

## Object Number Forty One:

### *Garth Farm*



Garth Farm has provided a 'home' for the Club ever since 1962 when we took on the former cow-shipping that is now our Hut. Then, the proprietor of the farm was Robert Owen Jones and his is still the name under which the farm trades, with the addition of the words 'and Sons', the sons being Thomas and Robert who look after the farm today. Mr Jones' other children (Margaret, Peter, Anne) live locally.

Mr. Jones hailed from Pentrefoelas and he purchased the farm in the 1950's. The site has a long history, Thomas telling me that in the fourteenth century it was the home of a 'strong archer from Denbighshire' (making it roughly contemporary with the older building at Dyffryn across the valley). A mantelpiece above the fireplace in the house bears the date 1776. The only mention of Garth in Teleri Bevan's book about Esmé Kirby and Thomas Firbank's book is a reference to the help that neighbouring farms gave to each other at the busiest times. Following the untimely death of Mrs Jones, Mr Jones' mother moved into Garth to help look after the 5 children, and this was the family captured in a 1967 BBC TV Documentary [Shepherds of Moel Siabod](#). The Documentary is referred to in a book by Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*.

Latterly, the Jones family has done the things necessary for survival at a time when sheep farming is in decline in Wales: expansion, with the acquisition of an additional flock at Llanwrst, and diversification, through the campsite and lease of facilities such as our Hut. The Jones family has been a good friend of the Club since its earliest days. George Murphy recalls a visit to Liverpool by Mr Jones at a time when the provision of facilities was making a notable contribution to the work of the Probation Service. Mr Jones was 'produced' at both the Crown and Magistrates Courts and the wheels of justice stopped spinning when each Court in turn rose to give him a standing ovation. A typical piece of George Murphy theatre, and I am sure Mr Jones appreciated the recognition.

## Object Number Forty Two:

### *The Generator*

This is an Object that is apparently not understood by a majority of Club Members because they either know that they do not know how to operate it (and therefore never make its acquaintance) or because they have tried to operate it and failed. All this has given the Generator a bad reputation, or worse than that as every wannabe will tell you, no reputation at all.



But our Generator is the sole means we have of getting electricity to the Hut and it should be recognised for the sterling work it does in providing power whenever there is serious work to be done and when the lights are on in the Hut it really is a pretty and welcoming sight. The alternatives? Running a cable down from the grid up at Garth Farm: this has been looked into and appears to be prohibitively expensive. The distance to be travelled means that very thick copper cable would be needed making it unaffordable.

There has been talk of windmills and solar panels but none of that has resulted in a serious proposal, so the best we can hope for is a Generator that is more friendly for the novice operator.

*Footnote: Since taking over the Hut, Thomas Jones has installed mains electricity there.*

### **Object Number Forty Three:**

#### ***The Bike Rack***



On the face of it, The Bike Rack appears to be an Object that achieves depths of tedium unmatched even by The Generator and The Gas Bottle, and the inclusion of The Bike Rack may be seen as evidence that the Object collector is flagging as he approaches the goal of Fifty Objects. But that would be unfair, because The Bike Rack, whilst in itself being deeply uninteresting, stands for other things which are very interesting indeed, namely -

the Club's response to the interests of minorities, the importance of the generosity of individual Club members, and the way in which hard work and good will in fixing 'the problem' is not guaranteed to produce the best solution.

The story goes like this. A minority of Club Members are keen cyclists and wish to use the Hut as a base for cycling, on road and off. Improvements at the Hut led to new space being created and bikes being stored in the new washroom. Strong objections, bordering on outrage, were expressed at the Annual General Meeting held in February 2016 and it appeared that the cyclists, being very much a minority voice, had no voice at all. The matter was not helped by no cyclists being present to speak for themselves, indeed half of them live in Holland. It was resolved that storage of bikes in the washroom was henceforth to be banned (and then we proceeded to tie ourselves in knots with pushchairs, wheel chairs and so on) and the Committee would provide a facility for cycle storage. What was missing was a mandate to involve the cyclists. The result has been, thanks to the great generosity of a Club Member, the provision of a bike rack, and, thanks to the Club's regular hard workers, its installation at the Hut. The fact that I have never seen The Bike Rack in use does not mean that it has not been used. But the Dutch contingent did not bring their bikes to Garth this year because in their view the facility does not provide proper protection or security for

their expensive kit. Fussy so-and-soes perhaps, and it raises the question about how much money and effort the Club is prepared to invest to meet the interests of a small number of Members. But it may be argued that cycling is a growing sport and providing properly for it will help attract new, especially younger, people. We are reminded of other minorities - pot holerers, dog lovers, smokers, swamp dwellers, early morning bacon fryers - all of these have at some time or other caused a moral panic to break out among the majority. So that is why I think that The Bike Rack is in fact very interesting indeed.

