

# South Wales Mountaineering Club

## Clwb Dringo De Cymru



[www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk](http://www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk)

## Newsletter, April 2005

### Notes from the Editor

Sadly, it is in fact notes from the chairman. Chris Wyatt our Newsletter Editor is quite ill at the moment and will not be able to continue in his current role. Being the sort of bloke he is, he has of course apologised for the delay and any consternation that may have been caused to eagerly waiting readers, where as a lesser man may have just said "Stuff it!"

I'm sure all club members and indeed anyone who knows Chris, will join me in wishing him a very speedy recovery. If you're a friend of his and are in the Swansea area, give him a ring and pop in for a short visit. He will accept Joe's ice cream and offers of help with the chores. "Peace and Love," Chris!

Nigel Lewis

### Annual General Meeting 2004

The AGM was held in Swansea and was reasonably well attended. The obligatory free pint was more than enough to drag in some of the stalwarts!

As well as all the usual stuff like Chairman's Report, accounts and membership numbers, there was a long and impassioned debate around the club's constitution. Most of the changes involved bringing the language into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, ensuring others know we are non discriminatory and adding some stuff to appease the tax-man. This was all fairly straightforward and accepted by all present.

The main debate concerned the age at which people can join the club as a member in their own right and the nature of our relationship with young climbers, if indeed we have one at all. Issues such as liability and child protection were discussed at length.

Eventually the constitution was amended so that you must now be 18 years of age to join SWMC. However, all present agreed (to differing

extents) that young people were the life- blood and long- term future of grass roots climbing in South Wales (and who else will arrange the annual dinner for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club?).

To cater for young people, a working group is putting together a system whereby those that want to can climb with and encourage young people to be the superstars of the future, can do so safely, both for them and the young people. Watch this space for updates.

A number of changes were made to the committee, which have since had to be amended. Here's the full line up as it stands today.

Nigel Lewis	Chair	<a href="mailto:nrlal@aol.com">nrlal@aol.com</a>
Alan Rosier	Secretary	<a href="mailto:alan.rosier@capita.co.uk">alan.rosier@capita.co.uk</a>
Llio Elgar	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:Llio.elgar@swansea.gov.uk">Llio.elgar@swansea.gov.uk</a>
Bryan Smith	Barn Warden	<a href="mailto:bryan@bhsmith.fsnet.co.uk">bryan@bhsmith.fsnet.co.uk</a>
Insert your name here?	Newsletter Editor	<a href="mailto:nrlal@aol.com">nrlal@aol.com</a>
Sylvia Noorbhai	Membership Secretary, East	<a href="mailto:snoorbhai@hotmail.com">snoorbhai@hotmail.com</a>
Paul Rogers	Ordinary Member, East	<a href="mailto:fathorsepig@yahoo.ie">fathorsepig@yahoo.ie</a>
Tim Hoddy	Membership Secretary, West	<a href="mailto:tim.hoddy@ntlworld.com">tim.hoddy@ntlworld.com</a>
Nik Goile	Ordinary Member, West	<a href="mailto:Nik.goile@cdsm.co.uk">Nik.goile@cdsm.co.uk</a>

With Chris Wyatt's illness, the position of newsletter editor has become vacant. In line with the constitution, a member can be proposed and seconded, and will join the committee for the rest of the year as long as no-one objects. Do you fit the bill? If anyone is interested in the post, give any committee member a ring, or, just feel free to sort out your own proposer and seconder.

## Reports from the committee

### **Barn Stuff**

Bryan Smith has whirled like a dervish into his new role. Lots of the smaller jobs have been done at the barn and the boiler has had a damn good thrashing. Fair play to Bryan, he managed to get the boiler running at 94% efficiency (which I'm told is very good) for literally hundreds of pounds less than the original quote.

The gent's shower has been condemned as it sits on a softwood and chipboard frame that is now an excellent example of how life was formed from the primordial soup. Bryan is working toward a solution, even as we speak.

