



SWMC Newsletter

Spring '06

www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk

Have you ever watched someone do something so stupid and dangerous (jump from a 100 foot cliff, solo E5, snort tequila up their nose) that you've thought, "Well, at least I'd never be that crazy."

And then a few months later, jumping off a 100 foot cliff while snorting tequila up your nose, you've had a little smile to yourself and thought, "Oh well, never say never."

When you're climbing those first indoor routes on a safe top rope, it's hard to believe that one day you'll be leading high mountain pitches or abseiling into the unknown off intimidating sea cliffs.

Well, believe. In the SWMC there are super-hard rock climbers, experienced mountaineers and hardened polar travellers. They all started somewhere, and like playground drug dealers, most are only too happy to lead others onto bigger thrills (thanks for the ice climbing, Gary).

Many climbers are happy reaching a comfortable enjoyment of the sport, and content to stay at that level for the rest of their climbing lives. And many others need to constantly push their boundaries.

So as John Custance has realised (see The Nepalese Saga on page 4), never rule out seeing the summit of Everest.

Simon Williams
Newsletter editor

Joining the club

Join the SWMC and you'll meet friendly and helpful climbers and mountaineers of all abilities and interests. There's regular weekday evening and weekend climbing meets, a lively online forum, British Mountaineering Council affiliation and insurance, discount at retailers and reduced rates at the North Wales club hut.

Anyone interested in joining should go to the website www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk, or email John Custance [membership.east@tiscali.co.uk] for Cardiff area membership, Tim Hoddy [tim.hoddy@ntlworld.com] for Swansea, or Linda Jensen [Linda.Jensen@ntlworld.com] for the youth section (see page 2 for more youth section details).

Novice Day

Novices can have a taste of climbing at the club's Novice Day on May 14th. Taking place at Three Cliffs Bay, Gower, experienced club members will be on hand to get beginners going safely.

To come along, get to the Gower Inn at 9.30 am, on the right hand side of the A4118 between Swansea and Port Eynon. Bring sunscreen, sarnies and whatever climbing kit you've got. Non-members will be able to join the club, and the guide book to climbing in the area will be available to buy. Non-climbing partners are welcome, to just enjoy some time on the beach. If you'd like to attend, please email Nigel Lewis at [Nrlal@btinternet.com].

All club members able to help, or intending to bring novices along, please let Nigel know. and bring all the spare kit available.



SWMC members climbing on a club meet at Navigation Quarry

Weekend Club Meets

This summer the regular Wednesday evening meets are being supplemented by a monthly programme of weekend events and trips. The first took place on Sunday 7th May at Navigation Quarry, and was well attended by both East and West members. Lots of climbing was done, and in line with the club's new 'crag clean up' initiative, several large bags of rubbish were collected.

Special thanks goes to Chris Wyatt for lugging the barbeque up the hill, and for stealing the sausages from the party he attended the night before.

For anyone who missed it, there's plenty more weekend meets throughout the summer. The full programme is as follows:

14th May - Novice day, Three Cliffs Bay, Gower
Contact Nigel Lewis [nrlal@aol.com]

20th - 21st May - Grit Weekend, Stanage
Contact Garan Comely [Garan.Comley@scottwilson.com]

10th - 11th June - Gower, with BBQ and camp
Contact Tim Hoddy [tim.hoddy@ntlworld.com]

8th July - Llangattock Quarry
Contact Alan Rosier [use bulletin board Private Message]

5th - 6th Aug - Bosherton, Pembrokeshire
Contact Simon Williams [williamsSj6@cf.ac.uk]

26th - 27th Aug - 1st Lead Weekend, North Wales
Contact: Nik Goile [nikgoile@gmail.com]

9th - 10th September - Shorncliffe
Contact John Custance [membership.east@tiscali.co.uk]

Next issue...

The next newsletter will be Summer 06, due out in July. If you have anything to contribute - trip reports, news items, letters, photos, rants etc - email Simon Williams [williamssj6@cf.ac.uk]

Climbing for young people

SWMC members Linda Jensen and Gary Lewis run a club for young climbers on Saturdays at the Welsh International Climbing Centre (WICC). Linda, also BMC Area Youth Coordinator for South Wales and Gary, BMC Climbing Wall Rep, hold the climbing and coaching session between 10.30 and 1 pm for youngsters who've learnt the basic climbing skills and are keen to improve their wall climbing with a view to entering the BRYCS.

