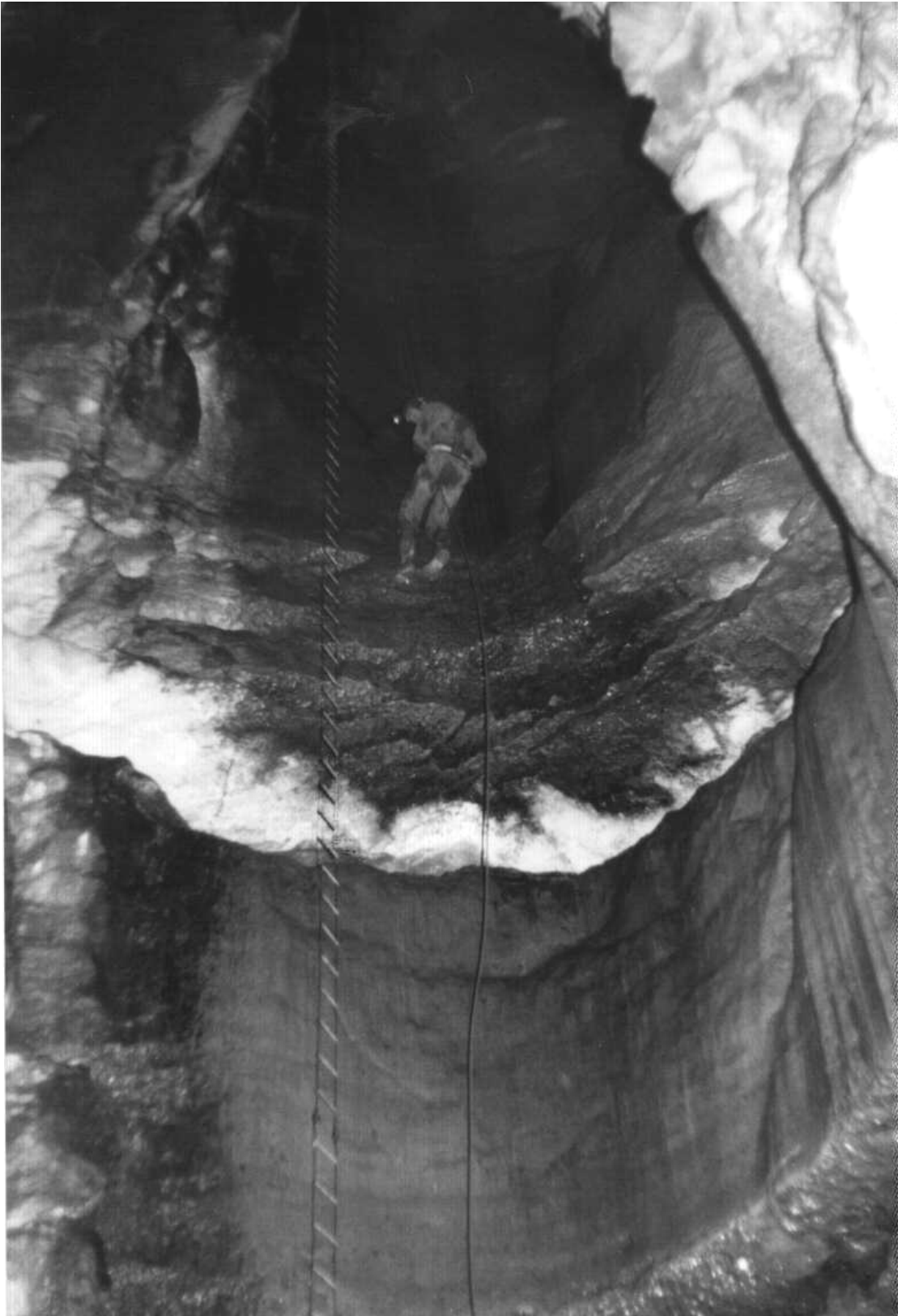


# Yorkshire the Rambler

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Nick Welch descending the 100ft pitch in Bar Pot guided by Tim Josephy

Photograph by Richard Josephy

## Foreword

I write this forward on my return from the High Moss meet in Dunnerdale. A super hut in a delightful part of the Lake District. Regrettably many hills to the west were still closed because of Foot and Mouth Disease restrictions. Whernside and many areas of the Dales continue to be closed. However we look forward to a new post FMD era with hopefully no more Meet disruptions

Our own website is now live and can be visited at...

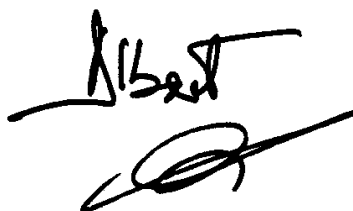
[www.yorkshireramblers.org.uk](http://www.yorkshireramblers.org.uk)

Among its pages I commend members to fully use the Notice Board and to post interesting photographs.

Meets from Lowstern on the first Tuesday of the Month continue to be well supported.

I've enjoyed both overseas Meets in the Julian Alps of Slovenia and the Western Atlas of Morocco and full reports from these await inclusion in our next edition together with the John Muir Trail.

This Bulletin is full of interesting and varied articles and I wish you a joyful read.



Albert Chapman, President

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The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the YRC nor its Officers

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# **The Nanda Devi Inner Sanctuary Millenium Trek**

**23 September to 18 October 2000**

**Albert Chapman**

Joint Leaders:

John Shipton, Son of Eric Shipton and  
Colonel Narinder Kumar.

Colonel Kumar is one of India's most eminent climbers. He was Deputy Leader of the first Indian Expedition to climb Everest in 1960 and led the first Indian Ascent of Kangchenjunga. He was Leader of the successful Indian Expedition to climb Nanda Devi, which was the third ascent after Tilman's in 1936.

The other members of the Expedition were:

Steve Berry, MD of Himalayan Kingdoms  
Ian McNaughton Davis, President of the  
International Mountaineering and  
Climbing Federation

Loreto McNaughton Davis

George Band, Youngest Member of  
John Hunt's 1953 Everest Expedition and  
first to climb Kangchenjunga

Lena Dacuncha, Netherlands

Gerald Becker, U.S.A.

David Baber                 Barry Bond

Jeffrey Ford                 David Sayer

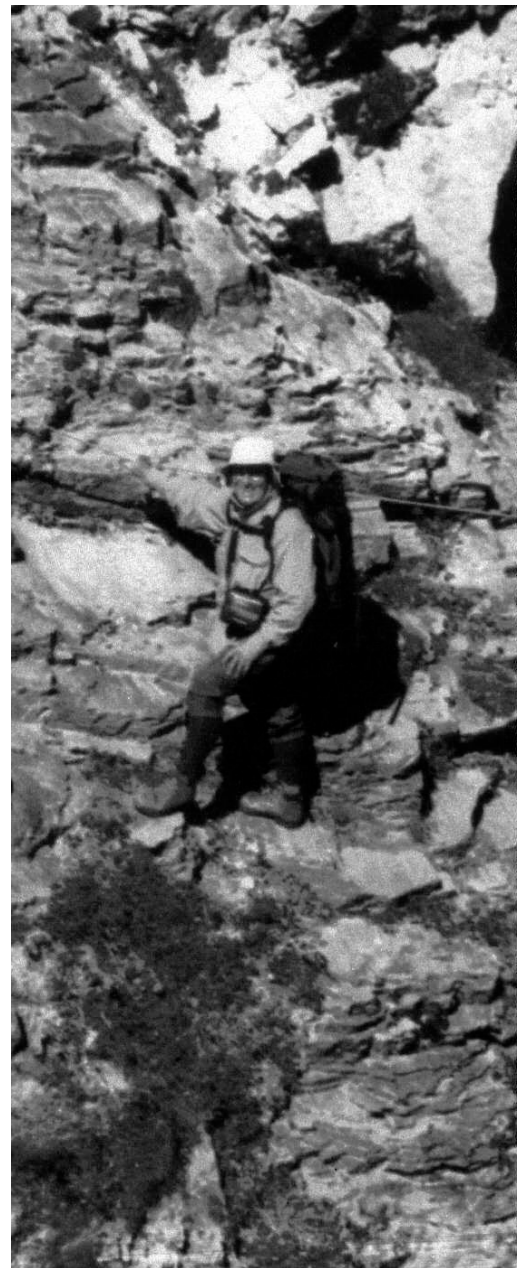
Allan Tate                   Hugh Thomson

Howard Humphreys and

Albert Chapman

The trek was well over-subscribed at time of departure and I had been fortunate to get Howard and myself on the team when the trek was first muted.

Amongst others Chris Brasher was on standby and I thought it unwise to inform Steve Berry of my many recent accidents including falling out of trees and off horses resulting in damaged ribs, broken collar bone and a detached retina.



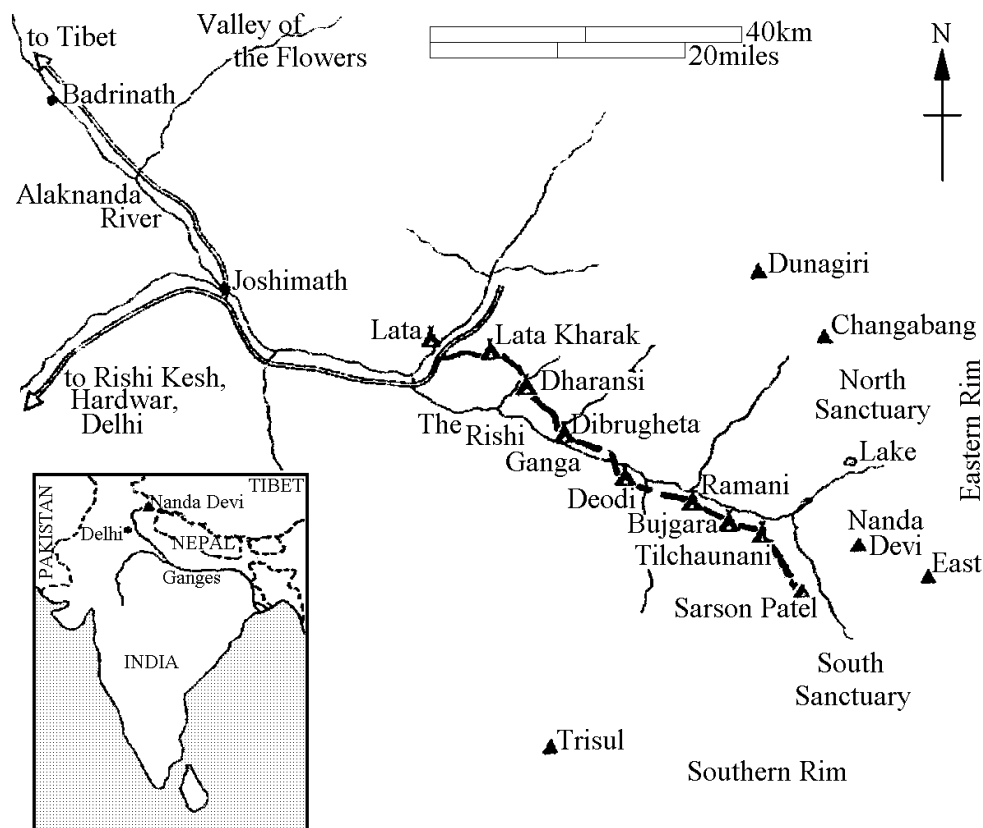
The author, Albert Chapman on trek

The Nanda Devi Sanctuary in the Garhwal Himalaya of India is a unique geographical feature. A concentration of peaks connected by massive walls which dip no lower than 17,000ft/5200m form an enormous amphitheatre 250 square miles of land all over 13,000ft/4000m. The only exception is the point where the Rishi Ganga, which drains this great basin, emerges to the West in one of the most terrific gorges in the World. In this ring of mountains are at least twelve peaks over 21,500ft/6500m including several famous names such as Changabang and Dunagiri to the North and Trisuli, Nanda Kot to the West and South. In the centre is the goddess mountain Nanda Devi a manifestation of Shiv's wife Parvati herself. At 25,643ft/7816m this is the highest peak situated completely in

India. Until 1934 human beings had never penetrated this Sanctuary.

The Garhwal Himalaya, the section of the Great Himalaya Range immediately to the West of Nepal give rise to the various sources of the River Ganges and all of which are holy in the Hindu Religion. The Rishi Ganga is no exception and the gorge is the last earthly home of the Seven Rishis, great hermits who guarded the goddess. Entry into the Sanctuary was prevented as much by the presence of the gods as by the great physical barriers.

The enigma of the Sanctuary naturally attracted the attention of European explorers and mountaineers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. From the first the obvious route into the Sanctuary was up the Rishi gorge. Attempts were made by

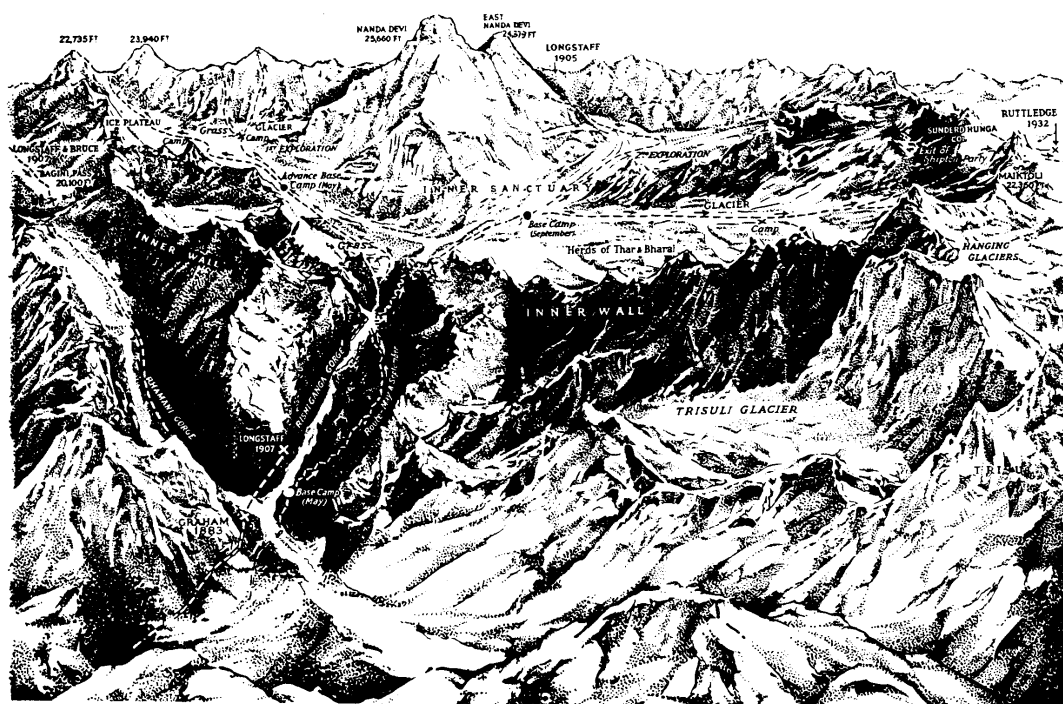


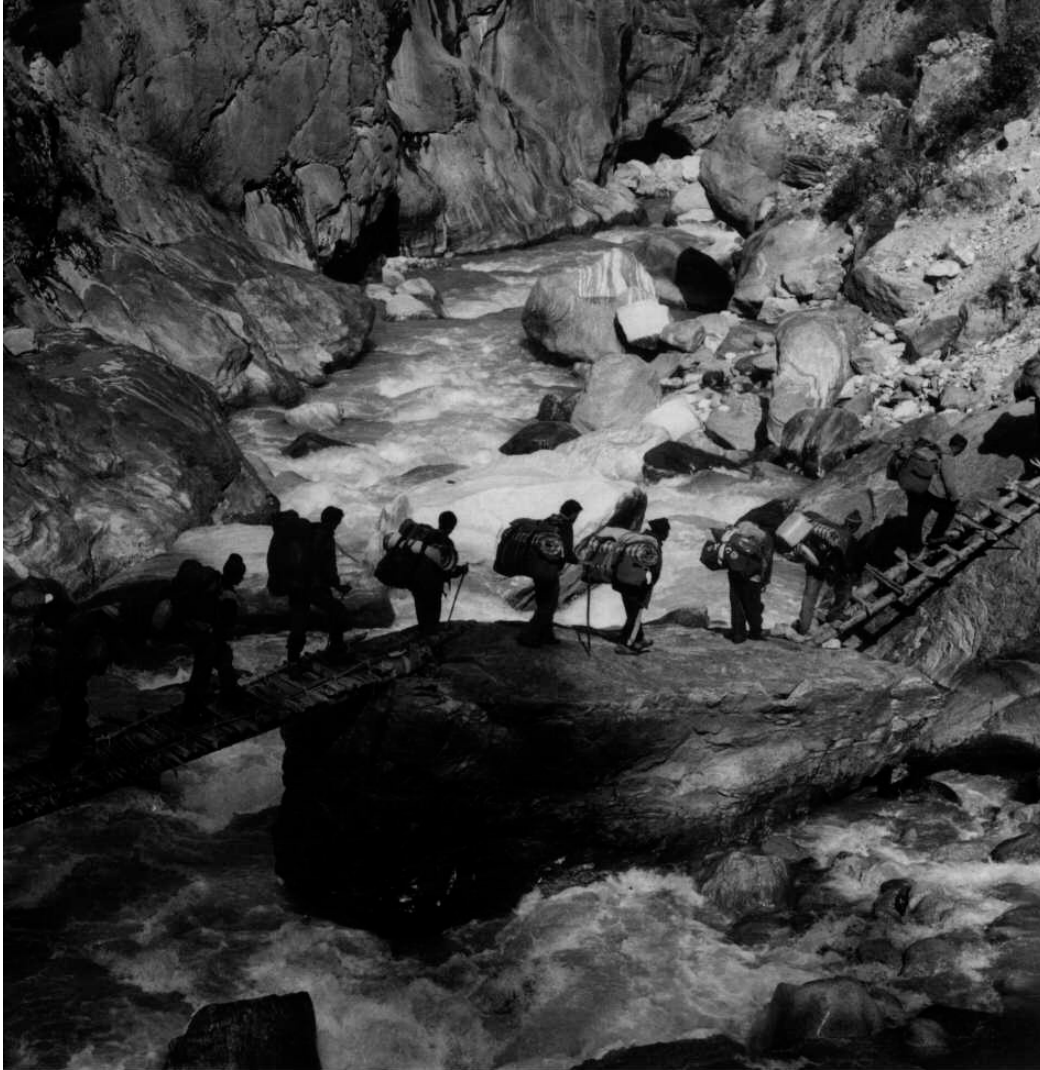
WW Graham, and later Longstaff, to achieve entry but a route appeared to be impossible. Mountaineers including Longstaff and Hugh Rutledge attempted to find ways in over the walls and a Longstaff party became the first humans to set eyes on the Inner Sanctuary on climbing to the rim of the Sanctuary from the East in 1905, but descent from here was impossible. Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman finally solved the problem in 1934 in the first of their great lightweight Himalayan expeditions. With a budget of just £300 for a five month expedition and accompanied by three Sherpas they forced a way up the gorge and became the first human beings to set foot there. Above them was the towering spire of Nanda Devi herself 10,000ft/3000m above the amphitheatre where the two main rivers joined. Herds of tame mountain sheep grazed a pasture full of alpine flowers. With more than a month's food, a diet consisting chiefly of rice, flour, ghee and tea, they explored the sanctuary, and returned after the monsoon to complete their survey. This exploit of exploration

was followed by Tilman's successful ascent of Nanda Devi in 1936.

