

# ANABASIS MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

[anabasismountaineering.org.uk](http://anabasismountaineering.org.uk) | Winter 2019/2020 Newsletter



*Winter in the High Carneddau, looking out towards Carnedd Dafydd from Yr Elen, December 2019.*

**Dear Readers,**

I hope you all had a great Christmas and a strong start to the New Year.

The last few months have had some good turnouts from the Anabasis, at the Bonfire Meet in particular, but also races, meetings, informal gatherings in the pub, committee meetings and, of course, the AGM. There has been a pulse of new members, interest and plans, discussion and developments; the Club is in really healthy condition.

I decided to postpone this edition until after the AGM to allow time to synthesise any relevant developments from the gathering of minds, although I'll take care not to duplicate any information that will no doubt be disseminated by Atko and Mike.

On a final note here; there will be an Anabasis MC Winter Meet at Garth from the 21-23<sup>rd</sup> of February, so hope to see some of you there.

Until then, here's a few updates and photos from Club goings-on, and some solid material from the archives.

All the very best to you all.

Dave

## **Isn't this what it is all about? (A contribution from Roger Reid).**

In writing about these climbs, I have rediscovered those who accompanied me on the great adventure.

Together we toiled over moraines and shivered through bivouacs, together we were warmed then burnt by the sun, caressed by the breeze, then whipped by the wind. Together we scraped ourselves on granite, or twisted our knees on the way down scree.

There have been abseils on wet rope, which were difficult - abseils where the abseil rope was difficult to retrieve, or even jammed. We were shaken by lightening, by its unexpectedness, its roar, its smell.

Together we knew and shared apprehensions, doubts, fears; and yet it was there, far above, that we learnt of the life, the ardour, the strength, that burned deep within us. All that made for solid, unalloyed, inner happiness was there, in our souls, and we did not know it.

And then there was friendship.

On the Clochers-Clochons, on the Pic de Roc, on the Sans Nom and the Peuterey, I have rediscovered you, my faithful companions. Here Jean gave me a shoulder; there, Lionel shared a lemon with me; on the ridge, Eduard freed the abseil rope; elsewhere, Henri taught me to cut steps.

Henri, you above all; to the world you may appear insignificant; to me you were a true 'big brother' in the mountains.

I wish all alpinists a big brother, a man to inspire love and respect, to keep an eye on your roping up, to take an almost tender care of you while introducing you to that tough and arduous life.

A man to let you share his moments of exaltedness, at 4000m, to introduce *you* to the summits around, much as a gardener might introduce you to his flowers.

A man to be envied, whose home is the mountain and whose world is the mountains. And the friendship of a man of such riches is beyond price.

"L'Apprenti montagnard, les cinquante plus belles courses du massif du Mont Blanc"; Gaston Rébuffat (Editions Grand Vent, 1946)

## Ascent of Mt Diablo by the West Flank – Roger Reid

Excluding poor conditions, the only wretched aspect of alpine climbing is the early morning start. Never allowed even the comparative luxury of a Crack of Dawn start. But always a sometime-after-midnight arousal to blunder and stumble around in a half-baked stupor whilst searching for carefully packed gear. Then staggering into the night to find the path, which had been checked out the previous afternoon oh! so carefully and memorised in detail, only to find that apparently one has woken up in the wrong valley. Or even worse, like when Eric and I left the Hörnli Hut for the Z'mutt Ridge an hour before the mob, so as to avoid the rock trundlers, and found to our surprise that all the later headlamps were passing us far below. Eventually, after just about everyone had passed, to realise with dismay that we had turned left far too soon and were up on the North Face instead. Bloody embarrassing, that.

So, each time, we say *"Never again"*. But we forget our wise promise. And now here we are, yet again..... It's about 01.30 and Eddie Gray is gently prodding me awake. *"Time to be off, Roger"*. 'Sod off yourself', I think to myself. Zzzzzzz. Another series of nudges and encouragements. I prefer Zzzzzzzz. But they won't give up. 'They' being Eddie, the two youngest Graylets and the two Reidlets. *"Come on. We'll disappoint the kids."* True, they are really fired up. And it was my idea in the first place. Originally an ascent of Mt Diablo from the north. It would be colder on that side. Suit me fine. But the route might well be too much for the party. So, let's take the West Flank... An afternoon start so that when the sun is at its hottest we are hopefully shaded in the ravines or on the upper more-forested slopes; a bivvy high up; and a summit push for a dawn view, which the guide book says could be stunning - 360° uninterrupted views for hundreds of miles. In 1851, during the California Goldrush, the summit became the initial point of the Diablo Median and the consequent land survey which still serves two-thirds of California and parts of Nevada and Oregon. Seemed **A Good Idea** at the time. So, got to get shifting, can't lie curled up warm forever. And to take comfort that, as we all know, once the circulation gets going and we slowly wake up, we realise the positive reasons why we are where we are.

