

Hill Walking & Mountaineering *in Snowdonia*



Scrambling on Crib Goch (Photo: Surf-Lines)



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“*The craggy heights of Snowdonia are justly regarded as the finest mountain range south of the Scottish Highlands.*”

Introduction

The craggy heights of Snowdonia are justly regarded as the finest mountain range south of the Scottish Highlands. There is a different appeal to Snowdonia than, within the picturesque hills of, say, Cumbria, where cosy woodland seems to nestle in every valley and each hillside seems neatly manicured. Snowdonia's hillsides are often rock strewn with deep rugged cwms biting into the flank of virtually every mountainside, sometimes converging from two directions to form soaring ridges which lead to lofty peaks. The proximity of the sea ensures that a fine day affords wonderful views, equally divided between the ever-changing seas and the serried ranks of mountains fading away into the distance. Eryri is the correct Welsh version of the area the English call Snowdonia; Yr Wyddfa is similarly the correct name for the summit of Snowdon, although Snowdon is often used to demarcate the whole massif around the summit.

The mountains of Snowdonia stretch nearly fifty miles from the northern heights of the Carneddau, looming darkly over Conwy Bay, to the southern fringes of the Cadair Idris massif, overlooking the tranquil estuary of the Afon Dyfi and Cardigan Bay. From the western end of the Nantlle Ridge to the eastern borders of the Aran range is around twenty-five miles. Within this area lie nine distinct mountain groups containing a wealth of mountain walking possibilities, while just outside the National Park, the Rivals sit astride the Llyn Peninsula and the Berwyns roll upwards to the east of Bala. The traditional bases of Llanberis, Bethesda, Capel Curig, Betws y Coed and Beddgelert serve the northern hills and in the south Barmouth, Dinas Mawddwy, Dolgellau, Tywyn, Machynlleth and Bala provide good locations for accessing the mountains. The area is well served with a broad spectrum of outdoor orientated businesses: instructors, guides, outdoor shops, photographers, writers, accommodation providers, cafes and mountaineering hardware manufacturers such as DMM.

History

In the latter part of the 19th century, upper-class Oxbridge gentlemen (and later, women too) were drawn to the area as a practice ground for the Alps, then later in its own right. The hotel at Pen y Pass (now a Youth Hostel) and later the Pen y Gwryd Hotel became the focal points of mountaineering and rock climbing in the area. The 'Society of Welsh Rabbits' gradually mutated to become in 1898 the Climbers' Club. Welsh mountaineering remained dominated by those with time on their hands, which until after the Second World War remained the province of the gentry and other professional people. Post war, increasing recreation time, affordable equipment and personal mobility rendered the hills the playground of the ordinary person, to the extent that a solitary day in the mountains has become a mid-week, off-season privilege.

Mountain Walking

Fell walking, hill walking and mountain walking are really self-explanatory terms, often referring to the same pastime. This varies from wandering along the northern edges of the Carneddau, which is in essence moorland terrain, to an ascent of Tryfan, reputed to be the only mountain in Snowdonia requiring the use of one's hand to gain the summit. ▶



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Iwan Jones scrambling on the East Face of Tryfan
(Photo: Pete Bursnall)



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The ends of the spectrum can often be combined, with a rocky ascent being followed by a more gentle descent. Terrain that would fall within this definition would include all the upland areas within Snowdonia, with the exception of the steepest rocky parts, which are obviously the province of rock climbers; this broad boundary covers the ground where an ascent or descent would involve scrambling. Winter conditions would move much mountain walking terrain into the realm of mountaineering.

Scrambling

This covers the ground between mountain walking and modern rock climbing, and sometimes covers terrain that would have been considered rock climbing a century ago. The ‘gully era’ of rock climbing provided the vital stepping stone to exploring the vast open faces and buttresses that were to become the domain of the brave and skilful until general good health, better equipment and an element of training allowed access to all and sundry. Nowadays, many of those gullies and easy faces are regarded as scrambles, sections of straightforward climbing interspersed with steep walking terrain; where a good eye for a line, accompanied by a clear understanding of one’s own ability are essential assets.

The very fact that scrambles often take natural lines of weakness, threading an often intricate way through imposing rock architecture, predisposes these routes to having their fair share of suspect rock, scree-covered ledges and the odd slippery slimy section thrown in for good measure. They vary in difficulty from steep rocky walking alternating with sections of very easy climbing on big, though often well worn holds, to serious and committing outings which may well involve sections of climbing that would appear in rock climbing guides at a grade of Moderate (i.e. real rock climbing). These latter routes, needless to say, may be very difficult to retreat from and almost universally should not be attempted as a means of descent.