The onset of war meant that after this the Sanctuary remained un-visited for a number of years, and was then closed to travellers for political reasons until the seventies. However in 1983 the Indian government again closed the Sanctuary. The delicate ecology of this hitherto pristine space needed time to regenerate after the inevitable damage caused by expeditions and shepherds who were also finding their way in.

A further reason for the closure could be the joint clandestine mission of the American CIA and the Indian Army to place a nuclear-powered device on top of Nanda Devi in 1965 to monitor Chinese missile tests in Sinkiang. The nine experienced American climbers reached only 22,000ft and secured the device during bad weather. On their return a year later found all had been swept away by avalanche necessitating further expeditions to locate and remove it but without success. There is concern that at some point the 13" cylinder





containing three pounds of radioactive plutonium 238 will emerge from the ice and pollute the Rishi Ganga which eventually feeds the Ganges.

The Indian government's closure of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary in 1983, whether or not it has had the desired positive environmental impact, certainly had the indirect effect of giving it back some of its original mysterious allure of a heavily guarded secret experienced by Shipton and Tillman in 1934.

Steve Berry and Colonel Kumar had the hard work of badgering for permission from the labyrinthine corridors of power in India and setting up the trek.

The bureaucratic key to the Sanctuary was not entirely secured when Steve met our thirteen members at Delhi airport on the 24th. The Colonel had done 99% of the running and it was left to Kumar Junior, Akshay who was to be our incomparable sirdar, to drag John Shipton around Delhi to run the gamut of a series of alarming offices packed with struggling masses desperately getting papers stamped. From the Indian Mountaineering Foundation they extracted a vital letter which took them to the awesome Interior Ministry, where a brave warrior extracted from its bowels a further document which got them into another ministry, where they waited on long benches whilst quantities of paper were attached and

unattached to their pile of passports. They at last emerged into the heat of Delhi with the stamps and papers needed, and the required army liaison officer needed as part of the permission requirements. This turned out to be Sorab, a great companion, who that morning had just returned from another expedition and was allowed time to shave before coming with us.

We still lacked a forestry officer, a further requirement, but we left this hurdle to the gods for the moment and piling into our bus, fled Delhi across the Ganges plain to arrive in Rishikesh that evening.

The following morning we left the Ganges Plain and began our second long road journey on the ancient pilgrim route towards Badrinath. We stopped for an auspicious swim in the cool waters of the Ganges before the river became more turbulent as we approached our two-night stay in the fleshpots of Joshimath.

In the morning everyone enjoyed the pleasures of the ride on the cable car to Auli, where the clear weather afforded superlative views including Nanda Devi herself. Meanwhile John Shipton, accompanied by Akshay, was fitting the last piece of the bureaucratic jigsaw, the finding of a forestry liaison officer. This entailed three visits to the Park office and sending faxes to Chamoli, the district capital. All the pieces of paper were in the right offices but they had to be brought to the attention of the right officers. The case was still in doubt as the sun set, and we even considered driving all the way to Chamoli, it is bad enough doing that journey once a trip, but thankfully this option was closed to them by a series of normal road slips. A harrowing day was alleviated at the last minute by

Akshay's charm, aided by the goddess Nada Devi, won through, and we got our forestry liaison officer Bimal Kumar (Bhut) from nearby Srinigar. We all strolled down to the Nah Singh temple. This is an extremely important religious complex where the image of Vishnu is brought down from Badrinath in winter. There is a shrine to Nanda Devi and on being told that we were to approach the goddess, the priest there gave his blessing and gave us gifts for her to take with us. We then made the two-hour journey to Lata. Just before the village we got our first views of the Rishi Ganga as it emerges from its gorge and rushes into the Dhauli Ganga below. At our camp by the road the rest of our camp staff met us. Sula and Wallia had driven with us from Delhi but at Lata, we met Dev our gourmet cook and the ever smiling Solti, along with Bishu, Joshend, Sadpal and Bagwan Singh. Here also were our chief sherpas Baleb Sahib, Deva and Shankar. Some of our motley group of porters came from the village and the Dhauli valley itself, others from the Joshimath pool of coolies, many of whom were Nepali.

The Colonel arrived in the morning and we all walked up to the temple in the village for a blessing. Here we met an old man who claimed to have been a porter with a European expedition in the 1930s and Akshay insisted, with Eric, but John remained unconvinced. The path we took to Lata Kharak, the high pasture on a ridge 4 hours above the village at 3800m, is very well constructed and would have been extant in 1934 and I would guess centuries before. It took us through pine forest and then passed cedars and into Himalayan fir (*Abies spectabilis*). The ridge affords stunning views with great chunks of the Himalaya on show



in every direction.

First though we had a slight problem with the porters. Akshay had gathered them together at Lara, but a wedding was in progress and many of the local porters celebrated a little too much and failed to leave the village until late in the day. Some baggage arrived but by nightfall we were still short of tents and personal baggage. It turned out that way down below Baleb Sahib was stuck looking after horses that refused to move in the dark, and was sending up vital stuff for the night.

The morning was clear and bright and we woke to views of the Garwhal Himal, Hathi Patbat to the NW and due south Bethartholi Himal with the dome of mighty Trisul just behind. A ridge ran away in this direction with Lata peak at the end of it. We were now at the same altitude and the ridge provided the obvious access to it. As we were taking a day to acclimatise, the whole party moved round onto the ridge from where we had views of the Rishi gorge the Devistan ridge which forms part of the inner wall, and above Nanda Devi herself. Even at this season this high pasture was dotted with flowers. Outside the tents Howard puzzled over a find stand of blue Delphinium or Aconitum, and all along the ridge were Gentians. Gentianellas and Cyananthus microphylla. A remarkably well-made path runs along the crest of the ridge into further high kharaks.

Before leaving Britain I had assumed we would be the first party into the Sanctuary since 1983. In fact this was a long way off the mark. A few years before there had been an official army party, and forest rangers had made several visits, to make sure hunters weren't going in. There had probably been a lot of unofficial visits even

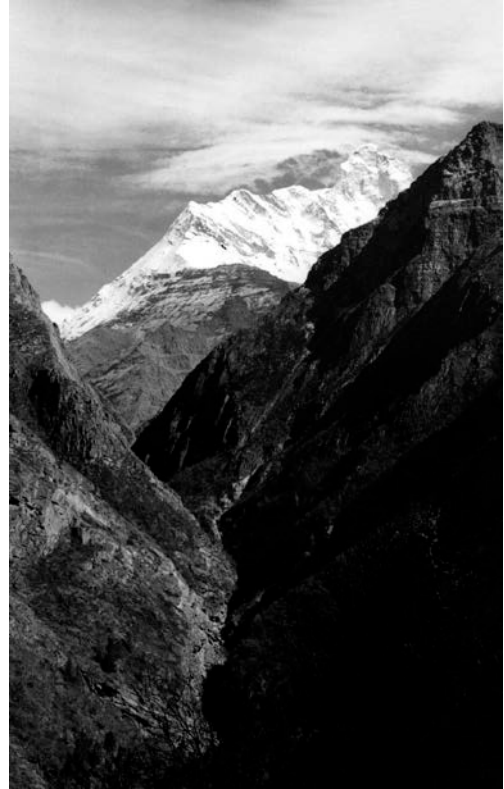
then. To cap it all the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were currently mounting a full-scale expedition to climb Nanda Devi. Reports were already coming back with porters that they had been successful but had lost one man. All this meant that, far from having to hack through seventeen years growth of bush, make bridges and fix ropes on the slabs all this was done for us. This would make life easy, and although it took some of the edge off things, we would have a good chance of making the trip in. The weather was perfect again the next day and was for the whole trip. The goddess was smiling on us. We heard that the springs on the high plateau meadows of Dharansi, where we had planned to make a camp, were all dry so we decided to make for Debrughetta, well praised by both Shipton and Tilman. This is four hours beyond and 1000m below Dharansi. It was a fine walk over the rocky Dharansi Pass to the open alp of Dharansi, and then opposite the great bulk of Dunagiri and the adjoining Hanuman Peak, we plunged down the gorge of the Hanuman Glacier through a forest of ancient firs. Our party was well strung out. One of our female members suffering from altitude sickness had to be carried by a relay of porters down the 1000m to our camp. Porters arriving after dark used bundles of birch bark as torches. The last porter down arrived at 10.30 pm.

A rest day was in order at Dibrughetta. We again enjoyed fine weather, the sun soon burning away the frost, streams to wash in and rocks to lounge on and the ungrazed meadows adjacent to the untroubled fir forest was a treasure trove of plant seed for Howard.



George Band crossing the roped slabs

The trek to our next camp at Deodi consisted of a high level track way above the river until we descended again into the Gorge to cross the Rishi Ganga on one of the bridges built by the ITBP who we understand had to wait ten days for the river to go down before construction could begin. A major event on the way was the loss of Loreto's precious bag. A porter slipped and it went tumbling down a precipice. Akshay coming round a corner had heard the words gir गया! "fallen" and had images of a client at the bottom of a chasm. For Loreto, the disaster felt almost as bad. At Deodi word came down that the ITBP expedition was coming down the slabs to camp at Rarnini. Space is very limited there so it was decided to spend an additional day waiting at Deodi.



The upper Rishi George as the Ramani campsite was approached

We met many of the ITBP including its leader on our way over yet another shoulder to cross a second temporary bridge over the Trisul Nala, a tributary of the Rishi Ganga. We spent a couple of hours in the warm sun on the open hillside before descending into the dark inhospitable camp site of Ramani right against the turbulent Rishi Ganga.

It was at Ramani on John Shipton's advice that nine were to go with him up the box canyon to the Inner Sanctuary and four with Colonel Kumar return to Lata at a more leisurely pace.

First we had to reduce our personal kit by half and with limited number of porters set out on a most exciting day. We moved carefully up the steep southern side of the gorge hanging onto saplings and branches for the first hour until we came to various exposed scrambles with ITBP fixed ropes still in place. They had very

kindly agreed to leave their ropes for us to take down on the way back. The ropes were a boon although with nerve and care you could get by without most of them except perhaps when carrying very heavy loads. There were no endless narrow ledges that I had imagined, but sharp pieces of exposure above the gorge and the route certainly added a dimension or two to trekking.

Four hours got us to the camping ledges of Bojgara where water was plentiful but tent space very limited. From here we made a longish exposed rocky traverse before making a long steep ascent. The climb seemed to be leading nowhere until cairns led away into thin air and the famous "fortuitous" ledge. The ledge is wide, comfortable and very exposed but again seemed to lead into thin air, until right at the end, high above the gorge it turned a corner into a gully known to the porters as Sidhiko Swarg or "Stairway to Heaven" which lead over the penultimate buttress.

The ledge which looked impossible from below, and the stairway that turns the buttress, are the keys to the Sanctuary. With the preceding airy scrambles one can totally understand how the 1934 team had to work hard at forcing a way in.

By evening we had all reached our camp at Patalkhan and congratulated each other on our admission to the Sanctuary. The west face of Nanda Devi glowed red in the setting sun. The next day was one to savour. Glorious weather again and a gentle stroll into hallowed ground. To the north we picked out by name all the peaks making up the northern rim. There was heated debate about Changabang, which from this angle looked so unlike its pointed shape seen from outside the Sanctuary. In

still sunshine we strolled across rolling meadows under the great south western flank of Nanda Devi.

The flora was surprisingly disappointing, with virtually nothing in flower. The barrenness could have been the result of clear weather, which with the lack of rain also meant sharp night frosts. At least heavy grazing was not a problem here. At the eastern end of the meadows and just above our final camp at Sarson Patel were the monuments to the various climbers killed on Nanda Devi.

From our camp a small flock of blue sheep were seen.

The next day the party spread out on various missions. Mac who was suffering from a chest infection set off with two porters back down to Ramani, George, John, Gerald, Jeff and Sorab along with several porters in holiday mood walked to the 1936 base camp. They crossed the snout of the Dakkri Rishi Glacier and after a long slog along the moraine and turning a final buttress same to what they described as one of the most spectacular places in the world, a huge circle of mountain from Nanda Devi to Nanda Devi East then Longstaff's Col and the massive eastern wall of the Sanctuary.

Howard, Alan, Barry and I spent the day in beautiful weather traversing the undulating grasslands interspersed with rocky landslips. Reaching a height of 4600m we had superb views of Changabang glacier in the far west to Longstaff's Col in the east. The predominate view however was the massive west face of Nanda Devi guarded by its immense rocky abutments. In outline near the summit was the near vertical north buttress first climbed by Roskelley in 1976. It

was events at the top of the buttress that this Indo-American climb was called the tragic expedition,

It was while trekking through Northern India in 1949 the famous American Mountaineer Willie Unsoeld spotted Nanda Devi from high on a ridge. Gazing at the mountain he decided that if he ever had a daughter he would name her after that magnificent peak. Years later he did have a daughter and together with her name she developed a love for the mountains in general and of course Nanda Devi in particular. It was her wish to climb this most beautiful of peaks with her father. She and her father followed Roskelley to the top of the buttress. There at 24000ft with the summit within their grasp she died of an altitude aggravated illness. With much emotion and sadness her body was zipped shut in her sleeping bag and pushed over the north face during a storm committing her corpse to the mountain after which she was named.

Lowering our gaze we saw and made for the snout of the Dakkric Rishi Glacier and crossing Tillman's snow bridge set foot on the very slopes of Nanda Devi whose summit rose 12000 feet above. One of my best days ever amongst such beautiful remote mountain scenery.



On arriving back at our base camp at Sarson Patel several groups of porters were requesting that we get out of the Sanctuary the following day. There were signs of the weather deteriorating and with snow on the slabs descent would be dangerous for everyone with or without loads. With regret we decided to try making the trip down to Ramani in one day.

On leaving Sarson Patel the weather was OK but a light dusting of snow overnight gave some concern for the return. We actually roped up for the descent of the Stairway to Heaven and where the sun had not reached the slabs a covering of snow suggested extra care.

In the afternoon and evening as we all came down to Ramani clouds built up covering the mountain and delivered sleet and snow showers. During the last hour before Ramani we got very wet hanging from both branch and sapling. After a night at Ramani we all enjoyed the return walk in which we camped at Deodi and Dibrughetta. As the bridges over Trisul Nala and the Rishi were crossed we ceremoniously took them down, safe guarding the Sancturary until another future party is given permission.

At Lata Kharak we joined the Colonel and others for a night and compared stories and experiences.

The 5000ft walk down to Lata was a delight as was our journey via Joshimath to the two-day fun rafting on the Ganges from a raft camp near Rishikosh.

On arrival in Delhi we were entertained to dinner by Colonel Kumar and his delightful wife before our flight back home.

A superb trek among hidden mountains.

# Men with the world at their feet

*The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club is far more adventurous than its name suggests. David Overend penned this report in the Yorkshire Post published 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2000 and reproduced here with permission.*

For Albert Chapman it could have been a tough choice - the chance to follow in the footsteps of some of Britain's greatest explorers, or to be among a privileged team descending into uncharted caves in remote China.

But when it came to making a decision, Albert, newly elected president of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club there was really no contest - it was off to India and the secret inner Sanctuary of Nanda Devi, a mountain in one of the most remote and least-known areas of the Himalayas.

"I've been wanting to do it for the last 30 years," said Albert, who lives in his own bit of remote and inaccessible Yorkshire, on the flanks of the highest of the Three Peaks, Whernside. From here, he can look out across the stunning limestone scenery, and or, a good day, the leonine shapes of Penyghent and Ingleborough stare back.

But for several weeks earlier this autumn, his eyes were set on another horizon - the magic and mystical Sanctuary, where the mountains stand in a vast amphitheatre almost 6000m high. The only way in is where the Rishi Ganga has carved out an awe-inspiring gorge.

And it was via this route that in 1934, Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman became the first Europeans to step into this high-altitude world. Two years later,

Tilman was back as part of an Angle-American team to climb the fantastic peak of Nanda Devi, then the greatest height ever attained by man.

Expeditions came and went, but in 1965, Nanda Devi became a mountain of intrigue rather than a peak to attain. The US devised Operation Hat - a plan to observe Chinese nuclear tests by siting (a) monitoring station on top of Nanda Devi.

Bad weather stopped the Americans from reaching the summit, so they left their equipment and returned a year later- - only to discover that avalanches had swept it all away. Among it all was several pounds of plutonium which had been to power the spy station. And it's still there somewhere in the vast and frozen wilderness that is the Himalayas.

Eventually, the Indian government decided that the Inner Sanctuary would not go the way of Everest - besieged by mountaineers and trekkers from around the globe who turned the landscape into a giant rubbish heap.

So, for many years the Inner Sanctuary was off-limits to all but a privileged few, but this year, a 12-strong trekking team, including John Shipton, son of Eric, and two YRC members - Albert and Howard Humphries - received permission to enter the hidden land.

Much of the work persuading the Indian government that they should allow the trekkers to enter the sanctuary was done by renowned climber Ian McNaught Davis, 71, who hails from Wakefield.

"It took a tremendous amount of work to get permission," said Albert. "But they got it, and it was worth it. It was just spectacular the whole time. I like

to go to places that are wild and beautiful and (where) there are not many people. And I think everyone else who went there had the same idea.

The expedition involved navigating the Rishi Ganga gorge and ascending into the sanctuary where they spent several days exploring a world now enjoyed by only a handful of humans.

But while Albert and the Himalayan Kingdom expedition were experiencing the indescribable scenery at the feet of Nanda Devi, Yorkshire Ramblers' Club members were making their ground-breaking trip to China to explore some of the world's most spectacular caves. "I would have loved to have been with them, but I'd waited 30 years to go to Nanda Devi," said Albert.

So, 13 other YRC members went for the Guangxi. It was the first time the Chinese had allowed a foreign caving team to explore the area. They discovered 13 kilometres of new caverns, found new species of cave life and also helped to survey some of the caves for the Chinese.

Among the cavers was Alistair Renton, who said, "Three weeks there was just not enough. The caves are so big and so remote that it's a lifetime's work. We'll definitely go back." Perhaps next time, Albert Chapman will go, but he'll have to wait a few years to beat the oldest man on this year's Guangxi expeditions. That was 68 year-old Arthur Salmon. His son was also in the team.

This family connection has been a long-standing trait of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club which, despite its name, is renowned for more arduous activities, such as caving, Nordic and Alpine skiing and trekking to far flung corners of the world.

The male-only club, founded more than 100 years ago in Leeds, now has its HQ in Clapham, in the Yorkshire Dales.

"In the last few years, the YRC has found a new lease of life," said Albert Chapman." We have 180 members - but we could do with a few more younger ones -and have recently visited Iran, Bolivia and the Himalayas." Future sorties include journeys to Slovenia and Morocco.



Nanda Devi from inside the southern Inner Sanctuary with Howard Humphreys and George Band on the path

# A Day on the John Muir Trail

Iain Gilmour

It is five-thirty in the morning, and the sound of birds outside our tent wakens us at dawn: time to get up and prepare for the trail. The first man out of his sleeping bag starts the MSR stove ready for tea, porridge, or Muesli. Camping sometimes at 11,000 feet, the tent is covered with frost and condensation, so we pack up the inner separate from the flysheet, and hope to air it during the day. Morning sun in July warms us immediately as we hit the trail at seven.

Backpacking with a heavy load, we adopted a plan of hourly stops, usually walking for fifty minutes and resting for ten. Resting is hardly a fair



description, for the brief pause would be taken up by: drinking water and refilling a one litre bottle plus iodine tablets (two tablets for a giardia prone area), eating trailmix or Power bar, applying sun cream, or applying Deet to combat the mosquitoes. After all these tasks, it is time to move off again. Later in the day, we would have a slightly longer stop to allow a more substantial snack, and a chance to remove boots and air tent or sleeping bags.