Gear to select... take The Big Rope? Heavy. But there's an area named Rock City up on the West Flank, and the name is due to its technical challenges, not music. Some of my slings and krabs are still up in the garden eucalyptus trees after my recent 'Johnny Weissmuller goes chainsawing' efforts; but we have enough for this task. Take Barton's Japanese short-rope as additional safety back-up? No - whilst it might save us in 'A Situation', if we do not take it we might avoid A Situation to begin with. Is there time for a quick snack? No. Time for a cup of tea? No, grab some water. Even so, it is 02.30 by the time we are ready to move. Eddie: *"How long will it take before it starts proper?"* Me: *"I don't know. I have never done it. Possibly 30 minutes"*... Eddie moves on auto-pilot. That's better than me: *"Legs like hosepipes"*, to use George McMurphy's classic expression. And that's before the day's start.

In due course Eddie stops for a wee. That breaks the rhythmic monotony and starts to wake us up, sort of. After 40 minutes we get to 'the start, proper'. But our route is

blocked. No way forward. No way around. That's life - even the Threlfalls and Burdens of the world surely have experienced this sometime. But retreat is out of the question. A look from the young'uns says everything: "*You Old Farts keep rabbiting on about your mountaineering past. Well, we trust you can sort this one out. So just do it, but do it now, and do it quickly*".

No alternative but to have an impromptu bivvy where we are and to continue the assault in the morning. One has to be prepared for this sort of thing. I realise I need to volunteer a recce. Manage an awkward move in the darkness (brought hand torch not head lamp, foolishly), and vow to increase my daily dosage of Glucosamine Sulphate. Tentatively go forward a goodly way but cannot find any bivvy spot. None at all. Ground's far too steep. The young'uns would be certain to roll over the edge and down into the valley. "*Wheeee.... Aarrghhh!...*". Thump.... Splatt! What to say to a mother's query: "*You are one short. Where is so-and-so?*" Something like : "*Err..... Bit of a problem... Err..... he/she is outside. In the rucksac*". Now wish that I had brought Barton's manky rope. Would have been ideal to secure them all to *terra firma*. Renew my search for bivvy spot. It's feeling somewhat Rumdoodlish. Or is this Dumdoodle? Tell myself we need Ray Rogers at a time like this. Could depend upon him. He would not need to be asked to "send down more champagne" to keep out the cold and calm the troops. He would be lowering *une bouteille*, and giving reassuring stentorian advice. Return, and Eddie has found what turns out to be the best bivvy spot in the area. I had deliberated whether to pack my 2-season, 3-season or 4-season bag. Now relieved that I had packed the 4-season bag (< -15° they said). Great to have squeezed my bivvy bag into my pack as well. Delighted with my self-inflating lilo – remembering those days when a small square of rubber matting had to suffice. The young'uns are getting settled down happily. Glad I had not told them about the tarantulas here. That would have given them the jitters. The guide book says they don't come out in full force until the autumn mating season. Hope it's right. Don't want a young'un running around with a tarantula hanging off a nose. Bad for morale. Would be too-memorable an occasion. No mention either of the mountain lions. Nor of the Alameda Whipsnake. An endangered species it may be, but not as endangered as The Bleedy.

Eddie, bless him, produces a resuscitation. *Dos Dos Equis*. Mexican Two X's. Mexican XX are 10x better than Aussie 4 X's. We nestle down into our flea pits and gaze upwards as Eddie points out many shooting stars. He gives a discourse on seemingly most of the stars in the sky. I thought I was a mine of useless information, but this is awesome. And it is all serious knowledge. Devastating. Eddie is super-hyper. Have to think about de-worming him when we get back.

