

KILIMANJARO



**DOLOMITES MEET - JUNE 19TH - JULY 2ND**



This open meet was based at Camping Miravalle, Campitello de Fassa, giving easy access to dramatic landscape. It only attracted the President, eight other members (two were unable to attend at the last minute) and three ladies and only the meet leader for the entire duration. Low numbers but a high level of achievement and enjoyment by the group.

This raises the question 'should future meet lists include an Alpine meet? This area had much to offer and having checked out some of the harder Via Ferrata's, well within our ability, we could return, perhaps later in the season and hiring a guide for a week or two. Cheap air flights, car hire, and hotel accommodation seem to offer the best cost/time arrangement but it does need commitment.

What a start! Fortunately the meet leader had started his travels and did not receive a recorded telephone message (16 June) from a despondent Derek and Yvonne 'It's poring down, the site is deserted, if you have not set off don't come'. Fortunately they set off for a pre-planned visit to Venice and on return the sun was shining. Rob and Gabrielle Ibbotson arrived in the morning of 19 June and set up camp next to them and Alan and Angie Linford arrived after lunch to find them booted up and off into the hills, and all as right as right can be.

Gabrielle - Sunday 19th June. "Glorious, hot and sunny day. We took route 645, from the camp, towards Crepa Negra - said to be easy - but Yvonne and I had had enough after about 200m of ascent- it wasn't flat zig zags but steep zig zags. Robert and Derek got up to the Alpine meadows - full of lovely flowers and returned back about 1½ hours after Yvonne and I. We had sat chatting for ½ hour before winding our way down.

We took a path along the river on the same side as the campsite and manoeuvred ourselves around the campsite fence, close to the river and into camp. The men happened to do the same but were "caught" by the patron who let it be known that he disapproved. Gin and tonics for the women and Weissbier for the men and eventually dinner was cooked. A chat followed about what to do next and agreement was reached to get some altitude and view the area from Piz Boe 3150m. "

Gabrielle again - Mon 20th June

"We set off at 10.00am for the Passo Pordoi and parked by the cable car. The road up had an impressive 27 hairpin bends. Up in the cable car to Saœ Pordoi and we then set off East and then North East via refuge Forc Pordoi - though by that time Yvonne knew it wasn't for her - scree, snow, precarious edges etc. From Force Pordoi I slowly and painfully climbed to 3150m at Piz Boe. We had had lunch on the col before the final haul but were very happy with chocolate and coffee from the hut/refuge Cappana Piz Fassa. There were glorious views all around. On the return I did a spectacular "glissade" down a snow slope when a foot print gave way under my right foot. I managed to lean back and did myself no harm but forgot to shout 'Geronimo' as I slid about 30metres and stopped at bit of bare scree! (could have been serious ahead - a long way down! A party of Brits called to offer assistance, nice gesture.). At another point my foot went down into a snow hole right up to my crutch - I literally had to be dug out because there was compacted snow on top of my foot. My first experience of wire protected rock and snow ridges!

One surprise was butterflies; both a white one and a red admiral coloured one flying around. There seemed only one flower to feed on - a deep purple/pink pincushion of flowers (Saxifrage?).

The only bird we saw was a small raven like bird - yellow beak, red legs. Later we agreed that this was a chough.

It was thrilling to have done something that even in my wildest dream (or nightmare!) I never thought I would do. And the sun shone almost the whole time, scorching my right calf - or was that the snow slide?"

Later in the week the presidential party also topped Piz Boe as he reports:

"After several members had climbed Piz Boe and reported what a good walk it was, John and I took the cable car from Passo Pordoi to the top station at 2953m. As Piz Boe is a mere 3150m it appeared an easy way to achieve some magnificent views.

Perhaps we should have anticipated some intervening depressions. Most of the way was on rock or beaten paths with varying lengths of snow patches being traversed by a wide range of walkers, including family groups with quite young children. There were a number of flat, horizontal sections of scree like limestone fragments which appeared to hold no soil or other growing medium but which supported beautiful miniature alpine plants, all of which would have been acceptable in our rock gardens at home.

The views from the top were all that we had been told about. Before leaving a visit was made to the toilet on the eastern side just below the summit. The way to it was interesting, being protected by a knotted kermantel rope. Very well made, the exterior looked sound and new but is was the interior which was worthy of comment. Attractively tiled it would have been a credit to any cottage in Little Langdale.

