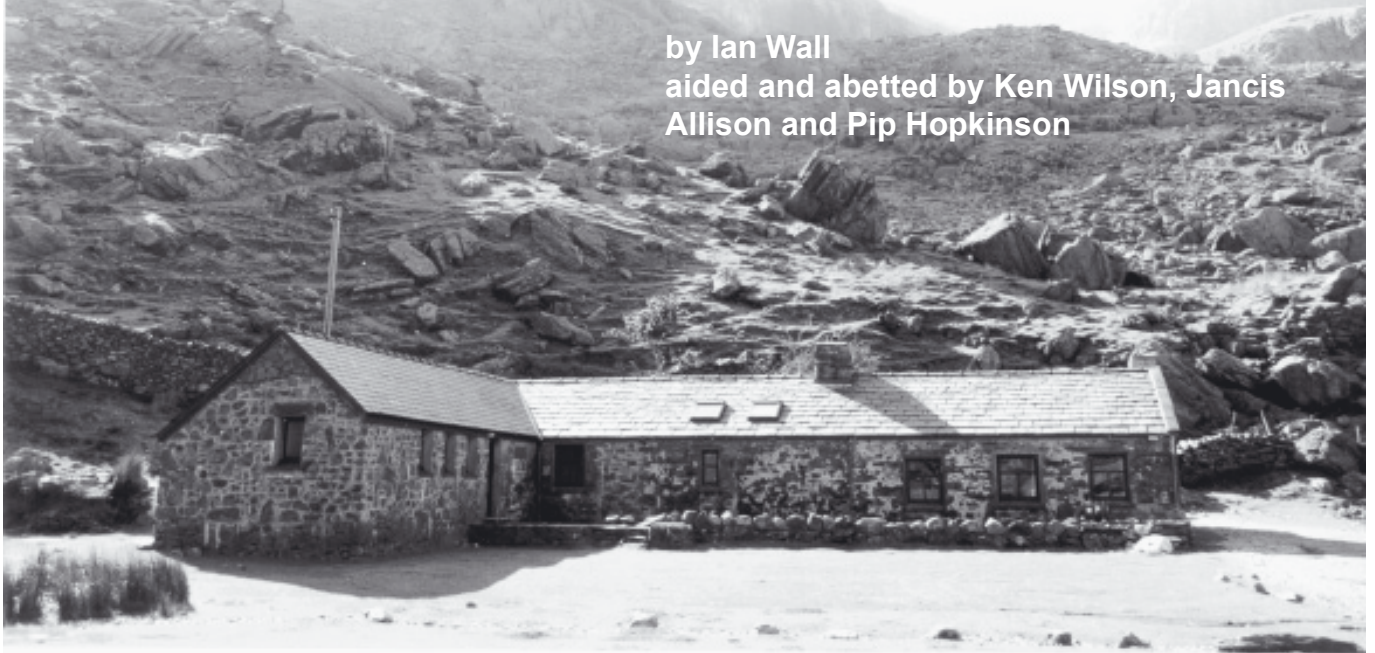


# Ynys Ettws

## The R W Lloyd Hut

by Ian Wall  
aided and abetted by Ken Wilson, Jancis Allison and Pip Hopkinson



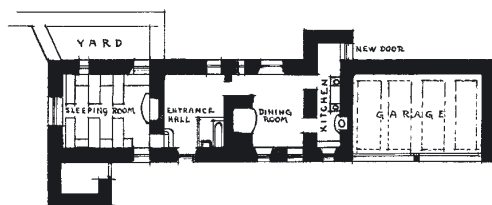
There is evidence of a Trust Deed dated 1932 between the Lessee and Walter Phineas Marler on behalf of the Club. However, it was the President speaking at the Annual Dinner in 1938 who told of the steps being taken to provide the Club with additional accommodation in North Wales.

'One cannot believe that anywhere in North Wales would it be possible to find a property more ideally suited, surrounded as it is by cliffs — many of them unclimbed and offering routes of every standard.' See CCJ 1939.

The old cottage identified for reconstruction was chosen by the Sub-Committee and known as Ynys Ettws with a two-acre field to the front. At that time there was no direct access but plans were in place to build a bridge over the river and to construct a rough road thus enabling the members to drive cars up to the six vehicle garage that was to be built next to the cottage. Sir Michael Duff originally leased the property to the Westminster Bank that was acting on behalf of the Climbers' Club in 1939 for a 50-year period but this did not come into effect until after the war in 1945. At that time the Sub Committee consisted of S B Donkin (Chair), G L Bartrum, W R Reade, B Donkin (Treasurer), E S Chantrell and B McKenna. See CCJ 1939

