



Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue CIO

Newsletter July 2019



From the Chairman : Andy Harbach

So, after promising it would be the last time I would write to you, I am once again writing an introduction to the news sheet. At our AGM in March it was agreed to remove the limit of 5 years for the Team Chairman, as long as nobody else is standing for the position. We have had a couple of changes to Officers recently. Jed Stone is our new Equipment Officer, having taken over from Alex King. Jed has approached the role with great enthusiasm, and has made a significant amount of progress in the last month. Gareth Pritchard is now a Trustee. Gareth was the ACPO lead for Search and Rescue, as well as Deputy Chief Constable for North Wales Police before retiring last year. Gareth brings with him a huge wealth of valuable experience. Bill Dean has now retired as a Trustee, and Daz Edkins has retired as joint Training Officer. Thanks go to everyone who has taken on additional responsibilities to help ensure the Team runs smoothly, and thanks to those who have retired.

We held our spring review earlier this week. The review is an opportunity for members to voice their opinions about the running of the Team, and for us to consider plans for the future. This year we discussed the significant issue of operational resilience and how we can provide a pathway for members to become Team Leaders of the future. We have a number of ideas to consider at the Committee meetings over the coming months. We also had an interesting presentation about the peer review which we will be undergoing in November. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on how we operate, and may lead to some improvements.

Finally I would like to thank you for your continuing support of OVMRO.

Team Treasurer

Heather Beale has been doing a sterling job as the Team Treasurer for 3 years. She feels it is time for somebody else to take the reins. If anybody feels they would like to take on the role please get in touch with Heather at treasurer@ogwen-rescue.org.uk and she can explain what the role entails.

333 News and Events : Chris Wycherley : 333 Secretary : secretary@333.org.uk

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|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Sat 6 Jul 2019 | 10:00-16:00 | Navigation training | Bryn Poeth | Dave Worrall |
| Sun 28 Jul 2019 | 10:00 | Midsummer madness walk | TBC | Dave Salter |
| Sat 10 Aug 2019 | 06:00-21:00 | Oggie 8 Challenge | Bryn Poeth | Jen Edwards |
| Sun 15 Sep 2019 | 10:00-16:00 | Tracking and Clue awareness | Bryn Poeth | Clive Swombow |
| Sat 19 Oct 2019 | 18:30 | 333 AGM | Siabod Cafe | |
| Sat 9 Nov 2019 | TBC | Night Walk | TBC | Dave Worrall |

Calendar and Cards Alan Green

The judging of the entries for the OVMRO 2020 calendar competition is complete. All 134 photos entered were scored by a panel of amateur and professional photographers to produce a shortlist. The final selection of twelve photos for the 2020 OVMRO calendar was made by John Rowell of the Soul of Snowdonia Gallery (located in the Moel Siabod Café on the A5 in Capel Curig). The winning photographers were:

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| January | - Marcus Williamson | February | - Rob Samuel | March | - Jan Knurek |
| April | - Dave Foster | May | - Paul Spear | June | - Rob Samuel |
| July | - Gareth Owen | August | - Derren Jones | September | - Jan Knurek |
| October | - Rebecca Wright | November | - Lee Sutton | December | - David Lloyd |

A photo entered by Jim Backhouse achieved equal highest score from the judges, along with Rob Samuel's photo for February. Jim's image will be used for the front cover of the calendar.

A big Thank You to all those who sent their photos in, and to volunteer judges Barbara Pearson, Robin Trangmar and Matt Nobles for their hard work. The calendar artwork has gone to the printers. They have just supplied a sample for approval and it looks excellent. The calendar should be available in the online shop on the OVMRO web site during the summer.

This year we intend that the OVMRO Christmas cards will feature a piece of original artwork on a seasonal theme. Entry for a separate competition to choose the artwork was planned to close at the end of May. Only five entries have been received. We have decided to extend the closing date to 22nd July, and to approach local schools, Scout, Cub and Beaver groups in order to invite the children to submit designs. We are looking for an image with a Christmas theme and possibly some relevance to mountain rescue. The artwork may be created with any art media. The competition is open to all: amateur or professional; OVMRO and 333 members; and non-members. Children in particular are encouraged to enter.

