

JACK GRIFFITHS
AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL
'PRESIDENT, MOUNTAINEER AND GENTLEMAN OF THE HILLS'



Jack Griffiths
1909 - 2013

It was with some sadness that Jack Griffiths, the President, of the club made his last climb to the great mountain in the sky at 05.45 on the 14th June 2013 at the grand old age of 104, after an extraordinary life. Jack's ashes were later scattered on Moel Eilio, which looks over to Snowdon, which was Jack's favourite hill.

Jack was born in Liverpool on the 2nd March 1909 and is outlived by Molly his wife of over 70 years. He was employed in transport management and was a shareholder of Everton Football Club, plus he was a keen golfer. Jack's greatest love was his cycling, and he was a founder and very active member of his Liverpool Cycling Club, becoming involved in time trials of up to 100 miles. He spent many weekends cycling from Liverpool to North Wales, Bala in particular, but he also extended his excursions to touring Europe. In Germany in the mid 1930's, whilst on one of these trips, he saw many signs of the forthcoming world war and saw Hitler speak at one of the many rallies leading to war. As Jack speaks fluent German this certainly helped him on these travels.



Jack and Molly's wedding (1941)

He had a tandem and took a blind club member on rides with him. It was during one of his local cycling trips that he met Molly, who was also a keen cyclist. Jack's aside was that he 'picked up Molly in a cafe!' The dear lady is renowned for her gift of homemade cake, which she sent to each of the club meets that Jack attended.

Jack's interest in hill-walking and mountaineering started when he began to extend his cycling trips to Bala to include a walk in the hills. This

began a love affair with the hills and mountains, more so when he retired at 65 years old. Jack started leading walking parties for Ramblers Holidays in The Alps, for three months at a time, and 'The Ultimate / Great Outdoors Challenge', coast to coast walk across Scotland, was an ideal opportunity to get fit for these trips. After one of these trips Jack was asked what the parties had been like. "Oh, OK" was the reply; "apart from the last one - they were all a bit elderly". Jack was about 70 at the time!

One of his last leading trips was at the age of 75, achieving 18,000 feet in The Himalayas. Jack also led The English Coast to Coast, from Robin Hood's Bay to St. Bees, for English Wanderers, always 'East to West', heading into his beloved Lakeland Fells.

Jack also had a passion for writing and sketching / painting in water colours. Website 'links' can be found at the end of this article for 'Jack's Himalayan Trek' and 'Jack's Scottish Sketch Pad'. The Mountain Bothies Association is very interested in these sketches for their 50th anniversary book to be published in 2014.

The Over the Hill Club members all have their own very fond memories of Jack, but he will be remembered for his stories, that very special twinkle in his eye, and his way with the ladies. There are many tales to tell of Jack's exploits, and there were many, but we can relate this one from the 1996 Isle of Arran meet:



One of Jack's many exploits

Jack set off with the group up Glen Sannox and then went off to do his own thing, which was not unusual. We all arrived at the restaurant of the local hotel, but no Jack. We waited and waited, still no Jack. Much debate went on about alerting the local mountain rescue team, but how were we going to tell them that a responsible club had allowed an 88 year old man to wander off on his own? Just after the mountain rescue team had been alerted and before any high drama had been enacted, Jack was found walking down Glen Rosa by the local policeman. Jack scrounged a lift from him back to his B&B, the officer waited whilst Jack washed and changed and from here the officer brought the culprit to dinner. To this day we don't really know where Jack went that day.

For Jack's 90th Birthday a club meet was held, in honour of our President, at Snowdon Ranger YHA in March 1999, but due to prevailing snow conditions, Jack failed to reach the summit of Snowdon. Jack's Bash part 2 was held in August, of the same year, and Jack led a group of 40 club members from Pen-y-Pass to Snowdon Ranger over the summit of Snowdon, helped along the way by a glass of Champagne. What an achievement for a man of 90 years! We were all very proud of him as he reached the



Jack's Bash Part I - Club members assembled at Pen-y-pass with Jack at the helm

summit and then he phoned Molly to give her the good news. When asked how he was feeling at the end of the walk he replied "just a bit tired! He descended like a mountain goat and it was difficult to keep pace with him. The day was followed by a super party at the Snowdon Ranger Youth Hostel when many drams were drunk, memories recalled,

Champagne corks popped and songs sung. Jack even demonstrated some of his dancing skills!