I can't speak highly enough of Big Bry, all this has been done whilst he is training to walk to the North Pole. If any other members have been there, can they speak to Bryan and give him any tips! Some he's received already.

Don't eat the yellow snow.

Penguins = wrong pole.

It might look big, white and cuddly, but it will eat you.

Make sure you shake it properly, I will NOT kiss it better!

### **Slide shows?**

The committee have also been asked to consider what we as a club do, other than rock climbing. For instance, slide shows throughout the winter have been a feature of the social life of the club since time immemorial. (I'm actually lead to believe that they were called 'Jack o' lantern' shows when they first started.) However, in the East of the club area, some shows have been really well attended whilst others have been embarrassing for the person who was asked to put them on. This is no reflection whatsoever on the people concerned, as often they have been the same person!

Several factors, such as venue and day of the week have been suggested as impacting on the success of events, and the committee have quite rightly decided to ask you the members what is wanted. To that end, the famously talented Llio Elgar is writing a survey, which all members will be asked to complete. We will be asking who does what; such as big mountains, classic treks, bouldering, esoteric crags, skiing, caving, walking or anything else. We also want to know if people want slide shows, lectures, training sessions etc., and if so where? When? Will they attend? Will they contribute?

If any event is to be successful, it needs to be something that people want. The committee don't know what you want unless you tell us.

### **Novice Days**

The committee have also arranged Novice's Days for 2005.

The first is on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April in the Gower. (The coast West of Swansea, not the pub in Cathays). The second will be on Saturday 14th May, at a venue to be fixed.

Numbers are to be restricted dependant upon numbers of volunteers and the size of the venue. It is a priority that all interested parties get at least one chance to attend, so if the first meet is full then an overspill to the second date will be arranged.

For further details see the Bulletin Board or contact Alan Rosier direct.

### **First Lead weekend?**

We also hope to host a First Lead weekend based at the hut some time during the summer. This is aimed at those who are competent seconds or plywood leaders and want to move out into the bigger, scarier territory of leading on trad gear. As an aside, if any members want to propose/arrange an event that will assist members to move toward the

bigger mountains, they can contact a committee member direct, or include the details on their completed survey.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the committee will be on 17<sup>th</sup> May. If there is anything you would like the committee to consider, just contact any committee member you like the sound of.

### **Membership Matters!**

Please remember that subscriptions for club membership are due on January 1st. These can be paid to membership secretaries by sending a cheque made out to the SWMC, handing over cash to membership secretaries, or the preferred option, which is to set up a standing order. You can find the contact details for the Membership Secretaries in the committee details above. The website has a membership form that you can print off and send directly to your bank.

It should be noted that BMC insurance is dependent on being a member of the BMC and that if you haven't paid your subs and are not a member of

the BMC by any other means, then you're not a member of the BMC. It is the responsibility of members to ensure that subscriptions are paid up to date. In other words, if you haven't paid your subscription since the 1st of January then you're probably not covered by the insurance.

Too stupid to be scared.      Nigel Lewis.

In March 1992, I was lucky enough to spend a couple of weeks in Sierra Leone, a country in West Africa that most people had never heard of at that time.

It's situated a couple of countries South of the Gambia, just before the big Western bulge of Africa starts to straighten out toward Ghana, and is between 5 and 9 degrees North of the equator. Then, it had a population of around 5 million, in a country about the size of Scotland. Amongst the many indigenous languages, some people speak English or Krio, a sort of Pidgin English. As a nation, it started to exist around the late 1780s when freed slaves from America and the UK bolstered the local population, and it became a Crown Colony on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1808. It was granted independence from Britain on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1961.

I don't know what I said or did, but six weeks after I left, there was a fairly popular revolution, which overthrew the Government of Major General Momoh, who had been the stable but corrupt leader of the party that had ruled for around 30 years!

My parents were living there during the revolution and were able to tell me of the benefits Captain Valentine Strasse had brought with him to power. He was the youngest leader of a nation in the world at that time,

and the country was swept with a wave of hope and optimism. I had the chance of going back 6 months later and well, who wouldn't?

