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ARTICLES

**TREKKING IN
MORROCO**

AZERBAIJAN

**SUMMER
ISLES**

**PARYS
MOUNTAIN**

**MOUNTAINS OF
MOURNE**



**ROSEBERRY TOPPING
PHOTOGRAPH
CHRIS SWINDEN**

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EDITORS NOTE

The Club has been in existence almost 124 years which means next year will be something of a celebration and we look forward to an interesting meets programme.

We are also bringing out a special edition of the Journal to mark the occasion. Work on it is well advanced and I would like to thank the many members who have provided me with snippets and old photographs.

This edition will concentrate on the highlights of the last twenty five years during which period cameras have moved on and we have a welter of wonderful photographs. Many have never been seen before and some previously only in black and white.

We look back at the many interesting places we have been to and things we have done and can look forward to continuing this tradition.

This special edition should be a real keepsake for the members but will also hopefully inspire those that follow us to push new boundaries.

This publication will distort our usual output cycle and the next Journal will come out in March 2017 and cover nine months of activity and the deadline for this edition will be the end of that February.

Meet reports and Club proceedings after that time will be kept until early the following year with the special edition coming out during that gap.

No more photographs now please, unless I have specifically asked for them as we are now putting the chapters together. If we find we are lacking something on a specific location or activity we will approach likely members direct.

We have been trawling through the archives and old journals checking facts and looking for material to include and it has reminded us that we have lots of spare copies of old journals. We always print a few spares to replace members lost ones and to be able to provide recent ones to prospective members but invariably there are a few left over.

In addition, many members' families give old copies back to the Club when a member passes on.

We have a way of using the more recent ones to good purpose. If any member knows of a school or library or any other outlet which might take and enjoy them please let us know as we may trigger interest in membership that way.

Similarly if you have a friend who might be tempted to join, copies might be available after we have satisfied the initial demand.

Many members do like to collect and retain the journals but have gaps in their collections which we may be able to fill and newer members might like to have copies from the days before they joined.

Please get in touch with the Club Librarian if you want to find out what is available.

As to the content of the Journal please remember that it is your journal. Other members want to know what you have been up to, especially those now older members no longer active themselves.

It is when we come to carry out an exercise like this special edition that we realise how many exploits discussed socially never reach the pages of the journal.

You may feel that putting pen to paper is not your forte but I am more than happy to tidy up articles for you.

AZERBAIJAN – LAND OF FIRE (AND MUD!)

John & Valerie Middleton

A refreshingly different country that can make an alternative ‘stop over’ on any long journey to or from the Far East or Central Asia. It is full of extremes, contradictions and contrasts but will prove safe, secure and fascinating.

AZERBAIJAN has the privilege of being the eastern-most of all the European countries. It is bordered by Russia to the north, Georgia and Armenia to the west, Nagorno-Karabakh and Iran to the south and the Caspian Sea to the east.



It covers an area of 86,600 square kilometres with its highest elevation being 4,466m on the Bazzarduzu Dag along the Russian border. The lowest point is the Caspian Sea coastline itself at -32m. Its considerable wealth is derived from petroleum products, caviar, carpets, saffron, olives and other agricultural products. The population is estimated as just over 8 million people made up of 90% ethnic Azeris with the remainder being Lezgins, Armenians, Russians, Talysh and Georgians. Politically it manages to maintain good relations with all the surrounding countries as well the majority of the rest of the world. Historically it is at the crossing point between east and west with all the benefits (trade etc.) and tribulations (invasions etc.) that such a position holds. The dominant religion is a very tolerant form of Shia Islam with virtually all other forms of worship being accepted.

BAKU is the capital city composed of a beautifully renovated Historic City centre surrounded by futuristic buildings, luxurious shopping malls, very plush offices,

hotels and Government buildings all of which rival anything to be found in Singapore, Shanghai and Dubai. The city, for the most part, is separated from the sea by an easily traversed modern highway and 12km long superbly landscaped Primorsky Park Promenade that has won many International accolades for originality. In contrast, oil derricks, both derelict and still working, creep to within a few kilometres of the city centre as do several traditional villages and even scrubby animal farmland.



Restaurants are particularly good value providing authentic foods from all the surrounding countries as well as delicious local Azeri cuisine. International ‘Fast Food’ can be found in most of the shopping malls. The street layout is easy to follow and cheap user friendly buses and taxis are everywhere. Language is not normally a problem as not only is English widely spoken within the city but the sociable local population enjoys practicing their linguistic skills on any passer-by.

All-in-all this is a very pleasurable city to spend time in.

FIRE. Baku is situated on the Abseron peninsular

This sizeable protrusion of the mainland represents a fascinating microcosm of all things Azeri from millionaire’s mansions and playgrounds to hovels and ancient villages full of narrow alleyways.

Mosques, minarets, old forts and castles are also to be found in such surroundings.

Oil fields, both derelict and new, dominate most landscapes however, with oil and gas having been known since time immemorial. In fact it was because of the several ever-flaming gas vents that the almost pacifist Zoroastrianism religion, based on earth, wind, water and fire, was born around the 6th century BC. Strands of Zoroastrianism thinking are still part of everyday Azeri life.

The actual country name of Azerbaijan is believed to have originated from the Persian word for 'fire'.

Before leaving Abseron one other site that fascinated us was the several large pink algae salt lakes to be found immediately to the north of Baku. They are apparently favoured by occasional visits from flamingos and the salt is harvested and used for commercial purposes. At other times the pink creates a beautiful 'glow' during the morning and evening sunlight.



MUD. If we have to be honest, mud, glorious mud, was the real reason for our visit to Azerbaijan! This is not the normal mud caused by excessive surface water or similar but mud that is literally spewed out of the ground from depths of up to 10km or even more.

This phenomenon is associated with oil and gas fields in a similar manner to the salt diapirs previously described in Iran – see YRC Journal Issue 6 Winter 2008 pages 4-10.

Surface extrusions of mud often develop at a point of weakness in the Earth's crust such as along a fault line. They are associated with geologically young sedimentary deposits together with the presence of organic gas from hydrocarbons.

Even Marco Polo in his 13th century travels recorded some of these same vents. One of the old religious sites, situated above a spent natural gas vent, has been restored to its original splendour and is known as the Atesgah Fire Temple. Within the outer walls of this quite large complex special channels carved into the limestone have recently been unearthed that once actually carried the gas to various destinations! An on-site museum is exceptionally informative, well presented and worthy of an hour or more study.

The only area on Abseron that still emits flames naturally is to be found about 10km to the north at Yanar Dag. A reduction of these active vents is believed to have been caused by oil industry extraction. This is still quite an impressive and little changed site situated at the base of a small hill. The flaming area measures roughly 10m long by up to a metre high and obviously looks doubly spectacular after dusk.

The mud is forced upwards with and by this pressurised gas, usually methane, which often includes small amounts of oil, minerals and water. This is deposited on the surface, or even underwater, as volcano like cones, domes, mounds or simply pools. The fresh mud is normally as cool as the surrounding surface and may be several degrees colder unlike magmatic flows of molten rock from the more well-known volcanoes. Eruptions are generally very benign but 'explosive' ones do occasionally occur that have in the past killed both livestock and people and overrun habitations. These more violent eruptions normally happen following earthquakes.

There are estimated to be around 850 mud volcanoes on Earth and 350 of these are found in Azerbaijan. Probably the most interesting ones to visit are those of a cone or traditional volcano shape. These may grow up to 5m in height but because of

their soft composition they tend to be ephemeral. The resulting mounds do slowly increase in height with several exceeding 500m. The base of these may extend over several square kilometres.

The easiest concentration of these cones to visit is found about an hour's drive southwards from Baku in the hills close to Gobustan. A complex series of very minor roads lead onto Dasgil Hill. Upon the top of this sits a concentration of about 30 assorted shapes and sizes of miniature volcanoes.

The ground is surprisingly solid and it is possible to walk onto them for some really close up views and photographs. Activity within each vent is variable from virtually nothing but gurgling's, through rising and falling mud levels to others with obvious flows. The consistency of the mud is one of a viscosity that slowly develops into attractive ripples and curves, sometimes with a dull surface but more often with a shiny skin. The second site that we visited was a five minute walk from kilometre 41 on route M27 which runs from Baku to Shamakha. This is just as interesting as the previous site although the volcanoes are probably of a slightly smaller size.

Two further sites that we did not visit due to time constraints and access difficulties were the individual Turagay and Lokbaton mud volcanos. The former is 400m high with a shallow gently seeping caldera on its domed summit whilst the latter, rising to only 100m, spewed out flames 300m high as recently as the year 2000!

On the day that we visited the mud volcanoes close to Gobustan we also spent half the day investigating the UNESCO listed Gobustan Petroglyphs. There are 5,000 of these impressive carvings to be seen amongst large rocks and caves that overlook the Caspian Sea. Many date back to 10,000BC.

THE CANDYCANES HILLS.

This is definitely another site that is worth seeing, particularly if the day is bright and a picnic is brought. Unfortunately the sun failed to shine for us but we still considered the effort well worthwhile. The hills are situated to the north of the Gilazi to Kaladzh road less than an hour's drive from Baku.

The hills reach 958metres in altitude and we were also informed that the walking opportunities are excellent.

Each hill is a geological wonderland of dramatically folded and multi-coloured shale beds hence the Americanised name of 'Candycane'.

Photography here in morning or evening sunlight would be exceptionally impressive.

OTHER DEVIATIONS.

We only had four full days within the country so our excursions were limited a couple of hours drive from Baku. However we did not have to travel a great distance to realise that a far more traditional and less frenetic way of life was lived just beyond the cities boundary.

Two other interesting sites that we did visit were Cirax Qala and Besbarmaq Dag. The former is the remains of a fifth century fort with spectacular views over the surrounding countryside whilst the latter is a collection of quite impressive rock pinnacles atop a 520m high hill. It is possible to ascend to the summit of Besbarmaq Dag but not before running the gauntlet of local people trying to sell their wares!

LOGISTICS.

There are many flights to and from Baku but an advanced visa is needed for entry into the country. This may be obtained through the Azerbaijan Embassy in London at <http://www.visaforazerbaijan.org.uk> or electronically through several accredited Tour Companies within Azerbaijan.

These companies will normally arrange the visas for free provided one or more of their services is selected. We used 'Improtex Travel Tours and Conferences' who also provided us with a city centre hotel and a vehicle www.improtex-travel.com .

Most of our information on the country was obtained from friends, the internet, or from photographs placed on 'Google Earth'. Lonely Planet also produces one of their guidebooks that cover 'Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan'.



Above, mud volcanoes and left, Yanar Dag

THE GREAT INVASION

Roy Denney

In addition to the many diseases and parasites attacked numerous species of trees there is an ever growing list of invaders both flora and fauna.

In our woodlands we have non-native deer greatly hindering natural regeneration and killing off natural plants of the woodland floor. There are thought to be over a million deer in Britain but of the six species only the red and roe are native.

Statistics produced back in 2013 were staggering. They suggest that across the EU about £10 billion pounds are spent trying to eradicate harmful invaders and worldwide around 5% of the world's economy.

The latest addition to the list of probably invaders to cause great concern is knocking on our door and great efforts are being made to sport early arrivals and stamp them out.

I once came face to face with a European hornet in my garden, a species migrating northwards through Britain. It looked a fearsome creature and I reported it to the local authority who said they were now being seen locally but that they were no great threat. It is usually not aggressive but if threatened can be defensive of its nest and food supplies – only the female stings. Much larger than the wasp, its wings are orangey-red and its belly striped yellow and brown. Its legs are all brown unlike its far more dangerous cousin lurking across the channel.

The Asian hornet was accidentally introduced to France and is now spreading out and is highly possible in Britain, possibly wind-blown but more likely in soil associated with imported plants or in untreated wood. It might easily be inadvertently in freight containers or vehicles.

It is also slightly smaller than the native hornet and their most distinguishing features, differing from our European hornets, are their almost entirely dark abdomen (tiny flecks of yellow) and their yellow tipped legs.

We also have invasive plants causing untold damage to the eco-system like Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed, Australian swamp stone-crop, water primrose, rhododendron, floating pennywort and American skunk cabbage. Some can be imported as attractive plants but once escaped into the wild are out-competing native species.

Once established, for example, evidence indicates that rhododendrons have toxins that hinder the growth of other species and are most concentrated in its young leaves making them unpalatable or even deadly to grazing animals that might have controlled their growth. Their large canopies are capable of dominating areas with and can even dry out wetland habitats that are otherwise unsuitable for it.

Not all invaders are entirely unwelcome. Rainbow trout, sweet chestnut and horseradish have been introduced and welcomed. In 2002 Britain had its first pair of breeding European Bee Eaters for half a century. These colourful occasional visitors arrive from time to time when strong winds blow them off course when migrating to Europe from Africa. They usually take one look at our weather and head for the Channel but a pair set up home that year in County Durham and successfully reared a clutch of young. In 2005 another pair successfully nested in Herefordshire and numbers of these birds are now appearing in this country every spring.

There are now thought to be over 6000 green ring-necked parakeets living wild throughout Britain. Thought to have been increasing in numbers steadily since releases and escapes in the sixties, they tend to be particularly concentrated in the south of England. These birds are thought to be doubling in numbers every few years and as our winters warm up their chances of survival increase dramatically. Now considered to be naturalised it is long-tailed with a red beak and a pink and black ring around its face and neck.

In flight it has pointed wings, with a very steady, direct flight. It flocks in its hundreds by roost sites, and can be very noisy.

A pair of European eagle owls nested in a remote piece of woodland in Northumberland in 2003 and two chicks were found in a hollow in a tree spring 2005 and by 2009 they were cropping up in a number of locations. European eagle owls are amongst the world's largest owls and grow to a height of two foot six inches with a wingspan of nearly six feet; a large beak; enormous talons and startling bright orange eyes. They can weigh in at up to nine pounds and, like most owls, hunt at night for their prey which includes rats, mice, voles, rabbits, hares and other birds.

They are fairly common in the wilder areas of Europe, Scandinavia, Northern Africa, Asia and the Middle East but were very rarely seen in Britain and then only in the Highlands of Scotland. The species was wiped out in Britain about 150 years ago and because we are an island and the birds don't like to cross large expanses of water it was thought unlikely they would be back. This does not however seem to be the case and they are increasingly being spotted in other locations

Those early arrivals seen in Scotland were probably island hoppers from Scandinavia blown off their normal patch by bad weather. There are a lot in captivity and it is quite likely that the first breeding pair in Northumberland were escapees but they could have migrated down from Scotland. Wherever they came from they are now with us

and should survive well in Britain's wilder corners if not persecuted by man.

Much as I like to see 'lost' species returning to where they originally existed, it always has a knock on effect with other creatures in the food chain. An eagle owl was caught on camera attacking a hen harrier in Bowland and then remaining on that birds nest for some time and needless to say that nest then failed. Given hen harriers are very few in number and rarely successfully breed in England this was fairly disastrous. Quite apart from taking some other birds for food the eagle owl is known to attack other predators to get rid of 'competition'.

Little egrets were unknown in my youth but are now widespread.

We need to watch out for and try and stop alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to the health of humans or farmed animals but we often realise too late what harm they can do. The apparently attractive and tasty North American grey squirrels are driving native red squirrels to near extinction in most of England; rabbits and now cane toads plagued Australia, both having been introduced for apparently good reason; signal crayfish from America are out-competing the native and introducing disease etc. Problems with escaped mink, terrapins and zanders are well documented. Once established they are near impossible to remove despite our best efforts.

The only success I can recall is the coypu.



All Our Yesterdays

This is a photograph kindly provided by Ray Harben and taken just over 50 years ago

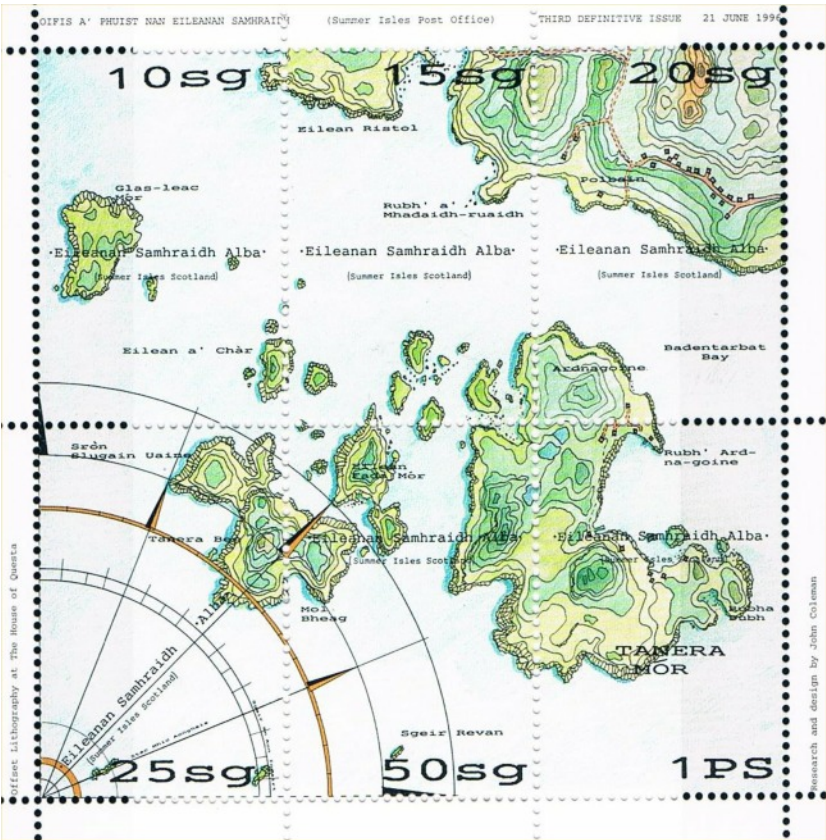
**NAMES - Thought to be
George Postill,
Dennis Armstrong,
Chris Renton,
Frank Wilkinson,
David Smith and
Tony Reynolds**



SUMMER ISLES

ALAN LINFORD

John Coleman, architect, artist, climber and humorist, survived a serious mountaineering accident recovering in time to complete the design of this 1996 issue of stamps for the Summer Isles. Their postal service was inaugurated in September 1970 with the approval of the Royal Mail. The first edition (1896 revision) of the 1855-1861 one inch OS map was used by him to create this unique collage. Gaelic titles and face values are used in recognition of the Gaelic renaissance. In Gaelic the GBP is referred to as the 'pundd sassanach' (PS) and the penny in Gaelic is 'sgillinn' (sg) which was a Scots shilling worth one twelfth of the English pre-decimal counterpart.



EILEANAN SAMHRAIDH ALBA (Summer Isles, Scotland)

On holiday one summer the artist stood outside the old schoolhouse rejoicing in the panorama of the mainland hills, over two miles of blue water. He could not resist painting them and they ended up on these stamps. The view extends from the Assynt Hills of Sutherland to the great peaks of Wester Ross.



Canisp, 846m (White Hills, Inchnadamph)

Stac Pollaidh, 613m (Inverpolly)

Quinag, 808m (Water Soup, Kylesku)

Suilven, 731m (Pillar Mountain)

POETS' CORNER

We always welcome contributions from budding poets amongst the membership but here is one from the early days of the Club.

John Snoad brings to our attention a number of items now available on the website of Norway's national library - Nasjonalbibliotek.

There are about eighteen letters written by Slingsby, letters that John had not seen before and presumably not in the Club's archive. They were probably donated by Jocelin Winthrop-Young.

John has transcribed the following poem for us.

It was apparently sent to George Percival Baker (1856-1951) and was dated 18th May 1899.

Invitation to the Fells

by Wm Cecil Slingsby

Let's meet once more you dear old boy,
On fells let's seek for health and joy,
In some wild ghyll another prize,
We'll win & all the world surprise.

Late we shall come on Saturday eve,
Time by the forelock mean to thieve,
By Dungeon & by Rossett Ghyll,
We'll think no more of loom or mill.

Meet us at the house of Tyson,
Where we'll on mutton pies set eyes on,
Do not fail us good old Robin-
son though thou'rt round as any bobbin.

You must come & pray do carry,
Much for me or else I'll tarry.
You must really into training get
for when you come to snows you'll sweat.

There'll be Briggs J. .J. & W. A.,
Howard & Ellis, with cameras they.
"Eric the Brave" & Holmes the True,
There never was a better crew.

Don' fail your tasties rich to bring,
For well can I their praises sing,
Of parkins rare I'll fetch a store.
I think you've tasted them before.

Keep back the storm nor let the rain,
Prevent us from great deeds to gain,
Soft days we've had at Wast before,
Nor wish we for them anymore.

And who am I who scribble now?
You'll guess a name at once I reckon,
It may be wrong. It may be right,
But as it's late I'll say good night.

OZ AND TASSIE

Iain Gilmour

A SHORT WALK IN AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA

Oz and Tassie would be how the locals refer to the areas where Sarah and I took a few short walks while visiting family in Melbourne. A short walk in Australia is about as helpful a definition as a stroll in Asia, but we enjoyed our little forays enough to tell you about them.

We decided not to use a car when we went to Melbourne, but we wanted to head slightly inland and experience walking in the bush. There is a good train service from Melbourne via Ballarat which connects seamlessly with a bus to Daylesford, a sleepy little town established 150 years ago in the goldfields rush. At that time there were thousands of prospectors furiously digging and panning for gold. The Goldfields Track is 210 km long, running from Ballarat to Bendigo in Victoria, South Australia.



The track runs through natural bush of gum trees with undergrowth which makes the walker stick to the track following a small creek along the valley bottom. The shelter from wind and the moisture in the valley, encourage trees like the silver gum to reach amazing size. We had been warned to keep a good lookout for snakes, but fortunately saw none. As you thread your way along the path the bird song is always with you, and if a noisy kookaburra calls from a tree above, it makes you jump with surprise.

We were walking from Daylesford in late October and saw very few people on the track, so the feeling of being in unspoilt bush was very real.

We saw wallabies and burrows where the nocturnal wombat had been digging. There are thousands more tracks to explore, but at least we made a start.

Tasmania was near enough and a suitable size for a ten day visit, and we chose Tassie instead of New Zealand which would have required more travel and time. There is something homely and familiar about Tasmania, reminiscent of England 50 years ago.

We flew to Hobart and planned our trip along the east coast heading north to Launceston. This only gave us a brief introduction, regrettably missing the wilder west side of the island where the weather can blast in from the roaring forties with squalls and rain.

