



**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL NOGS - GET THE YULE TIDE OUTDOOR HABIT**

## THE BLIZZARD MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE 2003

by Jackie Roberts

**Saturday 10th July** saw us collecting **George Blizzard** at midday and making the lovely journey up to Bryngwynant Youth Hostel in daylight. We made a slight detour via Kings Hostel to collect a porridge pan that had been left there during a previous trip in April. The new warden appeared to be settling in well.



Stopping in Beddgelert for a drink on the way who should we see strolling along the main street but Mark, and we were later to discover Ali and Ray at Bryngwynant, a sort of 'welcome committee' for the first leg of our 'epic' journey!

After a very good meal and drink the first night we all set off splendidly at 9.30 am the next morning from the car park at the start of the Watkin Path. Ray diverted just before the Gladstone memorial to pursue a less strenuous day in the heat and the rest of us pressed forward diligently with Mark reaching the summit sometime before the rest of us, with George constantly thanking his lucky stars that he was able to cling to the path made by Watkin! The views were extremely clear particularly from the top. The glass of ice cold guinness was memorable and reminded me of the film 'Cold In Alex'!!!

After conquering the first of our 3 peaks, George was by now a man on a mission. A man of grit and courage he was fulfilling a long term ambition and having just had a taste of

success (having ascended Snowdon many times before) was to prove an excellent companion for Norman and myself during the coming week. Monday was the drive to Eskdale, stopping at Ashton Court in Lancaster for lunch, arriving at our destination in time for an evening meal at the local Woolpack Inn.

Next day we set off at 8.30 on a route described by Wainwright as 'the best approach to Scafell Pike' - his description was certainly true to form. The route we took followed the River Esk to Cam Spout, a steep ascent up the waterfall, a long climb up to the ridge of Mickledore between Scafell and Scafell Pike and then a stony climb to the summit.

We saw 2 people and 2 tents from the time we left the hostel until we started to ascend the waterfall. The climb up was hard work but nothing too strenuous, and the views all around were stunning. Standing on the highest peak in England was well worth the effort, obviously appreciated by many others as the summit, rather unlike a lunar landscape, had many walkers out. We descended via Little Narrowcove and it was no less pleasurable, though George took a tumble on a slippery rock going over a stream when we were down in the valley. No serious damage was done, just a graze or two, and so on we went until the hostel was finally in sight, Norman having been sent on ahead to put the kettle on after 10 hours walking. Of course, by this stage, we were getting through copious amounts of tea as well as water during the day.

The following day Wednesday had arrived, and we were all a little sad to leave Eskdale. It is, in my view, an absolutely perfect hostel in a totally unspoilt area. The drive over the Hard Knot and Wrynose passes was without any problems for us although other drivers seemed to be without any thought for other road users in that they did not space themselves out properly on these passes. They seemed to want to cling to other cars and squeeze 3 into a passing place for 1 !!

On the way up to Glen Nevis via Gretna Green, we noticed that a Highland Games was to take place at Balloch, on the southern shores of Loch Lomond. So we decided to call in on the way back down. Afternoon tea at the Ballachulish Hotel just down from Glencoe was very pleasant as always (it is a regular tea spot for us when we are up that way), although their interpretation of a cream tea is slightly different to ours!

Fort William nestles on the side of Loch Linnhe and the Glen Nevis Hostel is situated just across the stream from the start of the regular climb to Ben Nevis. It is a widely acclaimed International Hostel and extremely busy. But because virtually everybody is there for a common purpose ie to climb mountains it really is a pleasure to stay there.

Thursday dawned hot and sunny, and as we started the climb at 8.30 am we knew what a hard trek it was going to be underfoot. The lower slopes of the main track up have steps built from stone and really are very easy to climb up at the start of the day. A little later on you realise how hard they are on the feet!

However, we persevered, and eventually reached the top - it is quite difficult not to in clear weather. As long as you can see where you are going you are pretty safe on this route. The other routes are more challenging, maybe for a future date?





While George munched his sandwiches and rehydrated on the summit, Norman and I walked to the point above the Carn Mor Dearg arrette. It is a breathtaking view, but you do need a good head for heights as Norman will testify!

Descending the lower slopes later that afternoon we realised that we were enjoying the last of the fine weather, as the spots of rain increased to a downpour by the time we were drinking tea in the hostel. The skies were getting darker and the rolls of thunder heavier although it was virtually clear by the time we set off for our celebratory meal – with champagne - in the Glen Nevis Lodge Restaurant.

We discovered during the course of the week that George is very good at seeking out companions, and he did so on this occasion with a character who was intent on Munro bagging, and had just done two-thirds of the 280 or so. To mark the occasion, George bought a similar book the following day to tick off his first one!

