

# THE FORTNIGHTLY FAFF

The Periodical Journal of the Mercian Mountaineering Club

May 2017



## OGWEN VALLEY

Naomi's take on the Casseg Fraith hut meet

## GREAT END MEET

Was England's most reliable winter venue as great as last time?

## WELSH WINTER

Oh the shame of it! Louise grumbles about the rain

## CURVED RIDGE

Andy and Jane on Glen Coe's finest scramble

## CODE BROWN

The great British bog-off by our most prolific bog snorkeler



### **A word from the editor**

Well, the hut season is now firmly in the rear view mirror. In retrospect it hasn't been the best winter on record, but we had a lot of fun anyway. This issue is packed with stories, reports and photos from the winter meets in England, Scotland and Wales. The only thing missing from them is any mention of good ice, but hey, you can't have everything! The food on recent meets has been of Michelin star quality quality too so I extend my thanks the chefs who've kept us so well fed in the evenings.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that the 2017 Chairman's Challenge is in full swing, and you can find a copy of the score sheet in this issue. I'd encourage you to get involved. It's not about the winning, as they saying goes, but the taking part. Well, I'm not so sure about that, it's certainly about coming higher on the leader board than your friends. I've seen people racking up points left, right and centre. Even writing a brief article for the Faff nets you 5 points. What are you waiting for? We'll be announcing the winner of the Chairman's Challenge at the club's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party to be held in Birmingham on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July. The committee is still ironing out the details so keep an eye on your inbox and Facebook for more details in the next few weeks.

But before the party we have the sunrise ascent of Snowdon on the weekend of the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> of June. Pack your stove and bacon, hike up in the dark, and meet me at the summit cairn to see the sun rise and mark the dawn of a new decade for the Mercian Mountaineering Club. Hope to see you there.

Stew.

Naomi Walker gives her take on the first meet of the new year in Snowdonia

## CASEG FRAITH

## OGWEN VALLEY

The first meet of 2017 and another new hut for the Mercian Mountaineering Club was attended by the south Birmingham contingent (myself, Vicky H, Stu Bennett on his first meet), the Sutton Coldfield contingent (Vijay and Amandeep, also her first meet) and of course, Adam.

The London University Mountaineering Club hut is a stone's throw from the meet late in 2016 and in a great location. With eight parking spaces and only one of those allocated to a non-Mercian, we would have the place to ourselves right? Unless the one space is taken by a mini-bus. Caseg Fraith is a large hut and we were to share it with the LUMC, as most are, a very friendly bunch. The only downside to this hut is that the toilets are outside and at minus 5C during the night, it sets a rather chilly scene.

Never mind all that stuff, what did we do? On Saturday, we had a grand day out in almost perfect walking conditions on the Carneddau. Starting from the far east end of Llyn Owgyn we took in five of the Welsh 3000's: Pen yr Ole Wen, Carnedd Dafydd, Carnedd Llewelyn, Yr Elen, Craig yr Ysfa. Vicky informed us that we'd walked for 11 miles that day but with the amount of to-ing and fro-ing from an excitable Stu, I'm sure that he clocked up a lot more than that.

Sunday was meant to be a quick stroll up Tryfan via a scramble. Seriously? I'd normally do one or two of these but not both on one weekend. I'm getting too old for all this exercise stuff! The conditions had changed overnight. Even as we were descending from the Carnedd on the road of death, we saw that the weather was changing. Instead of clear skies, we had cloud and a spot of snow in the air. At low levels this was fine but higher up around Heather Terrace onwards the ground conditions got a tad spicier. Note to self: never blindly follow Stu up a mountain. He's a bit of a mountain goat with little sense for finding and following clear and obvious paths. Amandeep and I opted for what we thought was the escape route for Bastow Buttress but turned out to be Bastow Gully. I'm not convinced how easy an alternative this really was since the icy conditions proved quite a tricky proposition and crampons would have been nice. The others climbed Bastow Buttress. Slow but safe and steady saw us get to the top and back down and home to warmth.

Thanks all for a great weekend.



The Casseg Fraith hut with Tryfan in the background. Image courtesy of Google.

A hiker, Amandeep Kaur Sehmbi, is standing between two large, vertical rock pillars on a mountain summit. She is wearing a light-colored jacket, a grey beanie, and black gloves. She has a backpack on and is smiling at the camera. The background is a bright, overcast sky. The rock pillars are made of grey, textured stone with some moss or lichen growth. The overall scene is a high-altitude mountain environment.

## Caseg Fraith meet, Ogwen

Photos by **Amandeep Kaur Sehmbi**

Amandeep standing between Adam and Eve on the summit Tryfan. The group ascended Bastow Butress (SG3) on Sunday and in doing so bagged 10 points each for the Chairman's Challenge by doing a graded scramble. The weather wasn't great, unlike on Saturday when they walked the Carnedau, taking in the summits of Pen yr Ole Wen, Carnedd Dafydd and Carnedd Llewelyn on a crisp and sunny day. That's 10 more points each right there for bagging a Welsh 3000er, and quite possible a further 10 if they did more than miles in the process.