#### **Object Number Forty Four:**

### *Moel Siabod*



Snowdon calls for attention when we are at Garth but that is just the view. Moel Siabod is the mountain we are on, or at least at the foot of. Garth belongs to it - the TV programme about Garth Farm referred to its occupants as the 'Shepherds of Moel Siabod'; and it belongs to Garth - on old maps the rocky ground seen on the lower slopes of the mountain from the Hut is called *Creggiau Garth*. Never mind the annual race from Capel Curig, on at least one occasion the Club has had its own Moel Siabod race, Hut to summit and back. In this view taken from the top of Snowdon, you can pick out Garth Farm, just this side of the Llynau Mymbyr Lakes, at the foot of Moel Siabod's mighty flowing apron. And mighty it is, because I hear that there is a way of doing the numbers that makes Moel Siabod the biggest mountain in the UK. This is not in terms of its modest 2861-foot (872 m) height but in terms of its *volume*. Moel Siabod has an enormous footprint, filling all the terrain seen in the picture, and more besides. Relatively isolated from other high ground, it claims the space with gentle slopes on all sides but the east. No doubt there are other ways to do the numbers that make this 'biggest mountain' claim nonsense, but there it is.

Object Number Forty Five:

*A Red Hat*



So now, we have a Red Hat to complete a triumphant triumvirate in red, along with Simon Letts' sleeping bag and Billy Murphy's balaclava. My Red Hat goes back to 1971, before my first trip to the Alps that year and 45 years on I still have it now. I knew that the intensity of the sun above was something to be prepared for, but was not prepared for (nor protected against by the Hat) the glare off the snow below - hence the 'all their faces frying in the sun' line in the Montenvers Chemin de Fer song.

In all the years since 1971 the Hat has been many places with me and washed-out pink is all that is left of the original red, sign of the work it has done under Lakeland, Welsh, Scottish, high Alpine, Yosemite, and Kaisergebirge suns. The picture below was taken at the Grütten Hutte. Standing from left: Mark Willingham, Mark Hounslea; seated: Mike Threlfall, Oliver Threlfall, Rob Hastings, Jan Willingham, Esther Threlfall, Mary Hastings; seated: Dave Atkinson, Fiona Threlfall.



## Object Number Forty Six:

### *A Guitar*



Thank you to Roger Reid for suggesting this one! My ownership of this Yamaha guitar goes back as many years as my membership of the Anabasis. For over forty years now I have been carting this music box around and sowing delight and despair in equal measure with the songs it has helped me create and accompany. It is the platform on which I crafted songs such as *The Garth Song* and *Montenvers Chemin de Fer* which have become as much part of many delightful evenings at the Hut as covers of classics such as *Me and Bobby McGee*, *For The Good Times*, *Goodnight Irene*, *Mr Tambourine Man*, *Streets of London*, *Four Strong Winds* and of course and above all, *Running Bear*. Latterly the company has come to include grand-children and with them the songs get new life.

But this guitar has been played not just at the Hut but on campsites all over the the country, not always to the delight of the neighbours! Once I strapped it to a rucsac frame and hauled it on a rope up to the top of Napes Needle and sitting atop the summit block gave an airy rendition of *Climbing in The Mountains*. Blessed I am indeed with the Anabasis friends who have kept me in song all these years. But as well as all of this, we have often enjoyed Murphy brothers George and Billy with their magnificent rendition of *Wild Colonial Boy*. Thank you Ken Ainsworth for the fine recording. (available on request)

## Object Number Forty Seven:

### *The Pot-holing Ladder*



Days out in 'underland' was once a passion for some Club members and it is my understanding that the Club owned a set of pot-holing ladders. They have not been seen for many years but a couple have been found by Clive Lane (see below). The men in boiler suits are Len Kata (facing), Roger Reid, Twin (aka Brian Fielding) and Ray Rogers. And the Ladder. I encountered the Ladder on one occasion and the memory of climbing up three sets of ladders with water crashing all over me is one that troubles me even now. No doubt the Ladder has been largely superseded by single rope techniques. Now enjoy this, from Clive Lane:

younger. The result is the same as too much human revelry. Lots of corrosion around the joints. They must be commended for the support they gave to the Anabasis on many underworld forays. The moment I always remember is 15 ft off the bottom of Lancaster pot and watching a "hey, look at me" whiz down an abseil line and, at the bottom, let go of the end of his rope to see the stretch take it well out of reach above his head. The number 47s saved more than Anabasoids that trip".

