



Hi everyone. We have a bumper write up and some great pictures of the Scottish Winter meet in this edition; thank you to all who contributed. With the snow covered mountains now a distant memory, we're all hoping for some decent Spring weather for the meets programme, including Tremadog *this weekend!* In this edition we also have part two of Tom's 'Gable Axe recipients' article, and finally we pay tribute to former members Jean Ford and Bernard Price who passed away last month. Wishing you good times in the great outdoors this springtime. JP.

## In this issue...

**Tales from SWM 2024.** Paul, James and Shane heading for Stob Ban; Hazel on her run up Ben Lomond.



### Taking the plunge on the Scottish Winter Meet!

Jakob jumping into the River Nevis from Polldubh bridge 😊 March 2024  
JP on (in!) Clachaig Gully's waterfall pitch, 44 years earlier! March 1980\*



We remember Bernard Price and Jean Ford



Updated meets programme, with changes to a couple of locations & leaders in June/July and confirmation of the AGM & dinner weekend in November. Hut meets shaded.

Date	Venue	Leader
April 13/14	Peak	Ryan
April 27/28	Tremadog	Jakob
May 11/12	Llangollen	Dan
May 24–27 <b>BH</b>	Peak	Steve S
June 8/9	North Wales (hut)	Georgi
June 22/23	Lakes	Al
July 6/7	Peak BBQ	Jakob
July 20/21	Lakes	Col
Aug 10/11	White Peak	Georgi
Aug 24-26 <b>BH</b>	Anglesey	Celeste
Sep 14/15	Yorkshire	Al
Sep 24-Oct 1	Lundy	Lucy
Oct 12/13	Swanage	John
Oct 26/27	Northumberland	Nick
Nov 16/17	Peak AGM & Dinner	Jakob
Jan 10/11	N Wales Capel	Roger
Jan 24/25	Lakes Coppermines	Jakob
Feb 7/8	N Wales Nant Peris	Chris
Feb 21/22	Lakes Patterdale	Steve W
March 1-8	Scottish Winter meet	Col
March 22/23?	Venue & date TBD	
April 12/13?	Venue TBD	

\* write up in the next newsletter



### A note from our President

Fellow Polaroids.

Well, what a fantastic week the SWM24 turned out to be – windy but dry and as Tom stated at the time it must be a record that waterproofs were not required at all during the week. It was great to see so many faces, old and new, with everybody thoroughly enjoying themselves. The week just summed up everything that makes PMC so special. A big thanks to Col for organising these meets. I'm already looking forward to SWM25.

Anyway, the year is moving on, winter gear packed away, and with summer on its way we can look forward to an excellent, varied meets programme where (hopefully) camper van users don't need to worry about getting stuck in the mud!

All the best

Steve

## *Forthcoming Meets*

North Wales, Llangollen

<http://www.wernisaf.co.uk/>

May 10 - 12



Gollen gosh - yes folks, we're back at a favourite venue! It's time for another North(ish) Wales meet with a difference, as we return to the Dee valley area for more PMC fun and games.

But what are we gonna-go-go do? Well whatever your interest there is a plethora of activities - llet me see if I can tempt you ...

- For anyone wishing to walk nearby then there are many points of interest such as Castell Dinas Bran, Valle Crucis Abbey and the famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct that could be incorporated into an outing, perhaps returning on the Llangollen Steam Railway; for those looking for a bigger day out then we aren't far from the Berwyns and Moel Famau
- Bikers of the mountain variety are well catered for by the network of local trails plus the nearby Llandegla trail centre, or perhaps the Wayfarers' route, and the llycra-and-skinny-tyres fraternity can explore the nearby network of quiet lanes or perhaps conquer the Horseshoe Pass just up t'road.
- For whitewater fans there are plenty of nearby kayaking options
- And for anyone wanting to climb, there is a whole range of limestone crags nearby including both trad and sport as detailed in the RockFax guidebook (<https://www.rockfax.com/climbing-guides/books/clwyd-limestone/>) and database ([https://www.rockfax.com/databases/results\\_area.html?id=1022](https://www.rockfax.com/databases/results_area.html?id=1022))

This is a camping meet, and the nominated campsite is Wern Isaf Farm (<http://www.wernisaf.co.uk/>). This is only a short distance from the town and within walking distance of some of the crags. And yes it does take vans, so members of the Polaris Motorhome Club are also welcome to join us. For those not possessing a van nor wishing to camp there are plenty of Airbnb's and regular BnB's listed in the area on Google. There is also a nearby hostel at <https://llangollenhostel.co.uk/> - I'm planning to bring the family and will be staying there.

As ever, I hope to see you there - please llet me know if you will be camping (as per contact details below) and I will try to book us some pitches together. Dan

**For more information, please contact us using the links at the foot of P1**

**Peak**

<https://www.thedukewilliammatlock.com>

May 24 - 27 BH

Come and join me in Matlock at a lovely campsite behind The Duke of William, 91 Church Street, Matlock, DE4 3BZ. Tel 01629 583111. £13.50 pppn and £6 per hook up.

