

YORKSHIRE *RAMBLER*

THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS CLUB

MOUNTAINEERING & CAVING

BULLETIN 24, WINTER 2005

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CHINA, THE GREAT WALL



The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Established 1892

The 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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BULLETIN 24 - WINTER 2005

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THE NATIONAL FOREST

THE STORY SO FAR



In less than 10 years the concept has become a reality, as there is now plenty of evidence of a physical entity called 'The National Forest'.

Comments like "we have seen all the road signs but where are the trees" should be a thing of the past as the trees which have been planted reach heights making them more obvious. The forest covers 200 square miles in all and is no longer just a series of road signs.

In fact a fairly dramatic environmental, economic and cultural change has taken place in the area.

Woodland cover within the Forest has more than doubled from under 6% to an impressive 16%, with ambition to achieve about 30% eventually. Even this 6% figure was deceptive as it was concentrated in two largish blocks and much of the area was very poorly served with trees.

In effect the ancient forests of Charnwood and Needwood are being linked by massive amounts of planting in the lands in between. There is no plan for wall to wall trees but eventually it will compare with the New Forest and Epping Forest.

Perhaps the New Forest will have to be renamed with the advent of this new forest.

Much of these plantings have been on reclaimed and previously derelict land and has changed the countryside of this region out of all recognition and as the trees mature will increasingly do so.

The area has been transformed from one that was sparsely wooded, scarred by dereliction and badly affected by economic and social

decline; into an area where woodland cover has more than doubled, a major new recreation and tourism resource has been created and where more people now want to live, work and spend their leisure time.

The Forest is creating a new sense of community spirit and pride, particularly in the old coal field area where house prices have soared and new house building is in full swing.

In addition to the blocks of woodland being planted, new hedge rows are being created (12,000 metres last year alone and a total of 47 miles so far) providing wildlife corridors and homes to many species. As much again has also come under management, which will see them thickening up into useable habitat.

The National History Museum quotes over 600 species of plant as having been found in British hedgerows and they provide homes to birds, bats, butterflies, moths and numerous other small mammals.

The Rt. Hon John Gummer MP established the National Forest Company when he was Secretary of State for the Environment in 1995.

At a meeting I attended last year he reflected on the progress made. "Ten years ago, we wanted to find a new way to create this Forest," he commented "It had to be big; it had to be innovative, without the heavy hand of bureaucracy all over it; and it had to be here. It had to have variety and its own unique spirit through real and meaningful partnership". "From the start, the Tender Scheme system enabled individuals and groups

to have their own ideas carried through, but the whole Forest was still protected as an entity".

The Tender Scheme is the NFC's unique method of woodland creation under which landowners apply for funds from the NFC to carry out woodland schemes of their own devising on their own land as their contribution to the creation of The National Forest.

Through a decade's worth of successful schemes, 162 in total to date, the Tender Scheme process has created 3000 hectares, or two thirds of the new woodland in the Forest.

300 km of new trails have also been created with over 30 km for cycles. Over 600 ha of grasslands, wetlands and heathlands and 243 ha of woodland have been brought into management and over 400 ha of new grassland, wetland and heathland habitats have been created.

So far £23,000,000 has been invested in tender schemes and all together over 6,000,000 trees have been planted creating a total of 4,600 hectares of new woodlands.

I serve on the National Forest Company's Access & Recreation Working Group and one target which I keep promoting in particular is in the provision of links because if the public is really to be able to wander at length many of the smaller blocks need to be joined together.

The normal method of creation is a tender scheme where ideas get 'scored' on several criteria with the best receiving grants. Long distance routes must however be developed by proactive measures even, if necessary, to the extent of direct acquisition of land by the National Forest in its own name.

82% of the new forest sites offer some form of free public access and a further 7% will when fully developed. A total of 310 miles of linear access has been created.

Increasingly landowners are having the confidence to give full informal access.

The new National Forest means very different things to different people but the first essential of all our woodlands must be to provide havens for all forms of wildlife and to be the 'lungs' keeping our air quality up. The provision of sporting and recreational facilities also ranks very high.

Wildlife considerations feature highly and of the trees planted 84% have been broadleaf.

Whilst there are some dramatic outcrops of originally volcanic origins the granite in this area has been worn down over eons and nowhere does any hill exceed 1000 feet in height so the area is unlikely to feature in our meets programme but it does afford opportunities for long distance walking and increasingly diverse wildlife. Some climbing is done in old quarries.

There is a plan for a two hundred mile walking and cycling route through these new woodlands so who knows we may yet see a club long walk down here in the Midlands

Tourism is increasing bringing benefit to local communities and there is a slow increase in small businesses aimed at providing facilities to the visitors.

This includes a proliferation of antique and bric-a-brac shops. There are of course some who are trying to fleece the gullible, and we must always remember that most 'antiques' are sold by dealers, who mostly only buy 'junk'.

Roy Denney

CLUB ACTIVITY

There is abundant evidence that already the objects of the Club have been and continue to be fulfilled in a very large measure.

Every year increasing numbers of the members have gone abroad, to Switzerland and Norway especially, and acquitted themselves well. Not in spite of this tendency, but rather as the result of it, our members have scoured the British hills as they never did before, particularly those most easily reached - in Scotland, the Lake Country, and North Wales. Every Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, and in fact the year through, members are busy with all their talents.

Parties, excepting for the Annual Meet, are never made up "officially," but the many informal, not unlooked for, but not pre-arranged, gatherings at Wasdale, Pen-y-gwryd, and elsewhere add not a little to the pleasures and advantages of membership.

Perhaps the most pleasing feature of all is the fact that our own Yorkshire fells are found to possess even greater charms than before, and that although other regions have in some respects superior attractions, here at our very doors is plenty of scope for the most energetic.

True, it cannot be said that there is much rock-climbing on the grassy slopes of the Pennine Chain, and snow work, except of a very elementary character, is, of course, out of the question. Of the latter, by the way, what little there is to be experienced south of the Border does not satisfy our members, some of whom occasionally take the liberty of invading the territory of the Scottish Mountaineering

Club and the Cairngorm Club. No sort of permission has been asked or given for such an intrusion - the "open door" is taken for granted.

The only time the Yorkshire hills have been deeply covered with snow since the Club was formed was early in 1886, when on some of the steeper slopes steps needed cutting here and there, and the novelty of a long glissade on Ingleborough could be experienced.

The short rock climbs (and it must be confessed they are short) to be found on the slippery limestone and the uncompromising millstone grit afford a certain amount of practice and enjoyment; such climbing as our hills afford, however, would remain unknown if it were not for the singular and inviting beauty of the country.

But the Yorkshire hills possess another great attraction for our members, namely, the vast system of caves in the carboniferous limestone, a large number of which remain yet unexplored. Here, in this almost inexhaustible field for the practice of "underground mountaineering" and scientific research, the Club is busily engaged. The manner in which the work of exploration has been carried on and the results achieved have already conferred distinction on the Club, no less than on the members who are its pioneers.

The vigorous pursuit of this most fascinating sport, and the best use of our unique advantages, must always be one of the special features of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club.

The above is an extract from the very first journal of the club which was issued in July 1899 and is commentary on activities since the Club's foundation in 1892. I thought members would find it of interest.

Editor

MAURITANIA 2005.

John and Valerie Middleton

PORCUPINE CAVE.

OK! We agree that on a world scale "Porcupine Cave" is not much but by Mauritanian standards - and this is a country almost as large as France and Spain put together - it IS big!

At 72m long it is the 2nd longest cave in the country; with a depth of 13m it is the deepest; and with a chamber measuring almost 20m by 11m and 8m high it has the largest!

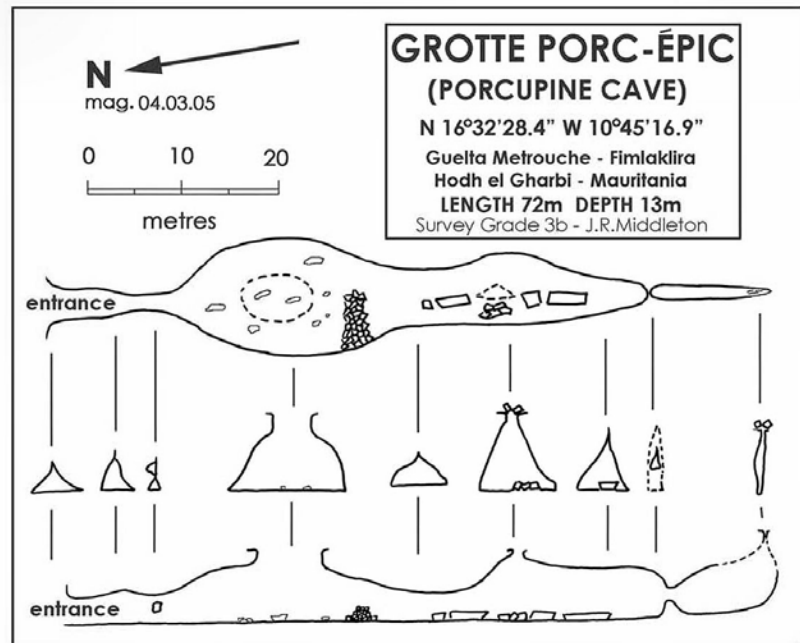
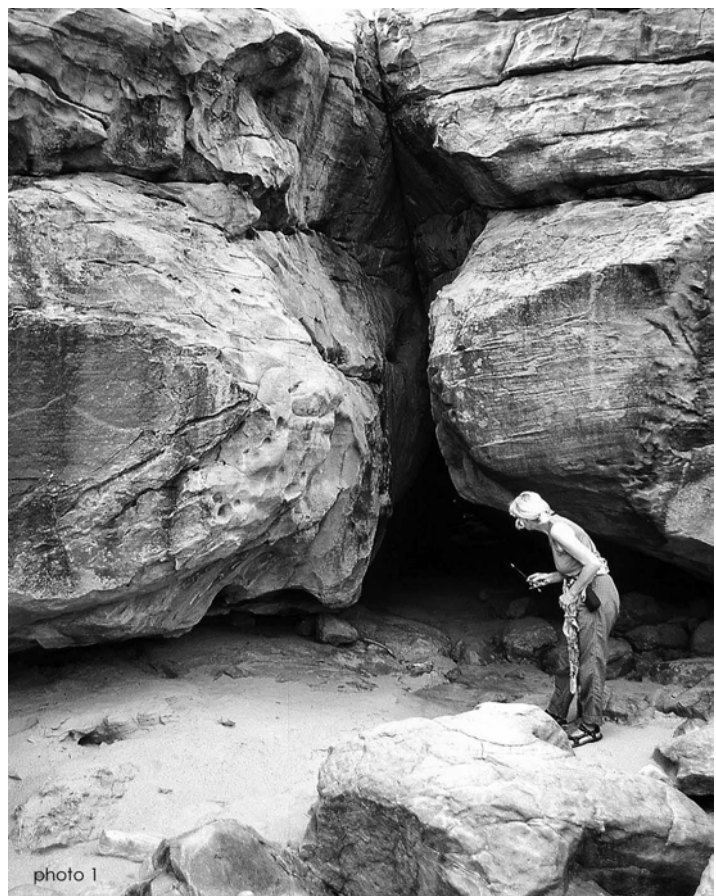


Fig. 1. Porcupine Cave

The cave is developed in sandstone along an obvious line of fracture.

It is smoothly water worn and shows little sign of collapse although there are several largish blocks within.

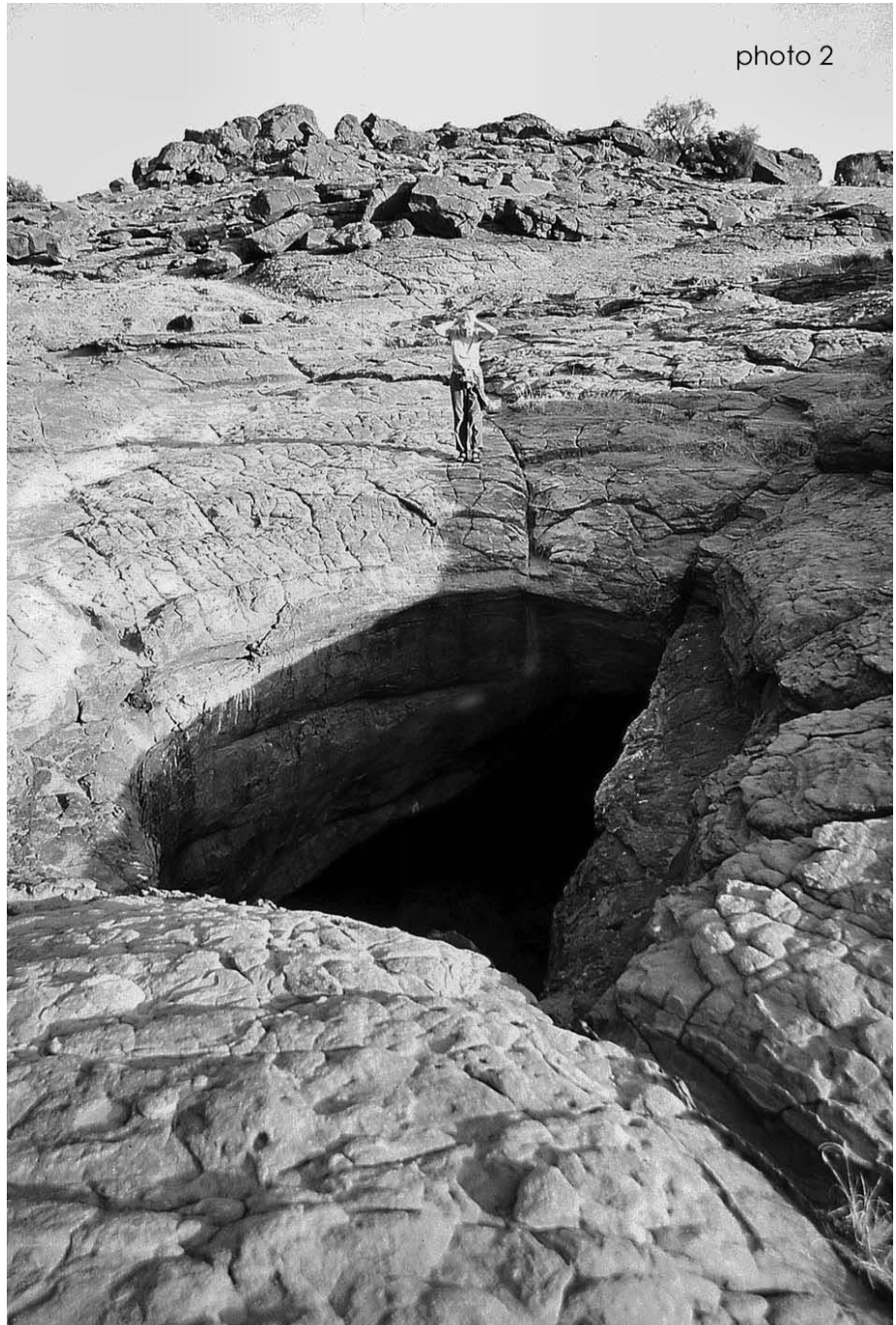


The floor is generally sandy with an obvious jumble of similar sized rocks all piled partially across the passage, probably by humans many years ago. Just inside the entrance and also at the far end were a number of small bats whilst a pair of Barn Owls gave us quite a fright when they flew directly at us from a nest about two thirds of the way in. Porcupine tracks were obvious on the sandy floor as were several quills, hence the name of the cave.

The main entrance is situated on a large ledge part way up a cliff face. The upper, vertical entries, all along the fracture line, measure roughly 7m and 1m in diameter, and then, towards the end of the cave, there is a short rock filled slit.

Porcupine Cave is situated in a stunningly beautiful setting amongst exotically eroded sandstone and overlooking a plane of golden sand and occasional acacia trees. Vervet monkeys and Rock Hyrax can also be seen here.

About 80m to the right of the cave, close to the top of the cliff but on overhung ledges, we came across several ancient two roomed mud and rock dwellings. Conversation with the local population could elicit no name for the cave and no knowledge of the shelters.



CAVES AND KARST OF MAURITANIA.

The great majority of this very arid country is composed of sedimentary formations particularly sandstones, mudstones, siltstones and shale.

Carbonate rocks do occur and both limestones and dolomites are to be found

in the far north-east where there is a thickness of up to 500m.

Minor but interesting karst morphology has been noted from this region (Mouret 1997).

Similar rocks can again be found in relatively thin beds in a line extending from around Atar southwards to Kiffa. This region is more readily accessible and several karst features, but no notable caves, have been recorded (Calandri 1997).

Of particular note is the small area around the oasis of Terjit just south of Atar where there is a sizeable spring and beautiful tufa covered walls around a palmerie. A thin band of dolomite weathered into micro karren features can be found above Terjit.

More flat exposed beds can be found with the same features plus occasional kamenitzas to the north and east of Atar.

The whole area is very impressive scenically and could easily be part of America's Monument Valley.

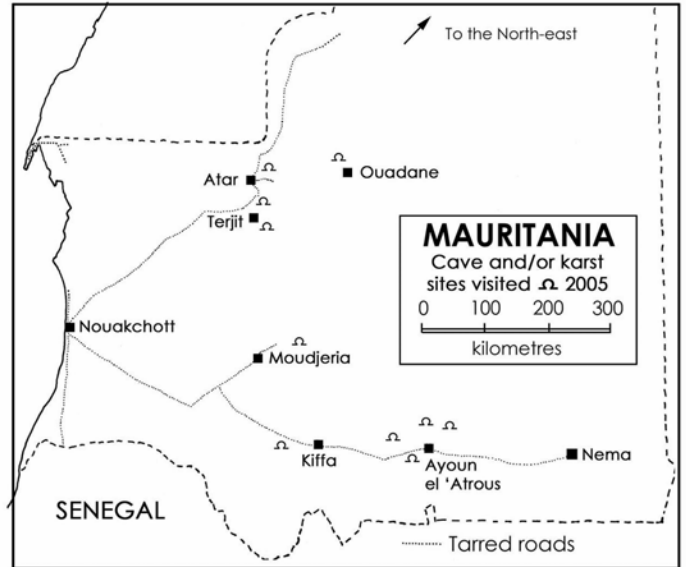


Fig. 2. Map of Mauritania

Sandstones provide the greatest scope for caves particularly in the south eastern province of Hodh el Gharbi. Here, there is often a landscape reminiscent of Arches National Park in the U.S.A. with spectacularly eroded cliffs, isolated castles, columns and arches.

The area within a 50km radius of Ayoun el 'Atrous is particularly impressive.

photo 4





We noted several caves up to 30m in length. It is a very hostile environment, hot and sandy, where an efficient 4x4 and lots of water is required! In the mountains just to the west of Guerou we visited several holes which could be classed as sandstone "Crevice Caves" (Encyclopedia of Caves and Karst Science, 2004). The latter classification would also cover the 25m long covered cleft of Tin Labbe whose association with a giant "being" is now part of local mythology. Tin Labbe is situated several kilometres west of Ouadene in Adrar province. The longest known cave, again in sandstone, is the 84m long Grotte du Lapin at Kanoel just south east of Atar which was first noted in the early 1950's.

Almost all the water available in Mauritania comes from wells. There are no perennial rivers apart from the River Senegal along the border. However there are several small perennial springs in the sandstone. We visited three; the first was just above Moudjeria in the Tagant whose flow was measured as 1.4

litres per second (Calandri, 1997). All this flow was piped to Moudjeria. Also in the Tagant but a 2/3 hour desert drive eastwards from Nbeika is the archetypical oasis of Hasaneg. Here a stream of at least 5 litres per second by our estimate flowed from beneath a rock into lily covered pools surrounded by a large palmerie before sinking into the desert. The third spring was that already mentioned at Terjit whose measured flow was 5/6 litres per second (Calandri, 1997).

OUR TRIP. We spent almost five weeks during February and March of 2005 travelling around Mauritania with Mouloud Tounsi (Partner at Surmi Travel in Nouakchott - www.surmi.net and surmi@mauritel.mr) and George, our superb cook and handyman. For the majority of our stay we either camped in the desert or stayed with the local people - the proud and still nomadic Moors, a fascinating experience! For anyone planning a trip to Mauritania a tri-lingual guide (English/French/Arabic) and good 4x4 are essential.

This country was undoubtedly the most fascinating one culturally that we have ever visited (thanks to Mouloud) and also one of the most exciting with its thousands of square kilometres of unrecorded wilderness.

Thank you Mouloud, Christine Tounsi, George, Moulouds expansive family and every other Mauritanian whose hospitality always humbled us.

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Photographs and figures

- Fig. 1. Porcupine Cave survey.
- Fig. 2. Mauritania Map showing sites visited.
- Photo 1. Porcupine Cave lower entrance.
- Photo 2. Porcupine Cave main upper entrance.
- Photo 3. Inmimish Rock, Medob village, north of Ayoun el Atrous at N16°48'31.2" E9°36'47.4". Is it a cave?
A typical sand blasted formation of the region.
- Photo 4. The area around Terjit, sandstone, mudstone and layers of dolomite.

CHAPMAN OF WHERNSIDE

David Handley

Albert has lived at Scartop for getting on for 30 years. It is the nearest inhabited dwelling to the summit of Whernside and stands at about 1150 feet. He has used this fell as his own training ground to prepare for trips to the Himalayas, the Alps, the Andes and lots more. He must know more of every wrinkle, nook and cranny on that hill than anyone alive.

Over the years he has quartered the eastern side of this hill with amazing regularity. He has ascended in every month of the year, in all weathers and at every time of day. Over the years an assortment of dogs has been in tow, which includes spaniels, Irish wolfhounds and one or two Newfoundlands. On one unique occasion his cat did the complete round trip unaided and unbidden!

Occasionally during periods of hard frost he has curled stones over the Whernside Tarns overlooking Dent, and Greensett Tarn overlooking Ribbleshead viaduct. Most of these trips have been solo though visitors with an inclination often join in. Simple arithmetic tells that if allowances are made for his frequent trips abroad he may well have stood on the top in the region of 700 times!

And, as he often says, if you look east from the summit there is no higher land before the Urals. Though he has frequently invited others on the top to look for the Eiffel Tower none have yet claimed to have seen it even with the advantage of standing on the trig point!



Some kind of record?

YESTERDAY'S MEN

DENIS DRISCOLL

F D Smith

The famous Yorkshire Ramblers' Slingsby, Frankland, Roberts and Smythe contributed much to the interesting history and success of the Club. There are however many less known members who have added much to the Club's success.

Denis Driscoll is in my opinion one such member. Joining the Club in 1948 he soon immersed himself into its various activities.



His interest in mountaineering started in 1930 with days out with his father, a member of the Rucksack Club. His activities widened in 1946 when he was at Didsbury College with George Spenceley. They endeavoured to form a mountaineering club at the college but only one other student expressed any interest.

Undeterred they visited local gritstone outcrops, Windgather, Laddow, and the Roaches using public transport. With the help of Ernest Roberts they were introduced to members of the Rucksack Club who had regular meets in that area. Denis had acquired

a motorbike; this gave the pair wider possibilities. Snowdonia provided for them exposure to the greater crags including venturing onto Cloggy with both success and failure.

Now 1947, Denis was a frequent visitor to Elterwater where a newly married George was living. Real winters in those days gave the pair exposure to winter gully climbing. Later that year George invited Denis to the YRC meet at Pateley Bridge when Denis had his first potholing experience. They descended Goydon Pot with Roberts and Thornton.

In 1948 Denis, now a teacher living in Rainow became a member the Club, being proposed by George and seconded by Ernest Roberts. It was in December 1949 that Low Hall Garth was viewed by Frank Stembridge and Fred Booth as climbing club hut for the YRC. Denis and George walked over from Robertson Lamb hut in January 1950 to take their first look. George became Hut Warden in October of that year with Denis providing practical skills.

It wasn't until January 1951 that Denis first stayed at LHG, the beginning of his long association with the cottage. He was Hut Secretary from 1957-59, then Hut Warden from 1959 - 1973.

Many members will remember Denis for the succession of twenty-one successful February meets (1955-75) when one could expect good snow and ice with visits to Great End Gully. Denis introduced the Club to a special high standard of communal catering to the Club. Though one must not forget Percy Robinson who did likewise in the Thirties in a bell tent at the Whitsun Gaping Gill meets.

The paraffin oven used in those meets found its way to LHG.

The cottage had only eight beds in those early days; meets were usually attended by a couple of dozen members. The highest attendance was 52, but it was the cottage next door, rented by the Club's treasurer and High Hall Garth made this possible. Regardless as to the increasing numbers, Denis never failed to rise to the occasion providing wonderful meals.

In the particularly severe winter of 1960 Denis having purchased the food was trapped in his home in Kentmere. Undeterred he sold much of the food to the folks of the valley and walked into Kendal. Here there was no snow at all. Denis then obtained sufficient food for breakfasts and took the bus to Ambleside. From there he encountered deep snow. He proceeded to trudge his way to the cottage.

Only two members arrived by vehicular transport. Our Monte Carlo competitor in his Landrover crashed though the ice covering the ford and ploughed through snow two to three feet deep along the track. It was necessary to lift the road gate off its hinges to make progress. There was just a single line of Denis's footprints leading to the cottage. The three members retired to bed but throughout the night seven other members leaving a trail of abandoned cars arrived on foot in one's and

two's; their rucksacks piled high with new snow. During the day Denis obtained a supply food and later that evening eighteen members sat down to an excellent dinner.

In the rainy periods the cottage regularly became flooded with muddy water. Sometimes a four inches witness would be recorded on the skirting board. Denis with his wife Margaret regularly spent hours cleaning up the mess or doing other necessary work there.

Another very pleasurable connection with Denis was the Christmas meets at 'The Grove', where Margaret and Denis had their beautifully located guesthouse in Kentmere.

Margaret set a standard of catering that would be difficult to better. At the five meets enjoyed there in the seventies when up to seventy members would be accommodated, sleeping in every available space at 'The Grove', at a nearby cottage or in tents.

Denis built several tasteful extensions to 'The Grove' but as well, made improvements at LHG or he would help fellow members with their building projects. He never had a hard word for anyone and was a friend for all. Perhaps his most dominant characteristics were his unflappability, his cheeriness and his ability to make friends.

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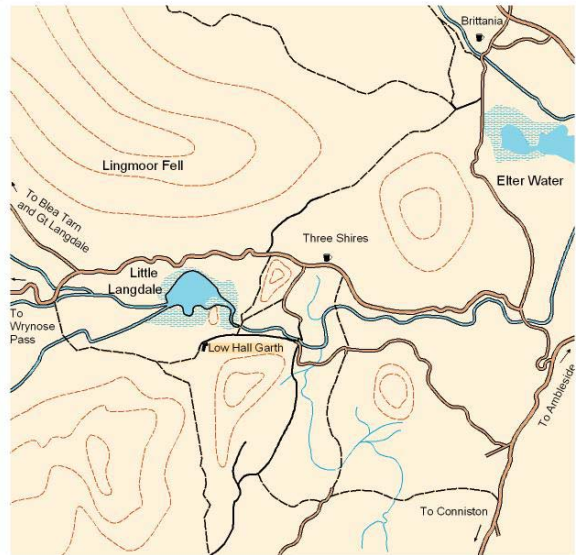
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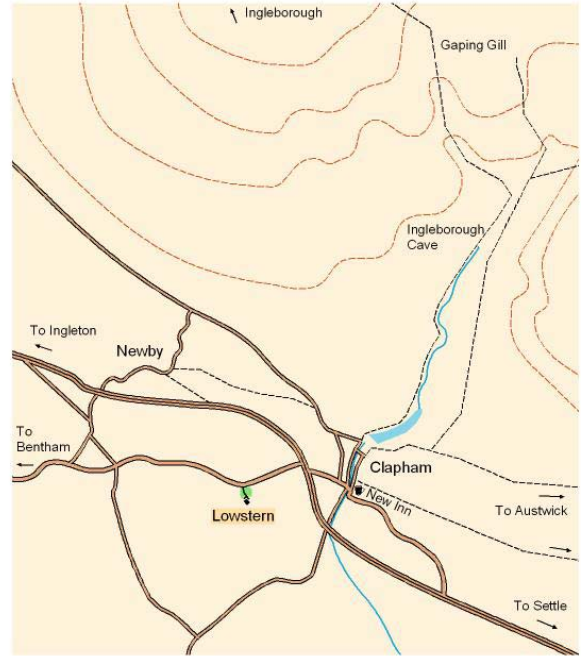
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TALES OF YESTERYEAR

THE LAKELAND 3000s

W. J.(Andy) Anderson

Following recent articles on present day assaults on the Lakes 3000s Andy has recalled his efforts back in the 1950s

He had always held decidedly adverse views on the so-called sport of peak bagging. In short, he was against it. However, man has many peculiar ways of expressing himself and he found it was unwise to condemn the practice out of hand without a personal trial.

