

YRC JOURNAL

EXPLORATION, MOUNTAINEERING AND CAVING SINCE 1892 - ISSUE 16 SERIES 13 WINTER 2013

ARTICLES

**WHALES, BAJA
CALIFORNIA**

**TREKKING IN
HAUTE SAVOIE**

**MULANJE
MOUNTAINS,
MALAWI**

**ZILLERTAL,
AUSTRIA**

**NORWAY, WITH THE
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**ANDY SYME, RICHARD SMITH AND DOM KIRKMAN ON
SAVAGE SLIT IN COIRE AN LOCHAIN,
CAIRNGORM 2012**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL SMITH

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WHALES - BAJA CALIFORNIA

Bill Hawkins

It was all Stephen Fry's fault really. On a television series he showed a clip of whale watchers in a small boat, stroking grey whales. This caught the imagination of my wife Wendy (a veteran of several whale-watching trips) and so I was charged with finding out how to participate in this fascinating activity. A bit of silver surfing later and we were booked on a flight to San Diego. From there we arranged to board a small boat, The Searcher (105 feet long, with twenty six passengers and seven crew) and cruise down the Pacific coast of the Baja peninsula into the Sea of Cortez. Hopefully we would see Grey and Blue whales on the way.

21 FEBRUARY 2013, THURSDAY

After (thankfully) an uneventful flight from Heathrow, we landed at San Diego and headed for a motel for the night. Here we met a very interesting character. He was 95 and had been at El Alamein during the war. From there he had progressed up through Italy, working as an Army War Correspondent and photographer. Unfortunately we were too tired to stay up late and hear the stories he had to tell. Unavoidable, but a missed opportunity.

22 FEBRUARY 2013, FRIDAY

After a hasty breakfast we set off to explore Shelter Island, which was opposite the motel. Not really an island, but an artificial peninsula jutting out into the bay, where we had heard there was a lot of bird life. There were also a lot of boats, several marinas-full in fact, but this did not seem to deter the birds. At the end of the island we were surprised to see an osprey perched on top of a lamp post! Nearby was an artificially constructed nest site, with a hen bird in residence. In the UK it would probably have needed an armed guard!



The male Osprey approaching the nest

We embarked on our boat, the Searcher, in the early evening. A briefing was held at 8pm, at which time the Captain, Art Taylor reviewed important information for the trip, including safety information. At 9:29pm, the Searcher left the dock and headed south under a clear starry sky. We passed the bait receivers moored in the bay and got our first glimpse of California sea lions and several species of seabirds and herons. The sea and wind were calm, with a slight westerly swell. The ride southbound on the ocean was for the time being, smooth and uneventful.



The Searcher, San Diego

23 FEBRUARY 2013, SATURDAY

The Searcher cleared customs in Ensenada Mexico from 6:02 to 6:48am. This was an interesting experience. We were up early, to find the customs officials sitting in the saloon with the Captain completing the paper work. They were accompanied by an armed guard in military uniform. A cheerful "Ola!" did not seem to remove the sour expression on his face. Out on deck we were met by a similar guard, suspiciously watching our every move. Any thoughts of a quick walk along the quayside were soon dismissed by the third guard standing legs astride on the gangplank with an automatic weapon across his chest. However they were soon gone and we sat down to our first breakfast on board.

While in Ensenada harbour, several species of coastal/sea birds were observed. While departing the harbour, California sea lions and additional species of seabirds were seen. The Searcher then spent an hour motoring past Islas Todos Santos, where several species of pinnipeds (seals etc.) and birds were seen from the boat. One elephant seal was seen on the rocks, while many harbour seals were seen especially in the water, including quite a few mother-pup pairs. A group of California sea lions was seen on the westernmost rocks. Bird highlights included black and American oystercatchers, western gulls, nesting brown pelicans, cormorants, a masked booby, and a peregrine falcon.

The rest of the day was spent motoring toward Islas San Benitos, although the Searcher's progress was repeatedly delayed by marine mammal sightings. Many northbound grey whales were seen, including several we followed for a better look. Several large groups of common dolphins approached the Searcher during the day, with some animals bow-riding. The first few groups were comprised of short-beaked common dolphins, while the last group we saw was long-beaked common dolphins. Several humpback whales were seen, including two in the mid-afternoon that allowed very close views. These whales fluked (dived revealing their tails) several times. Many seabird species were seen during the day.

The northwesterly swell remained mild to moderate for a mostly comfortable overnight run south, although several of us did feel seasick! Wendy, who is wise, had taken some sea-sickness tablets, but I retired to my bunk at 6.30pm and slept for almost twelve hours.

24 FEBRUARY 2013, SUNDAY

The Searcher dropped anchor at West San Benito Island at 8:12AM. Here we were able to go ashore in skiffs and make a circumnavigational walk around the island. Along the way we spotted northern elephant seals, Guadalupe fur seals, and California sea lions in those coves that lay along the walking route. Large numbers of young elephant seals were present, along with moderate numbers of older animals (including perhaps 20-30 mature bulls). All told, perhaps as many as 400 or more elephant seals were seen. The large number of animals reinforces the importance of the San Benito Islands as an elephant seal breeding site.



Elephant Seal

Several small groups of fur seals were observed in scattered locations along the island's southern, western, and northern coasts.

Various birds were seen, including five pairs of nesting ospreys.

The walk was in no way arduous, being a little under six miles, but it took several hours simply because there was so much to see and to photograph.



On the Islas San Benitos

At 3:40Ppm the Searcher left Islas San Benitos and headed south for Laguna San Ignacio. Various species of seabirds (especially Cassin's auklets) were observed following our departure from these islands.

25 FEBRUARY 2013, MONDAY

As the Searcher approached the entrance to Laguna San Ignacio, northerly winds increased in strength starting around 5:30am, making the rest of the ride quite rough. The Searcher entered Laguna San Ignacio at 8am and dropped anchor within the Observation Area at 8:45am. During the transit into the lagoon, lots of grey whales were observed, along with several bottlenose dolphins. Because of persistent strong winds and rough seas, morning viewing of grey whales was limited to the Searcher and not from the pangas - the small boats operated by the locals for whale watching. There were plenty of whales to be seen, however, as the most-recent census indicated 354 whales in the lagoon.

After lunch the winds backed off enough to allow panga excursions in the lagoon. During our two-day stay there, we were able to view the grey whales up-close. On this first day the panga session was conducted from 12:50 to 3:20pm. Many grey whale cow-calf pairs were seen, and most of us had the opportunity to have a close encounter. The panga driver would spot a whale and make towards it, and when reasonably close would wait to see what happened. After several abortive attempts to find a "friendly pair" we were eventually rewarded when a mother and calf approached our little boat. As the mother shepherded the calf alongside the boatman instructed us to "splash water, splash water!" Several pairs of hands immediately responded and the calf came right alongside, with mother in close attendance.

And Wendy stroked her whale – in fact both of them. I also managed to touch the mother; it was like stroking thick neoprene with barnacles on it.

All too soon the magical moment passed, but was etched in the memory for ever.



Wendy strokes a grey whale

Later we observed other grey whale behaviours including spyhopping (keeping their heads above water) fluking, and group pursuits (most likely several males pursuing a female!).

During the evening we discussed with our fellow travellers just what was the nature of the excitement which surrounded actually being able to touch a whale? Many theories were aired but the most popular seemed to be that it was almost a magical experience to have a close encounter with such a large and powerful animal that was at the same time so gentle, and that lived in a different element to ourselves. The Mexican beer which was kept on board also helped with the discussions.

26 FEBRUARY 2013, TUESDAY

The Searcher continued its visit to Laguna San Ignacio. During the day, four panga trips were made to look for grey whales. Many whales were observed throughout the day, and many interesting behaviours again were seen, including fluking, breaching, and spy-hopping. Our little panga found itself at the centre of a whale mating session. Literally feet from the boat the water was being thrashed by the tails of several whales, some of them passing beneath us with inches to spare. Being so close brought home to us the raw power of the creatures we were observing, and how easily they could have overturned the panga if they had a mind to. The activity was quite violent in its intensity, and yet the boatman seemed completely unconcerned by what was going on around us. He was obviously used to it! All too soon we had to return to the Searcher which raised anchor at 4:24pm and, after negotiating the breakers and sand bars protecting the entrance to the lagoon, finally exited Laguna San Ignacio at 5:08pm. The boat headed south, making way for Cabo San Lucas and the entrance to the Gulf of California. There was only a modest swell.

27 FEBRUARY 2013, WEDNESDAY

This was a day of travel, with the Searcher continuing its journey between Laguna San Ignacio and Cabo San Lucas. During the daylight hours, a constant vigil was maintained for marine mammals and seabirds. Several species of marine mammals were sighted and, occasionally, closely observed: groups of long-beaked common dolphins (with lots of bow-riding behaviour), several groups of California sea lions travelling far offshore, a cow-calf pair of fin whales, perhaps a dozen

humpback whales (most in the distance, but two relatively close-up), and miraculously, a blue whale. The blue whale was observed for some time, as its diving and surfacing pattern occurred with some regularity. The whale showed its flukes on at least two occasions.



Blue whale with a distinctive scar

A variety of seabirds was seen, including a red-billed tropicbird, two species of skuas, and various species of gulls. At least five sea turtles were briefly observed; most were green sea turtles and perhaps one was a loggerhead turtle. Several ocean sunfish were seen.

28 FEBRUARY 2013, THURSDAY

At approximately 5am the Searcher rounded Cabo San Lucas and entered the Gulf of California. From 5:40am through 1pm, many humpback whales (perhaps as many as 30) were seen, mostly in the vicinity of the Gorda Bank. We were afforded excellent and close-up views of typical humpback behaviours such as breaching, lob tailing, flipper flapping, and fluking. A few cow-calf pairs were among the observed humpbacks. In one case, the calf appeared to be very young, perhaps less than a week old. In another case, the calf was very active, breaching multiple times and imitating the flipper flapping and lob-tailing of the adults. As entertainment goes, this was spectacular!



Humpback whale flipper flapping with calf breaching

Also during the morning we saw various seabirds, jumping Mobula and Manta rays, a green sea turtle, long-beaked common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins (with some bow-riding)

Increasing winds during the morning forced us to seek protection in the lee of Cabo Pulmo. The Searcher arrived at Los Frailes / Cabo Pulmo Marine Park at 1:13pm, our first landfall in the Gulf of California. We were able to go ashore for about four hours. The land visit revealed many species of birds and plants. Between 4 and 5pm, several of us participated in a snorkel activity around the rocky reef along the southern shore of Cabo Pulmo; many species of reef fishes were seen. This was the first snorkelling activity of the trip and an opportunity for everyone to practice their snorkel skills. Unfortunately I was the only one not to obtain a wetsuit from the store on Searcher, (there were none left) but I thought I would probably be alright without one. How wrong can you get? A t-shirt is no substitute for a wet suit and after about a quarter of an hour I was freezing. Going ashore only made matters worse. The wind chill was severe and there was no skiff back to Searcher for 45 minutes. Eventually with my body temperature dropping and shivering uncontrollably, I sought shelter among the rocks. Out of the worst of the wind the rocks felt warm so there I stayed until the skiffs returned. I vowed to abandon snorkelling on this trip.

After a hot shower and a good meal everyone felt better, and the anchor was raised at 8:23pm. The Searcher then headed north into strong winds and heavy seas; the ride was very rough, and we all went to bed early, after a few Mexican beers from the fridge.

1 MARCH 2013, FRIDAY

The Searcher continued travelling north all night and early morning into huge swells and strong winds. The Mexican beer may not have been a good idea. At 4.00am both Wendy and I awoke with a need to go to the head, as the toilet is known in nautical terms. The only problem was that we were being violently pitched around which made getting out of the bunks somewhat difficult, especially the top one. Eventually, carefully supporting each other, we made our way out of the cabin and along the short narrow corridor which led to the few steps up to the saloon. Having negotiated these, we staggered to the heads and then back into the saloon, and decided to stay there. Two passengers whose cabins were accessed via the deck, were asleep under a table, cameras and binoculars still around their necks. It had been deemed that it was too dangerous for them to attempt to access their cabin last night. The cook was in the adjacent galley complaining that the crew couldn't sleep, the passengers couldn't walk, and he was still expected to do the cooking! We sat down at a table and hung on to the seat. The fun really started when the cutlery began to fly about, and an amusing ten minutes was spent fielding the coffee jars and mugs which flew off the drinks counter in all directions. The captain reported from the bridge that he was eyeballing

dolphins on the tops of the approaching waves. Then the engines suddenly slowed and the cook muttered "Oh no!" We were struck by a huge wave, head on, which caused the crockery to fly off the racks and roll around the floor. Strange to relate, the ceramics escaped unscathed but the only casualty was a wooden bowl, which split. Then the engine speed increased again and the worst was over. More passengers began to appear in various states of undress and health, and the cook announced that breakfast would have to be scrambled eggs. I had often wondered what it would be like to be in a small boat in a bad storm. Now, unfortunately, I know.

To get out of the uncomfortable weather, we dropped anchor at 8:58am in El Candelero bay on the island of Espiritu Santo. 9:40 to 11:45am we explored the beautiful beaches and dry streambeds (arroyos). Many species of birds, plants, and lizards were seen. Following lunch, some people elected to spend an hour snorkelling around the rock island in the middle of the bay; in the light of my previous experience I decided to give it a miss. Instead we took a skiff ride along the edge of bay, observing birds and the island's geology.

After-dinner the Searcher remained anchored at Isla Espiritu Santo, with plans to raise the anchor at 2am and head north to Isla San Francisco.

2 MARCH 2013, SATURDAY

The Searcher eventually raised anchor at Espiritu Santo at 2:45am and headed north, arriving at Isla San Francisco at 5:37am. From 8:00 to 10:10am we all went ashore to explore the island, enjoying the geological features, scenery, plants, and birds. There was a short ridge walk along the remnant of a volcanic crater, which reminded me of Crib Goch, but in miniature. Quite exposed in places, with the blustery wind adding to the fun. Prior to lunch, some of the group went snorkelling for about an hour, while we went back to the shore for some more island exploration. After lunch, the Searcher raised anchor at 12:53pm and headed north up the San Jose Channel.



On the way down from the volcanic crater, Isla San Francisco

The weather conditions for the rest of the day were sub-optimal for viewing marine mammals, with moderate swells and winds. Nevertheless, we saw California sea lions on Seal Rock, long-beaked common dolphins in the channel, and, late in the afternoon, at least two blue whales. We were able to get a good look at one of the whales at sunset.

The Searcher dropped anchor at 5:55pm off the south shore of Isla Santa Cruz to get out of the persistent north wind.

3 MARCH 2013, SUNDAY

The Searcher raised the anchor at 3:10am off Isla Santa Cruz and travelled north to Isla Santa Catalina, arriving at 5:30am. After breakfast, we all went ashore for a walk from 6:50 to 9:09am. We explored the beautiful arroyo, marvelling at the spectacular giant cardon and wavy barrel cacti, along with the other interesting desert plants. A variety of birds and lizards was also seen. Everyone enjoyed the visit to this uninhabited and relatively pristine island.

The anchor was raised at Isla Santa Catalina at 9:28am and the Searcher headed west to look for whales. Then three blue whales were seen between Isla Santa Catalina and Isla Santa Cruz, as well as a California sea lion and various seabirds. We got many good looks at these blue whales, and couldn't help but be impressed by their sheer size and majesty.

Following lunch, the Searcher continued farther west towards the peninsula. Some California sea lions were seen with their flippers extended into the air, a technique for regulating body temperature. A single Bryde's whale was seen, albeit for several fleeting moments, as is typical of them. Shortly after, we came upon a herd of perhaps 500 or more long-beaked common dolphins. The dolphins initially seemed to be in the midst of a bait ball feeding frenzy, as many seabirds were diving amongst them; the presumed feeding activity eventually ended but the dolphins continued to mill around.

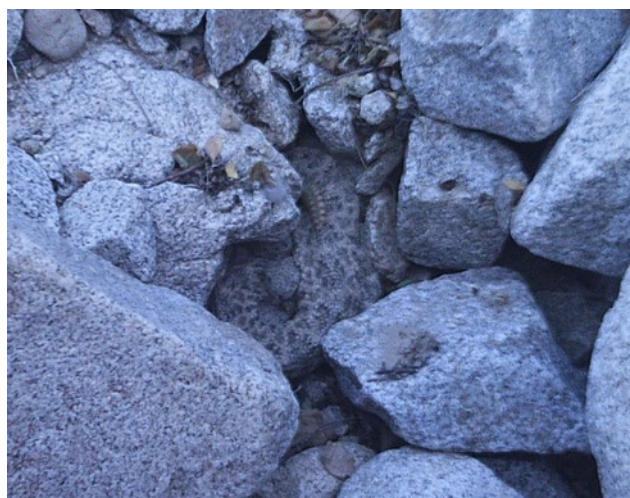
For the last three hours of daylight, we ended up very close to the peninsula in an area being utilized by at least eight blue whales. Some fluking behaviour was observed, especially by one easily-recognized individual who displayed a repetitive and consistent pre-fluking routine. This consisted of five or six very short dives followed by a huge release of bubbles, then the fluke and dive. On average it stayed submerged for about ten minutes.

At 5:42pm the Searcher dropped anchor near the peninsula, where we remained for dinner. We raised the anchor at 7:49pm and travelled to Punta Colorado, Isla San Jose, anchoring at 11:33pm.

The excellent weather of the day (especially the calm seas) continued through the night.

4 MARCH 2013, MONDAY

We went for a pre-breakfast hike at Punta Colorado (Isla San Jose) quite early in the morning. Many species of plants and birds were seen; a reptile highlight was a speckled rattlesnake observed in the arroyo. This was spotted manoeuvring across some rocks, into which it took cover when it realized it had been seen. The camouflage was excellent.



On the Punta Colorado spot the rattlesnake

We left Punta Colorado at 8:21am and headed south. Cetacean species encountered before lunch included a scattered group of bottlenose dolphins, a few dwarf sperm whales in the distance, a large but scattered group of perhaps 500 long-beaked common dolphins, and another small and scattered group of bottlenose dolphins.

The anchor was dropped at Los Islotes at 12:23pm. We took a one-hour skiff ride around the islands to photograph the sea lion colony and the many seabirds that occur associated with the islands. The next activity was a one-hour snorkel session, highlights of which included the many reef fish; close encounters with sea lions in the water, and observing cormorants chasing (and sometimes catching) herring.

I had noticed that on the previous snorkelling trip that the numbers had been somewhat depleted, so I had a word with a crew member about the chance of borrowing a wetsuit. I was furnished with a neat little number with pink flashes, and after some suitable comments was let loose into the water. It was a wonderful experience, and one that I am glad I did not miss. Cormorants underwater are fantastic!

The Searcher raised the anchor at 3:16pm and began the long overnight run to Cabo San Lucas.

Along the way, a few bottlenose dolphins were observed in the wake, some jumping. Later, a large group of jumping Mobula rays was closely observed.

These fascinating creatures put on a good show, and we were surprised just how close to the boat they came.



Mobula Ray

This was our final day and our final dinner aboard the Searcher. We all spent the evening sampling Mexican beer, reminiscing and recounting our favourite experiences of the trip. The Grey Whale encounter won hands down.

5 MARCH 2013, TUESDAY

The Searcher had travelled through the early morning hours to Cabo San Lucas, where we all disembarked and had an early morning walk along a river, before having lunch in the town. It was strange to be back in "civilization".

Then we journeyed to the airport for the flight to San Diego, there to catch another plane back to Heathrow.

Like the flight out, this was fortunately uneventful.

IDWAL IDYLL - A WELSH WEEKEND

Ray Harben

As Dylan Thomas would say, "Begin at the beginning"

Sometime in the early 70s, camping one weekend below Birchen's Edge, Baslow, Derbyshire, I woke very early on the Sunday morning with the valley shrouded in mist and the sun very low in the East. Just the conditions for a Brocken spectre so I stepped up onto a low stone wall and started waving my arms about then slipped so no Brocken spectre but a broken leg.

I was tied to my air bed and placed in the back of my Morris 1000 van and either Don Henderson or Keith Barker drove me to Sheffield Royal Infirmary where my leg was put in plaster and so I was immobilised for six weeks.

A few days after the plaster was removed Keith suggested we go to Wales climbing so I accepted the invitation. At the time I worked for British Railways and so could get free travel on the train. I also owned an ex WD Norton motorcycle so I offered to take that along and we duly caught the train from Sheffield Midland station and alighted at Bangor. There was however a slight problem; I had no motorcycle licence, my test having been aborted in a Sheffield fog when the examiner could not see me nor I him! Keith also had no m/c licence so breaking the law, we rode up to the Ogwen youth hostel where we parked the bike then hiked up to Llyn Idwal where we pitched camp by the side of the lake.

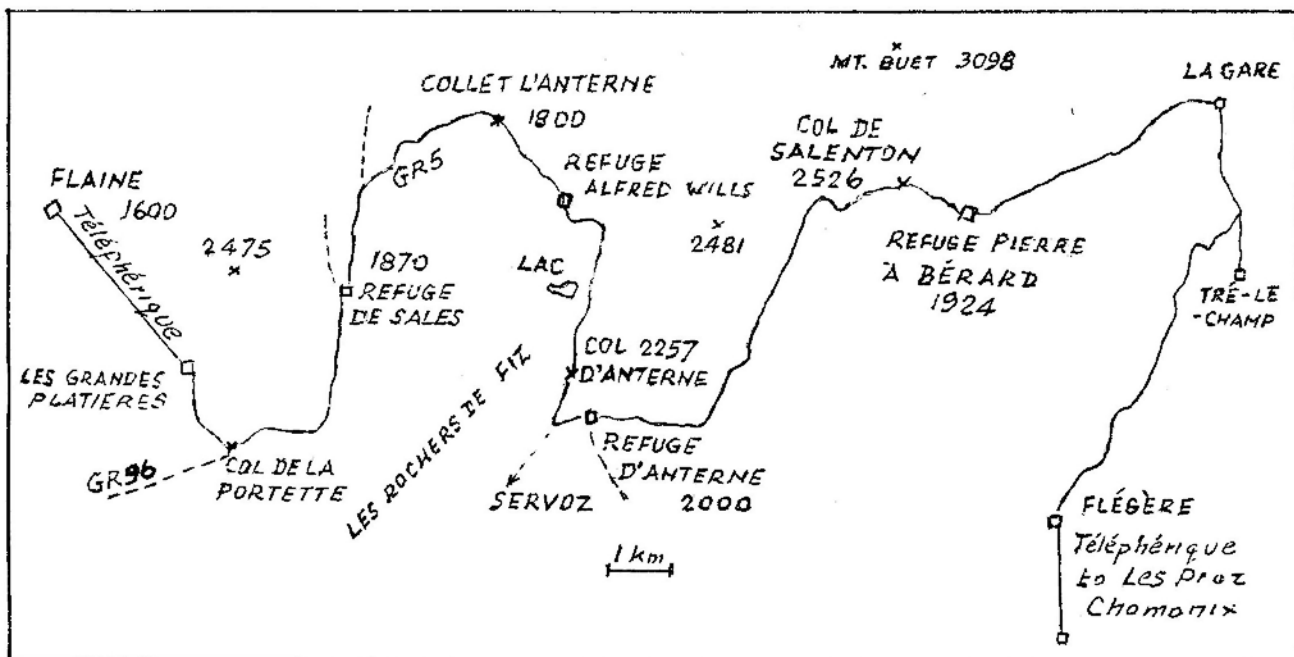
The following day dawned bright and sunny and after breakfast we walked up to Glyder Fach and climbed the Direct Route, mainly a steep chimney, and then climbed the fourth pitch, a smooth neat often greasy scoop if wet. Fortunately there had been an exceptional spell of dry weather, and we finished the route by the alternative Winter finish. We then went down to the foot of the crag where we climbed the just severe climb Oblique Buttress and from the top of this we made our way round to the foot of Idwal Slabs to climb Tennis Shoe followed by the Piton route on Holly Tree Wall. On completion we made our way across to Glyder Fawr where we climbed Central Arete finally making our way down to our tent arriving around 8.00 pm and cooked dinner. It was a very long and satisfying day.

The following day we had to catch the midday train so decided to tackle something easier and headed for Milestone Buttress on Tryfan. Quite a few parties were on the route and as we came up to each of them we politely asked to be allowed to climb through as we had a train to catch, and all willingly obliged.

We finished the climb in good time and so motorcycled down the valley in glorious sunshine after a memorable and exhausting weekend climbing on warm rock and happily with no problems with the leg

A SHORT TREK IN THE HAUTE SAVOIE 'THE TOUR DE PAYS DE MONT BLANC'

Jack Short



In July 1999 the YRC had a caving meet in Flaine Haute Savoie. All I knew about the meet was that an apartment named Pointe Percy had been reserved in Flaine. At the last minute I decided to pay it a visit, without any idea of what I intended to do.

Wednesday 28th July

I managed to book a flight from Heathrow with British Airways departing at 8.25 which got me to Geneva at 11.00 am and a local train eventually dropped me at Cluses in the afternoon.

An enquiry at the Touriste Bureau elicited the news that there was no convenient bus and Flaine was 30 km away by taxi. They kindly booked a taxi for me and I duly arrived in Flaine and found the location of the appropriate apartment after a lot of searching, complicated by the fact that the place I wanted was actually in the nearby village of Carroz d'Arâches.

So, finally having found the apartment block, I had to knock on several doors asking for a group of English climbers. Eventually I was pointed to one of the apartments, only for the door to be opened by a stranger from Blackburn who did not seem to recognise the name YRC. I managed to persuade him to let me in and eventually some recognisable faces covered in mud turned up. I had arrived.

Thursday 29th July

An easy day walk the following day and a splendid dinner at the local Pizza restaurant and I decided on a walk to Chamonix.

Friday 30th July

None of the potholers were interested in walking to Chamonix, so having prospected the locality the previous day, I decided on a quick start with the aid of the Telepherique des Grandes Platières. This whisked me up the 3 km to the summit of 2443 m very quickly, and put me, completely alone, onto a featureless limestone plateau criss-crossed with crevices. A couple of kilometres on a compass bearing saw me on the Col de la Portette 2354 m and I joined the GR96 with a sigh of relief. A further six kilometres down a well marked path took me down to the Chalets de Sales where I found that the usual refuge had been destroyed by an avalanche and the guardian was not intending to accommodate travellers. However as the next refuge was a rather long way away and the weather did not look all that good he took pity on a lone walker and let me stay and also managed to produce some food.

