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Richard Smith on Pfaffen Ferner
2009 Meet

ARTICLES

CAVES & KARST OF BRAZIL

TREKKING IN SIKKIM

WALKING & WILDLIFE IN AUSTRALIA

FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR, PERU

PULKING ON SVALBARD

YRC JOURNAL - SERIES 13 EDITION 9
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THE REMARKABLE CAVES AND KARST OF PERUAÇU, BRAZIL.

John and Valerie Middleton

Following a recent visit to the renowned Peruaçu karst of Minas Gerais State, Brazil, the authors detail their own observations and experience. Notes are also added on two other karst regions visited, Lagoa Santa and Serra da Bodoquena. A general overview of Brazilian caving is also attempted.

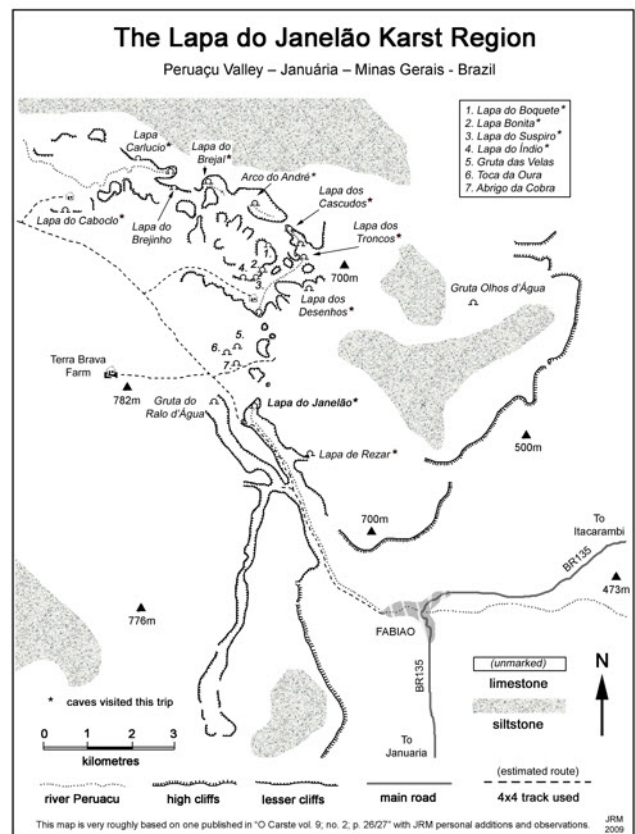


of several million years this river has eroded a series of giant caves through the carbonate rocks of the Bambuí Group, Januária/Itacarambi Formation (mainly limestone but some dolomite at higher levels – on certain areas sandstone and/or siltstone may occur). Surface rainwater also assisted in the process until parts of these great galleries collapsed. This has currently left a 17km long canyon 50 to 150m wide and up to 175m high that has partially retained a roof creating five equally great caves. The old abandoned side passageways now appear as separate systems in or close to the canyon walls. The surface karst is both spectacular to look at and diverse in its many forms. There are great towers, sometimes degraded, still covered in razor edged pinnacles and these together with the valley side cliffs exhibit many forms of karren (rillenkarren, kamenitzas etc.).

INTRODUCTION.

In the very north of Minas Gerais State and just west of the Rio São Francisco lie the two towns of Januária and Itacarambi. Part way between these two is the sleepy village of Fabião with its one simple hotel and area office of IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Resources). Accessed from here is the amazing 60,000 hectare Parque Nacional Cavernas do Peruaçu and 150,000 hectare Área de Proteção Ambiental Cavernas do Peruaçu (the latter is to protect both the watershed of the Peruaçu river and the upriver flora and fauna). Currently, entry into the Park is only possible with a permit issued for scientific purposes although it is intended that eventually there will be limited general access to certain caves. We had joined Augusto Auler and Luis Piló on one of their periodic research trips. From Fabião a dirt road leads into the start of the Peruaçu valley before then heading up a steep side ravine leading onto the karst plateau and the research centre at Terra Brava Farm. From here a distant but beautiful panoramic overview of the forested karst can be seen. Entry into the protected area is made down two rough 4x4 tracks, one leading to the old abandoned farm and original research centre close to the Lapa do Janelão and the other to an abandoned farm at the upper end of the valley.

What makes this Park so exceptional, even on a world scale, is its speleogenesis*, its multitude of impressive karst forms and the great number and size of its known caves. In very brief terms the slightly acidic perennial Peruaçu River originates from wetter highlands to the west. Over a period



Strange shaped succulent plants and epiphytes hang or grow on the seemingly bare rock adding to the surrealistic environment. Lesser blocks of limestone protrude through the overlying soils and show similar features as well as rundkarren. Above the canyon, on the karst plateau, dolines in a multitude of shapes and depths make surface exploration challenging; two of these dolines are so great that they have been reclassified as tiankengs. Then there are the caves. They are huge! Many have been explored, some are known but not explored and many, no doubt, are still to

be discovered. To the north-east lead and zinc mining has taken place in the region known as Serra do Cardoso das Minas. Several more caves occur here including the 9km long Gruta Olhos D'Água. These caves are not related to the Peruaçu valley but drain directly towards the Rio São Francisco. The karst of the Peruaçu valley extends from 440m to just over 700m in altitude with a climate that is classed as "tropical semi-arid". For greater detail on the karst geomorphology of the region refer to (Piló 1997).

HISTORY OF EXPLORATION.

Brief mention of the regions caves and karst can be dated back to a letter from Governor Pina e Proença to the King of Portugal in 1736 but the first written account belongs to an Álvaro da Silveira in his 1929 book on the geography of Minas Gerais. In 1939 the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística produced "As Grutas em Minas Gerais" whilst in 1957 the American geologist Jacques Robertson described the karst, with maps, in a valuable report related to zinc and lead deposits (Auler 2000). Surprisingly no serious exploratory work was undertaken until 1975 when the caves of the Peruaçu river were explored by the "Sociedade Excursionista e Espeleológica da Escola de Minas de Ouro Preto". In 1983 the "Grupo Bambuí de Pesquisas Espeleológica" resumed the 1975 work (Piló & Rubbioli) a process that continues today. Special mention must be made of Claude Chabert, the Spéleo Club de Paris and the Grupo Bambuí who together in 1991 commenced a detailed survey of Lapa do Janelão culminating in 2002 with the publication of the "Atlas do Janelão", an unparalleled speleological work of art.

Any visitor to the area cannot fail to notice the many amazing Rupestrian** paintings and rock etchings that adorn the shaded walls by many of the rock shelters and caves. These occur in various styles and in some cases they are thought to date back more than 7,000 years. Continuous occupation of the caves has been proved by excavations that yielded various human fossils and artefacts dating back almost 10,000 years. The paintings were mentioned by several early writers but it was not until 1977 that any serious studies were undertaken. This early work by Bryan and Ghrun of the Alberta University Department of Anthropology was later continued by Professor André Prous of the Museu de História Natural, Belo Horizonte.

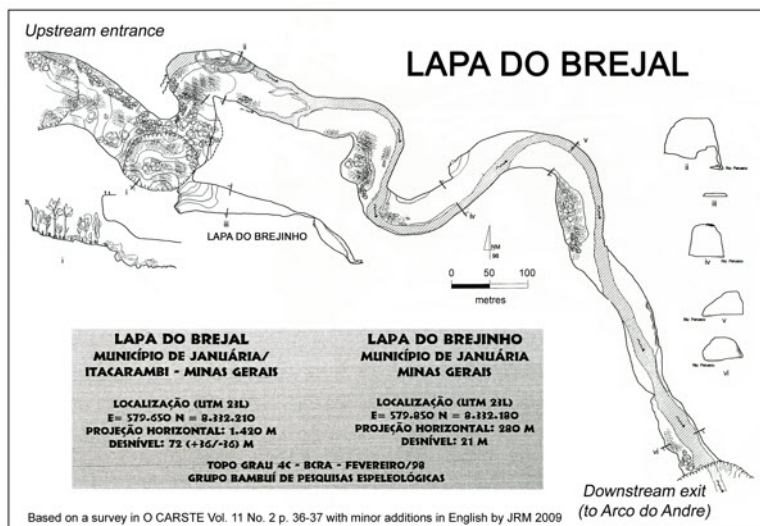
* Speleogenesis. "...the full extent of speleogenesis includes all the changes that take place between the *inception* and the eventual destruction of an underground drainage system...." (Lowe & Waltham).

**Rupestrian art. A general term given to graphical and sculptural works that pre-industrial homo-sapiens man has left on hillsides, rocks, rock shelters and on the walls of caves. These may date to 30,000 years BP and the upper Palaeolithic period.

THE PERUAÇU RIVER CAVES.

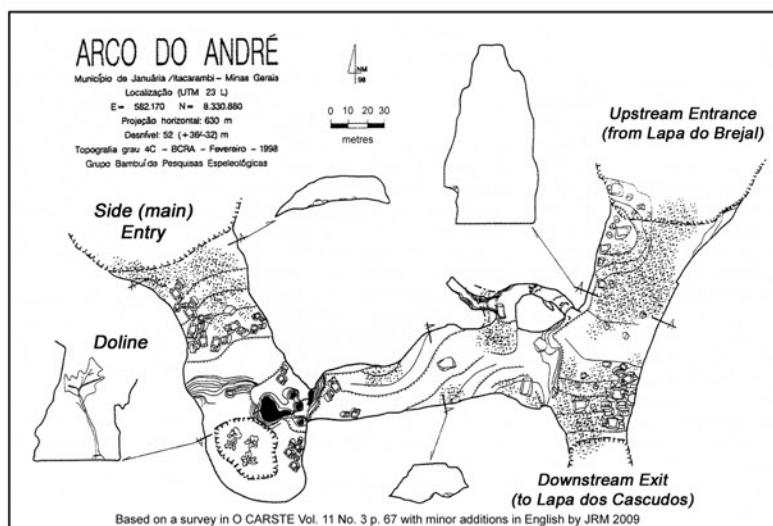
Caves through which the Peruaçu River still flows.

LAPA DO BREJAL* 1,420m long. This cave, the uppermost of the Peruaçu river valley, is a superb introduction to the area and is barely 30 minutes walk from the upper farm. The massive opening measures almost 90m wide and 30m high into which even the forest of trees and saplings enter. The floor descends as a rocky slope for around 250m until the stream is first encountered. Just before this, on the right, the much shorter LAPA DO BREJINHO enters. The great meandering passage then continues for over a kilometre before exiting at an impressive formation encrusted arch (photo 1). Apart from these speleothems the only other of note is an impressive cascade of gours about 350m from the entrance. During the traverse several knee deep and muddy crossings of the stream have to be made. We noted many Turkey Vulture footprints on the mud of the floor some 60 metres back from the exit and we also found a dead Vulture on top of the previously mentioned gours. We have not managed to ascertain why these birds regularly enter this cave.



ARCO DO ANDRÉ* 630m long; +36m, -32m.

From the old research station it takes around 50 minutes of walking to reach this spectacular site.



The route is never dull; it meanders through fine secondary forest and passes imposing limestone towers festooned with cacti. Access to the Arco do André is normally through its great side entrance. From this a steep descent amongst thick dust leads to a flat floored chamber. To the right and up the opposite slope a large collapsed doline enters whilst a diagonally leftwards ascent leads to a slot that drops awkwardly to a chamber preceding the main Arco do André passage. Superlatives cannot then do justice to the vision that now appears. To the left, upstream, a boulder slope descends steeply for 40m to a rubble covered floor leading to an exit over 100m high and 55m wide (photo 2); beyond, the tree clad 150m high cliff bounded valley divides into two. Both branches later unite and lead to the first of the Peruaçu valley river caves, Lapa do Brejal. Returning up the boulder slope a rough rock strewn surface continues to the downstream exit. This is not so large and is masked partially by tall trees but it is still around 65m high and 20m wide! Downstream, Lapa dos Cascudos is the next cave. This is unreachable from here due to the difficult nature of the terrain. At the junction of the side entry passage and the main cave there are many old tree trunks – these have been dated back 600 years to a catastrophic flood that once inundated the valley. Contemplation is obligatory at this point of the excursion to just take in the sheer breathtaking grandeur of “Arco do André” and its surroundings.

LAPA DOS CASCUDOS* 180m long; -15m.

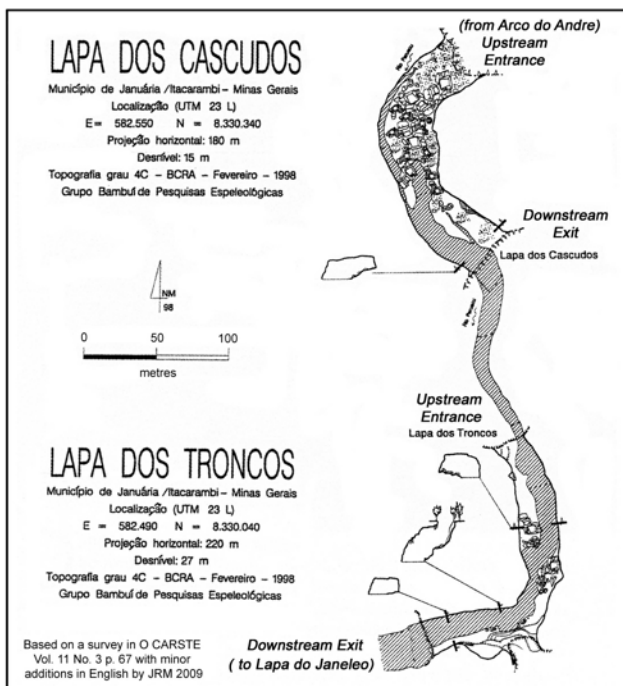
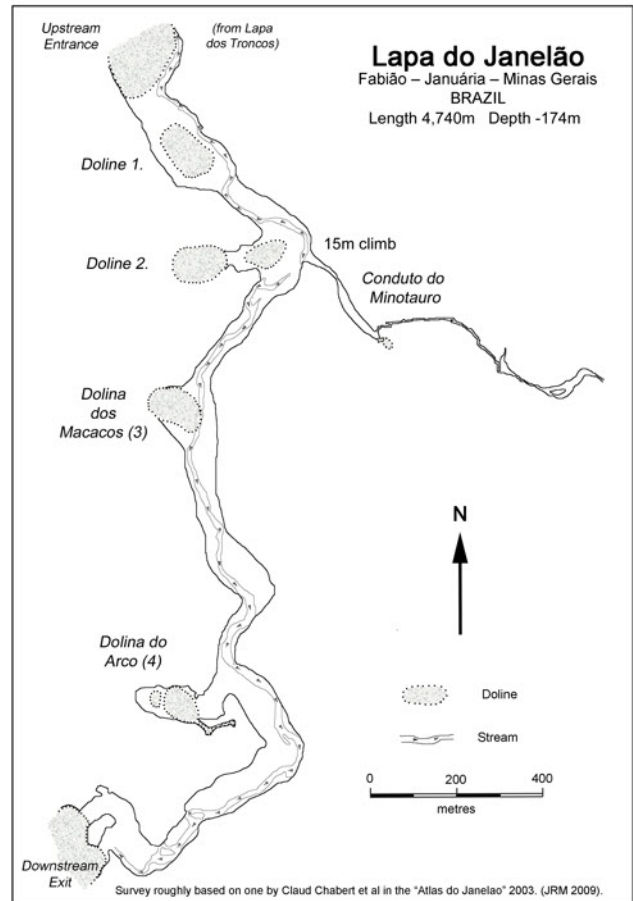
Between the Arco do André and Lapa dos Cascudos is about 400m of collapsed cavern making entry from the former very difficult. Access is usually via a 30 minute walk from the old Janelão farm and through the lower Lapa dos Troncos. Whilst the cave is only 180m long it is nevertheless impressive averaging 30m wide and 15m high with the Peruaçu River filling much of the floor. Rocks and debris from the collapse cover the river at the upstream end.

LAPA DOS TRONCOS* . 220m long; -27m.

A gap of just 150m separates “Troncos” from the Lapa dos Cascudos and both caves are very similar in size and character. Where this cave differs is that a collapsed doline enters on the left about 50m from the downstream exit. Just before the doline is a deep pool that either necessitates swimming or is sportingly negotiated by a slippery log.

LAPA DO JANELÃO* 4,740m long; -176m.

If the previous four caves were impressive then Janelão is truly awesome! Access is normally from the old lower farm where a 15 minute pleasant walk soon brings the great entrance into view.



The river passage extends for almost 3km, measures between 50 and 110m wide and has a height of up to 100m! From the upstream entrance three great dolines provide daylight after 150m, 450m and 1,000m (Photos 3/4/5/6/7). A fourth doline set back up a short side passage provides a further dim glow a kilometre later. There are boulder piles at various places within the cave but generally the crystal clear water meanders between hard sediment banks. Flowstone formations are found at several points and great stalactites abound around the dolines (including one measured by helium balloon to 28m in length!). Probably the finest speleothems are the extensive beds of pristine cave pearls and small gours after the Dolina dos Macacos. This great gallery and the Deer Cave passage at Mulu (Sarawak) were for many years considered the largest in the world. In 2009 they were reduced to numbers 3 and 2 respectively by the discovery in Vietnam of Hang Song Doong. The downstream end to the cave is an impressive double exit

linked by a short speleothem rich connection (Photo 8). The depth of -176m is obtained from the edge of the Dolina dos Macacos.

There is one side passage, the Conduto do Minotauro, accessed by a difficult climb from opposite Doline 2. This is over a kilometre in length of a generally smaller gallery and has an exit to the karst plateau above.

To the right of the upstream entrance an extensive wall covered in fine paintings of the São Francisco style can be seen. Similar paintings also exist in other nearby rock alcoves and ancient pieces of pottery are easily seen on the ground. Another great place for contemplation!

ASSOCIATED CAVES. These are now dry systems that were probably once part of a "Greater Peruaçu River Cave".

LAPA CARLUCIO*. 120m long. Carlucio is the most north-westerly of the known Peruaçu caves. Access is from the old upstream farm and the route passes through secondary forest and by a superb cactus "garden". The entrance is 45m wide and almost 20m high. A similar sized passageway continues directly into the hillside before turning rightwards for the final 80m. The whole cave is extremely well decorated with speleothems of all types. These are no longer active but most are not yet in obvious decay. There are some unusual tall, oblong columns from which upwardly angled branches extend. The density of formations prevents any further exploration. In the entry chamber a considerable number of blocks can be seen on the deep dust covered floor. These have (recently) fallen from the otherwise flat ceiling. Calcified shells can be noted in the darker zone. Above the entrance, in the cliff face, is a further cave in which can be seen many poles used by the local people for obtaining birds nests.

LAPA DO CABOCLO*. 120m long.

Access to this interesting cave is again from the old upstream farm but this time up a short track in the opposite direction to Lapa Carlucio.

The oblong entrance measures roughly 30m by 10m high with the ensuing gallery being extensively encrusted with speleothems. Unusually a number of these do still seem to be growing. Outside, the shaded walls are richly decorated in geometric paintings of the São Francisco style (Photo 9). On the ground our guide pointed out several highly polished boulders (Photo 10) that are thought to have been sat upon by these ancient peoples for many thousands of years - distinctly thought provoking!

LAPA DO BOQUETE*. 40m long.

This is one of the most important archaeological sites to be found in the region. Carbon dating of material just 1½ metres below the surface has shown human occupancy extending to 10,000 years BP whilst an intact burial was dated at 7,000 years BP. The cave itself is roughly 20m wide, 3m high and 40m deep. Much of the roof has been blackened by ancient fires and a few engravings can be found chipped onto the walls. Outside, reasonable paintings are obvious either side of the entrance with some being about 4m above ground level.

LAPA BONITA*. 420m long; -15m.

