

Welsh 3000s - 28 June 2019

by Heather Smith



We made it to the final peak Foel Fras - Heather Smith

June 28 saw me attending not only my first AAC meet, but also my first attempt at the Welsh 3000s. I have always had a soft spot for North Wales so when Mel offered to organise and act as support for those brave enough to face the challenge I eagerly signed up.

But first, for those of you who know little about the Welsh 3000s. It is a feat that sees you summit every peak over 3000 feet in the Snowdonia National Park. There are 14 or 15 peaks (depending on exactly which criteria you follow) over the Snowdon, Glyderau and Carneddau Massifs. From start to finish my watch recorded 40 km.

With a heatwave subsiding across Europe, the car's thermometer at 0345 read a balmy 17° C: we were in for a hot and humid day! Dawn was not far from breaking so, with plenty of light and after the drivers returned from Nant Peris, we took our first footsteps towards Crib Goch. As this was my first AAC meet I knew no one, yet I quickly fell into step with Gail and we shared stories. The winds rose as we gained height scrambling up Crib Goch. The upside was the formation of some spectacular lenticularis clouds. Snowdon marked our first achievement of the day: 3 peaks down, 12 to go! Now for the first steep descent to test how strong our knees were feeling! We followed Mel's instructions for the most efficient way to descend to Nant Peris: basically get to the bridge over the Llanberis path then point your feet to the farmhouse and use a bit of common sense!

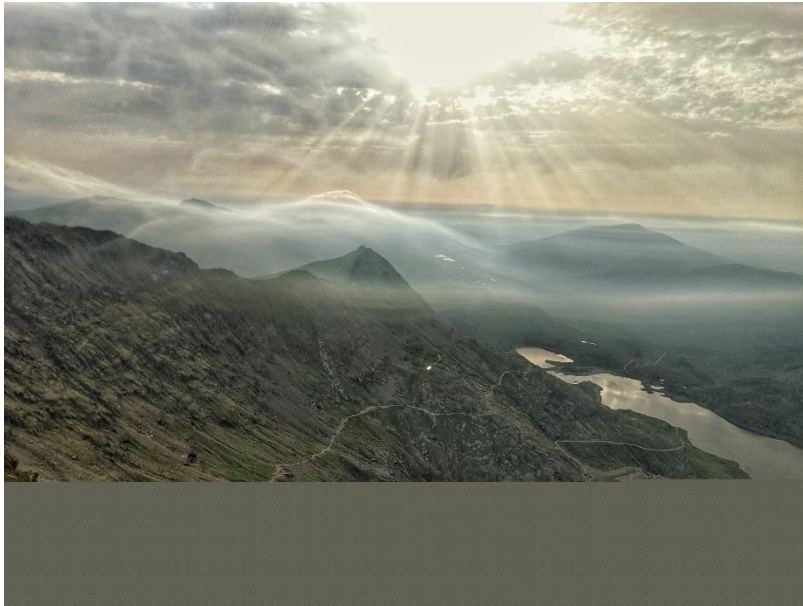
We soon found ourselves giving Mel our autographs (OK... signing the check-in sheet), swapping shoes and refreshing water bottles.

Gail and I quickly set off noting that the clouds had dissipated, a brilliant sign as it meant the winds had dropped at height. At least I thought it was a good sign until the muggy climb up Ellidr Fawr nearly did me in! Gail marched to the top, informing me just as I was about to sit down with the thought of flapjack that the midges were out with a vengeance. I chose to avoid being their breakfast by continuing to put one foot in front of the other. This turned out to be the best thing as my legs soon regained vigour and we continued our steady but sure pace across the Glyders, catching up on the summit of Glyder Fawr with Ian and John. A quick scramble for the desired photo and along we went to Glyder Fach to delight in the next modelling opportunity that is the Cantilever stone. Realising how far we had come, Gail and I discussed what both of us considered the next task (which wasn't quite as appetising as our mini photo shoot), the descent to the saddle of Tryfan via the scree slope. I led us to the right hand edge to avoid getting entangled with a pair of lads who were frequently sending small landslides ahead of them. Neither of us fancied being buried as we had more mountains to conquer! We reached the saddle safely as a call from behind presented Len, who joined us for the summit and the subsequent knee breaker descent from Tryfan. Effective as it was, we all agreed we wouldn't descend that way without necessity again!



A moments pause on the cantilever stone atop Glyder Fach - Heather Smith

A short march along the road to the Glan Dena hut and we had completed two of the Massifs! I felt elated, especially after the earlier climb of Ellidr Fawr which had left me wondering if I would make the whole thing. I had proved to myself so far that as long as I kept moving one foot in front of the other, even if it was slowly, I could do it. My own personal support crew, Barney, restocked me with flapjack, water, clean socks and the awaited jelly tots! Five of us set out to tackle the rounded and gentle giants of the Carneddau. Mel assured us that as long as we got to the top of Pen Yr Ole Wen we just had to "stride it out from there" as we wouldn't drop below 3000 feet. We had been lucky with the weather so far; cloudy skies had kept some of the heat off us but it had been high enough to allow for excellent visibility and easy navigation. As we climbed away from the hut I watched as increasing amounts of cloud were brushing the tops of the Carneddau. We might actually have to get a map out! This of course did not deter our small group from soon accomplishing our 9th and 10th summits of the day. However, as we made the traverse across to Yr Elen (a personal favourite of mine) the cloud surrounded us, confused us: out came the maps and eventually the GPS. As the Carneddau became increasingly green and gentle underfoot the cloud broke to show us the marvellous views across the Menai Strait. Our last peak, Foel Fras, was within reach and gave us the finishing photo we deserved. We had done it!



View on to the Pig Track from path up to Snowdon - Craig Thompson

Behind the scenes of our fantastic day was Mel – organising a bunch of people from all over the UK, (who moved at different paces, didn't know each other and turned up late at night) was no mean feat. Yet 19 of us completed the whole route safely, no people or cars were lost and overall everyone had a fabulous weekend. So I would like to say a big thank you to Mel for putting together the first Welsh 3000 event for the Club, and hope that others get the chance to break the mind-blowing record of 4hrs 20mins...



Gail and I on Snowdon summit - Heather Smith



The view back to the car over Llyn Anafon - Heather Smith