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Inside Rear Cover: Andy Mitchell on Ringwraith, Scafell East Buttress. Photo - *Al Phizacklea*

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## Editors' Note

Hello everybody. You will notice some changes in this year's Journal. Firstly, and most obviously, you will find photographs where we didn't have them in previous years. We have changed the font, from Baskerville to Myriad Pro; this is not a random choice, but is in line with our other publications, for instance the Chronicle and the Handbook, so that we can project a FRCC 'house style'. We await receipt of a lament for the missing serifs. Secondly, the eagle-eyed amongst you will have noticed that we have dispensed with the Roman numerals in the numbering system. This is Journal number 84. That's it, nothing else. The Roman numbering system dates back to the time when Journals were sometimes hardbound in sets of three, and no longer has any relevance, so we have dispensed with it.

Some thanks are in order. Firstly to those who contributed to the Flickr website in response to the photographic competition held last year, and to Colin Prior for judging the competition. Although we were not inundated with photographs, there were some excellent contributions. The focus of the exercise was to choose a photograph for the cover, but it seemed churlish to reject the rest, and you will find some of the other entries throughout the Journal. Secondly, we have three contributing artists, each with their unique interpretation of the Lakeland landscape – Renira (Rennie) Barnes, Martin Packford, and a line drawing from Susan Dobson, who contributed to the previous Journal.

As for the content, we have the usual mix of new adventure and club history, lots of new routes (how many times has it been said that we are running out of new challenges?), informative pieces providing inspiration for new trips, and some humour, all leavened with a sprinkling of paintings, photography and poetry. We hope you all find something in here to keep you informed and entertained over the winter months.

*Martin Cooper*

*Andrew Paul*



Scafell from Brackenclose: *Susan Dobson*

## X12 – Passport to Adventure, Part 2

*John Holden*

### Torver to Brackenclose

The night was closing in rapidly as I worked my way up the path from Eskdale to Burnmoor Tarn. It was February and I was totally committed. I had to get to Brackenclose. There was no plan B, but I was knackered. For some unknown reason my feet were hurting badly; not blistered, just hurting as though they had been beaten with a club. It had never happened before and has never happened since, but at the time gave me a real cause for concern.

The day had started in Ulverston waiting for the X12 bus service to Torver. A beautiful day, sharp shadows, bare trees and cold air. Nervous tension created by the long walk to come and short daylight hours. And on the bus, relaxed chat between regular X12ers and a driver who paid no heed of the bus stops on the route, but stopped at the most convenient spots for his passengers -at their doors when he could.

Torver: an old boy got off the bus in front of me. As he was heading for the Tranearth track I strolled with him for a few minutes before he sent me off, saying the day was a-wasting and Wasdale was a long way. So off I went, the miles rolling away until the ever-surprising surprise view on Walna Scar summit arrived. The Scafells, sunlit, the Isle of Man, a black floating silhouette. A pause for thought about the miles to come and impetuous legs carried on, unbidden and uncaring.

The long slope into Dunnerdale is so inviting and the navigation across the Tarn Beck pastures so involving, being knee deep in water, that it was with some surprise that the Stepping Stones were reached and crossed. With a growing awareness of pain in my feet came the wet slog beyond Grassguards. At the crossing point to Eskdale the brewing kit came out; the petrol stove roared and in a couple of minutes tea was brewing in my china cup with the gold rim. However, I wasn't relaxed. Seven miles gone, seven to go, two and a half hours of daylight left.

Off I went again feeling marginally better, drawn by gravity and the smell of beer at The Burnmoor Inn. Once there I really was in a quandary. Could I get over to Brackenclose? Could I hitch out of the valley? The sun had gone from the valley and Harter Fell was lit orange by the dying sun. Once again, with no conscious thought, my legs took off in the direction of Burnmoor with me thinking, who exactly was in charge?

The two mile walk to the tarn is not the most interesting stretch of ground in the Lakes, but the gathering night improved it and when the tarn was reached the last light was glowing over the entrance to Miterdale. The path to Wasdale could not be picked up, so I headed for the lowest point of the ridge ahead, knowing that I would eventually hit the main path leading past the peat huts to Brackenclose.

On reaching the path I had to admit defeat and get the head-torch out. With its help the final descent was tackled and, as it eased, so did my anxiety. I was going to make it. Five minutes from the hut I could hear the faintest of noises. The volume grew and I thought it could be a burglar alarm. But from where? The realisation came when I reached the Brackenclose gate. It was the hut fire alarm. It is simply unbelievable how much you can think in fifty yards. Will it switch off? Is there a fire? What can I do if... and so on. Door open. Thank the Lord – mute button – silence – time to take stock. Priorities: fire lit, brew made, dinner cooked, whisky poured and alarm reset successfully. All's well.

### Coniston to Brackenclose via Grey Friar and Mickledore

If the route seems bizarre, get your map out. The question that had exercised me for some time was just what is the straightest route between Coniston and Brackenclose? A straight edge placed on the map goes up the Coppermines Valley, cuts across Levers Water, over Levers Hause, Grey Friar and leaps across the Duddon and Eskdale to land you on the summit of Slight Side. The massive west facing slope of Scafell is then traversed until the intake above Brackenclose is reached. Do-able? I wasn't sure. My feeling was that the pathless section was too long. So what then could be done?



The modern X12 in Coniston: still delivering walkers to adventures

Using paths, the obvious route was to go up the Coppermines Valley, but not bother swimming across Levers Water, climb over Levers Hause, Grey Friar and down to Cockley Beck. From there Mosedale beckoned, and the Great Moss. Boats properly burnt at that point would leave no choice but to go over Mickledore. Easy.

So on a wet August day there I am, waiting for the X12 in Ulverston, wondering if I had picked the wrong day. And in Coniston up went my brolly as I walked past The Black Bull. (A word here about umbrellas; they should be an essential piece of kit for any walker. If you discount

windy days, when they are problematical, an umbrella keeps an enormous amount of wet off and allows much better regulation of your temperature. Hoods can be left down and jackets unzipped, and brews when it's raining are a positive pleasure. Umbrellas can be positioned when you are sitting so that tea can be enjoyed without watering it down.)

The cloud was down on The Old Man and if the truth be told, with a dozen miles to go, I wasn't feeling that inspired. The grey and wind ruffled Levers Water was looking very moody and the craggy Great How ridge was cloud capped, but Levers Hause was just under the cloud level; once up there the wind forced me to put my brolly down as I took the lovely traversing path round the side of Swirl How across Fairfield towards Grey Friar. Now the map shows a path from the summit of Grey Friar to Cockley Beck. There isn't one. In thick cloud I took a compass bearing and, starting on the faintest of grass trods, set off in a north-westerly direction. After a very short distance the trod disappeared, but a rotted stile across a wire fence showed

that there was a right of way. Below the cloud a way still could not be seen, so a direct line to Cockley Beck was taken. What difficult ground it is; the fellside is a mass of medium sized rocks, largely hidden by bracken. Real ankle-breaking ground. I was very thankful to reach the upper intake wall, and a party of walkers asking my opinion as to feasible routes up Grey Friar were recommended to try Harter Fell.

A brew was needed, and thankfully it had stopped raining. As the stove purred away I took my boots off in a forlorn attempt to dry my socks. It was pretty stupid really – I was just about to walk up Mosedale and then go across the Great Moss. Nothing was going to keep my feet dry. However, hot tea, a Booth's pork pie and some jelly babies put me in the right frame of mind and on I went.

The great thing about this walk is the sense of commitment; there is no easy way out. When you get to the head of Mosedale, and Mickledore is then seen, there are few choices and none of them are easy. What a great place upper Eskdale is. It always takes my breath away, even after over forty years of visiting it. So many memories, of walking the ridges, camping out and the fabulous days climbing on the East Buttress, Esk Buttress and smaller outcrops.

One memory will suffice for now; my first visit to Esk to climb was in the company of Dave Winstanley, my climbing partner in the nineteen seventies and eighties. Bridge's Route was the objective and as Dave could not get up in a morning we walked in the middle of the day and it was hot. And as Dave only moved at one speed, slow (but inexorable), it was getting on by the time we arrived. Now Dave was famous for the size of his rucksack. He called it his light-day sack but the actuality was that it weighed as much as an expedition sack (or more – it was impossible to pick it up and swing on to a shoulder), the reason being that it had everything anyone could possibly want when in the great outdoors. That particular day he had brought two well insulated canisters of home-made lemonade that had been kept in the fridge the previous night. That hit the spot and, rehydrated, we got started. Perfect rock, a brilliant line and the most fabulous location make this possibly the best Severe in the Lakes (now there's a discussion point around a hut fire). At the end of the

traverse the updraft caused by rising thermals was lifting the rope behind me.

We topped out and wandered wearily down to the sacks and threw all the gear down and ourselves on the ground. Dave decided we needed a nice cup of tea. Out came the Trangia, meths poured in, lit, and a well deserved rest ensued while waiting for the water to boil. After about ten minutes Dave, not seeing any sign that the water was getting hotter, decided that the meths had run out and went to top up the fuel reservoir. It was still lit. It is impossible to see the flames in strong sunshine and the nearly full bottle of meths in his hand was now also lit. Panicking slightly he brought his arm back like a bowler and lobbed the flaming bottle about twenty yards down the slope. Unfortunately he tipped the bottle as he was about to launch it and a stream of fiery meths ran out onto the ground and down the slope over our climbing gear. The nylon slings melted before our eyes. We hadn't wanted to do another route anyway.

Back to the walk. That section between the top of Mosedale, across Lingcove Beck and under Long Crag makes up for the earlier wet plod and when the Great Moss was reached I had only one route across in mind. I squelched and squished, up to knee deep in places, making a bee-line for Cam Spout. The cloud was dropping again and I could feel spots of rain, so up went the broolly. I ran out of steam half way up to Mickledore. Another brew, another jelly baby and a pep talk along the lines of 'all I had to do was put one foot in front of the other' did the trick. I arrived in good style at the col and clearly amused a walker with my large red and white umbrella.

There's a commonly held belief that going downhill is harder than going up. In my case that rule only holds true until the nine mile mark. Once beyond that mark I find walking down infinitely preferable and that mile and a half, knowing that Brackenclose and chairs that are nearly comfortable were waiting below, made it plain sailing. But boy was I glad to get my boots off.

#### Torver to Raw Head via Great Carrs and Red Tarn

I don't think that many people would disagree that the best mountain views are not to be found on the tops of mountains. The



best positions are at lower levels and this walk is a superb example of that. From Torver it takes five miles to get the summit of Great Carrs, passing Tranearth Quarry, traversing Goats Water and the ever-impressive Dow Crag. Goats Hause is next with the mysterious carving on a rock of a circle and pair of lines crossing it through the centre (an identical carving can be found on the path across Walna Scar summit).



Great Carrs from Red Tarn

From there the route takes a magnificent line across the side of Brim Fell and comes out at Levers Hause and the grass on the side of Swirl How is so beautifully manicured that a gentle rising traverse missing its summit will land one on Great Carrs without breaking sweat. Now there is a lovely top. A rest there is obligatory; the east side of the cairn gives a great eagle's eyrie experience.

Another of my favourite paths lies ahead down Wet Side Edge, but instead of following it to the Three Shire Inn a steep descent to the top of Wrynose is taken. There was a point at which I looked across, level with Red Tarn, and realised that it was going to be tough losing all that height only to have to regain it. And so it was, but I plodded and stopped and plodded again and there was the tarn.

There comes a point in a walk of a decent length when the view back gives a real sense of achievement, and so it was at Red Tarn. As I sipped tea, my eyes were resting on Great Carrs, my mind reliving the descent. It seemed a very long way off.

The path into Langdale is quite simply evil. Now I know the 'authorities' felt they had to do something, but that bone jarring stone staircase with a million steps is one that I will never, ever, go down again. However, once on level, ground the pleasant thought of beer drew me down the valley. Easy walking, mind in neutral, a reet good do.

### Conclusion

There are other walks I could have chatted on about, but one thing that struck me was that there is the making of a really good meet in having to arrive at a hut by using public transport and walking in. Anyone interested?

### Author's note

Part 1, the story of how I as a young man came to be on the X12 bus from Ulverston to Coniston, has still to be told. It may be a while yet.





The upper groove of The Cumbrian

## The Cumbrian Controversy – Forty years on

*Al Phizacklea*

If you could select one single route which sparked off an unprecedented ethical dispute between 'traditionalist' climbers and the 'modern' climbers, it is the 1974 ascent of The Cumbrian on Esk Butress. Forty years have elapsed since this route was first climbed, so it provides a reasonable excuse to review the ascent, following an interview with the protagonists, Paul 'Tut' Braithwaite and Rod Valentine.

The traditional climbers, typified by the Fell and Rock membership of the time, took climbing as it came, always on-sight and tackling the crags as nature had intended, with cracks full of vegetation and moss. Routes were cleaned as one progressed, this was not much of an issue on easier angled rock in the days before nuts had been invented. However, the introduction of the small wired nut, such as the Chouinard Stopper from America, was a major game-changer. Now thinner cracks could provide protection, which led to climbers looking at the steeper rock that remained unclimbed. On this sort of crag it was proving to be impossible to clean cracks as you climbed without resorting to resting on your gear; remember that climbers only gained fitness as a result of actually climbing – a couple of weeks of bad weather left one out of form. Many ascents in the early seventies were only climbed with a point or two of aid, testament to what some considered the limitations of a traditional ascent.

Some climbers took exception to this style of traditionalism, they realised that by pre-inspecting and cleaning the crag the ascent of a new route became more of a certainty, with none of the climber's energy being wasted hanging around scratting away at grass and heather choked cracks. The end result was a clean route; both clean of vegetation and clean of aid. This trend gathered momentum from various parts of the country, but it was Yorkshire's Pete Livesey who had the greatest influence on the climbing activity in the Lake District.

Livesey was greatly influenced by the American free-climbing ethos following an eye-opening trip to Yosemite. Upon his return he trained relentlessly, often utilising circuit training and laps of the early climbing walls to improve his strength and endurance. This fierce attitude to the sport hadn't been seen before, and some people regarded him as being a rather ruthless character. Livesey had been snapping at the heels of 'the authority' for several years and had already clashed with the FRCC guidebook team; in particular with Allan Austin, through his activities in Langdale. Livesey's new routing campaign in the Lakes took a dramatic upturn in 1974. Within the space of a month he had climbed Dry Grasp, E4, and Nagasaki Grooves, E4, in Borrowdale, followed by his greatest breakthrough, Footless Crow on Goat Crag in the same valley, which became the first undisputed E5 in the area. With these ascents he burst onto the local scene and threw down an unbelievable challenge to the locals. He established himself as the undisputed 'top dog' almost overnight.

The line of The Cumbrian is a shallow, left-facing groove that cleaves the impending headwall of Esk Buttress, 300 feet above the base of the crag. It is a beautiful line on a beautiful crag on the southern flank of Scafell Pike, overlooking a wild and lonely tract of the infant River Esk. It had been one of the most obvious and elegant challenges left in the Lakes, and it was first climbed on the May 5th, 1974 by Paul 'Tut' Braithwaite and Rod Valentine.

Rod recalled the ascent during an interview for the Scafell Climbing Book:

Myself and Tut decided to have a do at this route, as everyone had seen the line. We were regarded as being traditionalists, because we went up on-sight with the gear we had at the time, which was the normal 'MOACs' and the like. I was an engineer at that time and worked on a centre lathe where I made a nut from the smallest aluminium bar that could be knurled down, it was ¼ inch bar, and I filed tapers on the ends and drilled holes for the thinnest perlon. That was the smallest nut I had. Anyhow, this route coincided with the time that Troll starting to make small swaged wire wedges, and Tut knew the lads at the factory at Oldham.

As I was setting off to have a crack at this pitch, he pulled these tiny wires out of his pocket. He had three of them; I think they might even

have been the prototype wires from Troll. He said 'Take these with you,' and I said 'You're joking! There's no way they'd hold you if you fell off!' Anyway I took them with me and set off up the wall. I think I rested on two points going up the wall, not standing in slings or owt like that, just sitting on the rope, gathering yourself to make the next few moves. Anyhow, I had got to the point where I got one of these wires in a little crack, I thought it was a joke really, but I put it in. Then I made the move across to the main groove and I got it right first time, the tendency is to move low across the wall to get to the bottom of the groove, but I had decided to make a move up to get my hands on the edge of the groove and step round into it, which is the correct way of doing it. It was obvious that we hadn't abseiled down to inspect it; we were doing it traditionally, because when I got into there the cracks were dirty. I scrambled about, I didn't have any pegs with me but I did have a peg hammer with a spike on it, so I used this to clean out this slot, but the only thing I had was too big and it wouldn't go in. I hung around and tried a bit longer, but it was obvious that I was going to fall off, and I shouted down to Tut: 'Heyup, I'm going to come off here!' and he said 'No, no, don't fall off!' but I couldn't reverse it and was running out of strength, so that was it. I fell off, and the protection I had in on the way up was sort of loose and it all flicked out, and the only thing left was that Troll wire, and that's what held me. I fell about thirty feet, and the day was over, so we finished up Central Pillar.

We were staying at RawHead and went back the following day, where Tut said he'd have a go. He tensioned off the wire and got a blade peg in, and used a foot sling on this as a basis for cleaning out the groove. He climbed this, cleaning as he went up. It was steep, and I think he hung onto bits and bats all the way up. I knew I could make those moves into the groove, and I followed it free that day, but it wasn't until 1988 when I went back to lead it.

Braithwaite recalls the eventual ascent on the following day:

We returned to the crag the next day, it was my turn to have a go at the pitch. I used the tiny nut that had held Rod's fall the previous day. That allowed me to place a blade peg at the base of the hanging grove. I put a short sling on the peg and stepped high into it. This enabled me to clean out the crack at the back of the grove which was chocked with moss and debris. Once the crack was cleared out, I used it to pull into the groove.

After a few more feet I got a good runner. From here, steep difficult climbing lead up to a large spike and good holds. Once I stood on the spike, the main difficulties were all over. Above, a shallow recess enabled me to make a stance below the top of the crag. I decided to belay here so I could communicate with Rod. He followed in fine style, eliminating the aid I had used to clean the pitch.

Rod continued his thoughts:

Looking through what Trevor Jones wrote about the ascent in his book 'Cumbrian Rock', he has the usual story of Livesey slating us at the time, because it was Livesey that was changing the rules. He was the most prolific climber to emerge for producing routes rather than climbing them by traditional methods, because he was that type of character. Ken Wilson stirred it up a bit to get some controversy going, obviously it made good reading; a bit of spice, you know. It went something like: 'Valentine and Braithwaite the bastards, look what they've done on Esk Buttress! They've stolen the line by using aid!' So it was all fuelled up and Wilson was delighted. That's what happened, I think Livesey was pissed off because we tried it before he had chance to inspect it.



The approach to the hanging groove of The Cumbrian

There has to be an explanation into one of the underlying issues of this controversy, as it explains the significance of Livesey's following comment. This ascent of The Cumbrian only just made it into the 1974 edition of the Scafell guidebook by being slotted in the addendum at the back of the book. Ken Wilson, editor of Mountain magazine, seized upon the situation and published the following vitriolic outburst by Pete Livesey:

Valentine and Braithwaite pulled the lowest trick in years. It was Valentine and his FRCC cronies who had a lot to say about leaving routes with aid out of the guidebooks. 'Avoid the rush to get into print,' they said 'If you can't do it without aid leave it for someone better.' The various factions operating in the Lakes couldn't help but agree with these strictures, so we had a look at this Esk Buttress line and left it for someone better. The new guide was about to go in print and who rushed to get it in but Valentine and Tut. I see the finished product, the route, as an important aspect of climbing new routes on British rock. It is better, therefore, to sacrifice some purity of approach in favour of leaving a clean, aid free ascent.

Rod continues:

I would like the chance to set the record straight. In Trevor's book [Cumbrian Rock] he implies that we inspected it; he says that Valentine and Braithwaite examined the line and went to climb it. We never examined the route by abseil or anything; it was totally on-sight, an unknown thing we were going into. You could see it from other routes, such as Bridge's or Medusa Wall, but you hadn't a clue what you were going into, you were too far away. I was annoyed about Trevor putting that down, because there was no way we did anything like that.

I admit it wasn't the best ascent; the best ascent is actually the second ascent which is probably going to be free and on-sight, not from the person who produced the route. Livesey was a fantastic climber and he produced lots of routes like that, but would he have been able to repeat routes like Footless Crow on sight if someone else had produced them, and be able to come along and do them on-sight and free? We just won't know.

[Livesey did in fact make the second ascent of The Cumbrian, and claimed the first free ascent, in order to justify his disputation that the line should have been left for him in the first place. However, he later rescinded this account and admitted to pulling on a nut to



check a higher hold after some eye witnesses had contradicted his initial 'free' claim.]

This sentiment is echoed by Tut:

We were both chuffed with our ascent of The Cumbrian only to find a few weeks later there were rumblings of discontent from the Yorkshire lads, mainly Pete. In the summer months of 1974, I was busy climbing in the Alps and expeditioning, and Rod is not the type of person to respond publicly to the press coverage that ensued. I always had great respect for Pete and his ability to climb and stay focused on his personal mission, however on this occasion I considered his comments amounted to no more than a touch of envy and a certain amount of hypocrisy.

As the route was eventually graded E5, I would have certainly been punching a bit above my weight to climb it free on sight. Rod however was more than competent with climbing at that grade and has proved it time and time again.

Whether the first ascent was carried out by trad style or pre-cleaned and beaten into submission from above, The Cumbrian has stood the test of time.

Rod continues:

One thing that smarts was the way Livesey climbed Lost Horizons, where he abseiled and prepared that route, then he went and used aid on it! I don't remember him getting any stick for that in the press. We weren't even given the chance to put our point of view forward; we couldn't defend ourselves or explain what happened. Well, we did meet Ken Wilson shortly afterwards; we were at the Half-way House on our way to Cloggy, when out came Wilson and his mates. He just confronted us outside and asked us to justify our actions on The Cumbrian – it was like a kangaroo court. We just said we were going to climb on Cloggy, and walked away. That sort of confrontation was unfair on us.

So that's the history, people who read about it will probably think 'What a pair of bastards, doing that', but the whole thing has annoyed me for thirty odd years.

The Cumbrian was eventually led free for the first time by Martin and Bob Berzins in 1977. It was originally graded E4 when it first appeared in a guidebook, but after countless ascents the consensus is that it is a good E5 to flash cleanly on sight. It is a 'good E5' for a young climber to break into that grade; the technical grade is an amenable 6a, and if you get spat off the crux the fall is spectacular

but harmless, as the steepness ensures that you don't hit anything more solid than fresh air.