Competitors are required to submit their images in digital format. This may be achieved by scanning the artwork or photographing it with a digital camera. Please scan the artwork at 300 to 600 dots per inch.

Entries should preferably be submitted in jpeg format. If your artwork includes line art or text, png format may give better reproduction. The image will be printed on the card in landscape format with dimensions 150mm x 105mm. The original artwork should ideally have this aspect ratio. Any winning entry may be cropped to fit, at the discretion of the competition organisers.

Entry to the competition closes at midnight on 22nd July 2019. For a chance to have your work featured, please submit your entries by email to competition@333.org.uk. Please include your name and contact details. No postal entries can be accepted. Posting

your entries on the OVMRO Facebook page is NOT acceptable as a means of entering.

As a prize, each competition winner will receive a pack of Christmas cards. Only one prize per winner will be awarded. No other fee will be payable.

The greeting on the published cards will be bilingual Welsh/English.

Artwork must have been created by the individual submitting it, and by entering the competition, permission is granted to OVMRO to reproduce the images. The chosen images will be credited to the artist, with a statement that the artist owns the copyright to the image.

To limit the workload on our hardworking volunteer judges, please do not submit more than three images per entrant.

MERCHANDISE

There are many items for sale on the team website shop at <https://shop.ogwen-rescue.org.uk/>
You can buy merchandise, join or renew your 333 membership and make donations to the team.



Six days on the Jordan Trail Robin Trangmar

Due to fluctuating family circumstances, I didn't have time to organise a desert trip, so was at a loose end. I went to a presentation by Silk Road Adventures, a travel company run by two friends. Marley (one of the Directors) gave me a nudge. "You'd love the Jordan Trail. We've got a deal with a local company."

When I got home I looked at the Jordan Trail; an unmarked trekking route from Umm Qais in the north of Jordan, to Aqaba on the Red Sea in the south. It looked a bit much; it was clear that without support it wasn't possible. Too many wild camps, too little sources of water, and unclear possibilities of resupply. As I scanned the maps I found that one stage ended at Petra, the fabled red sandstone city of the Nabateans. Hadn't Joe Brown been there in the 1960s? I looked at Silk Road Adventures' website and their trip had six days' trekking on the Jordan Trail, two days in Petra and a night in Wadi Rum. Perfect! I sent Marley an email with the deposit.

The prologue

It didn't start well. Everything was planned to perfection, but of course the French air traffic controllers decided to strike. Merde! I arrived in Amman, Jordan, two days early to allow for some exploration. Thanks to Air France and the strike at Charles de Gaulle Airport, the luggage didn't arrive with me. When you've only got what you left home in, the options are somewhat limited. After seeking advice on less energetic things to do in 35C heat, the hotel staff were supportive. "Have you thought about going to the Royal Automobile Museum? If you like cars, you'll love the collection there."

There are over 130 cars and motorcycles in exceptional condition. The first vehicle you see is a 1952 Series 1 Landrover, followed by an armoured 1915 Rolls Royce replica of the type used by Lawrence of Arabia. There's a 1952 Vincent Black Shadow (similar to the one on which Lawrence died), Harley Davidsons, Indians, several Ridges, Nortons and BSAs, and a Douglas.

I stayed nearly three hours, and on arrival back at the hotel, the manager presented me with my missing luggage. Whilst I enjoyed the museum visit I was happier to change out of the clothes I'd been in for over 48 hours.

Day 1: Amman to Wadi Ghuweir

We left the hotel in Amman after breakfast and headed to Wadi Dana for the start of the trek. Thirteen intrepid souls from all over the world – China to San Francisco; New Zealand to Jersey, London and North Wales.

By the time we left Dana village, it was past 10:00am and the temperature was climbing. In the confines of Wadi Dana, it was over 30 degrees Celsius and there was limited shade under a few trees. We stopped for lunch and Ali (the Bedouin guide from Dana) made a welcome cup of tea on a juniper fire. We carried on to the Feynan eco-lodge, passing a Bedouin camp and a freshwater spring, before crossing Wadi Ghuweir to the 'wild camp' which was set out Bedouin style, with personal tents. The showers were fantastic. There was a wonderful hedge of flowering Oleander trees, many of which had filled the dry wadi on the way down.

