

YRC JOURNAL

The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

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**MOUNT BAUME
SOUTH GEORGIA
PHOTO GEORGE SPENCELEY**



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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YORKSHIRE ROCK

THE EARLY DAYS

Having looked at the early years of caving in the Club in the last journal it seems timely to consider the development of climbing in our original heartland and I am indebted to the reminiscences of Bill Todd. This material is a précis of an article he provided published in 'Loose Scree'

He is looking back to a time when outcrop climbing was looked down on by traditional mountaineers, like crag climbing seventy years before. Homeland crags, even Lakeland or Welsh, were regarded only as useful training for the Alps. "Rock gymnast" was a term of opprobrium. Contrast that with today when competitive gymnastics are done on artificial walls and are recognised by the mountaineering establishment.

His following comments are meant to give, to those interested, some idea of what happened along the way, when he assures us that a lot of fun was enjoyed by everybody concerned.

Bill first came into contact with Yorkshire rock in late 1955, "I had got talking with a climber in the ODG. He was a lad called Richard Weston who lived in Ilkley and knew his way about Yorkshire. I had enjoyed an upbringing in Lancaster followed by two years in Sussex. I knew about the three peaks because, if you had a bike, Ingleton was a good place to walk from. I had also, of course, read about Almscliffe in Frank Smythe's book 'Climbs and Ski Runs' but it was still only a name.

Richard and I fixed a meeting at 'Cow and Calf' for the following weekend. The climbs on the Quarry and the Cow were too much for us so we walked over to Rocky Valley and approached the base of Stiction Chimney which some climbers from Hull were busy tackling. A big surprise to me was that they had a guide book, 'Kinder, Roches and Northern Areas'. It described this little bit of a climb as if it was on a proper mountain crag like Gimmer or the Napes.

What an eye opener! All I had to do to satisfy my need for climbing was to buy a copy, stay with Richard, and go up through the grades and become a proper climber in due course.

Incidentally, I should remind people that moulded rubber soles were in their infancy; they were referred to as 'vibrams', though the Uskide company brought out a British version which was called 'commando'. Most climbers wore nails in those days; either saw-edged tricounis, really an ice nail, or clinkers which were supposed to be mouldable to the roughness of the rock. We novices were warned about the slipperiness of vibrams on wet or lichened rock and I remember people who determined to learn to climb in nails as a matter of conscience or honour. I also remember my surprise when my leader used vibrams on a snowy Gowder Crag during the 1962/3 winter. Of course anyone who climbed in nails these days would rightly be a figure of scorn and hissing as a source of crag destruction and noise pollution.

I soon bought a guide book and was delighted to find lots of routes on crags I had never heard of that I might be able to do. Crookrise Crag was new to me and I remember gaily leading Traverse and Crack in my clinker nails and finding it steep and strenuous but reasonably well provided with holds. But it wasn't the cake walk I had expected from the guide book grade of 'moderate'. The guide had been written by a man called Sydney Waterfall and when I had the pleasure of meeting him over forty years later, and tackled him about the undergrading, he just laughed and claimed "We used to do those climbs after Sunday School." It was not clear if he was claiming Divine sanction for his choice of grade. End Slab routes I and 3 were also graded moderate in that 1951 guide. I see that I altered them to V. Diff. in my copy. Just as a matter of interest I see that in the 1998 Guide, Route I is graded V.Diff. and Route 3 Severe. I seem to remember that the first ten feet of Route One, in nails, were harder than anything on Route Three.

But in spite of Yorkshire rock being treated as a poor relation of Kinder and Roches there was plenty to go at in this 1951 book. Crookrise and Rylstone boasted fifty routes between them. Ilkley and Almscliffe had seventy three and fifty respectively and Widdop thirty eight. Simon's Seat entered a creditable seventeen, and a few minor crags which are only now approaching maturity were mentioned like Rolling Gate, Deer Gallows, Eastby and Hugencroft.

I should also mention that access was difficult in the fifties. A permit was required for Simon's

Seat and on Crookrise I remember being politely informed by a gamekeeper that there was no public access.

There was nothing in the guidebook about limestone of course, though some climbing had been done, climbers being the awkward beggars they are. But general opinion regarded it as something very unpleasant, loose and grassy and only remotely safe if climbed with plenty of piton protection and only really useful as a means of learning what used to be called artificial climbing. This was recognised as a skill to be applied abroad where climbers had been using pitons and etriers since the 1930s.

Among the climbs done on limestone before 1955 were the South Gully of Kilnsey Crag, climbed in 1947 by Arthur Dolphin, John Cook and Des Birch. I heard that one of them described it as "Open air pot-holing." Five years later Joe Brown and Ron Moseley ascended the first pitches of Direttissima and Original Route. The waterfall pitch of Hull Pot had been climbed and the West Face of Gordale Scar. A most significant ascent was that of the Central Gully of Norber Scar in 1948 by Arthur Tallon and Dennis Barker. They didn't do it as training for the Alps or to learn piton climbing but simply because it looked like good fun.

"Surely, the only good reason to go climbing at all."

Bill fondly remembers his early days with the YMC starting with an early exploit on Laddow Rocks with Allan Austin and Brian Evans. "Allan and Brian were leading members of the group of four who, at that time, all wore crimson jerseys. The other two were Doug Verity and Brian Fuller. I had met Fuller when walking over to Rocky Valley at Ilkley one evening with Richard Weston. My earliest memory of Doug Verity is also at Ilkley but in very different weather. It was raining heavens hard one Sunday morning when I turned up at the YMC hut. At Charlie Salisbury's suggestion Doug took me climbing and we did three severes, Three Slabs, Flake Climb and Spreadeagle.

Charlie was Vice President of the YMC and, with his record of pre-war achievement with Winston Farrer, was the undisputed elder statesman. His enthusiasm was infectious and his skill on rock was phenomenal, particularly on balance climbs. The limestone slabs at Haw Bank were very suited to Charlie's style but his speciality at Ilkley was to

solo Bogey Wall. In a flurry of arms and legs he would reach the top while most people were struggling with the first move. Walking up Rocky Valley with the red jerseys one day we were in time to see Charlie do Bogey Wall. Brian Evans promptly repeated it thus saving the honour of the red jerseys. One of them muttered as we resumed our walk "Well, one of us did it".

Other active members included Ron Tyler, who, usually with his wife, Hilda, would tackle most things - often at Hilda's prompting. One of our most popular members, his cheerful disposition and broad Yorkshire accent made every meet a laugh. Another active husband and wife team was Ashley and Audrey Petts. In many ways the YMC was a family club. The Bevington twins were regular attendees at Ilkley and Almscliffe meets and always enjoyed climbing at their own standard even if it was only practising rope work on the Calf. Tony and Clive Burnett were active members. On one Crookrise meet Tony and I did climbs totalling nearly 300 feet. Doug Verity's brother Wilf was also active and mostly climbed with Brian (Tiger) Smith.

We had our share of the famous and soon to be famous. The late, great, Ian Clough used to come on meets with Geoff Grandison, and Ron Hirst was Deputy Leader of the Yorkshire Himalayan Expedition in 1957 and, in 1958, partnered Ron Hields on the Direttissima on Kilnsey Crag. Other top grade leaders were Harold Barraclough, George Steele, Derek Farley and Neville Drasdo.

Guide books of the time give an indication of the scope of that generation of rock men. Part one of this survey mentioned the 1951 'Kinder, Roches and Northern Areas' Guide Book which included in its 'Northern Areas' section twelve Yorkshire crags plus Cadshaw and Blackstone Edge. These two, not being in Yorkshire, were omitted from what became the first book to deal exclusively with climbs in Yorkshire. This was 'Climbs on Gritstone Volume 5 West Yorkshire Area' and was edited by Allan Allsop and Brian Evans. I suspect that Brian had contributed most as Allan's knowledge applied more to the western side. This little green book mentioned 27 crags. Five of them rated only a mention such as "climbs have been done here" but the number of routes described on the other 22 is 465, nearly double the number of routes on the Yorkshire section of the previous guide. It was dated 1957.

This was quite a landmark for Yorkshire climbers and it is instructive to compare the numbers of climbs described in 1951 and 1958. On Almscliffe only four new climbs seem to have been done in those seven years though a few may have been deleted from the earlier guide to make room for better things. Ilkley had nearly a 50% increase from 73 to 108, Crookrise did well with a lift from 28 to 54, but its neighbour, Rylstone, only rose by 10 from 21 to 31. Widdop added 4 to its 38 in the 1951 guide and Simon's Seat stayed steady at 17 in both books.

Of the 'new crags', Haw Bank, now sadly quarried away, had the most routes at 37. Brimham Rocks with 56 routes and Guise Cliff with 30 seem to indicate a drift to Nidderdale where evidently there was more new ground to explore. There was an early meet at Brimham when I met the Bert Murgatroyd team for the first time, including Jeff Lawson and Barry Turner. Jeff introduced me, knowing me because he had patched me up a couple of weeks previously after a rock fall at Haw Bank had injured my right knee. It had recovered sufficiently to get us up Lovers Leap Chimney - most people will know how hard that initial crack is.

Another memory of Brimham is chatting with Allan Austin after John Johnson and I had just done Long Funnel. Allan had just made the first lead of Pig Traverse and was wondering whether to grade it HVD or Severe. Having done it since I would say that the grading depends on the shape of the climber. It rates HS in the current guide.

In August 1958 Joe Brown came to Crookrise and put up Small Brown XS and Hovis HVS. Later, with partner J. Smith, Joe got as far east as Brimham to do Hatters Groove without combined tactics, then Smith led Dennis Gray up Moss Side. Closet Crack at Brimham fell to Pete Hindle and George Steele in Jan 1959, then George teamed up with Malcolm (Kim) Wainwright to lead Sinister Rib at Ilkley the following April, but probably the most noteworthy events of this period were Allan Austin's leads of Frensis Direct at Brimham and Western Front at Almscliffe."

During this period evening classes at both Bradford and Leeds were recruiting grounds for the climbing fraternity with weekend practical tuition on the local crags and Bill made many lasting friends there and got quite friendly with Doug Penfold who was already a member of the Midland Association of Mountaineers.

Weekend tuition was also available independent of the evening class set-up. Back in 1951 the Yorkshire Climbers Mountaineering Club, with Charles Rhodes taking a leading part, used Ilkley Quarry to instruct novices in rock and rope work. The YCMC broke up in the early fifties, its members dispersing to the Yorkshire Ramblers, YMC, Pudsey Ramblers and the Gritstone Club.

By the mid-fifties residential weekend courses were based at Highfield House, Ilkley. A volunteer instructor like Bill could find himself teaching police cadets, students from Lady Mabel College of Physical Education or members of the general public. The latter were organised by the local branch of the C.C.P.R. (the Central Council of Physical Recreation). A typical instructing day would start with breakfast at Highfield House and a stroll over to the Rocky Valley. The favourite start off route was Cooper's Slab on No.1 Buttress. This was graded Difficult but had no protection and not much in the way of handholds. If the instructor managed to lead that, he was confident of doing enough to fill the rest of the day. After Cooper's Slab the next route may have been Stiction Chimney, just on the left of the VS mentioned above and graded difficult, a straight-forward chimney climb. Next on No 2 Buttress might be the un-named slab next to The Strid. Bill says this was frightening for the first few moves because the left wall kept trying to push you off. In fact it was very like, but not as hard as, The Chute on No 5 Buttress which he sees has now gone up a grade to Severe.

No 3 Buttress had one of the best routes, Flake Climb; a scramble to get on the route then a layback followed by a traverse left on good holds. A short but exposed face led up till you could grasp a vital hand hold set back from the edge. This was graded Severe. Bill did get round to leading it, but not until he had seconded it, and never with a pupil. No 4 Buttress had the magnificent Long Chimney. They always used to tackle this V. Diff by climbing the scoop on the right. "You got a finger jam with the left hand, pushed down with the right and got your right foot on a sort of tongue of rock protruding from the depths of the chimney. Once your foot was on, it was possible to traverse left into the main chimney and climb up on good holds. When I tried the climb years later the tongue which had been such a vital hold had disappeared. The next buttress, No 5 was small. It's not up to me to call it nasty and brutish but I never succeeded in leading anything on it.

The biggest of the Rocky Valley buttresses was No 6, which was more like a mountain crag with several two-pitch climbs on it including the easiest, Holly Tree Route. The tree is long gone and the route is now so overgrown with grass that the holds are hard to find. In fact I chickened off when I looked at it ten years ago. Other excellent routes on No 6 are Matchbox, Lady Mabel, Taj Mahal and Arrowhead. No. 6 Buttress was also admirably positioned for the tea room at White Wells.

Having the run of Highfield House we were free to make our own entertainment. I remember a slide show by John Jackson of Kangchenjunga fame and a lecture by Don Roscoe of the Rock and Ice Club whose presence enhanced the instructor team."

Bill points out that their company in those days had a full complement of first class climbers from the fair sex. Some of them had done well at other sports before taking up climbing. Margaret Spooner was a champion back stroke swimmer for Yorkshire and Audrey Spencer was champion lady shot putter.

While all this was happening on gritstone, things were also happening on limestone. The Central Wall of Malham Cove was climbed in a 5 day epic by Barrie Biven and Trevor Peck. Bill is indebted to Dave Musgrove whose research has established that it was Barrie, not his brother Pete, who partnered Trevor on this major route.

The other outstanding achievement was described by Dave as "the most famous and popular artificial climb in the country."

This was of course the Directissima on Kilnsey Crag.

Bill has mentioned Brian Evans' 'Climbs on Gritstone, Volume 5.' This title was not strictly correct because 3 of its 138 pages are devoted to limestone. Written by A.B. Knox it describes Cave Route and Face Route on Gordale Scar and 2 routes on Kilnsey, Main Overhang and the Diedre.

The state of climbing practice at that time is illustrated by Mr. Knox's note that the artificial techniques involved may not be to every climber's taste. The section concludes with the message that 1 or 2 short routes have been done on the right of Malham Cove's main face and that there was plenty of scope for more.

Remember that those words were written in 1957 and it must have been that year that Allan Austin, with Brian Evans and Brian Fuller, spent some time "pegging at Kilnsey" and got ordered off by the law. Note that pegging was then regarded as the normal way to approach limestone. But by the year 1960 the "little green shoots" of free climbing on limestone were appearing. In fact Allan had referred to it as the "climbing of the future" when Bill was chatting with him in Rocky Valley immediately after the incident with the law.

Yorkshire Ramblers Club member John Richards had done some climbs on Ash Tree Crag, a bold upstanding cliff above Clapham, plus some routes on Beggar's Stile, Crummackdale. Tony Greenbank had climbed Hull Pot, Waterfall Route and some climbing had been done on Twistleton Scar. Information about the early days there is scarce but legends abound when the truth has been lost. Bill has been told that the first climbing was done there when the Kingsdale Lads, a caving club, climbed on Twistleton to divert attention from their latest 'secret' pot hole.

West Face Route, Gordale, was climbed by Derek Farley and Neville Rhodes in 1954. The legend is that on completing it they were so dismayed by the looseness of the rock that they made a policy decision that climbing wasn't worth the risks involved and went back to potholing for good, although when Bill spoke to Derek a few years ago, he said it wasn't quite like that. He had in fact joined the YMC and became an active and popular member.

What Bill didn't mention was that 'Climbs on Gritstone Volume 5' included descriptions of some recently made routes on the limestone of Gordale Scar, Cave Route and Face Route. So it is only fair that the very first book purporting to cover Yorkshire Limestone should have a section on gritstone. The book was entitled 'Climbs on Yorkshire Limestone' edited by Michael A Mitchell and published by Dalesman in 1963. Most of the popular limestone crags are described but of course nothing like the number of routes we have now. The gritstone element covers the crags of Pen y Ghent, a very fine outcrop with a mountain atmosphere. There have been access problems but an agreement was reached shortly before the CROW Act became law. That, however, is by the way. The important thing about Mike Mitchell's initiative is that the first ever guide to Yorkshire

Limestone saw the light of day. The editor of the limestone section of the 'Volume 5 Gritstone Guide' approached his subject with due modesty, very conscious that limestone was not everybody's cup of tea, and contented himself with a general warning about limestone's capricious nature.

As the nineteen sixties took off, there was however, in the natural way of things, something of an influx of new names, all good sound climbers, and some brilliant ones, like the Barley brothers, Robin and Tony. When Bill first went out with him, Robin went up to the crag ahead of him and by the time Bill got up there Robin was leading Kiernan's Traverse with great aplomb and didn't need any help from Bill. Bill brings other names to mind including Dennis Gray who seemed to have made a speciality of Brimham, often with Des Hadlum and once, in 1962, he led Eric Beard up a new route called Felicity. Eric was keener on running than climbing but he went around for a bit with Harold Barraclough's group and inevitably got drawn in to a few climbs.

Brian Evans' wife Aileen supported Brian on a number of first as-cents notably in Crummackdale and Trollers Gill. Typical of their output are The Kylin on Malham Cove - a classic, Swastika on Trollers Gill and Damocles in Crummackdale. Jack Wilson and Bill tackled Damocles a few years ago and could make nothing of it although it was only supposed to be a Diff. Funnily enough when Bill ran into the chap who wrote the guide the following week he was able to tell him how hard we had found the route. Bill notes from the latest guide it has been upgraded to V. Diff. and reckons it is still under graded at that. Touching on Crummackdale it is worth noting that Chris Bonington was on the first ascent of Epicure, HVS in March 1963.

This period also saw the first climb to be made on Blue Scar in Littondale. Ron Tyler and Harold Barraclough shared leads, and Hilda Tyler and Bill followed. It was rather loose. Another climb which Bill says always looks loose when he goes there is Wall and Corner on Beggar's Style climbed by John (Grimper) Richards and Mike Hobson of the Yorkshire Ramblers. In 1964, Pot Scar, not far away at Feizor, saw the first ascent of Rebate by Ginger Bates and John Richardson of the Gritstone Club.

Bill comments "It ought to be on record that we got just as much fun out of the first ascents we

didn't do as those we did. A first class team consisting of Allan Austin, Brian Evans and Ashley Petts attempted a girdle traverse of Crookrise Crag about this time but it never got into the records and none of them remember anything about it now. Joan and I tried a similar route on Great Wolfrey Crag from left to right but didn't get very far. Months later Jack Wilson and I tried to complete it but before long Jack decided that an escape to the crag top was the better part of valour. But what matter, we enjoyed a splendid day on the rocks and would not have wanted to be anywhere else."

Whilst Bill is recounting the history of Yorkshire rock he would also comment on the activities of Yorkshire climbers on the major crags of the UK and on the greater ranges of Europe.

In 1960, George Steele and Malcolm Wainwright made a new route on Pillar, West Wall Traverse 100' Severe. In 1962 Brian Evans had a season in the Alps with Ian Howell during which they climbed the West Face of the Dru. Ian Clough, with Geoff Grandison, did the N.E. Face of the Piz Badile then went on to join Bonington and Whillans on the first ascent of the Central Pillar of Freney. After this he partnered Bonington on the first British ascent of the Eiger North Face.

Bills reminds us while discussing the sixties at this distance of time it is easy to forget that the 1962/3 winter was one of the coldest and snowiest of the century. On the 13th January 1963 Joan and Bill and Jack Wilson drove up to Hubberholme. Passing Kilnsey Crag we saw Ron Hields starting a route on North Buttress. "Jack, of course, stirring it as usual shouted "That's been done." To which the irrepressible Hields replied "Not the way we are going to do it." When we got to Hubberholme after a drink in the George, Joan decided to go skiing on the fellside with her recently purchased Norwegian skis (which I still have) while Jack and I decided to tackle Strans Gill. I cannot remember, but we must have had ice axes; I certainly did not have crampons. With Jack taking the brunt of the leading we got up it and, in the doing of it, found a sheep in the gully bed that seemed in a bad way. We got it out onto stable land and let a grateful farmer know the position.

A bunch of us from Leeds and Bradford had spent Christmas in Glenshee for the skiing so the winter conditions we got on return home enabled us to

carry on and improve our skills. Taken in the right spirit skiing can be just as good fun as climbing; Joan and I skied Blubberhouses Moor and Ilkley Moor and afterwards generally joined a group of friends from various mountaineering clubs on Ben Rhydding Golf Course. This was set on quite a steep slope and we used to stick ski sticks in the ground and practice slalom. Nobody minded; I seem to remember Hamer Dawson and Brian Sheard from Gritstone Club joining us there or maybe it was at Kidstones the previous winter.

Memories come crowding in, Charlie Salisbury singing "J'Attendrai" at Harold and Vera's party or yodelling for his tea coming back down to Buttermere from Grey Crag, Harold repeating a layback pitch at Earl Crag for benefit of photography.

Sadly a number of friends from those days are no longer with us. As I write Ernest Shepherd's funeral was less than a week ago.

Bert Murgatroyd's and Ron Hirst's were less than a year ago. Jack Wilson has been in a nursing home for two years. Harold Barraclough and Ron Tyler passed away some years ago but fortunately some of the old crew are still in the land of the living. Allan Austin is seen from time to time at YMC slide evenings and Brian Evans still climbs at a high standard when he is not traversing hills on his mountain bike. Brian Sheard was enjoying his fishing when I ran into him in Scotland a year or two back. As part of a tour round Alaska and British Columbia in the year 2000 I was delighted to meet Robin Barley at his home in Vancouver. He was good enough to take us on an evening scramble part way up a local hill called Squamamus Chief. His brother Tony brought out a book recently on Yorkshire bouldering and is now, I believe, running his own business.

Memories, photographs, and diary entries confirm that we certainly used to live in those days and, in spite of advancing years, some of us are making a fair shot at it now."

TELEMARK WITH PULKS

Michael Smith

A brief account of a week's continuous expedition on the Norwegian Hardangervidda in April 2007.

Inspired by the freedom to roam provided by the use of personal sledges on an earlier expedition (see *Crossing Spitzbergen 110 years after Conway*. YRC Journal 2006; 13(2): 15-20) a skiing trip across the Hardangervidda was planned.