The Cumbrian was probably the last major unclimbed line in the Lakes to be led ground up, completely on-sight. Indeed it may have been the last important new route to be climbed on-sight in England or Wales; it took a few more years for these new routing 'ethics' to influence the Scottish climbing scene. The outburst of controversy produced by the climbing press ensured that nobody else would ever dare to consider climbing new routes in a similar style. Sadly, this diminished the traditionalist approach and it became replaced by copying Livesey's ruthless, professional style which was rapidly adopted by everyone.

But a bizarre upshot to this incident must also be assessed. It was an 'own goal' by Ken Wilson, who at the time was the most vocal and staunch supporter of traditional values in British climbing. His drive to publish the disparity between the factions, in what was one of the first 'tabloid style' pieces of journalism in the climbing press, effectively killed off those exact virtues he strived to promote. But that's the devil of the printed word, it can't be forgotten – it shouts at you every time the page is opened.



Early Snow above Kentmere : *Rennie Barnes*

## Renewing the Memorial Plaque on Great Gable (2013)

*Peter Smith OBE*

It is a brave man who stands astride a mountain summit on a cold autumnal morning to address some four hundred hill walkers, mostly strangers, whose eyes are directed by a gesturing arm to the surrounding fells: 'They were bought by the FRCC as a memorial to the twenty members who died fighting for their country during the First World War; their names are recorded on this nearby plaque'. On that Remembrance Sunday, 11th November 2012, newly elected President John Barrett ended his delivery from Great Gable: 'We ask that our Act of Remembrance should be reflective, private and personal as well as collective. Can I ask you to gather together and join me now in two minutes silence to honour those who have been denied the freedoms we enjoy?'

A shiver of emotion ran through me as, for the first time in twenty such events, I witnessed a spontaneous and genuine round of applause, subsiding just before 11 o'clock when the only sound was that of the wind whistling across the summit. I counted twenty-one months to August 2014 when, like it or not, the whole country will mark the Centenary of the start of WW1, when radio, television, and innumerable publications will regurgitate a plethora of events and memories. A memorial on a mountain top will surely attract much attention. If we care at all about our plaque, its meaning to our club and its place in history, then our plaque must look right. A new plaque is needed.

The plaque, the mountain, and its neighbouring fells have acquired iconic status, being treasured as the club's equivalent of the Crown Jewels. Utmost care was essential for my embryonic plan to succeed. All I had to do was to devise a master plan and then convince the committee that we should proceed. What could be easier?

Applying Eric Spofforth's oft-heard Seven 'P's 'Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Pretty Poor Performance', demands doing one's homework thoroughly, and using all the tools in the box. Wear-

ing my hat as national secretary for Mountain Rescue I spoke to the Legal Advisor, awaiting imminent appointment as a District Judge by Her Majesty, and who was also prominent as a Major in the Army Reserve, having been awarded the Territorial Decoration. Over coffee he passed me on to a MR Team Leader, who in turn provided a contact for a team member serving with the Royal Engineers. A request for assistance in bringing down the existing plaque and returning to fix the new casting brought a succession of encouraging responses:

'Peter, Absolutely no promises, but give me a few weeks and I will see what I can do. I suspect that one of the old Regiments may want to be involved.'

'I have arranged for someone to check out the methods of fixing over the weekend of 7/8 Dec. After that I will let you know if we can be of assistance.'

Two months passed before hearing again:

'Pete, Holding email. Events have somewhat overtaken me as various Mediterranean issues cropped up. Have not forgotten and the preliminary investigation looked positive but we are trying to ascertain the weight. Do you have the rough weight of the new one?'

'The studs in the sides may be some form of bolt and it might be a tricky removal and then a partial rework to have the rock in good condition for a re-fix. The bottom line is that we would like to get it off over the summer to give time and weather for any follow-on works.'

RMS Titanic sank in April 1912 after striking an iceberg. On a visit to the Memorial Garden in Belfast, opened on the centenary of the disaster, I was impressed by a plinth thirty feet in length, supporting five bronze plaques. Displayed were the names of all 1,512 victims, passengers and crew, listed in alphabetical order.

Fortuitously the manufacturing foundry was located a mere six miles from home and a visit proved fruitful. Ongoing research into the loss of the Titanic resulted in amendment after amendment after amendment. Our plaque, with just two minor corrections amid twenty names, would be in good hands. Manager Alan Scarfe's recommendation was to rework the mountain detail (shotblast and chemically darken) and make a new plaque for the wording for

which a good clean .pdf will be needed. Eight weeks should be allowed for casting work but it could take much less depending on the urgency of other, more profitable, jobs.

Three days before I was due to address the Committee at Birkness I received a reassuring message:

'The Royal Engineers (that my lot) are currently scoping the unit to undertake the work. It is likely to be a unit based at Leeming (so there may be some RAF rescue involvement). At present we fully plan to undertake the work in time for Remembrance 2013 (which can be briefed to the committee); the exact timelines are TBC.'

The Committee agenda read 'Replacement of the plaque on Great Gable: It was FRCC who placed the present plaque on the summit of Great Gable so we have a responsibility for it. The upper part – the relief map – is showing its age and the lower part – the list of members killed in the Great War – looks sorry for itself because of two recent corrections. Peter Smith has looked into this.' Some favourable comments were interspersed with 'it's like Munro's Tables; not to be tampered with'. The meeting agreed that 'the plaque should be replaced as soon as possible but definitely before the Act of Remembrance on 11th November. A note will be put in place to explain the absence of the plaque and a plaster cast (or similar) will be made as a back-up.' From the Committee, then, a cautious nod; from the President I detected a silent yet decidedly firm appeal 'don't mess it up on my watch'.

Very sensibly for a mountaineering club the committee business waits until late in the day, allowing members some time for enjoyment on the hills and crags. Our hill day, achieved in the vilest of weather, had left us battered and soaked yet we had ventured 'without let or hindrance' relishing the freedom to roam. Often, in the Highlands of Scotland, I have approached, with dismay, a sign proclaiming 'PRIVATE LAND'. Closer inspection made my heart sing: 'This estate welcomes considerate walkers and climbers. Please respect this property as you would your own'. Familiar requests followed: close gates, keep dogs under control, and so on. Many workers and their families were reliant on the estate being managed effectively and profitably; partly for self-sufficiency and partly to



finance the maintenance of the fabric of the estate for the future. Seasonal access restrictions for lambing, nesting, fishing, stalking and culling seemed reasonable.

A century ago rich landowners bestrode their domains like emperors, rightful masters of all they surveyed. It was their land and likewise their prerogative to maintain privacy. Walkers were forcibly kept at bay or risked arrest by police, with scant sympathy from rural magistrates inclined to regard them as communists.

When Herbert Cain amazed the 1919 AGM with the audacious 'let's buy a fell' he knew that such properties rarely came up for sale and that landowners would reason that the infant FRCC lacked the status to acquire such property. Success came when the club purchased not one but twelve fells, ensuring lasting freedom of access, to honour those members that fought in WW1 to preserve freedom and, in so doing, lay forfeit their own.

Purchase of that huge tract of land, referred to by John Barrett on Remembrance Sunday, was concluded only after a daunting and protracted struggle by a determined group of members driven by the persevering Cain. He was extremely relieved and justifiably proud by the Committee announcement to members:

'The time has now come when it is the privilege of the Committee to put before you the War Memorial Scheme. After much delay, which they think you will consider to have been not without its compensation, they have negotiated for the purchase of a very large portion of the centre of climbing and walking in the district. This comprises the tops of twelve mountains, viz.:- Kirkfell, Great Gable, Green Gable, Brandreth, Grey Knotts, Base Brown, Seathwaite Fell, Glaramara, Allen Crag, Great End, Broad Crag and Lingmell, together with almost all the land over 1,500 feet, bounding them on the sides facing the Seathwaite to Wasdale track.'

That Committee Meeting was held during the Whitsuntide holiday weekend in 1923 so we purposely chose its anniversary for our 'Walk through History': an expedition across all twelve mountains. This is a delectable outing through our most majestic heartland and it is essential in order to appreciate the magnificence of our Memorial to our members from WW1. Nothing finer can be imagined.

The plan was agreed: a leisurely two-day trip departing from Brackenclose; have a pub meal in the Scafell Hotel in Rosthwaite; stay overnight in The Salving House.

Wasdale looked its best as Chris Sherwin, Brenda and Barry Fullard and I ascended Lingmell, guarding the valley head, before traversing a remnant snowfield in the upper reaches of Piers Gill leading to Broad Crag. Picking our way very carefully across the roughest summit of the district we moved on to Great End and down to Esk Hause, flimsy clouds dispersing as the watershed was crossed into Borrowdale.

Sprinkling Tarn could have been Sparkling Tarn as we skirted its shoreline, there and back, to reach Seathwaite Fell. Up and over Allen Crag and onward to the final mountain for the day. From the summit of Glaramara, in the quadrant arcing from SW to NW viewed against the late afternoon sun, it was possible, just, to identify all the other eleven summits in our Walk through History. Descending the nose of Thornythwaite Fell through warm still spring air was sheer bliss; the eye leads down to The Salving House, along Borrowdale and across Derwent Water to the Skiddaw massif. That night, drifting off to sleep, I envisaged a similar balmy day for the morrow. Sleeping soundly, I had been unaware of the torrential downpour that had kept others awake. Observing the clouds hurtling over High Spy, aware that it was somewhat lower than our hills, we reasoned that our intended high level route would be more than an ordeal; it would be dangerous. Our cars were back at Brackenclose so we had no choice but to persevere against the tempest, taking the valley route over Sty Head whilst anticipating the sanctuary of our hut.

An opportunity to salvage some of our six lost hills came through a surprise invitation from the President for Committee members to attend a social weekend in mid-June at Birkness: 'no business – just pleasure.' 'That really is a test of one's popularity' voiced some of the members, although a full house insisted that they enjoyed barbecuing in the rain. Sunday was much kinder as Ellie Sherwin joined Chris, Brenda and me for an easy walk from Honister, taking in Grey Knotts, Brandreth, Green Gable and Base Brown before calling in the Langstrath Inn to review progress on the plaque.

The Royal Engineers had been on a recce at the end of May to determine a suitable route up Great Gable, following which Corporal Mark Dodds had briefed Major Paul Golding:

'Sir,

The recovery of the war memorial located on the summit of Great Gable will take place on Wednesday June 26th 2013; all DCRE personnel on station will take part in the recovery exercise. The ascent and descent ... same route ... from Wasdale Head Grid NY 187085 ... to the prominent track junction Grid NY 218095 ... up to the summit Grid NY 211104. Once removed the plaque will be brought down to Wasdale Head ... steep and craggy in places a stretcher will be required ... memorial is heavy and quite cumbersome ... use a tent valise ... down the steeper rockier sections ... use the stretcher on the shallower paths. It is intended that we use bolster chisels to remove the cement border from around the outer edges of the memorial and adjustable spanners to remove the bolts from the six corners using tubing if extra leverage is needed due to the length of time the bolts have been in place and also crowbars may be needed to prise the memorial from the rock ... taking in the region of 8 hours ... leave Wasdale Head car park at 09:00hrs.'

Major Golding had written to me on 10th June 2013:

'Since our last correspondence the plan has matured somewhat. We now plan to make two visits to the site. The first will be a recce with tools to, without damage to the plaque, remove the mortar and investigate the fixings (we will deploy with a range of tools). If possible we will safely remove the plaque and recover it as discussed; this is assessed as the most likely outcome of that visit. If the fixings are stubborn and require additional specialist equipment we will return the following week to complete the removal. I hope that this allays your fears.

Due to service reasons unfortunately we will no longer be available on the 26-27 June to attempt the task. I hope that this has not caused you inconvenience. The next window of opportunity for us is: Attempt 1 (Recce with tools) 10 July; Reserve 17 July.'

On behalf of the club I had to complete a nine page document 'Application for Military Aid to the Civil Community'. In return I received reams of paperwork, all to be digested and ideal for bed-

time reading: Introduction, Aim, Location, Execution, Grouping and tasks, Coordinating instructions, Safety, Movements, Security, Dress and equipment, Feeding, Transport, Fuelling, Medical, Key personnel and contact numbers, Kit list, Suggested additional kit, Stores list, Summary, as well as location map, walking route, risk assessment (five pages) – all to be signed by the Assessor and countersigned by the Line Manager.

'It looks like being a thorough job done in a professional manner.'

Apart from trying to find time for all this correspondence all seemed to be going well – excepting these two unexpected sections:

2. Indemnity. In the event of the Secretary of State accepting and agreeing to act on this application the Sponsor undertakes to furnish a completed Indemnity Form as appropriate prior to the completion of the Service other than where a standing indemnity has already been furnished to the Secretary of State and the period covered in the form has not expired.

3. Insurance. In the event of the Secretary of State accepting and agreeing to act on this Application, the Sponsor undertakes:

a. To effect with an Insurer or insurers a policy or policies of insurance to cover the requirements of the Indemnities as follows:

(1) Ground Risk Insurance. Minimum of £2,000,000 (two million pounds) any one claim/incident.

(2) Aviation Risk Insurance Minimum of £7,500,000 (seven and a half million pounds).

Club insurance is in place for anyone on-site but this was different. Several brokers responded 'certainly unusual; not sure how to proceed'.

From Major Golding:'

'How is the indemnity and insurance coming along? If we do not get it sorted this week I am afraid that it may delay our recovery attempt.'

Eric Spofforth's '7 Ps' needs expanding to include Perseverance. Never doubting a positive outcome (but sweating a wee bit) I was able to tell everyone to start packing after this confirmation arrived

on the day immediately prior to the plaque removal: 'Peter, Thank you for the payment; I now have pleasure in attaching our cover note. I hope all goes well! I noted the time with interest; it was exactly the 11th hour.

A buoyant mood prevailed at Wasdale Head when Mark Scott, Tina and I welcomed the Royal Engineers. Corporal Dodds introduced his team who were 'ready for a cheeky climb to the task site'. A chisel for removing the mortar and a spanner proved adequate for the easy removal of the six bolts; three were removed intact; the others came out along with their lead fixings.

The Royal Engineers insisted on our company during their debrief in the Wasdale Head Inn before returning to barracks at



Mark texts the President that the plaque can be removed

Leeming, unable to accept our invitation to stay overnight at Brackenclose.

For over a year Tina had suffered a painful knee. Trying to compensate by walking with a modified gait affected her hip which in turn resulted in a bad back prone to spasms. I had become 'i/c all things domestic' including exercising her dog. Now Zac had lost the use of his rear legs yet was happy with his trolley. They managed to accompany me from Wasdale Head as far as Burnthwaite whilst I continued for a circuit over Kirk Fell. The morning mist cleared; the sun-kissed summit was all mine. I had, eventually, completed the ascent of all twelve summits that comprise the War Memorial. For my part, having traversed in rapture over the entire Memorial Fells I am glad that much more came of the initial proposal by Cain, in November 1919, that 'the Club should enter into negotiation with a view to purchasing Pillar Rock or part of Great Gable'.

He met frustration at every turn until, after three and a half years, the greater purchase was secured. I pictured Cain's ecstasy upon informing club Secretary Leslie Somervell:

'We have done it! Herewith letter and Heads of Agreement which followed me on here and arrived this morning, whereupon I spent part of my life's savings in a telegram to you as I know you are as keen as I am.'

The foundry provided a progress report: 'We have cast the relief of the area and have just received the patterns for the writing. We will cast the plaque next week and then need to bolt the two together'.

'The Royal Engineers have allocated Wednesday 25th September for fixing the new plaque.'

'I'm sure we can meet the date you need it for. The only slight problem is that I am on holiday from the 14th to the 26th'.

'What happens if ...'

The machining of the letters took place off-site. The Royal Engineers were due to leave Leeming on the 24th. The plaque arrived back at the foundry late on the 23rd. Panic? Me? Never.

Tina was recuperating from an operation for a replacement knee and needed me to look after her - as well as Zac - but insisted on travelling. After a pub meal with the Royal Engineers they followed





Molten bronze for the relief map

me in convoy from Wasdale Head to the club 'hut' at Brackenclose envisaging a draughty leaking bothy half-way up a mountain where-upon the first task would be to clear away the sheep droppings. 'This isn't a hut; it's a palace.'

Even though an early start was agreed for the morrow the President was not impressed with the 05:30 alarm call. The plaque, yet to be examined, was still packaged and secured to a pallet when we transferred it to the stretcher ready for the ascent of Great Gable. Chris Sherwin and Paul Exley blazed a trail for the stretcher party.

Making steady progress in their wake John related his feeling of newly found liberation. Only two days previously he had been set free from doctor's orders that had keep him away from hills and crags for six months; an irksome constraint for one possessed of a burning passion for walking and climbing yet kept tantalisingly distanced from numerous adventures planned without fulfilment.

John and I paused together above Sty Head Tarn to wonder at the unfolding day with autumnal valley mist slowly dissolving and the stationery clouds obscuring our neighbouring summit crests. I felt privileged when, with poignant spontaneity, he burst forth, face beaming with jubilation and eyes ablaze with exhilaration: 'What joy



Royal Engineers stretchering the new plaque up Great Gable

to be out walking again; what joy to be on this special mountain; what joy to be here on this special day'

The Royal Engineers applied their renowned experience: position template, spirit level checks, mark the rock, drill to enlarge bolt holes, apply epoxy resin, position plaque, check levels, insert bolts, secure, point the surround, wipe clean any residue, blacken the bolt heads, stand back and admire a professional job – 'our job' – a perfect complement to the foundry promise 'you will be pleased'. Perfection indeed but everything had depended upon the exacting artwork by Chris Sherwin. Modern day computer fonts cannot repli-

cate the lettering of ninety years ago, nor could we trace an original template or drawing, yet only the best will satisfy Chris. The excellence of our Centenary exhibition gives testimony to his brilliant professional skills yet he had to dig deep this time until: 'this is getting pretty close - not the same serifs but fluted and clean; I will play with the q's and a few others' and then, just beating the deadline 'herewith .pdf to size along with indication of borders etc in two sections as requested'.

While descending for a debrief in the Wasdale Head Inn, Squadron Leader Paul Laugharne said 'anytime now' and, somewhat puzzled, we were surprised by a low flying aircraft. Paul contributed a narrative:

'Transiting at a standard 420 knots (7 nautical miles per minute or 480 mph) Flight Lieutenant Duncan Dean turned his RAF Hawk from 100



Chris Sherwin by the plaque

Squadron south-westwards down Borrowdale before rising upwards over Styhead Tarn ... overbanked his aircraft and pulled it to the right with a G-force of 5 times that of gravity so as to maintain a safe distance from the rising crags of Lingmell ... the valley widening towards Burnthwaite and West Water ... a small group of people looking upwards ... momentarily dropped a wing to acknowledge our presence ... his overflight had capped what had been a most memorable and historic day for the FRCC members and military personnel present.'

The President contacted Corporal Dodds:

'Dear Mark, I am writing to thank you and all your colleagues for the safe removal and replacement of the Fell & Rock memorial plaque on Great Gable. I have to admit that I had some doubts in my mind about the feasibility of the task and did not want to be remembered as the Club President who broke the plaque. Clearly I need not have worried as you and your men were well equipped and showed great skill in carrying out the task. I was impressed not only by the professionalism and effort of your group but also the light-hearted banter and spirit of comradeship. The Club will hold an Act of Remembrance on Great Gable on Sunday 10th of November; it would be good to see you at this event.

I noted the new terminology in Mark's acceptance:

'Can we please confirm with yourself that we now have ten places booked for your lodge at Buttermere for the night of Saturday 9th November in order that we can attend the Remembrance Service on Great Gable?'

It was destined to be one of those memorable days when all the varied efforts of the past twelve months came together perfectly. Departing from Honister, and blessed with a dry day, my party included Chris and Ellie Sherwin, Richard and Jane Hargreaves, and our guests from the Royal Engineers and RAF. I walked for a while with Major David Hartley, who disclosed:

'When your letter arrived I agreed with Major Paul Golding that it was imperative to accept the invitation – it must not go to another unit.'

A covering of snow on the high ground, beneath clearing skies, was apt as the President addressed some four hundred hill walkers before the Two Minute Silence:

'Today we are sharing an historic event in the life of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club as we gather together around our newly cast plaque commemorating the lives of our members who died in the First World



War. This year the original plaque was removed and replaced with the new by our friends in the Royal Engineers who are with us here today.'

A White Ensign, from the pivotal Battle of Jutland in 1916, was used in the unveiling by Richard Hargreaves. He referred to the plaque:'

The H.L. Slingsby here was Laurence Slingsby ... He was also my great uncle on my mother's side ... One of Laurence's sisters was Eleanor who married Geoffrey Winthrop Young, one of Britain's leading mountaineers before WW1. So he was another great uncle and I remember him from my childhood. In the war ... his ambulance convoy was shelled ... his left leg was shattered and had to be amputated. He designed his own wooden leg so that he could continue to walk and climb in the mountains. This should interest you engineers; it had a screw device to make it shorter for going uphill and longer for downhill. His first big walk with the new leg was in June 1924, a gruelling walk up here to Great Gable from Gatesgarth in Buttermere, not the easy way from Honister, to speak at the dedication of this memorial. Family legend is that it took him over five hours to get up here.'

These are the words with which he began his tribute both to the men whose names are written here and to the freedom for us to walk these hills today:

'Upon this mountain summit we are met to-day to dedicate this space of hills to freedom. Upon this rock are set the names of men – our brothers, and our comrades upon these cliffs - who held, with us, that there is no freedom of the soil where the spirit of man is in bondage; and who surrendered their part in the fellowship of hill and wind and sunshine that the freedom of this land, the freedom of our spirit, should endure.'



Winter Fells : Rennie Barnes



## We Bought Them a Mountain

Times were harder back then than we have it today  
And escape to the hills was a rare treat they say.  
Coming up from the smoke by train, cart and bikes  
To tramp over and climb on the fine craggy heights.

It was damp and quite cold as they strode up the hill,  
While raven and buzzard wheeled in mist never still.  
Though the wind blew a deafening gale all around,  
There was peace in their hearts as they covered the ground.

The way was unknown as they picked out a route  
Up cracks, walls and grooves with a faith absolute.  
Protection was merely a stout friendly hand  
But peace filled the minds of that lively band.

Then nation's leaders fell out; war reared its black hand.  
Mountain friends faced each other across no man's land.  
The noise, stench and horror drowned the noblest thought,  
Stole the peace from their hearts as for freedom they fought.

When the end came at last and stillness befell  
They sort refuge again in the hills they knew well.  
But solitude met them, coves empty of chatter  
Few weary survivors to down the scree clatter.

Yet, the ghosts of their comrades were there roaming free  
At peace with themselves, in the fells silently.  
And we bought them a mountain, Great Gable, their throne  
To remember them always; they're never alone.

So today if you go to those fine craggy tops  
And peacefully sit while the world around stops,  
Listen for the sounds of those lost generations;  
The laughter and joy of their past aspirations.