## Object Number Forty Eight:

### *The Afon Gwryd*



Thank you to Clive Lane for this very fine Object nomination. Never having partaken of its sweet waters it is one I have neglected. But prompted by the nomination, I made sure to get a couple of pictures last time I was at Garth (below). To the Hut visitor, the Afon Gwryd imprints itself most forcibly as it thunders under the bridge crossed as you enter Garth Farm. From the Hut the lazy meanders of the river, like the morning Hut lay-a-bunks, are largely hidden in its bed. But it shows up well in this picture from on high and I expect those meanders are following the line of least resistance, around the resistant pods of volcanic rock (see Object 21). Garth Farm can be seen on the left and the Hut just across the green field. And I bet the white spec is Clive's van. I expect many of us, young and not so young, have tales of the riverbank to share. Over to you, Clive:

*"I was at the hut with my three offspring and most of my grandchildren (including the new 'bump') a couple of weeks ago. It was cold but they still wanted to go down to the river. It's been such an attractant for our kids and is always visited by successive generations. My daughter has been known to drive alone to Garth and walk by the river when she needs to think. I still wander there too. She misses it and wants her kids to be just as fond of the place".*



## Object Number Forty Nine:

### *Lord Hunt's Boots*



Interest in this item was expressed early on in this Object Odyssey, but the watercolour painting of a pair of old boots mysteriously disappeared from the wall at the Hut. Then it turned up in a recent clear-out so here it is to open the way to the finest of back-stories. Not a peerless one, however, because the picture was presented to the Club by a peer, none other than Lord Hunt, John Hunt, the Leader of the 1953 Everest Expedition.

Sir John was also President of the National Association of Probation Officers. The occasion was, George Murphy tells me, the opening of the improved Hut following the acquisition of the third of the building formerly used by Liverpool Probation Service. That dates it to the late nineteen eighties. For me the most memorable moment was when Sir John was seen to be attempting to open the door lock with his car keys, prompting Bob Hastings to observe: 'you'll have trouble getting it started with that, Sir'.

But there is a still finer story of Lord Hunt's link with the Club, and if on reading this you suspect the hand of George Murphy, himself a Probation Officer, you would be absolutely right. The Club was corralled into supporting a 3 day 14 Peaks (The Welsh Three-Thousanders) expedition by a party of Probation Officers. The west end of the Glyders was served as an appetitif on the Friday with a main couse of Carneddau, Tryfan and Glyders Fach and Fawr saved for Saturday. I headed up to Carnedd Llewellyn to meet the main group heading south towards Ogwen. We must have had either Lord or Lady Hunt with us because I recall them meeting on the top with a touching embrace. Conditions were good and clear but by the time we got started on Tryfan things had changed for the very much worse and heavy rain set in, sending all but 3 of the Probation Officers, and Lord and Lady Hunt, back to the valley. Lateness of the hour must have been a factor, because by the time I (having been chosen by George to accompany him and the survivors), got up onto the Glyders, it was just about dark. Fortunately, the rain had passed through and we made our way down to Llanberis from Glyder Fawr in the darkness: how that was accomplished I do not know, nor how we got back to Garth. We even got a cheer when we got back to the Hut, the only time I have ever had that reception on getting to Garth! But the best was yet to come: Murphy then proceeded to conjure up a nightclub of the utmost depravity way out in the middle of nowhere on the western end of the mountains. Had I not been very tired indeed, I expect I would have got into all kinds of trouble there. Desert was served on Sunday, the full Horseshoe in cold, clear conditions. So Lord Hunt's Boots are not just a picture on, or not on, the wall: they have a story to tell.

## Object Number 50:

### *The Hut*



Of this Object, there is nothing to say - because it speaks for itself, in our memories and anticipations, eloquently in Stewart Prince's fine image from a few years back; and everything to say, because the Hut has become, it seems, increasingly the focus of Club life over the years. Indeed, as an Object devouring the majority of the Club's income and human resources, it may be said that the principle purpose of the Club is to maintain and improve its leased premises at Garth Farm, rather than the purposes expressed in the Memorandum and Articles. In recent years, there have been more work meets at the Hut than meets held for the purposes of pursuing the sport of mountaineering. In the accounts for 2015, £1956 of a total expenditure of £3187 was spent on the Hut, and this did not include the sum of £930 as outstanding in relation to recent improvement works. Income from hiring the Hut to outside groups is increasingly important to the Club, £725 of total receipts of £3468 in 2015. Away from the work, the most populous meets are those held at the Hut, and for many of those attending, being there is sufficient, it does not need to be a base for getting into the hills. It is refreshing, therefore, to read the Hut Book and be reminded that the Hut continues to be used for the purposes envisaged by the members who first got to know the Jones family at Garth Farm and took out a lease on the building we now know as 'The Hut'. What all this means for the future of our Club is something to be debated elsewhere.

