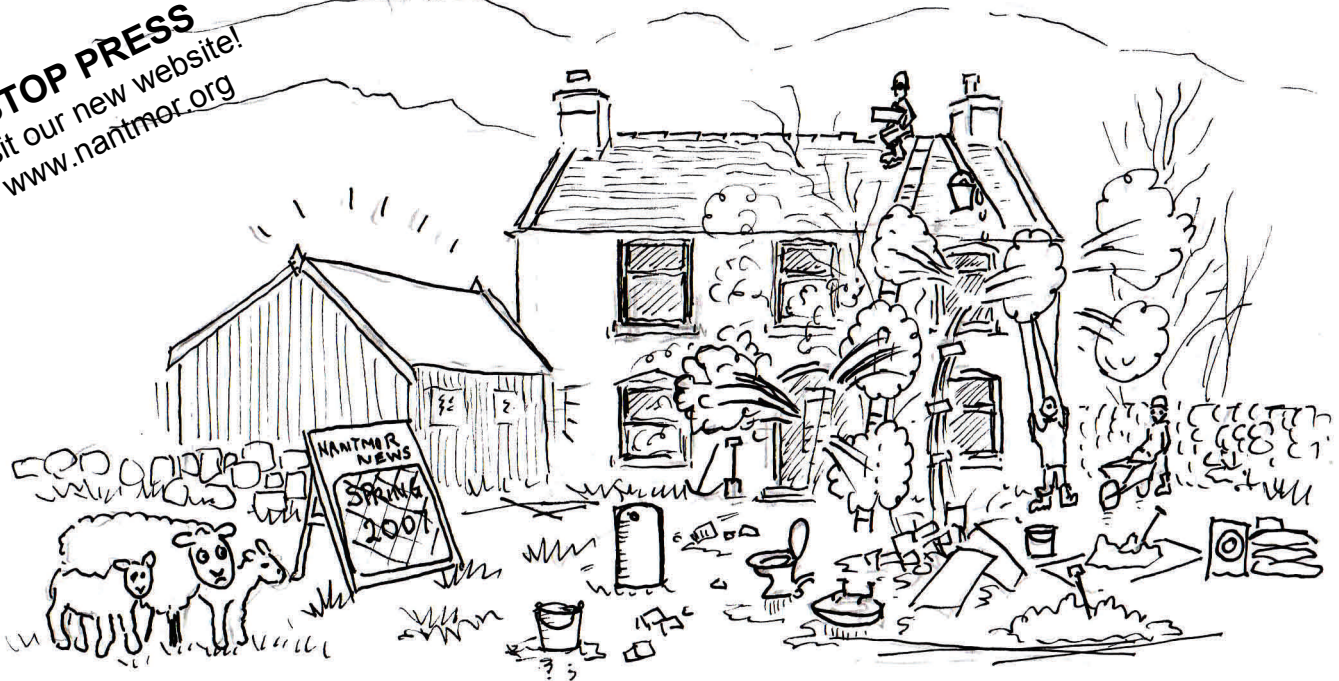


NANTMOR NEWS

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

This time we have reports of the Centre's latest mod cons, we hear from Arrow Vale High School, from the Warden and there's a special supplement from past member Andrew Sheehan (alias Spider) in which he shares memories of Nantmor.

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HISTORY IS MADE!

A momentous weekend in February...

Echoes of destruction rang through the building as much of Gelli Iago disappeared under a shroud of masonry dust and plaster. Not, in fact, demolition but the start of work on the long-awaited new bathroom!

For three days John Laithwaite and his faithful crew laboured in true Mancurian spirit as they began removing the old wall of Hebog bedroom, constructed a new one (bigger bathroom now), battled to remove the old and immensely heavy hot water tank from the loft (it was precariously lowered by rope with a final "controlled" descent of the stairway via ladder..), and with Keith's expertise installed a new tank in the now partly floored loft. They even rotated the toilet 90 degrees in readiness for the forthcoming cubicle (disorientating and downright confusing!).

Meanwhile up on the roof, seemingly oblivious to the untimely weather, sat Dave absorbing the views as he methodically re-bedded each of the ridge tiles to fix the leaks, fed by Barry with buckets of fresh mortar. Later Alec revealed his skill – brilliance – in plastering, as did Gary in steadily tea-making (and washing up!) throughout the weekend.

A big thank you to all the team for giving their time, their labour and good company! We look forward to their return in April for "phase two" ..and even more to indulging in the new facilities...