There is a simple grading system in use, with 1 being the most amenable scrambles through to 3 when they become serious undertakings, where considerable experience, rope skills and a finely tuned ‘mountain sense’ are mandatory. Even routes graded 2 may require the use of ropes and may be impossible in poor weather conditions. Some examples of graded scrambles are noted below:

- Grade 1 The Snowdon Horseshoe; Bristly Ridge (Glyder Fach); North Ridge of Tryfan.
- Grade 2 Bryant’s Gully (Llanberis Pass); Clogwyn y Person Arête (Llanberis Pass).
- Grade 3 The Chasm Face (Glyder Fach); Cneifion Arête (Glyder Fawr).

It goes without saying that these outings are not to be approached lightly, combining as they do the need for both competently enacted mountain walking skills together with those of agile movement on very steep ground and other rock climbing techniques.

Winter Mountaineering

Under a mantle of snow and ice, the landscape of Snowdonia changes from sheep trimmed grass and heather to a much more primeval state, where the summits trodden by summer hoards become arctic-like environments and basic human survival can become paramount. The west coast mountain ranges of the British Isles provide some of the best winter mountaineering conditions in the world, where due to the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean, and in particular the North Atlantic Drift, temperatures rise and fall quickly leading to very stable snow conditions. Of course, this does not occur with every snowfall; sometimes it all just washes away in the rain, and at other times dramatic thaw conditions can unleash deadly avalanche potential.

Winter challenges vary from apparently straightforward routes (The Llanberis Path, Snowdon; The Pony Path, Cadair Idris) through simple snow climbs (Parsley Fern Gully, Cwm Glas; Banana Gully, Y Garn; Central Trinity, Yr Wyddfa) to major ice climbs (Cascade, Craig y Rhaeadr: Trojan, Cadair Idris; The Somme, Ysgolion Duon/The Black Ladders). All however, are totally at the mercy of the prevailing and 



Sam Leary, Righthand Trinity Gully (II/III)
Clogwyn y Garnedd (Photo: Al Leary)

“In the latter part of the 19th century, upper-class Oxbridge gentlemen (and later, women too) were drawn to the area as a practice ground for the Alps, then later in its own right.

immediately past weather conditions. Simple snow plods can become fields of sheet ice and difficult climbs can start and finish on easy-angled but deadly avalanche prone terrain. Good conditions and fine weather, when they do arrive, more than make up for all the damp, blizzard blighted days that went before.

A simple grading system is applied to winter mountaineering routes although straightforward winter walks with no technical difficulty are ungraded. Grade I involves steep snow slopes, either open or enclosed in a gully line, or easy mixed ground (snow, rock and ice in combination), while grade II involves some much steeper sections, or harder mixed ground. By the time one arrives at grade V, vertical or near-vertical stretches of ice or mixed ground are continuous and strength, experience and nerve are essential pre-requisites.

It must be remembered that an easy scramble such as the Snowdon Horseshoe, a fantastically popular outing in summer conditions, becomes a very serious expedition under winter conditions, graded I/II, and the scene of many accidents due to underestimation of the way snow and ice can change the nature of the route. Even the ‘zigzags’, the very top section of the PyG track on Snowdon, an easy-angled ramp in summer, becomes a hazardous tilted skating-rink for a few days most winters.

Equipment and Skills

The places and routes mentioned previously all require a degree of mountain competence, along with the correct gear, to visit and complete safely. A lot of emphasis in the media is placed upon expensive equipment, but what really keeps people alive in the remote and sometimes hostile mountain environment is ability and judgement allied to basic skills. A modicum of fitness will help to make the day’s outing much more enjoyable, although easier routes can be used to gain better stamina for the more arduous undertakings. An efficient walking style and pace will enable energy to be conserved and common sense will dictate whether a proposed itinerary is a realistic proposition. A weather check before setting out is vital as the conditions in the mountains can change with great rapidity; being forewarned will enable a route adjustment or ensure that protective gear is carried. The very best way to dodge trouble in the hills is to be able to navigate efficiently in all conditions, including mist and darkness. Following the desired route will enable steep and treacherous ground to be avoided; the ability to re-locate one’s position when temporarily misplaced (lost!) is priceless. This acquisition of navigation skills does require unavoidable practice in controlled situations rather than always sticking to ‘motorway’ paths until the day it gets dark earlier than expected. In winter, a good understanding of snow and ice conditions is vital in order to avoid avalanche prone slopes and slippery iced-up sections. Finally, it might be considered a moral imperative that anyone involved in a risk sport like mountaineering should undertake some first aid training.