The next day George was ready to pack up and head towards home not realising that we were to stay for another night. And so we enjoyed another extremely tasty bowl of soup on the quayside of Fort William whilst being serenaded by pipers music, before setting off to visit Fort Augustus and a sequence of locks entering into Loch Ness.

Is there any truth in sightings of the Loch Ness monster? Any more than the rumours of what a Scotsman wears under his kilt? Having been a complimentary guest of the film show at the visitor centre, George may or may not be able to give an authoritative opinion. An evening at McTavishes Kitchen did not reveal anything so just to confirm we did look in at Balloch on the Saturday, and I can confirm that the average traditional Scotsman appears to wear boxers. Pam may or may not disagree!!! From there we had our last overnight at Kendal arriving home on Sunday to pouring rain.

All in all a memorable week for all 3 of us – it will certainly provide material for a memorable speech at the next Blizzard Memorial Meal! Thank you for your company, George.

## MOON PHASES FOR 2004

To all werewolves, or indeed anyone generally interested in moonlight walks (especially now the dark Winter nights are with us), the following information on the phases of the Full and New Moon's may be useful:-

Full Moon	New Moon
	
07 <sup>th</sup> Jan	22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan
05 <sup>th</sup> Feb	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb
06 <sup>th</sup> Mar	21 <sup>st</sup> Mar
04 <sup>th</sup> Apr	19 <sup>th</sup> Apr
04 <sup>th</sup> May	19 <sup>th</sup> May
02 <sup>nd</sup> Jun	17 <sup>th</sup> Jun
02 <sup>nd</sup> Jul	17 <sup>th</sup> Jul
31 <sup>st</sup> Jul	15 <sup>th</sup> Aug
30 <sup>th</sup> Aug	14 <sup>th</sup> Sep
28 <sup>th</sup> Sep	13 <sup>th</sup> Oct
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	12 <sup>th</sup> Nov
26 <sup>th</sup> Nov	11 <sup>th</sup> Dec
26 <sup>th</sup> Dec	-

## NEW YEAR – NEW GROUP LOGO ?

By Dave Green

At the AGM it was agreed that we would have a competition to design a new logo. The logo needs to represent the Group, so think about outdoor activities, the YHA, Newport and Wales.

It must be reproducible in black and white, although there could also be a colour version. Closing date for entries will be the first Monday in the New Year.

(The "TT Walking dragon" and current logo will be pitted head-to-head with your entries to determine the NOGs group logo –Ed)

## PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

By Norman Roberts

Another successful annual photography competition took place on 24<sup>th</sup> November, when several NOGS entered their choice prints, slides, and digital images, hoping to win that valuable NOGS mug! The standard of entries improves year after year, and 2003 was no exception, albeit that the slide entry was a little disappointing in terms of numbers. There were some excellent photographs in all categories, and 7 different NOGS won prizes (see winners list below).

Digital photography is starting to have an impact, and Norman was lucky enough to win 4 of the 7 print categories with entries taken with his Fuji digital camera. The winning landscape/seascape print also went on to win the best print prize, a shot taken of heavy seas on the coast of Galway on the recent trip to the west coast of Ireland. Other print category winners were Chris (yet another photo of George!), Maggie (a superb ornamental photo), and Dawn, the latter winning the 'worst print' category with her shot of a log (I think).

The slide category winners were Dave (2), Clive (2), and Ian Reese (2). Dave entered a number of photographs from his recent trip to the States, and his miscellaneous category shot of sunlight shining on a canyon wall won him the best slide prize. Both Dave and Norman were presented with framed certificates and a box of chocolates. An enjoyable evening for all – at last Clive's stranglehold on the competition has been broken! Maybe he will invest in a digital camera! (Some of the winning entries will be posted on the web site version of this newsletter – Ed)

### Winners list

A. Best Print - Landscape / Seascape	Heavy Seas With Rainbow - Galway Bay	Norman
B. Best Print - Natural History	Frog - near Llandeusant	Norman
C. Best Print - Group Activities	Climbing at Portland	Norman
D. Best Print - 'Fun Pictures'	George at Oxford	Chris
E. Best Print - Architecture	View outside Manchester Youth Hostel	Norman

F. Best Print - Miscellaneous	Ornaments	Maggie
G. Worst Print - Any Subject	Log	Dawn
H. Best Slide - Landscape / Seascape	Grand Canyon	Dave
I. Best Slide - Natural History	Flower close up	Clive
J. Best Slide - Group Activities	Game of trivial pursuits - Llanddeusant ?	Ian
K. Best Slide - 'Fun Pictures'	Ian on summit of mountain - America	Unknown
L. Best Slide - Architecture	Reflections at festival - Westonbirt	Clive
M. Best Slide - Miscellaneous	Sunlight in cave - American canyon	Dave
N. Best Print	Heavy Seas With Rainbow - Galway Bay	Norman
O. Best Slide	Sunlight in cave - American canyon	Dave

**Some winning entries:-**

