

Dacorum Adventure Group

Newsletter

April 2009

Coming up ...

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Articles

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BMC Membership

There's been some confusion over what our affiliation to the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) actually means for DAG members. So, just to clarify ...

As a DAG member you are asked to renew your membership each year at the September weekend (the AGM) or soon after. At the end of the calendar year we pass a list of all current DAG members to the BMC. So, if you haven't renewed by then, you won't be on the list! This gives those listed Club Membership of the BMC. The

main benefits for Club Members are as follows:

- BMC Civil Liability Insurance – In case you are sued for causing an accident on the hills!
- BMC Magazine - Once a year, in March, you will receive a copy of the BMC magazine – Summit. This is a quarterly magazine for individual members, but as a Club Member, you will receive one per year.
- BMC Membership Card – This is enclosed with the magazine. It entitles you to discounts at various retail outlets.
- Monthly email newsletters - In addition, as a member, you may receive the BMC email newsletter sent out in the first week of the month. These cover a variety of topics of interest to climbers, walkers and cyclists. If you don't receive this already, you can opt in by sending an email to office@thebmc.co.uk with your details.
- "Competitive rates" (according to the BMC) on BMC insurance (eg for travel). Could be worth checking out.

If you are new to DAG and joined mid-way through the year, it is possible for us to submit new names to the BMC periodically. If you would like more

info on this, please speak to a member of the Committee.

Mountain 1st Aid Course

Last month 10 DAG members enrolled on a mountain 1st aid course, run by CRT Medical in Mid Wales. An account of the 2-day course follows on Page 4. A second course may be organised, if there are sufficient people wanting to do one. So, have a look at Page 4 and, if you would be interested in doing something similar, speak to Colin Workman.

Can you cook for us in July?

We are still in need of a volunteer (or two) to cook for us in July. If you could do it, please contact Sue. If you haven't done it before, it's not as challenging as it may seem. You'll get help re quantities and lots of ideas and advice on the sort of things to choose.

Pub Nights

Don't forget ... We meet regularly on the first Tuesday of every month, from 20:30 onwards, in a pub near Hemel Hempstead. Everyone is welcome. The address of the pub (along with lots of other info) is on our website – www.dag4hills.org.uk. Why not come along? Next pub night – Tuesday, 5th May.

You are invited ...

As always St Albans Sub Aqua Club warmly invites all DAG members to the following social events:

Ian & Kerry's Engagement Party - 25th April, 7.30pm at Cottonmill Lane, St Albans. Ian & Kerry would be pleased to see any DAG members who would like to help them celebrate.

It's a Knock Out Competition – 11th July 2008, 2.00pm at Cottonmill Lane, St Albans. A good family afternoon. Take part in the DAG team or simply watch the fun and cheer them on.

Xmas Party – 19th December 2009, 8.00pm at Cottonmill Lane, St Albans. Tickets will be on sale nearer the time, but put the date in your diary.

For further information on any of these events contact Reg on 01727 838694.

In the next few newsletters we're planning to give you a little background info on one of the centres we regularly visit. Where else could we start, but with the ...

Hertfordshire Snowdonia Centre

by John Entwistle

DAG has been going to the HSC ever since it was formed. My first trip with DAG was to the HSC in 1978. So, for newcomers to the club, perhaps some background knowledge would be of interest.

The building is a late nineteenth century coach house, which served a large house, now demolished, further up the hillside. It would have been from here that carriages went up the track to carry the ladies to hear Gladstone speak to the local people at "Gladstone Rock". This event took place 13th September 1892 when William Ewart Gladstone (a Scot born in Liverpool married to a Welshwoman, then Prime Minister for

the fourth separate time and 82 years old), gave a speech from the rock on "Justice for Wales". He was there to open the Watkin Path, named after the local landowner and personal friend, Sir Edward Watkin, who had created it. HSC was the coachhouse to his house. According to 'The Times' about 2500 people attended, including David Lloyd George, in whose Parliamentary constituency the rock stood.

We skip a few years now and the first association with Hertfordshire was when the Herts Mountaineering Club rented it for a short period. Hertfordshire County Council then acquired it in 1964 on a 21-year lease. When that lease expired in 1985 use of the Centre carried on under the terms of the old lease for several years without a new lease being negotiated. HCC obtained a new 21-year lease in 1991, which extends to 2012. There are rent reviews every third year.

When DAG first went there, the water supply came from a pipe leading from the next door stream. It occasionally froze which meant that we had no water. When we went into the centre on a Friday night, it was COLD. The building, without any heat is a great fridge. But with the fire going, it could get quite cosy. Not very often – it was always warmer in a pub than in the centre.