Exactly what equipment one carries is always a matter for great debate and personal preference, but there are a number of basic items that might be considered vital by most mountaineers. These include: stout footwear, usually boots, with a robust and well-patterned sole, a full set (top and trousers) of waterproofs (which are also windproof, and therefore wind-chill resistant), warm underwear and mid-layer clothing, wool or fleece hat, gloves. In addition to this outfit other vital gear is: a headtorch (with spare battery and bulb), weatherproofed map & compass (together with the ability to use them), a whistle, food and drink, a simple first aid kit, a survival bag (a big thick plastic bag roughly 1.85m by 1m) together with a plastic bag lined rucksack to carry it all in.

Scrambling requires walking gear plus a rope (and the ability to use it) and often some slings and karabiners. On the most demanding scrambles a bigger selection of climbing gear, helmets and harnesses become more common.

Mountain walking in full winter conditions dictates good quality waterproofs and substantial boots capable of being fitted with crampons, You should anticipate the ▷



Hillwalkers congregating around the summit of Snowdon (Photo: Al Leary)



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need for both ice axe and crampons and should be practiced in their use. On steeper ground, specific snow and ice-climbing equipment and techniques may be required, including the use of ice-screws, ice-hammers, snow-bollards and so on.

A full analysis of all the skills of mountaineering are beyond the scope of this activity guide and specialist literature should be consulted and instruction gained before attempting to put them into use.

Getting Started

Many young people are introduced to the mountains by school visits (to outdoor education centres) or youth groups (Scouts, Guides or Youth Clubs etc.). Having had one's imagination captured it is sometimes difficult to see how to progress, especially if friends and colleagues seem disinterested. Hillwalking and mountaineering clubs and associations exist all over the country and can be located either through the British Mountaineering Council, to whom many are affiliated, or through the pages and websites of the outdoor media. Most clubs welcome beginners and many have access to club huts - cheap and basic accommodation within the mountain areas; in addition transport and costs can often be shared to moderate individual outlay.

More shy or individualistic people simply get on and do their own thing, although it should be remembered that solitary mountaineering puts an even greater emphasis on personal ability and judgement. Many novice, and not so novice walkers and mountaineers feel more assured after gaining some training in the knowledge and skills required to travel successfully through the mountains. This can be achieved either by attending a course at an outdoor centre or engaging an individual instructor who can tailor the days to exactly meet the client's requirements.

In general, novices might progress by following popular and well-established paths until fitness, skills and confidence improve. Many hundreds of pounds can be spent on even basic equipment, but a little investigation will show that a novice could easily be adequately equipped for summer mountain walking for under £100. In practice, almost everyone receives some training; this might be from family members, friends and companions, club members, or more formal tuition from mountain instructors. The main difficulty for the beginner is to work out how much of this knowledge is genuinely useful and correct and how much is second-hand disinformation, passed in ignorance from friend to friend. Remember that not everyone trendily attired knows what they are doing and a personal degree of judgement should never be dismissed.

Regional Breakdown

What follows is a break down of the main mountain areas in the region.

Carneddau (a)

Huge ridge lines, deeply incised by deep cwms characterise this range of hills. Their northern flanks overlook Traeth Lavan and Conwy Bay while the eastern side frames one side of the Vale of Conwy. The real meat of this range however lies along the extensive ridge running from Pen yr Ole Wen (979m) over two of the four 1000m plus summits in Wales, Carnedd Dafydd (1044m) and Carnedd Llewelyn (1064m), before continuing over Foel Grach (974m), Garnedd Uchaf (926m), Foel Fras (942m) and winding down over Drum (770m) and Drosogl (621m) to terminate near Aber. Pen yr Helgi Du (833m) is often worked into a circular ridge walk with quick access from the A5 near Helyg, but Pen Lithrig y Wrâch (799m) is less frequented.

Scrambling in the Carneddau is more limited than its near neighbours and with the notable exception of the Llech Ddu Spur (grade 1) tends to be more technical outings of moderate length or rather contrived. Braich Ty Du is the setting for a couple of variations on a theme (grade 2), as is Cwm Lloer (grades 1/2 to 2/3).

