an hour or so and we were on our way home for the day. Beers - showers - dinner - joviality etc.



## ARGINONTA

**What made day 5 outstanding for me was that we rented scooters.** Let me start by saying that scooters and Kalymnos go together like peas and carrots. Daily at about 9am the relative silence of Massouri is broken by the buzzing of a hundred or more scooters scattering like flies to crags on all corners of the island. With an air of excitement for the journey ahead of me and with a terrified Vicki sat behind me I strapped on my climbing helmet, stuffed the rope bag between my feet and sped off to Arginonta. I felt like the king of the road, cruising the coastal road with the sun on my back and the wind in my face. The reality was that I was actually on a pretty old scooter doing little over 30mph and struggling to make right turns (bizarrely I'm good at turning left!).

Having climbed for the day at Arginonta, and after Tom had his first minor road traffic accident of the trip (don't worry folks he was fine) we went on the hunt for the much-lauded Pirate Bar further up the coast. We found it a mile or two before the village of Emporios, down a small steep side road where a narrow strip of shingle beach is backed by a few ramshackle bars. Let me tell you that the last of these bars before the beach runs out is built around a pirate ship from which cold beers are served as the sun slowly sets - indeed it is a heavenly spot. We drank to our own good fortune for being climbers on Kalymnos and I swear to you that life doesn't get much better than this.



Top - Vicki sports this season's must have yellow climbing trousers whilst belaying Tom up Koubinas (6b) at Arginonta  
Middle - Tom belaying Vicki on Victoria (5c). Luke and our antipodean friend Lana help out in the late afternoon sun at Arginonta  
Bottom - Luke and Tom kick back at the pirate bar for a cold beer and a view back over the water to Massouri





**Day 6 was our last climbing day and it took us to Ghost Kitchen. It was Baltic!** We were climbing in the shade to make the routes easier (less sweat more friction apparently) but for me it had the reverse effect. Here Tom, Vicki and I made a beeline for a 35m 5c which had an excellent write up and seemed like a good warm up for our cold muscles. Well, 5c my ar\*e, it was nails and before long siege tactics were employed. On my first attempt I got about half way up, placing 6 quick draws before lowering off. Tom took the rest of the quickdraws and pushed on by another couple of bolts before also admitting defeat. Vic dutifully took over but fell off near bolt 5 muttering something about "hard for the short", swinging so far out from the face that she couldn't get back on. I tied back in, blew into my cold clenched fists, looked to my new green trousers for inspiration and finally reached the chains.

In case you don't know Vicki isn't a big lover of the cold so she and I sauntered off to a neighbouring Skalia Balcony that faced into the sun and bagged a handful of routes until the sight of the sun striking Ghost Kitchen beckoned us back. Tom climbed a few 6a routes with some Ceunant folk and I thugged my way up another nails route called Totenhansel (6c+) in Luke's wake. It was unanimous that a return trip to the Pirate Bar was the order of the day so we jumped on our scooters and hit the road. Tom, showing a similar problem with his left turns as I have with my right managed to hit a bush and grazed himself up a little. Dusting himself off he hopped right back on and we pressed on for the bar, the beer, the sea and setting sun.

Sadly day 7 saw us journey home. With no time for climbing we lounged around on the beach for the morning, ate a hearty breakfast and then jumped in a taxi, but not before promising to come back next year.

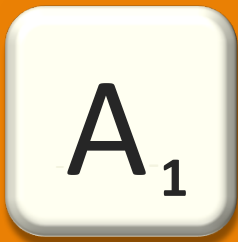
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Stew seconding Totenhansel (6c+) as Ghost Kitchen

# GHOST KITCHEN





# Mercian Mountaineering Club AGM Minutes

## 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014

### Attendees

Vicki Cox, Stewart Moody, Tom Morris, Matt Lewis, Mike Hogg, Norman Wright, Mike Smith, Lou Bullock, Beth Heeney, Joe Norris, Pierce Ferris, Fran Ibison, Malcolm Imhoff, Vijay Karatone, Alan Hardie, Joel Taylor, Naomi Walker, Karl Stewart, Harriet Stewart, Roland Clarke, Huw Davies, Julie Taylor, Emma Mead, Tom Mead (prospective members), Anta, Pete Neilson, Fabian Moore, David Simmonite,

### Apologies

Geoff Taylor, Lynn Taylor, Matt Kettle, Paul Rigby, Maggie Imhoff, Simon Hodgson, Jodie Monks

### Minutes of the last meeting

Karl proposed them. Mike Smith Seconded.

### Matters Arising

None.