Saturday 31st July

Up bright and early and heading towards the Refuge d'Anterne Alfred Wills. A leisurely walk down the Gorge de Salles viewing several waterfalls on route eventually led to the GR5 and the well marked path to the Collet d'Anterne at 1796 m (not to be confused with the Col d'Anterne further en-route) Another 2 km and the solitary Refuge Alfred Wills 1810 m, set on a lonely flat plain, came into view. However I did not intend to stay here, so I continued on to the Lac d'Anterne at 2104 m where a thunder and lightning storm made me regret that decision.

However the real Col d'Anterne at 2257 m was eventually reached and a short downhill path led to the Refuge du Col d'Anterne 250 m lower down. This was more like a Hotel than a refuge and was very popular. However I asked for a bed and was given a choice of tariffs. A single room seemed like a very reasonable price and I had a very comfortable stay, with hot shower and excellent dinner. It seemed to be a Mecca for walkers coming from the teleferique at Le Brevent and was quite busy. People were quite surprised when I said I had walked from Flaine.

Sunday 1st August

I considered the option of walking directly to Chamonix via the Brevent but chose the longer route, known as the 'Tour de Pays du Mont Blanc' leading to the Col de Salenton at 2526 m. There was a layer of snow on the upper slopes of the col and on the slopes of the other side of the Col, but after a rest and some time spent viewing the movements of a herd of Chamois on the opposite facing slopes of Mont Buet about 500 m higher, a well worn track led downwards to the Refuge de la Pierre à Bérard at 1924 m. This turned out to be a quaint hostelry, built under an enormous boulder to protect it from avalanches, with a very popular restaurant. As it was a Sunday it was quite crowded. However once the day trippers departed it was very pleasant and a bed was available with an excellent meal and company for me to exercise my French linguistic skills on. An interesting photograph inside the dining room showed the hut buried under deep snow with a path to the entrance cut through 12 foot drifts.

Monday 2nd August

Descending from the Refuge down the well-trodden path, taken by all the day visitors of the previous day I eventually came to a small café at the entrance to another waterfall "The cascade de Berard" and finally to the village of Buet near the Col de Montets on the main road to Chamonix.

I remembered the location of a very pleasant chalet named Chalet Bourne at Tre-le-Champ where I had previously stayed and after a short walk down the road they found a place for me and a large platter of their traditional fish pie awaited me for dinner!

Tuesday 3rd August

However the walk was not yet over, and I returned up the road to Col de Montets and toiled up the 500 m climb through the botanical gardens to the high level Balcon de Sud track leading to Flégère about 8 km and 3 hours later. As usual this track was very busy, including a cross country foot race in the opposite direction to mine. As many of you will know, the path has a tight squeeze through the rocks at one point and this caused quite a bottleneck, to the annoyance of the more-voluble French runners and walkers. A cup of coffee at the Flégère café and then I was on the lift down to Les Praz and a pleasant walk down to Chamonix.

I booked into my usual bed and breakfast place and re-acquainted myself with the delights of Chamonix and the Bar Nationale, and stocked up with the exquisite chocolate truffles filled with an assortment of liqueurs, before dinner at the self service restaurant and a return to my bed.

Wednesday 4th August

One week after setting out on this unusual trip I caught the early bus to Geneva and returned home on the British Airways flight to Heathrow.

Conclusion

The route chosen was a mixture of GR96, GR5 and from the Refuge d'Anterne the 'Tour de Pays de Mont Blanc', and finally the well known 'Balcon de Sud'. It proved to be an excellent and varied walk with good hostelries en-route

WHO WAS MRS. E. P. JACKSON

Jeff Hooper

When I first read the YRC Journals an article in Vol. 2 No. 6, 1904-5 held my attention. For several reasons I found it intriguing. I have re-read the article several times and have been left with a feeling that it was a record of greatness. Nothing was known of the background of the writer and I could find no one else to enlighten me. The writer was a lady. The article Winter Mountaineering in 1888 by Mrs. E. P. Jackson; a record of a lecture that she presented to the YRC in Leeds in 1903.

For a fuller account see A Winter Quartette, Alpine Journal Vol. 14, edited by W. A. B. Coolidge.

(Mrs. Jackson had intended to present the lecture in November 1900 but was prevented by a family bereavement). It is well known that the YRC from its foundation in 1892 until 2011 was a Club with a membership made up of men, so for a lady to be lecturing to them, and for the lecture to be printed in the Journal, positioned in first place in the number, indicated either; that she had done something exceptional, or perhaps belonged to the family of a Club member. Were these accounts exaggerations, or, were the lady's recorded exploits in advance of anything at that time? She was not the very first, but there were few lady mountaineers in the nineteenth century and other than in this article I had read nothing referring to Mrs. Jackson.

In his book *The Victorian Mountaineers*, Ronald Clark provides a photograph of the lady but writes not one word about her. Although the YRC was a Club for men; wives, sisters and lady friends accompanied members on climbs and pot-holing trips. From what is known Mrs. Jackson fitted into none of these categories. Other details are unusual.

The Jungfrau in the middle of January?

Benighted with only candle lanterns passed from one to another for illumination?

Sitting out the night in a cave in a glacier?

What protective clothing was available at that time?

For cooking and warmth the party relied on fire-wood.

No wonder that guides were needed.

Mrs. Jackson was born Margaret Ann Sanderson in 1843 in Birkenhead and in 1865 married Edward Patten Jackson the son of Sir William Jackson Bt. M.P. of Birkenhead. Between 1872 and 1888 she completed 140 major ascents. Until 1879 Edward Jackson and Mrs. Jackson made their ascents together including in September 1877 the traverse of the Matterhorn ascending from Breuil. This was the second traverse by a woman, but the first by this route, that started in Italy. Miss Meta Brevoort, made the first traverse by a lady, starting from Zermatt and descending into Italy on 4 September 1871. The party included her nephew W. A. B. Coolidge, with Christian and Ulrich Almer and Knubel as guides.

Tragically Edward Jackson died in South Africa in 1881 at the early age of 38.
(*Alpine Journal* Vol. 10: 231, 1881)

Mrs. Jackson continued to travel to Grindelwald and climbed with the friends she had made there, until the account given here of the traverse of the Jungfrau in January 1888 from the Bergli hut to the Guggi and down to the Wengernalp.

W. A. B. Coolidge described this exploit:
(Coolidge, W. A. B. *Alpine Studies*: 131)

"...our short trip was nearly at an end, and I for one was feeling rather down in the mouth when two men arrived from the Bergli hut near the Mönchjoch with the news that an adventurous English lady (Mrs. E. P. Jackson) had started thence for the Jungfrau that morning. All other thoughts were swallowed up by this piece of news. I may add that the wind drove her back that day, but that on January 16 she succeeded in reaching the summit, and descending to the Wengern Alp- a difficult feat at any time, and in winter more so than ever from the necessity of passing a second night somewhere on the mountain. Her party spent it in a crevasse and were frost-bitten, not with-standing

which the expedition must always rank as one of the most splendid ever achieved in winter. "

From Coolidge, the alpine authority, this was praise indeed.

The friend who Margaret Jackson relied on was the exceptional Mr. Emil Boss, one of the brothers who until he too died at the early age of 36, owned the Bär Hotel in Grindelwald. His qualities shine through his obituary, written by Douglas Freshfield in *Alpine Journal* Vol. 14.

Alone among the Swiss guides at this time, he travelled to climb in the Himalaya and New Zealand. He used the Swiss winter months to travel on ocean liners working as a steward and took the opportunities afforded by this means of travel to visit many other countries. Boss's problems arose from being born in the wrong century.

Margaret Jackson appears to have climbed for the best reason of all, sheer joy of being in the mountains. She did not make out that there were scientific reasons for her ascents. She did not write books about mountains, she left few accounts of her exploits, but she was one of the foremost among Victorian lady mountaineers. The guides that accompanied Mrs. Jackson and Emil Boss on the climbs recorded here were Ulrich Almer, Johann Kaufmann and Christian Jossi who was referred to as 'our second guide' in the account of the Jungfrau climb. It is not clear if Johann Kaufmann was in this party or not.

After reading her account of winter 1887-8 in Switzerland and marvelling at what was done, and the enjoyment and satisfaction obtained from the completion of the climbs, together with the description of the night in the ice cave in the glacier, it was surprising to discover that it was Mrs. Jackson's last mountaineering expedition. Amongst the descriptions of ice crystals and the lamplight, she makes no mention of the fact that her feet were so badly frost bitten that some toes had to be amputated. The amputation left her permanently lame and unable to do even simple climbs. Mrs. Jackson died 13 October 1906.

How did Mrs. Jackson come to lecture to the YRC? I would like to think that it was her eminence as a mountaineer that led to her invitation. Even so, she did have connections to the YRC. Her nephew, A. L. Clover was a member of the Club for a short time and Clinton T. Dent, Honorary Member of the YRC from 1892 to his death in 1912, was the friend who wrote the obituary of her husband, Edward Patten Jackson, in the *Alpine Journal*.

If you wish to read *Winter Mountaineering in 1888* and do not have a copy of the relevant YRC Journal you can find it on the YRC website.

TO THE ISLAND IN THE SKY

Michael
Smith

OVERSEAS MEET, JUNE 2013, TO THE MULANJE MOUNTAINS OF MALAWI AND A SUBSEQUENT VISIT TO THE DZALANYAMA FOREST ON THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER.

The most common response to the suggestion of a trip to Malawi was “Why?” The next likely question was “Isn’t that the place with all the killings?”

In quick succession a couple of years ago, two mountaineers mentioned Malawi to me, one at the 2011 joint meet as we walked towards Ingleborough and the other on a Kinder mass trespass commemoration walk. They spoke of its unspoiled charms, rugged mountains, African culture and reasonable weather, so making it sound just the place for the YRC – hence its place on the 2013 meets list.

A little investigation revealed that a foreseeable problem would be the limited size of the huts there if we arrived with a dozen Ramblers as we had on the 2012 trip to Nepal. So in discussions we stressed that this was not a suitable place for large groups and that we would be buying food and cooking for ourselves as the trekking support infrastructure was underdeveloped. This was going to be more of an exploratory trip than recent Club ventures, for example the most recent guidebook to the mountains was published in the ‘70s and long out of print. Together these cautions appeared to put almost everyone off and we ended up with a party of five: three members for three weeks and another couple with us for the first week.

The killings? Well, they were confusing placid Malawi with seriously conflicted Mali. Malawi, called the *Warm Heart of Africa*, is the old colonial Nyasaland squeezed in between Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique with long thin Lake Malawi filling the Malawian part of the Great Rift Valley forming most of its eastern boundary.

As one of the World’s least-developed and most-densely populated countries, Malawi has about four-fifths of its 17 million people living rural lives with low life expectancy and high infant mortality. Its main export is tobacco followed by tea, sugar then other food products with Uranium, Thorium, etc. making up just 1% of exports. The official languages are Chichewan and English which was encouraging for negotiations and we had no problems on the language front. Another encouraging aspect of Malawi was the road infrastructure and public transport arrangements which are good compared to most other countries in the region.

Historically, in 1859 David Livingstone declared the southern highlands to be suitable for European settlement and missionaries and colonisation followed with the British Central African Protectorate being proclaimed as the Club was formed, including the Shire Highlands and its Mulanje area. The white administration ran the territory and its million people on a budget of £10,000 and a staff of under a hundred: light-touch government indeed. Tolkien penned *The Hobbit* shortly after climbing onto the Mulanje plateau. Independence came for Malawi in the 1960s with Banda’s one-party state lasting until the 1990s and President Joyce Banda elected last year. Freedom Day used to be celebrated but we noticed no observance of it at all despite it being marked as a holiday on calendars.

Flying in from London via Addis Ababa or Nairobi to Lilongwe’s Kamuzu International Airport we took a bus for the supposed five-hour journey south to Blantyre. The two buses we used took longer on account of one shredding a tyre and the other unexpectedly running out of fuel as the dashboard had no power. Much of the tarmaced route had pedestrians and cyclists making their way along, close to the speeding bus.

Blantyre, named for the birthplace of Livingstone, is the main commercial centre and we bought maps there for the trip. As Mulanje mountain huts do not provide food we used the services of Mulanje Outdoor Adventures to provide supplies, porters, cooks and guides. They had an arrangement with the Mountaineering Club of Malawi giving access to the huts and especially to the sleeping mats and basic kitchen equipment stored locked away at each hut. Cooking in the huts was on an open fire with the hut-keeper providing buckets of water from the nearby stream. Sleeping was on the floor either in the main room or a side room.

Many isolated outcrops of rock were seen rising out of old sedimentary farmed lands as we travelled south. These elevated islands result in natural diversity of unusual habitats. The largest is Mulanje mountain, actually an isolated granite massif or monadnock, extensive enough to create its own climate, covering over a thousand square kilometres and rising from the 650m Phalombe Plateau via a plateau around 2,000m to Sapitwa, 3002m, the highest summit in south-central Africa.

The massif gives spectacular views across tea plantations towards Mozambique, with sheer drops down forested gullies laced with waterfalls and fragrant cedar trees. An absence of annoying insects and the scarcity of threatening animals are further attractions. Given the tight schedule of most of the party and our large kitbags, we were collected by pick-up trucks from our lodging in Blantyre rather than using the crowded slow minibus to get to the Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve. By the Likhubula Forestry Station we met our *tenga-tenga*, (porters, literally those who carry) and were soon underway for the five-hour walk up a forested gully onto the plateau. On the way a plunge pool offered a bracing chance to swim.

On the path we meet many women taking down two-metre long bundles of firewood and men with long beams of Mulanje Cedar (*Widdringtonia whytei*). Both carried loads on their heads which were probably illegally felled though with a daily licence for collecting fallen wood for firewood is permitted.

Arriving at the Chambe hut we inspected our accommodation. This and the massif's other huts are single story wooden buildings each with a brick hearth and chimney and a deep veranda. Sitting on stilts or piles many have lasted a century and have settled a little leaving undulating floors and roofs. Beside the huts are simple long-drop toilets and similar cabins in which we were provided with a large bowl of hot water for a wash in the late afternoon. Many of these huts were built about a century ago either for administration of the forestry business or as 'hill station' bungalows for colonists to escape the heat of the lower plains. Nowadays they are maintained jointly by the Department of Forestry, the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust (MMCT) and the Mountain Club of Malawi (MCM) or the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP).

We slept well after a filling meal. As the equatorial days were about 12 hours, we were stirring soon after dawn ready for breakfast and a 2½ hour ascent of Chambe Peak (2,538m). Off by 7:30 we passed through pine forest and up a steep slope on grassy tufts to reach a col where poachers loitered with dogs. From there we made for the East Ridge which consists of gentle sparsely vegetated rises interspersed with steeper rock faces which thankfully have gullies or shallow grooves as lines of weakness we could use. Small moves to the right, were made to link these and red marks on the rocks help our guides keep to the best route. A 100m section (rated low-grade rock climbing in the guidebook) was particularly steep but the crystalline granite rock was sound and gave excellent grip despite being tough on the fingers. Additional holds of uncertain security were provided by the stumps of *vellozia* plants. As with other summits here, the last few hundred metres were boulder strewn requiring careful moves over or round obstacles and strides over gaps.

The survey point at the top catered for the obligatory group photo and nearby picnic before we carefully

descended this fairly exposed ridge – any slip would have resulted in extensive laceration. On the steepest section a hand line was placed for security and Tim demonstrated a classic abseil here.

In front of us as we descended looking west we could see our entire route for the next week. To cover the whole range though we needed to get down smartly to the hut, eat and set off that afternoon for the three hour crossing of passes to the next hut at 2,219m, the Chisepo hut. We arrived there as the sun set. There were others there already and we ate a strong soup then a chicken stew together that evening. All the meals included fresh fruit and vegetables. We had the option of adding Nali sauce. 'Africa's hottest peri-peri sauce' is made from local birds-eye chillies scoring 175,000 scoville heat units. This sauce has achieved cult status in the West but quickly gained a different reputation in our home when brought back and used in chilli con carne.

Our cook had the fire going before dawn the next morning and we five were walking southeast directly behind the hut by 7:00. There were two others on Sapitwa, 3002m, the only time we didn't have a peak to ourselves. Soon onto rough rocky ground and we had to watch every step over the rough ground whilst we made height quickly up the long steepening northwest ridge. This led to a flatter section where we scrambled past a couple of monoliths four times Tim's height, the Rabbit's Ears, then tortuously between, over and under huge boulders for almost a mile. The latter part of this three-hour ascent is termed 'virtually indescribable' in the guidebook so the red paint waymarking was welcome. Sapitwa is the highest peak in the region and the name translates as "Don't go there!"

After lunch we again traversed east across ridges to the next hut, Thuchila at 2,303m, across several distinctly decaying wooden bridges. The last of these was twisted at crazy angles requiring parts of it to be climbed like a ladder. That evening a short walk in front of the hut gave a magical view of the sunset over the plain.

In the morning Fiona and Booker descended north with porters, through sunflower farms, to be transported back to Blantyre. Then onward for a visit to Chembe village within the Cape Maclear National Park on Lake Malawi to snorkel, kayak and risk bilharzia to see the many brightly coloured Cichlid fish. Little to their knowledge the kayak's hatch seals (presumably having been lost in a previous incident) had been replaced by cloth coverings which upon capsizing were washed away. With two gaping holes they were left stranded on the far side of Domweisland. Heroically, Booker paddled, slithered and swam some miles, hitched a lift on a dugout canoe and secure assistance from a group of local fisherman to arrange a rescue for Fiona (and, more importantly, the kayak) who had meanwhile, 'enjoyed' a close encounter with a large monitor lizard.

A real adventure. They also walked the local hills, which were once used as a hideout from slave traders, in the company of baboons and a grass snake. They managed that without mishap.

Meanwhile, Richard, Tim and I scrambled up the West Ridge of 2,590m Nandalanda standing behind the Thuchila hut. Tim was full of a cold and I was sniffing. Nevertheless, we kept a good pace skirted left of the truncated spur of Castle Rock on short steep slabs then fluted slabs over false summits and a balanced rock. After we traversed east below the summit we turned back sharply and steeply up a narrow ridge to reach the survey point and hung on to it because of the strong blustery wind. Our guide ferreted around in the boulders 20m below the summit and returned triumphant with the water bottle he had dropped on his last visit. We descended a steep groove off the flank rather than risk the summit ridge in the wind then descended the ascent route visiting the rocky spur we bypassed earlier, disturbing a Red Mountain Hare and several lizards. The wind-blown cloud was quite wetting and we put on our waterproof jackets for one of the few times on this trip.

The huts had solar panels to charge batteries and provide some illumination. The same approach is used in village huts as few areas have mains electricity. Those with these systems offer a mobile phone charging service to others. In the huts though most of these badly installed systems have failed. Our guide, Comestar, had some success in charging his phone battery by holding bared wires direct from the panels onto its terminals. We provided rubber bands so he could leave it to charge.

That day's peak, Nandalanda, and the two peaks to its south are known as the Eildons for their similarity to the three shapely hills which make a half-day outing from Melrose. The Mulanje Eildons are a different matter. We tackled the remaining two the next day in improving weather, as the clouds gradually cleared. Initially we headed back west for 20 minutes from the hut, then left the track by a bridge to head for Khuto, 2,757m, across grassy slopes then boulders then more grassy slopes. After a traverse right under a rock wall we took the second gully left over boulders with some awkward scrambles. A final swing to the left took us towards the summit. Over a bite to eat we persuaded our guides to next head over unfamiliar ground south across a col to Dzole, 2,715m.

Once underway we saw occasional small cairns probably placed by members of the Mountain Club of Malawi. These marked the starts of steep shallow grooves or ramps avoiding crags to deposit us at the col. Beyond was slightly steeper ground which we thought would 'go' but our guides insisted on a descending traverse to the left dropping a long way, over a series of rocky terraces and occasionally through vegetation to meet up with a route they know from the Minunu hut. Muttering to one another at the inefficiency of the route, we eventually levelled out before passing old trigger snares. Then we reached a steepening rib of slabs and gullies and turned right to

take these, regaining the lost height as we headed almost directly to the summit. We crossed the usual boulder field, this one unusually flat and chaotic. The descent was east down steep slabs to the Minunu hut despite our destination, the Thuchila hut, being on the opposite side of the mountain. Minunu, like most huts, has nearby swimming pools and visitors were bathing noisily in the late afternoon sunshine. Short of time, we sped past and picked up a good track to circle anticlockwise for 2½ hours round below all three Eildons and over a pass to the Thuchila hut.

The hut now held three couples: one making a travel video, another involved in tourism and the last hailing from Leeds, taking a year out to travel through South America, Australia, New Zealand and now Africa. He had a distant connection with Arthur Salmon – more evidence that it's a small world as Karinthy pointed out in his six degrees of separation. We had a full table for the chicken meal that night.

Sunday morning was frosty. A little weary after some long days we walk just a couple of hours over a pass and down to the Chinzama hut to relax and air our sleeping bags. The Leeds couple arrived and joined us for a lunch of salami, salad and chips before they continued to the next hut. Richard went for a swim in the Ruo Basin pool.

That afternoon three MCM ladies appeared, discovered that we were in the hut, promptly changed their plans and disappeared at a brisk pace towards the Madzeka hut. Later two girls arrived, looked around and passed through to the Minunu hut.

Perhaps Tim and I needed to go for a swim in the pool.

We checked with our guide who assured us that we did not smell.

After a three-course breakfast from our cook, Baston, we were off the next day with clear skies and a slight frost. We headed further east towards the Sombani hut but turned south on a good flattish trail to ascend the less distinctive peak, Chinzama, 2,663m. We passed the start of the guidebook route and followed a notional route by a dry streambed and gained the marked route on the slabs of a higher shelf above a vegetated gully. The summit was again a jumble of boulders with the highest point being atop a large squareish granite boulder not unlike Ilkley's Calf rock. It gave a steep scramble before we had our usual summit picnic.

We descended and headed to the shabbier Sombani hut at 2,070m. After afternoon tea we three prospected the start of the stiffer scrambling route up shapely Matambale, 2,643m. It clearly got fewer ascents and our guides were unfamiliar with the peak. This would have made a grand day out for our last ascent but the weather was windy and changing.

After strong winds overnight we woke to thick cloud with wind-blown rain. All our plans were now on hold. We whiled away the day reading and drinking tea.

Lunch was ham, banana, cabbage and chips. In a late afternoon clearing we wandered east, past a Malawian Cedar nursery, part of the replanting scheme to restore the mountain's forests.

We also spotted cerval spoor and our guide was convinced he heard a cat pass in the night. There was more rain overnight.

Not only had we lost the day to poor weather but the rain had made the earthen descent paths from the plateau too treacherous for our ill-shod porters. Our intentions of heading back south west across the range and down to a convenient roadhead were now impractical. Instead we were forced to head further east off the plateau's drier flank and down to the Fort Lister Gap which marks the end of the Mulanje range.

Britisher Lister was associated with the establishment of the fort in colonial times to discourage slave trafficking by the Yao chiefs after Livingstone and others highlighted the suffering involved.

After porridge, fruit salad, beans and egg on toast we packed, tipped the porters, cooks and guides and walked off the edge of the plateau down through the forest for a few hours down to the Lister gap village where a pick-up truck waited to take us, our gear and, on the back, our support team.

We drove right around the northern side of the Mulanje massif on gradually improving roads to our starting point of Likhubula of nine days earlier. The additional transport organised at short notice was expensive at a cost of \$180.

A porter then dashed up to the Chambe hut in under half the time we had taken, collected our climbing gear and got it down again before nightfall as we had abandoned any hope of rock climbing the next day.

We spent the night in a CCAP bungalow with suspect electrics: the earth wire to the property hung freely in the air, unconnected. A gecko kept our bedroom almost insect-free. Neaby vervet monkeys, fork-tailed drongos and Livingstone's turacos fed in the trees. We walked that night a mile or so to Nancy's Dream Restaurant for a papaya starter, pizza and a coke. Breakfast in the CCAP mission buildings was accompanied by the singing of 'Abide with me' before an expensive transfer back to Blantyre. There we bought bus tickets and relaxed in the afternoon by visiting the park on Mandala Hill for a beer. We had an appetising pre-arranged three-course meal at the Ministry of Tourism catering college's Alendo Restaurant close to our Lodge on Chilembwe Road: £8 with beer and coffee.

An early start the next morning saw us on a trouble-free luxury bus back north to Lilongwe where we met up again with the two now back from Lake Malawi.

The youngsters returned to the UK the next day, whilst Tim and I were driven about 30 miles west to the Dzalanyama forest lodge. This is a spacious bungalow

by a waterfall in both a Miombo forest reserve and a working forestry area with both pine and gum plantations. Dzalanyamais important for many Malawians who believe it to be the site of creation with the footprints of the first man to be seen in the rocks where God set him down. We didn't see those but we saw prints of hyena, deer and boar.

The forest trails through the thin forest were much tamer than the Mulanje routes. We saw a wide range of bird species but relatively few individual birds. Tim had a couple of days out here and I had five. Ascents were made of all the main rocky hills including Kawuziuzi (Breeze) Hill by the Mozambique border, Mtsotsolo Mountain by the forest entrance, a northern outlier of Kazuzu and 1,654m Kazuzu itself. The last of those gave sightings of deer, rock hyrax and bush squirrel. Early in the day as we ascended a sunlit broad ridge my guide Flackson, a pace ahead of me, almost stepped on a large puff adder which started to move away as he leapt aside. Unaware, I too almost stepped on it then notice the snake's movement in the leaf litter and I skipped away smartly. Puff adders are responsible for more fatalities than any other African snake and a bite would have been a serious matter here. We were an hour from the lodge and even if a forestry vehicle could be found it was another half-hour drive to a simple clinic with a nurse, then two hours on to the Lilongwe hospital. I'm glad it moved steadily away rather than living up to the species reputation for being bad tempered.

Perhaps the most interesting day we had took us along the Mozambique border. We saw a string of women heading over with food for a family celebration, smugglers taking motorbikes over the infrequently patrolled border, illegal tree felling and charcoal burning, besides legitimate felling and transporting of plantation timber.

The meet provided interesting mountaineering in a novel area amidst an unfamiliar culture. So we are grateful to the various people who recommended this area to us. We secured good logistical support and sufficient information on the routes to make good use of our time out there. While maps were difficult to obtain we now have copies and can envisage other opportunities for any future visits to the area. The people we met were warm-hearted and helpful, making the trip enjoyable and relaxing. So despite the highest peak's name meaning don't go there we would say do go and you are likely to have a good trip.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Most visitors spend at most two or three days in the Mulaje mountains making just an ascent of Sapitwa. A trek through the range from Lichenya to the east and back down south-west could take anything from a rushed three days to a relaxed week.

