

PROFILE: Christine Smyth



John Huxley

In 1986, the year she joined the GMC, Christine served notice that her hill ambitions were to be taken seriously when she ascended Mont Blanc with her friends Steve and Gloria from Birmingham, kicking off a long and varied career on the hill.

In 1992 she was a member of the 27-strong group that went to Nepal to mark the Club's Silver Jubilee. Her detailed diary of that wonderful trip was made available to me when I was writing the Silver Jubilee chapter of the Club history and it proved to be invaluable. When we got back she and I gave a series of lectures about the trip, even getting paid for the last one, in Bebington Civic Centre. Of course we paid our fees into the Club account (I'm lying of course-we actually spent it on drink).

The following year, 1993, she finished the 14 Peaks, a longstanding ambition, winning the GMC Ladies Trophy in the process. In 1997 she ascended Mount Whitney in the (US) Sierra Nevada with the Club group, one of the three events marking the Club's thirtieth anniversary.

As well as being particularly in tune with the great outdoors she is a great traveller : In 2000 she took a three-month sabbatical and travelled round the world, joined by various people en route. Although specialising in hills and mountains Christine also has quite an affinity with water, having descended the Liffey and rafted down the Grand Canyon for a week with Nuala. On another occasion she even allowed Bryn to take her ice-climbing. Of course there have been countless other trips over the years, from Scotland to to the Picos de Europa to Switzerland and Provence. The picture above is from the 1988 trip to Lauterbrunnen when four of us plus camping gear squeezed into Mal Lamb's Fiat Strada, which felt and probably looked egg-shaped, such was the crush of bodies and gear.

Christine met Paul at an Open University weekend in Manchester in 2002 . In August 2005, after years of criss-crossing the Irish Sea by ferry and Easyjet, they got engaged in a very interesting and public way: we were in the Mountains of Mourne again for another weekend in that beautiful area and had just descended from Slieve Donard into Newcastle:

" We all knew about the Great Engagement Secret but were expecting it in the evening back at the centre. However, Paul knows a thing or two about staging surprises: as we drank outside O'Hare's Bar, he produced a suitably impressive engagement ring, sank to his knees and asked his beloved the immortal question " Darling, will you marry me? " Fortunately, the answer was Yes and there followed what Lin Jensen described as a good Kleenex moment. "

After a great night back at the centre Paul vanished off to walk the Pyrenees from west to east, a seven week epic. As he said in The Great Escape (see mag no.22):

" After a quiet weekend in the Mournes with a few friends and a just-found fiancée it was time to disappear for a couple of months allowing the dust to settle and leaving Christine Davies with no opportunity to reconsider....."

Christine and Paul married in June 2006 and honeymooned on Majorca. Then the Smyths, as they now were, were once again separated by the Irish sea until finally Paul left the army and moved permanently to Greasby in September last year

Some people have favourite hills but Christine's favourite place is a small lake on the Glyders: Llyn y Caseg-fraith (the windblown lake, according to my " Place-names in Snowdonia ") lying at 2434 ft on the plateau between Glyder Fach and Y Foel Goch (or what we used to call Moel-y-Caseg). Among her extensive photographic collection are some rather fine shots of this area .

In June this year, rounding off the Paul/OU connection in a very satisfying manner, she graduated with an degree in English Language and Literature after six long year's work. Also this year, just to prove she wasn't becoming a boring academic, She and Nuala did a week's backpack in the (Spanish) Sierra Nevada.

Although only the second female chairman in the Club's history Christine has served on a number of previous committees, as a Member (1987, 1991, 1994 and 1995) and as Club Secretary (1988, 1996 and 1997). Other roles have included organising the Chapel Fondue Parties, a number of annual Photographic Competitions and many stints on the 14 Peaks support group. Since becoming chairman in March Christine has introduced a monthly bulletin which summarises the various activities members have been involved in, a popular idea and especially welcomed by the out-of-towners.

This November Christine will be fulfilling one of her most important roles: marshalling other members of her family (her parents Liz and Ted, sister Susan and neice Lucy) into an efficient wood-gathering team at the annual Bonfire Party. We look forward to their efforts in a few months time!

We look forward to Christine's chairmanship and wish her well.