05.30 hours. Dawn breaks. A heavy dew. Thank the gods it is not verglas tho'. The clag is well down. Been awoken rudely by a 'clank'. Some bloody cyclist is hefting his bike over the locked entrance gate. Back to sleep. But 'clank' again... and again.... And again. Hell's teeth, there must have been about 50 cyclists all told. They are as daft as us. At 07.30 a State Park Ranger appears and unlocks the gate. We try to hide behind the blades of grass. Don't want to be imprisoned. Wouldn't be good for The Grays' memories. Ranger disappears. Either he does not see us or he kindly chooses not to see us. We just finish packing our gear and loading it into the car when



another Ranger drives up. He looks a fitter Ranger than Aragorn even. He challenges us. I explain that we have just driven down from Vancouver especially to see dawn from the Mt Diablo summit, had arrived late and got trapped on the wrong side of the entrance gate. He understands since he'll know more than most how Mt Diablo was a sacred mountain to the Miwok Native Americans. (According to mythology, Mt Diablo was once an island surrounded by water, and from this island the creator Coyote and his assistant Eagle-man created the world). Ranger obviously recognises spiritually committed types, and waves us on.

Escaping 'citation' for our illegal bivvy, Eddie leads the assault on the West Flank. He's enjoying it greatly, and increases his speed a little at each hairpin. I am reminded of the guide book's advice: "When confronted by a wild animal, do not show fear". I try my best. I really do. But this is not a Brown Grizzly, but a Gray Grizzly. When Eddie reminisces about his ascent with Barbara of Mt Olympus being less steep, and how he spun the car in 2ft of snow half-over a precipice ; their crawling oh-so-delicately out of the rocking vehicle; and having an army troop retrieve it the next day; well, I make vague appreciative noises. But he cannot see the whites of my eyes. Explains why Barbara declined to join this expedition. The foolhardy and the young can look after themselves. She, like Winnie, has aged relatives to think about. But when Eddie instructs us all to take off our safety belts: "*It will be safer if we go over the edge*", I cannot contain myself. "*To hell with the kids, Eddie, take care of this poor senile geriatric*". He heeds my beseechment.

The summit..... Impressive. Richard immediately decides to test his newly developed bivvy expertise and finds an 18" wide ledge. When we see him happily somnolently well laid out on his back, we realise the merest body-roll and his next feel of land will be 50' below. How I wish I had Bear Barton's wonderful rope. Eddie manages not to panic and sidles up to him in good tv-cops style so as to perform a rescue without disturbing him. Don't want: "*Babs..... Got something to tell you... please sit down... NO! PLEASE don't look in the rucksac.*" I pass one of the two pairs of binoculars to Eddie. I direct him towards the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, and we try to fathom out its location beneath the blanket of coastal fog now affecting 90° of the panorama. I point towards Mt Whitney far to the south (at 14,495' the single most sought after peak in North America) and to the awesome Mt Shasta far to the north. Then due east, for the sight of Half Dome and Yosemite unbelievable and alluring, some mere 4 hours drive away; and the *aiguilles* and glaciers of The High Sierra should be seen sparkling hundreds of miles away to the south east. All would be awe-inspiring, if it were not for the rapidly building-up heat haze. What we do see instead are 1 million dragon flies circling us, doing what dragon flies do best, which is presumably seeking to ensure that there will be one million or more dragon flies here next year. So we sit here feeling the warmth entering our bodies, our minds and our souls. All seems idyllic. Actually, just one thing missing. Bloody Rogers and his champagne.

## Foel Fenlli – Dave Atkinson



It has been said that the most precious wilderness is the one closest to home. As such, the hills of the Clwydian Range fit the part, visible from my Chester home and just half an hour's drive from front door to boots on for the hill. Foel Fenlli is by no means the loftiest of the Range but it makes a distinctive bump on the Clwydian skyline, south of the graceful flattened triangle of Moel Famau.

So here I am on my most recent ascent, back in October 2019, of significance only in that these days I have big problems with an ankle, making getting to the top of this one very satisfying. Wife

Jackie was away in Vancouver with youngest daughter Amy (another story) so there was no-one to tell me I would only make my ankle worse by this adventure. I went alone and had the hill to myself, the packed Bwlch Pen Barras car park at the start being a base for everyone else to walk up Moel Famau.

It was not my first climb of Foel Fenlli and indeed it has become something of a favourite. There is a nice combination of accessibility and remoteness, rarely have I seen others on the summit. Ground dropping steeply on all sides gives the top an air of lofty isolation and there are splendid views south along the spine of the Clwydian Range, east over Cheshire and as far as the Peak District, north to Moel Famau and west over the Vale of Clwyd to the mountains of Snowdonia. The remnants of Iron Age ramparts around the summit and at a lower level add character and the lower ones provide a splendid aerial walkway across the west flank of the hill, the route followed by the Offa's Dyke Path.

