

POLARIS MC

May/June 2022 Newsletter

Hi everyone. It seems strange publishing an account of the Scottish winter meet now, with the weather so spring-like, but it's always good to read of members making the best of whatever conditions they encounter. A glance at WhatsApp shows there's so much going on in the club; I'm looking forward to meeting up with everyone again this weekend in the Peak. Enjoy your newsletter! John



In this newsletter...



Scottish Winter Meet 22
What really happened...

We bid farewell to Tim Healey, 1927 - 2022



Top: Steve Wright's Yorkshire Dales view; left: Al climbing at Rylstones; below: glorious weather on the Coniston meet; bottom right: happy Easter bunnies setting off from Cracoe campsite.



"...one of the single greatest feats I have witnessed on any winter meet ever. Well done Steve Wright"
What prompted this accolade from our President?



A note from our President

Hopefully you are now all into the swing of spring activities and have said goodbye to winter, till next year.

We have had our first camping meet (Yorkshire) and have another this weekend in Derbyshire. There are a lot of meets in the Derbyshire/Yorkshire area this year as this is where most meet volunteers wanted to lead meets. So let's try and keep numbers high and support where we are able.

I will be running the Upskill and New Members Meet (UNMM) in May and we really need a big attendance to make this work. So if you don't already have plans, please come over and make the most of a summer(ish) hut meet in N Wales.....no midge worries. Meet details are attached further down the newsletter.

Look forward to seeing you all soon.

Col

Forthcoming Meets

Peak District – north

Beltonville Farm Campsite, Millers Dale, Buxton SK17 8SS

April 30th/1st May



Beltonville Farm Campsite is located on the road between Tideswell and Millers Dale at grid ref 151734 (sheet 119 Buxton and Matlock).

Cost is £20 per night per pitch for a tent or campervan - please state which when booking - however no electric hook ups are available so get those leisure batteries charged before you come! The site also has a well-stocked farm shop.

Please book individually by phoning the site owner direct on 07943 994807 and mention Polaris when booking as the owner will group pitches together where possible. Please also contact Ian Saxton via the PMC WhatsApp group or text or call him on 07811 174378 for further details and/or to let him know you will be attending.

Although almost centrally located within the Peak National Park and in the heart of some of the finest white peak walking country this is an area we haven't held many meets in so this should be a change of scenery for many of you. There are many things to do within the immediate area - The Monsal Trail is a short distance away, the nearest crag is within walking distance (unfortunately it is Ravens Tor - Revelations or The Prow anyone?) and the crags of Chee Dale and Ravensdale are but a short distance away.

I am sure there is plenty of cycling/walking/climbing to suit everyone and looking forward to seeing many of you there.

For more information please contact us using the links at the foot of page 1

PMC New Members and Upskill Hut Meet, North Wales - Capel

Gwyder Mountaineering Club hut, Capel Curig, LL24 0EB

21/22 May 2022



As proposed at the AGM, PMC will be running a summer hut meet based from the Gwyder Mountaineering Club hut in Capel Curig, North Wales. [Hut and Cottage Location | Gwydyr Mountain Club \(gwydyrmmc.org.uk\)](#) The primary focus of this weekend will be to bring new members to a well-attended meet, the secondary focus will be to upskill current club members.

23 spaces are available, 4 instructors will be in attendance. ****ALL INSTRUCTION IS DELIVERED FOR FREE****

Hut fees are 1 night = £20 per adult; 2 nights = £30 per adult.

All attendees will need to inform me of their planned attendance ASAP and (ideally) no later than the week before. A number of members have already volunteered themselves to help instructing this weekend, but any other volunteers will be gratefully received. Activities and locations will be decided once I have a firm list of members and potential members committed to attend. As an outline I will have the following activities available:

1. Rock climbing - ratio 1:2
2. Scrambling - ratio 1:2
3. Mountaineering and navigation - ratio 1:8
4. Water rescue techniques - ratio 1:10

I am hoping that all groups will be a mix of current members and potential new members. This is so that new members can meet current members and pass on their experience as well as assisting the instructors to improve their own skill level.

Whilst members are encouraged to participate in the planned activities, it is absolutely not compulsory. If members want to attend and do their own activities each day then this is totally fine and will cause no problems. Having bigger numbers of attendees/active members is more important.

There will be 4 volunteer instructors:

Col Kingshott - Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor and member of The Association of Mountaineering Instructors.