We have the unfinished business of the scramble up Matambale Peak from the Sombani hut and walking the southern approaches.

There were long apparently unclimbed ridges joining some of the peaks which appeared to be feasible.

As for climbing, east and west faces of Chambe peak are real challenges, offering rock climbs of up to 1,650m and said to be the longest rock climb in Africa. Protection appeared sparse. It was said that there was some (bolted) sport climbing being gradually developed.

PARTICIPANTS

Tim Josephy
Michael Smith
Richard Smith
Fiona Smith (guest)
Dave Booker (guest)
Guides: Comestar Supini and Edson Mvoso
Cooks: Burton Menard and Patrick Wowo
Porters: John Ben, Albert Muroma, Paul Mpaha, Vuto Kapito and six others for shorter supply portages.

ANIMALS IDENTIFIED

Deer
Puff Adder
Red Mountain Hare
Rock Hyrax
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Vervet Monkey

BIRDS IDENTIFIED

The locations where the listed birds were observed are coded and given in parentheses:

- l, Lilongwe city;
- b, Blantyre city;
- n, Nidirande peak close to Blantyre;
- c, Chambe bowl, Mulanje massif;
- s, Sapitwa/Chisepo shelf, Mulanje massif;
- t, Tuchila shelf, Mulanje massif;
- g, Lister Gap descent from the Mulanje massif;
- d, Dzalanyama Miombo forest reserve (or approaches) on the Mozambique border.

Grey Heron (bd)
Cattle Egret (d)
Yellow-billed Kite (l)
Brown Snake-Eagle (c)
African Harrier (Gymnogene) Hawk (d)
Shikra (Little Banded) Goshawk (s)
Augur Buzzard (t)
Red-necked Falcon (d)
Lanner Falcon (t)
Rameron (African Olive-) Pigeon (c)
Cape Turtle- (Red-necked) Dove (d)
Tambourine Dove (d)
Blue-spotted Wood-dove (d)

Emerald-spotted Wood-dove (d)
Livingstone's Turaco (cg)
Schalow's Turaco (d)
Little Swift (lb)
Red-faced Mousebird (d)
Speckled Mousebird (d)
African Hoopoe (d)
Little Bee-eater (d)
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (d)
Crowned Hornbill (s)
Pale-billed Hornbill (d)
Trumpeter Hornbill (d)
Flappet Lark (d)
Black Saw-wing (s)
Wire-tailed Swallow (d)
Pearl-breasted Swallow (l)
Mosque Swallow (d)
African Pied Wagtail (bgd)
Mountain (Long-tailed) Wagtail (c)
Woodland Pipit (d)
Fork-tailed Drongo (bgd)
Square-tailed Drongo (d)
Eastern Black-headed Oriole (d)
White-necked Raven (cstg)
Pied Crow (lbd)
Red-collared (*ardens*) Widowbird (n)
Rufous-bellied Tit (d)
Spotted Creeper (d)
Arrow-marked Babbler (d)
Dark-capped (Black-eyed) Bulbul (b)
Kurrichane Thrush (cd)
Cape Robin-Chat (c)
White-browed Robin-Chat (b)
Common Stonechat (cd)
Arnott's (White-headed black) Chat (d)
Evergreen Forest Warbler (c)
Olive-tree Warbler (c)
Lazy Cisticola (d)
Churring Cisticola (cg)
White-winged Apalis (c)
Yellow-Breasted Apalis (ctg)
Tawny-flanked Prinia (d)
Ashy (Blue-grey) Flycatcher (d)
African Dusky Flycatcher (d)
White-tailed Elminia (Crested Flycatcher) (d)
Malawi Batis (c)
Souza's Shrike (d)
Black-backed Puffback (sg)
Tropical Boubou (n)
Retz's (Red-bellied) Helmet-shrike (d)
White-crested Helmet-shrike (southern race) (d)
Greater Blue-eared Starling (b)
Violet-backed (plum-coloured, Amethyst) Starling (d)
Red-winged Starling (ncg)
Amethyst (Black) Sunbird (d)
Olive Sunbird (s)
Yellow-bellied Sunbird (ct)
Miombo Double-collared Sunbird (cstd)
African Yellow White-eye (t)
House Sparrow (lbd)
Blue Waxbill (l)
Common Waxbill (t)
Village Indigobird (Steel-blue Widow Finch) (d)
Pin-tailed Whydah ©

1 Sombani hut with the Hutkeeper's accommodation behind

2 Tim Josephy by the Rabbit's Ears

3 Richard Smith in Khuto's West Gully

4 Damaged bridge near the Thuchila Hut, Fiona and Richard

5 Unfinished business: Matambale Peak





Descent of Chambe Peak,
Michael Booker, Fiona,
Edson and Comestar

The col by
Chambe's East Face



Richard, Comestar and Edson
working their way through a
boulder field

Kazuzu Hill and view over
the Dzalanyama Forest
towards Lilongwe





SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Accommodation in Lilongwe: Kiboko Town Hotel, www.kibokohotel.com

Accommodation in Blantyre: Chilembwe Lodge, www.chilembwelodge.net

Logistical support in Mulanje: Mulanje Outdoor Adventures, www.moadventures.mw, or the individual guide ComestarSupuni, mulanje.guide2@gmail.com

Logistical support for the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve: Land and Lake Safaris, www.landlake.net

Maps of the Mulanje area are available at 1:30k (overprinted with main trails) and 1:40k scales as colour photocopies ordered from the Government Surveyor's Map Sales offices in Lilongwe (south of the roundabout by the golf course, at the road's end) and Blantyre (at the foot of Victoria opposite the old law courts and tourist information office)

Route guidebook: Frank Eastwood's Guide to the Mulanje Massif, 1979, Johannesburg, SA: Lorton Publications with later supplements published informally locally and perhaps available via the Mountain Club of Malawi, www.mcm.org.mw.

Huts and portering: Mountain Club of Malawi, www.mcm.org.mw. Note that the MCM does not accept non-resident members except in exceptional circumstances.

YOU SHOULD DO AN IRONMAN !

Tim Bateman

This was how it all started around September last year. At 47 I've never been much of a runner but had recently managed to get myself up to running half marathon distances all be it very slowly. Then I came across some folks that were into this triathlon business and one in particular went and suggested 'You should do an Ironman'.

Not really fully understanding what I was letting myself in for I foolishly checked online and entered Ironman UK in August 2013 before it filled up. (These events are popular these days so you have to jump at the opportunity when you can).

An Ironman for those who may not be aware is basically a long distance triathlon. It starts with a 2.4 mile open water swim followed by a 112 mile bike ride and finally a full 26.2 mile marathon all of which must be completed within a strict 17 hour time limit. It was obviously going to need a fair amount of training on my part particularly on the bike as I've never owned a road bike, let alone one with proper clip in pedals. Swimming I could just about get by with and my running still needed to improve a lot.

I though a good starting point would be to join the local Rugby Triathlon club and go to some of their training sessions. And so began 11 months of training much of which was spent dealing with niggling little injuries. I learnt lots along the way and still have much more to discover.

The spring saw me do my first marathon in Barcelona of all places, it seemed like a good excuse to take the wife and kids away for the weekend. Not a fast time but I got round, then a month or so later I did the Greater Manchester marathon in a slightly faster time. Warmer weather arrived and I finally started to get out on my new bike. It's at this point that I started to realise

that 112 miles on a bike is actually quite a long way and once complete the prospect of doing any running afterwards is quite unthinkable.

I thought I needed to do at least one triathlon before the Ironman so June arrived and I found myself at the start of the Outlaw middle distance event in Nottingham. This was basically half an Ironman in distance and would get me used to all the procedures with the transitions and also allow me to practice my nutrition strategy in a proper race. I think the most important thing I've learnt is the importance of nutrition in these events, it's all very well doing the training but if you can't get the right number of carbohydrates into your system every 15/20 minutes then you will hit what marathon runners call the wall and your race is over.

The end result on a hot day and a flat bike course was just under 6 hours which I was more than pleased with at the time.

The full Ironman seemed like it was possible but I still needed to do much more cycling and the course at Bolton was somewhat hilly to say the least. Still I did as much as I could in the time remaining and all too quickly August arrived.

I turned up on the Friday for the first race briefing and the pasta party. The Saturday was spent sorting the various transition bags out and depositing them and my bike at the two separate transition areas some 10 miles apart. Then it was off to bed for an early night ready for the 6am swim start the next day.

Race Day:-

Swim (1:23:29) - This was quite an experience to start with. I was one of the first in the water and positioned myself off to the right hand side near the start buoy. I then turned and watched the amazing sight of all the other 1600 file slowly in which took the best part of ten minutes. The start was entertaining shall I say which

was to be expected and there was plenty of contact all the way up to the first turn. Two laps of an anticlockwise circuit with an exit and a short run along the bank at the end of the first lap. Not my best time but sound enough for me and I didn't want to get too carried away at that point.

T1(6:27) - A fair run in to the tent, too many people and not enough chairs made it a bit chaotic but otherwise ok.

Bike (7:05:19) - This was the bit I was most worried about as I'm no great cyclist and I knew it wasn't a flat course by any means. I had been up a few months prior and ridden round the loop so I knew what to expect. 14 miles to start with followed by 3 times round a loop with one big hill on it. The weather was thankfully dry at this point but there was a fair wind blowing and it was chilly to start with. Although hard I must say I really enjoyed this as there was fantastic support all round. The hill goes on a bit and is steep at the top but never quite too steep so you could pace yourself up it without blowing too hard. The descent is fast and exciting and over in a flash but there are some other long fast sections as well which made the whole course entertaining. I think I kept a good speed up (for me that is) throughout and felt ok on the coast downhill to T2.

T2 (4:16) - In to the school tennis court handed the bike over to the helpers and waddled up the steps to the sports hall. Not so crowded this time and off we go again.

Run (5:20:06) - Now this started off surprisingly OK I just got myself going at a steady pace and plodded on for the first 6 miles down towards the loop. This is where things started to get very dark and ugly though. You basically have to run up and down this road/loop 3 and a half times collecting 3 coloured hair bands as you go. It takes you down into the centre of Bolton right close to the finish line where you can hear what's going on and then wrenches you away and sends you back out up a steep hill for another 5 miles each time. To make matters worse the rain that had set in near the start of the run was now pretty torrential. The support though at this stage was awesome with thousands of people lining the streets and it did really help. Whilst on the bike I'd consumed a good 15 or so gels plus fuel and water but me, gels and running just don't go together so it was onto the bananas and coke at every opportunity.

I made the decision to walk for 50 yards at each feed station and get the nutrition onboard. This kept me going and slowly (very slowly). I managed to accumulate all three bands.

Now at this point I wasn't keeping track of the overall time, I only knew my run time so it wasn't until I approached the finishing chute that I heard the announcer saying that there was less than a minute to go until the 14hr mark. With that I seemed to burst into life and shot past the woman checking the bands and tore down the finishing straight like a headless chicken,

final time - 13:59:35

All in all a fantastic experience which I would wholeheartedly recommend to anyone.

But that wasn't quite the end.... A week passed, my legs recovered and I sat wondering what to do next. A quick check on the internet again and I realized that a cheeky late entry into Ironman Wales some 4 weeks later was possible. Why not I thought !!

A far harder course and a slightly slower time was to be expected but I think if you get these opportunities you should take them while you can so off my entry went.

I'll spare you all the race details but needless to say this was the most wonderful race I've done so far. Held in the Pembrokeshire town of Tenby the whole atmosphere was fantastic none more so than at the swim start where all 1700 of us stood on the beach and sung the Welsh national anthem at 7am whilst thousands of onlookers filled every vantage point around the cliff tops.

It was a late finish in just over 14 hours this time but again I was more than happy with that.

So now it's down to some more winter bike training ready for Ironman France in Nice next June. My wife has always wanted to go to the south of France and I've always preferred the mountains but I guess I've got a reason to go now !





The massed start



NATURAL HISTORY

WILDLIFE, ECOLOGY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



NOTHING TO GROUSE ABOUT

The black grouse has had a record breeding season. This endangered bird normally manages to rear one chick at best but the weather this year has seen most pairs with three or four and a few have been spotted with many more. There is a report of one hard working pair having one,

but raptors are in trouble

This year has seen an increasing number of gamekeepers being successfully prosecuted for killing birds of prey but unfortunately this just indicates the prevalence of the crime. It seems unlikely that we will be able to stop this when the punishments are community service rarely full enforced and modest fines usually met by the rich estates employing them.

During 2012 three golden eagles were killed in Scotland. One had been trapped, one shot and one poisoned. One gamekeeper was prosecuted for trapping buzzards in North Yorkshire and since 1990 70% of all prosecutions have been against staff employed on shooting estates. The RSPB inspectors have turned up a diary of one gamekeeper who killed 102 buzzards in one year.

The problems birds are having is not down to environment and weather, as although species do have ups and downs, the same birds are faring fairly well in some areas and very badly in others and it will not surprise you that this correlates to where shooting takes place.

Experts believe that there are suitable locations in England to support 300 pairs of hen harriers but last year there was just one breeding pair and the bird is on the edge of extinction.

Scotland is however doing what it can to fight the problem but England is lagging behind. Scotland has introduced an offence of vicarious liability making landowners responsible for what happens on their land.

WHERE ARE THE CATS

The Scottish wild cat is also in serious trouble. It has been clinging on desperately for years having been pushed into the Highlands by persecution. Food sources up there are not as easy to come by as in their natural lowland woodland terrain.

It is now thought there may be as few as 100

remaining all found in the far north west of Scotland. Here are a few other pockets where cats can be found but these are hybrids where the few surviving true wild cats have mated with gone wild feral domestic cats.

A FRACKING FRACAS

The debate over fracking for shale gas has taken over the environmental agenda in the last few months and is becoming ever more strident. There are very real concerns which need to be addressed but none of us have enough information as yet to make informed judgements. One major risk is that opinion is being polarised before the debate really gets started.

Genuine concerns of local residents nervous about test-drilling near their homes are being drowned out by rent-a-mob anarchists who will protest about anything and those in favour of trying to extract this very useful product are digging their heels in because of the nature of the loudest of their opponents.

We cannot have any objection to new technology being used to help us produce energy and this is an exciting and important area of research. However we need to consider each individual suggested developments in our crowded island bearing in mind possible impacts of people's lives and in our countryside if they have the potential to harm wildlife.

This is equally true, be it a wind farm, a drilling well, new housing developments, a road or an airport. The government has not helped its case by apparently trying to hide adverse reports about wind turbines.

The choice between renewed backing of fossil fuel extraction in the UK, and continuing the transition to low-carbon, renewable energy is a fundamental one. I feel however that our potential energy needs are such that it is not an either or situation. We probably need this gas to buy us time to develop proper renewable energy sources.

We are too fond of hidden subsidies to ineffective technologies so that we can be seen to be going down the green route when we need to put all that money into true research into high tech solutions. Provided that we can find places where it is safe to extract this gas then this could bridge the gap in supplies until nuclear production is brought back on stream and new technologies can start to be introduced.

Not far from our home base, in the 'desolate' North as one clumsy Minister chose to describe it, the banks of the Ribble contain a richness of wildlife that could inspire even the city-based southern peer. In the spring and summer, you can see numerous waders including avocets, redshank and godwit probing the mud flats and wetlands. Later in the year countless pink-footed geese arrive from as far as Siberia, providing an awesome wildlife spectacle. There is however a suggestion of a fracking test drill site nearby.

The country imports enormous amounts of liquefied natural gas from overseas and burns untold tonnes of coal coming from as far away as Australia and, if environmentally acceptably produced gas can be taken from home based sources as an alternative then it will save this country substantial foreign currency and help to protect us from the swings in world fuel prices.

It will also help the environment when considering the pollution and damage caused by the transport and infrastructure needed to bring in the imports.

We basically need a sound and unbiased environmental assessment but in today's suspicious climate who would we trust to give it?

LETS GET SLOE

or a tale of spikes and prickles and other nasty things.

For those of us who get so called pleasure from walking rough country and fighting our way through undergrowth, nature has an armoury of weapons waiting to do us damage. Strangely though, nearly all of those undergrowth plants have good uses to which they can be put.

Hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn etc and fields of brambles are just the start.

The blackthorn (or sloe) is a member of the prunus family and, with the closely related cherry plum, is probably the ancestor of all plums and damsons etc. as they hybridise freely. The blackthorn is a small, crooked deciduous tree or shrub with angular, knobbly, black/brown branches, with long, extremely sharp thorns which we are introduced to regularly. The pricks and scratches from these can easily become septic and difficult to heal. The thorns are sharp enough to penetrate bike and car tyres so care is needed near newly trimmed hedges of the stuff.

From early October the fruit or sloes often cover the branches like bunches of grapes. They soften a little after frosts, but never lose their acidic, mouth-puckering character enough to become palatable. The name sloe is likely to derive from the old word 'slag' meaning sour; very descriptive of the fruit!

This plant does however have its uses. First as an effective barrier, but also in many other ways.

The unripe fruits will provide an almost indelible marking ink and the ripe berries give a good deep purple dye. The leaves and blossom make a tea that is mildly laxative and purging while stimulating the appetite, and it also soothes coughs and sore throats. The bark is an astringent and has been used to combat diarrhoea and piles as have the green unripe fruits, which are also reputed to lower blood pressure.

It is the ripe berries we use most. Like its cousin the cherry-plum the fruits are rarely sweet enough to eat raw but the plums and the berries will make a fine wine, being particularly good with elderberries. They are also used as bitters to make liqueurs; like sloe gin and sloe port made by pricking the sloes and soaking them in gin or brandy with sugar for at least three months and then decanting off the ruby liquid. The remaining alcohol-soaked fruits can be chopped up and introduced into numerous desserts; great with ice cream or rice pudding. They can also be covered with melted dark chocolate to create superb liqueur chocolates. Both the plums and berries can be cooked into jams and jellies often with crab apples and other hedgerow fruits.

Sloes are high in vitamin C and a good tonic for the stomach and bladder, as well as soothing chest, mouth and throat when troublesome.

Hawthorn, or to give it any of its local names (whitethorn, quickthorn, fairy thorn, quickset, bread and cheese and tramps supper, etc.), has flowers and berries which are the source of numerous natural remedies and an ingredient of many jellies, preserves and liqueurs. The young leaves can be eaten in salads as can dandelion leaves.

Dandelions, in some parts of the country, can lay down carpets of slippery green leaves just waiting to upend the off-balance walker. The flowers are held up by leafless, hollow stems that contain a milky latex adding to the ice-like qualities of the surface. The name dandelion comes from 'dent-de-lion' or 'dens leonis' meaning lion's teeth although quite why it is given these names is unclear. It is assumed to possibly refer to the shape of the leaves or the long tapering tap root. Its other old names are 'piss-a-bed' or 'piss-en-lit' referring to its qualities as a diuretic. Other names are priest's crown or monk's head from its appearance once the seeds have flown and clock flower and blowball from its seed head. Its official name taraxacum officinale refers to its ability to remedy disorders and its use in medicine. It was used by ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Arabs and Celts and is a very good tonic, and is now proven to stimulate the bodies' systems, detoxifying the blood and lymphatic system by increasing efficiency of the kidneys and bowels; a diuretic and mild laxative. The latex has long been used to shrink warts, verrucae and age spots while the flowers in honey soothed sore throats.

The plant is good at stimulating the gallbladder, liver and digestive systems, preventing gallstones, jaundice, kidney and urinary infections and the increase in body fluid retention. It reduces high blood-pressure, eases heart problems and PMT, swollen

ankles etc., and eliminates toxins that can cause skin problems such as, eczema, acne, as well as gout and cellulite. It is even said to help regulate blood sugar and cholesterol levels. You are lucky indeed if it cannot do anything to help you.

The plant contains most of the minerals and vitamins needed to keep us well. The young leaves can be eaten as a spring tonic, cooked like spinach or in sandwiches, soups, stews and stir-fries. Dried leaves can make a beneficial herbal tea and the roots dried, roasted and ground to make a herbal 'coffee'. The whole plant has been used to make country beers, often with nettles, dock and burdock.

Nettles are another plant that is Jekyll and Hyde like. We are all too familiar with the irritating sting and the warm legs that come from running carelessly through them. The sting is however very helpful in fighting the effects of arthritis and I have heard similar claims for bee stings.

I have seen several adverts for nettle products not least a small corner shop in Cumbria selling delightful chilled nettle beer. Nettles were used by Roman soldiers to ease their joints after long marches and as a pick me up for exhaustion. They are said to be packed with iron and other trace elements, health-giving minerals and many different vitamins. They are a blood cleanser, detoxifier, tonic, diuretic and astringent. They are also claimed to stimulate the immune system and be good for eczema and other skin conditions, asthma, hay-fever and other allergies, for gout, cystitis, prostate and water retention problems, anaemia, bloody noses and high blood pressure. Applied with caution it helps haemorrhoids and varicose veins and as a shampoo it encourages hair growth.

It can be added to beer or wine during manufacture, mashed, stewed, boiled, microwaved or steamed and produce a herbal tea or form part of many dishes although having little flavour in its own right. If you pick fresh young leaves in spring, liquidise them and freeze the resulting mush in ice cube containers you can bring them out regularly to add to your cooking etc.

Brambles are a pain in the neck (and everywhere else they can reach) but I read recently that this is not in fact a single plant but a family of plants rarely differentiated but counting about 2000 different types in Europe. There are apparently about 200 in Britain but are all equally unwelcoming, but there has been a magnificent crop of blackberries this year.

Juniper is another plant that can 'annoy'. If brushed against the chemical it exudes can cause severe skin irritation. It is one of only three native conifers we have and is now under threat from a number of circumstances.

Climate is seen as a contributory cause restricting its potential growing sites to further north or higher above sea level but alternate land usage is the major problem. Places where it could thrive naturally without assistance and which are not being used commercially are limited but with help it can survive.

The increasing question as to the viability of grazing the uplands may help as overgrazing stops young bushes developing but surprisingly without an element of grazing the land is often in such a state that re-generation cannot even start.

As is the case with many ancient species folklore attributes many beneficial qualities to the berry of this plant and modern research seems to support many of them.

Whilst we have better cures today for Cholera and Typhoid, if as is threatened, penicillins become less effective we may have to turn back to such traditional treatments.

Juniper essence is thought to aid infections of the waterworks, dysentery, tape worm and, when rubbed into the skin, can assist arthritis and muscle pain. Perhaps more common uses and benefits are the flavouring of many marinades, seasoning for game and the production of gin. The leaves are also used in many perfumed products and are added to the water used to clean hand and face towels not least those provided after a meal in many Indian restaurants

MYTHS?... AND YET....

We were all brought up on fairy tales and myths and legends of giants, sea monsters and beings half man half beast. In these more scientific times you would think these would have all been debunked but the opposite is proving to be the case.

Rather than prove many of them nonsense we are actually confirming many of them. With better research capacity and equipment including cameras which can go to where we may not, much is being discovered.

As I am sure a good number of you have, I once paid a pittance to a monk in a monastery in the Khumbu to have him open a box and produce the scalp of a Yeti. The hours of TV time which has been dedicated to this particular myth are beyond count and a million explanations have been offered for the giant footsteps and the grainy images of distant figures. It was not helped by a couple of impostors in monkey suits parading to make a few bucks.

It now appears that this creature does exist or at least has done so in fairly recent times as documented on TV and reported in a recent edition of the Telegraph.

A British scientist may have finally solved the riddle of the yeti; the fabled apelike creature said to inhabit the upper ranges of the Himalayas. He has uncovered a genetic match between samples thought to come from the elusive creature and another that lived more than 40,000 years ago, but this evidence also suggests the beast is still roaming the mountains or has till fairly recent times.

Professor Sykes conducted DNA tests on hairs from two unidentified animals, one found in the western Himalayan region of Ladakh, in northern India, and the other from Bhutan, 800 miles to the east.

The results were then compared with other animals' genomes stored on a database of all published DNA sequences and Professor Sykes found a 100 per cent match with a sample from an ancient polar bear jawbone found in Svalbard, Norway.

That specimen dates back at least 40,000 years and probably as far back as 120,000 years – a time when the polar bear and the closely related brown bear were separating as different species.

Professor Sykes believes that the animals are hybrids – crosses between polar bears and brown bears. Because the newly identified samples are from creatures which were recently alive, he thinks the hybrids may still be living in the Himalayas.

The sample from Ladakh came from the mummified remains of a creature shot by a hunter around 40 years ago. He considered the animal so unusual, and so alarming, he kept some of its remains. A sample of the hair was passed to Professor Sykes by a French mountaineer who was given it by the hunter around a decade ago. The second sample was in the form of a single hair, found in a bamboo forest by an expedition of filmmakers, also around ten years ago.

Professor Sykes added: "This is a species that hasn't been recorded for 40,000 years. Now, we know one of these was walking around ten years ago. And what's interesting is that we have found this type of animal at both ends of the Himalayas. If one were to go back, there would be others still there."

Both hairs were brownish in colour. The Ladakh remains suggested a creature that would have been around 5ft tall – shorter than the towering figure of mythology. However, Professor Sykes suggested the animal could have displayed other characteristics which would have fitted with the yeti myth.

He added: "The fact that the hunter, who had great experience of bears, thought this one was in some way unusual and was frightened of it, makes me wonder if this species of bear might behave differently. Maybe it is more aggressive, more dangerous or is more bipedal than other bears."

Reports of the yeti, also known as the 'Abominable Snowman', have been recorded for centuries, with locals and explorers claiming to have come face-to-face with the beast. A photograph of a yeti footprint, taken by British climber Eric Shipton at the base of Everest in 1951, sparked global interest in it. Professor Sykes said there were only three known species of bears in the area: sloth bears, brown bears and the Asiatic black bears.

Professor Sykes added: "There's more work to be done on interpreting the results. I don't think it means there are ancient polar bears wandering around the Himalayas. But we can speculate on what the possible explanation might be. It could mean there is a sub-species of brown bear in the High Himalayas descended from the bear that was the ancestor of the polar bear. Or it could mean there has been more recent hybridisation between the brown bear and the descendant of the ancient polar bear."

As well as being closely related, brown bears and polar bears are known to interbreed when their territories overlap.

These myths go back a very long time and it is hard to argue that they are just fiction given how long they have endured. Alexander the Great is said to have coveted a yeti during his conquest of the Indus Valley in 326 BC, but locals told him the creatures could not survive at the low altitudes. In 1925, a N.A. Tombazi, a photographer and a member of the Royal Geographical Society provided one of the clearest descriptions, of a "figure in outline was exactly like a human being, walking upright ... It showed up dark against the snow, and as far as I could make out, wore no clothes."

