

YRC JOURNAL

THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS CLUB

MOUNTAINEERING & CAVING ETC.

Series 13 - issue 2 winter 2006

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**CORNICE ON THE ZINAL ROTHORN
PHOTO RICHARD GOWING**



The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Established 1892

The mountaineering and caving club

The Club aims;
to organise caving, mountaineering, walking and skiing
excursions and expeditions,
to encourage the exploration of caves, potholes
and the more remote parts of the world
and
to gather and promote knowledge of natural history,
archaeology, folklore and kindred subjects



Low Hall Garth
Club cottage
Little Langdale
Cumbria

Lowstern
Club cottage
Clapham
North Yorkshire



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BANANA BOATING

Don Mackay

Some years ago, wearying of air travel, my wife decided I deserved a different sort of holiday and so, as a surprise, booked passage on a Banana Boat from Newport, Wales, to Jamaica and back.

There were seven other passengers onboard, all interesting people, and we came to know them well. And the ships officers were a great crowd who organized darts matches and various entertainments. Meals were taken at the Captains table. The food was excellent. Arriving in Kingston we had a hotel ready booked and moved in to find we were the only customers. It was out of season and there was a lot of unrest in the locality because elections were coming up. We were advised to steer clear of some areas we would otherwise have liked to explore.

In the circumstances we hired a car and headed out into the country. First stop, a visit to caves that had figured in a James Bond movie. These were spectacular show caves with a ticket seller at the door, but we did learn that there were plenty of others on the island. Some that had never been explored.

Our hotel keeper was British and joined us for meals to talk about conditions back in the old country. He went further than that and invited us to join him and his wife at a drinks party with the governor of Jamaica. We declined the invitation because much more important to me while in that part of the country was a compelling wish to visit the Blue Mountain Peak and time was running out. Some four and a half thousand feet high, the highest in the Caribbean, I thought it was the sort of thing I could just take in my stride. Far from it! I was advised I would need a guide. My wife drove me as far as a mountain track permitted and left me to walk on alone. I had been directed to a coffee planters house a few miles on where I was assured I would be able to get a bed for the night and pick up a guide. The place, in a clearing, could properly be described as rambling. In its clearing it was the sort of building that must have occurred piecemeal over centuries. Outside, huge tree trunks had been sliced up to make tables and benches and at one of these sat an enormous coloured lady surrounded by at least twenty piccaninnies.

I learned afterwards that these were all her own. She had a lovely twang to her speech and offered me accommodation and a meal. I was told supper would be rice and shrimps. Fantastic, I thought, then whilst waiting for it to come, she introduced me to a man she said would be my guide. The two of us sat down at a table and when the supper came I politely waited for the guide to start. To my amazement he stirred the shrimps in with the rice and shovelled spoonfuls into his mouth heads, legs, shells and everything. There was only one thing for it. I did the same.

Bed was another matter. It looked nice and comfy so I stripped off and tucked myself in. Pitch black of night descended and I fell asleep quickly only to wake up again feeling itchy. I tossed and turned and then fumbled for my torch. Turning it on I found a blanket from the bed had hung down as far as the floor and up it marched a huge column of ants: Big nasty ones, ten abreast. There was no-one else in that part of the building so I jumped out and shook all the bedding until I thought it fit to get back in.

Breakfast was another basin full of rice and shrimps which, by then, I was used to, so I guzzled them and prepared for the long trek ahead.

The climb was unlike anything I had met before perhaps better described as a drag. It was wilderness nearly all the way with labyrinths of little tracks leading in all directions, some practically impassable. It would have been easy to get lost. A guide was essential. It was not climbing in that sense. It was tough walking up and down gradients of at least one in four for some ten miles with plenty of interesting wildlife, and humming birds. Reaching the summit there was just grass and a small derelict building. Nothing much to see in itself but the views were spectacular and rewarding enough to amply repay the effort needed to get there. My guide found an empty biscuit tin which to him was a very valuable discovery. He carried it carefully and lovingly all the way back down.

He had told me he rarely saw any English people on the mountain but went on to describe two English men who hired him some years earlier.

He didn't know their names but Stanley Marsden and Edward Tregoning fitted the description.

Escaping from Kingston, where rioters had set fire to an old peoples' home, our next stop was Ocho Rios from where we were able to explore spectacular waterfalls and an interesting canyon that extended miles into the mountainous area.

But then our ship arrived in Ocho Rios and we enjoyed watching it being loaded with Bananas. It was the first time I learned that they cut down the whole tree to harvest the bananas and a new tree grows ready for the next crop.

TAFRAOUTE – BACK TO BASICS!

“...It is intended that all who climb here will be able to enjoy to a great extent the same exploratory satisfaction experienced by those involved in the (original) route exploration and development of this wonderful rock climbing since 1990... This is not the place for novices... It is also not the place for desecration by bolters...”

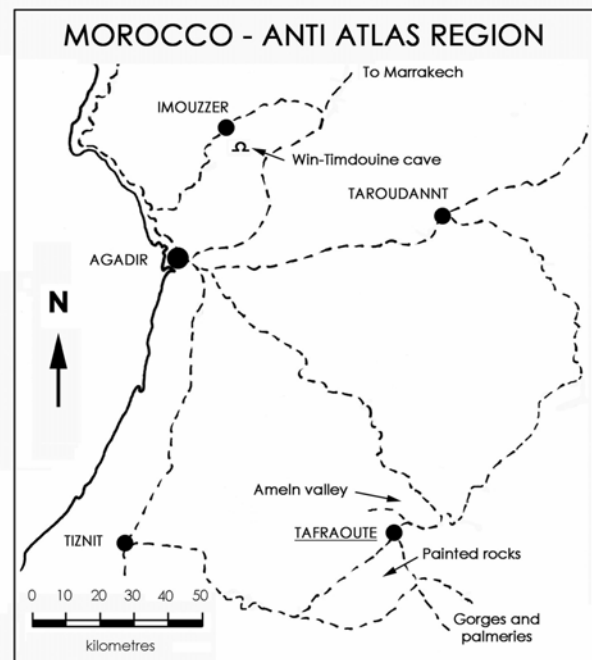
Claude Davis - Climbing in the Moroccan Anti-Atlas

In the late 1990's rumours began to circulate of a previously unvisited climbing region in Morocco with incredible rock, superb routes, permanent sunshine and vast potential. Most climbers assumed it must be near to the great gorges of Dardes and Todra where, in fact, new routes were then being done by French, Spanish and British climbers. But this was incorrect and it was not until after the millennium that the actual whereabouts, Tafraoute, became generally known. From then onwards a steadily increasing stream of climbers have made the pilgrimage to this new Mecca. All returned amply rewarded. The list of early explorers includes Trevor Jones, Les Brown, Joe Brown, Claude Davies, Derek Walker, Paul Ross, Pete Turnbull and Chris Bonnington. Most of these originators, together with the newcomers, continue to return each year contributing even more and better routes.

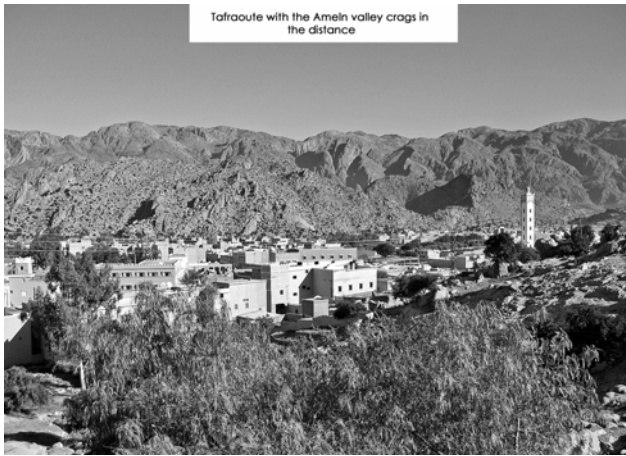
SITUATION. The town of Tafraoute lies about 120km south-east of Agadir in southern Morocco. It is located roughly in the centre of the Anti-Atlas mountains which, close by, reach 2,359m on Jebel el Kest. The region is arid, rugged and wildly magnificent.

I managed to buy a big hank of bananas which a crew member stored for me in the cold room. It started off quite green but had turned yellow in the ten days it took the ship to get us back to Newport. As soon as we docked a veritable army of customs officials came aboard and searched every nook and cranny. The captain told us they nearly always found drugs concealed aboard and sometimes a stowaway hidden in the tiniest of spaces. I have been wanting to go back ever since, to have another look at Jamaica, but unfortunately, due to rheumatics, my climbing and caving days are over. If I do get there again, regrettably, it will have to just be as a tourist.

John Middleton



GETTING THERE AND ABOUT. Agadir is a popular tourist destination and is therefore well served by charter and other cheap flights from most British airports. A hire car must be considered indispensable and most international companies operate from the airport as do a host of local businesses. The drive to Tafraoute normally takes around 4 hours. It is possible to also fly to Marrakech but this would double the driving time. Fuel costs are about 30% less than in the UK and petrol is available in most reasonable sized towns. However be aware that strikes related to fuel deliveries are not uncommon and deliveries often do not arrive until after the fuel station has sold out. We had to wait three days in Tafraoute!



WHEN TO GO. Due to the heat suitable months for a visit are normally limited to February/March and October/November when the temperature is around an agreeable 25°C. The former period is usually considered the more pleasant as the flora is at its finest after the brief winter rains.

FACILITIES. Tafraoute is an extremely pleasant place that can provide all the basic facilities any visitor could require. Most climbers stay at the three star Hotel Les Amandiers but there are other similar places nearby and also many that are less expensive. Restaurants and cafes for all pockets can be found on every street. The food is usually mouth watering Moroccan tagines and koftas but with a bit of searching croissants for breakfast can be found as can steak and chips! Alcohol is only available at the Hotel Les Amandiers. There are local taxis and a bus service which extends to Agadir and surrounding towns. The one local Bank has an ATM and will exchange notes when open.

GUIDES. The only climbing guide to date is that by Claude Davies entitled "Climbing in the Moroccan Anti-Atlas, Tafraoute and Jebel el Kest". ISBN number 1 85284 412 4 published in 2004 by Cicerone, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7PY. In addition the Hotel Les Amandiers keeps a new route book at Reception. The Guide book is intentionally vague listing only the route length and grade of the hardest move - no descriptions are given. Even the diagrams may fit 300m of climbing onto a 10cm photograph. The object is to encourage the original pioneering spirit!!

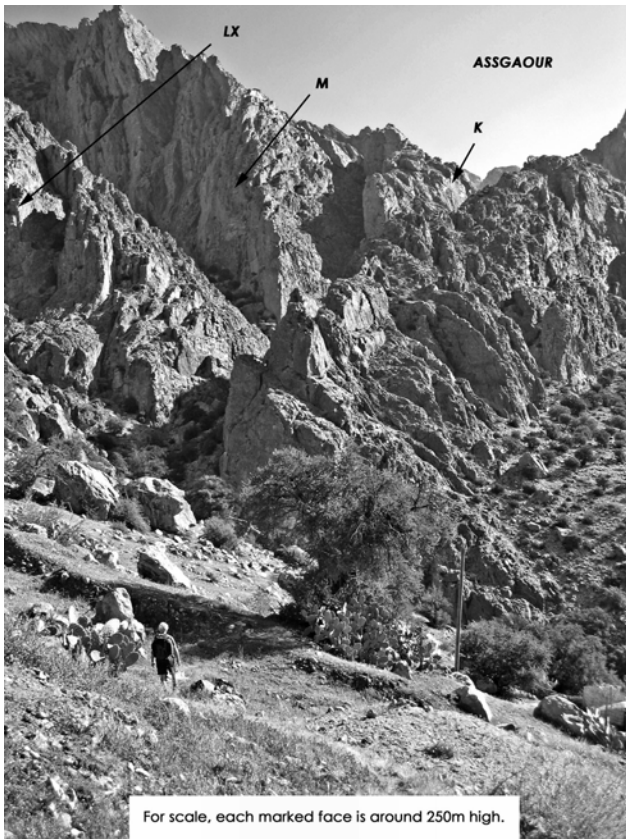
THE ROCK. Two types of rock suitable for climbing are to be found around Tafraoute. To the south lies pink granite creating both a boulderers paradise and many roped routes to 50m whilst to

the north the rock is quartzite. This latter is the object for most visitors; it is extremely compact, sound, has few loose sections and abounds with imposing lines on great faces 250m or more in height. This compactness means that good protection can sometimes be difficult but rarely impossible to find. To date the vast majority of climbing has been done in the beautiful Ameln valley just 15 minutes drive from town but new explorations extend to the north side of Jebel el Kest and beyond. The potential is still phenomenal.

THE ROUTES. The mountains on the northern side of the Ameln valley house the majority of the currently explored climbs. These usually require a 30 to 60 minute walk from where a car can be parked. This walk in is often quite arduous being steep, boulder strewn and littered with a profusion of spiny plants. It is never boring! The routes tend to be found on rock faces in the side of gorges leading into the mountains although some do actually occur much higher. The technical grades currently vary from 4a to 6a with overall description ratings varying from Severe to E3. The length may extend from 30m to over 1,000m with the average being around 250m. In our experience about two thirds of an ascent proved to be good face or slab climbing with the last third being scrambling to the top or descent. Due to the intricacies of the region the descent can often take an hour or more. An extensive rack is required including large "Friends". Two 50m by 9mm ropes are all that are required.

SOME EXAMPLES. The majority of the climbs that we did were around 250m in length and we found that we could usually fit in two of these each day. Our first efforts were in the dramatic Tizgut gorge on Crag S and even at the end of our trip we still considered "Tizgut Crack" to be our finest route. Pitch one is 45m long, 5b and is a steep and just occasionally overhanging crack too wide for good jamming. With large "Friends" it is probably E2, without - definitely E3!! The 50m second pitch is a pleasant crack and groove at 5a.

Crag K above Assgaour gave us some superb bottom pitch face climbing leading to stimulating cracks all on excellent rock. Joe Brown and Claude Davies's 200m long "Great Schism" went at E2 5c-, 4c, 5b, 4a whilst Chris King and Ron Kenyon's recent "Call to Prayers" was similarly E2 5a, 5b, 5a, 4a. The descent route from this crag includes an exciting free hanging abseil of 45m.



NEARBY DEVIATIONS. Walking is the most obvious with the wild hills just beckoning to be explored. There are few obvious paths and the ground is rough but there are no fences and it is possible to walk wherever you choose. In fact many commercial trekking groups visit Tafraoute just for this reason.

The local and very friendly villages at the base of the hills are also well worth investigating with one, Oumesnat, having a fascinating "Maison Traditional".

In 1984, about 6km south of the town a Belgian artist, Jean Verame, painted 18 tons of blue paint over some large granite boulders. Surprisingly, this is worth seeing! Following on from these boulders a good day trip is to proceed south east to visit several palmerie set amongst magnificent gorge scenery. All around Tafrouate there are many dirt roads that entice exploration. Some of these lead to ancient rock engravings although these can be more easily found with the aid of a guide.

Just to the west of Assgaour is Yazult and Crag F. Here we visited the very memorable "Hidden Crack", a Brown, Bonnington and Walker classic. The hardest moves may have only been 5b but they were brilliantly continuous. Add to this sparse good protection and a very complex descent and E3 (or epic) could be a good overall grade for the outing! Also above Yazult but on Crag E is "Stiff Start". This winds its way amenably up a 150m narrow buttress via a chimney, slab, wall, small overhang and cracks at E1 5a. The views are superb.

En route to or from Tafrouate both Tiznit and Taroudannt are walled enclaves containing typical but almost hassle free souks and old buildings. Both towns are worthy of a nights stay. To the north east of Agadir, in the mountainous Imouzzer region there are a multitude of local fossil stalls where some superb examples of ammonites (to 1.7m), trilobites, brachiopods and others can be seen. In the vicinity of the stalls it is worthwhile exploring the local countryside as many fossils can be viewed in the limestone rocks or just collected from the ground! To the south-east of Imouzzer lies Win-Timdouine, a cave currently 19,128m in length and the longest system in Africa. It houses some very large chambers and excellent formations but unfortunately has a very wet entrance series. The walking around here is again very good and Imouzzer has an excellent place to stay in the "Hotel des Cascades".

And, when everywhere else is exhausted, then there is still Agadir with its beaches, night clubs and sophistication (?).

Our small team consisted of John and Valerie Middleton, Peter Kaye and Anne Webster.



BOOK REVIEW

WILD LAKELAND by Martin Varley ISBN 1-84114-475-4 Halsgrove Discovery Series

Very much a 'coffee table' book, this nevertheless is an excellent read for those of us interested in the flora and fauna of the Lakes.

Written with the flair of a story teller and accompanied by superb photographs this book explores every cranny of Cumbria detailing the natural history and the reasons why things are what they are and where they are.

It covers conundrums like why birds-eye primroses grow near Kirby Steven but not near Keswick; how the ash trees in Borrowdale have lived twice as long as their counterparts elsewhere and why eagles no longer fly over Eagle Crag.

Sea pinks flourish along the coasts as you might expect, but are also found near the summit of Scafell and for many years they were thought to be separate species.

Chris Bonington states;

"it provides a refreshing account of Lakeland's Natural History. It tells of how it has been influenced and effected by our activities in the past and what hope there is for its future.

The true variety of its landscapes from the sea to the mountain tops is revealed, its fragility explained and the importance of protecting this special place firmly reinforced".

Amongst other things it touches upon man's early impact on the landscape. From the first real industry when Neolithic man started making stone axes and exporting them as far afield as the English Channel coast and southern Scotland, through to modern man. Nearly a third of the stoen axes found on the Isle of Man came from Pike o' Stickle.

By the time the Romans came on the scene there was a well developed agricultural economy which was strong attraction to them.

Their activities made further change not least pushing the roads through from Ravenglass to Ambleside over Hard Knott and over High Street to Penrith.

The Vikings added to the impact pushing well inland from the west as evidenced by the remnants of their language (gill, dale, tarn, beck and fell).

Scafell itself is Norse for 'bald mountain'.

It was however in Norman times that what we know as Cumbria was really tamed. There were no entries for this area in the Domesday Book but the Normans soon carved the land up into vast feudal estates providing a living for the barons in their lowland castles. (More of this later)

What land they did not own was held by the church and much of what we know as Furness was owned by Furness Abbey.

These Cistercians were hard headed businessmen and amongst many interests they developed a major sheep industry which in turn led to the building of stone walls to keep predators at bay.

If you want an uplifting tome to take to hand on a wet dismal day when you are trapped at home I can commend this to you.

Roy Denney

THE BARONY OF KENDAL & THE LANGDALES

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Ian Crowther

Regional history is an interest of mine and I have recently been studying 'The History & Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland & Cumberland' a very bulky and scholarly 2 volume work by Joseph Nicolson and Richard Burn first published in 1777, for other personal reasons.

Whilst perusing this work I came across their references to the Langdales and thought that a little investigation might be appropriate for a 'YRC Journal' article. In writing this I have gleaned most of my information from the above work but I

have done a great deal of editing and rearranging in order to make it applicable to the Langdales in particular, and more accessible to a modern readership.

I have deliberately excluded vast amounts of fine detail which could only interest a specialist, but inevitably I have allowed a few thoughts of my own to creep in here and there.

I had previously thought that great swathes of this area had been early Church land. I couldn't have been more wrong. The history of the ownership of the lands of Westmorland & Cumberland is extremely complex considering that it is a remote area far away from the seats of power, land which the Domesday book dismissed as 'entirely waste', and whose inclusion in England or Scotland was in any case highly debated in the mediaeval period, most of it having been during the so-called 'dark ages' a part of the old British kingdom of Strathclyde (Alcluyd) administered from Dumbarton Rock.

The slightly later Cumbrian Kingdom of Rheged had been a complex matter whereby its British rulers were arguably under the suzerainty of the Anglian (and later Danish) kingdom of Northumbria. The name 'Cumbria' is simply a variant of the Welsh 'Cymru' and their spoken language in those days would have been very similar to early Welsh.

Moving on to 945 ad, the Saxon King Edmund relinquished the area to Malcolm I of Scotland, so presumably he didn't want it as it was probably more trouble to protect and administer than it was worth. In 1032 this was effectively confirmed, following squabbling between the Danish King Knut (Canute) & Scots King Malcolm (Canmore) II. This same Malcolm II in 1068 agreed to 'do homage' to William I of England for these lands following the Conquest, but the next year William seized them back during the 'harrying of the North', no doubt so that he could 'grant' them to his many continental friends and followers.

Subsequently, the cross border harrying, reiving and periodic open warfare continued, in spite of all efforts to control it, for some 700 years to a greater or lesser extent until the time of Queen Anne and the 'union' of the Parliaments. It is always a matter of some amusement to me that Hollywood manages to make so much of their 'Wild Frontier' & 'Wild West' periods which even when

combined together as one only lasted a mere 150 years or so at the most. Far more could be made of the 'Wild Borders'.

It appears that William I established numerous Baronies throughout his conquests, including that of 'Kendal' which he granted to one of these favoured followers, Ivo de Taillebois, brother to Fulk, Earl of Anjou & King of Jerusalem. No information is given regarding the pre-Norman ownership. Ivo had diplomatically married Elgiva the daughter of the late Saxon King Ethelred II (The Unready) and sister to both Edmund (Ironside) and Edward (the Confessor) whilst that family had been in exile in Normandy from the Danes. He seems to have granted all or most of the churches in his Barony to the Abbey of St. Mary, York. He was the first Baron of Kendal.

During the reign of Henry II, William de Taillebois, great great grandson of Ivo, adopted the surname 'de Lancastre', and this seems to have been the origin of the concept of a 'House of Lancaster'. His male line failed and the whole of the 'Forest of Westmerland' passed by marriage to Gilbert Fitz Reinford in the time of Richard I who reigned 1157 -1199. Richard granted Gilbert the right to hold a weekly market in Kendal on Saturdays, although how this was achieved is problematical - Richard was absent from England almost throughout his reign, notwithstanding legends linking him with the doings of Robin Hood! Gilbert's son William also adopted the name 'de Lancastre' from his mother's side, also receiving her inheritance, but the male line failing again the properties were divided between his two sisters Alice & Helwise. These shares subsequently became known as the 'Richmond fee' (Alice) & the 'Marquis & Lumley fees' (Helwise), but these 'fee-names' resulted from later proprietorship, not from Alice & Helwise themselves.

Alice married one William de Lyndesay and amongst their share, or 'moiety' of the Kendal Barony received large a large part of what was then known as 'Langden'. After four generations there was again no male heir except one resident in France who was debarred from inheriting, thus the 'Richmond fee' 'escheated' to the crown in the time of Edward III.

In 1348 King Edward granted the estate to John de Coupland of Wooler in Northumberland & his wife Johan (Joan) for their lifetimes, in

consequence of John's 'laudable services .. in our wars .. over our enemies, the Scots'.

Following the death of first John then Johan de Coupland the 'moiety' then reverted by order of Edward III in 1376 to the progeny of the de Lyndesays in the person of the French nobleman Ingelram de Coucy, a grandson of that William de Lyndesay previously mentioned, the point apparently being that Ingelram had had the presence of mind to marry Isabel, Edward III's daughter! Parts of 'Langden' were certainly included in this reversion. Ingelram was also ennobled as Earl of Bedford. Clever chap!

The male line failing again, King Henry III granted the lands to his third son John, Duke of Bedford who died in 1436. King Henry IV then granted the lands in 1444 to John de Beaufort, Duke of Somerset and Kendal, himself grandson of John of Gaunt. Again there was no male issue and yet again the lands reverted to the crown who granted them to Margaret, heir to the Duke of Somerset, and whose second marriage was to Henry Stafford, son of the Duke of Buckingham and was herself mother of King Henry VII (Henry Tudor) by her first marriage to the Duke of Richmond.

(Are you following all this? There will be questions later!)

In 1492, the year of Columbus's first trip to America and the final expulsion of the Moorish rulers from Spain, an account of the value of the annual rentals lists its part of 'Langden' as worth £6-0-0d.

In 1532 these lands were granted by King Henry VIII to his illegitimate son Henry Duke of Richmond & Somerset. He also died without heir & the moiety 'escheated' to the crown for the eighth time, but it subsequently seems to somehow have got itself reunited with the 'Marquis & Lumley fees' of the old Barony of Kendal who were by then held by the Parre family because, by an 'inquisition' held at Kendal in April 1572 'Langden' was included in the estates of the then recently deceased William Parre, Marquis of Northampton and brother to the late Queen Katherine Parr(e), and who had died without issue. The estate then passed to his other sister Anne and, through her marriage to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke who later married for a second time to a 'Helena'. Helena outlived him and received the Kendal

estates as part of her widows' dower. This was confirmed by a 'survey' held on 12th July 1572 in which she is referred to as 'Ellen, lady Marquis of Northampton', though quite how she could have contrived to lay claim to the Northampton Marquisate is somewhat obscure to me. Shortly after this it appears that this lady was obliged to pass these holdings to Queen Elizabeth I in exchange for other land elsewhere, and on 7th. September 1574 they (including 'Langden' by name) appear as crown lands once again.

In 1615, the 12th year of his politically very complex reign, James I granted parts of these estates including 'Langdall' to his eldest son Charles, Prince of Wales 'for the better maintenance and supportation of his Princely State'.

These Stuarts were 'cavalier' in many ways. James was always seeking money and bickered with parliament constantly. He dissolved parliament in 1611 but then found himself without any means of raising taxes and/or receiving moneys to fund his extravagances. One of his more tyrannical ways of trying to raise cash was by effectively 'cancelling' the royal tenancies in Westmorland & Cumberland on the premise that as they were based partly on the feudal requirement whereby the landlords provided 'border service' against Scottish depredations (which was true) and that as the two crowns were now conjoined in himself (also true), then this requirement was rendered obsolete and therefore the entire basis of the tenancies was void, a specious and suspect argument indeed! By 'cancelling' the rights of the holders of crown-granted lands he must have thought that he could then impose new and, for him, far more profitable terms on his landlords.

