



# Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue CIO

Newsletter August 2020



## The New Team Treasurer(s)

After many years of sterling work, Heather Beale has handed over the role of Team Treasurer to Graham & Cally Palmer. In their words;

*"We own and manage an accountancy and bookkeeping practice based in Brithdir, Dolgellau and we both have a strong history of working within and supporting the voluntary and charity sector (as Board Trustees and regular volunteers) as well as a passion for hiking in the mountains of Wales."*

Our "connection" with OVMRO began when we were rescued by one of the teams on a very cold night in February 2013. We remain extremely grateful to this day! <https://summit-inspiration.blogspot.com/2013/03/snowdonia-mountain-rescue-glyderau.html> (The rescue involved Ogwen MRT, SARDA, RAF Valley MRT and 22 Squadron resulted in a find by a SARDA dog)



*Since that fateful night we have made some important decisions regarding our work-life balance which have resulted in us both giving up our jobs in Surrey and Kent, setting up our own accountancy practice, moving to Snowdonia and getting married!*

*We welcome this opportunity to offer our services on a voluntary basis in support of our local mountain rescue teams and in so doing thank the OVMRO members who rescued us in 2013 and become more involved in the mountain community."*

The Team are very grateful to Graham & Cally for stepping into the role and look forward to working with them.

## Del's old boots (Del Davies ran 'The Towers' for a number of years)



My first pair of boots were worn to attend my junior school which was run entirely in Welsh by the Welsh League of Youth (Yr Urdd) at Llest not far from the Waun above today's Penglais campus in Aberystwyth. It was very rural and fairly muddy there in those days. The boots had leather soles but were fitted with steel 'horseshoes' on toe and heel, excellent for producing sparks on rocky ground with the right sort of kick. We must have had slippers or something like that to wear inside the school building which was a fine Victorian villa surrounded by fields and woods. It's now an old folks home. I did not wear boots other than wellies again until I came up to Aber in '62 from Llandysul to where my parents had moved from Aber so this is mainly the history of my second pair of boots.

I signed up to join the Mountaineering club on Freshers Weekend in '62 along with my room mate Tom Owen, neighbouring Pantycelyn fresher Jeff Gough and many others. Soon afterwards we were invited by Bill Dean [A serving team member], also a Panty resident in those days, to have our feet measured up so that he could send off for some boots suitable for mountaineering by mail order. One was supposed to wear a 'mountaineering stocking' and draw around the outline of one's feet on an order form. We did this and a parcel soon arrived with assorted boots mine being from Messrs Robert Lawrie. I was a slip of a boy in those days weighing about 7 1/2 stone so the boots seemed huge and ungainly and even Bill wondered whether I should return them and order a lighter pair. Fresher's weekend was imminent however so I decided to keep the Lawries which despite their apparent bulk were a good fit. I amused fellow students by wearing my boots to lectures which were all in town in those days hoping to get them broken in on the daily commute down and up Penglais Hill by the time of the meet weekend.

One if not two coaches were required to get the large Aber group up to Ogwen for the Freshers weekend. We stayed at the London Uni hut next door to Gwern y Gôf Isaf farm in the valley. The hut was packed and many people had to sleep on the floor. A fine and clear Friday night was followed by a sunny weekend, ideal for my chosen option of rock climbing. I was not a complete novice because having lived in Aber previously, my Sunday School companion Meurig and I had seen students grappling with climbing problems on the sea wall near Alexandra Hall and had struggled up one or two of these ourselves when we were 13 or 14 years old. We also did some scary scrambling on Consti and I had climbed down the crumbling 'Window' Buttress beyond the breakwater with the rusty iron ladders North of the 'Bar' end of Aber Prom. Tim Sparrow (currently President of the XAba club) thinks that may have been a first descent or ascent of this feature. Madness! Done in my Sunday best shoes!