A boulder strewn 30m wide and 10m high entrance leads into what is probably the most beautiful cave in the valley. Some 70m into the cave a 40m x 25m x 20m high chamber extends to the right and contains an excellent array of wall, floor and ceiling formations. Slightly leftwards the main passage continues through a calcited constriction (still 3m x 2m!) into the aptly named "Salão Vermelho". This beautiful gallery with its red sediment floor and flat, light grey ceiling extends for a good 150m before a short crawl on hands and knees leads into a final formation filled grotto. Very beautiful and often eccentric speleothems are to be found throughout the Salão Vermelho (Photo 11). Unusually for the majority of the caves in the Peruaçu valley these formations are still growing. The reason for this is thought to be crystal growth within evaporating condensation water as there appears to be no seepage from cracks; this would also explain the many eccentric forms (Photo 12). A fascinating feature of the cave is the abundance of small, and sometimes not so small, branching channels etched into the roof. These look very much like anastomosis developed along some bedding planes and then exposed when a roof bed falls away, except that they do not follow the bedding planes into the walls. They appear to have developed by water working along the boundary between the wallrock and an ancient and complete cave fill. They are therefore referred to as a type of paragenesis; though that term is commonly applied only to canyons developed upwards by solution and erosion of the complete passage roof above a sediment floor (*Lowe & Waltham 2002*). These channels are an attractive feature of this cave (Photo 13).

LAPA DO SUSPIRO*. 90m long; -20m.

Lapa do Suspiro is situated between Lapas Bonita and Indio. It consists mainly of a chamber containing many large boulders. A few formations can be seen and there are some interesting karren features on the rock.

LAPA DO ÍNDIO*. 150m long. -5m.

An archeologically important cave with a considerable number of paintings found around the entrance. The interior is reasonably well decorated with speleothems.

LAPA DOS DESENHOS*. 140m long.

From the lower farm a 20 minute upstream walk through gallery forest leads to this small cave noted for its spectacular rock art. Much of this art dates back 7,000 years and includes rock engravings as well as very well preserved paintings of the United style (Photo 14). The latter extensively cover the walls around the entry, in some places to 5m high.

LAPA DE REZAR*. 380m long.

Lapa de Rezar is the only associated cave to be found downstream of Janelão. It is accessed from the main dirt road into the park via a devious track. This commences within dense scrub, crosses the Peruaçu River on a slippery log, becomes knee deep in a swamp, detours (in our case) around a large snake and finally ascends a steep forested slope to the base of a cliff. At this point a short scramble gives a good view up the gorge towards Janelão still more than two kilometres distant. A considerable expanse of wall either side

of the very large cave entrance is home to a fascinating display of some of the earliest paintings known. The entry itself is 60m across and perhaps 40m high with a single great gallery extending into the hillside. This passageway is very dry with a few large formations. Several of the larger columns have broken in two with the lower section now slightly offset. This is probably due to settling of the floor sediment upon which they stand.

TOCA DA ONÇA. 170m long; -20m.

These final three caves all occur in the 500m x 300m Dolina da Onça. This considerable feature is found about 300m south of the Dolina dos Macacos of the Lapa do Janelão and is obviously associated with the larger cave. The entrance to Toca da Onça is an impressive 45m x 15m. This leads directly into a large split chamber with the northern half having a short extension from it. Rock paintings are again found around the entry walls (*Moura 2001*).

GRUTA DAS VELAS. 282m long; -22m.

This cave is found about 300m from the Toca da Onça on the northern side of the doline. It is basically a single large well adorned passageway to 35m wide and 15m high that heads directly towards Lapa do Janelão (*Moura 2001*).

ABRIGO DA COBRA. 50m long; -25m.

Abrigo da Cobra is a small cave, not much larger than a shelter and is so named because of a very large and realistic snake (*cobra*) painted at the entrance. It is thought to have been used historically by hunters and has also been used as such until quite recently. It is situated on the southern side of the doline (*Moura 2001*).

* Caves visited by the authors.

CAVE SURVEYS reproduced by kind permission of the Grupo Bambuí de Pesquisas Espeleológicas.

OTHER CAVES.

GRUTA DO RALO D'ÁGUA. 272m long; -12m.

Several hundred metres to the south-west of Dolina da Onça can be found this short cave. The entrance is 25m x 8m high and leads to a 250m long passageway frequently 12m wide and 6m high. The only constriction is at an easily negotiated roof collapse after 170m and a short lower passage just before the end. (*Moura 2001*).

GRUTA OLHOS D'ÁGUA. 9,100m long; -135m.

"It is like a sporting clean washed Yorkshire pothole in its upper section only with warm water, followed by long meandering sections with a low ceiling" – conversational quote from Augusto Auler! The Gruta Olhas D'Água was explored and surveyed over several years from 1984 until it acquired the reputation described by Augusto. It is not related to the Peruaçu Valley caves but is found well to the east with a resurgence river that drains into the Rio São Francisco valley. Entry and exploration was first gained from the lower end until an upper entrance was found in 1986 and a surveyed connected depth proved in 1988 of -126m. Following on from this various extensive side passages such as the Conduto do Monstrhino Creck were explored and a final length attributed

of 9,100m, the twelfth longest system in Brazil and -135m, the twenty ninth deepest (Soc. Bras. de Esp.). Most of these passages are clean washed meandering streamways often with short cascades and occasional pools. Impressive and particularly fragile speleothems are to be found in various parts of the system such as the Condutos da Gipisita and Aragonês. Unfortunately deforestation higher up the mountain has recently caused sediment to be washed in during heavy rainfall causing blockages in some of the galleries (*Auler, Rubbioli & Brandi pp.108-111*).

ADDITIONAL KARST REGIONS VISITED.

LAGOA SANTA, MINAS GERAIS.

Just 30km to the north of Belo Horizonte city lies the 350km² "Environmental Protection Area" (EPA) of the Lagoa Santa Karst". Due to its historical links this particular EPA can probably claim to be the most important speleological region in the country. It is not only well known as "The Cradle of Brazilian Speleology" it is also "The Cradle of Brazilian Archaeology and Palaeontology". The area is roughly bounded by the River Mata to the west, the River Velhas to the east, Lagoa Santa and Vespasiano towns in the south and to just short of Funilândia in the north. The relief varies from 650m to almost 900m and due to 1,400mm of rain much of this is covered in luxuriant vegetation. The carbonate rocks belong to the Sete Lagoas Formation of the Bambuí group. Within this compact region there is a quite amazing diversity of karst forms and development including dolines in variety, poljes, karst depressions, blind valleys, limestone escarpments and outcrops (where karren in its many forms is etched onto the rock), sinks, resurgences, shafts and caves. Of the latter almost 400 have been recorded up to 2,615m in length and 66m deep (Gruta Santo Antônio, Matozinhos). Many of the caves have either considerable sediment content or show signs that they were once thus choked. Evidence of paragenetic development can frequently be seen with this being particularly notable in the fine show cave of Gruta da Lapinha. This concentration of features combined with its proximity to the city of Belo Horizonte has resulted in the region being the most scientifically studied in the country.

The first written reports of cave investigations in Brazil were made at Lagoa Sante by the Danish naturalist Peter Wilhelm Lund (1801 – 1880). His interest was mainly that of archaeology and palaeontology and during an intensive 10 year period between 1835 and 1844 he excavated, studied and classified more than 20,000 bones of extinct species (photo 15). For much of this time he was joined by the Norwegian artist Peter Andreas Brandt (1792 – 1862) who was responsible for drawing cave maps and cave scenes. From this beginning the area was visited by other scientists who helped reveal some fine Rupestrian paintings, a multitude of extinct animal fossils (giant armadillos, giant ground sloths, giant ant eaters, bears, Sabre Tooth Tigers etc) as well as many human remains culminating in the discovery of "Luzia". This skull was found in 1971 by Annette Laming-Emperaire in Lapa Vermelha IV and in 1999 Prof. André Prous continued her work by identifying the skull as a 20 year old female from 12,500 years ago! Analysis of this skull and

subsequent ones show that they have African and/or Australian characteristics (Weber, G). This significant finding immediately put Lagoa Santa fully onto the world map for all three disciplines.

The majority of the information in this section results from a fascinating field trip with Augusto Auler to Lagoa Santa. We apologise to Augusto if we have missed out any salient points but if we have we can only plead that there was too much to assimilate in just one day!

SERRA DA BODOQUENA, MATO GROSSO DO SUL.

The Serra da Bodoquena is a beautiful region of gently undulating green hills aligned on a north to south axis. Much of this range comprises limestone and dolomite of the Corumbá Group that exhibit a considerable array of fascinating karst forms extending from just north of Bodoquena to well south of the River Prata. This gives an area of roughly 150km by up to 70km in width and an altitude variation of 250m to 700m. Obvious features include cones, dolines, caves, shafts, karren fields, blind valleys and springs (including vauculian springs). There are approximately 150 explored caves up to 1,864m in extent (Gruta Dente de Cão) with a further 100 known entrances yet to be investigated. One of the most notable features of the region is the clarity of water found in rivers, resurgences and lakes within caves. The latter have been investigated by cave divers with some quite remarkable results. In a 12 hour dive at Lagoa Misteriosa an incredible and unfinished -228m was reached by the Brazilian diver Gilberto Menezes. The visibility here is reported by Edmundo da Costa Júnior as being so clear that at -90m trees on the surface can still be seen! Gruta Ceita Curé goes to -153m; Nascente do Rio Formosa to -89m; the stunning Gruta do Lago Azul to an unfinished -83m (-137m total); Abismo Anhumas to a further unfinished -75m (-150m total). The Buraco das Abelhas has an underwater passage 1,900m long; etc. etc. Many of these underwater caves, and others not mentioned, have submerged formations suggesting that the regional speleogenesis is very complex.

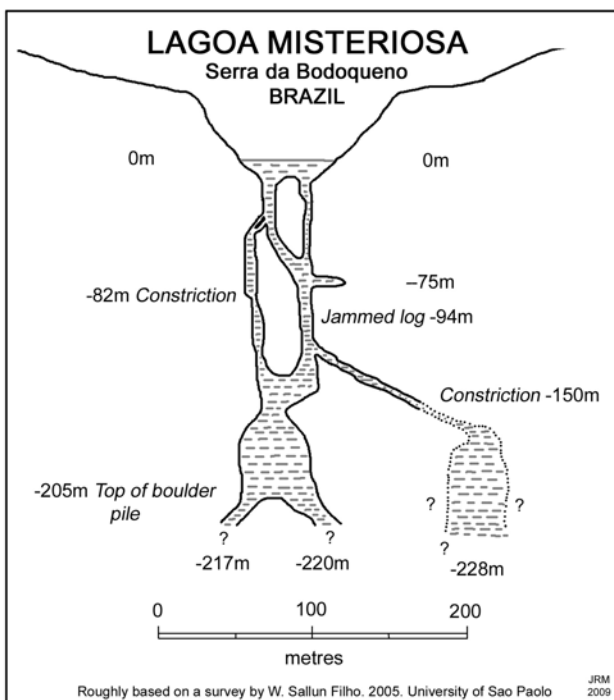
Further obvious features of the surface landscape are the extensive cascades and flows of tufa. These are shown very well at the Boca da Onça some 55km north of Bonito. In the south-east of the region sandstone overlies the limestone often to a considerable depth. However this has not prevented cavern collapse in the limestone also creating dolines in the sandstone surface above. Perhaps the finest example of this is the Buraco das Araras, 140m by 65m and almost 100m deep! Additionally Araras has an interesting flora and a nesting flock of Red and Green Macaws.

The entire area has world class potential particularly as far as underwater exploration is concerned. Unfortunately progress is slow for two reasons. Firstly there is a lack of local speleologists. Edmundo da Costa Júnior is an exceptionally enthusiastic cave explorer, cave biologist (who has added several new species to the Brazilian list) and cave diver. He and just a handful of friends are the only persons currently active. Secondly there are problems of access for exploration to the many large farming estates. In the year 2000 the State government created a 76,481 hectare Serra da Bodoquena National Park with the object of protecting not only the sites of speleological interest but also the amazing diversity of flora and fauna. One of the Park's early duties is to take over much of the farmland and so make it both more easily protectable and accessible. This process is slow but still progressing.

A FEW NOTES ON BRAZILIAN KARST, CAVES AND CAVERS.

KARST & KARST REGIONS. Carbonate rocks occur extensively in the eastern half of the country and are estimated to occupy almost 200,000km². Over half this total* is contained within the limestone and dolomite of the Bambuí Group that extends through much of the western half of Minas Gerais, into the east of Goiás and terminates in southern Bahia and south-eastern Tocantins. Not surprisingly many of the country's major cave and karst regions are to be found here. These include Lagoa Santa, Cordisburgo, Montes Claros, Vale do Rio Peruaçu, Serra do Ramalho, Santa Maria da Vitoria and São Desidério. There are also 13 other carbonate groups with perhaps the most important being the Una Group of Bahia with an area of 19,100km²*. This comprises the three separate cave rich blocks of Campo Formoso, Irecê and Andaraí. Here lie the two longest systems yet found in Brazil as well as many smaller gems in the Chapada Diamantina region. São Paulo province hosts the very productive 11,900km²* Açungui Group. Particularly notable in this region are the many vertical caves and the enormous 215m high entrance portal of Gruta Casa de Pedra! A characteristic feature associated with many of the caves found in Brazilian carbonate rocks would seem to be their considerable entrance, passage and chamber dimensions. The relief rarely reaches 1,000m and the topography is normally one of gently undulating hills occasionally cut by river gorges.

Non carbonate rocks that have the potential for karst and caves are also estimated to cover a further 250,000km². The principle rock here is quartzite and this already hosts the



country's two deepest systems (see below) and others of considerable length (Gruta do Centenário 3,790m). Sandstone outcrops in many states with the most important region being Chapada dos Guimarães in Mato Grosso. Smaller caves are found in iron ore (over 1,000! *Carste CA*), in granite, in gneiss and in bauxite.

* Figures quoted from *Auler, Rubbioli & Brandi p. 34*. See also p. 27 for explicit karst map.

LONGEST SYSTEMS (*SBdeE 2009*).

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 1. | Toca da Boa Vista ¹ | Campo Formosa, Bahia | 107,000m |
| 2. | Toca da Barriguda | Campo Formosa, Bahia | 33,000m |
| 3. | Gruta do Padre | Vitória, Bahia | 16,400m |
| 4. | Boqueirão | Carinhanha, Bahia | 15,170m |
| 5. | Lapa do Angélica | São Domingos, Goiás | 14,100m |
| 6. | Gruta da Água Clara | Carinhanha, Bahia | 13,880m |
| 7. | Lapa do São Mateus 3 | São Domingos, Goiás | 10,828m |
| 8. | Lapa de São Vicente 1 | São Domingos, Goiás | 10,130m |

DEEPEST SYSTEMS (*SBdeE 2009*).

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Abismo Guy Collet | Barcelos, Amazonas | -670m |
| 2. | Gruta do Centenário | Mariana, Minas Gerais | -481m |
| 3. | Gruta da Bocaina | Mariana, Minas Gerais | -404m |
| 4. | Gruta Alaouf | Mariana, Minas Gerais | -294m |
| 5. | Gruta Casa de Pedra | Iporanga, São Paulo | -292m |
| 6. | Abismo do Juvenal | Iporanga, São Paulo | -241m |
| 7. | Gruta Lagoa Misteriosa | Jardim, Matto Grosso do Sul | -220m |
| 8. | Gruta da Água Suja | Iporanga, São Paulo | -202m |

¹The initial survey of this system was made in 1987 with successive expeditions ever increasing the length. There are still many open leads and serious estimates put a possible final total as much as 200km. Additionally work is underway to find a connection with the nearby Toca da Barriguda (see above). The system is maze like, extremely dry and the logistics of working in the further reaches are very challenging.

As at the 12th July 2009 the Sociedade Brasileira de Espeleologia had 4,791 Brazilian caves recorded on its files. It is recognised that this number could be less than 5% of the caves still to be discovered (*Carste CA*)!

FOREIGN EXPEDITIONS.

Because the cave potential within the country is so great and the number of national cavers is relatively small the Brazilian cavers welcome approaches from foreign groups who would like to propose a joint project. This project may be "technical-exploratory" and/or "scientific" but in both cases there are set rules that have to be followed. Full details can be found on the Redespeleo Brazil website www.redespeleo.org.br.

CAVING ORGANISATIONS.

There are thought to be around 1,600 cavers within Brazil but not all of these can be considered as being active. The

national organisation, formed in 1969, is the "Sociedade Brasileira de Espeleologia" www.sbe.com.br. This organisation has more than 25 affiliated local groups and is closely associated with allied bodies such as diving, conservation, rescue, archaeology, geology etc. It publishes *InformAtivo SBE*, *Espeleo-Tema* and an on line bulletin *SBE Noticias*.

There are and have been many small caving clubs in Brazil but the most consistently successful is the "Grupo Bambui de Pesquisas Espeleológicas" www.bambui.org.br. This club was established in 1983 and is based in Belo Horizonte. As of 2008 they had surveyed some 705 caves with a total of 540km of passageway (*Rubbioli 2008*). It regularly publishes the very informative journal *O Carste*.

Other groups include the "Espeleo Grupo de Brasilia" www.espeleogrupodebrasil.org, the "Grupo Pierre Martin de Espeleologia" www.gpme.org.br and the "União Paulista de Espeleologia" www.upecave.com.br.

OUR JOURNEY.

The wanderings of Valerie and myself in the south western parts of this incredibly large country took us to the wildlife rich Pantanal; the undulating karst of the Serra da Bodoquena (both in Mato Grosso do Sul); the frenetic city of Belo Horizonte; the Lagoa Santa karst; to Peruaçu; the old diamond mining town of Diamantina (all in Minas Gerais); and finally to the intoxicating cultural mix of coastal Salvador (Bahia). A stimulating cocktail spread over a month. We did experience problems with the language finding Portuguese Brazilian particularly difficult to master and almost no one that we came into contact with spoke English. However the very friendly and helpful local people ensured that this in no way spoilt the enjoyment of our visit. We quickly accepted this as part of the "adventure" and soon fell in with the local ways – caipirinha cocktails, buffet meals, early to rise and early to bed (unless there happened to be a carnival!).

We found car hire to be expensive but fuel (alcohol, petrol and bio-diesel) inexpensive. Driving always proved exciting and required 110% concentration. Accommodation was good value and at the time of our visit, May/June, there were ample spaces.

Inland we averaged a balmy 25°C but at Salvador it was an uncomfortable 30°C and humid. We had no problems with insect and mosquito bites but we believe that at other times of the year they can be troublesome.

Good maps were virtually non-existent and we had to rely on those we could purchase from the street news kiosks. Surprisingly these did always get us to where we wanted to go but they gave little or no information on physical features. Our best one was "Rodoviário 2009" by Guia Quatro Rodas www.viajeaqu.com.br; the scales varied from 1:133,000 to 1:5,700,000.

Google Earth is very good for most of the populated areas of the country but proved lacking in the areas that we travelled.



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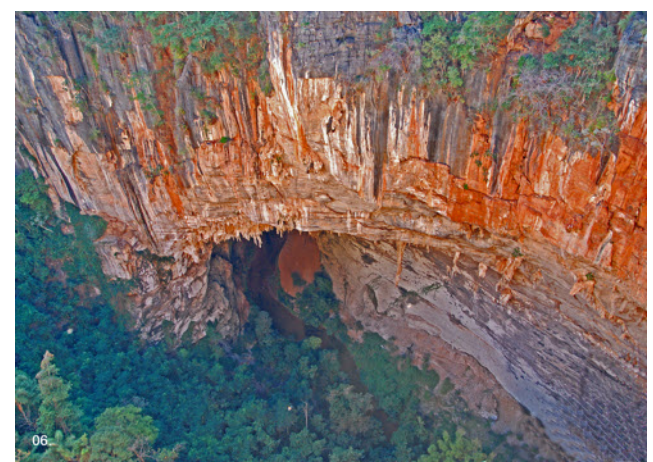
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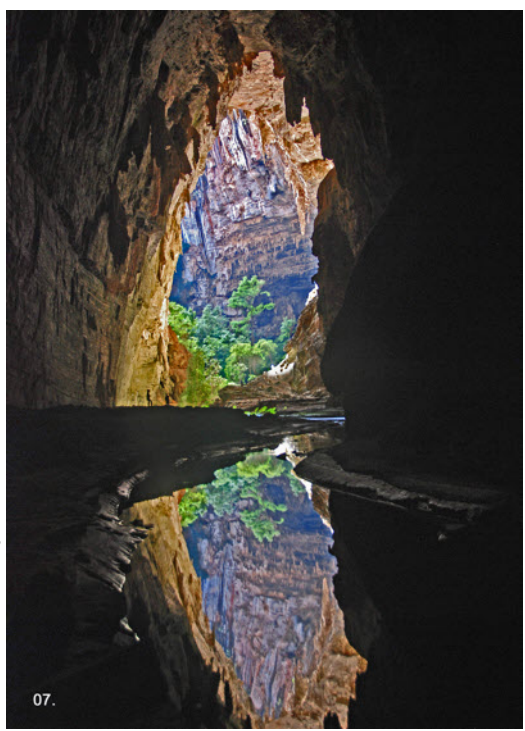
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

There is no doubt that without the patient advice and assistance of Augusto Auler we should not have been able to make this quite amazing trip. On the ground at Peruaçu we were also helped by Luís Piló. In the Serra da Bodoquena Eddie and Sandra da Costa together with Almira from the Abismo Anhumas were our saviours whilst all the other Brazilians that we met could not have been more helpful. We can never thank you enough.

