

## Editors Bit

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#### Data Protection Act

The above Act requires us to tell all members that their personal details will be maintained on a computer. This allows us to send you material. You have the right to request that your details be removed from the computer database and you should contact the Membership Secretary if this is your wish.

Hello all, hope the summer weather (?) has encouraged you onto the mountains. I've been having a bash doing the Welsh Champs, which incorporated a British Champ at Elidir Fawr, the International Snowdon Race, and helping out at international team selection races. I found a cracking race in The Callow and even managed to get to a couple of Tuesday night runs (apologies to the Llanbedr group but we got through the ferns eventually!). So I've been getting round and talking with quite a few people as well as reading some interesting correspondence on fell running matters.

Just as I thought all the politics was out of the way John Sweeting distributed his application form for runners to join the WFRA at his Waun Fach Race. Disappointingly MDC Cttee members supported him. I shall not take up valuable space in this Newsletter suffice at this time to say that I cannot condone such action, by forming a breakaway group they put the whole of fell running in Wales in jeopardy and I and many others do not support this move. I shall be contacting members in the near future to provide 'the other side of the story' in support of staying within the present structure. In the meantime my advice is to wait before deciding on where you see yourself within all this and how you would like fell running to progress.

I understand the Transfan went very well, 21 runners in its 21<sup>st</sup> year. An 'invitation team' did the Cambrian Way over 2 days (hope I got that right). And particular mention must go to our members who gained International honours (drum beat please):

- 🏆 Kit Edwards at Knockdhu
- 🏆 Andrew Jones at Snowdon and World Mountain Running Trophy, Italy
- 🏆 Rhys Manning at Snowdon
- 🏆 Matthew Collins, World Mountain Running Trophy, Italy

It's a proud achievement and something that MDC should support 100%.

*Ade Orringe*

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### MDC Party

Norwegian Church,  
Cardiff Bay

Saturday 25.09.04

7.00pm

guest speaker & buffet

(Dr Mike Stroud)

£12 ticket from:

Douglas Adlam

11 Bridge Street

Llandaff Cardiff CF5 2EJ

by Adrian Orringe

The AAW AGM will be held at Leckwith Stadium, Cardiff 1pm 23<sup>rd</sup> October. I don't have an agenda as yet but it's where you get the opportunity to nominate representatives as your voice on the AAW Committee. At the moment I'm your representative but in view of comments made at our club AGM and a letter sent by the club Committee to AAW I find my position increasingly difficult. The club Chairman tells me I won't be supported as the club nomination.

Following this AGM there will be a general open meeting for AAW members to elect officers on the Welsh Mountain Running Committee. Again the club will not support me in this. WMRC will in turn seek nominations for the international selection team and team managers.

The current WMRC are:  
Chair Rod Jones MDC;  
Vice Chair Steve Barnard Eryri; Sec. Sharon Woods Eryri; AAW Ade Orringe MDC; E.Wales Ade Woods Eryri; S.Wales Angela Jones MDC; N.Wales Mike Blake Eryri; W.Wales and Statistician Brian Wilson TROTS.

International Cttee are:  
Managers – Sharon Woods, Angela Jones and Rod Jones. Selectors –

managers, Adam Haines and Sean Tobin.

All positions are open to all AAW members with voting taking place should there be more than one nomination. As you are not supporting me then I must look therefore for alternative options to remain with the AAW and Welsh Mountain Running Committee.

I encourage you all to join AAW and volunteer. Your knowledge and experience in fell/mountain running is invaluable in developing our sport within AAW.

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Apologies to the chap in the photo as I'm sure I should know who he is. I saw this browsing the Eryri website, taken at Moel Siabod 17<sup>th</sup> July.