Hobart has a beautiful harbour, a Saturday market with 300 stalls of local craft goods, a working square-rigged historic sailing ship, a crazy art gallery built by a local gambler, and the best sea food of scallops and prawns imaginable. Nearby Port Arthur has the original buildings which were constructed by the convicts banished to Tasmania, and poignant reminders of our murky past.

However, locals who might ask where you are from will often respond warmly with "Ah, from the mother country".

We saw trail heads leading into the bush, and there are many recommended day walks. We particularly enjoyed a coastal walk at Fortescue Bay which has a superb beach of dazzling white sand, and the crystal clear seawater of the Southern Ocean. The Wineglass Bay area at Freycinet has a splendid 11km walk with a vigorous climb to a viewing point at a col of the granite Hazard Mountains, and then descends to two superb beaches and a rocky path over the shoulder of the mountain back to the starting point. We were near Great Oyster Bay, the source of some of the famous shellfish, and home of the Oyster Bay Pine, a cypress tree of distinctive upright habit.

As we journeyed north to Launceston there are more dazzling beaches, vineyards, and a café at Orford with exquisite scallop pies.

Near the Tamar Estuary there is a fascinating trail through remnants of the original temperate rain forest in Notley Fern Gorge where the slow growing tree ferns, Dicksonia Antartica are over 100 years old and can reach 20 feet high



We took time out on arrival to get over jet-lag and visited the lovely Kangaroo Island, off shore from Adelaide, where I got this picture of a Koala.

If ever the opportunity arises, I would happily return Down Under.



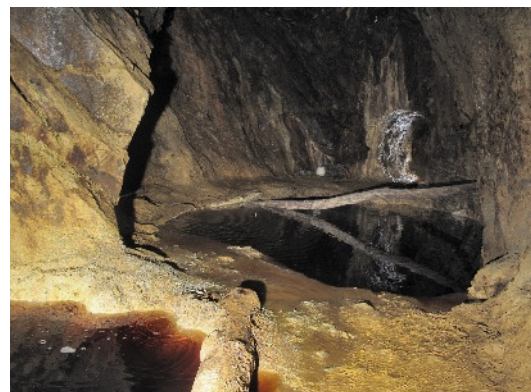
PARYS MOUNTAIN, ANGLESEY

In the early 1980s, a local lad died when he fell down an open shaft into the mines in Parys Mountain, probably jumping over it for a dare. The council took the decision to fill in or cap all the shafts, a huge undertaking as there are over 100 and so the mines were sealed. However David Jenkins of Bangor University was convinced that the mine held evidence of Bronze Age workings and in the late 80s negotiated permission to open up the Parys Footway in order to search for evidence. A JCB was employed, the footway dug out and, after a corrugated iron pipe with a security gate was installed, exploration began. David expected a protracted search and so was surprised and delighted when, after half an hour, several water-washed stones were found with evidence of usage. They were later proved to be from the seashore nearby and had been used as hammer stones. The bottom of a shaft was reached with pieces of charcoal and leaves embedded in the mud. These were carbon-dated to nearly 4000 years ago; among the oldest confirmed Bronze Age workings in Britain. A group of enthusiasts, Grwp Tanddaerol Parys (Parys Underground Group) was formed and exploration of the accessible levels began.

The mines were to prove to have some remarkable features.



Copper sulphate formations



The Red Pools



Snottites, bacterial extremophiles, Parys Mine



Formations in Mona Mine

BACKGROUND

Mining had been going on to a greater or lesser extent for centuries before the Great Discovery of March 1768. Acting under the direction of the owner, a miner named Rowland Pugh discovered a huge lode of copper close to the surface. This sparked off an expansion that was to see Parys mountain become the biggest copper producer in the world and making the tiny port of Amlwch the busiest on the west coast of Britain, eclipsing both Liverpool and Milford Haven. For this discovery Rowland was rewarded with a bottle of whisky and a rent free house. Small recompense for the vast profits that were to be made.

Surface mining in two huge opencasts worked alongside deep mining which, by the end of the nineteenth century reached a depth of over 900ft, about 500 ft below sea level. Although initially vast quantities of ore were recovered, by the mid to late 1800's developments of mining in South America and South Africa were taking their toll and the difficulties of extraction under Parys Mountain made mining an economic struggle. It had long been known that copper could be recovered from mine drainage water by collecting it in lagoons; throwing in scrap iron, then processing the resulting sludge. By the twentieth century, this was the primary method of recovering copper; dams were built in the drainage adits, the mine allowed to flood for a few months then the water was drained off into the lagoons which still circle the mountain.

Even this operation had ceased by the 1950s, the mine slowly flooded and apart from a few visits by interested locals it was forgotten.

EXPLORATION

There had been two mines on the mountain, the Parys and the Mona, separately owned and connected only by the joint drainage level at 45 fathoms.

Joint drainage level



The Parys Mine, the only one accessible, was flooded below the 20 fathom level.

Descending to the 20ft level



Pretty soon all accessible passages had been explored, with the discovery of two more Bronze Age sites, so interest switched to some of the still open drainage adits.

The Afon Goch (Red River), so called because of the iron staining of the water, yielded over ¼ mile of desperate struggle, chest deep in viscous ochre, to a concrete dam with two drain valves, now inoperative, at the bottom.

The explorers sat there, aware of the effects of acid water on concrete (some mine water is pH 2.1!) watching water leaking through cracks in the dam and pushing their fingers two knuckles into the soft material. They couldn't help being aware of the 25 fathom (150ft) head of water behind the dam..... All this was reported to the Environment Agency who, realising the catastrophe that would occur to Amlwch town should the dam fail, decide to de-water the mine and remove the dam. This they did at enormous cost, there being more than 10 times the calculated amount of water to remove, only to find that the dam was over 18ft thick and would probably have lasted until the second coming.

Never mind, there was now access to the 30 and 45 fathom levels and many kilometres of passages and stopes to explore. Thank you taxpayers!

Over the next few weeks explorers excitedly followed the falling water level, rediscovering huge chambers and stopes until finally the 45 fathom drainage level became accessible. These were interesting times because ancient timbers, long supported by the water had a habit of giving way unexpectedly and precipitating collapses of all sizes. A certain alacrity of movement was the order of the day. Luckily things have settled down now and most routes are safe.

Mona mine was reached via the joint drainage level, a 50 yard low airspace section leading to an enigmatic and ancient wooden ladder propped up and only reaching two thirds of the way up to the level above. This was duly extended and exploration began. Some weeks later, a surface party, searching for evidence of the buried Mona Footway were surprised to hear some foul language emanating from the bottom of a depression. Upon investigation they found a hand poking up out of the heather. First instincts were to hit it with a rock but more gentlemanly sentiments prevailed and the hand was grasped.

More profanities ensued and the hand was withdrawn. It transpired later in the pub that all the swearing was because the owner of the hand was lying under a roof of loose boulders and didn't appreciate folk walking about above him. A connection had been made but it took several months of hard work before a stable entrance could be made and a classic mining through trip created.

The through trip, which under the terms of the Group's lease from the Marquis of Anglesey, has to be led by a designated leader is more of a caving trip than a walk through a mine. Lodes were worked on the bargain principle; teams of miners bid for work and hoped they would dig enough ore to cover their bid. Teams who dug connecting tunnels were paid by the yard and only made the tunnels as big as they had to. They weren't very big people in the eighteenth century either. A few massive rock falls have further constricted the way in some places and everything below the 20 fathom level has a rich covering of mud. Sounds great! So why go?

Fantastic iron-stained formations, straws up to 15 ft long and massive stalagmite bosses; huge stopes and chambers; startling blue copper sulphate formations and a unique adventure.

If you're of sound body and not so sound mind you really should try it!

Tim Josephy



Parys Mine footway

16 Fathom footway



CHIPPINGS



Ama Dablam

THE COWAL WAY

The Cowal Way in Argyll is another of Scotland's newer trails and is of a distance to allow it to be walked in a weekend. It is also very accessible, being not very far from Glasgow. Basically the start of the Highlands it offers beautiful coastlines, pretty dramatic scenery, quite a bit of up and down without achieving major heights, and abundant wildlife.

Only established in 2000, it runs the length of the Cowal Peninsula, depending on which way you walk it, beginning at Portavadie in the south of Cowal winding its way up to end at Inveruglas on Loch Lomond. It also connects with the West Highland Way and Kintyre Way. Improvements to this are part of a five year scheme to give people more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and travel sustainably.

Thirty new long distance routes are to be added to Scotland's network of trails, cycleways and canal towpaths, as part of plans aiming to extend the network by 500 miles over the next five years, joining up and improving existing routes.

Those backing the scheme want Scotland to develop a strategic path network on a par with the best in Europe, making it easier for people of all ages and abilities to get to and enjoy the great outdoors.

Feasibility studies are in hand for a coastal path on the north side of the Solway Firth, to extend the Clyde walkway in Lanarkshire, and for improvements to parts of a 'Pilgrim's Way' across Scotland between Iona and St Andrews. Major improvements to canal towpaths have already begun.

It sounds as though the Cowal Way would be a good challenge with more being lined up.

MORE OF A CHALLENGE

If a walk like the Cowal Way is not for you I will share something of a secret with you. A friend has been relating details of what sounds one of the great walks of the world; one of the least known and least walked and one of the longer named routes.

He lives part of each year in South Africa and has told me of this walk that one of his friends over there has done. It sounds fascinating but with my increasingly dodgy feet I am afraid it is not one for me. Tempt you?

The Cowal Way is 57 miles long but this walk takes about 57 days so you need to have a bit of spare time.

It seems the route is normally targeted at 55 days but there are some longish legs which some people need to break up. The route is almost 650km long.

This is a very challenging walk through pristine wilderness and I am told is almost a spiritual experience. Called the The Rim of Africa it is a traverse of the Cape Mountains. Starting high in the Cederberg Wilderness Area, it finishes in the foothills of the Outeniqua on the Garden Route. Whilst it supposedly follows old pathways, and existing trails, it is a major test of navigation which would challenge the finest of orienteers. The trails are impossible to determine in places and the route often follows remote pathless ridge-lines.

The walk is often tackled in stages and I am not sure whether this chap did it all but he certainly waxed lyrical to my informant who is not himself a walker at all. I doubt he did, as very few have. Normally done in their spring you have to do it with a guide, not least for access permissions.

They back pack and sleep out but have relief parties trekking in to meet them at a number of locations bringing fresh supplies and sometimes a change of guide. It is at these points where people doing one section come out.

It is a strenuous mountainous jumble of folded rock, with numerous steep gradients; is mostly off-path; involves wild camping and stream washes, and you have to look out for wild animals. What's not to fancy?

Having found it on the web it appears they only organise one walk through each year.

STOREN

On the 140th anniversary of the YRC's second President, Cecil Slingsby's landmark ascent of Scandinavia's most sought after and Norway's third highest peak, Storen (7,890 ft) two YRC members were in the party of six making an ascent, not by the same route (now considered often problematic) but by Andrew's Chimney.

More of this three-day outing in a subsequent issue.

AND EVEN MORE CHALLENGINGHOW DO YOU MOVE A MOUNTAIN?

The answer is of course to change a map.

A fairly modest peak on the Norwegian side of the Finnish border may be 'moved' into Finland which would make it that country's highest peak.

If the border were to move east about 200 metres and north 150 metres, the summit of the 1365m Halti would then be in Finland.

At present the highest place in Finland is part way up a slope and compared the the giants in Norway this summit is of little consequence to them.

There is a campaign to bring this about to celebrate Finland's 100 years as an independent country.

WHERE WITCHES FLYON A COLD WINTER'S NIGHT

Pendle Hill is an imposing divide between communities in this part of Lancashire and as well as being a good walking place affording good views it is a land of myth and mystery.

Stories of the Pendle Witches have passed into Lancashire legend and folk poem and music. It reflects a period of malicious accusations and counter-accusations with people convicted of witchcraft and at least nine being executed. The area is now to receive a lottery grant to delve into its wide and fascinating heritage including the starting of the Quaker movement.

LOMOND & TROSSACHS

Scotland's first National Park, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs is set to receive £1.5m to fund a Landscape Partnership project at its eastern-most corner. Callander sits on the Highland Boundary Fault in a geological gap between the Lowlands and Highlands, and provides a natural gateway to the National Park and the Highlands.

Made famous far and wide as Tannochbrae, the home of Doctor Finlay's Casebook when

televised in the 60s it had a period as a very popular visitor location.

Ambitious plans as part of this new scheme include restoring its fortunes by transforming the town into the 'Outdoor Capital of the National Park' and developing a cycling and walking network.

COAST PATH UPDATE

Natural England is moving on nicely with its work to deliver the England Coast Path, with work underway to open up half of it at present. Eventually the path will stretch out across 2700 miles of often stunning walking routes if you fancy a really long walk. To establish the route they have divided the coast of England into sixty-six bite-sized stretches with teams working closely with local authorities, land owners and occupiers, communities, interest groups and others to ensure the best and most appropriate alignment for the new coast path.

They have already opened up over 100 miles with almost as much again opening any time now, in Kent and Somerset. They are now building on this progress with the aim of still completing the coastal path around England by 2020.

Stretches are open in Dorset and Norfolk; in the North West the Cumbrian stretch from Allonby to Whitehaven is now open and the rest between Gretna and Silecroft is currently being worked on. Work on the coast round Morecambe Bay down to Cleveleys should start this year. In the North East the Durham stretch is open and south from there to the Humber is being worked on.

The new routes will also improve access to our coastline, beaches and foreshore, with some existing coastal footpaths actually moved nearer the sea so walkers have a better opportunity to properly enjoy our coastal views and beaches. The England Coast Path will be a well way-marked National Trail around the whole of the English coast.

THE REAL CHALLENGE OF FRACKING

How do you fracture the lower rock strata in Limestone areas without disrupting the routes water takes underground; causing rock falls in cave systems and making caving a considerable amount more dangerous?

I am no geologist and have only ever been an occasional caver but I cannot help but fear some of the magnificent calcite features I have seen underground may be destroyed or blocked off from future generations. The government has announced that licences will be given including parts of the Peak District and North Yorkshire. The licenses are for exploration not production fracking and the jury is still out on possible underground effects on the hydrology but it is envisaged that productive sites will be chosen for licencing taking such matters into account.

THE BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL

By the time this is published it will be too late to watch the films at any of the British venues but some are still available on line. Those of you lucky enough to have caught one of the shows will know how good some of the entries were last year. There are two collections on tour and I took in the Red programme as it included one film I particularly wanted to see.

The Cerro Fitz Roy skyline is one of the most dramatic in the world and the continuous traverse has been an ambition of many seriously great climbers. This film, 'A Line in the Sky' accompanies the two men who first managed the traverse of the ridge line.



(see <http://www.patagonia.com/us/the-fitz-traverse>)

In early February 2014, after sitting and watching for weeks the skies cleared and the forecast showed five days of high pressure and low winds, by local standards the best that could be hoped for and they went for it. They knew to succeed they had to be very quick so travelled very light with everything they needed in two small back packs as the traverse includes numerous serious and lengthy rock climbs.

This film won the Best Film-Climbing Award and covered an epic many had thought impossible. It involves 13,000 feet of vertical ascent and three miles in all, taking in Fitz Roy itself and six dramatic satellite peaks largely on ice-covered rock.

Alex Honnold and Tommy Caldwell are probably the top American big wall climbers but this trip to Patagonia was Honnold's first and he had little experience of alpinism.

They ended up doing it in five days camping out sharing one sleeping bag including one night at the summit of Fitz Roy (3,359 m) and another atop of Poincenot (3002m).

This achievement earned the climbers the Piolet d'Or, mountaineering's highest award.

Another of the seven films included in the Red tour well worth a look at was 'Unbranded'. Not mountaineering but a long distance trek on horseback.

That does not do it justice! Trying to make people aware of the plight of the wild horses (Mustangs) roaming the wilderness area of the States four men just out of college caught a string of mustangs and partly trained them before riding 3000 miles from Mexico to Canada, They road through public access lands, crossing the desert; going over the Tortilla mountains, through the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. At times man and horse were rock climbing. It took them five months.

The film won a People's Choice Award. (See trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQmmaiWHYHQ>)

Another great 'climbing' film I have just seen and recommend is Meru if you can find it being shown anywhere.

CAPE CAVING

Following up on previous pieces about caves in South Africa they are not on the scale of those in the UK and elsewhere. Most of these dolomite caves are in the former Transvaal which Steve Craven and his associates in the Cape leave to their members in Johannesburg. In the Cape they have many short caves in the Table Mountain sandstone on the Back Table, and above Kalk Bay and Muizenberg. Those on the Back Table are mass movement caves in which they have 4.7 km. of continuous surveyed cave passage, which is not bad for insoluble rock.

They also have some in the coastal limestone on the De Hoop reserve east of Bredasdorp and in the limestone north of Oudtshoorn which includes a commercial one 'Cango Cave'.

In the Ghaap Plateau of the Northern Cape there are dolomite caves, but because of the huge distances from Cape Town and Johannesburg where the speleologists live, they are not well recorded as the locals are uninterested.

If we again consider a meet in South Africa there would be opportunities for some work underground in addition to climbing and trekking.

CLIMBING MOUNTAINS - EVEREST

Despite the disasters of recent years the Everest Industry appears to be back in full swing. Speaking as somebody who could never have dreamt of attempting it, it is easy for me to look at the activity with some disdain. I know the draw of mountains and the elation of achievement beyond your personal expectations but I really cannot see the attraction of climbing Everest these days.

You obviously have to be fit but with sufficient money the professional firms will get a lot of people up there so what is so special? Do we really want to ascend what is an open air cemetery combined with a rubbish tip. If I want to be part of a traffic jam I can find that in Leicester.

Thankfully the heavily used glacier camp sites within sight of Everest are kept clean by the local guide associations leaving an impression of the wilderness experience for trekkers and climbers. They also have procedures for current campers to clear their sites backed up by end of season clearances. Unfortunately the upper reaches of the mountain are still not pleasant in places.

Money as always speaks. If you have lots of it somebody will always help you spend it and Nepal as one of the world's poorest nations has found it hard to resist letting too many people onto the mountain but have announced restrictions on the numbers and characteristics of those who will be allowed above base camp. In future. Under-18s, the over 75s, anyone disabled to the the point of not being independent climbers and those without 6,500m peaks to their name will be banned.

Trekking up to look across at base camp I saw far more attractive mountains offering far more challenging real climbing opportunities.

If you really want a challenge what about Ama Dablam.

Now that is what I call a mountain!

MOUNTAINS CLIMBING

Summits in the more geologically active parts of the world are mostly slowly rising. Certainly getting higher quicker than they are being eroded. Our records of the heights will need checking from time to time. Earthquakes can have dramatic effects on the surface but they also cause or reflect major changes in the earth itself.

All the great ranges are where the tectonic plates meet and effectively one continent is bumping into another.

Some are pushing head on and some grinding past each other. When the latter build up pressure it can suddenly be released with a quake. When they meet head on one tends to ride up over the other but again not in a smooth motion and the sudden releases can cause mayhem. Quakes can differ greatly not only in magnitude but whether they are deep seated or nearer the surface. It makes a great deal of difference to the effect on the surface.

The constant movement of the Indian sub continent pushing north into Asia at a rate of 37mm a year is what has produced the great peaks of the Karakoram, Pamirs, Hindu Kush and Himalayas. As the one is being pushed under the other, one rises and one sinks and the recent apparently major quakes in that region could have been a great deal worse had the quake been nearer the surface.

BEN IS GROWING TOO

The latest measurements have thrown up a bit of a surprise. The O. S. has now determined that Ben Nevis is 1,345 metres above sea level, one meter higher than previously thought.

The actual height is apparently 1,344.527 Given the technology available then it is surprising perhaps that the last measurement, taken in 1949, was so accurate.

TEESDALE WAY

The Teesdale Way is a 92 mile trail, from Cumbria and Cow Green Reservoir in Upper Teesdale through County Durham and Teesside to the North Sea coast at Warrenby in Redcar.

For much of the way it follows the River Tees and members have walked the western end on a number of meets over the years.

It is now to be 'improved' and promoted by the River Tees Rediscovered project; a £3.7m programme supported under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Programme. It will deliver improved signage, surfacing and path furniture on the Way and along a series of linked countryside and urban trails. The project will also help to interpret and celebrate the industrial and natural heritage of the area and runs over 5 years. A diverse range of projects is in hand including schemes which will conserve and enhance natural environment and heritage features, and improve public access

MORE PARKS FOR SCOTLAND

The Scottish Campaign for National Parks supported by a number of other organisations is calling on the Scottish Government to honour its election manifesto commitment to explore the possible creation of new national parks.

Scotland only has two national parks, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and the Cairngorms. They are suggesting seven areas to consider as future national parks, including possible marine national parks taking in Lochaber and South Skye and / or the Argyll Islands and coast.

HODGE CLOSE

The Climber magazine is making much of the climbs on slate in Hodge Close.

"The centre piece of Lakeland slate has to be the imposing Hodge Close, a huge hole with immaculate 50m off-vertical walls rising out of a 32m deep, green pond. This is a very special place to climb, once an industrial eyesore producing millions of tons of slate to roof the houses of our land, nature has taken over to leave a tranquil place of beauty with the backdrop of Wetherlam and the Langdales"

Now why did we not think of that?

Seriously though with all that exposure in more senses than one should we not make more of the fact that LHG is only yards away. Something for our web site?



NATURAL HISTORY

WILDLIFE, ECOLOGY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



AT THE RISK OF BEING A BOAR

If you go down to the woods today, you may get a big surprise.

I have been doing just that for 60 years and there are massive changes over that timeframe.

As somebody who loves wildlife and wild places and also a keen walker and orienteer, I have always spent hours in woodland. As a younger man larger animals were a rarity wherever I was. Since then Roe have re-inhabited many areas, muntjac have come out of nowhere and are now everywhere and we even get occasional polecats now.

Now after an absence of nearly half a century, wild boars are again fairly wide spread - they now have no natural enemies and the UK population is exploding. These and the muntjac are decimating our understory.

Plants growing beneath the trees where minimal light penetrates grow earlier than the canopy trees to make use of the earlier availability of light and greater humidity include ferns, mosses and fungi which provide favourable habitats for many small creatures and plants, available to these beasts when other food sources are scarce.

Some areas are turning to drastic solutions. It was reported last year that in Germany three quarters of a million boars are shot every year and that barely keeps the numbers steady. With an average litter of six young, plentiful food and no predators, the boar are on a winner.

Here in England with ideal conditions, where the conditions are even better for them, they will be everywhere unless we do something about them.