The following is his account of what happened.

"Having undertaken two such expeditions in recent months, I have found that the agonies of such an undertaking are not unbearable, and that enjoyment is not solely confined to opportunities for subsequent 'line-shooting' in bar parlours!

The reaction of the individual to such self prescribed hard labour is quite unpredictable. Some people are less sensitive to pain than others and, consequently, when they cease to bang their heads against a wall, they derive correspondingly less satisfaction from so doing. Being myself blessed (or cursed) with a sensitive skull, it were better, perhaps, to confine myself to a factual account of our attempt to climb all the 3,000 ft. peaks of Lakeland in one day, and leave the reader to form his own inductive conclusions.

We chose our date well in advance; a week-end in September (1954), with a full moon scheduled for Saturday night; no funny business about completing the job in daylight you see!

Cross sections of the route were plotted and distances and times estimated. Many excuses for not undertaking the walk were put forward and rejected and at last the fateful day arrived and I found myself being shaken into life at 3.30 a.m. to the sound of torrential rain. Here was a gleam of hope, but since it had been raining like this continuously for the past three days it was deemed too late to bring this forward as an excuse. Valuable time was lost in argument and it was not until 5.0 a.m. that a miserable party of five assembled outside our headquarters in Little Langdale and proceeded at their several interpretations of a brisk pace, up the road towards Blea Tarn.

It was fine when we left. Had it not been, perhaps we should have been spared the tribulations of the succeeding hours. It rained several times before we reached Middlefell farm in Great Langdale and we arrived at Esk Hause at mist level at 7.20.

Our passage over Broad Crag and on to Scafell Pike was made in under scheduled time thanks to the well marked track. We did, however, get a little astray on our way down to Mickledore but fortunately retrieved ourselves before much harm was done. Our passage up the streaming rocks of Broad Stand was enlivened by its effect on Vibram wearers who are always known to boast that, "Vibrams are all right on wet rock if you learn to use them correctly"

I will not contest the truth of this statement but merely comment that this occasion did not produce the evidence to support it; unless of course, experienced rock-climbers are normally given a hand-up when negotiating wet rocks of moderate difficulty with this type of foot-gear!

Scafell summit was reached without delay and Broad-Stand 'went' more quickly in reverse as gravity came to our assistance.

We followed the Corridor route to Sty-Head and had the pleasure of coming out of the mist at Piers Ghyll. Some patches of sunshine threw the Napes Ridges on Gable into fine relief. This path, although a very fine route, is not made for speed and we were 13 minutes behind schedule at Seathwaite, where we arrived in another torrential downpour to be welcomed with steaming bowls of soup by our support party.

No praise is too high for this team who had over a period of some weeks been variously cajoled, persuaded, and finally browbeaten into performing this very necessary service.

A half-hour's rest and we were on our way in steadily improving weather along the road to Keswick where we arrived some two hours later in glorious sunshine with the clouds just clearing from our next objective; Skiddaw. Our support party again awaited us a couple of miles up the road, at Applethwaite, having re-equipped themselves in Keswick; both, I understand, on their own as well as on our behalf. Just in case anyone should have become confused between the Assault Group and the Support Party let me hasten to point out that the former travelled on foot whilst the latter festered in a car and gave such undoubted moral support as a cheer and a wave as it passed the A.G. on the Borrowdale road.

We luxuriated too long at Applethwaite. I found myself a delightful spot on a pile of chippings exposed to the health giving sunshine, and partook of various forms of nourishment ranging from sugar saturated tea, through orange juice to raw egg and milk.

We did at last make a move at 2.45 p.m.

42 minutes behind schedule, but arrived on Skiddaw summit 1 hour 45 minutes later in the teeth of a ferocious gale which almost blew us off the mountain.

On our way down the normal tourist route we lost more time, being perhaps too tired to run as fast down hill as anticipated, but eventually arrived at a delightful spot on the south bank of the River Greta. Leastways Brian and I did. We seemed to have lost touch with the others since leaving Skiddaw summit. Brian, as he himself was at some pains to explain when I suggested later that he continue up Helvellyn with me, had only joined in the walk at Applethwaite because it was a nice day and he needed the exercise.

He did however, at my insistence, carry the rucksack and at this point produced quite unexpectedly a most delicious tin of pears. My only disappointment was that he now wanted to combine the roles of support and assault parties, and instead of administering all the pears to me, insisted on a half share. As a matter of fact he made a miscalculation in my favour but I can honestly say that I was man enough to point this out in spite of great temptation. Perhaps he was just testing me and would have made me carry the rucksack had I deceived him! You observe the spirit of unselfishness which is the hall-mark of all great mountaineering exploits.

However, to press on; which is precisely what we did for a further six weary miles of road, down (or is it up?) St. John's Vale. Our S.P. was waiting at Thirlspot where I now found myself the only surviving member of the Assault Group.

Fortunately the others arrived during the course of the next half hour, but owing to certain misunderstandings regarding my state of sanity, when it was learnt that I intended to push on up Helvellyn in the gathering darkness,

it was decided that 'twere better to lose one insane climber than jeopardise the lives of four more responsible members of society.

I was therefore sent on my way with many good wishes, admonitions, pullovers, sweets and headshakings, whilst I imagine the S.G. called an Extraordinary General Meeting and made arrangements to contact police, mountain rescue and ambulance services.

I was able to cross most of the boggy patches, where the other-wise well marked path tends to disappear, before the light became too bad. Although it was now overcast and rain was coming down in the usual torrential showers, I found enough diffused light from the obscured moon to follow the path at my present slow climbing pace and proceeded better thus than with the aid of my torch.

I had one or two anxious moments about the path and whether I was still on it, but, fortunately I made no mistakes and arrived in what seemed a very short time at the summit shelter at 9 p.m.; on schedule in fact from Thirlspot but by now 1 hour behind on the day.

Using my torch on the way down I came out of the mist above Grisdale Tarn to find the sky clearing and the full moon beginning to assert itself giving a magical aspect to the Tarn and surrounding slopes. I found my way down Green Tongue in brilliant moonlight and was able to call off the potential rescuers by a telephone call from the Traveller's Rest where I also got my last cup of tea of the many drunk that day.

The moon guided my now faltering footsteps over the last six miles to Little Langdale where I arrived at 12.50 p.m. to complete a circuit of some 50 miles and 12,000 ft. of ascent."

SOMETHING DIPPY

I have spent many a welcome break watching grey wagtails playing by some stream including Clap Beck and I do find this bird and the dipper endearing creatures. I encountered both whilst waiting for the start of a recent committee meeting at Lowstern.

Unfortunately when trying to watch for wagtails many people mistake the grey for a yellow. It is easily done as they both have brilliant yellow rumps; the difference is that the grey wagtail has a grey back but the yellow wagtail has a green back.

The most significant difference is in distribution however; the yellow wagtail is a summer visitor breeding on flood meadows, whilst the grey wagtail is a resident bird living alongside fast-flowing streams and rivers.

The most common wagtail is of course the pied wagtail.

Another bird which almost exclusively uses the same type of habitat as the grey is the dipper. Both move in a similar way, constantly bobbing.

The grey wagtail is wagging its tail; but it can't avoid moving its whole body giving the same effect.

Whilst superficially similar, the dipper is unique amongst British birds in that its behaviour is not replicated by any other species.

It is predictable in its choice of habitat so sitting beside streams and fast flowing rivers, in upland areas you are quite likely to see one.

The dipper rarely strays more than a few feet from the river's surface throughout its entire life.

Despite the confines of its chosen lifestyle the dipper is frantically active and even when disturbed flies fast and low along the course of the river for just a few yards until safety is assured.

Its name reflects its action in constantly dipping its head or bobbing. It is sometimes called a bobby.

The dipper is a 'round' or 'plump' bird, nearly the size of a blackbird, with good thick plumage.

It is one of our most buoyant species with well waterproofed feathers and a good layer of insulating air trapped between its feathers and body but it still manages to literally walk under water in search of food.

Its diet is mostly insects, such as damselfly larvae and water beetles, but it also takes small fish. These hide away under pebbles and among gravel in the fast flowing streams and the dipper needs to submerge itself in the most treacherous conditions while being able to disturb the stones by scratching around with its feet to reveal them.

It remains submerged while doing this by the brilliant use of the force of the fast flowing water, by angling its wings against the current, like ailerons.

The adult is largely black with a white bib but the belly and head are actually dark chestnut.

Unfortunately in common with many water birds it has suffered this year as streams have dried out.

Roy Denney

COMMITMENT

Tim Josephy

You've all been there, sitting at home after a good meal and a few glasses of wine when a friend rings you up and says "Worrabout?" and you say yes, great idea and go to bed full of enthusiasm for the morrow.

In the morning, sanity prevails and you realise with horror what you have agreed to. Luckily when you meet up you can see the shifty look in your friend's eye and you stare knowingly at the tiny white cloud on the horizon and say "Well... if the weather was better, but it's too risky." So you slink off and do something far more sensible.

Sadly, this doesn't work with Mr Bridge.

When you meet, you can see the gleam in his eye and you realise he is serious. White Slab is far too hard for me and I know it but he doesn't. Last time I got away with it because just as we reached Cloggy the heavens opened, so we slithered and groped our way up Great Slab instead.

This time however the sun is beating down before we leave Llanberis and there is no escape.

We stride off up the track and soon catch up with a younger pair, who, realising our destination, stretch out and make a race of it.

As the red mist rises, we get them to name their route, Great Wall, and I feel a warm glow that they think I look like someone who could climb a route like that. Despite the fact that we are no longer in competition we don't seem to slow down and we manage to knock half an hour off the guidebook approach time.

RAT RACE

By Mark Cocker of the Guardian.

We are first to the West Buttress and are soon gearing up below the crucial starting traverse. All the West Buttress routes have the same problem - you have to get through the band of overhangs that prop up the cliff. I study the guidebook. Look! I say, pointing a minatory finger. "Care must be taken to protect the second man." I shall sue if you don't! Adrian advances to the problem, prats about a bit then shoots across. I follow, prat about a bit then fall off. There are tiny finger holds but they are in the wrong place and the difficulty is letting go of them. Luckily, in my parabola across the wall I have espied a hold and next time I make it, just.

We are now established on the slabs, and these are what make the climb one of the best at the grade anywhere. Long, long runouts, fingertip and toe climbing, sustained difficulty and exhilarating exposure; absolute perfection.

In the middle is the famous "cowboy pitch". A steep slab, unclimbable to mere mortals, separates the climber from the safety of a groove. Some 15-20 feet away is a six inch high spike and the idea is that you lasso the spike and pendulum across. I try and fail. Adrian tries and fails. Luckily a climber appears on West Eliminate and is kind enough to catch the rope and hang it over the spike for us. Cheating maybe but people have been known to get benighted here.

At last the route lands us on the big crevasse stance of Longland's climb and we finish up the short overhanging wall of that route. We coil the ropes at the top and look at each other, utterly delighted in ourselves and the world in general. White Slab too hard? Rubbish! All you need is a bit of commitment.

White Slab, Clogwyn D'ur Arddu E1 580ft. First climbed by Ron Moseley in 1956.

The prime breeding ground of the Manx shearwater is being invaded by an unwelcome intruder.

We were about 2,000 feet up on one of the tallest peaks of the Inner Hebridean island of Rum. It was cold, wet and 2.30 in the morning.

Had it really been necessary, one wondered, to suffer all this simply to capture the essential strangeness of our quarry? But then the nocturnal, burrow-haunting seabird called the Manx shearwater is a creature with a very special sense of place.

Black above and white below, the bird is built like a bijou albatross and is one of the most ocean-going of all British birds. Much of their life is spent wandering featureless stretches of the Atlantic, but they are obliged to come ashore to breed. When they do so they are extremely choosy. Aside from Rum, just two other islands on the planet - Skomer and Skokholm, off the Pembrokeshire coast of south Wales - seem to provide the same exacting conditions that the shearwaters find in the Inner Hebrides.

Between them, the two Welsh sites support about 135,000 pairs, but Rum is the species' motherlode. It has as many as 100,000 pairs - about a third of the world's population - while altogether Britain may hold 90% of the entire species.

Nor is the whole of Rum entirely to the shearwaters' liking. Their nest burrows are concentrated at the southern end of the island on a semicircle of peaks formed in part from a particularly friable type of igneous rock that poured from a long-extinct volcano.

Only these layers of larva are soft and porous enough. for the shearwaters to excavate their nest chambers.

The fortunes of all these Manx shearwaters were once entirely in the hands of a single family of Lancastrian industrialists called the Bulloughs. They bought Rum in the late 19th century, but their tenancy was brief. In 1959 long after any family member had last visited the island, the estate trustees sold Rum to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Most of the 29 residents are employed by the organisation, which means that Chris Rodger, reserve officer for SNH on Rum, has to face few of the political complications his mainland colleagues encounter.

Yet there is a four-legged bogey in Rodger's idyll. Brown rats have been present on Rum for decades, and while they plague the houses of SNH staff by the shore, they were not thought to have any role in the shearwater colony.

Recent studies have now shown that rats are entering the colony during the breeding season and are beginning to predate shearwater eggs and chicks. This maybe an unanticipated consequence of climate change. Mild winters allow higher numbers of rats to survive on Rum and, in the spring, to spread to more remote parts.

SNH has commissioned Rentokil to assess the problem around the staff homes, while studies on predation of shearwaters are on-going. Control of rodent numbers through conventional poisoning or trapping methods presents severe challenges in an ecosystem as rich and complex as Rum, but Rodger speculates it may become necessary.

"We have only to look across to the neighbouring island of Canna to see what can happen" he says. "Rats there reduced Manx shearwaters from 1,000-1,500 pairs to complete extinction by 2002. We can't afford for something similar to happen here."

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CANNA

As a post script to the above article a solution to the problems of Canna may be to hand.

Whilst only one mile by four and a half miles, this crofting island has an estimated population of 100,000 rats and as Mark Cocker reported they have wiped out the population of Manx Shearwaters. Many other species are now seriously at threat and a drastic solution is being considered.

The eleven residents of the island live in dread of the fearless rodents who frequently try and break into their houses.

A team of biologists from New Zealand have been awarded a contract to try and get rid of the rats. They have over the years proved themselves expert at removing unwanted species from islands.

The plan is to create baiting stations all over the island with poison sufficiently mild as to be no problem for other creatures but which should have a cumulative effect and lead to the rats dying underground.

Climbing volunteers are welcome to help put out the baiting stations.

IN CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE BROWNING SPENCELEY

On six decades of hyperactivity in some of the mountains
and molehills of most continents.

George had been reluctant in the weeks running up to the interview to commit himself completely, after all 'everyone knew everything there was to know about him'.

I assured him that was not the case; this was to be an attempt to tease out some detail. Panic for both of us!

He was looking a little nervous when we met on the Lowstern carpark on the Saturday of the Christmas meet. Over 4 decades have passed since I first met him and he still looks much the

same. Manicured goatee and receded hair bear little witness to the years which have elapsed. He likes to be in control and this, he felt, was slipping away. His somewhat clipped, precise speech belies his long Yorkshire pedigree and the signature pipe of explorers is nothing but a memory.

In recent years his hearing has become less than perfect which makes noisy meet dinners a bit of a trial.

And so to Lovett's conservatory.

Now in his 85th year with over 60 years in the Club would there be some truffles worth



unearthing? He joined the Club on the recommendation of Roberts who asserted that if George was old enough for war service in the RAF then he was certainly old enough to join the Club.

School days were not particularly happy, for then, as now, he had no affinity for team games or, as his Headmaster declared, 'no esprit de corps'. This dislike for team games continues but as a younger man cross country running was a real interest. Until quite recently he was to be seen

jogging around his Oxfordshire village and working out at the gym. The Headmaster's declaration still irks George and he feels it prevented him getting the officer training he so desired.

The family originated from Swaledale, moved to Coverdale and then to Harrogate where the breeding of hunter horses was the family trade. His father, who was friendly with Botterill, hated cars but trips into the Dales were quite frequent.

It was on one of these trips that they gazed down from Ingleborough and saw an encampment of potholers at Gaping Gill.

'That, my boy, is the YRC and when you grow up you will become a member'. George was 7 or 8 years old.

After the War, during which George served as second pilot and became a prisoner of war, he returned to Harrogate where Almscliff Crag became an attraction, as did longish walks in Nidderdale (a meet venue long neglected by the Club). The Lakes began to offer up their craggy secrets and he was an active member of an intimate group of Lakeland climbers.

He has very happy and vivid memories of hard days on Dow and hard nights at the Sun Inn Coniston, not to mention its landlords and landladies! I get the distinct impression that he would have liked to have been a more able and prominent rock climber, as he was friendly with well known climbers of that era though he was a little younger.

For some years in the 50's and 60's he was also a very active Club potholer and, like many, regrets its decline as a mainstream Club activity. But something else was beginning to course in the veins. He happened upon a copy of 'Watkin's Last Expedition'. Gino remains one of his heroes, as does Freddie Spencer Chapman, who once, apparently, was a guest at our dinner.

South Georgia ensued but that too is well documented in the journal. (No 28). At least 5 of this close team are no longer with us. Shortly after, he was a member of the YRC team which attempted a peak in the Himalayas. That story is also recorded in detail in the journal. (No 29) Mortality and the hereafter are not a preoccupation.

Judging by his enthusiasm for Greenland it is surprising he visited it only once. Polar travel is made for masochists and he easily qualifies on this measure.

George is now getting into full flow. He senses a ready ear.



Don't be so sure! He is anxious to choose what to recount but that is not what I want. It could be difficult but then that is George, precisely pursuing single mindedly his own agenda.

Good climbing writers? Geoffrey W Young. Anyone more recent? None come to mind. Any recent travel writers? Newby, Chatwin and Theroux he agrees with some prompting.

What if anything has his chosen passion taught him? 'You can't appreciate a warm bed until you have sat out an polar blizzard or a high level camp in the Lakes in winter with a leaky tent'. A dimension less known about this man is his enthusiasm for bivouacs. He is remembered by some for his nights in large concrete pipes in Glen Shiel as a prelude to a Skye meet and he was one of the early users and popularisers of Dove Cave in Patterdale. His very frequent sleeps in the back of his car can only be seen as a reversion to type.

Being forced into a hotel room is certainly a last resort. I will always remember his technique and charm in securing a bath at a good hotel after a hard winter day on the Scottish hills.

Simply order afternoon tea and after a short lapse of time humbly request the possibility of a bath. Always have a bag with a change of clothes to hand.

It rarely fails!

Several seasons in the Alps followed in the 60's with Fox and Price amongst others. Prizes included the Mer de Glace Face of the Grepon and the Forbes Arete of the Chardonnet. He is particularly proud of completing the Skye Greater Traverse with Fox. He waxed eloquent about this achievement as we savoured lunch on the Cioch along with Carswell and Gott on a perfect day in early June in the mid 60's. Carswell, once in the YRC, is now 90 and was with George on the Greenland escapade.

Had he ever pushed his luck too far? He couldn't recollect an occasion. Could I suggest one? But of course! When he was descending off the Greenland icecap into Gaasefjord they had serious route finding problems and the weather didn't help. Did he think they would miss the boat booked? Well yes, but there was no panic.

Not even with a shortage of food? No!

Here we have the quintessential Spenceley. Things would work out. A bit like Shackleton but with boat on standby and fairly near to hand. (Watkins Mountain Expedition No38)

Moment of greatest elation? Traverse of the Grand Combin with Eric Arnison taking 19 hours.

Does he ever return to places that made an impression? Not really. Where would he most like to return to? East Greenland but he feels too old. Maybe the Himalayas, but perhaps on his own with a couple of porters. But returning is not his bag. New vistas are the

thing. Did he ever feel like a weekend in Coniston for old times sake? Well he wouldn't say no but a new place would be preferred.

Thus the challenge of completing the English 2000s though he still has a good few Monro's yet to tick off.

Australia was included in a recent round the world trip, travelling, I was a tad surprised to learn, in business class! Was he going soft as he got older? Not really. It was a treat from his wife. Had he taken to Australia? Not particularly, preferring New Zealand by far. There seemed to be no perception of the huge area of wilderness, albeit of a type unfamiliar to him, known commonly as the outback.

Had he missed any prime chances? One in particular. In the late 50s an Arctic Air Rescue Training Expedition had been proposed by a Stanley Moss. The plan was that in the event of an aircraft crash in arctic regions this team would be parachuted in with dogs to the scene and effect an evacuation.

Was it practical or a hair brained scheme? Well, who knows? The declaration by the RGS that the whole scheme was a stunt killed the project in its infancy.

Reading at the moment? Something on the retreat from Moscow and another book on Gallipoli which he had recently visited.

How would he view women in the Club?

I watched his response to this question closely. Momentary pause. Trick question? No objections but it would be conditional on what types they were! Perhaps a detail not best pursued. Did he have a view on the Club's more recent achievements? He was impressed with the China, Himalayan and Bolivian projects but bridled at the inclusion of a cycling event in the Club's programme.

Did he agree that red wine was one of the few real accomplishments of civilisation? Not really, though he did like a glass. Had he ever considered becoming teetotal? Never, but he would most certainly do so if he thought his intake was getting out of hand! The perfect moment to retire to the New Inn bar!

Did I unearth any truffles? Probably not. You could say he is the truffle. Having known George for over 40 years there is a clear consistency of attitude, priority and disposition which doesn't suit everybody. Perhaps for newer members, both old and young, this piece may fill in a few blanks and make him more comprehensible. And perhaps not.

GBS is something of an enigma. Probably the most widely travelled member of the Club with 52 countries to his credit, though the list only includes Germany as a prisoner of

war! Mountains and wild areas are his passion. Trips to the Taurus in Turkey, the highlands of Ethiopia, Lapland, the Barren Lands of Arctic Canada, the Himalayas, the Arctic and Antarctic, not to mention canoeing the Big Muddy, have been some of the more significant trips in a life absolutely packed with action. He seems to have never missed an opportunity. His appetite for the hills was to the exclusion of most other things and his career as a teacher gave him the requisite time to pursue his passion. He has the admiration of most long serving members of the Club, if not always their affection, though he still needs to work his undoubted charm on more recent members.

With three sons and two grandsons another Spenceley in the members handbook is long overdue. Honorary member naturally, but most certainly the best President we never had!

David Handley

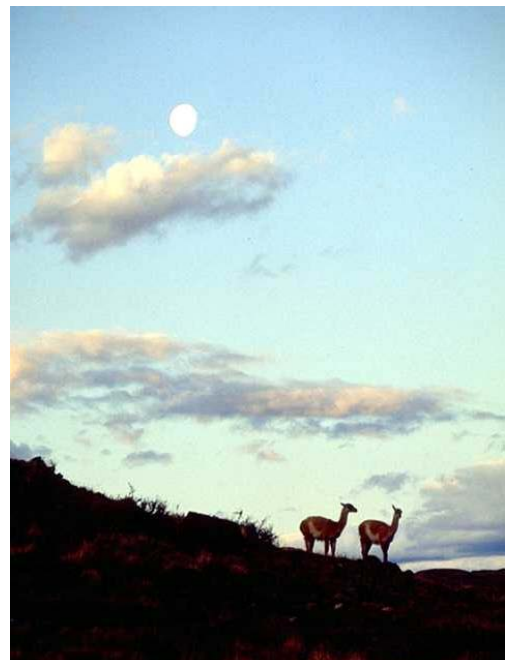


ANIMAL SILHOETTES



HORSES IN THE EVENING,
AUSTWICK

ROY DENNEY



VICUNA
BY MOONLIGHT

MIKE SMITH

NEWBY MOSS CAVE

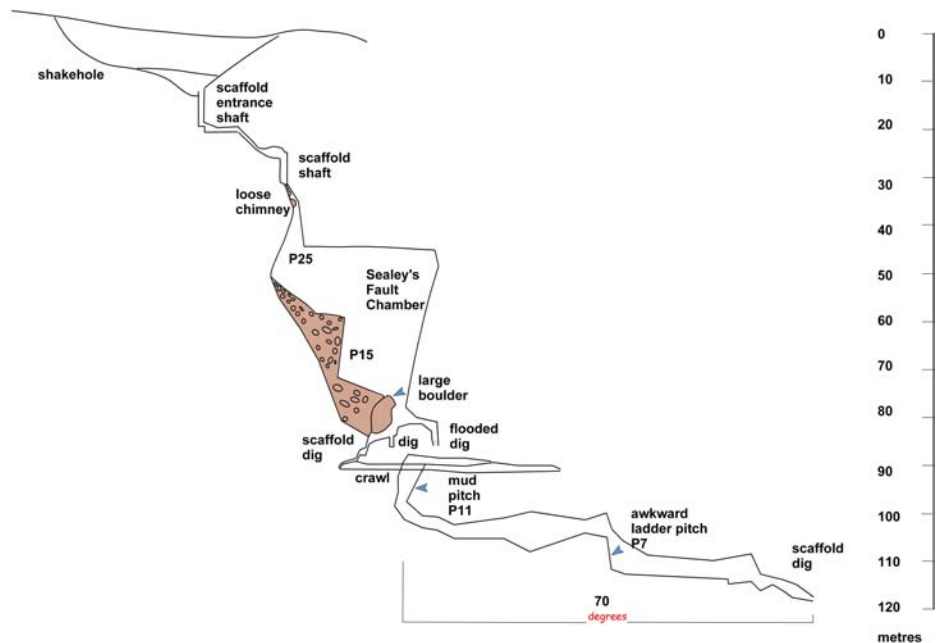
Bruce Bensley & Ged Campion

Over the past couple of years members of the club have been making steady progress in Newby Moss Sink, the large shakehole, 50 metres west of Hurnel Moss Pot.

This feature was first investigated by the BPC in 1955 when the water was tested to Moses Well. A shaft was excavated but subsequently fell in. In 1972 Jim Abbott and other BPC members had another go but the progress was halted by further collapses. They did however find a new passage in the upstream part of the shake hole (which was named Cartilage Cave) which provided a tight through trip to a higher shake hole. However they decided to leave the the sink itself for another time.

Although a long way from the road the YRC were not daunted by the task of carrying quantities of scaffold and railwaysleepers up to Newby Moss to sink a new shaft in the deepest part of the shake hole. It was decided that only a concerted and thorough approach could solve the problem of entrance collapse.

After a couple of weeks a good draft was detected and the remnants of the old BPC dig removed. A horizontal passage was 'stabilised' and a small chamber found where the stream was disappearing into the floor. The draft became more elusive but progress had been good so efforts concentrated on digging in the floor of the chamber



A further shaft was sunk, aided by chemical persuasion, and one Sunday evening at 5.00 pm when spirits were getting particularly low, a boulder was pulled out to reveal an incredible rush of air and the top of a 25 metre pitch. Concerned about leaving such an obvious lead, the team returned on the following Wednesday and the pitch was descended into a huge fault, part of the Hurnel Moss Fault.

Further pitches of 15 metres and 5 metres led easily down to a further blockage at minus 60 metres.

Various options were available but the draught continued into a particularly unstable boulder choke. Various attempts to get past this were foiled at first and other possibilities only proved a distraction.



ALISTER RENTON ADMIRES
A CLUSTER OF STRAWS ABOVE A LARGE
JAMMED BOULDER
IN SEALEY'S FAULT CHAMBER

Eventually the technology of scaffold was applied to the choke and slow but great psychological progress was made over the next 6 months beneath the 'hanging death' that formed the roof.

During wet periods the noise of the stream not too far away beckoned us on. After many induced collapses and the removal of sizeable boulders a low crawl was revealed where the stream was met.



ALISTER HAULS BUCKETS ABOVE THE
EXPLORATORY SHAFT
AT THE BOTTOM OF
SEALEY'S FAULT CHAMBER.
DIG LATER ABANDONED.

After a few metres, this sank down a narrow slot. The crawl however continued dry, stable and draughting and after about 20 metres a T-junction with a tall hading fault was reached with the noise of water a long way below. The possibilities looked promising in both directions but the left lead ended in decorated fossil passage that narrowed down.