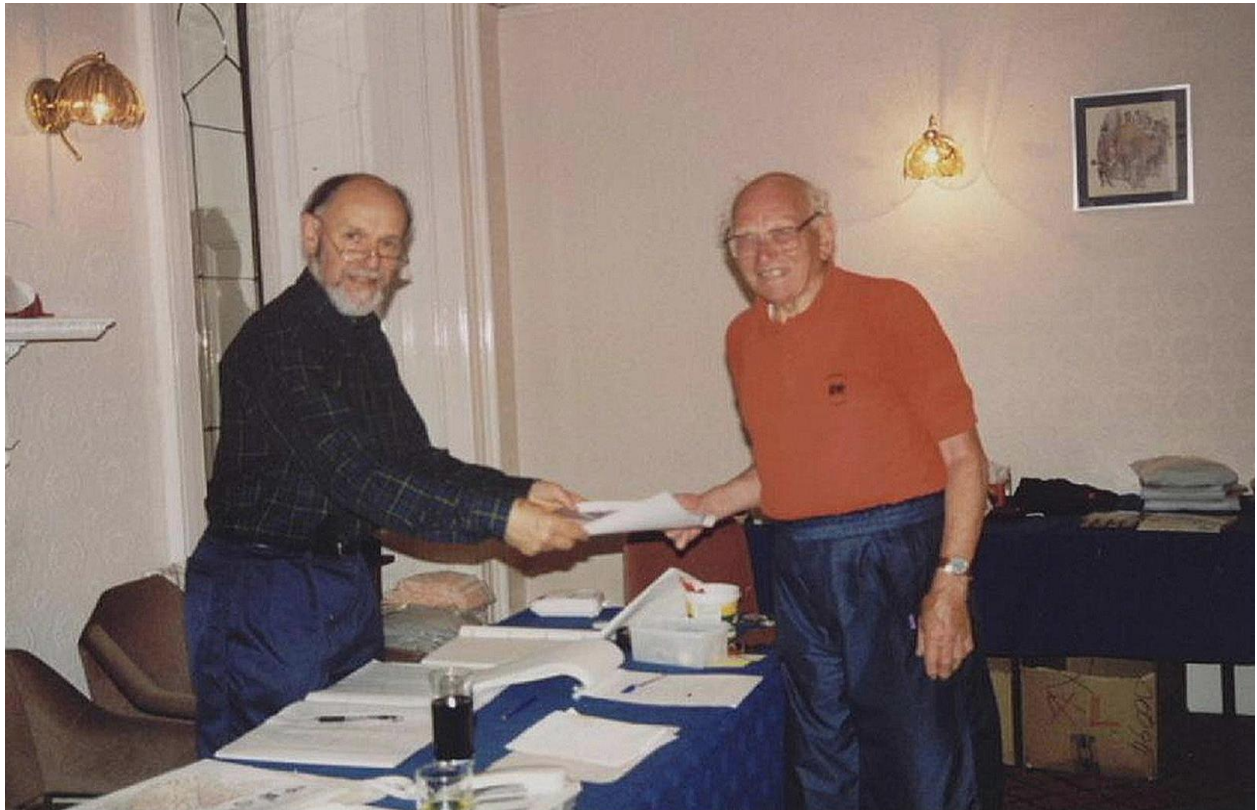
After the Snowdon spectacular, a few quotes from Jack:

"Thoughts as I descend with my son Alan and friends - I've been lucky. Maybe it's the final, the last: never again will I walk Snowdon's summit? The sun is shining – glorious landscape – the train travels down ... There's always tomorrow!! and Snowdon there!"