The Forest of Dean which I visited this summer is now thought to have a population of about 1000 boars which are being culled each year to keep them in some sort of check. To put this in perspective they expect to cull 60% just to stand still year on year.

There are increasing numbers of tales of terrifying encounters with them. Some of the fear may be misplaced, as boars are by nature shy and secretive, but if cornered or disturbed they can be dangerous.

They can weigh 25 stone, and anything that heavy coming at you at up to 30 mph can be rather disconcerting. No use climbing over a fence as they have been seen to clear six-foot fences. Like many wild animals if you have a dog they will feel threatened and these beasts have wicked little tusks and they know how to use them.

Eat them I say; they are very tasty.

MORE PROTECTED WATERS

It is good to report that the extent of the marine protection around the British Isles is increasing. As always with Government matters there are, to my mind, far too many slightly different forms of protection. We have Marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and Nature Conservation MPAs (NCMPAs). Anyway all protection is welcome.

The Government has now designated another twenty three new Marine Conservation Zones making fifty in all and technically means that about 8,000 square miles of UK waters now have some environmental protection.

It is worth noting though that as yet there is as yet no management plan nor are there any legislation or byelaws in place. There will be no keep-off signs, and apparently no policing so activities in the reserves will probably remain largely unchanged.

BEE PROBLEMS

There are well documented concerns about the dramatic reduction in numbers of bees around but things seem to have got worse last year in the North West.

It appears that Bee-Eaters have been breeding successfully last year, in a quarry near Brampton in Cumbria.

The same people bemoaning the plight of the bees were celebrating this breeding success. Strange world isn't it?

Active and restored quarry sites can and do provide habitats for a wide variety of species. The quarrying industry has through restoration programmes, already delivered or has planned, over 10,000 hectares of priority habitats

The Twite has declined dramatically both in numbers and range over last 25 years and it is now a rare bird in England, only breeding in a few small locations in the South Pennines. This includes a small group near Dove Holes quarry.

CEMEX, the quarry company, has been working with the RSPB in providing extra feeding to help maintain this population which now seems to be slowly expanding.

WELSH IMPROVEMENTS

Natural Resources Wales with the help of EU funding is to introduce or enhance active management and restoration of a large number of sites to act as key reservoirs of biodiversity, mostly in Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

The total cost to deliver the actions across Wales has been calculated at £120 million over five years but it will have to be spread thinly as protected sites cover around 7% of the land area of Wales and about a third of Welsh seas. An analysis has identified priority ecosystems, which include peat lands, sand dunes, woodland, rivers and, in the marine environment, estuaries and salt marsh, lagoons and shingle.

THE COST OF ENERGY?

There are sources of fuel out there but they have to be used sensibly. 'Sustainably' as the jargon goes.

Deutsche Bank is on record saying solar power will be cheap enough within two years to make fossil fuels redundant.

On the face of it that should be welcome but field upon field of solar panels disfigures the landscape and takes often productive agricultural land. The easy answer is to say that fuel supplies come first and the environment has to be surrendered. This gives in effect little value to our environment but it is a valuable asset.

The UK has many Capital Assets - No not London buildings; and not only just the machinery we use to

produce goods but also the elements of the natural environment which provide identifiable benefits such as clean water and air, food and recreation. These are being depleted and our stock is in a long-term decline with impacts on economic growth and the wellbeing of the population. If economic growth is to be sustained, this natural capital has to be protected.

It has been estimated that poor air quality causes in excess of 40,000 deaths each year in the UK. This has a significant impact on the productivity and public health. We are thought to lose over £5bn through lost work days and possibly as much again on the NHS budget.

The challenge of protecting and improving our natural capital is large but doable and it can still contribute to both energy creation and energy and costs savings.

One of the earlier forms of energy was of course peat. With extraction for fuel followed by use for garden enhancement our peat lands have been decimated. Farmers and grouse moor owners are teaming up with conservationists to restore vast expanses of Peak District and South Pennines peat lands; extensive tracts of semi-natural moorland with upland heath and peat bog, supporting birds of prey and wading birds.

The peat bogs have been in decline since the industrial revolution, but thanks to individual moorland owners, large Environmental Stewardship (ES) schemes are in hand to bring about £15 million of moorland restoration over the next five years. This does of course mean we must stop peat extraction but it can still contribute to the economic package.

These schemes will involve changing management on 39,000 hectares of moorland, with less heather burn-off and a return to traditional sheep herding practices to help improve the environment. They will be blocking gullies increased water retention on the SSSIs to sustain peat bogs and their special plant life and birds. The knock on benefits to the economy is reduced flooding down stream and more carbon retention in peat, helping mitigate climate change. One of the difficulties with any attempt at landscape scale works is that there are so many agencies and government departments involved in some way. Natural England and DeFRA are very much involved on the wildlife and environment side, the Environment Agency are also involved and especially in flood management and even English Heritage have got involved. They organised studies of these areas

looking out for archaeological remains in the peat and underneath it. If like in Ireland they find bodies there then presumably the anthropologists will want part of the action. It is possible that schemes to solve other problems could be threats to any archaeological remains.

Amongst the areas receiving particular attention from the archaeologists are the fells of south west Cumbria including the Langdales and Bowland Forest, on the doorsteps of our two cottages. It is thought that significant archaeological remains may be found beneath the peat at the top of the original soil. If the peat has preserved things from 8,000 years ago they would want to remove the peat to find them but once air gets to them they would soon deteriorate so it is a bit of a catch 22. If the archaeologists want to remove peat and the conservationists want to protect it there could be some lively debates.

Strangely the biggest threat to upland peat areas is probably climate change although longer growing seasons, milder winters and more rain should help it. The problem is though, that warm, dry conditions and prolonged droughts can increase fire risk and a peat moor can burn for a long time. This is where we came in: it is a fuel source. Such conditions may also encourage the growth of competing heathland plants. On one level deep rooted plants would be welcome as they can prevent mud slides which peat areas can experience when we have a lot of rain.

It seems the best option is to protect entire landscapes where there are likely to be historic remains whilst not actually looking for them; working towards complete preservation until such time as techniques evolve to allow for search and recovery without risking environmental impacts. By this we make no economic return out of the archaeological possibilities but the peat lands as a natural asset will still contribute as a carbon soak and a flood alleviation mechanism.

Another agency involved is the Natural Capital Committee which advises the Government, working closely with other QUANGOs and non-governmental agencies and the private sector.

They are recommending a long-term, strategic investment in this area which they feel will deliver good value for money. They make a strong economic case for planting of up to 250,000 additional hectares of woodlands near towns to generate net societal benefits in excess of £500 million per annum although the mind boggles at how they came up with that figure.

Peatland restoration on around 140,000 hectares in

upland areas, they say would deliver net benefits of £570 million over 40 years in carbon values alone. Restoring old habitats to hold back water run off and prevent downstream flooding has to be a sound idea and in no way disfigures the landscape. Despite their benefits other uses of our natural assets cannot all claim the same and wind turbines fall very much into this category as increasingly do massive farms of solar panels.

Tidal energy capture seems one of the better options although many suggestions for capturing it have proved equally unacceptable. Barrages creating lagoons are very expensive and normally silt up and become ineffective between 8 and 15 years after construction. It is one way of creating new land but long term does not solve our energy needs. It has been suggested that if we tapped into the hot air created by the endless committee, commissions and governments discussing this we would not have a problem.

One encouraging idea being used in Australia is an alternative use of tidal power. Most systems rely on wave power as tides come in and then additional pressure as captured water is slowly released to drive turbines. There are numerous other small scale projects working and producing power but impractical on a scale to be meaningful. We have snakes, ducking ducks and nodding seabirds to give a few nicknames.

The Ozzies are trialing a simple device which sits like a spinning top on a wire and moves up and down with every wave not needing a great tidal range. This Salter's duck / nodding duck / Edinburgh duck was developed in Britain in the 1970s in response to the oil crisis. When we got cheaper oil and North Sea gas we did not develop it further. Salter is South African but studied in England and worked in Edinburgh. This looks the best idea yet.

We do need power but we also need to protect this globe we live on. We must stop the human race from killing off our own planet as that would be the end of us. A healthy environment for and a future for our descendents is a must if we don't want to go down as the last generation that had a chance to stop the destruction and did nothing.

There is an immediate benefit anyway; if we could cut stress-related illnesses, obesity, mental health and other related illnesses; the NHS would have more money for other problems.

The natural world can really help. But it needs our help to.

The RSPB has estimated that of 3000 species it looked at 60% are in decline. A mixture of our farming practices and disease has hit pollinators especially bees and if they do not do their work plant species will decline even faster.

We need to act to afford wildlife and our environment the protection it needs if only in our own selfish interest. One encouraging bit of news recently was that somebody was actually jailed for wildlife crime.

Fining a gamekeeper on a rich estate has never been a deterrent.

NORTH PENNINE CREEPY CRAWLIES

Whether you are put off by creepy crawlies or are fascinated by their diversity there is good news from the North Pennines AONB. A new project has been launched, Cold-blooded and Spineless, which aims to put invertebrates in the spotlight. Two thirds of all of invertebrates have declined in the last half century and there are still many we know little about.

We are particularly ignorant of those species that live in the uplands.

A half million pounds grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be used over 5 years, will allow these to be studied in the North Pennines.

Invertebrates are invaluable for good biodiversity and a healthy landscape. They are classic recyclers and act as pest controllers and are a vital food source for all kinds of fish, birds and animals.

Teachers and youth groups and the public at informal survey days will encourage a group of invertebrate champions in the region. The North Pennines AONB Partnership's WildWatch website has been enhanced to offer features to help budding entomologists. Recorders can upload images of their observations, join a forum to get expert advice and share their interest in important local sites.

(see www.northpennines.org.uk/wildwatch)

JOHNS BLUE AGAIN

Until recently there were 14 slightly differently coloured types of Blue John to be found, all from different seams around Castleton. All strange and intriguing mixes of blue and purple and not very useful in jewelry as it is quite soft, it has nevertheless been prized as something unique to the area.

Now, 150 years since the last find, another seam of

this fluorite has been discovered. The Ridley Seam named after the miner who found it was something of a surprise as he found it almost accidentally

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS

There is much talk of the remarkable diversity and range of species to be found on coral reefs and in rain forests, but the humble hedge can give them a run for their money.

Classed as a priority habitat, their importance for wildlife is often understated. Many studies show that they are vital for insects, small mammals and farmland birds. Arable farmland relies on pollinators living in these hedges and they in turn rely on the wild flowers along hedgerows and the blossoms on some hedging species.

One hedge less than 100 yards long has been found to contain over 2000 species that could be seen with the naked eye and the true figure is probably nearer to 3,000. It probably also included over 10% of all insects known to be in the UK.

The great majority of these creatures are finding food and a safe haven in the hedge. Many breed there and find shelter and protection from bad weather and others will be using the hedge as a safe flyway through the countryside, bumblebees and bats especially.

THE OUTER HEBRIDES

This is of course a favourite place visited by a meet recently. Its remoteness, wildlife diversity and near wilderness areas are marred somewhat by ugly intrusive military cabins by the village bay and the military radio gear by the hilltop.

Perhaps visiting and sporting activities should be restricted as the islands are hugely important for their wildlife. They are home to huge populations of sea birds including the world's second largest colony of North Atlantic gannets.

The waters around St Kilda are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for their reefs and sea caves, which attract a wealth of spectacular sea life.

Monitoring these underwater worlds is extremely difficult due to the remoteness of St Kilda and the

treacherous waters. Any diving has to be regulated by strict safety limits. Recent endeavours have found cave entrances teeming with life, from kelp to colourful sponges, sea-squirts, bryozoans and anemones with many other species hiding between them.

Work will continue when weather permits for the National Museum of Scotland and Herriot-Watt University

KINDER PROJECT

The five year project to restore Kinder is progressing well. The moorland had been badly damaged by fires, pollution and over grazing, not to mention the effects of thousands of feet but £2.7 Million is being spent on restoration.

So far 80 hectares have been replanted with a further 191 hectares having been spread with seed.

6,000 small dams have been created to stop run off and over 14k of sheep fences have been erected.

The moors are returning to their former state as lush wet bogs which helps prevent lowland flooding, improves the quality of the water finally escaping the moors and provides a habitat which is encouraging the return of numerous native species.

BYE BYE FLUTTERBY

Almost 80% of our butterfly species have seen a fairly pronounced decline over the last half century.

We may soon be saying goodbye to some once common species either resident or regular migrant visitors

The long-term reduction in numbers of the Wood White, Small Skipper, White Admiral, and Marsh Fritillary continues and the Essex Skipper, Small Heath and Wall, are now amongst the most rapidly declining. All is not lost however as organisations are waking up to the problem and trying to fight it.

Preserving, protecting and reinstating their

habitats makes a big difference and four once endangered species are actually increasing over recent years. During the last ten years the Duke of Burgundy, Dingy Skipper Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Silver-studded Blue have seen good increases in occurrence and even our most endangered butterfly, the High Brown Fritillary, has plateaued.

It is a very mixed picture. One of our common species, the Gatekeeper, whilst not yet threatened has declined by almost half during this century.

Butterflies that migrate from more equable environments are not doing badly with three common species becoming much more abundant (Clouded Yellow, Red Admiral and Painted Lady).

Two other once rare migrants, the Scarce Tortoiseshell and Long-tailed Blue have arrived in increasing numbers.

RATTY RETURNS

After an absence of 50 years you should soon be able to catch a glimpse of water voles in Malham Tarn.

This year after work to restore the tarn and remove pollution the national Trust is to release sixty or more to try and re-establish a population with another release planned for next year.

A BETTER BLEASDALE

Back in 2013, volunteers planted common cotton grass and moved Sphagnum moss into new pools created on the fells and the hags were re-profiled to have a less angular edges helping to reduce erosion of the peat by the wind and the rain.

They were then limed and further seeded to encourage vegetation growth, good for the wildlife but also helping to stabilise the peat.

Signs are good that the moorland is responding well to the restoration works undertaken so far. The results are now being seen with vegetation slowly returning.

OBITUARIES & APPRECIATIONS

JOHN HENRY STOKES MBE BEM

John "Brummie" Stokes, died in January. Born in 1945 in south Staffordshire on the edge of Birmingham; a wayward child his schooling was apparently patchy and he was often in trouble with the law.



He got his taste for adventure on a Sunday School coach trip when he first climbed Snowdon. It was surprising they took him along as he was always ducking out of Sunday classes for a smoke.

At the age of 17 with encouragement from the judiciary he joined the army and the rest is, as they say, history. He took to it like a duck to water and kept pushing himself and would never give in with anything. After several attempts he passed the selection course for the SAS where he learnt jungle fighting and mountain skills which he honed all his life.

His military career saw him serving in Borneo, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. He also served in Guyana, the Canadian Rockies, Germany and the Falklands, along the way becoming an SAS mountain expert. He was part of an Army team which summited Everest in 1976.

He never seemed to know when he was beaten and should probably be described as an obsessive.

He really got the bug in 1975 on Nhuptse. It was pretty amazing that he made that trip anyway as while in Dhofar three years earlier, he was shot in the leg, and lost a kneecap. Four men had died on that Nhuptse trip; but Stokes and his climbing partner, Michael 'Bronco' Lane, were not daunted.

The following year was nearly his last. These two were trapped at Camp 6 on Everest in a storm and when it finally abated they should have come down. Not for them; heroically brave or stupidly fool-hearted as it may have been, having lost a day and with oxygen supplies dwindling they attempted the south-west face the following morning and summited during the afternoon,

exhausted. Trying to come off the top they were engulfed in a white-out with oxygen running out so they huddled down in a little snow hole hitting each other regularly to keep each other awake and therefore alive.

With eyesight failing and badly frostbitten and struggling out of the improvised bivvi they were found by the second summit pair who had expected to find two bodies. It took five days to get them off the mountain and Stokes lost over three stones. He and Lane were awarded the British Empire Medal. Lane later had to have the five frostbitten finger-tips of his right hand amputated and both men lost their toes.

It took a long time for Stokes and Lane to walk, run and climb again on their damaged feet but once Stokes was fit for active service again, he joined the Falklands campaign.

Despite his experiences Stokes did return for a further three attempts on Everest; first in 1984 planning an ascent up the north face having prepared on Mount McKinley the year before. It was another disaster and near miss however as an avalanche killed one member of the team and left Stokes with a fractured neck.

Leaving the Army the following year and with a team of ex-SAS and top civilian climbers with permission from the Chinese he was to attempt the north-east ridge, then an un-climbed route, but the attempt had to be abandoned at about 26,000 ft due to strong winds. The team did however capture some wonderful film footage of Tibet and Everest.

His last attempt, in 1988, saw two climbers succeed in crossing the perilous Three Pinnacles, completing this previously unconquered stretch. Stokes, was the expedition leader but could not join the bid for the summit as he had suffered a cerebral oedema leaving him partially paralysed and he had been evacuated.

In 1988 Stokes produced an autobiography, 'Soldiers and Sherpas: A Taste for Adventure'. Three years later in Herefordshire, he founded the 'Taste for Adventure Centre', providing activity days for underprivileged children, older people and people with physical and learning disabilities.

He was appointed MBE in 2004.

Lieutenant Colonel Alastair Edward Henry Worsley, MBE

1960 – 2016

Explorer Henry Worsley died in hospital in Punta Arenas, Chile after collapsing from exhaustion just thirty miles short of completing a solo crossing of Antarctica.

The 55-year-old was attempting to recreate the majority of Sir Ernest Shackleton's unfinished journey to the South Pole and become the first adventurer to cross the Antarctic continent without support having been part of the successful 2009 expedition that retraced Ernest Shackleton's footsteps.

He was 71 days 913 miles into the charity challenge when he called for help and had to be airlifted off the treacherous ice having exceeded his goal of raising £100,000 for the Endeavour Fund, a charity founded to help injured service personnel. He had passed the South Pole, battling extreme weather conditions and temperatures of as low as -44C when he began to suffer from severe dehydration and exhaustion and decided to stop and raised the alert.

On earlier expeditions he had already become the only person ever to have completed both classic routes to the South Pole as established Scott, Amundsen and Shackleton. He was a descendant of Frank Worsley Shackleton's skipper on the Endurance.

Lieutenant Colonel Worsley was a special forces veteran who had served in Afghanistan, Ireland and Bosnia. He had been born into a military family and his father was General Sir Richard Worsley. He seemed destined for the army and trained at Sandhurst before being commissioned into 3rd Battalion, the Royal Green Jackets, in 1980.

He went on to become battalion adjutant of his and was selected for the SAS in 1988. When on 'special duties' in Northern Ireland, he served in Intelligence for which he was awarded the MBE in 1994. He later took command of a battalion of the Royal Green Jackets, in Bosnia and completed two tours of duty with the SAS, in Afghanistan.



Sammy Chapman 1941 - 2015

Sammy died at the end of last year shortly after celebrating her 74th birthday with members of her family at the Club's annual dinner. She and Albert had lived at Scar top on the side of Whernside for 40 years and many members had enjoyed her hospitality there.

During our 1984 Christmas meet she somehow managed to cater for 55, a feat repeated in 2001 when she coped with the Presidents garden party with 65 attending.



Albert was encouraged by Sammy to go off on his many treks and together they visited over 30 countries. They always considered their stay in northern India as the most enjoyable.

The Club was very well represented at her funeral including Motup Goba who flew in from India especially.

She will be fondly remembered and sadly missed by many members of the Club.

Rev. JIM RUSHER (1928 – 2016)

Jim Rusher was not one of the usual YRC members. His early years were different and life did not deal many good cards to him, but throughout he had a character that enabled him to ride his difficulties and play his part as well as he could.

Jim's father was a soldier joining up during WW1; was commissioned and somehow survived the trench warfare. He stayed in the army and by 1939 he had risen to the rank of brigadier and was stationed in India until 1941 when the Japanese warfare began.

Up to this point Jim had had a happy life but that all changed when his father found himself in Singapore when it surrendered in December 1941. Jim's father was taken prisoner and as a high ranking officer he was separated from the lower ranks with the higher ranks quickly being sent north, where they were treated just as badly or worse than the other ranks.

No knowledge of his whereabouts filtered back to India and it was not known whether he was alive as a POW or dead. The army was slow to find an answer and until it could be proven he was alive, his father was assumed to be dead. So all income money was frozen and Jim's mother had to leave the Officer's Accommodation. Jim said that his mother was in a sad state of shock, but somehow found accommodation for herself, Jim and his sister. This meant a four day rail journey, with all their goods and chattels, all privileges withdrawn, and not much money. His mother suffered greatly and it is thought that it was 12 year old Jim who tried to hold the family together. For Jim a new boarding school was found, a Jesuit foundation where corporal punishment was the rule of the day being administered hard and frequently. Jim hated the school.

News of his father came through eventually, confirming that he was a POW and the army funds were restored.

When the war was over, the family returned to England but his father had suffered greatly and was not in good health. At his father's insistence however Jim was sent to Gordonstoun to complete his education, an experience he liked no more than that under the Jesuits.

He did his National Service, gaining a commission and for the first time a career lay before him. He reached the rank of captain, serving in several places overseas, including a mysterious episode in the Middle East involving some sort of espionage. Something however went wrong and he was accused of disobeying King's Regulations and had to leave the army leaving him unsure which way to turn. He had enjoyed the army as it was a structured life, something he valued after the chaos in India.

Looking around, he began to think of the Church and one day while in Yorkshire, pondering his future, he came across a group of men who were pot-holing. He showed an interest, and was invited to 'have a go' by the leader, who turned out to be Ernest Roberts of the YRC. Roberts and Jim became friends and before long Jim became a member of the YRC .

It was the early 1950's when potholing was strong within the Club and it is probable that Roberts encouraged Jim to think seriously about a future in the Church. In due course Jim was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. Married to Mary, a medical student, his parochial work did not permit time for YRC activities.

After serving as a curate, he was appointed Vicar of Knowle near Solihull, a large well-heeled parish. It was now the mid-1970's and there our paths crossed. I did not know Jim and I had never heard of the one parson in the YRC. But in the handbook, there he was.



We made contact but it became clear that Jim's was a demanding full time job in his big parish at Knowle and there were also health difficulties in the family. Mary had been appointed as a consultant in Solihull Hospital so after 11 years in the post, Jim resigned as Vicar of Knowle but retained his Hospital Chaplaincy.

An old friend of Jim's from his days in Knowle who was known to try and keep up with Jim on the hills and paid the price in the following days, made the case that Jim had the energy to always be five

minutes in front of younger friends because of his ability to sleep soundly and eat enormous fried breakfasts.