We are also indebted to Augusto Auler (Brazil) and Tony Waltham (U.K.) for constructively commenting on this article.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

- Photo 01. Lapa do Brejal downstream exit.
- Photo 02. Arco do André upstream view.
- Photo 03. Scenery around Lapa do Janelão
- Photo 04. Lapa do Janelão main passage just downstream from Doline 1.
- Photo 05. Lapa do Janelão and the Dolina dos Macacos.
- Photo 06. Lapa do Janelão main passage as seen from the edge of the Dolina dos Macacos.
- Photo 07. Lapa do Janelão and Dolina dos Macacos reflections.

- Photo 08. Lapa do Janelão and the downstream exit.
- Photo 09. Lapa do Caboclo rock art.
- Photo 10. Lapa do Caboclo seats.
- Photo 11. Lapa Bonita and the Salão Vermelho.
- Photo 12. Lapa Bonita and helictites.
- Photo 13. Lapa Bonita with paragenetic channels.
- Photo 14. Lapa dos Desenhos rock art.
- Photo 15. Lagoa de Sumidouro - a seasonal karst lake with small cave where rock art and many fossils were found by Peter Lund.



SIKKIM

October 14th to November 2nd 2009

Report by Peter Hodge

The objective of this trek was the Goeche La (Goecha La) in Sikkim. This pass is a terminal moraine at 4950 metres and only 5 kilometres from the south east facing wall of Kangchendzonga.

Attending:
Albert Chapman
Howard Humphreys
Arthur Salmon
Frank Wilkinson
George Burfitt
Liv Triggs Hodge
Peter Hodge

The
complete
team



Sikkim, wedged in between eastern Nepal and Bhutan, with Tibet (China) glowering over its northern boarder, was its own kingdom until 1975 when it became a part of India but old habits die hard and there is still a border to cross and a passport to be stamped as it is still a "restricted area". In fact when we applied for the Indian visa we were told not to mention Sikkim. In these days of open borders the Sikkim stamp is, nurdishly, a collectors item I would think.

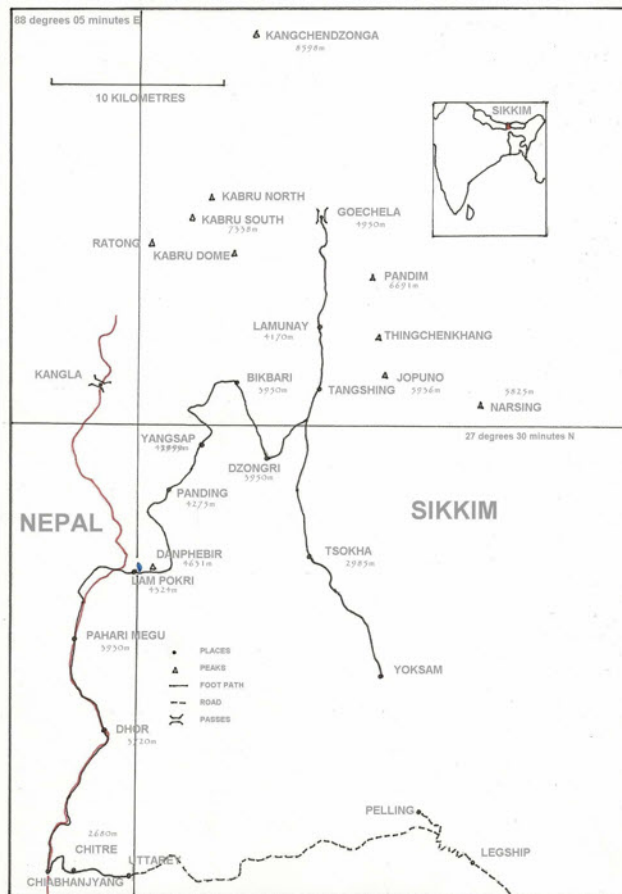
After the Bhutan trek, for me the best to date (out of only two treks I hasten to add) it was rumoured that there was going to be one to Sikkim but that it would have a more cultural slant, which is ok in itself but I definitely wanted to trek so had not considered going. However when I saw the itinerary I realised that it was all trek. I really wanted my wife, Liv to see what it is like in the Himalayan foothills and I am sure she had hinted that she could not stand the cold, particularly at night, but to ease my conscience, I asked her if she would like to go and she accepted with alacrity. Albert, our leader, accepted my request to bring a guest so that was that. I just had to hope that there were no misogynists amongst the other trekkers. It probably also helped in that it was going to be a very small party, at first 6 and then 7.

During this trek, it became obvious that this was to be the "bestest" ever. But strangely, in my mind, the Ladakh trip had been promoted to second place and Bhutan relegated to third place. Not too sure why this happened but my heart seemed, suddenly to hold a great affection for that amazing desert place. Anyway you always remember the first one don't you?

Even though I had done two previous treks the preparation for this one was all consuming and required as much thought as the others. Due to some quirk of the web, or that of the web user, I did not receive a kit list and relied entirely on experience and what I had taken last time. This seemed to work and Liv was never really cold at night. (Phew!) The RAB women's Quantum 600 did the trick and the silk liner was sufficient. How these compare with fleece liners I do not know. I will mention here the YRC holdalls (dufflebags) that Rob Ibberson acquired, they were just the ticket. Plenty big enough for the necessary gear and small enough to handle on trek.

We all met at Manchester, terminal 3, and you could not fault the BA flights to Delhi, the transfer at Heathrow terminal 5 being very easy. The Hotel in Delhi was brief, low key and perfectly adequate. (It is all very nice staying in places like the Imperial but not necessary). The Kingfisher flight from Delhi to Bagdogra (Shiliguri), via Guwahati was exceptional!! (the plane flies past Bagdogra to Guwahati and then backtracks to Bagdogra. The flight was the reverse at the end of the trek) We saw the whole Nepal Himalayan range, Kangchendzonga and the mountains of Bhutan twice, north of which we had walked two years previously. There was an hour's delay at Guwahati as they had pumped on too much fuel.

This had to be pumped or sucked off. I did not know they could do that!



We were met at Delhi by Pawan of Rimo, who was as polite and efficient as ever and in Bagdogra by Mr Rimo himself, Motup and his wife Yangdu. Motup was coming with us to hold our hands once again. It really is comforting to have the guy about, just that added bit of security.

The roads we drove on were not too good. In many places they had been washed out by the last monsoon and maybe even the monsoon before that. I would think that the Minister of Roads is not an enviable job. Many rock and mud slides had occurred and whilst we were driving back at the end of the trek it was rumoured that a rock had fallen onto a car crushing all three occupants! Buddha acts in mysterious ways. On the Bagdogra to Darjeeling leg it didn't help that the Shiliguri to Darjeeling "toy" railway criss-crossed this road but when it did the track was laid on the road and ramped with tarmac.



During the drive from Bagdogra to Darjeeling we stopped for a drink at Kurseong. In the sunset you could just make out Kangchendzonga, about 50 miles due north. Motup said that he had not seen it as clear in 20 years. From the Windamere Hotel in Darjeeling a much better view. The Windamere goes back to the Raj and is very pukka. White gloved waiters etc but it was possible that one of the tiny spicy breakfast sausages had not been cooked quite properly as George Burfitt found out about two hours later. He collapsed in the town, felled like a tree. It was so quick. Luckily the recovery was almost as quick.

After getting George back to the hotel we did a bit of site seeing. First the station where five tiny steam engines, built in Glasgow in 1926, were being tended to, oiled and watered then to the Happy Valley Tea factory that supplies Harrods. We learned all about first and second flush at a Harrods priced tea shop back in town. Then the zoo. As always zoos are anticipated but are a huge anticlimax as you watch the poor dejected animals pacing up and down or just lying listlessly about.

Finally the Everest Museum at which I would have liked to have spent more time. There was a gallery of 30 or so photographs of everybody who was anybody in relation to the biggest peak including the likes of Hillary, Tenzing, Tilman and Nawang Gombu. Who? Nawang Gombu.

This man is Yangdu's father, he is 77 and was the first man to climb Chomolungma twice. This stood for 20 years. It is said that he has two hearts and three lungs. And then we were to have lunch with this guy, at his house. What a privilege! We all received welcome scarves and a signed copy of his book



Kangchendzonga dominates the western half of the province. After a second night in Darjeeling, at the Windamere hotel we drove to Pelling. In the afternoon we walked to Pemayantse monastery. This is the second largest in Sikkim. All the monks and novices were lined up to wait for a visit from the Indian interior minister, from Gujerat. We did not wait but passed him on the road out. He wished us a good day.

Apparently he was responsible for a massacre of 3000 muslims several years ago.



Pictured is the team having dinner at Pelling.

During the night it rained heavily. This was the only rain we experienced until we got back to Yorkshire.

Next day we drove to Uttarey.



The police post at Uttarey

Our trek started from Uttarey, which is only 5 k east of the boarder with Nepal on Latitude 27d 16m N. Here we had a final cup of tea, served by a very attractive lady, watched the tsos being loaded up and then set off ourselves. A final collectors stamp in the passport at the police post and we started to climb. We went due west up onto the Singalila Ridge camping at the police posts at Chitre and Chiabhanjyang. These were encircled by a high wire fence with pairs of bottles hanging at intervals on it. These to act as some sort of alarm system I imagine.

Our party consisted of: 7 trekkers, 10 tsos, (a tso is a cross between a domestic cow, for temperament, and a yak, for strength and sure footedness) 10 porters, 4 cooks, 3 tsomen and 3 guides.

We were to loose three of our party. Firstly Howard. He just hadn't got the fitness and appeared to be puffing after a climb up the hotel steps. Secondly Motup. There had been an avalanche accident on Thingchinkhang, south east of

Pandim, one Indian climber killed and two sherpas injured. The sherpas were Rimo men so Motup had to go and see that they were ok. In the event they were. One of the sherpas stayed with a second fatally injured Indian climber overnight surrendering his coat. It was now that our head man to be, Kunzang, appeared. Thirdly Albert whose knees just could not take any more. Or did he fancy another cup of tea?

We followed the border and the ridge north for 2 more camps, Dhor, where we rose early to climb a ridge to view the Kabru trio at sunrise, our first taste of things to come, and Pahari Megu which was well into Nepal. We then turned east to camp at Lam Pokri. This camp was close to a sacred lake which had many standing stones raised at the river outlet by the pilgrims, and beyond the lake a hill called Danphebir at 4631m. 3 of us decided to get up there and have a look. We made for a col and as we topped the rise the view hit you between the eyes. Absolutely mind blowing. I have to say it brought tears to my eyes. From this vantage point you could see three of the four highest mountains: Makalu and Everest, at about 75 miles due west and the ever present Kangchendzonga, about 25 miles to the north. We spent too long up there as it was getting dark as we headed back to camp. We claim Danphebir for the YRC.

We made our way east and then north crossing two ridges, to Yangsap, Panding and Bikbari (which means "poison fields" although there was no evidence of this.) All these camp sites were excellent. Plenty of room and level ground.

From Bikbari we came south to Dzungri which used to be a royal grazing ground. Getting there for lunch we all climbed a nearby hill in the afternoon. I am sure the views were as good as from Danphebir but they did not seem so. We must be getting used to them. We could see Narsing to the east and then moving anti clockwise Jopuno, Thingchinkhang, (upon which two Indian climbers had been killed) Pandim and then west of north, Kabru Dome and Kabru North and South, Janu in the distance and Ratong. Kangchendzonga could just be seen peeking out above the Kabru trio.

There were very few religious sites in Sikkim but just north of Dzungri there was one which consisted of 4 twelve foot stone pagoda style towers which looked up to the Kabru trio.



At Dzungri, 9 of the 10 porters were paid off as provisions had been eaten and there was less to carry. They received a 20% tip and went singing off down the hill. From Dzungri we walked north east and joined the busy route from Yoksam to Goeche La.

Most people take this route and a lot of them are unprepared. It takes a week and it is possible the unscrupulous trek organisers take advantage of students who have no idea what to expect. The first camp on this route Tangshing was big and well used. There was a "bothy" near where the path entered the camp site which was partly a ruin. These refuges had been put up about 20 years ago but now the use of them is prohibited. The area is now a national park. They are even planning to move all the inhabitants from Choka, our penultimate village and camp site, to Yoksam.

We walked through Tangshing and up to Lamunay, which is not marked on the map. We were woken at 0300 the next day with tea in order to start walking at 0400 with head lamps. This we did so that we could watch the sunrise on Kangchendzonga. We arrived at the first view point at 0520. Spectacular. On the way to this view point we passed a holy lake, Samiti Pokhari, nearby was another derelict refuge. Our leader, Kunzang, and indeed Motup before him, kept saying that this was the best view so no need to go further and walk within your own capabilities, and remember that when you arrive at the pass you are only half way, almost trying to dissuade us from getting to the Goeche La. I left impatient, the first view point with another guide, Dorjay, and we got to the 2nd view point at 0645 and the Goeche La at 0724.



2nd view point

I spent about 20 minutes on the pass but the wind was strong so we tarried as long as was comfortable. We met the others coming up to the 2nd view point and of these only George continued to the Goeche La. The site from the 1st view point was awesome. Huge lateral moraines, dry glacial lakes and the towering peaks. We were back in Lamunay for lunch and then another 2 hours to camp at Tangshing. This was our longest day.

The next day we walked on down the busy path, lunching at Phedang and bypassing Dzongri to Choka (Tsokha). This little farming village had a small monastery and a government office. The camp sites were at a premium but the guide that we sent ahead did his job and we used our allotted site.

Every village has its dogs. Even some of our remote campsites which were near summer farms attracted the attention of the lone dog. These dogs are active at night and rest up during the day so can be quite tiresome. Shades of that long noisy night in Ladakh.

The path from Uttarey to the Nepal border had been constructed from rocks to enable the police to travel quickly, (Police are used as they are not so symbolically aggressive as the army. This is the same at all Indian border posts) and the road from Phedang to Yoksam was also graded but this one mainly from tree trunks split in half to present two flat surfaces. This was no doubt built to help supply Choka.

From Choka we walked to Yoksam, the road head, and a hotel. An unusual arrangement in that our trek cooks cooked at this hotel until we left the next day and we had gone through the tipping ceremony.

There were some beautiful flowers on our route but nothing near us lush as Bhutan. We saw the occasional small bird, heard one or two, saw a couple of kestrels and a larger hawk. There were very few mammals, a small rabbit at Dhor, George and Liv saw a red pander as it crossed the path in front of them. These are bred in captivity and released on the Singalila ridge. Near Lamunay we saw a number of Tahr. These are small goat/sheep type animals and not very common.

We did not see any blue sheep. As we came through the forests in the first few days we picked up quite a few leeches. I also discovered a coloured beetle (tick?) that was trying to attach itself to the inside of my arm. He was not as stealthy as the leech and I felt his teeth so was able quickly to remove it.

The lunch spot between, Choka and Yoksam, was just off the path. There was a sort of wooden pagoda thing under which we sat and the guys were cooking up in the bushes close to the other side of the path. Tsos were going both ways up and down the path and at one time the opposing trains were trying to cross at our lunch site and we ended up having to vacate the pagoda as the tsos were coming through.

We walked another two hours during which time I managed to fall off the path. A drop of about 10 feet or so trying to avoid a tso in a similar situation to lunch. Tsos going up and tsos going down and very little room. The road was "cobbled" and had been made up with stone and we started to walk through fields of millet and vegetables and then farms and houses and finally we were on the outskirts of Yoksom. We bought some Fanta and sat and waited for everybody to catch up and then walked to the Tashi Gang Resort. On the way we met Albert and outside the hotel Howard. Liv and I had a very palatial apartment.

There are separate kitchens for the trek cooks to carry on doing their bit and the evening meal was huge: rice, bbq chicken, salad, duchess potatoes, spring roll and veg. There was another large cake for pudding.

For those who wanted it there was a strange drink made from millet. The millet was boiled and then yeast added. Large, wooden, iron bound, litre sized tankards contained water with the fermenting millet floating on top. The alcoholic liquid was sucked out through a straw and then the tankard topped up with more water.

After dinner we thrashed out the tips. Kunzang supplied us with the daily wage of each person and we allotted 20% to each. All a bit of guess work and no real guidance as to how much to give.

The hotel is good apart from the occasional power cut. It is on the edge of town and very rural with the sounds of cows, chickens, children and various birds and as you are dropping off to sleep the usual dog chorus, but this time the dogs sounded quite frantic and barks reaching a crescendo as each dog tried to outdo the other.

During the afternoon we witnessed a Buddhist funeral. A man of 69 who was one of a trekking party of 12 Americans suddenly died two days in. His daughter was with the party so she was able to agree to this cremation. Albert and George went to observe the proceedings. The guy is folded up into a foetal position and then placed upright in this tiny casket which is carried, with music and chanting, through the juniper fires to the funeral pyre which is on the banks of a river. The outside logs of the pyre are wet and melted butter is poured on the middle. This burns furiously without being visible behind the damp logs. In the end all is burnt and the ashes are taken away by the river.

After breakfast we carried out the tipping ceremony.

In Ladakh and Bhutan Motup had been present at and before this ceremony so was able to advise as to how much to give. I feel that each trek should have some guidance in this procedure as none of us knew how much the guys earned in order to work out a percentage. In the end we asked Kunzang but we still had the problem with his tip. They all seemed to depart happy so at least we hadn't under tipped.

We drove from Yoksam to Kalimpong which has a frantic market and the excellent Himalayan Hotel. This road was like all the others as it followed the river Tista downstream passed several new hydro schemes.

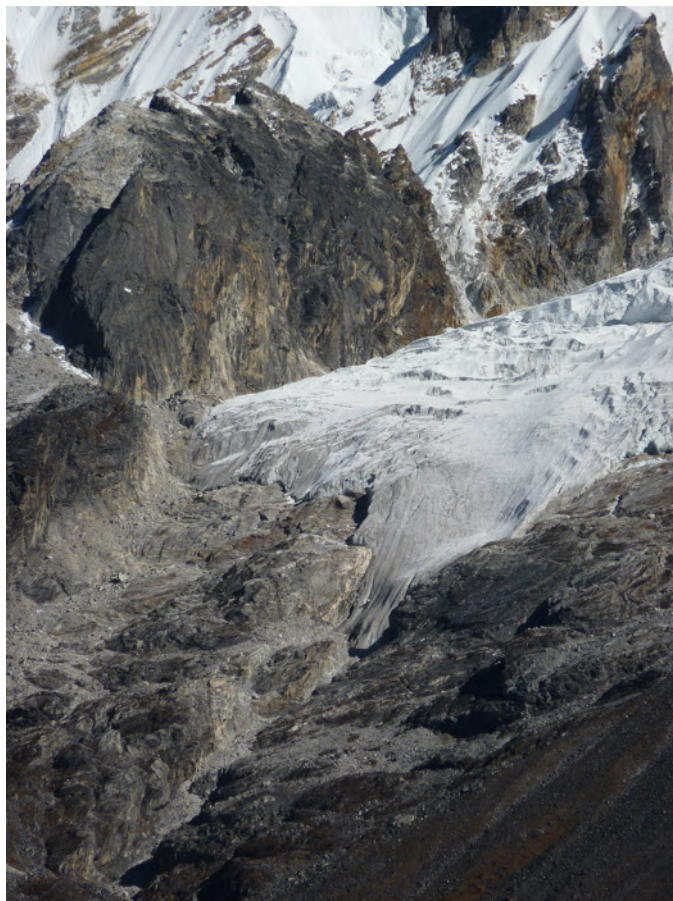
This has to be the most vertically inhabited country I have ever been in.