During the Second World War, Slawomir Rawicz, a Polish soldier, who claims he escaped from a Siberian gulag and walked across the Himalayas to India, said his path was blocked, at one point, by two yetis. Photographs published in 1951 of several large footprints, taken by Eric Shipton, the highly respected mountaineer, sparked renewed interest, though critics claim the prints were distorted by melting snow. Two years later, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reported seeing large footprints while scaling Mount Everest. Hillary later mounted an expedition in search of the creature, which he said his father had once seen. In 1986, Reinhold Messner claimed to have had a face-to-face encounter with a yeti.

There are similar myths in northern Russia and North America but sample s from these areas have been identified as familiar creatures.

There are other strange myths which consistently appear all round the world and it is easy to dismiss them, but we do still turn up amazing species and giant specimens previously unknown.

A New Zealand game fisherman recently found himself wrestling with a giant catch as he hunted for marlin off the coast of Queensland. Video shot from his charter vessel, the Moana III, showed the battle he had to land the fish, an enormous black marlin, weighing 544 kg. Also fairly recently a 617kg Kaluga fish was caught in Heilongjiang, a river at Tongjiang, a city that borders Russia in northeast China. The Kaluga is a large predatory sturgeon only found in the Heilongjiang River basin. According to breeders, the sturgeon is a female and was carrying about 1.2 million eggs. Staff at the breeding station to which it was taken collected the roe and will implement artificial insemination. The fish fry will be released into the Heilongjiang River.

Kaluga fish are believed to have existed for 130 million years and are claimed to be the largest freshwater fish in the world but it is listed as critically endangered, having been fished to near extinction for its valuable roe.

In another incident, a marine science instructor snorkelling off the Southern California coast spotted the silvery carcass of what turned out to be an enormous 18-foot-long (5.5 metres) oarfish. It took 15 helpers to drag the giant, serpent-like creature to the shore of Santa Catalina Island. Because oarfish dive

more than 3,000 feet (914 metres) deep, sightings of the creatures are rare and they are largely unstudied and are probably the source of myths about giant sea serpents.

Also recently a team of Pakistani fishermen got the catch of their lives when they reeled in a massive whale shark measuring 36 feet in length and weighing over 15,000 lbs. Excited crowds gathered at the harbour in the city of Karachi as the giant sea creature was lifted onto the shore by two cranes. The whale shark was discovered by accident when it became caught in the fishing nets of a passing trawler. The whale shark is the largest species of fish in the world and feeds mainly on plankton. They are currently listed as a vulnerable species but they continue to be hunted in parts of Asia.

A giant blue fin tuna was caught off north eastern recently weighed in at 222 kilogrammes (489-pound) and a giant prawn turned up in New Zealand. The 'supergiant amphipod', as it has been described, measures almost 12 inches in length - ten times the size of the normal species - and was found 4.3 miles under the surface of the ocean.

It just goes to show we should not discount all myths as fact can be stranger than fiction.

What chance a mermaid ...?

Never mind there is still Nessy

GOOD NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

The Scottish authorities are working on identifying specific boundaries round as many as 33 areas of the seas to be designated as Marine Protected Areas.

Let us hope they conclude the exercise more quickly than is happening in England where of 127 proposed round our coasts, only 31 have finally been confirmed for possible designation this year

HIGH SPEED THREATS

There is a consultation running currently on Phase 2 of HS2 which it is proposed will eventually come up to Leeds and Manchester.

One can oppose the route in concept but I cannot see the planners taking any notice. It is a political decision, not an economic or indeed necessarily intelligent one. You can suggest that the route goes round high value obstacles but again not much chance of change. Every few yards the route is moved sideways affects properties miles down the line given the minimum curve permitted for high speed trains. The one area I can see where at this stage some actual suggestion might be given weight if enough people shout is that of cuttings, embankments and tunnels. These might provide some mitigation to the damage that will be done to the ecology of wild life areas and the convenience of walkers using footpaths etc., cut by this track.

Looking at the environmental impact first don't buy into what is in the blurb too much. They are distinctly economical with the truth. They also contradict themselves at various points in their paperwork.

Phase 2 consultation is not yet about specifics but it is a good time to flag up concerns in a general way. Phase 1 to Birmingham is further down the line (excuse the pun) and the more detailed information now available on that states that 19 ancient woodlands will be destroyed or severely damaged as HS2 heads for Birmingham. HS2 is threatening a major impact our historic cultural heritage; the woodlands are the living equivalent to our great buildings. They are one of our richest wildlife habitats and are irreplaceable and are vanishing rapidly, now providing only 2% of England's land cover, 50% down since the 1930s.

The Woodland Trust disputes HS2's claim of the number of ancient woods damaged and says that the first phase of the route will cut through 21 of them, not 19. A further 12 ancient woods are within 200 metres from the track and will be affected by the construction work. This is because the scheme's footprint is bigger than in previous documents: the damage will be done as much by the construction sites and access as by the line itself.

HS2 says 79 acres will be lost but that only includes woods which will be completely removed. Whilst parts of the effected woods will survive, these fragments will often be turned into unviable isolated pockets of trees. In all there are probably about 1,000 acres affected by Phase 1.

As far as wildlife is concerned if the track is in a cutting it can be given a land bridge or if on an embankment, a tunnel.

Without specific detail yet it appears at least a further 14 ancient woodlands will be affected by Phase 2.

It is not just the trees but entire ecosystems depend on their trunks and the soils around their roots. An area which has been continuously wooded for centuries, contains all kinds of unique organisms. There are 256 species of concern to conservationists that rely on ancient woodlands.

We must also be concerned about footpaths, whether formally recorded or otherwise. The Ordnance Survey is not a complete record and it is imperative that the Definitive Map and Statement for the County be consulted. Even this is not necessarily the full story. There are unclassified County Roads where the status is under review, there are outstanding and pending Definitive Map Modification Orders, there are claims going through due legal process and there are historic ways which have not yet been added to the map which all authorities are looking at under the requirements of the CRoW Act.

Please add your thoughts to the consultation process.

OBITUARIES

TOM PRICE

8 April 1919 - 30 July, 2013



One edition after Tom wrote an obituary for the journal on his long time friend George Spenceley we find ourselves having to mark his own passing, very shortly after George.

He was well know to us through the annals of his trips with George.

Tom Price was a mountaineer, explorer, artist and educator who believed there were few better classrooms than the adventurous outdoor world, a view founded on his own experience as a climber, explorer and teacher. As warden of the Outward Bound School in Eskdale, Cumbria, he helped around 5,000 young people drawn from all classes and backgrounds towards a better understanding of themselves and others through month-long adventurous courses in the mountains of the Lake District. Tom took over the headship once held by Eric Shipton, the renowned mountaineer and explorer, and his already adventurous life later became significant in the development of outdoor education.

He was born in Sheffield, the son of a railway worker. After winning a scholarship from Alsop High School he began studying English and History at Liverpool. The university mountaineering club introduced him to rock climbing at which he quickly became expert having a slight, wiry build and a fearless approach to steep rock. His studies were interrupted by war and he was called up, electing to join the Royal Navy "for the lure of the sea and the watery wilderness of the oceans." He recalled that the war probably saved his life. His confidence as a climber was such he seemed to stick magically to any rock face. "I joined the forces and spent the war safely at sea," he later declared.

Tom volunteered to serve as able seaman on mine sweepers in the hope of seeing Iceland and the Bering Strait. Instead he spent two years on patrol in the western Atlantic on a trawler using its fishing tackle to hunt for mines, only occasionally going into Gibraltar to refuel. One night ashore ended with Price on captain's report for drunkenness, but instead of being sternly disciplined he was told his academic record suggested he might become an officer. He passed selection and as a first lieutenant was assigned to Combined Operations, a force being built up for the invasion of France. He was posted as first lieutenant on a landing craft converted into a rocket assault ship which opened the barrage on Juno beach with a salvo of 1000 missiles. He was then given command of his own rocket ship, HM LCR 405, which he took to the Mediterranean to assist in the invasion of the south of France at one stage by landing secret agents on the Italian coast.

When hostilities ceased in Europe Tom's rocket ship was destined for Pacific waters but the Hiroshima bomb cancelled that prospect. He returned to Liverpool for two and a half years to complete his degree, ending with a BA and teaching diploma. Back regularly among the crags and fell tops of Cumbria he joined the teaching staff at Workington Grammar School and with his naval background became coxswain of the local lifeboat.

During his 12 years at the school Tom was allowed leave to join the survey expedition to South Georgia led by Duncan Carse, polar explorer aka Dick Barton special agent of the BBC radio series. He was part of a small team of mountaineers giving protection to the surveyors as they went about their work, often in dangerous situations. George was the photographer. The weather was frequently stormy with bad visibility and on one occasion his team of surveyors and climbers became so delayed that a second team set out from base to search for them.

The two groups stumbled past one another in the storm, Tom and his surveyors reaching camp to find it deserted. Meanwhile the "rescuers" became in need of rescue when one of them fell into a crevasse. Everyone regrouped safely the next day and Tom departed South Georgia with a glacier named after him as did George.

Tom took over as warden at Eskdale from John Lagoe who had already introduced the more relaxed regime favoured by Eric Shipton and Price's climbing, sailing and adventure credentials made him a worthy successor to Shipton's ideals. He remained there for seven years, putting his own stamp on the way adventure could be used as a powerful tool in education.

His approach was not authoritarian and designed more to spark enthusiasm and self-reliance whilst his writing and lectures on outdoor education won him increasing respect. He moved to Yorkshire as an advisor to the West Yorkshire Education Authority where his essays and ideas about the value of adventure in education won wide support. In 1973 he became the Dean of Bingley Teacher Training College where he was instrumental in promoting outdoor activities and attracting a significant number of talented climbers among staff and students. He was a former president of the British Mountaineering Council and a founder member of the Mountain Leadership Training Board which introduced the now accepted certification standards.

In later years Tom was acknowledged as an accomplished painter. He also went on several challenging expeditions, among them a ski traverse of the Alps with André Roch, the Swiss mountaineer who almost reached the summit of Everest a year ahead of the British.

One of the rewards of the South Georgia expedition was the continued friendship enjoyed by its participants and while they were both living in the north, George and Tom met with some regularity. It was at one such meeting that, as an alternative to the crags, they took to the waters of Windermere in Tom's Canadian canoe. This brief spell on the water was to lead to bigger deeds. A year later they embarked on a five-week canoe journey across the Barren Lands of Canada's greatest wilderness. Put in by seaplane, they canoed 500 miles down the Hanbury and Thelon rivers to the Inuit settlement of Baker Lake.

On his 90th birthday Tom went for a walk over Glaramara.

A gentle and amusing man, Tom's personal life was complex and thoroughly described in 'I'm a Stranger Here Myself' written for the British Library archive.



He also wrote 'Travail So Gladly Spent' in 2000 in which he

reflected on mountaineering as a compulsion to transcend the ordinary and aspire to greater heights and enlargement of spirit.

Even when powers were waning and bones were becoming more brittle, mountaineers, he believed, remained at heart true romantics,

There was standing room only for Tom's funeral at Distington Crematorium with people there from all walks of life including members of numerous climbing clubs.. Affectionate and eloquent tributes were paid by Stewart Wagstaff and Roger Putnam, former instructor and former warden of Eskdale Outward Bound, recalling the wise counsel Price had given to the school and to outdoor education. Philip MacLeod Coupe, past president of the Lake Artists Society, described Tom's skill as a painter and his instinctive style and Dennis Gray, past general secretary of the BMC spoke of the valuable contribution Tom had made to the direction of the sport during a critical time of change.

Dennis Gray recalled the time when Tom had asked him to be his second on a climb over the rooftops of Bingley Training College to retrieve a Christmas Tree that some anonymous student had placed on the top of the college flagpole. This happened the day before the college was due for a visit from a group of government inspectors. It was a demanding climb with the final pitch up a lightning conductor. Tom was probably less concerned about the Christmas tree as the pair of knickers that lay even higher up the pole. They were inscribed in red letters, "I Love Tom". The culprit was never identified, but among students at the time were some gifted and well-known women mountaineers.

Tom was aged 94 when he died and is survived by his wife, Margaret, from whom he separated, two sons, his partner Jean, and five grand children.

We are indebted to Ron Faux for the bulk of this obituary.

G D BULL

David joined the Club in 1982 and sadly died on 18th August, aged 74 years.

He was survived by his wife Jean and his children Andrew, Stephen and Jennie, and their families.

His funeral was held at the United Reform Church, Savile Park, Halifax.

Brenda, wife of Bill Lofthouse, knew Jean as organisers of a company of girl guides and invited her and David along for a meal introducing them to Bill. Bill then discovered that David was a climber and the two men hit it off; climbed together and eventually David joined the YRC.

David was closely involved in the Halifax Scouts' Centre at Hebden Hey near Hardcastle Crag in terms of maintenance, development and providing activities for the youngsters attending the centre. He and Jean were wardens for the centre.

In his most active years he regularly climbed with Bill and knew the local crags well and recalled several of these climbs, on one of the Club's recent visits to Hebden Hey.

SLINGSBY TRUST

Slingsby Trust Board Meeting 2013: an informal report from the President, Michael Smith, the YRC's representative on the Board

One September Wednesday this year in the Peak district I'd been out walking in shorts with our village retirees looking for two-barred crossbills seen twice recently in a reservoir-side plantation. So it was a shock the next day, after flying to Oslo, Norway, and taking the Valdresekspressen bus to the Jotunheimen, to find the temperature was down to 1°C. Despite arriving at 11pm I was welcomed to the Klingenberg Hotel in Årdalstangen by Erling Eggun, Chair of the Slingsby Trust. The hotel is at the far end of Sognefjord and boats from Bergen used to bring mountaineers here for easier access to the mountains than travelling overland across this mountainous and fjord bisected terrain. The earlier hotel here was William Cecil Slingsby's base in the area including when he was preparing for the 1876 first, and in the final event solo, ascent of Støren, or Støre Skagatølstind to give it its full name. Later Slingsby accepted Honorary membership of the YRC: hence our link with the Trust.

Before the 6pm Trust's AGM and Board meetings, I had time for a walk. Erling drove me up the valley past Øvre Ardal, with its aluminium plant using the HEP generated in Årdalstangen, to Hjelle. As he returned to run the hotel, I headed off up the valley to the picturesque hamlet of Vetti then steeply up to the overlook by the top of Vettifossen. This dizzyingly high waterfall is supposed to be the longest uninterrupted drop on northern Europe at 275m of its 450m fall. A short distance beyond is Vettismorti, a collection of cabins on a high shelf littered with frosted silver birch trees gently dropping their leaves as they warmed in the bright sunshine. The view to the north is of Store Ringstind above its glacier nicely framed between two nearer mountainsides. To the south there are a number of peaks within walking distance but ascending the best one needs at least several hours for the round trip.

After a picnic lunch and a chat to someone from Bergen staying there, it was a quick descent back to the roadhead for 3pm to be met by Alois, a Latvian runner, from the hotel. A shower and change of clothes then it was time for drinks and introductions before the Board meeting.

Most of their AGM, like ours, is taken up with formalities though I was able to report that the YRC had negotiated with the Alpine Club a means of maintaining the Trust's complete collection of AC Journals. Their supply had lapsed following the poor health and death of Jocelyn Winthrop-Young. There were two other topics discussed at length which may be of interest. The first is a plan for the next seminar which will discuss the conflicts of interest in outdoor activities from the perspectives of walkers, climbers, mountain bikers, skidoosers, hunters, birders, conservationists, industry, etc. The point was made that climber Slingsby was also a hunter and in those simpler, Victorian times this was not considered a conflict. Nor were trundling or scree-running. However, today's increasingly technical outdoor specialisms and massively increased participation following the democratisation of leisure do lead to conflicts of interest. Being aware of these conflicts may be a step to lessening their impacts. Secondly, the small summer farm cabin of Vormeli where Slingsby stayed and used as a base for some of his better known ascents is nearing the end of its current lease and is need of repair. There may be a chance of restoring the building, making it available for use by a wider range of people and bringing it under the protection of the local Park authorities. Negotiations are at a very early stage but the Trust supports the project. The cabin is about 10 hours walk from its nearest neighbours so it is unlikely to attract many visitors and there is no intention to create a commercial establishment but instead to secure for the future an historic and culturally significant building.

Meetings over by 8:30 allowed time for a bite to eat before the 9pm illustrated lecture on the relationship between composer Edvard Grieg and both Slingsby and the Jotunheim. This was delivered in English as I was present but this caused little difficulty for the professor of pathology from Oslo University. Since retirement he has documented this topic including records or audio recordings of people who met Greig in the mountains, played folk tunes for him (some on primitive goats' horn flutes), wrote to him and dissected his corpse. That last was from an account apparently leaked to a French newspaper from the Bergen hospital and its content unknown in Norway. Employees of public bodies feeding confidential information to the press is not new. It was 11pm by the time we wrapped up and I had an early start the next morning.

My drinking tea at 5am while the others had the usual Norwegian strong coffee caused some amusement. With Erling and Alois, I went round the headland to Lærdal parked near the hospital and headed steeply up Oftadalen along a rough path used to move sheep to and from the high pasture. Within an hour the stars had faded, it was light enough to see our way as we swung northwards past a few mountain cabins and up again on a barely visible path to skirt a rocky plateau, cross a valley and over to a bowl high on the slopes of 4,000ft Hogsrtyn.

Here we quartered the ground over a square kilometre looking for a small cairn erected by Erling two days earlier. He had been stalking a herd of reindeer with a permit to shoot a yearling. It had taken a long time and a few approaches to get lined up correctly and make the kill. That left only enough time before darkness descended to gralloch (gut) it and bury the carcass under a pile of stones to keep scavengers off and get back down. Our mission was to finish off the butchering job. I eventually spotted the cairn using binoculars and we found the carcass intact, the cold weather had kept it fresh. Saw, hunters' knife and brute strength removed the hide, hooves and head then jointed the meat for bagging and packing in our rucksacks. I took the two haunches and an hour or so from finding the spot we were on our way over the peak's rough shoulder and down north then west to the fjord-side. A nine-hour day on the hill.

On the way down, below more cabins and in the pine woods, we passed two elk haunches hanging from a tree and awaiting collection. They were each over a metre in length and would have required a stretch of the arms to wrap them around the widest point. I was glad not to be carrying one of those down. Our meat was soon in the hotel's larder ready to hang for a week or so.

Early the following morning it was back home via Oslo and Manchester making a five-day trip. The YRC maintains its link with Slingsby and with Norwegian mountaineering through the Slingsby Trust and the Board members value our contribution. The financial cost is largely met by the Trust or the Hotel and while ever we can sustain this link I think we should.

Erling and Alois skinning the reindeer

Cabin at Vettismorti with Store Ringstind the far distance



CHINAMAN

Tim Josephy

This story happened a number of years ago. I was skating around on slippery scree below the great crag of Diffwys high on the slopes of Moel Hebog above Beddgelert. It was a warm and humid August evening and I was on my own. I should have had a partner but she'd had second thoughts and was disporting herself on the sunny rocks of Tremadog instead. I should have turned back but it had taken years of prevarication and weak excuses before I got here and I probably wouldn't ever get round to it again.

Diffwys is one of the biggest crags in Snowdonia but it has never been popular because of its thick mantle of vegetation. There are routes – dozens of them, but they are from a time when such drawbacks were greeted with equanimity and even enthusiasm. Showell Styles was an aficionado as was the great adventurer Paul Orkney Work. I was there to unearth a route done in 1950, of particular interest to the YRC.

There were tendrils of mist growing around the foot of the crag as I found the start of the route. I opened my sack to discover why it felt so light. The rope was still nestling comfortably on the back seat of my car. With no means of safe retreat I really should have turned back, but here I was and how could I admit to giving up so easily? I pressed on.

The first pitch started up a chimney, not too bad, but the groove above was vegetated and greasy. The holds were rounded and the whole thing was not nice. Come on! Don't be a wimp! Do it! I did.

Looking down, I realised that any attempt at retreat now would almost certainly result in a broken ankle or worse. Oh well, press on. Higher up I reached a noisome cleft that the pioneers named the Opium Den. It was necessary to worm one's way up it then launch into a groove above. There wasn't far to fall, just enough to cause considerable injury and the holds were less than satisfactory.

I retreated back to the ledge to consider my options. My climbing partner wouldn't miss me until the next time we had planned to climb and no-one else knew where I was. Retreat was an unpleasant option and continuing seemed no better. I felt very much alone. I sat on the ledge and pondered my stupidity.

After a time I began to have a feeling that I was not alone. A voice in my head urged me on saying the move wasn't so bad – one step up and there would be a good hold in the groove. I looked about; did I just catch a lanky figure dressed in an old black anorak, ex WW2 gas mask case hanging over one shoulder as he disappeared into the mist above the ledge? The feeling of companionship was strong and I returned to the fray with new confidence. I cleaned the foothold and stepped up to find a magnificent spike hidden in the heather. It was all over, the climbing eased and I romped up rough ribs to the hillside above.

Somewhere up there the feeling of companionship faded and by the time I finished the climb I was alone again. I walked up in the gathering dusk to the summit and sat for a while, but the feeling didn't return. Eventually I got up and walked down towards the lights of Beddgelert glimmering far below through gaps in the cloud.

Now I don't believe in ghosts and I don't really think I experienced anything of that sort at all. The climb is only a V Diff so logic says there had to be a good hold in such a situation, otherwise it would be harder. But I do believe that the influence of the people who taught us in our formative years lives on with us and in times of stress the memory of our tutors and the example they set comes out to save us from harm just as they did themselves when they were alive.

Chinaman 415ft V Diff - First Ascent: Paul Work, Brian Nicholson (YRC): June 1950

THE ZILLERTALER RUNDE AND THE BERLINER HÖHENWEG

Hut-to-hut in the Zillertal, Austria, for nine days in August of 2013 - Michael Smith

Helen and I were attracted to this round by encouraging reports from various friends who had completed parts of it but they warned of some long days between certain huts. So at fairly short notice we booked ferry crossings, drove down to Mayrhofen, on the opposite side of the Inn opposite Achensee, and handed over €300 each to a bureau in the high village of Ginzing. While we went for a beer they contacted the eight huts and reserved places and *halppension* meals for us. We were given vouchers to hand over in place of payment. All that remained was to pack our sacks, put the car in the long-term car park (€15 for two weeks) and catch the cable car (€11 each) up towards the first hut, the Karl von Edelhütte.

In glorious weather despite long looks at the view we were up at the hut with enough time to tick off the nearby Ahornspitze, 2,976m. The two hour ascent had a good rocky finish and I'm told it was the daily training route taken from the valley by Peter Hablerin preparation for his 1978 Everest ascent with Messner, the first ever without supplemental oxygen. Our oxygen-rich late ascent gave ample opportunities to talk to people as they hurried down to catch the last gondola back to the valley and they stopped to check that we did not want to catch it. One was a Huddersfield postman. Nowadays the route goes well right of the rocky gully described in our guidebook, probably because of the reduced danger from stonefall.

Descending using steel cables round a precipitous corner I had my only mishap of the trip – frayed steel wires from the cable rip through my right index finger. This proved to be a bit of a nuisance for a few days.

Back at the hut we found that, not for the first time, the British are at odds with the Germans. The Germans have built and run almost all the high mountain huts in the area and comprise the vast majority of users. Their Berliner Höhenweg guidebook description runs from the Gamshütte and runs widdershins to the Berliner with an extension on the Zillertal Runde to the Edel Hütte. Our British guidebook gets it the right way round and we two alone are going clockwise. As my dear mother put it "Look, they're all out of step except for our Michael."

An unexpected consequence of this we discovered on our first night. We were on the scattered thin mattresses on the floor in the ill-lit loft space with beams, struts and ties everywhere to be worked around which in itself did not bode well for a good night's sleep. The Germans were of course celebrating the completion of their round with many rounds of lager and schnapps accompanied by songs and toasts. They made sure we realised they were heading for bed by putting the light on, hailing their friends and knocking things over. Once in bed they let us know they were soundly asleep by snoring. Then they were soon back up again to empty their bladders and repeat the process. Not a good first night's sleep for us but we were up for a 7am breakfast and half an hour later ready for the first full day of the route.

We had been warned that this was something of an endurance test, 8 to 10 hours with 750m of ascent and 800m of descent and some 'technical' sections. Within an hour or so of departure we were scrambling up steep rock on rods and stemples to cross the first of three cols on ridges in the early part of the day's route. These certainly held one's attention and their descents were no easier. Some of the traverses were on steep ground and cable handrails gave some sense of security should one stumble. For part of this day we had the company of a lone walker, Manuel, and a chance to use my Spanish. After a few hours the route levelled out somewhat and crossed large boulder fields so rough that one could not establish an even pace. We passed a shallower ridge, a bivouac hut, more

boulder fields and a couple of final ridges all heading roughly south before a descent to the Kasseler Hütte. We had made good time at 8 hours with only a couple of short breaks. We asked for and got a bed as we felt we deserved a good night's sleep after that.

Generally, we had only ourselves for company during the days. So the evenings' conversations in the huts were welcome. This night it was a family from the Kassel district who maintained this hut. Their children were teachers in training. Before we set off the next morning the guardian warned of rain in the afternoon. Our guidebook calls this 6 hour day with 700m ascent and 650m of descent a comparative rest day after yesterday's rigours. We had an undulating start crossing melt waters then after a few hours pull up over snowfields to the Lapenscharte (pass).

On the descent to the Greizer Hütte we saw marmots and two climbers high on the steep face of the Gikalitz. We arrived long before the rain but there was no bed and we get a small lager designed for 8 and shared with just three quiet ladies – another good night's sleep. Meanwhile, the rain was beating down overnight and our route for the next day was over a high steep 'technical' pass with ladders now covered in thick snow. It does not make sense to risk this. We quickly decide to make a long detour down the Floitengrundtal to Ginzling, take taxi or bus up to Breitlahner and then ascend the valley up to the Berliner Hütte. Perhaps 18km, 14 of them walked, instead of the 5km across the blocked pass. It was a wet trudge, initially steep then on a graded track and then a plod up in slightly drier conditions.

In both valleys we stopped at lower huts for a warm drink to break the day. This day was not the high point of our trip.

Now, the Berliner Hütte is not your run of the mill hut. Built in 1879 as a small cottage it has been greatly expanded and can now take about 160 people and another 17 in *notlager* (emergency) places. In WWII elite German troops trained using the hut as a base. The main room is a lofty dining hall traditionally decorated in the baronial style of elitist early 20th century mountaineering when it was used by the Austrian royal family. We were allocated humbler accommodation, a small room for two on the second floor but up a grand staircase. There was a bed and a mattress on the floor. Guess who got which?