<https://www.thedukewilliammatlock.com>



There's plenty to do cycling, walking and climbing can be done direct from the site - High Tor is a mere 20 mins walk away and Pic Tor even closer -the start of the High Peak Trail is a 15-minute ride away and the fab Ribber Castle circuit starts from the campsite. There's a fab open air swimming pool too...£10.00. Open all year ...maintaining a steady 24 degrees, heated naturally by spa water. <https://newbathhotelandspa.com/open-air-pool/>

If that's not whetted your appetite, then the fabulous local micro-pub surely will. Mmmm all that lovely neck oil to sample whilst resting sated limbs...in front of a cosy fire. What's not to like..? Seizure there!

Steve.

**For more information, please contact us using the links at the foot of P1**

**N Wales, summer hut meet!**

**Ceunant MC hut, Ty'n Lon, Nant Peris**

**June 7 - 9**

Hi team!! Here's another fab meet proposition in a place that needs no further advertisement to this club: the Llanberis Pass!

Come n join me at this superb hut next to the Vaynol Arms in Nant Peris (Ty'n Lon, Nant Peris, Gwynedd, LL55 4UF). The UKC website has this to say: 12 places mixed. Exceptionally well equipped with excellent facilities including drying room, dining room, lounge, large kitchen with fridges, hobs, oven, microwave, grills, cutlery and crockery, hot water, toilets, showers, electricity. Access by car.

But if you'd like your own privacy, you can pitch your tent in the garden. Bring your kids for free...! Yep, no charge for children ☺. It's right alongside the Vaynol Arms, where you'll find a decent pint and a wholesome meal! See you there!

Georgi

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**Lakes, Lorton**

**The campsite with the swallows**

**June 21 - 23**

Midsummer's weekend: long, hot days; never ending warm evenings; smoky barbecues; magnificent surroundings; quiet, tranquil site, and swallows skimming the Cocker. How does that sound? Thought it was about time we revisited some of the potentially quieter areas and crags in the western lakes, and have chosen the beautiful [Whinell Hall Farm Campsite](#) in Low Lorton, who have plenty of availability for us that weekend.

There is so much fabulous walking to do over this way, with Loweswater, Buttockwater and Crummermere on the doorstep and easy access to High Stile and Haystacks, or over the valley to Grassmoor, Causey and Grizedale. Multipitch or linked-up climbing adventures to be had close by on Grey, Eagle, High and Raven crags, or "nip up" Honister to Buckstone How.



There are enough tough road passes to suit even Phil Stewart, with Honister, Newlands and Whinlatter all within a few turns of the pedals, and I've seen umpteen options for MTB or gravel routes that look to be both challenging and tasty.

The campsite's got everything we need, decent reviews and the Wheatsheaf pub only half a mile away in Lorton village. It's 18 quid (for up to 5 people) in a tent and 25 quid with electric for van or caravan. Probably easiest to book on line at [Pitch-up](#).

It's got to be 15 years since I last went and am really looking forward to a return visit. Be fab to get a good turnout, so please let me know if you can join us and get booked in! Ciao for now, Al.

**For more information, please contact us using the links at the foot of P1**

Peak BBQ  
Beltonville Farm, Millers Dale  
July 5 - 7



This year the Peak BBQ meet will be at Beltonville Farm Campsite, Millers Dale, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8SS.

<http://www.beltonvillefarmcampsite.co.uk/> Just moments from the Monsal Trail, the campsite is in a beautiful location, has good facilities, and importantly permits BBQs and firepits! On site there is a farm shop, a bar/cafe and even some glamping options.

Within a short stumble is the Angler's rest pub, overlooking the river Wye. This offers food and B&B accommodation. Along the Monsal Trail there are many options for walking, cycling and climbing, with the rest of the Peak District also within easy reach.

Peak BBQ meet is always a firm favourite, so I hope to see lots of you there! Further details to follow in the WhatsApp group.

Jakob

**For more information, please contact us using the links at the foot of P1**

Feel free to draw or make notes here... 😊 😄



## ***Past Activities...***

### **Scottish Winter Meet 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Another year, another successful meet based at Kinchelle Croft, Roybridge. 21 attendees this year, including guests Joe, Seb and Charlie, everyone engaged in a variety of activities including winter climbing, rock climbing, Corbett and Munro bagging, e-mountain biking and fresh-water swimming! Hugh Miller begins with his story of the week, and the SWM journal closes with a piece by Hugh's dad Tom, reflecting on now being part of the club's older generation.



#### **Hugh Miller**

We started the week late, arriving on Monday evening, and were keen to get as much winter action as we could. We had 4 days to get out, and we'd planned for day 3, the Thursday, to be our big route.

Joe is a great climber, brave and technical, but doesn't have so much experience of winter routes or ropework. I have a bit more experience of these things, but I'm a wimp. So a good team, we figured.

On the Monday evening, we mined my dad and TT for beta on the various routes we had an eye on. After much thought, we decided on Craig Meggie and Raeburn's Gully for day 1, where we could practice a little gear placement, moving on snow, and rope work, in relative comfort. Or so we thought. We had predicted an easy snow gully, and to get from bottom to top in 1-1.5hrs. The snow was awful, and it was far longer than we'd anticipated. 4 hours later, we emerged, knackered, onto the summit plateau.

Day two was a much more enjoyable affair, as we headed up Glen Shiel to tackle the Forcan Ridge. We figured this would give us a chance to practice moving together, plus there's a little abseil at the end to help us feel adventurous and manly. A very fun day.