And then suddenly you left behind the verticality as it changed to horizontality. Fields, straight roads, road markings, factories, suburbia and Indian urban sprawl. The transition was instant, and then to Bagdogra (Shiliguri) airport

For those that completed the trek there were very few sprains and bruises, no altitude problems and only minor gastric issues. All in all it was a very successful expedition.

Rimo also performed faultlessly and professionally. But I think that this is the norm all over India and the Himalayas. It is just that Albert has such a good relationship with Motup that we get the personal touch and the odd little gems along the way that other trekkers would not be able to witness.

In Delhi, Motup had invited all of us to dinner so we were driven straight from the airport, as the plane was 2 hours late, to his apartment for a sumptuous meal. Then a quick 4 hour sleep and onto the plane for home. Again everything went well with BA back to Manchester.



Above, the team resting and not falling in

Top right - bottom of Pandim

Right - Peter on Goeche La





FREY'S PEAK

RATONG

KABRU SOUTH

KABRU NORTH

PANDIM

THINGCHINKHANG

JOPUNO

NARSING



THINGCHINKHANG



DANPHEBIR



FROM DANPHEBIR



DZONGRI CAMP



BETWEEN LAM POKARI AND YANGSEB

THE LIZARD OF OZ

plus other strange creatures and the land they inhabit

Australia tends to be a country we visit to see relatives or to attend major sporting events but surprisingly few of us visit for the outdoors experiences it can offer. Tourists flock to Sydney which is a remarkable cosmopolitan city and are also attracted to Ayres Rock. Even Darwin and the Kakadu draw people to see the mysterious landscape despite the abundance of surface water and high humidity and the insects that enjoy that environment and human blood. Covering nearly 20,000 square kilometres, Kakadu is rightly renowned for its natural values including its variety of landforms, habitats and wildlife.

Oz does not enjoy many really high peaks and its hinterland is mostly arid and inhospitable but affords some, if dangerous, trekking or hill walking opportunity. However if you want to get away from it all it is certainly the place to be.

The worlds smallest continent or largest island whichever way you want to look at it, Oz has a tiny population per square mile although you would not think so in visiting the major cities. When you bear in mind that most of the people live within 100 miles of the coast and those mostly in those major cities then you start to see just how empty the middle is.

Perhaps the one exception to the lack of activity-attraction is the Great Barrier Reef if you are into diving or snorkelling. I certainly found it fascinating when I spent some time in Cairns but that is another story. Inland of Cairns however, there is some wonderful near tropical countryside and quite respectable hills with gorges and dramatic waterfalls, not to mention railway bridges.



I would like to make a case for allowing time whenever visiting or passing through, to search out some walking. The amazing wildlife is obviously an attraction but there is surprising good walking to be had quite close to 'civilisation'. I have spent several weeks exploring the country on a couple of visits and whilst I have seen a good part of it, I have in reality barely touched the surface. In searching out the odd orienteering event and looking for good day walks I have found that there is plenty to go at.

The highest mountains are the Snowy Mountains and that is on my list for a future visit to New South Wales. At 7313 feet, Mount Kosciuszko is the highest mountain on mainland Australia. It is situated in a national park of the same name covering 690,000 hectares.

I would like to tell you about the Blue Mountains just outside Sydney. Unfortunately having organised a 1100 mile round trip by road to explore them, we arrived during a period of low cloud lasting for several days when you could barely see your own hand, so that also has to await another trip.

I did get some good walking in amongst the Glasshouse Mountains near Brisbane where I came face to face with the lizard of OZ. These 'mountains' are actually a group of eleven hills that rise abruptly from the coastal plain on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, the highest being Mount Beerwah a modest 1821 feet above sea level. The mountains were named by Captain Cook apparently because peaks reminded him of the glass furnaces of Yorkshire. They are actually volcanic plugs exposed as softer rocks have been eroded away.



Strange large plants, apparently a grass, grow here known locally as 'black boys'.



The lizard in question is actually the Goanna.



I have spent some time walking in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges just north of Melbourne again modest but interesting and rich in wildlife, particularly birds.

Overall this national park covers over 3000 hectares and consists of a series of ridges dissected by deeply-cut streams.

Sheltered gullies in the south of the range are home to temperate rain forest; mountain ash predominates in areas with enormous gum trees in others and gullies are full of ferns.



The drier ridges and exposed northern slopes are covered by more scrubby woodland and on my recent visit I saw much evidence of recent bush fires. I saw numerous unusual birds but my camera or photographic skills did not produce much photographic evidence.



I did see and hear the Lyrebird with its fascinated ability to mimic the calls of other bird species. I have heard one in a reserve mimicking a mobile phone and I was also lucky enough to see the beautiful tail display of the male.

Crimson Rosellas were everywhere and amongst other more interesting finds included the fairy wren.

There are two peaks just breaking the 2000 foot barrier with Mt Dandenong, the highest point at 2077 feet.

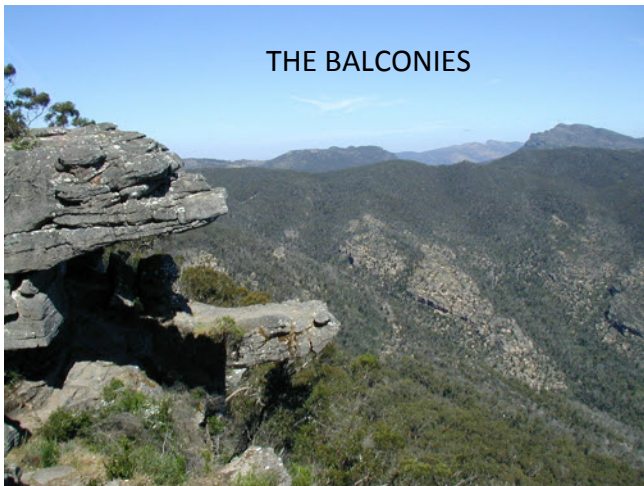
On this latest trip I spent a few days exploring the Grampians.

I have passed through the area before, heading through Victoria for South Australia, and was determined on this occasion to do it justice.

About 120 miles from Melbourne the general form that the ranges take is of a series of low-angled sandstone ridges running roughly north-south.

The eastern sides of the ridges, where the sedimentary layers have faulted, are steep to the point of vertical in places. The area is noted for rock climbing.

One of the best walking areas in the 168,000 hectare National Park is the Wonderland area near Halls Gap which is where we based ourselves.



We were there in their late spring when wildflowers are a major attraction which came as something of a surprise given how arid everywhere looked, once above the river level.

Birdlife was abundant, perhaps too much so at times. Screaming mobs of sulphur-crested cockatoos wheeled about the valley bottom and whilst it was nice to see kookaburras close up, the fact that they had been trained to come in to be fed as a tourist attraction and knew how to summon their meal meant the chance of a lie-in was limited and we awoke to their laughter. Wild kangaroos came down at dusk to graze the riverbank within feet of where we were staying.

Mount William is the highest peak at 3832 feet and there were some startling views from these ranges and good walking opportunities.



The strangest feature I came upon was a quite substantial waterfall which vanished when it hit the ground.

Silverband Falls land on what must be an old boulder choke which, whilst apparently solid and perfectly safe to walk across, must still be loose enough for a considerable amount of water to dive straight through the rocks to an underground stream passage to re-emerge as surface water several yards lower down.



I did some coastal walking this trip and on a previous occasion have travelled the Great Ocean Road from Melbourne to Adelaide. I can certainly recommend this as one of the great drives of the world but do allow time to stop off as there are numerous great locations along the way. I spent four days on it and it was nowhere near enough.



The beach does afford numerous other wildlife opportunities; this trip I got up close and personal with tiny penguins and large pelicans.



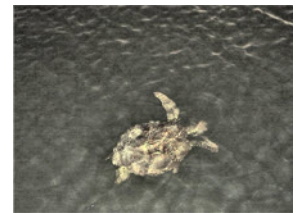
- Crimson Rosella
- Magpie Lark
- Australian Dove
- Gullah
- Bush Turkey
- Silver Gull
- Little Penguin
- Kookaburra
- Australian Swan
- Pelican
- Sulfur Crested Cockatoo
- Emu
- Tufted Dove
- Possum
- Koala
- Dolphin
- Turtle
- Kangaroos & Wallabies

There are of course even stranger creatures in Australia.

Wombats are by no means scarce but I have never seen one in the wild nor have I seen an echidna.

I have however seen turtles, dolphins, koala, emus and possums that I have managed to catch on film, albeit fleetingly.

I am also pleased to say that I have never confronted either a dingo, shark or a crocodile.



Older and long standing members of the Club will remember Tony Reynolds and possibly his wife Doreen. They have now lived in Australia for 35 years but have made a number of visits back, indeed I can remember Tony joining us on a meet probably longer ago than I care to be reminded.

Despite early intentions time did not permit for me to meet up with them whilst out there, a shame as we were very close by Australian terms. I have however exchanged emails with them and Doreen is still going strong

Perhaps not surprisingly they have walked all the areas I mention except for Mt Kosciusko. Doreen does suggest that if visiting the Blue Mts (named because of the haze from the gum trees) you should, if camping, do so on the right hand side of the ridge - the Goss valley. It is not quite so touristy and there are some great walking tracks there.

Mount Kosciusko itself bears a bit of explanation as it does not sound at all Australian. The Aboriginals call the mountain Tar-Gan-Gil. But the mountain received its present name in 1840 when Polish geologist and explorer Count Paul de Strzelecki named it in honour of General Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a Polish patriot and freedom fighter. Strzelecki said the name occurred to him because he was "amongst a free people who appreciate freedom".

Several members have visited the Reynolds over the years. When David Atherton visited some time ago, Doreen recounts that they 'did' the Ocean Road [built by returned servicemen after the first world war] and then went on to the Grampians but unfortunately their 4x4 broke down and she had to go and pick them up. Doreen reminisces that whilst snakes are protected unless they pose a danger (and as far as she is concerned, they always do) when David Smith was with them they had to kill a tiger snake on their lawn and that they lost their first Jack Russell to a snake bite after surviving another bite. They also have the dangerous funnel web and red-backed spiders, the blue-ringed octopus, the box jelly fish, crocodiles, and of course sharks but to name a few things to beware.

Doreen does suggest I should not understate the dangers of walking the bush. If you get further afield than we managed it can get very confusing. The trails are often small and not very well established once you get any distance from the tourist spots. Wandering off the tracks is a constant danger and an all too common event. Earlier this year an experienced bush walker was lost in the mountains on the Black Spur, halfway to Marysville, scene of last years bush fires, and even after exhaustive searches, he has never been found. It is so easy to stray off the path and get lost in thousands of acres of bush.

Returning to the strange creatures that inhabit this land, none come much more peculiar to my mind than than the duck-billed platypus and its cousin the echidna. I have seen both in reserves but never in the wild which is a little surprising in that they are not rare, indeed the Echidna is possibly Australia's most widely distributed mammal. It is probably because they are usually active at dawn and dusk, and in the summer, are typically nocturnal. They also have a very good sense of hearing and smell and will know when being approached.

This creature, to give it full name is the short-beaked echidna otherwise known as the common echidna or spiny anteater

is, along with the platypus, the only egg-laying mammal. Echidna are between a foot and eighteen inches long and can live about 50 years if they avoid the traffic on the roads. Looking something like a hedgehog they share that animal's unfortunate defence mechanism of rolling up into a ball.

Echidnas have a light-brown coat with spines made up of hair on the back and sides and have a long, tubular, hairless snout, very helpful when they use their long, sticky tongue (about 7 inches from tip of snout) to collect ants and termites.

We often joke about all things Australian being upside down but in this case with some justification. The female lays a leathery egg by lying on her back and dropping it into her pouch. The egg hatches after 10 days and the baby echidna (a puggle) stays there till old enough to be left in a nursery burrow while she forages. The puggle becomes independent after 12 months.



Tony & Doreen certainly love the wild life near to hand and often have up to 8 noisy cockatoos on their patio. They have Lyrebirds in the bush next door and there are many wombats around, unfortunately often seen dead from being hit by cars as they are fairly slow moving and out on the roads at dusk. They have also had quite a large goanna on the property but haven't seen one for a while.

England is however still missed; the villages, the rolling hills, the moors, the lovely woods. Doreen does get tired of seeing mile after mile of densely forested mountains. She doesn't however miss the traffic, the parking and of course, the weather and life in Australia is fairly relaxed.

As time marches on however their outdoor activities are ever more limited. Tony has not been well of late; in fact he was in hospital in February having a blood clot cleared from his leg. Doreen still hopes to visit the UK this year as it is 5 yrs since the last visit but with Tony's health being what it is, who knows?

I hope a selection of my photographs give a flavour of what is on offer and that other members get an opportunity to visit these areas.

Roy Denney

BOOK REVUE

Roy Denney

Richard l'Anson is a renowned landscape photographer who contributes to and works closely with Lonely Planet.

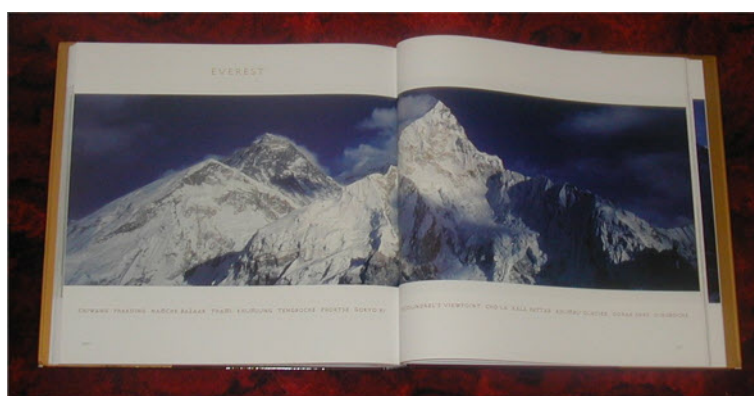
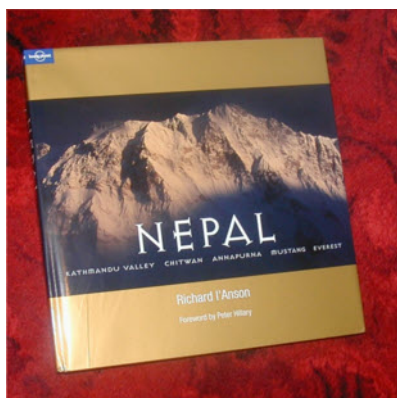
His love of photography and travel was triggered when at the age of 10 he set sail for Australia with his family. His mother is a long time friend of my sister in law in Melbourne and on each occasion I have spent there I have admired the various photographs on display.

During a recent afternoon spent with her, I read with fascination his recent book on Australia and whilst possibly only of great interest to those who have travelled Australia and know many of the locations, it is a superb pictorial record and I can commend it to you. It has 368 colour pages packed with reference maps and more than 300 photographs including many famous landmarks but also some well-kept secrets.

Australia, 42 Great Landscape Experiences
ISBN: 9781741790566

I have just acquired another of his recent publications which brings back many personal memories.

Nepal: Kathmandu Valley, Chitwan, Annapurna, Mustang, Everest ISBN 9781741793765



FAMOUS CHURCHES

An American author decided to write a book about famous churches around the world. To start he chose historic British churches and made his way around the UK to carry out his research. On his first day he was inside a London church when he saw a golden telephone mounted on the wall with a sign that read '£10,000 per call'. Being intrigued, he asked a passing cleric what the telephone was for and was informed that it was a direct line to God.

At an impressive church in Nottingham he saw an identical telephone with the same sign. Upon asking a passing nun she said it was a direct line to God and she would connect him for £10,000. He saw similar phones and signs in many churches on his travels including Liverpool, Belfast, Chester, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow and Birmingham.

I am particularly pleased to find a book with such a startling pictorial record of the Khumbu as when I trekked up the valley we had a lot of snow and rain and my own pictorial record is patchy.

Chapters include Kathmandu and Kathmandu Valley (112 pages), Chitwan (20 pages), the Annapurna Circuit and Sanctuary (54 pages), Upper Mustang (20 pages), and the Mount Everest Khumbu region (51 pages). There are 400 pages in all.

The Everest chapter includes Phakding, Namche Bazaar, Thami, Khumjung, Phortse, the Gokyo Valley, and the views from Gorak Shep and Kala Pattar all of which I visited.

The Annapurna chapter begins with Pokhara and Sarangkot. The views from Dhampus, Ghandruk and Poon Hill precede the photos from the Sanctuary itself.

Upper Mustang features photos from Kagbeni to Lo Manthang, passing through Chuksang, Chele, Ghemi, Charang, Drakmar, and Tama Gaon.

Prices of these books vary and Nepal, usually listed for about £30, appears to be out of stock with most suppliers given its popularity and I do not know whether any reprint will be organised. Copies are available from several overseas web sites but with the additional cost of postage.

I would say that it is still well worth that cost and effort.

They were all charging £10,000 per call.

On leaving Birmingham he headed for Yorkshire and in a beautiful church in Hubberholme, he found the same golden telephone but, this time, the sign read '10p per call'.

Being surprised at the huge difference, he button-holed the vicar and asked, "Reverend, I've travelled all over Britain and seen this same golden telephone in many churches. I've been told it's a direct line to God but in every other part of the country it costs £10,000 per call.

Why is it so cheap here?

The vicar smiled and answered,

"You're in Yorkshire now son. It's a local call"

CLUB ARCHIVES

Further to the list of archived material detailed in the last journal a further large body of material has been added from the collection of the late F. David Smith.

A full breakdown is available on request but amongst the material which may be of particular interest to researchers is the following:

Minute books: 1910-51, 1951-74, LHG visitors book, Lowstern log book, annual reports 1892-28 / 1934-51, members records 1892-1973, meet reports 1956-83 and 1984-94, club annual dinner menu cards from 1901 and other menu cards.

On the expeditions front there are details of the planning and maps for the Norske project and the Dorje Lakpa expedition of 1995.

There is as well a comprehensive set of papers from 1995/96 on Nepal which includes:

Guide: Langtang pp.93-107 & 135-43, map of Kathmandu, The YRC 1995 Expedition to the Jugal Himal, The Langtang Himalayan Trek, his notes on Nepali vocabulary and phrases, the trek itself and record of photographs taken and a list of slides of Nepal. It also includes facts about malaria, a check list for Himalayan trip including climbing equipment for the trekking party. There is a map Ganesh, Langtang & Jugal Himal with Helmu and the map used on the trek.

Also included is a trip dossier of Tilman's Col & Naya Kanga expedition and re the Rowaling expedition with expedition accounts.

There is other historical material on overseas meets and expeditions:

1964 The Alpine Meet, Lotschental & Zermat
1986 The Alpine Meet, Arolla
1987 The Alpine Meet, Saastal
1987 Timetable and planning for Bolivia 1988
1988 Bolivia, Apolobamba
1988 The Alpine Meet, Bernian Alps
1989 The Alpine Meet, Argentiere
1990 The Alpine Meet, Val d' Herens
1991 The Alpine Meet, Dauphine Alps
1992 Norway, Lofoten: The YRC Slingsby & Norsk Project
1993 The Alpine Meet, Pennine Alps
1995 Bolivia, Atacama & Cordillera Occidental
1997 Bolivia, Andes: Quimsa Cruz & Copacata mountain ranges of Bolivia for 1999 or 2000
1999 Bolivia, Andes Copacata Range, Cochabamba

Other historical material includes 'Mountaineering Without Guides' by Charles Pilkington, 1897, a letter from EE Roberts 1957, Will Lacy's memories of visits to the North and South

Poles in his eighties and literally dozens of other sundry articles.

There is also much interesting and useful material on the Cuillins including maps and routes.

There are numerous photographs going back to the 1920s and details of dozens of huts, cottages and bothies used over the years.

