

YRC JOURNAL

The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Mountaineering, caving etc.

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ARTICLES

**MAPPING OF SOUTH
GEORGIA**

**THE EARLY DAYS OF
SKIING**

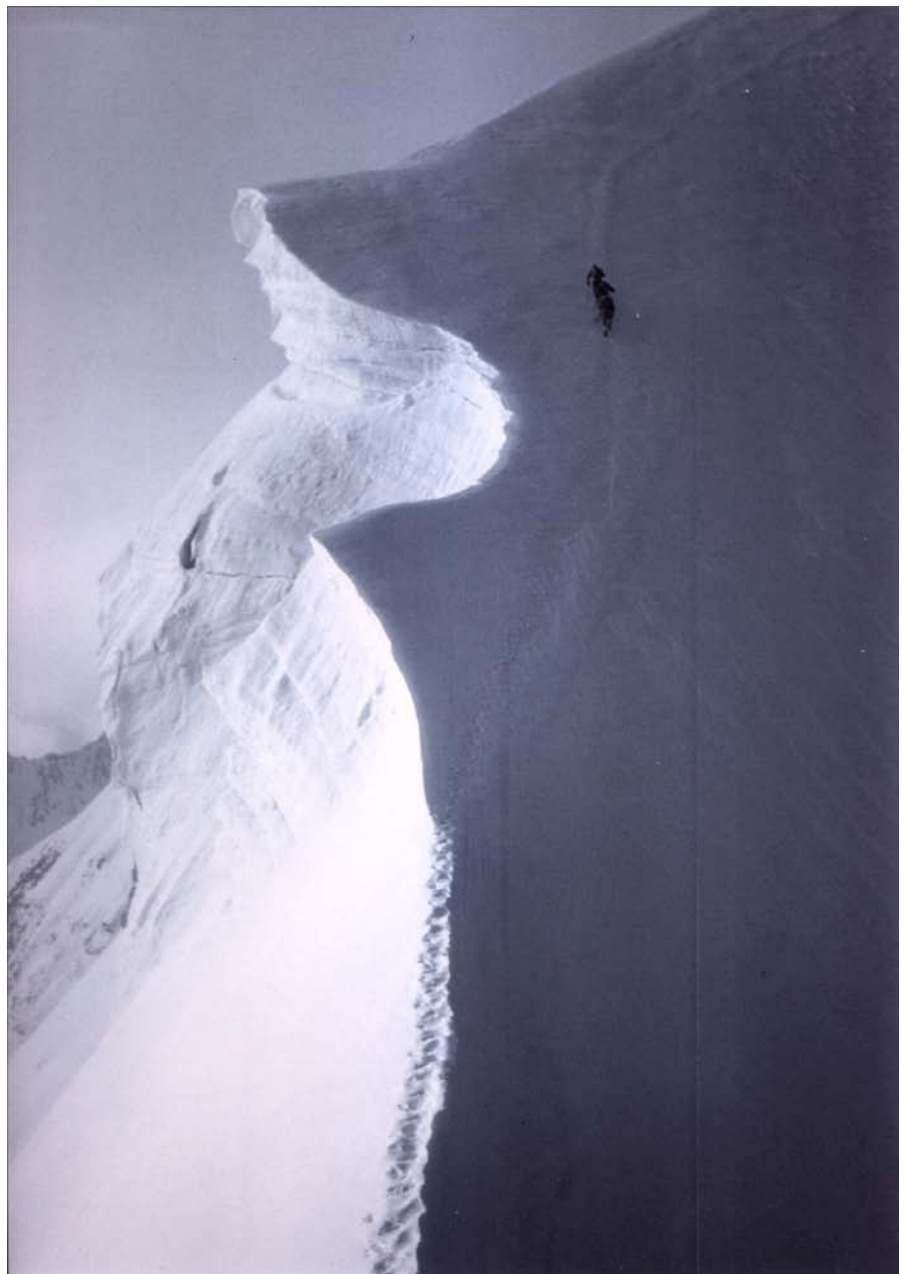
**CLIMBING IN THE
MARITIME ALPS**

**THE MOORLANDS OF
ENGLAND**

TREKKING IN BHUTAN

**PULKING ON
SPITSBERGEN**

**CAVES & KARST OF
LIBYA**



CORNICE ON THE BIANCOGRAT

PHOTO - RICHARD GOWING



The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Established 1892

The mountaineering and caving club

The Club's aim;

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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WHO ARE WE, WHO ARE WE!

AND MORE TO THE POINT WHAT ARE WE.

As a club we may wish to see ourselves as a select band of brothers who have been pushing the boundaries of adventure sport for the best part of five generations. It is indeed true that since our formation in 1892 we have been going where few have gone before us but this is increasingly difficult to do as the world shrinks with the advent of easy and cheap travel.

Whether we like it or not we have to accept that we are largely unknown outside of a narrow band of informed participants in the sports which we enjoy. In one sense this may not worry us but if we do wish to broaden the population from which we can recruit, we perhaps do need to become better known.

We circulate our journal giving details of our activities but copies largely go to other clubs and to institutions comprised of people already within the range of activities which we pursue and I would suggest that we need to make ourselves known to members of kindred sports who may progress to a wish to join us as their other interests wane.

When most of us were young we needed to join a club to achieve our ambitions but the world has changed and it is much easier now for individuals or groups of friends to arrange for themselves the sort of activities we enjoy. We need to accept that this is the new norm and understand that we will in future tend to recruit at the ages that seek the camaraderie of like minded people. This may mean we no longer can push the boundaries to the same extent that we used to but within our peer group we can and indeed do set the standards for what can be achieved.

To attract members we need to acknowledge these realities and work to identify ourselves and promote what sets us apart from many other very worthwhile clubs.

Within the audience of people who do know of us we are seen as a 'Gentlemen's Club'. I trust we are all gentlemen and gentle men, but there is nothing gentle about the activities that many members continue, well into what in other worlds would be considered their later years.

As your journal editor I regularly get comments about the breadth and extent of members' activities and we need to turn this into a source of new membership. In reality we do not seem to have any problem maintaining our membership levels but given that people are joining later in life we must not take our eyes off the ball as we need to continue to replace those who go off to the great peak in the sky.

Longevity is our middle name. Whilst ambition still stirs the soul and good company helps make such ambitions possible our members are still very active well past their apparent sell-by date; which does effectively mean that we mostly survive to ripe old ages. Notwithstanding this I do have the regular task of organising obituaries but these are themselves sterling record of just how active many of our members have been. No one was ever born old!

The journal last summer included obituaries of three stalwarts, the lives of each of whom would make an interesting biography. If we look back even further the quality of our membership has always been thus and long may it continue.

Those of us nearing our honorary life membership can look back and actually remember some of the near mystical giants of our past but some of our albeit shrinking number of younger members are still pushing the boundaries and may well end up as legends by the time they are in their dotage.

As editor of the journal I feel it important to keep alive the memories of the early days and the giants of yesteryear but do ask those today doing things of moment, to take time out to put their achievements on record as otherwise my successors will not be able to perpetuate the traditions of the club as I hope to do.

I personally had been out on numerous meets when the then President, Arthur Craven told me it was time I paid my subs and contributed to the Club. Arthur was a previous editor of the journal and unfortunately was amongst those whose obituary appeared in the last journal. I finally completed the process of joining and was adopted within the family in 1974.

The journal recording this momentous event included articles by the then fairly mature George Spencely on the hard way to Lalibella and an article

by Harvey Lomas on Gran Paradiso. George featured in an historical piece last year about the 1957 fateful expedition to the Himalayas and also recently became the oldest man by many a year to reach the Annapurna Sanctuary. More on George shortly.

The club were back in Gran Paradiso last year and Harvey has been out to China recently with our exploratory cavers and is still seen by some as one of our 'young' tigers. Keep up the good work lads.

Derek Smithson also wrote in that journal about Drakensberg and members have been back recently. Derek Clayton wrote of one of our more apparently insane pastimes; that of becking. Both Dereks are still with us and turning out at meets.

That journal also included a piece on the history of potholing by Steve Craven and he is still contributing such material. The early days of the sport are the stuff of mystery as very limited records were kept but I trust you all found of interest the early meet reports from the 18th century which we managed to unearth from local records and publish for the first time, last year. Please document your activities for posterity; you may take such activities in your stride and think little of them but down the years they will be of great interest to our descendents and successors.

Not bad considering that the journal in question was published over 30 years ago and it makes my case that not only must the club be doing something right to see people staying involved for their lifetimes but that their involvement in the club and the activities it supports helps keep them alive beyond their three score and ten.

The journal recorded that Tony Reynolds was elected Vice president in 1973, John Hemmingway was Treasurer and Alan Linford and David Smith were looking after our huts. Alan is still going strong and we have unfortunately just lost David who was to the end a regular attendee at meets and John and his wife were at the 2007 ladies meet. It is a little more difficult for Tony who has lived in Australia for many years but he remains a member and looks us up whenever he returns and I have just posted his copy of the last journal out to him.

When I joined, legends within the club like Stanley Marsden and Cliff Downham were still in full swing. Jack Hilton was a comparative whippersnapper and

Jack Woodman was making his presence felt. Stanley joined the club in 1936 and never stopped enjoying the hills and was out on them into his nineties. Cliff survived to the age of 85.

Harry Stembridge and Pat Stonehouse were other stalwarts of the club. Harry was a keen potholer and climber and world traveller; he survived to the age of 95. Pat was President (1964-6) and was 85 when he died, active to the end. Saddleworth was his home patch and he joined us on a meet there the year before he died and left money behind the bar in the Cross Keys to buy all members present a drink: A true gentleman.

There are numerous more examples I could mention but enough to say a great tradition to follow and there are many more years left in us yet if history is anything to go by.

The earlier greats both of the club and indeed of the climbing and caving world in general have taken on almost mystical reputations but hard fact is harder to come by.

Last year I reported on the opening of Lowstern by Ernest E. Roberts (or Roberts as he was known to all and indeed how he signed himself off on any missives). It is perhaps timely that we pull together what we have on record about the old 'Gentleman'. An apparently unimpressive and distinctly grizzled oldster when he did the honours, he was still exploring the caves of Yorkshire up to his eighty second year. He died in 1960 at the age of 85, the year I started work as a raw school-leaver.

He retired in 1935 having spent most of his career as a schools inspector in Yorkshire but was actually born in Salford and educated in Manchester before going to Oxford.

He joined the YRC in 1908 and the Alpine Club at about the same time. The immortalised Whympers had been an honorary member of the club and Cecil Slingsby; President, over the years covering the turn of that century (1893-03). Indeed it was Slingsby's son in law who proposed Roberts for membership of the Alpine Club. Roberts himself was President from 1923-5.

Despite their reticence on personal matters these early stalwarts were very detailed diarists on the exploration they undertook and our early journals provide valuable archive material from that period.

On a personal level these gentlemen potholers were not all devout athletes by modern standards. They took their time and did things properly and normally had the wherewithal to do so. Supplies often included stilton, port and a good cigar. Very civilised! This tradition has long been maintained even to an extent to this day. Provisioning for meets is expected to be of a high standard.

Pictures abound in early records of members going underground in tweed jackets and bowlers sometimes with a candle stuck on top. Clifford Chubb who was our president during world war two (1938-46) was reputed to come to meets in attire acquired in Saville Row. He did remove his spats and change into tweeds before going underground. It is important to get the recollections of older members down in print whilst they are still with us. We may be long-lived but cannot go on for ever.

John Lovett is another great example of longevity. Still an active participant on meets, he is Hut Warden at Lowstern and this is despite the fact that he was actively potholing twenty years before I joined the club. He recounts those days in the fifties and remembers Roberts still outdoing members twenty years younger than he was.

MAPPING SOUTH GEORGIA

I am an amateur cartographer with numerous maps to my name. I have to a large extent mastered the techniques of triangulation using sighting compasses and come to terms with inclinometers and am learning how to use GPS systems for even more accuracy. I have the benefits of photogrammetric plots, aerial photos of high definition and indeed the good old OS for the anchor points from which to start. Once I have done the field surveys I retreat to the warmth of my study and use specialist computer CAD programs for the actual drawing.

This is a far cry from the early heroes. In 1856, a British mapping team established what is now called Everest as the highest point on earth. It was given its name in 1865 in honour of Sir George Everest, the Surveyor General of India from 1830 to 1843. The surveyors took theodolite readings and using a triangulation network, worked up from sea level and were remarkably accurate.

The conditions they must have met would most certainly have been challenging but not I would suggest as tough as those experienced by the stalwarts who first mapped South Georgia.

Duncan Carse led three expeditions of exploration

Roberts was of course a renowned climber who did more than most to open up the Dolomites and it was his use of climbing techniques in potholes which moved the sport on in leaps and bounds if that is not an unfortunate term to use when discussing work underground.

He started potholing in 1905 having been introduced to it by Frank Payne and was to spend 60 years pursuing this obsession. Prior to this period such techniques as there were, were fairly primitive. One of Roberts' contemporaries and a pioneer of potholing was Blackburn Holden who made up some cotton ladders in his own mill. This enabled him to make a solo descent of Gaping Gill but rumour has it that his ladders were so elastic that when returning, he had used a couple of dozen rungs before he actually started ascending.

The tradition of 'gentlemen members' lives on; it is not that many years ago (well perhaps quite a few) that I recall staying at Lowstern for an annual dinner being held in Harrogate and nameless colleagues stopping on the moors to try some boulder moves on the way over, whilst already attired in their dinner jackets.

Roy Denney

and survey to the island of which the third in 1955-56 was the most successful.



Duncan Carse
pictured in his tent, Christmas 1955

George Spenceley was one of that team and wrote of their exploits at the time but they will bear re-telling in part. George comments that much of the credit for this success was due to Tony Bomford, later to become Director General of the Australian Survey. He was honoured by the R.G.S. for his work, then regarded as the finest piece of topographical survey ever done in the Antarctic.

George recalls their amazement as they arrived, standing by ice encrusted rigging and watching the early sun light up the mountains of this fabulous island. In the half light they could see fifty or sixty miles of glaciers, snowfields, and then with their crests tinged brilliant orange, numerous high peaks, all but one unclimbed, all but a few unnamed, and rising seemingly straight out of the ice mottled sea.

South Georgia is on the same latitude as Cape Horn but unlike it, lies within the Antarctic Convergence signified by the winter pack ice. There is a cold current coming up the Weddel Sea. South Georgia was then an important centre for whaling and sealing. Sheltered in the deep inlets of the north coast were three whaling stations but the hinterland was unknown and even the coastline was only incompletely and imperfectly charted. Otherwise uninhabited it did of course shoot to fame again much more recently when the Argentines landed there and triggered the Falklands war.

As mentioned, Duncan Carse had led two previous expeditions to South Georgia and ten months' sledging in a climate as difficult as any in the world had only enabled them to map two-thirds of the island. The task of the team in 1956 was to finish the job.

They were an eight man party, Duncan Carse being the leader, second in command was Dr. Keith Warburton, they had two surveyors, Capt. Tony Bomford and Stan Paterson and Louis Baume, Tom Price and John Cunningham reinforced the climbing element. George was the photographer which excused him the ten days of hard work setting up base and preparing for the first journey. He was away visiting the bays and fjords round the island in an Argentine sealer taking photographs of this strange and bloody occupation which he found a fascinating experience.



Their first trip was a 60-day journey after being landed with sledges and 3,000 lbs. of stores at Fortuna Bay. They travelled a known route to the Kohl-Larsen Plateau, an elevated snowfield in the centre of the island and just to the north-west of the main Allardyce Range. They were hoping to discover and follow a route more or less along the central watershed of the island until a junction could be made with the country already surveyed at the head of the Brunonia Glacier. The sledges were man-hauled, an exhausting and painfully slow method of travel.



The first day saw little over a mile in distance and perhaps 500 feet in height. Once on the glacier they made better progress, sometimes as much as twelve miles between camps but often much less as they were rarely on a level surface and ascending to a col, sledges had to be relayed. If in an hour one made one and a half miles it was good travelling, and on unbroken snowfields and glaciers interminably long, in a landscape to which nothing gave scale, sledge hauling became not a little tedious and the order to make camp most welcome.

They sledged up the Koenig and the Neumeyer Glaciers, camping on the latter below the 4,000 foot face of Mt. Spaarman, a face no less steep and almost as high as the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc. It took them ten days before establishing camp on the Kohl-Larsen Plateau where the work of exploration and survey was to begin. More than anywhere else the landscape here had a Polar aspect. It was an extensive and elevated snowfield surrounded on all sides by mountains icy and austere and the Kohl-Larsen Plateau was the stage on which was played out the dramatic close of the enterprise.

In the initially kindly weather, they were rising at 3.0 a.m. and after a breakfast of porridge and cocoa, cooked and eaten by candlelight, were setting out on skis in parties of two or three, either heavily laden with theodolite and tripod to a survey station or on a reconnaissance with only a light rucksack. Every day first ascents were made and every day, from peak or col, they viewed country previously unseen.

The mountains were not high and for survey

purposes, they selected for ascent the lower and least difficult peaks. Mount Paget, the highest peak in the island, is only 9,500 feet, and there was little that exceeded 6,000 feet in height that they could see from the Plateau. But the worth of mountains is not measured in feet. These peaks had the form and individuality of the best in the Alps, and if the climb of an Alpine peak is measured from the hut, they had the height too. But they are not to be climbed in the same slightly casual fashion of an Alpine peak. Many would call for the greatest mountaineering skill, not a few might prove, if not unclimbable, certainly unjustifiable. These southern mountains carry in summer a winter garb where ice hangs at an impossible angle, and no one can overestimate the severity and danger of the weather in South Georgia. No margin of safety can be wide enough and the line of retreat never too secure where there is a greater cold to consider and frequent storms, unheralded and prolonged, liable to come with dramatic suddenness from any direction, where winds come in gusts of exceptional force and may blow without respite for many days.

Eventually with surveying complete all the party bar Paterson and Baume had hopes of making the first major ascent. Paterson was suffering from snow blindness and Baume was caring for him in camp. After waiting one day whilst the wind blew out they set off in a slight arc to avoid a section heavily crevassed and skied to the foot of a couloir and then set off up a long undulating ridge for the summit of Spaarman. Beyond was a second summit, hopefully no higher but separated by a deep cleft and an arête, narrow, twisted and tortuous. It was really a rock arête guarded by many gendarmes but clothed in ice so thick that nothing of its structure could be seen. From its base a 200 foot tower rose abruptly, encrusted in pillars of vertical ice. If that is the true summit then their view was that Spaarman would long remain unclimbed.

To their right as they ascended and separated from them by a rock ridge and another arm of the snowfield was the peak they called 'Dimple'. Cunningham, Baume and George had earlier made its first ascent initially carrying the lightweight theodolite, although unable to take it very far. The ridge was too narrow to set it up and the summit itself, gained by a steep slope of dangerous snow, proved to be a cornice of the utmost delicacy overhanging on its far side, an appalling void, and barely safe as a restricted stance for one man.

3 days in camp followed, sitting out a blizzard, and rarely were they to enjoy two consecutive days of fine weather and almost half their time was to be spent lying up in conditions that made either travel or survey impossible. Yet they travelled in all but the worst weather and seized every opportunity of going to a survey station. Often before the day had shown its hand, they had dug out theodolite and tripod, unslashed rope and ice

axes and set off on skis for some neighbouring peak, hurrying to beat the onset of cloud, only a few hours later to return disappointed, anxiously searching for tracks fast disappearing in a fury of wind and snow. Often on a morning full of promise, they broke camp, only shortly afterwards to be forced to halt, and after struggling in the rising wind with billowing tents, again seek refuge in their fabric homes.



Eventually progressing, they were travelling across the narrow isthmus between King Haakon Bay and Possession Bay. It was into Haakon that Shackleton had brought the James Caird after his perilous open boat journey from Elephant Island and he must have crossed this isthmus. By a strange accident they were to follow his route in reverse far more precisely than intended. At the foot of a steep slope and in heavy mist they left the three sledges and skied up into the sun, locating the col they were seeking. They returned and, one sledge at a time, laboriously hauled two of them up on to the sunny snowfield. After making camp here there would still be time enough left for a climb. Down they ran for the third sledge; it was not there. Anxiously hurrying forward they saw two parallel tracks veering away from the others, disappearing into the mist down the glacier; lonely sledge tracks unaccompanied by ski or foot marks. Somehow set in motion, the sledge had gone and with it two tents, all their Primus stoves and all but one of the sleeping bags. The glacier, the same one up which Shackleton had toiled, descended to a maze of crevasses and ended abruptly in an ice cliff falling into the sea. It seemed that the sledge and its load must be a total loss and with its loss, not only was there a situation fraught with hazard and hardship, but they were faced with the effective end of the expedition.

Despondently following the tracks, they dropped below the mist and perceived a glimmer of hope. The sledge by a miracle had kept to the side of the glacier. There were crevasses here too, but fewer in number and smaller. After three miles following the tracks they came to a slope, more of ice than snow, and very steep.

At the bottom was the moraine and there, mounted high on its side, its load widely scattered, was the sledge. It rested but a few yards from the site of Shackleton's 'Peggotty Camp.'

Back in business the days went by, often tent bound by snow outside that fell and drifted and built itself up in banks around them, mounting ever higher and consolidating into solid walls so that the sides of the tent collapsed and the ridge sagged. At their Camp XII it snowed almost without ceasing for seven days. The level of the snow rose until it was nearly four feet above the level of the ground sheet and close to the apex of the forward poles and the space inside grew limited. The centre of the tents hung down under its increasing load, dividing the tent into two compartments. With outstretched legs pinned down, restricted of movement, in hollows moulded to their shape, they huddled close together in a small triangle of space in a strange quiet. The wind could do its worst, they felt safe and snug in their little hole.

High mountain ridges with unsledgeable cols cut across their route but they persevered, making camp on the lee side of a steep col at the head of the Glacier. It was a bad site. The tents had so far stood well up to the threat of the wind, but here they were to be exposed to an uncommonly strong wind that came down from the col above in gusts of unequalled force estimated at about 110 knots. This hurricane blew for sixty hours and from the first they realised the danger. There was little sleep for anyone; the noise, the hammering of the drift and the constant lashing of frenzied fabric might not have prevented sleep (they were familiar with such disturbance) but anxiety was now added to discomfort and they felt compelled to brace the poles with their backs and with outstretched arms ease the tortured cloth. In the early hours of the second morning one tent was ripped open and a few hours later a second became untenable. With both surviving tents now sheltering their maximum number they were without any margin of safety.

In preparation for an anticipated emergency move they sat booted and in wind-proofs, sleeping bags rolled into rucksacks. And so through the second day and the third night and the worst hours of the blizzard, cold and cramped, fearful for the fate of the tent; four silent shivering shapes, vaguely outlined in the occasional glow of a pipe. It finally weakened and they moved a bit lower before effecting some repairs and rethinking their plans. Only 4 set off to complete the link and George and the remainder skied lower down and after 10 miserable days both parties were reunited and returned to the comparative luxury of the whaling station. Nevertheless they carried out numerous other trips and surveys.

They eventually made camp at the head of the Philippi Glacier, only one day's march from

Drygalski Fjord where they were to be picked up but suffered yet another setback. They were entombed in tents for eight days while it blew almost without interruption at hurricane force. Fortunately the wind was constant and there were none of the dangerous gusts that were so damaging on the Grace Glacier, but the abrading action of the icy drift on the suffering ventile was such as almost to wear through sections of the fabric. It had been the intention to be transported direct to a landing on the south coast but now they had to return to base for repairs.

Finally at the beginning of March they sledged down the glacier on a perfect day. The mountains fell in great cliffs of rock or ice nearly 8,000 feet to the sea. It must be amongst the finest coastal scenery in the world. Far below drifting among the ice debris in the black waters of Drygalski Fjord, patiently waiting for their appearance, was the sealer Diaz.

The last journey however was quite abortive. Unable to land on the south coast they were to travel again to the Kohl-Larsen Plateau where by crossing a high col they could reach the glaciers and snowfields that descend to the south of the main Allardyce Range. They hoped to complete the season's work by making an attack on Mount Paget but never reached the unknown country and got no nearer to Paget.

There was now little snow cover on the lower glacier, the crevasses were open and after landing in West Cumberland Bay they had three days of arduous backpacking before they were established on sledgeable terrain. Camp was pitched on the Kohl-Larsen Plateau and the next day dawned fine. By first light 3 set off for a trig. station, but George and 4 others moved camp across the Plateau. Soon after midday the wind freshened and a blanket of cloud was already sweeping up from the Neumeyer Glacier and filling up the Plateau. By 3.0 p.m. the others had not returned causing some anxiety and tracks were rapidly drifting over. Accordingly they decided to go out and walk in line abreast on the line of their return not imagining they would be away from the tents for long and neglecting to take those items of equipment essential to their safety. After thirty minutes staggering against the wind, they halted and waited with the weather worsening all the time. It was evident they should go back while they still could but the high ridge behind their camp was not now visible.

Carefully following the reciprocal compass bearing, the course in that wind was not easy to hold and after twenty minutes it was obvious they had overshot the tents. They turned and fought against the wind but could not keep it up for long. Eyes froze up and lungs filled with fine powder snow leaving them gasping for breath. Backwards and forwards they went for two hours searching in a zig-zag pattern.

Short of finding camp, safety lay to the north, back down the Neumeyer Glacier, but that was against the wind and was not to be thought of. Downwind was unexplored country and crevassed glaciers falling steeply from the Plateau. They had no skis, no ice-axes, no rope, nothing to make travel safe. They had no food or spare clothing and only one hour of daylight left. The position was not a pleasant one and I think I will stick to mapping the forests of England.

As they ploughed on, Cunningham put a foot through into a crevasse but peering down into black emptiness, one end of it was shallow and quite friendly. A steep slope led to a platform, beyond which the crevasse opened out and plunged into greater depths. Immensely relieved they sought its shelter. It was quiet and peaceful, voices absorbed by the icy walls were hushed and the wind could only be heard now like the faint rumbling of distant artillery. With his usual understatement George says they were lucky to find this refuge.

For the moment safe, there was little comfort and for 10 hours they stood and shivered, vigorously stamping feet, too cold to relax, not daring to sleep with little reason to believe dawn would bring relief. The recent 8 day blizzard was vividly on their minds.

When grey light finally filtered through the hole above they looked out anxiously finding no visibility and the wind still blowing with fearful force, but with one vital change; it was now blowing from the south.

Their physical condition was fast deteriorating and they were worried for the others' safety. They were better equipped for it but presumably, they too were suffering similarly and after a second night there might be little help that they could offer. It was decided then to get out and to risk the fight back to the coast and the safety of a Whaling Station. They knew the compass bearings and the wind would be at their backs.

Once outside it seemed so impossible they pondered the wisdom of the move but action was better than soul destroying inactivity which so insidiously sapped strength. They made rapid progress at first but by late morning were again in trouble. Off course on the slopes of Spaarman, which fall steeply on to the Neumeyer Glacier they had wandered into a mass of large crevasses. Gingerly crawling over them where bridges could be found the slope became too steep and back they had to go, the worst moments of the whole episode, crawling, blinded and choked by drift, seeing only occasionally the feet of the man in front, fearful lest this slender link was severed. They could only struggle thus for a few minutes and finding a shallow crevasse got into it, resigned then to a second night. By a strange twist of fortune however it would hold only three of the party and unexpectedly while searching for

alternative shelter, a way down was found.

One further peril remained; the maze of narrow but deep and thinly bridged crevasses that lay four miles down the glacier. They crossed them in a line diagonal to the fissures with arms tightly linked and at almost every step one or the other would go through. Only once did the chain break but Cunningham who disappeared altogether, was happily to wedge unhurt some twenty feet down and was able to climb out.

After thirty-six hours of almost continual effort the five very exhausted explorers thankfully staggered into Husvick. The missing men turned up having found the tents and had suffered nothing worse than anxiety.

There was no discord on the trip and its members have remained good friends. More recently the surviving members of the third expedition got together at George's home to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the trip.



Tom Price, Tony Bomford, Stan Paterson, Duncan Carse and George Spenceley (left to right)

Unfortunately Keith Warburton was killed as leader of the Anglo-German expedition to Batura Mustagh in the Karakoram 1959. The climbing party was overwhelmed by an avalanche at Camp III. Tom Price and George were both invited by Keith to join the party, he feeling they might be a moderating influence on the rather thrusting attitude of the Germans. For financial reasons they couldn't accept. Tom has written a chapter on this episode in his book 'Travail so Gladly Spent'. John Cunningham, one of Scotland's most brilliant climbers, was killed by a freak wave which swept him off the rocks of South Stack near Holyhead while acting as an instructor for the I.M. Marsh College Liverpool, in January 1980. John was an fine athlete in most respects, but a poor swimmer and his body was never found. Full details in Creagh Dhu Climber by Jeff Connor. Louis Baume had died of cancer.

In recent years there has been quite a lot of mountaineering activity in the Salvesen range by Stephen Venables, Freeman-Attwood and others and there has also been the retracing of the Shackleton crossing by Venables, Messener and Conrad Anker. This was part of the Imax film.

In the last few years the government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands have issued postage stamps recognising the mapping of South Georgia between 1951 and 1957.

One of the last series showed a simple map of the island including Spenceley Glacier and another series of 4 values has now been issued, with one showing the Kern DKMI theodolite, the type used by George Spenceley, Louis Baume and Tom Price for their part in the survey work.

This stamp has a companion showing the Landsat 7 satellite and the other two values show corresponding images produced by the survey parties and by the satellite.

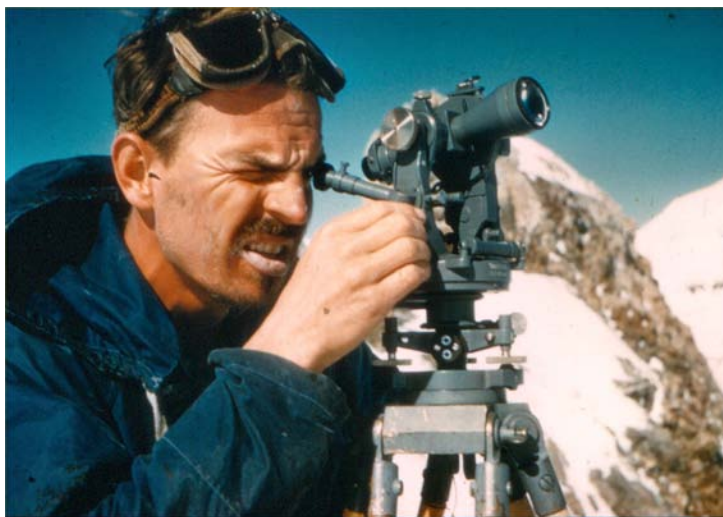


The area covered is the Neumayer Glacier, Cumberland West Bay and the Allardyce range. The land survey map, 1958, and satellite image 2003, both summer records, show agreement on the land outline but indicate significant recession of the Neumayer, Geikie and Lyell glaciers that lead into Cumberland West Bay.

Last year Alan Linford sailed into the Drygalski Fjord and was hoping to catch a glimpse of Mt Carse at the head of the glacier, but alas the ship was not able to penetrate far enough to see round the corner of a buttress to have a sighting. George will need no reminding about Drygalski Fjord. No snout on this glacier, just a vertical ice cliff into the Fjord, shorter now but just as inaccessible to the sea as in 1956 when George was there.

I am indebted to George for his photographs from the trip and to Alan for the images of the stamps in question.

Ed.



