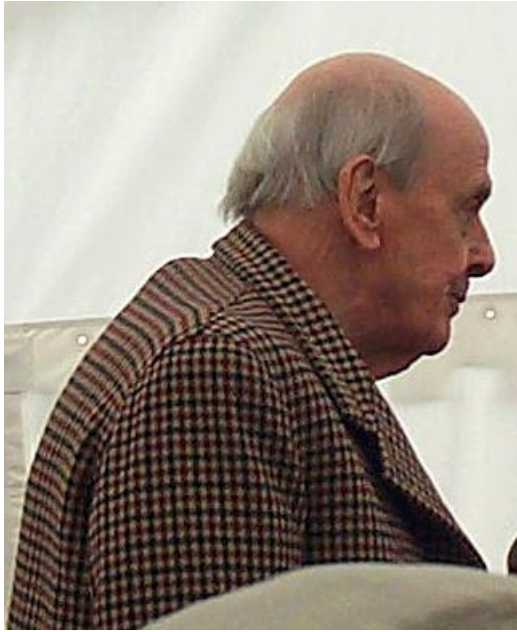


Yorkshire Rambler

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Clockwise from here: Michael Meacher, Duke of Devonshire, one of the original trespassers and Mike Harding

Foreword

One item that failed to make the last issue was a timely reminder from a member with a deep love for England's wilder places. He noted the passing of a small man who had a large influence on rambling. Benny Rothman had died shortly before the 70th anniversary of his address to hundreds gathered at Hayfield quarry before the mass trespass of Kinder, then Derbyshire's 'forbidden mountain'. In the short term it led to convictions and imprisonments for riotous assembly. Arguably, in the longer term it led to the formation of the Ramblers' Association, the National Parks and the more recent Countryside and Rights of Way Act's right to roam.

A year ago, with over a thousand others, I joined another gathering in the same quarry to remember the spirit and sacrifice of those trespassers. With the improbable combination of the Duke of Devonshire and then Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, led by the Ramblers' Association's Mike Harding, we sang the Manchester Rambler, raising the marquee roof despite the rain. Attempts by a landowners-cum-hunting-lobby to provoke the crowd into a reaction were ignored and looked foolish.

These memories were rekindled by a report in the paper of the recent passing of the last of the trespassers, Sheffield's Bill Keen and Manchester's Jimmy Jones. We are indebted to all those early campaigners and their successors who kept up the pressure for the access we now enjoy. As we tramp over new moors and fells we should take a moment to remember them.



Editor

"I am aware that I represent the villain of the piece this afternoon, but over the past 70 years times have changed and it gives me enormous pleasure to welcome walkers to my estate today. The trespass was a great shaming event on my family, and the sentences handed down were appalling. But out of great evil can come great good. The trespass was the first event in the whole movement of access to the countryside and the creation of our National Parks"

Duke of Devonshire

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act "is not the seizure of the privileges of the great landowners it is the restoration of the normal, historic rights of access to the finest and wildest areas of moorland and mountain which, prior to the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries, had always been common land, open to all. What this is about is reclaiming our common heritage".

Michael Meacher

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

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Drakensberg Trek

September 2002

Albert Chapman

With no real hope of being accepted I filled in an application form a year ago for the joint British Mountaineering Council and Mountaineering Club of South Africa KwaZooloo-Natal Section (or Zoo for short)

Trekking Exchange due to be held in the Drakensberg mountains. To my surprise (not having been, until then, a notable supporter of the BMC) I was one of the seven selected to go. Once selected, though, I thought the whole concept commendable. Not to my surprise I was the oldest by far. The youngest was Tom, twenty-one.

The BMC gave us each £100 for the purchase of food at a local supermarket and we were driven to the start of our trek.

It was wonderful to experience these mountains so rarely visited by we Brits so do read on.

The BMC contingent was myself, most commonly referred to as "Yorkshire", Fiona, Davy and Elaine, Gilbert, Brian (or "Irish"), Tom and Ian. While the Zoo consisted of Steve (called the Indecisive), Dylan (Rambo) and Ian (known as the Dark



Avenger).

All the Brits made their own way by air to Pietermaritzburg arriving on the Friday "Vomit Comet", not without some excitement since the cloud base closed in just after we landed making for an interesting approach diving through the clouds. Gavin whisked everyone off to their various hosts, and then later all reunited for a communal supper.

Saturday saw the Brits spending their £100 (courtesy of the BMC) at a local supermarket provisioning for the trek and then a gathering at Gavin and





Barbara's home for a braai. The evening began with a Greig Stewart slide show on the conservation challenges facing the Drakensberg, and giving a flavour of sights in store for us.

After, in my case, a bad night on a settee, Sunday was hardly an alpine start as we drove into the Mnweni in four vehicles with Gavin, Glenn, Frank and Cesar kindly stepping in to drive the cars round to Cathedral, our endpoint. A quick visit to the Mnweni visitors centre, resplendent in its coat of orange paint, before we got the packs out of the car to begin the great trek.

As soon as we set off we got lost, fortunately no one noticed, not even the leader and a pleasant detour via a waterfall and some settlements not previously visited saw us back on track. The day was balmy and a leisurely lunch below Mlambu's kraal was followed by a hot afternoon slog into a campsite near Shepherd's cave. We Brits tried several sprigs of local

herb in our couscous which had a doubtful influence on the quality of later sleep. I immediately established a feedback mechanism to the leadership using a scale from two thumbs up (A-OK) to two thumbs down (kill me, things are desperate!) It is worth mentioning through out the trip that we never got below 1½ thumbs up! Certain apparently well-connected Brits who shall remain nameless, were praying for all sorts of weather, so after midnight a thunderstorm swept over the valley keeping us all awake. The three zoological specimens took up residence in Ian's "stately pleasure dome", and the Brits in various abodes, the least of which being Fiona's single person tent dubbed the Badger Trap.

An early start on day two was required in view of the 1500m of height gain in 6km on the menu. In the cool of the morning we threaded our way through the lush undergrowth of the Mbundini Valley. By 9am we were at the junction of the Fangs and



Mbundini passes, and the task ahead of us was blatantly obvious as the top of the pass looked so close despite seeming almost unreachable.

We Brits found a wee 'berg adder on the ridge, and soon we began the interminable traversing into the pass gully.



I suppose in spring one should expect changeable weather, and during lunch another thunderstorm swept first south and then back north pelting us with hail. We trudged on amid amazing scenes of light, storm and rainbows, summitting late in the afternoon to camp in the jaws of a thirty knot wind from the northwest.

Overnight temperatures plummeted to -17°C in the bell of the tent and in the

morning the wind freshened. Without another option, we donned our full set of wild weather clothing and set off for Ledger's Cave. Things went well until the snow that was forecast for the southern 'berg arrived in the north. Buffeted about by an ever increasing wind, and faces stung by blizzard snow, we fought our way to lunch to cower in the lee of a buttress above the Mnweni Pins.

Being out of the wind was almost surreal, but we came down to earth with a bang as we set off once again into the gale. The realization that we were unlikely to make Ledger's Cave before night fall saw us set up camp behind an outcrop in a cwm above the hanging valleys. The wind persisted through the night.





Day four dawned bright and clear and the wind lost some of its edge. The plan now was to “cut the corner” and try and catch up the four kilometres we had not covered the previous day. A splendid day’s trek was had, as we walked a long gently descending arc into the confluence of the Orange and the Koakoatsi, and then trundled up the latter lunching at a delightful spot behind the North Peak of the Saddle. Irish determined that the valley above us was no more than 600ft high and since the map required a 1000ft high one, insisted that we find something bigger to help us while away the long afternoon. Cresting the ridge as we looked down into the valley that feeds Ntonjelane Pass, we were once more in the wind, and another strategically placed “copout” campsite in a valley reared its ugly (but welcome) head, dissolving whatever remaining resolve was left for a determined finish to the day. It was at this point that I remarked “I jus luv this trip, since nun of us knows what’s going to ‘appen in the next ten minutes, ‘cos Steve jus’ keeps changing his mind!” This unnamed valley was bordered on the east by the level escarpment edge, with a spectacular view of the South Saddle

brooding above us to the north, and the grandeur of the Cathedral range to the east.

We Brits members caused all sorts of cardiac palpitations for the locals as we posed with legs over the edge to get photos like those in the postcards.



Various mutterings like “enough of this character building stuff, let’s get off the mountain while we’re still able” prompted a democratic process which by unanimous vote meant that we would descend a day early via the Mlambonja Pass to stay in Xen Cave. A quick call to Gavin to rearrange transport was made, and we rested easy knowing that relief was in sight. Little did we know.

Another day in paradise dawned clear and bright, and we made good time to

the top of the Mlambonja Pass still in the freezing wind. No sooner had we begun the descent and our progress was hampered by stops as we all in turn flung off our arctic apparel, like butterflies emerging from cocoons. I hasten to add that our appearance lacked the pristine beauty that a butterfly exhibits, and it was our sense of smell that needed to harden, rather than freshly formed wings. "Only a 1000 metres down to the contour path" announced Steve. The first half went quickly enough, but the second half taxed our quads to the limit, and then I decided to practice flying by stepping on a loose rock turning my ankle and bashing my head, all in a single flawless flight. Elaine our professional physiotherapist strapped up the ankle, and while this was in progress, Irish and Gilbert upped the stakes for the title of Rambo by charging off with my sac across the contour path and down into the Mlambonja River valley. Soon enough the path ran out for them and they peered upwards to see the rest of the party high above them on the path. Gilbert immediately engaged in self-flagellation by cursing and throwing the third sac upwards ahead of him, as they made slow but steady progress towards us. The contents of my sac were then divided up amongst the others. I kept an eye on this lest they were going to leave me for dead and stroll off with the spoils.

We soon gained the path on the ridge down to the Mlambonja, but when Steve, in a rare break of character, decisively set off down a steep slope to enter the Xenj, mutiny broke out, and once again our quest to sleep in a cave was overtaken by expediency as we followed

the path down to the valley. Another welcome campsite was found as the ridge path hit the valley and Gavin soon joined us to a hero's welcome as he produced beer from his sac.

Needless to say our start the next morning was a leisurely affair using some spare time to visit the Spionkop battlefield where the Boers massacred several hundred British soldiers.

We wound up the entire proceedings with a splendid dinner at the Hilton Hotel, where Tom made a passionate speech and impressed us all. Gavin presented each of the Brits with an MCSA Journal and the Brits gave the MCSA two magnificent books on Scotland and Ireland.

Eleven people, almost all of whom did not know any other member of the party came together to trek through the Drakensberg. We faced extreme weather and personal challenge and we all got along as though we had known each other a lifetime. I continue to be amazed how people who are passionate about mountains can do this more often than not.

It was a great privilege to participate in this meet and I look forward to helping host MCSA members on the return leg when they visit the UK. Incidentally I discovered the MCSA was founded in 1891 just a year before ourselves.



Fong Yen Fly Cats

Ged Campion

An account of one adventure from the international 2002 Hidden River Expedition to Guangxi Province in Southern China. As deputy expedition leader Ged joined a number of YRC members and others to explore one of the most extensive areas of limestone in the world. The main focus of the expedition was to follow a major river into the mountainous area and discover its route through to its resurgence. However other major features were also explored and a total of thirty kilometres of new cave passage discovered over a period of six weeks.

As I ventured to the edge of the drop in front of me the scale of this huge chasm became apparent, mist and water vapour rising from the depths gave it an eerie feel, a savage place but somehow enchanting. A stone to test the size of the drop fell silently for a long time then inaudibly clattered away into oblivion as if to defy any attempt to gauge the awesome dimensions. A few breeding birds rose squawking from the shadows to mark their disapproval. We would be the first explorers to disturb the sanctity of this place with our whirling drills, unreeling ropes and silly chatter. A beam of sunlight filtered through the trees dissolving the dank mist below to reveal some of the secrets that lay beyond. This place would be ours now as the noise of the 36volt Hilti drill thundered across the void.

Fong Yen was to swallow almost a kilometre of rope before it gave up. It seemed a promising exploration as news from the teams in our main objective Dashiwei, suggested things



were closing down in the big passage, the river disappearing contemptuously and tantalisingly down a hading slot, too perilous for any caver to enter.

We had descended Fong Yen 18 months previously to approximately 200 metres until we had run out of rope and time. Just imagine a huge canyon that's begging for a roof well that's what this gem of a pothole is like. It was a major objective on our minds and the way it just kept cutting down held promise for us to relocate the Hidden River. After the second day exploring its vertical walls with a full days rigging behind us we reached the point of our previous exploration, 200 metres down, and for the first time had to fire up our carbides and leave daylight behind. We were to discover however that we were not entirely alone in this huge mystical place. Quite curiously, at the bottom of the longest vertical Bruce to his amazement noticed a small creature in a rock recess by a pool. On closer inspection with our limited knowledge of Chinese mammalia we eventually understood it to be a flying squirrel, locally known as fly cat (fay mow). It was just sitting there seemingly oblivious to the seriousness of our exploration. Apart from a slightly

disjointed back leg it seemed in good health. Whilst skimming through trees high above this fly cat must have soared too close to the edge of the precipice, lost altitude and spiralled helplessly into the void. We hadn't seen it the previous day so it must have landed the night before after we had exited the cave. Stewart offered it the leftovers of his luminous Chinese sausage but full of life and furiously independent it repelled any advances of help. Roman and Pascale, our Swiss/French contingent, the more philosophical amongst us felt that nature should take its course, but Bruce, Stewart and I had ideas about reuniting it with its family in the forest above. So temporarily leaving it behind to give ourselves plenty of time to ponder on a suitable rodent catching strategy, we continued. We were just about recovered from the excitement of our unusual discovery when Roman yelled up from the bottom of the next pitch, 'another squirrel'. By now a seasoned scurridean expert, Bruce confirmed the find. This one was even more animated than its estranged companion, growling and bearing his sharp talons as it crouched within the security of its rocky recess.

But for now we had to go on to find out what other surprises Fong Yen held for us. The nature of the passage changed quite dramatically, muddier and less airy. Gloomy chambers and a cracked mud floor gave way to a quicksand floor that was only possible to cross with the aid of tree trunks judiciously placed at intervals that had been conveniently washed into the chasm during times of flood. After a few metres a more stable floor led to a low arch requiring kneeling for the first time. Beyond, the passage enlarged considerably with an incredible temperature change as hot

as a dragon's breath just as if someone had turned on an electric fan heater. We had witnessed this sort of temperature change in Oman, but never before in China. A further 20 metre pitch led disappointingly to a sump at 500 metres. Once again the Hidden River had eluded us, only silence and sediment remained. Our thoughts turned to the journey out and our awaiting mammalian friends.

As we returned to our quarry, we consoled ourselves with the fact that we had at least been inoculated against rabies but that didn't help as we anxiously avoided being bitten by these whirling, growling, spitting fur balls as we cornered them. Mr. Chen our Nanning TV caver and cameraman, in true David Attenborough style excitedly recorded the whole episode. After a number of failed attempts to bag our quarry the technique of basically grabbing the creature by the tail and holding it at arms length and dropping it into an open tackle sack was the simplest and most effective method. After all they were tired and hungry and became suitably compliant. Each squirrel had its own bag in case they were of the same sex or of course the opposite! Prusiking back up the 700 metre of rope far from being the normal lonely experience was quite entertaining with the two rodents wriggling around on my back but after twenty minutes or so more familiar with their temporary home, they were fully resigned to their evacuation.

It was very late when we arrived on the surface and the Chinese support team dutifully waiting, anxious to inspect our quarry as they had been listening into the radio conversations from below. Convinced that we were going native and wanting more than just the delicacies that the hotel could

offer us, gesticulated a number of methods of preparing the squirrels for supper. However, we dispelled any such ideas and set about the business of finding a place to free our furry friends at a suitable distance from the hole. At the foot of a large tree, although at first a little reluctant to leave the security of the tackle sacks, they eventually dropped out one by one to the forest floor a little dishevelled, but once re-orientated they scurried away finding refuge in the tree. Once again, Mr Chen was carefully choreographing the filming

of this conservation showpiece.

After fully researching our interesting finds we were to discover that our Flycats were in fact Giant Flying Squirrels (Rodentia; sciuridae, genus *Petaurista alborufus*). These flying magicians are nocturnal and arboreal, usually located 15-30 metres in the trees. They spend daylight hours in hollow trees or branches and become active after dusk. They travel through the treetops in a squirrel-like manner, but when a branch or a tree is too distant to reach by an ordinary leap, they go to a higher branch and leap



Their head and body length ranges 305-585mm, tail length, 345-635mm, and their weight is about 1-2 kilograms. The soft fur is fairly long on the back. The upper parts are yellowish grey, bright brown, chestnut, or black. Their underparts are yellowish buffy, brownish or white. The tail is generally the colour of the back. These squirrels have short broad heads; complex molars; and a tail that is bushy, cylindrical, and as long or longer than the head and body.

toward the objective, extending the membrane as they spread the arms forward and out, and the legs backward and out. At first the glide is downward at an angle, but as they approach the objective, they ascend for the last metre or so before alighting. Some apparently can glide up to 450 metres!

These squirrels seem to have a basic knowledge of aeronautics, since at times they may ride on ascending currents of air coming up from deep clefts or caves. In flight they are actually capable of banking and on some occasions they have been observed to make several banks in the course of a single glide. The diet of these rodents consists of fruit, nuts, young twigs, tender shoots, leaves, and sometimes insects and larvae. In springtime (March-April) in Southern

China, they have been seen to be so engorged with young leaf and flower buds that they probably could not glide with such alacrity; they are noticeably heavier at this time of the year. And this may have been why our squirrels had misplaced their leaps!

