

# NANTMOR NEWS

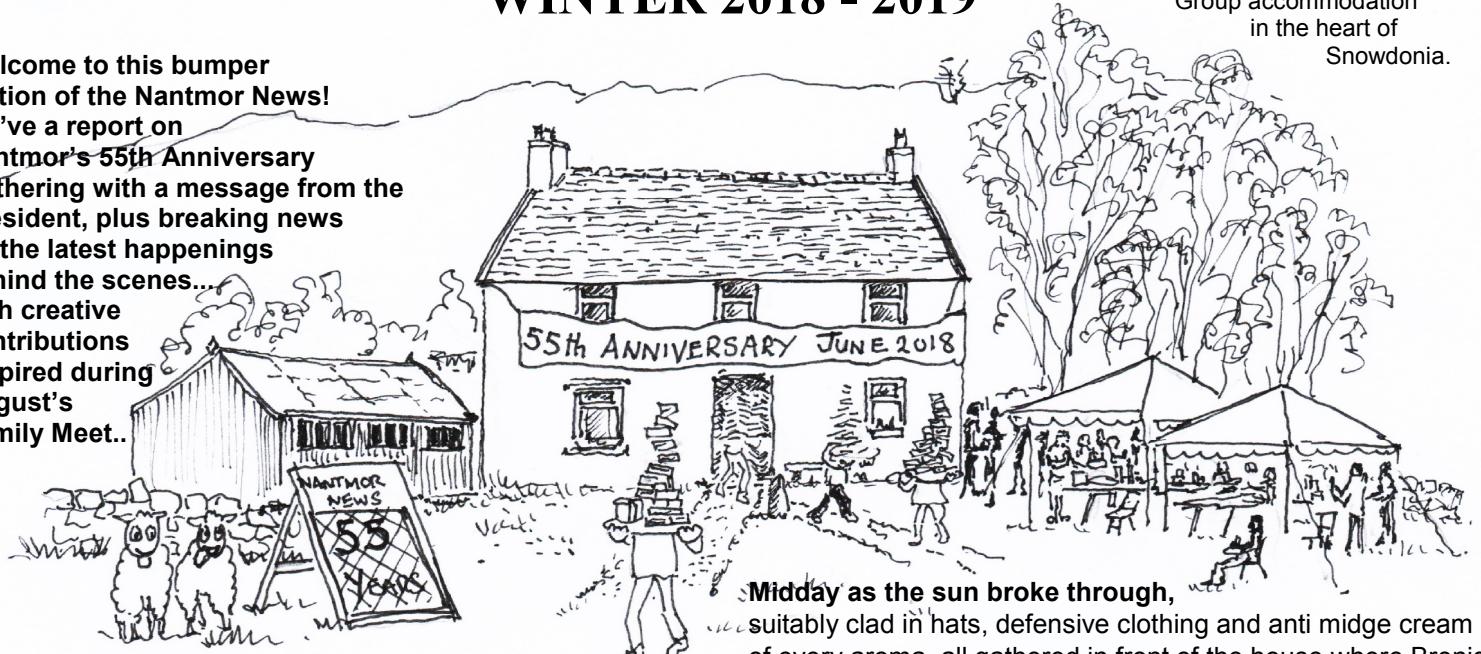
## WINTER 2018 - 2019

Welcome to this bumper edition of the Nantmor News!

We've a report on Nantmor's 55th Anniversary

Gathering with a message from the President, plus breaking news on the latest happenings behind the scenes...

with creative contributions inspired during August's Family Meet..



### 2018 heralded a year of extremes! Not least

in this valley where for weeks on end streams froze over and Llagi's waterfall morphed into a massive icicle, footsteps resonated on frozen ground and the slopes lay silent in an icy grip; only to be followed by the hottest summer on record with soil like dust, stream beds dry and little relief from mountain breezes. Then the rain! October's work weekenders came close to being marooned when the main stream flooded, abating just in time for Sunday's escape. Such is mountain weather!

**Fortunately the long awaited 55th Anniversary weekend** landed between these extremes. By Thursday the long anticipated pilgrimage had started, individuals, couples and small groups weaving their way from distant corners of the globe to converge on that extraordinary place, Gelli Iago. By the evening, a rather damp valley saw visitors and helpers arriving, many offloading carloads of goodies, from wine glasses to gazebos and food to fairy lights. Throughout Friday the place was abuzz with activity, whilst an assortment of tents began to appear on the field, some tellingly dating their owners, all in an atmosphere of excitement and happy anticipation.

