



Mynyddwyr De Cymru

Newsletter - January 2009

www.mdcwales.org.uk

Editors Rambles

Another few months of year goes by, the hills get steeper, the joints achier, the hair whiter and the memories dimmer. The only advantage is my ramblings get shorter. This winter has seen the introduction of Tuesday night runs in the dark. We are just doing one a month, running in the dark with head torches along some nice trails throughout South Wales. I emailed you all earlier with the itinerary. As usual we will finish in a pub or a members house for grub. So far, all have been well attended with 10 to 15 runners participating.

The other piece of news I have to report is that 'Topher' Gildersleve, not a member, but well known on the local fell running scene has been seriously injured after falling off his bicycle. He has fractured his hip and collarbone and will be out of action for a while. We all wish him a speedy recovery. Still, he seems in better state than the local health services, which left him lying in the road for 2 hours awaiting an ambulance!

Transfan 2008 – 25th anniversary

John Aggleton

With the annual running of the Transfan planned for early September I was once more in the clear with a valid excuse – away on hols. Alas, one of the many prolonged downpours that marked this 'summer' led to the sensible decision to postpone the event. The only compensation was the chance to encourage Hugh Aggleton to have a second go (his first attempt was marked by a lot of pain, lots of blisters and lots of sun).

The morning of Sunday 11th of October marked the start of the 25th anniversary running of the Transfan – a mere 21 miles and 8,500 feet of ascent (and descent). Two bands of runners assembled by the church at Llanddeusant. The first set off at 10.00am (Rob West and Haydn Griffiths), the second at 11.00 am (Hugh Aggleton, John Aggleton, Alan 'falling' Stone, Gary Davies, and Jules Carter). Some at the start hadn't even been born when the Transfan was first run, others were suddenly recalling just what it was a year ago that made them say that 'I will never do this again', while others (Jules and Gary) had never before tackled the course. Martin and Douglas started a new tradition of cycling from the start (to be joined later by Toffer, the incumbent holder of the immaculate Transfan Trophy), while the

utterly invaluable support from Kaye, Jane, Sarah and Derek made the whole thing possible by being in the right places at the right time (yet again).

Martin intoned the traditional words at the non-start of the non-race and off we set. It was appropriate that the weather was also traditional – low cloud and clag over the Black Mountain with it clearing as we traversed eastwards. By the time we reached Pen-y-Fan the skies were spectacularly clear with amazing visibility, but more of that later. Jules set off like a greyhound, much to our amusement – he had clearly worked out that the start point was higher than the finish point. True, but.....

Summit #1 (Carreg yr Ogof) – I always find this the hardest to find, and so it proved. The five of us headed off in the thick mist in roughly the right direction, dropping Alan 'double transfan' Stone by some few yards. We reached the summit but not the trig point – and only with a bit of casting around did we find it in the mist. Just as we ran towards the trig out suddenly appeared Alan 'GPS!' Stone, heading miraculously in a direct line towards the trig and reaching it just before the rest of us (*After all this isn't a race and doesn't have any rules – Ed.*).

Due East on compasses (except for 'GPS boy'), and off we set in a loose group through the mist. This time we were spot on, and came up Bannau Sir Gaer (#2) directly without wasting time climbing the top in between. The only passing traffic in the mist were occasional soldiers carrying 50lb packs (think bag of cement) – their suffering made our task feel easy. Straight over to Bannau Brycheiniog (#3) and then down. The four of us hit the road by the unnamed ridge pretty well together, with Alan 'snakebite' Stone a little further back. Over the ridge (#3a), where something resembling a path now exists, and down to the cars. Hugh and Jules shot off up Fan Gihirych (#4) while Gary and I starting to lag – well we're only human and it was Fan Gihirych. The top was in cloud and we started to stretch out only to regroup again in two pairs (Hugh and Jules ahead in the distance, myself and Gary). We trudged up Fan Nedd (#5), where I headed for the road crossing but Gary decided to cut the angle and head straight for Fan Llia – not knowing that there was an evil fence in the way. A little bit earlier Hugh and Jules had caught up with Rob and Haydn at the Sarn Helen crossing. Quick refuel – the joy of Mueller rice – then set about getting the line up Fan Llia right (why do we always go too far south?). Derek (who was supporting Rob and Haydn) helpfully pointed to a sheep that he