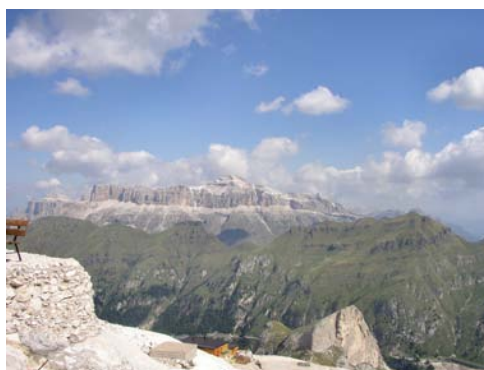
Within 5 minutes of setting off down (too long in the loo) the rain started, soon changing to snow and hail. This section of the way was

protected by steel cables, which we had been glad to use on the way up. However on the way down it was more secure to pick out a secure route on the slabby rock.

The hail became quite vicious and painful and was soon accompanied by thunder and lightning. Visibility was down to about twenty metres with a very dark gloom surrounding us. The timing between lightning and thunder was sufficient to give some comfort but that was about it. By now the whole area was with snow and hail and the well beaten grooves in the earlier snow patches were quickly filled with slushy hail and we lost sight of anyone else for a while.

The track to the cable station passes the Refuge Pordoi, welcome shelter from the storm, now easing. About twenty metres from the door I suddenly sank down in the snow up to my knees. Feeling a bit embarrassed I struggled to pull one leg out while the windows of the hut became filled with grinning faces enjoying the spectacle (could be the same hole Gabrielle sank in).

When we arrived back at the cable station the storm had moved on, as these alpine storms do, and Passo Pordoi was almost clear of snow. Snow and rock debris littered the road down but to our surprise on entering the village, workmen with vehicles and shovels were clearing fairly thick snow from the roads (pampering to the motorbikers)"



PIZ BOE FROM REFUGE FACIONI

Later in week the rest of the presidential party (guess who) shot to the top and back to the lift by 1300hrs, missing out a descent by a 1b Via Ferratta which would have made a full day. Axes and a rope would have been needed and carried!!

21st June Tuesday a rest day for Derek and Yvonne. The Linfords and Ibbersons set off flower spotting driving up to the Sellajoch; for some inexplicable reason the lift from Campitello to Ref. Col Rodela was not running until mid July.

From the Sellajoch 2160m a splendid path, the Friedrich August Weg, takes you under the magnificent mountain mass of Sassolungo and Sasso Piatto taking in the refuges of Friedrich August and Sandro Pertini 2300m. Flowers in abundance (see separate article by Ken Aldred), but no Edelweiss, so a plan was hatched to visit a known spot in the Vajolet hills.

While the camp residents were making plans to climb Costabella 2706m by the Bepi Zac 1b via Ferrata, the group staying at the Piccolo Hotel in Canazei had arrived, walked down to camp but found themselves on the wrong side of the river and unable to make contact.

Knowing the lift, saving 300m of height, from Passo Pellegrino 1887m to the Paradiso Refuge was not running, the ascent was only a Munro day out but needed an early start to avoid the afternoon thunderstorms and allow plenty of time to explore the many World War 1 artefacts. On our way at away 0830. The route follows the ridge between the Passo Selle and the Forcella Ciadin and was one of the Austrian main front lines in the war with the Italians.

Several British groups were now on site including Frank and Lynn, who, having seen 'Via Ferratas' on TV, joined us for the trip.



HEADING FOR PIZ BOE  
FROM PARDOI CABLE CAR



APPROACHING VALON DEL FOS  
ROUTE 627 TO PIZ BOE



VALON DEL FOS



SELLA GROUP  
FROM ROUTE 627

As we parked at the Passo Pellegrino it was clear why the lift was not running. It had been dismantled and the 604 track to the Paradiso was now a gravel and dusty road carrying heavy lorries loaded with aggregate for more and bigger ski lifts. Worse was to follow, but for now the dust forced us off the road onto a long traverse across the hillside into an area carpeted with alpine flowers so dense it was difficult to avoid them. Our turning point for the ridge, Passo Selle, slowly took on an appearance we could not recognise from a previous visit, the reason slowly becoming apparent.

The wonderful old wooden 16 bed Bergvagabunden Hut had been dismantled and moved off the col to a position under the ridge and site now occupied by huge concrete block building, to be serviced by the new lifts. There must be a Euro directive against this desecration. What will happen to the hut and charming elderly lady guardian and the big smile you get from the hatch as your food or tea is served? It reminded me of many times in a hut, early morning starts and thirsty returns, guardian up early, wood stove lit, a sense of urgency 'let's get going', then your food arrives at the hatch. Peace and wellbeing descend on the recipients. An important feature a hatch.