Arguments went on and on for years, including landlords' meetings resulting in 'petitions' and suits in the Court of the Star Chamber, but there doesn't seem to have been any really definitive outcome. It seems probable that many of the landlords simply came to private arrangements with the King's agents, paying fixed 'fees' or 'fine' (bribes) in order to be left alone.

We have now reached a time only a little over a century before Nicolson and Burn were producing their great work. Nevertheless, they have nothing to say about affairs during the reign of Charles I or the Commonwealth interregnum, but after the

restoration of Charles II in 1660 the lands were granted by him to his Queen, Katherine. This leads me to guess, without any real evidence at all, that they must have been sequestrated in some way by Cromwell's rabble! The annual rentals of Langdale, by now using the modern spelling, were listed as two separate sums, the moiety of the 'Richmond fee' being £5. 4. 11 d. and that of the 'Marquis & Lumley fee' £7. 12. 5d.

Following the death of Queen Katherine they were all granted to the Lowther family who later became Earls of Lonsdale, and still are to this day, but some smaller holdings in Langdale and other parts of the old Barony of Kendal had passed down a different family line after the 'de Lancastre' period, passing through the ownership of the 'de Brus' (Bruce) family, the 'de Thwengs' and the 'de Lumleys'. They then fell to the 'Bellingham' family who sold them to a Colonel James Grahme whose daughter married Henry Bowes Howard, Earl of Berkshire whose descendants still enjoyed these holdings in 1777.

Clearly, all this information only concerns the 'primary' landholders who held their lands of the Crown, originally by means of the feudal system introduced by the Normans, but later by Crown 'grants'. There are no substantive references to those who we could nowadays describe as subtenants, men who would themselves have been knights and/or 'squires', leasing their lands from the 'landlords', except insofar as they were sometimes named as witnesses to leases, other documents and enquiries without ever really indicating precisely what their land holdings were.

The actual workers of the land in those days did not signify at all, of course. As a result, none of the now long-established, familiar but ordinary Lake District family surnames appear at all during this period of history, although they would have been there, tucked away in their peasants' cothouses and yeomen's longhouses!

Editors note

Searches of the internet have found similar references to this chapel and details of other searches for its location but no answer is forthcoming. Similarly research of Bartholomew's and OS maps of the early part of the 20th century do not help either.

There is however a location called Vicars between Greenburn Beck and the River Brathay near Fell Foot which may give a hint as to where it was.

The history of the ecclesiastical parish is that it was originally part of the very extensive parish of 'Kirkeby in Kentdale', which included 'Gresmer' or 'Grasmire', now Grasmere. This was a daughter chapel to Kendal and later became, 'by custom & reputation' a separate 'rectory', St.Oswald's, due to its remoteness from its mother church in Kendal.

It was certainly so by the reign of Henry VIII where, in 1535 it was valued at £28. 11. 5d. The chapel in Great Langdale is a daughter chapel to Grasmere, but it also serves Little Langdale and the annual salary was anciently £6. 4. 3d., plus a small house and a parcel of land valued at £2 annually. In 1743 Langdale chapel received the benefit, by lot, of

'Queen Anne's Bounty' of £200 with which an estate was purchased in the "parish of Ulverstone".

In 1767 another "lot" of £200 fell to the said chapel, wherewith an estate was purchased in Little Langdale. The whole revenue of the chapel amounts to about £21 a year. In Little Langdale is a place called Chapel Mire, where it is said a chapel formerly stood, which was removed and united to that of Great Langdale. In Little Langdale is got fine Blue Slate; large quantities of which are sent off to London and other places'

Can anyone place 'Chapel Mire'? I can't find any reference to it on the 1:25000 map.

If I receive sufficient fan mail, I might consider composing another gripping episode of this saga to enthral you even more.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

A FIRST TIMER IN CHINA

Tim Josephy

As reported in previous journals and detailed in the supplement to the last edition, the YRC have for several years now been making expeditions to China in order to assist the Chinese with the exploration and mapping of some of the major caves. Detailed reports will continue to be produced but these are the personal impressions of Tim Josephy who went out last year.

"In 2005, I was lucky enough to get a place on the expedition and whilst the results of the trip will be fully documented in due course, this article is an attempt to describe in personal terms, what the experience was like.

The area we visited, Feng Shan County, is in a vast area of Karst landscape with tall towers of limestone all around, thickly clad in bamboo, palms, thorns and who knows what else. Think of a classical Chinese watercolour and it is just like that. Roads are being built at a frantic pace with quantity definitely ahead of quality. Where they are cut into the hillside (which is most of the time) they are liberally strewn with stonefall and if there is a delivery of material to effect repairs, it is all just dumped in the road. This combined with the steep gradients and hairpin bends makes for exciting travelling. Even more so when you realise that the big tank on the roof of the bus isn't for fuel, it's for water to cool the brakes.

Our base for the expedition was Jiang Zhou village where we were accommodated in the government compound, a square of apartments surrounding a courtyard. The buildings are, like the roads, built on the economical style with little attempt to make them in any way attractive.

Farm near Jiang Zhou



This feature is noticeable even in remote villages where the medieval lifestyle sits incongruously with the stark breeze block cubes. Traditional thatched roof houses and the occasional more imposing residence do exist, but they seem to be disappearing as the newer housing is put up. It may or may not be an improvement, depending upon your point of view. The roof of at least one of the houses will be adorned with a satellite dish whilst outside in the paddy fields a farmer will be ploughing with a hand plough behind a water buffalo. Outside the cities cars are rare; transport is by bus, lorry or the ubiquitous motor-cycle, converted into a tricycle taxi, with a sheet metal and perspex cab on the back. These last were affectionately referred to by the expedition members as "biscuit tins" and could be hired for a few pence, although it was probably quicker to walk.

Our apartment was on four floors with a shower and toilet on the ground floor. This was a hole in the floor affair with the shower on the wall. One slip with the soap and it was gone. Electricity came in via two wires part way up the stairs, into a dodgy isolation switch which needed constant attention from the janitor, who with candle in one hand and screwdriver in the other would stand on a rickety chair and attempt to reconnect the live wires, to the accompaniment of impressive blue flashes. Bruce spent ages waiting with his camera but the chap never actually fried himself. We had our own cook who fed us regularly and well; whether they were being kind to us I don't know but none of the "exotic" ingredients I had feared actually materialised.

Typical karst scenery



Each morning people would assemble in the courtyard and teams of expedition members and Chinese cavers would be organised. Projects for the day would be allocated, transport arranged, everything sorted. Then maybe a television crew would arrive to do an interview, or a local government leader might appear to be introduced to everyone, or the transport might be re-arranged. Whatever, we were usually finally ready for the off by the crack of 11 o'clock, with poor Ged close to a nervous breakdown. Despite this, long underground trips were the norm, with teams often returning late into the night. Transport was by an old Japanese 4x4 and an even older pickup. Someone had remarked that riding around in the latter, we looked like a Taliban assault group; the Chinese found this incredibly funny and from then on the pickup was invariably referred to as "The Taliban". The mere mention of the word was enough to have them rolling around hooting with laughter. One of the great delights of the trip was the sense of fun that the local Chinese had. As well as being insatiably curious, they also seemed able to find something to laugh about in just about everything; the sight of a hairy chest was a source of huge amusement. They were also extremely hospitable; in one village, when Stuart Page and I surfaced from the cave at dusk, we were met by the entire village (about 20 people) and whilst the children sang us a welcome we were plied with beer. Night fell and an old kettle appeared out of which was poured home-made spirit. It was pretty awful, but after a while they must have brought out the good stuff because it began to taste much better. (As an aside here, drinking in China is a dangerous business - if someone raises a glass to you and shouts "Gambay", you both have to drain your glasses in one.) We soon moved indoors where we were treated to a gargantuan meal of rice, pork and tofu with various greens. It was all very tasty as long as you kept your back to the kitchen which probably wouldn't have passed a health & safety inspection. Only the men sat down to eat, whilst the women and children watched on with great interest. By the time Emma Porter and Marci Kucsera arrived some hours later, they were greeted by a party in full swing.

But what about the caving? What can I say? I had been told to expect big caves but nothing could have prepared me for what they are really like. They are so huge that in some places you cannot see the walls or the roof of the passage. Stalagmites loom up 15 or 20 metres high and

crystal cascades tumble down the walls from far beyond the range of lights. In one cave, Yulang Dong, we descended a black flowstone cascade maybe 50 metres wide and high into the biggest trunk passage I have ever seen. Further into the cave, one party surveyed all the way round a massive stalagmite boss, thinking it was the wall of the passage. Most of the passages we explored were a long way above the active river passages and were eerily silent. It took me a while to realise why. In British caves one is always accompanied by the noises of gear and bodies being banged about and scraped along the walls of the passages; here in China only the occasional snatches of conversation break the silence. The temperature and humidity are other differences. Even wearing just a light-weight boiler suit or T shirt and shorts, any hard work soon brought on an overheat caption. Luckily one could easily dispense with a helmet most of the time - there was little danger of banging ones head!

On the last caving day for most of the team, Emma, Stuart and I entered Jiang Xhou cave by the Long Hai entrance to survey a passage noted on a previous visit. This led through a dried up sump to a dry stream passage in dramatic black limestone, marbled with calcite veins. Any South Wales caver would instantly have felt at home so we christened it Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 4. It led past a precarious traverse beside a deep shaft to end at a flowstone slope descending beyond the reach of our lights. With no rope and time pressing, we had to turn back, but perhaps someone will look next year? On the way out we got quite lost for a while. There is only one passage but the colossal boulder piles and mud slopes made direction finding a nightmare.

This was for me a uniquely memorable trip. To experience such a different culture at close hand and in a way that tourists could never do was a great privilege. Whatever the politics and baggage of the country itself, the rural people were warm hearted, friendly and welcoming. And the caving? Fantastic!"



Magwuai Dong

See small box for scale

HARE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW ?

Roy Denney

As I have been out and about I have noted a large increase in the numbers of hares in our area particularly where the new National Forest is being created. These entrancing creatures enjoy the rough grassland which is developing as an interim feature where new trees have been planted.



These animals really are very unpopular at present as they do great damage to young trees, and new woodland plantings have to be protected by fencing off.

Unfortunately hares appreciate the ready supply of good food and hares are often shot to clear such areas. One area planted with 40,000 new trees in autumn had by Christmas had half of them with their growing tips eaten off. Once the trees are established hares will be very welcome again.

They can vary in size quite dramatically depending on food supplies and disturbance levels. I have seen some really big ones living amongst the young trees and in Anglia where they thrive on sugar beet they are known as 'Fen Donkeys'

Hares sometimes give a seasonal performance seen in the spring and often referred to as the hares boxing match. Creatures of open areas more so than rabbits, during March and early April they can be seen squaring up. Often thought to be territorial squabbles it is probable that it is often a female fighting off an unwanted suitor. Even rarer is the occasional hare's conference when groups of the animals can be seen forming inward facing circles in apparent debate.

I have started several hares up when wandering around and find them a fascinating creature but their numbers are decreasing over the country as a whole due to changes in land management.

The mountain hare which is a separate species from the common brown hare appears, over much of the country, to be doing much better than his lowland cousin. In years gone by I had the pleasure of seeing them in their white winter coats on visits to the Pennines but this seems a thing of the past. They turn their coats white in areas where snow normally prevails but I have not seen one for many years and

if they were still changing colour surely they would now stand out like a sore thumb.

Perhaps they are dropping the habit. It could mean that numbers are falling but these creatures are past masters at finding background to hide against. They can be told apart from their lowland cousins by a permanent white tip to their tail.

They are obviously still about in more northern Britain as members on the Braemar meet last February were fortunate to be able to confirm.

They not only saw white hares but white hares boxing!



Photograph taken by Michael Wood

If you walk an apparently empty field of stubble you will frequently have one jump out from under your feet and if you do not have a dog with you they will dart away in a curving or jinking run and then a few hundred yards from you they will freeze and literally vanish. I have walked over to where I know they are and certainly got within five yards without starting them up again, only to walk on by and turn to see them materialise when I am long gone.

This ability to 'disappear' together with the creatures blood curdling scream when injured have found it a place in mystical folklore down the ages.

I knew a gamekeeper in the dales who called them the 'Invisibles' and they have many other local names. 'Dew Flirt', 'Big Bum' and 'Wood Cat' all give intimations of their habits.

This creature can live in many habitats and feeds actively at dawn and dusk lying up in surface scrapes for most of the day. It will have several favourite scrapes and will tend to return to one of them.

Rough grassland by arable land and woodland edges is their favoured habitat. They are quite happy in pastureland but the shortage of cover does mean they are very nervous and expend much energy avoiding perceived threats which wears them out.

These animals often only live a couple of years even surviving predators, whereas the species can live to

five or six. When disturbed they can hit nearly 40 m.p.h. and can sustain 30 m.p.h. over fairly considerable distances making them the fastest land animal in Britain.

There are thought to be about a million hares left in Britain today. The population is very precarious as the young (leverets) are badly exposed to both agricultural equipment and predators, living on the ground as they do. Mothers are known to scatter their young about to increase the chances of some surviving. They visit them in turn to suckle them.



CROSSING SPITZBERGEN 110 YEARS AFTER CONWAY

Michael Smith

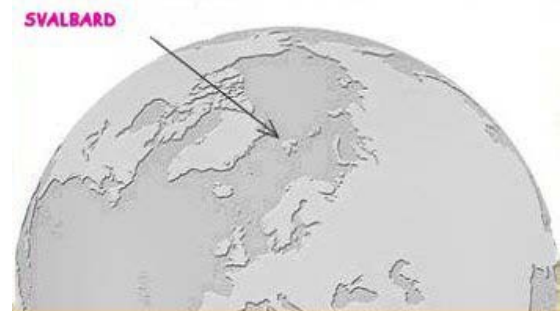
A two part account of a seven person ski-pulking expedition crossing Svalbard in April, 2006.

Part I The Journey

Undoubtedly it was Duncan MacKay's and his partner, Sarah's irrepressible enthusiasm for Spitzbergen and their experience of the area that resulted in, Peter Chadwick, me and relative youngsters Rachel, Duncan and Natasha standing outside Svalbard's Longyear airport one evening late in April 2006. We were ready for eight days in the mountains. Well almost ready - half my kit hadn't arrived.

Thankfully SAS loaned me a sleeping bag as Svalbard, Land of Cold Coasts, matched its name that night. After a noisy night in a giant flapping tent normally used for skidoo engineering and reindeer skinning, we sorted kit and stocked up on fuel and food for a trip into the hinterland. Our pulks were packed by mid-afternoon by which time my remaining kit had arrived on the next plane from Oslo.

An hour by skidoo dragging sleds piled with our pulks (one-man kit-carrying sleds) and we were dropped off in steadily worsening weather at the entrance to Vendomdalen. It had taken some persuasion by Duncan to have us transported this far as the winds approached gale force, sleet was setting in and



visibility worsening. The skidoos were soon off: their drivers concerned lest they fail to retrace their tracks to the township. Nobody else would be out in this weather and a storm was brewing. Navigating this interconnecting maze of featureless broad snow-covered flat-bottomed valleys is no problem when you can see the shapes of the peaks but in this weather it would require careful use of the GPS.

As we had 24-hour daylight we considered moving up valley to a more sheltered spot - but not for long. Instead we dug into the snow to make a sunken platform and built a high wall as a windbreak. Duncan was left to put out the trip-wire bear-alarm as soaked and tired we crawled into the small tents. Stoves were soon roaring for the three hours or so needed to melt snow and prepare the evening meal plus drinking water for the night. Well, two stoves were. One Primus with a leaky fuel pipe proved irreparable. The surviving stoves were an MSR and another Primus. Two tents sharing one stove prolonged the noisy cooking time. It was around midnight when I put my paperback away and settled for the so-called 'night'.

It was a rough night but much to our relief the next morning was bright and clear. After breakfast we were called to arms - literally.

Everyone tried out one of the three 9mm ex-WWII German rifles with ordinary live rounds before loading them each with four dum-dum rounds in case we encountered bears. The hand-held firework launcher was demonstrated and the Verrey pistol sequence practiced. We felt better prepared after that.

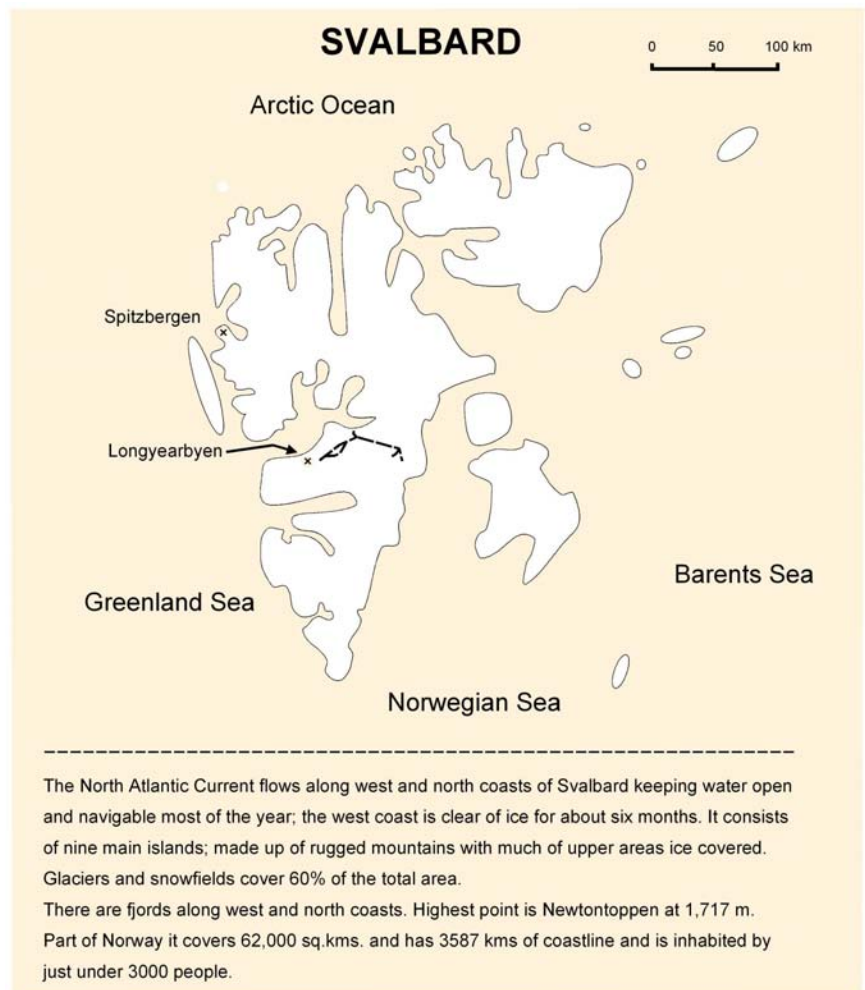
Pulks were packed and we clipped into our skis. We were a mixed party in all sorts of ways. Four chaps, three lasses. Four over 50, three around 30. Six with ski experience, one without. Three on fish-scales, two on waxed Nordics and two on alpine mountain ski. This resulted in different individual paces on some terrains and attempts to convince others that one's chosen type matched the task in hand.

It is a pleasant and easy first day as we barely cross a contour heading 'up' Sassendalen. By 6pm the clouds descended and we dug out a camping spot soon after entering Fulmardalen. By 10pm the cooking was finished and large snowflakes were falling.

The next day we had packed the sodden tents by 10am and started a determined effort to progress south-east towards Agardh Bay. This was the route taken by William Martin Conway in 1996 and the first crossing of Spitzbergen. He tackled it a couple of months later in the year and his progress was hindered by swollen rivers and "a nameless compound, neither solid nor liquid, neither ice, water, nor snow, but possessing the wetness of water, the coldness of ice, and while offering no support to the tread posing a massive obstruction to the advancing foot".

A narrow col links Fulmardalen with Agardhdalen. This col is formed by the Marmorbreen (glacier) advancing since Conway's time, from the icecap to the east and abutting the opposite valley wall. Beyond the col we dropped to a several kilometre long frozen lake, Jökulvatnet, which has appeared to fill the gap between the new col and the Elfenbeinbreen which Conway did cross and called the Ivory Gate.

We are now in thick mist and on wetting snow as we start to cross this second glacier late in the afternoon.



Our compulsion to make progress towards the coast (still 16km away) is tempered by the navigational problems presented by a contorted glacier and some individuals concerns regarding the hazards of glacier crossing on skis with pulks. We descend about a kilometre over undulating, lightly crevassed, snow covered ground and happen upon a bowl sheltered from the brisk wind. A couple of moraines of coal debris have been exposed by the wind and we had for these in the hope of warmer camping. The wider one just takes the three tents. After removing the larger pebbles we build a snow wall and settle down, tired after skiing almost 20km in the day.

The third day on ski was intended to be to the coast and back without the pulks. However, we faced real difficulties. Firstly, the weather was against us mild, raining and thick mist. Also, for security we were moving slowly roped together on ski and needed to halt to add or remove skins as the slope changed. Thirdly, the terrain was complex in the middle of the glacier with a river worn channel having cut a long 15m tall ice wall blocking our progress. A decision was made to follow it upwards to find a crossing. This proved impractical.

However it did give us sight of fresh bear and cub prints passing a few hundred metres from our camp - a sobering thought. Retreating having made slow progress, the remaining distance to the coast was abandoned and a return was made to pack up camp and head off back over the col in search of the clearer weather we had enjoyed further inland.

Now very wet and weary by the time we regain the col towards Fulmardalen we consider a return via the icecap but this would be foolhardy in the conditions. Instead we glide down the valley to camp at its mouth where we get a calm dry 'night'. Establishing camp clustered close together to make setting the bear alarm easier is now a slick operation.

Blue skies greet us as we rise on day four and tempt us to climb 360m Elvøgda by the camp. We reach the top, get good views of the many surrounding peaks and glaciers and are tempted on towards Milne Eldwards Fjellet as clouds descend, rob us of the view and we head back down. By noon we are skiing off west along broad Sassendalen. So broad at 5 kilometres across its flat valley floor that progress feels slow. Evening finds us turning out of Sassendalen and south into Eskerdalen requiring a short pull over a spur where we see reindeer. We make a few kilometres progress up the valley, which will eventually take us to Adventdalen and the township of Longyear, before making camp. It is almost 11pm before the stoves fell silent and midnight before I turned in as light rain starts.

This year, as last, April has been much milder than the published tables of average temperatures suggest. I would judge the difference to be almost 10°C. As we were approaching the coast the temperature in Longyearbyen reached 7.5°C, the highest recorded in April on Svalbard since measurements began in 1912. Add to this our abandonment of our original objective, Dicksonland, due to the failure of sea ice to form at all in Sassenfjorden this winter and you have evidence supporting the global warming hypothesis.

A bright clear start the next day tempts us up Sticky Keep, a Conway peak of 700m, via the east buttress of the central peak. The views all round were upliftingly impressive with innumerable shapely white peaks and the length of Sassendalen laid out before us. To the north are high brown cliffs across Tempelfjorden towards Dicksonland. The route presented no real difficulties though thin snow on steep scree held in place by 'sticky' black goo slowed progress both in ascent and descent. Those using alpine skis persevered with them up to about 250m and carved graceful turns in descent.

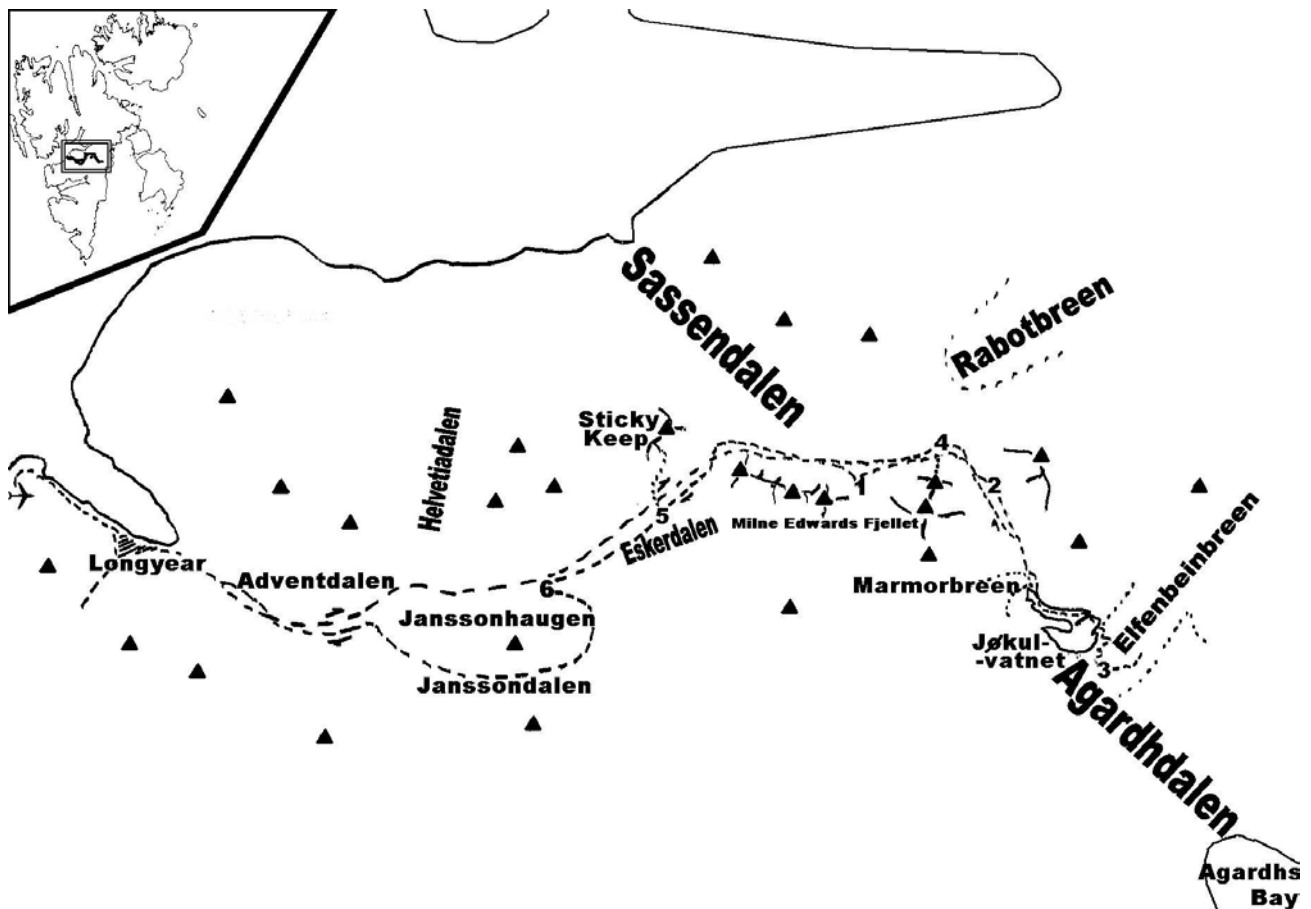
We were all able to ski run effortlessly back to camp and were packed ready for the off by mid afternoon.