With our practice bagged, we could now focus on our aim for the week. We'd read about Golden Oldie on Aonach Mor as a bit of a classic. It's described as a consistent grade 2, three start route, and long. The main difficulties, according to online accounts, seemed to be getting to the bottom along Allt Daim, and then actually finding which buttress was the right one to head up. On the route, there were a few crux pitches, but the challenging part was the length. 'Leave lots of time' we were warned, 'move together as much as possible', 'you'll be rushing for the gondola back down'.

Well, we rather took these warnings to heart, and so planned the route meticulously. We were first in the queue for the gondola at 8am, and we'd planned which bike tracks we'd use to get to the bottom of the route. We practically ran up the Allt Daim, and got to the base of the grassy, rocky incline below the route at around 9:30am. The black fingers of rock that knot together, obscured by mist at the top, appeared intimidating and exhilarating. After getting harnesses and crampons on and meandering up the slope to where the rock started, it became clear we should have put the rope on lower down where there were wider, more comfortable terraces. We awkwardly tied together and coiled the rope, whilst perching on what dad calls 'grade-IV death-grass'.



Joe on Golden Oldie

And then off we went. We moved together over huge boulders and up little chimneys as the ridge became more defined. The granite was lovely. The snow was averagely bad, but improving with altitude. We got to a tricky groove with exposure into the gully on the North side, and so Joe was sent up on belay to see what was what. After a few strenuous moves, and some gear placements, we decided to move together again, and got into a great rhythm. We then came to the part I'd been nervous about. It's called 'walking the plank' in the guidebooks, and consists of a horizontal 8m section where the ridge pinches down to maybe 50cm wide and the exposure is absolute. At the end of the 'plank' is a football sized nubble of rock that you can put a sling round, and then a tricky down-climb right onto a ledge that leads back to the ridge. We scrambled over and along with glee.

A bit further on, we started to feel the incline lessen, and the rocks become more separated. Was that it? Were we approaching the summit? Yes! And how had we done for time? Well, having both been a bit nervous, and focused, and having read about people being caught out by the length of the route and missing the gondola, we'd pushed hard. We'd pitched just one 5m section on the entire route, and we ended up on the summit of Aonach Mor at 11:20am! Maybe we should have had a bit more faith in ourselves. Anyway, after the obligatory photos, mostly in mist, we skipped down to the gondola and were back at the car by 2pm, about 6 hours ahead of schedule. No matter. It was a fantastic, wild, sustained outing that felt like a real adventure. A 3-star A++ day.

We finished the week off with a little jaunt up the East ridge of Beinn a Chaorainn on Friday morning, before departing back home to Liverpool. Another excellent winter meet. Thank you to Col for organising, to TT and dad for their encouragement, and to everyone for making Joe feel so welcome. We're already looking forward to next year.

#### **Phil Stewart**

Saturday. Meall Chuaich en route, crocked buddy Al at home 😞 Grouse & ptarmigan & not much else.

Sunday. Grey Corries with Steve S, up the north ridge of Stob Choire Claurigh into a strong southerly with poor vis. Edges banked with soft snow, and slow going, Stob Coire an Laoigh then turned South for home at 3:00 on Stob Coire Easain, thinking better of 600m there and back ascent and descent in poor conditions. *#unfinishedbusiness*

Monday. Beinn na Lap with Steve S, easy day from Corour Station, Hotel & YHA both closed. Steve on an Anglo-Franco charm offensive with the French tourists, whilst we all staved off hypothermia on the platform waiting on the train.

Tuesday. Glen Nevis to watch the boys climb, and Jakob jump into the river Nevis from Polldubh bridge!!! (cover pic)

Wednesday. Sgurr Eilde Mor with Steve S, great walk from Kinlochleven.

Thursday. Sgurr Choinnich Mor with Steve S, *#unfinishedbusiness* sorted. Fab walk in through Glen Nevis, and had a play on Steall Bridge because we could.

Friday. Carn na Caim and A'Bhuidheanach Bheag with Steve S again, strong wind, big windchill, frozen top, poor vis, 2 ticks.

#### **Tony Thorley**

Still recovering from a hand injury that precluded me from even thinking about going climbing, I thought I would seek out some new-to-me hills and do a few Corbetts. This constraint did nothing to spoil what was a most enjoyable week.

Sunday. A relatively easy day to get used to being back in the hills, as days out have been rare recently, so I decided to join Steve, Tom, Bob, Jonathan and Ian on Bienn Bhan in Glen Loy. We started opposite the drive to Inverskilavulin and followed the access track to the lodge before being directed around the boundary fence and onto the open hillside before contouring into, and following the valley of, the Allt Coire Mhuillin up to the point where the vague path all but disappeared, and it became necessary to strike directly up the very steep



Phil and Steve: No vis on the Grey Corries; descent from Sgurr Eilde Mor



ridge to the 771m subsidiary summit where we entered the snowline. From here a gentle stroll around the head of Coire Mhuillin took us over a further subsidiary top before reaching the trig point at the true summit. Although a mere 796m in height, the views from the summit were magnificent, especially those looking towards the Aonachs and Ben Nevis, where we could clearly see the whole of the north face under a clear blue sky. Looking north we could easily pick out the hills of Kintail and Knoydart, and the Loch Lochy hills seemed close enough to touch. However there was a chill wind blowing and it was no place to hang around, so we set off down the broad south ridge before contouring back to the burn and returning along the track back to the road. A really enjoyable day out and great to spend some time on the hill with people I rarely seem to get out with.