The wildlife had been fascinating; Blue lizards, Geckos, a Palestinian Sunbird, a Hoopoe, Tristram's Starlings, a Vulture, several Buzzards and a Kestrel. I'd got my fluids badly wrong and was probably approaching heat exhaustion by the time we reached camp. There wasn't enough urine coming out to even consider doing the firefighter's colour test. Serious amounts of tea, water and cold showers just about stabilised things before bed, but it was still an uncomfortable night. Not a bad day – 16km and 280 metres ascent, 1420 metres of descent.

Word of the day: Yallah! Let's Go!

Day 2: Wadi Ghuweir to Furon

All the height lost yesterday had to be made up today. Despite having drunk like a fish, I barely managed a dribble of urine. As Jim

from New Zealand said, "For us old guys, dehydration isn't always a bad thing." At least I didn't have to get up at 3:00am for a pee. Although we had two donkeys carrying water, I added another litre to the rucksack. We set off towards the Sharah mountains across Wadi Feynan, where we found robbed-out Byzantine Christian graves and examples of Neolithic underground houses. The views up to mountains and the Wadi Araba desert were incredible. It was good, rough, trekking country on barely discernible paths. We eventually reached a rough track which wound relentlessly up into the mountains. The temperature was hitting 38 degrees C., but with the extra fluids I was feeling much better. We scrambled through gullies and over buttresses to reach an improving track which then became a tarmac road. There was still no sign of the camp. Thankfully at the top of a hill (where a lot of us had to dig deep) we contoured off and headed downwards to reach Furon. And more hot, sweet tea.

This was a stunning campsite with the promised 'African shower' (bucket and jug) and a festival-style porta-crapper. Dinner was Mansaf, the Jordanian national dish. Mansaf is a delicious dish of rice, lamb, and a dry yoghurt made into a sauce called jameed. That evening Ali showed us the stars and constellations. It was a great viewpoint with the lights of the little towns and villages sparkling across the Wadi Araba desert.

Today was the tough day – 16km and 1320 metres of ascent, 390 metres of descent.

Day 3: Furon to Ghbour Whedat

It wasn't the quietest of nights as there was an episode of barking around the campsite about 3:00am (dogs, foxes or wild hyenas - the jury is out). After three trivial pees, I decided to have a pre-emptive dose of rehydration salts to balance the fluids I was pushing through my sweat glands. I did feel an improvement.

We'd seen the way ahead the day before - a great long ridge rising to a summit with a pass on the other side, but between the summit and the pass was unknown territory. As the sun rose, we followed dusty paths across open landscapes to descend into a wadi, meeting a herd of camels on the way.

One reminded me of Doris, my Moroccan partner in the Sahara, and the sweet taste of camel meat in Oman. After an attempt on my rucksack, the camels moved off and we crossed the wadi and climbed out past a very dirty water hole which the donkeys loved. The summit had the most stunning views and we followed a long winding syncline around the hillside to a small plateau where we dropped into the campsite at Ghbour Whedat. The rocks had been eroded away to form shapes that resembled skulls. Whilst it could have been sinister, it had the feel of a happy place, and as the embers of the fire died down, the ghosts of the Nabateans watched over us. Today was an easy day - a mere 17 km hike, with 750 metres ascent and 920 metres descent.

Day 4: Ghbour Whedat to Little Petra

The campsite at Ghbour Whedat was probably one of the best I've ever slept in. The rock faces stared down, the views were great, and we were guarded by a sculptured rock cave with carved steps leading up to it. As the sun rose, I walked onto the platform in front of the rock cave, did some yoga and breathed in the moment. Back at the campsite a Huntsman Spider dropped out of the bags; at 4cms it was a big beastly, but more dangerous to insects than humans or animals.

We walked past small Bedouin encampments where goats were being milked, and crossed low, rough mountains on good stony paths, occasionally finding shade under the buttresses. In a side gully we found a deep well carved by the Nabateans, now dry. Still heading uphill, we passed a water recycling plant, then to another plateau where we stopped in the shade for a welcome cuppa. I was entertained by a Mourning Wheatear, and then we were overflown by groups of 20 or so Buzzards; probably 100 in total.

