

# JOURNAL OF THE



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### EDITORS NOTES:

Once again, welcome to the Journal of the Great Orme Exploration Society Ltd. for Spring & Summer 2003. I am grateful to members of the society and friends for their contributions to this journal. Please remember that this is your publication and we rely on you to keep its pages full.

One apology which comes from the humble editors hand, concerns an omission in the last journal of our treasurer Dennis Abbot amongst the committee members. Despite the fact that Dennis thought we were trying to tell him something in a subtle way, I'm afraid it was just the result of burning the midnight oil! It cost the Editor a pint! Sorry Dennis!

On a lighter note, I was contacted via e-mail from a man in the USA who got my address from the GOES site. He explained that his parents, who came from Wigan, loved holidays in Llandudno and had given him the middle name of *Orme*. He was tracing his family history and wondered what it meant. I e-mailed back and told him that it is thought to mean *serpents head*. Strangely I got no reply back!  
**PHIL BARRATT (Ed)**

### A FEW CHANGES

Since the last Journal reached you, we have had a couple of changes in GOES personnel with specific jobs.

#### SUE CHAPMAN

Our Public Relations Officer, Sue Chapman, decided early in the new year that she had to stand down. The Society expresses its thanks to Sue for all her hard work last year as PRO. Dave Broomhead has kindly agreed to take over as PRO and those of you who take the NWWN will have seen that he has wasted no time in getting going!

#### STEPHEN LEA

It was with considerable sadness that members learned just before Christmas that Steve had decided to step down as Secretary for GOES after many years of long and devoted service to the Society. We all know that Steve's contribution to the life of our Society was enormous and went over and beyond the expectations of members. Tom Parry wrote to Steve on behalf of all members to pay tribute to all the work he had done for GOES over many years. His commitment to the Society was without reserve at all levels but especially underground and at Committee level. Steve continues to be a member of GOES and even behind the scenes he is still offering help, advice and support to the new secretary. As we thank Steve for all that he has done on our behalf, so we also thank Gareth Davies for taking on the demanding role of being our company secretary.

### THE G.O.E.S. ANNUAL DINNER 2003

has been booked for  
**Friday 28th November**  
**at the Kings Head.**

We will be showing  
The Dave Flowers DVD Footage  
of the underground exploits of the  
'GOES Diggers'  
throughout the evening.  
**PLEASE PUT THE DATE**  
**IN YOUR DIARIES!**

## VISITS :: Home and Away

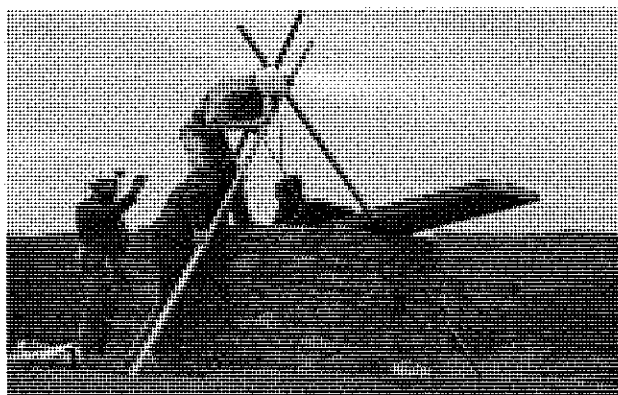
Since we last went to press, GOES has hosted two visits from other Clubs. The Crewe Caving Club joined with GOES members on a trip down Romans and on another occasion the Shropshire Caving Club split their members for two simultaneous trips. One group was taken into the Ty Gwyn whilst the more adventurous and athletic ventured into Romans. Both clubs really enjoyed their excursions and the hospitality which GOES offered them.

In return, the Shropshire Caving Club invited GOES to join them on home ground at a fascinating site called Snail Beach in Shropshire. Gaz Davies undertook the organisation from this end, not only sorting out the transport by way of a minibus but also surprising colleagues by producing a two ring stove and cooking the assembled crew a sumptuous breakfast. Even vegetarians were catered for!

The day included both overground and underground trips. The underground work included some excellent descents with a good variety of diversions which kept GOES members on their toes. The Shropshire Club had put a lot of work into organising the trip which was really appreciated by the 14 GOES members who attended. You may not be surprised to learn that the day ended in a hostelry of good repute where members imbibed the best beer on draught, strangely named 'Lady Godiva'. As it only cost £1.40 a pint it certainly brought a cheerful end to an excellent day away. Thanks to Shropshire Caving Club for a great day!

## NORTH WALES CAVE RESCUE IN ROMANS

On April 13th, CAVE RESCUE joined GOES in



Romans & Treweeks (see photo below) for some rescue practice; this was a new venture for GOES. As some of our members are also CR members the society was really glad to be able to help and support such an important group within North Wales.

## PORTH YR HELYG

Work is now being planned for some more digging on the site. Another entrance slightly above last years has been identified and will be explored over the coming months. We will report progress in the next Journal.

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER!

On the 30<sup>th</sup> November, GOES once again enjoyed a night of friendship, feasting and fun. This year GOES returned to the Kings Head, and were more than satisfied with the fare and the service, especially the latter. How bold and unflinching were the waitresses in the face of such a bombardment of balloons.

Very early in the evening, new recruits to GOES were warned to watch their tongues. They were told that Big Brother was listening to them. This was unfortunate, but happily everyone soon let caution fly to the winds. In consequence many amusing, and sometimes shocking, remarks were overheard by Big Brother. Perhaps I should say Big Sister!