The Hardangervidda is halfway between Bergen and Oslo in Norway's southern bulge and its national park is the country's largest. Logistical difficulties transformed this traverse into a circular route based on Rjukan in Telemark and the south-west part of the Hardangervidda. The team of three consisted Michael and Richard Smith and John Brown.

We flew into an unseasonably hot Oslo, collected a hire van and drove out the 110 miles to Rjukan the next day collecting the pulks, fuel, shovels and some ski gear on the way. That afternoon we were at 900m on the lip of the Hardangervidda thanks to a cable car installed by the hydroelectric company in 1928 so the workers in the narrow valley could get some sunshine in the winter.

The first few hours were a bit of a drag - literally - as we pulled the loaded pulks first up steep narrow snow-covered tracks through the thinning

forest then over a couple of rises to the north. To get enough traction we needed to use skins on the skis - these are pile fabric strips under the skis which are biased to slide forwards but 'catch' on the snow and don't slide back as you move forwards. Initially skidoos shot past collecting people from the last few cable car trips and taking them to the hytte in the woods. Gaining the undulating plateau we abandoned the skins and switched to klyster, a gooey layer put on the skis just under your feet that gives a grip as you press down even in warm conditions. Sometimes it didn't give enough grip to haul a pulk up the steeper slopes though and we resorted to less efficient herringbone or sidesteps using the skis edges for purchase.

By dusk though we had passed all that and the Den Norske Turistforening (DNT - the Norwegian mountain hut and mountain tour organisation) hut Helberghytta to camp in splendid isolation by a rock outcrop at around 1120m.

The daily pattern for the next six days was broadly similar. Wake about six. Melt about six litres of water from a large bag of carefully collected snow. Breakfast, break camp and pack the pulks for a start about nine.

Move steadily through the day with short stops for a drink and sugar-boost every hour or so and a longer lunch stop with bread and fatty meat. By six or so a campsite would be identified and an hour spent constructing a tent platform excavated out using shovels and a snow-saw with the blocks and spoil used to build a sheltering wall. Make camp including building a toilet. Stove on about seven and a four-course meal with three dinks was served over the next two or three hours. The map was checked for a suitable onward route, books were read, a diary maintained then it was ten or eleven and time to sleep.

The routes taken were generally through the passes sticking to shallower routes on the whole. Initially while the weather was calm we headed north then west then as the wind strengthened we were blown along as we headed south then east. We hit a good spell of weather with lots of sunshine, good visibility and, apart from one day, little fresh snow. The depth of well compacted snow was often 2 metres or more and only rarely had we to pick our way past windswept patches of heather projecting above the snow.

Typically a day's journey would take us across a lake, over a few passes threading between peaks with views of snow covered peaks in all directions for scores of miles. We would see grouse, raven, perhaps snow buntings and on one day a pair of peregrines. Tracks of grouse, arctic fox and reindeer were often seen though we only once noticed a herd of a dozen reindeer. Then down. We would aim to camp in a sheltered spot in a broad valley giving both evening and morning sun.

To see the route use the general Hardangervidda map and link Helberghytta, Bergbu, the SW side of Ljostørnnuten, the island on Gøystvatnet, Kilshovd, Sandbekk, Ongelbutjønni, Grasdalen, Brjostet, Langesjøporten, Fagerhaugen, Vavervatnet and Gvæpseborg for the Krossobanen down to Rjuklan.

Several times a day we would stop at a brow and take in the full panorama of unspoilt country. The few summer fishing huts were usually half-covered in snow and we spotted only a couple of power lines. For four days we saw nobody and only two skiers on another day.

We had a sense of wilderness but with the security of knowing that we could stop almost anywhere and pitch camp or, provided we were not on a lake, dig into the deep snow and snowhole.

Half way through the trip we broke routine and left the tent in place and skied off into the mountains without the pulks. From the frozen tarn of Ongelbutjønni we headed east up vestre Stordalen seeing and worrying reindeer. Then we turned more steeply north up onto the ridge of Skardfjellnibba. By this time the weather had added to the biting wind a thick mist-come-cloud. This appeared to be a gratuitously malicious change as it dispersed as we left the mountain a couple of hours later. High wind and steep slopes slowed our progress along the gently rising ridge and we called a halt at a lesser summit around 1455m. Care was needed in the descent but we regained the approach valley and refuelled ourselves in a wind-scoured hollow below a crag. Back at camp we had a quite few hours reading and the irritating sight of the tops now clear and sunlit.

Our route developed organically as we gauged our capabilities over the first two days. We'd allowed an extra day in case of poor weather but that was not needed and we finished a day early. That evening we drove west to the large frozen lake of Møsvatn and along its shore almost to Varland to a fishing club parking area. We cooked and slept in the van, waking to find thick fresh snow and heavy snow showers blowing quickly in from the west. That day we skied across the lake to Møsstrand on the island of Hovden. Sheltered in the lee of the wooden church there we decided to continue to the next island south, Mellomøyi, across its low col and back to the van. A lively buhund, a setter, joined us, repeatedly dashing off across the ice and bounding back to us. With a few hundred metres left to go we passed three Samei ice-hole fishermen who were not having any luck.

The final ten metres to the shore were very problematic here as on Gøystvatnet. The lake is part of a hydro-electric power scheme so its water level fluctuates almost 20m. We knew the water level was low as we'd passed many once submerged rocks now looking as if they were bursting up through the ice. Collapsed tennis-court sized slabs of thick ice were tilted up the bank. Metal edges were essential to find purchase on these and the crevasse-like spindrift-filled cracks were best avoided.

Soon we were on our way back to the airport, this time via Hønefoss. This was not just a pulk pulling trip though. We made time for a little culture. In Oslo we walked the length of the centre to the Royal Palace. On the way to the hills we had stopped at the 1250ish Heddal stave church (with

the most complicated roof I've seen on one of these). Around Rjukan we identified the 'Heroes of Telemark'saboteurs' route taken to destroy the heavy water plant and visited the Mæl train ferry whose sister ship sank with the remaining supplies of deuterium and 18 souls. On our return journey we visited Haugfossen, a 50m high waterfall with ore-crushing mill which once served cobalt mines and local glassworks, then extensive ancient burial grounds near Hønefoss.

All in all a great trip which covered only one corner of the Hardangervidda leaving plenty of more for further visits.

Notes:

Equipment hire from Stein Øvereng of UT, www.ut.no based near Hokksund.

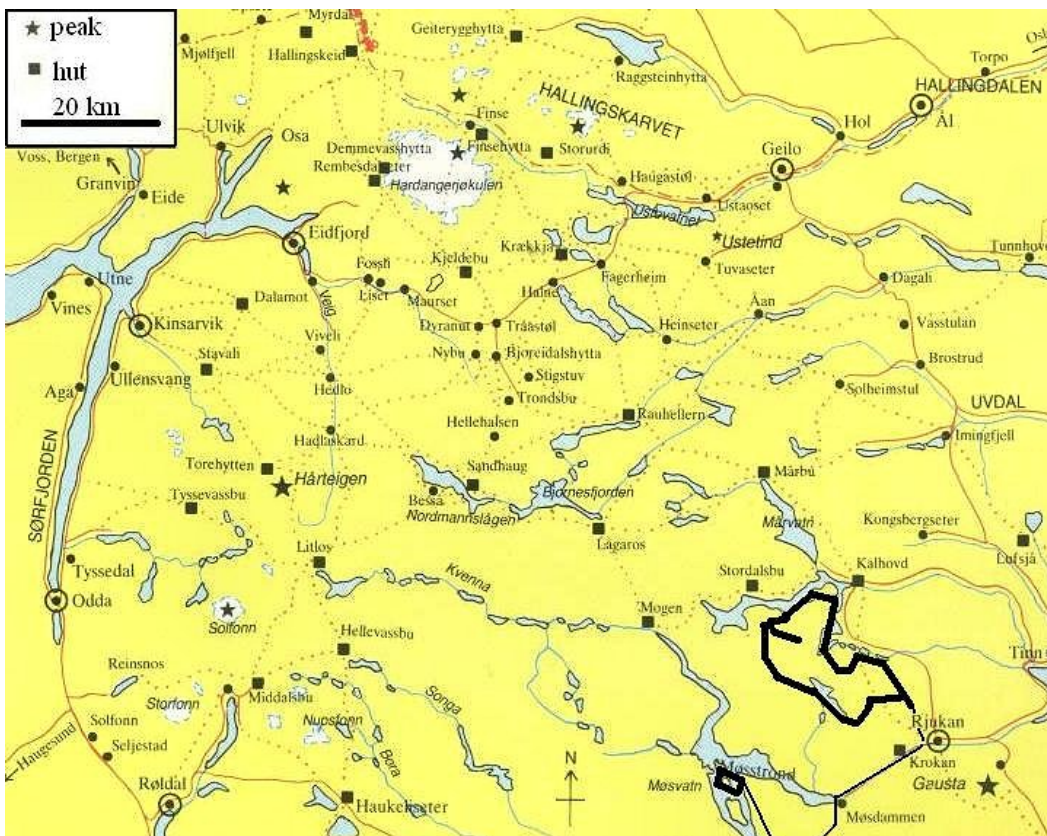
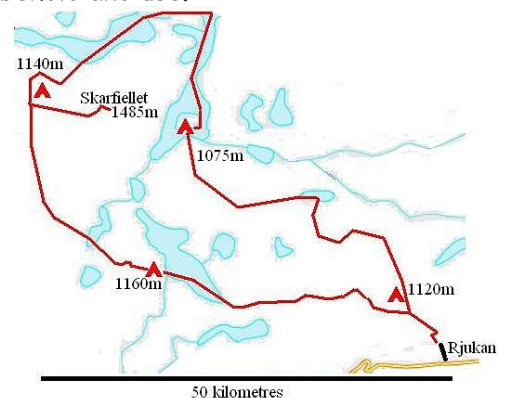
Van hire from Rent-A-Wreck, www.bicobil.no near Oslo Gardermoen airport.

Maps used were: Uglund IT TurKart Hardangervidda sheet at 1:100k which would almost have sufficed alone and is available for £15 from Stanfords. For added detail we also used 1:50k sheets from the Statens Kartverk series (Møsstrand 1514 IV; Frøystaul 1514 I; Kalhovde 1515 II) from the Oslo DNT shop. Their 1km grid was easier to use with the GPS than the 2km grid of the overview map. For driving we used the Freytag & Berndt 1:600K road map of Norway available for £9 from Stanfords.

For fuel we found paraffin available in thin-walled litre plastic bottles at the very largest garages (some ironmongers were also said to hold stocks). More readily available was Lampeolje (lamp oil) which worked perfectly well in the MSR Dragonfly stoves. For priming we used Rødsprit.

Water supplies were supplemented by solar heating melting plastic bags of water on the top of the pulks. The bags used need to be made of a thick plastic. Dark-coloured bags or placing transparent bags under a black shovel blade proved effective.

This was our first use of a snow-saw. Sawing below the level of your feet was backbreaking work. However, the resulting 30cm cuboids came away intact and allowed a windbreak to be built to 2m above the tent floor providing considerable shelter. John's rectilinear, almost cubist, design for a snow-saw cut toilet and windbreak was a delight to behold and use.





Michael Smith,
John Brown and
Richard Smith

Bottom left - John pulking

Right - Richard and John breaking camp



COASTAL ACCESS

Provision for extending open access to the coast was made in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and access to coastal areas was said to be an early priority for a Labour third term. To this end Natural England was asked to provide advice to them by last February as I reported in the last journal.

Their recommendations are just going through the consultation process but the vision is for a coastal environment where rights to walk along the length of the English coast lie within a wildlife and landscape corridor that offers enjoyment, understanding of the natural environment and a high quality experience; and is managed sustainably in the context of a changing coastline.

The outcome hopefully is that it will be possible to walk along and enjoy the length of the English Coastline with a very minimum of diversions inland and with the coastline itself becoming more accessible. It is also hoped that joined up policies will lead to improvements in coastal landscapes, quality of enjoyment and a better wildlife environment.

Natural England looked at each of the three existing delivery options that could be used to improve coastal access, i.e. the use of the Highways Act 1980, section 3 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and voluntary measures to create permissive access. They concluded that no existing mechanisms would provide a solution to meet the vision and recommended that the answer is in providing a coastal access corridor implemented through new primary legislation tailored to the circumstances of the coast. It should create statutory powers for NE to align a coastal access corridor around the whole English coast, to create access where it does not exist and improve it where it needs improving, and to repeat this process later on any stretch of coast where considered necessary given erosion and accretion change the line of our coasts constantly.

The access corridor would include new areas of spreading room along the coast, and could also formalise existing beach access. People assume a right of access to beaches but it does not actually exist. Natural England would undertake nature conservation assessments as part of the planning process, to avoid damage to any features of importance.

MOUNTAINS OF THE EAST

Paul Glendenning

The following two accounts are by Paul who has lived in Singapore for the last 7½ years but is now moving his family back to Lancashire.

Gunung Ledang (1276m), Malaysia

Previously known as Mount Orphir, this is one of the most climbed mountains in Malaysia and is located not far from Malacca in the state of Johor. It is touted as the 6th hardest trek in Malaysia, the others all being on the island of Borneo.

It takes about 3 hrs to drive from Singapore to the base of the mountain where there is a resort you can stay in. To climb Mt Orphir, you have to hire a guide. Ours was very helpful and although you could climb it without a guide (if you could somehow outwit the checkpoints), he did help avoid a few wrong turnings in the jungle.

There are some great pools in the river for bathing, and when you set off you are greeted by the sight of an impressive waterfall that tumbles alongside the forest. Shortly above the waterfall you enter the official trek through a gate in a wire fence and start climbing very steeply over tree roots. (In the humidity, you will rapidly find yourself sweating buckets.) This is the theme for most of the hike, ie. "tree root scrambling". About 2/3 of the way up things start to change and you have to negotiate a series of ladders and fixed ropes which lead you up through some interesting rock scenery, still capped by the trees above.

The way the vegetation changed was one of the most interesting things for me on this climb. Initially you are below the tall tree canopy. Then somewhere above the rocky fixed rope sections the path becomes more open, surrounded by lower trees, with glimpses of the surrounding hills. Finally you come out onto a top covered with grass and bracken which brings the sense of achievement of having reached the summit.

Mt Orphir is a full day's climb. We were late setting off due to waiting for the rest of our party to arrive from Singapore. We departed the resort at 9.15 am, reached the summit at about 2pm, and got back to the resort about 6.30pm, half an hour

before it got dark. Being near the equator, there is always about 12 hrs of daylight. The average time to get up and down is apparently 14 hrs, but that could be because a lot of big groups do it, sometimes with not very fit people.

If you fancy doing this climb during a stop-over in Singapore (say on your way to Oz or NZ) you can organize it via the shop "Campers Corner" on Stamford Road, or you could do it all yourself by crossing the causeway to Johor Bahru (Malaysia) and hiring a car.

Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5400m) China, - via the cable car (the only mountain where you get awarded a medal at 4680m)

Having visited almost all the surrounding countries during our time in Singapore, and also having successfully survived a week in Sri Lanka with our 3 small children earlier in the year, we felt ready to take on the challenge of a family trip to China.

During our 10 day trip, we flew to Kunming (the capital of Yunnan Province), then flew to Dali, took a bus to Lijiang, then flew back to Kunming. Dali and Lijiang are on the edge of the mountains and very nice places to visit, despite being heavily commercialized. Lijiang (2400m) is almost on the edge of Tibet and is a UNESCO world heritage site because of its ancient cobbled streets and old buildings.

Jade Dragon Snow Mountain stands at 5400m, overlooking the town. Until recently it would have been more difficult to access, but tourism is changing things rapidly. After paying to enter the National Park, you can buy your cable car ticket, and ride in a spectacular Italian-made cable car all the way to 4500m. Bus-loads of Chinese tourists do it every day, and all of them buy an aerosol-style can of oxygen at the bottom with a moulded plastic mask on top! Well, two adults and three children under 5 yrs managed without that - they must have thought we were very irresponsible! We figured if we had a problem we would jump on the next cable car back down.

Once at the top of the cable-car you come out to a spectacular view of the glacier, mountain, and valley below. You can also see a boardwalk with

steps leading up to a red flag which is flying higher up the mountain at 4680m. If you choose to hike up this extra 180m, you are greeted by a man who will engrave a medal with your name (for a suitable



fee) to say you have reached new heights.

I was well-impressed with the cable car ride - very spectacular! I do confess to being a little shocked by the commercialism of it all though. Virtually all the old buildings in Ligiang's old town are selling stuff for tourists and the oxygen-wielding mountain climbers were incredible. Hardly anyone speaks English, but why should they, when China has its own internal massive tourism business? My recommendation would be to go there, explore the side streets, and then head up into the more remote Tibetan regions which have only opened up to tourists in the last 10 years or so (if you don't have 3 little kids to take with you!).



Above - Chinese lady with her oxygen bottle

Left - Lesley & Anna with their medals

Below - Admirers of a blond-haired, blue-eyed infant



HELP AND ADVICE

Tips and good practice are well worth sharing but members must use their own judgement at the end of the day. This information is provided in good faith but neither the club nor the author can take responsibility for any outcomes from actions taken after reading this and if in any doubt you should cross reference the material

PROPER POWER FOR THE PURPOSE

For those of us who are cyclists without dynamos, safe and legal riding after dark will mean using batteries. Equally those of us using head torches for walking in the dark need reliable power sources especially if you are, like me, one of that select band of certifiable head cases that use them for night orienteering.

Disposable batteries are better for some applications including some cameras but for most purposes rechargeable batteries are the best option. Car batteries are an early example of a rechargeable battery and are known as lead-acid batteries because they contain lead and sulphuric acid.

They are usually too heavy for use on bicycles (unless as a means of propulsion on some power assisted bikes) and definitely headache material if used as a head torch and so we need other options.

Here are some helpful notes, courtesy of Maplin Electronics of Regent Street in Leeds, via Rob Ibberson. This should enable you to pick the type that is right for you.

ALKALINE

Alkaline batteries have been around for years and provide good all round performance. Alkaline batteries can be split into two distinct groups, premium and standard alkaline. Premium alkaline are better for high-tech devices and provide about 20% more power than standard alkaline batteries which are ideal for everyday household devices such as remote controls and smoke alarms and provide dependable long lasting power. Alkaline batteries are much longer lasting than heavy-duty zinc carbon batteries - alkaline batteries have longer shelf lives as well.

LITHIUM

Not to be confused with lithium-ion which is rechargeable technology used for mobile phones and digital camera battery packs. Disposable lithium provides amazing performance in high-drain devices. Disposable lithium batteries last up seven times longer than standard alkaline batteries in high drain devices, such as digital cameras and MP3 players. They are the best performing of all the disposable batteries, and work well at extreme temperatures.

NICKEL-CADIUM (NI-CD)

The original rechargeable battery. Ni-Cd rechargeable batteries are good value for money and offer adequate performance in middle drain appliances such as radios and torches. Ni-Cd's suffer from memory effect so it is advisable to fully flatten them before recharging to maintain their performance. Ni-Cd's require charging before their first use.

NICKEL-METAL HYDRIDE (NI-MH)

The best choice for intensive high drain usage. High capacity Ni-MH rechargeable batteries last up to four times longer on one charge than alkaline batteries in a digital camera. Ni-MH batteries don't suffer from memory effect, they don't have to be fully flat before recharging them. Ni-MH have taken over from Ni-Cd as the most popular type of rechargeable, as they offer much longer run times and they are better for the environment. Ni-MH batteries lose out 1% of their charge capacity a day when not in use.

This makes them unsuitable for standby applications such as smoke alarms and a poor choice for very low drain devices like TV remote controls. Ni-MH require charging before their first use.

HYBRID NI-MH (HYBRIO)

The latest generation of rechargeable battery. Hybrio batteries offer all the advantages of rechargeable while performing like alkaline batteries in many ways. Hybrio come charged up and ready to use out of the pack, like alkaline. Thanks to a unique formula, Hybrio batteries hold their charge for much longer than ordinary Ni-MH batteries when not in use, losing less than 0.1% of its charge a day. This means it is much better for low drain uses such as remote controls and clocks than any other rechargeable battery. Hybrio is the first truly multi-purpose rechargeable battery and because it comes charged and ready to use, it offers the ultimate in convenience and long term value for money.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

This term is used to cover a number of complaints.

The first and most prevalent is often overlooked but causes a lot of discomfort and distress. Vertigo affects a surprisingly high proportion of the population and has caused serious accidents when 'dizziness' has ended up with people falling off relatively low edges or bridges.

More serious however are the very real problems caused at high altitude which are difficult to fully avoid and as such it is essential to recognise and understand the symptoms and to know what remedial action to take.

Well over half of those who travel from sea level to an altitude of 12,000 feet will experience symptoms of acute mountain sickness and almost all of those who ascend rapidly will do so. Slow, gradual ascent will reduce the chance of suffering. The symptoms tend to develop over two or three days at altitude and include loss of appetite, headaches, tiredness, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sleep disturbances and a pounding of the heart. If steps to relieve it are not taken, the condition may advance to either of two life-threatening effects.

Cerebral oedema is characterised by confusion, drowsiness and coma and is the result of fluid accumulating in the brain.

Pulmonary oedema is a condition in which fluid accumulates in the lungs causing breathlessness even when at rest, both are medical emergencies.

The best way to avoid problems is to ascend slowly. Above 10,000 feet it is recommended that you end up sleeping at an altitude no greater than 1,000ft above the previous day's altitude; ideally, you should descend to sleep — "climb high, sleep low". It is also sensible to have a rest day every two or three days. Many people have a schedule of climbing about 2000ft every second day but dropping back by 500 to 1000 feet to sleep. The intervening day can be spent on side trips or exercise so long as the body has time to acclimatise at the basic sleeping altitude.

The drug Acetazolamide (Diamox) can help prevent problems in many people. It is not specifically diagnosed for this situation but history suggests it helps and it is often taken at a dose of 250mg twice daily, starting three days before starting and continuing for a further two days at altitude although these guidelines are varied by different medical authorities. If you do get any symptoms of altitude sickness it is important that you go no higher until they have resolved and most advisors suggest dropping back a thousand feet for a couple of days. If symptoms get worse you should descend immediately.

