



# Nor' West News



## The NeWSletter of the Nor' West Sgurramblers

Issue No. 149 – January 2012



### MEET REPORTS

#### **WELSH INVADE SCOTLAND** !: Meet No. 279 (Thursday 8 – Monday 12 September 2011)

I had volunteered to organise the meet as I wanted to celebrate a special occasion – completion of the Munros! It had taken me 17 years to be one summit away from achieving this objective. The NWS members attending were joined by some Clwydian Ramblers from North Wales, family members and friends. The meet was based on the Corran Bunkhouse near Fort William. This gave the possibility of access to a number of excellent Corbetts in the Ardgour peninsula and a range of Munros in Glencoe and the Mamores. The bunkhouse is also conveniently situated next door to the Corran Ferry hotel and we planned to take advantage of the hostelry! Unfortunately, severe weather was forecast for the weekend because the tail of Hurricane Katia was due to hit the UK. And the Corran Ferry hotel had shut down. So it seemed a little grim! However this problem was overcome as it was possible to get a free ferry to the Inn at Ardgour and this was taken advantage of by a number of us during our stay in the bunkhouse.

The weather in Scotland this summer has been poor with some good soakings received by the group in May. The September weekend turned out to be no different. But on the Friday Chris Knowles had a go at Glas Bheinn by Kinlochleven and Colin Bradley succeeded in getting up The Cobbler in the Arrochar Alps with his son Luke and friend Matt. All encountered very mixed weather with some rain and wind - but this is to be expected in Scotland!



The forecast for the Saturday was dreadful, with high winds and rain predicted. But, on getting up in the morning and rushing to open the curtains, it did not seem as bad as the forecast – some blue sky could be seen! Sixteen of us assembled in the car park down Glen Nevis and set off to do Sgurr a' Mhaim which was to be my final Munro of the round. The rest that were up for the weekend, but not able to do this Munro, went on the train to Mallaig - a memorable journey - over the Glen Finnan viaduct which featured in a Harry Potter film.

On the way up Sgurr a' Mhaim, some excellent views down Glen Nevis were had and Ben Nevis almost cleared of cloud. Stob Ban looked very impressive, as did many of the other Mamores that could be seen as we gained height. Finally the summit ridge was reached and the top could be seen. Then, unfortunately, it started to become misty but my final Munro was reached! Colin Bradley had brought a bottle of champagne to celebrate the occasion and his son Luke had carried it to the summit. So we all had a celebratory drink. Some members of the group decided to carry on along the Devil's Ridge towards Stob Ban. But the weather was deteriorating: it started raining hard and the mist came in. Reaching the bealach the group split, two descending into Coire a' Mhusgain and two going on to Stob Ban and descending the north ridge. By then the weather had improved again. The rain stopped and the cloud lifted a little so that there was a pleasant end to the day as we drove the final miles back to Corran Bunkhouse. Full use was made of the drying room in the bunkhouse that night, as is the norm in Scotland! To celebrate the day, we made our way to the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe where a fine meal was had with the usual music to follow.



The next day the tail of hurricane Katia really hit Scotland, bringing very heavy rain and high winds. A few members of our group decided to explore the "North Face" of Fort William - in other words some of the gear shops. A few more went on the train to Mallaig. Chris Knowles and Dave Douglas decided to have a go at a Marilyn nearby and a few decided to go home early. Any attempt at a higher peak would have been futile that day as the wind would have blasted you off! The weather was even worse on the Monday with flooded roads in some parts of Scotland. Any mountaineering expedition was impossible and we all beat a path home, planning to return at another date when the weather was more favourable. At least this year we had not had a long range forecast promising a "Barbecue Summer"!

Having managed to scale the final Munro I can now call myself a Munroist and I can have my name recorded in the Munro Society list which already has more than 4,000 entries. It may have taken me some 17 years to complete the round - nowhere near the present record of 39 days and 9 hours - but it was still a pleasurable occasion. As to the future, a friend has bought me a book called "The Call of the Corbetts" so I still have plenty of challenges left in Scotland!