Monday. Chris had managed to crock his knee on the walk in to Raeburns Gully yesterday, so I promised him (falsely as it turned out) an easy-ish day doing the two Loch Arkaig Corbetts. We followed the access track to the hydroelectric dam to the foot of our first mountain, Geal Charn. However, from here to the plateau was steep and hard going before finally reaching the snowline then the summit trig at 804m. The views from here



were once again spectacular to Knoydart in the west and the Kintail hills to the north, and the view south revealed the huge corrie on the north side of Beinn Bhan which had remained unseen yesterday. From the summit we descended steeply east through soft snow to the col at 648m where we managed to find the only rock outcrop big enough to shelter behind for a bite to eat as the wind was blowing a hoolie. Then over the subsidiary summit of Meall Coire Nan Saobhaidh and onto the col below Meall Na H Eilde, the direct ascent of which looked very steep. We did however manage to spot a snow ramp heading diagonally upwards to meet the ridgeline just north of the summit and this allowed for a much easier ascent than anticipated. A short walk up the north ridge saw us arrive at the rather diminutive summit cairn, where we were rewarded once more with a fabulous view. Descent via the SW ridge back to the valley of the Allt Dubh and back to the hydro dam, where we had a second lunch and indulged in the sheer pleasure of dipping bare feet into the cold waters of the burn. Another great day on the hill enlivened by Chris's endless joviality, humour, storytelling, and enthusiasm!



Tuesday. Still blowing a hoolie and the skies were now cloudy rather than blue, but no rain in the forecast. Decided to do the two Corbetts at the head of Glen Roy – both rather confusingly named Carn Dearg - and Karin agreed to join me. Starting from

the very end of the road down Glen Roy, we continued past the lodge and headed up Glen Turret to below the rather steep looking southern flanks of the westernmost of our two hills. From here we headed upwards, slowly and steeply at first, before reaching the more level area of Teanga Mhor where heather and grass gave way to peat bog reminiscent of the Dark Peak. At the summit cairn the wind was stronger than ever, and we had difficulty maintaining our balance as it blew us around. From here we headed down to the col between the two hills and found a sheltered spot between boulders to have lunch. Setting off again we encountered the only person we saw all day, and although we walked to within 10 metres of him and we both said hello, he neither acknowledged nor spoke to either of us! The ascent of the second Carn Dearg went smoothly, despite soft wet snow, before reaching the summit with its excellent views to the remote upper reaches of Glen Roy and the north side of Creag Meagaidh, the "Window" being easily recognised. A gentle descent over the summit of Sron A Ghoil, then back south, crossing the unique Parallel Roads, and into Glen Roy. Another good day out in "challenging" winds and great to spend a day on the hill with Karin.

Wednesday. Spurred on by positive descriptions on the 'walkhighlands' website, "a grand ridge walk high above Loch Leven with magnificent views", I decided on another new Corbett, Mam Na Gualainn, and Karin, Paul and James agreed to come along. Paul and James saying that they'd like some "old fashioned" paper map and compass navigation as part of the day. Starting in Kinlochleven we followed the West Highland Way through some very pretty woodland before emerging into the open valley of the Allt Nathrach which gave stunning views of the days objective. After a mile or so we picked up the path and then gradually climbed the

east ridge heading for the subsidiary summit of Beinn Na Caillich. After a while, a brief levelling seemed like a good place to practice navigation, and we spent some time matching features on the map to those on the ground: corries, hanging corries, spurs, ridges, gullies, summits, etc, features which are not so obvious on the small screen of a phone or GPS. We also covered bearings, back bearings and location confirmation by triangulation, after which Paul and James offered to do the nav for the rest of the day. Eventually we reached the summit of Beinn Na Caillich and got a stunning view of the entire ridge heading out west to the main summit almost 2 miles away. At the col between the two summits we managed to find a little shelter from the biting cold wind to have lunch. From here thirty minutes of surprisingly pleasant uphill saw us at the summit trig point where the views were magnificent under an almost clear blue sky. From here the instructions from 'walkhighlands' were useful to as the ground was quite complex, but we soon picked up the right of way which took us down and onto the West Highland Way. All in all a great day in great weather, on a great hill with great people!

Thursday. I was intrigued by the fact that Gairbeinn and Corrieyairack Hill are both given the same height of 896m, and are both considered to be part of the same mountain even though they are 2 miles apart, so you have to climb both summits to claim the Corbett! The start of the walk is many miles in along the single track road beside the River Spey at Melgarve, to the eastern end of the Corrieyairack Pass. Just a few hundred yards in from the start is the Melgarve Bothy, which looked well maintained with a couple of chairs, a table and a fireplace downstairs and an upstairs sleeping area – perfect for those wanting to sample a bothy night for the first time. From here some really rough going over the heather moor eventually led to the vague south ridge of Gairbeinn, with many false summits, before finally arriving at the small rock outcrop at the summit and a howling gale again. From here I headed north to find the fence line that led me over the summits of Carn an Aonaich Odhair and Geall Charn all the way to Corrieyairack Hill itself- no need for any complex Nav today! The wind was even stronger at the summit and although the views out west tempted you to linger it was incredibly cold. I quickly made my way along an obvious track to the head of the Corrieyairack Pass where I found a disused concrete hut full of old electrical equipment, and the old workmen's benches still in place. It was a bit rough, but was an absolute haven of calm on a day like this. All that remained now was to descend the pass, 4 miles back to Melgarve. Once things levelled and opened up I was virtually blown back to the car. Yet another enjoyable day out in a rarely visited area – maybe this "Corbett bagging" is not a bad thing after all!