The way opened up for us to go to Meets together sharing transport with his favourites being the Welsh Meets and RLH in Cumbria. He was often required to officiate at early services on Sunday mornings so he drove up on Friday morning, went out walking and then rather late after dinner on Saturday he would drive home in the early hours.

He did once get as far as Glen Etive. The dinner routine was followed but he failed to take into account that there were nearly three hundred more miles to cover than Langdale or Snowdonia. He realised that he would have to drive faster, much faster, which surely would be safe in the small hours. By one o'clock he had reached the Southlands service station on the M6. He went in for a coffee and full of excitement after his drive, asked at the counter if there were any police about. He boasted that he had just driven from Glasgow at over 90 mph, smiling proudly around. The answer was: Yes, they are right behind you! and there were two policemen waiting to be served.

He enjoyed the evening talk on meets. On one of the Welsh meets, a certain YRC member well known for his forthright views approached Jim, sitting at a table, challenged him and said: "Jim, you're a parson, tell me why do you believe in God?" Then Jim answered, speaking for about five minutes, never raising his voice, and in his quiet tones explained his thinking. At the end, the member said, just as quietly now: "Well I think that is the best answer I have ever heard". You could feel the respect of the other members in the group.

The cars he drove were strictly owned by Mary. The local agency in Knowle were Alfa Romeo dealers, so every so often Jim arrived in a new Alfa. As he grew older his driving wandered a little but he held his own when danger was ahead. It was in the car park of the local supermarket he came unstuck. He reversed the car into his spot which was a trifle higher than other cars around. On returning there was no car in the spot, turning he saw that his (new) Alfa had (somehow) rolled down the slope, clipping a number of other cars en route. Jim had forgotten to put on the handbrake.

The last meet we were on together was RLH either in 2004 or 2005. He was determined to get up Pike o'Blisco but the weather had been wet and the streams crossing the path were in full spate. Jim slipped on the wet boulders, and went spread-eagled in the stream. He was quite wet, but he refused to reconsider his ambitions. Then behind us came help; three Dovers: Paul, Richard and Phil. These three willingly took over the task of getting Jim across all further streams, and stand on Pike o'Blisco he did.

As he grew older he kept having slips; and Mary had to find help to get him up again. He went into a Bupa Rest Home, more to give Mary a break than for Jim's needs. He was sitting in one of those crescents of patients, all silently looking at the television but one person was reading – Jim! What was he reading? Papers reporting economic and social statistics of India. He said "if I stay in this place much longer it will turn me mad". I said: "Why don't you ask for the TV to be turned off?". Oh, he said, "I turned it off myself a few days ago, and there was a real rumpus. One of the other patients, a man, got very angry at me for disturbing their routine". It was about this time that Jim resigned as a Member of the YRC as he felt that he could no longer take an active part.

In 2010 I heard through friends that the Rusher household had left the district. I went to their house, a house to which I had drawn up so many times with a car full of clobber. There was no reply. I tried phone numbers, but no luck there. I knew that Mary was nearing retirement age. I assume she did retire and they moved somewhere nearer her family.

Jim's wife Mary died in 2012 and so he had to remain in the rest home till his death. He is survived by his sons John and James. The funeral was at Knowle Parish Church with seven members of the Club attending.

His last years were afflicted by increasing dementia but he never forgot his times with the YRC and asked that donations at his funeral should be split between his church and the YRC. His many friends in the Club will miss his company on the hills and his wry and often sharp sense of humour .

Dennis Armstrong

KEN WILSON

Ken Wilson has died in June after a lengthy illness. Influential in mountaineering circles certainly, confrontational and controversial though as well.



As a trained photographer in the 1960s and 1970s he recorded much of what was being done by many famous climbers.

His legacy of publications, ideas and passion will remain for years to come. The producer of 'Mountain' he set the climbing scene and started many a debate in climbing circles. 'Mountain' was to become an important international publication covering mountain matters always illustrated with quite astounding photography. After working with numerous publishing houses he finally started his own business Baton Wicks.

He has countless books to his name from 'Black Rock', a whole book devoted to just one crag, Clogwyn Du'r Arddu to an enormously successful series of volumes covering climbs and walks, starting with 'Hard Rock' in 1974. Other notable works were 'Games Climbers Play', 'Mirror Mirror' and the Classic, Hard and Extreme Rock series.

He joined the Alpine Club in 1972, not to the pleasing of many existing members, and continued to annoy many with his outright opinions on climbing ethics and artificial aids and numerous other subjects. For all those he antagonised however there were many who agreed with him and it started numerous long running debates. He was a main player in the campaign against the use of bolts etc., and argued that sport climbing posed a threat to traditional climbing.

We owe him a great deal for creating a magnificent archive on climbing and he certainly helped shape the world of climbing as we know it today.

Ken was a keen climber if only to modest standards and was a member of the Climbers' Club and an Honorary Member of the BMC.

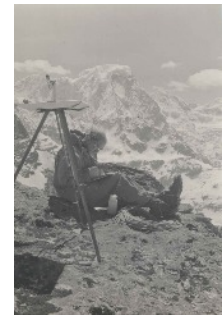
WILFRED (ANDY) ANDERSON

Andy died on 15th March this year. He had lost touch with the Club and had resigned when no longer feeling able to play a full part. Andy was in his nineties and most of his contemporaries have also passed on but some of our older members remember him.

Andy and his wife had been living in sheltered housing in Ilkley for some time but Edna, his wife had to go into a nursing home last summer. Andy was taken ill last December and never really recovered.

Andy was a very active member in the 50's and later, and those who are still with us remember some good times with him.

He was Expedition Secretary on our ill-fated expedition to the Himalayas in 1957, was a very strong walker and excellent photographer.



Andy on the Loengpo Gang expedition



Cliff Large first met Andy was on a climbing holiday in Scotland with Bill Lofthouse and Nevil Newman. Camping behind the Clachaig Hotel in Glencoe in 1951 before either of them joined the YRC, Andy produced a bag of small trout from somewhere which were cooked over an open fire.

David Stembridge remembers Andy. He in particular remembers meeting up with all the expedition members in London the night before they set off for Nepal. He was doing his National Service on Salisbury Plain and went up to join them for an evening which included a lot of Guinness and Oysters, which as he puts it "most of us probably regretted the following morning, but showed that the YRC had a taste for culinary delights as early as the 1950's."

Andy loved the mountains for their own sake and never bought into the idea of peak bagging, in fact he thought it a bit silly. He was a bit contrary though and thought it improper to condemn the idea too vigorously if he had never tried it. So... back in 1954 he decided to do the Lakes 3000s in one day.

He was woken at 3.30am to the sound of pouring rain and despite some argument about the wisdom of the cause the small party set off at 5.00am from LHG heading briskly for Blea Tarn.

7.20 saw them in mist at Esk Hause. Over Broad Crag and Scafell Pike, only occasionally losing the route, they ploughed on with mist and heavy downpours interspersed with brief bursts of hazy sunshine. Seathwaite was a welcome sight with a support party providing hot soup before they were off again.

They eventually gathered at Thirlspot where the only topic of conversation was on the subject of Andy's sanity given he was intent on heading up Helvellyn in the gathering darkness. The decision was finally made that there was no point losing five good members so they let Andy go off by himself.

With typical understatement Andy later said that there was a little diffused light from the misty moon between showers and he admitted to a few anxious moments. Using his fading torch when he had to he soldiered on and was blessed with clearing skies and descended Green Tongue in brilliant moonlight. He made it back to LHG at 12.50.

Not all the peaks in one day but well within 24 hours. There is no record that he changed his mind about peak bagging but by then he did know what he was talking about.

Arthur Tallon also on the 1957 expeditions remembers Andy as somebody he always got on well with, having a dry, at times rather too sharp sense of humour, not to everyone's taste.

"I remember doing the the Lakes 3000s as a group with him and David Smith amongst others. I climbed with him a lot in the Lakes including doing Intermediate Gully one New Year, finishing in the dark and then going to George Spenceleys New Year "do" at Chapel Stile. I also remember him on a meet on the Isle of Rhum and on a trip to the Cairngorms in the 60s. I went to the Alps with him

either 2 or 3 times, first to Sass Fee and also to the Zermatt area, and went to the Pyrenees in 61.

I last saw him after the Dinner in 2007 when we looked at his expedition slides and photos with Dan Jones family. Superb photographs, meticulously looked after. Dan was also on the 1957 expedition as medical officer and his widow Val tells us that in his later years as postman in Hetton he was known to don his skis when it snowed to ensure the mail got through. She also remembers seeing the photographs and worries what may have happened to them.

Andy was a work study engineer and was meticulous in his preparation for any trip. When we went the Pyrenees he decided he would cut down on excess weight and to that end cut his boot laces to a minimum length and cut the handle of his tooth brush in half. Everything was measured out to an exact amount for each trip"

Andy was very much his own man.

GEORGE RAYMOND INCE

1928 -2016

When Harry Stembridge was appointed to be Chief Commissioner of the Scouting Movement in Central Yorkshire, Raymond was a Senior Scout Leader in Leeds and Raymond and Harry became very good friends.



Raymond was born the eldest of a Leeds family of four in April 1928.

World War II broke out a few days before he was eleven so he took part in the message duties that the Scout movement undertook during the war years. He found himself called up to duty in the Royal Navy during 1946

when National Service was still classified as for "Hostilities Only."

There was much to do and Raymond served for a substantial period in the Far East - especially Hong Kong. During this time he was able with Navy encouragement to build up his Scouting activities which he carried back into civilian life when he left the navy. His time involved much activity with small boats.

On return from the Navy Raymond worked in the textile industry before qualifying as a P.E. teacher. He was by this time a very substantial athlete. Teaching remained his profession, specialising at first in P.E., then moving into general teaching until his eventual retirement from a Head of School post. Raymond was also an enthusiast Mason and in his latter years was appointed to a key position in the United Kingdom Masonic hierarchy.

Throughout his teaching career and well beyond he remained a key worker in the Leeds area Boy Scouts eventually as a District Commissioner.

Throughout these years he, with his wife Dorothy were very busy parents with three growing children.

As District Commissioner he was deeply busy with activities for the "up to fifteen" scout age group and set to work particularly to organise climbing and fell walking for them. He was much aided and encouraged in this by Harry Stembridge who was the Scouts Yorkshire County Commissioner by then. It proved to be a successful venture as Raymond roped in young climbers to act as tutors. One side result of this was that the YRC acquired Raymond together with some of his team as members.

Raymond joined The Yorkshire Ramblers Club in 1962 and over a fifty year period of membership, had been until quite recently, an active member.

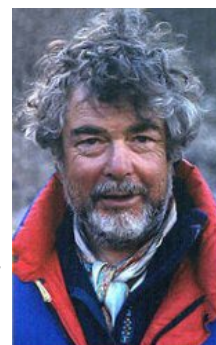
Harry's son David remembers enjoying their company on several YRC Meets in the 1960's & '70's.

Raymond attended many meets throughout the UK including the Corbetts Meet of 2000 and the overseas Norway Meet in the Club's centenary year of 1992.

Four members represented the Club at Raymond's funeral

JIM CURRAN

Jim died in April this year after a long illness. Not just a climber, he told the full story of the mountains to a wide audience. He was a videographer, filmmaker, author and painter and used all these avenues to tell the tale.



His funeral was held at the Grenoside Crematorium in Sheffield attended by Alan Hinkes and Michael Smith from the Club. Jim lived near Michael who always appreciated the help Jim had provided when Michael was planning his second Andean expedition having then recently climbed nearby Palomani Tranca himself. There must have been at least 200 people attending his funeral.

Jim first came to the attention of the climbing fraternity when his film 'The Bat' was shown at one of the early Kendal Film Festivals. He subsequently made many more films, with the likes of Joe Tasker, Alan Rouse, Chris Bonington, Don Whillans, Joe Brown, Ian MacNaught-Davis and Pete Boardman. He filmed on St Kilda and the Old Man of Hoy and further afield in Caucasus, the Atlas Mountains, China and in the Andes.

He joined the Alpine Club in 1985

He produced numerous books including the authorised biography of Chris Bonington. One of his classics was based on the K2 tragedies of 1986. 13 climbers died giving that mountain the epithet "savage mountain". Jim had been hired by the British K2 team to cover their attempt, and was by the mountain much of that year and his notes were written up in 'K2 – Triumph and Tragedy'.

A subsequent book, 'K2 The Story of the Savage Mountain', won the non-fiction award at the Banff Mountain Book Festival in 1995. He became very involved with the Boardman Tasker Award being a judge for two years. Although he was shortlisted for the award himself on five occasions but never won, he was given the BT Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

Curran also did some television, filming and presenting the 'Tracks' for the BBC,

JBEL SARHRO, MOROCCO

A THIRST FOR STARK BEAUTY

A two-week trekking meet, 5th-19th April 2016

Leader: Mick Borroff

Introduction

Having been on the very enjoyable YRC meet to Taфраoute in the Anti-Atlas in 2009, I was keen to return to Morocco. I was originally thinking of another similar week based at a hotel where we could go off on day trips walking, scrambling and climbing, but could not identify another immediately attractive location.

A trek in the mountains of the Atlas or Jbel Sirwa in April appealed, but would be complicated by late snow, so I looked further afield on Google Earth and came across a number of intriguing images taken in the Jbel Sarhro (Sarhro means drought or thirst). Having read a copy of Alan Palmer's guidebook "Moroccan Atlas - The Trekking Guide", I decided to reach out to him to help me refine a two week route across the Sarhro's starkly beautiful landscape. Alan proved to be very knowledgeable and most helpful, so I chose to use the services of his trekking company *Trek in Morocco* to arrange our trip.

The Jbel Sarhro is a little trekked area on the south side of the Atlas Mountains which enjoys a dry and hot climate year round. 2016 had been a dry year with just one day of rain since last October – hence its name!

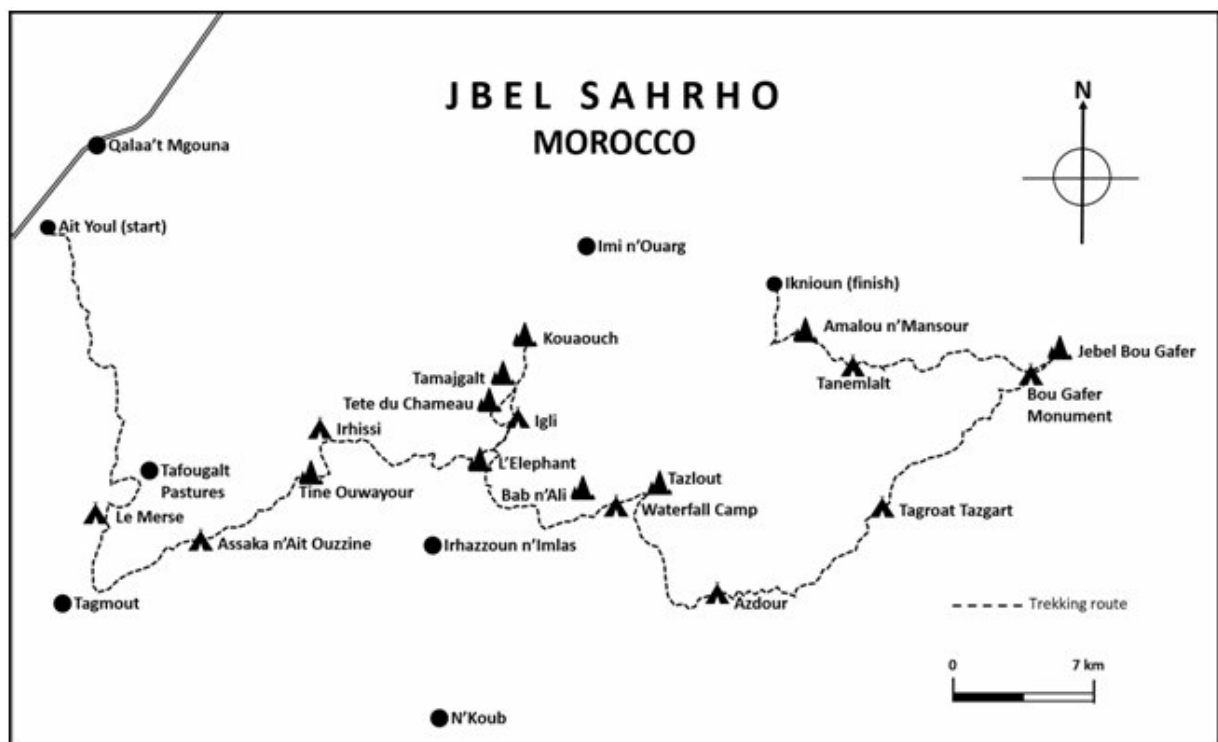
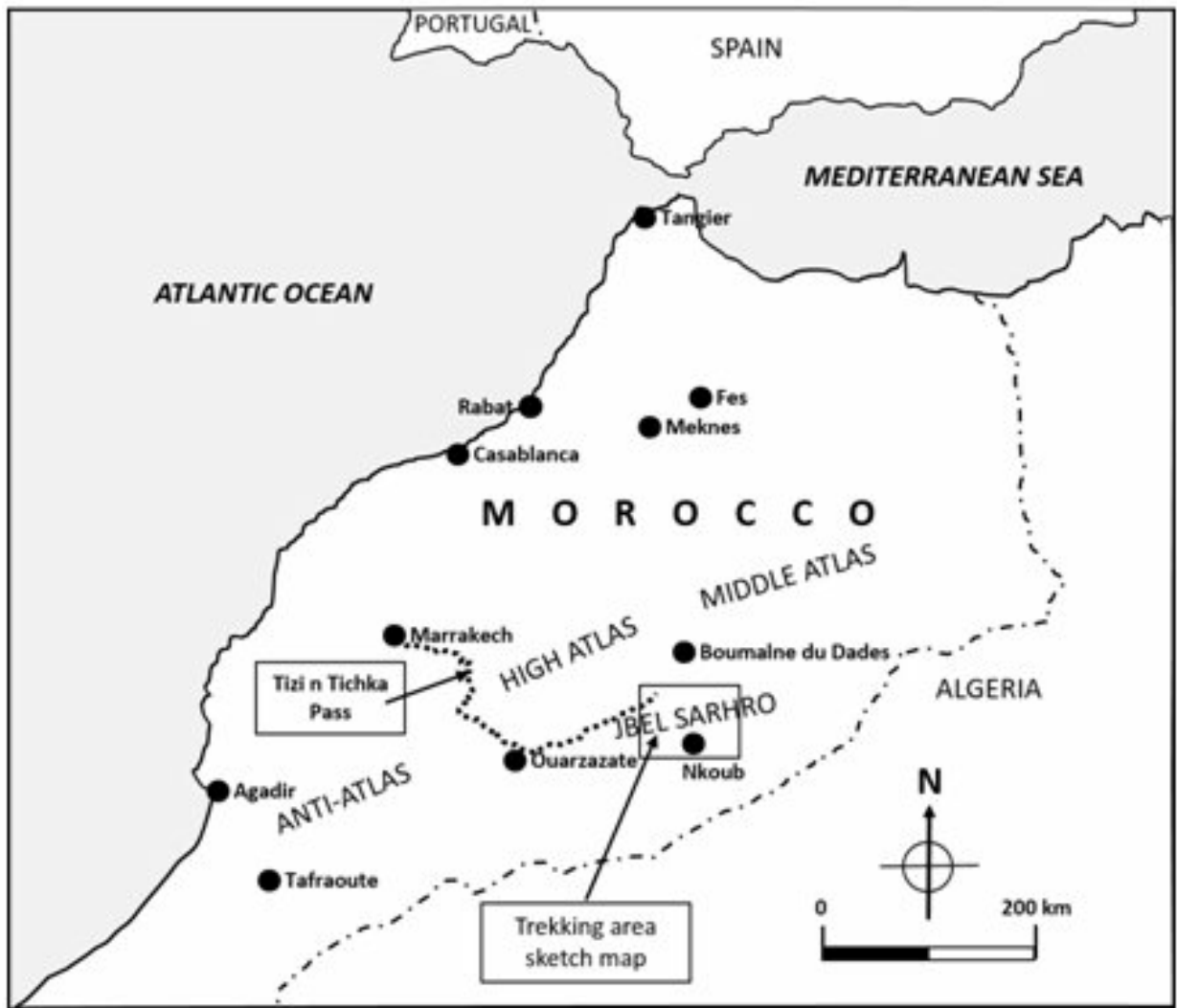
A number of trekking routes are possible in the Sarhro and our chosen route linked several of these to take in various scrambling objectives as well close encounters with the area's gorges and spectacular rock formations.

Alan suggested that we use the services of Lhoussain Oufkir, a qualified mountain guide from Boumalne du Dades who he had trekked with before. We found Lhoussain to be a warm and likeable individual who was always smiling! His deep knowledge of the region and evident respect for the Sarhro's Amazigh people enriched our visit, together with his insights into national and regional politics, past history and current affairs. His remarkable multilingual skills facilitated our communications and engagement with the Berber nomads whom we met and our five local Amazigh muleteers.

Each muleteer brought his own mule – they were all in good condition and received considerate treatment throughout the trek.

Our cook Hamid was from Marrakech and together with Mohammad, one of the muleteers, prepared consistently appetising and plentiful food which was enjoyed by all. Some 200 flat breads and 80kg of vegetables were consumed supplemented with a goat, a few chickens, eggs and tinned fish - mackerel, sardines and tuna! The latter was simply labelled "*Isobel*" in marked contrast with our Euro labelling! This was washed down by gallons of mint tea, which was drunk at every opportunity. Water was obtained from local wells and the occasional spring and was purified by a variety of systems.

These all worked as the group stayed healthy with an absence of gastrointestinal upsets.



Participants

Mick Borroff, Peter Chadwick, Barry Dover, Richard Dover, Paul Dover, Bill Gibbs, David Hick, Janelle Humphreys (guest), Michael Smith and Richard Taylor.