John Jenkins was our leader on the Saturday in Ogwen and our group of three had a brief introduction to the rope work then set off for Tryfan and Heather Terrace searching for the start of Gashed Crag route. I found my big boots clumsy at first but effective on the smaller holds though I had a bit of a struggle on the chimney pitch, this being an unfamiliar technique. The East face of Tryfan was very impressive but without much experience of examining rock faces I found the jumble of rocks a bit confusing at first. It was a brilliant day out and even when we discovered that the 'Panty' food box had been raided by other unscrupulous hut dwellers we managed to have a good fry up in the

evening. The following day we went, again with John, to Bochlwyd Buttress to climb but whilst descending unroped from the first climb there I got on to some steeper rock, slipped, fell on to a ledge but lost my balance and fell down the full length of the easy slab or 'glacis' on that side of the crag. My boots had a sort of pendulum effect so I turned a few somersaults in mid air as I bounced on the way down and rolled a fair bit further down the hillside too before coming to a halt after about 150'. Amazingly I was more or less unhurt and was able to walk down unaided. This accident was hushed up because of fears about continued Union funding for the mountaineering club ... sadly a club member had been killed descending from a climb in the Llanberis Pass the previous year and questions had been asked and warnings about safety issued. Back in Aber I had slight stiffness in my wrist so visited a GP who sent me for an X-Ray which revealed a fractured Scaphoid bone resulting in three months in a plaster which immobilised my thumb! The doctor also mentioned in passing that he had seldom seen worse bruising on a patient, I was unaware of this because it was mostly on my back. Neither the bruising or the fracture caused much pain so I carried on climbing and walking and learnt to write after a fashion with my good hand.



*Bill Dean leading Hounds Head Buttress*

There was some good snow that year so the boots were great for kicking steps and generally getting around in Winter weather. Next Spring I resumed 'real' rock climbing and at a club meet in Tremadog followed Bill Dean up Hound's Head Buttress, a climb since demolished by blasting because the huge 'hound's head' block was unstable and threatened a cottage and the roadway below. Permits to climb on this part of the cliff were obtained from Captain Livingstone Learmonth, a geologist who lived in Plas Tan yr Allt also below the crag and who had spotted and measured the movement in the hound's head block.

Later in the Summer of '63 I found myself back on Tryfan with John Jenkins. I had done a fair bit of easy climbing and much bouldering at Aber in my big boots but not much in the way of serious lead climbing. John was vague about our objective that day but we ended up below the Terrace Wall high on the East face, he climbed up a short pitch and belayed near the right hand side of the wall saying "have a look at the next pitch". I climbed up and out of his sight and spent twenty minutes or so teetering on small holds in the big boots before managing a tricky little sequence of moves and ending up on a higher ledge. In concentrating on the moves I had blotted out the rest of my surroundings so that when I had fixed a belay and sat down to bring John up my contemplation of the full glory of Cwm Tryfan and the surrounding hills was a revelatory and almost spiritual experience! The climb was Belle Vue Bastion, my first serious lead. As we descended Cwm Bochlwyd we were keen to try a route on the E face of Glyder Fach but as we approached the cliff heard a cry and saw a climber plunging down the upper rocks. I failed to climb the rocks directly below where he had been held by his second but eventually we were able to get to him from the side and help to haul him on to a ledge. He had sustained a serious head injury but was conscious at times and his female partner had bad rope burns from holding the fall. Ogwen rescue arrived speedily and we spent the rest of the day assisting with the rescue. The casualty survived and recovered but we lost some precious carabiners during the rescue and there was much discussion later in the day down at Ogwen Cottage as to who should drive the casualty's car (a smart Jag, possibly an E type) to Bangor hospital but as a non driver I was more worried about the lost kit.



Not long after this, climbing shoes made their appearance in Aber. The early models were PAs [Manufactured by Pierre Allain] and I soon acquired a pair which were a major step forward in rock climbing footwear so the big boots were reserved for Winter use and hillwalking and were invaluable during a visit to a very cold camp in Glencoe where the snow conditions were excellent for winter mountaineering.

In '64/65 myself, Lloyd Forsey and Bernie Norton shared a flat on Cliff Road in Borth. The motor cycles with which we intended to commute to Aber proved unreliable and whereas the other two kept working on their courses I became very disillusioned about my chances of graduating and more or less dropped out of academic work. Long walks in to Aber along the cliffs and up towards Pumlumon took over as well as some casual work on our landlord's milk round. I climbed a lot with Lloyd and friends and did some excellent routes including Cenotaph Corner with Mike Scott. Bootwise the Lawries featured on an ascent of Pincushion at Tremadoc. As the name implies in those days it was mostly an

