



Mynyddwyr De Cymru

Newsletter - January 2009

www.mdcwales.org.uk

Editors Rambles

Fed up of the credit crunch? Bored by further revelations of MP expenses claims? Well read on as I promise not mention them again and take you to a place of far earthier pain and suffering. Yes, another summer season of uphill struggle is upon us. I haven't received any reports of your activities this quarter so the newsletter is a bit thinner than you've come to expect. Obviously you've been drinking too much and running too little.

Congratulations to Tom Gibbs on completing the Paddy Buckley Round in the third fastest ever recorded time. At one point he was well ahead of the record schedule but had to contend with very hot weather and the non-arrival of a member of support crew. He ended up running one leg unassisted without any food. A very good effort and I'm sure just a prelude to another attempt.

3 Peaks

Most of my silly adventures usually start with a discussion in the pub after a pint too many. This was no exception. How about doing the 3 peaks yacht race? The only problem was we didn't have a yacht. Step forward Rob West with his 30 foot Mustang and we were almost there. All we needed now were some sailors. Rob had done a lot, Haydn Griffiths a little and Me – I could only claim to have played with rubber ducks in the bath. The lack of skill and experience had everyone else busily studying the bottom of their glass, when up stepped Andy Blackmore to say he was game for anything. We had a contact through the climbing club of all places and found a keen sailor in the form of Dave Ewing. He was soon a MDC member. It was clear from the start that a 30 foot boat was not going to be competitive (in sailing size **IS** everything) and so we set ourselves our own challenge – try to get everyone – all members of the same club - to the top of a mountain – including the 69year old skipper.

Haydn and Alan decided we needed to learn to sail and were seen heading for Cardiff Bay most Sundays with the Cardiff Bay Yacht Club – learning the difference between a sheet and a halyard. I even learnt to thread the monkey's bollocks!

We also spent a couple of weekends in Milford Haven, learning to sail our boat. On our first outing we witnessed the skipper being washed off the roof of the cabin by a large wave and snapping though the railing at the side. He was saved from going

clean overboard by the quick thinking of Dave, who grabbed Rob's collar as it flew past. On the second outing we learnt the man overboard procedure!

We also spent a weekend in the lakes scouting the route and Andy and I paid separate visits to North Wales to find the route through Caernarfon. I decided to cycle the road sections on that occasion. The only quandary was how to get the cycle from one side of Snowdon to the other while running the race route (up the Ranger Path and down Llanberis path). The answer proved easier said than done – carry it. This resulted in much amusement for the other hill walkers that day and total bafflement for the train riders.

Come the day of the race, brilliant sunshine for a change, we were still to be found fixing the oar mountings to the boat. We had a nice pair of carbon fibre oars. You are not allowed to use motors on this race outside of the harbours, so if the winds are light and currents strong you have to be prepared to row – or go backwards.



The start was the usual confused melee with the usual near collisions and crews shouting at each other. In order to avoid the pack we tacked across the fleet – only to be almost speared by the largest boat in the race. I don't think we would have even dented his paintwork. The sea was still rough from a storm the night before and I was reduced to a green gibbering wreck within minutes. Lunch and supper came up in one projectile vomit that failed to clear the sides of the boat. Only a quantity of prescription drugs that would have sunk Michael Jackson prevented further misery. The first night was spent tacking into a strong head wind and we got to Caernarfon without further incident. Andy and I did the run up to Snowdon which was straight forward. We had support from El Presidente Derek Thornley,

who fed and watered us and told us how bad we looked and how slow we were. The usual encouraging banter! We passed 2 other teams in the process and made it back to the boat in 4 hours 50 mins. We then were able to sail up the Menai Straights with a following wind. The picture is of us displaying a nice gay pink spinnaker. Emerging into the Irish sea we were able to see most of the fleet arrayed in front of us. Light winds had hindered their passages through the straits. We were able to row our boat past a large chunk of the becalmed fleet. The night sail to Whitehaven was marred only by light winds and our near collision with a gas platform. These things litter the route and are large, stationary and lit up like Christmas trees. Easy to miss, but not if you have me at the helm!



On arrival at Whitehaven, Haydn and Andy started the cycle route towards Scafell Pike in hot pursuit of 2 Lycra clad girls. Only later did they discover that the slower of these 2 girls is in the Olympic squad! They were soon dropped and were making good progress when Haydn blew up in spectacular fashion. A scorchingly hot day took its toll and he was reduced to a vomiting wreck lying at the side of the path. Meanwhile back at the boat the day crew were having a lovely time with hot showers and even hotter food at a local hostelry. They waited and waited and then did some more waiting and eventually 2 lights flickered into view shepherded by a very concerned Derek aboard the boat. Haydn collapsed into a bunk and we were off to Scotland. Light winds plagued us again and were still in reasonably close contention. However the winds were so light that we only travelled 42 miles in the next 24 hours. We ended up passing a group of rocks aptly named The Scares. Festooned with guano and emitting eerie bird noises, these ghostly apparitions lived up to their name. To prevent us going backwards against a strong tide we were forced to anchor up in a small bay overlooking some old friends - the Galloway Hills - of previous OMM acquaintance.