Naomi half way up one of the gullies on the east face of Tryfan. The clag is in but she's smiling.



The group take a break in the Carneddau on Saturday. (L-R) Vicky, Adam, Stu, Naomi, Vijay.



Group shot somewhere on Tryfan (L-R) Stu, Vijay, Vicky, Adam, Amandeep, Naomi.

[x2 Faff] It's bad enough when you have to wait for one person to pack so you can leave the crag and go to the pub. Worse still when you have to wait for two of them. Tom Morris applies a good amount of social pressure by placing his perfectly packed 'sack nicely between Adam and Vicki..



# GREAT END

How great was the 2017 trip to England's most reliable winter venue? Stewart Moody describes Saturday's action on the High House meet in the Lake District.

For those of you new to the Mercian, the Great End meet of February 2015 (see Faff April 2015) is said by many who attended to be "the best ever meet". People have spoken ever since of a weekend of firm neve, steep ice, blue skies, and several teams of Mercians knocking off classic routes left, right and center. It was as if the planets aligned themselves in a way that is rarely seen in England. I wouldn't know. I wasn't there. I'm not bitter! Fast forward to 2017 and I was eager to give Great End a go when I saw it included on the annual meets list.



With 3 days to go until the meet ground conditions reports on social media showed a distinct lack of snow and the newly installed thermometers on Great End provided irrefutable evidence that temperatures had been consistently above freezing for the past week. It didn't look so great. It was clear that the planets had not re-aligned.

On Friday night, and over a beer in the High House hut in Seathwaite, Adam and I had formed a plan to do a scramble. Alas, our dreams were shattered when someone noticed that our proposed route offered a paltry 20 meters of rock. Back to the drawing board. To this day I maintain the Lakes scrambling isn't a patch on Wales. So we eaves dropped on other conversation and gave in to the inevitable FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out – how hip am I?) joined the Great End group to see for ourselves whether or not anything would go.

At 7:30am on Saturday morning six of us walked from the hut and joined the path to Great End. Our expectations were low. Joe, Tom and I formed a van guard whilst Julie, Ed and Adam were not far behind. We set a fierce pace through the damp air. To this day I've no idea why we were in such a rush. I thought several times to ask if anyone else fancied a rest, but thought better of it – I didn't want my position in the A-team to be questioned – there's group dynamics for you! After 50 minutes we paused to regroup. The clag was in making visibility poor, but my spirits were high as I was at least getting some mileage in with a heavy pack.

The path turned increasingly icy, and we treaded gently, reaching the bowl underneath Great End by 9:15am, which we agreed wasn't too shabby. We couldn't see much more than the ground around us, we certainly couldn't see the crag, so we boshed blindly up the slope in the general direction of the crag. The accumulations of snow underfoot increased, but it had clearly just come down the night before and was powder. Great Gully loomed above us. It was a miserable sight, a black and gloomy chasm, devoid of snow, with some rimed up boulders that looked desperate to surmount. The banked out gully we'd be optimistically (unrealistically?) dreaming of was nowhere to be found. It didn't take us long to abandon that plan. We met a pair of similarly somber looking climbers who had reached the same conclusion.

We tracked rightwards under the crag, feeling pretty fatalistic. My mood worsened when I also dropped my pork pie 15 meters down the crag and had to scuttle down to retrieve it. We figured that we might as well have a nose around and see what else might be in, then walk up the side of the crag and over the top of the mountain to rejoin the path back to the hut. We detoured onto 1-pitch route (II) which looked like a goer, and we did make it most of the way up the easy lower terrain before reaching the eponymous pitch. A rope came out, and Joe gave the first moves a good try but there was no gear for the leader, or a belay for that matter, so we sacked it off and retreated back to the base of the crag.



Further left still we stumbled across Cust's Gully (I), which looked like a straight forward way to reach the summit of Great End. Finally! It was amenable little romp. The snow was not ideal and occasionally poured down the gully like water. We overcame a step up steep ground which needed some thought whilst spin drift blasting up from below. Not an ideal combination. It was goggles on time and the world turned a lovely shade of yellow through my lenses. We topped out just below the summit of Great End. It was well below freezing and the wind was up. Adam's hands shook as he poured tea from his flask and passed it around. We didn't loiter; Joe took a bearing and navigated us back down to the footpath. We arrived back at the hut five and half hours after setting out. It was 1pm when we sat around the table and drank a large pot of tea between us.