artificial route [It is now E2 6a] and Mike was keen to peg it. I wore my big boots mainly for comfort standing in etriers but once over the main overhang realised that in order to remove some of Mike's pegs I had to stand on little footholds and realised that most of the route was potentially free climbing and some years later I repeated it in that style with Lloyd. Rather than sit and inevitably fail my finals, during the exam week I escaped to Skye with ex Aber student Tom Kerridge who was by then teaching in Nantwich. We travelled there by motorbike heavily loaded with climbing gear and wearing our full mountaineering kit including boots and despite a crash on the Loch Lomond road and a tent fire in Glen Nevis we did eventually get to the Cuillins, camped at Glen Brittle in our scorched tent and did some fine climbing and mountaineering there. Ian Clough and his wife were also camping on the site and Ian, who had recently climbed the N Wall of the Eiger with Chris Bonington, was guiding a client on the Cuillins and he let us have details of some exciting new routes so on the last day of a fine spell we completed the second ascent of the dramatically situated route King Cobra [E1 5b] just as a heavy rain storm came in from the sea. The bike broke down in Glasgow on the return journey and I hitched back to Aber to face the music. Later that Summer I was part of an Aber expedition to Arctic Norway which came to a sudden end when the club lorry crashed in South Germany.

Lawrie's boots are a vintage collectors item these days. In the '60's the 'off the shelf' ones were remarkably good value for an all round hand made mountaineering boot. Graham Greene's brother had been on the 1933 Everest Expedition and for that Lawrie's had made him a special pair of size 15's! I had won a 'book purchase' scholarship bursary of £25 when I completed my A levels and with that I had paid for the boots, a Black's Icelandic sleeping bag and a Bergen rucksack.

By '65 my boots were well worn but a resole that year restored them to good climbing condition. During the Summer of '65 Lloyd, myself, Ronnie Auld and his climbing partner Simon drove to the Dolomites. All our climbing there was done in boots; we traversed the Cinqua Dita, climbed on the Sella Towers and did the Steger route and several others in the nearby Catinaccio range. Returning via Chamonix we did more climbing in the Mt Blanc range which, despite the repairs, caused my boots to slowly deteriorate and that holiday came to an end when I badly scalded my feet whilst cooking rice on a Primus stove and returned to the UK with Bill Dean and friends in his vintage and much travelled Land Rover. Godders (Mike Nurse) nobly gave up his seat for me and hitched back to the UK. In an interval of stormy weather at Chamonix we had escaped to the Calanques near to Cassis where climbing in big boots on the dazzlingly white limestone cliffs above the sea was a novelty.

My brief history of the Lawries boots is drawing to a close. After the busy Summer of '65 I must have bought a pair by a different maker. For years I could not find anything that was as good all round as the Lawries whilst my original and now very tatty pair languished on a shelf somewhere, sadly I forget where and what eventually became of them.

Some years later Godders and I met ex-Aber student Beti Wyn on one of her return trips from Canada or the US to visit her family in Bethesda. We met in Arvons on the High Street, that much missed outdoor shop in Bethesda. Godders replaced one of his signature white balaclavas and Bert, the man in charge at Arvons sold me a pair of second hand lightweight boots made by a firm called Zenith. Wonderful all purpose climbing footwear but their's and my story from then on is another chapter.

**I recently scanned some 2.5" glass slides. Do you know where they are?**





# SAR - The future?

Way back in 2007, the ability to locate Lost Persons (LostPer's) using their mobile phone browser was innovated and SARLOC was released to UK MR teams and SAR teams around the world. For those that don't know, SARLOC allow teams to precisely locate a LostPer when people 'phone up and say "It has gone dark and we don't know where we are. Can you come and help me". The LostPer is sent a text message with a URL in it and when they click on it, the location of the person is displayed on mapping systems back at base.

When Russ Hore presented an update on SARLOC at the MREW Conference in Leeds in 2012, the last slide he showed gave a taster of the future tools that may be available to SAR teams.

Well the future has come a little bit closer with another innovation from the SARLOC stable.

Many smartphones have 'apps' that provide and Augmented Reality (hence the **AR** in the title) display of your surroundings.

An 'app' will soon be released to testers that goes part of the way towards what Russ envisaged.

Currently running on iOS (iPads/iPhones), the 'app' will allow any object to be displayed in Augmented Reality. So SARLOC hits, team members radios, aircraft, vehicles, footpaths, search areas, cave systems, etc. Navigating to a LostPer is as simple as holding up the 'phone and seeing how far away and above/below you they are.

The app' will only be available to SAR Teams.



*Future possibilities.....  
(MREW Conference Leeds 2012)*



The newsletter relies on contributions from the membership and supporters.

Please think about writing an article or providing a picture.

Please email [heather.beale@ogwen-rescue.org.uk](mailto:heather.beale@ogwen-rescue.org.uk) if you would prefer an electronic version of the newsletter in the next copy

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