*Max Biden*

## GREAT GABLE – Remembrance Sunday 2013

*Richard Hargreaves*

The replacement of the plaque on Great Gable has special significance for my family, as a descendant of one of those FRCC members whose name is on the plaque, Laurence Slingsby. A further connection is through my other Great Uncle, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, who embarked on his first real walk after losing his left leg in the war, with the wooden leg he designed himself, from Buttermere up Great Gable to speak at the dedication of the memorial on June 8th 1924.

Some weeks ago John Barrett invited me to come to the annual gathering on Gable this year because of my Slingsby connections, to unveil the new plaque and to say a few words. How could I resist such an invitation?

On the Saturday night, Jane and I stayed at the Salving House. We woke on Sunday morning to hard frost and iced up cars under a blue sky and glints of snow on the hill tops. We drove to the top of the Honister Pass to walk to Great Gable the easy way, unlike GWY who, with his new leg, had walked up all the way up from Professor Pigou's house, half way between Gatesgarth Farm and Buttermere village. By arrangement, we met up with Peter Smith OBE and the team of ten Royal Engineers who had carried the original plaque down the mountain in June 2013 and the new one back up in September. It weighed 75kg.

Sunshine above, snow-dusted peaks around and ice-glazed rock underfoot, it was a sociable walk up the old quarry tramway, along Moses Trod under Brandreth and up to Windy Gap, true to its name, between Green Gable and Great Gable. Here it was in 1924 that GWY was revived with life-saving hot coffee from a thermos before hauling himself up the steeper rock and scree to Gable's summit. We didn't need the coffee, only another layer of clothing, because Gable had kept its cloud cap all morning and the dusting of snow over icy rocks made it a slippery and cold ascent. We were on the top at 10 o'clock, half an hour ahead of schedule and with an hour to wait before the 11 o'clock silence.

Above the names on the memorial plaque is a relief map of the twelve mountain tops around Great Gable which the Fell and Rock had bought from the Musgrave Estate in 1923 and given to the National Trust so that these hills, in the words of Arthur Wakefield, then President of the club, would be 'secure for us and our children for ever'. This gift of mountains to the nation was an essential part of the memorial. As we arrived, the ridges and valleys on the map were delicately etched with the white crystals of hoar frost.



In the 1924 Fell and Rock Journal's account, the stained Union Jack from HMS Barham at the Battle of Jutland, which veiled the plaque, gave 'the only touch of colour' in the 'grey mist and driving rain' and 'the climbers in their well-worn grey and brown ... and now and again through the hush the clink of boot-nails on the boulders.'

Red, blue, purple and grey were today's colours in the throng of over five hundred people who merged on the top of Gable as John Barrett stood up to speak from the summit rock.



As John finished and introduced me as a fellow Fell and Rock member and Slingsby relative we both crouched low to pull up a different Battle of Jutland flag to unveil the new plaque. Then it was my turn to speak as clearly and firmly as I could to the silent, colourful crowd all around our rocky perch. I had practised and timed my speech at 3½ minutes before a herd of inquisitive, even excited Highland cattle in the field over our garden wall in Hawkswick.

I spoke from rehearsed memory of Laurence, his father William Cecil Slingsby, and GWY's gruelling walk to deliver his 'glowing eulogy' from the same perch in 1924. His speech, in the flowing, heightened language of the time, would have been difficult to deliver in our changed world but the first six lines ring as true as ever today. I chose to finish my speech and lead into the silence by quoting those lines:

'Upon this mountain summit we are met today to dedicate this space of hills to freedom. Upon this rock are set the names of men – our brothers, and our comrades upon these cliffs – who held, with us, that there is no freedom of the soil where the spirit of man is in bondage, and who surrendered their part in the fellowship of hill



and wind and sunshine that the freedom of this land, the freedom of our spirit, should endure.'

I have spoken in public often in my life but never encircled by such a crowd on a mountain top, as the sun began to clear away the mist in the silence which followed and Pillar, Green Gable and the Buttermere fells slowly unveiled themselves with their ridges and

crag sharply outlined and casting dramatic shadows on the valleys below.

The total silence of such a large crowd of people, young and old, from so many places and so many walks of life, standing in such concentrated silence around the very top of one of the finest mountains in one of the most beautiful places on earth, has an intensity which I cannot imagine feeling anywhere else in the world.

As we walked back down the still icy scree and rock path to Windy Gap and then in warm sunshine over Green Gable, Brandreth and Grey Knotts to Honister, in wide-ranging conversation with other Fell and Rock friends almost all the way, I felt so privileged and lucky to be part of such a historic fellowship of family, club and mountain.



*Mike Cudahy*

As you know, 'flu' can be a very unpleasant johnny. Not only is it unpleasant at the time, it is recognised as 'debilitating', medical jargon for leaving you feak and weeble. So if you have had 'flu' and you fondly imagine you would like to race 40 miles, over rough moors, at night, in winter, you had better check that, although your brain is obviously weak, your body is not. What the medics advise is a period of convalescence.

There were three of us quite keen for Don to complete his convalescence from 'flu' as he was our key fourth team member in the notorious 40 mile High Peak Marathon (at night, in winter, etc). Don wisely deemed it necessary to check the completion of his convalescence with a trial run. We all agreed that 20 or 30 miles over the very guts of the course (at night, etc, etc) would be a jolly good idea and save possible embarrassment on race day (or night). As the SAS say: 'fail to prepare; prepare to fail!'

It was a very dark, wet and windy night (just like the real thing) when we arrived at Ladybower Reservoir. Our team leader, Ted, had kindly driven us there in his sturdy Land Rover. Don, John and I stood around checking torches and nostril expanders waiting for the ever disorganised Ted to get his act together. Eventually, an exasperated John rapped on the side window.

'Are you right there, Ted?'

'Yes I am thank you, John. Just waiting to make sure you're all OK.'

'Yes we are. In fact, we're ready to go!'

'Excellent, so am I. Cheerio and good luck!'

And with that the Land Rover coughed a cloud of diesel fumes over us. 'But, but, but ...' we cried. But he was gone. For a time there was a silence, broken only by the soft patter of rain and the sigh of the wind over the high moors. Then, with a suck and a plop, three pairs of feet were plucked out of the bog and three tongues began an intimate and bitter dissection of team leader Ted and his perfidious (though admittedly realistic) analysis of the situation. We all

*Mike Cudahy*

agreed on one thing, however; Ted failed to recognise the value of convalescence.

Thus began Don's convalescence. Starting with a lung-bursting ascent onto the Derwent Edges, it continued with a laborious jog along what is called a moorland path but is better described as a ditch. We practised the cunning plan of running without lights (to baffle the opposition). This was usually followed by heaving one another out of unseen but palpable bogs, sometimes head first. Soon, the incredible gritstone tors loomed up like pieces from an Epstein exhibition: 'The Coach & Horses', 'The Salt Cellar', 'The Cakes of Bread', 'The Venus de Milo' (how did that get here?) ...

All too soon the entertainment ended and we got stuck into the black innards of the moor. The comforting orange glow from the Sheffield conurbation to our right and that of Manchester to our left slowly faded as an impenetrable mist rose from the sepulchral bogs. Although the wind had somewhat abated, the rain seemed to be increasing and we all agreed it was a splendid night on which to practice running over the course (and convalescing).

John said he expected Ted was asleep in the arms of Morpheus by now. I said I thought his wife was called Mildred and we all laughed, a bit. Don said something unprintable and medically impossible about Ted. John ran with this theme and was becoming very inventive until he fell into a hole. So, by and large we were all pretty jolly and I thought it was just the job for convalescing.

In this merry way Margery Hill (more a 'subdued eminence' than a hill) and Outer Edge trig point passed by. Further entertainment was taken by counting the stakes down from the trig point and arguing about who counted the right number. After either 13, 14 or possibly 19½ stakes we took a fresh bearing. This was the key bearing, 284° (or perhaps 275° or maybe 370°), to take us to the sanctum sanctorum, the route's pivotal point, identified by some interfering geezer as 'THE POINT OF NO RETURN!!' (He thought the race should be banned.\*) It was actually the point equidistant from start and finish and it is called Swains Head. In the interests of careful convalescence it was deemed sensible here to take refreshment. We each selected a portion of damp moorland and sat on it. Withdrawing

\* How right he was

into my dripping hood, onto which the rain beat a relentless though hypnotic tattoo, I munched away. I entered a state of peaceful reverie and was starting a meaningful dialogue with myself concerning the metaphysics of reality when a shadowy movement disturbed the subconscious vigilance of my peripheral vision. I turned and saw, as they say, a sight I shall never forget. It was Don, lying like Beryl Reid's\*\* 'prostitute on the ground'. His mouth was open but his eyes were closed. And the rain, as John and I observed with horror, was not falling on his face - it was bouncing off it, like a pavement.

Incredible as it seemed, something must have gone wrong with the convalescence. Despite the invigorating night air, the bracing temperature and the stimulating company we seemed to be witnessing a 'relapse'. This could be an 'emergency'. Don looked deeply unconscious though strangely peaceful. We might have been tempted to use a mobile telephone but they had yet to be invented. We were aware of being at the 'point of no return', but we had every intention of returning and we were not retracing our steps. What that silly geezer had overlooked was the Woodhead road, a mere mile to the north.

John and I each grabbed Don under one arm and propelled him rapidly northwards. Curiously, while Don remained incommunicado, Don's legs seemed vaguely aware that walking was taking place. The further we went, the better Don's legs went with us. Eventually, muttering noises became audible. They were along the lines of 'Wozzamatter? Wherami? Wozzgoinon?'; but more worryingly the mutters were being overlain by an ominous roar. John and I exchanged frightened glances. 'It's the Etherow,' he said. 'Yes, in spiteful spate,' I replied, alliterative to the last. By this time the lights were going on inside Don's brain. This was fortunate but a bit disappointing, too, as I had been looking forward to floating him down the Etherow like a Viking warrior. Judging by the roar he would have joined the Mersey in no time at all. However, when we reached the bank we could see it was all fur coat and no knickers. Frothy, loud and dirty like a club comedian, we were across it and emerging with clean boots and underwear in no time at all.

Scrambling up to the A628 we took stock. Don was still somewhere between 'relapsed' and 'debilitated'. He took a turn for the worse when John estimated it was a good ten miles to Glossop, where we had a car. Characteristically, John nobly volunteered to run ahead and try to flag down any stray vehicle on the way. He later reported that, having failed with thumb, hands and arm, he tried stepping into the headlights with gestures both frantic and wild. Would you believe that on seeing a tall, hairy man half covered in mud with staring eyes, breeks all holes, jumping up and down in the middle of the road and waving his arms about, not only did no one stop, some even accelerated rapidly away?

Meanwhile, Don and I, sticking out an occasional and hopeless thumb, plodded forlornly Glossop-wards; I think we were both losing faith in the value of convalescence. Suddenly and unbidden a Transit van pulled up. The passenger door opened and a young man leaned over from the driver's side. I thought, 'this must be down to Don, 'cos I don't believe in the power of prayer'. Unfortunately, the driver just wanted to get directions for Glossop. GLOSSOP!! Summoning all my notorious charm I gave him the full benefit plus an offer to guide him there from the passenger seat. Having by now assessed our dripping, muddy and probably smelly condition he was explaining how he was on his way home from a gig and the van was packed out with gear when there was a blur of movement from behind me and Don suddenly appeared, as if by magic, in the passenger seat. The shutters may have been down, but the lights had certainly been on. As the van began to accelerate I flung myself inside and slammed the door.

We must have passed John driving the other way somewhere near Glossop. Being, in those days, quick on the uptake, he figured out what had happened and we were soon reunited at a friend's house enjoying a very early breakfast. Except Don wasn't. He was either relapsed, debilitated or convalescent. We didn't care which. Anyway, he was asleep.

It was decided not to include him in our Watersheds team. We got a super-fit replacement who gave us all a very hard time, particularly Ted. I saw Ted again two weeks later. He was still convalescent.

\*\* A comedienne from Birmingham

## Winter Days in the Lakes

Remembering that we still have good winters, even if they arrive erratically, we thought they should be celebrated; when it is really good it can be quite magical... so we invited contributions on the subject of people's 'Best Winter Days in the Lakes'.

*Neville Hawkin*

The view from Sergeant Man is spectacular. The bright winter sun is at its highest, it glistens and glints on the streams and tarns below. North facing slopes are in deep shadow and every fold and undulation in the surrounding fells is in sharp relief. Patches of snow dot the mountainsides. Wispy white clouds float effortlessly across and a haze rising from the still frosted valleys gives the distant hills a magical appearance, the farthest ones merging seamlessly with the sky.

Last night had been cold and frosty with a thousand stars twinkling in the crystal clear firmament, surely an omen of the day to follow. Another log on the fire, another shovel of coal, another glass of wine. It had been a long, late night, so much catching-up to do, but an empty bottle and weary eyes signalled time for bed.

It was bright and sunny almost from daybreak, quite warm, too, if you stayed away from the shadows. Breakfasted and booted we were, as usual, among the last to leave the hut. There was no rush; even in the short days of January it seemed likely that mountain-starved legs would turn to quivering sticks of jelly long before the sun went down.

A couple of hundred yards along the road a path climbs steeply up the field side before zig-zagging right, then left to a stile leading to the open fell. A short respite then another steep climb and we were on the ridge that separates Langdale from Easedale, heading for Blea Crag, Eagle Crag and Sergeant Man. Time to linger, to savour and admire. The cloud has disappeared as quickly as it came, so too the haze; beautiful blue sky, as clear as a bell, wonderful.

It's an effort to drag ourselves away but onward, and just a little bit upward, we head towards High Raise. The usually soggy ground is still solid. Large icy patches linger to catch the unwary but are easily avoided. Another viewpoint, another 'name all the peaks you can see' game. We falter on some but think we've got most of them. A few more photos and then the long descent towards Stake Pass. Two small tarns on Martcrag Moor are a good point at which to aim, and once across Stake Beck it's just a short distance to the track that comes up from Langstrath. A small herd of deer graze on the moor below. Stalking is a growing Lakeland activity these days so perhaps it's not unusual to see them. We approach them with care but are



still some distance away when they scent us and run to higher ground.

For Jenny this is far enough and she turns left along the track to eventually descend towards the sheep fold at the head of Mickle-den. It's getting chilly now and although the sun is still high it won't



be too long before it sinks behind the huge bulk of Bow Fell. Martin and I continue. We head for the Angle Tarn footpath before breaking off left for the boulder field that climbs to Rossett Pike. Still in the sun long shadows are creeping over the valley and steadily making their way towards Pike O'Stickle. No time to linger here.

Although extensive repair work has been done to the path down Rossett Ghyll it's still an uncomfortable descent for tired legs, and it's a relief to reach the gentler slopes that lead to the footbridge. It's quite cold down here. The sun has long since departed and on the other side of the beck, below the slopes of Bowfell, frost still covers the grass. The final miles are always longer than you remember and it's with some relief that we close the last gate before the pub car park.

As we walk down Langdale car headlights signal the gathering gloom. It's been a long but exhilarating day, perhaps further than anticipated, but the weather has been perfect. It may be some time before we enjoy another like it, and as we climb the last few yards to the hut door legs and light fade in perfect unison.

*Jim Rigg*

#### SO IT GOES

**Y**ou can stay overnight at our place. Leave your car in the village and I'll come down in the VW to collect you. I've got snow chains fitted! Thus spoke the man in the know.

Our host indicated that the place to go was Honister, 'It's plastered and few people seem to have twigged that conditions at such a low altitude are well-nigh perfect.'

Bright and late next morning, we're out and about with a belly full of Cumberland sausage providing enough energy to keep us going for a week. Driving too fast down the track for my liking, we're soon in the village removing the chains from the car. The roads are clear, and having picked up Martin, we're soon speeding down Borrowdale. Chains are re-fitted (with some difficulty!) at the bottom of Honister Pass and without further ado we head for the white wonderland. So far, so good. 'What was that?' 'That', we soon found

out, was a now-useless snow chain that had broken with an explosive report. Colin was not amused. 'You buggers get pushing and we'll see if we can get up the steep bit.' Predictably, our efforts led to no improvement in the situation. Indeed, I was convinced that the car had slid further down the road! Picture the scene: the car's stuck, pointing up the hill and completely blocking the road. (Not that that mattered much – who else was daft enough to try driving up the pass in such conditions?) Now, it turns out that Martin is no slouch



in the driver's seat. In no time, he'd allowed the car to slide before executing a perfect handbrake turn that saw the car parked in a passing place and, pointing downhill! John and I were gob-smacked.

As we trudged up through deepening snow and howling spin-drift, it became more and more apparent that we'd 'got out of jail'.

Only a vehicle with caterpillar tracks would have made it to the top of the pass. We passed the 'ghost town' slate mine buildings and eventually geared up in one of the gantry tunnels. 'Colin, I've only got two ice screws, can you lend us a couple of yours?' 'Hell, I give you bed and breakfast and now you want my gear!' John spoke soothing words to restore calm and somehow negotiated the loan of two further screws, thereby doubling our protection possibilities.

'You abseil down there and get the ropes sorted.' I thought it expedient to do as I was told. I was soon at the bottom of Cable Gully staring at one impressive sweep of ice. 'We'll head up here and you can take the line on the left. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, this met with the approval of the team. As a tentative ice climber (I like to think of myself as more of a mixed man), I made bumbling progress up the line. Although modern ice screws are technologically far superior to those I was weaned on, I still don't trust 'em. Nevertheless, with a screw in place, further progress was made via an icicle thread and a rock placement to a small stance. With the comfort of a rock belay, I began to unwind as John made rapid progress up the pitch. A steep icy corner led onwards and upwards. A hefty spike runner allowed a measure of relaxation and I soon reached the next stance. Ice screw belays soon put paid to any calmness as concern crept into the reckoning. Speaking of reckoning, the final fifteen feet or so of the last pitch provided just that. A drive-in, hammered into turf of doubtful strength, provided the only protection as one negotiated a tottering pull-out in the line of a partially frozen spring. I felt a slight twinge of sympathy for John who found little purchase in what was left. That said, he did have a top rope and we were soon back in the gantry tunnel enjoying coffee and cakes.

All the talk was of the quality of the routes and good fortune. Here we were at an altitude of around 350m, enjoying conditions typical of those found high on the Ben. And we were the only ones there!

On our return to the car, Martin ('You're a better driver than me') took the wheel. Back at Colin's I remember saying 'I don't think I've ever been driven at 60 mph down Borrowdale.' Some day.

The sequel to this outing is partially recorded. Dave Birkett climbed 'Long Bendy Straight Thing'. This is documented in an arti-

cle to be found on the UKC web site. However, little is known of Colin and Martin's return visit. It certainly involved another epic car jour-



ney and a successful ascent of another icefall. Five days after our climb, the thaw set in and the icefalls disappeared. So it goes.

(An ascent of Left-Hand Gantry Curtain by Martin Nicholson, Colin Downer, John Spencer & Jim Rigg. Photographs courtesy John Spencer.)

*Lesley Houfe*

**E**aster 2013 and two days when I fell in love with the Lakes again. Normally I'd be heading to Scotland with friends for Easter but not this year, given a house move and a busy time at work. Based in Kendal, I had decided to stay at home and had no plans for the

weekend. That was until I drove from Penrith to the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick after work on Maundy Thursday.

It was a glorious scene. I was both shocked by the beauty and also shamed that I'd taken it for granted. I marvelled at the snowy hills, splendid and proud, bathed in the soft late afternoon sunlight. I knew immediately that I simply had to head for the fells over the weekend, to be in them and to be part of something special. So I checked the forecast on my phone, made a quick call to a friend and it was all sorted. Great! Now time to enjoy the play...but at the same time, a slight niggle about whether I should have gone to Scotland after all, given the conditions and weather forecast up there.

Good Friday came and we made an early start in the cold, grey light of dawn. A snow plod straight from the car and after a short time crampons on for the ascent of Swirral Edge. We had wanted to ascend via Catstycam NW Ridge but with a potential avalanche risk



Richard Tolley on Striding Edge

we played safe. It was still dull and overcast and there was an eerie yet benign silence. As we delicately trod the Edge, in the reassurance of solid friendship, I had a definite sense that this was to be a memorable mountain day.

Helvellyn summit was quiet and still, with a layer of cloud not far above. A monochromatic Lakes vista. Frozen and special moments shared with a couple of other early starters and kindred spirits. Warm feelings of satisfaction from a bite to eat, a hot drink and the anticipation of the Striding Edge descent. It all felt so good.

As we started down, the weather unexpectedly and very quickly began to clear. Like the curtains at the theatre the night before, the clouds parted to reveal a completely new scene - blue skies, bright sunshine and sparkling snowy hills. It was like magic and it took our frozen breath away. What luck!

Richard, who knows Striding Edge like the back of his hand, couldn't remember such voluminous snow conditions, which had simply obliterated the usual familiar features and chimneys. In their place, banks of snow and even a wonderful filigree snow arête. It was simply too special to be rushed. So we took our time, stopping to take photographs, sharing and savouring the moments as we went.

It was a most memorable traverse and any thoughts that I should have travelled north of the border had evaporated with the cloud. Never mind Scotland, this was the Lakes and it was as good as Alpine! I just had to have more.

So next day, up the Band to Bowfell and Esk Pike, this time with friend Suzanne. In contrast to the day before, it was not an early start, and we had Esk Pike completely to ourselves towards the end of the day. The surprising highlight was at Esk Hause. The clocks had already moved forward and there was still much daylight. As the sun set, lovely lighting made for wonderful snowy landscapes of the Dales, Morecambe Bay and beyond. The more immediate views of the Langdale Pikes and Great Gable were also some of the best I've ever seen in the Lakes - thanks again to the day's late sunshine and the year's late snow. A second splendid day.

It is practically impossible to convey in words or through pictures the experience of a fantastic hill day and the emotions it evokes. However, if you have experienced days like these, then you will know





The Gables from Esk Hause

and understand what I was part of. Two very special days. Two days when I fell in love with the Lakes again.

*Simon Jefferies*

There are winter scrambles and climbs that lend themselves to spicy and exhilarating solo adventure, whilst others cry out to be climbed by a large, jolly party. I'm an avid fan of Crinkle Gill, being qualified by virtue of at least one winter ascent in each mode, and I could talk about two wonderful days for the price of one.

Well, not really. The solo venture, of fairly recent vintage, began with an unedifying and unscheduled one-legged pirouette and head-over-heels plop on the icy driveway in front of Raw Head, watched by senior ghouls drinking tea in the doorway. Tsk!

Tsk, indeed. The day ended with a similar involuntary manoeuvre upon reaching the road at Stool End and removing crampons; this time the ghouls were thirty years my junior and, bless them, they ran to steady an old man to his feet. What happened in

between – easy snow in the Gill, and a brisk traverse over the Crinkles, returning by Cold Pike and Pike O'Blisco – was straightforward enough and of no consequence to the reader.

This preamble is offered with a nervous eye on membership joining documents and in the hope that no-one will choose to invoke rules and demand my expulsion on retrospective grounds of gross mountaineering incompetence. I plead: read on; it only gets better.