Most of the JMT (John Muir Trail) is between 8,000 and 12,000 feet, so the strong Californian sun is offset by fresh mountain air, rather like the



Nevada Falls Yosemite

Alps. It would be possible to walk the JMT without a map, for the trail is well built and clearly discernible, but it is beautifully constructed and greatly appreciated when the path crosses massive boulder fields. The approach to Mather Pass threads a route up very steep granite cliffs – quite a feat of construction. We see other hikers along the trail, some of them hiking North along the Continental Divide trail (the JMT is just a 210 mile section of this), and every encounter is a chance to discuss destinations, food supply points, and tips for the trail further ahead. Destinations varied, and one hiker just said he was walking until the end of August. We looked at the PCT through hikers' rucksacks, and

wondered how they could cover long distances with so little gear. It seems that to hike long distance, you must have less gear.

By mid afternoon we are planning our stopping point, hoping to achieve our target miles for the day. Firstly we would stop and cook supper, usually rice or pasta, and then clean all our pans to remove food odours. Our food was kept in bear canisters, which are mandatory to comply with Park regulations in some areas. The canisters that we used, weighed more than two and a half pounds, and took about seven days food, if carefully packed. To get the maximum food into a canister, you have to squeeze all air out of plastic bags, and stand on

Just above Ansel Adams Pond. at Pinchot Pass winding through Tallis Rocks





the food for five minutes. After supper we would hike another hour, perhaps some three miles, before stopping and putting up the tents. This routine made sure that we had no cooking smells near the tent to attract bears. The time would now be seven or eight PM, and usually we would climb exhausted into our sleeping bags by nine-o clock.

### Thoughts about the trail

The John Muir Trail is superb. It is popular, but once away from places like Yosemite, the presence of hikers is hardly noticed. You will see very few hikers in the remoter sections, and the occasional meeting is welcome when one is three days walk from the nearest potential assistance.

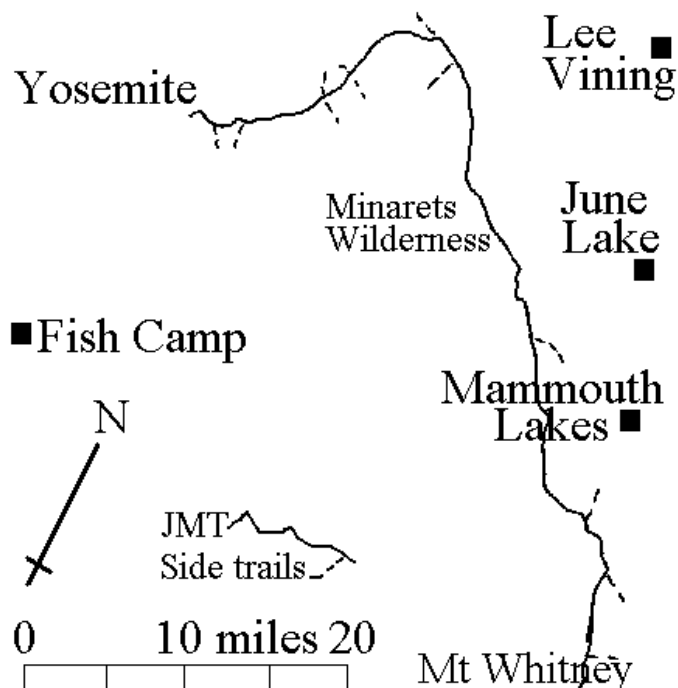
Weight is crucial. Reduce weight to the minimum, and then scrap your first plans to reduce weight further. Your total loaded rucksack must be less than twenty pound before adding food, fuel, bear canister, and water. If I return, my sack will weigh eighteen pounds. We saw a tent that weighed 26 ounces, and the guy who used it was delighted with it. Rucksacks are available at less than two pounds weight, and solid fuel stoves can weigh four ounces. One stove we saw was made from a coffee can, and would burn solid fuel tablets, alcohol, or sticks & twigs.

One final piece of advice, the most important of all, is to allow sufficient time for the overall JMT journey. Better to plan on at least twenty days and admire the scenery,

rather than to attempt fifteen days and go hell for leather. Remember that the average trail height is nearly 10,000 feet, and your daily target should take account of altitude and weight carried.



Near Mono Creek feeding Lake Thomas



## Unfinished Business On Skye

by **Tony Smythe**

It seems ungrateful to use such an expression when talking about climbing on the Cuillin Ridge. A day up there clambering on that unique rough rock, preferably in the sunshine and surrounded by a hazy blue sea, is a gift from the gods; nobody should do more than count such blessings day by day.

And yet..... My story begins, or began, forty-six years ago on a baking August day in 1955, a few days after I had celebrated my twenty-first birthday. My brother, Richard and I had been part of a group camping in Glen Brittle and enjoying on our first visit to Skye an exceptional spell of fine, if midgy weather. At the end of a week I decided to have a go at the whole Ridge – and since Richard declined to come with me I would go it alone.

All went well for many hours. I arrived on Gars-bheinn at dawn. I was nervous soloing the Thearlaich-Dubh gap but after abseiling into it I towed the rope behind me and pretended I had a second. The In Pin was exhilarating, and Richard met me on Banachdich to provide refreshment and relieve me of the rope.

Much later on, very tired, I reached Bruach na Frithe. The sky had clouded over and a spit of rain was more threatening to my morale than helpful to my parched body. In front of me stood the Basteir Tooth, the most evil-looking thing I had ever seen. I didn't even bother to look for a way round, and with sadness mixed with relief I abandoned the Tooth, and Am Basteir summit behind it, and the final peak, nan Gillean behind that, and waded down through the heather,

bare-footed to Sligachan. And so I became one of the Ridge's Nearly men.

Years passed, many years, and I became more of a walker than a rock climber. I started doing the Munros. As a climber I had already of course visited the summits of Ben Nevis, the Glencoe peaks, Lochnagar, etc and I could add a few dozen other summits to my starting list. Some may think of would-be Munroists as rather obsessed people with tick lists, but for me it opened up a whole new Scotland, and as red pins replaced yellow pins on my wall map I even sensed the anti-climax lying ahead if I ever did finish them all.

And so Skye eventually came under the spotlight again. Am Basteir and Gillean came back to haunt me, or perhaps tease would be a better term. Two or three visits to the Island were abortive because of foul weather, although I risked going up Blaven on a day when the wind was picking up the surface of lakes and blowing waterfalls back where they came from. When I stopped for lunch a plastic bag was sucked out of my rucksack and went vertically until it was lost from sight.



Towards Am Basteir

At last, one September I found myself heading westwards through Glen Shiel in a spell of fine settled weather. I paid my £5-plus to cross the fine new bridge, van-camped alongside one of those rather gloomy sea lochs penetrating the Red Cuillin, then on a wonderful morning set off from Sligachan.

Sgurr nan Gillean is said to offer from its summit on a clear day one of the world's greatest mountain views. Certainly the mountain itself seen from Sligachan is elegance itself – clean ridges sweeping up to a point in space, with the whole graceful shape seeming to lean slightly to the left as though resting on an elbow. To its right, beyond a col the ridge sloped up to the other summit I aspired to, Am Basteir, and then beyond that the Tooth, which had thwarted me all those years before, lurched drunkenly, a broken fang inviting celestial extraction.

My plan was to traverse Gillean first, ascending by the “tourist” southeast ridge, then descend to the col mentioned. From there I could climb Am Basteir, return to the col and descend the corrie on the Sligachan side. However it occurred to me as I strode along the excellent made-up path through the bogs, that I'd be better off doing it the other way round. The route to the col, carefully described in my guidebook, seemed complicated and perhaps easier in ascent, and Gillean would be best descended by its easiest route. I came to this obvious conclusion just as I reached the point on the path where the routes went their separate ways. In the first flush of youth I am sure I wouldn't have cared tuppence which line I took, but I was acutely aware of my lack of rock-climbing practice and resulting limitations. While I wasn't

exactly dreading the prospect, I was certainly curious to know how I would get on when faced with the situations of severe exposure that are commonplace on the Ridge.

To my surprise and slight alarm, a thick mist descended as I headed up towards the corrie Basteir. A few bootprints and the odd cairn kept me more or less on track, but at one point I found myself edging along a grass shelf which petered out into nothingness, while the shocking sound of water echoing in a gorge floated up from unseen depths. Retracing my steps I found a link with the huge scree slope below the Pinnacle Ridge, and this led me up and around to the col, where I thankfully sat down in the sunshine above the mist and restored my morale with a slice of home-made carrot cake.



Am Basteir from below Sgurr a'Fionn Choire with Sgurr nan Gillean behind

As I munched this delicious example of Sonia's baking skills, I remembered the conversation we'd had the previous evening when I told her I was on my way to Skye. “Isn't that climbing with a rope?” she said. “No, no,” I told her airily, “it's just exposed scrambling.” And now I was about to put it, and myself, to the test. A broad rubble-covered slope of sunlit grey and yellow gabbro swooped up steeply and soon I was at grips with it.

“At grips” probably describes my progress pretty well. I always used to hate the first pitch of the first climb, especially after a long gap. It’s not a question of fitness and it doesn’t seem to make any difference whether you’re leading or seconding - it’s all to do with mentally coping with that unaccustomed space underneath. In the past I had found that within half an hour or so I had become adjusted and was able largely to ignore exposure; I could only hope that it would work again for me this time.

For a while I sweated and clung, rather too fiercely, to the holds, then at last started to relax and even enjoy myself. The crest could be bypassed in most places, but I forced myself to climb all the most challenging bits, until at last the previous half-century spent growing old might never have existed. Perhaps therein lies the joy of rock-climbing. If you never climbed at a particularly high level – as I didn’t – you can always get it back, like swimming or cycling, and there are plenty of golden oldies around to prove it.

But rocks, while mainly benevolent to those who approach them with respect, have a habit of springing nasty surprises. About half way to the summit I crawled over the crest and looked down a steep, almost blank slab about twelve feet high and overlooking the fearsome void of the north face. The book had warned of “one place of slight difficulty where an awkward descent of a few steps has to be made”. It was an awkward descent, sure, but even my dusted-down newly-honed rock-climbing know-how couldn’t detect the “few steps”.

I hung there at the top for several minutes trying to imagine the moves and I knew I had to be honest with

myself. There was a little fingery slot near the top and below that – nothing, until you were standing on the block in the gap at the bottom ten feet lower. A slide, a jump? No way!

Two things dawned on me. Firstly, my overwhelming ego had caused me to breeze up to this place completely unprepared – I even had a rope in the van but assumed that since I was solo, and it was ‘scrambling’ only, there would be no point in taking it. And secondly, from a Munroing point of view, unless I was prepared to come up again next day – a very tedious thought – this peak at least would stay on the wanted list. And who knew when I would be in Skye again with the weather as benign as this? All of a sudden the vista of peaks and blue distances lost their charm. Failure hurt, just as it always had done.

After a last confirming stare at the horrible place I retreated to the col, where I gloomily watched a pair of climbers descending from Gillean. They were climbers because they had a rope. They abseiled down a chimney and eventually sat beside me for their lunch. A tiny hope which had been stirring within me was then crushed. The leader, a man with a natty moustache, baseball cap and golfing jacket with badges, was a guide, and like his client, who wore a helmet and harness, was uncommunicative. After a silence which followed our initial greeting I ventured a comment on the awkward place that had humbled me.



Am Basteir, the Basteir Tooth and Sgurr a’Fionn Choire

“Yeah,” said the guide, more to his client than me. “Been a rock fall there. Usually have to lower people down that.”

There was no further conversation. I knew exactly the scale of the rebuff I would receive should I solicit his help. Too busy now, already employed, as you see. Have a vacancy in the programme at the end of the month, perhaps. Will cost you (three figure sum). You’ll need proper boots, can probably hire you a helmet. Your age? Oh dear.... May be able to get you insurance.....

Sadly and enviously I watched them jangle and clank their way up to Am Basteir. Meanwhile I was joined by another solitary walker, who ascended from the depths of Coire Basteir. His name was Neil, he was a cyclist-turned-Munro bagger, and I told him the bad news, adding, “But you ought to go and see for yourself.” No, said Neil, he believed me.

While we sat chatting about Neil’s time-trialling, the guide and his client returned, the former’s disapproving glance as they passed by clearly assigning us to that class of mountain visitor to Skye with whom the rescue teams came into regular contact.

Suddenly things began to look up. A scraping noise announced the arrival of Dave, who mysteriously appeared out of the void on the south side of the col. Dave was more of a rambler than a scrambler. He had done a sort of circuit of the Basteir chunk, had a whimsical dice with the Tooth, and caring nothing for paths or scratch-marks, traversed across the grotty shelves to where we sunned ourselves. He was stripped to the waist, sweating heavily, and carried a large rucksack. On discovering that he now planned to continue to the

summit, my next two questions followed like both barrels of a 12-bore. Did he have a rope? (Yes) and Could Neil and I tag along? (Yes).

Dave clearly thought that the mauvais pas was a figment of my imagination, until he saw it, whereupon he adroitly arranged an abseil and in seconds the three of us stood at the bottom. At that point a following party of three appeared at the top, and while one of them, with Dave’s permission, availed himself of the rope, the other two calmly climbed down the overhangs to one side. Seeing this, Dave, to my concern, pulled the rope down before following the rest of us to the summit.

But I need not have worried. On the return the rock jocks discovered an easy but intricate traverse back to the crest – a genius of a route that would have been very difficult to spot from above. I was in good company; the Fates had smiled.

From the col Neil, who had already done Gillean, descended, while Dave decided that he and I should climb it. The rope remained in his rucksack; by now I was on song and the crux chimney seemed to have a multiplicity of holds. In the soft late-afternoon light we stood on the cramped summit of my last Skye Munro. It was delightful to realise that my next visit to the Island would be purely voluntary!



Sgurr nan Gillean from Sgurr a' Bhasteir

# 1950s Ski Safety Bindings

by John Sterland

Winter will soon be upon us, and during the next few months many members will be donning their ski boots rather than their walking boots, and they will be off to an Alpine, or perhaps an American, ski resort, to fling themselves down precipitous slopes, hopefully without falling. However, what happens if you do fall? All modern skis have an ingenious device called a safety binding, which releases the boot from the ski, and so prevents or certainly minimises the danger of damage to the leg or ankle.

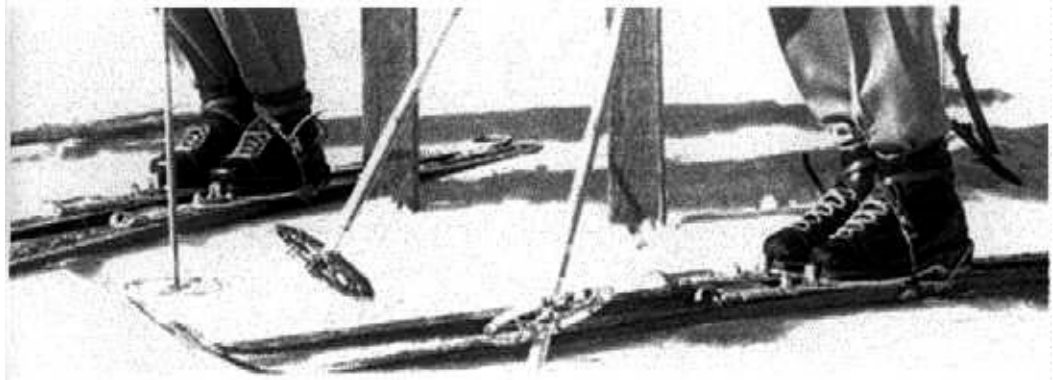
However, it has not always been so. I started skiing in 1950 when boots were secured to the skis with Kandahar bindings. For those who cannot remember as far back as 1950 perhaps I should try to describe the arrangement, for I am not a very good artist and any descriptive drawing which I attempted would be indecipherable. The toe of the boot was placed on a metal plate screwed to the ski, and this plate had upturned



flanges on each side which prevented the boot from moving sideways, so that there could be no safety release if one should have a sideways fall. The heel of the boot was secured to the ski by means of a thick, coiled circular wire, which was inserted into a groove cut in the heel of the boot by the manufacturers especially for that purpose. Thence the wire was passed under and then over two small lugs

screwed to each side of the ski and then to a toggle in front of the toe plate. When the boot was in place this toggle was pressed forward to tighten the coiled wire which thus kept the heel of the boot close to the back of the ski.

However, there was no provision for release of the binding in the event of a violent forward fall. This meant that the incidence of serious accident in those days was very high. I believe that the possibility of serious accident on a ski holiday was about one in three, and it was not unusual to see people hopping around in ski resorts with their legs encased in plaster. Once when I accompanied a "victim" to a surgery in Wengen in March of that particular year they told me that the plaster they put on my brother's



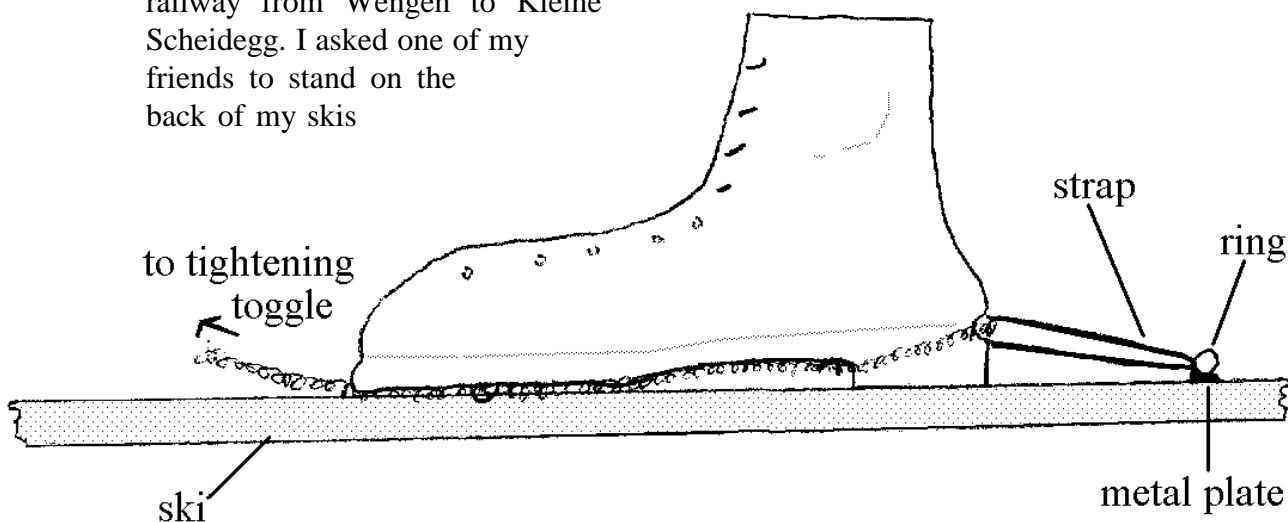
Kandahar cable bindings holding the heel onto the ski were introduced in 1935

leg “just completed three tons of plaster they had used that season”.

I was at that time a member of the Ski Club of Great Britain, and they decided that something must be done about this situation. They therefore designed a very crude safety device, and sent it to about six members for them to test on the slopes. I was selected as one of the guinea pigs. This amazing invention consisted of a small metal plate to which was secured a metal ring, and the plate was screwed into the ski a few inches behind the heel of the boot. A leather strap was threaded through the ring and under the Kandahar binding at the heel of the boot. The idea was that in the event of a violent forward fall the binding would be dragged off the heel of the boot, thus releasing the skier from the ski and preventing damage to the skier’s leg. This release only operated in respect of a forward fall, and was not intended to address the danger of a sideways fall.

