

# YORKSHIRE RAMBLER

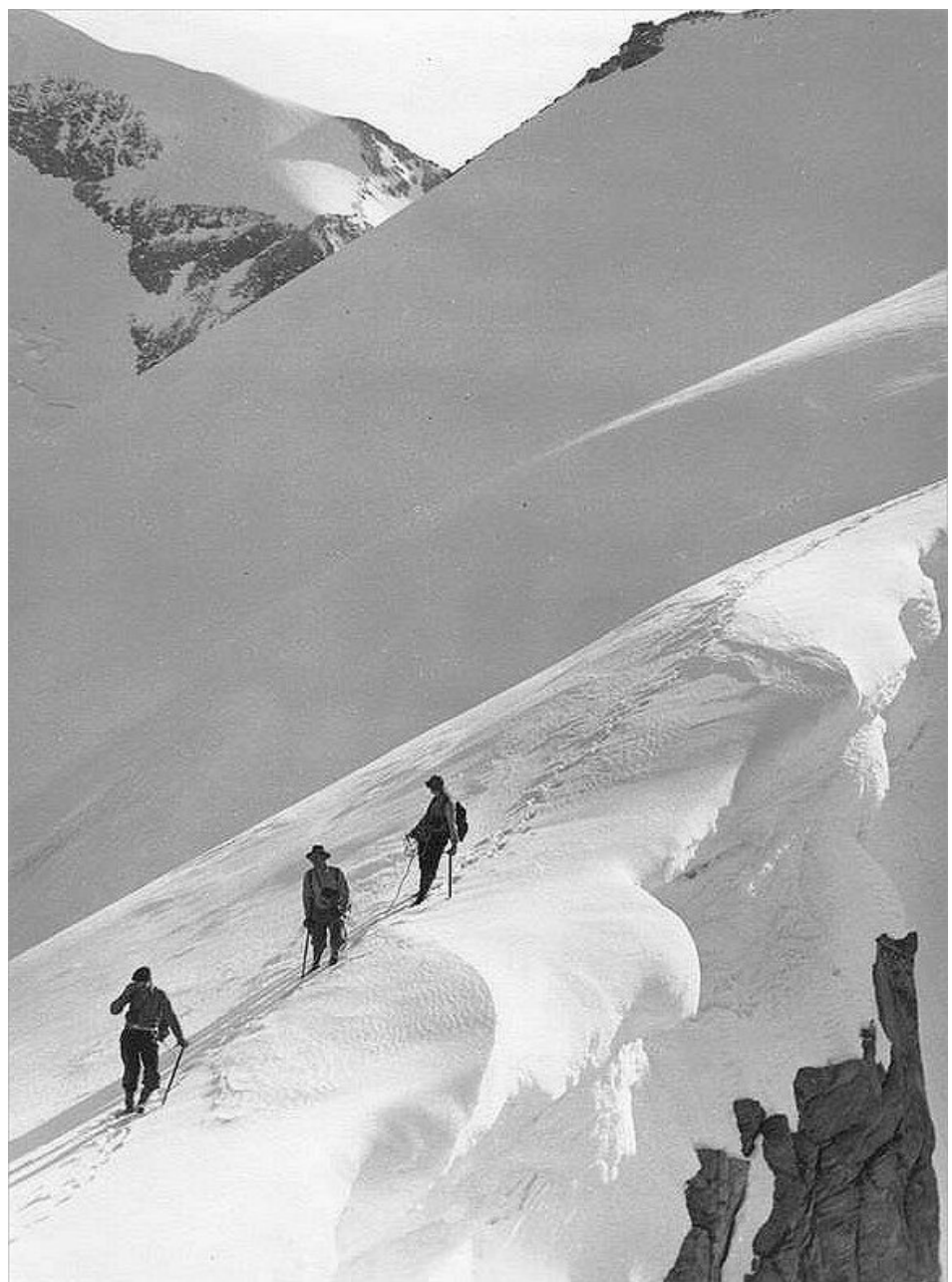
THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS CLUB

YRC BULLETIN

Issue 22, Winter 2004

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DESCENT FROM THE OBER GABALHORN



**CLUB COTTAGE, LOW HALL GARTH  
LITTLE LANGDALE, CUMBRIA**



**LANGDALE**

**SLATER'S BRIDGE**



# The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Established 1892

A mountaineering and  
caving club

Club Member of  
The British Mountaineering Council

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The opinions expressed in this  
publication are not necessarily  
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## SOF OMAR

John and Valerie Middleton

Six hundred and fifty kilometres southeast of Addis Ababa the glistening river Webb, fresh from the 4,300m high Bale Mountains, reaches the dozen round thatched huts that make up Sof Omar. This picturesque village nestles in a small but luxuriant subsidiary dale terminating where the river valley reaches the great Sof Omar cliffs. Here is to be found the fourth most extensive cave yet explored in Africa (the longest is Wit Tamdoun in Morocco at 21km).

The 15.1km long cave of Sof Omar was first noted but not entered by the explorer Donaldson-Smith in 1897. In 1967 Robson, Clapham and Ahmed explored and surveyed over 8km of passageway and in 1972 a British Expedition added a further 6km (see Transactions of the C.R.G. vol. 15 no. 3 pgs 107-168).

Over the next 25 years various cavers visited the system but barely a kilometre was added. From then until 2002 access became almost impossible due to local political problems. As we were in Ethiopia in early 2004 we decided a visit could be worthwhile.

Expressed very simply the system is based on a great river passage 1.5km long, averaging 20m wide and 20m high, commencing at the village of Sof Omar and known as the Ayiew Maco entrance. This extends through the mountain to emerge at the equally vast Holuca exit.



ONE OF THE SOF OMAR EXITS

Along this main thoroughfare maize-ways of (usually) large passages and chambers extend from both sides. A good survey becomes invaluable when exploring these!

Few formations are to be found but erosion of the Mesozoic Antalo limestone has created many spectacular columns and canyons. The streamway can be followed throughout but this entails several swims; deviating through the many side passages can avoid these. In the many dry chambers bats are very common as is guano and it's associated fauna.

Just within Ayiew Maco entrance is a Muslim holy site that should be treated with respect.

No new discoveries were made on our visit but for anyone in the region with a 4x4 an excursion to Sof Omar is well worth the effort.

The area is extremely beautiful and due to the dense and spiny nature of the vegetation possibilities must still exist further afield.

### BETWEEN THE TWO SOF OMAR VILLAGES

The cave is in the valley behind the Camel.



We stayed at a small hotel in Goba situated roughly 120km east of the cave but camping, with permission, is possible nearby.

The friendly villagers make a "negotiable" charge for entry into the cave and can also provide a very proficient guide.

On the plateau directly above Sof Omar is a slightly larger but not so picturesque village also known as Sof Omar. Here, on each Saturday, a very lively and colourful market occurs with most of the produce being transported on local camels or donkeys (these latter have a distinctive stripe on the shoulder).

Our team was comprised of Jan and Tony Waltham, my wife Valerie and myself, a driver and a guide.

## WEATHER OR NOT

By Roy Denney

We constantly see evidence of the effect of climate change with extremes of weather having a disastrous effect on people and property and the more gradual and subtle effect it is having on wildlife is well documented.

The importance of weather in our lives is probably reflected in the number of weather indicators that our forbears had identified.

There are many supposed natural indicators several of which may be old wives tales but may also contain an element of truth. Logic suggests that the weather is too variable for wildlife to be able to make long term predictions but there is certainly evidence of accurate short term indicators to be seen around us.

If you see sheep frolicking or horses rubbing their backs on the ground then you should head for cover as rain is due although it is hard to find any correlation. Cattle also have a habit of picking a dry spot to sit or lie down before the ground gets wet.

The scarlet pimpernel is known as the poor mans weatherglass as it always closes its petals when rain is due. This is no good in the afternoons as this plant closes up shop for lunch and does not open again till the next day.

Bees head back to the hive when rain is due and swallows hunt low to catch insects which are not rising as high as they would in fine weather.

Frogs certainly seem to set up a loud chorus when rain is impending and they, like many creatures, can probably sense increased humidity or barometric pressure.

Long term climatic change will, and indeed already is affecting our own leisure activities and is beginning to make a nonsense of our traditional seasons.

It is tempting after recent weather to rename our seasons. In other parts of the world, the autumn and early winter we have seen in recent years would have been called The Monsoons or The Wet and perhaps should at least be known as the rainy season. This and the odd brief cold snap are impressed on our memories but memory is fickle and we remember the good or bad depending on our mood at the time. We perceive last winter as bad but as mentioned above the evidence of the wildlife belies this although it cannot be denied that we had some extreme interludes.

We often say that spring is upon us but even this is subject to some debate. Traditional calendar allocations of the seasons no longer seem appropriate and different bodies now consider the various seasons to start at differing times. Even nature is changing the rules.

Traditionally and meteorologically autumn is supposed to start on Sept 1st. However many bodies now consider Sept 23rd, the equinox, to be the start as it more properly reflects the natural world but yet others now consider Oct 1st to be the start.

In reality it is just a label to describe a type of weather and the associated behaviours in the natural world. The obvious indicators of autumn are misty mornings and falling leaves. Both are caused by the changing balance between air and ground temperatures.

If we ignore the norm of considering each season to be three months long and relate the seasons to natural activity as evolving with the change in our climate then what we used to think of as winter is now only December and January and they are rarely as severe as we used to see as is reflected in the lack of snow conditions at most of our January meets.

Spring often starts in February but can run on into May. Summer then runs through, certainly into September and to be classed as an 'Indian Summer' we now look for a hot spell in early October as we had in each of the last three years.

Recent research by the Woodland Trust and others shows that in much of Britain, trees retain their leaves till well into November with reds and oranges only appearing at the end of September or later.

Heavy rain, one of the many potentially dangerous effects of weather changes due to global warming, puts many inland sites at risk particularly areas of the world where we like to enjoy our sport.

I can loosen the bonding of sandy soils, and clay and boulder mixes, leading to land slips and mud slides as was evidenced on the Lley Peninsular in 2002, Boscastle and Lochearnhead last year and in alpine regions of Italy and France.

As permafrost melts and becomes less 'perma' this threat could magnify many fold and large swathes of high mountain areas could become unstable and collapse into lowland valleys. Parts of the Himalayas, The Urals, Caucasus and Alps are thought seriously at risk.

Closer to home we have of course traditionally held meets in LHG in January and we all recall super meets with 40 or more members attending enjoying great hospitality not least when Dennis Driscoll catered. We used to enjoy good snow conditions more years than not but this seems a thing of the past now and they normally refill the lakes when we are there these days.



I also have great recollections of near white outs on High Street during Kentmere meets



We have often held Hill Inn meets when the Dales were wrapped in snow but it now seems that we will not get classic winter conditions without going much further afield.

To counter this we do now seem to enjoy better summers. May and June last year were exceptional months for sunshine although July and August saw dramatic storms and flooding between good spells.

I spent two weeks walking the North Yorkshire Moors and another two in Cornwall and came back as dark as from one of my periodic visits to Tenerife. As there was a cooling breeze in Cornwall it did not seem as hot as other more humid snaps but sunny it definitely was. We have seen early and abundant fruits and nuts this year which supposedly means an early and hard winter and by the time you are reading this you should know how reliable this old wives' tale is. What would we have to talk about if the weather was predictable.

As a club we must look forward but also enjoy our memories and remember our past and any archive material is most welcome. As we greet 2005 and remember classic winters of the past I thought you would be interested in a previously unpublished piece about 5 intrepid souls on an Alpine trip fifty years ago.

This was written by Wilfred Anderson but for some reason was never actually published.

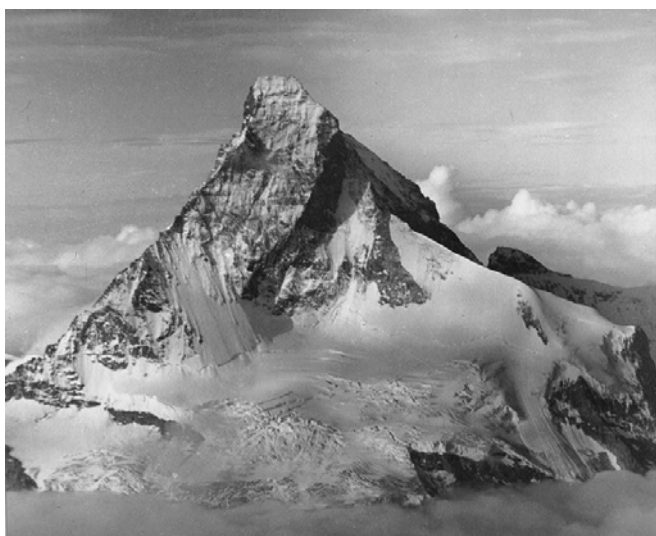
The accompanying pictures are from David Smith's archive.

In a similar vein I am obliged to David Handley for a copy of an old handwritten letter from Roberts which he came across in one of the YRC journals returned to the Club by Geoff Scovell's widow which I have included in this bulletin and trust will be of interest.

Finally on this all-our-yesterdays theme, Alan Linford has produced a copy of an article on the early carabiners which shows what we had to make do with in the good old days.

## ALPINE TRIP 1955

By W J Anderson



### MATTERHORN FROM TÊTE BLANCHE

This is no story of hair raising ascents of vertical faces or narrow escapes from benightment on some major snow peak, indeed in retrospect the highlight of our holiday seems to be centred on a night out in one of the more notorious cafes in Zermatt!

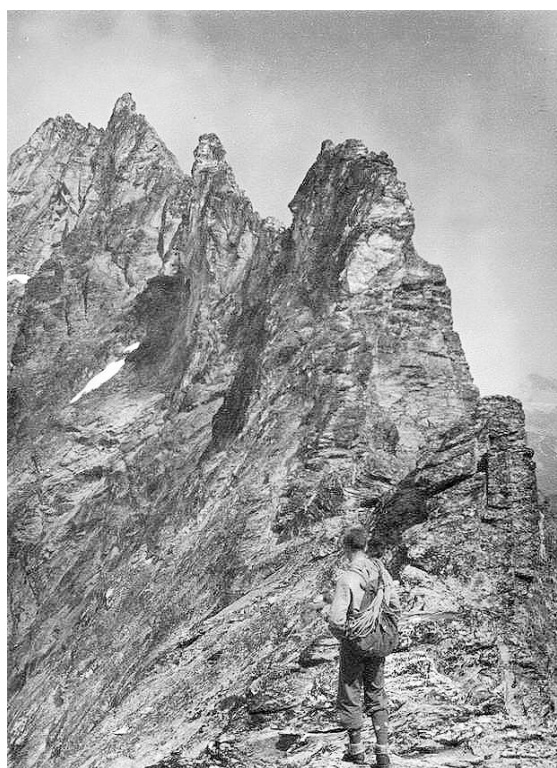
However, our worthy editor (*Tim Watts in those long gone days*) thought that an account of our activities in the Alps in 1955 was desirable, and for the sake of brevity and to save embarrassment to members of our party I have confined my account to our mountaineering exploits. At this point the reader has my forgiveness if he breathes a sigh of disappointment and turns to tales of more stirring adventure than I have to offer.

Truth to tell our activities above the snow line were strictly limited by one or two falls of new snow, followed by warm nights which precluded consolidation giving rise to avalanche conditions. These provided entertainment from a distance but discouraged too close an acquaintance with the avalanche slopes themselves. The season was generally bad and it seems that although we were out in early July conditions would not have been better later.

Our party was five in number, all members of the Club. Our climbing activities were commenced from a base in Arolla which spot we reached after an exciting journey from Sion to Les Haudères, by post auto from whence we completed the journey by jeep. Two nights at the Vignettes hut gave us an easy snow plod up the Pigne d'Arolla, but we were denied the opportunity of climbing Mont Collon, due to a day of bad weather, which brought some new snow.

Our time at the hut was enlivened by conversations with a guide who was escorting a young female client along the 'High Level Route' to Chamonix. He gave us excellent instructions, complete with energetic and most convincing demonstrations, of roping up methods for glacier travel and the associated crevasse rescue technique. He and his client left for the valley a few hours before us. Judging by the closeness of their footprints in the snow of the Glacier de Pièce we concluded that we had yet something to learn of glacier travel particularly in mixed parties!

High peaks being 'out' due to bad snow we reluctantly relinquished our plans for the Aiguilles Rouges and spent a delightful day on the Petit Dent des Veisivi, enjoying excellent climbing along a Skye-like rock ridge.



In order to give the snow peaks a chance to settle down and yet be in a position to take advantage of good conditions should the weather improve, we proposed a visit to the Bertol hut with the prospects of climbing the Aiguille de la Za the same afternoon.

The future programme would depend on opportunities but we had hoped for a chance to climb the Dent Blanche and an eventual descent to the fleshpots at Zermatt. Unfortunately an excellent morning deteriorated into cold mist as we climbed the 'fixed rope' into the Bertol hut, situated so fantastically on its ledge of rock.

An American family were a few minutes behind us as we came up the snow slope below the hut. Much to our surprise the son appeared as soon as we had completed our reconnaissance of the accommodation. He was alone, but English reticence forbade questions.

After a suitable interval for the exchange of civilities he announced that his pop had been hit on the head by a rock and, apparently deciding that his pop's non-appearance might be worthy of investigation, he departed. We were relieved shortly afterwards to find the family party happily reunited and although the paternal cranium was bleeding freely there was little evidence of serious damage. Although I think we were not entirely cleared from suspicion of having dislodged the offending rock, the incident provided an opportunity for conversational openings.

Mutual sufferings at the hands of the smoky stove further fostered transatlantic relations and valuable advice was received by our party on surrounding climbs from 'Haslar' who appeared to have considerable experience in this district.

The ensuing night was the best we had yet had, early morning showed clear sky, bright with stars, whilst the great peaks surrounded us grim and lifeless dimly seen in the eerier light. Consequently what might have been a purgatorial slog in soft snow or a game of hide and seek played in thick mist amongst the

crevasses proved a delightful glacier crossing in what must be one of the finest mountain settings in the Alps.

As the first rays of the sun met us we were approaching the central ridge of this vast snowfield and were surrounded by the giant peaks. The fantastic silhouette of the Matterhorn was perhaps the most striking whilst Dent Blanche on our left showed its less formidable aspect, with its South Ridge running towards the Col d'Herens.

We proceeded on to the Tête Blanche, just a snow plod, but what a magnificent viewpoint on a morning such as this. The Dent d'Herens seemed but a few minutes away whilst Mont Blanc established its pre-eminence 40 miles to the west. It was a magnificent opportunity for photographic panorama. Indeed our cameras were busily employed before we commenced our descent of the Col d'Herens. Here we found conditions rather tricky due to soft snow and the prospects of small avalanches from above, a promise, which was fulfilled as soon as we were clear of danger.

We had a protracted halt at the Schönbühl hut lazing in the sunshine with the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn conveniently placed for end on inspection across the glacier.

At this time, work had been commenced on a new hut, to be built in the latest SAC style using locally quarried stone. Teams of mules were jingling their way up the track carrying beams of wood. The 'muleteers' and workmen were lurching in the hut when we arrived, the mules likewise, but in their case the meal was alfresco.

This new hut was opened in the September 1955, and is said to have increased capacity to deal with the demands of the skiing season. As I promised earlier a veil will be drawn over our activities in Zermatt. Sufficient to say that two days later found us staggering up the interminable track to the Rothhorn hut with very full stomachs and very full rucksacks.



An early start the following morning got us away in front of a guided party whose leader was not averse to using our tracks across the glacier and onto the snow saddle of the Wellenkuppe.

A pleasant 800 feet of rock lead to the final snow slope and we were soon on the summit enjoying the magnificent panorama. The Mischabel peaks were seen across a sea of cotton wool clouds with a frightening view of the North Face of the Matterhorn nearer to hand. An impressive view led downwards over the Trifhorn and along the rock ridge to the Rothorngrat. This latter must surely be a most rewarding expedition.

Our immediate attention was directed to our neighbour the Ober Gabelhorn whose steep northerly slopes we eyed with some mistrust.

We crossed behind the large cornice and commenced to ascend the gendarme. Our doubts were quickly confirmed. To proceed was rashness. The snow was like sugar and reliable steps were impossible to obtain and their probable condition for the descent some hours later was in doubt so very reluctantly the party retreated.

*(see frontispiece-Ed.)*

We met the guided party on regaining the summit of the Wellenkuppe. They had missed the magnificent view as the early morning clouds had risen to envelop us in thick mist, which would certainly accelerate the deterioration of the snow.

The collapse of my ice axe on the descent made the traverse of the Trifhorn on the next day memorable, chiefly for the number of crevasses I 'found' on the slopes leading down to the Mountet Hut.

On the delightful ascent of the Trifhorn we had some excellent views of the west face of the Ober Gabelhorn down which avalanches thundered frequently, and across the glacier the impressive east face of Dent Blanche was

revealed at intervals through gaps in the clouds, which were forming around the summit.

Vague hopes for the Zinal Rothhorn by the north arête were not encouraged by reports from a guided party who took 14 hours on this ridge whilst we traversed Lo Besso.

Our plans for at least one major summit were dashed by the unpromising morning when we planned for an early start on the Rothhorn; the high altitude weather confirmed our suspicions as we later wended our way down the glacier to Zinal.

However our final climb on the Besso had been a very worthy ending to our holiday. A bi-pinnacled southwest ridge provided excellent sport on red granite very reminiscent in places of Commando Ridge on the Cornish cliffs at Brosigran.

The return over Mont Blanc de Moming completed a most excellent expedition, which owing to a shortage of supplies was celebrated by a three course meal of soup, spaghetti and a sweet on our return to the hut.

A delightful leisurely progress down the Val d'Annivera to Ayer was enjoyed all the more after the previous days above the snow line.

The scent of flowers, the humming of insects, the warm sweet smell of hay under a hot sun, a cool path through pine woods and the ever present rumble of turbulent icy steams, combined with our memories of days on snow and rock, to give completeness, a consummation of our holiday.

Our party comprised

Arthur Tallon  
Brian Hartley  
Cliff Large  
David Smith  
Wilfred Anderson

## **GLEANINGS FROM THE YRC LIBRARY**

DAVID HANDLEY

28 Nov 1949

Dear Scovell,

I had gone to Stump X on Sun, as it was open all over to the Craven Pothole Club. The lower part is not at the best more than an interesting earth cove, but on Sunday was muddy & filthy of the worst. However there was no rain going in or coming out.

I will get Jim Addyman to settle you both. There is nothing armchair or motor coach about the qualifications.

FS Booth will send you notices of the meets, and when you have attended one you will be elected. The sub is 21s.

We had to do this because people were getting in who never came near us, and as it is, the people who keep resigning are men we have only seen once. There will be a lecture in Jan and a meet at Chapel le Dale on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan weekend.

I have a bad Press. The YP would not publish my letter, but I have found the man who started Ilkla Moor with the YRC.

He was 20 yrs in Hull after the 1<sup>st</sup> War and says the song was utterly unknown in the ER till broadcasting took it up. It was the same in the NR 1904- 13. It seems to have been local to Halifax & Baildon. 1<sup>st</sup> publ. 1916, and publ. incorrectly about 1922-5.

My friend heard it at the Buffaloes and began teaching it to YRC men friends. Of course Leeds TC sang it. The great Parsons was the Principal. Macdonald though northerner seems to think not, bore me out. It was novel in 1911, though it had once been a circuit song.

People I have asked have never heard it at a football match, no crowd would know more than a snatch.

Ask your friends about it. No Yorkshire or Englishman ever knows more than one verse of anything except a school song.

All the best

Yours sincerely

E E Roberts

## **ANTIQUES OF THE FUTURE?**

ALAN LINFORD

The meet mentioned in the following article saw a large turn out of old people dressed in and festooned with a large amount of old gear.

Clearly demonstrating that mountaineers do not dispose of, but hoard equipment that has passed its service date. Perhaps it holds memories and has become a part of them or maybe they sense it will become collectable and worth a bob or two. Leather boots with clinker, star mugger and two varieties of tricouni nails, crampons, pegs and abseil rings made by the local black-smith, hemp rope and waistlines, ice screws akin to corkscrews, double Ventile anoraks, wooden shafted axes with primitive heads, fluffy knotted rope and tape slings, etriers, engineering nuts of all sizes no doubt each having an interesting tale to tell. Most interesting was a range of carabiners which generated much discussion around technical features, who made it, where and when and one carabiner which had an interesting provenance. I had not heard such a conversation before and asked one of the participants, Peter Holden, to write an article recording at least some of the discussion. We have his permission to reproduce it here.

If equipment such as old carabiners do become collectable who, in the Club, would be the Roadshow Expert?

Peter is a mountaineer with an extensive list of achievements including climbing the 6 big North faces in the summer of 1971. More recently the Comici route on the Cima Grande to celebrate his friends 60th birthday.

## **CARABINERS - did you know?**

Peter Holden

Carabiners are, as you do know, metal links that can be closed and open easily [except when I am trying to clip that crucial gear at full stretch!]. Climbers (and others) use them for a wide variety of tasks. They come now in a huge range of styles, sizes and designs. But from where did they originate?

The climbers' carabiner was first used and got its name, apparently, from carbine [carabiner!] guns, which used a spring-loaded gate.

The first climbing carabiners were made from steel and consequently were very heavy. The most favoured attribution of their first use is during the years preceeding the First World War when such brilliant climbers as Hans Dulfer, Otto Herzog and Hans Fiechtl from the 'Austrian school' of climbing, which was developing climbing to such a high standard on the big Austrian limestone walls and in the Dolomites.

The carabiner adaption for use in climbing has been specifically attributed to Otto Herzog. He was nicknamed 'Rambo', even then. He is reputed to have got the idea from the seeing firefighters attach themselves to ladders by pear-shaped spring clips. He experimented with them with Dulfer, Fiechtal and others and they put them into practice on the limestone cliffs. Many of their climbs are still great classics and defy the myth of most British writing of their period on their exploits. The British were very accusatory of so called 'artificial techniques' when in fact these bold exponents of the new arts were putting up essentially 'free climbing' routes on major cliffs with occasional direct aid. Just how do we think Herford ascended the Flake Crack on CB, brilliant climber as he was. Many a 'fine' ascent on British crags was accomplished with ample use of 'aid' from other climbers, ice axes and other nefarious ruses.

Certainly pitons were in use before the rather more sophisticated use of the carabiner. The former being used either directly, with a closed

ring for threading the rope through or with a short piece of rope tied through the ring and round the main climbing rope. Great fun hey on a big limestone wall!

Some of you will recall the days when you proudly walked into the pub after a visit to your local crag and, having 'forgotten' to remove your nylon sling runner equipped with its mighty Stubai 'biner', you took in the well-earned adulation of the locals [you thought]. You will have then saved up and invested in a length of hemp cord, wrapped it round your waist [if you had one] and proudly clipped the hugely heavy, screwgate carabiner to it and tied the climbing rope to it with a 'Tarbuck' knot to impress all your mates with your cognisance of the latest technology.

But out there there was, as usual, a 'smart set', and they were equipping themselves with the latest import from that 'snazzie' place called, in those rather imprecise days [early 1960's], 'The Continent'. This import was a super-lightweight carabiner made of aluminium known as the PA 'krab'. Well wasn't that just posh, and more shiny things to impress others with. They gained popularity with us with the advent of two almost concurrent seminal developments in British climbing. Firstly the popularisation of 'nuts' on slings to give the possibility of increased protection and hence the huge increase in runners carried by a climber and secondly the popularisation of 'artificial' climbing in the UK with its requirement of the usage of many karabiners on a single pitch.

Now in the CMC there are members who span from that 1950/60's generation to the now as we saw so well displayed at Scugdale on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 'Old Gear' Meet. From the photographs taken on the day I am somewhat puzzled to know why only the term 'Old Gear' was used as the only 'young laddie' [spelt correctly?] in the photos was Pete Simcock in his lurid colours.

It was at this gathering that Alan Linford listened in on a private conversation between

Chris Woodall and myself when we were discussing, displaying and would you believe, photographing our 'old equipment', as older men do from time to time! It is sad when mountain men are reduced to intense discussions as to who has got the oldest PA carabiner - but that is what anniversaries are about.

Anyhow I proudly laid out my collection for Chris to admire and lo and behold Chris produces the carabiner from his current runner [don't get phased he has rarely used it in 40 years] and claimed that his was older than any of mine. Apparently he was sorting a joint rack with Paul Nunn whilst on a train in Southern Germany when Paul noticed a crab and commented that he had only seen one like it before but had unfortunately left it on a tension traverse on new climb in the Lakes. It was the same crab but 'finders keepers'

As far as I can discover Pierre Allain first made lightweight alloy carabiners in 1939 and then after the interval of the Second World war began to make them commercially in 1949, so another 10+ years were to elapse before they became common in the UK.

[**Yvonne Chouinard** began to make his first alloy carabiners in about 1957/58. He was a 'self-taught' blacksmith and operated out of his garage until he borrowed money to invest in a portable forge so that he could combine manufacture of pitons and carabiners with his passions of surfing and climbing. I think that Chouinard is one of the most amazing personalities that climbing has ever seen, and a huge influencer of our 'game'. Chuck the TV and search the 'web' on him truly amazing.]

It is perhaps sad that the first British attempt at making a climbers carabiner resulted in the production of the short-lived Hiatt heavy steel carabiner. I still have a few of these, the like of which I will have hauled up many a UK classic climb. I think I would have had about a dozen of these hanging on slings threaded with reamed-out nuts as I made my 1st ascent of Cenotaph Corner in 1964. On my feet I wore 'Masters' the British made rock boot modelled on the seminal PA rockboot first sold in 1948.

## **A modern overview of the carabiner**

[[mountainmagic.com/carabiners](http://mountainmagic.com/carabiners)]

In climbing, carabiners have to be able to withstand extreme forces and a climber's life often depends on them.

Different climbing activities and tasks require different kinds of carabiners. Characteristics such as shape, gate-type, strength, material, weight and size are a climber's references to choose the right type of 'biner for the right task and budget.

## **Carabiner Strength tests**

Carabiners are tested according to international standards established by the CEN. The ratings that you can find on your biners represents the maximum load a carabiner can support before failing. Generally, you should find three ratings: while loaded on the vertical axis with the gate open and closed, and while loaded on the minor axis. Unfortunately, it is important to understand that these tests do not always cover perfectly all potential ways carabiners can be loaded and break in real life. The climbers must always be on the lookout for situations where a biner could be loaded in such a way that it might fail.

## **Carabiner Geometry**

### **General Geometry**

*The Oval* was the first carabiner shape engineered. Its rudimentary shape made it easier to manufacture while offering advantageous characteristics. This type of carabiner is versatile and affordable, though not quite as strong, light and easy to clip as other shape options. Oval 'biners have smooth, uniform top and bottom curves to limit load shifting. They are ideal for aid climbing.

*The D Shaped* biner was the second biner to enter the scene. The D-shaped 'biners are designed to shift weight loads toward the spine (the strongest part of the 'biner. As a result, they have a better strength-to-weight ratios. Ds are lighter and stronger than ovals of the same size and material. Because of their shape just above the gate, they are slightly easier to clip

into protection pieces. They are ideal for a low budget or if you are just starting out and looking for durable, versatile biners at a low price.

*Asymmetrical "Ds"* were the last to appear in the biner's history, as their design involves more intense manufacturing processes. Asymmetrical Ds work like regular Ds, but they are smaller at one end, reducing their weight, and wider at the other end, increasing their overall "clip-ability" and gate opening.

This type of carabiner is generally seen in climbing racks of more experienced climbers or just people who demand even more from their biners, and don't mind paying extra pesos. A biner of choice for technically challenging lead climbing, sport climbing in general and/or any situation where clip-ability and weight is critical.

*The Pear-shaped* biners are comparable to ovals in shape, but are associated with a locking gate. The narrower end of the biner is the one linked to the anchor point while the wider end allows a rope to run freely. Their ample design and round cross-section gives them a smooth surface for a running rope. Pear-shaped biners are ideally used to link a running rope to an anchor, as in a top roping situation or when belaying a second. They are very useful for belaying directly from the harness, belaying from the anchor and/or with an Italian (Munter) hitch, or for rappelling. *See more information on locking biners below.* Generally, climbers will have two or three of these special biners in their rack...