It's the 'big party' trip up Crinkle Gill (and much more besides), on a lovely, crisp day, which stands out in the front row of the memory stalls. There was ice at valley level and wherever water had once flowed, while on the tops lay deep powder snow and firm névé in equal measure, according to localised susceptibility to the recent strong winds.

Crinkle Gill wasn't difficult, but as the ravine became more enclosed there was a growing sense of oppressiveness, heightened by the cascades of ice oozing down the side walls. Here were virgin climbs that had popped up in the night and awaited pick and point. Not for us today, though there were countless sharp pitches at intervals to break the general rhythm. The exit from the Gill, first up an ice ramp and then a steep snow slope, proved testing enough for those in the party with only one axe! Above, we split into those who had the gear (aiming for the conspicuous wide gully to the ridge) and those who, like me, had armed themselves with a pair of axes – although there was something of a mismatch between my ancient walking axe and my more specialist weapon. We found a route of sorts, hard, up icefalls and a blunt ridge to the second Crinkle. The ridge lay bathed in glorious sunshine.

Lunch on top, and then another split as four took the *voie normale* to Bowfell's summit, while I visited Bowfell Links with The Boss. The third or fourth gully line from the right\* looked as though it would 'go' without a rope. It did, in an awkward icy chimney sort of way, until we reached a steepening at the top. The steps became a hacked-out ledge; someone had been here before and retreated. There followed a comical pantomime, first extracting rope from the bottom of my sack and then a second axe from The Boss's sack, all without losing hats, gloves, camera, food, flasks and dignity. We roped up and The Boss led away. It was hard with frozen fingers and

we agreed about the wisdom of a rope. We joined the others by Bowfell's summit cairn, had a second lunch, and proceeded to Esk Pike for a third.

The descent from Ore Gap and Rossett Gill should have brought the day to a respectable finish, had The Devil's Advocate not pointed out those attractive blue icefalls above Angle Tarn: "You've got to do them! You've got to!" Upon which both The Old Man and The Boss raced across like eager children at Christmas, beckoning me to do likewise. Well, we scraped about and did an icefall or three – sometimes on a rope, sometimes dangerously without – until benightment looked a dead cert. The race to get down by fading torchlight is another story. But what a day!

\* Recent guides and topos suggest that this line is probably Chimney Crack (II); we didn't have a clue, and the guidebook of the time mentioned nothing.

## A Lakeland New Year

It was New Year's Eve on the fell tops  
And High Street was blazing with light  
They were having a party at Fairfield  
and Helvellyn had got rather tight.

Dollywaggon was dancing with Skiddaw  
Blencathra was jiving with Blake  
The Langdales had not been invited  
But came all the same with Jack's Rake.

Bowfell struck up his fiddle  
Great Gable had brought his trombone  
Seatallan played his tin whistle  
And Dodd sang a song on his own.

The Red Pike twins' dresses were scarlet  
Grasmoor was decked out in green  
Black Combe wore his usual mourning  
And Silver Howe glinted and gleamed.

The Old Man of Coniston wilted  
And sat on Lord's Seat for a snooze  
Out of sight behind Pillar stood Steeple  
Where he an Scafell kept the booze.

The Bishop of Barf called for silence  
As the chimes of Catbells rang out clear  
Ill Bell joined in with a flourish  
As together they rang out the old year.

Saint Sunday delivered a blessing  
Grey Friar followed on with a prayer  
As the mountains and fell tops of Lakeland  
Gave thanks for another New Year!



Funkmeister, White Ghyll : *Rob Matheson collection*

## Langdale – the ninth edition

*Steve Scott*

Our 2006 Centenary Journal contains an article by the then Guidebook Editor, Stephen Reid, which describes the development of FRCC Guides from the apparently simple publications of the 1920s to the current photograph-adorned, highly technical manuals we produce today. Of enormous value to future editors and authors, Stephen's article, well-written and painstakingly researched, probes and analyses the evolution of our guides, explaining the style and exposing the character of past editors.

In more ways than one, I am taking up where Stephen left off and this account starts in 2003. FRCC Guides had attained and set the standard for hand-drawn diagrams and the highpoint was reached with the publication of the Club's first selected guide. Lake District Rock used Al Phizacklea's accurately drawn diagrams, adding colour and highlights to attain a level of clarity that could only be improved upon by using photographs. By 2006 the CC, Rockfax and Groundup were all producing guides that made extensive use of high-quality colour photo-diagrams and it was time for the



guidebook committee to modernise. Phil Rigby was drafted in to create the templates for the photo-diagrams, and most of what you see in the series 9 guides is his work. The other pressing issue was the plethora of new material in the form of new routes and the growing historical and first ascent details. Stephen summed up the plans for the future, which, at the time, included a Winter Guide (2006) in collaboration with Cicerone, Gable & Pillar (2007), Butter-



mere & St. Bees (2007) and Eastern Crag, Eden Valley and South Lakes Limestone (2008). Despite the inevitable delays, and expanded to four volumes, these had all been delivered to an eager and enthusiastic climbing public by 2012; indeed the winter guide proved so popular that it was out of print within 5 years and the second edition was published in 2012.

All these ninth-series guides included a completely re-styled layout introducing the distinctive banner headings, photo-diagrams and photo-plans augmented by text. The compact pocket size introduced in the second series of the 1930s was retained, together with the plastic encapsulated covers introduced in the late 1960s. Under Stephen's guidance, well-researched historical anecdotes and photographs enhanced the content. By 2012 Stephen had influenced and engineered the publication of seven definitive and one selected guide over a 13-year period. A huge effort, this output is a credit to his commitment, and is a credit to this Club. We should thank him...

The second edition of Lake District Winter Climbs (2012) would begin the tenth series before the ninth was complete, and heralded new editorship. Stephen rightly suggested that the amount of new material that needs to be incorporated requires that the book expands proportionately, or implementation of innovative new tricks. Hatched in only three months, the 2012 winter guide produced a book of 460 pages despite a potentially controversial increase in size. Little scope was available for any other space saving strategies, given the constraints of the time available and the need to match the Cicerone style.

In November 2012, with time to step back, the guidebook committee was presented with an ambitious publication program that would, by 2015, deliver up to date and contemporary editions of all the guides that were out of print – Langdale, Dow, Coppermines & Slate, Scafell & Wasdale, Eskdale and the Duddon.

For the Langdale guide, being an in-house publication, we had full control. Over the Christmas period we made a thorough review. We wanted to produce something that would be modern and innovative, present images effectively and capably, handle the huge volume of material and provide a template for the remaining

volumes in the series. As you can see the look and feel of the finished book is significantly altered from the five guides classified as series 9. It does have similarities with the first guide in series 10 – it's big! As our guides expand and the series completion spreads over decades, it is simply unrealistic to retain common attributes. Production techniques, expectations from users and the market all move on ... The classification into 'series' with core attributes will probably be abandoned. It is the ninth edition, but is it the 9th or the 10th series ... maybe series 9 was just 'unfinished'? I am happy to let you decide.

Immediately apparent, it is bigger; a small, experienced team thought about this at great length, considered and weighed many existing guides, and the carefully crafted, well-tested, scientific criterion we adopted was that it should fit into Al's jacket pocket. What this does mean is more text on each page and larger space to showcase photo-diagrams and the inspiring action shots now expected. A modern sans serif font, a title style last used in the 1960s, replaces the script-title font synonymous with FRCC Guides for the last 40 years. The change to a matt finish limp-bound card cover presents a modern, attractive high-quality package, and with the flaps has created extra space for information, providing superb convenience for the user. Al's wonderful valley panoramas, discontinued after Eastern Crag (2011), have been replaced with high-quality photo plans and professional mapping from Harvey. The advent of the interactive routes database has allowed us to omit many routes, and even whole crags, that were felt to be of little merit or had become overgrown through lack of traffic. There is no first ascents list; instead we have followed the style of Lake District Rock and placed these details in the route banner heading. The introductory material has felt the editorial pen and been rationalised and the user reaches the meat of the book, route information, more quickly. Ancillary information has been moved to the back and re-positioned for ease of access. The font palette, Myriad Pro, has been chosen not only for its compact strength and clarity, but also to provide equally clear presentation on a computer screen, to support the delivery of app content for mobile devices – electronic guides; and we are currently working, using the CC developed app, to deliver these. Despite all

these changes it still runs to 496 pages – printed on durable 95gsm paper it is the biggest, but not the fattest, FRCC definitive guidebook yet produced, a massive effort from the guidebook committee. The responsibility the editor's post carries is huge; the output reflects the Club and what it aspires to be. As your new editor I trust that you feel your appointment is vindicated, and you agree that this guide is a credit to our Club.

Our next guidebook - Scafell & Wasdale - is currently being finalised by the authors Al Phizacklea and Ron Kenyon. Even as we produce them, our publications are evolving and will be driven by the ideas and aspirations of the current editor together with the eponymous guidebook committee. The snags that we know of will be ironed out. We are altering the format by reducing the page height while retaining the width, and working with Don Sargeant, we have produced a revised and larger photo-diagram template to optimise use of this larger space. The result will be less of a compromise, producing a slightly more compact, but no less a guide, our aim being to deliver a fitting tribute to commemorate the centenary of the first ascent of 'that most wonderful climb', CB, in April 2014.

We do need to be careful about what we write, the opinions we express and be mindful of how the way we present that information can change history. In his book *The Ordinary Route* (1997), Harold Drasdo has suggested that the move from text to photo-topo style guides is likely to be a retrograde one, as much of what we express in words will be lost, together with the value this adds to our climbing, our history and the legacy we leave. Ken Wilson (*Mountain 57*) roundly criticised this Club for failing to combine titles to provide better value, allowing pirates to enter and cream the best and damn the rest, ignoring ethics and history, killing off definitive guides to less popular areas or crags. This threat is far more real today than it was in 1977. If we are complacent, choosing to ignore the threats and failing to respond appropriately, the impact on our on-going ability to record and retain a definitive account of climbing in Lakeland could be catastrophic. Distasteful as it may be to such a traditional Club, the FRCC must take account of and respond to competing market tensions – the editorial task is to skilfully manage the retention of the definitive record while delivering a sought after,

competitive, desirable product. This may mean combining or losing titles and further culling of unpopular routes and unfrequented crags, it may mean taking risks, being progressive and doing things differently. Some of this output may be electronic; much will continue to be in print. As your Guidebooks Editor my aim is to provide the climbing public, our customers, with accurate, contemporary, clear, value-for-money guides. Guides that match any, guides that inspire, guides they will want to buy. This will enable the Club to compete in this shrinking marketplace, generating revenue that facilitates the publication of the full and complete record of rock-climbing in the English Lake District, continuing a tradition started in 1922. With these ambitions we can optimistically look forward to the next centenary – our Guidebook Centenary – knowing that our guides will continue to rank amongst the best.

## In Memoriam - The Android Tree (? - 2013)

*Nick Wharton*

It is with great sadness that the South Lakes climbing world has come to learn of the terrible loss of a great and loyal friend. A true giant in the local scene, the Android Tree has provided long service, support and assistance to several generations of climbers with barely a creak or a groan by way of complaint. Although in its latter years the strain was beginning to show on this once proud fixture



Bob Smith Making use of the Android Tree in happier times

at Chapel Head, it continued to aid progress up the main buttress to anyone who was in need. As is sadly so often the case, the Android Tree had appeared to deteriorate rapidly since the loss of its close friend and neighbour the Super Dupont Holly. In fact since that time this once proud and solid specimen had only really been able to provide its valuable service with the aid of roped support, keeping it tied in to the crag. Despite this there was never any suggestion of complaint and not a disability benefit in sight.

Locals have been flocking to the site to pay their last respects and amid many tearful scenes heroic tales have been

recounted and shared. It is at moments like this when our close-knit community must come together to provide the necessary comfort and support for one another. 'That tree meant the world to me, I cannot imagine doing those routes without it' said one Barrow based climbing legend.

First brought into service in 1979 with the ascent of *Android* by Ed Cleasby, the tree went on to provide access to *Perverse Pepere (7a)*, *La Mangoustine Scatouflange (7a+)* and *Song for Europe (7b+)*. The question now on everybody's lips is 'what now?' In a moment of eerie premonition, local prophet Dave Birkett foretold of the sad events when he produced his 1992 route *For When the Tree Goes (7b+)*. Sadly this is of inferior quality to the routes above and is often damp. It is also clearly a harder proposition to those it would provide access to above. It has been suggested that a fitting tribute to the tree would be some kind of substantial wooden pole, fixed in place (perhaps with a natural wobble at the bottom and alarming flex at the top to recreate the magic that we all remember so fondly).

The tree is survived by two young saplings and a small community of insects.



*Al Phizacklea*

It is now 30 years since I climbed the first ascent of a route called Wargames at Chapel Head. It was climbed at a time when the Cold War was still hot, and Maggie had just crushed the miners, and I had just joined the Fell and Rock.

It has since become a bit of a classic, a fact of which I am rather proud, because it is probably the only new route I have climbed that has actually achieved such status. Our very own Eden Valley and South Lakes Limestone guide states that it is 'probably the best route on the crag', and the Northern Limestone Rockfax guide states that 'This fantastic route ranks as one of the best of its grade in the country', which is high praise indeed. However, I recall that someone once wrote that the route was 'The result of a 15-month protracted siege' – so what went on? Well, I thought it was time to tell.

### MY FIRST ENCOUNTER AT CHAPEL

I first visited Chapel Head with Iain Greenwood back in late 1978 after hearing tales in the pub of this new crag secreted away in a side valley in the woods, yet it was only fifteen miles from our homes. For our first visit, we just felt our way around, and at that time there were no route descriptions except for a brief article in a recent *Crags* magazine. We knew that Fawcett and Livesey had made their mark on the crag, and local hero Ed Cleasby had climbed Cyborg and Atomic Bong, and I seem to recall that we left after that first visit without even removing our ropes from the sacks. The only routes climbed at that time were the obvious lines of weaknesses, and we were awed at the vertical and overhanging walls that remained untouched, especially the soaring undercut wall of the Great Buttress. It both inspired and dejected us in equal measures; so much rock, yet so little ability and capability in our frail, skinny frames.

The next time I visited the crag was with Tom Proctor, the quietly spoken star of the Peak District, in the hope that he could power his

way up the crag, and drag me along behind. He did have an abseil inspection and a brief foray into what would become The Route of all Evil, but he retreated from a nut, stating that he wasn't strong enough for the line. That gave the crag a new level of difficulty in my eyes; if it defeated Tom, I would have no chance! It's not that Tom was weak you understand; I later learned from Geoff Birtles that you had to bully and harangue him to generate motivation and action, as Tom was essentially a shy and self-deprecating character who never believed his own natural abilities. However Tom was far-sighted, and as we walked along the foot of The Great Buttress he pointed to a shallow hanging groove and declared in his quiet voice that was not much more than a whisper 'Now there's a good route, you'd get up there all right'. I couldn't believe anyone could ever climb that rock, it looked so steep and holdless, but it was the line that was to become Wargames.

The following spring I returned with Iain (there were no access restrictions in those days) and started ticking off the routes within our capabilities, and on our second visit we even climbed a new route called Running Blind, an E3 at the extreme left end of the crag, in the area later banned from climbing. We became small part supporters at the end of the first wave of development at the crag, witnessing the first ascents of Android and Interstellar Overdrive, and adding Strongbow on my 20th birthday. Things settled down after that, and I didn't return to the crag for some years, but when I did, with George Smith, he climbed the first ascent of The Route of All Evil whilst I took photographs with my new Contax camera. I scuttled down to the top of the crag to congratulate him as he topped out, and disturbed a plum sized stone which fell the full height of the crag and struck his belayer, Rob Knight, square on the head. I rushed down the slippery descent path to assist; he was bleeding and dazed, not to say as mad as hell, and was in no fit state to climb, so I tied onto the end of the rope to second George – well hey, you can't let the chance of a first ascent go begging, can you? Then in July 1984 we heard a rumour from the counter staff at Rock and Run, the sort of news that spreads fear into the heart of any local climber, and it left me nervous and agitated. It was said that Gary Gibson had climbed a new route on Chapel Head. If it had been any-

one else, it would have been dismissed as trivial; but Gibson ... He already had a reputation of being a prolific new routing machine, he was notorious for ruthlessly clearing up all unclimbed routes on a crag by fair means or foul, and Chapel Head still had an awful lot of unclimbed routes – including one pointed out to me by Tom Proctor – time to get active!

### A PROTRACTED SIEGE?

My diary tells of the first visit following this Gibson news – I went there alone after work the following Wednesday, the 1st August; it says 'Abbed down Great Buttress, placed peg'. It was my way of marking my intention; if Gibson had subsequently climbed the route I could have justifiably claimed it was my project! This marker was essentially the equivalent of a dog peeing against a lamp post. It was sooo ludicrously steep, especially the first thirty feet; I had never experienced overhanging rock of this nature before, and I knew I was way out of my depth. But there must have been something, a little spark that inspired me to return. The following Saturday the diary states 'Cleaned up route, met Bernard Newman & Dave Wilcock, went to Bowderstone with Bill Birkett and met Bill Peascod'. (That was the only time I ever met Peascod, in all it was a memorable day). I recall Bernard's doubtful comment that there was little possibility of any route going up there, and didn't I have better use of my time? But there was a series of tufas that formed pinches and undercuts and a pocket next to the peg, and it looked as though they might be linked; however it seemed a long way to reach the next runner in a flake out right.

This was a time of increasing standards; I was gradually improving my strength and confidence, and the following day I led my first E5, which was High Performance at Threshthwaite, highlighted in capitals and double underlined in my diary. The following Wednesday evening I returned and attempted to climb the route for the first time, and managed to reach a large tufa that formed a good sidepull. The moves were dynamic and energetic, action-packed; swinging steeply upwards utilising widely spaced sidepulls and pockets, and I was relieved that I could reach the big sidepull tufa. There was no



Chris Gore next to the first thread

protection here for a tricky traverse right to reach the good flake crack in a niche, so I reversed gingerly to the peg and called it a day.

The lack of a decent runner at my high point (high in this sense was only 25 feet off the floor) caused some heart searching. I had been castigated recently in *Climber* magazine for placing a bolt on Humphrey Head, and so that possibility was ruled out. I decided on the next best thing, so next Sunday I returned with a star drill, and drilled holes through two tufa formations, the sidepull and one twenty foot higher. The hole was perfect for a bit of 9 millimetre rope, so I cut a couple of metres off an old red rope and created threads, but I was unsure of the capacity of stalactite based material for holding loads. This was soon tested, because I tried the tricky traverse twice, falling off both times as I tried to swap hands across a tiny finger tip undercut. Full of enthusiasm, I returned the following day and after a few attempts managed to reach the flake, but it took so much energy I was too pumped to get any gear in and swung wildly off the tufa thread.

Returning again the following weekend, I tried the route for the fourth time (I was also on my fourth belayer) and as my diary recalls 'Tried route – got to top of the flake and dropped nuts + pumped out DAMMIT!!' I had failed again because of fumbling a grab of nuts, there was still 60 foot of overhanging rock above and it felt that the route wasn't for me, so I left it for a while. I can't recall why, maybe I was getting fed up with the repeated failures, but just after this time, the Ambleside wall was under construction, and I spent many a happy weekend assisting with that project.

I returned on a bitterly cold day just after the New Year with Chris Gore and Martin Atkinson, and surprised myself by getting to the second thread, but I didn't have a crucial RP 2 to protect a long runout up the next wall, so I was lowered again to failure. Both Chris and Martin top roped up to the thread, and Martin solved the problem of the tricky finger tip change on the undercut by crossing through with his left hand to reach the flake, thus removing a very hard move. I implored him to continue to the top, but he said it was my line and I should train more and go for it in better conditions. But this was the best winter for years, and I spent the best part of the next two months up Scafell, Scrubby and Gable, and spring

arrived along with the bird ban at Chapel, and so the stubborn project was forgotten for some time.

That spring was a rush of climbing; I had cracked the E5 grade and was determined to tick off as many as I could, with flashing Footless Crow being a big milestone. It was the 5th August when I returned to Chapel Head, over a year since I first looked at the line. By now the opening moves were ingrained into my memory (they still are, I can still talk my way up the start), and by using the new move on the lower wall I climbed the lower section, including the long run-out above the second thread to a small horizontal slot. This held a fiddly but bomber runner, but there was another tricky move which I couldn't fathom, so I slumped on the nut. Another failure! This was becoming dispiriting, but after a rest, I completed the route to the top, but used a further two rests on the upper section. At least I knew there was nothing unclimbable but boy, was it strenuous; I could hardly improve my stamina, what I needed was a big kick of motivation.

That came with a phone call on the 24th October – Pat McVey had been to Chapel Head and was keen to give my project a try – he asked whether I would like to give it another go before he had an attempt – too damn right I would! So Pat, Paul Cornforth and I gathered under the crag, and I casually let Corney have a go, not realising he had morphed from a beer-swiller into a really strong climber following months on the Ambleside wall. I nearly regretted this decision, as Corndog managed to overcome the lower section first go and climbed as far as the good nut high on the wall. He struggled to get in a hexcentric nut, and pumped out, just as I had done, and gingerly lowered back to the ground. Now the following bit of information is my confession, the reason for this article - I did not pull down Corney's ropes for my attempt – I top roped up to his high point. My reasoning was that I had led it myself as far as that, a sad and lame excuse in hindsight, but the new route fever had got the better of my judgement, so hey, that's what happened.

When I got to Corney's Hex, I could see why he was reluctant to either push on or retreat. It was a loose fit, so I swapped it for a Rock 8 concave side up, which fitted a treat. (It's amazing how some things were so important at the time they remain ingrained in the



memory forever). I was still feeling fresh and, knowing the moves ahead, I led straight to the top without further problems. Neither Corney nor Pat wanted to second the route, as they both wanted to lead it. However, the second ascent came within a week when Dougie Hall flashed it on-sight, bitter testament to where I stood on The Ladder of Climbing Abilities, i.e. not very high, it seemed. So the first ascent was a bit protracted, but it was no means a siege, and I must admit that not pulling down the rope is one of my biggest regrets as it tainted the first ascent.

#### ON TO TODAY

The route was retro-bolted about 10 years later, an act that I greeted with ambivalence; it seemed inevitable at Chapel Head. It changed the grade from E5, 6b to the new rave European grade of 7a+, and this made Wargames immensely popular. I used to visit Chapel Head quite frequently after that; it was close to home and often provided good, strenuous fun when the higher crags were out of condition. We used to have some marathon darts and pool sessions afterwards at the Darby Arms, they were great days. Some 20 years after the first ascent, I arrived at the crag to be met by some of the old crowd, some of whom I hadn't seen for five or six years. Having a young family meant I wasn't as fit as I once was, and I was carrying a few extra pounds of internal lard about me. There was some chuckling when I announced I was going to warm up on Wargames, it was the first time I had been back on it since the first ascent. The barracking fell silent as I swiftly raced up the first part, hitting each hold perfectly, displaying precise footwork; and without the fuff of having to place gear I romped to the top in very quick time. It just seemed to flow together; each move clearly remembered like the lyrics of a favourite song, movement and dance on a vertical ballroom, it was like meeting an old friend, and the joy of that ascent is what I want to take to my grave.

