

WESSEX MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Contents

COMMITTEE REPORTS	Page
President – Max Streeton	2
Secretary – Steve Wales	2
Treasurer - Chris Cumming	3
Programme Secretary – Dave Johnson	4
Meet Secretary – Alan Blanchflower	5
Social Secretary – Anita Christensen	5
Membership Secretary – Anne-Marie Shepherd	5
Newsletter Editor – Henry Larden & Anna Tonkin	6
Hut Secretary – Andy Cumming on behalf of Phil Abraham and Jodi Longyear	7
Website Manager – Tracy Sutton	7
Additional member – Michelle Byrne	8

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PRESIDENT – Max Streeton

I think it is fair to say it has been a fantastic year for the club.

The membership has increased from being around 150 the last few years, to nearly 190. More importantly these people have been getting out on our meets. We have regularly seen 15-20 people on meets, and some meets have been oversubscribed. For the next Scottish winter meet we currently have 27 people down to go.

The increased membership is in part due to effort to raise the profile of the club, such as social media. Also events that are both a benefit to our members and also publicise the club help. For example the evening training sessions at the Project Climbing wall. However the main reason people join (or rejoin) and more important stay is that we are an active and friendly club.

Next year we will improve the image of the club with the new logo developed by Tracy. This will be on the new membership cards and car stickers you receive when you renew your membership.

We have also been developing further the training in the club. There has been the climbing training mentioned and a weekend session at Swanage. We have held a very popular two day 1st aid course which was run by club member Rob Williams. We also had an evening navigation training course, and recently groups have been going out practising their navigation skills. We would like to continue to develop training so suggestions are always welcome.

The finances of the club are in a good state. The increased membership clearly helps, the hut is seeing increased usage, and we have had a grant from the BMC for equipment, and income from the BMC/Sherpa event which is being used to fund training. We also made £182 from the sale of gear kindly donated to the club by the late Geoff Scott. This means despite the increase in the fee paid to the BMC, income is up, allowing the option to do more in the future. It also means we can continue with donations to the Llanberis and Ogwen mountain rescue teams.

Looking forward we will have the usual popular programme of trips and events for next year, but also what I think is the first official club mountaineering trip outside the Alps, that being to the Cordillera Blanca in Peru. Nine of us have already bought their plane tickets for this.

All of this increased activity takes increased work to organise it, so we should all thank the members of the committee and other members for their hard work. Many of these have been on the committee for a number of years and some plan to stand down this year. It would be great to see people coming forward to offer to help, rather than feeling I have to push people into volunteering. In particular it would be good to have some of the newer members on the committee. You don't need years of experience of the club, on the contrary new ideas are good.

Lastly on a sadder note, we have seen the death of a number of our members this year. Alan Evans, Geoff Scott, John Baddesley and Stephanie Roberts. Perhaps inevitable in a large club that has been around for over 50 years, but sad none the less.

SECRETARY – Steve Wales

There have been a total of 5 committee meetings this year. The Ringwood pub crawl that we started last year has now come to an end and we've gone back to hiring a room for the committee meeting.

Holding meetings in the bars of pubs wasn't working with the meetings often being disrupted by other groups of people.

The club received a BMC equipment grant to purchase ice axes and crampons. The value of the grant was £200 and this needs to be matched by the club. To date a pair of mountaineering axes have been purchased and a pair of technical axes. A pair of technical crampons will be purchased before the Scottish Winter meet. The total cost to date has been £400 with a further £100-£120 expenditure planned.

Some of the money raised from the BMC/Sherpa lecture and masterclass that the club ran last year has been used to subsidise a First Aid course that was held in November with Bob Williams (a long standing club member and experienced First Aid instructor).

TREASURER – Chris Cumming

This has been another very successful year for the Club. Membership numbers have swelled from 155 to 188 at the time of writing this report, which is very encouraging. The usual club activities have been fully maintained, meets have all been well attended and generally costs controlled. Our net worth has increased by £4,194 this year (£52,169 - £47,975) due to the net profits £1,832.84 on the general account and £2,360.57 on the hut account.

General Account

The General Account profit increased by £628 compared to last year.

On the income side, although our subscription costs remained the same this year at £23.00 for a full member, the amount of the subs received increased substantially by £856.00 due to the new members. We received a compensation payment £350.00 from Barclays, £182.00 from the Geoff Scott auction and an equipment grant £200.00 from the BMC.

Expenses have increased this year, the main reason being the increased capitation costs. The secretarial costs include the new membership cards and car stickers. However Henry and Anna managed to produce the excellent newsletters at no cost at all!

We made a very good profit £352.91 on the BMC lecture and Masterclass (shown under Meets) which is earmarked for training. Otherwise there was an overall loss of £235 in total on all the meets and social events this year which was due mainly to the loss on the Scottish Winter Meet. We continue to cost all the functions as carefully as we can to avoid large losses made on any one meet.

Donations of £80 have been made to each of Ogwen and Llanberis Mountain Rescue teams, both of which were very grateful for even this modest amount. We have paid £60 for affiliation to the Ramblers this year.