### **Gate Shapes: Straight or bent**

*Straight gates* are perfectly straight from the pivot point to the end. In most cases, they are spring-loaded to open easily when pushed, but rotate closed automatically when released. Straight gates, without a lock are usually used to clip into protection because they are faster and easier to manipulate. Straight gate biners should make up for most of the biners in your rack

*Bent-gate* 'biners have concave gates designed to make clipping the rope into this biner easier. The bent-gate design does not significantly

affect the carabiner's strength or its weight. But, if not used properly, bent-gate 'biners can unclip from your rope. As with any other kind of climbing equipment, you must learn how to use bent-gate 'biners' correctly in order to be safe! For instance, bent gate carabiners should only be used on the end of the quickdraw or runner to which the rope clips. See the "Carabiner Misuse" section of this document. **Bent gate biners will account for less than half of your biner collection**

*Wire-Gates* biners use a loop of stainless steel wire for a gate. This gate offer multiple advantages: the biners with wire gates weigh less, have larger gate opening, lack moving parts which might freeze or stick, and reduce chances of gate opening due to vibration or sudden force. Despite their look, biners with a wire gate are as strong as their more conventional brothers are and their wire gates are in most cases as strong as the conventional gates. But the wire can become a sharp surface on which a rope could fray in the event that the biner would shift during a fall, with the rope ending up loading the gate. To prevent this, it is recommended to make sure the quickdraw is held tightly in place at the narrower end of the biner.

### **Locking Gates**

Locking 'biners have gates that can be locked in the closed position to provide extra protection against accidental gate-openings caused by friction, vibration or sudden force.

They should be used anytime you depend on a single carabiner for safety, such as during a rappel, anchors, while belaying, or at your first piece of protection. Locking 'biners can be oval, D-shaped or asymmetrical.

The locking devices themselves range from simple threaded collars that screw down over the gate to spring-loaded, "automatic" mechanisms. Most rack average around five locking biners in total.

### Hot Forged, Anodized...

Forging allows manufacturers to push their biner designs even further to enhance functionality and reduce weight further. Forging allows metal to be relocated where it is needed for strength, and removed where it just adds more weight. In all, forged biners possess a higher strength to weight ratio. Forging also allows shaping that can't be obtained with the stamping technique, like a notch-free gate closing system.

*Anodizing* is a process in which the coating is part of the metal itself as opposed to being a separate layer like paint!

The surface of the aluminum itself is toughened and hardened to a degree unmatched by any other process or material. Coloring dyes are added to the anodized finish for appearance and function. The advantage of anodized biners is durability.

The material in the biner is protected from corrosion and abrasion. The anodized finish will make a difference in salty air coastal areas for example

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Rock and Ice Climbing - Cappon  
[Mountainmagic.com/carabiners](http://Mountainmagic.com/carabiners)



## TOMORROW IS THE FIRST OF OUR FUTURE YESTERDAYS

To conclude this look into the past I should like to briefly acknowledge our history in which we can take justified pride but we must ensure that fifty years hence we have a new generation of members who can look back at this period with similar feelings.

On the 13th July 1892 four Yorkshire gentlemen met at the home of Herbert Slater in Leeds to discuss the idea of forming a club for individuals interested in promoting the idea of walking and the study of the countryside. At an open meeting held at the Skyrack Inn, Headingley on 6th October 1892 it was unanimously decided to form a club to organise mountaineering and walking expeditions and encourage the study of nature. The name of the Club was picked from others including The Three Peaks Club, but Yorkshire understatement prevailed and the name Yorkshire Ramblers' Club was chosen. Thus the second English mountaineering club was born, the first being the Alpine Club in 1865.

In an attempt to give some standing to the infant club they invited prominent members of the Alpine Club and other eminent personalities were invited to become Honorary Members. These included Edward Whymper of Matterhorn fame, Cecil Slingsby, the Yorkshire man who was later to become the Father of Norwegian Mountaineering, the Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Wharnccliffe. The latter two had estates where members might walk and climb. The good counsel and practical encouragement from these individuals added much to the success of the Club.

Looking at the countries visited by members as evidenced in the bulletins over recent years, one is inclined to think that the world of the mountaineer is wider today than it was in the early days of the YRC and certainly travel to distant parts is now much easier and less expensive. Perhaps we should reconsider this view when one reads the exploits of members in our early journals. Many have read of Whymper in the Andes.

Fewer will know of Morris Slingsby's crossing the Eastern Karakoram range to discover the 49 mile long Siachen Glacier in 1909 with another Yorkshire man Tom Longstaffe or his attempts on Kamet in May 1911 and June 1913.

Kamet or Ibi Gamin fell to another member, Frank Smythe was to make the first successful ascent in 1931. The Club donated 100 guineas.

Smythe is perhaps better known for his Everest expeditions in 1933 and 1936. Earlier still Geoffrey Hastings climbed on Nanga Parbat with Mummery and Collie in 1895.

More recently The YRC mounted the first Himalayan expedition by an English regional club. Six members attempted to climb Lönpo Gang, the great White Peak, in the Jugal Himal in 1957. Sadly the leader and two sherpas were lost in an avalanche.

In 1995 the Club mounted a second expedition to Dorje Lakpa but were defeated by dangerous snow and weather conditions.

Subsequently there have been expeditions to the Himalaya, Bolivia, Morocco, Iceland and China.

Members have climbed in the Alps and many more distant parts of the world from the birth of the club, but apart from these numerous private visits to these remote areas, the club has since 1986 had regular meets in the Alps and 1988 saw the second intercontinental expedition to Bolivia.

A broad spectrum of members' abilities is exploited on these occasions.

These include Mountaineering, Rock Climbing, Caving & Potholing, Cross Country Skiing, Sailing and the various studies of nature.

It is Club policy to have a serious expedition every two years or so either in the mountains or caves of the remoter areas of the world and actively financially supports more serious expeditions.

As Yorkshire is an important limestone area with many caves and potholes, the exploration of potholes and caves soon became an important activity with club members making many of the early cave discoveries.

Today members carry on that tradition both at home and in more distant parts of the world.

Following a serious accident in 1934, the Cave Rescue Organisation was formed and headed up by a redoubtable pair of YRC members, Ernest Roberts, who became the first chairman and Cliff Downham the first secretary. Both were outstanding members and presidents of the YRC.

In 2000 a successful caving expedition went out to Guangxi in South China and yet again in 2003 and 2004. Additionally 2001 saw successful YRC expeditions to Morocco and the John Muir Trail in the USA.

Possible future expeditions include a visit to Greenland and a return to China.

Many members seem to remain active well into the latter stages of life, passing on tales of their escapades to successive generations and it is to be hoped that our 'younger' members will still be in a position to do so when they reach their later years.

We are in the midst of a review of Club activities and structures to see how best to support the epics of the really active members without losing the unique nature of the Club.

We are a 'cradle to grave' club and must accommodate all interests but our future lies with a younger generation carrying on the traditions of the stars of yesteryear.

Editor

Based on material provided by F David Smith.

## MALE CHAUVINISM AT ALUM POT:

### THE UNRECORDED PRESENCE OF MISS L.E. MAY JOHNSON ON 19 SEPTEMBER 1908

S.A. Craven

With the notable exception of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District, all the major northern English climbing and caving clubs a century ago excluded female members. Despite this disability, it is clear from the records of the YRC that ladies did, and still do, attend meets. Samuel Wells Cuttriss photographed an unknown lady at Alum Pot, but she may have been an "*interested spectator*" (Fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>. A good example of female meet attendance was at Meregill in 1907 *et seq*<sup>2</sup>. But on other occasions their presence was not immediately obvious.

One such meet was that on 19 September 1908, which was reported in the newspapers<sup>3,4,5</sup>, and in greater detail in the YRC Journal<sup>6</sup>. We are told in the latter that seven members, viz. Messrs. (Erik T.W.) Addyman, (Frank Hawksworth) Barstow, M(atthew) Botterill, J(ames) Buckley, J(ames) H(enry) Buckley (son of James), W.E. Palmer<sup>7</sup> and (Henry) Williamson, attended an unexpectedly wet meet at Alum Pot. Also present were five male guests viz. Messrs. (W. Forbes) Boyd<sup>8</sup>, (B.) Hössli [sic], Mattley, A. Palmer and Shaw<sup>9,10</sup>.

The article in the YRC Journal was illustrated by two photographs. The lower one by B. Hoessli [sic], entitled "*Helln Pot, from Long Churn Exit*", shows three people silhouetted against the backdrop of the Alum Pot waterfall. The centre figure has a flat-topped hair style which protrudes at the back of the neck - compatible with a female hair style of that period<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 2). The other, upper, photograph of "*Long Churn Exit, from Helln Pot*" (Fig. 3) is by "*M. Johnson*", who was Miss Lily Ellen May Johnson of Rose Cottage, Smalldale near Bradwell in Derbyshire.

May Johnson was with Fred Botterill, Frank Payne and Henry Williamson when the Leeds Ramblers' Club, some of whose members subsequently joined the YRC, descended Gaping Gill in 1904<sup>12,13</sup>. She was therefore known to members of the YRC.

It is not immediately obvious when May Johnson descended Alum Pot. Some time during the previous year, 1907, a "*mixed*" inter-club party of members of the Alpine, Climbers', Fell & Rock Climbing, Leeds Rambling, Rucksack, Swiss Alpine<sup>14</sup>, Wayfarers' and Yorkshire Ramblers' Clubs descended Alum Pot. The meet reporter explained that the word "*mixed*" did not refer to gender, but to the "*representative character of the gathering*".



Of the seventeen people present, only sixteen were named viz. Messrs. Dr. (James Barlow) Barnes<sup>15</sup> (YRC), Fred Botterill (FRCC & YRC; the Leader), (W.S.) Brayshay (FRCC)<sup>16</sup>, J(ames) H(enry) Buckley (YRC; sub-Leader), (H.E.J.) Dalton (FRCC & YRC), Prof. (Harold B.) Dixon (AC, CC & RC), Fitzgibbon, C(uthbert) Hastings (YRC), Dr. C(harles) A(lexander) Hill (FRCC & YRC), F(rank) Horsell (YRC), Petty<sup>17</sup>, P(ercy) Robinson (YRC), George Seatree (CC, FRCC & WC), Dr. J(ames) H(enry) Taylor (CC; sub-Leader), F(rank) Toothill (LRC), and H(enry) Williamson (FRCC & YRC; sub-Leader)<sup>18</sup>.

The probable identity of the seventeenth member of the party can be ascertained by consideration of the three photographers who provided the eleven illustrations:

PHOTOGRAPHER	UNDERGROUND	SURFACE
Godfrey Bingley	1	5 <sup>19</sup>
Samuel Wells Cuttriss	3	0
Cuthbert Hastings	2	0

Of these, Cuthbert Hastings attended the meet. Samuel Wells Cuttriss was an active and prominent member of the YRC, and would therefore have been recorded if present. Godfrey Bingley was a skilled photographer<sup>20</sup> who tramped the length and breadth of Yorkshire recording surface geological phenomena<sup>21</sup>. This one underground photograph, of the "*Interior of Long Churn*", shews daylight at the entrance, suggesting that Bingley was the seventeenth member of the party but did not venture far enough underground to be named with those who descended.

It is unlikely that Johnson descended in 1907 on the inter-club meet, even though she was known to Messrs. Botterill, Toothill and Williamson. She was quite capable of descending Alum Pot, and would therefore have been listed with those who attended. It is also unlikely that the Fell & Rock Club, with lady members including two daughters of Vice-President George Seatree<sup>22</sup>, would have omitted a female participant from a meet report.

It is even less likely that Hoessli and Johnson descended Alum Pot together on some other occasion. They were not members of the YRC, nor of the Yorkshire Speleological Association, and would therefore have had no access to the necessary tackle. There is no record that the Kyndwr Club of Sheffield and Derby, which was another contemporaneous ladder owning northern club<sup>23</sup>, met at Alum Pot. Neither did its 1906 successor, the Derbyshire Pennine Club<sup>24</sup>, meet there.

On the balance of probabilities May Johnson is therefore most likely to have descended on 19 September 1908 when she was photographed by "B. Hoessli". Her presence at Alum Pot is independently confirmed by her undated photograph of "*The Bridge, Alum Pot*"<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 4).

May Johnson was a remarkable lady who has received little credit for her caving and climbing activities. She was the elder daughter, born 23 May 1879 of William Johnson, a "*steam joinery manufacturer*" of 111 Randall Street, Sheffield. Johnson was in August 1904 the first lady to descend Gaping Gill, with members of the little known and transient Leeds Ramblers' Club<sup>26</sup>, and again in August 1908 during a joint Yorkshire Speleological Association and Derbyshire Pennine Club meet<sup>27</sup>. At the latter event she met Eli Simpson who, 27 years later, achieved fame as the founder of the British Speleological Association<sup>28</sup>. Simpson was a regular correspondent and visitor at Rose Cottage until his health began to deteriorate in the 1950s.

On 7 May 1904 May Johnson (Fig. 5) was at Eldon Hole in Derbyshire with members of the Kyndwr Club<sup>29</sup>. Before the Great 1914 - 1918 War she used to go out with James William Puttrell<sup>30</sup>, the well-known Sheffield climber, caver and member of the Climbers', Derbyshire Pennine, Kyndwr, Fell & Rock, Yorkshire Ramblers' and other Clubs. Following the discovery in 1926 of the extensions to Treak Cliff Cavern in Derbyshire, she took therein a series of photographs which were sold to the tourists as postcards and glass stereo views<sup>31</sup>. Three of her photographs were published in 1938<sup>32</sup>. Thereafter May Johnson disappeared from the speleological scene until 1938 when she donated some lantern slides to the British Speleological Association<sup>33</sup>, thereby confirming her continued association with Eli Simpson.

May Johnson died on 13 August 1963. As is often the case, she regrettably left no archival record<sup>34</sup> apart from some photographs in the Department of Local History and Archives, Sheffield Central Library<sup>35</sup>, and twenty one more in the author's collection. Indeed, in 1903 she became an active member of the Sheffield Photographic Society, which currently has some of her slides taken a century ago. In 1965 her poorly documented collection of "*rocks, minerals, gemstones and fossils*", including "*about 12 drawers of ... stalagmites, stalactites, cave pearls etc.*" was sold by auction to the Doncaster Museum<sup>36</sup>.

The lack of a Derbyshire cave historian has ensured that May Johnson has not received credit for her outdoor activities at a time when ladies of her station in life were not accustomed to venture underground. This short note belatedly, if somewhat briefly and inadequately, acknowledges her contributions, and hopefully will prompt further research into the history of Derbyshire cave exploration.

## PHOTOGRAPHS (see page 22)

- Fig. 1. The "Mouth", Alum Pot. Photographed by S.W. Cuttriss Esq. on 22 July 1900<sup>37</sup> or on 28 September 1902<sup>38</sup>.
- Fig. 2 Helln Pot, from Long Churn Exit. Photograph by B. Hoessli [sic] Esq.<sup>39</sup>
- Fig. 3. Long Churn Exit, from Helln Pot. Photograph by (Miss L.E.) M(ay) Johnson.
- Fig. 4. The Bridge, Alum Pot. Photograph by Miss L.E. May Johnson. Reproduced by kind permission of the Hon. Editor of the Craven Pothole Club<sup>40</sup>.
- Fig. 5. May Johnson aged 25 years. Photographed at Eldon Hole, Derbyshire, by R(ichard) Holt Esq. of 233 Burnage Lane, Didsbury on 7 May 1904; face identified by the late Henry E. Chatburn Esq., and reproduced by kind permission of Graham D. Price Esq.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Mrs. Eileen Cooke and to Messrs. Chris Howes, Dave Irwin, Richard Morgan, Phillip Murphy, Geoff Peppit and Graham Price who have kindly provided information, scans and photocopies.

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- <sup>2</sup> Roberts E.E. (1912) The Siege of Mere Gill. *Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal* 4. (12), 30 - 43.
- <sup>3</sup> *Leeds Mercury* (1908) 23 Sep. p. 5.
- <sup>4</sup> *Yorkshire Evening News* (1908) 23 Sep. p. 5.
- <sup>5</sup> *Craven Herald* (1908) 25 Sep. p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Palmer W.E. (1909) A Wet Day in Helln Pot. *Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal* 3. (9), 45 - 48, 2 ills.
- <sup>7</sup> Who must not be confused with the better known William T. Palmer (died 1954) of the FRCC.

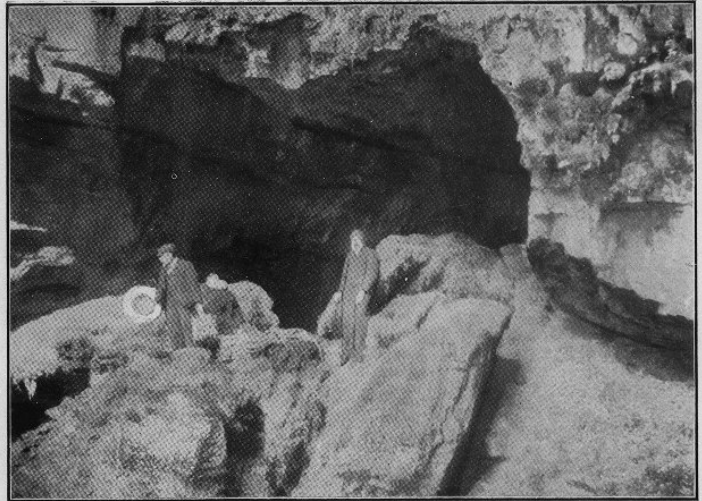
- 
- 8 *Bradford Daily Argus* (1910) 17 May p. 3, reporting his accident in Sunset Hole, records that Boyd came from Didsbury in Manchester.
- 9 "Shaw" may have been T. Shaw of the Climbers' Club (from Audenshaw), who was with Fred Botterill at Buttermere on 24 May 1907 [*Climbers' Club Journal* (1907) 10. (37), 13]. Audenshaw and Didsbury are south-eastern suburbs of Manchester, about 5 km. apart; so it is not impossible that Boyd and Shaw may have travelled together.
- 10 These five names are not recorded in the consolidated YRC Membership List 1892 - 1992.
- 11 A straw poll of thirty friends and colleagues has unanimously confirmed this gender interpretation.
- 12 Botterill M. (1929) Gaping Gill in 1904. *Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal* 5. (18), 309 - 310.
- 13 Toothill F. (1904) Pot-holing in Yorkshire. *Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement* 26 Sep. p. 4.
- 14 *Malheureusement on a rien trouvé dans nos fichiers. Ca fait déjà trop temps en arrière.* E-mail d. 5 July 2004 from M. Sven Rohrbach, Swiss Alpine Club to S.A. Craven.
- 15 Dr. Barnes of Southport qualified LRCP., LRCS. (Edin.), LFPS. (Glasg.) in 1908 [*Medical Register* (1914) p. 54 (London: Constable)]. While still a student he was elected to the YRC in 1906 [*Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal* (1907) 2. (7), 248], and was with Charles Alexander Hill of Liverpool at Scosca Cave in 1905 [*Journal of Anatomy and Physiology* (1907) 41. 221 - 230].
- 16 Who must not be confused with George Harold Brayshay of the Yorkshire Speleological Association.
- 17 This may have been John Petty who attended the YRC annual dinners in 1912 and 1913 [signed menus in the possession of the author]. His club affiliation and residence are unknown.
- 18 Seatree G. (1908) Alum Pot. *Journal of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club* 1. (2), 103 - 114.
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- 20 Jones J.E. (1987) A Noble Gift: The University of Leeds Collection of Photographs by Godfrey Bingley. *The University of Leeds Review* 30. 117 - 135 records that Bingley had a long amateur photographic career in Great Britain, Europe and the Americas.
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- <sup>24</sup> Byne E. & Sutton G. (1966) *High Peak* p. 62 (London: Secker & Warburg).
- <sup>25</sup> The original was kindly lent to me on 24 June 1973 by May Johnson's nephew, John W. Kay Esq. of Dronfield.
- <sup>26</sup> Toothill F. (1904) Pot-holing in Yorkshire. *Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement* 26 Sep. p. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> British Speleological Association archive, folder 19, in the British Cave Research Association library, Matlock.
- <sup>28</sup> Craven S.A. (2001) The British Speleological Association (1935 - 1973) and its founder, Eli Simpson: with particular reference to activities in the northern Pennines of England. *Cave and Karst Science* 28. (3), 99 - 112.
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- <sup>31</sup> Howes C.(J.) (1989) *To Photograph Darkness* pp. 216 - 217 (Gloucester: Alan Sutton).
- <sup>32</sup> Winder F.A. (1938) *An Unconventional Guide to the Caverns of Castleton and District* (Sheffield: W. Hartley Seed).
- <sup>33</sup> (Simpson E.) (1938) Acknowledgment. *Caves and Caving* (4), 156.
- <sup>34</sup> Letter AWL/WF d. 03 July 1973 Messrs. Kesteven, Lamb & Williams, solicitors of Sheffield, to S.A. Craven.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter LH:O:NR d. 02 July 1973 Sheffield City Libraries to S.A. Craven.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter d. 12 September 1973 Don Bramley Esq. of Doncaster Museum to S.A. Craven.
- <sup>37</sup> Anon. (1901) Descent of Alum Pot. *Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal* 1. (3), 233 - 234.
- <sup>38</sup> Lowe G.T. (1902) *Yorkshire Weekly Post* 25 Oct. p. 15.
- <sup>39</sup> "Hössli" and "Hoessli" was a Swiss gentleman whose name has also been spelt "Hossly", "Hoessly" and "Horsley". He is not to be confused with Frank Horsell of the YRC.
- <sup>40</sup> Craven S.A. (1978) The History of Alum and Diccan Pots. *Journal of the Craven Pothole Club* 5. (6), 321 - 329.

Fig. 1 "The Mouth" Alum Pot



Fig. 2 Helln Pot from Long Churn Exit



LONG CHURN EXIT, FROM HELLN POT. Photo by M. Johnson.

Fig. 5 May Johnson



HELLN POT, FROM LONG CHURN EXIT. Photo by B. Hoessi.

Fig. 4 "The Bridge" Alum Pot



Fig. 3 Long Churn Exit, from Helln Pot

Fig. 1 is copied from club journal of 1903

Figs. 2 & 3 are copied from journal of 1909

## TURBINE OR NOT TURBINE

Roy Denney

How do we obtain the power we need without spoiling the world we enjoy? The energy crisis rumbles on and demand continues to grow at a rapid rate forcing up oil prices. China in particular is sucking in great quantities of fuel and much of the developing world is in the same situation. Unfortunately the solutions being pursued in this country are increasingly disfiguring the countryside we love.

The Government is determined that forms of renewable energy such as wind and tidal power are to be encouraged at all costs and can solve our energy crisis but this is based on unsound theory. With their keenness to have us rely on wind, waves and sunshine for our energy supplies, many of us have bought into this apparently idyllic concept but the ambitious targets they have set themselves to cut down greenhouse gasses by using renewables are not achievable.

Why are the powers that be ignoring information from scientists, economists, ecologists and many environmental groups? It seems likely it is because this debate is more about a political wish for apparent green credentials than actual landscape and environmental protection.

The Government is still supporting more large wind turbines despite growing public concern and against much professional advice.

To meet the Government's aspirations for 20% of the UK's electricity generation to come from renewables by 2020, the CPRE have calculated that we might require a wind farm one and a half times the size of the Lake District (over 1,000 square miles in area).

The Government is talking about 20,000 turbines but as each turbine on average only produces 25% of its capacity, this may have to be 80,000

to achieve their goals. You will never be far away from one.

It seems greenhouse gasses will not reduce because even if they build as many wind turbines as they threaten to, they will only replace ageing nuclear plants as they close down and they did not produce greenhouse gasses anyway. Although renewables generate clean energy, they cause a whole different set of problems. Not only will they do virtually nothing to halt global warming, but will impose major economic burdens on taxpayers, energy consumers and the owners of properties blighted by their presence.

Wind farms in particular are increasingly running into opposition from local pressure groups, and country lovers generally arguing that they are a visual blight on the landscape and that thousands of birds are killed every year by the turbine blades. They do not work when there is no wind or indeed when there is too much wind. We cannot expect people to do without power during unsuitable weather so we still need the same amount of other capacity to provide cover in these periods. Turbines can only substitute for other forms of power production when the wind is not too weak and not too strong, but just right and at other times more traditional and reliable power stations have to step in. This means that

the true cost of wind power includes the cost of providing back-up power to compensate for the wind turbines' intermittent output.

We need a wind farm half the size of the Lake District

The creation of Britain's biggest wind farm authorised to date is in Mid Wales. This massive enterprise at Cefn Croes will dominate the skyline of the Cambrian Mountains and anyone approaching will be welcomed by the now familiar 'thump thump' noise.

Fancy a peaceful break on the Norfolk Broads? Well, miss out Swaffham as they have a turbine over-shadowing the village. The sea bird sanctuary of Romney Marsh with two highly sensitive SSSIs is earmarked for several as are the tidal flats of the Thames Estuary.

If you enjoy the magnificent scenery and solitude of the Scottish islands can I suggest you make an early visit to Lewis? There are plans for one of the worlds largest wind farms there, and seventeen other offshore sites are in the planning stage. Fancy watching the sunset over the seas from South Wales, from Southport or Blackpool, Morecambe or South Lakeland? You should get a good silhouette of turbines at sea. Cromer and Kings Lynn will have impeded sun rises and the once peaceful Solway Firth will never be the same again. They also introduce many more hazards to shipping and we all know the potential environmental risk from spillages when accidents happen.

For those like ourselves who enjoy the wilder places in Britain, navigation in future is only going to be a challenge in foggy weather as coastal sailors, hill walkers and orienteers will soon be able to take bearings from the nearest wind turbine.

Germany has jumped heavily into such technology at great cost to their taxpayers but one region has discovered that their turbines only reach 50% capacity on one day in ten due to the vagaries of the wind. Another inherent risk discovered in Germany is that on a still night ice can form on the blades very much as it does in the rigging of a ship and if the winds then get up these ice daggers can be thrown many hundred yards. Beware walking the hills early in the morning if you have to pass one of these monsters:

They can fight back.

Noisy eyesores which can be seen for miles

In any event wind turbines are inefficient producers of power costing massive sums to create in addition to the pricing subsidy they need to compete, and they only have estimated life spans of between 20 and 30 years.

These noisy eyesores along our coasts and on mountains and moorland will have a massive impact on both our visual aspect and the environment. They stand between 300 and 500

feet tall and can be seen for miles. To put it in perspective Nelson's Column is 167 feet high.

They are so 'unobtrusive' that the MOD has lodged several formal objections as they will interfere with jets flying by and with radar defence.

It is also unlikely that anyone would go to the enormous expense of removing the remnants of these steel and concrete giants at the end of these fairly short life-spans. The concrete base of each of these immense structures will be bigger than 3 double decked buses parked side by side. Do you think they will then be removed and the land restored when they are redundant? I cannot imagine that when their working life is over they will be cleared and equally I cannot see those becoming listed monuments to our industrial heritage.

Another new development is an apparent health threat. In addition to the incessant noise they also create low frequency vibration that resonates through the body and has long been known to cause stress, tinnitus, nausea, depression, headaches and sleep disorders to people living within up to half a mile of a wind farm.

Several recent reports on research carried out as a result of various disputes are confirming the health problems and Defra has now commissioned Salford University to carry out more research.

On a more mundane level but very real for those affected it has now been accepted that living near one of these machines can seriously affect the value of your home. A court recently awarded £15,000 damages against a house seller when the purchaser had not been aware of a nearby wind farm to be created and the sellers had not disclosed it.

There is absolutely no doubt that wind produces enormous amounts of energy as demonstrated during this year's hurricane season but present



technology simply cannot utilise it economically and without enormous cost to the environment.

They are however one of nature's safety valves and whilst it is difficult to identify cause from effect, hurricanes are getting more violent as the Earth warms up and these storms do dissipate heat.



#### A BIT OF A BLOW COMING UP

Another favourite from within the 'green' community is hydro power. This involves either flooding valleys or building barrages across estuaries and destroying the habitat and wildlife they support. Unfortunately this latter idea is self-defeating as they silt up rapidly and cease to be effective. It would however create new land for our overcrowded island. Given enough time we would end up with a perfectly round island.

In addition, all barrages, power stations and indeed the bases of turbines require enormous amounts of concrete. The emissions from lorries taking incalculable tons of concrete to the sites would exceed many years of the savings in emissions from a traditional power plant using fossil fuel. We need not go into the loss of our well-loved limestone uplands to produce the cement needed to build these monstrosities or the energy required for the processing of it.

Perhaps the most encouraging of such renewables is true wave power but we are a long way from mastering it at an economic price. Prototypes fall into three main ideologies. First is the dipping duck strung on the surface with mini turbines being pushed by waves and springing back in troughs but this is not proving very practical as yet.

Next we have the idea of harnessing the actual movements of tides in their entirety, using the ebb and flow in a constrained passage of water. The latest to be tried involves harnessing the changes of pressure caused by the vertical rise and fall and an experimental operation in the seas off the Orkneys actually started making a small contribution to the grid in August 2004.

If we are to preserve the countryside as we know it and leave our children

the chance to enjoy the hills and valleys and coastline of Britain we need to press the powers that be to take a fresh look at the damage they are causing and will continue to cause with their present policies. If the people of Britain do not act soon to halt this intrusion, great swathes of ancient countryside and shoreline will be disfigured for generations to come.

It is important to make the case that securing increased development of renewable sources of energy need not be at the expense of a disfigured landscape. We must support the development of a range of such technologies provided they do not have negative impacts on the local environment but must be concerned that valued features such as landscape, heritage, ecology and amenity including the enjoyment of peace and quiet, will not be sacrificed.

Nuclear fuel produces clean power although obviously there is the risk of large scale pollution if anything goes wrong.

Around the world there are 30 nuclear power stations currently under construction to add to the 438 already in existence. These generate enormous amounts of power and coal powered stations generating the same amount would churn nearly three billion tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere every year.

Wind turbines and other renewables as a source of energy are a long way from being competitive and Ofgem already estimates renewable energy receives £450,000,000 p.a. of subsidy to compete with other sources. Under a new system of charging generators to have power transmitted around the grid, the government is proposing further assistance. Even Ofgem is against this move and is quoted as saying it is "unnecessary and misguided", "customers' bills will inevitably rise" and "for no clear benefit".

The Royal Academy of Engineering has produced comparative figures showing coal, gas and nuclear plants produce power for between 2p and 3p per kilowatt hour, compared with 5.4p for wind turbines on land and given the added difficulties of offshore turbines, they are even more expensive, generating power at 7.2p per kilowatt hour.

Britain is now decommissioning 12 older Magnox nuclear plants and hopes to complete the exercise in the next 5 years which will leave us with just eight more modern nuclear plants and it seems politically unacceptable for us to build any more.

This is not the case in other parts of the world. Asia is leading the way in building new nuclear plants. Of the 30 under construction at present, nine are in India, four are in China, three in Japan and one in South Korea.

Many countries which introduced the world to supposedly environmentally friendly energy are now under pressure to back track on wind farms

and the like, in the face of public dismay over their impact.

Many resent their proliferation in some of the most beautiful areas of the countryside and nuclear fuel is again on the agenda.

The fear of global warming and the downsides of the alternatives are making nations look again at the nuclear industry. Even European countries with sound "green" credentials are increasingly viewing it as a realistic option.

The debate rages fiercely inside Germany, possibly the largest wind power producer in the world with over 15,000 turbines.

It is committed to abandoning nuclear power but recent legislation to double the number of wind farms over the next 16 years has stirred up a hornets nest. Massive areas of Germany are covered by huge turbines which have lights mounted on their blades for aircraft warning. These add to light pollution and disturb nearby residents. Many Germans consider that their countryside has been desecrated more than at any time in their previous history.

**Not politically acceptable to build nuclear plants**

Germany's influential magazine Der Spiegel pronounced recently "The dream of environmentally friendly energy has turned into highly subsidised destruction of the countryside".

Amongst the other countries where serious concern is being expressed, Sweden is taking a good hard look at so called environmental good practice.

Many cows sacred to the green lobby are proving self perpetuating fantasies. Sweden had decided to phase out nuclear power having 11 power plants generating half the country's electricity.

They have however changed their stance and a poll shows 80% of their population in favour of nuclear fuel.

It is in a country where Hydro Electric plants abound and produce half their needs but cannot hope to replace production from nuclear sources never mind provide for increased demand.

They have not yet gone so far as to start building new nuclear plants but Finland has one under construction.

Denmark, which introduced wind turbines 30 years ago and is probably the world leader in wind technology, is preparing to scale down the number of windmills in the countryside as the environmental realities have become apparent.

A plan to scrap 900 of their existing turbines and replace them with 175 new and taller windmills which will produce twice as much electricity, has apparently failed to satisfy the public.