Accordingly, when I went on my next skiing holiday to Wengen, I attached this contraption to my skis and tried it out primarily on the terrace of the Wengernalp Hotel, where we were staying half way up the mountain railway from Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg. I asked one of my friends to stand on the back of my skis

to prevent them lifting, and the other stood on the front of the skis to catch me if the release gear happened to be activated. I then threw myself forward as hard as I could, trusting my forward friend to catch me if my binding should be released. I have to say that unfortunately the device was not by any means reliable, and it certainly had to be a very violent fall to activate the “mechanism”. To carry out further trials I turned up at ski school, and the rather sarcastic instructor said “Vas ist Das?” I explained to him that it was a safety binding to prevent accidents, and his somewhat caustic comment was “Das ist sissy”. I didn’t argue with him, but sent my report to the Ski Club of Great Britain. As far as I am aware this type of safety binding was never put into general use, but no doubt it encouraged ski manufacturers to design a more sophisticated arrangement, which eventually led to the very reliable device in universal use today. I have often wondered what the response of that same ski instructor would be today if I turned up at his ski class without a safety binding of any description, or indeed with skis equipped with Kandahar bindings.



# Climbing Mount Sinai

**Dennis Armstrong**

Mount Sinai is at the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula. It is a rough craggy red granite mountain, 2250 metres high. The Bible says that Moses saw God in the Burning Bush on the lower flanks of this mountain, when God called him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of captivity. It also says that during their forty years in the Wilderness Moses led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. He climbed it to have a face-to-face meeting with God and to receive the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. It is therefore a place of some religious interest, and anyway (we were told) the sunrise from the top is worth seeing. So during a recent holiday in Egypt my wife and I decided to do just that.

The coach driver drove from Cairo to St Catherine's Monastery, the recognised starting point for the climb, a distance of some 700km. The road goes along the western side of the peninsula with the Gulf of Suez on one side and flat open desert on the other. You could imagine Lawrence riding his camel across such a desert. Security against terrorists (and Israeli insurgents) is tight, with checkpoints and armed police at intervals along the highway. Occasionally army camps could be seen in the desert, where low-slung camouflaged tanks poked their 77mm guns over the dunes. In one sense it was alarming,



in another it was reassuring. The coach leaves the main highway after 550km, turning east into the hills, and ascends the Wadi Feran to a height of 1560m to reach the monastery. It is now not possible to stay at the monastery, so visitors stay at the modern Morganlands hotel (with pool) some 2km away.

The wake up call was 0130. After the hot drink provided the coach took us to the Monastery gate. Not that we could see in the inky dark anything of the thick tall ramparts of this building. At 0215 we began the climb, a broad rocky sandy path which climbed gradually. We were glad we had torches to identify the protruding rocks. Soon I was aware of a loud belching noise above my left ear, which startled me, turning to find it was a camel adjusting its tummies to the morning's exertion. The rumbling camels, and their drivers calling "Camella, nice Camella" hoping to pick up clients, became a regular feature of the early stages of the walk. The camels can only go along the path. The last part of the ascent, known as the Steps, where a steep rocky route leads to the summit, is beyond them.



Looking back down the path into the blackness, a line of winking torch lights showed how many others had the same intention of ourselves. We learnt that on feast days (Easter for example) there are several thousand making the ascent, too many for the summit to accommodate. Today there were several hundred – a quiet day. One was forced to wonder at the zeal of modern tourists to seek out places all over the world if it has ‘interest’, however remote.

The path grew steeper and rockier. Little ‘buffet’ bars appeared at the side of the path, selling water and chocolate bars, some with a mini salon, where clients could sit for a rest, and get their second wind. Unlike a normal outing, we were climbing against the clock. Any rest had to be brief. Sunrise we knew was about 0515, we had to keep going. Higher up, we began to have to cope not only with the camels behind us, but also with camels descending, camels who had dropped their early clients at the Steps. At times there was little room for us as these pushy animals coming and going were no respecters of persons. The aroma was quite zoo-like.

Soon we left all the camels behind when we entered the Steps. All walkers were funnelled down to single file to begin this steep section and the pace fell to that of the slowest. As far as I could see there were not many grey wrinklies in those around us, but a number seemed to be finding this section demanding. One woman on a crutch was gallantly making the ascent, and we did manage to squeeze by as she rested from her exertions. By this time the dawn light was gently easing its way from the east and we could put away our torches. We could now see the long snake of people

were making their way up to the summit. We reached it, just before the sun began to come over the mountains. Hardly a breath of wind, not too cold but a fleece was handy.

It was not a thrilling sunrise, full of brilliant reds and gold. Thy sky was almost cloudless but vapours in the atmosphere produced a rather a pale yellow wispy sunrise. Nevertheless it was an exciting sight, and around us all the surrounding granite peaks were coming into the light revealing a series of rocky peaks about us. Light overcoming darkness. On our square yard of summit there were Americans from Pennsylvania, Germans from Stuttgart, and we chatted away as the light slowly increased. After about half an hour, the call of breakfast began to assert itself. The crowd began to descend in single file, but now we could see where we were going and we were amazed at the scenery revealed to us. The Steps were like Lord’s Rake, but of much firmer rock and a little wider. We stopped on the way down at one of the ‘buffets’ for hot tea; there was no rush, we could enjoy our environment. Finally we were back at the Monastery by 0800 in time for our rendezvous with our coach driver to take us back to the hotel.

The total ascent was about 700m, a reasonable day out under normal circumstances. But in the dark one feels confined and the pressure of walking up against the clock meant you had to keep going. By the time the steep section was reached many are feeling the strain. Then there were all the camels, pushing, burping, breathing, an additional nuisance, and to say the least, unusual on a walk. It was as they say A Night to Remember.

# A Winter's Doggie Tale

## Harvey Lomas

I had not yet been living in the Dales for eighteen months and was just settling in to the pace of life and had joined the C.R.O. having participated in many rescues: some serious, some not. The charm of my new home amongst the crags and upland limestone scenery was and still is an inspiration.

Ingleborough dominated the whole aspect from my flat above the Flying Horseshoes at Clapham station. I'd seen through one winter and was almost through the second, having acquired the art of keeping a good fire and making myself warm and snug against the frosty nights.

It was a Sunday night in February, 1981, when my newly installed ivory white telephone, of which I was very fond, rang close to midnight. A man and his son were overdue from an expedition up Ingleborough. I soon found my self at a briefing in the C.R.O. H.Q. with our team being given Crina Bottoms, Newby Moss, and Little Ingleborough to search.

Into the outdoors, dark and cold, we went, weaving across Newby Moss and scaling Little Ingleborough without success. Over the fells our search was a basic sweep moving across the fell calling out and looking into shake holes but always moving. Our path now lead to Clapdale Farm, inspecting the barns calling out to no avail. Our lights penetrating the dark recesses of the gloomy barns, finding nothing, before our path lead eventually back to the depot.

Two a.m. and still no sign of the boy and father and with the temperature below freezing coupled with driving

winds the situation for them did not seem too good. Our team was assigned a new area but on route to it we listened in to the radio messages from a team high up just below the arches, on the steep western flanks of Ingleborough. A voice came over, frantic and excited, "...can hear a dog barking...", against the noise of the crackling. Radio confirmation was being sought. We stopped and listened, there it was, we could confirm that is was from above.

Somewhere a team was dispatched in the direction of the animal's bark out in the black clouded night.

It took some time to reach the place scaling the steep snow and rocks. The radio messages were from the team that was closing in on the dog's bark and soon human voices could be heard. They found the father, his son and their dog, on a broad ledge. The man had fallen down a fifteen-foot crag and had broken his leg. Two feet further and he would have fallen nigh on five hundred feet down steep well-frozen ice slope. That would almost certainly have been fatal.

They would have been one of last on the summit that late afternoon over the top of Ingleborough, enjoying the view as the daylight faded. The dusk was closing in and the night was beginning. They must have taken the wrong direction off the summit plateau (an easy thing to do off top of Ingleborough) and probably on the hard packed snow slipped down over the edge of the crag while looking for their route down. On to the broad ledge where, unable to move and his son unable to go for help, the son would probably have come to grief if he had tried. They had no option but to remain where were marooned out on the dark winter's mountainside.

Their night must have been long and cold with the dawn a distant hope. Just at their lowest and desperate point, after nearly nine hours waiting with the father unable to move even to keep warm. Out of sight and off the main routes, the search teams had followed footsteps only to lose them in the blizzard like conditions, and also despite looking very carefully over the summit the wind would have made voice contact difficult. At that moment the dog must have detected then by scent or superior hearing and from their well-hidden ledge in the mist the dog barked out into the night

By now I was part of the stretcher team pulling and jerking the empty stretcher over the peat hags and rocks up Crina Bottom. It was then that the son and dog, a small wiry terrier, came out of the darkness towards safety with rescuers, but we couldn't afford to stop and rushed upwards since evacuation was urgent because of the father's injuries and the time he had been up there.

On the summit we lowered the stretcher to the ledge and then across an exposed traverse. I thought the son's climb and traverse over to his stricken father would have been very risky and traumatic. What I saw of their survival gear suggested they would have had difficulty keeping warm in the wind and snow.

The father was in a corner lying on the snow, just conscious. The doctor gave him what was then a new treatment, a warm air-breathing device now called "The Little Dragon". It uses soda lime crystals in a cylinder to heat air, via a heat exchanger, for inhalation.

We put the stretcher (it must have been a Neil Robson one) as close as possible to him after splinting his leg

and placing him on an exposure bag for the delicate manoeuvre to lift him on. At about four in the morning, tired and cold, we gently and carefully extracted him from this exposed spot, across forty feet then a haul up to the plateau on steep and deeply covered mountainside. On reaching the top he was transferred on to a larger, Thomson stretcher.

The descent was swift. Being in a stretcher party depends heavily on teamwork: lift at one command and walk on the next, and relying on someone in front to advise on sudden drops, rocks or peat hags and, that night, water ice. As we descended the gloom lifted, as the dawn rose pale and white over the snowfields.

We wove a path round the peat hags and rocks, Crina Bottom house came into view and other team members received us. Then came the thud of the rotor blades from the R.A.F's Sea King helicopter, circling round and landing on the very frozen ground. The helicopter was a blaze of yellow against the lifeless colours of the fellside and patchwork snowy fields.

We placed him inside the helicopter and with a roar of rotors he was gone, flying out into the grey morning sky. As for the boy and especially that dog I do not know what happened to them as we spent several hours pulling Landrovers out of frozen tractor ruts because they were grounding, before I stood by the C.R.O. field canteen, eating, drinking and watching the Chapel le Dale rush hour go by. Returning home to my flat I would have slept very well.



# How it Really Used to Be

by a “Has Been”

Number  
Four

“Kota Kinabalu: 9m above Sea Level” announced the sign above the entrance to the Arrivals lounge, as we walked across the hot tarmac from our small plane. That leaves something like 13425 feet to the top of Mt. Kinabalu I thought as we passed through Customs and collected our bags. One bag each to be precise.

David, Roy and I were the rump of a holiday group of about fifteen from Brunei, to climb Mt. Kinabalu which had dissolved away as the departure date approached and money had to be paid. Stephen Hendricks the organiser was due in about three days but, in the meantime, we didn't know who was meeting us, where we were staying or how to get to the base of the mountain. It was 1975, Sabah, Borneo and tourist arrangements did not exist for climbing Mt. Kinabalu.

Almost immediately we were greeted by a smiling Chinese, an uncle of Stephen. We were amazed how he had picked us out until Roy pointed out we were the only Europeans off the plane. Stephen never turned up but it did not matter as having us met was the sum total of the organisation.

Uncle found us a cheap little Chinese hotel up a back street. David and I shared a room with a noisy air conditioner and a working shower. Roy had quickly grabbed the single room on offer containing little but a double bed. Being a bit slow nothing registered even when I heard girlish laughter and lots of movement during the first night.

What to do? David had been in Asia for a couple of years and said, “We wait.” We looked around K.K. as it is called and went to the market. Genuine Asian markets are something special, for example you know you have bought a leg of beef as the hoof is still on the end. It was still the same in Hong Kong or Honkers in 1999.

I had been in Asia for nine months having, I thought, left Britain for good. The market was a big one selling many temperate vegetables such as potatoes and greens from the plateau. I had a pang of homesickness exacerbated by the sight of roses from the hills. However the scent of durian soon brought me round!

Nothing was happening so we located the bus stop for Ranau and the mountain lodge and discovered the daily Landrover left at 9.00am. We felt fifteen plus luggage would be about the maximum and so turned up at 7.00am the next day and just scrambled into the vehicle, four beefy blokes across the back seat.

It was a three-hour journey which seemed to be mainly across builders rubble, though the first twenty miles were through paddy fields on a sealed road. The cheery and cavalier driver told us Landrovers lasted about two years. We stopped at a roadside shack for food and got a splendid view of the mountain just like a stupendous Stac Polly and then the cloud covered it. Apparently this happens around mid-morning every day. Finally, pretty shaken, we climbed out and walked up to the surprisingly well-built and comfortable lodge.

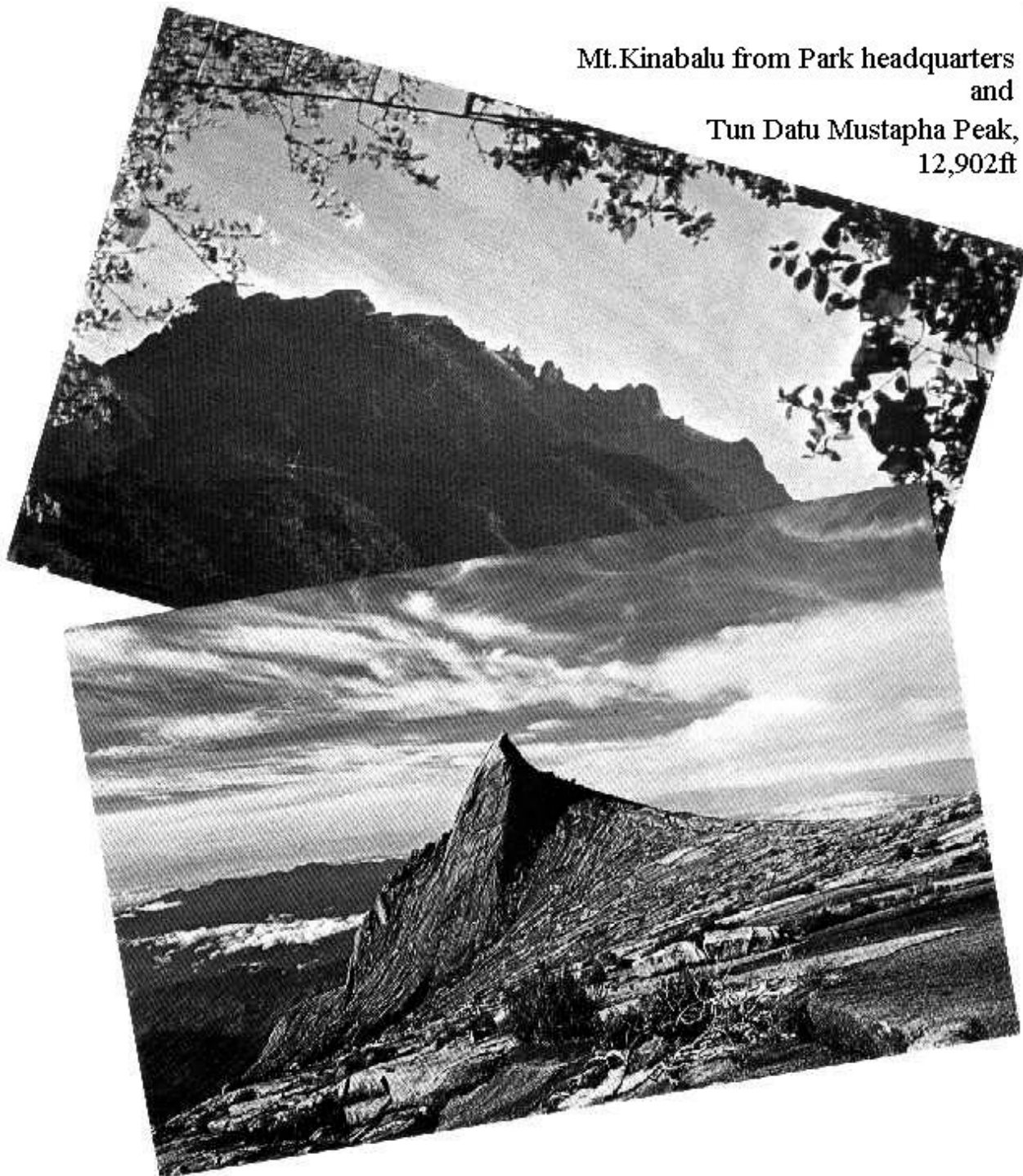
The days of sacrificing chickens before attempting the mountain were gone but instead we had to have a local guide. As expected our man

was a Dusun, one of the Orang Asli or original people, They are people of the Longhouses and some are still hunter gatherers though there were a number of farms clinging to the hillsides.

We started the next morning at dawn with a five-mile tramp up a very rough Landrover track before turning into the forest and steeply up. The

guide turned up with a number of porters, young girls carrying enormous baskets supported by headbands. This foxed us a bit as we carried all our own gear such as it was. We were not over-equipped for a 13000ft. plus mountain. In my case my gear consisted of canvas hockey boots with rubber studs, a thin waterproof, a bag of sandwiches, a

**Mt.Kinabalu from Park headquarters  
and  
Tun Datu Mustapha Peak,  
12,902ft**



bottle containing water and a rucksack. David, quite a trencherman even forgot his sandwiches. Our guide wore wellington boots and carried an ex-Army knapsack as well as the inevitable parang. Parangs are like Roman swords and used with great skill for a multitude of tasks, cutting through the forest, opening coconuts, digging and on occasion, for settling drunken arguments. Our man impressed us by paring his toenails with his weapon.

A good path climbed steadily up through the forest. At this height it is a moss forest the trees being draped with curtains of the stuff producing a very secretive feel to the place. I had already spent a good deal of time in lowland forest, mainly secondary, and had spent days in primary forest with the Ghurkhas. As we gained height the trees became smaller and bushier and the moss disappeared. Then we realised it was like Alice in Wonderland. Heather surrounded us but it was 9 feet high! It was all very different from anything I knew. Around 10000 feet the path came out of the giant heather onto easy angled slabs which made for comfortable walking to the aluminium hut containing only bunks and blankets, where we spent a cold night enlivened by the screams of one of the girls as the rats started nibbling.

On the approach I had noticed the huge continuous wall above with mighty waterfalls cascading down. Our route was up but how? Fortunately, outside the hut the wall fell back to a slab with a fixed rope of very doubtful provenance. After clambering about a bit I decided the slab without the rope was a better bet. The evening meal had been sandwiches as was breakfast, so we were content to start up the slab more

or less feeling our way in the dark. The girl porters had disappeared and the guide led on silently. After a while in the twenty minutes or so as dawn was breaking, he told us to stop while he carried on round a corner. He returned in a few minutes and we continued, finally reaching easy angled boilerplates with all sorts of unclimbed rock formations around. We learned later the guide had gone on ahead to perform his ablutions. I wonder did he leave the route?