To the right however, a muddy 9 metre pitch dropped into the bottom of the hading rift and the stream was found again. Although narrow, the passage would carry a sizeable stream in wet weather. We had turned back on ourselves but the open passage beckoned. Several squeezes that were occasionally low and wet were passed along the rift before reaching a 4m pitch with a difficult take off.

The stream continued below to a small chamber and a significant boulder collapse. Work is continuing at this level. A particularly worrying boulder choke is proving hard to negotiate, digging in loose, wet cramped conditions.



GED CAMPION ASCENDING A
25m PITCH OUT OF
SEALEY'S FAULT CHAMBER

During the saga of Newby Moss Sink the entrance has collapsed and on one occasion temporarily trapped a digging team! The nature of the cave is not always appealing and has areas of loose boulders that need to be treated with caution. To compensate however, there are some formations which are not always easy to find, and the size of the fault chamber (Sealey's Fault) housing the 25, 15 and 5 metre pitches is quite impressive.

We are currently 110 metres down and deeper than Hurnel Moss Pot. The lower passages are heading in a south easterly direction and this would agree with a trend towards Moses Well and the easterly part of the elusive Newby Moss Master Cave! Watch this space...

MOUNTAINEERING WITHOUT GUIDES

I would not persuade you, even if I could, to abandon the wish to climb without guides, for I think it the finest form of a noble sport, and that as such, Yorkshiremen are sure to be found in its foremost rank; but I wish you to recognise its dangers before you taste its joys.

At the present time there are many Englishmen who successfully attack the High Alps on their own account, and the movement is no longer an experiment; its future success depends on the younger generation.

The older mountaineers who first tried it had worked for a long time amongst our own hills. and then gradually feeling their way amongst the snowy peaks - first with, and then without guides - slowly qualifying themselves to lead, or descend last, on the more difficult expeditions, or, if without much home experience, had at any rate climbed for years in company of the best ice-men in the world.

Now-a-days there is a rush to reach the end without touching the middle stages of the journey, and there are many athletic young men who are first rate rock climbers and walkers, whose enthusiastic ardour it seems difficult to control. They know that most mountains are comparatively easy and safe in good weather for any man who has experienced companions and a good head and legs.

But this is no reason why inexperienced young fellows of twenty or twenty one years of age should organise and lead expeditions on alpine peaks.

I have been told that there is a small school of scramblers who think that the ordinary Oberland guide and middle aged member of the Alpine Club are more or less fossils, and mountaineering is now very different from what it was ten years ago. But the mountain remains the same - stern and unchanging; and those who approach them without due reverence will sooner or later suffer for their presumption.

One unfortunate side of the question is that these young men are endowed with those very qualities which, if united with modesty and under proper direction, would place them in the front rank of mountaineers.

It must be remembered that almost any snow mountain may become dangerous in half an hour, and sometimes in a few minutes. And it is to guard against and combat these sudden and unexpected perils, that so much care, skill and experience is required to ensure the safety of expeditions under adverse circumstances.

The precautions to be taken, the dangers to be avoided, and the equipment required, are subjects you can read up for yourselves; but in actual work, the situations develop so rapidly, are so varied and numerous, and the actions required must sometimes be instantaneous and always prompt, that no mere knowledge is of any use unless made available by practice and familiarity.

No knowledge of rock-work, however good a cragsman you may be, is enough; you can learn that part of the profession to a great extent on our own hills. But most of the accidents happen on ice, or through the effect of the weather on ice and snow, and it is to the ice-man that a party has generally to look in time of doubt or danger.

I have seen a most brilliant and experienced cragsman utterly useless and helpless on an

easy icefall; and it is a well known fact that many of the eastern guides, splendid rock climbers and chamois hunters though they may be, are often nervous and sometimes dangerous companions on difficult ice. Knowledge gained in one or two years is imperfect, and may only lead to rashness.

I therefore say, emphatically, as my most carefully considered opinion, based on an experience of twenty five years of Alpine work, and consulting men of equal and some of longer experience, that no man, however experienced in British hill work, should climb the High Alps without guides, until he has at least four years experience of ice and snow, unless, indeed, he goes with such experienced climbers that they, acting as guides and knowing what they do, take him with them as a traveller, and even then the experiment is doubtful.

In climbing without guides, it is most important to make up your own party before you start for the tour; and it is better that it should consist of four men, so that in the case of a slight accident or indisposition of one, there are still three left for the next expedition. Should you unfortunately want another man to make up the party to the required number for safety, do not pick up a stranger of whose powers you know nothing; rather take a guide or a porter, and do the work yourselves.

Take notice of everything around you when you are amongst the mountains, whether at your bivouac or on the march; whether you are leading or not, and with whomsoever you are climbing; and thus learn to form your own opinion, and to be able to take command and act when the occasion arises. And assuredly it will arise sometime or another, whether you are climbing with or without guides, for guides themselves are not infallible, and are not all in the first rank

And so, we hope that by the use of every precaution, and by perfecting yourselves, slowly and surely, in every practical detail of the mountaineering art, that you, the younger members, who are now taking our places and our work, will jealously and successfully guard the character and reputation of the sport we love so well.

(This was the conclusion of a lecture to the Yorkshire Rambler's Club given on Oct.27th, 1896, in the Philosophical Hall, Leeds, by Mr. Charles Pilkington, President of the Alpine Club - courtesy of F David Smith)

A RETURN TO SKYE



THE CUILLIN RIDGE, SKYE

This week was characterised by one glorious day, and the rest of low cloud and rain.

Neil, Olly and I travelled together and arrived on Skye on Saturday, meeting Aaron near Kirkibost at about 2pm. We walked across towards Camasunary in the rain and set up a light weight camp beside a stream, near the bottom of the southern ridge of Bla Bheinn. Here we also left bivvy gear for Tim and Nick. We used the same site as on two previous occasions, when hoping to complete the Greater Traverse. After this, we drove round to Glen Brittle and set up the main camp. The fee is now £4.50 pppn: the facilities are much improved with plenty of hot water.

On Sunday, the four of us took several litres of water up to the ridge, scrambling up beside

Water Pipe Gully. Being in cloud, we ascended to the central peak of Bidein without realising it. Much consultation of altimeters, maps, GPS, compasses and with two guided parties we'd seen/overtaken finally convinced us. Still confused (at least, I was) we descended to the bealach where we'd intended to be, to leave the water. The cloud lifted slightly and we had grand views down to Loch Coruisk, and to afford us an easy descent down the way we'd intended to come up. Because of the rain, water levels had risen making the falls in the valley much more spectacular.

Tim and Nick arrived that night, but we didn't see them until the following morning.

One of the most sensible decisions of the week was then taken: that was, to leave a car at Kirkibost. We drove round and all of us walked up onto Sgurr nan Each, scrambled across Clach Glas then down the scree beside The Great Prow of Bla Bheinn. (which looked singularly uninviting, greasy, black and dripping wet).



ON THE SUMMIT OF CLACH GLAS BEFORE THE TRAVERSE

We were assailed by a million midges in the car park, thankfully, the only time they bothered us. That evening, the rain and clouds cleared, giving us perfect views of the ridge. We decided to leave at 3am on Tuesday, the next morning.

After three hours of grind, we were on top of Gars-bheinn, with almost uninterrupted 360 degree views - just a few wisps of cloud. The rocks were dry and made quite a contrast to how they had been so far and enabled confident movement. Thankfully, the TD gap was also dry and soon descended into and ascended out of. It was quite a challenge for Aaron, who'd little abseiling and even less rock climbing experience, but he came up trumps, even carrying his rucksack.

Alasdair,
Thearlaich
and
Mhic Choinnich
were visited,
four via Kings
Chimney, two via
Collie's Ledge.

KING'S CHIMNEY



Neil and I climbed the delightful An Stac and met the others after the Inaccessible Pinnacle. There, Nick and Aaron decided they would 'retire' and they descended to camp. The four of us continued as independent pairs, Tim and Olly, Neil and I, meeting up next, at the water dump. The second half of the ridge certainly seemed tougher than the first, with more hands on scrambling, as well as more

difficult route finding. We both did more abseils than we needed, had we followed a 'best line', but after descending a couple of hundred feet, on what turns out to be the non optimum route, its hard to go up again to avoid an ab. Anyway, the place is well equipped with tat left by others, so no gear was lost.

We were only held up at Naismith's Route on the Bhasteir Tooth, by two parties ahead of us, and as we got to the top, Tim and Olly were starting on the vertical part of it. The exposure there is very considerable, but one seemed inured to it, by so much, before. The first move off the belay ledge is quite tricky and the exit at the top has its moments, in between the climb is straightforward.

The ascent from the tooth to the summit of Am Basteir was not something any of us had done before; I'd had it well described by Russell Myers, so knew what to do, but it wasn't so easy.

The West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean was far less frightening than I'd remembered it from 1999. This time it was dry and in the sunshine - makes quite a difference. Parts of it still totter, however!

We were on the summit at 1930, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs after leaving Gars-bheinn, still in beautiful weather. Clach Glas and Bla Bheinn looked a long way away! When Tim and Olly were on the summit, we were at the bealach just before Sgurr nah-Uamha and made radio contact. They decided to return to Sligachan, and after a pint or two, got a taxi back to Glen Brittle. Neil and I descended to the

main Sligachen/Camasunary valley and walked south.

As soon as we started to ascend the slight slope to the valley path, I knew I didn't have enough energy in the can to consider the Garbh-bheinn/Clach Glas/Bla Bheinn route we'd envisaged to make the Greater Traverse. Neil was disappointed I think, but could see I was not able and didn't try and persuade me otherwise.

We trudged along the path to our campsite, the last part particularly, seemed interminable; We got to the tents at 23.40hrs, never having to have used our torches at any time in the day.

We slept well, and awoke to the familiar sound of rain and an increasing noise from the stream. We slept on until 1330 hrs, awakened by shouts from the other four who'd come to collect us and their gear. The stream had risen up so much that it was too dangerous to cross. They descended to the bridge, almost at the beach and back up to us.

We packed up and trudged back to the cars in continuing rain. That night we went out to the Sligachan Hotel for a meal, most had venison casserole, (£8.50), which was delicious.

The rain continued through the night and got heavier during the next morning; it wasn't a difficult decision to pack up and leave.

My (larger) tent pitched at Glen Brittle suffered terminal damage from the winds and rain during the night we were away: Neil's clothes were in something like 2" water on one side. The tattered tent was left in the dustbin.

Every stream was in spate and looked dramatic; had Tim not felt very strongly about leaving a car at Kirkibost, and we'd sought to return via the coast path, its probable we'd not have got across the outfall from Loch Coruisk - or the Mad Burn. A pretty pickle we'd have been in then!

The completion the Greater Traverse in one go, I now know, is beyond me. It remains for younger chaps!



TORRENT BY REMOTE
CAMP SITE

Participants:

Tim Josephy, Nick Welch, Neil Grant, Olly Burrows, Aaron Oakes and Adrian Bridge.

(Foot note: On previous ridge journeys, I'd struggled with the weight of a sometimes wet, 50m 9mm rope. To avoid this, I cut a rope in half. This was a good enough decision, but a better one might have been to cut it 20/30 and take the 30m - good for almost all parts).

Adrian Bridge
Whit week 2005

YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS

A view from outside

When I was invited to join a meet in Skye what did I expect? What sort of people would these Yorkshire Ramblers be?

Ramblers?... I thought of Sunday afternoon strollers, of mature groups wandering gently around the Yorkshire Dales. Traditionalists, neatly dressed with polished leather boots, small rucksacs to hold their flasks of tea, and wooden walking sticks or for, the avante garde, walking poles.

I was to travel up with Adrian, although I had never met him, and had only spoken to him a couple of times on the phone. His voice was cultured, certainly not broad Yorkshire.

He also lived in North Wales! Not quite my stereotype. I collected lots of kit together, flung it into the car and made my way to his house after work.

When I arrived there wasn't a whippet in sight and the flat caps must all have been put away before I turned up. Neil arrived from Chepstow a few minutes later. Chepstow? Again he didn't fit the mould. Nor did the attitudes. No boots were to be seen, only approach shoes, nor were there any breeches, sticks or walking poles, and gear was pared to the minimum - 2 pairs of socks, one on and one drying was the theory. Nor did either of them fit the image of the middle aged Rambler, both looked lean, honed and fit.

The story of the trip itself is told elsewhere, but suffice it to say that when we were all assembled there was not a Yorkshire accent among us, and no one rambled. Their idea of a rest day was to go over Clach Glas, a worthwhile objective in its own right.

Indeed, had it not been for the rain they were up for ticking off The Prow (it's in 'Hard Rock') on Blaven as well.

This attitude I was to learn during the course of the week. Tim had told me about the camp they established near the road at the far end of the Greater Traverse, and Adrian's notes confirmed "This can be reached easily from the car park near Kirkbost".

I hadn't bothered to check out his grid reference, and when I asked how far we were going they said it was just over the ridge. I took this to be the ridge about 300 yards away not the one on the horizon, so finished up carrying my bivi-kit for three miles in a rucksac liner, thinking all the time that we must almost be there.

Adrian's notes on the Traverse were succinct, in true Yorkshire fashion:

"Sgurr nan Gillian West Ridge; a serious place. Eyes shut and move quickly"....."Clach Glas ascent; often solo'd. A slip could be terminal". "Could be terminal"? That's a bit of true Yorkshire understatement!

Aaron picked up on his comment on Naismith's Route, which Adrian described as a "straight forward 40ft. climb".

Aaron pointed out that in his guide it warranted an entire page, while Adrian dismissed it in just four words. Could it really be so straightforward? Only then did it emerge that Adrian had never actually climbed it, and somewhat disingenuously he pointed to the space between the words "straight" and "forward", suggesting that it was straight (it wasn't) and it was the way forward. Well, to those like him used to climbing HVS or above it probably was straightforward, to those of us who weren't it just felt like HVS did 20 years ago!

Certainly by the end of the week I had no doubts: "Ramblers"? certainly not in my book, but amongst the most capable mountaineers I have ever encountered; ageing inevitably, but still undertaking expeditions that others half their age would be proud to complete.

A good week, with good company, just a shame the weather wasn't good for more of the time.

Olly Burrows



NEIL, SGURR ALASTAIR
AND THEARLAICH



OLLY, DAWN VIEW TO
SGURR ALASTAIR



NEIL AND RED CUILLIN FROM
SGURR NAN GILLEAN



LOCH CORUIK
AND BLA BHEINN



NIC AND TIM,
DAWN VIEW SOUTH

ACROSS THE MOORS FOR FORTY MILES

Following recent articles about the North York Moors and the Lyke Wake in particular, Andy Anderson has dug up from his scrapbook, an old article from *The Dalesman* in 1956, about the early crossings. It is reprinted here for the interest of newer members by courtesy of the present editor of that publication. When I discussed this with Andy he modestly forgot to mention that he was one of the named intrepid souls involved in this epic half a century ago.

SO MANY PARTIES HAVE TRAVERSED THE ROUGH COUNTRY FROM SCARTH WOOD MOOR TO RAVENSCAR, AS SUGGESTED ORIGINALLY BY THE DALESMAN, THAT THE ROUTE HAS BECOME A LONG DISTANCE CLASSIC.

THE complete traverse of the North Yorkshire Moors from Scarth Wood Moor in the East to Ravenscar in the West was first completed inside twenty four hours by ten members of the York Mountaineering Club and four other walkers in October, 1955. The route, about forty miles as you walk, is a magnificent one, crossing all the highest points of the moors and including only about a mile of metalled road.

Several attempts were made to repeat the walk last winter and early spring, but all failed, either from bad conditions or weakness in map and compass work and path-finding. There are practically no tracks, and the Cleveland Moors can be very deceptive. Mist makes a compass essential over wide stretches of featureless moor.

Now so many parties have gone across that the route has become a long-distance classic, and that if no two parties take quite the same path, a path would very soon be worn even in the tough heather of Cleveland!

Whitby, Northallerton, Loftus and other Youth Clubs combined to put nearly forty people on the moor one week-end, and twenty-two, including one girl, Joyce

Fletcher, of Loftus, completed the route within the time limit of twenty four hours. Donald Wogd and David Richardson made the fastest crossing, in eighteen hours. At fifty years of age Mr. Charles Smales, leader of Grangetown Boys' Club, took twenty hours. Jim. Tierney, of Grangetown, who was in an orthopaedic hospital two years ago encased in a spinal jacket, completed the walk with five minutes to spare.

The organiser of this effort was Mr. Ronald Sowden, of Whitby, who did the walk himself in twenty hours. Whitby Round Table members took a breakfast of bacon and eggs to the walkers in their bivouac round the ruined inn of Hamer. under Shunner Howe.

DAY-TIME TREK

A WEEK after that two walkers, Messrs. E. A. Hopkins and F. W. Barwise - came up from London and combined with another York Mountaineering Club member, Derek Wilson, to make the first daylight attempt. They left the Triangulation Pillar at 6-11 a.m. and reached Ravenscar at 7-38 in the very fast time of just under thirteen and a half hours. One man, Barwise, had to drop out with blisters and was evacuated from Blakey ridge by a supporting motor cyclist, Tony Lea, who was himself in the first party last October. There was a strong wind, at times cross, but often pushing from behind. That same weekend a lone walker, Chris Readman, a Middlesbrough Rover Scout did the walk in thirteen hours, but not having had any

previous contact or instructions he did not quite follow the right route. Nevertheless, to walk alone was a first-class effort.

The challenge was now out to do the walk in twelve hours, and the following week-end Yorkshire Ramblers' Club turned up at Osmotherley in force. How the Queen Catherine hotel managed to squeeze in thirty-odd people is not known, but some slept in the dining room and some in the lounge and two people headed hopefully with sleeping bags to the bar.

WELL ORGANISED

YORKSHIRE Ramblers' Club, founded in 1892, is one of the most senior dubs in the country, and their organisation is superb. Everyone had full instructions as to route, compass bearings and landmarks, and several supporting parties in cars established five victualling posts; at Clay Bank Top, Blakey, Hamer, Tom Cross Rigg and Helwath Bridge.

The results were commensurate with the effort and forethought put into this planning. Twenty men set off, and nineteen completed the walk. The twentieth was unlucky. He tripped in a hole on Fylingdales Moor and fell badly. Two men, P. A. Warsop and David Haslam, went all out from the start, reaching Clay Bank Top (over all the front line of hills) in two hours. They trotted downhill and on the flat where possible, and crossed the tough deep heather of Wheeldale Moor in an hour and twenty minutes.

Unfortunately this revived an old strain in David Haslam's groin and he had to crawl on from there. He struggled pluckily on to the finish in fourteen and a half hours. Warsop, however, kept up his pace-having benefited thus far by Haslam's local knowledge, and was able to achieve the goal of twelve hours.

His times were - Triangulation Pillar 4-31 a.m., Raven Hall Hotel 6-30 p.m. C. Large, W. J. Anderson and J. A. Medley also returned excellent times of 12.27, 12.47 and 12.52 respectively.

SPEED NOT THE POINT

ORGANISED efforts such as this require a great deal of planning, and of support from other people who are perhaps unable to contemplate doing such a walk now themselves, but who can thereby be part of a team. And it is good that energetic young people should try to pit their energy and endurance against such challenges.

It would be a pity, however, if this walk became merely a matter of record breaking. No one except a cross-country runner with marker flags is going to do a much better time than twelve hours. That is not really the point of this walk at all. In fact it might be better to insist that the walk should not be done in less than twenty-two hours!

It is a great experience to cross Wheeldale Moor in the darkness. And for many people the only way they can do this walk, after working Saturday mornings, is to start in the afternoon or evening, walk until dark, bivouac for a time, then complete the walk on Sunday morning-because they have to get back from Ravenscar by public transport on the Sunday afternoon and evening. And I hope many parties will continue to enjoy this magnificent walk in this more leisurely fashion.

The usual way is to do it from west to east, though Cleveland Mountaineering Club have performed an east-west crossing. They met two other parties crossing the opposite way. The prevailing wind being south-westerly, the heather leans against a party coming from the east, and this can add considerably to fatigue.

FIRST CLASS TREK

SOME parties cross from Scarth Wood Moor over Snilesworth Moor and the head of Scugdale, down a spur into Chop Gate in Bilsdale, and then up on to Urra Moor and Botton Head from Bilsdale Hall. This is a fine tough crossing, but misses out one of the finest sections of the route, that along the front line of the Cleveland Hills.

What is hardly within the spirit of the route is to go up Scugdale itself and over by the track into Chop Gate. Otherwise the route is now fairly well established by Botton Head, Loose Howe, Shunner Howe, Wheeldale Howe, Simon Howe, Lilla Howe and Pye Rigg Howe.

All who do it agree that, although not perhaps quite so tough as the Seven Peaks walk, this is a first-class trek which will always be a challenge to fitness and to path-finding.

RULES OF THE CLEVELAND LYKE WAKE CLUB

When thoo frae hence away art passed,
Ivvery neet an' all,
Ti Whinny Moor thoo comes at last,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

Traditional Cleveland "Lyke Wake Dirge."

1. Members of the above Club -or "Dirgers" -are those who complete the crossing of the North Yorkshire Moors from Osmotherley to Ravenscar in twenty-four hours.

2: Starting point is Triangulation Pillar, near the television station on Scarth Wood Moor, above Osmotherley, and finishing point the bar of the Raven Hall Hotel ! - Walk may be done in the opposite direction.

3. Route must cross Stokesley-Helmsley road between Point 842 Clay Bank Top and Point 503 Orterley Lane End; the Whitby-Pickering road between Point 945 (N. of Sil Howe

Quarries) and Point 701 N. of Saltersgate; the Whitby-Scarborough road between Point 538 S. of Evan Howe and Point 526 Helwath Bridge, and must keep to the tops as far as possible.

4. Names of members are inscribed on the Goulton Tankard, and it is hoped to hold an annual walk apart from individual attempts. Individual tankards may be presented for any outstanding achievement.

5. It has been usual to start between noon and 5 p.m. one day, bivouac half way, and finish by the same time next day. An attempt will be made this spring to complete the walk in daylight---dawn to dusk.

6. The distance is thirty-four miles as the crow flies, about forty as you walk, but going is pretty tough - deep heather, bog and bracken for long stretches.

7. No one should attempt this unless after hard training. A good map and compass are essential. In conditions of mist the moors can be dangerous and Wheeldale Moor is particularly difficult. Only experienced walkers should attempt this alone, and a party of three or four is preferable.

8. For checking of times, ring Hutton Rudby 406 from Osmotherley before starting, and check in with Mr. Cooper, manager of the Raven Hall Hotel.



With usual understatement the meet (June 15-17th 1956) report was brief and differed marginally from this report.

"A total of 25 walkers turned out for the Cleveland Lyke Wake Walk together with 10 supporting members distributed as victuallers along the route. Despite low cloud and occasional rain all but 2 completed the course of 40 miles. The first man arrived in just under 12 hours and 3 others in under 13. All enjoyed excellent hospitality in the Raven Hall Hotel."

KIBO

Michael Smith

Looking for a final family trip before the 'children' were likely to be off on ventures of their own I was surprised when Helen suggested the equatorial volcanic peak, Kilimanjaro. Despite being a popular objective and having a good infrastructure to support trekkers, at over 19 000 ft, it is a serious undertaking.

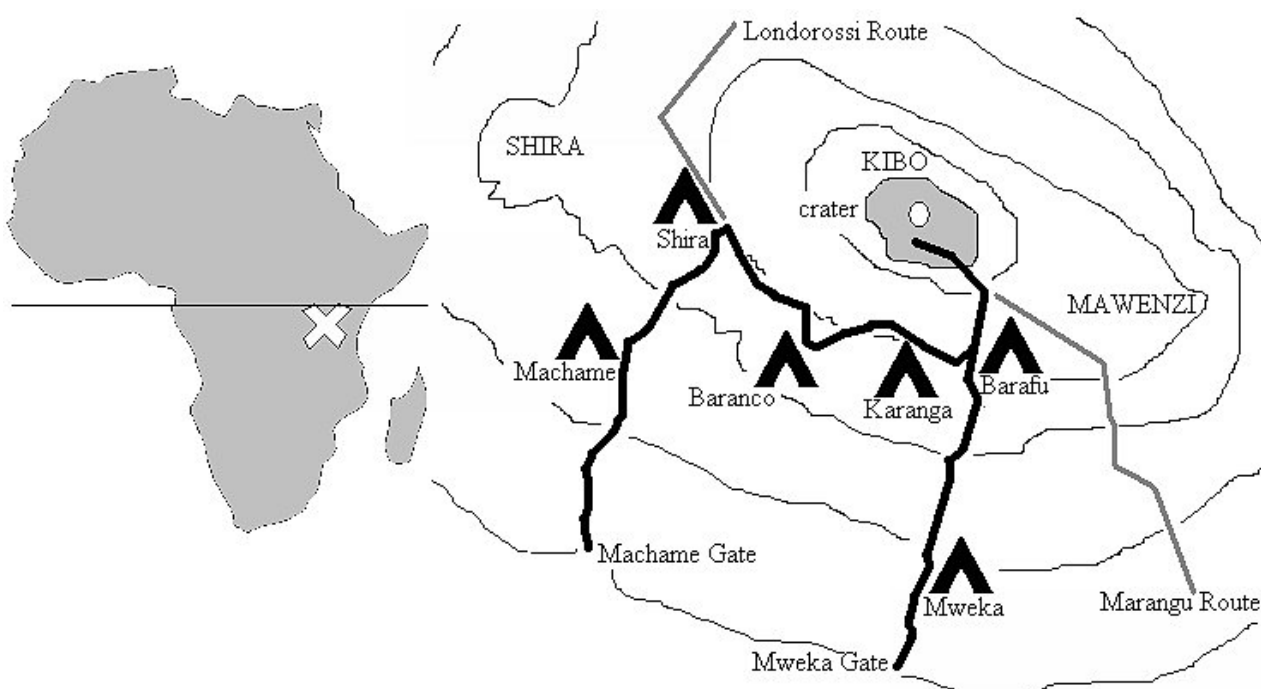
Only about half of those who attempt it succeed in reaching the summit. At the height of the season two hundred or more a day arrive at its foot from, as we observed, America, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, South Africa and Rawtenstall. Add two to three times as many guides, cooks and porters and you can imagine the size of the campsites along the routes.

Kilimanjaro is the name for the massif of three volcanic peaks:

Shira, with its top blasted away in a explosive eruption; Kibo, with the highest point in Africa on its intact crater rim; and Mawenzi, so steeply towered that it is purely climbers' territory. They have not erupted for 100,000 years.

A little research uncovered the current choice of routes to the central peak, Kibo, with the five-day Marangu or Coca-Cola route being the shortest and using a line of Norwegian huts and the Londerossi Route being much longer and approaching from the Kenyan side via Shira, one of the three tops of Kilimanjaro.

We settled on the Machame route, taking seven days, six of ascent, because its reputation for being attractive and allowing adequate time for acclimatisation. We booked flights with Ethiopian Airlines into Kilimanjaro International Airport several months ahead as this appears to be an access bottleneck during the dry season of our summer.



On personal recommendation we engaged Shah Tours for the logistical support. They are neither the cheapest nor the most luxurious - no chairs, table, tablecloth and napkin for your midday feeding unlike one American outfit - but they have exactly what you need where and when you need it without any frills. For the four of us they provided a guide-cook with assistant and eight porters.

Over the intervening months a few further sources of information filled in more detail of what we might expect. Carl Phillips' description of an ascent of the Machame route elaborated on the effects of altitude including optical illusions. Teessider Coupland's detailed but inexperienced perspective on the route from Shira onwards did help us refine our kit lists. Both these accounts described wet weather in what is taken to be the dry season. Perhaps of more impact was the video of an ascent including 64 year-old Audrey Salkeld's comments. This allowed us to view the conditions and make our own judgements of what we required.

There is little point in providing a step by step account of the route since such information is readily available from the sources mentioned and endless web-based accounts. Instead let me look at two problematic aspects of the venture. Firstly, acclimatisation and mountain sickness then, some ethical aspects of the use of porters.

Our chosen route initially reached 12,600ft quickly, then spent three days mainly traversing the slopes round to 15,500ft though with the odd excursion somewhat higher. This should aid acclimatisation. The pre-trip briefing warned us to expect loss of appetite at the higher camps. Perhaps it was the appetising food we were given or our Yorkshire stomachs but we noticed no such

loss. We did drink a lot of water which we iodine treated and neutralised or Aquapure filtered since it was often turbid.