### Reports

#### Librarian

No librarian's report as Jodie stood down previously however Stewart mentioned that we've got South Wales Climbs and Tremadog and Ogwen Valley and Cornwall guide books. The signing in and out system is working better. The book list should be online but might need updating.

#### Meets Secretary

This year we had 12 hut meets and 7 camping meets. A lot of meets were organised by Huw as outgoing meets sec from last year. Thanks to Huw. We had 306 nights away spent away in huts. In the spring/summer we had 102 camping nights away. Took almost £3000 in hut fees. We didn't get any big profits or loses. The year ends £57 year up but they might be different for the treasurer's as he takes a different year. August Bank Holiday was a loss as nobody turned up. Brian and Pauline went to one meet on their own. Top of the leader board for meet attendance is Stewart, Tom and Beth as leader. Those members were given certificates. Next year we have Hogmanay, we have 18 people turning up. We have 10 hut meets next year and 9 camping meets. We go to some good winter venues in the Lakes and North Wales. We are at Lagangarbh at Easter which is a nice hut and quite early in April so there should still be snow around. He asked for members to support the meets next year in order for us to keep doing them. (See attached report.) Matt Lewis proposed it. Roland seconded it.

#### Treasurer

This report is for the Mercian Mountaineering Club Financial Year 2014 which covers the period 1 November 2013 through to 31 October 2014 inclusive. As detailed in the Club's constitution the accounts of the Mercian Mountaineering Club are not subject to formal audit as it is considered that this would be unnecessarily costly. In accordance with the constitution, the Club's accounts are available for review by any full member of the Club upon request.

Banking for the Mercian Mountaineering Club is arranged through a HSBC community account. The account requires a minimum of two signatories for any withdrawal transaction. For FY14 the signatories were: Matthew Lewis, Huw Davies, Simon Hodgson and Victoria Cox. The Communities account is non-interest bearing and non-fee charging account. During the year the club closed its 'Business Money Manager Account'. This account was originally set-up to benefit from better interest rates. However, the interest rates on the account deteriorated to such a point that the benefit didn't justify operating the account. It is considered that the current banking arrangements remain suitable for the needs of the Mercian Mountaineering Club.

During the financial year the MMC had a total income of £5,090 (2013: £4,991) and recorded a deficit of £191 (2013: £152). Subscription fees from Club members totalled £1,038 (2013: £839) of which £646 (2013: £546) was payable to the BMC for affiliate group membership. The Club recorded an income of £4,000 (2013: £4,107) in relation to hut receipts against an expenditure of £4,109 (2013: £4,417) giving a net loss of £109 (2013: £310). The net loss can be attributed to poor attendance



on certain meets where the club is liable to pay for the entire hut. This net loss would have been greater if not for the careful pricing structure imposed by the current meets secretary and the prudent hut booking methodology adopted by last year's meets secretary & treasurer. Social activities gave a net expenditure of £374 (2013: income of £25). The committee committed to revamp this year's Annual Dinner and so provided a Ceilidh band at a cost of £370. This is considered a 'one-off' and the funding of such future events should be given considered carefully by the in-coming committee. The Club has maintained a strong balance sheet with total net assets of £3,470 (2013: £3,660). The club has a cash balance of £3,037 (2013: £2,425). It must be noted that the clubs cash position is currently at an inflated position due to £840 being collected in advance of the upcoming New Year meet. Roland Clarke proposed it. Vicki Cox seconded it.

## General Secretary

It has been a fantastic year for the club and we currently have our highest number of members for a number of years with 59 members. Our latest members are: Naomi, Joe, Fiona, Matt Kettle, Chloe, Pierce and Fran and Fabian. Joel is now eligible to apply and Anta and Adam Hughes have done one meet each and are regular attendees down the wall. Pete Court is now a regular down the wall and we hope to get him on some meets in the New Year. We have continued to have a good interest in the club and although not all of these turn into regulars, we have picked up all but Naomi and Chloe through this route. Our own club website is still the way in which new members find us despite our social media presence and the meets list and photo albums seem to be the main things which encourage people to join us and the Faff provides a very professional looking account of our exploits on our website. – Karl Stewart proposed it. Stewart Moody seconded it.