## Not in Dutch backyards

Belgium also blocked new turbines quoting as reasons: ruined views, the effect on sea bird migration and the risk of maritime accidents and pollution.

France has started refusing permission for new turbine developments on shore and is looking for offshore sites, while the Dutch government is facing public hostility. They had hoped to increase onshore windmill capacity to provide energy for 1.5 million homes by 2010 but this is now politically difficult.

A spokesman for the Dutch government is quoted as saying "This is a very densely populated country. Whatever infrastructure you want to put up people will oppose. People say that they don't want it in their backyard. They don't like the look, and they fear interference with their lives."

New, potentially safer forms of nuclear power are needed and money being wasted on subsidising wind turbines should be ploughed into research in this area. Present nuclear stations use nuclear fission with its 'dirty' waste product.

In the past billions have gone into research on nuclear fusion a much cleaner form of generation but this has been all but abandoned given the immense problems associated with the enormous amounts of heat generated. However 15 years ago a British chemist made claims for a cold fusion process which was laughed off at the time but is surely worthy of some more detailed research. Independent tests have proved it works but not to order in a usable form as yet. A British company also now has technology to encase nuclear waste in toughened glass that will outlast the half life of the radiation.

Solar energy is perhaps the best of the renewable energy at present employed but it shares many of the downsides, due to unreliability of the weather, especially in wetter parts of the country. There is no reason however why building regulations should not enforce some panels on all roofs to augment the grid.

There is the technology to use Hydrogen as a fuel and there are copious amounts of water as a source for it. This would help keep rising sea levels down and a by-product would be oxygen which would improve our air quality. It seems that the process is too expensive at present but perhaps there is hope in this direction down the road. A novel alternative way of producing Hydrogen has been developed that takes it from Sunflower oil.

There is much talk of diminishing gas and oil reserves. Whilst this is obviously true in that you cannot both use up and preserve anything, the picture painted is misleading.

What is really meant is that reserves that are presently economically worth extracting are being used up but the price will inevitably rise to

make extraction affordable as demand cannot be satisfied. The good knock-on effect will be that some of the more imaginative new technologies at present too expensive to be viable will start to come into their own when cheaper sources dry up.

In any event it could be said that we are looking at the problem from entirely the wrong direction.

Five jumbo-jets emit more CO<sub>2</sub> each year than the annual saving from reduced generation from gas and coal fired power stations and this decries any real purpose to our miniscule renewables power industry.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution forecasts perhaps 75% of our CO<sub>2</sub> pollution will come from aircraft by the middle of this century.

### Scrubbers needed

More efficient use of power and reduction in demand by better insulation of properties etc. is a major part of the equation but in reality we need to attack the problem from every direction.

The possible incineration of combustible waste from domestic and business sources should be considered and with appropriate scrubbers the emissions can be largely eliminated.

We are pressed to recycle all sorts of products but Swedish experts make a strong case for this being bad environmental practice and this is from a country renowned for environmental protection.

The energy involved in recycling has to be produced somehow, normally by environmentally damaging processes.

Incineration in modern plants is cheaper and cleaner than recycling and the resulting slag is a much better landfill than household waste. Other supposed experts consider these views rubbish, (if you will pardon the pun) but the case is very much open.

Unfortunately even clean incineration brings problems. Italy is in the process of building a generation of enormous new plants leading to violent demonstrations by locals opposed to these huge edifices. This is the unavoidable outcome of the new rules coming out of the EU closing down most landfill sites.

Our own Government's figures suggest we will need 165 such plants by 2016 each with chimneys about 400 feet tall. Low level flying is going to become a dangerous business and even more cement will be needed.

Sacrificing landscape and wildlife in the name of protecting the environment is a strange twist of logic and that is just the situation which will arise when many of these 'new' technologies are on stream.

Perhaps nature's greatest display of 'free' energy is lightning strikes but harnessing or replicating these is still the stuff of science fiction.



## A FISHERFIELD FOREST FOUR

Tony Smythe

Before I became interested in doing Munros in a systematic way with a view to sometime, maybe, completing them I climbed that very remote, almost legendary peak in the north-west, A'Mhaighdean, the Maiden, after the Club's Whit meet in 1995. Walking in from Poolewe I spread a groundsheet and sleeping-bag under a large boulder on the mountain's long craggy north ridge, endured some hours of rain and reached the top in cloud next morning. In clearing weather I walked up the neighbouring Ruadh Stac Mór before retreating. Then and later I came to think of that corner of Scotland with its fingers of lochs and near-uninhabited peninsulars reaching as far north as Stornoway as one of the most magical in the Highlands, a region of misty blue distances strewn with a thousand unvisited rivers, lochs and glacier-worn slabs, crags and mountains great and small.

And of course my new ambition was going to bring me back there. The Fisherfield Forest, as it was rather quaintly named, had four more peaks of 3,000 feet and all, like the ones I had done, quite hard to reach. The lowest, Beinn a' Chlaidheimh, just reached the required 914 metres but was in a difficult place, being the most northerly on a ridge from which sprang the other three, and defended on its northern flanks by a river system which in wet weather could quickly become impassable. This awkward and unpredictable threat made me decide to tackle all four in a single day's outing from the south, from Kinlochewe, a round trip so huge that rather foolishly I somehow never got round to measuring! I suppose I could have considered using a tent, but I've never been afraid of dawn starts, which can occasionally eliminate any advantage of getting going from a camp, especially if as in this case a few miles could be covered at the beginning by bicycle. If I am honest, I prefer the comfort and organisation of my camper van, with the advantage of a decision on the weather being left until the morning of a walk.

The scene was therefore set in late June, 2003, when I decided to go for it. The weather was not propitious. On Ben Wyvis I was blasted down the summit ridge by tremendous wind and rain. Next day was dry but on An Teallach and Sgurr Fiona the wind had increased to the level of a hurricane. I then went down Glen Carron and on another dreadful wet day struggled up Sheasgaich and Lurgh Mhor. At least I was fit when that evening in welcome and promising sunshine I drove to Kinlochewe and made my preparations for the Fisherfield Four.

From the car park at the end of the Incheril lane the locked gate defending access to Gleann na Muice has a cycle-friendly side gate. At 4 a.m. it squeaked loudly enough to raise every soul in the nearby cottage. Hastening on, I quickly pedalled the two or three level miles to the Heights of Kinlochewe and its couple of cottages. From here the road divided, and the steepening left-hand branch became a challenge for even the lowest of my 24 gears. The serene calls of a valley cuckoo behind me seemed to have a mocking ring. Finally, an hour after leaving the van further wheeled progress became impossible and dumping the machine I continued on the stalkers' path towards Lochan Fada. So far so good, and those five downhill miles would be very friendly ones on a bike at the end of a long day.

The loch, another couple of miles further on, was a dismal scene - a gloomy sheet of grey water obscured by fine drizzle and sagging cloud. I must admit I had ignored the obvious signs of a return of the bad weather when I left the van. Maybe I hadn't really wanted to know what the weather was up to. Maybe my recent battles with wind and rain on other peaks had brutalised me into thinking I could keep walking in any kind of weather, plodding on in the worst while hoping for the best. At any rate I gratefully accepted a mug of tea from some campers by the water's edge, walkers who had no intention of stirring from their warm sleeping-bags and who wished me luck as I moved on into the murk that obscured everything not much above lake level.

The going was atrocious. I had to make for the south-east ridge of Beinn Tarsuinn, the first summit, via a gradually-rising totally saturated bog, and as I gained height so the drizzle increased to a steady downpour. I found myself in the cloud in a region of great rock slabs and the rain was sheeting down. I sensed the game was up, but I wanted to find some sort of shelter so that I could think clearly and not rush into a retreat. I saw a boulder as big as a car that was resting on a smaller rock creating an eighteen-inch space underneath. As I crammed myself into the gap (being careful not to kick against anything supportive) I saw that I was being watched by deer that stood in a circle, brown shapes at the edge of the mist. It was an altogether surreal moment.

It was remarkably dry in my den. I thought about what lay ahead. The route-finding I wasn't afraid of (although later I discovered that this was somewhat misplaced confidence) - it was the thought of walking for 10 or 12 hours unflinching in order to stay warm. I was already damp and deadly cold would grip very quickly if I had to slow down or stop through tiredness or any other reason. But above all, what was the point? The hills would always be there. I could come here on a fine day and see some of the finest country on the planet under a blue sky. There really was no decision to make or regret.

\* \* \*

To my intense disappointment, exactly the same thing happened, at the same place, the following May. I had two excellent days in the Cairngorms, headed for Kinlochewe, and on reaching Lochan Fada again after a promising dawn, I was shocked by a sudden onslaught of wind and rain. This time there could be no debate. Steel-grey slivers of vapour raced in from the sea underneath a gathering roof of cloud while the wind rose to such an intensity that adequate shelter from the elements could be obtained by standing next to a large rock rather than crawling underneath it. And after retreating, with the weather remaining like that

for the next several days I temporarily gave up on the Four, as I was coming to know them.

I now knew if I hadn't known it before, that the north-west of Scotland conforms to no meteorological rules. I had experienced wonderful days on Suilven, and Foinaven, and Ben More Assynt - George Spenceley will remember the walk we had on the last one - but they were gifts from a divine providence and never to be forecasted. The Four would only be climbed if there were a similarly benign nod in their direction from Up There.

Nevertheless, being the devil for punishment that I am, I once again found myself on the 350-mile drive from Kendal to Kinlochewe four months later, at the beginning of September this year - 2004. To give a sense of perspective, I believe that 350 miles in the opposite direction would take one to the Channel and the petrol bill would be the same - about £100 there and back. The weather as I drove north was needless to say magnificent, but I was still a trifle tense and telling myself that 'third time lucky' was a pretty daft phrase.

It was a serene evening in the car park that I was beginning to know rather well. Next morning I was ready before first light but after waiting a while I negotiated the squeaking gate and swooped along the road to the Heights avoiding sleepy reluctant sheep on the way. Within the routine hour I had abandoned the bike, and I was on the shores of Lochan Fada just before eight.

There was not a soul around to share the magnificent sunrise. Not a breath of air disturbed the reflection of Slioch, and the first two Munros of my quest which I had never seen until this moment, bulked above me, huge purple shapes against an eggshell-blue sky.

Even the deer were there to welcome me again on the Tarsuinn ridge and I spent some time fiddling with my camera, a new acquisition, a digital. Much time I spent selecting from menus and peering at the monitor while the

animals posed patiently. Of course the battery chose that moment to run out delaying me further, but on a superb sunny morning who cared? And so I was fashioning for myself, by my time-wasting and lack of proper calculation, the leisurely start of a day that was due to finish as one of the most demanding that I have ever spent in the hills.

Eventually I came to the summit of Beinn Tarsuinn, awe-struck to be there on one of those very special days in Scotland when every peak in every direction is a delicately-described blue shape and the nearby glens have rich September colours that are difficult to believe in. My time-delay shot of myself has as its background the jagged ridge of An Teallach, with a foreground of the three peaks now in store for me, an awful lot of up and down over slopes of white scree and boulders that the SMC guide had made something of a warning song and dance about.

sharp edges and wicked holes for an unwary leg. Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair has the longest name of all the Munros; it may not offer the longest and worst slog but it tries very hard to do so. After that came Sgurr Ban's dazzling white plateau and huge descent of its broad and crazily broken north-east ridge, and finally the long, long flog up number four, Chlaidheimh, where a few hundred feet below its final upthrust I was glad to leave my rucksack that was starting to make its modest weight bear heavily on such a hot day.

That single paragraph covers 6 hours of desiccating heavy effort. I seemed to move in a trance-like state in the drugging blinding sunlight, unaware of the passage of time, struggling across that immense landscape, dealing with each little decision as it came up, but nevertheless conscious of the feeling that I still hadn't reached the half way point. That could only happen when I turned about and started walking south.



And I soon discovered why. Great care was needed on ground that for much of the time showed no trail and was every man for himself - tilting boulders, ball-bearing scree, and always

I had brought plenty of food and had drunk and carried enough water to keep I hoped, exhaustion at bay. It was at one of these feeding stops that I began to think, hardly too

soon, about the logistics, the timing, of the return. Bennet in his guide had insisted that the quickest and most predictable way back was over the outward route, over the peaks again, but he was talking about the return from Sgurr Ban. It had seemed to me that from Beinn a' Chlaidheimh a more effective way back was down grassy slopes to the east and via the glen running alongside the flank of the peaks. A stalker's path took care of a couple of miles in the glen after which one faced the long plod over the Bealach na Croise, with some miles of indeterminate moorland beyond, to reach Gleann na Muice and the bike.

quite a body of water. I had to find a crossing point, and quickly.

Everybody falls into rivers from time to time - surely. A harsh lesson that I learnt (or re-learnt) at that moment in the Fisherfield Forest, a very long way from anywhere, is that dry boulders get covered when rivers rise, and therefore always have some sort of a film of algae, even when the water has subsided and they are dry, when they can look pale and clean. This might not matter if one stepped onto them in dry boots, but my boots were wet. It was a long stride, I rushed it, my foot shot sideways,

BEINN TARSUINN  
FROM  
LOCHAN FADA



I left the summit of Chlaidheimh at 4 o'clock and was approaching the valley bottom, a colossal descent to the 200-metre level, an hour later. I was beginning, belatedly, to realise that I was running out of time. The second week of September, and while I hadn't particularly noted the time it got dark (careless again) I guessed that I had used up two-thirds of the daylight on only a half of the distance.

The stalkers' path, which I could pick out clearly, lay on the other side of the river. In my haste I was more irritated than worried to see that the river was more than just the silver thread it presented from the heights - it was

and I went down so fast that my head cracked hard on the boulder on which my foot had just made contact, while a wrist and a shin and a knee had chunks gouged out of them - scarcely noticed at the time - and my torso made as though to float away. The shock was great and swearing gave way to the effort of simply breathing, scrabbling out of the water, floundering up to the path, where I fell in a heap.

After too short a time lying in a recovery position I stood up, the hills spun around, and I fell down the bank towards the river again. After that, regaining the path I sat, head down, brooding on the complete absence of people that day, the prospects of a rescue (nil), the



embarrassment of being the subject of one anyway, and the number of days it would take me to reach Kinlochewe if I kept falling down. At last the dizziness subsided, the strangely soundless world around me became audible again, and I stood up cautiously, this time to my relief remaining in balance. Realising that I had lost my sun-glasses I now spent 20 minutes searching futilely before commonsense crept in; there were rather more urgent things on the agenda.

I started off slowly, and then felt strangely energised, which later became almost exhilaration, in the realisation that I had a real challenge now instead of the usual artificially-contrived mountain-walk one. Life offers these stark choices or prospects occasionally. Mine was straightforward. I could make a big effort and try to get back that night. My physical state would have to be put on hold. There wasn't much blood, but I didn't like the look of a large hole in my wrist at the bottom of which there was something white (Bone? An embedded chunk of quartzite?). My head had also received rough treatment but I had no mirror to check the result. I judged that a cold night in the open would be even more unpleasant than normal, and the thought lent wings, or seven-league boots.

Wearing the map like a Boy Scout I began to do little sums as I tore along. Three miles an hour and to hell with Naismith. It looked like about 14 miles, but the last 5 on the bike, on the track, might be done in darkness. It was a quarter to six - how many hours of useable daylight could I count on?

As I pounded along, Loch an Nid moved past as though viewed from a scenic railway, and leaving the stalkers' track regretfully, I literally aimed myself at the Bealach, which looked a very long way above and beyond. The going was deep heather full of rocks and holes, sometimes with water rushing underneath. Sometimes I used the trace of a track beside the main stream, but more often than not I simply followed the line that would have been flown by the traditional crow, or bee. I didn't dare stop for a drink or a

bite; this was an occasion when the flow of adrenalin counted for more than calories.

Hardly touching down on the bealach I moved into overdrive on the level or slightly descending moor. It was a bit Kinder Scout or Bleaklowish at times with five-foot gruffs and black quicksands but I treated it like a gymnasium, trying not to lose the steeplechase rhythm. I had to be heading due south, but I didn't have time to get the compass out or even look at my watch. The sun now cast an orange light sideways on the tops and the glens were turning midnight blue. The thought came to me that I was too far east, but I didn't dare stop to find out.

The light was really going fast now, no use pretending it wasn't. I was in trouble.

Suddenly a path! And joy, another path joining it from the left. A glance at the map and I'd got myself pinpointed. It was a mile to the bike.

I was now drawing on inspiration more than any last reserves of energy, but there was nothing that could stop me now. I came over a crest and made out down below me the familiar junction of paths where I had left the bike. In minutes I was there, leaping aboard, and then tearing down in near-darkness. The road in the valley bottom was eventually sensed rather than seen in the starlight.

At 9 o'clock I passed through the squeaky gate for the second time that day, 15 hours after first light. In the dark I almost ran down a local woman.

"Nights are drawing in," she commented good-naturedly.

It's not that I think of the Fisherfield Forest as anything other than one of the most sublime parts of the Highlands. But I am happy now that if I go back there it will be a matter of choice alone.

## LE TRAIN EST TROP CHER! (GR5)

**Derek Collins**

"C'est dur, le premier jour" I muttered to the young Frenchman above me as I struggled up a near vertical slope with my pack seeming to be unfairly heavy, clambering over roots and skidding in the mud. For goodness sake, this was supposed to be the GR5, a major walking route and should be well graded and a pleasure to walk along. The Frenchman commiserated and bounded off, his huge pack plus camera tripod and two loaves swinging wildly. I struggled on and things did get better but it became obvious a new route had been fashioned. It was a bad start as it crossed my mind it was my own fault --- on my own with over 200 miles of the French Alps in the way between me and Nice. Exactly why I was on this journey crossed my mind quite a lot during the next few days until I settled into the rhythm of daily travel.

A new route had indeed been fashioned so my guidebook was no more than an indicator. Fortunately the "balisées" or red and white horizontal slashes were sufficient except they disappeared when most needed! Generally they were good. On reaching the Col de la Vallée Étroite I rested and ate sardines and bread and felt a bit better while looking north back at the first 200 miles or so of the route.

The "usual" GR5 stretches from Geneva to Nice through the Alps, while the complete route starts at the North Sea a total distance of 1300 miles. My bit, "La Grande Traversée des Alpes" is around 400 miles passing through three major parks, Vanoise, Mercantour and Queyras, the whole climbing over umpteen passes on the way, Col de Chavière being the highest at 9173ft. No tops are included in the journey but it is difficult not to bag one or two, le Brévent above Chamonix in particular.

The whole business started in August 1999 when I travelled to Geneva with two companions, Roger Dix and a mutual friend Dick Rostron. Our seven year old guidebook split the route into six

sections and fifteen days walking seemed about right for three of these sections enabling us to complete a short half of the journey. I had hurt my foot some weeks previously and a one mile amble on a tarred road had been my maximum walk in the month beforehand, so I was not too optimistic. In the event things settled down after a painful six days but it kept my mind off other things.

Our guidebook arranged the 400 miles into six sections and sketches indicated the large scale climbs and descents. We bought maps along the way and assumed accommodation would turn up. On the first half, north of Modane in the Arc valley this was the case and we split our evenings between huts and small hotels all being almost empty. The hotels were acceptable while the huts or refuges varied from palatial to pathetic.

From Geneva we took a train and boat to St.Gingolph where we started walking. Our packs were heavy but got lighter as we became fitter, while generally the weather was good with a little rain. Route finding was not much of a problem apart from missing a well hidden sign near Landry as we crossed the Isère. The scenery, as one would expect, was striking though we did look at the gradients with an eye to effort of ascent rather than beauty.

Some parts of the journey had quite spectacular scenery. The two days around Mt. Blanc, the Vanoise National Park and looking North and South from Col de Chavière above Modane in particular, kept us quiet for a few minutes.

The first half of the walk worked pretty well. I had spent time going through the guidebook considering each day's journey, alternative accommodation, availability of daytime food and escape routes if it all became too much. There were many stopping points and we were able to stock up with daytime food adequately, so the odd beer and coffee could be enjoyed. Even though the route was rugged and rough it was not remote and gradually we learned to interpret the language of the guidebook.

This northern part of the GR5 is well known but we met nobody doing it and few people on the hills.

We walked for fifteen days with one half day for washing and card writing, several being nine hours plus and in Modane after a shower, a meal and a few beers we all felt fresh and looked forward to completing the walk to Nice.

With one thing and another we did not team up again so three years later, on August 24<sup>th</sup> 2002, I found myself struggling up the long steep slope south of Modane. I had left home two days earlier and already there were differences from the first trip. Originally Modane to Geneva had been an easy three hour train journey. The reverse was a whole day trip by train and bus, very pleasant but time consuming. The walk up to Col de la Vallée Étroite was steeper and different from the guidebook and I was not so fit! Odd refuges, cafes etc., which dot the northern Alps were not there and one just had to finish the day's journey. While the country was less rugged, accommodation was much more limited.

The many other occupants were all Italian and on a jolly weekend. The food was awful and the noise impressive. The next day to Plampinet went well but the hamlet is just a bend in the road with one bus a day. The accommodation was acceptable but my evening meal, billed a "chilli con carne" was a plate of red beans and some pieces of sausage. The results spread over several days were predictable.

The following morning it started raining and got worse for most of the day and the ski resort of Montgenèvre was in thick cloud and closed as I passed through. I was to find chalets, villages and even small towns closed up and so a walk through remote country became a walk through a closed up land. That I did not mind, but where was I to sleep, eat and buy daytime food? It was never quite as bad as that but being alone generated some pessimistic conversations. Finally, very tired I reached Briançon — what a site — and booked into the first hotel I came to. The room was fine but it did not serve an evening meal, in France of all places! I ended up enjoying a very good pizza and chips from a stall while sitting in the local park.



NORTH FROM  
COL DE VALLEE  
ETROITE

POINT DE  
SARACENS  
AND  
ROC ROUGE

My first night had been in Modane where the restaurants were closed or very expensive so I fed poorly, my next night was in the Refuge de la Vallée Étroite, which used to be in Italy and the first language is still Italian.

My sleep was good and a number of aches had disappeared when I set off on the next stage. For some reason the guidebook glossed over the next two hours so I had some serious re-arranging to do for that day.

The day was sunny and fresh and I continued in good spirits. There was a reason for this; plainly my route was not passing through sheep country. Near Plampinet I had come across the first of several notices about the "Patou" or dogs guarding sheep. These dogs are Pyrénéen mountain dogs about the size of a donkey and trained to be fierce, or so the notices said. Apparently this is because of the re-introduction of wolves and lynx in some of the National Parks, but all the shepherds seemed to use them except the one who enjoyed letting his two Rottweilers snarl and bark a few feet away. At least he did not pretend they were harmless.



The notices instructed you not to throw stones or shout at the dogs or to pass through the flocks.

Unfortunately the flocks were about 500 strong and could cover a ridge so you had to pass through! Furthermore not all flocks had a shepherd and the notices said that after the dogs had sniffed at you they USUALLY went away. This made me unhappy on the day after Plampinet and I learned later it has made a lot of French randonneurs unhappy also. I comforted myself that I had heard no stories of people being eaten by dogs and anyway as soon as a dog attacked a randonneur, bad feeling is such the French penchant for direct action might happen. A companion would have been a support when the dogs were around.

The route was airy with wide views and as I approached Col des Ayes lots of walkers appeared. A small group approached me on the narrow path across a steep hillside and we stopped to talk. I was able to keep the conversation going until they asked me why I was walking all the way to Nice. All I could think of to say was "le train est trop cher" This amused them vastly and one of the ladies almost fell off the path.

Feeling much better I pressed on and after a long time walking through a holiday village not mentioned in the guidebook found a splendid gîte d'étape in Brunissard. My routine was now established; find the gîte, wash me and socks plus a shirt every three days, air off boots, find a beer, write up diary, examine the next day's route and walk a few yards along it before dinner and bed. There were always conversations in French and occasionally English and after Brunissard I met people walking parts or the whole of the GR5 in the huts.

I was no longer questioning why I was on the route, travelling was the justification with the bonus of stupendous views in remote surroundings.

Lac St.Anne, the Ubaye valley and the Pont du Chatelet came and went before arriving in Fouillouze, truly the road to nowhere.



PEAKS WEST OF LAC STE. ANNE  
PIC DES HEUVIERRES AND  
PIC DE LA FONT SANCTE

My day had started in Ceillac where I had met Gran from Val d'Isère and he turned up in Fouillouze. There were five of us there, doing parts of the GR5 so I garnered some advice not registering the only important bit, that the Refuge at Roya had been burnt down. Joel a lone walker from Caen regaled us with stories about the Patou. Gran was not seen again, but Joel and an elderly Austrian lady "madame," with no English but French, turned up at the next gîte at Larche on the old Franco-Italian border.



## LOOKING DOWN THE MAGNIFICENT UBAYE VALLEY

The frontier has been shifted a couple of miles up the road but nobody has bothered to move the road barriers. There was a post office (open) and a sort of cake shop (closed) as far as I could make out. Joel collected a packet of maps at the post office sending off the used ones, which struck me as a good idea.

Today the 31<sup>st</sup> was the eighth day and I was in good form, getting along well and enjoying things. I discovered marmots have special toilet holes and saw huge flocks of choughs. Lac du Lauzanier is truly stunning and I envied a couple of small groups simply sitting and being. My immediate target was Pas de la Cavale. The guide described it in terms such as "particularly rugged," "to be taken seriously," "route finding NOT straight forward," and "danger of stone fall."

Clouds were developing and they looked nasty so I kept going. Since starting walking alone I had noticed that I kept pushing on not

taking time to enjoy the views or even rest adequately. On a day walk it is of little importance especially when one is in familiar country, but I felt things were being missed and there was little time for those excellent conversations some of us have with ourselves. Joel was on the pass, having started before me and it turned out the guidebook had dismayed him. In the event there was no problem, the author must have had a bad day.

We hurried on but were caught in a violent storm about two miles short of our gite but on a broad path. I even took a detour as I reckoned the storm would not last. To my relief it didn't and I dried out a bit while walking the last mile or so.



PAS  
DE  
LA  
CAVALE

The following day finally brought hot sun and lavender brushing against my legs. St. Delmas le Selvage, a gem and St. Etienne de Tinée were passed through and arrived at. The gite did not open until five so in the meantime Joel found;

- (1) there was no shelter at the next gite, Roya and certainly no food
- (2) There were no buses to take us round to Roya so we could walk from there and
- (3) the local taxi did not do business after 31<sup>st</sup>. August.

It started raining hard but finally the gite opened and it was good. Madame, Joel and myself were the only guests and the evening meal was the best of the whole GR5.

During the day we walked alone greeting one another on passing but staying in the same places at night. While discussing hut charges I displayed my BMC card and madame gave us a quick glimpse of her well worn German Alpine Club card. She was a remarkable woman, quite elderly now but keeping going and with a history of remarkable journeys. I wonder who she was?

The rain was dreadful that evening and Joel was suddenly called home to his sick mother. When he left for the bus to Nice the next morning he lent me his up to date guide and told me the weather forecast was awful. By this stage I was becoming stubborn but had discovered there was a new ski resort part way to Roya. I decided to walk there and find somewhere to stay even though madame la patronne at St. Etienne said it would be closed. Our madame agreed with me and, as had become usual, set off some time before me on a wet morning. After an hour or so plugging up steep slippery ground I caught her and our combined French in the tourist office of Auron elicited from a superior young woman, that a particular hotel might still be open. It was, we booked in and I never saw madame again. She decided it was all a bit much and took the bus to Nice leaving behind her best wishes.

Auron was truly closed and development work was going on everywhere. Italian workmen were staying in my hotel, Italian owned, which was probably why it was open. The owner's wife was Kenyan and pleased to speak English as her French was poor. I checked out the following day's route, which was fortunate as a golf course and fenced off paddocks blocked it.

Normally each day had an ascent of several hours, some time among the tops and then a long descent and perhaps another climb. My aim was the Refuge de Longon, a converted cattle shed in a remote valley. It was the only possible place with nowhere in between. I needed to climb before dropping to Roya, then a long ascent in the Mercantour National Park to the Col de Croussette, the last high col. This was to be followed with a long open descent, before a hard pull up to the Portes de Longon after which

several miles up a high valley should bring me to the Refuge. This added up to three long ascents and around twenty miles over rough ground.

It was a glorious sunny, chilly morning as I galloped off before 7.30 and made excellent time over to Roya. The baliséés were indistinct and I felt distinctly miffed at not having time to enjoy the view. The path was sketchy and one had to watch the ground all the time. The refuge was a shell but a tent had been erected over the septic tank and the hamlet was effectively derelict. There was water and after a mars bar and a long drink I set off into the Mercantour National Park, trying to ignore yet another notice about the patou. The park is lonely and I swear a wolf howled far away.

It was a steady ascent, much enjoyed and I made good time as was necessary. About an hour later, on rounding a buttress I walked into a large flock of sheep and three dogs lolloped towards me. Their heads came above shoulder level and they stank. Fortunately there were shepherds and I continued. Col de Croussette capitulated after another ninety minutes or so and in bright sunshine I looked for the Mediterranean. It was not there and despite the glorious sunshine it was bitterly cold. After donning wind-proofs I lunched behind a boulder watching the ravens. I needed to move on so my break was short.

The next few miles were at an easy gradient, up first then a long easy descent, the only excitement being chased by an old dog that could not be bothered, as I sidled straight through his flock. Finally the path veered away further down and along past spectacular rocky outcrops before the last flog up to the Portes de Longon. By now I was tired and the very beautiful valley disappeared into the distance, while the storm clouds were gathering. I carried on in the gathering gloom mentally preparing myself for a night under a tree or a boulder, when a low, miserable structure appeared---the refuge.

Ten minutes later the storm broke. Thunder and lightening carried on until the small hours while huge hailstones were at a depth of five inches the following morning.

The hut had showers but the hot tap was not connected. The electricity source was solar power and the *Guardienne* told us it had rained every day since July. As a result we had pathetic electric lights, which switched off after five minutes. The *Guardienne* was a student from Nice and miserable with the cold. She was not a good cook but the beer was helpful. We went to bed on damp batflancs and I shivered all night. The clientele in the hut comprised two Frenchmen in street clothing who seemed to have arrived by accident, a Dutch couple on a walking holiday, myself and three Germans, also walking the GR5. The Germans became important later.

After a miserable night I set off in the rain and gloom some time after the Germans. In front of me was a four thousand five hundred foot drop followed by a climb of sixteen hundred feet to St. Dalmas-Valdeblore. At the bottom I was able to take off my waterproofs and concentrate on finding the baliséés, which had disappeared. Eventually I found the route but the rest of the day was difficult. The baliséés for the Grande Randonnées are maintained by local organisations, which means patrolling high mountain areas with two large pots of paint. The wonder is that so many are clearly marked. In the two hundred and twenty five miles I walked on this trip, no more than ten miles were unclear and in only one place were they misleading. It was coming home to me I was tired mainly, I believe, due to poor food during the day and pushing on without proper breaks. In the first half, with companions, we had eaten poorly during the day, which elevated disagreements to spats and I had resolved not to let it happen again. It had and one result was some fairly harsh criticism of my planning abilities but on the bright side there were some interesting speculative discussions on many matters. I have always had a mind which wandered and it certainly did on this trip.

I do not believe the YRC figured, but towards the end I spent a little time comparing solo walking with solo rock climbing which attracted me greatly in bygone days.

Finally St. Dalmas was reached and it really was closed. The Germans were discovered sitting on the terrace of a café, closed of course, but they had found a holiday camp which offered bed and breakfast a little way up the hill. The *Guardienne* had gone to considerable trouble and found a restaurant two miles up the road, which was open. None of us were suitably dressed, it was the sort of place to stay with one's wife on a trip, but the food and wine were good and the prices reasonable. The Germans were curious as to why Britain was so slow in embracing the euro.

Day thirteen, another long one, but then surely it would be a simple run-in, from my destination Utelle, to Nice. I set off at eight on a crisp cold morning up a long steep slope but was soon overtaken by the Germans. They invited me to walk with them and I joined them readily especially as one of them had completed the walk before and knew the way — there were six cols and it was a long day with water at only one point. Two of them were retired air traffic controllers and the third a sort of very fit sixties hippy. Werner as he was called did not have a word of English and my German is rudimentary so I did not learn much about him. The other two, Hubert and Jürgen, spoke good English as required by their professions while Hubert spoke good French. He was very much the leader, Werner described him as "führer" and I was given permission to call him Adolf if I wished. So much for the complacent English idea that Germans have no sense of humour!