Sip Powers - International Mountain Leader, Rock Climbing Instructor and member of the British Association of International Mountain Leaders.

Ben Powell - Mountain Leader, Rock Climbing Instructor, serving soldier and member of Mountain Training.

Martin Bills - Swift Water Rescue Advanced Instructor Trainer. Lead Technical Author of UK Flood Response Guidance - seconded to DEFRA to write these. Retired firefighter with many years' experience teaching to numerous organisations.

All attendees will be expected to bring their own equipment for the duration of the weekend. If equipment is needed (e.g. climbing equipment), I will need to be know this when you inform me of your attendance. All attendees will be expected to bring their own food and bedding.

IF ANYONE HAS ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT ME

For more information please contact us using the links at the foot of page 1



2-5th June 2022 Bank Holiday weekend Local arrangements

Your committee decided that this extended June Bank Holiday weekend should be used by club members to organise their own local activities. Don't forget to post your pictures on the Polaris WhatsApp group!

Lakes – Ullswater

https://www.pitchup.com/campsites/England/North_West/Cumbria/Penrith/eden-valley-holidays/

18/19 June 2022

The meet will be based at the Eden Valley camp site (link above). Please book early as many of the campsites within the lakes are rammers! We have just booked in the van for 2 nights for £36 which is reasonable.

Em and I look forward to seeing you all with another opportunity to get out into the mountains. **Sip**

For more information please contact us using the links at the foot of page 1



North Wales Porthmadog

Tyddyn Adi Farm, Morfa Bychan, Porthmadog, LL49 9YW
2/3 July 2022



This is the longest established site in the area. <http://www.tyddynadi.co.uk> Nestled at the foot of Moel y Gest mountain (850ft) and only 0.5 of a mile from Black Rock sands a blue flag beach giving you the best of both worlds, relaxing sunny days on the beach or energetic walks up the mountain or the many footpaths nearby including the Wales Coastal Path.

Activities include:

Climbing: the many climbing venues nearby, with Tremadog being the star attraction.

Cycling: the route to Harlech from Porthmadog seems popular following the train line, here's 10 of the best available routes <https://goldenfleeceinn.com/2017/11/10/porthmadogs-best-cycling-routes/>

Other activities: Llechwedd slate caverns, where you can enter the world of the Welsh slate miner.

Alternatively you can have a bird's eye view of the quarry workings on the area's newest attraction 'Zip World', or for the more energetic why not try out the bouncy nets at 'Bounce Below' <https://www.zipworld.co.uk/adventures>

Porthmadog town with its many shops, supermarkets, cafes and restaurants is only 3 miles from the site. Porthmadog is also home to the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways. Porthmadog is served by a main line railway and various bus companies should you wish to use public transport.

Booked under the collective name of Polaris, prices are £16 a night including car/van. * No electric hook up sorry..

Please let me know if you want to attend, the owners are very friendly and accommodating.

For more information please contact us using the links at the foot of page 1

Tales of past activities

Scottish Winter Meet 22. Kinlochewe

It's now April and seems like ages since WM22 already, plans are already in place for WM23 and summer meets will have begun by the time you read this. It was great to actually have a winter meet again, as COVID fades into history. Although it wasn't a classic meet in terms of conditions, it was great to return to one of PMC's (and my) favourite locations in Scotland, with a psyched bunch of winter aficionados ready to battle all that Scotland can throw at us!



Col with Jim, Ryan, Steve S, Georgi at Diabeg

Attendees: Hut 1 - Col, Jim & Ryan; Hut 2 - Ben, Sip & Hugh; Hut 3 - Phil, Steve S & Georgi; Hut 4 - Tom, Ian, Bob & Steve W

Day 1

After travelling up in warming and sunny weather on Saturday, most of us were wanting to get out on the hill and see how badly affected the winter conditions had been by the temperatures. So a cautious and optimistic approach was taken by all to just get out and have a look, then make plans for the rest of the week based on this first foray.

Col, Georgi, Jim & Ryan. We headed round to the north side of Liathach to check out ice routes, in particular Poachers & Umbrella Fall. It's about 2hrs to get round to Coireag Dubh Mor and looking upwards as we progressed, conditions weren't looking promising. As we approached the Coire water was visibly running behind detached ice and ice was falling on most routes, with rockfall seen coming from the route 'George' (warthog AI 😊). We all decided that it would be best not to climb and headed up 'Way Up' to the ridge and

then down the other side instead. Whilst it was frustrating to not have any winter conditions, the weather and views were stunning so a relaxed day on the hill was fair compensation.