By 15 000 ft there was a clear difference in effort needed to move uphill compared with downhill on even a slight gradient. The final six-hour ascent to the rim, made entirely in darkness, gained 4,000ft mostly by a zig-zagging path on steep ground. This stretched each of us to our limit. Having a cold I was experiencing breathing difficulties and after a few hours I realised I was stumbling but was feeling quite detached from my predicament. Keeping one metre apart and placing one foot in front of the other in our pools of head-torch light, we moved like automata for an hour at a time and then only stopping for a few minutes.



Earlier I had been aware of the route and commenting on the constellations but as the cold wind encroached, my consciousness diminished and I knew I must act. I called a halt to eat chocolate and the guide took my 6-7kg rucksack. Then I was able to keep a steady, if slow pace. Both Helen and Fiona were feeling the cold especially in their feet and hands. Richard, still carrying his sack, was so tired he could happily have sat for a while at the rim, short of the summit, and then turned to descend.

Now was this lassitude due to the altitude, the gradient, the cold wind or our diurnal cycle expecting us to be asleep? I suspect our body clocks and the energy sapping wind chill were significant factors exacerbating the effects of altitude. There is though no way of knowing from a single ascent.

The sun climbing in the sky while we sat on the crater's rim, a hot drink and our guide's determination saw us soon on the move over the gentle gradients to Uhuru Peak and back.

Leaving the rim back to camp brought about a rapid rejuvenation and we were crunching down the lava crumb scree in fine style raising clouds of fine dust. We were still at altitude though the temperature was rising and our bodies were expecting activity.

So why are Kibo's ascents made in the night when a dawn start could be made? It is not to avoid rock fall which is not a problem on this route. I suspect it is to get that day's climbers, down and away from the campsite down to Mweka before the next day's hordes arrive and need feeding and bedding down for the night. The Barafu site has limited flat pitches for tents and all water has to be brought by porters from over an hour away.

And so to those porters. Our guide generally used porters from his own town and others he already knew who he'd warned to make their own way to the park gate. Extra porters he could select from the scores crowding the park gate and occasionally being beaten back by a soldier with a long stout stick.



The available workforce exceeded demand but the crowd assembled daily each with their inadequate mountain kit in hope of employment.

If hired they earned \$10 a day though this reduced to \$7/8 once they had paid for their keep - shared tent and the broth or gruel typical of most homes. A tip of \$20/25 was normal making about \$75 for the week in a country where the average weekly per capita income is about \$10.

The regulation of trekking in the National Park, though occasionally circumvented, protects porters from exploitation by overloading and all their work is on paths below the snow line.

One of the Japanese trekkers wanted to know if we thought it was fair treatment. She obviously did not. While it would be better if they were better equipped we considered the arrangement acceptable. The wage was good and the keep adequate by local standards. There was a clear progression route for the most able and willing from porter through assistant guide to guide. A guide should earn enough to put his children through secondary school, a rarity in Tanzania.

The trekking arrangements have brought a degree of prosperity to an area that would otherwise see people either engaged in subsistence farming or working on the coffee plantations which are struggling with low export prices. Tourism is second only to mining as a foreign income earner. Our view was that booking the flights and trek with local businesses we were making a direct contribution to local incomes and that the porters were not being exploited but gradually improving their conditions through

employment and gifts of equipment from trekkers. The porters certainly appeared enthusiastic.

At the end of our trip we handed over a pair of boots, a sleeping mat, some medicines and a tent some members may recall. It was a brown three-hoped Phoenix Falcon tent with red snow valance originally obtained for the 1988 Bolivian trip and used again in 1999 besides many camping meets. It is presumably now spending its last years yo-yoing on Kilimanjaro.

A venerable Club member asked if this was the first of the Seven? Certainly not but it is an interesting trek even if you don't bother with the summit.

The flora is justifiably renowned, the people friendly and the landscape fascinating - all before you start on the safari possibilities of the Serengeti, Lake Manyara and Ngorongoro.

We were delighted with the trip.

Sources:

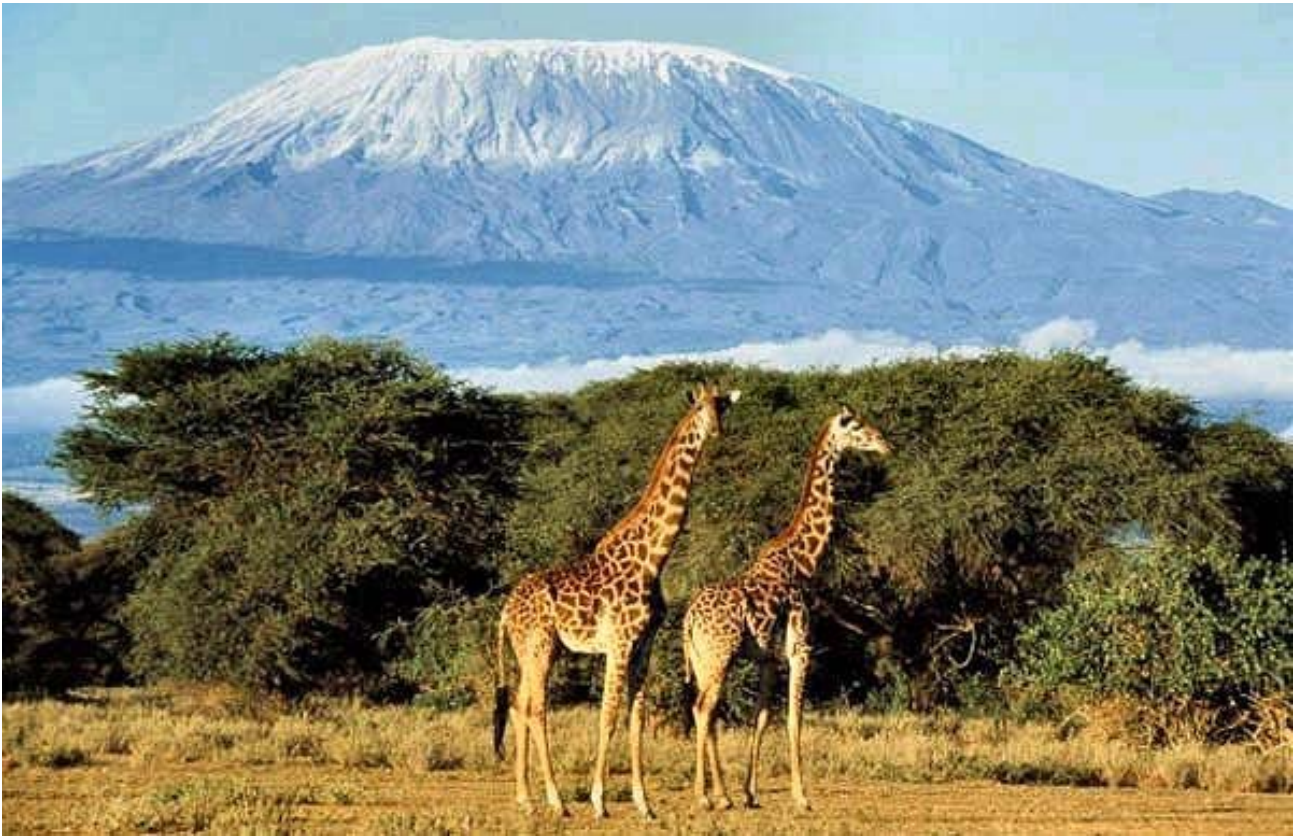
David Breashears' DVD, *Kilimanjaro - To the Roof of Africa*, 2002.

Stephen W. Coupland's privately published *The Roof of Africa*, 2001.

Carl Phillips' essay, *The height of obsession*, Guardian Review, 21 May 2005, 4-6.

Shah Tours P.O.Box 1821, Moshi, Tanzania (www.kilimanjaro-shah.com) mountain guide, John, and Beda Hyera, wildlife guide, bedahyera@yahoo.com or Box 12442, ARUSHA, Tanzania.

Aquapure Traveller water purifier and filter from BUPA, Field & Trek, MASTA, etc.



KILIMANJARO



DOLOMITES MEET - JUNE 19TH - JULY 2ND



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

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

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

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

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

Gabrielle again - Mon 20th June

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

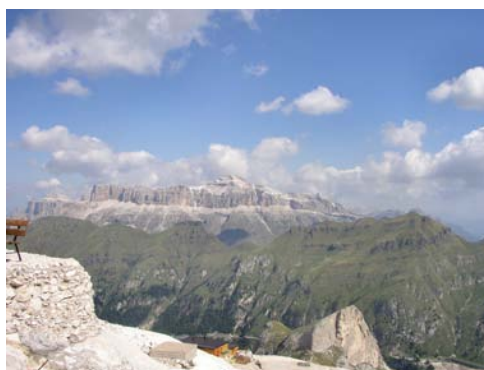
Within 5 minutes of setting off down (too long in the loo) the rain started, soon changing to snow and hail. This section of the way was

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

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

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

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



PIZ BOE FROM REFUGE FACIONI

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

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

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

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

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

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



HEADING FOR PIZ BOE
FROM PARDOI CABLE CAR



APPROACHING VALON DEL FOS
ROUTE 627 TO PIZ BOE



VALON DEL FOS



SELLA GROUP
FROM ROUTE 627

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

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

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

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



TOP OF PIZ BOE



DAVID RETURNING TO PARDOI CABLE CAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WAL

In attendance;

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



MARMOLADA
LIFT

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





SASSO PIATO AFTER STORM



ITALIAN ALPINE CLUB



ALBERT BEPI VAC (508)
CORBELLA IN MIST



MARMOLADA
FROM ALTA VIA DOMITI



SELLE GROUP AFTER STORM



SELLE GROUP, PIZ GRALBA 2964m



SASSO PIATTO SASSO LUNGA SELLA TOWERS



NORTH SIDE OF SASSO LUNGA



LIFT TO REFUGE DEMETZ



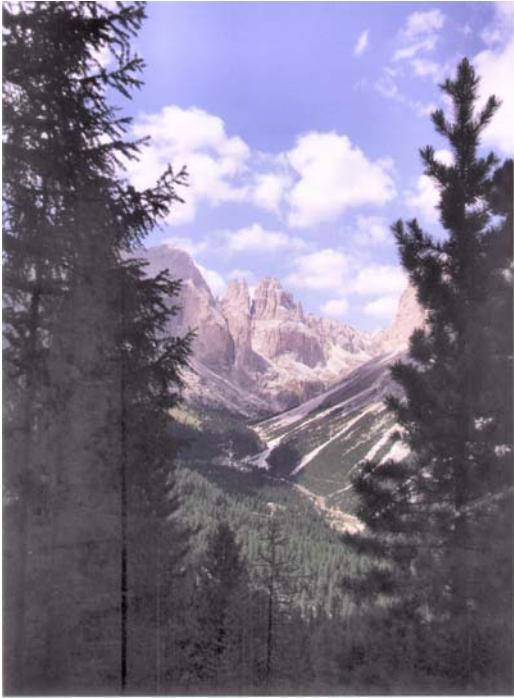
SASSO LUNGA COL FROM NORTH



DETAILS OF PLANT IDENTITIES ON PAGE 56



VAJOLET TOWERS AND KING LAUREN'S ROSENGARTEN



KING LAUREN'S GARDEN

Ken Aldred, Dolomites 2005

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An illustrated copy is available in the YRC library.

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

A GARDENER'S FRIEND

THE BLACKBIRD AND ITS COUSINS

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

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

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

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

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

There are several members of the thrush family to be found in Britain. Amongst the less common are the ring ousel which are greyish rather than jet black like the blackbird. They have a white chest but as occasional blackbirds do as well this can be confusing. Ringed ousels are rarely seen in gardens.

The WWF is on record as fearing that the song thrush could be extinct within a decade. This problem is thought to be largely due to loss of suitable environment. This now rare bird has an orange under wing but nothing like as pronounced as the redwing which together with the fieldfare are also of this family and regular winter visitors.

Its cousin the mistle thrush is doing rather better and is a bigger bird but nothing like as melodious. This thrush is so named after its fondness of the mistletoe berry for food. It has other names in parts of the country where this plant is not common such as the holm thrush. This is a derivative of the word holly and reflects another seasonal delicacy which this bird enjoys. Another name it bears is storm cock which reflects its habit of singing to defend a territory or attract a mate during the winter months when most birds are lying low. It is a very territorial bird and males will defend good food sources against all comers.

It is not entirely a fruit eater and like other members of the thrush family will happily take insects, grubs and worms when fruits are no longer available. Thrushes also employ an 'anvil', a stone where they like to break open snail shells to get at the juicy interiors and there is a rock in my rockery constantly surrounded by broken shells.

Keep up the good work I say.

Roy Denney

OF GARDENS

FROM A HIGH PLACE

Ted, a goodly man, finally went to meet his maker and he was debriefed at the Pearly Gates by St Peter.

The story he had to tell was so perplexing that it was reported to the Boss without delay.

God decided to send St Francis down to earth to have a good look round and report back.

The following is a transcript by our special correspondent of the conversation on his return.

GOD "Francis, with all your experience of gardens and nature what in the world do you make of the goings on down there.

Whatever happened to the dandelions, violets, thistles and the like which I started aeons ago? I created a perfect, no maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with great abandon. The nectar from their long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees, and flocks of song birds and I had expected by now to see a vast garden of untold colours.

From Ted's comments and my own observations there appear to be only miles of green rectangles."

FRANCIS "Lord, I can only speak for the area I visited, where Ted used to live but I am told that it is much the same everywhere where his tribe is to be found.

These 'Suburbanites' started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass"

GOD "Grass, why it's so boring. It's not colourful and does not attract butterflies, birds or bees but only grubs and sod worms. It's susceptible to changes of temperature and precipitation.

Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?"

FRANCIS "Apparently so Lord, they go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilising the grass and poisoning the other plants which appear in these rectangles which they call lawns."

GOD "The spring rains and warmer weather must make the grass grow really fast. This must make the Suburbanites very happy"

FRANCIS "Apparently not Lord, As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, often several times a week."

GOD "They cut it! Do they bale it for hay then?"

FRANCIS "Not exactly, Most of them rake it up and put it in bags."

GOD "They bag it! Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?"

FRANCIS "No Sir - just the opposite. They pay to throw it away."

GOD "Now let me get this straight. They fertilise grass so it will grow, and when it does grow they cut it off and pay to throw it away?"

FRANCIS "Yes that right Lord.

GOD "These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rains and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work."

FRANCIS "You are going to find this hard to believe Lord, but when the grass stops growing fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so that they can continue to mow it to pay money to get rid of it."

GOD "What nonsense! At least they kept some of the trees. That was a stroke of genius though I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves that provide beauty in the spring and shade in the summer.

In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus as they rot the leaves form compost which enhances the soil. It's a natural cycle of life."

FRANCIS "You had better sit down Lord.

The Suburbanites have drawn a new cycle. As soon as the leaves fall they rake them into piles and pay to have them hauled away"

GOD" No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?"

FRANCIS "After throwing the leaves away they go out and buy something called mulch. They haul it home then spread it around in place of the leaves."

GOD "And where do they get the mulch?"

FRANCIS "They cut down trees and grind them up to make mulch"

GOD "Enough, I don't want to hear any more"

DOLOMITES BOTANICAL REPORT

Where does one start when asked to write a short account of the flowers found on our trip to the Dolomites ?

The separate article on King Lauren's Rose Garden covers some of the flowers of the area but no article on the YRC Dolomites meet can do justice to the magnificent views we encountered throughout our stay.

On our first day we drove to the top of the Sella Pass to find ourselves, in the car, passing far more groups of the "King of the Alps", *Eritrichium nanum*, than I have previously seen, in total, in thirty years of Alpine visits. This plant, which is difficult to grow at home, and which won two prizes at the Harrogate Show two years ago, covered vast areas of the hillside and the grass margins at the roadside.

At the top of the pass, in great abundance, were the Globe Flowers, *Trollius europaeus* and various gentians which we identified as *G. acaulis* and *G. verna* but which probably included *G. bavarica* and *G. brachyphylla*.

One plant described in a number of publications is *Androsace hausmannii*, a beautiful small cushion plant which is very desirable in the Alpine gardening world but which is almost restricted to the Dolomites and a few other limestone areas. We searched, not too diligently perhaps, but it was not until the last day when the meet leader took us up to the Marmolada Glacier and we had spent some time scrambling on the ice worn rocks at the foot, that it was decided to take a walk along the road above the Fedaiia lake.

There on the vertical walls, together with dwarf ferns, were numerous small samples of this most delightful plant. By small, it should be appreciated that a single open hand would have covered most of the plants. The walls looked solid with only the smallest of cracks in them.

Farrer describes *Silene pumillio*, which we also found, as a cushion plant, one foot across, a quarter of an inch high but having a root mass one yard in length! How would you set about growing that in your garden at home? The *Silene* does grow on horizontal scree but this information indicates the problems of trying to copy the natural growing conditions of alpine plants.

The mountain aven, *Dryas octopetala* was common, as was the alpine aven, *Geum montanum*.

The dwarf thistle, *Carlina acaulis*, was not seen in flower but a number of the flat seed heads were found in the rough meadow land.

Alpine ladies mantle, *Alchemilla alpina* was in abundance in many areas, as was the round leaved wintergreen, *Pyrola rotundifolia*.

The tall fleshy leaves of the yellow gentian, *G. lutea*, together with the dotted gentian, *G. punctata* were noted in a number of wet areas but none were seen in flower.

Ken Aldred

Plants shown on page 50

AN ABUNDANCE OF WILD FLOWERS - TL
SAXIFRAGA OPPOSITIFOLIA - TC
DOUGLASIA (ANDROSACE) VITALIANA - TR
ASTRAGULUS ALPINUS (ALPINE MILK VETCH) - ML
GENTIANA VERNA (SPRING GENTIAN) - MC
LEONTOPODIUM ALPINUM (EDELWEISS) - MR
PRIMULA HALLERI - BL
MYOSOTIS APESTRIS (ALPINE FORGET-ME-NOT) - BR

THE MUNROS

Tony Smythe

Earlier this month (September 2005) I walked up to the cairn on Meall nan Eun, a minor Munro east of Glen Etive, and looking furtively around me shouted "Yes!" Not normally prone to such exhibitionism I felt that I was allowed a celebratory shout, just that once. It was my last Munro, the final one of the 284, and the end of a pursuit that had begun unwittingly, in Skye in 1955, continued in earnest about 40 years later, and fulfilled after 50 years.

So how do I feel about it? Certainly not triumphant. Moderately pleased I suppose, and faintly relieved that I have entered the last tick before I myself am entered for the biggest tick of all! I also have the feeling that it doesn't really amount to more than a goodish amount of walking in Scotland and I am in the same position as the American couple who said, "Europe? Sure - we had a coupla weeks last year and did Europe."

So what are the positives and what was the point? Like many others in the Club, rock climbing in my early years was a much bigger thing than just walking in the hills. However at the end of a climb it was customary and pleasant to walk on to the top of something, so in that way I got to the top of Munros in Skye, Glencoe, Lochnagar and Ben Nevis of course. I certainly didn't look to see if something was 3,000 feet high - I don't actually remember hearing the term Munro in those days. Nice little peaks like Suilven, or Merrick, well short of 914 metres, made a good day out if we weren't climbing. I didn't actually get to Scotland much, living in the south of England. By the '80s, when I had rejoined the YRC (I was a member for a short time in the '50s) and rock climbing had largely fallen into

disrepair, I was accompanying George Spenceley on his desultory picking off of Munros - peaks like Ben Lui, and Ben More Assynt in the far north on a YRC meet, on which George saw a golden eagle and I marvelled at the thousands of frogs on the boggy path.

So the 'collection' had gradually built up without any purpose or intent to about 60 by the time my wife and I moved up to the Lakes in 1993. Pretty soon after that, with more free time since I was semi-retired I realised that with Scotland now closer at hand, doing the Munros more systematically would be a wonderful way, with that element of discipline to help, of seeing many more parts of Scotland that had until then eluded me. And so it has proved.

The discipline I mentioned has been necessary, for me at any rate. There has been an element of drudgery in going back two or three times to a peak or group of peaks that foul weather has denied me, such as a quartet in the Fisherfield forest that I finally managed not long ago. As a result of being very unwilling to have to make more than one attempt I have rarely turned back in bad weather and my map and compass skills have improved greatly in recent years. Mostly I've been on my own and this has posed its own threat at times - the main danger being my wife alerting the rescue services if I fail to phone in! As probably most people know, mobile coverage in most of the Highland glens is non-existent, but often you can get a signal on a summit, so apologies to those souls with me at various cairns who have had to endure my mutterings into my phone.

I can't imagine having done all this without my camper van. Preferring to have time in hand at the end of the day rather than the other way round, I have usually made crack of dawn starts, especially when I have decided to go

for a long day on a string of say 5 or 6 peaks. My earliest start was probably 3.20 a.m. from the car park of the Cluanie Inn when I did the 7 Munros on the ridge north of Glen Shiel. It's wonderful, even alarming, how close you get to deer at that hour, and of course being on the tops at sunrise beggars description. These early starts would have been difficult or impossible staying B & B, and suffering from a delicate back, camping has long lost its appeal for me. Which brings me to the subject of midges.

I admit to being somewhat of a wimp about insects, biting insects, as George will confirm (but he is OK - there is something about the taste of him that is not to their liking). But since it would be very difficult to do Munros without a winged accompaniment much of the time I have had to develop strategies. A repellent that is 50% deet is about right - 100% rots clothes and you never get rid of the smell - so a small bottle of this is very much part of my survival gear. Defences have to extend beyond mere repellent, which is for out and about use only. My van is as midge-proof as I can make it, but they still get in in small numbers at the worst times - I think it must be through rust holes in the vehicle bodywork, or possibly the ventilation system. I remember when I went down the Yukon River in a powered dinghy with Barrie Biven the mosquitoes were so bad that we understood that an unprotected person could die in four days from blood loss. I am not claiming that I have come across midges of that calibre, but I have once or twice looked out of the van window on a dead calm, humid, overcast, warm, deep forest, lakeside, August evening, and reached for a cloth to wipe the steamed up window and realised that it wasn't the window steamed up, it was the cloud of midges outside. Of course one could be a winter Munroist, but few of mine have been done in the winter. The van is easily blocked and unable to escape from snow, daylight can

be dreadfully short to accomplish your climb, and the dark evenings are unbearably long and cold unless there is a pub nearby. The van will also eat up butane, now at £13 for a small bottle. It's a pity that I haven't been very courageous about the practical side of Munroing in a van in the winter, because I love axe and crampon work and snow generally. On the subject of cost, doing the Munros must have been quite expensive in petrol. In recent years my Transit van, at 25 mpg has cost anything up to £100 per trip and I don't suppose I've averaged as many as 6 summits each time. Do the maths for yourself!

A bike has been a godsend. I used to have an old drop-handlebar road bike, but this was highly dangerous on rough tracks, so for some years I've had a mountain bike with lovely fat nobby tyres. You have to be prepared to lift the bike over a deer gate about 14 feet high, but you develop a technique for that (balance it on the top and hope it doesn't fall off before you've got round the other side). The thought of a bike waiting after say a big Cairngorm round, when you've got final miles to get back along the estate road to Deeside, is bliss. I've always been a bit nervous about the temptation proving too much for a bikeless walker chancing across it, so I've taken elaborate precautions to hide the machine behind heathery humps, etc, well off the track. And if ever there's a time to have a spare inner tube, pump, and tyre levers, it's in the middle of nowhere when there's only an hour of daylight left, as I once discovered to my cost.

What about magic moments? There must be too many to single any out. Qualities of light and weather that you photograph but know can't be captured. Skye floating in the blue from Ben Alder, 70 miles away. The aurora from the Ben Nevis plateau on a December night. A lone rowan in a stream bed catching the evening sun, when you're coming down tired

and the mind is sort of floating and free of every worry. Wonderful bits of the old Caledonian forest inviting a rest among the trees. Ben Lomond, which I ran up from the loch in an hour and five minutes on a summer evening in shorts, plimsoles and carrying a mars bar. The Cuillin Ridge of course, which I didn't quite finish, on a hot August day in 1955. Ghillies and estate workers you stop to have a chat with, men who know so much more than you do about that bit of country and its wild creatures.

Interesting moments too, such as a wind of hurricane force on Blaven which at one moment stopped a major waterfall and blew it back where it had come from. A planned bivouac on A' Mhaighdean when I found a large boulder to sleep under below the NW ridge and woke up to a night as dark as any I've ever known. Literally couldn't see my hand in front of my face.

And the worst moments? Not very many bad moments, fortunately, but usually relating to extreme discomfort, cold and wet. I can never really accept totally saturated boots, even though it's usually par for the course in Scotland. A worrying moment quite recently on Ben More in Mull, when I unthinkingly followed a path rather than take the pinnacley bits of the NE ridge direct, and the path meandered on and on more or less level, while the ridge rose out of sight in the mist alongside. Eventually the path petered out uncertainly, leaving me standing on a steep cliff face of unknown depth, short of time and unwilling to go back (as perhaps I should have done) and having to get my mind right for the climb out above me back to the ridge. That strange little voice that issues advice on occasions like this, which this time said something like, 'you're going to have to climb it in your soggy bendy boots. It *should* be straightforward but if it gets difficult remember you used to climb rocks a whole lot

harder than anything this can offer. But *on no account* hurry it or climb anything you feel you can't reverse because there just could be something you can't climb higher up.'

Of course it was easy and I was soon on the ridge and then at the cairn, but I hadn't heard that little voice in a while and it was quite sobering.

So, in retrospect, I'm really happy with all the wonderful days the Munros have given me. They must have been much more of an achievement when there were no paths beaten by the hordes of people now doing them. But there are still great lengths of heather moorland to be crossed without easy tracks to use. And I've had a surprising number of days when I've never seen another soul.

Will I now move on to do the Corbetts? I think not. Like the Americans in Europe I haven't really *done* anything, so everything is always new, and whether it's a Munro, Corbett, Graham, Marilyn or a river bank that I chance upon in the future in Scotland it will be nice not to have a list to consult!



NEPAL - MY FIRST TRIP

Ken Aldred

In early 1985, having finished a short working spell in India with Mike Allan of the Wayfarers' Club, it seemed sensible to take advantage of our situation in Calcutta and to see something of the mountains.

The initial idea was to travel to Kathmandu but our contact in Calcutta persuaded us to try Gangtok where, he assured us, we would enjoy some magnificent scenery.

Because of some problems with the Nagar Freedom Fighters the Indian authorities wouldn't issue any travel permits beyond Darjeeling.

An overnight bus to Siliguri, on the aptly named Siliguri Express, was uneventful, but one has to travel on the bus to fully appreciate the splendour of its name. At the terminus a very polite and smartly dressed army officer strolled across and casually asked to see our travel documents. An apparently informal chat was followed by him accompanying us to the railway ticket office where he watched us buying tickets for Darjeeling. It was all so friendly but obvious that any attempt to travel further north would have been met with opposition.

The 'Toy' train from Siliguri passed through extensive tea plantations as it crossed and re-crossed the adjacent road on its way to Darjeeling. At one stop at a station on the way a chap came into our compartment taking orders for a mid-day meal. With no sign of anything resembling a restaurant car available it was a bit disconcerting to see him leave the train as it pulled away from the station. However, nothing to worry about as he re-entered the carriage about two or three stops up the line bearing piping hot food and drinks!

No chance of this on the Carlisle-Settle Line.

The weather in Darjeeling did not look promising but we booked into a hotel for two nights in the hope that the clouds would lift and we would, at least, be able to see something of the Himalayas. The following day in thick mist we climbed Tiger Hill, a recommended viewpoint for Kanchenjunga. Of course, we saw nothing.

On the way down we called in at a Raj type bungalow tea house where we were lucky

enough to get into conversation with a group of Swedish trekkers. We told them that we intended to cut our losses and to travel to Kathmandu the following day, buying one of the through tickets advertised by the Darjeeling travel agents. They stressed that this was something that we shouldn't do as we would find that no bus company would accept them once we had left Darjeeling.

This advice saved us buying worthless tickets but, in retrospect, the cost of travel was so cheap that it wouldn't have cost us a fortune, only hurt pride at having been cheated. As we left Darjeeling the clouds lifted and for almost a full minute we saw Kanchenjunga, then the clouds covered it again.

