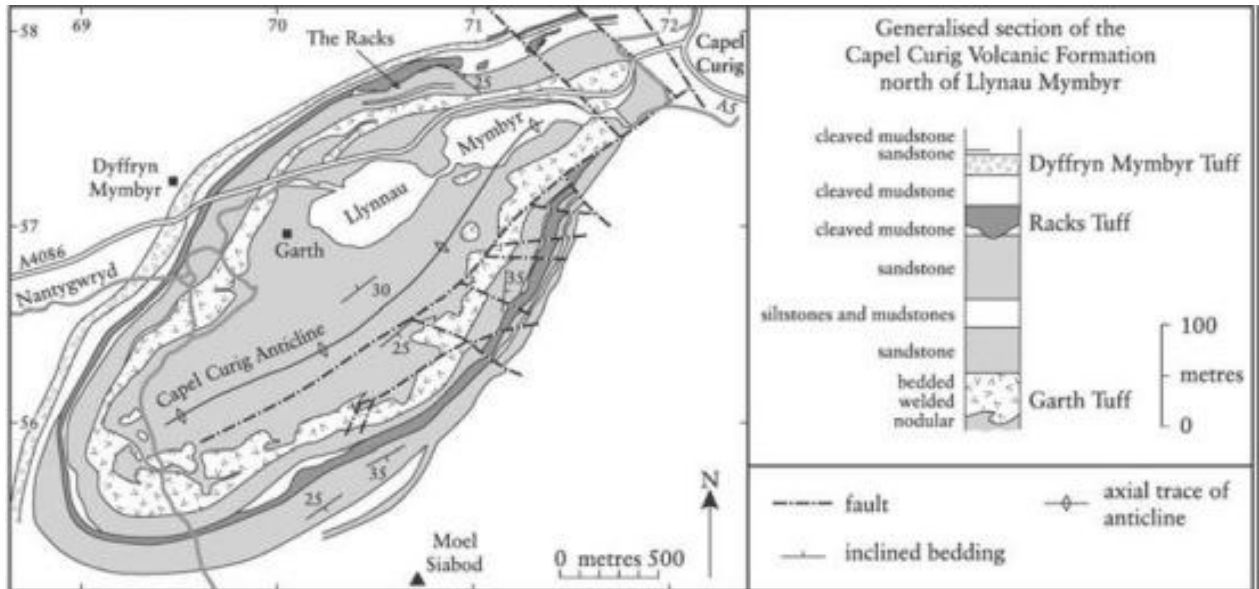


## *The Anabasis in 50 Objects: Objects Number 21 to 30*

### Object Number Twenty One:

#### *The Rock Below the Land*



The map shows the Capel Curig Anticline, which runs approximately in line with the present Dyffryn Mymbyr valley. An anticline is an arch-like up-fold – this is odd because it now forms a valley! Perhaps the apex of the anticline is higher up on the side of Moel Siabod and the dipping slabs we see from the Hut are evidence of that. Similarly odd is the syncline – the converse of an anticline, a down-fold – which forms the summit of Snowdon! My thanks to Mike Hart and Stan Eccles for this erudite contribution:

The date is 455 million years ago, towards the end of the Ordovician geological period. The location (of Garth) is somewhere well south of the equator, thousands of miles away from where it is now. There are many volcanoes. The sea is not far away. The ash from the volcanoes is forming a rock of rhyolite type. Rhyolite is common in Snowdonia, the Lakes, Glencoe and elsewhere, and forms most of the main climbing crags in those areas. The molten ash flows across the landscape.....and into the sea, where it cools rapidly and mixes with various sands, muds and so forth. Today it is a relatively resistant rock and hence stands up as a knoll a few metres above the surrounding terrain. So it is rhyolite-type, volcanic, Ordovician in age and (unusually) cooled as it flowed into the sea - and, because it is unusual, is of considerable world-wide geological importance(!) as it is one of the first locations where it was recognised that rocks could form in that way. Some volcanic material would probably have been from 'nuee ardente' (glowing cloud) - fine volcanic material blown out of the vent of a volcano. Today at Garth these rocks are covered by glacial material deposited during the last ice age ending about 11000 years ago. This material includes clay and rocks carried by glaciers. (More on the glaciers in **Object Twenty Two**).