Here is sample: "I would rather like a roll". "I cannot find my serviette. Oh, is that it? I thought it was a paper hat". "Why is JC on his knees by the side of Hilary? Is he proposing? No, he is looking at the ladies".



Picture : Gaz loses his turkey in an avalanche of spuds

legs under the table". "Is that a terrorist's bomb exploding? No it is Tom closing his glasses case." "Oh look Brian is wearing a tie. I had no idea that anyone in Conwy owned a tie, other than the Mayor". "I think it is disgusting when a man of the cloth is caught canoodling with his own wife", etc, etc.

After an excellent dinner, our Chairman staggered up onto his feet and delivered his Christmas message. He began by confusing us all – not difficult after we had been happily imbibing. John told us that summer had lasted four weeks longer than last year. Everyone said they hadn't noticed it, and in fact they hadn't really noticed much summer at all. He then explained that Ali and Sue had extended the Thursday evening walking season, following an inspired suggestion by David Haynes.



John mentioned some interesting finds on the Orme this year, and the History Board in the Visitor Centre. He congratulated Sue, as the PRO officer. He said that Phil had taken over as "Gerbil" editor. He had intended to say Journal editor, but found the word too difficult in his inebriated condition. We were told that Tony had obtained £5,000 worth of lottery funding, with which we had purchased a very posh computerised projector. John said that everyone who took part in the lottery had received £18.50 this year from lottery wins – this was a record, but not quite up to the £52 invested!

Mark then gave us his usual excellent slide show. I hope to be forgiven by Mark for describing the slides in a somewhat frivolous fashion. For example we saw Steve wearing John's motor cycle suit, and Gareth looking very kinky, geared up in chains. There were many, slightly indecent, views of members

from the rear, abseiling down. I found a particular slide of Paul sitting by an underground lake and looking thoughtful, very reminiscent of Jules Verne's "Journey to the Centre of the Earth". Remember the lake full of fierce monsters? Maybe that was what Paul could see. As usual, Tom and I had to leave before the show was over, but the last things we saw were some particularly beautiful slides with sparkling brown stalactites and stalagmites. An excellent night, and yet again all thanks to Ali for her brilliant organisational skills.

**EVE PARRY :: December 2002**

## ICE-CREAM AND OYSTERS

On a visit to the shaft excavated by GOES members in the Happy Valley gardens, Llandudno, recently, I became aware of numerous empty oyster shells that littered the area near the shaft. Having worked on shellfish at the former Fisheries Laboratory in Conwy for most of my working life, I was obviously curious. Imagine my surprise when having examined the shells, I found that these weren't your 'ordinary' native oysters, but an American variety, *Crassostrea virginica*, that had been imported in large numbers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The expansion of the rail network and its potential for moving perishable products rapidly to the main centres of population, linked to the Victorians love of oysters, had greatly increased the exploitation of the natural beds of our own native oyster, *Ostrea edulis*. Located in the Thames estuary and the Essex rivers, these oyster beds were regarded as the richest natural oyster beds in all of Europe, a fact well known to the Romans! In 1864 alone almost 500 million oysters (equivalent to 30,000t ) were sold on Billingsgate fish market. It is therefore no surprise that by 1876 stocks of our own native oysters were drastically depleted and that a trade in live American Oysters from the United States and Canada had already started.

It is thought that the trade started in the

early 1870s with the formation of two companies, The Conway Oyster Company Ltd. and the Anglo-American Oyster Company. The oysters were shipped over in barrels as deck cargo in the winter or early spring, to be either relaid for fattening in our own coastal waters or sold for direct consumption. Apparently the Anglo-American Company, which had relaying sites in the Salcombe estuary and in the Menai Strait, went into liquidation in 1876 following disastrous losses to their oysters whilst they were in transit from America. The Conway Oyster Company was importing a million small oysters a week in the early 1870's but experienced problems with poor fattening of the imported oysters in the Conwy estuary. They subsequently moved the on-growing side to leased grounds off Cleethorpes and Brightlingsea, Essex. It was reported that in 1879 over ninety thousand barrels (approx.1000 oysters per barrel) were imported from New York alone. This American trade had largely died out by 1915 but there was a small revival in the 1930s.

The downside of this unrestricted trade in oysters was the introduction of two native American oyster pests which became established within our own southern oyster fisheries, i.e. the slipper limpet and the American whelk tingle. The slipper limpet, *Crepidula fornicata*, although not a direct predator, reproduced at such an alarming rate it was a serious competitor on the oyster grounds. Despite the simple control measure of being destroyed on sight, and many thousands of tons must have been destroyed over the years, they are still a pest in our southern oyster fisheries.

The American whelk tingle, *Urosalpinx cinerea*, on the other hand, a tiny whelk shaped snail was by far the most destructive, actively seeking out and drilling the shells of the small oysters to get at the flesh inside. Still seen in our oyster areas, but in smaller numbers, this pest was significantly affected by marine antifouling paints containing the chemical Tributyl tin - T.B.T. This chemical caused physiological changes to the reproductive system that effectively sterilised the beast thereby reducing the overall numbers. It was the French scientists that first recognised the

toxicity of T.B.T paints on the marine environment and who alerted other foreign governments accordingly. T.B.T. has now been banned from use by all vessels under 25 meters in this country, effectively reducing the contamination of our inshore waters.