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### **Race Report – Compton Downland Challenge**

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March and it was a choice between Dr Buffets excellent Llanbedr to Blaenavon race or something different. In the

end I decided to wrench myself away from the comfort of the Black Mountains and risk crossing the border. The destination was Compton near Newbury, not renown fell running country. The race was the 40 mile version of the Compton Downland Challenge (there is also a 20 mile option). This is an undulating offroad run focused around the Ridgeway. Surprisingly it manages to pack almost 4000' of ascent. This was potentially a foolish decision, as I had not been training for such distances. In fact my weekly training mileage rarely exceeds 20 miles, but there is the daily cycle commute and odd caving trip on top of that. 9.00 am Saturday and 400 plus runners are off! Around 75% are doing the 20 mile option and this makes the pacing difficult to judge. The result is that the first 10 miles are too fast. The route is pretty good, consisting of bridleways, pretty woodland paths and ploughed fields but recent rains had made sections pretty filthy. Although the route does not have what we would term big hills, it is funny seeing the expressions on many of the runner's faces when a steepish bit of hill appears! The feed stations appear roughly every five miles and everybody is really friendly. The 19.5 mile switch point approaches and the 20 milers are making that last frantic dash to the finish, but the 40'ers are only half way.

Suddenly the route is a lot lonelier! At around 22 miles a lass comes steaming past and running really well. She goes on to break the womens course record by 20 minutes! My lack of training and early pace now tell and I have to dig deep. The 20 to 30 mile part of the course is a bit dull. It's flatter and consists of long straight sections. However the feed stations are friendly and well stocked – you could even have a cup of tea or coffee! At around 30 miles the going gets more lumpy and twisty again – definitely preferred by the fell runner. The last couple of miles start to hurt. The legs are feeling trashed but I manage a bit of a sprint at the end to finish in 6.08 and in 18<sup>th</sup> position. Showers, tea and a cooked meal all await – just like Llanbedr to Blaenavon!

Overall a good run with a good atmosphere. Now I just need to fit in a couple more long runs before having a crack at the infamous South Wales Traverse.....

*Jules Carter*



**Knockdhu - From the inside by Kit Edwards**

As people have asked about Knockdhu, I thought I'd give an insider's narrative of the race last month.

I found out I was in the squad via email while out

in Chile as part of a 5-week trekking/sightseeing vacation. The plane to Belfast was to leave from Birmingham a couple of days after my flight from Santiago landed in Gatwick. This was not ideal from my point of view: 5 weeks of steak-eating and wine-drinking (well they were the cheapest & tastiest items on the menu) and limited opportunities to run was not ideal preparation for my international debut... however I was thrilled to be selected and once back in Cardiff, I made every attempt to get over any form of jetlag that I was suffering from, so that by the time to go, I was just about back into British sleep pattern.

Getting to Birmingham airport involved a 4:45 AM (yes I know- I don't think I've ever seen that hour before) start... my Dad "volunteered" to give me a lift to Rod & Angela's house (team managers). After waving my Dad off, I turned to face the team that I would be spending the next few days. Those awake enough to chat started getting on well with one another, surprising considering the time most of us got out of bed (I know what I'm like that early in the morning!). Even more surprising considering the early start was that the whole team made it onto the plane!

I excitedly took a window seat on the plane, determined not to miss a

thing on my first ever visit to Ireland. No matter how hard I tried to resist, as the plane prepared for take-off, my eyelids prepared to close... "Kit... come on... we're in Belfast!" So much for the view from the plane.

A coach took us to drop off our bags at a clean and friendly bed and breakfast, then we rushed off for a much needed course reccie. It seemed a good course, with a few short but steep climbs and falls, followed by a slightly longer climb, followed by a long flat(ish) section to finish. In the evening we had a buffet at one of the race organiser's house, who kindly (and though most people cringe at the thought) let about 30 strangers into his house to eat his food. Yes- I found it slightly random too...

"Hello, I've come to eat your food".  
"Hi, great! Come in, come in... there's loads here!"

The teams from Scotland and the Isle of Man turned up too! It was a free for all! No English squad though, they had suffered setbacks resulting in no English runners competing at all. I enjoyed a good nights sleep on a full stomach...