We scrambled down a small gully with a short, exposed traverse before we found a wide overhung ledge for lunch. Further down the wadi, we climbed up a series of steps to find human habitation. It was a shop and the back entrance to Little Petra. A tall, narrow passageway (Siq al-Barid - the cold canyon) occasionally cut with steps, opened into a wider area, and there were the first of the Nabatean carved chambers. We walked into the Painted Biclinium (dining room) with the ceiling frescos of grapes and vines. The quality of the stone masonry was astounding; perfectly aligned walls, all chiselled from the living rock. It was better than good, and this was just the side show.

Other carved buildings appeared, until we reached the evening's camp, run by the local Ammarin tribe. The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent in a chasm in the rocks which had been carpeted. In the coolness and with comfortable cushions, it was the perfect place to relax. The surprise visitor was a Blue Rock Thrush who came scavenging under the tables. After another perfect dinner cooked by the locals, we were given a demonstration of the Bedouin tradition of making coffee for guests.

Not a big day today, but a varied and pleasant walk: 14 km hike, 610 metres or ascent with 560 metres of descent. Almost a stroll!

Day 6: Little Petra to Petra

I had mixed feelings about today, as it was to be the last day of proper trekking.

The path crossed stony ground, some of which had been ploughed and sown. I got behind the group and a complacent dog suddenly became energised running round me, teeth bared and eyes wild. I managed a graceful retreat. The ground turned to sand and suddenly we had clear views across to civilisation; Wadi Musa (Petra town). Wadi Musa means "Valley of Moses" in Arabic. Apparently the old boy struck water from the rock at Ain Musa (Moses's Well). No water today, unless it's in a plastic bottle.

Then a control post where our pre-purchased passes were stamped. There were 4x4 vehicles and people. The wilderness experience was approaching the end.

A dusty trail led around the cliffs, past a Bedou woman tending goats who grinned toothlessly at us. We found steps, and more steps, to reach a little cafe at a viewpoint. The trail continued along terraces and rock shelves, until a big (30-40cm) spiny-tailed lizard attracted my attention. When I looked up again, I saw a carved urn on top of a rock, and within a few paces The Monastery came into sight. That wasn't an anti-climax. What a stunning piece of work.

The area in front of The Monastery was full of Cap'n Jack Sparrow lookalikes. The local Bedouin have long, tightly curled black hair and the Kohl mascara made from charcoal. They ride donkeys, usually followed by a stray dog or two. I suddenly found myself in the middle of a dog fight and just escaped being bitten. Too much excitement today!

We stopped for lunch, and several teas later, I wandered off to take photos. To the side of the Monastery was a little weep of water coming from the rock. From the Sinai Rosefinch, Tristram's Starlings, and the most beautiful Laughing Dove, to Desert and

Crested Larks, they all came for a drink and I was ten metres away with the camera. That was Petra for me; a spring and some birds. Never mind the historic rubble.

All good things come to an end, and we descended the 800 steps to the Grand Temple before heading up through the Colonnaded Street into the Siq leading to The Treasury. When the Treasury appeared, it was almost an "is that it?" moment. It is very impressive, but when swamped with humanity, camels, horse-drawn carts and tat sellers, it's not a patch on The Monastery. There were a few birds, including Fan-tailed Ravens, but by now it was so hot that I headed for the hotel. After the solitude of the desert, the hordes of people were almost too much to bear.

Once we'd showered and eaten, the holy grail was attained; the 'Ice-cold in Alex' moment was completed with a cold Petra Dark beer in an approved local bar. It cost £10 for 500ml. Worth waiting for. And worth every penny. The final day on foot: 14km, 496m of ascent and 519m of descent.

Day 7 and the epilogue: Petra and Wadi Rum

After breakfast we walked back through the Siq, now quieter in the early morning, and headed for the Royal Tombs. From the vantage point above Petra, you could see the scale of the old city before it had been destroyed by earthquakes. When we got to the Urn Tomb, it seemed familiar, and of course in Joe Brown's book 'The Hard Years' there's a picture of him climbing up it on a caving ladder.