NEW BUNKS

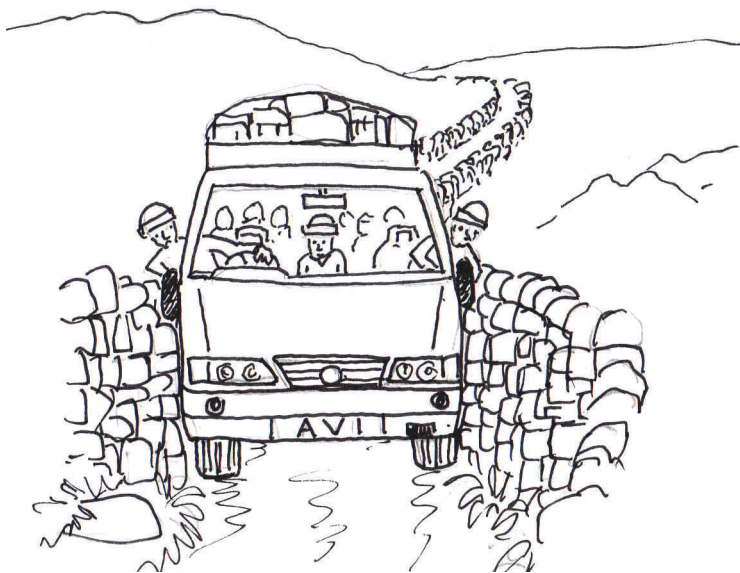
The bedrooms now look splendid, with new wooden bunk beds complete with ladders and safety rails (a cunning device to prevent things from going bump in the night) and sumptuously comfortable mattresses, after another epic working weekend last November.

It was a nostalgic moment for some as the old bunks, dismantled, wobbled their way down the track, precariously lashed onto Bob's trailer sadly destined for the tip. Now, with this unprecedented level of comfort draconian measures may have to be taken to coax snoozers *out* of bed...

What with the new "Force Ten" dining room curtains (safety measure in case you lose Gelli Iago at night), the newly white-washed lobby, yet more sumptuous fittings in the downstairs toilet, plus the promise of new bedroom carpets...

..sounds more like a hotel than a Mountain Centre...





"A GREAT TIME" for new members!

Since the last issue we've welcomed as new affiliated members Reaseheath College, Solihull College and Arrow Vale High School. Arrow Vale made their first visit in February, as their leader, Jez Thomas reports:

"We've at last been to 'The Legend', that is, the Nantmor Mountain Centre! First impressions – a great setting, and a valuable experience."

This, their first ever visit, turned out to be something of an unexpected initiative test when it came to 'turning things on', but they coped magnificently ...even successfully negotiating the lane in the minibus, and retaining *both* wing mirrors into the bargain. Not content with their February visit the group returned in March for 'Round Two' when, defiant of wind and rain...

"...we climbed Snowdon via the Llanberis path, for the 'tick in the box' they all wanted. Good stuff!! A great time was had by all!"

CLUB MEETS

December's club meet held more than a taste of Christmas, with fine weather, flaming Christmas puddings, (extra strong) brandy sauce, ample party spirit and good company into the bargain. An excellent weekend!

For those who couldn't make it we had an even better **New Year 'encore'** in January, when we were joined by John, Keith and Dave, 'plumbers supreme', for some serious bathroom planning.

On the March club weekend a good few made it to the top of Snowdon, with just a covering of snow, drawn by the once-in-a-lifetime experience of the summit without its café. Work on the new building is due to start in April.

FROM THE WARDEN..

"As you can see it's been a hectic few months which have seen lots of improvements. It's sometimes hard to grasp that this really is still a Mountain Centre, we're getting so soft on comfort these days!

First some serious bits... As from 2nd April the **ban on smoking in public buildings in Wales** takes effect, which will mean no smoking in the Centre at any time. Changes are on the way too for rubbish disposal, with containers now provided for **bottles, paper and cans**. These need to be emptied into the recycling bins on Beddgelert car park, or taken back home for your own collection service. With a little effort the amount going into the wheelie bin can be dramatically reduced, with obvious environmental benefits. And please remember to **double bag non recyclable rubbish** to help keep the wheelie clean, using **strong bin liners** ...cleaning out decomposing waste from the wheelie is an undesirable task for the next group!

Don't forget that (for those who can't bear to leave their laptop at home) there's **internet access** at the Centre ...useful for getting the latest mountain weather forecast. The 1p a minute dial-up connection charge (off peak) is now included on the invoice sheet.



