

## WESSEX MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

### ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### **PRESIDENT – Max Streeton**

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

For me the key thing is people getting out climbing and mountaineering with the club, and we have had a full and well attended series of meets. For the first time we had a club international expedition, the trip to Peru, The format worked well with people forming climbing teams then sharing logistics, so this is a model we can adopt again in the future.

Last year we had a large increase in membership, and predictably that also meant more leaving this year. However we continued to recruit new members, and hence maintained membership levels. As always what really matter is having active members, and it has been good to see many of the new members getting involved.

The healthy membership has certainly been helped by things like car stickers and T-shirts as well as social media raising the profile of the club.

We had an intention to increase training. The Swanage training weekend was again popular, as was the winter skills run at the start of the Scottish Winter meet. However we have yet to identify other needs, so let us know what you want.

The hut is a key asset of the club. We did have some uncertainty over the management of this, but now Jodi Longyear has taken this on. Lots of improvements have been done, and it was great to see a big turnout to help on the October working weekend. Of particular note is that we now have a new generator installed which ensures the lights will stay on this winter. This has been funded by part of the generous legacy left to the club by Geoff Scott. It is also good to see the use of the hut by members has increased by around 50% over last year.

The newsletter has been an excellent publication with reports of not just club activities but from the wider exploits of our members.

A couple of years ago we introduced a youth membership class, and Paul Havill joined the committee to organise Youth events. Although there was not a large take-up of this, I think it is a good thing for the club to be doing.

The clubs finances remain good, which means we have been able to spend money on important things such club loan equipment (for winter mountaineering) and treat ourselves to food at the AGM again!

Running all this takes considerable effort by all the members of the committee and they should be thanked for this. It was good to see volunteers coming forward at the 2016 AGM to help, and I hope this will be the same in 2017.

It is a bit outdated to think of the web site in isolation. It is certainly a key part of the clubs online presence as well as providing admin function such as membership management. However other channels such as Facebook are also very important. It is for this reason we are proposing to formally remove the 'web site manager' role from the committee and introduce a 'Marketing' role. Largely this is formalising what we have been doing the last two years anyway. This does then leave the question who looks after the technical 'IT' aspects of the web site, but we do not feel this needs to be a separate full committee position.

## **SECRETARY – Steve Wales**

There were 4 committee meetings this year and we are now firmly back to hiring meeting rooms, which although a cost to the club is really the only way to hold these meetings. Minutes from these meetings can be found on the website.

Every year the BMC has a grant from Sport England which clubs can apply for funding. The club has been successful in getting funding for training and equipment. This year we were successful in getting some money to cover the cost of a printed 'special' newsletter which will probably be a 'best of' compilation.

I should mention that the club has an archive of old meet books, hut books and newsletters if anyone is interested in looking at they can be loaned out provided they are returned.

## **TREASURER – Chris Cumming**

This has been another very successful year for the Club with a full meet calendar, meets well attended and a lot of activity at the hut. Membership numbers have remained steady at 184 as at the end of the financial year. Notable items this year are the generous £5,000.00 legacy from Geoff Scott which is intended to be spent on Pen y Clogwyn, a grant of £200.00 from the BMC for the newsletter, the funding of food at the AGM and purchases of the WMC stickers (both of which are included under secretarial expenses in the accounts) and the WMC T-shirts for sale. Our net worth has increased by £5461.56 this year (£57,630.58 – £52,169.02), represented by the profits £4,715.01 on the general account (which includes the legacy from Geoff) and £746.55 on the hut account.

### General Account

The General Account profit is £2,882.17 more than last year.

#### Income

On the income side, the subscription fees remained the same as last year at £23.00 for a full member, the membership numbers remained static and so the subscription income remained virtually the same as last year. The only other income apart from the legacy was interest £302.10 from the money invested with Barclays. However the interest rate will be zero percent with effect from 5 December 2016 and I am looking into moving this account elsewhere. The grant £200 from the BMC has not yet been spent and so is included in the balance sheet as a creditor.

#### Expenses

Expenses on the general account have increased this year by £1,500.21. The committee decided to fund food at the AGM this year (£340.00) to try, in desperation, to boost attendance and happily it seemed to work. The AGM was well attended and consequently there was much more lively discussion and interest than the previous year. In order to try and increase the club's visibility and so attract new members, we purchased WMC stickers (£260.00) and T-shirts which are for sale (net cost £146.00 was mainly for the test print).

With the main activities of the club in mind, we donated an additional £100.00 this year to Mend Our Mountains which we felt was a worthy cause. Donations are to be made to each of Ogwen and Llanberis Mountain Rescue teams and for affiliation to the Ramblers for this year.

Frodo successfully followed in Henry and Anna's footsteps and produced his excellent newsletters at no cost at all.

We continue to budget for all the functions as carefully as we can to avoid large losses being made on any one meet and this is reflected in the small losses on the meets and social events during the year which I consider to be acceptable.