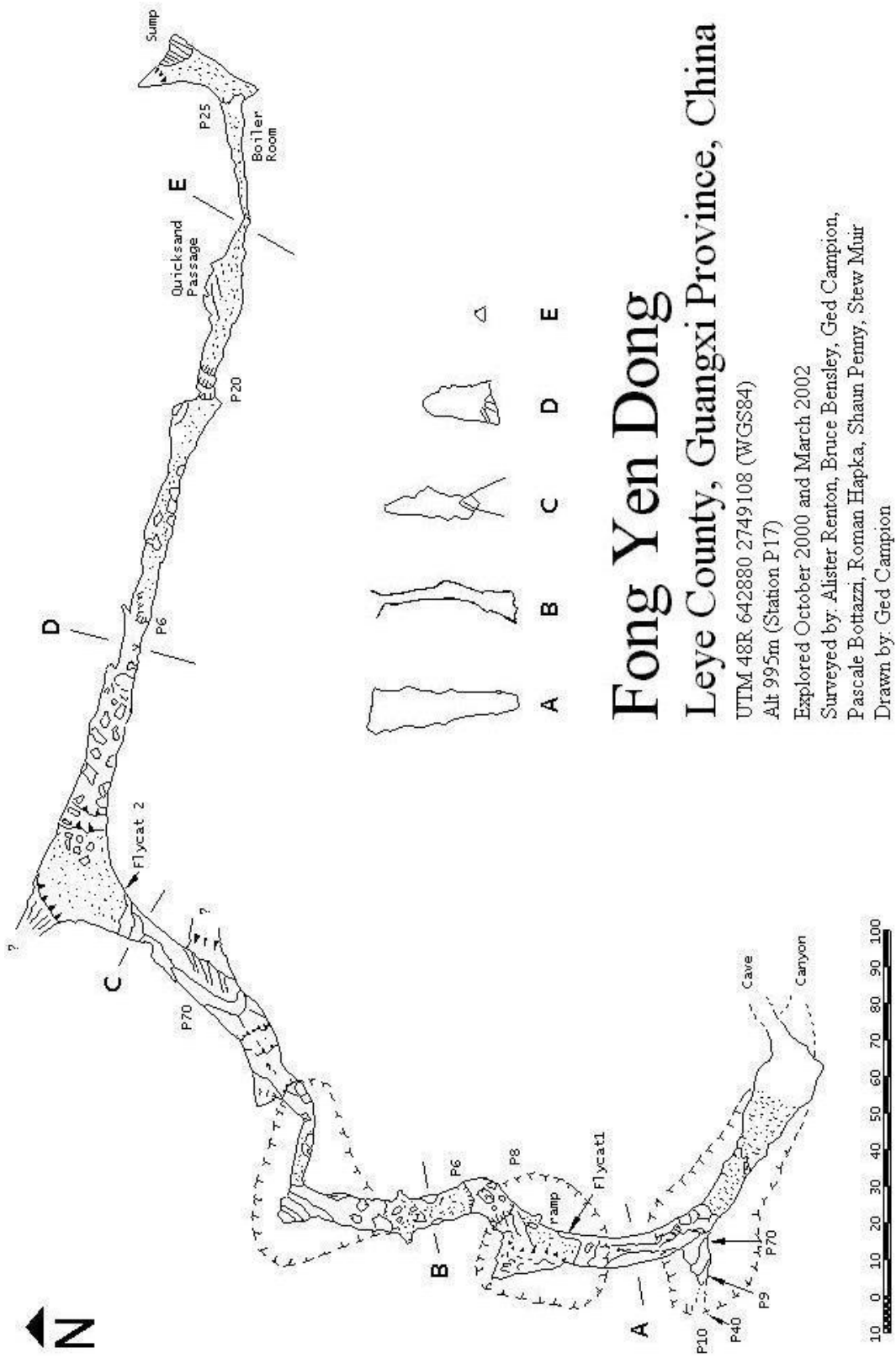
Another theory as to why we encountered two in the duration of a single trip was that our caving activity the previous evening with an array of lights may have disorientated them so much that they had missed their perches and fallen therefore we had possibly played a significant part in their misfortune. It seemed justifiable therefore that we should have made such bold attempts to rescue them from the murky depths.

Giant flying squirrels have been hunted intensively by local Chinese and have in the past served as

important food items at certain times of the year. However, the loss of forest habitat and killing by people led Wang Zheng and Kobayashi (1989) to classify them as endangered. The existence of a number of small bones 200 metres in the chasm confirmed that other fallen fly cats had not been so lucky in the past.

YRC members exploring Fong Yen were:
Ged Campion,
Alister Renton, and
Bruce Bensley.





Fong Yen Dong

Leye County, Guangxi Province, China

UTM 48R 642880 2749108 (WGS84)

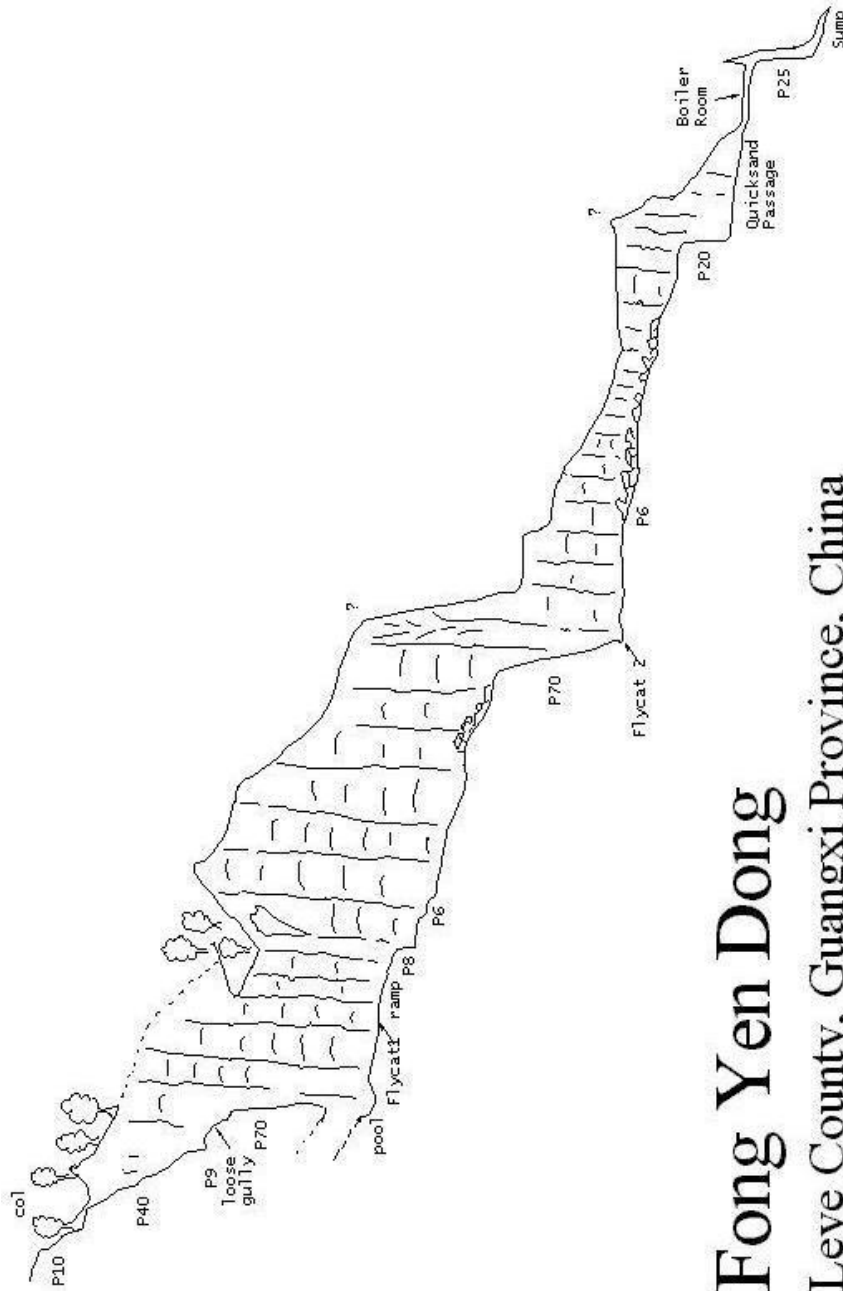
Alt 99.5m (Station P17)

Explored October 2000 and March 2002

Surveyed by: Alister Renton, Bruce Bensley, Ged Campion,

Pascale Bottazzi, Roman Hapka, Shaun Penny, Stew Muir

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The Alderley Edge Mines

Nigel J Dibben

History Copper and lead mining is known to have taken place at Alderley Edge since the 1690s. Firm evidence of earlier mining exists in the form of crudely shaped stones and an oak shovel found during the nineteenth century near Brinlow. These have been identified as Bronze Age tools from around 1750 BC. Roman mining has been found at Engine Vein where a forty foot deep shaft and passage were dug down to reach the vein below the Bronze Age workings. The shaft has been dated to the first century AD.

From 1693 to the mid-1800s various people are reported to have explored the Edge for copper. Work was done at Saddlebole, Stormy Point, Engine Vein and Brinlow. It is likely that the near-surface sections of Wood Mine were investigated during this period. One operator of note was Charles Roe of Macclesfield who worked the mines from 1758 to 1768 before moving over to Anglesey on the discovery of major deposits of copper at Parys Mountain.

In 1857, a Bristol man, James Michell, started work at West Mine and moved on in the 1860s to Wood Mine. His company lasted 21 years (the length of the lease) although Michell died in an accident in the mines in 1862. During this working period nearly 200,000 tons of ore were removed yielding 3,500 tons of copper metal. The West Mine closed in 1877 and the Abandonment Plan of 1878 shows all the workings open at that date. All equipment was sold in 1878. There were some small and unsuccessful attempts to re-open the mines just

before and during the First World War but these ended in a sale of equipment in 1926.

From the 1860s onwards there have been many thousands of visitors to the mines, many - including the earliest - with good lighting and experienced leaders. However, many other visitors, especially between 1940 and 1960, were ill-equipped and unprepared. This led to a series of tragic accidents that gained the mines a notoriety that still haunts them today. The West and Wood Mines were finally blocked in the early 1960s.

In 1969 the Derbyshire Caving Club obtained permission from the National Trust (the owners) to re-open Wood Mine. Since 1970 thousands more visitors have been provided with miners' lamps and helmets and led in safety around Wood Mine and Engine Vein. In 1975 the owner of West Mine allowed the Caving Club to make a new and safe entrance to that mine. In 1981 the Engine Vein was capped for safety and added to the Caving Club's lease.

In the late 1980s an Open Day was inaugurated by the Club and for one or two weekends each year the public can visit a selected mine without making prior arrangements. These have become popular local events but we still take other groups around the mines a couple of times a month.

Until the end of the seventeenth century, explosives were not available and all rock had to be cut by hand. At the Edge, where the rock is soft, this practice continued into the early nineteenth century and pick marks can be seen in many places in Engine Vein and Brinlow mines. Throughout the Wood and West Mines (which were mainly worked in the nineteenth century) the rock was drilled by hand

and blasted with black powder (gunpowder). The ore was roughly sorted at the face and “deads”, the waste rock, were left behind in heaps. The good ore was trammed to the surface where it was crushed and the copper extracted using acid. The ore gave about 2% copper. In the second half of the nineteenth century, some 200,000 tons of ore were raised from all of the Alderley Edge Mines, yielding 3,500 tons of copper worth £3,000,000 at the time.

Wood Mine Wood Mine was worked for copper, lead and, possibly, cobalt. Although Wood Mine is not the largest mine, it is a good illustration of mining techniques and minerals. The mine is mostly the result of working between the early 1860s and 1877. The mine was worked on three beds or levels and the ore was removed through one of two adits; one is the present entrance and the second is the **Hough Level**.

There were five shaft entrances to Wood Mine, four were probably driven to find the extent of the ore and the fifth, a 90 feet deep shaft, to extract ore straight to the treatment works. Later, two adit entrances were made, one connecting with the bottom of the deep shaft and the other, the present main entrance, connecting with the upper levels of North End Chamber and Sand Cavern. This latter adit would have been useful in extracting ore from quarries, now infilled, which lie above Wood Mine.

West Mine By contrast with Wood Mine, West Mine is immense. It is by far the largest and longest of the Alderley Edge mines at around six miles in length. The current entrance is a small hole in the corner of a field but previously the entrance was a massive open cutting, 50 feet deep leading to a gaping entrance 30 feet

high. Inside, the mine consists of two parts divided by a fault.

In the first part, the Main Chamber is the largest single void in the mine at around 500 feet long by 50 feet high and 100 feet wide. From the Main Chamber, a railway tunnel leads down to the Sphinx Chamber and then through a now-buried section to the second part of the mine. By climbing a ladder, ascending a steep passage and crossing the infamous Plank Shaft, the scene of many accidents in the past, the Great Arroyo is reached. From here, there are two and, further on, three routes to the end of the mine. These pass through the Lion Chamber, the scene of one chapter in Alan Garner's novel "*The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*", past several ore chutes to a dead end. Legends abound that this tunnel or another nearby continues down to the cellars of the de Trafford Arms in the village!

Despite the legends, you still have to return out by the same way as you went in, as there is only one open entrance. When the mine was working, there were two air shafts – one at the middle and one near the end. At some stage in the development of the mine, another five or more shafts were open to the surface but these have all been capped with stone slabs.

Engine Vein This mine gets its name from a deep shaft which required an engine (probably a horse gin, not steam) and the fact that it is mainly dug along one mineral vein. The name is quite old. Within Engine Vein, you can see evidence of all periods of mining from 1750 BC to 1919 AD. There are Bronze Age pits, large Roman galleries, narrow mediæval “coffin levels” (so-named from their shape) and worked out stopes blasted by gunpowder.

Engine Vein is also deeper than any other mine except West Mine with workings on several levels starting from near the surface to 100 feet below ground. However, deeper still is the Hough Level that connects all the mines on the eastern side of the nineteenth century treatment works. This level is over 150 feet below the surface at Engine Vein and runs for nearly a mile from Dickens Wood to the works.

When you enter Engine Vein, you start in a side passage only 150 years old but soon reach the main vein working with sections 2000 years old. Modern steps take you down to a bridge installed by the caving club, leading to the upper levels at the west end of the mine. Stairs down from the bridge lead to lower levels and give access to the vein in Blue Shaft Passage. Blue Shaft is a beautifully coloured shaft leading down to the Hough Level.

Brinlow Mine Brinlow is a small but interesting mine as it has, like Engine Vein, been worked in at least three different periods. There is evidence of Bronze Age working at the surface and of 18th century mining in the form of a set of initials on a wall dated 1764. The initials include a typical I with cross bar and W formed of two overlapping Vs. Later mining is shown by the Hough Level passing through Brinlow (which is partly flooded here, making an interesting caving trip) and another set of initials dating to 1866. The entrance is a fine coffin level but the main mine shows evidence of blasting.

The Cobalt Mine A few years ago, the DCC descended an innocent looking well behind the Wizard restaurant and found that it connected with a previously unknown mine, unknown, that is, in recent times. The mine was subsequently explored and

two other entrance shafts cleared giving a small but interesting through trip between 30 and 60 feet below the surface. The most recent discovery in this mine was a shaft in the floor of the room used by the Club as an exhibition space! The shaft was found during building refurbishment and was subsequently dug and lit out by the Club. Named Tom's Shaft in memory of a Club member, this shaft is about 40 feet deep. Visitors can now look straight down into the mine from within the museum. Whether the mine really was a cobalt mine is not certain but we know that cobalt was worked at the Edge in the early 1800s and this mine has very little evidence of copper. The likelihood is that it was the cobalt mine but it is unlikely that we shall ever get proof.

The other mines at the Edge include Stormy Point Mine, Saddlebole and Finlow Hill Mine.



The Wizard and the Beacon from a 19th century mining company's share certificate.

The Geology of Alderley Edge

Alderley Edge is made of sandstones which dip from the Edge towards the Congleton Road (A34) at about 12° to the horizontal. The sandstone is not one solid mass but is in layers many feet thick. Each bed is slightly different in origin, hardness and colour. All the rocks at Alderley were laid down about 180 to 250 million years ago. The youngest rocks are the West Mine beds which are formed from air-borne sand and form the thickest layers at Alderley. Below them are the Wood Mine beds formed of alternating layers of conglomerate, water-deposited sandstone and clay. Below these again are the hard beds

Minerals found in the Alderley Edge Mines

Of all the minerals present at Alderley Edge, sandstone, consisting of quartz or silica (SiO_2) grains is clearly the most abundant. The useful minerals are the metal ores which are found in the sandstone or in faults through the sandstone. The common minerals are listed below:

Malachite: Basic copper carbonate - $\text{Cu}_2\text{CO}_3(\text{OH})_2$

Green malachite is the most common economically viable ore at Alderley Edge and was the object of most of the mining. It was formed by the reaction of surface water containing dissolved carbon dioxide with "primary" sulphide ores such as chalcocite (Cu_2S) traces of which are still present in the ore body.

Azurite: Basic copper carbonate - $\text{Cu}_3(\text{CO}_3)_2(\text{OH})_2$

Found with the malachite, the less common azurite is bright blue (especially when damp) and is formed in a similar way to malachite. Azurite is found in one unusual form in Engine Vein where small spheres, about 3 mm in diameter, are found dispersed in a grey clay.

Chrysocolla: Hydrous copper silicate - $\text{CuSiO}_3 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$

Chrysocolla is also a secondary mineral and forms in abandoned mine passages from trickling water. It is a beautiful deep blue-green colour when damp and forms the "Green Waterfalls" in Wood Mine and the "Green River" in West Mine.

Galena: Lead sulphide – PbS

Pure galena is shiny grey and looks like lead metal. At Alderley it is more often dispersed in the sandstone as grey specks although the characteristic cubic crystals can still be seen with the aid of a hand lens. The carbonate of lead, cerussite (PbCO_3), is also found abundantly at Alderley.

Asbolite: Manganese/cobalt oxides and arsenates

Black and found in small patches in several places in the mines. More strictly known as 'Cobaltian Wad', asbolite was worked for a short time to obtain cobalt for blue colouring in glass and paper.

Barite: Barium sulphate - BaSO_4

Barite is found very widely on the Edge and has never been worked for profit. In many places it cements the sand producing the very hard rock that stands out at locations such as Stormy Point.

Iron Minerals: Various iron oxides

A number of iron compounds are present which give rise to the distinctive rust-red bands in all the mines. The chemical process in the last century removed the iron from the sandstone which is why the processed sand in the area of the old sand hills is much whiter than sand elsewhere.

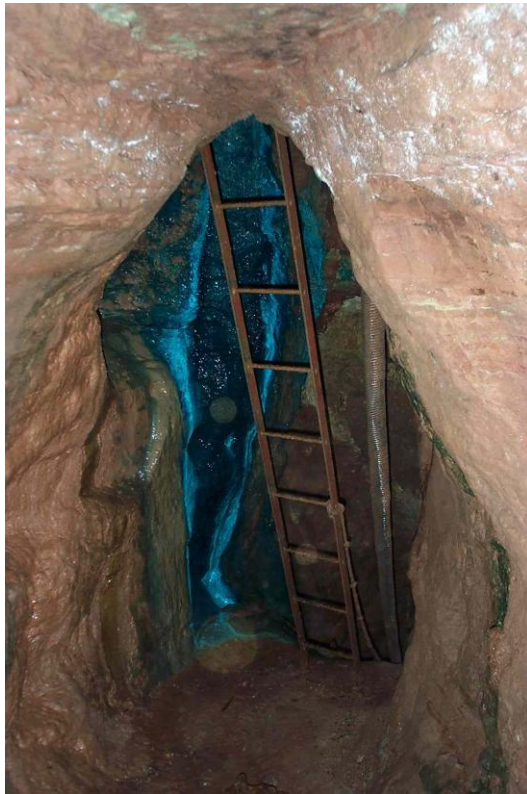
This list contains only a few of the minerals at the Edge. Elements found include silicon, copper, iron, lead, sulphur, chlorine, phosphorous, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, calcium, aluminium, molybdenum, vanadium, tungsten, zinc, barium, cobalt, arsenic, nickel, manganese and even traces of gold.

of the Engine Vein sandstones which form the bottom of the Helsby Formation. It is these hard beds which outcrop at Stormy Point and provide the weather-resistant rocks that form the Castle Rock. Finally, appearing at the bottom of Stormy Point, are the soft Bunter sandstones.

There are a series of "faults" throughout the Edge, which follow two predominant directions. The north-south faults have been responsible for most of the major

movement of rock including the uplifting of the Edge itself and the steep hill on the A34. In fact, the whole area of land between the A34 and the Edge has been raised as a block several hundred feet because of the faulting. The other direction of faulting is roughly northwest-southeast and faults on this alignment are often mineralised. It is thought that the ores were carried in solution up through the faults, which are relatively porous compared with the

surrounding clays and sands. An anomaly to this general rule is the fault upon which the Cobalt Mine lies. This fault is also roughly north-south and cuts across the end of Engine Vein.