I have always been of the view that one walks faster alone but I found it not to be the case. As a group we moved quickly and I could enjoy the view, confident that Hubert was sorting out the route, taking just enough notice to be aware of our position. Among other things, I learned a great deal about mushrooms, which were in abundance as we descended through woods to

Les Granges de la Brasque, a remote and primitive holiday camp. It was closed but there was a good water source, the only one in nine hard hours walking. We had heard crashing and other noise in the woods and tough looking figures appeared all carrying Miss Marple type shopping baskets. It turned out they were Italians who had driven large distances and maltreated their cars simply to collect mushrooms.

Apparently commercial mushrooming quickly becomes illegal in Italy so they made their very good living by driving into France. Three months a year was quite sufficient to keep the wolf from the door.

During lunch of biscuits and bilberry pie Hubert treated me to a lecturette on mushrooms. Like many Germans he took the hobby seriously driving sixty miles from his home to the right sort of woodland. A good friend brought up in Germany just after the War had introduced me to the term "poor man's meat" or protein, a sentiment with which Hubert concurred.

The day was deteriorating as we set off again. The route followed a dirt road which was closed, due to landslides, so we crashed down through the forest and finally came out onto Col D'Andrion where waterproofs were put on. From now, around two p.m., it poured until after eight with low cloud and consequent poor visibility. The track became a rock staircase ascending what seemed to be a narrow rock pinnacle and it finally popped over a tiny col and plunged down. It was the Brèche du Brec and why there should be an engineered track, confounds me. There was nothing to be seen, just water running down between the stones as we stumbled on until we came upon Utelle with no warning. The village boasted two hotels and I felt a bit like a lost soul standing at the locked gates in the pouring rain wondering where to stay. There was one bar and, rather smugly, they told us the gîte was closed. Silver tongued Hubert charmed them and it was opened for us though no food was provided and

we had to pay on the spot. It was an old church, but the showers were hot and there was plenty of room to spread out our wet gear. We asked about food and were told the only épicerie did not open at this time of year. Hubert asked me to look after things and disappeared to the village returning within the hour with ham, cheese, tomatoes and wine together with a faint whiff of beer on his breath. We feasted and returned to the bar. It did well during the hour we were there.

After a good night we woke to a lovely morning and breakfasted well in the bar. I bought a packet of biscuits in the shop and after crossing a stream we joined an old pilgrim route. Utelle is an ancient place of pilgrimage and once had a monastery and two churches, all for about one hundred inhabitants. Its situation is spectacular above the huge gorge of the Vesubie valley and our route was the old mule track, which seemed to be hacked out of a vertical cliff. It was hot, the views were out of this world and the end was in sight. The walk was charming lasting until one p.m., during which time we descended two thousand feet to Pont du Cros only to climb thirteen hundred feet, in short order, to Levens. The Germans were stopping here and intending to drink beer. The temptation was great as they were pressing, but after heartfelt thanks on my part, I pushed on. They had made the last two days much easier and I reflected as I strode along that companions are, by and large, a good idea. Hubert was to accompany his wife to a wedding and he did not want to go, so intended to use up two days walking ten miles and then phone home with his apologies!

It was hot! The summer of 2002 was a poor one in the Alpine regions being cold and wet fortunately for me, as I would have suffered in high temperatures and low humidity. Today I was suffering as lack of food and, for the first time, lack of water made life hard. However I consoled myself with the thought that Aspremont, my destination was only about eight miles from the outskirts of Nice. The ground was interesting with wide views, particularly of the Mediterranean, but it took a long time to



reach Aspermont, which turned out to be a busy little town with mopeds and cars screaming about. It was a strain on the ears but I took refuge in a bar, had a celebratory drink of two Fantas, two carafes of water and two beers followed by a small quiche, which turned out to be my evening meal before going to find an hotel. I found one and went in and rang the bell. No-one came and after poking around for a while I stood in the doorway wondering what to do. A man got out of a car and told me the hotel was closed; he was staying there, had a key and had been instructed to lock up. However he gave me a telephone number and was amazed I had no mobile phone so I went to a public phone booth. No answers were forthcoming but as I sat on a wall feeling a bit fed up the phone rang and after a brief conversation, followed by a further wait, I booked in. There was no food of course and the town had closed on me so I went to bed.

The following morning I was keen to get on and breakfasted in the bar where I had celebrated. They opened forty minutes later than advertised and for the only time on the trip I was ripped off for my meagre meal. Aspremont did not appeal anyway and it was a lovely morning so I strode off in good spirits. Quite soon the outskirts of Nice came into view and I walked down through suburbs into the town. It was strange, the noise and bustle after fifteen days in quiet and near solitude. The previous evening I had telephoned home to find a dear friend had died suddenly and wanted to go straight to the airport for an earlier flight if possible. Downtown Nice went on for a long time but finally I dodged the traffic for the last time and reached the beach. I had thought about this moment for a couple of years, visualising myself strolling across a flat, sandy, empty beach with the setting sun glistening on pools of water. In the event it was a stony shelving beach and I had to pick my way through nubile, near naked bodies.

When I reached the sea I stood there to let the waves lap over my boots, a job completed. The waves soaked me up to the knees and sent me staggering back!

The concierge in the public toilets directed me to the airport bus stop and the notice said that buses passed every twenty minutes. After forty minutes in the hot sun a bus came, air conditioned as well.

The GR5 did not give up that easily, extensions to the airport buildings meant the bus was directed elsewhere so there was a good walk into the departure area. Changing my ticket was simple but tidying up and washing were not. I ate what I could buy on the short Easyjet flight to Liverpool and the better part of two celebratory dinners that night.

Walking alone encourages reflection about many things and not a little introspection. Apart from that quite some time was spent considering the different types of travel, ranging from package holidays where everything is arranged, to solo holidays carrying all food and shelter. I have enjoyed a fair range of holidays and come to the unsurprising conclusion that it depends where one wants to go and how one wants to do it.

I am glad I made this journey.



GOOD SERVANTS. Ahhhh !

**LAKES 3000s**  
**22/5/2004**

Adrian Bridge

The idea for attempting this arose because it was Andy Wells' 50<sup>th</sup>, and needing to do something of significance, (and as an after thought, because it should help in preparation for the High Sierra trip).

We met and camped at Seathwaite on Friday night and set off just after 0330 on Saturday, walking down Borrowdale in the dawn, with wonderful birdsong all around.

The sun shone on us as we ascended Skiddaw, as it did all day long, though a cool northerly wind got up and urged movement rather than sloth.

Tim's father and brother-in-law met us for breakfast on the A66, where we'd left a water dump. Our way continued south towards Thirlmere, through pleasant meadows, until striking up to Helvellyn, which we reached after about 10 hrs walking. The summit was quite busy, people in various outfits, and a surprising number on the phone, as one does on hills, it seems, these days.

We descended to the car park at Wythburn, where Nick had cached a vast amount of water for lunch. The way up beside Wythburn passed quickly, but once up the main valley, the route took its toll and we slowed noticeably, getting disoriented (definitely not lost!) before grinding up the flank of High Raise and eventually across to Angle Tarn. Here Andy elected to miss out the Scafells, and descended back to camp via Esk Hause. The rest plodded on, finding the going tougher than we'd remembered, reaching the summit of Scafell Pike at about 8 pm. Across Mickledore, up Broadstand to the fourth and final summit, Scafell, then back down the same way.

It seemed a long way back to the camp, via the Corridor Route and Styhead Tarn, becoming quite dark before we left the tarn. We stumbled into camp at 2330 hrs, a 20 hour day, tired but happy.

Next morning, Tim, Neil and I climbed 'Mandrake' at Quayfoot Crag - a '5 mins from the road' crag in Borrowdale. Proved to be an excellent route, but feet couldn't stand rock boots for more than a little and we retired for cake, coffee and ice cream at Grange.

Foot note: Mike Hobson was going to join us but was prevented from doing so at the last moment.

He and I had walked this same route in Oct 1984, but instead of good weather it had rained much of the time. Be nice to think we could do it again in another 20 years.....

We were, (L to R in the photo taken the following morning)

Kieran Toon, Tim Josephy, Nick Welsh, Adrian Dixon, Neil Grant, Andy Wells and Adrian Bridge.



## LANCASHIRE V YORKSHIRE

Charles Nevin, author of  
"Lancashire -Where women die of love."  
(Mainstream 2004)  
has some interesting (if biased) observations on  
Lancashire v Yorkshire differences.

(Edited extract Copyright Guardian Newspapers  
provided by Richard Kirby.)

The really important northern distinction, easily  
grasped but so often ignored by outsiders, is  
that between Lancashire and Yorkshire. The  
Pennines are a boundary far more significant  
than the Trent. On one side lives a warm  
whimsical race, ever ready to chuckle, even laugh  
in the face of the sheer ridiculousness of life; on  
the other, a surly people, unable to understand  
why they have not been let in on the joke.

JB Priestly, from Bradford, thought us noisy,  
frivolous spendthrifts, and joined in the general  
head shaking at our 'annual goings on' in  
Blackpool. They did not call him jolly jack for  
nothing. Consider this list; Arthur Scargill,  
Roy Hattersley, Michael Parkinson, Fred  
Trueman, Geoffrey Boycott, Alan Titchmarsh,  
Richard Whiteley, David Blunkett.

And now this one: George Formby, Gracie Fields,  
Stan Laurel, Frank Randle, Robb Wilton,  
Tommy Handley, Ken Dodd, Les Dawson,  
Eric Morecambe, Victoria Wood, Steve Coogan,  
Johnny Vegas, Caroline Aherne, Peter Kay.

It is an essential truth that comics do not come  
from Yorkshire. Actually, as it happens, Frankie  
Howard was born in York, but I think I'll let that  
pass. And Ernie Wise.

Not long ago, I came upon a guide book to  
Lancashire written by Walter Greenwood, author  
of the classic Lancashire romance 'Love On The  
Dole'. Here is the difference.

Yorkshire faces the full blast of the easterly  
wind which may account for the Yorkshire

character... (whereas) The boisterous wind that  
buffets the land of the Red Rose is born in the  
tumbling wastes of the Atlantic. A wild, warm  
amorous wind wenching with fat clouds and  
leaving them big with rain of which they deliver  
themselves on the Pennines' western slopes.

Terrific Walter.

On one side a land under attack from the  
elements and whatever else Europe can hurl at  
it; on the other, even the wind is more fun. No  
wonder we're different.

I also recommend A J P Taylor's essays in  
English history, which include a fascinating  
excursion into Lancashire and Lancashireness.

Taylor had read *Le Lys dans la vall* by Honor de  
Balzac, in which the hero is seduced by the  
beautiful Lady Arabella Dudley, a Lancastrian,  
who tells him that Lancashire is 'the county  
where women die of love'. That is something is it  
not? Can Surrey, Sussex, Shropshire or even  
Essex make such a boast?

(The Editor of this bulletin feels comment is  
unnecessary coming from Blackburn stock as he  
does.)

## MOUNTAIN QUEST

ASWRPLTEMNERLEND  
SEBCSLIASKCALBEN  
DSIVENNEBIEAONSM  
FADCNEPODNAWLARD  
GEAHAGETRDFGIFET  
LUYCLEKRSEOLEYKR  
RDMOLSOALRDDORIN  
ENOGAWYLLODPETPM  
TRRBTRELEHOSICKT  
HOVIAPAIWADDIKSD  
KCEREKIPDLOCgher  
LRNCSWIRLHOWLEDP  
MWERDSWRPLTEMNER

There are at least twenty sizable mountains  
from mainland Britain in this block. All names  
are in straight lines but may be in any direction.  
Something to drive you mad when stuck in, on a  
miserable day.

## HIGH SIERRA EXPEDITION

24<sup>TH</sup> July 12<sup>th</sup> August 2004

Members: Adrian Bridge  
Tim Josephy  
Iain Gilmour  
Neil Grant

Sat 24/Sun 25 Jul:

We flew from Manchester to San Francisco via Atlanta, accompanied by Adrian's wife Felicity: Spent the night with Adrian's son Ian and his partner Cecile at their San Francisco flat.

Next day, we drove to Yosemite, about 4 ½ hours and camped at Crane Flats. This is a good site for Yosemite - although 17 miles away from the valley, it is much higher, cooler and less crowded; the temperature in the valley was reaching the 100s at this time of year.

Mon 26 Jul: Half Dome 8836ft. 18 miles/4500ft. Up at 5AM - early starts were to be the pattern for the trip in order to gain height before the low level temperatures made uphill a misery. We reached Yosemite Valley just as dawn was breaking. For those of us who had never seen it before it was an amazing sight, with vast crags rearing up from the dimness of the valley to golden sunlit crests thousands of feet above.

We left the trailhead at 6.20 and walked up the already busy path beside Vernal and Nevada falls. Above the falls the trail levels off for a few miles through groves of pines and sequoia along the Merced River valley. The traffic had eased of considerably; clearly many fail at the first hurdle of the falls. Height was gained slowly till we reached the top of the forest and a splendid view of Half Dome. It seemed hardly possible that a route for mere mortals could be found up it. A zigzag path was followed up a steep granite shoulder to a saddle below the famous cables.

From closer up they looked even more improbable - two steel cables held up by posts every 15 feet or so going straight up a steep convex slab for about 800ft.



The ascent was breathtaking in every sense of the word; at around 8500ft our lack of acclimatisation was showing.

With lungs at bursting point Iain was heard to say he was only going on

"because that \*\*\*\*\* Kay had done it"!

All pain was forgotten on the summit where we lost ourselves in wonder at the views and in the satisfaction of success. On the way down, Iain & Tim descended by the John Muir Trail, whilst Adrian & Neil took in the spectacular summit of Liberty Cap above Nevada Falls.

Tues 27 Jul: To Tuolumne meadows.

A leisurely start then we drove to Tuolumne Grove, not far from the campsite where we wandered about in awe at the size of the giant sequoia trees, which can live for 3000 years and weigh up to 6100 tons.

Later stopped for a picnic lunch by Lake Tenaya, where some swam in wonderfully warm water despite the 10,000ft altitude. We reached Tuolumne Meadows in early afternoon & managed to secure one of the last sites. Although the National Park was busy, we never had any problem getting campsites.

Adrian, Neil & Tim spent the rest of the day climbing a route called Northwest Book (severe, about 500ft) on the nearby Lembert Dome, a miniature of Half Dome, whilst Iain walked and then came to take pictures.

Felicity & Ian carried out the vital task of booking us into the local restaurant for the evening meal.

Wed 28 Jul: Cathedral Peak 10,911ft. SE face, severe, 8 miles/2300ft

Another early start: Although the mountain is only 3 miles from the trailhead, we were trying to beat the crowds; this is a very popular peak and in fact we had the misfortune to arrive just behind a rather slow pair of climbers.

Iain left us at the foot of the rocks and went off to explore the beautiful Budd Lake. He then crossed a large area of glaciated slabs over a pass which led down to the Cathedral Lakes on the John Muir Trail, where we met him later.

We climbed about 600ft of perfect granite, picking our own line to the small summit where there was just room for two at a time. The descent passed through a notch 20ft below the summit, then steep scrambling for a few hundred feet to scree and boulders back to the start.

The walk over to meet Iain took some time because everywhere we looked there were views of jagged mountains and jewel-like lakes to distract the eye. Iain met us with welcome supplies of water and after a short break by the lake; we followed the dusty JMT back down to the trailhead.

Thurs 29 Jul: Mount Conness 12,590ft. West Ridge, about V. Diff, 9miles/4000ft

Breakfasted in the dark then drove 10 miles to Saddlebag Lake. We set off through meadows full of flowers for a few miles until the trail petered out, and then struck up over broken ground to Alpine Lake, a little gem fed by permanent snowfields under the stark ridges of Mount Conness.

The way became steeper and rougher up to the East Ridge at about 11500ft. From here we had magnificent views to the north. Below us was the small Conness Glacier, with myriad pools leading down to Saddlebag Lake, whilst in the distance we could see the sharp peaks of Cathedral and further away, looking very small, Half Dome.

Iain left us here and went down to botanise and explore the valley. The rest carried on up the

shattered East Ridge to a huge plateau only a few hundred feet below the summit. We crossed to the SW Ridge and descended some distance until a gully could be found to drop into the amphitheatre below the tremendous SW face.

This is as near vertical as makes no difference and about 1000ft high. We felt like ants crawling over the boulders across to the start of the West Ridge. This turned out to be a splendid alpine style ridge; we climbed together for all but a couple of pitches.



After the first 500ft or so, the route was entirely on the edge above the SW face, giving stunning exposure but easy climbing. What a combination.

The ridge was about 2000ft long and by the time the summit was reached we were all feeling the effects of altitude.

A resident marmot occupying the summit rocks was very interested in the prospect of scraps but refused to pose for us.

We came down the East Ridge, a grand walk in its own right and met Iain back at the car. A great day, but then all the days were like that. On the way home we stopped to eat at the Tioga Gas Mart, an unlikely place for a great restaurant,

but its reputation stretches far and wide. We all ordered too much, except for Iain who ordered far too much - he never learns, he did it several times again later.

Fri 30 Jul

Left Tuolomne Meadows and drove over the Tioga Pass towards Mammoth Lakes and the Minarets. Past the town of Mammoth Lakes we entered the Devil's Postpile National Park and found a charming campsite at Red's Meadow.

After visiting the Postpile, an extrusion of basalt columns (not a patch on the Giant's Causeway), we got a permit from the ranger station to camp out in the Minaret mountains the following night. These permits are free but limited in number. During the night we were disturbed by bears trotting through the campsite. They came very close to the tents but didn't eat us.

Sat 31 Jul/Sun 1 Aug: Clyde Minaret 12,281ft. SE Buttress 1000ft+ VS. Lots of miles / height!

A fateful day! Set off early again.

The first part of the 8 mile approach to the Minarets follows the JMT and is very dusty. We split up to avoid the dust and walked alone, joining up at rests every hour or so. We passed picturesque waterfalls on the gradual climb up to the beautiful Minaret Lake. Surrounded by the needles of the Minarets and with the shores dotted with flowers, one could be excused for just sitting and contemplating, but we were on a mission and we had no time for that.

A further steep pull reached Lake Cecile and a stunning view of the perfect spire of the Clyde Minaret. Here we made our first mistake.



It was only midday and there were 8½ hours of daylight left. We had planned to bivi and start the route early the following day, but it looked like we could crack it straight off.

Iain's disapproving silence ought to have been a clue but we had the bit between our teeth and we were off.

Crossing Lake Cecile outfall and climbing the snow and boulders to the foot of the SE face took 1½ hours, so that was another clue, but still we pressed on.

We decided to climb to a big ledge 1/3 of the way up the route and then make a final decision. We passed two climbers abseiling off; they had started at 8AM and had only got halfway. A big feature of the climb is a huge corner just above halfway up; we could see it and thought we were nearly there.

After a delicate traverse we were over a very steep part of the face and pretty much committed. Adrian was given the task of leading whilst Neil and Tim climbed together behind. The guidebook 90ft corner turned out to be four full pitches - the climb just went on and on.

The sun was well off the crag and it was getting cold. As the foolish virgins had no spare gear, the wise virgin shared his out selflessly. Still, he had more padding than the rest.

Climbing like demons, we reached the top just as the sun set and with no time to admire the colours, rushed off down the scrambling route of the SW face.

We got off the spire after a convenient abseil but then missed our way in the dark. We tried several gullies but they were all suicidally loose. After boulder hopping for several hours we had to admit we were lost.

Meanwhile, back at Minaret Lake Iain was getting very concerned. The two American climbers tried to reassure

him that we seemed to be climbing competently (where they got that notion I have no idea), and eventually Iain retired to bed with the intention of going down for help at first light. We were still walking and although we had very little in the way of clothes, it was not too cold and our main worry was Iain's state of mind.

In the end we walked right past the end of the Minarets ridge then just aimed across country to try to pick up the trail we had come up the previous day. It was around 6AM when we finally made it to Iain's camp after 24 hours on the go.

He was very relieved but justifiably even more cross. Still, compassionate soul that he is, he relented and brewed us tea and porridge whilst we dozed in the morning sun. Later we wandered back down the trail to Red's Meadow and more sleep.

Mon 2/Tues 3 Aug: Bishop

Packed up in leisurely time and drove down to the town of Bishop. At only 4000ft, the heat was oppressive and the surrounding countryside was dry and burnt. It was easy to believe that we were close to the Mojave Desert. However a road led 20 miles up towards the trailheads at 9000ft and here conditions were very pleasant. We found a good campsite by a rushing stream, and then returned to Bishop to visit the Galen Rowell photo gallery (worth going just for that) and to indulge in too much food.

Next day we were banging on the ranger station door early to get a permit to stay out for 5 days in order to attempt the Evolution Traverse, a magnificent ridge crossing 8 peaks, and expected to take 2-3 days. We secured the last available permit to go in the next day. We spent the rest of the day provisioning and preparing for the trip.

Wed 4 Aug: Lamarck Col, 12,900ft

Set off from the North Lake trailhead at 9300ft. After 10 minutes Adrian turned back to recover a forgotten eating utensil. The rest of us walked on, deep in conversation, so we missed

the sign nailed to a tree and took the wrong trail. By the time we had sorted that out, Adrian had passed us at high speed trying to catch up. Neil set off at higher speed trying to catch him up.

Iain and Tim eventually met up with Adrian near Lamarck Lakes, a couple of hours up the trail, but no sign of Neil. We waited a while; then searched the broken ground around the valley and hillside. Although we couldn't see how he could have passed us, we decided to press on to the col and look for him there. We reached the col in early afternoon but there was no sign of him.

As we sat and discussed our predicament, a Ranger called Debbie appeared on her way over the col to the Ranger station on the John Muir Trail at McLure Meadows. We had convinced ourselves that Neil had not passed us, so must either be injured at the lake or have gone back down. Debbie agreed to look for Neil on the other side of the col and to radio back to Bishop.

We returned to the lake to search again. Eventually we returned to the trailhead in sombre mood and called the police for help.

Relief all round when they told us that Debbie had found Neil sitting happily on the Darwin Bench on the far side of the col, unaware of all the drama and that he would walk out next day. In fact, he walked out that evening (no mean feat, crossing the col twice in one day), spending the night at the campsite near the trailhead.

All in all; a classic example of how the smallest mistakes can snowball into utter chaos. The Evolution Traverse was now out of the question as we had neither the time nor the energy.

Thur 5 - Sun 8 Aug: Piute Pass to Lamarck Col circuit.

We still had 4 days of the permit to use, so having reunited the party we set off from North Lake to walk a loop to the John Muir Trail, following that to the Evolution Valley, then back over Lamarck Col.

Despite the disappointment of missing the Traverse, this was to prove one of the highlights of the whole trip. Iain and Tim set off first and walked up through forest, then flower meadows beside lakes and streams to the pass at 11,420ft.

On the far side they walked down into the Humphreys Basin below the giant Mt Humphreys and found a beautiful and lonely campsite on a small bench overlooking a wide river valley dotted with green meadows and azure lakes. Adrian and Neil arrived in the early evening and fully approved of the site.

Next day was a lazy start and it was past 8 o'clock before we were away. The wide valley soon narrowed and deepened, becoming more wild and dramatic. Looking back it was hard to see where the path had been. Ahead were great glaciated domes, with the river still descending quite steeply towards its junction with the JMT, which we reached at about mid day.

There were more people about now, including a large party who had arrived on horseback, but a siesta was called for and it was gone 2PM before we stirred ourselves again. Our plan to camp in the next few miles was scotched by the abundance of mosquitoes, the only time we were really bothered by them, so we extended the day to climb up into the Evolution Valley, where we expected the problem to be eased.

Although it was a fair climb, the zigzag path was well graded and easier than we expected. At the top we forded the river to Evolution Meadow, where Iain's local knowledge led us to another fine campsite. This turned out to be equipped with a fire pit made by some previous occupant so for the first and only time we camped, American style with a proper campfire. We didn't sing any songs though.

Having cracked about 18 miles the previous day, we were in no hurry as we strolled up the valley past McLure Station (Debbie was out) and along to a steep climb up to the Evolution Valley itself. This is at the same time one of the most beautiful and dramatic places any of us had ever

seen. All I can say is go and see for yourself. Along one side stretched the Evolution Traverse, seemingly miles above. It was a sobering sight and we wondered if we would have been capable of doing it at all.

We spent a few hours sightseeing; then climbed up a side valley to the Darwin Bench, where Neil found the best campsite of the trip; flat, sheltered and surrounded by stupendous scenery.

On the last day, we walked slowly up the Darwin Canyon past a chain of charming lakes under the vast walls and glaciers of Mts. Mendel and Darwin. There is so much to do one just has to go back. (Any takers?)

The pull up to Lamarck Col was steep and bouldery but small cairns pointed out the best way. At the col, a rocky ridge led up to Mt. Lamarck, 13,417ft. This proved too much temptation for three; Iain, having more sense, negotiated the snowfield below the col, and waited for us by a small lake. The ridge provided fine scrambling to the summit plateau whence a magnificent vista revealed itself, with the town of Bishop visible miles away and over 9000ft below.

The descent to the trailhead and the car seemed interminable, but the prospect of a motel room, a shower and a beer (not necessarily in that order) kept us all going.

Mon 9 Aug: Tom's Place to Dade Lake. 6 miles/2000ft

Drove to Tom's Place; a small hamlet about 30 miles NW of Bishop. In the afternoon we set off from Mosquito Flats trailhead to walk up the aptly named Little Lakes Valley.

This is very popular with walkers and fishermen but once we reached Gem Lake, about 3½ miles away we were on our own. The trail ended there and we covered 2 miles of large boulders up to Dade Lake, spectacularly positioned below Bear Creek Spire, our objective for the next day.



We found some cosy little bivi sites among the boulders and were soon driven into them by the chill wind (we were at around 11,500ft).



Tues 10 Aug: Bear Creek Spire, 13,720ft. North Arete 1000ft+ Severe

Iain professed himself past master at pottering around in campsites and absorbed himself investigating the flora and fauna of Dade Lake.

The rest of us toiled up boulders and snow to the foot of the fine North Arete. This time we had all day for the climb and we enjoyed it thoroughly.



Superb rough granite, the first half was on a relatively steep buttress, then the rest on a grand alpine style ridge with many gendarmes and

limitless views all around. The summit block provided a tricky move or two and was just big enough for one person to stand rather precariously.

Once we had taken our turns on top, we found abseil slings, which allowed us to reach easy ground quite quickly.

The descent was dusty, bouldery and long, but we didn't mind, each of us quietly reliving the enjoyment of the climb.



Back at Dade Lake we packed up and the four of us hiked out to the trailhead. I don't know about the others but I felt a strange combination of satisfaction at our achievements and sadness that it was all over. I really think the High Sierra is not a place you can visit just once; there is so much to see and do whatever the level of your ambitions, that you have to go back.

### Logistics.

It was really a very cheap trip. Including the flight and the car hire, petrol, camp and national park fees, food, beer and a couple of nights in a motel, the cost was less than £1500 per head. We pre booked the first campsite at Crane Flats which was a good thing as Yosemite area is very busy; all the others were on spec and we had no trouble.

We had entertained some doubts about the time of year because of high temperatures but in fact although the valleys reached over 100deg most days, we were rarely below 7500ft and the climate was very pleasant. Water was plentiful and the snowfields, which can necessitate the use of axes and crampons earlier in the season, were no problem. In addition, nights were not cold, so we carried only light clothing and bivi gear. Thunderstorms are rare in July and August, so for the high mountains we probably had the best of all worlds.



EICHORN AND CATHEDRAL



IAIN AT CLYDE MINARET



EICHORN PINNACLE ON CATHEDRAL



BEAR  
CREEK  
SPIRE

LEFT



CATHEDRAL  
PEAK

RIGHT



HALF  
DOME

MARMOT



## APPALACHIAN TRAIL COUNTRY A BRIEF VISIT

Peter Green

Thanks to friends, lending us their house in October 2004 in Lynchburg, Virginia, only a half hour drive from the Blue Ridge Mountains, Rob Ibberson and I spent a day of picture-postcard weather walking ("hiking") there. The Blue Ridge Mountains are home to just one part of the mammoth 2,100+ miles Appalachian Trail.

Only having one day available we really had no idea where to start. Our host knew of our interest and had thoughtfully provided us with some suggestions - but no actual maps, so at the James River Visitor Center we tried to purchase all the relevant maps, but believe it or not he (the Ranger) had not got the one local for that area. We settled for some verbal instructions and a print-off of the route we would take.

We now know why Bill Bryson called his book "A Walk in the Woods", as this accurately described our own walk up to 4,000 ft. Because this area is on the same latitude as Madrid the tree line reaches far higher, so there are few vistas, but what there are (from boulder outcrops and peaks) are stunning (see photo, taken by Rob) especially during early "fall".

The trees, mile after mile, are however not without interest, largely broadleaved deciduous, but a greater range of species than we are used to here, including mature tulip trees, ailanthus and liquidambar, which in the UK are lovingly tended as single specimens in parkland.

The US Parks Department do a great job, but have a different philosophy to ours on how to run a National Park; they have deliberately cleared away and discourage permanent habitation and

what we would think of as hill farming, to create something nearer the original wilderness - and of course they have massively more space available in which to do it.



### Useful Data (provided by Rob):

1. Maps: National Geographic Maps are double sided and on waterproof material, price \$9.95 each. Further details from [www.trailsillustrated.com](http://www.trailsillustrated.com) and Nat. Geographic Maps, PO Box 4357, Evergreen, Colorado 80437-4357. (Sample available for inspection /loan from PG).
2. "The Best of the Appalachian Trail"(AT) - Day hikes by Victoria and Frank Logue, \$15.95; ISBN 0-89732-138-3. Menasha Ridge Press, Alabama.
3. "Hiking Virginia's National Forests" - hikes along the AT by Karin Wuetz-Schiafer, \$10.95. ISBN 0-7627-0226-5. The Globe Pequot Press, PO Box 833, Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475.
4. "50 Hikes in N. Virginia", Leonard M Atkins, \$14.00. Walks, hikes, back-packs from Allegheny Mts to Chesapeake Bay.

## AROUND THE CLUBS

The Alpine Club's South America Symposium  
Shap Welles, November 2004

Since the AC forsook London for its Annual Dinner and combined it with their popular day-long mountaineering symposia they have not looked back. There must have been 250 there for the combined event. On a dull wet day in the Lakes 120 were entertained by good speakers with interesting and, more importantly, informative tales to tell.

Steve Venables in his introduction referred to the first AC South American Symposium which Peter Swindells and I attended in 1985. That event helped us select Cololo in the Apolobamba as the objective for a Club expedition. Sat alongside us that year, as Steve reminded us, was a young Simon Yates who was there "having just had a spot of trouble" on Siula Grande. Simon was presenting this time.

The organisers had it all planned logically. John Biggar started with an initial sweep down the Andes to give a well illustrated overview contrasting the different ranges. His ski mountaineering trips in the Chilean volcanoes to peer into summit craters sporting spluttering lava captured the audience's imaginations and prompted later questions in the bar. John's grand Andean tour preceded a more leisurely drift southwards through the continent.

I noticed a second distinct and unintended progression though. Nick Bullock started climbs with food and fuel for a single day. That his excursion took four or five days was unfortunate and clearly slimming. Later came Carlos Buhler who, having tried and spurned Nick's 'light 'n fast' approach, made sure he had four days provisions. Enough for eating well throughout the likely length of the outing. Last up before us was Simon Yates. He'd filled the yacht with food,

literally scooped sardines and hake from passing shoals and then took beef from the one estancia worker who'd been commissioned to cull feral cattle. His party happily sat out eleven-day storms. Then, later, a couple of hundred of us took our seats for the Dinner of ham, pheasant, pudding...

Anne Arran's account of her recent rock climbing beside, and sometimes up through, Venezuela's Angel Falls was hair-raising. Problems here and on her other climbs included route gardening on the scale of Kew, jaundice, broken limbs, swarming wasps and, finally, attempting to build a boat to float out as an oil-shortage prevented the expected tourist flights from arriving. Not to mention E6 on poor rock.

Pushing himself to the absolute limits was obviously all in a day's mountaineering to bold Nick Bullock. I'd seen him present his account of the climb on Peru's Quitaraju south faces before. This and his other icicle and serac threatened hard ice and mixed climbs looked no less fearsome nor more sensible this time around. He was later approached by someone in the bar who wished to "shake his hand while he still had the opportunity" presumably expecting Nick's life to be action packed but brief.

Our 1999 Real and Cocapata expedition logistics organiser, Jose Carmalinghi, covered all the Bolivian ranges in his session. One shot included Derek Bush and others taking a mug of tea in the Real.

