

# OVERSEAS MEETS

## CALIFORNIA July 11- 25

Tim Josephy, Ken Roberts, Tony Dunford, Neil Grant and I met at Heathrow on July 11th for a non stop Virgin Atlantic flight direct to San Francisco. We emerged into the US sunshine some 11 hrs later and headed for the hire car depot. After managing to avoid buying the extras the agent was so keen to sell us, we set off for Yosemite, arriving at Crane Flat camp site around 2130. It was extremely dry and dusty; a fine layer of tilth soon covered everything. Next morning, we called at the check in desk at about 0745, seeking to pay for the night we'd just had and one more. Whilst the office was manned by two people – and the till was being used – they would neither accept any money nor take a reservation until they 'opened' at 0815. We idled away 30 mins and returned; they quickly did as we'd wanted and thanked us for waiting – and of course insisted – have a great day!

Drove down into the valley; I've made that drive several times now and the first views of El Cap. and Half Dome are still awe inspiring and to me, one of the best vistas anywhere. It was Ken's first visit; whilst Tony and he went and walked up the Mist Trail beside Vernal Falls then on up past Nevada Falls (to return later via the JMT), Tim, Neil and I climbed a six pitch route, 'After 7', on the Manure Pile Buttress, a mile or so east of El Capitan. Any manure that might once have been there was no longer present, tho' we did watch out for bears in case they came to leave some. We walked further into the valley and climbed a little on Swan Slabs, before getting the shuttle bus to Curry Village where we met up for a meal.

Next day, July 13th, we drove into Tuolumne Meadows, stopping at Olmsted Point for photos and Lake Tanaya for a swim, then set up camp at the Meadows camp site.



Neil, Tim and I set off to climb Werner's Wiggle, a 5.8 bolted route on the smooth side of the nearby, Lembert Dome. We could hardly ascend the first pitch before deciding that dome climbing is not what we're good at, so retreated. We followed Tony and Ken walking around and over the same dome, with splendid views to Cathedral Peak one way and Mt. Conness the other.



That evening we ate at the Tuolumne Lodge – as in previous visits, a good meal and good value.

Before 6 am the next day, Tim, Neil and I were on the trail to Matthes Crest, planning to traverse from north to south. There was a lot more snow pack around than on previous visits and en route to the crest we had to cross some and avoid other patches. Our first views of Matthes Crest were from between a couple of the Echo Peaks above Budd Lake – a spectacular ridge.



We (I) began too ambitiously seeking to climb some slender rock fins, which were not easy to get down off, so retreated – lost 30 mins – then realised we'd bypassed these on our 2006 traverse from south to north. Continued on up/over/across the rock cornice and into more jagged steeper ground, when in sight of the North Tower – the highest part of the ridge, we got 'lost' and wasted a lot of time seeking the right line to traverse or descend, before re ascending. The ridge was pretty narrow with spectacular drops on both sides – not a place for taking undue risks. Eventually a gully/chimney on the east side of the ridge was ascended and the North Summit attained. In 2006 we'd had no such route finding problems going the other way.....why this time? We didn't have enough time to complete the traverse over the southern half, so abseiled off 100m, on the west side then descended talus slopes, walked across and up to the bench, south of Cathedral Peak.



AB

Mozzies were very active, biting/stinging through clothing as well as on exposed flesh so we didn't spend too long admiring the wonderful views. We arrived back at the car around 7 pm. to find beers had been provided for us by Tony and Ken - a most welcome treat. A camp meal and a good fire rounded out an enjoyable, if frustrating day. (Peter Croft, in his inspirational book of High Sierra climbs "The Good, the Great and the Awesome" describes how he soloed the whole route, including approach and return one morning, in time to report for work at 0830. A man in a different league!

15.7.10: Packed, second breakfasted at the Tioga Gas Mart and collected a permit from the Mono Lake Ranger Station for our next 2/3 day visit to the Matterhorn Peak in the Sawtooth Range.