The geological map above is taken from Volume 17: Caledonian Igneous Rocks of Great Britain Chapter 6: Wales and adjacent areas, by M. Smith. (Link below). Volcanic deposits are either subaerial (from volcanoes above the sea) or subaqueous (from volcanoes below the surface of the sea). Smith states that: "The exposures west of Capel Curig village are of international importance, as it was here that welded submarine ash-flow tuffs were first identified in ancient rocks..... The Capel Curig GCR (Geological Conservation Review) site provides classic exposures exemplifying the delivery of subaerial pyroclastic flow deposits into a shallow-marine environment". Smith also notes that: "Large detached bodies of tuff, up to 100 m × 250m in plan, and surrounded by the underlying sandstones, are sporadically preserved. These bodies of tuff are lithologically identical to the main tuff". One of these detached bodies of tuff is the more resistant rocky knoll on which Garth stands. *Two of these are clearly seen in the picture below, along with the dipping slabs of the anticline. Some people may remember the children identifying the next knoll west of the Hut and claiming it as a pirate island!*



## Object Number Twenty Two

### *The Look of The Land*



The photograph shows the valley of Dyffryn Mymbyr from the eastern end of the Glyders. Garth Farm can be seen on its relatively resistant knoll (see **Object Twenty One**) just beyond the lake. The look of the land at Garth today is the work of glaciation and human beings. Native deciduous trees cover just 5% of the landscape; in the 16th century it would have been some 65%. Since then, clearance for timber and grazing, and the continuing maintenance programme undertaken by the sheep, shape what we see now. A few sheep and the ribbon of the road stand out in the picture. The small stand of trees above the road at the centre of the picture shows the location of the Dyffryn Mymbwr Farm, made famous by Thomas Firbank's book, *I Bought a Mountain*.

The main glaciation of the area took place some 18,000 years ago, when there was an enormous ice sheet centred on the Migneint/Arrenig area (east of Betwys-y-Coed around where Ysbyty Yfan is now). The ice sheet was 1400 metres thick, over-topping the highest peaks in Snowdonia today - though some of them may have been taller than and poked out of the ice sheet as 'nunataks'. There was a warmer spell when the ice retreated, and then some 12,000 years ago a mini-glaciation when the cwms on Snowdon were carved: the consequent glaciers flowed westwards towards the sea by way of what is now Llanberis and Nant Gwynant. All this left me wondering about which way the ice flowed in Dyffryn Mymbyr, the valley where Garth is. So I asked Mike Hart (who knows about this stuff) for a view:

'I have been looking at this, the question of which way the ice flowed at Garth, without coming to any firm conclusion.

Two factors complicate the issue straight away. 1. Ice can flow uphill over short distances when under pressure. 2. Snowdonia (and other areas as well) was glaciated several times during the Ice Age, and the ice might have flowed in different directions at different times. I suspect that, whichever way it was flowing, it wasn't flowing very fast. The evidence for that is the more or less circular shape (in plan view, as seen on a map) of the rock knoll on which Garth stands. If the ice had been flowing strongly in a definite direction it would almost certainly have produced an asymmetrical feature like a roche moutonnee, and the direction of the asymmetry would have told us the direction of flow.

Today, the downstream direction of river flow at Garth is east, so, in the absence of any conclusive evidence to the contrary, we have to assume the ice flowed that way too.

So the best I can offer is that, at this low-gradient valley location near the top of the pass, the ice probably flowed east, slowly.'

Mike was supported by Stan Eccles (who also knows about this stuff): The Garth glacier would have flowed eastward then north down what is now the Conway valley to meet the Irish Sea ice.

*The picture at the end of Object Twenty One, crags on a larger knoll on the right are evidence of west to east glacier movement - if I remember right from school geography, the glacier has an action like a breaking wave which 'plucks' the rock to form the 'downstream' steepening.*

## Object Number Twenty Three

### *The Annual General Meeting (AGM)*

The Club's AGM is normally held in January or February each year, with the usual formalities to be negotiated - election of Committee Members (including the 'Officers': Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Hut Warden), presentation of the Accounts by the Treasurer and reports by the Chair, Secretary and Hut Warden. But aside from the formalities, there is always more to frustrate, infuriate and enjoy:

George Murphy remembers attending the inaugural meeting of the Club in 1961:

'I was completely over-awed by the polished introduction of the founder members - Keith Britton and Ian Cass - but this paled into insignificance at the savage verbal assault on them by the audience led by Ian Sturrock. Well, you know this form of entertainment became an odd tradition in the Club - this ritual 'taking apart' in Annual General Meetings'.

You might enjoy the account of the 1979 AGM\_ it's in the March 1979 Newsletter.

## Object Number Twenty Four

### *The Gas Bottle*



The red gas bottle is one of those taken-for-granted items that deserves more recognition for the vital role it plays in life at the Hut. Without the gas bottle, no gas, then no cooking, boiling water for cups of tea, hot water for washing and washing-up, and in former times when we had gas mantles, there would be no lighting. These days the gas bottles, which used to stand outside in all weathers, have their own dedicated accommodation, lining up like so many red-suited soldiers in a sentry box, awaiting their turn to be connected to the line, to be the one supplying gas to the hut. But unlike real soldiers, they do not march to order, they have to be manhandled into the sentry box.