One last note ..a **working weekend** with a difference is coming up, 20th – 22nd April will be "phase two" of the bathroom work, plumbers and all. **Helpers are needed please**, preferably hardy ones as the water may be "off", but the pro's are good company, fun, and you might even get to pioneer the new showers!"

Bob James

Thank you to Jez Thomas of Arrow Vale High School for his contribution to this issue, and to Andrew Sheehan for his 'nostalgic rambles'. If you have news, views, reports or memories you would like to share they should be sent to: jane137@gmail.com, or can be left at the Centre to be collected.



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 it's 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:

Jane Pedley/ Lesley Dawson April 2007

The Warden: Bob James bj13@btinternet.com Tel: 01905 345688 or
The Secretary: Jane Pedley jane137@gmail.com Tel: 0116 2876886
Also find us on our website: www.nantmor.org

Rambles around my head: Greetings from Chile

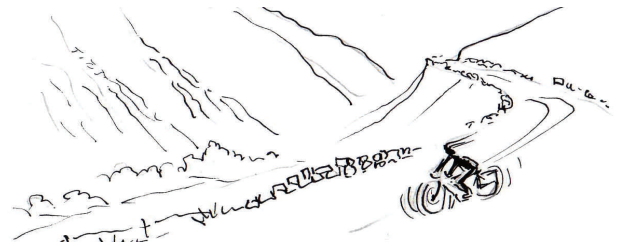
A highlight of my April 2006 visit to the UK was a trip down 'memory lane': a nostalgic pilgrimage to Gelli lagoon and Nantmor, which still hold their place among my favourite 'inlaid jewels' of this planet. The look of surprise on Tony Tatford's face – on realising that the 'proowler' he saw peering into the 'hut' was none other than myself – was itself another highlight (somehow he had recognized me in spite of my cunning disguise of white hair and a liberal scattering of wrinkles). Tony very kindly gave me a 'tour' of Gelli lagoon and I was delighted to see that – apart from a few comfort-enhancing additions – so little had changed since I was last there some 30 years ago. As a result of the visit, I renewed my connection with Nantmor, and was prompted to write this epistle.

Nantmor became, for what was a significant period of my life, a lodestone, and even now, thirty years later, generates a mental kaleidoscope of still-colourful and startlingly vibrant images. Please allow me to share some of these memories; they are in no particular order, and perhaps their highly personal nature will evoke similar memories for the reader.

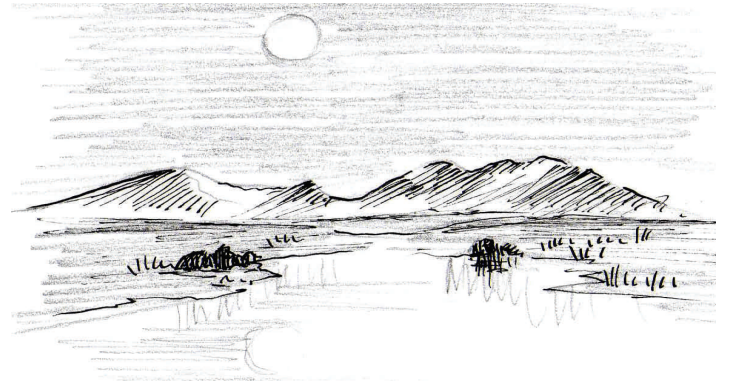
First and foremost, of 1969 vintage, the Mountain Leadership Certificate training course stands out, along with the privilege of knowing and being inspired by Arthur Stow, Brenig Garrett and – through them – Jack Henson. This formed my introduction to Nantmor, and I'm certain it is no coincidence that several of the people who figure prominently in the annals of the Nantmor Association (including the editors of this Newsletter) were also participants in the MLC introductory courses.

'Somnambulism' is the word for 'sleep-walking'; I do not know the word for 'sleep-cycling', but there must be one – the English language contains a word for almost everything. For example, 'the fear of having peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth' is *arachibutyrophobia*; 'a sudden breaking off of thought' is *aposiopesis*; and 'the urge to look into the windows of houses you pass' is *cryptoscophilia*. A particularly strong memory is that of setting off from Bromsgrove for Nantmor on my bicycle, at 9pm (like many things during that phase of my life, it seemed a good idea at the time). By the time I reached Capel Curig I was somnambulistic (perhaps someone can tell me the word for sleep-cycling); just turning the pedals became an impossible challenge. On seeing lights in a window of the Plas-y-Brenin centre, I had the cheek – fuelled by desperation – to knock, and was saved by a large mug of tea and some toast, proffered by a couple whose late-night canoodling I had disturbed. Then, thus fortified, I experienced the nightmare of freewheeling down from Pen-y-Gwryd in a sudden, torrential downpour, at a velocity I could not control, with the brakes not working and sparks flying from the pedals when they scraped the road on the bends. I finally arrived at Gelli lagoon at about 4am, slept on the table (the very same of the infamous crawl), there being no other suitable space, was woken up for breakfast at 7am on a clear, sunbright day, and took a group of students up Snowdon via the Watkin Path the same morning. That night, after dinner, standing outside the front door, as my gaze was inexorably drawn to Snowdon, the mountain exerted her siren charms on me once more, and inspired by the prospect of a full moon I somehow found myself, alone this time, on the summit again at 1am. That week I went up Snowdon five times. Those were the days!