So, was it a good day of winter climbing? Truthfully, no. The conditions weren't good enough. Did I have a good time yomping around the mountains with my friends? Absolutely. And any day that ends up with a few pints of Loweswater Gold in The Dog & Gun gets my vote. You didn't do that back in 2015 now did you?

# High House meet, Patterdale

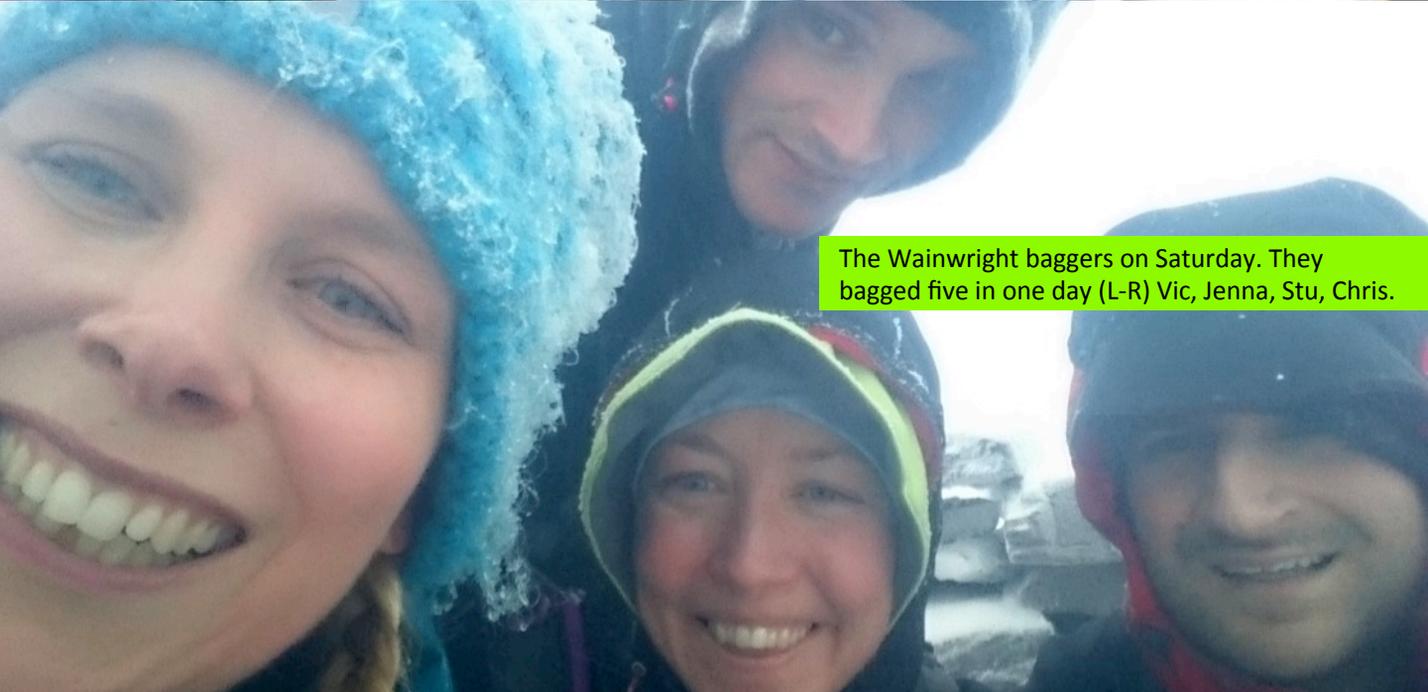
Photos by **Stewart Moody**

(L-R) Stuart Bennet, Tom Morris and Julie Taylor near the summit of Great Gable a few moments after summiting. It was blowing a gale and bitterly cold, which in fairness had been forecast. Nevertheless, it didn't deter the group from ticking off a few Wainwrights on the Sunday. We had aimed to tick off four summits to net some chairman's challenge points but had to settle for just two before voting to descend out of the wind.





(L-R) Vic, Adam, Stu, Jenna, Chris and Malcolm kicking back with a few drinks in the High House hut.



The Wainwright baggers on Saturday. They bagged five in one day (L-R) Vic, Jenna, Stu, Chris.



Evening drinks in the lounge on Saturday night. (L-R) Joe, Geoff, Tom, Duncan (asleep?), Anna.

Stu stands his ground against the howling wind at the summit cairn of Great Gable on Sunday.



(L-R) Ed, Ned and Tom raise a glass. The pot bellied stove in the photo kicked out a huge amount of heat. For such a big hut it was surprisingly warm.



# Harriet Stewart

## 1983 - 2017

words by Vicki Cox

This year saw another Mercian taken from us far too soon. Harriet had been battling cancer for over a year when she was taken from us in January. She'd put up a real fight and if you were at the the Stratford on Avon swim and picnic last July you would have thought she'd won.

Even when we saw her in November she was incredibly positive and full of life. Yes, she was struggling to keep up a bit but then we all know how the lads race ahead so I wasn't necessarily keeping up either!