Blue Shaft in Engine Vein

Some lead is found in the faults (e.g. at Engine Vein and at Stormy Point) but most of the copper and much of the lead is found dispersed in the sandstone on one or both sides of the faults. The copper-bearing ore body is usually thickest near a fault and tapers away from the fault. Generally, ore is found only on the down-dip (south-western) side of the fault showing how it was deposited by water percolating through the sandstone after the land was uplifted. In West Mine the association with faults is less clear-cut but this is probably explained by the fact that the rocks in West Mine are more porous and the solutions

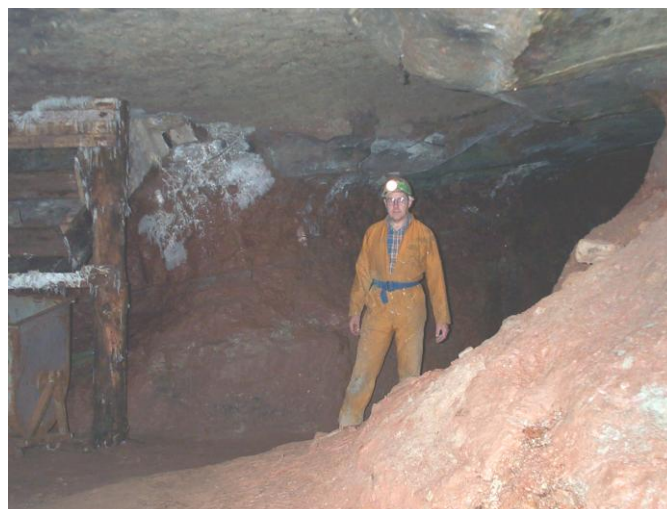
could carry further than in Wood Mine or Engine Vein.



For more information

If you want to read more about the Alderley Edge Mines, a good book for reference is "The Alderley Edge Mines" by Chris J. Carlon published by Sherratt and Son, Altrincham (now out of print but available in local libraries). Beyond this, the author has collected about 300 references ranging from 19th century books such as Sainter's "The jottings of some Geological, Archaeological, Botanical, Ornithological and Zoological rambles round Macclesfield" to a 21st century item in New Scientist.

Members of the Derbyshire Caving Club meet regularly at the Edge to explore the mines and to re-excavate the numerous blocked entrances that remain on the Edge. Adults are welcome to join the Club either to help occasionally with digging or as a full member, able to take groups around the mines and participate in the wider activities of the Caving Club. If you are interested in knowing more see: www.DerbysCC.org.uk.

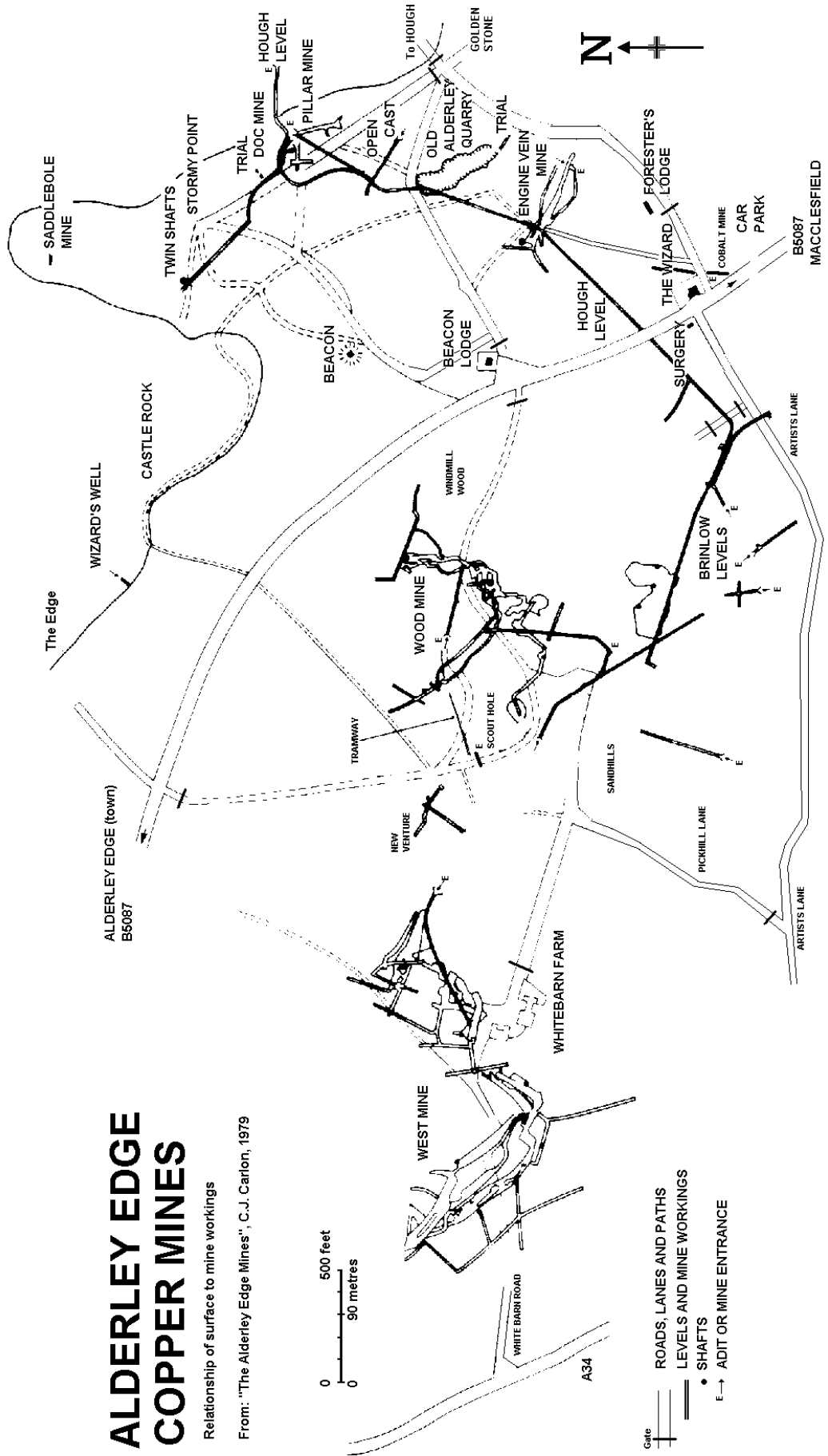


The author in Wood Mine

ALDERLEY EDGE COPPER MINES

Relationship of surface to mine workings

From: "The Alderley Edge Mines", C.J. Carlton, 1979



Cala Gonone

A Rock Climbers' Paradise

John Middleton

A brief review of a stunningly beautiful region in Sardinia recently visited by the writer encompassing, at the last count, some 16 major sports climbing venues all to be found within 10 kilometres of Cala Gonone.

SITUATION. The little visited 240km long by 120km wide Italian island of Sardinia is home to many rugged granite and limestone mountains that provide excellent walking, mountaineering, rock climbing and caving. Some of the wildest of these ranges are to be found in the eastern province of Nuoro. Here, between the coastal towns of Orosei and Arbatax there lies a sparsely habited region of limestone up to 1,000m in altitude covered in colourful macchia (small scrub), riddled by caverns (Su Palu 40km long), and punctuated by vertical faces of warm rock ideal for winter climbing. The perfect centre for all activities is the delightfully isolated and friendly small port of Cala Gonone. From here a twenty minute walk will reach the first cliffs whilst none of the others will take more than a twenty minute drive.

GETTING THERE AND ABOUT. From the U.K. the island can be reached by flying to Alghero and Olbia in the north or Cagliari in the south. In practice most climbers fly to Alghero with Ryanair from Stanstead airport, often at extremely cheap rates (we paid just £69 return including taxes). Car hire can be easily arranged in advance or directly and considerably cheaper from the array of local agencies within the terminal building.



Driving to Cala Gonone on good roads takes between 3 and 4 hours.

WHEN TO GO. The summer and early autumn are best avoided as it is very hot, usually well into the 30's, and very crowded. The best time to visit is from late September into December and from late February through to early May. Temperatures should then be around the 20's and the only other visitors will be fellow climbers.

FACILITIES. Out of season, i.e. October to April, the campsites and most hotels are closed. The usual option is to hire an apartment, most of which are situated on the sea front. In March 2003 my wife and I paid 36€ per day. We booked on the internet with the English speaking Cenza at tendersnanni@tiscalinet.it. An alternative site is prima.sardegna@tiscalinet.it. The only hotel that we noted as being open was the three star Hotel Pop (tel 00 39 784 93185). Food is available at several small supermarkets. During the day snacks can be obtained from the various bars

– the climbers favourite being Bar La Pineta situated on the road into town. This bar also sells climbing guides and maps. BEWARE that everything, including bars, shut down between 1pm and 4-5pm! Also BEWARE that the few pizza bars and Hotel Pop do not start to serve food until after 8pm! There is a cash machine by the port and close by is a small climbers shop. Opposite can be found Internet facilities.

GUIDES. The classic Sardinian sports climbing guide is “Pietra di Luna” which covers the whole of the island and has been updated to 2002. We used the new “Arrampicare a Cala Gonone” by Corrada Conca. This excellent publication concentrates solely on the Cala Gonone region. Rockfax have also produced a new selected mini guide in English with very good diagrams and this can be obtained direct from them at www.rockfax.com.

THE ROCK. This is without exception extremely massive and solid limestone. Throughout our short stay, which included some 43 routes, we never came across a single loose hold. The aspect is generally southeast but shade or sun can be found at most times of the day by choosing different venues.

THE ROUTES. Some 1,000 routes extend from as little as 10m up to awe inspiring 300m monsters and from a single pitch to more than 6. Bolting is generally excellent with spacings of around 3-4m. The crucial first bolt is usually fairly low down. Grades, all of which are the standard French Sports ones, vary from as little as 4c up to 8b with the majority being in the 6’s and 7’s. The standards seem remarkably consistent and equate well with, say, the Leeds Climbing Wall. Most cliffs tend to be either steep slabs or near

vertical walls and include subtle layaways and balance moves on small pockets and incuts. A 60m single rope is recommended. Valerie does not climb but enjoys (!) belaying and I was able to do at least the bottom two pitches, to 55m, of all the routes I attempted. Belay points are various but always substantial so abseils can be easily arranged.

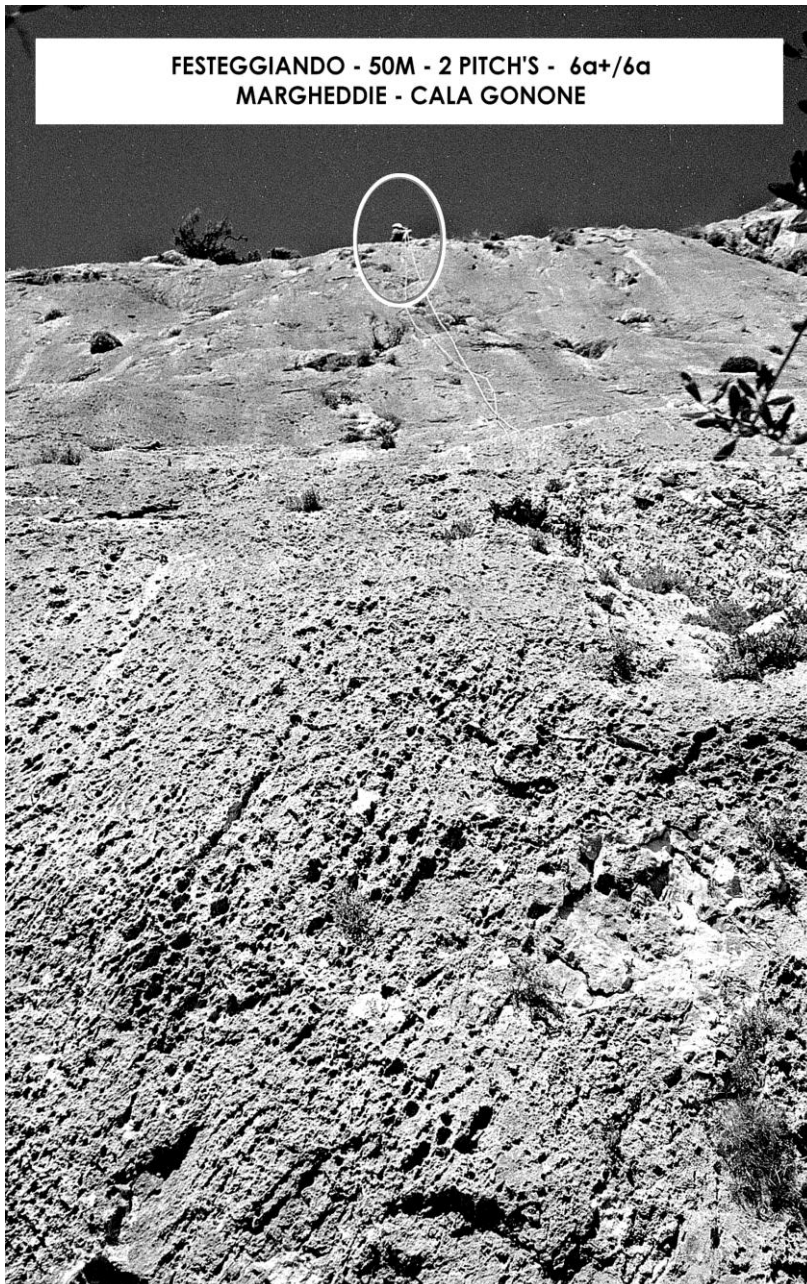
SOME EXAMPLES. We visited just five cliffs starting with the main face of BUDINETTO situated a three minute drive and 10 minute walk from town. It is a steep slab and proved an excellent introduction with most of the routes being in the 5c/6a category and up to 35m in length. Maleducato, a 35m 5c/6a and Josephine, a 25m 6a+ seemed particularly good. Just a five-minute drive away and at the same level as Budinetto is LA POLTRONA, a much larger version of the former with some 4-pitch routes up to 175m in length. The quality is again excellent with my favourites here being the first two pitches of the central senza nome going quite excitedly at one steep point and the established classic of Deutsch Wall, both at 5c/6a. Each crag overlooks the town and keeps the sun until mid afternoon.

On a wild isolated hillside steeply descending to the sea can be found MARGHEDDIE (see photo), a definite “must visit” with its sensational situation and colourful cover of spurge and cistus plants. Secteur “Nina Nana” has just 12 routes to 50m in length with grades from 5c to 6b, each a magnificent very steep slab climb with a shelf about 15m up. We did every one and never met another climber all day! Almost directly below Margheddie is the great sea cave of BIDDITISCOTTAI reached easily

across the boulders from Cala Gonone. Mega overhangs abound whilst the walls to the right bristle with superb routes on a very different rock that tends to feel soapy if the hand stays in one position too long! Paolino is an enjoyable 20m 6a+ classic that leaves the cave on great jugs (see photo) whilst the 30m Bar Gullich, at 6b on the steep right wall interestingly traverses calcite formations. Both sites keep the sun until mid afternoon.

The beach to the south of the village and directly beneath the end of the

road is CALA FULI, a beach now made famous by Madonna as the one onto which she is shipwrecked in her new film. It also sports a gorge with no less than 9 crags bolted with many fierce routes in the 7s and 8s. Two more cliffs are situated above the sea. We visited secteur "Amelia" where we climbed Cotequino, Silja, Sixteen, and Kho phi phi, all superb 30m long routes starting directly from boulders by the sea. At 6a/6a+ they did seem slightly harder than the other crags visited.



Several of the cliffs require the hiring of a boat to reach. This is easily done from the port, and these include the fine cliffs of Cala Luna and the great 175m tower of Aguglia di Goliritze. The trip is very spectacular passing superb scenery and many caves, some, reputedly still unexplored. Just inland, but still within a short drive are many six pitch mountain crags offering both bolted and adventure routes.

NEARBY DEVIATIONS.

In such a wilderness region it is not surprising that there are a multitude of other interesting sites to visit.

From Cala Luna it is possible to follow the river up a deep valley for around an hour and visit the 40km long cave of Su Palu. Another Speleological wonder is the Grotta sa Oche in the very beautiful Lanaitto valley. This cave is large and with the help of a rope as a handline is exciting (and wet) to explore. A couple of hours uphill walk from the Grotta is the amazing ancient nuraghic village of Tiscali hidden in a collapsed cavern and rediscovered only a

hundred years ago. In an adjacent valley the river Flumineddu passes through the 700m deep and frequently only 4m wide gorge of Gorropu, an exciting excursion that unfortunately finishes at a deep pool and vertical wall. A three-day hike follows the coast south from Cala Gonone with nowhere to stay and all food to be carried! The list of adventures is endless – we highly recommend them all.



Short Spring Strolls in the Haute Savoie

Rob Ibberson

Had I not become a member of YRC relatively recently nothing of what follows would have happened.

We have friends with a chalet just over the border from Geneva, at 1000 metres overlooking the Lake not far from Evian. My wife wanted to attend an international conference in Geneva and we fancied a short break in a place neither of us knew. It seemed a good idea to acquire the chalet for a few days, do a bit of sightseeing and for me to do a bit of walking whilst Gabrielle “conferred”. U.K. had been sweltering (relatively) in the best spring weather for a century so we were unsurprised to note that few would likely to be skiing at that sort of height in April.

We arrived to find a foot of recent snow barring our way to the chalet and friends’ instructions took no account of such unseasonal severity. The following day was mainly grey and misty but somewhat warmer – around 0°C but not really good walking weather. So we resolved to visit nearby La Chapelle d’Abondance where Gabrielle had spent a happy school holiday with friends in that then isolated hamlet. It is served now by a good road and has scores of very large chalets; many festooned still with Christmas decorations, and mainly closed ski hire equipment shops. We looked at the map and decided upon a circa three hour walk taking us up from 1200 to 1500 metres. There was a gradual increase in snow underfoot and I found myself doing a “Good King Wencelslas” act, gaitered as by then I was, for a couple of miles before a slippery descent back to the village.

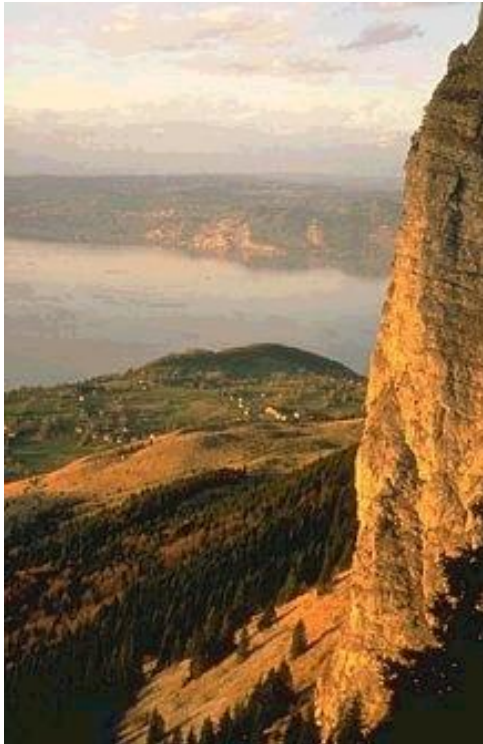
When I had things to myself I checked with the “information” chalet in our village who pointed out that walking uphill from the village was difficult or not on, depending upon which route one took. So, thinking of what I’d learned from YRC, I decided to retrace my route for a day’s walk three days hence when the weather might be better.