Ben & Hugh. Went to do Post Box on Sgorr Ruadh but it was falling down so did Central Gully with our own right-hand variation.



Above: Georgi & Jim day 1;
right: Tom and Bob day 1;
below: Ian on Sgurr Dubh.

Phil & Steve S. Fionn Bheinn from Achnasheen. Warm day, fantastic views with a full Shillito strip part way up.

Bob, Tom, Steve W & Ian. ‘Team Rowan’ decided to have an easy intro to the mountains, how naive! They opted for the tourist route above Loch Maree, it was very steep and rocky. Every so often there were little cairns with plaques to be read as we puffed by - “pine, forest, bog”. All very weird. It’s what the NNR authorities are reduced to if they have spare money. On the top it was bleak and blustery and we descended to the road with the sun glancing down Loch Diabeg from the west. P.S. remember the figure 279, it will be mentioned later.

Day 2

Col, Jim, Ryan & Georgi. Penguin Gully and Emerald Gully might be in on Beinn Dearg! Let’s drive round optimistically and have a look! It didn’t really get cold overnight and was raining when we arrived at the carpark. Frustrating. None of us really wanted to leave the car. We knew the routes wouldn’t be in, so forced ourselves out and left all climbing gear behind. A Munro day it was going to be. There are 4 Munros to complete in a round, but it’s quite a big day and we weren’t there particularly early. See how we get on. Bit of rain on the walk-in, heading past the routes they clearly weren’t in condition so a good choice was made. Snowpack was unhelpfully damp and unfrozen. So a bit of a trudge to the first summit (Eididh nan Clach Geala) followed by a longer and more tiring trudge to the next (Meall nan Ceapraichean). It was windy on top and the snow

conditions made the going fairly slow. As we approached the third summit (Cona’ Mheall) the weather deteriorated with strong winds and blizzard conditions. I’ve been up Beinn Dearg before, and the other guys weren’t fussed about heading up again into the maelstrom, so just the long walk out to complete. Handily, just before we reached the car, we all got soaked by another rain storm! Haha. Into Ullapool for a sugar overload and drive back round to Torridon. After having not really been up any Scottish mountains for a couple of years, these two days had felt quite tiring. Good to be ticking off some Munros again and a top day overall.



Sip, Ben & Hugh. Sip arrived on Sunday evening and having looked at the forecast for Monday which included very strong winds, we set about formulating a plan for Monday. Having read Garry Smith’s One Axe book we settled in Deep South Gully on Beinn Alligin, which is a 3 star classic grade one gully and being on the eastern aspect would keep us out of the winds. After a hospitable walk in the gully



looked great although the snow was really soft. Hugh set the pace and started up the gully before Sip took over and continued up to the chockstone approximately 3/4 of the way up; not before Hugh disappeared chest deep into a void where the stream was running below. Due to the receding snow the chockstone was fully exposed and involved a tech III move to get around it; with 300m of gully below us we decided to rope up, to protect the move and the group. Ben led the move before bringing the rest of the team up, we stayed roped up and Sip run a full rope length out before declaring he could see the exit slope; Ben and Hugh finished up to the bealach before Sip followed on. After the considerably weaker winds on the walk in the group considered doing the rest of the classic ridge traverse; no sooner had this thought crossed our minds than the gale force winds and cloud closed in accompanied by sleet/hail. The three concurred that walking off the spur was the sensible choice to regain the footpath and walk out the same way, overall

a great day and another three star Scottish classic ticked off the list.

Phil & Steve S. Into the Fannaichs from south of Loch Droma. A tough bog & heather bash into Loch Gorm, with a steep pull up to An Coileachan in a blizzard. Enough for Phil, return to car, but a fantastic effort from Steve to pull in another 3 – Meal Gorm, Sgurr Mor & Beinn Liath Mhor Fannaich.

Tom, Bob, Steve W & Ian. Team Rowan had made plans to climb Sgurr Dubh in Torridon. But it was raining when they got out of the car and encountered various excuses; “wind, viz, showers for the whole of the day, it was blowing 50mph on ridge, it’ll be better tomorrow”. So they wimped out and went down to Torridon Village, they selected a stalkers path taking them high into the wilderness on Maol Chehn Dearg. Another bleak and blustery day and the party decided it had been a good choice, but they would say that.

