

YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB

JOURNAL - 2018



Yorkshire Ramblers' Club Journal

Volume 14 Number 1 - 2018

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Photographs,
front cover by Mick Borroff,
Bob Peckham descending
Na Gruagai Chean Mamores

Back cover by John Whalley,
Tony Penny & Mick Borroff,
returning to Settle, Dinner Meet

Editor's note

Welcome to this, the first edition of the new style journal. The layout may be different but the content still relies on members submitting articles.

The Journal will be produced annually in future, based on the calendar year. As a result there will be less news items as there is nothing worse than old news.

The intent is to largely feature:

- Articles by members on matters related to the Club's aims
- Précis about caves and climbing etc from articles in other club's material
- Articles by members on their recent activities and reminiscing about their old activities
- Meet reports and reports on overseas trips and explorations
- Technical articles and kit, book and film reviews by members (subjects related to Club's aims)
- Short contributions about and from members and their activities for 'Chippings'
- Club Proceedings – e.g. Appointments, précis of meetings etc
- Obituaries/Appreciations about Club members
- Third party articles about the YRC or its members where permission can be obtained
- Poems if related to the Club's aims, at Editor's discretion

A major part of the journal will be the reports of meets and I know from their comments that older and now less active members enjoy reading them. Reports have varied greatly and I would prefer they all follow a basic format. A few simple rules would ensure that is the case and that I can produce them in a consistent manner.

One essential is that meet organisers should ask somebody to do the meet report at the start of the meet to give them a chance to capture what is being done and remind the reporter that it is due within two weeks. The report does not need to be overly long or detailed but should give an outline of what has been done and mention any events of particular interest. A summary of 500 – 1000 words will normally suffice for a UK meet although overseas meets will usually need more to do them justice.

A report should include an indication of the meet leader and the name of the author together with a list of those attending, identifying whether members or guests. It need not go into chapter and verse about exactly who did what. Photographs are very welcome but should not be inserted or embedded into text documents but sent separately, as photos provided by other members might also have to be slotted in. Send images preferable as JPG files, with the photographers name or initials in the file name or given in the covering email. I like to accredit the photographer and it also allows me to follow-up with the taker as necessary to identify people or locations in the photographs or indeed correct spelling of unfamiliar names

As you will see, the biggest change to the format is that it will be of a more book shelf friendly size and will be full colour allowing me to usually place photographs close to relevant text.

Snippets of news and information of more general interest to members will in future be made available as part of the newsletter for those receiving that electronically.

I trust you like the new format which is still evolving and should be even better next edition

Roy Denney

The annual joint meet with the Wayfarers was at Lowstern this year.

The Friday afternoon forecast seemed to offer the best of the weather, tents up in the dry, and some enjoyed various short excursions before traditional corned beef hash at 6.30. Others including Albert Chapman, and John and Betty Lovett called in for a chat and enjoyed fresh scones, jam and cream supplied by Angie Linford.

Betty brought the welcome news that a relation of Dr Farrer was to take up residence in the village. Perhaps the YRC will have an opportunity to welcome them to Lowstern at some time in the future.

Friday evening it started to rain, heavy, accompanied by screeching and hooting owls that seemed to be sat on the tent poles.

Saturday. Plotting routes till the rain stopped. President and David C decided to avoid all the usual summits which were shrouded in hill fog and planned an interesting low level walk. They parked under Dent Head viaduct, crossed onto the Blea Moor Tunnel track to meet up with the Wherside path coming up from Ribblehead which was packed with 3 Peak walkers.

They soon left them behind and headed up the Dales High Way. Showers accompanied them as they dropped down into Dent Dale and a return by the Dales Way to complete a good day.

Dorothy, preparing dinner till the sun came out, managed to find a parking space at Horton for an ascent of Pen-y-ghent but abandoned an unusual route back due to underfoot conditions. Many walkers were not dressed or equipped for the prevailing weather.

Sue and Garry went across the fields to Ingleton and back, a long day during which they suffered many heavy showers and John Jenkin did a shortened version.

Mike, Colin, Steve and others parked at Helwith Bridge for a trip to Austwick via Moughton Scar.

George and Alan, preparing the evening meal had the best excuse not to go out and enjoyed the brief sunshine and the view from Lowstern.

Sunday. The President did a 10 mile circular walk from Countersett (Semerwater) up to the cairn on Drumaldrace returning via Bardale and Marsett. Despite an encouraging start he encountered the heavy showers that swept in on several occasions. Parts of Cam high road were more like a canal which had just been drained of water - lots of muddy pools.

This route coincided with the OMM mountain marathon and a mountain biking event based in Hawes, all contributing to difficult conditions underfoot reflecting the crowds and conditions found on Saturday.

The President,
Mick Borroff

Enjoying
Dentdale
between
showers



Addlebrough and
Semerwater



Sunday saw most on their way by lunch time.

Bruce stayed on for 2 nights, clearing the leftovers and hoping for the chance of a good day out before setting out for RLH and official duties.

Alan Linford

Attending:

Wayfarers. Bruce Hassell, Colin Smith, Steve Auty, David Carpenter, Dave Lawrence, Gary and Sue Mellor, and George Chambers. **YRC.** Mike Godden, Alan Linford, Mick Borroff (Pres.) Dorothy Heaton, Ian Crowther, John Jenkin, Alan Clare, John Lloyd PM, Ged Campion, Aaron Campion PM Derek Clayton, Albert Chapman and John Lovett,

Seventeen members and guests assembled at the Corris Hostel, a renovated Victorian school building formerly owned by the YHA and now run independently, with a relaxed atmosphere, friendly staff and a comfortable lounge area having an open fire. Another advantage is that the village pub is conveniently situated within 150m of the hostel.

Most members made the most of the decent weather on the Friday. Kjetil, Ann-Karin, Michael and Helen arriving from Betws-y-Coed, stopped off at Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog to traverse Moelwyn Mawr.

Richard and Paul broke their journey at Commins Coch and walked over Celn Coch to Gader Goch, enjoying fine views over the surrounding hills, the Dovey valley and out to the estuary.

Mick, Iain, Ian, John and Dave arrived in time to fit in a short walk above Dolgellau - the original Precipice Walk as recommended in Bob Allen's guidebook. This afforded fine views over the river Mawddach and down to the Barmouth estuary finishing with a walk around the shore of Llyn Cywach with plenty of autumnal colour.

Christine and Jim drove a couple of miles from Corris to Ceinws and completed a walk circling Mynydd Pant-coch taking in Cae-cwta, Ysgubor Fraithwen and Maesycriau, with good views, though not always well waymarked.

All groups got back to the hostel just in time to complete our party for a pre-ordered meal in the welcoming Slater's Arms, enjoyed with a well-kept pint of real ale or two.

Saturday was true to the weather forecast, with mist settled on the tops and light rain for most of the day. Any thoughts of scrambling on the Cyfrwy Arete were quickly abandoned.

Despite the conditions, Cader Idris was naturally the focus of most peoples' attentions and various routes were ascended from the Minffordd car park. One party of Tim, Mick and John Sutcliffe tackled Mynydd Pencoed on the way.

Helen, Michael, Kjetil and Ann-Karin took the back of the Cwm Cae direct.

These two groups met on the ridge above Lyn Cau and proceeded across to the Penygadair summit and into the small building for shelter to eat lunch, with several other parties.



After parting from the Smith-Tveranger group at the edge of Lyn Cau, Jim and Christine followed the Minfford path to the cairn near Craig Cwm Amarch and returned

to the car the same way. David and Alan caught up Paul and Richard just before the main ridge with Iain Gilmore, who decided to retreat. They followed the ridge over the summit to Mynydd Moel and descended to the car park via Moelfryn.



Ian and John Jenkin enjoyed a visit to the Tallylyn historic narrow-gauge steam railway.

Richard Gowing drove to Cwrt on the Aberdyfi road about 4 miles down the valley from Machynlleth. He walked 1½ miles up the Happy Valley road to take a bridle track ascending below the mist-shrouded ridge of the Tarrens, descending via a track to Dysyrnant farm to follow the Happy Valley road back over its pass to the car.

After stocking the drying room to capacity, we sat down to a splendid four-course dinner, the highlight being Hilary's home-made terrine of pork, chicken and duck with smoked bacon and pistachio nuts. Kjetil introduced several members to the pleasures of Norway's prized aquavit as a digestif.

Sunday brought better weather than the forecast suggested. Richard and Paul had to leave bright and early to catch a flight, enjoying a fine sun-rise en route. Mick, Iain and Tim drove over to

Abergynolwyn village and walked up through the rocky gorge of the Nant Gwernol river admiring the cascades and the superb ancient semi-natural woodland with its oak trees cloaked in moss and ferns. Our objective was to explore the extensive remains of the abandoned Bryn Eglwys slate quarries. At its height, 300 men worked two veins of slate, known as the Broad and Narrow Veins. At nearly 2 square miles, the site is extensive and we wandered around the spoil tips, inclines, drum houses, wheel pits, tramways and open quarries for some time but did not find an open adit to explore, they were too well hidden in the fenced-in undergrowth.

Jim, Christine, Helen, Michael, Kjetil and Ann-Karin enjoyed a 'stroll' on the New Precipice Walk including an old tramway built to serve the long-abandoned workings of the Voel Goldmine high above Llanelltyd, followed by a rather good Sunday lunch at the Cross Foxes.



Richard visited the excellent Talylyn Railway museum at Tywyn Wharf, then drove to Dolgoch where he walked up Nant Dol Goch past the lower falls as far as the upper falls, all in fine flow after Saturday's rain, stopping for lunch on the way back down.

Monday saw Michael, Kjetil and Ann-Karin ascending Snowdon via Crib Goch in variable weather.



Tim had his dog with him so he scrambled up the side of Crib Goch and met the other three at Bwlch Coch. The intrepid Norwegians can just be seen atop the highest pinnacle.

Sunshine in the morning but rain by the afternoon. Tuesday saw Kjetil and Ann-Karin beside Adam and Eve on Tryfan's summit, returning by Heather Terrace.



Attending:

- Mick Borroff
(President) – Leader
- Ian Crowther
- Paul Dover
- Richard Dover
- Iain Gilmour
- Richard Gowing
- Christine Harrison
(guest)
- Jim Harrison
- David Hick
- John Jenkins
- Tim Josephy
- Alan Kay
- Helen Smith
- Michael Smith
- John Sutcliffe
- Kjetil Tveranger
- Ann-Karin
- Tveranger (guest)

MB

By dusk eighteen members, prospective members and guests had assembled at Low Row West Barn, two miles West of Reeth. Most had taken advantage of a beautiful autumn day to do something on the way in. The meet leader with Ros and David, having unloaded the weekend supplies, went for a stroll along the Swale to Low Row and Feetham. Alan and Dottie walked along the lane towards Low Houses from the bunk house. The Smiths and Christine



Harrison walked from West Burton in Wensleydale to Aysgarth Falls and back visiting the lovely rock garden at Aysgarth en route. The area around the Falls was fairly busy as it was half term. Martin and Tim driving over from the committee meeting at Lowstern had independently been up Pen-y-Ghent and must have missed each other by a matter of minutes.

The atmosphere in the bunkhouse was warm even if the temperature initially was distinctly chilly. About half the group ate out in the various pubs of Reeth - the rest eating at the barn. Later on that evening Michael Smith gave short presentations of the club's snowshoeing meet to the Jura (France): the ski tour in Norway and the backpacking and climbing expedition to the Wind River Mountain range in Wyoming, all projected onto a white mattress propped against the wall. Your scribe mentions the word 'mattress' as later on that night she was rummaging around the dormitory in the pitch dark failing to find a mattress more comfortable than the one she was failing to get to sleep on with its springs virtually through.

Saturday's dawn was rather disappointing weather wise with low cloud and strong winds, so plans were adapted to take this into account. The meet leader with Ros and PM Simon Raine walked up Gunnerside valley, crossed near the top and spent some time looking at the old mining remains. But once on high ground it was cloudy so the views were disappointing. After a very steep descent they made their way along the other side of the valley and down into Gunnerside. John has always wanted to visit this valley so was very pleased finally to have done so.

The Smiths, Tim, David, Richard T and Christine drove to Gunnerside and set out in less than encouraging conditions though the threatened rain never appeared. They walked to Muker, seeing dippers and roe deer, and then for some distance along a rather muddy and slippery Pennine Way to Kisdon Force for a photo shoot. Shortly after they were caught up by one of the party, breathing very deeply, who had turned back to retrieve his walking pole having carelessly left it behind during a comfort break. Lunch was hastily eaten at a windy Crackpot Hall. They continued briefly along

the Coast to Coast and then down Gunnerside Beck, inspecting various mine workings along the way back to Gunnerside - followed by a welcome pint(s) at the King's Head.



Alan, Frank, Dotti and Richard G did a good 8 mile walk to Healaugh, Reeth (where they stocked up on meet essentials i.e. toilet rolls) and Grinton. They returned by the river and for at least two of the party, this was followed by a second visit to the Punch Bowl.

Helen Brewitt (PM) and Daniel spent two days exploring Swaledale covering a lot of ground on their mountain bikes. On Saturday it was up Harkside Moor to Gunnerside and back.



Martyn decided to take a walk up the valley towards Muker and headed from the hut along a series of bridleways, initially following Low Lane and then Dubbing Garth Lane almost to Gunnerside. He then followed the river to Ivelet and stopped for lunch at a strategically placed bench near the Ivelet Bridge.

He continued over fields towards Muker but with some twinges in his dodgy foot decided that was enough and took the track back to Gunnerside, then to Low Row Pastures, descended to Feetham and finally to the Punch Bowl for a swift pint and WiFi to get a quick message home. Leaving Feetham meant a climb to Gallows Top, following the track to Hilltop before dropping down

through the old quarry and the short stretch of road to the Scabba Wath Bridge and to the hut - a round of 13 miles.

The bunkhouse was a hive of activity in the evening with John and Ros preparing a tasty meal which was very welcome after the day's energetic activities. The bunkhouse was open plan so cooking could be observed by everyone which was a bit alarming for the chefs but surely observing the cooking process is the modern trend in restaurants?

The sun shone brightly on Sunday morning so many decided to make the most of this lovely day with its rich Autumn colours. Ensuring that at least one mountain was climbed this weekend Richard T went up Great Shunner Fell from Thwaite and added Little Shunner Fell for good measure. Harvey returned home pausing on the summit of the road leading to Askrigg for a coffee with fine views of Swaledale and later on he cycled up to Stainforth Force to watch salmon leaping the waterfall. Helen B and Daniel cycled a loop up and over Reeth Moor. Dotti drove over to Wharfedale and had a lovely day with family walking a circular route from Hawswick via Arncliffe and Kettlewell.



The Smiths, Tim and Christine drove to Middleham and walked by the River Ure: inspected the ruins of Jervaulx: forced themselves to have coffee in the tea rooms and then made their way back to Middleham via a Halloween themed East Witton.

The meet leader Ros drove to Reeth, parked in the square and then walked up to the top of Fremlington Edge. The views from the top were stupendous and it was a great and airy feeling to be walking along. They descended down towards Langthwaite and then headed back south towards Reeth following a path along the river. It was, 'A great day to end a great weekend'.

Many thanks to John and Ros Brown for their superb organisation and excellent catering.

HS

Attending:	Daniel O'Leary (G)	Tim Josephy	David Hick	Michael Smith
John Brown (leader)	Ian Crowther	Alan Linford	Harvey Lomas	Richard Taylor
Ros Brown (G)	Richard Gowing	Christine Harrison (G)	Simon Raine (PM)	Martyn Trasler
Helen Brewitt (PM)	John Jenkin	Dotti Heaton	Helen Smith	Frank Wilkinson

Socially and administratively the Annual General Meeting and Annual Dinner weekend is the largest scale event of the Club's calendar. Over the current decade it has become the norm to include a talk or presentation by the Club's principal guest between the two main Saturday components. The After Dinner Walk is a long-established part of the weekend. Times change and these events have evolved over the centuries since the Club's foundation.

The 1899 AGM was held in mid-October, a couple of weeks after the Annual Club Meet which saw the cavers down Sell Gill Hole and the 'hill party' traversing Ingleborough and Whernside from the Golden Lion – both parties drenched by an afternoon downpour. Later the then President, W Cecil Slingsby, delivered "Mountain Exploration in Arctic Norway" as one of the Club's fortnightly winter lectures.

This year's AGM and Dinner were held in Settle just six miles from Horton-in-Ribblesdale. The Sunday activities included caving and walking. Turning the tables somewhat on 1899, there was a lecture by a Norwegian about Slingsby and this time not even the cavers got wet.

The Falcon Manor hosted the Dinner but did not feel up to the challenge of laying the tables for the meal in one hour so the meetings were held in the new St John's Methodist Church about 15 minutes walk away. Thankfully, the weather was dry. Only a few members ended up in the wrong church to beat a hasty retreat from a different meeting. The 4.00 pm AGM is reported elsewhere in this journal but was briskly chaired by the President, Mick Borroff, and completed in good time for the 5.00 pm lecture.

As the AGM is only for members, Ros Brown provided hot drinks and a biscuit or two for those guests waiting for the lecture.

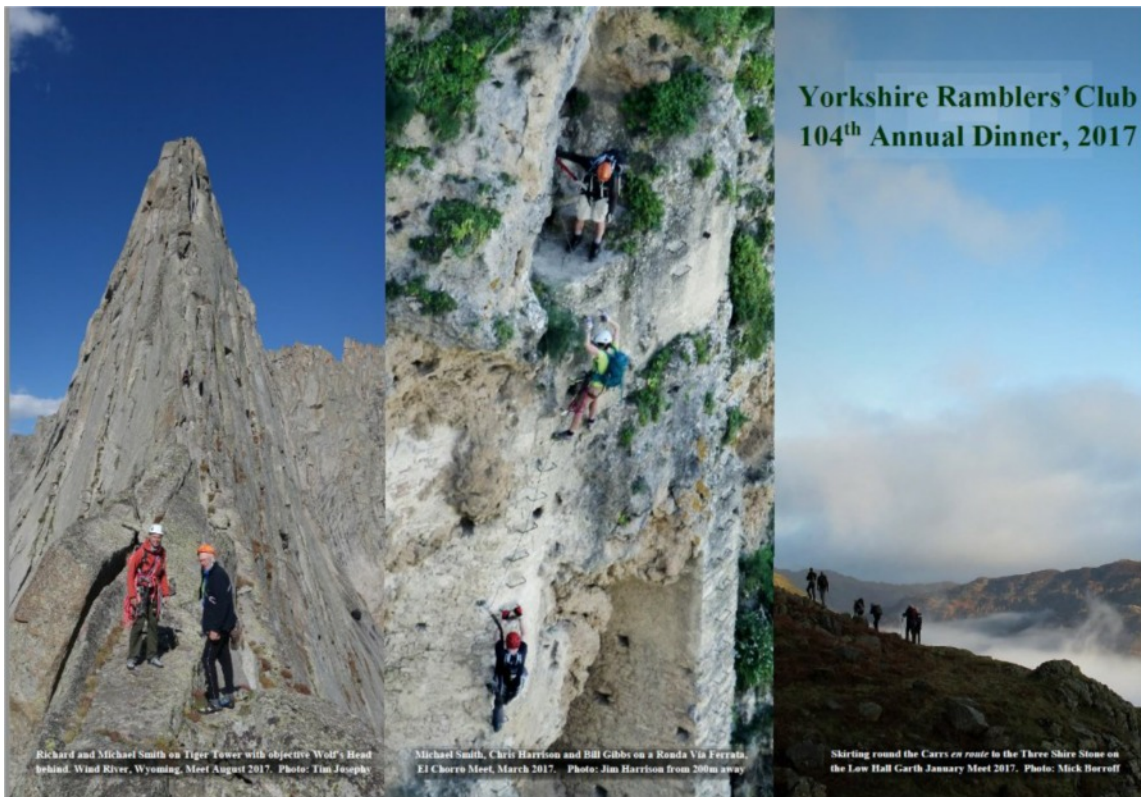
Some recent principal guests' talks have been considered rather too informal or uninformative for one or two members. Not so this year. Principal Guest, Knut Tønsberg of the Norsk Tindeklub and Alpine Club, gave an authoritative account of Slingsby's week-long 1876 mountain excursion which culminated in his solo ascent of the final ridge on unclimbed Storen, the outcry which followed, subsequent ascents by Slingsby and members of the Tønsberg family and Slingsby's critique of the Norwegian's avoidance of snow craft in favour of rock routes.

Leavened with humour, an interesting set of old photographs and with its links to the YRC, the talk was well received.

Back at the Falcon Manor by 6.30 the 76 diners (46 members and 30 guests) were gathering in the bar and comfortably furnished snug.

Photographs and video compilations from the year's meets allowed those who had missed some to catch up with what had been going on.

David Large as Master of Ceremonies gave the 7 pm call to table in a rich Scots burr. Following Chris Hilton leading us in the Grace, members and, guests enjoyed a three-course meal served under silver candelabras.



Around 9.00 pm toasts were proposed by Ian Laing to the Queen then Trevor Salmon to Absent Friends. The President recognised the quasiquintennial anniversary of the Club and our timeless core values and then highlighted the importance of inter-club friendships in proposing the toast to the kindred clubs and our guests.

The Principal Guest responded with an anecdote about Slingsby and his Norwegian fellow climbers celebrating their ascents by singing 'Home Sweet Home'. Knut then proposed the toast to the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club. The choir of Arthur Salmon, David Hick, Denis Armstrong and Ian Laing accompanied by Alexa Wightman on the keyboard closed the formalities with the traditional rendering of 'Yorkshire' – the whole assembly joining in for a rousing last chorus.

Menu

☼ Starter ☼

Seasonal Soup with Warm Bread Roll
Thai Crab Cake, Thai Salad, Sesame Dressing
Pressed Duck Terrine, Plum Compote
and Toasted Brioche

☼ Main ☼

Roast Sirloin of Beef with Yorkshire Pudding
and Gravy
Goosnargh Chicken Coq au Vin,
Roast Chicken Breast, Bubble and Squeak Mash
and Fine Beans
Cheese and Onion Pie with Spicy Beans and
Chips

☼ Dessert ☼

Sticky Toffee Pudding, Toffee Sauce & Vanilla
Ice Cream
Cheese Platter
Mango Cheesecake, Clotted Cream Ice Cream,
Ginger Biscuit Crumb



The convenient location of Settle, close to Clapham, gave the two-dozen staying at the Club's cottage at Lowstern a short journey back. Twenty-two others had only to climb the stairs at the Falcon Manor to find their beds.

Sunday breakfast at Lowstern was organised by Richard Josephy and while it offered a little less choice than the Falcon Manor's it was appreciated just as much especially by the Club's guests unfamiliar with YRC catering arrangement

The Club's guests were all highly appreciative of the Club's renowned hospitality and the friendliness of members they met at Lowstern.

It was with fears of potential ridicule that our Norwegian guest was taken on the usual walk around Malham. After all, Janet's Foss, Gordale, the Tarn and Cove hardly bear comparison with the likes of Tvindefossen, Vettisfossen, Møsvatn and the Troll Wall.

Knut though was delighted with the village itself, the dry stone walls, spotting his national bird, the

dipper, the scramble up the tufa of Gordale's waterfall and the varied topography.

The Falcon Manor was a new venue for the Annual Dinner. It proved very acceptable and it is likely that we will return.

Principal Guest

Knut Ihlen Tønsberg

Climbers' Club

Jancis Richards, Past President

Craven Pothole Club

John Webb, President Elect

Gritstone Club

Chris Ambler, Vice President

Wayfarers' Club

Pete Dixon, Past President.

Also attending were:

Dave Richards of the Climbers' Club,
Sandy Gregson of the Alpine Club and
Jim Gregson of the Arctic Club.

Also in attendance:

Mick Borroff,	Paul Dover	Ian Laing	Ann Salmon (G)
The President,	Eddie Edkins	Una Laing (G)	Arthur Salmon
Dennis Armstrong	Caron Ferguson (G)	Cliff Large	Barbara Salmon (G)
Joan Armstrong (G)	Ian Ferguson (G)	David Large	Trevor Salmon
Bruce Bensley	Marcia Godden (G)	Karen Levine (G)	Helen Smith
John Brown	Mike Godden	Alan Linford	Michael Smith
Ros Brown (G)	Richard Gowing	Angie Linford (G)	Richard Smith
Derek Bush	David Handley	Tim Lofthouse	John Sutcliffe
Ged Champion	Dorothy Heaton	Harvey Lomas	Richard Taylor
Albert Chapman	David Hick	John Lovett	Hilary Tearle (G)
Anne Chapman (G)	Chris Hilton	Christine Marriott (G)	Martyn Trasler
Claire Chapman (G)	Jason Humphreys	John Middleton	Carol Whalley
Garry Chapman (G)	Judy Humphreys	Peter Moss	John Whalley
Iain Chapman	Rebecca Humphreys	Rory Newman	Alexa Wightman,
Joe Chapman (G)	John Jenkin	Dave Richards (G)	pianist (G)
Ian Crowther	Richard Josephy	Felicity Roberts (G)	Frank Wilkinson
Robert Crowther	Tim Josephy	Harry Robinson	Valerie Middleton (G)
Anne Dover (G)	Alan Kay	Josh Rule (G)	

Mick Borroff, starting his second year as President, addressed the members and started by talking of the 18 meets staged. "Our overseas meets have generally been popular. The Jura snowshoe and the Norwegian ski-touring trips were certainly very successful and meets of this type bear repeating in the future. Tony and Val Penney organised another very enjoyable and popular Spanish Meet at the El Chorro gorge. This type of winter sun rock and walking meet is now firmly on our calendar.

The Long Walk around Ullswater was well attended, helped by our policy of ensuring a variety of different length walk options are included in the meet planning by the leader Michael Smith. His trip to the Wind River mountains in Wyoming was very successful and somewhere new for the club.

He thanked all the officers and meet leaders for their efforts.

He commented that both huts handbooks and our byelaws had been updated. The last series of journals has now been digitised and are on the website in full colour. Mick and Andy Syme, the webmaster, are now working to implement the planned improvements to the web site which should have been completed early in 2018.

The President again pressed members to contribute to the journal and outlined ideas for a new format.

He went on to give details of the 2018 meet programme and then proposed Michael Smith for Honorary Membership of the Club for services rendered.

He also informed members that Rory Newman had accepted the well-deserved nomination to become our next President.



Rory Newman

During the year two members had died but four new members had joined. One had resigned and one whose subscriptions had lapsed and was not responding to messages was deemed to have resigned. Membership currently stands at 161.

Election of Officers for 2018

The President	Mick Borroff
President Elect	Rory Newman
Vice President	Chris Hilton
Hon. Treasurer	Martyn Trasler
Hon. Secretary	Tim Josephy
Huts Secretary	Richard Josephy
Warden Lowstern	Richard Sealey
Warden, Low Hall	Garth Alister Renton

Other committee members:

Harvey Lomas
Andrew Syme (Webmaster)
Peter Elliott (Meets Secretary)
Rachel Evans

Not on Committee:

Honorary Editor	Roy Denney
Hon. Auditor	Richard Taylor
Hon Librarian	Arthur Salmon
Hon Archivist	Alan Linford
Membership Secretary	Helen Smith

Immediately following the AGM the principle guest would be doing a presentation to members.

KNUT TØENSBERG



Knut is a very experienced mountaineer and former Secretary of the Norsk Tindeklub.

Very active in Norway, the Alps for over forty years and more recently in the Himalayas, Knut's tick list takes in many hard routes, ice climbs, first ascents and new ski-mountaineering routes.

These include new 6000m peaks in Ladakh, multiple Haute Route crossings, a host of Alpine peaks and climbs in Norway, including on its superb waterfall ice.

Knut comes from a Norwegian family which has mountaineering in its blood, flowing down through several generations and with family connections to former YRC President W Cecil Slingsby.

His grandfather, Henning Tønsberg, was one of the founding fathers of the Norsk Tindeklub (the Norwegian Alpine Club) and was its first chairman.

Knut's father, Henning H. Tønsberg, was a decorated skier, a renowned ski-jumper and mountaineer, and was also chairman of the Norsk Tindeklub.

Knut himself has made 20 ascents of Store Skagastølstind (also called Storen) by various routes and in 2016, took part in celebrations to mark the 140th ascent.

Thought to be unclimbable in 1876, when it was first ascended solo by Cecil Slingsby, Michael Smith and Kjetil Tveranger also summited on this celebratory ascent representing the YRC.

It was touched upon in an earlier edition of Chippings but we now have a more detailed report later in the journal.

Ten o'clock on the Sunday following the annual dinner saw members and guests split into walking and caving parties.

The walkers left Settle Market Square to ascend to Attermire Scar, peek into Victoria Cave then past Winskill to Stainforth.

The return leg via Langcliffe took in an exploration of the scheduled ancient monument of the Hoffmann continuous kiln at Craven Limeworks.



Photo John Whalley

Along the way they had cold crisp sunny weather with clear views of Morecambe Bay and the Three Peaks.

The 6½ mile (10½km) walk with total ascent 1,510ft (460m) was led by Arthur Salmon supported by Frank Wilkinson sweeping up at the rear. They did a good job getting everyone back in time to drive over to Lowstern for Albert Chapman's afternoon tea of eggs and ham with pineapple washed down with a cuppa before heading home.



Photo John Whalley

Meanwhile underground, the four cavers, Tim Josephy, Michael and Richard Smith and novice Felicity Roberts had descended Lancaster Hole.

Bridge Cavern was crossed to scramble up to see the Colonnades and back where the last three rejoined Tim who had a delayed descent because of a Combined Forces party exiting.

Richard led the way onwards with Tim's guidance from the rear through Kath's Way to Fall Pot and Montague West then Stake Pot.

The High-Level route through Oakes Cavern took in the Minarets then through Cornes' Monster Cavern and Snail Cavern to Main Line Terminus and the old iron ladder of Stop Pot. Four Ways Chamber was passed on the way to struggle up the sinuous narrow Wretched Rabbit slot to the exit.

The four emerged into the still, mild air at dusk and headlamps were needed to find the stile out of Easegill then the route over the moor to Bull Pot Farm.

Quite a demanding trip for a novice.

A moment of concern was the lack of their rope at the Lancaster Hole entrance but the kind Forces team had carried it to the farm perhaps as part of their commitment to 'help the aged.'

The water levels were as low as any of them had seen them and all finished practically dry if rather muddy. Indeed, the clay was exceptionally slippery in places.

Could this be because of the hundreds of cavers who passed that way during Ged Campion's recent Eurospeleo conference?



Those staying overnight at Lowstern were ready for the cavers' late arrival and had saved some food from the afternoon tea to feed them.

Ten stayed until Monday or later though the deterioration in the weather discouraged outings.

Meanwhile, Knut impressed the Lowstern work party with his axe work when chopping logs..

MS

There was no need for crampons or ice axes but snow all the same, which on a Christmas meet, adds to the atmosphere, but made travelling more of a challenge. Twenty three intrepid members and prospective members, and one dog, made it to this year's Christmas meet through poor road conditions. One failed to find the hostel on the first attempt, went home and joined us on Saturday morning.

Michael and Helen Smith attempted to arrive from Lowstern via Stainforth and Littondale but were beaten back by ice on the road. Diverted via Gargrave, they had a later start for their walk along Old Cote Moor from Birks Fell to Horse Head, finishing back down in Litton.

They called in on Richard Hargreaves at Hawkswick. He recalled five YRC past presidents and John Snoad coming back to his house from a 1994 memorial service at Carleton following the death of Eleanor (Len) Winthrop Young, nee Slingsby. The only one they could identify was Alan Brown.

The venue for this year's Christmas meet, originally booked at the Longrigg Centre at Sedbergh, had to be changed at short notice because of failing a technical inspection by the authorities. After much hard work by Mick and the meet committee an alternative was found in Langstrothdale at Swarthghyll Farm, an outdoor centre near Oughtershaw. It proved very suitable with good accommodation but a trifle cool. Most people were to be seen wearing duvet jackets, fleeces and woolly hats on the first afternoon. The under-floor heating coming on at 5.00pm soon warmed us enough to enjoy Bill's leek and potato soup, rolls and warm quiche. The meal was followed by photos of the club's recent trip to the

Wind River region of Wyoming and Mick Borroff and John Sutcliffe's trip to the Dolomites. The keg of Timothy Taylor's Landlord on tap added to the conviviality after a few teething problems with the pump.

Saturday dawned clear and sunny and after a gargantuan English breakfast, braving the sub-zero temperatures and a new dusting of snow, we started out along icy footpaths.



Robert Crowther with Arthur Salmon and John Whalley

Most parties set out along the Dales Way towards Cam Houses, climbing to the Roman road, over Dodd Fell before returning by various routes.



Approaching
Cam Houses

We enjoyed fantastic views of the Three Peaks in the winter sunshine.



Peter Chadwick and Pippin, David Hick, Tim Josephy, Helen, Michael and Richard Smith, chose to cross Fleet Moss to Jeffrey Pot Scar, Oughtershaw Tarn, descending to the road at Oughtershaw. Several voles were seen exploding from under the snow before running across it for some yards, much to Pippin's annoyance. One, less lucky, was last seen in the talons of a kestrel

Mick Borroff and John Sutcliffe made use of the Dales Way, the Pennine Way south, then back east through the forest and Langstrothdale. Ian Crowther and John Jenkin visited Wensleydale, where they spent time in Hawes and included a stop at Aysgarth Falls.

Derek Clayton and Alan Clare visited Buckden and the White Lion Inn where they reportedly did much socialising with the locals before moving on to the George Inn at Hubberholme and carrying on their missionary work with a group of young farmers.

Dinner on Saturday night proved to be a feast. The dining room, decorated with red tablecloths, crackers and with bottles of wine set out, looked a treat and so the meal turned out to be.

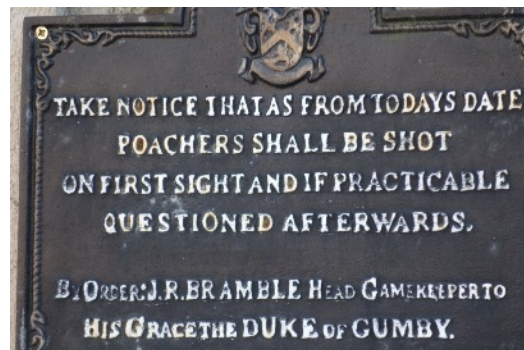
Bill and Paul's catering proved to be first class. We dined on pate, wonderful beef with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding and finally a cheese course.



Richard added to the festive mood throughout the weekend by supplementing his usual winter walking gear with a Santa hat and fairy lights draped around his rucksack. Carol's flashing earrings added to the Christmas spirit.

More photos followed, reminding us of past trips to the mountains. The evening was rounded off by John Sutcliffe's tale of some very midgy last stages from Fort William to Cape Wrath on his mammoth trek from Cape Cornwall to Cape Wrath, told with humour and sang froid.

One item of interest spotted was a not very friendly plaque



Dire warnings of heavy snow to the south sent most people off early on Sunday.

John Sutcliffe and Mick Borroff drove down the dale and parked in Coniston. They ascended Coniston Dib to meet the Dales Way which they followed almost to Grassington. They then turned northwest to cross Bastow Wood thankful that the muddy path was well-frozen, to pick up the footpath back to Coniston just before it traverses above the 'hidden' valley of Dib Beck, where they saw two roe deer.

Helen, Richard and Michael parked in Coniston and went up the Dib gorge to visit a couple of areas of prehistoric hut circles before descending along another section of the Dales Way into Grassington.

The big attraction there was the Victorian Christmas Market which provided amusement and a welcome brazier by which their sandwiches could be eaten. Potential disaster was averted there by our shouting out to a Morris dancer in a rag coat who was backing into said brazier singeing the rags dangling from the hem of his jacket. The return route was lower via Grass Wood.

Harvey and Tim planned to visit Dow Cave but the lane over was somewhat icy and threatened to strand them at the foot of Park Rash. They relocated to Littondale and visited Scoska Cave, a long low and cobbly cave where, sad to report, conversation and debate took precedence over crawling and the further reaches of the cave, first explored by the YRC in 1905, were left undisturbed. Still, they got underground and honour was satisfied.

I motored home down Wensleydale in sunshine reflecting on a very enjoyable weekend: good company, good walking and excellent hospitality.

Many thanks are due to Bill and Paul for making the meet such a success.

Attending:

Mick Borroff, President

Alan Clare	Alan Linford
Peter Chadwick	Harvey Lomas
Derek Clayton	Arthur Salmon
Ian Crowther	Helen Smith
Robert Crowther	Michael Smith
Paul Dover	Richard Smith
Bill Gibbs	John Sutcliffe
Iain Gilmour	Simon Raine (PM)
David Hick	Carol Whalley
John Jenkin	John Whalley
Tim Josephy	Frank Wilkinson

DAH

Meet Report

Low Hall Garth Little Langdale

5th - 7th
January

Mike Smith, in need of some exercise post Christmas traversed Lingmoor Fell from the cottage and then joined a select group at the cottage on the Friday evening to sample the excellent soup provided by Robert.

The aroma of this was sufficient to entice Messrs Denney and Trasler back from their quest for other refreshment, somewhat earlier than usual.

They had walked over to Elterwater and returned in the dark under a wonderful starry sky. Saturday dawned clear but windy (very).

The sensible option was followed by Mike, Roy and Robert who visited Coniston in their quest for a replacement supply of coal, walking the Tarn Hows circuit whilst there.

Messrs Chadwick, Trasler and Dover (part) ascended The Carrs, Swirl Howe and Wetherlam. The Smiths and Richard Taylor went by way of Tilberthwaite and an indistinct high level path above Coniston Mines up Coniston Old Man, Swirl Howe and back to LHG



Michael and Richard on top of the Old Man

Whilst the day was not cold the tops were no place to linger as standing up was a challenge. They were followed on the route by Mick, David and John who, wisely, decided to eschew the high level path, but preferred to arrive back in the dark. The final visitors to the windy heights were Richard Josephy and Nick Welch who went by way of Goat's Water to Dow Crag. The wind, true to its word, blew Nick over and caused a gash to his leg, a bruised rib and a small fracture to the radius. He was then able to carry out some market research on Westmoreland General, which passed with flying colours. As a result the rest of us were able to enjoy larger than expected portions of the dinner expertly prepared by Robert, ably assisted by his charming assistant Roy. We were joined at dinner by Jim and Sandy Gregson, an Arctic old hand who regaled us with anecdotes of trips they had made. They stayed for the subsequent main feature film, provided by Mike Smith, showing Oxford University retracing and re-photographing a Spitzbergen trip of 1923.



Beer, courtesy of the Three Brothers brewery was provided by Richard Smith in "The Mop and Bucket," the smallest pub in Britain.

Sunday dawned clear and cold. Mike Smith had just come of age and was desperate to collect his bus pass and , as a result, left early but not before stopping near Lancaster to walk from Braines Cragg and up Clougha Pike to be rewarded by stunning views.

John Sutcliffe, David and Mick made a first ascent (for them at least) to climb Whitbarrow Scar and also enjoyed a 360 degree view from the cairn at Lord's Seat.

Richard's T and S and Peter were anxious to get up high to enjoy the windless summits and snow. From the Old D-G they ascended Rossett Ghyll to Esk Hause



Peter Chadwick and Richard Smith en route to Esk Hause

and below:

Richard Taylor on the summit of Great End

Richard T and Peter then continued up Great End and back by way of Stake Pass.

Richard S, once he had escaped the two millstones, returned to the cottage by way of Esk Pike, Bowfell. Crinkle Crag and Pike O'Blisco. Both parties were rewarded by hard snow and the best views of the year.

RT



Attending	David Hick	Nick Welch	Harvey Lomas
Robert Crowther (Leader)	Roy Denney	John Sutcliffe	Richard Taylor
Mike Smith	Martyn Trasler	Peter Chadwick	
Richard Smith	Richard Josephy	Paul Dover	
Mick Borroff	Mike Godden	John Jenkin	

Following the LHG meet in January, my mind turned to the changes I have seen in my time in the club. When we attend meets we have always had varying interests and many different activities have been pursued but one constant has been the practice of long-time members looking back at shared times in the past. LHG was no exception other than there were not many really long-term members there. Circumstances conspired to see Mike Godden and me lunching together remembering lost friends and the good old days. Strangely our companion was Robert Crowther who, while being one of our younger members, has actually been attending club meets for at least 43 years to my personal knowledge.

Talking of such matters brought home to me just how long I have been walking with the club. I have been married 45 years and was on meets quite a few years before then. Back then they did not list meet attendees so I cannot trace my first, but I suspect it was 1968. Back then I had done some walking in the Peak District whilst living in Manchester and had made a few forays to the Lakes. I was transferred then to a branch of the bank just up the road from a Barclays branch and the staff of both socialised together. Derek Clayton was their Assistant Manager and the rest is history as they say.

One change we have seen over the years is the nature of our meets. In some ways the club is more ambitious and modern travel possibilities mean we can do the more adventurous things more often, but the downside to my mind is we have less meets affording something for everybody. Not all members can go off on distant treks nor are some any longer fit enough for camping and bothy meets in the high mountains. We used to have more meets

where elder statesman could enjoy some creature comforts and modest walks in locations still offering longer, higher level walks for the rest of the club. This is when the reminiscing used to be in full swing. Who can fail to remember George Spenceley wedged in a corner, bottle of red wine in hand, regaling us with his many exploits; bless him.