AB

Drove north to Bridgeport, then west across a few miles of flat grass land on which thousands of cattle were being raised. (Surely not all for the huge meals at the gas mart?) As we drove along it appeared that the approach to Matterhorn Peak was surrounded by extensive snow fields – for which we were not equipped. The road ended at Mono camp ground, where we stayed. To check out access to Matterhorn Peak, three of us walked up Horsetail Creek trail towards it, steep zigzags to begin followed by a delightful flower bedecked valley. The trail deteriorated to an indistinct cairned route still some 3000' below our peak; from that point we could see that access would indeed be barred by snow fields, so reluctantly, gave up on that objective and returned by a longer route, the Cattle Trail which lead east via more spectacular flowers and down to the mid point between Twin Lakes, then a couple of miles back to camp along the lake side.



AB



AB

The return from Matterhorn Peak

The next day we all walked up the Barney Lake trail from the camp site to a series of lakes, Barney, Robinson and Crown with, as everywhere, grand scenery all round. We turned back just before the Sawtooth Crest - decision made by the approach of a thunder storm and fierce mozzie activity. Luckily, the storm missed us, tho' it did hit the camp site. When we got back, other campers were mopping up. I say campers, but there were few tents; most were in the large to very large camper van/bus vehicles with all the attendant



TJ

The approach to and summits of Matthes Crest



bikes, fishing kit, boats, BBQ kit, outdoor furniture, generators – with a significant proportion of the occupants having a BMI exceeding 35 – and having a very different sort of outdoor holiday experience to us.



Barney Lake - Crown Point - Sawtooths

17.7.10. Packed and left, drove to Mammoth Lakes, parked the car and took the shuttle bus to Agnew Meadows. It was a little disappointing that the bus descended 1500' to our starting point, leaving us with that and rather more to ascend. From there, we walked up to the Thousand Island Lake, with bivi gear, climbing kit and food. The Thousand Island Lake was about a mile long, we went along its northern side over/round endless granite boulders, small pines and water courses: our walk in took about 5 hours, to a place we deemed suitable to camp at.



The Camp site Thousand Islands Lake

Our (climbing) objective was one of the ascents of Mt. Banner. There was plenty of snow around the mountain and we agreed on the North Ridge as the better line.



Mt. Banner has a dramatic profile from the way we had approached – little did we realise what a tottering pile of rock it turned out to be. Off before 6 am next morning, 90 mins trudge – a lot through snow - up to the pass and the start of the North Ridge. Steep scrambling and a few pitches brought

us to the top of a pillar – wrong start. Careful descent, traverse and re ascent, all through worrying loose rock.



Dawn start for Mt. Banner



Approach to Mt. Banner

We reached the Peaklet, followed by descent and as often, false leads/retreats. Began to find snow, to climb or avoid. We failed to find the way onto the ridge proper and climbed a steepening gully, heading for a notch in the sky line which we/I assumed would bring us onto the NE Buttress route. Above a steep wet chimney, we reached a place where the rock wall was slightly overhanging, loose in places and with water trickling down. It was too hard, so we abseiled off a rock 8/quick draw left in place at the highest point of the pitch and slowly retreated, leaving several more tape slings in place at various abseils. Eventually we reached safer ground where the loose rock was less of a hazard. Fortunately the afternoon thunderstorm that looked as if it might arrive didn't do so and the weather stayed good all day. We stumbled on down, getting to the camp at around 7 pm feeling very frazzled; it had been frustrating and often scary – we'd never been amidst so much tottering rock.

Ken and Tony had been up a subsidiary peak on Davis Mountain, north and east of Mt. Banner; they provided TLC, food and drink which was much appreciated. Early to bed amongst the loud croaking-frog chorus.

Having had three 'outings' spoiled by navigation errors/incompetence, I was beginning to wonder if we were getting past our 'best before' date.....