On my October climb I took this route then a fine and helpful staircase to make lighter work of the steep final ascent. I descended northward direct to the Bwlch Pen Barras car park and, bizarrely, the sounds of a marching band drifted up from below but by the time I got down they had gone so I did not find out what that was all about. By this route, about an hour could be sufficient.

But Foel Fenlli is worth more time and a fine half day walk starts at the lower car park on the Bwlch Pen Barras road, cutting across the east flank of the hill promisingly until a disappointing down is required to cross a small stream. Now the way goes over open ground to join the spine of the main Clwydian ridge south of the

summit. After a short down there follows a very steep up to meet the Offa's Dyke path which has made its way from the west to the south side of the summit. From here the route goes steeply up again on a sketchy path that gives a distinctly mountainous feel to things for a while until the ramparts surrounding the summit are crossed, and then, in just a few more steps you reach the summit cairn. Returning to the start, because you have not come up by way of the splendid staircase on the west flank, you are allowed to take that route rather than the rather scruffy direct descent to the north. At the Bwlch Pen Barras car park, to avoid the road, take a track on the right through the forest leading towards the starting point.



There are of course other Foel Fenllis: the one cantered over by the light-clad runners; the one skirted by the heavy-laden long distance walkers; the one of the singular elderly gentleman who had reached the summit not from any elevated visitor car park but all the way from his home deep down in Llanferres. I have never seen the mountain bike brigade up there, I hope they stay away, there are many better places for them in the area.

For me, these days Foel Fenlli's fine summit is a gathering place for memory and contemplation, and:

*Only a hill, but all the world to me  
Up there between the sunshine and the sea.*

If you do not know Foel Fenlli, perhaps this will tempt you. I might even meet you up there, making it a busy day!

And the ankle? Rubbish as ever next day but no worse.

Enough! I think it's time for tea and cake at the splendid Café Florence down at Loggerheads, don't you?



# Cardington Cracker – Jack Tyrie

Struggling to find a smile during last month's Cardington Cracker fell race. Who knew the rolling Shropshire hills could be so evil!





## Anabsis MC Bonfire Meet – Dave Atkinson



Another splendid night at Garth, in the finest traditions - thanks to the bonfire makers, firework setters, hotpot makers, cleaners-up, cork counters, talkers and listeners. Happily the damn singer eventually ran out of steam.....

The weather was kind at the crucial time, dry and not cold. It was good to see Chris Hatton back in action as a guy-maker and to have a visit from Thomas and sons.

Things we learned:

Pierre is not a Frenchman - there were 142 corks (recount was demanded but declined)

Dave Appleton finished a very fine fifth in the Penmaenmawr

The science behind the ping-pong ball and methylated spirit setting was wrong this time (there were none of the hoped-for explosions)

Rockets come down to earth (one landed on the Hut roof).





## Winter Highlights – Dave Appleton



A turbulent few months over the winter, but nevertheless, a solid spread of activities took place. I won't bore you with too many words here, and just share some highlights instead.



Enjoyed a few races as the season drew to an end, a welcome return to bashing around on wee hills after a summer spent on bigger ones. Had a navigational howler at the Clwyds, including a missed checkpoint which I had to run back to which was, naturally, manned by Clive Lane. Managed to claw back some places on the descent and finished 7<sup>th</sup>.



Managed to hang onto 5<sup>th</sup> at the Penmaenmawr Race, a day I'd be looking forward to all year. Fantastic to head straight over to Garth for the Bonfire Meet.

Popped down to Shropshire for the first time too with Jack, and just about managed a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Cardington Cracker. A tough fixture, in spectacular frost settings, and lots of lovely folk out on the hill.