Race day, and I was feeling OK, yet a little concerned that I would break down mid-race as Chilean steak, wine and inactivity got the better of me. The encouragement, advice and support from the more experienced members of the squad was brilliant

though, and definitely helped me to focus. My race plan was simple: "As I have no idea what condition I'm in... just see how I feel and run accordingly".

My feelings of pride at wearing a Welsh vest as we lined up at the start quickly gave way to feelings of fatigue as we ran. The course was a total of 6.5m/1500ft (don't quote me on that) and I ended up running a steady but quiet race, finishing 11th. I was really pleased to have completed the race without injury, but I would have loved to have another go, when I was physically a bit less raw going into the event. We got the silver medal (may I remind once again that there was NO newspaper. We had a bit of spare time in Belfast to eat, before catching flight back to Birmingham.

I'm happy to say that I managed to stay awake for

England side), with Scotland winning. Overall, the Welsh sides did great, Wales junior and senior ladies both getting the Gold medal, and Wales junior and senior men getting silver. In addition to this, both Angela Brand Barker and Tim Davies finished first.

Festivities that evening involved Guinness, presentation, meal and disco. As a member of second-placed team, I went up to collect my prize envelope, quickly ripping it open to reveal the delights inside...

"A P & O Ferry Voucher for a free ferry crossing for two, with vehicle from N.Ireland to Scotland". Crisis- a P & O Voucher?! This was my first time ever the return flight, so didn't end up missing the birds-eye views of the emerald isle.

The Welsh sides overall had performed the best they

to Ireland, and I'd NEVER been to Scotland! Things turned out rosy though, when I flogged it to a local for cash... now that's more like it.

The Disco got going slowly, with Ronnie Gallagher's amazing and energetic fusion of "flashdance with Mc Hammer shit" scaring most off the dance floor. Things eventually got livelier with more and more people getting tempted to dance the night away.

The final day involved a tour of Belfast, v. interesting- actually seeing Catholic and Protestant areas divided by road barricades is a lot different to reading about them in a

ever had at Knockdhu (cough... English... cough...missing... cough) and the team results capped a great time- a good experience, and a good laugh throughout!

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## **Awesome and Magnificent – 21 years of the Transfan**

*Martin Lucas*

The arrival of the Prophet Dixon to spread the gospel of long-distance fell running amongst the heathen hordes of the eastern valley of Gwent is generally accepted to have been around 1978. His ministry began in a modest way with steady weekend runs attracting increasing numbers, but

by 1980 with the help of his acolyte the Good Doctor Buffett the Llanbedr – Blaenavon race was established, MDC was set up to help spread the word and the rest, as they say, is history.

Apart from his epic early attempts at the South Wales Traverse, the prophet's greatest initiative was the establishment of a race in 1984 that outdid all others

in distance, height climbed, number of summits and general all-round difficulty. The 21 miles and 8500 feet of climb over the most spectacular point to point route in the Brecon Beacons, culminating in the climb of Penyfan, was inspirationally named the Transfan ('cos of all the Fans it visits), and to this day it remains the toughest race in Wales (© OGB 1997).

For those who have not yet accepted the challenge, after a short downhill plummet on tarmac from the start at the church in Llanddeusant the route climbs steadily to the first summit at Carreg yr Ogof (1969 ft), a surprisingly difficult trig point to find in mist, before heading east over the main Black Mountain ridge of Bannau Sir Gaer and Brycheiniog, which are reached after about an hour. From this point, mist permitting, the remaining summits can be seen rolling away toward the horizon, with the flat top of Penyfan towering over them all and seeming a very long way away. At least one runner has abandoned at this point, having seen the magnitude of the task ahead.