The afternoon pull up towards a pingo on the pass with its nearby locked Passhytta, our first sign of 'civilisation' other than the occasional skidoo party probably heading for the coast where a rotting beached whale was attracting bears. We ski on until early evening by which time it is milder and the wind is stronger and head on as we seek a suitable camp. Soon after entering a cliff lined narrowing and spotting resident snow buntings I suggest camping in a shallow wind hollowed scoop that now provided shelter. It was not a good idea. A few hours later, half way through cooking I lifted a pan from its melted hole in the snow to see the water rapidly filling the hole. The water table, rising with the melt and is only a handbreadth from the surface. I shout a warning to the others and we quickly raise the camp out of the hollow and resettle much later that night.

That evening there was more activity as a helicopter repeatedly flew into Helvetiadalen and later past our camp. Later a skidoo came over and asked us if we had triggered a rescue beacon. They were responding but couldn't locate the source. We reassured them we were fine and they passed on some local knowledge. Round the corner the valley was completely flooded. They suggested we take to higher ground round the back of the small peak Janssonhaugen.

We followed this advice the next morning in spells of warming sunshine. As we regained Adventdalen we meet four novice dog-sled teams out for the day. Several kilometres further on we near the first buildings and the road to the radio mast. By this time the snow has thinned to leave extensive bare patches where plants are starting to raise their stems. Obviously it was time to call a halt to the skiing.

We secure a minibus and trailer to get us back to our shed and head off first to shower then sauna then dine out at Husset by Sverdrupbyen on coalfish, seal, whale and reindeer. After a day sorting out the gear and visiting the newly opened museum we were flying home. The trip was a good introduction to both Spitzbergen and using pulks. Its success was largely down to Duncan's experience of these matters developed over thirty years. Unlike Conway with its pony sledging across soft ground, we had just enough of the right kit. That made the going easy and the camping comfortable despite some testing conditions. So how about Greenland, northern Norway or Murmansk perhaps?



Part II Lessons Learned

This part lists some reflections on the equipment used on the expedition and its suitability with the hope that these prove useful to other parties planning trips to similar areas.

Camping

Snow valences were useful in strong winds and in driving snow. They do though need to be a robust material such as ripstop nylon.

Having a snow shovel for each person speeds the digging of tent platforms and building of snow walls. The longer handled extending snow shovels were better for the back than short ones.

Our snow pegs were home-made from aluminium angle with a small hook of coat-hanger wire on a short nylon cord loop. These provided good anchorage though care had to be taken to avoid both straightening the wires and cutting one's hand when pushing the pegs in.

In really wet conditions an under-tent groundsheet protector of waterproof nylon might help keep the tent dry and protect the groundsheet on rocky ground.

A full length closed-cell insulation mat supplemented by two sit-mat sized pieces for the

pressure points of hips and shoulders provided sufficient insulation and padding provided the sleeping platform was well prepared and evenly compressed before pitching.

Additional small plastic bags are required to store used toilet tissue to avoid littering the landscape unnecessarily after the spring melt.

Cooking

Coleman fuel, usually available in Longyear, may be better in Svalbard than paraffin due to the latter's tendency to wax formation. Rodsprit was available and used for priming the stoves.

Carrying a spare fuel tube would have allowed repair of the leaky primus stove but you'd need the whole expensive assembly: fuel tap and pipe.

An aluminium plate or biscuit tin lid was invaluable for stopping the stove sinking into the snow.

Boil in the bag meals and pouring hot water onto dehydrated food (such as pre-mixed muesli, milk powder and sugar) in individual portion-controlled plastic bags balanced on a plastic bowl avoids the need for washing up. Some boil in the bag meal packs release substances into the surrounding water which make the water unpalatable though it can still be used for washing.

Effervescent orange vitamin supplement tablets were popular for encouraging the drinking of large volumes of water. Nobody suffered scurvy! Tubes of condensed milk were also popular.

The supermarkets in Longyear were large and well stocked though prices were high by UK standards. The alternative of taking out food as baggage risks excess baggage charges of several pounds sterling per kilogram. Some Norwegian food packaging lacked cooking instructions comprehensible by English monoglots which led to some interesting experiments.

Skis

The heavier Alpine skis, at least when used by people a good level of fitness, are able to keep up with Nordic skis on the flat and are fine for pulling pulks. These skis were usable somewhat further up the mountain than the others and consequently gave longer and consequently quicker descents on the return. They are probably preferable for a trips covering a significant proportion mountainous terrain but not for predominantly valley work.

Fish scales worked very well in the wet snow. They could be used on moderate slopes with pulks and supplemented with herring-boning and then skins as a last resort for some on steep slopes. These were probably the best compromise for these 'around zero' snow conditions encountered.

Waxed Nordic skis gave adequate traction on wet snow with universal klyster but then required careful handling. With a strong tail wind and arms raised a sail effect gave glides of up to 20m. In colder conditions the waxed skis would probably have more advantage.

Ski boots

Plastic boots are very good in these conditions and you can walk up mountains in them quite successfully though one wearer suffered sore ankles after a half day out. Wearers of plastic boots still had dry feet after a week out provided they changed or dried their socks.

Leather boots, even with yeti gaiters, do get wet after four or five days when the temperature is above zero. But at temperatures below freezing, they work fine.

A tube of the Scarpa waterproofing is claimed to work well as long as you apply it every day, especially around the welt stitching.

Pulks

Using the pulks was preferable by far to using backpacks.

The different pulks were similar in performance although the Fjellpulken are better downhill as their shafts being braced do not allow the pulk to overtake you. They also give the impression of being more robust. The Snowsled pulks are much less expensive and work well in most circumstances.

In warm conditions inverting the pulk overnight avoids it collecting water.

Strapping a dark coloured plastic bag containing a couple of kilograms of snow on the top of the pulk can, in sunny conditions, produce a litre or two of water to speed up cooking or provide refreshment.

Pulk harnesses that are easy to detach are convenient for stops.

Several of water proof bags with sealable openings are essential.

A rucksack that packs down small to take little space in the pulk is worth carrying for ascents or excursions.

Navigation

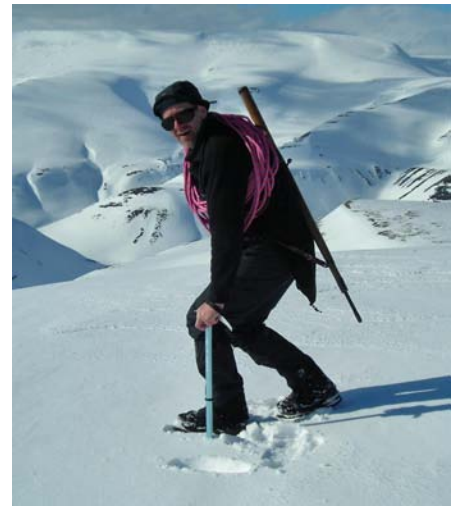
Maps are available at scales of 1:50K and 1:100K. These maps are overlaid by two grids: longitude/latitude and a universal map grid. In poor light these grids can be difficult to distinguish from one another. The sides of the grid squares are typical over 10cm long so interpolating positions from GPS coordinates is error-prone.

The basic GPS equipment worked if hand held. Buried in clothing the estimated positions were subject to significant errors making breadcrumb trails 'hairy'. Despite this criticism, the use of GPS in thick cloud on featureless flat snow was reassuring. If switched off in camp and kept reasonably warm in clothing then the AA battery life was between one and two days.

The GPS (Hall effect) compass function performed erratically and appeared overly sensitive to being held at small deviations from the horizontal presumably due to the large angle of declination at this latitude. The difference between magnetic north and the grid north was large and subject to large annual changes. The calculated values for the current difference did not agree between the maps we were using. European magnetic compasses, rather than polar compasses designed to cope with the large declination, worked adequately.



Team with panoramic background



The author



Duncan works on bear alarm wire at camp below Sticky Keep



Pulking past a pongo

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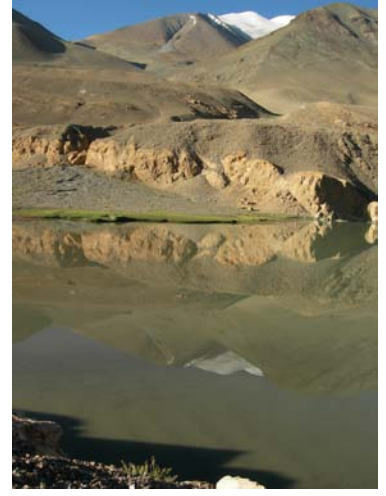
Edwin Poulsen of Ing. G. Poulsen A/S, *Longyear for pulks, precautions against bears, inland transport and general advice.*

Advice re bears, etc. <http://www.dpc.dk/Res&Log/ProjectPlanner/Safety/Wildlife1.html>

IMAGES OF LADAKH

















CHRISTMAS IN THE LOST WORLD

David Laughton

I spent Christmas & New Year 1991/2 in Venezuela on a trip organised by Explore. After flying to the capital Caracas I joined a small group of 7 (5 from UK, 1 Canadian and I USA). We spent a full day doing Caracas then flew some 400 miles SE to land at a small airfield near the town of Puerto Ordez close to the Caroni River, just before it joins the mighty Orinoco Delta. Here we met our group leader, Doug. (UK but now living in Venezuela), complete with his Toyota Land Cruiser, plus trailer, which we used for the rest of the trip.



Orinoco Delta

The next 5 days were spent touring around in the Delta mainly by small boat. For 2 nights we stayed in a small, rather rough "ethnic" hotel in the town of Tucupita before moving to a cabin right on the river bank, sleeping in hammocks, being looked after by a couple of locals who cooked the generally locally supplied food. The meat consisted mainly Capybara (a large riverside rodent we had bought from a "hunter") or locally caught fish. There was a Mission across the river whose loudspeaker kept us awake at night blaring out "Silent Night" -it was Christmas! We also visited many small villages meeting lots of friendly locals, often being invited into their houses, and seeing a great variety of colourful birds, many small mammals including a River Otter being fed fish by villagers and touring a Hearts of Palm canning plant.

Their 'cabin' on the Orinoco and their trusty transport



Roraima

Anxious to get into the mountains we thankfully loaded up the Toyota and drove across the Orinoco at Ciudad Guayana and headed south. On to the town of Upata to spend a last "civilised" night in an excellent hotel. Next day, on good roads, we stopped at the gold mining town of El Dorado on the river Cuyuni (which flows into the Atlantic at Georgetown, Guyana). It was here that Pappion was in jail - still a pretty rough area. Just beyond the town we stopped to walk around a current mining area - ecologically a terrible place where they hosed off the top soil before digging out the gold bearing earth to pass it through mercury to extract the gold. From here we joined a newly improved road - the Trans-Amazonian Highway, which climbed up onto the Grand Sabana at some 1600 metres. Soon we camped on a public campsite,

unfortunately crowded with Christmas holiday Venezuelans and staff from the French Embassy. From here our road south passed very close to the Venezuela/ Guyana border continuing eventually into Brazil and the Amazonian town of Manaus. Thankfully however, after passing through several checkpoints we left the main road to turn off down a narrow, unsurfaced road. This was OK at first but after a torrential downpour turned very slippery with several rivers to ford; our Toyota took everything in it's stride but we passed several other bogged down 4x4 vehicles. Eventually we reached the village of Peraitepui, inhabited by a small number of Amerindians of the Arekuna tribe. The rain stopped and we drove up a small hill above the village to pitch camp (1190m).

From here we had a magnificent view of our objective, Roraima, one of some hundred flat topped, sheer sided mesas, known here as tepuis, spread over a large area where Venezuela, Guyana and Brazil meet. They are the remains of a quartzite plateau having been left as the softer areas have eroded away. Roraima became famous after it was first climbed in 1884 by a British botanist. He gave a lecture in London, attended by Arthur Conan Doyle, who was so impressed by the remoteness of the mountain that he subsequently incorporated the idea that dinosaurs may still live on the summit in his novel "The Lost World".



Roraima

Roraima is the biggest of the tepuis, some 10 miles long, 3 miles wide and 2810m high. The sides are almost all vertical rock. At one end is the wedge shaped Prow, first climbed by a party including Joe Brown many years ago. The only possible route open to us was a "Jacks Rake" type gully on our side of the mountain which we knew offered a scrambling route to the summit.

We recruited a small group of porters from the village and on Christmas Eve set off, leaving our spare gear in the vehicle. Initially a good track gave easy walking. After a few miles we reached the first of two rivers, this was no more than knee deep so was easily forded, the second, the Kukanan, was almost waist deep and fast flowing. It took quite a while to get us and the porters across (they were suffering from the effects of a noisy party last night), there was plenty of dead wood around so we decided to camp and dry out.

Christmas Day warranted a late start and a fairly easy day which we spent climbing up through thick vegetation below the steep cliffs surrounding our peak. We were aiming for a flattish area known as the Base Camp (1715m) where, with some difficulty, we found a slightly less muddy area to pitch the tents - it had rained much of the day. We were now at the foot of our gully - the only break in the otherwise vertical cliffs above. Boxing Day saw us scrambling up what was at first a steep slippery path to the foot of the final cliffs and then a more pleasant scramble up to The Gate bringing us onto the summit plateau at 2430m.

To describe the summit as a plateau is rather misleading. It covers some 24-25 square miles and to some extent reminded me of an overgrown Brimham Rocks.



Camp site



The route up

In his book "The Private Life of Plants" David Attenborough (who camped on the summit, going up I suspect by helicopter) says that the ancient quartzite "has been sculptured into grotesquely extravagant shapes, mushrooms 30ft high,

columns, windows, archways, chasms 100ft deep too wide to leap across, vertical walls undercut to form caves etc." We very quickly found out how true this was but it did enable us to base our camp under an overhang alongside 2 other tents occupied by 2 Venezuelans. My tent was suspended from the roof in a coffin like spot, others bivi'd under tarpaulins, later a party of 5 Venezuelans arrived and joined us - they talked most of the night! Such shelter is very desirable as, again according to Attenborough "the summit is drenched by one of the heaviest rainfalls anywhere on earth." A Cambridge Expedition claimed that there was regularly over 2" of rain in 24 hours.

Next day some of us scrambled across to look down into the gap between Roraima and the next tepui Kukenam - really remote jungle, virtually unexplored according to Doug who is planning a trip there. The rest of the day was spent climbing up to various high points, skirting around the very large pools and bogs, whilst the fittest 3 of our group did a very long strenuous walk to the border point where Venezuela, Brazil and Guiana meet.

Sat.28 December - it had rained heavily all night and the clouds were right down so with little regret we started down. The descent was not pleasant but by the time we were back at our first river it was fine and we were able to have a good wash, dry out our gear round a huge fire, watch a large Howler monkey strolling around on the other side and have a very large meal.

Next on to the village and the Toyota to drive back

north, finding a very nice quiet campsite en-route, back through Upata, Ciudad Guayana and then west, along our old friend the Orinoco, to Ciudad Bolivar where we booked into a comfortable hotel.

Angel Falls

On the last day of 1991 we returned to the mountains so recently left as we still had one other area to see. This time the Toyota was left behind as the 7 of us loaded into 2 small Cessna planes to fly back to the tepuis and the small tourist town of Canaima - only some 150 kilometers west of Roraima. At other times of the year Explore parties see Angel Falls from canoes in the river below but December - April the river is too low so the Orinoco visit is included instead. The falls come down from Auyan-tepui and at 3282ft (2718 ft free fall) claim to be the highest in the world. Unfortunately for us the clouds were right down over the tepui but as our plane circled around we did get a very brief clearance and saw around 300 ft of the falls, managing a very quick photo. Landed at Canaima for a 2 hour stroll around then back to C Bolivar to celebrate New Years Eve.

Caribbean Coast

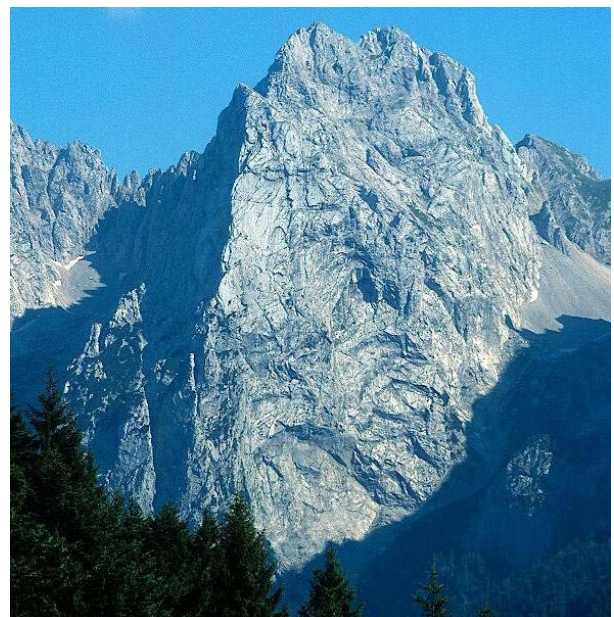
The first 2 days of 1992 were very pleasantly spent driving back north, across the Orinoco and through an interesting mix of agricultural country, oilfields with nodding donkeys, opencast mines, and as we approached the coast, jungle covered mountains. A perfect campsite on the beach, with swimming and a fire provided a wonderful contrast to the earlier overnights. Finally drove back to Caracas and flew home 3 January.



THE AUSTRIAN EMPEROR'S MOUNTAINS

Mike Smith

Halfway between Innsbruck and Salzburg, east of the Inn and close by the German border is the compact Austrian mountain group called the Kaisergebirge or Emperor's Mountains. Also called the Wilder Kaiser they are too rocky for ski development. To the east are the Berchtesgaden alps and to the south are the Stubai, Zillertal, Venediger and Glockner peaks. I can certainly recommend them.



However, I had not heard of the Kaisergebirg when I was informed that I was going there for a *week en famille* in August 2006. A little research and I realised this range would provide plenty of interesting walking through rocky landscapes. There is also sport and mountain climbing at all standards on sound rock. We were based in St Johann im Tyrol to the south-east though Kufstein to the west is probably more popular as a base.

Our town offered all the usual alpine valley diversions. While we were there it also staged a regional competition for marching bands which started with march pasts before 8am then, after refreshing beers in the town square cafés, 10am church parade, more refreshment and off to the serious playing. We missed the main event by making a cable car assisted traverse of the Kitzbüheler Horn (1670m) to get an impression of the Kaisergebirge. Back in the town by evening we saw massed swaying of band members to classic drinking songs and dancing on the tables.

There are several mountain huts in the range sufficiently high to be of use when climbing or mountain walking and they offer the full range of facilities. We visited four of these and the only difficulty we encountered was that one couldn't accommodate a vegetarian. A smattering of German is an advantage.

at the road in from Ellmau to Wochenbrunner Alp (1085m). The woods provided welcome shade from the morning sun. Good paths wound up to the small Grutten Hut (1620m).



A kilometre further north of this we left the grass and alpine flowers and took to the extensive but thankfully mostly stable scree. These scree footed the seemingly impregnable pale grey walls of the Ellmauer Halt (2344m) and Köpfel (2028m).

The only other people we saw as we made our way up were an English couple who were heading for the former peak and, like ourselves, their first via ferrata or rather klettersteig as they are called in Austria.

We did though pass close to a herd of about twenty chamois of all ages who did not perceive us to be much of a threat. What was threatening was the weather. The cloud-base steadily dropped to hide the summits.

It was not long before we arrived at the far corner of our corrie and a little scrambling over broken ground took us to a face with a break running across it. A cable handrail started here so we donned our helmets and climbing harnesses then hitched on our pairs of giant spring-gated karabiners with their fall arresters.

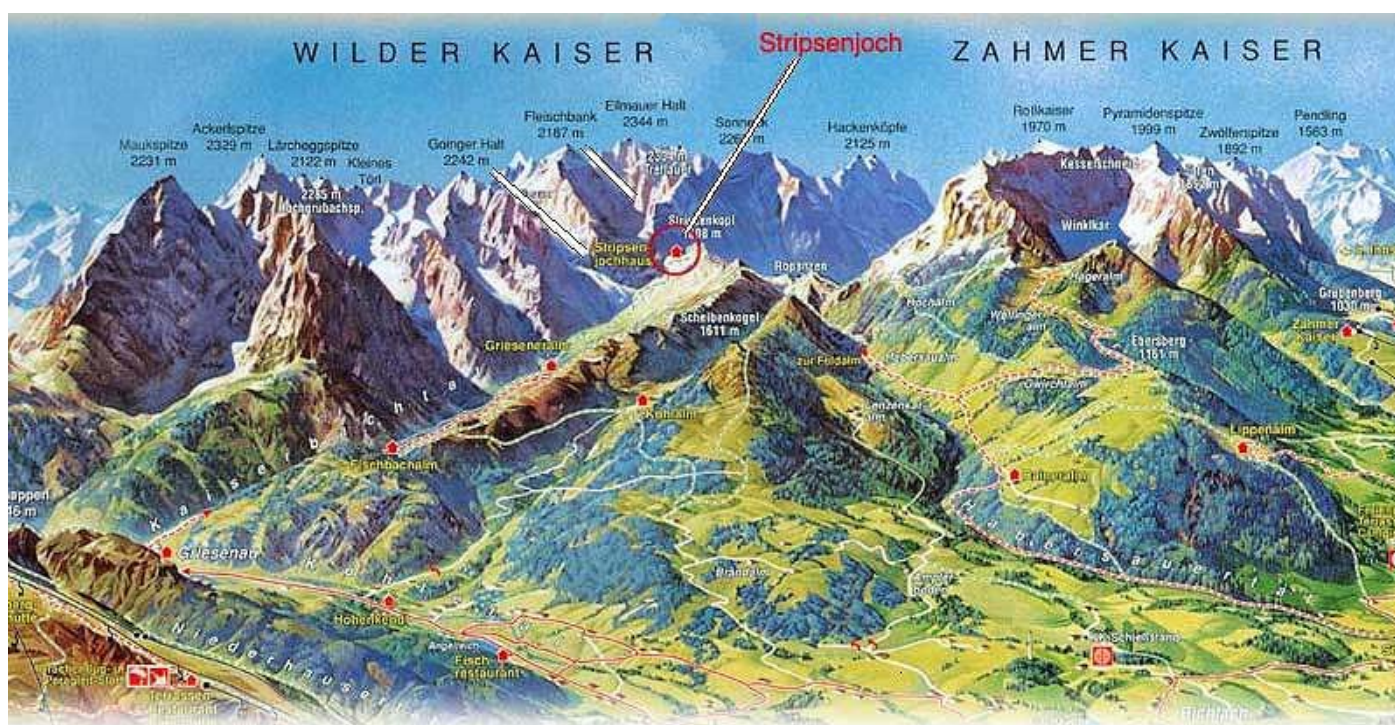
Just as we were setting off an Austrian elder clicked and clattered round a corner. He had come from our destination, the high col linking the two valleys to the north. He reported that everything was in order on the route though there would be a lot of unstable scree on the descent.



I will describe only one of our excursions, a two day trip circumnavigating the Fleischbank (2187m) and Karl Spitze (2260m) in deteriorating weather with an overnight at the Stripsenjoch hut. We started from the middle of the south of the range



The footing was rarely any worse than on Jack's Rake on Pavey Ark though the direction kept changing and the exposure was sometimes greater. We arrived on the main north-south ridge crest and followed it past gendarmes and towers in swirling cloud. Route finding was hardly a problem as the end of one cable was rarely more than a few metres from the start of the next one. Quickly the moving of one krab then the next past each cable anchoring point became automatic. We soon learned to always change the leading krab first to avoid twisting the ropes. These attachments gave a strong sense of security. In a few places where the route ascended directly up a buttress those in front had to take care not to dislodge stones. Other than this the ascent was a carefree scramble through dramatic rock scenery.



The location of the Stripsenjoch hut in the Wilder Kaiser. Our routes in and out are to its left

Approaching the highest col of the Kopftörl we traversed a steep face by way of a ledge to ascend a less than shoulder-width chimney behind a 24m tall flake. By the time we stood on the col the clouds had blocked out the view behind and it was feeling much cooler. The descent of the Hoher Winkel to the north twisted between steep crags to the end of the steel cable and then passed over a couple of lips on coarse scree down to a rough alp. Barely more than a kilometre as the chuff flies, the klettersteig had taken us a couple of hours.

The path then hugged the righthand wall descending very little as its destination, the Stripsenjoch hut, at 1677m is on a high col. The main track descended to a lower hut but we cut across on a path shown as maintained on our 1:50k map but as unmaintained on the more detailed map we later saw in the hut. It was a little overgrown in places but was still better than losing height only to have to regain it. It did have a sting in the tail though as we arrived at a wet cliff in the forest to be climbed via a vertical ladder.