Enquiries at the Llandudno library and the Conwy County archives have failed to shed further light on this live oyster trade from America or indeed the fate of the Conway Oyster Company itself. Sadly, we shall never know the circumstances of how or when these shells came to litter the ground around the Happy Valley shaft, perhaps just another small mystery to add to the many that surround this great outcrop of limestone, the Great Orme.

#### Reference.

Utting S.D., and Spencer B. E., 1992. Introductions of marine bivalve molluscs into the United Kingdom for commercial culture - case histories. ICES mar. Sci. Symp., 84-91.

**BRIAN EDWARDS - Feb 2003**

### MORE OF ST.TUDNO

The last Journal featured the first part of extracts from a paper presented at S. George's College Windsor in January 2002. This article takes up the rest of the story.

The Iolo Manuscripts (a collection of a variety of ancient manuscripts, and music) suggested that Tudno together with his brothers lost their inheritance and patrimony took refuge at the monastery of Bangor Is Coed (on the river Dee and not to be confused with the modern day Bangor) . There is little information available for the history of this monastery. It features in several historic works as a site of some significance. It is suggested that it was daughter house to the monastery at Bangor Fawr (The modern city of Bangor today) and was celebrated in the Triads as one of the most important monastic sites in Wales.

The Venerable Bede mentions the monastery at Bangor Is Coed. It is the venue for an important conference with

Augustine who was trying to encourage the Welsh Christians to accept him as Archbishop. Bede gives the year as 603 AD.

Bede tells us that when the monks were not prepared to accept the authority of Augustine, he issued a decree that had a prophetic element to it. If they refused to accept peace with fellow Christians then they would be forced to accept war at the hands of enemies; and if they refused to accept the English way of life, they would eventually suffer at their hands, the penalty of death. Sadly it seems all these things happened as Augustine had prophesied. In the onslaught from Chester that followed, the monks came out in force to pray for victory over the invading English. Bede records that of those who came to pray, twelve hundred were killed and only about fifty escaped.

It is sometimes suggested that Tudno could well have arrived on the Great Orme fleeing this great defeat, but there is no evidence to support this theory. What seems more likely, and again we are in the realm of speculation here, is that Tudno had developed his monastic life to the point at which he needed to move on to a more advanced level of monastic discipline. The Welsh church of this period saw the solitary life as an advanced form of monastic expression. It was not for the beginner and marked an individual's progress towards spiritual perfection and was often taken up towards the end of a saint's life.

Whatever his motives, Tudno is mentioned in the ancient pedigrees as being of Cyngreawdr (the ancient Welsh name for the Great Orme). The writer E.G.Bowen (amongst others) suggests that Tudno lived in the cave known as Ogof Lech (Hiding cave). He suggests that caves, rather like islands, abound as personal retreats of the early Welsh saints. This would certainly equate with the suggestion that Tudno, having reached a state of maturity in his monastic life, came to further his saintly life (or even end it) in the seclusion of a retreat.

If this is the case then another question is posed. Was Tudno's arrival on the Orme part of his own desire to be a hermit living the eremitical life, or did, as is often suggested, Tudno arrive on the Orme with the express

desire to evangelise, bringing the Christian faith to a people who were pagan?

This question has no easy answers and perhaps an answer lies in some sort of combination of the two positions. It could be that it was necessary for him to retreat first in order then to come out from the cave and evangelise. We must again note the imagery here, a man coming out of a cave with a new lease of life has clear resurrection images and did not Jesus himself need to retreat before major events?

In the history of monasticism, we often find monks leaving the enclosure for some seclusion. It was their experience that whilst they sought solitude others were drawn to them by the very nature of the holy lives they led. Could the same pattern be here with Tudno. Could it be that, sought out of his seclusion, he built a church cell at Pant yr Eglwys. (The current church on this site that dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries is thought to sit on the site of an earlier 6<sup>th</sup> century structure.). Perhaps the answer is more down to earth: he was getting much older and the dampness and wetness of the cave was too much for him.

An aerial view of the landscape surrounding the church today shows that the church seems to sit inside a rectangular earthwork or enclosure (Llan?). These aerial views show ancient field workings, evidence of some small industry and together with evidence of mining on the Orme, quite clearly suggests that far from being a monastic retreat, the area around the church was one of much human activity.

The significance of his achievement is measure by the fact that the Church was actually dedicated to him and his feast still exists in the Liturgical Calendar of the Church in Wales. (This is not the case with many of the other lesser known saints of this era.) We also find that various cults associated with Tudno are to be found. Nearby to the church and slightly to the east we find Ffynnon Tudno (Tudno's Wells). A rocking stone, Mael Sigl, known as St Tudno's Cradle lies on the Pen Y Dinas

site of the Great Orme. Tudno is also suggested as the owner of a celebrated Whetstone which was accounted one of the thirteen royal curiosities of the Isle of Britain.

The Church has often dismissed the lives of the early Welsh Saints because their story exists within that strange juxtaposition of fact, myth and legend. Yet that dismissal fails to recognise the gift of such an exploration. To look into the evidence about Tudno takes us through a thousand or so years of history with all the different genres which that entails. That is in itself part of the gift of attempting a 'life of St Tudno' and should be celebrated for what it is, without the need to make factual assertions. Some Welsh Saints have a 'well documented' life, but a closer look reveals a whole series of influences on their biographers which calls into question again the factual claims they make.

As any pilgrim traveller will tell you, the journey is as significant as the destination!