Melgarve bothy. Library pic 😊

Friday. Woke up to yet another day of gale force winds but this time accompanied by something of an overcast sky. I had visions of doing a Corbett on the eastern side of Loch Ness but the thought of another day being battered by the wind and the general malaise of too late a night and too much whisky put paid to that. Instead I had a steady afternoon exploring the woods around the accommodation and a walk alongside the Roy gorge to Bohenie and the Spean at Bunroy. Thanks to everyone who attended the meet, especially those who I managed to get out on the hill with, to Col for organising it, and to the weather Gods for blessing us with 7 days without rain!



**Jakob Doran**

Saturday. Bidean Nam Bian. Winter skills with Cele, Seb and Charlie

Sunday. Raeburns gully on Creag Meagaidh with everyone (**pics above**). Back down the window



## *Polaris newsletter – May/June 2024*

Monday. Aonach Mor. Forgotten twin via easy gully. Gondola down cancelled due to wind. With Seb and Charlie (**pics 1 & 5 below**)

Tuesday. Climbing at Polldubh crags with Cele and Ryan. Phantom Slab VS 4c (**pic 2 below**)

Wednesday. Fiacaill Ridge in Northern Cairngorms. With Charlie (**pic 3 below**)

Thursday. Ledge Route and CMD arete on Ben Nevis. With Cele, Seb and Charlie (**pics 4, 6, 8 below**)



### **Chris Lunn**

Monday. Great day out with Tony, doing two Corbetts: the Dyson Hoover 806m and the Hover Mower 826m. I'm pretty sure that's how they're translated. Shane, Ben and Karin climbed Number 3 Gully Buttress; snow conditions were a bit iffy.

Tuesday. Shane and I did a 30 mile loop on our e-bikes from the cottages. Down to Roy bridge then up through the forest to the Nevis centre, over to Neptune's staircase and across the Caledonia canal to the Commando monument and back to the cottages.

Friday. Shane and I rode our e-bikes up to Lairig Leacach bothy, a 23-mile round trip going over the gorge on the new bridge and up to the bothy, pedalling into the wind and snow. But great fun coming down with the strong wind behind us!



**Ryan McConnell**

Highlights for us were: an ascent of Ben Lomond for Hazel -running it in 2hrs 7min. Being part of the group ascent of Raeburns gully at Creag Meagaidh. Climbing phantom slab VS 4c with Jakob and Cele at Polldubh crags while Hazel ran 38km around Loch Lochy. We climbed south gully on Stob Ban with Shane, Paul and James and returned down north ridge- excellent day! Last day rock climbing with Paul and James again at Polldubh ticking Pine Wall HS, Tear HS, & Pinnacle Ridge S. Hazel ran to Roybridge from Glen Nevis via the Lairig Leacach bothy, another 38km. Great week! ☺



Pic 1 Hazel and the whole team gearing up for Raeburn's gully. Pics 2-5 South gully on Stob Ban. Pic 6 On Hazel's 24 mile solo run from Glen Nevis to Roybridge.

**Tom Miller**

Tom and the 'Golden Oldies'. A week of firsts and surprises.

First, there was a continuing strong easterly gale. We did not need to get out our raingear at all for the whole week. Is this a record? Second, I cannot remember so many new faces at a Winter Meet, ever. Third, more trips to Corbetts were made than I ever recall, and some of them are really good value. Fourth, the Golden Oldies had an encounter with electric bikes. Traditionalists may frown, but is it a sign of things to come?

The Golden Oldie hut was occupied by Steve Wright, Bob Power, Jon Philby, Ian Johnson and Tom Miller, and we managed mostly communal meals, quite like the old days in the 1970's. We set out on the first day, accompanied by Tony Thorley, for Beinn Bhan beyond the Lochy river, and noted the key issue of the week i.e.



The A Team on Meall a Bhuchaille

that there was snow above 2000ft, but not much of it and in unconsolidated condition. Where are the big snow falls of yesteryear, and the deep continued freezing that consolidated the pack?

On the Monday, whilst Bob and Steve used their mountain bikes, Tom Ian and Jon went over to the Cairngorms and climbed Meall a Buchaille behind Glenmore Lodge; all very civilised with a clear footpath all the way. Later in the

week Ian and Tom took a trip by train to Corroul and traversed the Leum Uilliem horseshoe, a high rocky outcrop on the edge of Rannoch Moor\*. You get a 7-hour window to do this so no hanging about. We made the return train with 25 minutes to spare. It seemed far too little time in reserve.



And finally, in pleasant sunshine, we all did that ridge north of Loch Leven – A Caillich and Mam na Gualain. There are brilliantly engineered stalker paths here. They are a delight to tread.



On the Leum Uilliem horseshoe

\*Ian adds that their descent was down an eponymous ridge called Tom an Eoin 😊

It was inevitable that someone in PMC would start to rave on about Electric Mountain Bikes. This meet could have set a trend. Steve, Bob and Jon hired these new-fangled forms of mountain cheating and had a glorious time racing up the Caledonian canal and back down to Fort William via the routes in Leanachan Forest. Purists will scoff; but the same scoffs happened when pitons were invented. And crampons and ice axes rather than alpenstocks. And helmets and Karabiners. And it turns out that Shane and Chris had brought their own electric Mountain bikes. What are things coming to?