To save time we decided to ascend unprotected as the climb and traverse round the corner didn't look particularly awkward. Muggins brought up the rear ascending with a pair of someone's hastily shortened trekking poles on one wrist. Changing from one ladder to the next, a section of one of the poles slid out to land at the foot of the ladder. The descent, reassembly and re-ascent were accompanied by mutterings.

The large Stripsenjoch hut straddles a narrow col with stupendous views both ways and especially of the nearby peaks to the south. We were there midweek but at weekends if there is good weather rock climbers arrive in droves as it is only a couple of kilometres from the car park and you can send your gear up on the wire for a few Euro. We were made welcome and for a little over 30 Euro each (with UIAA card) we had a room to ourselves, showers, drying room, a two course evening meal, beer, teas and a large breakfast. We talked to three Germans after our meal and they asked us why we had decided to visit the area which was obviously their local stamping ground. They were probably expecting us to comment on the beauty or savage rock or quality of the routes or huts. They looked a bit 'put out' when we said it was because of a cheap offer that took us from our local airport, included transfers, valley accommodation and half-board all for £200 a head.

The weather improved that evening and I was hopeful that the forecast rain wouldn't materialise. Dawn arrived and it was dry. Breakfast arrived and it was drizzling. Boots and sacks were on by 8am and it was raining hard. We decided to drop down into the valley and miss out the other half of the circuit as the guide book warned of a hail of pebbles dislodged from cliff ledges in rainy conditions.

Half a kilometre down the path the clouds lifted a little and the rain almost stopped. Optimistically, Richard and I were tempted into thinking it might get better and we decided to complete the circuit leaving Helen and Fiona to descend the Kaiserbachtal and catch a bus back into town. Our traverse of the Egger Steig started soon after separating from them and this klettersteig was twice as long as yesterday's. First traversing round a buttress then through the narrow gates of the Stein Rinne, up and up the rocky basin to the steep-sided Ellmauer Tor col and then down Kübelkar to the Gaudeamus hut (1263m).

The first few pitches of the rock at all stages looked very impressive. I can't vouch for anything higher as the cloud had again descended, the heavens opened and we concentrated on keeping an even pace. In a couple of places the rainwater was flooding down bare rock making for wetting traverses. In another place 50m of the cable had come adrift probably in the winter snows.

We saw nobody until we were on the final descent and had just reached vegetation. It was the chap we had seen as we set off the day before. He had set out late having almost decided to descend and walk round rather than crossing the range. Five minutes after we met we heard rockfall behind us and blocks up to a metre across were tumbling down the scree 200m to one side of us. We safely past that gulley and I was pleased to see he was higher on the other side.

We arrived at the Gaudeamus hut soaked through but happy to have completed the circuit and in under the guidebook time as there had been little incentive to stand and stare. The hut's main room was crowded, hot and humid. Family groups at practically every table were playing games to sit out the bad weather.

A hot drink, an apfelstrudel, remove the harness and helmet and we were on our way down to the roadhead and back into town for a hot shower and a beer.

I must return sometime to see what the Egger Steig and Ellmauer Tor look like.

For further information:

www.stripsenjoch.at/html/verteiler.html
with webcams

www.wilderkaiser.co.uk

www.inghams.co.uk

Kaisergebirge M 1:25000 (available locally)

1:50000 Freizeitkarte (sheet 301)
Kufstein/Kaisergebirge/Kitzbühel

NOT WEATHER BUT WHEN - Roy Denney

The debate on climate change is over. I have not heard any reasoned case denying that it is a fact for some considerable time now. It is generally agreed that even if it were possible and indeed even if every country agreed and the world were to cease burning fossil fuels today, the damage already caused would take nearly a thousand years to repair at best and the earth may never recover fully.

Nearly a thousand articles published in Science magazine over the last ten years all support this proposition with just some differing views on the recovery time.

The seas have risen by up to 20 cm in the past century and evidence suggests that process accelerating rapidly. Four years ago NASA had found that the Greenland ice sheet was retreating at a rate of around a metre a year but current research indicates that rate has increased to 10 metres a year. Ecologists consider that we need to hold global temperature rise to 2°C if we are to escape dramatic species and habitat loss. As many people have said, something needs to be done and done now, as this is at the lower end of the range of predictions.

Many of the newer technologies, such as the harnessing of wave and sun power, are still in the research and development stage as opposed to being commercially viable. Wind power on a large scale is being discredited. One encouraging idea, the hybrid car engine, which switches between carbon fuel and electricity to give a performance of 65 mpg, is a long way from going into mass production. The facts are clear but the solutions not so much so.

Twenty years ago the Thames Barrier was built and designed for use once every three years but in reality we are already raising it six times each year due to the rise in sea levels. Of the nineteen largest cities in the world, each having a population of over 10 million people, sixteen are in coastal areas. This threat will only get worse as the world population is expected to rise by an average of 1% every year for at least the next 50 years and in the same period world energy demand is expected to double or even triple. The ten hottest years on record are all in the last 15 and with this comes

increased rainfall with the damage that can cause. The year 2000 was the wettest for 300 years.

Snow cover across the planet has reduced by 10 % in the last 50 years. Ice sheets and glaciers around the world are shrinking. If the Greenland ice sheet alone were to melt completely the estimate is that sea levels would rise by about 7 metres. We've known for years of this impending disaster and almost become bored of reports of the global retreat of glaciers, rising sea levels, and increasing extremes of weather.

There are however even more disturbing and detailed reports emerging as to the effects of these changes. Will arctic tundra melt and rot, releasing incalculable amounts of CO₂ and methane into the atmosphere, accelerating the warming of the planet? Will the ocean currents change course leaving Britain without the warming effects of the Gulf Stream? Will increased acidity in the seas prevent corals and molluscs from forming their shells and bring disaster to entire food chains? Britain could actually become as cold as Canada and Norway despite global warming if the gulf stream is turned off. Warming refers to average temperature but will bring more extremes and more violent storms and gales.

In many ways the effects of global warming are more pronounced on the sensitive environments in the seas. It has had a devastating effect on some of the worlds finest coral reefs. 90% of the coral around the Seychelles has been wiped out as the Indian Ocean warms up and the loss of this haven and food source has badly hit many species up the food chain. Numerous species are now thought to be extinct in that locality. More worrying is the fact that the smaller fishes suffering most are mostly herbivorous and dropping numbers allow green algae to spread rapidly.

As I recently pointed out, recent years have seen many colonies of birds along our North Sea coast failing to raise other than very few young or failing completely.

The sand eel on which the birds depend had not appeared, apparently due to the cold-water plankton they depend on being driven further north by warmer surface sea temperatures.

Particularly affected were the arctic skua, arctic tern, kittiwake, guillemot, and razorbill with puffins also struggling!

On a single day last year Beijing was hit by unprecedented dust storms, the Danube was flooding many European countries. Forest and scrub fires were more prevalent than usual due to dry conditions everywhere; from Indonesia and Australia to Spain, Portugal and the USA. Many countries in Africa were having record droughts.

Parts of England were having severe water problems not all of them obvious. Acres of the heath land of Dorset were decimated by fire in April, not renowned for being a dry month. Arable farming in much of the east of England is under threat as there is insufficient rain to dilute fertilisers and the water quality is reaching unacceptable levels.

It is not just that the world will get warmer but that it will get more extreme in its ranges of conditions, and wildlife just cannot adapt quickly enough. In addition weather patterns are becoming more inconsistent.

Migrant birds struggled this year with the longest winter for a long time including the coldest March for ten years. They seem to know what is happening here and many did arrive a bit later than usual but the weather was still such that supplies of insects for food were desperately low. These used to be fairly normal temperatures on average, for the time of year but after over ten years of mild winters, wild life had been starting to react to earlier springs but has had a knock back this year.

Frogs had been spawning in January in recent years and even this year a brief sunny burst in February triggered some activity but much of the early spawn was killed by late frosts. Later spawnings then faced the prospect of tadpoles arriving in rapidly drying out ponds. Last journal I commented on the Hawthorn and how earlier it was now blossoming. Not this year with the cold and late spring.

Following this years prolonged heat wave many questions are being asked about our future climate and the affect on the wildlife. Several moors have been burning and reservoirs virtually empty.

As sod's law would have it the Glorious 12th of August marked the end of the glorious weather, perhaps as well when the moors saw their influx of grouse shooters.

The population of this bird has been struggling despite mans' assistance with both sheep tick and a worm parasite both taking a heavy toll. It is thought that these pests are thriving because of our generally warmer winters. Last years colder spell seems to have helped a little and bird numbers are up a bit.

As this bird is encouraged just to shoot it perhaps it does not matter but in reality the moors are managed to sustain the sport and in doing so many other species thrive. If shooting were to be abandoned we could lose many native species.

The conservation work done by shooting estates provides a haven for many waders in particular including golden plovers and curlews.

There are 200 times as many curlew in the shooting areas of the north Pennines than in a similar area of Wales where there is no grouse shooting.

There have been plenty of examples of population crashes when shooting management ceases. In the 30s Howden and Derwent Moors were very productive grouse moors but 50 years later the heather had largely gone and acres of rough grass cover was devoid of much in the way of wildlife. A tenant farmer however, was given encouragement to start a restoration project and 3 square miles is now under heather and other traditional moorland plants with bird species again thriving.

The latest international scare following the unprecedented drying up of parts of the Amazon Delta last year, is that there is a very real threat that unless rainfall levels return to their norm the rainforest may be wiped out within a hundred years. If this sponge, which soaks up so much of the CO2 in our atmosphere, were to go all the other threats would be accelerated and things could get far worse than we can even imagine.

We have just sent a satellite to study Venus as scientists cannot understand how such a similar planet to earth ended up such a dramatic hot house. We may find the answer much nearer to home if we do not stop the processes we are starting to experience on our home planet.

THE CLUB COTTAGE, LOW HALL GARTH, LITTLE LANGDALE

As the debate continues as to what we should do with LHG members might be interested in the report of the formal opening of the cottage which took place on Saturday, October 7th, 1950, in the perfect setting of a Lakeland autumn afternoon. Mr. C. H. D. Acland represented our landlords, the National Trust, and officially handed over the property to the President, Charles Burrow, in the presence of 33 members of the Y.R.C. and kindred clubs. We were specially happy to welcome Mr. Harry Spilsbury of the Wayfarers Club, Mrs. Clifford Chubb and Mrs. J. I. Watts.

The President, wearing the Chain of Office, and installed with Messrs. Acland and Spilsbury on an improvised dais facing the Front Door of the cottage, welcomed our guests and expressed the thanks of the Club to Mr. Acland and to the National Trust for all they had done in finding the cottage for us. He also thanked Mr. Spilsbury for his many kindnesses and helpful hints on furniture and equipment ; he then called upon Mr. Acland to say a few words.

Mr. Acland gave a brief outline of the work of the Trust in the Lake District, laying particular emphasis on the Trust's primary object, which was the safeguarding of the interests of the local agricultural community in a countryside which was increasingly becoming the playground of holiday-makers who did not always realise its importance as the farmers' means of livelihood. He asked members of the Club to give all the help they could by avoiding disturbance to fences, walls, crops and stock, and by seeing that others, less conscientious, did likewise. He explained that a cottage like ours could only become available to a Club provided it was not wanted as a dwelling and had been offered for tenancy by local residents.

He hoped that Y.R.C. men would support the National Trust in its need for funds to carry on its great work, and would become subscribers.

Mr. Acland concluded by taking from his despatch case a golden key, 15 inches long, which he handed to the President. The President thanked Mr. Acland, and said how deeply honoured he felt at being asked to perform this opening ceremony, he was indeed the first President of the Y.R.C. ever to have had such a privilege. He did think that perhaps an opening ceremony was superfluous

because there seemed to be strong evidence within that the cottage had already been occupied by "squatters."

Before actually unlocking the door, the President invited the assembly to spend a few minutes in happy contemplation of these very commodious premises, and to appreciate the unique advantages which the members of the Club would in the future be able to enjoy.

Outwardly the cottage was a very fine example of the architecture of its period. Among its many amenities were running water in every room (given suitable weather conditions); sleeping accommodation for 10 to 15 people and beds fitted with mattresses of an improved type, which had many good points. These however would not be noticed unduly if good thick pyjamas were worn.

There is a large airy bathroom (illustrated by a large airy wave of the President's arm in the direction of Little Langdale Tarn); a commodious lounge with raftered ceiling (5 ft. 9 in. above floor level) and a fine old-world fireplace.

A well equipped kitchen with stove by Florence and a lofty garage well fitted with anything the mechanic might need - provided he brought it with him. Every room fitted with windows designed to open and shut and glazed with 20th-century transparent glass.

The President then descended from his seat on the dais, deftly inserted the golden key presented to him by Mr. Acland into the door of the cottage, turned the lock, flung open the door and declared the cottage open, at the same time wishing good luck to all those who should dwell in it and hoping that its walls might long echo with the patter of the Ramblers' feet.

After the cheers, led by E. E. Roberts, had subsided, Mr. Spilsbury, on behalf of the Kindred Clubs, wished the Y.R.C. members all good luck in their new venture. The party then proceeded indoors where an excellent afternoon tea was served.

On the following day two members achieved a first ascent on an adjacent crag which received the name of "Opening Gully."

CHIPPINGS



WHEN

When you can keep on going when your companions

Are giving up and sinking to the ground;

And trace through nabs and neuks and twisting canyons

The route the ancient Brigantes had found.

When you can love a mountain-side so dearly

That every single ledge has things to say,

And choose the path your mind's eye sees so clearly

That in the dark it's just as light as day.

When you can see a pothole in the distance,
And curiosity overcomes your fear,

You do not plunge alone on your insistence
But take a willing partner and some gear.

When you can see a sump of gloomy water,
Shining with evil blackness by your light

Remember now to do just as you oughta
And give your mate priority from the RIGHT.

When you can climb the Picos de Europa
And lose your way through no fault of your own,

Just keep your head and prove you are a coper
And sit you down and use your mobile 'phone.

When you can meet the Spanish speaking copper
And tell him of your plight in his own tongue,

You'll keep your cool although he says a whopper,
"Por Dios; but you're all no longer young."

When you can make a pile of all your earnings
And spend it on a brand-new motor car,

Then drive to Wales to satisfy your yearnings
For crags and mountains whether near or far.

When you can bear to see that motor break down
And wait for half a day to get it fixed

Then follow on the walk your mates all went on
Descending in the dark, emotions mixed.

When you can be a helpful happy member
And turn your hand to jobs around the cottage,
And lead on meets from January to December
Claiming your birthright with a mess of pottage.

When you can still down-climb with both legs
broken

And never show by word or deed your fear

In climbing huts your praises will be spoken
And, which is more, you'll be a Y.R.C.er.

© Bill Todd, May 2006.

With massive acknowledgements to the
author of "On Greenhow Hill"



HIMALAYAS UNDER THREAT

Satellite imaging has confirmed fears that the Himalayas are being rapidly denuded of forest protection. In the last 30 years, 15% of the woodlands have been cut down increasing the threat of landslides and the subsequent loss of topsoil.

When I was there, wood was being carried into the Sagamartha National Park (SNP) to prevent further losses and cutting trees for firewood was prohibited. It seems locals take little notice of this in some areas, not perhaps surprising when

the government writ does not run in many areas controlled by Marxist rebels.

Efforts are being made to redress the balance and the WWF has initiated the Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project to address the issue of increasing deforestation in Chaurikharka (Pharak). It is an area which has gained prominence as the gateway to the SNP and Everest - visited by 25,000 tourists along with twice as many support staff every year. The Project's goal is to increase forest coverage area and to strengthen local capacity for sustainable management of their natural resources.

BETTER ACCESS

In 2003 less than half of North Yorkshire's footpaths were considered easy to use. Statistics just released suggest the Council is now claiming 77% of their 3,600 mile network of paths now meet this classification.

During the last 3 years they have increased their spending on their rights of way by three quarters of a million pounds and received grants from central government of £336,000.

On of the worst counties in the country in this respect is now above average.

WHOOOPS

I must be getting complacent. My first proofing error crept into the last edition. Sorry!

My appreciation of the life of Brede Arkless ended somewhat prematurely with the end slipping off the page.

The last paragraph should have read:---

She went on numerous, usually all-female expeditions to the Himalayas before separating from her husband and taking her younger offspring to live in New Zealand where she guided over 20 successful attempts on Mt. Cook.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

After the contribution in the last edition by H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama on the paradox of the age I am indebted for this piece attributed to an Irene Arthur.

On the first day, God created the dog and said, "Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this, I will give you a life span of twenty years."

The dog said, "That's a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I'll give you back the other ten?" So God agreed.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said, "Entertain people, do tricks, and make them laugh. For this, I'll give you twenty-years."

The monkey said, "Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the dog did?" And God agreed.

On the third day, God created the cow and said, "You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years."

The cow said, "That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty, and I'll give back the other forty?" And God agreed again.

On the fourth day, God created man and said: "Eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy your life. For this, I'll give you twenty years."

But man said, "Only twenty years? Could you possibly give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back; that makes eighty, okay?"

"Okay," said God, "You asked for it."

So that is why for our first twenty years we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family. For the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. And for the last ten years we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.

Life has now been explained to you!

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The UK has signed the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention. This deals with protection, development and sustainable landscape management. The government claims to be committed to conserving and enhancing our landscapes.

What we have now reflects the interaction of people and nature over many centuries and is not all to be admired so hopefully this will help guide policy development in the future and perhaps protect some of our better vistas from the encroachment by pylons and turbines and the like. But perhaps not!

DESECRATION

It only needs those of us who love the countryside to take our eye off the ball and the vandals will hold sway. Do not think for one minute that unlamented removal of John Prescott from his empire has changed the mind set of the central planners. Campaigners all over the country celebrate great wins when they block some development threatening a beauty spot but in reality they are only doing a Canute and trying to hold back the tide.

Almost before the ink has dried on a decision not to allow a massive wind farm in the northern Pennines, on the edge of the Lake District, we now see a new threat to build a similar monstrosity near Haltwhistle.

In addition, having been thwarted in their attempts to spoil the Lakes, the shadowy men from the ministry have decided to take another bight out of the under rated South Lakeland countryside and build a dual carriageway past High Newton. Two more miles of concrete jungle.

This madness knows no bounds and there now seems little purpose to designating areas as national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty as such status does not seem to afford any protection.

Stonehenge is a world heritage site and even there they cannot agree planning issues about the cost of alternate road improvement schemes.

One of Prescott's last actions was to sanction a football stadium on the Sussex Downs and beauty spots all over England are under similar threat.

The Peak District has long been considered the lungs of the industrial areas of Sheffield, Derby and Manchester but for how long. Subject to last ditch attempts to stop it at a public enquiry, new quarrying is to be allowed near Great Longstone and a new Mottram and Tintwistle bypass is set to destroy miles of glorious and largely unspoilt moorland.

Get your pens out and reach for the telephone; unless we do more to block these desecrations we will have no excuses when the great outdoors as we know them cease to exist.

GLEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Further to previous reports about the clear up of Ben Nevis including the removal of makeshift memorials, plans are now afoot to find a home for these.

A garden of remembrance is being created in Glen Nevis at the foot of the Ben. It will be a memorial to all those killed on the mountain and it is intended that it may be used by those who have commemorated loved ones on the mountain.

Any memorials which have been removed will be re-sited in the garden at the request of those who lay claim to them although to date very few have done so.

COASTAL ACCESS

There is currently a campaign for better access to the coastal areas of Britain and I strongly support this and indeed better access to woodlands and canal/river banks.

I was a consultee on the original CRoW Act and would now like to see it extended to beaches, the foreshore and cliffs. I maintain that the public should have a legal right of access to walk along the coast of England, subject to common sense safeguards to protect wildlife, habitats and to take account of coastal developments.

A new right of access should be set out in a sensible, well promoted coastal walking code of practice. A legal right of access defined by words and not by maps would allow us to make an informed choice, with reasonable expectations, about where we can walk along the coast. This would be simpler, less bureaucratic, inexpensive and flexible (it could take account of erosion) and faster to implement than was the case with the mapping process used under CRoW.

A non-mapped approach has been shown to work in other European countries including Scotland, France, Portugal, and Denmark.

A coastal right of way as such would not allow for nature conservation restrictions; a right of access to coastal areas under the CRoW Act would make this possible. In addition rights of way are subject to erosion, and I know many cases where

rights of way have fallen into the sea and have not been replaced, leaving us with no legal means to walk along the coast. Other areas are blighted for a variety of reasons and one classic example close to my heart is near Whitby.

Following the Cleveland Way north the path is routed along the busy main road rather than follow the disused railway along the cliff tops. This ideal route is blocked by an uncooperative golf club.

A right of way would not necessarily provide access to beaches and foreshore; it would merely provide a single linear route allowing people to pass through. A right of access to coastal areas would allow for wider access where practicable.

I would not wish to unreasonably impact on peoples' homes but under the CRoW Act, there is a 20m exclusion zone around dwellings. Back gardens, parks and land covered by buildings are excepted from the right of access. If a CRoW right of access is extended to the coast, these exceptions would still apply.

Before the CRoW Act came into force, landowners had concerns that the new right would affect their privacy. I have seen no evidence that the right of access to open countryside is causing any problems in this respect.

On the plus side farmers and landowners also operate rural businesses such as B&Bs, liveries, shops and restaurants and should stand to gain from any increased tourism.

I have made my own contribution to members of parliament and amongst other ideas I have floated for consideration is that the best way to police any new arrangements would be to have the coastal areas added to adjoining National Parks. Where no such park exists new linear parks could be created.

National Park Authorities have experience in balancing the rights of access against the needs of the local communities but also the sensitivities of local flora and fauna.

As part of my submission I have suggested that this legislation should define the coast to include coastal waters out to the twelve mile limit. This would sit nicely alongside further promised

legislation: the proposed Marine Bill. This is supposed to protect sensitive inshore waters and create Marine Protected Areas.

Giving such waters National Park Status might address some concerns as to how MPAs would be policed and protected.

If like me you feel these are worthwhile causes please contact your MPs and encourage them to press for this additional protection of our natural environment and our controlled access to it.

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ACT 2006

This sees the birth of Natural England with a brief to ensure the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Sounds wonderful doesn't it! This body has been formed by bringing together English Nature (EN) and parts of the Countryside Agency (CA) and the Rural Development Service (RDS). I have fairly regular dealings with all three bodies and if it does nothing more than get them all singing from the same hymn sheet it will be a great improvement.

It aims to ensure a healthy and secure natural environment whilst encouraging both sustainable use of that environment and the enjoyment of it.

In the past I have worked with the CA on many projects to encourage people to get out into the countryside and met many barriers both physical and otherwise put up by EN to protect wildlife and the environment. There should be some interesting conversations in their new combined offices.

As Chairman of the County Access Forum I come under the auspices of the new body and wait with some interest to see what tack they take.

Visits to the countryside or open spaces in urban areas are an important source of recreation for around 50% of the population, and about 20% of adults in England are actively engaged with the natural environment as members of conservation and recreation organisations. However, whilst 1.26 billion trips are made each year and £9.7 billion is

reckoned to be spent on these visits, one third of adults in England do not visit the countryside at all. Increasing levels of physical activity is a national priority for improving people's health and the natural environment provides many such opportunities.

However the government has encouraged litigation by introducing legislation which permits no-win no-fee claims against landowners and as such there is resistance to allowing people out into countryside areas. Similarly teachers and youth leaders are scared of taking any responsibility. Add to this the pressures on land managers to reduce costs by charging for car parking and access and you get a picture of one side of the powers that be working against the intentions of their colleagues.

If you want to take a group of people into a local park for any organised activity to encourage exercise you will inevitably face a charge which I would contend is a tax on exercise.

I will continue to work with these bodies and hope for the best but I do have reservations.

One of the targets they have announced is to deliver £3 million in efficiency savings during the next 12 months. In other words they have already had Gordon Brown's hand on their collar and face a budget cut.

SOMETHING SCILLY

Well over a hundred miles of walking often by granite sea stacks and six summits paints a bit of a false picture but if you want a walking holiday with a difference I can commend the Isles of Scilly. Nowhere are they very high and even St Mary's, the largest island is only about 10 miles round the coast. The views are spectacular, the wildlife quite tame and you can wander largely at will.

If you are not into walking, sailing or diving it could be a problem but that will not concern our members. My wife and I have just spent fourteen days in this remarkable part of England and walked every inch of the coast of St Mary's and almost every other possible footpath; criss-crossing the open areas in every direction. Every three days or so when we fancied a change

we caught a boat out to one of the other larger islands and had a walk round them, taking in the views from their high points.

For those who have not visited the islands they are like stepping back in time. The way of life is slow and friendly and people just leave their bikes wherever they like as no one will steal them. Indeed many of the guest house and some private homes never lock their doors. The islands themselves have rocky shores and cliffs facing into the weather and have a well deserved reputation for shipwrecks. These cliff tops have uninterrupted paths amidst moorland growth and a few blasted trees but as you move inland the countryside becomes far more diverse with a riot of flowers in places.



The other sides of the islands have great sweeping bays of white sand, often largely deserted.





I did go into the sea several times but did not stay in long; the water was distinctly chilly. I did take my snorkel out one day but the inshore waters were not blessed with a great deal to see. The tide can drop as much as 15 feet and there are very strong currents between the islands.

We took the very noisy helicopter from Penzance but once we stepped ashore all was peace and tranquility except when queuing for the bus-boats between the islands. We opted out of this and took places on smaller owner-driver boats with the added advantage that they could poke into little uninhabited islets and knew exactly where to find the wildlife.

We saw Atlantic grey seals basking on rocks nearby with their young coming over to see what we were up to. Sea birds of many species were in abundance from shags and cormorants to razerbills and numerous gulls and fulmar, the only albatross found in our waters. We saw a pair of peregrines nesting on a low cliff by the sea There are even occasional buzzards to be seen and one pair of marsh harriers.



On shore there were less species than I had expected but what would be rare on the mainland was often common over there.