"Though strange to us thy life and death  
Yet English faith shall say  
Thou wast among God's witnesses  
In that wild and ancient day

And still where thine own mountain church  
Looks calmly o'er the waves  
And – sight of joy! – the blessed Cross  
Gleams fair on recent graves.

We'll honour one that walked with God,  
And sought no earthly fame,  
And blend with thanksgiving to Christ  
His faithful Tudno's name."  
(found in Christ Church Oxford)

St Tudno is celebrated in the Welsh liturgical calendar on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

#### **PHIL BARRATT - 2002**

*(A full copy of the paper to members of GOES with a full reference & Bibliography is available from Phil)*

### **PEN MORFA UPDATE.**

After some months away from it Pen-Morfa has seen a lot of activity recently, despite the 700 metre of wading through ice cold water to get in.

By abseiling from the high points, down mainly ore shoots, various new areas have been found. The ore shoots had been avoided on earlier trips because of the loose material left in them. A lot of this material has now come down!

Why? The decision to go down these ore shoots was brought on by necessity. On a trip in February (no names no pack drill) we managed, whilst crossing the abyss to drop 2 (one would be bad enough) kit bags. One belonged to Gaz containing lots of gear needed for our exploration, the other to Brian containing all of his SRT gear etc. It took two very long (in at 10 am out at 4pm) Sunday trips, to get both bags back.

What we found were tunnels, going off the ore shoots at approximately mid distance that had never been explored since the mine had closed. This was ascertained by artefacts we found, including a full ginger beer bottle and a complete clay pipe as well as chisels, drills and tampers. Had these areas been found in early exploration days these items would have found their way out. If they had been found recently they would be recorded. All these items we have left in the mine, but have moved them to an area where more people can see and appreciate them.

When I joined the society in 1998 I was told of an area in the Pen-Morfa where a tunnel was visible with what appeared to be a rail track hanging out of it. To get to it would entail drilling and roping a 30 foot expanse of vertical wall over a 25 foot drop. As we were not allowed into Pen-Morfa at this time, an area in Romans was used to perfect a rope walk across a wall. This was then to be the method used to cross to the tunnel in the Pen-Morfa.

We have had so many things going on in the Pen-Morfa that crossing this area wasn't attempted; it was left on the back burner. On Sunday March 23<sup>rd</sup> we found ourselves not going across and into this tunnel but coming out of it after descending 2 ore shoots.

All said, Pen-Morfa is still coming up with surprises, the grail still awaits us, "somewhere there is a connection" leading to Owens or Vivians and yes we will find it.

**JOHN CARPENTER - March 2003**

## **BRYNIAU POETHION,**

One of the outstanding events of the nineteenth century was the Californian Gold Rush. In common with many great occurrences it was triggered by a simple discovery. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1848 a group of workers constructing a saw mill on the banks of a river near Sacramento found a handful of gold nuggets. It was a find which had world wide ramifications. It triggered a global movement of over half a million people intent on achieving riches. Gripped by 'Gold Fever' miners and would be miners flooded into California from all four corners of the earth. Several made their fortunes in the gold fields, but the vast majority failed to do so. By 1852 California produced gold worth in excess of eighty million dollars. In 1859 a nugget weighing over fifty pounds, the Willard nugget, was discovered.

But the rush to mine precious metals was not confined to California. In 1849 the Great Orme experienced a similar occurrence, albeit on a much smaller scale. At that time Llandudno was a small isolated and remote village with a population of about six hundred who depended on mining, fishing and farming for their livelihood. The precious metal that was discovered was not gold but copper, nevertheless an extremely valuable substance.



A little below, Penygwylfryn, the Summit of the Orme, is the area known as Bryniau Poethion (see photo above). It extends across the heath land between Pyllau Farm and the old church of Saint Tudno. Literally translated the name means 'the hot hills' and several explanations for the name exist. It is sometimes suggested that the name refers to the practice of fire setting and that the area would have been wreathed in smoke when this was taking place. A more likely explanation is that the name is a farming expression and refers to land which dries out quickly, an arid area.

Despite the fact that copper mining had taken place in this locality since the Bronze Age and that this area adjoined the nineteenth century workings, a large quantity of copper ore was discovered a few feet below the surface. Amazingly this had remained undiscovered until 1849. The bed of ore was so shallow that it was possible to extract it using only a pick and shovel. There was a wild rush to take advantage of the fact and Bryniau Poethion was re-named, 'California Cymru', the 'Welsh California.' In no time the whole area was a scene of frenzied activity as gangs of 'adventurers' sought to make their fortunes. The scene is described by Thomas Rowlands some fifty years after the event.

"... had discovered huge copper deposits, and that within a yard and a half of the surface, on the road to the old cemetery. Within a week the whole area was covered in pits and the miners were to be seen like ants in every direction digging for copper, and many hundreds of pounds of the treasure were obtained in a short time, and this short lived success made a huge difference to many families in the village and their children are influenced by it to the present day."

The 'Rush' ended in a very short time as the small rich deposit of ore was worked out by the miners. Nevertheless several local families benefited considerably from the find and the 'Welsh California' became firmly established in the folk memory of the area. The results of the excavations are still in evidence and the pits described by Thomas Rowlands still scar the mountainside.