When everyone was back safe and sound Steve Wright popped over to our hut just as we were heading out to do the rounds and see what others had been up to. We all took a beer with us “I’ll get a bottle of malt” was Steve’s rallying call. Cue an impromptu party night in Phil and Steve Shillito’s hut. Bottles of whiskey, rum and Jagermeister appeared as if by magic and a proper old PMC drinking session dispatched most of them. Georgi & Jim were sick on themselves in bed, I was sick all the following day. An absolutely top night was had by all. A firm reminder to all to beware Steve Wright and his whiskey sessions. Haha.

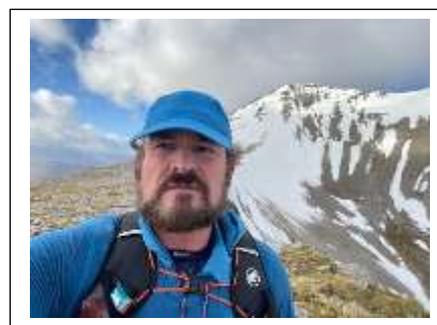
Day 3

Ryan, Jim, Col. Luckily (after the previous night) we had already planned to have an easyish day today. Jim washed his bed sheets, I lay-in and Ryan searched the guidebooks for crag with a short approach and low grade routes. Beginners Slabs on the road to Diabeg seemed ideal. A few starred slab routes around Diff/VDiff would be perfect for our delicate states. Jim and Ryan styled up their routes, I experienced a harrowing lead, was almost sick mid-route and barely made the top, having also forgotten to take my belay device! Back on the road I was sick and we headed down to Diabeg to look at routes for the next day. Diabeg is an amazing place. So peaceful. We saw a glorious sunset, I was sick again, and we headed back for an early night with plans formed for the following day. Another top day!



Above: Ryan on Beginners Slabs; below: Sip on his solo traverse of Ben Eithe

Sip. On Tue I completed a solo traverse of Beinn Eithe due to an impromptu ‘session’ Mon night which prevented most people from climbing out of bed never mind a hill! 🤪 With some good int from Tom I crossed the Corie Domhain avoiding the Black Sales overtaking a number of teams on the route in. After summiting Sgur Ban with no one else on the ridge I was treated to clear skies and firm snow to aid a safe crossing to the trig point on Spidean before dropping down Coire an Laoigh. After 6 hrs on the hill my taxi was waiting on the A896 driven by Ben!



Ben. Had some work to catch up on!

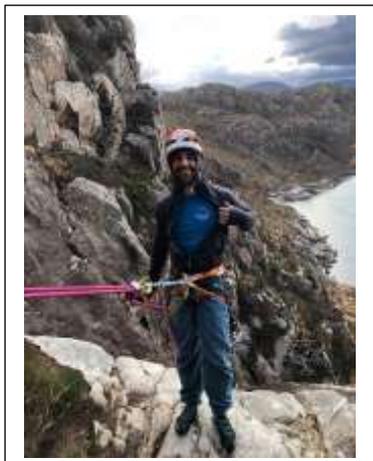
Georgi. Had some sleep to catch up on!

Phil and Steve S & Steve W. The morning after... a drive to Gairloch & Red Point.

Tom, Ian, Bob, Hugh. Team Rowan A (Bob & Steve W) planned to do Slioch, but the best laid schemes of mice and men were laid to rest (sorry Tom, I couldn’t read your actual quote). Steve W went with Phil and Steve S, Bob came with Team B (Ian and Tom). So Team Rowan B + Bob and Hugh set off to do Sgurr Dubh halfway down Glen Torridon. This one has a bit of a reputation; A - serious route finding difficulties, B - seriously rough ground. Point proved, much discussion was had as to the way along the ridge up the mountain. The party clambered their way to the top at 1430hrs Sgurr Dubh is a very fine mountain, well defended with boulders. The glen down to Ossian Lodge and evening views across Loch Ossian were particularly fine.