I have known people who have frequently been into the death zone without problem to succumb to altitude sickness so it is not a case of experience or indeed being used to it. It can strike even the most fit at any time so it is essential to identify any symptoms early.

Effectively, if you fail to allow time for proper acclimatization, you may well develop symptoms and whilst it may be mild enough to go away with a day's rest, if ignored may lead to death.

All that is required to ensure a safe trek is a basic awareness and a willingness to rest or descend if you develop symptoms.

As a result of the growing awareness of altitude problems there are only on average, two deaths each year in Nepal out of more than 60,000 trekkers. Even these deaths would be avoidable if everyone knew how to respond to any problems as they develop.

The problem is not limited to the high Himalayas and indeed more cases arise on Kilimanjaro where the climate tempts people to try and do the ascent in something of a rush.

Basically the problem is of fluid accumulating in parts of the body where it does not belong: in the brain, in the lungs, or both.

When mild symptoms develop, it is a signal that you must stay at that altitude until the symptoms have gone away and certainly you should never ascend with any symptoms.

Usually within one or two days you will feel well and can continue your trek. The problem is often accentuated in that a person suffering from AMS may not have clear thinking and may have to be forced to descend. Even if someone is willing to descend they should never be allowed to descend alone. If the diagnosis is not clear, but might be AMS, you should always descend. You can always re-ascend when the person feels better. If you choose to administer oxygen or medications you should not delay the descent to watch for improvement.

In summary, if you are not doing well at altitude, most likely you have some mild symptoms of AMS. Rest at the same altitude until you feel well.

If you are getting worse at the same altitude, descend to at least the last point at which you felt well. If you are not sure of the diagnosis, err on the side of caution.

It must be said that the Himalayan Rescue Association does not recommend taking any drug to try and prevent AMS, however, it is now widely accepted that taking drugs such as Diamox before travelling to altitude may well assist with acclimatization, but is no substitute for a planned slow ascent.

When I went up the Kumbu I took this drug and we also had staged rest days but my colleague was advised not to take the drug and was given a drug to carry which it was claimed would help if he got into trouble.

He had several days when he had difficulties and we had to change our itinerary and had to cut out some of the trek, whereas I had only one day of slight lassitude which retreated after a day's acclimatisation.

More information can be found in a free booklet downloadable at www.medex.org.uk

Ed.

LYME DISEASE

Amongst the many concerns arising from global warming is the spread of diseases to which populations have little immunity. Lyme disease was a fairly rare illness but numbers of cases have recently exploded and the risk of infection should not be ignored.

It is caused by bacteria carried by ticks and people who walk through rough vegetation especially bracken, are most at risk. The highest risk is during spring and summer when ticks are more active.

Early signs often include a red blotch or circular rash several centimetres across in the bite area. This appears between a week and a month after the bite occurred, often in conjunction with flu like symptoms; tiredness, aching and fever. These would last several weeks if no treatment were given and serious complications like neurological difficulties and joint problems may develop many months later. In rare cases it can lead to chronic arthritis and has been known to attack the central nervous system and even badly affect the performance of the heart. One in thirty cases can kill.

The recent warm and wet summer has caused both the ticks and the bacteria to thrive and it only takes one bite to infect you. A tick alert has been issued for the New Forest, Cumbria and the North York Moors.

Ticks are minute blood-sucking insects that cannot fly but jump easily on to animals such as sheep, deer and cattle that brush through the vegetation on which the ticks hide. Not surprisingly they also attack dogs and humans as well. They have a strong beak-like mouth which they use to cling tenaciously onto their victims whilst they gorge themselves on your blood.

Not all ticks carry the bacteria to infect humans and with a little care and caution they can be detectable and be removed before they have done much harm but care must be taken not to squeeze the body forcing the blood back into the victim.

There were 293 cases in 2003 but that jumped to 683 last year and is expected to increase again substantially this year.

A CLEAR BLUE SKYE

Tony Smythe

The photo on the front cover of the Ordnance Survey map for North Skye is of Macleod's Tables. I only noticed this after I had completed the ascent of the two strange flat-topped hills last April. It isn't a good picture of them, skulking in the distance under grey clouds, and the photographer has arranged his composition around a croft and a little loch and a selection of the relatively few trees to be found on the island. Open the map itself to find them and one is immediately intrigued to see, positioned nearly as far west as you can get in Skye, two small circular hills with tightly packed contours named Healabhal Mhor and Healabhal Bheag, with the English translations in brackets underneath - Macleod's Table North and Macleod's Table South.



At a lowly 468 and 488 metres respectively (1,535 and 1,601 feet) and the best part of 30 miles tortuous driving north-west of Sligachan, one would imagine that these modest tops would be ignored by most hill walkers in Skye (although I have no doubt that they have not escaped the YRC's attention).

Since I was looking for something interesting and different (and to be honest I was a touch wary at the thought of messing with the Cuillin ridge on my own) I decided to go and see what the Tables were like. The coast nearby looked exciting too, with sea cliffs rising to not far short of 1,000 feet and liberally sprinkled with the words Cave and Natural Arch.

I have never known such a spell of good weather in Scotland. It was the end of April, beginning of May, and for a week there was rarely a cloud in the sky. A pleasant breeze made it comfortable in shirt-sleeves, and even in the calm of morning and nightfall the midges hadn't yet woken up to the new tropical Scotland. It was very satisfying to be told on my last day that it had been very wet just before I arrived, and then to experience the next bout of Atlantic wind and rain just as I arrived home. There are not too many opportunities to be smug about the weather in Scotland!

Returning though to Skye and my plan, I saw that I could make a traverse taking in the two summits and that my bike, so useful in Scotland, would allow me to avoid a final weary three or four miles road slog, whichever way I approached it. The roads are in short supply in this part of the island anyway and all I could do was start at either end of an unfenced moorland road that runs past the Tables at about two miles distance. The Tables themselves are about a couple of miles apart, with a minor summit on the broad ridge between the two. I would park up in my camper at Osdale under the northwest ridge of the North Table and cycle down to Orbost below the east ridge of the South Table to start walking from there, using the van to collect the bike later.

It wasn't a good start next morning. At 6 a.m. at Orbost I rode a short way up a track seeking a place to tuck the bike away and arrived unexpectedly at the front door of a smart new house. Luckily there were no dogs to tear apart the Sunday morning calm - or me - and I was able to retreat quietly, unobserved I hoped. I found a better place in a grove of trees and set off up the pastures towards Macleod's Table South. It was another peerless morning, the early sun shone gently on my back, and the Cuillin looked incredible from this viewpoint, the whole main ridge spread across the skyline.

From the north east the Tables have freakish flat tops and there are clearly steep little bands of

rock on the sides below making them into miniature lost worlds.

As I plodded up heathery slopes that rose in waves, the peak I was heading for gradually became more challenging, with a 100-foot cliff forming a prow, with even an overhang at one point. I was confident I could find a straightforward way round this but I dismissed the thought that I could find a way up one side of the Table and down another - finding a way down a cliff usually seems to be more problematical than going up. I took a likely route up steep grass patches and soon found myself past the cliffs and in the land of dinosaurs on top (well just grass, a few sheep and a trig point in fact).

But what a viewpoint it was. South Uist and Benbecula appeared so close that a rowing boat would have sufficed to get there across the flat sea, a la Menlove Edwards. The Cuillin were changing colour as the sun rose higher. My destination, the North Table, was a serenely beautiful shape with a blue outline of distant hills behind. I assumed these were peaks of Torridon and the Fisherfield Forest, but have since checked the map - they could only belong to the Isle of Lewis.

I had foolishly neglected to bring water, but at last found a lunch spot next to a tiny trickle of clear water (thanks, David for the tip about taking a cup with you). Then I took on the long haul up to the North Table. Again, it was so flat on top you could have landed a plane.



Only at one point on the descent from this did I have to make a flanking move to avoid crags, and then I was at the van after a most satisfying day. There is in fact a third smaller table further south, Beinn na Boineid. This would be more awkward to get to but could be taken in as part of a splendid walk along the marked path going round the coast of the peninsular.

That evening I drove further west and then south nearly as far as I could get on the rough unfenced road leading to Ramasaig. My overnight parking spot was magnificently placed, a few hundred yards from immense cliffs. In a pre-supper investigation I found that they were so enormous and vertical that it was impossible to find a safe spot anywhere where the distant sea at the base could be viewed. Bits of rusty fence were poor protection for the sheep grazing placidly nearby. Presumably they had learnt how to survive by observing the mistakes of their unfortunate relatives.



Sunset from near Ramasaig

In the morning I set off on my bike. Ramasaig turned out to be a huddle of farm sheds and a holiday cottage, unoccupied. The road south now became a mud track, luckily bone dry and I covered the couple of miles to the Lorgill river and bay easily enough. Here at the end of the trail there was a ruined croft in as lonely a position as could be imagined, but the large numbers of sheep grazing the lush pastures around showed how the modern farmer with the right transport could still manage well. Indeed on my return I heard the buzz of a quad and I exchanged a cheerful salute with the driver.

A footpath followed the stream down to a tiny beach.

Here I got sidetracked by an examination of the granite pebbles of all colours worn flawlessly smooth. I chanced upon a large perfect egg, almost pure white, and I regret to say that the temptation was too much. It now graces a bookshelf as a constant reminder of the sea's timelessness, creativity and unending work. However I had to pay for my souvenir in sweated effort - the weight in my rucksack later was something I wouldn't forget in a hurry.

The path now rose again, zigzagging to the top of the long stretch of cliffs leading south-east for some five miles to Idrigill Point. I knew I would have to return the same way since inland there was only untracked moorland and minor summits, and an out-and-back walk never has the same sense of purpose and continuity as a circuit. Still it was a day for lazing, watching seabirds and the sparkling waves, trying to capture the magnificence of the rock architecture with my camera, and simply dreaming in the sun. Anyway I didn't get far before I lost the path and found myself confronted by the Scaladal burn, a deep cleft that seemed to require a long detour inland.

I enjoyed one more day on Skye, on Blaven. This highly accessible mountain seemed positively crowded, and my thoughts returned, as they have done since, to that amazing west coast and its lonely sea and sky.



The Cuillin Ridge
from the summit of North Table

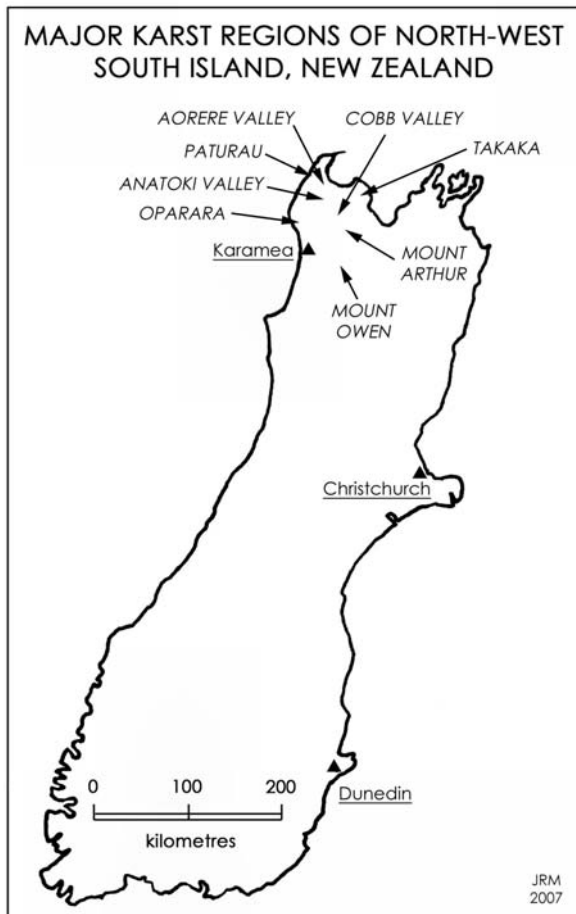


Tony Smythe and the Cuillin Ridge
during the traverse of the Tables

THE OPARARA BASIN

John and Valerie Middleton

In the remote north-western corner of New Zealand's South Island there lies a wilderness area of stunning beauty and amazing secrets. It is an area watered by almost six metres of rain each year. This in turn has encouraged a luxuriant forest of great Podocarps and Southern Beech trees beneath which giant Tree Ferns and their allies flourish. Covering the ground and hanging many metres from every branch are a multitude of mosses. Giant carnivorous snails of the genus *Powelliphantas* prowl this floor as do several flightless and near-flightless birds. A further paradise of avian species constantly flutters throughout the various forest layers whilst strange insects shelter under each leaf. Around each corner exquisitely sculptured limestone features excite the imagination. This is mystical "Lord of the Rings" country where anything is possible. This is the Oparara Basin.



The "Basin" is found about 10km inland from the Tasman Sea in the area known as Karamaea of the Kahurangi National Park (see map).

To the north and east the watershed is from mist shrouded 1,000m plus mountains whilst a 400m high ridge separates the sea to the west. In the south and south-west there are densely forested 2-300m high hills. These hills are broached by the rapidly flowing Oparara River and the McCallums Mill Road. The latter is an old dirt forestry track now adopted by the Department of Conservation as the only means of access. The basement rock is granite with this being topped by crystalline limestone to a depth of 60m. It is not thought that the Maoris ever penetrated these hills so nothing was known about the region until loggers began their investigations in the early 1960's. News of some of the amazing things that they found quickly leaked out to the caving fraternity.

THE ARCHES. There are three natural limestone arches over the Oparara River, each spectacular in its own right with one definitely qualifying to be amongst the worlds finest. The smallest is the Moira Gate Arch situated just a 20 minute walk through superb forest downstream of the small central car park. Its length is 46 metres, height 8 metres and width 28 metres. From the true left bank the arch has a beautiful slightly flattened half moon shape with the sparkling river filling the entire width. Twenty to thirty metres inland from the right bank it is possible to drop down a slot into a small chamber and then drop down again to emerge on a broad ledge in the centre of the arch. From here the smoothly water worn rock architecture is superb.



Moira Gate Arch

Upstream Entrance



Downstream Entrance

The statistics of the probably even more beautiful Honeycomb Hill Arch are 47 metres in length, 24 metres in height and 35 metres wide. This formation can only be visited with a Park approved guide due to the natural sensitivity of the Honeycomb Hill area. It can be found after an hours walk from the car park and because of its size and dense crown of vegetation it is arguably the most photogenic. The third arch, Oparara Arch, is literally mind blowing in its spectacle. Just imagine an entrance some 79 metres wide and 43 metres high that suddenly rears up out of the pristine forest just a twenty minute walk upstream from the car park. A roaring river surges out of half the width whilst a raised bank on the path side allows an easy fifty metre access to boulders where a viewpoint makes the equally spectacular upper entrance visible some 219 metres away! In wet weather two streams cascade from the roof. Interestingly the base of the arch is composed of deeply eroded Permian Granite. The "locals" claim that helicopters have flown through this arch!

In Australasia the aforementioned arches are noted as being first, fourth and fifth in terms of volume. The Devil's Coach-house 131m long, 85m high, 40m wide and Jenolan Grand Arch 137m long, 25m high, 69m wide, both in Australia take second and third place.

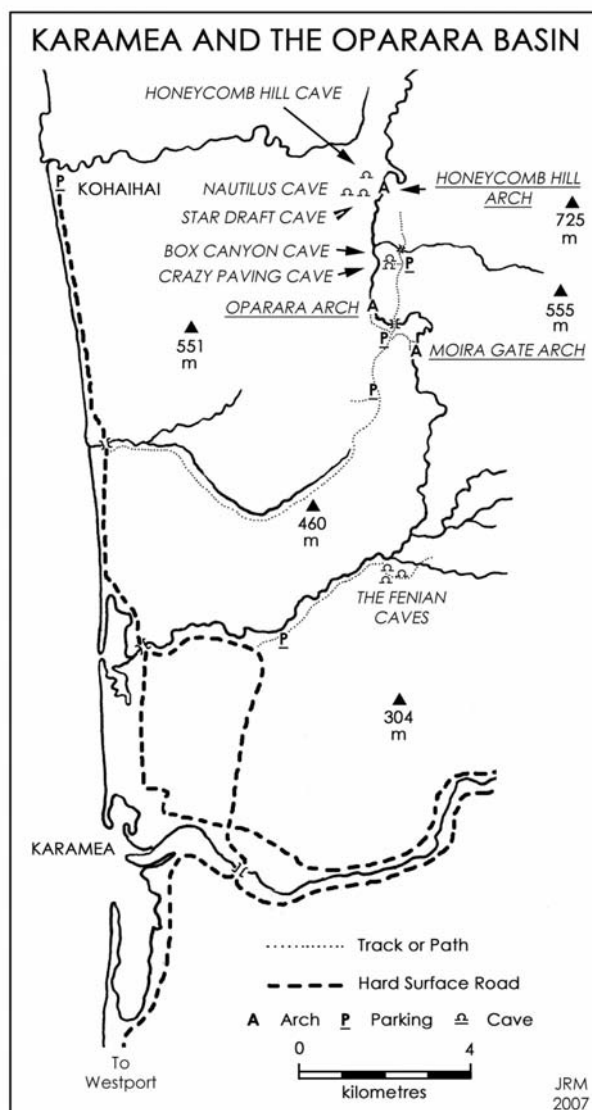
THE CAVES. The Basin contains many caves and due to the dense bush no doubt many more are still to be found. The currently known highlight is the 14 kilometre long complex but beautiful Honeycomb Hill Cave System with 70 entrances! This can again only be visited with a Park registered guide due to both delicate formations and a plethora of sub-fossil bird bones. These latter include some 18 now extinct species such as 7 different Moas, a giant Harrier and 4 Rails. Also in this cave, and most of the others, are a large endemic spider (*Spelungula cavernicola*) and an endemic cricket-like cave weta (*Deinacrida* sp.). A "true" caving tour takes around three hours and the information gleaned from the knowledgeable guides make it well worth not attempting to visit independently. Associated with the aforementioned system are the nearby but smaller Nautilus and Star Draft caves. We did not visit these but understand that they are very similar to Honeycomb Hill Cave.

Just 10 minute walks from the car park are two further caves. The first is Crazy Paving Cave.

This is short and so named due to the dry cracked mud floor. Box Canyon Cave is virtually next door, much more interesting and considerably larger (300m) with a high and beautiful meandering stream-way together with several side passages.

Our visit was made in early 2007 and it was obvious that whilst we had to "rough it" to gain access the Department of Conservation were about to embark on a number of environmentally friendly footpath and trail projects. This should make access considerably easier and open up more areas. There are many similar tracks already in the Karamea region together with the western end of the long distance Heaphy Trail making this an excellent place to spend an exciting week.

The Kahurangi (452,002 hectares) and contiguous Abel Tasman (22,500 hectares) National Parks provide some of the finest caves and karst of all Australasia (see map). We visited a little of the karst, particularly that around Takaka Hill and in the Abel Tasman and we do hope to visit further areas next year.



A brief resume of what can be found is listed -
Mount Arthur - the high karst here is classic alpine and the rock predominantly marble. Caves include Nettlebed, -889m, 24,252m long; The Ellis Basin System, -775m, 28,730m long; HH Cave, -721m and The Incognito/Falcon System -540m.

Mount Owen - again alpine karst and marble and quite difficult to access. Caves include Bulmer Cavern, -755m, 52,149m long; Bohemia Cave, -713m, 11,230m long and Viceroy, -440m.

Takaka Hill - lower altitude than the previous two but still marble and alpine in character. The highlights here are the Greenlink System at -394m and 5,228m in length and Harwood Hole at -357m, 1,310m long with its spectacular entrance shaft. The stunningly beautiful Pupu Springs just to the north-west of Takaka village are claimed to be the largest resurgence in Australasia

Other areas. The remaining sites in the north-west are all limestone with a considerable number of caves found and great potential but none so far of the magnitude of the Mount Arthur, Mount Owen and Takaka Hill areas. Moonsilver Cave (Cobb Valley) 5,900m long and Wetneck Cave (Paturau) 3,500m long are perhaps the most extensive.

A BAD JOKE

This is not a political news sheet and in any event many of you may feel that all politicians are at best comedians and possibly suitable cases for commitment to asylums. However our leaders have recently surpassed themselves - it would be funny if it were not so potentially disastrous.

Anyone who know anything about power distribution knows there are limits to how much energy from wind turbines can be accommodated within the national grid.

On the face of it the pressure being brought to bear to stop the despoiling and disfigurement of our wilder landscape by massive turbines seems to be having some effect in that the government has just announced that it is largely going off shore to achieve its ambitious targets for renewable energy supplies.

We are apparently to build 2 new giant offshore turbines every working day between now and 2020, a total of 7000. Forgetting the ruin of our lovely seascapes and the massacre of untold numbers of birds this is absolute nonsense on a scientific basis. Denmark, the world leader in this field, never managed more than 10 a month. It would actually be cheaper to build nuclear stations to create the same amount of energy and given the erratic nature of wind, back up capacity would be needed anyway.

A few years ago half Europe was blacked out due to a surge of wind produced power and more than about 10% provision from such sources will destabilise our systems. The Danes have given up building such units and have found they have to dump massive amounts of their power onto their neighbours during surges of production when the wind gets up to avoid swamping their grid. They also have to import massive amounts of power when the wind is not blowing hard enough. Somebody wake me up please; I am having a bad dream.

MAPS. Kahurangi. Parkmap 274-13 at a scale of 1:155,000

Abel Tasman. Parkmap 273-07 at a scale of 1:50,000

Karamea. Land Information 260-L27 Karamea 1:50,000

Mount Arthur. Land Information 260-M27 Mount Arthur 1:50,000

Mount Owen. Land Information 260-M28 Wangapeka 1:50,000

CONTACT. New Zealand Speleological Society <http://caves.org.nz>

ACCOMMODATION. This is easily available to suit all pockets either on arrival like we did or over the internet.

TIME OF YEAR. The South Island winter can be wet and cold so late Spring through to late Autumn (English November to April) is generally considered the best time to visit.