claimed was dead in line with the famous moving summit. With the sun finally making its presence felt, Gary and I trudged up, and for once weren't far off the top (#6). Running north along the ridge we looked across to the dreaded back of Fan Fawr where we could see a string of runners and walkers. (Jules and Hugh had headed straight down east from the top of Fan LLia – arguably not a good idea, but they survived).

What can one say about the ascent of Fan Fawr (#7)? – it's not the biggest climb in feet of ascent, but you have to do the Transfan to appreciate just how awful it can be. Time and legs seem to stand still. If you make the mistake of looking south you realise how little you have achieved. The only thing is to fix on any walkers ahead of you, with a view to nonchalantly breezing past them. We went past Rob – only to discover that he had quite badly hurt himself on the river crossing off the Black Mountain. This fact added to our admiration of his achievement and rather dented our joy of catching up with someone. Somewhere on this climb I pulled ahead of Gary, my advantage being that I knew that the climb didn't really last forever. We also passed two pretend soldiers, each with guns – one so unfit and so slow that I suspect that he is still trying to get up that hill. Haydn's distinctive white legs (well his famous bandages) were seen on the top of Fan Fawr, and I passed him on the descent (he was nursing a very dodgy calf - sorry that could be misunderstood).

Storey Arms- hurrah – now the weather was startlingly good. Earlier, Hugh and Jules had arrived pretty well together, but in the ensuing march towards Y Gyrn (not #8) Hugh pulled ahead and continued to do so. Quite a long time later, after grabbing some food from Jane (thanks again) - I walked/trotted up endeavouring to catch up with a walker who turned out to be Kaye. A red kite floated past at eye level between Corn Du (call it #9) and Pen-y-Fan (#10) – stunning. Finally, there is that infamous, painful descent down to Cwm Llwh. To be honest it was my least painful Transfan over that stretch. Then the almighty relief of finishing, where Derek, Martin, Kaye, Jane, Sarah etc did a great job of welcoming in the expiring runners. Haydn was held up by a herd of ponies being driven straight at him. Meanwhile, Alan 'I really have fallen like a stone' Stone lay prostrate on the ground while the farmer drove up in his quad to make a suitably pithy remark about his state.

For the non record, the finishers in chronological order were: Hugh (4:34 50), Jules (4:47 45 M40), John (5:15 50 M50), Garry (5:26 23), Alan 'no more nicknames' Stone (5: 42 10 M40), Haydn (6:34 20 M40), and Rob (6:58 26 M68).

The traditional BBQ was held. It should be noted that this was October and it was probably the first dry MDC BBQ of the year! (Tom, note). Douglas and Martin had arrived via bikes, and food and drink

enjoyed as only possible after the Transfan.



The support crews had their traditional get together and decided unanimously that there really could only be one winner of the coveted trophy - Rob West (*The only runner to complete the 1st and 25th running of this event – Ed*). Highly desirable polo shirts are now being modelled by the lucky few who were there (once again, thanks to Martin and Kaye). I'm currently looking forward to booking my summer hols just as soon as the Transfan 2009 dates are announced!

P.S. am I the only person to have noticed how spookily similar are P.B.s for the Transfan and Bob Smith?

Total OMMersion

The OMM 2008 attracted the regulars from the MDC, Haydn, Alice, Alan, Dan and Jules. Joining them were newcomers to MDC, Gary Davies and Natalie. There were also some other familiar faces from Cardiff, Nick and Caroline Dallimore. Dave and Jane from SWMC decided to lose their OMM virginity. The weather forecast was grimmer than usual with torrential rain and gale force winds on the game plan. Friday night was wild and windy in the valley as we tried to get some kip before the off. Saturday morning saw most packing extra fleeces and tent pegs. The weather front kicked in a little later than predicted and mid-morning saw the first of the rain. By midday it was getting a little tough on top of the hills. The wind was making progress slow and hazardous and the rain was hitting you in the face like pellets of grit. You really didn't want to stop to put on leggings or eat, obvious precautions given the conditions - but easier said than done. Hypothermia was a real risk.