Tropical dawns are stunning and ours at around 12000ft was quite simply marvellous. The view went on for miles over the forest back towards Brunei and the immediate rock scenery was spectacular. In this part of the world there is not much ice so scree and shattered rock were missing though the little puddles were ice fringed, which disappeared as the sun struck it. In twenty minutes we had come from murk and gloom into a fresh untouched world with air like wine - though I was a bit short of breath and had a bad head - and the wonderful colours of a tropical dawn. The top was clear so we pushed on as fast as we could. At the edge of the boilerplates on the plateau an easy looking gully dipped down. This was the top of the famous Low's gully, unclimbed at the time and even now only a couple of Army expeditions have embarrassed the mountaineering world in it. The summit cone is an easy scramble to a nice little top. The cloud was building up so I travelled as fast as possible and felt quite unwell on arrival, Sir Hugh Low was Colonial Secretary and Lieutenant Governor of Labuan, a large island off the Sabah coast. He was the man who, illegally, brought the first rubber seedlings from South America to Kew and thence to South East Asia. Has any man ever had a greater effect on

the landscape and economy of a whole region?

From the top Low's gulley could be seen miles and miles of primary forest or Ulu with other mountains and the South China Sea. It was 1975 and I had been moving through and looking at some of the remotest and wildest places on earth, all in a pair of hockey boots and with a packet of sandwiches. There was no radio or telephone and no rescue services. We were on our own, a marvellous, marvellous feeling almost unattainable today.

The cloud came down so we hopped it. Down over the boilerplates, the fixed ropes, through the forest and back to the mountain lodge. Roy disappeared somewhere no doubt for rest and recreation. We had a beer and I spent the rest of the day birdwatching.

The following day David and I walked the couple of miles to Ranau. The old timers all knew about the Ranau death march. In 1945 the Japanese marched 6000 men, mainly Australian with a few English, from Sandakan to Ranau over unknown terrain, mountainous and all forested. Six escaped and lived, twenty-eight made the march and were shot. The Japanese did not always lay a heavy hand on local people often because they could not find them and, consequently, many local people did not have bad memories.

Because there were no survivors the Japanese left no camps or other traces except at Poring hot springs and this was where we were going. A taxi took us the thirteen miles to two huts in a field. We looked a bit askance but were assured this was the place. The driver was paid off and booked for four days later, we shouldered our

bags and approached the huts. It's a small world and a couple from Brunei were in residence with only a hazy idea of who else might be coming. David and I promptly bagged a pleasant room.

There was nothing to do except read, sit in the hot bath, a concrete bowl under a boulder with hot water flowing in a continuous stream, slip through the cold one and walk in the forest looking for Rafflesia, the biggest flower in the world, reputedly exhibiting the once in a lifetime bloom. We did not find it but did find lots of leeches. Neither of us smoked but salt made them curl up and fall off: After nine months at sea level living in tropical rain forest it was a refreshing rest but, like all good things it came to an end. No taxi.

There were no telephones either so we shouldered our bags and set off on a thirteen mile walk down a dusty track. After five miles a crowded Landrover roared past us, we flagged it desperately and it stopped. It was the local bus and somehow we squeezed in the back and bounced the remaining nine miles to Ranau where we caught the daily Landrover back to K.K. The vehicle was piled with Durian fruit which to most European noses have a detestable stench. They have.

One more night in the hotel then a trip to the airport in a V.W. beetle whose boot lid kept swinging up. It amused the driver but not me - think about the V.W. configuration. Back to Brunei and lowland swamp!

Travelling in mountains, on rivers or across dusty plateaux has to be fun but most of all has to have an element of choice and uncertainty.

It's a wonderful world. JMC

## The Roof of England

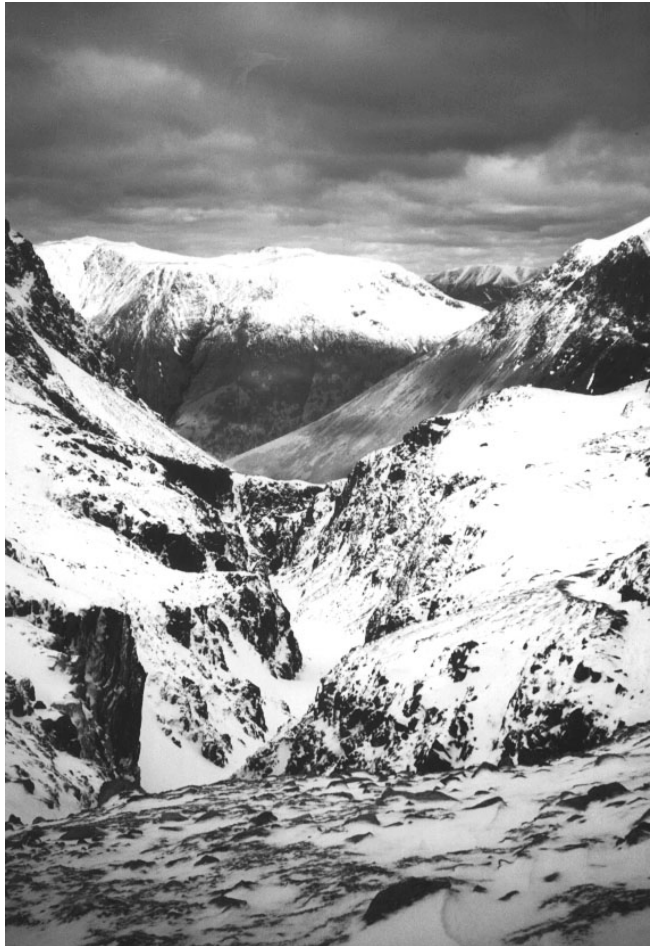
Bill Todd

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Most photographers would agree that a covering of snow makes our English hills look a lot more impressive. It also makes them a lot more dangerous; in winter they must be treated with great respect and should not be approached without good boots, warm clothing - and if you are going for the high tops, crampons and ice axe. But it was difficult to look on the dark side as Juliet and I drove over Ulpha Fell road in brilliant sunshine for her first visit to Wasdale.

A slight mist was forming as we breasted the hill after Santon Bridge, but I stopped the car and took out the Olympus XA to photograph that famous first view of the Wasdale Fells, Yewbarrow, Kirk Fell and Lingmell. The next day was equally fine as, avoiding the route across Gable, we walked up by Lingmell Beck's frozen waterfalls to Sty Head. On the path up to Esk Hause we soon hit snow and I donned my walking crampons, seized my old Aschenbrenner ice axe and handed my walking stick to Juliet. On her assurance that she was perfectly happy and secure we pushed on up to the shelter on Esk Hause for lunch.

The views of Great Gable and the Borrowdale Valley were magnificent, with Skiddaw and Saddleback on the far north horizon. We struck up the shoulder to the summit of Great End, the northern extremity of the Scafell range. An orgy of photography ensued



Piers Gill and Kirk Fell, March 1995, Todd

before our descent by Calf Cove to Esk Hause and our outward route.

Our next day out was sunless but clear, the landscape presented various shades of steely grey. So we walked over Whin Rigg and Illgill Head above the Wastwater Scree, enjoying the view of the valley below backed by the Wasdale Fells. The return along the bottom of the Scree was a bit hairy in the gathering gloom, but Juliet coped magnificently with the scramble. We groped our way across the fields at the bottom of the lake and were fortunate to hit the road gate within five yards.

Just over a year later, after a preliminary visit to the Helvellyn range we found ourselves in Borrowdale. There was a good



forecast for the morrow - this was going to be it, the big one. We drove to Seathwaite and walked rapidly, for us, up to Sty Head Tarn for coffee. our objective, Scafell Pikes, was visible and seemingly unattainable in a pure world of snow and ice; surely the Alps could show nothing more magnificent.



Approaching Lingmell Col, March '95, White

We soon hit the snow line on the corridor route, and crossing the top of Piers Gill the path got steep and icy. So at Lingmell Col we put on crampons before turning left for the Pike. By this time the sun had disappeared behind high cloud. But at the top the views were still there and extended over all Lakeland to the Galloway hills of Scotland.

It was into afternoon by this time so we forewent lunch and made down to the Little Narrowcove col. It was fairly steep

and Juliet decided that instep crampons were not entirely adequate for serious winter mountaineering. That was the worst bit however and we made good progress north along the range till we could turn down into Calf Cove.

As we passed Esk Hause a helicopter landed below the Great End cliffs. We learned later that a casualty was being evacuated after a leader fall in South East Gully. This is the left hand of the three Great end gullies and is an easy climb in summer. It is a long time since my late first wife and I did it under Doug Penfold's leadership on a February day; Juliet and I were tired as we got back to the valley but a songbird in the wood next to the track gave us inspiration to step out the last quarter mile.

The holiday finished with a scramble up Cam Fell which rises above Langstrath on the west. From the top the weather cleared sufficiently to allow a sun dappled view of the Buttermere Fells, Fleetwith Pike and Dale Head. It would be wrong to call Cam Fell an anticlimax because every day on the hill is by axiom a good one. But the ascent of Scafell Pike, the highest peak in England, had undoubtedly been that winter's glory.

On Great End, February 1994



# Out and About

**Roy Denney**

*Here is the weather forecast for the next 100 years...*

*Conditions over the United Kingdom are likely to be variable but winters will get shorter with autumn likely to be late arriving and with spring starting earlier and lasting longer. Most areas will have as much winter as before, but in a shorter period. Rain will be heavier leading to increased risk of flooding and winds will be stronger and more frequent causing structural damage including flooding of coastal lowland areas during tidal surges. The south and east can expect this to be interspersed with many periods of extended drought with temperatures approaching the thirties centigrade being much more common.*

Unfortunately examples of the problems this will bring are becoming more common as the devastating floods seen last winter will testify.

Since leaving full time employment I have taken up or developed many interests which bring me in contact with many experts in the environmental field and their knowledge and interests are bound to rub off on even a philistine like me.

I am a volunteer warden with Environ Trust, Regional Liaison Officer with the Woodland Trust, Access Officer for Orienteering Clubs and I work with Forest Enterprise and several institutional and private landowners designing and/or organising marked trails and permanent orienteering courses. I am also on the Access and Recreation Committee of the National Forest Company and have become a part time cartographer.

Native heathers have now joined the list of species under threat because of weather changes. As the moorland areas warm beetle infestations attacking them are becoming more prevalent and it is probable that some will be decimated to such an extent that many will be unable to sustain the bird life populations that live on them at present.

Our old friend the grouse is in some difficulties. As we struggle over high moorland it may be disconcerting to hear them apparently laughing at our endeavours but the uplands would be a far poorer place without them. Red grouse in particular already need assistance from man both in the form of mineral drops and burning off to create new growth but with many moors failing to support numbers of birds to allow sporting shooting several are being abandoned and such growth as is surviving is not now being managed. Legislation threatens to ban all hunting and shooting in any event.

Many moors normally awash with dramatic purples are being 'browned off' as the beetles attack them. This year has seen the worst attacks for than half a century and, as the beetles survive best in milder wetter winters and their grubs prefer damp springs, the prospects do not look good.

From the same family the wonderful black grouse is actually doing quite well in the higher moors further north especially along the borders of Cumbria and Northumberland as some members saw during the Alston meet.

Another cousin, the Ptarmigan is going to be re-introduced on the moorlands above the upper Tees and North and South Tyne's where appropriate planting of pockets of

woodland is in hand. This area has a strong population of 'gone wild' pheasants. Extensive woodlands suitable for commercial pheasant shoots are scarce and as a result many unviably small shoots have been created then abandoned.

Local experts say these wild birds struggle for food over the winter but are actually doing better in recent years as the harsh winters become rarer and they are learning to find alternative sources by raiding food put out for the sheep. With the lack of threat from much shooting and better climatic conditions some cocks are probably surviving for several years and there are certainly some magnificent specimens about in the bushy ravines of the becks and gills running down from the moors. There are large numbers of Melanistic Pheasants to be seen often jet black in colour and a very proud sight.

Species under threat because of weather changes or despoiled habitat now include horses, seals and dolphins. As the waters round our coasts warm up various viral infections attacking marine mammals are becoming more prevalent and it is probable that some fish species which return to fixed locations to breed, may also be affected.

Our old friend the horse is in some difficulties. There are no truly wild horses in Britain but veterinary bills for treatment for so called wild herds may put their survival under threat if disease creeping across Europe reaches these shores. Mosquitoes in Europe are now spreading West Nile Fever which can be fatal to horses within hours of a bite and has been known to infect people on rare occasions. The wild 'White Horses' of the Camargue are having a particularly difficult time and are

thought to be under some threat of being wiped out. Mosquitoes are now found in numerous areas of Britain but as yet none carrying any particular disease has been identified. A Dartmoor Pony is only worth about a £1 for pet food and they are already being shot rather than be given winter food and any extra threat to them could be terminal.

On the other side of the coin some species are doing better, many of which have been inadvertently brought into this country and now survive whereas in colder times they would have died out. Slugs, snails and other invertebrates may escape notice but there are a number of new species in Britain which were not present twenty years ago. There may often now be well over 50 different species of these creatures in any given area and over seventy have recently been counted in Oxfordshire. Some are quite colourful with an array of patterned shells but some can look quite daunting. All are considered pests by most gardeners but they are a useful part of the food chain acting as they do as nature's dustbin men.

If you ever met a 'Leopard' or 'Ash Black' slug in all its extended mature glory it would come as a bit of a surprise as both can grow to be an inch around the 'waist' and up to a foot long.

A more attractive native which is on a slow comeback trail is the Dormouse. This is probably more due to man's help and improving environmental farming and forestry than to climate change but it is encouraging. This lovely creature with its bushy tail is rarely seen unless it is disturbed and hibernates during the winter.

Unfortunately if unusually warm winters wake it up then it can starve

to death. It is back at sustainable population levels across most of the south of England with the northern edge of this solid domain reaching the South East Midlands. Pockets are being found in more isolated spots and there are outposts scattered around the rest of England. I have seen one this year which is very unusual given that they are largely nocturnal but it appeared to have been sleeping in an old hanging basket under the thatched eaves of a country pub and had been disturbed when they were being taken down to be cleaned out and prepared for a new years planting.

It is a fact that the Mouse-eared Bat, the Kentish Plover and the Long-haired Bumblebee have disappeared and it seems likely that the Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Song Thrush will follow. Numbers of Bullfinches and Spotted Flycatchers are also dropping away rapidly and the Water Vole and Pippistrelle are also under severe threat.

The Water Vole and Moor Hen populations have been extinguished in many areas by infestations of Mink and Otters are being encouraged throughout many areas of the South and Midlands as they restrict Mink by competing for their habitat and do not take the same prey.

Turning to more exotic creatures there have been four very reliable sightings of large black cats, thought to be leopard size in and around my immediate area during last autumn. A solicitor friend and one of his golfing partners saw one in the early morning just to the south of Leicester but did not report it for fear of ridicule but one following the same description has been photographed in the Measham area just off the M42 and a further cat, again largely of the same

description, has been seen by a local police officer in the Kirby Muxloe area in the suburbs of Leicester. A further sighting took place in October near Bagworth when the remnants of an eaten fox were found when it was disturbed. All that remained was one leg and a part of the rear end and I know of no native predator capable of such carnage.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there is a breeding group of some released species spreading throughout the wilder areas of the district. Given that in my various capacities I am often out early in the mornings, in such areas, I may be lucky enough to see one but it would appear that they are so secretive and suspicious of man that they will be long gone if they hear my gentle footsteps.

Another 'exotic' worth a mention is the beaver. A controlled release of European Beavers is being planned for a forest in Argyll. The creature has been extinct in Britain for several hundred years but the Forestry Commission are allowing their re-introduction to restore wildlife balance and improve water quality and if successful they may be allowed to expand their area freely with further imports from Europe.

These vegetarian creatures usually make nests in riverbanks and thereby slow water run off and as a side product change the local habitat providing refuges for many other creatures. They feed largely on bark but with Forest Enterprise moving away from commercial forestry and towards restoration of natural woodland, this is not seen as an unacceptable threat. They rarely cut down trees for dams unless in very rocky terrain which is not likely to be the case in the Knapwood Forest where they are being released or

indeed in most of Scotland where by and large the only sufficiently undisturbed woodland is to be found.

Man is taking a hand trying to assist wild species but on the other side of the equation other men are still doing intentional harm. Given that most assaults on birds or their nests would go unseen it is disquieting that a recent RSPB report has logged over 680 crimes against them. This included 245 nest robberies of protected species, 153 shootings of birds of prey and 70 poisoning of rare birds including fourteen Red Kites, eleven Peregrine and three Golden eagles.

Keith Raby and I have recently spent a winter afternoon and early evening, with rangers from Forest Enterprise watching Red Kites coming home to roost as the sun faded away. These magnificent birds were extinct in our area 150 years ago but survived (just) in the Welsh borders. The bird population was decimated by insecticides, deliberate killing by ignorant farmers' guns, nest destruction and poison. Gamekeepers thought these birds attacked their game birds and young animals. The Kite is in fact entirely a carrion eater and does no harm whatsoever to the country community.

As re-introduction programmes were started occasional solitary birds were seen in our area of the Midlands during the early '90s. The first release locations were kept secret but the ones seen in Northamptonshire probably strayed from the Chilterns.

A Forest Enterprise wildlife ranger saw a bird alight in a Rockingham Forest Area and was moved to suggest this patch as another release area and five years ago the first imports of Spanish Birds took place.

They have now been released in two locations in that area and in 1999 ten pairs successfully bred and last year, thirteen. The nesting pairs are now spread out over the area and have been recorded as visiting other colonies to the north and south as they range far and wide and re-colonise large parts of woodland England. They do however tend to return to the general area where they were released to nest on the ground each year.

They are becoming an ever more common sight and have been seen in the skies over many local forests this winter. Immature birds not yet ready for mating tend to congregate in roosting colonies and the one we visited is in private woodland but there are public rights of way nearby.

Unfortunately some of last years young were deliberately poisoned and, whilst the identity of the culprit is known, lack of evidence has prevented prosecution.

Overall there are now over 400 breeding pairs in Britain of which over 250 are in Wales but about 130 in England and about forty in Scotland. It is only a decade ago when the last breeding pairs, numbering no more than fifty, were confined to areas of Wales.

During the sixties and seventies when I spent many weeks cruising the Norfolk Broads sometimes hearing the distinctive Bittern's boom. This rare member of the Heron family lives almost entirely in reed-beds and has suffered greatly from habitat loss and disturbance and now is almost extinct in the area.

It was thought three years ago that there were only 11 males left alive throughout Britain and a conservation campaign was launched which has created a viable population at the

RSPB's Leighton Moss reserve, Lancashire, and there are now thought to be 22 breeding pairs in the country. A new reserve created on the Humber saw it's first successful breeding pair for over twenty years.

Another encouraging report indicates that the rare Stone Curlew, down to 160 breeding pairs, and on the verge of extinction in Britain, is staging a recovery. After schemes organised by farmers in Anglia they have increased to about 250 pairs.

A surprising discovery is that a rare Burnet moth thought to be extinct has in fact just moved to follow weather changes. It was only found in one UK location and had gone missing. The New Forest Burnet has not been seen since the Great War but it has now been found on the northern side of the Clyde estuary where the warmer climate apparently suits them.

Juniper is one of only three native conifers and is now under threat from a number of circumstances. Climate is seen as a contributory cause restricting it's potential growing sites to further North or higher above sea level but land usage is the major problem. Places where it could thrive naturally without assistance are limited but with help it can survive. The increasing question as to the viability of grazing the uplands may help as overgrazing stops young bushes developing but surprisingly without an element of grazing the land is often in such a state that regeneration cannot even start. A trial scheme in Swaledale will assist this historic plant.

As is the case with many ancient species folklore attributes many beneficial qualities to the berry of this plant and modern research seems to support many of them.

Whilst we have better cures today for Cholera and Typhoid if, as is threatened penicillins, become less effective we may have to turn back to traditional treatments. Their essence is thought to aid infections of the waterworks, dysentery, tape worm and when rubbed into the skin can assist arthritis and muscle pain. Perhaps more common uses and benefits are the flavouring of many marinades, seasoning for game and the production of gin. The leaves are also used in perfumed products and are added to the water used to clean hand and face towels not least those provided after many an Indian meal.