The type of gas we get is Butane. Butane is an organic compound which is an alkane with four carbon atoms, with the formula  $C_4H_{10}$ . Apparently Butane is the most commonly misused volatile substance in the UK, and was the cause of 52% of solvent-related deaths in 2000. Inhalation of butane can cause euphoria, drowsiness, narcosis, apnoea, cardiac arrhythmia, fluctuations in blood pressure and temporary memory loss. So take care. And no, it's not just like a hangover. Both Butane and Propane are liquefied petroleum gases (under pressure). Butane freezes at around - 10 degrees centigrade, Propane gets to 45 below before freezing.

## Object Number Twenty Five

### *The Snowdon Horseshoe*



Our twenty-fifth Object is half way to our target of the Anabasis in 50 Objects, making it a landmark for which only a landmark Object will do. So here we have no less a landmark than the Snowdon Horseshoe. It is of course not just our Object, our landmark, but everyone's. But there is a sense in which the Horseshoe does indeed belong to us. It is, after all, the view that lifts the spirit as you step out of your car at Garth Farm and begin walking down the hill to the Hut; it is the wall-paper on our western wall (we just have not built the wall yet); it is the outlook through our great west window (we just don't have the window); it is the view from our upper west patio, and, of only yesterday, that we do have. There is a kind of perfect symmetry in the assymetry of this view, the long arm stretching out towards Lliwedd seeming to balance the cluster of mightier peaks on the right, with Snowdon itself the fulcrum. Of course the view is not always visible - taken away by weather, darkness, or our simply being somewhere else. But seen or unseen, it is always there.

## Object Number Twenty Six:

### *The Decorative Cupboard Doors*



Chris Hatton's sacrificial creations notwithstanding, (Object 17), one of the Hut's finest features is the decorative cupboard doors that are such an attractive feature of the kitchen area. The doors are, I believe, the work of former member Owen Mullarkey, and show off his considerable talents as joiner, draughtsman and illustrator. Set on the inside of the west-facing wall of the Hut, they give us a glimpse of what the view through that great west window (which we do not have) might be like (if we had it, and if the wash room was not there). Let us disregard for a moment the fact that Owen's creation *includes* the Hut, which would not be in the view *from* the Hut because the viewer would be *in the Hut*. Anyway, being able to contemplate the lovely scene from inside the Hut is very handy for those times when poor weather, darkness, kitchen duties or lack of personal inclination, discourage us from going out to see the real thing for ourselves. The arrangement of pans floating above the Horseshoe, and the pile of plates alongside the Hut, delightful though they may be to look upon, are incidental, and not part of the artwork. They demonstrate that the piece has a functional as well as a decorative purpose, and there is more storage to be had behind Lliwedd on the left and behind Crib Goch on the right. Masterful.

## Object Number Twenty Seven

### *The Ice Screw*



The First Anabasis Winter Meet was held in 1967 at Glen Coe, where Hamish McInnes and Cloughie taught us how to deal with horizontal sleet and to navigate in whiteouts. And Nikki Clough took Threlly on A Real Climb. However the Winter Meet nascance really was with a Winter Expedition in 1965, created by Ray, Irene and Billy Em. That was the one when we huddled down in Glen Nevis in whatever fleapits we could afford or borrow, whilst the eggs froze in their shells around us.

I had the joy and privilege of being invited along as The Clown. To try to broaden my usefulness, I took my state-of-the-art ice screws and ice piton. I knew that they would assist us with our alpenstocks and so we should achieve much daring-do. Upon sight of my additions to the common wealth, Irene's eyes light up. She had been quietly troubled that she might have overlooked packing the winebottle opener, but now she had been granted a Plan B. And yes, the ice screws were used.

It was such a fine Meet that I've never had the heart to throw away these embarrassing objects. I had been thinking of donating them to Hans Christian Bonnington's Museum of Ancient Artefacts in Keswick, but I feel that the Anabasis Collection is much worthier cause.

## Object Number Twenty Eight

### *The Annual Dinner*



The first Annual Dinner was in Betws-y-Coed in November 1962 after the formal opening of the Hut. My sources inform me that subsequent Dinners were held in Liverpool, but later, more money and more cars meant they could move out to Wales where they coincided happily with the Penmaenmawr Fell Race. A full and reasonably-priced hotel package was secured. When the Dinners began to lose support, Jan's famous Hotpot stepped into the breach.

For many years the venue was the Waterloo Hotel, Betws-y-Coed (picture). Other venues were Cobden's, Capel Curig and The Royal Victoria, Llanberis. And thereby hangs this tale.