On one impoverished YRC alpine meet a vast quantity of ex war time (ex LHG) Chinese dried egg was presented at the hatch, taken by strong hands, mysterious happenings behind the hatch; which returned a delicious omelette. I wonder if the block house will have a hatch.

The route is well marked with plenty of protection allowing time to examine the observation posts cut into the rock, signs of gun emplacements, zig zag trenches, cisterns, tunnels still carpeted with ice and wondering about the condition faced by the soldiers.



TOP OF PIZ BOE



DAVID RETURNING TO PARDOI CABLE CAR

A section of wire protection was still under snow, new sections have been added and just before the descent route is a 15m gully leading up to the huge observation room and window seen in the guide book many of the tourist brochures.

The route passes beyond this point to the top of a 30m ladder descent which we were unable to negotiate due to a steep ice and insufficient gear. An enjoyable nine hour trip.

Later in the week Albert and David were dropped off at 0730 at the start and collected at 1500hrs wet and chilled, having caught the outer end of a violent thunderstorm, fortunately we had a change of

gear in the car. The refuge and nearby hotel were shut due to the engineering works.

The storm produced hailstones on such a size and quantity that the pick up car was forced to a stop for fear of damaging the windscreen.

Next the Vajolet Towers: Despite the fact that the Vigo cable car, which opened on the 18 June, suddenly stopped running the whole meet managed to catch the 3 stage lift from Pera and assemble at the Refuge Bellavista! We followed route 541 to the edelweiss and beyond under dramatic dolomite towers. Finished off with a 'Cappa di gelato con fruttii' (fruits of the forest and ice cream).

A nice touch, Gabrielle, new to this game, dropped a walking pole soon after lift off, which was returned to her by the operator when she returned in the afternoon. Derek and Yvonne returned home next day.

Rob takes up the report for the last via ferrata before he and Gabrielle were to leave.

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June "The day dawned sunny and bright but with a threat of later cloud. Alan's injunction as we went to bed the previous, rather wet night, was that we, from the campsite, would meet the others at 0900, so to make a good start - and hopefully an ascent of "Roda di Vael 2806m. We missed meeting in Campitella village and met on the Passo di Costa Lunga underneath the forbidding, and exciting peak itself. Shortly afterwards we were being tipped out of the chair lifts over 400m. above the car park and set off up hill to the Christomanos monument where we gathered for a breather.

Here the "more-or-less" level walkers went one way and the rest aimed for the Col or Pas de l Violon (path 549,551), me following David's good steady pace (a bit brave Rob! WAL). We lunched in brilliant conditions with

stunning views and greedy, cheeky choughs, who almost pecked the bread from one's hand; until, a very fit young Dalmatian came bounding up the path and they all took off like a flight of fighter planes and swooped to ledges 300 - 400 m away.

Refreshed, it was time to start on the Via Ferrata Majare which to my un-practised eye looked steep and "dodgy". Encouraged by my YRC stalwarts and the ever nimble Angie we scrambled up with "interesting exposure" on either hand; new territory for me. Alan and Albert encouraged me to look upwards: I did as told.

We were slowed down about half way up as there was a fully kitted and belayed crowd of young people out for a slow Saturday lesson and very impressive it was too, to see one 10 year old up there with the rest of us 'wrinklies'.

I was surprised when we got to the top and it was quite spacious. That was only a grade 1 B! Some people would have gone on from the summit for a different and more advanced descent but not for us on this occasion - for which I was much relieved. Alan encouraged me to continue climbing down steadily but with him manipulating my short "tether". Once I got the hang of actually climbing down and obeying some of the "rules" which most YRC veterans learned 50 yrs ago I began to see what it was all about - in very benign conditions it has to be said. This climb in a Scottish, English or Welsh mist would have been a "quantum" leap into something which might have had me scared. As it was, with the assistance and tuition from our Meet Leader I felt as safe as it was possible to make it.

I think everyone enjoyed the climb: we left a mark of our visit in the book at 2,806 m. and raced the gathering clouds to the car park

wondering whether we'd make it before the rain. We did. In the end we chose not to get into cars but to have some "Panna Cotta" or equally delicious forest fruits with fattening 'sauce', under a very large umbrella which had become necessary to avoid the hail.

It was a great and memorable day; but the weather had truly broken and we went to bed weary and early on a misty, wet, view-less evening.

News that the lift to Refuge Facioni 2626m under the Marmolada was running raised hopes that we might go up and down the Punta Penia 3343m using the normal 2c descent via farata but in reality we had insufficient numbers and gear and had to satisfy ourselves with a trip on the lift and a walk around the glacier. Sadly like all others, receding.