The first of these to the proposed “descent” col at 1500 metres had to be abandoned due to thick mist and deep snow on much of the path from 1300 metres. So I contoured round back to the village of Thollon without ever seeing the magnificent Pic des Memises and its extended limestone cliffs, which had formerly contained the southern edge of the very large glacier extending from there over to the Jura mountains which delineated the other side. That glacier had followed the line of the lake and was about 1500 metres thick. I had to wait another three days to see the peaks and cliffs in their glory. I thought of our climbers but understand this particular bit is too dangerous to climb.

My second retrace was more successful as I approached the col from the other side and managed to get up to the right height, albeit on a south facing slope, with thus less snow on it, in about ninety minutes.

So I planned a route from Thollon ascending via Lejoux, Pointe de Cormiens and Chalet de Nordavaux to gain the Eastern end of the Balcon des Memises with a fallback plan that if that proved impossible I would turn back and do another round walk downhill towards the lake and return with an ascent to Thollon. There were several places on the otherwise good but snow covered path where it was covered with a big pile of avalanched

snow and muddy rocks. I noted signs of previous day booted and snowshod people crossing and prodded it smartly with my sticks. They stuck OK so I clambered over. Coming to a more open snow-slope before the last part of the ascent I found myself in up to thigh-high soft snow and wished I too had snowshoes. I changed route to walk up the steep, sunny side of a deep ravine for a mile or so which was “sticky” but possible and came out at the Chalets des Memises. It had been cloudless all the way up and I was ready for a rest. I soon found the walkers’ refuge which contained a comfortable chair for my lunch, so munched and reviewed whilst enjoying the solitude and sunshine. The height was mainly done. I did not fancy going back and reasoned the other mostly reccied route down would be better than that of my ascent. So, after stuffing my 2/3rds empty water bottles with clean snow (a dodge learned on a meet last winter) I walked across the deserted snow playground of seasonal skiers to the Pic des Memises where I lingered to admire and photograph some of the magnificent 360° panorama. Descending the west end of the Balcon I came across two walkers; we were each others’ first human contact since setting off five hours earlier. The descent from the Col de Pertuis was made more interesting as there were plaques embossed in three languages for the benefit of summer walkers



ascending straight up 700 metres for the ridge walk via the teleskilift and descent I was doing. These told one about the topography, natural and economic history of the locality. It was slippery on the shaded snow covered parts of course, but no worse than any Pennine peak in winter when not frozen. The sunshine on the mixed conifer and bare trees, some bent over like large Roman catapults ready for release onto some distant enemy, made my heart sing as I slithered downhill.

During the day I’d seen many spring flowers which we see over a more extended period and watched deer, badger, kite and numerous other smaller birds and heard a largish mammal in some distress, clearly being attacked by something else about 150 metres off my track: but it was not prudent to investigate further. On reaching the village again the first bar was shut on Tuesdays but the pint in the second tasted excellent. Although the walk in total was only fourteen kilometres, it felt like somewhat more and would surely have been easier in snowshoes. I’ll try to remember some if we go somewhere similar again. But the experience was memorable as a first walk in the Alps.

Institute Geographia National Maps (IGN):-

1. Haute Savoie 1::50,000 ed Didier Richard – 350 itineraries de Randonnees.. No.3
2. Les cartes touristiques locales 1::25,000. No.3528 ET “Morzine”

*Extract from paper (actual paper not known but probably Yorkshire Post or Leeds Mercury) dated 31 July 1927 relating to the death of Claud Frankland...
Cliff Large*

Leeds teacher killed on Great Gable

40-feet fall while trying new climb

Mr Claud D. Frankland, headmaster of Sweet Street Council, Leeds whose home is in Brudenell Mount, Leeds, was killed while climbing one of the face climbs on the Napes Ridge, Great Gable last night. He fell 40 feet.

Mr Frankland was a member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and an old member of the Yorkshire Rambling [*sic*] Club. He spent yesterday doing many climbs on the Gable, leading a party of three, one of whom was Miss Barker, of Silloth.

Late in the afternoon he was leading his party up Chantrey Buttress on Napes Ridge when his hold gave way, and he fell on to his head and was killed outright.

A party of climbers, organised by Mr Ralph Mayson, of Keswick, carried the body down to the Sty Head Pass,



where they met a stretcher party from Wasdale Head, where the body was taken.

Mr Frankland's companions were unhurt.

The climb the party was doing at the time of the accident is very difficult, and was discovered only recently.

The Gable is a favourite resort of climbers, and on the summit is the Fell and Rock Climbing Club War Memorial.

Mr Frankland is described by those that knew him as all that a schoolmaster should be, and he was regarded as one of the most promising of the younger headmasters in the Leeds education service. Keen on all outdoor sports and recreations, he took a particular interest in the sports side of his school work.

He was a pupil teacher in Leeds, and before going to Sweet Street was headmaster of Chapeltown School.

His father, at one time Headmaster of Ossett Grammar School, was a famous character in the West Riding.

Note: I found this newspaper cutting in a copy of George Abraham's British Mountain Climbs which I bought in Leeds in the 1950s. It was one of several cuttings about climbing accidents in the book which had belonged to a M. Perkins of Armley. Another cutting referred to a fatal accident on Doe Crag in 1932. The party included H.W. Tilman who along with his two companions, one of whom was killed, fell 175 feet after the rope broke. Tilman suffered concussion and spent four hours travelling four miles to Coniston to raise a rescue party.

Ben Alder

Tony Smythe

The darkest hour before the dawn at Dalwhinnie Distillery. After the painful, hour-long process of converting myself from a recumbent sleeping-bag dweller, into a breakfasted, booted, gaitered and rucksacked mountain man, I locked up the van and rode my bicycle away from the lay-by outside the ghostly white factory where Scotland's finest malt was produced. Soon I was at the railway station, and beyond that at the crossing where notices exhorted the unwary to Stop, Look and Listen, and (those that weren't flattened by one of the two trains per day) to Shut the Gates after them. Ahead of me stretched a dirt road running for miles along Loch Ericht and leading to one of the most remote areas of the Highlands.

I was bound for Ben Alder, described in the SMC guidebook as "one of the great remote mountains of Scotland, a vast high plateau surrounded by corries in the heart of the Central Highlands between Lochaber and the Cairngorms". The book, and indeed the map went on to make it clear that to traverse the mountain and take in the neighbouring Beinn Bheoil was a very long day – about 30 miles, of which half could be done by bicycle. I had therefore earmarked it for a suitably fine day in May or June. I had toyed with the idea of bivouacking en route or using Culra bothy but both these options seemed to complicate things and ask too much of the weather, so my heart was set on an early start and a huge day from Dalwhinnie.

However it was late September and the nights were drawing in, and only the fact that the weather seemed

exceptionally settled tempted me to go for it now. The previous day I'd had a sun-drenched walk on a trio of peaks above Loch Laggan, and that evening Bill Fish, the most cautious of men after his 1987 gaffe, 'a lady's just phoned to tell us there's a hurricane on its way, don't worry, there isn't', was confident it would be fine for at least one more day. So with that frisson of excitement when you make a big decision on impulse, I drove to Dalwhinnie.

A hard frost, and icy air cut through my fleece – how grateful I was for the relative warmth of the forest. My bike which in the last week had bounced and bumped over some terrible tracks, now to my delight glided over a recently-graded surface, and there were even proper road signs. Near the start of the loch I rode past a gatehouse, recently built in that peculiar 'modern' castle style, on which from the turrets to the block paving, no expense had been spared. In fact all along the loch the manicured road edges and fine stone parapets over the burns oozed wealth. Later I understood that the laird of the Ben Alder estate had been faced with the choice of making a huge tax payment or spending the surplus income on 'repairs'.

So in what seemed like a matter of minutes I had covered the lochside miles and was riding up the inclines towards Loch Pattack. As my tyres squirmed in the loose gravel an Alpine dawn greeted me. Miles away at the end of the glen the majestic Ben Alder glowed red, and in a sky slowly losing its stars a full moon still hung brightly.

The recommended route now lay across the moor on foot and I locked my bike to a rusted and empty cattle feeder and set off along a track leading to Culra Lodge and bothy.

Within a few minutes it occurred to me that I should still be riding the bike. The unusually dry ground and hard overnight frost made a perfect cycle lane, but I could not be bothered to go back, concentrating instead on that mindless walking action that on a smooth level surface on a cold morning, crams miles into hours. Actually the humble Culra bothy and just beyond it the more opulent shooting lodge came up alongside in about forty minutes. They lay just the other side of the placidly flowing if unpronounceable Allt a' Chaoil-reidhe which was so low that a crossing could have been made anywhere. Not a soul appeared from bothy or Lodge and in fact I was not due to meet anybody else until the end of the day.

The good path now headed firmly uphill and Ben Alder increasingly towered overhead, its two huge craggy north-easterly spurs, one of which I would soon be required to choose, barring progress to the upper part of the mountain. The path, a real stalker's one with laid gravel and beautifully constructed stone channels, began to wander off to the east on non-mountaineering business, and fine judgement was now needed to decide when to trade comfortable walking in the wrong direction with the labour of deep undergrowth in the right direction.

I was now confronted with the more distant 'Long Leachas' spur over on the right with the Short one directly above. The book told me that 'both are approached through thick boulder-strewn heather. The Short Leachas is steeper and involves frequent scrambling, while the Long Leachas is easier and has better situations.'



Ben Alder and Lancet Edge seen from Culra Bothy

For the prudent and, shall we say, mature solitary walker it was a straightforward choice. As the years go by, mountain features described as 'easier, and with better situations' become increasingly hard to resist, and I accordingly set off on the traverse underneath the frowning, rotten-looking rocks of the Short Leachas. I took time off at a stream to drink about a pint of water as I carried no liquid refreshment – a long process as the water was icy cold and greatly resented by the inner man. Then I picked out a minor col on the ridge which had a connecting slope of grass and headed for it. So far so good. There were definite marks of human passage on the ridge and these guided me up a rock step which had that special quality of presenting your whole past life in front of your eyes as you place your feet and hands on the holds (in other words it was bloody exposed!). Beyond this there was nothing particularly serious, and joyfully I reached the plateau.

This would be a rough place to be in bad weather. It was a wilderness of stones with not a shred of shelter. Navigation would be dire as there were several minor summits and great flattish expanses. With the main summit, still a long way ahead, at

1,148 metres (I prefer 3,766 feet) you could be faced with conditions not far short of Cairngorm severity. But I had no anxieties apart from the ongoing requirement not to do anything silly like put a leg down between two boulders and fall over. The weather was marvellous – sunny and warm when the wind dropped to nothing – and I had loads of time in hand.

The top of the Short Leachas was a Top, and beyond it the way meandered along the edge of the enormous north-east corrie. The plateau levelled and became smooth grass, good enough to land an aircraft. The summit, still elusive, capped a small bank of rocks, below which there was a stone shelter, four walls about 6 feet high but no roof. There were also three strange stone rings nearby – had the aliens who carved the crop circles been busy up here too?

So with a feeling of great satisfaction at a long-standing ambition accomplished, I walked past the trig point to the cairn, a very shallow-angled one where I sat on a flat rock next to the highest point, my view unimpeded. And what a view! Nevis was instinctively the first one to find, and from the east on precisely the same degree of latitude it had strangely lost its hulking shape and appeared almost steeple-like. Not knowing the Highlands well enough I couldn't identify that many others but I should think that everything was visible up to 50 miles, maybe more. Could I see the Cuillin ridge, a tiny set of battlements floating in the sea of blue vapour? There was something there, a cloud perhaps. The Cuillin are 73 miles from Ben Alder.

Huge viewable distances are a product of atmospheric clarity and knowing where to look and what you're looking at. In the RAF I once flew a Canberra

from Malta back to base in North Germany, passing Mont Blanc en route. From 45,000 feet the great white dome of the mountain remained in view as we cruised northwards, and out of curiosity to see how long it would stay in sight I kept an eye on it, glancing over my shoulder from time to time, and even dropping a wing so that I could keep picking out the diminishing white snow cap from the distant clouds around it. After about forty minutes it was so minute as to be almost invisible, merging with the horizon, and then finally it was lost. At that point we were over Cologne, a distance of 360 miles from Mont Blanc. I have since found that theory bears out practice; the calculated line of sight between those two altitudes at that distance does remain comfortably above the earth's curvature, and there is also probable help from refraction of the atmosphere.

When I tired of exploring the distances from Ben Alder I ate lunch and, since there was nobody around to offend, made a phone call home. Quite apart from the pleasure of a jolly chat, it is quite reassuring to discover that contact from a mobile is available if needed – certainly not the case from all Scottish mountains.

The way down south-east takes you to a boggy col with the strange name of Bealach Breabag, and here, at the furthest point of the circuit – which is more rectangular like a croquet hoop – I was conscious of the long miles home. But first there was the length of Beinn Bheoil to cover, a 2½ mile whaleback on which I was pestered by flies. These were alarmingly similar to black flies in that they refused to be brushed off and had a rubbery resistance to being squashed, although they were slightly bigger than black

fly and a greyish colour. I didn't allow any to settle long enough to see how sharp their teeth were. End of September – a few hardy midges, plenty of mosquitoes, certainly my share of deer ticks, and now these beauties.

In the afternoon sun I ploughed through the heather to rejoin the path under the Leachas. Through my binoculars I picked out a team upgrading the path leading to the Bealach Dubh. Labours over and shovels and machines cast aside they were sunbathing, and later I saw the 8-wheel all-terrain vehicle trundling across the moor to pick them up. Will the wildest places always be wild?

I had an unwelcome return to reality when, from the vicinity of Culra bothy I could see a white van parked exactly where I had left my bike. A number of depressing possibilities occurred to me – my chain and padlock were not much more than a minor deterrence. What a way to have the day ending. But as time went by and the van didn't move, and I marched towards it, confidence grew. And when I arrived there was nobody there – it was the van and trailer which had brought the all-terrain vehicle.

In the last yards to the Distillery and the lay-by I rode past a large group of swarthy people toting carrier bags in which bottles chinked. Some of them lurched a little or leaned on one another and they greeted me joyfully in Spanish. They were uproariously happy and had obviously had a very good time at the Distillery, where a sign said Visitors Welcome. Don't be superior, Smythe, I thought to myself as I unlocked the van and set in motion the whole process of tea, sweaty clothes and soggy boots off, etc. Just feel grateful you had the mountain to yourself.

Another Munroist

While the Ardgour Meet was getting underway a guest on Scottish meets of old, Nick Sutton of Ingleton's Daleswear, was celebrating a double - completing the Munros and his fiftieth birthday – by ascending Beinn Dorain.

Nick was keen for the YRC to be represented among the forty who made their way from Bridge of Orchy to the south top, as the Club was instrumental in getting him interested in the Munros by inviting him on the 1982 meet when, between us, we climbed them all in a week. Nick was on Skye then in Glen Sheil.

Celebrations on the top ignored the wet and windy weather and continued later in the pub with congratulations for the several who had just made their first ascent of a Munro – the youngest a four year old – and a scratch band formed.

On guitar was the chap who gave him the Munro book exactly a decade earlier so he could start keeping a proper record and be more organised about the whole project. During that time Nick has come across members in the hills a few times. Michael Smith



Out and about

Roy Denney

Since leaving full time employment I have pursued a number of interests in forestry and wild life conservation and write a regular series of articles on such matters. A few years ago I produced an article for the journal and during a recent wind down at a meet it was suggested to me that I might do another. The member concerned had downed a number of drinks so his judgement may have been somewhat impaired.

I am a warden at a local environment park, spend many solitary hours out in the forests preparing orienteering events or mapping and work closely the Woodland Trust and Forest Enterprise. I also serve on one of the working groups of the National Forest Company and as such have many opportunities to observe wildlife and talk with many experts in these fields.

We must enjoy such opportunities whilst we can as much of our flora and fauna may not be around for our grandchildren to see as the effect of climate changes with ever more extremes of weather are having a dramatic and accelerating effect. It will be a very different England we live in within our children's lifetimes.

As I look back on last year I have fond memories of magic moments in the wild as I have travelled more distant parts. I remember fondly the activities of many species which were once much more common but which I now only see on my occasional visits to the wilder parts of the country.

One of the last such bastions is of course our beloved Yorkshire Dales. Largely man made but unchanged for so long nature now claims the

landscape as its own. The northern dales with miles of wildflower meadows criss-crossed with dry stone walls and dotted with stone barns (often ruins) are home to surviving colonies of once common creatures.

It is not uncommon to find stoats at play or patrolling the walls where they both hunt and live. I watched a young family at the foot of Troller's Gill last year.

Stoats are amazing and somewhat mystical creatures as are their smaller cousins the weasel. Many countrymen will tell you tales of strange behaviour which do seem to have a basis in fact.

Stoats appear to be able to mesmerise rabbits rooting them to the spot in terror to the point where they die of fright. Weasels carry out a 'dance of death' where for no obvious reason they try to turn themselves into a football by doing a series of somersaults, twists and turns within a tight circle which birds seem to find so interesting that they do not notice when the ball rolls slowly towards them. Dinner is served.

Whilst on my travels recently I saw one of the more reclusive members of the animal community. By no means rare the shrew is however hard to spot because of its size, speed and habits.

I have seen them before but they are gone before you can really focus on them and I have seen a number of their corpses but this was the best sighting I have had for years.

Unfortunately it did not have a happy ending in that as I sat on a stone parapet taking a breather, one ran along the wall right up to me and then when it realised that I was there it died of apparent fright. I have heard countrymen's tales that they are so highly strung that the slightest shock

can kill them but until now I took such comment with a pinch of salt.

Wildflower meadows such as those in the Dales have been reduced over the country as a whole, by about 97% since the middle of the last century and those left are still shrinking by about 5% per year despite the efforts of various bodies to try and preserve them.

Not only have we lost many dozens of species of wild flower from many areas to be replaced by rye grass for silage but the early cutting of this has had a desperate effect on the young of ground nesting birds.

The corncrake has virtually vanished from most of Britain and the lapwing and skylark are struggling to find homes. For many years now the corncrake has been restricted to Northern Ireland but a pair successfully reared two chicks in the Dales last year.

The traditional meadows still found in the Dales are awash with colourful flowers in spring and summer with buttercups as far as the eye can see attracting a myriad of insects, including bees and butterflies feeding on the nectar. I was up there last March and it was a delight to see young birds in abundance. When skylarks in particular get an insect rich diet they can leave the nest and fend for themselves within little more than a week of birth.

There is no more entertaining sight in nature than to watch lapwings in spring when they are doing aerobatic displays as part of their courtship rituals. They will be at it about now if you have time to visit any appropriate area. They frequently launch into apparently death-defying dives

towards the ground, pulling out at the last minute to arrow back into the skies. Snipe do similar contortions and the air passing over their tail feathers makes a weird rumbling noise as they dive. Curlew are also active but they are best spotted by their haunting call.

I have mentioned the decline in wild flower meadows but in the brief periods when farms are left untended prior to afforestation and when young trees are taking hold they often create quite good imitations and some species of flowers flourish in the absence of grazing animals or agricultural activity. This increases the insect population and the birds that feed on them. Skylarks and partridge have abounded for the last few years in parts of the new National Forest despite being in decline elsewhere.