Harriet is probably the only person I know that I've never heard moan about anything. Not about freezing rain, not about traffic jams, not about noisy snoring. What's even more impressive is that I never heard her moan about her illness. Visiting her in hospital she was incredibly bouncy and upbeat and planning the holidays that her and Karl would take and the last time we saw her she was full of plans for the future.

When most people would fill their time while stuck at home watching back to back box sets and eating junk food, Harriet started a masters, adopted a Greek rescue dog and was helping Karl put in a new kitchen.

Harriet did more in her short life than most people would manage in ten lifetimes. She was caring, considerate and incredibly generous with her time: I can't even begin to count the number charities that she volunteered for. It was a real pleasure to know her and call her a friend. The world is certainly worse off.



Harriet topping out after an ascent of Sron na Lairig (II) in Glen Coe on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2015

The 2017  
**CHAIRMAN'S  
CHALLENGE**

to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the  
Mercian Mountaineering Club

Your goal is to collect and log as many points possible between the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January and the summer party on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, where you can submit your form to demonstrate your awesomeness and perhaps even be crowned the winner.

*There is no "I" in team, but there are 5 in "individual brilliance" (Tom Morris, 2010)*

Challenges need to be completed individually except cooking, where you can split the points with another member. The white number shows the points you get for completing a challenge. Do something once and bag the points. Yellow numbers denote a maximum, where you can repeat something more than once. Fill in the grey letter-boxes with details of your completed challenges and then work out your subtotals, and then your grand total.

## meets

Attend a meet 5 20  
I had a splendid time at (list meets):

Cook a meal on a meet 10  
I whipped up a feast of:

Do the morning tea run 1 10  
I got one measly point for each cup I served to their bedsides (hut/no. cups):

Travelling to a meet with a different Mercian (2pt each) 2 10  
I enjoyed the company of (names):

Be the designated driver back from the pub 10  
I was altruistic at (pub/passengers):

**SUBTOTAL =**

## climbing

Climb something in fancy dress 10  
I looked ridiculous on the way up: 

Make a predawn 'Alpine' start 10  
I got up at the crack of dawn to:

Climb a route whose first ascent was made in 1957 10

I was followed in the footsteps of our ancestors when I climbed:

Climb 20 different routes at the wall in a single session 10

I got totally pumped on (date/wall):

Lead a route above your grade 10  
I was a total boss on (route/crag/grade (or wall)):

Second a route above your grade 10

I sweated blood and nearly pulled my belayer from their perch whilst climbing (route/crag/grade (or wall)):

Climb a route from Classic Rock or Hard Rock 10

I kicked ass today, and sent (route/Grade):

Spend half a day bouldering 10

It's not all beanies and tea! I saw how the other half really live at (venue/date)

**SUBTOTAL =**

## karma

Pitch somebody else's tent (as well as your own) 5

I did a good deed for (name/size of tent):

Learn a new skill and teach it to another 5

I taught a lesson in (skill/pupil):

Provide home made cake or snacks at the wall or meet 10

I laboured in the kitchen to produce a batch of (food/diners/venue):

Carry a bag of rubbish (not your own) out of a crag or walk 10

I wiped the nose of (crag/hill/date): 

Help a newbie 5

I gave something back when I (date/newbie/gesture):

Take the rubbish or recycling away from a hut meet 10

I loaded my car with everyone else's empty alcohol receptacles on (meet):

**SUBTOTAL =**

## selfies

Tea shop selfie 10

I shot myself today (tea shop/date): 

Gear shop selfie 10

The staff looked at me like I was a flippin' lunatic (shop/town/date): 

**SUBTOTAL =**

## promotions

Write an article for the Faff and submit it to Stew **5**

I put pen to paper and wrote about (meet/route/day-hit/social):

Get the club publicised in printed, audio or digital media **10**

I got us a shout out in/on (media/date):

Post a photo of yourself in action wearing club merchandise **5**



I threw some shapes in my hoodie and posted the shot on social media:

Provide a sketch to the promotions secretary for the 2018 merchandise run **10**

I learned loads from watching Neil Buchanan's Art Attack on ITV, so I got my pencil case out and drew a picture of:

Recreate a photo from a guide book **10**



I got someone to pap me on:

**SUBTOTAL =**

## grand total

I scored:

out of a possible 305 points

## walking

Walk 10 miles or more in a day **10**

I blazed a trail up/near/around (hill):

Bag 4 Wainwright's in a day **10**

I was knackered after the second summit, but dug deep and prevailed the day I bagged (Wainwright's x4):

Bag a Munro **10**

Now I understand why there isn't a challenge to bag 4 Munro's in a day. It took me all day just to get to the top of:

Nail a Welsh 3,000 foot summit **10**

I refused to do Elidir Fawr as it is the World's worst hill, so instead I plumped for an ascent of:

Do a graded scramble **10**

I moved quickly and efficiently over rock the day I scrambled up (route):

Recommend a campsite / pub / crag (or hill) combo for meet **10**

I emailed the committee about an undiscovered gem, shhhh, don't tell anyone, it's...

