

Brian and mountaineering

Brian caught the climbing bug in his early teens. From that point on, he would climb anything that didn't move, from Himalayan peaks to the local railway bridge.

Having enjoyed rock climbing for a few years, he started winter climbing, with axe and crampons, firstly in the UK and later in the Alps which he visited for the first time in 1953.

By this time, mountaineering was a serious part of his make up. Indeed, when he first met Regina, he explained to her that mountaineering was not just a pastime to him, it was more like a religion! Fortunately, she also loved the mountains!

Brian continued to have adventures in the mountains in the following years, while he was establishing his academic career and enjoying his family growing up. But things became more serious in 1971 when endurance mountaineering raised its head.

It started with the Welsh 3000s, a classic challenge visiting the 14 peaks in Wales over 3000ft in a day, ending on top of Snowdon.

Next, he tackled the Skye Ridge, which involves literally miles of continuous rock scrambling and technical rock pitches. It was on this trip that Brian encountered The Ghost of Corrie Lagan. He had a conversation with an old mountaineer dressed in tweeds who offered advice on the best time to tackle the route – but nobody else ever saw this character! And so the myth of the ghost was born.

Between 1975 and 1980, Brian had several trips to the Alps. In 1980, a party including Brian attempted the Matterhorn. After a successful and enjoyable ascent, the descent started well and the party had a leisurely pause at the Solvay Hut. However, the sun had softened the snow on the Lower East face, making it desperately challenging and dangerous. Safely down, they vowed never to loiter in huts again. Just one of Brian's many epic mountaineering adventures.

The next step was the Himalayas. A major six week expedition to the Garhwal Himalayas was planned by Brian and Mike Leask, to take place in 1981. It was to be the largest expedition anyone had made in this region for many years. So epic was the proposed adventure, some of the team members were even interviewed by the BBC.

Brian made further visits to the Himalayas, including to the Annapurna Sanctuary with Regina, to Langtang and finally to the Everest region, which I was fortunate enough to take part in.

During this period of great mountaineering adventure, Brian and a group of friends formed the Gorphwysfa Club for climbers and mountaineers, which is still going strong today. The club has regular meets, an annual journal and dinner, where Brian, as Chairman, presented each year what he called his "long and boring speech". Of course it was anything but!

Brian had a truly indomitable spirit. Aged 60, he learned to ski. Despite various illnesses and setbacks, he continued to walk, climb and orienteer until very recently.

Throughout his life he relished adventure, its risks and its rewards. He was always encouraging to those of us less adventurous, supportive of us when failing, generous in praise when successful. He was always positive and utterly dependable. A huge personality, a high achiever, a lover of life. I am proud to have known him.

Kate Williams