

WESSEX MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

PRESIDENT – Max Streeton

The purpose of the annual report is of course to report on the year, but I think it is important to also look at what we can learn from that, and what we should do differently in the future.

I think it is fair to say we have had another mixed year. We have had some very successful meets, including the social meets, but also some with very few or none going. We have seen more people leave the club, but also an increase in new people joining the club. Some of those new members being very active in the club, but others are not. We must make an effort to get people involved so they stay. The finances are in a good shape, helped by the hut being used more.

We have the new web site up and running. Training was provided to our members at the Scottish winter meet, and days at Swanage. We also hosted the Sherpa sponsored master class and lectures which as well as being an interesting event, raised the clubs profile and gave us funds to be used for further training.

Also we should not just judge success by the club organised events. Part of a clubs benefit is to get people together, so ad-hoc trips by club members are just as important. The Facebook group has helped in this area. The newsletters and slide show have also showcased what our members are doing, with many interesting articles and presentation on activities both inside and outside the club.

The club still feels like it is split into a number of different factions. Perhaps with a wide range of members interested and a large geographic spread this is unavoidable.

Going forward I don't see a need for radical changes, just doing more of what is good. This can actually mean less meets, to allow for more ad hoc trips taking advantage of the best weather. More training, and I hope more events like the Sherpa one. However we need to know what you want, so let us know.

Organising events, looking after the hut and the administration of the club all takes effort. Thanks must go to the current committee members, some of whom have been helping run the club for several years. People will not however do it for ever, and we need new people with new ideas. You will have seen my requests for new people to be on, or to help the committee. I have had some but limited responses to that request so far, which is disappointing.

SECRETARY – Steve Wales

The five committee meetings this year have taken us on a tour of Ringwood pubs this year in search of free meeting places. Aside from producing minutes of the committee meeting I did organise the BMC/Sherpa Event with masterclasses from Neil Gresham and Lectures from Neil and Kenton Cool. The whole event was a success and helped to raise about £360 for the club which has been earmarked for subsidising training activities. It also helped to raise the profile of the club locally.

TREASURER – Chris Cumming

Another year has flown by and it has been a very successful one for the Club. Membership numbers only dropped slightly (160 to 155), the usual club activities have been fully maintained, meets have all been reasonably well attended and costs controlled and, the main reason for the increase in our funds, the hut revenue has increased by 70% this year.

General Account

The General Account shows another good net profit of £1,204.07 compared to £1,142.32 last year.

On the income side, although we only lost 5 members overall, the income from subscriptions dropped by proportionately more (£211) as more members joined after 30 June (when the subscriptions are lower), than last year, for some reason. The committee continues to consider ways or encouraging new members to join the club. One of these is the new paypal account which has been opened. We felt this would be particularly attractive to new members, enabling them to now pay their subs and for meets quickly and efficiently by credit card.

The £400.00 grant which we received from the BMC last year to update the website and fund some training was all spent in this year. Avalanche training was given at the Scottish Winter Meet and a great deal of time has been spent working on the new website this year which hopefully everyone finds clearer and easier to use. More to the point, in view of the unfilled webmaster post on the committee, it is much easier and less time consuming for Max and committee members to administer than the old website.

This year we have managed to reduce the general account costs even more. At £45, committee costs are really minimal, particularly when considering the time and effort all the committee members put in on behalf of the club. Henry and Anna managed to make a £122 saving on the newsletter costs – thank you and well done. We have more than halved the costs of room hire for meetings having managed to find pubs that let us use one of their rooms for committee meetings for free. We made an overall loss of only £75 in total on all of the meets and social events this year compared to a profit of £80 last year. We continue to cost all the functions carefully to try to ensure particularly that there are no large losses made on any one meet. Thanks are again due to the committee for this.

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 £55 for affiliation to the Ramblers this year and also £25 to the YHA for group membership so that we could get a discount on the accommodation bookings e.g. for the Scottish Winter Meet and the Christmas Dinner.

Hut at Pen y Clogwyn

The hut account shows a net profit of £1,976.66 compared to a loss £487.65 last year.

