

## **Snowdonia Weekend Review (with CLSAR) – June 2009**

The Bremex June meet in Snowdonia was planned as a joint event together with a couple of members from Cheshire Lowland Search and Rescue team (CLSAR). In addition to the usual weekend activities on offer the Sunday was targeted for practising mountain safety procedures, specifically casualty recovery from steep ground with the aid of a stretcher. So we had a full-on weekend ahead of us as usual.

The majority of the group arrived at the Beddgelert campsite on the Friday evening. It was fine and dry but all that was set to change, after all it was a Bremex weekend and in Wales! After a trip to the local hostelry we braved the night and rain to return to the tents for a good night's sleep.



Atop Snowdon at the Café – typical weather for June!

We regrouped Saturday morning in the local Cafe Gwynant for tea and toast where members were briefed and split into their respective groups based on their chosen activity. There were 4 groups in all, two for scrambling, one navigation and one climbing group.

The navigation party (my group) set off on the Watkin Path, one of the many Snowdon ascent routes. The drizzle arrived with perfect timing just in time to see us off! We soon turned off the path and made our way to an old copper mine picking out different features on the way. We then ascended to the ridge at SH 630 535 working our way through complex terrain. En route we practised some confidence roping techniques along with sitting belays - always good fun with the rain running down your back and soaking up into your pants. After a short lunch stop we ascended Y Lliwedd and came across a party of teenagers with a guide who enquired where 'the cafe' was. They had mistakenly thought that they were on the flanks of Snowdon. Hmm - I wished that I had taken some club cards with me!

Being so close to Snowdon we decided to take in the summit and understandably purely for research purposes visit the new and very well frequented cafe. For the descent the mist was down giving us a chance to practise low vis navigation albeit on a ridge, spotting re-entrants and features along the way. At Bwlch Cwm Llan we followed the path down to the valley and again had the opportunity to assist more disorientated and poorly equipped fellow walkers, another story.

It was early evening before we were back at the tents with the Welsh midgets out in force, forcing us to retreat back to the shelter of the pubs of Bedgellert!! before another damp return to the tents.

Sunday started off in the same manner as the day before i.e. in the cafe but the plan was for the whole group to ascend the Watkin Path and to then practise recovery procedures with a MIBS (Multi Bodysplint Stretcher) supplied by CLSAR. This is a full rescue stretcher and is particularly suitable for casualty extraction from steep ground, is easy to assemble and can be compacted for storage. Some steep ground close to the Gladstone Rock was chosen where, thanks to Tony's expertise, all members of the team were involved in practising various stretcher handling exercises on steep and very steep ground (vertical). Worthy of mention is some very nimble foot work by Tony during one vertical lowering exercise. The main rope to which the stretcher (with dummy casualty!) was attached was chafing over a sharp rock out of sight of the belayers and the outer sheath of the rope was literally being stripped down to the core.



Some real action!

Mid afternoon some of the group decided to make for home and a few hardy souls remained to tackle some rock climbing, great fun! The terrain looked quite easy so I suggested that I would like to try to lead, this would be my first time but I was in safe hands. On the previous day I had just expressed my unwillingness to climb multi pitch but this was about to change. I set off under instruction, all fantastic fun, until I got the call that just 5 meters of rope were left. I was about to not only climb multi pitch but also to lead, both seemingly impossible feats for me just the day before. But hey this was a Bremex weekend where the impossible is the norm!

This was not the first time that the impossible had become possible for me with Bremex. Some years ago I joined the group to complete the Summer Mountain Leader test. I did manage to pass but was not keen on steep ground work and since I suffered from vertigo would only go on easy scrambles. After expert tuition I began to feel quite at home on most scrambles, but I definitely still had no desire to climb. Then there I was tied off on a full length rope looking down at '**my**' second. How things change. It's a good job 'the second' hadn't read this before following me up! But I was under supervision from a very capable tutor. Thanks again to Bremex.

Thanks must also be expressed to the CLSAR members for their valuable input over the weekend.

More photos can be seen at:-

[http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/lh/sredir?uname=wherethehellrwe&target=ALBUM&id=5352695301326594193&authkey=Gv1sRgCJXn\\_KiTypD1Jw&feat=email](http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/lh/sredir?uname=wherethehellrwe&target=ALBUM&id=5352695301326594193&authkey=Gv1sRgCJXn_KiTypD1Jw&feat=email)