**Saturday dawned mild, grey and ominously calm.** The much hoped for warmer weather had indeed arrived, justifying this year's later June celebration rather than its usual time in May. Cruelly so had the midges! Hopes for a severe winter extermination were dashed as the vicious creatures appeared from nowhere in their millions, seemingly having starved themselves in readiness for the onslaught. Having lain low all winter their well led assault quickly and efficiently penetrated every corner of enemy territory, threatening to drive away the faint hearted. But our own well disciplined lines held their ranks in the kitchen and despite the potentially debilitating attack all hands were soon on deck in the D.I.Y. buffet department, with exotic fruit salads appearing, trayfuls of locally supplied meats and savouries and an army of dedicated sandwich makers duplicating mountainous platefuls of butties. The kitchen was soon bursting

**Midday as the sun broke through,** suitably clad in hats, defensive clothing and anti midge cream of every aroma, all gathered in front of the house where Brenig as President - 'The Breing' - welcomed members and supporters of the Association, representatives of the National Trust and neighbours from the valley to this, the 55th Anniversary of The Nantmor Mountain Centre. Brenig, who has himself continually, and amazingly, served the Association for *thirty* of those years, spoke of the changes he had seen not only in farming practices on the hillsides above, but to Gelli Iago itself and now, significantly, within the Association and of his optimism that 'Nantmor' will continue well into the future. Glasses were raised, midges swatted and repellent cream renewed, before Andrew Sheehan, alias 'Spider', whose own Nantmor days took off in the late '60's, proudly launched as co-editor a glossy, full colour second edition of the 50th Anniversary Anthology, 'Fifty Years Plus', as a surprise to all.

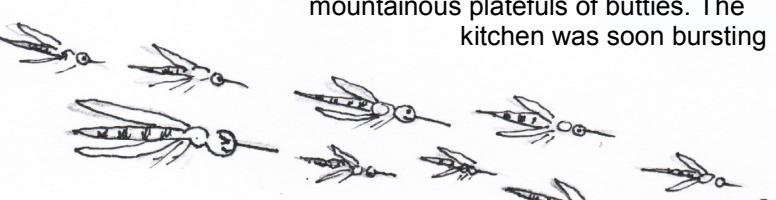
**Messages were conveyed** from others sadly unable to attend, including several who had played key roles in Nantmor's early as well as more recent years: Tony Tatford, Roy Peacock, Mike Thirsk, Brian Stephens, Tony Farmer and from David Dean, whose words are included here. Glasses were again raised, books purchased and signed, friendships renewed and memories recalled, before hunger drew folk indoors to make inroads into the mountains of food now assembled. And what a spread it was!

**With appetites eventually appeased**, some drifted away to rediscover old haunts, others stayed chatting - and there's no denying that a few sneaked off for an afternoon nap. Batteries re-charged, all returned for Bob and Edwin's barbecue and to spend more hours into the night reuniting with friends who share a common love, that of Gelli Iago and 'Nantmor'.

**Sunday brought glorious sunshine.** After a late start those able to stay another day enjoyed nostalgic walks, intrepid bouldering, or even skinny dipping in icy waters, returning for another evening in good company, many determined to come back again before the 60th!

with generous donations extracted from cars, camper vans and cool boxes, and before long all suitable dining room surfaces were spread with a feast fit for a king.

The newsletter of the Nantmor Mountain Centre. Group accommodation in the heart of Snowdonia.



## Message to the 55th Gathering from David Dean OBE:

**Of the many local residents** I was lucky to spend time with during my thirteen years at Gelli Iago and later Fedw Bach, few have remained so vividly in my mind as Will Roberts of the Chapel House, Nantgwynant. Known throughout the district as Will Bwlch he was a great teller of stories. Will epitomised the oral tradition, now well recognised as making a vital contribution to the history of these islands. Will worked at the slate mines of Blaenau Ffestiniog and would walk the route from his home via Llyn Llagi, as late as the light would allow on a Sunday and return to his family on a Friday evening. During the week he shared a bothy with fellow miners.