Although the Scottish Winter Meet shows an overall loss of £335.31, this is made up of a loss £69.32 on the meet itself and a loss £265.99 on the cost of the training which was held on the meet. The training loss was effectively covered by the previous year's profit £352.91 on the BMC lecture and Masterclass which had been earmarked for training.

#### The Club Hut, Pen y Clogwyn

The hut continues to be popular and well used regularly.

#### Income

The hut account shows a net profit £746.55 compared to a profit £2,360.57 last year. The costs for staying at the hut remained the same. Hut fees received from members increased by 50% which is very encouraging, the non-members fees dropped by 6%. Overall hut income only dropped by £59.

#### Expenses

Jodi and others have carried out a great deal of maintenance and improvements at the hut this year and eighteen enthusiastic people went up to Pen y Clogwyn for the October working weekend. The hut overheads increased by £1,554.46 due mainly to the increase in the costs of maintenance by £525.21, in travel £582.63 and depreciation £346.80 compared to last year. Maintenance costs include a battery charger, expenditure on water testing, a new chainsaw and other tools. We also purchased a new generator for £2,120.00 and this has been included in the balance sheet as capital expenditure. Depreciation is shown in the profit and loss account. As Jodi will no doubt report, the hut is looking good and so I consider all the money has been well spent.

#### Balance Sheet

Our assets are the property at Pen y Clogwyn together with the fixtures and fittings and the stock which comprises the full calor gas bottles stored there and the unsold T-shirts. We also have total funds £28,859.14 in the Barclays savings account and the two TSB current accounts, compared to £24,096.28 last year.

The closing debtors and prepayments £1,297.50 include the deposits (payments in advance) for the Scottish Winter Meet, the Slide Show and the Christmas Meets for both 2016 and 2017.

#### 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 and on training and equipment.

Although there has been an unexpected boost to our funds this year from Geoff's legacy, we are always aware of potential costly work needing to be done at Pen y Clogwyn. As ever, I consider that our savings should remain as far as possible, as a capital buffer against such work.

If anyone has any ideas about how the legacy could be spent on further improvements to Pen y Clogwyn or about training, venues for meets 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 tell us.

### Audit

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

### **PROGRAMME SECRETARY – Helen Littlejohn**

Some new venues have been used for meets this year notably a change to the campsite used for the Roaches. Next years programme has been put together and is now on the website. There is a mix of established venues for next year plus a few newish venues. A trip to Fontainbleau is included for the third time as this has proved popular. Next years SWM has been booked for the YHA in Glencoe.

### **MEET SECRETARY – Alan Blanchflower**

There has been some good meet attendance this year with all away trips having at least some attendance with even the slightly more esoteric venues such as Anglesey and the Wye Valley seeing a good number of people going. As ever trips on Bank Holiday weekends proved popular, and then there was the Peru expedition which was a completely new departure for the club.

### **SOCIAL SECRETARY – Anita Christensen**

The Social Meets for 2016 were successfully concluded with the Christmas Dinner meet at Hathersage YHA in the Peak District. Hathersage YHA offered good accommodation and facilities, two days of climbing (even some sunshine) and a splendid meal. Dressing up and drinking kept us entertained and I was glad to see some Wessex children enjoying themselves too.

The summer social meet was a barbecue held at the Railway Campsite near Swanage, where the Wessex climbers were joined by the Wessex walkers. The weather was good and everyone had a fine day out before joining for the barbecue. Thanks to Emma for her firelighting skills.

Finally, the Slideshow at the Elm Tree Barn offered some exceptional film footage and photography of climbing, hiking and mountaineering, even canoeing, from all over the world. Apart from providing good entertainment and another welcome excuse to get together this year's slideshow was an incredible reminder of the extensive skills, aptitude and dedication of the members of the club.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to help organise and participate in these meets this year.

## **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY – Anne-Marie Shepherd**

The club now has 188 members, and have welcomed more new members this year compared to last year. It's great to see that the age range is wide, the youngest being under the age of 5 years old and the older members being over the age of 80. Most of our members found us on a websearch, but also, a very significant proportion joined us after communications with current members. I really would encourage members to wear their groovy WMC hoodies and T shirts when they are down at the walls, because newbies are keen to meet you and need to recognise you. If it's not warm enough to wear just a T shirt, wear it over a thermal and get seen. Show us off!

## **NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Frodo Stickel**

Two Newsletters were produced this year, with the first being dominated by Winter meet contributions; providing an interesting insight into the different experiences and perceptions of Wessex members.

The second newsletter showcased the broad variety of activities undertaken and enjoyed by contributors, including some great climbing reports.

Personal commitments prevent me from continuing as newsletter editor, it would be great to see someone taking on the role at the AGM to provide support to the committee and keep the club newsletter alive.