The Carneddau do provide a magnificent arena for winter walking and climbing, with the long ridge lines providing spectacular views, and enough altitude to hold the



Iwan Jones - Would you Adam & Eve it?!
Tryfan Summit (Photo: Pete Bursnall)

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snow early and late in the season. The definitive climbing scene is Ysgolion Duon / The Black Ladders where the harder routes are most popular. Craig Dulyn provides a small number of steep, icicle-strewn lines, while Craig yr Ysfa's deep rifts hide the sporting Great Gully (IV/V), scene of more than a few epics. Cwm Lloer holds snow well and provides a good playground for the more moderate performer.

Glyderau (b)


The main line of these peaks makes a near right-angle turning around Cwm Idwal; benign to the south, the northern and north-eastern flanks are deeply scooped out to reveal the very bones of the mountains. The spine of the range runs from Carnedd y Filiast (821m) over Mynydd Perfedd (812m), Foel Goch (831m) and the popular Y Garn (946m) before the large dip down to Llyn y Cwn nestling above the grand slash of the Devil's Kitchen, then rising again over Glyder Fawr (999m) and Glyder Fach (994m) amid some wonderful mountain scenery. The ridge then gradually drops down over Y Foel Goch (805m) and Gallt yr Ogof (763m) before running on to finish at Capel Curig. The northern end of the range is dominated by enormous slate quarries, both below Carnedd y Filiast, where the Penrhyn Quarry still expands, and the branched-off peak of Elidir (924m), where the disused slate workings of the Dinorwig Quarry rise to 650m in altitude. The alternating spurs and cwms on the north side reach their most prominent position with the rocky and renowned Tryfan (917m) overshadowing the A5 Trunk Road and Llyn Ogwen.

The scrambling possibilities of the Glyderau are very popular with minimal walk-ins combining with excellent rock quality and fine positions. Ogwen Cottage provides the most obvious starting point with many variations on the Cwm Bochlwyd Horseshoe including the sublime Tryfan North Ridge (grade 1), Bristly Ridge (grade 1) and Gribin (grade 1). Both the east and west faces of Tryfan provide excellent sport at various levels of commitment, as does Glyder Fach. Over in Cwm Idwal wonderful rock fins and buttresses give lines such as Cneifion Arête (grade 3) and Seniors' Ridge (grade 1), while the Devil's Kitchen and Sheep Walk (grade 1) attracts many a glance, but fewer prepared to undertake the challenge. The west flank of Glyder Fawr, accessed from the Llanberis Pass provides much broken ground including the popular, but awkward Bryant's Gully (grade 2).

A popular venue for winter climbing, Cwm Idwal and the Glyderau offer excellent opportunities on the mixed ground afforded by many of the previously mentioned scrambles in addition to many fine ice climbs. The highest ice runnel, Clogwyn Du Left Hand (IV) comes into condition earlier than almost any other route in the area, and the steep upper section of the crag provides a number of excellent, modern mixed routes. Lower down, adjacent to the Devil's Kitchen, a range of popular ice falls draw the crowds when in condition. To the right, the obvious curving line sweeping up towards the summit of Y Garn, Banana Gully (I) is hugely popular, although the avalanche debris often present at the foot does not always deter those who should be.

Snowdon / Yr Wyddfa (c)

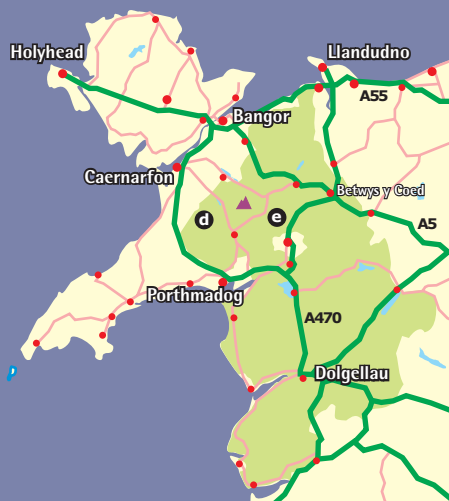
This eponymous mountain radiates six ridgelines, all popular walking routes in their own right and providing some choice as combinations for ascent and descent. The Snowdon Horseshoe of Crib Goch (921m), Crib y Ddysgl (1065m), Yr Wyddfa (1085m) [the highest peak south of the Scottish border] and Y Lliwedd (898m) is a justifiably popular but long day's walk. Taken either way round, it reserves areas of required concentration until late in the day and can be quite busy on summer days unless started very early in the day.