Tony Bomford with the Tavistock theodolite



Tom Price with a King Penguin



Spenceley
Glacier



Drygalski
Fiord



Manhauling
up the
Koenig Glacier



View down Grace Glacier



Mount Baume from Spenceley Glacier

Camp after a blow



Camp at Ross Pass, Allardyce Range to rear



Less enlightened times



Grytviken Whaling Station



Butchery



Seal shoot

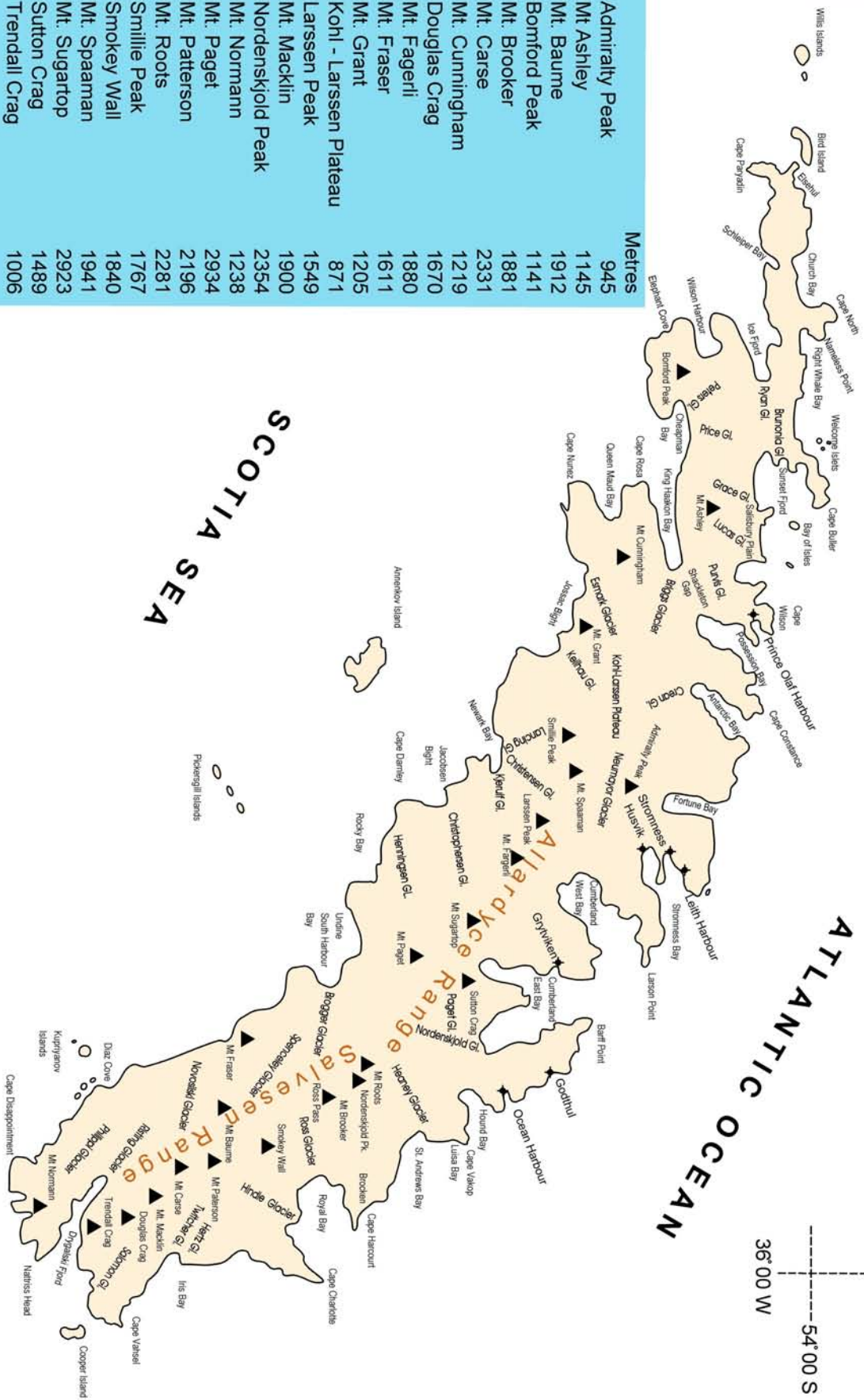


Before and after.

George in 1957 and more recently in his eighties



SOUTH GEORGIA



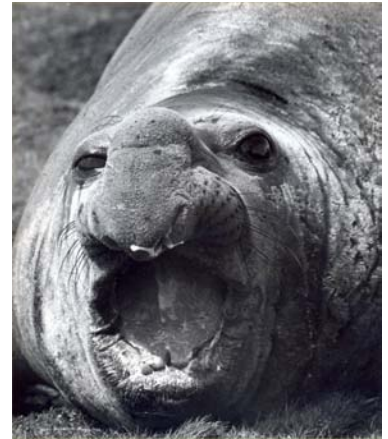
Peak Name	Elevation (Metres)
Admiralty Peak	945
Mt. Ashley	1145
Mt. Baume	1912
Bomford Peak	1141
Mt. Brooker	1881
Mt. Carse	2331
Mt. Cunningham	1219
Douglas Crag	1670
Mt. Fagerli	1880
Mt. Fraser	1611
Mt. Grant	1205
Kohl - Larssen Plateau	871
Larssen Peak	1549
Mt. Macklin	1900
Nordenskjold Peak	2354
Mt. Normann	1238
Mt. Paget	2934
Mt. Patterson	2196
Mt. Roots	2281
Smilie Peak	1767
Smokey Wall	1840
Mt. Spaaman	1941
Mt. Sugartop	2923
Sutton Crag	1489
Trendall Crag	1006

Approximately 90 miles

THE LOCALS



Elephant seals



Gentoo penguins



Wandering albatross



Black backed albatross



BACKGROUND

South Georgia was discovered in 1675 by a merchant ship out of London, off course seeking Cape Horn, and again in 1775, by Captain Cook searching for Antarctica. It next attracted hunters after fur seals and then whalers with Carl Larsen in 1904 establishing this industry lasting 60 years since when science has become the principal continuous activity on the island.

This was followed by Sir Earnest Shackleton's trans-Antarctic expedition which arrived at South Georgia in the *Endurance* in 1914.

Already an experienced polar explorer, having researched routes subsequently used by Scott and Amundsen to reach the South Pole, he now intended crossing the Antarctic from the north. A separate team was creating food dumps from the southern edge of the continent to the South Pole.

After a month preparing for his arduous trip and despite the whalers of South Georgia warning him that his route to the northern edge of the Antarctic continent was likely to be barred by unusually heavy concentrations of ice, Shackleton sailed for the Weddell Sea and within a month *Endurance* was beset by ice for 18 months before it started to break up and sank, marooning Shackleton and his 28 men on the ice.

The rest is history; the men camped on the ice for 5 months and then Shackleton led them in 3 open boats, in appalling conditions to the inhospitable Elephant Island. He then took one boat, covered it and sailed it with 5 men to South Georgia 850 miles away through mountainous seas taking 16 days to arrive, at South Georgia during a violent storm, at King Haakon Bay. They crawled ashore at Cape Rosa on 9 May 1916 to recover, living off young birds and seals before sailing down the bay to Peggoty Bluff that gave access to the interior ice caps of South Georgia.

Safety and rescue lay on the north side of the island in the whaling stations so leaving three of his crew under the upturned boat, Shackleton with two others set off with minimal equipment and crossed the previously unexplored interior of South Georgia. They could certainly have done with a map. All they had was a small piece of the German blue print chart of South Georgia from which to navigate.

They eventually hit Possession Bay on the north of the island but decided not to make for Prince Olaf Harbour whaling station at the northern end of the bay thought to be deserted in winter although it was in fact occupied. After many failed attempts they finally ended up at the head of Antarctic Bay on the glacier now called after Tom Crean who with Frank Worsley (Captain of the *Endurance*) made up this small team.

Proceeding round the island, they made a difficult descent into Fortuna Bay followed by a climb leading to the Stromness waterfall. They wrapped what little kit they had, the log book and the cooker in one of their shirts and threw it down before walking into Stromness Whaling Station in ragged wet and foul smelling clothes. They had crossed the island in 36 hours, a distance of 22 miles as the crow flies but no self respecting crow would bother.

Worsley returned to King Haakon Bay to recover their shipmates whilst Shackleton set about rescuing his remaining comrades from Elephant Island. It took all winter and only the fourth attempt all in different boats managed to briefly put ashore but in the end Shackleton had rescued all his men

He returned to South Georgia in 1922 in the *Quest* intending to circumnavigate the Antarctic but died of a heart attack on board while anchored in Grytviken Bay. He is buried in the small cemetery that overlooks the bay and his crew put up a cross in his memory.

The members of the fifties survey team had various features named after them as can be seen on the map. In addition the Salvensen Range was named after the whaling company Christian Salvensen who cooperated with the team regarding transport.

If you want to read more of these epic exploits, a book of the three expeditions, largely based on the members diaries, is now being prepared for publication. If you want to see for yourselves without the privations the team suffered you can do as Alan did and take a cruise including the island.

South Georgia now receives between 4000 and 5000 visitors a year off the cruise ships.

Roy Denney

SAINT-JEANNET AND THE "YELLOW PERIL"

John Middleton

Way back in the 1980's the magnificent Verdon Gorge was the place to visit for all aspiring hard rock climbers. However it did sometimes rain and in that case an hour's drive south-eastwards took them to the equally challenging and almost permanently sun-drenched 200m high cliffs of Saint-Jeannet. For us it was not the rain that brought us southwards but the fact that we had already frightened ourselves enough at Verdon!

Saint-Jeannet is a very attractive, old, and non-touristy village situated some thirty minutes drive directly north from Nice airport. It nestles snugly beneath the great Baou de Saint-Jeannet (802m) and has spectacular vistas of the Mediterranean. The village contains one small bar/hotel, a very friendly Auberge, two Gites and has its own quality vineyard. All the climbing is within a 20 minute easy walk - what more could you ask for!

The rock is steep, solid and massive limestone providing around 500 routes from 4 to 8b, both traditional and sports. The crags are in three sections a. La Source, this is the lowest with nearly 200 single pitch lines; b. Les Ressaits, this has a further 200 routes of one and two pitches, some sports and some traditional; c. La Grande Face, the big one with around sixty climbs of up to 210 in length! Most lines have bolts but these are often widely spaced (4 - 5 metres) so a small rack may be needed.

The First Day. La Péril Jaune. Our principle objective. It is still one of the classics of the edge and a "must" for everyone even though it was first ascended by F. Cravoisier and M. Dufrance way back in 1957 (some routes date back to the early 1940's!). The walk is a gently ascending one for twenty minutes to the westward end of the main face. The line, like most classics, is obvious and it rears impressively from the right hand end of the Grotte du Péril Jaune. Actually, on day one it seemed to rear a bit too impressively so we decided prudence was called for and spent the full day climbing within the "Grotte"! The routes proved truly amazing - 22 single pitch ones from 4+ to 7c, all up overhanging walls on (usually) great

jugs. One even enters a hanging cave in the roof to reach the descent chain. An introductory day well spent.

The next day: La Péril Jaune. This is it; we couldn't turn back today as our reputations were at stake!

Pitch 1. 25m 6a.

Peter led off up the initial steep but short wall with a quick step right to avoid some excessive polish. Easier angled rock then continued to a large ledge and the sunshine.

Pitch 2. 20m 5+.

This section commenced rather worryingly with two challenging but short bulges before relenting to a pleasant slab.

Pitch 3. 25m 6a+.

A distinctly exciting overhang - too exciting really - just 4m above the stance entered a steep but easier corner.

Pitch 4. 30m 6a.

The whole climb is worth doing for this three star pitch alone. It commences with an airy 5m rightwards traverse that leads to a vague ascending groove. This rears steeply upwards and requires sustained technical moves throughout its ascent. Luckily the bolts are more regularly spaced!

Pitch 5. 30m 6a.

Half way now. Peter takes the excellent corner crack that can be seen from 5km or more distance, not hard but with a definite sting in its tail, superb!

Pitch 6. 20m 6a.

Up a bit and then improbably leftwards onto an overhanging wall. A quick draw that I dropped at this point - whilst gripped - made no sound until it landed some 3m out from the base of the climb! Pretty steep, a thought that had me quickly scrabbling for the top!

Pitch 7. 40m 5-.

A short rock section before a steep grass and boulder strewn ledge easily and sadly reaches the final hurdle.

Pitch 8. 20m 5+.

There are really two options here, a steep slab with sparse protection at 6b or to move diagonally leftwards round some blocks and up a steep crack. Either is well worthwhile and each finishes on the flat limestone plateau of the "Baou".

The 360° panorama is breathtaking whilst the view directly down the face and into the Saint-Jeannet square is incredible. The descent is via a footpath round the side of the cliff. From village square to village square took us around 7 hours.

There are many other fine rock faces within a short drive. We visited La Turbie, another series of superb crags that drop directly to the buildings of Monte-Carlo. Another cliff is the excellent Peille some 15 minutes inland from La Turbie with many single and two pitch routes in the 6a - 6b category. Also at Peille there is a challenging via ferrata that includes a section through a small cave, two monkey bridges, a good overhanging wall and a long tyrolean. All in all this is a highly recommended area and one much favoured by the ladies who, just for a change, may find the delights of Cannes, Nice and Monaco very tempting!

Our small team was made up of me, Valerie my wife and Peter Kay.

Guide Book. L'escalade dans les Alpes-Maritimes vol. 2. by Jean-Claude Raibaud
escalade@alticoop.com

It is possible to purchase this guide in Saint-Jeannet from the very small climbing store.



Map. IGN 3643ET 1:25,000 Cannes and IGN 37420OT 1:25,000 Nice.



EARLY SKI-ING

WHEN THE SNOW WAS BETTER BUT THE EQUIPMENT WAS NOT.

Following our recent series of articles, firstly about the very early days of caving and pot-holing and in the last edition the early years on Yorkshire rock, Bill Lofthouse has been enthused to share his reminiscences on the early years of ski-ing. This sport has always been part of the Club's ethos; indeed our objects clause in our constitution includes the organising of walking, mountaineering and ski-ing excursions.

Like many young boys born and brought up in Leeds, Bill was always fascinated by the hills to the North in the Yorkshire Dales. This interest was encouraged when he joined the Scouts and was taken by the troop seniors on an expedition to Kettlewell staying at the youth hostel and went down Sleets Gill Cave and Dow Cave and then climbed Great Whernside which at Easter was covered in snow. Many expeditions to the Dales

followed but bigger mountains beckoned and trips to the Lakes and Wales were undertaken and Scafell, Helvellyn and Snowden were climbed before cycling back home

A course on rock climbing was arranged at Bramhope by the then Leeds Scout County Commissioner who at that time was Davis Burrows and the crags on Otley Chevin were used as a practice ground. The instructor was Fred Booth who provided ropes and demonstrated how to use them to make belays.

War service interrupted these activities but reading books by Frank Smythe and Winthrop Young kept up the interest.

The war had just finished when Bill was posted to Austria to an Engineer Unit on the Yugoslav Border.

This was the best posting he could have dreamt of and he would involve himself with canoeing, sailing in the summer and ski-ing in the winter.

All units in Austria were supplied with ski equipment and Austrian ski instructors as part of the army policy of training; ski-ing took the place of football as the winter recreational activity. Another bonus Bill enjoyed was being sent on a training course for winter warfare at the Army Mountain Warfare School at Mallnitz where they practised moving on different types of snowshoes whilst pulling sledges, camping in snow, doing hut assaults on skis and constructing and living in snow holes.

Their equipment was very basic with ash or hickory wood skis, with the better ones edged with metal strips. Various patterns of Kandahar bindings were used with a strong spring fitting into a groove in the heel of the boot and attached to a cable running through clips on the side of the skis to tightening levers on the skis at the front of the boot. These were used to pull the toe of the boot into the metal toe plates to give a secure fixing.

The soles of the skis were waxed for downhill running and sealskin strips were fixed to the soles of the skis to enable the skier to walk up hills. Sticks were of cane with cane and leather baskets on the end. They wore string vests under army uniforms covered with anoraks. At the mountain warfare school they had American boots and double layer anoraks which were of a better quality and design than the British army issue.

Bill arranged to send 2 pairs of skis home before he was demobbed and bought ski boots and climbing boots from a local Austrian boot maker using the currency of the time which was cigarettes. As Bill didn't smoke and they were issued with a tin of 50 cigs a week he thought it was a very good arrangement.

After Bill was demobbed he went back to college and spent the next few years ski-ing confined mainly to the local Roundhay Park except for one occasion when Nevil Newman and Bill travelled to Holme Moss on Nevil's motor bike with 2 pairs of skis strapped on Bills back. Needless to say they didn't repeat this as a motor bike is not the best vehicle to travel on over icy snow covered roads. Bill moved to Halifax in 1955 and became involved in a Rover Scout Crew at Heath Grammar School

where he met Chris Ambler, Roger Sutcliffe, Peter Massey, Alan Stansfield, Peter Haigh and Malcolm Hopkins, all from the Gritstone Club. One of the Grits meets was in Glen Shee in the Carngorms at Easter. They arranged to go to the same hotel after the Grits had left, with a mixed party of Rovers and Rangers and Bill was introduced to ski-ing in that area.

They also went ski-ing locally round Halifax. Shibden Park was one venue and with the light from the nearby road lamps they managed to ski at night. This was all done without the help of uphill tows.

As ski-ing became more popular great strides were made in the design of equipment. Leather double skin boots with lace up fastenings were superseded by plastic boots with metal clip fastenings on a very rigid boot and sole. With uplift systems being developed and installed everywhere walking uphill was out. There were great strides being made in the design of safety bindings to help reduce the number of broken bones as the result of awkward falls. Specialist skis, boots and bindings were designed for downhill, cross country and mountaineering activities. This specialist development was only made possible by the increase in the uphill tows and funiculars being provided at the various ski resorts from Scotland to the Alps, in America, Canada and throughout the rest of the world.

Bill's children were introduced to ski-ing about this time (when Tim was nearly six) with a trip to Glen Shee and then they took the three of them to Aviemore where they had a week of wonderful sunny weather and perfect snow conditions. Tee-bar tows which were the usual type of uplift were quickly mastered by the children and they managed most of the standard runs in a style known as the racing snowplough.

Several wives and girl friends of members of the Gritstone Club were also interested in going ski-ing and to avoid the problems with a men only clubs the "Pennine Ski Club " was formed in 1970 with the aim "to encourage the pursuit of ski-ing". Based in Ingleton under the presidency of Reg Hainsworth it quickly became a very active club. Trips to the three ski areas in Scotland were arranged on a regular basis during the winter as well as trips to the European ski resorts. Local ski-ing was also being catered for in the form of home made ski

tows positioned on favoured hillsides with a call out system informing members of suitable ski-ing conditions. Most of the tows were portable using a home made snow mobile to move the tows about. Club members in Ingleton spent lots of time and ingenuity in constructing the rope tows which were made from old scrap car engines. Small Fiat engines seemed to be favoured. Two tows were permanently positioned in the best locations, one on Wold Fell and the other at High Wind Bank near Kilnsey and only brought back for servicing in the summer. One of the Members, Brian Thomas designed and built a portable tow which could be carried in rucksacks and was manufactured commercially.

Ski-ing was really taking off as a leisure activity with more and more people going to the Alps for winter sport holidays. To cater for the need of beginners for instruction, dry ski slopes were constructed all over the country. These slopes fostered competitions from their members in slalom racing with teams of racers from each slope. Any young racer showing promise was invited to train with the national squad with the prospect of competing in the international events. This happened to several youngsters from the Harrogate slope with which Bill was involved.

Because of the long queues for the limited number of tows in the Scottish resorts and the poor weather most people living south of the Border looked to the Alps for resorts with facilities suitable for families with young children. In 1972 and 1973 Bill and family went to Brand and Gerlos with small groups from Nidderdale. They then started taking parties of school children, their parents, old scholars and friends on a regular basis. The times were limited to Christmas and the February half term. With the travel firms catering especially for school parties the choice of resort was limited. Cost was another important consideration as was the rapid developing skill and expertise of the pupils. The two resorts they went to in 1974 and 1975 were not extensive enough for the Christmas trips but the February half term holiday trips where the children were younger and less proficient was well served by going to Aufach in Austria where the facilities were adequate and easily supervised by the staff.

To ensure they had good snow conditions (global warming was a factor as long ago as that) they started looking at higher resorts and these included the purpose built resorts in France.

Courchevel, Meribel and Val Thorens in the Three Valleys, and Alpe d 'Huez and Les Deux Alpes were used. Another resort they found suitable was Cesana in Italy where they were able to link in with other centres on the Milky Way circuit. This area was developed for the last Winter Olympics and not surprisingly Bill did not recognize any of the views shown on the television.

The school ski trips starting in 1974, with trips each Christmas and half term, lasted until 1987 when the two leaders retired. They continued ski-ing with family parties visiting Kitzbuhel in 1988, Les Arc in 1989, Serre Chevalier in 1990, La Plagne in 1991 and Val Thorens in 1992. At this stage Bill was requiring a replacement hip joint and the operation carried out in 1993 put paid to any further ski activities on the advice of the surgeon. However the ski tradition was being maintained by their families and they went to Andorra in 2002 to look after those of their grandchildren who they thought would be confined to the nursery slopes. Bill could not resist having a go on skis again as the weather was perfect and the snow marvellous but after 3 days he could hardly walk and spent the rest of the holiday swimming.

The final event was in 2005 when to celebrate Bills golden wedding anniversary they had a family party at Les Deux Alpes for a week's ski-ing. The snow at high level was very good, the weather was wall to wall sunshine and the 8 grandchildren, with the practice they had on dry slopes at home, became very proficient and are now hooked on winter sports. Bill borrowed a pair of skis and boots for the last afternoon and skied up and down the nursery slopes and at the end was thankful he hadn't fallen because getting up would have been very difficult.

Global warming has been having an effect on ski-ing activities for a number of years now, so what is the future for winter sports. Local ski-ing is almost non existent with clubs only active if attached to a local dry slope. The new development of totally enclosed real snow slopes which are getting larger and longer with each new development is a boost to ski-ing in this country but cannot compare with ski-ing in the open in real mountains.

The ski resorts that have access to high level snowfields are ones that are favoured and the new purpose built resorts in France fill the needs of most recreational skiers. With accommodation on

the snowfields and a wide variety of runs served by adequate lift systems they are proving most satisfactory. Now that air travel is more commonly available, ski-ing in USA and Canada is one answer as they have resorts with good snow conditions with a long season and superb accommodation in purpose built centres. The Scandinavian countries specialise in cross country and touring ski-ing which appeals to many who find the crowds at the popular alpine resorts spoil their enjoyment of a holiday in the mountains.

The types of equipment have been under constant change in the 50 years Bill has been ski-ing. His first skis were simple ash wood, 2 metres in length but had metal edges. Then laminated wood ones followed, and then wood covered with plastic outer surfaces. With the development of plastic the use of wood was superseded with the all plastic ski and its special ski sole which had a low co-efficient of friction with snow. This simplified the elaborate waxing process which was required to make the ski glide over the snow. The lengths of the skis has also changed with short skis 900mm long for beginners and the wider compact ski about 1.500mm long for recreational skiers. Downhill racers had longer skis for maximum speed and make it easier to keep them on a straight line. Now we have shorter skis which have a broad spade front narrowing to a point under the feet and increasing in width at the tail to make turning easier with a length of around 1.500mm. In theory this shape helps the skier to carve a turn by using his edges instead of skidding round. The development of the ski boot and the binding is another story.

Ski-ing has always interested mountaineers and in the early Club Journals there are many mentions of ski-ing trips to the Alps by members. Among the most notable are ones of C.R.Wingfield who was a competitor at the British Ski Club championships in 1921 and who in the storm in March 1909 did possibly the longest ski-tour in England of 96 miles Setting out in March 2nd from Nelson over the moors to Skipton, on the 3rd from Skipton over the moors to Grassington, 4th from Grassington over Great Whernside to Buckden and on the 5th from Buckden over Buckden Pike to Aysgarth. On the 6th from Hawes Junction over Wild Boar Fell to Kirby Stephen, the 7th from Kirby Stephen over 9 Standards Rigg back to Kirby Stephen and finally on the 8th over The Calf to Sedbergh. A total of 96 miles (No 9 Vol 3 YRC Journal)

The snow conditions must have been remarkably good that year because Bill had always hoped that snow conditions would be good enough to do the Three Peaks on ski but they were always disappointed.

Harry and David Stenbridge did the Haute Route in 1960, H G Watts did a Ski Course at St Moritz in 1963 and Frank Stenbridge was ski-ing in 1950 in the Alps.

The tradition continues as evidenced in recent journals including ski trekking on Spitzbergen and across Hardangervidda in Norway.



Mountain warfare school 1947



Pennine Ski Club tows

Bill Ski-ing on Konsel 1947



Above Selside (Tim Lofthouse)

Below Wharfedale (Chris Ambler)



ICE CAP CROSSING ON SPITSBERGEN

Michael Smith

An account of an eight person ski-pulking expedition across an ice-cap in April, 2008.

Standing in a shaded colonnade at Hatshepsut's temple on the Nile's west bank my mind drifted from the colourful depiction of jackal-headed Anubis god before me to my trip to Spitsbergen in a few days time. It was going to be quite a contrast. Not 28°C, sand dunes and sun burn but -23°C, snowdrifts and wind chill. Instead of being pampered on a tourist cruise with waiter service it would be self-reliance for a week camping in the wilderness and melting snow before eating. The next week was to be less of a cultural experience and more about pushing one's limits in a harsh but magnificent Arctic landscape.

The Svalbard trip had been more than six-months in the planning during which our core three had expanded to a disparate collection of eight. Four are YRC members: John Brown, Rory Newman, Aaron Oakes and myself. The others were my son Richard, relations Lynn and Andy, and a colleague's partner James. We didn't finally all meet up until midnight on the first day in the field when Rory was snow-scooter'd out 50km in under an hour from Longyearbyen airport to join the rest of us who'd arrived more sedately mid-day by snow cat. Our intention was to be out for a week skiing starting through Vendomdalen, attempting to get onto the icecap and take it from there.

The next morning after striking camp we left Sassendalen and entered the mouth of Vendomdalen snaking generally south. As usual the first day's travel involved lots of stops to re-jig skis and clothing so progress felt slow especially in this wide flat valley. The sun was shining and the breeze made the cold air (-21°C) feel sharp. There was a strong sense of being away from it all: no passing vehicles, not even planes passing overhead, and no signs of the effects of people.

By late afternoon we were pitching camp by the Jinnbreen's terminal moraine. Pitching involved digging a flat platform and building a surrounding wind break wall partly from the excavated snow and partly from saw-cut blocks of snow. Then erecting the four tents and unloading the pulks before setting the bear alarm trip 'wires' a few

metres out from the enclosure. A gap in the perimeter marked by two skis had a track leading to the toilet.

We saw no polar bears, only reindeer and fulmars. We did though see a fine set of recent bear tracks emerging from a gully in Sassendalen. Apart from the alarms round camp which would fire a flare and sound an electronic buzzer in the tent we carried personal hand-held flare launchers and two Mauser 98s which we kept handy at all times.

The next morning we were to tackle the gently rising Jinnbreen - once we had crossed the broken moraine area. All started well. We entered a gradually narrowing twisting gorge which eventually stopped in a sudden steepening. The ways out to either side were prospected on foot and we decided on a steepish slope to the right (south). This was awkward with heavily-laden pulks but with combined tactics we made it and after a shallow descent to a lake we skinned onto the glacier itself. The going was then easier. Half way along the Jinnbreen we needed to turn east to gain the Hellefonna ice cap. As we reached its plateau we were in cloud and the wind gained strength from the south-west.

In the several kilometres across the plateau instead of heading east we drifted a little south. We realised this as we started to descend and the slope was to the south-east rather than the north-east of the upper Skruisbreen. It was getting towards evening and it needed some determination to climb a little over the Krapotkin fjellet spur: an irksome couple of kilometres we weren't expecting. The descent of the Skruisbreen held no technical difficulty but the conditions played psychological havoc. We were descending glacier we had not seen, in thickening mist, with the sun setting behind us and, for some, a first descent with the heavy pulk behind you. At times it was hard to tell if you were gliding or stationary. All went well.

Once below the cloud, still high on the glacier but sheltered, we camped with wide views across Sabine Land and down Agardhdal. That night was a few degrees warmer but in our tent we still appreciated having two thick insulation mats each and a few millimetres of tent underlay, good down bags and a liner inside out bivvy bags. The bags were 'breathable' but the dew point was reached before vapour left the bag and ice accumulated inside the bivvy bag. Sleeping while keeping one's nose aligned with the fist-sized breathing hole in

your bags was an art. Another odd part of sleeping was the 24-hour light.

The next day gave clear skies so we left the pulks by the side of the glacier and climbed back up onto a top of the Ragg fjellet for a view before continuing down to what should have been a 4km by 2km lake, the Jøkulvatnet. I'd been in that area before with Duncan Mackay two years ago. The area where the should have been was a maze of channels and shattered rock and we camped in the 'lakes' middle confirming our position by GPS. Taking one of the Mausers we wandered to some nearby ice cliffs to discover that these were an A-road sized canal cut through the damming snout of the Elfenbeinbreen. Its draining must have been quite a sight.

We then had a couple of days to get back to our rendezvous for a pickup back in Sassendalen. The first of these took us over the snout of the Marmorbreen and down to ski the length of Fulmardalen and just into Sassendalen - perhaps 17km in all - with the wind increasing all day. Overnight it increased further to 30 to 50km/hr and the temperature fell to -16°C. That gave a windchill of -45°C but we had very little flesh exposed to the wind.

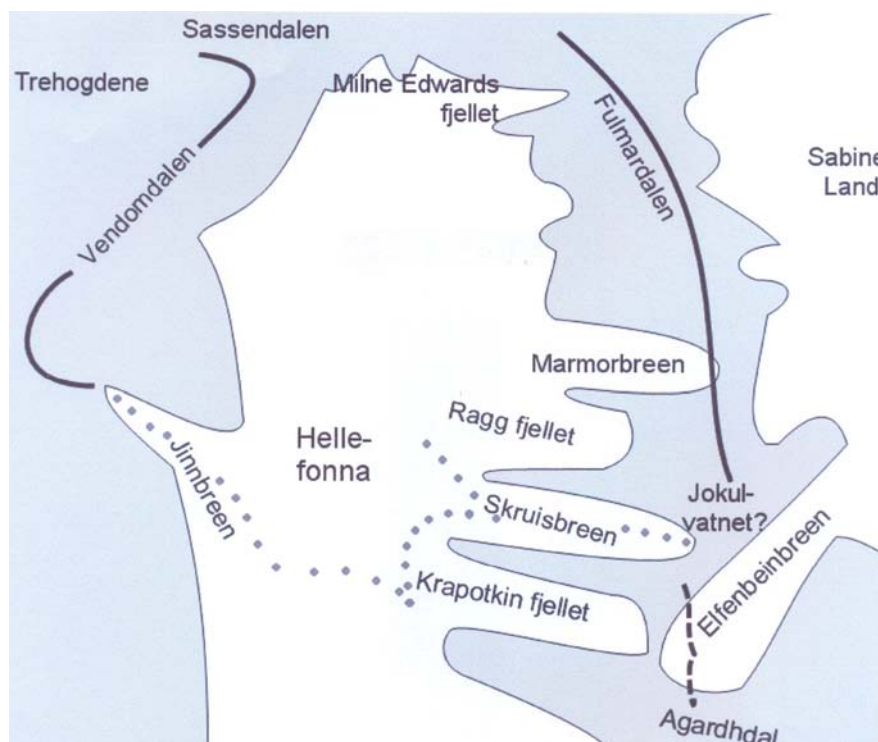
The last day we made the final 10km or so easily intending to climb one of the nearby peaks. However, the hazy conditions and biting wind discouraged us. Instead we traversed the northern flanks of the Trehøgdene to peer into a

steep, wide gully. On our return a tent fly gave ample shelter for us all and a stove provided a steady flow of drinks until, on time at 6pm, our snow cat rumbled into view.

Soon after 8pm we were back at the Polarrigg hostel for a welcome shower and then a meal sat at a table. The next day was warmer but with winds up to 54km/hr and visibility greatly reduced by mist and spindrift. Some of the party went up onto the Longyear glacier to go ice caving including crawls and a chilling duck for one. Others tried learning dog handling and sledging with huskies taking teams of six out along Adventdalen and into Bolterdalen. the return downhill with the wind behind was exhilarating but lacked control from the brake in deep fresh snow.

A meal of seal, beef and whale that evening exemplified the high prices in Longyearbyen; over £500 for the eight of us. By 8am the next day we were on our way home flying over the broken ice pack which had blown out of the fjord over the last day or so.

This was a rewarding trip with a great group of people who all helped one another. The landscape is wild, impressively large scale and quite unlike the Nile. Pulking is the right way to tackle it. Besides, while ski-pulking when you try to look round at the scenery you feel like one of those temple depictions of ancient Egyptians: feet constrained to face forwards, hips twisted sideways and face twisted at right angles to the shoulders.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Contact: Edwin Bailey of Ing. G. Poulsen A/S, Longyear for pulks, precautions against bears, inland transport and general advice: edwinb@spitsbergentravel.no.

Accommodation: The Polarrigg is friendly with all the facilities you would expect of a private hostel. Organisation there is organic and adaptable rather than rigid and bureaucratic. Accommodation in Longyear is generally in short supply at the times when there is still ample snow but also ample daylight so early booking is advisable.

Transport: The snow cat travelled at speeds up to about 15mph a third the speed of snow-scooters with trailers. However it provided greater security for the gear and a more comfortable ride. No vehicles are allowed in Vendomdalen. From the airport minibus taxis willing to take expedition gear are readily available. Pulks for rent are in short supply on Spitsbergen. This limited the size of our party.

Communications in the field: Satellite phone from Adam Phones Limited (2 Dolphin Square, Enedsor Road, London W4 2ST www.adamphones.com 012087420101) cost about £80 paying only for the days in the field. This operated without problem.

Shipping: Delivered DHL parcels were seen in Longyear. A food parcel sent out in advance using UPS reached Oslo and Tromso but failed to reach Longyear. Local advice given retrospectively was to use SAS cargo services.

Fuel: Lamp paraffin formed an unpourable slush around -20°C and failed to flow in the MSR stoves. One solution was to use a pool of about 20ml Rodspirit (methylated spirit primer) burning freely to preheat the MSR fuel bottle, feed tube and burner. About 3 litres of this paraffin kept the stove in fuel for five days for three people. A low octane form of gasoline worked in MSRs in all conditions though sootily in one of the stoves. A Trangia was operated on Rotspirit without problem albeit with low heat output.

Water/Dehydration: Ironically despite being surrounded by water in the form of snow and ice dehydration is a potential problem. Water can really only be carried in an insulated flask (of the type used in the UK for carrying a hot drink) as it will soon freeze in an ordinary Sigg or plastic

bottle. Even then it should be heated before being stored. One has to avoid drinking all the water you are carrying before melting more as water is needed to efficiently melt snow. If a pan of cold snow is placed on a stove then little of the snow is in contact with the pan, the metal gets very hot and vaporises the snow it touches before the liquid can mix with the snow and transfer the heat to the remaining snow. With a little water in the pan, initially snow must be added in small quantities to avoid soaking up all the water and so limiting convection. Throughout our cooking we were making several drinks to rehydrate. At the end of each meal we refilled our three flasks with hot water.