Whilst few of us will accumulate anything like the weight of material that David did you are all invited to offer your collection to the club for consideration for inclusion with the archive.

Similarly any books etc that might be worthy of a home in the library would be welcome.

It is Club policy that our history should be kept together in a Public Records Office, to be maintained and be accessible for reference under the control of a professional archivist.

The material remains the property of the Club and our own Archivist will advise members from time to time of material being deposited there and can supply on request a comprehensive list of material currently held by the service.

The YRC archival material is held at the North Yorkshire County Record Office, Malpas Road, Northallerton, DL7 8TB.

Our contact is currently Ms M J Boustead, Senior Archivist (Collections). Telephone number 01609 777585, e-mail: archives@northyorks.gov.uk

It is about a five minute walk from County Hall, the railway station and the town centre car park. The facilities there include a large public search room, internet access, WiFi hotspot, a tea room for visitors' use and toilets.

There is no charge to visit the Record Office but you are asked to make an appointment before doing so. Bookings can be made by telephone.

The archive and our library house a wealth of historic material for those wishing to research the past for whatever reason and the rest of us would find it a fascinating diversion which few of us avail ourselves of.

More than this however there are old maps, routes and surveys which could be of great assistance to those planning present day excursions.

It is easy to forget in this day of the internet and instant communication that our forbears left us a whole panoply of useful material which is there to be used with just a little effort.

Ed.

WHAT IS YORKSHIRE

Roy Denney

No the answer I am looking for is not 'God's Country'.

Perhaps from my personal perspective the question should be 'what is Lancashire' although in reality I am trying to determine what is a County.

Consultation is under way to change the boundaries of the Yorkshire Dales National Park to include parts of Lancashire and Cumbria.

Like many of my Lancashire compatriots I love the Yorkshire Dales and Moors and consider Yorkshire people second only to those from what is left of the County Palatine. There is a point however where we have to draw a line in the sand and if we do not act soon it will be the sands of Morecambe Bay.

Coming from the area bounded by Blackburn, Accrington and Clitheroe my forbears would have been astounded if they knew that by these so called enlightened times they would be able to travel west of north to enter Yorkshire at Bentham itself only about 11 miles from the Irish Sea.

Yorkshire has already absorbed a good bit of what was Lancashire, Furness is now Cumbria, Cheshire has crossed the Mersey and when you take out what is now Merseyside and Greater Manchester and the smaller unitary authorities there is not much left of the old county. Now to add insult to injury they want to add some of our beauty spots to the Yorkshire Dales. Lancashire's situation is far from unique indeed Yorkshire has seen many changes. Do the Ridings still exist? Indeed does Yorkshire still exist now that we have north, south, west and east or is that Humberside.

Lancashire has some of the finest landscapes in England. Many of these are already protected as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Over the years what is now Natural England has been under pressure to afford National Park Status to many additional areas and one of the reasons why many do not today enjoy this status is that to qualify it has to afford opportunities for outdoor leisure as well as being great landscape. Since the CROW Act and the advent of open access land I would contend that many such areas do now afford good opportunities for leisure and that if such areas were promoted more by being given this status it might take some pressure off the very busy ones like the Lakes.

I have been participating in this debate as part of my role working with Natural England as a Chairman of an Access Forum but early questions of colleagues in that organisation, local government and eventually MPs have left me in a quandary as to what exactly is a County.

Before returning to that, for those of you not seeing local press on the issue the current situation is that NE are currently considering whether some of the area of countryside between the western boundary of the Yorkshire Dales and eastern boundary of the Lake District National Park (M6 Lune Valley corridor) should be designated as extensions to these National Parks.

There is little doubt that there is merit in the suggestions for enhanced protection. The present situation is distinctly anomalous with the boundaries being a bit of nonsense. As far back as 1947 when National Parks were being discussed it was proposed that there should be the creation of a 'Howgill and Orton Fells Conservation Area'. However, when the YDNP boundary was established, its western limit was based on the old administrative boundary of the West Riding rather than any particular topographic or landscape features. This included the southern part of the Howgills only and the Howgill and Orton Fells conservation area was never created. There has been pressure ever since to resolve this.

Early considerations touched on the possibility of a North Pennines National Park which had a lot of arguments in its favour but I suspect that the reason it seems to have been dropped is the cost of setting up another QUANGO to manage it. Another idea floated and apparently ignored, probably for the same reason, was for a North Lancashire National Park. One reason why that is difficult is that whilst the Bowland would be worthy, especially now with much enhanced public access, other areas further north equally able to be described as suitable are separated by a belt of developed land between which would not qualify and the boundaries of a park have to be complete.

There are similar debates in other areas of the country but as far as this northern area is concerned we were down to having broadly agreed which areas are deserving and were deciding whether to add which bits to the Northumberland, Lake District or Yorkshire Dales National Parks so as to not require more and costly management. In more recent times Northumberland has dropped out of the equation and we are now subject to formal consultation as to how to carve these areas up between the Lakes & Dales.

The political considerations of parts of Lancashire (albeit small parts) being in the Yorkshire Dales must surely touch a sensitive nerve with traditional Lancastrians. Given the name the 'Lake District' does not mention Cumbria it might be acceptable to see parts of North Lancashire included in that protected area. Similarly if sizeable parts of Cumbria are now to be in the Yorkshire Dales that is also anomalous but given Cumbria is itself a comparatively recent creation it is unlikely to be such a sore point.

Would our Yorkshire friends be prepared to rename the park as the Dales National Park or Pennine National Park?

The suggestion at present on the north Pennines area seems to be that the YDNP be extended northwards to the Kirby Stephen, Ravenstonedale, Tebay line and the LDNP east to Tebay and south to Greystigg.

Further to this, the area from just west of Kirby Stephen to just west of Appleby Castle extending west to Shap is being considered for addition to either of the national parks with no favoured option at present.

South west of Kendal it is also proposed that most of the corner between the A6 and the A590 at Levens will also be added to the LDNP

The major options are being assessed in three blocks basically—

Yorkshire Dales North: Mallerstang and Wild Boar Fell and the northern Howgills;

Yorkshire Dales West: Barbon, Leck and Middleton Fells and the Upper Lune Valley to the north of Kirkby Lonsdale and

Orton Fells (including Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin-on-Lune).

As mentioned the Orton Fells area is being considered as both a possible further extension to the Lake District East extension and as a possible Yorkshire Dales North extension.

It must be conceded that in terms of geology and habitat the area of Orton Fell has more in common with the YDNP than the LDNP and the M6 is a fairly substantial divider. If it was not for the name and sensitivities of local inhabitants then YDNP would seem the better option. Perhaps a change of name would resolve this but the cost of re branding probably precludes this.

Similarly another option might be far too costly. North of the Orton area there is of course the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, itself about the same size as both the national parks under discussion. Possibly this should be upgraded to national park status with the areas under debate added to this.

There is also a detailed consultation going on about the management of the coastal access strip to be created under legislation just enacted. One school of thought is that where this runs in contact with a National Park or very close to one then these areas should be added to those National Parks.

Returning to the issue of boundaries and the Counties I seem to get a different definition from everybody I ask and I think the truth is that nobody really knows. In part this seems to be down to the law of unforeseen circumstance.

Legislation changing administrative responsibilities removed some areas from the authority of County Councils, but was written in such away as to not define the status of those areas as far as County boundaries were concerned. The boundary changes were not intended to change the Counties but just who was responsible for the administration of which parts of them and neither was it expected to affect traditional loyalties but in practice it is the new boundaries which are now shown on maps and marked by road signs. They have also been widely adopted by the media as geographical designations which has caused concern in some areas. The big issue (or should that be little issue) in our area was the merger of Rutland with Leicestershire and the subsequent de-merger.

"The new county boundaries are administrative areas, and will not alter the traditional boundaries of counties, nor is it

intended that the loyalties of people living in them will change, despite the different names adopted by the new administrative counties."

Made on 1st April 1974, this was a statement by the then government, reinforced by a further pronouncement by the Department of the Environment in Sept 1991.

"The Local Government Act 1972 did not abolish traditional counties, only administrative ones. Although for local government purposes some of the historic counties have ceased to be administrative areas, they continue to exist for other purposes."

The real problem appears to be how far you go back to claim historic boundaries. They have always been changing if we look at the longer term. Even if we take modern Britain to have been started with the Norman Conquest the huge county of Yorkshire was a successor to the Viking Kingdom based at York and was considered to include what was to become northern Lancashire, as well as parts of Cumberland and Westmorland. The larger part of what was later to become Cumberland and Westmorland were under Scottish rule until the last years of that century.

Going back to the Local Government Act of 1972, Lancashire saw more upheaval than most counties, having most of its population transferred to the new entities and other County authorities: Manchester, south east Lancashire and the Saddleworth area became part of Greater Manchester; Liverpool, Southport and south west Lancashire became Merseyside; Furness came under the administrative County of or indeed became part of Cumbria and Warrington and Widnes came under Cheshire.

The issue is further confused by the Royal Mail no longer using their former postal counties and instead use the postcode and post town to direct mail. They have generously conceded that anyone may now include "Lancashire" or any other traditional county name as part of their address. Where a county is provided however, it will be ignored.

This itself causes endless disputes. I was involved in speaking in support of a formal change of address for the Duke of Rutland. (Nothing to do with the dispute about Rutland as he did not in fact live in that tiny County.) The home of the Dukes of Rutland is Belvoir Castle which is in Leicestershire but had an address obliged to use the post town of Grantham and the County of Lincolnshire which did not go down well with his Grace. As an orienteering club we regularly stage major events around the castle and in the estate woodlands and indeed, all being well, by the time you read this we should have had the best part of a thousand running round there at an event this year. Had it indeed been in Lincolnshire it would have been outside our jurisdiction hence our involvement.

Another difficult side effect is that targeted mailings etc go to entirely inappropriate households based on these anomalies. Close to home we have a problem based more on the inability of folk working in London to grasp these issues.

The Ramblers Association allocated new members by post code to local groups and the groups are members of county based area organisations. The problem is that here in Leicestershire we only have the one central city and many parts of the county have Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Lincolnshire post towns. New members therefore get allocated to groups in other counties which do not organise in the areas where these members reside.

A similar daft anomaly was the case of Nottingham, East Midlands Airport. It had a Derbyshire post code but was actually in Leicestershire and we had to pick up the bill for security etc. A few years ago after much heated local debate and at great expense it was renamed and is now 'East Midlands Airport, Nottingham, Leicester, Derby'. Trips off the tongue doesn't it?

The whole issue is a minefield and they should have left well alone.

If anyone feels they can throw any light on this subject there are an awful lot of people around who would welcome it.

THE FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR

Phil Dover

The Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*) is the largest flying bird in the Americas. It is classed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Near Threatened, and is in Appendix 1 of the CITES (Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species) classification.

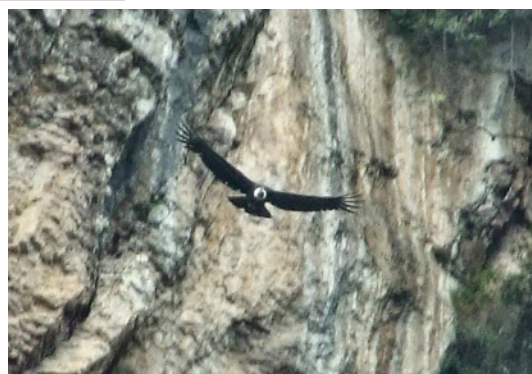
The population of the bird is decreasing and it is now very rare in the north of its range with less than 30 birds in Venezuela and a declining population in Columbia and Ecuador. In all 3 countries there is an active repopulation programme. In coastal and dryer mountainous parts of Peru the birds are quite numerous but in the northern more humid areas of the Andes they are now rare, with ornithologists recording only 30 birds in Northern Peru.

Unusually for a raptor the adult male is larger than the female with a wingspan of up to 310cm and weighing up to 15kg. The bird feeds on carrion; in the mountains, mainly larger animals such as cattle and horses and on the coast, sea mammals such as seals and whales cast up on the beach. As a carrion eater it does not have the long talons of other raptors but rather short blunt nails and a large beak to tear through the skin and flesh of the carcasses.

The birds reach maturity in about 5 or 6 years and mate for life, nesting usually on steep cliffs, but coastal birds will nest on sloping ground laying 1 or 2 eggs. The young fly after about 6 months but continue to fly and feed with their parents for about 2 years and only then does the female lay another clutch of eggs. As a result the reproductive rate is low but the birds can live up to 50 years.

In November 2009 whilst staying with my son in Chachapoyas in Northern Peru, friends who have a house in Leymebamba about 50 miles away rang up to say that a juvenile condor had been found and asked if I, as a retired veterinarian, would go and examine it.

Adriana and Oscar had recently purchased an area of cloud forest to try to prevent it from being logged and destroyed and part of the land had high limestone cliffs where a pair of condors nested. They had heard that a local campesino had found the young condor in a field near the road and was considering whether to kill it and eat it.



An adult condor - photo Rob Dover

Presumably it had crash-landed on its maiden flight and been unable to launch itself off flat ground. They had caught the bird and taken it to a hastily constructed pen next to the house of their employee in the woodland.

After buying some meat in the market my son and I drove up the Utcubamba Gorge to visit the bird. The cage was rather small for the size of the bird and it was reported that despite being offered food so far it had not eaten. It was looking rather miserable sitting on its hocks in the back of the pen but when we offered it our meat it started eating immediately and soon devoured what we had brought.

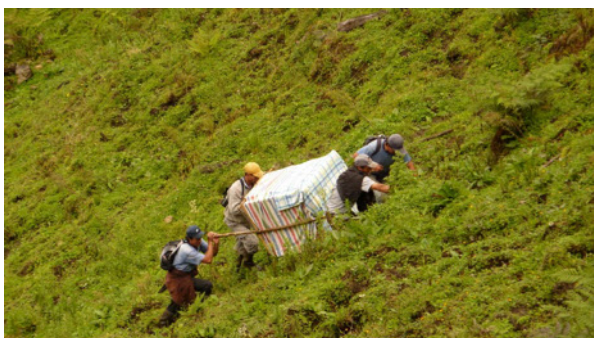
When we attempted to put a cloth over its head in order to examine the bird, it jumped up and spread its wings. The juvenile bird was brown unlike an adult and had the comb over its bill showing it to be a male. As it was eating, spreading its wings successfully and taking its weight on both legs, although it had a slight limp on its right leg, we decided not to stress it further.

Government authorities heard of the capture of the condor and arrived a couple of days later complete with a very small cage to take possession of the bird and remove it to a rehabilitation centre several hundred miles away. However people from Leymebamba objected to this plan demanding that it should stay in the local area and eventually the officials went away leaving the bird in the custody of our friends. The condor has an important place in the local culture so it was important to the people of Leymebamba for it not to be removed to another part of Peru. They had the idea of keeping it caged as a tourist attraction for the

area but the plan of our friends was for it to be released into the wild, if possible.

About 10 days later when I returned, as official condor vet, accompanied by an Environmental NGO lawyer and a NGO bird expert, I was surprised how much better the bird looked and behaved. It was now eating 2 to 3 kg of meat a day, its feathers were in good condition and it was alert in appearance. Again there was talk of it being taken away to the coast or even Cusco, in the south of Peru, but the person feeding the condor reported that the parent birds were constantly flying around and knew where the bird was caged. The bird expert said it was now very rare for condors to live in cloud forest and that as birds adapted to their own locality it seemed even more important to release it in the same area as the parents, if that was possible.

A week later Oscar came up from Lima to organize the release and we returned to Leymebamba, where a light carrying cage had been designed and made. After we had deparasited the bird, as demanded by the authorities, it was soon transferred to the new cage. It took 4 men to carry it up the very steep, very muddy valley side partly through a field and partly through cloud forest, for about 500m with 3 prolonged coca stops on the way.



The campesinos put a wad of coca leaves in their cheek and then you hear the constant tap tap as they use a wire to get the lime which activates the alkaloids in the coca leaves out of the small gourd they all carry.



With the 6 of them it sounded almost like castanets. The coca reduces the effects of fatigue and hunger.

It must have been very hard work as it took us all our time to keep on our feet in the mud after a hard night's rain. The weather had been sunny when we set off but 3 hours later when we reached the potential launch site at 3080m, the cloud was right down and it was raining again.

We waited nearly 4 hours for the weather to improve and then decided to release the bird, but it showed little interest in flying just flapping its wings occasionally. We tried taking it onto the top of an 8 foot high rock but it just walked down, showing no fear of humans and was not in the least aggressive.

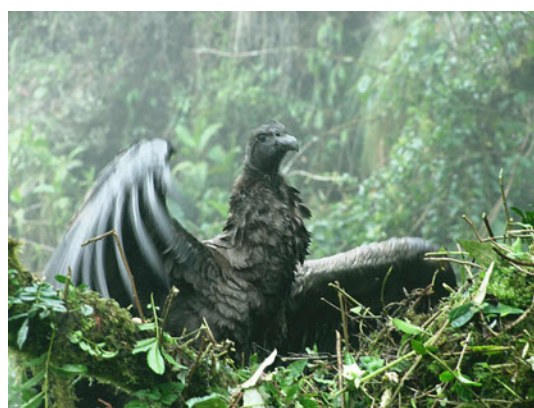
As it as now getting late for the descent to the valley, we returned the bird to the cage and left it below an overhanging rock after feeding it.

Returning the next morning we tried again at the same site. This time the bird appeared much brighter and was looking round all the time. It did half fly, half jump for about 10m, and we think it knew the parent birds were around although we could not see them.



As this attempt wasn't working the campesinos suggested using a nearby cliff, so we put the bird back in the cage and carried it down to the crags.

The men cut down the vegetation on the edge with machetes and this time when we released the bird, it stood on the edge flapping its wings. Then it moved out of view on the ledge then suddenly appeared to jump into the air with 2 flaps of its wings it was gone from our sight.



The employee's wife in the valley who was watching with binoculars reported that a parent bird had come into view and the young one immediately took off and flew about 500m to a ledge on a large cliff over 100m high where the adults sometimes perched.

Within a couple of days the juvenile was seen several times flying in the area with the parent birds. When returned towards the end of my stay in Peru we had the pleasure of watching the young bird flying with its parents and also saw another pair of adult condors at the other side of the valley

DR. JOHN A. FARRER

Forty years ago the Craven Pothole Club published a letter from John Farrer our honorary member and landlord who was himself reflecting on his accession to the status of Lord of the Manor of Ingleborough some seventeen years earlier.

The CPC have just seen fit to re-publish this interesting missive and given that I am sure it would be of great interest to all our members I have their permission to reproduce it here.

It went under the banner of;

Off The Record - Of Squires and Potholes

"I often wonder if anyone emerging from a mud duck or just lying on a bank of shingle contemplating his cigarette smoke wafting up a pitch while waiting for his turn on the ladder, has ever thought what it might be like to find suddenly that he owned this particular system. If potholers never think of such things, certainly no one else does. In 1952 I certainly had no thoughts about it. I had visited a cave once, a very fine show cave in Victoria (Australia) and, like every tourist, after having goggled at the formations and marvelled at the sensationalized commentary typical of that in show caves the world over, I thought no more of it.

Then in 1952, as I was savouring the enjoyment of a summer Christmas, wondering if the sun was going to get any hotter and if I was going to have any emergency calls, a telegram arrived informing me, quite simply, that my uncle in England had died. Now for most people the death of an almost unknown uncle across the other side of the world is not an occasion for undue excitement, but for me it was not unlike being told that I must change my profession and had been elected Prime Minister at the same time ! The fact was that the almost mythical family estate 12,000 miles away, in a country known to me only in geography books, was now mine.

My first concern was not potholes. The evil spirits which usually concern themselves with tearing wet suits and blowing out carbide lamps soon made me realise what I was in for. "Doctor from Down Under says G.G. is not a bad sort of hole to have in your back yard," and similar ridiculous headlines started to appear all over the front pages of the news-starved English and Australian press. Thank heavens these gremlins went back to tearing wet suits and blowing out carbide lamps.