Never having had a car while I lived in England, hitchhiking up to Snowdonia was the preferred option. The magical moment was being dropped off in Nantgwynant, at the bottom of the lane, and immediately being struck by the silence, or the sound of the streams loud in spate, as we strode up the midnight lane. I remember going through the gates, cresting the rise of the hill, dropping into the moonbright valley, descending and passing through the slate quarry workings, crossing the little bridge, the final stretch up the track, the last gate, the loud tumbling stream filling the air, the night air redolent of sheep and gorse, and then – finally – the welcome lights and front door of Gelli lagoon, and friendly voices. Hitchhiking from Bromsgrove, via Kidderminster, Bridgnorth, the Shrewsbury roundabout, the A5, Langollen, Corwen, Betws-y-Coed, Capel, (the route is etched in my memory, too) became a weekend ritual. In my memory, departure was always late on Friday, thus increasing the risk of not arriving that same night. However, thanks to the women I persuaded to accompany me (my long hair, as it was in those days, would have otherwise put off any well-intentioned soul), I was always successful.



Other flashbacks include: walking, several times, back to Gelli lagoon at night (instead of returning in the minibus) from the "Brondanw Arms" (or "Y Ring"). Writing in the signing-out book under 'destination' – this was rebelling somewhat against always letting people know where I was going: "Beyond the Southern Star". The Twin Lakes, at night, one of the most romantic places on earthRomantic with a capital R..... Instructing rock-climbing on the outcrops above Gelli lagoon, and on Yr Arddu below Cnicht, rekindles strong memories. So does my falling off, soloing, after a day of instructing (and warning people of the perils of climbing without a rope), and gashing my arms so badly I had to hide the wounds in order that a certain BG would not discover what had happened (but of course he did, later, learn the truth). That night in the "Saracen's", with stiffness setting in, I could not lift my pint of orange juice the necessary distance to my mouth.

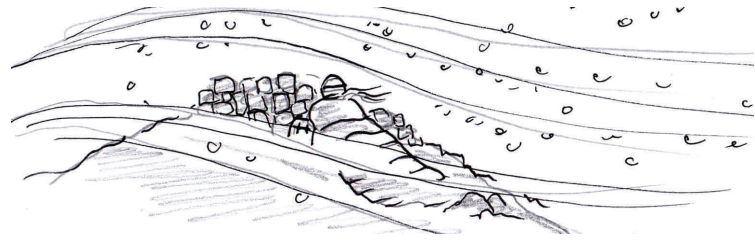


Particularly memorable, too, is climbing up the miniature stream gorge above Gelli lagoon, at night, in pitch darkness, without a head-torch, guided only by the feel and sequence of imprinted foot- and hand-holds, and the heightened roar of the water. Having worked out all the sequences during the daytime (and some sections were at least VS, above daunting drops), the challenge was to complete it at night.

Setting off from Gelli Iago to sleep on the summit of Snowdon one very, very cold winter's night (along with IW, another Mountain Leadership contemporary), with an old and woefully-inadequate 'Icelandic standard' sleeping bag and a thin blue polythene laundry bag to protect me from the elements, is still remarkably vivid in my memory. It was so cold the air crackled, and bare fingers stuck to rock. Waiting, shivering, for the dawn, which was heralded by the sun exploding above the horizon and miraculously (it seemed) reflecting off every tiny lake and stretch of water as it climbed into a cloudless sky. Descending to Pen-y-Pass and drinking five pints of tea, one after the other in rapid succession, and then being rescued by a very generous Tony Tatford, who had braved the icy roads to pick us up there.