Returning to the January meet, one ancient memory was triggered by an amusing sight as Martyn Trasler and I approached the ford on our arrival, Friday afternoon. Some show-off on a mountain bike cycled through the ford rather than use the bridge and he did not make it.

Two old memories came flooding back. The first was of when I parked my car overnight on the 'beach' at the far side of the ford only to find in the morning the stream was up and running in one door of my car and out the other. I rushed back to LHG for help and members kindly offered to assist once they had finished their breakfast. The other was of one of our number actually trying to cross the stream at the ford in his new business vehicle. Not a great idea.

Back then in dryer periods 4 x 4 cars could cross and the step down from the bank was less severe.

When Derek started taking me out on meets, I became a member of his gang so to speak. In reality I suppose Ian Crowther could lay claim to being the leader as the longest serving member of the Club in our group. I actually went on teens of meets over several years

before the then President, Arthur Craven, took me on one side and said “young man it is time you became legitimate and paid your subs”. Our number was made up by Tim Teasdale, no longer in the club, and we were variously referred to as the young hooligans or the Cheshire mob although by this time Ian had moved to Yorkshire. There were a number of other ‘youngsters’ and we did in fact organise quite a few private meets but whilst some others are still around and about; still in the club of our circle there are only John Whalley and Harvey Lomas still going strong.

Before I became a ‘legitimate’ member of the club I had married one of Derek’s staff and in 1975 followed Ian to Yorkshire, specifically to Wharfedale. Ian and I were then socialising locally with our families and he had formed Yorkshire Lifting Tackle, when he was the unfortunate who tried to cross the stream by the ford and was seen baling out his vehicle after getting out



Misfortune did seem to follow Ian about.

They were good days. Also fairly local in Yorkshire, and with similar interests given my wife used to sing in folk clubs, were the family Renton. Performing as Art Bart and Fargo they worked the local scene and several meets saw impromptu sing song sessions into the early hours.

The January meets at LHG back then were renowned. We invariably had good snow and ice conditions and a massive turn out on the meets. I recall one meet when many of us had to stay an extra day because we could not get our vehicles out. Some managed the ford but most had to wait till the track to the top road was ice free.

In those days we always borrowed the cottage next door and often High Hall Garth as well. I can certainly remember one meet when we catered for well over 40 people. They were in all three properties; some were in cars by the ford; one camped behind LHG; four stayed in the Three Shires which opened that time of year in those days and I seem to think a couple put their heads down in Great Langdale at RLH. We had a trestle table between the two usual tables and did two sittings for the customary three course dinner.

Also back then, the late Dennis Driscoll used to bring his beer machines from his hotel, complete with gas cylinders, and set up a proper little bar for us. Home from home.

Talking of Dennis, in those days alternate Christmas meets were held at his hotel in Kentmere, and excellent meets they were. One winter in heavy snow conditions, about ten of us set out to walk over High Street to the Kirkstone Inn.

Not long after we got onto the ridge the weather turned again and some snow started falling. It was dry snow and once we go onto High Street it was blowing all over the place and some decided to turn back. Those of us carrying on kept in close order as visibility was at best a few yards but even so the back couple peeled off somewhere.

Four of us eventually reached the inn but at 1.45 rather than the expected 12.00. We grabbed a quick pint and a nibble, before setting off back with darkness due within the hour. Needless to say we did not go over the tops again but headed towards Troutbeck down the road. We struggled to try and see the outline of the hills to our left, trying to pick out a low point where there was supposed to be a track over them but when we took to the fields we soon lost our way to hit the river with no footbridge in sight. We had to wade it and for those of us with short legs it was thigh deep. Once over we were not entirely sure which way to turn but luckily got it right; found the track and arrived back at the hotel cold, wet, tired and hungry. The rest of the meet were getting stuck into their Christmas feast without a care in the world. They did however save us some.

Another difference between then and now as regards meets was the activities we got up to. There was not then the same separation of cavers from climbers and from fell walkers as there is now. I and many others considered ourselves to be high level hill walkers but we were often persuaded to do some rope work and go down holes in the ground.

There were also sports never contemplated these days perhaps the most memorable of which was becking. Described as many things including madness, it was also known as canyoning or beck-bottoming and was akin to surface potholing; scrambling or swimming up mountain watercourses.



The more recent advent of coasteering fills the equivalent niche for adrenalin junkies.

I remember various epic trips; some great fun as well as challenging. The most dramatic becking one I can recall was a Lakes meet with snow on the higher hills when we decided to climb Scafell by Piers Gill. This involved almost four hours largely immersed in snow melt including swimming across one deep pool to climb out up a ten foot waterfall that took delight in constantly throwing us back. We finally exited this obstacle by stepping on Derek Clayton which everyone seemed to enjoy. Derek stood on a rock well below the water surface whilst we climbed up him and then over the lip by standing on his head or shoulders.

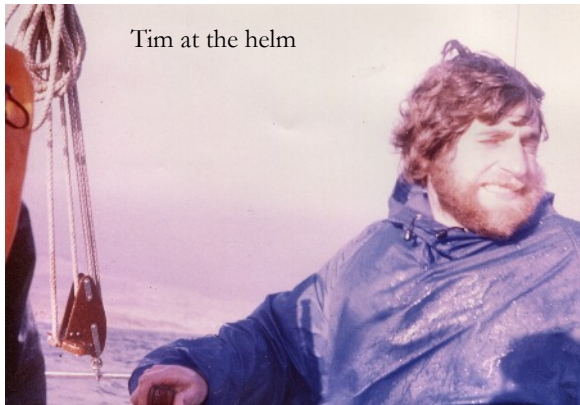
The day in question was actually sunny and comparatively warm especially when emerging from the water. At the top in a small cleft sheltered from the wind and on the south facing side where the snow had melted, we largely stripped off to dry and change into such spare clothing as we had. We usually tried to have a change in plaggy bags. I am not sure which was the more surprised, our party or the party of fell walkers who trudged past us wearing full snow gear and carrying axes.

Members also often took to canoes or yachts. One informal meet organised by the younger crowd saw members canoeing down the Dee towards the Gatehouse of Fleet. A dispute on a reservoir as to whether they had a permit to be there led to a probably deliberate opening of sluice gates. By then, a bit downstream, the canoeists had pulled their kit ashore to take a break and have lunch, when a wall of water rushed by causing some havoc.

Ian Crowther's lunch box and wallet were washed away but some time later and searching downstream, we found his lunchbox. No wallet. Misfortune did seem to follow Ian about.

Another meet which will live long in my memory may well have led to the club being four members short. Suffice to say we had towed Ian's yacht, Talisker, up from Coniston to Arisaig for a Skye meet and never got there. There had been a bad storm and the seas were still rough and everybody was delayed. The main party for the meet had contracted a fishing boat from Mallaig and even the skipper of that had not been prepared to take them over as scheduled and when they eventually got there the meet had appalling weather, so we are told.

We spent the night in Arisaig waiting for the seas to subside and it was a rather strange experience being turned out of a closing bar at ten at night and sitting in the sun waiting for the midnight weather forecast. The evening sunshine was a brief respite in the weather but the following morning we set sail (using the motor). Seas were down a bit but there was heavy rain and wind but we fought our way towards the mouth of the bay before our engine failed.



It was far too windy to get sails up but we tied a climbing rope round Tim Teasdale and sent him forward to fix a handkerchief (I gather they call it a storm jib).

This gave us just enough steerage way with us all hanging over the side, to cream our way back to shore dodging the ugly reefs we could see either side.



Ian left his craft there and we headed south for the comforts of LHG. I think Ian sold the boat without ever removing it from Arisaig. Misfortune did seem to follow Ian about.

Anyway as a result we spent the best part of a week in the Lakes; still lousy weather though. It was then I did probably the biggest climb I ever did and was introduced to Collie's Step as we ascended Scafell via what I think is called Moss Ghyll Grooves. I do recall us all coming down from Scafell in the dark, making a beeline for Esk Dale when Tim fell into an overgrown tarn. Yuk!

In 1978 we mounted an informal expedition to Crete. There were about a dozen of us and most were intent of some exploratory potholing. Ian and I took our wives along and Ian's son Robert, then in his early teens. As it happened we found out after booking that my wife was pregnant so I left the tent behind, carried the kit for both of us and sought out some sort of accommodation each night.

I also hired a car for a few days. She was six months on by the time we travelled so it was surprising that our daughter was not premature. Anyway the potholing was not successful but overall it was a good meet. Subsequently a major system has been discovered not far from where we were looking.

Towards the end of our two weeks Ian charmed himself into a major sailing club and chartered a large yacht, the idea being for the two families to sail the coast. Doreen and I thought better of it and left them to it. I will leave Robert to tell anybody interested about what occurred but again suffice to say misfortune did seem to follow Ian about.

I do have a copy of every journal since the club was formed and I regularly look back for ideas and inspiration as your Editor. I have enjoyed the role over the last fifteen years and looking through old journals is actually one of the high points.

I have noticed that back in 1978 I wrote a piece about water and the YRC and it strikes me that whilst the world changes many other things stand still. Grumpy old men still do their thing and water plays a major part in tales of the YRC. At the time I did mention webbed feet as an advantage to membership.

Back then and talking about becking I had recollections of fighting our way up Hell Gill to achieve the top of a natural water shoot where by sitting in the top of the gully and spreading oneself to create a natural dam, the water could be backed up until your arms gave way at which point you were ejected at a great rate of knots to fly through the air and drop into a deep pool. I also recall subsequently standing at a bar taking internal refreshment and along with my colleagues, seeping half a beck onto the bar-room floor.

In a subsequent year when walking to the bar of the Golden Lion in Horton in my stocking feet after wading the stream I made such an impact on

the slate floor that the landlady asked me to come back the following day to clean the other half.

Becking exploits continued during that period including Tilberthwaite with its difficult upper exit and How Stean Gorge in Nidderdale.

On the caving front, I do recall one trip through the caves at Goyden, when squeezing through a shallow passage meant removing your helmet turning your face to the side and pushing the helmet forward through the mud with your head, as you made progress. This created a foul tasting mini bow wave as you went. It was my first experience of being submerged to go through a sump, I have to admit that on entering this system through its extremely high mouth it was unsettling to see fresh green vegetation wedged in the ceiling from a recent flood.

Other recollections include a Christmas meet at Braithwaite when Tim and Richard Josephy's father had the Coledale Inn. On a miserably wet day after weeks of miserably wet days we decided on a comparatively low level walk above the west side of Derwentwater, dropping down for a late lunch-time drink around the head of the lake.

Perhaps not surprisingly in hindsight, the lake was several feet deeper than usual and we were faced with the prospect of either no drink, a further walk of at least 3 miles to get round the lake reasonably dry, or going direct. Being the YRC and very familiar with water, and it fast approaching closing time, I am sure those of you who were not involved will not be surprised at our choice. It was amusing to see cars stopping on the far bank on this dismal December day to watch half a dozen idiots walking across the duck boards up to their thighs in water.

The last laugh was on us however because where the boards ended there was still 200 yards of water left and we were suddenly up to our waists. The pub was far too posh to allow us in but one generous soul did take our money in for us and bring out very well earned pints.

Water and the YRC seem to go hand in hand and Ian features in many wet memories. My memories may be coloured by the passage of time and stories oft repeated in many a bar but these are all real experiences many of which could become the stuff of nightmares. It would be good to think we could return to what might be described as the dafter pastimes of the past, in this safety conscious and litigious age.

I could fill this entire publication with stories of Ian but he has deeper pockets and a better lawyer than me so I had better restrict my comments to a few salient highlights of my time with him in the club.

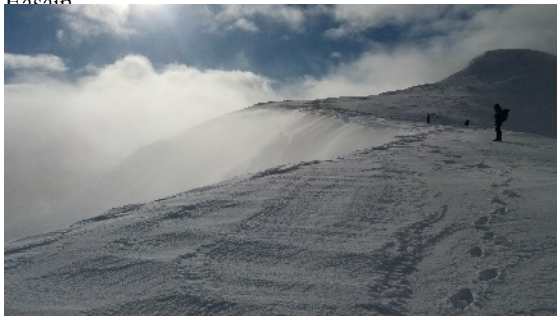
The YRC is no ordinary club and neither are its members. Long may it reign /rain.

Meet Report **Tulloch Station, Roybridge, Highlands** **1st - 5th February**

Due to a family bereavement the joint leader had to stand down and the prospect of Richard T's cooking and last minute illness meant that only those with strong constitutions (internal and external) ventured on this meet. Others missed a treat.

This was a "no wind" meet (in all senses) added to the fact that on two of the days the tops were clear, sun in abundance and with good snow.

On the Friday Mike, Peter, Richards S and T and Dave Turner (guest) ascended from Fersit up Stob a Choire Mheadhoin, some by way of a short but steep gully, and then descended to the col to climb Stob Coire Easain.



Final ascent of Stob a Choire Mheadhoin

Summit of Stob Coire Easain



Descent was by the North Ridge where one of the party descended faster than planned but, fortunately, only suffered injuries to pride. The walk out down Coire Laire involved us in a stream crossing as Dave decided to eschew a fine looking bridge a little further downstream. All in all a full and excellent day.

Harvey, who had decided to come by train from Settle was so enamoured with this form of transport, and the fact that our lodge was actually platform 1, that he chose a day trip to Fort William and was able to confirm all his prejudices about this metropolis.

On Saturday Dave, in his quest for Munros, ascended Gulvain and pronounced the mountain, if not the walk in, to be excellent. Chris, who had now arrived and recovered from the wedding festivities which had delayed him, and Richard S ascended The Sash on Creag Meagaidh and descended by Easy Gully. Mike and Peter were anxious to hone their cross country skills before Norway and drove over to Aviemore for a gentle ascent from the Sugarbowl car park. They were accompanied by Harvey and Richard T, anxious for some light entertainment. In this they were not disappointed and were able to confirm that walking is faster and less susceptible to unplanned tumbles.



On the return they stopped at Ruthven Barracks, built in the 1700s in a stunning position to police the Highlands.

Sunday dawned clear and Mike, Peter and Richard T made their way to Aberarder for an ascent up Coire Ardair to Lochan a Choire thence by way of the Window to the summit plateau of Creag Meagaidh.

As the other two had previously visited the summit they sunned themselves whilst Richard went to the top, for stunning 360 degree views.



Ascent from the Window

Descent was to the South East via Creag Beag. Richard S and Chris visited Aonach Mor and climbed Golden Oldie (the only ones to do it on a perfect day).

Harvey did a circular walk from Loch Treig and was rewarded with the sight of a Golden Eagle.

On the return journey on Monday Peter, Richard and Mike visited the fascinating “Parallel Roads of Glen Roy”.

These are 3 shorelines from 12000 years ago, at heights of 260m, 325m and 350m, of a freshwater lake created when the outlet was blocked at various times by a glacier.

Tulloch Lodge is in an excellent location for many mountains, has warm bedrooms and showers and a very helpful warden, Belinda who was able to help us fathom the mysteries of the gas oven.

To enjoy Scotland in winter (or any time) requires persistence and we were rewarded with stunning weather which helped dim other previous memories of wild, wet and windy visits.

RT



Creag Meagaidh and the Window

View from Creag Meagaidh summit



Attending:

Richard Taylor
(leader)
Mike Smith
Richard Smith
Peter Chadwick
Harvey Lomas
Chris Hilton
Dave Turner (g)

Regulars on the Welsh meet were confused by the bright light in the sky and an absence of gales and torrential rain. Although there wasn't much snow, what there was proved excellent and there was an abundance of sunshine. We stayed in the Gloucester MC hut Cefn Goch, above the village of Deiniolen, a venue that provided comfort and plenty of room for the 19 attendees.

Two early comers spent the afternoon climbing Mynydd Mawr from the west and by mid evening all but one had arrived. Plans were made for the morrow and most retired to bed at a reasonable hour.

Parties were off early on Saturday morning. Three went to Ogwen, one nursing a sore ankle. They lost one member of the party very soon, not finding him until the end of the day. He had spent a happy few hours with his camera. All three encountered difficult icy conditions underfoot. Carol was rescued by a Guardian Angel who picked her up and tossed her across the ice flow to safety. George Spenceley used to contrive to get rescued by young women, Carol seems to be continuing the tradition with young men.

A lone walker set off to walk down to Llanberis, planning then to go up the track to Snowdon. He never made it to Llanberis, having got lost in the intricacies of the forest and quarries. Eventually he abandoned the attempt and finished the day taking in the spectacular scenery of the quarries.

Three set off from Nant Peris, doing a circuit over Y Garn, Foel Goch, Carnedd Y Filiast, Mynydd Perfedd and Elidir Fawr, very little snow but glorious weather.

Two carloads drove round to Capel Curig and seven walkers traversed the central ridge in its entirety. They crossed just below Gallt yr Ogof, then over Foel Goch to Glyder Fach,



Richard Smith was the only one brave (foolish) enough to scramble onto the ice clad Cantilever.



After Glyder Fawr crampons were required for the first 100 ft or so of the very steep descent to Llyn y Cwn. All had crampons but some had never used them before; it is a fairly challenging place to learn!

At the Llyn, one member was becoming agitated about the impending kick off time for the 6 Nations Scotland England match, so two forged on ahead over Y Garn, alongside Foel Goch (another one) then over Carnedd Y Filiast and Mynydd Perfedd before a steep descent to the reservoir and a long walk down to Deiniolen. The rugby fan might have wished he'd stayed up on the tops- England were thrashed.



Rory Newman arrived in the afternoon, completing the meet list and all sat down to a convivial meal of leek and potato soup, sausage casserole and lemon tart.



Sunday dawned equally fine and most people made the most of a short day before setting off home. Five went to Moel Siabod and four enjoyed an excellent scramble up Daer Ddu, the south ridge.

One set off to Mynydd Mawr and two more took the path from Capel Curig towards Crafnant, enjoying great views of the Snowdon Horseshoe.





The monstrous regiment of Smiths (plus one) walked up to an icy Aber Falls, climbing high above it before returning by a circular route to the valley.

This was a most successful meet, carrying on the trend of good weather we have enjoyed so far this year.

Richard Dover and John Sutcliffe

TJ

Attending:	Fliss Roberts	(G)	John Sutcliffe	Richard Taylor
	Harvey Lomas		John Whalley	Rory Newman
Alan Clare	Helen Smith		Michael Smith	Tim Josephy
Carol Whalley	Iain Gilmour		Mick Borroff	
Derek Clayton	Ian Crowther		Richard Dover	
Fiona Smith	John Jenkin		Richard Smith	
	(PM)			

Meet Report

Glencoe

15th - 18th
March

The weather during the journey northward was promising and the forecast suggested strong winds would dissipate during Friday. On arrival at the MCoFS Alex Macintyre hut in Onich, just west of Ballachulish, the warden and his wife were in the throes of departing following news of a family bereavement that day.

I drove just round the corner to the Loch Leven Hotel, stepping down to the old ferry jetty and musing on the last time I travelled up this brae. It was in June 1965, several days before I celebrated my fifth birthday near John O' Groats. But this was not the time to toast these long ago

events, the barman lamented that he had recently received a twelve month driving ban and a £900 fine for driving with 32 mcg of alcohol in his blood; in England the threshold is 35mcg. I had a glass of appropriately named “Nanny State” alcohol free beer with my meal.

Bob Peckham arrived from Inverness, the remainder of the meet were travelling after work. The President’s progress arrived safely before midnight and Richard Smith set off from home on Friday morning. When I last visited this hut in September with my youngest son, Ben, it felt slightly damp and dingy. However in late winter, having been regularly occupied, the premises were much cosier. The main room is heated by an electric fire masquerading as a multi fuel stove. The sofa and armchairs are of a design that one used to see on hastily erected bonfires just before the fifth of November.

Friday morning looked promising, some tops were visible, the wind was pushing the clouds across the sky but this was forecast to subside. It didn’t.

The President and Bob drove round to Kinlochleven and scaled Beinn na Caillich, then on to Mam na Gualainn, both west of Aluminiumville. The reports of good snow conditions at higher levels but a ferocious and very cold wind defined the day and indeed the whole meet.



Bob on the ridge of Mam na Gualainn (Photo MB)

David, Anca and guest Jason found Binnein Mor via Sgurr Eilde Beag in splendid isolation, the solitude interrupted only by the sight of a ptarmigan and separately a vole..

The wind had sculpted a double cornice along parts of the ridge. The winter landscape is often majestic

Binnein Mor
(Photo AP)



Andy and Peter headed into the Lost Valley and attempted a climb, The Graduate, which proved to be out of condition; the strong wind sent the duo helter- skelter down the hill all the way to Fort William.

Richard drove up from Newcastle and onwards to Kinlochleven to make a circular walk, incorporating the Grey Mare's waterfall which now has a via ferrata, then on to Loch Eilde, returning by the River Leven.

Hilton set off for Stob Corrie nam Beith with a view to ploughing up Summit Gully. In the corrie, the strong winds and mixed snow hampered progress and in the absence of any moral fibre he returned to the car. The afternoon was spent stitching a long section of trouser leg that had yielded to a crampon point during one of a number of tumbles as a result of the strong winds.

We were a party of nine, catering together and each evening there were variously one or three other guests. The facilities in the hut, for our numbers were good, we just about managed.

The hut accommodates 16 plus the warden. With several small parties in attendance one would probably do well to eat out.

On Saturday the President and Bob again drove round to Kinlochleven and scaled Sgurr Eilde Beag.

They continued round to Na Gruagaichean; given the conditions the pair had no compunction in missing out Binnein Mor.



**Bob descending Na Gruagaichean
South Ridge (Photo MB)**

David, Anca and Jason headed up the Allt a'Mhuillin. The not inconsiderable aim was to pick up Carn Mor Dearg then the Ben, repeating the north east ridge, finally dropping into Coire Leis.

There is no better testament to the severity of the conditions than that David was beaten back by the high winds at around 2500ft.

The party took solace in walking up Glen Nevis to Steall and beyond, returning to the hut before dark.

Andy and Peter also headed up the Allt a'Mhuilinn and managed to climb The 1934 Route, graded II/III, on the west face of the Tower Ridge. Most routes at this height appeared to be in condition.

Hilton drove Richard round to Ballachulish to pick up Sgurr Dearg via the inviting looking Schoolhouse Ridge. The wind propelled Richard onto Sgurr Dhonuill via a narrow snow arete.

Meanwhile Hilton drove up Glencoe and after watching folk struggle in the wind just beyond the car park, modified his ambitions, which by late afternoon he had failed to achieve.

Hilton as meet leader provided his usual stodge, demonstrating an admirable but very real lack of imagination.

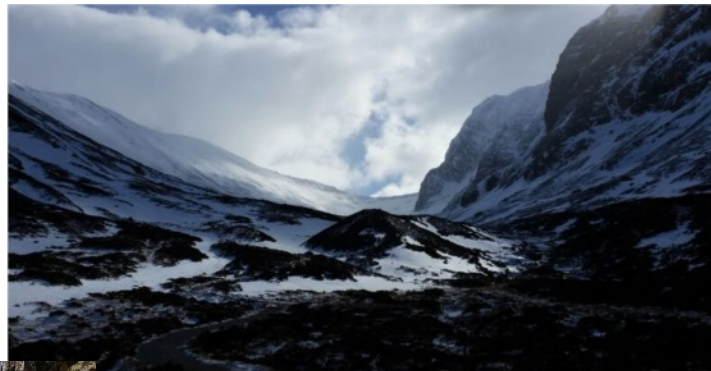
Sunday, brighter but no calmer witnessed an early departure after the usual chores. Richard, undeterred, completed the Ring of Steall. The snow conditions were excellent however again the strong winds prevailed. After negotiating the wire bridge Richard travelled clockwise to minimise the effect of the wind. Nonetheless the summit of Am Bodach was reached as a horizontal ice climb, crablike on all fours. Richard managed to lose his map to the atmospherics descending Sgurr a'Mhaim.

We were unfortunate with the weather but the first two meets this year have seen sunshine and the days following this meet saw perfect conditions. Scotland in winter remains a magnificent destination.

Chris Hilton

Attending:

Anca Pordea
Andy Syme
Bob Peckham
Chris Hilton
David Large
Jason Lees
Mick Borroff
Peter Elliott



Glen Nevis
(Photo AP)



David, Anca Jason and Mick visited the Whangie, an interesting collection of rocks near Glasgow on the way home.

(Photo AP)

Journey to the Centre of the ...

Michael Smith
and Alan Kay

Not Jules Verne's account of Professor Lendenbrock's descent of Icelandic volcanic tubes but a wet walk over Alan Kay's suggested route to SD 64188 56541 near Dunsop Bridge in the Forest of Bowland. A solitary stroll with a surreal start and several snares which included the geometrical centre of Great Britain as defined by the centroid method. That method might be imagined as cutting out the shape of Great Britain with its islands and finding the point where you can balance this shape on one's fingertip.

Alan had suggested this route when I was seeking a good walk in Bowland. He cannot though be blamed for what happened as he went clockwise in better weather and used a different route with better paths.

My opportunity to try it came as I was on the way to Lowstern in January. Arrival at the small Tower Lodge car park on the narrow Marshaw to Sykes road was in drizzle but brightened up by a film crew in action. A bear of a chap dressed in golden boots a flowing blue cape and a small headdress was skipping around singing. He picked up a twig and examined it as if it were an exotic morsel then attempted to nibble it before prancing off towards a full dripping drumset... "Cut" Booting up saw

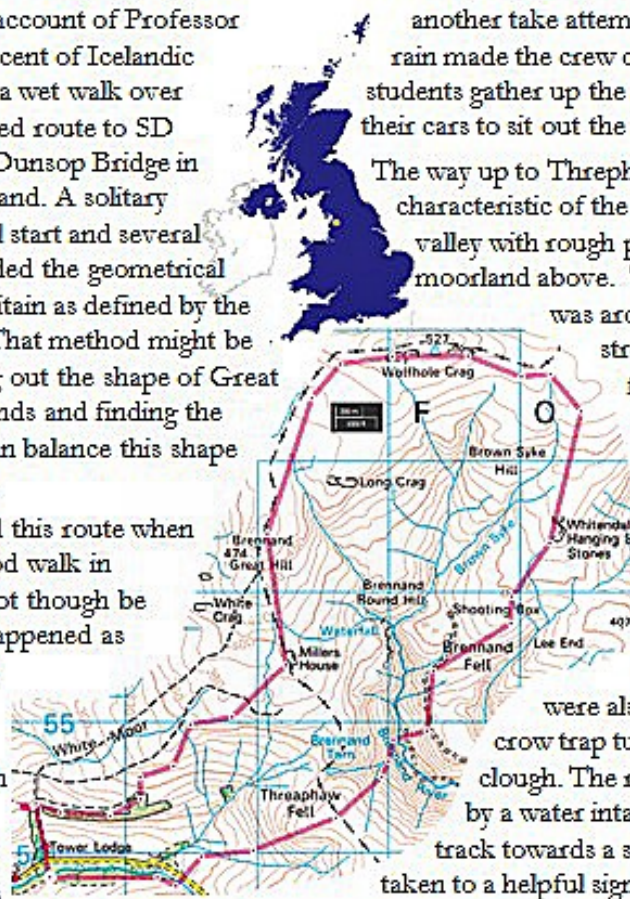
another take attempted but heavier rain made the crew of a dozen or so students gather up the gear and dash for their cars to sit out the shower.

The way up to Threphaw Fell was characteristic of the day: boggy in the valley with rough pasture and moorland above. The cloud level

was around 500m and a strong wind blew from the west.

Sheltered descending to the Brennand River care had to be taken to avoid the snares presumably set for fox. There

were also gin traps and a crow trap tucked away in the clough. The river was crossed by a water intake then the fell track towards a shooting cabin taken to a helpful signpost indicating



the point to start heading across the moor to Whitendale Hanging Stones and Great Britain Centroid a couple of hundred metres northwest of the stones northern end. Here it is practically essential to have GPS to find the spot, at least in dismal weather with blowing snowflakes. Care is needed to avoid the soft boggy ground.



The unmarked, uninspiring centre of Great Britain

Onward the way is north past White Crag's stones (there are two white Crag's on the route) and a turn fully into the blown mist past Wolfhole Crag. This was not a day to loiter but perhaps there are views here in better weather. Care is needed again towards Brennand Great Hill and beyond to Millers House to avoid the quagmires.



The signpost and track to the shooting cabin

A descent in fast fading light past a plantation led to a couple of farm tracks and the Tower Lodge. The film crew had long since departed for either the editing suit or more likely a pub to dry out.

Alan's original and clockwise version of the walk took the more northerly track up White Moor and descended further west than my ascent route. It passed the Shooting Cabin and kept north of Brennand Tarn onto Threaphaw Fell. However, I'm sure there are many ways to tackle these fells but if you try be sure to expect rough and boggy ground. Don't get ensnared and remember the GPS.



Tarn Clough crow trap and behind it a gin trap

EDITOR'S NOTE

Some years ago Martyn Trasler and I did a similar walk trying to find the same elusive location, back then without the aid of a GPS system. We saw a lot of rain which is not unusual but the only really unusual thing we saw was a hen harrier close up.

At the time it triggered research and debate into exactly where the centre of England is, as there seemed loads of different interpretations. How do you measure the centre of an irregular object such as England or Britain? So far I have found 29 different suggestions. The one I have always favoured was the point at which you would be furthest from the sea. Given the shape of Britain the answer on this basis would be the same for both England & Britain which is perhaps the best argument for coming up with something better. However, when looking at England, do you include Wales or should it be from the Welsh border when this is nearer than the sea?

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

They have however, for the purposes of this exercise, treated Britain as a whole.

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

Another well supported technique is to effectively rely on gravity and as such define the centre based on mass. This involves making a cut out of Britain and the centre is then the point at which it would balance on a fulcrum.

This does not of course allow for the volume of land above sea level at any given point so should it be loaded so that the mountains of Cumbria weigh more than the flatlands of Anglia?

Discounting this anomaly the OS calculates that the centre of Britain by this means is indeed near Dunsop Bridge by the Trough of Bowland.

They have however made allowance for the off shore islands. How? And should they have?

Fascinating, isn't it.

Storen Celebration

We touched on it at the time but now have more information. On the 21st July 2016 two YRC members joined Norwegians to honour Cecil Slingsby 140 years to the day since he made a bold ascent of Store Skagastølstind (known as Storen) the most sought after peak in Scandinavia.

Michael Smith and Kjetil Tveranger made a three-day celebratory ascent despite mixed weather, having met up at the modern Kilgenberg Hotel in Årdalstangen on the spot where Slingsby stayed at the old wooden hotel between trips into the Hurrungane mountains of Norway's Jotunheimen.



On their way up to a mountain cabin they were in thick cloud and heavy the rain but the next day, a ridge crossing and walk up the wild Midtmaradalen valley was under blue skies.

Dodging the headwall and climbing the glaciers at the end of the valley they arrived at the sparse bivouac on a col below Storen.

The wind strengthened and cloud blew in overnight requiring a pragmatic approach to the ascent of the steep final 650m of bare rock. Slingsby's route is complicated now in the summer as the glacier has shrunk and cloud could make the twists and turns needed harder to locate. The normal route from a small ledge was too exposed to the wind, so an 1899 route, Andrew's Chimney, was chosen.

On the day they were joined by four Norwegians: Erling from the Klingenberg Hotel and three Norsk Tindeklub members, Are Knudsen and Lars Bryne and the renowned Knut Tørsberg who had made 24 previous ascents including a new route just left of Andrews' Chimney. Knut was of course our Principle Guest and Speaker at last years AGM

Once the foot of the cleft was reached by scrambling, Knut led up the four long pitches of roped climbing, much of it on wet rock.

Progress was slow, but the summit was reached and all admired Slingsby's determination for making the ascent solo, without a rope or any of our modern equipment.

The bold and very risky ascent certainly brought him to the attention of many Norwegians and he gained the reputation of being the 'Father of Norwegian Mountaineering.'

Pirates on the Piton

Imogen Campion

The rock was becoming steeper and more slippery as I stepped up once more pulling on the dubious blue fixed ropes that must have been placed years ago. At least I had a tight top rope and Dad shouting encouragement from the belay stance some way above hidden in the thick jungle undergrowth. The rain was a mixed blessing, providing some relief from the torrid heat but as it got heavier it started to dissolve the orange clay surrounding the better handholds. The liquid soil trickled through the gaps between my fingers only to increase my feeling of exposure as I approached the steepest wall on the climb'.

We had climbed the Gros Piton (771m) a few days earlier with Mum and our friend Pam. It had been a straightforward climb through the jungle on a well-trodden path providing lots of interest but no technical challenge. Although the higher of the 'Piton' it was considered straight forward and the prize at the top was the incredible view of the island of St Lucia. Although it looked slightly down on the Petit Piton (743m), a meagre twenty-eight metres less in height, there was no doubt that this was the real prize to be climbed. Whenever you visit this side of St Lucia this iconic shaped peak is hard to ignore, it appears steep on every side covered in seemingly impenetrable jungle with occasional glimpses of rock buttresses and loose gullies. From the exclusive Sugar Beach resort, where we couldn't afford stay, it soars up straight from the tide line in menacing fashion quite indignant to the hustle and bustle of bars and restaurants on the flat beach below.

Unlike the Gros Piton it wasn't possible to get permits to climb the Petit Piton although there were vague suggestions of conservation issues, the story was that the authorities on the island were concerned about fatalities and accidents that had occurred in the past and a ban on climbing would keep would be aspirants at bay. Dad however, not to be put off by Caribbean bureaucracy had been asking around and was informed that local Rasta, come hermit lived in a cave below the Petit Piton and would, at the right price, be prepared to guide parties up the peak. Dad explained that it wasn't the technicality of the climbing that was a problem, it was finding a route through the dense forest to the foot of the difficulties. Once at the rock face there were fixed ropes and besides, Dad always took a small stash rock gear and a length of rope on family holidays whatever the destination. Mum never seemed to complain so I thought it a normal part of growing up.

So, the plan was hatched. All that was left was to locate the guide and agree a price. On the day before the climb we drove to a small 'locals' dilapidated bathing pool by some waterfalls in the forest below the Piton where we were told our guide, Peter did some casual, very casual, cleaning. A few Rasta's later, accompanied by a lot of confused shouting up and down the hillside in deep Rasta dialect, Peter emerged from the undergrowth bear footed and a little dishevelled. First impressions suggested he wasn't your normal mountain guide. He appeared about 40 with rusty brown coloured dreadlocks and a rugged face that told a story of the hard life of a hermit living in a cave with plenty of rum in the larder. He had a wiry frame and an athletic look about him, his casual attitude was not at first reassuring, but he was the man with the local knowledge, so we agreed a price.

We decided to meet the following morning in the car park clearing at 6.00am. Dad told him he had a rope and slings, but Peter said we didn't need them, no wonder there had been accidents on the Piton I thought as we walked back to our hire jeep.

The next morning dawned a beautiful Caribbean day the frogs finally slowing to a slumber outside our forest accommodation left a stillness before the cicadas would start to kick in. It had been raining but that was normal, all that mattered was the sun was coming out and we'd have fantastic views from the peak.

We arrived at our agreed liaison in the forest clearing at the designated time but there was no Peter in sight. A Rasta man and his wife were setting up a canvas to sell cold drinks and melon in the clearing, they were a charming couple and said they knew Peter and he was normally around at 8.00ish. The Rasta man said he used to guide up the Petit Piton but was too old now, he seemed a lot younger than Peter I thought.

Half an hour later still no Peter, so our new Rasta friend offered to drive us down towards Soufriere via the old road where he thought we'd meet Peter walking up. Despite a good search there was no sign. We drove back to the clearing and there was Peter, as if he had miraculously appeared like a Genie from a lamp.

We made no mention of the confusion and set off with determination, Peter's only concern was that we should take plenty of water which we reassured him we had.

Although still early the dank humidity was noticeable. Immediately the faint track on the forest floor reared up and we picked our way between fallen rocks and boulders on the slope. Well acclimatised to these conditions Peter was setting a blistering pace we moved upwards with purpose. At times the track became more pronounced well used and polished trees and roots bore testament to the struggles of those who had climbed this peak before us. Without the aid of the vegetation the climb would have been impossible, the tangle of twisted roots seemed to be the very cement that was keeping the steep slope in position.

Every so often a demolished tree laid bare by a huge boulder was a reminder of the dangers of falling lurking above. The forest rang with the sound of cicadas as we mopped the stinging sweat off our brows and round our eyes. After a long stretch we reached what appeared to be a prominent corner in the context of the slope where through a convenient window in the vegetation we had a spectacular view of the sandy bays below us with the tiny boats bobbing on what seemed a painted ocean. We had reached what Peter call the 'the shoulder' and not far above were the 'difficulties'.

This was a defining moment for all aspirants who would dare to climb the piton Peter explained in... clearly hoping for a fast buck. This was where it was prudent to turn back if we were struggling, as he gazed at us eagerly. Perhaps I looked like I was struggling I can't remember but Dad would hear none of it, we were on a mission.

So, there we were standing below the difficulties, the verdant vegetation gave way to a rocky landscape as we arrived at the foot of a dark rock buttress where an old knotted rope hung forlornly from its top. Peter explained that he would go up first to show us what to do. Dad said no, he would lead with the top and bring me up with Peter in the rear. Peter kept insisting that we didn't need a rope because there was one already there. Not familiar with the finer points of traditional rock climbing techniques, Peter eventually conceded to our wishes and found solace in placing my feet on the footholds as Dad roped me up from above. I had no harness so the thin rope cutting into my waist as Dad enthusiastically gave me a tight line. When I arrived at the belay I was tied off on a firmly rooted tree.

We repeated this exercise buttress after buttress, vegetated ledge after vegetated ledge and knotted rope after knotted rope until we reached what appeared to be a deep vertical cleft stretching upwards to the top of a buttress. There seemed no obvious way of accessing this next challenge until Peter suddenly started to squeeze enthusiastically into the crack horizontally and sideways demonstrating a series of crafty caving moves until he was able to stand up and get some purchase on the slippery walls. From inside the cleft he proudly announced that this known as the 'rabbit hole' and that was how to do it. My Dad described it as looking a bit like Lockwood's Chimney on Clogwyn y Bustach and even more like Monolith Crack on the Gribin Facet which was much harder.

With no knowledge of either of these I struggled into the depths of the crack with my Dad unceremoniously pushing me from behind. Once past the squeezey bit I was able to pull myself back in to position with the help of a black very frayed knotted rope. By now it had started raining and where there was previously friction there was now none.

After clawing my way up the cleft the exposure at the top was quite worrying and the clay that seemed to cement everything in place was trickling in an orange solution down the crag. Once at the top a bedraggled Peter said we were at the end of the difficulties and a few rocky steps led up through the wet undergrowth to a more winding and easy angle trail. A few more metres and we emerged from the low forest canopy to the clearing and the summit. Almost by arrangement the rain gave way to the sun and the lush wet vegetation sparkled in the sunlight.

I collapsed on the grassy top more out of relief than tiredness, colourful butterflies floated in the fragrant air almost as if they were there to greet our arrival.

Peter performed a celebratory dance to Bob Marley's 'Jamming' finishing off with 'Buffalo Soldier.' Dad joined in while I filmed.



Top of the 'Rabbit Hole' pitch
note the boot-shaped chockstone



This is the view from the summit looking over to Gros Piton. We soaked up the views had some lunch and prepared for the descent.

Although I had been dreading it, we repeated what we had done gravity assisting all the way down especially in the cleft which had been lubricated by the rain. Once past the 'difficulties' I was tired on the slippery steep slope desperately trying to keep my concentration to avoid any falls, at times swinging from tree trunk to tree trunk but always trying to avoid the spiky vines waiting to catch you unaware.

I glanced down at my cut and bruised legs that bore testament to the days struggle through the forest. Down and down and we were onto the flat which led to the clearing where we had started. The little drinks store was a welcome sight and the couple we had met earlier congratulated us on our achievement.

We had a much-needed drink of ice tea and Dad paid Peter the guiding fee. He had decided to give Peter a tip but hadn't got the extra money so we agree to meet him the next day at the same place.

It had been a fantastic experience and it was great to get back to Fond Doux Plantation House where we were staying, to tell the others of our success. That afternoon we relaxed in the hazy sunshine by the small swimming pool outside the Avocado Cottages.

The next day we returned to the clearing and were greeted by the sight of five burly Slovaks mopping their sweaty brows, they appeared dressed like the Pirates of the Caribbean. They had come ashore from a sailing trip to climb the Piton with Peter as their guide. They were a bit disgruntled and questioned us about our experience on the Peak. Apparently, they had only got to the shoulder and Peter had told them it was too dangerous without a rope to continue but they thought he was nursing a hangover.

Peter was sitting in the drinks store and was a little worse for wear having spent the previous day fee on rum in Soufriere. We weren't about to act as mediators and gave Peter his tip and beat a hasty retreat to the car. In a cruel twist of fate, we later discovered that they had their boat stolen shortly after landing on the island. However, it was incredible to think that we had made it and they hadn't. That night we had a meal at the Hotel Du Chocolat which boasts a magnificent view of the Petit Piton.