After fording, or in some years swimming, the River Tawe, Fan Gihirych at about 2 hours rises straight up for 1500 feet above the main Swansea valley road and provides the first opportunity to use your hands to drag yourself up the increasingly-steep gradient and for supporters to shout abuse at your slow progress. The route continues to cross the grain of the country over Fans Nedd and Llia, before another 1500 foot slog up the huge whaleback of Fan Fawr. Just to rub salt in the wounds the trig point is a long way from the summit! Finally, there's

the little matter of Y Gyrn, Corn Du and the daddy of them all, Penyfan (2907 ft) to be beaten, usually accompanied by strange looks from the hordes on the tourist path to the top, before a 2000 foot descent in just over a mile which is guaranteed to make the aching legs scream for a rest, before the finish in an idyllic setting by the stream in Cwm Llwh.

Back in those early days when the world was young and the dreaded words 'compulsory kit' and 'registration fee' had not been invented there were some astonishing performances in the race. This isn't the place for detailed lists of finishers, but 4 hours has been broken 11 times, and the Ladies' record is 4 hrs 20. A quick glance through back copies of The Fellrunner (sad, I know) shows that in 1987, for example, MDC's own Adrian Belton won in 3.57 with the first Vet (Les Williams) doing 4.09 and a youthful Puffing Billy Darby sneaking in in 4.15.

1988 saw the epic in appalling weather that has set the standard for bad weather running ever since and inspired the legend of the Transfan as being something more than a hard A Long race. According to The Fellrunner *'in spite of the ever worsening conditions 26 intrepid souls set out*

*on an epic journey. Astonishingly only four dropped out and the last man arrived back 7 ½ hours later. The race over, the legends began. Tales of runners swept down angry rivers, heroic rescues, groups linking together to ford streams which had been trickles the day before, horrendous stories of the impossibilities of navigation with the mist right down and maps disintegrating in the rain. And yet – at the finish there was only elation at having beaten the worst that the heavens could throw down and the excitement at having succeeded against all odds.'* Nevertheless, half the field beat five hours, with Huw Parry of Eryri taking home the trophy in a time 17 seconds over 4 hours.

Following the departure of the Prophet to conquer pastures new in the mid 80's, the race fell into my care for reasons that I can't remember, but the 1988 epic was destined to be the last 'official' race. Due to problems with car parking at my Llynfan short race (fondly remembered), negotiations with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, who own the Black Mountain, resulted in them refusing permission for either Llynfan or Transfan to be run in 1989 as that part of the course was designated a 'remote zone' in which organised

events would not be permitted. Strangely, this didn't stop them allowing a major orienteering event in the same area a couple of weeks later, but then the orienteers had paid a sizeable 'mapping fee'...

So the Transfan entered a period of hibernation, but it was never forgotten and proposals for its revival were mentioned every year. Eventually the solution dawned – let's just go for a training run over the course! One thing led to another and the first 'individual collective challenge' (not a race) took place in 1997. Apart from the 2001 break for F&M the challenge has been renewed every year since. Numbers of participants were never high even in the glory days of the event as a Welsh Championship race, but such is the lure of the challenge that old faces keep returning year after year and new faces appear, so that this year's version attracted 21 people over the 21 miles in the 21<sup>st</sup> year (spooky, eh?). Not bad for a tough navigation event that isn't competitive and doesn't appear in any calendar. These days you have to be self-reliant for the entire distance as there are no checkpoint marshals, but runners are normally met at the four road crossings by their back-up drivers to ensure they haven't come to grief.

Quite early on in the race's history a perpetual trophy was sculpted and presented to the race by Adrian Andrews of Abergavenny. Despite its outward resemblance to a toast-rack it in fact depicts the course and the climbs to scale, and is now commonly known as the 'Awesome and Magnificent Transfan Trophy.' When the race was a race it was presented to the winner, but since the revival as the event is non-competitive it is presented to the Best Sporting Performance on the day in the opinion of the supporters, which often isn't the fastest time of the day. The current holder is Rhys Manning, who showed his potential on his Transfan debut by running all the way up Fan Gihirych and finishing in a very respectable 4.41. For the record, the first man home (we don't have a winner as it's not a race) in 2004 was Ifor Powell (Westbury) in 4.35, with Alice Bedwell, the 2003 toastrack winner, upholding the honour of the ladies in 5.20 or thereabouts.