John Elwyn Williams

**YORKSHIRE SUNSHINE**: Meet No. 280 (Friday 8 – Sunday 10 October 2011)

Due to booking problems David Cheesman had had to abandon the original decision to base the 2012 AGM had at Alston youth hostel and had had to settle for Langdon Beck youth hostel which is in the heart of the North Yorkshire Moors and not ideally situated to satisfy the summit-bagging aspirations of some members. As I was working fairly late on the Friday before the AGM, I decided to travel up to the area on Saturday morning and to return home on Saturday evening, as I was also working on Sunday. The general theme of the weather for the preceding days in October had been rather damp and gloomy so it was pleasing to find that there were blue skies and sunshine when I set off on Saturday morning.

The wildly optimistic travelling time to Langdon Beck that the online route planner had calculated - and the fact that the Sat Nav took me to the fire station near the centre of



Middleton in Teesdale - conspired to ensure that I pulled up at Langdon Beck youth hostel considerably later than my estimated arrival time of 8.30 am. When I arrived at the hostel Paul Cassell had already left to walk part of the Pennine Way down to Middleton in Teesdale (where he intended to sink a pint of beer before walking back again). But, happily, I was in time to find most of the others who were about to set off on their day's walking. Just as well I did not get to the hostel any later as I hadn't got around to printing a copy of the OS map of the area. Mike Knight and Kerina Cheesman had decided to walk along the

River Tees to Cauldron Snout. The rest of the group - Chris Horne, Brian Billington, David Douglas, David Cheesman and Roger Reeves - were planning an ascent of Cross Fell from Garrigil, a drive of about six or seven miles from the hostel. I decided to join them. I'd been up Cross Fell a couple of times before but never from that side of the hill.

Cross Fell is an enormous, sprawling lump of a hill – the highest point on the Pennine Way and the highest point in England outside the Lake District. There is an interesting local phenomenon known as the Helm wind – a strong easterly wind which (by all accounts) produces an eerie wailing noise as it moves through the hill's gullies - certainly not something we were going to hear this day as it was almost completely calm. If Wikipedia is to be believed (and it usually isn't), in ancient times Cross Fell was known as Fiend's Hill and the name Cross Fell is derived from the "angry" meaning of the word "cross". The track from Garrigil follows a roughly south westerly route across the flanks of the hill for about 12 km to the 893m summit. I must admit that I was not aware of how far it was to the top and it was with some surprise when, after about an hour and a half, I looked at somebody's map and I realised that we were not even half way. The point which I had been looking at and imagining to be the top of Cross Fell was only a subsidiary peak. Luckily the weather was wall to wall sunshine and blue skies. Otherwise the scenery would probably have been rather bleak.

About a mile from the top we came across a bothy – Greg's Hut – which is named after John Gregory, a local man who had been killed in a climbing accident in the Swiss Alps in the 1960's. We went in to investigate its suitability as a lunch stop venue. Compared to some Highland bothies, Greg's Hut really was five star accommodation, complete with a wood burning stove, Tibetan prayer flags hanging from the ceiling, sleeping platform and a number of plastic chairs with holes drilled in the bottom to allow any water from the leaking roof to drain away. The windows even contained glass panes which had been taken from BT phone boxes.



Hunger pangs having been banished, we continued our ascent of Cross Fell, arriving



at the broad, featureless, stony summit in about another 20 minutes - my third ascent and another tick on Roger's Marilyn bagging list. Up until this point we had seen hardly anybody all day but now it became quite busy with people converging on the trig point from various directions. So we asked one of them to take our group summit photo. The conditions whilst not crystal clear were good enough for us to spend several minutes arguing over the identity of various Lake District peaks arrayed some 30 miles to the

West. Skiddaw was fairly obvious but others we weren't so sure of. To the south east we could easily see Little Dunn Fell and Great Dunn Fell, the latter with its distinctive golf ball shaped radar installation.