Petit Piton from the Hotel du Chocolat

Looking down to Soufriere with Gros and Petit Pitons in distance, left to right



The Petit Piton is located on the south side of the island of St. Lucia in the eastern Caribbean Sea on the boundary with the Atlantic Ocean part of the Lesser Antilles, it is located north/northeast of the island of Saint Vincent, northwest of Barbados and south of Martinique. To get there it's nine hours flight from the UK. The Pitons are the eroded remnants of lava domes. They occur with a variety of other volcanic features including craters, pyroclastic deposits (pumice and ash), and lava flows. Collectively, these features provide a geological history of the composite volcanoes associated with tectonic plate subduction zones. We completed the climb on 31st October 2016.

The climb up the Petit Piton is not technically difficult but there are sections of loose rock and soil terraces. The climb is made easier by the fixed ropes, however, many of the ropes were polypropylene and of a dubious quality because of their age and erosion caused by the acidic nature of the rock and soils in the forest.

**Meet
Report**

Low Hall Garth

**20th - 22nd
April**

This was a meet that nearly did not happen. The meet was relocated after a mix up over the booking at the Derbyshire Pennine Club's Stoney Middleton hut. Initially moved to Eyam Youth Hostel (full) then to Lowstern (full), it finally ended up at LHG.

Only five members attended, which was a shame as the weekend turned out to be the hottest of the year so far.

Alan Clare and John Lloyd walked from the hut via Greenburn and through Coniston to the Ship Inn where they met up with the others for a meal.

The three octogenarians (total age 250) went to the boat museum at Windermere but it was closed, so they went to Tarn Hows for a walk. Not mountains, just hummocks as one remarked.

After the late afternoon meal the two walkers carried on to Torver but due to bad map reading they climbed high above the old railway track.

They met up with the others in Torver and crammed into Ian's car for the return to LHG.

A weekend of glorious weather.

Derek Clayton

Attending:

Alan Clare, John Lloyd,
Ian Crowther, John Jenkin,
Derek Clayton

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE 'DRAW-DOWN MUD FLORA' OF DALE DIKE & DAMFLASK RESERVOIRS DURING 2017.

John and Valerie Middleton

INTRODUCTION.

It was over twenty years ago that Dr Ken Balkow first introduced us to the pleasures of plant hunting on late season draw-down reservoir mud. Since that time we have always investigated these sites whenever we had the chance. It therefore followed that whilst recording vascular plants for both the 'Sorby N.H.S. Data Base' and the 'Botanical Society of the British Isles 2020 National Tetrad Survey' we should pay particular attention to two reservoirs within our area. These two sites being Damflask and Dale Dike (sometimes spelt Dyke) both situated close to the village of Low Bradfield some 14km north-west of Sheffield.

Damflask extends for roughly 1.8km in length and is up to 350m in width. It is used for both fishing and light sailing. Dale Dike is slightly smaller at 1.5km by 200m and is used by fishermen only. Both reservoirs are mostly surrounded by interesting woodland and can be conveniently circumnavigated on good footpaths. 'Yorkshire Water' is the landowner. Dale Dike has the unenviable history of being the cause of the 'Great Sheffield Flood of 1864' when the recently constructed main embankment collapsed causing a devastating wave of 3 million cubic metres of water to sweep down the Loxley Valley and into Sheffield. Over 240 people died and 600 houses were destroyed in this event.

The water level of most reservoirs tends to become naturally lower towards the end of summer. As this happens, sediment, usually in the form of bare mud, becomes exposed to the atmosphere. Within a month this substrate will be covered by an amazing multitude of rapidly growing mainly ephemeral plants. Some, like *Lythrum portula* (Water-purslane), might be expected in such situations but others like *Senecio sylvaticus* (Heath Groundsel), could be entirely unexpected. More may only have been known from sites many kilometres away. Additionally the habit of any taxon might show up as being rather abnormal. Examples of all these possibilities may be spotted in our 2017 recordings listed below. The great delight of reservoir mud is - *always expect the unexpected and prepare to be surprised!*

During 2017 we noted that the water level in Dale Dike fell by almost 3 metres exposing particularly large areas of mud at its upper western end. At the same time the level at Damflask dropped by 7-8 metres exposing very fertile north and south banks except where the slope was too steep. This latter reservoir was probably lower than usual due to work being carried out in the vicinity of the outer dam embankment. However in both reservoirs there did appear to be a greater 'explosion' of plant life than we had ever previously experienced.

Where do these plants originate from? This is often a question asked and whilst we have not managed to find any reports on serious research being carried out to answer this scientifically there are many obvious possibilities. Seeds could have been washed down feeder streams from near and far to be precipitated on the water's edge as it recedes; birds, particularly ducks and geese, will carry

many seeds both on their bodies and in their intestines; human sporting activity will unwittingly introduce more; wind-born seed is particularly prevalent during late summer and finally a very few will have survived being submersed by water for 8 or 9 months. A good example of the latter would be *Persicaria amphibia* (Amphibious bistort) whose survival strategy is to have interchangeable land and water forms.

In addition to the plants referred to above both dams have a good surrounding marsh flora at or above the high water level. For Dale Dike this occupies around 10% of the water's edge whilst at Damflask it is probably nearer to 40%! Typical plants here might include *Achillea ptarmica* – Sneezewort, *Iris pseudacorus* – Yellow Iris, *Lotus pedunculatus* – Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil, *Lysimachia vulgaris* – Yellow Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria* – Purple-loosestrife, *Mentha aquatica* – Water Mint, *Myosotis scorpioides* – Water Forget-me-not, *Phalaris arundinacea* – Reed Canary-grass and various sedges and rushes to name but a few.

METHODOLOGY.

The area to be surveyed was deemed to be the entire exposed region below high water level. As we were already surveying to 6 figures in 100m squares we simply continued doing so but by zig-zagging up and down the mud banks with more frequency we gained even greater accuracy. This was done in late September and again in late October. Percentage cover ratings were applied to each square or relative part thereof according to the **DAFOR** scale -

Dominant 75%+, **Abundant** 75 - 51%, **Frequent** 50 - 26%, **Occasional** 25 - 11%, **Rare** 10 - 1. %

DRAW-DOWN MUD FLORA NOTED. *Unusual size or habitat. DD - Dale Dike. Df – Damflask. *Aethusa cynapium** – Fool's Parsley. Annual. DD, Rare. SK234906. Only eight x 20cm high flowering plants observed close to the confluence of the main stream and reservoir – normally this species is found on arable land and waste ground growing to 1m.

Alopecurus aequalis – Orange Foxtail. Df. Rare. SK268915 & SK267916. An uncommon species. Small but healthy populations towards the upper reservoir level on the southern side.

Alopecurus geniculatus – Marsh Foxtail. DD, Df. Occasional. Sparse but widespread distribution on the central and upper levels of both banks around most of the reservoir.

*Atriplex prostrata** – Spear-leaved Orache. Annual. Df. Rare. Just a few 20cm high fruiting specimens on the upper north bank. This species is most obvious on roadsides and disturbed ground growing to 90cm.

*Bidens tripartita** – Trifid Bur-marigold. Annual. DD, Df. Frequent. Plants to 80cm in flower on Dale Dike but rarely more than 15cm at Damflask.

Callitriche stagnalis – Common Water-starwort. Perennial. DD, Df. Rare. Found as a number of small patches on the damper flushed surfaces.

Cardamine amara – Large Bitter-cress. Perennial. Df. Rare. Several large plants close to the main reservoir entry stream.

Cardamine flexuosa – Wavy Bitter-cress. Annual. DD, Df. Rare. More widespread than *Cardamine amara* but still restricted to the wetter areas. In flower.

*Chenopodium album** – Fat-hen. Annual. DD. Occasional. A considerable number of 20cm high flowering plants found along the central levels. Whilst this plant does commonly grow in most conditions to greatly varying heights this is the first time that we had noted it on reservoir mud.

*Chenopodium rubrum** – Red Goosefoot. Annual. Df. Rare. SK267916/17. Several patches of up to

8cm high flowering plants (normally 20cm+). Again this is the first time that we have recorded this species on reservoir mud and we have never seen consistently flowering plants of such small size. *Epilobium montanum* – Broad-leaved Willowherb. *Perennial. DD, Rare. Df, Occasional.* Distributed widely but only as small non-flowering plants.

Galeopsis bifida – Bifid Hemp-nettle. *Annual. DD. Rare. SK235907.* Around 16 flowering plants at the upper end of the reservoir. This is a taxon that is considered to be locally uncommon. The similar *Galeopsis tetrahit* is generally more frequent and might have been expected here.

Gnaphalium uliginosum – Marsh Cudweed. *Annual. DD, Df. Frequent.* Very common and in flower at the lower levels but rarely reaching more than 7cm high.

*Hypericum humifusum** – Trailing St. John's-wort. *Perennial. DD, Occasional. DF, Rare. SK235907.* Over 200 plants counted on the mud in this Dale Dike square many of which were flowering. *Hypericum humifusum* is considered uncommon in the region and is normally only found in much drier conditions. We could find no further plants in the immediate locality. This find is particularly interesting for us as we had probably only seen a total of around 30 plants, usually singly, before.

Hydrocotyle vulgaris – Marsh Pennywort. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* On the wetter areas only.

Impatiens glandulifera – Indian Balsam. *Annual. DD. Rare.* Occurs in shade close to the main input stream. In flower.

Juncus bufonius – Toad Rush. *Annual. DD, DF. Occasional.* A seemingly common and rapid coloniser at all levels. In flower.

Juncus bulbosus – Bulbous Rush. *Annual. DD, Df. Rare.* To be found only on the wetter flushes of the upper level.

*Lepidium didymum** - Lesser Swine-cress. *Annual. Df. Rare. SK271913.* Just 3 plants noted close together on the northern shore. Considered as an uncommon farm plant in our region.

Littorella uniflora – Shoreweed. *Df. Occasional.* Widely distributed in small concentrations at higher levels – no flowers seen.

Lythrum portula – Water-purslane. *Annual. DD, Df. Frequent.* Probably the commonest of all taxa occurring at each level.

Matricaria discoidea – Pineappleweed. *Annual. Df. Rare.* Sparsely distributed but widespread with many particularly large plants to 35cm. In flower.

Montia fontana – Blinks. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* Several succulent patches in the wetter flushed areas. No flowers seen.

Persicaria amphibia – Amphibious Bistort. *Perennial. DD, Df. Occasional.* Both submerged and land forms are present with only the latter in flower.

Persicaria hydropiper – Water-pepper. *Annual. DD, Df. Frequent.* Found throughout, often in quite large stands towards the upper reservoir level. The most common taxon after *Lythrum portula*. In flower.

Persicaria lapathifolia – Pale Persicaria. *Annual. Df. Rare.* The least common Persicaria. In flower.

Persicaria maculosa – Redshank. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* Often confusingly mixed in with *Persicaria amphibia*. In flower.

Polygonum aviculare – Knotgrass. *Annual. DD, Rare. Df, Frequent.* Surprisingly common and equally spread with some very large forms. In flower.

Potentilla anserina – Silverweed. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* Found mainly at upper levels and often rapidly creeping down from the reservoir edges. In flower.

*Potentilla anglica** – Trailing Tormentil. *Perennial. DD, Rare. SK235907.* An interesting locally uncommon find of a dozen well spreading, flowering and seeding specimens. No further plants could be found in the immediate surroundings. This is a plant that prefers drier almost heathland situations.

Ranunculus flammula – Lesser Spearwort. *Perennial. DD, Rare. Df, Occasional.* Young growth is to be found at all levels with flowering plants higher up.

Ranunculus hederaceus – Ivy-leaved Water-crowfoot. *Perennial. Df. Rare. SK276907.* Only one small site noted.

Ranunculus omiophyllus – Round-leaved Water-crowfoot. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* Occurs in several small quantities on the wetter areas.

Rorippa palustris – Marsh Yellow-cress. *Annual. Df, Occasional.* Widely distributed. Found in moderate quantities at mid to lower reservoir levels.

Sagina procumbens – Procumbent Pearlwort. *Perennial. DD, Df. Rare.* Widely spread but only as isolated plants.

*Senecio sylvaticus** – Heath Groundsel. *Annual. DD, Frequent. Df, Rare.* A locally uncommon species that is normally found on slightly acidic well drained sandy soils. We had previously noted it growing on reservoir stonework but only rarely on mud. Some specimens at Dale Dike reached almost a metre in height. In flower.

Senecio vulgaris – Groundsel. *Annual. DD, Df. Occasional.* An early occupier of almost any situation. In flower.

Spergula arvensis – Corn Spurrey. *Annual. DD, Df. Frequent.* A taxon that usually prefers disturbed soils such as cornfields but does also seem to occur at most reservoirs. Often abundant at higher levels. In flower.

*Spergularia rubra** – Sand Spurrey. *Biennial. Df. Rare. SK269914 & SK270913.* Another taxon that normally has a preference for well drained sandy soils. Widely distributed but only with isolated individuals. In flower.

Stellaria alsine – Bog Stitchwort. *Perennial. Df. Rare.* Usually occurring in small but luxuriant patches on the wetter areas of the south bank.

ADDENDUM.

The general term ‘MUD’ in this article refers to hardened silts and clays found on the exposed floors and sides of Dale Dike and Damflask reservoirs.

In certain instances *The South Yorkshire Plant Atlas*, (2011). Edited by G.T.D. Wilmore, J. Lunn & J.S. Rodwell was consulted for general taxa distribution.

Apart from having an interest to botanists both Dale Dike and Damflask appeared to also support a rich avian fauna either on the water or in the surrounding foliage. Of particular interest to us was the small semi-resident flock of Mandarin Ducks on Damflask which never failed to brighten our visits. For Bryologists we also came across a locally uncommon thalloid liverwort in *Riccia glauca* - Glaucus Crystalwort whose identity was kindly confirmed for us by Joan Egan. This was found happily growing on several square metres of mud at Dale Dike SK235907.

Anyone wishing to know more about Bryophytes and Mud should consult *Sorby Record No.50* and the comprehensive article by *Harry Lake and Joan Egan* on ‘*Bryophytes of Reservoirs and Arable Fields*’.

As always we are also indebted to Dr Ken Balkow for reading through this article and offering his constructive comments.

Given the number of alternative Mediterranean venues for walking and climbing, it is worth reflecting on why we keep returning to the Calpe area. For at least one member on the meet it was their seventh week in the area but only on one day this week were they repeating a previously visited ascent. It is not only the many locations for outdoor activities within reasonable driving distance but their variety which is attractive: coastal and inland walking, spectacular ridge and canyon walking, sport and traditional rock climbing and abseiling down canyons. Added to those are the cultural sites such as the castles and hill villages besides the opportunities for swimming and mountain biking. It is a great area with something to suit every taste and ability, even full English breakfast and lager in Benidorm if you want it.

So popular did this meet prove that the familiar large Villa Perles used on the last meet lacked sufficient capacity and a second was required. This arrangement was less than ideal but proved satisfactory with some groups consisting of individuals from both establishments heading off to walks or climbs. One couple seeking greater luxury were ensconced in a hotel. Villa Perles' location, close to the main coastal road, gave ready access to the hills and was only a few blocks from two supermarkets.

Albert's 83rd birthday was celebrated on the first day of the meet with a chocolate cake and sparkling wine. Towards the opposite end of the scale it was noted that summing the ages of the youngest three attending failed to reach Albert's years by a long chalk.

The Climbing

Michael and Richard Smith got in a couple of sport routes at Marin, near Alicante during their drive up. On the Sunday, two parties, the Champions and then M&R Smith, Kjetil Tveranger and Tim Josephy drove the short distance from the villas and walked up to Olta, situated high above Calpe and with fine views out to sea and the 330m Penon. Several routes of 4 to 5+ were done before occasional showers encouraged a relatively early finish. Later in the week the Champions had a productive day at Toix, climbing routes up to 6a. On Friday, after doing the Ponoig via Ferrata they climbed a couple of routes in nearby Echo Valley.

Two of the great traditional routes for which this area is justly famous were also done. On Monday, we climbed Via Valencianos, 250m VS, which wends its way up the awe inspiring South face of the Penon taking a devious route to avoid excessive difficulties. The early start may have been a shock to Aaron but it meant that we were up there showering bits on those below rather than down below being showered upon by those above.



Via Valencianos team on top of the Penon de Lfach

We climbed in two ropes of three, R&M Smith and Kjetil, then the Campions and Tim Josephy. Apart from a short but desperately polished crux crack, the rest of the route was enjoyable steep slab climbing with a spectacular belay about 170m up on a knife edge ridge overlooking Calpe. It was a bit of a shock to reach the summit to find it thronged with visitors who had walked up the tourist path to invade our peace.



On the way down we met a YRC party making their way up, an ascent of the Penon is a must for any hill walker visiting this area.

Later in the week on Thursday, the Campions and Richard Smith went to the Mascarat Gorge to climb the Llobet-Bertomeu route, 250m HVS. When you drive through the gorge it is impressive enough. To climb there is a unique experience and one that Ged had wanted to have for many years. After a fairly easy introduction the climbing soon became steep and sustained at VS with one pitch considerably harder. All of this was spectacularly positioned right above the road and the trio were acutely conscious of the risk of knocking stones on to the unsuspecting motorists below.

The walking

Parties were out and about every day making the most of the wonderful limestone scenery. Most had a crack at the Penon and most of those made it up the slippery track to the top. Christine Marriott was very pleased to get to the top end of the tunnel which is a feature of the route, Jim Harrison got a bit further and Albert, who had a leg injury following a recent car accident, made it nearly to the top.

Sun: Ascent of Carrascal de Parcent from Parcent: Mick, Helen, Arthur, David, Jim & Christine Harrison and Ann-Karin

Els Arcs walk: Bill, Richard Sealey, Paul Dover, John & Carol.

Mon: Ascent of Penon de Ifach: Paul, Billy, John and Carol

On Monday morning we had a relaxed start to the day. Billy Sarakun led us across the beach at Calpe to the start of the Penon; it was there we bumped into Alan and Angie Linford. We compared notes then adjourned to the nearest tapas bar for beer and a tasty bit of lunch before our scramble

up this huge chunk of limestone rock. Richard Sealey decided to go elsewhere, so our team consisted of Paul Dover, Billy, John and myself.

It was thronging by the time we reached the trail: a whole coach full of excited French school kids had arrived. I thought they'd probably not go any further than the tunnel but I was wrong. John and I had been up the Penon over 30 years ago and only saw a couple of people, but now it's a major tourist attraction. Not far after the tunnel we bumped into our climbing team on their way down. We were on a rocky ledge with great views and steep sea cliffs. John took a group photo before we scuttled off to the Guard Post where I was in charge of the camera. From there we scaled the main path which now has chains, as the rock is polished and quite unforgiving. It was so noisy at the top that we only stayed long enough to take quick snaps then we left Billy to admire the view.

Ascent of Malla del Llop from Famorca: Mick, Helen, Arthur, David, Bill and Ann-Karin

We headed further inland to tackle another ridge traverse at the eastern end of the Serra de Serrella. This excellent route climbs past abandoned terraces into a valley with interesting rock formations leading to another bare limestone ridge which was followed over the summits of El Regall (1319m) and the Mallada de Llop (1361m) passing plenty of hedgehog broom.

The far-reaching views from the crest were splendid, especially to the Castellet ridge, where a steep descent brought us into the spectacular Barranc de la Canal, a wide and steep sided valley draining Mallada de Llop to the east. A mule track descended through more disused terraces and brought us back to Famorca and then a beer in front of the log fire at the Coll de Ratesventa.

Tue: Serra de Olta: Paul, Billy, John, Carol, Richard Sealey

Scramble on west ridge of Monte Ponoig: Mick, David, Bill, Helen, Ann-Karin, Arthur and Jim & Christine Harrison

The Ponoig is a fine isolated summit giving a choice of a direct scramble or a walk up the west ridge. Having located the correct track up from Finestrat, we left the cars on a path up to the Refugi Vera Catral, a spartan tin bivvy hut used by climbers tackling routes on the adjacent Puig Campana. The Col del Pouet was soon underfoot and the next innominate col gave access to Ponoig's west ridge. Dave and Mick went for the scramble up the arete, meeting the others at Monte Ponoig's summit cairn (1182m) and all returned to the col by the path. At the Col del Llamp, a group of lovely dark purple and lime fritillaries (*fritillaria lusitanica*) were seen, their drooping heads nodding in the breeze. An easy return was then made down forestry tracks.

Wed: Walk to Els Arcs natural arches – Mick, David Hick & Christine Marriott

Thu: Traverse of Serra del Ferrer ridge: Mick, Tim, Mike & Helen, Ann-Karin & Kjetil, David, Arthur and Billy

This grade 1 scramble is rightly considered one of the best walks in the area. Pleasant walking up dry stream valleys steepens to a pull up to the south end of the ridge. This leads over a narrow and vertiginous section, rather steeper and longer than Crib Goch, to a complex route through rugged and spectacular scenery to the descent col. We carried on to the summit around a kilometre further north, disturbing a herd of goats on the way.

Further progress looked unpleasant through trackless scrub and thorn so we returned to the col and so down to the cars which we had fortuitously left in a restaurant car park. It would have been churlish not to have had a beer.



Vall de Laguar (fabulous gorge walk) with : Bill, Paul, Richard Sealey, John & Carol. The original plan for the day was to walk along the Cavall Verd ridge. However, once we were parked in Benimaurell the conditions were proving to be far too windy to make that walk a pleasure. As an option we chose to do the walk through the gorge Barranc de Racons.

The route from Benimaurell was taken in an anti-clockwise direction downhill via a concreted road leading north-east which lead on to a dirt track narrowing to a path which eventually led to the start of the downhill stepped Mozarabic trail carved into the mountainside by the Moors centuries ago. The steps led down to the dry river bed of the Rio Girona at which time we came off the main PR-CV147 to follow the river bed through the gorge. The river bed provided some stunning rock formations carved out by water and some superb scenery.

All too soon the way out of the gorge was marked by a cairn in the middle of the riverbed. At this point we headed up hill on a steep narrow and in places airy path taking us across the steep hillside with views down into the Barranc d'Infierno. This path eventually met another beautifully constructed stepped path that continued uphill towards a road that led down to our start point in Benimaurell.

This was a fantastic walk with tremendous scenery and interest throughout.

Castell d'Aixa: Jim and Christine Harrison

Jim & Christine Harrison had a couple of days on their own, one on Monday to the Pas Tancat area where Christine would later “enjoy” a descent of the eponymous canyon. They went to see the eagles but had forgotten to tell them they were coming. The eagles were not in. They also climbed Castell d'Aixa with splendid views. After the initial disappointment of finding the pool at Font d'Aixa completely empty this was an excellent walk, mainly in sunny weather. The first part of the walk was a steady climb with a short but narrow shelf section before gaining the first ridge with its splendid views to Val de Pop and the further climb up to Castell d'Aixa. This proved an excellent place to pause and take in the views towards Montgo, Ferrer and the sea. Following the descent to a well (sadly with a lost bucket) the walking was mainly easy providing views of an ever changing landscape, including the encroachment of development into a wild area. There was an interesting and slightly twisty finish to the walk, mainly through olive terraces which are being restored. A striking feature of this were the number of burnt and blackened tree stubs which Jim found strangely arresting.

Fri: Bernia circuit: Bill, Richard Sealey, Paul

Ascent of Pla del la Casa from Facheca: Mick, Mike & Helen, Ann-Karin & Kjetil, David and Billy
We returned to the Serra de Serrella to climb Pla de la Casa, named after its enormous nevera (pla meaning level and casa meaning snow-pit in Valenciano), some 11m in diameter and 13 m deep constructed in the 18th century to take advantage of the altitude. We passed a huge walled-in cave used as a goat-fold and stopped for lunch at the nevera. We signed the summit book on Pla de la Casa (1379m), admired the extensive views and headed down the old ice-cutters mule track to the Font Roja spring. A traversing path then took us back to the village descending via the customary abandoned terraces.

Sat: Walk up Barranc del Cint above Alcoi : Mick and Albert

This short walk above the university town of Alcoi took in the best bit of the steep-sided Barranc del Cint which continued into a nature reserve. Four griffon vultures circled overhead, signalling time to return to the car to get back to the airport.

The Canyons

Barranc del Pas Tancat (by Christine Harrison)

On Wednesday a party of 7 set off to abseil down the Barranco del Pas Tancat. We were Smiths three, Michael, Helen and Richard, Tim Josephy, Kjetil and Ann-Karin Tveranger and Christine Harrison. On the way we had dropped Jim Harrison and Albert at Guadalest to explore its culture and history.

Among our party were two absolute beginners, Christine and Ann-Karin and Helen who had one previous canyon under her harness. We'd had a short lesson, delivered by Michael, the previous evening on the villa's marble staircase.

The entrance to the barranco was well concealed but we soon encountered the first pitch, fairly easily negotiated. However, the description of the length of the drops didn't reflect what we actually found and it turned out to be much more difficult and longer. The advertised 300m length was actually the depth - it was about 2km long! After a couple of pitches a more difficult one appeared. It was in two sections with a scramble up a rope in between. Tim was on hand to haul us three up the rope. The second section was a long drop, about 30 metres into a huge space. Dangling there, my heart was in my mouth. By this time it had been raining for a while and we were getting cold. Kjetil had sustained an eye injury from a flicking rope and could only see from one eye. The second long pitch started down a slippery chute and looked quite short. Richard set off down only to find the rope dangling well above the ground and had to climb back up to re-rig. There were about 10 pitches altogether with two being about 30-40 metres.

The beginners found it hard going but were ably assisted by the experienced members. Michael, the anchor man, even did a few mid air poses, circus style, for the cameras. The scenery was stupendous and I've never seen or experienced anything like it. It had been a long day and we were all glad to reach the bottom and see the green bridge where we'd left our cars.

PS Kjetil's eyesight improved over the next few days and we hope continues to do so.

Barranc des Llidoners and Barranc de Racons

On Friday Richard Smith and Tim Josephy, armed with much rope and in the latter case faltering courage, drove to the little village of Benimaurell. The canyon was only a few yards from the road and started with a 60m drop over a huge amphitheatre. We had to make a diagonal abseil of 14m to a hanging stance on the edge of the overhang with the unnerving knowledge that if we missed it, the ends of the ropes were a long way from the ground. The remainder of the drop was in space with ample opportunity to take in the magnificence of the scene.

Another 50m abseil and several smaller ones led to the junction with the Barranc de Racons, a gentler place but with fine sculpted rock in the bed and just one abseil. Eventually we reached the junction with the Barranc del Inferno, which we had done the last time we were here. The return was the same way Bill and his team had gone a few days previously. Exciting abseils, jaw dropping scenery and ancient paths. A great day.

The Via Ferrata

Monte Ponoig

R&M Smith, Kjetil and Tim did it on Monday, the Champions on Friday. This modern and well equipped route is very steep and exposed, making it a full on introduction for Tim, who hadn't done this sort of thing before. It climbs 200m, mostly vertical or bulging- a good workout for the arms!

The first team ignored the abseil descent and thought they might find a way to the top of the mountain. They didn't. Eventually, after following goat tracks across the steep hillside they had to bite the bullet and descend through scrub and thorns into a dry river bed, climbing the other side to reach the top of Echo Valley and a good path home. They left several pints of good English and Norwegian blood for the local denizens to feed on.

**Kjetil on the Ponoig
via ferrata**



The Rest

From time to time various people had easier days, exploring Calpe and the area. Christine took the bus to Benidorm and was so impressed she spent 40 minutes sitting reading at the bus stop waiting to get back to civilisation.

On Wednesday Jim and Albert were dropped in Guadalest by the canyoning party and experienced a cultural tour of the Old Town and Castle. They took advantage of the initially beautiful sunshine, though it was coupled with strong winds. Every viewpoint was explored to absorb the beautifully

blue reservoir and the spectacular 360 degree view of the surrounding mountains. Within the house of Orduna there was a thought provoking exhibition of digital collage produced by the Tancasian Canyonista Collective. After separate explorations the parties reconvened over a relaxed lunch and as the weather had turned inclement set to waiting for a lift in a bar. The atmosphere turned distinctly theatrical, particularly after the last tour bus left town, descending into Samuel Beckett territory only for Godot to eventually turn up driving a Nissan Qashqai.

This was an excellent and very active meet in a wonderful area to which I'm sure we will return.

Attending: Helen Smith, Michael Smith, Mick Borroff, Christine Harrison, Jim Harrison, Bill Gibbs, Paul Dover, Billy Sarakun (G), Alan Linford, Angie Linford (G), Carol Whalley, John Whalley, Richard Sealey, Ged Campion, Aaron Campion, Albert Chapman, Arthur Salmon, David Hick, Christine Marriott (G) Kjetil Tveranger, Ann-Karin Tveranger (G), Tim Josephy



Top left - Serra Ferrer TJ

Els Arcs - C Marriott, Mick Borroff
DH

Top right - Richard Smith
Du Darfst Olta TJ

Ponoig and Puig Campagna
from Ferrer TJ

Nine members and guests assembled in the coastal town of Cahersiveen on the Iveragh Peninsula, about half an hour's drive southwest of Killarney, arriving in Ireland by ferry and plane in glorious sunshine. We made ourselves comfortable in the Old Monastery, a large Victorian country house built in 1842, which the Club had rented for the week and headed into the town for an evening meal and a Guinness or two.

Cahersiveen proved to be a good choice for a base as it was a pleasant laid-back town with several pubs and good restaurants, a butcher, a baker and several food stores and much less busy than Killarney. There were local hill and coastal walks available, as well as the higher peaks of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks not far away, and plenty of interesting sightseeing to do.

WALKING

On Sunday, Mick and Tim made a start on the hills with a circuit of Mangerton Mountain (843m) and Stoompa on a rather misty and damp day. The insectivorous butterworts lining the stream on the initial ascent were the largest either of us had ever seen - more like the size of dog violets.

Bog Violets (Butterworts)
Photo MB



On our descent, Tim found that his new hip was fortunately resistant to dislocation when he inadvertently put his leg down a hole underneath the heather and cracked a rib with his knee instead.

Hilary, John and Ros walked up Beentee behind Cahersiveen to enjoy the fine views over the town and Valentia Island. Martyn and Lizzie undertook a circular walk on Valentia Island walking from the car park at the Skelligs Visitor Centre to Clynacatan to Coarha Beg, past St Brendon's Well to Beenakryraka Head and around to the Tower at Bray Head and back via Clynacatan.

Tim was dropped off by Mick in Kells on Monday to ascend Knocknandobar (690m) to make a 17km traverse back to Cahersiveen. He enjoyed a spiritually uplifting descent, if that is possible, via the 14 stations of the cross. John and Ros took an afternoon walk around Rosebehy Point, that took them way out along Rossbeigh Strand into the bay, a fascinating place where a close eye on the tide was required.

Mick was fit from ten days in Scotland prior to the meet climbing Munros with Bob Peckham, so a fine weather forecast on Tuesday tempted him to do a solo traverse of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks

starting near Kate Kearney's Cottage at the foot of the Gap of Dunloe, where John kindly provided a lift to the start. The route led up Cruach Mhor (932m) and along a precipitous ridge to The Big Gun (939m) and on to Knocknapeasta (988m), the highest peak in the eastern Reeks.



The Big Gun, Knocknapeaste and Lough Cummeenapeasta (Photo MB)

Maolan Bui (973m), Cnoc an Chuillin (958m) and Cnoc Toinne soon followed. As Mick ascended to the large summit cross on Carrauntoohil (1039m), Ireland's highest point, he met Tim, John, Lizzie and Martyn on their descent, returning by their ascent route of the Devil's Staircase from Cronin's Yard. Mick then completed his route over Caher (1001m) and made the long descent to Glencar, where John picked him up, more than slightly tired after 24km and 1868m of ascent.



Setting off to Carrauntoohil and on the summit (Photos TJ)

On Wednesday, Mick and Tim enjoyed an easier day. They walked from Cahersiveen over the summit of Beentee by an 11km circuit known locally as the Carhan Letter Loop, with fine views from the top.



Knocknandobar
from
Valentia Island

(Photo MB)

Thursday saw Tim in the Glenbeigh hills, Meenteog, Coomacarra (772m), Teermoyle, Mullaghnarakill, Been Hill, Beenmore and Drung. All were done in mist and heavy showers. The descent to the coast road was enlivened by an uncontrolled descent down a 30ft shale embankment to the amusement of some passing tourists. 18km. Meanwhile, Mick and Hilary almost missed the showers and did a coastal walk around Ducalla Head and Bolus carpeted in pink thrift, but the sea mist prevented any views of the sharp Skellig islands.

On Friday Mick and Tim did a walk over Slievagh to Canglass Point to view the sea cave which had penetrated the headland to form a massive collapsed blowhole which put Hull Pot to shame.



Picture shows Tim if you can see him which gives an indication of scale.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Peter and Ann did a lot less walking than they had planned because they brought their dog which on reflection was a mistake. Dogs are not just not welcome in Ireland, they are banned from all open land, even on a lead, and can be shot! Nevertheless, they had a very enjoyable and interesting time being tourists.

Hilary brought her kayak out to Kerry and had a play out in the bay at Coonanna which was surrounded by convoluted black cliffs and was very attractive. It also resulted in a chance encounter with Gerry, a local paddler, who the day after took her out on a cross-estuary trip from White Strand to the island of Beginish via Church Island. This has a basic stone structure, now largely restored, which is a very early church. This had to be seen from the water however, since the tide was running too fast to make a safe landing on the small, steep, rocky islet. Local knowledge of the tides and currents was invaluable and Gerry was an interesting guide to the area generally, not just to its maritime vagaries!

Several parties visited the Kells Bay Gardens containing a large collection of sub-tropical plants which take advantage of the Gulf stream climate.

Its most interesting feature was the planted forest of tree ferns, positively prehistoric. Others visited the houses and gardens at Muckross, Derrynane and Glanleam. The latter was a fascinating place, completely run down, with an air of dereliction, but did have a hint of the fairies.

The mulberry forest was very distinctive.

Ros Brown,
Kells Gardens

(Photo JB)



Martyn and Lizzie took a trip to Bandon in County Cork to discover some ancestral history on Lizzie's maternal side. Including a visit to the West Cork Heritage Centre which provided a great insight into the region's and Ireland's past .

Various parties during the week visited the imposing Cahersiveen barracks constructed in the Schloss style between years 1870 - 1875 as a police station for the Royal Irish Constabulary to protect the Irish end of the new transatlantic telegraph cable entering the sea at Valentia Island.

Today the building holds an excellent Heritage Centre, dedicated to the life of the 19th century Irish political leader Daniel O’Connell. Born nearby, he became an MP in Westminster and sought separation from Great Britain although he believed strongly in non-violent protest and was very popular with the masses.

After looking at the ruins of Ballycarbery Castle and going to see the two ancient stone ringforts nearby, most crossed over on the ferry over to Valentia Island and visited several places of interest there, including Geokaun Mountain and the tetrapod footprints.

John and Ros travelled to the centre of the Iveragh peninsular to visit Likeen Wood. This was a good example of a wet woodland of willow and alder growing close to a beautiful river that had been developed as a game fishing venue. They also spent the following couple of days in a busy Dublin during the Irish bank holiday. The Guinness was good though! They spent time walking in Phoenix Park, the largest city park in Europe and the botanical gardens.

As well as the Guinness, we discovered Powers whiskey, as well as enjoying some excellent sea food at Reenard Point. With mostly benign weather, all in all, it was another excellent Irish meet.

MJB

BIRD LIST

Robin	Skylark	Sparrow	Gt. Black backed gull
Hooded crow	Willow warbler	Gannet	Collared dove
Swallow	Cuckoo	Rook	Wren
Jackdaw	Heron	Little egret	Raven
Grey wagtail	Tree creeper	Cormorant	
Chaffinch	Meadow pipit	Gold finch	
Pied wagtail	Kestrel	Black cap	
Chough	Rock pipit	Herring gull	
Wheatear	Stone chat	Bullfinch	
Blackbird	Swift	Starling	

ATTENDING:

Mick Borroff (President) - Leader, John Brown, Ros Brown, Peter Chadwick, Martyn Trasler, Tim Josephy, Ann Chadwick (guest) Hilary Tearle (guest), Lizzie Trasler (guest),

FURTHER READING

- Hill Walkers Kerry – David Herman (Shanksmare Publications)
- Hill Walkers Atlantic Ireland – David Herman (Shanksmare Publications)
- The Mountains of Ireland: A Guide to Walking the Summits – Paddy Dillon (Cicerone)
- Carrauntooil & MacGillicuddy’s Reeks, A Walking Guide to Ireland’s Highest Mountains
Jim Ryan (Collins Press)
- Killarney to Valentia Island - the Inveragh Peninsula – Adrian Hendroff (Collins Press)
- The Dingle, Inveragh & Beara Peninsulas – Adrian Hendroff (Collins Press)

I do not really know why I always seemed to have a love for the mountains. Nobody in my family had any particular interest in the hills and, although we enjoyed country walks, we never set out to climb a particular peak. Also, having been brought up on the west Lancashire coast in one of the flattest regions of the country, there was little immediate incentive to seek out the high places. Nevertheless I can remember from early childhood the mysterious lump of Black Combe rising out of the sea way beyond the obvious landmark of Blackpool Tower and, on the clearest days, the enticing cluster of the Coniston fells at least 60 miles away. Even then I felt I wanted to be a part of this and yearned to seek out the high places for myself.

It was not until my last year at school when I first took the opportunity to do so. A friend and I went up to the Lakes for a week at Easter with something of a train spotter's approach to climb all the 3,000 foot peaks. It was the first time we had stayed in youth hostels and appreciated the wonderful opportunities provided by this organisation to have cheap and pleasant accommodation in the heart of the climbing areas.

Our objective on the first day was to climb Great Gable. We took the morning bus from Keswick to Borrowdale and set off up the track to Seathwaite in warm and dry conditions. We were woefully inexperienced and ill-equipped: we had a map but no compass and thought that shorts would be the correct dress for the mountains.

Also we had no idea how long the route would take. From the farm we walked up to cross the

river at Stockley Bridge and swung round to follow the track up Styhead Gill.

After quite a while we suddenly found ourselves on the shores of Styhead Tarn and wondered what was now the best route. We had not done our preparation and so, instead of taking the attractive Breast track up Gable, we set off up the very unrewarding Aaron Slack, which was a grim slog up endless loose scree.

Eventually we made Windy Gap but unfortunately met the cloud line and had to pick our way carefully through the mist until we finally reached the summit cairn.

We felt a real sense of achievement as this was something neither of us had done before; the only disappointment being that we were denied a view.

We were more fortunate during the rest of the week, finally adding Scafell Pike, Skiddaw, Helvellyn and Coniston Old Man to our tally, all in excellent weather and with extensive views. This experience was the beginning of a lifelong fascination with the hills.

For the next four years I was at university in the centre of England far from the mountains and had little chance to explore further until my first teaching post at Christ College Brecon, nestling on a lovely site beside the river Usk and beneath the beautiful ridge of the Brecon Beacons.

In the next three years I got to know this area very well and sometimes on a free afternoon I would take the opportunity of a quick trip up Pen Y Fan and Corn Ddu to admire the

magnificent panorama across the Black Mountains and the Carmarthenshire Fan.

Then in the early 60s I moved to St Bees and was able to rekindle my love of the Lake District, which I have always regarded as my spiritual home. I was fortunate in that several of my colleagues were keen, and very good, mountaineers who kindly included me on all sorts of expeditions and introduced me to the joys of rock climbing and winter mountaineering.

The very hard winter of 1963-64 was a wonderful time: the big freeze began on Boxing Day and continued unbroken until the second week in March.

The first expedition of that period was in fact in North Wales when a colleague of mine who had relatives near Llandudno invited me down to join him on the Snowdon Horseshoe. It was a truly magnificent day but very demanding from a technical point of view and I would surely have perished without Alan's expert leadership.

We first went up Lliwedd and followed the ridge round to the summit of Snowdon. This required great concentration but it was when we started along Crib Goch that I realised how formidable this expedition was: a frozen knife-edge ridge studded with ice-glazed rocks and an infinite drop on either side. Not for the faint-hearted! We had of course roped up and Alan gave the instruction that if one of us fell over the edge we must shout which side, and the companion would have to jump off the other—all very reassuring!

As we inched our way along we had what was surely the most remarkable experience I have ever had in the mountains. Our two shadows were sharply outlined on the ridge of the Glyders across the valley, each shadow moving separately but each also surrounded by its own rainbow halo. We supposed it must have been

some combination of Brocken Spectre and Glory but it did not seem to fit either description accurately. I have seen the Brocken Spectre on the Scottish hills several times but it has always been a shadowy and indistinct projection onto a bank of mist. The Glory can be seen quite frequently from a plane flying through a bank of cloud but I have never met anyone who could really explain our experience.

Alan mentioned that Whymper's party was supposed to have seen the same phenomenon just before the fatal fall on the Matterhorn but at the moment that was not something that we wished to contemplate.

We completed the Horseshoe without further alarms, however, and agreed over a pint in the Pen y Gwryd that we had had a splendid day.

The above-mentioned hard winter provided a number of superb weekends with the hills in magnificent condition. What a pity that no longer seems to be the case. There were so many highlights, including a memorable day on Helvellyn when we walked straight across the frozen Red Tarn and used our axes to cut a way directly up the north-east face. There was such a huge cornice on the summit ridge that we had to burrow a way through it to reach the plateau.

On another day we walked right across Loweswater and even watched intrepid motorists driving on Derwent Water.

The Lakeland crags also marked my first experience of rock climbing and here again there are so many wonderful memories.