Next day we walked out and stopped in a small café in Mammoth Lakes; a minor altercation led to the arrival of two police men who decided on balance not to escort Tony to the local penitentiary. We drove off as free men and stayed in a motel in Bishop.

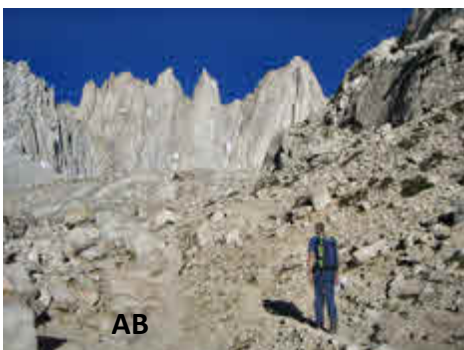
The following day (20th) we drove up Route 168 and to the South Lake trail head. Walked from there up the trail towards Bishop Pass. Tony and Ken ascended the well named Chocolate Mountain, whilst the rest of us walked/scrambled up the south ridge of Mount Goode.



The ascent was laborious, much sand and loose stone before we reached steeper rock and some snow. We met three folks descending with axes and kicking steps; they were Seattle ladies, we chatted a little then used their steps to ascend. Views from the summit were superb, and several tops we'd been on in 2004, 2006 were identified.

July 21st was Tim's 62nd birthday, so the traditional song was sung before breakfast. We made a leisurely drive south to Lone Pine and collected the permit for Whitney for the following day. Tim had applied for this in Feb, not got it, and then later received news that we had won a place via the lottery. At the Ranger station, we had forms to fill in and sign to comply with strict but sensible conditions and were given a WAG bag each. There are a lot of visitors to Mt. Whitney and the land is steep with not much dirt, so everyone is required to pack out all waste. The WAG bag process isn't too bad, but we found that the odour control aspects could be improved!

Next morning, Ken got up to drive us to the trail head from our camp at the Whitney Portal camp ground, to start our (Neil, Tim and I) ascent just after 4 am. The trail head is at ~8000' and the summit is ~14,500' so we expected a long day. We planned to ascend the North fork of Lone Pine Creek trail to Iceberg Lake, and climb the 1200' East Face of Mt. Whitney. We began with many others who were going up the main trail to Whitney, and then we branched off onto the steeper, less well travelled trail. At around 5 am the dawn came and with it, amazingly beautiful alpenglow views of the East Face and Keeler Needle.



Keeler Needle and East Face of Mt. Whitney

The dark grey to pink to red/orange to yellow to bright but pale grey transition took only 5 mins and we were lucky to be in a good position to see the mountain sides clearly when it occurred. We reached Iceberg Lake around 8 am. Part of the surface looked to be clear water, but it was solidly frozen.



Neil above Iceberg Lake

Three other lads had camped there and set off up the East Face route ahead of us, getting established at the 'notch' and beginning of the pitches, just before us. We waited ~30 mins then followed. The climbing was relatively easy most of the way, but the exposure got ever greater; at one small stance above the 'Fresh Air Traverse', there was ~1000' vertically below us to the scree, with clear views across the Owens valley to the White Mountains.

At a few places, we had to wait for the other climbers to move on, but it didn't slow us down much; in fact at above 13,500' exertion needed some recovery time, so rests were welcome. In many places there was loose granite rock so care was needed, however, it was very much less of a problem than we'd encountered on Mt. Banner.



Our route involved 14 pitches which ended right at the summit, which we reached at around 4 pm. We sprawled around, had lunch, enjoyed the views 'from the top of America' and the flute playing of a couple who'd walked up from their camp at Guitar Lake.