The quieter Cwm y Llan Horseshoe including Gallt y Wenallt (619m), Y Lliwedd, Yr Wyddfa, and Yr Aran (747m) makes a good alternative when approached from Nantgwynant. The Llanberis Path, weaving around the Snowdon Mountain Railway, is the most trodden way to the summit, which has approaching half a million visitors each year, although the Miners' Track and the Pyg Track are both also enormously 



Sam Leary on the Pyg Track with the magnificent backdrop of Snowdon (Photo: Al Leary)

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popular. The lower but pleasant hills of Moel Cynghorion (674m) and Moel Eilio (726m) lie to the north and offer less strenuous days wandering with marvellous views.

Apart from the Snowdon Horseshoe, the scrambling hereabouts is less pleasant and less extensive than on the Glyderau. Y Gribin and the East Ridge of Yr Wyddfa (grade 1) is a popular variation on the main routes but Y Lliwedd's West Peak via Bilberry Terrace (grade 3) illustrates the top end of scrambling grading and route finding.

In the Llanberis Pass, the steep ice sheets of Diffwys Ddwr (Craig y Rhaeadr), contrast with the well-trodden snow gullies and buttress routes of Cwm Glas. Over on Yr Wyddfa, the Clogwyn y Garnedd face holds a good selection of middle grade climbs, whilst down on Y Lliwedd in hard winters, a more difficult playground awaits the dynamic with several classic difficult outings.

Eifionydd (d)

This varied area boasts a selection of summits running roughly North to South, starting with the isolated, and rather unexciting, Mynydd Mawr (698m). On the South side of Dyffryn Nantlle lies a more continuous chain of hills – The Nantlle Ridge – running East to West over Y Garn (yes, another one) (634m), Mynydd Drws y Coed (695m), Trum y Ddysgl ((710m), Mynydd Tal y Mignedd (653m) before crossing Bwlch Dros bern and rising to finish on Garnedd Goch (700m). This popular outing is usually walked in the order described starting at Rhyd Ddu and finishing near the tiny village of Nebo. Moel Lefn (638m), Moel yr Ogof (655m) and Moel Hebog (782m) overlook the charming village of Beddgelert and can be made into a pleasant circular walk by approaching through forestry to reach the head of Cwm Pennant and then southwards to finish on Moel Hebog.

Although the Nantlle Ridge boasts a few rocky moments, the rest of the documented scrambles are not particularly popular, boasting some unstable rock combined with a less tolerant access situation than in many of the other areas. The best hereabouts is the somewhat friable Sentries' Ridge (2/3) on the South flank of Mynydd Mawr.

Winter climbing is pretty well limited to Cwm Silyn and Craig Cwm Dulyn. Both require significant ice formation but the former boasts some very fine routes.

Moelwynion (e)

An intricate area of lakes and summits, with the ever-present but fascinating scars of the now virtually defunct slate industry, which once provided jobs for many and wealth for a few, albeit at some cost to the scenery. The Cwm Croesor Horseshoe including Cnicht (689m), Moelwyn Mawr (770m) and Moelwyn Bach (710m) makes a fine outing while the northernmost representative, Moel Siabod (872m), is a popular peak in its own right. The neglected Allt Fawr (698m) and Moel Druman (676m) are worth seeking out although Manod Mawr (661m) is probably not, even though the caverns within this hill were the reputed hiding place of national treasures during World War Two. The town of Blaenau Ffestiniog continues to fight valiantly to thrive surrounded by the astonishing slate grey remains of a once booming industry.

There are few lengthy scrambles and even fewer winter climbs hereabouts, although the area above Tanygrisiau could provide some entertainment for the determined. Viewing the quarrying remains is a popular pastime although great care should be taken and common sense applied when visiting these often unstable sites.

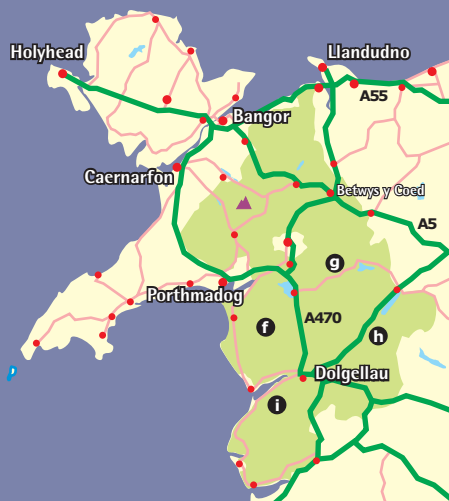
Rhinogydd (f)