I remember a strenuous day on Scafell Pinnacle when I was pressed into leading one exposed pitch and when we eventually reached the summit in pitch dark. Another great joy was climbing the Napes Needle with Richard Gowing, an old university friend. I remember the first part from Needle Gap was fairly

straightforward but once we had turned the corner and were faced with the exposed face and the ultimate mantel-shelf it was a different matter. We scrambled up to the tiny summit, however, and Richard rather disconcertingly pointed out how the whole Needle could be made to rock with just a slight sideways movement.

Perhaps my best climb, however, was the demanding Tophet Wall on Gable which we climbed on Remembrance Sunday in glorious late-Autumn conditions.

By the time I left Cumbria in 1965 and moved up to a new post in Edinburgh I had managed to climb all the Lakeland peaks so was looking forward to the new mountain delights in Scotland. Before I left, however, Richard suggested that I might like to join the YRC and I gladly accepted the opportunity.

I attended a meet at Mungrisdale as a prospective member and greatly enjoyed all the fun and fellowship. The Inn was overflowing with our group, so that the only sleeping space that Ian Crowther and I could find was on the floor of the bar; there are worse places. I was duly elected in 1964 (my application being seconded by Jack Hilton no less) and have now been a member for over 50 years.

One of the great pleasures has been attending the Annual Dinner and I count myself very fortunate to have coincided with many of the great names of mountaineering who in the later stages of their career generously gave their time to attend. I still possess some very special menu cards signed by such legends as John Hunt, Eric Shipton, Tom Patey, Joe Walmsley, George Band and Ian McNaught Davies.

I have many happy memories of club meets in a wide variety of places. One of the first was the Easter meet in Glen Nevis in 1965. We camped towards the head of the glen and spent a splendid few days on the Mamores. These were the first

Scottish hills I had climbed and I proudly notched my first Munro, Mullach nan Coirean. Little did I realise then the train of events that I had set in motion, one that was to occupy a significant part of my life for the next ten years-but more of that anon.

After the weekend my companions and I headed for Dundonnell where we enjoyed the luxury of the local hotel.

The following morning we set out for An Teallach and had perhaps the most wonderful day on the hills that I have ever experienced. The day was clear and bright, the views in all directions were diamond sharp and the snow was in beautiful condition. The summit ridge over the Corrag Bhuidhe buttresses is sensational with just room for one foot at a time as you inch your way along and when we eventually descended from the final peak some hours later we knew we had been truly blessed.

From here we drove round to Torridon to stay at the Ling Hut and had similarly splendid days on Beinn Alligin, Beinn Eighe, Slioch and Liathach. I had no idea that mountains could be so magnificent and it felt a true privilege to be a part of it.

Now that I was living in Scotland the opportunities to get out into these hills became a reality and I spent many weekends and sections of longer holidays in different parts of the mountains.

The Munro tally grew gradually, almost without my realising it, until I decided that I should specifically record the various expeditions. My climbing diary fortunately includes all the Scottish expeditions and remains a happy source of memories until this day.

There are so many magnificent routes in

Scotland that it is very difficult to select the absolute highlights. I suppose one's tally will depend to some extent on one's companions and the prevailing weather conditions but I have so many indelible memories.

I think of three expeditions to Skye. My first day on the incomparable Cuillins was the traverse of Clach Glas and Blaven and one could not consider a more superb introduction. There was another wonderful day on the Pinnacle Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean when we met a wiry 79 year old on the summit who looked as if he could have gone on walking for ever. Then there was the huge excitement of climbing the Cioch. I remember roping up at the foot of the enormous slab and wondering how on earth we were going to get up that. A few days later another great target came my way as we tackled the Inaccessible Pinnacle. I found it technically fairly straightforward but the exposure, particularly on the descent, was the stuff of nightmares.

Other memorable days included the traverse of the Aonach Eagach, the wonders of the Rough Bounds of Knoydart and the monumental trek into Upper Glen Dessarry to climb the wonderful Sgurr na Ciche, perhaps the finest mountain of them all.

At first the number of Munros was just a passing score but as the various milestones of 100 and 150 were achieved I realised that the "completion", as the SMC describes it, was becoming a possibility. Once I had passed 200 and was counting downwards the sense of excitement was palpable. The difficulty was of course that those remaining tended to be in the remotest parts of the Highlands and were requiring ever more complicated problems of access.

I was greatly helped by some very considerate Factors who kindly gave me access to some of the estate roads, which avoided a wearisome plod of many miles, but there were still many

unusual adventures. These included wading through the river to avoid an enormous detour on the approach to Slioch, hitching a lift on a snowplough on a fiercely stormy February day on Drumochter, and specially commissioning a friend with a four-wheel drive to gain access to Bendronaig Lodge on the Attadale Estate in order to reach Lurg Mhor and Bidean a' Choire Sheasgaich. When asking one of the party what his recent climbing experience had been he mentioned modestly that it was on the south face of Everest!

Eventually I was down to a final six peaks in the Letterewe wilderness and a weekend expedition at the end of May was set aside for the purpose.

We drove up through Inverness to near Dundonnell and set out across the moor to the beautifully located bothy of Shenavall in Strathnasheallag. Over the two days we finally left ourselves with the remote peak of Ruadh Stac Mor but unfortunately the cloud and rain came in and we were denied any views on the summit. Nevertheless there was a joyous celebration including a bottle of whisky which had mysteriously found itself into a rucksack.

Thus the great odyssey was over and we worked our way back to the hut in great content, not particularly minding that we had another wading of a river to negotiate.

The ascent of the Munros had taken me just over nine years and I felt truly privileged to have spent so many splendid days in such magnificent surroundings. I also take pride in being the first of several of our club members to complete the round.

After this I turned my attention to the Donalds, a much less challenging but still extremely rewarding table of the 2000 foot peaks in the Scottish Lowlands. These had the advantage of being much closer to my home in

Edinburgh and also conveniently grouped so that one could easily climb several peaks in a single day. There are many interesting places to visit in the southern part of Scotland but the favourite for me was Galloway. The hills here are both more remote and challenging, providing some excellent expeditions. The long ridge of the Rhinns of Kells is an especial delight and the whole area is a haven for wild life with sightings of adders quite frequent.

After a long spell in Edinburgh our next destination was Vancouver Island on the west coast of Canada. I managed to do a little climbing while we were there but time was much more limited and the really interesting mountains were rather too far away. There was one lovely peak called Mount Baldy which stood out above the lake on which we lived and I often used to climb this on a spare afternoon. It had a few testing sections that one had to approach with care but it gave magnificent views across the water to the Gulf Islands and south to the Olympic mountains in Washington State.

Another interesting day was when we were on holiday in the Rockies and I took the cable car from Banff to the ridge of Sulphur Mountain. It was a glorious day with just a light breeze and the ridge has a number of intermediate summits leading to a large cairn at the highest point. The view down to Lake Louise is most spectacular and if you are kindly disposed you can share your lunch with the inquisitive chipmunks and marmots; whereby hangs a tale! I had set out in such lovely conditions that I was wearing just a shirt and shorts and had not bothered to take any provisions. Considering that I had started out at 8000 feet, that was probably not the wisest decision. The ridge narrowed sharply and the drops on both sides were sensational; however, I made my way to the cross and cairn on the summit and decided it was time to turn back. It was then that the

cloud cover boiled up in no time and it started to snow heavily. I was very glad that I had already traversed the route so generally knew where I was but had to be extremely careful to take the correct route of descent through the crags. I was very relieved to reach the gondola station and it was quite an experience to walk straight out of the storm into a warm café. I was soaked and really fancied something to eat but had nothing with me but my return gondola ticket. However, just as I was checking that this was intact I found a pulpy mass in my pocket which turned out to be a \$5 bill. Fish and chips was \$4.99 and my money was accepted with some reluctance.

On returning to England five years later we took various holidays in Europe and though I never took the opportunity to do any serious mountaineering, I did have three days in the Karwendel and Rofan Gebirge which were especially enjoyable. The first day was an ascent of the Barenkopf above Pertisau on the Achensee and the following day I climbed the beautiful peak of the Seebergerspitze which also towers above the same lake. It is an unremittingly steep climb but the upper sections contain some beautiful flower meadows. The final section presents quite a challenge on a knife-edge ridge and then you are on the summit at just below 7000 feet. The view is magnificent: across the Karwendel towards the Zugspitze, and south into the major Austrian peaks of the Gross Venediger and the Grossglockner.

On the final day my wife and I went up on the Rofanbahn cable car and set out on a beautiful sunny morning for the Hochjoch, the highest mountain in the Rofan. We found a very well-contoured track which led on to a grassy saddle, after which it became a much more serious mountaineering

venture. Handholds were necessary in several places and we were conscious of huge drops down the steep grassy slopes on our left. However, we negotiated the section without too much difficulty and reached the summit at 7540 feet. There was even a record book for us to sign. We took a different route down as we were conscious of the need for some speed if we were to catch the last boat across the Achensee at 4.30. Otherwise we would be stranded.

The only incident of note was when my wife walked round a cow that was standing firmly in the middle of the track and tried to give it a friendly pat on the nose. It turned out not to be a cow after all and it gave her quite an angry biff on the arm which suggested a rapid retreat.

By this time the boat was clearly in sight and it was going to be a close-run thing. We sprinted the last few hundred yards and reached the landing-stage just as the boat drew in.

By this time we were living in rural Derbyshire which is well placed for reaching most of the mountain areas of the country. I had now decided to see if I could complete the Bridges, a catalogue of all the 2000 foot summits in England and Wales. I had in fact climbed quite a lot of them when living in the Brecon Beacons and Cumberland but there were still many areas, particularly in the Pennines that I had not been to.

Gradually this list was whittled down as well but it included some most enjoyable expeditions. I twice went down to Dartmoor to climb High Willhays and Yes Tor, once in the mist when a ghostly herd of ponies appeared out of the gloom and once on a glorious spring day with cuckoos, larks and curlews all calling across the moors.

Bridge had also included Snaefell in his list so I managed to secure an early morning, and very cheap, flight from Liverpool to the Isle of Man

one Sunday, hired a car at the airport and duly drove up the TT course and walked the final distance to the top. The locals proudly tell you that you can see six kingdoms from the summit: England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of Heaven. On such a lovely day you could clearly see them all.

Some of these expeditions have their problems, not the least of which are the military firing ranges and the game shoots. The army personnel are generally very co-operative and will clearly advise you when conditions are hazardous; the grouse shoots can be less predictable but at least you know the dates of the season.

My closest encounter of this kind was many years ago in Glen Derry when we got ourselves between the guns and the deer, having foolishly failed to take note of the stalking season. The stalkers were very courteous, though one companion reckoned he overheard a ghillie say, "Right Angus, you take the one in the blue anorak and I'll have the one in the green."

Thus eventually the Bridges were completed as well but although I still went out on the hills and gained the greatest pleasure from doing so, I was aware that the effort was becoming more strenuous and the long mountain days of old were a thing of the past.

The final pleasure has become the introduction of two of our grandchildren to the joys of the countryside. Both have stayed with us at Low Hall Garth and Lowstern on a number of occasions, have climbed some of the local hills, walked the Ingleton waterfalls, been up to Victoria Cave and done some rock-climbing in the Tilberthwaite quarries. If they can experience at least some of the pleasure that I have derived from my life in the hills I shall feel well content.

Another Life Outside

Albert Chapman

After a recent Friday lunch at the monthly YRC 'Grave Dodgers' get together I thought back to my former days. The average age of those at the lunch was 80.

I joined the YRC 63 years ago when the President, Harry Stembridge, told me that the Club was more than just climbing and caving. It is a social club of like minds and because of this most of my friends are from the YRC.

Some forty years ago we talked of mountains climbed and caves explored but now it is our last hospital visit, and choice of funeral hymns.

According to today's authorities, those of us born in the 1930s and 40s should not have survived this long. Most of us were born to mothers who drank or smoked or both; we had no child-proof tops on bottles and wore no helmets when on a bike. If the family had a car it had no seat belts or airbags.

We shared bottles of pop with our friends; drank water from streams and our milk was not pasturised. The diet included fish & chips, bread & butter, lots of cheese and of course cakes.

We were not overweight because we were always outside playing and TVs and computers were the stuff of science fiction. We would leave home in the morning and play all day and nobody could reach us as there were no mobile phones.

We would spend hours building go-carts out of scrap and then ride them down the hill only to find we had forgotten the brakes. After running into walls, fences and bushes a few times we learnt to solve the problem

We fell out of trees, got cuts and bruises and sometimes broken bones or teeth but there was no law suit because of these 'accidents'

We made up games with sticks and stones. We ate worms and, despite what we had been told it did not put out any eyes and they did not live in us for ever.

At school we were caned for the smallest misdemeanour but it focused our minds on study and made us respect our teachers and call them sir or maam.

Junior sports teams had try-outs and not everybody made the grade. Those that didn't learnt to deal with disappointment and were happy to cheer the team on.

The idea of parents bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of; they actually sided with the law.

Those generations produced some of the best risk takers, problem solvers and inventors ever. The past 50 years has seen an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, responsibility, failure and success and we learnt how to deal with all of them.

We had the luck to grow up before the era of E.U. dictats and before insurance companies, lawyers and governments started regulating our lives supposedly for our own good.

Given the age most members of the YRC achieve there must have been something good about the good old days.

Participants in this meet who had spent the week watering gardens were the first to find where all the rain had gone-the Lake District!

Members and prospective and guest members (3) arrived on the Friday evening to be greeted by Carol and John's wholesome soup. Despite this a few felt the necessity to test the footpath to the Three Shires Inn and it would have been bad manners not to take refreshment after the journey. On the Friday Mick Borroff and Richard Taylor had completed a circuit above Easedale Tarn in dry weather of Helm Crag, Gibson Knott, Calf Crag and Deer Bield Crag.

On Saturday morning we were greeted by steady rain. Mick had wisely decided that a day at the nearby BMC AGM (under cover) was an essential activity for an active president and disappeared early. Tim Josephy and Richard Taylor felt the necessity to show our guests a good time and 'volunteered' to take them up a hill. So the initial party comprising Alan Palmer, Donna Flitwick and Billy Sarakun were joined by Paul Dover and all donned full rain gear. They went by way of Tilberthwaite over High Rake towards Coniston. At this point wisely Paul elected to keep low and circled back by way of Tarn Hows.

The remainder struck out for the heights of Wetherlam. We only knew we had reached the summit when the only way ahead was down. A group decision was made not to continue with the water torture and return by way of Great Carrs. Tim and I hoped that the experience had at least demonstrated that YRC are not fair-weather ramblers, and could find their way home.

Derek Bush, Andrew Duxbury and Dorothy Heaton completed a circuit of Holme Fell and Tarn Hows and reported no better weather.

John and Carol Whalley, who one would have expected were accustomed to being wet, decided that a photographic safari to Cathedral Cave had much appeal.





Cave photos,
JW

On return to LHG to enjoy the evening sun, a rumour was circulating that we were to be joined by two unexpected mystery guest members. The anticipation was at fever pitch when Ian Crowther and John Jenkin burst in, just as dinner was being served. Fortunately Carol and John had used their well-honed purchasing skills at Aldi to ensure nobody went hungry despite this.

On Sunday Mick resumed his executive presidential role and with Donna, Billy, Paul and Richard did a pleasant circuit of Lingmoor Fell arriving back just as the rain started. John and Carol, after cleaning the cottage tried to catch up with the Lingmoor party but turned back when heavy rain set in.



TJ

AP, BS, TJ, RT & DF, putting on a brave face



MB

RD, BS, DF, MB & RT on Lingmore Fell

ATTENDING:

Carol and John Whalley, Mick Borroff, Andrew Duxbury, Derek Smithson, Tim Josephy
Dorothy Heaton, Paul Dover, John Jenkin, Donna Flitcroft (guest) Billy Sarakun (guest)
Alan Palmer (prospective member)

This year's long walk presented a set of unusual challenges. It was based in a part of the country unfamiliar to many: the hills of Shropshire. Though these are modest by Yorkshire standards, the 58 km suggested route still involved significant ups and downs (1,900 metres of ascent in total). The weather was unusually hot and dry, with the clear blue skies and soaring temperatures of previous weeks continuing over the weekend, so going was dry and firm underfoot, but sunburn and dehydration were real risks. In addition the original meet leader had taken a slightly unexpected opportunity to backpack in Spain, and was unsure of his return date, so the meet ended up with a slightly bemused Rory as cat-herder in chief. Furthermore, the meet was overbooked, but 2 late dropouts reduced us to the 16 for whom the bunkhouse accommodation was designed.

All those attending arrived safely on Friday late afternoon or evening, some direct and some via a local walk on the Stiperstones, with red kites and buzzards sighted; some had brought food, some went out together to a local pub in Much Wenlock, and a few sampled several hostelrys with a view to selecting the best.

In spite of this, most of the party were up early, having laid plans the previous evening. Richard S set off at 04:30 from the bunkhouse, planning to complete the whole circuit – which he did. This was a loop starting at The Granary bunkhouse just outside Much Wenlock, working across country to the Lawley, following the ridge line over this and Caer Caradoc, descending to All Stretton, ascending to Pole Bank, the highest point on the Long Mynd, descending to Church Stretton, working across country to Wenlock Edge and following this home.

Michael and Felicity, Mick, Nick and John Sutcliffe were driven to the foot of The Lawley by Rory and Richard D, cutting out the first (least interesting?) section, losing about 13 km but only 170 metres of ascent; they arrived at about 07:00, just neatly in time to meet Richard Smith.



Rory, Nick, Richard and John on The Lawley

The Smith party continued southwest along the pleasant ridge of The Lawley (above the line of Roman Watling Street, and with good views of Penkridge Hall, an old Manor), and on over Caer Caradoc with its iron-age hill fort, and an awkward steep descent towards All Stretton.

The rest of the Lawley party followed a few minutes behind, admiring good views, birds and butterflies.

Rory cut back from the top of Caer Caradoc to collect his car. Richard Dover cut across from the Strettons to Wenlock Edge, and followed this northwest back to the bunkhouse.

The rest of the attendees sensibly looked at shorter options. Carol and John Whalley walked up the Long Mynd from Church Stretton. Jim and Christine walked Caer Caradoc, explored Cardington village (with pub) and cut back to the car via the Gaer Stone – comma butterflies were highlights, but they found it all rather hot (they were not alone in this). Paul and John Lloyd had a walk on the Long Mynd, up to Pole Bank from All Stretton; John had a fall on descent, twisting his knee; Alan and Derek rescued him, and the four continued to research local hostelrys.

Meanwhile the Smith party were pushing on in spite of punishing heat, following Cross Dyke up to the summit of the Long Mynd; this proved to be the busiest section of the walk, with lots of other walkers, cyclists, sightseers, horse-riders, hill ponies and a collection of radio hams setting up aerials near Pole Bank; (a YRC ham noted how much smaller radio equipment had become). The party descended via the Boiling Well and Devil's Mouth and paused in Church Stretton for lunch, ice-cream and to restock on water, then pushed gamely (and rather tediously) on via farmland and minor roads to Eaton; an ascent of Jacob's Ladder led them onto Wenlock Edge, which was followed back to the bunkhouse. The route along the Edge followed bits of the Shropshire Way and the Jack Mytton Way, mostly through mature woodland, which gave welcome shade but obscured the views. They discussed "Mad Jack" Mytton (more of him later; it is not entirely clear why he has a Way named after him, but his career is remarkable though not exemplary), and finally arrived back, hot and rather weary, at 18:30.

Mick, Nick and John Sutcliffe followed the same route, but rather more slowly. After meeting Rory in Church Stretton for a welcome drink (and some discussion about why the town is there – carding mills, we think), they tramped on to Wenlock Edge, and after some negotiation (they were informed by a helpful horsewoman that their original pub objective was closed!) were collected from Wilderhope Manor, an interesting old building gifted to the YHA, a possible venue for a future meet, and most importantly in context with a bar that sold beer. This was about 12 km from the bunkhouse, and they were the last party home at 20:00.

In view of the heat, supper was quiche, salad and cold new potatoes, and fruit salad with ice cream; this was enjoyed by all.

On Sunday (still very hot and sunny) many people just made for home, but Jim, Christine and Michael collected the highest point in Shropshire, Abdon Burf on Brown Clee, with panoramic views including the Malverns, the Brecons, Cader Idris, the Arans, the Berwyns, the Wrekin and the southern peak district, and more butterflies (Jim the lepidopterist claimed that the weekend had been punctuated by commas. Meanwhile Mick and Rory walked the various tops of Hope Bowdler hill, with good views and (much to the delight of Mick the other lepidopterist on the meet) a group of green-veined white butterflies drinking at a patch of bog.

Thanks to all those attending for making this a success, in particular John S for the original idea, Mick for advice and route planning, Michael for Jack Mytton research, and all the kitchen team.



Caer Caradoc

Attending: Michael and Richard Smith and Felicity Roberts, Paul and Richard Dover, Mick Borroff, Carol and John Whalley, Christine and Jim Harrison, Alan Clare, Derek Clayton, John Lloyd, John Sutcliffe, Nick Welch and Rory Newman.

Shropshire Characters.

Wild Edric was a British landowner active at the time of the Norman Conquest. He had property in Shropshire. He was active in a revolt against William the conqueror, but later made his peace with him and campaigned with him against the Scots. Later in life he married a fairy woman (so the story goes); he lives on in the fairy hills, including Caer Caradoc; he was known for helping the Shropshire lead miners (who of course worked on/in the hills); he now leads the Wild Hunt, riding out particularly before Britain goes to war.

Much of the 2018 Long Walk followed the Jack Mytton Way. “Mad Jack” Mytton was a Regency rake and famous eccentric, from a Shropshire landowning family. He was expelled from Winchester and Harrow (where he only lasted 3 days) schools, the former for fighting with a master. Not surprisingly he was reported as having “no academic ability” but still went to Cambridge University. He arrived with luggage which included 2000 bottles of port, so again it’s not a surprise that he left without a degree. He became an MP in 1819 (his election campaign was a great success as he offered £10 notes to potential voters) but only attended the Commons once, finding the speeches too dull to bear so never went back. His reputation for eccentricity was well-merited: angered by finding a toll gate closed, he spurred his horse to leap over it – disregarding the fact that it was pulling a carriage (which was of course wrecked); he hunted duck by crawling over a nocturnal frozen lake dressed only in a nightshirt; he tried to cure his hiccups by setting fire to the same nightshirt (the “fright” cure); he entertained guests by inviting them for dinner then dressing as a highwayman and ambushing them en route; he once rode a bear into a local meeting...this was surprisingly uneventful until he used his spurs on the animal, which then bit his leg and attacked his servant. After all this he died at 38 in a debtors prison “ruined by drink” and with gangrene of the leg.

By contrast there is a gravestone in Bishop’s Castle churchyard commemorating Matthew Marston, a local burgess; Bishop’s Castle was a famous “rotten borough”, and the local burgesses sold their votes to the highest bidder (by 1802, when Marston died, the going rate was £25). But Marston was remarkable in voting according to his conscience and refusing to accept bribes – so remarkable in fact that this was recorded on his tombstone. Honest politicians were hard to find in 1802 – have times changed? I wonder....

Introduction

The Romanian Carpathians are split into three groups: Western, Southern and Eastern. Mountain walking is popular, however few regions and paths are busy, due to a relatively low density of population. Young people generally speak English and are very helpful, and mountain areas welcome quite a few international tourists. Generally, paths are very well waymarked, and Muntii Nostri offers some good printed and downloadable maps, with descriptions of trails at the back.

The Padis Plateau is situated in the Apuseni mountains, a karst region in the Western Carpathians with forested hills and plenty of caves and potholes (they say numbers go as high as 7000 caves). The highest peak in the Apuseni is Cucurbata Mare (1849 m), situated in the Bihor-Vladeasa massif in the North-West. The resort complex Padis is in the middle of this massif, and offers a great base for exploring, walks and entry into some of the longest and deepest caves and ice caves in Romania, along with spectacular gorge walks. The complex can be reached by car from Beius in the West, via Pietroasa.

The road from Cluj via Doda Piliz is not recommended, as the last part is on difficult dirt track with worrying potholes, as some of us discovered. We stayed at Popas Turistic Padis, which offered wooden cabins for 4 people and a relatively varied half-board with good food.



Retezat MB

The Retezat mountains are in the most western massif of the Southern Carpathians. They have one of the most extensive alpine areas above the tree line in Romania, after the highest massif, the Fagaras. Characteristic features are the lichen-covered granite boulder-fields, and the multitude of glacial lakes and tarns. The highest peaks are Peleaga (2509 m), Papusa (the Doll, 2508 m) and Retezat (2482m) from which the mountain region got its name.

Retezat means “cut off”, recalling the shape of its peak. There are a few mountain huts at lower level, and we stayed at the relatively well kept Pietrele (The Rocks, 1480 m) hut, which offered basic accommodation and a not so varied food and drink menu. From here, the trips to the peaks involve 1000+ m ascents. A camping alternative is at Bucura Lake on the other side of the range, the largest glacial lake in Romania, at a higher altitude of 2030 m, which needs personal transport of all food.

The summer weather in Romania is generally hot and dry in the plains and valleys, resulting in sunny mornings and thundery afternoons in the high mountains. If sunny, it can get quite hot with high UV on the tops. However, the June-July weather in 2018 was unexpectedly bad, with daily rains. The weather started to clear when we arrived in Apuseni at the end of July, and by the time we arrived in Retezat at the beginning of August, we had a good time. Mike and Helen were less fortunate, with continuous rain when they visited at the end of July, and they had to abandon the mountain after two days of rain, with no opportunity to dry their clothes in the humid wooden cabins.

First week: Padis area in Apuseni mountains

Sunday July 29th

Helen and Michael Smith had arrived on Saturday afternoon. Richard Smith and Tim Josephy were much later, having against all advice taken the short cut through the forest. After about 10km of walking pace progress they were very relieved to hit tarmac at the top of the hamlet of Padis, windows open to dissipate the strong smell of hot clutch.

On the Sunday morning the five walked down to the charming campsite at Glavoi where coffee was taken before climbing the other side of the valley to make a tour of several cave entrances, including Ghetarul Focul Viu (Living Fire ice cave), a spectacular chamber with an ice boss said to date back to the last ice age.

After a shortish day they returned to the accommodation in Padis to await the arrival of the others.

Richard Taylor, Mick Borroff, Jason Lees and Anca Pordea left Arad and arrived at Padis via Beius, on a relatively good road. The caving trip planned for Tuesday was postponed to Wednesday August as Mike was not feeling great due to a nasty chest infection.



Monday July 30th

Helen, Mike, Richard S, Tim, Richard T, Mick, Jason, Anca

Padis – Varasoaia – Cetatile Radesei cave – Somesul Cald gorges circuit – back to Padis through cave

Everyone was keen to start some walking under the much praised dry Romanian weather, though Mike was still not feeling great.

We walked on a gentle path from Padis to Varasoia pass, where a notice warned that the Magura Vanata trail was closed due to fallen trees.

Walking further towards Cetatile Radesei, we discovered another notice warning that both the trail surrounding the caves, and the Somesul Cald trail were also closed, but decided to explore the situation anyway.

We arrived with no problems at the massive entrance of the Cetatile Radesei cave, and we scrambled through to the exit.



Approach to Radesei-Somesul Cald

JL



Cetatile Radesei

MB & TJ

It is a beautiful large cave with a stream flowing through, and the scramble out was slow due to being obstructed by fallen trees. We started the exploration of the Somesul Cald gorges by initially walking on an unmarked path alongside the stream, which turned out to be more of a slide on greasy wet rocks. Richard S, Mick, Tim and Mike made it to a water pool, and the explorers decided that any further advance would lead to immersion, so we decided to follow the marked trail at the top of the gorges. This turned out to be a tedious struggle through a mass of fallen pine trees, and spirits were dropping when we finally made it to lunch at a beautiful belvedere on a cliff at the top of the gorges.

We decided to continue, rather than turning back via the obstructed path, but the tree fall continued and we were only making about 1/2km an hour. After we crossed the stream at the end of the gorge the trail got easier, with fewer fallen trees in mainly beech and oak forest on the other side of the valley. We had had plenty of opportunity to observe the shallow root systems of pine trees; beech and oak have deep taproots and are clearly more resistant to the wind. Getting back to the cave, we met a group of Romanian walkers, who explained that the forest damage was due to the massive storm from September 2017, of which we kept seeing signs throughout our visit of Apuseni.

We returned through the cave, then through the Varasoia pass, back to Padis, to celebrate with a well-deserved beer and dinner, together with Anca's sister and her partner, who had arrived from Arad for the week.



TRC group
relaxing at Padis
Photo TJ

Tuesday July 31st

Helen, Mike, Richard S, Tim, Richard T, Mick - Lumea Pierduta (the Lost World)
Jason and Anca went for a short walk around the Padis plateau with Dana and Sorin (Anca's sister and partner). They also went to the Biserica Motului peak, just above the plateau.

The rest set off from the cabins down through a muddy track past several summer huts offering various fruit cordials and distilled liquors for sale. We descended steeply into Poiana Ponor - a large grassy depression (a polje). This was fed by a river emerging from the Ponor spring which we followed until it disappeared into a sinkhole to join the Ponorului system. Here a large party of Romanians were having single rope technique practice on the cliffs as part of a week-long caving course. We stopped for coffee at the Cabana Cetatile Ponorului, a mountain hut run by the Romanian Speleological Association.

A forest track led to the climb up to Lumea Pierduta. This is a dense area of mainly beech woods, with several impressive cave entrances hidden in the trees, but linked by a well waymarked path, eventually leading back to Padis.

During the evening, after dinner, some bemoaned the lack of a dessert course, which was not on offer. Dana and Anca spoke in glowing terms of the "pies", sweet or savoury, which could be had from the shacks on the plateau nearby. An expedition was mounted and fruit pies (actually more like waffles) were freshly cooked and consumed, along with a taste of liqueur made of pine nuts, all provided by a very friendly peasant and his wife.

Wednesday August 1st

Mike, Tim, Richard S went on a caving trip in Cetatile Ponorului

Helen, Richard T, Mick, Jason and Anca set off with a drive to the road leading to Glavoi. We left the car and started a walk leading to several cave entrances: Ghetarul de la Barsa ice cave – Taul Negru (Black Tarn) – Pestera Neagra (Black Cave) – Ghetarul Focul Viu (Live Fire ice cave) - Pietrele Galbenei – Bortig pothole – Cetatile Ponorului cave.

Cetatile Ponorului JL

*See detailed report by
Michael Smith
on page 90*

The start resembled a rain forest walk due to the humidity in the atmosphere. We were pleased to cool down with a descent into the Barsa ice cave, where we found some ice remains.



The walk continued through forested hills with a mixture of deciduous trees and spruce, and passed by several cave entrances and potholes as points of interest, including the very atmospheric Black Tarn and the Black Cave. We reached the “Live Fire ice cave” around noon time, when the sun was supposed to shine onto the ice (hence the name). The clouds made the experience less notable, though it was still impressive to see ice surviving in the middle of summer, due to the cool air of the cave. We had lunch with a view, at the top of Pietrele Galbenei, offering views over the forested Southern Apuseni range. The walk continued to Cetatile Ponorului. At the “balcony” at the top of the doline, the steep descent / scramble to the bottom of the doline looked too nasty for Helen, who decided to continue the walk to Glavoi and wait for us there. The rest of us descended to one of the cave entrances, and further into the cave until we reached the river, but did not follow it to the large portal (main cave entrance), to avoid wet boots. When outside, we walked further to the impressive main entrance, then back up to the road and Glavoi, where we met Helen, had a nice cup of tea (fruity infusion) and shared a “langos” (a kind of waffle) with cheese and cream.

Thursday August 2nd

Helen, Mike, Richard S, Tim, Richard T, Mick, Jason, Anca
Galbena gorges circuit

This was due to be the longest, and most strenuous walk of the Apuseni trip. We started early morning with a drive to Glavoi campsite, on a dirt road starting from where we parked the car on the previous day. It was a warm humid morning with the sky covered in clouds, but no sign of rain yet. We went back to the top of Ponorului doline and the “balconies”, to take in a spectacular view of the sheer drops. We continued to the Galbena gorges via a never-ending descent to the bottom of the valley – a hint to what was to be expected in terms of climbing back up at the end of the trip. The gorges were impressive, with some scrambling points aided (or not) by chains and metal wires. The Evantai (Fan) waterfall welcomed us with high waters, and we had to use the metal fixed aids to aid us in a lateral traverse on the wall, to avoid getting wet.

We had lunch after the waterfall, after which rain started with increasing strength, making the wet limestone a tricky terrain to walk on. Luckily, the tricky scrambling points were almost all behind us, with one hurdle at the end, involving walking on a loose chain, which Richard S made with an umbrella in his hand! The walk back under the rain was not to be fondly remembered, suffice to say that the climb up was never-ending too. A stop at Glavoi campsite under clearing skies to remove wet clothes and have a beer, pancake and langos reward was very welcome.



Galbena Gorge



MB & TJ

Friday August 3rd

The morning started with saying good-bye to Tim, who was heading back to Cluj, to catch his plane early Saturday morning. Richard T tried to negotiate the acquisition of a Romanian flag, but the host did not give an indication that he would gift his proudly exhibited cloth. He suggested buying one in the valley, but it turned out to be too expensive for Richard’s needs.

The rest of us went on a walk to the Boga, which started on an exiguous path through the woods, through to Padis cave, and finally out to Poiana Varasoia clearing and an easier walk on a path. Dana and Sorin joined us on this adventure. From the clearing, a walk up the hill led us to a superb view point onto the Boga amphitheatre, where we had lunch. The descent was gentle, and we learned about the Padis flora and fauna from the explanatory panels. A particular noteworthy

phenomenon is the inversion of the deciduous and coniferous forests in Padis, due to colder air in the valleys.

When back from the amphitheatre, Dana, Sorin, Anca and Jason went back to Biserica Motului peak, where they saw red squirrels, which in Romania have a very dark fur. Mick and Richard T went to visit a sheepfold, which Anca and Jason had seen earlier in the week. They were invited in by the lady of the house to sample her newly made cheese.

The Smiths also made it to the Biserica Motului peak, and on the return met with Anca's party and went on the "pie trail" on the plateau, where they had a nice taste of cheese and fruit pies from the locals.

Saturday August 4th

The Smiths moved on to visit Cluj and the surroundings, prior to their departure on Monday. Mick, Richard T, Jason and Anca descended to Deva. They had lunch in Hunedoara, where they finally got a decent internet signal and found out from an email that sadly, YRC member Cliff Large had passed away. We visited Corvin Castle where we met Esther and Lloyd, and where Richard T finally bought a long sought after Romanian flag. We had dinner in Deva with Anca's aunt and uncle, Ani and Vasile.

Second week: Retezat mountains

Sunday August 5th

After getting the last supplies from Deva, we drove to Carnic, where we left the car and hiked to the Pietrele hut for about 1.5-2 hours, reaching it in the early afternoon. Accommodation was in wooden cabins for two, and we were warned to watch out for the adders warming on the sunny stones! We got used to the 5 min trip through the nettles to the WC (Wine Cellar), and got to meet the hut warden Paul (we found out his name later in the week). For the rest of the afternoon, we gathered around a few beers. Mick had an old back injury, giving him trouble.

Monday August 6th

Richard T, Mick, Esther Chadwick, Lloyd de Beer, Jason and Anca
Pietrele hut – Lolaia ridge – Retezat peak (2482 m) – Retezat saddle - Stanisoara lake – Pietrele hut
We started on a sunny morning following the yellow stripes, on a steep climb through the spruce woods with impressive mushrooms, until we reached the tree line around 1750 m at Ciurila saddle. The steep forest climb turned out to be the theme of the Retezat trip, and was necessary every day, to get from the hut to the tree line above (around 1800 – 1900 m). We discovered a lovely alpine landscape, with juniper and dwarf mountain pine, gentians and butterflies, and had good views towards the Retezat mountain. We continued the walk over the Lolaia ridge, through granite boulder fields that required a lot of focus.

The clouds closed in, and it started to rain when we got to the Lolaia peaks, before the last push up the Retezat. The climb became more steep and difficult, and we made it to the top with the head in the clouds, just in time for lunch. The clouds started to clear when we started the descent, unveiling a majestic landscape towards the main ridge, and some of the mountain landscape behind.

We arrived at the superb Stanisoara lake, where we spotted some chamois, which we admired through Esther's binoculars.

As we found out later, their fur is black in winter (hence their name meaning black goats in Romanian), and brown in summer.

The Stanisoara valley walk on the blue triangle back to the hut was a pleasure.



Tuesday August 7th

Richard T, Mick, Esther, Lloyd, Jason and Anca

Pietrele hut – Gales lake – Varful Mare (Big Peak, 2463 m) – Gales lake – Pietrele hut

With Mick's back still giving trouble, we discussed an easier day for today. He suggested this trip, following the same trail for both ascent and descent. It was another clear morning, with a steep climb in prospect. Yet this time the walk started with an accentuated descent to Valea Rea (Bad Valley), before starting the climb to Gales lake. This was not quite to the taste of Richard T, who was feeling rather under the weather, so he returned to the hut after bravely “flogging through the woods” up to the lake. From Gales, a gentle ascent at first, followed by a steep climb led us to Vf. Mare saddle. From there it was a “knife-like” ridge walk on boulder fields up to the top, requiring some attention and a sure foot

With an unsure step at first, Lloyd made it to the top with Mick's guidance, and thoroughly enjoyed himself. We reached the top in the clouds again, and they opened up for us as we were having lunch at the top.

When back at the Vf. Mare saddle, we admired the scary ridge leading to Papusa peak. On the way back, Esther, Lloyd and Mick saw two marmots playing, just above Gales lake.

We met the shepherd from the Gales lake sheepfold, but he was too shy to enter a discussion. He had a herd of beautiful rams, which we admired for a while before descending to the hut. On the way, we took the alternative route by the atmospheric Taul dintre Brazi (The Tarn amongst the Fir Trees).

Wednesday August 8th

Richard T, Mick, Esther, Lloyd, Jason and Anca

Pietrele hut – Gentiana hut – Bucura saddle – Peleaga peak (2509 m) – Peleaga saddle – Valea Rea (Bad Valley) – Pietrele hut

With Richard still not feeling great, we decided to attempt the Peleaga peak today. After the usual forest climb, the walk up Pietrele valley was very pleasant. At Pietrele lake, we met a very friendly shepherd who was taking care of a cow herd. He had a shelter full of pots and pans under a large rock, and a tent for bad weather.

A steep climb from the lake led us to Bucura saddle, from which we had a great view over the largest glacial lake in Romania.



Peleaga from Bucura MB

We also had a surreal moment there when we met a lady with a siamese cat, something you don't see very often in the mountains. A Dobermann appeared from the direction of Pelagea, running ahead of its owner, excited at the prospect of prey and the cat owner was forced to scoop up the cat and defend it from certain extinction.



Peleaga JL

After a brief chocolate rest, we started climbing Custura Bucurei peak, before a descent to Custura Bucurei saddle and a relatively gentle ascent to Peleaga, the highest peak in the Retezat.

Here we got the usual cloudy top and lunch, and Richard was happy to hear that the ascent was over for the day. We descended to Pietrele hut through the Valea Rea.

Thursday August 9th

Richard T, Mick, Esther, Lloyd, Jason and Anca

Pietrele hut – Stanisoara lake – Sava Retezat – Bucura I peak (2433 m) – Bucura II peak – Bucura saddle – Pietrele lake – Pietrele hut

We returned to Stanisoara valley, this time for an ascent to Retezat saddle and a ridge walk to the two Bucura peaks I and II. Although still resentful of “flogging through the woods” at 9 am, Richard was feeling better on this day. After the saddle, on our right, we admired the Gemenele scientific reserve, and the Judele (The Judge) peak, during a glorious sunny day.

From the top of Bucura I, we got superb views of the Retezat mountain, with its “cut off” shape, and of the ridge up to Peleaga.

We then continued to Bucura II, which was an easy walk on an unmarked boulder field. Anca’s sister had warned of

From there, it was an easy descent to Bucura saddle, where we could see storm clouds starting to form in the valley. The descent was marked by a thunderstorm, and we were rather uneasy to hear the thunder on the tops, but happy to be in the valley. We sheltered, together with other tourists, under the shepherd’s rock at Pietrele lake, but he wasn’t there. We met him further along, after the storm, at Gentiana hut, having a beer with other tourists. He answered our curious questions, but we are still doubtful that he can drive his cow herd from Ohaba de sub Piatra to Bucura lake in 12 hours. He said he was originally from Ohaba, and he had spent 16 years being a cowherd on the mountain.

At Gentiana hut, we also found a memorial for members of the mountain club “Floarea Reginei”.

At Pietrele hut, we finally engaged in a very pleasant conversation with Paul, the warden, and we even got an exchange of jokes. Who would have thought, Helen? (Helen and Michael had totally failed to get any sign of humour from the custodians on their visit two weeks earlier.)

Friday August 10th

Richard T, Mick, Esther, Lloyd, Jason and Anca

Pietrele hut – Valea Rea lakes- Peleaga saddle – Papusa peak (2508 m) – Portile Inchise ridge – Varful Mare saddle – Gales lake – Pietrele hut

Another glorious day, starting with the ascent through Valea Rea (Bad Valley), this time with Richard in top form. The name of this valley likely comes from the shepherds, who thought it was unfavourable for grazing, and this can easily be seen at the top of the valley, where lakes are scattered onto a rocky landscape.