Following the Llandudno floods of 1993 it was

noticed that the bottom of some of the pits had slumped, and concern was expressed that the old excavations might pose a danger to the public. In order to investigate the possibility, Aberconwy Borough council employed a JCB and two pits were excavated. Surprisingly it was found that the pits were connected by a small tunnel and no evidence of mineralization was seen. It would appear that the ore deposit was shallow and that the tunnel was an attempt to investigate whether it continued at a deeper level. Apparently it did not and the operation seems to have been abandoned when the shallow deposit was worked out. The "Llandudno Copper Rush" was obviously a short lived affair!

Last Summer one of the Orme wardens was conducting a party of school children around the Bryniau Poethion area. She asked them if they could explain why the area was covered in large holes. One little lad stared thoughtfully at the landscape and suggested,

"Giant rabbits, Miss."

Does that sort of thing happen in California?

*Tom Parry - April 2003.*

## GOATS, GOATS, GOATS

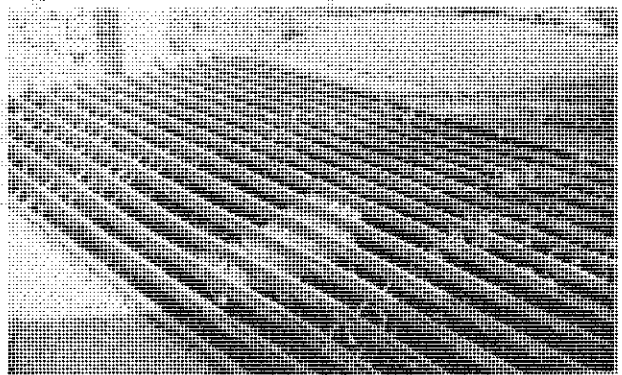
In my short time on the Great Orme I can honestly say that the goats have brought a great deal of entertainment and enjoyment to the job. They have added variety and amusement, not to mention a great deal of trouble and strife! Despite all the trouble they cause, the predicaments they put themselves in and the ridiculous situations they put me in, I welcome every goat encounter I am fortunate enough to have.

I first began working on the Great Orme in 1996 as Assistant Country Park Warden knowing next to nothing about the Great Orme and its goats. I am by no means an expert now, 7 years later and having taken over from Helen Jowett as Country Park Warden, but I do feel I have learnt an awful lot about their behaviour. This has come from observing them and having to become more closely involved when one or

other of the goats has found itself in trouble (and the trouble they can get themselves in to can be quite spectacular!).

At this time of year goat kids are particularly vulnerable from the weather, when many kids can die due to hypothermia. When very young they are also vulnerable to attacks from Ravens and also from us humans who can easily mistake a perfectly well cared for kid for an abandoned one. Each year at least one 'abandoned' kid is picked up and removed from the spot where left by its mother. If the kid is left alone the nanny will almost always return to suckle her kid.

Two years ago a group of nanny goats and their kids were also subjected to a particularly cruel and barbaric act from a group of local youths that involved the kids being deliberately pushed from cliff tops above Ty Gwyn Road. As a result one kid had to be put to sleep and two others were subjected to a terrifying ordeal that culminated in them becoming trapped on a cliff ledge. Thanks to eagle eyed passers-by this act was spotted from the promenade and was amazingly caught on CCTV. The CCTV footage did not make for pleasant viewing when I was asked if I might be able to identify the people involved.



But kids are not the only ones to find themselves in trouble. Take the nanny goat in the picture above. No, your eyes are not deceiving you. She is stuck beneath a cattle grid! There was no obvious way in which the goat could have got underneath the grid and myself and the RSPCA officer, who were called to deal with the goat, spent a good while puzzling over how she had become trapped and how we could get her out. The grid was concreted down, impossible to remove without some heavy equipment and, being late

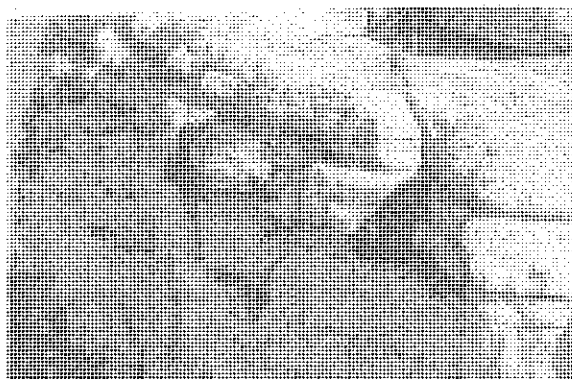
on a Bank Holiday Monday there was little point in even trying to get someone out to remove the grid. After more head scratching, we noticed that the gap between two of the bars was ever so slightly further apart and that this could be the only explanation for how the nanny goat had become trapped. Over an hour later we had managed to catch the goat beneath the grid and gently, bit by bit, pulled the goat back through. A perfect way to spend Bank Holiday Monday! After a quick check to make sure she was none the worse for wear the nanny trotted off to join the rest, who had been watching from a safe distance. Not a word of thanks!

The billy goats, being the notorious 'troublemakers', come into contact with numerous foreign objects on their forays in to people's gardens, Happy Valley and Haulfre Gardens. The billies tend to have problems with their hooves and legs leading to lameness (this doesn't seem to afflict the nannies at all). On numerous occasions we (Country Park staff and RSPCA) are called to look at goats with broken legs. Invariably they turn out not to be broken bones but lameness. The difficulty here is the amazing ability of a goat to appear to be virtually immobile yet, when anyone tries to approach it, off it leaps at top speed. I have even watched a billy goat leap over the same fence, of its own volition, three times when only having the use of three legs! Another memorable occasion was when Tom Parry's penknife came to the rescue. We had discovered a billy goat in trouble near Haulfre Gardens that had become completely entangled in a good mixture of barbed wire and Old Man's Beard (a wild clematis, with vine-like appearance). The goat was effectively tethered to the spot but flinging itself around like a mad thing trying to free itself. It took three of us to rugby tackle him, pin him down and give him a fetching haircut that enabled us to set him free.