I lowered off to some well meant praise, 'Hell, you made short work of that! The old magic is still there, Al.' Maybe it was, but I didn't tell them that I had to climb it fast because the old stamina certainly wasn't.



Wasdale : *Martin Packford*



A centenary ascent: Nick Wharton leading across the Flake, Al Phizacklea belaying on the Oval, bringing up John Holden : *Ron Kenyon*

## CB Centenary and Launch of Scafell and Wasdale rock climbing guide.

*Ron Kenyon*

On 20th April 1914 'The Flake' on the Central Buttress of Scafell was climbed by Siegfried Herford, George Sansom and Cecil (commonly known as Charles) Holland to provide the link for a complete ascent of the buttress – this was completed on 22nd April. The ascent of Central Buttress, more often known as CB, was a major achievement and one of a succession of such events in the history of British rock climbing. Its centenary was celebrated by a special Easter weekend meet of the Club at Brackenclose. This weekend also saw the launch of the new rock climbing guide to Scafell and Wasdale produced by the Club.

There was snow around the base of the crag and especially in Lord's Rake, which was similar to conditions 100 years earlier, as shown in a photograph of Herford, sitting atop The Flake, where a sizeable patch of snow can be seen at the base of the crag. The crag faces north and with the low temperature, warm clothing and a gritty determination no doubt was and still is necessary. Originally there was a jammed block in the Flake which was used to aid the original ascent, with Sansom tying himself to the block and Herford using the block and Sansom in his ascent – a very precarious activity. The block dropped out twenty years ago, sadly with a fatal consequence. Ascents can now either be made of The Flake, without the block, which is somewhat harder (E3), or by the face to the left, which is now the more normal route (E1).

The events of the weekend were filmed by Simon Gee, Adam Hocking, Henry Iddon and team. In addition to modern equipment they made use of the camera used by the Abraham Brothers to record climbs over 100 years ago. This camera is now in the Mountain Heritage Trust collection and will be on display at the Keswick Museum. Part of the filming was a re-enactment of the accident on 31st December 1893, when Arthur Milnes Marshall was taking photographs in the Lord's Rake area, fell off the ledge and was killed. Mike Cocker provided details of the accident, and the team





The film team with the Abrahams' camera

managed to film from the actual location where the accident happened.

The focus of the weekend was Sunday 20th April when climbers were to make ascents of CB. Nick Wharton led off with Steve Scott and made a steady lead up the face to the left of The Flake. Al Phizacklea with his 'mucker' John Holden came next, then John Lynch, Tommy Moore, Joe Holden and Dave Woods. It was cold with some damp patches and there was some rain for a short period. The ascent was filmed and also captured by the Abrahams' camera as well as being watched by people around Hollow Stones, including Peter Moffatt (age 89) and Ron Miller (age 86). Later the Abrahams' camera was used to take and recreate a photograph of a group standing on the bridge behind the Wasdale Head Inn. The original

taken in 1893 was not an Abraham photograph. The setting up of the camera created much interest from those assembled for the photograph.

Later in the afternoon there was a gathering of everyone at Brackenclose, close to the path up to Scafell. The climbers assembled there ranged from Peter Moffatt and John Wilkinson, who climbed CB in the 1940's, through to the latest generation of climbers including Craig Matheson, who with his father Rob, had been checking out a new route on East Buttress during the day. Others included Johnny Adams, who was on the first ascent of *Lord of the Rings* (E2), a traverse of East Buttress, and Paul Ross, who had been active on the crag since the 1960s. Pete Botterill was looking through the hut book which recorded his ascent, with Jeff Lamb, of *Zeus* (E3) in 1974 – the first of a number of first ascents on Scafell with which he was involved with. Al Phizacklea and John Holden returned, after their ascent of The Flake, somewhat warm after having had a good look at a potential new route on the Shamrock area. Adam Hocking mentioned plans for 2014 with potential new routes and repeats of Dave Birkett routes - Dave Birkett was not able to be there. Past guidebook writers – Ron Miller, Bill Young and Mike Burbage – reminisced about routes and Scafell. On the Friday Ron Kenyon and Mike Cocker had climbed the route of Centenary Slab (E1) near Pikes Crag opposite CB, named to celebrate the centenary of the FRCC, and





then climbed a new route nearby, at a more lowly grade - CB Centenary (Severe).

At 6.00pm the throng gathered outside the hut for various speeches. Ron Kenyon made the introduction, then John Barrett spoke about the ascent of CB and the first ascensionists. Siegfried Herford was one of top of climbers of the time but sadly he was killed, along with many others in the Great War. George Sansom served at the front but went on to live until he was ninety-one, with a full life that included being a pioneer in the use of colour and stereo photography, as well as inventing a bird scarer. Craig Matheson then read, from the original Wasdale Climbing Book kept at the Hotel, the record of the ascent of CB written 100 years ago, which helped to carry all present back to that time. Kit and Ted Brauhnoltz, who are nephews of Siegfried Herford, then spoke to reinforce that link to their uncle and his climbing pals. Al Phizacklea, who wrote



Kit and Ted Brauhnoltz cutting the centenary cake

the new and previous two guides, and is also a prolific developer of new routes on Scafell, then enlightened all in his usual way.

CB was huge step forward in climbing 100 years ago but new routes are still being developed on Scafell, with many at a level undreamt of then. CB is still a challenge for climbers and the new

guidebook will help to guide climbers up it and other routes in the area.

## Central Buttress - Circa 1964

*Jo Light*

It must have been the Whitsuntide holiday weekend. The weather was warm and sunny. The area of gorse bushes between the end of the lake and what is now the official camp site was bristling with mountain and Vango tents, mini vans, Ford vans, and the occasional Norton motor bike; and climbers sorting out ropes and slings, and calling out to each other. The big crags were dry, bright in the sunshine, enticingly near; and the big lines hinted of good conditions.

The groups converged for discussion. Individuals agreed, disagreed, gesticulated in various directions, and split into climbing teams destined for particular routes, and then set off up the well worn path that used to lead up the crest of Brown Tongue, and on up into Hollow Stones. A tall figure approached and asked me if I would like to do Central Buttress.

Sean Williams was one of the young climbers associated with the Rock and Ice, was well over 6 feet tall, always climbed in mountain boots (well, one had to practise for the big rock routes in the Alps), and his usual rock climbing colleague had reported a complete disinclination to do C.B at the morning sort out of routes and teams. It did not take me long to decide, and as my rucksack was packed, I picked up Sean's rope and followed him up into Hollow Stones.

By this time the Scafell crags were busy, and the ones intending to climb on the overhanging East Buttress were silhouetted on the deep gap of Mickledore, but Central Buttress was free.

We climbed up to the Oval and made ourselves comfortable on the wide ledge in the warmth of the sun, and discussed the techniques to be used for ascending the flake. Sean had no intention of standing on the shoulders of his second (this one is only 5' 4" tall) but had worked out that if he fixed a sling around the chockstone he would need to rest in tension on the sling before laybacking up the

flake. Even in summer I always wore a blue ventile anorak. One has to remember that the live rope was played out to the leader by the belayed second from round the waist, twisted over the arm and held in the hands, so leather gloves were also usually worn.

The belay was checked, the rope sorted out so that it would run smoothly, a good stance taken by me, and Sean set off with the appropriate sling destined for the chockstone in pole position round his neck.

I watched his movements up to the overhanging base of the flake, how he fixed the sling, and how he carefully clipped in. He called down for tension, his full weight coming onto the rope, and moved into a more comfortable position. He rested for a short time, and then called down to say that he was ready to climb again. I paid out the rope once more as he smoothly launched into the layback, his long arms and legs making short work of these strenuous moves. The adjacent wall was even then quite smooth. When he had organised the belay on the top edge of the flake he called out with a very cheerful shout that he was ready for me to climb.

I had had time to work out a sequence of moves. The crux for me would be to take off the sling without wasting energy, and then to move into the layback position and keep moving!

Sean had indeed made a good job of placing the sling and I soon had it round my neck. Some strenuous gymnastic moves were needed to get me round the base of the flake, and then I moved into the sunshine, enjoying the exposure, and on up the vertical edge of it, until I pulled myself onto the top of the flake, at the far end of which sat a broadly grinning Sean.

The rest of the climb was a total delight; a series of steep, delicate traverses – Sean wearing his mountain boots, I, of course, wearing E.B.s (these had superseded P.A.s by 1964).

We continued up to the summit of Scafell and descended Broad Stand where we met some of the other teams. The inevitable questions followed of where had we been, what had we done, how hard had been the climbing, and how had we managed it, accompanied by much laughter, and genuine interest and respect for the various climbs accomplished and immensely enjoyed by such an assortment of exuberant young climbers.



Siegfried Herford on CB, 1914



Adam Hocking,  
dressed for the Cen-  
tennial Celebrations

Doug Elliott

It is my firm belief that small geographically constrained clubs were the bedrock of the climbing and mountaineering scene in the 1950s and 1960s, and a classic example of such was the Pillar Mountaineering Club (PMC). These clubs were at the core of active participation from whence erupted advancements in filling-in the blank spaces on crags, with increasing degrees of difficulty. Climbing was not the mass pursuit it is today, though the PMC emerged in a period when increased leisure time was becoming available for everyone - even more time was at the disposal of the unemployed - and it coincided with a dramatic surge in rock-climbing standards. Hitch-hiking was the most common form of journeying, but a variety of motorbikes, vans and pre-World War II cars were used to get to climbing centres, as individuals became aware of others' interests and were awakened to collaborative possibilities.

The PMC was based on a lively crowd of climbers from West Cumberland regularly travelling at weekends to Keswick and using the locality as a social hub for meeting in coffee bar or more often pub; talent spotting at Friday and Saturday night dances in Braithwaite, Threlkeld or Rosthwaite; relying on barns, caves or bothies for accommodation - and of course rock climbing at the then highest grades. Factions coalesced into a tight-knit grouping to share and exploit joint opportunities, and the overriding qualification for eligibility to participate was to exhibit keenness. The group gelled and became a magnet for local climbers - we were ready to form a club.

The inaugural meeting of the PMC was held within sight of Pillar in August 1962 in the living room of my family home in Frizington, whilst my parents were on holiday. Immediately the Club made its mark via a cigarette burn on a polished table, and though 'Yellow Pages' intimate a French polisher can easily rectify such damage, the mark remained long after I left home. Invitations were scattered amongst the area's aristocracy of established climbers and resulted in Joe Williams of Whitehaven becoming President, with Vice Presi-

dents 'A.G.' Thorburn of Workington and 'Ancient' Syd Wilson of Maryport.

Joe was a wonderfully neat climber, excelling in descents as well as climbing up, and he was a fount of knowledge on pre-war and immediate post-war climbing with the likes of Jim Birkett. Later he was co-author of a delightful book: 'Climber and Fellwalker in Lakeland'. A.G.'s claim to fame was his first ascent of *Green Gash* described variously in guidebooks as a 'rose amongst thorns' and a 'tremendous adventure'. This 'Very Severe' is located on Bowness Knott, Ennerdale which was an evening gathering place for PMC members, where on one occasion a young Chris Bonington was grateful for a PMC rope on *Green Gash*. 'Ancient' Syd was a survivor from the 1920s climbing generation and he owned a market garden and a greengrocer's business. On a regular basis he would come out late on Saturdays, stay at a hut and distribute left-over fruit, ensuring his favoured 'eager for a bed' guests were also regular.

At the time three Syds graced our domain, as in addition to 'Ancient' Syd there was 'Old' Syd, sometimes referred to as 'CB Syd' on account of his numerous ascents of Central Buttress, Scafell; and 'Young' Syd who was starting his career as a courageous and capable crag-rat before blossoming into one of the Fell & Rock Climbing Club's most respected Presidents with a record of hard climbing and big mountaineering all around the world. PMC Chairman was Jim Young and his brother Bill was Secretary, Treasurer was Ian Singleton, Committee Members were William (Barney) Barnes and me, and I was also Journal Editor. Membership probably never exceeded twenty, even if 'hangers-on' are counted, but all shared a collective purpose and were young, energetic and earnest. The PMC had little in common with more affluent 'senior' clubs, and no thought was given to the present *de rigueur* affiliation to the British Mountaineering Council, insurance cover or anything else remotely formal.

It might be expected that the PMC Journal would be a huge source of detailed information - but only three editions were ever produced, and each time as Editor I berated members as non-literary and apathetic, and appealed for contributions. Despite poor responses Journal articles confirm isolated climbing activities in the



Western Alps, Dolomites, Himalaya, America and Greenland in addition to Wales and Scotland – and though the Club was flourishing our emphasis centred on rock-climbing in the Lake District – we were unashamed crag-rats. Good Lakeland snow and ice conditions were spasmodic and in winter attention shifted north to Scotland, plus the ice climbing revolution was yet to make an impact. However, with a pair of futuristic home-made picks little bigger than a peg-hammer, one particularly fine first ascent was Barney's lead in 1966 of 'Force Crag Waterfall', Coledale – after watching through binoculars for several winter seasons waiting for a big freeze.

Members operated every weekend and on weekday evenings when daylight allowed, but they rarely managed to congregate in any single sector. In spite of the Club's 'official' meets list being reduced to only twice monthly gatherings, it seemed the most difficult organisational aspect was getting everyone to climb in the same valley, but to assist it was practice for echoing battle cries of 'Odin!' to bounce between those approaching and those already on a crag. Members also sported black sweaters with a yellow stripe up the back as a response to the jazzy sweaters paraded with panache by posturing and posing Alpine guides. A logo of ice-axe, karabiner and snow covered mountains was adopted; and, convinced the PMC would last forever, at great expense an enamelled metal badge was produced.

True to its name, and like many British post-war climbing and mountaineering clubs, the PMC laid claim to a particular area. Unsurprisingly this was Pillar in Ennerdale. The PMC was sufficiently respectable to obtain a Forestry Commission permit allowing access beyond the then locked gate at Gillerthwaite, to render Pillar an evening out, and over the 1960s the list of first ascents on Pillar Rock is dominated by PMC members. Pillar has long been overlooked in favour of easier to get to alternatives throughout the Lake District including Langdale, Borrowdale, Scafell, Gable, Dow and the Eastern fells, but neglect was remedied in 1963. PMC members Geoff Cram and Bill Young produced 'Scylla', a 'Hard VS' up the middle of the North face of Low Man. This was an audacious undertaking exemplifying Pillar's 'mountaineering flavour', and immediately it was to act as a catalyst for other PMC stalwarts. Forty or so new

routes were recorded in the gap between the 1952 and 1968 FRCC guidebook editions; nothing much happened at first, but then all but five were first ascents by PMC members at grades up to what was then 'Extremely Severe' to match a classification recently smuggled in from North Wales.



Club members could be relied upon to quickly repeat any new routes by others, but notable first ascents were made by PMC members themselves – on crags beyond Pillar including Gable, Scafell, Castle Rock and Heron Crag. Nevertheless, with Keswick as a honeypot, Borrowdale was a close second to Pillar with PMC activists producing first ascents on all major crags

taking in Shepherds, Black Crag, Bowderstone Crag, Goat Crag, Castle Crag, Raven Crag and Falcon plus outlying areas. Highlight first ascents include *The Mortician*, *The Ghost*, *The Tomb* and *Iago*, with early repeats of signature new routes like *Praying Mantis*, *The Medlar* or *Totalitarian*. For a short period attention was directed to the sandstone of St. Bees Head where in climbing parlance the climbs were 'necky', particularly with rudimentary gear. Perhaps rightly the big bold routes fell out of favour and St. Bees later developed into a sport climbing venue at weathered lower levels.

In Borrowdale the ultimate triumph must be 'The Niche', now graded 'E2'. The first ascent of this magnificent route was by Raymond (Mac) McHaffie at the start of his reign over the valley. Mac has been referred to as the jaws of Borrowdale and he was a natural raconteur as well as a brilliant performer, and amongst numerous claims he reckoned the PMC was the only club he ever deigned to join. I was one of a group of PMC members at Falcon Crag on the day of *The Niche* success and we barracked unmercifully when, after his

partner led the initial pitch, we accused Mac of cutting steps as he cleared away loose rock with a peg-hammer before exiting the actual niche. Light hearted banter with humorous and derogatory remarks was a significant part of climbing, but respect was never absent and lampooning was balanced by self-deprecation.

Perhaps rivalry amongst potential pioneers was increasing but the PMC was lucky to exist when lots of unclimbed rock at reasonable standards was still available. The subject of 'climbing ethics' was still in its infancy, yet as breeches provided a peg-hammer loop it was only natural to employ pitons in situations which today we now know would be frowned upon. In the Lake District the use of pitons was a last resort, but in winter PMC members often travelled to Yorkshire for unrepentant aid-climbing on overhanging limestone. Locally there was no doubt or debate about leaving virgin rock to someone better, though later there was a rush to free aided routes. An illustration is outsider Pete Livesey's awesome advance to the first 'E5' in the Lake District; *Footless Crow* on Goat Crag more or less following the locals' artificial line of 'Great Buttress' from a decade earlier.

The seeds may have been sown for the 1960s generation but acceptance was some way off for abseil inspections, wire brushing, pre-placed runners and the like, and the general rule for new routes was for these to be led free and on-sight with any 'gardening' or cleaning done on the way. This held back advancement, in spite of some arbitrary use of pitons. It must be appreciated how climbing was more dangerous in PMC days, when climbers casually tied the rope around the waist with a bowline and harnesses were still in the future. Karabiners were heavy and the only runners were slings and drilled out nuts. Over the years sticky rubber footwear has got stickier, ropes have improved, karabiners lightened, tapes replaced rope slings, and a bewildering assortment of alloy chocks and camming devices became available; all of which has transformed climbers' perspectives on risk. High levels of skill of PMC climbers are endorsed by the fact there were very few leader accidents, and an attitude prevailed whereby the leader must not fall.

It is worth noting attitudes to equality were also time warped, but in the spirit of the age the PMC was an all-male club. It was never

deliberately established as such, but at the time most females within the climbing crowd were girlfriends and there was a mindset that restricted them to occasional second on the rope. Even so there was always a strong social side to the PMC and 'mixed' annual dinners were riotous affairs, with the Club rarely welcomed to the venue a second time. Annual meets in North Wales or Scotland also seemed to encourage wild behaviour, and though superficially antisocial there was never any serious harm done. Irreverent conduct spilled out from the mountains as climbers' talents were called into play on demonstrations. I recall watching the television news one evening when pictures of a PMC member flashed on the screen; he was on the roof of South Africa House in The Strand protesting against Apartheid. On another occasion during a pea-souper smog the Albert Memorial was climbed at night to leave a banner and political slogan for discovery next morning.

Clambering around various structures preceded the introduction of artificial climbing walls and an evening's entertainment could be had on the industrial remains at Whitehaven harbour, the sea-wall at Maryport or any other accessible stonework. Good fun for climbers was not always universally understood, and the Club's 1965-66 Journal records an ascent of a Whitehaven landmark – the candlestick shaped mine ventilation tower above the harbour. An altercation with police arriving in 'Z-Cars' to accost Alan Jackman and Ian Singleton, pegging their way to the isolated summit, was resolved amicably, and the police learnt a new command: 'abseil!' Another episode carved into PMC history concerns the appearance in Keswick of a couple of reporters from the Daily Sketch seeking to manufacture vivid headlines and a story of immoral conduct. At the height of 1960s 'flower power' they hoped for evidence of alleged orgies, and a group from the PMC was only too happy to oblige. In return for as much booze as could be carried, after the pubs closed a confusing approach was taken deliberately as a circuitous route through trees up to Millican Dalton's cave on Castle Crag. It was easy to ditch the reporters en-route and there followed an uproarious party in the cave at their expense.

I like to think malice was absent and that unruly breaches of etiquette were no worse than the smoke room and billiard table

based games of the Victorian gentlemen pioneers at Wasdale Head. Thankfully PMC members matured and we received a hospitable enough reception at regular venues in a variety of pubs or working men's clubs, for get-togethers to plan meets or for slide show evenings. These were informally convivial and evolved to suit who turned up. Many participants will remember the evening 'Old' Syd arrived with a wrong set of slides which he insisted on showing with an accompanying lecture on 'controlled tipping' based on his job as an environmental officer.

Association with the PMC combined glorious days of fun and fellowship with some fierce climbing, but towards the end of the decade the Club was winding down and withering away; and it barely limped into the 1970s. This was happening at the same time as an explosive leap forward in climbing standards that brought a shift of focus. Cutting edge input from small local clubs such as the PMC was leap-frogged and replaced by roving and raiding superstars dedicated to pushing up the 'Extreme' numbers. Still based on the PMC as an enabling group, camaraderie continued and individuals carried on climbing as enthusiastically and exactly as ever, but the Club was freely haemorrhaging members to the FRCC. Barney was first to go after being taken under the wing of legendary Jack Carswell; Geoff Cram was poached and given instant promotion to guidebook writer for the Pillar Group; and I became part of an exodus which included the likes of Bill Young, Chris Eilbeck and Alan Jackman. It is pleasing for me to confirm how nearly all of the PMC's supporters remain active and they continue to climb together in *ad hoc* partnerships. Also as a matter of record: the PMC has never been formally dissolved – it never had a Constitution – and in many hearts we are still members.

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Grey Crag from Buttermere : Rennie Barnes



*Carol Pilling*

I did not properly get into rock climbing until I was quite old, although my Dad had climbed and caved and as a family many holidays were spent hiking the Lakes fells in uncomfortable leather boots. As a member of the lacrosse team at school I was privileged to spend part of the summer back packing in the Lakes too, usually in the rain, we also spent time climbing on some easier stuff on Scafell.

When I reached my thirties a period of illness left me determined to do something positive for myself and I booked onto a climbing course at a local wall. This coincided with a chance meeting with a handsome firefighter and I became hooked despite my first outdoor climbing being on Yorkshire Grit at Woodhouse Scar. (Readers, even after this experience, I married him!) I joined the local climbing club and was lucky enough to be invited to Raw Head with Adrian and other friends. This was my first experience of Lakeland rock and my first multi pitch leading on Upper Scout Crag and Middlefell Buttress. At that time I was definitely an unconscious incompetent, by which I mean that the actual climbing was easy physically and I had no fear of falling, but my placement of gear and belay choices were not considered sufficiently; often, as the less experienced partner in the climbing relationship, it was easy to take a back seat and second routes, just enjoying the situation and the quiet places in the Lakes which climbing takes you to. I remember being pleased with myself when we went to do Corvus in Borrowdale and I took the first lead, since I had to be responsible for route finding. We had a great day swapping leads and topped out in the sun, walking off for a well earned beer. A lovely mountain day out. We experienced a similar day on Gillercombe Buttress and although the climbing isn't hard, the Lakeland rock and situation do make for a classic route combined again with a good walk, which leaves that feeling of peace and satisfaction that you don't get from a sport route in France!

