

A SCRAMBLE UP TRYFAN'S NORTH RIDGE

SAM HUGHES WITH LOLA FRANCIS, BETH GRACE, AND SAM SNOWDEN

We awoke in the North Wales hut to the ever dreaded sound of torrential rain. To make matters worse the kitchen was filled with discussions of micro-climates and other rogue weather phenomena; none of this particularly amenable to a nice day of climbing. The four of us gathered to cement a plan and the following opinion was offered: 'Scrambling is an extremely fun thing to do in a storm.' We all agreed.

Having decided the activity, we were drawn to Tryfan's north ridge and buttress as the location. This had a number of small but useful advantages given the weather conditions. Firstly, Sam S. had completed numerous climbs here and so had a good idea of the routes. Secondly, there are a number of easy retreats if the conditions become too dangerous. Thirdly, the spiny rugged jaggedness of Tryfan would be the perfect setting for the drama of the weather.

We parked in a lay-by at the base of Tryfan, next to Llyn Ogwen, pulled on our waterproofs, and began the approach. We were hit by icy rain and strong winds as we climbed the winding path to the scramble. Tryfan towered over us and soon we were caught in a wet fog clinging to the mountain. The atmosphere was truly epic; there was a strong expectation we would see a dragon soaring overhead — we were now in the plot of a fantasy novel. After ascending for some time the stone slab path had largely disappeared, so with high spirits we knew it was time to really start scrambling.

The rain was intense but intermittent and we were sheltered from the worst of the wind. We climbed an exciting route which kept a safe level of exposure and difficulty for the conditions. We soon gained the cannon stone and stopped for a short rest in the relative shelter.

After the cannon stone we hugged the east side of the ridge and slowly gained altitude. Soon we were on the terrace wall of the north buttress. We climbed up the rock face, now sheltered from the wind and rain, we could pull some harder climbing with spectacular exposure. The fog below us, beckoning a misstep, added an intimate but exhilarating atmosphere to section.

After pulling a few bouldery moves we topped out on the North summit. We were immediately hit by powerful winds and bitter icy rain. We traversed the gully separating the North summit and the summit of Tryfan; the rock was soaked and the wind was strong making the down climb feel extra spicy. Now, the goal was in sight so we kept low to the ground and pushed through the gale and downpour. After reaching the summit we sheltered behind Siôn a Siân. Another group reached the summit at a similar time so we traded photos. Afterwards we backtracked and started our descent down the north-westerly gully between the two summits.

After carefully down climbing the gully we found ourselves on a grass covered face near a stone slab footpath. The grass was soaked enough to function as a slide so we utilised the opportunity — sometimes intentionally! We returned to the car, and to finish the day, inflicted our dirty soaked sweaty smelly bodies on a local café. We made sure to sit next to the fireplace.