NATURAL HISTORY SNIPPETS



WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BOARING NEWS

Wild boars now live in many parts of England but particularly, West Kent, East Sussex, Dorset and Gloucestershire. Specimens have been seen in Yorkshire and Northumberland and occasionally in the Highlands of Scotland. They helped our countryside become what it is today and in a sense they're returning to their natural home.

The creature became extinct in Britain in the 17th century but escapees are now breeding successfully and it is thought there are about 1000 living wild. Once one of the prime beasts of the chase, hunted by royalty for their meat, they were probably extinct by the 13th century. Attempts by James I and Charles I to reintroduce them were only partly successful and between the 17th century and the 1980s, when wild-boar farming began, there were only a handful of captives in zoos.

The Woodland Trust believes we should welcome wild boar back to our countryside as a key woodland species although clearly it's a matter of balance, and we wouldn't want to see high populations of pigs in woods. At the right density wild boar are good for woodland because their rooting about for acorns, beech mast and other fruits and nuts disturbs the soil and encourages biodiversity.

Britain's last wild boar roamed Scotland's woods and scrubland until the end of the 17th century, when over-hunting and absorption into domestic stock heralded their demise as an indigenous wild mammal, leaving their bones to be discovered in Scottish caves, the brick earth of the Thames Valley, and the peat bogs of Ireland. But now they are back, making their important environmental contribution. In Scotland they are helping with the restoration of native trees such as pine, rowan and birch, in the Glen Affric national nature reserve. They are also doing a job keeping the bracken down. They like eating the fronds and the roots. They also like the ground where the bracken is growing so they prefer to root there and the patches of well turned soil left behind will also

provide a fertile seed bed for the regeneration of native species of trees.

Whilst commonly regarded as a woodland species, they do use other habitats, including scrubland and agricultural land and they can cause damage to crops, and also have the potential to pass on disease to domestic animals.

Some have concerns about public safety, but they appear to be unfounded. In France, Germany and Poland almost everyone lives very happily alongside them and there's no reason why we can't do the same. As yet there are no reports of injury to visitors to the woodlands but several dogs have been hurt by their slashing razor-sharp teeth. Campers in the Forest of Dean have seen their tents damaged by rampaging herds of these beasts but in both cases they have probably be startled by dog or man and wild boar are inherently nervous and very shy of humans and will run away from you nine times out of ten. Campsites in Gloucestershire are however to be protected from attacks with wire mesh fences. The Forestry Commission will erect two four-foot barriers around campsites in the Forest of Dean where a 40-strong herd of the pigs has been roaming.

Whilst in days of old, a royal hunting target, Gloucestershire trading standards have now confirmed that the animals, which can grow to 6ft in length, can be shot if found on private land. Their meat takes careful cooking somewhat similarly to wild venison but tastes very much of where they live. The nearest comparison is to the dark meat of turkey legs.

OWLS OF PAIN

European eagle owls, weighing in at up to 9 lbs, are amongst the world's biggest owls and grow to a height of two foot six inches with a wingspan of nearly six feet. With a large beak, enormous talons and startling bright orange eyes they are not to be ignored.

They are fairly common in the wilder areas of Europe and Scandinavia but until recently were very rarely seen in Britain. The species was wiped

out in here about 150 years ago and because we are an island and the birds don't like to cross large expanses of water it was thought unlikely they would be back.

There are a lot in captivity and it is quite likely that ones that do appear from time to time are escapees but they could have migrated down from Scotland. They do appear in the Highlands occasionally as island hoppers from Scandinavia blown off their normal patch by bad weather. The eagle owl could survive well in Britain's wilder corners if not persecuted by man.

A pair nested in a remote piece of woodland in Northumberland in 2003 and two chicks were found in a hollow in a tree spring 2005 and this year a pair were breeding much closer to home. They raised a brood near Dunsop Bridge and after several attacks a footpath had to be closed. The birds took dog walkers to be a threat and chased them off to the extent that one man needed minor hospital treatment.

Like most owls they hunt at night for their prey which includes rats, mice, voles, rabbits, hares and other birds but they are well capable of taking an unsuspecting cat.

MOUNTAINS NOT HIGH ENOUGH ?

As global warming moves whole ecosystems further north or to higher ground several species of mountain plant are facing extinction.

Research in the Italian Alps has established that in the last 48 years plants have responded to an increase of one and a half degrees in temperature by climbing 1400 feet higher.

In all 52 species were monitored and on average they had migrated upwards by an average of 80 feet per decade. Yellow coltsfoot is one example which has climbed from 8530' to 9940' and edelweiss and Alpine clover are very much at risk.

Many plants have reached the tops of mountains and have nowhere left to go.

Edelweiss



JOHN MUIR TRUST

With alarm bells ringing even more loudly all over the country over the threat to wild landscapes posed by intrusive developments including large-scale onshore industrial wind farms, the John Muir Trust is gearing up on the campaigning front. A Wild Landscape Appeal has been made to members and other supporters to consider contributing towards the cost of mounting effective challenges to those developments which would cause the most harm to our wild places. At the same time the Trust is working to convince politicians and other decision makers of the need for changes in national landscape planning legislation and protection.

With threats to the environment through climate change and global warming the Trust is a 100 % advocate for green energy - but it must be provided in ways that do not cause other harm to our environment and especially the qualities of our finest wild land which make it of such national and international importance.

The culprits are those who propose large scale industrial wind turbine developments on or very close to important wild areas. There is a need for a 'green energy mix' with energy coming from a range of green sources including onshore wild farms but these must be sensitively sited.

The risk is that in the dash for green energy too many eggs are being placed in one basket - onshore wind farms - and that more needs to be invested in energy conservation and in securing energy from the sea and bio fuels, and from small scale options.

The Trust lends its support to sensitively located community renewable energy projects such as the three turbines proposed by the North Harris Trust but is opposed to large scale schemes such as the hundreds of turbines threatening the Lewis landscapes.

The Trust has devoted a great deal of its resources to opposing the proposed new giant power line marching down the spine of Scotland from Beaully to Denny. In doing so they have proposed practical alternatives such as sub-sea links, or upgrade and extension of the existing east coast connector.

A new leaflet has been sent to all members and supporters and this is also available on line at www.jmt.org. Just click on Wild Landscape Appeal.

People who are not members but who wish to sign up for this campaign can become members online.

CONSEALED ?

Researchers are finding it increasingly hard to find harbour seals around parts of our shores.

Of Orkney and Shetland their numbers have dropped 40% in five years and numbers are also down in the Firth of Tay and along the coast of eastern England

RAPTORS DOWNED

Far from encouraging news from Scotland is that three Red Kites have been found poisoned. One of these reintroduced birds was part of a pairing that had produced 16 chicks in the last 8 years.

The RSPB report 42 confirmed cases of illegal raptor poisoning last year and whilst convictions are very difficult, the punishments must be dramatically increased, both to make it painful for those caught and as a deterrent to others.

Ignorant owners and managers of commercial estates are thought to be responsible but the sort of fines handed down to gamekeepers mean nothing when the cost is met by the 'Laird'

In December a White-tailed Sea Eagle was shot in Scotland, the first such shooting for 90 years. This youngster was one of 15 imported from Norway last year as part of the reintroduction scheme and again a rogue estate is thought to be responsible. The actual estate is known from radio tracking records and despite the police stating that the estate in question had been responsible for persecuting several birds of prey over recent years in the absence of a body or eye witnesses to the actual act of shooting there can be no prosecution.

Such problems are not restricted to Scotland and there was a well publicised incident on the Sandringham Estate last year involving the shooting of Marsh Harriers. The Marsh Harrier is actually doing very well of late. There are now more in Britain than at any time since the 18th century. Farmers have been encouraged not to shoot or poison them and wetland habitat has been reconstructed.

In the past a build-up of pesticides in the harriers led to eggs with much thinner shells and fewer chicks were being hatched successfully.

This with persecution by farmers and the draining of marshland sent the bird into serious decline and between 1900 and 1920 it was virtually extinct and despite a bit of a recovery, by the 1950s numbers were back down almost to zero. It was thought that only one pair remained in Britain in 1971 at the RSPB Minsmere reserve in Suffolk.

Fortunately as a migratory species, birds were always passing through and they recovered until surveys in 2005 from the RSPB and English Nature show there are 360 breeding females in England and Scotland compared to 156 in 1995. More than 800 young were fledged, up from 350. The birds now breed in Scotland and in Anglia, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Kent and the Cambridgeshire Fens where major projects are underway to increase the areas of wetlands.

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.

This beautiful bird nests on the ground but the nests, eggs and young are regularly stamped on with the adults being shot or poisoned. This bird is smaller than a buzzard but larger than a crow and has a long tail and long wings. It can often be seen hunting low over the ground with wings raised in a shallow V when gliding. 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% but few estates are prepared to go to the trouble of doing so.

I was fortunate enough to see one in northern Cumbria last year and to aid recognition you should remember that the smaller male has silver grey upper-parts, white under-parts and black wing tips whereas the female is dark brown with buff wing markings and a grey-brown tail with white banding at the base.

In order to properly assess how this bird is doing the RSPB would like us to report any sightings by emailing henharriers@rspb.org.uk or ringing 0845 4600121.

CHIPPINGS

A DEAD RINGER

On the Edale meet last year someone said I was a dead ringer for Harold Shipman. This got me to thinking about the source of this saying.

Basically it means that someone has been seen who is a "dead ringer" for someone thought to have been dead and buried.

England is an ancient land and people have been dying for ages. It is pretty small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people once they thought they were dead. As a result they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and re-use the grave.

When re-opening these coffins, about 4% were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. As a result they started to tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it out through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell.

Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night ("the graveyard shift") to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered a "dead ringer".

In a similar vein, back in the 15th to 18th centuries most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled reasonable by June. However, they were starting to go off so brides carried a bouquet of scented flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it; hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water".

Houses had thatched roofs piled high, with no ceiling underneath. It was the only place for



animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the creatures would slip and fall from the roof. Hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs".

As there was nothing to stop things from falling into the house it posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how "canopy beds" came into existence.

The floor was almost always just made of compacted dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt; hence the saying, "dirt poor". The wealthy often had slate floors, very good most of the year but that would get very slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread threshings or thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when the door was opened, it would all start sliding outside. A piece of wood was eventually placed across the entrance way to prevent this; hence the saying "the threshold".

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle or stock pot that always hung over the fire as many families still did well into the 20th century. This was their stock of food and every day they boosted the fire and added things to the pot and their standard dish was from the stock-pot. You can imagine that over a period the contents lost their individual flavours and became somewhat stewed, hence the terms having a "stock" or "stew". They ate mostly vegetables not getting much by way of meat.

They would eat this "stew" for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while; hence the rhyme, peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old..

Sometimes they could obtain some meat often just a snared rabbit but occasionally they could get quantities of pork, which made them feel quite

special. When neighbours came by they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon".

They would cut off a little to share with guests (not normally the best bits) and would all sit around and "chew the fat".

Those with real money had plates made of pewter. Food with a high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning often leading to death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf (oven bottoms), the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the "upper crust".

Lead cups were used to drink ale or spirits. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road and finding them by the wayside would take them for dead ("dead drunk") and prepare them for burial although there was always an element of doubt so they did not rush the process.

Accordingly they were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of "holding a wake".

INSURANCE ESSENTIAL

A regular climbing friend of Adrian Bridge took a day out from a business trip to North Carolina to do a days climbing on the granite of the Smokey Mountains. He was bitten by either a copperhead or rattlesnake on the left hand, which rapidly swelled up and as you can imagine was very painful.

He had to climb one more pitch before abseiling off and walking out to the hospital. Once there he was given an anti venom drip and kept in overnight.

Result?

No lasting damage other than to his wallet; \$26,000 for drugs and \$4,000 for hospital charges.

It pays to be insured.

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

As Editor I get a constant stream of comment for which I am extremely grateful and it often takes the form of cuttings from various publications when members think the content will be of interest to fellow members.

I also get copies of the regular publications of numerous organisations.

When I feel I wish to reproduce the whole article I go for formal permission and give full accreditation but frequently I will just mention the matters under discussion within these pages.

Quite obviously I am more likely to expand on those matters within my own sphere of knowledge and where I have a personal interest.

Snippets in recent journals have however triggered a new phenomenon. I am now acting as post box for members sending in opposing points of view on several issues. I like to see this healthy debate but please bear in mind that I am merely the messenger and 'Taint my fault Gov'.

I always try and cross reference any 'facts' which come my way and will contact members who send in material to try and get their views and encourage an expanded contribution. This is not always easy as I do get material signed by common Christian names and even cross referencing the post marks sometimes leaves the sender anonymous.

I have a number of times in the past quoted statistics from the RSPB and have been taken to task when the facts as presented paint a slightly distorted picture. There are often two sides to any issue and all interested parties will put there own slant on the situation. As Chairman of the County Local Access Forum I see one of my main roles as bringing together apparently conflicting views and working to an understanding of each others concerns and a satisfactory joint way forward.

I further complication arises when I am sent pages from newspapers with interesting 'letters to the editor'. These whilst interesting and apparently quoting responsible bodies, are not always as well informed as they think they are and

sometimes perpetuate myths or genuinely allocate credit to organisations when it is not in reality due.

Those of you who know me well are aware that I have many diverse involvements some of which may on the surface conflict but in reality I do not see it that way and suggest that my range of interests and contacts gives me a better than average ability to weigh all pros and cons.

I am Chairman of one area of the Ramblers Association. This is a body that has a reputation for opposing any diversion of footpaths and ignoring the legitimate concerns of landowners. This reputation is well founded in some areas but I have many friends in the Country Land and Business Association and actively work with several, developing their businesses and see no conflict. There are not many issues which cannot be resolved by a bit of give and take.

I am an environmentalist and regularly write on issues of ecology and the environment but equally have many shooting friends and help them occasionally beating for them. I take the shooting times and hopefully they are about to publish a letter by me refuting some misconceptions about access to the coast.

The issues are often inflated by press coverage.

I recently was afforded a half page article in a broadsheet evening paper extolling the health and well-being that arises out of access to the countryside and exercise in the fresh air. I spent a good part of the article talking about the co-operation between user groups and land owners.

Unknown to me at the time the same paper had asked a member of the CLA to write an article on the same issues.

Both articles were edited down to about 700 words and both had all references to co-operation removed and when published this full page spread came out under the banner headline of 'War in the Countryside' As both authors know each other well and serve on numerous bodies together we fired off a joint complaint to the editor.

The RSPB and United Utilities have recently had a joint rebuttal published in the Yorkshire Post's Country Week setting the record straight about the treatment of birds of prey on the Bowland Estate

SERVAS

From George Spenceley who wonders if any Club member has heard of Servas International?

George and his wife Sylvie were planning a three-month tour of the west side of the United States. They had several good friends where they were invited to stay, otherwise it was anticipated overnight accommodation would be at the ubiquitous and friendless motel. That was the situation until visited by a Dutch couple whom George had met in Nepal. "Why don't you join Servas?" they asked. "What is Servas?" he replied.

The name Servas, which means "we serve peace" in Esperanto, was started in 1949 by a number of Scandinavians who felt that after the devastating war there was a need for open minded people from varied ideologies and countries to meet, ideally in each other's homes. Today Servas Internationaql has over 15,000 members and hosts in 130 countries. To become a member either as guest or host a very nominal fee is paid to the national group, this to cover administrative costs. Before acceptance as a member, a personal interview by one of the regional officers is required followed by two letters of reference as evidence of integrity. It is a system of open doors that could be abused; certainly it should not be considered as a means of having a cheap holiday. Conversation and the exchange of views of common interest are the purposes and for this reason a visit of not less than two nights is encouraged.

On acceptance as a member, an official document will be issued on which the guest will write a mini autobiography. This complete with a photograph serves as a passport and is handed to the host on arrival. The member then applies to their National Office for a list of hosts in the country in which it is intended to travel. In the case of the United States, the current handbook lists 1431 names. Britain has only 564 names, less than half that of France, Italy and Germany. Other countries offer fewer hosts: Nepal 76, Russia 61, Bhutan 5, Belarus 3, Bolivia 2.

For whatever country, the details of each host listed with cover essential information of address, means of contact (two or three days' notice is suggested) and directions. Many hosts will offer to pick up their guests when convenient. Further relevant information is provided: the ages of hosts, occupations, languages spoken,

their interests, countries in which they have lived or travelled and organisations or societies of which they are members. A further line may indicate the attraction of the area in which they live and a few words encouraging you to visit. With all this information a guest can select those hosts with whom they may feel most compatible.

George and Sylvie embarked upon this new (to them) service with some hesitation, uncertain of the welcome they might receive. Their initial fears were groundless. In addition to visits to their personal friends and between nights at motels, they accepted two days of hospitality from twenty Servas hosts in all cases being quite overwhelmed by the warmth of their welcome. While each varied in what they had to offer, they had certain things in common: distaste for current US policies, liberal inclination and an interest in other people and varied cultures. Conversation flowed easily on many topics, which is the aim of the organisation.

Their hosts varied widely in background and what they had to offer. A few were affluent and lived in homes of some splendour, others could only offer more modest and cramped accommodation. Likewise varied were their occupations: academics, teachers and those in the medical world being the most common. They stayed with a financier and his doctor wife in an exclusive suburb, their immaculate home decorated, like a museum, with expensive artefacts from their world travels. Prominent among these was a life-size copy of a terracotta soldier specially shipped from China. Affluent yes, but the same couple had happily slept as Servas guests on the floor of a not very salubrious house in Peru. It is a classless society.

Another of their hosts was a retired postman living in a small mobile home. He now did charity work but he was a connoisseur of Californian wine. The walls of his modest home were lined with racks of carefully labelled bottles. One of their hosts ran an organic farm, another bred horses. Somewhere outside Reno they stayed on an alpaca farm, these attractive animals clustering curiously to watch the barbecue a few yards from their pens. Somewhere on a remote peninsula on the Washington coast, where they went to watch birds, they stayed with a retired oyster farmer with his musical wife - she had led a band which toured Europe. Now retired, they toured remote parts of Europe on tandem.

Very varied then were their hosts, but all had warm hospitality in common, the pleasure

given and received was mutual. George and Sylvie did seek to reciprocate in some measure; a modest present was offered if only a bottle of wine in which the boot (trunk) of their car was well stocked. In most cases on their second night, they took their hosts out for an evening dinner. It was not expected but always appreciated.

George and Sylvie found it all most enriching - not only to see beautiful scenery and interesting places but to share briefly in the lives of some of their inhabitants.

Further information: www.servas.org

FURTHER TO CLIMB

A recent survey has shown Mont Blanc to be actually be 15,784 ft high, 14 feet higher than when last measured.

Unlike glaciers at lower levels it appears that the ice and snow cap on the higher Alps is actually thickening due to global warming. Seemingly we are seeing more 'sticky' snow and it is thought the mass of ice on the slopes of the mountain has doubled since 2005.

SPLITTING

We have all seen long processions of walkers on the hills but one of the great attractions of our Club meets is that our company often splits and each group do their own thing, meeting up later to compare notes.

At the recent RLH meet one ex-president took splitting to extremes.



OF DAYS OF YORE

Four members of John Godley's family along with the president and two past presidents ascended Ingleborough on Saturday 29th of September 2007.

Their task was to honour John's wish that his ashes should be scattered there. A special part of Britain so special to our president in 1958-60.

If we look back to his era the annals throw up distant memories to some of his contemporaries but I have to admit his presidency came to an end 2 months after I started work as a green 16 year old.

We have turned up one old photo of that era including John. Left to right are Roy Salmon, David Smith, George Spenceley, John Godley, Jack Carswell and Richard Gowing.



This picture was taken on Bidean nam Bian on the 16th April 1960 - My thanks to Cliffe Large.

Jack Carswell, is a one-time active member of the club and for many years was a regular climber. He is now 93 and living in a home in north Cumberland. A great name in British climbing.

MARCH OF THE MONSTERS

H G Wells would feel at home in today's landscape as giant monstrosities bestride the wilder parts of our domain.

Despite the fact that wind turbines are rapidly being discredited, planning consents are still being granted all over the UK despite bitter opposition from both locals and the informed campaigners. The Government desperately fights to meet its EU-imposed target that within three years, 10 % of our energy must come from renewable sources. At the moment that figure is less than 5% of which only 1% is from wind.

The only way the Government thinks it can meet its target, is by forcing through permission for many thousand more turbines.

Even their own regulators disagree and it was a recent recommendation from Ofgem, that the Government should end its Renewables Obligation, under which the wind industry receives a hidden subsidy of nearly £1 billion a year due to rise to a staggering £32 billion a year, paid by us through ever higher bills. This obligation compels the electricity companies to buy all the power generated from wind at around twice the normal market price and without a subsidy the industry is so "uneconomic" that projects would dry up.

Turbines are grossly inefficient producers of power costing massive sums to create in addition to the pricing subsidy they need to compete, and they only have estimated life spans. Recently a significant change has happened and no longer are communities objecting to wind turbines just because they represent intrusions into some of our wilder, more beautiful areas but the people are realising that subsidised wind power is an expensive way to generate only minute amounts of electricity.

The Government is prepared to bend normal planning rules and flout local democracy to force through as many schemes as it can but people now see it as a con trick. Government can claim to be striving to be green by 'bribing' companies to build schemes which are virtually ineffective.

When Ofgem calls for an end to the subsidy system calling it the most costly and inefficient way of lowering CO2 emissions so far devised, the days of this nonsense may hopefully at last be numbered.

As a further condemnation, the CO2 emissions it saves are negligible bearing in mind that the hundreds of turbines in Wales save only 200,000 tons of CO2 a year, about the out that a single coal-fired power station emits every week.

It would seem that the only place where these large turbines can be justified would be offshore but relatively near to major cities and even then they would need to continue to enjoy massive subsidy to compete.

Hopefully there is still a chance to save our wilderness areas.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A healthy turn out of members attended this years AGM, minutes of which will be circulated in due course.

The president outlined his hopes for his second year in office and his full report is given elsewhere.

Iain Gilmore is stepping down as LHG Warden after doing sterling work on the redevelopment of that cottage and a replacement is being sought.