From Siliguri to the Nepalese border there was a fairly frequent bus service, something we found quite uncommon in Nepal itself. The first two buses which came along were full inside with a number of passengers on the roof so by the time the third bus came along we had worked out a strategy. Mike climbed up the ladder at the back of the bus, I threw the rucksacks up to him and then he helped me to climb up the side of the bus as by this time the ladder was occupied by non-paying passengers. The bus terminus on the Nepalese side of the border was a large open space where about twenty or thirty buses were parked. They all left for Kathmandu at the same time in the evening.

This gave us plenty of time to wander round looking, unsuccessfully, for one with some tread on all of its tyres. We eventually found one with tread on some its tyres so we felt that we had not wasted our time.

An interesting result of our choice of transport was that we found ourselves sitting opposite two characters straight out of Kim; a scantily dressed holy lama and his young chela.

In Kathmandu I paid a quick visit to a niece who was working at the hospital in Patan. She advised us not to apply for a trekking permit in Kathmandu but to travel to Pokhara without one and then to apply there at the immigration office. As I had tried, unsuccessfully, to get a re-entry visa back into India for an overland return to Delhi I was willing to try anything which could bypass some of the bureaucracy.

After two nights in Kathmandu we caught the early morning bus to Pokhara. Again, all the buses travelled in convoy. One of the possible reasons for this became apparent well before the end of the journey. Our driver stopped on a number of occasions to top up the clutch cylinder with oil from a container which didn't appear to contain clutch fluid. Before long he had to stop and wave down another driver. After a short conversation we were once more mobile, our driver having received more dubious clutch fluid in exchange for his spare wheel, complete with treadless tyre.

It was mid-afternoon when we arrived in Pokhara, so our first move was to call at the immigration office to apply for our travel permits. The army officer in charge asked a number of questions including when we intended to start our trek. When we replied "this afternoon" his eyebrows raised slightly as he asked us to take a seat outside his office. We had been through this sort of procedure in Delhi, Madras, Calcutta and Kathmandu when I had tried to obtain a re-entry visa for India so we were astonished when, within ten minutes, he came out in person with our permits and his good wishes for a pleasant trip.

Because Mike had to back at work in England we had limited time for any exploration. Also, the only map obtainable in Kathmandu was a very amateurish one produced like an old fashioned engineers' blueprint with contour

lines 1000 foot apart. Our plan was to cover as much ground as possible each day and to continue walking for an hour or two after sunset.

We had no tent although I had a duvet jacket and an extendable rucksack, quite adequate if we obtained a bed in a tea house. When we couldn't manage that we always found a villager willing to let us sleep on the covered veranda of his house.

On our first night out of Pokhara we were climbing steadily up a steep track towards Naudanda when a voice out of the darkness asked us where we were going. It belonged to a small boy who invited us to follow him to his house where his mother would allow us to sleep outside and also provide us with a meal. He appeared to be the only member of the family who spoke English, and after a short time he produced some curry and a mug of salty tea. All this, of course, had taken place in darkness so it was the next morning when we awoke that we could admire our surroundings.

A neat farmhouse on a steep hillside with cultivated terraces stretching into the distance had a few trees to add to the picture. We accepted an offer of food and were given a plate of cold curry. During the planning for the trip we had decided that in the interests of hygiene we would use our own plastic plates and mugs.

I mention this because when Mike explained to the small boy that he couldn't eat all of his curry the boy replied "No problem Sahib, I will give it to God". Or at least, that is what I thought he had said. He then took the plate to a small wooden shutter in the side of the house where, I assumed, there must be some sort of a shrine. However, when the shutter was opened it revealed a mangy, smelly goat which proceeded to lick clean the plate on offer.

Shortly after leaving the farmhouse, and the small boy with his thirteen rupees which he had requested for the hospitality, probably well over the going rate but still ridiculously cheap for the entertainment alone, we were climbing steadily up the track when over the ridge in front of us appeared a fantastic sight.

Because of a heat haze the previous day we hadn't seen anything of the Himalayan peaks to the north but here in all its glory was Machhapuchhare. Compared with what we had previously seen in the Alps this was clearly something in a different league.

I believe that a road now runs along part of the ridge through Naundanda on its way from Pokhara to Baglung airfield. In 1985 a good track linked Pokhara, Phedi, Lumle, Chandracot and then Birethanti where it crossed the Modi Khola by a substantial steel suspension bridge.

It was near one of these villages that we rose early and made our way by torchlight through the trees to watch the sun rise on Annapurna. Again, an unforgettable sight.

Beyond Birethanti the route continues to Jomsom and eventually Tibet so it carries a fair amount of traffic, some consisting of pony trains with jingling bells demanding a right of way.

The next sizeable village is Ghorapandi at the top of a steep 1700 metre climb but which would have given good views of Poon Hill. However, before that we turned eastward at Hille along an unmarked track, assuming that there would be a bridge back over the Modi Khola at Ghandruk. This turned out to be correct and also gave us a bonus on the empty track that we were able to take a shower under a waterfall, the first reasonable wash since leaving Kathmandu.

The map was of limited use but it did allow us to make our way back in the general direction of Pokhara and from here onwards we had only one night when we didn't manage to get a bed in a tea-house.

Many of the changes which have taken place over the last twenty years could be described in detail but one item which sticks in my mind is that of buying some eggs and tomatoes from the Ghurka owner of a tea house. He allowed us to have some cooking oil only after we had promised that we would return the empty container, a small Shiphams meat paste jar. He explained that it was valuable.

On a more recent visit to the Khumbu on the YRC 1996 trip we camped at Phakding. Here the path to the latrine was delineated with upturned beer bottles, half buried in the turf.

We spent a night in Pokhara before catching the bus back to Kathmandu.

It was an interesting journey as it was the Holi festival when enthusiastic participants threw red powder over each other. (don't ask why, I don't know). We had seats inside the bus but as the activities continued after the bus had started it seemed a wise move to leave the other passengers with their chickens and a goat and to climb onto the roof at the first village stop. Wise? Another feature of the celebration was to throw coloured water, either from containers or in paper water bombs, at passers by. Anyone on the roof, and we were not the only idiots, was a sitting target. At hairpin bends the marksman had a double chance of achieving success. More recently the Lonely Planet guide describes this activity as using sewer water.

From Kathmandu I had intended to travel overland to Delhi, calling in at Jaipur or Agra, but without a visa this was not possible and I

had to travel by air and remain, with an bored armed guard, in transit.

The cost of the air ticket was far greater than the cost of train, accommodation and a weeks food so I was not too pleased especially as I couldn't even get the same flight as Mike. I was in the transit hanger alone with my guard and without any sort of a drink for a couple of hours before The Nepalese flight arrived with a large influx of passengers.

Mike was with three jovial Sikhs and it appeared that they were all tipsy. As the Air India flight had limited its passengers to one tin of Heiniken, envy got the better of me and I wanted to know about the apparent better service they had received.

It was the result one of the Sikhs sitting next to Mike, standing up in the gangway when the drinks were being served and counting the seventeen Moslems on board. He then told the trolley lady that they three and his Scottish friend would have the spare drink.

The trip was far too short but it left many lasting memories and an overwhelming desire to return. The local people were without fail extremely friendly and helpful. Even without any knowledge of the language it was uncomplicated to buy a cup of tea at any time during the day while we watched an elderly man making a porter's carrying basket or an equally old lady weaving on a primitive loom.

We had a small stove and a supply of oats and some cooking chocolate which supplied us with breakfasts but we never failed to obtain an evening meal, sometimes of a basic standard, but nevertheless satisfying.

The mountains were more that we could have expected, all of them competing for attention and eliciting a firm promise that we would return.

MICHAEL PHELPS WARD **CBE. MD. FRCS** **1925- 2005**

An appreciation

Michael Ward, surgeon, mountaineer and author was the expedition doctor on the historic ascent of Mount Everest in 1953. He was a climbing member, as well as medical officer of the group but never attained the summit, because as the expedition's official doctor, he had to remain some 1,500 feet below, at Camp Seven, on the mountain's Lhotse Face.

It was his discoveries whilst examining forgotten photographs and maps in the Royal Geographic Society's archives, which identified a possible route up the Nepalese side of Everest, making achieving the summit possible.

During the first half of the 20th century, climbers could only approach Everest from the north - the Tibetan side. But after the Chinese invasion of 1950, Tibet was placed off limits to foreigners.

As a national serviceman in the Royal Army Medical Corps he came across two unmarked envelopes in the archive and inside were photographs taken on clandestine flights over Everest in the late forties, showing key features of the Nepalese side of the mountain, including the South Col and the tricky cliff just below the summit that would later become known as the 'Hillary Step'.

Around this time, Nepal, which had long been closed to outsiders, began to open its borders. Mountaineers took advantage of this and he was convinced there must be a route up Everest from there.



IMPROVEMENTS ON THE BEN

When I was in Fort William in the summer a large section of the path onto Ben Nevis was about to be repaired. It gets very real hammer with 4000 people having been recorded using it in one day this year.

The stretch by the Halfway Lochan will have 200 tonnes of stone lifted in by helicopter.

Also this summer volunteers started trying to rationalise the multitude of cairns between the zigzags and the summit. It is hoped to reduce the present 100 down to about 25 which will all be either of historical interest or of real use as way markers.

The route being promoted is to the top of Gargyloo Gully.

Scottish & Newcastle have given the John Muir Trust £10,000 for footpath maintenance work on the Ben and for developing the native woodland management scheme in the upper glen.

S&N funds will also support the production of a new guide, 'Introduction to the Wild Plants of Ben Nevis', which is being written by Will Boyd-Wallis and published in conjunction with the Nevis Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Nigel Hawkins, JMT Director, said:

"The Trust is extremely grateful for the support as, with over 100,000 ascents each year, maintenance work on the main Ben Nevis footpath is essential. The native woodland management scheme in upper Glen Nevis, where we are working towards the regeneration of woodland habitat such as birch, aspen, rowan, Scots pine, alder and holly, will benefit too"

Considered one of Britain's finest climbers in the years after World War II, Dr. Ward became an authority on high-altitude medicine.

In 1951, together with Bill Murray, he initiated and took part in Shipton's invaluable reconnaissance and in 1951/2; he worked on high altitude medical problems.

He was the author of numerous books on mountaineering and its physiological effects.

He co-wrote 'High Altitude Medicine and Physiology' (University of Pennsylvania, 1989), and wrote amongst other books, 'Everest: A Thousand Years of Exploration' (Ernest Press, 2003) and a memoir, 'In This Short Span' (Gollancz, 1972).

After the successful 1953 expedition he became a consultant surgeon and had spent the last 50 years exploring the mountains of Asia, and working on high-altitude medical research.

As a boy, he had become sold on climbing after reading 'Camp Six' (Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), by F. S. Smythe, an account of the 1933 failed attempt on Everest.

RJD

RJD



NATURAL HISTORY SNIPPETS



WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

UPDATE

The pair of ospreys on Bassenthwaite have successfully reared two chicks which took their first flights during July and August this year.

I reported last year, on the attempt to reintroduce great bustards to Salisbury Plain. Not an unmitigated success, but if at first

28 were imported last year of which one is now living completely wild and four others survive but keep returning to their rearing pens. Three more were injured and are now kept as pets but the rest fell prey to foxes.

40 more were imported this year. These are a little younger and may take the predator awareness training more to heart.

I also mentioned eagle owls in Northumberland. There are now reports of sightings this year in three locations in Scotland. Who knows it may be about to become a widespread resident.

It has been disclosed that a pair have been breeding in North Yorkshire for 8 years now and have had a total of 23 chicks so these birds could account for the new sightings.

Following last year's disastrous breeding failures of sea birds particularly along the eastern seaboard this year has seen a collapse of the breeding success of Puffins on St Kilda.

Sand eels and plankton which form the bulk of their diet are moving further north as waters warm round our shores.

Strangely, early indications are of a good

breeding year this year on Coquet Island and the Farne Islands.

Manx shearwaters are also in trouble and the journal includes an article from the Guardian which members may well find of interest.

Despite their numbers fluctuating depending on the severity of our seasons, a report early this summer

suggests numbers of hedgehogs have dropped overall by 20% in the last 10 years.



At the Royal Agricultural Show this summer, farmers representatives called for wholesale eradication program for badgers in many regions of the country.

The British Trust for Ornithology reports further mixed fortunes this year. Tree sparrows have made a slight recovery as have song thrushes. They point out that one year does not mean too much as it probably means the coincidence of good wintering weather in Africa and a good breeding season but it is encouraging.

One of the most common birds is now the Wood Pigeon, not always a welcome visitor. Willow warblers, whitethroats and chiff chaffs have also done well but the main winners are sand martins up 300% on last year and cuckoos up 33%. When you realise that cuckoos were down nearly 43% over the last 30 years this is indeed good news.

I certainly heard several duels between calling cuckoos as I wandered around parts of the western highlands in early June.

The downside is that redpoll and yellow wagtail numbers are starting to drop.

Last winter was the second driest for a hundred years and many areas of Britain experienced prolonged drought this year with the net result that many wetland habitats dried up.

This had a disastrous outcome for wading birds. Lapwings had been making something of a recovery but vanished completely from some areas this year and early figures from across the south of England suggest that they and other species such as snipe and redshank may have only had a 20% breeding success this year.

Turning further afield, I reported last edition, that nature's great recyclers were under threat. The collapse of the vulture population in India in the 1990s had led to an explosion in the population of feral dogs with 30,000 people dying of Rabies in India in 1997 alone.

A new report shows the situation deteriorating at an alarming rate and the reason has now been discovered hopefully not too late. A cheap and commonly used painkiller diclofenac is given to sick animals and safely passes through their systems. However if the ox or water buffaloes dies it remains in the carcass and is taken up by the vultures who cannot cope with it. They are dying in their millions from a form of gout caused by this drug's effect on their kidneys. In seven years the most 'common' species has declined by 96%.

The drug is to be banned in India and hopefully other countries of the sub-continent will follow suit.



WEASEL WORDS

Weasels, Pine Martens, Polecats, Otters, Badgers & Stoats make up the British populations of Mustelids. Fortunately none of them are as 'smelly' as their cousin the skunk.

One creature I have seen a lot of recently is the weasel. Perhaps I should say I have seen more of what I took to be weasels as invariably it was a quick glimpse of a long sinewy mobile sausage.

Telling the difference between weasels and stoat is very difficult if you do not have time to get your eyes properly focused, but the sort of habitat where I have seen them, increases the probability that I am correct.

In my travels I have not infrequently seen stoat at play and am quite familiar with these delightful animals but their smaller cousin is quite similar. Both these admirable creatures are actually fierce predators. Big cats are fairly lazy creatures but when hungry can take prey twice their own size, even if they do have to slowly throttle them to achieve a kill and in the case of lions they usually gang up.

The Stoat however is easily capable of killing rabbits and other creatures up to 6 times its own size and does it with one sharp bite into the brain or the back of the neck. It can run at up to 20 mph. Even the smaller weasel will happily take on a fully grown rat.

The creatures vary in size but a small female weasel could nest in a tea cup whereas a large male stoat can be almost as big as its semi-domesticated cousin, the ferret and is up to 10 inches long from nose to the base of the tail. Both have pale under-parts with russet backs but the back of the stoat is less red. The stoat also has a black tip to its tail.

Further north stoat tend to go white apart from the tail tip as winter camouflage in which state it is known as ermine.

There are thought to be just under half a million of each species in Britain in 2004.

I was fortunate to see a stoat in Langdale last June with more time than usual to study it.

We were driving out of Little Langdale towards Wrynose at about 9.00 a.m. and cautiously going round a bend in the road where high stone walls on both sides make visibility poor.

Suddenly there was this stoat trotting along the road in front of us with a large frog in its mouth. It proceeded for about 30 yards with us creeping along behind it, before a small van came the other way and all three parties came to a stop. After what seemed well over a minute vacillating over which way to turn the creature eventually dived into a crack in the wall and vanished.

There is another close relative which I have only once seen. The Polecat was thought to be only surviving in Scotland (I think I saw one many years ago near Lossiemouth) and part of Mid Wales but a number of road casualties have shown that it has re-colonised woodlands elsewhere in the country and it has been seen in Rockingham Forest in the S E Midlands.

With suitable habitat these creatures will soon fill an environmental niche as they are

prolific breeders. These wild 'ferrets' with their masked faces have large litters often of a dozen or even occasionally more and they are voracious killers which will help keep the population of rabbits down and perhaps more importantly the rapidly increasing population of rats. There are thought to be about 65,000 now, which is up by nearly half over the last 20 years.

The elusive Pine Marten is also staging a recovery. Having been thought to be down to not more than 1000 a few years ago there are now thought to be about 3000. They are shy largely nocturnal creatures surviving in the highlands and a few scattered pockets of northern England. They are creatures of woodland and often make homes in hollowed out trees.

STRANGER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE

Some time ago I commented on a very strange creature. Many creatures are strange to look at but, in line with Darwin's theories, there is usually a very sound reason for their appearance.

Strange behaviour however is harder to understand particularly when looking at them from our perspective.

The creature I thought one of the strangest was a bird which I have seen quite often but is a bit of a mystery. This is a wading bird that almost never wades and lives in woods. Most waders migrate when winter gets tough but these birds increase in number. Most waders are noisy inhabitants of windswept open reaches this one quietly skulks in dark undergrowth and, whilst camouflaged for defence, it is glaringly ostentatious when displaying in spring (roding).

Where birds normally whistle it alternately squeaks like a bat or croaks like a frog.

One of the stranger sights in nature is to see the female finally decide she has to move her offspring at which point, one by one, she firmly grasps them between her thighs and lumbers into the sky.

It is one of the strongest flyers in the bird kingdom and many join our residents by crossing the seas to get here. These birds take a while to settle in and are the ones most easily seen when they arrive in late autumn. Another good chance to see them is during their 'roding' display flight normally done at dusk.

It is in fact the woodcock



It has such effective camouflage that it is easy to walk right by one without seeing its beautiful marbled buff and brown markings.

It spends so much time sitting still that it has eyes at the sides of its head so that it can see fore and aft at the same time and it will certainly have seen you. Its eyesight is however not all that good in that shooters will tell you that if they see males roding above the tree tops all they have to do is throw a brown glove or cap into the air and the bird will drop down thinking it has found a mate.

Another strange bird is the penguin; strange in an admirable way. It lives in arctic conditions and on the equator; it swims superbly but cannot fly; it nests on rock, on ice, in deserts and in trees and is about as flexible in habit as it gets.

On the subject of strange behaviour I recently had the experience of a squirrel jumping from an overhanging tree just in front of me. Not strange? This one jumped as far out as it could into the Thames and then set off with a strong doggy paddle to cross to the other bank.

Another odd ball is the sperm whale. All males live in the Antarctic and all females in the tropics; a 5000 mile swim for procreation.

However I now think I have found a new candidate for oddest of them all.

The jelly fish has always seems a bit of a loser in that it has very little control over its destiny; drifting wherever currents take it. However as we find out more about them they are even more weird than I imagined.

Not only do they eat with the hole we would loosely describe as their mouth but they also cast their solid waste out of it.

It does not end there; the males ejaculate their sperm from the same organ and, you've guessed it, the female receives the sperm into her 'mouth'

Very much the strangest creature I have come across but perhaps you know better?

ANOTHER RAT RACE

Bearing in mind Mark Cocker's article it is pleasing to read that Puffins are breeding on Lundy Island for the first time in 33 years, following a three year project to remove rats from the island.

Rats were eating the eggs and chicks of these ground nesting birds and by 2000 there were only ten pairs of puffins left.

Over a two year period a project by English Nature, the RSPB, the Landmark Trust and the National Trust wiped out the rats and a new chick was seen this July.

A return to a more normal predation cycle is also good news for small mammals on the island.

EXOTICA

The rarest species of deer which is found wild in England is the Chinese water deer. I have never come across one despite many visits to the Norfolk Broads where they are mostly to be found. There are populations in the Cambridgeshire Fens and small pockets in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. I spent a recent afternoon quietly combing the woodlands of the Ashridge Estate in Hertfordshire where they are also said to be found but to no avail. I did however see several roe.

The Chinese Water Deer browse the tops from root crops in winter when other food sources are scarce which does not endear them to farmers but they do not cause damage to trees.

Both buck and doe only stand about 50 to 55cm at the shoulder and weigh between 11 and 18kg and uniquely amongst deer found in Britain they do not have antlers. They are a sleek reddish brown which turns a little sandy during winter and are largely solitary and give birth in early summer. Despite having up to 6 fawns (normally only 1 to 3) this creature is unlikely to increase much in population due to limited suitable habitation. They survive in damp woodlands and reed beds.

They should be easy to recognise if I ever come across one as this is between muntjac and roe in size with large protruding tusks. Round, large ears are also a give-away.

There are only about 1,500 in Britain but this is an important community as there are only about 6000 left in the whole world.

They are just one of a number of exotic residents in this country and we also get increasing numbers as seasonal visitors.

Another resident is the Wallaby. Colonies of gone wild animals have been existing for many years and those of us familiar with the Roaches saw them occasionally in the sixties. That colony has probably died out no sightings having been reported since the nineties but they are still reported from time to time in the Thames Valley and one was killed on the M1 in Northamptonshire this autumn.

In 2002 Britain had its first pair of breeding European Bee Eaters for half a century. These colourful occasional visitors arrive from time to time when strong winds blow them off course when migrating to Europe from Africa.

They usually take one look at our weather and head for the Channel but a pair set up home that year in County Durham and successfully reared a clutch of young. Specimens of this bird now appear every spring in Britain and a pair have nested successfully in Herefordshire this year.

This attractive bird something like and related to the kingfisher seems likely to become part of our scene with the warmer weather.

There are also now thought to be over 5000 green ring-necked parakeets living wild throughout Britain. Thought to have been increasing in numbers steadily since releases and escapes in the sixties, they tend to be particularly concentrated in the south of England. These birds are thought to have doubled in numbers in each of the last 4 years

and as our winters warm up there chances of survival increase dramatically.

Another recent addition to our bird populations is the little egret which I saw in large numbers whilst down in Cornwall last year and I saw one on the Blackwater Estuary in Essex this August.

Honey Buzzards are also seen fairly regularly and there are a number of other species found across the channel that we can expect to see colonising Britain over the next few years.

Birds are not our only unusual visitors. Rare visitors like tuna, basking sharks and leatherback turtles are becoming more common and even the fin whale has been seen occasionally in recent years.

This giant of the seas has been seen once or twice a year recently but this year a school of 6 was spotted just off the Pembrokeshire coast. Weighing in at up to 65 tons and as much as 85 feet long you would not wish to bump into one whilst sailing.

Another creature once considered exotic is the mink. It is now so widespread in Britain that it could almost be considered native and it has certainly decimated many other creatures. There have been calls this autumn for a cull of this animal on Mull to prevent them from wiping out protected seabird colonies on the nearby Treshnish Isles. These uninhabited islands have the highest form of European protection for their seabirds, which include puffins, Manx shearwater, black guillemot and storm petrel. Only two miles of sea currently separate them from the mink on Mull.

Mink have been on Mull for some time and if they ever get across to the nearby islands these ground-nesting birds would be extremely vulnerable to such a predator. Unfortunately the sea has not proved an

adequate defence in the past. Mink are thought to have swum from Harris to North Uist and Benbecula about 10 years ago and a project of extermination looks like being successful there, but has cost close to £2,000,000.

Conservationists argue it is time to start a similar project on Mull. The mink has already devastated bird colonies in nearby islands such as Ulva.

I do see mink from time to time and given its impact on native wildlife, not least in decimating the water vole population, I would advocate its eradication throughout Britain but it is probably too well established by now.

There is some hope however as the numbers of mink are thought to have dropped by over 60% in the last ten years probably due to the return of the otter which competes with it. There are thought to be about 35,000 mink at large in Britain in 2004.

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

There were literally millions of water vole a hundred years ago but they have been decreasing rapidly and have reduced by 90% in the last ten years. There are now thought to be only about 875,000 left and they have vanished completely from many areas of the country. It is threatened with extinction within 10 years due to privations by mink and mans activities in reducing their normal riverbank habitat.

A captive breeding programme has been set up and 100 pairs are being progressively released in mink-free wetland areas to try and restore some balance. The first 25 pairs were released into the Wetland Centre in West London. This has been created from a

redundant reservoir and has an area of over 100 acres. This is in an urban area where it is hoped mink cannot reach and these are the only realistic sites where they can be released with any hope of avoiding the attention of mink.

Releases have been tried in area where mink have been trapped out but sixteen released last year soon fell prey to wandering mink passing through the area.

Good old 'Ratty' has had an unfortunate nick name, more so of late. This creature is now so rare that even professional pest control officers are poisoning survivors in mistake for rats. It is similar to a brown rat but is easily distinguished if you know what it looks like. It is a medium dark brown in colour whereas the rat is greyer. It is slightly smaller than a rat and has hidden ears where the rat's stand out proudly. It has a whiskery nose and hairy tail unlike the bald pink tail of the rat.

BEAVER AWAY

A controlled release of European Beavers was to be carried out in a forest in Argyll. The creature has been extinct in Britain for several hundred years but the Forestry Commission were allowing their re-introduction to restore wildlife balance and improve water quality and there were hopes that Beaver would be allowed to expand their area freely with further imports from Europe.

This will unfortunately not now happen as Scottish government ministers rejected 10 years of work by their own environment agency when they refused to licence a five year trial in September this year, ignoring overwhelming scientific evidence from across Europe.

They rolled out the usual limp excuse that it might contravene EU rules which is somewhat surprising as they have already been reintroduced to 24 other European countries.

These vegetarian creatures usually make nests in river banks and thereby slow water run off and as a side product change the local habitat providing refuges for many other creatures. They do feed largely on bark but with Forest Enterprise moving away from commercial forestry and taking steps to restore natural woodland this is not seen as an unacceptable threat. They rarely cut down trees for dams unless in very rocky terrain which was not likely to be the case in the Knapwood Forest were they were to be released or indeed in most of Scotland where by and large the only sufficiently undisturbed woodland is to be found.

They feed largely on herbs and soft grasses when available but will feed on bark when other food is not available. Given our comparatively short winters this will rarely arise.

With Forest Enterprise moving away from commercial forestry and taking steps to restore natural woodland the small amount of tree damage is acceptable and interference with rivers highly unlikely.

There is evidence of beavers escaping from captivity and successfully surviving in Britain, Loch Lomond, the Ashdown Forest and on the Rivers Axe and Medway to name a few locations.

Unfortunately, however, these examples are Canadian beavers and as such might prejudice any future reintroduction of European beavers to Britain by out competing them. This did happen with the release of both species in Finland.

More encouraging news is that beaver are being released in an area of Kent. These animals have been given to the Kent Wildlife Trust by the Norwegian government and are to be used to help restore a large wetland area to its natural state. It will be enclosed by fences but if it proves successful beaver may be allowed to expand their area freely with further imports from Europe.

There has also been a release of 6 into a nature reserve in the Cotswolds.

Politicians in England are as cautious as their Scottish counterparts however and English Nature, which advises the government, does not envisage a general release.

The Kent Trust hopes the beaver will graze the wetland edges to maintain a natural balance within the environment. Allowing cattle to graze has not been successful as they are too heavy and churn up mud which chokes many forms of wildlife.

They are promoting the use of hardy grazing and browsing animals (e.g. European beaver, roe and red deer) to create natural cycles of destruction and regeneration that restore and maintain the structurally diverse and dynamic changing habitats most suitable for wildlife. The project, will assess the beaver's effectiveness as a natural conservation management tool, as well as providing a focus for public awareness of wildlife and conservation issues.

If successful, the project could help to revolutionise the management of wetland and riverside conservation areas,

The area they are working on has in the recent past lost 12 species of butterfly and of 15 species of dragonfly which could reasonably be expected to be present only four have been found.

It should abound with wetland birds but only one species is present and this all down to a lack of diversity of terrain.

By careful management they hope to restore the area to a mix of water meadows and open marshland with pockets of native trees at various stages in their life cycle including dead and decaying remains and then hope to see an increase in the species of fauna present.

It is thought that the beaver will play an active part in maintaining this diversity once it has been established.

OH WHAT A BOAR

If you go down in the woods today beware of a big surprise.

Wild boars now live in many parts of England but particularly, West Kent, East Sussex, Gloucestershire and Dorset.

As yet there are no reports of injury to visitors to the woodlands but several dogs have been badly hurt by their slashing razor-sharp teeth. Campers in the Forest of Dean regularly see these creatures and their tents are occasionally damaged by rampaging herds of the beasts.