The walk to the single shower involved four changes of floor and a couple of hundred metres of corridor with creaking floorboards. I got lost on the way back. In contrast with prim of British bunkhouse showers, the Germanic version is more public. The shower cubicle was transparent sided and the routine was to strip off and stand in the queue chatting jovially in the buff clutching one's shampoo and shower token. The tokens gave three minutes hot water and within seconds the next person was in and the last drying off outside. That's a much faster throughput than the closeted British system and you certainly get to know your dinner companions.

The weather did not improve the next day. We had pre-paid bookings for fixed nights in the huts and a tight deadline for our return to the UK. Without these we would have been tempted to head down the valley and stay there until the weather improved. Instead, we stayed a second night at the Berliner. Generally, hut guardians would phone ahead to the next hut and delay that booking by a day. However, the DAV (Deutscher Alpenverein) had published this spring an account of the Höhenweg route extolling its virtues resulting in a large increase in bookings. At the height of the season they were running at 150% capacity this year.

To get some exercise we toggled up and walked 1½ hours up to the Schwarzsee, a corrie tarn. We found an overhanging boulder and squeezed ourselves into the cubic metre of dry space to have our *snap*: crispbread with a squeeze of cheese, dried fruit, chocolate waifer and a muesli bar washed down with water. About to leave we noticed two people descending. They had attempted the pass towards our previous hut and sensibly turned back.

While the clouds are still covering the ridges the next morning, the rain had stopped. Our way onwards was another technical 3,000m pass, about 7 hours with 1,040m ascent, and we decided to attempt it rather than skip down the valley and round again. The route was interesting. First a traverse then stream crossings, up a long moraine, a rising traverse under a large crag then on a rake back across its face and over the crest above to an airy ridge as we reached the snowline. Poles were stowed and the scrambling began.

The near vertical thin steel cables gave little grip and were of little help but the rock gave plenty of holds. Care was needed with footholds on account of the depth of wet snow. Nearing the Schönbichler Sharte the cables traversed off left taking us across a face and then steeply up the last bit. We were the first from the Berliner up to the col and making reasonable time so we decide to climb the nearby Schönbichler Horn, 3,081m. We made the top as the weather closed in, thick cloud and snowfall hastening our slippery slabby rock descent which zig-zagged down to the Furtschagel Haus hut at 2,295m.

That evening we whiled away a few hours and a couple of schnapps chatting to a German couple who cycled all round Scotland as students. He, a gynaecologist, had recently completed the south-west coastal path.

Neither the next day's weather nor the route were inspiring. We splosh down, pass alongside a long HEP reservoir then pull steeply up to the Olpererhütte. All in the rain. Thankfully this was only a 5 hour day with 600m ascent. Eventually the hut loomed out of the mist. The main feature of this new hut was its 10m wide panoramic window near which we sat and read sipping tea.

There were slight clearings but it was the next morning before we got the full view of the reservoir, ten glaciers

and many surrounding peaks. People dashed outside to snap the early light on the mountains only to slip and slide on the iced decking.

Our onward route could have been our shortest day, 3 hours and 600m ascent to the Friesenberg Haus but we decided to extend it to take in a peak. The wet weather had swollen the streams as we traversed the hillside now heading north. After crossing more boulder fields, this time with a reasonable path across them, we were looking down on the hut. Instead of descending we took a sweeping traverse on a fair path to bring us to a col between the Höher Riffler, 3,228m, and the Petersköpfl, 2,677m. Leaving the sacks, I headed for the former and Helen the latter. The Riffler took about 1½ hours in ascent, much of it on snow covered boulders and a shattered arête needing great care. The only others I saw on the ridge were two young Germans taking it slowly. The summit was typical of the area with a huge metal cross and a summit book in a metal box. This one also had snow encrusted Nepalese prayer flags dangling from the cross's arms – hedging one's religious bets. The views were clear over towards the Hintertux glacier ski area but not towards the Dolomites. Helen's top was covered in innumerable cairns of all shapes and sizes said to be erected in memory of the souls lost to the holocaust. The Friesenberg Haus was built by the Jewish section of the DAV. While elite German troops were training in this area the hut still had a Jewish guardian.

After lounging around for a while we descended to the hut, our last of the tour, enjoying its cosy atmosphere after the oversized Berliner and Olperer. We only have notlager here having changed our booking. The notlager are squeezed into a small room. You step in and have only a square metre of floor space. To the right are two tiers of long mattresses each with six places. Ahead is a two tier bunk of narrower shorter single beds. We take those. Neither has a rail. You can guess who has the top one and spends the night huddled against the wall retrieving his blankets from falling off the side of the bunk.

The official route heads on the Gamshütte on a long day. As the second half of this is not especially interesting we decide to tackle the precipitous sections round ridges for 4 hours with 900m of ascent and more descent to reach the Pitzental hut and descend steeply down to the valley a little above Ginzling then head there to catch the bus. On the way Helen spots a pine marten, a dead mole and an adder.

As we descend the temperature rises and we are soon in shorts and short-sleeved shirts. By early afternoon we are enjoying a beer as we wait for that bus.

That round I would recommend to anyone but it is more demanding than the Stubai Rucksack Route both in the difficulty of the terrain and the length of the walking days.

I notice that a well-known British adventure trekking company offer this route for £1,100 half-board starting and finishing in Munich. I doubt our trip cost us half of

that. Something to look out for is a new and easier hut-to-hut route in the area, the Peter Habler round which is due to be opened this year.

Useful information:

Rather than driving there flights to Innsbruck or nearby German airports have good rail and bus links to Jenbach (west of Innsbruck) and Mayrhofen.

Accommodation in Mayrhofen is readily available outside the ski season. B&B typically under €30 per person per night. The hut booking bureau is the Naturparkbetreuung Zillertal Alpen, info@naturpark-zillertal.at, and they can organise half-pension in advance and send you the vouchers, €300 each. Beds, as opposed to larger, may be available at an extra cost. If you arrive at a hut without a booking and they are full then you may be asked to move on to the next hut provided you can reasonably be expected to get there before about 6pm. Unlike other countries, Austria's huts do not always supply hut shoes. We always found acceptable pairs but most visitors were bringing their own. Most of the huts had hot showers: 3 minutes for €2.

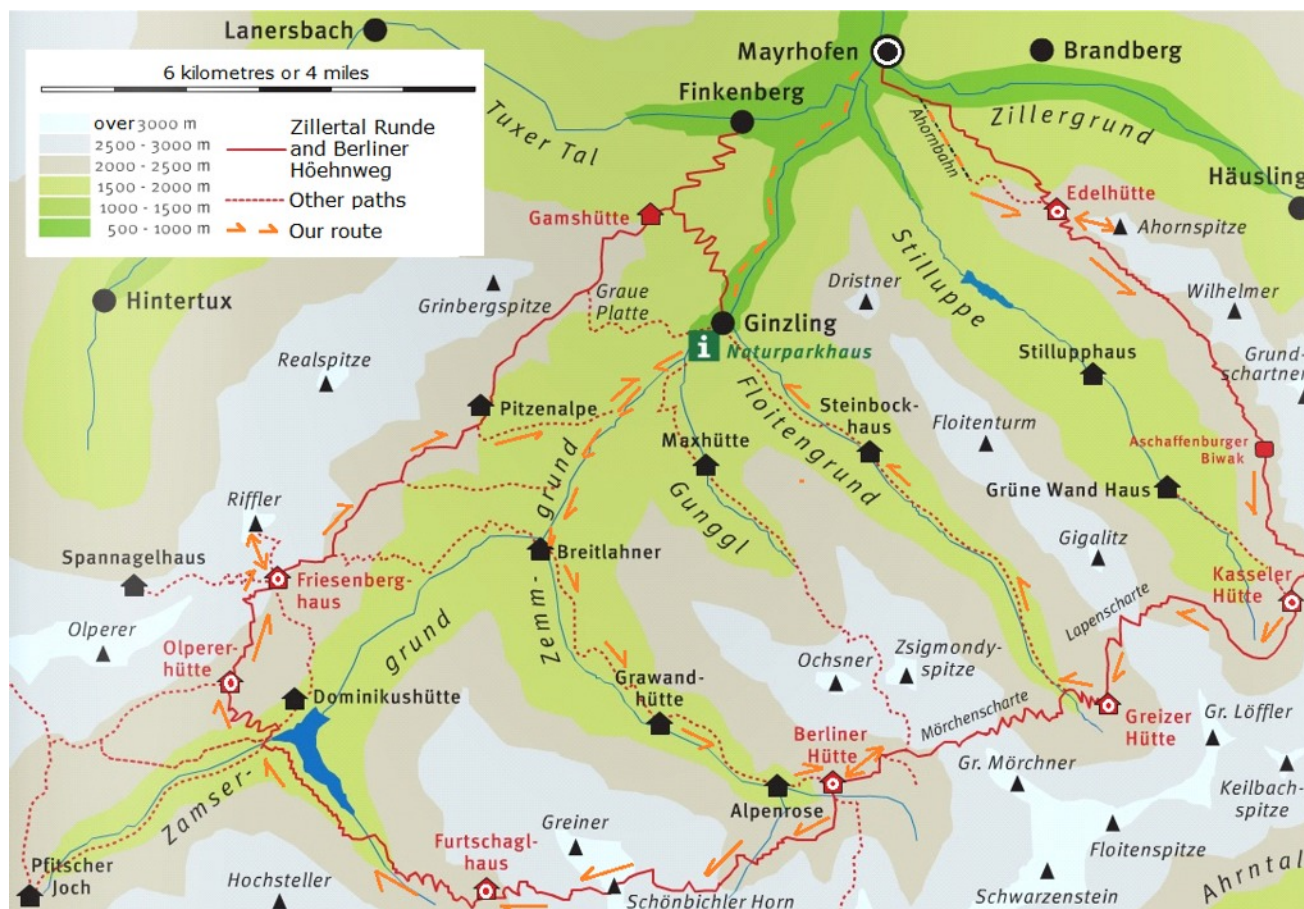
Maps at 1:25,000 are included in the pack from the bureau. In good weather you will not need them unless you wish to pick out nearby features. In bad weather they are useful for planning alternatives.

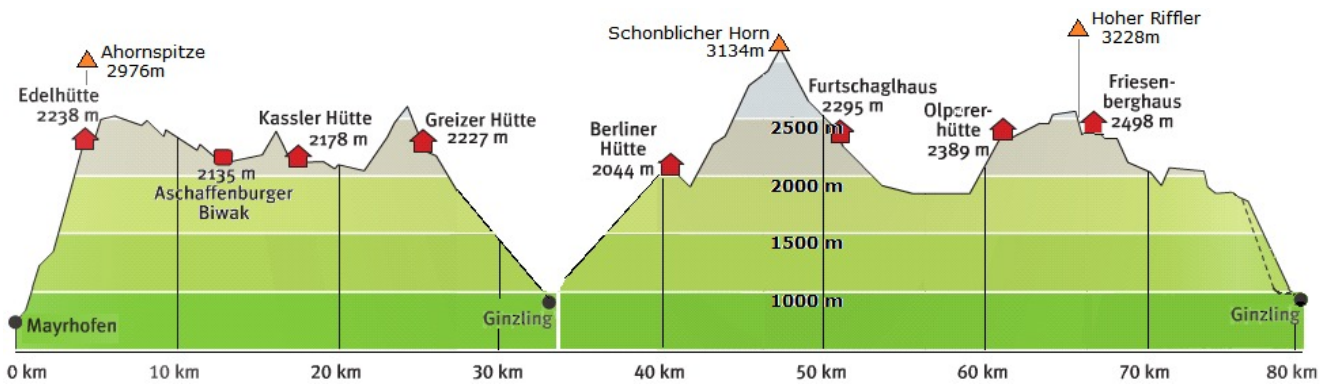
The guidebook we used was Cicerone's 2013 2nd edition, 2013, Trekking in the Zillertal Alps by Allan Hartley.

Public transport is available on the roads above Mayrhofen and is sufficiently frequent to be useful. The bureau vouchers include about four bus tickets for free travel locally. Where buses do not operate there are private taxi services in some cases (not up to the Berliner hütte though) and for the Stilluppertal taxi there are two vouchers included in the pack.

Payment in the huts (for drinks, extra food, beds, etc) used to be by cash though we noticed that some were now accepting credit cards. In one case it depended on an intermittent connection of the card machine with the valley and the staff had to stand by the window to get any reception. Cash is probably more reliable.

The meals provided in the huts have good portions. We usually supplemented them on arrival with a couple of litres of tee wasser (~€2 but this appears to be going out of fashion as people now just buy cups of tea) and a beer later. We took crispbread, tubes of 'cheese', dried fruit, chocolate and muesli bars for lunch and, for the first few days, apples. This was quite heavy to carry 18 person-days supplies and we could have reduced the load by buying food bars at the huts and eating less during the day. It is good, though, to have some spare food with you in these wild places.





Care is needed because of the steep ground: this was on the first full day

The final descent to Ginzling





**Manuel and Helen crossing one of the three ridges early on the first full day
Crossing a snow field on the Lapenscharte after the Kassler Hütte**



**Ridges above the Floitengrundtal showing the bad weather which drove us down
Ascent of the Schönblicher Horn: the route crosses a pass 120m below**



**Crossing a bridge over a glacier melt soon after the Olperer Hütte
Michael on his mattress in the Berliner Hütte**

ANIMALS CAN BE WILD !

With manslaughter charges pending we should not discuss in detail, the fatal incident in Leicestershire when a walker in one of my local groups was killed by cattle, but in the light of a number of other recent similar events in the news, questions have been asked again about just what the situation is about beasts in open country and in farm fields where there is a Public Right of Way (Prow).

The guidelines issued by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) attempt to clarify what farmers can and cannot do, and the National Farmers Union (NFU) also provides advice to its members.

There are eight dairy breeds identified in the rules as needing special care but a number of farmers are not very up to speed on legislation. They have a legal responsibility and ought to be aware, but it is suspected that many farmers' ignorance on the subject is due to them being snowed under with paperwork and regulations.

The applicable legislation is quite old and needs addressing to make it easier to understand and comply with.

Natural England are looking at it and it has been suggested that consideration be given by DEFRA to their guidance being updated (including the list of breeds). As numerous new breeds and crosses are being introduced to this country it was suggested that rather than have a list of breeds not allowed which would not cover new introductions, perhaps a safer route would be a list of the only permitted breeds.

NFU do produce a business guide for members entitled "Livestock on Rights of Way: A Guide to the Law", which goes through everything farmers need to know about their responsibilities, including the recognised dairy breeds which farmers cannot have in a field crossed by a public right of way. It goes into great detail; eight pages on past case law and good practice. They also produce articles from time to time which encapsulates that advice so are probably doing all they can.

The DEFRA website regarding livestock on PRoW's is to be found in the document Public Rights of Way:- Rights and Responsibilities (Updated June 2013)

Basically if a farmer has a potentially dangerous animal, he can be prosecuted if he keeps it on land crossed by a PRoW.

No dairy bull over ten months of age may be allowed to roam freely in a field which is crossed by a PRoW. Bulls of all other breeds must be accompanied by cows or heifers when in fields which have public access.

There is absolutely no protection given to a farmer

by putting up a notice saying ' Beware bull in field'. It is his responsibility to keep us safe if legally crossing his land.

Further to this if he puts up such a warning when there is no bull in the field or leaves it up when the bull has been removed he can be said to be at fault as he is constructively obstructing a highway.

Having talked of bulls however they are actually not as much a threat as are cows as most farmers do keep proper control of bulls. Despite this bull-handlers and farmers are in more danger than the passing public. Cows however are the cause of many fatalities and serious injuries; the NFU representative on one of the bodies I serve on stated that an average of seven people a year are killed by cows.

Invariably this is when cows have young calves with them and people are walking with a dog and dogs are of course a major issue. They must be under close control but if however, you are attacked you are advised to release your dog as it can avoid any attacks far better than you can.

Horses may be kept loose in fields crossed by PRoWs, as long as they are not known to be dangerous. They are big heavy animals with dangerous hooves and must be treated with respect. You are well advised not to walk behind them.

We have all heard of people being attacked by rams but for whatever reason that does seem to be a very rare occurrence these days.

All domesticated animals can act like wild ones if they feel threatened or are annoyed so we also have a responsibility to behave sensibly.

We must of course, also be aware of genuinely wild animals.

When we journey abroad to 'wild' lands we do take all the reasonable precautions we can but we do tend to think there are no threats to us in the UK.

Not so! Unfortunately this autumn a walker was badly gored by a stag. We must be aware of their rutting season and not go near them that time of year.

There have also this year been several cases of wild boar attacking dogs and one of wild pigs tearing up a tent searching for food.

All animals will normally avoid human contact unless they feel threatened. Loud noises and surprises are likely to spook them so the best answer is to make enough noise that they know you are there and no more than that.

They do feel threatened by crowds so if you are in a large party, split up to go past them.

Roy Denney

RIGHTS OF WAY LAW

The law concerning rights of way is both a minefield and an incredibly bureaucratic framework in that it can take forever to get even sensible adjustment made to the 'definitive map and statement' which is in effect the 'bible' as to what is a legal right of way.

To even start to understand the picture properly you need to look at the hundreds of years over which the present situation has developed, going back to the Enclosure Acts.

There is a tome which attempts to detail the present legal situation but that runs to just under 1000 pages and is not light reading in more ways than one. That will however be out of date shortly.

In 2000, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act introduced a cut-off date of 1st January 2026 when all 'unrecorded' public rights of way will be permanently extinguished. This section of CRoW Act has not been activated yet but is expected to be after the Deregulation Bill passes through Parliament. The cut-off prevents any reliance on historic evidence after that date although user-created PRowS will still be a possibility as will Dedication and Creation.

This legislation will hopefully speed up the processes for clarifying the issues and rectifying the many anomalies. One thing is abundantly clear if we do not wish to lose out, the user groups and interested individuals are going to have to get involved as busy local authority employees in these financially challenged times will not have the capacity to identify all the problems before the proposed cut off date.

Amongst other changes probably to be in the Act which will make a real difference are that surveying authorities should have a new power to reject applications that do not meet a Basic Evidential Test, on the understanding that they may be resubmitted if more convincing evidence can be found. Similarly surveying authority should be allowed to discount any irrelevant objections. The Act is also likely to set out a process for modification of the definitive map and statement by consent by means of a "modification consent order". This process includes provision to alter the right of way before it is recorded, provided agreement can be reached between the local authority and all affected landowners.

It will probably also lay down that surveying authorities should determine applications and make any consequent definitive map modification order in a reasonable timescale. Where they do not, both applicants and affected owners should be able to seek a court order requiring the authority to resolve the matter. Surveying authorities will have an important role as now, in securing the recording of useful or potentially useful routes if there is convincing evidence of pre-1949 rights of way along them.

At present the draft Deregulation Bill includes: Clause 12 will, after the cut off date of 2026, give extra

protection to already recorded rights of way by preventing the making of a deletion order in respect of any way if deleting it would affect the use of a definitive path and the only basis for deleting it was evidence that it did not exist prior to 1949. It will therefore lower the number of deletion applications. Clause 18 gives effect to Schedule 6, which makes changes to the procedures for 'ascertaining rights of way' in England. These include a simplified procedure for dealing with 'obvious' errors in the definitive map and statement; special diversions for ways which have fallen into disuse whose existence has been proven by documentary evidence, so that these can be realigned by agreement, subject to certain conditions; a new system for determining applications for definitive map modification orders, in which appeals to the Secretary of State against decisions by a surveying authority not to make an order can involve a full public inquiry into the entire matter (instead of the prima facie issue being determined purely on the papers followed by direction to make an order followed by public inquiry where objections are placed); a right to apply to the magistrates' court where the surveying authority is slow determining an application and a means of transferring applications for definitive map modification orders from one person to another. Schedule 6 also enables order making authorities to dismiss irrelevant objections and so confirm an opposed order if the objections do not relate to the law, and to sever composite orders so as to confirm the unopposed parts and submit to the Secretary of State for determination only the parts which attracted un-withdrawn objections.

When the cut off was introduced, it was said this would benefit both land managers and users in terms of greater certainty about the existence of rights of way. We had 26 years to correct the record but if we do not know where we are starting from it is a minefield and it is all very well but what does 'recorded' mean. There are ancient paths and bridleways evidenced through historical records and we could have them recorded. There are however many paths in use of which there are records but are they recorded within the meaning of this act? There are many smaller roads and lanes falling into the gaps in the legislation and possibly technically unrecorded.

Given the historic basis of the network there are many problems with the present layout. There are missing links, often just down to poor recording for various reasons by parishes when the definitive map was started. It possibly came low on many parish councils' concerns at the time and was often rushed and not properly understood. There was possibly incomplete knowledge by the "parish surveyor" (if there was one) of the actual use or status of routes. There was probably landowner pressure not to record paths, especially as was often the case, when a landowner was a parish councillor. At parish and highway authority level, there would have been some misunderstanding as to what was a "public path" or "bridleway" and what was a 'Road Used as a Public Path.

Lets hope the new legislation sorts this out but don't hold your breath.

Roy Denney

CHIPPINGS



HOSTING OUR LEADERS

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Mountaineering chose to make their annual day out with the BMC a visit to the Yorkshire Dales on the Friday (13 September) preceding our joint meet with the Wayfarers.

Chris Bonington and Alan Hinks joined the group who did varying parts of a 13-mile walk from Albert Chapman's home on Wherside to Ribbleshead over Ingleborough.

This is the motley crew including our President, Michael Smith and his wife Helen



BESIDE THE SEASIDE.....

To quote a well known song, we do like to be beside the seaside, as discussed by the group above. Unfortunately a lot of the coast is not accessible to us despite legislation that should be opening it up.

Going down to the sea is one of life's simple pleasures and one most of us were introduced to as very young children. We have fond memories of playing on the beach; making sand castles, going for a paddle, catching crabs off jetties and hunting in rock pools.

We are an island nation and the sea is in our blood; the coast with the sound of lapping waves accompanied by the cries of gulls, instils a kind of calm in our hectic lives.

As we grew older we went farther afield and as a club we have had meets using coastal footpaths, often with as much climb as we meet on treks across the high country.

Climbing in and out of stream valleys along the Cleveland Way or South West Coast Path gave you plenty of ascent if not much elevation.

Despite this over a third of our coastline remains out of bounds. The Marine and Coastal Access Act, which passed into law in 2009, provides for the creation of a complete path around England's coast, as well as access to all beaches and foreshores. This law guarantees that, when complete, the path will 'roll

back' on to the land immediately behind it should coastal erosion occur. It is not so much a path as a margin providing right of passage with spreading room.

When the Act came into force, it was hoped the new coast path would be completed within a decade but four years on, only one 20 mile stretch (Rufus Castle on Portland to Lulworth Cove), has been opened. With two more sections from Allonby to Whitehaven in Cumbria and Hartlepool to Sunderland in the north east due to open shortly. Beyond that, for the remaining 2,900 miles of coast path, the future remains uncertain.

For very modest outlay of funds this facility will have major benefits but we should not be having to make the case all over again. It will create a 3,000 mile path around our country.

It is estimated that the project will cost less than £50m and it is planned it should be spread over 20 years so we are looking at only £2.5m each year or about £1 a metre.

It won't just be walkers that will gain, it will boost economic growth, breathing new life into coastal communities, some of which are amongst the most deprived in the country.

It will help people experience the natural world around them, improving their health and well being, offering people new opportunities to unwind and get active.

If it is properly signposted as a series of through routes with reasonable access points it will encourage holiday

makers to spread out from the honey pots and use areas which may well have been informally used by locals for many years.

It will also bring people into contact with land managers creating opportunity for diversification to many often-struggling farmers etc.

The Wales Coast Path opened last year, putting Wales on the map as a new global tourist destination, boosting the principality's economy. People in Scotland can already enjoy the entire Scottish coast, thanks to the Land Reform Act 2003.

Once completed, the England Coast Path will connect with these coastlines to create a path like nowhere else in the world.

It is down to us whenever we get the opportunity to make the movers and shakers aware just how much we value our coast to make sure there is no back tracking and penny pinching.

Any savings would in any event, be false economy, as the Wales Path has proven. That cost £16m and is estimated to have generated twice that sum in the first year it was open.

AND IN THE MIDDLE

Enough of walking round the edge of the country as mentioned in the meet report, Martyn Trasler and I tried to walk to the centre of it on the September meet.

The idea came out of a report I received of difficulties walking to the centre of England at Lindley Hall Farm not far from where I live, after a TV article which implied it was accessible whereas it is actually on private land. We decided we would try and walk to the centre of the UK instead.

The information as to how to calculate the centre is one which we have covered some years ago but it is worth a précis here.

Our abject failure in this endeavour is covered in the meet report.

Meriden, near Coventry does claim to be the centre of England but it is all in how you determine it. How do you measure the centre of an irregular object ?

So far I have found 29 different definitions. The one I have always favoured was the point at which you would be furthest from the sea. This would put Meriden only a few miles out but how to measure even this is not a fine art.

Given the shape of Britain the answer on this basis would be the same for both England & Britain which is perhaps the best argument for coming up with something better. However, when looking at England, do you include Wales or should it be from the Welsh

border when this is nearer than the sea

However taking this system the OS have decided that the answer for Britain would be just south of Church Flats Farm just the Derbyshire side of the border with Leicestershire. This assumes 'as the crow flies' but a case might be said that as it is flat to the east but going west you have to climb hills then the answer in strides would be farther west. Presumably such measurements are done when the tide is in but do you include estuaries? They have however, for the purposes of this exercise, treated Britain as a whole.

A commonly accepted alternative is to take the longest line of longitude the length of Britain and the halfway point is then the centre. This comes out at Haltwistle where several local enterprises promote their being at the centre of Britain. Could not the same case not be made for the longest line of latitude although this again would be the same for England as Britain. Again it could be where these two lines meet. Why should they be lines of L or L - Should it not be half way along the longest possible straight line route on mainland Britain.

Possibly the furthest point North and furthest point South should be joined, and then East to West and where these cross should be the centre.

I have seen it calculated by drawing straight lines between the extremities of Britain such that they never cross land and taking the common intersection point of lines then drawn from all the touch points across the country to each other.

Another well supported technique is to effectively rely on gravity and as such define the centre based on mass. This involves making a cut out of Britain and the centre is then the point at which it would balance on a fulcrum. This does not of course allow for the volume of land above sea level at any given point so should it be loaded so that the mountains of Cumbria weigh more than the flatlands of Anglia?