Last autumn saw bumper crops of sloe which are still quite common in more remote parts of the country including the North Pennines and the incredible mouth-drying qualities of this fruit still makes a Christmas treat if added to gin, with a little sugar, for a few months before the festivities.

On a more encouraging note, The Moorland Association recently reported the first increase in the total area of heather moorland for over half a century. Since the end of the war 200,000 acres had been lost but since 1985, 160,000 acres have either been created or improved either by reducing the amount of grazing or active support by way of re-seeding and bracken control. This together with improved access legislation should increase our opportunities but 60% of such moorland is now designated as protected. It does however bode well for the wildlife which requires such habitat such as the Merlin, Short-eared Owl, Hen Harrier and Grouse.

All in all there appears to be increasing threat to the timeless beauty and great diversity of the English countryside but in reality it

has always been subject to change and is almost entirely man made. The biggest problem is the increasing speed of change and the capacity of flora and fauna to adapt quickly enough.

Many well known beauty spots such as Burrough Hill, Stonehenge, various white horses and well endowed men, are in fact mans contribution to the landscape from the iron age or earlier and numerous long defunct homesteads have left marks of their presence by the plants which thrive where man has left his waste.

Patchwork fields are man-made hedges, fences and walls round introduced crops. Those that are used as pasture house introduced or modified animals.

Coastal reclamation and peat extraction creating the Broads has transformed Anglia in an area bearing no resemblance to how it must have been even comparatively recently in geological terms.

Where can you go in Britain as a whole, where the view does not include man's buildings, roads, trig points and summit cairns, wind-mills, lines of pylons or the rapidly breeding population of masts.

We talk about the wonders of Lakeland but slate quarrying has shaped much of the landscape and damming in fact enlarges many lakes. As an area it receives sixteen times as many visitors per square mile than Yellowstone Park in the states.

A few statistics will demonstrate the scale of our impact and perhaps it is surprising how well nature has learned to put up with us.

There are 120,000 miles of public footpaths in England alone, nearly 15,000 churches, millions of cars and

over half a million archaeological sites identified. We have lost half our hedgerows during the 20th century but we still have a quarter of a million miles of them.

During the same period we have lost over 70% of our wetlands, marshes and ponds. Almost all of our wild flower meadows and lowland heaths have gone and half of our ancient woodland.

Climate warming is having at least one good effect as far as we are concerned. Trees are starting their growing cycle earlier in the year and continuing well into what is supposed to be autumn leading to accelerated afforestation. Plantings across the central midlands are well on target to achieve the 200 square mile National Forest.

A threat to wildlife from the EU has just been averted. Set aside subsidies have a time limit and many field borders and hedges which have been allowed to develop into wildlife havens and corridors were to lose their subsidies. The legislation suggested that these would have to be brought back into cultivation although each farmer could then set aside new land nearby and start the process again. Franz Fischler who appears to be one of the more sensible EU commissioners has accepted the presentations made to him and has exempted any margin of over 2m wide from loss of subsidy to continue as a refuge for wild flora and fauna.

Finally a weather tip to bear in mind when you are out and about enjoying what is left of our green and pleasant land: *Mist in the hollows - dry weather follows, mist on the hills and the lake soon fills.*

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## Philately: a kindred subject?



### Alan Linford

At first sight stamp collecting would not be considered a suitable subject for the bulletin of a mountaineering and caving club

but Rule 2 allows for members to 'gather and promote knowledge concerning Natural History, Archaeology, Folklore and kindred subjects'. It is likely most members, at some time in their life, has owned a Stanley Gibbons stamp album with a page for each Commonwealth country and spent their pocket money on gummed hinges and packets of stamps. Bargaining for swops, an early introduction to negotiation.

My first serious attempt at a collection started when work requirements took me to Taiwan. My wife Angela did not wish to go, certainly not three weeks before Christmas,

but put on a very brave face and we left the UK to live in Taiwan. In December 1989 the Post Office issued a set of five stamps bearing the medals awarded for outstanding bravery in war and peace. I presented these to Angela to ease the pain of parting from the family but soon realised that a meaningful collection could be assembled based on events. Travelling the world and living in a

new country with many significant events the collection developed very nicely with many of the stamps featuring mountains.



A natural development was to specialise in collecting postage stamps with mountains as a theme, known in the philatelic world as a 'thematic', simple you may think. The task is not as simple as it may seem. Mountains are not a thematic group. Birds, ships, flags, flowers, football and many others figure, but not mountains. To find stamps it is necessary to attend stamp fairs, scan all new issues, and plough through catalogues trying to interpret the language and the description. Result: some successes and some failures. There are few stamps where the mountain is the primary subject but many stamps where the mountain is the secondary subject even when the mountain is clearly recognisable.

For example, Bolivia: 1998 ascent face of Bernardo Guarachi superimposed on Everest. Nepal: Snow Leopard with snow peaks behind. Japan: badminton player in front of Mt.Fuji. Which thematic group are these? In 1974 Royal Mail issue four stamps of paintings by Prince Charles but only two feature mountains Ben Arkle and the Mourne mountains. Should that set be included in the collection? I now have three hundred stamps associated with mountains and the problem is how to group them.

As this topic started out simple and became complicated I decided it was a YRC Kindred subject.





# A Homemade Three-Fuel Stove

## Michael Connick

My stove is the result of my thinking about running out of fuel during a three-week solo Adirondack hike. Short of fuel tablets

I built a wood fire in a fire ring, found some rocks on which to balance my pot and moved some hot coals and small pieces of wood underneath it. The whole set-up was pretty precarious but luckily for me that night, I managed to keep my pot balanced on the rocks.

After the hike, I started wishing that someone would make a multi-fuel stove that would alleviate this type of problem. Ideally, it would burn my favorite fuel source, solid tablets, along with spirit or wood. That way I'd be covered no matter what my fuel situation was.

I finally decided to see if I could make a homemade version. The result is the stove I'm now using, weighing only a smidgen over 4 ounces and working rather well.

Here are directions for making a stove just like it.

### Parts List

- A 12 oz can coffee can
- ¼" wire mesh (known in the US as *hardware cloth*)
- A 3 oz tuna can



Left is a view down the top of the stove past the spirit fuel mesh to the tuna can burner. The three lower slots can be seen and, to the right, the two vents.

### Constructing the Stove

#### Coffee Can:

Leave the base of the can attached.

Along the top, cut two 2" wide by ½" high slots about 1" apart from each other. These vents will allow air to pass out under your pot and keep it from smothering the fire.

Cut three 1" wide by ½" high slots so that their tops will be 3" down from the top of the can. Only cut the top three sides of these slots. The bottom is left uncut so that when completed the metal can be bent down into the can to form support tabs for the burner.

Along the bottom of the can, and in-line with the top two vents, cut two 2" wide by 1" high slots. These vents will act as the air intakes when burning wood in the stove.

**Wire Mesh:** Cut a circular piece of wire mesh about 4" diameter to drop it into the top of the stove and rest securely on the three tabs you previously created. This mesh will serve as the platform on which the burner will rest.

Cut a smaller piece of wire mesh of sufficient size to cover the top of the tuna can. This wire mesh acts as a catalyst to help improve the efficiency of the alcohol burning.

**Tuna Can:** Other than taking its top off, eating the contents, and washing it out, nothing else needs to be done to the tuna can. It will serve as the

burner. If you really want to, you can remove the label.

That's all there is to it!

### Using the Stove

To use the stove as a wood burner, just use the coffee can alone. Load it up with very small pieces of wood (I never use anything bigger than pencil-sized), get them going (Vaseline soaked cotton balls make wonderful fire starters), and put your pot on top. Make sure the intake vents face into the wind. The additional air coming in the vents will help the fire burn hotter.

When burning wood you'll need to keep your eye on the stove. It only holds a small amount of wood that needs replenishing fairly often. My experience with this stove as a wood burner is that to boil two cups of very cold water requires about two "can-fulls" of wood and fifteen minutes. When the first can-full starts to burn down, lift your pot and add another load of wood, making sure that you don't smother the fire in the process.

To use the stove as a spirit burner, put the 4" circle of wire mesh onto the three internal tabs, put the tuna can in the centre of the wire mesh, and add alcohol to it. Then put the small wire mesh piece on top and light the alcohol. The wire mesh heats up as the alcohol burns and causes the stove to burn more efficiently. This very simple alcohol burner will get water up to a boil just as fast, if not faster, than a commercial Trangia alcohol stove. When using the alcohol stove make sure that the intake vents face away from the wind. This allows the back of the stove to provide a windscreen for the flame and greatly increases its efficiency.

To use the stove with solid fuel tablets, put the 4" circle of wire mesh onto the three internal tabs and put the tuna can upside-down in the centre of the wire mesh circle. Put your fuel tablets on top of the tuna can's bottom and light it. Again, when burning fuel tablets, make sure the intake vents of the stove face away from the wind.

That's it. If you make one of these stoves, I hope you enjoy playing with it as much as I have. Also, there's probably a lot of room for improvement in the design of the spirit burner for this stove. Once I got to the point where I'd found something that works as well as the commercial Trangia units, I stopped working on it. You don't have to do the same and can likely come up with a design that's more efficient at burning spirit than mine.

In any case, enjoy your stove!

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How did the Club find out about this?

Charles "Chuck" Meyer gave Derek Smithson and Iain Gilmour a lift from the John Muir Trail trailhead at Cedar Grove back to civilisation. Chuck was into *gear* and was using a coffee tin stove, a hi-tech bear canister made out of Stealth fighter style materials and a 26oz tent that had trekking poles for a central A frame.

Building the stove Chuck had followed Michael's instructions on [www.monmouth.com/~mconnick](http://www.monmouth.com/~mconnick) but as he does not use spirit he omitted the tuna can for a two-fuel version. It worked beautifully, but at times it was a bit smoky. For those thirsting for lightweight gear talk, Chuck recommends [www.backpacking.net](http://www.backpacking.net).



Tim Josephy examining the straws in Easgill's Thackray's Passage, September 1998

## **Cave Photography by Richard Josephy**

Magpie Grotto, Pool Sink and other Easgill formations



## Song for the John Muir Trail

As I walked by the campsite one evening so fair  
To view the still hills and take the night air,  
I heard this old trekker a singing this song,  
Won't you take me away boys, my time isn't long.

*Wrap me up in my Gortex and fleeces,  
No more on the trail I'll be seen,  
Just tell me old trail mates I'm taking a trip mates,  
And I'll see you sometime in Fiddlers Green.*

Oh Fiddlers Green is a place I've heard tell  
Where Ramblers do go if they don't go to hell,  
Where the weather is fair and the brown bears do play  
And the start of the trailhead is far, far away.

Where the sky's always clear and there is never a storm,  
Where rucksacs are light and steaks are the norm,  
Where you lie at your leisure, there's no work to do  
And Kay's in the mess tent making tea for the crew.

When you get back in a bed and the long trip is through,  
There's pubs and there's clubs and there's lassies there to,  
Where the girls are all pretty and the beer is all free,  
And there's bottles of rye growing on every tree.

Now I don't want a harp nor a halo, not me,  
Just give me a breeze and a nice rolling lea.  
And I'll you some stories as we stroll along,  
With the wind in me lungs to help sing me this song.

Lyrics are from Noel McLoughlin's Fiddlers Green and  
attributed to J Connolly but the tune is traditional

# Ode to the YRC

by Roy J Denney

They rise from their bed, when few people would  
and seek remote hills to quicken their blood.  
Grabbing their gear and watching the time  
they set off to cave or to tackle a climb.

Historically based, in Yorkshire so fair,  
Members now live scattered hither and there  
When caving's their aim they stay at Lowstern.  
When Lakeland is calling it's LHG's turn

They climb in the autumn when daylight is dim  
and in the winter when the sun is so thin  
They climb in the spring, birds rejoicing in song,  
and also in summer when days are so long

On along paths, route carefully planned,  
They jump across streams with care as they land.  
Ploughing through mud getting stuck in the mire  
passing by stable, by barn and by byre

On up the slope never giving up hope,  
fighting through trees, brambles tripping like rope,  
emerging from thorns and looking forlorn,  
wearing strange outfits, very often, well worn.

Onwards they push, on by thicket and bush  
taking scant note of the flowers they crush.  
Often through mist or in dark, murky clag  
on up that crack and that dangerous crag.

Seeing the wild life on every hand,  
taking in views often ever so grand.  
Is that a hawk or a trick of the light?  
Joy and relief when the top comes in sight.

And on to the summit, gasping for breath,  
proud in achievement but feeling like death.  
The first feel elated, success being hailed,  
the others behind them wearily trailed.

Now to return, over moorland or fell  
accompanied by, the curlew's strange yell  
Hares in the heather, the laughter of grouse  
Kestrels and falcons are after that mouse.

Down to the hut or a warm cosy bar  
with time to enjoy a welcoming jar  
stories of epics whilst eating their meal  
hard to explain the contentment they feel.

Born in the Skyrack, the Club marches on  
though heroes like Whymper and Slingsby are gone.  
Through Botterill and Roberts the Club left it's mark  
in doing new routes and deep pot holes dark.

Glen Etive, The Cullin, Blencathra, Scafell  
Snowden and The Glyders, many more as well  
From Nepal to Norway: Ghar Parau and Spain  
To Iceland and Bolivia, in sun, snow or rain

We've topped all the Corbetts, Monros as well,  
been way underground more times than to tell.  
GG into Clapham: in Douk, Alum Pot  
Boggarts Roaring, Lost Johns, we've done the lot

Woodman, Driscoll, Downham : Tregoning, Bone and White  
Stembridge, Hilton, Allan: Edwards, Swindles and Wright  
Stonehouse, Fox, Marsden: Nicholson, Chadwick and Gott,  
no longer are they with us but forgotten they are not.

Old friends still remembered, replaced by the new,  
it seems rather lacking to mention so few.  
We must move on - more climbing: fell-walking anew,  
becking, pot holing and boulder trundling too.



Denali from Princess Lodge, Bill Todd, July 2000

## Book Reviews by Bill Todd

### **Eiger Dreams** by Jon Krakauer

pp186 pb, £6.99

What is a “water box”? And what has it to do with the Eiger?

Well, a water box is something that may be encountered when “canyoneering” or what we in England call backing or gill climbing. You will know a water box when you come to a pool which is too deep to wade between rock walls which are too smooth to climb. The nearest example I can think of is the crux of Hell Gill near Mallerstang described by Derek Clayton in YRCJ No.37 (1976).

But you don't go up Hell Gill with a week's food and gear. In the Mogollon canyons in the American South West you need plenty of supplies including snake bite serum. The whole region is on a scale that dwarfs our familiar Yorkshire places.

The chapter on canyoneering is one of a dozen chapters dealing with aspects of mountain adventure. The title of the first chapter is used as the title of the book, probably the publisher's idea to sell more copies. Other chapters deal with Denali, Chamonix, K2 and the Burgess boys.

The book is full of insights and anecdotes. I liked particularly the distinction Mr Krakauer draws between wanting to climb the Eiger and wanting to have climbed the Eiger. Looking out of the window at the Eigerwand stop on the railway can give a sudden jolt to overweening ambition.

Of course natural hazards are not the only ones mountaineers may have to face. Rick Fisher, doyen of

canyoneers, recorded an incidental excitement after an encounter with marijuana growers over the border from Chihuahua.

Mr Krakauer comments on bad feeling between French and British mountaineers. Being just a motor drive away from the Alps the French ought to be able to leave the Brits behind at mountaineering but they don't always. I well remember Yorkshire climber Ian Clough coming back from the Alps to tell us all about a “last great problem” solved by the Brits, plus one Pole, to the chagrin of the French contenders who included Desmaison. What, was it now? Oh yes, the Central Pillar of Fresnay.

I had my doubts when I started reading this collection but I soon got hooked and I am sure most people will too.



### **Craven Pothole Club Records**

#### **No.61 January 2001**

Highlights of Issue 61 are a record of mountaineering in North America and a note of a cave painting having been found in the hills above Verona. So anyone who goes to Verona for history, the Roman amphitheatre is famous, may have the opportunity to see something 33,000 years older. The paintings are estimated to be 35,000 years old and probably the oldest such art work in Europe. The American adventure involved a success on Mount Shasta, a bit north

of San Francisco and a narrow failure on Mount Rainier.

Information on and adventures in the underground are of the usual high standard.

### **No.62 April 2001**

The last paragraph above applies equally well to No.62, In addition there is a most interesting article about Crete by Emma Porter. If I had known about the notoriety of hire cars there I might have done something different last time I went. But for Emma and Mike injury was added to insult because there was no petrol available, they had half a tankful to last the whole holiday.

They thought they would use a taxi to get to the first cave, Kournas, but the taxi man had dropped them at Kouras Lake and it was another 5 kilometres to the cave. After the cave it was a trudge from village to village to get back to a main road and the chance of a lift. On an early visit Joan and I were in a similar situation hoping the next village would be near Agios Nicolaus. There were no walking maps then.

Hugh Bottomley's article on his association with Horton in Ribblesdale going back to 1941 must strike chords with many of our members, his warm relations with the Morphet and Jackman families are a delight to read about and the illustrations recall a vanished era when potholing gentlemen dressed in a proper manner.

Note: This reviewer is conscious of his lack of the necessary experience to comment on the potholing articles, If any of our potholing members would like to have a go I could arrange for the Records to be sent straight to him instead of to me.

## **Book Review by Jeff Hooper**

### **The Celebrated Captain Barclay Sport, Money and Fame in Regency Britain by Peter Radford**

**Published by Headline Books  
ISBN 0 7472 7222 0**

My excuse for writing this for the Yorkshire Rambler is that Captain Barclay has recently been mentioned twice. Also, Barclay's first serious preparation for a walking event was done in Yorkshire, at Oulston between Boroughbridge and Easingwold. The actual wager; to walk ninety miles in twenty-one and a half hours was completed at Barmby Moor on the road between York and Hull in November 1801, for a stake of 5,000 guineas. The event was timed by six stopwatches in a sealed box, so much money depended on the outcome. It was said that as much as 100,000 guineas changed hands in side bets during the event. The time trial began at midnight, a time at which in the 1960s and 1970s it was traditional for aspiring Yorkshire walkers to begin the Lyke Wake Walk. Barclay was not a mountaineer, but had he been born a century later, who could say what he might have done in the Alps or the Himalayas, with his strength, unprecedented powers of endurance, and resistance to cold and hardship.

I have had an interest in Robert Barclay for some years but could find little significant information. Many people if asked about him might say that '...he was the man who walked 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours'. A few might say that '... he was the man who walked one mile in 1,000 successive hours'. The '1,000 miles, 1,000 hours' wager—for all of these pedestrian competitions were driven by wagers—was: *...that he could walk one mile every hour of every day and every night—*



*without a break—Sundays included, for 1,000 hours, for a wager of 1,000 guineas.* It was completed on 9 July 1809 on Newmarket Heath.

My want of knowledge of the man was finally satisfied in August 2001 when I saw on display in Waterstons' bookshop in Edinburgh, Professor Peter Radford's book *The Celebrated Captain Barclay*. It was a coincidence as that afternoon I had driven from Barclay's home area near Aberdeen, through Fofar and Dundee where much of the action took place. The book had only been published twelve days earlier. To me the first chapter was worth the price as it tells in detail of the 1,000 mile event.

The author, Professor Radford is Professor of Sports Sciences at Brunel University and may be remembered by some as the sprinter who won two medals in the 1960 Olympic Games and was the World record holder over 200 metres. As one would expect, this book written by a professor, has been thoroughly researched and includes over eight hundred notes and references, a comprehensive bibliography including the Barclay family papers, and a complete index.