**SUBTOTAL =**

## Notes on daisy-chains

One of the most efficient ways to rack up lots of points is to complete challenges simultaneously. Here's an example.

Go on a meet to North Wales, climb Grooved Arete, top out at Adam and Eve on the summit of Tryfan.

You'd bag 25 points in total because you went on a meet (5 points), climbed a route from Classic Rock (10 points), and also bagged a Welsh 3,000 foot summit.

You could daisy chain even more points in. Were you to descend Tryfan by the North Ridge you could argue that you down-scrambled a route for a further 10 points. Were you to belay a newbie up behind you you'd get 10 karma points. Were you to get up before day-break to avoid queues on the route you'd also get 10 points for an Alpine start (though your fellow Mercians would thank you for not daisy chaining in the morning tea run too).

## Notes on photos

Where you see the camera icon you must submit photographic evidence by one of the following (in this order of preference):

1. Posting the photo on the Mercian (not your own) Facebook page.
2. Tweeting the photo and including @MercianMC
3. Emailing the photo to the chairman

# Weekend Warriors

Last issue's cover girl Sarah Laight bags 10 chairman's challenge points by climbing a route at Symonds Yat in fancy dress. That's a Cookie Monster onesie. The reputation of the club remains intact as we were the only people on the crag.

Photo : VICKI COX



# THE RHYDD DDU MEET WELSH WINTER WOES

BY LOUISE BULLOCK

**It is rumoured that the Eskimo have over 50 words for snow. They have that much of the stuff that they can ascribe 50 different qualities to what the untrained eye perceives as one uniform substance. Well..... I have news for them.....I reckon the British have a similarly big list to describe the 'r'word (I cannot say it out loud for fear of jinxing it to happen). I'm also pretty sure that many of those words were coined in North Wales; the home of regular, unrelenting deluges. How many can you spot?**

The Rhydd Ddu meet had promised much; views of Snowdon, walking the stunning Nantlle Ridge, climbing at Tremadog and even a steam train right on the doorstep of the hut. I'd just come back from three weeks in New Zealand, and so with images of blue sky mountains and sunshine lodged in my head, I quickly signed up. It'll be fine I thought, its March now...practically summer.

The journey down was pretty nondescript. It drizzled for most of it but Tom distracted me with chit chat as he filled me in on what Mercian adventures I'd missed over the last few weeks. We arrived safe and sound at the hut and as we approached Snowdonia the showers eased. We were in good spirits.

The forecast had suggested further and heavier downpours throughout the weekend but when we awoke early on Saturday the reality could not have been more different. Jules opened the curtains to a beautiful vista of light cloud over the hills and even the odd patch of blue sky. "Looks quite nice" she proclaimed. "Really?" questioned Adam....."well then let's get out there!" The others thought the same and a frenzy of activity followed. The hut was empty by 9:00am.

The Mercians broke into 4 sub groups. Team Taylor (Jules and Joel) went off to run a circuit through the hills, Tom and Adam paired up to do a grade 3 scramble over the other side of Snowdon, Vicki H headed out solo up the Rhydd Ddu path and myself, Jane, Andy, Stuart and Amandeep strode out into the hills in front of the hut towards the Nantlle ridge. What's the plan?" I said to nominated group leader and navigator Andy. "Dunno" he replied, "get as much done as we can before it starts r\*\*ning?" Bit pessimistic I

thought. In my post NZ glow I looked across the valley and saw Snowdon standing tall, with its snowy summit only just covered in cloud. It's not that bad, I thought naively.

We got about an hours walking done, and thankfully most of the ascent, before the first doubts began to creep in and I began to think Andy was right. The sky turned grey and the fog began to build. It started to spit. We carried on and scrambled up to the first peak on the ridge. The views were pretty good and morale remained high. Half an hour passed and the spits turned to large spots. It'll pass I thought and put up my hood, hoping that the wind would change direction and blow the clouds away. Over the next half an hour the cloud thickened further and slowly but surely a steady, torrent ensued. Our pace quickened and we proceeded to tick off two more peaks along the ridge. Still in denial I turned to look across at Snowdon.....but it had gone. Disappeared into a claggy mist. Bugger. As I stood in the mizzle considering how a whole mountain could just disappear I was suddenly aware of moisture starting to permeate through my left sock, drip slowly down between my toes and then slosh about under the sole of my foot. My legs were already damp, my gloves were sodden and the droplets of water that I had been trying to ignore for the last two hours continued to drip off the peak of my hood. I sighed and reality dawned. The slow, irreversible decline to a complete soaking had begun. It was just shy of 11am. Yep, we were definitely in North Wales.