Jack also wrote in his inimitable style, a note of thanks to the Club:

"Just a short note of thanks – It was a tremendous weekend celebrating the 90th – I truly enjoyed every moment. There was so much happening, so much enthusiasm, pleasure and joy, the friendships. The festive bond and evening of 'toasts', food, wines, dance and song – the cake – the presents and so many cards (90) etc... etc ... So much to recall: I thank you – I thank you and The Over the Hill Club".

Also that year, at the age of 90, Jack accomplished his 11th Ultimate / Great Outdoors crossing, coast to coast across Scotland. Along the way he burnt a hole in his brand new Rohan jacket, but the smooth talking Jack soon had a replacement free gratis from Rohan. We were very fortunate to walk the last few days with Jack, but on the flat smooth surfaces we couldn't keep up with him and were glad to get to rougher ground. He often



Roger Smith presenting Jack Griffiths with his TGO Challenge certificate at the age of 90, after completing his 11th Coast to Coast crossings of Scotland

talked with affection about his first Challenge when he met 'The Rainbow Girls' ... Marion and Adrienne, so-called because of their multi-coloured jumpers. They really looked after him; in particular at Melgarve Bothy ... Jack would not enlighten us any further!

For Jack's 100th Birthday celebration the Club had to do something very very special. A room was hired at a good hotel in Jack's home town of Liverpool and a super buffet lunch was organised. It was attended by a large number of Club members together with Jack's wife, Molly, son Allan, brother-in-law George and niece Nikki, plus Jack's carers who called 4 times a day. 'The Rainbow Girls' wearing their jumpers of many colours brought a tear to Jack's eyes, and he was absolutely delighted with all the fuss and attention. The club presented him with a bench, with the inscription:

Jack Griffiths
President of The Over the Hill Club
Presented by members in celebration
of his 100th birthday 2nd March 2009
"Always at home in the hills"

Very fittingly, the bench resides outside Newtonmore Hostel, which is about the midway point across Scotland, so each May weary Challengers can rest a while and reflect on their crossing, so far.



Jack and Molly, after celebrating Jack's 100th Birthday

Behind every man is a good woman and Jack was no different. Molly, his wife, was so supportive. She was not weak and feeble lady, as you may imagine, but was very much a person in her own right ~ a free spirit who was also endowed with a lot of love and practicality.

Nikki, Jack's niece, pictured her as the wise, matriarchal elephant who leads her family across the plains of Africa, fending off lions and hyenas in her search for the waterhole. However, once they arrive at that waterhole, she'd be the first in, splashing and squirting water at all the rest!

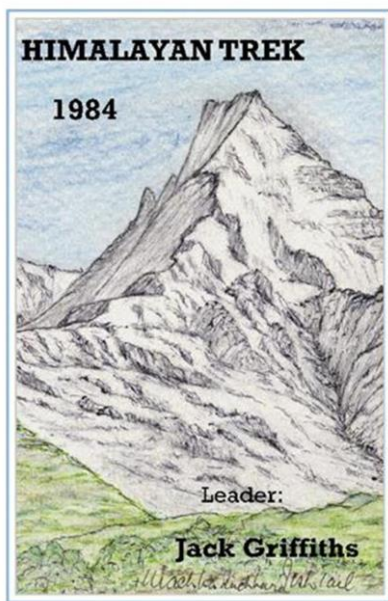
Molly, in her later years suffered terribly with arthritis, but still she made visitors very welcome with a cuppa and cake.

Jack was very proud to be The President of The Over the Hill Club, and we were very privileged to have known such a special man and walked with him. I doubt if we will ever meet the likes of Jack ever again.

Jack's secret of life was 'two fingers' of malt whisky, every night. Cheers Jack, you have 'touched' many mountaineers and hill walkers hearts; a true gentleman of the hills.

JACK'S LITERARY WORKS AND SKETCHES

This page includes some of Jack's literary works and sketches.
'Click' the photograph below to take you to a Photo Album.



[Jack's Himalayan Trek](#)



[Jack's Scottish Sketch Pad](#)



Snowdon from Llyn Goch

[A Sample of Jack's Other Artwork](#)