Stonechat were everywhere and song thrushes were so tame we constantly had to shoe them away. One strange anomaly was that the black-birds had red bills. No one seems certain why but possibly the fact that they eat more shellfish than mainland cousins.



Razerbills
(above)
and Fulmar



We had a bit of a surprise one day when the local twitchers got all excited about a sighting of a magpie, no less.

For the really keen botanists or gardeners there is of course the world famous Abbey Gardens on Tresco.

The roadside plants will also cause surprise because the microclimate has proved a good home to many foreign plants which have hitched rides on boats calling to the islands from all over the world.



If all this was not enough the skyscapes were magnificent especially in the evening and at night.

Facing west with no dust in the atmosphere and very little light pollution some of the skies were hard to believe



The End of the Day
Isles of Scilly
Roy Denney



ROB THE RUBBISH

This is the nickname given to Robin Kevan (61) a retired social worker, in his home town of Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys, for voluntarily clearing litter from his neighbourhood since his retirement

He gets up bright and early each morning having the world largely to himself and has extended his ambitions to clean up Ben Nevis, Snowdon, Cadre Idris and Scafell and has just been out to clean up Everest Base Camp. This was funded by a trekking company and a team making a documentary about "Rob the Rubbish".



GEORGE STILL GOING STRONG

George Spenceley never expected to be the holder of a world record but he says it was but a very modest one gained not by strength or skill but merely by longevity.



At the age of 84 he became the oldest man ever to trek into the Annapurna Sanctuary. This is according to the local people in the lodges, who are the most knowledgeable of these matters. They spoke of an earlier 'old man', a German, but he was a mere 74. While pleased to be the holder of such a record, George admits that he probably took the longest time travelling at the slowest pace. The journey there and back took three weeks and he travelled solo except for a very caring porter who looked after him with great devotion.



He says he did meet the Maoists, heavily armed but quite friendly, requiring only a modest donation to their cause for which a receipt was given.

Having walked himself almost to a halt he was distressed to find on reaching the road that a strike had closed the road to all traffic. A further trek of 25 miles to Pokhara lay ahead but his excellent porter, pleading his age and decrepitude, secured a lift in an ambulance.

For the benefit of members visiting Nepal, George continues to highly recommend the Utse Hotel in Katmandu and the Nirvana in Pokhara. Just say you are a friend of the 'old man'.



NATURAL HISTORY SNIPPETS



THE LATEST WEATHER

This summer saw the worst drought for 30 years. Forestry friends have shown me numerous trees in distress often indicated by more than usual crops of nuts. If the tree feels it may not survive the instinctive reaction is to try to throw more seed.

Despite the occasional storm and local flooding we have had two dry winters and this latest episode has given us the longest period of below average rainfall for at least a century.

Rivers were drying up and the remaining water is so low that fish could be seen gasping for what little oxygen it contains. Many insect species which spend their early lives in ponds have been decimated by drying out ponds.

Dead fish are being found all over the place and rescues are being organised either by catching and moving or by the installation of aerators.

Birds and mammals which rely on insect rich wetlands, are also suffering with the bat being one of the worst victims. Shallow rooted trees may not recover and moors are regularly catching fire.

ISLAND THREAT

Those trying to rid many of the Scottish islands of unwanted predators such as rats, mink and hedgehogs have had something of a set back on Harris and Lewis.

For the first time in many years foxes have been seen on the islands. They will endanger ground nesting birds and hens and lambs reared by the crofters.

For a breeding colony to have arrived it cannot have been naturally so presumably someone has introduced them.

Better news is that after killing over 10,000 rats on Canna it appears that bird numbers are recovering.

CUDDLY KILLERS

Whilst on the subject of killers, picture a nice furry animal scattered across the pages of children's books and featuring regularly in nursery rhymes. It is a sad fact that most song birds are killed by that lovely creature; no, not the cat this time but the squirrel, the grey to be precise.

The birds have struggled for a long time due to loss of habitat but with assistance from man they should have now been doing better than they have been and recent surveys have identified the reason. 85% of adult songbirds can be wiped out by predators and complete breeding failure occurs in some areas. The sparrow hawk plays its part but in itself would have no impact on populations neither indeed would the numbers taken by rats.

Domestic and feral cats have long been known to be a major problem but it now seems that the grey squirrel is far and away worse than are cats. In areas where they are in numbers as many as 93% of nests can be raided for both eggs and young birds. This import from North America has a lot to answer for not least the holes it makes in my lawn.

Another discouraging report out this year highlights the desperate state of the native red squirrel.

Unless there is a mass extermination programme for the grey squirrel these creatures may well soon become extinct in most areas. They are to get more help however. Over the last year 25 areas have been identified in Northumberland and Durham where they have plentiful supplies of food and are still about in relatively high numbers. In all 170,000 acres of forest has been identified and negotiations with the various landowners proceed with a view to defending these sites against the encroaching grey squirrel.

This final attempt to save the red squirrel from extinction in mainland England was launched in 2005, with experts admitting that their previous efforts had not worked. No go areas for the grey squirrel are being established around many of the red's last outposts in Northumberland, and also in

Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Merseyside. Among the northern strongholds of the red to be defended are Kielder Forest, Northumberland; Whinfell, near Penrith; Sefton Sands, near Southport and Widdale, near Hawes in Yorkshire. Greys that enter the three mile exclusion zone around these reserves, in some of the North's largest blocks of conifers, face extermination by trapping or shooting.

Unfortunately the red squirrel, (*Sciurus Vulgaris*, common squirrel) is becoming far less common. In Victoria's time this lovely creature was found the length and breadth of the British Isles. The grey was only introduced in 1876 but now has chased the red out of most of the country. The red population is now down to 160,000 and is not as flexible in its eating habits as the over two million greys. Reds apparently like a mix of Larch, Norway Spruce and Scots Pine. Despite having broods of between 3 and 8, food shortages mean survival rates to maturity are very poor and progressively populations are vanishing.

The young are suckled for nearly two months and are moved regularly to avoid threats before being left to their own devices whilst mum has a second litter which is even more unlikely to survive the winter. All squirrels need to pile on the fat during autumn if they are to see the next spring.

The bigger and stronger grey will tackle nuts before they are fully ripe and also has more fat reserve to survive periods of shortage and thus has something of a stacked deck.

The red is more accommodated in its diet than many people think but cannot compete with the larger grey and has found it can only survive in the areas the greys dislike. They thrive where the small and hard-to-retrieve seeds of some coniferous trees do not satisfy the greys.

Both species frantically bury single nuts all over the place and are thought to have magical abilities to remember where they put them. It seems likely however that they merely smell the nuts in the ground and are as likely to be digging up another squirrel's trophy as their own.

The two species do not actually fight but the bigger grey is more versatile and is happier on the ground than its cousin which gives it the edge where they compete for limited food supplies. The

grey is therefore happier with the environment which man is producing with changes in farming and land management.

To add to this the EU refuses to pay very much attention to the red's plight when legislating to protect wild life as the common squirrel is indeed common in Europe. As part of Europe we must toe the line and woe betide this lovely creature that we will see less and less.

The grey squirrel (*Sciurus Carolinensis*) was introduced from the Eastern USA and is well able to contend with our winter cold and strengthens its drey during winter to withstand strong winds. It does not however handle our rainy spells very well and our increasingly wet winters were expected to hold back its domination of the red where they still co-existed but the last two winters have actually been quite dry

If that was not enough for the poor red to contend with, the grey is thought to have brought with it a viral infection somewhat akin to a squirrel cold, which they can laugh off but which can decimate reds.

OSPREY RETURNS

There is better news on the Osprey front: These birds became extinct in England a quarter of a century ago and attempts at re-introduction during the sixties were hampered by pesticides in the food chain.

In recent years two breeding programmes have been conducted with birds initially brought down as chicks from Scotland. In addition to the well publicised efforts in the Lake District there is a reintroduction programme here in the East Midlands.

For a number of years osprey have been pausing in their flight home to their breeding grounds in Scotland to feed up locally. They were seen from time to time on and around Rutland Water and Watermead Park. In 1996 four young birds from Scotland were released at Rutland Water and about a dozen more have been each year since. Suitable nesting sites have been created and the first chicks were recorded in summer 2002. One pair is nesting in the area of Rockingham Forest and are often seen fishing at Rutland.

Ospreys that were reared on Rutland Water in 2003 survived to set off on migration with their parents probably to Guinea or Senegal. Early in spring the following year five males appeared and took up residence awaiting the arrival of some females who follow on a few weeks later. Two males introduced there in 1997 and 1998 were never to return but have now been found trying to breed at sites in Wales.

Now, finally we have true success. A totally naturally reared English osprey chick has returned home for the first time for centuries. This ringed bird left Rutland in 2004 and has just been sighted back at his old nest sight.

Naturally his parents gave him the boot, but for a bird reared without any assistance from man to return proves that the territory is becoming imprinted and is entirely suitable and as such we should be seeing the start of a truly wild colony of these magnificent birds.

Hopefully he will acquire a mate from the other birds in the area and perpetuate the cycle.

FANCY A SPLASH IN THE SEA?

As our waters warm, a day at the seaside with a swim in the surf may be a little less inviting. Quite apart from increased numbers of jelly fish, there have been several unconfirmed but fairly reliable sightings of great white sharks from the Scillies up to the Scottish Islands and during this summer fishermen off the coast of Northumberland and Durham have landed both a large swordfish and a 25 foot shark. This was not a basking shark but the predatory porbeagle. There have also been occasional sightings of killer whales.

OF FLITTERBUGS AND FLUTTERBIES

On a trip earlier this year I saw several humming bird hawk moths on the Isles of Scilly. This spectacular creature is becoming resident in parts of the southwest. Not yet accepted as a native species this is one of three which are becoming regular features of the south of England as our climate warms.

The other two are the clouded yellow and the painted lady both of which I also saw on my visit to Cornwall and the islands and surprise, surprise we

spotted one in our garden not long after we returned.

These may be welcome additions but truly native species are struggling with many species vanishing county by county. The changing weather and loss of habitat are the major causes but strangely foot and mouth did them no favours.

The already rare marsh fritillary is in very real trouble as about 75% of its population survived in a foot and mouth infected area in Devon and relied on grazing to keep its habitat from becoming overgrown and unsuitable and it is struggling to recover. Ten of our rarest butterflies were adversely affected by the reduction in grazing including the large blue.

HARRIERS CLOSE TO HOME

Hen Harriers are quickly being driven towards extinction and whilst there are only about 800 pairs in Britain very few are in England apart from the Isle of Man. It is one of Britain's most endangered species and English Nature report that it has vanished from the 12,000 acre *Geltsdale* Reserve in Cumbria. This reserve is surrounded by managed moorland and they suspect the activities of gamekeepers are responsible. Suspecting game keeper activity, English Nature is to investigate several large private estates.

Prosecutions are rare but recently a keeper on a large Scottish estate pleaded guilty to shooting a hen harrier having been captured on film and was fined £2000. Whilst this is a considerable sum if found from his own resources were any landowner to compensate an employee for any fines incurred they would probably consider it fairly cheap to maintain stocks of valuable game birds. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Scotland claims that hundreds of hen harriers have been systematically killed over the last decade.

This beautiful bird nests on the ground but the nests, eggs and young are regularly stamped on with the adults being shot or poisoned. Unfortunately the bird does take young grouse but in a few areas the practice of feeding the bird with dead rabbits during its rearing season has been shown to reduce predation by 85%. Few estates are prepared to go to the trouble of doing so.

Only six pairs were recorded as successfully breeding in 2001 and there is an apparent disparity between the successes of the birds on adjoining moorland areas where the only obvious difference is the attitude of the landowners. One such location under constant review is the Forest of Bowland near to our Cottage at Lowstern.

After privatisation United Utilities became the owners of the old Water Board area which was opened to the public and has a resident RSPB warden and is where five of the successful broods were found.

The following year a pair of hen harriers raised a clutch in Cornwall, the first time for over 150 years. These were probably immigrants from Spain but with only 6 other recorded breeding successes by this bird throughout England in 2002 it was a good sign.

During the years to 2006 numbers increased slowly in England but this is not as healthy as it sounds as they were virtually all in Bowland more of which is now open to the public under Right to Roam.

In the Peak District 5 chicks took wing from one brood this year, only the second family in the area for 130 years. This was due to the valiant efforts of the mother as the male vanished shortly after the eggs were laid.

Of 22 breeding attempts this year 12 nests produced 46 young.

TAWNEY OWLS

Another bird of prey is the tawny owl which was our most common breeding owl and is found throughout Britain but strangely not in Ireland. There were about 20,000 breeding pairs in the eighties but it is feared this may now be down to about 8,000. You are far more likely to hear one than see one.

They will live almost anywhere with old tall trees and are often found in churchyards being particularly fond of roosting in yews. The number of old trees is reducing not least as schools and churches have them felled for 'safety' reasons and this is a major problem for these birds. Whilst not strictly nocturnal they prefer hunting at night if there is a little light; normally just after night-fall when their prey is still about. They also very occasionally hunt during the day when desperate,

but they do need quiet and falling rain muffles any sound being made by potential prey. It will eat almost anything it can get hold of and only rarely gets enough to feed its brood of up to five young. These are actually hatched progressively with the first egg being incubated whilst the hen is still laying and the smallest fledglings often fail to survive unless food is plentiful. Even the survivors rarely get past their first winter as food is of course scarce and they are chased from the territories of older birds.

This creature lives for about 18 years and as much as 21 but does not normally wander far from its territory which it will know intimately. This is just as well as their eyes and ears are little better than man's and they rely on knowing their patch inside out to avoid flying into objects and to know where food sources are. It is about 15 inches long with a wing span of over three feet and is a ruddy brown near chestnut colour with a paler underside. This bird is the image seen in drawings of owls; it has facial feathers giving it the traditional spectacled look which probably gave rise to the saying 'wise old owl'. It is probably also the origin of the reputed twit-twoo sound which is actually something of a myth. The male bird is the source of the 'hoo-hoo, huh-hoo' sound often haunting woodland and the traditional noise is probably a male and female 'talking' to each other as the female makes a sound something like ke-wick which the males normally responds to with a 'hoo'.

Attempts are currently in hand to try and count how many of these birds are still about.

KILLER MOTH ARRIVES

A moth accidentally imported into Britain on young oak trees has started successfully breeding thanks to our warmer climate. This moth can strip the leaves from oak trees but more worryingly it has toxins in its hairs which can be fatal to humans.

Pest control officers in breathing equipment are trying to eradicate them wherever they appear but the hairs can easily break off and become windborne causing rashes and conjunctivitis and if inhaled far more dangerous ailments.

The oak progressive moth as it is called is presently being found in the area round Kew Gardens where trees imported for a housing estate are thought to be the source.

MEETS REPORT - OVERSEAS MEETS

SIERRA NEVADA, CALIFORNIA

July 22 - Aug 12

Having had such a good time in 2004, we felt compelled to go again, not least because we'd seen the Evolution Traverse but had failed to get to grips with it and wanted to do so.



This year, as well as Iain Gilmour, Tim Josephy and myself, we were joined by Alan Kay and Andy Wells, (who had been a YRC member some years ago). Iain and Alan chose to walk the 70+ miles of the High Sierra Trail, west to east across the mountains, so we dropped them off at the start at Crescent Meadow, the day after we arrived, having visited General Sherman en route.

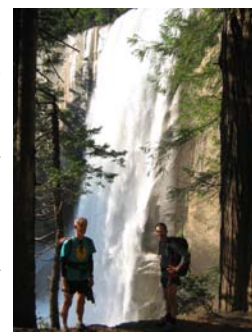


The rest of us travelled west then north to Yosemite; we travelled via Fresno, about which the only remarkable thing was 46 deg C temperature whilst we stopped for some shopping at Trader Jo's. Thank goodness for a car with aircon!

Rounding the bend and descending into Yosemite valley in the early evening, the first sight of the main cliffs is fantastic; El Capitan nearest, dominates, with Half Dome still sunlit and further away - jaw dropping stuff. We camped the first two nights at Crane Flat. On Monday 24th July, we set out from Yosemite valley (4000') and climbed Snake Dyke route (5.5) on Half Dome (8836').

This ascends the curved face diametrically opposite the wired 'tourist' route. It was pretty hard going just getting to the bottom of the route, jet lag and un-accustomed altitude left us all lacking in energy and quite breathless. The rock climbing wasn't hard, but the protection was sparse except at the stances, most of which were quite uncomfortable for three people. We felt like ants climbing up the outside of a large ball - not too steep, but still very exposed. When we got to the top of the route, we were still some 800' vertically below the summit. Trudging up the slabs to meet the marmot and its many human admirers at the summit was really tiring.

It was soon apparent that not only was there more snow around than in 2004, but also that the streams were much fuller; making the waterfalls far more dramatic. Vernal (pictured) and Nevada Falls, alongside our route down from Half Dome were spectacular - much photographed, and the spray gave us a good wetting - appreciated after the heat of the day.



The next day, we drove into Tuolumne Meadows, stopping at Olmstead Point on the way. Views SW along Tenaya Creek to Yosemite Valley and Half Dome were spectacular. Later we climbed a route called "Great White Book", 5.6, 3* on the Stately Pleasure Dome. It featured very sparse gear on long pitches curving away out of sight. On Andy's pitch, he climbed the full length of the rope - we had to assume he was belayed, but arrived to find he'd had to jam his knee hard into the corner crack to get secure, some way below the next stance. We did not possess 6" friends! The skin scraped off his knee in that selfless action didn't heal over until the last couple of days of the holiday.

On 26th July, we walked to Matthes Crest and traversed the full (half a mile) length.



This is a Peter Croft Grade IV Traverse 5.7, 3* route. It was a grand day of up and down horizontal movement, pinnacles, scrambling, abseiling, rock steps, very narrow crest moves, with serious exposure both sides and even a horizontal corniced pitch, which felt really odd! It became a 15-hour day and dark by the time we reached the road. We endured just Cherrios and warm water for our evening meal. We'd camped at the Tuolumne Meadows campsite and thought we'd treat ourselves to a breakfast next morning at the Tuolumne Meadows Grill; we did - it was really grim, be warned!

Thursday 27th, was a sort of provisioning/rest day; we did set off to climb on the `roadside` Drug Dome, there was a splendid looking route called The Hobbit, but after taking 70 minutes to get within sight of the bottom, we'd left it too late - so went for a swim in Tenaya lake instead.

28th July: Drove to Big Pine via Tioga Pass and walked up delightful trails to the bottom of Temple Crag. En route, we encountered Beth Kennedy, camping by the path with two llamas, two dogs and a crow. More of this, later. The way crossed a fast flowing outlet from a lake on some tree trunks that had jammed across the narrows; a slip would have meant more than a wetting. After crossing some elephant talus, we found a splendid bivi site, close to the bottom of the crag. That evening as we pottered about, a rock as big as a car suddenly appeared bounding down the snow above us and well to our right interesting! Next morning, we walked up scree and across a large snow slope to the bottom of our route "Moon Goddess Arete" 5.8. This had two towers on it, hence some abseiling as well, on the way up. Climbing was easy to begin with, but it soon reared up. There might have been 18 pitches, I can't really remember. Where it was tricky, there was a lot of loose rock and with serious rope drag in places made for some tense moments. We also got a friend stuck (thankfully, it wasn't mine!), but did find some gear too.

Somewhat like on Clyde Minaret two years before, we arrived at the top just after the sun had set. First view of the summit had a crescent moon just over it, so the route name was perfect. The descent was to the south, down talus to an abseil into Connect Pass (11,800'). Surprisingly, we found it quite easily, then just had to descend snow slopes and scree back to the bivi, arriving after

11pm. Andy had bought a new LED headlight - it gave a wonderfully powerful beam and helped us down much more quickly than another party who had retreated off a neighbouring route and were also descending in the dark.

The next day, we walked out and drove to Lone Pine/Whitney Portal and met up with Iain and Alan, who had successfully traversed the High Sierras in good time (see their account of the trip). We'd had none of the storms they had, but had heard some thunder on occasions. That night we stayed in the Dow Villa Hotel - relative luxury - surrounded by cowboy film star memorabilia. Food that was not rehydrated and a trip to the launderette made us all feel rather better

The area between Lone Pine and Mt Whitney had been used as the location for shooting John Wayne and others' cowboy films. Indeed, one track passing through a desert scrub area with huge piles of granite boulders was called Movie Road. It wasn't hard to visualise goodies chasing baddies through it. That evening, we dined with Beth Kennedy at her house on the outskirts of Bishop. She was good company and made us very welcome; the conversation ranged through politics, capitalism and conspiracy theories to druids! She had `rescued` all the animals in her care and regularly went into the hills with them, having retired to do so.

On Tuesday Aug 1st, we all walked from South Lake (9800'), above Bishop, to Bishop Pass (11,900').



This was up another delightful flower filled valley. Andy, Tim and I then ascended Mt. Agazziz (13,893'), via an easy scramble, just to the south. The views from this peak were stunning.

Next morning, we set off from North Lake (9,350') for Lamarck Coll and the Evolution Valley with bivi and climbing gear and food for several days. Alan and Iain chose to go via Piute Pass (11,423') and take a longer route around, via the

JMT and meet us on the Darwin Bench, where we'd found a perfect bivi site two years ago. Lamarck Coll is quite high (12950') and on the approach one sees many horizons which could be the pass, but turn out not to be. Head down and trudge on! As noted earlier, there was a lot more snow around and we had to cross several snowfields that were not there last time.



Mt Darwin

The Darwin Canyon was every bit as grand as we'd remembered, five brilliant blue lakes in a line stretching away to the right below us, flanked by steep and jagged mountain ridges, and opposite us, the Evolution Ridge (a Grade VI, 5.9 *** ridge, eight miles long). Even from where we were, it was difficult to judge the scale of the thing; 'small' features on it turned out to be rather large when we got there later. At some point on our descent we came to the conclusion that to seek to attempt the traverse carrying all the gear we had, with expected climbing at up to HVS was going to be too difficult/slow, so decided to look at it in daily stages.

Evolution Ridge



On arrival at the agreed bivi site, we found it still partly covered with snow, and what wasn't, was still very wet. Also, to suit the new plan, being at the north end of the traverse was less useful, so we continued round and down into the Evolution Valley where we found a good bivi site on a promontory into the main lake. It was sufficiently exposed to catch the breeze and blow away more of the midges, which were a lot more evident this year.

Tim discovered that the soles of his shoes were coming adrift and wouldn't survive rock ridge stuff the granite is exceptionally tough on gear (and skin), so he decided to walk back out the way we had come, change his shoes for some others at the car and return to meet up with us either before or at, the main rendezvous on Darwin Bench. He left the next morning, as Andy and I set off for the ridge, directly above our bivi site. This was 2,500' of ascent, walking to begin, but soon into scrambling as the way got steeper. Judging by the quantities of loose/unstable rock, it didn't look as if many people had been that way. We reached the ridge and could immediately look down onto a glacier and into the Darwin Canyon on the other side. Turning right/south we ascended to the summit of Mt Mendel (13710'). It wasn't very far, (400m?) but took us nearly five hours of roped rock climbing up and down to get there. This part of the ridge seemed to be comprised of jumbled poised blocks, dubiously held in place by gravity. For the most part, they were considerably heavier than us, but we moved very carefully, often with heart-in-mouth! It certainly wouldn't have been the place to seek to move with heavy packs. Beyond Mt Mendel, the going was easier for a while, but then the ridge looked more jagged, like we had been on. We didn't think we could get to Mt Darwin and down within daylight, so at a low point in the ridge, descended a gully back to our bivi site in the Evolution valley.

Next day, Andy and I walked south on the JMT and forded the stream just before Sapphire Lake, then ascended Mt Spencer, the spur to its east and up onto the ridge between Darwin and Haeckel. This approach gave excellent views of the whole ridge and demonstrated to us just what an effort it would be to traverse the lot. We cut through a notch in the ridge to find climbing on the other side was far less formidable than it appeared on the side we'd come from; I'd hoped to get at least to the summit of Mt Darwin, but we just couldn't seem to make quick enough progress and by 2pm, clouds were beginning to build up in a somewhat ominous fashion. We elected to descend - yet another loose gully, to the valley. Rain began when we were still some way from the bivi, but held off from what was to come until just as we got there. The rain turned to hail like small marbles and was rather fierce; we cowered in our bivis, seeking to keep sleeping bags dry and breath through small openings, whilst avoiding the puddles that formed in any dips. Lightening flashed very close as the

storm moved passed us; after two hours it had gone and we were able to emerge to a watery landscape.

At this point a rather wet and bedraggled Tim arrived. On leaving us the previous morning, he'd gone back over Lamarck Coll to the car at North Lake, changed shoes, then walked up over Piute Pass (11,423') and bivied, then, the next day walked all the way round to Darwin Bench, met Iain and Alan, then came on to us. This is a distance of some 28 km on the map, but probably more than twice that on the ground. A tremendous effort, considering the roughness of much of the path and the height lost and regained.

He'd been caught in the storm too, managing to shelter for part of it in his bivi bag, but arriving wet with a lot of wet gear. We had not taken waterproofs - for weight saving and because in 2004, there had been no inkling of any rain. They might have helped! The night was quite miserable and in the morning, all our sleeping bags had plenty of ice on them, inside our bivi bags. There wasn't much enthusiasm for going up to the ridge again, so we set off and rejoined Alan and Iain on Darwin Bench - for a second breakfast - before exiting back over Lamarck Coll to the car at North lake. Just 10 mins before reaching the car, we ran into swarms of large, insistent mossies that made escape from that area a necessity. Whether this was as a consequence of the thunderstorm making the ground and vegetation so damp or due to proximity of the horses at Bishop Pack station wasn't at all clear, but was very unpleasant. A mile down the road when there were fewer outside than in, we had to stop and open all the doors to get them out of the car!