It had only been a month or so since my last soaking when, on the New Year meet, Pierce, myself and a few others optimistically started out on a walk in 'moderate' precipitation through the hidden valley near Glencoe. One river traverse and one stream crossing (nay rapids) later I was drenched and cursing myself. My boots took 4 days to dry out properly after that weekend. Shortly after my reality check the heavens opened and the fury of Welsh weather unleashed itself. A combination of sleet, some snow, wind and a lot more of the wet stuff followed. We quickly hung a left and headed down off the ridge into the relative shelter of the forest. I say relative shelter as it turns out navigating in a forest when you can't see any geographical features is quite tricky and can take longer than you thought. However, forest soon

became field which subsequently became track and then path back to Rhydd Ddu.

We arrived back at the hut at 1:30pm wringing wet and cold. Vicki H appeared half an hour or so later looking equally soaked. Team Taylor had already returned and were sitting around the fireplace (still can't fathom why they didn't light the blooming thing) cradling hot drinks. We got changed, showered and resigned ourselves to an afternoon of board games, snacks and tea drinking. I personally had 5 cups in 3 hours which I thought was pretty good going.

By 5pm thoughts turned to the two Mercians still out on the hill.....and more importantly to our dinner. If Tom was still out scrambling who was going to cook tea?! Some discussion took place as to what we should do in the event of a late return of our chef. The pub naturally won the day. It was now 6pm. It was still throwing it down outside and so folk started to gear up to run through the deluge down to the Cwellyn Arms. Just as this was underway Tom and Adam filed through the door looking like drowned. They'd also had a pretty soggy day which was longer than they thought as they stopped to help a less experienced group (and convinced them to turn back as the scramble was so wet and greasy). However, we plied them with tea, they ran through the showers and a delicious dinner of Thai Red Curry was soon on the go. After a few more drinks, and a tasty apple crumble courtesy of Jane and Andy, we retired to bed.

Sunday began as Saturday had ended and it continued to persist it down. At one point, the sound of the water running past the bedroom window was so loud that I genuinely thought the down pipe from the roof had broken. When the r\*\*n turned to snow we decided enough was enough. A quick stop at Pete's Eats and then it was time to head home. By the afternoon we were back in Birmingham and the weather had cleared up. I decided to ring my Mom to share, in that very British way, my story of weekend weather woe and also to see how the midlands had coped with the downpour.. "Ooooo" she said sounding perplexed "it was beautiful here on Saturday.....I was in the garden all day.....felt like spring was on its way." Grrrrrrr.... I rolled my eyes and groaned. Bring on the summer!!

## Easter meet, Glen Etive

Photos by **Stewart Moody & Joel Taylor**

Louise Bullock nets herself 10 points in the Chairman's Challenge for wearing club merchandise in action. Her definition of "action" is the summit of Ben Nevis after an ascent of the CMD Arete in full winter conditions. You can't argue with that. The CMD was the main objective of several folk on this meet and the weather on Sunday gave us the window of opportunity we'd been waiting for. Welcome to the A-team Lou, you smashed it!





(L-R) Joel and Adam high up on Curved Ridge (SG III) on Carn Dearn on the last day of the meet.



Joel launches the mother of all snowballs in the general direction of Sarah. Andy, packing slightly less firepower, says nothing for fear of a blue on blue.



Joel "The King of the World" Taylor soaks up the views from the top of Curved Ridge.



Near the summit of Carn Mor Dearn, en route for the arete (L-R) Lou, Jules, Adam, Vicky

Jane Gilmour nears the summit of Stob Dearg after an adventure filled ascent of Curved Ridge, one of Scotland's best Grade III scrambles

Andy Armstrong describes his Easter Monday ascent of

# CURVED RIDGE

It was talked about as a quick scramble to be done before heading back home. I knew better and as soon as we stepped onto Curved Ridge going up Stob Dearg the others were out of sight, the difference in fitness levels clearly visible. It didn't matter as Jane and I had everything we needed: harnesses, helmets, rope, rack and a full day to enjoy.

The morning fog still hung in the air deceiving us of the hidden drops on either side of the ridge but the rock was good, even if slightly damp. We continued up, every now and then seeing a figure in the mist above, or it could have been my imagination.

About two thirds of the way up the cloud lifted a little to gift us our first glimpses of where we were. As I looked around a strange sense of fright and awe struck me. "We're not supposed to be here" was the first panic stricken thought followed by "That's amazing, I'm so glad I'm here".





About three quarters of the way up and we got to the crux, a chimney which looked more like a v.diff climb. I looked at Jane and immediately the rope came out. It was less than 10 meters in height but the reassurance made us feel better. A strong lay back followed by some wise foot placements was needed to complete this mini section. The chimney was followed by a mantle shelf (aka getting out of the swimming pool move). A nice hip high right foot placement and then you are up. Easy, unless you get your foot wedged into said placement.