Our route off the hill followed the Pennine Way for about a mile to Tees Head where we departed from the Pennine Way to follow a rather vague path back to the track we had come up on. There was some talk of traversing across to Round Hill and thence along its north west ridge back to Garrigil. Although this would have been no greater distance, the terrain looked rather rough: so laziness won out and we decided on the former plan. It was about 4 pm when we arrived back at the hostel. Mike, Kerina and Paul had arrived back from their walks. There was just time for afternoon tea and biscuits before starting the AGM during which we discussed plans for the 2012 meets programme (amongst other things).

The evening meal should have been followed by a viewing of photos from the 2011 meets. Unfortunately my ageing laptop took this opportunity to finally give up the ghost. The connector from the monitor had come adrift from the motherboard – so no photos.

Thanks go to David Chessman for organizing the meet and to everyone for their company.

Chris Knowles

## **FORTHCOMING MEETS**

### **MEET No 282: Southern Highlands**

**Dates:** Friday 17 - Monday 20 February 2012.

**Area:** Southern Highlands

**Accommodation:** Crianlarich youth hostel or Tyndrum bunkhouse.

**Programme:** An opportunity to ascend some of the many Munros and Corbetts in the nearby areas when they are snow-capped and at their most attractive.

**Transport:** If coming by car, please advise the organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

**Maps:** OS 1:50,000 sheets Nos 41, 42, 51, 52, 56 & 57.

**Equipment:** **Crampons and ice axe are essential.**

**Bookings:** To reserve a place, contact the Meet organiser who will advise what deposit is required. He will try to reserve accommodation in respect of bookings received by **15 January**.

**Meet Organiser:** Mike Ridley.

### MEET No 283: Central Highlands

Dates: Thursday 5 – Tuesday 10 April 2012.

Area: The mountains surrounding Loch Tay.

Accommodation: Fearnan Bunkhouse.

Programme: Fearnan is centrally placed for walks in a wide area containing a large variety of mountains including numerous Corbetts as well as Ben Lawers and many other Munros.

Transport: By train or car. Picking up arrangements will be made once the participants, availability of cars and routes are known. If coming by car, please advise the organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: OS 1:50,000 Nos 41, 42, 51, 52, 56 & 57.

Equipment: **Crampons and an ice axe are essential.**

Food: Will be provided by the Meet organiser, unless requested otherwise, from **an evening meal on the Thursday to breakfast on the Tuesday inclusive.**

Bookings: To reserve a place, please contact the Meet organiser and send him a deposit of £85 (cheques payable to him in person). He will arrange accommodation in respect of all bookings **received by 1 February**. The balance will be payable on the Meet itself.

Meet Organiser: David Douglas.

### MEET No 28: Far North

Dates: Friday 25 May – Sunday 3 June 2012.

Area: The far northwestern and northern coastal areas.

Accommodation: It is planned to book accommodation in Ullapool, Durness and Helmsdale – with intermediate stops on the first and last nights.

Programme: This large area contains a great variety of very fine Munros, Corbetts (particularly Arkle) and Marilyn's - something to satisfy every interest and aspiration.

Transport: If coming by car, please advise the organiser how many passengers you can take and your approximate route and time of journey.

Maps: OS 1:50,000 sheets Nos 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 33, 34, 40, 41 & 42.

Food: To be provided by the Meet organiser, unless requested otherwise, from an evening meal on the first Friday to breakfast on the last Sunday inclusive.

Bookings: **To reserve a place, contact the Meet organiser and send him a deposit of £100 (cheques payable to him in person) as soon as possible.** Accommodation in this attractive region tends to be booked early but the Meet organiser will attempt to obtain places in respect of all requests received up to **28 February**. The balance of costs will be payable on the Meet.

Meet Organiser: Roger Reeves.

### N O R W A Y

Chris Knowles has offered to organise a meet in Norway in mid-August 2012. He proposes a 10-day trek between mountain huts in the Jotunheim area of Norway. The dates will depend on the preferences expressed by those interested in attending.

**If interested, please contact him by no later than the end of March 2012.**

### MEMBERSHIP

We welcome one new member – Peter Thompson.

A revised Membership list containing the relevant detailed information will be circulated separately. Please note that the revised list also contains revised details for several other members.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions for 2012 - £15 per person - are now due.

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