Y N Y S E T T W S  
L L A N B E R I S P A S S  
F O R T H E C L I M B E R S C L U B  
P L A N S A S P R O P O S E D

A plan from  
CCJ 1939  
page 54



PLAN

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100  
SCALE OF FEET

STEWART MURCHLAN F.R.I.B.A.  
CHARTERED ARCHITECT  
ROYAL LIVER BUILDING  
LIVERPOOL FEBRUARY 1939

In the 1947 CCJ the editor A D M Cox stated that 'at the time of going to press little progress had been made. Periodic nagging at the different authorities had made no apparent difference. On the other hand R W Lloyd's magnificent gift of £3,500 had removed any anxiety about the Club's ability to raise the funds to carry the work through'. This, it is believed, was given so that the 'young men' of the time could enjoy the opportunity Lloyd realised the mountains and climbing brought to so many young men. Lloyd himself gained a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure from the mountains but he was in fact lame and no longer as active as he would have liked. The Club expressed its appreciation by electing Lloyd as an Honorary Member. An idea of the original layout can be seen from the following plan. Calor gas was the fuel installed due to the prohibitive cost of bringing electricity into the building.

The 20th May 1950 saw the opening of Ynys Ettws by R W Lloyd. The day dawned warm and overcast but without a breath of wind. The opening was a low-key



Ynys Ettws from the CCJ 1939. Photo: B Donkin.

affair, there were no official ceremonies but around 50 club members were present, proceedings were carried out with due dignity. Firstly, the Rev J E Grosvenor dedicated the stone bridge to the memory of those Club members who gave their lives during the 1939-45 war and a short but poignant service was held around the stone inscription. Following the service the small gathering moved into the hut itself where they duly inspected the facilities

before going outside for the obligatory photograph. The assembled group attired in a variety of clothing from the climbing fashion of the 1890s to the business suits of the day seemed to represent just about every generation of the Club.

See CCJ 1950

Many commented on the fact that the architect, S McLachlan, had made a great effort to design the exterior of the building in 'a way most fitting for the valley'. The interior boasted a fine (new) electric drying room, which was viewed with suspicion as it had short-circuited most of North Wales the previous evening. The large kitchen with its open fire was particularly admired but it was also noted that the view in no way compared to that of Tryfan from Helyg. The copious quantities of champagne handed round by Roy Beard, the first custodian, probably induced these reflective and fond memories of the Club's first acquisition. There was even a bath of normal shape, which was later photographed at great length; this maybe had something to do with the naked female bather who was participating of the facilities at the time. I wonder what Matthews, who was the President when Helyg had its first female guest, would have said? (See previous article on Helyg.)

Later that evening the assembled membership dressed for the occasion and attended a dinner at the PYG where they listened to speeches from G S Summers, the President, and R W Lloyd, who 'graced the occasion with a felicitous exposition of his own views on climbing and climbers'. The Climbers' Club eventually secured the freehold for Ynys in 1984 for the grand sum of £80. Oh, how things have changed.

Membership at this time had very much an Oxford bias, a legacy from the '20's. The Club was still one of 'Gentlemen'; despite the high jinks of a well-known athlete who, it is said developed the environmentally friendly boot, and who walked his muddy Vibrams over the newly painted Ynys ceiling. Hard climbers who might have joined the Club didn't, although thankfully there were a few notable exceptions. The Club was not welcoming to those who might have been from the 'other ranks'. Don Roscoe's application, as now, had to state the applicant's occupation. Don was a typewriter mechanic and the comment was overheard "Are we to have typewriter mechanics in the Climbers' Club?" Don was also told by one of the mandarins upon his election

"I don't think you are the sort of chap we want in the Club. I'll be watching you very carefully." It has to be said that the member apologised three years later for his misjudgment of character.

The 1962-63 winter was long and hard. The vogue for winter climbing in Wales had only just begun with the ascents of *Waterfall Climb* on Craig Rhaeadr, *Jammed Boulder Gully* on the Mot and *Central Gully* on the Grochan. The two climbers who took advantage of these conditions were Ingle and Crew. They, along with Boysen typified the new type of class-less climber who moved easily within the whole range of the climbing spectrum and whom the CC was attempting at that time, although somewhat uneasily, to assimilate. One route that had often been the main conversation piece, especially amongst notables from north of the border was *Black Cleft* on Cloggy but it was thought that it would never come into condition. This year the constantly flowing spring had built up during the long freeze into a magnificent boss of blue-green ice 20 feet wide and solid at the base tapering up to a thin pillar hanging under the overhang from where the spring surfaces.



R W Lloyd about to unlock the R W Lloyd Hut at the opening, from the CCJ 1950. Photo: R J Collinson.