## **HUT SECRETARY – Report by Andy Cumming and Jodi Longyear**

### Hut Bookings

This year has been another good year for hut occupancy. We have had a few pounds less income but as there were more member nights the actual usage based on receipts is higher. When you add additional nights on working weekends and by Jodi, Dave Mac and others maintaining the hut then there are just under a thousand person nights spent at the hut. If you consider this in terms of weekends then the average occupancy is about 9 people for 2 nights every weekend

Just one reminder on booking – if you decide not to book until a few days before and I am away or very busy, you may not get the codes in time. It's always best to book at least a few weeks in advance.

### Hut Maintenance

This has been my first full year as Hut Secretary. During this time I have managed to make quite a lot of major and minor changes that have made the hut more comfortable and practical. However, I have not done this alone as there has been a huge amount of support from many different members of the Club.

Working weekends have been particularly well attended in 2016. The last one had 19 people attend, many staying for more than just the weekend. The spring working weekend had around 15 people attending.

During these working weekends and on other visits to the hut we have completed a lot of ongoing jobs (such as firewood restocking), some maintenance jobs and a few one off jobs. I will not mention all the work here, just the key points.

The kitchen & bedroom have been repainted and the toilet block varnished. A new generator has been fitted along with an intelligent charger which should mean our leisure batteries will last longer than a winter. UV and ceramic water filters have been fitted to the water supply. The main tank has also been overhauled with new rods and a fully fitting cover to stop any unwanted ingress. This work has led to the previous water purification issues being resolved. Also, a huge amount of rubbish and junk has been removed from the hut.

Projects planned for 2017 include a new seating area, a composting toilet, investigations into a drying room and alternative green energy sources. There are also plans for a more substantial boiler in the toilet block and for the generator to be set up so it is fully automatic.

## **WEBSITE MANAGER – Tracy Sutton**

### Marketing

It's been a good year on social media for the club. We've had some really positive engagement via polls and gear talk and we've seen more activity pre and post meets too with some great photos for the members to see.

We've posted from different climbing walls to keep others in the loop of new and existing walls and the interest in this years free coaching sessions at The Project has got people involved in the discussion and others keen to come along. We've already had 2 students join as a direct result of the coaching which is great for the club.

The Facebook Page has enabled climbing walls to share our content to a wider audience (Calshot, The Project) and I am looking for this to continue in 2017.

Indoor climbing is incredibly popular with climbers of all ages and I'm hoping that the club's connection and visibility at climbing walls will entice new young members into the club.

Fresh faces, new opinions and perspectives and approaches to training, hiking, scrambling, climbing and winter mountaineering combined with the existing experienced members in the club are the key to keeping the club and engaging and exiting to be part of.

Club clothing has been selling successfully and we are hoping to expand the range in 2017.

I'm always looking for feedback from any members so if you're reading this and have any ideas or feedback about the club, please drop me an email.

### Website Admin

Following the development of the last couple of years it is good to say that the website had remained largely unchanged this year, or so it appears. However behind the scenes the hosting has moved over to a new cloud based system. If you did not notice the change that is a good thing.

## **ADDITIONAL MEMBER – Paul Havill**

Some 'Youth' meets were organised at the beginning of the year with some take up by club members.

## **WESSEX WALKING GROUP –Doug Pigg**

The Wessex Walking Group has had another successful year embracing monthly walks across the Wessex Catchment Area. The walks are usually held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, the exceptions being Bank Holiday clashes. The details are fully integrated with the WMC Events Calendar. Most regular walkers elect to receive a separate email directly from me.

We have a good geographical spread of walk locations and there will be a walk near you in 2017. Our core group of Wessex Walkers comprise the middle aged, infirm and generally peculiar.

Walks are generally 9 to 11 miles in length and are undertaken at a reasonable pace. Heavy breathing is allowed and the use of walking sticks is tolerated. There are 'Rambling' overtones to our walks; they can be a ritualistic experience with a banana stop followed by first lunch and second lunch. Public Houses are rarely entered as once across the threshold some walkers revert to their Wessex Mountaineering Days and are known to order alcoholic beverages, three course Sunday lunches and a chaser; all a bit too much to absorb in the allotted 30 minutes.

2016 has seen us walking throughout the WMC Catchment, examples are:

- Godshill Ridge, New Forest
- Fordingbridge
- Piddlehinton
- Amesbury near Salisbury
- Win Green Hill
- THE MOOT, Downton
- Bere Regis
- Our 2016 Christmas Walk - True Lovers Knot at Tarrant Keyneston

Some of us nerdy types are building up a GPX file of the walks with the intention of putting the best ones on the WMC Website. Occasionally we send out the GPX File for the walk in advance and it has been known for WMC Stalkers to follow in our footsteps and so avoid the difficulties of walking, talking and breathing at the same time.

I hope this has discouraged you from joining us. However, should you be feeling your age, find walking in groups to be annoying and try to avoid being on first name terms with people – then give us a try, you may just have found your niche in life. All you have to do is register with the Walking Section E-mail address on the WMC Website, that is assuming, of course, that you can remember the Website Password.