From the Peleaga saddle, we walked to the top of Papusa (The Doll), where we could admire superb views of the Northern Retezat landscape, whilst the South was covered in clouds.

From there, we descended the ridge to the dreaded Portile Inchise, a knife-edge ridge that we had admired on the second day from the Vf Mare saddle. The trail was narrow and we had to use chains at the beginning. The clouds were menacing on the ridge behind, when we reached Portile Inchise, but the South Eastern side, on which we were walking, was nice and sunny.

After a few scrambling moments, helped by Mick's calming attitude and advice, we made it to Vf Mare saddle. As we took a well-deserved rest, Lloyd's observant eyes helped spot a majestic eagle. The descent followed the same route as day 2, and Anca got to see her first Romanian marmots, probably the same that the group saw before. From Gales lake, a steady descent brought us to meet Valea Rea, from which we ascended to Pietrele hut.

Saturday August 11th

We descended from Pietrele, visited the roman ruins at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, then returned to Timisoara (Esther and Lloyd), Sibiu (Richard) and Deva (Mick, Jason and Anca) after a very satisfying week.

Conclusion

The concept of visiting two contrasting upland areas of Romania worked very well and allowed people to come for just one of the weeks. The leader, Anca Pordea, being a native Romanian had ensured the meet went like clockwork and all were very grateful for her detailed planning and the hospitality of her sister Dana and partner Sorin who came along on week one.

The Padis Plateau guarded most of its secrets under a cloak of trees, but the karst features we visited were world class and the Cetatile Ponorului dolines, the Cheile Galbenei gorge and the Cheile Somesului Cald with its dramatic start with a through trip of Pestera Radesei cave were exceptional and highly enjoyable. The partial descent of the Ponorolui cave was an exciting adventure with lots of fast flowing water and huge passages

The Retezat Mountains were also a great place to visit and have many similarities with more familiar parts of the Pyrenees, such as the Aigüestortes National Park and Andorra which are also glaciated granite sprinkled liberally with tarns and lakes.

Each area had enough for a full week's activity, but little more and so were a good choice for the trip. Romania is still a comparatively inexpensive place to visit, with a variety of flight options from the UK. The accommodation was modern in Padis and basic but adequate in the Retezat. We ate well - the food provided was plentiful and appetising. The fruit tea and local beers were excellent!

Participants

Week One:

Mick Borroff, Tim Josephy, Jason Lees (guest), Anca Pordea (leader), Helen Smith, Michael Smith, Richard Smith and Richard Taylor.

Week Two:

Lloyd de Beer (guest), Mick Borroff, Esther Chadwick (guest), Jason Lees (guest), Anca Pordea (leader) and Richard Taylor.



Pietrele hut JL



Retezat via Lolaia JL



On Papusa MB

Maps

Dimap: Padis Karst Area of Bihor Mountains, 1:30,000
 Muntii Nostrî: MN17 Bihorului Platoul Padis, 1:55,000 and 1:25,000
 Muntii Nostrî: MN06 Retezat, 1:50,000
 Bel-Alpine: Retezat Mountains, 1:50,000

Mapping Apps

Avenza maps: Zona Padis din Muntii Bihor (£1.99)
 Galileo Pro: Romania (£3.99)
 Muntii Nostrî: Retezat map (free)

Guidebooks

James Roberts, *The Mountains of Romania*, Cicerone, 2005. This is the only English language guidebook available and focuses exclusively on backpacking through hikes and was only of limited usefulness for planning our walks. The last decade has seen much change in Romania and the book's planning section is becoming somewhat outdated.

Pre-Meet Week in the Retezat Mountains and other minor aspects of the trip

Two Smiths visited the Retezat just before the meet started as they had to be back in Yorkshire for a family celebration clashing with the second meet week. Unfortunately, their visit coincided with wetter weather and low cloud bases. The unheated cabins of the Pietrele (1,480m) soon resulted in damp clothing and sodden shoes. Undaunted they made two ascents lacking any views from the ridges.

Vârful Peleaga (2,509m) was approached via the forest and Bulgarian cleg-like dwarf firs and tarns in Valea Rea and boulder fields up to the Saua Pelegii pass with a descent over Saua Zănoegelor and down the long Valea Gales passing shepherds leading their flock to high grazing before heavy rain set in for the last few kilometres. The traverse of Vârful Retezat (2,482m) was made longer on account of the loss of the map-indicated route from La Brodulet to the col north of the summit. Instead the Valea Stânișoara was followed for a further kilometre and a steep winding route taken to the Saua Retezatului. A well-marked route over the boulder field led to the flag-marked summit before a loose gully descent leading north.

On that descent they met three young male backpackers, the last falling behind as his boot sole was flapping. Michael rooted in his sack and provided tape to effect a repair. At the last top on the broad Culmea Lolaia ridge our two encountered a family group of three generations and exchanged pleasantries.

As they departed they shouted and came down to ask if they would escort grandpa back down to the col as he had “reached the limit of his endurance”. It transpired that they had no map and little idea of the route. Given the clear colour-coded route markings and signs giving the time taken to complete routes then the lack of a map is understandable at least in good weather - they were given a spare map printout to help them orientate themselves in the mist.

During the descent with grandpa they chatted (as much as allowed by severely limited shared vocabularies in a mixture of Spanish, German and French) and discovered that he was aged 65, retired and called Michael – three things in common with Michael Smith.

As the afternoon rain set in they reached the dense forest was reached giving some protection.



Caves and Gorges

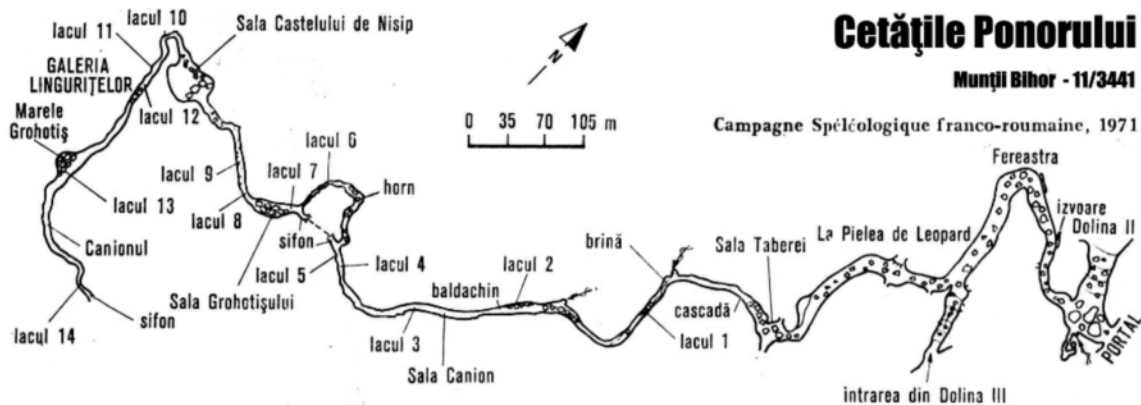
A number of small cave entrances were investigated while out walking, for example Peștera Padiș on our last day. Typically, they required initial descent of scree or clay slopes and soon reduced in height to make stooped walking impossible. Many vertical shafts were peered into such as Șaua Bortig. These were sometimes difficult to locate in the forests.

The ‘Living Fire’ ice cave or Ghetarul de la Focul Viu was unique in our experience in having permanent ice – indeed ice that is supposed to have remained there from the last ice age. The descent down dilapidated wooden steps to a gated viewing area was a transition into a cold sink. Behind a cone of ice with embedded tree branches a more solid ice ‘stalagmite’ glistened.



The absence of any draft or water flow through the cave reduced the rate of melting. Sometimes shafts of sunlight reach some of the nearby icicles giving a sparkle which led to the cave’s name.

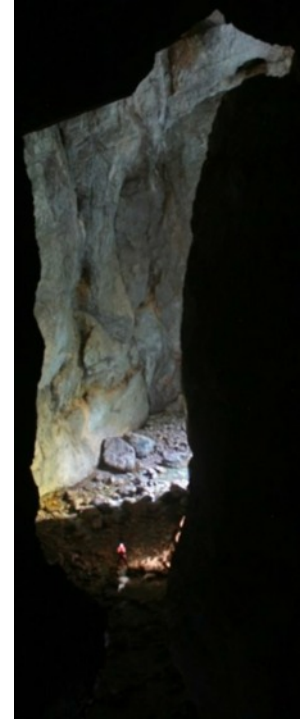
Three members signed up for a trip down the so-called Everest of Romanian Speleology, the Ponor Fortress or Cetatii Ponorului. Their guides were two members of the Spel Club Cristal of Oradea. From the Galbena valley a forest walk reached the kilometre-wide doline following the stream into the 70m tall, 30m wide entrance at the foot of a 300m wall. Soon a chamber of twice the entrance’s dimensions is entered and they joined the river. A little further and a secondary entrance (and their exit route) illuminates the cave with diffused sunlight. A couple of small waterfalls were descended before an area of water chutes and jammed tree trunks requires an abseil, plunge into a narrow channel and swim to a gravel bank.





Cetatii Ponorului
photographs on
this page are by
Cristina Ianc of
Travel Guide
Romania.

The one at the
top of the
previous page is
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Mihai-Cosmin.
Pascariu



Continuing along the winding route wading and swimming arrived at a logjam dam across a several metre wide narrowing with a more difficult drop beyond. Given the forecasted threat of heavy afternoon rain and the tired state of the elders, a decision was made to return. Those elders struggled with one of the upstream swims, making no progress against the flow, indeed they were

being carried downstream, and called for a rope to haul them in and a hand up the water-smoothed exit from the channel. It was a pleasure to warm up again in the sunshine of the doline floor. The assistance of Robi and Bogdan was appreciated.

Driving through the eastern Muntii Vladeasa in the north of the Apuseni, the sinks of Peștera Întorsuri-Runcșor were briefly visited. A short circular walk traversed above the sink and just below a 223m long, 35m deep cave entrance home to three species of bats. Near the sink holes, the farmer was rinsing out his muslin cheesecloths as cattle crossed just upstream.

East of the Apuseni, the Turda Gorge or Cheile Turzii was a popular weekend attraction with a long zip wire and cafes near the lower entrance. The 3km long canyon was walked beneath steep walls reaching up to 300m. There are scores of small caves, a couple of arches and several rock crags this being one of the country's main climbing areas.



Tourism

There is more to a meet than the walking, scrambling and caving.

One of the fascinations of meets in new places is the opportunity to see something of the local culture. Transylvania provided plenty of cultural interest. Bran Castle had links to not only to Vlad the Impaler and so Bram Stoker's Dracula but the Queen Marie of our Victoria's Royal Family. One member was attacked by a bloodsucking creature while visiting that castle though this was in daylight hours and was by a midge. Set among the decaying remains of Romania's largest steelworks is Hunedoara's Gothic-Renaissance Corvin Castle, one of Europe's largest castles, supposedly imprisoned Vlad. Brașov was established as a city by Teutonic Knights as Kronstadt, manufactured tractors in the communist era, was the site of the militarily repressed 1987 rebellion against Nicolae Ceaușescu's draconian austerity measures, but is now a main tourist destination with a large brewery. Cluj-Napoca has Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic architecture and an active modern cultural scene with its Untold electronic music festival attracting 350,000 ticket sales while we were there. Nearby, Turda has an impressively deep abandoned salt mine which, apart from its historical interpretation and archaeological remains, now has popular underground amusements including row boats, table tennis and a Ferris wheel.

Travelling around with minimal Romanian we were warmly received and frequently offered unsolicited help. Those we spoke to at length gave us suggestions for visits and were open in discussing the dramatic changes in their society over the last generation. Having Anca and her family's support and insights added immeasurably our visit.

Michael Smith

Review

CAPE TO CAPE

CAPE TO CAPE By John Sutcliffe (ISBN 978-1-909461-55-0) £17.95.
Published by Crescent House(a division of Vertebrate Publishing)



John Sutcliffe, a semi-retired minerals exploration geologist, and YRC member, decided to mark his 70th birthday by devising and walking a 1250 mile backpacking route covering the length of Great Britain, from Cape Cornwall to Cape Wrath.

The book John subsequently wrote, “Cape to Cape”, is no run-of-the-mill guide book; it’s a comprehensive story of his 99 days of walking, in which he takes the reader along on his adventure, with fine descriptions of the route, the countryside, geology, history, the people he encountered, and much more.

He doesn’t hesitate to follow existing trails where it’s convenient to do so, and although he has an enviable skill at finding wild camping spots, he’s happy to overnight at the occasional pub or b&b; he follows backpackers’ best practise of never passing a café without stopping to eat.

The book is interspersed with interesting anecdotes – the history of Cornish copper mines as he passes remnants of them; when pondering the number of grains of sand on a beach, John mentions the work of Archimedes, then Copernicus and Galileo.

At Launceston town hall he manages to barge into a wedding party, and get photographed with the bride, groom and all the guests; he takes a day off at Glastonbury to learn more about the dreadful events there during the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

He understandably pauses the walk for a few days to return to Yorkshire for his mother’s 100th birthday celebrations.

He manages to lose equipment, get rid of unnecessary stuff, buy new boots and rucksack to replace defective ones, but is still left carrying a substantial weight – the bane of all backpackers.

From Fort William to Cape Wrath, John encounters the most difficult and challenging part of the route, 250 miles of rough, largely pathless terrain. These are difficulties enough, but Hurricane Bertha hit Scotland whilst he was in a remote area near Loch Hourne; twice he found himself trapped on the wrong side of turbulent streams, but with luck and a struggle managed to escape.

John has an inquisitive eye, an enviable knowledge of our countryside and geology, and a fine turn of phrase, combined with a wry sense of humour.

This is a splendid book, enhanced by pen and ink illustrations at each chapter heading – courtesy of John’s daughter Amanda, and by six geo-referenced route maps – courtesy of Louisa Keyworth of Lovell Johns. .

Cape to Cape is a book I can strongly recommend. It contains and by more than 100 photographs taken on the walk. It describes the route John chose, though there are many other similar challenges just waiting to be identified.

Anyone needing inspiration to find them should read this book and they’ll quickly be reminded how fortunate we are to live in a beautiful and diverse country that has so much to offer, even to those who’ve already travelled the world.

Alan Kay.

Dec 17 - England

As I crawled out of bed at 4am I could feel Emma rolling her eyes as she pulled the covers over herself and mumbles something. The car was packed so within 15 minutes I was showered and out the door driving off across the moor.

Walking up in the dark we chatted about whether it would still be there, was it too warm, would there be a queue. Some young students were coming down from a night camping on the moor. We quiz them for information; they had been told it had gone....well it's only another 30 minutes from here, might as well go and see for ourselves.



Then we can see the cliffs and eventually a dirty brown smear on the rock. It's still there.

We arrive at the base to find a pair roping up (not first, should have walked quicker. Couldn't though!), they were doing the first pitch then moving right as the central fall was now liquid. We'll do pitch 1 then decide.

I offer Dave the lead, being polite but hoping he says no, he umms and ahhs then decides he will (blast).

Leading off clearing the white snow to reveal the brown ice, stained by it's travels through the peat above. It looks odd, but it's solid.

Second pitch, I decide to follow the route, pull my hood up, put clean dry gloves in my jacket and make the 2 steps through the growing waterfall to the safety of the ice on the other side.

Gloves swapped and I move up the steps to the final belay, hooking and torquing my axes as the ice thins leaving unconsolidated snow.



Andy through
the waterfall

We are offered the use of one of the abb ropes to quickly retrieve our sacks and set off for home. It's 10AM but we've already bagged a good day and Kinder Downfall is ticked.

Jan 18 - Scotland

The Alex Mac hut is a great location, but Scottish weather is doing its best to provide a very mediocre YRC meet. Yesterday we stayed low to avoid the weather, but the snow and ice in the Hidden Valley is soft, and dangerous. We drive early to the Anoch Mor gondola to go high, but winds have closed it. Only one option left, and we drive to the North car park and shoulder the packs for the slog to the CIC.

The wind is brutal, stopping you in your tracks and pushing you back, throwing ice in your face. But we reach the CIC after only 2 hours, wow I'm fitter than I thought. We're not up for the Orion Face but the North side of Tower Ridge might be good. Behind the Douglas Boulder walking becomes easier. We toy with the idea of Vanishing Gulley, but there are 2 teams there and it's a good excuse to go for something easier.

1934 Route had shut us down a couple of years ago so we opt for that. Pete leads the first pitch and it goes far easier than last time, no swimming through loose snow and it's comfortably in its grade (II/III). The second pitch is fun but undemanding with solid neve between short steep steps of ice. Good job as gear is sparse, or maybe I'm just not incentivised to look as I enjoy the climbing with little chance of problems. I belay below the ridgeline to avoid the wind.

There's a small mixed overhang above the belay and I have a play at leading it but the cloud coming in adds to the sense of danger and I back off. It's 4PM, the weather and night are coming in; not the time to be trying stuff at your limit. Pete abbs off back down the gulley. I check the tat round the flake, remove the backup gear and cautiously descend, icy ropes causing me to bounce the rope more often than I want. Second abb is off a good looking peg, much nicer.

Walking back down the wind is behind us and we meet a couple who we chat with as our weary knees quietly complain. A good day. Need to book the CIC again though; I hate that walk.

Feb 18 – Norway

There are a myriad of icefalls visible from the door of our hut, but there is one that draws my eye back. A huge expanse of ice in a large gulley about a mile from our front door.



View from the door

Walking up you are pushed into a narrow gorge, high dark cliffs giving an oppressive feel and hiding the ice ahead. Rounding the corner the gorge opens up and we can see the first pitch. A sharp sided triangle with a narrow exit. WI3 I guess; no guidebooks is liberating but ...

The ice is beautifully plastic. Axes and crampons bite in a comforting way, screws go in easily but are solid. The top is weird; ice as clear as glass, water running below; it looks very thin, like it will shatter when hit, but is actually maybe an inch thick and solid. Belay has little pro, but in the flat base of the higher gorge a snow bollard is possible.



Pitch 1

Tim leads off on the second pitch as Pete decides to go back and return the car keys to the others (rookie error). The second pitch is steep and strenuous; Tim recons WI4, I think harder but I'm tired, claws screaming from a week of climbing, forearms pumped. Hanging on the axes trying to get the blood flowing again I keep repeating "This IS fun, this IS fun" as my body tells me I have not trained or climbed enough this year. At least the ice is perfect.



Tim on pitch 2 as it gets steep

Pitch 3 is easier, traversing across less steep ice to the foot of a final column.

Tim leads off on pitch 4, and as I follow I realise that it's running water (it's minus 15°C!!).

Tim can't hear me as I whinge and swear my aching limbs up the vertical ice that seems to go on forever (it's maybe 15 m) before I pop out to see Tim shivering in the wind.

There's another pitch, maybe 2, about 400m up stream but we don't even discuss doing it.

We've had a good day, more would not make it better.



Pitch 4

Dropping down the left side of the icefall it's totally vertical. Abalakov anchors are stronger than screws, and don't leave expensive gear, but it feels very odd to ab on 5mm tat threaded through a tunnel in the ice. But there are no ledges or slopes so I trust the theory and carefully lower myself hanging almost free trying to avoid the rope being grabbed by the belay device.

As I look down I tell myself that if it fails then the snow bank below might save me, but when I arrive the snowbank is rock hard; well it made me feel better anyway.

As I get in the car the following morning the icefall glows in the morning light, a beautiful sight. It was a great day.

Most of the meet had arrived by Friday evening. The original leader had to cancel at late notice because of unexpected work commitments; the replacement was unable to get there until later so the assembled community had to fend for themselves for Saturday breakfast.

By the time Tim, the new meet caterer, had arrived everyone had departed on their adventures so he walked up Ingleborough through the Estate then down to Horton and back via Crummackdale and Norber. Arriving at the Reading Room in Clapham in the late afternoon, he was surprised to find no YRC in residence. What is the world coming to?

Sadly there was only one youngster on the meet, Paul Dover's granddaughter Lucy, aged nine.

Nevertheless a caving trip was organised. Michael Smith and John Brown conducted Lucy and her father, Jimi, around Upper and Lower Long Churn.

Lucy thoroughly enjoyed the experience and all the water, causing some consternation by disappearing up sundry tiny ratholes which were impassable by her minders either because of physical size or ability.

In the afternoon they made an expedition to the Norber erratics where Lucy was again suitably impressed.



John and Carol Whalley accompanied the cavers for a while to take photos whilst the rest of the meet enjoyed the splendid late summer sunshine walking from the hut.

Albert Chapman joined the meet for dinner, bringing a gift of bottles of wine.

Sunday was a thoroughly wet day. Lucy was keen to go underground again, so with an eye to water levels, Great Douk was chosen and traversed by the same party as the previous day.

In the afternoon they dodged the rain by visiting the climbing wall. The party there comprised the Browns, Paul Dover and the Sarakuns.

The Whalleys and Michael Smith set off for home and the rest splashed their way from the hut around Norber and Crummackdale guided mainly by Alan Linford's memory.

As it was a bank holiday weekend most of the meet stayed on for Sunday night. By Monday breakfast Lucy, who had been giving a fair impression of the Duracell bunny all weekend looked a little tired but with a good forecast was ready to set off for a walk with her father and grandfather.



Downtime

Everyone enjoyed the meet but it was sad that no other youngsters were tempted to come. Maybe next year

TJ

Attending

Paul Dover, Jimi Sarakun (G), Lucy Sarakun (G), Alan Linford, Dorothy Heaton
John Whalley, Carol Whalley, John Brown, Ros Brown (G), Michael Smith, Tim Josephy
Albert Chapman (for Saturday dinner)

Meet Report	Joint Meet with Wayfarers Langdale	7th - 9th September
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The Joint Meet has been on meet programmes for 70 years, with some research, maybe even earlier. For some it is a renewal of old friendships and perhaps for some just a club meet. The joining dates might reflect this, certainly many younger Wayfarers, we need to see more from the YRC (who will be in the Dolomites next September!).

Convivial chat always returns to 'the old days'. Old days? In 1926 Robertson Lamb represented the Wayfarers at the YRC Annual dinner. Was this the start of joint meet interest? There are references to meets in Langdale, long before the Robertson Lamb Hut was available, and a camping meet at Gaping Gill in 1948 for a winch descent. Wayfarers explored caves long before this and renewed this interest when meets alternated between RLH and Lowstern.

Prior to 1988 all meets were held at RLH, always oversubscribed, with the overflow accommodated at LHG. The Rucksack Club were a part of the Joint Meet in those days.

Ken Aldred and Harold Mellor provided catering for many years and brought the meet together introducing, with great success, a Saturday night buffet.

Bruce, Mike and John called on Ken and Sheila Aldred on their way back north and found them in good spirits. A call from anyone passing that way to chat about the past and present would be most welcome.

Three 'chefs' provided the usual high standard of sustenance for the meet. Colin on Thursday, the unofficial meet start day, Bruce on Friday as Dave arriving late Friday would provide for the rest of the meet. Thanks to all.

It fell to Bruce to run a casualty with more than a first aid cut to Kendal A&E. Bruce was the only member who had not called at an Inn on the way off the hills!

A Friday 7am call got Bruce out of bed to prepare the evening meal and then cycle to Grasmere. Stage 6 (168km) of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race passed through Grasmere on its way to finish on Whinlatter Pass. Witnessed the race leaders and the peloton from a stance on a pub table. Martyn Trasler was also in there somewhere.

Cycling was the preferred activity over the weekend. Ben and Jon clocked up a respectful 68km including The Struggle, Kirkstone and Thirlmere. This was most dangerous activity of the meet. Thursday and Friday were the best days. A pair of CC members stayed for a while, and went to Bowfell to continue their quest to climb all the routes in Classic Rock.

There were many excursions round familiar routes on all 3 days, Saturday morning was very wet for the early starters, fairer later. Climbers looking wistfully at the hills were told 'these crags dry quick', this was met with a response 'they will if it stops raining.' They made do with a trip to the climbers path on Bowfell and up the Great Slab.

The arrival of Martin Tomlinson solved the problem of the lack of water in the hut system. Blocked filters, a legacy from the dry period and the severing of the feed by a nearby Club. Sunday. Wet. All wrapped up and locked up by 1030.

A new activity emerged. Fossicking, v. to rummage or search. Translates to travel by car going nowhere in particular and not looking for anything. The word new to most but some Wayfarers recognised it and the word was confirmed by reference to an Oxford dictionary kept in the hut.

AL

Attendance with club joining dates.

Wayfarers: Steve Crossley (2014), Ian Grosset, Matt Booth, Martin Tomlinson (2001) , Dave Wearing (2016), Colin Smith (1990), Steve Auty (1980), Mike Allan (1989), Bruce Hassel (1978), John Pentland (2005), David Carpenter (2010), George Chambers (1989), Graeme Pennie (2009), Ben Reeve (1991) Jon Pinch (1983) and Peter Ward (2015).

Yorkshire Ramblers: Mike Godden (1988), Dorothy Heaton (2015), Richard Gowing (1956), Ian Crowther (1962), Derek Clayton (1967), Martyn Trasler (1988), John Jenkin (2001), Alan Clare (2000), Carol Whalley (2012), John Whalley(1973), Alan Linford (1957) and Ged Campion. (1990).

Tajikistan Journey - John & Valerie Middleton

A brief introduction to a forgotten land with particular reference to karst, caves and other natural wonders.

WHY TAJIKISTAN? This is a country that has an average elevation of 3,186m, *yes, 3,186m*, with its lowest level of +320m being found by the Syr Darya River close to Khujand in the north. The highest point is 7,495m on 'Peak Ismoil Somoni' amongst the main Pamir Mountains of the east. There are also two other summits above 7,000m whilst a further 48 exceed 6,000m. This is major expedition country! The Fan Mountains, which incorporate much of the Hissor and Zarafshan Ranges of the west, offer similar outdoor challenges to the Pamirs albeit on a smaller scale and with easier access. Here, 'Chimtarga' at 5,490m is the highest peak. This region is particularly beautiful with great valleys, plunging waterfalls and multiple mountain mirrored lakes.

There are known to be several areas of karst within Tajikistan but few have yet been thoroughly explored, mainly due to inaccessibility. However one interesting limestone cave, Rangkuls kaya, also known as Sykykirduu-Unker Cave, exceeds 2,050m in length with a depth of 268m (-240m, +28m). This system is found in the very east of the Pamir Range close to Rangkul Lake and at an altitude of 4,600m. It and the surrounding area are thought to have considerable potential for further exploration. An unusual feature of Rangkuls kaya is that it contains remnants of fossil ice left from a past glaciation period.

Another high altitude cave is 'Shakhty Cave' which, whilst short, houses several very well preserved bi-coloured cave paintings dating back to the Neolithic period some 8,500 years ago. The cave is found in the Kurteskei Valley about 60km south of Murgab at 4,100m and has now been given protected status.

Apart from the Pamirs various uninvestigated karst features have also been noted in the Vakhsh and Surkh Ranges to the north of Nurek and to a much lesser extent within the Hissor and western Zarafshan Ranges. Additionally two large Salt Diapirs in the south of the country contribute further karst interest with a number of shortish caves and spectacular karren dissolution features on a major scale.

Tajikistan's history, frequently inspired by the 'Silk Road', is turbulent, exciting and visible everywhere. Its rulers have included the Achaemenids (5th to 3rd century BC), the Sasanians, the Hephthalites, the Samanids, the Mongols, the Timurids, the Russians and finally the Soviets. Independence from the latter finally came in 1991.

How could we not be tempted!

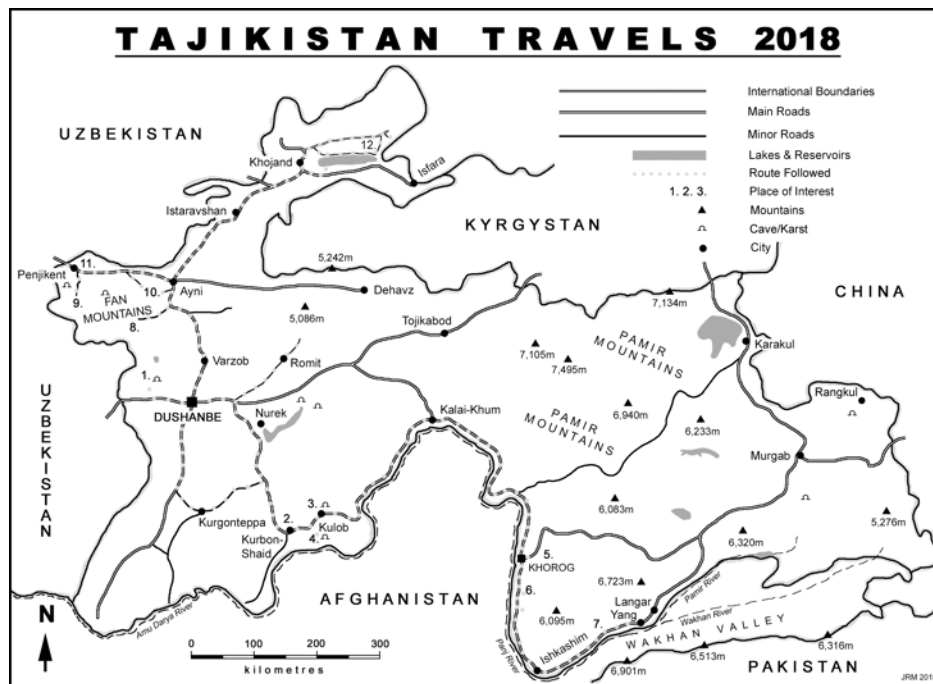
WHERE IT IS AND A FEW MORE FACTS.

Tajikistan is both the least known and smallest of all the Central Asian States covering an area of just 143,100km². This is only slightly larger than England whose land surface is 130,279km². It has borders, sometimes rather imprecisely delineated, with Afghanistan, China, Kyrgystan and Uzbekistan .



It is classed as a ‘Presidential Republic’. It is currently stable and has respected political and cultural relationships worldwide. The growing population numbers in excess of nine million people which equates to roughly 69 persons per square kilometre. For comparison, in England the density is 410 persons per square kilometre! Tajiks comprise 85% of the country’s population but there are a considerable number of other integrated ethnic groups. These include Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Yagnobis, Russians, Pamiris, Rushanis, Shughnis, Ishkashimis and Wakhis. The latter five peoples, together with their own languages, are all found within Gorno-Badakhshan Oblast.

The Republic is divided into 4 viloyats (provinces or oblasts) these being *Sughd* – the north and north-west; *Region of Republican Subordination (RRP)* – west and central; *Khatlon* – south-west and *Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO)* – the Pamirs and east. This latter viloyat requires visitors to obtain a special permit before entry (see ‘Logistics’ section).



Tajikistan is a secular state whose constitution guarantees religious freedom. However 87% of the population are Sunni Muslims, 7% are non-denominational Muslims, 3% are Shia Muslims and the remaining 3% is divided between Russian Orthodoxy, Protestants, Zoroastrians and Buddhists.

Whilst the country's economy still relies heavily on remittances received from Tajiks working in Russia and an extensive aluminium processing industry it is also steadily developing its own rich mineral resources. These reserves include gold, silver, antimony, strontium, lead, zinc, mercury and uranium (aluminium production is based on imported ore). Cotton is a further valuable commodity and improvements in transport are enabling Tourism to prosper at an increasing pace. Agriculture is well developed in the lower regions and the country is fully self-sufficient in the majority of food-stuffs.

WHAT REALLY IMPRESSED US!

1. THE SHIRKENT REGION – *Dinosaur footprints, caves, mines, waterfalls and wildlife.*

The Shirkent Valley and its surroundings are situated within an hour's westward drive from Dushanbe. It was declared a 'National Park' in 1991 to help preserve the areas unique flora and fauna, ecosystems, cultural structures, geology and archaeology. This is an extremely interesting and surprisingly unspoilt region considering that it exists so close to the countries capital city.

Our prime objective was to view one of the three known 'dinosaur footprint' sites each of which necessitate good walking through geologically spectacular country. Unfortunately on the day of our visit the weather was distinctly dull with frequent showers, rather similar to that in England which we had just left! Our site followed the Meis Valley (Copper Valley) situated just beyond Shirkent One village (there is a Shirkent Two village!). The valley track is particularly interesting with a good flora, rich bird life and interesting rock formations. It is 4.6km to the base of the footprint slabs with an ascent of 558m which involves a moderate scrambling finish. The diagonally ascending steep limestone slabs from the Upper Jurassic period are roughly 120m high and extend for around 180m. These bear over 200 impressively large imprints of three different dinosaur species one of which is *Macropodosaurus gravis*. This was originally identified as being new to science but has since been found at a number of other locations.

Whilst we had read reports of caves being known within these mountains our local guide insisted that there was only one and this was primarily of archaeological interest in a more remote region further up the Shirkent River. He did however describe various eroded rock shelters. The old mines which we did not reach were mainly for copper and tin and are generally inaccessible.

2/3/4. KURBON-SHAID & KULOB - *Salt karst, caves and an ancient fortress.*

a. **Kurbo-Shaid's** main claim to fame is its very impressive partially reconstructed fortress of Hulbek. The original city of Hulbek was protected by two 10km long walls with associated watch towers and is thought to have originated around the 4th century AD. Its importance was due to both the cities strategic position and riches derived from the locally fertile soil, gold, copper and salt.

Unfortunately it was plundered and burnt to the ground by invading Arabs in AD726 and then again by the Turks in AD1064. Subsequently it was abandoned but recent archaeological research has unearthed sufficient evidence to suggest that it was once not only the 4th largest city in Central Asia but it was also a place of particular magnificence with underfloor heating, available fresh water and highly decorated adobe plaster walls. Interestingly the earlier parts of Hulbeck show Zoroastrian influence which seems to have persisted even when overtaken by Islam.

Within the new fortress it is possible to see considerable remnants of the old buildings and pathways. A particularly informative museum has also been built opposite the site.

b. **Hodja Mumin** is a large salt diapir* (or dome) situated almost 30km south-west of Kulob. It rises imperiously above the surrounding plain for 860m to reach an elevation of 1,334m. The mountain's shape is roughly oval with surface measurements of 9,900m by 5,600m (Google Earth). This ranks it as the second largest salt diapir on earth with the largest being **Namakdan Mountain*** on Quesham Island in southern Iran. The estimated salt reserves of Hodja Mumin are considered to be sufficient to last "until the end of the world"! This quote was originally made by Marco Polo in his local travels around 1274AD. Current geological research has confirmed this observation and a figure of 30 billion tons of salt have been estimated for Hodja Mumin.

Both the salt diapirs mentioned in this article have an unusual mushroom-shaped top. According to **Sedletskiy** this arose due to the almost immediate *spread of salt at its exit points to the surface*.

Hodja Mumin really is large and has a considerable percentage of its surface as exposed salt karst (at least 25%). We quickly determined that on our one full day we should have to be economical in our investigations.

We commenced by making an 18km reconnaissance along the Vose to Moskva road which lays immediately to the east of the diapir. This route proved to be both beautiful and instructive with numerous springs (160 had been mentioned) and small salt exposures being noted. We then returned to the small half-way village of Quarakoch (alt. 780m) above which we had been



informed that there was a rough track that should take us to the main face. The way wound up the mountain through a stunning green treeless landscape until, at 1,193m it finished at a small Mausoleum. By the side of this was a view the like of which neither of us had ever seen before! To the front and commencing 50m lower down a great wall of almost vertical rock salt rose upwards for more than 120m and extended for at least a kilometre!

Most of this was covered in a visual wonder of unique **halite** flows, multi type **karren**, non-negotiable pinnacles and at least two caves. Neither of the latter went very far but this did not matter as we could do nothing but amaze over the site – this truly was another world – we were satisfied!



Various hearsay reports stated that elsewhere on the mountain several other caves can be found around a kilometre in length containing large passageways and good formations. We did not manage to find any publications with such details but we are sure that they exist together with many more.

c. **Hodja Sartis** is a similar salt diapir found just 10km to the west of Kulob city. It gently rises 400m above the surrounding plain to a height of 975m and measures roughly 8,800m in diameter. This is yet a further diapir to contain sufficient salt reserves to last “until the end of the world” and may even be slightly larger in volume than Hodja Mumin. On the upper region of this dome ‘Google Earth’ reveals an enticing field of grass covered dolines measuring in excess of 3.5km by 2.5km.



In the central north-east of this there is an obvious large raw salt exposure. This was to be the object of our visit.

Access is relatively straightforward although a capable off-road vehicle is really required. The dirt road commences from the main road that runs along much of the eastern side of the salt and about a kilometre south of a series of salt pans. The route traverses through many of the smoothly beautiful dolines until, at an altitude of 870m a second site of ‘spell binding’ wonder comes into view. This is a depression measuring some 460m by 415m and 105m deep from its highest point (925m).

For two-thirds of the upper circumference many buttresses of dazzling white gypsum up to 22m in height almost reach to the upper surface. Each of these is covered with uniquely eroded karren, many forms of which we had never seen before. Additionally one buttress held a pair of nesting Golden Eagles. Above the buttresses lays a thin bed of the original raised clays, silts and alluvium originating from the mighty Amu Darya which now resides some 400m lower!



The lower levels of the doline can be reached by narrow winding tracks used mainly by young ‘salt students’ leading salt block laden donkeys to the surface.

These ‘salt students’ are under the tutorship and protection of the ‘Salt Guardian’ a charismatic **Bobo Zayniddis** who has worked here daily for 40 years. Apparently four qualities of salt are extracted with sales of around 10,000 metric tons per year. Not only is this site of considerable and little known

karstic importance Bobo is also only too pleased to ‘wax lyrical’ over its thousand year history! It is particularly interesting to note that almonds, black mulberries, cherries and various smaller mountain fruit bushes manage to grow vigorously within the dolines environment.

Apart from a brief reference by ‘Sedletskiy’ we were unable to find any exploratory information on Hodja Sartis. This diapir does have other halite exposures amongst the upper dolines and there are a number of springs around the base.

Hodja Sartis and Hodja Mumin are so named after two highly respected local people.

**For more information on diapirs and how they are formed see Middleton and Waltham under ‘Reference Sources’ section.*

5/6/7. KHOROG TO LANGAR – *Scenery, hot springs, ancient forts and precious stones.*

Between Kalai-Khum and Ishkashim the Panj River becomes the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It flows through a narrow high mountain valley where the river and each country may only be 15m apart. The contrast between the two is immediate. On one side there is a rather rough but reasonably wide asphalted road with cars and Chinese heavy goods vehicles heading backwards and forwards whilst on the other side a narrow meandering track allows a few people to walk or ride donkeys and the very occasional motorbike.



At valley widenings multiple snow-capped mountain peaks come into view

Anyone travelling this route will most certainly never forget it!



Just by Khorog, which is the capital of the GBAO viloyat and an interesting city to visit, there is a 'Friendship' bridge connecting Afghanistan to Tajikistan.



At one end of this a heavily guarded market can be seen that is open one day a week. This is well worth visiting as it shows up well the differences between the Tajik and Afghan peoples

a. **Garm Chashma**, which translates as 'hot spring', lies 42km south-east of Khorog at an altitude of 2,325m on the western slope of the Shohdara Mountains.

This is a fascinating site which has to be seen to be believed. It consists of a stunningly beautiful white and yellow **travertine** cascade that flows down the hillside for almost 60m. The source is a number of springs, some intermittent and geyser-like, some sprouting fountains to almost 1m in height and some just bubbling out water



On the downhill flow sparkling gours and other fairyland formations abound as has a turquoise coloured pool at its base. The temperature of the water at its resurgences is 60°C but this steadily cools in its descent to 38°C at the main pool.



This water contains considerable amounts of carbonic acid, hydrogen sulphide and silica as well as lesser proportions of strontium, fluorine, iron, aluminium, magnesium, and other trace elements.

Throughout the centuries such a site has not gone unnoticed by the local population who attribute 'Garm Chashma' with many therapeutic benefits. A special area has been set aside for personal soaking which is strictly limited to separate men and women's sessions. A small charge is made for entry to these.

There are also unusual carbonated mineral springs nearby at a constant temperature of 14°C. These are used by local inhabitants as a safe and healthy source of drinking water.

Fifty metres above the upstream start of 'Garm Chashma' an old buttress-like flow descends the hillside which includes several small but still active springs. Slightly higher still and further to the right there is an even larger travertine flow that exceeds 80m in width and descends a good 30 to 40 metres. This too is old but its size still creates an impressive site whilst standing on its top allows many mountain vistas to unfold.

b. **Kuh-i-Lal*** is the name of a valley, the name of a village and, more importantly, the name for some ancient gemstone mines. The area itself is situated up the next large valley following the Garm Chashma turn on the road towards Ishkashim. After travelling a short uphill distance extensive mine workings can be seen on the hillside to the left. These mines, at 2,900m and a 40 minute walk from the road were worked intensively between the 9th and 15th centuries and then again by more modern methods from the late 1950's. Two different gemstones are found with the most numerous being high quality red, orange and pink **spinel** – a reasonable stone currently fetches up to £160/carat. The second stone is the much rarer translucent **clinohumite** which occurs in yellow and orange with an average selling price of around £180/carat. There are reported to be over 400 mines in this compact area with shafts and tunnels descending 50m into worked chambers up to 12m x 22m x 8m high. From these, mazes of crawling size passageways follow the gem-bearing veins. Processing of the stones is done close to Khorog where some of the finished products can be seen and purchased. Other varieties of precious and semi-precious stones, including high quality **lapis lazuli**, can also be found in the southern GBAO region.