At midnight we started rowing out into the now favourable current and started making progress up the west coast of Scotland. The winds had picked up and we were flying along. We need to now as we knew we were going to have to go around the Mull of Kintyre. A scary headland with fierce overfalls,

submerged rocks and a 4 knot current against us. We were flying a large asymmetric spinnaker on a home made bowsprit and were a bit overpowered approaching the headland. Just as we were about to turn the corner the fierce force 6 winds spun us out and we ending up broaching sideways on the wind and against the current. The boat tilted alarmingly and we came to an abrupt stop. The home made bowsprit was bent at a crazy angle. With dry mouths we down sized the sails and crept closer into the headland dancing between the rocks and overfalls.

We made it through and heaved collective sighs of relief. We were still quite close to the body of the fleet though and were soon heading up past Jura. Again as dusk fell we were becalmed and in order to prevent being swept backwards by the current were forced to find an anchorage. The only problem was this was an exposed rocky shore. We eventually found a 12 foot square patch of sand to drop the anchor on. A local seal objected to our presence and emerged at regular intervals to blow raspberries at us!



Just after midnight we upped anchor and rowed/sailed with the current up towards the sound of Luing in the dark. We were doing shifts of 2 hours on and 2 off and I was lying collapsed on my bunk fully clothed when I heard a change in the tone of the voices in deck. We were going through a narrow channel at low tide surrounded by submerged rocks when the wind had died. We were now being swept by the current towards the largest of these hidden rocks. We were out of the marked channel and were in the red zones of the sector lights. I didn't need to be asked, I was up on deck and at the oars within seconds rowing for our lives. The danger passed and we then had to battle with light fluky winds up the Firth of Lorn towards Fort William. This proved frustrating. We were neck and neck with one other boat but could still see 8 or 9 sails ahead. We were passed by porpoises in the water. We eventually made it through the Corran narrows which is the last tidal gate before Fort Bill. We were still playing the Fluky winds and sometimes passing our nearest rival and sometimes being passed. Just before Fort Bill the wind died completely and we passed our rival rowing into the harbour.



This time Rob and Andy were doing the running and they disappeared up the ladder at the jetty and were off. Derek observed that out of his many trips to the Ben this was the first time he'd seen the summit. A beautiful sunny day revealed the snow patches still on the summit. Alan, Haydn and Andy, the non-sailors were then given the responsibility of parking the boat in the waiting basin of the Caledonian Canal. This we did without leaving too much paintwork on the canal sides. We then proceeded to get pissed while awaiting the return of the runners. We had this theory that alcohol would deter the midges which were trying suck the last meat off our bones. It didn't work. The local toilet cleaner had the right idea, dressed head to toe in a mosquito net with only a pair of rubber gloves sticking out in front!

Andy and Rob descended down the hill to a warm welcome and finished just after midnight of the sixth day. We were 21st out of 31 starters, which for the smallest and slowest boat in the race was creditable. I passed out in the cockpit of the boat while the others were trying to lob peanuts into my gaping mouth.



The picture above shows the flash bouncing off the midges – not snow flakes! The next day we had to say good bye to Rob and headed back home with Derek in his car. Rob is still travelling back slowly with the boat as I write. An epic adventure, not without its scary moments. A big thank you to Derek for providing backup and support all the way.

AGM Minutes

Mynyddwyr de Cymru AGM 2009

The AGM was held on 28 March 2009 after the Pen Cerrig Calch race concluding the Winter League in the Red Lion at Llanbedr 16.05-16.36.

The minutes are written by reference to the Agenda set out in the Notice of AGM:-

1. Apologies/attendance

Apologies – Rhys Williams, Helen Bennett, John Sweeting

Attendance :- Kay and Martin Lucas, Clive Horsfield, Julian Carter, Douglas Adlam, Derek Thornley, Alan Stone, Bethan ("Pebbles") Stone, John Aggleton, Hugh Aggleton, Andrew Blackmore, Mark Bryant, Chris Taylor and Jess Taylor.

Chris, Jess, Martin and Kay had not received the email Notice.

2. Minutes AGM 2008

Agreed as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by Julian Carter , seconded by Jess Taylor.