Rob Ibberson is also stepping down from the committee due to pressures of other commitments and he was thanked for his contribution.

Subscriptions were increased by a majority vote.

NEW DRESS CODE?

Contrary to the various rumours circulating after the dinner meet I can confirm that the YRC has not introduced a new dress code for breakfast after such events.

The stalwart disporting himself in sartorial splendour on this last occasion was doing so having slept on a floor overnight with the only raiment he had access to.

Unfortunately in the early hours of the morning when repairing from the bar to his caravan a few hundred yards up the road, he discovered that the green cagoule he had collected from the hotel was not his and therefore did not have his caravan keys in the pocket. To compound matters his car keys were locked within the caravan and his own cagoule had found its way to Lowstern with a member who did not realise he had the wrong garment.

MONTRAIL ULTRA RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIP

In 2006 a new ultra-running championship was launched with Montrail as the main sponsor. In 2007 the series comprises 12 events, 4 short distance (26 - 31 miles), 4 medium (31 - 40 miles) and 4 long (43 - 61 miles one of which is the Fellsman). Contenders count their 4 best scores

which have to include one event at each distance. 203 contenders scored points in the 2007 series including YRC member Adrian Dixon who finished 20th overall and won the over 60 category (scoring events Wuthering Hike, Calderdale Hike, Osmotherley Phoenix and Rhayader Mountain Challenge).

Not bad eh? I'd have called the distances long, longer and very long!!

Adrian Bridge

RE-INTRODUCTIONS

For those of you living within reasonable travelling distance of Glasgow and following the developing debate about potential re-introduction of species once indigenous to this country, you may be interested in a debate and presentation taking place at the Kelvin Gallery of the Hunterian Museum.

It is on February 11th between 7.00 and 8.30 and the subject will be whether wolves, beavers, lynx and even bears might be found once again living in the wild.

For further information contact the Scottish Wildlife Trust (edhamilton@swt.org.uk)



SPANISH REVENGE

It is said that the ships of the line made of stout English Oak kept the Spaniards at bay in the days of the Armada (with more than a little help from the weather)

It now seems likely that revenge is to be visited upon us from Spain with the weather again playing a major part.

It seems Global warming is encouraging a fungus that is killing hundreds of thousands of Oaks each year in Spain alone and it is spreading north as the climate warms and is coming our way.

COSTA BLANCA ROCK

At the end of October 2007, the two Adrians, Bridge and Dixon, Tim Josephy and four friends from North Wales: Geraint Jones, David Evans, Nic Sharpe and Medi Ashton, braved the vagaries of Ryanair and flew to Alicante for a week's sunshine & climbing. We stayed in a tiny village called Abdet, about a half hour inland from Benidorm, surrounded by spectacular limestone pinnacles and grand mountain scenery. Our house, owned by an English climber, provided excellent accommodation and the village had two bars, so we were well set up. The only problem we had was the stove, an eco friendly affair that burnt compressed sawdust and had an instruction manual slightly bigger than the one for the 737 we flew in on. Needless to say, no-one read it until the middle of the week and even then it took the combined might of several degrees to work it out.

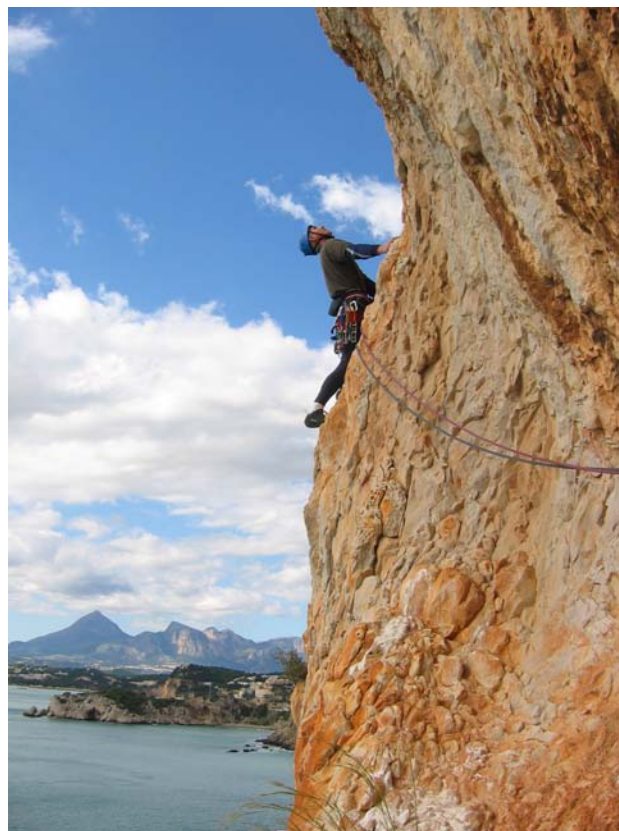


We climbed and walked every day. Sunday saw us at the well bolted cliffs of Toix, although the weather was more like home than the Mediterranean. Monday dawned damp and windy so we stayed on the local Abdet cliffs, finding plenty to amuse us. After that, the weather improved and was fine & warm for the rest of the week.



YRC Journal

On the Tuesday, two set off at 5:30 for a big day on a nearby mountain called Puig Campagna, only to find a flat tyre and no spare - serves us right for going for the cheapest car hire! Eventually they got towed to a tyre shop for a sidewall repair which was surely illegal, but it lasted the week.



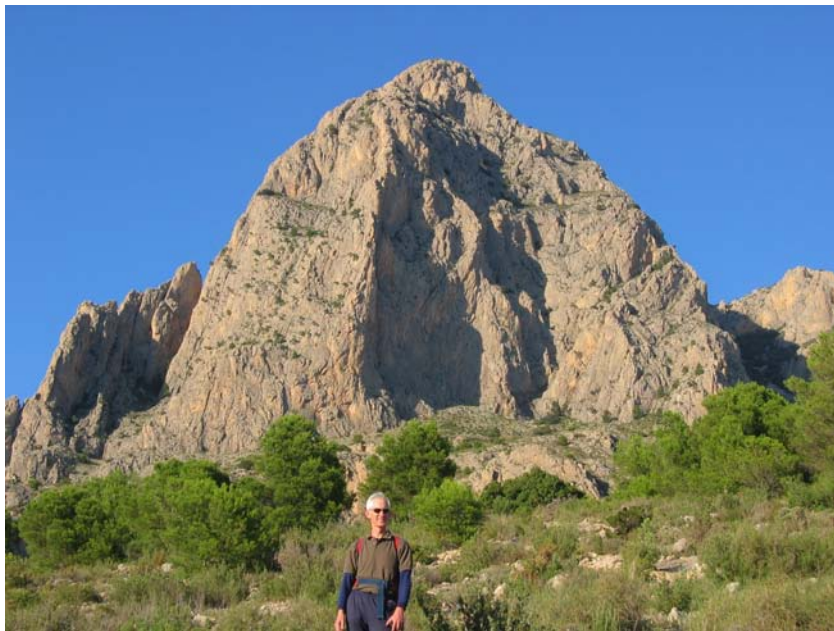
With half the morning gone, they returned to the sea cliffs at Toix to do the Magical Mystery Tour, a great adventure involving a hair raising abseil some 45 metres down overhanging rock to ledges above the sea, then a long easy traverse through spectacular scenery, to an intricate line up through very steep rock at a reasonable grade: All very exciting.

The others went to nearby Echo Valley, where they found excellent climbing in a beautiful situation.



On Wednesday, one pair walked in the Abdet area, finding some impressive scenery and some very hard going through the thorns and scrub. Another party went to Sella, the Mecca of sport climbing in this area, but unaccountably couldn't motivate themselves to do much. I have noticed this before, when you are younger you think there will always be a next time but as you get older you think this may be the last time, so you have to get on with it!

The last pair made it to Puig Campagna this time and enjoyed a superb 15 pitch hard severe ridge route on this spectacular mountain.



strolled down unencumbered and I struggled on behind with two ropes and two sacks.

Despite the unfortunate illness and injury we had a great week. The opportunities for climbing and walking are limitless and one can feel a smug sense of superiority as one looks down on the crowded fleshpots by the coast. Well recommended for an autumn or spring break.

Tim Josephy

PHOTOGRAPHS

Below - Espero Sur Central

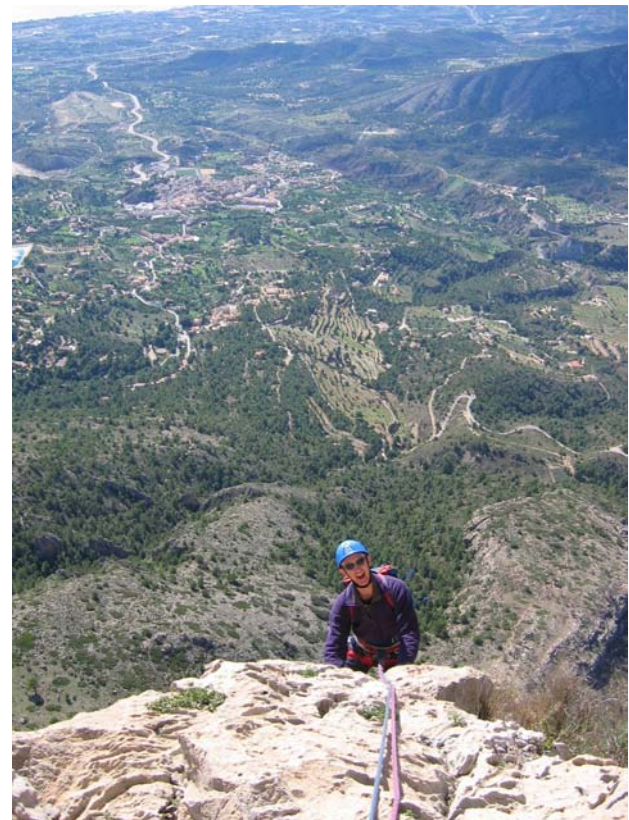
Left- Puig Campagna

Page 32 left
Abdet Valley and Pinnacles

Page 32 right
Top
Magical Mystery Tour
Bottom
Echo Valley

Unfortunately Adrian Bridge succumbed to a nasty stomach bug in the evening, not recovering until well after we returned home. Needless to say, this was not allowed to interfere with his climbing and next day we all returned to Echo Valley, where 3 multi pitch routes and several roadside sport routes were climbed.

On our last day, Adrian Dixon took himself off into the hills again and found a spectacular castle atop steep limestone crags. The youths went to Toix cliffs again whilst their elders and (maybe) betters went to the Penon de Ifach, a superb 1000ft pinnacle of rock sticking out of the sea by Calpe harbour. Here they climbed a fine HVS, Diedro UBSA, which involved a scary diagonal abseil to a narrow ledge above a 600ft wall. Adrian fell when a hold broke - not far- but enough to crack a rib, which no doubt rather spoilt his day, but he stoically didn't mention it until we reached the top. Passers by on the descent path must have thought I was a guide & he the paying client as he



OBITUARIES

Thomas Hugh GODLEY 1914 - 2007



John was the name his mother added to his birth certificate and the one that we knew him by in the YRC. He was born shortly before the First World War on 20th May 1914. He left Marlborough School at the age of 17 to join the long established family firm, Godley & Goulding of Worktop, Timber Merchants, Saw Millers and Woodworkers founded in 1860. After gaining experience in every aspect of the timber industry he eventually took part in the other activities of the Company, those of forest timber valuation and felling. Godley & Goulding survived over a hundred years but ceased trading in 1962. In 1968, he acquired a timber business in Cirencester.

He was in a reserved occupation during the war because of the great need and his knowledge of wood. He served in the Auxiliary Fire Service.

Trees and wood were to be an important part of his life even into old age. The craft of woodturning fascinated him as a young man, his interest and skill never left him and he was still producing beautiful turned articles well into his eighties. John was proud to be on the Worshipful Company of Turners' Register of Professionals and had a stall in Cirencester's Craftsman's Market.

On the 23rd of September 1937 John was elected a member of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club and almost completed 70 years of membership, however he is currently on record as the longest serving member. He became friendly with Frank Stenbridge, their families holidayed together often in the mountains walking and skiing. Potholing soon took a hold on him and his activities with the Club took him to Northern Ireland in 1938 and 1939. One needs to read the Roberts account in the YRC journal no.24 of two expeditions there to get a feel for John's enthusiasm for caving. Pollnagollun, Marble Arch Cavern, Rattling Hole, Pollasumera, Legnabrocky Pot are just some of the caves and potholes they visited. Then there was the discovery of Reyfad near Noons Hole.

John Stuart Watson

John lived in Harrogate and when he joined the YRC was a bank clerk. He was already a member of the York Mountaineering Club when he joined the YRC and he probably came under the influence of that remarkable member, Ernest Roberts who proposed him in April 1949. His seconder was another Harrogate man and a redoubtable potholer, Frank Hawksworth Barstow, who reached the far end of Mere Gill in 1914.

Two years after the Second World War in 1947 he was back there again, Reyfad was their first objective. Jack Holmes' account in the 25th journal describes well their involvement there. Then back again in 1951 and 1963. Needless to say John descended many of the Yorkshire potholes.

John was a very well respected member of the Club. He became a Vice President of the Club 1950-52 and later President in 1958-60. In 1972 he became a life member. He died on the 20th of August 2007.

Survived by two sons David and Simon and two daughters Mary and Marion, living in Toronto, Bolton, Cirencester and Winchester.

F David Smith



Turning his hand to wood turning

John served in Italy during Great War in the infantry. Clearly an all rounder for at one stage he walked inland from the coast of Iceland to the plateau.

He died in 2007 having been a member for 58 years.

F D Smith

BOOK REVIEW

The Caves of Meghalaya

Daly B.D.K. (2006)

(Shillong: Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Govt. of Meghalaya; Rs350).

When I was a lad India did not feature on the world speleological map. As late as 1989 the Atlas of the Great Caves of the World devoted less than one page to the caves of India, the longest being 3.2 km. long, and the deepest a mere 86 m. The reason was political. The most promising karst area, the 300 km. limestone belt in the south of Meghalaya State, was close to the unstable Bangladeshi and Chinese borders. Therefore only Government officials, army personnel and the local residents were permitted to be there.

Since then the improved political situation has allowed unrestricted cave exploration to take place. During the past fifteen years the members of the Meghalaya Adventurers' Association, and visiting cavers from Europe and the USA, have organised many joint expeditions to these caves.

This well-produced book summarises their work with 111 cave descriptions, 70 colour photographs, 13 surveys, 5 maps and 117 references to the earlier literature. It contains much more than cave descriptions varying in length from a few metres to 22 km. There are a geological summary, speleo-historical and bio-speleological summaries, and a glossary of technical terms.

The speleo-history pages give credit to the YRC member Bill Allsup's 1934 book Notes on walking around Shillong which contained three pages about the Meghalaya karst.

This essentially well presented book has some imperfections. Pages 87 et seq. are missing! There is no scale on the survey of the Siju Cave. It is disappointing that more space was not devoted to the problems of cave conservation. Limestone country has poor soil cover. The caves are therefore prone to degradation because of deforestation, and top soil erosion, to which must be added the irreversible damage done by quarrying activities. If more had been written about this, the book would have provided good

propaganda against the ongoing encroachment of the limestone quarries.

The inexcusable error has been made in the introduction by Arindam Som, who claims that the world's longest cave is in his Meghalaya! That record belongs to the USA where the Mammoth Cave / Flint Ridge system exceeds 550 km.

Despite this criticism the book deserves to sell well. It is an essential guide to the Meghalaya caves for both local and more distant visitors, and a important addition to the world's cave literature.

Steven Craven

THE CENTRAL BUTTRESS OF SCAFELL

A collection of essays selected and introduced by Graham Wilson.

Millrace, 2004, ISBN: 1 902173 163.

£12.50 direct from the publisher,
www.millracebooks.co.uk.

The Alpine Journal 2007 (Volume 112), just recently received, contains an article by Gordon Stainforth, "The Crux, Great moments or turning points in British climbing history". Among the 25 pictures covering 15 decades from 1860 to the present day, prominence is given to a photo by the Abrahams, "Central Buttress, Scafell, Easter 1915". This was staged a year after the first ascent, on 19th April 1914, by S W Herford, G S Sansom, H B Gibson and C F Holland. For the photo, Holland, R T Chorley and another were posed on the climb, Holland having been lowered into the crux position.

This brings me to the subject of this review. Millrace is a small Cheshire publisher who produce a series of handy sized books on mountain, walking and travel subjects. In "The Central Buttress of Scafell", they have reproduced a set of articles, mainly from our Journal and that of the Fell and Rock, setting out the history of the climb, from the events leading up to the first ascent in 1914, via some significant ascents (and the first descent!), up to the present era. Our Journal is represented by Fred Botterill's account of the first ascent of his Slab, (Vol. II, No. 5, 1903), and Claud Frankland's account of the second ascent with Bentley Beetham in August 1921, with his

illustration of the Flake Crack enhancing the front cover (Vol. V, No. 15, 1922).

Beetham's account of this climb in the Fell & Rock Journal (Vol. V, No. 3, 1921) is also included.

A further article co-authored with Mabel Barker (who had previously made the first female ascent, as described in this book) by our one-time YRC member Jack Carswell, describes their first descent of the route with Ieuan Banner Mendus in 1936. (FRCCJ Vol. XI Nos 30-31, 1936-37). Jack in a recent conversation paid tribute to Mabel's boldness in leading the descent from the Bayonet Shaped Crack to the V Ledge, groping for unseen footholds with no real protection from the rope. The final account, by Elizabeth Cripps, is of a recent ascent (2004), 10 years after the tragic dislodgement of the Chockstone from the Flake Crack in 1994, which necessitates a departure from the Crack onto its face. The articles are introduced and linked by essays by the editor, Graham Watson, to make a coherent and very readable account of the history of this great climb.

Anyone who has had the privilege of ascending CB (I seconded Colin Taylor up it in 1961, a few days after following him up Botterill's Slab) will value this book for its record of probably the greatest British rock-climb they have done, and others who appreciate the majesty and atmosphere of this great crag of Scafell will treasure it.

Richard Gowing

CLUB PROCEEDINGS - 2007

MEETS

Jan 12/13 Glenridding
Feb 8/11 Ochils MC Hut Crianlaraich
Mar 9/11 Deinolen North Wales
Mar 31/A1 Low Hall Garth
Apl 20/22 Edale - Ladies Weekend
May 11/14 Dunmail Raise Lakes 2000's
Jun 22/24 Glencolumkille Donegal
Jun 29/A4 Corsica GR 20
Aug 14/16 Cumbria - Long Bike Ride
Aug 24/26 Lowstern
Sep 14/16 Robertson Lamb Langdale
Oct 5/7 Peak District
Oct 12/N4 Bhutan

Oct 26/28 Salving House Borrowdale

Nov 17/18 Whoop Hall Annual Dinner

Dec 7/9 Ennerdale Christmas meet

The meet heralding the start of the Club's 2007 programme did not augur well. Atrocious weather was forecast, the roads were awash and an HM Coastguard van was parked at the end of the Greenside road. Then a power cut. What else could be in store? But nothing deters our members; many of the obvious and well-known places were visited. Someone reported seeing a 'view', but most reported only gale force winds and heavy rain.

The February meet was at the Ochils M.C. hut near Crianlaraich. Again conditions were not those we expect, soft snow on frozen ground. Everyone enjoyed the first day, Friday, particularly the meal provided by Chris Hilton.

Saturday - Violent winds, low cloud, sleet and snow. David Large and his guest battled their way to the summit of Cruach Ardtrain. David said, "It was grim". The 'Six Nations Rugby Match' on television was an excuse by some to make something of the visit. Two of our climbers visited the Wall in Glasgow on the Sunday.

The early March meet was based on the Wolverhampton M.C. cottage near Deiniolen, which is hidden away along minor roads. Tryfan area was visited. Yet again there were gales but the rain was horizontal. The meet was saved by Tim's catering always enjoyable.

At the end of March LHG was to have been the venue but improvements in progress there meant transferring the meet to RLH. The Saturday was fine but with cold winds. Most of the Langdale tops were ascended.

Also in March was a 'Lads & Dads' meet or was it 'Lads & Granddads'? Enthusiasm was the order of the day. The youngsters were introduced to rope practice, a visit to the climbing wall at Ingleton and rope ladder climbing back at Lowstern, and on Sunday scrambling on the Norber Erratic Boulders.

April was selected as good time for the Ladies Weekend. Rambler House, Edale was the venue. Gaining height by way of Grindsbrook Clough where good views opening up as the party neared the summit. Then the party were off to Kinder Scout and the celebrated 'Downfall'.

It was interesting to observe how various people dealt with the unfamiliar gruffs, fairly unique to this part of Britain.

The Club having completed the Munros (1983) and the Corbetts (2000) in the past it was decided that we should come near to home and tackle the Lakes 2000ft summits, but in a weekend rather than a week. 38 members took part. The meet was based at the well-appointed Achille Ratti hut at Dunmail. It was good to see Peter Selby on the meet after a break of 20 years. Chris Renton undertook and maintained communications from his base in Kendal. Catering was of a high standard and was masterminded by Richard Kirby. Perhaps the Welsh 2000's might be the next in line.

At the end of May a party of members set off for Glencolumkille, Donegal, an area familiar to many of our members in the thirties and forties. Coastal walks presented great landscapes of jagged pinnacles and neighbouring islands and spectacular climbs at Muckross Head. The later attracted the attention of Adrian and Tim. It was a meet of great diversity including Canoeing, loch side walks, scrambling, rock climbing, mountain walking and a village Ceiladh. The meet based on Derrylahan hostel proved to be excellent choice.

The Long Walk never fails to attract our members and Ian Crowther always manages to provide us with a hard task; his 'Swaledale' walk was no exception. What a splendid valley this is? The first section was through village and woodlands then by way Framlington Edge, but then came the slog over the waterlogged Sleighmoor and the Pennine Way. As usual the support party did their stuff. Sunday was another nice day when hills near our base at Low Wita saw our feet.