Their meat takes careful cooking somewhat similarly to wild venison but tastes very much of where they live. The nearest comparison I can come up with is to the dark meat of turkey legs.

This area is having a bad time recently with wild life imbalances. The milder winters have seen an explosion in numbers of grey squirrels which are killing thousands of the trees by stripping bark

CHIPPINGS



WIND UP

A recent study from Oxford Economic Research Associates show just how grossly inefficient wind farms really are.

They will require £12 billion in subsidies, almost three times as much as building nuclear power plants would cost. They could provide the same amount electricity for £4.4 billion which would be equally free of carbon emissions.

To put these figures into perspective a government scientific advisor has just admitted that if the Thames barrier failed due to higher sea levels caused by global warming, the cost to the economy of the damage which would be caused would be about £30 billion.

COUNTRYSIDE CLUTTER

Quite apart from the thousands of wind turbines envisaged, the tens of thousands of giant pylons to transport the small amounts of energy they will produce and the ever increasing acreage of this green and pleasant land which is given over to roads we have two additional threats to our natural countryside.

Legislation was introduced trying to reduce the visual intrusion of billboards but this did not cover the advertising on the sides of vehicles.

Have you noticed however, the proliferation of curtain sided 'trailers' parked in fields convenient to major roads.

I doubt if any of them are intended to ever move other than one journey behind a tractor to site them in full view.

A rose by any other name?

The other major concern is of telephone masts.

We have all had a laugh at false conifer trees standing amidst a clump of deciduous trees and protruding a good 20 feet above them. Camouflage? It is not a joke however.

There are already about 35,000 masts in place and it is estimated that this will treble to permit the use of the new technology now licenced to be provided over mobile telephones.

This has serious consequences for our landscape and planning regulations do not allow local communities to do much about it.

I serve on the planning group of my local council and we recently objected to a mast to be erected right in the heart of our village in the middle of a green.

When the application was turned down they reduced the proposed height to just under 15 metres and resubmitted. This means that apart from a few technical and design limitations they do not need permission and as such it will now be erected.

Perhaps if the various companies were made to share masts the number would be reduced and our coverage improved but we still face more disfigurement of our landscape.

A LITTLE BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY....

There is no doubt that 5 portions of vegetables or fruit a day are good for you as is exercise. It is equally true that drinking alcohol is bad for you other than in moderation.

However for those of us whose resistance to temptation is not strong there is good news on several fronts.

Real ale brewed the traditional way with minimal chemical additives is too high in sugar but contains many beneficial ingredients.

Red wine is full of ellagic acid antioxidants which help fight cancers and now research has shown that single malt whisky contains even more of this than red wine.

I should not worry if you get stressed out worrying about this as further research suggests that short bursts of stress help prolong life.

WAINWRIGHT MARK TWO

Chris Jesty has just finished updating Wainwright's Pictorial Guide to the Eastern Fells for the new publishers of the guides.

It has now been released and other editions will follow roughly every six months a commendable feat by the reviser.

This new edition of the Eastern Fells has maps and text completely revised to take account of the many changes to footpaths and terrain since Wainwright himself walked the fells.

The new edition features over 3000 corrections and revisions, but retains the original hand-drawn character.

All text, maps and ascent diagrams have been checked and updated for the modern fell-walker; paths and route indicators are picked out in red for greater clarity but drawings and page layouts remain faithful to Wainwright's originals.

BEWARE THE W I

Beware the well-intentioned idiot.

This species is quite prevalent amongst the powers-that-be and the bastions of bureaucracy.

In many ways more dangerous than the downright malicious; they always know best despite the apparent drawback of knowing nothing about their subject.

They banned fox hunting in the name of the protection of foxes and condemned thousands of these creatures to die slow and painful deaths from gun shot wounds and poisons, not to mention the other creatures inadvertently poisoned as well.

They fret about levels of obesity whilst allowing a culture of blame and litigation to flourish, making it impossible to organise outdoor activities without filling in countless pages of risk assessments and carrying enormous sums of public liability insurance.

Wearing a number of my various caps I am in the loop for a number of grapevines and worry about other ideas being floated by various think tanks. These are wonderful innovations: they allow government to float ideas which they can subsequently deny were

ever their intentions, if public disquiet becomes too vociferous.

If this goes hand in hand with pressure groups floating ideas which develop into campaigns which politicians then endorse to get on the band wagon, our way of life is under threat on many fronts.

It is no use feeling that some of these ideas are too stupid for words; it is not long before they are the subject of green papers and then become government policy. The time to shout is when they first raise their heads over the parapet and hopefully this will scare the politicians off.

I hear voices saying that mountains are dangerous places. We should perhaps have licences before we are allowed on them which will have the added benefit of funding the rescue services when we need help.

This pays no heed to the fact that the rescuers are invariably from the mountaineering community and that most accidents happen with casual slips on fairly modest slopes.

Anyway, what is a mountain area ? With people living and working at close to 1000 ft would they need licences?

Hot from their success with fox hunting the League Against Cruel Sports is turning its intentions elsewhere if only to justify its own existence.

The catching of inedible fish for fun, dragging them from water by a hook in the mouth, is the subject of much debate.

As a 'working class sport with millions of devotees it is probably safe given the number of votes at risk.

The same cannot be said however of other country pursuits and the combination of townie politicians and animal welfare fanatics is likely to bring them under increasing pressure.

Game shooting is in the firing line for various reasons. Politicians wish to oppose guns in the community and obtaining a licence is more difficult than ever. This is despite the many fold increase in gun crimes since hand guns were banned.

The League Against Cruel Sports has now started campaigning against game bird shooting.

As with fox hunting there is an urban myth that toffs go shooting. In both cases all classes of country dwellers participated and many livelihoods depend on them. Many shooters go for wood pigeon which are vermin and cause immense damage to crops.

Some do go for snipe, hare and partridge but from my experience most do not, being fully aware that these are endangered species.

Pheasant and grouse are the most common target and it is very doubtful if either species would still exist if 'shooters' did not raise them for the shoot.

Going on from this if thickets were not preserved for both game birds and foxes then much of our other wildlife would not survive in a manicured agricultural environment.

The country way of life has survived for many years without any apparent real threat to wild life but legislation no matter how well intentioned is disturbing that balance and could eventually spoil the countryside we all wish to enjoy.

CLEANING UP OUR ACT

Further to the article on improvements to the Ben, the JMT plans to remove impromptu memorials from the summit and site them in the car park below.

The current trend for such markers is making many mountain areas more than a little untidy and many organisations are both tidying up and trying to discourage this practice.

We have all been on summits where flowers have been left and toys and photographs are not uncommon.

It is by no means unique to Britain with parts of the Alps and Himalayas equally affected but it is perhaps time to try and call a halt before matters get further out of hand.

The Mountaineering Council for Scotland want to promote a debate on this subject but there is a general consensus that these activities are a blight.

Many people act as volunteers in generally cleaning up after visitors as I do in a country park near home but it would be better if we could encourage people to take all litter home and leave the open spaces as they found them.

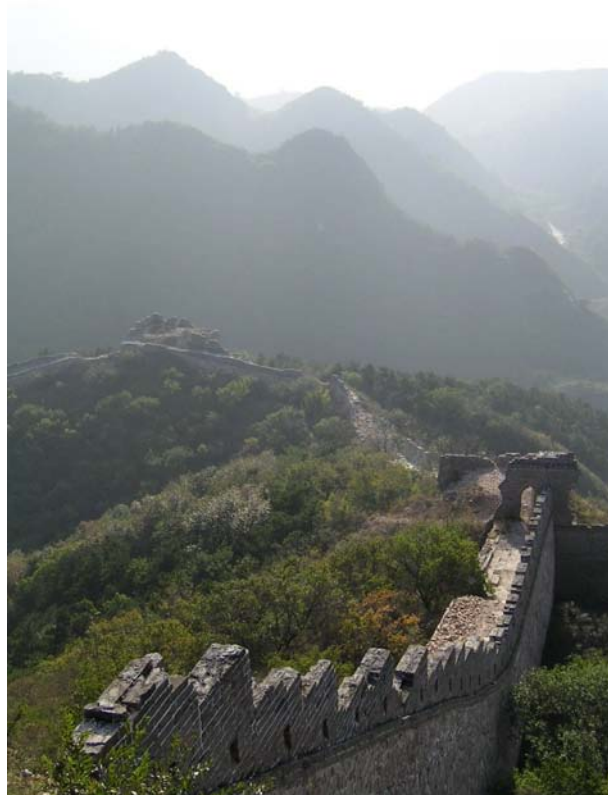
One such group which has come to my attention is known as the Borrowdale Lengthmen.

This group largely made up of retired professional people, help the National Trust to maintain and clear over 20 miles of footpaths in the uplands around Keswick.

Looking at their membership it would suggest that these must be the most highly qualified and best educated navvies in the world.

A SHORT WALK ON A LONG WALL

This was an opportunity not to be missed. There cannot be too many YRC members who have walked a few miles on the *Great Wall of China*. Our Editor thought it might make a "chipping".



This was an afternoon's excursion from Beijing to one of the nearer parts of the wall and rather "touristy". If one is doing such things one cannot be a chooser. I gather that some intrepid guy has walked (or jogged) the whole 3,500 mile length.

It cannot have been on the top of the wall where we walked. Thousands of soldiers have done so in their time, over the centuries, but now the vast majority of it, like Hadrian's is in a state of decay: and presumably has been a source of dressed building stone for generations.

What is really impressive is the terrain up and over which it goes. Not taking any short cuts but sticking to the ridges and "tops" just as Hadian's builders in Britain did, but without the style of the Chinese. It was built over a period of more than 2000 years, starting about 700 BC (or BCE) when several dukes built self-defence walls around their territories. In 221 BC Emperor Qinshihuang unified China and linked them up to form a 5,000Km wall. The one we can see today is from 1368-1644, known as the Ming Dynasty and in its prime was 5,600Km long.

We set off from the Badaling Pass up some formal steps then onto a viewing platform, I think, specially re-constructed for celebrities' photo opportunities with whoever is current Chairman of the P.R.C. or Communist party.

This section of the wall averages almost 8 metres in height and the top surface is "wide enough for 5 horses or 10 men abreast" .

It was a warm afternoon and we soon had a sweat on, almost scrambling up the steep slopes and very large steps. We had chosen to go that way because there were less people on it (it was a public holiday). The less steep part was almost crawling with people winding up and down like ants in the woods, and you could not have had a proper walk. It was a bit "throng" on our side too at first. After a mile or so and we'd gone up perhaps 150 metres in height and down 30, before another 60 up and on to the last "modern" Fort, there only remained a few of our party and some Swiss chaps admiring the hazy view whilst wondering at the resolve of the builders (or their Emperor).

After a pause at that last Fort, most who'd come thus far turned back; but three of us went on to take a photo of some of the remaining old wall. This was beyond the end

of the re-built and maintained part we'd been on. What we saw was a narrow grass track on the wall top, but with the sides partially in ruins. A lot of its length would probably be like that. Obviously people do walk on it, but how far across China is open to tourists and trekkers I don't know and no-one I asked did either. We did not have time to explore further but we'd come about 3 miles.

Going back was easy but it was only net downhill! Some of the downhill bits were treacherous even in those near ideal conditions; in rain or snow at other times of the year it must be 'interesting'.



It was good to have escaped the hawkers and post card sellers nearer to the access point and nicer still to say we'd taken our own pictures of the 'old wall'.

We later read in a guide book that "one who failed to reach the Great Wall if China would not be regarded as a hero". We certainly did not feel heroic but are really glad we had a look.

Rob Ibberson

DOG WARMERS

Next time you pull on your fleece to set out on the hill taking your best friend with you, you may wish to consider a product on the market, new, at least to me.

I know nothing other than what I have seen advertised but at least one company is now making fleeces for dogs.

You might like to check out---

www.equafleece.co.uk

CLIFF COBB

It was immediately after the Picos meet in 1995 that I went to the Lowestern meet. I was hoping to see Cliff Cobb there with some idea of doing Strans Gill but he had not been able to make it. So I wandered up to the Hunt's Cross area of Gragareth where there were some very attractive limestone crags, not too high or too hard but just right for the warm dry weather.

Scrambling about on the part I christened Back Tow Scar I found a chimney, strenuous, followed by a super slab which I considered reporting as a new route.

It is no longer accepted to call a new climb after yourself but there is nothing wrong with calling one after a friend, even if inverted.

That is why our old friend is immortalised on page 497 of the new limestone guide as 'Cobb Cliff' 12 m. Difficult.

Bill Todd

MOONLIGHTING

On short visits to the mountains it is sometimes difficult to escape a feeling of incompleteness. One seems to leave a part of oneself behind or to have brought the workday world along. I suppose this is almost inevitable when ones visits are restricted to week ends and a two week annual holiday. Even so it is surprising how far one can extend the apparent time spent in the hills by refusing to observe normal conventions for eating and sleeping times. For example it is extremely pleasant once in a while to set out before dawn and climb a hill in time to see the first rays of the sun pierce the clouds and flood the cold dark hills with a warm, rosy glow.

I had such an experience one morning during a week-end stay at the Rucksack Club cottage Beauty Mawr near Llanberis North Wales. Awakening at about 4.30 am to find the room bathed in the cold mystic light of a full moon ideas of sleep suddenly vanished. Without the normal struggle between a warm bed and the cold night air I found myself donning my climbing clothes and creeping downstairs in stocking feet to avoid disturbing Stan, my companion, a quite unnecessary precaution as he was still soundly asleep when I returned four hours later. I made an abbreviated breakfast and left the cottage at 5.15am, my vague plan being an ascent of Glyder Fach.

It is my experience that the expression 'as light as day' is always a gross exaggeration in reference to moonlight. The moon shone brilliantly out of a patch of clear sky but its light at ground level was only sufficient to give an indication of the general nature or the ground and the distinction between light and shadow was, at times, woefully inadequate to ensure confident progress over broken ground. The air was calm and large silvery edged clouds hung

majestically over the wet mountainside. It had been raining recently and was likely to do so again very soon.

The mountainside is steep and craggy on this side and seamed by tree clad gullies. To pick an easy route would be difficult even in daylight and I soon found myself on a narrow strip of bracken covered slope. I had already negotiated a stream and two barbed wire fences and hoped that I was now clear of such things.

The slope was much steeper than I had anticipated and but for the bracken I should have had difficulty in getting up. Using the stems as handholds I clambered up until the slope eased off and gave way to short moorland grass. The light was better now and the sky began to lighten slowly in the northeast. In my attempts to take a straight line to the summit I found myself on a patch of loose scree. To have avoided this would have involved a long detour so I stumbled slowly up it. The clouds were low as I gained the easier slopes above the scree though the summit of Y Garn was visible a mile to my left. The clouds quickly enveloped the peak and came swirling across the intervening mile of grassy upland towards me. I took a compass bearing on the largest pile of rocks that I could see ahead and proceeded through the mist. On arrival at the rocks I chose a spot as sheltered as possible from the chill wind and indulged in a damp and solitary snack.

It was quite eerie sitting there at that early hour with the mists swirling around and those fantastic rocks looming up in a magnified form on all sides. I didn't stay long and, after taking another compass bearing, I headed in the direction of Llyn Cwmffynnon. I subsequently estimated that my resting place had been among the rocks between Glyder Fawr and Glyder Fach. The mist cleared to permit views to the north before

I dropped down the southern slopes. I watched the changing light on a bank of clouds as the rays of a still invisible sun were reflected in a warm rosy glow which was soon transferred to the rocky peak of Tryvan across the valley. The view of this peak is often disappointing but on this occasion, with the clouds swirling round its pointed summit and its rocky flanks glowing in the reflected light, it was a king among mountains and seemed very remote and inaccessible. Beyond Llyn Idwal a thin blue column of smoke rose from a solitary cottage; Ogwen Cottage, the proprietor no doubt having just arisen to prepare breakfast for his guests. It gave me a feeling of superiority to be up there whilst the world was rubbing sleep from its eyes! I also had pleasant thoughts of a return to Beudy Mawr for a second breakfast!

From Llyn Cwmffynnon there is a faint track which, if followed, avoids the rough ground on the lower slopes. It brought me out at the cottage just as rain began to fall. Stan was still sleeping when I tiptoed upstairs. Not feeling sleepy myself, nor yet inclined to make his breakfast, I climbed onto my bunk and read for an hour by which time Stan was stretching himself and complaining of the weather which by this time was decidedly wet. I told him that I had already had the best of the day on Glyder Fach but he didn't believe me; nor does he to this day so far as I know!

Wilfred Anderson

Reminiscing about a trip in 1952
with Stanley Maude a lapsed member
of the YRC

HECLA, SOUTH UIST.

Arthur Salmon



HECLA FROM CAOLAS MOR



LOOKING NORTH FROM HECLA

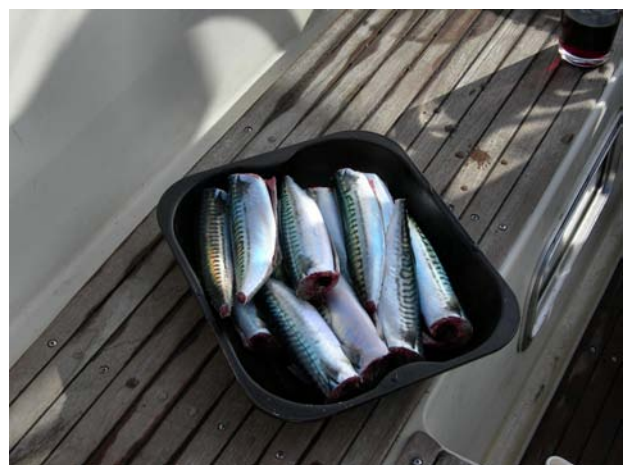
On occasions, sailing can give one the opportunity to climb hills in areas that are not exactly on the beaten track. This year our summer cruise took Graham, Bruce Bensley, Frank Wilkinson and me to the Outer Hebrides. One of our stop-offs was in the remote anchorage of Caolas Mor, which is a small cove off Loch Skipport, South Uist.

Rising above this anchorage is Hecla (606m), the most northerly of the hills of south Uist. It proved to be a temptation that we couldn't

resist. So, leaving Graham behind to mind the boat, Bruce, Frank and I made the ascent by the long NE ridge that starts essentially on the coast and curves round a north facing corrie to, what proved to be, a subsidiary top. The true summit is about half a mile south of this top and separated from it by a small descent. Before starting on the climb, we had assumed that we would be up and down in about three hours, but this proved to be very wide of the mark as the round trip took us closer to double our estimate.

During the ascent, excellent views were had to the north across the straits separating South Uist from Benbecula (Bagh nam Faoillean). This scenery certainly gives one the feeling that it has remained virtually unchanged since the retreat of the ice. To the west, St Kilda could clearly be seen rising out of the Atlantic while, to the south, Beinn Mhor and the other peaks of South Uist present a very rugged aspect.

A point of interest to anglers is that Caolas Mor was well populated with plump mackerel and it took Bruce and Graham, our two fishermen, no time at all catch enough for several delicious meals.



MACKEREL

TAKEN FROM CAOLUS MOR

JACK CARSWELL

A piece in the Guardian's 'Country Diary' back on March seventh talked of Jack Carswell who many older members may remember as he was a member of the club until 1981.

The article appeared in their section; 'For the crag' and is reproduced with their kind permission.

Lake District

Above the birthday cards in the window, the mountains rise across the Solway Plain like a snow-white wave. It is a view Jack Carswell, who has just turned 90, enjoys, evoking memories of days on fells and crags from Skiddaw to Pillar. I had called in on my way to climb Skidda' and through the window we trace my route as if from base camp: up Ullock Pike, across on to Skidda'; and down by Dead Crags and Dash Falls. A former engineer who now sees engineering (in the form of hi-tech equipment) as an adventure-killer, he recalls epic days. Climbing The Nose on Pillar with nailed boots and hemp rope. And there, were we to have x-ray eyes and able to see through Pillar, is Central Buttress on Scafell Crag. Jack was the first cragsman to descend it daringly from the top last on the rope (in whitecanvas pumps), and with Caldbeck teacher Mabel Barker and Ieuan Banner Mendus, the mayor of Workington.

As I leave, we shake hands, his grip warm and our bald heads like two coots, birds of a feather, just another species among the incredible bird life around his cottage at Grune Point. Driving south across the plain through Calvo, Blencogo and Fletchertown, Ullock Pike knifes upwards ever-nearer. "This is for Jack," I say as I begin the race against time up the track near Barkbeth Farm and on to the fellside covered in soft snow, driving my trekking poles into the turf to aid each

step. Far below, Bassenthwaite Lake gleams in the late afternoon sun. But as I near the Pike's summit, Skidda' is in clag. A skein of geese fly north towards Silloth. I send him my good wishes with their leader, honking in front of the V formation, just visible in the dusk

Tony Greenbank

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SLUM CLEARANCE

The national park are currently trying to raise £8,000,000 to replace the cafe on the top of Snowdon.

This eyesore has been there far too long and whilst it could be debated that there should not be any building in such location, if we are to have one then we are long overdue something more in keeping with the area.

Provided they can raise the funds they propose something more attractive in its own right and made of local materials rather than the concrete blocks of the present monstrosity.

A WET CLIMB?

On a family holiday in Cornwall this year, we visited Kynance Cove on the Lizard peninsular. In one of the bays is a sea stack which is surrounded by water at higher tides. The possibility of a 360 deg traverse around it was examined by swimming around first then wading to it with shorts, and rock boots held high and dry. Going to the right past the first overhanging bit looked too difficult, but going leftwards was successful. Enjoyable climbing at about 4c level I'd judge. Have a go if you're there!

Adrian Bridge

QUINAG

The John Muir Trust is bidding to purchase the whole of the mountain of Quinag in Sutherland - one of the most spectacular mountains in Scotland. The owners of the mountain have offered to sell at an agreed and fair price, and the Trust has an offer from an anonymous donor to provide most of the funding.

The mountain has supreme wild-land character and interest and lies within the Assynt National Scenic Area. It is the northernmost of a series of stunning mountains lying amid a myriad of lochs and lochans in one of the wildest and most beautiful parts of Scotland. The JMT has just assisted the community-based Assynt Foundation to purchase the adjoining Glencanisp and Drumrunie estates to the south.

The purchase of the mountain is a major milestone for the Trust as it is their first purchase of land since 2000 when the Trust took on the Ben Nevis Estate.

An anonymous donor has given half a million pounds towards this acquisition and the Trust has the resources to make up the balance.

Quinag estate covers 8,400 acres and includes the whole of the mountain itself, standing at 808m. In reality it is really a mountain range with an undulating series of peaks along its crest. From the north and from the road crossing the Kylesku Bridge, Quinag presents a most formidable sight with its two huge buttresses of Sail Mhor and Sail Ghorm (Big Heel and Blue Heel) dominating the skyline in what is one of the most awe inspiring mountain landscapes in Scotland.

ROAMING.

As of October 31st the new access areas under our 'Right to Roam' were all open. We now have open access amounting to nearly a million hectares in England which equates to about 7% of the country.

Many aspects of what it means have been clarified but there are still some grey areas which will only be resolved if they are tested in a court of law.

There is no entitlement to ride a horse or bike or any other mechanical mode of transport. We cannot hang-glide, paraglide, camp or swim. There are dog restrictions in some local areas in particular grouse moors.

We cannot windsurf or use any boat in non tidal rivers or lakes, nor can we remove anything for example stones, fallen wood or plants.

Land will be subject to closure from time to time and if we need to check for the latest notices before getting to the area in question they should be on www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

Rock climbing is permitted but not instructing people who have paid to be shown how to do it.

Organised games are prohibited but whether the term 'Games' includes sports is not clear and whether rambling is a sport could be debated.

Yorkshire Water owns 72,000 acres of land and is committed to making it accessible for everyone to enjoy. Almost 65% of their estate has already been mapped as open country but some attractive areas did not qualify.

The company is therefore planning to extend the public right of access to more of its property by legally dedicating three areas of woodland later this year. A legal right of access to these woods will fit well with the access regime on surrounding land which is already open country.

HOT AIR FROM THE MOUNTAINS

There's been more hot air on mountain walks this year than I can recall from earlier years. The hottest October 27th since records began saw our knees and elbows were being exposed, probably for the last time in 2005, on Black Hill above Holmfirth in the southern Pennines. At the other end of the scale, earlier this year Alan Kay painted a vivid word picture of an unusual Helm wind experienced, a strong cold wind descending from Cross Fell in the northern Pennines as he was making his way to Dufton. Then I came across a piece of NASA grant-aided research...

In the Peruvian Andes some of the air high above some peaks was seen by researchers to be 100°C hotter than the surrounding air, sometimes as much as 400 °C hotter. Other researchers had seen a related effect at Boulder in the Colorado Rockies where, studying the spectra of the high air's night glow, unexpected colours dim and brighten over several minutes. These changes were thought to be powered by turbulent air flowing over foothills.

There are other possible explanations but the air waves appear to be the best explanation found so far for causing the heating. These are not thermals of rising hot air but a wave travelling up through the air mass caused by a fluctuating air flow near the ground.

Walterscheid and Hickey calculated that winds around 10 metres per second (24mph), can generate a sort of turbulence which produces up-down waves with amplitudes over three meters above rough terrain. They also found that steep slopes made these waves larger and long, wide and parallel ridges typical of some foothills, can generate a stronger version of these waves which then send a secondary wave off up vertically. It is this wave that carries energy up into the higher layers of air. That energy can heat air which may then glow.

The researchers note that there is a dearth of detailed field studies of these winds over hills. Their theory suggests that even small waves at the surface can produce observable effects in the outermost layer of the atmosphere. So you could keep your eyes open and report anything unusual.

And just to show that there is nothing new under the sun, though the author may have been speaking figuratively, from the Bible comes... "a scorching wind from the bare desert heights sweeps down on my people, it is no breeze for winnowing or cleansing; a wind too strong for that..." Jeremiah 4:11

If you are driven to find out more you could consult...

Schubert G., Hickey M.P. & Walterscheid R.L. Heating of Jupiter's thermosphere by the dissipation of upward propagating acoustic waves. *Icarus*, 2003; 163(2): 398-413

Sivjee G.G. & Walterscheid R.L.

Observations of elevated power near the Brunt-Väisälä frequency. *Journal of Geophysical Research* 2005; 110

Walterscheid R.L. and Hickey M.P. Acoustic waves generated by gusty flow over hilly terrain, *Journal of Geophysical Research* 2005;110

Michael Smith

LYKE WAKE UPDATE

The Lyke Wake Club has unfortunately now been wound up. The harassed archivist has deposited the remains in the Rydale Museum

A FAMILY HISTORY

The Reverend Jim Rusher has produced a family history and as several members have expressed a wish to read it we have deposited it in the library at Lowstern.

Jim went to Sandhurst to gain a commission which was to lead to service in Tripoli, Malta, Jordan and Egypt when Nasser cut up rough. Not a games player, Jim took up climbing and pot-holing whilst at Sandhurst.

Pot-holing was cheap and there were ex-marine ladders in the store and the clothing was basic - denims and rugby boots. Candles, miner's lights and electric bicycle lamps were the illumination used. The routine was to reach the Mendips in a military vehicle, have a meal and go down to the pub. When it closed they would set off for the cave.

On one occasion they left for Swildon's pot about 10.30pm after leaving the Priddy hostelry. It was about 2am when they reached the sump. There was a black cable running out of the murky water and it led through the underground stream. To reach the rest of the cave it was necessary to duck under the water following the cable through the passage. It was narrow but with a good deep breath perfectly possible. Once having dipped beneath the murky water it was not too difficult to reach the other side. With his bicycle lamp still working perfectly, he sat there waiting maybe 10 or 15 minutes, no-one came. So he dived back through the sump. It must be realized that if there had been

anyone coming the other way they would have both been drowned since the human body is not the right shape to go backwards nor was there room to pass. Standing up dripping he encouraged the rest of the party; "Come on it's not far (or words to that effect) and dived back through again. Another long wait, still no-one came, so back through the passage and straight up the ladder voicing his opinion of those standing round the pool. It was thanks to one of the civilian instructors that he was proposed as a member of the Yorkshire Ramblers Club.

It just happened that while at Sandhurst the History Lecturer, Mr.C.E. Burrow led officer cadets fell walking, pot holing and mountaineering. He was a YRC member and though Jim is no Yorkshireman he noted that Jim was keen on outdoor pursuits and in 1948 he proposed him as a member and the following year he was accepted.