**It was Will who told me about the fire path** which weaves its way from the original longhouse Gelli Iago, past the now tiny ruin, the name of which escapes me and on to Fedw Bach and Cefn Gerynt. It may possibly have reached as far as Bryn Bedd, I can't be sure but Margaret Griffith there would know. Lighting of fires was a complicated business. A small piece of burning fire would be taken from one dwelling to the next and then on to others as and when needed. This facility was more an essential service than we might imagine today and although in Pagan times it was considered unlucky to give away a piece of your fire, the practice was alive and well in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when the original Fedw Bach was built. This fear was one aspect of Pagan ritual that Christians in the form of the Chapel presbyterians did not adopt into their faith as was so often the case. Their interpretation of it in more modern parlance would be that it was an act of grace, an exchange of energy, as for sure the debt of gratitude would be paid many times over in the lives of the inhabitants of the Blaen Nantmor.



Fedw Bach, Bwlch y Calch and Gelli Iago, the fire path between

**This time honoured sense of community and mutual assistance and appreciation is one to envy isn't it?** Our modern day equivalent of the thought behind the fire path is the giving of practical assistance to our neighbours, respect and generosity, helping and supporting them in much the same way as we hope they would us. Members of the Nantmor Mountain Centre community, of course, live but a small part of their time at Gelli Iago itself. Rather like the Iona Community, we are spread all over this country and beyond. What binds us together and what you here today are demonstrating so explicitly is the comradeship, the feeling perhaps of having helped in the shaping of some young minds together with tasks undertaken together to keep the house and its surrounds together for future Members and those they bring with them.

**So by being here today**, and I so much wanted to join you but am prevented, you are resurrecting and keeping alive that piece of burning fire ready to be transmitted from group to group, meet to meet and which has bound us to this place for over half a century. Great success and happiness to you all, to our Association and, in particular, to those who, alongside the whole Membership, are the modern day custodians of how we manage our affairs. I don't know about you but I hope that for many years to come, our successors will gather here from time to time to celebrate what they have achieved for and with the next wave of Nantmor MC adventurers from all generations.

David

*Founder Warden 1963-65 and past President for 20 years or so, David is currently one of our four Vice Presidents.*

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**What a wonderful weekend the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary proved to be.** Great opportunity for friendship, reunion and celebration, real promise for the future. Thanks go to all who planned the event and contributed to the day. My family and I were overwhelmed by the welcome we received and I am only sorry that I was unable to help in the way I had intended, but I did manage to get there and it is obvious from the attendance that Nantmor means so much to so many people past and present. Much work was involved but it served as a great opportunity for reunion and to meet immediate neighbours in the valley.

**Congratulations to the Warden** in persuading the Trust to do much needed work to the roof, chimneys and end rear wall chimney. I barely noticed any effect of the hydro-electric scheme, so nature is already mitigating its effects.

**'Fifty Years Plus' is a superb record of 55 years of Nantmor**, full of memories and beautiful photography, well worth producing, and I am delighted and so grateful for my copy. It helped to remind us of the origins and the ghosts of the Association and the need to emphasise the future and the real need to identify and develop a new clientele.

Great hopes for the future.

Your President  
Brenig Garrett

### 'FIFTY YEARS PLUS'

**'Fifty Years Plus'** is a beautifully presented and illustrated compilation of articles and photographs contributed by past and present members of the Nantmor Mountain Centre, 'Gelli Iago', in Snowdonia, covering a wide range of topics from personal anecdotes and reminiscences to historical descriptions.

Anyone with connections to, or an interest in, the Nantmor Mountain Centre or the Nantmor area will derive great pleasure from this book.

**Published in A4 landscape format**, with 120 colourful pages, it makes a perfect 'coffee table' gift. Cost approx £10 plus p&p. As all original copies have been sold a reprint will shortly be available, please email [jane137@gmail.com](mailto:jane137@gmail.com) to order.

## MEANWHILE..

The house has had another facelift in front with three sturdy slate benches and landscaped pathways giving clear access to the door for unloading gear, the depleted box bush having graciously retired to our memories. Folklore has it that box was planted to protect a house from witches, its leaves being too tiny and confusing to count so they left well alone. We can only hope remaining local box trees will beam their magic around the valley..



**There's good news for broadband users** since internet provider Avanti have finally risen to the challenges of mountain and rock, uncooperative trees and water ingress, damage by sheep, birds and 'wild animals' (not to mention navigation to Gelli lago) and have at last restored the connection.