Managing an agricultural estate is a job of out-facing complexity, especially when my previous experience in land management went no further than a lawn, a vegetable garden and a couple of window boxes. My study of less important issues like whether a few thousand pounds should be spent on a new barn for a farm were frequently interrupted by such telephone calls as, "Hello ! Can the Happy Boggits do Disappointment tomorrow ?" Not having a clue about what "doing Disappointment" meant, I decided to learn a bit about potholing.

My first investigations were frightening, to say the least. The Agent, explaining the presence of the heavy iron door at the entrance to the Show Cave said, "The trouble with potholers is that they put dynamite under anything which looks as if it might move !" On the assumption that they could not all be like that, I set about finding out exactly what potholing involved. On hearing what "doing Disappointment" involved, the object of the whole exercise became obvious, although why people didn't go to the edge of G.G. main shaft and jump, saving themselves a lot of time and energy. was not so obvious. When I was invited for a "potter down G.G." I decided that this was my opportunity to get some idea of what went on ; and it sounded relatively harmless.

So, I was lowered into the depths, confident that every possible safety measure was used on the rickety-looking winch gear, until I noticed that the only thing separating me from the bottom of the chamber below appeared to be a three-eighths inch bolt holding the cable to the chair. After arriving at the bottom without mishap I was rushed off down the S.E. passage and spent five hours getting covered with mud, and as it felt, tearing every muscle in my body to shreds. At last, emerging, I gasped my thanks to my host and asked him why he had changed his mind about the trip. He told me that that was what they called "pottering", so ever since I have felt quite content administering potholes, and leaving the exploration to others.

The owner of a number of potholes finds himself in a position somewhere between a referee at a football match and an air traffic controller at a busy airport. First a complaint comes in that six different clubs have all — simultaneously — arrived at a pot, all claiming that they have permission to descend when in fact, the only club which has obtained permission has not turned up! Then a member of some school outing will wander into a pot and fall, breaking a few limbs, so that the Cave Rescue Organization has to be called out. And if that isn't enough, the local Council writes to say that it believes that potholers are paddling about in what eventually becomes the village water supply and will I please do something about it?

After fifteen years I think that I have found a way of dealing with most of these problems and have come to accept administration of the potholes as part of the daily programme. They provide a valuable source of enjoyment and recreation for many people which is unique in the world today. When the supersonic transports start spreading their boom carpets all over the country, potholes will be the only place where people are not constantly reminded of our over-grown industrial civilization. They also provide much of scientific interest, material for post-graduates in geology and for scientists who can exercise their minds in their spare time while having physical exercise in an acceptable form. And, finally, in the great deluge of the summer of 1967, the caves acted as a reservoir, preventing another Wray-type disaster in Clapham.

J. A. Farrer (Lord of the Manor of Ingleborough)

SVALBARD WITH SLEDGE

Pulking across Nordenskiöld Land, April 2010

Michael Smith

In a third visit to Spitsbergen, Club members John Brown, Rory Newman and Michael Smith were joined by Simon Atkins and James Marson. The pulking trip was a success despite a number of setbacks. Glaciers were traversed and mountain tops climbed.

Ten days before their planned departure for Spitsbergen the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull erupted launching dust clouds into western European airways and grounding practically all aircraft for a week. Normal services returned only a day or so before they made their way out via Copenhagen, Oslo and Tromsø to Longyearbyen. A few days after their return ten days later, some British airports were again closed because of more volcanic dust. The party were lucky to fit in their expedition between the disruptions.

Their second setback was only discovered on trying to collect their pre-arranged hired pulks (individual towed sledges), fuel and rifles at the Paulsen's depot: despite Paulsen's paperwork only stating that rifle hire for over a month needed additional authorisation, new regulations required a Spitsbergen Governor's (or Sysselman's) permit for any gun hire. This discovery was made on Sunday morning and the Sysselman's office opened only on weekdays. Further, the application for such a permit had to be supported by a report of good character which Norwegians would normally obtain from the police. Quickly abandoning any idea of setting out without a rifle on account of the possibility of an encounter with a polar bear, an electronic copy of a recent Criminal Records Bureau report was requested from home. When this arrived on Monday the Sysselman was on the outskirts of the township encouraging a bear to go elsewhere. On his return he had lunch and issued the permit within the hour.

Meanwhile, Sunday saw the team taking the local ski track along the Longyear valley past ruminating reindeer and beneath shimmering drifts of newly-arrived Little Auk patrolling the cliffs above the township.

Better luck was had with provisioning. Parcellforce had delivered 13kg of camping food to the Mary Ann's Polarrigg hostel without difficulty and for about two-thirds the cost of excess baggage. As an alternative the supermarket had quality dehydrated camping food at a cost about twice that of ordinary UK packs. Also on the baggage front, ski packs pre-booked with SAS are charged at under £20 for the return journey and can weigh up to 10kg.

By Monday afternoon the team were transported by taxi out to the roadhead at the entrance to Bolterdalen and skied past returning dog-sledding groups for a couple of hours in deteriorating weather. Overnight the wind rose, spindrift flowed and a little snow fell. Tuesday was only fit for a short excursion up the Rieperbreen and improving the wall round the tents. Using GPS made finding the camp easier on the skiers' return.



Camp with bear alarm cord

Wednesday dawned calmer and after packing the pulks progress was made round Foxtoppen. A few fulmars passed as a gentle ascent was made slightly over the Bolterskaret pass then down to the foot of the Plogbreen. The way upward to the Foxpasset was smoothest on the left (true right) of the Dalburgerbreen. Skiing was interrupted to allow a reindeer with calf to cross the glacier and gather up a second mildly distressed calf which had fallen behind the family group. Clear skies and the prospect of expansive views tempted three of the group to climb Gilsonryggen. They crossed rotten snow and rock slopes to reach the point at the western end of the ridge but were put off the traverse to the tottering tower by the summit by the long double corniced ridge. Their descent required great care.



Rory comes a cropper

Camp was made that night inside a ring of snow blocks around 750m at the very head of the Dalburgbreen. Calmer clear conditions prevailed for 2 days and allowed the wide views of pristine snow-covered peaks to be enjoyed to the full.

The following day was passed exploring those peaks and prospecting the onward route. Views in all directions for scores of miles were of white peaks, fjords and icecaps. Back in the township the authorities were issuing avalanche risk warnings and care was needed because of the fresh snow on top of hard old snow. Ignorant of the warning but well aware of the conditions the party's medic bailed out of a direct assault on the highest peak a short distance from the summit ridge taking a somersault and slide down the face.

Thankfully no harm was done.

CHIPPINGS

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Wm. Cecil Slingsby, renowned man of the mountains, Honorary Member of the Club and President from 1893 to 1903 is talked of at length in early records of the sport.

Trawling through the archives Albert Chapman has now turned up a recounting of one of his early epics in his own words. The following is an extract from a paper he read out to the Burnley Literary and Scientific Society in 1893.

"I have only once ascended Mont Blanc, As my ascent was rather a remarkable one, I will say a few words about it. In 1879, my friend the Rev. C. J. Ord and I, with two Swiss guides—old Franz Andermatten and his son Adolph—arrived at Courmayeur intending to cross Mont Blanc. With true patriotic pride old Franz would not consider that this Franco-Italian mountain could be in any way superior to his own Saas and Zermatt peaks. Most of these he had climbed without sleeping out, and he did not see why we should not cross from Courmayeur to Chamonix over the top of Mont Blanc in one day.

We pointed out the fact that, as Mont Blanc is 15,781 feet above sea level, Courmayeur only 4,098, and Chamonix 8,446, it meant an ascent of 11,681 feet and a descent of 12,885 feet, or, with the ascent and descent combined, it meant that 24,016 feet were to be negotiated.

Franz cared little for this, it was only a mountain after all.

As we were in admirable training we were quite willing to make the attempt, but, as none of us had ever seen the Italian side before, we made a stipulation that we should take a native guide with us. However, though several were willing to cross the mountain with us on a two day's expedition, none would tackle it in one. I now think they were wise. This being the case, Franz and Adolph went for a day on the Miage Glacier to reconnoitre, whilst Ord and I climbed Mont Saxe and enjoyed one of the most beautiful views in the world.

To make a short story of a long expedition, after we had bid adieu to the various Italian counts and countesses who had stopped up to see the last of the two mad Englishmen and their Swiss guides, we left our hotel at Courmayeur at two minutes past midnight, on Friday morning, July 25th, 1879, and made our way by lantern light through the still and solemn pine forest and grassy glades of the Allee Blanche, to the little tarn, the Lac de Combat, where we waited 41 minutes for a porter whom we had engaged to carry our packs to a hut where climbers invariably spent the night before making the ascent of Mont Blanc by the Miage route. After traversing a somewhat wearisome moraine, we stepped at 4 a.m. on the hard ice, probably a century old, on the Miage



Glacier. Then we had 1 hours flat walking, and reached rocks at 5-30 and the old hut at 6-47. We had breakfast here and sent the porter back. At nine o'clock we saw a party of Austrians close to the top of Mont Blanc. Franz said we should be there too, in three hours. After passing over, under, and through some powdery snow, at 10-15 we began to climb a steep snow gully, and for six hours almost without cessation, our guides hacked away with their ice axes. At 5-15 p.m. we stood on the top of Mont Blanc, 17 hours 13 minutes after leaving Courmayeur, having ascended 11,681 feet.

The view was superb, but we were not allowed to enjoy it long. Though on the last few hundred feet our limbs felt like leaden weights and our breathing was difficult, when once on the top all fatigue vanished and we could breathe as well as down on the sea shore. We reluctantly left the summit at 5-20, and found the snow to be nearly knee deep most of the way down to the Grand Mulets.

We turned into the hut at 7-20, had some soup, left at 7-40, and reached Couttet's Hotel at Chamonix at 10-10, having descended 12,885 feet in 4 hours of actual going—the quickest descent on record. Neither Mr. Ord nor I claim any credit for this extraordinary expedition, but I do claim a large amount for the old hero, Franz Andermatten, who did it from purely patriotic motives.

We were out altogether 22 hours 8 minutes."

They do not make them like that anymore!

Ed.

LIVESTOCK UPDATE

Further to the comment last journal about how to act near livestock there has now been a top level meeting to discuss this issue. Natural England organised a meeting of most interest groups including the BMC and the Ramblers who explored all aspects of perceived problems.

Statistics show there is no increase in serious incidents although user groups are convinced less serious incidents are on the increase but are perhaps not always reported.

Apparently the average number of serious incidents reported is fairly constant at 2 fatalities and 5 serious injuries per annum. Despite anecdotal evidence it seems that there is no discernible behaviour variation between breeds.

It was generally acknowledged that there is a problem in the complexity of differing guidance and that most members of the public simply don't report incidents which makes any firm conclusions difficult. The overall perception issue suggests a clear need to improve the guidance and promotion of messages on what to expect

and how to behave around livestock, particularly for dog owners and for visitors to the countryside who may not have accessed existing sources of information. Careful signage can play a part in this, but there was wide support for a long term approach to improving public understanding with clear and consistent messages from all parties

Ed.

WALKING THE WATERWAYS

The Government's strategy for the inland waterways of England and Wales has been published under the banner of Waterways for Everyone.

The introduction states "From Roman times, the rivers of Britain have been used as routes for trade and commerce. Two centuries ago most of our canals were built to provide the transport infrastructure for the industrial revolution. Today our rivers and canals are used much less for trade and industry but they have gained a new importance in delivering a range of social, economic and environmental benefits unimagined even twenty years ago. Our waterways help to define our landscape, provide opportunities for recreation and quiet enjoyment, attract visitors by the million, and offer exciting possibilities for economic and social regeneration. The welcome renaissance of our waterways is reflected in the upgrading of our rivers, the restoration of derelict canals and the revitalisation of waterfronts in towns and cities throughout Britain"

They go on to claim that the past decade has been a golden age for the waterways and that across Britain we can now see examples of just how our rivers and canals can improve the quality of our lives. They acknowledge however that in many places the potential is still unrecognised.

Inland waterways provide recreational opportunities and sporting activities close to people's homes. They can be used to encourage active lifestyles and canal tow paths were the original long distance trails. They also form a very important environmental and ecological resource, providing wildlife corridors and a diversity of aquatic and riparian habitats.

They are primarily concerned with navigable canals and rivers and to tidal rivers and estuaries, but the policy does not aim to address lakes (except those that are part of through navigations) and smaller unregulated rivers.

Unfortunately as walkers our prime ambition is to gain the right to walk along such rivers and around lake shores as we have gained the right to access the moors and mountains and will shortly be able to walk round the coastline. We already have rights to walk most of the waterways that this report discusses.

We will need to keep campaigning for these benefits.

Ed.

GÀIDHLIG – BEURLA

Or, in English, Gaelic-English.

For anyone with an interest in the background, history or identity of a peak, plant or other feature in Scotland then a new bilingual wildlife dictionary is fascinating. SNH has launched an online Gaelic/ English dictionary, with a large database of Gaelic words for trees, plants, animals and more, with audio included for pronunciation.

For example Chuinneag Hill is 'the milk pail', 'Spidean Mialach' means the ' Lousy Pinnacle' and 'coirean-bàn' is the plant, the white campion. The Gaelic name means ' Little White Cauldron' due to the shape of its flowers.

For more visit www.snh.org.uk/gaelic/dictionary.

Ed.

DÉJÀ VU

Continuing the debate as to the usefulness or otherwise of wind generators Jeff Hooper has turned up something of interest. Two hundred years and we still have not learnt.

Reading English Peasant Farming by Joan Thirsk recently, about the drainage of the Lincolnshire Fens in the early nineteenth century he found:

"... When gravitation alone failed to clear the water from the fens, windmills were built to lift it into the Witham. Yet these were not completely satisfactory, for in the wet seasons when they were most needed, there was normally very little wind".

About 1815 they changed to steam power.

COMMENTS ON YORKSHIRE PETS

Yorkshireman took his cat to the vet.

Yorkshireman: "Ayup, lad, I need to talk to thee about me cat."

Vet: "Is it a tom?"

Yorkshireman: "Nay, I've browt it with us."

A Yorkshireman's dog died and as it was a favourite pet he decided to have a gold statue made by a jeweller to remember the dog by.

Yorkshireman: "Can tha mek us a gold statue of yon dog?"

Jeweller: "Do you want it 18 carat?"

Yorkshireman: "No I want it chewin' a bone yer daft bugger!"

Anon

HAIRPIN HOLIDAY

Visiting my offspring may not be easy or cheap but it is certainly spectacular. Following on shortly from visiting our son in New Zealand we have just spent early spring in Grenoble with our daughter. On previous visits we have explored the Chartreuse Massif which is a wonderful area but this trip extensively explored the Vercors.

This massif is actually a group of limestone plateaux surrounded by 1000 ft vertical cliffs often tens of miles long, with the highest point of the massif being Grand Veymont at 7680 ft.

The area is the largest karst area in Europe and saw little glaciation but water erosion has created spectacular canyons and cave systems. Before the end of nineteenth century, the different parts of the Vercors massif were isolated from each other, other than by dropping back to the surrounding plains, skirting the massif and then climbing back up. Effectively in those days a journey of very few miles as the crow flies in reality became the best part of a day's trip. The canyons that cut the massif, which are today some of the main access routes were then impassable barriers. Even today they are a serious obstacle for anyone of a nervous disposition, with some very hairy roads. Hairpin bends, vertiginous drops and often little protection do concentrate the mind.



Some only lead to high valleys with very small communities and no way onto the top which made very defensible safe areas for the resistance during the war and tied down thousands of German troops. When they got annoyed enough they usually managed to get through and often then slaughtered Marquisard and civilians alike as was the case at the village of Malleval, in the Coulmes. It can be reached by an impressive road up the Gorges du Nan directly dug into the cliffs in places. I do not make a contented passenger when being driven up such roads.

The area is rich in caving opportunities and indeed Grenoble itself supports eight different caving clubs. Numerous well known caves are found in the area the main ones I could determine as being

Grotte de la luire, Grotte de Gournier, Le trou qui soufflé, Grottes du Bournillon and the most famous of them all of course, Le gouffre Berger which was, it was said, the first 1,000 metre deep cave in the world when discovered in 1953. The main entrance is near Engins high on the Vercors Plateau with a depth of up to 4170 feet. The caves are formed because of the Cretaceous limestone which is up to 1300 feet thick at some points.

The main route onto the plateau from Grenoble travels up the Canyon du Furon and passes Engins where we took the opportunity to walk some of the side canyons. It seemed wrong not to get some caving in, but a lack of equipment (and fitness) and family companions with little interest meant it had to be a show cave.

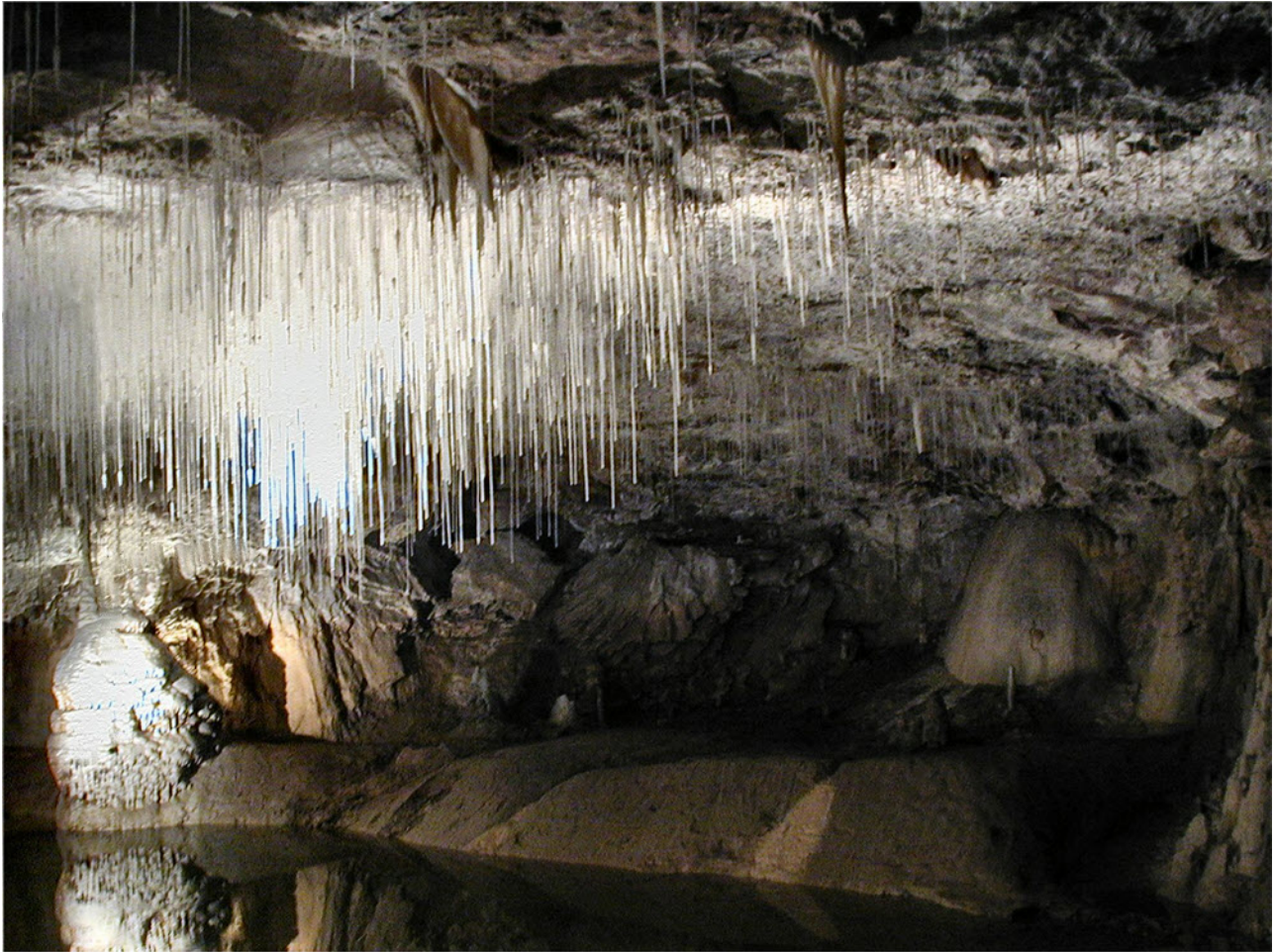
We settled on the Grottes de Choranche, in the cliffs near Pont-en-Royans, which turned out to be very impressive with magnificent speleothems. Grottes, from the same root as our Grottos, is their word for cave and is pronounced "grot" but grotty it certainly was not.