At that time I was very content with climbing on outcrops in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and getting to the Lakes and Wales as much as I could but I hadn't really pushed myself and usually climbed with Ade. I would say that now I have reached 50, alarmingly, I am more obsessed with climbing and my life is strongly defined by climbing and how well it is going. This has been determined by a number of factors, the most serious of which was that Ade had a bad climbing accident and broke his back, leaving him obviously with lots of treatment and recovery time, and the uncertainty as to whether he would ever want to climb again. Since I was the belayer, I wasn't sure of that either but made myself go back to the place where it happened a week later to confront those fears. I did some bouldering and was glad I had. I was able to also climb with people from our local club and was forced to take the lead far more and to push myself a bit more. This was actually good for me and I gained more confidence, although on a trip to climb at Raven in Langdale, I will never forget my friend Abigail commenting 'Well, your climbing's fine but your gear's rubbish!!!' My confidence was truly knocked so I used to practice in the evening placing wires in local crags and even the Yorkshire stone walls of our house.

Abi and I went on to do SPA training together at Twistleton Scar and Langdale, there are no more funny comments about my gear and we have had some great days out with another close friend on Raven in Langdale. As women climbing together it's a different day out since I think we are more open about our fears and more supportive of each other, but since our husbands climb and are our main partners on trips away, we tend to climb more as a group of women in the winter at the wall, where it is always very sociable and we are able to have a good catch up and a latte afterwards! We probably get less climbing done but we talk a lot more about our climbing and our hopes and fears for future trips and routes. The truth is inevitably though that I have achieved my best leads whilst climbing with Ade since he is my main climbing partner and we have developed the shorthand of communication where a single 'eek' from me and an expression of clenched teeth means 'I am very scared and might come off' or 'I am really not happy with my gear'. He is great at being in turn either encouraging in a sympathetic way

or stern. Get on with it!! We have trust and confidence that is gained over years of experiences, both good and bad. As a group of women climbers we do not have enough trips away together to have gained that lexicon of experience and often there is a group of three so we tend to pick classic routes where we know we will have a great day, rather than one of us trying to push the grade.

Our last expedition to climb in Langdale as a threesome was a lesson in over optimism and blindly ignoring the Met Office forecasters. We had finally managed to find a day during the week that we could all manage, and set off early to do some of the classic severes on Raven such as Original Route and then move onto Bilberry Buttress. We did manage Original Route but alas on the horrid green slippery descent, there was a loud clap of thunder and the heavens opened; 'Someone died on this descent recently' one of our group helpfully commented as we attempted to hide from the worst of the rain. That was our only route of our much anticipated day out and as the rain eased slightly we began a walk instead but were thwarted again by torrents. It was a very soggy journey home in underwear for me, not having brought waterproof trousers along. Blind optimism and as people are so fond of saying 'well that's why it's the Lake District!'

I have found that working less, going to the wall more and getting a fingerboard for Christmas has improved my strength and led me to think I should get on some of the harder Lakes routes. I have a tick list. I am trying to convince Ade that I should be allowed to retire since I am sure that is why people I admire, like Eileen Clark and Angela Sope, are still climbing hard and with great style. I bumped into them both recently, Eileen at Black Crag and Angela at East Raven, both lots fitter than many people half their age and an inspiration. I therefore did start to try more of the harder VS and HVS routes on my favourite Lakeland rhyolite. I love the rock at Sergeant Crag slabs and it has lovely long absorbing routes with mainly good protection. This summer has at last been a proper summer and we returned from a long trip to France in early June to head straight to Salving House for a meet with beautiful weather. We climbed at Sergeant Crag with our friend Steve on the Saturday and we had the crag to ourselves, amazing, but perhaps there was an inverse law of



Terminator - Sergeant Crag Slabs

irony in that other people thought it would be too busy. It was bliss to paddle in the stream after the day of climbing and return to the hut for a very sociable evening sat outside until 10pm, watching the light fade down the valley and thinking how lucky we were!

That particular meet weekend also led me to reflect on the number of good friends I have made through FRCC and as we were joking in the kitchen on Saturday morning that lots of those folk more accurately resemble extended family with the shared passion for climbing, the outdoors in general and the Lake District in particular. It was following the wisdom and experience of other members which led to one of my best days on Pavey Ark. I had wanted to lead Golden Slipper for ages but kept wondering if I was good enough or had earned the right to get on it; also the summers we had been experiencing were not conducive to the rock up there being at all dry. Eventually, in late September a couple of years ago, the opportunity arose; it had been dry for a couple of days and we had time off during the week. This was the day. As we walked up to the crag I felt very nervous but excited too and almost desperate to get on `my

route'. However Ade wanted to lead Capella first so we set off and I must admit it passed by in a bit of a blur for me although it was great climbing and I would like to lead it sometime. The helpful guide-book comments regarding the 'adequate protection for the diligent' kept going through my mind.

As I began climbing I actually felt quite composed, grateful to be there and in the lead. The gear did keep coming in the form of small wires and then there was an excellent placement to protect the balancy traverse move. The rock was brilliant, very rough and pockety, my favourite Lakes rock.



Very happy having just done Capella and Golden Slipper

I made it to the belay ledge and had a large Cheshire Cat grin all over my face, I looked around at the view which was beautiful and clear to the sea. I felt very privileged. Two other chaps had come up behind us, 'good lead' one commented. Thanks, and I did feel pleased with myself.

Alas we had to head home that evening but as we walked off we came across a group of Scottish youths at the tarn bearing a coolbox of tinnies. 'Hey, was that you up there love, in that pink hat thing, climbing' they enquired. Yes it was, fame at last! They did not offer me a celebratory can of Tennants, but asked whether there was an easier way to the top of the crag. 'Oh yes, lads', Ade replied, 'there is a really nice path called Jack's Rake all the way to the top!! It's a bit scrambly in places but you look like quite fit'. We descended, I was rather horrified. As we departed for home, was that the drone of the helicopter?



*Dan Hamer*

A life on the rocks has habituated me to avoiding, not always with success, a variety of falling objects and the odd tumble. The combination of a professional career as a geologist and a passion for climbing mountains regularly places me in the firing line. The risks involved are mostly natural hazards. Occasionally, however, the hand of man plays a modest role.

To begin with, there is the small matter of mutual attraction. Newton published his Theory of Universal Gravitation in the 1680s. He proposed that gravity was a predictable force which acted on all matter in the Universe and that this force was a function of both mass and distance. Today's students learn that all particles of matter attract all other particles with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

In simple terms, this means that the further your companions climb away from you, and I guess the smaller they are, the less the gravitational force that operates between you. This should mean that the higher they climb the chances that gravity will suck them back towards you, and of course Mother Earth, will diminish. Unfortunately, even the last meter on Everest isn't far enough away for the distance to be significant and before you think twice about the mass of your future climbing partners, it is worth pointing out that down-sizing won't lessen the likelihood of them plummeting in your direction!

Newton's term gravity was derived from the Latin word, *gravitas*. Appropriately its meaning was intended to convey substance, weightiness or dignified demeanour. There's a certain irony here, which suggests to me that Sir Isaac may have had a sense of humour, because I can tell you plainly that there's nothing dignified about my demeanour when I take evasive action from rapidly approaching objects.

Mountaineering literature and climbing lore is packed with thrilling tales of near misses and sombre tragedies involving falling

objects. It's clear that there is an inherent instability about elevated regions. Mountains, it seems, are like kids' building blocks – the higher you stack them, the more prone to tumbling down they become. This disorderly, natural phenomenon manifests itself most obviously in rock falls and there is an unfortunate inevitability that climbing parties will be affected.

I have described elsewhere the sudden, frightening appearance of a fragment of volcanic rock which parted my hair and partially severed our rope on Dinas Mot's Diagonal. It could well have had my name carved on it. Luckily for me, it was a near miss and the fragment – yes I kept it - now invokes little more than the occasional, involuntary recall whenever I catch sight of it amongst my collection of rocks.

Besides the precipitate arrival of that chunk of tuff, a couple of other encounters stand out. One nearly terminated my climbing career on an early excursion to Scotland. I was rounding the chock stone on the cave pitch in Crowberry Gully and as I stuck my head gingerly over the lip, a pebble-sized stone smacked into the front of my climbing helmet, knocking my head violently backwards and nearly dislodging me from the holds. It was a borrowed helmet and I had only elected to make use of it at the last moment. I was mildly embarrassed when I handed the damaged article back to its owner, but she was quick to point out that whilst helmets can be replaced, heads cannot.

From then onwards, I took care to wear a helmet whenever necessary, but a further incident with my father in the Lake District emphasised that the dangers were more widespread and less obvious. On the way to the summit of Black Crag, we found a large boulder with a prominent, frontal arête, half buried in the scree. I was two thirds of the way up the arête when my father stepped onto the boulder below me. No sooner had he committed his full weight to it than the entire block pitched slowly outwards from the slope. I leapt immediately to the right whilst my father followed suit to the left and we watched mesmerised as the now completely detached boulder cartwheeled gracefully down the slope into the gully beneath us. It promptly exploded into a dozen fragments that cascaded noisily into Ennerdale.

Rock climbers are not immune to gravity, although there was a short period in my youth when I thought otherwise. I learnt my lesson in an embarrassing training fall from the parapet of a disused railway bridge in one of the flattest and lowest lying areas of the UK. I hobbled through the subsequent winter on crutches feeling decidedly sorry for myself.

Lead climbers justifiably draw critical acclaim, but their success depends in part on competent seconds. My harder lead climbing days are probably numbered, but this does not mean that I am any less vulnerable and it has given me the opportunity to contemplate the risks that the much-neglected second is exposed to. Since becoming less enthusiastic about sitting cramped on uncomfortable stances, out of line of sight and hearing of my leader, with the wind rising, a few drops of rain appearing and only half an hour of daylight remaining, I may as well own up to being an SPBS – a Single Pitch Belaying Specialist!

Reliable seconds have patience, tolerance, understanding and stiff necks. They must anticipate their leader's every move – especially the sudden downward ones. Leader falls require focus and lightning reactions. This includes the readiness to leg it downhill and away from the bottom of the crag if the lead climber is so far above his last protection that he will deck if you don't take in the extra slack and quickly.

It's no easy job coaxing a reluctant leader up a challenging route. In the same way that seamen anchoring nineteenth century harpooners by a slender monkey-rope during the mayhem of a Sperm Whale hunt, '... could only attend to one end of the business ...', it's worth emphasising that the climbing second only has managerial control of his or her end of the rope. Nevertheless, seconds can be quick to disown outspoken leaders and despite the obvious connection of the rope, make clear to other seconds or casual passers-by that the vociferous and gesticulating leader above is not necessarily the soul mate that the rope between them implies.

Seconds have to dodge more than their fair share of inbound detritus and the variety of objects hurled in their direction is staggering. In addition to bits of the crag, I have endured a barrage of debris which includes sundry items of discarded clothing, guide

books, sun glasses and loose change, together with the full range of climbing gear dropped as the climber I was belaying failed either to insert gear properly, or clip protection, or simply because they were surplus to requirement. I don't want to discuss chalk. I just hope no-one identifies a link between exposure to airborne chalk dust and a serious medical disorder! I'll be really annoyed if they do.

Climbers above you aren't the only objective dangers. I spent several years working as a Field Geologist based in Mwanza, on the southern shores of Lake Victoria. In the evenings, I used to amuse myself bouldering at a platform overlooking the Lake which was covered with large granite boulders known as Dancing Rocks. On one occasion, I had just jumped down from a fingery highball and was admiring my creation in a needlessly self-satisfied manner, when I was felled to the ground by a sharp blow to back of my head.

My first thought was that I was being mugged and I instinctively assumed the foetal position. However, there were no follow up blows or shouts and when I jumped to my feet, fists clenched in preparation to face my unknown assailants, I was puzzled to find that there was no-one in sight! A few moments later, I caught the faintest hint of a shadow flickering on the rocks to one side and managed to duck out of the way in time to avoid an angry, Yellow-Billed Kite swooping down for a second attack. These aggressive and gregarious scavengers are habituated to man and not afraid to single out isolated individuals. Perhaps this one was protecting young nearby or maybe it didn't like boulderers - not everyone does.

Succinct communications are fundamental to climbing, but not all leaders appreciate this and a lot of excess verbiage rains down on the much-abused second too:

'This is stupid - we never have enough time to redpoint the hard routes.' 'I've got nothing in my core today.' 'It's a bit loose here...oh! Sorry about that.' 'This crux is plastered with chalk – I can't decide which hold to use!' 'Tight rope! Watch me! Slack, slack...give me some bloody slack! Take.'

If you're really lucky as a second, you get the chance to join in and throw something back!

'Chuck me that No 2 Friend - this one won't fit!' 'OK, here you go....oops'

If you're fed up with the barrage of verbal diarrhoea, I have the perfect riposte for frustrated seconds. It's guaranteed to bring the grouchiest of leaders to heel:

'I'm going to have to take you off belay for a second - the dog's got tangled up in the rope.'

Newton didn't just postulate universal gravitation. During his distinguished career he elucidated many of the fundamental principles of science. It is not recorded whether Sir Isaac climbed any mountains; his religious views probably curtailed any nascent geological curiosity and he laboured under a lifelong alchemical misconception that gold could be created! Nevertheless, his explanation of gravity was a defining moment. Perhaps we should be grateful that he wasn't a geologist, or a climber. If he'd been hunting for crystals in Crowberry Gully, and without a helmet, instead of just lounging beneath an apple tree as the fanciful embellishments of posterity would have us believe, we might never have had the benefit of his prognostications.

We might never know what had hit us, or for that matter, why.

## Bouldering in Pinnistal

*Martin Cooper*

The cloud swirled around Bowfell Buttress, obscuring completely the lower part of the climb, as well the view of Flat Crag, Cambridge Crag and Langdale below. We had started the route in weak sunshine after a brisk walk in and an early start from the North East. Rain had been forecast for late afternoon. Already there had been a few spots. Now, high up on the buttress, it was to be hoped that any real downpour would come later. The climb had been challenging in places; pitch six, my lead, was causing some problems

Thirteen days earlier I was at 3,210 metres in the Austrian Alps. The view from the Eisjoch below the Schaufelspitze extended south towards the Dolomites and Marmalada and across the head of the Stubaital, cloud billowing over the col, eventually allowing glimpses of the Zuckerhutl and the Wildem Pfaff. It was the end of a two week holiday in Italy and Austria, carrying out family duties, delivering a car. But I could get a glimpse of the mountains at the same time, surely. I know Austria well. I lived there for a year, had travelled through Innsbruck and over the Brenner pass by train and by coach. This was the first time staying in the Tyrol. Stubaital is located directly south of Innsbruck. Turn right at the Europabrucke and follow the valley to Neustift. Our hotel was the Burgjuwel, on the edge of the village. You cannot but be impressed by the huge wall of the Hammerspitze, towering above the side valley of Pinnistal, and the peak of Serles further round to the east. My camera was out straight away, catching the mountains in the late evening light. It was time to make preliminary plans.

Bowfell Buttress is a climb that had somehow escaped me amongst classic, easy Lake District routes. Raven, Gimmer and Pavey Ark had claimed most of my attention in the Langdale Valley. I had ventured along Bowfell's climbers' traverse just once, on a grey November day and had scrambled up to the summit of the mountain instead. So I was pleased to be at the foot of the route. The previous summer's constant rain had left me with a total of zero multipitch climbs in the Lakes, a state of affairs unmatched for more



than twenty years. The walk to the crag had been dry but the route looked like it might be damp.

Pitch one was straightforward and easy; big holds, plenty of gear. The plan was to run the first two pitches together. I could see from the ground that the chimney on pitch two was going to be awkward. Up close it looked revolting. Damp in the back and as much polish on the rock as you could imagine. I had a quick peek in my book. Yes, we were on a three star Lakeland V Diff. Stepping up high I got my foot into a squelchy groove, reached up for big holds, pulled up, wet rock, foot slipping, decided on the merits of teamwork, brought Alex up who finished the pitch in seconds. It was only his second multipitch climb. I should have felt humiliation but I felt none. I got over these things years ago. Alex had enjoyed himself with pitches two and three and the start of the fourth as well, easy angled, lovely dry, rough rock. This was the stuff.

Our drive from Italy had started in Puglia, up the eastern Adriatic Coast to Marche where our son had been married two months previously. The mountains of the Parc Nationale di Siblini had still held snow then. Now in July they shimmered in the heat, although an evening drive to try to get a closer look at Monte Vetore proved fruitless. The twisting road through the valley beyond Ascoli Piceno refused to break out of thick woodland. Only distant glimpses of the mountains were to be had. Antipasta, prima, secondi and red wine provided some consolation. Further north we stopped at the beautiful town of Bassano del Grappo and drove through the edge of the Dolomites the next day. Eventually the road and the village architecture became Alpine and high on the Brennero we spotted snow on the mountains of the Zillertal. Travelling from the beaches of the Adriatic coast to the Austrian Alps in two days certainly left me ready for some cooler air and a more energetic regime. But it was hot in Austria too, almost as hot as Italy. In fact, the whole of central Europe was in the middle of a heatwave, Austria recording its highest daytime temperature ever the following week, 40.05 Centigrade in Graz. We would still need the siesta.

The crux pitch on Bowfell Buttress is the fifth, a steep crack. I finished the fourth pitch, up an open chimney and over some easy ledges before a downward traverse led to the foot of the crack. I

was getting the easy climbing but enjoying the route. The short, light shower was not unduly worrying. We speculated on how easy the crack appeared to eyes more used to Northumberland sandstone. It didn't look hard compared to Bowden Doors V Diffs but Alex still placed plenty of gear in the crack before the angle eased and he climbed confidently up to the pinnacle belay. As a crux pitch you wouldn't worry unduly about this particular set of moves. You launch onto it from a very wide belay stance, with little real exposure. The climb was living up to its Classic Rock billing but the cloud had come in and there was a dampness in the air with two pitches to go.

The guidebook describes almost every rock feature possible on pitch six: a groove, a chimney, a slab, a wall, a step up to a platform. Damn it, no overhang! The guidebook author has a vivid imagination. I traversed left for four metres, climbed up a broken groove, steeply for one move over a block with a slab-angled upper surface and into a narrow steep corner below a short wall. On the left was obvious gear placement, a small cam in the corner crack. But the crack itself was too steep and strenuous for the grade. Moving right gave access to the easier angled side of the wall with plenty of polished holds to indicate where the route went. Another piece of gear went in before a step up to more damp rock and an exposed position. Back down. Contemplation. To my left, where the cam had gone in, hordes of winter climbers had recently been, the rock scratched amazingly by countless axes and crampons. I wondered what the grade might be but was pleased that my Grivel tools had been left in the garage.

It was raining in the Stubaital, big heavy drops falling on the path down from the Elferhutte to the Elferbahn cablecar. The forecast had been for afternoon storms and we had just set off along the panoramaweg when the first rumble of thunder came from higher up the valley. We watched the rain approaching from the north, a pity because the footpath was living up to its name, giving stupendous views across Pinnistal to the Hammerspitze and the Kirchdachspitze. Which part of the mountain had actually been named after the shape of a church roof we were not sure. Before the thunder we had studied a path thousands of feet below us, zig-zag-



The Kirchdachspitze above Pinnistal

ging its way up into a huge hanging valley, wondering where on earth it would break up onto the main ridge across the valley from us. That could wait for another day.

Entertainment that evening at the hotel was provided by a large forest fire, started by lightning striking the tinder-dry mountainside. We watched while we ate dinner as a helicopter ferried water up to douse the flames. The rain had stopped and I needed a plan.

Next day I left the hotel early, caught the bus down the valley to Fulpmes and took the first cablecar of the day on the Kreuzjochbahn with Nierederer und Hoher Burgstall in my sights. I walked quickly along the easy path, pleased to at last be out of the heat of the valley, with the impressive limestone walls of the Kalkkogel towering up to the right. The first peak was easy but the Hoher Burgstall (2,611 metres) presents a steep and rocky face. This, however, is easily outmanouvered on the north side and I was soon enjoying magnificent views to the south and east, of the peaks and snow fields at the head of the Stubaital, a range of ridges and steep

mountains over three thousand metres traversed by the Stubai Hohenweg, the best known hut to hut walk of the area. It is one I would return for.

My day was completed by a five thousand feet descent, steeply down from the summit to the Starkenberger Hut, on through a high pasture where cows grazed from their sitting position in the heat of the afternoon sun, then steeply down through forests back to Neustift where Mary, my wife had enjoyed the afternoon by an outdoor swimming pool. I would recommend the Hoher Burgstall, a very easy peak to climb but a magnificent setting and wonderful views.

Bowfell Buttress wasn't going to trouble us for much longer. A bolder approach, despite the dampness of the rock, soon saw off the penultimate pitch and Alex sped off up an open chimney towards the top. The final pitch was disappointing. For once the rock was not very continuous. Instead, by now it was damp and slimy but the holds were so big that progress was not impeded. At the top of the buttress we were in dense cloud and didn't much enjoy the descent back down steep scree to our sacks. But we had done the route and were well pleased with our efforts. Some weeks later I leafed through the pages of the brand new Langdale Guide. Well, what a surprise. Bowfell Buttress is graded Hard Severe!

Only a few days left in Austria and I suggested a walk up the Pinnistal, a side valley below the Hammerspitze, forested and more shady. The steep forest track took us to an idyllic spot where the valley opened out to pastures and a gasthaus at Issingeralm. Gruss Gott! Well earned drinks and hausgemacht kuchen were irresistible. The Pinnistal would be the end section of the Stubai Hohenweg if you started at the Starkenberger Hut. Only the section in the middle to do then.

Our final Austrian walk took us back down into the Pinnistal from the Elferhutte. Once again, the views to the great walls of the crystalline mountains of Stubaital dominated. I found my eyes continually wandering up and across these great ridges with their stupendous drops, wondering how I might climb them one day. Mary was honest in her feelings about such enormous, sweeping areas of steep rock and mountainside. She found them oppressive. And so

we descended.

Walking down the valley now, not up it, we were struck once more by scale of the place and by the dry river bed, wide and boulder strewn. The Tyrol was in the middle of a heatwave and we had seen for ourselves how little rain had recently fallen. I had climbed high mountains in the Stubaital but had not touched the rock. Here, as we descended the valley, were large boulders by the side of the riverbed, four or five metres high. It was too much to resist. I had spent two weeks amongst high mountains but I had done no rock climbing and no via ferrata. So a new sensation was discovered. Press me to choose between a long multipitch route in the Lakes and clinging onto the side of a small rock in a dry river bed in the Tyrol. There is no choice. I'd rather be bouldering in Pinnistal.