The lift was interesting; "that is not a chair" said Albert "it's a shopping trolley with one wheel. Go and see for yourself".

The presidential party left leaving the meet leader to finish alone, as circumstances prevented the Dover brothers from attending. Two memorable days, one on Sassolunga; extreme contrasts between cow pastures, lots of edelweiss, and steep rock.

Another day looking for the Lovett rare orchid (spotted on one of his trips), when having taken too long or gone too far, got caught in an electric storm and, unable to reach the lift, took refuge in the Ref Fedarola. Chairs and tables flung around, lights went out (surge protection) as lightning struck nearby, then a direct hit which blew the cash register and moved the chef who was leaning on the steel sink.

Third day under Sella Towers - pelted with stones - you definitely need helmets here.

The cliffs look solid but close up are a series of towers & gullies.

A good ending as the lift operator had seen us coming and waited for us as the storm abated keeping an eye on our progress and the weather.

We had not intended to leave then but motorbikes are a feature of alpine passes and the appearance of signs saying next weekend Val de Fasse was hosting the Yamaha international biking event made us beat a hasty retreat to Gorges du Tarn, France.

WAL

In attendance;

- The President, Ken Aldred
- Derek and Yvonne Bush
- Albert Chapman
- Rob and Gabrielle Ibberson
- Alan and Angie Linford
- John Lovett
- David Smith



MARMOLADA  
LIFT

CARVING OF  
FREIDRICH  
AUGUST AT  
REF. AUGUST  
AND SOSSO  
LUNGA IN  
BACKGROUND





SASSO PIATO AFTER STORM



ITALIAN ALPINE CLUB



ALBERT BEPI VAC (508)  
CORBELLA IN MIST



MARMOLADA  
FROM ALTA VIA DOMITI



SELLE GROUP AFTER STORM



SELLE GROUP, PIZ GRALBA 2964m





SASSO PIATTO SASSO LUNGA SELLA TOWERS



NORTH SIDE OF SASSO LUNGA



LIFT TO REFUGE DEMETZ



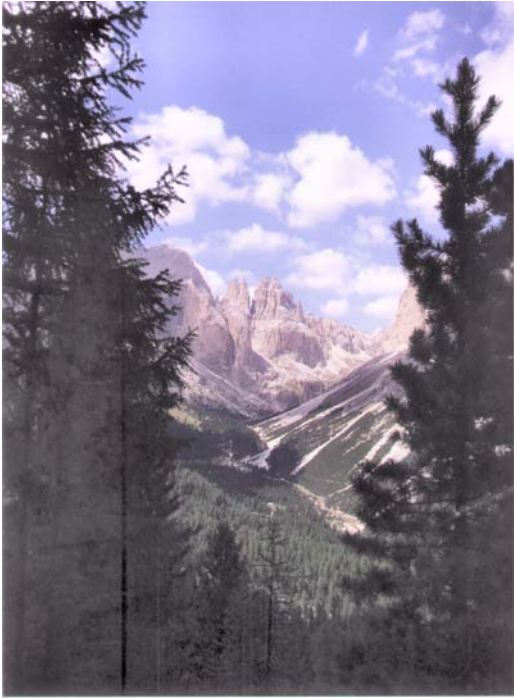
SASSO LUNGA COL FROM NORTH



DETAILS OF PLANT IDENTITIES ON PAGE 56



# VAJOLET TOWERS AND KING LAUREN'S ROSENGARTEN



# **KING LAUREN'S GARDEN**

Ken Aldred, Dolomites 2005

Reginald Farrer, in his book, "The Dolomites", (\*) makes several references to King Laurin's Garden. King Laurin was the kindly and popular head of a Kingdom of dwarfs who occupied a hollow mountain intersected with tunnels and containing many valuable treasures. Above ground the whole area consisted of a magnificent garden filled with beautiful roses. Without hedges or walls the garden was protected by a single thread of fine silk and for many years harmony reigned.

Then came the time when King Laurin tried in vain to win the hand of Similde, the daughter of a neighbouring king. The princess rejected him, refusing to leave her father and join him in the Rosengarten. Annoyed at being thwarted, Laurin arranged for some of his dwarfs to abduct her after which he held her prisoner for seven years. Many battles were fought before, eventually the princess was rescued and it was the turn of the king to be held prisoner. He was bound to a stake and was humiliated by his captors, being made to sing and dance for their entertainment.