Is it possible to 'lose' your way on such a well-paved highway as the Llanberis (Tourist) Path? Embarrassingly, I can claim such a dubious distinction. Some years later than the previous episode, during a period when I found intense enjoyment rock climbing alone, I had spent the morning and early afternoon soloing in the 'Pass' (Llanberis Pass). I had climbed on an almost deserted Dinas Mot before crossing to the cliffs of the south side. It was winter, but the Great British weather had so far been surprisingly amenable. However, its true character began to reveal itself, and by late afternoon, just as night was falling, the characteristic and menacingly-dark clouds had steamed into the valley like a flotilla of immense battleships, and rain and sleet had set in. I retreated to Llanberis. For some reason, Llanberis never was, for me, a welcoming place (and in those days there was no 'Pete's Eats'), and the café which existed then, and the pub later, felt cheerless, and the thought of spending yet another night in the disused railway shed, along with the sheep, even more so. So, at 10.30pm I took the perfectly logical decision (I was young, foolish and utterly invincible once – weren't we all?) to walk over Snowdon and down to Nantmor (because I knew there was a group staying at Gelli Iago). Having stocked up on fish & chips, I began heading upwards, at 11.00 pm.

The weather deteriorated as I climbed, visibility decreased proportionately, and the wind increased in ferocity. Deep snowdrifts obscured the railway line, making detours necessary. Beyond the 'Halfway House', where the railway line runs higher than the track, the trap was sprung and I was soon engulfed in a swirling blizzard white-out, and somehow wandered off the Tourist Path (I still do not know how) and ended up on what I realised was the approach path to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. Rather than retrace my steps, I opted to climb a steep, wind-howling, snow-plastered gully, and from the top of that eventually made my way to the summit of Snowdon. By now my appetite for masochism had waned and there seemed little point in continuing. The only option was sleeping (hardly the right word) in the shelter (also not the appropriate word) of the summit restaurant, in a snowdrift. At least I had the place to myself! Somehow, in the maelstrom, I cleared a trench in the snowdrift, and climbed into my now more-sophisticated sleeping bag and the regulation, orange plastic bivvy bag. The gusts whipped the spin-drift into miniature white tornadoes, which penetrated the bivvy bag and percolated into every exposed bit of my body. I woke – had I slept? – still in the white-out blizzard, but now at least it was light. With thoughts of breakfast prominent in my mind, I hastened down the iced-up switchbacks of Bwlch y Saethau, at the top of the Watkin.



I remember reaching Nantgwynant, and walking up the lane, my head still full of the swirling storm. Then, as I drew level with the top of the hill, the clouds suddenly swept dramatically aside like the curtains in a theatre. Intense sunshine illuminated a Snowdon which was not the savage mountain I had just escaped from; now it was a different creature, benign and coated in brilliant white snow, creating an image which – probably because of my recent experience on the mountain – I have never seen bettered before or since. Somewhere I still have the photos, two of which include *Hafod Owen*, once the home of Menlove Edwards, nestled among the rhododendrons, set against that unreal backdrop.

And, finally, and something I have never confessed before..... Imagine the following scenario..... It is a Mountain Leadership Certificate training week, and I happen to be placed as leader and assessor of the three best candidates on the course. We are on the final, three-day expedition, at the end of the course, and have already spent one night out in tents, and the trio has already proved they are fully competent. Our final night's camping is to be in the Moelwyns, somewhere near Llyn Cwmorthin, above Tanygrisiau (my memory here is a little hazy). I instruct and assess the candidates as they each lead their required sections of the hike to the campsite. En route I discover that one of the group (an architect, interior designer and artist) lives in what had been a water mill in Blaenau Ffestiniog, which he himself has recently converted into what sounds like a dream home. We arrive at our designated campsite and I assess them as they erect the tents. Everything is set up perfectly: the sleeping mats and bags laid out; guy lines tensioned for the coming rain (the weather forecast is not promising)..... Thus are weak men (me) led astray..... A vote is taken – a show of hands: "All those in favour?" the vote is unanimous. Delaying only to pack waterproofs, we sprint down into Tanygrisiau, gorge ourselves senseless at the fish & chip shop, and then head – via the pub, where else – to enjoy a luxurious night in real beds at the architect's mill in Blaenau. The rain drums a tattoo on the roof all night. At the crack of dawn, after a full fried breakfast and pints of tea, we hurry back up to the lonely tents, chortling to ourselves. We strike camp, stow the tents in our rucksacks, swear never to tell a soul, and continue on the final leg of the expedition, deviously back to Nantmor via Llyn Llgi. Very naughty, but very nice..... and that was the beginning of a long friendship I enjoyed with the architect, and only the first of many subsequent visits to the mill.