Low cloud and poor visibility ensured that those in the score classes chose their routes to avoid exposed slopes or going high. All the classes had had the length of the routes curtailed. Even so, many chose to exit the mountains early, heading for the start, the finish, the pub, anywhere but staying on the tops. The many didn't included the MDC contingent, who all finished their courses and arrived at the finish to find the event cancelled and the world media

desperately trying to cook up a big story on a quiet news day.



Alan and Haydn had an interesting river crossing to get to the finish. Buttermere lake had flooded onto the campsite and the rivers that feed it were, by late afternoon, torrents of white water. The valley floor no longer resembled the maps! We tried to find a wider shallower part and teamed up with a couple of other teams to attempt the crossing. The water rose to our waists as we waded out. Haydn and Alan were the only ones left standing as the others lost their footing and were nearly swept away. Fortunately a rock appeared at that point and I was able to jam my leg against it to resist the water flow. This saved an unpleasant swim down to the lake with packs on our backs.



The Dallimore's got back to Borrowdale to find their car flooded. Jules and Dan got abducted by dogooders and spent a night in a local school. Alan and

Haydn decided to ignore the officialdom telling them that Borrowdale was flooded and to go back. They walked past the road blocks and waded through waist deep water to get back to a nice dry motorhome. and steaming grub. Many competitors spent an uncomfortable night in a farmers barn sleeping on wet concrete.



Yes, there were some difficulties in the conditions, the wind was strong enough to blow you clean off your feet, the rain made navigation difficult, but we were prepared for the conditions and were carrying all our safety kit. The fact that everyone got off the mountain is testament to the good organisation, the minimum kit list being enforced and the self reliance and training of the competitors.

The main problem was that the media didn't understand what a mountain marathon is all about. I think they thought we were all boy scouts on a day trip and had got caught out by the conditions. They were genuinely surprised to find no one (except outsiders) criticising the organisers. Many competitors would have been happy to continue on day 2, although we quite understood the decision to abandon had to be taken when the start and finish areas had flooded.

Roll on next year when we look forward to another OMMersion.

AMS

Notice of Mynyddwyr de Cymru AGM 2009

The AGM will be held on 28 March 2009 after the Pen Cerrig Calch race concluding the Winter League in the Red Lion at Llanbedr.

The Agenda will be:-

1. Apologies/attendance
2. Minutes AGM 2008 (draft already circulated by newsletter)
3. Matters arising
4. Officers' reports
5. Election of Officers
6. AOB

Volunteers are as ever encouraged to step forward for club officers' positions. Remember that Membership secretary will become vacant per the draft Minutes for 2008 and is a job that needs to be

done, preferably by someone with a computer at home (which excludes me!)

If anyone has any other specific issues for the AGM please let me know so that they can be dealt with where appropriate rather than all under AOB

Douglas Adlam Secretary 18 01 09

The Bob Smith Challenge 2008 (1/6/08 & 7/6/08)

John Aggleton

When the Bob Smith was young, support crews were induced by the promise of a fun day out, plenty of time for coffees, sun bathing, ice-creams in Brecon, and the chance to read a book. As I was about to find out, this was a myth put out by people in need of the support that is necessary to complete the challenge.

The entries for this years Bob Smith (all six 800m peaks in southern Britain by foot and bike) numbered only three – John Aggleton, Hugh Aggleton, and Tom Gibbs - but the Aggleton duo posed a logistics problem. 'Hugh & I' (that well known 1960s comic pair) could not be supported by one person. Hugh is just too fast on the bike (oh, and running as well). The solution was that I did the BS on my own one week before the set date (with Hugh supporting), while I would support Hugh on the appropriate day. Tom was supported by the ever reliable Phil, along with Astrid (who cycled from Cwm Gwdi to the finish in the Grywne valley.) All three of us had specific targets: Tom's was to have decent outing before doing something difficult (or just to show how it should be done, or just to wear the silliest cycle top he could find); Hugh's was to have a clear run without something going wrong or being handicapped by a slower father; mine was to beat Phil Holder's 5hr 14mins veterans 40 record (1 min faster than my PB), my secret weapon was a new bike (and older legs).