This continuous 20km spine of hills, nowhere crossed by a road, is fringed by the sea to the west, with the historic town of Harlech providing a contrast to the seaside fleshpots of Barmouth, and by a huge and rather bleak valley to the east. The northern section is dominated by rock-strewn moorland and the summit of Moel Ysgyfarnogod (623m) affords a spectacular vista of the higher mountain ranges to the North. The central sister peaks of Rhinog Fawr (720m) and Rhinog Fach (712m) provide a



A big box of butties for a big day out:
Alun Sion Gwilym & Pete Griffiths in Cwm Idwal
(Photo: Si Pantan)

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popular circuit but beware of the deep separating cleft of Bwlch Drws Ardudwy – an easy ridge walk this is definitely not. The grassy ridge beyond Y Lethyr (756m) and over Diffwys (750m) provides a more logical continuation South from Rhinog Fach.

Little continuous scrambling exists although the heather-covered stepped ground around Rhinog Fawr and Rhinog Fach gives occasionally tricky and often strenuous walking. The northern hills however do provide interesting bouldering on fabulously rough rock that will enliven many a days outing.

Winter routes are confined to Craig Bodlyn, where a long approach and a low altitude ensure rare and definitely lonely conditions.

Arenig (g)

These occasionally rough mountains are dominated in the north by Arenig Fawr (854m), Moel Llyfnant (751m) and Arenig Fach (689m) while the remote and conical Rhobell Fawr (734m) overlooks the forest of Coed y Brenin near Dolgellau. Sheep-cropped grassland and heathery moorland alternate on these quiet hills.

Only Arenig Fawr boasts any possibility of scrambling and this is invariably very short and broken. Virtually no established winter climbing has been recorded hereabouts.

Aran (h)

A long ridge running down from the western end of Llyn Tegid, near Bala, to reach Dinas Mawddwy provides by far the most popular walk in this range. Running over Aran Benllyn (885m), Aran Fawddwy (905m), Gwaun y Lliwyni (685m) and GlasGwm (779m) these lofty peaks have long been the scene of intricate access wranglings that demand a sensitive and careful approach from visitors. However the effort is well rewarded with spectacular views & plenty of peace and quiet once the upland is reached.

Access difficulties have helped prevent popularisation of any scrambles in this area although there have been some notable winter finds. Cwm Cowarch sports a few gully climbs, as does Aran Benllyn, however Gist Ddu provides the classiest route in the range with the steep corner line of Sloose (V).

Cadair Idris (i)

Popular with visitors to Southern Snowdonia this rugged 12km ridge is most often approached from either side rather than traversed from end to end although this would also provide a fine expedition. The circuit around Cwm Cau is very worthwhile, taking in the summits of Mynydd Pencoed (791m), Pen y Gadair (893m) (often referred to as Cadair Idris) and Mynydd Moel (863m). The approach from the north side allows for a visit to the highest summit while circling around Llyn y Gadair and descending over Cyfrwy. A night spent alone on the peak of Pen y Gadair is, according to legend, sure to result in the brave individual returning either a poet or a fool. A long but easy-angled ascent can be made from the southwest via the popular Pony Path.

Little documented scrambling exists although a line can be followed beside the Cyfrwy Arête, albeit of poorish quality. Elsewhere the transition from steep walking to rock climbing boasts little middle ground.

The northern flanks of the mountain offer a long escarpment where the winter potential has not been totally fulfilled. Low altitude and the closeness of the sea ensure that weather watching is a serious prerequisite to successful climbing here.

Information and Resources

Historical

Wild Wales (Collins Classics, George Borrow, 1862)

The Mountains of Snowdonia (Crosby Lockwood & Son, HRC Carr and GA Lister, 1925)

The Mountain Men (Heinemann, Alan Hankinson, 1977)

The Complete Guide to Snowdon (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Robert Jones, 1992) ▶



Chris Parkin swinging high on The Devil's Appendix
Cwm Idwal



www.snowdonia-active.com

“ Check out the BMC Regional Access Database for the latest access agreement changes for crags in snowdonia.”