Our itinerary was as follows:

Summary

Tue 5 April	Arrive in Marrakech
Wed	Transfer over the Tizi n'Tichka to the Valley of the Roses
Thu	Ait Youl - Tafoughalt Pastures - Le Merse
Fri	Le Merse - Assaka n'Ait Ouzzine
Sat	Assaka n'Ait Ouzzine - Tine Ouwayour summit - Irhissi
Sun	Irhissi - Igli
Mon	Igli - Kouaouch summit - Tamajgalt summit - Igli
Tue 12	Igli - Tadawt n'Tablah - Bab n'Ali - Waterfall Camp
Wed	Waterfall Camp - Tazlout - Azdour
Thu	Azdour - Tagroat Tazgart
Fri	Tagroat Tazgart - Jbel Bou Gafer summit - Bou Gafer Monument
Sat	Bou Gafer Monument - Tanemlalt
Sun	Tanemlalt - Amalou n' Mansour summit - Iknioun - Valley of the Roses
Mon	Transfer to Marrakech via Ait Ben Haddou and Telouet
Tue 19	Sightseeing in Marrakech and depart

Detailed Itinerary

5th April

We arrived in Marrakech and were transported to our hotel by Jamal Imerhane, Alan's local agent. The Riad Bahia is situated in the Mellah (the old Jewish quarter of the city) and we arrived in time to meet our mountain guide Lhoussain and enjoy a mixture of vegetarian starters and a chicken tagine in the hotel before going to bed at around midnight.

6th April

Lhoussain and Hamid joined us for the 6 hour minibus transfer over the snow-capped Atlas Mountains via the Tizi n'Tichka pass, with the road in the process of being comprehensively upgraded. There were a number of police speed traps as we passed through the villages *en route* – their police use the same technology as ours! We stayed in the very pleasant Kasbah Agoulzi in the Valley of the Roses (the Mgoun valley), so-called as pink Persian roses are grown as a crop to be distilled to produce rose oil, rose essence and rose water etc.

7th April

A local Mercedes minibus appeared at the hotel first thing in the morning which had done some 740,000 km if the clock was to be believed! After stopping in Qalaa't Mgouna to pick up a mountain of flatbreads, eggs, some lamb and 50kg of vegetables, this transported us together with a large pile of tents, foam mats and other foodstuffs to the village of Ait Youl (1385m), the start of our trek. Here we met the five muleteers, who had camped out overnight with their animals.

Leaving them to weigh and equitably divide the loads between their mules, we started walking at about 9.45am and began getting used to the heat as we walked south across the dry plain on footpaths and small tracks.

Mohamed's mule was used for taking the food and kitchen equipment for our lunch stops whilst the other muleteers continued to set up the camp. Espying "lunch mule" next to a suitably shady spot was always a welcome sight!

After mint tea, our midday meal consisted of a huge plate of freshly prepared finely chopped salad vegetables and tinned fish accompanied by flat breads and pasta or rice and a spicy lentil-based sauce, followed by fruit and more mint tea. Lunch was timed to avoid the hottest part of the day and allowed a short siesta if required. This set the pattern for the remainder of the trek, except for two days where we carried packed lunches to be eaten on the summits.

Approaching the Tafoughalt pass, some of the group bought scarves and trinkets from a squatting lady sat next to the well in the hope of passing trade. This was the first of many such opportunities! Often Berber children raced out of their adobe houses or herders came over armed with blue plastic bags of intricately made but gaudy trinkets to tempt any passing trekkers and boost their families' incomes.

Just below the col itself Mick, Peter, Barry, Richard T, Michael and Dave decided to take the side-trip up to see the Tafoughalt Pastures (1950m), an upland grassy meadow used by Berber nomads to graze their sheep and goats. One black roofed tent was spotted on a ridge, but the only Berbers we encountered were a lady and her children living in a small stone-built house who invited us to join them for a glass of mint tea, which was prepared outside over a camping gas stove. Plates of dried dates and almonds were then produced. This was the first of several examples of genuine Berber hospitality in the mountains which elicited our thanks. (This report uses the more familiar term Berbers to describe this ethnic group, but they refer to themselves as Amazighs).

We descended from the pastures to re-join the main track and soon found our cluster of tents huddling round the well at Le Merse (1924m). A typical dinner of lentil soup and bread, lamb tagine and an apple was taken in a large tent whilst sat on sleeping mats on the ground. The four corner (pole) positions were much sought after to provide welcome back support!

8th April

We breakfasted early on bread, jams, honey, Nutella and processed cheeses washed down with copious tea, coffee or hot chocolate. This proved to be the usual menu for trek breakfasts. We were sometimes offered a thin 'porridge' which once a suitable quantity of jam and salt had been added, was quite tasty. A varied day of walking started with an ascent to the Tizi n'Tagmout col (and down towards Tagmout village where a mobile phone signal could be picked up. We passed a grove of newly planted almond trees to reach a watershed marked with the ancient graves of warriors from the Ait Seddrat and Ait 'Atta tribes.

A descent along a dry river eventually led to a spring and the welcome sight of lunch mule. Our meal taken on a shady ledge above the stream and was enjoyed with a chorus of croaking frogs and sightings of a few brown leeches and a small black water snake.

Suitably refreshed, we continued above the river gorge with good views east to the peaks of Tine Ouwayour and Amalou n'Mansour, passing a ruined kasbah (citadel) *en route* to our camp (1592m) on the football pitch belonging to Assaka n'Ait Ouzzine village. The local children turned out in force to watch the goings on in camp and eventually treated us to a stone-throwing competition, with tin cans regularly jumping in the air – one can see just how local goatherds get their accuracy in pitching stones!

9th April

This was another very varied day which started with a walk through the village then along the dry streambed towards the flat-topped peak of Tine Ouwayour (place of the moon). On the map and on Google Earth, the upside down heart-shaped mountain is unmistakable. Our plan was to ascend it using the major gully penetrating cliffs along the southern flank. Lhousain had never been up it before so when we met a Berber guarding her large flock of black goats, he asked her if it 'went'.

We then met her son who offered to show us the way – he said he often went up to the summit to get a mobile phone signal so he could contact relatives in N’Koub and get shopping sent to the nearest roadhead by taxi to be collected!

The grassy plateau on top of Tine Ouwayour (2117m) was a distinct contrast to the surrounding countryside and after trying to find the highest point, we carefully descended the steep eastern flank for a well-earned lunch. After our meal we passed another Ait ‘Atta cemetery to reach the start of the rocky Irhissi gorge and descended it to reach a crumbling adobe agadir (fortified granary), overlooked by our camp (1630m) on a terrace underneath some almond trees. All took advantage of the nearby spring to have a good wash before dinner.

10th April

After shaking most of the earwigs out of our luggage and rucksacks (the remainder appeared regularly over the next few days), we set off along the dry riverbed, then climbed up to a traverse and a new piste put in by some Berber prospectors. We passed a trial digging with copper green and cobalt blue colours in the excavated rocks.

Lunch was taken just before the hamlet of Bitche, then another ascent to a col where we could see the massive and appropriately named L’Elephant rock. This was passed with stunning views along serried ridges of eroded pinnacles. A short descent brought us to our camp at Igli (1704m), close to a Berber’s gite with a small shop and the possibility of hot showers for £1!

Hamid provided us with afternoon mint tea with popcorn and biscuits. Water was drawn from the huge well and a local boy was assisted with the filling of his family’s water bottles and the subsequent loading of his donkey to take them back home.

11th April

Paul, Bill and Janelle took advantage of the optional rest day at Igli camp, whilst the rest of us set off early with Lhoussain to climb up beside the impressive cliffs of Tassigdelt Tamajgalt to the Tizi Igli pass and on to the scrambling ascent leading to the twin cairns on Jbel Kouaouch (2592m) where we stopped for lunch. Fantastic views ranged from the snow-capped Atlas Mountains to the north, while to the south, the twin towers of Bab n’Ali beckoned beyond the Tete du Chameau (camel’s head) and sight of the witch’s hat of Tazlout to the southeast.

On the way back to Igli, Mick, Richard and Michael decided to see if Tamajgalt (2246m) could be ascended and found a good scramble on clean rock at the top of a gulley above the path to Abide that led to the summit plateau. A descent was made down pathless terrain beside the Tete du Chameau back to camp and a warm shower, followed by goat tagine and chips. A Dutch trekking group were camped in the gite’s compound, the only other trekkers we met.

12th April

The Igli well had been pumped dry the previous evening to irrigate the surrounding crops and we had to wait for a refill overnight to replenish our water bottles after breakfast. Lhoussain had arranged for a local woman to bake us a supply of fresh flatbreads in exchange for the remainder of the large bag of flour. The flatbreads were baked on hot pebbles in an earth oven.

Another spectacular day of walking lay in store. First up was a close encounter with L’Elephant before heading southeast into the Tadawt n’Tablah with its amazing rock scenery. Pinnacles were everywhere with views from a col (1708m) to the impressive twin teeth of Bab n’Ali held to be the ‘Jewel of the Sarhro’. We could see a nomad’s camp not far away but then encountered a family of Berbers on their three week transhumance journey north to the Atlas. The sight of a young boy tied onto a donkey led by his mother with a kid goat lashed into a side pannier was unforgettable.

After reaching Bab n'Ali, we stopped for lunch under a palm tree. After our meal, we headed east reaching the bottom of the Oufarar Gorge. This was an alternative route from Igli, so we walked and scrambled the almost dry gorge upstream for about an hour to enjoy the frogs, toads and the different rock scenery. Back at the entrance of the gorge we headed over to another gite beside a major piste to enjoy a coke. Paul and Richard had camped there on a previous visit in a 4x4.

A short walk took us to Waterfall Camp (1358m) nicely situated beside a virtually dry streambed issuing from a box canyon containing two waterfalls both having moss covered tufa screens. We had another goat tagine for dinner!

13th April

Paul and Janelle accompanied the mules from Waterfall Camp to Azdour, whilst the rest of us contemplated ascending the shapely volcanic cone of Tazlout (1803m). Lhoussain had not been up this, so he again consulted with local Berbers about the best route. Having been assured that it was doable, we ascended to the lower rock band on the NW side before finding a shallow gulley to climb. A second rock band was scrambled and a traverse under the cliffs above led to the wide central gulley between the twin peaks. A delightful scramble up a clean volcanic ridge was followed by some, whilst others kept to the gulley. Both routes led to the summit cairn bespattered with guano to find more excellent views. The return descent down the steep loose terrain was mostly uneventful. At the base of the last scramble, Bill pulled on a rock without making the customary solidity check and fell, fortunately sustaining only minor grazes to his head and legs, which were soon cleaned up.

Lunch mule was further away than Lhoussain expected, but Hamid had chosen a lovely shady spot for our meal. Later, in Azdour village, we were invited to visit Lhoussain's female cousin and her family to take tea, biscuits and nuts and to sample her home-made bread – all pronounced delicious. We sat on cushions on home-made rugs over carpets in an airy room. Lhoussain washed our hands following Berber custom and tradition – we felt very privileged to be there.

Azdour was also the last opportunity to buy anything from a village shop before camping just outside the settlement (1237m). The last of the goat was enjoyed for dinner!

14th April

After a late breakfast we walked away from Azdour village beside another dry riverbed with much evidence of irrigation using wells and water pumps powered by a variety of engines, all inspected by Barry as our chief engineer.

We stopped for lunch in a shady grove of almond trees and soon some local Berbers appeared with a plate of lamb tagine which we had to try. There were lots of kids around speaking French and some doing the family's washing – tramping the clothes in soapy water in the bottom of a cut-down oil drum or washing socks in a bucket. Both clothes and kids soon dried in the warm sun.

In the heat of mid-afternoon, three were walking along a broad track when David spotted a largeish lizard some 15m away running flat out towards them along the middle of the piste. Michael saw it and noticed a thumb-thick Schokari sand racer snake closely pursuing the lizard and gaining on it slightly. Lhoussain having turned round to see what we were commenting on, at the shout of "Snake! Behind you!" leapt to one side. The snake was moving so fast (~2m/s) it appeared to skim over the surface. The lizard might have mistaken us for trees and a potential escape route, so Michael then backed rapidly off the track to the left, keeping an eye on the still advancing venomous snake. He stumbled over a rock and fell. This movement may have disabused the lizard for it fortunately veered off to the other side of the track. The two reptiles disappeared into a loose pile of rocks still at full speed. The outcome was unobservable!

Later in the afternoon, we climbed up over a ridge close to two volcanic formations known locally as the shoulder blade and the wrist. Between them lay the col of the elbow to be crossed in the morning. Our camp (1690m) at Tagroat Tazgart (red throat) was close to a well beside a palm tree. On the slope opposite was a remarkably shaped lone tree, sculpted into a green umbrella by pollarding for firewood above and goat-browsing below.

15th April

After an early breakfast in anticipation of a long day, the “elbow” col was soon reached, then down and up over another one which eventually led us to lunch mule beside some trees in the valley bottom. Again some local Berbers appeared with some food for our party, but this time it was lamb couscous. A couple of ladies appeared with bags of colourful scarfs, etc. and waited patiently until we had finished eating before displaying all their wares prior to some bartering mediated by Lhousain.

Another climb to a col revealed the ruin of a military fort, part of the 1933 colonial French campaign against the remaining Ait 'Atta warriors besieged in their mountain stronghold of Jbel Bou Gafer. The descent on the other side led to our camp (1708m) on a terrace just above the French-erected Bou Gafer Monument to their fallen soldiers. This was the only place on the whole trek where fragments of green glass were seen – presumably pieces of eighty-year old French wine bottles.

Following afternoon tea, we set off to ascend one of the summits of the Jbel Bou Gafer massif by the steep path from the monument to a col. After a scrambling ascent to the summit (1918m), we were rewarded with extensive views to the High Atlas with a newly reduced capping of snow to the north and Algeria to the south. The Bou Gafer massif has three principal summits and the top we climbed was found not to be the highest, but we were out of time to try one of the other two! Several pieces of shrapnel were found lying close to the path on the hillside before returning to camp, evidence of past shelling and bombing by the French forces.

16th April

We set off after breakfast along the piste that descends from the Bou Gafer monument and gradually ascended towards a distant col on a path. Over the col the lunch mule awaited next to an almond and oleander grove dripping with sap after an aphid attack.

Later, we met another family of Berbers with a large flock of sheep and goats on their transhumance journey north to the Atlas who had been walking with their ten donkeys for twelve days with another eight to go. Passing yet another Berber camp, we picked up an old French military road and made rapid progress to our camp (2088m) just outside Tanemlalt village.

Hamid had procured some chicken from Iknoune which had been brought to Tanemlalt village by taxi and collected by the muleteers. He was busy preparing some flat paratha-like breads to go with the tagine - all cooked on two camping gas burners! After dinner, the crew entertained us with the traditional Berber love song of the deities “Hirro n'Wirro” accompanied by Mohammad on a tin flute. We responded with a rendition of “On Ilkley Moor Baht'at”!

17th April

Our last day on the hill began with an early start to avoid the heat. After team photographs had been taken and warmly thanking our five muleteers who would be heading for home after the equipment had been dropped in Iknoune, we began our climb up Amalou n'Mansour, the Sarhro's highest summit at 2711m. Three different walking or scrambling ascent lines were taken which converged at the summit with its communications mast.

After eating our packed lunch perched on the helicopter pad, we followed the ridge westwards to the head of the Great Gulley and down a very well graded zig-zag mule track to roadhead at the small

town of Iknoune (1925m) for a celebratory non-alcoholic cold drink with Lhoussain, sat outside the appropriately named Café Restaurant Nomades.

A local minibus took us to Boumalne du Dades and a then second one to the Kasbah Itran, our hotel for the night back in the Valley of the Roses. This very pleasant hotel is richly decorated with Berber rugs and artefacts which overlooks a huge crumbling kasbah and we enjoyed an excellent dinner on the terrace, serenaded by the croaking of frogs from the river below as we ate.

18th April

We transferred back to Marrakech by minibus but this time taking the old caravan route below the Tizi n'Tichka to visit a couple of historical sites. We hired a guide to show us round the extraordinary UNESCO listed ksar (fortified town) of Ait Ben Haddou with its typical earthen construction towering over the river. After lunch, we continued to Telouet to visit the unusual nineteenth century Glaoui kasbah with its amazing carved ceilings, alabaster fretwork, ornately painted window shutters and mosaic-tiled walls and floors.

Then over the Tizi n'Tichka and back to the Riad Bahia in Marrakech for a shower and a quick change of clothes. Then out for a lovely Moroccan dinner with Lhoussain and a couple of Janelle's relatives washed down with a few local beers at La Fassia restaurant in Gueliz – Marrakech's new town, to celebrate a fantastic trek in the Sarhro.

19th April

Our last day was spent sightseeing in Marrakech before our late flights home to the UK, with few of our group getting into their beds at home before four in the morning!

Planning and GPS Use

Detailed route planning was carried out using the GPS co-ordinates provided in Alan Palmer's guide book to locate key landscape features and camp sites in the Sarhro. These were loaded into Google Earth (GE) and a linking route plotted over path and track features visible on the ground in satellite images. This annotated route, together with waypoints, escape routes, possible variants, side trips and scrambling objectives was then made available to team members as a GE KMZ file. GE was also used to estimate the distance, cumulative ascent and descent for each day of the route and timing estimates generated for information using Naismith's rule.

The plotted routes and waypoints were also converted into a GPX file so they could be loaded onto GPS devices for navigation if needed. This included several escape routes. 1-50k and 1-100k mapping dating back to the 1970s were also used. Several members of our party carried GPS devices during the trek and our actual GPS tracks are available on request as GPX files, covering our journey which was measured as 203km and 8236m of ascent.

Glimpses of the Lives of the Berbers

We observed many local Berbers in the Sahrho leading what we perceived to be traditional lifestyles both in and out of the village environment. We met families making their annual transhumance journeys with a string of donkeys to carry their possessions on journey of several weeks to their traditional summer pastures in the foot hills of the High Atlas. Others remained in the villages, with their animals and many were occupied in tending to their crops and managing irrigation water pumped from wells along the dry river beds. We saw ladies grinding henna to a powder in a pestle and mortar for tattooing. Machine-free washing of clothes was the norm and washing boards were still in use. Mains electricity was being supplied to the major villages augmented by solar panels was seen on a small scale. Cooking with bottled gas was now the norm.

We encountered numerous Berber family groups on the hill carefully managing their flocks of sheep and goats by the judicious use of stones to redirect strays and bring them down towards the village at the end of the day.

The dress code was mixed with younger male Berbers often choosing Western clothes, whilst most women were seen in colourful traditional dress. Traditional values of hospitality to travellers were observed on several occasions, as already noted above.

Efforts to educate their children were evident with several new primary schools having been built in the villages and secondary schools in the larger towns. Once banned, the Amazigh language is now being taught to young Berbers alongside French and Arabic.

Bou Gafer

In February 1933, the massif of Jbel Bou Gafer was the site of intensive military action by the French and their local allies, as they sought to crush the resistance of the Ait 'Atta tribe who were the last to violently oppose the occupying forces and who had withdrawn to their mountain stronghold of Bou Gafer.

The Ait 'Atta warriors accompanied by their families are thought to have originally totalled around 7,000 (including some 500 armed fighters) and their flocks to number some 20,000 head.

Deploying morally questionable siege tactics and having vastly superior numbers, the French surrounded the massif and subjected it to fierce bombardment from the air and numerous artillery positions on the ground. Any tribespeople approaching water sources were simply machine-gunned. The French forces efforts to storm the mountain were fiercely resisted and they sustained as many as 3,500 casualties.

After a month of slaughter, some 2,000 Ait 'Atta had died along with 90% of their flocks. The French realised that the Ait 'Atta were not going to capitulate and perhaps discomfited by the slaughter of non-combatants, eventually agreed generous negotiated surrender terms with Hassou Ba Salem, the Ait 'Atta leader.

The French subsequently set up a monument to their fallen with a plaque inscribed: *"A la Mémoire des Officiers, Sous-Officiers, Caporaux, Soldats, Goumiers et Partisans des Groupes Mobiles du Confins de Marraksch Tombés Glorieusement Dans les Durs Combats du Djebel Sagho"*.

Unsurprisingly, this metal plaque is now absent!

Transport idiosyncrasies

Morocco maintains an ancient and modern approach to transport. At one end, modern air conditioned vehicles abound and the main roads are pretty good. School buses were used to transport poultry and after the local markets, cows travelled on lorry roofs above their new owners. In the souk, handcarts were still very useful as we found when our baggage needed transporting a couple of km to the hotel after the minibus driver could not work out how to get there on our return journey. Mules and donkeys still played very useful roles in the villages away from the road network and some locals used low power motorbikes to get about on the pistes.

With two weeks, we had the opportunity to sample some of Sarhro's best trails and make a number of scrambling ascents, some of them we believe to be the first by an English party, with plenty of scope for more. Day time temperatures were in the high twenties and three-season sleeping bags were more than adequate overnight.

Bird list

Michael Smith, Bill Gibbs and Peter Chadwick were our principal birders and prepared the following list of sightings:

- * Mallard - *Anas platyrhynchos*
- * Barbary partridge - *Alectoris barbara*
- * Cattle egret - *Bubulcus ibis*
- * Little egret - *Egretta garzetta*
- * Grey heron - *Ardea cinerea*
- * European White Stork - *Ciconia ciconia*
- * Montagu's harrier - *Circus pygargus*
- * Common buzzard - *Buteo buteo*
- * Mediterranean gull - *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*
- * Rock pigeon - *Columba livia*
- * Collared dove - *Streptopelia decaocto*
- * Turtle dove - *Streptopelia turtur*
- * European scops owl - *Otus scops*
- * Common swift - *Apus apus*
- * Pallid swift - *Apus pallidus*
- * European bee-eater - *Merops apiaster*
- * Hoopoe - *Upupa epops*
- * Hoopoe lark - *Alaemon alaudipes*
- * Bar-tailed lark - *Ammomanes cinctura*
- * Crested lark - *Galerida cristata*
- * Thekla lark - *Galerida theklae*
- * Eurasian skylark - *Alauda arvensis*
- * Temminck's lark - *Eremophila bilopha*
- * Barn swallow - *Hirundo rustica*
- * Common house martin - *Delichon urbicum*
- * White wagtail - *Motacilla alba*
- * Common Bulbul - *Pycnonotus barbatus*
- * Eurasian Wren - *Troglodytes troglodytes*
- * Blackbird - *Turdus merula*
- * Song thrush - *Turdus philomelos*
- * Common chiffchaff - *Phylloscopus collybita*
- * Common whitethroat - *Sylvia communis*
- * Sardinian warbler - *Sylvia melanocephala*
- * Robin - *Erithacus rubecula*
- * Desert wheatear - *Oenanthe deserti*
- * Red-rumped wheatear - *Oenanthe moesta*
- * Mourning wheatear - *Oenanthe halophila*
- * Black wheatear - *Oenanthe leucura*
- * Blue rock thrush - *Monticola solitaries*
- * African blue tit - *Cyanistes teneriffae*
- * Woodchat shrike - *Lanius senator*
- * Eurasian magpie - *Pica pica*
- * Maghreb magpie - *Pica pica mauritanica*
- * Yellow-billed chough - *Pyrrhocorax graculus*
- * Eurasian jackdaw - *Corvus monedula*
- * Common raven - *Corvus corax*
- * European Starling - *Sturnus vulgaris*
- * House sparrow - *Passer domesticus*
- * Desert sparrow - *Passer simplex*
- * Common chaffinch - *Fringilla coelebs*
- * European serin - *Serinus serinus*
- * European greenfinch - *Chloris chloris*
- * European goldfinch - *Carduelis carduelis*
- * Trumpeter finch - *Bucanetes githaginea*
- * Cirl bunting - *Emberiza cirlus*
- * Rock bunting - *Emberiza cia*
- * House bunting - *Emberiza sahari*

The team





Drawing and purifying water
at Igli well



Conclusion

The Jebel Sarhro was a very interesting place to visit. As Wikipedia correctly states “*the desolation of the harsh landscapes of the massive dry mountains with the many areas of bare rock and the austere, lunar beauty does not leave anyone unimpressed*”. They could have added monolithic rock towers, basalt columns, flat-topped mesas, serrated ranks of pinnacles, river gorges and unexpected oases of green to this description.