The BRYCS is a friendly competition run by the BMC for seven to fifteen-year-olds, consisting of three local rounds followed by a national final. Young climbers at the Saturday club don't have to enter the competition, as anyone keen to develop climbing skills and fitness is welcome.

If a youngster wants to go along on Saturdays, they need to first do an introductory course at a local climbing wall, learning how to put on a harness, tie onto the rope and maybe how to belay. If afterwards they're still keen, they should call Gary or Linda (see below for contact details). Kit can be hired to get started, and Gary and Linda can advise on buying new or help find second hand gear.

As most of the youngsters are keen to gain some independence, the Saturday club helps them learn

the skills to do this safely. Over a training period of anything from weeks to months, dependant on age and ability, new members introduced into the group eventually pair up and climb independently. They'll belay each other while an adult keeps a watchful eye, usually one of the parent volunteers will be able to do this after a short training session. Gary and Linda are always keen to include parents and experienced climbers as belay bunnies.

As confidence and fitness grow the youngsters can start to lead climb. Young climbers who become established members of the Saturday morning climbing group may be invited to become Youth Members of the SWMC, and able to take part in various outdoor sessions. These include a few all day or weekend meets a year, and most sunny Saturday afternoons after the indoor session there's climbing on one of the local crags. A helmet is essential for all outdoor climbing.

If you would like to join the SWMC Youth Section but can't attend the Saturday morning club, you may still be eligible - call to make special arrangements.

Gary Lewis: 029 20214677; gary.lewis2@ntlworld.com
Linda Jensen: 029 20652992; Linda.Jensen@ntlworld.com

Sign up to the bulletin board for all club communications

From September this year, all club communication with members will take place by email. To receive any communication (including this newsletter), all members **MUST** be registered on the bulletin board, although there is no requirement to be an active user of the forums.

If you're already registered on the bulletin board you need do nothing. If you are not registered and wish to continue to receive club communications after September, go to www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk/bb/ and click the 'register' link at the top right of the screen.

A more detailed email will be sent to all members, but in the meantime Paul Rogers has prepared the following helpful guide to get the technically challenged started with using the forums.

Step 1

You will need a computer - ask if unsure what one is.

Step 2

Plug it in, switch it on and connect to the internet.

Step 3

Open up a web browser (that button you press when you want to search for porn)

Step 4

Type: 'www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk/bb' into the window at the top and press the 'enter' (or return) key. Or if you are John Meyers spend the next 6 months fruitlessly attempting to have the web address shortened.

Step 5

If already registered, log onto the bulletin board by entering your username and password in the appropriate boxes towards the bottom of the screen. Otherwise, click on the "register" icon and follow the instructions.

Step 6

Once logged on, select a topic from the forum list. All the forums are pretty self explanatory ('Abuse you Friends' forum should be avoided if you are easily offended). There is a symbol to the left of the description that turns orange if there are any new messages since your last visit.

Step 7

A new screen with 'threads' will appear. Click on one to read it. Again the orange symbol denotes an unread 'post' in the thread.

Step 8

If you wish to reply to one of the postings click 'reply' towards the bottom of the screen.

Step 9

That's it, enjoy!

Llety Llwyd, the club hut

Hut warden Bryan Smith has been busy as usual. He's taken care of all those nasty drafts, so we're no longer paying the bills to keep the cows warm. You may have a bit of trouble on arrival, as the main entrance door now feels a little stiffer to open, but a good push will get you in past the draft proofing foam.

Our neighbours at the Lincoln Mountaineering Club hut have done an excellent job of filling in some of the larger holes at the top of the track, with SWMC contributing a couple of bags of concrete. You may now feel brave enough to take your car down, though there's still much track improving to be done.

Lincoln members have also repaired and improved the dry stone wall that closes off our patch from the field below, and its marauding cows. They've left us the bit of wall in front of the hut to finish, and Arwyn the farmer is happy for us to use stones from some of the nearby ruined walls.

Bryan's taken one radiator to the hut in readiness for expanding the heating to upstairs. If anyone has another spare, please let Bryan know.