He does not feel he gave much to the Club until he retired. He wrote short articles about Mount Etna's ascent and the descent to the Castellana caves in Italy, the walk across Mallorca and the attempt in the Mulhacen in the Sierra Nevada. It has been over the past 30 years that he has been able to enjoy the varied meets arranged including Sardinia.

One recollection was in Cumbria while on the Long Walk over Scafell. It was about 4a.m on a wet and windy night. There is a difficult scramble up Broad Stand to the top. They had no rope and if a complete stranger had not been there with one, he feels he would have fallen maybe 40 feet and would have been a mountain rescue candidate.

While walking over the Glyders in North Wales he took a deviation down toward Pen y Gwynd Hotel. There were small cliffs from one of which, while negotiating, he slipped

over the edge and fell the 8 feet or so with his foot caught at the top. The force of the fall was sufficient to clear my foot but the ankle was badly twisted and the fibula broken. He limped down to join the others and after about a mile of rough walking, one member volunteered to carry his rucksack and when they came to the road they all disappeared into the pub for refreshments. Jim drove four members back to the hut, where The President sold him a bottle of wine so they enjoyed an excellent meal and lecture then to bed on a middle bunk. Next morning the ankle area was coloured black and yellow. While he stood on one leg and put the other in a hand basin full of cold water, a Club member commented "What a lovely colour. Can I get my camera?" After breakfast Jim drove the 80 miles or so back home. There was no one in and he had no key so he got a ladder and cut back some creepers. When his wife got home she took one look at his ankle and insisted he

went straight round to the Accident and Emergency at Solihull Hospital. Jim was in hospital for 3 days and soon on his feet after what could have been a nasty outcome to a simple slip.

Jim has had a very diverse and interesting life including attempts at truck manufacture and hotel management before finding his vocation and being ordained at St Paul's Cathedral. Along the way he lived in Wales for a time and enjoyed the company of many of the finest climbers of the day including members of the 1953 Everest expedition.

This 'history' makes a very good read and if you feel Jim has lead an exciting life I must say it it pales against the life story of his father and Jim's early years. Dad was a serving officer in the Raj and ended up a POW of the Japanese whilst his family went from post to post throughout India.

BOOK REVIEW

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

By Aron Ralston

In 'Touching the Void' Jo Simpson told the story of his incredible escape from the crevasse and his journey back to base camp, a journey that took three days and nights and with a broken knee cap. It was Simpson's determination, physical strength and will power that got him through.

In this book Aron Ralston tells the story of his escape when trapped in canyon in Utah. As with Simpson, determination and will power were essential elements of the escape; but rather than physical strength, in Ralston's case the third element was mental strength, to stay calm and to use his brain.

The adjective 'incredible' still remains valid however.

When the accident happened Aron Ralston was a young mechanical engineer of 27 living in Aspen Colorado who had been deeply bitten by the bug of mountaineering. He was in the process of solo climbing in winter all the 14,000 foot peaks in the Rockies. He had climbed 39 of them. In April 2003 his successful winter climbing season was over and he was relaxing. Easter came. Where to go? He drifts off in his pick up letting chance guide him over to Utah, to Blue John Canyon, a pleasant scrambling descent

finishing with a 150 abseil into Horseshoe Canyon. Unfortunately as he scrambles over a large boulder in the canyon, it suddenly lurches forward as he prepares to drop off it. Quickly Ralston jumps down off the boulder into the canyon, a drop of about 9 feet. He then looks up, only to see the rock coming down on top of him. He puts up his hands to protect his head, and when the noise ceases he finds that the rock has trapped his right hand against the canyon wall above his head. The time is 2.30pm.

In his rucksack he has a leatherman knife, climbing slings and karabiners a rope, but no jacket and little food and water. He will not be missed until Tuesday when he is due back at work. To make matters worse, the rescuers will not know where he is. If they locate his pick up truck, it will be at the earliest Thursday before he can hope for rescue. Five days, six nights: 120 hours of entrapment.

After thrashing wildly at the boulder in anger at his stupidity, he calms and thinks of options. (1) He can move the boulder. After half an hour's one handed attempt he realises that is impossible. (2) He can use the knife to chip the boulder.

Many hours later he realises he needs much more than his knife. The boulder is of some hard structure, an erratic flushed down by winter floods. (3) He can sever his arm. The knife will go through flesh and tendons, but is not sharp enough to cut through the bone. Nothing else remains except (4) to apply mind and body to staying alive until Thursday.

The chapters of the book alternate between a night and day in the entrapment, and his memories of his mountaineering career to date. In the canyon he uses his brain to deploy his harness, his slings and a piece of his rope to make rope swing to relieve his

legs. He rations his water to sips. When that is finished, he is forced to drinking his own urine. The sling relieves but provides no comfort. Sleep is limited to 20-30 minutes before the rope bites into his legs. The temperature at night falls to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, a cold 10 degrees C when motionless in a T-shirt and shorts. He wraps his legs in the rope to try to keep warm.

By Thursday morning, he is utterly exhausted from lack of sleep, there is nothing else to do, and inactivity is driving him to distraction. He looks at the trapped arm. It smells. He hates it, the cause all this pain and anguish. He will have it off. And then he sees in a flash that there is no need to cut through the bone: he can use the vice like grip that the boulder has on his arm against the wall to break it. And so carefully, his mind now galvanised with purpose, he works out what he his method, planning the tourniquets using karabiners to tighten the bands. The pain is irrelevant: it is his way out.

In the alternate chapters he describes how the rescue is progressing. The police in Colorado are 'sure he will turn up - they always do'. His mother takes things into her own hands. She goes to the Utah police, who are much more helpful. So by chance on that Thursday afternoon, just as Ralston is staggering down Horseshoe Canyon, their search helicopter happens to land in the same canyon.

Like Jo Simpson's, Ralston's adventure has a happy ending (or the books would not have been written). I was filled with admiration of how a person in that predicament used his mind and his brain to stay alive until as death stares him in the face he grasps what he must do to survive; And does it.

Dennis Armstrong

MEETS REPORT

LADIES MEET HAFOD ARMS, DEVILS BRIDGE 3rd to 5th June 2005

Members and their ladies began to assemble on the Friday afternoon until perhaps some fourteen residents sat down to dinner on the Friday evening to a very good meal with a good choice of dishes. It has to be said that the Hafod Arms reputation for first class food was duly upheld on this occasion also.

We drove up the hill on the Saturday and parked near to the memorial to 'Mad King George', before starting out on a very pleasant walk round the old estate above the hotel.

The weather was dry but not too hot - in fact good walking conditions. The area we walked through was mixed, open farmland, woodland and moor and very attractive.



We returned to our starting point in the early afternoon, some returning to the hotel, some going home and some continuing for a little while further.

Devil's bridge has an old Victorian walkway around the very impressive falls with good views of the three bridges, one on top of the

other, and imposing views of the falls. Members visited this at various stages of the week-end.

The meal that evening was, as usual, a convivial affair and afterwards we repaired to the upstairs lounge (called the 'dry lounge', but not really) for a sing song.

Sunday morning brought the usual mix of folk returning home, short local walks, visiting the falls etc.



Altogether a pleasant, successful and friendly meet and well up to the best standards of this particular occasion.

John Schofield

In attendance:

Ken Aldred & Sheila Aldred
Dennis Armstrong
Tom Van Bergen (DA's grandson)
Ian Crowther & Dorothy Crowther
Roger Dix & Gwen Dix
Paul Dover & Anne Dover
Richard Dover & Anne Dover
Mike Godden & Marcia Godden
Gordon Humphreys & Fiona Humphreys
Alan Linford & Angie Linford
Don Mackay & Sue Mackay
Jim Rusher
John Schofield & Pat Schofield
David Smith & Elspeth Smith
Linda Greenberg

THE DOLOMITES MEET June 19th - July 2nd

A comprehensive report starts on page 42 as a separate article.

THE BIG BIKE RIDE July 16th - 17th

With High expectations of fine weather and gentle winds 12 members of the YRC including 2 recently introduced members congregated at LHG on Friday evening to enjoy a great meal provided by Roger Dix and prepare their trusty steeds for the following day's event.

The route Roger had planned was a roller coaster tour of the western area of the Lake District.

The warm up climb of Wrynose Pass was good preparation for the even steeper Hardknott after which a gentle ride down Scale and on through Eskdale Green, Sinton and Gosport brought us to our first refreshment stop at Calder Bridge.

Stage two of the "Tour de la Lake District" found us climbing over Ennerdale Moor to Ennerdale Bridge, Kirkland and Lamplugh before a pleasant ride along the north shore of Loweswater. Various routes were then taken to the base of Whitleather Pass and yet another long climb.

The descent off Whinlatter was exhilarating with fine views of Derwent Water and Keswick beckoning us to our next resting / refreshment point at the former Keswick Station.

The only "off road" section followed, riding along the route of the former railway track before eventually heading south through St John in the Vale to cross the A591 and pedal along the west shore of Thirlmere. A most rewarding level ride with a good tailwind helped our average speed indications.

The inevitable passage of Dunmail Raise was short lived again aided by a stiff tail wind. One final stiff climb, after passing through Grassmere was over Red Bank finally bringing us to Elterwater and back to Little Langdale.

A great 75 mile ride in stunning countryside and enjoyed in perfect weather conditions.

Six members completed the circuit with a prize for the fastest time of day going to Graham Dootson, presented during the evening meal.

Other members explored the transport of bikes possibilities on the Lakeside Haverthwaite Railway and Windermere Ferries and evaluated the relative speed of foot and use of public transport versus cycle power around the hostelryes of Coniston.

The thanks of all the participants go to Roger (meet organiser) and Ken and Stuart (feed stations, encouragers, and backups).



Whilst the majority of attendees had a leisurely breakfast on Sunday and packed to return home the Dover brothers continued their training for the YRC Himalayan trip to Ladakh by enjoying a walk from LHG via Wetherlam and Swirl How to The Old Man of Coniston returning via Coniston village and Tilberthwaite.

On Monday the glorious weather of the weekend broke but even so traversing Wrynose and Hardknott passes by car was somewhat easier than by bike, a couple of days earlier, in the sunshine.

Mondays walk took us up Eskdale to Cam Spout and a scramble onto Scafell before returning to the car at Brotherilkeld. Fortunately the rain in the morning eased to give a cool cloudy afternoon.

Prior to departing LHG on Tuesday afternoon our walk took us up Greenburn and the horseshoe ridge of West Side Edge, Little and Great Carrs, and onto Swirl How before dropping into Greenburn again to return to LHG.

Richard Dover

Attending

Ken Aldred
Alan Clare
Derek Clayton
Ian Crowther
Roger Dix
Stuart Dix
Graham Dootson
Paul Dover
Richard Dover
Richard Kirby
Tony Smythe
Tom O'May

PRESIDENT'S CELEBRATION OPEN MEET

24th July - 26th July 2005

Few members attend all the YRC meets in a year. So how do they make their choice? Here are some suggestions: they want to go to an interesting area, they want to go back to a familiar area to do something new there, they want to renew friendships and catch up on Club gossip, or they have for the moment have completed all their DIY jobs. All good reasons, but on this occasion the writer of this Meet Report attended because it was the President's Celebration Meet, and he himself was part of the celebration.

What celebration? The celebration the President wished to give on the 50th Anniversary of that *annus mirabile* 1955, the year when twelve new members joined the YRC. Of that bumper crop, six regrettably are no longer with us. Two were good YRC men: Harry Haslam and Sydney Waterfall, two died tragically young, David Haslam and Brian Hartley, and Peter Warsop and Walter Decort were with us for a few years and then resigned, Walter to join his wife in the Fell and Rock Club. David Tetlow was not able to attend, but the other five 1955-ers all attended the meet. They were: Albert Chapman, Alan Brown, Derek Smithson, David Smith and Dennis Armstrong. This Famous Five served the club well over the years, on the hills and on the Committee, and in due season each were elected President of the YRC.

It was an Open Meet. Besides the '55 Five there were four members who joined *before* 1955, one as early as 1941, and there were seven members present who joined *after* 1955, the youngest as recently as 1993. And there were twelve guests who were very

welcome and who added greatly to the joy and merriment of the weekend.

The outdoor activities need not detain us long. There was some good walking on Saturday, and Ingleborough featured in all routes. The routes chosen to return to Lowstern varied, but it should be recorded that in the party that chose the longest route back was the 1941 veteran. On Sunday there were fewer walkers, but for those who did, Pen-y-Ghent featured strongly in their itinerary.

It was in all aspects the President's meet. He planned it and he had done his homework. The menus were carefully thought out, and overseen with authority as befits the wise head that had overseen so many Joint Meets at RLH. Everyone assisted in preparing, serving or disposing of food. On Friday evening fifteen sat down for the evening meal, and on Saturday evening when all were assembled twenty eight sat down for the celebratory feast. As the President wished speeches were minimal, to afford the most time for good conversation.

We remembered the old Lowstern and its squalor. We remembered the debates it engendered. Should we have another Hut, where should we have another Hut, what would it cost and could we raise the money? We remembered the early meets at the new Lowstern when there was half a Hut, and we remembered with gratitude Cliff Downing's gift that enabled the Hut to take its present form. We rejoiced that what we had dreamed of, now was accomplished, and we were part of it.

That night Lowstern was full of good cheer.

It was after all a Celebration Meet.

Dennis Armstrong

Attendants:

Members

Ken Aldred
Alan Brown
David Smith
Albert Chapman
Dennis Armstrong
Mike Smith
John Hemingway
Chris Renton
Gordon Humphreys
John Lovett
Mike Godden
Alastair Renton
Derek Smithson
Alan LInford
George Spenceley
John Schofield

Guests

Sheila Aldred
Madge Brown
Elspeth Smith
Sammy Chapman
Joan Armstrong
Helen Smith
Janet Hemingway
Joyce Renton
Fiona Humphreys
Betty Lovett
Marcia Godden
Jane Butler

THE LONG WALK HELL GHYLL TO SEDBERG

August 5th - 7th

Nine people arrived at Catholes barn on Friday evening and with the forecast fair for the morrow soon retired in anticipation of an early start. Sure enough, 4 AM came and Ken was turfing everyone out of bed. Breakfast was quickly disposed of and by 5,

Alan and Ken were driving the walkers the half hour to Hell Ghyll.

The weather was clear but cool for the first short leg along Mallerstang Edge and down to the first feeding point at Pendragon Castle. Various ways were taken off the edge but all seemed to be fairly precipitous. Ged and Alister caught up with the pack at Pendragon, having arrived late after an interview with the constabulary as to why their cars were tearing along the country lanes at such an unreasonably early hour. Their explanation seemed to be treated with some scepticism by the worthy peacekeepers but they were allowed to proceed.

The walkers were basically in three groups by now, with Mick, Tim, David, Ged and Alister in the van, Derek S in the middle and Derek B bringing up the rear with Jeff. I mention this only because the back markers, on reaching the second feeding point and finding themselves somewhat adrift of the pace, made some scurrilous and probably actionable comments to the effect that we must have cheated. They were just unable to come to terms with the fact that we are younger and fitter (except for David, who is older and fitter).

Wild Boar Fell was reached just before cloud came in to cover the high ground, but it passed within an hour to be replaced with warm sunshine for the rest of the day. Swarth Fell and Swarth Fell Pike were soon passed but the descent to Uldale was rather long and tedious, being trackless over tussocks and marsh grass. It was somewhat enlivened towards the end by a rather large but apparently somnolent bull. Derek Smithson, walking alone, was moved to discard his red shirt. I do wonder, however, what the bull thought about being approached by a strange man who appeared to be tearing off his clothes.

The feeding point at the end of the Uldale road was reached by the first team at around 11:00 AM in warm sunshine. The support team had been augmented by the arrival of Albert, David Handley and John Lovett. Meanwhile Ian Crowther was cycling around the perimeter of the Howgills, presumably in the role of sheepdog, to ensure that no-one escaped. The last walkers went through the feeding point at about 1 pm, with the weather now gloriously warm and thankfully midge free. Meanwhile the vanguard had reached the top of Green Bell but unfortunately David Smith had become unwell, having apparently suffered a reaction to something he had eaten. By the time he got to the next top he was no better, so Alister accompanied him down to the road below Cautley Spout where, thanks to the wonders of mobile phone science, they were collected by Albert.

The remainder carried on over the uncompromisingly steep Yarlside, and then by various ways, some via Cautley Spout and others by a long traversing path, over Calf and down the long ridge to Sedbergh and home. The first party was in at about 5:15 and the last about 8 pm, much to the disappointment of all, as it was still light. (For those who don't know, Derek Bush has a reputation for never finishing a Long Walk before night has well and truly fallen).

Sunday saw the usual departures but Mick Borroff set off with the intention of a good walk, and Ian and Tim explored the flanks of Baugh Fell, finding some small but delightful gorges and waterfalls.

The thanks of all the walkers go to the support team and to Roy Pomfret for the catering, although at the last minute he was unable to attend.

Tim Josephy

In attendance, Long Walk Meet

Ken Aldred
Mick Borroff
Alan Brown
Derek Bush
Ged Campion
Ian Crowther
Jeff Hooper
Tim Josephy
Alister Renton
David Smith
Derek Smithson

Saturday supporters
Albert Chapman
David Handley
John Lovett

NUBRA - LADAKH

Our recent trek to Ladakh was a success although as leader I may be slightly prejudiced.

To have been leader was a simple pleasurable experience and merely included choosing a remote mountainous region in an area where Rimo could act as ground support and of course encouraging fellow members to go.

The club has had a long standing association with Rimo Adventure Travel and therefore open to my request for the highest standard of trekking food and the best group of Sherpas available. It was also possible to negotiate the cost of the many extras I asked for with my make believe Hindu daughter Alka to keep within budget.

Our final group could easily have been over subscribed but was limited to twelve. These gelled within hours and I could not have hand picked a better team. We had two doctors both over seventy with non medical PhD's two

nurses both well below fifty. One being a midwife but fortunately no member gave birth even in the most scary of locations!

The second not only looked after the health of our group but quietly helped the Sherpa team with medical problems. Less than half the group were members of long standing. A third were relatively new members and a quarter were guests.

Four were very fit and over six feet tall and nine suffered minor medical complaints during our visit. We were joined on several occasions by a member and wife team on a separate itinerary who added spice to our journey when meeting.

It was never described as a purely climbing trek, perhaps more a cultural experience in that part of North Western India.

We toured New and Old Delhi, saw the Taj Mahal, visited massive forts and Buddhist monasteries, attended local festivals and stayed in the best hotels. Our stay in Leh coincided with the visit of his holiness the Dalai Lama.

We rafted twenty eight kilometres down the Indus, trekked rarely visited valleys, visited Pangyong lake on the Chinese border and got every member of our group to the summit of a 19000 foot peak, climbed only once before (by a Sherpa), in the remotest part of the Ladakh Range.

A more detailed members account will appear in the next Bulletin covering the route, food, culture, logistics, flora and fauna and no doubt their views of the leader who never exercised the meaning of the word consensus and was often accused of using the phrase 'need to know' when the arrogance of a one time president touched the surface.

A.R.Chapman (Albert)

LOWSTERN WORKING MEET

Sept 2nd - 4th

Assorted members attended the Yorkshire hut to spend a weekend on maintenance.

HARRY SPILSBURY MEMORIAL MEET ROBERTSON LAMB HUT GREATER LANGDALE

September 16th - 18th

The first meet of autumn was our joint meet with the wayfarers, hosted by them at their impressive Robertson Lamb Hut reputedly the oldest climbing hut in the Lakes. Our thanks go out to the Wayfarers for their hospitality, and Mike Godden and Alan Linford for the logistics.

14 YRC members, some having clocked up over 50 of these joint meets, along with two guests, and 9 Wayfarers made up the compliment and they started to arrive at various stages of Friday depending on work commitments and from whence their journeys started.

I started out from Rugby early Friday afternoon and the first detour saw me pick up our editor on the outskirts of Leicester. A typical Friday afternoon journey up the M1, A50 and M6 saw us arrive at our destination somewhat later than we would have hoped and after the best bunks had been taken! Still more headroom than those bunks at LHG, or coffins as my better half described them on a recent family outing when breaking them in to LHG. Character building I tell my 7 and 4

year olds. Still with the average age of the club, enough talk of coffins.

Most of those assembled on the Friday evening were already catching up on matters occurring since last meeting those in their company, over a nice hot brew or a £1 bottle of beer, (how does Mike Godden manage to supply at those prices?) A dinner was prepared for those members not wishing to venture out into the dark, whilst others grabbed a bite to eat at local hostelrys. We chose the Britannia at Elterwater. Food quite nice but getting a little on the pricey side. After that back to the Hut to join in the banter and the £1 beer and the chance to plan and discuss what to do the next day.

After a choice of breakfast arrangements it was time to venture out. Saturday brought with it some typical autumnal weather. Quite breezy and a day of on/off arrangements, with waterproof clothing, was to ensue. Roy and I decided to set off and take a view on routes as our walk progressed, trying to take account of the cloud level etc.

We left the hut and walked on the road to Chapel Stile for a short way before turning left onto a not too defined footpath up the side of a long drawn out grassy bank which saw us arriving at Little Castle How and turning left to Great Castle How.



There were good views over Grasmere and Easedale from here, and this gave us a good opportunity to weigh up whether to stay low and head towards Loughrigg Fell or to turn left towards Stickle Tarn.

With the weather looking quite promising at this stage and with the cloud fairly high, we decided to take the latter option and headed towards Blea Crag with the weather then closing in from nowhere; out came the water-proofs. This was only temporary and they came off later.

From there we descended to near the edge of Stickle Tarn and decided to go higher with the sky clearing once more. Pavay Arc was the obvious choice from where we were positioned and this proved an interesting option. There were a variety of routes up Pavay Arc, but the one that stood out as something different for those of us that keep both feet firmly on the ground was "Jacks Rake". This looked the most appealing on the map and proved to add a bit of excitement to the route up, and probably got me as near to being a mountain goat as I am likely to become, with a good deal of scrambling and climbing over rocks. My slightly height-challenged companion, with shorter legs, was finding high heels may have been a good idea to try and gain those extra inches in helping to get a leg over!

Arriving at the top of Pavay Arc with nice clear conditions the views were spectacular.



Straight down and you could see Stickle Tarn, and stretching out beyond that the Great Langdale valley. To the South, Blea Tarn, and to the North, High Raise stood proud. Turning to a more easterly view, the Scafells came into view, and continuing round to our next objective, it was decided, Harrison Stickle being the highest point in the Langdale Pikes.

We left the peak of Pavay Arc and dropped down to move on and over to Harrison Stickle bringing in good views of Bow Fell as well as the Scafell's.



We descended via a route that ran between Harrison Stickle and Thorn Crag, which followed a gully and the start of Dungeon Ghyll down towards the valley. The path moved away from the Ghyll to rejoin it later at the bottom, where somewhat fortuitously, we arrived at the Sticklebarn hostelry just as the heavens opened, offering well timed and well received shelter. Finally we returned along the short half mile walk through the rain to the hut, to find that an early start to the dinner had already taken place and we were grateful that those assembled had not gone on to second helpings at that stage!

As the evening moved on and experiences of the day were shared, we all admired George Spenceley's battle scar of the day, injured whilst he fell on the fell, or pushed as he claimed. There were cry's of "keep him of the hills!" Anyway, George's attempts at first

aid for himself appeared to include lint and sellotape. We do hope that he has made a full recovery.

George Chambers and partners headed to Sergeant Man sweeping around to Pike O'Stickle. Derek Smithson along with Neil West, and David Smith with John Lovett all took in Pavey Arc at some point in their walks.

Mike Smith along with son Richard engaged in climbing at Middle Fell Buttress at Raven Crag. This I am informed has quite a severe start, and needed the right man for the job to get matters under way. Step forward Richard! Sign of the times Dad?

Anyway, inspired by Saturdays exploits and the sight of another group's instructor falling off his attempted climb, both Mike and Richard set off in search of more climbing on Sunday morning.

Mark, Bob and Paul from the Wayfarers also undertook climbing. They did a classic climb including seven pitches on Bowfell Buttress.

Suitably fed and watered, members retired to their bunks at various times during the evening to recover and prepare for the following day. Sunday brought its share of those within a reasonable travelling time of home making the most of the day at hand. Others, myself included, had to make do with a short stretch around Grasmere and Rydal Water to get the limbs moving before setting off on a four and a half hour journey back home.

Thanks again to Alan and Mike for their sterling efforts in arranging and providing so ably for the meet. Thanks to Mike's tip, I was on a recent visit to Lowstern, able to stock up with a supply of some interesting bottles of fine ales, at no more than £1 per bottle from Booths at Settle.

I'm converted, can they move south and take over from Sainsbury's and Tesco!

Martyn Trasler

Attendees

Wayfarers :-

George Chambers

Mike Gee

Mike Godden

Alan Linford

Paul Read

Dave Wood

Mark Wignall

Bob Buck

Paul Sambrooks.

YRC :-

Dennis Armstrong

Alan Brown

Roy Denney

Martyn Trasler

Andrew Duxbury

Chris Fitzhugh (Guest)

Bill Lofthouse

John Lovett

Harry Robinson

David Smith

Mike Smith

Richard Smith (Guest)

Derek Smithson

George Spenceley

Neil West (Prospective)

Tony Smythe

GLENCOE (LAGANGARBH)

29th September - 2nd October 2005

The meet didn't start at first. At 9.15pm on the Thursday the three souls fed up of sitting in a car across the stream from Lagangarbh departed to Kinlochleven and Water's Cottage. Two of those (DAS + MS) had made an early start staggering up Garsbhein from the south in 50mph winds and finding a way through the dripping crags above the Steall hut to Sgurr a' Mhaim via its east ridge.



Elsewhere one searched the hillside above Kinlochleven in vain for a top. Four entered the Lost Valley and two returned as clouds lowered leaving two to traverse Stob Coire Sgreamhach to Lagangarbh. One made a late ascent of the Buachaille via Curved Ridge.

All were finally assembled by late Friday evening with rain lashing the windows. Stars appearing about midnight raised hopes which were dashed by breakfast time.

Langangarbh is well placed to access many mountains as was demonstrated on Saturday. Beinn Mhanach, tucked away behind Beinn Dorain, tempted two and rewarded them with sunshine. The King's house was reached via the Corbett, Beinn a Chrulaiste.

Munro Sgor na h-Ulaidh was traversed as well.

MS



After a damp day on Friday the prospect of any 'warm Scottish rock' as Adrian had promised was not looking good. After much indecision and several cups of tea in the hut three of us left for Kinlochleven with plans to walk up the valley to the Blackwater reservoir and look in at the climbing wall. After checking the weather forecast at the wall we opted to try the 'warm Scottish artificial rock' first before going for a walk.

Two hours later and suitable worn out we emerged to find the sun had made an appearance. A quick change of plans followed and we were soon back at the hut and on our way up to Rannoch Wall to try a route called Agag's Groove. Only a V Diff but with 4 stars in the guide book it looked like the best route to choose with the weather the way it was.

Extracts from Samuel I

Saul smote the Amalekites from [near] Egypt and he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good.

[The Lord, Saul and Samuel debate the extent to which this genocide was God's work]

Then Samuel said "Bring to me Agag." And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

Samuel hewed Agag in pieces.

By the time we arrived at the foot of the route the sun had gone and it was wet miserable and cold. Having walked all the way up though there was no turning back so on we went up four exposed pitches taking it in turns to lead. Conditions at the top were ok and we managed to make it back to the hut as darkness fell.



Sunday was another cloudy day and not the best for climbing Munro's. Four of us however ventured south to tackle Beinn Achaladair and Beinn a' Chreachain on the way home.

TB

ATTENDING:

Derek Smithson
Mike Smith
Tim Joseph
Tim Bateman
Adrian Bridge
Mick Borroff
David Smith
Iain Gilmour

ROUTE

Agag's Groove

V Diff ****

(TB, TJ, AB)

HUTTON ROOF
15-11-2005.
A TUESDAY MINI-MEET

'BABES IN THE WOOD'

There were three of us walking from Lowstern last Tuesday, John Lovett, David Smith and your scribe. In wonderful weather we drove to Hutton Roof village and got the last parking space. David led us unerringly up to the Rakes crags then bore leftwards towards Three Cairns. We got to the north east summit in fairly good order but instead of heading south from there our leader turned west and we got in a proper tangle among the deep clints and scrubland. Thinking that I might as well avoid dying of thirst even if I died of a broken leg I had my morning coffee while John and David disputed the way forward. John had discerned some good going to the west but David followed his own idea to the east. I followed John and sure enough we soon hit the Potslacks path and turned right for the Three Cairns.