Corsica enticed four stalwart members in late June. The first day on the hills started with mist and was humid but later temperatures reached 35 deg. As the trek proceeded it was generally agreed that Corsica was an ideal island for walking, climbing and mountaineering. A comprehensive report can be read in this journal.

There was no support for a visit the Silvretta Mountains; in its place a meet was fixed for Lowstern. Two potholes were descended: Bull Pot of the Witches to South Chamber and Burnett's Great Chamber. Two dead sheep made descent of Cherry Tree Hole impractical on the Sunday so Hammer Pot was substituted.

The Long Bike Ride has now become a regular feature of our meets since the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 indicating how versatile a club we are. Once again the weather forecast was dreadful. Thankfully it turned out better than expected and riders enjoyed a well-planned route from the Solway Firth, Silloth, a circuit of Skiddaw, Scales and Keswick and back to the Fylde M. C. at Stair. The ride included more than 82 miles of steep hills in that beautiful part of England.

At the end of August was the annual Barbeque at Lowstern that has reinvented itself into a meet for youngsters. Caving was the attraction with underground trips to Calf Holes and Brow Gill Cave. Inglesport Wall was another attraction enjoyed by all. Let us hope that the future of the YRC is in the making.

Never a year passes without a joint meet with the Wayfarers, with a usual a full house, but this one was special, it marked the sixtieth anniversary of these joint meets. The weather could have been better, low cloud and cold wind on the mountains but rock climbing on sheltered Bowfell Buttress was possible. More low-level walks were appropriate although the more stalwart members visited all the Pikes. The catering was again up to the standard to which we have become accustomed. Mike & Alan have become a successful duo following Ken and Harold before them and back to Harry Spillsbury.

The overseas meet to Bhutan was well supported and all appear to have been very impressed by this most beautiful and unspoiled country, although almost medieval, it is in touch with the world of today through the all-invasive media.

The joint meet with the Fell & Rock in late October was not well attended. A fine start degenerated into gale force winds and torrential rain. This must surely have been one of the poorest years for weather in living memory, though the Tuesday YRC group hasn't missed a week on the hills. However those attending the meet enjoyed the occasion, which is what meets are about.

The Christmas meet was a third visit to the splendid Scouts hut delightfully located in the forests of Ennerdale. The weather lived up to its 2007 image, 60 mph gales whisking the surface from lake in Ennerdale and torrential rain. Regardless some hardy members topped the high

mountains. Members Kinder, Casperson and Ince in the brand new scout hut provided a superb Christmas dinner, with every modern facility. Sunday, there was snow on the high tops and the day opened up with blue skies and wonderful views. Back in Yorkshire were flooded fields and roads.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 116th Annual Meeting was again held at Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale, on 17th November 2007 when the following members were elected to the committee for the year 2007 - 2008.

President; F M Godden
Vice President; R A Kirby
President Elect; A D Bridge
Secretary; R G Humphreys
Treasurer; G A Salmon
Meets Secretary; J H Hooper
Editor; R J Denney
Librarian; A R Chapman
Archivist; W N Todd
Huts Secretary; R G Josephy
Hut Wardens:
Low Hall Garth: Vacant
Lowstern: J Lovett
Auditor; C D Bush
Committee: M J Borroff; D J Handley;
G Campion; C G Renton

Council of Northern Caving Clubs Representative;
H A Lomas

The minutes of the 2006 AGM, the Officers' reports, the Treasurer's Accounts were again provided to all members prior to the meeting; all of them receiving approval by the meeting.

The Treasurer then proposed an increase in the subscriptions from £35 to £45 and after much discussion the increase was finally accepted. The meeting then discussed the future of the barn opposite our cottage at Law Hall Garth although the current warden was unable to support the suggested work. Due to lack of time the matter had to be abandoned and was left on the table. Clearly there is insufficient time to hold an Annual General Meeting starting at 4.30pm and to give members sufficient time to such an important subject and also to give the hotel staff adequate time to set out the room for the dinner.

THE PRESIDENTS ADDRESS

Progress on those matters which I highlighted at last years AGM has been successfully achieved and are detailed below.

Our Committee procedure has been streamlined and Health and Safety matters is an early item.

New caving tackle has been purchased and a recording system introduced. A record is kept of all issues, returns, and inspection of equipment, and this is maintained in a special new record book. The equipment policy is appended within the book binding to guide users. (Part of our Health and Safety Procedures).

Risk Assessments have been done for both Huts, inadequacies identified, action taken, and we are now more in line with new legislation.

The LHG improvements have been successfully completed, and we are indebted to Iain Gilmour and Chris Renton, who have seen the contract through successfully. The financial outcome is that the final cost is in the region of £19000. This is less than the contractors estimate. Many favourable comments have been received. Some final tidying up work is to be done and this is in hand. Work is currently being undertaken by Ian Crowther to bring the bunks into line with H & S requirements. A fire detection system is installed. Sadly the Warden will relinquish his duties after the AGM. We celebrate his achievements, His hard work during his office is an example to us all.

Two Lads/ Dads/ Grandads meets were held with great success. These will be included in the 2008 meets list. Our thanks to the organizers, particularly Alan Linford who has pioneered this event.

Consideration has been given to the adoption of an Environmental Policy and a report is tabled at this meeting.

As a result of recent legislation your Committee has produced a draft Child Protection Policy. This will have consequences for our rules and hut booking procedures. We all have a duty of care in this matter and new rules will be drafted for adoption next AGM.

Safety rails have been fitted on the bunks at Lowstern to conform to H & S requirements, and improvements to Lowstern and its environs continue under the supervision of the Warden, who seems to have endless energy.

The aims for the coming year are:-

1. To continue with careful monitoring of our H & S requirements.
2. Produce new rules and booking procedures for our huts to ensure our duty of care towards young people is maintained.
3. Receive a comprehensive report on proposals for the LHG Barn from the Barn Sub Committee, and inform the Membership of the Committee's decision in this respect.
4. Investigate ways of achieving Limited Liability status for the Club in order to place a level of protection for all members should there be extreme legal action against the Club. The Yorkshire Mountaineering Club has adopted Mutual Status to achieve this aim, and the Fell and Rock C.C. are proceeding on course to do so at the end of 2008. This will require much research by the Committee and legal and financial advice sought. Members will be kept informed by the Newsletter, but of course no positive action can be taken in this respect without the consent of the membership at an AGM. Whilst these aims are secondary to the real objects of the Club, they are important to its well being.

FMG 16/11/07

ANNUAL DINNER

The 94th Annual Dinner followed in the hotel. The President, Mike Godden took the chair. Phil Bartlett, mountaineer, explorer and author was our Chief Guest. Martin Scott, the club secretary represented the Alpine Club, Rae Pritchard the Rucksack Club and Tony Charnley the Gritstone Club. President, Dennis Davis, represented the Wayfarers Club. Vice President, Kirk Mayer, represented the Midland Association of Mountaineers and Mark Vallance, former president of the BMC, represented the Climbers Club.

It was good to have with us John Farrer of the Ingleborough Estate, our honorary member together with his land agent, Michael Parkinson who is also a member of the Fell & Rock Climbing Club.

This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Club's expedition to the Jungal Himalaya; this was commemorated by a picture of the team on the back of the menu. George Spenceley, Arthur Tallon and two of Dan Jones's sons in law made the connection with the 1957 team who made the historic journey to the Langtang; the first regional club to mount such an expedition.

On the front of the menu was a sparkling picture of the Nantille Ridge taken by our president on a beautiful day of the Club's Welsh meet last year.

The President proposed the loyal toast followed by the absent friends toast at the appropriate time. Later he introduced Phil Bartlett, our Chief Guest. The President responded to Phil with an excellent speech. Michael Smith followed him, proposing the health of our Kindred Clubs and our guests in a well-researched speech, to which Martin Scott responded. The Club song 'Yorkshire' was sung to bring the proceedings to an end. Perhaps the best rendering for several years, it would undoubtedly have pleased our legendary former secretary, Cliff Downham.

2007 Membership Statistics

107 Ordinary Members
70 Life Members
5 Honorary/Life Members
1 Honorary Member
183 Total membership.

New Members

Chris B Fitzhugh
Peter Hodge

New Life Members

Harvey Lomas
Duncan Mackay

Deaths

Conrad Jorgensen
Dan Jones
John Godley
John Watson

Resignations

Geoff Baldwin
Chris Joint
Clive Mitchell
Jim Sykes

David Smith

THE ROAD TO HUNZA

Long ago in the fifties and sixties I climbed big snowy mountains. Now way past my biblical sell by date I enjoy trekking among them.

Although visiting the Indian Subcontinent a number of times I had never travelled to Northern Pakistan: Hunza was a mystical name conjuring up delightful people, fantastic peaks, and hidden glaciers. I was not to be disappointed.

My constant companion on these far away treks was Howard Humphreys. However a medical problem prevented his joining me and I was fortunate to press gang Chris Fitzhugh to take his place at the eleventh hour

I was tempted to trek the Hispar and Baltoro Glaciers but when reading guide books indicating one thousand trekkers a year plus three thousand support staff I lost interest.

I took the advice of Richard Kirby and focused on the Batura Glacier which he and his daughter, Helen, had trekked four years ago.

Helen, now living in Pakistan met us at the guest house she chose for us in Islamabad and introduced us to Altaf our local trek organiser.

Our intended flight to Gilgit the next morning was cancelled due to poor weather. No problem as Altaf had predicted this and organised a four wheel drive vehicle with driver. We left Islamabad at 6.00 am to begin our 600 kilometre journey up the Karakoram Highway. An exciting ride as the day progressed. We lunched at Mansehra and inspected nearby the edicts of King Ashoka carved in stone. Ashoka was the greatest king of the Mauryan period reigning from 273 to 232 B.C. Initially his life style was one of indulgence steeped in cruelty but on conversion to Buddhism transformed into a model of compassion. He even opened clinics for animals. An Indian Military Decoration is named after him.

Our journey became more spectacular as we drove north. Land slips, floods and the civil engineering of the highway cut into the side of cliffs.

At midnight after two punctures and eight police/army checkpoints we gazed in awe at the white mass of Nanga Parbat under a full moon.

It was in 1895 that A.F.Mummery together with Dr. Norman Collie, Geoffrey Hastings Yorkshire Rambler, and two Ghurkhas attempted this

Albert Chapman

mountain. Suffice to say that the doctor and our member came home sadly leaving Mummery and his two Ghurkhas in an unknown grave under the snows we gazed upon. Nanga was not summited until 58 years later by Herman Buhl.

I commend the letters Mummery wrote to his wife during his journey to this Nanga Parbet massif at the western end of the Great Himalayan Range. These are a preface to his book "My climbs in the Alps and Caucasus" and the following is an extract of one written in July 1895.

"We have had a rare time, driving from Rawal Pindi to Baramula. The tongas are queer little two wheeled low carts with delightfully easy springs. The first fifty miles there are relays of horses every three or four miles and you go at a tremendous pace.

We did one or two miles, coming down from Murree to the Jehlas valley, in three minutes, horses galloping like fury.

We got a good deal delayed, as the monsoon broke and the rain came down in thick sheets, so that a good deal of earth and stuff got washed onto the road. Thanks to the labours of numerous coolies, our tongas were hauled over bodily, but it quite spoilt the pace.

We met heaps of English people - in fact on no road in the Alps have I seen so many travellers."



Nanga Parbat (Naked Mountain)
8125m - 9th highest in the world



We arrived two hours after midnight at a very comfortable tourist hotel in Gilgit, the mountain capital of Northern Pakistan.

Prior to a tour of this vibrant colourful dusty bazaar town we were introduced to our guide Saif and cook Arshad.

An afternoon drive to Minapin for the night. Good guest house almost empty of tourists.

Pleasant 6 hours walk up to Rakaposhi base camp, ablation valley separated from Minapin glacier by lateral moraine. Only four other trekkers, a couple from Canada, an American guy and an Irish girl now living in Switzerland. Storm during night put new snow on the mountains.

A semi relaxing day wandering the dry Minapin Glacier from which great views of Diran and Rakaposhi East.

Next morning relaxing walk down to Minapin and jeep to Karimabad on the K.K.H and a good night at Eagles Nest Hotel way above Karimabad. Superb vantage point with views across Hunza valley to Rakaposhi.

Now acclimatised we headed north to Passu. A swim in Borit lake and an experience never to be forgotten in crossing and re crossing a wire suspension footbridge over the Hunza river. It takes ten minutes and more than 400 careful steps on narrow boards spaced three feet apart.

We were the only guests at the Ambassador Hotel on the outskirts of Passu. The tourist industry almost non existent.

Our trek began at 7.00 next morning. A long climb up to Mulungeen. A two hour crossing the the Batura glacier to Uzhokpirt. Not a good place to have a bad leg.

On top of the glacier was an average of six feet of unstable stone constantly on the move. A very hot day. So after a long rest we decided to press on another two hours in the cool of the evening to Yashpirt.

Yashpirt a most delightful semi deserted village of thirty buildings constructed of huge juniper logs and dry stone. People from Passu take it in turns to do an eight day stay looking after the Yashpirt goats, sheep and yaks.

The sloping village meadows are surrounded by junipers and afford spectacular views of avalanches crashing down the Passu Massif across the glacier.

Met only two other trekkers a Dutch guy and his Bolivian girl friend. Also no eagles or vultures only magpies and cuckoos.

Rain during the night enhanced the hill sides above 4000 metres with fresh snow.

We trekked to camps at Kukhill and then Guchesham and onto vantage points at Lupdur giving spectacular views of the second Batura Wall rising two and a half miles above the glacier.

A sprained right ankle balanced my bad left knee as I hobbled back to Guchesham where Arshad prepared a great meal.

A pleasant three days walking down ablation valleys amid abundant juniper willows and birches, camping again at Yashpirt my favourite, across the rock covered glacier to camp at Mulungeen with view of Tupopdan - mountains which made our Skye Coolins look quite gentle.

Back down to the Batura terminal moraine where we forded the river to reach our waiting jeep at China Camp on the K.K.H and another night at the almost deserted Passu Hotel

A stop over at Gulmit which was celebrating the 70th birthday of the Aga Kahn.

Our visit to Naltar valley and its flowers was aborted due to a bridge under repair so an early return to Gilget. We were made very welcome in every place we visited and never felt unsafe.

The people in Hunza had that mild disdain of those in the south as many in northern England have of those in London and the South East.

We were fortunate to get a flight to Islamabad as the K.K.H was blocked in many places.

We both enjoyed a superb visit to this wonderful northern area of Pakistan and would certainly journey there again.

Footnote

While in the hills General Mussaraf had sacked the Red Mosque and killed its Imam causing a backlash by the minority which included the looting and burning of Red Cross Depots along the K.K.H.

A fierce storm had uprooted trees and killed eight in Islamabad with winds over 100 mph.

Six hundred villages hit by floods in Sindh.

MEETS REPORT

Error - The report of the Ladies Meet at Edale earlier this year had Ian & Una Laing as attending. In reality it was Iain and Sarah Gilmour

THE LAKES 2000'S

11-12-13 May 2007

A considerable amount of planning went into the meet and true to YRC tradition the odd withdrawal led to some rapid and largely successful rejigging. The stamina of members in their 60s and 70s was much in evidence and impressive including some members who did a hard 2 days and then mopped up the Caldbeck group after some confusion as to who was doing what. Bravo. Mercifully the bathing in all tarns above 2000 was dropped earlier. This would have been a commitment too far, although certainly novel. Weather throughout was varied. Some very poor; but usually improving and occasionally good.

The Achille Ratti Hut provided some very good accommodation and the location was nigh on perfect for most. From 5 am on Saturday 3000 charity walkers passed the hut on a route from Keswick to Barrow much to the disbelief of those lying in bed and being appraised of the fact.

The first "incident" of the weekend was on Friday when a member trapped his finger in a turning bicycle wheel and needed treatment at Keswick A & E.

The definition of the Lakes 2000's was based on Dawson's "The Relative Hills of Britain." He proposed that a 2000 mountain should have a minimum drop of 500' between mountains. There are 110 such tops in Lakeland. All these peaks were scaled, sometimes more than once by a combined effort of 40 members and 1 guest. It was a fine, whole club effort which confirms that although the Club membership is ageing it is still in good heart. When last did we have so many members on a meet? One participant was a new face to many having not been seen for the past 20 years! We hope he has recreated the bond and will be with us rather more frequently in the future.

Only Saturday dinner was catered. This was a fine affair, masterminded by Richard Kirby to whom we are indebted.

Catered meets remain a hugely popular and possibly unique characteristic of the YRC. Long may they continue. Thanks as well to our Director of Communications, Chris Renton.

Munro's 1983
Corbetts 2000
Lakes 2000s 2007
? 2010

Inspiration needed for a proposal for a whole club event in 2010. Any ideas?

In attendance at the Achille Ratti:

President Mike Godden
Bush, Campion, Welch, Lomas, Dover P, Handley, Crowther I, Lovett, Smithson, Wood A, Wood M, Platt, Smith D, Ibberson, Robinson, Dix, Aldred, Selby, Dootson, Linford, Renton C, Collins, English, Josephy R, Edkins, Kirby, Dover R, Chapman, Hick, Hooper, Gilmour, Josephy T,

Based elsewhere:

Hartland, Kinder, Casperson, Coot (G), Schofield, Farrant, Todd.

Visiting:
Gordon Humphreys and Fiona

DJH

DONEGAL: DERRYLAHAN HOSTEL, KILCAR

24-29 May 2007

This Irish meet was based in the Gaelic-speaking 'Gaeltacht' area of southern Donegal to the west of Donegal Town and Killybegs. Renowned for its spectacular coastline, mountainous interior and its traditional music, we were not disappointed!

We were given a warm welcome from Shaun McCloskey and his staff at Derrylahan and the assorted hostel buildings offered bunkhouse, family and self-catering accommodation. The communal kitchen proved a fine international meeting place and information exchange with acquaintanceships being reinforced over evenings in the peat-fire-heated sitting rooms.

Thu 24th

Most members travelled over by ferry to Donegal, with the route from Dublin north of Lough Nigh being declared the faster. Two parties took the opportunity to visit a rain-swept Giants Causeway en route and some to dry out in front of a welcoming peat fire followed by lunch in the Bushmills Hotel, not far from the famous distillery of the same name.

Paul, having arrived early by bus, had a wet walk from Derrylahan to Dundawoona Point and Tawny Hill.

Fri 25th

Dominating the view westwards from our accommodation, Slieve League is claimed to have the highest marine cliffs in Europe. Different parties made the ascent to the summit, with an arête providing some mild scrambling on the direct route.

Dave Hick traversed onto Lachen, the next summit, via coastal approach missing Mick, Adrian Dixon and the two Dovers who took a direct line to the top, finishing at the perfectly named Silver Strand near Malin Beg in glorious sunshine and deep blue seas.

After walking with Flic near Malin Beg, Adrian and Tim escaped for some climbing at Skelpoonagh Bay. Meanwhile Hilary erected her new collapsible canoe for its inaugural marine expedition and paddled the length of Teelin Bay from slipway at Teelin, which was just below the ruins of a coastguard station blown up by the IRA in the twenties.

Sat 26th

Mick, Adrian Dixon, Tim and Paul took off into the Bluestacks Mountains for a round of Lough Belshade, taking in Croaghanirwore, Croaghbarnes (Cruach an Bhearnais) and Ardnageer from the north end of Lough Eske. The going was wet underfoot in the valleys, but lots of splendid granite on the tops with some mild scrambling. Fortunately all the showers that soaked Donegal Town and Sligo passed well to the south allowing us to almost get back to the car without getting wet.

Most other members and guests headed over to the Glencolumbkille peninsula to venture along the spectacular coastline studded with signal towers.

Adrian and Flic ascended Slieve League from Teelin. Adrian and Tim then went down to Muckcross Head to get a couple more routes in.

Later a larger party went into Kilcar to attend the village ceiladh, followed by a session with some excellent musicians and some traditional Irish dancing in Rory O'Connor's Bar in Meananeary.

Sun 27th

Tim took his turn to climb Slieve League while Mike and John visited St John's Point the long peninsular protruding south-west below Killybegs.

On Sunday Dave H walked with Helen and Mike round the Glencolumbkille peninsula with its many ancient crosses and a signal tower. Later visiting Malin Beg's tower and down out of the strong winds to frisbee on the sands with jetsam lid.

Alan and Angie ventured over to the Silver Strand and Malin Beg while Adrian and Mick helped Hilary on another paddle around Kiltyfanned Lough near Port, after deciding that wind and waves in Loughros Bay were a bit too epic for a solo kayaker.

One group headed over to Ardara for dinner followed by a session in the Corner House Bar.

Mon 28th

Another stunning day of weather. Mike and John set off to catch their ferry back to England. Mick, Adrian Dixon, Tim and Dave Hick got dropped off south of Slievetooley on the northern side of the Glencolumbkille peninsula and traversed its two western tops and on down to the sea cliffs near Gull Island. The cliff top path afforded spectacular views past jagged pinnacles to Tormore and Toralaydan islands and were followed west to Port, meeting Paul, Adrian and Flic part way. Afterwards, Adrian, Tim and Paul went to Muckcross Head for spot of climbing.

Mike and Helen Smith did the Slieve League round. In the evening we all met up for a final meal and the odd Guinness together.

Tue 29th

While most of the party were crossing Eire to catch various ferries back to England and Wales, Helen and Mike crossed three of the Blue Stack

tops as we all left - encountering brief hail shower as they started to descend.

They later visited the Maghera (sea) Caves, the Machair sand dunes at Meenlaragh, Hornes Head, Malin Head (basking sharks), Derry, Giant's Causeway, and the waterfalls in Glen Dun in Antrim before heading back to the ferry at Larne.

Richard Ann and Paul went to the Giants Causeway in glorious weather.

Directly below the hostel was a beach offering some several hours of harmless amusement searching for otters. Two holts were identified by Mike and Helen - fresh prints abounded but the otters kept out of sight.