The former cow shippon was identified, in 1962, it is said, by a Club member 'off route coming down Moel Siabod' (the first of many). In its original state, the floor was ankle/knee deep in cow dung, and members slept in another barn where the campsite toilet block is now: those who were children at Garth Farm (Robert, Thomas, Margaret, Peter, Anne) recall rich pickings of loose change in the straw after every weekend. Initially the Hut was shared with some who may have been Brummies because the third of the Hut not used by the Club was apparently known as 'The Birmingham Section'. Subsequently, that third was taken



over by Liverpool Probation Service. Since those early days, there have been two big landmarks in the Hut's history: first, in the 1980's, the acquisition of the remaining third of the building, and the construction of the current seating area and overhead Swamp; and second, the recent development of the derelict area to provide a washroom and toilets. These are merely the big mountains in a range of peaks of work, maintenance and improvement that stretch back now over half century and will continue for as long we have the Hut.

Aside from all this factual stuff, in a real sense the totality of the Club is its members and the Hut. It has its own song, which of course is quite wrong in saying that work to be done belongs elsewhere, because there is always work to be done at the Hut; and there are many things that matter more than the weather in the morning. For some of us, the Hut is a holiday home, for many of us, it feels like a second home. Indeed, if what has been called the 'Anabasis family' is the Club's heart, then the Hut is its body, and looking after that body is key to the overall health of the Club.

Roger Reid has kindly provided this additional commentary on the early days of the Hut, and this picture, taken in 1964.



"I am not being pedantic; it is simply that your historic work is so important, that when I feel that there is further comment that could be of use, I feel (hope) that I can make a useful contribution about the 'Birth of the Hut'. I remember querying and being told that it was The Mills brothers who found the cowshed after straying off Moel Siabod. (George, Colin or Rowena to confirm - I suggest that it was 1961 when "our" cowshed was found). Through Colin, I joined The Anabasis in April/early May 1962 and the hut was "fully" operational by then. E.g.; had concrete floor and the bunks - in the original sector, from "the measuring post" to the "new" fireplace wall - were just about completed, with "all joiners and woodcrafters" plying their trade. Dot and I were part of "the support team", e.g. making tea and carrying stuff. The potbellied stove was operational, by the outside door.... That

summer, 1962, Dot and I stayed there whilst "the experienced ones" went to The Alps. (I was right royally pizzed off my being gently refused permission to join them; although Brian Melville had been deemed experienced enough to go. I had introduced him to The Club subsequent to my tracking him down at the Royal Town Planning Institute exams in London in June 1962. I realized the next year, when we went to Cham, that "the club decision" to bar us the previous year had been a sound one.) • Someone has a slide of Kata and others laying the concrete; and messing around - I mean preparing stuff - outside. If found, there would be a date on the slide's cardboard. I guess it would be Easter 1962. Irene and George might be able to confirm the concrete-laying time. And George for the month, if not the day, when he worked a day clearing out cow muck from "The Birmingham sector" due to a misunderstanding as to what our area was to be. • The Club site notes it as being "the Probation" section. True, but that was much, much later (LOL). It was "The Birmingham section" for "many" years. • I attach (hopefully) what is likely the earliest extant photo of the hut. Taken Winter 1963/64. Sorry, but not sure who the guy is. Our hut was happily in use. But no-one at "The Birmingham" section. (LOL.) • Now, in 1961 The Club was exploring (on the verge of leasing?) a hut base in The Lakes. The great advantage (IMHO) was that it was in The Lakes rather than in Snowdonia. But two great disadvantages were, according to legend, (1) it was at first floor level in a barn with a carcinogenic generator below, and (2) even worse, it was next door to a pub. I suggest that, for the history of the club, George, Colin, Rowena and/or Irene be asked to date and detail this really important snippet of club history. • You make me think that there is one anecdote, or myth that could be resolved. Namely, did The Mills bros actually lose their way off Siabod and find the hut; or were they returning to Garth rather smartly? I.e. did we find the old barn (now the Garth shower, etc, block) because we had unintentionally found the cowshed, or did we have a weekend base at the old barn first? I think the earliest Anabasis visitations were based at William's, by Tryfan; so it might be interesting to know when Garth came onto our radar (and through whom)".