Day 4

Jim, Ryan, Steve S, Georgi & Col. With winter routes ruled out for the duration of the week, we went rock climbing. Diabeg is such an amazing location. The rock is exceptional. Rough, unpolished, good gear and strong lines, with the added bonus of no midges. All of us wanted to climb The Pillar, a 4* E2, 5b, but needed to get



Georgi at Diabeg; right: Dildo Darts;
below: the tension is unbearable

on something else first. So we headed round to The Main Cliff and split up. Ryan, Jim & Steve climbed Route Two and Georgi and I climbed Route One. None of us really had all the gear or shoes that we would have had for rock routes, so racks were cobbled together, shoes were shared or borrowed. Both routes were amazing and allowed an abseil descent to the base of the crag. As it was still winter (sort of), temperatures weren't particularly high so fingers were getting cold and pushing it on The Pillar was decided against. Jim led The Black Streak and Ryan and Georgi both followed. Another abseil and we decided to call it a day and head back for the proper party! Personally, that one visit to Diabeg has absolutely made me want to go back. Any climber in PMC should have it high on their list of places to visit and climb. Just stunning.

Bob, Steve W, Phil. Slioch from the hut, had a brilliant full-on winter mountaineering day, feral goats, red deer, snow buntings and a pair of golden eagles.

Hugh, Sip, Ben. Liathach. Ben left the keys for the shuttle car in the drop off car and remembered after 1km so ran back to retrieve 🤪. Headed up onto the ridge via a gully in Choire Dhuibh Bhig then traversed toward Am Fasineran Pinnacles with strong winds, we were going to traverse around but wind settled just before we arrive at start of difficulties, so we roped up and I lead/short-rope team through, awesome day out

Tom, Ian. Drove to Loch Carron and up the Bealach na' Ba. Views were spectacular, the whole of the Cullin snow, Big and the Outer Hebrides 60 miles away. They traversed the moor to the cliffs of Sgurr a Charrain then back via the radio mast and stumbled back to the car in a developing gale.

P.A.R.T.why? Because it's a PMC winter meet! A few attendees were leaving the meet the following day, so it made sense to have the traditional party night this evening. As we'd already made a serious dent in the alcohol stock pile during the impromptu party, you would have thought that this one would have been a more laid back affair!!! Wrong. Sip brought Gobble & Dildo Darts, Steve brought more whiskey and we all brought our 'A' banter game. Gobble soon turned into a drinking game and dildo darts turned into a dart free for all. Moment of the night has to go to 'Dildo Dart King', Steve Wright. His exceptional shot from across an entire room onto the bottom of the bottle Sip was drinking, was a masterclass in drunken game playing and tomfoolery. Every man (we need more female members to attend) who witnessed his extraordinary effort was both amazed and in awe of this throwing prowess. Certainly one of the single greatest feats I have witnessed on any winter meet ever. Well done Steve. An awesome night ended without anyone being sick on themselves. Winner.



Day 5

Steve S, Phil, Jim, Georgi and Hugh all departed south.

Col & Ryan. After the previous evening's hilarity, ensuing hangover and heavy rain all day, we decided on the (again) traditional Torrion post party meet activity. A day in Gairloch. Soup and cake in a one of the new cafes was perfect. Ryan had a delayed hangover and piled in early. I messed up tea and we worked out a better plan for the following day.

Tom, Ian, Bob, Steve W. Wind, rain and showers all day. Off to the delights of Gairloch and climbed onto a chair in a cafe. The new Museum of Highland Life is good.

Ben & Sip. Due to poor weather forecast/hangover for Ben we



went for short afternoon walk/nav practice around Victoria Falls and up to Loch Garbhaig, it's on the Gairloch road

Day 6

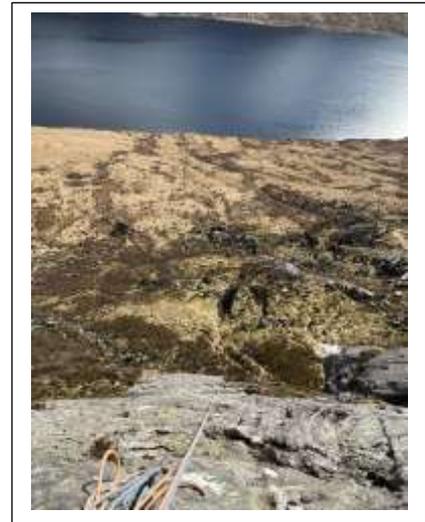
Col, Ryan, Sip, Ben. An Teallach and Hayfork Gully 8 star day. I could leave it there and all would understand. However I will expand a little. If you could ask for the perfect start to (probably) the best mountaineering day on the U.K. mainland then it would be a lift for 4km up there track to begin your day. Tick. Some top lads who were working on peat bog restoration at Shenavall were happy to grant my tongue in cheek request for a lift. Brilliant. So a lift to the point where the hill track leaves the 4 x 4 was a great start to the day.