Guidebooks

- The Welsh Peaks (Constable, WA Poucher, 1997)
- Hillwalking in Snowdonia (Cicerone Press, Steve Ashton, 2002)
- Ridges of Snowdonia (Cicerone Press, Steve Ashton, 2002)
- Scrambles in Snowdonia (Cicerone Press, Steve Ashton, 1998)
- Scrambles & Easy Climbs in Snowdonia (Greystone Books, Sparks, Hutton, Rawson 2005)
- Welsh Winter Climbs (Cicerone Press, Malcolm Campbell & Andy Newton, 1996)

Books on Skills and Techniques

- Hillwalking (MLTUK, Steve Long, 2002)
- The Handbook of Climbing (Pelham Practical Sports, Allen Fyffe & Iain Peter, 1997)
- A Chance in a Million? Scottish Avalanches (SMC, Bob Barton & Blyth Wright, 2000)

Maps

Explorer Series (Ordnance Survey) 1:25 000 scale:

- OL17 Snowdonia (Snowdon)
- OL18 Snowdonia (Harlech)
- OL23 Snowdonia (Cadair Idris)
- 254 Llyn Peninsula East

Websites

www.thebmc.co.uk - The British Mountaineering Council site. Check out the Regional Access Database for the latest access agreement changes for crags in Snowdonia or the affiliated club database. The BMC also publishes its own magazine (Summit) which is distributed to all members and affiliated clubs.

www.cordee.co.uk - The specialist distributor and book publisher. Rock climbing, mountaineering, trekking, skiing and travel: all the latest maps, instructional/'how to climb' books, guides and videos, with an online sales facility.

www.mltw.org - Mountain Leader Training Wales

www.ami.org.uk - Association of Mountaineering Instructors

www.ogwen-rescue.org.uk - The main Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Team website. Includes useful web cams situated in the Ogwen Valley and a host of interesting data and material.

www.llanberismountainrescue.co.uk - Another well laid out site with excellent mountain safety advice and a catalogue of incidents the team has attended.


www.outdoorsmagic.com - A vibrant online outdoor magazine with a very healthy traffic level. Always worth a look, as they update it every day!

Specialist publications

TGO - shorthand for The Great Outdoors, is recognised as Britain's most authoritative outdoors magazine for hill walkers, backpackers, trekkers and scramblers. Every month there is a variety of features from home and abroad, up to date and informed news coverage of the outdoor world and in depth gear tests.

Trail - the magazine for the adventurous walker - full of route descriptions, advice and gear tests. Includes articles giving coverage to UK locations and abroad.

Climb - A recently launched UK magazine giving topical coverage of mountaineering and rock climbing. Entertaining gear coverage from the ever irreverent Andy Kirkpatrick and top quality photography displayed in a larger format give the magazine a vibrant, modern edge.

Climber - the most popular British climbing magazine, with regular features on the Snowdonia area and up to date news, comment and stunning photography. Also features monthly contributions from North Wales based climbers, Jim Perrin, Simon Panton and Ray Wood. (check out: www.climber.co.uk) 



Looking up Nant Ffrancon from Bethesda
(Photo: Al Leary)



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“ Winter mountaineering in the British Isles is usually undertaken in a variety of conditions.

Access & Conservation notes

Most of the countryside in Wales, including National Parks, is privately owned and often used for farming. Since May 2005 we have had the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW), governing rights to walk-on defined 'access land'. Under the Act there are rights of access to most common land, public forests, mountain, moor, heath and down. Public Footpaths, Bridleways, and permissive paths provide further means of access. Ordnance Survey maps show Public Rights of Way in green and open access areas as a yellow wash. For up to the minute Information and interactive maps showing countryside access in Wales, go to www.ccw.gov.uk/countrysideaccesswales. Farmers who are part of the Tir Cymen and Tir Gofal schemes also permit access as part of their farm agreements.

By respecting these agreements and keeping to Rights of Way, you will minimise disturbance to farmers and their livestock, wild animals, birds and plants.


The mountains of Snowdonia support a number of rare species of plants and animals. Snowdon, the Glyderau, the Carneddau and Cadair Idris, for example, are special in that they support many uncommon arctic-alpine plant species. However, years of grazing, burning and drainage have reduced the extent of these rare species so that they often now only survive in limited refuges, usually on inaccessible cliffs and mountain-sides, where they have natural protection from grazing animals. Whether we are mountaineering, walking or scrambling, we practise our sport on these less accessible summits and cliffs and therefore have the potential to affect precisely those last remaining refuges which are so valuable.

The most important areas for nature conservation are often the vegetated and wetter areas of cliffs, usually north facing, dank and slippery and often including gullies and ledges. These are usually of limited interest to climbers, but many scrambling routes are based in gullies which can be very important habitats and care must be taken to prevent damage to vegetation by not gardening. Even the soggy mosses and lichens are often uncommon or rare in these habitats. Scrambling on the drier, less vegetated rock, where possible, is usually more pleasant anyway!