## Scotland and Ireland

### Seana Bhraigh - Remote or what?

*Smiler Cuthbertson*

With only thirty days left before our odyssey to Peru and Alpaymayo, I felt it was time to do some training.

Seana Bhraigh (927metres) is described as occupying a remote situation and vying for the title of 'the most distant Munro'. It had been on my mind for a fair while, since tagging on to Mark and doing Ben Hope and that strenuous (full) traverse of Ben More Assynt. Seana Bhraigh was one of Mark's few remaining Munros and it sounded tough. We were going to do it after our Ben More Assynt day but the weather clagged in and spoilt the plan. The plan was shelved until further notice.

I suspect I should have told Mark I was going, but with the brilliant forecast for Wednesday, my mind focused on the plan and I completely ignored looking for my usual walking partner. A good, long hike with a rucksack was called for.

I left Loch Ness around 5:45a.m. and sped along the A835 towards Ullapool. Turning off at the Beinn Dearg car park, I parked up, removed the mountain bike from the rack behind the car, had a last check of my belongings and mounted up. It only takes about twenty minutes to reach the end of the forest track, where I locked the bike to the fencepost, and set off up the steep track.

I had done the first section on a previous reconnaissance trip. That day I'd only started from the locked bike around 2p.m. and it was always on my mind that the summit would be unlikely, especially if I was to get back home for dinner. As I had now improved my knowledge of which track from the forest end to take since my recce trip, I quickly pulled up the steep incline and soon got pretty warm. I was carrying two separate litres of cool orange juice drinks and a flask of tea, so there was little reason to get dehydrated. After reaching the easier angled slopes, I stopped on the good track and had a swig of juice. It was a chance to look around.



An Teallach stood proudly to the south-east. In all other directions other Munros poked their heads out of the Haar that would soon be lifting and leaving, according to the forecast for a clear and sunny day. I continued after my break across the ridge and dropped down into the valley leading up to the Sgeirich Lochan at 758 metres. I kept on the fairly good path to the right of this Lochan in the corrie of the same name. I'd been this way before and the path so far was



Sgeirich Lochan, Seana Braigh just appearing above the horizon

reasonable, but now I was presented with some awkward and time-consuming rocks to cross, in order to climb the steeper terrain which leads up to the easier angled ground above on the plateau.

As I had anticipated the ground soon dropped down in height beyond the col. This was new ground now and my adrenalin was rising. I knew I'd crack this beast today, by hook or by crook.

A mistake I always make when solo hiking is to go a little too fast. With no-one to chat to there seems no point in stopping for rests or other reasons. Today was no exception and it was with some slight urgency that I tracked across rough and now very wet ground

towards where I knew the way should lead, down into the wide area containing Loch a' Cadha Dheirg. I'd long since lost any real track, and was heading in the general direction of Gate of Seana Bhragh derg. This was a slight mistake. It was dreadfully wet. Melting snows had saturated large areas and I soon realised I should have held the higher ground closer to Meall a' Corrie Ghlais. There seemed no point in retracing any steps and I continued across what was very swampy ground. At one stage I stepped into what looked like a quarter metre



pool of murky water and suddenly I was up to my thighs in what can only be described as quicksand! It gave me quite a scare.

In a few more metres, the disaster was over, and I took stock of my grim lower half, shrugging my shoulders to the unpleasant mess I'd got myself into. With the forecast as it was, there seemed little point in changing my plans, and soon I was climbing more steeply through the Gate of Ca'-derg.

I stopped after a while to look around me, and was pleasantly surprised to see I had passed my dog-leg left point and was heading for the ring contour at 905 metres, before the final section to the summit. I was delighted. I switched up a gear and although there was now plenty of wet snow all around, I could usually find ways which mostly avoided me getting any wetter or colder.

A quite proud Smiler reached the ring contour and without pausing, I broke a trail through the now deeper but not too offensive snow and down to the col on the summit ridge at 850 metres. I paused for a quick drink from my bottle and then headed slowly up towards the summit. With the length of my day so far, almost four



An Tellach from Seana Braigh

hours, and the débâcle of the swamp, I was now pretty tired. But spurred on by the ever closer summit, at 11.20am, just under four hours from leaving the mountain bike, I flopped against the outside of the summit shelter.

Inside was full of snow but it was beautiful weather I was being provided with. It was time for food and tea. I gazed around in a full 360° curve and felt pretty good about my day and what I could see from the summit of Seana Braigh. Many peaks had plenty of snow on. To the north there was a cluster of big peaks, which I sensed was Ben More Assynt and other great peaks to the east of Ullapool and even further north to Ben Hope.

The tranquillity of the lunch hour was broken by the arrival of a couple, all the way from London. They were on a camping trip, having done part of the ridge above Toman Conich the previous day, so they had a shorter climb than me to Seana Braigh's summit from their tent lower down. They pointed to where they said they'd left their rucksacks, but I couldn't really see anything. After a few more minutes of chatting, with my solo spell broken, I bade them farewell and headed back.

Choosing to avoid the ring contour this time, I made good progress diagonally down and towards the Gate of Ca' - derg, having to re-adjust my line at one point, as I was getting a bit close to some very steep ground above Chadha Dearg. I looked down a huge cleft dropping vertically down to the Chadha Dearg, which I later worked out to be around 500 metres deep. The traversing ground was steeply inclined and covered alternatively in either wet snow or soaking wet grass. I contoured on less steep ground and, picking up a faint track, soon reached the level area of the Gate of Ca'-derg. I moved rapidly towards the flatter ground to the west of Meall a' Chorie Ghlais.

Before reaching this easier section, there had been a moment when I'd thought about by-passing the steeper cliffs to the south, but I decided to re-trace my steps from the morning.

There was still a small section of steep scrambling before I reached the level ground leading back over to the Corrie an Lochan Sgeirich, but it was easy enough and I emerged from some shadows, and headed across south-west, on what was the best quality path I'd



The abyss of Chada Dearg

seen for a while.

Of course, it was now clear what my mistake coming up from Lochan Sgeirich had been. I was on the wrong side of the valley. I cursed silently, thinking how much easier it would have been on the eastern side of the trip. Still, no real harm done, although I did have

to take a shot of my trekking trousers and boots. What a mess. At least now it was just dried, caked mud.

Reaching the ford crossing the stream, I was soon contouring back up over the ridge of Coir a' Mhadaidh, where at long last the forestry plantations were in full view. It didn't seem long before I reached the mountain bike and was soon speeding down the track, clutching my peaked cap in fear of losing it, such was the downhill speed. The only interruptions were the gates, where I had to dismount and pass through on foot. The spare flask of tea in my car was a welcome ending to a great seven hours on the hill.

Some top tips:

Be sure to keep to the east when reaching the first lochan. Then the track is good and there are few rocks to scramble through. Using this eastern side of the valley all the way across and below Meall Choire Ghlais, avoids almost all of the unpleasant swampy ground. Take a mountain bike in twenty fairly slow, but easy minutes to the forest end. The descent back to the A835 is sheer bliss.



*Karl Nelson*

Many people climb the 13 Irish Munros as a sequel to the Scottish Munros. Together with the English Munros and the Welsh Munros, the Irish Munros form a group known as 'The Furths'. The SMC seem to encourage their ascents by including three columns of achievement in the list of Munroists found in their 'Munro's Tables', namely the Munro Peaks, the Munro Tops and the so called Furths. The Irish Munros are fine mountains in their own right and are well worth a visit, irrespective of whether one is a prospective or successful Munroist. They are all readily accessible with no access issues and their ascents require no technical scrambling or climbing skills although such routes are available for those who wish them. Strictly speaking, Munros only exist in Scotland on a list, originally compiled in the late 19th century and attributed to Hugh Munro, which contained principal and subsidiary summits above 3000 feet in Scotland. Nowadays, the term has been expanded to include peaks and selected tops anywhere in the British Isles which, geographically, includes the whole of Ireland. All of the Irish Munros lie within Southern Ireland; there are none in Northern Ireland.

The Irish Munros are found in four distinct areas. Three of these contain solitary Munros. Ludnaquilla, 925 m, is in the Wicklow Mountains to the south of Dublin. Galtymore, 919 m, is in the Galtee Mountains which lie about 15 km south of Tipperary in the south of Ireland. Cider lovers can drive from Ludnaquilla to Galtymore via the town of Clonmel which is the headquarters of Magners cider. The route actually goes past their huge plant. Some might not get any further! Dingle is the most westerly town in Europe and sits almost at the end of the Dingle peninsula which juts out into the Atlantic Ocean between Killarney and Tralee. Just to the north of Dingle is Mount Brandon, 952 m, (sometimes called Brandon Mountain). All the other Irish Munros lie in a single range known as MacGillycuddy's Reeks just to the west of Killarney with their tops forming a letter 'Y'. There are ten tops over 3000 feet, including Carrauntoohil, at 1039 m, the highest peak in Ireland. It is a matter

of some debate how these 10 tops are classified as 'peaks' or 'tops'. Arguments also rage as to what is the correct name for some of them! Modern Irish maps of the Reeks use their Gaelic names so Carrauntoohil becomes Corran Tuathail and the English name is omitted altogether apart from one top which is still called the 'Big Gun'. Incidentally, the Irish OS maps use a different grid system to the UK but it is relatively easy, for those who need it, to reset a GPS to the Irish grid system. Another significant difference between UK and Irish OS maps is that the Irish maps show very little, if any, detail of crags and rocky ridges.

The overnight ferry from Pembroke Dock takes about 4 hours and arrives in Rosslare at about 6.30 am. From there one can drive north to ascend Ludnaquilla. It is a pleasant drive past Wexford then through Enniscorthy, Tullow and Baltinglass. After that, one drives along narrow country roads to the Glen of Imaal, looking for the Irish Army Information and Advice Centre because there is one slight problem with Ludnaquilla; it essentially lies within an army firing range. On my first ascent, in July 1996, a tank shoot was scheduled across the ascent route! It was now late morning but no sign of any tanks. Trying to be helpful, the army man rang their barracks, in Dublin, to find out where they were. A few minutes later, he came back to say that they had 'had a bad night' and were not coming today! The wry smile was almost mandatory! For those arriving via Dublin, find your way to Blessington then drive south towards Baltinglass turning off for Donard which is a lovely little village with a shop and two pubs.

From Glen Imaal, Ludnaquilla is a very straight forward ascent of about 7 km; up a lane then up and along a gentle grassy ridge to the large summit plateau where there is a huge cairn and trig point. There are cliffs on the north and south side of the plateau known as the North and South Prisons. In 1996, there wasn't much of a path but by 2013 there was a fairly obvious path most of the way. On a clear day, there are good views in all directions mainly to grassy hills of similar character to Ludnaquilla. Military activity often rules out a circular route as firing is usually going on somewhere around the mountain. Up and down only takes about 5 hours leaving plenty of time to find a base near to the next objective, which, for Munrobag-

gers, is usually Galtymore but it is worth staying on for a few days to explore more of the Wicklow Mountains including alternative ascents up Ludnaquilla. In 1996, there was what looked like an old stone building, with a corrugated iron roof, at the start. This actually turned out to be a lovely old fashioned pub inside and a very pleasant place to have an apres hill beer. Hanging proudly behind the bar was a copy of the order opening the firing range, back in the early 1900's, signed by a certain Winston Churchill. Sadly, in 2013, the pub was defunct but locals were hopeful of it reopening again. The obliging army now hand out free OS maps of Ludnaquilla with the firing areas clearly marked. Not a Munro, but about 5 km along Ludnaquilla's north ridge, is a hill called Table Mountain (701 m). The only similarity between this mountain and its more famous counterpart in South Africa is that its top is flat. The Irish version is more like Kinder Scout and is a very boggy featureless plateau. Those who feel the need to ascend it can avoid the military dimension by ascending from Glenmalur to the east of Ludnaquilla. However, it should be pointed out that it is only just outside the firing range and one can hear exploding shells if the army is out on practice. Hopefully, one should not have a problem with stray shells. If one did, it would be short lived as would you! There is also a village called

Hollywood about 10 km N of Donard. If you are fed up with friends bragging about where they went on holiday, just shut them up by saying you went up Table Mountain and visited Hollywood on the same day! Donard has a lovely camp site called Moat Farm which has landscaped grounds and excellent facilities including a TV lounge, camp kitchen, dining area and free showers. Campers' kitchens and eating rooms are common features on Irish camp sites. As Ludnaquilla is a massive mountain and throws out many ridges, there are many other routes of ascent. Some of the best start in Glenmalur to the east.

Tipperary is a lovely old Irish town and could be used as a base for Galtymore which is the most inland of the Irish Munros. However, about 15 km to the south, and over an intervening ridge, there is a well positioned camp site at Ballinacourty House just to the west of the small village of Lisvarrinane in the Glen of Aherlow. This not only has the usual good facilities but also looks out to the whole of the Galtee (Galtymore Mountains) range to the south. An even better viewpoint is on the road from Tipperary at the 'Christ the King' statue. Galtymore is best climbed as a horseshoe from the car park up the lane to the south of Clydagh Bridge which is less than 4 km from the camp site. New way marked paths have been



Galtymore from the 'Christ the King' statue

introduced over the last 15 years which help with the descent but this is an easy route anyway. One can follow these or, better still, try the Galtymore Horseshoe which takes in Cush, Galtymbeg and Galtymore with good paths much of the way. There is a lovely small lake nestling below Galtymore. Many Irish mountains have religious symbols on them and Galtymore is no exception. About 40 m to the west of the summit is a white Celtic cross erected in 1978. From here, one can find another cairn then follow a wall down to a shallow col from where a faint and steep path goes down steep grassy slopes to the scenic Lough Curra which nestles in a grassy corrie. From the outflow, a path, later waymarked, leads back to the car park about 5 hours after one left it. Alternatively, one can complete the horseshoe on the ridge above the Lough Curra route.

Killarney is a bustling, attractive, town with all the usual tourist facilities and an ideal base from which to explore MacGillycuddy's Reeks, the largest and highest mountain range in Ireland. The Fossa camp site lies about 5 km west of the town, away from the worst of the traffic, and the Reeks are visible from there. From here it is about 12 km to Cronin's Yard, the most popular starting point. It is possible to hire a large static caravan at the Fossa and, outside of the peak season from mid-June to August, it is noticeably cheaper for two people to share a large static caravan than camp separately. One is reminded of the old 60's slogan 'Save water, bath with a friend!'. The 'Y' shape of the Reeks means that a full traverse involves some back tracking so many people break them into two parts and do the 'tail' on one day then the 'V' on another. The tail is best attempted from Cronin's Yard where there is a car park, toilets and cafe but this is sometimes shut if the lady owner has gone shopping. From the yard, one aims for Cruach Mor, 932 m, at the eastern end of the 'tail'. In clear weather, one can see its summit all the way up as there is a large square stone walled structure on its small summit. On arrival, one side of this holds a small religious grotto. From here, a rocky pinnacled ridge, not that dissimilar to the Aonach Eagach, runs south to a top, essentially a large pinnacle, known as the Big Gun, 939 m. There are numerous opportunities for scrambling but, unlike the Aonach Eagach, many of the difficulties can be avoided by dropping just below the crest. The rocky ridge continues south west to

Cnoc na Peiste (Knocknapeasta), 988 m, where most of the difficulties end and the ridge becomes mainly grassy but still narrow in places, continuing south west to Maolan Bui, 973 m, before a long, mainly level, section over a minor top to Cnoc an Chuillin, 958 m. From here, one can walk roughly west, over Cnoc Toinne, then down to the col above the Devil's Ladder, at the foot of Carrauntoohil, which is also at the head of the Hag's Glen. The Devil's Ladder is steep, rocky, eroded and loose. Many choose to avoid it and, instead,



Caher, Carrauntoohil, Knockouter, Beenkeragh & Knockbrinnea from Cruach Mhor

use an alternative path which zig zags down from Cnoc Toinne to reach the Hag's Glen slightly lower down the glen. Once safely in the glen, an easy path, the track leads back to Cronin's Yard. All the way along this ridge, there are excellent views, especially to Caher,



Carrauntoohil and Beenkeragh, including the pinnacled Stumpa an t-Saimh ridge and the Hag's Teeth rocky ridge. As a bonus, the prevailing weather often gives cloud on one side of the ridge giving a kind of curtain effect. Some days, one can see 10 km on one side



Knockouter and Carrauntoohil from Beenkeragh

of the ridge and barely 10 m on the other! The tail is about an 8 – 10 hour walk.

The top of the 'Y' is best walked from the north west as the Coomloughra Horseshoe which starts up a hydro track about 1 km north of Lough Acoose (Loch an Chuais). One simply walks to the end of the track, crosses a short, peaty, plateau and ascends a good path up the north west ridge of Caher. Its north west top, 975 m, is reached first where there are two cairns, one of which is actually a stone hut,

ideal for those wet Irish days! Soon the large cairn of Caher, 1001 m, is reached before the path descends and curves around, on a narrow ridge, as it climbs towards the summit of Carrauntoohil (Corran Tuathail), 1039 m. There can be no doubting where you are as there is a massive cross made of girders! The best is yet to come as one crosses the fine, rocky ridge to Beenkeragh (Binn Chaorach), 1010. There are many opportunities for scrambling, all avoidable, along this 1 km long ridge. Near the Carrauntoohil end, is a Munro top which some call Knockoughter, 959 m. The summit of Beenkeragh is at the end of this rocky ridge. From here, one can complete the horseshoe over Skregmore (Screig Mhor) and Skregbeg (Screig Bheag) or retrace the more interesting outward route, the latter taking about 10 hours overall.

There are many other routes up Carrauntoohil. The shortest is from Cronin's Yard, to the head of the Hag's Glen, up the loose Devil's Ladder then north west up the open flank to the summit on an obvious path all the way. The most romantic route, however, leaves the Hag's Glen before Lough Gouragh (Loch Gabhrach) and picks its way up, on a good path, with a couple of short and easy scrambles, into a stunningly scenic corrie containing Lough Cummeenoughter (Loch Coimin Uachtair). The path up gives close views of the pinnacled Stumpa an t-Saimh ridge. From the loch, the path climbs up a gully in the corner of the corrie known as Brother O'Shea's Gully, so named because, like Walker's Gully on Pillar Rock, it is named after someone who died there. The gully emerges on the Carrauntoohil – Beenkeragh ridge just to the south east of Knockoughter. One can then continue over Carrauntoohil and head down towards the top of the Devil's Ladder before veering off to pick up a path heading for the 'Heavenly Gates'. This is a lovely path which follows a terrace, going in an out of gullies before reaching the 'Heavenly Gates'. This is actually the entrance to a narrow cleft which one can pick their way down before it flattens out to reach the outward route passing a sod covered mountain rescue hut en route. The path seems to go past the 'Heavenly Gates' for a few metres before plunging over a cliff so if you miss the 'Heavenly Gates' you could end up at the 'Pearly Gates'! This route gives excellent views across to the tail of

the Reeks 'Y'.

Mount Brandon is an elusive mountain. It took 7 ascents before a clear day with views was enjoyed! It lies just where it is most vulnerable to the Atlantic weather. Ben Nevis probably sees more clear days than Mount Brandon! There are two very straight forward routes up Mount Brandon. The easier route is from the south, starting at a large religious grotto, where a path with marker posts then crosses can be followed up a long grassy ridge to the summit where there is a large cross, the fifteenth one in the sequence. This is called the Saints Route and is probably the most idiot proof route on any mountain! Another easy route, from Faha to the north, also follows



a The Mount Brandon Range from Stradbally Summit  
mainly marked path called the Pilgrim's Route, past a religious grotto and garden, but has a short, steep and loose section in the upper corrie. This is a particularly scenic and rocky corrie with a succession of stepped lakes which some call the 'Paternoster Lakes', from the Latin for 'Our Father'. The finest route up Mount Brandon also starts from Faha but follows the ridge above the path. This gives an entertaining scramble with a short knife edge arete at one point. One should note that there is also a Brandon Peak which is about 2 km south of Mount Brandon and is not a Munro! On the north side of

the Dingle Peninsula is the lovely coastal village of Castlegregory. Near here is the Anchor Caravan site where one can camp. At one end of this site is a gate which goes on to the beach and the Atlantic Ocean. Ideal for a bracing walk!

One would think that the Irish Munros would be fairly busy in the summer but the most popular peak in Ireland is not actually a Munro. It is Croagh Patrick, 764 m, near to the town of Westport and is almost in the sea. Its popularity derives from legends which say that St. Patrick himself once climbed the mountain. Some days, thousands of people can be seen ascending to the summit. Some ascend bare foot. There is even a church about half way up. For many it is a religious pilgrimage. There are other parts of Ireland well worth visiting such as Connemara so try to go over for an extended visit rather than a short Munro bash. If you want to climb your mountains on good days then allow for a few rest days as Ireland's weather is on the same track as western Scotland and many will have experience of that!

Full details, with more photos, of the routes up the Irish Munros can be found on my website: [www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk](http://www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk)

## Witnessing changes at the Big Bothy

*Simon Jefferies*

Thirty years on, bothying still holds a compelling mystique. If the weather is set fair, its pleasures are usually evident at the time; otherwise one encounters almost invariably damp episodes at these isolated former homes of crofters or tenants. The experiences may vary from the sublime to the sordid. No two are alike. Few can be described as pampering to the finer senses. Once, at Corroul, I awoke to dazzling sunshine across deep snow and a young deer peering at me through a window; on another occasion at A'Chuil, the wind roared so violently down Glen Dessarry that I thought the whole structure – solid though it is – would be blown away in an instant. There are cosy nooks alongside railway lines; others, like the Tarf Hotel, stand amid a vast inhospitable expanse of featureless moor and mountain. Several grace remote beaches or headlands. I have my favourites – though I won't let on!

It is unlikely that any club member, most of us having substantial experience in Scotland, can have failed to enjoy (or perhaps endure!) at least one encounter with this network of simple shelters, so I am clearly addressing a large and converted audience. Over the years I've come to love and greatly respect these buildings, remote or otherwise; the folk whose homes they once were, often within living memory; the simple protection they offer the weary traveller on foot or the ambitious seeker of summits; and of course the magnificent efforts made to maintain them.

Those of more than a few years' membership will remember the galaxy of celebratory events held for this club's centenary. Among these nestled a planned hut-to-hut walk from Karn House to Waters Cottage, enjoyed (sometimes) in relaxed fashion (sometimes!) over five days of April weather fair and foul. The central feature of the expedition, in terms of both distance and time, was a night spent at Culra bothy in the lee of big Ben Alder.