Ski Boots: Both leather and plastic duck-billed boots performed well in the cold temperatures. There were perhaps fewer complaints about cold feet from the two wearing plastic boots.

Bindings: Cable bindings performed well though one set's adjustment barrel tended to twist lose a little. The Soloman bar binding used by one of the party invariably refused to release unless considerable force was applied. This was probably due to icing up of the mechanism.

Skis: Skis used were all Nordic but a mix of track, touring and mountain widths/weights. All proved acceptable. The low temperatures (typically -18°C , sometimes -23°C) resulted in those waxing having to re wax a few times a day despite using base-binder and three layers of wax. Their grip was occasionally little enough to persuade them to put the skis on the pulk and walk. Those with waxless skis had no trouble but tended to resort to skins sooner than the others and retained them longer. Waxes are available in the supermarket's outdoor gear section. Ski rental is not available locally.

Ski skins: Skins were in frequent use and the adhesive side of some became covered in powder snow. The consequent lack of 'stick' was remedied with the duck tape which had to be reapplied as metal edges severed the tape.

Routes: The ice-cap we crossed is in Management Area 10 which is open access to visitors without permits from the Sysselmannen. The western drainage of the Nordmannsfonna, the next ice cap to the east, is also in this area. Consequently an ascent of the Elfenbeinsbreen and descent of perhaps the Rabotbreen would form an extension

of the route. The Jinnbreen and the Skruisbreen can be descended along their schuss-lines with confidence in mist at this point in the season until their terminal moraines are reached when care is needed.

Bear alarms: The locally available bear alarm consisted four hand flares with a trigger pins attached to four barrels with cocked springs all mounted on hand-sized brackets. Each bracket was stamped into the snow with the flare angled slightly away from the tents. Fishing line from each trigger pull-ring ran over ski bindings and stakes a quarter of the way around the tents. At least once the trigger pins were frozen into the snow and we doubted their sensitivity in those conditions.

A second, safety pin prevented firing and these were removed when the alarm was in use. Removing or reinserting the fiddly safety pin by your feet risked triggering the flare so it was important to keep one's head out of the line of fire. The purpose of the flare is to alert people in tents with a single explosion and not to scare away any bears. We also used home-made electronic alarms used a similar fishing line across stakes arrangement and a magnet and reed-switch trigger. They were not triggered by the wind and operated in the -10 to -23°C conditions we encountered. The continuous buzz on triggering (by someone stumbling into the line) was readily audible even between tents. Three alarms with 20 stakes weighed 5.5kg. These alarms are probably worth developing further.



Drop off at Vendomdalens mouth



Mike by a pongo Vendomdalen



Camp near Fulmardalen



Camp near Jokulvatnet



Richard pulk packing



Richard - Minus 23 degrees



Elevensies stop - Fulmardalen



View back to ice cap



Polar bear tracks



Pulking in Sassen



Descending the moraine



Ascending the moraine

LIBYA. - LAND OF AMAZING KARST AND CAVES.

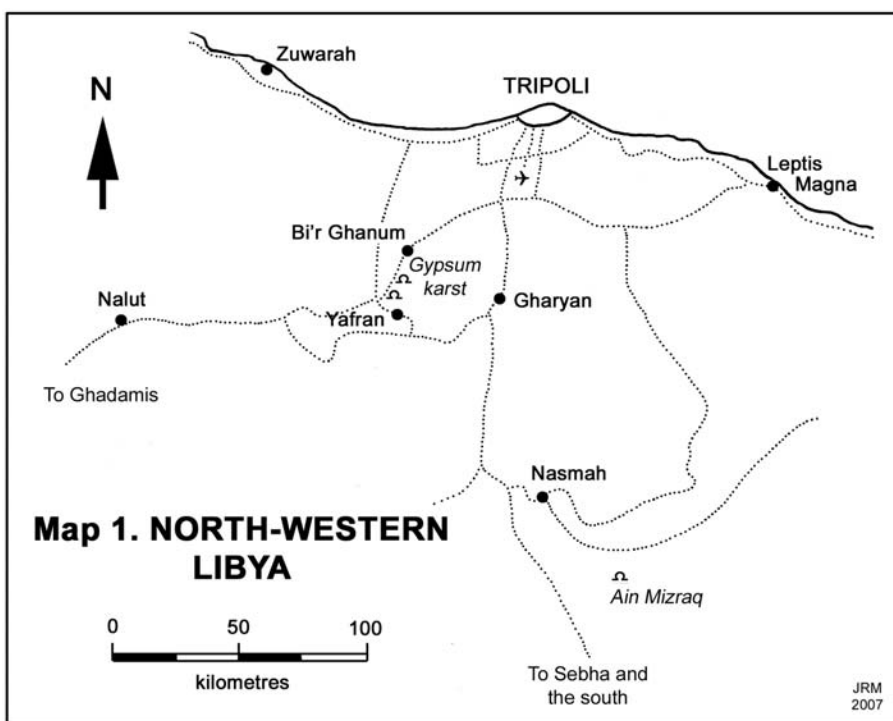
John & Valerie Middleton

Libya is a little known country from a speleological aspect yet it does have many exceptional karst features and considerable potential for new exploration. The following article recounts highlights from a recent visit made by the authors, accurately pinpoints sites and gives a resume of other major known caves and their explorers.

THE WEST - IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ATTILA KÓSA.

INTRODUCTION.

Dr. Attila Kósa was a Hungarian hydro-geologist whose company gained a contract with the Libyan government to do research work in the Bi'r Al-Ghanam area during the period of 1977 until 1981. He was also a speleologist and during this time he produced various reports on the gypsum karst of the area together with notes on other karstic features he had seen elsewhere in Libya (see references). After the contract was finished he maintained an interest in the country until his death in 2003. We read these reports in 2005 and decided that the sites mentioned were definitely places to visit! In November of 2007 we made a month long excursion that also included several of the countries archaeological wonders and an amazing trip through the deserts of the west. We were not disappointed!



NOMENCLATURE.

Transcription of spoken Arabic into written English is never easy and we had to rely on our two guides for this. Saad had spent 4 years in England and Amer taught English at a Libyan school. We also relied on the local people for the names of caves and areas which may or may not have been the same as those sometimes seen in other (foreign) publications. We had three maps of Libya, one German and two Libyan. Each gave differing place spellings. The names used in this article are from the Libyan one that proved the most correct geographically and was dated 2007 (but had no publishers name). This was obtained from the El-Fergiani bookshop in Tripoli.

THE BI'R AL-GHANAM GYPSUM. (photos 6 and 7).

This outstanding area of gypsum karst is easily accessible as it is conveniently traversed by the main Bi'r Al-Ghanam to Bi'r Ayyad road. If this road is then followed half way up the steep hill towards Yafran a superb panoramic overview of almost all the small conical gypsum hills can be observed. For notes on the geology and geomorphology of the area it is best to refer to the detailed accounts by Dr Kósa himself (1981, 1984) and Laumanns (2002). Initially the area looks very barren and uninviting but on closer inspection small shafts, dolines, dry valleys and exposed dazzling white gypsum karren is to be found. Many dwarf plants and animal tracks can also be seen.

There are three major regions of caves and two minor ones with a total of 7,017m of passageway recorded. Zakhrat al Ghar is the northernmost area and contains the longest system, known as Ain Umm al Massabih (survey 1), at 3,593m in length. This cave has 17 entrances. As with most of the other gypsum caves the

passageways, whilst not large, tend to be "walkable" or at least "stoopable" and at places of roof collapse quite large chambers have formed although the roof does not always look too stable!

Squeezes and crawls are infrequent and usually only found at upper entrances. Formations are not uncommon and are similar to those seen in limestone. The central Abu an Niran area is the most easy to locate as it is close to an old fortified hill top grain store known as Qasr Abu an Niran. This is barely 200m from the main road. The longest cave is AN-1 at 859m. The third region is around the Wadi Fasat. This actually had water in whilst we were there together with abundant reeds and rushes making the valley extremely attractive. The longest cave here and probably the most interesting of them all is the 618m Ain Wadi Faset. With flowing water, knee deep pools and sculptured passageways this system would easily have been "at home" in the Yorkshire Dales. This cave is well known to the local people who often picnic around it at weekends.

THE YAFRAN AREA.

The friendly town of Yafran is situated on the very edge of the Jabal Nafusah escarpment and as such has sensational views over the plain below. A few kilometres to the west this edge is cut by the Wadi ar Rumiya and most spectacularly at the occasional waterfall of Shallal ar Rumiya. The latter drops 25m with the bottom half being heavily undercut. This in turn is well decorated with stalactites and flowstone, as in fact are some of the surrounding cliffs. Dr Kósa in his final report (1981) states that there is a 30m talus shaft below the waterfall but we were unable to find it. Not many kilometres further westwards the escarpment is again cut by a similar sized wadi and associated waterfall known as Shallal ar Uweyniyah. Once more the base is undercut and has actually developed into a well decorated passage around 15m long. The surrounding cliffs also exhibit extensive flowstone features. The rock is variously limestone, dolomite and sandstone of the Upper Cretaceous Sidi as Sid formation (Kósa, 1981). Many small holes can be seen on the cliff faces and in the past these were often enlarged to form "troglodyte" dwellings. The greatest such concentrations can be seen just south of the Yafran to Ar Rumiya road.

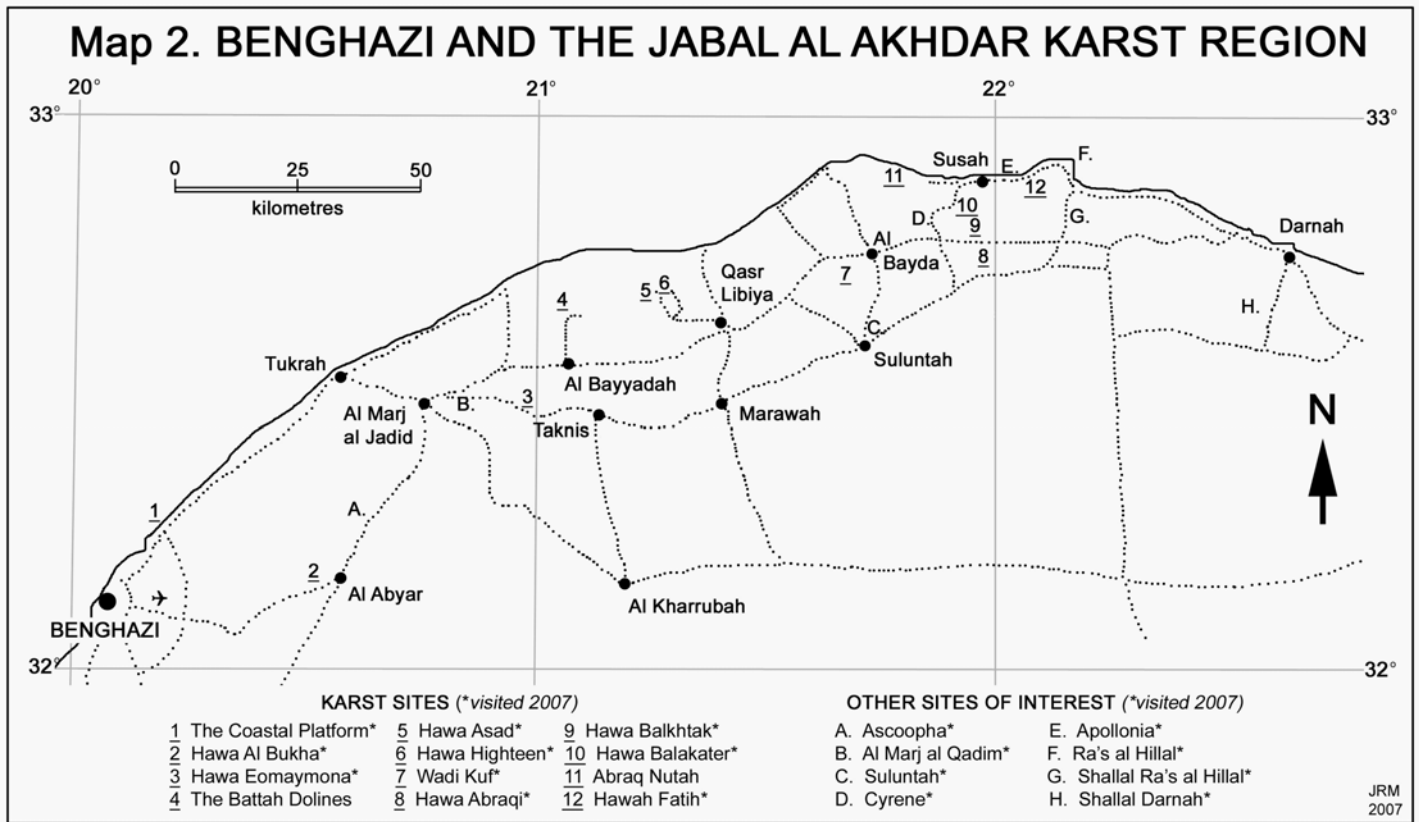
OTHER REGIONS.

Ain al Mizraq (Survey 2 & photos 9 and 10)

South-east of Nasmah. N31°15'53.3" E13°27'26.9" alt. 280m. Depth -86m single drop into chamber 85m in diameter. This remarkable, lonely shaft is situated in Upper Triassic limestone (?) about a twenty minute complex 4x4 drive from the small but pleasant village of Ra's al Tabl. Apart from crossing two sandy wadis the driving is over a flat plateau devoid of any feature but one liberally covered by pebble to cobble sized sharp limestone rocks. The 26m diameter hole cannot be seen until within 50m and then only because several small features have been built by the entrance. These structures were originally constructed to facilitate the lowering of buckets to obtain water. This is no longer done but once or twice a year villagers drop smoking wood into the hole and spread netting over the top to trap some of the numerous Rock Doves that nest on the ledges for food. We had the early afternoon sun on our visit which enabled us to see the impressive debris cone at the bottom together with the water which surrounded about 70% of this cone in the 85m diameter chamber. There are no passageways leading off. We covered the surface for a radius of about 500m in all directions but came across no other karst features and our guide from the village stated that there was nothing similar anywhere in the vicinity. However Dr Kósa is reported to have stated (Halliday 2003) that he has seen other smaller isolated shafts on the Tripolitanian limestone plateaux. Ain al Mizraq very occasionally receives local visitors but no foreigners are thought to have been here for about 15 years. The cave was first reported to have been descended in 1936 (Laumanns) but it was the exploration by Dr Kósa in 1979 that really publicised its existence. This hole, together with most of the shafts in the Jabal Al Akhdar, are considered to have formed through a simple large underground chamber collapse.

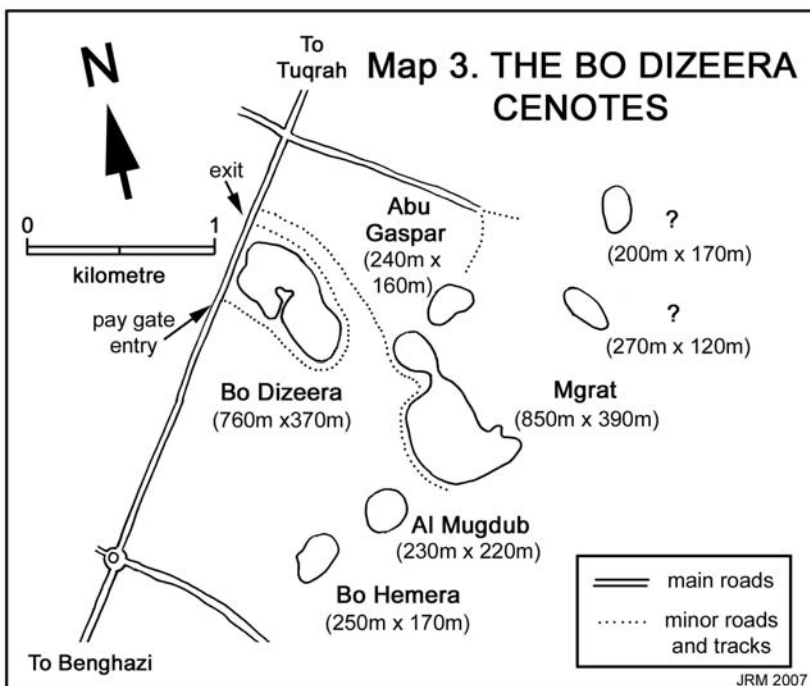
Jabal Akakus - Ghat.

We spent five days exploring this stunningly beautiful region of eroded sandstone, multicoloured sands and prehistoric art dating back 10,000 years. As always we kept our eyes open for both natural and fissure caves. We certainly viewed many that looked good from a distance but none seemed to exceed 20m in extent except for one in the wadi Awis area. This had quite large dimensions and reached 30m in length with two climbable exit fissures (N25°20'50.5" E10°30'54.6" alt. 814m). A small amount of rock art occurred at the entrance. There are also a number of arches (formed by the hot and cold weathering process rather than water) including the very impressive "The Arch" (photo 8) estimated as almost 50m high, 35 metres wide and 25 metres through!

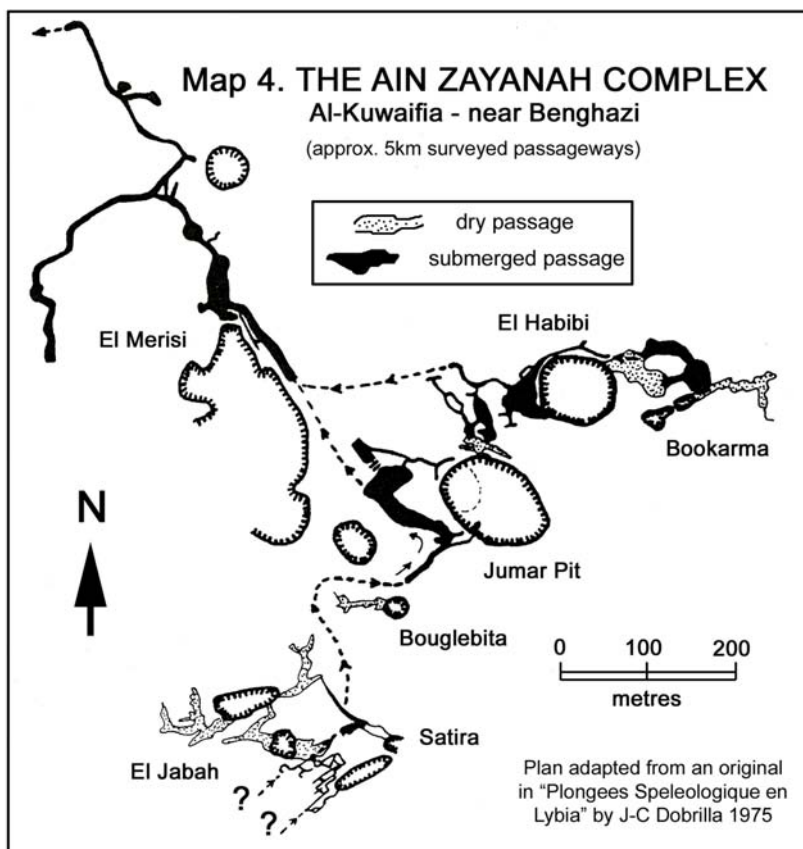


BENGHAZI AND THE COASTAL PLAIN.

The coastal Benghazi limestone platform extends from the city to as far north as Tukrah and beyond. It reaches inland to the base of the "first step" (see The Jabal Al Akhdar) which varies between 5km and 15km away. The height above sea level extends from 5m to 30m with the first 30km northwards having a superb exposed limestone pavement peppered with large dolines. Approximately 10km from Benghazi is the area known as Bo Dizeera where eight major cenotes can be situated (map 3). At least two of these are used as weekend holiday resorts and diving in all of them is regularly practiced. Unfortunately we could not obtain information on the results of these dives except that they went to a depth of around 25m. The water of the cenotes has a distinct seawater/freshwater lens proving connection between the open sea and mountains.



The cenote of "Bo Hemera" is particularly beautiful with a backdrop of palm trees and a surround of limestone pavement (photo 1). Closer to Benghazi but unvisited by us is the 500m long and 30m deep Rommels Pool (Dobrilla). Lethe Cave, known since the time of the Greeks, is now on military land and difficult to access but the French team obtained permission and revealed a system 205m long, 27m deep and with a lake 100m long and 20m wide. Entry is from a large doline. Williams also gives an excellent historical account of a visit to Lethe Cave in his book (p25-28).



About 7km further northwards from Bo Dizeera lays the town of Al Kuwaifia.

To the west of this is the Ain Zayanah lagoon connected to the sea by a narrow inlet. Into the bed of the lagoon resurges a considerable volume of impenetrable fresh water.

On the platform just to the east of Al Kuwaifia there are a series very impressive dry dolines. Most of these give access to underground water and 4,705m of passageway - almost all underwater - in 6 separate systems.

The longest is El Merisi at 2,117m. The lowest point reached on any dive was -78m; this is well below sea level. All this area is usually referred to as Ain Zayanah.

Fifteen kilometres to the west of Susah on the coastal dirt road and just before Jabbanat Awlad Nuh are three large dolines known as Abrak Nutah. The easternmost one is roughly 60m in diameter and dry. The central cenote measures almost 200m across and is filled with saline water to a depth of 25m; this is 15m lower than sea level. The western cenote is 120m across and 50m deep taking it to 35m below sea level. There are no diveable exits. Both the Cambridge Expedition (1959) and Fillecia (1989) make reports on these phenomena.

THE JABAL AL AKHDAR.

The "Green Mountains" are an extensive range of karstified hills that rise from the coastal platform in two steps to reach a final rounded summit at 872 metres. The first step from the coastal platform is of 200 to 300 metres and the second between 500 and 600 metres of altitude is slightly less. Both "benches" contain fertile soils upon which much of the countries food is grown. Most of the shafts noted occur amongst the fields in the northern half of the range with the majority of the remainder being found amongst wild terrain close to the top of the "first step". No caves or shafts have been reported on the southern slopes. Several large wadis descend seawards with the most notable being the infamous and spectacular Wadi Kuf. Infamous because this was the last stronghold of Omar al-Mukhtar the leader of the resistance movement against Italian occupation and the site where much of the film "Lion of the Desert" was made. Spectacular because the steep, scrub covered wadi sides abound with great stalactite smothered rock shelters (photo 4). Unfortunately none of these prove to be extensive. The area is reported to be a National Park but this was not obvious on our visit (see Footnote). There are no perennial rivers in Libya but in the Jabal Al Akhdar there are several short streams that create magnificent tufa covered waterfalls. The largest is the 30 metre high Shallal Ra's al Hilal just ten minutes inland from the coast whilst the second is Shallal Darnah. This latter is smaller but probably more beautiful. Much of its water comes from a kilometre long tunnel drilled into the mountains that is accessed further up the valley from the falls.

Horizontal caves so far explored have proved to be relatively short. Ain Apollo is found amongst the ruins of Lower Cyrene and is an easily negotiable but wet 300 metres until it becomes too tight. The Sorgente de Massah is a resurgence cave some 475 metres long found close to the village of Massah whilst just a couple of kilometres westwards is the much shorter Ain Hufra (Fillecia 1989). These latter two were not visited by us. About 6 kilometres to the west of Susah at the base of the "first step" is a well decorated cave notable for a succession of chambers and for having both Greek and Roman inscriptions within it. We only visited the entrance and whilst very well known locally it seemed to go under a wide variety of different names with the most popular being Ain Susah. The length is around 250 metres.

Hawa Boacha - Al Abyar. N32°10'05.2" E20°36'32.2" alt. 287m. "Cave of Mist".

This was the first great shaft that we visited and is found in the centre of flat fields just to the west of Al Abyar. The entrance is a beautifully circular hole with a diameter of 18m. The parallel sided walls drop for maybe 30m before enlarging into a chamber with a possible depth of around 50m (falling stone estimate). This site was mentioned briefly by Kósa (1983) but not descended. The description also fits El Abiar Pot a shaft partially explored by the C.U.C.C to -45m (1959). It is now highly unlikely that it will ever again be descended as surrounding the entrance and no doubt at the bottom is many lorry loads of expended (?) military shells!

Hawa Abraqi - Al Abraq. N32°46'50.2" E21°59'24.4" alt. 675m. Also reported as Hava el Labrag.

Al Abraq is a small town situated on the main Al Bayda to Darnah road directly south of Susah. Almost at the entrance from the Al Bayda direction there is a cross roads, turn south and a short distance down there is a large field on the right. About 100m diagonally in from the corner is a shaft with a small dry stream bed leading to it. This is roughly 8m in diameter and descends perhaps 20m before belling out into an obvious chamber. With the overhead sunlight we could just see the bottom 53m below. It was first descended in 1959 (Laummans).

Hawa Balkhtak - Al Abraq. N32°49'15" E21°56'36.7" alt. 623m. Survey 3.

Also known as Hawa Hacharie and Az Abraqi.

About 6.5km in a direct line north-west of the crossroads mentioned for Hawa Abraqi a dirt road leads to some houses. Once reached a further narrow track just wide enough to take a vehicle passes the buildings on the left and leads through scrub to this truly amazing hole. The slightly oval shaft measures 60m at its widest point and 53m at its narrowest. This descends for perhaps 30m before enlarging into a great chamber where a debris pile can clearly be seen at around -110m. This in turn slopes southwards to a final depth of -140m in a chamber almost 100m in diameter. Hawa Balkhtak is currently the deepest hole in Libya and is believed to have been first descended and surveyed by the Italians in 1983 (Fileccia 1989). It was also noted as Black Well by the C.U.C.C. (1959) but not descended.

Hawa Balkater - Sutea. N32°50'35.4" E21°56'16.3" alt. 395m. "Water Drop Cave".

We believe that this cave is unrecorded. A local friend of our guide in Susah took us to Hawa Balkater which is found by first following the road to Cyrene and then taking a surfaced road to the left for 3km to a dirt track on the left. The cave is in the hills about 300m to the north-west. He told us that his whole tribe together with livestock used to hide successfully from the Italians during their occupation (1911 - 1943). There are several hand made stone receptacles on the floor of the cave used to collect the drops of water. One of these was made by his grandfather. The cave is an obvious part roof collapsed chamber with debris to within 4m of the surface at one end. At this point a healthy carob tree grows and by this it is possible to scramble down into a chamber measuring roughly 45m in diameter with no outlet and a depth of 20m.

Hawa Asad - Asad (Qasr Libya). N32°43'43.9" E21°19'59.7" alt. 128m. "Cave of Happiness".

If the road that passes the fascinating mosaic museum of Qasr Libiya is taken and the right turn to Hawa Highteen ignored the main road continues to a small farm where it becomes a dirt track. Opposite the farm a devious route through scrub for some 300 metres leads gently downhill to a spectacular mega doline 200m in length and 155m wide (photo 3). The depth is 80-90m at one end and 90-100m at the other. All the walls are vertical to overhanging and the bottom is totally flat. This is mainly covered by grass and reeds. A small (dry) wadi leads to the chasm from the south. No passageway extensions could be seen from the top. This hole was reported by Fileccia (1983) but it is not clear if it was descended.

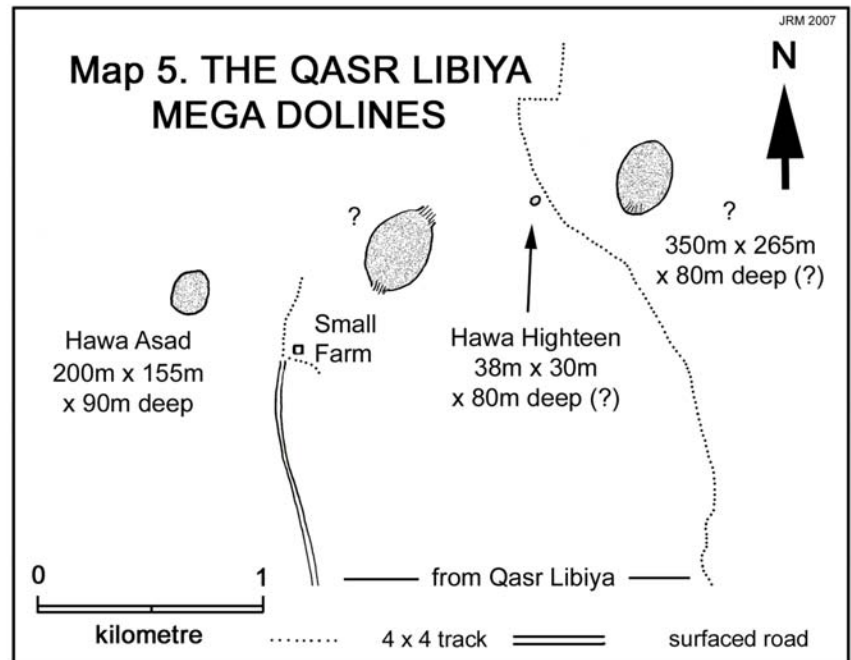
Hawa Highteen - Mirad Rhadea (Qasr Libiya). N32°43'57.4" E21°20'58" alt. 145m.

By following the road that passes the museum of Qasr Libiya a small but newly paved road leads off to the right before developing into a 4x4 dirt track for some distance. Fifteen minutes driving down this gave access on the left to another impressive and roughly round hole some 38m x 30m and at least 80m deep into a large chamber (photo 2). We were guided to this hole by a local policeman who stated that he knew of no foreigners that had ever visited the area. Easy access into this region had only just been gained by the engineering of this track.

About 500m eastwards from Hawa Highteen there is an even larger mega doline than Hawa Asad. This reaches 350m in length and 265m in width. The estimated depth is around -80m. The southern end is considerably degraded and may allow access without ropes but we were unfortunately only informed of this hole too late in the day to properly investigate.

In addition there is yet another equally large doline that has been badly degraded at both ends situated a similar distance to the west. This therefore creates an amazing line of such features within a short 3km east-west axis.

Several kilometres further west and not far from the village of Battah there is a similar area of approximately 12 square kilometres in which are 11 further dolines with several exceeding 100m across. No reference to their speleological investigation could be found other than a very brief mention by Fileccia (1989).



Hawa Eomaymona - Hawat Al Qasr (Al Marj Al Qadim). N32°28'30.7" E20°59'41.5" alt. 461m. Survey 4.

Also known as Muntaga Aqaranta. Depth -120m (?) in a shaft split at -60m.

About 17km from Al Marj al Jadid on the road to Taknis there is a small paved road to the left with a house 150m up it again on the left. A flat field extends from the house and in the middle of this three short wadis descend into a valley terminating in an impressive shaft some 8 metres across (photo 5). We believe this to be the Muntaga Aqaranta mentioned by Kósa (1983) but the local people only knew it under the name of the long time landowner "Eomaymona". The hole was descended in 1983 on a rope that only allowed a descent to a large ledge at -60m. The remaining 60m is an estimate to the bottom (Kosa 1983 and Fileccia 1989). When we were there the rocky surface ledges were ablaze with white "Tazetta Narcissi" creating an enchanting setting.

Kaf Fatih - Susa. N32°54'0.9" E22°03'04.9" alt. 64m. Also known as Kaf Hawafte. This spectacular marine formed rock shelter is very obvious on the hillside to the south of the Susah to Ra's al Hillal road. A ten minute walk through short scrub leads to a porch some 80m wide, 18m high and 40m in extent. There are a considerable number of small formations. In the floor are two archaeological digs together with a luxuriant depth of goat droppings! Early on in the life of these "digs" both rhinoceros bones and signs of life forty thousand years ago were found (Williams).

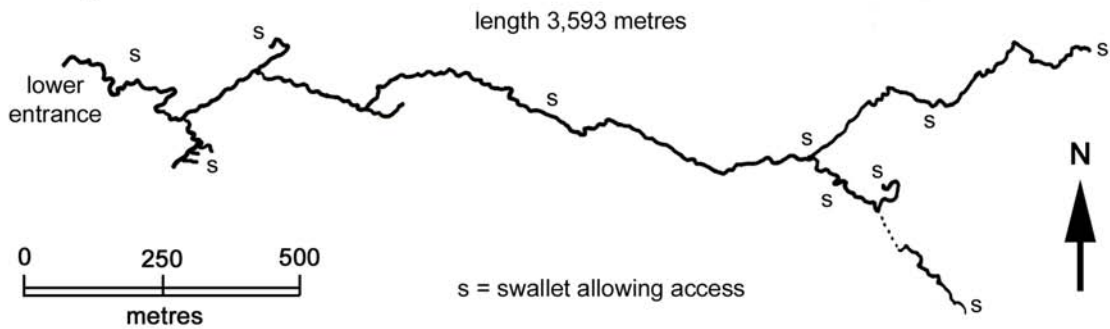
FOOTNOTE.