Within five or six years these quasi meadows vanish as trees mature but increasingly, developments in the National Forest are leaving areas of open meadow and whilst the scheme continues there is usually a new site started nearby which allows wildlife to move on.

It will take years however to recreate the balance and wildlife populations to what they used to be even if weather changes do not stop such dreams.

The limestone dales are one of Europe's last strongholds of hay meadows and sustain nearly 100 species of wild flower, including the increasingly rare birds-eye primrose. In amongst the nearby limestone pavements further rare plants can be found surviving in the micro-climates in the cracks in the rock. These 'pavements' were created by ice sheets as the last ice age receded and are areas of exposed limestone rock split into blocks in which sheltered

nooks, whole eco-systems have developed.

The area is also a super place to watch birds of prey work. I have watched the comparatively rare Peregrine at work and, whilst I have never spotted one, Merlin also live there. This smallest of British birds of prey is also probably the most agile in flight and I live in hopes of seeing one when I wander the area.

Another fascinating bird often seen sitting on a stone wall is the Little Owl. This bird is active during the day unlike many of its cousins and is a relative newcomer to Britain having only been introduced late in the nineteenth century. It nests in holes sometimes in hollow trees or old warrens but often in the cavities in walls. It often sits around during the day and does most of its hunting as dusk falls, collecting moths, beetles and earthworms and the occasional small mammal. I saw one last September in the early hours of the morning driving across a moorland road near Bardon whilst on the September meet.

Dusk is a rewarding time to be about as the barn owl starts patrolling and rabbits come out to feed. Foxes, stoats and weasels are also then attracted to this meal opportunity. On the same weekend Keith Raby and I saw our only barn owl of the year just after dusk near Storrieths.

Other birds of prey were fairly regularly spotted as I went about last autumn. Sparrow hawks are now fairly common and the buzzard is one of few bird success stories with numbers steadily growing since the sixties.

One creature I have yet to see in the wild is the Otter. I do see mink from time to time and given its impact on

native wildlife, not least in decimating the water vole population, I would advocate its eradication but it is probably too well established by now.

The mink at about 18 inches long is only half the size of the otter and whilst its coat can vary it is generally dark where the otter is a fairly plain brown with a white bib at its throat.

I have often seen sea otters around the coasts of Scotland and these playful creatures can provide hours of entertainment. They are in fact the same species as the otters of England's river systems but the two populations have developed very different lifestyles with the 'southerners' having to become much more secretive to survive and unlike their bolder northern relatives they are now largely nocturnal.

These creatures are being reported in more and more river systems but they are great travellers and are often just passing through. It usually needs mans help to create pockets of habitat suitable to permit the establishment of breeding colonies but as rivers are cleaned up and agricultural practices revert to more traditional methods this should change.

We constantly see evidence of the effect of climate change with ever more extremes of weather having often disastrous effect on people and more gradual and subtle effects on wildlife.

A recent study suggests many water loving plants such as delphiniums, lupins and lobelia will only survive with extreme support and we will have to give up on our lawns unless we switch to the harsh spiky grasses found on the continent and in the USA. We may soon be able to grow grapes in abundance, olives, oranges, lemons and bananas.

A general consensus is emerging on many aspects of the change and if we pause to take stock it might well be a very different England we live in within very few years.

Many perennial plants treated as annuals in the past are now surviving the winters but there are many downsides to consider.

Bramble and other less welcoming undergrowth has wintered well. Ponds and lakes are regularly infested with algae. Historic gardens are under severe threat as plants, highly appropriate when they were introduced, cannot cope with present conditions.

Native trees are under threat. The beech with shallow roots cannot survive successive droughts. Ash and Willow will struggle in many areas and others like yews many hundreds of years old are dying due to infestation thriving in the damp conditions caused by lowland flooding.

Wood cranesbill, dwarf willow and other woodland plants will start to disappear other than in the colder uplands and far north and are unlikely to migrate north fast enough to keep ahead of the weather change.

No fewer than 8750 species of tree are on the world list of threatened trees and, perhaps surprisingly, eleven of these are found only in Britain. Three are on the critical list and the Ley's whitebeam is in the top ten most at risk. There are only fifteen specimens of this tree left in the wild and these are struggling to survive on a couple of cliff faces in Wales. The other ten at risk are all members of the same family and are rock loving cousins of the rowan.

We are doing our bit here in the Midlands as to date we have planted 5,000,000 new trees in the National Forest being created here and most of these are native species. Unfortunately we are a bit short of cliff faces to help the whitebeams.

Another discouraging report out this year highlights the desperate states of the red squirrel and water vole. Unless there is a mass extermination programme for the grey squirrel and mink these creatures may well soon become extinct. There were literally millions of water vole a hundred years ago but they have been decreasing rapidly and have reduced by 90% in the last ten years.

Another creature in trouble is the world's second largest fish. You may be surprised to learn that it is found in British waters but sightings here have dropped by a fifth in the last twenty years. It is the basking shark, an entirely harmless plankton eater which is protected in our twelve-mile zone but needs further protection as it roams far and wide. They grow to over forty feet long but mature very slowly and often do not survive to breeding age.

On a much smaller scale the poor old sparrow continues to struggle. It is now thought that house sparrow numbers have fallen 60% in the last quarter century and have virtually vanished from many cities. Unfortunately they seem territorial to the point where they will not travel and repopulating areas rarely seems to happen. We can only help to ensure that no more populations are lost by using less pesticides in our gardens and leaving out food in winter. Nesting boxes also help as modern houses have less suitable nesting sites. Putting bells on cats would help as well.

The terms 'as common as a sparrow' and 'like a cockney sparrer' seem to have outlived their meanings. The sparrow is now on the red list of most endangered species along with others like the night jar, grasshopper warbler, red necked phalarope, white tailed eagle and other perceived rare birds. Sad to think how the 'common' sparrow was allowed to sink to this level.

They do no better in farmland where the planting of winter wheat has deprived the bird of stubble fields where they used to find grain over the winter. Sealed grain stores have deprived them of another source. Oxford University has discovered that up to 20% of British Farms have completely lost their sparrow populations.

The WWF is on record as fearing that the song thrush could be extinct within a decade. This problem is thought to be largely due to loss of suitable environment. The once all too common starling is now an infrequent visitor to our gardens probably because less of us maintain gardens where the earth is turned regularly and as such they struggle for the soil invertebrates which form much of their diet.

For some years the blackbird was our most common garden bird but it has now been relegated to third place possibly in part for the same reason.

The blue tit is now the most common but I saw far fewer last year and this year they are not as common as they seemed a few years ago. I understand that last year they saw a 43% drop in offspring to parent ratios which is the lowest for two decades.

The robin is now number two with the coal tit becoming more common and now creeping in at number ten. The

others in the top ten are in order :- great tit, dunnock, chaffinch, house sparrow, collared dove and green finch.

These are of course national figures and the evidence of my garden is not entirely in agreement. The most common I have is the green finch with blackbirds, dunnock and robins very evident. I see regular coal tits and numerous other birds in lesser numbers. I suspect that there are perhaps less green finch than last year but as they are still numerous it is hard to tell.

Over the country as a whole blackbirds, green finch, long tailed tits, sedge warblers, reed buntings and black cap all saw offspring ratios drop last year by over 30%.

Another visitor which I always welcome seeing is not popular with my other feathered friends and I do not relish the outcome of their visits. On two occasions I have seen the piles of carefully plucked feathers that confirm a visit. I am of course referring to the magnificent sparrow hawk.

There is some good news and there were several successes during last year. For the first time for over 150 years a pair of hen harriers raised a clutch in Cornwall. These were probably immigrants from Spain but with only six other recorded breeding successes by this bird throughout England it is a good sign. Another success is the Osprey. After an absence of about fifty years the first pair to breed in Britain were spotted in the fifties and since then they have slowly been recolonising Scotland and parts of northern England quite independent of the releases being organised on Rutland Water, here in the Midlands. One good piece of news is that the pair which nested in

Cumbria had two chicks this year and hopefully we are seeing the start of a new colony of these magnificent birds.

Yet another success is the Black Grouse which is being encouraged in several upland areas. It makes a pleasant change when wandering these areas to hear their bubbling chortle rather than the raucous laughter of their cousin the red grouse.

How many of you heard a cuckoo last year let alone saw one? This renowned harbinger of spring has been in steady decline since at least the seventies. It is thought that unusually cold springs of recent years have reduced the supply of grubs to feed the chicks and in keeping with many other birds there has been a considerable loss of habitat. They are not especially picky but do avoid built up areas and particularly favour places with good cover such as reed beds or parkland or scrub with a good supply of bushes and thickets.

If this promiscuous creature is struggling it does not bode well for many species.

The female cuckoo goes on a sexual spree during the mating season and actively pursues any number of males and does not allow itself to be distracted by routine matters like setting up home or raising young. She lays an egg most days for a period of nearly a month and dumps them on unwitting step mothers usually much smaller than their adopted fledglings. Wagtails, pipits, dunnock and reed warbler are favoured victims. As they grow these orphans get rid of the competition by dumping their supposed siblings out of the nest. There has been a 60% drop in numbers of cuckoos in woodland areas and even in farmland areas numbers have dropped by about 20%.

Another winter visitor which I have seen near my home is a bit of a mystery. This is a wading bird that almost never wades and lives in woods. Most waders migrate when winter gets tough but these birds increase in number. Most waders are noisy inhabitants of windswept open reaches this one quietly skulks in dark undergrowth and, whilst camouflaged for defence, it is glaringly ostentatious when displaying in spring. It is in fact the woodcock. It is one of the strongest flyers in the bird kingdom and many join our residents by crossing the seas to get here. These birds take a while to settle in and are the ones most easily seen when they arrive in late autumn.

Many waders can actually be found away from water, being ground nesters, in particular the lapwing, curlew and snipe. Their chicks are very independent and can forage and feed themselves almost from birth. Walking the moors in the Rosedale Abbey area last year I saw hundreds of curlew and golden plovers, both actually waders. About 10% of the British population of both birds are to be found on the quiet uplands of Durham and North Yorkshire.

Many birds are found away from what might be perceived as their natural habitat. Walking over closed areas of The Trough of Bowland on a club long walk many years ago we found ourselves in the midst of the breeding grounds of most of the gulls from Morecambe Bay. There were what seemed like several million of them and they did not welcome our presence. It took about forty minutes to cross the colony trying to avoid the biggest density and we were constantly swooped at and spat on and

had our heads flicked by their feet as they flew by.

There is another escalating pest problem which may come as a surprise to many of you. Deer are becoming a very real problem in many areas. Researchers are quoted as reporting that there are now more deer in Britain than before farming began 5000 years ago.

New tree plantings have to be expensively protected for many years to prevent them being topped by deer. Whilst wandering about in the woods in the quiet of a morning I frequently see these attractive animals but they are becoming a serious threat to the ecological balance.

Our native species are making a comeback as woodland cover is increased and are greatly helped by the reduction in gaps between woodland blocks which is being brought about by the creation of community woodlands near habitation and by the development of the National Forest and other similar projects. In purely ecological terms we should also re-introduce wolves, their natural predators, or further encourage the burgeoning population of 'gone wild' large cats but I cannot see this being popular with a people the majority of whom never set foot in wild places and have little perception of the interlocking nature of the food chain in the wild.

There is no national culling policy but a Deer Initiative has just been set up between interested organisations including The Forestry Commission. Their Director is quoted as making the self evident statement that not enough deer are being killed.

I cannot see the shooting of Bambi and it's parents going down well with a population largely against killing a

known predator (the fox). Perhaps the increasing population of foxes that we are soon to experience will turn to killing fawns rather than household pets as is increasingly being seen.

In addition to the roe and, further north, the red deer we do now have large and increasing populations of the waves of imported species which have gone native. Fallow are widespread and Chinese water deer and sika are not rare but the fastest growing and most troublesome is the pig-like muntjac. You may go months without seeing one but they are all about us and I have seen them several times this year.

Unfortunately the muntjac feed on ground flora and are yet another threat to species of less usual plants which will be further depleted with the spread of this miniature deer.

As these plants decrease so does the insect population and the birds which feed on them and in turn the birds of prey which feed off them. Butterflies and moths also suffer and the whole ecology is under threat.

Muntjac populations are often as high as 50 in a square kilometre and have been recorded at double that which is not bad for a creature which only escaped into the wild about a century ago.

I have also seen fallow in the wild in several locations in the Midlands and have seen roe quite close up in Wharfedale. The magnificent red deer is a tremendous sight when seen in the wild but the roe is my favourite.

This tiny deer is both graceful and athletic and seems full of life and fun. They are just over two foot tall at the shoulder. During the mating season you often see the small bucks as they get careless and bold when their

minds are on territorial squabbles (and the does). The young are always born from the middle of May to the start of June and within six weeks the mating cycle begins again. The young are initially very tame and should be left alone if you stumble on them in their hides in the woods. They may well follow you if you approach them before they are old enough to follow their mother but within a couple of weeks they are imprinted on their mother and start to run with her and you will only get fleeting glances of them.

When I first started wandering the Lakes and Dales in the middle fifties these creatures were fairly rare and unknown in great swathes of countryside where they now abound. Having nearly been driven to extinction in most of Britain this once common animal is now firmly back with us. You can see how common it once was by the names of public houses such as the Roebuck or Buck Inn and in village names like Bucknall, Buckfast, Buckhorn, Buckhaven, Buckden and Buckland.

In Scotland the red deer are a serious threat to the regeneration of woodlands and a survey just published shows that the only restriction on numbers appears to be the weather and food competition and that the now traditional culling of 12 to 15 per cent has no impact and for culling to really keep the population in sustainable numbers without detriment to the environment we would have to cull about 80% each year. Who knows venison may soon be comparatively cheap.

A number of small conservation groups have gone on record as saying that in these circumstances reintroducing wolves would help if only in a small way and they would

normally only take the old, young and infirm but it would help restore the wilds of Scotland to how they were centuries ago. With such abundant prey they would not be driven to attacking people, indeed there is little real evidence that they ever do except when absolutely desperate in Arctic blizzards.

Wolves still roam free in many parts of upland Europe and no person has been killed by one in Europe for at least a hundred years. The last wolves in Britain were killed in the mid seventeenth hundreds.

A survey a few years ago showed that only 44% of the people were against re-introduction and 36% were actively in favour.

A major landowner in Wester Ross has actually offered to use his land for the first introductions and has advocated including the European lynx.

The countryside and country way of life is under well-publicised threat and if we wish to see it preserved we owe it to ourselves to support the rural economy as much as we can. We certainly do our bit for rural pubs when we are on meets. One result of the fairly desperate situation many country folk find themselves in is the revival of many crafts and skills making use of wild products.

I well recall on journeys from meets in the north, many happy breaks to visit my old aunt in Forton who had the most astounding collection of fruit wines, Cumberland brandies, nettle beers and other goodies. Several other members who travelled to the lakes with me in those days were often known to suggest a journey break. I also recall a tiny village store in the Fylde where the lady kept stone jars of nettle beer in the stream running by

her front door and extracted them to pour out a two-penny glass of this 'chilled' nectar.

Kew Gardens have highlighted this renewed activity reporting on thousands of people now using hedgerow plants to make wines, brandies, vodka and syrups. Seaweed is in demand and there is even paper production from heather. The study suggests that about 2500 people are making a living from the produce of woodlands and hedgerows and thousands more are making a bit extra. The cottage industry using the product of the Elder is alone thought to be worth about £10million a year. Quite where the excise man fits into this equation, I am not sure.

Whilst in the south west earlier this year I learned of a new example of 'green' energy (or should it be 'brown') A new power station has opened in Devon adding two megawatts of energy to the grid and which will use 1.6 million tons of cow slurry each year as it's fuel source. In addition, gas from the slurry will power the station itself and as a bye product hot water produced will heat community housing nearby. There will also be organic manure at the end of the process. This will not seem so far fetched to those of us who have sampled the delight, in the high Himalayas, of cooking and warming alongside stoves fuelled by dried yak dung.

One very good piece of news is that one of the largest estates in Britain is launching a ten-year scheme to encourage many of Britain's rarest species. Amongst species of fauna expected to benefit greatly are the otter, water vole and Adonis blue butterfly together with numerous rare plants. This biodiversity action plan to

use the in vogue jargon will concentrate on 25 species on this 74,000 acre estate. This £15million project will create 150 ponds and 45 other wetland features, chalk grassland for the butterfly and many targeted environments for other species. I am also pleased to be able to tell you that this project can be found on our doorstep but is unlikely to be of much use as the estate in question is owned by the Highways Agency and comprises grass verges and roundabouts.

Another large estate of great interest and public unawareness has recently been the subject of a detailed report. This enormous estate which is about the size of the Isle of Wight is a swathe of chalk grassland smothered with native wildflowers. The owners have a resident archaeologist as the area is completely covered with clear remains of Romano-British and Celtic settlements and field systems which can be clearly seen from air surveys and much evidence is turned up on the ground.

5000 years of history is evident with Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill forts and a Roman village. English Heritage is publishing a book after a ten-year study which should make fascinating reading.

Unfortunately you are unlikely to have any opportunity to visit this fascinating area as it is the army training area on Salisbury Plain. The plus side is that despite the surprisingly small impact the shelling and tank activity have, the very presence of the army and the thousands of unexploded munitions mean man's normal developments will be unable to spoil the area.



Club Proceedings

2002: The Meets were

- 11 – 13 Jan Hill Inn, Chapel-le-Dale
- 8 - 10 Feb Low Hall Garth
- 28 - 3 Mar Inbirlhaolain, Glen Etive
- 8 - 12 Apl Hidden River China
- 12 – 14 Apl Beudy Mawr, N. Wales
- 26 – 28 Apl Hartforth Hall, N. Yorks
- 18 – 24 May Loch Coruisk, Skye
- 24 – 26 May Lowstern
- 31 - 2 Jun Circuit of Duddon Dale
- 15 – 29 Jul Laruns Pyrenees
- 21 – 23 Jul Dove Cave
- 12 – 14 Jul Forest of Bowland
- 14 Jul Scar Top Farm
- 9 – 11 Aug LHG Working Party
- 30 - 1 Sep Lowstern Working Party
- 6 - 8 Sep Appletreewick, N. Yorks
- 20 – 22 Sep R L H Joint Meet
- 25 – 27 Oct Lowstern Joint Meet AC
- 16 – 17 Nov Whoop Hall - Dinner
- 6 - 8 Dec Osmotherly, North Yorks

Year 2002 started with another visit to Chapel-le-Dale with many using the bunkhouse there. We enjoyed a super meal at the Hill Inn. Slides of Morocco and China were shown. It was again followed in February with a convivial meet at LHG. The weather was the worst for years but it was an enjoyable meet.

In contrast the 25th return to Glen Etive presented us with alpine conditions on the ridges. Our meet leader of many years, Derek, provided a celebration dinner (well Yvonne did). Sunday let us down, it rained. Our successful caving group returned to China performing world-shattering feats. A rescue of flying Foxes was undertaken.

Back in the UK good weather on the Beudy Mawr meet made hill excursions enjoyable but the weather changed on Sunday and a trip through a slate mine made sensible use of the day. The Ladies Weekend was well

attended at Hartington Hall with pleasant walks on both days.

Next the Skye meet. The good company made up for the poor weather. The hard men seemed to be undeterred by the rain and achieved a reasonable tally of climbs. Back in the Dales several members and their friends descended Gaping Gill thanks to our friends in the Bradford P C.