The winter days were, as always, short and with the Llanberis to Hafotty Newydd road being blocked by snow the only way into Cloggy was to walk over the ridge from Ynys. This approach left little time for climbing and the first two days were spent cutting steps up the lower bulges and using ice pegs for protection as well as aid. On the third day the pair set off before dawn and determined to complete the route carried bivvy gear. At the cave and sitting in a sling under the roof Ingle removed his crampons and then led the extremely difficult upper rocks that were heavily verglassed. The final section was climbed in fine style on good snow and the route that everybody thought would never get into condition provided a 'real climb under true snow and ice conditions.' (*The Black Cliff* Kaye Ward 1971)

Generally speaking the number of climbers doing the harder routes during the '60s was small but the publication of the Crew/Banner guide to Cloggy resulted in brisk sales followed by long sessions in Wendy's mulling over the possibilities. Any other crag with such a number of hard lines would probably not have had the same effect on the activists of the time but Cloggy had already built up a following from anybody interested in the mystique and legend of the



*J E Grosvenor unveiling the War Memorial Tablet, from the CCJ 1950. Photo: R J Collinson.*

sport and many of those anecdotes survive today. That slim volume contained the epics, adventures and some of the finest achievements of many of Britain's best climbers. The authors were particularly careful not to exaggerate the difficulties leaving the grades to speak for themselves. This soon proved less than satisfactory so as a result Crew and Rodney Wilson developed a numerical system for grading individual pitches solely on their technical difficulty. However this was not the first time a numerical system had been put forward. In the early '40s Menlove Edwards and John Barford worked on an interim guide to Cloggy in which they tried a numerical system:

*Sunset Crack* – Medium Severe – VA  
*Narrow Slab* – Very Severe – VI.

However, the system was spoilt by under grading. See *CCJ 1942* (Jones and Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, Pic Publications 1986). Numerical grading was also the basis of the Craig yr Ysfa article by Cox and Kretschmer, the latter also tried to summarise the numerical grading system in the same journal *CCJ 1943*. In the Editorial *CCJ 1947* it is quoted 'The committee, feeling that four years has been enough to give the numerical system of classification a fair trial, has decided to take a poll... the result Reactionaries 88 Progressives 6... showing that a clear case had not been established and therefore 1947 marks a return to the undisputed official sovereignty of words'. That was, however, until the *CCJ 1964*. The list that Crew and Wilson developed 'Extending the Grading System' and cleared up many of the apparent anomalies that occurred with the verbal grading and addressed the doubts of the 1943 Reactionaries.

Many of the CC huts have provided a fine base from which guidebook authors have set out when compiling and checking route descriptions, Ynys was no exception. When Don Roscoe was asked to write the new Llanberis guide he climbed all but five of the routes. Hugh Banner started to write the Cloggy guide and in a similar vein he wanted to check out all the lines personally before going to press. He had got down to the last two, *Woubits Left-Hand* and *Taurus* when Pete Crew offered to help. Giving him a draft up-to-date manuscript Crew and his Alpha Club colleagues were soon fired up and quickly added another 12 routes to the crag before the guide was published. Trevor Jones also settled down to guidebook writing — the first major guide to Tremadog was in the pipeline.

The concern over the way guidebooks were written and published was an issue for many 'modern' activists of

the day and in 1965 Crew and Ingle proposed for membership a young climber with a photographic skill and a certain talent for political correctness, before it became a buzz word. At his first AGM in 1966, Whiz, as his friends knew him, went in with both barrels blazing and tabled seven motions to reform the Club and in turn rocked the fundamental philosophy that underpinned the CC. One of the motions Ken Wilson tabled was to change the wording of Rule 2. He proposed that the Club should remove the word 'gentlemen' from the application procedure and replace it with the word 'persons'. Ken opened this motion with the statement 'As members will realise this simple word change will have the effect of letting women into the Club' this was received with an almost deafening intake of breath from the assembled membership. The President, Sir John Hunt and the Hon Sec, the Right Hon, now Lord, Roger Chorley were both sympathetic to this. However, Ken, in his true fashion, was going straight for the jugular and was in fact attacking the very foundation of the Club with its all gentlemen membership. There is no doubt the assembled 'gentlemen' were severely shaken by what must have been the first of Ken Wilson's forthright challenges to the climbing establishment. There followed over the period of the next eight AGMs debates of almost parliamentary proportions as to whether this motion should be passed. One of the most significant differences between Ken's generation and the one preceding it was the fact that the former expected and even accepted an establishment, conservative leadership whilst the new generation were progressive, more independently minded and outspoken. This was to have far reaching implications for the future of the Club.