The book is produced in hardback, is pleasing to handle and exceptionally well set out, which makes it a pleasure to own as well as to read. The book not only records remarkable athletic feats but also is a history of a slice of regency Britain. The writing on pedestrianism and wagers is intertwined with Pugilism and coach driving, and the characters taking part. Barclay was greatly involved with both of these, sparring and organising, and refereeing fights in the Prize Ring.

I have long believed that feats of endurance and strength performed in the past must have greatly surpassed anything, which is now done. Professor Radford proves that in this work. At this period, it seems that almost anyone at the drop of a hat, would set off and walk one hundred

miles. Anyone who reads this book will never think of the YRC Long Walk in the same way again. In addition to walking long distances and running for wagers, Barclay walked for enjoyment, walking for distances of hundreds of miles in preference to travelling on horseback or by coach, and walking twenty miles a day around his estates when he was at home.

Robert Barclay Allardice (Allardice was Barclay's mothers family name which his father had added at marriage as an acknowledgement of land which came with the alliance), was the Laird of Ury with estates near Aberdeen. Many of his forebears had been capable of great feats of endurance and strength. As a young man Barclay became one of the Fancy, that loose association of royalty, aristocracy and gentry for whom the only reason for sport was as a means to enable them to gamble. They used less fortunate men and women, as they would race horses or dogs to race or fight for their gratification. Although, it must be acknowledged that some of them took part in pedestrian events themselves in pursuit of wagers, turning in quite worthwhile performances. Sparring and training with prize-fighters was also a fashionable way of life. Many of Barclay's associates in the Fancy died before the age of thirty, or suffered some other fate related to their dissolute life style, this caused him to reflect and to some extent change his way of life.

I felt as though I had been waiting for years for this book to be written and enjoyed reading it so much that I rationed myself to a chapter a day, so that I could savour it. Interest, for me, slacked slightly in the second half of the book dealing with Barclay's later life, after the excitement of his competitive years.

Anyone who has undertaken a long walk or other endurance event, or even considered doing one from an armchair, will read this book with appreciation.

## Obituaries

### John Geoffrey Brook 1953 - 2001

Born in Huddersfield on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1908, Geoffrey's father died whilst he was still a baby. He went to school in Huddersfield.

During the Second World War he served in North Africa, during which time both his first wife and young son died. He was indeed fortunate in his very happy second marriage of over fifty years to Joyce.

His first contact with the Club was in 1931 when he attended a meet at Horton in Ribblesdale. Fred Booth was in charge of the meet and invited him to join the Club. However, he decided to withdraw his application on his appointment to the Bath Pump House Orchestra. Geoffrey was a very talented musician; he played the flute professionally and for pleasure for a good deal of this long life. He studied the flute under Mr Lupton Whitelock.

In more recent times he played with the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra. He generously helped and encouraged young people to play the flute including our one time member, Chris Baur. In the Sixties he re-scored 'Yorkshire' to make it easier for both singer and pianist.

Whilst he was in Bath he did some caving in the Mendips with his friend Gerard Platten of the Mendips Exploration Society. With another good friend he climbed at Almscliffe, North Wales and was highly impressed with his visit to the Cullin of Skye. On his return to Leeds he re-applied and joined the YRC.



Many members will remember him for his support in the refurbishing of old Lowstern in the Fifties where he spent many weekends working. Others will remember when he and John Godley carried food and drink up the grind to Carnedd Dafydd on one of the Welsh 3000's Long Walks.

Geoffrey had a great love of the Alps and spent many a holiday there, mainly around Zermatt. One time he did a circuit of Monte Rosa. His favourite climb was the shapely Zinal Rothorn. He attended the Centenary celebration of the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1965 in Zermatt. See his article in the YRC Journal Vol. 10, No. 33 where he describes the event. Coincidentally three other members failed to attend the diner having been delayed on the traverse of the Zinal Rothorn so beloved by Geoffrey.

Not only was Geoffrey an enthusiastic musician and Club member, he was a very competent writer with a wide subject matter. In our journal of 1962 Vol.9, No.31, he gave us a splendid history of the first 70 years of our club's existence. In the 1960 journal, Vol.9, No.30 there is an interesting article 'A Stop for a Smoke'. Typical

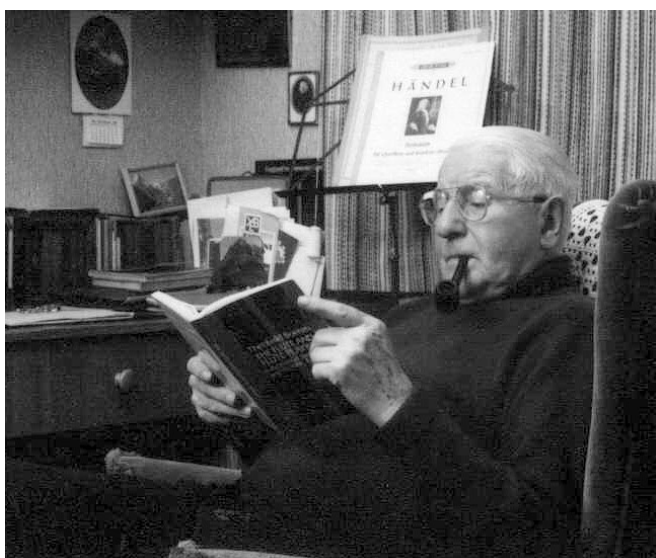
of many of our departed members, he enjoyed his pipe until the end.

There is a further article in the 1954 Journal, Vol. 8, No.27, 'Dr Johnson in the Highlands'. This illustrates his wider interest in literature. He was a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society and was quite an authority on this fictional character, especially when it came to detail.

An article entitled 'Daniel Defoe in Yorkshire' illustrates the depth of his search for accuracy in all aspects of life and indeed fiction. Yet another article, 'Whiskers An' What Not' written in Yorkshire dialect shows yet another facet of his character. He was a competent sketcher especially when it came to caricatures.

Geoffrey was a quite reserved man of many interests but most of all he was a man of great integrity. He will be greatly missed by members who knew him but also a loss to the Club in general. Our sympathy goes to Joyce who had always supported him in all aspects of his long life and especially in his membership of the Club

FD Smith



## Bernard Nelstrop

1931 - 1999

Bernard Nelstrop died on 26th December 1999, just a month later he would have been a member for 69 years. His interest in the Club never waned, letters to fellow members and to the Secretary continued right until the end of his long life. He was born in 1907.

He was interested in many aspects of the outdoor life which included walking, climbing, potholing and sailing. 1937 saw him in Chamonix with Byron of the Rucksack Club climbing the Grepon and being forced to bivouac. In 1939 he climbed the Matterhorn, topped all the Welsh 3000ft peaks and spent New Years Eve on top of Snowdon. Previously he bivouacked there at the end of 1937 and put up his tent on Crib y Ddisgl in a storm in the last hours of 1938. In 1940 he climbed to a high standard on Nevis, in Glencoe and on Skye.

With Matheson in 1938 in Gaping Gill he penetrated 148 yards into the wet bedding plane of Amphibian Crawl to end up at Two Hundred-Foot Pot. He joined some of the early meets in Fermanagh. See 'The Enniskillen Gondoliers' 1947 Journal Vol.7, No 24 for how he, with earlier members enjoyed potholing at its best.

The President and three other members attended his funeral.

F D Smith

# Chippings

Whilst on his annual visit to the Emerald Isle, this year **David Smith** in Donegal, visited the superb visitors' centre in the Glenveagh National Park. He was interested to see a poster marking the centenary of Martel's discovery of Marble Arch cave, Fermanagh, in 1895. He was pleased by the reference to its exploration by the YRC in 1907, 1908 and 1935. For more information on these see Geoffrey Gowing's article in YRC Journal Vol VI No 22 1936. Quite a number of current members should remember subsequent visits to this remarkable cave.

**Adrian Bridge** had one excellent day among several outings in the Dolomites' Sella Group with there was plenty of up and down on via ferratas. The rest was long days of many kilometres of walking and scrambling.

A source of some surprise among the local people on the route of a trek to Jomsom, behind Annapurna, was **George Spenceley's** age – they can't have too many people passing by of 1921 vintage. Trek independently with a single porter, he recommends, and you will gain additional freedom and closer contact with people.

**Derek Collins** reports that Mike Hansen offers help to anyone visiting his part of the world. He can be contacted at 2561 Massachusetts Avenue, #1 Cambridge, MA 02140-1020. Tel.617-661-6520, einhornresearch@hotmail.com

The biologist on the Club's Guangxi 2000 expedition, Arthur Clarke, wishes it to be made clear that the cave fauna summary which appeared under his name in the expedition report was a heavily edited version of the original field notes he supplied. The fauna photographs, and some of the others appearing in the report, were taken by him.

In September a group of members stopped off at Low Hall Garth for lunch to find the electricity switched off but the refrigerator door shut. Inside the fridge were the spoiled leftovers of milk, cheese, butter and bacon. Not a pretty sight or smell. The previous group staying at the hut were Club members. The mess was cleared up and all are asked to remove perishable foodstuffs and leave the fridge door open on leaving the cottage.

If you need mapping software to load your GPS then **Duncan Mackay** recommends some Ozi shareware and about £30 on joe.mehaffey.com.

**Scottish Highlands Meet,  
Alex Macintyre  
Memorial Hut, Onich  
19 – 22 July 2001**

The meet was arranged at short notice as a means of getting together club members in hills open to the public. Based at the Alex Macintyre Memorial Hut, North Ballachulish, the four days were outstandingly successful involving a great deal of hill walking, some climbing and a little boating.

In terms of bed space the meet was oversubscribed and it required no little ingenuity to arrange the tables, mainly imported, for our Saturday evening dinner. Catering standards are often high on these occasions and were particularly so this time. A fine meal was enjoyed by twenty-one including the amiable and helpful hut warden Mike Hansen. Apart from this treat the meet was self-catering.

Thursday was sunny with a cold wind on the tops. Beinn Dorain and Beinn an Dothaidh at Bridge of Orchy and both tops of Buchaille Etive Beag were climbed on the way to the hut. It was one of those truly magical Highland evenings.

Friday was sunny and warm with high cloud developing by afternoon. The Carn Mor Dearg round, Ben Nevis, Am Bodach area of the Mamores, Beinn Bheithir and Buchaille Etive Mor were all walked while two scrambled up the Curved Ridge on the Buchaille. One member renewed an acquaintance with the Ben going back sixty three years and found it had got bigger.

During Friday evening rain came and five more, making sleeping arrangements “cosy”.

Saturday promised and delivered rain but nevertheless, Beinn Bheithir, Stob Coire nan Lochan, Am Bodach, Beinn a Chrulaiste behind the Kingshouse were all walked over by different parties. Two separate parties scrambled along the Aonach Eagach ridge and did not enjoy the descent to Clachaig. This was especially so for one party who had to walk back up Glencoe to their car. A further party attacked Centurion on Ben Nevis in the rain, wisely leaving the top two pitches for another day.

A trip was made to Mallaig and the sailing party was hampered by lack of wind. Launching a boat is not too easy around Loch Leven but the local Hotelier and his staff made light of the job. The same hotelier had an indifferent grasp of property law.

The cloud was low on Sunday morning: midge weather. Rannoch Wall on Buchaille Etive, Ben Nevis and “something” were mentioned while the rest of us made for home in improving weather as we went south. Rannoch Wall in tyre rain turned out to be Raven Crag, Langdale in bright sunshine. That’s flexibility for you!

An impromptu meet, a great success with a magnificent dinner. Our thanks to Mr. Vice President and his kitchen helpers.

Derek Collins

## Lowstern Meet

17 - 19 August 2001

Attendance:

President, Albert Chapman

Vice Pr., David Handley

Denis Barker

Adrian Bridge

Alan Brown

Derek Collins

Ian Crowther

Robert Crowther

Adrian Dixon (Guest)

Derek English

Mike Godden

Chris Hilton (Guest,  
Jack's grandson)

John Jenkin

Tim Josephy

Harvey Lomas

John Lovett

Arthur Salmon

John Schofield

David Smith

Frank Wilkinson

Camping nearby were:

David Hick

David Martindale

It is often the case that the August meet is rather sparsely attended, and this year, in spite of the recent reopening of the hill footpaths in much of the area following relaxation of some 'foot & mouth disease' restrictions was no exception. Only five members actually sat down to the really excellent Saturday evening meal that the meet leader provided, although various additional members did make appearances at some point or points during the weekend, thus boosting the list of attenders. The low turnout must have been something of a disappointment to the meet leader who pointed out that it is almost as big a job catering for a few members as for a much larger number - it is merely a matter of degree.

In spite of this, quite a lot was achieved over the weekend. Particular mention should be made of the super outdoor barbecue which was under construction by our very newest member on a concrete base already provided for the purpose by one of our most senior members. It should be a great additional facility.

The weather was a mixture of sunshine, showers and one thunderstorm when it poured down for a short while. Rivers and caves were subsequently quite full. One amusement which occupied some of our waking hours was watching the activities of a **very** large Charolais bull in the field below the hut which seemed to show a deal of interest in our activities and particularly the brown tent erected by your scribe which it seemed to think was an attractive looking heifer. After dislodging a large capstone from our boundary wall with consummate ease,

certain intrepid members attempted to dissuade the animal from further depredations. Despite brave words, these attempts did not extend to actually entering the field to chase the enormous beast away !

Some of our most active cavers spent both Saturday organising equipment and materials for one of their ongoing 'digs' in the area and Sunday installing some new 'shoring' therein. Two more veteran cavers visited Kingsdale Master Cave on Saturday, making their way along 'Philosophers' Crawl' as far as the boulder choke which they thought better of tackling due to the very precarious 'hanging' boulders there.

Some modest walking was done on Sunday, although the principal activities seemed to be the continuation of work on the new Barbecue plus a high profile delegation who spent at least a part of the day furthering plans for this years annual dinner which the President is very anxious to succeed, incorporating some fairly radical changes in style whilst wishing to ensure that it remains true to the YRC tradition.

Ian Crowther

Attendance:

Ian Crowther  
David Handley  
John Jenkin  
Harvey Lomas  
David Smith

The following made appearances:

The President, Albert Chapman  
Bruce Bensley  
Gordon Humphreys  
John Lovett  
Alister Renton  
Chris Renton  
Neil Renton (G)  
Graham Salmon  
Richard Sealey

## North Wales Meet

### Red Lion Inn, Llansannan

7 – 9 September 2001

It was pleasing to get out on a meet finally after all the cancellations due to the foot and mouth epidemic.

As meet leader I am doing this report myself as I can claim no credit for this super meet which basically ran itself. Thanks are due to Keith Raby who recommended the location. Keith has visited the inn and area many times over recent years, joining a shooting syndicate, and felt that the area had a lot to offer to us. He will certainly get no argument from those who attended.

This is a little visited area of steep sided, largely wooded, river valleys and modest hills of between 1000 and 1250 feet. It includes extensive moors of tussock grass with scattered small reservoirs and several impressive river gorges and afforded numerous opportunities for long walks in unfamiliar territory. Whilst in easy reach of the higher summits of Snowdonia, the area was so attractive that everyone elected to explore this new territory.

It would certainly rival the Cotswolds although without the same pretty villages and would hold it's own against much of the Yorkshire Dales and Moors. It appears ignored by the normal tourism market given it's proximity to the massively impressive Snowdonia so close at hand.

The immediate benefit was the solitude, meeting almost no other walkers whilst out, and it came as a pleasant surprise to drive, or walk, along narrow country lanes where the sight of vehicle came as something of a shock. Bird life was also obvious

and unused to much disturbance by people. Large numbers of Buzzards could be seen over-flying their patches and we saw several fairly close to. We also saw a sparrow hawk patrolling the hedgerows just in front of us and a heron fishing nearby. Paths had been so little disturbed as to be anything but obvious and most members had tales to tell of cutting across country involuntarily.

Still on the wildlife front long eared bats were numerous feeding around the village street lights during the evenings.

Whilst the hills were not too big most members thought that the meals were.

The meet was based at the Red Lion Inn, Llansannan which is a very hospitable traditional inn about seven miles north of the Clocaenog forest with it's numerous large reservoirs and ten miles north east of Betws y coed.

Some members elected for the comfort of beds at a surprisingly reasonable price whilst other members either slept in their cars or camped behind the pub. All who wished to partake were blessed with enormous breakfasts and the group sat down to a three course evening meal which completely defeated several members.

The first member arrived on Thursday evening with the rest turning up at various times during Friday. Whilst a few had to depart early on the Sunday most managed to get in at least two good walks.

On Saturday, one party headed south following the river before crossing at a weir by Feilin Gadeg and then climbing up a steep hill to follow the skyline north and back past the village in the valley bottom to drop through

the valley and turn south again returning via the impressive wooded prominence of Y Foel.

We headed north east out of the village, climbing over Y Foel keeping just under the skyline to the east of the main valley, dropping into and out of several very attractive stream valleys mostly wooded with ancient deciduous trees before swinging west at Bryn Kenrick to drop through a forested area into the super village of Llanfair Talhaiarn where we took brief respite outside a hostelry which would not allow us in with our dog. We then went uphill on the west side of the valley walking directly towards the first party and unknown to each other dropping off at the same point to return into the village.

Both these walks were about twelve miles duration through very varied countryside with the tops affording some classic views.

A further party drove to the neighbouring village of Gwytherin before setting off towards the high point of the moors above Llyn Aled and they gave a lift to the last two of our numbers both recovering from recent serious surgery who made their own way upwards at a more leisurely pace. When these latter had not returned by late lunch time the first group went off by 4x4 to find them and were very much welcomed as they hove into view.

On the Sunday Keith and I drove up to Llyn Aled and did a six mile walk down the gorge of the Afon Aled and circled back over the moors before starting the long drive home.

Most members did bits and pieces of these various walks as their second efforts.



We had arrived in the dark and had elected to come all round the coast road but took a more scenic route back through Llangollen. As we left the area we took advantage to stop off and have a look at the enormous reservoir of Llyn Brenig in the Clocaenog forest and in driving round the shoulder of Moel Seisiog on the B5113 we looked out over Betws y coed with the best view of the whole Snowdon range as can be had from anywhere.

When I floated the idea of a self-running UK based meet at the same time as one of our overseas jaunts it was with a view to cutting down the long gaps with no meet for those unable to take off to more distant parts. I was conscious that with many active members in Slovenia, numbers would be fewer than usual but I had hoped for more than we actually attracted. Uncertainty as to whether it would go ahead bearing in mind foot and mouth disease also meant some members had made other commitments before it was confirmed as definite and a few who had originally signed up had to cry off due to family or work commitments.

I am happy to occasionally put together similar meets in the future but would welcome some feedback as to whether circumstances conspired to keep numbers so low on this occasion or whether the concept is not in favour with many members. Those who attended certainly seemed in favour but perhaps others could comment to either Albert or myself when any opportunity arises.

Attendance:

- Dennis Barker
- Alan Clare
- Derek Clayton
- Bob Davenport (Guest)
- Roy Denney (Meet Leader)
- Mike Godden
- Rev Jim Rusher
- Keith Raby
- Derek Smithson



**The Julian Alps,  
Slovenia  
31 August –  
14 September  
2001**



This was an open meet lead by George and Sylvie Spenceley with the express purpose of climbing Triglav.