Burley Boys' lunchtime view on their e-bike outing; Steve Wright's picture of the Beinn na Caillich ridge

It's a pleasure to see so many new members and guests, and we were delighted that Karin could come for a few days before her house move. It feels very odd to converse with all these unfamiliar faces, because it is inevitable that we Golden Oldies start to talk about what it was like in the 1970's. When we started, some of us in the 1970's, all the talk from the *then* golden oldies (Denis Beale, Ernest Snow, Ralph Ford) was about the 1950's when the Ballachulish bridge was still a ferry, and the living quarters were primitive, cold and damp. Now things are really quite civilised. Thanks to Colin for organising the meet.



No 3 Gully Buttress, Monday.  
Ben leading; Karin and Shane; Karin topping out.

## The Gable Axe recipients, part 2

*Continuing Tom Miller's summary of who, when and why*

2001 Richard Brown. As true mountaineers get older, they sadly degenerate towards mountain biking. It seems that Richard was the first to really lead this lapse of mountaineering drive and effort. But so many PMC members were only too glad to follow.

2002 **Martyn Locke**. Award for the Channel Islands meet Sept 2001. The perfect suntrap. And also the wasps in full attack mode; and the rats using the tent fly sheet as a trampoline.

2003 **Sid Harvey**. It Was Hell! in three stages. Award for enduring suicidal bivouacs over Christmas and New Year in the Cairngorms with, variously, Dave Evans, Tony Thorley, Heather Aston and Frank English. White outs, blizzards, ploughing through thigh deep drifts, sleeping in puddles because of a sudden thaw, interminable bacon butties...

2004 Grace and Ray Beurle. Few know of their wartime code-breaking work. Or for Grace's brilliant alpine routes in the late 1940's. She and Ray were present at every AGM/Dinner till her death. He skied in Zermatt age 90.



**Rachel Locke** abseils into Le Bigard area, Guernsey.



**Sid Harvey** in winter headgear

2005 Jonathan Philby. Restarted the PMC tradition of climbing in the Alps. Over the years he did 14 4000 metre peaks with a guide and countless others in 11 further trips, including the infamous Forbes Arete incident, where he lost a crampon halfway up this classic alpine route and still summited.

2006 Tom Miller. Award for guiding a PMC party off the top of Liathach at night and with avalanche risk at 4. No deaths. Nobody injured. We boozed till 4 in the morning afterwards.

2007 Steve Shillito. Award for rescue of Darren Vincent in Sardinia, involving a complicated double-person set of abseils, and fireman's lifting Darren from the bottom of the crag to the car and off to hospital.

2008 Bob Power. Climbed Island Peak and Mera Peak in the Himalayas. As the world gets a much more dangerous, and a more expensive and litigious place, such adventures may not be that frequent in the future.

2009 **John Chapman**. For completing the Munros after recovering from major cancer treatment. The drive to keep climbing cures untold serious conditions; an amazing elixir.

2010 John Parker. For taking over and making a great success of the Newsletter after the ill-fated experiment of going completely online. Long live middle technology.

2011 Eileen Healey. Awarded posthumously for all the incredible things she did in the Himalayas in the 1950's and for recording it all in her 37-volume diary. Put PMC on the map.

2012 Alan Parker. He can't remember. How could he forget dressing up as his hero, Fireman Thorley (complete with bandaged finger!) at the Clapham party meet...

2013 Ian Johnson. Award for thrashing up and down Mt Blanc at the ripe old age of 70, and accepting Hannah Burrows Smith (the guide's) view that a flask of coffee was not entirely needed on the summit.

2014 Colin Kingshott. Award for raining down icy chips on the PMC party below, whilst leading the crux pitch on Point Five Gully. The first PMC ascent of this route.



Liathach traverse 1975. **John Chapman** and Jim Cullen.

Roger recalls: "We were so hot on the flog up to the ridge and having no alternative clothing, we all took our wool breeches off. We did the ridge in our underpants."



2015 Alan Parker. Alan has no idea. The then President, TT, who gave the award is not sure. Was it that Alan had led too many meets? This loss of memory disease is getting very infectious.

2016 Dan Dennehy. For rattling the hut door at 8.30am, having flown home from testing cars in exotic places late on the Friday, and got up at 6 am to drive to Wales, all for the joy of climbing in the Moelwyns.

2017 Bob Power. Expedition to Bolivia. Climbed Illimani and several other high Andean peaks.

2018 John Merritt. Award for trying, for 25 years, to keep the Club accounts in order. And also for his valiant, yet never finished, attempt to reach the summit of each continent.

2019 Colin Kingshott. Award for recruiting new members and introducing older and more stubborn PMC members to the great delights of 21<sup>st</sup> century social media.

2020 **Colin Kingshott and Jim Broomhead**. Award for the ascent of the Cassin Ridge on Denali, Alaska. A hard classic alpine test piece, and it's at 20,000 feet in a high latitude, 63° North.

2021 Award to Roger Kingshott and Ian Johnson for their ascent in 1868 of the Matterhorn by the Zmutt ridge. And arguing about what happened on the trip ever since. Was that 1968?