The Tuesday meets were again well attended by that growing band of our members who now have a 52 weeks holiday each year. Life is great. The first Tuesdays are at Lowstern and the last at LHG with other areas to fill in the remaining Tuesdays. Rock climbing found its place in the activities with new recruits.

The Pyrenees meet in July was very successful. The weather was good and this beautiful area was explored and enjoyed to the full. Back in England only two stalwart members attended the Cave meet in Dovedale.

A second long cycle ride was organised and seems to have found its place in our regular meets list. Less arduous than last year and taking in a very varied countryside of the Forest of Bowland and even venturing over the Lancashire border.

Both working parties were well attended and proved to be equally enjoyable when compared with a good meet. Much useful work was accomplished to the satisfaction of our two wardens.

Once again we remembered Harry Spillsbury at his memorial meet at the Robertson Lamb Hut in September where the Wayfarers looked after us in style.

Could we improve on last year's successful annual dinner? Well we did; all the speakers were good and their speeches well received. The

Chief guest from South Africa was particularly good; reminding us of our good fortune in access to the open spaces compared with his own country where passes are required.

It is about fifty years since the Club was at Osmotherly when some stayed at the hotel facilities or camped on the hotel lawn before. The Club make the second traverse of the Lyke Wake Walk. Alan Linford and his team provided us with superb Christmas catering that has become a feature of the last meet of the year.

Annual General Meeting

The 111th Annual General Meeting was held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on the 16th November 2002.

The Following members were elected or the year 2002 – 2003 :-

President; T.A.Kay
Vice President; G.Campion
Hon. Secretary; R.G.Humphreys
Hon. Meets Secretary: J. H. Hooper.
Hon Treasurer; G.A.Salmon
Hon. Editor: M. Smith
Hon. Librarian/Archivist; W.N.Todd
Huts Secretary: R.G.Josephy
Hut Wardens:
Low Hall Garth: Vacant
Lowstern: R.D.Kirby
Hon Auditor: C.D.Bush
Committee: F.M.Godden
D.J.Handley
W.R.Ibberson C.G.Renton
National Committees Representatives
Council of Northern Caving Clubs:
H.A.Lomas
BMC Lancs & Cheshire:
C.N.Bird
BMC Lake District:
K.Aldred
BMC Yorkshire & Humberside:
W.N.Todd

The 89th Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The President, Albert R.Chapman, was in the chair. Our Chief Guest was the distinguished African rock climber, Ed February.

The special guests were

Ian McNaught-Davis, President of the International Mountaineering & Climbing Federation; David Gerbeaud, Club Alpine Francais; Alan Blackshaw, President of the Alpine Club; Steve Bell, Climbers Club;

George Band, Past President of the Alpine Club; Jack Escritt, Gritstone Club; Graham Taylor, Mongolian Alpine Club; John Whalley, Craven Pothole Club.

Ed February proposed the toast to the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club. 'The Year of the Mountains' toast was given by Ian McNaught-Davis. The response to both toasts were given by the President; The 'Kindred Clubs & Guests' toast was proposed by Mike Godden and the response was by Steve Bell; The 'Retiring President' toast was given by Ian Crowther.

Arthur Salmon led the singing of 'Yorkshire', he was accompanied by Neil Renton.

Membership comprised:

114 Ordinary Members
67 Life Members
1 Honorary / Ordinary Members
3 Ordinary / Life Members
1 Honorary Member
186 Total Membership

New Members, Resignations and Deaths

New Members

2002 W.J. Anderson
Adrian Dixon
W. R. Ibberson
David Price
Frank Walker

Resignations

2002 None

Deaths

2002 W.A.Graham Watson
Peter Wood

Graham Watson 1908 - 2003

William Anthony Graham Watson was born on the 29th March 1908, the eldest of three sons. He died on the 29th November. He was educated at Marlborough College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge graduating in mathematics. Listers and Co. was his family business of which he became the third generation of his family to become managing director.

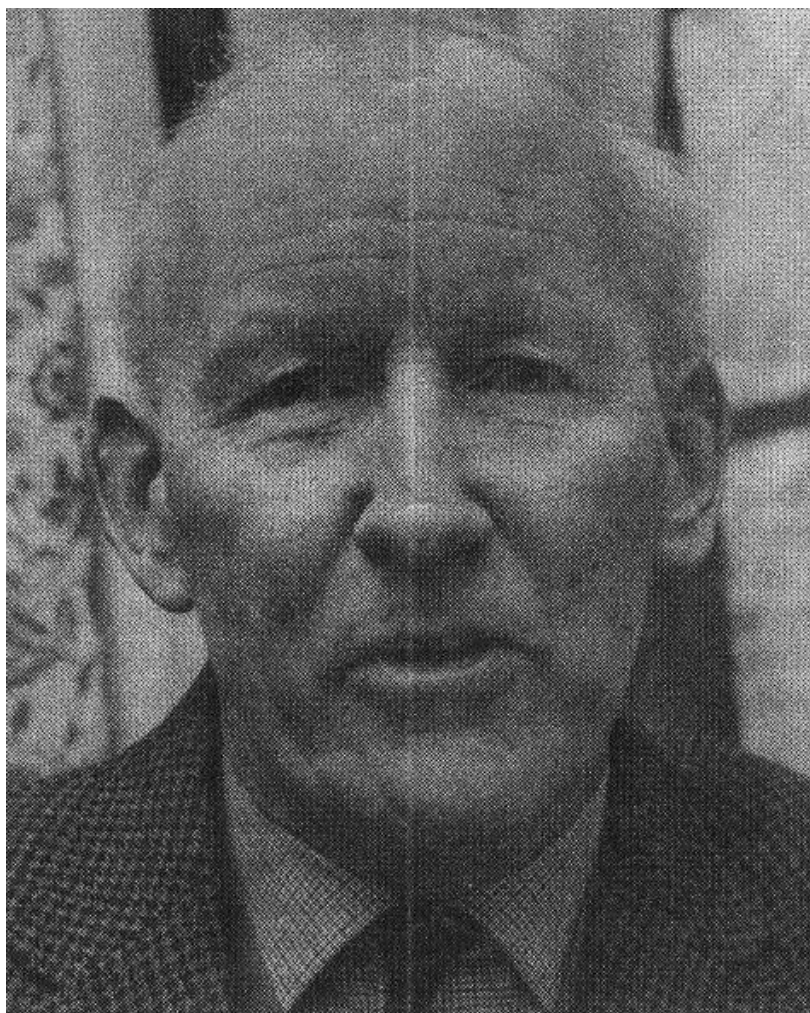
He had a great love for the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District where he spent family holiday in his childhood. He was an early member of the

'Friends of the Lake District' and was instrumental in the passing of the National Parks Act in 1949. Also as a founder member of 'The Yorkshire Dales Society' he worked to guard the landscape that might be destroyed for material gain

When his brother David died he gave 5500 acres in the Dales to the National Trust in 1988. He left his library of valuable books to his college. His paintings, antiques and jewellery were left to Giggleswick School where he was a governor for 40 years.

Since 1934 he had a passion for powerful motorcycles which he continued to drive into his nineties. He was a classical pianist, a magistrate, a keen photographer and a commander of the Auxiliary Fire Service for which he was awarded the MBE in 1944.

His interest in potholing spanned many years. He followed Ernest Roberts as Chairman of the Cave Rescue Organisation and was a long-standing member and past president of the Bradford Pothole Club. He joined the YRC in 1965 though I don't remember him attending any meets but several member did keep in contact with him. The YRC was represented at his funeral by John Lovett.



LETTER

The Bulletin No. 9 Summer 1998

Dear Editor,

Whilst at Lowstern yesterday (October 2002) I picked up a copy of the above *Bulletin* as I read W.R. Mitchell's article on Roberts, page 60, (reprinted from the *Dalesman*), I saw an error of fact so great that even five years later must be corrected.

Mitchell writes after referring to Sunset Hole:

The actual hole was a terminal 50 ft. pitch where the century old YRC had their only accident. The victim had a leg broken in two places. It took days to get the injured man out, using as a stretcher a leaf taken from a table. Cliff Downham, a former president and long-time secretary of the YRC, played a part in the rescue and became the first secretary of the Cave Rescue Organisation, with Roberts as chairman in 1935.

Bill Mitchell has confused two events twenty-four years apart and the involvement of the YRC.

The accident in Sunset Hole involved W.F.Boyd during Whitsun 1910. It was mainly a YRC party and Roberts was involved in the rescue. Boyd was never a member of the YRC and Cliff Downham was not born. Boyd factured his thigh and had severe bruising to his side following a fall down the

shaft. A leaf from a table was used to immobilise Boyd. It did not take days to get Boyd out, but seventeen hours from the fall to the injured man reaching the surface.

In 1934 a party from the Moor and Fell Club made up of management staff from the then Rowntree Cocoa Works at York (now Nestlé) were in the final chamber of Gingling Hole on Fountains Fell when an unstable boulder rolled and broke Reg Weetman's thigh in two places. The Northern Cavern and Fell Club were called to the rescue. Cliff Downham played an heroic part in this rescue but it was sixteen years before he joined the YRC. Weetman was strapped to a plank in this rescue. From the accident to moor surface took just under twenty-four hours, not days. Roberts was not involved in this rescue but following this accident the Cave Rescue Organisation was formed in 1935 and Roberts became the first chairman and Downham the secretary.

Both of these rescues involved titanic effort on the part of all involved and the record must not be confused.

I have often wondered what were the farmer's comments when the leaf of the table was returned with the end sawn off and other damage it must have suffered. I hope it was just from a pine kitchen table not his best French polished parlour one.

Jeff Hooper

Chippings

Whilst **David Smith** was on Cairn Hill in India he came across these rather nice words on a plaque in the forest.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like leaves.”

John Muir

Jim Rusher informs us that *Pearls of the Orient* are offering to support expeditions in Malaya

For the information of members Mike Hartland reports that Lowstern was the chosen venue for a family birthday celebration and that the facilities proved to be superb for this type of occasion:-

- 60 to 70 can be accommodated for a buffet meal
- The Downham Room proved an excellent dance floor
- Children have a readymade adventure playground in the plantation.
- The dormitories are available for anyone requiring to stay overnight.
- Catering by the local Bentham bakery was exceptional in quality and value.
- Any additional use of Lowstern is of financial benefit to the club.

Bill Todd after reading the recent review of Tschiffely's Ride remembered founding it in his firm's library in the 1960s and read it once or twice. If anyone have found that interesting perhaps you should read the sequel, Colman's Drive.

Inspired by Tschiffely, Colman decided to drive the same route but in a 1930s Austin Seven as he considered it the only car that could make the journey, one of its advantages being that it was so simple he could repair it on the way. He made dynamo bearings from pieces of a tobacco tin and he also had to go in reverse through sections of the Andes keeping a petrol tin handy to jam under the wheel because the hand-brake would not hold.

As you wander out and about you will no doubt have discovered that anywhere you wish to study on a map is always on a fold or where two maps meet. This strange phenomenon has finally been acknowledged by the Ordnance Survey and if you visit ordnancesurvey.co.uk/leisure you can now acquire a Landranger map centred on a post code. **Roy Denney** reports that these cost about £13 including postage.

Robertson Lamb Hut Great Langdale

**Joint Meet with the Wayfarers
Harry Spilsbury Memorial Meet**

20-22 September 2002

From my perspective, the weather leading up to the RLH weekend had been a long period of dry weather, and I was expecting another soaking reminiscent of the days on Skye in May, but it would be churlish indeed to complain. We had only the faintest hint of rain all weekend. We had photogenic blue skies and white cloud, and the haze in the distance did not prevent us from picking out Ingleborough. Although sun worshippers may have said it was not hot, it was pleasant for walking and warm enough for sitting outside the ODG at the end of the day.

As now seems the norm, activities fell mainly on Friday and Saturday, and so when yours truly arrived in time for the Friday evening banquet, put on by our long-standing food maestros, Harold Mellor and Ken Aldred, most of the arrivals had already been out on the hills. The evening was spent in the hut consuming copious amounts of beer and wine, discussing such vital matters as mixed clubs, the LHG hut and what we should do tomorrow. In the latter, Scafell via Broad Stand was mooted, hinted as beyond we geriatrics, and chalked up as a challenge.

After a full English breakfast the following morning, M.G, D.A, D.C, D.B, and J.Sc. set off for Pike o'Stickle, followed by Stake Pass, and Angle Tarn. The first 3 continued via Ore Gap, Bowfell, the Crinkles and back by Oxendale to let the other 2 return by Rossett Ghyll. J.Sc., G.S and A.B also aimed for Pike O'Stickle and

variously made their way back via Pavey Ark and Dungeon Ghyll. A mixed club group including yours truly set off from the ODG aiming for Scafell. Rosett Ghyll split the party, some returning via Bowfell, leaving only three YRC members reaching Mickledore. There, the challenge of Broad Stand, without the simple moral support of a rope even with dry rock, was wisely resisted (or so we claimed) and warnings of loose rocks in Lord's Rake caused us to turn homewards and traverse round the back of Scafell Pike at the level of Penn and approach Esk Hause from the delightful gorge like valley up from Esk Dale which was a novelty to some of us. From Esk Hause we just had time to include Bowfell, the Band, and a pint at the ODG before the excellent buffet dinner at the hut.

Sunday saw almost everyone departing the hut, but with at least one proposing to do something on the way home. FDS, GAS and self set off for Stickle Tarn and Jack's Rake. Here we merged with a larger group who came in helpful in patching up a bloody gash on the head of a past president when he inadvertently allowed it to come in intimate contact with part of the crag. We ended the day early and descended by Dungeon Ghyll. Another excellent joint meet but it was noted that there was no-one from the Rucsack Club present.

Frank Wilkinson



Attendance:

YRC

Ken Aldred
Dennis Armstrong
Denis Barker
Alan Brown
Albert Chapman
Derek Collins (day)
Mike Godden
Alan Linford
Frank Platt
Harry Robinson
Arthur Salmon
John Schofield
David Smith
Derek Smithson
George Spenceley
John Sterland
Frank Wilkinson
Alan Wood

Wayfarers

Steve Auty
George Chambers
Steve Dean
Mike Gee
Peter Harvey
Hal Jacob
John Jacob
Harold Mellor
Colin Smith
Brian Turner
Dave Wood
Mick Wrigley



Taken from near the public phone in Glen Etive by Derek Smithson

Lowstern, Clapham

Joint Meet with the Alpine Club

25 – 27 October 2002

It was a dark and stormy night as we all gathered at Lowstern for this caving meet. One green Alpine Club member arrived well wetted on foot from Clapham railway station while another was surprised to find a group still sat round the fire in conversation on arriving at 2 a.m. having driven through blustery storms.

The weekend for some began earlier when they by inadvertently entered for a quiz in the Marton Arms. Having outpointed all comers, the YRC team, named Leaping Salmon, were denied the prize through disqualification on a trifling technicality. They had ten team members instead of four.

Breakfast at eight allowed everyone to weigh up the weather - sunnier and drier above but soggy below – and select an appropriate activity for the day. And there was plenty of choice with Ged managing to keep a tally of everyone's intentions. All groups consisted of both AC and YRC members.

Several headed off for the Calf Holes to Browgill through trip at Birkwith near Horton. The trip was enlivened by high water flowrates and lower than anticipated levels of illumination. This short trip was an introduction to caving for some of the party who were in very experienced hands.

Most opted for various parts of the Grange Rigg Pot – Christmas Pot through trip up above Gaping Gill.

The entrance to Christmas was found after inspecting a couple of other sinks. The entrance oil drum



had been removed and some of the loose blocks above it were subjected to a risk assessment before being declared acceptably safe. Before long we were spiralling down the entrance pitch. A steady descent was made using ladders and lifelines down to the junction with Grange Rigg where, after inspection of the fine formations, we joined up with the leading group of the Grange Rigg party. Those of us infrequent cavers in overalls over walking gear and hired lampsets were happy to leave the technical decisions to those with acetylene lamps and all encompassing suits.

Below the fifth pitch of Grange Rigg enthusiasm for further descent was waning and the Drainpipe was impossible.

The ascent of three groups through Christmas Pot caused distinct congestion at the foot of the entrance series of pitches despite efficiently organised lifelining. Brewing up a welcome hot drink on a stove passed the time.

This longer trip kept most occupied for six or seven hours underground. Some spent ten or more hours below after one member tired in the constricted ascents in Grange Rigg

allowing them to make a well-timed entrance just before the evening meal. It lived up to its reputation for being strenuous in wet conditions.

A highly experienced party walked over Ingleborough then returned to recount past encounters with climbers in the Lakes warmed by the Downham Room fire and presidential punch. They kept pointing out that by staying above ground they'd enjoyed the best weather for several days while the cavers had missed out their chance to replenish their vitamin D levels.

Considerable advance preparations by Sammie and an able team in the kitchen provided an excellent evening meal to restore blood sugar and alcohol levels.

So satiated was everyone that all delayed exploration of the New Inn until after a high-tech digitised audio-video presentation of aspects of this year's caving trip to China. The formations and passages drew admiration but the capture, hoisting and release of flying squirrels aroused the greatest interest. If these gliders miss the branches of trees

overhanging the doline caves they are normally doomed to spiral down and starve. Several skeletons had been seen confirming this. The video footage of the fortunate few saved by the team made the Beijing evening news.

It was noted that it was only the English members of the international team who insisted on devoting time to saving these adorable and protected creatures. They then had to discourage the local population from preparing the squirrels for the table before they could be released. A nation of animal lovers indeed.

Sunday was wet. So wet there were a few grumbles at the early call for an 8am breakfast.

The arrival of scaffolding for the active dig on Newby Moss prompted the formation of a party to squelch their way over there carrying the load. All hope of a descent faded once it became apparent just how wet it was up there.

Your scribe walked around Long Preston on indifferent paths seeing nobody all day other than a wooden chap by the roadside.





Thanks to the leading cavers and sterling work in the kitchen this was another successful weekend with guests commenting on the “legendary hospitality and food”. One visitor was impressed by the meet leader’s ability to relocate a

snorer downstairs to ensure that the guest had a good night’s sleep. The meet gave the inexperienced a chance to take part in a more demanding trip and kindred spirits from the two clubs to make new acquaintances and renew old friendships. MS



Others visited Ingleborough Cave and made their way up to Gaping Gill and found a little sunshine.

By early Sunday afternoon, because of the dismal weather, members were back at Lowstern cleaning caving gear and tidying up.

Attendance:

YRC

The President, Albert Chapman

- Ken Aldred
- Dennis Barker
- Tim Bateman
- Bruce Bensley
- Derek Bush
- Ian Crowther
- Alan Fletcher
- David Handley
- Mike Hartland
- Richard Josephy
- Tim Josephy
- Alan Linford
- John Lovett
- Peter Price
- Al Renton
- Chris Renton
- John Riley
- Arthur Salmon
- Graham Salmon

AC

- Chris Fitzhugh
 - Pamela Holt
 - Kate Hunt
 - Steve Hunt
 - David Smith*
 - Michael Smith*
 - George Spencley*
 - Jeremy Whitehead
 - Dave Williams*
- * also YRC members

89th Annual Dinner

Whoop Hall Hotel, Kirby Lonsdale

16 November 2002

Ninety-three sat down to dinner; including eleven official guests and enjoyed a most convivial event which included many regular and a significant number of irregular attenders.