Some people, of course, just don't know when to stop and it's worth noting that on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2004 Alan 'Falling' Stone from Cardiff (and MDC of course!) clocked up the first 'double Transfan' (there and back) solo and

unsupported in 13 hours. Completely barking.

Whilst some good times are recorded every year, let's remember that the days of sub-4 seem to be long gone, whilst sub-5 is a distant memory for some of us. The men's record is 3.37 and the ladies' is 4.20, and there don't seem to be any realistic challengers to these times at present. Go on, prove me wrong in 2005 and join the party in Cwm Llŵch when we swig the champagne and sing the Transfan song:

*'So you've run t'Sahara  
Marathon, and  
Snowdon's just a jog;  
And you've done the  
South Wales Traverse as a  
day out with the dog.  
But you've heard the old  
men talking of a race that  
used to be,  
That makes these other  
epics seem a stroll before  
your tea.*

*The race that makes the  
hard men cry: The  
TRANSFAN- that's the  
one!*

**And if that's not enough  
read on ...**

## "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR AN MDC TEAM IN THE 2004 LONGMYND HIKE"

I will be entering the Shropshire based 50 mile event again this year and I think it would be great if we could put a team in. It will be taking place on 2nd/3<sup>rd</sup> October.

The aggregate time of the fastest 3 out of up to 5 predeclared runners is what counts. With a reasonable team, there is a very real chance of taking the prize away from the Mercia fellrunners who normally have little serious competition to worry about.

For more information on the event format see: <http://www.longmyndhike.free-online.co.uk/> or contact me. Please let me know if you wish to take part by the 11th September (the day of the Black Mountains Race) and I'll coordinate the entries.

Rhys Williams 029 20650796 [rhys\\_jw@hotmail.com](mailto:rhys_jw@hotmail.com) "

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### **9 and three-quarter man Cambrian Way Relay, 1st - 3rd July 2004; Preliminary report 309 miles/71,000ft approx.**

*(Whilst not an MDC organised event I think the invitation team were mainly MDC members-Ed.)*

You may recall the successful completion of this route in 1989 by MDC using an attritional 35 runners and 3 minibuses in a huge logistical assault. This was reported in the Fell Runner in the article "Top to bottom, side to side". To my certain knowledge no further attempts of this nature have been made on this route. Until now that is!

Last weekend we completed a slightly modified and extended route in 65hrs 54 mins using an altogether more "alpine" approach with 10 runners and 1 minibus. This was a considerable achievement by a small team made smaller by me being crocked with plantar fasciitis and not running my full quotient and Keri having an unmentionable problem, hence the oblique reference in the title, but helped by Roy Ruddle for some of the N Wales legs.

The weather was foul for almost the duration of the event, only brightening up on the 3rd morning and turning quite warm and balmy as we sipped champagne in Cardiff Bay to celebrate our achievement. For the most part however it was unseasonably cold, with strong winds, poor visibility and lots of rain. The conditions reached their worst on the second evening where after a traumatic traverse of the Rhinogs in gathering darkness the winds increased frighteningly and the rain became unremitting and torrential. In these conditions we made the very sensible decision that Cadr Idris would be too dangerous so we continued the relay with a circumnavigation of the mountain using minor road, track and mountain bike route. We survived a difficult night thereafter in Mid Wales as it took some guts to continue in the awful conditions. Things finally improved during the S. Wales Traverse section as we racked up the adrenaline in the long sprint for home, managing to claw back big chunks on a schedule that had been running behind for most of the route.

I would guess that several hours could come off this time in any decent conditions. Nonetheless, this still represents an outstanding time for a short-handed relay.

The participants were:

Runners; Tom Gibbs, Keith Byrne, Martin Lucas, John Aggleton, Kit Edwards, Douglas Adlam, Astrid Wheatcoft, Keri James, Mark Bryant, Roy Ruddle and myself, Chris Gildersleve.