Unfortunately whilst we did make our way to the valley we could only ascend as far as the small village at its base. The continuing route was blocked by the Border Police and army who were busy 'sweeping' the mine area for illegal immigrants. Next time!

** In ancient times these mines were known as 'The Badakhshan Ruby mines'. It is believed that the famous **Timur Ruby** and **Black Prince's Ruby** originated here.*

c. **The Wakhan Valley**, sometimes known as the Wakhan Corridor, is one of Central Asia's most interesting and spectacular regions. Its interest emanates from the many centuries that it remained an important trading route between east and west. This road was included and noted in 1274 as being amongst **Marco Polo's** many journeying's. In addition the valley once formed a rather shaky buffer zone between the rival British Indian and Russian Empires during the 19th century.

Unfortunately, tourist access and commerce is no longer possible on the Afghanistan side due to political constraints. As for spectacle this is immediately obvious as the mighty Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan form the northern boundary whilst the equally impressive Karakorum ranges of Pakistan and Afghanistan rise abruptly to the south (most notably the Hindu Kush) – see Tajikistan map. The entire length of the corridor is in excess of 350km with the width varying between 12km and 65km. The Panj and Pamir Rivers join together within this valley to later form the Amu Darya which in turn continues for 2,620km to discharge into what remains of the Aral Sea. This great river, once known as the **Oxus** to the ancients, also forms much of the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

d. **Kakh-Kakh** and **Yamchun** are just two of the many fortresses that have been built to defend the strategically important Wakhan Valley. Each is situated in an imposing position. The first to be reached from Ishkashim is Khak-Khak close to the village of Namadgut and just a 5 minute walk from the road. Only mud walls remain but their configuration remains obvious. Some sections date back to the 3rd century BC with others regularly being added over the years. Khak-Khak's long military tradition continued well into the early 21st century when it was still being used as a military check-point and observation post.

The second fort is Yamchun found over 500m above the village of the same name. It was built mainly along a ridge with unparalleled views of the mountains and valleys. The walls are very extensive and include 22 round towers with window slots. Archaeologists suggest that the earliest parts of the fort date back once more to the 3rd century BC with major extensions being carried out in the 12th century AD. As Yamchun was built mainly out of good, worked stone it is much easier to imagine how it once looked. Our suggestion would be "like a fairy tale castle in a land of make believe". This is the Wakhan Valley at its very best!

e. **Yang** is a very picturesque village with a 4th century Buddhist Stupa and large monastery on the hill above it. This complex is surrounded by an adobe brick wall which was doubly fortified with watchtowers. On the opposite side of the nearby river valley, several hundred metres away, is a rather crumbly cliff face containing many small hermit caves. In the early days of Buddhism there was also a considerable presence in this region of Zoroastrians.

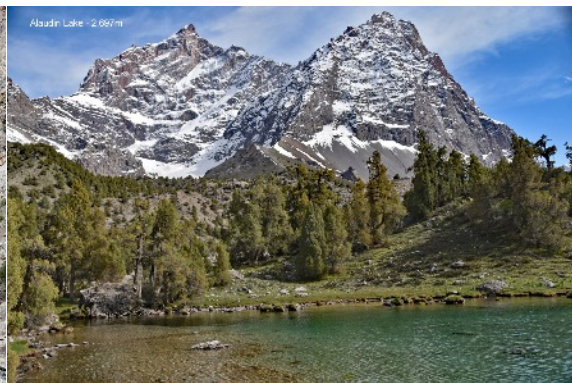
8/9/10/11. THE FAN MOUNTAINS – *Scenery, wilderness, trekking, mountaineering, culture, history.*

These extensive wild mountains are often claimed to be the greatest and most beautiful trekking region in all of Central Asia. This is a big claim with lots of competition elsewhere but having spent several days there ourselves, we can believe it! Many spectacular and steep sided valleys lead into the interior of the range from where there are then multiple opportunities for trekking at the road head. There are numerous permutations of interconnected trekking routes through high passes and around stunning lakes (there are 30 lakes of varying size within the mountains). These treks can last from half a day to 20 days – all are worthwhile. For mountaineers there are seven peaks over 5,000m most with varying degrees of difficulties. The highest of these is ‘Chimtarga’ at 5,490m. For rock climbers we learnt of several long traditional routes left by the Russians. We did not come across any bolted climbs.

From Dushanbe the first and very popular entry point, probably because it is the only signposted one, is the Iskandarkul valley with its smooth lake mirroring the surrounding snow capped mountains. Just before this turn the road passes the fascinating Kuhi-Malik Smoking Mountain which was apparently known to Herodotus in the 5th Century BC . It is coal within the mountain that is burning which has also created a labyrinth of gas filled caverns.



Whilst we are not serious trekkers we did explore two spectacular valleys commencing from the Dushanbe to Khujand road in the east and three equally fine valleys from the Penjakant road in the north. The two that really impressed us the most were the 7 Lakes Valley and the Pasrud Valley . The former does actually negotiate round seven lakes several of which have been created by landslides and finishes in a region of very traditional people in isolated villages. The Pasrud valley finds a way between more magnificent peaks to finish at Alaudine Lake just a day’s walk from Mount Chimtaga. Steady nerves and a competent 4x4 driver are required in order to arrive and return in one piece!



The main starting point for any excursion is usually from the interesting city of Panjakent. This city has been on the Silk Road Route for over 2,000 years and whilst much of this has been destroyed by conquering peoples evidence can still be seen back to 3,500BC at Sarazam. Equally fine are the remains of Ancient Panjakent which date back to the 5th Century AD.

We were only able to find evidence of one cave in these mountains. This is known as Nurridina Cave which is found at an altitude of 2,500m at the river-head of Karmartoshaj in Chakylkalyap Mountains. It is 55m long, 5m deep and is a permanent source of ice for the local people.

KHOJAND AND AROUND – a historical Silk Road city, more salt, Lake Kayrakkum – the Tajik Sea.

Khojand is an attractive, friendly, modern city that exudes youthful vitality and gives the impression of lacking for nothing. For us its greatest highlight was the Khojand Citadel in the city centre which has been partially re-built but still retains parts of its ancient mud walls. These outer walls face the great Syr Darya River and from the top it is possible to look across the river to the mountains beyond. It is from these that the hordes of Genghis Khan came to lay a bloody siege on the city. It only took a short while before we were searching the horizon to see if they would appear! The reconstructed corner of this Citadel now houses a superbly designed and filled regional museum.

Lake Kayrakkum which is more popularly known as the ‘Tajik Sea’ is actually an enormous reservoir with a surface area of 523km². The south shore is a major holiday destination for Tajik people although many of the Hotels and Sanatoriums are of Russian origin.

Salt, as usual, was our interest as at the north-eastern end of the lake there is a quite spectacular salt lake together with the probable remnants of an ancient salt diapir. Additionally the northern corner of the lake has become a superb wildlife marsh full of interesting flora and fauna. To reach this it is necessary to follow the long line of the ‘Oqbel Range’ of hills whose sedimentary base exhibits some excellent erosion features. As always we never left sufficient time to fully explore this region.

TRIP ORGANISATION, LOGISTICS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Our journey to Tajikistan was a natural follow-on to our previous four visits in Central Asia, a region that we are definitely addicted to. As had been our norm we asked our good Kazakh friend, Alexander Petrov, if he could recommend a company that would be able to get us to the places that we wanted to visit. Not unexpectedly he had an excellent contact, this time in Faridun Khamroev a director of ‘Panjakent-tour’ of Panjakent city. Faridun efficiently took control of all our logistics including adding several new sites, a superb driver in Faruz, an excellent translator in Huseyn and a very reliable 4x4. Our little ‘expedition’ could not have failed to be a success.

In order to visit Tajikistan British Nationals first need to have a 45 day e-visa. This can be obtained by referring to the Tajikistan Embassy website (see below). To visit the Pamirs and the GBAO viloyat it is necessary to get a Permit for this purpose at the same time. The cost in 2018 was \$70 per person. With this, border and immigration controls should be very speedily completed. This visa and passport are expected to be kept on the person at all times. Flights from the UK to Dushanbe are normally routed through either Istanbul or Moscow. We flew with Turkish Airlines whose return price was £664 per person.

There is a flight change in Istanbul which is an excellent and well organised airport to spend time in. The flying time each way is around 9 hours.

Finally we must thank every single Tajik person that we met for always being so friendly and helpful. We must also give an extra-large 'thank-you' to Faridun, Huseyn and Faruz with whom we are now all good friends.

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The weather looked set fair for a good few days on this lovely island. Seven of us arrived on the Thursday: Mick Borroff, John Brown and Peter Elliott all travelling together, Mike and Helen Smith arrived on the 4 o'clock ferry, the same time as Tim Josephy. Alan Kay was already on the island. The first evening was spent settling in the Youth Hostel at Lochranza on the northern end of the island, followed by a walk to the Lochranza Hotel where we had dinner and made plans for the following day.

Friday 5th October

It was a dry clear start with the sound of rutting deer all around the valley. Mike, Helen and John headed out to Glen Sannox after dropping Alan off, so he could find his way across to the northern coast and walk back to Lochranza.

The climb up towards the Devil's Punchbowl was steep and committing. They then traversed right towards the airy ridge of Cioch na h Oighe. The scrambling here was great on rough granite all the way to the top. This took a little time, so rather than complete the Glen Sannox horseshoe they carried on to Goat Fell and experienced the tremendous views. When they reached the valley at the hamlet of Corrie, Mike decided to hitch back to the car, his hopes rose when the school bus stopped, only to be dashed when they would not let him on. He finally did get a lift and came back to collect John and Helen.

Tim and Peter walked up the scenic valley of Glen Rosa, initially with Mick until he turned off to start his climb up to Beinn Nuis.

They continued for two and a half hours, initially on good paths until the final trackless heathery and rather unpleasant approach to their chosen route, Pagoda Ridge, a 250m Severe climb on the flank of A'Chir. Not the greatest rock climb but a good mountaineering route on excellent granite slabs and ribs, all in wonderful surroundings.

Steady climbing apart from one very short, very steep and desperate crack.

They enjoyed a splendid walk out down the grassy ridge over Beinn a' Chliabhain to the foot of Glen Rosa. A seven and a half hour day.



HS, JB Cioch na h Oighe
Photo MS



P E on Pagoda Ridge
Photo TJ



Rosa Pinnacle from
Glen Rosa
Photo TJ

The whole day was about seven hours.

Alan walked along the Arran Coastal Path from Sannox Bay to Lochranza. He felt this is the best part of the Coastal Path, the weather was brilliant, as was the scenery. Taking Alan's enthusiastic recommendation, Peter walked this route the following day, though in the opposite direction.

Mick went walking alone and completed a strenuous round on the west side of Glen Rosa, taking the ridge across Beinn Nuis and Beinn Tarsuinn, alongside to Cir Mhor,, returning down Glen Rosa to wait at the car for Peter and Tim.

Saturday 6th October

Mick set off from Sannox, initially following the route John and the Smiths had taken the day before. From the top of North Goat Fell he made the steep and long descent to the Saddle which separates the heads of Glens Rosa and Sannox then climbed the intimidating looking Cir Mhor which proved easier than expected as the path has been improved. Thence over Caisteal Abhail and the notorious Witches Step, made trickier by a short but wetting shower, then along the north east ridge back to Sannox, where he hitched a lift back to the hostel.

Tim walked from Sannox intending to follow Mick but on reaching North Goat Fell and surveying the prospect of the descent to the Saddle and the long climb up Cir Mhor his get up and go got up and hid in the bottom of his sack. Instead he scrambled across to Goat Fell then joined the multitudes going down the tourist path to Brodick Castle. All excellent stuff except for the tourist path which is dull and not recommended. He had to wait an hour or so for a bus so was forced to sample the delights of the Arran Brewery.



Alan also made the ascent of Goat Fell from Cladach, he descended to High Corrie, then back to Cladach via forest tracks. If he had known in advance how tedious the ascent route would be, he would have taken a different route, though the views and weather were excellent.

John walked from Lochranza a good 10 mile jaunt up through Gleann Easen Biorach Joining with Gleann Diomhan and GlenCatotol At the saddle he had great views down Glen Rosa but best of all saw three golden eagles, a peregrine and a red squirrel. There were a few showers, but still a great day out. Mike and Helen headed for the three Beinns in the Pirnmill hills on the northwest coast, seeing nobody but hearing bellowing stags. They then called at Machrie standing stones and circles in the late afternoon. They were lucky enough to see an otter fishing on the shore, a rare sight. Peter did the coastal walk from Sannox around to Lochranza and had a good day out before visiting relatives on the Island.

Sunday 7th October

Wet and windy. All apart from Mike and Helen made a early exit to the ferry port and managed to get the first and only ferry from the island that day. Mike and Helen wound their way from the Lochranza hostel to Laggan bothy on the east coast. They had coffee in its welcome protection. They followed the sheltered coast north past disused salt pans and pits missing the giant centipede fossilized tracks which they only learned about back at the hostel. They went on over landslips with gannets and seals for company to Fairy Dell and rounded a headland to battle into a blustery wind. Saw the two types of rock of the Hutton Unconformity (look it up!) near Newton Point and from there back had difficulty walking in a straight line at times against the wind.

The 8.20 ferry sailed on Monday but had to withdraw its stabilizers before attempting the manoeuvre into Ardrossan harbour in the crosswind and tossing sea. So the whole meet made it off the Island as planned, but only just!



PE on Beinn a Chliabhain
Photo TJ

John Brown

Attendees

John Brown, Alan Kay,, Mick Borroff, Peter Elliott, Helen Smith, Mike Smith, Tim Josephy

Ice-Cold in Taplejung

Harry Curtiss & Ged Campion

Ged has been looking back at an expedition he did in 1991. This is a précis of an article about it written by Harry Curtiss and edited by Ged.

It was to the Kanchenjunga area which had only just been opened by the Nepalese government as a region that could be visited by tourists. However, to obtain permits they were told that they had to have more than a trekking reason to visit the area. Thus, the name of the expedition was born; The Kangbachen Study & Exploration Group. The permits were issued. It was never clear what they would be expected to study and where they would explore. However, it seemed a great opportunity to recce a few unclimbed peaks and even go a little way up them.

The team was made up of YRC & WMC members, Ged Campion, Stewart Muir, John Riley, Andy Forsyth, John Hanson and Harry Curtiss and from the 30th September to 6th November 1991.

They caught the Biman Bangladesh flight from Heathrow to Kathmandu via Dacca. As they took off the pilot played a honky-tonk version of Roll out the Barrel, exotic air-hostesses in Biman Saris plied them with orange juice. They were on their way to the fabled Shangri-la, Nepal and adventure.

Well, not quite. The next day they found themselves in Dacca airport, sipping tea, eating lunch watching Ged threaten Biman flunkies who were operating a passport lucky dip for the few remaining seats on the overbooked ongoing flight to Kathmandu.

They lost the draw but won a free night in Dacca. The bus trip through a city was Harry's first glimpse of Asia, ploughing through a sea of cycle rickshaws, vespa taxis, with horns and bells blaring, past beggars and wondering cows.

They left next morning for the only country in Asia poorer than Bangladesh; Nepal.

Their Sherpa agents met them at Kathmandu airport with garlands of yellow flowers. Exuding a combination of Jasmine scent and BO, and dripping a trail of petals, they were ushered into a back street office for a chat.

Originally, they planned to fly directly to Basantpur or Taplejung from Kathmandu but to their dismay the agents said there were no flights, so they would have to travel by road. Time was already eating into their expedition plans.

They had a few days to explore Kathmandu but one morning they were rudely awoken by news that the Nepalese customs had impounded their high-level gear and Epi-Gaz and they were summoned with their agents to the official tourist bureau to explain why they needed ropes, axes, gas, and light-weight tents on a Trek. They explained that they were a study and exploration group, but the officials would have none of it.

The official in charge informed us in chilling tones 'If your agents cannot supply what you need, we can cancel their licence'. They knew that they had dropped the agents in the proverbial. The agents had to write a contrite letter promising never to allow it to happen again. Trekkers must be trekkers.

There were no official 'trekking peaks' in the area they would visit. There was no immediate prospect of retrieving their gear, so they decided on a spending spree, and spent a few hectic hours bargaining in the equipment shops to buy mostly discarded

Russian ropes, axes, crampons and fuel and packed them into padlocked kit bags to hide from enquiring eyes. They were ready to go.

They had decided to hire their own bus instead of slumming it on the packed night buses. The expedition was now rolling.

Harry takes up the story:

“The journey took us south, descending off the plain to an area feared by generations of travellers, and as formidable an obstacle to entry from the south as the Himalayan Spine was to the North. Here was a malarial infested jungle bordering India called the Terai. No place for mechanical problems.

We had our first puncture at dusk. The bus was old and the steep mountain road was punishing. Further on, as night fell, the road became a muddy track and ended at a collapsed bridge. Undeterred the driver simply drove the bus into the river and steered the amphibious craft to the far bank. We stared transfixed. Nepalese buses are run in the style of the old Wells Fargo coaches. No faint hearts. There was no moon. Red sparks of fireflies flickered in the undergrowth.

The bus pulled in at a Nepalese greasy spoon where the puncture was repaired, and the team stretched their legs and ordered some food. Grimy oil lamps attracted dense clouds of mosquitoes and moths the size of sparrows. I joined John Riley riding shotgun on the roof. It was his first major trip, he had to admit it wasn't like Yorkshire at all and was more exciting than a night in Barnsley.

We pushed on East ignoring a grinding sound that gradually increased. The bus halted when the main drive shaft bearing shattered. The two mechanics crawled under the bus to perform the necessary surgery using the entire toolkit, a hammer and chisel. They were not particularly amused by Stewart's passable tiger impressions, conducted for their benefit at the side of the bus. After all, it was tiger country and it was past midnight.

Eventually we were on our way. We stopped at the only petrol station en-route, a single pump at the road side attended by a bald, bare foot youth wearing only a blanket and loin cloth. The blanket was for covering his head and face to protect himself from the hordes of insects as he poured the petrol. After replacing the cap, he danced away into the night stepping lightly, barefoot, to avoid the scorpions also attracted by the light from the pump.

Later that night we pulled in at another village which was alive with burners, cookers and oil lamps, howling dogs. Here lived the stay-awake tribe whose role in life was to provide staging posts for the night buses of the Terai.

As dawn rose we jostled with oncoming HGVs on the single-track road. The forest gave way to rice paddy fields and we passed small towns. More breakdowns, a broken rear spring, and another puncture, the breakdowns became a ritual. We turned north past the Ghurkha recruiting post of Dharan, past Dhankuta to the end of the road at Basantpur. On the last lap of the journey there was a clatter as the exhaust system finally departed from the vehicle.

We set up camp and were treated to tiffin, tea and biscuits set out in silver mugs on a rattan blanket in a mess tent. The picnic tour of Nepal had begun. It was here we had our first evening tea, our first three course cooked meal and where I met my first leech. These weren't the big slug like leeches that co-starred with Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*. No, these were short thin Nepalese, fast moving, GTI leech which prospered in the post monsoon season on trekkers and kept us busy with cigarette lighters throughout the lower part of the trek. The only good leech is a fried leech. Later on, we accepted a more Buddhist approach. Live and let drink.

The following day set the pattern for our trek for three weeks. We were woken with hot tea at 6:00 a.m. This was followed by a basin of hot water coloured purple with permanganate disinfectant.

A breakfast of tea and cereals, cooked eggs and pancakes with marmalade and delicious Nepalese honey. As we ate breakfast the team of porters took down the tents, packed all the gear. They carried them in the traditional manner in wicker basket, a belt of woven cotton called a tumpline against the forehead. We felt strange, hitching with a Karrimor sack packed out with a sleeping bag and waterproof.



Typical hospitality on the Milka Dande

For the first four days we crossed a ridge called the Milka Danda, following a good trail linking small villages. All very nice but still a long way from the Taplejung area. The days trekking was divided into a morning session from 7:00 to 10:30 and an afternoon session from 12:30 until 16:00. Sometime about 9:30 we would be passed by a group of three fell runners in full packs carrying all the cooking gear. These were the cooking team. Cook, egg-boy and a tough weathered character we called Bronson. They were running ahead to find a suitable place for lunch. They would do the same in the afternoon. To be a cook in Nepal you have got to be fit.

At 10:30 we would arrive at a shaded lunch spot to be greeted with hot orange. The pace of the day was dictated by the distance porters could carry 40 kilogram (90 lb).

This was a true picnic tour.

The villages we passed were medieval. For two days a heavy mist followed us creating a landscape like a set for Seven Samurai. Chowki, Gupha Pkhara, Gurja. On these days we sheltered for lunch in one of the scattered huts of woven bamboo in the village settlements, sharing an earthen floor with the family and their livestock. The Limbu women of the region were richly ornamented with nose jewellery earrings. John Hanson admired the roofs; woven bamboo that let the smoke out but prevented the rain getting in, perhaps the first 'Goretex' roofs.

Everywhere curious children, beyond the reach of even the most primitive schools, would greet us with the Nepalese greeting 'Namaste', a bow of the head and gesture of open palms. The kids were dirty, charming, runny-nosed scruffs, natural models for our ever-ready cameras and a lot of Kodachrome was spent on the street urchins of the villages.

Nepal was designed for trekking. It is stunningly beautiful, dramatic and, unlike Tibet and the Karakorum, richly green. From the top of the Milka Dande, we caught glimpses of the big hills, Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu, as we headed towards Kanchenjunga.

On our descent off the Milka Dande towards Dobhan there was a dramatic change in culture. No more flimsy bamboo huts, the villages were made from brick and adobe painted with white silt with thatched roofs spreading wide like Swiss chalets. Over the balconies hung millet for drying and the houses boasted attractive gardens. During our descent we found the trail obstructed by porters carrying canoes. We had caught up with a gang of canoeists who were about to paddle the Tamur river

towards India. Nepal is a country designed for adventure.



Tamur River

In Dobhan we bathed and laundered in the river as temperatures soared to 40. The following day we began our second stage of the trek following the Tamur River upstream past Mitlung, Sinwa Tawa to the confluence of two rivers at Helok.

Everywhere the mountains had been terraced and stepped by villagers to grow rice, wheat and potatoes. Most of the terraces were only a couple of metres wide, scarcely enough to turn an ox for ploughing. Unused terraces provided ideal campsites.

As we progressed up river we treated to glimpses of another age. We saw women flailing wheat, women preparing paint from silt, women weaving on treadle looms.



In the town Sinwa we witnessed a piece of ancient theatre, the dance of the rope-makers. While one man sat in the centre holding the rope as it was made, three others walked around holding lengths of straw or hemp in a strange Maypole-like dance threading the fibres together until it grew slowly inch by inch producing a natural hawser laid rope.

The weather remained perfect, like a warm English summer's day. There were no views of big peaks but plenty to see. Fantastic mosses bearded the trees, exotic butterflies and beautifully iridescent dragonflies hovered and played. Spiders, a foot across, snared in webs across the trail while the cicadas deafened us with chirping, drowning out the roaring of the Tamur River below. The excitement was provided by the bridges, 100-foot suspension bridges built with according to the Buddhist ideal of minimalism. Even the porters crossed them one at a time.

Above the confluence at Helok we followed the right branch of the fork, the Ghunsa Khola. The lower forest gave way to bamboo, and later to temperate woodland, turning red and gold with autumn. Sokathum, Amjilassa, Kyopra, Phole and Ghunsa.

A Tibetan influence became apparent in dress, culture and houses.

In Phole we visited a Buddhist monastery built by the refugee Tibetan community who had fled across the border after the Chinese invasion. The tea houses offered teas made with rancid yak butter and salt. It is an acquired taste.

The land became harsh, wood gave way to scrub. Near Ghunsa we caught sight of the big hills that defined the border with Sikkim. Pride of place went to Jannu, a fabulous peak showing huge walls on either flank.

Our long procession of porters had been whittled down as the food was consumed. Above Ghunsa, wood became scarce and yaks common. Cooking with yak dung adds a certain piquancy to the food, but as most of the kerosene had spilt into the porridge, we had no choice. The cook kept the high standard of food, mixing traditional Nepalese recipes such as Mompos (dumplings containing meat) with more western fare.

Kambachen was the last inhabited settlement at 4000m. We pushed on to Lhonak at 4700m, a desolate plain used as grazing for yak herders. We decided to make our base camp and explore the area for acclimatisation day. The real Himalaya towered about us, Kabru, Sharpu, Wedge Peak, and Mera. Few had been climbed

After a day of exploration and acclimatisation, we confided to Angdawa, our Sherpa Sirdar the whole truth. We weren't butterfly collectors or geologists, but god-forbid climbers, and those padlocked kitbags that had kept two extra porters sweating for twelve-days, contained not butterfly nets and sample jars, but ropes, axes, crampons, helmets and gaz. I think Angdawa had suspected all along. A trekking permit in Nepal means you can look but you can't touch. Breaking this rule is serious business and could mean loss of licence and business for Sherpas and agents who allow it.



John Riley on Broken Glacier with comparisons of 2017 with 1991

Angdawa grinned, offered to help and recruited the younger Sherpa Urmi and one of the cooks a fellow Sherpa, to this conspiracy, to assist us making a high camp near Broken Glacier.

The following morning, we headed up the side valley at Lhonak to a ravine that offered access to Broken Glacier. The river snaked from side to side in the ravine forcing us to make several increasingly hairy river crossings, boulder hops, on icy boulders. Tiger Forsyth, knowing the basic MLC rule, never follow a waterway, scrambled up a steep loose moraine near the entrance of the ravine. As the day warmed, the river strengthened with the extra melt water, preventing our retreat. We were hemmed in by 300-foot granite walls. At one point we had to build a dam of boulders to cross the river.

That day we caught a glimpse of those legendary Sherpa skills. All morning they grafted in support. Probing, helping, catching sacks, building dams. As we rose the river became a frozen waterfall. We resorted to axes

and crampons, but the Sherpas' had hardly expected to need such equipment on a trek. With heavy packs containing tents and gear they opted to solo climb a steep granite rib to get them above the ravine. Stewart followed them to ensure the party did not become splintered. He had been climbing E6 during the summer and was fit. He admitted that the rib climb was extremely serious, loose and hard and at one point he asked for a pull from the Sherpa above. The three Sherpas found a suitable camping area and dumped gear. They then had to find an alternative way down to reach the Lhonak 'base-camp' by contouring the mountain and descending some unknown ravines.

From our 'advanced base-camp' at about 5300 metres we had hoped to tick off two unnamed peaks of the 6000 metre peaks, but after a long morning exploration we realised it was going to be very difficult. We kept probing for a way through but here was no water, the snow line was extremely high, above 6000 metres and access to the peaks above was guarded by precipitous walls of loose boulders.

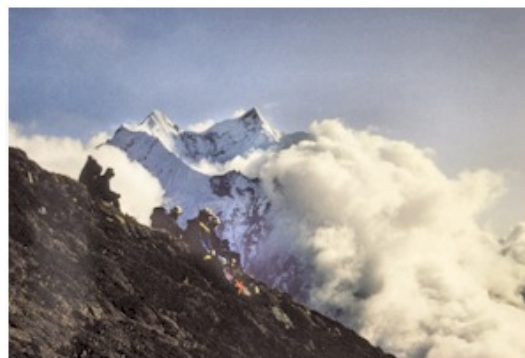
Our time had been reduced by our longer walk in and we realised that we needed to be realistic. With our thoughts on the state of the walls above us we talked in whispers and, at one point, when I sneezed everyone dived for cover.

Reluctant, after a few days we eventually decided to turn back and after a long gruelling traverse around the mountain, we found a reasonably convenient ravine and dropped back to Lhonak camp.

It appears that the peaks we had hoped to climb were named, Rifil Peak (6200 m) and Tsisima Peak (6250 m) both claimed as 1st ascents by a Romanian team in 2004.

The details of their ascent are unavailable.

However, according to AC journal Tsisima was climbed by Japanese in 1963.



Retreat from Broken Glacier

Lots of conflicting information.

The following day we completed the official trek, making our pilgrimage to Pangpema and stared at the massive south-facing wall of Kanchenjunga.

From here Smythe and party had tried to climb in the 1930's, and later, an English party with Boardman, Tasker and Scott had ascended.

Having been thwarted in the Broken Glacier area, we decided to return via a different route, crossing the high pass of Lapsang La (5161m) to drop down near the Yalung Glacier and continue down the valley to Taplejung and the flight home.

Crossing the Lapsang La was the toughest stage. We equipped the porters with trekking boots and spare axes. The weather was good, no wind and magnificent views of Jannu, but the slog up the col was over steep loose moraines at high altitude. The porters summed it up succinctly, 'Lapsang La, bad, very bad'.

We had hoped to explore Boktoh Peak (6114m) from the col, but again tons of loose rock and huge granite walls rose like cloggies from the col and we descended to the Yalung and returned via Chitre, Yamphudin and Khunjuri.

Throughout those weeks on the trek we talked and dreamed of the beer we would get in Taplejung. 'Ice cold in Taplejung'

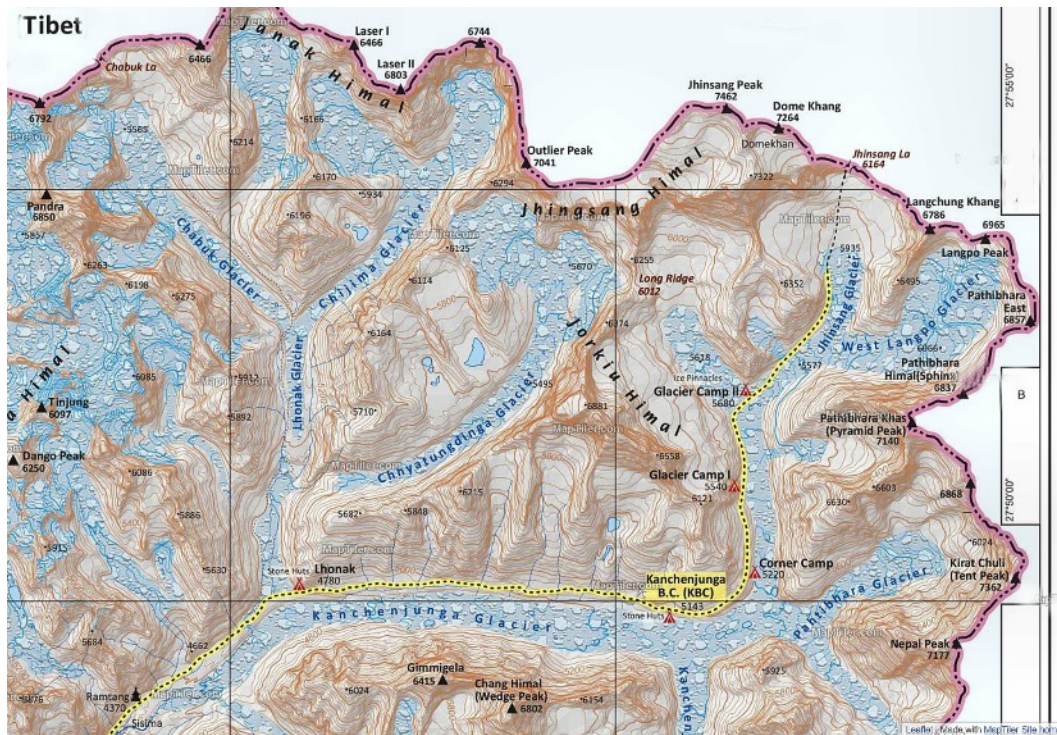
Now at Suketar, we cleared the trail dust with bottles of local beer and stared back up the long valley we had descended to the magnificent summit tips of Kanchenjuna and Jannu, flaring pink in the setting sun.

That evening we had a party, the cook made a monster cake using, we suspect, all the unused yak butter. And then a night of revelry, chang, and dancing with the cook. The following day we assembled at the sloping football pitch they used for an airstrip and boarded the twin Otter jostling with locals for the flight back to Kathmandu.

Top of the Lapsang La



Recent map of area. 'Broken Glacier' named here as 'Chhyatungdinga Glacier'.





Kanchenjunga base camp



Ged in camp



Wedge Peak from Lhonak



Broken Glacier from Google Earth

**Overseas
meet**

**Kanchenjunga South and
North Base Camps Trek,
Nepal**

**Oct-Nov
2018**

Possibly the most beautiful walk in the world?

After a most enjoyable YRC trek across the roof of Nepal in Dolpo in the autumn of 2016, it was a tough choice of where to go next. Humla and Zanskar came to mind. However, several authors including Peter Boardman and Kev Reynolds claimed that the Kanchenjunga basecamps trek is one the most beautiful in the world. Albert Chapman had been singing its praises to me; Alan Linford, Alan Kay and Ged Campion had all been to this area and everyone was enthusiastic about how much we would enjoy it, so it became an easy choice.



Kanchenjunga from Pangpema

Introduction

Kanchenjunga (8,586m) is the third highest mountain in the world and rebuffed an attempt by Dyhrenfurth's 1930 expedition from the North Base Camp (NBC). YRC member Frank Smythe was on that trip and made the first ascent of Jonsong Peak (7483m), which at the time was the highest summit ever climbed. Perhaps uniquely for a Himalayan expedition Smythe celebrated another first ascent, Nepal Peak (7154m), by drinking champagne and playing a mouth organ.

Kanchenjunga was first climbed by Joe Brown and George Band in 1955 from the South Base Camp (SBC). This creates two objectives for the trekker with very different perspectives of the mountain and its surrounding peaks and glaciers from the Nepal side.

This area is also attractive because it is comparatively little visited by tourists and there are few tea houses and lodges compared to Annapurna or Khumbu. The entire district was closed to trekkers until 1989 and eastern Nepal probably sees no more than 500 trekkers at most each year undertaking the Kanchenjunga trek in whole or part.

The route ascends through five of Nepal's climatic zones (tropical, sub-tropical, temperate, sub-alpine and alpine), allowing progression from the hot and humid lowlands of the Nepal-India border (the Terai), up through the foothills through a progression of habitats past the rice paddy terraces on cultivated hillsides and black cardamom plantations, then bamboo, rhododendron, pine and larch forests and on to the more familiar terrain higher up as the mountains and glaciers are reached.

The wooden and corrugated iron or stone houses in the villages are of course adapted to these zones with thatched roofs lower down, then tin roofs and finally simple timber planked roofs held in place with numerous rocks. The birders in our party were kept busy and there were plenty of other flora and fauna to see, including orchids, gentians, edelweiss, blue sheep, lizards, geckos, frogs, cicadas, butterflies, moths, spiders and some slippery leeches.



Simbu - a Limbu village

From a cultural perspective, the area has predominantly Limbu and Rai villages lower down and the trails between their settlements were dotted with poignant carved memorial stones often set in chautara (trailside resting places often used by porters). The higher villages at Pheri and Ghunsa were home to people of Tibetan extraction and were complete with Buddhist gompas, chortens and mani walls with many prayer flags in evidence.

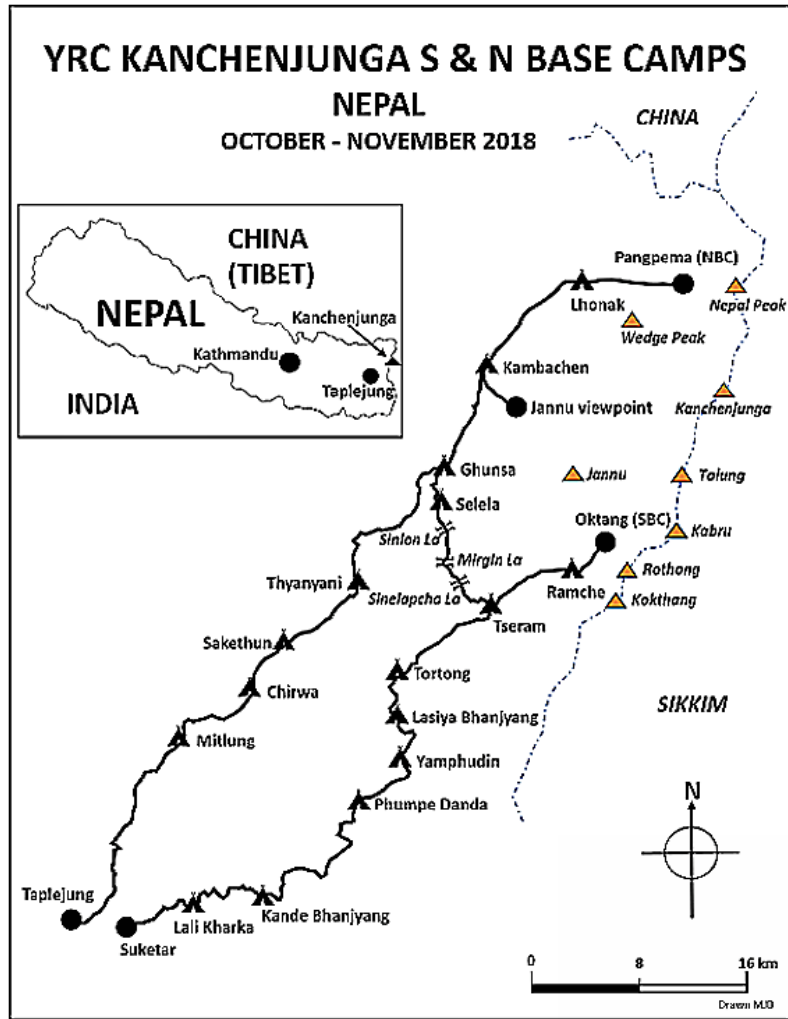
It was clear that this post-monsoon trek was going to contrast nicely with the previous Dolpo trip and the points above led us to expect something exceptional - we were not disappointed!



Blue skies at Lalisa Bhanjyang

Route Summary

After flying from Kathmandu to Bhadrapur in Nepal's south-east corner, we took jeeps up to the airstrip at Suketar above the large town of Taplejung to begin a 22-day route of some 260 km and 13,700 m ascent planned in conjunction with Rimo Expeditions. We trekked first through the settled forested foothills, with some surprisingly long and steep ascents to reach the Simbuwa Khola which was followed NE up to the Yalung glacier and the Kanchenjunga South Base Camp with its astonishing views. Then we crossed four high passes to 4646m to reach Ghunsa, the last permanently settled village in the Ghunsa Khola valley.



Some of our hard-working porters from Kathmandu

This valley was followed NE to Pangpema, the Kanchenjunga North Base Camp passing a few simple lodges and yak herders camps. From this high point, we came back to Ghunsa and our return was made SW beside the Tamor Nadi river, with a final climb from Mitlung village up to Taplejung to meet our jeeps for the return to Bhadrapur.

[NB Spellings of place names taken from the Himalayan Maphouse 1:100,000 mapping].

- 12 Oct Arrive Kathmandu
- 13 Oct Fly to Bhadrapur (91m) in the Terai and drive to Phidim (1164m)
- 14 Oct Drive to Suketar (2426m) and trek to Lali Kharka (2281m)
- 15 Oct Lali Kharka to Kande Bhanjyang (2126m)
- 16 Oct Kande Bhanjyang to Phumpe Danda (1861m)
- 17 Oct Phumpe Danda to Yamphudin (2061m)
- 18 Oct Yamphudin to Lasiya Bhanjyang (3411m)
- 19 Oct Lasiya Bhanjyang to Tortong (3003m)
- 20 Oct Tortong to Tseram (3884m)
- 21 Oct Tseram to Ramche (4492m)
- 22 Oct Ramche to Oktang - SBC (4855m) and descend to Tseram
- 23 Oct Tseram to the Sinelapche La (4708m) - Mirgin La I - Mirgin La II to Selela (4229m)
- 24 Oct Selela - Sele La to Ghunsa (3329m)
- 25 Oct Rest day in Ghunsa
- 26 Oct Ghunsa to Kambachen (4096m)
- 27 Oct Kambachen to Lhonak (4764m)
- 28 Oct Lhonak to Pangpema - NBC (5170m) - return to Lhonak
- 29 Oct Lhonak back to Kambachen
- 30 Oct Lhonak to Jannu viewpoint (4408m) - return to Ghunsa
- 31 Oct Ghunsa to Thyanyani (2478m)
- 1 Nov Thyanyani to Sakethun (1636m)
- 2 Nov Sakethun to Chirwa (1243m)
- 3 Nov Chirwa to Mitlung (916m)
- 4 Nov Mitlung to Taplejung (1805m) and drive to Ilam (1225m)
- 5 Nov Drive to Bhadrapur airport and fly to Kathmandu
- 6 Nov Relaxing in Kathmandu

Kathmandu Valley and the Terai

Barry and Janelle, Kjetil and Ann-Karin, and Richard arrived before the main group and took in the sights of the Kathmandu valley. The rest of the UK contingent arrived later. Some got their visas after a long wait, then we met up with Motup and Raj Kumar, our Rimo guide, met us at Kathmandu Airport and we were soon whisked off to the calm oasis of the Kathmandu Guest House hotel to join the others. Over a beer and a curry, we discussed the plans for the trek.

With our original plan to fly directly from Kathmandu to Suketar in tatters as Yeti Airlines had discontinued their charter service (probably because operating extra flights to Lukla was more profitable), we had to fly to Bhadrapur in the Terai lowlands and take a jeep over the foothills to Suketar. At the end of the trek, we would reverse this journey.