All in all we enjoyed an excellent meet, mostly in stunning weather with some seriously fine coastal and mountain scenery explored, some good music and not a bad drop of Guinness to be found anywhere, despite an extensive search! MB



LONG WALK, LOW WHITA June 22-24

The meet 'The Long Walk' has its origins in the sixties. Not that there weren't such walks before, for example the first recorded one was perhaps the 'Seven Peaks Walk' in 1953 which Cliff Large describes in our journal. The first time the term 'Long Walk' was used was in 1966 when the average age of walkers was about 35. Now the average is 61. Four members completing the walk had an average age of 75.

Ian Crowther the meet organiser can be relied upon to devise a testing and interesting walk. This one was no exception; it clearly revealed the splendour of Swaledale, arguably the most beautiful of all the dales in Yorkshire and perhaps England. However walkers concluded that he had not 'walked' the Sleighmoor section recently, which was waterlogged, indeed we can now claim to be able to 'walk on water'.

From the barn the walk took us along the Swale, Arkle Beck, Cuckoo Hill and Framigton Edge to Langthwaite, a most beautiful section; trees at their best, fast flowing streams and characteristic dales buildings. The shower at this stage perhaps



Adrian Dixon, Tim, David, Paul, Adrian Bridge and Mick, the meet leader.

Attending:

Mick Borroff and Hilary Tearle, Adrian Dixon
Adrian and Felicity Bridge, Tim Josephy
Richard and Ann Dover, Alan and Angie Linford
Mike Godden, David Hick, John Lovett
David Martindale, Mike and Helen Smith
Paul Dover

wakened us properly after our noisy 3am roll call by Ian. After the rain we enjoy an ideal day for walking with wonderful distant views. Despite regular consultation of maps a number of groups went astray on the Pennine Way. GPS to the rescue, not too much energy was wasted.

At Tan Hill we encountered literally hundreds of immaculate Lambretta motor scooters with their appropriately dressed, middle aged owners and their molls. The section via Tongue onto Roberts' Seat and Ravenseat was steady going enabling us to take in the scenery. This was followed by another scenic section from Park Bridge to Gunnerside, the rocky beck Swinner Gill, along the paths along the Swale to Kisdon Hill via Muker. Finally back to Low Whita Camping Barn, now renamed Low Row Camping Barn; crossing the Swale to the south side via Spring End, Haverdale House Low Houses and Feetham Holme.

We are as usual indebted to a valiant support party, Ian, John and Chris who not only fed us so well but also recovered any stragglers.

Sunday dawn another nice day, various groups made full use of being in Swaledale. One group of three completed a ten miles walk around Gibbon Hill and Apedale to the SW of Reeth.

The walk varied between 33 and 37 miles.

David Smith

Attending:

Mick Borroff, Roger Dix, John Jenkin, Michael Smith, Derek Bush, Ged Campion, Graham Dootson, Harvey Lomas, Mike Godden, Tim Josephy, Derek Smithson, Frank Wilkinson, Albert Chapman, Iain Hawkes (PM) Arthur Salmon, Ian Crowther, Chris Hilton, David Smith

CORSICA - GR20

June 20-July 7

Preparation & Planning.

The story begins about a decade ago when Alan first wondered whether he "might do the GR20 one day". Time passed and more recently he decided to "have a look" and booked onto a guided trek on part of the Northern section. This done he decided it was a feasible trek for a party from the YRC to attempt and following a discussion with Stuart, a Fell & Rock Club member and guest at the 2005 Christmas meet, he realised that by combining several of the stages and using the refuges and Bergeries (shepherd/goatherd summer quarters) where conveniently placed, so that descent to the villages every evening for a gite or hotel would be avoided, it ought to be possible to do in about a fortnight.

The other principal question was whether to go N - S (by far the most frequently attempted way), or S - N? In deference to our average age and lack of proper "alpine fitness" we decided the latter would be wise. Our Corsican agent and advisor, Sarah, told us that the "commercial" tours rarely do the full length, Calenzana in the NE of Corsica to Conca in the SE, because it is very difficult for the average group to be able spend 14 days "on the hills" and do it on a normal 2 week break from work. They thus do not include one or more of the initial and later stages. Many people starting in the North and walking south, as most guide books are written that way, encounter tough stages early on, leading to high "fall-out". By combining some stages, to make our "long" days and having a couple of "light" ones, (it's all relative!) we could still have a "spare" day in case of bad weather delay; and still keep to our budget airline, homeward departure schedule.

Our individual preparation was varied and quite tricky for the rigours to be experienced, even on

our first "low land" walks. Alan had tried his best walking across Scotland with a heavier rucksack! Nothing can fully prepare one for the incessant steep up and downs; the rough paths of scree, small granite and shale-like "aggregate"; extensive boulder fields and "interesting" slabs and scrambling. Someone said it was nearest to the most precipitous part of the Welsh Rhinogs - but continuous for a fortnight! Availability of water replenishment "sources" was another critical factor. On occasions we needed to set out with 3 litres at least. We all had problems with ageing joints at one time or another and secret remedies and prophylactics were used unobtrusively to aid our daily deficiencies. We certainly acknowledged the wisdom of the S - N decision giving us a (relatively!) modest introduction to these "hills"; but we were unanimous that that first ascent from Conca between 0630 and 0830 on Day 1 was the most uncomfortable ascent of the lot.

We have detailed the itinerary in the table attached, for information and possible use for anyone doing all or part in the future.

The first week.

We had traversed the island from Ajaccio (pronounced "A-jacks-io") airport, by taxi and bus to St. Lucce on days minus 2 and minus 1; not without some excitements. The trip from airport to the city central was probably the hairiest taxi ride ever. From breakneck to pedestrian speed - "the photographs" our jovial driver remarked (he meant speed cameras) as we suddenly went at one third speed; and after 200 metres back to 80mph to swing round the corners of nether Ajaccio. The next day on the cross-island bus we were delayed almost an hour by a real "pantomime" of a hold up in a narrow mountain village street with passers by and our driver attempting (largely failing) to sort out impetuous "Latin" motorists: and later our passengers getting off the bus to "bounce" a badly parked vehicle blocking our passage, onto the pavement.

The first "gite night" at Conca was hot and sticky and "enlivened" by a fire alarm (false), shortly before midnight. Breakfasting at 0545 on Day 1 we were slightly surprised to find people already departing. Following shortly afterwards we were soon in a "muck sweat", and "blooded", as we tackled the narrow stony path up through the sharp-thorned "maquis" covered slopes, on our ascent to the first landmark; the Bocca (col)

D'Usciolu. Mist was swirling around and we donned waterproofs in a vain attempt to keep dry. Vain because the humidity at a mere 600 metres was so oppressive we were wet through either way. The "Maquis" is the self same as the French Resistance of WWII fame. The Corsican rebels never gave in to the Axis forces and bred their sister organisation in mainland France in about 1941. That day improved with some magnificent scenery and shady forest paths and a little bit of what was to become familiar - the incredibly mixed and often treacherously unstable footholds on "terra firma". We all had subsequent slips, slides and tumbles; fortunately all in recoverable places and with no permanent damage; but the continuous concentration required added to the fatigue factor throughout the trek.

Our overnight stay at Bavella was comfortable and we were (mainly) able to dry things off - very necessary but not always possible subsequently. We were tired, as expected, as this was a "2 stage day". So Day 2 was in marked contrast; a later departure and an "easy" walk to the Bergerie d'Asinou was expected. Well we selected the alternative, "alpine" route, "to give Rob some experience to slabs, scrambling and exposure". As we negotiated the Aiguilles, coming off the highest point of this route, at about 1800m, we lost the way-marks (properly called "Balisees") but continued on down the corrie following a clear line of cairns. We stopped for lunch during which we decided we must return to the path we'd erroneously left - thus obeying rule 1 of Corsican walking. Meanwhile two young French women who had followed us down the line of cairns sat down and got out their lunch, only to re-pack it as we started off. "You led us down so you can lead us back please". Sophie and Emily were good companions, worked in London and were heading for the same Bergerie. We left them having a late lunch and dawdled our way to Asinou. But not before cooling our feet in the stream just below it. We did contemplate a swim but tacitly decided that a first summer dip in water at about 4 deg. C was not advisable for hot "pensioners".

At the end of the trip this Bergerie was a unanimous favourite. Not, it has to be confirmed because of Emily, on her first big walk, and Sophie. We were offered a warm shower. This we gratefully accepted but not knowing it was to be "al fresco" behind a rock with a magnificent view down the valley. We all shared a meal together, either side of the table of Angeline and Pierre-Doh

(PD), the Bergerie keepers; with PD at the end and Angeline serving. The meal was enhanced by the young women's instantaneous translation. This not only gave us valuable information about Corsican food in general and that menu in particular, but allowed us to make and understand comments and enjoy repartee, otherwise very difficult. We sat closely packed on benches at the table in flickering candle light. We enjoyed local ham, fresh pasta, a tasty gruel containing chestnuts, fennel and a hint of aniseed, followed by home made cheese with fig jam and finally a coarse oat (?) biscuit. These are mentioned as being typical Corsican fare but not repeated necessarily subsequently. We were rather late to our bunks at 2215.

Next morning was cool as we did our ablutions wherever we could find a bit of privacy. The French women, though originally included in our space, had been allotted another, next door, but joined us for breakfast outside the bunkrooms in the cool of dawn. Angeline embraced us all and we were soon climbing the Monte Alcludina, some 700m above us which we reached, somewhat breathlessly, in less than 3 hours. This included a bit of scrambling and slabs - more good practice for later. The descent and walk on the lower valleys towards Bassetta included some very different and attractive meadows and forest on this alternative (to the GR20) "liaison" route so as to include the gite at Bassetta. This was quite different to Asinou, being on a dirt road, and more accessible. It was a granite cabin and café with some camping, chalets and a bunkroom. A more sophisticated solar heated shower than Asinou was enjoyed and we washed clothes and generally relaxed having had a shorter day. We were fed early and two of us in our bags by 2030: soon followed by the others.

We were half awakened by some more people entering with torches and faint whispers about 2330. As we crept about silently departing the following morning the two shapes on the upper bunks woke up and said - "Good morning, we hope we didn't make too much noise as we came in to share a bunkroom with 4 old men after all". We were surprised! Sophie and Emily were supposed to be at another place on a different route - but there had been no-one there when they arrived about 1800. They'd set off walking to somewhere else and a "very old man" in a vehicle had pitied their plight and assisted them; bringing them to Bassetta at about 2300 where Madame had given them a welcome hot meal before they'd turned in. We wished them a good rest of their trek,

and were off by soon after 0700 on a beautiful morning; though we had a bit of difficulty finding the start of this "Liaison" route back to GR20 at Bocca di L'Agnonewhich we reached within the "designated/book" time of 2 hours.

Then followed one of those spectacular ridge walks for which the route is famous; memorable for us all. We could see the Mediterranean in the distance on both sides of the island. It was up to 35 deg. C and "too hot" for us really in the direct sun, but a cool wind when high up and in the shade of rocks. We arrived at the Refuge d' Uscoli about 1430. It seemed crowded but all was well and we, as "Tour Aventure" (TA) clients, were allocated the first four lower bunks with the warning it might reduce to 3 later. We were fed (pasta, vegetable and some meat), with TA preferential treatment on the, by now distinctly cool, terrace, and so in anticipation of an early start next a.m., we were soon abed. The bunkroom was full and the top layer all chattering away. But at some secret signal there was instant "hush" and the only sound the lowing of the wind and occasional snore. Setting off at 0630 we had a good, but long, two stage walk to the Gite at Col de Verde, skipping the Capanelle refuge: probably the best meal, shower and bunk-room (except the outer shutters which broke loose in the high wind. Here, next morning, after a hurried breakfast at 0705 we soon appreciated this was going to be a windy and longer day than perhaps we'd hoped. The wind roared though a lattice tele-communication tower beneath an invisible col in the trees - and sounding like some moaning monster. Further on, on that long walk, the wind was very strong and we were almost lifted off our feet when it rose to a (reported) 120 k.p.h. Just over the col at Palmente, we came across a young French woman bandaging her damaged knee. She had been lifted bodily and "landed" heavily on it. Her husband had called for a helicopter: we halted to help in any way we could, which in the end was David, staying behind to help the helicopter land and assist the woman and the medic in their hazardous evacuation. We remaining three then descended through the pleasant woodland to a made dirt road, where David caught us up an hour or so later as we approached our destination - the gite at the Col de Vizzavona.

During this first week Derek who had been feeling under-nourished, not being able to cope with the cold pasta/rice picnic lunches, became over-tired and was contemplating leaving us on day 8 at Grotelle. Alan advised that the nearest route to a

railhead to re-connect to Ajaccio was to stay with us only until Ref. L'Onda and walk out from there, as the rest of us left for Grotelle. He reluctantly decided to do this. L'Onda had been very crowded on the previous windy day but (apart from the rubbish bins and single "squat" toilet) served us well. There were even 2 grab handles on the inside of the door at strategic heights.

(Derek adds:- After leaving the other three (at 0640), I followed the GR20 down towards the Bergeries de Tolla and then a big track to the roadheads at Canaglia/ Apart from being short of food there were reasons why I should get home. A walk of 4 km. on the road: a wait in Tattone; a train to Ajaccio; some angst at the airport and then Nice and Leeds by midnight). He had had a long day!

The Second week

Many more spectacular and beautiful views, "stiff" ascents and "loose underfoot" descents punctuated our progress over the next few days. We saw Mountain Swifts, Eagles, Kites, lizards galore and Choughs. The sun shone and the wind blew. We got stronger and nearer to the predicted "walking" times (see table attached); we looked forward with a tri-partite "melange" of masochistic glee, fervent desire for more rocks, and faint apprehension - to the last few days' challenges. We were blessed with good conditions for these final adventures and looking back on them, we were perhaps justifiably a bit smug; the "Cirque de Solitude"; the French-man jovially claiming up-hill right of way passage on account of his "great age" being deflated by David responding, indicating that our average age was in excess of his alone; the camaraderie with our fellow north-going travellers whom we regularly came across in refuges etc: and that long, final descent, punctuated by joviality (de-mob happy?) and tuneful singing of whatever we could remember words for, on the path to Calenzana. We watched our footing diligently but still had a few inadvertent "sit-downs" and slides on that descent.

After such a trip there is inevitably much more that could be recorded in detail. We are left with indelible memories of a great experience. We think we are the first YRC group to have attempted the whole GR20 though many YRC people have been there. Corsica is a wonderful mountaineering, rock climbing, trekking, or just walking area and beckons again. It is difficult to envisage a large YRC meet, (official, open or closed) on account of the logistics and distances.

But plans are being hatched for a "private" YRC outing in 2008 (or beyond) whilst "people are fit enough to cope"! This would probably not be a long distance trek but a more concentrated, perhaps rock climbing; or a "top-bagging" venture? The rewards are for the taking and it's only about 4 hours flying time from LBA and a bit less from MAN.

RI

Attending

Derek Collins; David Hick; Rob Ibberson; Alan Kay



Photographs

- Derek, David & Rob surveying the route
- David on the lookout point
- Ascending the Cirque de Solitude
- Alan & Rob, on way down to Calenzana

GR20 June-July 2007. Details of daily Itinerary

Day	From	Dep time	Ht(m)	To	Arr time	Ht (m)	Ascent (m)	Descent (m)	Book time (hr.m)	Our time * (hr.m)	Remarks
-2	LBA	1230		Ajaccio	2145						Jet 2 & AirFrance
-1	Ajaccio	0834		Conca	1540	230					Bus
1	Conca	0635	230	Bavella	1640	1218	1300	300	8.00	10.05	2 stages
2	Bavella	0810	1218	Berg. Asinau	1545	1442	500	200	5.10	7.35	
3	Berg. Asinau	0735	1442	Gite Basseta	1520	1300	730	930	5.30	7.45	
4	Gite Basseta	0720	1300	Ref. Usciolu	1430	1820	400	90	4.30	7.10	Part off track
5	Ref. Usciolu	0635	1820	Col de Verde	1445		700	1177	7.35	8.10	
6	Col de Verde	0725		Gite Vizzavona	1750	1163	350	760	9.10	9.25	2 stages skipping Capanelle
7	Gite Vizzavona	0730	1163	Ref. L'Onda	1500	1385	1100	600	6.10	7.30	DC left for rail head a.m. day 8
8	Ref. L'Onda	0640	1385	Berg. Grotelle	1505	1360	800	800	9.45	8.25	Skipped Ref. Petrapiana
9	Berg. Grotelle	0710	1360	Berg. de Vaccaghia	1500	1620	935	685	6.00	6.50	
10	Berg. De Vaccaghia	0705	1620	Ref. Ciottolu	1700	1990	750	300	9.00	11.55	2 stages skipping Castellu de Bergio
11	Ref. Ciottolu	0735	1990	Berg. Vallone	1100	1430		550	4.30	3.25	
12	Berg. Vallone	0625	1430	Gite Haut Asco	1320	1480	1000	1000	6.30	6.55	
13	Gite Haut Asco	0605	1480	Ref. Ortu de Pubbiu	1610	1400	1218	1090	9.35	10.05	Skipped Carrozu
14	Ref. Ortu de Pubbio	0705	1400	Calenzana then Calvi	1201	270		1295	5.00	4.56	Taxi to Calvi
+1	Calvi	0834		Ajaccio	1320						2 trains changing Ponte-Leccia
+2	Ajaccio	1510		LBA	2030						

* Note "book" time is "walking time" only; our time includes all stops

LOWSTERN

July 20 to 22

The refurbishment of Low Hall Garth resulted in this meet being rescheduled and relocated from there to Lowstern. These changes may have foxed some members and extensive flooding around Oxford marooned a member who intended to arrive. News bulletins reported southern motorways resembling car parks and helicopter rescues from house roofs. Despite weekend weather forecasts of wet weather including thunderstorms, the drying room saw only the cavers' gear.

However, the unseasonably cool and damp weather made the fire a welcome on Friday night. Conversation flowed effortlessly fuelled by the wealth of assembled experience, the recent return of one member from Pakistan and another from the full length of the western US seaboard, aided by a beer or two.

The Presidential party of two toured Newby Moss on Saturday inspecting the new YRC dig, criss-crossing the moor identifying active BPC and CPC digs then prospecting a few sinks themselves by eye. A senior member met only one walker as he covered a section of Pennine Way by Malham Tarn then branched off to Darnbrook House to loop back past Great Close Scar. The majority formed a party of seven under the leadership of the brothers Josephy to descend Bull Pot of the Witches. The completely restocked tackle store, glistening with new gear, was raided for ropes and ladders all duly entered in new record book. The party were the first to chalk up an entry on the Bull Pot Farm board and only one other party was encountered. The path into the shaft was thought to have improved but still warranted a handline. The chimney climb took everyone to South Chamber and a view of the swollen entrance waterfall. The watercourse was followed and a way made to Burnett's Great Chamber exploring many diversions along the way. The drumming of the entrance waterfall heard through side passages lured some into exploring alternative ways back up and eventually one proved viable. A hint to its whereabouts came from seeing the other party appear from a roof and pass by. Re-descending from the South Chamber, the party's two slimmest cavers squirmed down then up into Gour Chamber leaving nearby by two others anxious they didn't

need help. Meanwhile, a highly experienced party of three with a combined age of 210 years made their way back out. All were reunited in the parking area, changed before that rain started and drove a few unimaginative sheep some miles along the track before rehydrating at the Marton Arms. A sociable trip.

Saturday evening saw the usual high standard of catering and healthy appetites. Four made it to the now necessarily smokeless New Inn for a self-disciplined single pint.

Sunday saw two returning home for social engagements, one considering cycling in the Bentham area, another heading for the slopes of Ingleborough and five heading over to Darnbrook Farm to get permission to descend Cherry Tree Hole. The good news awaiting them was that an entrance blockage had been removed from the Hole - the bad being that it was two dead sheep. The entrance was located after a short search. Since previous visits a new entrance had been excavated and scaffolded. This gave inadvertent access for most to Hammer Pot but a less easy exit for one member. A variety of techniques were used in the figure of eight shaped passage to avoid entrapment in the narrowing. The pothole gave engagingly varied going along both passages from the T-junction until a 2-3m cascade stopped progress in one direction and the absence of a viable onward route terminated the other close to the sump. After a return to the hut, a tea and stowing the now not-so-bright gear in the tackle room, all that remained was to secure the hut, call it a weekend and say thanks to the organisers.

Attendance.

The President: Mike Godden.

Ged Campion

Ian Crowther

Chris FitzHugh

Richard Gowing

Richard Josephy

Tim Josephy

David Smith

Michael Smith

Richard Smith (G)

George Spenceley.

Alan Brown, Albert Chapman and David Handley joined the meet for the Saturday evening meal and John Lovett made a hut warden's visit on Sunday

LONG BIKE RIDE

14th—16th August

They say Luck favours the brave. With this in mind seven brave souls gathered at the Fylde M.C. club hut, at Stair near Keswick.

The forecast for the previous few days had been dreadful, though improving slightly on the first day. However we had rain and wind to look forward to on the Wednesday, the day of the ride and we were to spend time in the hills and out on the coast. Not good for bikes.

At 7a.m. on Wednesday morning it was damp and gloomy as we rode/pushed our bikes up Whinlatter Pass but things got better and when the Solway coast was reached the air was crystal clear and Criffel above Dumfries could very nearly be touched. From then on the day was a delight as the ride did a big circuit through Silloth, Abbeytown, Mealsgate, Hesketh Newmarket, Scales and back via Keswick. All were delighted with Silloth talking to the old Ladies who had entertained murderers and generally enjoying a relaxed and civilised atmosphere.

In the spirit of the YRC riders took variations which wetted their curiosity and no times were noted or distances but members simply had a long, hard and thoroughly satisfying day which, I am pleased to say, included the support parties.

It was the usual sort of evening with various views being presented in a forceful manner. One wise, or tired, member slept through most of it, but all of us had an early and restful night.

Thursday morning was brisk with the promised rain on the way. We were all thankful the weather people had got it wrong! The route was, basically, a big circuit of Skiddaw taking in Silloth with many variations and the distance around 82+ miles with quite a lot of steep hills.

Animal life comprised Red Squirrels, dead and alive, many dead Toads and lots of Buzzards calling.

A good Meet.