2022 Tony Thorley. Award for all his hard work organising the Club and keeping us all informed about the ridiculous intricacies of the government's Covid rules throughout the epidemic. Not that we ever obeyed the rules in the first place.

2023 Georgi Kostadinov Kiryakov. In Col's words, "for training hard and being a 'beast'. Also, for his ability to surmount many climbs of exceptionally difficulty." 😊 Really leading the club in this respect.

2024 **Sip Powers**. For squelching, in foul weather, over the 214 Wainwright peaks, as a single, self-supporting, non-stop round, to publicise the charity Combat Stress. All whilst dealing with serious long term health issues.

Information correct at the time of writing, with a few flights of fancy to fill in the gaps.

### **Tom Miller**

*The eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed that the years listed are not the year that the Axe was presented, but the following year during which the recipient held the Axe. Ed. 🤔*



High on the Cassin Ridge, Denali



Sip on his epic Wainwrights Challenge

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## **Remembering Jean Ford**

Gairloch, Arran, Wasdale, Achmelvich, Glen Shiel, Ballachulish: a roll-call of Spring Bank Holiday meets which conjures up a torrent of wonderful memories forever associated with Jean and her family. No meet was ever complete without the Fords, who (and this was especially true of Jean) imparted a certain maturity to the gathering, a degree of restraint to the more exuberant tendencies of younger and more recent recruits such as ourselves. Their children, Clive, Jacqueline and Karen were already beyond the toddler stage in the 1970s and 80s, whilst ours were still appearing so it was encouraging to have role models for child-rearing in which Jean definitely belonged to the 'traditional' school. Shared childcare was a particular feature of meets, making it possible for the male and female partners to have their own trips into the hills. Jean was a sturdy fell-walker

and always took full advantage of these opportunities. By repute she was an accomplished rock climber as well, though I never had the pleasure of joining her on a rope. That period of the 1970s and 80s stands out as something of a golden age in terms of our Polaris days, but children grow up, holidays fragment and the great childhood diaspora takes hold. One could never recapture the special magic which surrounded that period in which Jean played such a key part. I feel sure that others may share similar feelings.

Nevertheless we maintained contact with Jean and Ralph. Mary and I were able to enjoy many days out especially on Lakeland Fells during the '90s, often in company with Bernard and Chris Price.

Jean held firm views and liked to talk about serious matters on these walks. She was never afraid to confront controversial issues with great vigour and sincerity, especially when it came to the environment. I recall her being particularly vehement about the contested proposals to erect electricity pylons in the Vale of York not far from Borrowby. For her it was an issue of principle, not simply the interference with her view, though she had good reason on that ground as well. Once Jean had made up her mind, she was not to be shaken from it.

These brief notes conceal a host of recollections too numerous to relate but I hope my fond regard for Jean is clear: she was a wonderful friend to us. She will always have a special place in our hearts.

**John Chapman**

I first met Jean on the Spring Bank Holiday Meet at Stoer, north of Ullapool, way back in 1972. Malcolm and I were very new club members, as was our motor caravan! Under canvas, next to us, we found the Fords, with three children, all under the age of four. It was wonderful to find such friends for our three-year old, Andy. I remember being thoroughly impressed with how calmly and happily Jean coped with her lovely family. Karen was just toddling around in the wet grass, and learning to talk [Double Dutch, I think!], and Clive celebrated his 4th birthday during the meet with a party which lacked nothing a lad could want. There followed many, many times thereafter which we all enjoyed together. I learnt that Jean had been an adventurous climber even in the days before Ralph appeared on the scene, often in the company of Pat Daley - a couple of high achievers. Perhaps one of the most memorable meets was Summer 1974, at Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Dolomites. A true family meet if ever there was one.

Life moved on and we more or less lost touch - just notes and wishes on Christmas cards. Last May I had occasion to be in Wetherby and realising that my journey took me near her home, I decided to call in and say Hello. Despite the fact that she had a full ten minutes warning, she did not recognise me! She had not really changed and we were soon back to old times. It was wonderful and I am so glad I went. At her funeral I thought once again that it is sad that the deceased cannot enjoy the company of all the friends who come. It was lovely to see some other Polaroids and to meet Clive, Jacqueline, Karen, and their families. I learnt so much more about Jean. I did not know that Music was one of the mainsprings of her life, teaching piano, in charge of several church choirs, as an organist for a group of local churches and organising lots of events. Karen said in her eulogy that her mother always impressed on them that when told something about anyone else, the test should be to ask themselves, "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" That was Jean's philosophy.

**Wendy Fraser-Urquhart**



Mary Chapman, Ralph Ford, Jean Ford and Bernard Price on the Kentmere horseshoe, 1996



Jean with the Polaris children on the 1974 Dolomites meet. L – R: David & Richard Hodgson, Andy F-Urquhart, Clive Ford, Catherine H. Jacqueline & Karen F, Tim Johnson, Elizabeth H.

## Remembering Bernard Price

It was a privilege and an honour to attend Bernard's funeral. The eulogies described not only the family man and outdoor devotee but also a dedicated and highly regarded public servant who served as Clerk and Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council for twenty years, and in an astonishing range of chairmanships, trusteeships and other voluntary and charitable activities at the same time, and later into retirement. But you would never have guessed it in his company when the talk would most likely be of steam trains or model railways (although he had a shrewd understanding of the workings of National Parks from his association with the Peak Park, a topic we shared in common.) A day out on the fells was always a stimulating experience with Bernard in the party.