Hut at Pen y Clogwyn

The hut account shows a net profit of £2,360.57 compared to £1,976.66 last year.

The costs for staying at the hut remained the same. Fees received from members sadly dropped but non-members fees increased yet again by £577. The hut continues to be popular and well used regularly by non-members, many of whom who take advantage of the sole occupancy rate.

Hut overheads remained at a constant level overall and no large, costly capital expenditure was incurred.

Balance Sheet

Our assets are the property at Pen y Clogwyn together with the fixtures and fittings and the stock which is the Calor gas bottles stored there. We also have £24,096.28 savings and cash in the two current accounts compared to £21,001.50 last year. The closing debtors £2,240.00 include the deposits (payments in advance) for the First Aid Course, the Scottish Winter Meet, the Slide Show and the Christmas Meet.

Comment

The committee are always conscious of the need to attract new members and for members to get value for their subscriptions. We try to ensure that there are always adequate and appealing events available for the members and that money is spent sensibly on subsidising those events where possible.

Although there has been another boost to our funds this year we are always aware of potential costly work needing to be done at Pen y Clogwyn. As usual, I consider that our savings should remain as far as possible, as a capital buffer against that. However next year we are looking to spend some money on more training and equipment and if anyone has any ideas about the sort of training they would like, or indeed anything which they feel the club could usefully provide for the members, then please let the committee know – we won't know unless you do.

Audit

Jack Crewe has kindly audited the accounts. Thank you Jack.

PROGRAMME SECRETARY – Dave Johnson

The first meet of the year is at PYC closely followed by the Scottish winter meet, this year in Roy Bridge with good access to the Ben, Creag Meagaidh and the Cairngorms. For Easter we have a new members meet at PYC with the aim of getting new members out climbing/walking with long standing members. Maybe the President will dream up a theme for the trip. The usual selection of weekend meets are scattered throughout the year and include the popular venues of the Peaks, Cornwall and Pembroke along with the less frequently visited Anglesey and Wintours Leap (Wye Valley). July sees 9 members heading off to Peru's Cordillera Blanca for a month, climbing and trekking in some larger mountains with an opportunity for those staying in Blighty to bring their families up to the Hut. Sun rock follows this and is looking for an organizer to gather a group, select a sunny venue and book some accommodation. Many thanks to Paul and Jill for taking on this role this year. The year rounds up with the slide show, a first aid course and the traditional Christmas dinner meet, followed by the usual Christmas - New Year festivities at PYC.

MEET SECRETARY – Alan Blanchflower

It's been a good year for meet attendance, with several meets oversubscribed, including the Lake District, Roaches and North Pembroke.

Conditions weren't great for last year's Winter Meet in Torrington, which may explain the relatively low turnout. Despite this, people got out walking or climbing every day. Next year's trip to Roy Bridge is already full, so it seems winter climbing is as popular as ever.

The summer calendar got underway with a trip to Borrowdale in the Lake District for Easter. Excellent weather (especially considering the time of year) and fine climbing and walking made for a successful meet, with several new members coming along.

In May, we had the first ever WMC bouldering trip to Fontainebleau. Despite less than perfect weather and the campsite flooding, everyone who went thought it was fun. It's back on the calendar for next year.

The weather forecast for the Lundy meet in August was poor, but despite a rough crossing and rain every morning, we managed to climb every afternoon. Add some ropework practice from the balcony in the barn and evenings in the Marisco Tavern made for another successful trip.

The late summer meets in South Pembroke, Cornwall and the Peak District were all well attended, and good weather meant some fine climbing was done. A group of members extended their climbing summer with a Sun Rock trip to Costa Blanca, climbing in the sun while the rest of us hid from the autumn rain back in England.

The provisional meet calendar should now be on the website, book early to avoid disappointment!

SOCIAL SECRETARY – Anita Christensen

The social meets this year were well supported. The BBQ was at the Burnbake Campsite, near Wareham, with some free beer from a micro-brewery (thanks to Emma) to entice people, lots of food and chatter and a fire for the evening.

The slide show had presentations on climbing in Morocco, the summer Alps meet, the Sun Rock trip to Spain and climbing in America, Germany, Sicily, the Czech Republic and Albania from Scott, plus others including a commemorative piece from Jack Crewe, Scotland from Steve and Helen and a mix of meets from Daj.

The Christmas Dinner meet was held at Pinkery Youth Hostel on Exmoor with Terry Pratchett's Discworld as the fancy dress theme and most people managing to conjure up a costume (well done to Helen and Steve for winning both 'best' and 'most original' costume). Mountain biking and hiking were the main outdoor activities for the weekend.

I have enjoyed being involved in the preparations this year and hope everyone had a good time.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY – Anne-Marie Shepherd

Membership is up this year to 188 members.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Henry Larden & Anna Tonkin

We will have published another 4 newsletters this year. Lots of interesting articles were received throughout the year – although (as ever) a lot of chasing needs to be done after club meets to get a report!

We have not printed any newsletters this year. A half-hearted attempt was made at the start of the year, but this was quickly abandoned.