After the new lease was signed a major redevelopment was undertaken when the building was extensively modernised and a washroom and shower block added at the cost to Herts County Council of £114,000. And what a conversion!! Central heating, more showers, hot water and a better kitchen – fantastic. But it still has its problems. One dark and wintry December night when all of DAG,

apart from three of us, were down at the Price Llewlyn, sampling their ale and waiting for the turkey to cook for our Christmas dinner, I was in the shower when there was an electricity cut – suddenly a very cold shower and no lights. Worse still, the cooker went off – it was electricity then. After an emergency retreat to the pub, John Lewis arranged with the pub to finish off cooking the turkey and the veg, in their gas oven. We went back to the HSC for a candle-lit, and late, Christmas dinner – it was excellent – and we all had had extra time in the pub. The publican was happy and so were we. I think that weekend was the same one that I drove up in Ian's car with Karen and Imogen. At midnight, Karen woke up and asked why we driving through a field. Ian replied "This is the A5". The whole of the road and surrounding areas was covered in fresh snow. That was when we had real winters.

The property is part of the Hafod Y Llan Estate, which changed hands for £3.65m following a national appeal when it was acquired by The National Trust. DAG gave money to the appeal, so in some way, we are part owners of the property. They, the National Trust, have the right to refuse HCC a new lease when the current one runs out in 2012 if the property is needed for its own use. At present there is no indication that this will be the case.

Hertfordshire Youth Service manages the centre on a day-to-day basis and the officer responsible is Bernie Talbot. On site, the caretaker, is Idris Evans, who has been looking after the centre, and DAG, since we started going there. He is a remarkable man with a fund of stories and we hope that

he and his wife, Anne, continue in good health.

The centre has a management committee of County Council members and representatives of interested bodies. The Management Committee normally meets three times each year. Every second year it holds one of its meetings at the centre, which requires an overnight stay. The committee is involved in all policy and budgetary decisions and is consulted about all significant aspects of the operation of the centre.

As you all will know, the centre is self-catering and has 34 beds. There are two large dormitories containing twelve beds each plus another two smaller rooms, one with five (single) beds and the second with four. Also on the ground floor there is a single bedroom and a bathroom, which are accessible by people using wheelchairs. The kitchen is fully equipped and there is a dining room and lounge. A good drying room is provided.

The primary users of the centre are Hertfordshire Schools, voluntary organisations and youth groups. There is also use by adult groups and non-Hertfordshire groups. Booking slots are allocated each September for the following calendar year with "priority given to groups containing young people" from Hertfordshire. Obviously, that is why DAG always manages to get our bookings! Following the September allocation bookings are taken on a first come, first served basis.

The centre is booked to one group at a time and the average group size is around 25. Usage is lower during the winter period when weather conditions

in North Wales are not ideal for novice groups. During this period use tends to be concentrated at weekends.

The financial brief has always been to balance income and expenditure, which has been more or less, achieved in most years. Some external funding was obtained a few years ago and has been set aside in a deposit fund along with one or two small amounts as a result of end of year surpluses.

An operating loss in 2001/2 was due to the centre being closed for several months as a result of the Foot and Mouth crisis. The centre is situated in an area heavily populated by sheep and the Snowdonia National Park closed all open land. The National Trust asked us to close the centre to avoid, as much as possible, any movement of people in the area. We lost our booking.

Many thousands of people have been introduced to North Wales via the centre over the years and DAG will surely remain a major supporter of the centre in years to come.

Mountain 1st Aid Course

"I had never had any first aid training before and I felt it was a really good course. The amount covered was really good and the emphasis on improvisations was also useful. The fact that it took place in a cold barn meant we were all wearing lots of outdoor clothing and waterproofs. So we were faced with the difficulty of checking if someone was breathing with lots of clothing on and if they were bleeding under waterproofs. Both of which are likely scenarios in the hills. The night exercise was also useful ..." (Alex)

"I particularly liked the hypothermia demonstration, although I found it difficult

to concentrate on what the Instructor was saying with the victim "shivering for England" behind him." (John)

"I thought the content of the course was really useful and well related to those walking the hills. The presenter was fun and made the course. The venue was the most disappointing aspect – accommodation was probably the lowest quality bunk house we've ever used, and fairly low budget food. In conclusion – I would not necessarily recommend the course as I think you could get better value obtaining a local to Herts provider." (Mike)

"More basic than your average DAG bunkhouse, but warm, good food, impressive demo of hypothermia and extraordinarily good training in teamwork, even if it does show up aspects of character you didn't know were there!" (Roger)

"Lucky we had a dry weekend. Lack of drying facilities would have given us a problem if we had had a lot of wet things." (Reg)

"I found the training emphasis was from a military-point-of-view and very over the top ... The scenarios set were in lots of ways very good but they assumed the party coming across the incident had nothing with them, this would not be real... If one thing came out of the course was that every one should carry some form of first aid kit (I do) then the course will have succeeded." (Colin)

We arrived on Friday night at Maesnant in Mid Wales – 14 people in total on the course; 10 from DAG and 4 others. The location was remote, miles from the main road at the end of a long, single track. The centre – a small bunkhouse and a couple of barns - was nestled in the valley, surrounded by mountains. A waterfall tumbled into a stream which ran into the reservoir below. It was a lovely

setting and we were lucky enough to have brilliant sunshine all weekend.