The route of the BS means that the weather is often critical. I had low cloud and a light north wind, while Tom and Hugh had a bright sunny day (there was one this summer) with zero wind.

Leg 1: we all went straight up the north nose of Fan Brycheiniog, the now preferred route. All going pretty hard we took almost exactly the same time (52 mins), though Tom's mantra for quick transitions meant he was first away (well strictly speaking not, as I was still one week ahead of Tom – if you follow).

Leg 2: Hugh and Tom worked well together on the bikes until Tom's tyre came off the rim – so Hugh made it to Storey Arms about 8 mins ahead of Tom. I meanwhile was already beginning to remember why the BS is so demanding, all those hills you don't

remember until you hit them (though we all survived 'sheep' alley).

Leg 3: Pen-y-fan, Corn Dhu, and that funny one. Hugh had by now perfected the art of aiding his decrepit father through the transitions – shoes laid out and then placed on feet, food spooned in to mouth. The onlookers (bear in mind I was on my own) watched in amazement, clearly concluding that a) I had lost my marbles and everything else, and b) that this youth was sadistically forcing this aged and clearly incapable and confused man out onto the mountains. In contrast a week later, Tom's tuxedo cycle top (the penguin one) led to requests for drinks, meanwhile I was struggling to find Cwm Gwdi by car (I am sorry, but I always get lost trying to navigate those lanes – especially when I can't follow Kaye). I was beginning to appreciate just how tough supporting is – I did my best to emulate Phil, but practice clearly makes perfect. Tom was now about 5 mins behind Hugh.

Leg 4: back on the bikes to the Black Mountains. We all went via the lanes, but none of us were bold enough to risk Toffer's new short cut via the Gliding School. I spotted one of my orange markers from many years before (but no yellow arrows!!). A sudden downpour near Llangors meant the first wetting for my new bike, turning the lanes into mud. Hugh reached the Black Mountains still 5 mins ahead of Tom who encountered a new obstacle. Tom had to stop in Pengefnordd as a girl 'in charge' of 5 huge horses rapidly became a girl out of charge of 5 huge horses. The resulting chaos meant that the horses blocked the road so Tom couldn't cycle up and I couldn't drive down.

Leg 5: Waun Fach, Pen-y-Gadair Fawr. Experience shows that this is the make or break leg. Past years have seen participants grind to a complete halt, while there remains a debate about the best route. This year we all tried Tom's direct route. I ended up going off piste, a bad situation as my energy levels fell to zero and I zigzagged up the hill with legs on the edge of cramp. For me the top was in low cloud, the wind across me, and the traverse to Waun Fach was a mud bath. As you all know, the unique, inverse summit of Waun Fach is even muddier, and I needed my compass to cross one of the worst mires in S. Wales (a week later it was dry and clear!). New energy appeared miraculously as I reached the last top (Pen-y-Gadair Fawr), quick check on the compass and a mad dash down into the valley, while praying I didn't get caught in the bracken. A glance at my watch showed that I could still get a PB despite Waun Fach. Running through the last bit of bracken I could hear Hugh shouting at me from below in the Grwyne Valley to hurry as I could get under 5 hrs. Hurry I did, across the gloriously cold river to reach the gate in 4h 59 min 50 s (bloody hell!).

A week later the tables were reversed. Now I am standing by the river looking up for the runners. I

looked up and saw Tom first (how does he do it?), who had somehow got just ahead of Hugh (who needed an emergency stop). Tom and Hugh crossed the river and touched the finish point (the gate) together in truly impressive time of 4hr 31 min. Astrid arrived a few minutes later. To put it into perspective, those two times have only been bettered once before (by Tom in 2007), which says everything about their achievements.