The end of the Real, nearer to La Paz, is so accessible that some days sixty or more climbers are heading for some summits. To counter this depressing thought he gave tempting glimpses of unexplored areas including the rarely visited smaller but glaciated Lipez ranges in the south. The look of the sound andesite rock of the Quimsa Cruz was tempting.

(This, as understood by a non-geologist, is rather like granite but it erupted in volcanic activity at the Earth's surface and has a slightly different chemical composition (less SiO<sub>2</sub>), finer texture and lighter colour. True granite on the other hand results from below the surface intrusion into cracks and not surface eruption)

It is a pity that political unrest has reduced mountain climbing, trekking and tourism activity in Bolivia by 70% over recent years when there are rarely actual problems getting to or from the mountains. A pity not only for us mountaineers but for the loss of much needed foreign income this entails for the local people. Jose also mentioned that exceptionally this season was not dry and sunny as usual but frequently wet and stormy. This left Condoriri, among others, a dangerously unstable pile of loose rock rather than the snow and ice route of old. Let's hope both weather and unrest sort themselves out and perhaps we can get back there again.

North America's, Carlos Buhler, summarised his climbs in Peru with understatement in measured tones. The routes were in the Vilcanota and Vilcabamba near Cuzco and the Huayhuash and Blanca further north. Over many visits he had appreciated the individual qualities of the different ranges. He regretted the changes the improved access and popularisation of the Blanca had brought to its once sleepy towns. Carlos continued the journey south via Aconcagua to Patagonia's Cerro Torre.

Simon Yates' accounts were of two visits to the Cordillera Darwin in tempestuous Chilean Tierra del Fuego, one of the remotest and least accessible in the Andean chain. They displayed his pragmatic approach.

Realising he needed sailing skills to make landfall before making an approach he signed up for a short course... in Howtown Bay... on

Ullswater... sailing a Topper. In a final session his instructor asked each trainee what they intended to do with their newfound skills. She didn't anticipate his reply, "the Beagle Channel".

After that boat trip and a landing at an estancia staffed by a single gaucho, they used horses to ride and as pack animals until halted by a beaver dam swamping the forest. The beavers were introduced for their pelts but wreak havoc with routes up the valleys. So time to make camp and for Simon to discover his sleeping bag is still on the boat. An initial foray up a side valley and they are on a glacier explored by Eric Shipton in the 1960s. There is time to establish a dump of gear and food then retreat in worsening weather. After a long wait they make a second attempt and reach the summit in a clearing in the weather.

Later that evening, at the Dinner, we hear that the valley is part of an area purchased under the one percent (of net sales) for the planet scheme introduced in 2001 by Yvon Chouinard, founder of the Patagonia label, and Craig Mathews of Blue Ribbon Flies. They purchase large areas in Chile and Argentina for around \$12 an acre. They then remove the fences left over from farming, gain agreements limiting future development and ensuring appropriate access before handing the land over to the governments for national parks.

Over coffee before the day's start I spoke to two new faces, students probably, who were looking a little lost. They wanted some ideas for a three week trip and sounded as if they had the ground skills sorted out. A couple of hours later they were deep in conversation with four others of similar age. That evening they stopped me and said they'd got some plans for both Brazil and Peru. I hope they make it. If the event inspires a few more to do something new it will have been worthwhile. I'm sure it did an awful lot more than that.

Michael Smith

## THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

Recent Bulletins have covered exploits by various members on parts of the John Muir Trail in the USA and Nigel Hawkins, the Director of the Trust, was our main guest at our 2004 Dinner. To expand on what we heard then and for the benefit of those unable to attend the dinner I am giving here more detail of their activities and background.

The John Muir Trust was formed in 1983 to protect and conserve wild places and to increase awareness and understanding of the value of such places. It currently owns over 50,000 acres in the UK. Its avowed aim is to conserve and protect wild places with their indigenous animals, plants and soils for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Trust not only advocates the improved protection of the remaining areas of wild land, but the need to enhance and restore wild land qualities in damaged areas.

Wild land is vulnerable to the intrusion of new developments and associated infrastructures. In past years commercial forestry, super-quarries and newly bulldozed tracks have been seen as the main threats, but today and in the future, the development of hydro-electric schemes and on-shore wind farms may become increasingly important.

The drive to replace energy generation from fossil fuels to energy from renewable sources is necessary, but as the search for new locations spreads, it will become increasingly incompatible with aims to defend wild land. The JMT advocates a need for legislative control to protect key areas of wild land. The Trust supports the development of small-scale, sensitively sited renewable energy schemes in areas adjacent to existing settlements, which demonstrate that renewable energy may be sourced without significantly impacting on wild land but while generally in support of the development of renewable energy systems, it will oppose any new developments where they significantly threaten wild land.

Whilst always remaining freely and openly available, wild land should not be 'tamed' by way-markers or by path improvements that serve only to speed up access. There is a need for self-reliance in wild land which should be accepted on its own terms. The sensitive, low-key maintenance of existing paths can prevent excessive wear and erosion of surrounding habitats and minimise visual intrusion. The JMT does not advocate the construction of new paths in or into wild land.

The Trust takes its name from John Muir, the Scot who was the first person to call for practical action to safeguard and cherish the world's wild places.

Born in 1838 in the small Scottish port of Dunbar, as a child John Muir emigrated with his family to the USA where he ultimately became a founding father of the world conservation movement devoting his life to safeguarding the world's landscapes for future generations. He is renowned in the States for his campaign to protect Yosemite and other areas which eventually became US National Parks.

Since 1983, the John Muir Trust, guided by Muir's challenge to do something for wildness and make the mountains glad, has been doing just that within the United Kingdom. By acquiring and sensitively managing key wild areas, the Trust sets out to show that the damage inflicted on the wild over the centuries can be repaired; that the land can be conserved on a sustainable basis for people and the wildlife which shares it and that the great spiritual qualities of wilderness, of tranquillity and solitude, can be preserved as a legacy for those to come.

It believes that this can only be achieved by recognising special qualities of wild places and understanding the human factors and to this end works closely with local communities.

The Trust is one of the country's strongest voices speaking out for wild land and the wilderness experience and has acquired key areas of wild land in Scotland to protect it.

It also manages land and helps communities become guardians of other areas of outstanding wild land. - It is amongst other projects helping protect Ben Nevis and the Cuillin. It is also working to bring back beautiful native woodlands - with all their birds, animals, flowers and other vegetation, insects, mosses and fungi - in Knoydart, Skye, Sandwood, Schiehallion and Glen Nevis. It provides an opportunity for people who love wild places to "put something back" through voluntary conservation work and other activities supporting the work of the Trust.

A major way it promotes its ideals is by encouraging over 12,000 people to take part in the John Muir Award Scheme. It encourages the discovery and conservation of wild places in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration.

In the UK, truly wild land is confined to large expanses of remote and relatively unmodified terrain. At a more local level, wildness can be experienced in smaller wild places, even close to centres of population. The term wild place may be used to describe any locality, however small, where nature prevails.

The term wild land used by the Trust refers to the larger key areas of a more iconic nature. The Trust adopts the following simple definition for wild land in the UK: Uninhabited land containing minimal evidence of human activity. It is normally remote or 'off the beaten track', rugged or physically challenging and naturally hazardous and provides a refuge for wildlife, a sense of peace, quiet and solitude, a sense of wonder, drama or awe and an inspiration and satisfaction. Many areas of wild land, whether rugged or featureless, require particular skills to navigate. The personal risk and sense of achievement associated with overcoming these challenges play a particularly important part in many people's lives.

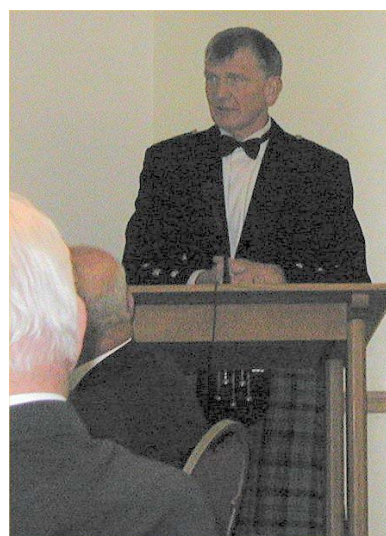
The overall area of wild land in the UK has by any definition, been and continues to be gradually and steadily depleted. It is considered a vital refuge and source of inspiration to all who visit but wild land should not be viewed merely as a recreational or even an economic resource of benefit to

humans, it is intrinsically important in its own right and supports many of the ecosystems least affected by humankind.

For many people, wild land is a place where one can escape from the pressures of everyday modern life. It is crucial that large expanses of unspoilt wild land are protected and continue to be openly available and enjoyed by society. Close to population centres, smaller areas of wild land are of increased importance and The Countryside & Rights of Way Act in England and similar legislation in Scotland are opening up such possibilities and the changing EU Common Agricultural Policy and new agricultural, conservation and woodland management schemes also direct financial benefits towards land managers engaged in sensitive wild land habitat management but the Trust is working on the surviving more grand locations.

The Trust is a membership organisation and I would encourage everyone with an interest in wild places to join.

Most activity is in Scotland and members who live near enough and wish to can participate at all levels of activity and can make a real contribution to the work of the Trust. Those of us living further afield can still provide vital help through our annual subscriptions which contribute towards the work of the Trust. You do not need to attend conservation activities to help safeguard the wild - just being a member of the John Muir Trust matters.



For more information about the Trust visit their web site at [www.jmt.org](http://www.jmt.org) or telephone 0131 554 0114

**NIGEL AT THE YRC DINNER**



# EXPEDITION REPORT

CHINA Spring 2004

by Ged Campion

Following the Hidden River expedition to Leye in 2002, many discussions had taken place on how best to progress our work in North West Guangxi.

Our work to the West of the Hong Shui River had allowed close examination of the karst areas of Lingyun, Leye and Madrong where we had made quite spectacular finds and now it was time to turn our attentions to the south, looking closely at the bordering counties of Donglan, Tian'e, Fengshan and Bama.

Previous expeditions had been made up predominantly of YRC members but the rigours of regular expeditions to far off places was wearing a little thin on a few players so recruitment outside of the time honoured team was necessary.

With little time for the formalities of selection processes or even opportunities for taking up references, Three new candidates were rushed through the necessary inductions and prepared for a challenge in China.

The normal arrangements were agreed with The Karst Institute in Guilin and although Prof Zhu himself was unable to join us in the field, Zhang Hai a hydrologist of considerable prominence and an upstanding member of 'The Party' was chosen as our Chinese tour leader.

Jet lagged and weary we arrived in Guilin to be greeted by our hosts amongst them Mr. Chen, a quietly spoken man of considerable dignity with the quite unabashed title of 'Director of Caves' - what a title to have on your door at work.

Prof Zhu treated us to a sneak preview of his recently completed book 'Tiankengs of China' and then agreed a special group discount upon

purchase, all of us mindful of our luggage weight on the outward leg!

The other Mr. Chen, a film camera man from Nanking TV would join us in Tian'e to report back daily with film footage of the expedition and Miss Tang formerly from CCTV, was now a freelance journalist writing a book on the people of the karst countryside.

Then followed the usual ritual of untangling yards of muddy rope, abandoned by previous China Cave Projects expeditions, in the dingy CCP tackle room on the ground floor corridor of the Karst Institute.

Depending upon your view, this can be considered either as a veritable Aladdin's cave of technical wonders or a place where you can abandon anything that you think may be useful to an incoming expedition, from a pair of underpants to an unsuitable expedition member!

A few nights in Guilin saw us suitably prepared for our road journey to Hechi City, the administrative capital for both Tian'e and Fengshan counties.

On arrival we were greeted by dignitaries, officials and the irrepressible Mr Wen Yanto, Deputy Director of Tourism and much acclaimed expert on the culture and ethnic minorities in the area.

At the banquet that followed such was his thirst for gambaying (toasting competitively) he was duly christened 'Gambey Man' a title he was to relish and repeat throughout our time with him!

Forty Gambeyes later it was time to move on and the swagger of the bus matched perfectly the

curvatures of the Hong Shui River which led sinuously to the bustling Tian'e Town and hotel the centre of operations for our first area of inspection.

Tian'e is dominated by the construction of a huge hydropower station. This is one of the landmark energy projects in China costing 2.9 billion dollars. It will be furnished with nine 600,000 kilowatt hydro-generating sets with an annual capacity of 18.7 billion kilowatts of hydropower - that's a lot.

The dignitaries who took us there showed us the biggest concrete mixer in the world, stone washing plants and the foundations of a dam that will hold 5.6 million cubic metres of water!

A visit to the steep karst hills above Tian'e was our first port of call. From here it was possible to survey the craggy depths of the Longtan Gorge with the dust of the dam construction in the distance. It was this promise of vertical range that had attracted us to this area.

A number of shafts had been recorded in the area one of them a significant sink, Wei Dong, situated in a dusty quarry above the 'stone works'. Here clean washed and attractively polished pitches led to an even grander drop of 40m into a big gallery and more pitches to a thunderous tunnel littered with boulders the size of houses. Navigation between these led suddenly to a blue sump where only catfish swam possibly indicating we'd reached Hong Shui river level.

As Bruce waded into the water they inquisitively nibbled at his orange suite. Such curiosity was duly rewarded by careful capture in a wellie-boot trap - all in the interests of science of course!

Other shafts in Tian'e and the adjoining areas of Dung Lee and Ping Shang led to similarly disappointing conclusions in terms of cave development but provided some interest and insight into local fauna. It's amazing what ends up at the bottom of a shaft. In Jian Shi, Dave Williams found the body of a Spotted Linsang

(Prionodon Pardicolor), a type of civet cat formerly blamed for the Sars epidemic though after scrupulous examination Dave concluded that the animal had possibly wandered too close to the void and definitely hadn't been pushed!

We also explored a number of big fossil caves including what was called Number 8 Cave. The dimensions of this place were quite incredible. The biggest chamber was adorned by crispy ancient stalls and, of particular mention, a stalagmite almost 20 metres high.

Ernie Shield and Dave Appleing were given the task of surveying this immense chamber and both newcomers to China surveyed every nook and cranny, careful not to miss the possibility of a crawl or a smaller passage were they could escape the agoraphobia of the big wide open space.

Circumnavigation of the chamber led to decreasing circle syndrome and Ernie mysteriously disappeared for a while but eventually re-emerged from the darkness much to Dave's relief. Number 8 cave notched up a few kilometres before we moved to an area in the south and Lao Pung in particular.

Lao Pung was to reveal something quite special - a new Tiankeng. The Chinese for this Tiankeng was San Gu Shui meaning ancient water cave but as we peered over its precipitous entrance we could see no sign of water.

The Chinese had never been able to descend into this feature so it held much awe and mystery for them and we were not without our audience as we rigged off the biggest tree we could find which quite remarkably gave us a perfect 100 metre free-hang all the way to the bottom.

As the noise of the circus above melted away into confused echoes we disappeared away beneath the verdant forest canopy which formed the floor of the Tiankeng. It led steeply down through a low arch that guarded the access to the cave below.

San Gu Shui was a real gem, beautifully decorated and quite spectacular in size.

Big galleries led off up and down but no sign of a river or a pitch that would reward us with depth. We took photographs and made our way back to the Tiangkeng and prusiked up to starlight sky. The circus had left us the glowing embers of a burnt out fire and a yapping little dog which ran the risk of disappearing into the forest below.

Not too far away we found Jiang jia Tao in Gan Tang village which was to prove another major vertical find, a spectacular shaft 200 metres deep

The exploration of this gem was carried out over a period of two days but no continuation at the bottom could be found.

This feature was just on the boundary of Tian'e and Fengshan counties forming the highest point on the relief map but few other interesting features were immediately obvious so we started to turn our attentions to Fengshan county.

For a few years we had discounted the idea of visiting Fengshan mostly because of the work that had been done here by China Caves Projects in 1988-89. Huge caves like Ma Wang had been explored and part of the system had already been transformed into a show cave. Significant caves on the Bama border had also been discovered but in a country with so much limestone we were nervous about getting too close to an area partially worked out. As if this wasn't enough I had heard about a small Italian expedition visiting Fengshan though we were assured that their remit was strictly to study archaeology and biology in specific caves that were not part of our itinerary.

With these nagging doubts in our minds we took the long and tiring road across the range, our journey constantly punctuated with stops for road excavation. Dropping dramatically down from the dizzy Cone Karst heights gave us our

first view of smoky Fengshan town nestling somewhat awkwardly amongst the beautiful karst features in the valley below.

We were to be greeted by an enthusiastic local government and tourist group of officials including Mr Wei the Director of Tourism for the town who eagerly led us to the government hotel where waiting, was guess what -you've got it - our next banquet and a whole host of town officials!

Suitably welcomed and toasted we prepared for exploration in the area.

Next day our first assignment was to look at two fossil caves Dark and Light Cave as well as a shaft just north of the town. We were not disappointed; two very large entrances led of in opposing directions through quite spectacular ancient formations and galleries which we photographed. The shaft disappointingly choked at 80 metres, however.

Nearby in Xia Qan Ping we found Yu Long Dong a big cave with beautiful formations some of which had been removed by local people! The deeper we ventured into the cave the more evident the plunder became with yards of bamboo scaffolding reaching to the roof and the debris of fine white and crimson stal curtain languishing on the floor.

The removal and selling of stals is a lucrative business in China and despite the efforts of conservationists and tourist officials to prevent this happening the trade provides a welcome source of income to local people and is seen as just another way of harvesting local resources.

The way that the caves and people co-exist in China was very well illustrated the next day when we were taken by two young and attractive tourist office girls to an interesting cave 'in town' virtually nestling between shops and offices. The girls with brightly coloured handbags and winkle-picker shoes led us enthusiastically up to the cave.

Who needs tackle bags and wellies when you can get this sort of gear! This was Chong Dong or 'Factory Cave' as we christened it.

It comprised a huge entrance some 70 metres across and 50 metres high with a sizeable river flowing out. It was a huge truncated section of cave approximately 1km long.

The area inside of the cave had been totally divided up between stal bosses and speliotherms and littered with industrial space, housing 'units' manufacturing concrete blocks, grave stones, telegraph poles and a whole host of other assiduously crafted goods.

The girls were happy to demonstrate their survey skills and lead off enthusiastically through the cave armed with matching tape measure and handbags.

We later learnt that Chong Dong forms the upper part of the Qiaoyin River cave which emerges in Fengshan and flows south to Bama County with every possibility of intersecting more karst.

Factory Cave however was not quite the sort of cavern, measureless-to-man stuff, we'd been dreaming of back in England and our Chinese hosts seemed a little unsure of what to go for next.



PYLONS IN  
FACTORY  
CAVE

The non stop activity, deafening machines, and glare of mains electric lights gave the cave environment a strangely surreal atmosphere quite alien to what we are accustomed - an example perhaps of nature not quite in harmony with technology.

Nevertheless it was still a cave and as dutiful expedition members we had a responsibility to survey and record it.

In the absence of a good geological map, I had been looking at a large pictorial tourist map of Fengshan County outside the hotel. In the south an elegant karst arch was depicted appropriately surrounded by those give away horseshoe symbols indicating large cave entrances. Further probing revealed that these features were close to the village of Jiang Ghou 50K south west of Fengshan. We dispatched Ernie and Ruth to go and have a look at the area while the rest of us cleaned up loose ends closer to Fengshan.



WOODYARD

FACTORY  
CAVE

When they returned they reported those caverns, measureless-to-man, that we had been thinking about. In fact a system called Man Fei that was considered by locals to be very extensive indeed. Man Fei proved to be a major find and very close to the Bama County border. Zhang Hai still drip feeding information on this area disclosed that our Italian colleagues had also done a recce to Jiang Ghou but had only strayed into the entrance of Man Fei without embarking upon a survey.

Compelled by a sudden sense of urgency we decided to put all our resources into exploring and surveying what parts of this system we could in the time we had left.

Zhang Hai however, as diplomatic as ever, wondered whether it would be better to leave Jiang Ghou as a separate project for another expedition. Sniffing a rat and fearful of an Italian return we began to realize the enormity of what we had uncovered so we decided to stamp our mark on the system there and then.

It was truly to pay dividends, the potential of the system was immense and there seemed a possibility that it could link with Ma Wang a cave

discovered by China Caves Projects back in 1989. A rough geological appraisal gave it a potential of over 30k going right under the county boundary to Bama.

Four days of furious exploration and surveying provided 7k of new cave as we left lead after lead routinely following passage in the order of 60m wide and 40m high. Although mostly fossil in nature, the sheer volume and antiquity of the cave kept us spell bound. A south east trending passage just beyond a huge chamber christened Colossus revealed a crevasse-style hole where echoed the dull thunder of a river a long way beneath us.

On the final day of exploration patently short of rope Dave Williams abseiled approximately 100m and slowly spinning in the void with the rope knot beneath his feet could just penetrate the darkness enough to see a slow moving mass of water 30m below.

That was it we had to come back!

Back on the surface momentum of another kind was picking up. The Chinese local government and tourism realizing the potential of this cave,

the surrounding karst features and a pedigree exploration history by an experienced foreign team were beginning to be blinded by dollar signs in their eyes.

The consensus of feeling was that the area merited Geo-national Park status and this could herald a steady flow of funds from Beijing to what was essentially a poor rural area of China.

We bade our goodbyes to the Fengshan Chinese team and headed back to Guilin relishing the likelihood of a return trip paid for by our Chinese hosts.

The team on this occasion comprised myself, Bruce Bensley, Ernie Shield, Ruth Shield, Dave Williams and Dave Appeing.

We were sponsored by the YRC, the Mount Everest Foundation and the Ghar Parau Foundation.

Members of the third Yorkshire Ramblers' Club and China Caves Project expedition, were in the field from 22 February to 19 March. Tian'e is located in Guangxi in south-western China and just to the east of Leye, the site of the club's previous 2000 and 2002 expeditions.

It is also home to the Hongshui River's Longtan Gorge, where work has just begun on what will be one of the largest dams in China.

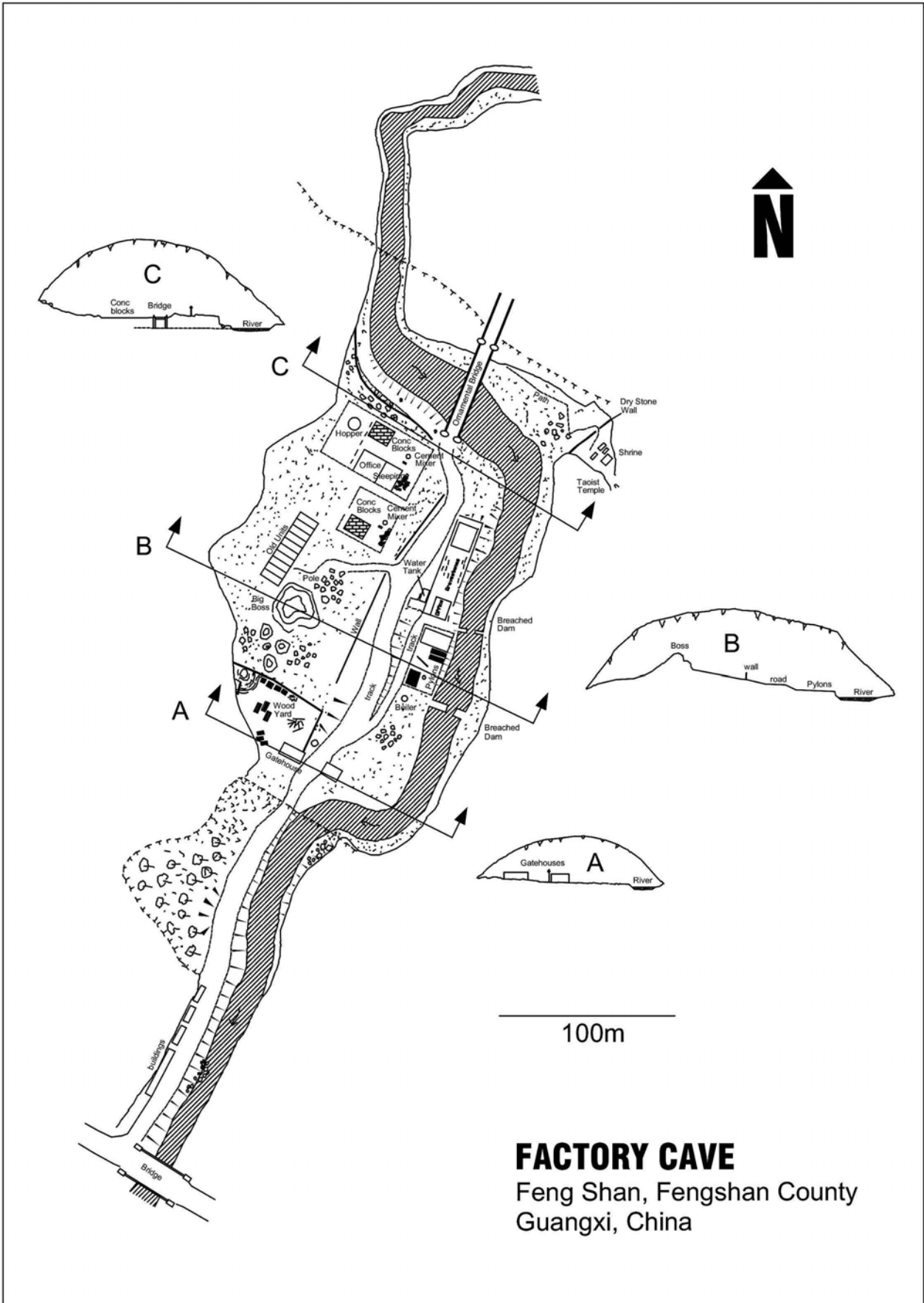
The team were joined by scientists from the Guilin Karst Institute, adventure cameraman Chen Lixin and several Chinese cavers.

Another team did indeed go out again late in 2004 and more will be reported in due course.

G.C.