Members attending:

DC

Mike Godden, President

Ian Crowther, Derek Collins, Richard Gowing,
Richard Kirby, David Handley, Rob. Ibberson

LADS LASSES and DADS MEET LOWSTERN

24 August to 26 August 2007

14 Lads and Lasses and 18 Dads participated in this meet, the hut full, some camped, and all seemed to have a good nights sleep! Thanks to Tim Josephy and his team for producing, at short notice, an excellent barbeque for 36 (16 was the plan). Appreciation came from one of the ladies 'Is the catering always of such a high standard?'

Caving Expedition

Participants:

Adults: Tim Josephy, Richard Josephy, Eddie Edkins, Robert Crowther, Dennis Armstrong and Phillip Dover. Juniors: Tom van Bergen, Florence van Bergen, Michael Crowther, Adam Crowther, Charlie Young, Owen Linford, Max Turvey, & Marco Vascilic, split into two parties, one group Sat and one group Sunday.

Location: Calf Holes and through Brow gill Cave.

It proved to be an interesting party, with ages ranging from 7 to 78. Several were making their first trip underground, including the youngest and oldest persons, both of whom completed the full passage.

We gathered before the Hole in the hillside, over the brim of which a stream languidly poured its plashy contents. We were a motley crew. The professionals (identified by their knee pads) set about establishing an abseil into the hole, while the small and tall debutantes, each dressed as best as possible, in their hired hats and wellies, their borrowed suits and harnesses, looked on, pondering the forthcoming voyage. What would we encounter? Discomforts of a special nature reserved for cavers to be sure! Rock of adamantine firmness, low ceilings, and vertical vices certainly, and water in pools, in streams, and cascades from above? All most probably; so with a fatality of 'If the worst must come, then let the worst come!' In turn we abseiled down the first pitch.

There followed a relatively comfortable walk to a dead-end to look at an underground waterfall. We then returned to the entry place, and continued through a deep pool into a rocky passage. Soon we were being vertically challenged, and then

seriously vertically challenged until - 'faut de mieux' - we were flat on our faces in the muddy shale. Then the height began to improve but the width narrowed. We became horizontally challenged, and then seriously horizontally challenged until passage was so tight we had to crawl on to a rock shelf like underground worms. After more rocky progress, yet again we had to adopt the humblest of humble positions, the lowest of the low, as we posted ourselves through an underground letterbox (being YRC with a first class stamp of course).

Soon there came a respite. The Leader explained the next part of the trip. We crouched in the best position we could discover, listening as it seemed that someone called Hainsworth had found a new way to exit the Hole via Brow Gill Cave. "Was he very thin?" someone asked. "Yes", came the reply, "He was very thin. But don't worry the passage has been smoothed and widened by the many cavers since then." This did not sound quite as encouraging as perhaps the Leader had hoped.

The critical move can be compared to the technique in High Jumping, where you go over the bar in a figure of eight, feet first, then onto your back, arms outstretched, then just flicking your head over last. In our case, it had to be performed in the midst of a rocky figure of eight plughole. We were naturally grateful that others had passed through since Mr Hainsworth, but the increase in width seemed more honoured in the breach than in the understanding. We then found ourselves before the rock descent, where a fixed rope was available, and so at the bottom we picked up our exit stream, Browgill.

The way out was through a long narrow cleft in the rocks. It enabled us to walk upright in the stream, with the smooth clean rock brushing our shoulders. On each side the cleft towered high above us. And so we emerged into the sunlight, the green fields and leafy trees.

And were the earlier fears realised? Well undeniably one's neck ached with stooping for so much of the time, and knees were sore from crawling; and the squiggle of a figure of eight tested one's flexibility! But the excitement of the feeling of underground exploration, (we forgot about Mr Hainsworth at this point of course!) the undergoing (literally) of a new experience and the close encounter with geological time scales, these left one with buzz.

No gain without pain you know!



Intrepid Cavers

WAYFARERS JOINT MEET - RLH LANGDALE - 14th-16th September.

Eager men started arriving from 10 o'clock onwards. Eager to secure a bed - and preferably a bottom bunk! Mike Godden was there before them and needed help unloading dozens of bottles of beer. At £1-a-bottle they were very popular. He didn't have any food - but nobody cared! Colin Smith, Nigel Musgrove and John Bennet went for a walk, but mainly with the intention of ensuring that the O.D.G. hadn't moved and that they would be able to find it on Saturday afternoon too. Vehicles decanted old friends. Handshakes, yarns and a year's experiences were recounted. Alan Linford's was a keenly anticipated and very welcome arrival as he brought the food for 31 hungry souls for Friday's evening meal and Saturday's breakfast and for about 38 for Saturday's evening buffet: a mountain of food; a mountain of work; an avalanche of washing up!

Early breakfast and, as people recovered from their Friday beer, wine and whisky, they dispersed in different directions. Apologies to anyone I omit or include wrong details for.

Mike Godden, Alan Linford, Ken Aldred, Derek Smithson, Mike Kinder and John Casperson made their various ways to Low Hall Garth to view the alterations and renovation.

Three groups - Mike Poulter & John Bennet: Dennis Armstrong & John Brown: Mike & Richard Smith and friend were walking/climbing Pike o'Blisco, Crinkle Crags, Bowfell Buttress and down Rosset Ghyll - or walked the Langdales and down Dungeon Ghyll.

Four groups - Harold Mellor & Dennis Davis; Bob Hughes; Ian Crowther & John Schofield; Roy Denney & Martin Trasler did various routes involving Stickle Tarn, Pavey Ark, Harrison's Stickle, Pike o' Stickle, Jack's Rake and Dungeon Ghyll.

Steve Auty, Russ Bloor, Nigel Musgrave and Colin Smith had a lift to Wasdale Head and returned to RLH via Scafell Pike, Esk Hause, Rosset Ghyll and O.D.G.

Mike Gee & Dave Wood did the Kentmere Round on their way to RLH.

Everyone else did various low level walks in and around Great Langdale.

The weather stayed fine with infrequent sun in the valley bottom but there was low cloud and a biting wind on the tops.

Friday's traditional corned beef hash was followed by cheese and biscuits. Substantial fried breakfasts ensured that no one was in danger of starving out on the hills. Saturday evening's buffet was excellently prepared - up to the chef's high standards. Dennis Davis gave a short speech saying that he hoped the friendship between the clubs would flourish from its 60 year foundation.

This was an excellent weekend in every way. My thanks to the organizers - Alan and Mike - and to everyone who helped to make it so successful.

GC(W)

Attendees;

Wayfarers;

Steve Auty, Colin Smith, John Jacobs, Mike Godden, Alan Linford, Brian Turner, Nigel Musgrove, Pete Dixon, Michael Poulter (G), John Bennet (G), Bob Hughes, Dave Wood, Mike Gee, George Chambers, Dennis Davis, Russ Bloor, Harold Mellor

Yorkshire Ramblers:

John Brown, Dennis Armstrong, Jim Rusher, Martin Trasler, Roy Denney, Harry Robinson, John Lovett, John Schofield, Alan Brown, John Casperson, Mike Kinder, Bill Lofthouse, David Smith, John Jenkin, Derek Smithson, Ken Aldred, Ian Crowther, Mike Smith, Richard Smith, John Hemmingway, Chris Fitzhugh, George Spenceley.



SALVING HOUSE, BORROWDALE

26 - 28 October Joint meet with Fell and Rock Climbing Club

This meet was held at the request of the FRCC and Salving House was chosen because of its comfort and superb location.

However, there were only five YRC males in attendance, and eight males plus one female from the FRCC. The lady present was the FRCC President. Nevertheless, everyone met up on Friday evening with some eating in the hut and others in the Scafell Hotel bar.

Saturday dawned fine and it seemed a good day would follow. Various routes were undertaken via Cat Bells, Maiden Moor, High Spy, and two bog trotters to Ullscarf and Watendlath. The weather during the day became increasingly windy to gale force on the tops, and rain arrived late afternoon.

A convivial reception was held prior to the communal evening meal very ably prepared by the FRCC members with some YRC assistance.

During the night the rain was torrential - no doubt in order not to deviate from the areas reputation for one of the highest rainfall areas in England. The road was flooded below Rosthwaite on the Sunday morning but passable by car - just.

A very enjoyable weekend when good friendships were struck and where the love and enjoyment of the hills was very evident in all present.

YRC members present:-

Mike Godden,
Derek Smithson,
Alan Linford,
Mick Borroff
Iain Hawkes.

FMG.

THE DINNER MEET

Nov 17- 18

Members in attendance and guests-

Mike Godden (President)
Bartlett Phil (Chief Guest)
Vallance Mark (Climbers Club)
Scott Martin (Alpine Club)
Charnley Tony (Gritstone Club)
Davis Dennis (Wayfarers)
Mayer Kirk (M.A.M.)
Pritchard Rae (Rucksack Club)
Aldred Ken, Armstrong Dennis, Bridge Adrian
Brown Alan, Brown John, Bugg Victor
Burfitt George, Burfitt Joseph (Guest)
Burfitt William (Guest) Bush Derek
Campion Ged, Casperson John, Chadwick Peter
Chapman Albert, Chapman Garry (Guest)
Chapman Iain, Clayton Derek, Clare Alan
Crowther Ian, Crowther Robert, Denney Roy
Dix Roger, Dix Stuart, Dover Paul
Dover Richard, Edkins Eddie, Farrer John
Ferguson Ian (Guest), Gamble David
Gilmour Iain, Godden Mike, Gowing Richard
Handley David, Hanbury Alan (Guest)
Hartland Mike, Hawkes Iain (P.M.)
Hemingway John, Hick David, Holmes David
Hooper Jeff, Humphreys Gordon
Humphreys Howard, Humphreys Jason
Ince Raymond, Jenkin John
Jones Stephen (Guest), Josephy Tim
Josephy Richard, Kay Alan, Kinder Mike
Kirby Richard, Laing Ian, Large Cliff
Large David, Laughton David, Linford Alan
Lofthouse Bill, Lofthouse Tim, Lomas Harvey
Lovett John, Luck Andrew (Guest)
Mackay Duncan, Martindale David, Moss Peter
Newman Rory, Oakes Aaron, Parkinson Michael
Postill George, Renton Alister, Renton Chris
Robinson Harry, Salmon Arthur, Smith David
Smith Michael, Spenceley George
Sterland John, Tallon Arthur, Whalley John
Wilkinson Frank

This meet followed the traditional pattern with members arriving during Friday or Saturday and staying at several locations including the Whoop Hall where the dinner and AGM were held. As usual Lowstern was well employed as a home from home.

Early arrivers took to the hills or holes in the ground before meeting up for the AGM and subsequent dinner.



We took the lane from Clapham to Clapdale and then up to Rayside Plantation. There our leader gave us two map references to find two points at which he had placed marker posts. I will draw a veil over this writer's efforts to locate them. Sufficient to say that with some help from our leader we came upon the two 'digs' which the Club is currently working on. After looking at the vertical depth they go down I am rather glad I am not a potholer!

We then traversed over to Gaping Gill which was particularly interesting for two of our guests because it was their first visit. We had lunch by the side of the stream running into the chasm where we joined by the Secretary. He had been slightly slower than the main party as he had had a pacemaker fitted only a few days previously. It is surprising what modern science can do these days. It is even more surprising to me that he was able to get up to G.G. having spent the previous week in hospital. I know he got safely back to Lowstern as I met him plodding up the road to the cottage as I left for home. Well done Gordon.



The following day many members either headed for home or did their own thing but a number of guests were taken out for a walk in an area not familiar to all of them. The weather on the Sunday was similar to the rest of the week end, dull and cloudy. Fortunately the rain was restricted to occasional drizzle. After breakfast either at the hotel or at Lowstern where an excellent repast was provided by John Lovett and his helpers, the usual melee and discussions started regarding the activities of the day. Some members went off caving to escape the rain, they said, others were talking of going to an indoor climbing wall. Others just went off walking in small individual groups.

In the event only eight YRC members accompanied four Kindred Club guests on the walk designated by our leader Alister Renton.

Anyway to continue the story, myself and another member left the main party to traverse over Clapham Bottoms to pick up Long Lane and back to Lowstern. Two Kindred Club guests left for home and what was left of the party went over to look at another dig in The Allotments area. This was an interesting walk but it could have done with better support. Our thanks to Alister for organising it.

DB

In attendance on the walk:-

Alister Renton	Martin Scott - Alpine Club
Paul Dover	Rae Pritchard - Rucksack Club
Richard Dover	Tony Charnley - Gritstone Club
John Sterland	Dennis Davis - Wayfarers Club
Richard Gowing	Gordon Humphreys
Peter Moss	Derek Bush

CHRISTMAS MEET, ENNERDALE WATER

Dec 7-9

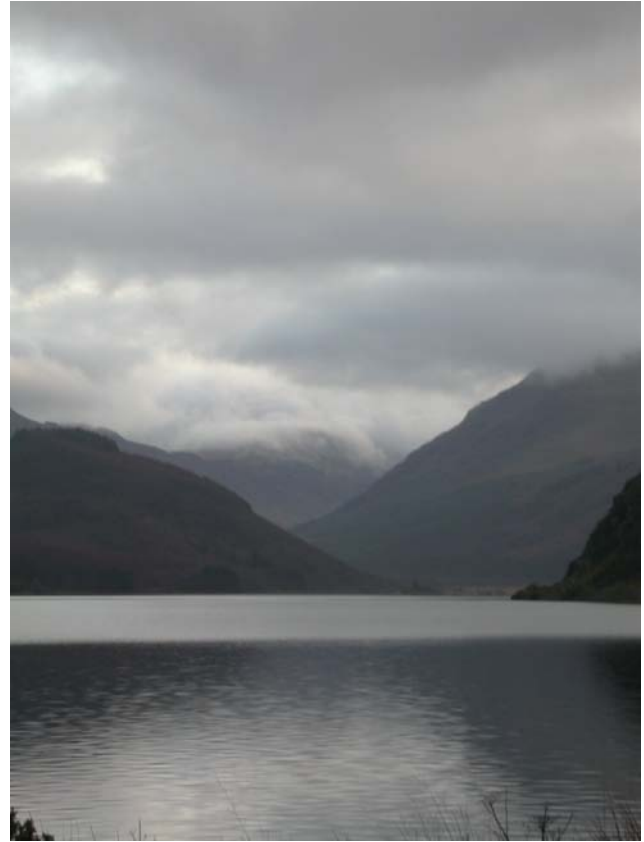
The opening to the YRC Christmas Meet Report for 2004 recalls the lack of clean crisp seasonal weather over the past decade for this highlight of the club calendar and as I sat contemplating the stationary vehicles on the M6 and watched the sheet lightening to the east over the hills I couldn't help but think that the BBC weather forecast might just for once be correct; unlike the BBC traffic news.

So as I crawled north from the Cotswolds, unaware that fellow members were enjoying Angler's Crag and being blown around en route to Crag Fell, it soon became apparent that the evening meal or the chance of refreshments at the Fox and Hounds was becoming more and more unlikely. The chance of an early arrival was made even less likely when my on-board GPS decided to offer a helping hand and suggest a direct route to the Ennerdale Scout Hut via some of Cumbria's more rustic routes that hadn't been passed by modern vehicles in recent years!

However, a late evening entrance was eventually made and a warm welcome received from all helped no end by a glass of red wine and the chance to debate every thing from the lack of global warming (thanks Ian) through to the opportunities for a repeat visit to Svalbard with Michael Smith et al in 2008 (MS and I both visited the Arctic in 2006 albeit 2 months apart).

The early morning call for a hearty breakfast on Saturday morning was somewhat dampened by the typical Cumbrian weather outside and the opportunity to get some far reaching views from the peaks didn't seem to be an option. Deciding that a simple low level stroll around Ennerdale would be the wisest choice to begin the weekend I set out with George Spenceley around the lake only to be hit by the full force of the winds almost immediately and what should have been a leisurely stroll turned into an interesting few hours of slipping and sliding with a number of occasions when we were literally blown off our feet. Even the return route along the level ground on the far side of the lake presented a few challenges with the white tops on the lake breaking over the shoreline sending head-height spray across the

path. Hopes that we might spot a Whooper Swan or two come to nowt with the only birds braving the water being 2 pairs of Tufted Duck.



Other parties travelled further afield but enjoyed the same climatic conditions. Derek Bush, Arthur Salmon, Frank Wilkinson and Paul Dover headed out to Scaly Moss (MR 062 137) and then walked over Blakely Raise in driving rain and high winds to Grike (MR 085 142 488 metres). They abandoned the walk there and walked back to car by a slightly more sheltered route. Their original intention had been to go on to Crag Fell then south to Whoop and back via Lank Rigg and Kinniside Common. The rain was turning to sleet and sticking as snow above 500m.

Graham Dodson, Peter Green and Rob Ibberson followed others along the narrow lane to Wains and the car park at Bowness, meeting a Land Rover about half way and having to reverse over 200 mtrs to solve that "impasse".

Parked up and booted they walked the north side of Ennerdale Water (as map calls it vs. "Lake" on the sign posts) crossing to the south side for path to Pillar. However the weather deteriorated as they ascended and being ill prepared for the wintry and blustery conditions turned back about 200 metres from the cairn.

Descending to the West-East track the party crossed the River Liza between Gillerthwaite and Black Sail hostels and headed back to the vehicle for a cup of tea at dusk.

Michael Smith's outing over Steeple and Pillar was curtailed by a forced retreat in the face of blinding airborne ice crystals and a rising wind and he now realises why the col between Steeple's NE top and Pillar is called Wind Gap! Burly David Hick, leading, was floored by the wind as they crossed that narrow col and instead of looking behind him to see if MS was OK, his first action was to look down the gully to see where Michael had been potentially blown. In fact he was crouched a few paces behind! Poles or axes would have been welcome on the day.

On returning to base, we were all rewarded mid afternoon with fantastic home made mince pies and a warming glass (or two) of mulled wine.

Dinner was served around 7.00 and here special mention needs to be made of the catering team who excelled themselves with a Christmas meal to be remembered. Soup, smoked salmon and turkey with all the trimmings was followed with Xmas pud and a good selection of local cheeses. The team in the kitchen and their able band of waiters were working so hard that they soon became out of sync with the rest of us and ended up one or two courses behind. Everyone piled in at the end and washing up was soon complete helped on with a variety of debates about the mechanism of semi-permeable membranes and an 1817 piece by Percy Bysshe Shelley (and there is a link I promise)...

Sunday was a clearer day and many took the opportunity to get some exercise before heading off. David Smith, Harry Robinson and Derek Bush parked their car just below Causey Pike on the

Newlands road and walked up a side track for a mile or so in very pleasant sunshine with excellent views over the Derwent Fells. A change from the horrors of Saturday!

Michael Smith mountain biked up to about 270m on Starling Dodd north of Ennerdale Lake then back to the river and up the valley to Black Sail hostel (300m). By this time there were glimmerings of sunlight. On the way down he caught a couple of photos of Pillar Rock with patches of cloud helping to pick it out from Pillar and Steeple behind.

The covering of snow at the head of the valley around Moses Trod and Boat How, seen the previous day, had all melted with the overnight rain. Only the highest gulleys held any snow.

However briefly that snow remained, it did not stop one enthusiastic young lad, staying at the hostel, who made the most of it. He snowboarded on the thin covering and the underlying grass, walking back up the slope each time!

In conclusion, despite the weather it was a good weekend with fine company and the perfect way to begin the Christmas celebrations.

MK

In attendance

Mike Godden, John Casperson, Gordon Humphreys
Raymond Ince, Mike Kinder, Roger Dix
Graham Dootson, Peter Green, Alan Brown
Jack Pattison (G) Ian Crowther, John Schofield
Derek Bush, David Smith, Robert Crowther
John Jenkin, David Hick, Iain Gilmour
Ken Aldred, Frank Wilkinson, Arthur Salmon
George Spenceley, Rob Ibberson, Andy Syme (G)
Mike Smith, Bill Lofthouse, Chris Renton
Harvey Lomas, Paul Dover, David Price
Harry Robinson



MEETS MONTAGE



Glencolumkille Pensinsula, north coast

Donegal meet



Above and left -
Adrian Bridge at Muckcross Point

Long Walk - Low Whita



Left - 1st feeding station
Bottom left - Arthur, Iain and Mick
Below - The day after





A day in Langdale



Christmas meet



OVERSEAS MEET

BHUTAN

The Club has staged an expedition to Bhutan.

A comprehensive meet report is being compiled and will appear in the next journal.

The objects of this trek were to walk wild, remote, rugged mountain country rarely visited by westerners.

So North Western Bhutan was chosen.

Also to enjoy the best food and hotels available which meant using Rimo with a condition that Motup joined us.

The Bhutanese are not allowed to act as porters so horses and yaks were engaged.

Our western group of twelve included six who were on the Club's Ladakh Trek, a nurse, a surgeon, two prospective members in their early twenties and some older members, two making their first visit to the Himalayas.

In support was Motup with eight additional staff including the cook imported from Darjeeling.

Also involved were thirty one horses, eight yaks and a dog which followed us for eight days.

We visited monasteries, dzongs and remote villages; watched archery contests and enjoyed the towns of Paro and Thimpo.

We trekked through semi tropical and alpine forests with a wealth of flora and bird life. Above the tree line lots of blue sheep, vultures and eagles were seen.

Fabulous views were to be had of high, snowy mountains to the west on the Chinese border.

A high point at the end of our trek was a relaxing dip in the Gasa Hot Springs.

The Bhutanese people both in the towns and remote villages were a delight.

Albert Chapman

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Jotenheimen, Norway
Fauna of Gran Paradiso
Bosnia
Loengpo Gang, Himalayas
China Caving
Flora of Ladakh

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Jamaica
China
Spitzbergen
Venezuela
Austria
California, High Sierra
Isles of Scilly
Annapurna Sanctuary
Ladakh
The Langdales, a history
Valnontey Aosta, Italy

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Bungle Bungle Massif, N W Australia
Climbing Volcanoes, Sulawesi, Indonesia
Mountain of God, Tanzania
Trekking up the Khumbu, Nepal

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