“Try to wiggle it”

“I can’t, I’ll try to go back down” which was quickly followed by “No, that’s worse”.

A conundrum on the side of a mountain. Not a dull day for sure. We were stuck and probably would still be there if it were not by chance that the only other person on the side of the mountain came along just at this moment. “I’ll try and wiggle it for you” said scrambler X. “No, that hurts” was the reply. “Hmm, I’ll take your boot off and then you can slip your foot out and I’ll pass your boot up”. A genius thought and minutes later Jane was free from the rock and with a wet foot avoided. Scrambler X obviously thought we were too slow as well as he quickly sped ahead.

The rest of the route was straightforward, if a bit snowy. By the time we reached the summit the cloud was gone and beautiful views all around us was our reward. The summit was crowded with other people but we knew that they just potted up and that we truly earned this Munro.

We could have ended the day there, an achievement in itself, but the other Munro, Stob na Broige at the other end of Buachaille Etive Mor was just asking to be bagged. So off we went along the broad ridge to get our second Munro of the day. By the time we got back to the hut it was 18:30. A long day but a memorable one.

Our encounter with scrambler X must have had an impact as he mentioned it later in a post on Facebook...



# SELFIES FROM SCOTLAND

Journey around Lochabar in nine  
selfies by the club's most prolific  
photographer, Joel Taylor



# THE GREAT BRITISH BOG OFF

## or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bog

by Victoria Higgins (in case you had to ask)

**Fellow Mercians, as many of you have come to note, my innate clumsiness and love of hiking mean I can often be found sliding around in some of the Nation's finest bogs. This year's Easter meet in Glen Coe was no exception, with a full on CODE BROWN situation developing within a few hours of leaving the hut on Friday morning. Luckily for you all, I survived to tell the tale and impart some priceless bog-related pearls of wisdom for your reading pleasure. Mountaineering does not get any more exciting than this folks.**

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### The Incident

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The day began swimmingly, as I set off with the rest of the B Team to begin an heroic but ill fated attempt to circumnavigate <sup>1</sup> the Ring of Steall. After hiking up Glen Nevis and successfully traversing the notorious Steall falls wire-bridge, we quickly ended up deep in bog country. Real deep. After hopping and slipping across a few squidgy patches I quickly gave up on trying to keep my new boots clean and went for the wade straight through 'em tactic.

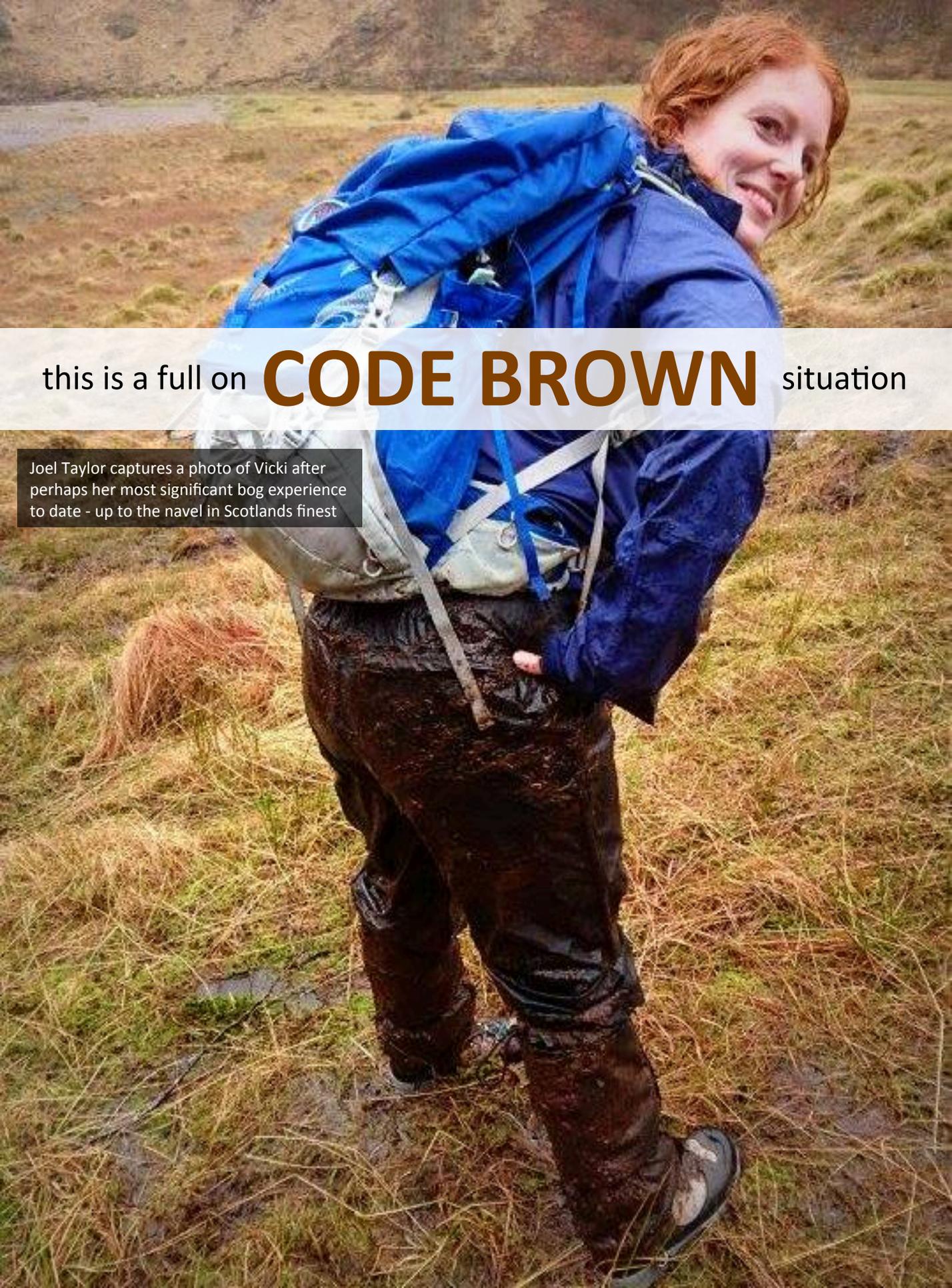
What I hadn't counted on was an unfortunate encounter with *Scotland's Deepest Bog*. Innocently stepping forwards, I quickly plunged waist deep into the quagmire and my frantic struggles only served to sink me further. As the majority of my fellow Mercians <sup>2</sup> laughed hysterically from the rocks above, I was saved by a quick thinking Anta who proffered a hiking pole of freedom <sup>3</sup> and pulled me to safety. After surviving the incident and spending the rest of the day covered in the soggy brown stuff, I had something of an epiphany and decided to re-examine my relationship with bogs. How to start? With research. Know thine enemy and all that.