3. Matters arising

Derek has the marshalls' packs and has looked after, cleaned and refilled them.

4. Officers' reports

a) President.

Derek declared that he felt a fraud as while it was a privilege and an honour to be President, he never had to do anything. It was an easy job and he wondered if anyone young and dynamic wanted to do it. There appeared to be a lack of suitably qualified persons...

The Tuesday night list had been published by Tom.

Derek would be out in June supporting the MDC 3 Peaks Yacht Race entry under Rob West in Swallowdale from about 22June onwards.

Julian Carter and Hugh Aggleton would be doing the Scottish Islands race in mid May.

Run MDC had come 8th in the High Peak marathon

The Aggletons were planning a LEJOG by bike;

Toffer was putting on a Tour du Pays de Galles.

Martin had done 101 winter leagues

b) Secretary.

The treasurers' papers had eventually if unconventionally been transferred to Andrew Blackmore via his flower pot but otherwise nothing to report.

c) Treasurer.

Fresh accounts were produced to the meeting. There had only been 10 transactions, no bank charges had been incurred and no interest had accrued. Andrew's personal suggestion was that club funds should be put to use. Derek suggested that young athletes could be supported financially. If anybody wanted to apply for support, they should do so. It was noted

that the Winter League though not strictly an MDC production might eventually need some assistance for prizes.

d) Membership Secretary.

Martin passed on a message from John that numbers stood at 53 paid up members without any chasing. John would chase subs before passing over the reins to his successor.

5. Election of Officers

For the avoidance of doubt, there are 4 posts of president, secretary, treasurer, membership secretary and, separately, club captain.

a) President. Clive Horsfield proposed the re-election of Derek Thornley as someone old and lazy in the absence of anyone meeting Derek's criteria of young and dynamic. Spit was therefore re-elected by spontaneous acclaim and without dissent which he gratefully and with a sense of privilege and being honoured accepted.

b) Secretary. Also unanimously re-elected by acclaim on Kay Lucas's proposal and Derek's secondment, gratefully and with a sense of privilege etc accepted.

c) Treasurer. Andrew Blackmore was proposed by Julian Carter and also shanghai-ed into the job by acclaim, sense of privilege etc and probably for the next 10 years.

d) Membership secretary. This had the makings of being contentious but Julian got in first with a resignation from his de facto post effectively voting against his own candidacy to allow Jess an uncontested run for the post in which she was rather ironically proposed by Julian Carter, seconded by Mark Bryant.

Tom Gibbs was unanimously re-elected as club captain in absentia for his work on the Tuesday night list and assorted mad capers, proposed by mark Bryant and seconded by Alan Stone.

Membership representation on the committee was remembered this year; Hugh Aggleton raised his hand at this juncture so was appointed despite protestations that he had been waving goodbye to someone leaving the pub.

Alan Stone received congratulations and applause for his continued work on the newsletter.

Julian Carter will also continue to look after the club website. An entirely incomprehensible discussion ensued on the appropriate software – for details see Kay/Julian.

6. AOB

Nil

Douglas Adlam

Any Questions?

Back by popular demand for this and subsequent newsletters will be this regular column where you can ask our resident expert, the well known former polar

explorer, **Sir T. Fayed-Insane** your burning fell running questions.

Q. Have you got any tips for getting up the hill faster?
Sir T. A skidoo works well for me. If they don't allow that sort of thing in your races then place a shapely maiden at the top of the hill – she won't get you there any faster but it'll make the arrival all the more worthwhile.

Q. How do I make the sport of fell running more environmentally sensitive and less damaging to the environment?

Sir T. Never eat beans and drink beer at the same time. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas. If you want to go really green – use camouflage paint.

Q. Do you use any special diet on your expeditions?
Sir T. I regularly eat the mating machinery of the endangered male mountain gorilla, for extra stamina. If that isn't available in your local hostelry then a chicken curry arf'n'arf will do.

Ed. – please keep your questions coming. Sir T.'s politically correct advice is always priceless.

Results

As usual I only list runners entered as MDC members. For full results see the WRFA or race organisers websites.