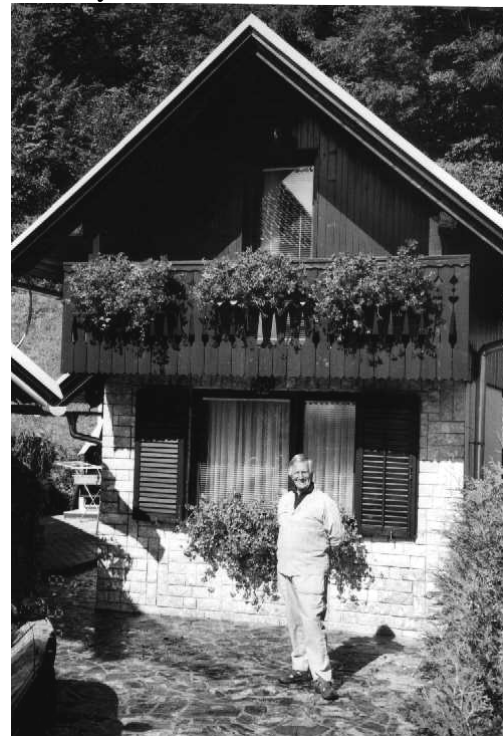
George and Sylvie were established in good time a day or two before the main arrivals to check that everything was in hand. Flights from Leeds Bradford, Manchester, Stanstead, Heathrow and Stanstead to brought most on Friday 31<sup>st</sup>, President and Vice on Monday afternoon to their Wendy House.

Now, the intrepid campers David Smith and John Lovett chose to drive and camp their way to Slovenia, most enjoyably with picnic lunches, restaurant meals at night, fresh coffee breakfasts and cosy tents to sleep in, but thundery rain every night, a little difficulty route finding fines to pay on leaving Austria, and the like. (N.B. John Lovett had not slept in a tent for forty years.) They left Clapham on the morning of Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> August and arrived at the campsite Danica in Bohinjska Bistrica, just beyond Bled, on the afternoon of Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> after 1200miles.

Our gentle introduction to this greenest of lands had us exploring the deep limestone gorge that leads to the most popular routes up Triglav, the circumnavigation of the Bohinjska lake, starting at Ribcev Laz where nothing as noisy and polluting as an internal combustion engine is allowed to power the visitors' launch shuttling from end to end – it was all electric.

This touching concern for the environment was noticeable throughout our visit.

It never ceases to amaze me the energy of the mature YRC members; walks every day, including quite high mountains, bus trips to further places of interest; I think all the gorges north of Bled were visited. Four members completed the ascent of Triglav, three from the north side. The high and lower huts on Triglav were reached on two occasions, it should be noted, by the oldest members. Mixed weather high on Triglav meant that it was pretty much of a lottery as to who actually reached the summit.



Presidential Palace



Railway station, Bohinjska Bistrica

On an off day the caves at Postojna were visited south of Ljubljana. I for one had never seen such varied formations in such concentration; the train ride into and out of the cave was a thrill, and to think it was a Russian prisoner of war camp in 1915!

The friendliness and service enjoyed in Slovenia made the stay a great success and there were mumblings of a return visit, perhaps to the Trenta valley further west.

On behalf of everyone at the meet many thanks to George and Sylvie for their work finding such a wonderful and challenging region for a meet. George's long term canvassing for a Club visit to Slovenia was thoroughly justified.

The drive home was something else; striking Trenta valley, Cortina, last over the pass to Davos across Switzerland, France to Calais via Langres and the lakes, Fontainebleau, the Chateau, Chartres, the cathedral. All in all a round trip of 3240 miles.

John Lovett and Alan Brown

### **A second perspective...**

Our interest in the Julian Alps started with a chance meeting with a Slovenian girl, Ziva Pecavcor, who was resident in the Tan-y-Wyddafa hut when the YRC arrived for the February 2001 Welsh Meet. Ziva soon grasped the nature of the YRC and together with an offer to obtain mountain stamps, suggested that Bohinjska Bistrica was a suitably remote area for the YRC. This confirmed the area chosen by the meet leader, George Spenceley, who had chosen a campsite and provided what is now a feature of meets, the URL of a web site at Bistrica.

Open meets create certain restrictions on arrangements for some, such as "I am definitely not camping" resulting in a rush to the Internet to find suitable accommodation close to the selected campsite. Yvonne Bush had the skills and style necessary to interpret the information and soon established, in English, a rapport with

one Bastian Potocnik of the Pension Potocnik.

Intuition said that this was the right place and it was located 150m from the campsite. This did not prove critical as five members were in the Pension, three on the campsite and two in the Presidential mansion.

The Potocnik was an excellent choice and became the natural centre of activity. The established rapport continued with Bastian and his wife Anja, who emphasised good service and communication with their guests were their prime objectives. We were supplied with transport, weather forecasts, local guiding information, with no request too much trouble and plenty of local colour. The fireworks we heard when Slovenia won their World Cup Match 2-1 were Klashnicovs! Bastian, Anja, the staff and all other guests spoke excellent English overshadowing our attempts at Slovene.

The meet leader lead off the first day to the Mostinica gorge and waterfalls,

missed the path on the way up, found it on the way down and waited to catch a bus that never arrived. Misinformation from the tourist office but excellent English was spoken there and in banks, post offices, hotels, huts and restaurants making our life very easy. The only reservation with Bistrica was the one-hour frequency of the excellent bus service (except the 1648 on a Saturday).

The Bushes arrived very late without luggage, were kitted out with missing gear and the entire group then away to circle the lovely Jezero Bohinjska (lake), crystal clear, shoals of trout, a kingfisher, a visit to the one month old Vogel Cable Car for information A boring return via the woods, a glance in the church window to see John the Baptist losing his head and a dash for the bus back to Bistrica.

The ladies' enjoyment on this and other side trips seemed be measured to words per km, steepness did not seem to affect the rate, which was



judged to vary between 10000 and 30000/km depending upon the number in the group. Unscientific but you get the message.

Thunderstorms forced a number of side trips including Kingfisher spotting on the river, Izviv Bistrice (you can now drive to this beauty spot), Bled, Ljubljana and the Postojna caves.

Weather was unsettled but the offer of a lift to the cable car, gave us the chance to go up and climb Vogel 1922m. Restrictions were in place – return fare – ‘I am not walking all the way down’. Well-marked paths were very useful as the threatened mist descended leaving it bitterly cold on top as we signed the summit book to tantalising glimpses of vast limestone cliffs. There were many paths down to the cable car but we elected to return on the ridge and found the hills almost deserted. Thunderstorms kept us away for a day but we returned in fine weather, on the early bus, to the cable car intending to do Vogel and Rodica 1966m. The ridge from Rodica to Ctna Prst 1844m was so inviting we opted for that. Clean bright limestone with lots of Eidelweiss and gentians lined our way. Past Raskovec 1967m the ridge draws you on but a decision had to be made. Do we drop down the 1300m from Crna prst to Bistrice or return (6 miles) for the last cable car. At Poljansku 189m we turned back to a lot of up and down on the true ridge with excellent footing and situation in glorious sunshine to catch the penultimate car down.

The offer of a lift with John Lovett to Rudvo Polje, a start point for Triglav recommended by Bastian, saw Ian Crowther and I set off for the Dom Planika hut, 2401m and only 1 hour from the summit of Triglor 2864m.

The scenic walk up was all the more enjoyable for a chance meeting with a Slovenian family, father and son. We had not booked but father pulled rank and we enjoyed the new dormitory, sheets, blankets and pillows! Together we considered a late afternoon trip up to the summit but were discouraged as it was in cloud and the morning forecast was good. A missed opportunity – very bad in the morning, hung around with a CPC member, till 10am but no improvement so we made the long slog down (1900m). No chance of staying up as it was now the weekend and the hut was booked by the annual meeting of 100 women!

Father and son confirmed what we had already been told that in Slovenia if you are tired, lost or in trouble come down a recognised path you will be given help. This was tested by others and found to be correct.

Our next plan the seven Lakes of Treglav crashed due to oversleeping and missing the one and only early bus to Slap Savica. Next time we shall hire a car. Having walked up, 400m, to the Slap (waterfall) we were unable to cross the dam at Savica due to engineering work. You can see the handrails and ladders but frustratingly cannot reach them. This forced us down taking more time to the start of a super zigzag path up the Komaraca Cliffs to reach the first of the Lakes. It was a lovely situation with a flock of redstarts to greet us. Despite a rapid drop down at the end of the day we earned black marks as we were late for the Presidential Dinner.

We have learnt a lot about the area and will return a lot fitter.

Alan Linford.

## **Triglav's Tominsek Route,** the Tominskova pot

It always sounds more impressive to report the climbing of a mountain by the north face. The northern approach to Triglav is no exception, though not especially difficult. It is not a continuous steep face but non-the less interesting throughout. Rather it is a series of gullies, terraces, and ridges and near vertical walls.

The expedition comprising the President and two former presidents were chauffeured round to Mojstrana by John Lovett, then along the Vrata valley to Alázev dom at 1015 metres. A few hundred yards beyond this hamlet is an impressive monument commemorating the mountaineers who died in the liberation fighting. It comprises a huge rock into which is driven an enormous piton hanging from which is an equally large karabina about 4 feet in length.

It was from this point our trail started by crossing the dry bed of the Bistrica. The path winds its way steeply through trees and into a rocky gully (Erjavcev graben) and onto the NW flank of Cmir. It is at this stage that the ledges, gullies and faces begin, exposed but well protected by a series of steel bars driven into the rock or by wire hand rails. Good views of the surrounding rock faces and peaks are visible at every turn of the route. The next section joins up with the Prag route up screes and over huge clint pavements. A tiny trickle of water issuing from the rock into a plastic bottle is the spring referred to in the guidebook and is the only available water en route. Has Moses been there before us? Here we met a group of young climbers who had been denied an ascent of the mountain because of new ice on the rocks.

Snow began to fall making progress requiring more care on the slippery limestone. Avoiding what seemed to be bottomless potholes was another hazard. But soon we sighted Triglávski dom na Krédarici at 2151m, a series of well appointed mountain huts and a small church where Mass is celebrated most Sundays. In the evening we were treated to a spectacular display of lighting as the sun dropped behind the neighbouring hills. Tomorrow's prospects were not good there was a good deal of ice in the col between the hut and the mountain proper.

A discussion in the morning with the warden suggested that we should descend to the valley but seeing a mixed group attempting the climb and a few solitary figures moving along the final ridge made us have a rethink. We managed to get together sufficient gear to enable us to 'cowtail' the wire protection should it be prudent to do so. Off we went across the saddle to the prominent circular marker denoting the start of the climb. The climb maintains ones interest throughout, steep rock, traverses and chimneys mark the way forward. Wire ropes and steel pegs ensure that one does not deviate into danger even in mist. Soon Mali Triglav 2725m (Little Triglav) was topped, now only an exposed but safe ridge separated us from Vélike Triglav 2864m (Great Triglav).

En route there are several plaques fixed to the rock, not marking fatalities but memorials to Slovenia's mountain history. One to Marko Pernhart, a painter and mountaineer and poet, one of the first to climb the mountain, another to Jákob Aláz, a Slovene priest and mountaineer. On reaching the summit one is faced by a large cylindrical turret like tower which provides refuge for three or four people in bad weather. This is called Alázev

stolp named after Aláz. We were rewarded by clear views of the surrounding peaks before the mist descended on the mountain. This alpine ascent must be a first for the YRC team comprising three presidents. After the obligatory photograph we descended by the same route as far as its junction with the normal route leading from the Dom Planíka and Vódnikov dom huts. There was much more new snow on this approach but no crevasses.

After a brief stop at the Planika dom hut we set off again heading for Vodnikov dom hut. Soon we encountered Alan Linford and Ian Crowther heading in the opposite direction. John Lovett, we were told, was making his way down to the lower hut. Which hut we did not clarify! To head off John before he left for Bohinjska Bistrica, it was agreed that I should try to stop him. I reached Vódnikov dom perhaps twenty minutes before Albert and Derek but no sign of John. He must have left for the lower hut at Planinska Koca Na Vojah, or so we

imagined. I again set off at speed, but instead of taking the right hand path, I went left as I thought I could see John ahead. I was soon to discover that it was not John and I was well on the way towards another valley. Without a map, John had mine; Derek had his, I could not be sure just where I might be. I went on a little and meet a couple with a map. Clearly I was a long way from the car and John. The route was called the Route Napoleon leading to Rundo polje.

I carried on along an impressive, high level path to Studorski preval 1892m. Then followed an interesting descent through forests to a road. At the end of this path to my astonishment I saw a maroon and silver car parked at the path end. It looked exactly like John's! It was John's car! Had I reached the parking spot that we thought John had used? Was I to take the car or what should I do? God and St Bernard (Patron saint of Alpinists) came to my rescue. I had the car keys in my pocket and there was the large area map in the car, my altimeter indicated the height



of a contour and a road from which I could pinpoint exactly my location. There were two car rugs, ample food and eight bottles of wine in the car. What more did I need? I battened down the hatches and settled down for the night. I was quite concerned that John may have slipped on one of the airy traverses and what my two companions were doing, worrying or thinking, but there was nothing I could do at this stage.

After a reasonable nights sleep and breakfast came one hundred ladies of many different age groups accompanied by a single guide. It appeared that they were to attempt Triglav and guarantee that they were true Slovenians. At about ten I was again amazed to see Bastian's car (the keeper of the hotel where many of our party were staying) approaching with Alan Brown and George Spenceley on board. I think they were a little surprised too. Bastian offered me a lift back to Bohinjska Bistrica, which I gladly accepted. Alan and George were to do the traverse to Vodnikov dom that I had used. It turned out that Alan Linford had recognised that this approach gained much more height than the Planinska Koca Navojah route.

It was a nice ride back and an opportunity of talking to the most, friendly and helpful of hotelkeepers. He had previously given Albert and I a lift after an earlier excursion back to Bohinjska Bistrica and bought us both a drink to boot. I called on Angie, Yvonne and Derek to report my return and was offered a most welcome shower from Angie. Derek had been clearly worried by my disappearance but was consoled by Yvonne who suggested that I would come to no harm, having survived lightening, crevasses, snowstorms and a fall.

Unfortunately Alan and Ian were denied the summit due to more snow and ice, as were George and Alan. Derek and Albert reached the lowest hut in the dark but safe and luckily were given a much appreciated lift back to Bohinjska Bistrica. John may well have been in the hut at Vodnikov dom when we were there or at least in the area. He stopped the night at the hut and returned to his car in the morning meeting the 'hundred and one' group and acted as traffic policeman on the narrow path much to their amusement. I had left my Gortex at Vodnikov dom but Alan and George were able to recover it, identifying it by its colour and a stone from Triglav in the pocket. George Burfitt made a successful solo ascent later in the week in difficult conditions but was benighted in the woods on his return. It was a great mountain day, well worth the effort, despite the subsequent but interesting diversion.

David Smith

#### Attendees:

The President, Albert Chapman

Alan and Madge Brown

Derek and Yvonne Bush

Ian and Dorothy Crowther

Alan and Angie Linford

George and Sylvie Spenceley

David Handley

John Lovett

David Smith

George and Vivian Burfitt late arrivals



**Harry Spilsbury Memorial  
Meet  
21-23 September 2001  
Joint with the Wayfarers  
and Rucksack Clubs  
Robertson Lamb Hut,  
Langdale**

The forecasters had been promising us good weather for the weekend. For once they got it right!

A few members arrived early and took the opportunity to carry out low-level valley walks and, just as an afterthought, sample the beer at the local hostelry. Twenty-five sat down to Dinner on Friday evening, which the meet organisers Harold Mellor and Ken Aldred confirmed was a record.

There was a little rain in the night but Saturday dawned fine but misty with the cloud base down to some 1500' but no wind. Every one for once seemed to have teamed up and knew what they were doing for the day. One potential leader arrived from North Lancashire at 7.45am glanced anxiously at his watch as he saw every one eating breakfast but was persuaded to relax and have a cup of tea. They eventually got off at about 8.30am. More of that party later.

Our party decided to ascend to the heights by the splendid 'new' track up Stickle Ghyll to the tarn. The only noise in the early morning was the ripple of the beck and the bleating of the Herdwick lambs flitting ghost like through the bracken. Stickle Tarn was wreathed in mist, as flat as a millpond, the only ripple caused by two male mallard ducks with a female.

We traversed around the tarn and up to the foot of Jacks Rake where we took a breather only to be passed by a large party intent on the same course.

Eventually we followed up on greasy rock, which required care. The ascent evoked memories of past climbs starting from this natural staircase. As we ascended the sun broke through the mist giving an almost ethereal shadow on the tarn. On top the party was joined by two other members and proceeded towards Harrison Stickle where we had lunch overlooking Dungeon Ghyll. Enough of this party! Suffice to say we eventually found ourselves going over Bowfell and down the Band on another magnificent path with glorious views northwards to Skiddaw and Blencathra and south over Morecambe Bay.

Perhaps the party having the longest day was lead by the aforementioned 'anxious one' up Rosset Gill across to Sty Head joining the Corridor Route to Lingmell. They then cut across the Great End crags onto the normal track to Scafell Pike and down to Esk Hause and followed their footsteps back to the Old D.G.

On returning to RLH everyone was in great spirits having enjoyed a glorious day on the hills. Helvellyn had been visited where it was reported there were long queues on the more delicate bits of Striding Edge. Another party went up Blencathra via Sharp Edge where in, certain areas over the back, Foot and Mouth restrictions still applied. The Fairfield Horseshoe was accomplished, this being the only party which reported a cold strong east wind, no doubt due to the cloud cover being slow to clear on the eastern fells. Incidentally we heard during the day that Kentmere was again closed due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic.

The buffet dinner on Saturday more than lived up to its reputation with enough food of the highest quality to satisfy the most discerning palates. Dave Wood the President of The

Wayfarers Club thanked the organisers Harold and Ken not only for their splendid catering but also for ensuring that this meet was a permanent fixture on both Club's meet calendars and expressed a wish that long may it continue. . The members present unanimously showed their accord and Albert Chapman the Yorkshire Ramblers President expressed the same sentiments stressing how important it was that these links should be maintained through this joint occasion.

Sunday morning was as always a little more relaxed. The weather was still fine with probably less mist around than Saturday. Some members had to start the long journey south. Local walks were arranged and some of the YRC went over to Low Hall Garth, unused for meets since February. A party of two went round Fairfield and confirmed that it was indeed cold and windy over that part of the Lakes. The parties that kept local to Langdale and fairly low down must have had the best of the weather.

It was great despite all the recent scares to still see the Herdwicks on the fellside. Long may it be so.

George Band the old Everest climber has been credited with saying that the improved safety equipment of today allows the 'old' climbers to climb roughly to the same standard of our youth. I can only add that the huge effort which has gone into improving the eroded paths of the Lake District has enabled us old walkers to get up and down the hills 'almost' as easily as in our youth. For that we must thank the National Park Authority.

Finally how can anyone finish a Joint Meet report without sincere thanks to Harold Mellor and Ken Aldred who make it all possible?

Derek Bush

Attendance:

### **Wayfarers**

Steve Auty  
Mike Gee  
G Graham (Guest)  
Peter Harvey  
Jim Honeybone  
Bob Hughes  
Les Hughes  
Hal Jacob  
Chris Kenney  
Harold Mellor  
Dave Wood, President  
Cliff Wray

### **Rucksack**

Eric Cook  
Bill Rylands

### **Yorkshire Ramblers**

The President, Albert Chapman  
Ken Aldred  
Dennis Armstrong  
Denis Barker  
Alan Brown  
Derek Bush  
Cliff Cobb  
Roger Dix  
Mike Godden  
Mike Hartland  
Jeff Hooper  
Alan Linford  
Harry Robinson  
John Schofield  
David Smith  
Derek Smithson  
Bill Tod