Anyone willing to help with the dry stone walling, painting, shower building, plumbing, cleaning and maintenance, get in touch with Bryan.

Remember, all hut bookings are still through Steve Lucocq, contact **hut@swmc.ath.cx** or 07789 551 591.

The committee

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Paul Rogers [fathorsepig@yahoo.ie]

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Nik Goile [Nik.goile@cdsm.co.uk]

The Nepalese Saga

John Custance thought he'd never get to see the summit of Everest, but it's amazing what you can do on a Saga holiday

Day 1

Arrive Kathmandu International Airport and meet our Saga rep, Mr Sahkai. There's seventeen in our party, ages ranging from fifty to seventies.

En route to the hotel we pass families living in corrugated iron shacks with their cows. Traffic is completely chaotic. The housing improves as we near Dwarikas Hotel. This is a beautiful place, a World Heritage site, preserving some of the Nepali traditional workmanship in wood, stone and brick.

Then sightseeing in the Thamel Market.

Day 2

After breakfast we leave for the domestic air terminal. Military presence all the way. Strict security at the airport, and we all squash into a Yeti Airways' Twin Otter. A thirty minute flight to Pokhara where we meet our trekking leader, Hosiyar Sing Gurung (or HS for short) and the porters.

One and a half hours to Naya Pul where we start walking. Each porter has a basket on his back secured by only a head band across the brow, carrying about 70lbs each.

Stop at Greenview Lodge in Birethanti for lunch and a short walk to a waterfall. See langur monkeys, kites rising in the sky, cotton trees coming into flower.

A dog joins us. He soon becomes 'Fred' or 'Pack Leader'. Then on to Sanctuary Lodge, passing yoked bullocks ploughing the terraces with wooden ploughs. Sanctuary Lodge is like paradise.

We wake to see the sun rise over Anapurna South and Fishtail, both covered with snow

Day 3

We climb a good path to a steel bridge built by the Ghurkhas, and start to see Maoist graffiti. Amazing terraced hillsides full of crops. Pass through many hamlets with stone built houses, tile or thatched roofs. The window surrounds are painted red and green, the walls above veranda level are whitewashed whilst the lower levels are covered with mud. Cows, dogs and chickens are everywhere. The winter wheat is ripening and the kitchen gardens are full of cabbages, peas, tomatoes, beetroot, fennel, onions, garlic and spinach.

10 am, we arrive at a primary school. The children are all lined up before going to class. The head teacher plays a drum and the children do exercises to the rhythm.

Carry on up a stone staircase, passing orchids, alpine primula and rhododendrons, then at last we can see the village of Ghandruk and Himalaya Lodge - our goal. But the clouds continue to thicken and it starts to rain - no sign of the promised mountain views.

Day 4

We wake to see the sun rise over Annapurna South and Fishtail, both covered with snow, and then breakfast on the lawn in beautiful sunshine.

A short walk among deciduous trees and rhododendrons, we see Common, Egyptian and Moustached vultures. Villagers are basket and mat weaving from slit bamboo, fabric weaving from nettle fibre. Others are washing clothes, cooking pots and themselves at the wells.

We spend the afternoon relaxing.



Children exercise to the beat of a Nepalese drum

Day 5

We watch another breathtaking sunrise over the Annapurnas. After breakfast set off on a different route back to Sanctuary Lodge. Down a massive staircase, on and on skirting Ghandruk village. The path is busy with mule trains, goat herds and children going to school, women with massive baskets on headbands going to market. Apparently the paths are maintained by work parties of one member from each household in the community.

At Sanctuary Lodge children from a local school give us garlands and a 'Welcome Dance'. The 'music' is the children singing in time to the headmaster beating a typical Nepali drum.

Day 6

Rest morning after a night of bad stomach cramps and little sleep. In the afternoon decide we can push on, and set off along the Modi Khola River, over a very rickety rope bridge, then a steep path towards Gurung Lodge.

We meet five boys playing by a well, stop to talk to them and brake the cardinal rule, "do not give children sweets" (tooth brushing and dental care are not part of everyday life). But we give each boy half a finger of Kit Kat, their eyes shine as they put the fingers in their mouths, then just suck lightly to make them last as long as possible. One of the boys gives us a rhododendron flower.