Jackie and I had booked a first-floor room at the Royal Victoria, the post-Dinner festivities took place in the bar, two levels below in the basement. Normally the very model of sobriety, some Club Members did occasionally become a little the worse-for-wear for drink on these occasions and to such an affliction I was unfortunate enough to fall victim. Nevertheless, in the early hours of morning I made it back to our first-floor room in reasonable order and fell quickly and deeply asleep. Some time in the night I must have been disturbed by a call of nature, because on coming to I found that I had risen to answer that call in the toilet. The return of consciousness was accompanied by a realisation that I was standing stark naked and the toilet was not the en-suite facility provided with our first-floor room, but the one adjacent to the basement bar. I do not remember meeting anyone as I made my way back up the two flights of stairs to our room.

## Object Number Twenty Nine

### *A Moac Wedge and a Cable-Wound Rope*

*Thank you to Ken Ainsworth for these very fine Objects.*

*I will not be alone in shedding a wistful tear for the Moac Wedge (I think 'Moac Number 7 Wedge' may be the full title).*

We are talking late May/early June 1972.

After a period of initiation (largely at Windgather Rocks near Whaley Bridge for we were Manchester based and without our own transport at that time) in the noble art of rock climbing, Dave Atkinson suggested that we should go up a notch and go and do some climbing in Scotland. The over-riding thought behind the trip being that we could cadge a lift all the way from our Sassenach domiciles to the Kyle of Lochalsh. Dave's parents were very conveniently off for a holiday on Harris and Lewis, you see.

We parted company with Mom & Dad at the harbour– no bridge back then, indeed I have yet to see any proof of there even being a bridge – and each team joined the queue for their respective ferries.



Somewhere between the fond farewells and our arrival at Glenbrittle Youth Hostel, Dave and I discovered to our utter dismay that our climbing rope was on its way to the Hebrides! But Lady Luck was with us: for a couple of quid, we managed to purchase one of last season's ropes from the Warden at the Youth Hostel. In spite of Dave's well-nigh faultless memory regarding even the merest scratch on the rock half way up the third pitch, all the memory bank could come up with this time was: "*The one route I remember is Archer Thomson's on the Upper Cioch Buttress, I was terrified, I have a clear memory of being belayed half way up to a single Moac wedge....it's given V Diff now and described as 'another character-crunching route'. And how!*" That's still considerably more than what I can come up with: Alzheimer Crack? Amnesia Gulley? Your guess is as good as mine!

What I do know though is that I still have both the rope – none of your fancy kernmantel stuff, good old-fashioned cable wound – and the pro. which I probably used at least twice on every climb I ever led: that beautiful Moac wedge. (P.S. Our rope was later posted to us from the Outer Hebrides. Note also the steel karabiner).

## Object Number Thirty

### *A Red Balaclava*

*Many thanks to Billy Murphy for this delightful Object.*

We joined forces in the early sixties, the Red Balaclava and I, a perfect fit. What we had ahead was to be something, something very special. Roger Reid coming through a cornice shouting for Mummery's Blood (a mixture of hot Bovril and rum). Ray, Irene and the Red Job went on what was to be the first Club winter camping meet in Scotland – fried eggs anyone? Oh no, they were frozen and had to be boiled. The photo of Irene belaying the Red Balaclava proves that the latest gear was in place, "and keep your eye on the leader" as instructed in the guide book 1966 saw Red Balaclava and I heading to Chamonix with Jan aged 20, following the group instructions from George, handing me the map (wrong map) "walk up the Mer de Glace until you come to a steel drum, turn left, up a metal ladder along the path to the Couvercle Hut. Next day, go along the Plan path and find a camping spot".





The party gathered for what was to be a memorable go down to Chamonix, big screen and England winning the World Cup. We also climbed some fine routes on that trip, Red Balaclava and I. More instructions from George, to Geoff Stott and the Red Balaclava, on our first visit to Cloggy: "walk along the crag 'til you come to a curving crack, you can't miss it, slopes left, then do Sunset Crack."

A brand new Cortina Mark 1 saw Geoff, Gordon Herod, Roger and the Red One motoring to Czechoslovakia, some fine English first ascents in the Bohemian Paradise, followed by benightment on a snowy evening on the highest peak in Czech-land (I think), something ending Spitz (I think), over 40 hours roped to Roger saw Red Balaclava and I off the mountain for cups of hot chocolate in a little kiosk. Next, to Yugoslavia and a first ascent on mile-high Triglav with George, Di, Roger. The Red Job also had a fine trip on the Cuillin Ridge. It had mixed feelings about the 14 Peaks in winter, iced-up, icicles obscuring glasses and hanging off nose. We finished though. Another trip saw the Red Balaclava benighted on Crib Goch, with Irene – Ray and Dave Hobster called it a day on Crib-y-Ddysgl, the Red One let go of the head torch on the ridge. So my pre-decimal purchase proved to be an outstanding buy, and lately it seems to have got wise and avoids the epics. The Red One has had a mixed life, but to quote the late Victoria Wood:

*"Don't starve a girl of little palaver,  
Dangle from the wardrobe in your balaclava".*