Congratulations to Hugh Aggleton who is proving to be hard to beat. The Pentyrch Hill Race is of particular note because he ran this 2 days after doing the London Marathon in a time of 2:47:40

Sarn Helen - Sunday 17th May

20	Peter Gareth	MDC	50	M50	2.12.10
37	Brian Hardcastle	MDC	56	M50	2.19.49
	Andrew				
52	Blackmore	MDC	41	M40	2.30.47
20	Peter Gareth	MDC	50	M50	2.12.10
37	Brian Hardcastle	MDC	56	M50	2.19.49
	Andrew				
52	Blackmore	MDC	41	M40	2.30.47

Cribyn 16th May

4	1:02:14	Gareth Craft	MDC	SM
29	1:17:04	John Sweeting	MDC	M60
41	1:25:32	John Derby	MDC	M50
42	1:25:56	Martin Lucas	MDC	M50
50	1:37:12	Dave Gilbert	MDC	M60

Pentyrch Hill Race

2	47:25	Hugh Aggleton	MDC	SM
15	51:20	Chris Taylor	MDC	M50
28	55:13	James Clemence	MDC	M45
30	55:58	Matt Unsworth	MDC	SM
51	58:55	Alan Stone	MDC	M45
59	60:11	Haydn Griffiths	MDC	M50

64	61:37	Martin Lucas	MDC	M55
78	64:37	Mick Learoyd	MDC	M50
93	68:01	David Ewing	MDC	SM
113	74:11	Dave Gilbert	MDC	M60

Cader Idris Saturday 30th May

130 2:12:52 Stott, Gill MDC 0/50

Llanbedr-Blaenavon 4th April

2	2:12:45	Hugh Aggleton	MDC	SM
18	2:51:53	Helen Bennett	MDC	SW
21	2:52:17	Andrew Blackmore	MDC	SM
26	2:54:50	Allan Hodkinson	MDC	SM
34	3:10:29	Alan Stone	MDC	MV
47	3:20:06	Haydn Griffiths	MDC	MSV
52	3:32:09	Robert West	MDC	MSSV
53	3:37:40	John Sweeting	MDC	MSSV
54	3:39:12	Dave Ewing	MDC	SM

SOUTH WALES SUMMER HILL SERIES 2009 (AFTER 2 RACES - Best 4 Results To Count)

4	John Sweeting	MDC	137	M60
11	Hugh Aggleton	MDC	102	MS
14	Gareth Craft	MDC	97	MS
26	John Syms	MDC	90	MS
35	Peter Williams	MDC	84	M50
44	Dave Gilbert	MDC	79	M60
45	Brian Hardcastle	MDC	77	M50
63	Kevin Betts	MDC	71	M40
64	Andy Blackmore	MDC	70	MS
79	Martin Lucas	MDC	58	M50
100	Cledwyn Jones	MDC	15	M70

Welsh 3000's

As I am sure you have heard by now this years race was abandoned mid run due to adverse weather conditions. As usual the media hyped it up – didn't they learn any lessons after the OMM? See the link below for the BBC's version of events.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8087297.stm>

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From Duggie

Marathon du Mont Blanc

Got the t-shirt.

It's just a Transfan with attitude. Sorry, altitude...

Duggie did the mont blanc marathon in 5;20 and came in the top 10%.

"It's just a Transfan" was what I told myself. I had just recovered (I hoped) from a moment running home one evening when something had twanged in my hamstring pulling me up short in some discomfort and leaving me with a 2k hobble home. There were then still two months to go to the race and no serious miles in the bank.

2 months later, having overcome the negative thoughts that packed in to counter the positive Transfan argument, and having put in 2 – 2.5 hour runs every weekend, the Transfan analogy was what I also put to Patrick when I unexpectedly bumped into him at Geneva airport while waiting for my transfer to Chamonix to turn up. I was a bit more convinced by then and fancied 5-5.5hours as a sensible target.

I did not have time to repeat the mantra at the start at 7am on the Sunday morning as there was too much going on with Mexican waves, some French bloke shouting into the PA so that he was totally incomprehensible plus the usual jostling and shuffling and having to dodge runners brandishing walking poles.

It is quite a course. 42195 m, 2511m climb and 1490 descent (mountain top finish at Plan Praz – there is a 1:50,000 map on the website www.montblancmarathon.fr). There is a cheeky climb of 1000m in 6k starting at about 18k by when you have gone up 608m and down 383m; more seriously, the descent involves a 700m drop in 2k before it gets slightly less severe which is steeper than 1:3 by my maths. There is then a decidedly impolite steep section again at about 35km; the uphill finish is almost rude. As usual, the photos in the blurb are quite misleading. They are not of the steep parts of the course. Yes, the backdrop is spectacular, but the paths are quite sporting with rocks and roots everywhere so that you don't really have time to take in the wider view while running.

It is a grand day out! In the end despite a bad patch at around km33-38, it took me 5:20 so it is like a Transfan – bit longer, not quite so much climbing. You also get a complimentary beer at the finish and a buffet scoff down in town (complimentary trip down in the cable car) which also echoes the Transfan tradition albeit in not quite such good style. Has anybody noticed any French blokes hanging around the Transfan historically?
Doug