Winter mountaineering in the British Isles is usually undertaken in a variety of conditions. The variability of snow and ice cover means that we often climb or ski on a thin cover of snow and ice, frozen turf or even during a thaw. This is when vegetation can be damaged the most rather than during conditions of good snow cover. The southerly location of Snowdonia means that we don't always get a good snow cover and the effect of snow and ice climbing in these poor conditions can be damaging, especially where it takes place in gullies or on areas which would support large amounts of vegetation during the summer months.

Of particular concern in Snowdonia are cliffs such as Clogwyn y Garnedd, below the summit of Snowdon and Ysgolion Duon 'The Black Ladders' in the Carneddau which are both noted for their mountain flora, but also for their winter climbing potential.

Winter ascents of summer rock routes including the British equivalent of dry tooling (Scottish-style mixed climbing, which would be on snow-covered rock, including techniques such as torquing) may be fun, but they can also result in damage to the route and to the vegetation caused by crampons, peg placements and the use of axes in cracks.

The reason why such damage occurs is that many arctic-alpine plants are shallowly rooted in moss cushions or lodged in rock crevices and so can be damaged and easily dislodged by the tearing action of ice axes and crampons in marginal snow and ice conditions, when roots and bulbs can be prised out of cracks which would not normally be affected by climbing. On cliffs which do not support much vegetation, and are also climbed on during the summer, this should not be a problem, as they usually support few species of conservation concern. The BMC hold information on a number of sites and have produced a booklet called 'Tread Lightly' which gives information on the upland environment and how we can care for it. There is a 



Aila Bursnall approaching Cnicht
(Photo: Pete Bursnall)

plethora of books written about Snowdonia and its wildlife, the titles of which can be obtained from a web search or from any good bookshop. More detailed information about particular conservation and species issues is available from organisations such as:-

The Countryside Council for Wales in Bangor. Tel: 01248 672500.

www.ccw.gov.uk

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Bangor. Tel: 01248 363800.

www.rspb.org.uk

The North Wales Wildlife Trust. Tel: 01248 351541.

www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/northwales

Access and Conservation Trust (ACT)

ACT is a charitable trust, established in 2000 by the British Mountaineering Council, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and the Mountaineering Council of Ireland. The trust aims to promote sustainable access to cliffs, mountains and open countryside by facilitating education and conservation projects that safeguard the access needs of climbers, hill-walkers and mountaineers. Check out the www.accesstrust.org.uk website for details of planned and implemented ACT projects.

Countryside Code:

Respect – Protect – Enjoy

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep your dog under close control
- Consider other people



Andy Bruce on the crux pitch of Snowdrop (III/IV, 4)
Clogwyn y Garnedd, Trinity Face (Photo: Al Leary)



www.snowdonia-active.com



Glyder Fach at sunset with Snowdon behind
(Photo: Ray Wood)

Snowdonia-Active website

www.snowdonia-active.com provides a whole host of information about local activity providers, instructors and guides, accommodation and campsites, outdoor shops and cafes. Check out the Directory, a geographically specific database covering outdoor orientated businesses in the North-West Wales area. The site is host to a whole range of downloadable activity and area guides written by field experts. It also has links to numerous weather forecasting websites.

Public Transport

Although the Snowdonia area is well served with a modern road network there are many alternatives to travelling by private car. The Snowdonia National Park, the Llŷn Peninsula & Anglesey are criss-crossed with a network of local & regional buses, and rail links. In the northern part of the National Park the special Sherpa bus service connects the most popular walking & climbing areas to adjacent towns and villages.

UK Public Transport Information

<http://www.traveline.org.uk> gives links to public transport providers. Click on the map for information about coach, bus, rail, air & ferry services for North Wales & beyond.

Disclaimer

The writer and publishers of this leaflet accept no responsibility for the way in which readers use the information contained therein. The descriptions and recommendations are for guidance only and must be subject to discriminating judgement by the reader. Advice and training should be sought before utilising any equipment or techniques mentioned within the text or shown in any of the photographic images.

Climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of, and accept, these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

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Author Bio: Andy Newton

Andy has spent twenty-five years working and playing in and around the mountains of Snowdonia. In addition to having produced numerous articles for Climber and High magazines he is also involved with climbing guidebook production, having co-authored Welsh Winter Climbs, Gogarth and Llanberis Slate. Former Secretary of Mountain Leader Training Wales, Andy now runs his own business training, advising on and inspecting climbing and mountaineering activities. He continues to play nearly as hard as he works.