The next day, all internal flights were delayed due to a backlog of flights out of Lukla, but we eventually took off. The views of Everest and the many other snow-capped giants was spectacular as we flew along the Himalayas and after half an hour, touched down in Bhadrapur. Our kit was loaded into three jeeps and we headed for the hills. The road was tarmacked and comprised of an endless series of switchbacks as we climbed up and down spurs and crossed bridges, rivers and watersheds into the foothills. On the way, we saw rhesus monkeys playing beside the road. We stopped for a pleasant thali lunch and drove past the tea plantations at Ilam, then a gruelling five hours later, stopped for a night in a hotel in the town of Phidim. Becca celebrated her birthday here with a cake and we enjoyed our last beers for some time.

Suketar to Kanchenjunga South Base Camp

Next morning, an early start and another three hours in the jeeps, stopping only to photograph our first views of distant Jannu and Kanchenjunga in the distance, brought us to Suketar where the rest of the Rimo crew and some porters awaited.



Jannu and Kanchenjunga hover in the distance

There were no mules this trip and we were going to be relying on porters for the heavy lifting with over 1000kg to transport. Rimo had brought a team of 20 porters from a village in the Kathmandu valley, tried and tested numerous times before.

Under the leadership of Kulparsad, the head porter (sirdar), they were to be entrusted with our kit bags. They were augmented by a second team of 15 local porters from Taplejung engaged to carry the food supplies and they were paid off in groups part way as we progressed, and literally ate through their loads.

Niri, our excellent and ever-cheerful cook from both the Mera and Dolpo trips was with us, this time with a nine-strong kitchen crew. They had prepared lunch for us, which we ate in the sunshine while the Kathmandu porters played weighing games with our kit bags to get equitable loads sorted out.

After lunch we started with a gentle three hour walk along a track down to our orange-tented camp at Lali Kharka, a high pasture with a lovely open view and we relaxed with afternoon tea in the sun. Just before dinner, Motup got out his transcutaneous pO₂ meter to record our baseline oxygen saturation levels, so he could monitor how we were acclimatising each day in the coming weeks. Dinner was excellent and Niri's chicken curry that evening was the equal of any UK restaurant.

Like most mornings, we had a 6-7-8 strategy. For the uninitiated, this means tea delivered to the tent at 6am, followed by a bowl of warm washing water five minutes later, then kit bags packed and breakfast at 7am and set off walking by 8am. We started with a long downhill section into aspidistra-like black cardamom plantations and stopped to talk to two men who were extracting the highly valuable pods for drying and export to India. We crossed over the Phawa Khola on our first suspension bridge, and had lunch followed by a long steep ascent up a pitched path with plenty of chautaara resting places. Many were inset with Hindu memorial stones inscribed in Nepali or Limbu script with carvings of the sun, moon, a trident, fish and elephants - many were carefully coloured. This climb led to the Kande Bhanjyang col and our second camp. Before dinner our pO₂ levels were recorded again.



Limbu memorial stones



Trail-side waterfall

Off at 07:45, we had another down and up day, passing a 100m ribbon waterfall and a lovely section of jungle but no grey langur monkeys were seen. We stopped for lunch by our first chorten, sited on a col with great views. Then down past colourful houses, some thatched, with goats, cows and water buffalo in mangers with free-ranging chickens everywhere, followed by another uphill section to Phumphe Danda camp on a ridge, with fine views up the Kabeli Khola valley. Niri produced a large tray of his famous pakora which we wolfed down with our tea.



Taking a breather

Leaving our camp in sunshine the next day, we passed through the village of Mamanke on a well-flagged trail, resplendent with marigolds and poinsettia trees. Many of the houses had buzzing bee hives made from sections of hollowed-out tree trunks suspended from their eaves. The path went down over a couple more suspension bridges. The main route had been affected by a major landslide and was unsafe, so we climbed up by a much thinner footpath. Undulating became our watchword as yet more steep terrain was crossed and eventually, we arrived in the Yamphudin hamlet for tea and biscuits after a tough day. Our camp was shared with a French group going up and a returning German party enthused with the views from SBC.

We were given packed lunches by Niri as another energetic day was in prospect.

An “undulating” trail dotted with pink and red orchids led to couple of bridged river crossings, then a long steep climb up through the forest with many rocky steps eventually led to our camp at the Lasiya Bhanjyang col, where the mist drew in shortly after our arrival. The mugs of hot lemon, cheese and crackers were very welcome. The leeches that appeared in our tents were not! We spared a thought for the kitchen porters who had to descend for 15 minutes to the nearest water source with plastic jerry cans and then spend 30 minutes hauling them back to camp in the drizzle.

We awoke to a lovely bright clear morning with stunning views of Jannu behind back-lit trees which kept the photographers happy. After breakfasting on cornflakes, pancakes and omelette, we set off to traverse round the head of a massive landslip area on the other side of the col. A thin trail led down through old rhododendron cloud forest with Spanish moss draping branches and ferns growing in the damp conditions underneath. Lower down in the wood was a clearing with a rough dwelling where a boy outside, who attended Yamphudin primary school, was busy doing his Grade 5 English lessons, while his father churned milk with a wooden paddle. More forest trail led to our camp at Tortong.

Blue skies were again overhead as we left camp and entered an ancient Tolkienesque wildwood on the north bank of the Simbuwa Khola. We progressed steadily upwards through moss covered boulders and past tree trunks of massive old pines and rhododendrons with little undergrowth, crossing several clearings with graziers’ huts, stopping at one for lunch. We passed the prayer flagged Buddhist shrine marking the trail junction with our later route over the Sinelapcha La.

The terrain then became more open as we reached the roomy camp at Tseram. Niri served us an excellent dinner: mushroom and garlic soup with popcorn; cheese, mushroom, tomato and herb pizza, potato and cheese stuffed marrow and French beans; finishing up with mango slices and mugs of hot chocolate.

Fortified with porridge, chapatis and eggs, we left our icy tents to thaw in the sun and walked steadily up beside the Simbuwa Khola drawn by the wonderful views of snow-capped Rathong (6682m) and the four Kabru summits (7412m) behind the Yalung glacier.

The views just got better and better as we ascended and entered the ablation valley (the subsidiary valley formed between the crest of a lateral moraine and the valley side) which we followed to our spectacular camp at Ramche in time for lunch.

The afternoon was spent pottering about the camp under warm sunny skies and we climbed up to the fluttering prayer flags adorning the moraine crest above the tents to admire the magnificent mountain view of six and seven thousand metre peaks from Koptang to Rothong to Kabru I-IV round to Talung.



Kabru, Rathong and Koltang tower over the lateral moraine
of the Yalung glacier above Ramche

We awoke to yet another bright and cold but windless morning for our walk up to Oktang, close to Kanchenjunga South Base Camp. After a substantial breakfast, we continued up the ablation valley path, then onto the lateral moraine of the Yalung glacier and onto the large chorten with its tridents, bells, oil bowls and the ashes of juniper fires, beneath lines of fluttering prayer flags.

The views of Kanchenjunga under blue skies were superb - Michael and Motup pointed out the modern line of ascent and its variants. Several of us continued towards Corner Camp for even better views as recommended by Alan Kay, but a large unstable landslide soon prevented any further progress. We also saw a herd of blue sheep grazing on the slopes above.

We returned to Ramche for lunch and retraced our steps back to the Tseram camp to complete a most memorable days trekking.

Kanchenjunga South Base Camp to Kanchenjunga North Base Camp

The next day was the crux: our crossing over the high passes. This merited a very early start, so we breakfasted well at 5.45 and were off 45 minutes later armed with packed lunches. We walked back down to the Buddhist shrine and said our silent prayers as we took the path up the mountainside towards the Sinelapcha pass. Once we were above the treeline and in the sunshine, the stunning views of Rothong, Kabru and Kanchenjunga took our minds off the climb. A couple of tranquil tarns were passed as we steadily gained height and soon the prayer-flagged Sinelapcha La was underfoot.



Kanchenjunga, Kabru and Rothang from the trail to the Sinelapche La

A long more-or-less contouring path took us across to the Mirgin La with its remarkably life-like sentinel cat, surveying some very spiky rock peaks. A pair of yaks with two drivers passed us on the trail. Lunch was taken below an icicle festooned crag with alpine accentors flitting around. The path continued up to and over to the third pass, the Sinion La, and then down to our camp at Selela. Unusually this was sited at the confluence of two large streams and was reached by a set of stepping stones. After a long hail shower had abated, we recuperated with cheese and biscuits with our tea in the dining tent and rested before dinner.

After a cold night, we ate a late breakfast in the sunshine. An easier day was in prospect as we took

a long contouring path across to the Sele La, really just a notch on a ridge, and then steeply down the other side through the rhododendron woods to the top of a prayer flagged spur and down to Ghunsa, the last permanently settled village in the valley for lunch in the lodge dining room. Mick walked down the hill with Austrian author Dr Dieter Höss and his wife. They discussed his recent book describing his enviable tally of 28 Nepali treks mostly in less-visited areas in the context of the people he met and photographed.

Later he and his wife joined us for afternoon tea. We all enjoyed fresh yak burgers with roast potatoes and pasta for dinner.

The team



We decided to take our rest day in Ghunsa rather than higher up at Kambachen as originally planned, since Becca's cold and cough had worsened and developed into a chest infection needing antibiotics. David and Nick were also nursing severe colds and coughs

After breakfast, we sauntered across either the new suspension bridge or the older cantilever bridge across the Ghunsa Khola to visit the Tashi Choeling Gompa. This Buddhist monastery is one of the oldest and most significant gompas in Eastern Nepal. The monastery and its lamas belong to the Nying-ma-pa (Red Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism and the Rimpoche originally came from Chabuk, just to the north of the Tibetan border, but fled to Ghunsa after the Chinese invasion.

We inspected the rows of colourful silk-wrapped prayer books and admired old thankas (Buddhist paintings) and the many statues of deities behind the altar. Outside we saw the much smaller "old gompa" perched on top of a huge boulder and propped up by tree trunks. Three ancient prayer wheels encased in stitched animal skins were turned for good fortune.



The rest of the day was spent relaxing or exploring this interesting village. Most houses were timber, some built on low stone walls in plots with wooden palings. Most had simple planked roofs held in place by rows of large stones with the odd satellite dish peeking out. We watched a couple of ladies in traditional dress building a potato clamp to protect their seed crop over-winter. The potatoes were tipped into a deep hole and were covered in turn by juniper branches to keep the animals away, turfs, a layer of soil, a sheet of polythene, then all topped off with a pile of small logs. Postcards were bought at the Post Office and posted home in the “Latter Box” outside. We also visited the newly built hospital and were shown round by the Health Officer, who explained that a lot of his work was involved with child birth. The day was rounded off by a celebration of Barry’s birthday and the consumption of another of Niri’s chocolate cakes and a tot of whisky.

After a day’s rest, and pO₂ checks, all were feeling ready to head towards NBC. Having had a good breakfast, we set off along the frosty track beside the Ghunsa Khola and into the larch woods, their frosted needles glowing gold in the warm sun. The path was a delight and after flirting with the river bed, eventually led up past a kharka to a huge shelter stone where we had lunch. We then climbed up the old terminal moraine of the Jannu glacier to be greeted by an astonishing view of Jannu itself and its snowy neighbours behind lengths of coloured prayer flags silhouetted against the blue sky. A wobbly bridge over the river was safely crossed leading us into the summer grazing settlement of Kambachen, beautifully situated in a wide glen at a river confluence. We camped outside a lodge and ate in its draughty dining room warmed by an efficient yak dung stove.

The next day took us up to Lhonak, our final high camp. The trail was comparatively gentle as we passed an icy waterfall into more barren terrain that led to Ramtang Kharka where a large herd of yaks and their calves were grazing. Niri was cooking lunch in one of the crude tents while the owner was serving noodle soup and tea prepared over an open fire to other trekkers and porters. The other tent was used by the yak herders as a dairy and they were milking yaks into a leather bucket outside. The magnificent mountain views developed further to include Gimmigela and Wedge Peak (Chang Himal) as we reached camp, again adjacent to a lodge, but this time with a less draughty dining room. Its stove was welcome as it was -10°C inside our tents when we retired to our sleeping bags at 8pm.

Lhonak camp



It was another glorious sunny day for our excursion up towards Pangpema and NBC. We crossed frozen grassland then climbed across a boulder field and up to traverse three new landslides and back down to the path alongside the moraine of the rubble-strewn ice of the Kanchenjunga glacier. A couple of monstrous boulders were passed, and a final easy landslip negotiated to reach the small lodge at Pangpema with its fine view of the towering north-west face of Kanchenjunga. A return was made down-valley back to Lhonak for the night.



L to R: Cocks Comb, Taple Shikhar, Gimmigela Chuli and Kanchenjunga from Pangpema

Kanchenjunga North Base Camp to Taplejung

From Lhonak, we retraced our steps to Kambachen in the sun, pausing to watch the extrication of a train of mules crossing the snow bridge below the waterfall where they had sunk up to their bellies. We spotted a lammergeier soaring above us as we neared camp. A couple of us walked up to the nearby Jannu viewpoint and got some good photos and a birds-eye view of the campsite. The next day we made a short excursion up the moraine to a closer viewpoint of Jannu on the way to its Base Camp, returning the same way and then back down the trail through the lovely larch woods to Ghunsa. After we'd had a good wash, Niri served tea and chocolate cake. Another splendid pizza dinner followed in the warm dining room - sips of our duty-free whisky adding further warmth.

Yet another sunny day saw us leave frosty Ghunsa by an excellent riverside path that led past the gumpa through more golden larches to the delightful village of Phere. We passed a water-driven prayer mill at its entrance and a huge chorten on top of a massive rock but didn't visit its gumpa. Plenty of grazing yaks were in evidence in the surrounding fields before we descended into the bamboo forest on an "undulating" trail crossing several tributary streams on new bridges.



Yaks grazing at Phere

We stopped for lunch in Gyabla with good views down the Ghunsa Khola gorge. Several waterfalls were passed as we dropped into the valley to a riverside path, finally climbing up to camp in a field by a simple lodge at Thyanyani.

In the morning John was interviewed about his Cape to Cape trek by a young lady recording it on her smart phone. She had won a competition to publicise solo trekking for Nepal: her motto was "If we can do it, you can do it!" After this we broke camp and tackled our day's ration of undulations. We met a fit 74-year old Tibetan lady out for a walk by herself on the trail - she told Motup that she had two daughters, both working in the US. Having crossed high above the steep canyon below, the trail then dropped steeply to the floor of the river gorge and along a flood-prone path past some ribbon waterfalls. Finally, a short climb led us to camp outside an immaculately kept lodge called the Panda Guest House at Sakethun run by a friendly Sherpa family. Niri's apple and cinnamon pie with its latticed pastry top drew admiring gasps except from Mick, who was tasked by Motup to cut it into thirteen pieces.

An easier half-day followed the river down-valley, now merged with the larger Tamor Nadi. We passed through irrigated cardamom plantations and then onto the first section of road we'd seen since Lali Kharka, before reverting to the old trail. Several suspension bridges crossed tributaries, then the main river itself.

Under the last one we saw a fisherman inspecting his traps beside a large rock in the water. A short walk took us to the large campground at Chirwa between rice paddy fields and the river.



Riverside trail beside the Tamor Nadi

There was an old road, now disused by vehicles because of insurmountable landslip problems between Chirwa and Sirwa. This afforded good progress with few “undulations”. We reached the prosperous linear village of Sirwa which was connected to Taplejung by a rough road and had volleyball and football pitches, a tailor, a jeweller and numerous shops. We camped in the next village of Mitlung in a cramped area outside a lodge. Our last night under canvas was celebrated with another good dinner from Niri and his team, finished with a slice of a splendid celebration chocolate cake which he had iced with “Happy Nice Trek Ending YRC” washed down with beers and flasks of the local tongba - fermented millet beer, drunk warm through a metal straw. Bob and Richard were so enthused by the tongba, they went partying with the locals in the village and had some more!

The last day of the trek took us along the road from Mitlung, then left it to climb steeply up the old trail passing many houses and hamlets to the village of Handewa to reach the road leading into the thronging market town of Taplejung to rendezvous with our jeep drivers. After the last of Niri’s lunches we gathered together to say goodbye to our valiant porters and the ever-working kitchen crew and Sherpa team. Mick thanked them individually and presented our gifts of appreciation to all. Then we got into the jeeps accompanied by Motup and Raj Kumar and began the undulating switchback ride down to Ilam, arriving during a live rock concert.



Rice terraces near Mitlung

We started early from Ilam and breakfasted on the way to Bhadrapur to arrive in good time for our return flight to Kathmandu and transferred back to the hotel. A long hot shower never felt so good! John's mother had sadly passed away at the ripe old age of 104 while we were away and so he caught an earlier flight to get back in time for the funeral preparations.

Some spent the following day visiting some of the sights in the Kathmandu valley with Raj Kumar such as the spice market and Swayambhunath, the Buddhist temple, others went their own way in the city shopping and visited other monuments. We all gathered in the evening for our final group meal which Motup had booked in the opulent Ghar-e-Kabab restaurant in the Hotel Annapurna, consistently rated as the best Indian restaurant in Kathmandu. We enjoyed a splendid meal - a fitting end to a fabulous trek.

We were fortunate with the post-monsoon weather. The typical daily cycle began with early clear skies and rapid warming in the sunshine, then increasing cloud build-up during the afternoon followed by clearing evenings and clear starlit nights.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Motup, Durga, Yangdu and Alka at Rimo Expeditions for help with planning and logistics. Especial thanks must go to our guide Raj Kumar and his team of four Sherpas: Ram, Sagar, Samgal and Pasang for their route finding, general help and support. Sincere thanks also go to our tireless kitchen crew: cook Niri and his team Saurya, Nima, Milan, Shakti, Ratna, Juman, Prakash, Bhoj and Dinman for the consistently excellent appetising and healthy food on our trek.

Most of all we have to thank each one of our porters and Kulparsad, their sirdar. Without them we would simply have had a camping holiday at Suketar. They carried very heavy loads which we could only dream about on their tump lines almost every day for three weeks and only through their unstinting hard work was our trek made possible.

Mick Borroff.

Participants

Mick Borroff (co-leader), Motup Goba (co-leader), Barry Dover, David Hick, Janelle Humphreys (guest), Rebecca Humphreys, Bob Peckham, Michael Smith, John Sutcliffe, Richard Taylor, Kjetil Tveranger, Ann-Karin Tveranger (guest) and Nick Welch.



Recommended Reading

Photo: Motup Goba

Kangchenjunga: A Trekkers Guide. Kev Reynolds. Cicerone 1999.

Kangchenjunga: North and South Base Camps. Kev Reynolds. In: Trekking in the Himalaya. Ed. Kev Reynolds. Cicerone 2013.

Map: Kanchenjunga - Pathibhara and Limbu Cultural Trail 1:100,000, Himalayan MapHouse, 2009.

Trekking and Climbing in Nepal – 25 Adventure Treks in the Mighty Himalaya. Steve Razzetti. New Holland Publishers, 2000.

Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya. Lonely Planet. 2016

The Kangchenjunga Adventure. Frank Smythe. Victor Gollanz, London. 1930.

Kangchenjunga. John Tucker. Elek Boks, London 1955.

Birds seen on the Nepal trip - Michael Smith

Alpine Accentor	Eurasian Collared Dove	Red-throated Thrush
Alpine Chough	Eurasian Jay	Red-vented Bulbul
Ashy Prinia	Eurasian Magpie	Ring-necked Parakeet
Black Drongo	Golden Eagle	Rock Dove
Black Eagle	Grey Wagtail	Rufous-breasted Accentor
Black Kite	Grey-backed Shrike	Rufous-vented Tit
Black-chinned Yuhina	Himalayan Thrush	Rusty-cheeked Scimitar
Black-faced Laughingthrush	House Crow	Babbler
Black-headed Cuckooshrike	House Sparrow	Scarlet Minivet
Black-naped Monarch	Indian Nuthatch	Slaty-backed Forktail
Blood Pheasant	Jungle Myna	Snow Pigeon
Blue-capped Rock Thrush	Lämmergeier	Streaked Laughingthrush
Blue-Throated Blue Flycatcher	Mountain Hawk-eagle	Sultan Tit
Brown Dipper	Nepal House Martin	Tibetan Snowcock
Brown Parrotbill	Northern Goshawk	Tibetan Snowfinch
Cattle Egret	Northern Raven	Upland Buzzard
Citrine Wagtail	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Verditer Flycatcher
Coal Tit	Peregrine Falcon	White Wagtail
Common Kestrel	Pied Bushchat	White-capped Redstart
Common Kingfisher	Pied Thrush	White-throated Bushchat
Common Myna	Plumbeous Water Redstart	Yellowhammer
Common Rosefinch	Red-billed Chough	
Daurian Redstart	Red-throated Flycatcher	

Editors note

The bird life of the Himalayas is predominantly Indo-Chinese of origin.

As you descend towards the Ganges the land is forested and then swampy and this variation in habitat has triggered a multitude of bird types.

Michael has identified an impressive number. It is impossible to find out how many exist in the areas visited, but the Indian sub continent as a whole there are thought to be approaching 1,300 species

105th Annual Dinner and AGM

Settle

November 17th 2018

The Annual General Meeting and Annual Dinner weekend are the largest event of the Club's calendar. This year it followed what has become the pattern over recent years with the AGM late afternoon followed by a presentation by the Club's principal guest before the formal dinner.

The Settle Social Club was the excellent venue for the AGM and presentation and the Falcon Manor hosted the Dinner. Thankfully, the weather was again dry.

Election of Officers for 2019

The President	Rory Newman
Vice President	John Brown
Hon. Treasurer	Martyn Trasler
Hon. Secretary & Meets Secretary	Tim Josephy
Huts Secretary	Richard Josephy
Warden Lowstern	Richard Sealey
Warden, Low Hall Garth	Alister Renton

Other elected committee members:

Harvey Lomas	Ged Campion
Robert Crowther	Chris Hilton
Becca Humphreys	

Also on committee:

Immediate Past President	Mick Borroff
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Other Roles (Not on Committee)

Honorary Editor	Roy Denney
Hon. Auditor	Richard Taylor
Hon Librarian	Arthur Salmon
Hon Archivist	Alan Linford
Membership Secretary	Helen Smith

During the year four members had died but nine new members had joined. Three had resigned and total membership currently stands at 163.



Mick Borroff, at the end of his presidency, addressed the members and this is a précis of his comments

“ I only joined the YRC in 2004 and so was very honoured to be asked if I would consider taking on the Presidency in 2016. I was also delighted that Chris Hilton accepted my invitation to be my VP.

I have enjoyed leading the Club over the past two years and owe a large debt of gratitude to the many members who have supported me both on and off the Committee.

I may not have agreed with your ideas every time, but they have certainly crystallised my thoughts on many issues.

Over my period in office, there are many areas in which I have taken a personal interest in trying to move the club forward:

I worked closely with Peter Elliott, the Meets Secretary and the Meets committee to ensure that we continued to offer a diverse and interesting meets calendar. The vibrant meets reports are testimony to how well that has worked.

I collaborated with the Hut Wardens to completely revise and harmonise our two Hut Handbooks, which were a decade old. All safety information was reviewed, and the contents updated and expanded to benefit all hut hirers and users.

I worked with the Committee to review our Bye-Laws and we made some amendments to better manage the Club's business and day-to-day functioning.

I worked with Roy Denney, to complete the project to digitise all the Club journals. Andy Syme has uploaded all the full colour PDFs to the website.

I designed a new Club tie in blue silk with a gold logo.

I led the review of the YRC Journal, which included the difficult decision not to progress with the planned 125 publication in its proposed form. Together, the Committee and Editor agreed that the Journal should be modernised, and this was supported by those attending the 2017 AGM. Accordingly, a sub-committee of Roy Denney, Martyn Trasler, Michael Smith and I worked through the issues this presented. Happily, you will be reading this article in the new format publication.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed material for this and Roy Denney for his efforts in putting the new Journal together.

I led our review of the GDPR legislation, which took effect in May 2018 to ensure that the Club was compliant. The Committee felt strongly that we should continue with our printed Members Handbook and we thus had to seek each member's approval to include their contact details. The few individuals who failed to respond will have their contact details redacted in the new Handbook (but will be available from the Membership Secretary).

Lastly there is one issue which is still work-in-progress - the upgrade to the YRC website. This is our window to the world and is crucially important. Last year I began work on updating it to reflect the needs of our four principal groups of users:

- Club Members and Prospective Members
- People wanting to book a YRC hut
- People researching a club to join
- People searching our archives for information

I completed a detailed review of many other mountaineering, climbing and caving club websites to benchmark our current offering in terms of content, navigation and appearance.

The new web page structure has been mapped out and a new fresh design adopted. I shall be working with Andy Syme and Rory Newman to get this development completed as soon as possible in 2019.

So looking back, it's been a pleasure serving you as President and working through my agenda for change - I have enjoyed your feedback on meets and discussions at the Dinners etc.

Thank you all for your help and support.

I must now hand over the reins to your new President Rory Newman, whom I wish every success, knowing he will get your support too.

Upon being formally adopted as President, Rory Newman said:

“I basically see the club as being in a healthy state at the moment, so my hope and ambition is to keep it that way. I am very grateful to Mick and to the committee; it's their hard work which has given me an easy job to inherit. Thanks also to John Brown for agreeing to be Vice-President.

Looking to the future, I think we need to continue to provide a varied and interesting meets programme, with something to attract everyone - this is the key to keeping a healthy influx of new members, I believe. The attractive upgraded website will also be very helpful here, as it will be the first view of the club for many people. The new-format journal is also important.

Several committee members are feeling it's time for some new blood; we owe them many thanks, and I hope we can now attract some younger members to take over committee roles: we need you!

Looking to the past - as we are also a club with great traditions - I am very interested to see what the new archive material found in a safe in Leeds library reveals, and I hope to be involved in a project to index the journal.

I think the club is finding a balance between the traditions of the past and the changes in society, with all the challenges these bring; I hope we can continue to do so.”

The Principal Guest was John Porter, President of the Alpine Club. His presentation was on the life and climbs of his old friend Alex MacIntyre and his major part in the start of light and fast Alpinism.

Leavened with humour, including some amusing old photographs it culminated with the death of MacIntyre in 1982, when a single stone fell from high on the south face of Annapurna killing him instantly.

The story is told in a book John has produced called “One Day as a Tiger” which was Grand Prize Winner 2014 of the Banff Mountain Book Festival

John himself was born in Massachusetts and started climbing at twelve. He honed his skills in the Rockies, Cascades and Yosemite before moving to the UK in the early 70s as a postgraduate at Leeds University where he was one of a team of climbers dedicated to alpine-style climbing which included Alex MacIntyre.

Ascents of the North Face of Koh-i-Bandaka (1977) and the south face of Changabang (1978) with Alex MacIntyre and Polish friends were achieved in the middle of the cold war.

In a half century of climbing, John has first ascents of Chong Kundam I and V in the Eastern Karakoram, has been on Everest in winter, the north-west ridge of K2, the east face of Sepu Kangri and many other notable peaks around the world.

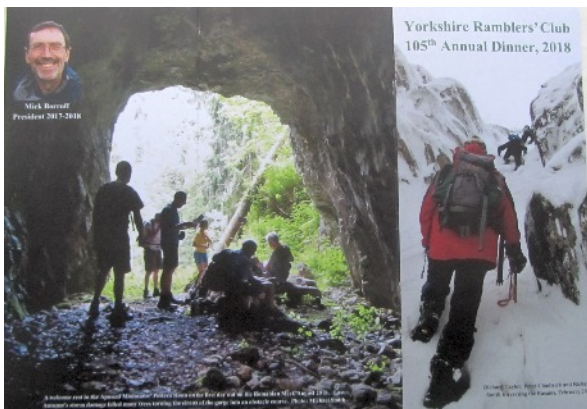
He has also produced a number of books.

There were 83 diners (54 members and 29 guests) sat down to dinner. David Large acted as Master of Ceremonies and Martyn Trasler said Grace, before the ensemble enjoyed a three-course meal.

This was followed by the toasts; to the Queen by Rory Newman, absent friends by Ged Campion and then the President, Mick Borroff, toasted the Kindred Clubs and Guests

The Principal Guest responded with the toast to the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club.

Then members concluded the formalities with the traditional rendering of 'Yorkshire' accompanied by Anne Dover on the keyboard



Menu

☼ Starter ☼

Seasonal Soup with a warm bread roll

Cured Gravdax, crab and pickled fennel salad

Game Terrine with apricot and plum chutney

☼ Main ☼

Roast Sirloin of English Beef, Yorkshire pudding, fondant potato, butternut squash and red wine jus

Breast of Goosnargh Chicken, bubble 'n squeak mash, carrots, broccoli with a coq au vin sauce

Fillet of Sea Bass with artichoke puree and butter beans

Root Vegetable Tarte Tatin, pine nut and shallot salad with balsamic oil

☼ Dessert ☼

Sticky Toffee Pudding with a butterscotch sauce, vanilla pod ice cream and brandy snap disk

Mango and Passion Fruit Cheesecake with lemon grass and ginger ice cream, mango salsa and oat crumble

Cheese and biscuits



Tea or Coffee and Mints



The Club's Guests

Principal Guest – John Porter, Alpine Club President

Scottish Mountaineering Club – Bob Reid, Vice Pres.

Fell and Rock Climbing Club – Dave Wilkinson

Craven Pothole Club – Alan Pedlar, President

Gritstone Club – Nigel Calaghan, President

Also in attendance:

Dennis Armstrong
Joan Armstrong
Carol Baker
Bruce Bensley
Dave Booker
Mick Borroff
John Brown
George Burfitt
Vivienne Burfitt
Derek Bush
Ged Campion
Peter Chadwick
Albert Chapman
Anne Chapman
Garry Chapman

Iain Chapman
Jo Chapman
Ian Crowther
Robert Crowther
Roy Denney
Anne Dover
Paul Dover
Andy Eavis
Lilian Eavis
Derek English
Caron Ferguson
Ian Ferguson
Iain Gilmour
Marcia Godden
Mike Godden

Elizabeth Gowing
Richard Gowing
David Handley
Dorothy Heaton
David Hick
Christopher Hilton
Liz Holmes
Rebecca Humphreys
John Jenkin
Richard Josephy
Tim Josephy
Alan Kay
David Large
Ross Large
Jason Lees
Karen Levine
Alan Linford
Angela Linford
Tim Lofthouse
Harvey Lomas
John Lovett
Dave Martindale
John Middleton
Valerie Middleton

Peter Moss
Rory Newman
Shaun Penny
Tony Penny
Anca Pordea
Gillm Read
Felicity Roberts
Harry Robinson
Ann Salmon
Arthur Salmon
Conrad Salmon
Trevor Salmon
Fiona Smith
Helen Smith
Michael Smith
Richard Smith
John Sutcliffe
Gail Taylor
Richard Taylor
Martyn Trasler
Carol Whalley
John Whalley
Frank Wilkinson

Roll of Honour

PRESIDENT

1892-93 Geo T Lowe
 1893-03 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1903-06 Alfred Barran
 1906-09 Rev LS Calvert
 1909-12 Lewis Moore
 1912-19 Walter Parsons
 1919-22 WA Brigg
 1922-23 JC Atkinson
 1923-25 EE Roberts
 1925-27 F Leach
 1927-29 HH Bellhouse
 1929-30 TS Booth
 1930-31 T Gray
 1931-32 AE Horn
 1932-34 WV Brown
 1934-36 A Rule
 1936-38 JM Davidson
 1938-46 C Chubb
 1946-48 H Armstrong
 1948-50 CE Burrow
 1950-52 Davis Burrow
 1952-54 J Hilton
 1954-56 HL Stembridge
 1956-58 S Marsden
 1958-60 TH Godley
 1960-62 FW Stembridge
 1962-64 RE Chadwick
 1964-66 WPB Stonehouse
 1966-68 EC Downham
 1968-70 EM Tregoning
 1970-72 AB Craven
 1972-74 BE Nicholson
 1974-76 JB Devenport
 1976-78 FD Smith
 1978-80 JP Barton
 1980-82 WR Lofthouse
 1982-84 WA Linford
 1984-86 JD Armstrong

1986-88 PC Swindells
 1988-90 AC Brown
 1990-92 DA Smithson
 1992-94 GA Salmon
 1994-96 CD Bush
 1996-98 TW Josephy
 1998-00 WCI Crowther
 2000-02 AR Chapman
 2002-04 TA Kay
 2004-06 K Aldred
 2006-08 FM Godden
 2008-10 AD Bridge
 2010-12 PRP Chadwick
 2012-14 M Smith
 2014-16 JC Whalley
 2016-18 MJ Boroff
 2018→ RR Newman

HONORARY MEMBER (PAST)

1892 Edward Whymper
 1892 Wm Cecil Slingsby
 1892 Clinton T Dent
 1892 8th Duke of Devonshire
 1892 Charles E Matthews
 1892 The Earl of Wharnccliffe
 1893 Charles Pilkington
 1893 Charles F Tetley
 1893 Gerald W Balfour, MP
 1893 Sir W Martin Conway
 1900 Horace Walker
 1907 Sir Alfred Hopkinson
 1907 EA Martel
 1907 G Winthrop Young
 1909 Dr Norman Collie
 1909 James Anson Farrer
 1921 George Yeld
 1921 George T Lowe
 1923 Charles Scriven

1925 Canon AD Tupper-Carey
 1939 Sydney J Farrer
 1939 Walter Parsons
 1946 Robert de Joly
 1949 Ernest E Roberts
 1955 Sir R Charles Evans
 1956 Harry Spilsbury
 1959 Fred Booth
 1959 Davis Burrow
 1965 Clifford Chubb
 1965 Jack Hilton
 1968 E. Cliff Downham
 1968 Stanley Marsden
 1968 HG Watts
 1977 HL Stembridge
 1985 A David M Cox
 1988 Dr John Farrer
 1998 Major W Lacy
 1990 F David Smith
 2001 Alan Brown
 2008 Gordon Humphreys

HONORARY MEMBER (CURRENT)

1997 Derek Bush (m. 1968)
 2003 Alan Linford (m. 1957)
 2008 Iain Gilmour (m. 1990)
 2008 John Lovett (m. 1950)
 2008 Motup Goba (m. 2008)
 2010 Albert Chapman (m. 1955)
 2012 Arthur Salmon (m. 1951)
 2014 Alan Hinkes (m. 2014)
 2016 Andy Eavis (m. 2016)

VICE PRESIDENT

1892-93 H Slater
 1919-22 EE Roberts
 1892-93 G Arnold

1921-23 F Constantine
 1893-94 G T Lowe
 1922-24 P Robinson
 1893-94 L Moore
 1923-25 JF Seaman
 1898-00 Rev LS Calvert
 1924-26 M Botterill
 1899-01 JC Atkinson
 1925-27 L Moore
 1900-02 A Barran
 1926-28 W Villiers Brown
 1901-03 Dr T Anderson
 1927-29 CE Benson
 1902-04 Dr FH Mayo
 1928-30 CE Burrow
 1903-05 W Parsons
 1929-31 WA Wright
 1904-06 JA Green
 1930-32 C Chubb
 1908-10 F Leach
 1931-33 GL Hudson
 1909-11 C Hastings
 1932-34 FS Smythe
 1910-12 A Rule
 1933-35 JM Davidson
 1911-13 JH Buckley
 1934-35 GA Potter-Kirby
 1912-14 CA Hill
 1935-37 J Hilton
 1913-19 AE Horn
 1935-37 H Humphreys
 1914-19 H Brodrick
 1937-46 A Humphreys
 1919-21 CRB Wingfield
 1938-46 H Armstrong
 1946-48 D Burrow
 1946-48 AL Middleton
 1948-49 GS Gowing
 1948-50 GC Marshall
 1949-50 HG Watts
 1950-52 S Marsden
 1950-53 J Godley
 1952-54 FS Booth
 1953-55 FW Stembridge
 1954-56 RE Chadwick
 1955-57 GB Spenceley
 1956-58 CW Jorgensen

1957-59 JA Holmes
 1958-60 JE Cullingworth
 1959-61 J Lovett
 1960-62 WPB Stonehouse
 1961-63 MF Wilson
 1962-64 EC Downham
 1963-65 BE Nicholson
 1964-66 JA Dosser
 1965-67 FD Smith
 1966-68 MD Bone
 1967-69 AR Chapman
 1968-70 JD Driscoll
 1969-71 J Hemingway
 1970-72 EJ Woodman
 1971-73 WA Linford
 1972-74 AJ Reynolds
 1973-75 JG Brook
 1974-76 JP Barton
 1975-77 WR Lofthouse
 1976-78 J Williamson
 1977-79 N Newman
 1978-80 J Stuttard
 1979-81 GA Salmon
 1980-82 PC Swindells
 1981-83 DA Smithson
 1982-84 TW Josephy
 1983-85 DJ Atherton
 1984-86 GR Turner
 1985-87 AC Brown
 1986-88 R Cowing
 1987-89 CR Allen
 1988-90 DRH Mackay
 1990-92 WCI Crowther
 1992-94 H Robinson
 1994-96 K Aldred
 1996-98 IFD Gilmour
 1998-00 DA Hick
 2000-02 DJ Handley
 2002-04 G Campion
 2004-06 FM Godden
 2006-08 RA Kirby
 2008-10 MJ Borroff
 2010-12 PA Dover
 2012-14 HA Lomas
 2014-16 RM Crowther
 2016-18 CDB Hilton
 2018- JF Btrown

**MEMBERS ELECTED
 TO THE ALPINE CLUB
 (CURRENT)**

MJ Borroff
 G Campion
 AR Chapman
 PRP Chadwick
 R Gowing
 DA Hick
 A Renton
 M Smith
 CM Goba

MEETS SECRETARY

1996-09 JH Hooper
 2016-18 P Elliott
 2018- TW Josephy

LIFE MEMBER

(after 35 years in Club)

Aldred, K
 Armstrong, JD
 Blair, AJ
 Bush, CD
 Casperson, JD
 Chadwick, PRP
 Clayton, WD
 Crowther RM
 Crowther, WCI
 Denney, RJ
 Elliott, PA
 Ellis, JR
 Errington, RD
 Farrant, DJ
 Gowing, R
 Hamlin, JF
 Handley, DJ
 Harben, R
 Hobson, MP
 Holmes, D
 Hooper, JH
 Humphreys, H
 Humphries, RG

Ince, GR
Jones, G
Josephy, TW
Kay, TA
Kinder, MJ
Laing, IG
Lee, R
Lee, W
Lofthouse, TR
Lofthouse, WR
Lomas, H
Marr, AM
Middleton, JI
Middleton, JR
Middleton, RM
Moss, PT
Papworth, HM
Pomfret, RE
Renton, K
Roberts, PD
Robinson, H
Rowlands, C
Rutter, HA
Salmon, TW
Short, J
Smith, M
Smith, SH
Smith, TH
Smithson, DA
Stembridge, DW
Stembridge, SW
Sterland, JH
Sykes, PW
Tallon, A
Tetlow, DM
Thompson, MJ
Varney, JA
Whalley, JC
Wilkinson, F

TREASURER

1892-93 HH Bellhouse
1893-99 H Slater
1899-04 J Davis
1904-21 AE Horn

1921-24 C Chubb
1924-51 BA Bates
1951-78 S Marsden
1978-83 D Loughton
1984-90 JD Armstrong
1990-98 TA Kay
1998-12 GA Salmon
2012 - MB Trasler

AUDITOR

1967-83 GR Turner
1983-90 JH Sterland
1990-93 JA Schofield
1993-97 D Lawton
1997-14 CD Bush
2014- RM Taylor

SECRETARY

1892-93 JA Green
1893-98 HH Bellhouse
1898-09 L Moore
1910-20 F Constantine
1920-24 CE Burrow
1924-29 J Buckley
1929-46 D Burrow
1946-52 FS Booth
1952-56 JE Cullingworth
1956-57 CR Allen
1957-66 EC Downham
1966-68 FD Smith
1968-79 EC Downham
1979-83 J Hemingway
1983-93 CD Bush
1993-96 JA Schofield
1996-08 RG Humphreys
2008-12 RA Kirby
2012- TW Josephy

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

1894-10 F Constantine
1910-12 JR Green
1912-19 L Moore
1919-24 J Buckley
1924-26 AS Lowden

1926-46 FS Booth
1946-52 FW Stembridge
1952-53 P Stonehouse
1953-54 CIW Fox
1954-57 EC Downham
1957-62 J Hemingway
1962-64 TW Salmon
1964-68 WCI Crowther
1968-73 FD Smith
1973-79 J Hemingway
1979-83 CD Bush
1983-85 J Hemingway
1985-92 M Smith
1992-95 MJ Kinder

EDITOR

1899-09 T Gray
1909-20 W Anderton Brigg
1920-49 E E Roberts
1949-70 HG Watt
1970-83 AB Craven
1984-90 AC Brown
1990-93 DJ Atherton
1993-03 M Smith
2003- R J Denney

ASSISTANT EDITOR

1947-58 RE Chadwick
1958-59 RB Whardall
1959-60 HL Stembridge
1960-70 AB Craven
1970-77 DP Penfold
1985-92 EC Downham

HUTS SECRETARY

1955-57 GB Spenceley
(Low Hall Garth)
1957-59 JD Driscoll
(Low Hall Garth)
1958-62 PR Harris
(Lowstern)

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

**WARDEN
LOW HALL GARTH**

1952-55 GB Spenceley
1955-59 A Tallon
1959-73 JD Driscoll
1973-76 FD Smith
1976-78 GP Postill
1978-84 N Newman
1986-89 WA Linford
1986-98 FD Smith
1998-01 D English
2001-02 M Edmundson
2002-07 IFD Gilmour
2007-08 G Dootson
2008-12 RG Humphreys
2012-14 GA Salmon
2014- A Renton

**WARDEN
LOWSTERN**

1958-64 J Lovett
1964-67 J Richards
1967-72 CG Renton
1972-74 JTM Teasdale
1974-76 A Hartley
1976-78 JA Varney
1978-79 GP Postill
1979-82 WCI Crowther
1982-86 C Bauer
1987-88 J Lovett
1988-90 H Robinson
1990-93 FM Godden
1993-96 GR Salmon
1996-00 FM Godden

2000-05 RA Kirby
2005-09 J Lovett
2010-12 DB Wood
2012- RJ Sealey

WEBMASTER

2001-08 CG Renton
2008-09 A Renton
2009- A Syme

TACKLEMASTER

2010- G Campion

LIBRARIAN

1899-03 F Constantine
1903-24 JH Buckley
1924-27 C D Frankland
1927-29 JK Crawford
1929-30 W Allsup
1930-35 J Buckley
1935-39 R Rimmer
1946-48 HS Booth
1948-49 DS Blair
1949-58 HL Stembridge
1958-62 JG Brook
1962-71 AB Craven
1971-79 JG Brook
1979-96 R Harben
1996-98 MP Pryor
1998-03 WN Todd
2003- 12 AR Chapman
2012 -14 RG Humphreys
2014 - GA Salmon

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

2008-16 MJ Boroff
2016- H Smith

ARCHIVIST

2009-11 JH Hooper
2012- WA Linford

Treasure Trove?