In October 2007 the "Green Mountain Conservation and Development Authority" was established to oversee the creation of a pioneering eco-region with an extent of over 5,500sq.km. It is proposed that the architect group "Foster and Partners" www.fosterandpartners.com will play a major role in the development that plans to protect the environment of the Jabal Al Akhdar, develop tourism and improve the infrastructure and facilities for the local population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

We had two outstanding guides for our journeying and without them and their enthusiasm it is doubtful if we should even have found our way out of Tripoli and Benghazi. Saad El-Ferjani was our companion for the east and Amer Klifa took charge of us in the west. In addition Arkno Tours at www.arkno.com and info@arkno.com efficiently organised our visas and travelling logistics. In Benghazi we were taken to see Hgd. Salem S.El-Haddad director of the Eastern Branch of the General Water Authority who courteously provided us with valuable information on interesting sites and the general geology of the region. In Darnah we had the honour of meeting Mohamed El-Hunade the doyen of Libyan caving. He not only knows the Jabal Al Akhdar intimately but over the past 50 years he has often single-handedly explored many of their great shafts and caves! He currently spends most of his time in his own incredibly interesting museum for the "Society of Al Hayla for Discovery and Field Research" close to Darnah town centre (tel. 081623932). Last but definitely not least our sincerest thanks must go to all the Libyan people we met whose friendliness and generosity was exceptional. Thank you everyone!

Survey 1. THE AIN UMM AL MASABIH SYSTEM. Bir al Ghanum

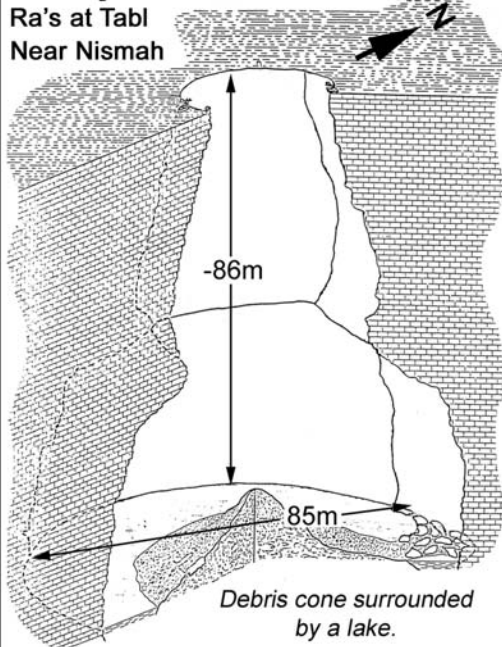


Plan adapted from one drawn by P. Szablyar in the original report by Dr Kosa (1981)

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Survey 2. AIN MIZRAQ

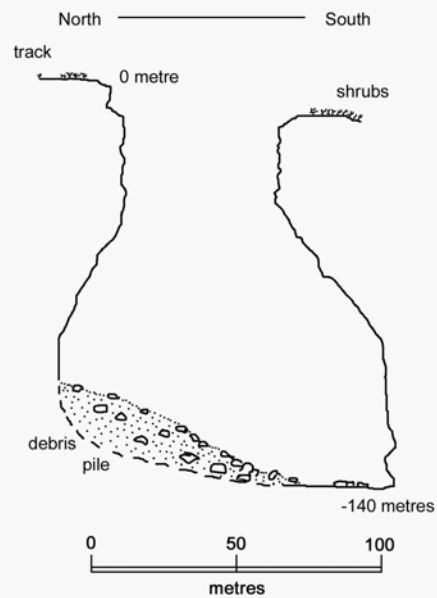
Ra's at Tabl
Near Nismah



Adapted from a drawing by P. Szablyar

Survey 3. HAWA BALKHTAK

Al Abra - Jabal Al Akhdar



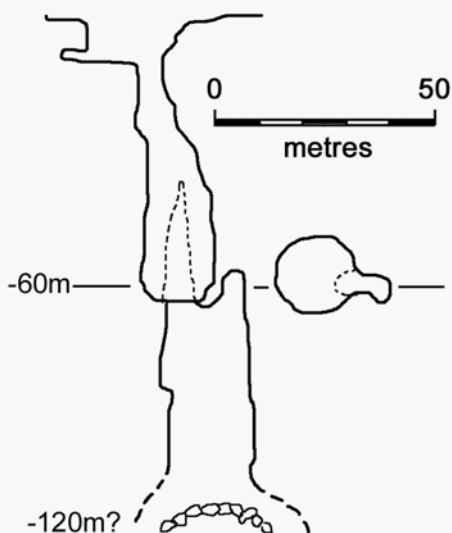
Adapted from a survey by A.Feliccia (1989)

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Survey 4.

HAWA EOMAYMONA (MUNTAQA AQARANTA)

Qasr Al Hawat, Al Marj Al Qadim,
Jabal Al Akhdar



Adapted from a survey by Kosa and Csernavolgyi (1983)

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Photo 01. Top left - Bo Hemera cenote

Photo 02. Top right - Hawa Highteen

Photo 03. Middle left - Hawa Asad

Photo 04. Middle right - Caves in Wadi Kuf

Photo 05. Left - Hawa Eomaymona

Photo 06. Above - Qasr Abu An Niran

Next page -

Photo 07. Top left - Karren feature in gypsum

Photo 08. Top Right - The Arch, Jabal Akakus

Photo 09. Middle - Ain Mizraq surface

Photo 10. Bottom - Ain Mizraq shaft



ADDENDUM. When rechecking the original report it was found that several short items had been omitted under "THE JABAL AL AKHDAR" section.

Immediately preceding Hawa Boacha the following paragraph should have been inserted -

'In 1951-52 a little reported but very productive British Army "Deep Reconnaissance Unit Expedition" and a follow up visit by the "Cambridge University Expedition to Cyrenaica 1959" resulted in almost 100 caves and shafts being investigated.

We have only been able to identify some of these sites as

- a. grid references given refer to the old unobtainable Italian 1:100:000 maps and
- b. all names were in English and rarely translated into the current Arabic ones. We apologise if we have failed to mention either expedition as first time explorers for any of the major caves listed below.'

Under Hawa Balkhtak it should have been noted that - The "Deep Reconnaissance Unit" first descended this hole during their 1951-52 expedition. It was then known as the Black Well. The hole was later visited by the C.U.C.C. (1959) but not descended. In 1983 the Italians arrived and made a more accurate survey (Fileccia 1989).

Under REFERENCES.

Deep Reconnaissance Unit to Cyrenaica Expedition 1951-52.

We were unable to obtain this account but it is frequently referred to in the C.U.C.C. report of 1959.

JM



AN APPRECIATION

SIR EDMUND HILLARY 1919 - 2008

Hillary died in Auckland Hospital, New Zealand, in January this year. Much has been written about this colossus both before and since his death but it would be remiss of the Club to not mark his passing although there is little that can be said that has not already been said elsewhere.

He was best remembered as the first man to summit Mount Everest and return safely, when he did it with Tenzing Norgay in 1953.

His life was marked by numerous great achievements; high adventure, exploration and discovery - indeed it appeared that it was one long life of excitement. However his modest business was that as a bee keeper and he was humble to the extent that he only admitted to actually being the first of them to the top, long after the death of his climbing companion Tenzing Norgay. He described himself as an average New Zealander with modest abilities. In reality he was a larger than life, heroic figure.

It is easy to forget just what a challenge Everest was in those days. Many climbers had tried and failed to climb it; many of them perishing, some never to be seen again. There was the great unknown; would human physiology survive at those altitudes, should they use open or closed oxygen systems, what route should they pursue?

Nowadays climbers seek more challenging routes but back then it took a tremendous attitude of mind just to believe it might be possible. In the fifty years after this first ascent and return, over 1300 people have summited which tends to belittle the performance of Hillary and Tenzing which was a stupendous achievement, especially bearing in mind the equipment of the day and the shortage of real information about the mountain.

The success was due in no small part to the work which had been done before; they received invaluable advice from other mountaineers who had attempted the feat over the previous years. Hillary joined in Everest reconnaissance expeditions in 1951 and 1952, endeavours which brought him to the attention of John Hunt. It was the expedition Hillary was on, led by Eric Shipton in 1951, that discovered the southern route to the top of the mountain. Everest is guarded on the south side by the treacherous glaciers and ice-falls of the Western Cwm.

This forms a huge bowl between Lhotse (27,890 feet), Nuptse (25,680) and Everest itself. The South Col is high above the Western Cwm, and directly between Lhotse and the mass of Everest.



Everest from Kala Pattar 1997

The expedition was well conceived and well planned and used 362 porters, twenty Sherpa guides and had over 10,000lbs of baggage. The party set out from the Nepalese base at Kathmandu on March 10 and trekked the 170 miles to make their headquarters at Namche Bazaar. They arrived 15 days later presaging a period of training and testing of equipment and a series trial climbs of up to 19,000 feet. It was considerably easier when I did it as we took a soviet army-surplus chopper to Lukla, substantially reducing the trek to Namche. Equally as our limited ambition was only base camp, we had considerably less kit to transport.

The next stage for the team was a 20 mile advance to their base camp, 18,000 feet up on the Khumbu glacier. Camp two was pitched below the ice fall at the head of the glacier and camp three above the ice fall. This actually proved too exposed and they pushed on to the Western Cwm, where the advance base camp (camp four) was established at 23,000 feet. Camp five was a stores depot at the head of the Western Cwm, and at the foot of the Lhotse face. Camp six was up on the South Col and within four thousand feet of the top. Camp seven was established at the highest possible point for the final assault by two men, at around 26,000 feet. Camp eight (the last) was being set up on the South Col at 27,500 feet, just 1,500 feet from the summit. It was to be a bivi from which the final pair of climbers hopefully could cover the last challenging leg.

At the end of the day it took sheer determination by two very strong men at 34 and 39 respectively to finally succeed. It was very appropriate that Tenzing should be the Sherpa of the successful duo as he had

reached the record height of 28,215 feet in 1952 during a Swiss expedition led by Raymond Lambert.

On the successful trip the whole expedition reached the South Peak but all but two of the climbers were forced to turn back by exhaustion and the effects of high altitude. This left Hillary and Tenzing, who had participated in five previous Everest trips, alone able to make the final assault on the summit.

They quite rightly celebrated when they go to the top but they did not waste much time in setting off back down, about 15 minutes to be precise. After a brief hug, a few photographs for posterity and Tenzing burying gifts to the gods they made their difficult descent.

Hillary and expedition leader John Hunt were knighted on their return to Britain and Tenzing Norgay was awarded the George Medal and later became director of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling. He died in 1986.

Sir Edmund Hillary was born in 1919, grew up in Auckland and it was in New Zealand that he became interested in mountaineering. Although he made his living as a beekeeper, he climbed mountains in New Zealand, then the Alps and finally in the Himalayas, where he climbed eleven peaks of over 20,000 feet before being convinced he was ready to confront the world's highest mountain. He served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force during WW2.

Hillary took part in several expeditions over later years including a trip across Antarctica to the South Pole in 1958 and he was New Zealand High Commissioner to India in Delhi from 1984 to 1989.

Having survived many near disasters himself it was doubly tragic that he suffered the loss of his wife and daughter in a plane crash in 1975.

Hillary never forgot the peoples of the Khumbu and he became more and more concerned with the welfare of the Sherpas and in 1961, he returned to Nepal and set up a medical and educational trust for the Sherpa people. He was rightly proud of his decades-long campaign to set up schools and health clinics in Nepal, the homeland of Tenzing Norgay.

The logistics of these projects required the building of bridges and construction of air strips which had the knock on effect of bringing more tourists and would-be mountain climbers to the region.



The Nepalese cut down many of their woodlands to provide building material for tea rooms and hostels and for fuel for the visitors, until Hillary persuaded the Nepalese government to legislate to protect the forests and to declare the area around Everest as the Sagarmatha National Park. His influence with the New Zealand government persuaded them to fund it. Sagarmatha is the Nepali name for Everest and in Tibetan it is Chomolungma "Goddess Mother of the Snows"

I am unaware as to whether any of our club members had the pleasure and privilege of ever meeting Hillary in person but many of us have seen the fruits of his efforts in the facilities now enjoyed by the people of the Khumbu. I missed the great man by 5 hours when he visited a monastery the day I left it to proceed up the valley. Had we known what was to happen we may have stayed on, but during the long climb up to the monastery at Tengboche, fog had closed in and as we arrived snow was falling heavily. We had to spend from just after noon until we could justify going to bed (7.30), huddled around a stove in tatty hut with party of Germans which proved hard work. Tengboche lies at a height of 3867m and had been officially reopened four years earlier having been destroyed by fire with much of the funding organised by Hillary. A five minute break in the gloom during the early evening gave us our only glimpse of this monastery.

The following day saw still-falling snow and we had to make a precarious walk out in very tricky conditions and still near zero visibility and it was only later we learned of what had been happening at the monastery.

It is an oft miss-used phrase but I very much doubt we will ever see his like again.

Roy Denney

MOORLANDS

Roy Denney

Following our Edale meet when a number of members expressed concern about the impact of walkers crossing Kinder away from the main paths, I did touch on the plans of several organisations to try and restore the moor not least because of its impact on climate change.

Another major player in the protection of these habitats is the Moorland Association which in just twenty years has grown to a 200-strong membership organisation, which is consulted by Government, their agencies and other bodies on almost every issue that affects the Uplands in England and Wales. Its members are responsible for more than 750,000 acres of the remaining 800,000 acres of heather moorland south of the Scottish border. This forms an internationally recognised habitat for wildlife and one that, due to the efforts of all concerned and particularly the landowners, is on the increase for the first time since the 1950's.

The MA were primarily responsible for obtaining EU funding of £4.6 million, for a three year Northern Upland Moorland Regeneration Project, to regenerate and sustain over 185,000 acres of heather moorland. This highly successful project created a prototype for future rural regeneration schemes.

Heather and its associated wildlife, is still being lost in Wales, the south-west of England and Scotland, and it remains one of the most threatened habitats in Europe. While the threats of afforestation and reclamation for agriculture are now much reduced, the problems of bracken encroachment, local over-grazing and neglect remain. By the year 2000 however, the overall loss of heather moorland in England and Wales had been halted and the decline reversed, with 160,000 acres of heather having been successfully regenerated either by reducing the amount of grazing or active support by way of re-seeding and bracken control. This should improve wildlife prospects as 60% of such moorland is now designated as Specially Protected Area or SSSI. Much of the cost for this was borne by private investment from many who are members of the MA, and this continues to this day.

I reported a few years ago when the MA advised the first increase in the total area of heather moorland for over half a century. Since the end of the war

200,000 acres had been lost. I mentioned at that time that three of Britain's most endangered moors had been saved by the injection of £17 million by the government. It is important that landowners and conservation groups work to preserve these moorland areas but government has to play its part. It is a bit long on words and short on action sometimes; often quoted as opposing rain forest being cut down and other conservation disasters in other countries but its own record in this country is not great and was under considerable threat if it had not purchased these conservation areas which had been being progressively cut, dug and bagged and spread over gardens all over the country. Hatfield and Thorne moors in South Yorkshire and Wedholme Flow in Cumbria are home to many rare forms of both flora and fauna.

The important role played by the MA in upland conservation is widely recognised by Government, Natural England, Nature Conservation and other representative bodies. The MA is represented on the National Countryside Access Forum which I also attend occasionally, wearing my Ramblers Association hat. It is a member of the Moorland Access Advisory Group, which influences the implementation of open access with the protection of moorland flora and fauna as a priority.

The MA played a part in instigating and then supporting the RSPB and Game Conservancy Trust sponsored report to study effects of moorland management on breeding wader populations. The findings, published April 2001, proved that the management of heather moorland for grouse is of equal benefit to a number of important breeding waders. Five times more golden plover and lapwing and twice as many curlew breed on moors managed for grouse, when compared with unmanaged moors as I have reported before.

Lobbying by the MA and others resulted in a change of Forestry Commission policy; it has now halted block-planting Sitka spruce on pristine heather moorland. In many areas moorland owners are felling the forestry blocks, and the land is now being managed to encourage a return to heather.

Through representation on the Raptor Forum, and by continuing discussion and pressure, the MA is attempting to work with Government agencies and

wildlife charities to resolve the problem of raptor persecution.

In this area education is of prime importance as the uninformed are quick to go to print apportioning blame.

There are undoubtedly some proven cases of gamekeepers destroying ground nests and poisoning birds of prey but the vast majority work diligently and sensitively trying to maintain a realistic balance and legally controlling predators that are as much a threat to hen harrier and merlin, golden plover and black grouse as they are to the red grouse.

Moorland owners I know are shooting dozens of foxes each year and in areas of managed moorland we are now seeing increases in numbers of many species including curlew, lapwing, dunlin, skylark and golden plovers which have lost their lowland habitat due to intensification of farming. I enjoyed seeing many of this latter species when crossing the North York Moors last year.

Raptors require prey but some are themselves endangered and if they are to have a chance all interests are going to have to work together better than has sometimes been the case in the past. Hen harrier, short eared owls, buzzards, goshawks and merlin all take small chicks requiring an abundant 'larder' of ground nesting birds and small mammals to sustain even small breeding populations. They are all protected and moorland managers along with all interested parties are working together through The Environment Council to forge a way forward to ensure that economical driven grouse shooting, with all the benefits it brings, remains viable whilst supporting reasonable populations of birds of prey. As I mentioned in the last journal some estates are actually putting out dead rabbits to feed such birds to reduce their need for live take. However, many ornithologists do not support this practice as they feel that if the habitat is right the various species will eventually come to a natural balance. How you manage the transitional period is a challenge.

Most species of birds of prey are well spread throughout Britain but all have strongholds. I find the Yorkshire Dales area is a good place to watch them work. I have often seen the comparatively rare peregrine at work and, whilst I have never spotted any, merlin also live there. This smallest of British birds of prey is also probably the most agile in flight and I did see one working, when walking in the Grizedale area of Cumbria on a meet last year.

They have enjoyed stable populations on many grouse moors across the North of England for decades, quite probably helped by the predator control work by the keepers.

Short eared owls and black grouse are staging some recovery but this latter may struggle if global warming continues apace. Breeding male black grouse have been scientifically mapped to be 90% correlated with the ground adjacent to managed grouse moors and there are many black grouse recovery projects in action to extend their range. Again, it is the grouse moor owners that are the driving force behind this recovery and reintroduction programme.

Heather moorland is not actually a natural habitat but one which has been managed by people ever since the scrub and birch woods were cleared thousands of years ago to allow for grazing. To survive heather has to be looked after as otherwise it grows into a dense mass of long woody stems that support very little wildlife, has no grazing or economic value and as we know all too well, is very hard to walk through.

75% of the world's remaining heather moorland is found in Britain and we must all work together to try and preserve it.

Footnote

Since penning this article the Countryside Alliance have issued a press release to the effect that two authoritative studies have rejected insinuations of systematic raptor persecution by showing that birds of prey are actually thriving on the moorlands of the Peak District and that their success is closely linked to management for grouse shooting.

The most recent study of all moorland birds in the Peak District was published by 'Moors for the Future'. It showed that between 1990 and 2004 all species of moorland birds of prey had increased, some dramatically:

Peregrine -	from 7 to 25 pairs = 286% increase
Short eared owl -	5 to 18 pairs = 260% increase
Merlin -	21 to 31 pairs = 50% increase
Raven -	0 to 18 pairs
Buzzard -	1 to 18 pairs
Kestrel -	64 to 89 pairs = 24% increase

This impressive array of raptors was joined in 2006 by two new nests of hen harriers on grouse moors, which produced 10 chicks. These were the first successful harrier nests in the Peak District for

decades and were looked after by a partnership of Natural England staff, landowners and shooting tenants and raptor enthusiasts.

A second report by the Game Conservancy Trust measured how changes in bird numbers were related to how the Peak District moors are managed and concluded that: "Sightings of peregrine falcon, short-eared owl and kestrel have all increased in the Peak District National Park". It also said that: "None of the birds of prey were found to be negatively linked to the area covered by kept land".

Tim Baynes, Moorland Policy Officer for the Countryside Alliance, said: "The Alliance has always condemned the illegal killing of birds of prey, but allegations of systematic persecution are based on insinuation, not science. These studies show that there is another side to the story. The reality is that ground nesting birds of prey are thriving in the Peak District and they are doing best on managed grouse moors. Gamekeepers control foxes and crows which might otherwise eat raptor eggs and chicks, and grouse moor management benefits a wide range of other birds which are the raptors food supply".

Editors note - There are confirmed cases of persecution on kept moors but from evidence I have been able to find most have been in the northern Pennines or Scotland.

BOOK REVIEW

WILDLIFE OF BRITAIN

ISBN 978 1 4053 2932 3

Penguin Books in association with RSPB

Described as the definitive visual guide to Britain's wildlife, for once it is hard to disagree with the promotional blurb.

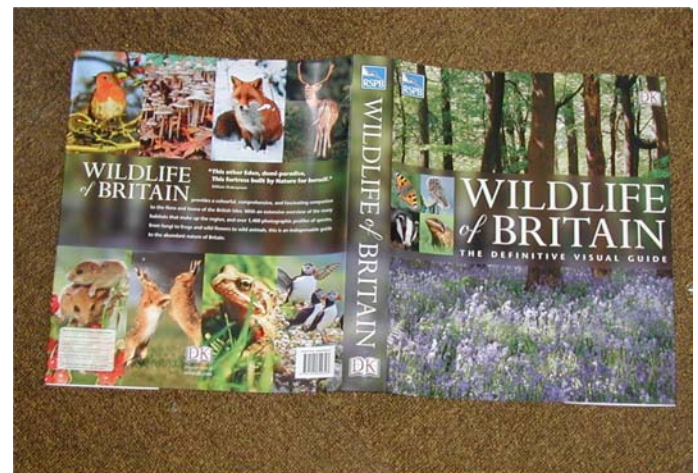
Equally it is very difficult to do justice to this book in any form of words.

It not only covers trees, fungi, wild flowers and other plants, birds, mammals, fish, insects and spiders, butterflies, moths and other invertebrates, but also geology, habitats and conservation.

It is a comprehensive guide to the natural world we share and is outstanding in many ways but the quality of the photographic record is simply quite phenomenal.

Do not rush out and buy one thinking you will have a pocket companion as you walk the hills and byways of England. This is a tome of 512 pages weighing in at six pounds but for anyone wanting either a comprehensive reference book or a good read on a wet weekend I can commend it to you.

It is carrying a recommended price of £30 but is currently on offer at Amazon for £18.



OBITUARY

FRANCIS DAVID SMITH

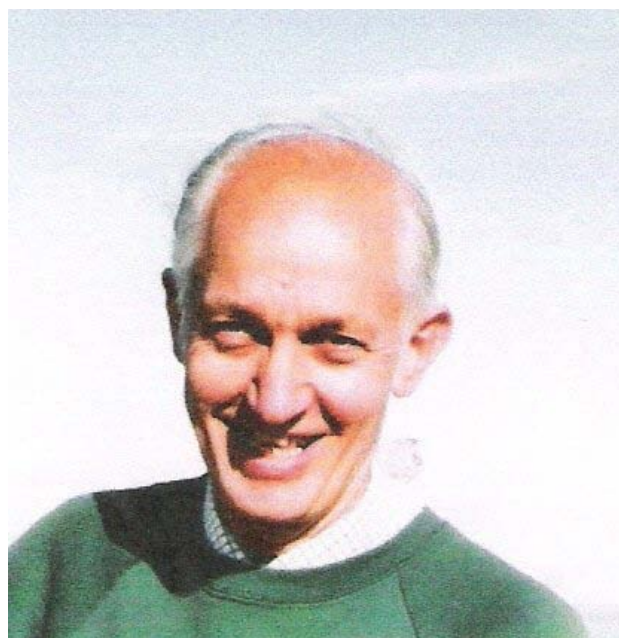
David has left us his own precis of his life--

Born on Saint David's Day 1928 Son of Frederick Smith and May Monica Smith (nee Rostron)

Siblings : John Colin Dinsdale Smith and Marie Josephine Smith (Mrs Leslie Barton)

Married Elspeth Anne Ackerley 17th December 1966

Children: Andrew David Mark Smith 7th October 1967 and Catherine Mary Elspeth Smith 17th October 1969



Education

Schools St. Mary's Infant and Junior Schools, Burnley College, Accrington College.

Chartered Engineer, Member of the Institution of Production Engineers and Institution of Electrical Engineers.

Subjects studied Engineering, History, Metrology, Industrial Psychology, Economics, Costing, Mathematics, Statistics, Works Administration and Management

Religion

Life long active catholic.

Family

I have indeed been fortunate in my parents who gave us freedom to grow up as individuals without any pressures, they gave us love without being possessive or over sentimental, they gave us guidance without us realising, they trusted us, and gave us protection. Again I have been so fortunate in my marriage, we have love without ostentation and have complete trust in each other. We compliment each other in so many different ways. We give each other support without making it obvious. In our children we have be extraordinarily blessed. Both highly gifted in many ways yet normal happy balanced human beings. It was a delight to watch them grow into thinking useful adults who are not self centered.

Mountaineering and Outdoor Career

Local walking with family on local hills, Pendle etc age four. Joined Burnley Youth Hostels Group 1944. Joined Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club 1947 -1950 Following first mountaineering holiday which changed my life on Skye with Harold Wiseman. Sgur Alistair, Ben Nevis, Inaccessible Pinnacle and several other Skye Mountains. 1948 Climbed on Isle of Arran and cycled to Cape Wrath following the west coast then down to Inverness. Many of my early climbing expedition were with Harry Robinson. In 1949 cycled to Monte Carlo from Lyon over the Alps returning via Avignon with Peter Arkwright. 1952 climbed almost every weekend in the Lake District with Douglas Spray. Two weeks in 1952 returned to Skye with Doug completing the Skye Ridge in ten hours top to top. 18 hours Glen Brittle to Glen Brittle walking and climbing all of the day in both directions. Also most of the peaks individually during the fortnight. Completed the Munros in 1994. Joined the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club in 1955 after which I joined many of their meets Britain and Europe.

Later hard climbing with Adrian Bridge, Tim Josephy. David Batemam (Gritstone Club) in the 2000s

Alpine Climbing

1953 Zermatt, Climbed Rimpfischhorn, and on Weisshorn, Dom, Matterhorn but unsuccessful due to snow conditions. Climbed in the Alps every year until 1966. With YRC members W J Anderson, Arthur Tallon, Cliff Large, Brian Hartley, Tim Smith, Roger Allen, Richard Gowing, David Haslam, David Stembridge, John Varney, Chris Renton, Frank Wilkinson climbing Matterhorn twice, Zinal Rothhorn, Dom, Taschhorn, Briethorn, Wieshorn, Aiguille du Chardonnet, Mont Blanc, Aiguille D'Geant Grand and Pitit Charmos, Aiguille D'Grepon by the Mummery crack and many other smaller peaks. Joined all the YRC Alps Meets 1986/2003 except 1997 due to Hernia operation.

After failing to organise YRC Alpine meet in 1977 when I was the President I was asked by President Dennis Armstrong to lead the Clubs meets to the Alps from 1986 visiting Les Hauderes, Saas Grund, Pontrasina, Randa' Argentiere, Nurstiff, (Austria) and Dauphine, Later I visited walked and climbed in the Pyrenees, Slovenia and The Oberland, The Dolomites, Aosta and Sardinia.

Climbing included the Strahlhorn, Rimpfischhorn, Alphubel, Breithorn, Allalinhorn, Feechohpf, Leiterspitzen, Mettlehorn, Unter Rothorn, Lo Besso, Mont Pelvoux, Aiguille Dibona, Barre Des Ecrins, Pic Du Glacier D'Arsine, Pitit Mont Collon, Petit Dent De Vesevi, Grand Dent de Vesevi, Dent de Peroc, Pigne d'Arolla, Mont Blanc de Cheilon, Aiguilles Rouge North Top, Dent Blanche, Aiguille du Pissoir, Aiguille d'Argentiere, Mont Banc de Tacul, Piz Morterarch, Piz Palu, Piz Roseg, Fletchhorn, Egginer, Tete Blanche, L'Eveque, Dent de Tsalion and many other smaller peaks.

Exciting Experiences

Experienced paragliding in Nurstiff, Tyrol in 1998 during an Alpine meet. Other exciting events include a benightment on the summit of the Aiguile Grepon with John Varney, Roger Allen and David Stembridge, struck by lightening, caught in an avalanche on Ben Lui falling about 600ft with Howard Humphreys, Richard Gowing, Harry Stembridge, Jack Hilton, Richard Gowing and Loius Baume without injury and a traverse of the Zinal Rothorn from west to east with Roger and Sue Allen and Chris Renton. Fell about 30 feet into a crevass on the Bella Vista traverse and dramatically extracted myself using front point crampons and my axe to maintain contact on te opposite wall. Was pulled off whilst climbing an ice wall in Great End Gully falling 250 feet without serious injury.

Yorkshire Ramblers' Club

Joined the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club January 1955 Proposed by W J Anderson and seconded by S Maude. Committee 1958/1960, 1990/1995, Lowstern Secretary 1962/66, Low Hall Garth Secretary 1958/66, Vice President 1965/67, Secretary 1966/68, asst Secretary 1968/73, Warden Low Hall Garth 1973/76, 186/98, President 1976/78. Forty years of continuous membership of the YRC Committee. Lead the first years of the official Club Alpine Meets. Joined the Trekking Expedition to Langtang , Nepal 1995 climbing Naya Kanga with Derek Bush and Ian Crowther also Motup and Kazi, 19180 feet, one of the harder trekking peaks of Nepal. Trekked to Bolivia in 1999, Visited Machu Pichu in Peru on Club expedition. Elected Honorary Member of the Club in 1990.

Caving

Potholed in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, South Wales and Northern Ireland mainly with the YRC. Most important expedition was the exploration of Reyfad with the YRC in 1960 when the main shaft was bottomed and many passages were discovered. The main participants were John Varney, Trevor Salmon, Michael Selby and myself with support from Jack Hilton, Jack Holmes, Stanley Marsden and others.

Long Walks

Long walks included Lakeland Three Thousands in 18h 20m, British Three Peaks in 18h 15m, Welsh Three Thousands several times. Peebles/Moffat Walk twice and most of the YRC Long Walks fron 1956 until 2002.

Career

Engineering apprenticeship with Burco Ltd. followed by 43 years continuous employment starting with Morley Products Ltd. which was bought out by Glover and Main Ltd. then by Thorn Electrical Appliances Ltd which became Thorn EMI Plc.- this was bought by Myson Ltd. and finally by Blue Circle Plc. during these years was employed in various management positions including Design Manager, Works Manager, Production Manager, Responsible for Costing & Employment, Principal Industrial Mentor to company graduates for membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Director of Accrington and District Group Training dealing with apprenticeships in the district.

Summary

Thinking about my life, I think I have been remarkably favoured with my family and friends. Life has been good in so many ways; enjoying work, having a successful and happy marriage with quite special uncomplicated and successful children has been an important factor. Wonderful experiences in the natural world particularly in the mountains; especially in my alpine adventures or the wildernesses of Scotland. The YRC became a very significant and important part of my life, it was an anchor in stressful periods, a great source freedom and comradeship.



David's funeral was on April 12th at Christ Church, Nelson and the Club turned out in force. Guesstimates suggest about 250 people were in attendance and that members and their wives probably accounted for about 100. This church is a joint RC and Methodist church built on the foundations of an older church perhaps five years ago. The service was taken by the RC priest who was obviously a personal friend of David's. However Elspeth read a lesson as did the Methodist minister and also the United Reform minister (Elspeth's church). Very ecumenical! The Eulogy was given by Dennis Armstrong and is reproduced below ---

"I think we all know that this morning we are here to remember, to commemorate, and to celebrate the life of someone special: David Smith. He was a Lancastrian through and through, who played his part to the full especially in this area. He had been baptised a Catholic here, grown up in this area, married here and brought up his family here. He had worked here in the local industry for 40 years and played his part in the wider community. But it was here that he first put foot on a hill that set him on his path of love for the mountains. It was through the mountains that he met and fell in love with Elspeth, proposing to her in Skye, on the Cuillins, on top of the Inaccessible Pinnacle. It was through mountains that he became a member of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club that was to prove "a significant and important part of his life."

As I said, we are all here to celebrate David's life, each from the walk of life we knew him: a husband and partner, as a father and guide, as good friend and colleague at work, and as a member of the YRC. Putting it simply, he was a good bloke.

In this contribution to the service, therefore, not being able to deal fairly with any of these areas, I want to speak about the sources of David's character, for these are common to us all. For it was the same David in all his situations, the same generosity to spirit, showing the same mental equanimity. Of course he could at time be frustrating as he remained steadfast in his opinions. But David was without spite or malice, and we all in our various walks of life knew him to be one of Life's 'Givers' never the 'Taker'.

The first thing we should recognise in David Smith is his Faith.

He was baptised a Catholic and he remained a life long active Catholic. Catholicism is recognised as being dogmatic: it provides rules, certainty and a clear pathway in life. But it also stresses Love, to temper those rules, to make the pathway less difficult. You could see both these characteristics in David: he liked the old ways, he would remind you of them, but not one for extremes; he was a gentle person, who just liked people. David admired two popes both very human: John XXIII who was instrumental in loosening the firm grip of the Vatican on the Church in the 1960's, and an Italian called Achille Rattay, a mountaineer and alpine guide who in 1922 became Pope Pius XI and after whom the hut in Langdale is named. I believe David would not have been the David we knew if he had not had his faith.