Upon arriving, it was evident that things had changed. Everywhere you looked, there was the new party's flag or a slogan. Work parties were clearing weeds from ditches and rusty wrecks were removed. Of course, what were most in evidence were soldiers.

Think of the Changing of the Guard or a Sandhurst parade. Well these soldiers were nothing like that. Some had uniforms, others had part uniforms and some had a pair of shorts and T-shirt. A multitude of weapons would be carried between them, with differing degrees of familiarity. It ranged from machine guns and rifles, to a pistol thrust into the waistband of their trousers or a machete swung nonchalantly in the breeze. Checkpoints were located at strategic points, supplemented by roving patrols.

All in all, the troops appeared to be acting properly and didn't much bother westerners. The overnight curfew had been relaxed and you could now go out after dark without being shot dead!

My parents lived in a gated compound, shared with a number of diplomats and their staff. On Fridays, we would start with drinks at someone's house; Saturday would be the golf club and Sunday the beach. Arrangements were made well in advance, as there was no mobile phone coverage and little reliable landline availability.

Friday evening came and we realised that we wouldn't be able to go out that evening, as my kids were unwell. Rather than be able to ring up and offer apologies, I thought I would drive across town and let people know we wouldn't be there for the evening.

I borrowed my mother's Daihatsu Sport track, and set off across town. It was already loaded up with tomorrow's golf clubs, but as I was driving from one secure compound to another, that was no problem.

As I drove through the dark, up Spur Road toward Hastings, I saw a group of soldiers disgorging from some ramshackle vehicles at the side of the road. I paid this no attention, as military activity was so common.

I duly arrived, stopped for one Star beer and delivered my message. I waved a cheery goodbye to all and set off back down Spur Road toward home. By the time I got to the soldiers, there was now a small queue of vehicles at a checkpoint. A chain was across the road at windscreen height and white painted logs across the road, studded with metal bars to rip out the tyres and sumps of those who wouldn't stop.

Again, I wasn't overly concerned as such stuff was fairly commonplace. As I sat in the queue with the engine off, a young boy walked down the side of the waiting vehicles, looking inside at the occupants and contents. He was a part uniform soldier and had a pistol thrust into the waistband of his ragged trousers. Upon reaching me, he became quite agitated and drew his gun. He didn't point it at me but began to shout

either in Krio or such heavily accented English that I didn't have a clue what he was saying. It seemed that I was supposed to get out of the vehicle. I got out and stood there quite bemused, when I noticed that another soldier had now levelled a rocket propelled grenade at my chest. I can distinctly remember thinking, "If he pulls that trigger, we'll all be blown up."

Before I realised I should now fear for my mortal safety, a far more assured soldier sauntered up. He was the full uniform type and carried an assault weapon. The boy soldier was shouting excitedly. Promotion for him no doubt, when I was found to be a mercenary or spy.

The professional soldier peered into the back of the jeep at the sophisticated weaponry I was carrying, turned to the boy with a clip of the ear type motion and said "Golf clubs. Golf clubs!"

Nothing more was said to me, but the assembled men turned and carried on down the line of cars behind me. I got back into the vehicle and when it was my turn, drove on down the hill and back home. I told my story and it was only in the telling that I realised I could have been arrested or shot! Star beer never tasted as good as the several I had later that night!

### Coming Soon

The next newsletter will be published in June 2005. Please submit items, requests or pictures by 1<sup>st</sup> June to Nigel Lewis. (Or any other Newsletter editor who puts their head in the noose!)

All submissions will be considered for publication and almost definitely printed.

Remember, the submission date means the date for inclusion in the next newsletter. If it gets to me by the 1<sup>st</sup> I guarantee inclusion in the next edition, if it gets there after, I will add it in if I have enough time or keep it until the next issue. Any item can be sent to me at any time for future publication.

Can you fill this space?

If you think you can, send any items for the newsletter to:  
[nrllal@aol.com](mailto:nrllal@aol.com)