We wandered back to the hotel, boarded a minibus and headed to Wadi Rum for the transfer by Toyota 4x4 to a Bedouin camp somewhere in the desert. We stopped for a run up a sand dune, and as I looked across, there were the great buttresses that formed the backdrop in the 1962 epic 'Lawrence of Arabia'. We stopped for more photos, the wind was blowing sand everywhere, and then we drove to a campsite set in a big cleft in the rock. It was utterly peaceful and still.

Dinner (a mutton dish) was produced from a 45-gallon oil drum buried in the sand with a fire on top. As the sun set, I went out into the desert with a blanket and slept for a few hours until a persistent mosquito woke me. I went back to the tent but got up at 5.00am to watch the sunrise. After breakfast we climbed into the Toyotas, caught the minibus and stopped for a dip in the Dead Sea, which was like being pickled in acid. Suddenly we were back in Amman.

So that was it. 77kms, 3456 metres of ascent, 3809 metres of descent.

Glorious wilderness, fascinating desert and wonderful wildlife. The rat has been fed.....for now.

You can find all the pictures at the blog: <https://bivibag-adv.com/media/jordan-gallery/>

Offa's Dyke Path – May Bank Holiday – 2 night backpacking trip Jude and Clive

We took an early train from Chester and arrived at Knighton to start our walk at 10.00am. First, we called into the Offa's Dyke Museum for a cup of tea and were duly invited to pose for a photograph. They were holding the Offa's Dyke Society's AGM and launching their new route card (you stamp the card for each section you complete) and they wanted a photo of walkers using the card, for their publicity. So our late start had become later, and we were glad that we had planned a modest distance for the day.

The path quickly rises out of Knighton and we were soon walking alongside the impressive earthwork. All weekend the weather stayed fine and we had great visibility to see the wonderful rolling hills across England and Wales. There was a cool breeze from the north, however as we were mainly heading south we had this on our backs.

Apart from the Dyke itself, the other highlight of the weekend was the flora. Many late-Spring flowers lined the path, and especially the masses of Bluebells, which were glorious.

Our overnight camp was at Gumma Farm, which is a working beef, sheep and chicken farm, and conveniently situated near the OD path. We had an idyllic pitch in the nearby apple orchard, which we had to ourselves. The nearby town of Presteigne offered us a good choice of pubs, also the opportunity to walk without our packs across the fields in a 5km round trip to get our evening meal.

The next day we walked a km or so down the lane to pick up the OD path again. Gradually we gained height and then enjoyed a broad ridge heading south. The terrain continued to be very varied: woodland, streams, plantations and grazed fields. We lunched in the lee of a plantation that offered so much shelter that we fell asleep in the sun.

Soon we were looking down upon Kington and a meandering path through the golf course took us into town. The end of an arts and crafts fair provided interest as we wandered through the streets to find the campsite on the recreation ground. Beyond a few static caravans, we found the campers field that was deserted and bounded by a large curve of the river. Another perfect pitch!

Kington has a good number of pubs and fast food outlets so we soon settled on eating at the nearest hotel and had a lovely evening meal.

The third and final day saw us completing a circular walk, using the OD path upon Hergest Ridge. This flat-topped ridge had been the site of an iron-age fort and more recently the Victorians used it as a place for a race-course and in WWII the home guard dug trenches and held military exercises. Traces of all this activity was clearly evident. We returned to Kington using footpaths and lanes at the base of the ridge and walked through two historic villages, one of which had the grand remains of a motte and bailey castle. Finally, passing through what must have been a spectacular Victorian garden for large country house. The vibrant azaleas were in full bloom and the many specimen acer trees in the arboretum were fascinating.

Afternoon tea in a trendy Kington café gave us a chance to reflect on the many aspects of the weekend before we took a taxi to the nearest railway station at Leominster for our journey home.

We had thoroughly enjoyed our 3 days of backpacking and seen many interesting things. The Offa's Dyke path always offers so much more than an ancient earthwork.

Please email heather.beale@ogwen-rescue.org.uk if you would prefer an electronic version of the newsletter which will save the team money

Russ Hore - russ.hore@ogwen-rescue.org.uk - Editor