Fan Fawr Race 4.10.08 2m 1000ft

Despite the awful weather a hardy few braved the rain and wind to muster on the start line. Topher Gildersleve started us off up the hill with the parting comment of, "You must be mad!" He obviously hadn't taken the time to psycho-analyse his own motivations. Freud could, would and should have had a lot to say.....

There is no hiding on this hill, 1mile straight up and another straight down. The course record is 16minutes and 2 seconds set by Graham Patten in 1991. Within a minute you're on the steep stuff, the red mist descends and you begin to regret that teacake and final slug of water you took before the start. Those in the middle order get to see the leaders running back past them as well as the joy of running past those even slower than themselves.

Kay was doing a good impression of a marker flag at the top and we all had to run around her. I knew she wasn't a marker pole when I saw her grinning at our suffering. She has strange ways of enjoying her leisure time that girl! The descent was entertaining with some running and some slithering on their a****s down the steep descents. It was wet enough to pick up some serious speed but I gained at least 3 places this way.

There wasn't much socialising at the end as many chose to head straight for the dryness of the cars and home. My dog needed a walk so it was straight up Pen Y Fan for me - being blown all the way.

AMS

THE BLORENGE RACE 29/11/08

46 runners contested the Bloreng race this year in cold, dry conditions. This unique race was almost lost from the calendar, until new organisers the Taylors stepped in. The use of the warm village hall for registration, with free tea and biscuits and real, actual toilets, was an unexpected and welcome luxury. For £2 entry free you get all this, and the lunacy of a relentless 1 in 3 climb for 1400ft, a treacherous descent, and surely in no other race in Britain do you get to run under a canal - twice.

A close men's race was won by Hugh Aggleton of MDC by just 4 seconds, from Rob Gordon of Mynydd Du. The latter was racing off a period of hard training, and despite a better descent than the winner, could

not quite catch him. Hugh, a cyclist, comes from a family of fell runners- father John was 16th overall and 2nd MV50- and reports that he may have seen the light and converted to fell running. A good climb brought him to the bunker in 2nd place, behind eventual 3rd placer Paul Murrin from Chepstow Harriers. Both the first MV40 Mike Duxbury (Stroud) and MV45 Max Suff (Hereford) are consistent top 10 placers in the South Wales Series.

Helen Fines was first woman home for the 3rd year running, although a pitifully poor line of descent put paid to chances of breaking the record. After a bad ankle injury in this race last year, Helen Bennett was relieved to come home safely in 2nd, and another Mynydd Du's Sharon Woods was 3rd (1st FV40). Chepstow's consistent stalwart Sue Ashton (FV50) was close behind.

The wooden spoon award has to go to Dick Finch. After selflessly leading his clubmates up the Bloreng for a recce the previous week, he proceeded to take possibly the most convoluted route in the history of the race. Returning over an hour later, he reported having visited the old railway sidings and the village of Garn Dyrys. Sightings of him enjoying a cream tea are unconfirmed, but he certainly failed to challenge John Sweeting for the MV60 win.

Helen Fines

KYMIN REPORT- 10/01/09

There was an excellent turnout for the fourth race in the South Wales Winter Hill series, at the Kymin in Monmouth. Although the Kymin is only about 600ft in overall height, an inventive and challenging course comprises 1150 feet of ascent in just under 4 miles.

After the early leader Hugh Aggleton was forced to retire with an ankle injury, the race turned into a fascinating battle between 17 year old Kristian Jones of Swansea Harriers, and Tom Gibbs (MDC/Chepstow). Gibbs, who performs better in longer races, tracked the youngster and caught him at the top of the final climb to the Observatory Tower. However, orienteer Jones had the superior descending skills, and despite the two being neck and neck with a quarter mile to go, his finishing speed gave him a 14 second advantage at the finish. A new record of 30.34 was written into the books. Mike Duxbury of Stroud AC, always a consistent performer on the fells, was third in 31.25.