**We've a new system** to help recycling along with easy sorting and bagging, plus a bin store padlock to prevent passers-by from dumping un-bagged rubbish, which had become a smelly problem as our bins are emptied by hand due to no tipper lorries.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Thank you to members who responded to contact preference emails, which were obviously a legal necessity. If you've been to Gelli lago lately you may have missed the Visitors Book, so long a part of staying at the Centre, if only to look back at previous entries and jog memories of visits. At the 55th Anniversary many a nostalgic moment was spent perusing old entries written in the early days of the Centre. Alas no more. You *may* still sign your name but *that* page will be removed before the next visitors arrive, to comply with GDPR requirements. So be the Law, it seems, some things are destined to change.

## GREAT THINGS TO COME?

Nearly as old as NMC, the classroom simply can't hold out much longer and will have to undergo changes in the not too distant future, so we'll be looking at other options to give us a teeny bit more space. Obviously mountains aren't the place to add ~~brand new~~ buildings, so trustee-directors are scratching their heads for a solution - and who knows what palace might spring from.

Gelli lago

in

the

future...



## FROM THE WARDEN

**You'll be pleased to hear** that local electrician Nigel-down-the-valley has completed safety checks on all the sockets and appliances, plus other electrical work where necessary, so all is now safe and good.

**The bathroom**, always the subject of debate with mixed groups, is due for imminent attention to provide two separate and secure floor to ceiling shower and washing cubicles, which we hope to have in place by the Spring.

**After twelve years of use** since being acquired second hand from the YHA, our mattresses and pillows have at last reached the end of their life and are shortly to be evicted. They will happily be replaced with *brand* new, much more hygienic ones. So clean, comfy nights are in store for all!

## BEATING THE DAM BUSTERS

After decades of regular battling to rebuild yet another dam destroyed by heavy rain and trying to locate unseen blockages of leaves, we've a state-of-the-art masonry dam that looks fit to withstand any deluge the weather can throw at us. A big thank you to the National Trust, and in particular to Emrys Hall and his iconic dam-builder Ifor, whose amazing underwater brickwork and its resulting deep, clear collection pool now looks almost surreal in its setting of age old walls and the ruined wheel house, with the thundering waterfall behind. The new pool looks undeniably tempting on a hot day - but please DON'T swim there, it's our water supply!



## KEEPING TABS

**Don't forget to check out our website when you're surfing the net** [www.nantmormountaintcentre.co.uk](http://www.nantmormountaintcentre.co.uk) - keep tabs through social media and the new Instagram account with its dramatic glimpses of the stream in spate! We're hoping visitors will start sending their own videos to be uploaded, bringing people closer to the Centre however far away they live. Please get in touch if you have videos you'd like to share.

## CAN YOU HELP REVERSE A TREND?

**Back in the last century** volunteering was part of many folks' lives. It was fun, sociable and looked good on CV's. Sadly it's less trendy these days and volunteers are almost threatened with extinction, but Nantmor is a **membership organisation** which relies on those willing to give up time, it IS still fun to help on work weekends and we need your help!

**Please come and share your views at Open Meetings** (June and October), and **join us for the AGM**, to be held on **Wednesday 13th March**, or you can **Skype** if you can't get there. More details nearer the time. Hope to see you there!

## AUGUST BEATS THE RECORD

Though club weekends still enjoy a core of regulars there's always a welcome for newcomers, with the ever popular December Christmas 'Pud', the promised February 'Winter Warmer' with Bob as chef, and March's St David's Day Cawl cooked to perfection by Owen. Walking is of course still an option, if only to work up an appetite..

**But the month long August Family Meet is a bit different.** Historically, in the days when schools were our main users throughout the year, often for week long bookings, the summer holiday period was hardly used. So the August Family Meet was introduced as an extended Club Meet for the whole of the month, but it still left the centre empty for much of August. It's only more recently, since it's been possible for a family to book the Centre 'on their own', that it's really taken off.

### Now, each family group in August has its own meet leader

who's responsible for looking after the Centre and leaving it clean and tidy, who must be either an individual member used to the routine, or an Affiliated leader. There's no guarantee of being sole users, but often there's only one family and most people are happy to share. As with all club meets there's no minimum charge, and payments are made to the Treasurer after each visit.

**This year's August Meet was an all time record with every night booked apart from one,** so families had a wonderful time making the most of the heat wave, as did the musical Lindley family, who sent in these lovely contributions after their visit...

#### Walking up Cnicht

Joy Lindley, age 10, 2018.

This will tell you about some of the beautiful things me and my family saw.