## Chairman

Karl read out Simon's chairman's report. Good evening everyone and greetings from Norway. Firstly an apology for not being present this evening, I could never have imagined 12 months ago I would be writing this from my home in a foreign land, I'd like to report that life in Norway is very good and we're looking forward to our first snow sports this coming weekend. Secondly I must thank everyone for attending this evening, and for the committee for all of their hard work and spare time that they've given up to keep the club running smoothly. I think a round of applause is well deserved (followed by a round of drinks later!) Once again the Mercians have excelled themselves throughout the year, the sheer variety of activities, we've skied, walked, scrambled, cycled, climbed, bouldered, and caved! The weather has been hot and sunny, and downright cold and wet, but still the Mercians have been out there having fun, and enjoying the beers! I'd also like to formally welcome the members that have joined this year, it's always good to see new people getting involved with the club. So, to next year's committee, I hope that when this evenings proceedings are complete next year's keen committee will find the club in good shape and are keen and eager to take it forward to new heights. Finally just a reminder that the club is, as always, what you make it. Even if you're not able to commit the time to hold a committee position this year:

- It's your friendly faces that make the club a great place for new people
- It's you sitting for hours belaying newbie after newbie up that V.Diff route in the rain, that will one day make new E3 climbers
- It's your attendance on meets when the forecast is dire, that allows us to run such an active program
- It's the shared experiences, in the hills and the pubs that make the Mercians such an awesome bunch of people.

Keep being awesome Mercians!

Vicki Cox proposed it. Karl Stewart seconded it.

## Other business

BMC Fees: Matt mentioned that the BMC fees are going up by £1.50 so we are proposing to raise club fees to £23 before the end of the year or £26 if paid after. Stewart pointed out that the BMC had raised their fees as they had lost funding, and were having to do more with their staff. It was pointed out that it was only the cost of a pint. It was said that the Ceunant and Wolverhampton clubs pay £25 membership. The question was asked as to why we got a discount if we paid early. It was said to be tradition. The motion to raise the membership to £26 was carried with all present members voting in favour.

## Election of Committee Members

- Chairman – Huw proposed Stewart for Chair. Mike Hogg seconded. Carried as not contested.
- General secretary – Matt Lewis proposed Vicki. Stewart Moody seconded. Carried as not contested.
- Treasurer – Karl Stewart proposed Vijay. Huw seconded. Carried as not contested.
- Meets secretary – Tom Morris proposed Julie Taylor. Matt Lewis seconded. Carried as not contested.
- Social secretary – Julie Taylor proposed Tom Morris. Vicki Cox seconded. Carried as not contested.
- Librarian – Karl Stewart proposed Louise Bullock. Huw seconded. Carried as not contested.
- Promotions secretary – Tom Morris proposed Huw Davies. Roland Clarke seconded. Carried as not contested.
- General Committee Member – Karl Stewart proposed Beth Heeney. Matt Lewis seconded. Carried as not contested.

AOB: Karl gave a round of applause for the outgoing members.



# Dinas Mawddwy

## by Fran Ibison

The first challenge of the weekend was the hike from the car park along a boggy path and assault course of stiles to the Bryn Hafod Hut, dodging grumpy farmers along the way. For some (sorry Louise) this journey ended with the catastrophic impact of wine bottle onto rocky path, with inevitable tragic consequences. After arriving in the hut, further challenges lay in store as the reflex instinct to fill up the kettle for tea showed that the water supply was not connected. Karl and Tom set off on a mini-expedition up the hill to the water tank to rectify the problem, closely followed by Huw and Pierce. There was eventual success, with water (albeit icy cold) flowing from the taps. What heroes! ;-) Success was celebrated with the finishing of Pierce's authentic Mead.

The dreary weather on Saturday morning led to abandonment of any climbing plans and most of the group headed out for a wet walk up Aran Fawddwy. Footwear was reinforced using the Sainsbury's carrier bag technique (Joel) and Tom was suffering the consequences of a mix up with Beth's boots. After meeting a single solitary other walker the whole day, and the rain closing in, most of the party gave up on the summit and headed down towards the hut via some deadly slippery wooden path over the bogs. Huw, Julie and Fabian had a long day out biking topped off by a dazzling from the pub goers head torches. After the blinding, Huw and Fabian were greeted to a cold shower, then fixed the boiler so that everyone else could have a hot one.



A few of the keener drinkers amongst us headed down the long wet track to go to the pub, where Ned was welcomed as the first 'Jihadi Gnome' the locals had ever seen. Meanwhile, others partook of a spot of wholesome 'Giant Jenga' amusement (Pete brought down the tower spectacularly). Julie cooked a fab chilli con carne and Beth made yummy sausage and mash for dinner. Louise's birthday was celebrated with a scrummy chocolate cake baked by Beth and replacement bottle of wine thanks to Julie. This was followed by 'Cards Against Humanity', with joint winners of the 'Anna, Beth and Tom Team' and 'Pierce and Karl Duo'. Later on, the sloe gin came out followed by an impromptu salsa dancing class lead by a rather unlikely Latino legend amongst us.