In the womens race Helen Fines achieved a comfortable win, though slower than her record set last year after being affected by stomach pains. Alice Bedwell, representing MDC, was second (and first FV40) in 38.57. She was chased all the way to the line by unattached runner Kate Auchterlonie who worked hard to catch Bedwell along the final road section, only to be outsprinted at the line.

The veteran categories were competitive, with Simon Blease taking the MV50 in 34.59 and Gary Gunner (Croft Ambrey) the MV60 in a fast 39.22. For the women, Sue Ashton (42.05) continued to dominate the FV50 category, and Clare Johnson was first FV60 in 53.44. – Report courtesy of WFRA website.

3 Peaks Yacht Race

MDC have a team entered for this prestigious race. Robert West, Haydn Griffiths, Andrew Blackmore, Alan Stone and Dave Ewing from SWMC are going to give up a week of suffering.

As I'm sure you know this involves running/cycling up Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis while sailing/rowing in between. We may be up against a team from Brycheiniog if Toffer can get mended before then. Doug Adlam has kindly agreed to be 1st reserve and Derek Thornley has offered road support. A race report and photos will follow.

Results

As usual I only list the runners with MDC after their names. For full listings, please see the WFRA website.

Kymin 10th Jan 2009

18	Mark Bryant.	M40	34.48
20	Kevin Betts.	M40	35.18
24	John Aggleton	M50	36.12
28	Allan Hodkinson	MS	37.36
44	Martin Lucas	M50	41.02
47	Norman Jones	M40	42.32
58	Robert West	M60	47.30
62	Dave Gilbert	M50	51.47
67	Les Pugh	M60	55.00
dnf	Hugh Aggleton	MS	

The Blorenge 29th October 2008

1	Hugh Aggleton	MS	25.22
14	Allan Hodkinson	MS	32.12
16	John Aggleton	M50	32.31
17	Kevin Betts	M40	32.32
18	Douglas Adlam	M40	32.33
19	Mark Bryant	M40	33.32
21	Alan Stone	M40	34.07
22	Helen Bennett	FS	34.10
27	John Sweeting	M60	36.45
28	Martin Lucas	M50	36.50
30	John Shanahan	M50	37.18
34	Mike Harris	M50	37.44
35	Robert West	M60	38.01
36	Peter Burne	M40	38.20

37	Steve Brown	M50	38.25
45	Ian Payton	MS	53.22
46	Dick Finch	M60	57.02

Sugar Loaf November 1st 2008

4	Hugh Aggleton	MS	39.59
6	Tom Gibbs	MS	41.18
15	Mark Saunders	M40	44.45
22	Neil Lewis	M40	46.02
27	Gareth Craft	MS	47.12
35	Mark Bryant	M40	48.25
37	Alan Stone	M40	48.43
38	Steve Brown	M50	48.47
41	Peter Williams	M50	49.07
50	Kevin Betts	M40	50.19
58	John Shanahan	M50	52.23
60	Helen Bennett	FS	52.30
62	Mike Harris	M50	52.36
64	Norman Jones	M40	53.09
67	Martin Lucas	M50	53.19
71	Peter Burne	M40	53.45
77	John Sweeting	M60	54.41
95	Rob West	M60	59.21
97	Dave Gilbert	M50	60.02
112	Gareth Buffet	M50	68.06
114	Les Pugh	M60	71.48
115	Ian Payton	MS	72.40

Christmas Pudding Run 14th December 2008

3	Aggleton	Hugh	37.10
27	Bryant	Mark	41.44
65	Aggleton	John	44.42
89	Davies	Gary	46.02

Congratulations to Neil Lewis of MDC for winning the WFRA Open Championship M40. Also to John Sweeting for coming 3rd in the M60 category.

In the WFRA South Wales Series, congratulations to Matthew Collins for coming first in the Male U/40's. Peter Williams came 3rd in the M40 category. John Darby came 2nd in the M50's. John Sweeting was 3rd in the M60's. Helen Bennett was 2nd in the Women's U40's.

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