At about this time Ynys was the 'in place' and most weekends the field would be alive with family groups. The Ynys of yesteryear was very different to the Ynys of today. Roy Beard was the custodian and a custodian with his own individual style of running things. One weekend Jancis Allison had arranged to meet friends at Ynys but the hitching from Oxford didn't go as planned and it wasn't until 2am that she arrived in the wild darkness of the Ynys field. The weather was so foul that all the others had sought the shelter of the hut (all were male and members) but none had given a thought for Jancis or for her tent that had blown away. Under these circumstances she made her way through the darkness to the hut door but even above the din of the storm she could hear the authoritarian tones of Roy Beard ushering forth. Too scared to enter the hut and incur the wrath of the custodian there was no alternative but to spend the night sat on the loo in the outside toilet. Eventually in the cold light of morning the assembled group realised Jancis was missing and eventually Roy found her huddled up in the outhouse and invited her in for a warm bath. (That was situated in the corner of what is now the member's room.) On another occasion the field was full of a variety of groups and while the cat was away the mice... anyway several of the wives and girlfriends had entered the inner sanctum to indulge in the odd glass of wine when Roy Beard having spent the evening in the Pardarn Hotel appeared in the doorway and in his own style proceeded to 'ask the women to leave', being a supportive bunch the lads left as well. However, our Ken saw an opportunity and with the support, and no doubt encouragement, of Brian Croft he verbally waded

into Roy who was then calling on Hamish Nicol for backup. The mother of all debates ensued during the following couple of hours until completely exhausted and speechless Roy retreated to bed. The congenial atmosphere now restored, the campers returned for a late night/early morning brew.

During one of these 'camping and no women in the hut weekends' the rules were again flouted. To avoid prolonged internment in the back room Dick Isherwood pushed out a pane of glass to allow escape, however, upon returning to re-glaze the opening two things became apparent, firstly the new pane was a quarter of an inch too big for the frame and secondly there was a



Chris Jackson (left) and Roy Small huddling round the feeble fire at Ynys, New Year 1981. Photo: Jackson collection.

'gentleman's dinner for senior members' taking place in the kitchen. Dick had no choice if he was going to avoid the disparaging comments from these gentlemen so he set to work, rather like the reverse of Colditz, with muffled chisel he enlarged the wooden frame and secured the glass and all between the gin and the port courses. Jancis was one of those 'offending women' and so it seems appropriate that as a result of Ken's motion at the AGM in 1966 and with the anonymity of only going by the title J M Baldock, Jancis was later proposed for membership with no indication of gender. However, somebody informed the committee of 'her' application but the old guard were not yet ready to lie down and so the application was rejected and for the next eight years there was a stand off. Harry Sales, a future President, said "If I can stay at Ynys with my boyfriend, my lover, my catamite why can't I stay there with my wife?" This time with the support of Hamish Nicol as President at the 1975 AGM the motion was passed that all people interested in the objectives of the Club shall be eligible for membership. With the womens' cause won Jancis, who has probably served the longest 'probation period' of any Club member, went on to become the first female member and then the first women President of The Climbers' Club in 1990-93.

The Club tries to document as much detail of its long and varied life as it can but many facts slip through the

net, however, in some instances new and significant historical information can be found in various articles and journals. The hut logbook is one such mine of gems. Unfortunately it seems that today these books are not always used for the purpose for which they are placed in the huts. However what goes round often comes round.

Extracts from the Ynys Logbook:

'I'm getting really pissed off with the way members are treating Ynys... just to let you know I'm reaching my limit'. 10.11.78

Arrived at noon on the 28.5.79 and was appalled. Hut full of large hairy monsters making a lot of noise. But I fear that a Yobbo is, and always will be, a Yobbo, despite birth or breeding'. 1.6.79

'I volunteer to be obnoxious to non-members who don't pay'. June '79

'I'm afraid all this writing isn't doing any good though. We've all got to get nasty'. 19.6.79

'It appears to me that the place is phlegmmed up during and after large meets by other groups'. June '79

There is a wealth of history stored away in all our hut logbooks and it must be one of the unwritten duties

of every club member to preserve these volumes for future generations. After all where else could we read the script written at the time of the second ascent of routes like *The Boldest* by such people as Ed Ward Drummond whose attempt spanned three days, partly due to not having read the route description and losing the line at the top of the grove. The actual ascent took only two hours 30 minutes at grade 6a. (Ynys Log book 1967.)

Custodians of the RW Lloyd — Ynys Ettws

1950 — 1959	R W Beard
1959 — 1964	J P Nelson
1964 — 1966	R W Beard
1966 — 1970	R H Nieto
1970 — 1973	R Handley
1973 — 1974	D Wiggett
1974 — 1976	W F Hurford
1978 — 1978	R D Sykes
1978 — 1981	D J Cuthbertson
1981 — 1983	R Enwright
1983 — 1986	D J Cuthbertson
1986 — 1987	A D Newton
1987 — 1993	D J Cuthbertson
1993 — 1996	S Andrews
1993 — 1999	G D Boston
1993 — 1999	P S Feely
1993 — 1998	S Andrews
1998	K Latham