Sunday's weather didn't prove much better than the Saturday, so all opted for a walk along a disused rail track towards Barmouth. The low point was a close call between the hailstone on the long walk along the railway bridge, and the disappointment of no tea or hot chocolate being served in the pub at the other end. A definite type 2 fun walk, but the excellent company more than made up for the weather, as usual. All-in-all, a great weekend in a very homely hut (with complimentary crocs).



Last weekend was our very first Mercian meet (ever!). On the 28<sup>th</sup> day of November, a Friday evening, we crawled our way out of Birmingham along the M6 making our way to Coniston.

Stew, Fran, Pierce, Duncan, Malcolm, Roland, Steve, Tom, Joel, Beth and Jules crawled along too, albeit in a couple of different cars (and several hours ahead, clearly more efficient than us). We had been briefed that the “road” to the hut was not for the faint-hearted (or any gear higher than first) but were delighted to find a super-toasty, well-equipped base for the weekend when we arrived!

The next morning we woke up to the sound of glass bottles from the various alcoholic beverages consumed the night before clinking and some of the early-birds proclaiming, “this should wake them up!”. So up we jumped to make breakfast and get ready for the day ahead. It was only when I brushed my teeth, looking out of the wash room window that I discovered the beauty of the hut’s location in The Coppermines Valley...

# Coniston the ecstasy of Coppermines

photographs by **Stewart Moody** and **Beth Heeney**

words by **Emma Mead** and **Tom Mead**





Departing the hut "bold and cold" in the fabulous autumn light. Who would believe that December was 2 days away?



By 08:35 (well before the agreed 09:00) we were all outside the hut, eager to begin our day's adventure. All except Duncan, Malcolm, Steve and Roland who were the real early-birds and had already set off on their hike! Jules' statement, "be bold, start cold" proved to be spot on and most of us were soon walking in just T-shirts as the glorious morning sun shone brightly upon us. When we arrived at the base of Dow Crag Pierce expertly organised us into three groups: the climbers (Tom, Stew, Beth and Joel), the scramblers (Pierce, Jules and my husband Tom Mead) and the walkers (Fran and I).

Fran and I enjoyed a lovely walk to the top and chatted lots along the way. Who knew we had been to the same medical school, just one year apart?! We did arrive at the summit some 1h30 before the others but we had a good stash of food to keep us going. With our long wait I started to wonder about my husband. He was due to be scrambling up with Pierce and Jules - both very competent, Fran assured me. Pierce and Jules had taken climbing gear and helmets for this "scramble", Tom had only a bottle of water, I think he should fill you in on the rest...

" With the guide book left at the hut, I deferred to Jules and Pierce to pick a route up. Their choice looked do-able from the base, even if it was vague. We picked our way over mossy rocks, passing up the inviting easy gully - where was the challenge in that?!

This was when Pierce decided I needed a harness, so one was kindly fashioned for me out of a sling - Alpine style. This was just as safe, I was told. Here the scramble became a climb. Pierce led the "sketchy" route up, finding limited security with micro nuts as he admitted this may lead us to a point where the only option was to climb back down. My confidence took a knock when we started running out of rope and slings for protection. Fortunately, just as my fingers froze we reached the top! We were pretty pleased to have made it in one piece! Back at the hut, I consulted the guidebook- it advised scrambles on Dow Crag are not for the faint of heart, transitioning between slippery grass and sheer cliff, protection should be used and climbing experience is necessary. I can only thank Jules and Pierce for making sure it was not an experience I'll forget! "

Half an hour later the climbers group joined us, just as the cloud settled in. A challenging adventure was had by all. We finished the day by walking across to the Old Man Coniston before making it back down to the hut. That evening we were treated to Tom's special stew. After a team effort to prep the vegetables we headed to the Black Bull pub, while Malcolm, Steve and Roland kindly kept a watchful eye on our dinner's progress. Everyone enjoyed a beer or two and reminisced over the day. We heard many stories of previous trips- what an adventurous bunch of people! Before heading back to the hut some of the group took up the offer of "takeaway beer". Ingenious!

After a scrumptious dinner the entertainment began. "The cardboard box game" was first up. This involved placing a cardboard box on the floor, which must be picked up by each person in turn without using their mouth with only the feet in contact with the floor. This gets more difficult as cardboard is torn off and the box diminished to a flat piece of cardboard. The Mercians are a flexible bunch! I did discover one of the disadvantages of being in the final three for this game, alongside Joel and Tom. You might end up licking the floor. Mulled wine helped relieve the taste.



The sun deceived us into believing that it was mid-June rather than late-November. Our scramble today was glorious! There were routes up to please all and we admired the views as we climbed.