The system was only discovered in 1875 with its exit passage largely boulder choked and part way up a steep cliff of about 1000 feet. It is at an altitude of about 1500 feet and is not apparently a deep system but quite a long one with some 20 miles of galleries explored and more waiting to be discovered. It is being actively pushed by several local clubs.

A new entrance has been cut to allow the show cave to be created in the early reaches of the system and you step almost immediately into a sizable entrance chamber about 200 feet in diameter containing a lake of emerald water fed from two underground rivers coming together before emerging into the open air. Neither river appears to have any source and both are thought to be fed by rainwater just sinking through the limestone surface.

As we progress we enter the Siphon Gallery which they claim is unique in Europe and I cannot gainsay them: literally thousands of very fine "soda straws" hang throughout; tubular stalactites with diameters of less than a fifth of an inch but some up to almost ten foot in length.





The cliffs at Presles are a famous centre for rock climbing and include some of the most beautiful rock walls in the Vercors. Arranged in a semi-circle from Pont-en-Royans to Rencurel, they form a magnificent circle dominating and sheltering the site of Choranche and giving it a dramatic setting.

It is a wonderful area and if any of the cavers wish to enjoy it they can contact local clubs for joint trips as otherwise it is apparently not easy to get a licence to go into some of the caves.

Local clubs include A.S.F Spéléo Montagne (Fontaine), FLT groupe Spéléo La Tronche, Spéléo Club de Grenoble (Grenoble), Groupe Spéléo Delta (Pont de Claix), Spéléo-Groupe (La Tronche), Club Spéléo Enginois (Engins), Spéléo Club Dahut and the interestingly named Les Furets Jaunes of Seyssins (The Yellow Ferrets)

Roy Denney



AN IRISH FIRST

The world heritage organisation UNESCO has approved a joint application from the Fermanagh and Cavan county councils to extend the Marble Arch Caves geopark to cover the Cuilcagh Mountains and Shannon pot. A geopark is defined by UNESCO as a geographical area where geological heritage sites are used to further development. This can include important geological, archaeological and cultural sites.

Marble Arch was first recognised as a geopark by UNESCO in 2004 and expanded into West Fermanagh a few years later. This new extension makes it the first transnational geopark in the world and there may be some difficulties with access on both sides of the border Ed.

BAGGING Bs OR OTHER HILLS

An orienteering magazine has just compiled a list of the best event area in each county by asking all local clubs. My own club covers Leicestershire, Rutland and North Northamptonshire so were asked to nominate for Rutland which was an easy task as there is only one event area in this tiniest of counties and that a very modest one only suitable for local training events.

We are however now having to anticipate an influx of outsiders for our forthcoming evening event there as there are people out there who wish to bag an event in every county.

This got me to thinking about bagging hills having just been up Merrick which marginally fails to be a Munro.

I got to thinking of all the collections people can aspire to and it is seemingly endless.

We have the Welsh 3s, Lakeland 3's, English 2s, County Tops (Three peaks or four if you include Ireland) County Tops, the Nuttalls, Bob Grahams, Corbetts etc etc.

There are probably others I have never heard of but I have tried to confirm definitions as to just what some of them are.

The first four are self evident but the County Tops depends on what we now consider a county as I have touched on elsewhere in this journal.

The Nuttalls are said to be any summit in England and Wales of at least 2000 feet which rises above its surroundings on all sides by at least 50 ft and these are named after the Nuttalls who wrote 'The Mountains of England and Wales'. The Hewitts are apparently hills in England, Wales or Ireland over two thousand feet high with a drop of at least 30 metres all round. Deweys are said to be ones in the British Isles excluding Scotland between 500 and 2000 feet.

The Bob Grahams are the peaks included in the round of that name but that keeps getting extended.

The Munros and Corbetts at least, are clearly defined: The Munros are the highest of Scotland's mountains, being over 3000 feet and named after the man who first listed them, Sir Hugh Munro. The Corbetts are the equivalent mountains with altitudes between 2500 ft and 3000 ft and having a 550ft vertical separation from any other hill. As a further definition we have the Grahams between 2000 ft and 2500 ft. not to be confused with the Bob Grahams

Another I have come across are Marilyn's which are apparently hills of any height with a drop of 150 metres or more on all sides. A sub group of these is known as the Humps. These are hills of any height with a drop of 100 metres or more on all sides, the name standing for hundred metre prominence.

The Wainwrights are presumably all the hills appearing in the Alfred Wainwright's Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells although what actually constitutes a hill rather than protuberance on the lower reaches of a higher peak is not clear.

As a constituent part of the English 2s we do have of course the Lakeland 2s and apparently Birketts are all the Lake District hills over 1,000 ft

County Tops is a bit of a challenge. Not just climbing them but even deciding where they are if using the new administrative counties. When I was a lad growing up in Manchester, Conistone Old Man was the highest point in Lancashire but that is not now in the administrative area of Lancashire, any more than in fact is Manchester. I have to admit that I am not sure what is highest in what is left.

One candidate is Gragareth at the head of Leck Fell and just a couple of hundred yards within new Lancashire but the nearby Green Hill lies actually on the border and I am not sure which County the summit is in. If either of these is actually the highest point in Lancashire they may both be in the Yorkshire Dales National Park err long.

Finally but of only local interest, another collection of hills to target are the **B** hills of Leicestershire. It may be a largely flat county but when orienteering and running up them they are often described as those **B---y** hills. However there is a peculiarity in that if you were to try and climb all the hills in Leicestershire beginning with **B** you would in fact, and for no apparent reason, actually climb most of Leicestershire's hills. There are six prominent hills in the county, **Bardon** (the highest point in Leicestershire at just over 900 feet), **Breedon** on the Derbyshire border, **Bradgate** and **Beacon** to the north, and **Burrough** and **Billesden Coplow** in the East. In such a low lying area what actually constitutes a hill is arguable unless it is actually called a hill. **Bradgate Country Park** has a distinct summit and is one of the highest points in the county but the summit is normally called Old John nowadays although that really refers to a folly on the top. This was built in 1786 and is believed to have been erected by the fifth Earl of Stamford, in memory of John, a retainer who was accidentally killed there.



It resembles a large beer mug apparently something old John was used to handling.

If we take all the prominences which stand out as being hills we also have **Broad Hill**, **Billa Barra**, **Blakeshay**, **Benscliffe**, **Burley Woods** (**Burley on the Hill**), **Budden**, **Bomb Rocks**, **Broombriggs** and the hill at **Belvoir** on which **Belvoir Castle** stands. There are a few other small hills not beginning with **B** but not many.

Roy Denney

NEPAL PROMOTION

Kathmandu: Reuters report that foreign mountaineers who have climbed Mount Everest or Mount Dhaulagiri will get free Nepali visas as part of a scheme to boost tourism. More than 4,000 climbers have scaled Everest since it was first climbed and some 700 of these foreigners are said to be still alive.

"We will waive the visa fees for them to visit Nepal in 2010 and 2011 part of the Nepal Tourism Year plan," Ranjan Aryal, of the tourism ministry said earlier this year. Nepal, home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, has designated 2011 as the year to boost tourism. It plans to receive one million visitors next year, up from nearly half a million now. Tourism accounts for 4% of the gross domestic product but travel officials say political unrest, frequent general strikes and shutdowns of transportation and roads has hit the industry.

Officials also said that nearly 200 foreigners who have climbed Mount Dhaulagiri, the world's seventh highest at 8,167 meters, would also get free visas this year and in

2011 as Nepal marks the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Dhaulagiri by a Swiss-Austrian expedition. Climbers will also get a 50% discount in climbing fees for Dhaulagiri for the rest of 2010 and all of next year as part of the celebrations, another official said.

Each foreign climber has to pay \$5,000 as a royalty for climbing Dhaulagiri.

Thanks to Steve Craven for bringing this to our attention.

RIGHTS OF WAY

It remains to be seen what will happen with a new government but just before the end of the last one a working party reported on the best way forward to clarify the rights of way record.

The report and proposals take up many pages as you would expect but I have attempted to give you the gist of it. Surprisingly, it was not until 1949 that a duty was established to keep any official legal record of public rights of way (PRofW). Before the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 introduced the concept of the "definitive map and statement", it was not easy to find out for certain whether a particular route was a PRofW. There was a growing concern that as a result, existing public rights were being lost to development and other land use changes. This definitive map and statement has secured the future of many rights of way, with about 118,000 miles recorded in England.

The PRofW network constantly changes and the record with it, to reflect the express creation, actual or presumed dedication, extinguishment or diversion of particular routes. Unfortunately many historical PRofW are not recorded on it, and some are recorded with the wrong status. Some of these unrecorded rights are still in regular use by the public. Others have effectively been forgotten, but common law includes the ancient maxim 'once a highway always a highway' - meaning that once established, a public highway cannot be lost because of lack of subsequent use. So there is always the possibility as things stand of hitherto unrecorded rights of way being discovered and added to the map.

Some years ago a suggestion was made that this should be changed: that there should be a point beyond which rights of way that existed before the definitive map was introduced, but have never been officially recorded, should be officially extinguished and a "cut-off date" was agreed as 2026. This initially seemed plenty of time but as the process started to be rolled out of identifying these routes there were extensive concerns about the possible loss of PRofW that it might cause in view of the complex, often adversarial processes involved in considering whether such rights exist and getting them onto the definitive map. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling among land managers and property owners that a cut-off needs to be brought into effect

at the earliest opportunity in order to create some certainty and remove the situation where unknown rights of way can appear out of the blue.

It soon became apparent that the original system as conceived could not possibly be completed by the cut-off date and this working party has been looking at how otherwise the situation can be dealt with. Because of the lengthy and convoluted nature of the processes, large case backlogs have developed.

The Working Group was set up by Natural England to look for ways to improve the position delivering significant benefits to all interests. There are two main parts to the Group's recommendations, firstly there are core proposals for how to capture or preserve useful historical rights, and then close the definitive map to such rights and then how the legal record of PRofW relates to the administration of highways generally. Protecting and managing them in an integrated way must be organised to enable the work of surveying authorities to be significantly more cost effective. Properly resourcing this work in recognition of the major public importance of the PRofW network will be vital to achieving the success we seek and in today's climate, funds are in short supply.

Amongst the proposals is that whilst supporting the cut off, any claims in the pipeline should not be lost at that time and due process should be allowed to run its course. On a technical point routes identified on the list of streets/local street gazetteer as publicly maintainable, or as private streets carrying public rights, should be exempted from the cut-off to protect the thousands of alleys and ginnels in our towns.

Surveying authorities should have new powers to put flexibility at the heart of procedures, with early negotiated solutions to resolve issues and for them to approach landowners if any application passes a Basic Evidential Test. A surveying authority should be able to make an agreement with one or more affected land owners recognising the existence of a previously unrecorded pre 1949 PRofW but allowing it to be recorded with appropriate modifications on the definitive map, where justified to avoid significant conflicts with current land use. As a check as to how authorities handle this Natural England should be added to the list of prescribed bodies consulted when a definitive map modification order is being considered.

Also a stakeholder (*don't you just hate that term*) review panel should be constituted to review progress with recording or protecting useful or potentially useful pre-1949 rights of way before the cut-off.

Effectively the suggestion is that rather than the present lengthy legal process the local authorities should have more powers to try and speed matters up by negotiation.

Ed.



NATURAL HISTORY SNIPPETS



WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

KINDER UPGRADE

Kinder Scout, quite apart from being within the Peak District National Park has now been afforded even more protection. Actually owned by the National Trust it has now been designated a National Nature Reserve.

It comprises around 700 hectares of various upland habitats, including rare blanket bog and sub-alpine dwarf shrub heath, and also supports several upland breeding birds, notably birds of prey and waders, curlew and ring ouzel.

This status offers more potential to restore damaged areas, including the regeneration of bog mosses, which are fundamental to the long-term process of peat creation and carbon storage.

It remains to be seen however, what impact this status may have on access.

BIRD TRACKING

Bird Track has been set up on the internet by ornithologists to record bird sightings throughout Britain but birdwatchers are thin on the grounds in the uplands of Scotland in particular and whilst we are out and about, if we spot anything, our input would be welcome.

The principle is that if you have been out anywhere in Britain and Ireland, or merely been watching birds in your garden, records of the birds you have seen can be useful data. The scheme is year-round and anyone with even only a passing interest in birds can contribute. Least is known about the rarer mountain birds and Eagles, Black Grouse, Ptarmigan, Capercaillie etc. details would be most welcome.

A leaflet is available from robin.anderson@bto.org (01786 466560) which explains it in more detail and the web site is <http://www.bto.org/birdtrack>.

Key areas of golden eagle habitat along Scotland's west coast should be due to receive additional protection following a recent decision by the Scottish Government to consider recognising more areas that are important for the birds.

Information on these birds is also sought by Scottish Natural Heritage which has now launched a public consultation on the proposal to create additional Special Protection Areas for the birds at Glen Fyne, Glen Etive, Moidart and Ardgour and the islands of Jura, Scarba and the Garvellachs.

Others being considered are Foinaven, Glen Affric to Strathconon and the Cairngorms Massif.

Scotland already has protected areas for golden eagles but has decided to look at adding more.

A consultation is open to all those who have an interest in the areas under consideration. The results will be collated by SNH and then reported to Scottish Ministers. For more information and how to comment on the consultation, visit -> www.snh.org.uk/strategy/GE_consult01.asp

DESERTS

When asked the name the great deserts of the world it is unlikely that anyone will mention Antarctica but studies by the British Antarctic Survey have confirmed that by all normal definitions the centre of the continent is in fact a desert.

The distribution of precipitation over Antarctica is very varied, with several metres of snow falling each year near the coast but with the interior only getting an annual snowfall of a few centimetres at most, thus officially making much of the continent a desert.

It is no wonder that there are no naturally-occurring mammals, reptiles or amphibians in Antarctica and such other creatures as do exist are not found in this central area. Terrestrial creatures of the sub and maritime Antarctic include mites, earthworms, simple insects and molluscs. Higher insects like spiders, beetles and flies can be found in the less severe areas primarily the sub-Antarctic islands.

CAPERCAILLIE

The fortunes of the Capercaillie in Scotland have been spectacularly bad since the 1970s during which period there has been a decline from 20,000 to fewer than 1,000 birds. In 2003 it was declared the fastest disappearing bird in the UK and it was then predicted it would be extinct by 2015 without intervention. Virtually no chicks were reared in some years.

Recent surveys however do suggest this decline has been halted and that populations are now on the rise thanks to help from man.

The sightings recorded in the survey suggest most of the population is concentrated in Badenoch and Strathspey, with few birds in the south of the range.

Another survey has been carried out over the winter months this year but the results have not yet been published but informed sources seem to be suggesting it may be up to about 2000 birds again. If this turns out to be accurate it will be encouraging especially bearing in mind the length and severity of last winter.

U K MEETS REPORT

LOW HALL GARTH, LITTLE LANGDALE 15 - 17 Jan

After a four week spell of freezing weather, the worst in 30 years, we arrived at LHG just as the ice and snow was thawing. Little did we know that ice inches thick had transformed the lane into a skating rink, alternating with potholes holding more than ten inches of water! It was generally agreed that the lane is in the worst condition that members can recollect, and some serious attention is needed. Much of the remedial work done by Cumbria Highways has been quite inadequate, with surfaces destroyed by water within weeks of repair.

We enjoyed the comfort and extra space in the converted barn opposite the hut, and were appreciative of the hard work and dedication of Gordon Humphreys and helpers in transforming it from a semi derelict agricultural barn. We were very grateful for Gordon's care and attention as LHG warden.

Saturday morning dawned to heavy rain, slush, and thick slabs of water ice on all the tracks. For an hour or two the only sport was hacking at the ice on the lane with a pick axe, drinking coffee, and playing cards! Gradually a sense of purpose prevailed, the rain became a drizzle, and parties set out in various directions. Mike Smith and John Brown drove to The Swirls and climbed Helvellyn via the Gill and Lower Man, finding the slushy snow lower down gradually improving near the top. Various parties set off through Cathedral quarry to Tilberthwaite (at least a hundred yards of tunnel out of the rain!), and headed eventually over the ridge into Greenburn and back to LHG. Richard and Paul Dover were led astray by an un-named scribe off the ridge near Wetherlam through 30 inches of snow and a quarter mile of juniper forest down to the Greenburn track. After a morning in Tilberthwaite, Adrian and Mick braved the ice again to visit Blea Tarn. Mindful of the club objectives to study Natural History, Archaeology, Folklore, and kindred subjects, some members dutifully visited the Ruskin museum, while others studied architecture in Ravenstonedale. Albert arrived with David Handley for a brief visit to deliver a delicious mulled wine which was greatly enjoyed.



Mention must now be made of the superb catering organised by Peter Green. We dined on excellent pâté, Wiltshire pork casserole, fruit flan, and delicious cheeses. Peter put on this great spread, regardless of the awful weather, assisted by Rob Ibberson and Robert Crowther. Peter kept us guessing with an awards ceremony giving prizes for: our guest Richard Garbutt, Ian Crowther the first member to book, Gordon Humphreys the last member to book, Rob Ibberson who was meet co-pilot, Robert Crowther who boosted the morale of the meet leader, and the writer of the meet report whose name was mysteriously to be drawn out of a hat.

On Sunday a party of four, Andy Syme, guest Richard Garbutt, Mick Borroff, and Adrian Bridge ascended Pavey Ark by way of Jack's Rake, conditions being slushy but mostly with adequate hand holds on rock. Arthur and Frank set off on a sporting round of Greenburn via Great Carrs; while others spent time hacking at the ice on the track and helping two wheel drive cars up inclines and out of ditches. Mike Smith and John Brown did the Fairfield horseshoe anti clockwise in wet snow, deep in places, with a chill wind and several wet showers.



Despite the weather, we enjoyed the challenge of a winter meet at LHG.



Andy Syme ascending Jack's Rake

IG

Those attending: - M Borroff, A Bridge, J Brown, I Crowther, R Crowther, P Dover, R Dover, I Gilmour, P Green, G Humphreys, R Ibberson, J Jenkin, F Platt, A Salmon, M Smith, A Syme, R Garbutt (G), F Wilkinson, A Wood.

PEN CEUNANT, LLANBERIS. 19 – 21 February.



Photograph by Martyn Trasler

Our Welsh Winter Meet was at the Chester Mountaineering Club Hut and was fully booked, being attended by 15 members, one prospective member and two guests. The CMC hut is ideally located above Llanberis at grid 581 591, giving easy access to the North West side of Snowdon.

A party of three arrived on the Friday and from the road at Idwal Cottage completed a circuit of Llyn Idwal, past the slabs on the east shore, ascending as far as the Devil's Kitchen, encountering blizzard conditions for part of their walk.

Arriving on Friday night several members had already discovered the unique pleasures of the nearby Pen Y Ceunant Isaf tea Rooms. Serving much more than tea, with a warm fire and an equally warm welcome from the landlord Steffan (Steven) Roberts.

Saturday morning was clear, still and dry with cloud clinging to the higher tops. Several parties departed for Snowdon. One member set off in advance, hoping to meet up with a group planning to walk to the summit and then descend via Bwlch Main and Llechog. Early morning communication must have been in short supply as he looked down from the railway line track to see his friends below heading for Eastern Terrace on Clogwyn. Although there was fresh snow on the hill, deep in places it had not thawed or bonded to the rock. Conditions on steeper ground were less than ideal. It soon became clear that the terrace was too steep and risky for dogs and the member with hounds opted to walk round and up Clogwyn du'r Arddu, meeting up again on the summit.