The second thing we should recognise in David Smith is that he was a man of his land. He was born in Lancashire, was brought up and educated there, and he worked for 43 unbroken years in the local industry. Unlike many of us, he did not have to change his domicile because of education or employment. It is commonly believed that if you live in the land of your birth, the people and their culture form your character. It was a local man called Harold Wiseman who introduced David to Scotland, which gave his life a new emphasis. Burnley was convenient for the Lake District and the Pennines were on his doorstep. For David I believe he was ever thankful for his deep roots in one place, providing strong roots for his life.

The third thing we should recognise is his family background. His parents gave him freedom without pressures, love without sentimentality, and trust at all time to be himself. In Elspeth he found a member of the Fell and Rock Club, a climber in her own right, and a partner who complemented him in many different ways. Their children, Andrew and Catherine, were the light of his life; he was so proud of their accomplishments. Without this family trust and support, his activities would have been curtailed. He knew this and valued it; so when Elspeth in her turn wanted to go into the hills, to Scotland to climb the Munros, he gave her every encouragement, company and support. Their Romahome motor caravan became a symbol of that partnership.

The fourth thing we should recognise is this deep love of the mountains. David became a member of the Yorkshire Ramblers Club in 1955 and he quickly established himself, (along with Richard Gowing, Roger Allan, and David Haslam) as a Young Turk. He read the journals; he was proud of its history. David attended meets regularly. He was not a picker-and-chooser; he was an all-rounder on the hills, an authentic old fashioned mountaineer: on rock and crags, on ice and snow, and on long long bashes over the Lakeland hills or the Cuillins - he took them all in his long stride. He arrived with his friends but he was not cliquey. He went out with others: he climbed with the older members, but he made a point of going out with the new members. He was there to help. In this he was following in the YRC tradition of Ernest Roberts, Jack Hylton, and Cliff Downham. AND If that were not all, he was active in the administration of the Club. He was warden of one hut or the other hut on and off, and on the committee in one office or another, without break from 1958 to 1998. Taking all in all, we shall not see his like again.

So we say our farewells to David, each in our own way, with our own memories. And as he passes over to the other side, and the trumpets are sounding for him, I will be hearing his voice fading into the distance saying:

"Oh no, I only drink coffee".

"I've got two bars, that all I need for lunch."

"The turkey breasts? Oh I got all forty off a stall in Burnley market."

"Oh you can't miss it. There's a path going straight up."

"Yes we did get lost, but only because Harry had the wrong map."

APPRECIATIONS

Numerous members have commented on their personal memories of David; far too many to print here.

A few will however bear repeating to reflect the flavour of the man.

"I never considered that I would have to write these few words as a tribute to a dear friend of many years. The shock is great for me and, of course, for his wife Elspeth, for it was so sudden. David, was supremely fit and energetic, and seemed indestructible. No club meet for me will ever be quite the same for David was always the first to make me feel welcome, and to enquire about my health, my activities and those of my wife, Sylvie. He would be the first to introduce me to guests or prospective new members. This was all part of his interest in other people, so well illustrated on that wet and windy meet in Ennerdale. We spent an hour or so going through the club list of members, many of whom to me were just names without faces and for whom all memories were lost. It was not so for David, with his unusual recall, each name he could bring to life with some detail of their work and activities.

David's name occurs frequently in my mountain diaries, always with a reference that I failed to keep up with his fast uphill pace. But David did adjust his to mine and I have happy memories of two very recent walks up Pen-y-ghent and Whernside when he accepted my limits of age and ability, perhaps thinking I should not be on the hills alone anyway.

Elspeth, his wife, I had known for some years as she was an active member of the Fell and Rock where she had earned a reputation as a strong walker. She had completed the 3000-ft tops of the Lakes in very good time followed by a bus journey to Southampton. We did the occasional climb together and some time in early May 1964 we met by chance on Dow Crag. Elspeth had no climbing partner at the time and I asked her if she would like to join David Smith, Howard Humphries and myself for a few days in Glencoe and Ardgour.



June 1st 1963 - Glencoe
David leading Howard Humphreys
on the first pitch, north face route
Bidean nam Bien

This must not be misinterpreted but David liked to say the first time he saw his wife she was coming out of George Spenceley's tent. It was a wonderful few days of good weather and great climbing and we all know its happy outcome.

We will all miss you David."

George Spenceley

"To me, David was a great friend and companion on the hills. We first met at a YRC meet on Hadrian's Wall in September 1957, when we climbed on High Shield Crag above Crag Lough, and went on to share many great days on the British hills and in the Alps, as well as underground in Yorkshire, where David with his climbing skills was always the last to get his feet wet! On the YRC's annual Long Walks I soon realised that if I could get going with David at the start, his steady pace would see me through the day.

To pick on a few highlights: the Cuillin Main Ridge in mist on the 1961 Whit Meet, with Roger Allen (who later joined the AC and sadly lost his life on the YRC Centenary Meet in Norway in 1992), followed two days later by Blaven and Clach Glas in warm sunshine. A rapid 700 ft. descent of Ben Lui in an avalanche on Good Friday 1963, with no casualties. Of the 6 of us, 4 were AC members! Summer that year in the Dauphine, again with Roger Allen. Our first outing was the Boell Route on the Dibona, David insisting that we carry enough gear for all eventualities so that we nearly did have to bivouac. As it was, David mistook the crux pitch, climbing the nearby Grade V+ one on a much harder route. We then had a great trip, traversing the Ecrins by its south face; difficulty following the complex route meant that we reached the summit ridge too late to go to the Barre, and satisfied ourselves with the lesser 4000m. top Pic Lory, before descending the voie normale to the glacier below the hut, where we tried out our new lightweight bivouac tents rather than face the climb up to the hut! The ensuing glacier tour past the splendid Pelvoux, Coup de Sabre and Pic Sans Nom took us back to the Temple Ecrins, where we were greeted by the warden and a reporter who credited us with the first traverse of the season. We later moved to the Oberland, stopping off for Friday night at Chamonix. We toured the eating places there looking unsuccessfully for one serving fish in that Catholic country before David accepted defeat and we went into the next, rather inferior, place that we came to. In the Oberland we climbed the Finsteraarhorn and had another great glacier tour, over the Gross Fiescherhorn on the way back to Jungfraujoeh.

Just a sample of the great times I shared with a friend who was a most competent and accomplished mountaineer, whom I, as so many others, will miss deeply. "

Richard Gowing

"My first outing with YRC was during Foot & Mouth as Iain Gilmour's guest when we walked on the permitted route on Coniston edge: I recall David because he was so welcoming back at the hut. 18 months later at our first Ladies Meet we were (inexplicably abandoned) to a table for 2 as we/I did not know the seat reservation "ropes". David Smith was foremost in repairing the position and Gabrielle seeks to know where the Ladies' meet is each year and enjoys YRC Company. She too was saddened by his untimely death"

Rob Ibberson

"David was a major part of the YRC when I first started going out with them at the end of the sixties. He remained so until the end and was an invaluable aid to me in taking up the task of journal editor.

If I wanted any background on any member or wished to cross check any historical reference David was my man. David's achievements on the hill and his formal roles with the club are well documented but in the background he quietly kept the wheels oiled and the club proceeding on the right track.

Each year he undertook to precis all the records of the clubs activities under the annual 'Club Proceedings' piece within the journal and in effect he was the club's informal historian.

He maintained a library of photographs of club members which I called on from time to time whilst growing my own collection and was also the repository of personal notes from members wishing to ensure their ultimate obituaries were factually correct.

A stalwart in every sense who will be sadly missed"

Roy Denney

"In David's early alpine days during the early fifties he had to take his summer holidays during the Burnley wakes weeks which were earlier than most other Northern towns. This meant climbing in the Alps at the very beginning of the season if not slightly before. On many occasions he made the first unguided ascents of the season on the high alpine peaks.

On a first attempt on the Matterhorn one year, Zermat guides were waiting his return to find out the snow conditions high on the mountain, prior to taking their client up.

I understand he never employed a guide in the Alps."

Albert Chapman

"What more can be said ? Probably very little but here goes! David could occasionally infuriate. Especially when talking politics and he reminded the group of his immense respect for the Guardian but not since it dropped the 'Manchester' title. We joshed him that all his political views seemed to have been formed by his devotion to the Archers which was his one and only soap. He had a disdain for newspapers. His dietary habits often confounded ! Very strong coffee or very weak tea with oodles of sugar, no eggs of any description and two fruit bars for the hills and rarely any form of drink. His sense of humour was simple. I once told a tale of a Dales farmer snowed in who was rescued by the Red Cross. He rocked with laughter and asked for it to be repeated frequently thereafter much to the amusement of his friends. He was the linch pin of the Tuesday group. He checked the weather and kept the group informed of the next meeting by unfailing email. We were amused at David's frequent lack of knowing exactly where he was when in the hills. He was always pleased to rely on others. Soon after the arrival of the GPS David got one and his fascination with this piece of kit never dimmed though few if any ever relied upon his assessment of where we were or where we were meant to be ! I think he would have smiled at the at the difficulty many had in finding the location of his funeral.

Until more recent months you could not outface him with the plan for a demanding day in the hills. Above all he was kind, gentle and without malice. He would give unstintingly in any capacity for the Club or a friend. He was a committed visitor of the sick. I said to him long before he fell sick that he should make a list of the meets he didn't attend since he joined the Club. I don't think he did it which is a pity since he was surely the most regular attender of all time !

We paid tribute to him on his 80th birthday with a small lunch party at Lowstern. He was unwell but clearly flattered. We saluted his achievements in the hills both at home and abroad and reminded him that we were pleased to be his friends. Full circle was just a month away.

The greatest Yorkshire Rambler since Roberts I have heard it said. Few would quibble with that!

David Handley

CHIPPINGS



JOHN MUIR ON THE WARPATH

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.

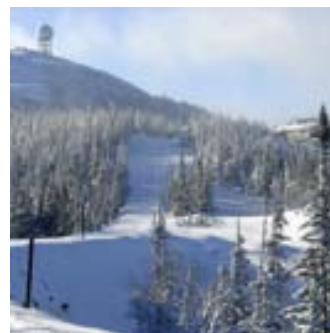
A new leaflet has been sent to all members and supporters and this is also available on line at www.jmt.org. Just click on Wild Landscape Appeal. People who are not members but who wish to sign up for this campaign can become members online.

LABRADOR & NEWFOUNDLAND

Peter Lockwood has written from Newfoundland extolling the attractions of his area.

He had to give up walking and skiing in 2002 after his back packed up and tells us he has just had a second hip replacement, but he is hopeful of getting about a bit better in a month or so.

He comments that St John's is getting quite civilised; they now have a climbing wall! They also completed the creation of a long distance walking trail last year. The East Coast Trail goes for about 120 miles along the cliffs from Cape St Francis to Cape Race. The sea cliffs are between 300 and 500 feet high and as such very spectacular. In his fitter days Peter used to do the earlier sections.



The west coast has quite a bit of rock & ice climbing plus the best downhill skiing in Eastern Canada, at Marble Mountain near Corner Brook.

There are also unlimited cross country trails both on the Avalon and the west coast.

Peter says that St Johns is becoming a miniature Aberdeen with offshore oil etc. Unfortunately thanks to the lousy service they get from Air Canada access to and from the island is pretty poor despite the efforts of the government and the oil companies but once there, he says there is plenty to do.

Access to Labrador is very difficult (bush plane, boat etc) but this is now a national park and hopefully access may improve. More information can be had from the tourism department of the government of Newfoundland & Labrador.

Peter still enjoys reading the Journal and especially the meet reports and he is glad to see that some of his contemporaries are still active.

Background

The Avalon region consists of the large Avalon peninsula to the east of the island, where the sun first shines in North America. There is a sizable wilderness reserve taking up the centre of this peninsular.

To the north of Avalon is St Johns itself, one of the oldest cities in North America, cradled in a harbour carved from granite and surrounded by hills running down to the ocean.

Corner Brook is situated on the west coast of the island, at the mouth of the Bay of Islands. The City is 25 miles inland from the open waters of Gulf of St. Lawrence and is nestling among the folds and faults of the Long Range Mountains, which themselves are a continuation of the Appalachian mountain chain. The landscape is rugged and the scenery spectacular with a coastline of magnificent fjords, jagged headlands, thickly forested areas and many offshore islands.

NEW CLUB AIMS

The younger members of the Club may eventually have to think about changing our list of approved activities.

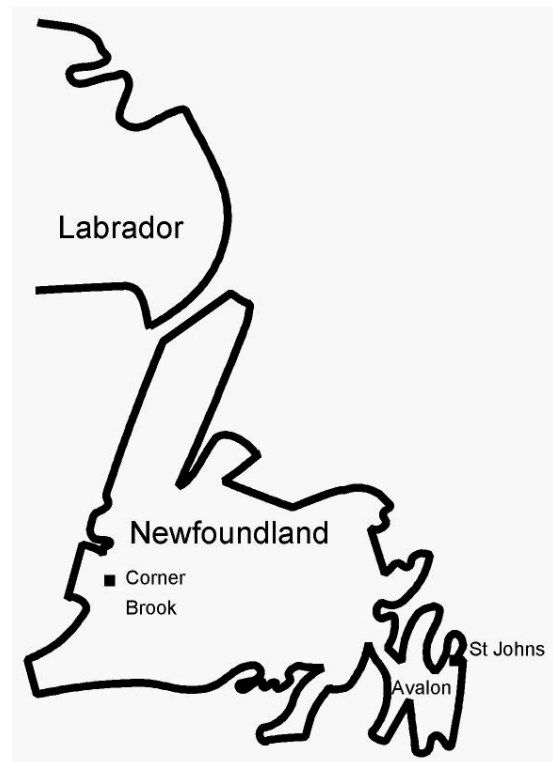
New maps show the effect of river flooding patterns with the now regular heavy winter rains and perhaps more concerning, the effect of rising sea levels.

If sea levels rise 7 metres we need to seriously consider water sports and sailing.

Southport would become an island; Kendal would be a coastal town and we will be able to sail to Europe from Tadcaster. If you wish to look at a map of Britain and see how each metre of rise changes the coastal landscape have a look at <http://flood.firetree.net>

Wildlife, forest and water push against the City's borders on all sides and mountains fill the horizon in all directions.

For thousands of years, people have lived and worked along the shores of the Bay of Islands and in the Humber River Valley but in 1767 Captain James Cook, the famous British cartographer and explorer was the first to survey and record the geography of the Bay of Islands and copies of the maps he created are displayed at the Captain James Cook Monument in Corner Brook.



GOING BACK

AND NOT BEFORE TIME

I am pleased to see that as next years meets programme is being put together it seems likely we will be returning to the Hudeaway Centre in Teesdale

I had suggested this be considered as our last visit there was a meet which sticks in my mind for many reasons.

The Centre for those who do not know it is a converted farmstead now a privately owned outdoor activities centre. When last we went there it had bunk rooms for 3 x 4 and 1 x 6 with camping facilities as well. Not that anyone camped when we were there for very good reason.

The first reason it sticks in my mind, was the sheer logistics of me getting there at all.

My family was still living in Wharfedale but I had taken up my post in Leicester and the epic started with a dash up the M1 at 5.00. Quick hallos, change and goodbye and then off in Peter Armitage's off-roader to drive north to Teesdale. Already running late we ran into snow storms and then heavy fog and may not have made it at all in an ordinary vehicle.

We finally made it just in time to report in and dash back to Middleton in Teesdale for a pint just before closing and very welcome fish & chips.

When I mentioned this venue as one worthy of a return visit I was imagining that the meet must have been about 15 years ago but my maths was way out. I should have realised by the fact that home was still in Yorkshire but this was actually 1988.

My memory may be coloured by time but I recall the venue as being very good but more than that I do recall the weather and activities being superb.

We awoke next morning to glorious sunshine, wall to wall blue skies, a good covering of snow and a frosted surface glistening in the morning light.

The Centre has access to some old local mines and members split into two groups one walking on the Saturday and going down the mines on the Sunday and the other group reversing that process.

We elected to walk first and followed the Tees past High Force and Cauldon Spout to High Cup Nick and back by a circuitous route. Absolutely glorious!

Sunday was equally fascinating crawling through these derelict workings and for the first time in my life seeing cave pearls.

Another reason the meet sticks in my mind is that my companion down the cave was a stalwart of the club who was to die shortly afterwards. It was Brian Nicholson's last meet.

I resorted to David Smith for his memories of Brian and an update on his family. David commented that my enquiry reminded him of a good friend and quite exceptional member.

Brian finished his career as a 'theatre sister' at the later stages of the lung operations for people with TB.

Not only was he a great potholer, he had a climb to his name in North Wales at the foot of which his ashes were ultimately scattered. His cave photographs were quite superb.

His widow, Brenda lives in Snowdonia. His daughter is a microbiologist with two young children. He is a cousin of Don Mackay and Brian was the member who started the Cambridge influx of members.

Much time has past and I do not know what the Centre is like today but if the meet is half as good as the last visit was, it will be well worth attending. I would suggest however that any member of a superstitious nature does not go caving with me.

Teesdale, whilst not strictly Geordieland, is well populated by people of that ilk and if you are to truly enjoy a visit to a strange land it is always a good idea to learn at least a token amount of the local language.

To this end I have compiled a short help list.

- Ah wes palatick - I enjoyed myself
- Gantethe hop? - are you going to the dance
- Mindshesweelstacked - what a stunning figure
- Heysparrasankles - excuse me miss
- Fowerfedz - 4 Federation ales please
- Broonsalrooond - brown ales for all barman
- Seymagen kidder - repeat the round please
- Bestuvordernoo - pray silence gentlemen
- Yerbyeuts is clarty - you have dirty boots
- Worbairns hacky mucky - your baby needs a wash
- Why aye hinny - certainly darling
- Ooutside! - let us settle this like gentlemen
- Wordaz on the buroo - father's unemployed

MEGHALAYA

The State Government of Meghalaya, together with the Meghalaya Adventurers Association (MAA), has organised a seminar 'Discover Meghalaya - The Caving Experience' at Shillong. The conference discussed the possibilities of cave tourism in the region.

"With over 1,100 caves discovered so far, and more being discovered every year, Meghalaya offers a wide spectrum of diversity in its caves. Over the past few years, caves in the state have drawn a lot of foreign tourists. Now, the State Tourism Ministry plans to consolidate the business and promote it as an element of adventure tourism," said D Wahlang, Secretary, Meghalaya Tourism.

TOOTH & CLAW

I have in the past touched upon the possible re-wilding of our upland areas and have commended the web site of Tooth & Claw to you.

They have now released a thought provoking book on the subject which is being well received.

It is not cheap but quite apart from its interesting content it is an attractive coffee table book with glorious photographs.

Not to be taken lightly this is a substantial tome which takes some lifting.

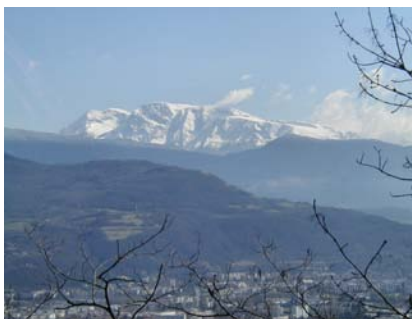
Tooth & Claw: Living alongside Britain's predators. Peter Cairns and Mark Hamblin. £25.00
Whittles Publishing ISBN 978-1904445-46-3 320

IN PASSING

Life's circumstances take us to less known parts of the world which, if located in southern England would fire us with great enthusiasm.

I have just spent a week in Grenoble where my daughter lives and works and whilst primarily a family visit, I did take the opportunity to get up a few thousand feet and take in some views during a half day sortie. Receiving very little attention being so near to some classic climbs there were several rock faces that would have afforded some very real challenges.

The weather in March was a bit of a lottery. A few days of cool but mixed sun and cloud. A couple of days of drizzle, one of pouring rain, one of day-long snow fall and one of glorious sunshine. The Mistral roaring down the valley in the late afternoon on two of the days really put warm weather clothing to the test.



Belledonne Range overlooking Grenoble from the Foothills of Chartreuse Range

On a similar basis and at the same time, Adrian Bridge needed to be in Barcelona for business on a Friday; and on a previous visit he had heard about the climbing opportunities at Monserrat and this time, arranged to go there with a chap from the company he went to see, and a couple of his friends who knew the area well.

He comments "Saturday (March 14th) dawned clear and dry; the Monserrat saw tooth ridge was visible from a long way off, rising several hundred metres above surroundings. A good road leads up to an extensive car park, built primarily for visitors to the large monastery (said to be the focus of Catholicism in Catalonia).

We walked on a circuitous path, rising perhaps a thousand feet to the crag area. From a distance, the rock looks smooth and massive, but close up, it is all a hard conglomerate - millions of stones and small rocks glued together by natural cement. The 5-6 routes we climbed were all bolted and followed a similar pattern, steep to begin and becoming gentler angled towards the top. Despite the crumbly appearance, none of the projecting pebbles broke away, and one soon got confidence to stand on not much. Potential for traditional gear was negligible - friends could be placed in some pockets, perhaps. All the routes we did had lower off/abseil rings after two/three pitches. They had a guide book to the area, but I never really worked out where we were, they kept pointing to conical crags that we never got to! The wind was quite strong and cold on routes exposed to it; by 5pm the sun had gone into cloud, we became chilly and were pleased to warm up during the scamper down to the car.

This was an enjoyable day (and my Spanish companions Carlos, Luis and Xavier were great company) but with the wealth of rock in Spain, this isn't an area I'd rush back to: not that there isn't excitement to be found, but all the moves are so similar due to the rock structure. A reasonable comparison could be made with the climbing on granite domes in the Californian High Sierras."



VANISHING GLACIERS

In the last edition we reported that Mont Blanc was growing due to increasing depth of the ice cap.

Alister Renton has brought to my attention a piece on the glaciers of Switzerland which whilst equally interesting is more than a little disturbing.

Switzerland has about 1,800 glaciers, ranging from the 23km-long Aletsch to glaciers of just a few metres in diameter. Almost all of them are retreating.

Experts say that if temperatures rise by an average of three degrees Celsius, 80% of the glaciers will have disappeared by 2100. A rise of five degrees would lead to their total disappearance.

The alpine glaciers are a major source of water not only in Switzerland but also for the whole of western Europe.

The article can be read in full if you visit the web site of Swiss Radio International where there is also a gallery of before and after pictures of numerous of the shrinking glaciers. This extract is reproduced with their permission.

<http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swissinfo.html?siteSect=107&sid=8757520>

The twist to the article is that back in 1802, young English painter J. M. W. Turner picked a spot in the French Chamonix Valley with a fine view of Mont Blanc's Mer de Glace and started to sketch it.

More than two hundred years later a young Swiss geographer, armed with Turner's drawing, searches the glacial terrain to find the same place where the artist once stood and takes out his camera.

By comparing Turner's landscape with the present day view, Samuel Nussbaumer has been able to determine quite accurately the position of the Mer de Glace glacier at that time.



LEWIS DECISION

Scotland's Energy Minister has finally vetoed plans for Europe's largest wind farm.

The proposed 181 turbine development on Lewis had provoked a fierce debate within the environmental movement over the last few years.

Supporters of 'renewables' had claimed the

project would bring in £600 million each year to the western isles and provide hundreds of jobs but this 'green' technology would have decimated a wild life haven and the economics were dependent on heavy subsidy.

In announcing the decision he stated that the project was incompatible with European law, as it would have had a serious impact on the Lewis Peatlands Special Protection Area. The land

is designated under European Commission regulations because of its important birdlife.

The battle is not over however as Scotland still hopes to generate 50 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2020 and the challenge is to do this without an unacceptable cost to the environment. Already 454 wind turbines are operating in Scotland; a further 203 approved and applications have been received for a further 1,700 others at 28 different locations, including two more in the Western Isles.

The future of a new inter-connector between the islands and mainland may now also be at risk but given the energy loss in long distance transmission this may focus attention on generation closer to where the main demand is.

The Western Isles Council, is disappointed as the local economy is struggling but the project has

been highly controversial since it was put forward in 2004. Out of 11,022 representations, 10,924 were against the plan.

Environmental groups feared massive damage to the peatland, which is home to many species including golden eagle, merlin, red throated diver, golden plover, dunlin and greenshank and the RSPB are pleased that this sends a strong message that in meeting ambitious and welcome renewable targets, we do not have to sacrifice our most important environments. These Lewis peatlands are one of the most extensive areas of blanket bog in the world and the potential development would have covered over 60,000 acres most of it within the Special Protection Area.

Quite apart from the effect on wildlife it was also thought that construction would cause extensive damage to the peat itself releasing enormous quantities of carbon dioxide



WAYS TO STAY LOST?

Since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, local authorities have had a duty to record rights of way on a definitive map. Technically if the route is not shown on this map, then there is no public right of access although in law any right of way remains a right of way until some form of legal extinguishment (i.e. once a right of way always a right of way).

The 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act created a right of access to certain types of terrain but as a trade off made provision for a cut off date to agree a definitive record of rights of way. Effectively it opened the door to the legal extinguishment all footpaths, bridleways, green lanes and byways that are not recorded on the definitive map by 2026 regardless as to whether they were in existence before 1949.

This deadline appears to have opened up a can of worms. Perhaps understandably many walkers and ramblers started digging out old records to try and prove right of access where there is no visible sign on the ground and landowners not surprisingly were up in arms about this. They felt under threat as the government itself started a process to find them all under a project they called Discovering Lost Ways which was to provide the research

necessary to get these unrecorded routes on the definitive map before the deadline, after which they would be lost.

The then Countryside Agency, now part of Natural England, was to look at the future of rights of way, endeavour to get unrecorded routes on the definitive map and then close the map. If there was good historical evidence for an old right of way that could be used, then it should be on the map. The definitive map has real legal meaning as once recorded, a right of way has the same legal protection as any other highway.

Unfortunately the legislative framework within which any paths could be processed is costly and slow. You need to present evidence of an old route to the local authority and they then have to involve highway engineers and planning / rights of way departments, wasting large amounts of taxpayers' money. Some authorities are already facing backlogs of rights of way case which with current budgets and officer time could be as long as 100 years.

It became obviously impossible to expect local authorities to complete the definitive map by 2026 and, given the fact that the proposals were unworkable, the government withdrew the initiative earlier this year and Natural England are

now to lead a reform of rights of way procedures that can be completed in reasonable time and cost without an undue burden. The risk is of course now that many thousands of tracks around Britain may never be recorded as public rights of way. Many of them would serve no purpose today and perhaps therefore would not be a loss but this should be looked at alongside a review of possible new rights of way to improve what is at present a very fragmented network.

One of the basic problems is that under the overall umbrella of looking for so-called lost ways there are a number of different issues. Many paths are not actually lost, with many in use but just unrecorded, and it is these we should be concentrating on.

It is essential that the network is improved as the result will be more leisure activity in the countryside with the knock on benefits to public health and also to rural economies.

BORING BUSINESS

Since 1892 this Club has gone about its business and has done so with a fairly rudimentary set of rules. Barring one or two minor difficulties along the way this has not been a problem but in this health and safety conscious, politically correct over regulated and litigious society we need to address certain issues. Our rule book is ambiguous in places, contains anomalies and has several fairly glaring omissions.

Not least amongst the issues are the blurring of the boundaries between Rules and Standing Orders and what constitutes a quorum and indeed what are the roles of the various officers.

More important perhaps is the way the club and you the members are exposed to liability if anyone sues the Club.

Your committee have been exploring possible ways forward. We have looked at becoming a Company limited by guarantee but this is very onerous and costly. Another idea being researched is of becoming a Mutual Company.

By the AGM this year we hope to be able to offer a new set of rules to you but this will probably only be a first step down a longer road.

We cannot remove our liabilities under litigation merely by a change of rules and we are likely to suggest a change of our legal status which will involve fairly boring resolutions being raised at each of the next two AGMs.

Unfortunately in this modern age rules have to cover every contingency and whilst 90% of them might never need to come into play they have to be included.

Rest assured your committee is seeking advice wherever it can, but somewhere down the road I am afraid you are going to have a sizeable document come through the door to give you a chance to understand what is required.

It would be nice to think we could just enjoy or excursions to the hills or down dark holes but unfortunately the administration needs attention.

COAST - ACCESS & PROTECTION

Whilst as a club we are more normally are to be found on the hills or underground a number of us like attacking the long distance footpaths around our coast and indeed some of us like sea swimming and diving.

Proposed legislation should afford us more opportunities to enjoy these activities.

A new network of marine conservation zones, for species and habitats of national importance, will be put in place by 2012 under new powers contained in the government's draft Marine Bill. The new marine conservation zones will have clear conservation objectives, to protect habitats and species of national importance, ensuring that some types of fishing, dredging or other forms of development do not damage them.

Measures to give people the freedom to walk round the English coast for the first time are also included.

Seas are already showing the effects of climate change and with increasing use of the sea by many competing interests we must make sure that the marine environment can cope with changing conditions. The proposals should raise protection and management of our seas to a new level, halting the decline in bio-diversity and create clean, healthy, safe, productive waters..

We will also for the first time in our history be able to walk the length of the coast getting close to the sea right around England.

There has been the usual knee jerk reaction in opposition from some landowners and many of us think the legislation does not go far enough but it will be a major step forward.

Enterprising landowners should be able to turn this to their advantage. Bed and Breakfast requirements will arise along the route and tea rooms etc should prove very welcome. It might also be the saving of some country pubs.

It is important to get the general public out walking if the nation's health is to be improved. Perhaps not walking as we know it but the coast is very popular with people for beach activities and wider forms of recreation. There is evidence that walking is the single most popular activity along the coast. Research shows that 30% of the coast has no access. In addition, of the 70% of the coast to which there is access, this is often fragmented, with gaps in access so it is not possible to make a continuous journey.

In other places the access may be very constrained, for instance there may be a footpath right against the cliff edge which does not provide a good quality coastal experience. Coastal erosion is also an issue which undermines existing access, and people do not always have secure access to the beach. Even where there is access there is a huge variation in the standards of management.

Improving access will give people the confidence and certainty that wherever they arrive at the coast there will be clear, well managed access in either direction, and they would be able to enjoy a rich and varied natural environment.

Under the proposals published in the draft Marine Bill there would be a continuous signed and managed route around the coast together with areas of spreading room, for example beaches, dunes and cliffs, where it is appropriate while ensuring that land management interests are recognised and wildlife and landscape features taken into account.

The alignment of the coastal access corridor will be tailored to meet local circumstances and decided in consultation with local interests.

There is no specified width for the corridor - in some places it would be only about 4 metres wide, plus the foreshore (the land between mean low and mean high water) but in others it would take in beaches, headlands, dunes, cliffs, etc. The width will be decided taking local circumstances into account.

Parks and gardens are excepted from the right of access to open country and registered common land under the CROW Act and this concept is carried forward into the proposals for coastal access.

Because the margin of access land on the coast will often be narrow, this will mean that people will sometimes have to walk inland around a garden.

Private beaches however will probably be treated differently.

Natural England's recommendation included the proposal that the vast majority of beaches would be included within the coastal access corridor. Responses to the consultation supported this view and the government are therefore proposing that beaches be included within the new right of access. There may be some exceptions, for example, for nature conservation reasons. Decisions on which beaches will be included will be made as part of the detailed alignment of the corridor.

Estuaries present another difficulty. They range in size from the biggies, eg. the Severn, the Humber and the Thames down to small tidal rivers of only a few metres width which indent the English coast. People in counties with a lot of estuarine environment, such as Suffolk, regard them as an integral part of the coastal experience. We must recognise however that estuaries throw up particular challenges which include the importance of wildlife habitats and nature conservation.

The draft Bill will enable access to be provided up to the first bridge across the estuary, or sometimes the first ferry, but there may be some places where providing access along an estuary will not be considered appropriate.

Natural England will take full account of all the circumstances in each case before deciding the appropriate access for any estuary.



NATURAL HISTORY SNIPPETS

WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

THE WILD IS STILL CALLING

Following my article in the last journal there are now more calls for animals such as the wolf and the lynx could be reintroduced to Britain. Support is coming from unlikely directions and it is being suggested that if the animals hunted to extinction here were brought back they would not only enhance the environment, restoring some of nature's balance, but would also boost the tourism industry to the extent of millions of pounds. This is the view of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University. They claim it would not be difficult to bring back wolf, lynx or beaver and said there was no reason to block their return. Wild boar are in effect already returning due to escapes and already live freely, breeding rapidly across several south-eastern counties. Even beaver had also escaped into the wild and one was living quite happily near Oxford. Should they be allowed to become more widespread the limited damage they would cause to trees would cost fairly modest sums compared to the value of tourism.

The report did think boars could be a potential threat to people and dogs and cause damage to crops, trees and through rooting to wild flowers, particularly bluebells, but it also expanded on the role boars play as ecosystem engineer, increasing habitat diversity. They are regarded as an economic asset in many locations because they provide sport and meat.

Deer are becoming a nuisance in many parts of Scotland and studies have suggested that the Highlands could support a population of about 400 lynx with possibly another 50 or so in the Southern Uplands.

Farmers' organisations might be expected to object to the introduction of lynx and wolves but given poor livestock values and the suggestion of compensation schemes those in Scotland accept that it would only be restoring the balance of nature and in preserving Scottish heritage tourism would be boosted giving alternative sources of revenue.

IGNORANT CAVALIERS

Many large estates in Scotland continue to demonstrate a completely cavalier attitude to the law of the land and a total ignorance of the habits of the red kite.