Flights to Marrakech were inexpensive and members arrived from Australia, Manchester and Bristol.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Alan Palmer at Trek in Morocco Ltd for help with planning and his agent Jamal Imerhane in Marrakech for local organisation. Especial thanks must go to Lhoussain Oufkir, an outstanding local guide whose comprehensive knowledge of the Sarhro, excellent route finding and language skills greatly enriched our visit. Also thanks to our cook Hamid for his consistently good food and the five Sarhro muleteers: Mohamed and his brother Zaid, Rashid, Brahim and his brother Yedir - their mules and handling were a credit to them. All can be warmly recommended to any future visitors.

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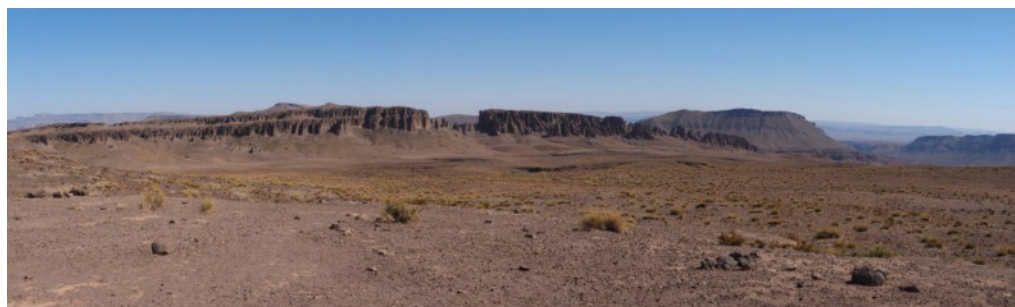
JPEG images of old (1970s) 1:50k and 1:100k IGN maps of Morocco can currently be downloaded from: <http://jemecasseausoleil.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/cartes-du-maroc.html> and <http://www.geojamal.com/2014/04/cartes-topographiques-maroc-50000.html>



Berber camp
Tadawt
n'Tablah.



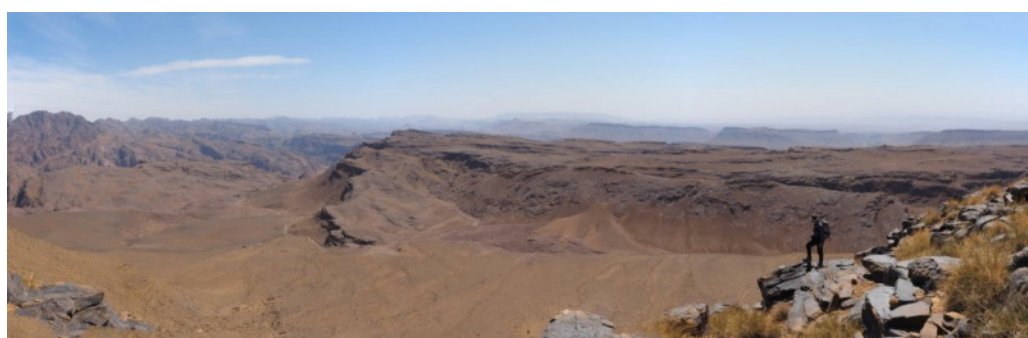
Camels' Head
and cliffs of
Tassigdel
Tamajgalt



Tadawt
n'Tablah
Massif



Tanemlalt
Camp



View from
Tine
Ouwayour



Ancient kasbah
at Itran



Tassigdelt cliffs

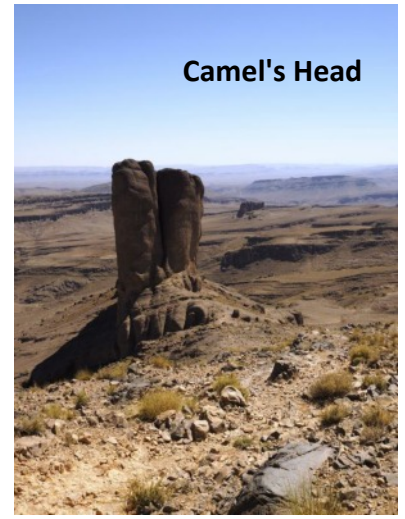


Elephant Rock with
Tazlout behind

Irhissi Agadir



Tazlout (left) and approaching Tazlout summit



Camel's Head



View over Igli



Camp at Irhissi Agadir

Tadawt n'Tablah pinnacles



A typical lunch



Transport





Irhissi Agadir



Irhissi Gorge



Heading south from Le Merse

REVIEWS

"It'll be Better Tomorrow - An anthology celebrating Senior Citizens" by Sylvie Nickels.

Whenever George Spenceley's wife Sylvie expressed concern about his health or the future invariably he responded "It'll be better tomorrow". This forms the title of this delightful anthology which Sylvie has produced, derived from the time of her caring for him in the last years of his life, and from her subsequent brief period in a residential care home.

The residents of the home, their relatives and their carers provided her with interesting and often poignant stories from their varied lives, which she has included with thinly disguised stories from George's adventurous life, which those who knew him will immediately recognise.

Those who would like a memento of our old friend George could do no better than to acquire a copy of this lovely book.

Richard Gowing

"TRAVAIL SO GLADLY SPENT" by Tom Price

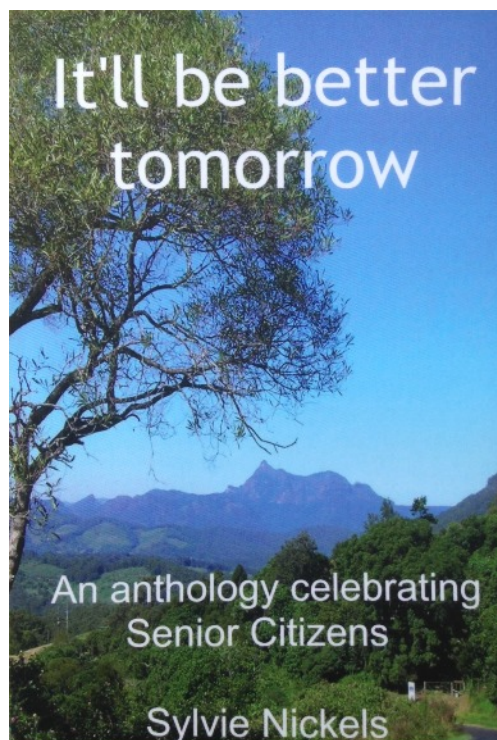
The Ernest Press, paperback reprint 2012, price £12.00.

The original hardback issue of this enjoyable book was ably reviewed by Dennis Armstrong in the Yorkshire Rambler, Summer 2001 Issue 15, pp. 102-104. Dennis concludes with the comment "I fear a hard copy priced at £17.50 may prove a difficult book to sell".

Now that it's available in paperback at a more affordable price, members will be able to enjoy this fine collection of essays and accounts of Tom's exploits and adventures during his varied career. I won't attempt to summarise Dennis's review, but merely point out that it includes climbs, excursions, experiences and characters in the British Isles, the Alps and the greater ranges as well as the South Georgia Survey expedition and his canoe trip in northern Canada, both shared with his great friend George Spenceley.

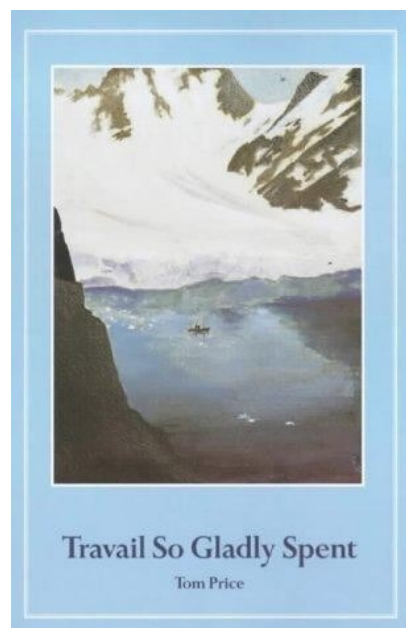
None of the stories is more than a dozen pages long, some as little as three, so it's an ideal book for dipping into, and is nicely illustrated with some black-and-white sketches which are typical of his considerable artistic talent; the cover bears a fine scene in colour from South Georgia.

Richard Gowing



FeedARead.com publishing
for Oriole Press. 2014
for Ebook

Paperback available from Amazon
or £7 + £1 postage direct from Sylvie.



Strongly recommended.

2015 MEETS REPORT

Repeated due to a production problem in the last journal

Northumberland Meet, Seahouses

3-5 July 2015

Northumberland holds many attractions. Usually we head for the higher hills, say, Cheviot or Kielder, and some quiet accommodation. This meet was a real contrast being on the coast and staying in a busy bunkhouse in the middle of a large caravan and campsite in the high season (Springhill Farm Bunkhouse). This departure from the norm provided new opportunities and plenty of entertainment despite mixed weather.

On Friday those arriving assembled on the large first floor balcony with its grand view of Bamburgh Castle and the Farne Islands both bathed in warm sunshine. Mick had been active in Cheviot on the way up ... and Michael had explored Low Newton-by-the-Sea that afternoon. When most were assembled a move was made into Seahouses for a fish and chip supper then a stroll around the harbour before finding the Presidential couple on the high street.

Overnight the weather deteriorated but the wet and windy start did not dampen our enthusiasm. Apart from Derek who nobly agreed to finish off the shopping for the evening meal and then be on standby to pick up any stragglers, the rest caught the 9am bus down the coast to Craster. From there we could tackle the a coastal section of the St Oswald's Way walk up to Bamburgh. Craster to Dunstanburgh Castle is a popular short walk but not in the conditions we had. Sodden grass, wind and rain discouraged others and we had a peaceful walk to this impractically large castle dating from 1313 built for Thomas Earl of Lancaster as a symbol of his power as he opposed his cousin Edward II - unsuccessfully as he was captured and executed.

Beyond the impressive castle we explored the whale-back folding a little further north likening them to a modern skate-park feature.

The next sandy bay had hazards - large dunes and a stream swollen from the heavy overnight rain.



Jumping and switching to sandals were all tried but most had wet feet by now and most paddled through. Respite was soon reached when we reached the Ship Inn, Low Newton, spot on 11am as it opened. Hot drinks were in order and there was no great rush to leave.

Richard the Elder had lagged behind wringing out sodden socks but was just ahead of the rest as we emerged from the Ship. Together we continued north past a small bay by High Newton then towards Beadnell where the river and nesting arctic terns pushed us inland a little to cross by a substantial bridge. The net section was the least inspiring as it was through a caravan park and the roads much of the way between Beadnell and Seahouses where we took to the golf course. By way of compensation there were opportunities for some to supplement their lunch packs with sausage rolls, ice creams or gingerbread men. This makes the walk sound like a bit of a jolly but we were keeping a good pace and still not half way through. The weather though was gradually improving and the forecasters promised sunshine at 1pm.

A Seahouses rendezvous with Derek allowed Evelyn to call it a day and the rest of us to reappraise the next section.

Officially the way is inland on an old railway track but we decided that as it was low tide we would stick with the beach.



The sea roak kept us cool and only really cleared as we reached Bamburgh Castle.

More holiday crowds and another chance to have an ice cream. The castle on its dolerite pedestal has seen it all: the Votadini in the iron age, the Romans' beacon, the Anglo-Saxon fort, the Norman one, the first artillery defeat of a castle during the Wars of the Roses (at the hands 'our lot'), Armstrong's restorations, and now the coach trips. More modern but still interesting were the many wartime pillboxes and extensive anti-tank installations along this coast.

Hearing we were there, Derek jumped in his car and drove to us and straight past us before realising his error and doubled back to take three back to the bunkhouse. Richard the Younger continued along the coast to Bundle Bay and returned by inland rights of way to Springfield Farm (a mile or so inland from Seahouses). Two other pairs took a more direct route back from Bamburgh along paths

and tracks to complete the round. Altogether about 17 miles but with little ascent compared to our usual routes.

It was another lovely evening inland and after a meal and some wine those wishing to chat moved outside leaving others to doze in the bunkhouse's comfortable chairs. Several of those attending had returned from Bulgaria just a week earlier so there were plenty of tales to tell from that trip. As on the night before, our group was earlier to bed than most others on the site and much earlier to rise. After the day's exercise all slept well.

The forecast was for a good morning and worsening afternoon weather so a 730 breakfast was called for.



It was 753 when King Oswald gave Lindisfarne to St Aidan for his monastery and it soon became a place of pilgrimage.

It was 950 when many of us set out on the Pilgrims' Way route across the sands from that Holy Island back to the mainland. A 1245 low tide should allow ample time for the crossing following the poles.

The President chauffeured some to the start and lingered to snap our departure. Removing footwear at the start we heard a persistent low moaning noise and thought it might be the wind over the sands but it turned out to be a couple of colonies of seals on a sandbank. Half-way across, we met lain going the other way. He turned to join us but declined to climb the refuge tower as we passed it. Other 'pilgrims' were wallowing in the silty hollows and getting 'clarted up' but with firmer footing we sidestepped the problems and remained unbesmirched. The 'sensible' advice is to join the 1954 motor causeway when you reach the South Low River at Beal Sands but we decided to give it a try and it 'went' at knee-depth rinsing the silt off our legs. Less than two hours for the crossing even at our leisurely pace.

The President and First Lady elected to stay on firmer ground, walking past Lindisfarne Castle to visit Gertrude Gekyll's walled garden, then continuing to the impressively tall pyramid at Emmanuel Head passing a profusion of wild flowers along the way, including wild orchids, and striking black and red five-spot burnet moths pupating among the plants. Meanwhile, Mick had headed south for a walk over Windy Gyle in the Cheviot and Richard the First was visiting the Alne Valley Railway, just outside Alnwick, then mounting the recumbent giant lady Northumberlandia working from head to toe before going to George Stephenson's birthplace cottage near Wylam. Derek was checking that part of yesterday's route around Low Newton. Later Dotti was going mountain biking before camping in wet conditions. Richard and Michael checked out the view of Holy Island from Lowmoor Point hide then visited Druridge Bay for a stroll and a cuppa.

Certainly a different type of meet.

One of our Club characters and senior member, WCIC, is fond of saying "There's nothing so ex as an ex-president." I appreciated the truth of this when I was designated meet leader for this meet and realised I was Club's the third choice. The previous two having had to withdraw on account of work commitments. MS



Part of the crew near Bamburgh

Attending:

John Whalley, President	Dorothy Heaton
Carol Whalley	Richard Gowing
Mick Borroff	Derek Smithson
Philip Dover	Michael Smith
Evelyn Dover, Guest	

Mourne Mountains

24th -26th July 2015

By Friday evening 12 members and guests had arrived for the Club's annual long walk, at the Mourne Lodge in Attical using a variety of routes. The Whalley's and Hick/Marriotts took the ferry from Stranraer to Belfast.

Dover/Horn/Boroff and Taylor flew from Leeds to Belfast and hired a car. The Smiths also rented a car but flew into Dublin from Robin Hood. The arrangements were less complicated for our Northern Ireland member and meet organiser, Tim, who simply had to navigate from Ballycastle.

The Mourne Lodge (Cnocafeola) is a community run hostel with, as its Director, volunteer Mairead White MBE, a retired cookery teacher. It seemed an onerous job requiring great commitment to run such a business as a volunteer. The Lodge does employ a small number of locals and was providing work experience for two young French girls.

We had a warm welcome albeit only in the friendly sense (it was distinctly chilly temperature-wise) but it was an idiosyncratically run. One returned from walking to find previously cast aside dirty walking trousers and T shirts neatly hanging in the wardrobe and suitcases re-packed, zipped and relocated: whilst the bathroom was left untouched.

The focus for the long walk was the Mourne Wall Walk. The wall was constructed to prevent incursion by sheep and cattle into the catchment area of the Silent Valley reservoir. It also provided employment during hard times in the early 20th century. The wall is impressive and in parts looks like a military installation with turrets. On average the wall is about 1.5 metres high and nearly a metre thick.



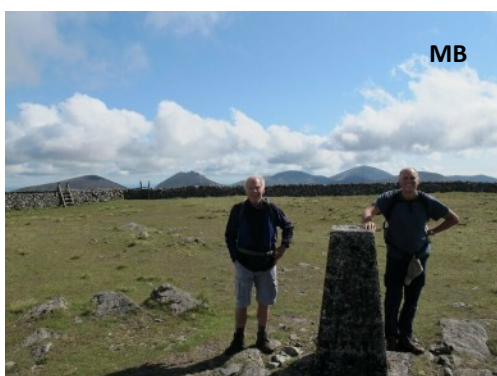
It is 22 miles (35 km) long and passes over fifteen mountains including Slieve Donard the highest in Northern Ireland. However this was insufficiently challenging for our member from Dacre who proposed a variation - the Eastern section which only skirted one mountain should be dropped and the central ridge which included four more tops should replace it! In fact this proved to be an excellent suggestion as the scenery was superb.

The first party of Smiths, David and Beth were dropped off at the Silent Valley car park at 7.00am and immediately set off to do the walk anti clockwise. They didn't hang about because although it was clear and sunny there was a brisk wind and it was chilly. The second party of Mick, Richard and Roger set off clockwise. After an hour or so party 1 were puzzled why they couldn't see the others. Perhaps we should have had a discussion before we left. Typical YRC!

The clockwise route is described by Mick:
 "Mick, Richard, Roger left the car park at 0715 and with no sight of the previously dropped-off party, headed across the reservoir dam to commence a clockwise round of the twelve peaks over 610m along the High Mourne Ridge. The Mourne wall was quickly reached and after some gymnastics to cross it, we negotiated a wide section of blanket bog with just one pair of wet feet. Roger had a near-miss after a large granite boulder detached itself at a hole in the Wall. The first summit of Slievenagloagh followed soon after.

The Wall was then followed over Slieve Muck, Carn Mountain and Slieve Loughshannagh to a switchback over the first three 700m peaks of Slieve Meelbeg, Slieve Meelmore and Slieve Bearnagh.

Richard Taylor and Roger Horn on Slieve Muck



Slieve Bearnagh is topped by a large tor reminiscent of the northern Arran ridges necessitating a scramble to stand on its summit. After another bite to eat at Hare's Gap, Roger decided to ease his foot cramps and descend to return via the Ben Crom and Silent Valley reservoirs.



Richard Taylor and Roger Horn following the Mourne Wall towards the summit tors of Slieve Bearnagh

Mick and Richard continued, passing Michael and Helen on the slopes of Slievenagloch (the second one!) on their anti-clockwise route. The long ascent over Slieve Corragh to the watch tower on Slieve Commedagh was completed, bringing Slieve Donard into our sights. Richard elected not to follow the Wall up Donard, but descended to follow the path beside the two reservoirs back to the car park. Mick ground his way up the steep flight of steps beside the Wall to the Donard summit with its trig point unusually sited on top of the watch tower. Numerous school children were passed again on the descent back to the col before heading southwest to tackle the remaining third of the circuit, leaving the Mourne Wall at this point.

A somewhat gentler traverse below The Castles crags following the old smuggler's trail of the Brandy Pad led Mick to another col and then up to the summit of Slieve Beg and the Devil's Coachroad over to Cove Mountain. The sixth 700m peak of Slievemagan was brought underfoot before a long descent to a col overlooking the Ben Crom dam. Another long climb up to the final 700m summit tor on Slieve Binnian passed a group of boulderers at The Back Castles (at this point Mick could have happily borrowed their climbing mat for a well-earned snooze). The Mourne Wall was regained and followed steeply down to Wee Binnian and Moolieve which was bypassed to access the track close to the dam.

Mick thankfully reached the Silent Valley gates at 2115 where Tim was waiting to whisk him back to the Mourne Lodge for a late dinner. For the statistically minded the GPS data for Mick's Mourne: were 36.1km distance, 3,033m cumulative ascent, overall time 14 hrs with 11.5 hours moving at an average speed of 3.1 km/hr."

The anti-clockwise team initially moved together. We didn't meet many people at all until bumping into the Presidential party. After the Devil's Coachroad, David and Beth chose to traverse the Brandy Pad to Hares' Gap and return via the Silent Valley as did Helen after climbing Slieve Donard, Commedagh and the ridge to Hares' Gap. The view of the Mourne Wall climbing (again!) Up Bearnagh was a step too far. In fact all but two of the seven who set out for the long walk and 11 walkers in total returned by the three hour Silent Valley 'shortcut'.

Michael continued anticlockwise and was rather miffed at getting his feet wet descending from his final summit - the aptly named Slieve Muck. He arrived back at the hostel at 19.10 - a 12 hour day.

Everyone had a long day out. The Presidential party as Carol writes, " ... left the Mourne Lodge in Attical very early on Saturday morning. Paul Dover, Tim Lofthouse, John and I were in Tim's car as we arrived at a very windy Silent Valley Mountain Park. No-one was around, except the gate keeper, who informed us that the park wouldn't open for a couple of hours, but he let us in and wouldn't accept any money.

We took the road that led us past the Silent Valley Reservoir and up to a granite dam marking the bottom of yet another reservoir, this one by the name of Ben Crom. There we ascended a very steep path immediately on the right which took us up to intercept the Slieve Binnian path. That's where we bumped into Helen and Michael; closely followed by David and Beth who joined us for the next stretch as Helen and Michael disappeared ahead of us.

The path was rocky and indeterminate but after a hard slog we reached the top of Slievelamagan, followed by Cove Mountain, which is where we stopped for a quick look over Devil's Coachroad, before ascending Slieve Beg and our long awaited lunch. The weather was much improved by now and we'd all got rid of our heavy winter clothing and looked almost summery.