Discounting this anomaly the OS calculates the centre Entire UK (including all islands) 7 km north west of Dunsop Bridge by Whitendale Hanging Stones.

This is Grid Reference: SD 64188.3, 56541.43 which is where we tried to go.

BT do in fact have a call box in Dunsop Bridge, claiming to be the one nearest to the centre of the United Kingdom, and we found that.

In deciding on this location they have however made allowance for the offshore islands. How? and should they have?

Using this method for England by itself the centre does indeed seem to be Lindley Hall Farm, between Atherstone and Hinckley which is just over 10 miles north of Meriden. On the same basis the centre of Scotland is by the north end of Loch Garry by the A9 from Inverness down to Perth. Whilst not many

of us would recognise it by name, for Wales it is Cwmystwyth, surprisingly near the Cardigan Bay coast.

I understand the OS say the point furthest from the sea in the British Isles is at Grid Reference SK 257144. This lies just east of Church Flatts Farm, approximately 1 mile south-east of Coton in the Elms, Derbyshire.

Centre of Great Britain - Mainland only 5.5 km SW of Clitheroe, Grid Reference: SD 72321.72 36671.1.

Great Britain Mainland plus the 7 major islands of Isle of Wight, Anglesey, Arran, Mull, Jura, Islay and Skye. The Eastern Edge of Longridge Fell, 1.5 km south east of Walker Fold and 1km north-west of Turner Fold. Grid Reference: SD 68123.7 41406.29.

England and Wales Hurst Green Farm, 2 km west of Curdworth south east of Sutton Coldfield. Grid Reference: SP 15627.33 92949.96.

Wales (mainland only) 3.5km north west of Claerwen Reservoir, next to Afon Claerddu. Grid Reference: SN 81162.99, 67795.6

Wales (including all surrounding islands) 7.5 km north-west of Claerwen Reservoir and 2.5 km south of Cwmystwyth. Grid Reference: SN 79728.22 , 71704.43.

Scotland (mainland only) 0.5 km west of White Bridge on the B846 (General Wade's military road) and 5.5 km south of Tummel Bridge. Grid Reference: NN 76731.26, 53751.42

Scotland (including all surrounding islands) 3 km east of the northern tip of Loch Garry. Grid Reference: NN66784.93, 71599.4.

Centre of London 300m east of Waterloo Station. Grid Reference TQ31330.87 79647.52 .

Northern Ireland (including all surrounding islands) Grid reference: 97004.44 533740.17

Northern Ireland (mainland only) Grid Reference: 96962.33 533666.07

ARCHIVE

Our archivist, Alan Linford, has delivered another batch YRC material to the North Yorkshire County Archive, to be added to the other YRC material deposited in 2003. It includes slides going back to the early part of the last century being the greater part of the Brian Nicholson collection

In May 2014 the Records Office have an open day and the Club will participate and supply old gear - rope ladder, nailed boots, hemp rope if we can find any, and any other bits and pieces to go with the historical caving slides.

It is to be hoped that when decided, the open day fits round our fixed meet dates so we can have a good presence. A good opportunity to recruit!

ENORMOUS VOLCANO FOUND

Olympus Mons, on Mars, is by far the biggest volcano in the solar system, till now.

The newly discovered one is a lot nearer to home but just as unlikely to be climbed.

O M can still claim to be the biggest but only just. A new one has been located in the sea off Japan 50 times larger than Mouna Loa, our biggest active volcano and about the size of the British Isles. Tamu Massif as it has been called is approaching 150 million years old, covers almost 120,000 sq miles and rises over two miles from the sea bed.

WALKING IN THE HILLS

The Welsh government has announced a review which could fundamentally change the way hill walkers and climbers experience the countryside in Wales, and could even result in an open access charter similar to the Scottish system. People familiar with the law surrounding public access to the countryside will know that Scotland has a very different system to England and Wales. In Scotland the law guarantees "a statutory right of responsible access to land and inland waters for recreation" - in simple terms, you can go where you want provided you behave. In England and Wales, however, rights are much more limited. If land is not designated as 'Open Access' - principally mountain, moor, heath, down and common land - you do not have a right to be there unless on a right of way or permissive path.

In Wales, at least, that could be about to change. Their Minister for Sports and Culture has instigated a review of the whole legislative framework that allows for access to the countryside of Wales for informal recreational and non-motorised access. Alongside this, the Welsh Government has started consulting with recreational users groups, landowners, farming unions, local authorities and other stakeholders on how they feel access to the countryside should work.

The Government of Wales state that they want to "secure better access to the outdoors for recreation, modernise and simplify the current regulatory framework, and provide clarity and certainty over where people can go and what they can do there.

This will enable them to take forward the Programme for Government commitments to improve access to the outdoors" They are seeking to improve Wales' extensive public path network.

This would involve extending and improving the rights granted under the Countryside and Rights of Way

(CRoW) Act to areas mapped as Open Access to a much larger area, including the coast, sea-cliffs, forests and even the inland waters and rivers of Wales. Access would be conditional upon following an access code or charter that would be legally enforceable, similar to the current model in Scotland and some other European countries.

Currently there are areas of land in Wales of great value to climbers and hill walkers which are technically only accessible by trespass or de facto (or tolerated) access, such as most of the sea cliffs, crags on private woodlands, outcrops on enclosed or semi-enclosed land or land on mountains and moorland that is not mapped as open access.

Recently hill walkers on the slopes of Snowdon, were aggressively asked to leave land they were walking over while trying to gain access to some Open Access land so on the face of it, this review is really great news for climbers, hill walkers, orienteers, mountaineers and other user groups and it is encouraging that the Welsh Government recognises the value of access both to the economy of Wales and for the social, health and wellbeing of its citizens.

However there are a few key points in the discussion documents that also cause some concern, including the suggestion that the duties currently placed on local authorities to maintain rights of ways could be reduced, that the legal protection granted to public rights of way could be reduced and that the current network of rights of ways could even be abolished, as they would be deemed unnecessary if there was a general right of access.

In another development, The John Muir Trust, well known for its work in conservation and the protection of wild landscapes north of the border in the highlands of Scotland, have just announced a campaign to buy a wild area of land in Snowdonia. Carreg y Saeth Isaf (meaning lower rock of the arrow) is an area of native woodland, heath and bog set deep in one of Snowdonia National Park's wildest upland areas, the Rhinogydd. The 105-hectare property stands at the entrance to Cwm Bychan, at the head of the Arthro valley.

The site's high wildlife value is recognised by a number of environmental designations, and it is home to greatly diverse bird life such as redstarts, black grouse, peregrine and pied flycatchers.

By caring for Carreg y Saeth Isaf, they state that they hope to contribute to the long term stewardship of Wales' natural and cultural heritage, and they "hope to support a strong local voice for wild land in Wales and that they will be better placed to deliver a vision that wild land is protected and enhanced and wild places are valued by and for everyone."

The JMT also acknowledges that there are wild land areas in Wales under threat, notably the Cambrians

threatened by wind farms. This purchase does not preclude the JMT from investigating opportunities in these areas when they arise. The John Muir Trust has a policy of open access, while respecting the views of other land managers and constraints imposed by land management operations. They wish people to experience the qualities of the land in a respectful way. It is the JMT's vision for wild places to be valued by all sectors in society, and for activities like walking, climbing and nature photography to take place in high quality wild land and wild places, providing valuable jobs and income for rural and remote communities.

The British Mountaineering Council has just carried out a hill walking survey, with more than 2,000 people taking the time to fill it in. They are currently looking to improve and expand the work done for hill walkers and have appointed a hill walking officer. A large majority of the walkers polled said they were not a member of a walking club which is something we as Club are very conscious of. While individual membership of the BMC has risen significantly over the last decade, club membership is in gradual decline and this is true in many walks of life. It is just so much easier to organise things for yourself these days. Of those polled, 63% said loss of wild land was very important to them, slightly more said litter in the countryside but at 83% mountain safety and rescue facilities was the most important issue for most people responding.

THAT MOUNTAIN

New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay are to have two as yet unnamed mountains named after them.

Hillary Peak and Tenzing Peak at 25,200ft and 25,971ft respectively have never been climbed and are expected to be opened to foreigners in the spring season that starts in March 2014.

When I was eight years old Tensing Norgay and Edmund Hillary were the first men to stand on top of Everest and come down safely. I saw the news on a strange contraption in the 'front room' as Dad had bought a tiny television to watch the coronation.

I had a surprisingly good view. Neighbours and Mum and Dad were all pushing their heads together to be directly in front of the magnifying convex lens hooked in front of the screen to enlarge it but which could only be used from dead ahead. My sisters and I had pride of place on the floor in front of the contraption.

The coronation was all pomp and circumstance and I suspect I was impressed, but the stories of the mountain made a much more lasting impression.

As a family we never had a car so my knowledge of the great outdoors was restricted to bus rides to local parks and an annual school trip for an afternoon on a farm. I was however an avid reader of books on the outdoors, wilderness activities and the wildlife and the strange places that were out there to be found.

I also thrived on the (*in hindsight, rather crude*) wildlife programmes appearing on the "TV". Who cares to admit they remember Hans and Lotte Hass?

David Attenborough's Zoo Quest book was an early purchase and more followed and I now have a substantial collection of books on ecology and the environment not to mention wild and remote places. Indeed I now write on these subjects and work with several conservation organisations.

As soon as I was old enough to be independently active I was off to ever farther locations that I could get to within a day on a bus. I recall in my mid teens going with my 14 year old sister to the Lakes by getting three buses from where we lived in Manchester to arrive in Thirlspot and climb Helvellyn; eventually to retrace our journey all in one very long day.

Then came the day I acquired a very solid and not overly comfortable 'Rudge' bike and started vanishing at weekends with my little tent. A few years later along came my first car and I was well away. Since then I have never stopped wondering what is over the next hill. There has been a lot of water under the bridge since then and whilst my knowledge of the built-up areas of Britain is slim I have explored most of the other corners. Along the way I kept on acquiring books which themselves tempted me to go farther afield, looking round another corner, including a number of less frequently visited parts of the world.

Amongst the books which I kept coming upon were ones of exploits in the Himalayas and especially on Everest which has always had a strange fascination. It is not a pretty mountain; it is hard to get to and to get a real view of and nowadays it has been commercialised to a pathetic extent.

I have never been a high altitude climber and have only limited snow and ice experience, but have done enough climbing on ropes to have some understanding of what it is all about. I am a high level fell walker when given the opportunity, but I never had the remotest ambition to tackle anything like that. I did and still do however, enjoy reading of the exploits of others.

The books I possess vary widely, some are boringly detailed and a poor read, some are fascinating studies in human endurance, some are classics in their own right but some seem to me, despite my only limited experience, to be bordering on fiction. I have read accounts of the same expedition written by two different members who seem to contradict each other at every turn. Some are patently written to aggrandise and promote the author and some are written by people who were not on the upper reaches and do not seem to understand the mountain at all.

Back in 1976 I got hold of a copy of Chris Bonington's 'Everest the Hard Way' - It was detailed and informative but on several counts I did not take to it. Partly I suspect, as I didn't really buy into laying siege to the mountain with massive expeditions. Such rock work

as I had done was at the end of the period when artificial aids other than protective ropes were deemed to be a bit beyond the pale.

As years went by and my collection of books grew I did develop an itch to go and see Everest for myself and upon my taking early retirement, a friend and I did just that. At least we went there, but we actually saw very little of it, as we had elected to go in the narrow spring window before the rains and that year winter was late and the rains came early. Big mistake!

There were just the two of us and a team of Sherpas in support and we got up Kala Pattar (5,643 m) and a little higher on the south ridge of Pumo Ri but only got glimpses of Everest itself as a blizzard closed in. We did however get some good-weather days especially above Ama Dablam. Now that is what I do call a classic and attractive mountain.

There were fatalities on Everest that season and indeed a large party, I think Kazakstani, were kitting up near us in Namche Bazaar to follow up a few days behind us and we heard later that they had lost members on Everest.

Returning to the books on the area, I did enjoy Nick Heil's 'Dark Summit' and have recently read again 'Into Thin Air' by Jon Krakauer. The latter is a good read but not as entertaining as Dark Summit. Jon does mention in his book, our old member **Frank Smythe**, if only in talking of delusions experienced by climbers when very high.

Stimulated as I was by Kenton Cool's address to us at our recent dinner I have now started reading again 'South Col' by Wilfred Noyce. In his preface to the book Noyce comments on the books that had inspired him.

"There are many books about Mount Everest. Some might say too many. Each addition, therefore, to the long list requires a larger apology, and I must give briefly my two reasons for entering this crowded field. The first is that among all the books I have read on Himalayan travel, very few give the 'inside story', to use an over-worked expression, of a man's life at high altitudes; or make you see the scenes that he saw.

*Of those few I would mention specially Howard Somervell's After Everest, Eric Shipton's Nanda Devi, and **Frank Smythe's** Camp Six. Therefore I was irresistibly tempted to try what may be impossible, and what a leader's expedition book does not from its very nature do. The task of such a book is to describe, in the compass of a few hundred pages, something of everything that was conceived and done by a large number of people for more than a year.*

John Hunt's book is the magnificent record of what has proved an historic achievement. But there may remain a further interest in what the members of the party, their untidy everyday individual selves, were seeing and feeling and thinking through all those months; in the closer expression of their fears and doubts and delights"

Even Noyce, looking at the situation from a human perspective, did not cover much about the people themselves outside this environment and many of them were complex and fascinating characters. Noyce mentions **Frank Smythe's** 'Camp Six' and none of the early mountaineers seems as complex as Frank. It is therefore fascinating to now have a chance to read about Frank the man, given that his son Tony has just published his book "My Father Frank".

Tony presented four signed copies of the book to the Club at our recent AGM. These will be housed in the Club Library and the huts.

Also at the AGM, John Hemingway presented a first edition of the first Yorkshire Speleological Association Journal for the Club archives. It was donated by Derek Burrow, son of C. E. (Charley) Burrow and nephew of Davis Burrow, both 1908 founder members of the Yorkshire Speleological Association.

The following is a review of Tony Smythe's book by Dennis Armstrong.

"MY FATHER FRANK"

Tony Smythe ISBN:978-1-898573-87-6

This book is the biography of Frank Smythe; ex YRC and a famous mountaineer and author. It is written by his son, Tony Smythe, a current member of the YRC.

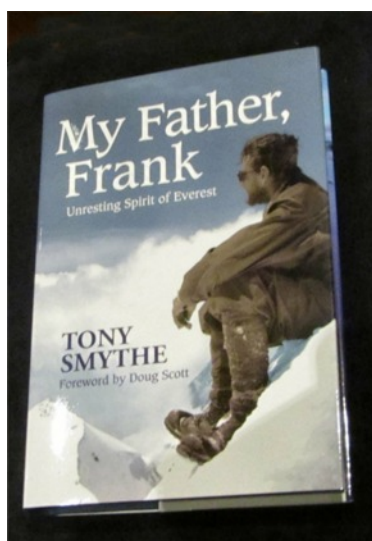
Frank died prematurely when forty eight years old. Tony then was fourteen and had lost a father whom he scarcely knew.

Later when Tony was in the mountains he was often asked if he was following in his father's footsteps.

In 1985 Harry Calvert had published "Smythe's Mountains" and this awoke in Tony the feeling that he ought to know more about his father; about the mountains Frank loved and about his domestic life where he was far from happy.

In this book Tony sets out to discover the father whom he had respected but whom he never really knew.

His personal story becomes a subplot to the main biography,



By the 1930s Frank Smythe had achieved an established reputation in mountaineering. He was happiest when on an expedition. Meanwhile he paid little thought to the gaps he was leaving with his family and even when he was at home he wanted isolation to write his next book. Frank's achievements in the Alps and Himalayas have been well publicised, but his domestic life has remained private. Tony has been able to dig deep into family diaries, letters and papers, and he acknowledges the help he received from many people who had known Frank. What emerges is a tale of two tensions, tension on ice faces, and tension with his family. The story is told as objectively as a son can when discussing his parents. Let it be said at the beginning, the double theme makes for a more interesting biography, both Frank and Tony can write well and the whole makes a riveting read.

From his boyhood Frank was captivated by hills, but lacked companions. In December 1919 when cycling to Almscliff Crags he met Ernest Roberts and Douglas Frankland, both members of the YRC and they quickly became friends. Indeed Ernest Roberts remained his good friend all his life. They took Frank under their wing and Frank very soon became a member of the YRC and the following year he was introduced to the Lake District. His first proper climb was Little Gully on Pavey Ark. From then on his rock climbing progressed rapidly and by August 1920 (incredibly) Frank is reported to have solo-ed Eagle's Nest Direct, a 'Severe' route on Great Gable.

That was the beginning.

There followed climbs in Wales Scotland the Alps and the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc. Frank showed 'uncommon ability' on snow and ice. He was now climbing with people like Graham McPhee, Jim Bell, Fred Piggot, and Graham Brown.

Everest began to beckon. In 1930 he had been with a German expedition to Kangchenjunga (28,170 feet), in 1931 to Kamet (25,447 feet), the highest peak to have been ascended at that time. His place on the 1933 Everest team was regarded as a shoe-in. Although that team failed to reach the summit, Frank achieved 28,200 feet alone and without oxygen, only 800 feet from the summit. He was on Everest again in 1936 and 1938 but bad weather prevented a serious attempt. During the war he was sent to Scotland and then Canada to train commandos. Militarily speaking it was rather pointless, but going to Canada opened up another mountainous area to be explored later. He is remembered there by the peak near Jasper named Mount Smythe in his honour.

Tony has climbed many of Frank's climbs and his descriptions bring a vivid intimacy to the plain facts. His father's skill and balance are best emphasised by the number of times he was able to resort to solo climbs to complete an ascent, usually because his companion could proceed no further. His climb of Mana Peak, (23,860 feet) in 1937 in the Garwahl required an eight hour approach including 5000 feet

of ascent. In the final push for the summit, his companion Peter Oliver became exhausted so Frank solo-ed the last 800 feet. Frank later said that this was the hardest solitary climb of his life. His route was not repeated for 57 years. Tony considers that for balance, skill, endurance and sheer courage, it was Frank's greatest climb.

We should not forget that all this was achieved at a time when safety precautions were in their infancy. The clothing was inadequate, leather boots led to frost bite, tricouni nails often served for crampons and hemp ropes were heavy to carry when wet. No helmets and oxygen was 'out'. There is only a solitary mention of a 'piton'. In 1947 in Canada, climbing Mount Colin, Frank used a piton at the crucial point for safety. He records that he felt guilty for cheating.

Like most climbers he had his near disasters. There was an electric storm in the Bernese Oberland, an avalanche on Kanchenjunga that thundered past them, and a storm on Everest at Camp 6, that ripped the tent to ribbons. In Canada there were great difficulties on Mount Alberta and also new dangers of a different kind - meeting a brown bear face to face!

The opening chapter sets the scene. It describes a young man descending a hill by a tricky route in the Stubai Alps in Austria. Does he trust a melting snow bridge over a 10 foot wide bergschrund, or does he attempt a jump over the yawning gap? The young man decides to jump. His upper body lands on the far edge; his dangling feet strike the snow bridge sending it into nothingness. Frank survived but it was a close thing. However few men can live their dream in the mountains and at the same time be all things to family and friends. In Frank's case his long absences on expeditions meant the strain fell on the home life. To Kathleen and to his three sons, John, Tony and Richard, Frank was an absentee. When he was at home he was awkward in social circles; lacking small talk. Tony writes that his father was probably happiest in a tent by himself among the high peaks. For Kathleen there must also have been fear and anxiety, because high mountains do not pass the normal Health and Safety criteria.

Then there is Frank's other talent, as an author and photographer. In all he wrote 27 books in 20 years often against strict deadlines. It is easy to forget how readable they were. They described the human (emotional) side to mountaineering as well as the basic logistics. Many of his books were illustrated with his own excellent photographs supported by his comments to bring them to life. His books sold well.

The flaw in Frank's character was his impetuosity: he wanted his own way and often acted hastily. Often mature thought could have brought a wiser course; for example, his long-standing dispute with Graham Brown about who did what on the Route Major on the Brenva faces of Mont Blanc.

Others described him as 'impulsive'. Tony has seen the vetting report that Howard Somervell wrote about

Frank for 1933 Everest, "An intolerable companion, nobody in our party could stick him owing to his irritating self-sufficiency."

His marriage was launched in haste. Returning from Kangchenjunga in autumn 1930, he felt it was time to get married. He decided he could fit it into his climbing schedule. He knew Kathleen Johnson so he courted her and married her in January 1931. Typical of Frank, their honeymoon began at the Pen-y-Gwyrdd Hotel and Kathleen was introduced to Snowdon in wintry weather. Later they moved to Switzerland to teach Kathleen skiing. Frank patronisingly comments in a letter: "She has grit and pluck and when she can do her turns, she will be first class"

In early April 1931 having achieved his ends he left his bride and set off to climb Kamet. But the hasty choice of Kathleen was unfortunate. She - a home-loving musician - married a dedicated mountaineer. Tony admits that they had nothing in common; a marriage doomed from the start. The couple separated seven years later, virtually taking Frank out of the lives of the three boys.

On the steamer returning from the 1938 Everest attempt Frank met Nona Guthrie. Nona came from New Zealand and seems to have been an astute 'switched-on' sociable lady, impressed by meeting a famous mountaineer. Frank was swept off his feet. But there was no easy divorce. Kathleen would not agree for she was sure Frank and she would get together again.

In 1946 Kathleen finally agreed. Tony remains loyal to Kathleen despite her "ineptness" and tactfully does not give his views on Nona. Much later however when Tony was researching material for this book, Nona, now married to a peer, would 'disgorge' to him bundles of Frank's private papers. However one day she became fed up with all the car journeys and decided to burn about 50,000 of Frank's negatives in her garden.

Tony comments that he found it impossible to forgive Nona for this rampage.

If Frank had lived longer, reconciliation between father and son would have made a happy ending to this double tale. Surely he and his sons would have had many years climbing together. Perhaps, but I have my doubts. Frank was not mindful enough to enjoy his sons.

There are two photographs of Frank with John and Tony on holiday in Galloway in 1948. The looks of boredom on all the faces are far from being the usual happy family holiday snap. But Tony's research has made him realise just how good 'My Father, Frank' was on the mountains and he cannot deny a new sense of pride in him to put alongside his old sense of rejection. He now accepts both sides of Frank's character that make up the man and holding them in balance has become his destiny.

MEETS REPORT

LONG WALK LOWSTERN

21st to 23rd June

Possibly due to many personal commitments at this time of year, and the clash with our Malawi meet, only a select nine members attended the meet at Lowstern.

R. Josephy and M Godden arrived Thursday evening, and on Friday RJ took his car to Halton Gill and completed approx. half of the suggested walk via Foxup, Plover Hill, Pen-y-Ghent, Horton, Ingleborough and Clapham. MG drove to Buckden to do a circular walk (commensurate with the ability of his artificial knee), via High Cray Bridge, Cray, Scar House to Yockenthwaite. The return was via the Dales Way, and Hubberholme. An inspection was made of Hubberholme Church - well worth the visit - and a pint taken at the George Inn which is under new Management and also a free house.

The weather was foggy and warm at the start of the day, but around lunch time the sun appeared and improved during the rest of the day. Six other colleagues duly arrived in the evening, Ian C and Rob I having caught the train to Shipley and then rode their bikes to Lowstern. Later Harvey L joined everyone in the New Inn where food was taken.

Saturday morning dawned wet and windy but RJ survived OK in his tent. John B, our organizer, provided a good 0730 breakfast and preparations were made to walk/bike ride. RJ, Peter G, John B, and Paul D drove to Selside and headed for High Birkwith, Cam End, The Dales Way to Oughtershaw, Beckermonds,

Yockenthwaite, and over Horse Head to Halton Gill. RJ's car was retrieved and Peter G's from Selside. Meanwhile, Ian C and Rob I rode to Bentham returning via Keasden where a music recital was enjoyed at the Church.

Derek S completed a circular walk via Norber, and Harvey L walked in the Ribblesdale area. Mike G ambled around Gearstones checking that his key to the Gritstones Hut still worked.

The weather improved considerably in the afternoon and everyone had returned by 5pm.

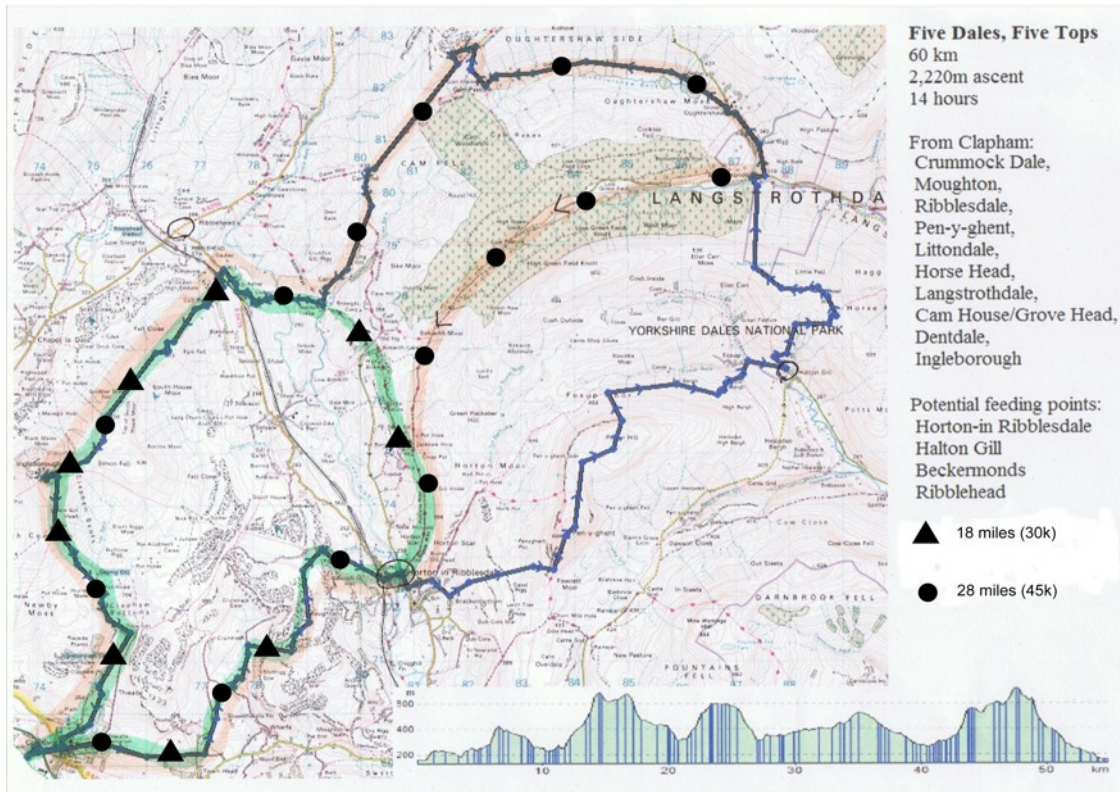
A very satisfying evening meal was enjoyed courtesy of our organizer, and wine taken in a very convivial atmosphere. Our sincere thanks to John Brown was ably expressed by our Vice President. Short visits were made during the evening by Albert C and Ged C.