Bernard shared his enjoyment of the outdoor life with Christine and his children, David, Emma and John of whom David spoke with great affection in his tribute to his father. I remember days out together in Borrowdale enlivened with bows and arrows and a particularly energetic ascent of Scafell Pike via the Great Moss, upper Eskdale and L'il Narrow Cove, adults and children scrambling hand over hand up the beck, a favourite route of mine which it was a delight to introduce the Price family to: happy days, indeed.

Though the onset of Parkinson's disease brought such activities to an end, Bernard confronted his illness with great fortitude and found a way to access the outdoors by acquiring an all-terrain Trampler with which he was quite unstoppable, setting a fearsome pace for his walking companions and undeterred by the roughest terrain. Here we did get him to pause on smoother ground long enough to capture this image during an outing in summer 2017. He was a fine companion and will be greatly missed.

### John Chapman

I remember a wonderful weekend in Llangollen with Bernard, Christine and their brown labrador. We walked in the Berwyns and then all went for a curry that night. It made me smile at the time because here was the ex- CEO of Shropshire County Council, very happy to be out on the hill doing what he so loved. At the time I was also working for a local authority and heard so many good reports about the wonderful CEO of Shropshire - how kind but also effective he was. A totally lovely man. Both he and Christine gave me lots of sound advice.

### Lucy Vincent

Bernard was such a lovely man: articulate, quietly spoken and with a good sense of humour. Very determined too, as I recall distinctly from a particular high-level camping meet in North Wales many years ago. Eleven of us, including Bernard and his son David, set off from Llyn Ogwen on a bright July morning, up into the Carnedd's to find an idyllic little spot to camp at about 3000' by a small lake in the NE coombe of Carnedd Llewelyn. A chilly evening turned into a wild and stormy night, with the wind and rain laying waste to most of the tents. By 7:30am the decision was made to abandon ship, and it was a very bedraggled party that made its way back down to the relative calm of the Ogwen valley. A truly memorable outing!

### John Parker

Bernard loved hill walking, generally in the more unfrequented mountains. Just like the 1950's. And there was always this black labrador called Gemma. Faithful, placid, biddable, waiting to tack along behind the humans.

I recall a day when we camped at Threlkeld in 2005. There was a torrential thunderstorm in the morning and some in the Meet deserted the hills to visit friends in Cockermonth. But Bernard was keen to get up to summit. So it wasn't till 1 in the afternoon that we set out for Clough Head. No problems with the light as he thought we could do quite a long round and get back in time for last orders.



We went up by the northeast ridge in brilliant weather after the storm and enjoyed the especially good views. The dog plodded slowly up behind us. Walkies were not like this kind of steep stuff. We had a great time going along the ridge to Great Dodd and back by the Old Coach Road. There wasn't a soul around. Bernard was as sprightly as ever; the dog was lame and exhausted. We discussed putting her in a rucksack, but we didn't have one big enough.

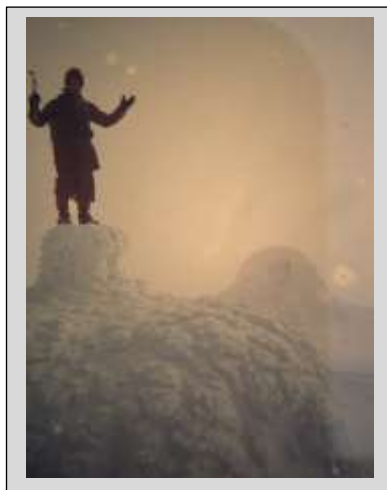
Perhaps it was the mutual local government background, but we always got on so well. I recall one trek soon after he had retired. I learned more about this great change from him in an afternoon than all the professionally supplied courses.

He was modest, very steady and immensely knowledgeable. A pleasure to be with. And he had this knack of always choosing out-of-the-way routes when the rest of the mountains were thronged with tourists.

**Tom Miller**

### *50 years of newsletters*

Don't forget that all the club circulars / newsletters dating right back to 1974, plus loads of other stuff including slide scans such as these, are available on our Google drive



Tom Miller on Corvus, Dec 1981; Dave Higgins on Ben Nevis trig point, Mar 1979; Jonathan on Great Slab, Millstone, Sep 1979; Kinder Downfall (!) Mar 1980





*And finally... a few recent pics from social media*



TT, Jakob and AP against a dramatic Peak District sky; JP's Test Valley sunrise; Janet on El Fuerte, Andalucia; Lucy skiing off Finnheimfjellet 1148m, Norway; Chris with Shane, I think, on an e-bike outing from Roybridge; Heather on a dreary day's riding on the Cleveland Way; a cracking picture of Tom on Win Hill; Sip guides a military veteran as he climbs Ben Nevis on all fours; Karin's sunrise breakfast on Gummers How, Southern Lakes; Phil and Sheree on Ben More, Mull; Georgi, high up on Fernhill E2 Cratcliffe Tor; Phill's view over Blea tarn to Bob and Steve toiling up Lingmoor; Heather's little morning walk; Celeste on Knights Move HVS, Burbage North; Steve W's pic of Bob in Great Langdale looking towards Pavey Ark/Harrison Stickle; Jakob emerges frozen from Forgotten Twin, Aonach Mor; Lucy's pic of a snow-bound Cinque Torri, Dolomites.