Next day, we went to the Gallery of Mountain Light in Bishop and looked again at many of the photos taken by Galen Rowell. These are superb, so good as to be unreal in some cases. Driving north, we visited Mono Lake, and were entertained by Ranger Cedric Williams, describing the history and some of the flora, fauna and geology of the area. He was quite a showman. We also went to Panum Crater, a volcanic spot near the lake that had erupted only 600 years ago, creating lightweight grey pumice and dense black obsidian. That night we camped at Ellery Lake campground, just east of Tioga Pass.

On Monday 7th, we walked from Saddlebag Lake dam (10,100') to the western end; Iain and Alan

continued to further lakes then returned via the north side of the lake (to a cafe for soup and cakes). The rest of us ascended to the North Ridge of Mt Conness (Grade II, 5.6 **) and climbed it to the summit. (12950'). The approach valley was again delightful, small lakes, streams, waterfalls, trees and flowers, giving way to more desert like landscape with snowfield/glaciers descending into ponds amongst barren dirt and rocks. The ridge offered quite easy climbing, in often very exposed positions and a couple of abseils from towers en route. We'd caught up with a couple of Americans, one of whom was glad of our rope on one pitch - they'd omitted/forgotten (?) to bring one. On the way down, we gazed at the South Face, above which the West Ridge (which we'd ascended in 2004) rose to the summit. This is huge and must have lots of routes to be discovered as well as those that have been climbed. Camped again at Ellery Lake campground. This was a chilly place when the sun wasn't directly on us - ice on sleeping bags each night.

On Tuesday 8th, Alan, Iain and Tim decided to walk to Clouds Rest; this is a peak first seen to the north of and slightly higher than Half Dome. We dropped them at the end of Lake Tenaya, from where they walked the seven miles to the top to be rewarded with superb views of Yosemite Valley and its walls. Andy and I returned to the Stately Pleasure Dome, where we climbed South Crack, 5.8, a 3* route.

Gear was good for the first two, steeper pitches and the way clear. Above that, it began to get a little worrying! Protection was minimal in full 50m run outs on the micro rough but macro smooth surface of the dome. A pair of Americans, who demonstrated a 'rock padding' technique that we'd not worked out for ourselves, overtook us. It seemed to consist of: - lean forward, palms and outstretched fingers flat on the rock, feet pointing uphill (not sideways) and ascend quickly, moving only one of the four rock contacts at any one time, so that three remained with sufficient friction to maintain contact / stop a slide. It obviously worked for them - but takes some commitment to put it into practice. Not really sure we wanted to spend the practice time! Despite being a lot slower than them, we did finish the route without mishap and met up with the others for a second swim in Lake Tenaya. The day ended with an excellent meal at the Tuolumne Restaurant; a very satisfying day for us all.

Our final day in the Tuolumne Meadows area was also a good one. Alan walked via Rafferty Creek and Tuolumne Pass to snow clad Vogelsang Peak and back, a fine shapely mountain to the east of the meadows. Iain went to Cathedral Lakes along the JMT route. Tim, Andy and I went to climb a 5.9 route up the north face/end of Eichorn - the steep spire attached to Cathedral Peak. Half way up the third pitch, we gave up - it was too hard - and abseiled down, leaving a Rock 8 and good krab for the next party to claim. (That was more painful than the dented pride!) We scrambled up to the saddle between the summits of Cathedral and Eichorn and took turns at photographing the other two on the Eichorn summit, after a straightforward, but exposed climb.



Adrian
on
top

After getting down, we scurried away quickly as a less than competent party seemed to be setting about the same route. We descended through the open woodland on the east side of the mountain and back to the Tuolumne Meadows campsite for our final night.

On returning through San Francisco, Andy and Alan visited Alcatraz, Tim got a professional shave, Iain visited an art gallery and we all met up at Ian Bridge's flat before going to a motel near the airport and a flight home the next morning. We were within 24hrs of the plot to blow up 10 transatlantic planes being discovered in Britain, so security was much tightened, but were only about an hour late at Manchester after it all.

Once again, a splendid meet with good company -

and still, so much more to return to do. Our thanks to Tim for most of the organisation: he couldn't say "Its not my fault...." There was no fault!

Adrian Bridge

The High Sierra Trail (by Iain Gilmour)

The club trip to the Californian High Sierra was split into two parts, climbers and backpackers. Alan Kay and I could not resist the temptation to visit this superb mountain range again, and chose to hike the High Sierra Trail to enjoy the superb scenery. This trail is a 70 mile West to East equivalent of the John Muir Trail, and merges with the JMT for the last two days. Any suggestion that this is an easy option was quickly forgotten as we carried 7 days food, full camping equipment, and bear canister through very remote terrain, finishing at 14,495 feet on Mount Whitney, the highest part of the USA outside Alaska.

The party of five flew to San Francisco on Saturday 22 July, hired a car, and drove to a motel, all in one day. The next day we drove to Crescent Meadow, near the General Sherman Sequoia tree, said to be the largest living thing on earth, and then to the trail head. The climbers waved goodbye, and agreed to meet us a week later at the other side of the Sierra, for them a 700 mile trip. After a day and a morning of travelling, Alan and I set out at 2 PM carrying 35 pounds plus water in a temperature of 85 F. at 7,000 feet. The cumulative effect of jet lag, travel fatigue, temperature, and altitude, soon took its toll, so we camped after eight miles of trail. Collapsed in my tent with a heavy thunderstorm booming overhead, my mind went through the possible reasons for feeling so exhausted. What if I should crack up part way through the trail? Anyway, a large bowl of porridge the next morning soon boosted morale, and the following days brought renewed confidence.

The Sierra had received more snowfall than usual, so the creeks (full blown rivers in Yorkshire terms) were fuller than usual, and several had to be crossed by edging across fallen tree trunks. We were surprised by the weather which produced a thunderstorm every afternoon. The trail follows the side of a deep valley, sometimes crossing steep rock faces and avalanche gullies, before rising to Kawea Gap at 10,700 feet. We threaded our way along the deep Kern Canyon with enormous trees, frequently crossing creeks, and camped near Kern

Hot Springs. A thermal spring gives a trickle of nicely hot water near the edge of the river, so we enjoyed a good wash, not caring if chipmunks or bears should be watching.

The trail soon joined the John Muir Trail, and then climbed to more arid terrain near Mount Whitney. We camped at Guitar Lake after a short day, to leave us plenty of energy on the last day for the 3,000 feet climb and 6,000 feet descent to Whitney Portal. After a good meal, we hitched down to Lone Pine and awaited the climbers.

As a final back pack, Alan and I set out from Bishop North Lake over Piute Pass, to Goddard Canyon, and McClure Meadow to Darwin Bench, just above Evolution Valley. This is the most superb piece of wild country, jagged ridges of granite on both sides of the valley which has a series of beautiful blue lakes.

We met the climbers at Darwin Bench, where late one afternoon in a torrential thunderstorm, a wild apparition appeared outside my tent, it was a dripping wet Tim Josephy, who had trekked some 27 miles in a day and a half. Tim headed on to meet Adrian and Andy Wells, lower down at Evolution Valley. We wondered how they would survive the heavy storm in bivvy bags.

The route back was over Lamark Col at 13,000 feet and down to Bishop North Lake again. We used the excellent Tom Harrison maps, which show all the recognised trails. A glance at the map shows some of the splendidly named lakes, Hungry Packer Lake, Moonlight Lake, Fishgut Lake, and Donkey Lake, a welcome contrast to the high minded peaks: Darwin, Mendel, and Goethe.

If you are a backpacker, the Sierra is one of the best places in the world, with scenery, weather, and unspoilt remoteness second to none.

High Sierra Trail Miles

Night Stop	Waypoint	Stage miles	Cumul. miles	Height feet	Day	Day Miles	Climb ft.
	Crescent Meadow	0	0	6,680			
	Junct 7 Mile Trail	5.8	5.8	7,690			
23-Jul	Part way to Bearpaw	2	7.8	7,700	1	7.8	1,020
	Bearpaw Meadow	5.5	13.3	7,820			
	Junct Lone Pine Creek	1.6	14.9	7,400			
24-Jul	Hamilton Lake Outfall	1.5	16.4	8,350	2	8.6	650
	Precipice Lake	3.9	20.3	10,300			
	Kawea Gap	0.6	20.9	10,700			
25-Jul	Big Arroyo Junction	3.4	24.3	9,560	3	7.9	2,350
	Split to Moraine Lake	4.6	28.9	10,225			
	Rejoin via Moraine	3.5	32.4	9,160			
	Upper Funston Meadow	3.8	36.2	6,730			
26-Jul	Kern Hot Spring	1.5	37.7	7,100	4	13.4	1,035
	Junction Meadow	7.8	45.5	8,080			
	Kern River Junct	1.2	46.7	8,830			
27-Jul	John Muir Trail Junct	3.1	49.8	10,405	5	12.1	3,305
	Junct Trail heads East	3.4	53.2	10,875			
	Crabtree Ranger Station	0.8	54	10,640			
28-Jul	Guitar Lake	2.6	56.6	11,500	6	6.8	1,095
	Trail Crest	3	59.6	13,650			
	Mt Whitney Summit	1.9	61.5	14,495			
	Trail Crest	1.9	63.4	13,650			
	Trail Camp			12,000			
	Outpost Camp			11,200			
29-Jul	Whitney Portal	8.5	71.9	8,340	7	15.3	2,995



Budd Lake



Temple Crag



Moraine Lake



Darwin Canyon

Iain crossing Wallace Creek and then descending from Mount Whitney



ALPINE MEET - VALNONTÉY AOSTA, ITALY 15 - 22 July 2006



Time to relax



Derek Bush on Gran Paradiso



Half way



Lac Gele from Piccolo Emilius



David Hick & Richard Dover on Monte Emilius Via Ferrata



David Hick on Monte Emilius



Laveciau Glacier



Paul Dover on Punta Vallattaz



Crossing upper snow field



Gran Paradiso summit

The meet was hailed by some attending as one of the best Alpine meets in the club's recent history. Others, after returning home, felt that it lacked the camaraderie of some earlier meets where all were camping together. The venue was selected and the meet organised by Mick Borroff. His comprehensive preliminary notes proposed camping at Lo Stambecco in Valnontey and for those using the hotel accommodation, the adjacent Hotel La Baume, both managed by the Herren family as our base.

The first members arrived on Saturday 15th. The Davids Hick and Martindale had been unable to book in at La Baume so stayed in Hotel Herbetet higher up the village. Mick, having made a solo drive via Lausanne and Grand St Bernard, arrived late to camp at Lo Stambecco. The main arrival day was Monday when Derek Bush, Albert Chapman, John Lovett, David Smith and Ken Aldred booked in to La Baume having flown from Manchester to Geneva and driven via the Mont Blanc tunnel. Andrew and Ann Luck arrived the same day as guests of Albert and also checked into La Baume, Ann having been on our Ladakh meet in 2005. Paul and Richard Dover arrived on Tuesday in Richard's motorhome, their wives having chosen to return home after a foursome holiday in France.

On arrival in Valnontey Richard and Paul went to Lo Stambecco to check who else had arrived. They had no records of any visitor named Borroff nor any visitor references to the YRC, so we searched the other venues in the valley all to no avail. By chance, they met Mick walking from the campsite to La Baume; only then did we find out that every thing was booked in the name of our intrepid traveller Chapman. This continued with the subsequent hut bookings throughout the meet! Jack Short, who lives only 45 minutes from Gatwick Airport took a flight to Turin and picked up a hire car to drive to Valnontey to stay in a nearby B&B. Mike and Marcia Godden attended for the first week staying at La Baume.

Although the party was accommodated in several locations within the village, we tended to gather at La Baume in the evenings either for dinner or for drinks after.

The village of Valnontey is at 1700m is in a narrow valley named after the village. It is surrounded by ridges 3000-4000m high and with a raging river fed by a number of glaciers at its head and is the

eastern of two valleys running north from the main attraction of Gran Paradiso. It is rated as one of the easier 4000m peaks, the ascent of which was to be our primary goal. However, the area had many other attractions. It is relatively quiet, but the weekends were rather different when city dwellers from Milan and Turin migrate away from the unremitting heat at home. It was 38°C and very oppressive in Aosta but a pleasant low-mid 20's at >1700m.

Mick's research had identified a number of 25,000:1 maps of the area and recommended the IGC 101 and 102 as the best. These were purchased in Britain, at great expense, only to find that the local communes publish their own much cheaper versions and on which all the local paths are numbered. These proved to be much more user friendly.

Group members had a range of aspirations: Mick 'needed' to reach at least one peak every day, Richard and David Hick were close behind and Paul wanted to but ran out of energy and so often took a middle route. The others were more content with enjoying walks along the beautiful valleys or up to the mountain huts typically at 2400-2700m sometimes enjoying their hospitality for lunch.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Sunday 16th - Mick walked from Valnontey up to the Refugio Vittorio Sella and north along the path traversing high above Valnontey to the L'Ouille col before ascending Monte Erban (3004m) by the south east flank. Near the summit, he was watched by a herd of about twenty chamois. The return was via the col and the Buttier Alp, then Cogne and along the riverbank back to Valnontey.

Monday 17th - He went by car to Gimillan then walked up the Vallone del Grauson and visited Lago Corona (2702m) and onto the three Laghi di Lussert (2907m). The flowers and butterflies in this beautiful valley were outstanding and the Grauson thoroughly deserved its acquired nickname of the "Valley of Flowers".

Tuesday 18th - Mick, Albert, Ann, Derek and David S walked from Valnontey up the Alp Money and traversed to the head of the Valnontey valley, returning alongside the river. They paused to take photographs of a chamois, then later, a vixen collecting bread thrown by passing tourists to feed her cubs.

Wednesday 19th - Mick and David H again walked from Gimillan. They ascended to the head of the Grauson valley and climbed Punta Tersiva (3512m) via the benign Tessonnet glacier with virtually no snow cover. The screes above lead to the large bronze statue on the summit. They returned by the same route. Paul and Richard joined Mike and Marcia for their first walk and followed the same route up to Grauson-Dessus admiring large flocks of butterflies en-route. Derek walked with Albert, David and Ann to Lillaz (John went to Lillaz with them) then they had a steep ascent to a small lake called Loie where Albert and Ann had a swim. They returned by a circuitous route through a very pleasant alp and steep woods, by the Torrent de Bardoney back to Lillaz - a very pleasant day. (Walks 12 & 13 on the AIAT Cogne Gran Paradiso Map) They returned by bus from Lillaz to Cogne where fortunately David Hick picked them up.

Thursday 20th - Mick, Richard and Paul, walked from Lillaz doing a circular route around the Vallone di Urtier towards the Finestra di Champorcher, via Lago Ponton (2602m) and the Refugio Sogno di Berdze. They returned by the Alta Via 2 footpath. Others had a leisurely day round the botanical gardens in Valnontey.

Friday 21st - Most had a restful morning performing either domestic duties or preparing for the big push up Gran Paradiso the following day. After a collective lunch in Valnontey we drove down into the Aosta valley and then up to Pont in Valsaverenche at the road head of the Torrente Savara valley. From here, Mick, Albert, Rod Tozer (Albert's guest), David S, Derek, Paul, Richard, Ann, David H, John and Jack walked up the mule track to the Refugio Vittorio Emmanuelle at 2732m, dodging thunder showers on the way. The hut was full and dinner was accompanied by a hub of discussion. We retired by 21.00 to prepare for our early rise.

Saturday 22nd - Up at 4.00am for breakfast The summing party of Albert, Rod, David S, Derek, Paul, Richard, Ann, and David H led by Mick, finally left the hut at 05.30 for the ascent of the Gran Paradiso. It starts over very large boulders which were awkward to navigate in the dark, followed by moraines and stretches of bear rock. David S decided to return to the hut before we reached the glacier, as he was not feeling well. The remaining members, having donned crampons,

continued via the normal route up the Laveciau and Gran Paradiso glaciers.

The lower glacier was steep hard ice with much gravel embedded in it. For at least four members of the party, this was a new experience and progress was slow but Mick tutored them well. At about 3450m Paul was very tired and decided, albeit reluctantly, to turn back. However, still only 08.00 the glacier was still frozen hard and the solo descent was done with great caution. Below the glacier, route finding was difficult but made easier lower down by the path over bare rock having been swept clean. Lower down, I (Paul) enjoyed watching a marmot scavenging amongst the boulders. For the remaining members the route continued up the Gran Paradiso glacier to the scramble leading to the Madonna and the true summit rocks. This was reached at about 11.00 by all except Rod who had decided to wait at about 3600m for the descending party. At the time of descent the ice was melting rapidly making conditions more difficult. The party split into two roped groups for the descent over the glacier and back to Vittoria Emmanuelle; most people didn't arrive at the cars until between 17.00 and 18.30.

Meanwhile, David S had joined John L and Jack Short at Vittoria Emmanuelle in time for a second breakfast. Jack left the group at this point and walked the traverse to the Chabod Hut for a further overnight stay before descending to the valley. David and John descended via the Mule track to Pont.

The drive back to Valnontey was somewhat rushed to make the 19.30 dinner at La Baume.

Sunday 23rd - This was for many a day of recovery but Mick, still full of energy, went to view the Lillaz waterfalls and then walked up to Lago di Loie, returning the same way. Richard and Paul rashly decided to visit the Pont d'Ael Roman Aqueduct on their mountain bikes. This included an enjoyable 1000m descent. However, before reaching the turning to Pont d'Ael they decided that the return was going to be a much more tiring task and so turned round where they could look down at the bridge from the main road.

Three hours later and a lot lighter they arrived back at the camp site. Paul learned a hard lesson, "so much for our day of rest!"

Jack stayed in the Torrente Savara valley for two nights, had some easy walks watching the Marmots and Ibex, enjoying good food and wine, and dodging the thunderstorms, before returning to Turin

Monday 24th - Mick, David H, Richard and Paul, drove to Pila - a growing ski resort - at 1770m. From here they took the chair lift up to Lac di Charmole and dropped into the Vallon di Comboe. Paul then walked up to the Refugio Arbolle and up to Lago Gele nestling under Monte Emilius at the head of the Arbolle valley to meet the returning party. With no sign of them on the summit ridge, he decided to descend only to meet David just below the lago. David had made a difficult and time consuming decent off the ridge before the west ridge.

After leaving Paul the others had a stiff ascent to the Bivouac Federigo at the Col Carrel, marking the start of the via ferrata del Monte Emilius. This involved negotiating a total of about 1000m of fixed rope. The route progressed over a spectacular and airy suspension bridge strung between two rocky towers, up the north ridge of Piccolo Monte Emilius, before turning up the west ridge of Monte Emilius (3559m). Ibex were seen just below the summit. The descent was effected down the voie normale to the Colle del Tre Capuchini and down to the splendid Arbolle Refuge, where we all enjoyed a superb restaurant quality four-course meal and an excellent night's sleep.



Bivouac Federigo

Derek went with John and President Ken up to the Sella hut. John was very tired when he got there but he enjoyed the bottle of beer the President bought him. So did Ken! They met David Martindale at the top; He was pleased to have got up considering he is waiting to go into hospital for an operation.

Tuesday 25th - After a substantial breakfast at Arbolle Refuge, Mick, David H, Paul and Richard

ascended Punta Vallettaz (3089m) and descended the via ferrata down the craggy southwest ridge to the Col Tza-Setze where the party divided. Paul and Richard descended to Cogne via Arpisson where Paul satisfied his agricultural queries by viewing a relatively modern cheese-making farm. It had two breeds of cows and one of goats with all the milk made into cheese. The herds had only been on the mountain pastures for 10 days, approximately two weeks later than normal. They typically return to the valley on 20 September.

As we arrived at Gimillan, the thunder rain descended on us with a vengeance. The road walk back to Valnontey was very wet, the only time!

Meanwhile Dave and Mick continued west along the ridge to the Colle del Drinc, where a threat of a thunderstorm forced a descent back down to Pila. They observed a distinctively marked black and grey snake on the grassy slopes later identified as a poisonous Asp Viper.

For Derek it was his last day. He needed some solitude, so he decided to go off and solo the traverse between the Sella hut and the Casolari Herbetet. "The walk is graded EE which means it is considerably more difficult than the normal mountaineering track in these valleys. Back up to the Sella hut, a little bit faster than yesterday. The first part of the walk is on an old hunting track and just below the Lauson Lake, Derek saw a herd of chamois grazing quite happily taking no notice of him. The traverse is called the Lauson Crossing - Herbetet. The path runs along 'unprotected and steep slopes'. There is a short passage with cord and ladders. It is a most enjoyable trip. He only saw two other parties of two all day coming in the opposite direction. After the Herbetet the thunder started and at first I thought it would stay in the next valley but eventually it came right up the Valnontey valley and for the first time on our holiday I got quite wet".

We were joined on the Lo Stambecco campsite by Chris Hilton and family for two nights. They were enroute to Tuscany.

Wednesday 26th - Ken, John, David S, Albert, Derek, Ann and Andrew departed after breakfast for Geneva airport. Unfortunately, the road works around the airport resulted in the first five missing their flight which resulted in a very expensive alternative ticket. Ann and Andrew had

a later flight and had time to ascend the Aiguille du Midi by cablecar to 3842 m from Chamonix en-route to Geneva.

Mick walked from Lillaz south up the Vallon di Valeille, ascending to the Casolari de l'Arolla used by the Park Rangers and then to the Colle dell'Arolla (2890m) where he saw several ibex. The col was crossed and a descent made into the Vallon di Bardonney and back to Lillaz on the Alta Via 2 path.

Paul and Richard cycled up the valley from Valnontey to the end of the track above Vermiana and returned to Valnontey. Then further off road cycling to Lillaz via Silvenoire returning via Cogne. In the afternoon, they changed to Richard's motor bike to visit Pont d'Ael Roman Aqueduct, the wine co-operative at Aymavilles and Aosta.

Thursday 27th - Mick and David H walked from Montroz up the Vallone del Grauson but ascended from Crouzet Alp to Lac Money and then climbed Monte Creyaz (3015m) where they surprised two ibex immediately below the summit rocks. A descent was then made down the Vallon di Liconi towards Cogne and down to the abandoned Colonna iron mine and back to Montroz.

Richard and Paul were joined by the latter's nephew Mark from Keighley who was working in Sainte Foie-Tarentaise and is a keen mountain biker, championship white water rafter, 26 years old and very fit! They followed the same route as Derek had done two days earlier and described above. They too found the walk very enjoyable although the traverse was easier than expected from comments heard. One interesting experience was helping two parties who had become stuck at the Torrent crossing. Mark valiantly got them all across.

Friday 28th - Mick, Richard and Paul departed on the drive to the Channel ports leaving David's Hick and Martindale who left on Saturday. Paul and Richard used time in hand to visit the First World War museum of the Somme at Peronne. This proved to be a rewarding but emotional experience.

This was a most enjoyable meet in a delightful location and with good company. Thanks are due to Mick Borroff, Derek Bush and Jack Short for contributions used in the above report.

Paul Dover

A PERSONAL IMPRESSION OF PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN PARADISO

Having enjoyed more than fifty years in alpine regions and dozens of mountain successes, largely with support and comradeship of members of our remarkable club; came failure for me on the Grand Paradiso. The beautiful unspoiled valleys of the Cogne area directed my thoughts to a new more relaxed approach to the Alpine regions.

It was after midnight before we reached our hotel, the Hotel La Balme, in the lovely village of Valnontey by car from Geneva airport despite having three navigators and Sat Navigation. Our first good impression of the area was stopping for a meal, very late in the evening en route provided by a friendly innkeeper in a busy restaurant. The next good impression; our hotel as left open for us with a note of welcome on the desk directing us to our rooms. In the morning we discovered village buildings that had not have changed since the days of our YRC forebears Conway, Walker and Whympier. The dry stonewalls of these buildings, their heavy stone roofs and the brown weathered timbers provided that link with the past. The inside of our hotel was comfortable and modern and the young owners and their staff seemed to go out of their way make us welcome.

My first excursion was with a few of our group taking us along a route running parallel to the Torrent Valnontey but heading upwards though trees to the Money Hut at 2327 m with splendid views of L'Herbetet mountain to the east. The return route was along opposite side of the river. A semi-tame vixen near our village was collecting offerings from walkers to feed its cubs.

The following day we walked down towards Cogne, skirting the town heading to the pretty village of Lillaz joining route 12, all routes are numbered and well signed, then upwards to a small tarn, Lago Loie at 2396 metres. Two of the party discreetly removed some clothing and enjoyed a refreshing swim. After walking up through the beautiful countryside with tree-lined paths we reached meadowland and passed the clear water of numerous tarns. The hills around were quite reminiscent of Scotland but without midges. We descended into the valley of Torrent Urtler to Lillaz just in time for a timely bus to return us back to Valnontey.

The ascent to Refuge Vittorio Emanuele filled most of another day after a drive round to the west flank of Gran Paradiso; again through magnificent countryside. It was a 5am start from the hut. The first part of the route to the mountain crossed huge blocks of rock leading towards the Glacier du Mont-Grand-Paradis. On reaching 3000m I decided that, not feeling at my best I thought it sensible to return to the hut and the valley. The pleasant descent walking through the beautiful landscape persuaded me that my fascination and drive to climb the higher peaks was not essential to my enjoyment of the mountains; there was much more to these wonderlands. Oh dear, I must be feeling my age! Well maybe not, it's Austria next year.

On successive days small groups of us visited different areas; one memorable trail leaves Lillaz by a steep meandering road that joined route 10 leading to a route that parallels the Torrent Urtier.

FLORA AND FAUNA Ken Aldred

Valnontey, the base for this year's Alpine meet, is the site of the Alpine Garden Paradisia, a botanical garden given over to the plants of the Grand Paradiso National Park as well as specimens from other parts of the Alps and more world wide locations.

Most of our members on the meet spent some time in the garden, busy with notebooks or cameras and generally being fully appreciative of the work which has gone into the development of the site since its foundation in 1955. Unlike a number of botanic gardens this one is a real educational experience with well labelled specimens, a wide variety of growing media including calcareous glacial drifts, peat beds and peat bogs and a variety of petrographic examples from the Cogne Valley.