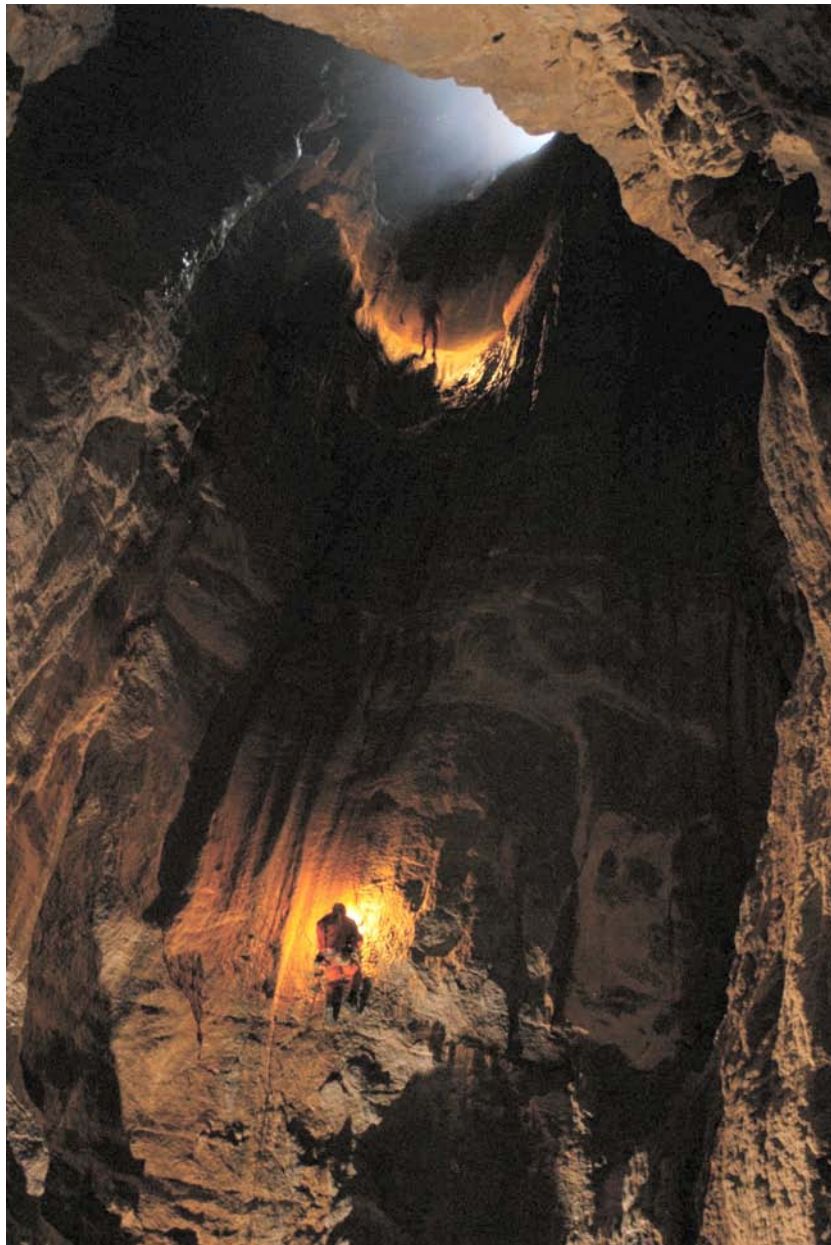
Editor







FACTORY CAVE - ENTRANCE AND GRAVESTONE MASONS AT WORK



JAING JIA TAO SHAFT



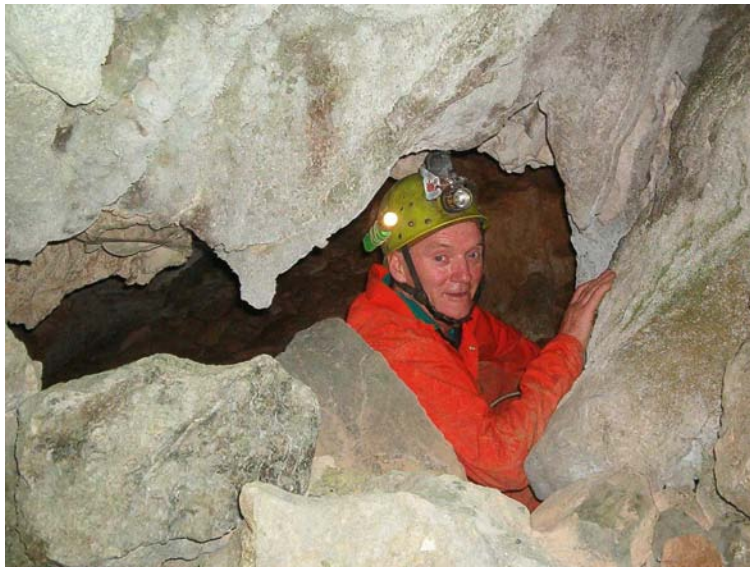


MAN FEI DONG ENTRANCE

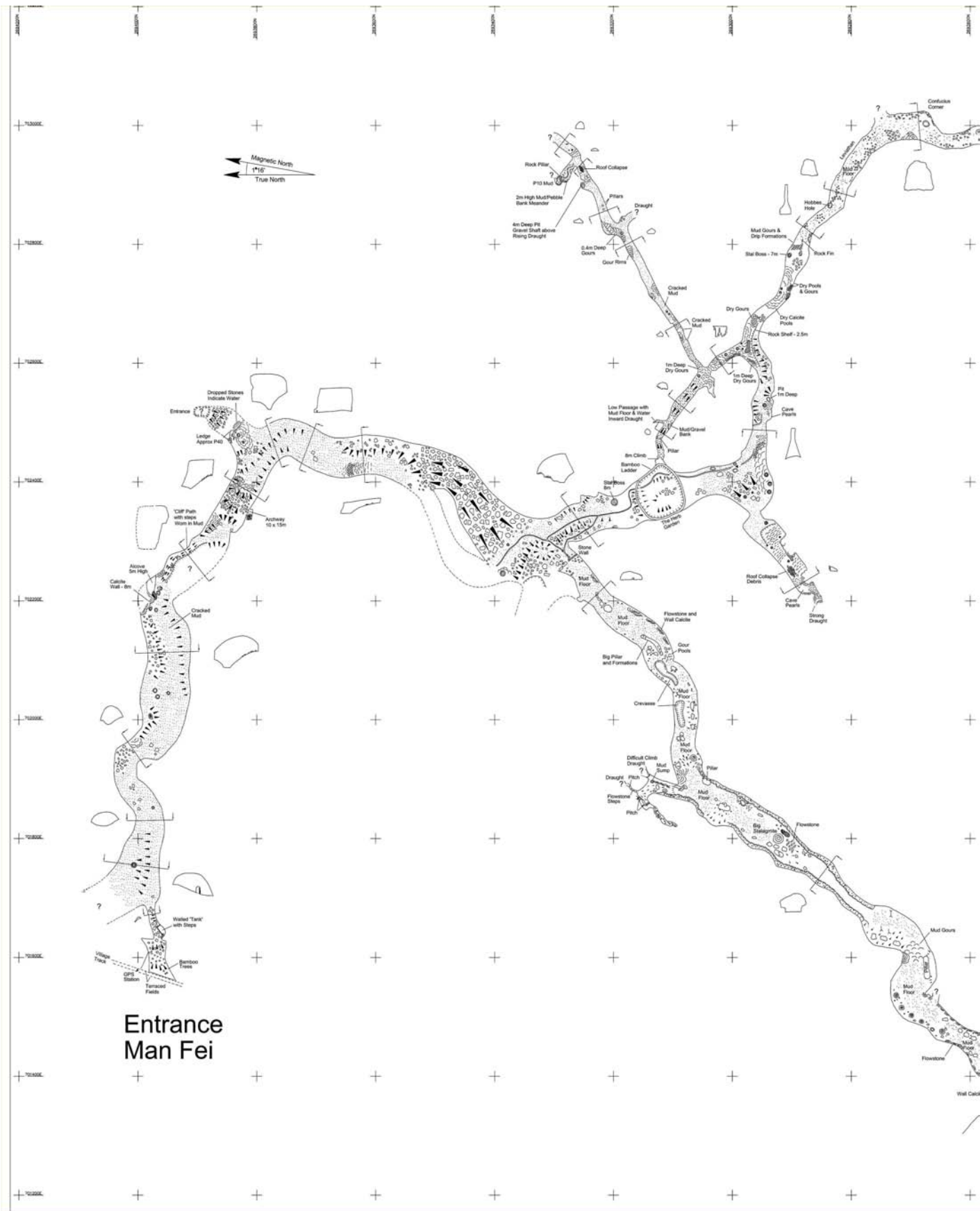


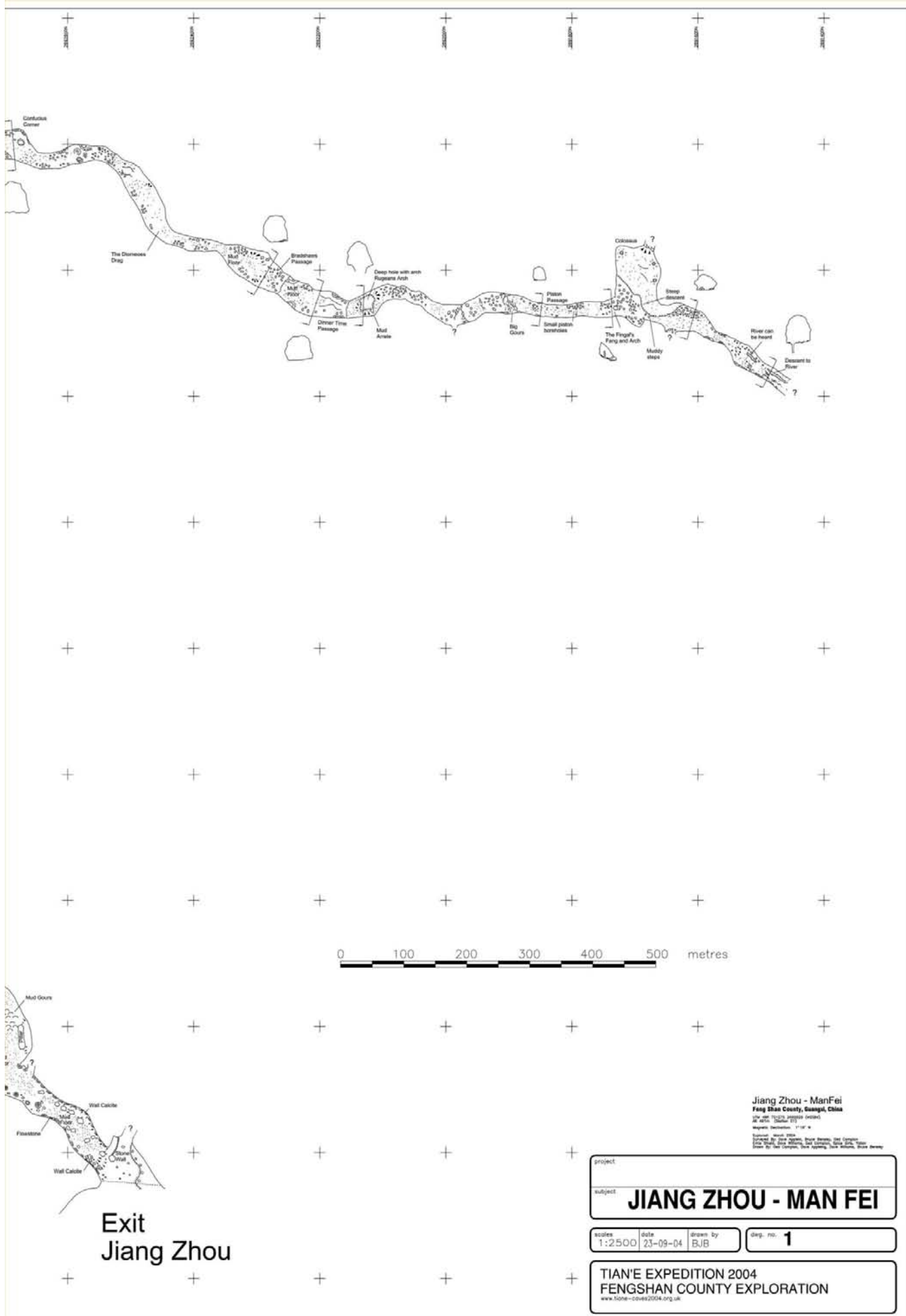
LAO PUNG TIANKENG

LAO PUNG TREE ABSEIL



ERNIE SHIELD





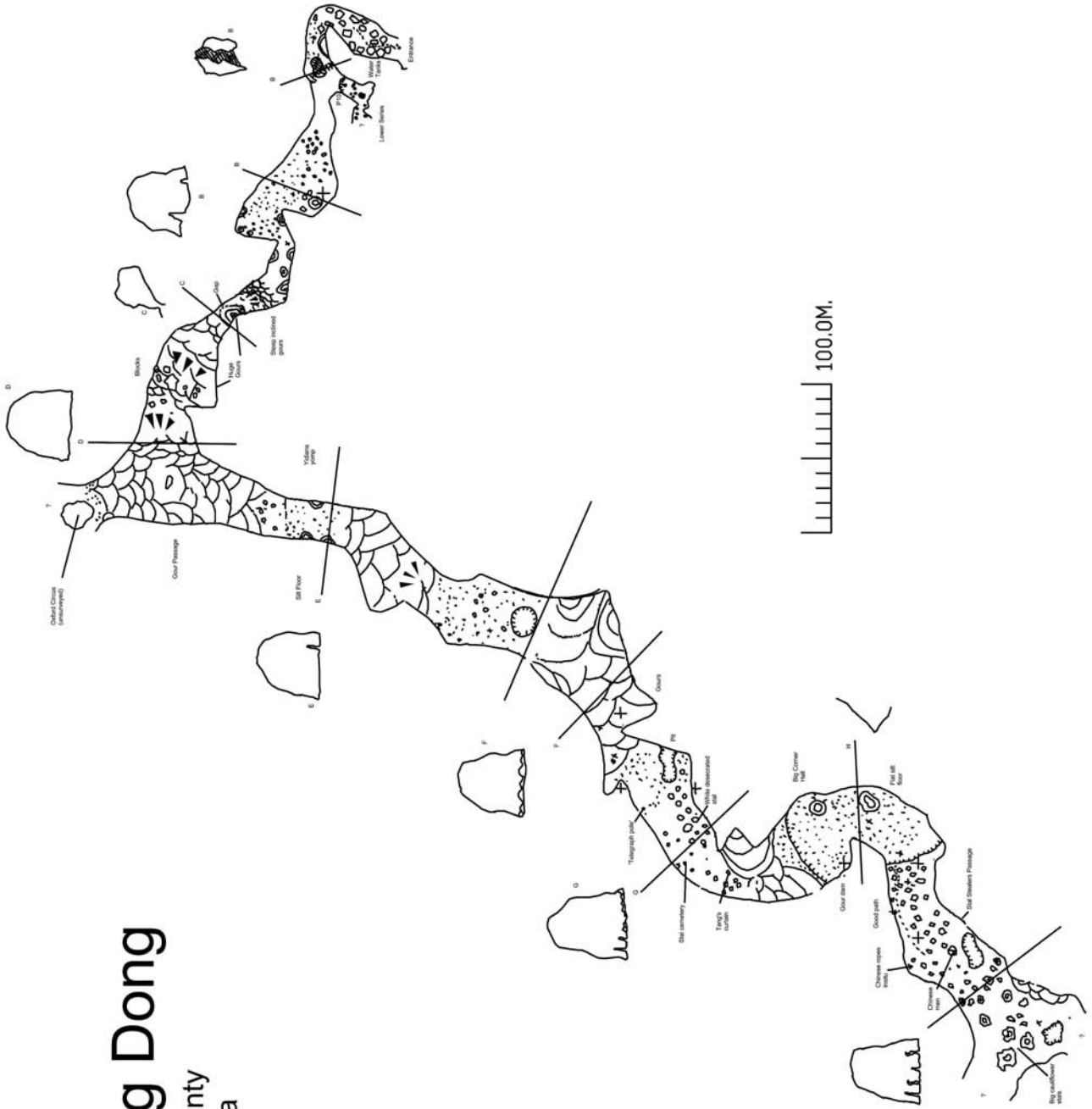
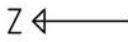
Exit  
Jiang Zhou

Jiang Zhou - ManFei  
Feng Shan County, Guanzhong, China  
1:2500 scale  
© 2004  
Map data: Ordnance Survey  
Projection: UTM  
Datum: WGS 84  
Units: Metres  
Scale: 1:2500  
Date: 23-09-04  
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TIAN'E EXPEDITION 2004 FENGSHAN COUNTY EXPLORATION <a href="http://www.tone-cove2004.org.uk">www.tone-cove2004.org.uk</a>			

# Yu Long Dong

Fengshan County  
Guangxi, China





# NATURAL HISTORY CORNER



## WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### CORNCRAKES

In summer 2003 I commented on the fate of this bird which had virtually vanished from most of Britain reporting that for many years it had been restricted to Northern Ireland. Cliff Large added to my incomplete information pointing out that in fact there were strong populations on several Scottish islands. I will not name and embarrass the major conservation group which was the source of this omission but I now learn from them that this is a great success story and that the population on the Argyll islands went up 46% last year and means they have doubled in only three years

The unfortunate downside is that the population in Northern Ireland seems to be struggling.

Figures published at the end of October show an improving situation generally with the overall number of wild birds of all species in Britain having increased by 7% in the last ten years. Particular successes, thanks in no small part due to conservation efforts, are the corncrake together with curlew buntings, bitterns and stone curlews

### BADGERS BACK IN BOTHER

Many of these harmless creatures have been brutally killed over the years in the name of so called sport, but recently hundreds have been slaughtered as part of official trials to stamp out TB in cattle, and a further campaign of eradication has just been announced.

Whilst they normally live in sandy soils in woodland they wander considerable distances for food and make easily identifiable paths. Their favourite food is earthworm but despite being powerful diggers they cannot find them

in grassland where the growth is over 4 inches high and as such they love being adjacent to pastureland and they abound near cattle. This has threatened them with eradication as many think they spread bovine T.B.

There are constant researches into this problem and the jury is still out but many conservation groups are convinced that there is no need to cull them. Badgers probably catch it from searching cattle droppings for food but whether they can pass the infection back to cattle is debatable.

Brock as it was known of old is far more widespread than most people realise but is rarely seen due to its shyness and nocturnal lifestyle. Many are however to be seen in some larger gardens on the edge of open country foraging in the lights of security systems. They have poor eyesight and unless they smell a threat or catch sudden movement they can be watched outdoors but are more usually observed through the window.

This sociable creature is actually the largest surviving member of the weasel family and lives in extended family groups. Litters of up to five cubs are born usually during February. The cubs are blind until they are five weeks old.

At around seven weeks when they start exploring the set, the cubs still have very poor eyesight and will not venture above ground till April or even May.

By autumn they are nearly the size of the adults and start piling on the food to build up their body weight in order to survive the winter.

Those of us enjoying woodland pursuits all know of sets just outside the villages we live in. There is even a family which has made a home in one of our local sewage farms.

Sets can be enormous works of engineering covering immense areas and have often been developed over many years. They excavate their sets where the digging is easy. Chalk, sand and limestone areas are all popular and they prefer to build on a slope, giving good drainage. They are not found in hill country where top soils are too thin for a good food supply or for digging their sets and they obviously avoid flood plains.

Some sets have been used by numerous generations over hundreds of years; most have a complex network of tunnels leading to the sleeping chambers which are lined with mosses, leaves and grass; they frequently have numerous entrances and I have seen one with 26.

There are thought to be over 300,000 of these creatures in Britain although many are killed on the roads each year and most people are more likely to see a dead one than one foraging. It is thought that between 10% and 15% a year meet this fate.

They are omnivorous and will eat almost anything that comes their way, including wasp larvae, nuts, fruit, mice, voles and carrion.

They have even been known to take hedgehogs but their favourites are earthworms, which they dig down like spaghetti. You very rarely see hedgehogs where badgers are found both because of the competition for food supplies and the risk of being attacked.

## **WELSH OSPRAYS?**

For the first known time a pair of Osprey nested in Wales this year. Unfortunately their nest and young were lost in gales but there are hopes the adults may return next year.

## **RED KITES**

Long a haven for red kites these birds are now spreading out from Wales and a chick was successfully raised in Hereford this year.

There are a number of colonies throughout England based on captive breeding programs and these birds are now linking up, with ringed adolescents turning up many miles from their birth locations.

A fresh release took place this year with 20 birds being released near Gateshead and the Derwent Valley will see releases over the next two years.

The bird was decimated in the past by deliberate killing by gun and poison by ignorant farmers and gamekeepers who thought these birds attacked their game birds and young animals. The kite is in fact almost entirely a carrion eater and does no harm to the ecosystem in the area. Invertebrates, small mammals and young birds on the nest are sometimes taken as live prey but carcasses make up most of their diet.

Unfortunately some are still being deliberately poisoned and whilst the identities of the culprits are often known lack of hard evidence makes prosecution difficult.

A third of all new releases in Scotland have ended up being poisoned and cases of poisoning have been found in the Peak District. A gamekeeper there has just been cautioned for the unsafe storage and non-approved use of a poison the same as one found in nearby carcasses but no proof of who was actually responsible could be found.

## **SCOTTISH SEA BIRDS**

Populations of many species of sea bird normally abundant on the isles off Scotland completely collapsed this year. Sea temperatures have chased away the plankton and with it the sandeels which make up the staple diet of many species. Not a single young arctic tern was recorded anywhere in the Northern Isles. In Shetland the 1000 or so arctic skuas failed to raise any young and of 7000 pairs of great skuas only a handful of chicks survived.

## SEEN ANY NICE BIRDS LATELY?

In 2003 I had a new species of bird visit my garden. Whilst a lot of birds can be seen when we are quietly going about the outskirts of the village, a surprising number can be seen in our own gardens. I have been keeping track of them for several years but this was the first additional species for a considerable time.

Gardens can be planted to encourage wildlife but even when just set out for our own delight they will attract all sorts of creatures.

If you do a comprehensive survey you will be surprised at what you share your world with not far from your own back door.

That year I had a visit from a nuthatch which brings the species I have seen in or above my garden to at least 43.

I have also seen blackbird, black cap, bull finch, buzzard, chaffinch, green finch, gold finch, collared and turtle doves, crow, goldcrest, dunnock, sparrow hawk, several species of gull, heron, kestrel, little owl, house martin, swallow, swift, magpie, redwing, red legged partridge, robin, greater spotted and green woodpeckers, siskin, house sparrow, starling, missal and song thrush, pied wagtail, wren, wood pigeon, tree creeper and blue, coal, great and long tailed tits, mallard and swan.

My garden is largish by modern standards but my entire plot is only a third of an acre and in a suburban setting only three miles from the centre of Leicester.

The nearest open country is about a mile away. I do however have a small pond and a bog garden, several mature trees of various species and a fairly dense shrubbery affording protection to wild life.

The nuthatch may well have reflected that difficult summer for wildlife.

The parched, hard ground was disastrous for invertebrates and the lack of moisture had decimated insect populations.

Some trees did not recover from that unusual lack of water and crops of fruit, nuts and berries were poor. All species of bird and mammal relying on these food sources were struggling and woodland birds were searching our gardens in some desperation.

Last year was a complete contrast. After a very pleasant early summer we had torrential rains in July and August and some species of tree were under threat from waterlogging.

Nuts, berries and soft fruits were in abundance.

I have also seen unusual insects in my garden some of which I have been able to identify and many species of moth or butterfly.

To date I have logged several different species of ladybird, six spot burnet, comma, common blue, red admiral, brimstone, gatekeeper, green veined white, large white, meadow brown, orange tip, painted lady, peacock, speckled wood, small heath, wall, small tortoiseshell, small white and herald.

I have smooth newts, frogs, toads, grey squirrels, several species of darter, damselfly and dragonfly, centipede, millipede, numerous beetles including stag and devils coach horse and countless other flying insects perhaps the most notable of which were snake flies.

I regularly have foxes and the occasional hedgehog and have had bats catching insects above my ponds but do not know how to identify a specific species.

We all love wandering off into the wild places but our own gardens are far more wild than many people appreciate.

## UNWANTED IMMIGRANTS

We are unfortunately seeing another wave of unwanted immigrants. As our climate warms we are becoming more welcoming to species drifting north from Europe.

We now have early sightings of a large and voracious ladybird. This attractive creature was once imported into the USA as a natural insecticide but it decimated other species of beneficial insects.

The 'Harlequin' is very adaptable and will compete with the 40 or so native species of ladybird and deprive them of their food sources. Indeed when the incomer runs out of aphids it will turn to its cousins for a meal.

They spoil soft fruits, can bite humans and exude foul liquid which stains clothing and can cause allergic reactions. Unfortunately it is near impossible for a lay person to tell them apart unless spotted side by side.

The other unwelcome visitor is a pest that is attacking conker trees. Again spreading our way from Europe the Miner Moth digs into the leaves and eats them from within and can severely stunt the growth of infected trees.

Another threat to native UK species has been flagged up. Escapees from ornamental ponds are out-competing native fish and putting them at extreme risk. The environment agency points out that the goldfish competes with and interbreeds with our native carp which may vanish as a species. Another species of carp, the Topmouth gudgeon, competes directly with roach and rudd and as it matures more quickly may well drive their numbers down. Yet another threat comes from Black Bullheads which not only compete with indigenous species but as they grows start to eat the young of our native stock.

The Common White Sucker has also been found in the Thames and its tributaries and this competes directly with barbell and chubb in their niche.

## IMMIGRANTS ATTACKED

The bustards released on Salisbury plain after being imported from Russia seem quite at home.

Unfortunately efforts to teach them to fear predators and man whilst very young (before being shipped) do not seem to have been very effective as two birds have already been found with their heads chewed off.

Thought to be the work of foxes it would seem it was done for sport as there had been no effort to eat the carcasses.

## OH SOD

If I were to say SOD when out in the woodland hopefully I would either be swearing or describing the grassy turf beneath my feet. Unfortunately it is possible that I might be referring to a potential major threat to our woodland.

I refer to a disease which is prevalent in many other parts of the world. It hit North America in the fairly recent past and wiped out 80% of one species of Oak. It is now starting to appear in trees here in Britain.

The majestic Oak, virtually a national emblem for Great Britain could be in serious trouble. They currently number about 200 million but for how long.

The rhododendron is badly effected which on the face of it should be no bad thing as this imported 'weed' suppresses other wildlife. Unfortunately it has spread into a number of mature trees including a Holm oak.

It is thought that imported varieties and species in garden centres are most threatened but if it starts hitting native species we could have another crisis like Dutch elm on our hands.



Commonly known in the States as Sudden Oak Death, it is not restricted to oak and beeches have also been hit. The evergreen species of oak are most at risk.

It has been found in hundreds of sites, mostly nurseries and garden centres, and is thought to have been imported from the continent in the soil the plants are in but it has hopefully been successfully eradicated.

Disease has now been found in native oak trees in Cornwall, raising fears for Britain's native oaks and other indigenous trees which may turn out to be susceptible to this fungal disease.

However it now appears that this is a similar but unrelated disease so far thought to be unique to Britain and more aggressive and much faster spreading than SOD. Rhododendron is the main host and source of infection and succumbs in weeks rather than months.

This poses a serious threat and the area where they have been found has been quarantined.

The disease appears related to one found in tropical rubber plantations and may thrive in Cornwall for climatic reasons.

## **BOOM BOOM**

The bittern, one of Europe's most threatened birds, is becoming something of a British success story. During the sixties and seventies when I spent many weeks cruising on the Norfolk Broads I sometimes heard the distinctive booming noise of this rare and shy member of the heron family which lives almost entirely in reed-beds. It has since suffered greatly from habitat loss and disturbance and had become almost extinct in the area.

It was thought in 1999 that there were only 11 males left alive throughout Britain and a conservation campaign was launched which has created a viable population at the RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss in Lancashire.

A new reserve created on the Humber by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust saw its first successful breeding pair for over 20 years in 2002.

A recent report now claims that from its desperate base of only 11 breeding males numbers have now increased to at least 55.

EU money is being invested in 19 new potential sites for these birds and many existing reed beds are being cleaned up and the prospects for this very rare bird are improving.

Even the Wetland Centre in West London has had a visit. This site has been created from a redundant reservoir and has an area of about 100 acres and is the site of releases of captive bred water voles.

Early January three years ago when the weather on the continent was appalling three bitterns were found at this site and were presumed to be refugees from the continent.

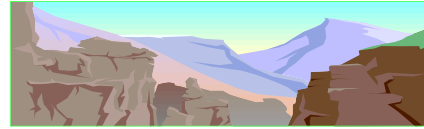
This extremely rare bird is making a slow recovery in the more remote areas of the country but to find some so near to populous areas was unheard of.

## **NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT**

Record numbers of grouse were counted on numerous moors this year. It was estimated that in the Pennines and North Yorkshire this pumped an extra £3 billion into the local economies with extra shooting days. Grouse have been in some difficulties and the uplands would be a far poorer place without them. They need assistance from man both in the form of mineral drops and burning off to create new growth but disease and weather conditions were causing many shoots to be abandoned.

It is to be hoped that shooting is not next in line for the class-hatred based legislation coming out of London. Long may the grouse continue to laugh at us as we struggle up the hills.

# CHIPPINGS



## PHOTOGRAPHY

You will I hope welcome the addition of a few colour pages to the bulletin. Provided we have photographs of sufficiently good quality to justify the additional cost this will now be a regular feature of your bulletin.

There is no shortage of photographic talent within the club as demonstrated by this years competition on display at the AGM and Dinner and many members get into parts of the world where other members cannot reach.

If you have any photographs you feel worthy of display to your fellow members please let me have them. I would prefer them in electronic form but if you do not have this facility they can be posted to me and I can scan them in at this end and return them to you. They do not need to be current.

The best pictures in this years competition ( judged by our principal guest) were;

Mountaineering (colour) - Spire at Dawn, Bear Creek, Sierra Nevada by Tim Josephy

Mountaineering (b & w) - Weissmies by Albert Chapman

Potholing - Tiger Cave, Leye, China by John Whalley

Character (colour) - "Don't Worry Gov., Lowstern is in Safe Hands" by David Smith

Character (b & w) - An Old Sherpa Woman by George Spencely

## COUNTRYSIDE CONFLICT

I have recently made a submission to the government to comment on the proposed legislation and the present situation with regard to motorised vehicles using largely inappropriate, but at present often legal, rights of way.

The Minister responsible has announced that he hopes to introduce changes to remedy many of the problems and I would like to feel he has been taking my advice but I gather I was only one of 15,000 such submissions.

Cars and motor bikes have legal rights to use many bye-ways which do not have suitable surfaces to accommodate their passage but I would contend that many such rights were created before such vehicles were even conceived and the term 'open to all traffic' should be interpreted as 'open to all existing forms of traffic at the time of the enabling legislation'.

I am also worried that there are numerous other routes, being increasingly used by inappropriate vehicles, some of which are rights of way such as green lanes, footpaths or bridleways but many of which routes are not recorded at all.

Unsurfaced routes cannot survive use by motor vehicles which usually destroy the surface reducing such routes to ever widening muddy tracts and create deep ruts making them extremely difficult and unpleasant for other users and, when frozen during winter, downright dangerous. When not contained by walls or fences these routes get wider and wider as people try to avoid the central quagmire.

As a sport, responsible ramblers avoid disturbance as far as possible to the

countryside including its wildlife and other users but this cannot be said of the people going into the countryside to 'enjoy' their motorised 'sport'

They intimidate other users of the routes. They cause noisy disturbance to the wildlife, destroy habitats and pollute the fresh air other people have gone into the countryside to enjoy.

Things can however be taken to the other extreme. Whilst not a cyclist myself I have many friends who do cycle but at the risk of upsetting them I do wish to register considerable disquiet about the new Sustrans routes.

They do seem to me to be completely over engineered. Many areas are now dissected by metalled or gravelled cycle ways completely out of keeping with the wilderness areas they go through. They are wider than necessary and a visual intrusion and often replace footpaths meaning runners and walkers face stretches of unforgiving firmness where previously there was some give in the ground.

10,000 miles of such routes are supposedly going in and many are on ancient footpaths and green lanes which have remained unchanged for hundreds of years.

Even worse many of these routes have hideous gates to prevent motor cycles and cars from using them and have direction signs and other road furniture further despoiling the countryside.

## A LASTING TRADITION

It is perhaps worth noting that last year's annual dinner was the hundredth anniversary of our first such dinner.

The first Club Dinner was held at the Metropole in Leeds on February 14th 1903 with W.C. Slingsby in the Chair. About 50 members and friends attended and it was hoped it would be the start of a new tradition in the club.

## IN LOVING PRAISE

Members may enjoy reading the following description of Clapham taken from a book by Reginald Farrer published in 1909 and reviewed in our journal of that year.

"Now Clapham village claims to be the prettiest in England; and I will honestly confess that I have never yet seen another to challenge that claim, which, indeed, has even received a sort of canonisation in the pages of the Strand Magazine, in which Clapham was recorded as standing among the six prettiest in England - a recognition, partial though it be, by which the villagers were properly uplifted. Close under the shelter of the northern hills, all wooded, it lies.



Straight overhead, out of sight, rolling up from tier upon tier of those lower hills, rises the great tutelary mountain. And down through the very middle of the village, embowered in hawthorns and Penzance briars and other such loveliness, flows the Beck, a rippling stream now, placid and peaceful, after its stormy career above.



For the Beck emerges high on the flank of Ingleborough, plunges peevishly, like Arethusa, into the unplumbed darkness of Gaping Ghyll Hole, in mid-moor; like Arethusa emerges again at the mouth of the second Ingleborough Cave, about a mile or more lower, in the deep wooded, shady gorge, which is the beginning of the Ingleborough woods;



and so, in cataract after cataract, and waterfall after waterfall, comes brawling down through the Ingleborough woods themselves - a creamy terror in spate, and a lovely mossy rippling in drought, until it loses itself in the quiet black waters of the Ingleborough Lake.

From these, at last, it plunges finally towards the valley in three wild falls;



and so, calm for ever, rolls broad and serene through Clapham village, under huge old spreading sycamores, and so on into the valley below, until its meanderings join another beck, where the shores are yellow with Mimulus; and the combination takes the name of Wenning, so to continue, under shaw and coppice, full of Trollius, until it joins the Lune, and so, like any

weariest river, flows somewhere safe to sea on the hideous mud-flats that stretch out from Lancaster into Morecambe Bay."

Accompanying pictures - Roy Denney

## OF MYTHS AND MEMORIES

A little bit of Yorkshire history was lost this autumn. Bill Foggitt died at the ripe old age of 91.

Fourth of a line of Foggitts who had kept meticulous records of the weather in Thirsk since 1830, Bill often put the weather men to shame with his rustic predictions.

Based on his family records and his knowledge and monitoring of natural phenomenon and the behaviour of plants and creatures his forecasts were published and broadcast over many years.

This local character featured regularly on television and in national newspapers and had gained international recognition.

Although briefly married in the forties he leaves no children so presumably this unique record will be no more.

## MOUNTAIN PONIES

Endangered breeds of ponies which grace some uplands where we like to wander, may have an injection of support following a recent report.

The research was funded by the DEFRA and the Brecon Beacons National Park and pointed out that ponies such as the Fell pony and the Welsh Mountain pony graze in a fashion which has an important role in maintaining the range of suitable habitat for a number of birds, insects and plants. It helps to create better conditions for animals and flowers on moors, bogs and grasslands.

There are respectively only about 500 and 700 breeding mares left and it has been suggested that breeders should be offered incentives to help protect the breeds.

"Feral and semi-feral ponies face a significant risk of extinction within their natural upland environments during the next decade.

Encouraging ponies to live in upland areas could enhance bio-diversity, save important genetic stock, help preserve changing landscapes and ensure the survival of a significant cultural heritage."

Unfortunately, new legislation coming into force next year may make this irrelevant. Under new EU rules all horse have to have an equine passport to show their medical history.

It is to prevent diseased horses entering the food chain but the end result is that whoever technically owns these horses has to cough up £20 for a passport.

As the feral ponies have no commercial value it is likely that landowners will get rid of them rather than meet such bills.

England has passed laws excluding Dartmoor and New Forest ponies and hopefully the Welsh assembly can be persuaded to do likewise to protect these animals.

## **CORKY'S POT BREAK THROUGH**

Following up on the report in the last bulletin, the 40 ft pitch reached after the huge efforts by the B. P. C. team over many weeks of hard work, which was tight at the top and had stopped progress, was pushed a little further at the top and found to go.

Gallant efforts culminated in a connection to Gaping Gill via a 110ft pitch, which descends a huge shaft landing on the boulder slope in Mud Hall towards Avalanche Inlet.

LOCATION - NGR (SD 75266 72675) The entrance lies roughly 300 metres from Gaping Gill main shaft and is clearly marked "Corkys" at the top of the steel tube lining the entrance shaft and has an aluminium ladder. It should not be confused with the BPC previous discovery, "Henslers Pot" which is nearby and similar, but has an iron ladder.

Having finished off Corky's work began on a shakehole 50m away and with the to be expected tenacity of the BPC digging team there is now a 7m deep shored shaft down to a working face where progress is being made. Looks like another war of attrition... but the BPC do have a habit of success nowadays.

Not to be out done the Craven Pothole Club are now working in a shakehole not too far away.

Mike Hartland

Dave Haigh of the Bradford kindly gives this description of the descent:

It is necessary to turn round before the first pot at the end of the short entrance crawl and keep going backwards down another two pots (all 1 to 1.5m deep) and continue backwards along the 9m long crawl until you arrive at the top of Anniversary Pitch (5m).

Picnic Pitch (4m ladder) follows immediately and after a short climb, Arnold Pitch (named to honour Arnold Patchett of both YRC and BPC), requires a 13m ladder and then the way on is right (facing the ladder) to the head of Prelim Pitch (10m ladder) into a chamber.

Continue along Nemisis Crawl, flat out on hands and knees for 25m to the head of Alleyway Pitch (5m ladder) into a well decorated chamber.

Go flat out for 10m along Elephant' Crawl until reaching Limbo Passage formed on a washed out shale band. This is 2m wide, 10m long and 1.8m high and beautifully decorated with long straw

stals. Care!! Crawl slowly and carefully along the floor to avoid damaging the formations.

At the end is Chemo Tim Pitch (9m ladder or SRT) into the impressive Fred's Breakdown Chamber, which is well decorated and boulder floored. A very loose (extreme care!!) boulder slope leads to the head of Vindication Pitch (40m SRT) - which descends into East Passage, close to Mud Hall in Gaping Gill. All the pitches are bolted. A life line is recommended on Prelim Pitch and Chemo Tim Pitch, and maybe Arnold's Pitch (although it is free climbable).

## **ON FOOT IN CROATIA**

In the last bulletin I extolled to virtues of Croatia following a recent trip and if any members are especially interested, a new book has just been published 'Walking in Croatia' which provides information on all levels of activity.

(ISBN 1 85284 406 X Cicerone £12)

## **ACCESS TO MORE COUNTRYSIDE**

After about a century of legislation, mass trespasses and countless rallies along the way this autumn saw the new right of access contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act come into force across the South East and Lower North West areas where people were able to celebrate by walking for the first time (legally or without specific permission) onto some of the open countryside previously out of bounds.