Whilst as in many parts of the United Kingdom conservationists are trying to reintroduce this magnificent bird, keepers in Scotland are constantly breaking the law by poisoning them.

The RSPB knows of 11 cases in Scotland during 2007 and suspects there were many more.

The programme in Scotland is now under review and releases planned for Dumfries and Galloway are being questioned given this poisoning problem has been particularly bad in Stirlingshire as it has in the Black Isle area near Inverness.

The coincidence of large estates in the areas has not gone unnoticed but prosecutions for illegal poisoning are rare and the punishments laughable in the scale of finances of large shooting estates.

This demonstrates the ignorance of farmers and gamekeepers who think these birds attack their game birds and young animals. The kite is in fact almost entirely a carrion eater and does no harm to the ecosystem in the area. Invertebrates, small mammals and young birds on the nest are occasionally taken as live prey but carcasses make up the greater part of their diet.

They are not territorial and often search out food in small groups but as the carcasses they find are often large enough to feed several birds this is not a problem.



WHAT A WASH OUT

As information comes in from various reports it is becoming very evident that 2007 was a disaster for much wild life.

The evidence of my own garden suggested as much but as I had been obliged to remove three forest trees early in the year after storm damage it remains to be seen how much that change of habitat contributed.

We used to have as many as a dozen green finches fighting over our seed dispensers and numerous tits of all species but last year they were strangely absent. In stead of having to restock the feeders every other day we now find the seeds rotting before they are eaten.

The loss of the high trees in my gardens may well still be a part of the problem but it seems that across the country similar stories are being told.

An early and unseasonably warm spring triggered many species into breeding early only for their nests and young to be decimated by the following wet weather which also took its toll on their food sources.

Whilst the poor weather cut down on mosquitoes and other flying teeth it had a similar effect on other more welcome insects such as ladybirds, bees and butterflies. The knock on effect was a bad year for bats which normally feed on them.

It is thought only about half of all blue tit fledglings survived last spring.

BAD NEWS AND GOOD NEWS

Red squirrels continue to struggle as their territory shrinks and one of the last English strongholds has been badly hit by Squirrel Pox.

Freshfield near Formby has been decimated by the disease brought in by encroaching greys who are largely immune to its affects.

There may however be a future for the reds assisted from an unlikely source. As the numbers of pine marten have increased with much habitat assistance from man, it has been noticed that the red squirrel is doing rather well thank you.

It seems that the marten is a successful predator on the grey, both species spending much time on the ground whereas the red is largely unbothered by the marten given that it spends much of its time high in the canopy.

A century ago the marten only survived in a few pockets in the highlands but since they became a protected species in the 80s they have been spreading into Perthshire, Lanarkshire and Lomondside in particular and it is now estimated that there are about 4000 adults at large.

Not only are some species doing well and other less well but many are changing their habits and trying to adapt.

Goldfinch numbers are increasing as they learn to feed in gardens. They used to be comparatively shy birds only seen in the countryside. No one could describe the jay as shy but again it did not normally raid our gardens but it is increasingly doing so.

Wood pigeons, long tailed tits, collared doves and even woodpeckers are now seen far more often in proximity to our homes.

MARCH OF THE MUNTJAC

The fastest growing and most troublesome of the deer now found in Britain is the pig-like muntjac. You may go months without seeing one but they are all about us and I have seen them at several local locations. You may well see one without realising it as this small brown stealthy creature is no bigger than a Labrador and if seen briefly, is often taken for a fox or dog. By their very nature we cannot be sure of Muntjac numbers but they are widespread and especially common in the Midlands and South. They are steadily moving north and are now found in Tyne and Wear. North West England is free as far as I know and Scotland has so far escaped.

There are thought to be at least 150,000 and even that is 300% up in the last decade and 20% in the last two years. This is bound to explode until habitat and food shortages cap it as they breed very young and at all times of the year unlike other species of deer. They are quite happy in urban areas and can be found within a few miles of the centres of Birmingham, Leicester and other Midlands cities. I must disturb one at least once a week wandering around the local woodlands. Muntjac are active throughout the day and night

but are secretive during daylight hours, making more use of open spaces during the hours of darkness especially where experiencing frequent disturbance. They are busiest at dawn and dusk. After feeding they digest their food whilst "lying up", which is when I tend to stumble on them.

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

Having said this it is by no means a new species. They date back more than 15 million years and do not appear to have further evolved as they are such a resilient and flexible creature.

This compares with our native roe which only evolved about one million years ago and the comparative new species of the fallow, thought to only date back a mere one hundred thousand years.



This short stocky deer is more like a cross between a pig and a goat. Adult bucks weigh 10 to 18kg but only stand 44 to 52cm at shoulder with does slightly smaller.

A common name for the muntjac is the "barking deer" as it gives out a single, loud bark together with various strange squeaks and screams in various circumstances.

During summer they are a reddish brown which turns to a grey brown during the winter. The bucks have visible upper canine teeth.

Muntjac have short branched antlers with one or two points and are quite long lived. Bucks can live up to 16 years and does up to 19 years. They are solitary animals and have one youngster (a kid) each year at any time of the year.

Unfortunately the muntjac feed on ground flora and species of less usual plants are under threat. Those such as broad-leaved helleborine, sanicle, wood anemone, yellow archangel, primrose, dog's mercury and wood sorrel are not common nowadays and will become less so with the spread of this miniature deer. The bluebell, lords and ladies, honeysuckle and enchanters nightshade are also

under threat and this has a knock on effect up the food chain. As these plants decrease so does the insect population and the birds which feed on them and in turn the birds of prey which feed off them. Butterflies and moths also suffer and the whole ecology is under threat

KIND TO KINDER

Kinder Scout is receiving some tender loving care.

The restorative work that was getting underway when we visited last year is moving on nicely.

Last year some 130,000 cotton grass plants were planted on the moor and further plantings are underway this year.

THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED

Whilst about in Scotland your chances of seeing a white-tailed sea eagle come home to roost have improved dramatically.

Re-introductions started just over 30 years ago and the bird has been making steady progress and surveys last year indicated that there are now 42 territorial breeding pairs.

There were only 36 the previous year.

OTTER BY FAR

Efforts are being made to assist the otter which is slowly spreading back into many areas. This charming creature with an apparent sense of mischief had long been gone from many of our rivers but is staging a comeback. Numbers are thought to be up to nearly 15,000 from just over 7,000 twelve years ago.

They have sleek brown fur and a white neck marking unique to each animal. Their silky sleek appearance is due to a heavy oiling of the coat for waterproofing which is essential given they spend so much time in water. Other adaptations include webbed feet and the ability to close their ears as well as eyes when underwater.

They find their prey by means of long and very sensitive whiskers.

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

They are now found in a number of locations in the Midlands including parts of Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire and now Leicestershire and it is hoped that the wildlife corridors being created along the Soar and Sense Valleys will encourage this animal in its gradual migration north.

Occasional sightings had been made along the Trent and its tributaries and man is trying to lend a helping hand. Within the new National Forest, a wildlife haven is being developed near where the waters of the Trent, Tame and Mease meet where sightings have been made and it is hoped these creatures can be encouraged. Another site at Kelham Bridge on the Sense is also being developed with otter, water vole and wetland birds in mind.

They can be seen at several reserves and I have seen evidence of their activities at Leighton Moss in North Lancashire and at the RSPB reserve at Minsmere but have never seen one in the wild in England.

Most of us will have seen these playful creatures around the coasts of Scotland where they have developed a very different lifestyle not having to be so secretive to survive.

The Otter Trust has a reserve in Suffolk where I did manage to get a great daytime photo of a pair basking in the sun but it is not the same as seeing one in its native habitat.



1278 MALES CALLING

Corncrake numbers are well up again; yet another creature that is making steady progress with a little help from man.

Last year saw increases in the Western Isles, Orkney, Tiree and Islay. Two were also heard in Northern Ireland.

These have seen populations for some time but encouragingly five calling males were logged in the Nene Washes in Cambridgeshire where an introduction programme is running.

For those of you who do not think you are familiar with the Nene Washes you may have actually seen it as the area was used for some of the shots in the hit film 'Atonement'

OAKS HAD IT?

We have previously reported the onset of SOD, the sudden oak death syndrome and the further threat to our historic oaks from the oak processionary moth spreading from the continent. We also get periodic attacks from oak roller moths and last journal we touched on another threat from the continent as a fungal infection moved northwards through Spain encouraged by global warming.

Problems have now come closer to home and struck dramatically in my own back yard. I live on the edge of the ancient Charnwood Forest now being joined to what remains of Needwood Forest in Staffordshire to create the new National Forest and part of the process of planting 7,000,000 trees so far is a good percentage of new oak trees.

You can imagine the worry that the discovery of this new threat has caused and it is now looking as though the mighty oak which has over the centuries been taken as a symbol of endurance faces a battle for survival as a devastating disease hits home.

This contagion, previously known as slow oak decline, kills the plant from the top down. It is now back in a more virulent form and the problem is now simply known as oak decline. It has spread to over a hundred areas around the country, with literally thousands of trees affected so far.

Experts fear that with global warming the disease will spread even more quickly in future and that oak decline could prove more damaging to the countryside than Dutch elm disease was in the 1970s.

The Forestry Commission fears that the number of reported cases is just the tip of the iceberg and the Woodland Trust confirms we have very real problems with our oaks.

Charnwood Forest, here in Leicestershire, was first affected four years ago, and to date twenty trees are known to have died and hundreds more are now infected; 250 at the last count.

The first indication that a tree has oak decline is a yellowing of foliage. Leaves then start to thin and the tree dies from the top downwards, often described as having a "stag-headed" appearance, with the large, leafless branches pushing upwards like antlers. The weakened oak loses the ability to fight off attacks from insects or fungi and die long before their time. Oaks which often live for 400 years and sometimes longer, are dying before reaching 40. This disease has appeared from time to time but has now returned in an "acute" form, killing trees very quickly and allowing less time for woodlands to recover, a condition which has alarmed wildlife experts.

THE FLORA OF LONGSTONE EDGE

When they are not off researching the karst and other limestone features of remote parts of the world, John & Valerie Middleton have been researching the flora of Longstone edge and an extract from their report follows.

*Italic 4 to 8 figure numbers are SK grid references. * Also refer to glossary.*

INTRODUCTION. The object of this project was to both record the *vascular plant life in detail and to attempt an understanding of the reasons for its distribution and diversity. According to Ordnance Survey maps the "true" Longstone Edge is a relatively small area that extends along the southern facing hillside directly above and between the villages of Great Longstone and Rowland. Most observers understand Longstone Edge to include the entire south facing slope together with much of the ensuing plateau. Our surveyor "licence" has also included Longstone Moor and some of the northern slopes of Coombs Dale in order to encompass almost the entire hill (approximately 5.6 square kilometres). This land has an altitude variation of 200m, is generally a gentle undulating dome shape and exhibits spectacular vistas from almost any point. The range of flora and fauna is considerable with the former including several local and national rarities. The variety of habitats is exceptional. Add to this an interesting history and here is a place of infinite challenge and fascination!

A BRIEF HISTORY The monoclinical fold (Ford 1967) of *Carboniferous limestone that forms the great body of Longstone Edge is perhaps most notable for the richness of its extensive mineral *veins. Mines and quarries have yielded vast quantities of *galena, *barytes, *calcite and *fluorite from these veins, as well as *limestone from the wallrocks. The major rakes, Deep, High, Bow, Watersaw and Wagners Flats are still exploited by both Glebe Mines Ltd and Bleaklow Industries Ltd. (landowner) with MMC Mineral Processing Ltd., (operator). Historically mining is thought, but not proven (Kirkham 1966b), to extend back to Roman times. Certainly it was mined for lead not long after the Romans left and written evidence can be found during the reign of Henry III, 1216 -1272, (Kirkham 1966b). The heyday for small mines would seem to have been from the late 17th to early 20th centuries and anyone wishing to pursue this historical perspective might well start with the little book by Ford and Rieuwerts and then delve into the two Kirkham monographs. Mining is, therefore, an integral part of Longstone Edge. Other visible signs of human history are the several tumuli. These date back to the Bronze Age with one tumulus showing continuity of use as a site for burial and ritual extending well into the Roman period.

PLANT HABITATS . A. GRAZED FARMLAND. The majority of such areas are used by both sheep and cattle. In order to maximise land use nutrients and selective herbicides are occasionally used by the farmer. This does result in increased livestock productivity but it also equates to very poor diversity of plant species. Many noted metre squares contained three or less broad leaved plants, these usually being White Clover, Common Mouse-ear and Creeping Buttercup. Just a few squares extended to eight species or more. A typical basic soil check, such as in the fields below Bleaklow Farm at 21697326 alt. 317m would be *pH6.4. Much of this land is not "open access" so recording was done to either side of the many public footpaths and by viewing over walls etc., It was not considered that the land was sufficiently interesting to request further access from the local farmers.

B. CALCAREOUS GRASSLAND. This species rich habitat covers about 40% of the survey area and really occurs in two forms. The finest is that which has remained undisturbed by major or recent workings and these can be found on the north facing slopes of Coombs Dale (pH7.0 at 22007402 alt. 288m), around the northern and southern edges of Longstone Moor, above Hassop Common and in 2272. All such areas are grazed to some degree with the resulting vegetation being made up of relatively dwarf *calicicoles. The dominant species here are Glaucous Sedge, Rock-rose, Common Thyme, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Fairy Flax, Small Scabious, Quaking-grass and Downy, Meadow and Yellow Oat-grasses. Specialities may include Limestone Bedstraw, Spring Cinquefoil, Woolly Thistle, Burnet-saxifrage, Dark Mullein, Spring Sedge and Hairy Violet. The variation to this calcareous grassland is that which has developed over old infilled quarries and mined areas. In this situation the ground tends to be both stonier and drier with a sparser distribution of the aforementioned plants but with the frequent addition of Germander Speedwell, Barren or Wild Strawberry and Mouse-ear Hawkweed; occasional patches of Bramble have also become

established and these must eventually become a nuisance. Good examples of this grassland are situated on the true Longstone Edge, on Hassop Common and in the large field west of Crossdale Head at 184732. In a particularly rich small field we counted 16 one metre squares that each held more than 30 large Autumn Gentians (pH6.7 at 21497306 alt. 312m). The spoil heaps from the many mines, sometimes levelled, exhibit extensive displays of Spring Sandwort and on closer inspection may show the elusive fronds of Moonwort.

C. DRY HEATHLAND. This is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the region. Longstone Moor is an area just over 86 hectares in extent of which the majority is composed of *loess in varying depths over limestone. This particular loess is acidic in character and hosts a diverse range of *calcifuges. These are dominated by Heather, Mat-grass, Wavy-hair grass, Common and Hare's-tail Cotton-grass, Soft Rush, Heath Rush, Bilberry and more rarely Deergrass, Common Sedge and Bell Heather. At alt. 379m 19127313 the pH measures 6.0 which would seem to be typical for the moorland. In several places the limestone is closer to the surface and a few *calcicoles are present. Obvious mounds frequently protrude above the heather and many prove to be spoil heaps containing base-rich materials from the old lead mines with an increased pH at 6.8 (18827314 alt. 383m). These are a botanical explorer's paradise with showy displays of Mountain Pansies, Early Purple and occasional Bee Orchids, Eyebright, Autumn Gentian and the local speciality, Spring Sandwort. The area also contains a number of valuable dewponds and scrapes (see F). This whole moor is an amazing mosaic of diverse habitats creating the finest such region in the Peak District and one of the best in the country. It has been protected as an S.S.S.I. since 1990 (English Nature 2006b). Originally Longstone Moor extended to the slurry lagoons and Blakedon Hollow but occasional traces of moorland are all that now remain.

D. ACIDIC GRASSLAND. Three different "shades" of this type of grassland can be observed. Above the rocky outcrops in Coombs Dale, 2174, 2274 and a small part of 2173, there are strongly leached acid soils often mixed with cherty gravel (English Nature 2006a). A poor calcifuge flora of mainly Wavy-hair Grass, some Mat-grass, Tormentil and some Bilberry is all that has developed, unless there happen to be any old workings, in which case a calcicole rich island intervenes. A soil sample for the former at 21697389 alt. 320m showed pH4.9 whilst an old spoil heap a few metres distance in 21677390 alt. 321m, read pH6.6. Some areas set further back or on the gentler brow of the eastern end have slightly richer and deeper soils where Bracken and Common Gorse grow. Blakedon Hollow, just above Black Harry Gate, is additionally moister with the dominant calcifuges being Soft Rush, Heath Rush, Wavy Hair-grass, Sweet Vernal-grass, Tormentil and the only good site for Purple Moor-grass. An interesting small relict of the old Longstone Moor can still be seen towards the eastern side of the new Slurry Lagoon Plantation.

E. PLANTATIONS AND WOODLANDS. "Ancient" woodlands on Longstone Edge do not exist. All such cover was destroyed in the pursuit of minerals, for firewood and for use in the 2nd World War. However over the past 50 to 60 years a number of plantations have become established and limited regeneration has occurred in areas no longer being mined. Probably the finest example of this regeneration is found in Coombs Dale around 222743. This is classic "Derbyshire Dales" with Ash dominating the stony slopes together with Hazel, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Dogwood, Buckthorn, Wood Avens, Greater Stitchwort, Wood-sorrel, Lords-and-Ladies, Wood Melick and nearby, several Mountain Melick. Just a few tens of metres to the west on a rocky ledge above the water from Sallet Hole Mine is an equally good assemblage of plants with the addition of two Small-leaved Limes and Guelder-rose. Another interesting place is the small 0.219 hectare Scratte Wood situated by Castlegate Lane in 1873. This contains a good understorey and includes one of the only two sites for Broad-leaved Helleborine. Unfortunately Bramble is again slowly becoming dominant. Miss Margaret Shaw states that before the present wide scale quarrying activity both the Dark-red and Broad-leaved Helleborines were also quite well known in the higher central areas.

The earlier plantations tend to be monocultures of Beech or Sycamore with an equally uninteresting ground flora. The later ones are more mixed and contain a finer selection. An exception to the initial statement would be North Cliff Plantation adjacent to Hassop Road; here, a variety of mature and semi-mature trees, shrubs, ferns and other ground plants can be seen. Back Dale Wood (2373) is a coniferous plantation surrounded by a band of various mature deciduous trees frequently with an attractive floor of Bluebells, Lesser Celandine, Red Campion, Greater Stitchwort, Moschatel, Wood-sorrel and Wood Avens. The finer western side is unfortunately protected by a dense tangle of Bramble. This wood has been much reduced by extensions to Back Dale Quarry. Black Plantation in 1973 is Sycamore dominated but does have an understorey of ferns that include Lady-fern as well as an interesting open area with the only station for Tor-grass.

F. WET AREAS. There are no areas that can be classed as permanently wet other than the man made dewponds and scrapes. These prove to be exceptionally rich in plant, amphibian and insect life, particularly so on the limestone and may include Unbranched Bur-reed, Bulrush, Lesser Spearwort, Pond Water-crowfoot, Common Water-starwort, Common Spike-rush, various rushes, Duckweed and Floating Sweet-grass. The pH, and subsequently plant life, does vary considerably depending on the substratum of the pond. For example south of Crossdale Head on the limestone at 18817288 alt. 335m the water reading is a very high pH7.8; well into Longstone Moor at 19417329 alt. 370m it is pH5.7 whilst amongst the old mine workings at 19407405 alt. 346m a pH of 6.6 proved to be also the most productive site botanically. Some of these pools have existed for a century or more and are essential for the healthy existence of both farm and wild animals. A few small areas of standing water do occur on Longstone Moor, possibly related to previous mining, but none contain anything of interest. Damp areas can be found on the more acidic Blakedon Hollow (see D.) and by Deep Rake at 217736 where Lesser Pond-sedge and various rushes flourish. At 23007358, a shallow hollow in an old path contains rain water for most of the year; here grow Common Spike-rush, Soft Rush and most surprisingly, a good clump of Remote Sedge. The water tested has an unusually high pH of 7.7.

Natural perennial streams are not present in the surveyed area but water does seem to always flow out of Sallet Hole in the upper part of Coombs Dale. Sallet Hole was originally dug as a *sough before being enlarged more recently into a mine that extends as far as Deep Rake. The ensuing stream, which also unfortunately floods regularly, has encouraged several additional moisture loving species such as Meadowsweet, Giant Fescue and Wild Angelica along its length. About 90m further up the Coombs Dale track there is a small perennially active spring on the northern side which joins the Sallet Hole water close to its entrance. Both sites were

tested for their pH levels. The spring at 21837405 alt. 229m shows pH7.3 and is surrounded by vigorous but unexciting vegetation on three sides. The result from the mine water taken a few metres from the entrance, 21937409 alt. 227m, is pH7.6.

G. SCREE AND SCRUB. The only completely natural areas of scree are to be found at Coombs Dale in 2074, 2174 and 2274. Where there is just pure scree the flora is relatively sparse and tends to be dominated by the nationally rare Limestone-fern (found in 14 x 100 metre squares!). Towards the bottom of the scree Ash is common and in the shade of this Herb-Robert thrives. In two very fine squares of 2274 a reducing population of Dark-red Helleborine occurs. At the edges of the scree a light covering of soil and moss develops; here the flora then becomes rich in calcicoles, many not found elsewhere or only rarely so. Scree is again seen on the "true" Longstone Edge hillside. Some of this is natural but most probably results from the old mine workings. Small pieces of calcite, fluorite and *toadstone can often be noted. As these slopes face south the dwarf calcicole plant life often has to cope with much drier conditions causing some decrease in the plant diversity. The scrub flora where found is invariably dominated by Hawthorn and/or Common Gorse with occasional Elder, Dog Rose and Western Gorse.

H. ROCKY OUTCROPS. Rock edges of any size are non-existent in the survey area but there are a number of outcrops just a few metres in height. The majority of these occur towards the top of the north-facing slopes of Coombs Dale and host a number of Crucifers, Hawkweeds, Stonecrops and ferns with Brittle-bladder, Maidenhair Spleenwort and Wall-rue being particularly plentiful. The very short turf that is a characteristic feature of the outcrop tops is also rich in common calcicole species. Just to the west of Back Dale Wood there are a number of short inclined limestone exposures. These too have a similar assemblage of plants together with rampant Parsley-piert and a single specimen of the scarce Rustyback Fern. A third area of outcrops and a small quarry face are found in the lower north-western corner of Longstone Moor; these considerably augment that section's plant diversity.

I. HEDGES. Surprisingly, only one short and unexceptional hedge exists, this being on Chertpit Lane. Almost all other boundaries are marked by limestone walls or wire fencing. Rarely these may also include the odd Ash, Hawthorn, Sycamore, Hazel, Wych Elm, Dog Rose and in one instance, Guelder-rose.

J. ROAD AND BRIDLEWAY VERGES. These prove to be very productive places with the soil generally being deeper, richer and slightly acidic. This tends to favour more vigorous species including Ox-eye Daisy, Common Knapweed, Agrimony, Field Scabious, Meadow Crane's-bill and various vetches. One site down Chertpit Lane has a healthy population of the scarce Melancholy Thistle. The soil measure here, as with most other verge sites tested was pH6.8 (18587277 alt. 300m). A small area of *shale on Bramley Lane adjacent to Back Dale Quarry also adds several different species including Changing Forget-me-not, Knotted Clover and a well established colony of Opium Poppies (23537360 alt. 221m, pH6.7). Perhaps the finest margins, due to the greatly varying conditions, are those along the Coombs Dale path where a large number of species can be observed at any season. Verges are also good places to find established garden "throw outs" including the bulbous Bluebell hybrid, Grape Hyacinth, Daffodil and Snowdrop. Entrances to fields are equally rewarding with various farm "weeds" being in evidence. The Coastal Reflexed Saltmarsh-grass is slowly establishing itself along Castlegate Lane but so far does not seem to have spread to the lesser roads even though these also carry heavy quarry traffic.

K. MISCELLANEOUS HABITATS. The current quarrying operations have created dramatic scars along the crest of Longstone Edge, often 60m or more deep, 100m or more wide and many 100's of metres in length. These areas are obviously wastelands unless viewed from a geological perspective when the rock bedding, folding, mineralisation and occasional *dolomitisation (Ford 1967) become evident. Infilled workings are all relatively recent and are dominated by (sown?) grassland suitable only for grazing. At 228735 there is a large hole which has not been infilled but at some stage has had a lot of refuse dumped within; this and its immediate surroundings are again good places to find established garden plants. Mine shafts have mainly been made safe but there are still a considerable number that have only been partially filled or have damaged caps. It is always *dangerous to explore* round these but the entrance 2 or 3 metres is often very productive for ferns which may include Hart's-tongue, Brittle-bladder, Maidenhair Spleenwort, Hard Shield etc.

Below the Beech plantation at 210730/211730/212730 an area of stone quarry waste has been partly covered with imported soil. This in turn has introduced a number of species not normally found in the area such as Squirreltail Fescue, Scarlet Pimpernel, Common Poppy, Teasel, Large-flowered Evening-primrose and at least five different Willowherbs. It will be interesting to see how long they persist. Minimal maintenance is periodically undertaken when excessive hawthorn is cut down and rampant Gorse grubbed out. The waste is then usually burnt and this residue can prove botanically productive. Common Mouse-ear is usually the first invader but is often followed by interesting annual plants and in one instance became only the second site for Common Cudweed (213730).

NOTE. The sample pH water readings were taken with a "Hanna HI18014" meter using a "HI1332B" electrode. Calibration was with pH4, pH7 and pH10 commercial buffer solutions. Moist soil pH samples were taken with a "Tenax Rapitest De Luxe" electrode horticultural meter. Considerably more measurements were taken than those shown but the above can be considered as the "average" for that kind of environment. Unless otherwise stated all samples were taken between the 15th and 31st October 2006.

HISTORICAL PLANT RECORDS. Towards the end of our project we decided to study the old "Flora of Derbyshire" (Clapham 1969) and note all plants mentioned therein for Longstone Edge. Additionally Dr Ken Balkow kindly provided us with records of his more recent finds and Nick Moyes of the Derbyshire Biological Record Centre supplied us with "all time" records for the five key squares. After eliminating species already on our list we then searched specifically for the remainder. We found a number but to date still have not rediscovered Sharp-flowered Rush in 1974 D; Narrow-leaved Bird's-foot-trefoil, Bulbous Rush and Marsh Violet in 1973 E; Frog Orchid and Wild Pansy in 1972 F; Foxtail Barley, Stone Bramble, Dwarf Thistle and Sharp-flowered-rush in 2073 G; Chicory and Kidney Vetch in 2072 H; Butterbur, Fox-and-cubs, Goat's-rue, Lesser Hawkbit and Dwarf Thistle in 2173 I;

Basil-thyme, Field Gentian, Field Pansy in 2273 K; Narrow-leaved Bittercress, Buckwheat, Dusky Crane's-bill, Enchanter's-nightshade, Wilson's Honeysuckle, Marsh Marigold, Sanicle, Star-of-Bethlehem and Sweet-violet in 2373 L; Fragrant Agrimony, Narrow-leaved Bird's-foot-trefoil, Stone Bramble, Grass-of-Parnassus, Lily-of-the-valley, Orpine, Fine-leaved Sandwort, Pill Sedge, and Narrow-leaved Vetch in 2274 P. Whether these plants are lost forever, simply do not occur in our section of a "part" square or are just dormant only time will tell. Conversely, we may simply not have spotted them!

OTHER DISCIPLINES. We make no claims to be experts in any fields other than having a moderate knowledge of plants. However, we could not help but notice that the number and varieties of butterflies seemed exceptional, a point also noted by English Nature (2006a). Animals in the form of foxes, rabbits, hares, badgers, squirrels and various small rodents (which moved too fast for us to identify) were also in evidence. Mosses, lichens and liverworts seemed surprisingly plentiful and these again are mentioned by English Nature (2006b). We came across occasional common lizard on Longstone Moor and amongst the short calcareous grassland. Frogs and newts (including the great crested newt) proved common around the dewponds and scrapes in season. Birds were perhaps our only disappointment. Probably the noise from the working quarries dissuades ornithological plenty although on almost every visit it was good to spot both buzzard and ravens overhead and hear abundant skylarks in spring and early summer. Maybe further study of all the aforementioned could prove productive and help achieve a truly overall view of the region.

CONSERVATION AND THE FUTURE (map 5). There is no doubt that it was the old, small scale mining that over the centuries has made Longstone Edge the fascinating place it has become. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the current large scale operations whose very presence must be out of all proportion to what was intended when the original mining licences were granted. Glebe Mines Ltd., have planning permission to extend their Watersaw Rake quarry as an open trench as far as Longstone Moor and then to mine underground. Bleaklow Industries Ltd., own the mineral rights to Beacon Rod and Waggars Flats. Glebe has stated that they do not intend to make any further applications and plan to restore the current workings to their original state (Save Longstone Edge Group 2006). If Bleaklow take up their rights to Beacon Rod then this could be a disaster as many rare and beautiful plants in the surrounding area could be destroyed. Longstone Moor, some of the southern edge and Coombs Dale are protected as S.S.S.I's therefore these are the only areas completely safe from further mining. Ideally we would consider all the land to the south of Bramley Lane deserving of conservation status and in particular we identified five small areas of particular significance (see map 5 and note below**). In the current "climate" such protection does not seem feasible. However, with the formation of the Save Longstone Edge Group, the backing of the Great Longstone Community Association, the efforts of the Peak Park Authority (who have currently managed to enforce "Stop" notices on Backdale Quarry and Waggars Flats) and more public sympathy, then there is hope that in the not too distant future this area might once more become the magnificent, peaceful and only partially, but fascinatingly scarred countryside that it originally was!

***A. Two small fields with a fine assemblage of dwarf calcicoles and some old mining equipment. Brambles and scrub becoming a problem. B. A long recognised botanical site between Beacon Road and the stone wall with several rarities and a wide range of calcicoles. Brambles and scrub becoming a problem. C. The fenced area and surroundings of White Coe Mine for more rarities and an extensive array of ferns. An open shaft and loose scree make this area potentially dangerous but invasive brambles and scrub are the main conservation problem. D. A steep hillside with exposed limestone between the wood and a public footpath is notable for more rarities, crucifers and general calcicoles. Brambles are already a problem. E. Both sides of Bramley Lane for its initial 200m. Varied soils and habitats have encouraged a very wide range of species including some interesting rarities. Erosion, rabbits and invasive bracken are problems.*

THE SURVEY. Recording commenced on the December 20th 2005 and finished on August 12th 2007. We had also been regular visitors to Longstone Edge over the past 20 years. The initial phase of the project was to note down all the obvious and common species whilst during the second year concentration was on the rarities and those plants more difficult to identify. This method proved to be an efficient way of covering such a large area. One interesting observation on the first two visits before New Year 2005 was that 14 different species of plant were surprisingly still in flower, these being Field Madder, Autumn Hawkbit, Common Gorse, Common Chickweed, Common Mouse-ear, Shepherd's-purse, Red Clover, Bush Vetch, Daisy, Herb-Robert, Thyme-leaved Speedwell, Common Field-speedwell, Creeping Buttercup and Dandelion! Due to considerations of space a decision had to be made early on as to the usage of common or scientific names. We eventually opted to use common names as a. this paper is aimed at enthusiastic local amateurs who are also likely to be the majority of "Sorby Record" readers and b. 95% of all commonly seen plants now have a standard English name as recognised by Stace in his Flora. All grid references were positioned with an Etrex Legend GPS and due to the very open aspect of Longstone Edge accuracy was normally to within +/- 5 metres. The final number of six figure records submitted was 21,635 (historical ones were not included).

TOTAL NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PLANT SPECIES 435.