Tim, Adrian and Neil on the summit



We'd already decided that we would descend via the main Whitney trail, even though it was twice as long as our approach, for variation and not wanting the steep and roughness the North Fork route entailed – and if we were to be out after dark, a better defined trail would be easier to follow. We left the summit at 1645 and got back to the trail head at 2030. The way was almost 11 miles with countless zigzags; whilst the views were great – and, as throughout the holiday, the weather was good too – the path went on and on. Our sympathies were with Iain Gilmour and Alan Kay who'd made this descent at least twice before with JMT type loads on their backs. This is not a route I shall ever choose to return to!

We passed a couple of areas where folks were camping and several people walking up with big packs; I've no doubt a one day trip is easier than a two/three day summit trip. It's a long way to be carrying a lot of stuff.

Tony and Ken had left the car at the trail head, we got in and returned to the camp where they prepared a pasta noodle tuna corn peas mix meal. It was lovely! We relaxed around a fire after a great day with no problems. Confidence returned.

Next day, we visited a Bristle-cone forest, 10,000' up in the White Mountains, some 25 miles east of Big Pine,



marvelling at the twisted and stunted trees, looking half dead and up to 4000 years old. We didn't visit the oldest tree, estimated to be 4800, and called Methuselah, it was a bit further away than we felt like walking in the hot sun, (and probably didn't look much different).

"One of these ancient life forms is over 3000 years old . Which is it?"

On our penultimate day, we revisited Mammoth Lakes and climbed the North Ridge of Crystal Crag, whilst Tony and Ken walked up onto a ridge overlooking this little mountain. The climb was graded 5.7, only so on the first pitch, the rest was a lot easier and lead up to and through a huge crystal band below the summit.



TJ

This was a fitting end to another excellent High Sierra trip. Many thanks to Tim for most of the arrangements.

Ken and Tony stayed on in San Francisco for a further 24 hrs, Neil's wife Clare flew out and they spent another two and a half weeks touring. Tim and I returned on 23rd, arriving on 24th. Work on 25th took some surviving!

Adrian Bridge

### SOME SIERRA TRAIL NOTES - Tony Dunford

There's nothing like a shower after a hike such as the beautiful Vernal & Nevada Falls trail loop, so be warned that there are none on the Yosemite valley and Crane Flats camp grounds. However there is a solution! .....

Good planning can take you (next day) via Tenaya Lake, and a swim there will be memorable, agreeable, and in the most beautiful glaciated scenery. It's named after the old chief of the tribe that inhabited Yosemite Valley (in summer), until its "discovery" in the 1850s.

Tuolumne Meadows gives numerous trail options, and so it did for Ken and I. Book early in the year or take a chance on the day, for a campsite. I've been fortunate on 2 of the 3 previous trips, and this time also there was space.

We chose a route that would use the John Muir Trail south west towards Little Yosemite; but enable us to top one of the classic "spires" in the area namely Echo Peaks. Tim, Adrian, and Neil (hereinafter "the ANT team") had left for nearby Matthes Crest, so it would enable us to "keep an eye on them"!!

The JMT winds gently up from Tuolumne through pine forests on a well used and maintained trail. It's a great start to the day being invariably cool in the morning; semi shaded and mosquito free, whilst giving increasingly beautiful glimpses of Cathedral Peak and Tresidder Peak.

By the time we arrived at the easterly of the 2 Cathedral Lakes after some 5 miles, the day was warming. Some 130+ years ago John Muir recounts he camped on its shores and had his soap taken by an acquisitive bird. It's to the immense credit of the US National Park organisation that the area has remained in its pristine condition since 1907.



KR

Tony before Cathedral Peak

Near the shallow col and not far south of the lake we left the trail and struck off east up the semi wooded slope to emerge after an hour on the sun beaten glaciated plateau giving superb views of Cathedral Peak. Unseen climbers were heard somewhere on its steep south face.

Our ascent at this stage somewhat resembled that of Frodo, Sam, and Gollum on their way to the Volcano - in that we often stopped for breath in whatever shade we could find. (I'd memories of bad headaches on earlier trips resulting from sun and altitude).