As we were walking up, quite soon after we started out, a pair of raven appeared over a crag and started wheeling above us, their shiny, coal feathers catching the sun. A bit further on we spotted a newt scampering up the muddy trail and not much further on a group of round houses came into view; Jane knocked to see if anyone was in but they weren't.

As the boys, Jane, Grandad and Daddy carried on up Cnicht, me and mummy sat down and played the whistle for a while then trundled across the field. On the way some wheat-ears must have been nesting because they were suddenly everywhere, calling warnings and alarm calls. We clambered up the springy, moss covered rocks, soft and warm beneath our hands.

A waterfall roared down beside us and the midges buzzed around our heads. The view of Cnicht was phenomenal and we sat there with a breeze ruffling our hair. We spotted the others making their way down Cnicht and waved frantically to them, but they did not see us.

As we were making our way back, Isaac twisted his ankle and had to cool it in the stream, which was FREEZING!!!

Then I went in and made cups of tea for everyone.

**Thank you** to Joy, Alexander and Isaac Lindley for their contributions to this newsletter, also to Brenig Garrett and David Dean for their messages. Please send items for the next issue to: [jane137@gmail.com](mailto:jane137@gmail.com).

The Nantmor Mountain Centre is a small and friendly organisation. It has charitable status and since 1963 has been active in providing simple but memorable farmhouse accommodation for groups in its stunning location between Nantgwynant and Nantmor village in the Snowdonia National Park. Our members include Schools, Colleges, Scouts and Rambler's groups. We welcome interest from new users of this most unusual and rare facility. If you would like to have a chat with one of us and discuss how it might suit you or your group then please contact: the Warden: Mark Underwood, 01684 833004 [mcunderwood@btconnect.com](mailto:mcunderwood@btconnect.com) or the Secretary: Jane Pedley, 01766 890673 [jane137@gmail.com](mailto:jane137@gmail.com). Also find us on our website: [www.nantmormountaincentre.co.uk](http://www.nantmormountaincentre.co.uk)

## PEAK BAGGING PIONEERS

**Gelli Iago's been busy with Affiliated groups too.** Ever popular with Sarda's rescue dogs and Batchwood School, both making regular visits, it's still a firm weekend favourite with Stafford Scouts who've been members for years, and being virtually on their doorstep, a perfect overnight base for Ray Barnett and his Conway Scouts during their mountaineering weekends. Diddy kiddies from Dame Catherine Harpur's, our only Primary School member, simply love the place for their annual summer week long trip (especially Beddgelert's ice cream). But Michael Blake's Solihull Scouts topped the 2018 record for bednights, filling the Centre in September, their second visit this year, with twenty two budding mountainers who all proudly went home with badges.

**Welcome to new members Appleford School, who made their pioneering visit in the searing heat of July,** pouring

out of hot vehicles after their long haul from Wiltshire into a stunningly beautiful, crystal clear evening. What an introduction to North Wales! Over the next three days they amazingly climbed every 3,000 ft peak in Snowdonia, with 'Alpine starts' each day to beat the heat, staying an extra night to lap up the weather - and sleep! They absolutely loved it all, leader Mark Ball was 'bowled over by the place' and resolved to be back as soon as they can.

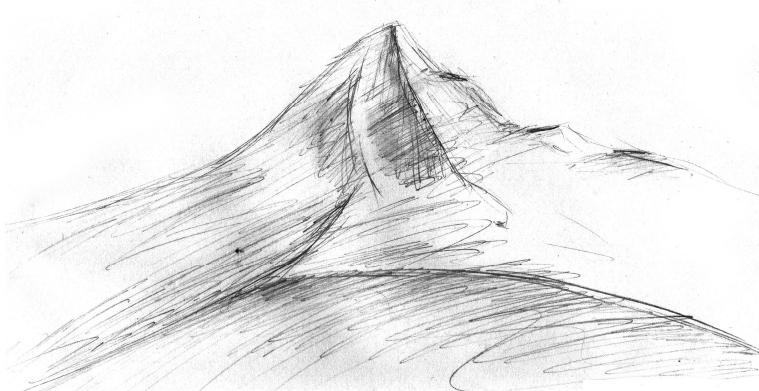


*Music from Isaac, top of Cnicht*

## SNOWDONIA

Sunny sky  
Now birds fly  
On through bleak  
White snow capped peaks  
Down to ground  
On wings spread proud  
Never will this  
Image fade from mind  
Again.

*Alexander Tobias Lindley*



*Isaac Lindley*

*Cnicht 27/11/18 JEL*