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1. This may or may not have been the A team plan for the day.
  2. JOEL, it was Joel
  3. Leki branded – an excellent bog rescue device. Sponsorship offers gratefully received.

So, here is a short summary of what I've learned so far - Higgs's top 5 bog facts just for you:

- 1) Where is the world's largest bog, I hear you ask? The peat bogs of the Western Siberian Lowlands in Russia is where. Covering more than a million square kilometres, they are apparently lovely this time of year. Surely a prime location for the 2018 Easter meet?
- 2) Bog Bodies! Preserved through the centuries by the anaerobic bog environment, they provide a gruesome glimpse into our prehistoric past. Lindow Man (aka Pete Marsh, lolz) was found in a Cheshire bog in the 1980s. Thought to have lived in Britain between 2 BC and 119 AD, he is now on permanent display at the British Museum. To think, I came so close to a similar fate.
- 3) The Bog of Eternal Stench. This is found en route to Goblin City and if you dip so much as a toe in you will smell forever. Luckily not native to the British Isles, where most bogs are composed of accumulations of peat, decaying plant material and sphagnum moss.
- 4) No need to travel all the way to Scotland for your bog fix – Birmingham's very own Moseley Bog provides a damp haven from busy city living and was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) back in 1980. The childhood playground of The Lord of the Rings author JRR Tolkien, he stated that the site inspired the 'old forest' in his books. Come for the annual Middle Earth Festival and channel your inner orc.
- 5) The World Bog Snorkelling Championship, first held in 1985, takes place annually every August Bank Holiday at the Waen Rhydd peat bog, near Llanwrtyd Wells in mid Wales. Associated events apparently include mountain bike bog snorkelling (where competitors must ride through the bog on specially prepared mountain bikes), and the Bog Snorkelling Triathlon (a 120-yard (110 metre) swim, a 19-mile (31 kilometre) bike ride and a 7.5 mile (12.1 kilometre) run). Anyone fancy forming a Mercian team?

So, there you go – five completely useless facts you definitely did not need to know about bogs. If you feel the need to waste a further 3.22 minutes of your life, the BCC have made it so you can listen to the soothing sounds of a peat bog any time you like. Riveting stuff. You can find it [here](#).

A woman with red hair, wearing a blue jacket and a large blue backpack, stands in a bog. Her pants and boots are covered in mud. She is smiling and looking back over her shoulder. The background shows a grassy bog with a body of water in the distance.

this is a full on **CODE BROWN** situation

Joel Taylor captures a photo of Vicki after perhaps her most significant bog experience to date - up to the navel in Scotland's finest

**HIKE | BIKE | CLIMB**