The costs for staying at the hut again remained the same. Fees received from members increased by £50 but non-members fees increased by an amazing £1,785. The hut continues to be popular and well used regularly – particularly by non-members! – and Andy has had a great number of dealings this year with people wanting to stay at Pen y Clogwyn.

Hut overheads were at a normal level this year and no large, costly capital expenditure was incurred. The gas consumption this year was relatively static and, considering the increased use of the hut, it

seems that the solar panels installed last year have been a success in reducing fuel costs. Paul has continued to work hard maintaining the hut and has incurred the usual costs of wood and wire and “stuff” as well as, of course, The Worms for the cesspit!

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 £21,001.50 savings and cash in the two current accounts compared to £17,316.64 last year. The closing debtors £810.37 include the deposits (payments in advance) for the Lundy meet, the Scottish Winter meet, the Christmas meet at Dartmoor and the Master Class venue and wall hire.

Overall our net worth has increased by £3,180.73 compared to an increase £656.67 last year.

Comment

The committee are always conscious of the need to attract new members and for members 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. Next year we are looking to spend some money on more training, particularly for new members, 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.

Although there has been a great boost to our funds this year it has been generated from our most costly asset, the hut, which continues to need regular maintenance. So as usual, I consider that our savings should remain as far as possible, as a capital buffer against the cost of any large unexpected bills for the hut.

Audit

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

PROGRAMME SECRETARY – Dave Johnson

Next year we have another full program in store for everyone. The first major meet being the Scottish winter meet in Torrion and closely followed by the Lakes over Easter. We then have something completely different; Fontainebleau over the Mayday bank holiday (mountaineers can try to complete one of the many circuits if they can't stomach the idea of not covering any distance). The rest of the year has a scattering of the usual fine venues with several visits to PYC, including a family meet. For those going to the Alps it's going to be a bit of a rush back to get on the ever popular boat trip to Lundy. When the nights start to draw in again it'll be time for Sun Rock. If you are interested in the Sun Rock, say so early as you'll need time to book your accommodation+ flights. It all got a bit last minute in 2014. As a finish to the year I've been contemplating a trip to Cogne for waterfall ice climbing but we may save this for another time if everyone's feeling poor or in need of a rest by then.

MEET SECRETARY – Alan Blanchflower

It's been a mixed year for meets, with some well-attended meets and other less so. Some of this was down to the weather forecast, but the Roaches meet didn't happen despite sunshine forecast for the weekend.

The most popular meet was the Xmas Dinner Meet in Dartmoor with 22, while the least popular meet (that actually went ahead) was the Swanage bivi meet, with only 3 people. Fortunately the caves at Winspit do not require a deposit! The autumn meets to Cornwall and Pembroke were also well-attended.

The provisional calendar for 2015 is now on the website, with all the old favourites (Including Lundy) and some new ground as the WMC goes bouldering in Fontainebleau.

Meet attendance:

SWM: 17	Swanage Bivi: 3
Spring Working Weekend: 5	PyC August: 8
Facebook meet: Didn't happen (Rain, everywhere)	Cornwall: 12
PyC Easter: 14	Pembroke: 13
Lakes: 7	Peaks (Abney): 6
Arran: 7	Autumn Working Weekend: 6
PyC end of May: 8	Xmas Dinner: 2
Roaches: Didn't happen (Despite good weather!)	

SOCIAL SECRETARY – Anita Christensen

There have been 3 social events organised this year: the BBQ, slide show and Xmas Dinner Meet. All were well attended, particularly the Xmas Dinner meet seeing the highest meet attendance of the year.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY – Thomas Vaughan

At the start of 2014 the membership dropped by around 40 as quite a few people did not renew their membership. This included 9 of the 18 people who joined in 2013.

However over the year we have been very successful in attracting new members with 33 people joining, giving a total of 155 members at the end of the year.

The challenge for the club must therefore be to get more of these new people involved in the club so they stay and become long term members. To help guide how to do that an email poll of new members, and also those who joined in 2013 and did not renew, is being conducted. That said, there will always be those who move away from the area, or join with good intentions but find they don't have time to come climbing.