Sunday morning presented wet weather again with most heading straight for home. However, John B and Paul D set off to circle Crummack Dale via Norber, Wharfe, Moughton, the head of Crummack Dale, and picking up Clapham Lane headed for Trow Gill and back to Lowstern.

F.M.G.

Attending:-

Mike Godden, Peter Green, Richard Josephy, John Brown, Ian Crowther, Paul Dover, Rob Ibberson, Derek Smithson, Harvey Lomas.



CORBY GLEN

August 3 - 5

Walking and cycling round Rutland and Lincolnshire

Having been asked to organise this combined bike and walking meet following an established tradition of such meets in what would otherwise be not thought classic areas for us I decided on a weekend rather than mid week to take advantage of much reduced motel prices in the absence of alternate places to stay. I had organised a camp site for those so inclined. We organised the main events for the Sunday allowing people to come and go from Friday to Monday as they chose given there were so many attractions in the area. So much for the theory. As it turned out the cycling contingent had been diminishing over the years and the death of a member on the equivalent meet last year was not encouraging to some of the older cyclists so numbers booking were low. When ill health and other commitments left us with drop outs we found ourselves down to just four but with all planning and arrangements complete we decided to carry on. Whether we attempt any similar meet again is problematical, perhaps not weekend, perhaps not in the holiday period.

In any event with the delays the camping contingent found the site fully booked so the back of a car was brought into play.

Two of us gathered for an early evening walk on the Saturday and then met up with KR to arrange to meet up with him to join us for half of our walk the following day. Next morning PD joined us briefly before we set out on our respective endeavours.

RD

Heading south for a meet felt odd but the journey went smoothly and I could call in at the Oakham end of Rutland Water on the way in for some quiet birding from the hides there. Quiet it was not as there was a Birding Fair on in enormous marquees and it was difficult to fit in a hide let alone focus on the birds. Still I made the rendezvous with our meet leader in the attractive Market Place of Corby Glen to the northeast. We confidently set off for a round to the east of the village across estate land with no map in evidence and relying on intuition and our leader's limited knowledge of the area. Aiming for South Wood we were strayed too far north though on good tracks and hit the road to Irnham nearer to our target than intended. Circling round to the north we found useful new permissive paths to avoid walking on the road and made it back to Corby Glen. The weather had been kind to us: warm with a breeze to keep us cool and sunny with some clouds so we were not burned. A good afternoon stroll at a little over 5 miles.

The welcoming Fighting Cocks beckoned and an after-walk 'half' was extended into a pint or two. Fortuitously, the local golfers organised a barbecue and we were invited along. The quality burgers,

chicken and sausages with usual accompaniments were tasty and certainly good value at £6 a head. We retired replete.

An early morning visit to Rutland Water's hides found them deserted and though it was too early for any ospreys to be active there was plenty to see, including a shrew.

Encouraged by the state of the paths on Saturday, your correspondent donned shorts and a short-sleeved shirt for the planned Sunday outing. This time we headed southwest from Corby Glen and hadn't made it even halfway to Swayfield, just two map squares away, when a stream crossing required battling through thorns and nettles. I emerged scarred but undeterred from these joys of Lincolnshire rambling. Soon after that we had to cross part of a wheat field using the tractor-tyre lines but sections like this were few and we made good progress accompanied by many a yellowhammer's song. Heading from Swayfield towards the A1 was going well until the intuitively obvious way at a road junction proved to be a little too far to the south though thankfully parallel to our intended direction.

A diversion was in order and a quick look at the map suggested that if we circled round Beaumont Wood keeping a few hundred metres away and made for a water tower in the wood we could take a track north to regain our route to Twyford Wood. Two fences and a few nettles later we were soon back on a right of way. Then we met our match. A sign on a locked gate in tall security fence gave three telephone numbers to call to be accompanied through this parking area for well over a thousand ex-military vehicles. None worked. We followed the edge of a field and a few partridge until we were looking at that wood through another tall fence. With a struggle we were over and into more stinging, scratching vegetation to land on a runway.

The old Twyford Wood joined the war effort and became RAF North Witham in 1943 to be used operationally by the Yanks. They handed the site back to the RAF for use as a bomb-collection dump before arranging disposal. Then the site was taken over by the Forestry Commission in 1945. Nowadays it is used by walkers and runners and there are glades to encourage butterflies. Weeds and trees have grown through tracks in the runways, taxiways and apron. We saw Jays.

Now at our furthest point from 'home' we had a snack and without incident covered a few miles to HRH Prince of Wales and Camilla's boozier in Burton Coggles, The Cholmeley Arms. This provided shelter and refreshment during a short shower. At this point telephone calls established that KR had turned his ankle and could barely walk and could not join us.

Navigation from here-on in proved boringly unproblematic and we ended up in Irnham retracing

our intended steps round to Corby Glen seeing hares, buzzards and a red kite. A round of 17½ miles.

Back in the Market Place we were promptly joined by our cycling contingent and headed to the Fighting Cocks and met Keith Raby there, courtesy of his wife driving him over. After a chat it was off to the Castle pub at Castle Bytham for a sociable meal. Uniquely in our experience, we were served by the landlord steering an occupied pushchair between the tables to keep the child amused.

It was over twenty years since I was previously walking in Lincolnshire and it is likely to be a few years before I return but this area had plenty to keep us entertained and we thank our meet leader arranging it.

MS

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny but with showers forecast for later.

After driving up from home, I joined up with other participants gathered in the village square at Corby Glen just east of the A1 at Colsterworth for a leisurely start time of 9.30am.

The route started along the A151 to Colsterworth which was something of a practice track for 'boy' racers on motor bikes, followed by a similar but rather less busy ride down the B676 Melton Road to Coston Lodge. From here a diversion to quiet lanes led me to Wymondham. Although only 12 miles from the start but against a head wind, a coffee stop at the Windmill was too good to pass over. To my surprise, it turned out to be an extremely popular stop for cycling groups from all over the region.

From here, the route followed minor roads along the south side of Stapleford Park, via Whissendine, and across the A606 to Cold Overton, Knossington and Braunston in Rutland. These are attractive villages built largely of local oolitic limestone. This area was more undulating and to my surprise, was still almost all grassland especially in the valley of the River Gwash which feeds into the Rutland Water.

The route continued south to Ridington, a more typical cereal based farming area, then turning east from where I had the benefit of a predominantly tail wind. I stopped for lunch in Preston, another attractive village with a welcome village bench and 32 miles from the start. Unfortunately, the light intermittent showery rain turned heavier just as I stopped.

The route then took me to Wing, across the valley of the river Chater to Edith Weston and the shores of Rutland Water. The cycle and pedestrian path round to Whitwell is of tarmac and was busy with many families either walking or taking young children on their first bikes or having picnics under trees and umbrellas. From Barnsdale it was a straight run past the Barnsdale garden of the late Geoff Hamilton of RHS and TV fame which is open to the public and Exton Park to Greetham. Here, at 42 miles I was ready for a tea stop, with a friend.

The final stretch, still with a predominantly tail wind and showery rain, passed through Stretton, Clipsham, Little Bytham, under the busy East Coast mainline, to Creeton, then Swinstead reaching Corby Glen having cycled 59 miles across both familiar and new territory. A very pleasant day's ride and my thanks to Roy for organising the route.

PD



The weather forecast for the Monday was dire so all bar myself decided to cut short the weekend and went home but despite considerable overnight rain, the early morning drizzle soon gave way to fitful sunshine and I managed to get in two thirds of the walk which had been planned for the Monday. Sunday's walk had been in Lincolnshire but the Monday offering was in Rutland.

I set out from Greetham, where the camp site option was, and walked downhill towards Rutland Water through the Exton Estate woodlands before circling back, broadly following part of the cycle route for a while, and then returning to my car. About 8 miles and very pleasant.

RD

Attending - Michael Smith,
Roy Denney, Paul Dover
Day visitor - Keith Raby

FAMILY MEET - LOWSTERN

Thursday 15th to Monday 19th August

As Paul, Billie, Oliver and I had all arrived on the Thursday evening, and had a full Friday ahead of us, we decided to make use of the good weather. At my request, as neither Oliver nor I had climbed it before, we went for a walk over Whernside. We parked at the Ribblehead Viaduct and followed the footpath alongside the viaduct and railway, before heading north west by Smithy Hill. It was at this point, as we started to ascend a little more steeply, that Billie set an enviable pace and strode off into the distance leaving us all to follow at our own speed.

The path up on to Whernside is being renewed in places using some large stone slabs which make for very comfortable walking.

Having reached the summit we stopped to admire the view and for a bite of lunch, before descending into the valley by Brunt Scar.

We then followed the footpath towards Turf Hill and on the way, we took a small detour to visit Albert Chapman at Scar Top Farm. The boys declined a dip in his swimming pool deciding it was best left to the frog in residence! We all enjoyed a tour of Albert's garden, a cup of tea and a chat, before resuming our walk back to towards the railway and down to the car.

Arriving back at Lowstern we were greeted by more members and their families who had begun to arrive for the meet. We had a soup supper, before trying to keep the youngsters quite while the Committee met, no mean feat, and some of the youngsters were evicted to run round outside, as the noise emanating from the large bunk room upstairs was proving just too much for the committee to concentrate!

Following the committee meeting, I was extremely pleased to find out that the committee had considered my recent application for membership and approved me to be put forward as a member of the Club.

Having previously had a damp few days at Stanton Bridge in the Lakes, I decided to put my very wet tent up and sleep outside for the next couple of nights, knowing from previous family meets that it would be somewhat quieter outside and also hoping to dry the tent out in the process.

On Saturday, the weather being somewhat dull and damp today the youngsters in the group unanimously decided that a visit to Ingleborough Climbing Wall was in order.

Paul, Phil, Evelyn, Katrina, Oliver, Marco, Billie, Alan and Alex all visited the wall for a morning of climbing and bouldering on the various pitches. Eve Faulkner was very disappointed to find out that at 7 years old she was too young to be allowed on the walls, the minimum age being 8 (for insurance reasons)



Oliver on the 'Faces'



Billie 'bouldering'

As a result, Richard, Gail and Eve decided to visit the White Scar Caves instead, as did Alister, Neev, Neil and Tristan.

After lunch we were joined by Michael and Tim who had spent the morning walking over Ingleborough, and for the afternoon as the weather was a bit damp, we decided to return to Clapham and walk up from the village to look round Ingleborough Cave. The weather steadily deteriorated during the afternoon and it was quite wet by the time we returned to the hut and consigned our gear to the drying room.

We then had a very convivial evening where over half of those present sat down to a wonderful dinner, which had been ably produced by Evelyn Dover.

The plan for Sunday had been to do some outdoor rock climbing, but as there were some very heavy showers passing through that would have made the rocks dangerously slippery, those of us that were left decided to walk over Pen-y-Ghent instead. Phil, Evelyn, Paul, Katrina, Billie, Marco & Oliver.

We started from near the School at Horton in Ribblesdale, following the footpath up Bracken bottom Scar, and up onto Pen-y-Ghent where we ate lunch at the top in the lee of the wall.



Oliver, Billie & Marco on Pen-y-Ghent

We descended by going down the other side towards Hull Pot where we stopped to see the water pouring from the river into the Pot, quite an impressive sight.



Oliver at Hull Pot

We then continued on past Tarn Bar and Horton Scar before arriving back at Horton in Ribblesdale for a visit to the Café where I was treated to a very welcome cup of tea and large slice of their excellent 'birthday' cake, as Oliver part way through the walk had let on to Phil that today was my birthday!

We had a look round St Oswald's Church on the way back to the car, drawn into the graveyard by the site of the very large slabs covering the older graves, before returning to the hut for the night, and then leaving for the long drive home the next morning.

Katrina Devenport

Attendees:

Paul Dover	
Billie Sarakun	Family, 15yrs
Katrina Devenport	Family
Oliver Devenport	Family, 12yrs
Richard Sealey	Family
Eve Faulkner	Family, 7yrs
Alan Linford	
Phil Dover	
Evelyn Dover	Family
Marko Vasilic	Family, 13yrs
Michael Smith	
Tim Josephy	
Alister Renton	
Jane Renton	Family
Neev Renton	Family, 4yrs
Iona Renton	Family, 23mths
Neil Renton Guest	
Teresa Renton	Guest
Tristan Renton	Guest, 7yrs
Jasmin Renton	Guest, 16yrs
Ian Crowther	Day visit
Dorothy Crowther	Family, Day visit
Alex Linford	Prospective member, Day visit
Harvey Lomas	Day visit

LOWSTERN JOINT MEET

12-15 September

Twenty six YRC and Wayfarers members and guests gathered at Lowstern on the Friday evening for the annual Joint Meet; very well organised and catered for by Andrew Duxbury. The previous evening had seen the early arrival of Martyn and Roy, determined to avoid the Friday traffic and eager for a full day on the hills on the Friday. Roy had been dragged into a complaint from a walker in Leicestershire who could not get to the centre of England (it was on private land) and inspired by this debate (or should that be led astray) he and Martyn took advantage of this early start to try and go and find the centre of the UK. There is no easy way or dry way of getting there and it must be said they attempted it on the day before walking across Morecambe Bay and wetness wise there was not much in it. The route they chose was a very tough grind and squelch of what would have been about 19 miles and that was a bad mistake. It can be approached on a route of about 11 miles achieving a height of 1600. The president and his wife were also in attendance on Thursday evening and had warned them that this was a very wet route. So theirs was not? Don't ever believe anybody who tells you water is always at the bottom of hills.

The shorter route goes through the Trough of Bowland from Dunsop Bridge going north into the access land up Rams Clough and then along Ouster Rake to Brennan's Farm and then towards Whitendale but striking off part way along this stretch to follow a wall up to Whitendale Hanging Stones. From this point you can retrace your steps or, from Brennan's follow the River Dunsop back to the village. They elected to avoid what they knew was a wet area and walked in from Slaidburn over Dunsop Fell dropping down into Whitendale. They had intended then skirting the Middle Knoll to pick up and follow the aforementioned wall from the opposite direction.

Despite it being the end of a long dry summer, Dunsop Fell was a sponge and it took them three hours to get over it and with the prospect of much more of the same decided in favour of discretion and headed down the valley to follow the River Dunsop down to Dunsop Bridge. En route they saw an unusual bird; half hawk half owl which subsequent enquiry identified as a hen harrier. They then followed an apparently never used and near invisible path along the River Hodder (much bog and long grass) back to Slaidburn. All in all they had ducked out of what must have been a very wet 3 miles but still did 16 which took them seven hours of actual walking. As Roy described it, too much bog, too much knee high wet grass and far too much road. The Hark to Bounty provided some relief at the end of the walk.

Earlier that day, Michael and his wife had joined an illustrious group including Chris Bonington, Alan Hinkes and Albert Chapman and others to promote the Britain on foot Campaign to get people out walking wherever they are. (See item in Chippings).

Other members enjoyed a local walk from the Hut via Norber and the Wharfe.

Saturday dawned bright and sunny. A party of 5 walked from Gearstones to High Birkwith and Cam End and were fortunate to see a steam train chug over Ribbleshead Viaduct, which was apparently identified as the "Union of South Africa".

Another group walked over Ingleborough and a group of Wayfarers had a day on Robin Proctor's Scar, climbing routes from 5 up to 6a+



David Connolly on Subterranean Homesick Blues 6a+

We knew there would be others on the crossing but had no idea that we would find ourselves part of crowd of almost biblical proportions; estimated at some 600 people, most of them fund raising for their favourite charities. It was good to see lots of families, teenagers and young children, all in high spirits and enjoying the adventure, along with what seemed to be about 100 dogs running around after each other.

We followed the coast down to Arnside Park where there was a brief lunch stop to let everyone catch up before stepping off terra firma. At low tide the sea disappears 10 or more miles away and exposes a vast expanse of sand and channels which could be quite intimidating without local expert knowledge. However, Cedric blew his whistle and headed off, staff in hand, and we all followed like an unruly flock of sheep.



A group of 11 YRC members and guests had arranged to walk across Morecambe Bay with Cedric Robinson MBE, the official Queen's Guide who leads walks across the bay on several days each year, all on a voluntary basis. We parked our cars at Kent Bank and caught the train to Arnside from where the walk was due to start near to low tide at mid-day.

As there was time to spare we walked up Arnside Knott in glorious sunshine and had marvellous views in all directions before gathering for the walk on the promenade in front of the Albion Pub.



From Arnside Knott looking over the estuary

The walk took around 4 hours to complete, mostly sloshing along the rippled sands barefoot or in trainers, with frequent stops to let the stragglers catch up and long views in all directions. The most exciting part was wading across the Kent Channel which resulted in a lot of wet clothing in the nether regions and swimming dogs. One member commented that many walkers then looked as though they had incontinence problems. The comments of one YRC member wearing boots and breeches are not recorded. There was a definite advantage for those of longer leg and the surprisingly warm sunshine kept drying us off.





A group of YRC walked around Grimwith Reservoir, Appletreewick and Trollers Gill near Hebden before calling it a day.

All in all an excellent weekend.

Peter Chadwick



- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Attendees | Richard Taylor |
| Ken Fyles | Gail Taylor |
| Steve Auty | Martyn Trasler |
| Colin Smith | Roy Denney |
| George Chambers | Ian Crowther |
| Mike Godden | John Jenkin |
| Alan Linford. | Peter Chadwick |
| Bruce Hassel. | Ann Chadwick |
| Martin Tomlinson | David Connely |
| Russ Bloor | David Hick |
| Malcomb Brentford. | Harry Robinson |
| Mike Smith | David Omerod |
| Helen Smith | Albert Chapman |
| Andrew Duxbury | Day Visit |
| Tim Josephy | Ken Aldred |
| | Day Visit |

MOUNTHOOLEY, NORTHUMBERLAND

11th to 13th October 2013.

This meet was based at the bunkhouse at Mounthooley, at the head of the College Valley, approximately five miles down a private road from the village of Hethpool. The bunkhouse, now administered by the YHA, was originally installed by the Sir James Knott Trust, a philanthropic body set up by the Tyneside shipping magnate who died in 1934. The Trust is the owner of much of the College Valley – the name probably derives from the Anglo-Saxon “col” and “leche” meaning a stream flowing through marshy ground.

The College Burn follows the course of a geological fault line, which during the ice age was scoured out by ice flowing from the summit of the Cheviot; it descends through the fascinating gorge of Hen Hole, which was much visited during the meet.

Members called at various places on the Friday en route to College Valley – Bamburgh Castle was visited and the recumbent giant lady of Northumberlandia was walked from head to toe.



The height gain during the whole afternoon must have been at least 5 meters but eventually we arrived at Kent Bank station, quite tired and pleased to have made it across. Tidal range in Morecambe Bay is up to 10.5m. So at a guess we might have been about 4m below sea level when crossing the Kent. Low tide that day was probably about 2.5m above the lowest limit of low tides.

The forecast for Sunday was dire and it did indeed turn out to be very wet and windy so most opted to get some fresh air with modest walks. 2 Wayfarers went from Langcliffe up to Victoria caves and a ramble round to Attermire before the rain and wind blew them home.



Early arrivals at the bunkhouse took an afternoon stroll through Hen Hole, though slippery rock put paid to any

idea of scrambling up one of the easier routes, so instead, a way was made north over the West Hill shoulder of Cheviot to Braydon Crag, returning by a steep descent of Bizzle Crags and Dunsdale.

The mountain forecast for the weekend, when viewed on Thursday, was for windy but good weather, with sunny spells and some cloud. In fact, Saturday dawned grey, damp and glowering, then became wetter as the day went on. Undaunted, members set off one way or another, either singly or more often in groups of two or three, most walking from the bunkhouse, down the valley to Elsdonburn then up on to the ridge which forms some of the last few miles of the Pennine Way, over The Schil, to Red Cribbs and back down to Mounthooly. The ridge was shrouded in wet mist, there was a brisk northerly wind, and views were frequently limited to 50 yards or so of boggy terrain. A couple of ancient hill forts, Stob Rig and the mountain refuge hut high on the Pennine Way, were visited.



Others members went to The Cheviot via Red Cribbs and Auchope Cairn, then northwards to Dunsdale and back to the bunkhouse.

One group drove round to Kirk Yetholm, walked up the Pennine Way to Black Hag before returning to Kirk Yetholm.

Alan Linford and Aaron Oakes had worked wonders in the kitchen on the Friday evening, producing soup, venison stew and dessert, and on Saturday evening they produced another magnificent three course meal.

Mike Smith later showed photographs from the summer's activities in the mountains of Malawi, and during a family visit to the Zillertal in Austria.

Members dispersed after breakfast on Sunday; some, hoping to find more settled weather at the coast, went to Warkworth, Amble, Bamburgh, Craster or Seahouses. Two planned a nostalgic visit to Coldstream, whilst one of your scribes decided to have a good look at Hen Hole.

There is much folklore relating to this glacier formed chasm – a “snow egg” seen in the depths of the gorge at Midsummer, groups of Northumbrian fairies who

play the sweetest music known to man, a hunting party lured there by the music and who remain trapped to this day, plus a number of other fanciful tales involving outlaws, murder and theft. Whatever the folklore, it's a fine little valley, with frequent cascades, a number of sizeable waterfalls, and just a bit scrambly. Your scribe exited the valley and the upper College Burn by ascending to the ridge south of Auchope Cairn, and in clear, though windy weather, was able to see the fine views westwards which had eluded everyone the previous day.

So this was another grand meet in an out of the way spot, sociable and with good days out on the hills. A lot of thought and preparation had gone into the catering for the weekend, and thanks go to Alan and Aaron, and Angie and Belinda, for all their work, which was much appreciated.

We might decry the use of mobile phones on the hills, an 'emergency call' was made from the heights of Cheviot -a text to late departing Mick Borroff to bring pan scrubbers, the bunk house kitchen not as well appointed as expected. Imagine a catering weekend without this essential item. In true YRC style both shower drains, blocked with a mass of hair, were dismantled, cleaned and reassembled. Bunkhouse left in a better condition than we found it.

Alan Kay.

Members attending: -

- Mick Borroff
- Ian Crowther
- Iain Gilmour
- Richard Gowing
- David Hick
- John Jenkin
- Richard Josephy
- Alan Kay
- Alan Linford
- Harvey Lomas
- David Martindale
- Aaron Oakes
- Helen Smith (guest)
- Mike Smith (President)
- Carol Whalley
- John Whalley



Stobs Stone on the border

The YHA Hostel



AGM AND DINNER WEEKEND

The members and guests staying at Lowstern started drifting in during Thursday with others staying at various locations including the hotel where the formalities were to be held.

The Lowstern Hut Warden and his guest made themselves useful on the Friday but Roy and Martyn went for a walk on a hit and miss sort of a day. They walked out of the hut through Clapham and out to Norber, keeping an eye on the weather and when the sun broke out whilst they were passing the erratics they elected to cut across country and go over Ingleborough.



A deceiving bit of sunshine on the erratics

The sun lasted only a few minutes and they never saw it again and ended up walking the rest of the day in light drizzle. The cloud on Ingleborough was so low that they had to skirt about to find the way off and arrived in Ingleton as daylight died. They warmed up and ate in the village before walking round the roads back to Clapham.

Saturday with the need to be at the AGM mid afternoon, activities were a bit curtailed. Some went over to Dent for some walking in that area, Michael Smith walked from Winterburn to Wheets Top (overlooking Goredale) and back via Claton before heading to the Coniston Hotel to start getting things ready for the AGM. A couple of others mountain biked in the Clapham Austwick area, some ascended Pen-y-Ghent and at least one went up Ingleborough and another bird watching at Stocks Reservoir.

On Sunday after the dinner those up to it and not having to dash home did various different activities; mountain bikers were active above Settle and others pottered about doing the usual bits and pieces whilst the official After Dinner Walk, was organised once again by Arthur Salmon. It did not depart from the Dinner Venue, the Coniston Hotel, but from Lowstern which required a delayed start to allow those from the hotel time to eat their breakfasts, quit their lodgings and drive over to Lowstern where a welcoming coffee awaited them. The assembled small crowd were transported to Clapham for an ascent of Ingleborough up Trow Gill and past Gapping Ghyll. Arthur then said encouragingly, as one guest put it, "Well, we may as well go a little further..." and so they were inveigled into one extension after another to make an interesting round circling back along Long Lane.

Their reward was a treat reintroduced to this meet by Rachel Evans, the Sunday Ham and Egg tea. A treat indeed which in the comments to the President over the next few days drew far more appreciation than for his speech and Kenton Cool's put together.

Michael Smith, Richard Smith and Aaron Campion went caving, being guided by Ged Campion through Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit by the normal route (Bridge Hall, Fall Pot, Montague, Passage, Stake Pot Inlets, Painter's Palate, Minarets, Stop Pot Ladder, Four Ways Chamber). They spent almost six hours underground as the geiatrics kept wandering off into curious corners of the system and took some rounding up. Along the way, catering services (tea, hot chocolate, etc.) were provided by Ged.

They shared the cave with a party from the Army who they heard at one point but did not see.

They eventually emerged almost completely dry so little water was there in the system, only to find it was raining as they exited into the last of the dusk light. A sociable trip with ages ranging 16 to 60. On their return to Lowstern long after dark they were revived by enhanced leftovers from the Ham and Egg teas prepared by Mrs Hut Warden.

The weekend is summed up by Peter Chadwick - The 100th Dinner of any Club is a special occasion that both demands and justifies special attention. Accordingly, your Committee had planned at an early stage to do something different to make it a special and memorable event and to improve attendance. The fact that 140 members and guests sat to dinner, twice as many as have attended recent dinners, is the result of that hard work. Our thanks are due to everyone who helped with the organisation, especially our President and resident dinner organiser Albert Chapman.

Coniston Hall Hotel at Coniston Cold near Gargrave was chosen as the new venue and it certainly lived up to expectations. It is easily accessible and well located with ample parking and plenty of accommodation. The food and level of service were both high, the only drawback being a slight lack of space to mingle and chat before the dinner. It could well be the venue for future Dinner Meets.