Laurin had lost everything including his treasures, his spirit was broken and when he did manage to escape he faced the long journey back to his kingdom. When he arrived in the mountains he admired the Rose Garden standing above him but then took his revenge.

He argued that it was his beloved roses which had betrayed him as it was their presence which had divulged the whereabouts of his kingdom to his enemies. He proceeded to cast a spell, turning the whole Rose Garden to stone with the effect that the roses would never be seen again by night or day. But he had

forgotten the twilight, which is neither night nor day and that is why we see the beauty of the Alpen Glow at sunset and sunrise.

Alan Linford and Angie had been to the Rosengarten and the Vajolet Towers two or three years ago so this year they were in a position to take the members on the Dolomite Meet to an area noted for its flowers.

A cynic would expect us to find no roses but, in fact, there were many clusters of the two Alpen Roses, *Rhododendron hirsutum* and *R. ferrugineum* growing quite close together. As one grows on calcareous rock and the other on basic rock this is not particularly common.

Alan made a point of successfully taking us to see some edelweiss indicating a good memory and equally good navigation. This plant was of the genuine dwarf variety and not of the straggling, overgrown specimens which we sometimes produce at home. The rock scenery looking into the upper valley was magnificent and it would have been so easy to miss many of the flowers. However, even the non botanists were full of admiration of the wide range of flora available from stepping off the chairlift right up to the arid scree above.

Just above the chairlift was the Nigritella Refuge causing us to search for this vanilla smelling orchid, *Nigritella nigra*. We didn't find it during the search but one member found it when returning alone to the chairlift restaurant. Easier to discover was the fragrant orchid *Gynadenia conopa* which was prolific in the meadows and thin woodland met with soon after starting our walk. Those members interested in Alpine gardening were pleased to see *Globularia cordifolia* and a small *Phyteuma*, both suitable for the home rock garden. One of the Alpine poppies, *Papaver rhaeticum* was quite common as was *Daphne striata*.

This latter plant caused some discussion as it is very dwarf and the only daphnes grown by some of us at home produce substantial bushes up to three foot high. Also among the trees were many *Clematis alpina*.

Earlier in the week on the Sella pass we had searched in vain on snow margins, its usual location, for the alpine snowbell, *Soldenella alpina*. This beautiful flower is often seen growing through the snow, the buds apparently forming in the autumn, before the fall of winter snow. As we started to climb above the tree line we were rewarded to find it in several places where the flattened and discoloured state of the surrounding vegetation suggested that the area had recently been covered in snow. Perhaps this explanation convinced the sceptics that we hadn't been wasting our time on the Sella Pass.

Several different primulas were seen but those causing most comment was the *Primula auricula*, bringing back memories of some seen above Lauterbrunnen on a previous Alpine Meet.

Before leaving the upper screes it was a fitting end to a very pleasant walk to see the numerous tufts of the round leaved pennycress, *Thlaspi rotundifolia*, which Farrer saw as King Lauren's roses as they gave a pale rosy glow to the scene in the evening light.

(\*) The Dolomites by Reginald Farrer.  
First published in 1913 by Adam and Charles Black.

An illustrated copy is available in the YRC library.

A more recent paperback is the 1985 edition published by Cadogan Books Ltd

## **A GARDENER'S FRIEND**

### **THE BLACKBIRD AND ITS COUSINS**

The most commonly found garden bird is the blackbird previously known as the ouzel. It lives about 5 years but packs a lot into its frantic existence. Blackbirds are actually a member of the thrush family and have between 2 and 4 clutches a year and have been known to have as many as five. At 3 to 5 eggs at a time it explains why they are so common even with fairly heavy losses.

Despite these figures it is calculated that each pair probably only has 3 surviving chicks each year. The eggs are pale blue with faint and blurred red speckles.

They have wonderful singing voices and are a welcome addition to the garden scene and I have had four pairs nesting in my garden this year. They are also considerably talented mimics and one of my birds has been imitating the ring tones of my telephone for a couple of years now. I usually leave the back door open when I am working in the garden and my wife is not home and I have several times dropped everything to run in to answer the phone when it was not ringing.

When eggs hatch, both parents start off feeding and protecting the chicks but the mother soon goes off to lay her next clutch leaving father to the job. Fortunately they mature very quickly to be able to feed for themselves and can usually fly by 14 days old.

Whilst the male is the familiar all black, bar the yellow bill and a faint yellow ring around the eyes, the female is quite different. She is a dark grey-brown with a lighter and slightly spotted breast and throat and has a darker beak. Both may occasionally have white flashes due to albino effects.