

Annual Dinner 2013

"The bizarre trend in mountaineers is not the risk they take, but the large degree to which they value life. They are not crazy because they don't dare, they're crazy because they do. These people tend to enjoy life to the fullest, laugh the hardest, travel the most, and work the least." – Lisa Morgan

"It's not surgery, it's banter!" - Sam Hockley (HOCKERS 2013!)

It's 6 PM outside the Munrow Sports Centre and the air is palatable. From out of the descending dusk stoats both old and new are arriving in droves, gathering together and chattering excitedly. Neither the darkness nor the cold can dampen the enthusiasm and sense of expectation. Those who have been previously know what is to come. Those who haven't listen eagerly to stories from club members who have done this before.

An atrocious and admirable amount of alcohol is stashed safely away into Sam Hockley's swag wagon and Milf-hunter's mangy milf mobile. Around the corner a bin is loaded into the back of Gary Yarrow's Tranny Van. Its significance is lost on no one.

The gear is stashed away. Pretty dresses and sharp suits are shoved carelessly away into the depths of rucksacks. Buses and cars are loaded with people. Anticipation is at an all-time high. Old Joe chimes half past six, because this introduction needs more atmosphere...

AND WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO ANNUAL DINNER 2013!!

Several hours later, after one supermarket stop and much bus/car related banter, we arrive at a 'converted' barn in North Wales. Far from converted, it still smells of farm animals and hay, and there's a pretty good chance that we're sleeping on the same perches that chickens used to shit on. Much spooning together for warmth is predicted.

But like any of this would stop UBMC. The drinks are cracked open and the socialising begins as people meet old friend's and make new ones alike. As is standard of anytime UBMC gather together in one place, people attempt to climb the walls and pipes in the barn. Slowly people begin to head to bed, hoping to catch an early night in anticipation of a hard day climbing and an even harder evening partying.

Wrapped in thermals and at least four layers on top of that, a hat, gloves and a sleeping bag, everyone gets some shut eye, before being rudely awakened bright and early for a day of multi-pitch trad. The skies are clear and the rock towers beautifully behind the hut, enticing stoats into action. The soft jingle of gear is

omnipresent and the word 'epic,' a term inextricably linked to multi-pitch trad in UBMC, is whispered by the more cynical members of the club.

But it is not to be! A great day of climbing and socialising is had by all without even the merest hint of an epic. By late afternoon, stoats begin returning to the hut. Out of nowhere, a hair dryer, straighteners and an incredible amount of make-up appears. In place of ropes and racks, there are tuxedos and high heels. The only three social secs present at the hut (Three? THREE!? Poor show ex socials!) gather together in a tiny bathroom with a quantity of alcohol that only be described as 'potentially illegal,' and begin the exciting process of mixing the meanie together in the meanie bin! It turns a lovely purple-pink colour. Excited glances are exchanged – it is an excellent batch of meanie!

Bottles of meanie are filled for the old gits staying at Glan Dena and the bin is dragged out into the main room of the barn. Last minute dashes to finish getting ready are made and UBMC is a club transformed: in place of waterproofs and harnesses stand a lovely bunch of smartly dressed young men and women. The moment is appreciated – as soon as the meanie drinking starts, all sense of decorum and decency will very likely go out of the window.

And so a tradition so toxic we can only do it twice a year is undertaken, and the meanie drinking begins! Mugs are filled with delicious yet lethal alcohol. There is chatter, laughter and much excitement among all the stoats, which only intensifies when the coach arrives to pick us up. Bottles are filled with meanie and unsubtly smuggled onto the bus. A game of how many people can you fit on the back row of the bus begins and impressive numbers are reached. The coach arrives and a group of already fairly drunk stoats descend on The Royal Goat Hotel, meeting with equally as drunk old gits from Glan Dena.

It is time for dinner! Everyone who ordered the trout is perplexed, as deboning an entire fish proves a difficult task in a drunken state. Some are surprised by the presence of a whole fish in general, a testament to the intoxicating power of meanie.