NUMBER OF FLOWERING PLANTS 345

Agrimony - Alder - Alder, Italian5. - Alkanet, Green - Anemone, Wood - Angelica, Wild - Apple (M. domestica) - Apple, Crab (M. sylvestris) - Arabis, Garden - Archangel, Yellow - Ash - Aspen - Aubrietia - Avens, Water - Avens, Wood - Balsam, Indian - Basil, Wild - Bedstraw, Hedge - Bedstraw, Heath - Bedstraw, Ladies - Bedstraw, Limestone - Beech - Bellflower, Nettle-leaved - Betony - Bilberry - Bindweed, Large - Birch, Downy - Birch, Silver - Bird's-foot-trefoil, Common - Bird's-foot-trefoil var. sativus, Common Bittercress, Hairy - Bittercress, Wavy - Bittersweet - Blackthorn - Bluebell2. - Bluebell x (H. non-scripta x H. hispanica) - Bramble1. - Bridewort (S. salicifolia) - Brooklime - Broom - Bryony, White 6. - Buckthorn - Bugle - Bur-reed, Unbranched - Burdock, Lesser - Burnet, Great - Burnet, Salad - Burnet-saxifrage - Burnet-saxifrage, Greater - Buttercup, Bulbous - Buttercup, Celery-leaved - Buttercup, Creeping - Buttercup, Meadow - Buttercup, Goldilocks - Campion, Bladder - Campion, Red - Campion, White - Cat's-ear - Celandine, Lesser - Celandine, Greater - Centaury, Common - Charlock7. - Cherry, Bird - Cherry, Wild - Chickweed, Common - Cicely, Sweet - Cinquefoil, Creeping - Cinquefoil, Spring1. - Cleavers - Clover, Alsike - Clover, Knotted2. - Clover, Red - Clover, Zig-zag - Clover, White - Colt's-foot - Columbine, Garden - Comfrey, Russian - Cornsalad, Common - Cotoneaster, Wall - Cotoneaster, Willow-

leaved - Cowslip1. - Crane's-bill, Cut-leaved1 - Crane's-bill, Dove's-foot - Crane's-bill, French - Crane's-bill, Knotted - Crane's-bill, Meadow - Crane's-bill, Shining - Crane's-bill, Small-flowered - Cress, Thale - Crosswort - Cuckoo-flower - Cudweed, Common - Currant, Black - Currant, Flowering - Daisy - Daisy, Oxeye - Daffodil, Single-garden - Dame's-violet - Dandelion
 Dead-nettle, Red - Dead-nettle, White - Dock, Broad-leaved - Dock, Curled - Dock, Wood - Dog-rose - Dog-violet, Common
 Dog-violet, Early - Dogwood - Downy-rose, Harsh1. - Duckweed, Least - Elder - Elm, Wych - Evening-primrose, Large-flowered7.
 Eyebright - Fat-hen - Feverfew - Field-rose - Field-speedwell, Common - Figwort, Common - Figwort, Water - Flax, Fairy
 Fleabane, Canadian - Forget-me-not, Changing3. - Forget-me-not, Early - Forget-me-not, Field - Forget-me-not, Wood - Foxglove
 Gentian, Autumn1. - Goat's-beard - Goldenrod, Canadian - Good-King-Henry - Gooseberry - Gorse, Common1. - Gorse, Western1.
 Grape-hyacinth, Garden - Ground-elder - Ground-ivy - Groundsel - Guelder-rose - Harebell - Hawkbit, Autumn - Hawkbit, Rough
 Hawk's-beard, Rough - Hawk's-beard, Smooth - Hawkweed, Mouse-ear - Hawkweed sect. Sabauda - Hawkweed, sp.8. - Hawthorn
 Hawthorn Hybrid (C.x media) - Hawthorn, Red - Hazel - Heather - Heather, Bell - Hedge-parsley, Upright - Helleborine, Broad-leaved2.
 Helleborine, Dark-red3. - Hemlock - Herb-Robert - Hogweed - Holly - Honeysuckle - Horse-chestnut - Horseradish - Hutchinsia7.
 Iris, Bearded - Ivy - Knapweed, Common - Knapweed, Greater - Knotgrass - Knotgrass, Equal-leaved - Knotweed, Japanese
 Lady's-mantle (A. filicaulis ssp. vestita) - Lady's-mantle (A. glabra) - Lady's-mantle (A. mollis) - Larch, European - Lettuce, Great
 Lettuce, Wall - Lime (T. x europaea) - Lime, Small-leaved2. - Londonpride - Loosestrife, Dotted - Lords-and-Ladies - Madder, Field
 Mallow, Common - Mallow, Musk - Maple, Field - Maple, Norway - Marjoram - Marsh-orchid, Northern1 - Marsh-orchid, Southern1.4.
 Mayweed, Scentless - Meadowsweet - Medick, Black - Melilot, Tall7. - Melilot, White7. - Mercury, Dog's - Milkwort, Common
 Milkwort, Heath - Moschatel - Mouse-ear, Common - Mouse-ear, Sticky - Mugwort - Mullein, Dark1. - Mullein, Great - Mustard, Garlic
 Nettle, Common - Nipplewort - Oak, Pedunculate - Oak, Sessile - Onion, Wild - Orache, Common - Orchid, Bee1. - Orchid, Early-
 purple1. - Orchid, Fragrant2. - Orchid, Pyramidal1. - Osier - Pansy, Mountain1. - Parsley, Cow - Parsley-piert - Pearlwort, Annual
 Pearlwort, Knotted1. - Pearlwort, Procumbent - Pepperwort, Field - Periwinkle, Greater - Pignut - Pimpernel, Scarlet7. - Pine, Scot's2
 Pineappleweed - Pink, Maiden2. - Plantain, Greater - Plantain, Hoary - Plantain, Ribwort - Ploughman's-spikenard - Plum, Cherry
 Pondweed, Broad-leaved - Polyanthus - Poppy, Californian - Poppy, Common - Poppy, Opium1. - Poppy, Welsh3. - Primrose
 Primrose x Cowslip (P. x polyantha) - Radish, Wild7. - Ragwort, Common - Ramsons - Rape - Raspberry - Redshank - Restharrow,
 Common - Rock-cress, Hairy - Rock-rose, Common - Rowan - Sage, Wood - St. John's-wort, Hairy - St. John's-wort, Perforate
 St. John's-wort, Slender - Sandwort, Spring1. - Sandwort, Three-nerved - Sandwort, Thyme-leaved - Saxifrage, Meadow - Saxifrage,
 Mossy3. - Saxifrage, Rue-leaved - Scabious, Devil's-bit - Scabious, Field - Scabious, Small - Selfheal - Shepherd's-purse - Silverweed
 Snowberry - Snowdrop, Double3. - Snowdrop, Single2. - Snow-in-summer - Sorrel, Common - Sorrel, Sheep's - Sowthistle, Prickly
 Sowthistle, Smooth - Sowthistle, Perennial - Spearwort, Lesser - Speedwell, Germander - Speedwell, Heath - Speedwell, Ivy-leaved
 Speedwell, Slender - Speedwell, Thyme-leaved - Speedwell, Wall - Spotted-orchid, Common2.4. - Spurge, Petty - Stitchwort, Bog
 Stitchwort, Greater - Stitchwort, Lesser - Stonecrop, Biting - Stonecrop, Butterfly - Stonecrop, White - Stork's-bill, Common
 Strawberry, Barren - Strawberry, Wild - Sycamore -Tare, Hairy - Tare, Smooth - Teasel, Wild - Thistle, Carline1.
 Thistle, Creeping - Thistle, Spear - Thistle, Marsh - Thistle, Melancholy2. - Thistle, Musk1. - Thistle, Wilted - Thistle, Woolly1.
 Thyme, Common, Toadflax, Ivy-leaved - Tormentil - Trefoil, Hop - Trefoil, Lesser - Twayblade, Common3. - Valerian, Common
 Vetch, Bitter - Vetch, Bush - Vetch, Common - Vetch ssp. nigra, Common - Vetch ssp. sativa, Common - Vetch, Tufted - Vetchling,
 Meadow - Violet, Hairy - Violet, Marsh - Water-crowfoot, Pond - Water-starwort, Common - Wayfaring-tree - Weld - Whitebeam,
 Common - Whitlowgrass, Common - Whitlowgrass, Wall3. - Willow, Goat - Willow ssp. Oleifolia, Grey - Willowherb, American
 Willowherb, Broad-leaved - Willowherb, Great - Willowherb, Hoary - Willowherb, Rosebay - Willowherb, Short-fruited -Winter-cress
 Wood-sorrel - Woundwort, Hedge - Yarrow - Yellow-rattle - Yew

NUMBER OF FERNS AND HORSETAILS 16

Adder's-tongue - Bladder-fern, Brittle - Bracken1. - Buckler-fern, Broad - Fern, Limestone1. - Hart's-tongue - Lady-fern - Male-fern
 Moonwort3. - Polypody - Rustyback3. - Shield-fern, Hard - Spleenwort, Black - Spleenwort, Maidenhair - Wall-rue - Horsetail, Field

NUMBER OF GRASSES, RUSHES AND SEDGES 74

Barley, Two-rowed - Bent, Common - Bent, Creeping - Bulrush - Brome, Barren - Brome, False - Cat's-tail, Smaller - Cock's-foot
 Cotton-grass, Common - Cotton-grass, Hare's-tail - Couch-grass, Bearded - Couch-grass, Common - Deergass - Dog's-tail, Crested
 Fern-grass - Fescue, Giant - Fescue, Meadow - Fescue, Red - Fescue, Sheep's - Fescue, Squirreltail2. - Fescue, Tall - Foxtail, Marsh
 Foxtail, Meadow - Hair-grass, Crested - Hair-grass, Early - Hair-grass, Tufted - Hair-grass, Wavy - Hairy-brome - Heath-grass1. - Mat-grass
 Meadow-grass, Annual - Meadow-grass, Flattened - Meadow-grass, Rough - Meadow-grass, Smooth - Melick, Mountain3.
 Melick, Wood - Moor-grass, Purple - Oat, Wild - Oat-grass, False - Oat-grass, Downy - Oat-grass, Meadow - Oat-grass, Yellow
 Pond-sedge, Lesser - Quaking-grass - Rush, Hard - Rush, Heath - Rush, Jointed -Rush, Sharp-flowered - Rush, Soft - Rush, Toad
 Rye-grass, Perennial - Saltmarsh-grass, Reflexed1. - Sedge, Green-ribbed - Sedge, Common - Sedge, Grey (ssp. divulsa)1.
 Sedge, Glaucous - Sedge, Hairy1. - Sedge, Prickly (ssp. lamprocarpa)1.- Sedge, Remote - Sedge, Spring - Sedge, Wood - Soft-brome1.
 Soft-grass, Creeping - Spike-rush, Common - Sweet-grass, Floating1. - Timothy - Tor-grass - Vernal-grass, Sweet - Wood-rush, Field
 Wood-rush, Hairy - Wood-rush, Heath (multiflora) - Yorkshire-fog

Notes

1. Population increasing
2. Population stable
3. Population decreasing
4. Hybrids also in evidence
5. One plant only in poor condition
6. One plant only
7. Only noted in one survey year
8. Probably 3 species (?)

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A SHORT GLOSSARY of technical terms and words used in the text.

- BARYTES**. The mineral barium sulphate, BaSO₄, used as a high-density drilling mud and as a pigment base and filler in rubber and plastics.
- CALCICOLE**. Plants which favour alkaline soils containing free calcium carbonate. These soils may have a pH value of between 7.0 and 10.0.
- CALCIFUGE**. Plants which favour acidic soils containing little or no free calcium carbonate. These soils may have a pH of between 6.9 and 4.0.
- CALCITE**. The mineral calcium carbonate, CaCO₃, used by the building industry for pebble-dash, terrazzo floors etc.
- CARBONIFEROUS**. A period in the geological time-scale lasting 60 million years between 360 and 300 million years ago. The Longstone Edge limestone was formed in the Brigantian sub-stage in the later part of the Viséan stage.
- CHERT**. A hard crypto-crystalline silica rock occurring as nodules or narrow beds in the limestone.
- DOLOMITE**. The mineral calcium magnesium carbonate, CaMg(CO₃)₂, and also a rock similar to limestone but containing more dolomite than calcite; it can be used in the making of refractory bricks and as a source of the metal magnesium.
- DOLOMITISATION** is the process by which limestone is converted either wholly or in part to dolomite.
- FLUORITE (Fluorspar)**. The mineral calcium fluoride (CaF₂), used as a flux in the steel industry and also as a source of fluorine for making hydrofluoric acid and various plastics.
- GALENA**. The mineral lead sulphide (PbS) from which lead is extracted.
- LIMESTONE**. A sedimentary rock composed of carbonates with the principle minerals being calcite and perhaps a smaller proportion of dolomite. It is mainly used as an aggregate by the construction industry.
- LOESS**. A wind-born siliceous dust with a particle size of between 1/16 and 1/32mm.
- pH**. A quantitative scale from 0 to 14 for measuring the acidity or alkalinity of a medium such as soil or water. A reading of 7 is neutral whilst above this shows increasing alkalinity and below increasing acidity. All plants have their own limited range beyond which they are unlikely to flourish.
- SHALE**. A hard clay with obvious lines of bedding.
- SOUGH**. A small tunnel dug to drain a mine.
- TOADSTONE**. A Derbyshire miner's collective term for variable intrusive or extrusive basaltic rocks. This term also includes tuff. Toadstone is frequently met whilst mining on Longstone Edge and currently forms the limit of many operations.
- VASCULAR PLANTS**. Plants containing both xylem and phloem tissue that conduct essential water and nutrients. This includes all seed bearing plants, ferns, horsetails, clubmosses and quillworts.
- VEINS**. Extensive, roughly planar sheets of minerals that formed within joints or faults; they lie within any country rock, but are particularly common in limestone. Rakes, scrins, flats and pipes are local names for mineral veins of various shapes and value.



THEY ARE BACK

Cumbria's pair of nesting ospreys have returned after wintering independently in Africa.

The arrivals are thought to be the male who has nested at the site since 2001, and the mate he paired up with last year.

The male has fathered 13 chicks to date.

It is now hoped that this year will see the eighth successful nesting season for Lakeland's famous birds of prey.

During that period nearly 500,000 people have visited the viewpoints around Bassenthwaite or watched displays in the Whinlatter visitor centre from a nest camera.

Unfortunately Bassenthwaite Lake National Nature Reserve is under threat. The water quality is poor and the pollution is seriously affecting the wildlife.

The Lake District Still Waters Partnership (LDSWP) is taking action on the threats to the lake and hope to restore the water in the lake to being as clean and clear as it was in the 1940s. They say that man needs to better manage the land around the lake because what goes onto the land goes into the lake.

We all love the Lakes as we know them but we all contribute to a growing problem. There are just too many people visiting them and helping destroy the very thing they enjoy.

Whilst the location in question may not be of direct interest to members it does demonstrate the diverse ecology of such areas.

If any member wants to know more about the methodology or indeed the specific locations where plants were found the full report includes detailed maps and square by square records of where each species was located.

For more information contact John direct.

If any members living locally have any further information on the subject John would like to hear from you as this is an ongoing project.



The Lake District attracts over 12 million visitors per year and this puts the environment under enormous pressure. It has been estimated that over 10 million people use the National Park's paths annually. With so many feet pounding these routes, many paths have become huge open scars, visible from miles away.

Eroded paths are not only unsightly, but unpleasant to walk on and can lead to habitat loss as well as damage to the heritage, archaeological and natural history qualities of the area.

Unfortunately some of the 'restored' paths are equally unpleasant to walk on so people tend to walk beside them causing even more erosion.

BLACK GROUSE

It is now though there are more than 1,000 male black grouse making up the English population. This is up 25% in the last ten years and reintroduction schemes do seem to be working in some areas.

The hope is now to extend their range into former haunts on the fringes of their present range.

The RSPB report that the North Pennines Recovery Project is a great success although black grouse have increased in other areas of England and Wales too, including Lake Vyrnwy and Geltsdale RSPB reserves, where numbers of displaying males have doubled since last year.

The Raby Estate in Teesdale had reasonable numbers before the project began but they are seeing steady increases year on year.

BHUTAN REPORT

The October 2007 Bhutan trek was only my second multi day trek. My initiation was the Ladakh trek in 2005 for which I wrote a snippet in the journal ending 'An experience I must certainly try to repeat'. So, despite being two years older, and suffering 'wear and tear' joint pains, under gentle coercion of fellow club members and a big push from my wife to be gone, I chose to take the plunge again.

I found myself among YRC members, and others, old and young, some very experienced trekkers and at least one novice, some whom I may call globe trotters and myself, who infrequently leaves the British shores. Despite this, the escapade was, I think, a success, and despite some pain, enjoyed by all. Escapade it was for me, not an expedition; a glorified package holiday as a form of escape from the increasing frustration of struggling, to adapt to the changes all around and those of growing older.

The trip was planned to comprise 12 days walking and 2 rest days under canvas, sandwiched between spells in hotel accommodation making the trip 20 days in all. I kept a diary to bolster my colander like memory; and thus was asked to write this article. Now here I am, many months later, fighting off procrastination to comply.

THE BHUTAN NATION

Bhutan is situated in the Himalaya on the border of Tibet, to the north of Kolkata and the Bay of Bengal. It is bounded on the north by China and on the south by India. The state is about 200 miles east to west and 65 miles north to south. Access by air is at Paro, only 21 miles northwest to the Chinese border, and the capital of Thimphu is only 14 miles to the east. The kingdom, in the process of becoming democratic, has almost no roads as we know them. To the west lies the Indian state of Sikkim, to the south that of Assam and to the east Arunachal Pradesh. We flew in from Kolkata, 350 miles to the south over the Brahmaputra and part of Bangladesh. The Royal Government of Bhutan recognising that tourism is an important resource, but wishing to minimise the effects on the environment, have thus imposed a daily surcharge. I found the economy difficult to understand, (as I do that of the UK). Outlying villages, days on horse back from a vehicular road have large houses with no glass in the windows but televisions and solar panels. In the countryside almost everyone wore national costume, but in the capital, the teenagers and the plethora of consumer

goods shops belied the fact that access was 30 miles by unmade road.

GETTING TO THE START OF THE TREK

Albert had arranged a BA flight out of Heathrow at 15:00 and some were joining the party there, but the majority found their way to Manchester airport to get a connecting flight in the late morning. There was fog at Heathrow and the flight was delayed. Spirits sank and frustration rose as time ticked away. Finally we were called and relief set in, only to be dashed when we were in the stack at Heathrow as the delays had caused backups at the unloading bays. By mobile phone we knew that those already at Heathrow were going through into the departure lounge and onto the plane. At last, after landing and yet another wait, we got a bay, but found that the terminal transfer could take 45 minutes. There followed a sprint along the walkways, and a frustrating bus ride, but we all made it to the flight. Our luggage, however, did not; a consequence that was to affect us for the next 3 days. We settled down to a 10 hour flight, the prospect of a time change of 4½ hours and arriving at Kolkata at 5:30 am local time.

It was at the carousel in the airport at Kolkata that most of us finally knew that we had no baggage, and there followed the inevitable nightmare of uncertainty, delay and form filling. At last we were met by the RIMO tour organiser, and taken out into the steaming heat for the ½ hour ride into the centre of Kolkata, to the Oberoi Hotel.

The hotel was a throw back to British colonialism; a central swimming pool, magnificent marble, and 'lackies' everywhere. We were to be called at 3:30 the following morning and a tour around Kolkata had been arranged for the afternoon. There were several nodding heads at times, but the visit to the Queen Victoria memorial building alone was worth the trip. Of course, each time we left the bus we were assailed by vendors trying to sell memorabilia, or just beggars, in this vastly overcrowded city.

The following morning, we took the bus back to the airport. Outside the hotel we literally had to stride over sleeping bodies to get to the bus, but surprisingly elsewhere, the streets at 4 am were almost empty. There were not the hordes that appear during the day. We had the security delay at the airport and then the short flight north to Paro, and out into a very different culture. This is the land of the Peaceful Dragon, and the airport was a stark contrast to Heathrow. We were at over 2500 metres in pleasant alpine summer weather, and were taken by bus to Kichu Resort, a

holiday complex of chalet buildings in a garden like area on the valley floor, with a main building containing lounges and dining rooms. We were to remain here pending the fate of our baggage, and planned to return after the trek, providing it took place, on our return home.

The original schedule had called for us to start the trek tomorrow on the Sunday, but this was now impossible, and so we had the pleasure of two days instead of one in Paro. The rest of the day was taken up by a bus trip around the valley, attempting to look at a museum, but closed due to a power cut, visiting the dzong or monastery, accessible by an old covered footbridge, and walking around Paro village. As it was Saturday, there was an amazing archery contest, where teams from Paro and Thimphu were competing, and there was a market. Later, after the evening meal at the resort, we found entertainment in progress around a bonfire for another party, and some of us were even inveigled into joining in the Karaoke.

The following day, Sunday, we were taken to the Tangstan or Tiger's Lair monastery. This complex is perched inaccessibly on a crag 2000 feet up the valley side not far north of Paro. It was severely damaged by fire in 1998 but has been fully restored and a tourist trail gives access for the intrepid. Remember that most of us were without our trekking gear. The round trip took us 4½ hours but the weather was perfect, and then the rest of the day was spent shopping in Paro.

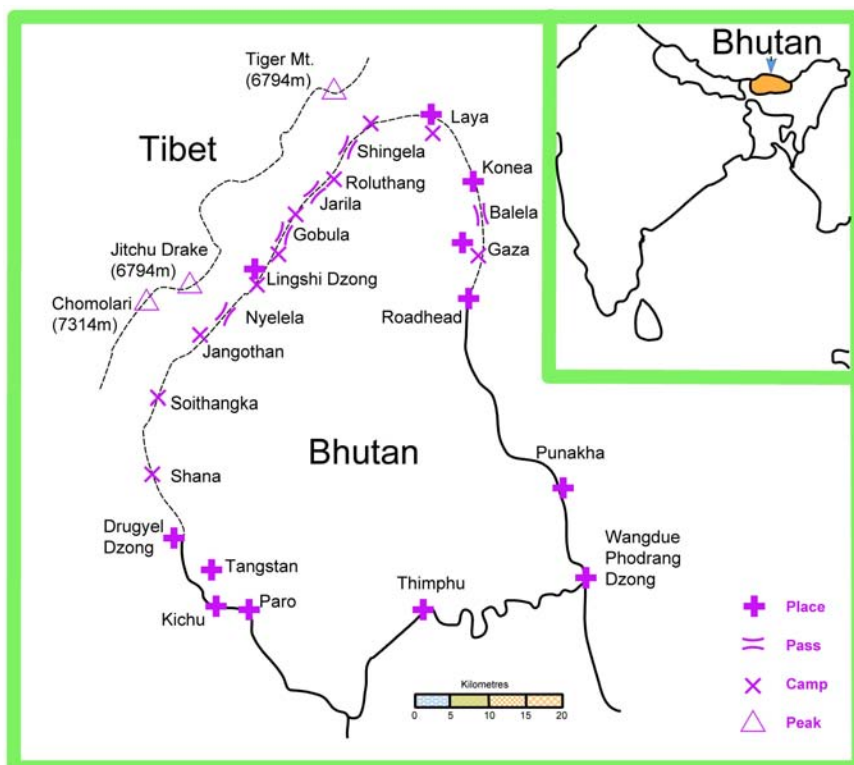
THE TREK TO CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP

By Monday morning we knew that our gear had arrived in Bhutan, but we had to wait for it, and then hastily (in 15 minutes) pack for the trek and decide what to leave behind. The weather was good but the forecast was less favourable.

The first 3 days were to be trekking up the Paro river valley to Jangothang, the base camp for one of the highest peaks in Bhutan, Chomolhari. Michael Palin, in his book Himalaya describing a BBC series, has a chapter on Bhutan and he describes his return from Jangothang to Paro as an arduous journey. He also took 3 days, quoting 23 miles walking in a total distance of 35 miles.

We were taken by bus as far up the valley as possible before the track

became unsuitable and there we began our trek just before noon, leaving our support team to pack all our pots and pans, tent, chairs, food, everything, including whatever appendages of western life style we had hidden away in our large hold alls. We were ominously all issued with umbrella walking sticks. The walk was in a valley somewhat wider than Langdale and with the sides disappearing to unseen summits. The valley was inhabited and cultivated. We were in farmland and walking around paddy fields, but the work was mainly manual labour. There was still a vestige of a road, and we passed a school at break time, all the pupils in national dress. Later we overtook a sizeable party of American tourists. The road ended at a suspension footbridge, sponsored by the Swiss, and then we were on the pack horse trail, which we would follow until reaching the final road head in 12 days time. The valley narrowed and became more of a gorge, and the steep, muddy groove along which we were scrambling brought us to the Gunitsawa army camp of the Phurba Battalion where we had to wait for our permits to be examined before we could go on. Here our pack horses caught and passed us. We crossed back across the river and climbed to the first day's camp site, not yet erected, at the settlement of Shana. We had been walking about 6 hours and two in the party were a little unwell to the extent that one had to hitch a lift on horseback. It was near dusk and the temperature was dropping rapidly. There was a slight drizzle as we waited for camp to be established. Then followed what was to be the pattern for the rest of the trek. Once our tents were up, we found our bags, got sleeping facilities set up, put on warm clothing, read, wrote up diaries, went exploring etc. as light would



permit and waited for the evening meal. All the evening meals were in the mess tent with one large table and folding chairs. A central gas lamp gave light and some much needed heat. Food was not what we were used to, but more than ample and varied.

Two more days to reach Jangothang; today was to be arduous. It was in the forest all day, climbing the valley on a pile of slippery, head sized boulders covered in horse droppings, but the weather was fine. Another 7 hour day, but the GPS said that our real location had only moved about 7 miles. A combination of altitude, ascent and descent, and rough going slowed us down, (speaking of course for myself). The guide book and our feelings indicated double this distance, but what is an adequate measure under such circumstances? Camp at Soithangka, when we arrived, was occupied by other trekking groups, but we had our first sighting of Chomolhari. It rained during the evening and night but cleared by morning.

On the third day, at 8 am, after the usual call at 6, wash, tea, pack and breakfast, we continued up the remains of the forested valley, managing to lose the main trail by following the tracks of loose horses coming down from their foraging up the valley side. We came out of the trees into pleasant meadows and found a small village, complete with powered vehicle (assembled on site) and a health clinic. Then just another mile or so to camp at Jangothang with a backdrop of the 10,000 feet snowy face of Chomolhari seeming only a day's walk away. Jangothang was an important point in former days when insurgents from Tibet could raid across the passes. There are ruins of an old fort here.

A REST DAY

Next day was our, so called, rest day, which we used to climb over 2000 feet up the hill side, supposedly to get acclimatised to the altitude, now over 4000m. The altitude was telling on some of us and although all made the prayer flag vantage point, most of the party went another 500 feet higher. The day was glorious and the views spectacular and we could also look across the valley to our route and the pass we would cross tomorrow.

A NUMBER OF PASSES

Day 5 of the trek was my 74th birthday. I woke to receive a birthday reception before getting ready for the first serious climb of the trek with a total ascent of 2600'. We got away as usual, this time at 8:20 only to pass a young lad of about 10 walking on his own down to the health clinic to school. Uncertainty in the route split the party as there are two trails from here on.

The wrong one takes another route for Paro and I was in the group, which took this by mistake. We could have followed it further into an upper valley, where we could have fairly easily crossed the separating stream to join the correct route, but knowing we were wrong we attempted to cross the ravine lower down. Only James made it, on icy rocks in the river, and the rest retraced their steps to join the proper trail. Once in the upper valley, we had a very pleasant climb on short grass, and easy going in comparison to the forest trail two days ago, in brilliant weather. The route went over a low pass and then traversed to enter another valley running up and around towards the true pass. On this stretch we had a distant view of a herd of blue sheep and were treated to even more spectacular mountain scenery, this time of a spiky snowy summit called Jitchu Drake. The Nyelela pass at 4880m was very windy, and the youngest member made sure that I didn't blow away on my birthday. There followed a pleasant descent, initially quite steeply on a sandy track, one I would not have enjoyed climbing up, to the luncheon spot. The afternoon was a high level traverse along a valley clothed in rhododendrons and junipers, with a distant view of Lingshi Dzong, which we would visit tomorrow. The trail turned into a side valley and descended to where the camp had been established. The meal that night was a little more special, with balloon decorations, an iced birthday cake, and even a bottle of wine in honour of my 74th.

The next day, with brilliant weather, was in retrospect a walk to school. We left camp and climbed around the hill to ascend to Lingshi Dzong on a small hill top. This monastery was home to lots of young monks but had once served as a prison. There was a good view down to a significant farmstead and the small village of Lingshi with school and satellite dish. We descended, and followed the trail along the side of the valley, over a spur, down to another village of Goyul in a hanging valley overshadowed by a massive rock face. Here we had lunch. Then on to the village of Chebisa 3850m in another hanging valley and we arrived early enough to see the villagers threshing with flails.

During the night, Motup disturbed us by giving instructions to shake the snow from the tent roof. Perhaps 3 inches had fallen, and when we got up in the morning it was still snowing and things did not look good. We were facing 2 more high passes and Motup had to choose between returning, and going on. The main problem was of the pack animals. Horses do not like the snow, and yaks although good at forcing a way through have a natural tendency to descend to try to find grass. However, since we were camped below a frequent entry point from Tibet, we discovered that in camp there was

an army associate equipped with satellite dish and power cells. We got an up to date weather forecast and even the result of the Rugby World Cup. We were to go on, possibly influenced by the fact that the current horsemen came from that direction, and for them to return with us would add many days to their return.

The weather improved and the snow soon disappeared. We got away by 10. The day consisted of climbing over our second pass or spur, the Gobula, just under 2000' of ascent to a height of 4430m. The descent curved around the head of a valley, before traversing and crossing a side spur at 4110m before descending into a side river coming from our left. The Tibetan border had been little more than a day's walk to our left since Jangothang, provided one could have found a way through. We crossed the shallow but wide river on stepping stones and climbed a few metres to the camp site at Shomuthang. The day had been overcast, with some risk of snow but the cloud cover meant a slightly warmer night.

The next day was to be another high pass, the Jarila at 4747m requiring an ascent of 2500'. The trail climbed steeply from the river and round a spur into a side valley, then precariously hanging to the valley side before meeting and crossing the river. The route continued up a broad, sparse meadow area and then stony ridges, which we climbed. I finally reached the summit in 3½ hours; on schedule according to Motup, but about an hour behind the gazelles and still a half hour ahead of the tail. The descent was steep and continuous, until we reached a side valley with a bridge across the river and a sign telling us that this was a protected area for the Takin. This is a peculiar mixture of goat and cow and we were to see them later in Thimphu. The trail led down to the floor of another valley coming from the left and the river had to be crossed on improvised log bridges. A sting in the tail followed with a 1000 foot climb onto an inhabited alp and the camp at Roluthang.

Trekking day 8. This was to be the highest pass, the Shingela at 5024m, and an ascent of nearly 3000'. The sky had cleared and it had been a very cold night with a hard frost. We had to climb over a shoulder with prayer flags, across a wet dead forest area and various routes were chosen. Then up into a high rocky wide junction of valleys or cwms. I was trailing and got myself on the spur between the two cwms, having been loured there by some prayer flags. In the wrong cwm was a dilapidated wooden shack, little more than a shelter. The thought occurred to me, what an ideal place to send ASBOs for a working holiday. Peter Green had been finding the going tough. Probably the effect

of altitude and had hitched a lift on a horse part way. Then finally to the col, and we were over 5000m (16,404') for the first and only time. There was some snow about but of little consequence. Once the group was together, we descended about 300m to a sheltered spot for lunch. We could see that we were descending into a complex of meeting valleys, and way in the distance was what looked like a massive wall. As we got closer we saw that it was the side of the valley, scraped clean in the past by glacial ice. How recent was this global warming? The terminal moraine was also interesting and behind it a small glacier lake. Some had the energy to climb up to look, but not I. Camp was a little lower down by a river with another spectacular view of the Tibetan border, known as Tiger Mountain. Today was Joe's birthday and we had another good evening meal, but by now we were running short of mugs. When cold plastic mugs have boiling water poured into them, they sometimes explode, and we had lost many.

VILLAGES ON THE WAY BACK

Next day was day 10 and we were on the way home and approaching habitation. A local woman appeared from somewhere to watch our activities. We had a long walk down the valley and to avoid gorge like sections or to be able to cross side rivers, the trail wandered up and down the valley side. At one side river we came across another army camp and had to be checked through. We then soon reached the village of Laya built on a shelf some 200 feet up the valley side. Our camp was in a small field overlooking the drop into the valley and with a wide panoramic view of the mountains. A challenging spot to think of having a spring bank holiday meet. Camp was outside a large building, which acted as a hotel. We had our meals there, and B&B was on offer if required. This village was the largest collection of houses we had seen since Paro. There were several shops and beer houses, and this is where the original schedule had planned a rest day, but not for us. However, after dinner, we were treated to an outside song and dance display, by the locals and our support team. An interesting spectacle, but when one cannot understand the language, it can appear very repetitive. Here our pack horse support was changed with the current ones returning to Paro, being replaced by ones from Gaza.

Day 11, a continuation of the trail down the valley, but the way had recently been shortened by diversion of the river to allow the trail to follow it through a gorge instead of climbing over probably a 1000 foot spur. The river was diverted by a massive wall, but this had already been breached causing us to have to navigate a narrow log bridge. As a sting in the tail, the day's trail

went over a final spur before descending to the site of a single building at Konea. The guide books described this as the worst camp site in the Himalaya, and we could see why. A field of about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre was used for the tents, but also for retaining horses. We had had exceptional dry weather but it was a mud bath. Luckily for us, a Sherpa had gone ahead and we had two rooms reserved in the building. We still had our meals in a tent outside but all of us slept under a roof for the first time in 10 days.

Day 12 was to be a long one. It started with the Balela pass or spur, a 2000 foot climb, probably to avoid the gorge of the main valley. The end of the day would see us at the hot springs. This draw had the unfortunate effect of stretching out the group. After the spur there was a very long descent on rather difficult, slippery, bouldery terrain before we crossed a side river and climbed up to the shelf on which Gaya is sited. Lunch was to be before Gaya, but as the leading group were feeling the pull of the hot springs, after waiting over an hour, they went ahead, leaving the poor food porter to wait. I came next in not many minutes and was persuaded to wait. The tail-enders and I got double rations that day. Then on to Gaya, another substantial village, built on a shelf, where an archery contest was in progress. It was Saturday, and there were lots of people around. Albert managed to stray into the arena and get involved with the visiting dignitaries. Gaza Hot Springs was probably another 1000' down in the valley and as we were now in quite a populated area, there were trails everywhere, and the party was split up.