I always take a phone call about the goats with a pinch of salt. Invariably a goat stuck on a cliff *isn't*. A tasty patch of ivy on the steepest of cliffs is well worth investigating to a goat (despite the fact that it requires a death-defying traverse of a rock face that we mere mortals would grade at least E1). However, they do sometimes get it wrong.

A call from a lady near the Gogarth Abbey Hotel prompted me to take a huge pinch of salt again. However, wherever possible, we always respond to a call about an animal in trouble. So we went

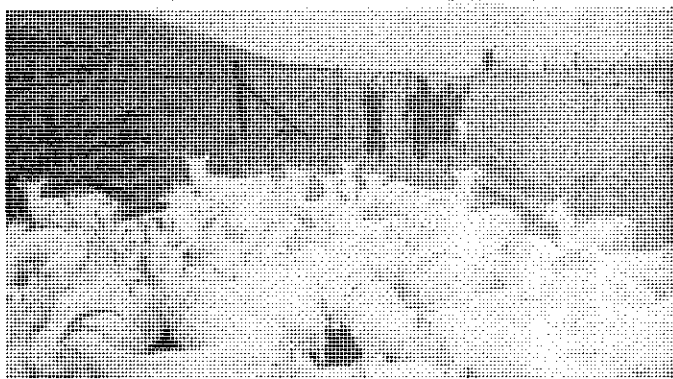
along to have a look. The lady explained that the goat she had seen was on a cliff ledge with its head in a hole and it had been there for about five hours! Sure enough when we got up there the billy had reached forward in to a crack in the rock to take a drink from a rivulet of water running down the back of the hole. Presumably it had slipped and its horns had become firmly wedged! It took some precarious pushing, shoving and wriggling before we managed to get him free. I made sure I got the head end!



The next picture shows a cliff rescue late last year when six goats became trapped on a ledge. A nanny and her year old kid had become stuck and because she was in season any billy goat in the area was attracted to her. Before we knew it there were four goats on the ledge and by the time a rescue could be organised there were six. We usually give the goats a good deal of time to 'rescue' themselves (and often they do) but this time it was decided that if we didn't do something the whole herd would be on there. I liken the nanny goats experience throughout this to one of those nights spent pinned in the corner of a nightclub/pub with a series of lecherous men whispering in your ear (the female readers will be able to identify with this, I am sure). Thanks to the heroic efforts of numerous RSPCA men the nanny was eventually rescued from this nightmare.

In 2001 it was decided that the number of goats on the Great Orme should be reduced. An explanation of the reason why would require at least an entire GOES journal to explain. The why's and where fore's could be discussed endlessly and believe me they have! One of the more positive reasons for doing this involves a

genuine concern for the future of the herd. Foot and Mouth disease in the year 2000 made it perfectly clear how vulnerable the Great Orme goats are to complete obliteration. Moving some goats to new locations seems to make perfect sense (not putting all your eggs in one basket as they say). Other reasons for reducing numbers involve concern over the number of goats that the Great Orme can support. I personally don't believe that 'saturation' point has been reached yet. The goats are, in the main, fat and healthy and the fact that they raid people's gardens for food is a learned habit, well remembered and passed from one generation to another. The goats aren't stupid. Why scratch around on the Orme itself for food at the end of the winter when there are far easier pickings and more varied delights to be found in gardens? Nevertheless, left unchecked the herd will increase and there will come a time when the goats are hungry. Intervention now should help prevent any unnecessary suffering or damage to the Great Orme's varied and important habitats (and reduce conflict with the goat's neighbours).



So, in 2001 we had a big round up. This involved putting up three large holding pens and lots of temporary fencing to help us guide the goats to where we wanted them. The idea was that we would give as many of the nanny goats as we could catch hormone implants to prevent them, temporarily, from having kids.

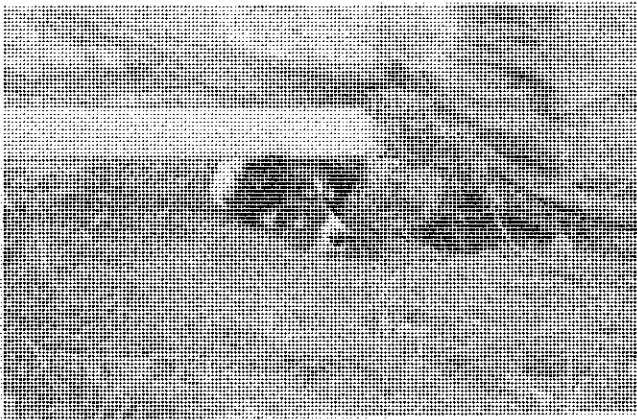
The round up started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August and the goats lulled us in to a false sense of security. We started at 6.30am and by 8am we had a pen full of goats. Aha, we thought, this is going to be easy! We employed a vet from the International Zoo Vet Group, Andrew Greenwood, and spent the rest of the day helping him with the work of treating each nanny goat. All the goats caught were wormed, given a health check and had their hooves trimmed if needed. Andrew remarked how well, healthy and fat they all were considering they are a feral herd. He

was expecting mangy, half-starved animals, I think. Each nanny, when released, was given a fetching red cross on her rear to ease identification the following day. Next day dawned bright and sunny and we went to catch our goats. Not a single one was caught! 6.30am to 6pm and all that we had were some very tired and demoralised people. The red cross goats had spread the word. Anyway, at the end of the three days we had caught 81 nanny goats (about what we had hoped for) and treated them to a year off pregnancy and motherhood. We didn't catch all the nannies and the implants didn't work for some of them so we still have some kids being born but it has vastly reduced the birth rate whilst we get a grip on reducing the size of the herd on the Great Orme.