A few weeks ago a junior librarian at Leeds central library wondered what was in a very large safe in an alcove on the top floor. No key could be found, so a locksmith was brought in to open it.



Much of the contents was labelled YRC, so the library contacted us, and a lot of the material turned out to be engravings - for illustrations for early journals

There were also some maps and plans, including a detailed plan of the Gaping Ghyll system (undated, but A Rule, president 1934-6, was one of the authors), and some material apparently from our first president GT Lowe

Steps are being taken to research this material further

This weekend includes the formal AGM and Dinner leaving little time on the Saturday for outdoor activity. With this in mind Martyn and Roy drove up on the Thursday evening and met up with Tony Penny who had flown in from Spain.

Friday Martyn and Roy went up onto Ingleborough as did a number of others on the Saturday morning. Thursday had been glorious as was the weekend which was sunny, if cold and breezy. Friday was a strange day. The temperature was in the mid teens but it was in absolute calm, overcast and very humid. Remarkable for November.

The downside of course was that above 1000 feet you were in clag which steadily thickened into a mist with visibility down to about 10 yards on Ingleborough Common at which point they turned back. People having found the actual summit were saying it was down to 5 yards. The wind was blowing at this altitude despite the thick cloud and it was very chilly.

More members arrived on Friday evening intending to get out on Saturday before the AGM.

Ingleborough was ascended by several people and by several routes. Several commented that the hydraulic pump in the beck below Ingleborough Cave was silent, the first time they could remember in all their long lives.

Others went to Malham and made the circuit of Gordale Scar to Malham Tarn and back by the Cove. Still more completed the same circuit on Sunday.

Sunday breakfast for those staying at Lowstern was organised very capably by Richard Josephy, as was the tea meal for those still around that afternoon.

Sunday those able to stay on either went on the official walk with some of our guests whilst others went under ground.



**Janet's Foss, Gordale, Richard
and Helen Smith - Photo MS**

SUNDAY WALK

Arthur's after-dinner walk was a touch too long for the President's new hip replacement at this stage, so Rory wisely limited his activity to nipping up Pen y ghent and was pleased with his progress.

Meanwhile, the rest of us tackled Arthur's 10 mile circular route from Settle Marketplace over towards Malham Tarn via Stockdale.

The weather was bright and sunny; the strong low-angled lighting illuminating the detail in the limestone crags below Warrendale Knotts was particularly fine in the sunshine and kept the photographers happy.



Warrendale Knotts - Photo MB

The group just back from the Kanchenjunga trek shared some of their experiences and caught up on the latest news, with plenty of discussions about next year's meets.

Lunch was taken in the lee of a wall just below Kirkby Fell and a return made along the track to Gorbeck and Jubilee Cave, just kissing the road out of Langcliffe and then south back to Settle.

The timing was judged to perfection to allow us to enjoy a well-earned pint in the Royal Oak, before heading back to Lowstern for ham and eggs.

THE WALKERS

Rory Newman - President
Mick Borroff
Dave Booker
Peter Chadwick
Fiona Smith plus young dog
Becca Humphreys
Conrad Murphy (guest)
Richard Taylor
Carol Whalley
John Whalley
Frank Wilkinson
Tony Penny
Arthur Salmon
Helen Smith



A Salmon, D Booker, F Smith, H Smith

SUNDAY CAVING

The caving team set off from Lowstern with commendable promptness at 10am to Bull Pot Farm where they made the long walk over the moor to Easegill Beck and County Pot.

The entrance series and short pitch were soon dispatched and Showerbath Passage followed to Spout Hall.

After a quick visit to White Way to admire the decorations, Richard was stuffed into the extremely polished chimney of Poetic Justice which he conquered with not a little effort.



Felicity Roberts, White Way Photo MS

He lowered a ladder for the rest and all negotiated the subsequent crawl and pitch. As with all such shenanigans, especially with a few novices, this took some time.

Progress picked up as we strode down Pierce's Passage to Eureka Junction and the master cave.

Upstream, the Sluice was negotiated in thankfully low water conditions into Stop Pot where, after a few minutes casting about, the start of Wretched Rabbit Passage was located. There is a unique law of physics about this passage; the older you get, the longer the twists, crawls, traverses and climbs become. At last the rope climbs near the entrance were reached and surmounted with varying degrees of difficulty.

The setting sun was painting the hillsides golden as we walked back to the cars after a most enjoyable and sociable trip.

THE CAVERS

Michael Smith
Richard Smith
Tim Josephy
John Brown
Felicity Roberts (Guest)
Peter Baker (Guest, Wayfarers Club)
Carol Baker (Guest)

The team
Except the
photographer
Michael Smith



The 2018 Christmas meet returned to Cote Ghyll YHA just outside Osmotherly, on the edge of the North York Moors. This is a spacious and comfortable venue, and 29 members and guests enjoyed their stay.

Most of the attendees arrived on Friday evening, with a few turning up on Saturday morning. Saturday started fine and sunny, so much so that a rock-climbing party enjoyed dry if rather windy conditions on the crags in Scugdale.



FS, Scugdale Chimney
Photo MS

Other parties mostly set off to walk from the hostel, exploring the Cleveland Way out towards Black Hambleton, looking for wildlife around the local reservoirs, looking at the ancient Lady's Chapel and visiting the ruined Mount Grace Priory (returning with tales of naughty monks; the priory is unusual locally as a Carthusian foundation, and well worth a visit).

Some of the more enterprising parties got as far as the trig point above Lord Stones, enjoying the views north from the Cleveland scarp, and one fast-moving group then visited the telecom's mast above Bilsdale, returning via Cow Ridge, a round of some 20 miles.

Some less long-legged or maybe more sensible parties extended shorter days by exploring the hostelryes of Osmotherly.

One team came across a memorial stone to Bill Cowley, instigator of the famous (infamous!) Lyke Wake Walk as they followed the Cleveland Way. David Hick reminded the party that YRC member David Laughton was one of the party to make the first crossing of the



The memorial, Photo MS

walk on 1st October 1955, thus making him a founder member of the LWW Club. The route was much tougher then with lots of deep bog and trackless heather rather than the motorway that exists today.

Later in the afternoon, cloud rolled in, and there were a few spots of rain. Snug in the hostel, we enjoyed slide shows of Romania and of the recent Kanchenjunga trek from Mick Borroff, and of John Sutcliffe's epic Cape Cornwall to Cape Wrath trek; meanwhile Michael Smith's slides and films of several recent meets in the UK, Romania, Norway and South America were much admired.

A couple of archive photos tested the memories of some older members, with the astonishingly young-looking Albert Chapman, Derek English, and Michael and Helen Smith with small children among those we COULD identify.

A splendid meal followed, with mackerel pate, pheasant casserole, fruit crumble and then cheese and biscuits; the subsequent vote of thanks to Tim and Richard Josephy, the meet organisers, was fully deserved.



The 'caterers'
Photo JW

After supper, we saw more Kanchenjunga slides, and a fascinating film from John Sutcliffe documenting a visit to a gold-mining site in Peru; some members recognised peaks they had climbed in the background. The usual cheerful conversation followed; and Ian Crowther, after considerable research, decided that the single malt Jura was OK, but the Islay was better.

Sunday dawned fine and clear; four people made the arduous 10 minute walk up to the Scugdale crags and enjoyed a morning's climbing in brilliant sunshine and only light breezes. Some members set off for home, some to Lord Stones with a view to walking to Scugdale to meet the climbers, whilst others went to Roseberry Topping.

JS heading for Scarth Nick
Photo MB



R. Crowther, A. Salmon, Carol Whalley,
P. Everett, F. Wilkinson, John Whalley; Roseberry Topping

Thanks once again to Richard and Tim for organising this very successful meet, providing such a delicious meal, and laying on such good weather for us.

Rory Newman

Attending:

Rory Newman (President), Mick Borroff, Alan Linford, Andrew Duxbury, Arthur Salmon, Carol Whalley, John Whalley, Christine Harrison, Jim Harrison, David Hick, Derek Bush, Fiona Smith, Frank Wilkinson, Iain Gilmour, Ian Crowther, John Jenkin, John Sutcliffe, Michael Smith, Mike Godden, Nick Welch, Paul Dover, Paul Everett (G), Peter Elliott, Philip Dover, Richard Gowing, Richard Josephy, Robert Crowther, Tim Josephy



Chippings

DUNG IS DUNG AFTER ALL THAT

When I was at Gorak Shep I had the luxury (if that is the word) of a mug of tea with yak butter for milk together with a warm apple pie and very nice that was to. All cooked on a tiny stove burning dried yak dung



It seems they are moving into the 20th century now. They are switching to a more available fuel source. Every year twelve tons of solid human waste is dumped nearby, the produce of thousands of mountaineers, trekkers, their Sherpas and porters etc. I went out in the short spring window, still very cold, and thank goodness the piles under the hole-in-the floor loos were frozen. This does cause bad pollution downstream, hence the need for the complicated purification techniques.

It is reported that a solution is coming. The UIAA Mountain Protection Award has just been won by project to develop and install an anaerobic biogas digester at Gorak Shep to treat the waste. The challenge for the Mount Everest Biogas Project has been to develop a digester that would function efficiently at altitude - Gorak Shep sits at just over 5000m.

The end product is a sustainable fuel source, back to dung again.

NORTH YORKSHIRE PERAMBULATIONS

At the end of April a number of members and their partners had their annual mini-break away together (Paul and Anne Dover, Tim and Elaine Josephy, Peter and Ann Chadwick with dog Pippin, Ian and Una Laing, Dennis and Joan Armstrong, Richard and Elizabeth Gowing, Mike and Marcia Godden, Cliff and Cathie Large, Richard and Gail Taylor and Alan and Angie Linford)

The North Yorkshire Moors and surrounding attractions provided an ideal location staying at the Grinkle Park Hotel, a converted country house in 35 acres of country house and gardens. Group morning excursions and do your own thing afternoons were the order of the day.

Seven couples took the steam train from Grosmont to Goathland. With most walking, back to Grosmont, calling at Birch Hall Inn at Beck Hole (Shut on a Tuesday! Smallest Inn in England). Richard and Gail made a side trip to Mallyan Spout.

Dennis, 90 this year, and Joan wished to see the sea and off to Saltburn they went with rain in stair rods which did not stop a walk on the pier accomplished with a fair rendering of 'Oh I do like to be beside the seaside' Unfortunately a bit of a disappointment as the sky and sea were the same colour; grey.

On the Wednesday a group were impressed with the 3m sculpture, by Sean Henry, on Westerdale Rigg, but others were rebuffed by the gale force wind coming from the Baltic. On then to join others walking from Low

Mill, Farndale, to take in the Daffodil Trail. Some walked both ways.

Dennis and Joan were left at the Faversham Arms in the care of Una and a car sent to collect them. Blakey Rigg provided splendid views of the dales providing you sat in the car.

The conditions were most pleasant in the valley. Many visited craft exhibitions, ice cream was consumed sitting in the sun enjoying the view. Many dales were traversed to keep out of the wind.



Above Grosmont

Photo PD

Better conditions at Staithes and Sandsend coastal resorts. Those attending had a most enjoyable time catching up with old friends

Cliff and Cathie Large, had to drop out with Cliff unwell and unfortunately he has since passed away

LAKELAND CHANGES

Change afoot in one of the quieter corners of Cumbria. Originally, Haweswater was a natural lake just over two miles long, nearly divided by a jut of land at the village of Measand, creating almost two separate lakes which were known as High Water and Low Water. Manchester built a dam and most of the beautiful Mardale is no more. Nature has steadily made the area seem more natural but man is now doing his bit. Nearby Swindale Beck was straightened many years ago but is being reshaped to restore its curves and reduce the speed of water flow. Trees are also being planted to help reduce the risk of floods.

The Forestry Commission is now slowly removing all non native trees from the Duddon Valley, already one of the more bio-diverse areas of the Lake District. It is helping the rarer animals there to thrive such as otters, dormice and red squirrels. More unusual birds are also making a come back e.g. bullfinch, jays and woodpeckers.

Glenridding Common and Helvellyn are also getting a touch of re-wilding. Now run by the John Muir Trust they have done some footpath repairs but have also scattered stones about to discourage off-path walking so that native plants can re-establish themselves.

A less welcome change is the increased use of vehicles on tracks not designed for them. The Lake District National Park have just released new data on usage to close for comfort. On the beautiful fell track from High Tilberthwaite to Little Langdale the number of 4 x 4s rose from 30 a month in 2002-4 to 163 a month in 2017/18 on average. The even narrower lane through High Oxenfell was used by 112 4 x 4s per month. Before 2000 these green lanes were hardly ever used by motor vehicles.

FRANK SMYTHE

Albert Chapman looking back on the many good Himalayan climbers in the Club singles out one in particular. Frank who joined the Club as a junior in 1919 went on to climb Kamet, the highest mountain then climbed.

Albert particularly likes the final words of one of his books

“And so from the hills we return refreshed in body, in mind and in spirit; to grapple anew with life’s problems.

For a while we have lived simply, wisely and happily; we have made good friends and have adventured well.

The hills have taught us to be content in our faith and in the love of god who created them.”

JOURNALS

The latest edition of the bulletin of the Grampian Speleological Group and the Speleological Union of Ireland are now in the library at Lowstern and once again it is well worth a read if your interests are underground. Copies of the journals of the Alpine Club and the Mountaineering Club of South Africa also end up there.

Our own journals go to each of those organisations to go into their libraries.

Copies also go to the librarians of the British Cave Rescue Association, the Sports Library, the British Library and the British Mountaineering Council.

Certain kindred clubs also receive a copy

NO HIDING PLACE

It is often said that it is a small world and we all experienced meeting people a long way from where it might be expected. A few years ago we had a meet at the Green Dragon near Hawes and BBC Countryfile descended on the pub and

your editor ended up on screen for nearly two minutes. It seemed like half of Leicestershire saw it from the comments he received.

The dinner meet this year also caused some surprises. He and your Treasurer arrived Thursday night to get an extra day in, and after claiming a bunk walked down to Clapham for a drink.

Pleasantly surprised that the pub was in new hands they were also surprised that about 10 folk musicians were playing in the lounge. Yet more of a surprise was that two former members of his Leicestershire Orienteering Club were in the band having moved up to Giggleswick unknown to him.

To pile surprise onto surprise the soloist singer of the band was that well know local troubadour, one Harvey Lomas.

NOT TO MISS

Next Spring the BBC is to have a series of programmes exploring Wensleydale, Swaledale and Wharfedale

SAFETY ON THE HILL

Hill walkers have been warned about magnets in their clothing or on phone covers as they can raise the risk of making navigational errors.

Mountaineering Scotland has warned these increasingly-used fastenings on items such as gloves and cuffs etc can distort compasses.

They said that a recent incident in Glen Shee was thought to have been caused by a magnetic fastening deflecting a compass needle badly misleading a group of walkers who headed east instead of west. They then became disorientated in low cloud and ended up miles away from a road that would have led them to safety. Fortunately no-one was hurt - just pride dented - but it could have turned out so much worse, had mountain conditions been more severe.



The compass had been stored in a pocket next to a mobile phone in a case which had a magnetic closure on it, and the magnet had reversed the polarity of the compass needle, so that the north arrow pointed south. The phenomenon of reversed polarity has been publicised previously in mountaineering circles.

People are advised to keep their compasses well away from mobile phones. Mountaineering Scotland said it was concerned by the growing use of magnetic closures in outdoor clothing.

Another way of protecting yourself is available. It is possible to register your mobile phone

number with the emergency services, so that as well as calling them on 999, you can send a text message. In an area with poor or intermittent reception, a text will get through better than a call. If you find yourself in a situation where you don't want others to know you are sending for the police etc., a text can be sent silently.

To register your mobile, send a one word text message 'register' to 999. You will receive an automated reply explaining the system. You need to read it and then text 'yes' in reply. You then receive a second message confirming you are registered.

If you need to use the text service, you should give the same information as you would when calling: the service you require; details of the incident; where you are and any other information to assist in locating you.

If you are off for a walk in a remote place get yourself registered.

TRADITION

Many years ago the then President suggested we look again at the Yorkshire anthem we sing at our dinners and I got permission to publish and to use a new one written by a lady in her 90s. There was no appetite though. for such a move away from tradition so we were asked to suggest updates to 'Yorkshire'. I recall a few of us comparing notes at LHG and coming up with a combined effort which presumably I sent in as may have other members. Anyway with a change of President nothing came of this.

Just looking through old files I have come across the suggested version using more modern language and as I had a corner to fill it can be found on page 176

OF CAVES

Early 2018, Veryovkina was named the world's deepest cave. During an expedition in March, Russian cavers had reached a terminal sump at the water table-a depth of 7,257 feet (2,212 metres). The low point was a new record, surpassing the nearby Krubera cave, at 7,208 feet (2,197 metres). They are in the Arabika Massif, of the Western Caucasus in Abkhazia, Georgia



The Massif

Two Brits joined a team going back there in September to photograph the system but got more than they expected.

Camping deep in the cave a sudden pulse of storm water first trapped them and then threatened to consume them. With a mile of vertical rope to climb they left all their gear but did take the camera's flash cards so as you can imagine they have some remarkable photographs. They must have left many thousands of pounds of kit.

They had to climb through millions of

gallons of water thundering down on them, slowly filling up the system. Some of the Russian team were still down below.

The two Brits, Shone the camera man and Wade, climbed to a camp at 1,900 metres where there was a well stocked tent and anxiously waited for the Russians to catch up.

They eventually arrived but the water was so high by then that they had had to swim through a maelstrom of water to get to the ropes where not long before the Brits had been dry at that point.

The flood pulse lasted about twenty hours and the team were trapped at that high camp for sixteen of them

Shone's photography was supported by National Geographic and having seen some of them, when they are published you should be impressed.

OF CLIMBS

Closer to home, Aaron Campion writes of new routes in Betsy Crag Slate Quarry, Little Langdale

"It's not easy to find new lines on Lakeland crags these days. However, not far from LHG there's an old slate quarry with potential for new routes. This summer (2018) we took advantage of the long dry spell and bolted a few previously unclimbed lines. The quarry already has some bolted and traditional lines climbed fairly recently.

The route below is 'Lucid Dreams' and goes at F6b. I made the first ascent, and Ged (Campion) did the second (see images overleaf).

When the good weather returns, we will be back."



Ged on the face, Aaron holding the rope and Ged's wife Bev taking pictures.

Obituaries and Appreciations

ROY THORNTON SALMON

1925 –2017, Member: 1950.

Roy was born into a working-class family in Hunslet, Leeds. He attended the local Council Schools, first in Hunslet and later in Middleton, Leeds, and started work at fourteen as an apprentice in a structural engineering company at about the same time that his father was called up for wartime service in the RAF. Roy continued his education at night school where he gained qualifications which gave him entry, in the immediate post-war period, to a course in mechanical engineering at Loughborough College, now Loughborough University, where he obtained the necessary qualifications to become a Graduate Member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineering.



Another aspect of Roy's early life was that, following in his father's and uncles' footsteps, he became deeply involved in the Boy Scout movement, receiving the King's Scout award at an early age. Scouting also led him to become keenly attracted to outdoor activities, mountain walking and rock climbing which he practiced on the gritstone crags at Almscliff and Ilkley.

On completion of his course at Loughborough he moved into the electricity generating sector with the Yorkshire Electric Power Company, gaining operational experience at the company's plants at Thornhill and Mexborough. At that time, the Club's Library was housed in a room at the Salem Congregational Church in Hunslet, Leeds, fairly near to Leeds Bridge. For a short time Roy attended the Salem Church and so became aware of the library and hence the Club and as a result, after attending the usual introductory meets, became a member in 1950, so enabling him to pursue more actively his interests in mountaineering and caving. This interest in mountaineering and desire to live and work nearer the mountains was aided in the early 1950s by his moving to Scotland to take up a position on the operations staff at the power plant at ICI's Nobel Division's works on the Ayrshire Coast. He also spent some time at the company's offices in Glasgow, but moved on to employment with the nationalised South of Scotland Electricity Board (SSEB).

During his early days working in Scotland, and indeed throughout much of his life, Roy endeavoured to take optimum advantage of his proximity to the hills. Like many other young people living in the Glasgow area at that time who had an interest in climbing and walking, he

travelled at the weekends to the hills of Arrochar, Glencoe and other nearby mountain areas on buses which I believe were organised by various climbing clubs. One of these trips to Glencoe had a significant impact on Roy's life. While climbing in the Clachaig Gully with a friend, Roy had a fall, while leading, which resulted in his sustaining injuries that required him to be admitted to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary for treatment. During his stay in hospital he met one of the nurses, Margaret Dufus, and they continued to see each other after his discharge, which led eventually to their becoming engaged and marrying in October 1955.

Also during the early 1950s, Roy with his brothers, Trevor and me, and our late Club member Roger Allen enjoyed two summer holidays at Glen Brittle on the Isle of Skye climbing in the Cuillins. On another summer holiday Roy joined a party of four other YRC members (Roger Allen, Cliff Large, Neville Newman and myself) on a mountaineering trip to the Otztal and Stubaital in the Tyrol, our first time in the Alps.

In line with the general enthusiasm at the time for nuclear power, Roy's career took a move in that direction, when, after a brief induction period at the UK Atomic Energy Authority's (UKAEA) Windscale plant, now known as Sellafield, he moved to work on the Dounreay experimental fast reactor, which is situated on the north coast of Scotland some twenty-five miles west of John o' Groats.

This reactor also produced power for the National Grid.

While working at Dounreay, the family, which now included two children, Alisdair and Morag, lived in the small town of Thurso. Roy remained at Dounreay for about eight years before his work took him south again to the UKAEA's site at Risley, near Warrington. After a relatively short stay at Risley, he returned to Scotland to rejoin the SSEB to be involved in the running of Scotland's two nuclear power plants at Hunterston in North Ayrshire and Torness in East Lothian, which after privatisation of the power industry, were split off from the SSEB to become Scottish Nuclear.

Roy remained in this position for about twenty-five years until his retirement and during this time the family lived in East Kilbride. For some time after his retirement, Roy maintained involvement with the nuclear industry by acting as a consultant.

Whilst living in East Kilbride, Roy decided to study German at the Goethe-Institut in Glasgow, as a result of which he became very fluent in the language and much enjoyed reading German literature. He also maintained his love of the mountains and whenever possible attended YRC meets and took his family skiing either in the Alps or in the Cairngorms, where he and



Roy taking in the view on Arran

Margaret bought an apartment for use by the family. Roy also made many trips to the hills with his friend, Herbert Wunsch. Unfortunately, from late-middle age, Roy developed a progressive muscle wasting disease that over time severely affected his ability to walk, climb and ski. However, for many years he continued to attend the Club's Annual Dinners and, with the aid of splints, was able to participate in the After-Dinner walks. Also, he and Margaret will be remembered for their many attendances at the Ladies' Weekend meets, which the Club used to organise.

After Roy's retirement, Roy and Margaret moved house from East Kilbride to live amidst beautiful Highland scenery, near their son and daughter-in-law on the shore of Loch Linnhe at South Cuil, Duror, about five miles south of Ballachulish.

In the final years before his death, Roy developed Alzheimer's disease and eventually was admitted into a nursing home in Ballachulish, where he received excellent care.

He leaves his wife, Margaret, son and daughter, Alisdair and Morag, four grand-daughters and two great-grand-daughters.

Arthur Salmon

DONALD R H (Don) MACKAY

1925 – 2018

Member: 1962

Donald was born on 30th October 1925 very close to both the River Cam in Cambridge and to the engineering business run by his father and grandfather. Unfortunately his father died when Donald was only 11 and he was brought up by his mother and 3 sisters. As the only boy in the family he was doted on by them all. His great childhood friend and companion was his cousin, the late Brian Nicholson (YRC). He used often to recount stories of their adventures in the neighbourhood. His home was right next to the old Barnwell Abbey they delighted in exploring some of the underground tunnels that were said to go from the abbey right into the middle of Cambridge. They found stone coffins that had real skeletons inside. In the holidays they went camping with the scouts or off to Cromer with the family.



When the Second World War came Donald was at the County High School in Cambridge and in the holidays and after school he worked in the firm's workshops. In 1940 an engineer called Sommerfeld came to the workshops to build the prototypes of the Sommerfeld Track, a system for producing runways almost anywhere. Don became his apprentice and together they developed what was to become crucial kit for the air force. It was nicknamed "Tin lino" and could be rolled out anywhere and was used as the basis for many airfields. On D-day a Sommerfeld track was laid out on the beach head and transport planes were flying in within 24 hours. By the end of the war 44 million yards of the tracking had been supplied by Britain to the Americans and many of the RAF air bases started life as Sommerfeld tracks.

After the war, Don trained as a structural and welding engineer and went on to design steelwork for many of the buildings being constructed in the city. In the early 1950s he worked with Martin

Ryle to design and construct the first radio telescopes in Cambridge, which Ryle then used to do the first radio surveys of the universe. This work resulted in Ryle proving that the universe was expanding, thus supporting the big bang theory, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Don continued to invent new ways of solving old problems, and his development of a novel way of building spiral staircases, resulted in him being awarded a patent. This was the start of a whole new business and he licensed the system to Guinness, who made the components in their barrel factory.

Donald got married in 1952 to Hazel and they had 3 children, Duncan, Neil and Alison. They continued to live in Cambridge close to the business, until they divorced in 1972 and then he married his second wife Sue. In 1976 they moved to their lovely home Roebuck House on the banks of the Cam in Chesterton. This house had a large barn on one side, and was the scene of many wonderful parties and gatherings.

Donald used to be a regular on YRC meets and he and Brian had many memorable times together. The Whit meet was a particular favourite and Northern Scotland in particular held a special place in his heart as the home of the Mackay Clan, although our family more recently came from a croft on the Black Isle called Balguneerie.

He also enjoyed potholing and was part of the group that went over to Ireland and the area around Eniskillen. He always used to recount a tale about when he was sent to get chickens for dinner and had to cross the border. But the guards in those days would not let him take his car across. So he got talking to the vet who was inspecting the cattle crossing the border. The vet said "why don't you take my car, I'm stuck here all day, so I won't be going anywhere". So he drove down the road to the farm and chose some chickens off their perches; the farmer wrung their necks and Donald returned with dinner. He loved the relaxed way of life in Ireland.

In 1978 Donald became Mayor of Cambridge. He was a very controversial mayor and was determined to root out what he saw as corruption in local government. He took on the town hall over a planning dispute that he felt had been handled dishonestly, and true to form he took the side of the underdog. His year as Mayor was eventful to say the least, and the local paper was delighted by the way that his antics caused their sales to rise markedly. At one council meeting when the council was discussing the IRA, Donald stood up and said that he knew all about the Irish under ground which caused the meeting to go silent. He then told them about the very good pot holes he had been down.

Don had a particular fondness for Low Hall Garth and he used to regularly take family groups to the hut particularly at Easter. These visits resulted in quite a number of Cambridge people joining the club, having enjoyed their first taste of the YRC at the hut. His son Duncan had his first taste of walking in the Lakes on one of Don's trips to LHG. He kitted he and his brother out with tough walking boots and they headed out to Wetherlam and other Lakeland fells with Don, Brian Nicholson and Cliff Downham. Duncan always remembers the day Don bought him his first hemp waistline and steel karabiner so Cliff could take them up Scout Crag and Middlefell Buttress.

Don had a particular friendship with Denny Moorhouse and helped him to learn about engineering in our Cambridge workshops and then to set up Clogwyn climbing gear. The Mackays would always pop over to Denny's place when they were in Wales. When Denny wanted to buy a power hammer for forging pitons, he sent Don in to negotiate the price, because Denny seemed to have

fallen out with the machine's owner. So Don went and talked to the owner, whose firm happened to be called Britannia works (the same as the name of the Mackay's workshops). He told the owner that he was nostalgic about power hammers, as his father had one just like it and would he sell it?

They agreed a really good price and Don said he would send his agent to collect it for shipping. Denny was delighted with the deal, but when he turned up with an old farm tractor and trailer as the shipping agent, the owner was furious.

In recent years Don's hill walking adventures had come to an end, but he still liked to go to the annual dinner. He had a fine sense of humour, and could always come up with a humorous question to lighten the mood of the AGM. He loved the YRC and all it meant to him. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him and his light-hearted approach and entertaining stories will remain as a wonderful memory.

Editor with input from Duncan Mackay et al

JOHN HEMMINGWAY

1953-2018

Member: 1953

The first time I met John, I was sitting rather nervously in a hotel in the centre of Blackburn waiting for a job interview. A man came down the stairs opposite carrying a pint in his hand and thinking he was a guest, I took little notice when suddenly he came up to me, enquired my name, shook my hand and asked what would I have to drink which threw me into a bigger panic. I hurriedly stuttered, I think, a bottle of Newcastle Brown Ale and went upstairs for the interview. I eventually got the job but I often wonder what would have happened if I had said a lemonade. I think our shared love of climbing and walking helped. Thus started over sixty years of a friendship I will always treasure.



This was a time long before computers, and I used to overhear frequent conversations John had with someone outside the company whom I later learned was the then YRC Secretary Cliff Downham. It turned out John provided through the auspices of the company the addressograph plates for the Club membership!

We then started the Wednesday night walking group, at the time mainly in Bowland. This was at a time long before 'the right to roam act' and most of the land we walked on was owned by the Duke of Westminster or the Duchy of Lancashire. However John's natural charisma helped to soften the ire of the many gamekeepers we crossed on our ramblings which finished very often in the dark. This 'charisma' served us very well in a crowded pub as he always seemed to get to the bar quickly, without offending anyone, to get the drinks in!

It also helped when a few years later John organized the annual long walk in Bowland. This necessitated not only planning the route but visiting all the farmers and game keepers whose land we crossed, I tagged along on these visits but kept I thought sensibly in the background.

Once they realized we were not trying to sell them anything they were very co-operative. The meet was based on the Youth Hostel at Slaidburn. It started on the Friday with a very 'heavy night' in the 'Hark to Bounty' and John mainly entertaining the gamekeepers.

The route started at the Trough of Bowland and took a circuitous route all over the area finishing up at the Club Hut at Clapham. The cloud base was down, the area featureless, you can imagine some of the YRC route finding. Two parties met up with each other going in opposite directions each convinced they were right. One party heard a lot of traffic noise which later turned out to be the newly opened M6 which meant they were completely off course. However as in most things YRC, the meet was agreed to be a huge success.

John was a true Yorkshireman. He was brought up in the Pudsey, Bradford and Leeds areas where his father was in the woollen industry. There must have been some remarkable genes in the family as his brother rose to be Secretary and Director of the Leeds Permanent Building Society. John was educated at Leeds Modern School. He was called up to be in the Navy from 1945-1948 and served for some time at Scapa Flow. He qualified as a Chartered Accountant after his Navy Service and had a number of appointments before joining Alexander Carus at Darwen in 1965 as Chief Accountant.

The company were textiles and surgical dressing manufacturers supplying mainly to the NHS. They later expanded and amalgamated with a company in Preston to become Vernon Carus. John eventually became Chairman and Managing Director of the group. He also held other non-executive directorships with other healthcare companies.

John in his early days was active in the Club. He enjoyed both caving and rock climbing, but preferably, as he would say, at the end of a rope! He completed the traverse of the Welsh 'Three Thousand's' and on another holiday with fellow member Rex Aldridge traversed Rannoch Moor from end to end despite the midges! In 1983 he took part in the Munro Project with Jack Devenport, Pat Stonehouse and Neville and Chris Newman. The team climbed Ben Lomond, Ben Vorlich, Stuc a'Chroin and Ben Chonzie. He walked extensively in the Dales, Lakes and Scotland but he was never a 'peak bagger'.

He had a deep love of remote places very often in his own company. He enjoyed fishing and spent many happy hours on the river bank although I suspect it was the joy of being out in the early morning rather than the number of fish he caught!

It must also be remembered that John organized, almost from its inception, the Friday YRC monthly lunches in the Dales which have become so popular until he handed over relatively recently to David Handley.

He had two stints as Assistant Secretary of the Club 1957-1962 and 1973-1979. He was Secretary from 1979-1984.

After he retired from business, he and his wife Janet spent many holidays both in the UK and the continent with their friends Bill and Brenda Lofthouse and Harry and Margaret Robinson.

John took a keen interest in local Scouting and held a number of non-uniform positions. He was awarded the Silver Acorn for his services to Scouting in 1953.

He was also very active in Freemasonry and the role of the Masons in the community.

In his latter years he was also a member of Probuss

John throughout his life had a strong spiritual link with the Scottish Islands. On many of his holidays with Janet and the family, John stayed on Gigha, the small island off the coast of Kintyre. In 2002 a Community Buyout was arranged when it became independent from its previous owners. John, played a very small part in this as obviously he was too far away and had not the intimate knowledge of its history. However, his contributions were appreciated, and Janet and he were invited to its ten-year celebrations in 2012.

He was also a member of the Iona Community which is an ecumenical Christian community which operates throughout the UK and many other countries. A reading from one of its members was read out at John's funeral.

John typified the true ethos of the Yorkshire Ramblers. He very rarely missed the annual dinner but at the age of ninety I think he felt it was time to go.



He leaves his wife Janet, his children Elizabeth, Simon and Nicholas and six grandchildren.

Seventeen members and their wives attended the funeral.

Derek Bush

DAVID METCALFE OXTOBY

1931 - 2017, Member: 1948

He was born in York where his family ran a small business and attended Nunthorpe Grammar School before studying Chemistry at Loughborough College. After college, his national service of three years was spent with the RAF largely based at Alhorn in Germany. Subsequently most of his working life was spent in management in the food industry.

David joined the YRC in 1948, when living in Quorn, between Loughborough and Leicester.

From an early age he was attracted to the empty spaces of the hills and mountains. This enthusiasm was fostered by his older sister Edna who took him to both the Lake District and the Cairngorms when he was around sixteen. In the following years when he was still very young, much of his holiday time was spent hitch-hiking around the British Isles to climb and scramble in the Lake District, the Mountains of Mourne, Wales, Scotland, The Isle of Man and the Macgillycuddy Reeks. The Scottish mountains remained a favourite of his and it was there that he was introduced to winter climbing.

Back in 1950, David joined Bill Kelsey and Crosby Fox and went to Switzerland to try what Crosby described as one of the finest ice and glacier trips in the Alps; the passage of the Eigerjoch. Very early on their second morning, they were stumbling across the Eigergletscher in the direction of the Klein Eiger. The famous ice-fall nearly had them beaten but Bill found the key, which involved some rather hair-raising jumps across seracs. After several manoeuvres which included descents into dry crevasses they eventually emerged onto easier ground arriving at the foot of the final snow slope, and soon after were admiring the wonderful panorama of the Oberland. It was a short respite though. The "pass" they were standing on is at the top of one of the most appalling slopes in the Alps. It descends to the Bergli and you have to traverse along to the "South Eigerjoch" a long and very sharp ridge of snow. After passing the many rock teeth with difficulty, they had to traverse a long ice slope, overlaid with about four inches of new snow. It was snowing very heavily and they were in thick cloud.

That trip also took in the Kamm Westgrat, Gross Grühhorn and culminated with the traverse of the Finsteraarhorn and shows the level of work David was doing back then. David was a regular climbing partner of Crosby and George Spenceley.

Crosby writes of a climb of the Brenva Route with David in 1957.
(YRC Journal Volume 8 Number 28: pp169-172)

David did not restrict himself to the Alps although he was obviously a regular and keen Alpinist but a meet report from that era talks about him fighting his solitary way, over the snow fields of the Cairngorm in appalling weather to meet up with the likes of Dennis Driscoll and George Spenceley.

After his marriage in 1956, family and work priorities took over and he had fewer mountaineering breaks.

However, he still visited Scotland and attended the occasional YRC meet including one on Rhum in Whitsun 1964.

In 1966 he moved from London to Scotland for work and he remained there for the next ten years. He and his wife Vivien lived in Elgin just north of the Cairngorms while he worked for Baxter's soups. This proximity to his beloved Scottish hills re-ignited his passion for walking and most of the family holidays were spent in the Highlands and Islands. These instilled a love of hill walking within his children and he often walked with them in his later years.

Work forced him to return south in 1976 to Devon. However, after he retired, he regularly went back to Scotland with his family, still enjoying long walks and scrambles in the most remote parts of Scotland.

Even when in his eighties he still enjoyed walking on Dartmoor.

In his later years David often talked about Crosby Fox who he had several adventures with.

Crosby was killed with two Sherpas on our Himalayan expedition which David had declined to go on as he had just got married. He remained very proud of his Yorkshire roots despite not having lived in the county for over 60 years



Photo of David taken in Oct 1994 from the Forcan Ridge towards Sgurr na Creige in Kintail

David hadn't been active in the YRC for many years but was always keen to retain his membership of the club. He always looked forward to receiving the latest copy of the journal and avidly read it from cover to cover. He was proud of his collection of club journals dating from its founding days in the late nineteenth century.

Climbing hills and mountains was a major passion in his life and as well as presenting a physical challenge, he loved the sense of isolation and the nature that was all around him. He certainly passed on his love of the hills and great outdoors to his family.

He is survived by his wife who is in a home now, and by their children Sarah, John and Michael and various grandchildren.

Editor with input from the family et al

CLIFF LARGE

1926 - 2018 Member: 1953

Cliff died this year having joined the Club in 1953.

Having been a member for 65 years he was a Life Member.

Very active in his younger years, Cliff was part of the team which climbed Bishop's Mitre, as part of the Lofoten group's contribution to the Norwegian Meet of 1992.

He was also a keen ornithologist and recorded birds identified on a number of overseas trips.

We hope to have a full appreciation in the next edition.



Editor

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be found on the Club
website and all editions
back to 1892 can be made
available for research

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Yorkshire Mark 2 ?

Wond'rous as her regions are, England's bounties great and small
of these all, shall ever stand, Yorkshire, greatest of them all;
Shouldering the stalwart north, buttress staunch and true is she,
is there any can compare, with her of the Ridings three?

Chorus

*Here's a health, then, lads of the Ridings three,
to the broad-acred shire in the North countree;
Here's a health to bonnie Yorkshire and all that she enfolds,
from the Humber to the Tees, from the Pennines to the Wolds,
here's a health, here's a health to Yorkshire*

From her high embattled cliffs facing eastward to the sea,
re-mote fells, in the west, guarding moorlands in their lee,
nature's graces lie revealed in profusion wide and free;
Gifts of God to win and charm, all her glories chance to see.

Chorus

Briton, Roman, Saxon, Dane, all have known her magic spell,
loved her, spread her fame abroad, made the hist'ry that we tell:
On her honoured roll of fame, those displayed who loved her well
Saint and soldier, prince and peer, and the folk of dale and fell

Chorus

Years go by as pass they must, some traditions fade away;
Lord preserve our towns of stone, yet to see another day:
Ancient fields enclosed by walls; sky oft' dull and leaden grey
timeless scenes we love to see, changing seasons by the day

Chorus

And as time drifts on along, shall her folk unworthy be
of this great inheritance, stories learned at mother's knee?
Never whilst the waves recoil, beaten from her rugged coast;
never whilst her hills still stand shall she cease to be our boast

Chorus



**Lowstern,
Clapham,
North Yorkshire**



**Low Hall Garth,
Little Langdale,
Cumbria**



To book either cottage contact Richard Josephy - bookings@yrc.org.uk

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

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Deadline for material for the next edition is 15th December 2019

**The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily
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The YRC Journal is published annually and is free to members, libraries and certain kindred clubs.



THE YORKSHIRE RAMBLERS' CLUB

**EXPLORATION, MOUNTAINEERING AND CAVING
SINCE 1892**

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Lodged with the British Library – Publisher ID L-43592

Printed by Alfred Willday & Son Ltd, Unit 1, Duns Lane, LEICESTER, LE3 5LX – 0116 251 8478