Alpine Club

newsletter

SUMMER ISSUE | TWENTY25

AFTER THE ACCIDENT

JONATHAN BAMBER COMES FULL CIRCLE ON TUPENDEO

FUNDING FEMALE FIRSTS

MASHA GORDON ON 10 ROUNDS OF GRIT&ROCK GRANTS

THE UIAA AND YOU

RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING MOUNTAINEERING DEVELOPMENT

MEET REPORTS

Meet Reports

1

2

5

6

7

1 Looking back towards Snowdon from the slate. **Photo**: Micha Rinn. **2** A psyched Kevin getting acquainted with Gogarth. **Photo**: Fritz Fimpel. **3** Dinner at the Pen y Gwyrd. **4** Chief DAV troublemakers Fritz and Kevin hanging out at the top of *Nea* (VS 4b). **Photo**: Nick Simons. **5** Meet coordinator Nick Simons leading 'the pitch' on *A Dream of White Horses* (HVS 4c), Gogarth. **Photo**: Micha Rinn. **6** The idyllic Fronwydyr Hut. **Photo**: Micha Rinn. **7** Views to match the weather on *Amphitheatre Buttress* (VDiff), Craig Yr Ysfa.

AC / DAV NORTH WALES MEET

5–12 APRIL 2025

Eighteen months ago a lucky handful of AC members were guests of the Wetzlar section of the German DAV for a week of semi-trad climbing on the extraordinary sandstone towers of the Pfalz (Rhineland Palatinate) region. DAV host Micha Rinn led us straight to the area's classic routes and towers, where each day we forged bonds and compared techniques and traditions and simply enjoyed great climbing. It was a hell of a week to live up to in April this year when we hosted the return visit of the Germans to the UK.

There'd been much discussion during the Pfalz week about which corner of our diverse climbing scene to show off to our guests. North Wales was settled on for its wide range of possibilities depending on weather and conditions. In the end, we were blessed with continuous bluebird sunshine and it was sun-block that was required rather than the head-to-toe *Gore-Tex* we had urged our guests to pack. Eventually they grew tired of us telling them that this weather was not the norm!

Our base was the beautifully-situated Fronwydyr Hut. Just uphill from Nant Peris, it has a footpath to the slate classics immediately behind it and, every evening that week, a view of Crib Goch bathed in something approaching alpenglow.

Almost every major climbing area was touched on during the week, with partners rotating every day to widen our international bonds as much as possible. Our first day at Tremadog was the only one when the entire meet went together to the same venue and every corner of that little paradise was explored. Among the many routes ticked were classics like *Scratch Arete*, *The Plum* and *One Step In The Clouds*.

3

4

Thereafter parties spread out so as not to saturate honeypots like the much fancied *A Dream Of White Horses* at Gogarth, which in the end three pairs from the meet climbed or repeated.

Away from the seaside, the Llanberis Pass of course saw a lot of attention, with action on the Cromlech, Cyrn Las, Dinas Mot, Carreg Wastad and Clogwyn y Grochan (where local member Ian Bryant joined us for a day on his return from climbing in Morocco). The east face of Tryfan and Idwal Slabs saw plenty of traffic (though sadly not on *Munich Climb*). There was one intense day on the slate behind the hut, Rhoscolyn was explored, and two pairs went together over to Craig Yr Ysfa.

So in the end the meet ranged across a happy spectrum, from *Amphitheatre Buttress* to *Cenotaph Corner*. We basked not only in the glorious weather but also in a spirit of internationalism and cooperation. There was a memorable evening eating and drinking at the Pen Y Gwyrd Hotel, surrounded by the paraphernalia of British mountaineering heritage as we compared notes on our respective mountain cultures and histories. On other evenings back at the Fronwydr Hut we had excellent talks from Micha on climbing in Oman with his wife Kirsten (where they made an ascent of the south face of Jebel Misht) and from Adam Butterworth on British sea-cliff climbing. His words and slides left our guests with very sharp (and soon satisfied) appetites to head to Anglesey for a taste. Another talk weighed up possible destinations in Germany

1

2

for the next joint meet in 2027, and the sea-cliff excitement Adam stirred up even got people speculating on 2029 for the return match back in the UK. Perhaps Cornwall. Or Lundy.

Micha introduced his equivalent meet report for the DAV newsletter as follows:

'An international exchange meet between climbers from different countries is more important than ever in these already tense times of European identity crisis, major national political upheavals and the long-term consequences of Brexit. An exchange on an international level, especially among like-minded people with the same enthusiasm and passion for mountaineering, is an excellent opportunity to look beyond one's own nose, to exchange ideas about mountaineering traditions & differences and to learn from each other. There is so much that unites us, and the differences offer a lot of potential for broadening our own horizons.'

I couldn't agree more. It reminds me of another international meet in 2020, hosted in Gressoney by the Saluzzo section of the Italian Alpine Club. At their formal welcome dinner we raised our glasses and drank to friendship, unity and the mountains.

Attendees: *Nick Simons (AC), Micha Rinn (AC & DAV), Konrad Becker (DAV) Adele Long (AC), Fritz Fimpel (DAV), Gus Morton (AC), Adam Butterworth (AC), Fabi Jacobi (DAV), Nigel Bassam (AC), Kevin Rick (DAV), Phil Benson (AC & DAV) and Rob Gates (AC).*

BY **NICK SIMONS**

1 Phil Benson on *Seamstress* (VS 4c) in Serengeti. **Photo:** Micha Rinn. **2** Micha Rinn on *Creagh Dhu Wall* (HS 4b), Tremadog. **Photo:** Gus Morton.