In 2002 and at the beginning of this year we began to move some goats. At first trying to find potential new owners and suitable locations for the goats was like hitting my head against a brick wall. However, with perseverance and help from English Nature's Grazing Animals Project, an ad in their newsletter led to some very interesting phone calls. We now have two proud new owners of Great Orme goats, a further one who will receive goats this summer and two further potential new owners. Rather than rounding them up, this time we have been gathering goats with the use of tranquillising darts which has been carried out by Nigel Edwards, the local RSPCA Inspector. Using the dart gun enabled us to be selective, choosing particular goats for relocation, not too young and not too old, some billies and some nannies. After being darted the goats are transported back to a holding pen to sleep it off. When fully recovered and when we have caught the number of goats we want they are taken to their new homes. As the first lot of goats was driven away I have to admit to feeling a little sad (sentimental fool) but since then I have seen some of the goats in their new surroundings (goat paradise) and have seen how pleased people are with what they are doing. I can't help thinking that it truly is worth all our hard work.

In total we have found new homes for 52 goats. Seventeen have gone to Rose and David Kent who farm near Crickhowell, Brecon (their own herd of goats had to be culled during the

Foot and Mouth outbreak). Thirty-five goats have also gone to Kent County Council where they are being used on an extensive area of what was chalk downland. Lack of grazing has led to the downs becoming overgrown with trees and scrub so the goats are doing a valuable job in restoring the downland to its former glory. Their new owner Andy Gorman, Ranger for Kent CC is so pleased with them that he has asked for more.



(This picture shows Siôn (Parry) in a 'supervisory role'. Ed)

This week I heard from Rose and Andy. The goats in Kent have produced one kid whilst the goats in Brecon have produced eight kids. The Great Orme goats go for world domination!

#### **SALLY PIDCOCK Great Orme 2003**

Many thanks to;

Tom Parry for all his help and moral support, all North and mid Wales RSPCA staff involved with the goats, for their seemingly endless wit and good humour (especially Nigel Edwards for helping get all this off the ground) and my colleagues in Conwy Countryside Service for all their hardwork. Also thanks to Phil Bailey for the cliff rescue photograph.

### **G.O.E.S. GOES BATTY ON THE ORME**

Friday 31st January 2003 was the day a Bat Survey took place on the Great Orme. It had been organised by the Gwynedd Bat Group and the Great Orme Country Park so as to monitor any changes in the presence of bats in the many mine and cave entrances on the Orme since the last survey a couple of years ago.

10 people, made up of Orme wardens, CCW members (licensed handlers), Licensed handlers from Gwynedd Bat Group, plus myself and John

Carpenter representing GOES, took part. We split up into two groups and set off over the Orme. Our aim was to visit as many entrances as possible in a morning (the afternoon was scheduled for another survey near Conwy), enter them and record any bat sightings or indications that bats had been present at some time in the past.

We managed to cover the majority of accessible entrances but found that many of them were not considered by the experts to be a suitable hibernating place. Frequent use by goats, sheep and homeless people cause too much disturbance for bats, which are extremely sensitive to minute temperature fluctuations and noise while they hibernate.

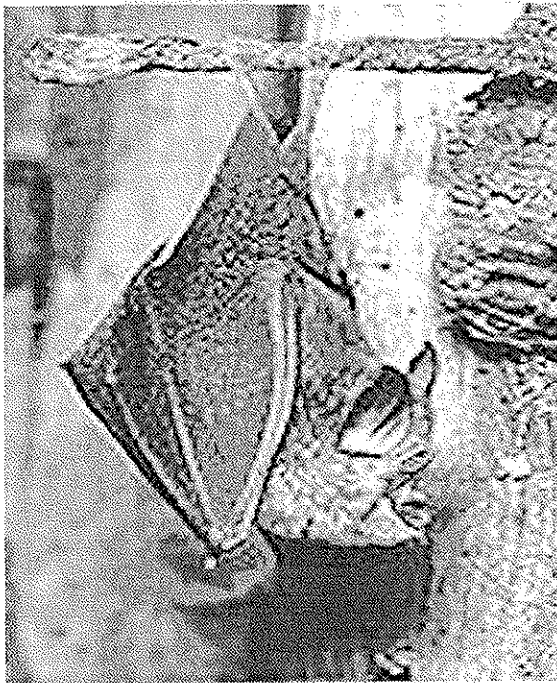
In fact, the only place we did discover two bats was in Five Entrances. They were both Lesser Horseshoes, and were hanging like old teabags from the ceiling. This site must be ideal as it was also the only place bats were found on the previous survey too - nice and quiet and fairly close to the trees in Haulfre Gardens, which the bats would likely use in the summer for roosting and feeding. Lesser horseshoe bats are considered to be very rare. They can now only be found in Wales, the west of England and the west of Ireland and are completely extinct in the rest of the British Isles.