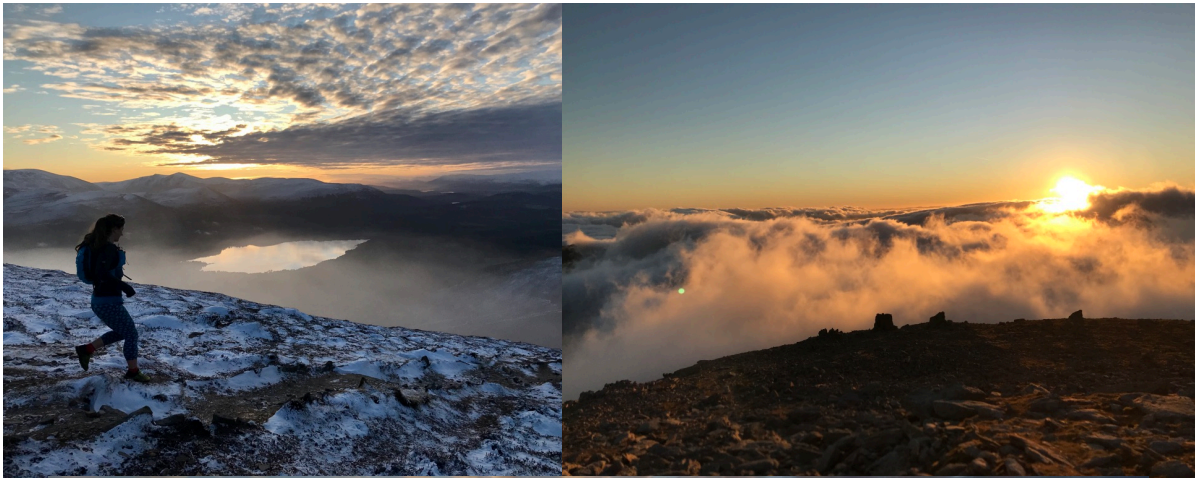
Enjoyed a long solo lap of Nant Peris, over the Glyders and the Snowdon Massif down to Moel Elio and back to Beris; a lap of the Snowdon Horseshoe with Jack Tyrie; and, a brilliant one-axe/micro-crampon winter circular up the Llech Ddu Spur and around Cwm Llafar with Jon Davies on my birthday.







Got out with Jack Tyrie during storm Atiyah to run up and over Tryfan, Y Gribin and the Glyders; a lap of the Edale Skyline; a long solo-day starting in the dark to run up and over the Glyders, the Snowdon Horseshoe and the Moelwyn's from the front door of Garth; and, some time spent winter running on the Lake District Fells and in the Scottish Highlands with Alice Kerr - lots of good to be alive days, I'm very grateful.





## South Face of Rhinog Fawr – Mike Morgan, Jack Tyrie, Dave Appleton



The three of us enjoyed a sterling, appropriately dreich day in the bleak Celtic Badlands of the Rhinogydd Mountains. While the forecast had misled us to believe there may be some good winter conditions on their way during the week, the weather soon shifted to warmer temps and mizzle up on the northern Snowdonian tops. So, the three of us decided to go and have a look at the famously contrived, esoteric South Face route on Rhinog Fawr. Described as a G2+ scramble, the line (supposedly) starts from the Bwlch between Rhinog Fach and Fawr and follows a convoluted line up to the top of Fawr.





The weather was lovely and mizzly, everything was greasy, the blocks were falling away from the cliffs, and the choss was relentless, and the line I'm not sure actually exists. Most of the day was spent harassing one another, putting the world to rights, bashing through heather, kicking steps in *Sphagnum*, avoiding toppling boulders and eating massive sandwiches. A proper lovely outing in superb company.





# The Anabasis MC Annual General Meeting

Of course, Dave Atko has already emailed you all with the highlights from the AGM, and Mike will be sending out a full report soon enough. Admin, bureaucracy and politics included, and aside, the AGM was a productive, thoroughly enjoyable and sometimes moving, occasion.

Reports and proposals were appropriately reviewed, discussed and critiqued, and I feel that a lot of important issues and opportunities have been identified with optimistic and pragmatic action to implement as we enter the new decade. Again, I'll not repeat information from the summary and report here, but a special mention must be given to George Murphy here. We were incredibly fortunate to have George share some thoughts and memories of the club, its history, members, stories and of friends with us, and it was an absolute pleasure to set down with the man for a chat after formal proceedings had finished. I've never seen a room of people so silent, hung on every word, with a shared respect and admiration for an individual.

Also, a special thank you to Warwick Waterworth and Stan Eccles, for their years of service to the club and on the committee, and to Dave Atkinson, for his part in bringing George's memoirs to fruition. A reprint of these is scheduled, having already raised almost £2,000 for Claire House Childrens hospital. If you would like a copy, please contact Dave Atko ([dave.atkinson27@gmail.com](mailto:dave.atkinson27@gmail.com)).