We were underneath the fore-shortened main ridge and spires of the 9 Echo Peaks, and some careful map reading was required to choose the approach to Echo Peak No.5 classed as a grade 3 scramble. Initially the route was through / round scrub, scree and small snow fields until reaching the correct steeply ascending ridge. This gave some tricky and enjoyable scrambling for 400 vertical feet, to emerge on the 2nd highest of the 9 spires at 11,120'.



The views were everything one could wish for. Although midday, it was the clearest panorama I've had in the Sierras. To the north east were the mountains either side of the Tioga Pass, the various peaks of the Cathedral Range stretched to the south east, whilst south of us Matthes Crest was providing sport for the ANT team. Away to the south west was Clouds Rest.

Descending the scramble showed an alternate return route for us; which we followed, after lunch in the shade of some scrub. At precisely 1255, and from Wilts Col, we spotted 3 ANT specks on the Crest. We picked our way down the north facing rubble slope, avoiding snow fields, all the while having views of Cathedral Peak and Budd Lake. The whole area was still only emerging from the deep annual snow cover. There's no trail on the map, or on the ground, until one is below the Budd Lake outfall. This valley is wooded and steepening, so we were pleased to eventually spot the small rough trail on the opposite bank after some 30 mins. As a result, during the hottest part of the day we were benefiting from the shaded woods of Budd Creek for 2.5 miles. This trail is faint and not un-strenuous in parts, prior to its unannounced junction with the JMT half mile or so south of the Tuolumne road.

The excellent route, great weather and 9 hour day were rounded off by us bumping into the accomplished man and wife team who had ascended the Cathedral Peak south face, and the later return of the ANT team, with whom we were to subsequently share and enjoy the logistics, trails, and many beers.

## MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS - Ken Roberts

It was my first visit to the Sierra Nevada, so I benefited from the experience of Adrian, Tim, Neil and Tony. It was all a wonderful surprise. Yosemite was full of surprises and beauty; smooth white granite mountains, especially the spectacular Half Dome and superb waterfalls. On our way up to the high level Nevada Falls we saw a Rattle snake beside the path. On the way out of Yosemite we saw a Black Bear by the side of the road and then stopped at Olmsted Point for an amazing panoramic view back into Yosemite Valley. My other team members will have documented our other locations, achievements and experiences, so I will now just focus on my first impressions.

The word which comes to mind when describing all I saw was WOW!

I saw many new birds – inquisitive Steller (blue) Jays, majestic Bald Eagles and Californian Condors, Western Bluebirds, Dark Eyed Junco and Hummingbirds. Also the ever present Striped Squirrels, Chipmunks and Marmots. We also came across an inquisitive stag deer by our camp site at 1000 island lake and I just missed seeing a Black Bear walk past our tent at Mono Lakes (as reported by our American neighbour)

A special surprise was the quality of the trails, the lack of litter and the abundance of wild flowers. We learnt that the trails were improved by “available labour” during the 1930's great depression. The wild flowers are everywhere and walking along the trails was at times just like walking through an established garden, along with ever changing carpets of colour and fragrance. Brushing against the large areas of wild sage gave a welcome pleasant odour – especially welcome when washing facilities were absent!

The general scenery is just stunning especially from mountain summits and ridges – it must be one of the most beautiful places on earth. A “must do” for anyone who loves the beauty of mountain scenery.

Other memorable sights were our visit to the Bristle-cone pines in the White Mountains - one of the most ancient of trees. They presented a natural and most beautiful spectacle of ancient trunks and twisted branches - preserved by altitude and dryness. Also the unique “Wild West” landscape between Lone Pine and Mount Whitney – the setting for many movies. I also still remember the 104deg F heat in Bishop and lying down in a stream to cool down after a hot day climbing Echo Peak 5. My first sight of the eerie Mono Lake was also a lasting memory.