Unfortunately Thomas our membership secretary became very busy with work and this has led to delays in processing membership applications, and at least one new member has still not received a membership card. This also meant that the implementation of under 18s membership, agreed at the 2014 AGM, was delayed.

The implementation of the membership system on the website in November, which includes under 18 membership, should make membership management easier in the future. As well as cutting down the admin needed, it means all the committee can see what applications are made and ensure people are not left waiting for a reply. However we will still need somebody to take on the task of membership secretary

Note I mentioned an email poll. I have emailed all these people and am compiling the replies which I will distribute once I have more. So far the replies have been quite mixed from 'the club is great' to 'not very friendly and I will not renew'.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Henry Larden & Anna Tonkin

We put together 4 newsletters this year, each one packed full of great articles. Thank you to all members that have sent in articles.

We are currently sourcing a reasonably priced print firm in Southampton so for the 9 members without email future editions should arrive within a few days of the electronic release.

However with the new website being delivered, we focused a bit more on the digital side of things. With help from Max, we've managed to setup meet reports on the website with as many high quality photos as we can take! We can publish trip reports on the website as soon as we have them, and linking to these from Facebook seems to work well. I only wonder if non-Facebook members know where to look! (Go to the website and click on 'Meet Reports' on the 'Meets' menu – or click here: <http://www.wessexmc.org.uk/?cat=164>)

We're also pleased to announce the shortlist for the 2014 WMC literature prize! Here it is:

"SWM 2014 - The Newbie's View" By Brad Fry (Spring)

All of Max's contributions throughout the year (especially the Summer newsletter which was written nearly entirely by him!)

"Arran" By Clare Johnson (Summer)

"100 Not Out" by Paul Stevens (Autumn)

"One route to rule them all. One route to find them, one route to bring them all and in the darkness bind them" By Alan Turner (Autumn)

“Motoring at Subluminal” by Graham Cooper (Winter) [Historical category]

“Transfers to the Club Bank Accounts” by Chris Cumming (Winter) [Poetry category]

The winner will be announced at the AGM.

HUT SECRETARY – Paul Crowsley

Compared to previous years there has been a bit less work done on the hut this year – the main addition being the new woodshed, and of course the worms. The solar panels are working and gas usage has reduced compared to previous years. For next year there are plans to improve the water supply fitting new plastic tanks. Once done the club is looking to get the water tested this is something we need to do to comply with new regulations.

WEBSITE MANAGER – Position Vacant (taken up by Max Streeton)

I have been wanting to see a new web site for some time, and it turned out the only way to get it was to do it myself. This was quite a learning curve!!

However with the recent addition of the membership management it is now has everything planned. Although I am sure there will still be future additions.

There were a number of reasons for developing this. The two key reasons were to get a more modern looking site, and provide a framework which allowed more people to contribute to the content, without the need to go through the web site manager each time. The use of the open source 'Wordpress' framework provided the basis for both of these.

The other objective was to reduce admin. In particular the membership system does this. For example before new members posted a paper form which the membership secretary had to copy the details from. Now the new member fills in the form online, and their details are stored directly. Past annual reports have included many statistics on web site access. From the statistics for the new site you can conclude our site is of most interest to people from the Eastern bloc! However ignoring these spam attacks we can see that the pages on joining the club, meets and the hut are popular as expected. The meet reports Henry has been posting have also had frequent visits.

With the main development done what I would like to see in the future is more content. This attracts people to the website. For example if you want information on Swanage then the premier local club's web site should be the place to look. However that requires people to produce and maintain the content.

The web site is not our only presence on the web. The other key place people find out about the club is our Facebook group. This also provides a good place for discussion between members, without generating loads of emails. The number of members out on a sunny weekend in December showed how well that can work. I know some people complain that they should not have to join Facebook to be in contact with club activities. Well we have tried other things and they did not get used, Facebook works so join it.

ADDITIONAL MEMBER – Position Vacant

Pete Langdown found himself elected in this role at the AGM last year and as he did not re-join after March this position became vacant.