More very steep climbing, lots of gentian violets. We come to a village, and on the wall of each house there's a head-high beehive made from a tree trunk. Eventually we reach Gurung Lodge, a beautiful place.

Day 7

A lazy day. We walk to Chandra-kot, seeing many different butterflies. In the village we watch a man splitting bamboo in readiness for weaving, and boys play football with a ball

made of sacking.

In the afternoon we visit the Himalayan Cottage Museum at Tanchkot. We see farm implements, household utensils, musical instruments, woodworking tools, furniture and stills for distilling alcohol from millet dried over the fire on a cloth sheet.

We learn that three crops a year are grown on a single plot. Maize and potatoes, March to June; rice and millet, June to September; winter wheat and more potatoes, September to March. Harvest thanks is said with the first fruit of any crop, privately in the home shrine. Collective worship is not the norm.

Day 8

A very hard climb to Dhampus, up high-sided "staircases", through rhododendron and magnolia forests, clearing every so often for enough space for a football or volleyball pitch. It rains heavily as we near the

This is the only way we'd see Everest 'live'

highest point of 2000 metres. Then down steep steps through Pothana, eventually reaching Basanta Lodge. We're all soaked.

Off again, the rain still coming down. One and a half hours down more steep steps. The terraces become wider, more like paddy fields, being ploughed ready for planting rice.

The stone steps eventually end and we're walking on a lorry track. The ground is mica-like clay and perfectly clean boots gain a covering of pearl-grey coloured mud.

Finally we're grateful to rest our weary limbs on the bus. Wet and bedraggled we arrive at Shangri-La Village after many police check points. In the evening we go to a disco in the hotel. What a contrast from the hills! Back to civilization?



Porters carry 70lb loads over a rickety rope bridge

Day 9

We take a bus tour of Pokhara, a town with only a few settlers and very isolated until 1968 when the first roads from the Indian border and Katmandu arrived, and many people came down from the hills looking for an easier life. But this life seems to have stood still for them – there's people collecting water from wells, cows roaming the streets, beautiful flower and vegetable gardens.

We go to a "combined" Buddhist and Hindu temple. Being Saturday it's the most popular day for people to make their weekly temple visit, although any day of the week will do. A cockerel is being sacrificed in the Hindu temple, later to be taken home and cooked - a special meal from the Gods. A holy man is sitting in the corner of one temple, giving blessings. The main difference between Hinduism and Buddhism is that the Buddhists do not take life, so they don't sacrifice animals.

The King is in residence at the palace at the end of Lake Phewa, meeting political leaders in an attempt to sort out the Maoist problem. So security is high with the streets crawling with police and soldiers. We visit Devis Falls, named after the two

Swiss tourists swept to their deaths in the 70s because of water dumping by the hydro electric scheme.

We go for a walk on our own.

There are houses that have seen better days, but are now no better than the shacks with which they

nestle side-by-side. There are even posh new houses being built, along with small "Barrett" style estates.

Like the Pied Piper we collect a growing flock of children as we walk. They're all trying to improve their English. Most of them went to the English School - the government say that education is free, but if you cannot afford the books, pencils and uniform, there is no place for you.

Day 10

We get up early to watch our last sunrise over the Annapurnas.

After lunch we fly back to Kathmandu and the Hotel Dwarikas. Then a sightseeing trip of Kathmandu, walking around Hanuman-dhoka Durbar Square, a World Heritage site Monument Zone. It's many Buddhist and Hindu temples and shrines have intricately carved wooded facades, though many are in need of repair or preservation. One temple houses the

Taking great delight in the very un-expurgated text of the Karma Sutra

"Living Goddess", a specially selected young girl. The King's Palace has been restored, another is under renovation. Our guide takes great delight in pointing out the carvings depicting the very un-expurgated text of the Karma Sutra.

Day 11

Out to the domestic airport for our flight to view Everest. The weather is perfect. We all have a window seat and are invited into the cockpit to take photos. It's a momentous occasion, with marvelous views of the Himalayas. This is the only way we'd ever see Everest 'live'.

In the afternoon we visit Bhaktapur (the "City of Devotees"), and see the numerous intricately carved temples and artefacts. An amazing place, but so much restoration and maintenance is needed.

Day 12

Very sad to leave Nepal. The highlight of the trip? My answer will always be what brings to me the most abiding memory - the hills and their people.