A slightly different and better format to the running order was also made whereby the lecture was held between the AGM and the Dinner (in previous years the guest speaker has usually talked or given a slide show at the end of the Dinner which has resulted in either the talk being rushed or finishing late). This year we were treated to a memorable talk by our Principal Guest Kenton Cool, a young (relatively) climber with a high public profile and an impressive record of Himalayan ascents (11 for topping Everest alone and counting). When not guiding clients on Everest he is in great demand as a speaker and motivator, so we are grateful to the President for aiming high and securing his services.

This illustrated lecture recounted the first successful completion of the Himalayan version of the Yorkshire three Peaks, Nuptse, Lhotse and Everest, all done

alpine -style with a colleague virtually non-stop over two days earlier this year. No doubt this feat was regarded as impossible, and in due course it may be repeated, but it must rank as about the hardest thing to do in the Himalayas.

It was a breath taking talk given at breakneck speed from a superb athlete at the top of his game.

The Dinner was enjoyed by all and the President proposed a toast to the Kindred Clubs and guests and Kenton Cool proposed the health of the Club. The usual rendition of "Yorkshire" was sung lustily at the close. Representatives from the Alpine Club, BCA,CPC, Giggleswick School, and Gritstone, Pinnacle, Rucksack and Wayfarers' Clubs were present together with Alan Hinkes (the first British person to ascend all fourteen 8,000m peaks) along with many other friends and guests including members of Dr.Farrer's family.

About a dozen members and guests assembled at Low Stern the next morning for a sociable and very enjoyable walk up Ingleborough via Newby Cote and back via Gaping Gill to some refreshment in Clapham. The President was unable to persuade our Principal Guest to go underground.

To sum up, this was very successful Dinner Meet and it a good chance for members to support the Club and to meet and catch up with old friends.

XMAS MEET - SEDBERGH

13th-15th December Longrigg Residential Centre

Your reporter was caught in a moment of weakness while awaiting the Saturday meal, and with the bribery of a glass of wine from the president, requested to do this job. It was announced to the gathering, and all were asked to supply me with details of their exploits, if they wished them recording. This is my excuse for any omissions, and I cannot be even sure that all that I was told is recorded as Senior Moments abound.

I arrived with Arthur Salmon after leaving Leeds at 19:00, and we were well on the way when Arthur remembered that he had missed a committee meeting. We turned up in the dark to find chaos with car parking as Albert in particular was wishing to leave. The weather was not pleasant, but Longrigg has good outside lights. Many cars had to park on the grass. I believe that some people had arrived early and made use of the day, including local hostelries, but details have escaped me.

Saturday arrived with fine, mild conditions but high winds and showers, "some heavy" were forecast. Continental breakfast was had by all and the early starters were away by the time I arrived for breakfast. The President, Peter C & Richard T drove into Mallerstang and from Pendragon Castle did a circuit including Wild Boar Fell, Swarth Fell and the other side of the valley. Martyn T and Richard J walked from the hut to The Calf and descended into the head waters of Bowerdale Beck to take the saddle north of Cautley Spout to come south and join the spout footpath down

to the Cross Keys and then back on foot to the hut. Arthur S and myself did the same bit from the Calf but had parked at the Cross Keys and gone up via the spout. At our highest point I had an attack of LMF (lack of moral fibre) and persuaded Arthur to descend early. My wife's warnings and images of headlines about two octogenarians got the better of me. David H and Alan K also visited the Cross Keys on a circular from the hut including West Baugh Fell and the upper Rawthey valley. Harvey L also tackled The Calf from the hut but the later bad weather forced a retreat and left him soaked.

To the east of the Rawthey valley, before Cross Keys, are interesting side valleys with limestone waterfalls which were visited by Ian C, Robert C, Peter G and John J. It was reported to be very boggy to the extent that Ian was almost submerged completely. Above the Cross Keys, the Rawthey is referred to as Uldale and Derek B, Mike G and Richard G spent 6 hours penetrating it and also reported much wet terrain. Paul D and Alan L crossed the hills into Dent Dale and returned down the Dee valley from Dent having little success in finding the Dales Way path. Alan C and Derek C from the hut climbed the hill behind Sedbergh and visited some hostelry on the return.

The evening meal was an excellent 4 course job, the even and odd courses split between Peter G and Tim J, with significant assistance from Robert C. After the meal the President screened episodes from Malawi and showed a film of upside down climbing.

The weather on Sunday was much improved and there was feverish activity after breakfast in clearing up and departing. The president, Richard T, Paul D and Peter C walked from Syke near Sedbergh, up to the Calf, north over Bush Howe and Docker Knott in windy conditions before turning back past Black Force and round Fell Head to the Roman road at Beck House and back to the car in the dry. Eight horses were seen on the fell not far from Black Force. Arthur S and I were going to explore Uldale, but when Arthur came to put on his boots he found they had been taken in mistake by someone else having Senior Moments.

Attendance		Frank Wilkinson
Ian Crowther	Michael Smith	Mick Borroff
John Jenkin	Iain Gilmour	Robert Crowther
Alan Linford	Alan Kay	Tim Josephy
Carol Whalley	Martyn Trasler	Arthur Salmon
John Whalley	Peter Chadwick	Derek Bush
Alan Clare	Mike Godden	Paul Dover
Peter Green	Pete Latham (G)	Richard Josephy
Harvey Lomas	David Hick	Richard Taylor
Derek Clayton	David Martindale	Frank Wilkinson
Richard Gowing	Harry Robinson	

Day visitors,
Ged Campion
& Mick Borroff

Head down
and into the
wind.



CLUB PROCEEDINGS

Annual General Meeting

The 121st Annual General Meeting was held at The Coniston Hall Hotel, Coniston Cold, on November 16th with 58 members present and 20 having given their apologies.

The President made his report. (see page 58)

Officers' reports and the accounts

were debated and adopted

Reports were circulated in advance with the exception of the Treasurer's report which was provided to the meeting. LHG usage for the year was down for no discernible reason; as costs remained the same as last year this resulted in a deficit. Lowstern usage and income were higher than last year although maintenance costs were higher, caused in part by relatively low spending in recent years.

Income from subscriptions was down slightly, due in part to the large number of new life members and expenditure on the Bulletin was higher, resulting in a small reduced operating surplus. Overall however, the Club's finances were in a healthy condition and there was no need to raise hut fees or subscriptions this year.

The officers and committee

were elected for the forthcoming year.

The appointments to positions being-

President - Michael Smith

Vice President - Harvey Lomas

Hon. Treasurer - Martyn Trasler

Hon. Secretary - Tim Josephy

Huts Secretary - Richard Josephy

Lowstern Warden - Richard Sealey

LHG Warden- Arthur Salmon

Other committee members :

Mick Borroff (Membership Secretary)

Ged Campion (Tacklemaster)

Andrew Syme (Webmaster)

Committee Members without portfolio -

Peter Elliot

Rachel Evans.

Other Officers -

Hon. Editor - Roy Denney

Hon. Auditor -Derek Bush

Hon. Librarian - Gordon Humphreys

Archivist - Alan Linford

Membership Changes

Deaths; David Bull, George Spenceley.

New life members; Peter Chadwick, Tim Lofthouse, Harry Robinson, Mike Thompson.

Resignations; Barrie Wood, Martyn Wakeman.

New members; Steve Allison, Katrina Devenport, Alex Linford.

Current membership; 168 (a net loss of 1)

Annual Dinner

The Club's 100th Annual Dinner followed the AGM. Our Principal Guest, Kenton Cool, spoke about his exploits on Everest which he has summited 11 times. He also spoke about the trip he did when he completed the ultimate Three Peaks Challenge with his friend Sherpa Dorje Gylgen. The two men were the first to achieve the feat of summiting Everest, Nuptse and Lhotse in one trip which involved 3 nights on the mountains.

Amongst our other guests was Alan Hinkes OBE, the first Briton to have climbed all 14 of the world's mountains over 8000m high.

Attending the dinner were -

Kenton Cool

Ged Campion

Dennis Armstrong

Imogen Campion

Joan Armstrong

Jenny Casperson

Alex Baskeyfield

John Casperson

Alison Baskeyfield

Peter Chadwick

David Booker

Albert Chapman

Mick Borroff

Ian Chapman

John Brown

Sammy Chapman

George Burfitt

Ken Coote

Vivien Burfitt

Ian Crowther

Derek Bush

Robert Crowther

Aaron Campion

David Crutchley

Bev Campion

Roy Denney

Roger Dix	Richard Gowing	Angela Ince	Don Mackay	Trevor Salmon
Ann Dover	Andra Gray	Dorothy Ince	Sue Mackay	Nick Sands
Anne Dover	David Hall	Paul Ince	Duncan Mackay	John Schofield
Evelyn Dover	David Handley	Ray Ince	Sarah Mardon	Richard Sealey
Paul Dover	Carole Harben	John Jenkin	Dave Martindale	Jack Short
Phil Dover	Ray Harben	Brenda Jones	John McLean	Michael Smith
Richard Dover	John Hemingway	Graham Jones	Jane McOuat	Richard Smith
Andrew Duxbury	Harry Hesketh	Elaine Josephy	John Middleton	Fiona Smith
Lilian Eavis	David Hick	Richard Josephy	Valerie Middleton	Tony Smythe
Peter Elliot	Christine Marriot	Tim Josephy	Frank Milner	Andy Syme
Derek English	Chris Hilton	Ann Kinder	Wynne Milner	Richard Taylor
Doug Errington	Alan Hinkes	Mike Kinder	Peter Moss	Martyn Trasler
Rachel Evans	Val Hobson	Ian Laing	Conrad Murphy	Liv Trigg-Hodge
Darrell Farrant	Peter Hodge	Una Laing	Russell Myers	Bernadette Varney
Peter Farrer	David Holmes	Alan Linford	Sylvie Nichols	John Varney
Gail Faulkner	Elizabeth Holmes	Angie Linford	Sean Penney	Frank Walker
Ian Ferguson	Nigel Holmes	Tim Lofthouse	Tony Penny	Nick Welch
David Gamble	Gordon Humphreys	Harvey Lomas	Valerie Penny	Alexa Wightman
Marcia Godden	Jason Humphreys	John Lovett	Suan Petty	Pete Wightman
Mike Godden	Rebecca Humphreys	Judy Lovett	Harry Robinson	Frank Wilkinson
Elizabeth Gowing	Rob Ibberson	Andrew Luck	Ann Salmon	Michelle Wright
		Ann Luck	Arthur Salmon	

Clubs and Organisations Officially Represented

Alpine Club, Malcolm Bass
British Caving Association, Andy Eaves
Craven Pothole Club, Pete Gray
Giggleswick School, Chris Wright
Gritstone Club, David Bateman
Pinnacle Club, Alfreda Renolds
Rucksack Club, Carole Smithies
Wayfarers Club, Martin Tomlinson

President's Address - Michael Smith

Shortly we will be enjoying our 100th Annual Dinner celebrating the Club's current hearty comradeship and its long-standing heritage. With 168 members and a full and active meets calendar we have a lot to celebrate.

Some members not here today are in China, caving. Last winter gave us four challenging meets in Snowdonia and in the Highlands though unfortunately the proposed scrambling meet had to be cancelled. There was high living on the popular Windermere social meet and the high living in a more adventurous sense in the Mulanje Mountains of Malawi.

Neither the family meet nor the Cheviot meet were blessed with good weather though that did not dampen spirits in either case. Hospitality

Principal Guest

Kenton Cool



on our meets is something we can take great pride in: a real asset in attracting more interest in the Club. Despite welcoming 3 new members during 2013, many of us here today and probably more of those members not here, are surely and steadily reaching an age when they are likely to be less active within the Club.

This presents real challenges for your Committee: to fill the officers' roles, find meet leaders and wardens to maintain another of our key assets, the Club huts. Well placed for these jobs are the newly retired but many of those are already holding Club posts, sometimes more than one, besides running meets every year. This challenge will remain for a few decades. In the meantime as we draw on a diminishing band of highly active members, I urge others to step up to the mark, do their bit to keep meets going and spread the load. We overburden the Club's willing work-horses at our collective peril.

I'll break off here to mention in this context, Richard Josephy's 17 year spell as Hut Booking Secretary, Roy Denney's decade long stint as Honorary Editor and Derek Bush's 15 years as Honorary Auditor.

Those are specific examples but we are indebted to all our hut wardens and their helpers who turn out time and again to further improve the state of Low Hall Garth and Lowstern; all our meet leaders and their helpers and our officers and committee members. Together they have made this a successful year; faced and resolved all sorts of problems; prepared this evening; arranged an attractive meets list for next year and agreed to keep going for a little longer. For that they deserve our wholehearted thanks and I encourage them to continue.

So, we look forward to the next 100 Annual Dinners and the only certainty we have is that none of us here tonight will be sitting down to all of those. However, I find consolation in the wise words of GBS, not George Spenceley this time but George Bernard Shaw expressing what appears to be the philosophy of many of our members here.

***Use your health, even to the point of wearing it out.
That is what it is for.
Spend all you have before you die;
do not outlive yourself.***



Club Merchandise

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

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

We are moving towards a system where the items can be ordered on-line by members and delivered direct from the suppliers but we still have a good number of items in stock. The present stock includes sweatshirts and fleeces of several grades and designs. There is a wide range of sizes from S to XXL.



We also have a supply of Club kit bags and windscreen badges in stock.



The smaller badges can be ordered as a separate item on almost any background colour for Members to fix onto garments and bags but the larger badge can only be done on to an item coloured in YRC bottle green.

Apart from the items which can be delivered ex stock T-shirts, knitted jumpers, gilets, cagoules and parkas can be supplied to order.

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

Rob is on 0113 250 2133 or at wribberson@uwclub.net

ROLL OF HONOUR

PRESIDENTS

1892-93 Geo T Lowe
 1893-03 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1903-06 Alfred Barran
 1906-09 Rev LS Calvert
 1909-12 Lewis Moore
 1912-19 Walter Parsons
 1919-22 WA Brigg
 1922-23 JC Atkinson
 1923-25 EE Roberts
 1925-27 F Leach
 1927-29 HH Bellhouse
 1929-30 TS Booth
 1930-31 T Gray
 1931-32 AE Horn
 1932-34 WV Brown
 1934-36 A Rule
 1936-38 JM Davidson
 1938-46 C Chubb
 1946-48 H Armstrong
 1948-50 CE Burrow
 1950-52 Davis Burrow
 1952-54 J Hilton
 1954-56 HL Stemberidge
 1956-58 S Marsden
 1958-60 TH Godley
 1960-62 FW Stemberidge
 1962-64 RE Chadwick
 1964-66 WPB Stonehouse
 1966-68 EC Downham
 1968-70 EM Tregoning
 1970-72 AB Craven
 1972-74 BE Nicholson
 1974-76 JB Devenport
 1976-78 FD Smith
 1978-80 JP Barton
 1980-82 WR Lofthouse
 1982-84 WA Linford
 1984-86 JD Armstrong
 1986-88 PC Swindells
 1988-90 AC Brown
 1990-92 DA Smithson
 1992-94 GA Salmon
 1994-96 CD Bush
 1996-98 TW Josephy
 1998-00 WCI Crowther
 2000-02 AR Chapman
 2002-04 TA Kay
 2004-06 K Aldred
 2006-08 FM Godden
 2008-10 AD Bridge
 2010 -12 PRP Chadwick
 2012 - M. Smith

HONORARY MEMBERS (PAST)

1892 Edward Whympier
 1892 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1892 Clinton T Dent
 1892 8th Duke of Devonshire
 1892 Charles E Matthews

1892 The Earl of Wharnccliffe
 1893 Charles Pilkington
 1893 Charles F Tetley
 1893 Gerald W Balfour, MP
 1893 Sir W Martin Conway
 1900 Horace Walker
 1907 Sir Alfred Hopkinson
 1907 EA Martel
 1907 G Winthrop Young
 1909 Dr Norman Collie
 1909 James Anson Farrer
 1921 George Yeld
 1921 George T Lowe
 1923 Charles Scriven
 1925 Canon AD Tupper-Carey
 1939 Sydney J Farrer
 1939 Walter Parsons
 1946 Robert de Joly
 1949 Ernest E Roberts
 1955 Sir R Charles Evans
 1956 Harry Spilsbury
 1959 Fred Booth
 1959 Davis Burrow
 1965 Clifford Chubb
 1965 Jack Hilton
 1968 E. Cliff Downham
 1968 Stanley Marsden
 1968 HG Watts
 1977 HL Stemberidge
 1985 A David M Cox
 1998 Major W Lacy
 1990 F David Smith

HONORARY MEMBERS (CURRENT)

1988 Dr John Farrer
 1997 Derek Bush
 2001 Alan Brown
 2003 Alan Linford
 2008 Iain Gilmour
 2008 Gordon Humphreys
 2008 John Lovett
 2008 Chewang Motup
 2010 Albert Chapman
 2012 Arthur Salmon

VICE PRESIDENTS

1892-93 H Slater
 1919-22 EE Roberts
 1892-93 G Arnold
 1921-23 F Constantine
 1893-94 G T Lowe
 1922-24 P Robinson
 1893-94 L Moore
 1923-25 JF Seaman
 1898-00 Rev LS Calvert
 1924-26 M Botterill
 1899-01 JC Atkinson
 1925-27 L Moore
 1900-02 A Barran
 1926-28 W Villiers Brown

1901-03 Dr Tempest Anderson
 1927-29 CE Benson
 1902-04 Dr FH Mayo
 1928-30 CE Burrow
 1903-05 W Parsons
 1929-31 WA Wright
 1904-06 JA Green
 1930-32 C Chubb
 1908-10 F Leach
 1931-33 GL Hudson
 1909-11 C Hastings
 1932-34 FS Smythe
 1910-12 A Rule
 1933-35 JM Davidson
 1911-13 JH Buckley
 1934-35 GA Potter-Kirby
 1912-14 CA Hill
 1935-37 J Hilton
 1913-19 AE Horn
 1935-37 H Humphreys
 1914-19 H Brodrick
 1937-46 A Humphreys
 1919-21 CRB Wingfield
 1938-46 H Armstrong
 1946-48 D Burrow
 1946-48 AL Middleton
 1948-49 GS Gowing
 1948-50 GC Marshall
 1949-50 HG Watts
 1950-52 S Marsden
 1950-53 J Godley
 1952-54 FS Booth
 1953-55 FW Stemberidge
 1954-56 RE Chadwick
 1955-57 GB Spenceley
 1956-58 CW Jorgensen
 1957-59 JA Holmes
 1958-60 JE Cullingworth
 1959-61 J Lovett
 1960-62 WPB Stonehouse
 1961-63 MF Wilson
 1962-64 EC Downham
 1963-65 BE Nicholson
 1964-66 JA Dossier
 1965-67 FD Smith
 1966-68 MD Bone
 1967-69 AR Chapman
 1968-70 JD Driscoll
 1969-71 J Hemingway
 1970-72 EJ Woodman
 1971-73 WA Linford
 1972-74 AJ Reynolds
 1973-75 JG Brook
 1974-76 JP Barton
 1975-77 WR Lofthouse
 1976-78 J Williamson
 1977-79 N Newman
 1978-80 J Stuttard
 1979-81 GA Salmon
 1980-82 PC Swindells
 1981-83 DA Smithson
 1982-84 TW Josephy
 1983-85 DJ Atherton

1984-86 GR Turner
 1985-87 AC Brown
 1986-88 R Cowing
 1987-89 CR Allen
 1988-90 DRH Mackay
 1990-92 WCI Crowther
 1992-94 H Robinson
 1994-96 K Aldred
 1996-98 IFD Gilmour
 1998-00 DA Hick
 2000-02 DJ Handley
 2002-04 G Champion
 2004-06 FM Godden
 2006-08 RA Kirby
 2008-10 M Borroff
 2010 -12 PA Dover
 2012 - HA Lomas

MEMBERS ELECTED TO THE ALPINE CLUB (CURRENT)

Mick Borroff
 Ged Champion
 Albert Chapman
 Peter Chadwick
 Richard Gowing
 David Hick
 Alister Renton
 Michael Smith
 Chewang Motup

LIFE MEMBERS

Armstrong, JD
 Bush, CD
 Casperton, JD
 Chadwick, PRP
 Chapman, A
 Clayton, WD
 Crowther, WCI
 Denney, RJ
 Ellis, JR
 Errington, RD
 Farrant, DJ
 Goodwin, R
 Gowing, R
 Hamlin, JF
 Handley, DJ
 Garben, R
 Hemmingway, J
 Hobson, MP
 Holmes, D
 Hooper, JH
 Humphreys, H
 Humphreys, RG
 Ince, GR
 Jones, G
 Josephy, TW
 Kay, TA
 Kinder, MJ
 Laing, IG
 Large, C

Lofthouse, TR
 Lofthouse, WR
 Lovett, J
 Mackay, DRH
 Marr, AM
 Middleton, JI
 Middleton, JR
 Middleton, RM
 Moorhouse, DM
 Oxtoby, DM
 Pomfret, RE
 Postill, GP
 Renton, K
 Roberts, PD
 Robinson, H
 Rowlands, C
 Salmon, GA
 Salmon, RT
 Salmon, TW
 Short, J
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 Stemberge, SW
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 1978-83 D Loughton
 1984-90 JD Armstrong
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 1998-12 GA Salmon
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 1898-09 L Moore
 1910-20 F Constantine

1920-24 CE Burrow
 1924-29 J Buckley
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 1946-52 FS Booth
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 1956-57 CR Allen
 1957-66 EC Downham
 1966-68 FD Smith
 1968-79 EC Downham
 1979-83 J Hemingway
 1983-93 CD Bush
 1993-96 JA Schofield
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 1910-12 JR Green
 1962-64 TW Salmon
 1912-19 L Moore
 1964-68 WCI Crowther
 1919-24 J Buckley
 1968-73 FD Smith
 1924-26 AS Lowden
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 1946-52 FW Stemberge
 1983-85 J Hemingway
 1952-53 O Stonehouse
 1985-92 M Smith
 1953-54 C IW Fox
 1992-95 MJ Kinder
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 1949-70 HG Watt

1970-83 AB Craven
 1984-90 AC Brown
 1990-93 DJ Atherton
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 2003--- R J Denney

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 1959-60 HL Stemberge
 1960-70 AB Craven
 1970-77 DP Penfold
 1985-92 EC Downham

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 1998-03 WN Todd
 2003- 12 AR Chapman
 2012 - RG Humphreys

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 2012 - WA Linford

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 (Low Hall Garth)
 1957-59 JD Driscoll
 (Low Hall Garth)

1958-62 PR Harris
 (Lowstern)
 1959-66 FD Smith
 (Low Hall Garth)
 1962-66 FD Smith
 (Lowstern)
 1966-67 AR Chapman
 1967-82 WA Linford
 1982-91 K Aldred
 1991-96 DM Martindale
 1997--- R Josephy

HONORARY WARDENS LOW HALL GARTH

1952-55 GB Spenceley
 1955-59 A Tallon
 1959-73 JD Driscoll
 1973-76 FD Smith
 1976-78 GP Postill
 1978-84 N Newman
 1986-89 WA Linford
 1986-98 FD Smith
 1998-01 D English
 2001-02 M Edmundson
 2002-07 IFD Gilmour
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1958-64 J Lovett
 1964-67 J Richards
 1967-72 CG Renton
 1972-74 JTM Teasdale
 1974-76 A Hartley
 1976-78 JA Varney
 1978-79 GP Postill
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 1987-88 J Lovett
 1988-90 H Robinson
 1990-93 FM Godden
 1993-96 GR Salmon
 1996-00 FM Godden
 2000-05 RA Kirby
 2005-09 J Lovett
 2010-12 DB Wood
 2012- RJ Sealey

NEPALIS ASCEND NEW HEIGHTS

When we hear the words Nepal and sport used together we quite naturally think of mountains and other high altitude activities. There are of course other more unusual traditional sports, practised by the Nepali, Gurkha and Sherpa people but when I read the news item today whilst finalising the journal I have to be honest and say I was more than a little surprised.

Nepal have qualified for the 2014 world Twenty20 cricket world cup. Now where did they find that flat bit of land to play on?

MEMBERS' MONTAGE



Bill Hawkins in that nice little pink number,
Baja California



John Brown on Moughton above the scars,
Long Walk



Fiona, Tim and Booker with bed and
breakfast in the Chisepo Hut, Malawi



Morecambe Bay crossing -
we had been warned



Visit to Ingleborough Cave, Family Meet



Katrina, Oliver, Paul & Billie on Whernside,
Family Meet

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Mulanje Mountains, Malawi
Trekking in Haute Savoie
The Mysterious Mrs Johnson
Ironman Eventing

Issue 15, Series 13

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Pontrasina, Switzerland
Walking on La Palma
Early caving
Ilkley Moor

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Oman and its Karst
Treks in the Écrins
Mera Peak, Nepal
France, The Vercours

Issue 13 Series 13

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Turkey, Rock climbing
Ireland, cycling & hillwalking
China, caving

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The Vercours, France

Issue 13 Series 13

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a gap in their collection we
may be able to fill it.

The Treasurer would
appreciate a contribution
towards the postage



Constitution

The Club's rules and bye-laws are printed in journal series 13 issue 11 - Summer 2011

Enquiries regarding the possible hire of Club cottages should be addressed to

**Richard Josephy
135 Divinity Road
Oxford OX4 1LW
Tel. 01865 723630
bookings@yrc.org.uk**

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Earlier journals can be accessed for information and go back to the formation of the club in 1892

Articles and items appearing in Chippings, Natural History and Obituaries are written and / or compiled by the Editor unless otherwise attributed.

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Deadlines for material for the journals are June 15th & December 15th

THE YRC

The Yorkshire Ramblers Club
Established 1892
The Mountaineering and Caving Club
www.yrc.org.uk



The aims of the Club are to organise walking, mountaineering and skiing excursions; to encourage the exploration of caves and pot-holes; to conduct expeditions to remote parts of the planet, the pursuit of other outdoor activities and the gathering and promoting of knowledge concerning natural history, archaeology, geology, folklore and other kindred subjects.

Editor

Roy Denney, 33 Clovelly Road, Glenfield, Leicestershire LE3 8AE
Editor@YorkshireRamblers.Org.UK

Secretary

Tim Josephy
Secretary@YorkshireRamblers.Org.UK

The YRC Journal is published twice a year and is free to members, libraries and certain kindred clubs. First published July 1899

Club Properties

Lowstern, Clapham, North Yorkshire



Low Hall Garth, Little Langdale, Cumbria



Lodged with the British Library - Publisher ID L-42592

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