Half way through the starters the bouldering team – absent so far due to taking part in a competition in Sheffield – appear, getting changed in the toilets and wasting no time in catching up with everyone else. Patrick Hill however, rightly prioritises the food and wine first. Good man!

As dinner finishes, Heather and Robin take to a set of a chairs, using them as a make shift stage in order to proclaim their love for UBMC and to give out awards to various club members for their exploits and achievements over the year. Brian Taylor takes the prize for the person who we thought would have made an excellent committee member. For his devotion to incredible and often hilarious fancy dress,

including one get up from Skipton 2012 than made him look like Mrs Garrison from South Park, Sam Hockley takes away the award for best fancy dress. Carina McGovern is given the accolade for messiest fresher, which is six shots of alcohol. She promptly and hilariously downs them all, a title well earned! For their enthusiasm and dedication to UBMC, Neeta Sundara and Felicity Borg take away prizes for being the keenest beans, winning the keenest fresher award between them. For improving beyond measure in such a short space of time, Hazel MacLean and Jonny Cheetham take away prizes for being the most improved fresher's of the year.

Then Harry Yarrow takes to the 'stage,' delivering his presidential speech with gravitas and sincerity; all the stoats in the room take a moment to reflect upon what UBMC means to them (we like to think, chances are a few people were too drunk for that – old gits were looking at you, you absolute party animals!) and with that the party begins!

Hilariously drunk old gits and hilariously drunk stoats take to the floor in the disco room and attempt to dance, but mostly just throw themselves around with great enthusiasm. In one lounge Nick Drinkall takes to the piano and people begin ordering bottles of wine and tumblers of whiskey. Many pictures are taken, becoming progressively more blurry and non-sensical as the night progresses. From the disco room, a conga line emerges, picking up many members as it travels through the hotel.

In another lounge Chris Stepanek, Harry Yarrow and Sara Page demonstrate their piano prowess as people wander in and out, socialising and having an all-round great time. Hilarity naturally ensues, but the large majority of people won't remember exactly what was said the next day.

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end, and before we know it, the coach arrives to pick us up. Once back at the hut, people change into their pyjamas to socialise, and the truly brave among us even drink a bit more meanie. Many ovary jokes are made and a whole pack of Maryland cookies are demolished. At 3 AM people finally turn in, drunk, tired and safe in the knowledge that they had an excellent night!

The morning arrives far too soon. Dan Geh attempts to wake a few committee members, asking if any of them want to come and collect the mini busses from Glan Dena with him. None of them do.

Many drag themselves across the road to Eric's café so that Eric the climbing legend can cure them of their hangover with excellent, greasy food. Heather attempts to write a climbing list but due to an intense hangover is forced to draft in ex-committee member and general UBMC saviour Chris Stepanek to do it instead. After

the usual amount of UBMC faff, exacerbated immensely by everyone's delicate state, everyone is finally ready to start climbing.

Some of the more sensible and determined among us take to a second day of multi-pitching, while the rest head up the road to single pitch crag Pant Ifan. Upon arrival, top ropes are set up and leads are undertaken by some, while others find even the prospect of single pitch climbing too much to consider and take to lounging around on rocks and in trees. Regardless, much fun is had by all and there seems to be a lot of sweets and chocolate hanging around – win!

After an epic picture of many UBMC members in a tree at AD, an excellent idea by Adam Jordan, everyone begins to head back. Some of the stoats who were unable to climb and stayed behind at the hut for various reasons (some because their hangovers inhibited them just a bit too much!) have cleaned up and everyone begins to pack away. With a pang of sadness Annual Dinner draws to a close along with the reign of Heather and Robin as social secretaries!

Regardless, the bus ride home is still undertaken with high spirits, spirits that are raised even further when we stop for fish and chips en route!

And for another year, Annual Dinner is over. Excellent climbing, excellent people and the culmination of an excellent year, it couldn't have been a better celebration. Here's to 2012/2013 with UBMC – it's been incredible, and we're all already excited for the next year and the next Annual Dinner!

By Heather Mungin and Robin Wilson