Lichens, again well labelled, are an unusual added attraction. The garden attracts a very wide range of butterflies, even more than the absolute clouds of them seen on the damp woodland paths in the valley.

On the hillsides, as expected, we didn't see as many flowers as in the Dolomites, but nevertheless we came across sufficient to satisfy the keenest botanist. The two attractive gentians of last year, *G. acaulis* and *G. verna*, were not seen by me, but the tiny snow gentian, *G. nivalis* was seen in a number of localities on the west side of the Valnontey valley at the Money Alp, well below the Glacier de Money. *G. lutea* and *G. punctata* were quite abundant on both sides of the valley. Edelweiss, always associated with any Alpine region, was not seen except in the garden next door to the hotel where masses of it hid some of the more photogenic plants!

Any gardener who has cursed the invasiveness of rose bay willow herb could have taken some comfort from its smaller alpine relative, *Epilobium fleischeri*, a beautiful flower of the higher hillsides. Daphnes, dianthus, campanulas, sempervivums and *Dryas octopetala* were very common as were the dwarf willows and dwarf birch. Seen in one location was a beautiful *phyteuma*.

The symbol of the National Park is the Ibex. I didn't see any but feel sure that other members saw vast herds of them as soon as I was out of sight.

I did come across a chamois which was very carefully stalked in order to get to within two or three hundred metres for a photograph. Later in the week on the way down to Cogne was a fine specimen posing by the side of the road, causing traffic chaos as motorists stopped for a snap. The problem was then trying to take up a position which avoided all the spectators spoiling any chance of convincing friends that the shot was taken in the wild. Marmots were plentiful on the way up to the Vittoria Sella hut, often heard but not commonly seen.

Leaving route 10 near Pinas we joined route 10E that climbed upwards into our destination, the valley of flowers. Not for nothing had the valley been so named, vast areas of colour opened up before us. My companions had however another objective, a swim in the lovely waters of Lago Pontonnet close to Colle del Pontonnet. We returned to Lillaz by the same route.

Our visit to this pleasant part of Italy was all too short and a return should surely be pencilled in for return.

David Smith

Present:

Ken Aldred, Mick Borroff, Derek Bush
Albert Chapman, Paul Dover, Richard Dover
Marcia Godden, Mike Godden, David Hick,
John Lovett, Jack Short, David Smith
Andrew Luck (Guest) Ann Luck (Guest)
David Martindale,

Further detail of the fauna will appear in the next edition of the journal

OTHER MEETS

BRAEMAR 9-11 FEB

Photographic record by Michael Wood with brother Alan in view



LOW HALL GARTH - WORKING MEET 3 - 5 APRIL

Work Party

Ken Aldred (President)
Richard Kirby; Derek Barker (G); Albert Chapman;
Derek Clayton; Ian Crowther; Iain Gilmour; Mike
Godden; John Jenkin; Tom O'May; David Smith.

En Route to LHG I called on Margaret Driscoll, the widow of Denis a former Hut Secretary and warden. Despite having had a minor stroke last year, the day before she had booked to go to Uganda, she remains a remarkably resilient and positive lady many members will remember with affection.

Two of the team arrived on Monday to find the road from the ford flooded. One lake was 24 yards long and 8 inches deep in places. Initial work involved clearing the drain holes under the wall that had been block by the road repairers. Much raking and scraping filled most of the hazardous hollows, to improve the road.

The main work was to improve the car park. Inset slate marking lines defined the areas for the Trust cottage residents. (This gives them space for three cars in the middle of the area) Extending and levelling the upper part of the car park was a considerable improvement. The banking running along the riverside was heightened, seeded and all the dangerous stone were removed.

The area opposite the cottage was also improved providing a low wall for sitting out in the summer evenings. The area behind this wall seat was also seeded.

Another major improvement was to coax the water that floods down the track back where it belongs in the drain alongside.

The work in the interior of the hut was limited to spring-cleaning the kitchen and dormitory.

Richard and Iain provided the team with a series of excellent meals and appropriate coffee or tea breaks. There was even time off for short walks in the bright cool weather to enjoy the unique scenery. With many members on the 52 weeks holiday scheme the average of workers age was 71.2. There is much to be said for enhancing friendships whilst working together and in consequence an enjoyable time was had by all.

F D Smith



SKYE, GLEN BRITTLE MEMORIAL HUT 17-24 May



Jeff Ford
And
MacLeod's
Maidens



Duirinish

Wed 17th

En route to the Misty Isle, Mick dodged the clouds along the fine ridge between Gleouraich and Spidean Mialach high above the north side of Loch Quoich.

Meanwhile Alan and Angie Linford and Mike and Marcia Godden arrived in Portree. The Linfords were caravanning and the Goddens in a B&B. Mick, Albert, Jeff and David were hut based.

Thu 18th

With the Cuillin wreathed in cloud and blustery winds gusting outside the hut, Mick, Albert, Jeff and David elected for a 14 mile cliff top traverse beneath the clouds from Orbst to Ramasaig. This is an outstanding walk taking in the spectacular seascape along the South Duirinish coast via Idrigill Point and the three sea stacks of MacLeod's

Maidens, passing the Lorgasdal waterfall and others near Lorgill Bay. The past few days had seen a lot of rain on Skye so the walk from MacLeod's Maidens was wet underfoot in places with some challenging stream crossings!

Meanwhile the Linfords and Goddens took a drive round the north of the Island via Staffin, Quiraing, Duntuim, Uig, Carbost, Dunvegan, Bracadale and then to the Glen Brittle hut. The occupants were out on the hills and so a message was left to say we would call the next day.

Fri 19th

Jeff was itching to get to grips with the gabbro on the Ridge on his first visit to Skye and so an early start was made with Mick in what appeared to be clearing weather. A classic approach was made to Gars Bheinn and the traverse started towards the mist shrouded summits as the rain began. A sequence of showers were timed to just prevent the rock from drying out and slow progress was made along the ridge and out onto Sgurr Dubh Mor. A wet abseil was made into the TD gap where the damp and greasy ascent was spurned in favour of an easier traverse across the scree to Sgurr Sgumain and then on to the top of Alasdair. Sgurr Thearlaich (with a safety abseil) and Mhic Choinnich (via Collie's Ledge) soon followed, before running the An Stac screes to descend into Coire Lagan and back to GBMH, some 13.5 hours later. Albert and David had prepared a huge and splendid dinner, which was gratefully devoured.

The non-hut based party set off to the hamlet of Torvaig to ascend the cliffs of Bealach Cumhang to see if they could observe a sea eagle said to be in the vicinity. They did see a large bird of prey perched on a post at the cliff edge, but were unable to make a sure identification. A coastal path into Portree was taken and many wild flowers seen. After our evening meal another trip was taken down Glen Brittle to see what the GMBH team was up to

Sat 20th

Mick returned south and the better weather prompted Albert, Jeff and David to venture north to Trotternish to explore the various crags, lochans and pinnacles sculpted by the geological land slips in the Quiraing, before taking in the view across to the hills north of Applecross from the Flodigarry Hotel and finally meeting Ken back in the hut.

The Linfords and Goddens also went north again to the river Lealt to walk inland to Loch Cuithir, where diatomite was mined until the 1960s. The Trotternish ridge at this point is spectacular with the cliffs of Sgurr a' Mhadaidh rising vertically. An eagle was observed soaring along the ridge. They returned along the disused horse tramway, long since dismantled. The popular waterfalls where the Lealt tumbles into the sea were then visited before returning to Portree.

Sun 21st

Albert departed southwards but Jeff found a willing partner in Ron Chambers, the hut Warden, for a cold but bright ascent of the Inaccessible Pinnacle which found the main ridge lightly dusted with overnight snow. Progress was made along the ridge to Sgurr Na Banachdich and then down to Coir' an Eich to pick up the path leading to the Youth Hostel then onto GBMH.

David and Ken walked over the hills to the west of the hut to admire the snow topped Cuillin across the glen.

A walk around Quiraing was decided upon by the Portree-based contingent. They started from the high point on the road between Brogaig and Uig, and traversed the eastern flanks of Quiraing via a most appealing alpine style path. After gaining the ridge at the northern end, Sron Vourlinn was ascended to enjoy our lunches. Return to the car was by Meall na Suiramach. The views all round were stunning, but particularly across the sea to the Torridon Hills.

Mon 22nd

It had snowed again overnight, so a covering of snow remained on the Cuillin. Jeff and Ron planned to ascend Sgurr a' Mhadaidh via An Dorus and then retrace their route back to An Dorus and onto Sgurr a' Greadaidh. From the hut it seemed just a light covering but close to An Dorus deeper snow was encountered forcing a cautious scramble to the summit of Sgurr a' Mhadaidh, returning the same way.

David and Ken ventured out from Glen Brittle below the main ridge onto the headland overlooking Coruisk.

The Linfords and Goddens opted for a visit to Raasay to ascend Dun Caan, the highest point

on the island. Once again a disused railway was followed which turned out to be the most direct route to our objective with good views again with a cold north wind.

Tue 23rd

In view of the poor weather forecast for Tuesday, decisions were made by Ken, David, the Linfords and Goddens to return south. The forecast was unfortunately correct and conditions were very unsettled with driving rain and low cloud, keeping Jeff from the tops.

Wed 24th

Jeff endured another day of poor weather partly relieved by taking in the atmosphere of the Sligachan Hotel.

Thursday 25th

With the weather improved again, Jeff climbed Bla Bheinn from Loch Slapin via Coire Uaigneich, descending the SE ridge. The summit provided excellent views across to the northern Cuillins with Sgurr nan Gilleann and Am Basteir dominating the skyline. Jeff had ascended eight of the twelve Skye Munros generating a strong desire to return.

MB

Attending: Ken Aldred, Mick Borroff, Albert Chapman, Jeff Ford, Mike and Marcia Godden Alan and Angie Linford, David Smith

LADIES MEET, CASTLE DOUGLAS

9th to 11th June

After arriving at the Urr Valley Hotel early Friday afternoon, our organizer was met and provided information to enable four early birds to visit National Trust for Scotland's, Threave Gardens. This garden is well laid out and excellently kept. However the main aim was to complete a circular walk in Threave Estate and along the old railway line to a bird hide at Lamb Island. A good start to the weekend with a welcome drink on return. The evening meal was enjoyed by 32 members, wives and guests.

Saturday was extremely hot and hats and lashings of suncream were applied as the majority arrived at Balcary Bay Car Park for a superb, scenic walk made all the more interesting with the local knowledge of the organizer.



The 7 and a half kilometre walk was along the cliff tops and beaches for a large part before heading inland across farmland and through woodland.

A second shorter circular walk of 6 kilometre was on the itinerary for those who wished for more in the sweltering heat. This commenced at Auchencairn Bowling Club Car Park and took in a newly opened footpath (courtesy of the organizer's hard work with various local bodies) around the Bay to Torr Point. Once again, splendid views.

The meal that evening was excellent and we were offered a good choice of dishes as the previous evening. A convivial time was had by all.

After fond farewells on the Sunday morning some departed for Threave Gardens, some for home and six to meet the organizer to ascend Screel Hill (343m) This was achieved in good time as one guest had to be delivered back to Prestwick Airport for the flight back to London.

All agreed this was an excellent meet in a superb Hotel, in a fairly unknown corner of Scotland and looked forward to returning.



Marcia Godden.

In attendance;



Ken and Sheila Aldred
Ian and Dorothy Crowther
John and Janet Hemingway
Ian and Una Laing
Alan and Angie Linford
John and Betty Lovett
John and Pat Schofield
Bill and Juliette Todd

Alan and Madge Brown
Mike and Marcia Godden
Tim and Elaine Josephy
Cliff and Kathy Large
Bill and Brenda Lofthouse
Arthur and Barbara Salmon
David and Elspeth Smith
Roy and Elaine Wilson

ARRAN,
ALDERSYDE BUNKHOUSE AND
LAMLASH HARBOUR
16-18 June

Fri 16th

Graham, Arthur, Frank and David crossed over from Troon on Graham's yacht, mooring in Lamlash Bay, after a stroll on Holy Island. Mick drove up with Chris and Ken via the ferry at Ardrossan, which delivered us in good time for a pint in Lamlash.

Sat 17th

Mick ferried Graham, Arthur, Frank and David round to Sannox, where they walked up Glen Sannox to the Saddle, up Chir Mhor and on to flirt with the scramble on A'Chir before descending Glen Rosa to Brodick.

Meanwhile from the same starting point, Ken ventured up to the Saddle and returned to Sannox to take a bus back to Lamlash, while Mick and Chris did the clockwise round of Glen Sannox. The scramble on the north ridge of Cioch na h'Oighe was ascended, dodging the cloud up to North Goatfell and thence down to the Saddle, where a mountain biker was encountered fixing a brace of punctures. After Chir Mhor, the Witch's Step was negotiated and then onto Suidhe Fhearghas, before descending to the old mine workings at the foot of the glen and a welcome pint of Arran Ale in Catacol. The nautical contingent entertained the landlubbers that evening to a fine meal aboard the yacht, complete with harbour-fresh mackerel as an after-dinner savoury, which brought a splendid day to a close.

Sun 18th

The weather took a turn for worse, with low cloud to 500ft and steady rain. The yachtsmen slipped their moorings bound for Bute and a short walk. Mick, Chris and Ken visited a centre at Kilmory with interesting CCTV footage of a ground nesting hen harrier feeding her chicks. A circumnavigation of the island was made by car in the worsening rain sheeting in from the West.

MB

Attending:

Ken Aldred, Mick Borroff, Frank Wilkinson, David Hick, Chris Hilton, Arthur Salmon, Graham Salmon

BIG BIKE RIDE IN CUMBRIA
19-21 June 2006

The meet was based at the Catholes camping barn near Sedbergh (the same accommodation as for the Long Walk in 2005).

Four completed the 100 mile route, six did shorter rides (up to 60 miles) and three helped with the feeding stations.

The weather was kinder than forecast mainly dry with sunny spells. The exceptional feature was the strengthening wind which made difficult what should have been an easy homeward stage

Route- Sedbergh, Orton, Shap, Pooley Bridge, Greystoke, Newton Reigny, Penrith, Little Salkeld, Gamblesby, Appleby, Little Asby, Ravenstonedale, Sedbergh

Attending:

Ken Aldred, David Smith, David Handley, Richard Dover, Derek Collins, Graham Dootson, Tony Smythe, Roger Dix, Richard Gowing, Jeff Hooper, Richard Kirby, Ian Crowther, Derek Clayton, Tom O'May, Albert Chapman

PRESIDENT'S SOCIAL MEET
LOWSTERN June 30 - July 2nd

During the weather which in the old days we used to enjoy from June to September 12 members and some of their ladies gathered at Lowstern. Although it now seems to have become the fashion to detail the exploits of everybody it seems to be sufficient to the writer to say that all the usual walks from Lowstern were undertaken and that all pot holes were studiously avoided.

During the evening we all celebrated Richards 50 years of membership and his birthday and helped him eat his birthday cake.

The superb location of Lowstern, the weather and the food and wine brought by the Aldreds brought an end to a perfect day.

The feeling that anything else would be an anticlimax seemed to bring an end the meet on Saturday and only one or two stayed to clear up on Sunday.

We must thank Sheila for the provision of food and generally for the efficient organisation of the meet and the President who probably provided some assistance.

Harry Robinson

In attendance

Ken & Sheila Aldred, Richard & Elizabeth Gowing, John & Betty Lovett, Albert & Sammy Chapman, Jeff & Joan Hooper, Mike & Marcia Godden, Gordon & Fiona Humphreys, John Hemmingway, Davis Smith, Harry Robinson, Bill Lofthouse George Spenceley

LONG WALK - LYKE WAKE 7/9th July 2006

For this meet it was proposed to complete the Lyke Wake Walk as a 50th anniversary of the first time the Club organised this walk. Comparisons are said to be odious, but I found it interesting. On both occasions we were favoured by good weather and on both occasions we were successful in completing the walk without any serious incident. The first time I was assisted in completing the walk and this time I helped other people to complete the walk.

Prior to the first walk, Cliff Fielding and I took a weekend to explore the route by taking a bus to the top of Clay Bank on Friday evening and camping on Friday and Saturday nights so as to reach Robin Hoods Bay in time to catch a bus home. The route was defined by a compass bearing, due east where it made sense, straight across the heather. The only excitement I can remember was taking a compass bearing on the lump on the horizon which turned out to be a sheep. My exploration this time was short days out to check the existence and condition the path which crosses the moors and represents the permanent damage done to the moors by the feet of walkers.

Nineteen members completed the walk on the first club crossing and this time it was five. On the first crossing we did not meet other walkers but this time it coincided with the annual race and a party of about twenty children crossing in a group. The accommodation was different because we used the Youth Hostels at Osmotherely and Boggle Hole this time whereas the first time some of us slept on the floor of the bar of the Queen Catherine on

Friday and slept at the Ravenscar Hotel on the Saturday.

Most of the meet sat and drank beer in the Youth Hostel on Friday evening and went to bed early in a ten bunk room in which was almost too hot to sleep. Breakfast was provided about 3.00 am and everyone left the start point by 4.00 am. Now there are standing stones to mark the start and finish of the walk. The support party were concerned to meet one of the walkers some thirty minutes later who had only completed about half a mile. He didn't use a compass. As the day continued the first and last walkers got farther apart and used slightly different routes. There was a case of the disappearing cairn which led to a diversion. The total crossing times spread from about 12 to 16 hours which is good for 42 miles considering that all the participants were probably older than any who completed the walk in 1956. Some were definitely older even at the start.

The cyclist was not seen on the route but did sterling work providing transport and an interesting bottle of whisky. At Eller Beck another incapacitated member came to encourage us.

D.A.S

Attendees: Ken Aldred, Roger Dix, Ian Crowther Iain Gilmour, Derek Smithson, Mike Godden, Tim Josephy, Rory Newman, David Martindale

FAMILY CAVING MEET AND BBQ, LOWSTERN, 18-20 AUGUST

After a week of heavy rain, it was with "fingers crossed" that upwards of a dozen members and guests, ranging in age from 3 to 83, gathered at Lowstern for Alister's Grand Family Caving Meet and Barbecue. The grandchildren were soon at home exploring the Club House and its environs, and following Alister in a bat hunt.

Despite a lack of promise in Saturday morning's weather, a hopeful party, augmented by a senior potholer, drove to upper Chapel-le-Dale and walked across the fields to Great Douk. We dropped down into the gorge and waited while Alister, supported by Arthur, checked the water gushing out of Great Douk Cave, but no-one was surprised when they declared it a "no-go". Returning to the cars we drove round to Kingsdale to park below Yordas

Wood, and walked up the short distance to Yordas Cave. This, I learned in later conversation with the Ingleborough Cave guide, had been a show cave in Victorian times, before the latter was opened to the public. Visiting the cave with my granddaughter Megan brought back memories of my own first cave, at a similar age to her, a visit to Yordas with my father.

Helmets and lamps were fitted and checked, before the party followed Alister on a tour of the cave, with an impressive waterfall visible through a sort of doorway at the far end of the big main chamber, a short crawl to the water exit at the lower end of the cave, and a good mudslide to amuse the children under Alister's care. Evidence of recent high water was visible in the form of foam adhering a few feet up the cave walls.

With the weather deteriorating, there was little now to do but to return to Lowstern for a late lunch, finding the members of the forthcoming China expedition in conference. Later in the afternoon the meet participants gave up waiting for a break in the weather and walked into Clapham for a rather wet round of Alister's Treasure Hunt, completed with varying success by the 3 family teams.

Further members, guests and children had arrived as the barbecue was prepared, with a shelter cantilevered out from a Land Rover to protect the chefs and a bouncy castle set up in the wood. Sadly, it was too cold and wet to enjoy the meal outside as we had at the President's Meet a few weeks previous, however all of the 40 or so participants found room inside, with the children sat at the dining room table and the rest of us using the ample space of the Downham room, to enjoy the excellent barbecue and buffet provided by our caterers. The senior member present made his customary speech of thanks on our behalf to the meet leader and his caterers, and while pointing out to his guest that this was not a typical YRC meet, complemented the juniors on their exemplary behaviour and enthusiasm. A prize was then awarded to the winning team of the treasure hunt. With the children filled up and safely to bed, the evening continued till late in typical YRC social fashion.

Sunday morning brought a continuation of the same weather, so after a late breakfast and clear up of the hut the party dispersed, with eager anticipation of a repeat event in 2007.

At least one grandchild had not had enough of the caving, so a trip into White Scar was included before the journey home.

RG

Attending

Chris Renton, Joyce Renton, Alister Renton, Jane Renton, Arthur Salmon, Graham Salmon, Dennis Armstrong, Joan Armstrong, Peter Whitehead, Caroline Whitehead, Millie Whitehead, Beth Whitehead, Holly Whitehead, Richard Gowing, Elizabeth Gowing, Megan Eastwood, Mike Godden, Marcia Godden, Ken Aldred, Alan Brown, Madge Brown, John Hemmingway, Janet Hemmingway, George Spenceley, Alan Linford, Angie Linford, Ged Champion, Bev Champion, Aaron Champion, Imogen Champion, Chris Smith, Garry Smith, Adam Smith, Bruce Bensley, Eddie Edkins, Alan Fletcher, Albert Chapman, Sammy Chapman, John Lovett, Betty Lovett, John Whalley, Carol Whalley, Anne Luck (Guest), Andrew Luck (Guest)



LOWSTERN MAINTENANCE MEET 5 - 7 September

Team.

Ken Aldred, Albert Chapman, Ian Crowther, Mike Godden, Richard Gowing, John Jenkin, Richard Kirby, John Lovett, David Smith.

This midweek started with unpromising weather but by mid morning the sun arrived and out door activities eased. The idea of a mid week operation was a great success giving employment to an enthusiastic body of retired members. All manner of jobs were undertaken, dead trees were skilfully felled with the accuracy of Fred Dibner's chimney downing. Any wall inside the hut that showed any sign of marking was repainted. Ian Crowther was given the technical job of fitting a lock to the under stairs storage area such that it conforms to fire regulations.

The kitchen was blitzed, pan storage areas were lined to give easy cleaning and unnecessary items were binned. The Ha-ha was extended to make easy access for the mowing machine and the weeds on the parking area were treated to some of Mike Godden's secret chemical. A new wire net fencing was erected to keep out our neighbour's sheep and the area around the wood stack cleared of the offending metal junk that keeps mysteriously appearing. Much of the totally useless chipboard and similar items that is continually being left for the fire was burned outside.

Richard Kirby was put in charge of the catering needs, a job he performed to perfection. Our club has been indeed fortunate in having a succession of excellent hut wardens at Lowstern each leaving their tenure of office with a greatly improved facility.

Working together was deemed a great source of pleasure and friendship that is difficult to measure.

To sum up our warden John appeared to be quite satisfied with work that was done, but I am sure that all our members greatly appreciate the unstinting work John does at Lowstern week after week.

F D Smith

HARRY SPILSBURY MEMORIAL MEET Robertson Lamb Hut - 14 - 19 September

Friday dawned clear. The Lake District at its best and more like a summer's day. Would the fire have been lit if George Chambers had been well enough to attend?

Some members arrived late morning and set off for Raven Crag, others arrived early afternoon and promptly disappeared to exercise their legs and taste buds before the evening meal. Stickle Tarn was visited and a couple of Yorkshire dalesmen managed to find the ODG after a stroll up Stake Pass, then a left-hand-down-a-bit to Angle Tarn, Rossett Gill and finally arrived at the ODG in desperate need of refreshment. Meanwhile two others cycled up Mickleden and walked to Angle Tarn in reverse of the dalesmen. Two arrived after an excursion over Grizedale Pike having broken their journey north by overnighing at Lowstern.

The evening meal of corned beef hash, cheese and biscuits and an assortment of choice beers and wine were enjoyed by 21 members.



Saturday promised another fine sunny day, and after hearty breakfasts at 07.30 members headed for the hills and valleys as their desire took them. Gimmer was approached via Middle Fell Buttress with Herdwick Buttress and B Route completed in the best of conditions. Except, perhaps for the notorious Amen corner which was described as 'having a surface like a bar of soap'. One old timer remarking 'he always got the job because he was an outcrop climber'!

Surrounding tops attained were Crinkle Crag, Pike of Blisco, Harrison Stickle, Lingmoor Fell, Silver How, and other associated high places.



trousers to gain access to his cash, firmly secured by a recalcitrant zip which refused to open. Another sage offered Euros only to be met with a knowing smile.

There was, of course, some trekking down the valley and the catering staff took luncheon (sandwiches) at Skelwith Bridge. An Otter and a Grebe were seen on Great Langdale Beck and a Merlin patrolling Coledale Beck.

Thirty-one partook of the running buffet meal after which the Wayfarers President Elect said a few words in celebration of the Wayfarers Centenary Year and the long number of years that the joint meet has been held. It transpired the traditional buffet started in 1982 when the YRC president of the time asked if the joint clubs could dine together at RLH instead of assembling after dinner in separate huts. The Wayfarers response was the buffet, and it seems this format will suit our needs into the future. Much conversation took place before retiring to bed.

So pleasant were the overnight conditions that one stalwart enjoyed it outside on one of the benches. Such was his contentment he was sound asleep when one of the resident cooks bumbled past him at 0645 on Sunday morning. Needless to say he saw none of the shooting stars that crossed the heavens that night.

Sunday dawned damp with the threat of rain but many were destined for home and domestic chores. The climbers set off for Pavey Ark with great intentions for Crescent Slabs(S). Rain started as they geared up hoping for a short shower, but no luck so wandered up Crescent Climb in steady rain. Top part very pleasant and exposed for a Mod! Dried out at the hut before a long car journey home. Two set off for the tops and were to stay on until Tuesday to get the best from their journey from the South. They ascended Jacks Rake in dense cloud before traversing Harrison Stickle and Pike of Stickle to Stake Pass.