On the way back, Tony and I spent a day in San Francisco – quite a contrast and surprisingly chilly. We enjoyed rides on the steep hill climbing cable cars and misty views of “Golden” Gate Bridge and Alcatraz.

I might even be tempted back to do a John Muir trail!

n.b. An 'All Parks' Pass cost \$80 – in 2006 it was \$50.  
£1=\$1.47 exchange rate this trip.





TJ



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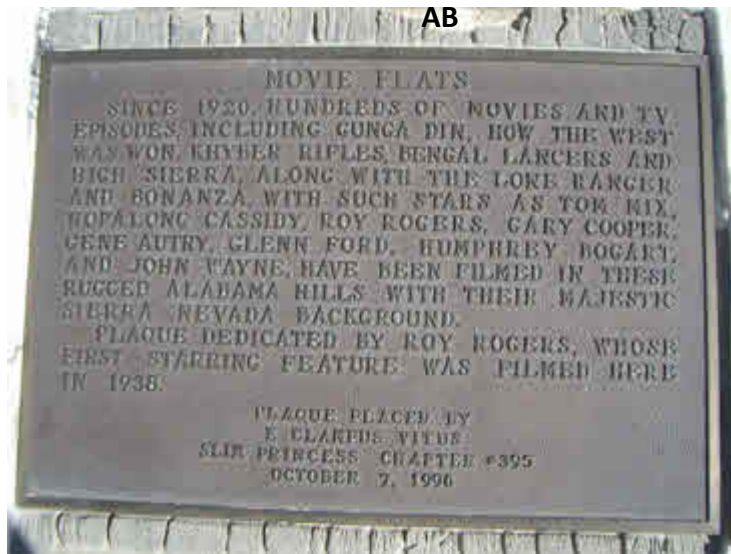


KR



The dawn photos on the previous page are of Mt. Whitney from North Fork Trail, the team are beside South Lake and the camp site is at Whitney.

The other photos are of Bristle-cone Pines, an unnamed wild flower and a scene described as something from the wild west, backing up the claims of the plaque shown here. The final photograph is one of the local inhabitants - a rattlesnake.



Photographs throughout the report are by Tim (TJ), Adrian (AB) and Ken (KR)

## BOLIVIA, QUIMSA CRUZ - AUG

A report of the YRC trekking expedition to the small Quimsa Cruz range of 5000+m peaks a day's drive from Bolivia's principal city, La Paz. Following a week of acclimatisation tourism the party of seven completed their trek during a week in mid August 2010.

### Introduction

Over the last forty years or so the Club and its members have made several successful trips to the Bolivian Andes with ascents and treks in the Cordillera Apolobamba, Cordillera Real and the Yungas, Cordillera Cocapata and the full length of the Cordillera Occidental. The remaining significant mountain group, the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz appeared overdue a visit. Interest in such a trip was aroused among both rock climbers and mountain trekkers though the former were already committed to a trip elsewhere in the Americas this season.



The mountain ranges of Bolivia

### The Quimsa Cruz

The Quimsa Cruz range is part of the Cordillera Oriental which runs in a line to the north and east of the altiplano. The Cordilleras Apolobamba and Real form the northern part of the line, close to and north of La Paz with Cerro Illimani marking their southern limit. The Quimsa Cruz lie on the southeast of La Paz River as it cuts through towards the Yungas and Amazonia. The range extends from 40 to 80 miles southeast of La Paz, almost reaching the highway leading from the altiplano to Cochabamba.

Around 1900, miners from La Paz found tin deposits at the foot of the glaciers near Viloco in the northern part of the range. They ascended the icy ridges and high altitude glaciers under the leadership of one Don Oswaldo Quetena. He died tragically on a Korichuma ridge while searching for a mountain pass to the richer veins. A decade later Germans Herzog and Seeling published the first technical information on the range prompting a number of pioneering expeditions. Mining operations flourished, then towards the end of the century declined markedly. They are now being re-established by smaller scale cooperatives.