Leaving the 4 x 4 track the drizzle stopped and we headed up into some sunshine and swirling clouds. The end of the mountain doesn't show the entirety of the route. Ben had done it in summer, so we relied on his navigation. Winter mountains are a very different proposition to summer ones though. We had a joint debate about the best way to access the ridge crest and decided to stick a rope on. A few moves later and we were on the ridge crest with the route extending away beyond us. In and out of cloud and sun. Constant route finding challenges and some interesting climbing got us across the ridge with some amazing views. Rope dropped and onto the last Munro we saw 3 golden eagles. From the last summit we headed to Hayfork Gully for a 450m descent from the ridge. The only slight difficulty was at the top, a 15m section of not great snow. Past the folks climbing up, engage reverse, disengage brain, axe axe, foot foot, repeat and the bottom arrives really soon. A fairly long walk off followed by a jungle whack and road section to the car. Another ace day.

Steve W & Bob. Departed for home.

Ian & Tom. Climbed Sgurr A'Bana Mhoreire from the Torridon Hotel,

nice hill to finish off with. Brilliant weather and huge views of everything we had done all week. Ah yes.....279 was the combined age of Team Rowan!!!!



Looking back down Ardverike Wall
Below: Diabeg sunset

Day 7

Ryan & Col. There were still no winter conditions to be had in Torridon and the weather forecast suggested more freezing rain, so I called a friend in Roybridge who confirmed it had been dry all week there and that Ardverike Wall should be dry. It was also on route home and offered a relatively short day. We left Kinlochewe at a decent hour and headed south. Rain as we left confirmed that we had made the right call. It was still freezing at glen level when we reached the carpark, but clear and sunny. I'm sure folks in full winter gear were giving me funny looks in approach shoes and jeans as we walked to the crag. Wet feet in the first bog meant I was happy to get into Ben's (kindly lent) climbing shoes at the base of the route. It's an amazing looking slab in a brilliant location. A gentle breeze helped get rid of most of the benefit of the sun, as temps hovered around 4C. Ryan led first on what is actually a long and fairly pokey start to the route. First belay reached and I led through. Ryan got the crux pitch (I think VS 4b would be fair) and I let us through a damp bit to the last slab. The last slab was soaking and not as easy as usual. We topped out into a bog and began the walk off over the back. Routes like this make a mockery of the Peak Classic Rock routes (Birchen!). An stunning day on a classic route and a great end to WM22. Roll on next year when we are back in Kinchella Croft, Roybridge.

WM23 I already have a list of 17 names for WM23. If anyone would like to put their name down, please get in touch. A non-refundable deposit of £40 will be required by all attendees no later than 1 Sep 22.

Col



Coniston Meet 18-20 Mar 2022

With a full complement of members everyone gathered at the BMSC hut between the weekend of Friday 18 to Sunday 20 Mar 22.

There was a mixed bag of activities including multi pitch climbs at Dodd crag, scrambles venturing across various venues over the Old Man massif, multiple trekking routes with a number of classic summits bagged, and long-distance MTB off-road trails. Once again (in classic PMC style) an impromptu session Saturday evening led to a late night with some sore heads in the morning. At least there was a great fire thanks to the huge bag of wood provided by potential new members Jacob and Celeste.



Some more detailed accomplishments were described by Phil and Martin who on Friday trekked across Wetherlam via Steel Edge and Wetherlam Edge from High Tiberthwaite. On Saturday they turned their hand to scrambling, bagging Goat Crag and traversing the Coniston Fells via the Old Man, Swirl How and Great Carrs. Jonathan managed to scramble up the Bell and Long Crag Butress on Friday then joined Tom and Steve across Red Dell Head on Sunday after more scrambling up Goat Crag on Saturday.

Many of the group made a summit bid of the Old Man of Coniston on Saturday with a great view of the imposing Dow Crag across the valley to watch Col and Hugh climb Murrays Route. On Saturday evening Sip challenged both Lindsay and Alistair to some rock hopping across the river and waterfalls running parallel to the hut, with numerous ventures into many of the mine shafts littered across the Fell.....don't tell Col or Karin!