There was also evidence that bats had been present in Elephants Cave, half way along a narrow dog-leg passage. It was unclear how long ago they had left the cave or whether they left due to human disturbance, but there were small mouse-like droppings in a concentrated area on the floor. Apparently bat and mouse droppings are very similar, but can be differentiated by squeezing them between two fingers! Mouse droppings are hard, but bat droppings crumble into small pieces.

We have 15 species of bat in the UK and many of them depend on underground sites for hibernation or for temporary roosts where they may feed, breed or shelter from bad weather. All of our UK bats feed on insects, which is great in the summer, but come the winter when there is no food around they are forced to go into hibernation. They will find a nice secluded spot with a near constant temperature and settle down for 6 months.

Their body temperature drops right down to only a few degrees and their heart rate drops to only 2-3 beats a minute. During this time they exist solely on their fat reserves.

Underground exploration in caves and mines known to be used by bats should be avoided during this time, usually between October and April each year. The noise of several cavers passing through, plus the heat emitted from their bodies and lamps could be enough to trick the hibernating bat into thinking that spring has arrived. They will gradually wake up, and about an hour later when the cavers have long since gone, they will be fully alert and in desperate need of food to build up their energy levels again. Unfortunately, as there will be virtually no insects around, any bats that have woken will perish.



Bats are protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and it is illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take any bat, to disturb roosting or hibernating bats, or to destroy, damage or obstruct access to any place used by bats for roosting.

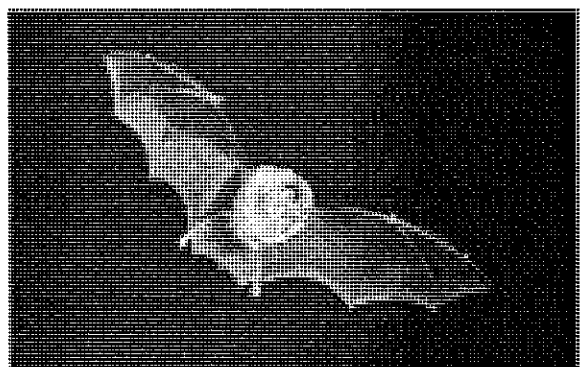
Most hibernating bats are extremely difficult to see, as they squeeze themselves into small cracks and crevices; it is only the Horseshoe bats that hang out in the open, so it could easily be wrongly assumed that a cave or mine site is not being used.

The Bat Conservation Trust has issued the following voluntary Conservation Code:

- Do not handle bats. Also beware of dislodging bats from their roosting position, particularly when you are moving through low passages.
- Do not photograph roosting bats. Flashguns can be very disturbing.
- Do not warm up hibernating bats. This can arouse them. Try not to linger in confined spaces as even your body heat is sufficient to cause arousal.
- Do not shine bright lights on bats. Both the light and the heat can trigger arousal.
- Do not use carbide lamps in bat roosts. Carbide lamps are particularly undesirable because of the heat and fumes.
- Do not smoke or make excessive noise underground. Any strong stimulus can arouse bats.
- Do not take large parties into bat roosts in winter. Rescue practises should be avoided when bats are present.
- Do seek advice before blasting or digging. Explosives can cause problems both from the blast itself and from the subsequent fumes. In known bat sites, blasting should be limited to the summer, or to areas known not to be used by bats. Digging operations may alter the microclimate of bat roosts.

Further information is available from the Bat Conservation Trust, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London. SW8 4BG or their web site: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

**ALI DAVIES, Llandudno, April 2003.**



## SUMMER WALKS 2003

All walks start at 7pm and are usually gentle strolls which last approximately 2 hours. Sturdy footwear is recommended. Following is a list of the proposed walks, but all are subject to confirmation. Please check the community news section of the North Wales Weekly News which will provide full details of the walk taking place and the arranged meeting place. If the weather is poor, it is very likely that the walk will be postponed until a later date.

If you have any queries, please contact **Ali Davies on 01492 877960**

| DATE        | WALK DETAILS                                                    | MEET AT                           |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| May 15th    | Elephants Cave/Happy Valley                                     | Car Park in Happy Valley          |
| May 22nd    | Fynnon Galchog area                                             | Ski Slope car Park                |
| May 29th    | Penrhynside Guided Walk                                         | Cross Keys PH, Street Parking     |
| June 5th    | Nant-y-Gamar to Penrhynside                                     | Nant - y- Gamar car park          |
| June 12th   | Pensychnant                                                     | To be arranged                    |
| June 19th   | Gun Sites                                                       | Gun Sites                         |
| June 26th   | Aber Falls                                                      | Aber Falls car park               |
| July 3rd    | Marl Woods & Obelisk                                            | Car park off Marl Hall Roundabout |
| July 10th   | Little Orme Summit                                              | Kwik Save car park                |
| July 17th   | Geology of the Vardre                                           | All Saints Church Deganwy         |
| July 24th   | Glanwydden to Pydew Quarry                                      | To be arranged                    |
| July 31st   | Porth yr Helig (steep slopes!)                                  | North Shore toll gate             |
| August 7th  | Farthest end of the Orme                                        | Car Par at top of concrete road   |
| August 14th | Beach Adit                                                      | Happy Valley car park             |
| August 21st | Ghost Walk (1 hr walk arranged by the Visitor Centre £3 Charge) | Wishing Well Conwy                |
| August 28th | Orme Cromlech & Pyllau Area                                     | Waterboard building               |