Next was “climb the table”. The boys competed to traverse the dining room table, this looked tough but was achieved first by Joel and then Tom! After a brief interlude of cake and custard, chocolate heroes and celebrations the Salsa class with Pierce began. Stew and Beth were the class pets as they mastered the steps with ease. They were soon onto the more advanced moves as the rest of us struggled with our foot work and knocking knees. We had a great time and eventually the salsa brought the evening to a close and we all retired to our bunks.

The Sunday morning start was slightly less spritely than the Saturday had been but no one was left feeling too vulnerable from the night before. Again, the sun deceived us into believing that it was mid-June rather than late-November. Our scramble today was glorious! There were routes up to please all and we admired the views as we climbed. On the way back we stopped for lunch (cue Beth's s\*\*\*loads of cheese puffs) and sunbathed on the hill while debating whether sound proof cots are okay. The group was divided but I still don't think they are.

Sadly the fantastic weekend came to an end around three o'clock. As we headed home we just felt that we had had the best time. You Mercians are kind, friendly and so much fun. When's the next meet?!

Meanwhile, back in the hut...



Pierce giving it 101% on the table traverse



Duncan and Roland enjoy the entertainment



Joel displays good form on the cardboard box game



Stew and Beth having a salsa



Dow Crag summit photo - (L-R) Pierce, Tom, Fran, Julie, Tom, Emma, Joel, Beth



**Chocks away chaps!**





[Rope Faff] Karl and Pierce give a fine example of rope faff, "after a long route in Glen Coe, with daylight being precious and a hot meal waiting for us on the table a bit of faff seemed appropriate".







Rab and Fran xxx



Adam, Naomi,  
Joel & Tom



Vijay, Graham and Pete  
Ho-ho-ho

# Christmas Dinner



Naomi



Joe, Vicki  
& Pierce



Stew & Joel





music

&



dancing



STARRING THE MEMBERSHIP



ascents

&



descents

MERCIAN MOUNTAINEERING CLUB'S

# SCOTTISH + WINTER

THE GREATEST NEW YEAR MEET THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN



&



THE SCOTTISH TOURIST BOARD presents a MERCIAN MOUNTAINEERING CLUB production of SCOTTISH + WINTER  
Original Score by THE NORRIS KETTLE BAND. Catering by EVERYONE ELSE. Sound editing by LASER LITE EAR PLUGS  
Home Brew courtesy of the COX VINEYARDS and HENNIS MOONSHINE LTD. Produced by KARL STEWART.





The mid day sun looking south west from the Tarmachan Ridge



Still photographs taken  
during the filming of

**SCOTTISH + WINTER**

Photos by Stewart Moody unless otherwise stated





Top left - Pierce caters for the masses. Photo by **Joel Taylor**. Top right - Vijay, Geoff and Pete waiting for the catering to serve their meal. Bottom left - Sandy and Bracken after climbing Central Gully (I) on Ben Lui. Bottom Right - Harriet Stewart making an ascent of Beinn an Dothaid. Photo by **Karl Stewart**.





Main image - Adam and Louise enjoying the ceilidh on new year's eve. Top right - Pierce and Fran kicking back in the evening. Bottom left - A little R&R at the local park. Photo by **Joel Taylor**. Bottom right- Huw downing a high value beer before dinner.





Main image - Joe (nearest), Pete, Vicki, Harriet and Karl on the Easy Left Gully on the Tarmachan ridge. Top left - It all gets too much for Joe, Laura and Huw at approximately 5am on New Years day. Photo by **Joel Taylor**.





Main image - Mercians silhouetted on the skyline on a traverse the Tarmachan Ridge.  
 Left - Stewart making the "M" for Mercian sign with his axes on Central Gully. Photo by **Julie Taylor**.  
 Left - Vicki on the Easy Left Gully on the Tarmachan ridge.



# The view from the Ochills Mountaineering Club Hut

by Lynn Taylor



## A pop at Ben More

by Steve Newton

I started at about 08:30 from Benmore Farm and after a very hard (for me) slog managed to get up to the snowline on Ben More. On the basis that the mountain wasn't going anywhere (except up!) I decided enough was enough and retreated down the NW flank. So a shortish day but enjoyable.

## A game of Risk

by Vicki Cox

After a bloodthirsty battle, Stewart finally kept control of North America whilst Pete attempted a Blitzkrieg of Europe. However, I proved to be the ultimate winner when the cease fire was called as my armies controlled a bigger percentage of the World. Yeah! Bad weather isn't all bad, is it?



**HIKE | BIKE | CLIMB**