

LARRY LAMB'S MOUNTAIN CLUB STORY

Recounted to Mike Jahn December 1997 as background to the Club's involvement in Cowarch

The start of The Mountain Club early in 1952 followed on the heels of other post-war (1939-1945) Club's such as 'The Ice Axe' (1946) and 'The Birmingham Cave and Crag' (1947).

Larry's first involvement with the Cave and Crag came through Theo Wild, a fellow worker in the drawing office, who knew that the Birmingham Club ran coaches to caves and hills in which they had spare places and would appreciate additional support.

This led to small numbers from Stafford going by train to Birmingham during 1950/51 to join a number of the Cave and Crag coach meets. The one crucially relevant to the history of the Mountain Club took place in the Ogwen Valley in Autumn 1951 when Larry, spending the weekend with the illustrious Climber's Club, called in to find himself in the middle of a debate among the Stafford contingent arguing for a group to organise their own coaches from Stafford.

So, on the third or fourth of January 1952, a meeting took place with twenty-seven people present who decided on the formation of a Club for outdoor pursuits.

All those at the inaugural event were drawn from the large numbers of English Electric (Now Alstom) Apprentices or young engineers. It was held in a room at the company's Stychfield's Sports and Social Club and could have been started under the Company's umbrella receiving facilities and financial support.

However, there would be a restriction to membership of a maximum of 25% of non English Electric members. With the expectation of a likely high turnover of members as individuals moved within the Company or returned overseas, coupled with a desire to encourage membership from friends outside the Company, it was decided to be totally independent and

THE MOUNTAIN CLUB

Came into being avoiding allegiance in its name to either Company or Town.

First there was the formality of drawing up a Constitution with auditing of accounts if there was to be a proper Club with recognition by the BMC (British Mountaineering Council). This was based on the one used by the Stafford Rugby Club and suitably modified by an ad-hoc committee of six comprising

Larry Lambe
Eric Morrison
Stuart Taylor
Sandy MacDonald
Jim Turner
?Pat Dodd

Then the first General Meeting which formally agreed a constitution and elected the first committee

Chairman	Sandy MacDonald
Secretary	Don Sougham
Treasurer	Pat Dodd
Meet Secretary	Larry Lambe
Member	Ken Finlay
Member	Jim Turner

As Meet Secretary Larry chose locations well-recognised and some new to the Club. Among the references he used was the 1952 'Mountains of Britain' Calendar by W A Poucher in which a photo of Craig Cowarch appeared with the caption 'Last Climbed in 1907'. Alas, although then included as the meet for May 1952, this first attempt to reach Cowarch was cancelled due to the priority of examination swatting.

As preparation Larry had made an earlier visit to Cowarch at Easter, met Mr Williams, and established common land camping and access paths which he followed for a walk over the crag. Undeterred by the cancellation and enthused with the potential of Cowarch Larry made further visits during 1952 –losing his food to Mr William’s dog on the first occasion and setting fire to his tent on the second!

Still undeterred Larry continued to persuade individuals to visit Cowarch during 1953 and finally in 1954 he led a party of twelve up the valley to camp above Craig Cowarch.

This coincided with a growing interest for a Club Cottage and when thanking Mr Williams at the end of a visit it emerged that he had an empty cottage at the far side of the common.

Agreement for a three year tenancy of Tyn-y-Twll commenced 1 January 1955 which established, in Larry’s view, Cowarch as the spiritual home of the Club.

By this time Dave Adcock had become Meet Secretary and, with Larry’s job move to Manchester, took the lead in organising Tyn-y-Twll for its opening on 5 March 1955

On expiry of the three year tenancy end December 1957 the search for a replacement cottage led Barry Knox and John Downes to the derelict Count House of the old Mine in August 1959. With Dave Adcock’s legislative drive through Planning Application and Appeals coupled with the unstinting support of the BMC’s Secretary (Mr T H Sinclair) final approval was given in June 1960 leading, after many years of work, to the official opening of

BRYN HAFOD on 16 October 1965

In the 30+ years since then The Mountain Club has continued drawing on the interests and enthusiasm for the mountains and Cym Cowarch first led by Larry who has to be the Father of the Club

Mike Jahn January 1998