INTERNATIONAL SCOTTISH WINTER MEET 2025

1–8 MARCH 2025

The International Scottish Winter Meet (ISWM) was first held in 1997 and since then it has taken place approximately every two years. However, due to the pandemic, the last full event was in 2020.

The ISWM is unique as the only international climbing meet dedicated to mountaineering. It has built a strong reputation, fostering partnerships that have gone on to achieve significant ascents worldwide.

This year, the event was organised by Mountaineering Scotland, with financial support from the Alpine Club and the BMC. Hut accommodation was provided by the Scottish Mountaineering Club, with the meet starting and finishing at Glenmore Lodge. While this arrangement required climbers to rotate between huts, it remains the most cost-effective option.

The first week of March is traditionally chosen for the best chance of good winter conditions. Unfortunately, a thaw set in after the second day, shifting the focus in the latter half of the meet to rock climbing. Nevertheless, many winter routes were climbed on Ben Nevis and in the Northern Corries, including two significant second ascents and a couple of new lines.

This year, over 60 climbers attended from 17 different countries, including Canada, South Korea, and South Africa. Overseas guests were paired with local hosts familiar with the Scottish mountains – a format that has proved highly successful in previous years.

Seventeen Alpine Club members participated in the meet, contributing as organisers, hosts, and international representatives.

With winter climbing off the agenda in the second half of the meet, there was more time for guests and hosts to connect. Many new partnerships were formed, and plans were made for future mountaineering trips elsewhere. This spirit of camaraderie and collaboration is at the heart of the ISWM, and as climbers departed Glenmore Lodge on the final day, they did so with broad smiles and exciting ambitions for the future.

Attendees: *Lina Arthur, Iain Ballantyne, Carrie Beadle, Ross Bell, Tim Elson, Will Hempstead, Aaron Hodgson, Callum Johnson, Julia Lyubova, Tim Miller, James Moncur, Kasia Piatek, Tom Priestley, Simon Richardson, Harriet Sharpe, Tom Shaw and Matthew Shepherd.*

BY **SIMON RICHARDSON**

The UIAA and You

SKILLS GUIDES

Richard Nadin is the Alpine Club's representative to the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA). Through a series of articles in this publication he hopes to shed a little light on the federation's role. In this issue, he takes a look at the UIAA's work on instructional publications and, in particular, the latest edition of *Alpine Skills – Summer*.

Over recent years, the AC committee has been embarking on an infant project to encourage all AC members to keep their mountaineering skills in step with best modern practice. It's called CMD: 'Continuing Mountaineering Development' and has involved refresher courses at Club events, as well as dedicated training meets. Those of you who have been in an active business, profession, trade or teaching role will know that the key to continued success in your work life is staying up-to-date with current best practice. Professional mountain guides & instructors need to retrain and update their skills in an ongoing process, and so it should be with us amateurs. Maintaining and refreshing our skills and knowledge not only enables us to climb more efficiently, but also helps to keep us and our companions safe in the mountains.

One method of staying aware of changes to best practice is to check in regularly with the UIAA website (*www.theuiaa.org*). The website holds a wealth of information, particularly with respect to bolted rock anchors, avalanche transceivers and travel to altitude. While these papers are not the most gripping of reads, they are generally short, clear and direct; providing vital information in a digestible format. I would thoroughly recommend reading through the medical advice ahead of a trip to altitude or checking the latest transceiver tests before your next ski trip.

Alongside the information on the UIAA's website, the federation also produces printed guides to alpine skills. The Summer guide, helmed by AC member and mountaineering instructor Steve Long, is now in its fourth edition. At over 400 pages, the guide provides 'basic knowledge' in a huge number of relevant areas. Alongside the expected chapters on rope work and rescues, there are sections dedicated to other important areas of mountain safety, including meteorology, leadership and alpine hiking.

I am a big fan of the approach that Steve has taken with this guide. He emphasises that the book is advisory, not prescriptive, and regularly gives safe alternatives to recommended best practice, especially where roped and technical skills are concerned. It is thoroughly up-to-date, with a navigation section built primarily around the use of GPS devices, but does not neglect the 'back-up' analogue skills, with an additional section dedicated to map and compass navigation. It reflects, in my view, the best approach to new technologies: use the latest tech to make your life easier, but do not rely on electronics alone. Another area where this is emphasised is in the reading and interpretation of weather patterns, an essential skill for decision-making in the mountains, where experience may be critical when a forecast is unavailable.

I was humbly reminded of my own shortcomings by the breadth of 'soft skill' subject matter that the book covers. I know that I, like many mountaineers, often focus on 'hard skills' at the expense of other areas such as decision-making, group dynamics and rescue skills such as first aid.

As important as the breadth of subjects covered, is how they are presented, and here the manual is also a resounding success. The simple line drawn illustrations, the handiwork of the *Petzl* design studio, are clear and easy to interpret. For those who learn better in a visual style, there are also QR codes attached to some subjects. These link to videos showing brief information on topics such as rope coiling, water hygiene and the treatment of high altitude sickness. I hope in the coming years that the UIAA team will extend these QR codes and videos to more of the core subject areas.

On the negative side, there are some obvious typos throughout the manual that readers will doubtless pick up on. No book is without a few minor errors, but for me the one major oversight is the absence of an index, truly essential for a manual like this one with so much in-depth technical information. Happily, this is not the 'final' edition and it will be updated continually as techniques evolve over time, providing plenty of opportunities to add this missing component.

Those who have already read this book, and been as impressed with it as I am, will be pleased to hear that the authors are currently working on a companion guide to winter alpine skills. Watch this space…

UIAA Alpine Skills – Summer is available to buy via UIAA member organisations like the AC. If you're interested in a copy, you can arrange to purchase one for £25 + P&P by contacting the AC Office at: *admin@alpineclub.org*.

BY **RICHARD NADIN**