A new format is being trialled with the Winter 2015 newsletter, based on Tracy's new club branding. This should make it easier to read when scrolling through it on a computer screen. I'm not sure how many people print out the newsletters at home – hopefully they're still legible on paper!

Anna and I will be stepping down after editing the newsletter for two years. We hope that a new(ish) member of the club decides to take on this role, as you get to have fun finding out what everyone's been doing (and not too demanding as long as not too many Scottish mountain names have been used!).

HUT SECRETARY – Report by Andy Cumming on behalf of Phil Abraham and Jodi Longyear

Hut Bookings

Another good year for hut bookings and use with the use by both members and non-members good although as has been the case for a number of years non-member bookings are far more numerous. I find that many people who stay at the hut get back to me to say how much they enjoyed it.

Club members will no doubt be aware that we have had a number of situations with the hut and although a lot has been done, there are some important areas where we need to improve or upgrade the arrangements (see my note on the Hut Maintenance below). Despite this there is very little criticism, but I think this is more a combination of the great location and the hardy attitude of the mountain folk who use the hut and accent on positive rather than not having any need to improve matters.

Recently issues with the water purification have led to us having to post notices on the website about boiling water to drink which is not something that we would like to see continue for too long. So all appears fine so far but I consider that as a club we do need to focus on what needs to be done at the hut to continue to improve matters.

Hut Maintenance

Paul Crowsley, after several busy and productive years as Hut Secretary stood down at the AGM in 2015. Paul had carried out the change of lighting from gas to electric and the installation of the generator and solar power units during his time as Hut Secretary. After some enquiry to the club we found that Phil Abraham had retired from the Fire Service and was likely to have some spare time. Unfortunately he found that he was required back for a consultancy post on emergency team training and he had to resign.

So we were faced with a number of things that needed to be done in 2015 that hadn't been. Max has as usual stepped in to help and made arrangements with the Council for the testing they required and he and Paul after many email discussions did something to sort out the generator and battery situation for this winter and re-stocking after the hiatus. Then a Fire Office complained about the stack of empty gas bottle, which luckily we managed to store and secure with some help from people going up to the hut in the next week or so. Thanks.

We have now found a new Hut Secretary in Jodi Longyear since this October however, like many of us, he is also busy with other things and he has hardly got to grips with the situation yet. Issues that are most demanding on us at this time include the water quality which failed the test because the UV filter had packed up. The UV filter has now been fixed but we are still awaiting a re-test. The generator and battery situation needs to be upgraded to a more reliable system. Signage and information need improvement. The septic tank and its covers, worms and many other things. Jodi and the committee would appreciate any help that members can give. That includes letting me know if there are any shortages or problems after a trip to the hut.

WEBSITE MANAGER – Tracy Sutton

Marketing

It's been a productive and enjoyable 1st year for me on the committee. I've enjoyed learning more about the club and it's been great to be involved in helping the club grow and evolve.

I've developed a refreshed logo that will roll out across the website, membership cards, car stickers and digital updates/newsletters. Next year may also see the introduction of WMC t-shirts!

The new Facebook Page is in its infancy in terms of how it connects with other organisations, we've had some good interactions with The Project which has brought the site more traffic. The Facebook Group page has had a good increase of interaction with people using it as a valuable way to connect with others to arrange local and national meets.

The recent collaboration with The Project for free monthly coaching skills sessions has been a great free resource to focus members on a united evening to climb at the project and of course to give them valuable skills to progress their climbing technique. We'd like to see more people taking advantage of this as we usually have 5 free places.

We've also just established a discount for those members who climb at QE in Wimborne.

Work needs to be done to help members to understand the value of the committee - without the committee the club would not exist. If we can increase awareness, then we can help them understand the importance of getting involved and hopefully we'll have some people step up to committee places.

This is difficult as no-one really sees what goes on behind the scenes, especially as the AGM currently has little appeal. The reformatting/updating of the AGM is key to increasing appeal - as a committee I think we need to collaboratively challenge some peoples pre-conceived ideas of what an AGM is. The important formalities need to be balanced out with getting members ideas and input

into the club. Members need to feel part of the club not just a member who benefits from the existence of the club.

Hopefully the updated format of the AGM and additional promotion will help. I also suggest that committee members take it upon themselves to personally rally up 3-5 members each to come to the AGM, word will spread and it will be a great social get together as well as an important process to keep the club alive.

This will take time but hopefully our friendly, welcoming approach will encourage more people to come along.

Website Admin

The addition of the membership management last year was the last major addition to the new web site. This has worked well, reducing admin and making it easier to join the club with the online application.

Since then it has been mainly minor refinements, such as adding the members map.

The focus has now shifted to adding content. The historical photographs compiled by Jack Crewe have been a very interesting addition. I have added some items in the 'general information' section but further suggestion for additions here would be good. Making the web site a useful resource of information is both helpful to all of us, but also helps attract people to the club.

The Facebook group has continued to provide a valuable forum for the club, allowing discussions and the organisation of ad hoc trips. People often join this group, perhaps coming to the climbing wall then join the club.

ADDITIONAL MEMBER – Michelle Byrne

Have become custodian of the club equipment.