This was an amazing meet, hopefully the first of many I will lead. I can't take all the credit as Emma helped with much of the organisation. Great weather, great venue and most important, great people.

Sip



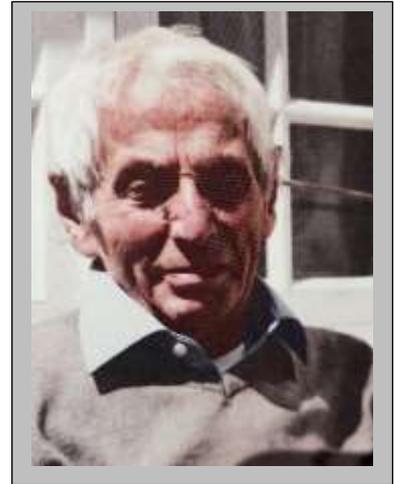
Pics from top left: Polaris on Coniston Old Man; Steve W, Jonathan & Tom on Wetherlam; Phil S and Martin Bills hail from a distance; Phill N out on his bike; Alistair & Lindsay; Emma takes in the view; Col leads Leopard's Crawl; Hugh on Dow Crag.

Memorial Service for Tim Healey 1927 -2022

Our oldest and longest-standing Club member died in February. I had got to know him by occasionally taking him to the Club AGM and Dinner in the 1990's. Then there were meetings to discuss the editing of his wife Eileen's diaries – 37 volumes of them. I never, ever, suspected the full story of this remarkable man. His funeral was in effect a memorial service – a celebration of a life well lived. I am indebted to his sons and friends for revealing the true picture.

There is a time to leave mountaineering aside. A time to celebrate the life of a complete polymath. Tim Healey was that Club member. He never paraded his eventful life. He lived life fully and simply. The sort of person where the truth is never revealed until they're gone, and there's a funeral. But then Memorial Services are never about the person you thought you knew.

A small and wiry man, full of smiles, a constant optimist, and perpetually cheerful.



He suffered badly from asthma as a boy, but excelled at science, particularly chemistry, and won an open scholarship to Brasenose College Oxford, where he studied chemistry from 1946 to 1950. By all accounts he was a brilliant scholar, but his degree exams never really did him justice. He spent large amounts of time on the Thames, coxing first his college VIII, and then Isis which is the University second VIII. London was chosen as the site of the 1948 Olympics, and Tim found himself after a set of national trials chosen for the coxed fours. They got through two rounds of the main Olympic competition, only to go out in the quarter finals. In the run up to the 2012 London Olympics he was particularly pleased to be able to attend a reunion of the 1948 Olympians at the invitation of the Princess Royal.

After University he did two years national service in the Royal Engineers. The skills he learnt at the time, how to blow-up bridges, as well as how to build them, might sound terribly topical in today's world. It is odd to think that Tim was never his real name. John Alexander Dick Healey (much Scottish ancestry here) was always called by a simple nickname that stuck.

He became a science school teacher, first at Tonbridge and then at Manchester Grammar School. This was of particular importance because it was during this period that he joined Polaris. The Club were climbing at Black Rocks, Tim climbing second on a particularly technical route. Half way up, the rope stopped being taken in. After ten minutes of waiting and shouting, Tim gave up trying to gain attention and soloed the rest of the route, coiling the rope as he went. At the top, he was largely ignored as the rest of the party were giving all their attention to the famous Himalayan mountaineer Eileen Gregory who had just arrived. However, he did get to offer her a lift back to Manchester, an event that Tim regarded as the most important of his life.



Stora Fens

They married in 1958 and had a memorable honeymoon in Norway making a number of impressive climbs with Ralph Hoibakk the notable Norwegian climber. It is clear from Eileen's diaries of the period that Tim was a much better rock climber than Eileen. They seem to have romped up Stora Fens in the Jotenheimen.

However, they faced a major challenge within the first year of marriage. Eileen was invited to join the all-women's expedition to the notoriously dangerous Cho Oyu, sixth highest mountain in the world. Tim encouraged her to go on the expedition, and took great pride in her mountaineering achievements. This was not without a good deal of worry however, especially as the expedition ended so tragically. Tim sat at home as shreds of news filtered in.

Tim returned at this time to Tonbridge School as Head of Science. He was a dedicated and skilful teacher, an experienced rowing coach, and leader of an annual three-week trek to the Alps. There are few teachers who are inspirational to the point where former pupils turn up to a Memorial service from all over the country 60 years later. A card read "To Tim Healey for chemistry, rowing, rock climbing and Trek '61 with thanks".