The accommodation was basic (compared with what we are used to) but warm, almost comfortable and quaint (in a way!) – no electricity in the building, so we ate at night under gas lights.

The food was good and plentiful – cooked breakfasts, hot lunches, afternoon cakes and a well-earned dinner on the Saturday night.

The days (both Saturday and Sunday) were largely spent in one of the barns, which was kitted out as a 'lecture room'. The course was very 'hands-on' with lots of time to practise new techniques both on each other and on traditional CPR dummies. It was cold in the barn, which was a negative point for some people on the course, but, as Alex pointed out above, at least it meant that we were in full outdoor gear, which made the task of assessing injuries and then dealing with them more akin to the situations we are likely to face on the hills.

As it got dark on Saturday night, our group was divided into two. We were taking part in a night exercise. Half of us were to be the casualties in a multiple accident. The other half were to be the first aiders. Having been assigned various 'injuries' and made up with nasty looking wounds (some of the make-up was quite realistic!) we were taken out into the fields. We lay around on the ground, groaning and moaning – some of us giving nothing short of Oscar-winning performances!

The first aiders arrived – with no idea what to expect – and we had our first attempt at putting into practice what

we had learned that day. To be honest, what we really learnt that night was that we all needed far more practice! But it was fun, and an eye-opener to just how important communication and organisation is in an emergency like that.



Sue and Dave (I think!) - casualties during the night exercise

On Sunday we had the opportunity to exchange places – casualties became first-aiders and vice versa. This time things went far more smoothly. We were learning!

The highlight of the weekend for some was the hypothermia demonstration. A member of CRT Medical, who, once a month, voluntarily (is he mad?)



Russ, calmly giving out instructions, while the hypothermia victim (in red) shivers in the water behind

subjects his body to extremely low temperatures by submerging himself in

the freezing water of the waterfall and stream. If any Oscars were to be handed out, surely he deserved the first!

But then again, this guy wasn't acting and, as John says above, it was difficult to concentrate on what Russ, the instructor, was saying when we could see Arwen – cold, deathly pale and shivering – in the icy water behind.

On Sunday, just as we were winding down and preparing to leave, CRT Medical had one more trick up their sleeve. One final role play – another surprise accident on the hillside with multiple casualties. Half an hour later everyone had received first aid and were awaiting the fictitious ambulance – spinal injuries, compound fractures, sprains, lacerations, shock – all dealt with calmly and confidently, using largely improvised materials from the rucksacks around us.

So, what did people think? Well, largely positive, but some negative points. For those who had little or no first aid knowledge prior to the weekend, the general consensus seemed to be that the course was worthwhile. We would now feel confident dealing with most emergencies of this nature on the hills. However, for those in the group who had significant first aid experience before the course, they identified more short-comings in both the content and the delivery.

If you, after reading this, would like to take part in a similar first aid course, speak to Colin Workman. If there is sufficient interest, another weekend may be arranged.

DAG Weekends April – December 2009

17-19 April 2009 Grid Ref: 235 119	K-Fellfarers, High House, Seathwaite, Lake District Through farmyard, through gate, turn left over wooden bridge and through gate.
15-17 May 2009 Grid ref: 223 824	The Old Shippon Bunkhouse, Thorpe Farm, Hathersage, Derbyshire S32
19-21 June 2009 Grid ref: 626 511	Hertfordshire Snowdonia Centre, Hafod y Llan, Nant Gwynant LL55 4NL Anyone up for doing the 3000s? Centre call box no. 01766 890 369
24-26 July 2009 Grid ref: 364 174	Bury Jubilee Outdoor Pursuits, Glenridding, Lake District - NEW CENTRE for DAG
11-13 Sept 2009 Grid ref: 331 110	Achille Ratti, Dunmail Raise nr Grasmere, Lake District
October 2009	To be confirmed
13-15 November 2009 Grid ref: 235 119	K-Fellfarers, High House, Seathwaite, Lake District Through farmyard, through gate, turn left over wooden bridge and through gate.
11-13 December 2009 Grid ref: 626 511	Hertfordshire Snowdonia Centre, Hafod y Llan, Nant Gwynant LL55 4NL, near Bethania on the A498

Who's cooking?

Once again, a **BIG** thank you to all those who have cooked for us recently ... and a reminder to those who've volunteered so far for 2009! As you can see, we have a few gaps. If you can help, please contact Sue.

Apr 09	Jane/John	Sep 09	Sue
May 09	Karen/Dave	Oct 09	
Jun 09	Janet	Nov 09	
Jul 09		Dec 09	