The event sported no top table and the Club's guests were spread round the room allowing them to exchange ideas with a wider range of members.

There were a greater number of shorter speeches culminating in the Mountaineering Club of South Africa's leading member Ed February's entertaining and informative speech centred on the International Year of the Mountain.

Lowstern plays a central part for many members over the dinner weekend with over two dozen breakfasts being served.

Sales of Journals over the weekend raised hundreds though ample stocks of many issues remain if you are seeking to build a collection.

Thanks go to the team of David Handley, David Smith, Chris Renton, Gordon Humphreys and Mike Edmundson supported by the efforts of several others for mounting this successful dinner.

Attendance:

The President, Albert Chapman
Ken Aldred
Martyn Andrews
Dennis Armstrong
George Band (Alpine Club)
Steve Bell (Climbers' Club)
Bruce Bensley
Alan Blackshaw (Alpine Club President)
Adrian Bridge
Alan Brown
Victor Bugg
George Burfitt
Derek Bush
Irvine Butterfield, John Muir Trust
Ged Champion
Peter Chadwick
Iain Chapman
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Cliff Cobb
Ken Coote (Guest)
Ian Crowther
Robert Crowther
Roy Denney
Roger Dix
Stuart Dix
Mike Edmundson
Derek English
Jack Escritt (Gritstone Club)
Darrell Farrant
John Farrar
Ed February (MC Sth Africa)
Alan Fletcher
David Gamble, (Guest)
David Gerbeaud, (Guest)
Ian Gilmour
Mike Godden
Richard Gowing
David Hall
James Hall, (Guest)
David Handley
Mike Hartland
Colin Hawkin, (Guest)
John Hemingway
David Hick
David Holmes
Jeff Hooper
Gordon Humphreys
Howard Humphreys

Jason Humphreys
 Rob Ibberson
 Raymond Ince
 John Jenkin
 Richard Josphy
 Tim Josephy
 Alan Kay
 Mike Kinder
 Richard Kirby
 Simon Kirby, (Guest)
 Ian Laing
 Cliff Large
 David Large
 David Laughton
 Alan Linford
 Bill Lofthouse
 Harvey Lomas
 John Lovett
 Don Mackay
 Duncan Mackay
 Ian McNaught-Davis,
 Int.Mt.Climbers' Fed.
 Sean Penny
 Tony Penny
 George Postill
 Peter Price , (Guest)
 Alister Renton
 Chris Renton
 Neil Renton, (Guest)
 John Richardson,
 Rucksack Club President
 Jim Rusher
 Arthur Salmon
 Graham Salmon
 David F Smith
 Michael Smith
 George Spenceley
 Chris Stapleton, (Guest)
 John Sterland
 Graham Taylor, Mongolian MC
 Trevor Temple, (Guest)
 Hugh Thomson, (Guest)
 Bill Todd
 John Van Gogh, (Guest)
 John Varney
 Frank Walker
 John Whalley
 Craven Pothole Club President
 Frank Wilkinson

Some photographs from the Christmas meet



Moorland tracks on the northern edge



Cliff Cobb enjoyed a milestone birthday celebration

Christmas Meet

Cote Ghyll Youth Hostel

Osmotherley

6 – 8 December 2002

This meet was originally to be held in December 2001 but that one had to be relocated to Ennerdale due to the access restrictions imposed on the North York Moors by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease. An insignificant, if inconvenient, impact on the Club compared with the impact on our hosts, The Youth Hostels Association, and the local community. We are grateful to the YHA for their willingness to reschedule the meet into 2002 and honour the commitments made in January 2001. The meet was well supported and justified booking the whole of the seventy-two bed hostel.

Several hostels face closure due to the access restrictions, Cote Ghyll will survive the cuts, partly due to the conditions of purchase, perhaps the Club will return in the future as the facilities are ideal. Especially appreciated were the en-suite toilets in all bunk rooms, bottom bunks for all who needed them, two spacious and well equipped kitchens, a large lounge and separate conference room but most appreciated was the large industrial dishwasher, operated for us by our YHA hosts Helen, Adrian and Austin. Hardly a dish to be washed all weekend, this allowed members to an



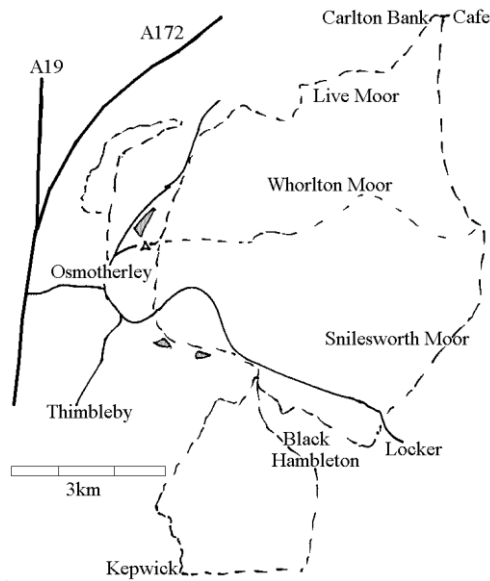
early start to the day and start the after dinner slide show before members fell asleep! Or perhaps it was the quality of the slides of Greenland, Iceland, Patagonia, John Muir Trail and Ethiopia that held their attention.

The North York Moors very colourful and picturesque in the sunshine but grey skies and a little drizzle prevailed

for the duration of this meet. The moors were already more or less waterlogged after two weeks of heavy rain. A member with local knowledge led a party from the hostel north to Cod Beck, up Red Way, then northeast on the Cleveland Way via Scarth Wood Moor, Whorlton, Live Moor, Faceby Bank and Carlton Moor to the Lord Stones Café. This is to be the location of a memorial seat to Maurice Wilson, soon to be erected. The route then turned south over Whorlton and Bilsdale Moors, past Brian's Pond, round the head of Scugdale, down



Ainsgill Head to Lower Locker Farm. Turning west to Dale Head, past Robinson's Cross, into Oakdale and back to the hostel: a smart six hours walking. Two members returned unexpectedly with blisters and discovered a dedication to assisting with dinner preparations.



Excursions to Roseberry Topping (seems to have been on some members' lists of 'a hill I must do but never got round to') Captain Cook's and Kildale. For others the escarpment sections (the best bits) of the Cleveland Way, Sutton Bank and coastal cliff walking satisfied all needs.

Traditional Christmas dinner was enjoyed by 39 members and our hosts. The excellent facilities and help from our hosts eased the burden on the kitchen team, in fact they all seemed to enjoy the experience. We wish John Lovett similar good fortune in 2003.

W Alan Linford.



Ken, Derek Smithson, David Hick and Rory identifying Ormesby somewhere in the mists

Attendance:

The President, Alan Kay

- Ken Aldred
- Dennis Barker
- Derek Bush
- Albert Chapman
- Clifford Cobb
- Ian Crowther
- Robert Crowther
- Roger Dix
- Mike Edmunson
- Derek English
- David Gamble.
- Iain Gilmour
- Mike Godden
- David Handley
- John Hemingway
- David Hick
- Gordon Humphries
- Rob Ibberson
- John Jenkin
- Richard Kirby
- David Laughton
- Alan Linfoord
- Bill Lofthouse
- Harvey Lomas
- Rory Newman
- Frank Platt
- Mike Rakussen
- Arthur Salmon
- John Schofield
- David Smith
- Michael Smith
- George Spenceley
- Alan Wood
- Frank Wilkinson



One of the dripping fowl by the café



Monument and marker in the woods near Kepwick.
The symbolism of the serpent escaped us.



Snowdonia Meet

Caseg Fraith, Ogwen, University of London Graduates' Mountain Club Hut

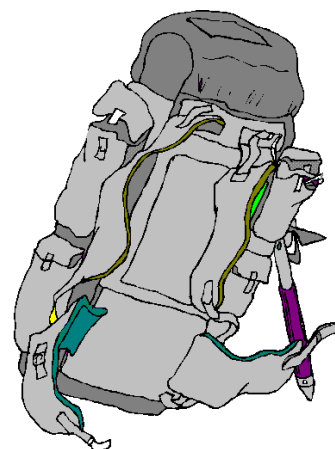
31 January - 2 February 2003

The week prior to the meet promised some interesting weather particularly as practice for those who planned to go to Scotland later. In the event the fortunate ones able to use some of Friday, fared best, with an excellent frosty, sunny day. Several managed to get in some ice axe practice even before anyone located the hut key and it was after dusk before they gathered at the hut. Two of our keen (young) guests for the weekend did the N. Ridge of Tryfan during the afternoon, reminding themselves of some of the more valued lessons of winter excursions in these hills. A more "mature" party comprising Peter Chadwick, Iain Gilmour and Rob Ibberson explored the ice covered ridge boulders to the east of Carnedd Llewellyn and indeed Peter & Iain "topped" it in mist just before dusk whilst Rob returned to the hut to see about supper and greet guests. Mike Godden and Dennis Armstrong went up Moel Siobad and there may have been other outings which on which I did not glean information; so apologies if omission results in incompleteness.

The well-appointed hut was filled to its capacity of thirty and ideal for 26 Members and four guests. Tim Josephy, meet leader, had included a suggestion in the notice that as the "staircase is rather steep (about grade 2 scrambling)... those whose nocturnal excursions are frequent are advised to use room 1 on the ground floor." The lower bunks were of

course secured p.d.q. leaving us later unobservant arrivals to dump our gear on the top ones. It was not until after a few drinks and some good beer, wine and repartee, that the absence of any fixed climbing aids was noticed. The first floor men at least had a ladder on the first pitch, unlike the elderly, prostatically challenged seen doing some very unconventional routines on both ascent and descent.

The night was wild and the morning grey on Saturday, but after a wholesome breakfast the hut was empty by about 9.15. The majority seemed to go North and East of the hut. Alan our President, Adrian Bridge and Peter Chadwick did a circular route encompassing Llyn Colwyd & Eiglau reservoirs, Foel Grach and back via Carnedd Llewellyn and the Helg Du ridge; Peter was apparently quite impressed at the rate of progress particularly uphill!. A heavily ex-presidential cohort comprising David Smith, Albert Chapman, Derek Bush, George Spenceley and John Lovett spurned the higher ground and did a lakeside and waterway ramble, whilst our intrepid meet leader and brother Richard together with Nick Welch claimed to have topped nine hills in the day: "Aber something" they said but their identity remains a Welsh mystery to your reporter.





Several other groups also went along the watercourses either on the way out or back and reported some spectacular views as the day improved with sunshine. Alan Linford, David Hick, Derek Smithson and Ian Crowther “walked to Capel Curig, turned left and followed a mountain route to Llyn Cowlyd reservoir and returned via the canals feeding in from the West”. Alan Fletcher, Ged Campion and Dave Williams did a gully on the Carnedds opposite north side of Tryfan. Iain Gilmour led me and my two guests

Richard and Andy up the Devil’s Kitchen and into the bright mist on the Glyders where we came upon the familiar face of Harvey Lomas munching a Mars bar and doing exactly as we were, but clockwise.

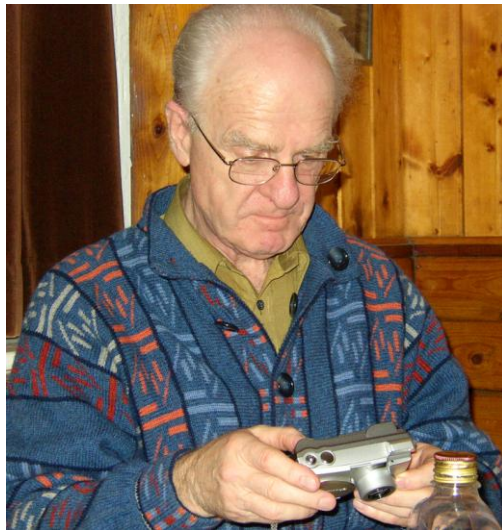
We saw the sun briefly and admired the eerie solitude of the ice and frost covered rock in the swirling mist with two seagulls soared close overhead competing for our scraps.

We might have been better with crampons at times but it

was marginal. On the descent via Galt y Ogof ridge direct to the hut, my three, much more experienced companions, having found a suitable snow slope, instructed me on ice-axe arrests then insisted I did enough runs to get thoroughly soaked in the soft snow.

The evening repast by Tim and his helpers would have shamed the Roux brothers – given the logistics of feeding 30 mouths so royally. It was excellent and much appreciated by all. Well-lubricated chat continued until eyelids drooped and the stirrings were not so early on Sunday which dawned – well, “foul” is a good word. Peter Chadwick attempted to raise a party to tackle Tryfan’s Heather Ridge: as he was the only taker he gave in and we walked round the Great Orme instead – and that was interesting too. We suspected that most others might have “chickened out” of anything more serious too: but it was a great meet.

Rob Ibberson



With the assistance of a wee dram, John Schofield gets to grips with the intricacies of a new digital camera.

Attendance:

- President, Alan Kay
- Dennis Armstrong
- Adrian Bridge
- Derek Bush
- Ged Champion
- Peter Chadwick
- Albert Chapman
- Alan Clare
- Ian Crowther
- Alan Fletcher
- Richard Garbutt(G)
- Iain Gilmour
- Mike Godden
- David Hick
- Rob Ibberson
- Richard Josephy
- Tim Josephy
- Alan Linford
- Harvey Lomas
- John Lovett
- David Martindale
- Jim Rusher
- John Schofield
- Steve Shipley (G)
- David Smith
- Derek Smithson
- George Spenceley
- Andy Syme (G)
- Nick Welch
- David Williams(G)

Tulloch, Creag Meagaidh

20 – 23 February 2003

If variety is the spice of life, then this was as spicy as it gets. And not just in the kitchen, as YRC members revealed hidden talents, ranging from chopping ginger root into tuna curry to fully set tables complete with cutlery, wine glasses, folded napkins all arranged on an immaculate table cloth. The attendees, including some who had been unable to attend for some years, took themselves off into the many different areas so accessible from this excellent location.

How to describe the situation, in order to convey an adequate picture to those not able to attend? North east of the grey Corries, south of Creag Meagaidh runs the railway line from Fort William. As it leaves Rannoch Moor and the lonely station at Corroul, it turns west and passes through the station at Tulloch. Some years ago Alan Renwick and his partner, Belinda, set about making the old station building an independent hostel to be reckoned with. Whilst preserving all the external trappings, they have ensured that the interior is the sort of place that it is a pleasure to return to after a long day on the hill. Sleeping about two dozen in small bunk-style accommodation, with sitting room and its ever-welcoming fire, and a kitchen and dining area large enough to become a warm focal point for eating, route planning and the sharing of anecdotes.

After arrival on Thursday evening, it was away to explore some of the many routes and activities available locally. Having an active railway station outside the back door certainly gave members scope for routes



without cars. Davids Hick and Martindale walked from Corroul back to Fort William via Glen Nevis and then trained it back to Tulloch; Tims Josephy and Bateman teamed up with Adrian Bridge and Neil Grant to tackle Coire Ardair and then



Creag Meagaidh's Raeburn's Gully (left) and Easy Gully (right) seen a few days later

Raeburn's gully to the top of Creag Meagaidh; Ross Briggs and Rob Ibberson tackled the same mountain by the more popular route up from the road; another larger group which included a number of past Presidents was also on Creag Meagaidh, but instead of toiling up gullies, they were to be found enjoying lunch in a snowhole by the Window some 600m below the summit in the company of a farmer, a teacher and a general practitioner from Kirby Lonsdale. Apart from the quality of lunch, the ladies were apparently most keen to demonstrate their navigational skills in the whiteout conditions on top! They certainly knew the way to the mens' hearts! The President and Iain Gilmour reduced Iain's tally of 'must-dos' by two on the tops of Chno Dearg and Meall Garbh. Not to be outdone, David Large and James Whitby climbed Stob Coire nan Lochan via Boomerang Gully.



Meanwhile Howard Papworth arrived late from Oxfordshire and contented himself with a stroll up Beinn Teallach in the cold bright conditions. Had he known that Duncan and Christopher Mackay were in Fort William buying crampons he might also have been tempted into those emporia to check out the latest gear. Derek Smithson enjoyed a day out on Aonach Beag and Carn Mor Dearg, while Gordon Humphries was nearby, flashing past on skis. The evening saw the traditional melange of cooking smells, styles and, er, experiments, before the drams were being passed around in front of the fire.

Saturday saw renewed enthusiasm as a large contingent took the train to Corrou from which to undertake a variety of different expeditions. Harry Robinson could not have guessed that he, Derek Bush and John Lovett would spend part of their day feeding wild boar after they began a conversation with the local landowner. All proper organic fodder it was too: perhaps we will have the chance to try some of the finished product next year. As well as feeding dangerous animals, they completed the round of Loch Ossian. Another group, including Barry Wood and Roger Dix, topped Beinn na Lap, while Derek Smithson and Michael Smith traversed two Munros east of Loch Triage. Ian Crowther and John Jenkin walked in Glen Nevis, while



Back Row L-R: Gordon Humphreys, Josephy, David Large, Papworth, Edmundson, Kirby,
 Michael Smith, Smithson, Tim Bateman, anon, Crowther, Smythe, ?, Robinson.
 Middle Row: Wood, Jenkin, Kay, Chapman.
 Front: David Smith, Bush, Paul MacKay, Lovett, Dix

high above them Adrian Bridge, Tim Josephy and long-suffering guest Neil Grant tackled Ben Nevis via No.2 gully. Adrian certainly looked the part, having attempted to shave his chin on a shard of ice that fell from above. David Large and James Whitby tackled Stob Coire Easain and seemd to find it far too easy! Iain Gilmour, heartened by his success of the previous day set off with Howard Papworth, Duncan and Christopher Mackay south from Moy. The latter two tackled Beinn a Chlachair, while Iain and Howard completed a two and a half hour walk-in, before pushing their way up in increasingly wintry conditions to the tops of Mullach Coire nan Nead and Meall Glas

Choire. Two more gone, thirty to go, Iain!

Saturday night proved a long and colourful evening: whilst several people contemplated the best way to cook the resident cat (with curry powder was the preferred method), others were intent on luring the local pine martens out of the pines to feast upon left over noodles, rolls, potatoes and tropical fruit. All in an evening's work for a hungry marten! England won the rugby, England won the cricket, the whisky went round again, the wine bottles were drained and finally everybody settled in to their bunks and tents.



Sunday saw a marked deterioration in the weather, with heavy cloud and rain beginning as we finished breakfast. A photographic session with the hostel's management team taking group photographs whilst balanced precariously on a step ladder across the railway tracks proved highly entertaining for those of the YRC sheltering from the rain under the station platform awning. From here, most headed off towards their homes, with some pausing on the way. Howard Papworth and Duncan Mackay were lucky enough to see Black Grouse by Loch Tay, whilst the meet organiser dragged his ever-challenged chums up the Cobbler before rushing back to beat the imminent downpour.

Tony Smythe, Michael Smith and Derek Smithson extended their stay but the wind speed and temperature increased. The last two made several ascents but above the Window were forced to retreat from the top lest they were blown away. Smith, out on his own, north of Newtonmore, saw eighteen hares in one spot above the derelict Red Bothy and five gents with large hawks hunting for hares (unsuccessfully) on the other side of the range below Loch Dubh.

There is a lot to do in the area (not forgetting the many interesting birds that were seen, which included Snow Bunting, Ptarmigan, Dipper, Ring Ouzel, Crossbill and Golden Eagle) and the wish was expressed by many that we return to the same location next year to sample more of the rich variety. Don't forget those spices!