As we descended the path towards Slieve Donard, we stopped at the old smugglers route (Brandy Pad) to marvel at the magnificent granite tors: the Castles. It was there we decided, as we happily chatted and basked in sunshine, that we'd make our way back along Brandy Pad towards Hares' Gap and the Mourne Wall. As we approached the Wall we caught sight of Michael and Helen coming off the ridge - Michael disappeared onwards whilst Helen and Roger joined us for the last leg of our journey.

After a quick greeting, we set off traversing the edge of Slieve Bearnagh, gradually descending towards Ben Crom Reservoir, pausing only to cross the River Kilkeel, then back down to the Silent Valley and our awaiting car."

All but one of the party (and we did save him some dinner) assembled at 7.45 for a veritable feast of a meal provided by Mairead and her team. She certainly put the skills from her early career to good use. Wholesome soup; homemade bread: salad followed by a main course choice of fish pie or pork - not forgetting the dessert of ginger/kiwi cake and

raspberry trifle with "4 tablespoons of Napoleon brandy" - just the ticket after such an energetic day.

There was some hobbling as people moved very cagily to the dining table and it was quite reassuring that even our youngest guest by at least 40 years was not moving easily!

All had taken advantage of the opportunity to extend their visit to Ireland. On Friday the Leeds fly drive team had completed an 18 km walk in the south west Mournes including the heathery dome of Eagle Mountain (638m) and the summits of Shanlieve (627m) and Finlieve (579m). It provided a rather intimidating view of what was to come on Saturday's long walk route.

A bog road led back towards Attical where Paul according to Mick "happily investigated a combined potato farm and microbrewery". The Smiths on Monday did the three 'bird' tops (Hen; Cock and Pigeon) of the Western Mournes. The President and Carol drove off to Connemara to visit friends. Two parties visited the Giant's Causeway and other attractions of Antrim and the Sunday washout 'forced' visits to the Bushmills distillery and a pub in Belfast.

Prior to arrival in the Mournes the Smiths had visited Skerries and stood in the exact spot where Percy French was inspired to write 'The Mountains of Mourne', ".....he's wishful like me, To be back where the dark Mourne sweeps down to the sea."

Clearly our President fully intends to be back as Mairead was muttering that he had left with his room key!

The scenery is good. It's a super area and well worth a visit. Our thanks to Tim for organising the meet and for his ferrying of people to the start and finish of the walk. Also thanks to Tim and his wife for accommodating four members when they moved north to explore the delights of County Antrim.

This is your scribe's first meet report since Saas Grund in 1987. I guess it was OK for female guests to be in Switzerland because it was 'foreign'. Nevertheless publication of the article in the club journal was described by some as 'the thin end of the wedge' The wedge must have been a bit thicker than they feared because it's taken another 28 years to make my second contribution as a now fully paid up member of the YRC!

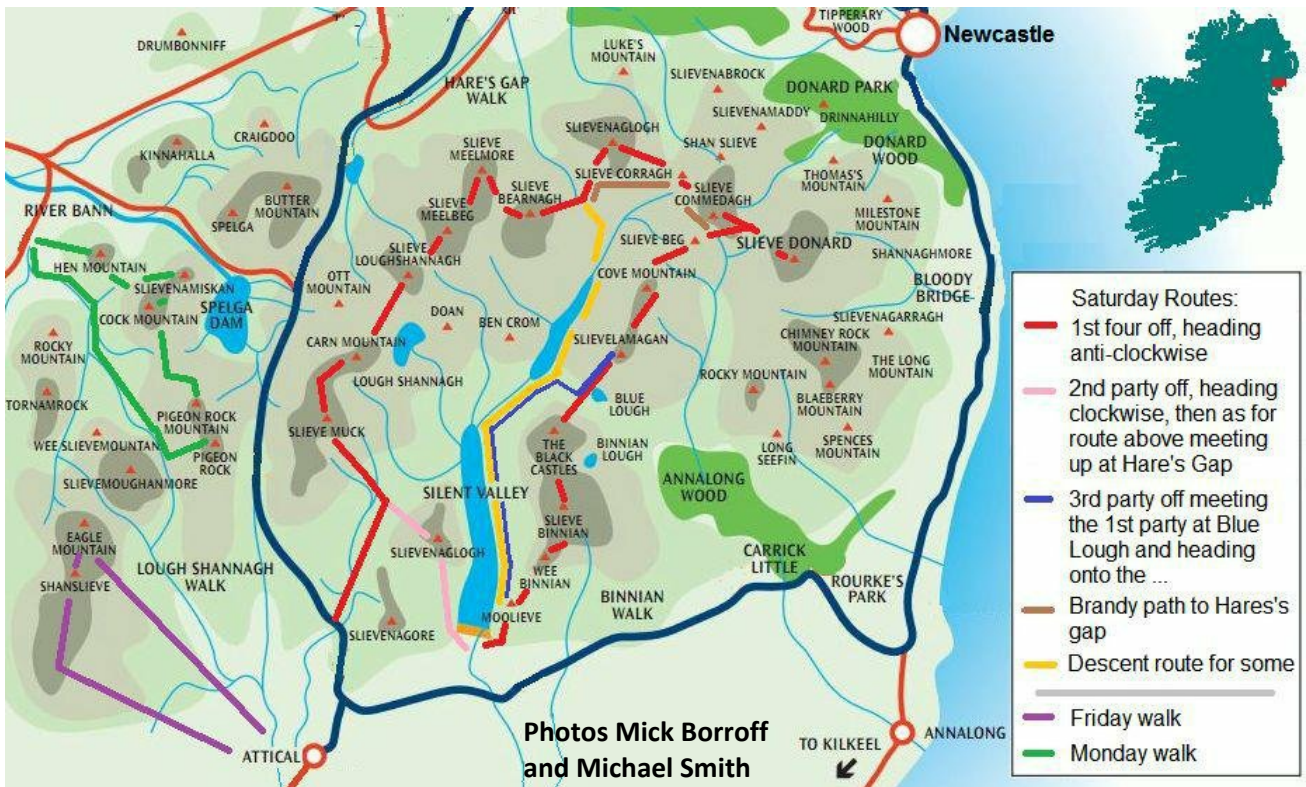
HJS

Attendance
John Whalley - President
Carol Whalley
Mick Boroff
Paul Dover
Roger Horn (PM)
Richard Taylor
Beth Marriott (G)
Christine Marriott (G)
David Hick
Tim Lofthouse
Helen Smith
Michael Smith



Slieve Bearnagh (MS)

View of the Mourns from the Silent Valley Dam (MB)



MEET REPORTS

LITTLE LANGDALE, CUMBRIA JAN 8-10

The custom of the first meet of the year being held at Low Hall Garth may well be more than fifty years strong despite that week often bringing indifferent weather. There are memories of sparkling days and good névé but they are few. This year did not refresh those memories though everyone got plenty of exercise. It was a sociable occasion with some new faces and plenty of familiar ones.

Friday's showers did not deter two from traversing Beamsley Beacon and Round Hill on the way to the Lake District. The Cambridge two, having arrived and circuited the valley on Thursday and being in training for the Moroccan trek, crossed Slaters' Bridge over a swollen River Brathay and traversed Lingmoor Fell, Hollin Crag and Fell Foot, Tilberthwaite and found a route through the quarries to descend into the back of the cottage car park. Peter provided welcome warming soup and bread for all on Friday evening. The Three Shires Inn being closed as usual for most of the month, everyone stayed in and caught up on everyone's news.

Heavy rain overnight cleared over breakfast but only the early starters beat the next shower. The pattern was set for the day though there was an overall lightening of the showers until late in the evening. Wetherlam was crossed with a good covering of snow above 1,500 ft to the Coppermines with a return through Hole Rake to tunnel through to Cathedral Quarry.

Meanwhile, the catering crew ascended The Carrs to descend Prison Band and splish down Greenburn. Our Treasurer started with them but peeled off into Langdale. The Presidential pair were also with this group to begin with until our first lady (recovered from a bout of flu and feeling very groggy) fell over and almost knocked Robert into the raging torrent of Greenburn. Luckily for her Robert saved the day. They walked past Greenburn Reservoir and on to Wet Side Edge, where suddenly high winds and thick mist were the order of the day. Eventually the skies cleared so the Presidential couple made their way down

to the Three Shires Stone and back along the dreary road to LHG.

Harvey arrived later in the day and walked up steeply by Stickle Ghyll to the Tarn and back. The most senior members headed for Elterwater's Britannia Inn but were delayed by exploring unintended parts of Fletcher's Wood.

First out and last back were three who crossed behind Blea Tarn to the Old Dungeon Ghyll, then pulled up to Stickle Tarn. They had no view of Pavey Ark beyond the bottom 20m so, hoping the reports of snow higher up were exaggerated, they found and 'swam' their way up a very wet Jack's Rake.



Emerging onto the top their lunch spot was snow covered but out of the strong wind. Sergeant Man and the full length of Blea Rigg took them in drier weather to just above Elterwater and the last of the light. Martyn was met in the Britannia bar and he led them back over the lane above Fletcher's Wood to the ford and home (22km, 1,250m ascent).

They had an hour to spare before Peter and Robert's meal of beef, new potatoes and peas followed by a fruit crumble. By then the rain had set in hard again ready to dampen the two who headed out to sleep soundly on the sturdy new barn bunk beds.

Sunday's weather included fast moving showers of hail, snow and rain. The Cambridge duo set off up past the Dungeon Ghyll Force in full spate from NDG car park but turned back crossing above the Ghyll due to strong gusty winds.

Others tackled the hills closer to LHG. Meanwhile, two tackled Stone Arthur, Great Rigg and Heron Pike from Grasmere. They do not recommend the right of way from Heron Pike steeply down to the west – there is no path and the footing is poor. They also found serious erosion of paths and the road caused by a swollen Greenhead Gill. The Lakes and other northern areas have suffered extensive and expensive devastation from unusually intense rainfall this winter. A month ago, surface water even flowed from Malham Tarn over Malham Cove.

Returning on the A65 to Yorkshire the roads were flooded in several places, particularly by the Aire and the Wharfe. On the way home, the President showed off Lowstern to his guest.

Thanks go to Peter and Robert for their sterling work in the kitchen.

MS

Attendees:

John Whalley, President

Peter Chadwick

Ian Crowther

Robert Crowther

Michael Crowther

Paul Dover

Peter Elliot

Bill Gibbs

John Jenkin

Harvey Lomas

Michael Smith

John Sutcliffe (G)

Ben Thomas (G)

Martyn Trasler

Carol Whalley

GLENCOE, SCOTLAND

JAN 28-31

The journey to the youth hostel in Glencoe passed without incident except for Richard Smith who struggled with a disintegrating gearbox. The forecast however was less than encouraging and reminiscent of a similar meet in February 2014 when the club stayed at the independent hostel next door and the forecast winds on the tops increased daily from 40 mph to in excess of 80 mph.

Friday dawned and Aaron and his guest, Dan Morris, provided a full Scottish breakfast, once the gas supply was activated. Strict health and safety protocols had to be observed.

Harvey tried to find shelter in Glen Nevis which included a careful step over the dark waters to Steall Hut. Jason, Dan & Aaron turned into the wind from the Lost Valley on to the shoulder of Stob Coire Sgreanach but could only estimate their precise location.

The remainder of the meet headed west in search of clearer skies. Waiting for the Corran ferry put one in mind of a time when much of the west coast moved to a slower tempo. This was echoed with glimpses of the old road running parallel with the A861. David Lodge proposed a walk from Strontian, via old mine workings, over Druim Glas, down to Loch Doilet, returning close to the Allt nan Cailleach. The party was rewarded with fine views of a changing Scottish landscape.



DL was able to maintain his record of returning in the dark as the final steps down hill were taken in the vanishing gloaming. The wind now cold, we could forgive the ferryman's grumpiness in having to fumble for change.

Saturday, fierce winds prevailed. Harvey floated around old haunts below Stob Coire Nan Beith. DH, JH, MS, RS, RT & TJ bent into the wind close to Stob Dubh on Buachaille Etive Beag. AO and DM headed for Meall a Bhuiridh; strong winds and a nagging injury found the pair also dropping down just short of the top.

DL and AP found Stob Coire nan Lochan and returned, in the dark, via the Lost Valley. DL experienced a moment of concern as a slab of snow he was stood on began to slip. MB and CH had the hopes of crossing to Lismore much to the amusement of the ferryman.

Sunday saw a slight improvement in the weather with many heading home. DH, Anka and MS headed for the Cobbler while RT, MB & CH saw nothing from Gulvain.

Our thanks go to Aaron for organising the meet as well as providing excellent victuals.

The Glencoe Hostel has all one could want but typically lacks any atmosphere, which given the recent weather had probably blown away.

CH



RT & CH at foot of Gulvain

MB

Michael Smith, Richard Taylor, David Hick and John Whalley walked to Pen-y-Pass then down to Cwm Dyli.



Descending to Cmw Dyli

By dinnertime almost all the meet had arrived, and a general move was made down the road to Beddgelert. Two pubs/hotels were patronised; a third belied its sign outside by telling us, after we'd bought our drinks, that dinner was cancelled in favour of the rugby on TV, so their custom went to the Royal Goat where an excellent dinner was enjoyed.

Attending

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Aaron Oakes (Meet Leader) | Jason Humphreys |
| Anca Pordea (Guest) | Michael Smith |
| Chris Hilton | Mick Borroff |
| Dan Norris (Guest) | Richard Smith |
| David Hick | Richard Taylor |
| David Large | Tim Josephy |
| Harvey Lomas | |

CWM DYLI, WALES

FEB 26-28

This year's February North Wales meet saw a return to the Pinnacle Club's hut at Cwm Dyli, beside the hydro power station to the east of Snowdon, three years after our previous meet there, and for details of the hut I refer you to the meet report in YRCJ Issue 155 Series 13, Summer 2013, pages 39-40, the main difference being that this time there were no ladies present.

18 members and guests arrived on the Friday afternoon, some having stopped off for a walk on the way and others arriving in time for a short walk from the hut. The weather was set fair, remaining dry but quite cold and windy, with patchy snow down to about 2,000 feet, rather overcast on the Saturday but clearing to a fine day on the Sunday. On their way to the hut, Paul and Richard Dover stopped off at Padog on the A5 and walked via Dylasau Uchaf to Hwylfa, a peak at 370 m. (1,214 ft.) From there they followed the ridge down to Bryn Llech (398 m., 1306 ft.) then returned to Padog via Blaen Isaf, a pleasant if muddy walk of 10 km (6 ¼ miles) from the hut.

Saturday dawned fair and dry, with high cloud affording extensive views. Michael Smith with Peter Elliott, Richard Taylor, Warwick Riley (guest), Ian Gauntlett (guest) and Mick Borroff set off from the hut along the path above Llyn Gwynant to join the Watkin Path up Cwm Llan, from which they climbed up to the col below Yr Aran, with fond memories of its ascent with Adrian Bridge, and up to follow Snowdon's south ridge to the inevitable circus at the summit trig point. (I remember arriving there on my first ascent in June 1958 and cutting my hand on a piece of broken glass on the cairn; fortunately first aid was available at the summit café.) Peter headed off to inspect the Trinity gullies and the delights of the Pig Track, meanwhile the rest of the party continued via the Watkin Path where they met Paul and Richard Dover before scrambling over Lliwedd's twin peaks and down the ridge to Gallt y Wenallt, from which they picked their way down beside the penstock and back to the hut.

Paul and Richard Dover took the path to Pen y Pass. Initially they thought they were going to be spoilt with a newly surfaced route but it soon became a more familiar track up the valley.

From Pen y Pass they took the Miners' Track before branching off to climb onto the east ridge of Lliwedd. From the summit of Lliwedd it was easy to see the masses of walkers on the summit of Snowdon. Having descended Lliwedd they met Michael Smith and party walking the same route in the opposite direction. An enjoyable scramble up the final section of the Watkin Path up Clogwyn y Garnedd with patchy snow underfoot brought them to the summit of Snowdon itself (and the crowds including seven mountain bikers!) For their descent they decided to fit crampons which allowed a more comfortable descent along the Rhyd Ddu path and the Clogwyn Du ridge. At Bwlch Cwm Llan they dropped off into the Cwm Llan valley before returning to the hut along the north shore of Llyn Gwynant. A good 14 mile walk with spectacular views of the Snowdon peaks and ridges John Brown, Tim Josephy and David Hick traversed the Glyders.

Richard Gowing and John Whalley drove to the hamlet of Croesor, below the SW ridge of Cnicht, and walked up the gently ascending quarry track on the northeast flank of Moelwyn Mawr. From the quarries they ascended to the col between Moel-yr-Hydd and Moelwyn Mawr, to follow a good path up the east shoulder of Moelwyn Mawr, 770 m. (2,526 ft.) This gave good all-round views, from Snowdon to Tremadog Bay, east to the hydro reservoirs above Blaenau Ffestiniog and south to Llyn Trawsfynydd and its decommissioned nuclear power station. From the summit they descended the quite steep and up-and-down south ridge to the col below Moelwyn Bach, to follow a faint, rather boggy path to the road about half a mile from the car park, a total distance of 5 ¾ miles.



Looking across to Moelwyn Bach

With all safely returned from the hill, tea, beer, wine and conversation were enjoyed in the warmth of the living-room stove before the meet sat down to an excellent three-course meal provided by our meet leader, Richard Taylor.

On a fine Sunday morning David Hick, Michael Smith, and Richard Taylor traversed Yr Aran from Rhyd Ddu. Before setting off Michael kindly assisted Richard Gowing who found he'd got a flat tyre - fortunately, after pumping it up, Richard was able to drive home with very little loss of pressure.

After cleaning the hut, Tim Josephy walked over Moel Hebog from Beddgelert, returning via Rhyd Ddu.

Peter Elliott and Mick Borroff parked at the roadhead above Tal-y-Bont and headed along the track into the depths of Cwm Eigiau. They then ascended from the slate quarry towards Foel Grach, admiring the snow-dusted crags and gullies of Craig-yr-Ysfa picked out against the blue sky, and then traversed south along the ridge over Carnedd Llewellyn, finding it much less busy than the previous day's walk over Snowdon.

They returned by the climbers' descent path down to the foot of Craig-yr-Ysfa and back along the track beside Llyn Eigiau to conclude a very enjoyable round.

Paul and Richard Dover, before returning home, parked their cars at Pont Cyfing to the south-east of Capel Curig and with John Brown walked the track to the mines south of Moel Siabod, continuing on to meet the south-east ridge of Daear Ddu.

This proved to be a very enjoyable scramble with slight snow and ice up much of its length.

After a lunch stop on the summit they again had splendid views of the whole of Snowdonia. Keeping close to the summit ridge made for a delightful scramble where conditions required them to use crampons, although not a lot of the snow was hard packed and the rocks were very slippery. They descended to rejoin the track to the mines and back to the cars. In all, about 7 km. with 720 m. altitude gain.

With most of the major hills in the area ascended, a successful and most enjoyable meet; our thanks to Richard Taylor for running the meet with his excellent catering, and to the Pinnacle Club for our use of their hut.

RG

Attenders

John Whalley, President,
Mick Borroff, John Brown, Alan Clare,
Derek Clayton, Ian Crowther, Paul Dover,
Richard Dover, Peter Elliott, David Hick,
Richard Gowing, John Jenkin, Tim Josephy,
Richard Taylor, Michael Smith,
John Lloyd (g), Warwick Riley (g),
Ian Gauntlett (g),



Carnned Llewelyn



MB

Carneddau



The locals

NEWTONMOOR, SCOTLAND MAR 18-20

I hope the participants will excuse me if I inadvertently cropped them in the wrong place and left them hanging on by their nails half way up some crag, whilst I struggled to get my head round all the Fiacail a' Choire Chais'es and Brocken Spectacles!

Eleven members and one guest attended the meet at the Pottery bunkhouse near Laggan Bridge – an ideal location for exploring the Grampians to the east and the Monadhliaths to the north. The bunkhouse was very comfortable with a triple aspect lounge-kitchen looking out across the flood plain of the Upper Spey. A wood-burning stove kept us warm and cozy in the evenings whilst we watched the capable chef / leader beavering away in the adjoining kitchen that lacked only the usual sharp knife. Chris' food was splendid, with two bottles of whisky appearing with perfect timing to mellow away the evenings.



MB

Temperature inversion above Coire an t-Sneacchda

The hostel, we learned, had been opened by the famous Polar Explorer, Wally Herbert, with examples of his outstanding artwork adorning the walls. Beyond these, looking out over some of the rambler's heads I couldn't help noticing the Highland sheep that whiled-away most of the long weekend contentedly snuggled down - also waiting to be fed!

The weather was reasonable for the time of year with mid-slope cloud giving way to fine views above about 900m. The parties reported a variety of wildlife including snow buntings, ptarmigans, oyster catchers and black grouse with an unconfirmed sighting of an Abominable Snowgirl disappearing off a snow bridge. It was Mick and Chris' confirmed sighting of at least a dozen March mountain hares over in Deeside that must take first prize, however.

On the Saturday, and suitably mellowed, Michael, Derek, Peter and David headed up Beinn a'Chaorainn starting out from Roughburn near the Loch Laggan dam. Climbing above the clouds the party was rewarded with fine uninterrupted views of Torridon and Skye and round to the Ben and the Mamores. Brocken Spectres were seen from the northern lip of the Beinn. Two of the party descended from the col at Tom Mòr whilst the two others continued round over Beinn Teallaich – one of the lowest Munros.

Chris and Mick headed over to Aviemore and ventured into Coire an t-Sneachda. On the approach the mist lifted and they made their way up snowy slopes under blue skies and sunshine to the rocky scramble of Fiacail Coire an t-Sneachda, watched by two pairs of Ptarmigan before emerging onto the Cairngorm plateau. Traversing the coire headwall over to Fiacail a' Choire Chais they saw their Brocken Spectre images projected onto the mist-filled Coire an t-Sneachda.

The President, Carol and the writer were joined by Bob Peckham, a guest and old friend from Inverness, to head up the glen from Aberader towards Creag Meagaidh. The First Lady set the pace through the nature reserve where managed reductions in grazing livestock and deer populations have led to a regrowth of the native woodland. Carol's progress was hampered by her lack of winter boots once we entered the snow covered slopes approaching the lochan and so, after nearly disappearing through a snow bridge, she decided to head to lower ground to explore the various trails in the nature reserve.