There were several splinter groups that added distance by going the wrong way, and this may well have involved the group with the trek leader. We had converged on another trekking party who were also descending from Gaza to the Hot Springs, and I just happened to come across part of the group, who were tending a member with an injured ankle. It came as a late reminder of what might have happened. Back at Chebisa, where we had been between passes and the only way out was up, we found out that a trekker had died of altitude sickness only days before our arrival. The man with his suspect broken ankle would have to be carried out on horseback to the road head, but fortunately only one day away. We made the descent to the hot springs in failing light and Peter Green, came in, in the dark. The springs were a complex of buildings with pools in which one could sit. The Hot volcanic water was claimed to have healing properties and any hotter would have been unbearable. The early arrivals had made full use of the free facilities, but the late arrivals did not miss out and found the baths therapeutic on tired and aching limbs.

Next day was the final day's trekking. We had to climb back up the valley side before finally reaching the road head, which had moved several miles nearer of late due to road construction, and we arrived there for lunch. There then followed a very long bus ride in the dark on rough roads over a high pass that brought us to The Riverview Hotel in Thimphu; a meal and a bed.

THE RETURN HOME

Having completed the trek, we still had 3 days before our flight home from Kolkata, but perhaps this was to allow for unexpected delays. The first day was spent looking around Thimphu. We were taken by bus to a nature resort in the hills just outside town where we saw the Takin in the flesh. Legend has it that some king or deity ate a meal of goat and cow meat and created this creature out of the bones. Then we went shopping and then viewed the open air market, where a flash wind and the associated sand storm came as an unexpected surprise and worry to the stall holders with flimsy awnings. We had a local meal and spent the afternoon walking around Thimphu before we were driven down the valley to Kichu resort at Paro. The road I have mentioned before. It is being remade in total and almost everywhere it consists of a rough earth surface made by cutting a notch out of the steep hillside and piling the earth up on the downhill side. There appeared to be little if any protection from landslides bringing debris down onto the road, or taking the road away into the valley bottom. From what we heard, this was almost a daily event. The journey was slow and at one point we had to give way to a cavalcade of VIP vehicles coming the other way. It was late when we reached Paro and we could see the sense in allowing time for eventualities. After the meal we were provided with the same type of local song and dance entertainment we had seen in Laya. But here we were supplied with copious amounts of food and drink.

The flight out of Paro was at 11:20 and so we had time for a leisurely breakfast before getting the bus. There was the usual airport security delay and then we were aboard. The plane took off down the valley and had to keep within the valley walls around two bends before it made sufficient height to clear the ridges. We arrived in Kolkata, back into the palpable heat and arrived at the Oberoi Hotel at lunchtime. A meal out of the hotel had been arranged for the evening and one could use the afternoon and the swimming pool to relax. I found the meal out somewhat of a culture shock, but one I had experienced 2 years ago in Delhi. We left the cool imperialist Oberoi hotel to wend our way through the hot night and streets crowded with pavement vendors to another air conditioned hotel, stepping from one world into another by crossing a threshold.

On the street we had tested out the product of western culture, the ATM machine, and probably could have got it to work. The meal was a shared affair. We were brought a large brass plate with rice and many small brass cups containing food. Some were dessert, others hot with spices, and far too much but not expensive. If the food in camp had been like this, I may well have struggled.

Since our flight home was in the early hours, 4:20, of Wednesday we had a whole day in Kolkata, but knowing that we would have to be up at midnight for our bus to the airport. There was a slight problem in that there was a strike in progress and so an organised trip was not possible. On our arrival in Kolkata we had not been shown the waterfront of the Hoogley River, a branch of the Ganges delta. Using the local yellow taxi there was quite cheap and different groups set off. One party were fortunate in that when they arrived at the waterfront, they were invited onto a boat which was doing an official bridge inspection cruise along the river. There was ample room for them and they were even offered a free meal. Arthur Salmon and I also got a taxi to the waterfront, and were determined to walk back. However, we had no map, and from earlier views of a map I knew that a large military area known as Fort William lay right in our path. We approached the guard at the gate in some trepidation, but found ourselves in a one sided conversation being told that the soldier had a sister in Northumberland.

BIRDING IN BHUTAN

It was an honour to be invited by Albert to join the 2007 YRC trip to Bhutan. Jane and I had met Albert four years early on a trip to the Altai Mountains in Mongolia. Sadly with the Bhutan trip being during term time Jane could not join the Bhutan outing.

I'm far from a proper ornithologist, but I've often, on previous trips, enjoyed the challenge of trying to identify the usually brand new array of birdlife one encounters. Jane kindly tracked down a most useful guidebook (Birds of Bhutan by Inskipp et al, a Helm Field Guide, ISBN 0-7136-6990-X). My treat item for the trip was my fairly chunky pair of Bushnells Legend Binoculars (10x42), which are certainly not pocket sized but do give a lovely view.

Below is a list of identifications I am certain were correct. I saw a great many more but as an amateur was unable to be sure in identifying them; I haven't just guessed. At times a definite identification was impossible due to a mix of freezing cold hands, failing light, small birds that refused to sit still and then

YRC journal

However, it was confirmed that we had a mile detour before we could get around Fort William, and so we opted for another taxi. The evening meal was in the Hotel and an early night for our early call.

Getting up at midnight does not set one up for a good day. There was the heat of Kolkata, the bus ride, the inevitable delays at the airport and the flight with the sun, so that it never came dark. The Everest group was visible on the far horizon as we flew towards Delhi. Our arrival back at Heathrow was at 10 am. Some disappeared to be home quickly but the Manchester group had the tedium of the local flight, delays and a train ride before arriving home in the early evening.

Frank Wilkinson

ATTENDEES

George Burfitt	Member
Joe Burfitt	Prospective member
William Burfitt	Prospective member
Albert Chapman	Member
Iain Gilmour	Member
Peter Green	Member
James Hall	Guest
Peter Hodge	Member
Rob Ibberson	Member
Ann Luck	Guest
Arthur Salmon	Member
Frank Wilkinson	Member

those that were still refusing to give the side on view seen in the illustrations in the book. Birds of prey were as difficult as ever given one's inability to be able to make out colours with the overhead bird against a bright sky.

We had superb views of the huge Himalayan Griffon Vultures on several occasions; a truly huge bird with a wingspan of about 280cm. At the trip's highpoint on Sinche La (5000m), several of us were sheltering from the penetrating wind behind cairns as several of these huge birds crossed the pass at head height only about twenty meters away; by the time the birds saw us it was too late for them to bank and turn. A couple of days before I had had another close encounter with these flying giants as I approached a Blue Sheep carcass.

The Blood Pheasant flocks that marched rather tamely across the track during our last few days proved a very popular and easy "tick" for the group to share.

A memory a few on the trip will share is the amazement of watching a Raven repeatedly flying upside down.

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None of us had seen this before. Ironically I saw the same spectacle last weekend in the Peak District, 6 miles from the edge of Sheffield!

I found the bird watching most therapeutic. It was a great filler of an hour or two in the afternoon. It was also a very good way of ensuring I didn't rush too much on the ascent days; it is so easy to overdo it early in any trek to altitude.

The last day of the trek had the most intensity of different and new birds as we descended through unspoilt primary subtropical forest. Other than on the first day when I was flattened as a result of a spectacular bout of food poisoning the last day was the only other occasion I had all the septuagenarians waiting for me!

In retrospect I wish I'd done more preparation with the guidebook. If I get the chance to go somewhere so unique again I will take marker pens to the guidebook and highlight all the common birds. Often I would find I'd spent too long trying to decide if I was seeing "x" or "y" later to notice "y" was very rare. I would also be tempted to highlight, in different colours, the common birds in groups according to altitude. There is little point trying to choose which of the blue birds with an orange chest (they are legion in Bhutan) when you are at 4000m if perhaps only one of them is commonly seen in that habitat.

Day	Bird	Plate
Paro	Common Hoopoe	10
Paro	Large Hawk Cuckoo	12
Paro	Oriental Turtle Dove	19
Paro	Red-billed Chough	35
Paro	Blue Whistling Thrush	39
Paro	White-capped Water Redstart	44
Paro	Plumbeous Water Redstart	44
Paro	Green-backed Tit	48
Paro	Yellow-browed Tit	48
Paro	Red-billed Leiothrix	58
Paro	White Wagtail	65
Paro	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	67
1	Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler	58
2	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	34
3	Snow Pigeon	18
3	Himalayan Griffon	24
3	Yellow-billed Chough	35
3	Large Billed Crow	35
3	Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	39
3	Blue-fronted Redstart	44
3	Grey-crested Tit	48
3	Black-faced Laughingthrush	56

3	Robin Accentor	64
4	Grandala	45
4	Tickell's Leaf Warbler	53
6	Tibetan Partridge	1
6	Rock Pigeon	18
6	Long-legged Buzzard	26
7	Blood Pheasant	2
7	Himalayan Monal	3
7	Lammergeier	24
7	Sparrowhawk	25
7	White-throated Dipper	38
8	Common Raven	35
8	Slaty-blue Flycatcher	41
8	Winter Wren	47
8	Rufous-vented Tit	48
8	Alpine Accentor	64
8	White-browed Rosefinch	68
9	Ashy -throated Warbler	53
10	Eurasian Treecreeper	47
10	Rufous-fronted Tit	48
10	Whistler's Warbler	54
12	Great Parrotbill	62
12	Red-headed Bullfinch	70
13	Great Cormorant	30
13	Grey Treepie	34
13	Yellow-bellied Fantail	37
13	Ashy Drongo	38
13	Hodgson's Redstart	44
13	Spotted Forktail	45
13	Common Myna	46
13	White-tailed Nuthatch	47
13	Rusty-flanked Treecreeper	47
13	Streaked Laughingthrush	56
13	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	56
13	Hoary-throated Barwing	59
13	Stripe-throated Yuhina	61
13	Rufous-vented Yuhina	61
13	Rufous Sibia	62
13	Mrs Gould's Sunbird	63
	Thimpu Spotted Nutcracker	35

Day = day of trek,

Paro includes walk to Tiger's Nest.

Plate = Plate in Birds in Bhutan, 1st Edition.

James Hall

WHITE WAGTAIL





MEETS REPORT

LOW HALL GARTH 11 - 13 JANUARY

The Meet proved to be a celebration for Low Hall Garth.

It was the first meet in LHG since its face-lift, the first meet to test the planning and work done over many months, the first opportunity to see we had got the better amenities required. We can report that we have. Everything went well: the head space in the bedroom, the improved bunks with new mattresses, and the kitchen cupboards. But the real improvement is the redesign and layout of the washroom, where there are now two WCs, three washbasins, and an excellent shower.

Members began to arrive on Friday at midday, to find a working party putting the finishing touches to the varnish on the new bunks. The weather was fine and promised similar conditions for Saturday. After a Cook's tour around the premises to see the new features and make suitable noises of approval, the early birds were soon out to make the most of the weather. And tomorrow we were sure that it would be better still...(sunglasses?).

However it was not to be so. At breakfast a member came through the door with rain on his jacket. Cries of disbelief went round the tables. Surely not! But it was so. Optimism for a summer however was not to be overthrown by one swallow. It was confidently asserted (by someone who knew about these things) that the rain would pass over. Reassured, everyone sallied forth into the wind and the wet. By 9.00am LHG was empty.

Considering all things, quite a lot was done. Most went on to Wet Side Edge and on to the Carrs. From there, some came back via Swirl How and Prison Band, some went over Brim Fell, down to Lever Water and back over the Band. One member carried on and went on to the Old Man, then Dow Crag and was able to take advantage of improved weather in the afternoon to dry out.

Two members went anti-clockwise, heading for Coniston, the copper mines, then via a grade three scramble from Low Water Beck on to Brim Fell. Others repulsed by the weather retreated to walk at a lower level. Our cyclist went over to Grisedale Forest to ride the North Face trail, his friend assuming the roll of sheepdog coming on behind.

It was a happy evening. In dry clothes once more, we enjoyed the meal, rounded off with donated cheese. One of these was said to be German Brie, identified as such (so it was claimed) by the black imperial eagle on its bottom. The wine had to be personally imported - always an indicator of over supply - and toasts of gratitude were drunk to all those (and especially to those present) who had put so much effort into the LHG improvements.

Sunday's weather proved to be worse than Saturday. Most people headed for home. But one member, willing to get wet again, traversed Skiddaw from the west via Longside Edge and returned (soaked) via Dash Beck, where the falls were (he assures me) 'as full as I have ever seen them.'

In reply to the question whether his return had taken him by Cockup (259314), he replied; "I was close to a cockup, but 'twas not a Great Cockup (273333)".

Dennis Armstrong

Attending

President: Mike Godden, Dennis Armstrong, Gordon Humphries, Mick Borroff John Jenkin, Derek Bush, Derek Collins, Mike Smith, Alan Wood Richard Josephy, Frank Platt, Ian Crowther Ian Gilmour, Derek Smithson, Alan Hanbury (Guest)

SCOTLAND, THE SMIDDY

7-10 February

However the age profile of the YRC membership may look, it says a lot for the club that two people out of 16 flew in from the European mainland (Denmark and Switzerland) for this trip (and not the easy way to a Scottish airport either, but both to the Midlands!). Your author, having left Switzerland in very nearly perfect winter weather, was looking forward to a couple of days of being scared out his wits on steep neve and was, to put it mildly, disappointed by the weather conditions upon arrival in the UK. All the snow of the previous few weeks had melted in a tremendous thaw, and the forecast was for continuous rain and gale force winds. After cursing my luck and thinking that I could have been skiing in sunshine, I began to appreciate the journey, particularly north of Glasgow where every river was in full spate.

David Large and myself got to the hut first on the Thursday afternoon, and having no access put our tents up and went for a walk up Benn Trilleachan hoping for a good look at the slabs. The ground was soaking and the terrain surprisingly steep and we only made it to the fore-summit before turning around to thread our way back through rock-bands for the traditional after dark

finish. There was very little snow, although there were patches of ice and hard snow above about 750 m. We had been concerned about the river rising further overnight and threatening the tents, but the next morning the river was nearly 100 m away and the channel we had thought was the edge of the river was now completely dry!

Friday saw a slight improvement in the weather - there were several suggestions that the Trilleachan slabs might dry quickly to give summer conditions but no one seemed inclined to test the idea in the strong winds. One energetic party climbed Curved Ridge on Buachaille Etive Mor, and not finding that challenging enough were later spotted at the 'Ice Factor' climbing wall in Kinlochleven. The rest of the group went for walks of varying lengths depending on ambient conditions, age or knee injuries.

Saturday was by far the driest day of the meet although strong winds were still predicted and a party of three climbed D-Gully Buttress on the Buachaille with the intention of down-climbing Curved Ridge. No snow or ice was encountered on the buttress, but due to time constraints they continued up Curved Ridge to the summit via some very dubious snow rather poorly adhering to scree. The wind on the top was gusting to about gale force. The climbing was agreed to be no wetter or colder than Scotland in some summers (gloves were only worn near the top).

Observations:

The catering at the meet was of a very high standard, and portions were of a generous (not to say ambitious) size. Guests and newer members were quite taken aback, so congratulations Barrie and keep it up!. The good food together with the spacious dry hut and wood stove made for pleasant evenings and a willingness to brave the weather during the day.

Many present at the meet learnt for the first time of David Smith's illness, and his name was toasted. He was one of the first people in the YRC I got to know, and kindly seconded my membership application after having only met me a couple of times; I will miss his presence on meets.

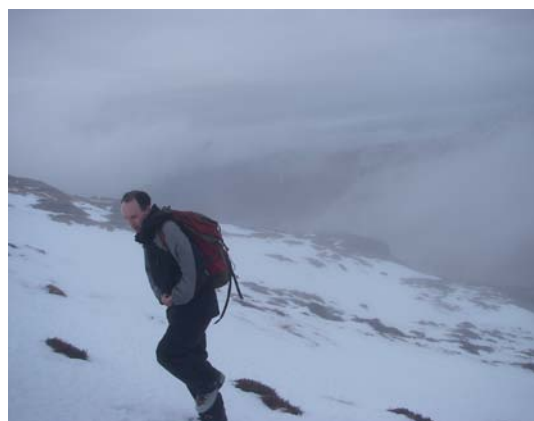
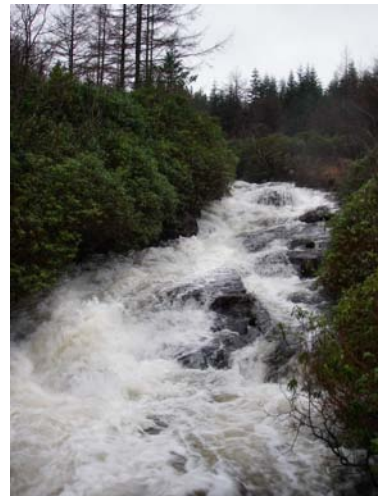
There were many red-deer in Glen Etive and Glencoe (including a large group in the car park of the King's House one evening), perhaps forced down in to the valley by the bad weather.

It was observed by several that neither the beer nor the welcome in the King's House was really worth travelling for if there had been a nearer alternative.

Attending. - A. Bridge, T. Josephy, B. Wood, D. Bush, D. Hicks, D. Martindale, J. Whitby, G. Humphreys, H. Humphreys, A. Chapman, D. Hanley, D. Large, M. Borroff, I. Gilmour, I. Hawkes (guest) and D. Whittles (guest)

James Whitby

- 1) Allt a'Bhiorain in spate
- 2) Loch Etive from Beinn Trilleachan
- 3) David Large on Beinn Trilleachan
- 4) Approaching D-Gully Buttress, Ranock Moor in background



David Large and David Whittles

LADS AND DADS - LOWSTERN 15-17 February

Again centered on Lowstern where we are indebted to John Lovett for his Herculean efforts to restore the water supply, essential for family cooking and comfort.

Caving on Friday and Saturday, Calf Holes and Long Churn, lads enjoyed the experience and the parents enjoyed the news that Albert had fallen into one of the pools. Unlikely to put Albert off caving but we were unable to raise any enthusiasm for caving on the Sunday. Understandable as weather was wall to wall sunshine for the whole weekend, Friday evening, harness checking, knot and belaying practice and the correct use of quick draws in preparation for those who wished to lead climbs.

Sat, breakfast appeared early as if by magic so early to the Ingelesport indoor wall for a concentrated 4 hours of climbing and bouldering. Some personal targets set the older lads helping out by leading routes and setting up ropes, donated by members, thanks from all involved.

Back to Lowstern for refuelling and, despite initial complaints, made the best of the sunshine with an afternoon walk round the waterfalls. This made us a late for the bangers and mash followed by bramble and apple crumble banquet, a success judging by the evidence of clean plates all round.

The normal YRC joint effort, we come to expect this sort of commitment, we all need to make sure we do not undervalue it. (Veggy bangers popular with demands for more.)

Another early breakfast from Richard, greeted with brilliant weather, ignoring the protestations, all out early for a morning of bouldering on Norber. Enjoyed by all and compounded on return by a clean hut and lunch on the table by courtesy of The President.

Most on the way home by mid afternoon, tired lads nodding off in vehicles, but memories lingering 'that was a great weekend Granddad- can we do it again?'

Alan Linford

Attending The President and Marcia Godden, Jahel Godden, Max and Jack, Clive Calmeyer and Charlie, Richard Josephy, Rob Ibberson and Ruaridh, Paul Dover and Billy, Alan Linford with Joe and Alex, Albert Chapman and Bob.

p.s. - In the last bulletin the names of the 'walling group' were omitted from the August Lads and Dads, The President and Marcie Godden, Jahel Godden with Max and Jack, Richard and Elizabeth Gowing with Megan, Alan and Angie Linford with Charlotte, Joe and Alex, Joan Armstrong, Paul Linford & Pam Mayhew with Simon, Alister and Jane Renton, Michael Smith, Phillip Dover and Helen with Marco. These were additional to the 'Caving Group' who climbed on the Sunday.

TULLOCH STATION, SCOTLAND March 13th - 16th

The early 1890s witnessed, amongst other births, the construction of the West Highland Railway Line by the contractor Sir Robert McAlpine, known as 'Concrete Bob' due to his use of this then novel material. The section to Fort William was opened in 1894 and included Inverlair Station, renamed Tulloch on January 1st 1895.

When last as a meet venue in Feb 2004 there were thirty-one attendees, seven of whom were in the party of fifteen on this occasion. The attendance level most probably affected by the fact of three Scotland meets in the first five months of 2008 as against one in 2004.

Apart from Mike Hartland who arrived Friday afternoon, the rest of the party grabbed their bunks on Thursday. An 11.30 pm arrival by Mick Borroff required waking up the proprietor, Alan, to let him in, whilst earlier Philip Dover arrived by taxi from Glasgow, courtesy of Virgin Rail, due to the lateness of his train to Glasgow missing the Tulloch connection.

It was suggested last year that the Scottish weather is more reliable in March than February, and this meet, a statistical population of one, supports this theory, although as I write this three days later my TV screen now shows atrocious weather for the area. Friday was a bit mixed with some typical hill country rapid changes between blue sky/sun and very overcast threatening showers. Wind speed on the hill variable up to 15/20 mph and there was continuous snow cover above 600m, fluffy and deep in some hollows. Saturday was picture postcard and with very little wind, very benign, and stupendous 360 degree panoramic views from the tops. Most of the climbs could be completed without ice axes or crampons although some use was made of these on other than south slopes.

Friday ventures were:

A Presidium of Presidents, Mike Godden, Ian Crowther, and Derek Smithson, accompanied by John Lovett and

Alan Clare, took the train to Corroun then walked the 15 mile country route back via Loch Ossian.

Rob Ibberson, Peter Green and Tony Dunford headed for two Monros, Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin and Stob'Coire Easain, to the west of Loch Treig, but aborted part way up due to a lost ice axe, not found on the return journey, and weather seeming to be closing in. Mick Borroff with the same objective (Monros not ice axe hunt) had no such problems.

David Hick, Iain Gilmour and Philip Dover went up Glen Roy as far as the road allowed, then a walk up Glen Turret to take on two Corbetts, first Carn Dearg (815m), then for a change (to quote Iain G), Carn Dearg (768m) - as Iain said, the Ordinance Surveyor must have run out of imagination. Dave and John Martindale also enjoyed Glen Roy up to the Bothy.

On Saturday:

Rob Ibberson, Iain Gilmour and Philip Dover walked up the track from Corriechoille Farm towards Stob Coire at the eastern end of the Grey Corries, but, not Monroing, satisfied themselves to the east of the track with two Corbetts, Cruach Innse and Sgurr Innse. The first hill did require crampons for the crusty morning snow, but not so after mid day with the afternoon sun melting the south slopes. Initially Iain thought they were going to look for Rob's lost ice axe but on the news that it wasn't where he'd lost it they reckoned the chances of finding it had only worsened slightly. Mike Godden, John Lovett and Mike Hartland also headed in this direction, but stayed at a lower level.

Right - Grey Corries from Bienn na Lap

Right lower -

Peter descending Bienn na Lap

Below - Bienn Teallach

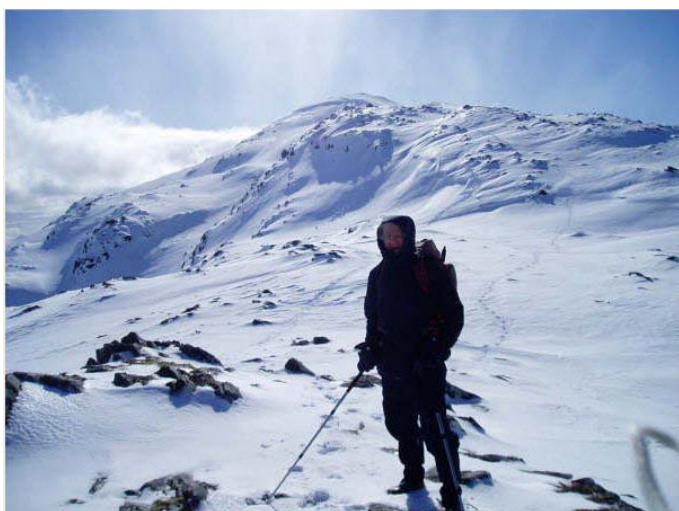
Dave and John Martindale went east from Tulloch and walked near the Dalwhinnie Distillery but failed to go inside and sample its wares, whilst to the west Derek Smithson was seen heading up Glen Roy and Ian Crowther with Alan Clare walked in upper Glen Nevis.

David Hick and Mick Borroff did two of the Monros east of Loch Treig, Stob Coire Sgriodain and Chno Dearg, whilst Tony Dunford and Peter Green took the train to Corroun and topped the rather easier Beinn na Lap via its south facing slope - Peter G's first Monro, only 280 odd to go!

At the evening Dinner the President thanked our hosts for their hospitality and excellent meals, and Rob Ibberson for his organisation of the meet. Iain Gilmour left after the Dinner, claiming that his wife's birthday took precedence.

Sunday

Tony Dunford and Philip Dover were returning by rail but line maintenance delayed this until Monday, so Sunday saw the two of them scaling a couple of Monros, Beinn a Chaorainn and Beinn Teallach to the north of Roughburn.



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Topping and Tailing

On the way up on Thursday Iain G climbed Beinn Each, just north of Callender and on the way home on Sunday Mick Borroff walked up to Loch Eilde Mor from Kinlochleven.

Perhaps the most memorable feature of this meet was some stupendous weather, especially on the Saturday - well organised Rob.

Peter Green

Attendees

Mike Godden, Mick Borroff, Alan Clare, Ian Crowther, Philip Dover, Tony Dunford, Iain Gilmour, Peter Green, Mike Hartland, David Hick, Rob Ibberson, John Lovett, David Martindale, John Martindale, Derek Smithson

GLAN DANA, NORTH WALES

28-30 March

Thirteen members plus one PM. and two guests arrived at Glan Dena on the Friday evening, three via the climbing wall at Plas y Brenin.

The forecast was bad but Saturday dawned fine if very windy but this was not to last and hail and rain joined the wind before noon and lasted for the rest of the day.

Mick, Paul, Neil, Richard G, John, Richard J and Barrie drove to Cae Coch and climbed Tal Y Fan then on to Carnedd Y Ddelm Where lunch was eaten in the shelter of the old fort. If there had not been a convenient fence to hang on to several members could have been scattered over the surrounding countryside and the decision to retreat to the cars was welcomed by everyone.

George's guest showed sound sense by setting off at seven up the north face of Tryfan thereby enjoying the best of the weather.

He then headed towards Carnedd Llewelyn but was forced to retreat before getting half way. George caught the bus to Beddgelert and walked to Pen Y Pass while Alan and Derek went to Aber Ogwen bird watching and walked along the coastal path but being more sensible than your average Yorkshire Rambler the birds were not about. Adrian Tim and Neil went to Lliwedd via Lockwoods chimney but decided the risk of getting blown off the edge was too great and carried on to Snowdon only to be defeated by the gale. Canny Ian and Roger took bikes to Llangollen, went on the steam railway behind a "black five", and drank copious quantities of tea.

The traditional Saturday evening discussion included a very interesting lecture on geology but alarm was raised when the subject of pole reversal led some of the more thrifty amongst us contemplate the possibility of having to purchase a new compass. Thanks to John for his erudite comments.

Sunday dawned sunny but still windy, Alan and Derek walked round Lynn Ogwen, Mick and Paul climbed Tryfan via a scramble from heather terrace and Adrian and co. had a good day at Tremaddoc.

Thanks to Richard for organising the weekend and providing a delicious dinner and breakfasts although the weather did its worst everyone had an enjoyable two days. B.W.

Attending.

M. Borroff, A. Bridge, I. Crowther, R. Dix, P. Dover, R. Gowing, N. Grant(guest), J. Jaggard (pm), R. Josephy, T. Josephy, A. Linford, D. Smithson, G. Spencely, I. Willcock (guest), N. Welch, B. Wood

LADIES MEET - DOVEDALE



Our leaders for the meet, Una and Ian Laing, had made the excellent choice of the Peveril of the Peak Hotel as the base for the weekend's activities. The hotel, which used to be a vicarage, is beautifully situated under the 'Cloud', that very striking and steep limestone hill at the lower end of Dovedale. Most of the Ladies and their men folk had arrived in ample time for dinner, which was reported to be an excellent meal providing a very relaxing evening for socialising. As is often the case at these meets, one or two couples chose to stay at a nearby caravan site with very good facilities.

Unlike most YRC meets where members do their own thing in small groups or as individuals, the Ladies' Meet

is one of only two meets on the calendar when we do an en masse 'ramble'. So, at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday morning everyone gathered in the car park ready to be led off on a communal walk by our leaders. Unfortunately, John and Pat Schofield were unable to join us on the walk as John was recovering from a very recent operation - so it was wonderful that he was able to make the meet. The walk started right at the hotel, over a stile out of the grounds and to the col at the head of Lin Dale, thus skirting the Cloud and descending to Dovedale, which was well populated with walkers enjoying the clear blue, sunny skies of a hot early May day. Our route followed the well-worn, but strikingly beautiful walk up the valley, diverting up the dry valley of Hall Dale, to Stanshope and returning to the main valley at the very popular Milldale, where lunch was taken by the river. At this lovely spot it was a pleasure to see five small ducklings following their mother upstream.

Roy Denney and Alan Hanbury had been in the fore and struck off up Hall Dale and continued into Alstonfield as had been the original plan only to be left to their own devices when the plan changed and the rest of the party descended on Milldale. The main party returned down the dale as far as the start of Hall Dale followed by a steep climb behind the cave to the eastern crest of the valley, finally descending to the Dove at Lin Dale.

Roy and Alan being aware of the approximate intended route back, headed down to Milldale after suitable replenishment and tracked the main group as far as the ascent to the valley rim but went higher and followed the actual summit line back, ultimately via the Limestone Way.

At Lindale the main party further fragmented with some climbing directly over the Cloud to descend to the hotel, while the rest continued down the dale to be caught by the sting in the tale of the walk, by the steep climb back to the hotel. For those interested in statistics, it is estimated that the core walk was about 9 miles with some adding as much as a further 3 miles.

By strange coincidence Roy and Alan never caught the main party but arrived simultaneously at the hotel albeit from the opposite direction whereupon we all joined up on the sun terrace for much appreciated drinks before preparing for dinner.

Thirty eight members and guests were present at the dinner on Saturday evening.

It was a convivial, informal event rounded off perfectly with coffee in the lounge and a film shown by Mike

Smith on his recent ski tour on the ice cap of Spitzbergen.

After breakfast on Sunday, a few members of the meet decided to start leisurely journeys home, but a significant number decided to join another communal walk that our organiser had up his sleeve. I didn't make a precise count of the numbers out on day two, but my guess would be not far short of thirty. The walk started at the car park at the southern end of Wetton, which is above the valley of the River Manifold. A short walk took us to an excellent view point overlooking the valley and then a descent followed to Thor's Cave which has a large entrance high on the valley side above the river. A number of the party entered the short distance into the cave, which required some care due to the limestone being well polished by generations of visitors and also wet by trickles of muddy water. The descent to the valley floor was followed by a short walk to Wettonmill where a coffee break was called. The weather was so gloriously warm by this stage that most of the party could not resist the ice creams on sale at the mill !

Many of the ladies only meet up at this event and, as a result, conversation, catching up on the gossip, tends to dictate the pace of the walk. However, the sting in the tail of the walk came with the climb out of the valley around the north of Wetton Hill and the circuit was completed by the descent back to the village. At this point, most of the group adjourned to the village pub for refreshment, both liquid and solid, before starting their journeys home.

In all, an excellent meet made memorable by glorious weather, the wonderful scenery of Dovedale and its surroundings, lovely walks planned by our leaders, and superb company.

Barbara and Arthur Salmon.



In attendance.

Marcia and Mike Godden (President)
Joan and Dennis Armstrong
Madge and Alan Brown
Dorothy and Ian Crowther
Ann and Paul Dover
Ann and Richard Dover

Sarah and Iain Gilmour
Elizabeth and Richard Gowing
Sue and Alan Hanbury (Guests)
Fiona and Gordon Humphreys
Elaine and Tim Josephy
Gabrielle and Rob Ibberson
Una and Ian Laing (Meet Organisers)

Angie and Alan Linford
Joyce and Chris Renton
Barbara and Arthur Salmon
Pat and John Schofield
Helen and Mike Smith
Juliette and Bill Todd
Roy Denney (Day visitor).



CLUB MERCHANDISE

A wide range of outdoor and leisure clothing is available with the traditional YRC 'Yorkshire Rose' badge (in green, yellow & white silks), beautifully computer embroidered at no extra cost, directly on to the clothing.

The badges are available in two versions, either the straightforward 50 mm diameter circular badge or a larger, 65 mm diameter version with the words 'A mountaineering and caving club founded in 1892' around the outside.

The range includes Tee-shirts, sweatshirts, polo shirts, fleece jackets of several grades and designs, knitted jumpers, cagoules and parkas.

There is a full range of sizes from S to XXL. The smaller badge can be embroidered onto any items; which are available in a wide range of colours, but the larger badge can only be done on to an item coloured in YRC bottle green.

Discuss your requirements by contacting Rob Ibberson or better still; see him at a meet, where he will be able to show you the samples and illustrated catalogues showing all the items available.



YRC



Secretary

Gordon Humphreys, Mountbegon, Hornby, Lancashire LA2 8JZ

www.yrc.org.uk

Affiliated to The British Mountaineering Council

www.thebmc.co.uk

Editor

Roy Denney, 33 Clovelly Rd, Glenfield, Leicestershire LE3 8AE

Editor@YorkshireRamblers.Org.UK

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