As the route passed the finger stone, where walkers from the highly graded Pyg track headed to the summit the mountain became predictably popular, with many young couples and groups variously equipped. Half way from the summit to the finger stone a descending German walker, complete with his baggage tag on his sack, enquired whether this was the way to the Pyg track, as he pointed straight over the edge. It was easy to see why this mountain claims its share of statistics. Dropping from the summit to the new railway top station, complete with Portuguese slate roof and granite clad walls, the president's party descended via Bwlch Main and Llechlog, catching intermittent views from the ridge and returning to the hut down the eastern side of the Afon Arddu. A brand new hut was passed at Helfa-Fawr before returning to the railway road and the hut.

The lone walker continued up Snowdon, descended up Clogwyn du'r Arddu, and completed the round over Moel Eilio and back to the hut.

After an excellent meal several members returned to the café, about 100m from the hut. Stefan presented the club

with a painting of the Anglesey shoreline which attending members felt should be hung in Lowstern.



The president receiving a David Barnes painting from Steffan Roberts

A light fall of snow overnight focussed attention on the very steep single track road from the village to the hut. Road sweeping duties made light work of the hazard and several early departees managed a safe get away.

On Sunday morning a party of two ascended Moel Eilio traversed Foels Gron and Goch to Bwlch Maesgwn, from where they followed the bridleway back to the cottage. They made one final visit to see Steffan Roberts for a brew before departing. One member made a circuit of Lyn Padarn from Llanberis, trying the quarry mortuary tables for size on the way round.

The CMC hut provided a superb venue for an excellent weekend. Having been absent for far too long it was a real

pleasure to find the members extremely welcoming and the special YRC blend of camaraderie and banter alive and well.



Clogwyn Ar'du - Photograph by Mick Borroff

In attendance:

Adrian Bridge (President & meet leader), Peter Bann (prospective member), Mick Borroff, Kevin Brown, Alan Clare, Derek Clayton, Ian Crowther, Paul Dover, Steve Eccleson (Guest), David Hick, John Jenkin, Tim Josephy, Richard Josephy, Alan Kay, Mike Smith, Derek Smithson, Martyn Trasler and Chris Ursell (Guest)

Kevin Brown

LAGAN BRIDGE March 11 -13

It was the coldest, snowiest winter since 1963 in Scotland but unfortunately the thaw started earlier that week. Instead of the dry powder snow and good crampon conditions we had been all looking forward to, the eighteen assembled members and guests had mainly wet snow and breakable crust together with low cloud and drizzle but little heavy rain.

Dave Hick, Michael Smith and Derek Smithson had spent the 3 nights prior to the meet in Glen Affric Youth Hostel and climbed 3 Munros in good weather and visibility. Having collected drinking water from the nearby stream they later found a dead stag in the water 100m above their collection point. Tony Dunford and Ken Roberts had also come to Scotland earlier in the week climbing Toll Creagach and Tom a'Choinich (Glen Affric) in the good snow and weather and 2 days later walked half way to Ben Macdui in soft snow and a white out before turning back. Barrie Wood, Derek Bush and Phil Dover climbed A'Mharconaich after driving up on the Thursday, seeing several mountain hares in their white uniform as well as grouse.

On Friday parties set off from the Pottery Bunkhouse in all directions, Tony Dunford and Ken Roberts headed for Creag Meagaidh, walking up Coire Ardair where they came across a massive avalanche which had come down from near the top of the ridge to the north bringing down trees and boulders in its wake. They climbed nearly to the Window but were turned back by the high winds. Mick Borroff and Adrian Bridge had a long day in mixed snow conditions climbing the round of Beinn a'Chlachair, Geal Charn and Creag Pitridh in 8.5 hours. David Large and Trevor Drage set off hopefully for the Northern Corries and climbed the grade II Goat Track Gully in Coire an t-Sneachda. Two parties headed for the Monadh Liaths, Aaron Oakes and John Brown traversed A'Chailleach and Cam Sgulain but in the cloud and strong wind, turned back down in to the valley before Carn Balloch. Following them went Derek Bush, Barrie Wood and Rob

Ibberson who climbed A'Chailleach, but after reaching Cam Sgulain, decided to return to the valley by the alternative route down Allt a' Chaorainn. However with snow hiding the way through the crags they had to climb back up over A'Chailleach to descend by the ascent route. Michael Smith and Dave Hick went up Glen Feshie and climbed Mullach Clach a'Bhlair and Sgor Gaoith. Iain Gilmour and Phil Dover went for the Corbett Geal-charn Mor and were back at the car by 12.30, with time to do a very icy circuit of Loch an Eilein. Alan Linford and Derek Smithson explored Glen Markie and the Red Burn.

Saturday the weather was similar with some drizzle and fairly strong winds. Adrian Bridge, Iain Gilmour and Dave Hick drove up the General Wade's road towards the Corrieyairack Pass. Dave walked to the top of the Pass and then back down the road whilst Iain and Adrian traversed Corrieyairack Hill and Gairbienn, of which only the latter now qualifies as a Corbett because it is marginally higher and the drop between them is not sufficient to class them as two. Mick Borroff and Phil Dover went down to Spean Bridge to climb the very shapely peak of Stob Ban. At the Lairig Leacach bothy at the bottom were 3 young climbers who had retreated from the Grey Corries ridge because of the high winds. Aaron Oakes, Richard Smith and John Brown walked up to Coire Ardair and to the Window and climbed Creag Meagaidh and Stob Poite Coire Ardair. David Large and Trevor Drage also headed for Coire Ardair hoping for a climb but with the poor snow conditions settled for ascending Creag Meagaidh. Tony Dunford, Ken Roberts and Mike Smith drove to Blair Athol to climb Carn nan Gabhar, one of the Munro summits of Beinn a'Ghlo, and Airgiod Bhienn, which is a top, with good visibility but high winds. Derek Bush, Barrie Wood and Rob Ibberson walked to Lochan na h-Earba and Allt Coire Pitridh but the conditions dissuaded them from attempting the summits. Alan Linford explored the Spey Dam and valley seeing much wildlife including brown hares and deer.

Sunday morning it rained off and on so many members headed straight home although some hardy ones set off to the hills. Richard Smith and John Brown climbed Gael Charn in intermittent showers and occasional sunshine. They saw ptarmigan, grouse and deer on their climb. Adrian Bridge and Mick Borroff with Rob Ibberson headed for Glencoe to climb Buchaille Etive Beag, but deterred by the rain, continued to Loch Tay and climbed the sunlit Munro Meall Greigh, whilst Rob continued up the valley to Lochan nan Cat.

Many thanks to Mick for arranging the meet and to his wife Hilary for the excellent food.

Phil Dover

Attending

Mick Borroff, Rob Ibberson, Tony Dunford, Ken Roberts (G) Derek Smithson, Michael Smith, Dave Hick, Alan Linford Aaron Oakes, Derek Bush, Barrie Wood, Adrian Bridge David Large, Trevor Drage (G), Phil Dover, John Brown Iain Gilmour, Richard Smith

GALLOWAY, NEWTON STEWART

Apr 16 - 18

One of the strengths of the Club is nudging members to greater efforts in areas they might not otherwise experience. This meet exemplified that strength in a number of respects. For example, sharing transport to meets may be increasingly popular on account of rising fuel costs. Besides being in accord with the Club's 'green' intentions it is more sociable than travelling alone.

While Galloway is known to most members and appears regularly in the meets calendars, this meet took some to a new side of the area and encouraged exploration. Perhaps the main encouragement to members to push themselves is through walking in a group and certainly on this meet, members did 'push' themselves to greater efforts.

Roy and Ian arrived early and explored the Cree before the Minnigaff Youth Hostel opened. Most were assembled for the Friday evening for a meal prepared by Ann for reheating by Peter. After a visit to a local hotel the nearby golf course provided a clear sky dark enough to identify Mars, Saturn and constellations with a hint of the Milky Way.

Back at the hostel a group of cyclist of similar age to ourselves had assembled and being regular visitors were making themselves at home. Two changes have occurred in hostels since my visits a generation ago: alcohol with meals is the norm and there are now practically no youths.

Saturday dawned clear and an early breakfast had people on the hills by 8.30. One group climbed Merrick via Benyellary in a cold wind. The old bothy of Culsharg was found to now have no windows or doors.



Benyellary and Merrick from above Bruce's Stone
Photograph Roy Denney

A larger group also started from the Bruce's Stone in Glen Trool but headed first up the Garland Burn and past Lock Neildricken to Craignaw's top. Though the terrain was rough and mostly trackless the going was better than feared so they continued over the Devil's bowling green, the nick, and Dungeon Hill to Mullwarchar and a bite to eat. Then passing

below Loch Enoch they ascended Merrick by the northeast ridge. The 1:50k 1st series map shows Merrick ringed by crags but they found no difficulty in walking up or down back to the cars. That made a 14 mile round which took 8 hours on account of the terrain and necessitated a refreshment stop on the drive back to the hostel.



Dungeon Hills - Photograph Mick Borroff



On Craignaw summit - Photo Mick Borroff



Ian on top of Merrick - Photo Roy Denney



Looking down on the lochs from Merrick
Photograph Roy Denney

One lone member walked a round the length of Glen Trool on decent tracks. Meanwhile the President Elect fished river and loch but there was no fish course added to the menu.

A few other small groups were spotted walking beyond Merrick but only one couple were within hailing distance or barking distance in the case of Tim's young Bramble. Also spotted were hares, two deer (Roe and probable Muntjac north of its usual range) and several lizards but no snakes. After the Saturday meal there was a stirring in the hostel and a large influx of visitors. A new experience for some members was the ensuing participation in Scottish folk singing led by a four-piece band. We glossed over the derogatory references to the English and a declined an invitation to respond with Yorkshire ballads. It was a grand evening which - again unlike the hostels of my youth - continued with discussion into the early hours.

Sunday was cloudy and showers threatened. Iain and Mick walked from Auchinleck Bridge, about 3 miles north of Newton Stewart, into the Minigaff Hills. They braved showers completing the 9 mile round of Drigmorn Hill, Red Gairy, Millfore and Gairy of Pulnee, returning via White, Loup of Laggan (above the White Laggan bothy where the Club met in 1977) and the Pulnee Burn. They had excellent views. Lochan of Drigmorn despite its 580m altitude and long walk-in was allegedly once a popular curling venue.

Peter, Michael, David and Tim headed over to park by the outflow of Clatteringshaw's Loch. From the Raiders' Road they struck up through the forest directly up the hillside to Clatteringshaw's Crag and soloed the sole climb, Dam It (25m Mod., Reid, 2002), along the rib formed by fallen blocks on the left of the crag. The ascent was continued via a rough break in forestry along the crest to Benniginea with its communication mast. A descent was made by the service track and then forest trails to the lochside visitors' centre. A heavy shower set in and some headed home while others visited a second Bruce's Stone by the loch and explored the dam. The outflow was in full flow as the loch was being drained to allow repairs to be carried out. The Black Water was in flood.

Nearby, Roy and Ian walked the woodlands to the north of Clatteringshaw's Loch following the Southern Uplands Way westwards to Garrary Burn and uphill to the north before cutting across country to pick up a track taking them back to their car.

Everybody managed to dodge most of the showers and were thankful that we were not doing Saturday's round on Sunday as Merrick and the Dungeon Hills seemed to be enjoying clag and repeated showers throughout the day.

Another good meet for which thanks to Peter, Ann and the SYHA.

MS

Attending

Mick Borroff, Ian Crowther, Peter Chadwick, Roy Denney
Iain Hawkes, David Hick, Tim Josephy, Michael Smith
Derek Smithson

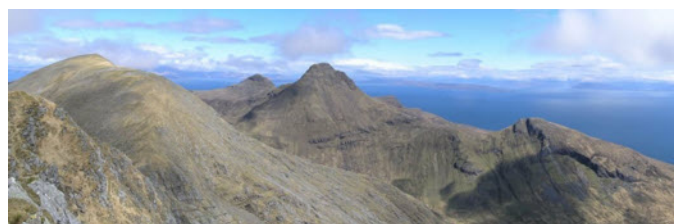
RUM 3 - 7 MAY

The troops gathered on the quayside at Mallaig around 10am on Monday 3rd May, nineteen in all thanks to an epic journey in a taxi by Paul Dover, at no additional expenditure to himself. Ask him for the full story.

Once settled in to Kinloch Castle and after being fed, most of the party decided to take advantage of a talk about the Island by the Ranger. It was most enjoyable and informative although it did seem to be too much for one or two more tired members who were helped to remain in their seats and then tried to pay only for the bit they had heard. Later that night a party made a successful foray up the hill to watch the Manx Shearwaters coming in to their burrows for the night.



Tuesday morning saw the beginning of the assault on all there was to do on the island with Derek Bush taking an early start, being fully charged after his snooze through the talk, accompanied by Barrie Wood to make the full crossing of the Cuillin complete with the seven mile slog back from Harris. In not the best of the week's weather it must be said. Whilst being the lesser of the two recognised Cuillins the Rum Cuillin offers a stern challenge to the hardest of walkers.



Many members followed suit as the week progressed and the weather improved taking in various permutations of the summits of Hallival, Askival, Ainsival, Ruinsival, Sgurr nan Gillean and Barkeval. It was also possible to take advantage of the substantial tracks that cross the Island making other hills such as Orval, Fionchra and Bloodstone Hill reasonably accessible in a day.



Askival Pinnacles above - Hallival below



We were so blessed by the weather that most things that it was possible to do on the island were done by many groups and individuals alike. Many of us also managed to fit in a tour of the "Castle" which was well worth it, strange and excessive as the place might be it was made only more so by the strong New Zealand accent of the guide!

Whilst the castle is a most palatial white elephant our accommodation did prove to be a little lacking especially on the ablution front.



View over Dibidil bothy to Eigg

The wild life had its part to play in our visit although it wasn't until we were returning on the boat that Sea Eagles were sighted along with a pod of Dolphin. Some of us claim to have seen a Golden Eagle early in the week and there were seals on the shoreline. The bird list would be too long to give here but, should you be interested, please enquire of the ornithologists in the party.

Whilst talking about the wild life, it gives me great pleasure to announce that there were no MIDGIES at any time during the visit. No bites no itching no scratching and only one member modelled the full-face mask to his chums in the privacy of the bedroom!

The meet was completed on Thursday evening with everyone enjoying a celebratory meal together to toast the achievement of one member attaining his 81st. birthday. During the week the average age on the island had reached a significantly high level. At this point I would like to warn fellow members to be wary of last minute lotteries and friends bearing gifts which suddenly become a poisoned chalice. That was how I came to be writing this!

Finally a second group departed after the meal to try to see the Shearwaters but, alas, they were unsuccessful on this occasion as only two birds turned up. There was a suggestion made that they had been frightened off by the rather strange adaptation of the Borroff spectacles due to an earlier small mishap on his behalf.

The weather blessed us again for our journey home with a magnificent vista of the Cuillin of Skye whilst the boat visited Canna and then the final views of Rum in the setting sun as we returned to Mallaig.

All of our thanks must be directed to our meet leader, Iain Gilmour for an excellent meet.

Derek J English.

These meet photographs were taken by Mick Borroff and the following two pages by Tony Dunford and those on final page by Adrian Bridge.

IMAGES OF RUM

Askival and Eigg from Trollaval
Ken Roberts taking a breather



Ruinsival from Trollaval

North West to Glen Kilmory
and Canna, Western Isles





Glen Dibidil and Eigg



Beinn nan Stac and Eigg from Trollaval



Ainshval from Askival

Atlantic Corrie Traverse below Askival





A tiny Tim Josephy on a rock arch near Bloodstone Hill, Guerdil Bay and top right Tim weighing up Askival and Hallival. Bottom right the same peaks from the boat on departure.



attending :-

Mick Borroff, Adrian Bridge, Derek Bush, Peter Chadwick
 Albert Chapman, Adrian Dixon, Paul Dover, Phil Dover
 Tony Dunford, Derek English, Iain Gilmour, David Handley
 David Hick, Rob Ibberson, Tim Josephy, Richard Kirby
 John Lovett, Barrie Wood, Ken Roberts (G)

SCARBOROUGH SOCIAL MEET 14th - 17th May

After much negotiation between the hotel company and the meet leader, Paul, a deal was struck and the weekend was extended to cover three night's accommodation rather than the usual 2 nights. Something that proved to be a very successful extension to the weekend.

Friday afternoon saw 16 couples arriving at the Hackness Grange Country House Hotel some six miles inland from Scarborough and amidst some stunning scenery. Unfortunately George and Sylvie Spenceley's cheque had been lost in the post and no room was available in the hotel. The situation was resolved by Rob and Gabriella Ibberson very kindly offering to sleep at another hotel within the same chain and take their meals with us at Hackness Grange. In addition to the hotel residents the Lindfords' and Armstrong's' caravanned at a nearby Camping and Caravanning Club site.

Saturday dawned a magnificent sunny, but chilly day and remained so through the hours of daylight. The assembled walkers loaded into as few cars as was possible to drive to the start of Paul's prepared coastal walk thus easing the limited parking availability.



20 walkers set off from Cloughton along the disused railway that ran northwards from Scarborough. The idea was to walk a figure of eight utilizing the railway and coastal path with various optional points where we could reduce or extend the intended mileage of 8 miles or so. Two miles brought us to Hayburn Wyke pub where we crossed to the coastal path after a brief stop by the beach. The stairs returning us to the cliff tops proved challenging but the challenge was met by all and we continued north slowly gaining height and a brilliant view overlooking Scarborough, Filey Brig and on to Flamborough Head. Lunch was taken prior to returning to the railway.



Six stalwarts decided to continue along the coastal path to Ravenscar, extending the walk by 4 miles, before heading south and hopefully catching up the remaining party back at the Hayburn Wyke as they were taking afternoon refreshments. The final leg of the walk took us back onto the coastal path to join a short lane returning us to Cloughton. A very enjoyable walk in delightful coastal scenery.



Meet leader surveying route towards Ravenscar

The less energetic members of the group visited various local places of interest.

In the evening all members of the group collected in the bar prior to the formal dinner where we enjoyed the sole use of the hotel's dining room. A splendid repast in convivial company.

The weather forecast for Sunday was not good so it was with some delight we again loaded into cars to travel the couple of miles to Langdale End in fair weather. The attendance was again encouraging as we set off for a walk of mixed field and forest content.

(Worthy of note perhaps is that Tim Josephy managed our days outing as a pre breakfast dog walk).

After leaving the road the initial walk was through mainly pastureland in and out of several valleys prior to meeting the forest boundary. On gaining entry into the forest we enjoyed the delights of mixed woodland clothed in its spring greenery. A conveniently felled tree trunk provided an ideal seat by the riverside where we took our lunch break.



After refreshments we headed downstream before a gradual climb up to Langdale Rigg End (244m) our high point of the days walk and on the forest boundary, this again offered magnificent views of the Dalby Forest and towards the coast. The return to the cars was along a ridge towards Howden Hill with a careful look out for the bull which we had been warned of as we entered the pastureland. Again a few members claimed Howden Hill prior to the last leg of road walking back to the cars in the only rain of the day.

Being able to discuss the enjoyment of the weekends activities over dinner on Sunday evening proved very popular and I am sure is a precedent for future similar events.

RD

Attending:

Ken & Sheila Aldred
 Adrian & Felicity Bridge
 Alan & Madge Brown
 Ian & Dorothy Crowther
 Roger & Gwen Dix
 Richard & Ann Dover
 Paul & Anne Dover
 Bob & Annabelle Sadler (Guests)
 Richard & Elizabeth Gowing
 Gordon & Fiona Humphries
 Rob & Gabriella Ibberson
 Tim & Elaine Josephy
 Bill & Brenda Lofthouse
 John & Pat Schofield
 George & Sylvie Spenceley
 Bill & Julia Todd
 Dennis & Joan Armstrong
 Alan & Angie Linford

Photos by Paul Dover and Adrian Bridge

MEET MOMENTS

Left - The January ice of LHG gives way to the sunny uplands of Galloway



The President elect building up reserves for Rum

Right - One intrepid member taking his life in his hands on Rum and two others taking in the views



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The Yorkshire Ramblers Club

Established 1892 - www.yrc.org.uk

The mountaineering, exploration and caving club



The Club's aim is to organise mountaineering, walking and skiing expeditions; to gather and promote knowledge of natural history, archaeology, folklore and kindred subjects and to encourage the exploration of caves and potholes and the more remote parts of the world.

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