Howard Papworth

Attendance

President, Alan Kay
Eddy
Tim Bateman
Adrian Bridge
Derek Bush
Albert Chapman
Ian Crowther
Roger Dix
Mike Edmundson
Iain Gilmour
Gordon Humphreys
Rob Ibberson
John Jenkin
Tim Josephy
Richard Kirby
David Large
John Lovett
Duncan Mackay
Paul Mackay (G)
Howard Papworth
Harry Robinson
F David Smith
Michael Smith
Derek Smithson
Tony Smythe
Nick Welch
David Williams (G)
Barrie Wood



Low Hall Garth Meet

28-30 March 2003

The weather forecast for the weekend was excellent, but in view of this the attendance at the meet was somewhat disappointing. Fourteen resident members and one guest were supplemented by two members who visited for the day.

One member arrived early on Friday, and walked the hard way over Lingmoor Fell to pay a visit to the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. I and my guest, also early arrivals, walked up towards the mines, and then cut over to Tilberthwaite, where my guest renewed acquaintance with several farmers who were previous "clients" of his when he was employed by the Ministry of Agriculture in Ulverston. The two of us, David Hick and David Martindale sampled the culinary delights of the Three Shires in the evening, but most of the other members enjoyed DIY meals at LHG.

Saturday's weather was superb, and all members made early starts for the fells, with one exception. This was Ian Crowther, who unfortunately had a gammy leg, and he decided to visit the Haverthwaite railway. However, he was thwarted in this intention because the railway did not open until April. Undaunted he explored the coast road to Silloth via Whitehaven and Workington. The Crinkle Craggs figured frequently in the routes selected by the remaining members, as apparently it did with many other walkers. I was impressed by the number of very young people we saw on the Crinkles and other fells during the weekend.

One party, starting from the National Trust car park at the ODG, ascended

Bowfell via The Band and proceeded via Ore Gap to Angle Tarn, returning for refreshment at the ODG by way of the Stake Pass and Mickleden. My guest and I walked up Oxendale and attacked the Crinkles via Crinkle Gill and the steep grassy final pitch of the ascent to the ridge. I think we were the only walkers who chose that route that day. I found it much more puff-making than when I last climbed the Gill fifteen years ago, and I was glad of a rest at the top, where we enjoyed watching the antics of several young ladies as they negotiated The Step on the Crinkles. My guest decided to add Bowfell to his walk, but I preferred to wait for his return on the pretext that I had done it several times recently, and he reported that the view from the summit was superb. This opinion was endorsed by our hut warden, Iain Gilmour: after driving to Kendal to purchase a gasket for the immersion heater, he walked up to the Three Shire Stone, and to Bowfell via the Crinkles and returned by the same route to LHG. Another lone walker, John Jenkins, followed a similar route to the Three Tarns, but included Cold Pike, as did the meet organiser and his able assistant. The lone walker returned to LHG by The Band and Blea Tarn. Seeking to avoid the Crinkle crowds three members conquered Wetherlam for the umpteenth time, and proceeded via Prison Band, Swirl How, Great How Crag and Levers Tarn and then home to LHG. The remaining two members assaulted Little and Great Carrs and Grey Friar, followed by a circumnavigation of Seathwaite Tarn.

Sumptuous fare in the evening was provided by the two Davids - Hick and Martindale - to revive the members after the exertions of the day. Many thanks to them for their culinary achievements.

There was less activity on Sunday, which proved to be another wonderfully fine and magical day. Three members returned home early to watch the Grand Slam rugby match between England and Ireland, but two of the party attacked the grade three scramble up Browney Gill from Oxendale, which they said was quite demanding, with several dicey pitches, and several waterfalls. Not being satisfied with that, however, they rounded off the day with an ascent of Pike of Blisco. The lone walker ascended Wetherlam via the Greenburn mines, and with the interests of the Club commendably in mind, the Hut warden, accompanied by Ian Crowther, scoured the quarries behind LHG to see if there might be suitable kerb stones there for the front of the climbing hut. As for myself, I introduced my guest to Whitbarrow, a limestone ridge in Southern Lakeland, from which there are magnificent views into central Lakeland. We had an interesting encounter on the top with a very knowledgeable walker and his wife, and discussed various topics which had appeared in the magazine of The Friends of the Lake District, such as the many planning applications for wind farms, including the one at Whin Fell. This is likely to be treated as an industrial site, and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the local planning board, because it is scheduled to generate more than fifty mega watts of power. As he departed he announced that he was Ian Brodie, who is the director of The Friends of the Lake District, and from whose articles I had quoted in our conversation! One has to be careful what one discusses with walkers on the fells!

John Sterland.

Attendance:-

Ken Aldred
 Derek Bush
 Derek Collins
 Ian Crowther
 Paul Dover (G)
 Iain Gilmour
 Mike Godden
 Mike Hartford
 David Hick
 John Jenkins
 Ian Laing
 John Lovett
 David Martindale
 Chris Renton
 David Smith
 Derek Smithson
 John Sterland



Ladies Meet, Harefield Hall, Pateley Bridge 25 –27 April 2003

Pateley Bridge lies some ten miles from the head of Nidderdale, and is the perfect centre for exploring this area of North Yorkshire noted for its scenery and outdoor activities.

Harefield Hall Hotel, a 17th Century Manor House overlooking the river Nidd, was the centre of activities and well chosen by our organiser.

Friday evening saw 31 members, wives, family, and guests renewing friendships in the convivial atmosphere of the Hotel. As always, concern was expressed about weather for the next day.

Saturday started fine and fresh and 31 persons set off on a circuitous route to Brimham Rocks. Initially uphill via steps and snickets, the abandoned church of St Mary's was visited before heading across fields and along tracks to cross the Pateley to Ripon road at Blazefield. Eventually the route took us upwards again to emerge at Brimham Rocks. Lunch was taken in warm sun, amazingly so as the forecast was for showers. After some exploration, the party set off again on the final leg, progressing steadily downhill to cross the B6165 at Low Laithe, and on to the riverbank path leading up river.

At the village of Glasshouses (famous for its Cricket Team successes in the Nidderdale League in the '50s and '60s), afternoon tea was taken at the local Winery. The path then led us back to the hotel where further refreshment was taken prior to rest, and for some a relaxing visit to the sauna, jacuzzi, and pool in the Leisure Centre. Dinner was taken by thirty-nine amid much conversation and enjoyment.

After breakfast on Sunday, nineteen stalwarts examined the disused stone quarry at Silver Hill on their way to the village of Wath. A church reputed to be the smallest Methodist Chapel in England was visited. Unfortunately the Sportsman Arms was closed for inspection when passed. Onwards south by the river Nidd again took us back into Pateley Bridge and Harefield Hall where final farewells were made.

Once again our organiser had found a superb venue for our annual get-together, an occasion much looked forward to for its social discourse and good walking.

Mike Godden

Attendance:

Dennis and Joan Armstrong
Alan and Madge Brown
Ian and Dorothy Crowther
Iain and Sarah Gilmour
Mike and Marcia Godden
John and Janet Hemingway
Rob and Gabrielle Ibberson
Alan and Julia Kay
Ian and Una Laing
Cliff and Cathie Large
Margaret Lee
Alan and Angela Linford
Bill and Brenda Lofthouse
John and Valerie Middleton
Tony and Valerie Penny
Arthur Salmon
Barbara Salmon
Trevor and Ann Salmon
John and Pat Schofield
Bill and Juliet Todd
Adrian and Judith Wardner

Rhinogs Meet

11 - 13 April 2003.

The Rhinogs have rightly gained a reputation of being the roughest, toughest mountains in the UK south of the Scottish border. Their crags of Cambrian grit are gnarled, much faulted and cut to the heart by immense canyons, and for good measure the hillsides are cloaked with thick heather, which conceals loose boulders and scree.

Nine members and one guest attended this camping meet, which was based in the delightful field we have used on previous occasions beside the Afon Artro, courtesy of the farmer at Crafnant, between Llanbedr and Cwm Bychan.

On Saturday, in calm, clear weather three members, Tim, Iain (Gilmour) and Alan (Kay), plus one agile dog, clambered over typical Rhinogs terrain to Clip and Diffwys, retraced their steps to Clip and then walked SE over Craig Wion, arguably the best part of the range. They then ascended Rhinog Fawr, headed for Gloyw Lyn, and followed a series of paths direct back to the campsite at Pont Crafnant.

Our senior members, George and Jim, walked a lengthy round from Llyn Cwm Bychan, Roman Steps, then southwards to the pass at Bwlch Drws Ardudwy, and back to camp via Cwm Nantcol over high moorland road and tracks.

The younger members, Alex and Chris, on a first visit to the Rhinogs, firstly scrambled to Clip, decided to leave Craig Wion for another day, took the eastern path through the forest to the Roman Steps, then back to camp.



Ian (Crowther) was in cycling mode, and spent the day touring the minor roads to Porthmadoc and back – no mean feat; these roads are narrow and very hilly.

On Sunday, most members had a leisurely breakfast before breaking camp and heading home. The President drove over to Cwm Nantcol, walked along the line of the old drove road to the beautiful stone bridge of Pont Scethin, then SW and W to Pont Fadog, then a series of field paths back to Cwm Nantcol.

It was a delightful, connoisseur's weekend in an unfrequented part of Wales.

Attendees: -

Alex Blair
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Ian Crowther
Iain Gilmour
Tim Josephy
Alan Kay
Chris Mutlow (guest)
Jim Rusher

George Spenceley

Ardgour, Scotland

10 - 17 May 2003

We made no prior plans as to time of arrival, but by strange chance three cars arrived at the same time at Eriskay Chalet in Strontian. A new departure for meet accommodation. It was well fitted out with every mod con, only the TV was not used. Having already had ten days on the hills with my wife I was happy to join a low level walk as a starter from Acharacle to Glenborrodale in doubtful weather conditions. I suspect Derek was not too happy not getting a top in, so next day he embarked on an impressive horseshoe near Kingairloch. This round takes in a Graham, Bheinn na Cille and two Corbetts: Fuar Bheinn and Creach Bheinn.

Four of us set out for the most prominent Ardgour hill, Beinn Resipol. The route follows the Allt Mhic Chiarain, a deep impressive gorge which seems to terminate at the col. It was quite misty as we neared the col, snow began to fall as we met four walkers descending. 'Never talk to strangers' they convinced John that the top was forty minutes above the col. My GPS said 300ft. His boot problem persuaded him to return the same way rather than do the intended traverse ending back in Strontian. The GPS was right and Richard and Roger despite a short snowstorm had a first class expedition.

Tuesday's weather was wet. In the afternoon three of us cycled along Loch Sunart and round to Laudale House. Albert Chapman and David Handley joined us back at the Chalet.

On the Wednesday the four of us decided to do the horseshoe trip that Derek enthused about. John nursing



First course for Richard, Derek, Roger and John

his feet decided to do the route in reverse and meet Roger, Richard and I as we descended the westerly leg. The ascent is very steep up onto the Graham and is followed by countless false tops. As mist clears the clarity of the air rewarded us with spectacular views in all directions. The snow-covered Ben glistened in the sunlight and the twin tops of Ben a'Bheither across Loch Linnhe.

From the summit to Meall nan Each the terrain resembles a golf course, easy on the legs. The ridge back to Glengalmadale is an endless series of small tops. We were glad to see John's car on the Loch side and to hear that he had solved his foot problem and successfully completed the westerly leg of the round.

The highest summit in the Ardgour is Sgurr Dhomihuill (Donald's Peak) and Thursday was the totally dry day so this was our objective. A short drive to a car park by the nature reserve by the Strontian River is the start of a pleasant walk through the woods for three miles. A further mile took us to a lead mine where the mineral Strontium was first discovered. Here we crossed the river heading for the ridge which took us to the top of Sgurr na h-Ighinn, where Richard returned to do some shopping for our evening meal. Albert, Roger and I pressed on and soon reached the summit of Donald's



John and Richard

Peak. It was much easier than it looked. An exciting descent took us back to Strontian River.

Friday didn't look too promising so we decided to go to Britain's most westerly point at Ardnamurchan. In high winds we climbed the dominant summit of Ben Hiant by way of a well-defined path. Roger and I decided to go cross-country to meet the road to the point. Miraculously we hit the road two minutes before the first car arrived at the agreed meeting place.

The use of chalets proved to be very successful, Richard took supplies for all the breakfasts and each of us provided an evening meal. It worked splendidly. The cost worked out less than a bunkhouse and certainly more comfortable. Maybe we should consider winter meets using two or three chalets. No doubt we could arrange a special rate if we took our own sleeping bags.

FDSmith

Attendance:

Albert Chapman
 Roger Dix
 David Handley
 Richard Kirby
 John Lovett
 David Smith
 Derek Smithson



The summit of Ben Hiant

Gaping Gill

May 2003

To celebrate the centenary of the YRC meet which saw Booth and Parson crawl between East Passage and South Passage, which led to the discovery of the hitherto unknown South East Passage, a small group of YRC members (which included a "pride" of Past Presidents) took advantage of the Bradford Pothole Club invitation to join them at their annual winch meet at Gaping Gill.

The YRC meet of 1903 followed on from the 1896 descent and utilised the original windlass and tackle of Calvert which was transported up the fell on Friday 29th May 1903 with a typical YRC early start at 0430 on the Saturday with some 19 members of the party participating in the descent over the weekend. Our descent pales into insignificance in comparison!

From Lowstern to Gaping Gill to descend at 1045 via the diesel powered winch and be gathered together in the flood lit Main Chamber in a matter of minutes hardly compares to the 1903 meet led by Cuttriss, however the grandeur of the Main Chamber is timeless and never fails to impress.

It is difficult to imagine that the entrance up into South Passage was not open in 1903 and that Booth and Parson discovered it by crawling through their aptly named Booth Parson Crawl from East Passage to South Passage to then arrive in the Main Chamber.

A further year was to pass before the South Passage was followed through the Portcullis to "T" Junction, the further reaches of Sand Cavern-Stream Chamber, back to "T" Junction and through to South East Pot.

The 2003 party carried on passed Booth Parson Crawl exit to "T" Junction, along South East Passage of notoriously awkward height (too low to stoop and too high to crawl) and traversed round the ledge of South East Pot to join friends from the B. P. C who were using Bar Pot as a short cut through to Hensler's High Aven to ascend to the surface via the newly discovered Hensler's Pot.

The BPC are to be congratulated on their major discovery which after a number of years of hard work has been pushed to give a new way into Gaping Gill by way of a series of 5 pitches culminating in a 40m+ pitch into Hensler's.

BPC members had only just completed the first ever through trip and from graphic descriptions from our BPC friends it is only for the very experienced and slim cavers.

On returning to the surface a toast in the beer tent was given to departed friends. One must certainly admire the grit and determination of the pioneer YRC cavers who from the 1903 meet carried on the exploration of Gaping Gill at annual camps on the fell over the following forty years.

Hearty thanks to the BPC for making the event possible.

Mike Hartland

Attendance:

Ken Aldred
Derek Bush
Albert Chapman
Mike Hartland.
David Smith

Tuesday Meets January - April 2003

As an experiment members on the midweek meets are providing brief reports of their activities.

4 February The Lowstern first-Tuesday-of-the-month meet commenced from the top of Buck Haw Brow in rather dreary weather, which fortunately improved as the day went on.

Along Brunton Road and across the enclosures to Feizor Thwaite via the access lane and paths which pass close to Huff's Pot (which brought yesteryear memories to one of party) and the field systems/enclosures of archaeological interest which are a feature of this area.

Splendid views opened as the Feizor to Little Stainforth path was followed to "Hidden Valley" – no longer hidden since described in Wainwright's book! Bearing left up to the top of Smearsett Scar with its panoramic views of the Ribblesdale-Ingleborough horizon,

thence down to the Hargreaves Barn to the Feizor Nick path. Along the lanes and paths to Austwick by Jop Ridding, Slaindale and the Austwick Beck's clapper bridges at The Pant.

Over the fields to Clapham and back to Lowstern where to the surprise of David Smith celebratory best wishes to recognise his 75th birthday were the finale to an excellent day.

Present were Richard Kirby. John Lovett. David Handley. David Smith. Mike Edmundson. Derek Bush. Mike Hartland.
Mike Hartland

18 February Five arrived at the head of Kingsdale under blue sky and a biting wind. The sixth companion was seen coming down Whernside, and having met, all proceeded up hill to the summit. After refreshment, a battle with the wind ensued as all headed for Whernside Tarns. Windchill was sufficient to freeze the perspiration on one companion's woolly hat. The Tarns displayed



Albert, Derek, David and Ken exit Booth-Parsons Crawl, Gaping Gill

sparkling ice driven and layered by the strong wind. Later further refreshment was taken at Scar Top by kind permission of the Mistress of the house before returning to Lowstern.

F M Godden

25 February Two arrived early at LHG and were quickly away. A second pair arrived soon after 10.30. Several of the regulars were not out because of the closeness to the Craig Meaghaidh meet at the weekend. In bright winter weather party two headed for Lingmoor Fell via Birk Howe. Following the track down to Blea Tarn House we crossed the road to the tarn and onwards to Blea Moor and Bridge End and back to Low Hall Garth. A pleasant, interesting, if shortish, walk but just right after a hard weekend in Scotland. David Smith

11 March Eight men and a dog met at Embsay reservoir car park at 9.45am. to do what has been known to some members for forty years as 'The Moor Walk'.

The day was one of those showery ones; the sort of day when you wait until you are wet before deciding to put on over-trousers and immediately that you have struggled into them the rain stops. The wind was strong at times and it cannot be said that the views were extensive.

The walk went up by the side of Crookrise to Crag Top, down to Eller Beck and up to Rylstone Cross, to Wart Crag on Cracoe Fell and Peter's Crag. Before going down to Upper Barden Reservoir lunch was taken in a gouse beaters hut, a roof, four walls and a doorway to lighten the gloom. The conversation was good and as wide ranging as is usual in the YRC. The party became rather spread out en route to the start. Some members

remarked that they used to do it in half the five and three-quarter hours taken.

An enjoyable day out in the company of Derek Bush, Mike Edmundson, Mike Godden, David Handley, Jeff Hooper Richard Kirby, John Lovett and David Smith. Jeff H Hooper

8th March Making the best of this remarkable spring weather we left the cars at Buckhaw Brow across the tops of Giggleswick Scar to Stackhouses. Here we went along the Ribble Way north to Stainforth Force, then northeast to Smearset Scar. At Feizor Wood's edge we headed to the village then back along the well-marked track to the cars. F D Smith

22nd April. It was another day with perfect weather conditions so we quickly decided to leave Lowstern for Longsledale, heading for the Garsdale Pass, passing picturesque waterfalls cascading down the River Sprint. At the pass were clear views of Haweswater but no appearances of eagles. We followed the district boundary to Adams Seat, The Knowe and Kentmere Pike returning to the car through newly planted tree. FDS

29th April. Weather forecast rain, but we didn't see any, we enjoyed sunshine all the way to Helvelyn, though we did have high winds on the summit. We set off from Dunmail Raise passing Grisedale tarn then heading straight for the summit. Excellent views of Striding Edge and Swirrel Edge. The return was via Wythburn and through the forest to the cars. F D Smith





Goats on the Cliffs of Moar, County Clare, Burren Meet, May 2003