Things can get rather interesting when settling accounts for the weekend. One gent had to rip his

On Monday, after a car ride to Coniston, Weatherlam was accessed by the Long Crag Buttress scramble and then via Black Sails, Swirl How, Brim Fell, Dow Crag to return to Coniston via the Walna Scar track.

Rain threatened all day and finally arrived on the return to Coniston.

After clearing up on Tuesday the day was spent engaged in some technical and challenging cycling in Grizedale Forest.

Superb weather, stunning scenery, lasting friendship, all helped to make this a very enjoyable long weekend in this Wayfarers Centenary Year.





Attendees.

Wayfarers.

Steve Auty Alan Linford
 Peter Baker Harold Mellor
 Russ Bloor Colin Smith
 Dennis Davies Brian Turner
 Pete Dixon Dave Wood
 Mike Godden Jon Jacob
 Mike Gee Nigel Musgrove
 Bob Hughes

Yorkshire Ramblers.

Ken Aldred John Lovett
 Alan Brown Harry Robinson
 Roy Denney John Schofield
 Paul Dover David Smith
 Richard Dover Derek Smithson
 Jeff Hooper George Spenceley
 John Jenkin Martyn Trsaler
 David Large David Whittles (G)



NEWTONMORE 6-8 October

The aspirations of members arriving early on Friday were dampened by rivers in flood and foul conditions even for the lesser Corbetts. Those who visited the RSPB reserve at Insh were rewarded with dry conditions in the hide to observe a dog fox, impervious to the rain, having his nap disturbed by the antics of crows. Must have been full of rabbit for during this siesta a rabbit grazed with out fear with yards on the other side of the bush. Hen and Marsh Harriers, Roe deer and a very wet, disconsolate looking Buzzard maintained interest until dusk called a halt.

The campers from Spey Bridge joined the high livers in the Highland Hotel Friday evening hatching plan A or B or C for Saturday which, as it happens, yielded a fine dawn.

Three YRC members following the traditional pattern of Scottish meets and camped at Newtonmore, forgoing the luxury of a hotel house party were the only group to achieve plan A. David Hick, Alan Kay, and Iain Gilmour camped at the Spey Bridge site just off the A9, and paid £5 for a night of damp tranquillity.

On Saturday all three drove to Moy Bridge, Loch Laggan, and trekked in the 5.5 miles to the start of the climb up Geal Charn 1132 metres.

The bealach between the two Munros, Geal Charn and Aonach Beag, is already over 3000 feet, a useful way of joining the ridge. We ascended to the 3,700 feet summit of Geal Charn, on the edge of a surprisingly extensive high meadow. In a cold brisk wind we took a compass course to the unseen top Sgor Iutharn (unmarked on map 42 at reference 490743), eventually descending a slippery few hundred feet until the top appeared out of the mist. This remote top is the summit of a very sporting steep ridge overlooking Culra bothy. We retraced our steps to complete a 17 mile day in 9 hours. (Iain Gilmour).

Derek Smithson headed into Coire Adair only to be stopped by gale force winds at Lochan a'Choire, opted for plan C and the safety of the valley. Not far north of the Sgor Iutharn group!

Richard Gowing reached the shoulder of Geal Charn 926 m (Monadhliath) only to be stopped on the shoulder, too windy even if he had wipers on his spectacles. Plan B a return by Lochan An Choire, Piper's Burn and Glen Markie.

The President elect group abandoned plan A (Allt Mor) for plan B, Cairngorm and Lurchers Crag, a mistake as having sheltered behind the summit building in gale force wind abandoned the route and headed direct down to the railway station. Finished the day, in shirt sleeve order, with a section of the Badenoch Trail.

On the tops, again misted spectacles a problem for Marcia on difficult ground.

The Presidential party completed about 5 sections of the Wildcat Trail, a circular walk around Newtonmore with varied scenery ranging from the lower slopes of Monadhlaith to the River Spey. Post walk declared as Plan A. John and Janet Hemingway, reaching the end of two weeks in the Highlands had a pleasant walk along General Wades road from Garva Bridge. Made their way home on Sunday. John in fine fettle.

Sunday highlighted the diversity of the YRC. Alan Kay had an enjoyable day, his words, sloshing for 2 hours through bog to the summit of Geal Charn 926m. Lower slopes to the SW ridge defended by a moat of bog and the last 500 feet in thick mist. Must have 6th sense as the hill had eluded him on three previous visits to the area.

Iain and Dave went to their yacht, near Oban to bring it alongside and make it ready for Rob Ibberson.

The rest went to Alpine gardens in the sunshine of Pitlochry a fitting end to the meet.

A first visit was paid to the Ptarmigan restaurant above Coire Cas, Not recommended. Need to ring the bell at the walkers access door, sign-in, leave sacks, nice coffee, call an attendant to get out, not forgetting to be signed out. Perhaps in the summer but not in the winter.

Attending

Ken and Sheila Aldred, Iain Gilmour, David Hick
Mike and Marcia Godden, Alan Kay,
Richard and Elizabeth Gowing,
John and Janet Hemingway,
Cliff and Kath Large, Derek Smithson.,
Alan and Angie Linford.

WAL

FUTURE MEETS

Your committee is developing guidelines for the programme of meets and invites your comment. We have in the past, perhaps been too attached to the previous pattern of meets in timing and locations. It is thought the meets diary should be a rolling programme, reviewed annually, but working two years ahead. This would mean that when a president-elect is agreed he will have the opportunity to discuss how he would like to see the programme develop in good time for his period in office.

It has been suggested that we aim for a 'core' programme for active members and guests/potential recruits. The target should be about 10 meets each year with at least two being overseas (including one Alpine), two in Scotland and two in new locations in Great Britain each year.

Going away from traditional areas involves often having to consider commercial huts or hostels and the Club will have to be prepared to pay or under-write advance hut bookings for such core meets. We need to be sure members agree with these aspirations as meets in the past away from the classic areas have sometimes been poorly supported.

We still favour as many meets as possible in huts, with some group catering. The programme must include some more adventurous ones with demanding mountaineering, climbing and caving objectives that may be beyond the capabilities of some members, but we must encourage others to attend to gain in experience, to provide support or to engage in parallel activities.

Small groups of members will arrange their own trips using the club network, and this has value in promoting the Club but whilst these could be thrown open to the wider membership and be reported on in the journal if appropriate, they would not normally be included in the core list and Club calendar.

There is an obvious demand for some open meets for members whose partners want to join them on the hills or underground, and for occasional social and family meets but the thought is the number must be kept in proportion; at perhaps no more than one third of the full list. Dates for any non-core meets should be set after the core programme is in place.

A meets sub committee will make suggestions within these general guidelines and will fine tune the arrangements. By working further in advance on the meets programme, a complete meets list for the following year should be able to be approved by the Committee in the summer, and be available to members by the AGM.

RETIRING PRESIDENT

When I was approached by Alan Kay and invited to become your President I was, of course, very flattered and appreciated the honour. I wasn't sure, however, how I came to be selected. Tales of the colour of the smoke issuing from the Lowstern chimney seemed far fetched but many members appeared to know less about the procedure than I did. I've now explained it to the present committee and it was agreed that this explanation be given to the AGM. As President, I gave the six immediate past presidents an alphabetical list of six members who I thought should be considered for the next presidency. After considering their replies I invited Mike Godden to be our next President. It has recently been suggested that the procedure for selecting the President should be changed. I disagree with this but this question and others such as having a committee chairman as well as a president will be dealt with during the coming months.

The Committee has recently been spending some time on a number of issues such as this which will need further involvement of members.

Some years ago one of our Kindred Clubs had a special general meeting to consider the question of admitting women into the club. For one hour conflicting views were put, some for, some against. However, it was a very civilised meeting with no animosity, no one threatened to leave the club, to form a breakaway club or to threaten self destruction. At the end of the hour a vote was taken (the motion was lost), and was accepted with good grace. I hope that if any proposals are put to a YRC meeting in the future that we can consider them in the same spirit without rancour.

Over the years I have enjoyed a number of our open Alpine meets, the closed Scottish camping meets and various ones in all sorts of areas and with a variety of accommodation, but the meet which for me epitomises the YRC is the Low Hall Garth Winter meet. When we had snow, this meet for me stood for the best representation of the club on the hills. I am not forgetting the potholing meets but as I never did much caving it was LHG which was the big attraction.

I sometimes went out with Stanley, often arriving back late at the cottage, (Stanley always knew a short cut back).

We would arrive in the dark to the welcoming lights and usually muggy atmosphere, to be met with standing room only. It was debatable as to whether we were offered a pot of tea or a can of beer first; a younger member sat near the fire would get up and offer us a seat.

In view of some letters and discussions taking place on recent meets I have asked myself the question, "would these meets have been improved if ladies had been present? ". The answer must be a resounding no. In fact, I cannot see how the meets could have been run with a mixed group.

We are on the verge of obtaining a twenty five year lease on the cottage. As I look around the room it is obvious that I am not the only member here who would find it difficult to persuade my GP to issue me with a twenty five year MOT. The point of this is that even if we get no new members and the membership slowly falls there will still be a Low Hall Garth and a Yorkshire Ramblers' Club after I pass away. We don't need any changes. This may appear selfish but if you agree with this then you will reject any move to change the rules of the club to admit women. However, some of you may look around at our younger members, consider your children or grandchildren or even consider some of the people whom we have never met but who, in the future, could get as much pleasure from their membership as we have had in the past. Perhaps in this context the long term future of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club is more important than the relatively short personal enjoyment we may have. In that case you may find that there is some merit in a proposed change. The decision will be yours gentlemen.

If you look at our rule book you will notice that there is no reference to the proportion of a vote for that vote to be carried. I had assumed that matters were decided on a straight majority. There is now a suggestion that matters should be weighted to say, 60/40 before rules could be changed or new rules added.



A further issue occupying the committee over the next year will be the changes in legislation; fire, health and safety, children at risk, all having a bearing on the responsibilities of members. A lot of work has already been done. We have studied documents from the BMC and other clubs and Mike Hartland has given very valuable advice. Much remains to be done.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have been of great help during the past two years. The meet organisers and leaders for providing a varied range of activities, often involving considerable organisation, and the committee for taking charge and responsibility for much of the work necessary for running a successful club. Our Journal and our two cottages attract very favourable comments thanks to the committee members and the band of helpers who contribute considerable physical efforts throughout the year.

Mike Godden as President Elect has given me full support throughout the last two years. I hope that you will give him all your support during the next two years.

Ken

THE NEW PRESIDENT.



Not being a very accomplished climber and mountaineer led me to believe I was secure from any possibility of being asked to be President, and when invited to be the next President early this year I was dumb-founded, fearful, yet greatly honoured.

I'm sure your Committee will succeed in overcoming any obstacles which may be present.

Although the provision of a good meets list to stimulate members attendance and attract new ones is foremost in my mind; we have two additional open meets in 2007 which have arisen as a result of two mixed membership kindred clubs requesting joint meets.

This has caused some speculation regarding mixed membership, and a set of guide lines to safeguard core meets and provide a balance of venues over a 2 year time scale is being discussed by your Committee.

The lease for LHG had still not been signed but is assured for 25 years from September 2005. Discussion with the National Trust regarding washroom improvements, noise insulation, and new legal requirements are well advanced.

However, within the context of "The Future of the Club", the work of the past 2 years will continue in order to resolve issues in accordance with members' wishes, and with consideration and concern for the Club's future. Matters which are currently under consideration are:-

Improving communication with members about Club business.

Meets list guide lines.

Attracting new members.

Mixed membership.

Increasing the Club's profile.

The role of President.

The election of Presidents.

Health and Safety legal requirements.

Child Protection.

All these matters need to be dealt with quickly but without undue haste, so that balanced judgements are made and the membership kept informed.

The above tasks may seem onerous, but I am sure the best endeavours of myself and your committee will be successful.

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Mike Godden.

CLUB PROCEEDINGS

The 2006 Meets were

6 - 8 Jan	Low Hall Garth
9 - 12 Feb	Breamar
3 - 5 Mar	Rhyd Ddu, N Wales
4 - 6 Mar	Low Hall Garth
21 - 23 Apr	Coniston
17 - 24 May	Glen Brittle
9 - 11 Jun	Castle Douglas
30 - 2 Jul	Lowstern
7 - 15 Jul	Grand Paradiso
7 - 9 July	North York's' Moor
22 - 12 Aug	High Sierra
18- 20 Aug	Lowstern
5 - 7 Sep	Lowstern
15 - 17 Sep	Lakes RLH (Joint Meet)
6 - 8 Oct	Newtonmore
18-19 Nov	Whoop Hall
8 - 10 Dec	Lowstern

This must be the year that summer returned. June, July and August were quite exceptional, wall-to-wall sunshine with the odd shower to keep the dust down. September and October weather was also considerably better than average.

However the first meet at LHG weather was normal, cold, rain with hard snow and ice on the tops, though insufficient for gully climbing. Frank Platt and Alan Wood performed to their high standard in the kitchen again. Almost all our neighbouring peaks were ascended during the weekend.

A return to the Parish Hall in Braemar for the now traditional winter Scottish meet was as expected well attended. Weather can only be described as wonderful; clear skies and sunshine. Activity was at its highest, peaks climbed included the inevitable and superb Lochnagar. But the list included more remote tops like Ben Avon and neighbour. There was Mountain Biking, Back-packing, Snow & Ice climbing, Munro bagging and a sighting of two mountain hares boxing at close range. It was indeed a truly memorable meet.

Ryd Ddu came next; again the weather was glorious once members arrived there. The snow blocked road made an exciting start to the weekend. Some failed to arrive. It was a real winter meet; deep snow and ice glazed rock. The peaks in the immediate area were climbed.

Catering was better than the usual high standard with venison casserole. It must be a first for a YRC meet. On Sunday the climbers were off to the Tremadog rocks whilst others took in Hebog and the Glyders. It was yet another excellent meet.

A useful working party at LHG pleased our tireless warden in early April and this was followed by a return two weeks later to the well-appointed MAM hut in Coniston. Some of our local mountains were tackled from the Coniston side. The ability of a sailing party on Coniston Water was tested when the tiller snapped. Meet organiser Roy Pomfret reintroduced an old YRC custom of providing early morning tea to members still in bed.

Castle Douglas proved to be a good choice for the Ladies Weekend. Superb coastal walks, an excellent hotel, perfect weather and good company ensured success. A return was called for.

The second Presidents meet in June was again a great success; this year celebrating the 1956 intake. Only Richard Gowing was able to represent the twelve members who joined that year. There were messages from Australia & Scotland. The meet was well attended and enjoyed.

The Alps meet was located in the beautiful and unspoiled Valnontey valley in Aosta. Prime target, the Grand Paradiso the only 4000ft mountain entirely in Italy. Mission accomplished.

This was not all; the area is a delight with wonderful walks through country not unlike Scotland but without midges and with flowers in profusion; buildings were not unlike those in old Lakeland. The people were friendly the weather was ideal; one could not fail to enjoy the experience.

Another excellent meet with good climbing, backpacking and remote camping in the High Sierra where the crystal clear air and blue skies that have been the hallmark of that beautiful part of California. Many great routes accomplished in the Yosemite Valley during July/August. The climbs included Snake Route on Half Dome and a wonderful fifteen-hour day on the half-mile traverse of Matthes Crest.

A barbecue at Lowstern was enjoyed and very well attended in August. It was very much a family affair with three generations attending.

Several of our guests took the opportunity of descending and exploring Gaping Gill, courtesy of our friends of the Craven Pothole Club using their winch.

The mid-week working party at Lowstern at the beginning of September was deemed to be a great success by the hut warden. It was a mixture of friendship, fun, and fatigue. It is amazing to witness the hidden skills that our members displayed when so many different types of job were tackled and accomplished.

The Spillsbury memorial meet at RLH was as usual well attended. Almost equal numbers from each club. Chefs, Alan Linford & Mike Godden performed their task admirably. The weather performed equally well on the Saturday to make it a vintage meet. Sunday was somewhat dampish. It was reported that some of the climbs are not what they used to be; It was reported that Amen corner on Gimmer's B route is now like climbing a bar of soap.

Newton Moor was the location for the October meet based on The Highlander Hotel with three members camping. One group did a circular walk round Newtonmore, the more adventurous went over to Monadh Liath.

The Christmas meet this year was based at Lowstern; mine host was our immediate Past President Ken Aldred. Our new Vice President took on the Friday evening catering.

The groups of members from the Leeds or Clapham areas meet regularly on Thursday or Tuesday have enjoyed some remarkable summer weather.

These activities were not however limited to the summer months. All manner of subjects are aired and discussed.

All members and their friends are welcome.

General meeting

The 115th Annual Meeting was again held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on 18th November 2006

The following members were elected to their roles for the year 2006 - 2007.

President; F M Godden
Vice President; R A Kirby
Hon. Secretary; R G Humphreys
Hon. Treasurer; G A Salmon
Hon Editor; R J Denney
Hon. Librarian; A R Chapman
Archivist; W N Todd
Huts Secretary; R G Josephy
Hut Wardens:
Low Hall Garth: I F D Gilmour
Lowstern: J Lovett
Hon Auditor; C D Bush
Committee:

MBJ Borroff; D J Handley; W R Ibberson;
C G 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 minutes of the 2005 AGM, Treasurers Accounts and reports from the Huts Secretary, Hut Wardens, Librarian, Editor, Officers and BMC areas were again provide to all members prior to the meeting. All of them receiving approval of the meeting. A good discussion on the future of our Club followed with interesting comments and suggestions from a wide age range of members.

Annual Dinner

The 93rd Annual Dinner followed in the hotel. Our retiring President, Ken Aldred took the chair. A double Everest climber, Stuart Peacock from our kindred club, the Wayfarers' Club was our Chief Guest.

This modest young man clearly has great ability. One of his ascents was by the celebrated Mallory/Irvine route. Vice President Dick Turnbull, represented the Alpine Club, Our old friend Chris Ambler represented the Grit stone Club, Don Lee came from the Fell & Rock and Jane Renton

represented our new Kindred club, The Wolverhampton Mountaineering Club.

Unfortunately Chris Kenny, the President of the Wayfarers' Club was ill and sent his apologies.

The President proposed the loyal toast followed by the Absent Friends toast at the appropriate time. Later he introduced our Chief Guest. Having had most of the Everest team it was most interesting to have a first hand account of a summiteer of that remarkable mountain.

Gordon Humphreys proposed the health of our Kindred Clubs and our guests to which Chris Ambler most adequately replied.

2006 Membership

115 Ordinary Members
68 Life Members
5 Honorary/Life Members
1 Honorary Member
189 Total memberships.

New Life Member - David Atherton

Three new members were elected.

Nick Beal from Daventry

John Brown from Wellingborough

Aaron Oakes from Lanchester

We welcome them and look forward to meeting them on our meets.

There were no resignations and no deaths.

Interestingly we now have 25 more members now than we had fifty years ago, though perhaps some are a little older.

We look forward next year to John Godley completing 70 years membership already the longest serving member.

F D Smith



Attendance at the Dinner

Aldred Ken
Ambler Chris (Gritstone Club)
Armstrong Dennis
Borroff Mick
Bridge Adrian
Brown Alan
Burfitt George
Bush Derek
Campion Ged
Casperson John
Chapman Albert
Chapman Garry (Guest)
Chapman Iain
Crellin Charles (Guest)
Crowther Robert
Dix Roger
Dix Stuart
Dover Paul
Duxbury Andrew
Edkins Eddie
Farrar John
Fitzhugh Chris (Guest)
Gamble David
Gilmour Iain
Godden Mike

Gowing Richard
Handley David
Hawkins Colin (Guest)
Hemingway John
Hick David
Holmes David
Hooper Jeff
Humphreys Gordon
Humphreys Howard
Humphreys Jason
Ibberson Rob
Jenkin John
Josephy Tim
Josephy Richard
Kenny Chris (Wayfarers Club)
Kinder Mike
Kirby Richard
Large Cliff
Large David
Laughton David
Linford Alan
Lofthouse Bill
Lofthouse Tim
Lomas Harvey
Lovett John

Mackay Don
Mackay Duncan
Moss Peter
Peacock Shaun (Chief Guest)
Penny Tony
Postill George
Renton Alister
Renton Chris
Renton Jane (Wolver'ton MC)
Richardson Paul (Guest)
Robinson Harry
Rusher Jim
Salmon Arthur
Salmon Graham
Salmon Trevor
Smith Bill (Fell & Rock CC)
Smith David
Smith Michael
Spenceley George
Todd Bill
Trasler Martin
Turnbull Dick (Alpine Club)
Wells Andy (Guest)
Whalley John
Wilkinson Frank

USEFUL WEB SITES

AA	theaa.com	National Cycle Network	sustrans.org.uk
Access Land CSS & ESAS	countrywalks.defra.gov.uk	National ExpressNational Parks	gobycoach.comcnp.org.uk
Access land in England	countrysideaccess.gov.uk	National Trails	nationaltrail.co.uk
Access land in Scotland	outdooraccess-scotland.com	National Trust	nationaltrust.org.uk
Alpine Club	alpine-club.org.uk	National Trust for Scotland	nts.org.uk
Amtrak rail travel	amtrak.com	North York Moors National Park	moors.uk.net
Bowline Club	bowline.f9.co.uk	Northumberland National Park	nnpa.org.uk
Brecon Becons National Park	breconbecon.org	Oread Mountaineering Club	oread.co.uk
British Orienteering Federation	britishorienteering.org.uk	Peak District National Park	peakdistrict.org
British Waterways	britishwaterways.co.uk	Pub guide (RJD)	charnwood.me.uk
Cairngorm Club	cairngormclub.org.uk	Public transport information.	pti.org.uk
Caledonian Macbrayne ferries	calmac.co.uk	Public transport information.	traveline.org.uk
Carlisle Mountaineering Club	carlislemc.co.uk	R.S.P.B.	rspb.org.uk
Coast to coast walk	coast2coast.co.uk	RAC	rac.co.uk
Countryside Agency	countryside.gov.uk	Rail enquiries	nationalrail.co.uk
Countryside Council for Wales	ccw.gov.uk	Ramblers Association	ramblers.org.uk
Cyclist Touring Club	ctc.org.uk	Royal Geographical Society	rgs.org
Duke of Edinburgh Awards	theaward.org	Scotlands National Heritage	snh.org.uk
English Heritage	english-heritage.org.uk	Scottish avalanche forecasts	sais.gov.uk
English Nature	english-nature.org.uk	Scottish Mountaineering Council	mountaineering-scotland.org
Europe route planning	theaa.com/travelwatch/planner	Ski Club of Great Britain	ukskiclub.co.uk
Fell & Rock Club	frcc.co.uk	Snowdonia National Park	eryri-npa.gov.uk
Fell Runners Association	fellrunner.org.uk	Southern Uplands way	dumgal.gov.uk/southernuplandway
Foreign & Colonial Office	fco.gov.uk	Speyside Way	speysideway.org
Forestry Commission	forestry.gov.uk	Summits information	peakware.com
Fylde Mountaineering Club	fyldemc.org.uk	The Climbers Club	climbers-club.co.uk
Grampian Club	grampianclub.org	Translation service	freetranslation.com
Greyhound Buses	greyhound.com	Travel guide- Lonely Planet	lonelyplanet.com
Gritstone Club	gritstoneclub.org.uk	Travel guide- Rough	roughguides.com
Guides	lonelyplanet.com	Traverse Holidays in Pyrenees	traverseholidays.co.uk
Himalayan Kingdoms - trekking	himalayankingdoms.com	Trek America (and OZ/NZ)	trekamerica.com
Historic Houses Association	hha.org.uk	Visitor information - Australia	australia.com
Historic Scotland	historic-scotland.gov.uk	Visitor information - Canada	keepexploring.ca/travelcanada
John Muir Trust	jmt.org	Visitor information - New Zealand	purenz.com
K E Adventure - trekking	keadventure.com	Visitor information - USA	visitusa.org.uk
Locations and routes	multimap.com	Walking in Scotland	walkingwild.com
Long Distance Walkers Assoc.	ldwa.org.uk	Walking in South West	cornwall-devon.com
Maps & books	cordee.co.uk	Walking in the Lakes	lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk
Maps & books	stanfords.co.uk	Weather BBC	bbc.co.uk/weather
Maps & books	Themapshop.co.uk	Weather forecasts	accuweather.com
Maps	ordnancesurvey.co.uk	West Highland way	west-highland-way.co.uk
Maps	harveymaps.co.uk	Wild life trusts	wildlifetrusts.org
Medical advice	high-altitude-medicine.com	Wolverhampton M'nt'neering Club	wolverhamptonmc.co.uk
Meteorolgical Office	meto.gov.uk	Woodland trust	woodland-trust.org
Michelin Guides	viamichelin.com	World Health Organisation	who.int/en/
Midland Assoc. of Mountaineers	themam.co.uk	Yorkshire Dales National Park	yorkshiredales.org
Mount Everest Foundation	mef.org.uk	Youth Hostels Association	yha.org.uk
Mountain Biking	trailquest.co.uk		
Mountain Heritage Trust	thebmc.co.uk/mht		
Mountain Rescue Council	mountain.rescue.org.uk		
Mountaineering Council Scotland	mountaineering-scotland.org.uk		

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 directly on to the clothing.

The range includes tee-shirts, sweatshirts, polo shirts, fleece jackets of several grades and designs, knitted jumpers, cagoules and parkas. There is a full range of sizes in a wide range of colours.

We keep in stock a sample range of stock and also keep embroidered cloth badges to sew onto your own items.

Discuss your requirements by contacting Rob Ibberson 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.

YRC

www.yrc.org.uk

Yorkshire Ramblers Club



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The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily
those of the YRC or its Officers.

The YRC Journal is published twice a year and is free to members
and certain kindred clubs.

First published July 1899

Previous series called the 'Yorkshire Rambler'

It is printed by Alfred Willday & Son Ltd, Unit 1, Dunns Lane, Leicester LE3 5LX - 0116 251 8478