We decided to shout for David when we hit the cairns hoping he had not gone too far the wrong way. Imagine our surprise and delight when he appeared on the path IN FRONT OF US. He must have grown wings or something.

Farlton Fell, on an earlier occasion.

Taken by Bill, probably 5 years ago and of John Schofield photographing the Turtle Rock, not far from where they walked the other day

After admiring the view from the Cairns we followed David down to the road which we crossed onto Farleton Fell.

Continuing straight north we found a delightful little nook under a cliff where we could have lunch and a little gentle exercise up a chimney and down a crack. I was delighted to get hand to rock after all these years.

After lunch we continued north to the famous tilted slabs and the main summit. The views of Lakeland and the dales were magnificent. We could nearly pick out the gullies on Doe Crag.

Coming back by the eastern side of Farleton Fell the lighting on Ingleborough and the Howgills was impressive. Hitting the high point of the road we crossed back by a new kissing gate onto Hutton Roof fell and followed a good track by the Rakes and Cuckoo Stone to the village.

A wonderful day and thanks to John for driving and to David for leading.

Bill Todd



DINNER MEET LOWSTERN & WHOOP HALL November 18-21

As is now the usual practice, a significant number of members (and guests) arrived at Lowstern on Friday for the weekend, taking advantage of the good weather, with a couple from the deep south staying over to the Monday.

Friday saw several members taking to the hills with one member tramping on Yockenthwaite Moor, a place normally known for being considerably wet underfoot but on this occasion frozen.

On Saturday, routes across Ingleborough, Crummack Dale, Sulber Nick, Wherside, in various combinations were completed, reluctantly by one member, "cos I forgot my climbing boots."



The AGM progressed without incidents - well not many! - the China caving trip reporting success, and the advance notice given of a California High Sierra visit by expedition group members.

The Dinner was generally enjoyed by all and the singing of Yorkshire was, I thought, particularly hearty and enthusiastic. Even Club Guests sang with enthusiasm.

Friday and Saturday had been magnificent and Sunday dawned similar, but was soon to deteriorate to haze with mist and poor views. However, this did not deter walkers who gathered to drive to Hutton Roof to traverse Hutton Roof Crags, Newbiggin Crags to Farleton Knott; returning via Holme Park Quarry and along the Limestone Link path back to Hutton Roof. A tally taken on Farleton Knott revealed a total of 28 persons.



A recent record I think for the Sunday after-dinner walk.

Rumour did have it that some late arrivals abandoned climbing because it was too cold.



Difficult to believe this could have been YRC chaps, yet a comment was overheard on the walk to the effect that "I've got my stretchy trousers on because I thought I was going climbing."



Ged Champion, Bruce Bensley, Michael Smith, Tim & Richard Josephy went to Kingsdale and descended Simpsons' Pot on Sunday, exiting via the Kingsdale Master Cave. Water levels very low but much fun had by all.

A break away group decided to try and escape the freezing mist and ascended Pendle Hill on their way home to the East Midlands, experiencing fine views.

FMG. et al

MEMBERS AND GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE

Aldred Ken	(President)	Godden	Mike	Luck	Andrew (G)
Armstrong	Dennis	Gowing	Richard	MacKay	Don
Atherton	David	Handley	David	MacKay	Duncan
Barton	John	Hawkin	Colin (G)	Martindale	Dave
Booth	Roger (RC)	Hick	David	Moss	Peter
Borroff	Mick	Holmes	David	Mullinger	Neil (LU)
Bridge	Adrian	Holt	Pamela (PC)	Newman	Rory
Brown	Alan	Hooper	Jeffrey	Penny	Tony
Burfitt	George	Humphreys	Gordon	Postill	George
Bush	Derek	Humphreys	Howard	Renton	Alister
Campion	Ged	Humphreys	Jason	Renton	Chris
Casperson	John	Ibberson	Rob	Renton	Neil
Chapman	Albert	Jackson	Johnny (G)	Roberts	Dave (MAM)
Chapman	Garry (G)	Jenkin	John	Robinson	Harry
Chapman	Iain	Josephy	Richard	Rusher	Jim
Crowther	Robert	Josephy	Tim	Salkeld	Audrey (CG)
Crowther	Ian	Kay	Alan	Salmon	Arthur
Denney	Roy	Kinder	Mike	Salmon	Graham
Dobson	John (G)	Kirby	Richard	Smith	David
Dover	Paul	Large	Cliff	Smith	Michael
Dover	Richard	Large	David	Smith	Roy (G)
Elliott	Tim (GC)	Laughton	David	Spenceley	George
Farrer	John	Linford	Alan	Sterland	John
Ferguson	Ian	Lloyd	Hywel (AC)	Trasler	Martyn
Fischer	Ingolf (G)	Lofthouse	Bill	Whalley	John
Ford	Jeff (G)	Lofthouse	Tim	Whittaker	Edward (CPC)
Gamble	David	Lomas	Harvey	Wilkinson	Frank
		Lovett	John		

OSMOSTHERLEY

Dec 9 - 11

Members arrived at various times during Friday with many getting the opportunity for a first walk. Weather over the weekend was mild and quite sunny, ideal walking conditions.

Opportunities for walking from the hostel are a bit limited and largely comprise walking either south or north along the Cleveland Way and then creating some form of circular skirting round the moors. Some set off along what is in fact the start of the Lyke Wake to swing round to the south before returning but most seemed to adopt variations on the walk

starting south and circumnavigating the moors in an anticlockwise direction.

Some members extended this southward by going as far as Black Hambleton and others extended it northwards taking in Scugdale.

There were members who over the weekend did it both clockwise and anticlockwise but other than this the only real option for any variety was to drive off and several parties did go to Roseberry.

Our own party, on the Saturday, climbed up through the trees to High Lane before heading south passing Chequers before swinging east to pick up the shooting tracks

along Whitestones Ridge and over the summit of Osmotherley Moor via a boggy and distinctly muddy track.



We reached Swainby Shooting House where we met the presidential party taking 'elevenses'.

At this point many members travelling in either direction had traversed Stoney Ridge to swing back round to Osmotherley but we elected to stay on the tops, heading east over Whorlton Moor and dropping down off-track into the head of Scugdale and walked the length of this attractive valley to Swainby itself.

After refreshment we back tracked and we followed the Cleveland Way south over Scarth Wood Moor until turning east at the radio station to drop down and cross the reservoir dam before finding our way back through the woods. All in all about 12 miles of varied terrain and more road walking than we would have liked as my blisters gave evidence and this largely extinguished the opportunities in the area. This is a shame as the hostel was superb and would make a great base in a better location.

Members enjoyed a digital presentation and slide show of the recent Ladakh trip and slides of a recent trip to below the North Face of Everest. Also included were some spectacular slides of many of the world's higher peaks and earlier trips into Nepal.

The usual Christmas repast was enjoyed by all, finished off by mince pies again provided by Marcia Godden and chocolate mints provided by David Hick.

Sunday saw another glorious day for the time of year and members set off in all directions to get some more walking in.



My guest and I went to Great Ayton and did the Roseberry Skyline climbing up to Captain Cook's monument and then

going over the Topping before returning to the village. This was the first time I had been on Roseberry Topping since doing the White Rose

back in the late 70's and I was inspired to do so by Alan Linford's great picture of it in last years snow. RD



THEN
AND
NOW

In attendance

Ken Aldred, Mick Borroff , Alan Brown, Derek Bush, Albert Chapman, Alan Clare, Derek Clayton, Ian Crowther, Robert Crowther, Roy Denney, Graham Dootson , Stuart Firth (G), David Gamble, Iain Gilmour, Mike Godden, Peter Green, Bob Haskins (G), David Hick, Chris Hilton, Gordon Humphreys, Rob Ibberson, John Jenkin, Alan Kay, Richard Kirby, David Laughton, Alan Linford, Bill Lofthouse, Harvey Lomas, John Lovett, Rory Newman, George Postill, Keith Raby, Chris Renton, Harry Robinson, Jim Rusher, Arthur Salmon, John Schofield, David Smith, Michael Smith, Derek Smithson, George Spenceley, John Sykes(G), Frank Wilkinson.



PRESIDENT'S
CELEBRATION
MEET



CHRISTMAS MEET
OSMOTHERLEY

COTE GHYLL YOUTH HOSTEL

WAYFARERS JOINT MEET



PAVEY ARK



DUNGEON GHYLL

THE
LANGDALE
PIKES



EASEDALE AND STICKLE TARN

CLUB PROCEEDINGS

YEAR 2005

The meets were

7-9 Jan	Low Hall Garth
21- 23 Jan	Lowstern
17-20 Feb	Glen Etive
4-6 March	Glan Dena N Wales
1-3 April	Low Hall Garth
15-17 Apl	Thirlmere
29-1 May	Newlands
24-26 May	RLH
8-9 June	Devil's Bridge
8-9 June	Lowstern
18-3 July	Dolomites
15-17 July	LHG
22-24 July	Lowstern
5-7 Aug	Howgills
21-3 Sept	Nubra-Ladak
2-4 Sept	Lowstern
16-18 Sept	RLH
30-2 Oct	Glencoe
19-20 Nov	Whoop Hall
10-12 Dec	Osmotherly

For the second year in succession the weather took out its fury on us; with high wind and heavy rain during the night in Lakeland, torn down trees, dislodged slates and flooded areas. After a survey of the damage we decided to depart from LHG and head for Lowstern. Several fallen trees had to be sawn up to make our escape. It was an exciting and enjoyable meet regardless.

A successful caving meet in February saw a novice party lead by Arthur Salmon into Aygill Pot and a more adventurous party lead by the Josephys completed the Lancaster-Easegill through trip. The knowledge of Wretched Rabbit and roof passages avoided the awkward Poetic Justice. A circuit of Ingleborough and Whernside was also accomplished by other members.

The MAM's superb hut, Glan Dena was the venue for the March meet. Cold icy weather promised an interesting weekend. A strong party having had a hard day on the Carneddu spent the remains of the day on the climbing wall. Others ascended Tryfan by the North Ridge in icy conditions. Sunday was a better day with blue skies and sunshine. Two enjoyed four climbs at Tremadoc.

A very good turnout of practical members for the LHG Working made considerable improvements to the car park; the bunkroom was repainted and a general cleaning took place. It was clearly a successful and enjoyable occasion.

It was good to be back at the Smithy for the mid-April meet, but the weather was appalling; soggy wet snow and cold weather. In contrast our hosts, the Gritstone Club were warm and welcoming. Some walked over to Watendlath; some Grits cycled over the local passes of Watendlath and Honister clocking up 44 miles. Ninety three year old Clifford Duckworth was the star; he walked, cooked for us and waited upon us. The younger George Spenceley, at 83 tackled Helvelyn and returned with a prospective member.

Our first visit to the Stair Hut in Newlands at the end of April members took hills that we rarely visit Maiden Moor, High Spy, Dalehead and Hindscarth. The Fylde MC hut is well fitted out albeit a rather unprepossessing exterior.

The high level camp at Boat Howe was a non-starter; perhaps it was because of the need for tent security whilst being on the hills. One of our members lost his tent at

Beudy Maur last year and another lost his in Scotland a few years earlier.

For the 2005 mid-week meet we were guests of our President at RLH. Another wet period, undeterred we set off on the Cumbrian Way to Elterwater then on to Howe Park, Lingmoor, Blea Tarn before rejoining the Cumbrian Way back to RLH. Wednesday was very wet. The next day we visited LHG. Flooded fields and spectacular river activity added interest to the meet.

A return to the Haford Arms at Devil's Bridge was the venue for a successful Ladies Weekend. The triple bridge there provided an interesting walk with its waterfalls and the lifelike bronze animal statues in the woodlands. A sing a long followed a convivial dinner on Saturday evening.

Another midweek meet at Lowstern saw five members with an average age of seventy-two complete the Three Peak. The President accompanied a member recovering from a knee replacement to the summit of Pen-y-Ghent.

The end of June saw members in the Dolomites. A wonderful area so easily accessed by inexpensive air travel. Several members were introduced to Via Ferrata. The First World War military remains and passages on the ridges overlooking Austria were amazing. The weather was excellent apart from a dramatic thunderstorm with huge hailstones leaving piles of hail in the streets.

The Long Cycle Ride was another success, considering the age of many of the members it was a remarkable achievement. The ride took in Wrynose, Hardknott, Eskdale Green, Calderbridge, Ennerdale Bridge, Loweswater, Dunmail, Red Bank and home to LHG.

In spite of the great effort the following two days saw members on the local fells.

A new innovation was the Presidents Meet. This was an open meet; it was well attended. The event celebrated six members all of whom joined the Club in 1955. Five subsequently became presidents. The President and his wife catered wonderfully. It was hailed as a great event

This year's Long Walk was based on the well-equipped Cat Holes Barn with a view to walking on the Howgills. Wild Boar Fell, Swarth Fell Pike, Yarlside and The Calf were included. The First group were back by 5.15pm others up to 8pm. It was a good walk in warm conditions. Baugh Fell and its waterfalls were visited on the Sunday.

The highlight of the year was a visit to Delhi, Ladak and the Nubra valley. Fourteen members and guests enjoyed a trip of a lifetime. Apart from sightseeing and white water rafting, two peaks over 19000 feet were climbed. One wonders what the earlier members of the Club would have thought. We are indeed a lucky generation.

Under the new management of John Lovett the working meet at Lowstern in September cut down dead trees, painted and cleaned our superb facility there. Hard work, good catering and good company made for an enjoyable and active weekend.

Mid-September took us once again to the Harry Spilsbury memorial meet at RLH. Most groups found their way round the Langdale Pikes. A father & son climbed both days. Fewer than usual of our kindred clubs attended this meet that dated back to the early thirties when neither we, nor the Rucksack Club had a hut in Langdale.

Back again in Glencoe at the end of September ten members filled the superb SMC hut at Lagangarbh. The weather left much to be desired but undeterred much was accomplished. The Lost Valley was found. Two of this group then climbed Agag's groove to complete day, but in poor conditions. A Corbett was added to Iain's collection. On Sunday two Munros, Beinns Achaladair and a'Chreachain were visited on the Sunday making a good but hard day out.

For the Christmas meet we returned to the youth hotel at Osmotherly. Full Christmas fare provided by Alan Linford and Mike Godden. A good turn out of members and guests walked many stretches of the Cleveland way and the moors with others visiting Roseberry Topping. The weather was most un winter like.

We enjoyed slides of many of the worlds classic peaks.

GENERAL MEETING

The 114th Annual Meeting was again held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on 19th November 2005. Reports were provided to members prior to the meeting including those from the Treasurer, Hut secretary, the Hut Wardens, the Editor and the Librarian.

Also the BMC representative for Yorkshire and Humberside area provided a report.

The following members were elected for the year 2004 - 2005;

President; K Aldred
Vice President; F M Godden
Hon. Secretary; R G Humphreys
Hon. Meets Secretary; J H Hooper
Hon. Treasurer; G A Salmon
Hon Editor; R J Denney
Hon. Librarian; A R Chapman

Webmaster; C G Renton
Archivist; W N Todd
Huts Secretary; RG Josephy
Hut Wardens;
Low Hall Garth; I F D Gilmour
Lowstern; John Lovett
Hon Auditor; C D Bush

Committee; D J Handley; W R Ibberson;
Jon Riley; A Renton

National Committees Representatives;
Council of Northern Caving Clubs: H A Lomas
BMC Lancs & Cheshire: R J Denney
BMC Lake District: J Riley
BMC Yorkshire & Humberside: W N Todd

The 93rd Annual Dinner followed at the same hotel. The President, Ken Aldred was in the chair. For the first time we had a lady as Principal Guest in the person of Audrey Salkeld, mountaineer, author and historian. Hywel Lloyd represented the Alpine Club; Edward Whitaker, the Craven Pothole Club; Tim Elliott, the Gritstone Club; Neil Mullinger, Lancaster University; Dave Roberts, the MAM; Pamela Holt, The Pinnacle Club; and Roger Booth, the Rucksack Club.

The President proposed the loyal toast and absent friends toast at the time honoured time before introducing Audrey Salkeld who proposed the health of our club. Michael Smith proposed the health of our guests and kindred clubs which was responded to by Hywel Lloyd. Finally followed the traditional singing of 'Yorkshire' by Arthur Salmon who was in good voice. Neil Renton provided the musical accompaniment.

2005 MEMBERSHIP
114 Ordinary Members
67 Life Members
5 Honorary/Life Members
1 Honorary Member
187 Total membership

New Members, Resignations and Deaths

New Life Members

Ian G Laing
Kevin Renton

New Members

Chris D B Hilton
K Richard Dover
Tom D O'May

Resignations

Alan Blackshaw (1991)
Euan Seaton (1998)

Deaths

Clifford C Cobb (1976)
Ralph G Hague (1964)
Peter R Harris (1958)

F D Smith

THE PRESIDENT



In our Winter 2004 issue I was invited to express my hopes and expectations for 2005. Two main tasks faced me; one, to attract new young members and two, to provide meets which would be appeal to them and to you, our existing members. Now is the time to look at how well we are doing.

The first two meets which took place after writing the article were the Annual Dinner and the Christmas meet held at Lowstern. These were, once again, two of our best attended meets of the year, thoroughly enjoyed by large numbers but not the sort of meet to attract active young aspirants. Glen Etive was as popular as ever but is now losing some of its appeal because of the shortage of snow and the fact that many of you claim to have climbed everything in sight, - more than once. Many of you decided to give the January Low Hall Garth Meet a miss this year; hence you avoided the rude awakening from the storm and the consequent transfer to Lowstern. Glan Dena attracted an active section of the club, as did the Newlands and Thirlmere meets.

Two proposed meets which did not succeed were the Lapland trip and the High Level Camp. When I joined the club the Scottish Spring bank meet was very popular. Is camping going out of fashion ?

In the survey carried out last year there were a number of requests for 'open' meets, so it is interesting to examine the results of those offered this year. The Ladies Meet at Devil's Bridge saw fourteen members and twelve guests. The President's Meet at Lowstern attracted sixteen members and eleven guests. This meet was set up to celebrate the fifty years membership of six of our members. In order to attract a comparable attendance next year will we have to produce a similar worthwhile attraction ?

The midweek open meet at RLH, Langdale saw eight members and no guests, and the midweek Three Peaks Walk which was not open saw twelve members. Those of a statistical bent may wish to comment on this. The Dolomites meet based on caravans, campervans and a hotel, fully justified its

inclusion on our meets list. The numbers attending were not as great as on some of our Alpine meets in the past but the praise from the ten members and guests could not have been higher.

Numbers for the Long Walk and the Cycle Ride were also down. However, meets which are enjoyed by a minority are still worth repeating. When the Ladakh party returned home we heard enthusiastic reports of various achievements. The members are to be congratulated for their planning and the successful completion of their objectives. The October meet in Glen Coe was not blessed with good weather or a large turnout but the members who did attend reported that an enjoyable time had been had.

Next year the exploration group may organize a number of meets as well as joining the Glen Brittle and the Grand Paradiso trips on the meets calendar. The return to the High Sierra next year is an example of an excellent opportunity for serious members of the exploration group to join with members who would like to take part in a trekking trip in what has been described as a fantastic area.

The Exploration Group is considering a three or five year plan in order to produce a programme of challenging events.

While it would be pleasing to see some more progress in the club I see no reason to be despondent. We have an active membership and two good cottages. Some of our potholers continue to put the YRC on the national and international scene and our journal is well received in many places.

Which brings me back to my opening remarks. We have three new members this year with more in the pipeline. If you have any suggestions regarding meets please let

any committee member know. Old favourites can remain but we should always be able to find room for new ideas.

Finally, after this year's annual dinner I received a number of messages of thanks, full of praise for the arrangements. These thanks should have gone to the organizer, Chris Renton and our Secretary, Gordon Humphreys. They, with the help of our committee, did all the work. I merely stood up and took the credit.

Ken Aldred

ANNUAL DINNER

Audrey Salkeld our principal guest was introduced by the President as an accomplished mountaineer and an award winning author; script writer for television programmes, translator of books by Reinhold Messner and Kurt Diemberger, joint author with Bonington, David Breashears, Alan Rouse, Paul Nunn and others as well as writing numerous books and articles alone.

She climbed Kilimanjaro with Breashears to produce the I-Max film and also South Col on Everest for filming. In conversation with Audrey she modestly told him that she hadn't actually got to South Col but merely the steep bit before the col.

Previous Presidents have led expeditions to Norway, the Alps, Iceland, the Himalayas and South America. When Ken was expressing his concern as to what he could accomplish as President, a senior member of the club said, "Don't worry, providing you get a good speaker it doesn't matter about the meets."

He thanked Audrey, not only for a very good evening but also for allowing him to go home with a clear conscience and with no worries about having to organise a potholing trip to Patagonia on mountain bikes.

OBITUARY RALPH GERALD HAGUE



Ralph Hague died in Huddersfield Royal Infirmary on the 14th. September, 2005 as a result of a massive stroke he had suffered two days earlier. He was 67 years old and his untimely end was particularly tragic as he had successfully fought off cancer over the previous two and a half years. Ralph underwent surgery in July 2003 for the removal of a large tumour attached to one of his kidneys. The scan prior to surgery revealed secondary growths on his lungs. Following a period of debilitating chemotherapy Ralph was selected for the trial of a new drug during which time he gradually regained some of his former strength. Just two weeks before his death he received the results of his latest scan which showed that he was completely free of cancerous cells.

Ralph was born on the 13th. of October 1937 and remained in Yorkshire throughout his life. He was a pupil of Barnsley Grammar School. On leaving school He took up a post as a trainee town planner with the former West Riding County Council based at the Doncaster Area Planning Office. He studied part time for the external examinations of the Royal Town Planning Institute up to the intermediate level. Following this he joined the post-

graduate diploma course at the Leeds School of Town Planning (now part of Leeds Metropolitan University) which he successfully completed and was subsequently elected to membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Ralph eventually left the West Riding C.C. to take up a post with Leeds City Council. Several subsequent moves for career betterment took him to Dewsbury County Borough, York City Council and back to the West Riding, this time at the headquarters in Wakefield. In this latter post Ralph headed a team that was responsible for urban renewal schemes and for conservation areas in the eastern half of the County, extending from Ripon in the north to Kiveton Park in the southernmost part of the County.

On the reorganisation of local government in 1974 Ralph was appointed to the post of Assistant County Planning Officer with the newly created South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council. When Margaret Thatcher abolished the Metropolitan County Councils in 1986 Ralph was retained by the South Yorkshire Residuary Body assisting with the winding up of the former Council's affairs. The final stage of Ralph's professional career was spent as a Planning Inspector with the then Department of the Environment where his long and varied experience in his chosen profession was brought to bear in the determination of planning appeals.

For several years Ralph served on the committee of the Yorkshire Branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute and was elected to chairmanship of the committee for a year.

Ralph was elected to the membership of the Y.R.C. in 1984. He was neither a climber nor a potholer but took great delight in a day spent on the hills in the company of friends. As is customary, Ralph attended several meets as a probationary guest and took part in the Munro meet in 1983 along with Peter Clarke, Mike Thompson and myself. We were allotted eleven summits in the Tyndrum and Crianlarich area. I particularly recall Ralph and I ascending Ben Lui, the summit of which was in thick mist when we arrived. We sat with our backs to the cairn to eat our sandwiches bemoaning the lack of a view for our effort. The mist obligingly lifted and we were treated to a stunning vista down Glen Fyne. We often recounted this magical day. The Spring Bank meet on Rhum was another memorable trip, not least for the midges which drove several members off the island after four days but not before we had tackled the main peaks and a walk over to Glen Harris. Ralph always had a penchant for large cars and Land Rovers/Range Rovers in particular. He obligingly provided the transport up to Arisaig on this occasion. As far as I recall the last meet attended by Ralph was the Corbetts at Spring Bank 2000. In company with Mike Thompson and myself we took on the summits in the Southern Uplands. The weather was kind to us and again we had a memorable week.

Ralph lost his first wife to cancer in the early 1990's and for several years lived a solitary life. He met Eve in 1997 and they married in 1998 moving to Birdsege on the Pennines to the south of Huddersfield.

Back in 1976 Peter Clarke organised the first of what became an annual get together of friends and colleagues, (all town planners!) at Low Hall Garth. Ralph was one of the original members of this happy band and to my knowledge only missed two meets. He was especially fond of the Lakes and the Langdale and Conistone areas in particular. Eve requested that Ralph's ashes be spread in this area. This request was fulfilled by Mike Thompson and myself at Slaters' Bridge on the 9th. of November with several of his friends in attendance.

Ralph was a gentle giant with a sense of humour to match. He was a lover of the countryside, an active member of a local woodland preservation group and had a latent talent as a watercolourist, a talent which he had only recently returned to. It was a privilege to have enjoyed Ralph's friendship and to be counted in the circle of his many friends. He will be sadly missed but remembered with great affection.

Roy Wilson.

CLUB MERCHANDISE

A wide range of outdoor and leisure clothing is available with the traditional YRC 'Yorkshire Rose' badge (in green, yellow & white silks), beautifully computer embroidered at no extra cost, directly on to the clothing. The badges are available in two versions, either the straightforward 50 mm diameter circular badge or a larger, 65 mm diameter version with the words 'A mountaineering and caving club founded in 1892' around the outside.

The range includes Tee-shirts, sweatshirts, polo shirts, fleece jackets of several grades and designs, knitted jumpers, cagoules and parkas. (Even baseball caps if you really INSIST).

There is a full range of sizes from S to XXL. The smaller badge can be embroidered onto any items; which are available in a wide range of colours, but the larger badge can only be done on to an item coloured in YRC bottle green.

We have so far only sold clothing items with the badges on the left breast, but they could be on the right, in the centre, on either or both sleeves or with no badges at all.



Ian Crowther keeps in stock a sample range of full sleeved sweatshirts in M, L & XL sizes at £16.00 each, fleece half-zip jumpers with 2 side pockets at £23.00 each as illustrated and full length zipped fleece jackets with 2 zipped side pockets and waist draw cords at £28.00 each. These prices are correct as we go to print. There are also superior quality items available (at appropriately higher prices)

Ian also keeps embroidered cloth badges to sew onto your own items at £5.00 each and licence disc sized windscreen badges to apply to the inside of any clear glass or plastic surface at £2.00 each.

Unfortunately new club ties are not a practical possibility as the minimum economic order would have to be 100 which is unlikely to be required over any reasonable timescale, but having paid the one-off charge for the computer embroidery programme, the currently listed items can be ordered from the source in small quantities.

Discuss your requirements by contacting Ian either by post or by phoning him on 0113-2669505 or better still; see him at a meet, where he will be able to show you the samples and illustrated catalogues showing all the items available.

He does require cash or cheque with orders and all prices are plus p. & p. at cost unless you ask Ian to hand them to you at a meet.

If anyone has any other realistic ideas for suitable YRC regalia, Ian will be happy to discuss your ideas.

USEFUL WEB SITES

AA
Access land in England
Access land in Scotland
Alpine Club
Bowline Club
Brecon Beacons National Park
British Orienteering Federation
British Waterways
Cairngorm Club
Caledonian Macbrayne ferries
Carlisle Mountaineering Club
Coast to coast walk
Countryside Agency
Countryside Council for Wales
Cyclist Touring Club
Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme
English Heritage
English Nature
Fell & Rock Club
Forestry Commission
Fylde Mountaineering Club
Grampian Club
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Guides
Historic Houses Association
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John Muir Trust
Locations and routes
Long Distance Walkers Assoc.
Maps & books
Maps & books
Medical advice
Meteorological Office
Midland Assoc. of Mountaineers
Mount Everest Foundation
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Mountain Heritage Trust
Mountain Rescue Council
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National Trails
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North York Moors National Park
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Peak District National Park
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Public transport information.
R.S.P.B.
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Ramblers Association
Royal Geographical Society
Scotlands National Heritage
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Ski Club of Great Britain
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Southern Uplands way
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Speyside Way
Summits information
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Walking in South West
Walking in the Lakes
Weather forecasts
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Yorkshire Dales National Park
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The Yorkshire Ramblers Club
www.yrc.org.uk

Club Member of
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www.thebmc.co.uk

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