The national launch was at Derbyshire Bridge in the Peak District National Park where accessible land doubled in area overnight. DEFRA and the Countryside Agency also held a celebratory event in the Forest of Bowland and I know of members who took advantage of new opportunities that day.

Some of the new access land is only new in the sense of being protected by statute where informal or 'blind eye' access already existed but many previously forbidden areas are being opened up.

The Yorkshire dales is even more dramatically effected and members might find interesting the following report by Paul Evans of English Nature about the Ingleborough National Nature Reserve.

"By the beginning of next year, over 65% of the Yorkshire Dales National Park will be designated open country (a huge increase from the current 3%) and approximately 900 ha (90%) of the National Nature Reserve is included.

However, wildlife is susceptible to disturbance and the farmers who manage the land have livelihoods to maintain, so walkers need to be aware of the damage they can cause and be responsible for their actions.

We are working in partnership with the National Park to ensure that responsible visitors can explore this beautiful part of the world without causing undue damage or disruption.

Over the last two years we have made the NNR a more enjoyable but safe place to visit.

Visitors will find information boards at all major access points to the reserve and maps and safety information help safe navigation around the land.

Many people may not wish to explore the wilder areas of the Ingleborough NNR, but those who want to leave the footpaths are asked to respect the countryside and show consideration for, and cause minimal disturbance to, both the wildlife and the land management operations which support it. In particular we are asking people to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds, like lapwing and skylark, by keeping dogs on leads throughout the nesting period.

We have also been working to increase people's experience of the NNR's wildlife and geology by creating self-guided circular trails. Wherever possible we would like people to visit by train; what better way to arrive than a trip on the famous Settle-Carlisle railway?

The wild feel of the area is something we all enjoy: we have tried not to turn it into a country park, but we have used limited waymarking, along with free walks leaflets, to help people learn about the local environment.

Parts of these trails take people to previously unexplored areas such as the wild South House Moor, with its ungrazed moorland habitats, and the beautiful limestone grasslands of High Brae.

The summer season has seen thousands of holidaymakers flocking to the unique scenery and open vistas of the Yorkshire Dales.

Many head for key attractions such as the Three Peaks, where walkers navigate the numerous footpaths and bridleways and the fittest attempt all of the Three Peaks. Ingleborough NNR is the central peak and we have over 100,000 visitors through the NNR annually.

Many of our visitors have told us they found these walks enjoyable and stimulating. We have a few problems to iron out, such as lack of waymarking in difficult sections, and unfortunately we are suffering from vandalism in one area. However the walks seem a huge success overall - over 10,000 leaflets have already disappeared from tourist information centres and local B&Bs.

Most visitors seem to like information that makes their time here more enjoyable and our simple leaflets seem to work well. Next year we hope to add to these with a series of 'I-spy' booklet for children.

We have kept the construction of footpath infrastructure to the bare minimum required, but on wetter sections of the self-guided trails

we have recently set about carrying out works to the walking surfaces.

On 3 August we went high-tech. A helicopter was hired to fly reclaimed flagstones onto the reserve. A dry day, but threatening thunderstorms, the helicopter appeared around the northern flanks of Ingleborough. With great precision, over 9,000 kg of stone was delivered in less than minutes with no damage to the delicate peatland.

The hard work of manhandling the flagstones into position was greatly eased by a group of Duke of Edinburgh volunteers who laboured for two days - a job well done and a footpath surface fit to last for generations".

## POOR PUSSY

Whilst on your travels in remote parts of Scotland you may have been extremely lucky and caught sight of a wildcat. The chances of doing so again are getting ever slimmer as there are concerns about the surviving populations.

Even its very existence is not an established fact in that whilst it is accepted that somewhere between one and four thousand creatures survive in the remoter highlands whether these are truly the same creature that existed pre Roman times is debatable.

The Romans brought the domesticated cat with them and there has inevitably been some cross breeding since then.

We normally class wild cats as those the same as early museum examples but these specimens date from comparatively recent times.

It is thought that there is still a population of 'originals, possibly as few as 400 strong but they are under threat as a loophole in the Wildlife and Countryside Act allows gamekeepers to shoot feral cats and certainly wild cat hybrids are being killed and possibly pristine examples.

## SKYE - THE GREATER TRAVERSE

Spring Bank holiday 2005  
Adrian Bridge.

There's a plan to make a third (and possibly final for me) attempt to complete this fine round in one go.

Already we have five intending to come along and would welcome any one with the desire to knock it off - or just to join in for the fun of being there.

As before, I propose starting from Glen Brittle and at the end, falling into a pre placed camp at the southern end of Blaven, walking back to Glen Brittle the following day.

The logistics of it are well honed now; just requires good weather and a certain (rather large) degree of oomph.

There will be a preparation walk of the Welsh 3000s, on a Saturday around the end of April.

Anyone with an interest, please make contact - once done, great memories will remain and one can truly say ... there's one thing less to do in life!

## SYDNEY WATERFALL

Sidney Waterfall's daughter has provided the following information which I am sure will be of interest to several of our members.

"Sidney Waterfall and his brother Arnold spent much of their youth 'gardening' and putting up many routes on Crookrise Crag and several other gritstone outcrops in the Skipton area.

A remarkable all-round man, he was a keen bird watcher, a philatelist particularly interested in stamps with maps on them and was a keen local historian. Apart from this he was an inspiration to several young men interested in rock climbing and potholing.



His children, Sonia, John and Fran have had placed an appropriate seat overlooking Embsay reservoir and overlooked by Embsay Crag and Crookrise.

If you are in the area, find the seat and rest a while, watching for Sidney's beloved birds circling and swooping over the still waters"

## STOP PRESS - MORE ON CARABINERS

Work this one out!

Pete Holden has found a reference to karabiners in 'In the High Mountains' Emil Zsigmondy 1899 English ed.P196 - on descending the Kleine Zinne.

" --We secured the rope to the rocks by making a double noose out of cord, which we laid round a rock spike. Through the noose we laid the end of the rope, linked to a karabiner. A long cord was tied to the karabiner, then let down to our companions.

They pulled on the cord and the karabiner followed. This was done to drag the rope down behind us. Otherwise you have to double the whole length of the rope round a rock spike, then free it from below."

Not a very good translation, but the technique can be understood.

I hope the cord was pulled down 'after' the abseil!

WAL



## **GREEN (AND PLEASANT?) LAND**

Over recent months I have been taking a particular interest in matters relating to Greenland having expressed a possible interest in going there with the club.

A friend went out in early 2004 and was contemplating going back with us but in the end the cost was more than we could justify. He had been on the main 'island' albeit in a remote wilderness and had given us some advice which I had passed on when the trip was still on the agenda. He had however used a commercial agency and paid only half of what we were contemplating for our ambitions.

One item on Greenland which caught my eye which members may find of interest is that a group of climbers in Eastern Greenland had submitted a previously unclimbed peak of 2782 metres and had decided to call it Mount Rothman.

Benny Rothman had of course recently died and his obituaries had reminded them of what all climbers owed to him and his colleagues who's activities including the mass trespass of Kinder in 1932, eventually contributed to the creation of the national parks we all now enjoy.

## **FOREST ACCESS**

In the last set of chippings I reported that the Forestry Commission had announced an intention to create formal access to all their freehold lands.

More information has now been released and last September, just days after the launch of freedom to roam in open country, a new legal right of access came into force in three of their areas of woodland, namely Delamere near Chester and Kingswood and Clowes Wood in Kent.

This does not unfortunately include land leased to the Forestry Commission for management

but they are to use their influence to try to get these land owners to take similar steps.

The actual freedom to roam legislation (CRoW Act) does not cover forests but does permit such areas to be specially dedicated for access voluntarily and it is hoped that many woodland owners will use this device to follow both the Government's and Forestry Commission's lead on access.

Over the next two years about 450,000 acres of woods in England, and about 250,000 in Wales will gain a legal right of access in this way in perpetuity.

Dedication of Forestry Commission lands will probably be a slow job as they have to consult others who have a legal interest in, or responsibility for the land, such as English Nature (where there are SSSIs - sites of special scientific interest) or English Heritage (where there are scheduled ancient monuments)

There is also the problem of tenants with such as shooting rights.

They are however hopeful to have completed the exercise by the end of 2006.

## **NIGEL HAWKINS**

"I greatly enjoyed being with you for your annual dinner and it gave me a great opportunity to learn a great deal more about the Yorkshire Ramblers Club.

I was very impressed by the range of activities right across the world and the terrific enthusiasm of your members, and also by their interest in all aspects of conserving our priceless wild places both here at home and overseas.

It was a most enjoyable evening.

All Best Wishes"

Nigel Hawkins

# YOUR NEW PRESIDENT

Earlier this year members were invited to express their views on the present position of the club and to comment on the future policy. It would not be possible to respond to all of the suggestions as some of them were diametrically opposed. However, the fifty members who responded gave plenty of leads as to where we should be aiming if we were to succeed in securing the future of the YRC and moving with the times.

The two main tasks facing me are to attract sufficient new young members and to provide meets that will prove attractive both to them and you, our existing members.

One way of attracting active members is to support the idea of the proposed "exploration group". With a small increase in younger members, keen to develop rock climbing and potholing skills which are now well beyond the level of most of us, we could see a gradual increase in the standards set by the club.

The meets list for next year is a mixture of old favourites such as *Glen Etive*, *Glan Dena* and the *Harry Spilsbury Joint Meet*, together with more ambitious ones in *Lapland*, the *Dolomites* and *Ladakh*.

These three overseas meets, starting with *Spring in Lapland*, are suitable for a range of activities with the possibility of an unclimbed peak in the Himalaya to alpine flower photography in the *Dolomites*. Together with serious rock climbing and the attractive *Via Ferrata* the *Dolomites* should have something for all of us.

An early meet is at *Lowstern* where I would hope to see some of our active potholers and some of less active more mature members if not together on the same rope, then at least in the same area, and ending the day with a meal together.

However much we may not like to be reminded of it, the fact is that our best attended meets are the *Annual Dinner* and the *Christmas meet*, both social occasions.

A number of you asked for more mixed meets, which as long as mixed meets do not replace any of our existing meets, but are extras, should be acceptable to the members. The *alpine meet* continues to be open.

A midweek meet at *RLH, Langdale* and a meet at *Lowstern* to celebrate fifty years membership of a number of our members will be offered. Members who like a challenge will take advantage of the long bike ride from *Low Hall Garth* to *Lowstern*, which starts from the cottage in a westerly direction over *Wrynose*.

Rock climbers are catered for in *North Wales* and *Glen Coe*.

The *Tuesday* group of members meet regularly at *Lowstern* and other convenient locations for a day out. We are all welcome to join them.

*Lowstern* has been used this year by a number of you for get togethers with groups of friends and as a venue for wedding anniversary and birthday celebrations. With such comfortable accommodation offering a wonderful view of the *Dales* why not take your family there for a few days? It is our cottage and we should use it more.

Members visiting *Low Hall Garth* recently will, no doubt, appreciate the improvements carried out by the warden and his team of helpers. With the lease up for renewal in 2005 we hope to see a number of major developments together with more use from our own members.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a *Happy New Year* with many enjoyable days on the hills.

Ken Aldred

# CLUB PROCEEDINGS

## 2003

### The meets were

10-12 Jan	Lowstern
31-2 Feb	Ogwen N Wales
20-23 Feb	Tulloch
7-9 March	Lowstern
11-13 April	Rhinogs N Wales
25-27 April	Nidderdale
6-20 May	Crete
10-17 May	Ardgour
23-31 May	Ireland
6-8 June	Lowstern
20-22 June	SW Scotland
1-10 Aug	Randa Switzerland
5-7 Sept	Derbyshire / Staffs.
19-21 Sept	RLH Langdale
3-5 Oct	Cwm Cywarch
24-26 Oct	Swaledale
15-16 Nov	Whoop Hall
12-14 Dec	Blencathra

### Year 2003

For our first meet the Club were at our splendid base at Lowstern catered ably by Frank Platt and Alan Wood. At the end of the month we were in North Wales at Caseg Fraith, Ogwen. Ice axes were in use, gullies were climbed, mountains were topped and on the Sunday waterproofs were tested.

The winter Scottish meet saw the YRC on the summit of Creag Meagaidh in its white mantle and in mist. It was summated unlike our last visit when the mist defeated us. This time a GPS located the cairn with ease. The old railway station Bunkhouse provided us with excellent accommodation.

In March we were back caving from Lowstern.

Later in the month David Hick did the honours at LHG, it was unusually, only supported by 14 members. Our local hills were all ascended.

We returned again to Wales, this time to the remote Rhinogs regions for a camping meet.

A repeat visit to Nidderdale for the Ladies Weekend in April was followed by an open meet to Crete.

An experiment basing a meet in a chalet at Strontium proved to be a great success for a party of seven. Cost wise it was less expensive than many bunkhouses and certainly more comfortable. Sadly recent Spring Holiday meets do not compare in numbers with the fifties and sixties when up to forty members might turn up.

A nostalgic return to Ireland at the end of May for potholing was made organized by Tony Penny in the Burren. It seems a long time since the glory days when the YRC opened up so many potholes in Ireland.

June saw the third Long Cycle Ride from Lowstern, which was originally a substitute for the long walk in the Foot & mouth year and has now become a fixture.

Iain Gilmour organised a successful and enjoyable working party at LHG and then the resourceful Ian Crowther devised another two day 'Long Walk' in Southern Scotland.

It was hoped to regenerate the Alps meets in August at Randa in the Pennine Alps, the low attendance was very disappointing. Peter Chadwick however did accomplish several ambitions climbing the Ober Gabelhorn. Zinal Rothorn and the Matterhorn.

Back at Lowstern, warden Richard Kirby masterminded a refurbishing of the hut in late August.

Back on the hills in September with a meet around the Derbyshire / Staffordshire borders, based at Butterton and then came our annual visit to RLH for the Joint Meet; started in the Thirties when few clubs had huts. The Wayfarers invited the Rucksack Club and the YRC as guests.

Richard Josephy organised a super meet At Bryn Hafod near Cym Cywarch. What a splendidly located hut it is. There was excellent walking and good climbing. The weather could have been better. We had a return to Swaledale, perhaps the best of the Yorkshire Dales, in late October. Iain Gilmour found us a good venue and catered well.

The AGM and Annual Dinner at Whoop Hall held in November were followed by a return to Blencathra for our informal Christmas celebration. Well attended and enjoyed thanks to John Lovett and his associates.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The 112<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting was held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2003.

The following members were elected for the year 2003-2004:

President: T.A.Kay  
Vice President; G.Campion  
Hon Secretary; R.G.Humphreys  
Hon Meets Secretary; J.H.Humphreys  
Hon Treasurer; G.A.Salmon  
Hon Editor; vacant  
(Later filled by R.J. Denney)  
Hon Librarian; Vacant  
(Later filled by A.R.Chapman)  
Huts Secretary; R.Josephy  
Hut Wardens:  
Low Hall Garth; I.F.D.Gilmour  
Lowstern; R.D.Kirby  
Hon Auditor; C.D.Bush

Committee: F.M.Godden  
D.J.Handley W.R.Ibberson  
C.G.Renton J.Riley

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

### **90<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner**

The dinner followed the meeting at the same hotel. The President T Alan Kay was in the chair. Our Chief Guest was Roger Chapman, MBE, FRGS of the John Muir Trust. Our Kindred Club Guests were Malcolm Eldridge, Alpine Club; Ian Smith, President-Climbers Club; Russell Myres President Craven Pothole Club; Tim Elliot, President Gritstone Club; Bill Truscott, Midland Association of Mountaineers; Geoff Bell, President Rucksack Club; Russ Bloor, Wayfarers Club.

The President proposed the Loyal Toast; Roger Chapman proposed the toast 'The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club' which was responded to by the President. The 'Kindred Clubs' toast was proposed by Ian Laing,

Tim Elliot responded. Arthur Salmon led the singing of the Club song 'Yorkshire'.