Support Team, without whom the whole thing would have collapsed and deserve huge thanks; Del Thornley, Fred Parry, Kay Lucas and Phil Brown.

Given that on the previous MDC attempt a pebble from Conwy, used as a baton was lost somewhere in deepest Mid Wales and therefore did not complete the route, we would claim that as in any relay, failure of the baton to complete the course would naturally invalidate any claim to a record. Following this logic, our completed transfer of pebble from Conwy to Cardiff must therefore represent a record!!

Regards Toff

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### **Kit for Race Organisers / Marshals**

For information of all race organisers and marshals the club now has available 4 'marshal's packs' which are about the size of a rolled up thermarest say 10x4x3in max containing survival bag, space blanket, wooly hat + gloves, energy bar, thermos flask, first aid kit and hi visibility jacket.

They are there to be used - or rather to be available for use if it all goes horribly wrong one day.

Contact Douglas Adlam

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### **Race Results**

#### **Elidir Fawr Race** - 5 miles 2800' - 23.05.04

*Ade Orringe*

This years race was a British and Welsh Championship counter so I decided to make the journey. 221 competitors took part from across GB on a gloriously sunny day with clear views across Snowdonia. Results aren't everything at these sort of things and to be part of the event was enough for me. Mike Blake, the organiser, did a great job of arranging sufficient marshals, 2 marquee's, toilets, car parking, Pete Blands van, etc. It all seemed to go smoothly and from the chatter in the field it went down well with the runners, especially as the completed results were displayed almost as soon as each runner finished. Lynne Handley and myself were the only MDC runners there so I won't bother with the results! Luckily I recalled some familiar faces from Eryri so didn't get too lonely.

#### **Llangorse Loop** – 5.5miles 1900' 29.05.04

*Dick Finch*

1pm. Cool, breezy, overcast following overnight rain, good visibility, firm underfoot. 20 runners (21 in 2003) with four times as many women as last year.

A cracking run by Andrew Jones, over five minutes quicker than his second place last year, and within striking distance of the record – maybe next year? Another Welsh international, Angela Jones, had a good first attempt in eighth place overall. Two youngsters from just down the road, Rhys and Cerys Manning, were second man and woman. A sprint finish kept

Matthew Collins just ahead of Russell Mapp for third. Thanks to John Darby for route marking, to Graham Cheshire for route marking and marshalling, to John Sweeting for sweeping up, and to the local farmer for his co-operation.

Pos.	Name	Category	Club	Time
1	Andrew Jones	SM	MDC	43.58
2	Rhys Manning	SM	MDC	46.06
3	Matthew Collins	SM	MDC	50.22
4	Russell Mapp	M40	Ludlow	50.23
6	Adrian Orringe	M50	MDC	52.46
7	John Darby	M50	MDC	54.33
8	Angela Jones	SF	Caerleon	55.09
11	Andy Stott	M40	MDC	58.15
12	Cerys Manning	FJ	MDC	59.51
15	Ellie Salisbury	F40	Eryri	63.13
17	Eric Meredith	M60	MDC	65.58
18	Adrian Moir	M40	MDC	69.55
19	John Battersby	M60	MDC	87.05

**Waun Fach** – 7 miles 2000’ 31.07.04

**Records: Men 44.21 Mark Kinch 1995**  
**Women 57.51 Ann Buckley 1995**

Pos.	Name	Club	Time	Cat.
1	Andrew Jones	MDC	53.17	SM
4	Maddie Horton	N. Devon Road Runners	58.18	SF
5	David Burton	Dursley	59.04	MV40
8	Rhys Williams	MDC	62.01	SM
9	Matthew Lawson	MDC	62.45	SM
10	Steve Littlewood	Hereford AC	63.33	MV50
20	John Darby	MDC	82.19	MV50
21	Gareth Evans	MDC	82.34	MV50
23	Chris Tanner	Griffithstown Harriers	85.25	FV40
24	Eric Meredith	MDC	85.35	MV60

Andrew Jones winning  
at Waun Fach