Bob and I continued on through the low cloud up the snow slope leading to the 'window' before emerging

into blinding sunshine onto the one square kilometre snow-covered plateau, a shining island surrounded by a sea of cotton-wool cloud. The whalebacks of Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor were clearly discernable to the west and beyond were half-imagined hints of Knoydart.

Sated by the awesome views we made our way along the tundra-covered ridge keeping just above the clouds towards Munro Puist Coire Ardour before heel-scrunching our way down through steep mushy snow slopes and across boggy heathland to the bridge and awaiting car, ending a very fine walk.

On the Sunday, Michael, Mick and Chris headed to the Cairngorm's Coire an t-Sneachda for Aladdin's Couloir with well-frozen neve; Michael then descending by Fiacail a' Choire. Snow conditions were good but it was cold and windy on the plateau with poor visibility, although they did manage to spot a Snow Bunting.

Derek and Andrew Duxbury, starting from General Wade's A889, headed up the Allt an t' Bluic and climbed Meall nan Eagan (MR 597875) before exploring for future expeditions.

Carol, the President and I had a relaxed day, starting with a visit to the impressive ruins of the Ruthven Barracks just to the south of Kingussie. Retreating Jacobites destroyed the barracks in the aftermath of Culloden in 1745. In the afternoon we had a ramble through the woods of Glen More nature reserve to the south of Loch Morlich, proving what I always suspected - if you keep turning right in a maze of woodland paths you eventually get back to where you started, if you can remember where that was.

Heading home on Monday Mick and Chris Hilton were tempted by the better weather forecasts to head over to the Spittal of Glenmuick on Deeside to climb the Black Spout. After heading up to the bealach between the main Lochnagar ridge and Meikle Pap they descended into the shelter of Lochnagar's magnificent coire before crossing over to the mouth of the Black Spout, watched over by at least dozen white mountain hares. They then ascended the gully, front-pointing up the well-bonded snowpack, taking the steeper left branch that was cornice-free and allowed them to gain the plateau and the cairn of Cac Carn Beag for a well-earned second lunch and an uneventful return to the car.

Michael drove up Glen Fincastle just a few miles south of Blair Atholl and went up Tulach Hill (470m) for good

views of the Atholl hills passing a curious ruin visited on the descent.

Thanks are due to Chris Hilton for organising the meet and feeding us all.

JS

John Whalley (President)

Chris Hilton

Mick Borroff

Derek Bush

Peter Chadwick

Andrew Duxbury

Iain Gilmour

David Hick

Robert Peckham (Guest)

Michael Smith

John Sutcliffe

Carol Whalley

THIRLMERE, CUMBRIA

APR 22-24

Nine members attended this meet at the Gritstone Club's cosy hut, the Smithy, at the head of Thirlmere.

One member, enjoying a Friday afternoon walk around the local area, called in at the King's Head, Thirlspot to warn them of the likely arrival of the party for an evening meal. It was lucky she did for she was told that owing to the road closure following the winter storms, the kitchens were closed. The road closure (over four months now) has badly affected businesses from Grasmere to Keswick. Members decamped to Threlkeld where meals were enjoyed at the Sally (what was wrong with the name Salutation? It seems to have been ok for a couple of centuries!)

Saturday dawned cold but clear and sunny; although cloud built up during the day it remained dry and the clarity of the views was spectacular. Mick Dorothy and Tim set off from the hut down to the lake, ignoring the path closed signs. All went well until they reached a fenced off construction site blocking the way. Climbing a fence onto the road they were accosted by a security guard but Mick charmed him and after he had pointed the trio the right way they parted on amicable terms, unlike a later party who had a more confrontational encounter. Can't imagine why!

The threesome then climbed steeply up to the summit of Helvellyn, finding considerable remnants of snow on the steep eastern slopes. In a biting wind they continued north over Raise and all the Dodds, descending to the Bramcrag quarries in St Johns in the Vale by way of a slim but delightfully constructed zigzag track through the very steep craggy hillside. This track, hitherto known only to Mick, starts by Jim's Fold, a ruined sheepfold 1km NNW of Calthow Pike and

descends along Fisher's Wife's Rake (Fisher's wife must have been a redoubtable lady!).



MB

Fisher's Wife's Rake

The route is worth noting as it would seem to be the only practicable way off without going all the way to the end of the ridge. A pleasant stroll down St John's Vale led them back to the hut after a 23km round walk.

A party of two explored the hills to the north of the hut, making a circular route over High Rigg to the Youth Centre, then over Low Rigg before returning.

Two members drove over to Ennerdale and walked there after checking out the accommodation for the June meet.

Ged Campion arrived for the evening meal and a pleasant evening was enjoyed by all with the usual variety of opinions offered, not always entirely coherently but always controversial.

Sunday dawned misty with wet sleet falling, a complete contrast to the previous day and most people decided to head for home. Some encountered torrential rain showers on the motorway, reinforcing the decision not to go on the hills.

TJ

Attendance

Mick Borroff

Ian Crowther

John Jenkin

Alan Clare

Derek Clayton

Dorothy Heaton

Mike Godden

Richard Gowing

Tim Josephy

LEVERBURGH, HARRIS

MAY 7-14

Thirteen of us assembled at Ruari's exotic Am Bothan bunkhouse on Sunday 8 May having taken the ferry from Uig on Skye to Tarbert on South Harris. The Sunday ferry was chosen to give everyone time to drive so far north; Uig is a 10 hour drive from parts of Yorkshire.

Some took the opportunity to take in a few hills on the way: two members in Glen Shiel went to the Glenelg peninsular for Beinn Scritheall and another two in the Cuillin tackled parts of the ridge.

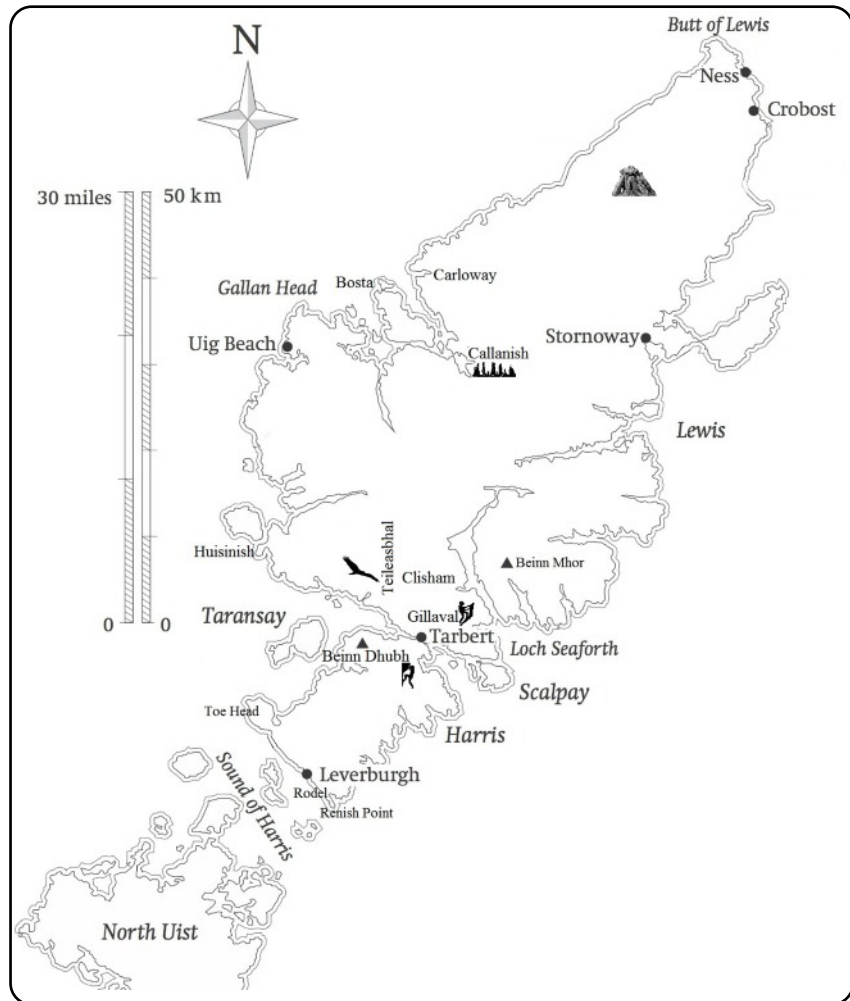
Similarly, after departing the following Saturday most motored home by the same route but others extended their stay, traversed the string of islands south, stopped off at Glen Shiel again for the delights of Ciste Dubh, the Brothers ridge and the Five Sisters of Kintail or spent a week on Skye – ahhh, the joys of retirement.

Besides those sleeping at Am Bothan – we almost filled the place – we had three visitors from local guest houses: the President's Canadian cousin and two familiar faces from York.

We dominated the kitchen, sitting and dining areas of the bunkhouse but welcomed other users and provided them with food and drink when they needed it. The relics of boats, Buddhist prayer flags, whale vertebrae, a boat, ships' lights, a surfboard and ironing board all displayed around the place made a fascinating décor.

This was a return visit for many members who had enjoyed using this bunkhouse on the 2011 Harris Meet. All were blessed with what may well be the best week for weather in Scotland since the Club meet on Harris 22 years ago. That time we were scattered between a basic campsite, a cottage and caravans.

As in 2011, being gathered in the bunkhouse made



for a sociable meet. Situated at the southern limit of Harris we had delightful sea and Toe Head views but paid for these by having to repeatedly drive the half-hour or so back towards Tarbert for the higher hills. Inevitably over the intervening two decades there have been changes: many more visitors and increased traffic, improved roads and a well-stocked community shop in the village. The place was barely recognisable from your scribe's recollections of his first visit in the 1970s.

Most had pre-booked a boat trip to visit the St Kilda archipelago with Angus of Kilda Cruises costing around £200 though all thought it good value. The four hours plus walking on the largest island, Hirta, was sufficient to make a relaxed circuit of the main features, picnic, observe the skuas then visit the ruins, museum and church. All were pleased to find the sea was calm and most managed the three-hour outward and return legs without problems. It was a little early for cetaceans though we had one brief sighting of a porpoise close to the boat. Before returning we toured the impressive sea stacks and circuted Boreray.

Local to Leverburgh were Toe Head (368m) to the

west and Roinebhal (460m) to the east. Both had a number of visits and gave grand sea and Skye views. Below the latter hill, at the southernmost point sits Rodel which had several visits. An otter's holt was spotted on the Renish Point headland there. Our most senior member heading out to camp was crossing the rough ground behind Roinebhal and went one better than an otter holt by surprising a large otter which was hunting down in a sunken waterway well inland.

The highest peak was only visited by one couple as most others had undoubtedly 'knocked it off' on a previous visit. The horseshoe of Clisham (799m) was tackled widdershins from the more northerly road bridge and gave a good airy ridge walk until the rounder main peak itself was reached.

More popular was the traverse or ascent of Beinn Losgaintor as it is locally known or Beinn Dhubh (506m) on the map. The longest route started from Horsacleit a couple of miles short of Tarbert where a cuckoo was heard and seen perched. The leading walkers put up a white-tailed eagle and were rewarded with close-up views of it slowly picking up speed. After crossing a lot of rough country on the broad ridge a descent of the rocky outcrops led steeply down to the "lazy beds" of Mol an Tighe bay before rounding the headland to the extensive golden sands of Losgaintor estuary. An alternative more direct descent followed the line of an old wall. The first down had the cars shuffled to pick up the last to arrive.

There was more to see on a round of Gleann Mhiabhaig, Lochs Scourst and Bhoismid to visit the two Beehive dwellings at Both a'Chlair Bhigs just to the south of the end of Loch Reasort, with a high level return over Stulabhal (579m), Teileasbhal (679m) and Uisgneabhal Mhor (729m) where several groups of deer were put to flight. The first few miles of that route led to the North Harris eagle observatory which made a popular excursion for several members. Those loitering there made several sightings of golden eagles soaring on the thermals above the steep buttresses of Sron Scorst.

Further west, from the road end at Huisinish, another group enjoyed a fine round passing the lonely cottage at Crabhadail, along the shore of Loch a'Ghlinne then ascending to a col and a return over the ridge linking Huiseabal Mor (589m) and Huiseabhal Beag (306m). St Kilda, Boreray and Stac Armin were all clearly visible from these summits.

Other parties followed the route used by pall-bearers to carry the dead from the Bays district over to the west side of Harris for burial on the machair, thus

making an interesting circuit with a double coast-to-coast crossing, with superb views over the strand at Traigh Losgaintir.

Two members managed a windy night out camping starting north of Tarbert and making a long circuit finishing on part of the cirque of Gillaval Dubh.

What with the sea trip and the variety of walking, there was little climbing done. However, what is claimed to be the best scrambling route in Harris was tackled in traditional style by a party of five attached to two connected ropes, one a disturbingly bright fluorescent orange, thankfully behind its photographer owner. Just north of Tarbet this was C Buttress (250m, start at slabs bottom right and keep heading up) on Gillaval Dubh's north face. Though broken by many grassy slopes it improved as height was gained. Lunch at the top was followed by a ridge walk and differing descents into the corrie were made. Again the leaders had a close-up view of an eagle – a golden one gliding past just below them.

The return to the car was short, tempting some to fit in just another route despite being due back for a 7pm meal. Five miles south of Tarbert, a short walk from the road, the south-facing Creag na Tri Piosan's 8m VD practically vertical 'Wee Corner' sandbagged our three climbers and a top rope was called for on the final moves. Good sport though and they were back in time for the meal – just.

North Harris and Lewis's many attractions were visited by various parties: Callanish standing stones, Dun Carloway Stornoway, Butt of Lewis, the Black Houses, Ness and the white sands of Bosta. A week is hardly long enough to do justice to Harris and Lewis.

Blue skies and fresh cool winds had been the norm for the week – precisely what we needed to make the most of our visit. The final evening saw everyone strolling the few hundred yards from the bunkhouse down to the pier for a meal at The Anchorage. Good food and contented conversation finished off the week nicely.

Our Canadian guest later in Wales met an ex-Everest army expedition acquaintance who, on hearing she had been out with the YRC on Harris, asked in awed tones "How did you get to go there with *them*?" His friend then went on to describe us as a premier UK mountaineering club, adding "but I won't tell anyone you stayed at the bottom while they climbed up to the top!" Wendy, a botanist, had been checking out the flora while the Presidential party ascended Beinn Dhubh.

MS

Attending were:
 Mick Borroff
 John Brown
 Ros Brown (guest)
 Peter Chadwick
 Bill Gibbs
 Paul Dover
 Iain Gilmour
 Dorothy Heaton
 Helen Smith
 Michael Smith
 Richard Taylor
 Carol Whalley
 John Whalley
 Wendy Dathan (Guest)
 David Hick (visitor)
 Christine Marriott (visitor)



(L-R) Stac an Armin-Stac Lii-Borera



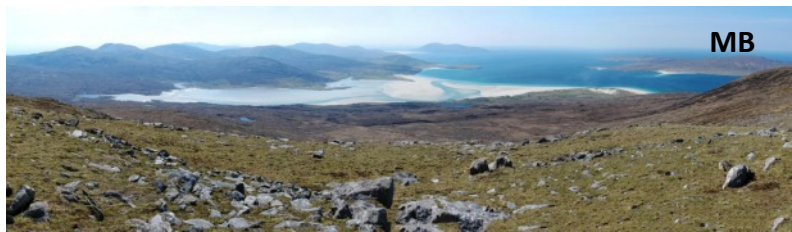
St. Kilda



Loch Crabhadail



Huisinis Bay Traigh



Loggaintir from Beinn Dhubh

TAL Y BRAICH, DEINIOLEN, NORTH WALES - MAY 20-22

As usual, members started to arrive at Deiniolen soon after Friday lunch but quite a lot of confusion was encountered by members who THOUGHT they knew how to find Tal y Braich, the Wolverhampton Mountaineering Club hut, which we have, of course, visited on previous occasions but when they got to Deiniolen some were wandering around totally baffled!

Once members had arrived some catered for themselves although a modest meal was provided for us. Others went to out to get a pub meal and also some entertainment at the local in the village.

Saturday morning dawned rather rainy and miserable. Two further members arrived, one familiar with the hut's position but the other had equal difficulty finding it.

In spite of the rain parties set off in various directions. Four elderly members decided to go for a tourist trip on the Welsh Highland Railway to

Caernarfon for lunch, whilst the President, who was also meet leader had to spend some of the time obtaining additional supplies and helping to prepare the evening meal.

Three members, including the most recently elected, drove to Llanfairfechan in search of better weather. In this they were lucky and after early rain they enjoyed a warm and sunny day. They walked over Foel LLwyd and Tal y Fan almost to the Sychnant Pass, returning along ancient green tracks used by the North Wales coast path although here it is high in the hills and nowhere near the sea. A circuit of about 12 miles through quiet and delightful scenery.

The Hut Warden went off with a group of fellow Wolverhampton members and traversed Tryfan and Glyder Fach via the North and Bristly Ridges. They were not so lucky with the weather, returning late and soaked.

A very fine roast beef and Yorkshire pudding meal with apple pie and custard together with the usual

generous rations of wine, cheese and biscuits was enjoyed by the whole party. An elderly past president offered the members' thanks to Carol and John. A few made the trip down to the village pub again for a pint or three.

Sunday morning was better weather at first but it quickly deteriorated as the morning wore on. One member is reported to have done a short walk on the flanks of Snowdon. The local member waited for better weather and walked up Yr Aran. The Treasurer drove to Lowstern as he had business in the North and walked up Wherside. Owing to the poor weather everyone else seems to have made their way home.

A very pleasant meet at the hut of our kindred club, the WMC but rather spoiled by really not very good weather conditions.

JJ

Attendance

John Whalley, President	
Carol Whalley	Derek Clayton
Martyn Trasler	Ian Crowther
Richard Sealey	John Jenkin
Alan Clare	John Sutcliffe
Tim Josephy	

**ENNERDALE, CUMBRIA
JUN 10-12**



The Presidential couple on Steeple

The "Bothy" part of the Scout Hut was a fine larch boarded bunkhouse very close to the Lake. On arrival we were met by the wardens and a very enthusiastic "labradoodle" rescue dog. On Friday we walked along the lake shore to the outfall, with orchids and foxgloves being very much in evidence, to be confronted by a battery of yellow deep well pumps, the purpose of which was to irrigate the downstream

mussel beds if the lake outfall should dry up. Apparently it was the biggest colony of freshwater mussels between here and Russia and the recipient of special conservation measures. When everyone was assembled most of us had a meal at the Fox and Hounds, Ennerdale Bridge.

Saturday dawned fine. The Leader, together with Derek C, John J and John L traversed a path which skirted the south shore of the lake and forms part of Wainwright's Coast-to-Coast walk, hugging the shoreline except where it is necessary to scramble over the obstacle of Robin Hood's Chair below Angler's Crag. They then had to return in order to get extra provisions and prepare for the evening meal

The President, Carol and John S also started out along the same path. Geologist John S pointed out some fragments of molten iron in the path where it passed beneath old mines.



The only people seen were some coast-to-coasters whom we had met in the pub the previous evening. The view was superb, with the mountains opposite reflected in the calm waters of the lake. A mile or so beyond the head of the lake we found way up through the forest onto the ridge of Long Crag. The ridge narrowed to a rocky ascent of Steeple, between Mirklin Cove and Mirk Cove. The latter opened up a grand view of Black Crag and Pillar. Making way for a group of fell-runners, we continued along the short arete connecting with Scoat Fell via a short scramble.

Turning right we headed for Haycock and then continued above the Ennerdale southern skyline, skirting Little Gowder Crag and taking in Caw Fell, Iron Crag, Boathouse Crag, Crag Fell and Grike.

A steep descent from Grike followed, until a path through the forest provided a gentler incline to bring us back to the Bothy. We had walked about 14.5 miles, had not seen a soul after Scoat Fell, and were very ready for the lasagne etc. prepared by Alan and his helpers.

An enjoyable meet with decent weather!

JCW

Attendees:
John Whalley(President)
Alan Clare (Meet Leader)
Derek Clayton
John Jenkin
John Lloyd (guest)
John Sutcliffe
Carol Whalley

MEETS MONTAGE

Snapshots of an exploit taking place during the June maintenance meet at Lowstern. We are after all a 'climbing' club and must teach the youngsters to us head protection!



Supervisors at work.



Evening over Eilean Chairminis (MB)



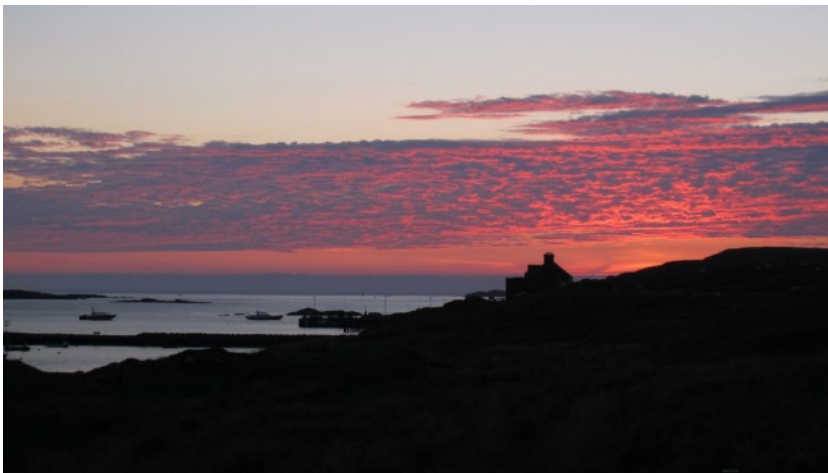
John Sutcliffe on Robin Hood's Chair (JW)



Mountaineering Mules, Morocco (PD)



Mountain Goat Cwm Dyli (MS)



Leverburgh sunset (MB)

Sunset over Eilean Chairminis (MB)

Photos:

- Mick Borroff**
- Michael Smith**
- Paul Dover**
- John Whalley**





**The Club's rules and bye-laws are printed in
issue 11 of series 13 of the Journal, Summer 2011**

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 to gather and promote knowledge of natural history, archaeology, geology, folklore and other kindred subjects.

Additional copies of the journals can be provided at cost whilst stocks last.

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The current series 13 of the journals goes back to Summer 2006. Series 12 was published under the title of the 'Yorkshire Rambler' and goes back to summer 1994. Both these series are held in electronic form.

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.

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

Deadline for material for the next journal is February 28th 2017

THE YRC

**The Yorkshire Ramblers Club
Established 1892**



The Mountaineering, Exploration and Caving Club

www.yrc.org.uk

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