In 1965 they moved north to Chester College to be nearer the mountains. But a new and fantastic opportunity for such a public-spirited man soon presented itself – a two-year secondment to the National Teachers College at Kyambogo in Uganda. True to his adventurous spirit he used the opportunity during holidays to travel widely in Africa. The last four months of his secondment, during which Tim was Acting Director of College were a dramatic ending, as a military coup brought General Idi Amin to power. He was a brutal dictator. Political repression and extra – judicial killings were commonplace.

They returned to Chester College and their house in Barrow just outside Chester, and resumed their service to the local community – the Parish council, the church, and the Barrow Tree Society. Tim told me in one of my visits that he was aware that developers were sniffing around at a particularly favourable site for housing. He had nipped in quickly and bought the site. The Tree Society planted a whole community woodland, with footpaths running through. I walked them recently. It is most unusual to be able to walk unhindered in young deciduous woodland, a model that should be repeated across the country.

Tim retired in 1988, and it presented a great opportunity for him and Eileen to rekindle their spirit of adventure. They travelled the world, to the Galapagos, the Grand Canyon, Madagascar, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, New Zealand, Oman and the Silk Road across Asia. In the UK they did a number of long distance walking routes including the notorious Southern Upland Way.

He took up sailing, modestly at first on the Broads, and then more adventurously in the Western Isles and Brittany. Then it extended out into the Atlantic to St Kilda, and the Canaries. We were told at the Memorial Service that Tim was determined to take a photo of the yacht at sea under full sail. So, he jumped into the small shore boat and let out the painter as the yacht sailed on. Then the painter broke. And the rest of the crew had to make a smart gybe to come and collect him bobbing about in a dinghy in the Atlantic Ocean.

We were also told of the decision he and some friends made to row the Dee from its head waters at the western end of Lake Bala to Chester (presumably with Tim as cox). This would have involved a portage episode with a large rowing boat through the streets of Llangollen to avoid the falls. Even at the age of 87 he embarked on a further adventure, a personal one, to visit the war grave of his uncle who died in September 1918 leading an assault on an impregnable position in Bulgaria. The war ended little over a month later.

Polaris members will recall his presence, now as an Honorary Member, at the Club meet in Ogwen burying Dave Evans’s ashes on the top of Tryfan. He and his son Jamie marched with us to the foot of the ridge, and spent the evening at the party. He was 88. What a story. We’d be pleased if we were still in the mountains at 88.

Tom Miller

Tim and his son Jamie
below Tryfan on the David
Evans memorial meet



Our Mr Miller has been a busy man. As the club’s Archivist he has recently made contact with Geoff Simmonds, the son of one of our founder members, Bernard Simmonds. Geoff has a number of remarkable photographs taken by Bernard and his contemporaries in the club’s early days. Here’s a taste...

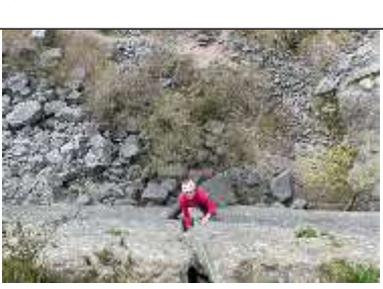


L: A Polaris
group in
Laddow
cave, 1940s;
R: This may
well be the
Kinder mass
trespass of
1932. TBC.





And finally... a few recent pics from WhatsApp



Phill Nelson out on his bike in t' Dales; Steve and Bob on a Wildboar and Swarth Fell day; Susan, Ros and Phil in the Ebbel Valley Wiltshire; Col's view from La Croix du Provence; Steve S lunchtime view in the Bristol Channel; Jim going for it, dry-tooling in Derbyshire; Tom Miller going for it, snoozing on Ingleborough; Karin enjoying their local crag; Steve S and Paul B at the Roaches; Georgi on PMC1, Curbar; young Leo Dennehy looking very cool 😊; PMC mountain bikers on the Easter Yorkshire meet; Georgi elated: "that was the hardest multi-pitch trad route I've ever done!!"; Lucy and Debbie on Leonidio, Greece; Jim follows Georgi up the mega-classic E2 Elder Crack, Curbar; Al and Janet's refreshment stop in Linton, Yks; Jim leads the classic E2 Elegg, Roaches.