### **Membership**

184 Members comprised

109 Ordinary Members  
69 Life Members  
5 Hon/Life Members  
1 Honorary Member

**New Members, Resignations and Deaths**

**New Members**

David J Gamble

**Resignations**

None

**Deaths**

Dr Arthur W Evans

~~~~~

**2004**

**The meets were:**

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 9-11 Jan       | Low Hall Garth |
| 30 Jan-1 Feb   | Tan-y-Wydfa    |
| 13-15 Feb      | Lowstern       |
| 26-29 Feb      | Tulloch        |
| 21 Feb-20 Mar  | Guangxi China  |
| 2-4 April      | Low Hall Garth |
| 16-18 April    | Lowstern       |
| 23-25 April    | Pateley Bridge |
| 27 Apr-11 May  | Sardinia       |
| 5-12 June      | Torricon       |
| 25-27 June     | Low Hall Garth |
| 7-8 July       | Lowstern       |
| 20-22 July     | Wasdale        |
| 24 July-14 Aug | High Sierras   |
| 13-15 Aug      | Low hall Garth |
| 3-5 Sept       | Lowstern       |
| 17-19 Sept     | Langdale RLH   |
| 23 Oct-13 Nov  | Guangxi China  |
| 8-10 Oct       | Lochearnhead   |
| 29-31 Oct      | Cader Idris    |
| 20-21 Nov      | Whoop Hall     |
| 10-12 Dec      | Lowstern       |

Expectation of snow at LHG for the first meet was not to be, instead high wind and rain when several local hills were visited. At the end of the month despite terrible weather, two fought their way to the top of Snowdon in wind and rain whilst others completed a circuit of the mountain at a more sensible lower level. On the Lowstern meet in February an interesting walk took in Jenkin Beck and Easegill Force surmounted by a limestone arch en route to Ingleborough.

The winter Scottish meet has become the most popular meet of the year. The Club return to Tulloch Station Bunk House a superb centre for so many hills. Garadh, Gardyloo, No 2 and Garaoh gullies were climbed. Grey Corries, Aonach Mor, Beinn Teallach and several other mountains saw YRC feet. One party were literally blown off Beinn na Lap. It was a vintage meet.

In March we had a welcome return to High Moss, the well equipped Rucksack Club hut in the Duddon Valley.

Our potholers were again in Guangxi China for three weeks.

Back again to LHG in April where twelve members put in some sterling work at LHG. A joint meet with the Wayfarers at Lowstern in April, aided by two Bradford P C members, did a through trip from Calf Holes to Browgill. A great success, the Wayfarers were still enthusing at the RLH meet in September.

The Ladies Weekend was back at Harefield Hall, Pateley Bridge. Forty sat down to dinner. Good walking was enjoyed over Lofthouse Moor in excellent weather.

Ryanair provided an easy and inexpensive transport to Cala Gonone in east of Sardinia. It was an ideal venue giving access to splendid high and low level walks in remarkable limestone scenery. There was walking, rock climbing, caving and sailing. Why didn't we take ropes? All the high peaks in the district were climbed.

The Torridon meet only attracted seven members to this wonderful location. In the sixties numbers would have been into the thirties. Despite mixed weather a good numbers of the spectacular hills were summited. Two of the party spent a day sailing in Loch Torridon.

Although not listed in Club activities the Long Cycle ride attracted twenty members and two guests in a mid-week meet. The route took some of us to Ribbleshead, Dent, Barbon and Ingleton. The more adventurous included the Lune valley to Burneside, down the Lythe Valley to Brigsteer then to the Arnside peninsula and back to Lowstern in 11 hours.

The second mid-week meet found fifteen from the four corners of England at Brackenclose, Wasdale. Perhaps the best location in Lakeland. Seven headed for Lingmell via Brown Tongue. Four continued upwards to Scafell whilst the others descended to Wasdale Head. With deteriorating weather conditions a trek to Boot was undertaken. The oldest working water mill was inspected. The return was over Brat's Hill, Mitterdale and the Screes.

Early September was another working meet, this time at Lowstern. Our competent woodsmen demonstrated their skills tidying our woods and producing firewood for the winter. The creaky floorboards in the dormitory were silenced and a thorough cleaning operation of the premises was completed.

The camping barn at Ty Nant was a good base but it was hardly salubrious accommodation. The campers fared much better. However the location with its backdrop of Cader Idris could hardly be bettered. Greasy rocks didn't help the rock men. Everyone made the most of this superb mountain. Aran Fawddwy was also visited.

The Christmas meet of the year was held at Lowstern with full seasonal fare. As usual it was very well attended and the catering was of the customary high standard.

Our headquarters at Lowstern has been the focus of much activity during the year. Several family parties took place including an eightieth birthday celebration.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The 113<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was again held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2004

The following members were elected for the year 2003 - 2004.

President; K Aldred  
Vice President; F M Godden  
Hon. Secretary; R G Humphreys  
Hon. Treasurer; G A Salmon  
Hon Editor; R J Denney  
Hon. Librarian/Archivist; A R Chapman  
Huts Secretary; RG Josephy  
Hut Wardens:  
Low Hall Garth: I F D Gilmour  
Lowstern: R A Kirby  
Hon Auditor; C D Bush  
Committee: D J Handley; W R Ibberson;

### **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 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The President, T Alan Kay was in the chair. The Principal Guest was Neil Hawkins one of the four founder members of the John Muir Trust in the UK. John Slee-Smith represented the Alpine Club; John Wood represented the Scottish mountaineering Club; Eileen Clark represented the Fell And Rock Climbing Club; Dennis Chapman represented the Gritstone Club; Don Smithies represented the Rucksack Club; Edward Whitaker represented the Craven Pothole Club;

# THE CLUB DINNER

and Tony Harrison who joined our China caving party represented the Cleveland Mountaineering Club.

The President proposed the loyal toast and absent friends before introducing Nigel Hawkins. In toasting the health of the YRC Nigel outlined the excellent progress obtaining areas of land in Scotland including Knoydart and on Skye for the Trust. Opportunities in Wales and intimately England are on the cards.

David Large proposed the health of our Kindred Clubs and our guests to which Dennis Chapman of the Gritstone Club responded. The evening activities conclude with the singing of Yorkshire confidently lead by Arthur Salmon and accompanied by Neil Renton.

## Membership

187 membership comprised

115 Ordinary Members

66 Life Members

5 Honorary/Life Members

1 Honorary Member

## New Members, Resignations and Deaths

### New Life Member

Victor Bugg

### New Members

Michael J Boroff

Graham Dootson

Paul A Dover

Peter S Green

Ernie Shield

David L Williams

### Resignations

None

### Deaths

Denis T Barker (1959)

Arnold N Pachett (1950)

Sidney Waterfall (1955)

F D Smith

The 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Dinner was held at the Whoop Hall with over 90 members and guests sitting down to an excellent four course meal bursting with calories to give us energy for the next day's exertions.



This was followed by the usual formalities including interesting comment by our Principal Guest and the following response from our retiring President, T. Alan Kay.

"Thank you, Nigel, for describing the valuable work of the John Muir Trust in conserving wild land under the Trust's care - Knoydart, Skye, Ben and Glen Nevis, Shiehallion, Sandwood Bay, etc, and the many other activities of the Trust. I was particularly interested to hear that the Trust may be getting involved in the conservation of the Rhinogs in Wales - this is a superb and wild area, and was in fact visited by three other members of the YRC and myself only three weeks ago, on a glorious autumn day.

The John Muir Trust has been in existence for 21 years, and John Muir was himself writing

about conservation and taking steps to conserve wild land in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The need for wilderness and wild land has been recognised for very many years, and the earliest quotation I have come across, though there are probably earlier ones, comes from an unlikely source, the Brothers Grimm, of "Grimms' Fairy Tales" fame.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were two scholars of philosophy and literature in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and their pastime was collecting folk tales, hence "Grimms' Fairy Tales" - the older members of the club may well remember reading them in their youth.

They obviously understood and appreciated the need for wilderness and wildness, and are recorded as saying (and here I paraphrase) "wildness is on the one hand inhospitable, alien, mysterious and threatening, but on the other hand it is beautiful, friendly and capable of elevating and delighting the beholder".

These words sum up precisely my experience of crossing that wild land north of Liathach and Beinn Eighe during our Torridon meet earlier this year - it was raining hard and inhospitable, it was misty and mysterious, and it was certainly threatening, but it was also beautiful and elevating, and delighted the beholder, particularly when I eventually located the path which leads out to Glen Torridon. This is an area of wild land that is hopefully now safe from the threat of a hydroelectric scheme, thanks in large part to the efforts of Nigel and his colleagues at the John Muir Trust.

I wonder if any of you from time to time read that daily diary of democracy - no, I don't refer to any of Rupert Murdoch's comics or the Daily Mail - I refer to Hansard, where every word uttered in Parliament is faithfully recorded - and that is sometimes quite comical and also a bit sad as well.

Hansard records that during discussions on the "Access to the Countryside Bill" in June 2000, James Grey, MP for Wiltshire North, said "Although one or two fanatics may enjoy stumbling around in the dark on moorland, it is hard to imagine such people."

When I read this I wondered whether we should invite him to join us on one of our long walks, perhaps Crowther's two day spectacular of last year.

Do you remember it? - I guess those of us who were there will never forget it! Clouds of midges, mist, rain, bog, rough moorland, just the sort of terrain Mr Grey had in mind; yet followed by brilliant shafts of sunlight through the clouds, then perfectly clear skies, mile after mile of verdant hillsides, and the biggest, if not the highest Corbett I've ever come across. But at the end of it all, a tremendous sense of achievement.

A few years ago when I was living in the Midlands I went to the Brecon Beacons one day, and in thick mist was sitting on top of Pen Y Fan having a bite of food, when I heard voices way below, but getting nearer all the time. One person was continually shouting what might best be described as words of encouragement at the others - he was clearly doubting their parentage, with much use of four letter words.

Eventually there emerged from the mist a group of five or six soldiers, running and carrying full equipment, rifle, bulging ammunition belts, huge Bergen rucksacks, and all looking completely knackered. Behind them trotted a small corporal, carrying no load whatever, but shouting all the time at the young soldiers.

When he saw me he came over and said "What the (4 letter word) are you doing up here? Do you come up here for fun? You must be (obscene word) mad.

We are mad of course, wonderfully mad!



If you strip out the emotion and look only at the facts, mountaineering and caving are bizarre activities, because they combine so many contradictory features of humanity.

They combine individualism and teamwork, a thirst for survival inspired by a thirst for danger, speed and muscle matched by canniness and steadiness.

But wouldn't life be dull if we always stripped out emotion and concentrated only on facts?

So why do we climb mountains?

Whole libraries of books have been written about this, many, though not all, quite tedious and often unreadable from a 21<sup>st</sup> century standpoint.

The attraction of altitude isn't new, of course. Religions have long depicted mountains as vantage points from which enlightenment or salvation might be gained. Early pilgrims to mountains were astounded by the fresh vision of the world gained at great height, and we continue to be astounded, and see things with fresh vision whenever we achieve a long sought objective, be it a summit, a ridge, or whatever.

Have you ever climbed a hill with a head full of problems and returned at the end of the day physically tired, but mentally refreshed? I have, many times.

Mountains and wilderness offer particular qualities of remoteness, wildness and separation from the humdrum of our Western urban way of life. More than this, mountains increasingly provide a much needed spiritual resource, or as John Hunt put it in a speech to the Fell and Rock Club, 51 years ago, after his return from Everest, they provide "a solace for the soul".

They offer a viewpoint from which people can not only look across wonderful, beautiful and extraordinary landscapes, but also down into themselves.

Towards the end of the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001, when footpaths were beginning to be reopened, a Dales farmer was heard to remark that he would prefer people kept away from his land, because the land was his living, and other people only go there for their amusement and recreation.

He was half right, of course, we do go there for recreation, but there's much more to it than that.

I prefer to take the same letters of that word, add a hyphen, and say that we go into the mountains and wilderness for our re-creation.

Members, honoured guests, I wish you much solace for the soul and re-creation, next year and every year thereafter.

I thank you. "

After Dinner members repaired to the bar (where most of the world's troubles were put to rights) before departing to their resting places for the night.



## QUIET CONTEMPLATION

# MEETS REPORT

## Torridon Meet

**June 5-12 2004**

Early in June a party of 7 YRC members gathered in the Choire Mhic Nobuill car park in Glen Torridon for the Ling Hut meet. The hut itself is a fifteen minute walk from the road and moving in a week's worth of provisions and equipment required a couple of carries for most people. While the hut is basic (no electricity and water is manually pumped from the nearby stream into a header tank), it provided comfortable accommodation for the week. What it lacked in amenities it certainly made up for in its location, situated at the head of a small lochan with superb views of the southern edifices of Liathach and its neighbour Beinn Eighe.

The proximity of these two great mountains is what made this hut such a compelling location for a YRC meet. However, activities were not limited to the Torridon area. On the day after arrival Alan Kay started what was to be a four-day expedition into the heart of the Letterewe Forest. When asked to describe his route on the map, Alan was heard to reply, "There isn't a map big enough!" His journey took him along the shores of beautiful Loch Maree, and after being refused a site to pitch his tent at Furnace, on to the Srathan Buidhe valley. From thence he headed northwest and overnights at Poolewe. The final two days brought Alan back to the hut via an overnight at Slattadale and then the long walk in through the Flowerdale Forest and between Beinn Dearg and Beinn Eighe. He described the route finding among the lochans and bogs in the latter stages of this walk as particularly difficult, but enjoyable nevertheless.

A party of 4 members took on Liathach from its southern side and completed the ridge from east to west. This is a very challenging mountain from the steep ascent, the four mile

traverse of its narrow ridge and then a long descent through scree, peat bog and heather. It should be noted that while the Fasarinen Pinnacles are daunting, the path used to by-pass them to the south is similarly exposed and in many places eroded and unstable.

Beinn Eighe is a much more civilised experience and three of the party ascended its Munro peaks during the meet. The route taken was via the scree shoot that runs up the southeastern side of the Triple Buttresses of Coire Mhic Fhearchair. The view from this corrie north over the Corbetts of Beinn a Chearcaill, Baosbheinn and Beinn an Eoin is a highlight of the area.

Derek Smithson ascended Slioch and was reminded that while this mountain is as popular as ever in photographic depictions of the area, it is actually a remote walk with an air of solitude that makes it particularly special.

The ascent of the Torridonian giants was rounded off when Derek and Graham Dootson completed Beinn Alligin.

Two expeditions tackled the hills to the south of the hut on different days. Roger Dix, son Stuart and Richard Kirby ascended Sgurr Dubh situated directly at the back of the hut. It is a straight-forward ascent to the col between this hill and Sgorr nan Lochan Uaine, but reaching the summit is problematic as you negotiate numerous small lochans and rock ribs. The view in especially fine weather of Liathach and Beinn Eighe makes this a very worthwhile venture. In poor weather conditions on our last day, a 5 strong party led by the President completed a southerly circuit that took us from Loch Clair into Coire Lair and then down to the hut via the col to the west of Sgurr nan Lochan Uaine. Again route finding in the latter sections of the walk was particularly challenging, made all the more difficult by the

impassability of streams made torrents by the recent rains.

An altogether different aquatic experience was enjoyed by Ian Crowther and Roger Dix following a day of sailing on Loch Torridon. The absence of good tide tables made judging the timing of bringing the Lady D to shore at Shildaig particularly problematic. Were this to be reported in the local Highland press, then I'm sure they would report a minor incident occurred involving a boat trailer, the bottom of the loch and Sassenachs stripped down to their underwear. The version enjoyed in the Sheildaig Hotel would surely be embellished with details and descriptors deemed unnecessary in these pages.

This was an entertaining meet with local mountains providing plenty of recreation for a very full week. The weather was the usual British mix of just about everything and we were blessed with departing without having any serious problems with the dreaded midges. Well done to Roger Dix for arranging the meet and thanks to the SMC for the use of their excellent accommodation.

#### Attending

Ian Crowther  
Roger Dix  
Stuart Dix  
Graham Dootson  
Alan Kay  
Richard Kirby  
Derek Smithson

SD

#### **LONG WALK 26-27 JUNE 2004**

All week the weather forecast had been predicting rain and high winds for the North West of England. A look at the BBC web site only reinforced the picture; Saturday 26 June was going to be wet, and windy, and we were going to be in solid, view-obscuring cloud.

And so we were, but not until we had had a wonderful morning of high level walking, in sun and comfortable breezes. The Knott, High Street, Thornthwaite Crag, and Stony Pike to the first food stop was perfect Lakeland walking with weather to match.

The first visible sign of the front bringing the cloud and the rain became clear on the horizon as the invigorating scramble up Red Screes was completed. The views from Fairfield were good, but the wind was beginning to build and the front, getting closer as it pushed northwards, looked every bit as good as the forecasters promised.

The second feeding stop gave a welcome break. By this time the field was well spread out. For your correspondent and his walking companion the promised front arrived somewhere after Steel Fell, and High Raise was a very wet and dismal land mark.

At this stage we decided that fun though this was, more was to be had by dropping down by Sergeant Man and Stickle Tarn and walking back to the club hut.

The route that Roy had planned was splendid, and some in the starting group did his hard work in planning full justice by completing it all. The rest of could only show proper appreciation by relishing an excellent meal and the invariably good company that is the hallmark of club meets.

Those taking part and their routes are summarised below.

Adrian Bridge and Tim Josephy Completed  
Richard Josephy and Nick Welsh to Sergeant Man, Langdale and LHG  
Mike Borroff (G)Stake Pass, Langdale and LHG  
Jeff Hooper and David Smith Dunmail Raise  
John Lovett Kirkstone Pass  
Arthur Salmont, Derek Smithson and Frank Wilkinson to ODG  
Mike Godden and Ian Crowther Kirkstone  
Ken Aldred and J Sterland were helpers  
Roy Pomfret Organiser

NW

**F&RC BRACKENCLOSE,  
WASDALE HEAD,  
20-22 July 2004**

I understand that this was the first YRC mid-week climbing and walking meet and was judged a success and one to be repeated. Although it attracted a predominantly retired section of the membership, there was at least one 'working member' in attendance.

Arrivals were spread over 24 hours with one member arriving on Monday evening intending to camp but the adverse weather forced a night in the car. Most of the others arrived by lunchtime on Tuesday and all took the opportunity to take to the high ground whilst the tops were clear. Seven of us agreed to a suggestion to climb Lingmell via Brown Tongue but before arriving there, decided to go straight up the nose of the hill.

The afternoon was hot and much perspiration was produced en route to the summit. Having rested on the summit, we dropped down to the top of Piers Gill where it seemed too good an opportunity to not head on to Scafell Pike. However there was a divergence of priorities, for three members, the bar at Wasdale Head called and they descended via the Corridor Route and Sty Head. The other four headed upwards and were surprisingly soon on England's highest peak. After admiring the fine views, we descended via Mickledore and Brown Tongue.

Of the other members, one left his car at the F&RC in Borrowdale and arrived via Sty Head, one climbed Kirk Fell and one walked to the Wasdale screes. The final three arrived via the bar at Wasdale Head.

After tea and cake followed by various alcoholic beverages, we enjoyed the usually high level of cuisine prepared by Roy Pomfret together with more alcohol!

Tuesday night was windy with moderate rain which resulted in one camping member with a wet sleeping bag!

The morning dawned damp and drizzly with the cloud down to about 1000 ft. This resulted in considerable debate about where to go.

Following numerous plan changes, several members set off over a period on the path to Boot. One member, having set off with the first group soon left it for a solo walk over Illgill Head and Whin Rigg. He intending to return via fells to the north of Wasdale but later decided to follow the road back to the hut.

Two groups soon amalgamated and continued to Boot where we had an interesting visit to the 'oldest working water mill' in England. The curator demonstrated the mill grinding a small amount of barley during our brief visit.

Whilst we were on our educational excursion, 3 other members passed by and were enjoying a well earned drink when we arrived at the Burnmoor Inn.

All eight members set off together for the return trip intending to go via Brat's Hill and Mitterdale Head. However, due to lack of definition, we lost the path to Mitterdale and found ourselves descending and ascending steep valleys off the path. Crossing Tongue Moor, the leading group decided that, as the clouds had lifted, they would climb to the ridge above The Screes. Most of the group followed but one decided to take the easier path direct to Wasdale Head.

For the others the climb proved to be a real slog but once on the ridge the effort was considered worthwhile.

Other walks involved two members setting off for Sty Head but once there the lifting cloud encouraged them to continue to Scafell Pike via the Corridor Route and returning via Brown Tongue. The remaining members decided on a more scientific topic and visited the Sellafield Nuclear site's visitor centre.

After returning to Brackenclose, all enjoyed more cake, tea and a few beers before tucking

into another fine dinner this time prepared by meet co-ordinator David Smith.

After dinner, the scribe enjoyed a stroll to Wasdale Head to admire the evening sun setting on Scafell.

Thursday morning dawned fine but with moderately low cloud but most members left for home. Two including the scribe, decided to finish the meet by scaling Black Combe from the Whitcham valley. This proved to be more interesting than expected from distant views of this mountain. Another walked back to his car in Borrowdale.

So ended an enjoyable meet full of YRC fellowship and enthusiasm to attend further mid week meets.

PD

Attended:

Frank Platt  
Alan Wood  
David Smith  
Ken Aldred  
John Lovett  
Derek Bush  
Paul Dover  
Derek Smithson  
George Spenceley  
Roger Dix  
Roy Pomfret  
John Jenkin  
Albert Chapman  
Mike Godden  
Harry Robinson

**August 13-15 2004**  
**L.H.G.**

This was to be a meet to include orienteering around Lingmoor and perhaps Greenburn; however this was not to be.

After a week of changing weather Friday promised a dry summer day, this proved so and the journey to the cottage was a delight.

Four members turned up on the Friday evening for the talk and meal and generally put the world and club to rights before turning in.

We were joined by our Kendal Member early Saturday and planned the amble in the hills, Greenburn Prison Band, Swirl How Carrs, returning by Wet Side Edge; you know it always seems to get longer and higher the more often I do that walk.

It should be said the president did a much longer route. Wetherlam, Grey Friar to name but two extra hills. For accuracy, and your records it should be noted that Swirl How is higher than Wetherlam. A first I think one member took the train to Windermere and via the ferry Hawkshead and Tarn Hows walked to the hut, a welcome addition for the Saturday nights dialogue.

Not a first but a member, with foot problems took to his bike and rode East down Windermere caught the stream train at Lakeside to Haverthwaite and cycled back via Esthwaite Water.

What a mixed bunch we are, and that's only six of us!

JL

Attending

Alan Kay  
Ian Crowther  
David Smith  
John Jenkin  
Chris Renton  
John Lovett

**LOWSTERN WORKING WEEKEND**  
**3 - 5 Sept 2004**

Judging by the number of retired members attending, it would appear that they are all missing work.

Mind you it wasn't all work; there was a good deal of chatter.

Perhaps one of the most technical and skill demanding tasks was woodcutting. Four members turned up with chain saws and all of them appeared to have mastered the skill. The real exciting bit was the Hi-Tec log splitter machine Alister produced and demonstrated.



All in all it was a highly enjoyable and successful weekend, the warden was very pleased with the good response, and all of us, the members, are so much indebted to Richard for his dedicated wardenship.

Richard's catering for this meet augurs well for the forthcoming Christmas meet.

A new standard was set, greatly enjoyed by us all.

Thanks Richard.

F D S

Present.

Alan Brown Alister Renton Chris Renton  
 Derek Bush David Handley David Smith  
 Mike Godden Mike Edmundson  
 Ian Crowther Iain Gilmour John Jenkin  
 John Lovett Ken Aldred Ian Crowther  
 Richard Kirby Rob Ibberson

**HARRY SPILSBURY MEMORIAL MEET  
 17 - 19 September 2004**

Friday afternoon, the hut gradually filled up with members who promptly disappeared in various directions to reappear nearer to

dinner time when twenty-six of us were regaled with tasty corned beef hash followed by interesting choice of cheese and biscuits.

The interior was deemed to be in a good state and did not require a repaint. All walls and cupboards were however thoroughly cleaned instead.



Mike G has silenced those creaky floorboards in the large dormitory; members will no longer be disturbed by the nocturnal perambulations.

The most difficult and most critical job was the replacement of the cracked shower basin and the refurbishing of the shower cubical upstairs. Mike E undertook this important job with consummate ability.

The spring of 2005 will present more daffodils to brighten our woodlands. The car parking area was further improved and gutters were cleared in readiness for the autumn fall!



Conversation was lively with various feasible solutions to the world's ills being put forward. If only we were in power! The country would be run on far different lines.

Saturday dawned as wet as only the Lakes can be. We were reassured however that the expression 'rain before seven, fine before eleven' was coined simply because the average front took only four hours to pass, and indeed this proved to be the case as it faired up by about ten o'clock and stayed fair until nightfall. The lighting effects were lovely, plenty of sunshine and plenty of white clouds. The autumn tints were beginning to appear and the countryside was alive with the sounds and sights of running water. Every path was a stream and the Lake District seemed both animated and vibrant.

A range of routes was followed. Chapel Stile, Lingmoor fell, Blea Tarn, O.D.G. N.D.G. and home. Some did the same route in reverse. One adventurer did Pavey Ark, Angle Tarn, Bow Fell, Crinkle Crag and Pike of Blisco. One person, when asked what he had done said that he hadn't the slightest idea, which didn't get the writer very far! Some four hardy souls swam in the newly-renovated pool, though not for very long. A couple did Jack's Rake. Unfortunately one Wayfarer slipped and so damaged his knee that he had to be taken, with two companions, to Kendal General Hospital. He was later delivered safely home with damaged knee ligament but no broken bones.



Some twenty-eight of us partook of a splendid running buffet that evening and passed the rest of the night in a sort of contented daze and went fairly early to bed.

Not much was done on Sunday.

On asking one member whether it was still raining he replied that 'it was difficult to tell really, as it made little difference either way'.



Much effort was put in by the new organisers, who had a hard act to follow. The catering was however superb and well up to the high standards set by the previous meet leaders.

#### Wayfarers

Steve Auty, Russ Bloor, Mike Gee, Mike Godden (YRC) Bob Hughes, John Jacob, Chris Kenny, Alan Linford (YRC), Harold Mellor, Ernie Potter, Colin Smith, Dave Wood, Ken Aldred(YRC)

#### Y.R.C.

Dennis Armstrong, Dave Brooks (G), Alan Clare, Derek Clayton, Roger Dix, Paul Dover, Philip Dover (G), Richard Dover (G), Iain Gilmour, Alan Kay, Bill Lofthouse, John Lovett, Tim O'May (G), Harry Robinson, Jim Rusher, John Schofield, David Smith, Derek Smithson

### **LOCHEARNHEAD**

**8 - 10<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

The rutting season had begun, stags bellowed down the glens, bullets pierced the blue sky of Scotland and members of the club headed north to tackle all that the southern highlands could throw at them.

Friday was a superb day. Ben More and Stob Binnein fell to Bateman. Bush, Wood, Smith and Chapman performed a miracle by discovering a new route up Ben Lomond.

Details are scant but it seems to have been direct from the loch shore and involved little use of map or compass, a true rambling experience. Car trouble forced Crowther and Jenkin to return south to select another automobile from the Crowther collection. Eventually all gathered at our excellent accommodation, the former Lochearnhead railway station now owned by Hertfordshire Scouts.

Saturday dawned slightly overcast. A hint of frost gave a whitish tint to summits, just sufficient to draw the mind to thoughts of Glen Etive and the winter to come. An active day was had by all. In Glen Lyon ascents were made of Stuchd an Lochain (Smith and Bateman) but others were driven from the Carn Mairg group by threats of the stalkers bullets and sought solace in the delicacies offered in the local Post Office.

Creag Mac Ranaich and Meall an Seallaidh due W of Lochearnhead were ascended (Hick, Gilmour and Smithson) direct from the station returning along the disused railway line. Godden and Hartland ascended a crowded Beinn Ghlas and Ben Lawers while C Large explored the neighbouring and much quieter Meall Corranaich. Dix, Dootson and Sykes completed the fine traverse of the Tarmachans, while at the head of Glen Lochy ascents were made of Beinn Heasgarnich and Creag Mhor (D Large and Paton).

To the East the rutting stags silenced by the bellowing of Crowther and Jenkins who, having been been rebuffed from Glen Almond on account of the shooting, found themselves misplaced in the vicinity of Ben Chonzie. C Large and Gilmour put on a fine evening meal and aching joints were well oiled with copious vin rouge.

Sunday arrived, grey with fine drizzle and cloud base at 1000 ft. Plans for the day included, Meall Ghaordaidh (Dix, Dootson and Sykes), Ben Vorlich (Bateman and Smith), Craigmaddie Muir (Large and Large), and a distillery (Crowther and Jenkin).

Intentions fulfilled or not on our final day, all had a fine weekend. With the exception of minor interference from stalking activity it was a good venue for this time of year.

May be we shall return.

D.L

Attendance: Tim Bateman, David Smith, Iain Gilmour, David Hick, David Martindale, Ian Crowther, John Jenkin, Mike Godden, Mike Hartland, Derek Bush, Barrie Wood, David Smith, Albert Chapman, Roger Dix, Graham Dootson, John Sykes, Cliff Large, David Large, Robin Paton (guest).

### **CADAIR IDRIS TY-NANT CAMPING BARN 29th-31st OCTOBER**

A leisurely journey from Cheshire was broken by a visit to old haunts in Bala, before arriving at Ty-Nant in good time to allow for light refreshments, prior to gathering with other members in the cosy bar at the Gwernod Hotel. This bar held a good beer brewed in the Wye Valley by one of the micro-breweries which seem to be springing up all over the country in recent times.

The weather looked promising for the week end, confirming, at least in this part of Wales a long held belief that immediately following the full moon, two or three days of good weather is 85% guaranteed,

Saturday morning, revealed clear skies, with just a hint of light cloud on the summit of Cadair Idris (the top 300/400 ft.)

The majority of the meet set off, in various parties, up the old Pony Track to





the saddle at 1800 ft and thence to the top of Cadair, which unfortunately stayed wreathed in light cloud, until about 2,30 P.M.

Again, as far as can be ascertained, most members descended by the Foxes Path, then eventually back to Ty-Nant.



Two members went rock climbing on Gau Craig (north east corner of Cadair).

An Ex President went cycling and one unfortunate, left early for home, following a car collision in Dolgellau, on the Friday evening.



Most Members were back by late afternoon, the last pair of stalwarts returning just before dark after crossing Cadair to Minffordd then alongside Tal-y-Llyn and returning over the saddle to base.

Altogether, we enjoyed a superb, late autumn day on the hill, which is quite a novelty for the Y.R.C. when attending meets in Wales.

Later in the evening, about half the members tried to get a meal at the local hotel, which

turned out to be fully booked, so had to go further afield for their food. Some seven of eight of us were content to eat in the camping barn where, after a learned discourse on historical naval tactics and as the wine and whisky stocks shrank, it degenerated into acrimonious arguments into Club politics.



### DOMESTICITY

Sunday again dawned clear, and as far as can be ascertained, members set off for various peaks in the area, The Arans, and Rhobell Fawr.

The Cheshire party retraced an old Welsh raiding route across the Upper Dee, and Peckforton Hills to a well hidden hostelry, much frequented by horse dealers, poachers musketeers and itinerant musicians.

WDC

Attendance:

- Adrian Bridge
- Nick Welch
- Ian Crowther
- Mike Smith
- Derek Bush
- David Smith
- John Lovatt
- Derel Clayton
- Tom Omay
- Arthur Salmon
- Frank Wilkinson
- Alan Kay
- Richard Josephy
- Euan Steaton
- Derek Smithson
- Tim Josephy
- Barrie Wood

**DINNER MEET  
Lowstern & Whoop Hall  
19-21 November 2004**



A trickle of members arrived at Lowstern during Friday to be greeted by one of those rare Dales days when unbroken blue skies shone down on glistening hills covered with fresh snow and ice. Most were members from the deep south who left home early to avoid the normal Friday crawl north.

Early arrivals took to the nearby hills to enjoy this treat and together with those arriving subsequently, were later blessed with a display of stars the like of which cannot be seen in most of the country, blighted as it is with light pollution.



George Spenceley, Roy Denney and Martyn Trasler enjoyed a surprisingly good meal in very cramped conditions in the Game Cock which was having a party to celebrate the landlord's sixth anniversary whilst other members displayed their culinary skills in Lowstern. George, with considerable enthusiasm, continued his life's work in checking out the qualities of the red wines on offer.

Later in the evening members gathered in the New Inn to put the world to rights with the exception of one stalwart who apparently succumbed to the comforts of the open fire.



Saturday dawned to another sunny day, if a little more hazy and most members present went onto, by or over Ingleborough before making their way to the AGM which will be reported on separately.

After a very good meal members dispersed to their various sleeping arrangements with plans made for the following day, many of which were rapidly changed when we awoke to steady drizzle.

Because of the weather, with a forecast of worse to come, many staying at Lowstern appeared to set off for home although David Smith, Harry Robinson, Roger Dix, Derek Bush and Ken Aldred had a day out in the snow in the Norber and Sulber Nick area visited by others on the meet during the two previous days.

Richard and Tim Josephy went off to find a pot hole as they had on the Saturday.

Others were to meet at Barbon Head to walk into Dent and two arriving there a little late, decided to keep low and had a shortish walk around Dent village and valley bottom before heading south.



### A DAMP DAY IN DENT

One member who describes himself as unclubbable (not he hastens to add, a challenge to sealers) did his own thing.

Once a year the Club carefully appoints someone to lead a walk and a starting time is announced. When unable to lie in, even after a Dinner's late night, Mike is up and breakfasted two or three hours before the appointed time and is impatient to be off.

So it was this year and by eight he was leaving Lowstern and heading towards Leeds. From the sound of things he left not long after several went in search of their beds.

The radio forecast was for worse weather later so he made for Malham while there was only light drizzle, and arriving at the deserted car park found it covered in black ice.

The previous few days of cold weather had cooled the ground so far below freezing that the drizzle landed, froze and made upright gait an unstable equilibrium.

A pity we were not there to witness it.

Approaching Janet's Foss two dippers, parent and offspring by the look of them, worked their way upstream exercising knee bends every few seconds. They were at the plunge pool as he arrived and stood by the wall above.

The water was so clear that he tells me he could watch them walking under the water turning over the bed in search of food. With no disturbance they continued for some minutes unperturbed.

Apart from a few campers in the field, Gordale was deserted and wisps of mist drifted above the stream at the foot of the screes. In the gorge he had the swollen waterfall to himself and the scramble was made easier by less icing near the flowing water. Thankfully the plans to build a staircase over the tufa had come to nothing.

Higher, beyond the Rakes road and Shorkley Hill, thick ice made each step on stone a balancing act and progress slow over the limestone pavements. The top of the cove was in cloud and for once he kept to the grykes and grassy slopes well away from the edge.

Only on descending to the foot of the Cove did he meet people as the car park steadily filled before he started to make his way home. Perhaps his solo efforts might be described as 'Not the after dinner Meet'

Take a bow early bird Mike Smith and presumably reading this report will be the first he knows of what everyone else got up to on the last day of this meet.

Attending the dinner meet and doing varying amounts over the weekend were;

Aldred, Ken - Armstrong, Dennis  
Band, George (G) - Barton, John  
Borroff, Mick - Bridge, Adrian  
Brown, Alan - Bugg, Victor  
Bush, Derek - Burfitt, George  
Campion, Ged - Chadwick, Peter  
Chapman, Albert - Chapman, Garry  
Chapman, Iain - Chapman, Dennis (GC)  
Clark, Eileen (F&RCC) - Coote, Ken (G)  
Crowther, Ian - Crowther, Robert  
Denney, Roy - Dix, Roger  
Dover, Paul - Edmundson, Mike  
English, Derek - Farrant, Darrell  
Farrer, John - Ford, Jeff (G)  
Gamble, David - Godden, Mike  
Handley, David - Hargreaves, Richard (G)  
Harrison, Tony (CMC) - Nigel Hawkins (CG)  
Hemingway, John - Holmes, David  
Hick, David - Hooper, Jeff  
Humphreys, Gordon - Humphreys, Howard  
Ibberson, Rob - Jenkin, John  
Josephy, Richard - Josephy, Tim  
Kay, Alan - Kirby, Richard  
Large, Cliff - Large, David  
Loughton, David - Linford, Alan  
Lofthouse, Bill - Lofthouse, Tim  
Lomas, Harvey - Lovett, John  
Mackay, Don - Martindale, David  
Penny, Shaun - Postill, George  
Renton, Alister - Renton, Chris  
Renton, Neil (G) - Robinson, Harry  
Salmon, Arthur - Salmon, Graham  
Schofield, John - Sealey, Richard  
Slee-Smith, John (AC) - Smith, David  
Smith, Michael - Smithies, Don (RC)  
Smythe, Tony - Spenceley, George  
Steel, Alan (G) - Sterland, John  
Trasler, Martyn - Whalley, John  
Walker, Frank - Whitaker, Edward (CPC)  
Wilkinson, Frank - Wood, John (SMC)

RJD et al

## FUTURE LOW HALL GARTH MEETS

Meets at the hut in the lakes may be difficult for a period as we have real hopes of being able to considerably improve the facilities. We are also interested in having the use of the barn across the way and hope to tie the barn within the lease to preserve our options for the future.

All these possible works will be to our long term benefit but will inevitably lead to some disruption during the alterations.

The Club are in detailed discussions with the National Trust about the future of Low Hall Garth and have asked for a 25-year lease, both to continue to provide the Club with a good Lake District base and to reassure the Club before spending considerable sums of money.

The National Trust has confirmed that there should be no objection to this.

Nothing can yet be agreed about future rents but a rent for the hut 'as is' within 5% of present levels, has been agreed to be possible.

Assuming that we will fund any improvement to the barn, the National Trust propose to add it to the lease, in effect as a garage, quite regardless of any subsequent improvements by the club. It would involve the area within the double doors plus the adjoining store.

Quantity Surveyor's estimates have shown the probable costs of our ideas and some of these may be borne, at least in part, by the National Trust.

The NT is proposing that some of the improvements should be removable, leaving the hut capable of being restored to its present condition.

Work being considered includes improving the interface between the hut and the holiday cottages.

Also there are some suggested improvements that could be accommodated within the existing bathroom space. This is the NT's preference rather than our ideas which involve a small extension to that area, affecting the partition wall with the kitchen.

The west half of the bunk-room ceiling is lath and plaster supported by fibreboard sheets and we wish to remove the ceiling which is in very poor condition to improve headroom on the upper bunks which is at present only about 400 mm.

It has been agreed that the space in the truss separating the hut and cottage should be filled as a fire and security precaution which will also aid soundproofing.

The NT as landlord will also consider repairs to the roof.

Improvements to our kitchen ceiling to meet fire and noise standards, are agreed to be combined with the bathroom changes since both ceilings suffer from the same problems. The ceiling is actually below the holiday cottage floor and if that is in a poor condition then at least a major part of these costs should be at the expense of the NT.

Improvements to the kitchen drains are also being discussed i.e. taking the waste across the hut to the bathroom drain, and away from the channel beneath the lane into the field.

Any improvements to the barn would require us to accumulate funds and can be subject to further debate in due course but in the meantime the barn would be used for storage during the hut building works.

The removal of various obstacles (e.g. disused manholes, boulders) on the car park will be undertaken to create more room.

The water supply has been checked and seems fine; treatment takes place up by the main storage tank, before the water reaches any of the four dwellings.

At the AGM, for the guidance of the committee, four questions were put to the members who indicated informally by show of hands that they wished the officers to proceed with;

[a] the washroom changes (nil against),

[b] the upstairs changes (3 against)

[c] the kitchen changes (6 against)

[d] in the longer term, the barn work (8 against).

Cost of the cottage work to us would probably be between £24k and £35k.

## LOWSTERN TUESDAYS

For some four years members and their guests who live within striking distance have met at the Club headquarters on Tuesdays for a walk and, very occasionally, a climb. Chats are about just about anything and everything from logging in the Cameroon to the technical difficulties of laying asphalt when the temperature is minus 10.

Meeting places and routes are emailed by David Smith on a weekly basis so all you need to do ask David to add you to the list. Mike Hartland has produced a list of walks in the area which are less known and full of interest.

Be assured there is nothing exclusive about the group although they have yet to hold an 'open' Tuesday. It would be very good to see new faces! Incidentally during longer Summer days forays to the South Lakeland hills and the Howgills feature about once a month with an early start being the norm. Not exactly cutting edge activities but certainly well within the fulfilment of Rule 2!

Whilst we do not regularly report these midweek mini-meets the following perhaps illustrates the

sort of things the members close enough to Lowstern get up to when they turn out.

In November I attended the Club's committee meeting and by dint of getting up at 5.00am I managed to join the motley crew which set off that day in steady drizzle, to walk out from the hut and over Norber towards Selside.

We ended up taking a lunch break cowering behind a stone wall with strong winds throwing heavier rain at us.

We must have had a friend on high however, as the sun broke through as we started to eat and the afternoon was very pleasant indeed.

After walking into Crummack Dale and down to Wharfe we were completely dried out.

"Having ascertained the time of the Tuesday walk, 0930, not 1000 as the web site says, I reached Lowstern c 10.17 to be greeted by David Gamble who had motored over from his home at Grange over Sands.

We were soon joined by Davids Handley and Smith and Derek Collins and a brief discussion found a consensus for Gragareth.

Two cars only went from Lowstern, thanks to David G. for transport, and we parked at point 292 metres on the Thornton-in-Lonsdale to Dentreod in absolutely perfect weather.



CRUMMACK DALE

Returning via Austwick through field tracks to Clapham we had a good day out and I saw bits of the area I had never seen before courtesy of our trusty guide, John Lovatt.

The following describes the activities of those out on 7 September as reported by Bill Todd.

Editor

A track runs across behind Tow Scar to the Turbary Road where we turned left, losing about 300 feet of height before crossing a stile on the right followed by a field which took us to another stile.

Ten minutes for a drink of coffee, spurned by David S. then we went on in a north easterly direction hoping to hit Gragareth summit.

This didn't quite happen but we got that we could gaze at the trig point over the wall.

A few yards further on, we used a gap in the next wall to settle down out of the wind for bite of lunch.

The next bit was difficult and dangerous; the downhill bit. I thought I had cracked it by descending on bottom but the company warned me that I was going straight for a cliff.

When we all got down we walked past a sheepfold and made for the wall corner on the right. Our fastest member went too far left and may have reached Yordas Cave for all the rest of us knew. I went back and found him coming along on the wrong side of the wall. He had made for the wrong gate.

I imagine the wall corner marks the termination of the Turbary Road and once there it was a straightforward walk along it to the junction of the morning, which your scribe completely missed.

Fortunately other members were awake and we followed the track back to the cars after an excellent day's walking."

## EXPLORATION GROUP MEETS

At the AGM Albert Chapman described the ideas stemming from the 'Way Forward' meeting and confirmed that such a group had been formed to try and organise up to four meets a year. The main contacts with the rest of the club would be Ged Campion and Alister Renton. It was open to any present members who felt able to participate in what are expected to be fairly challenging meets and expeditions but that new recruits would have to meet certain criteria.

It was hoped that this 'exclusivity' would improve the groups effectiveness as a recruiter.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

I strongly believe that it is worth publishing a journal as images and articles in any electronic form are far more transient. The printed word provides a more permanent history.

'The Rambler' is both a journal of the activities and proceedings of the club and a source of articles on a range of subjects provided by the membership from their great range of interests. It also acts as a newsletter and keeps members in touch with the club and each other during periods of their lives when they are less active for whatever reason.

The bulletins over the years have included articles on climbs, caving exploits, skiing, sailing, expeditions; natural history, folklore, archaeology and other similar subjects.

Material is welcome on all such subjects, informal meets, private trips and any similar pursuits, ranging from full blown articles to small items to go in a section of chippings. We also welcome poems and photographs or drawings which need not be accompanied by any article.

If enough pictures are provided which would be of interest to members then we will create a small gallery section some of which may be in colour.

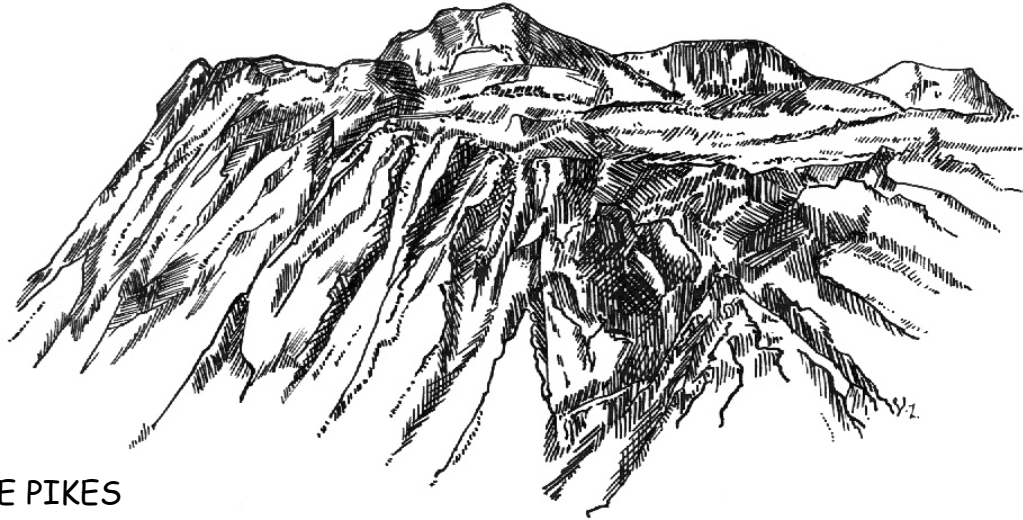
Roy J Denney, Editor



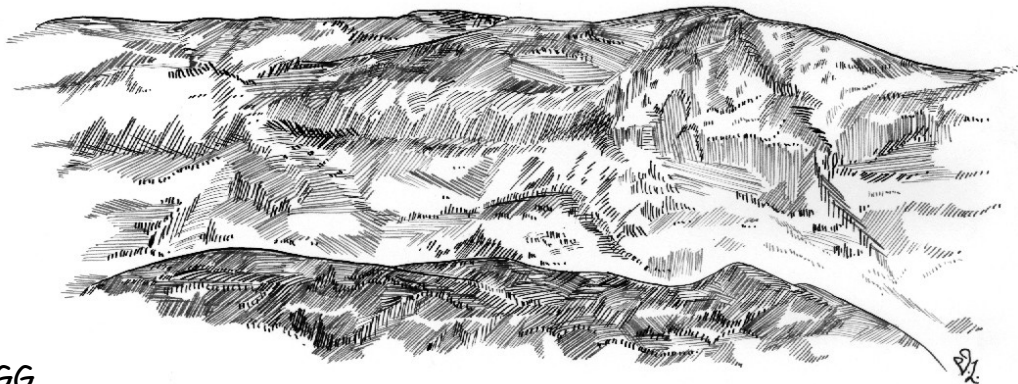
Mike Smith

DRAWINGS BY VICKI LOWTHER OF THURNSCOE

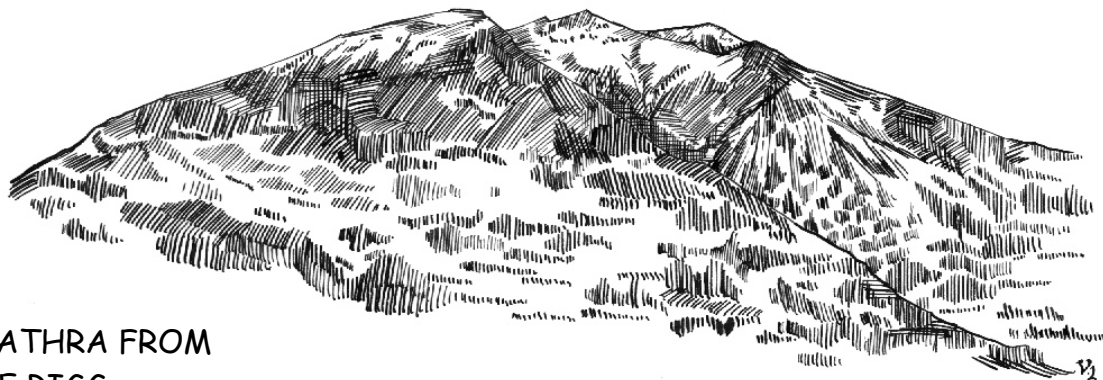
A while back an ex-student of Michael Smith's gave him these early sketches of hers which will no doubt interest those of us familiar with the locations



LANGDALE PIKES  
FROM LINGMOOR FELL



GREAT RIGG



BLENCATHRA FROM  
CASTLE RIGG





**CLUB COTTAGE  
LOWSTERN  
CLAPHAM, YORKSHIRE**



**TROW GILL**

**CLAPHAM FROM  
LOWSTERN**





The Yorkshire Ramblers Club  
[www.yrc.org.uk](http://www.yrc.org.uk)

Club Member of  
The British Mountaineering Council  
[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)