Culra is one of the most popular and most used, often most abused, of bothies in Scotland. Its name frequently leads to confusion with Culra Lodge, rebuilt as a private lodge and lying just above

*Simon Jefferies*

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the bothy, a few hundred metres distant. The bothy is relatively easy of access via the estate track from Dalwhinnie, although the distance from roads to the surrounding Munros (all major summits requiring full days' walking) make it almost inevitable that the bothy or its surroundings are paid an overnight visit by would-be Munroists or cross-country trampers. Hence the potential for wear and tear that has to be addressed by the Ben Alder Estate, which owns the property. Happily, the building has long been under the care and maintenance of the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA), which has spent countless work days (and much of its charitable funding) in maintaining the place in a habitable state. That isn't easy; the building is exposed to the worst that Highland weather can throw at it, and even today (2013) there remain a few structural problems. To the cynical, Culra – with Shenavall and Ryvoan and a handful of others that suffer often unwelcome intrusions by large groups and which are especially susceptible to 'trouble' – may seem hackneyed and best avoided by the true lover of wilderness. To most, including



Culra sports a lick of blue paint for the Centenary hut-to-hut team



myself, any visit never fails to be a life-enriching event, quite apart from facilitating whatever deeds one wishes to achieve on the Munros and Corbetts!

The Centenary Meet team arrived on a late afternoon of driving wind and rain, grateful not only that the bothy was almost empty – but that the two inmates, a young couple from New Zealand, had a roaring fire going and were uncomplaining when we stomped in with wet gear. Far from it; they were most pleasant and once we had arrayed ourselves comfortably around the building's different rooms, and (almost) without forcing the couple from their chosen spots, we enjoyed a convivial evening while the rain lashed against the windows. This had been a worry: that a large group might have been in prior occupation, causing a carefully planned scheme to founder with two full days still to go. Uncertainty about conditions at the bothy had been a headache until the previous night, where we'd had a very different sort of experience in the bower of the Monadhliath Hotel at Laggan. Whilst the latter would not have satisfied the purist in search of the Real Self, the hotel served a vital purpose in drying kit in readiness for a long, wet walk via Glen Shirra and Loch Pattack; and the owner was also prevailed upon to store changes of clothing and spent items both before the walk started and until we finished and could return to reclaim them. 'You're not right in the heid!' was the bemused farewell as we set out on a day that promised some rain and provided far worse.

The bothy did its job. Long before 2007 it had been equipped with raised wooden sleeping platforms that doubled as cooking ranges for our stoves. Care had to be taken to reduce the risk of wood furnishings catching fire and, even today, fire risk here is one of the MBA's major worries vis-à-vis Culra. Not having to crash out on a stone floor ensured a measure of nourishing sleep, and in the morning, with the sun making a welcome appearance, we left in good order for the shorter day across the Bealach Dubh and the less spartan comforts of Beth's at Corroul.

Comfort at Culra wasn't always guaranteed. In the mid-1980s it was a damp, cheerless place, even gloomier inside than its stark external appearance suggested. Once, I walked there from the car at Dalwhinnie with a friend with whom I hoped to bag not only Ben

Alder but also the Geal Charn ridge frowning over the bothy to the north. We arrived late, in steady rain, and with no-one in the bothy and hence no lights to guide us we made heavy going of crossing the stream (there is a bridge); in fact, finding the building was no easy matter. Having established ourselves on the stone floor of a



Culra in 1987 'a damp and cheerless place'

cold back room we did our best to cook some warm food while the wind and rain (as always) howled outside. That we didn't choose to stay in the master bedroom speaks volumes for its condition at the time: it was wet and cold with streams of water across the floor; and amid the general untidiness were beds whose springs were long past due date and mattresses that one recoiled from instantly. I'm not normally squeamish about these things, but we couldn't bring ourselves to place good sleeping bags thereupon. So we went next door.

An hour later, after a meal, our sense of growing ease was shattered by loud voices and clatterings from next door. Unsure, for a moment, whether it was this place or Ben Alder Cottage that was haunted, we tiptoed out to find twelve young men already cheerfully chucking down sleeping bags and sacks anywhere they could

find a square metre. The mess seemed to mean nothing to them. They were a contingent from Nottingham University and apparently happy to be off parental and academic leashes. They talked, shouted, sang, drank, yelped and whooped, seemingly all night. They weren't a bad lot – in fact they popped in to offer us a dram – but, och, they were noisy.

The next day, judgement clouded perhaps by over-indulgence of the Uisge and lack of sleep therefrom, we set out for a big day. The wind had reached gale pitch and we struggled to get out of the door. My plan to ascend Carn Dearg, at the eastern end of the Geal Charn ridge, and walk the ridge westwards, descending to the valley west of Bealach Dubh, was reappraised and rejected in favour of the reverse: to keep prevailing winds behind us once on the ridge. This promised a short descent to safety but meant a long tramp over the Bealach and a drop of 170 metres before we could start to ascend the SE flanks of Beinn Eibhinn, the westernmost Munro of this group. A stiff head-wind slowed us right down, but we stuck at it, aiming for the col at the head of the Chàrra Mhóir, a little way east of the summit.

It happened so suddenly. Attaining the col, with the mist quite impenetrable and against an absolutely ferocious wind, I stumbled. Or at least I think I did. In the event, I found myself in a swirl of wet snow and a resting position about 20 metres below the ridge, on the north side. Within seconds of heaving up to the col, blinded by spindrift I'd gone through a large cornice. By a stroke of good fortune I had just missed some minor cliffs marked on the map and had fallen down a more benign slope to the east. Shaken and stirred and much besides, I clambered back to join Dave who was quaking in a crouching position on the ridge. The decision was made: we would make the top if we had to crawl there on our knees (which we did) and get the hell down to the valley and safety. The other Munros would have to wait.

Our Nottingham friends had left and we enjoyed sole occupancy of Culra that night, drying things as best we could. Alas, our meagre stock exhausted, whisky was off the menu. But we slept better and the next day was a bit brighter and Ben Alder was ascended and we



Culra in 2003

went home the next day, chastened but pleased that we'd given our all.

Generations of bothy maintenance teams went to work on the place to ensure that my next visit, light years away in 2003, was more comfortable. Aonach Beag, Geal Charn and Carn Dearg had been duly ascended years before, this time from a tent, it being noted that the bothy had undergone something of a facelift. My Munro tally was long since complete, and this time I performed the role of companion to a wife who had climbed all but two. Culra now sported some fresh wooden cladding on the outside and its sparkling new wooden sleeping platforms on the inside. There were a couple of people there also: a young man who said nowt to nobody, and an older man (who we simply called 'The Man') since we never enquired as to his real name. The Man seemed content to while away three whole days just milling around the area, seeking

out corners of surrounding glens but not ascending any of the peaks or ridges. Perhaps he'd done them all a dozen times; anyway, his manner and sense of self-containment seemed the very essence of bothying for its own sake. We had cause to be indebted to The Man, for wherever he went he would return with enough fallen wood to have a good fire going that night, and never hinted that anyone else should be doing their share of hunting; he was simply there for the fun of it. I envied him, in a way. If he ever reads these lines, there are two grateful souls out there who remember him to this day.

We climbed the Short Leachas, a pleasant scramble, to the plateau of Ben Alder, and mist cleared – on cue – as we strode across the vast top, down to the deep col overlooking the extraordinary span of Loch Ericht, and over a subsidiary top to Bheinn Bheoil, where Sheila completed (Completed!) her Munros, achieving immortality as Number 2885. There was no fanfare, no big ceremony, save a miniature dram I'd saved for this moment. Then we returned to the bothy and the fire-laying skills of The enigmatic Man.

Culra shares a desirable characteristic of many bothies in that it is conveniently located to allow one-day valley or mountain traverses between it and other bothies. "Haunted" Ben Alder Cottage is relatively close, situated beside Loch Ericht at the foot of Bheinn Bheoil's south ridge. Blackburn of Pattack used to be closer still until it was lost to fire some years ago; it has never been rebuilt. Loch Chiarain, which the hut-to-hut team also visited on that memorably grim final day to Kinlochleven, is accessible in a day, even in winter. If heading to Fort William via Water of Nevis, Staoineag and Meanach make excellent stops; whilst the tramp to Lairig Leacach gives a superb day for those bound for Spean Bridge. The possibilities are almost endless.

Since the FRCC gathered in fair number and celebrated its own 100-year life span, Culra (whose vintage I cannot determine with certainty) has undergone six further years of effective maintenance, though I sense that it will always be a difficult and often thankless task to keep the place in tip-top condition. Currently the exterior is painted a subdued enviro-friendly green. There are tables now. It looks in fine fettle.

I have been an MBA member for a long time and have sporadically assisted work parties, if only to carry in materials for pending work meets. Membership is cheap and one has the satisfaction of knowing that one's meagre few pounds are going directly to support an aspect of the British hills that we should all value highly. Protocols exist between the MBA, the landowners and other countryside organisations to try to ensure that the user 'leaves the place in a better state than one finds it', and helps to protect these precious buildings in their fragile surroundings. Voluntary codes encouraging a high standard of responsibility in bothy use are established because of this very fragility.

More information is available on the MBA website:  
[www.mountainbothies.org.uk](http://www.mountainbothies.org.uk)

Note: Since this article was submitted the MBA has closed the Culra Bothy until further notice, due to asbestos having been found in the fabric of the building. It was not in such 'fine -fettle' as it appeared to be!





## Overseas Reports...

### Fresh footsteps in the snow -Antarctica 2013

*Jamie Goodheart*

Sometime in 2011, I was reading the Alpine Club quarterly newsletter when I saw a small call to arms for a yacht based Antarctic expedition. I had heard of a couple of trips like this and thought little could be more wonderful than an expedition with such varied adventure. I dismissed it as a possibility for me since it was both time and cost prohibitive. However, looking again at the newsletter a few days later, I realised that the trip was planned for later in the year than expected and that due to the mysteries of Warwick Medical School timetabling, I might have a significant block of time free at just about the right time. As soon as it had sunk in that this once in a lifetime trip was a possibility, I swung into action. Within a short time, I had arranged meetings with the Medical School (for time off), a provisional place on the expedition and further details of the trip's plans and cost. This latter aspect was a bit worrying as the trip was expensive, yet at the same time remarkably good value. This was a worry and as it turned I managed to solve much of it with a remarkable grant from the Lord Rootes Memorial Fund.

There was a fairly large amount of work required to get my ducks in a row, but eventually everything was authorized and down payments made. I was committed to the trip along with a varied team; Phil Wickens (Expedition Leader), Hannah Baker, Derek Buckle (FRCC), Mike Pinney, Stefan Jachmich (Germany), Bjorn Riis-Johannesson (Norway).

We had settled the two main objectives - Valiente (2280m) and Alencar (1592m). The picture below was the only one we had to go on. The map we used was a photo-merged satellite image straight off Google earth. There was a British Antarctic survey map of the area, but we all agreed Google earth was better.

The only other thing that I had to do was pass my pre-clinical medical exams first time round, as I was to be in Antarctica for the



Our only pre-expedition photograph - Valiente and Alencar

resists. The deal with the medical school was that if I didn't pass I didn't go...

Thankfully, after much nail biting, I got through my exams and we arrived in Ushuaia the southernmost town in Argentina, five days before we sailed; we knew that we had a fair bit of preparation to do and thought it would be a good idea to spend some more time together before we spent a month in very close quarters on the yacht.

Preparing the land rations took the best part of a day once we had bought everything we needed and packed it up.

Being a medical student, I was responsible for the health of the expedition, and had checked to see what supplies were on the yacht before leaving England, and had brought additional items as required. Despite this, I ran into problems when I actually looked at the on-board medical kit. Nearly everything was either out of date or unintelligibly (to me) Spanish. I had to do the best I could and I did create a land kit with the essentials for time in Antarctica. As part of my health remit I also ran a half day first aid course for the whole team covering the essentials of CPR and casualty management etc...

At the end of the course I ran a series of medical scenarios for the team to manage. After three successful scenarios the team embarked on their most ambitious yet, a suspected spinal injury after a fall in Antarctica. Everyone was engaged in the care and extraction of Mike Pinney in the car park outside our hostel when an Argentinian driving past with his grandmother screeched to a halt, jumped out of his car and ran over to us shouting *Ambulancia! Ambulancia!* Needless to say, our reaction to his intervention left him very confused.

We set sail from Ushuaia on the 3rd January aboard the 'Spirit of Sydney' heading east along the Beagle channel towards the coast proper. The next day we entered a calm Drake Passage followed by cape pigeons and soon Cape Horn disappeared over the horizon behind us. Next stop Antarctica, 1000km south. We started our watches: 3 hours on 6 hours off, 3 hours on 6 hours off, 3 hours on ... we soon lost track of time. This was particularly easy since after the first night the sun never set. The crossing lasted almost five days and



Our first view of Antarctica

remarkably we were becalmed for much of it, needing to motor for almost half the journey. The fearsome Drake dragon of the Southern Ocean was clearly sleeping and there was only a little seasickness.

The approach to Antarctica on 7th January was spectacular, the wind had picked up and we were under sail. I was on watch and 'land hoed'. There was something unreal about the whiteness of mountainous coast as it came into view. It had a strange bold whiteness, not dazzling, but strong and daunting.

Sixteen hours later we anchored at Vernadzky, the Ukrainian Antarctic base. We intended to spend a couple of days here, ostensibly to rest, but we also visited penguins, tested our snow gear, kayaked with leopard seals and reconnoitred our planned landing site. We did the latter with trepidation as it was far from certain that we could land. Thankfully we found an ideal location.



Skiing up the Trooz glacier to establish Camp 1; Lumiere Peak in the background

On the morning of the 9th January the 'Spirit of Sydney' pushed through brash ice toward our landing site. I never quite became comfortable with the sound of ice scratching and rasping against the hull. Our gem of a landing site was a thirty-metre wide snow slope tucked between a vertical rock-face and two kilometres of twenty-five meter high ice cliff where the Trooz glacier met the sea, the only chink in the coast's armour. We were dropped with eight days rations plus a shore cache in case the ice came in and made our extraction problematic. The land expedition had started and we were totally alone. We skied up onto the glacier for six hours before making a camp near the base of our first objective, Alencar peak.

Over the next week we climbed six unclimbed mountains from two camps. Three were fully skied - Belgica Dome (2,032m), Lancaster hill (600m) and Valiente (2200m) and the remaining three of which required us to cache our skis for the top sections - Alencar (PD-), point 1333m (PD+), and point 1459 (AD+?). On our longest day we set off for the mountain at the head of the glacier, which we



Belgica Dome

had called Belgica Dome. It was a long ski up the face, weaving round areas threatened by seracs, then across a one kilometre plateau followed by a second face to the rounded flat summit. There was an inversion that day so only the ground above 1,500m could be seen and mountains looked like islands floating in a sea of cloud. The sun was blazing and it was roasting hot. It was not very Antarctic! It took us eight hours of slogging to reach the summit and from here you could see mile after mile into the Antarctic Peninsula Plateau. I was drawn to that emptiness, I just wanted to ski into its vastness and go on and on. This however was not a good plan, so



instead the party split down age lines and those of us under sixty continued towards what we thought was the East summit of Valiente (Valiente's West Peak was the trip's main objective). Three hours later, after a number of false summits, we ran out of mountain and the ground in front of us dropped away. We were higher than



Phil Wickens on the summit ridge of Alencar Peak (1592m) with a view to the north of Pt 1333 and the Trooz glacier behind

anything around and realised we had climbed Valiente West by accident. It turned out it was also two kilometres away from where it was supposed to be according to the British Antarctic Survey! We eventually returned to Camp two after fourteen hours and a varied and enjoyable ski down.

On our seventh day on land, the obvious objectives climbed and a weather forecast showing an approaching front, we decided to call time on the foray. We called the yacht by sat phone and asked them to pick us up that evening. We packed our camp in a leisurely

manner and then skied slowly back to the shore. The journey that took us two days up the glacier took us just four hours on the way down. For most of the time you barely felt you were moving. We added the ascent of a well-known local coastal landmark, Lancaster hill, to our list of first ascents (which was very easy from the back) before being picked up without incident and greeted with a great spread of food on which we fell ravenously.

That night on the yacht, replete with food and beer, we began thinking about our next excursion. There were so many exciting opportunities and I got carried away visualizing myself on top of some really pointy peaks we had seen in the distance.

However we were brought to earth by a look at the satellite weather imagery. Our weather window had shut and low cloud and poor weather was set to blight us for at least four or five days. We had to accept that there was to be no climbing soon and that we had to hope for a break in the weather. In the meantime we decided to head to the Post Office via a couple of penguin colonies.

You did read that correctly we went to the Post Office to send some cards home. It is on an old British base where they have a museum, shop and even a postmistress. It was on our way here in the appropriately named Paradise Harbour that we met the whale.

I was sitting out on the back of the yacht and we were chugging along, motor running, across a flat sea when a hundred meters off the port side a humpback whale broke the black grey surface. A call went up and people clambered on deck to see what was going on. The single female humpback re-emerged about fifty metres away flapping a flipper to the joy of all. This showgirl was not finished however as for her next trick Fi-fi (as we started calling her) dived and swam right under the boat her fifteen metre long mass a shadow with eggshell blue highlights. By this point we were hooting, stamping and clapping as to try and keep Fi-fi interested and it seemed to work as she stayed with us for another thirty minutes going back and forth, port and starboard frolicking with barrel rolls and fin flaps. Then she started 'spy hopping' coming slowly vertically out of the water to get a good look at us. She was so close that I could have touched her deep blue barnacled snout. I have never seen an animal have the effect that Fi-fi had on all aboard. Everyone

was filled with a childlike ecstasy, grins plastered across faces as if the wind had changed at a smiling contest. The joy was palpable.



Fi-fi however almost got a little more than she bargained for. Towards the end of her visit, in my quest for an ever better photograph, I had positioned myself belly down on the smooth surface of one of the kayaks that were lashed to the deck by the bow. I had threaded the safety railings so my head and shoulders were over the side. This was a fantastic place for a photo and Fi-fi emerged directly below me like a good model.

While snapping away, both hands on the camera, the boat rocked robustly, gravity won over friction and I started to slide overboard towards Fi-fi's barnacled snout. I could not retain grip and realised I was soon to be very well acquainted with our magnificent friend. I yelled a panicked expletive as my hips left contact with the boat and quick as flash Phil grabbed my left leg. This slowed me and I managed to hook my right around the railing halting my progress towards the drink. Fi-fi meanwhile rapidly sunk under the water, clearly affected by the sight of a flailing man in close proximity, and sulkily refused to surface for a few minutes. As soon as I was safely

on the correct side of the railing everyone's mirth overflowed as contagious as the euphoria that had preceded it.

Unfortunately we never got the hoped for break in the weather. In fact our forecasts worsened with a major spell of bad weather predicted for the exposed and dangerous Drake Passage. This meant we had to head back to South America early to beat it. Our return journey followed the same program as the outward leg and the weather was a little rougher, particularly around Cape Horn. Safely in the Beagle channel, we headed to some Chilean Fjords for the



remainder of the trip, where the mountains of the Cordillera Darwin send glaciers spilling down into forests.

I wandered alone in these forests for an afternoon delighting in the wonderfully different flora and fauna, and I was lucky to run into a pair of huge Magellanic Woodpeckers and slightly less lucky to encounter an angry beaver at close quarters. Returning to the beach down the spur of a hill overlooking Caleta Olla, the bay containing our anchored yacht, I felt like Darwin himself, my notebook recoding every detail and my camera his specimen jar. This was to be the last of my wandering as the next morning we sailed back to Ushuaia and the day after, unlike Darwin, I caught the plane rather than the boat back to the UK.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Mike Pinney who tragically died after falling from a footpath in March 2014. Mike was known to and a great friend of many in the Alpine Club.

*Cherie Chapman*

Summer in 1968 (i.e. Christmas) - A party of seven trampers from The Auckland Tramping Club on a three week tramp through the Southern Alps of New Zealand. Our plan was to traverse the Alps, south to north, starting at Key Summit east of Milford Sound and finishing at the town of Wanaka in the east.

Our team was made up of mainly Kiwis, two girls and five lads, two of whom were Brits. At the age of nineteen I was the youngest in the party and although I had been tramping for three years and had spent a season working on the Milford Track this was to be my first proper tramp in the South Island.

We spent many weeks organising the trip, sorting out the logistics, arranging food, travel, and what gear to take. It was important to get this right because our only brush with civilization would come half way through the trip when we would be ferried across Lake Wakatipu by boat pre-arranged with a local sheep farmer. In 1968 this was the only way of getting to and from the Routeburn. It was possible to post food parcels to him for us to collect on our way.

As with any long trek all the food was measured, weighed and sorted into meal lots, fuel for the stove carefully calculated, and gear lists made. The rest of the team had done long trips before and seemed to know just what was required – an axe was a must for chopping fire wood, a pressure cooker also a must for quick cooking to save fuel, three tents, primus stoves, ice axes, ropes, crampons etc. along with enough food for seven people for three weeks. The pile was mounting up. The final weigh-in of our sacks was just 80lbs each for the lads, while us girls got off lightly with 50lbs a piece.

We would live off mainly dehydrated mince, cheese, rice, nuts/dried fruit, porridge and Tararua biscuits. These homemade energy bar biscuits were full of fruit and nuts, baked rock hard to keep for months - a bit like today's chewy bars, but without the chew...

Tararua biscuits, steeped in tradition, (nothing else would soak into them) are not haute cuisine and not for the feeble-jawed.

However they were developed by an unknown trumper many years ago specifically to survive the rigours of being stashed in a Christmas trip pack for two weeks alongside crampons, billies & primuses and will generally survive well any attempted attack by 'possums, rats or other vermin. ... Stories of people having to use ice axes to break them should be ignored and only testify to the lack of judgement on the part of some would-be chefs ... ([www.alpinesport.org.nz](http://www.alpinesport.org.nz))

Just getting to Foirldland was a three day expedition in itself. We left on Boxing Day, travelling to Wellington by train, to Lyttleton by ferry, then flew from Christchurch down to Manapori. We had clear weather and great views all the way down the Tasman Glacier, landing at The Hermitage at Mt Cook for a few minutes before taking off again for Queenstown, skimming past Mount Aspiring and Mount Earnslaw. Another touchdown then a short hop over the tops to Lake Manapori, finally by local buses to Key Summit in the Milford Area, .

Having seen most of our route from the air we now had to walk it! Our packs were so heavy we had to lift them on to each other's backs. We set off towards Guns camp, a logging station, and bivvied out under the stars on the back of a logging truck, a wonderful experience if you ignore being bitten to death by sand flies.

One of our objectives was to tramp out to Martins Bay on the west coast – seldom visited at that time. Perhaps it has changed, maybe the Department of Conservation has improved the track but all I remember is a long trudge through knee deep swamps being slashed by 'cutty grass' and of course - the sand flies.

After a quick glimpse of Martins Bay we left the coast, heading back towards the Main Divide and into the valleys and mountains of the Hollyford area.

Tramping through the southern beech forest is a beautiful experience, at one point I was alone on the track, lost in thought, when round the corner I came face to face with a large stag; he was so close I could have touched him! We stared at each other for just a few seconds before he bounded off into the bush.

For our first foray onto the summits we chose a peak at the head of Moraine Creek which should have only been a day's outing. After an early start up through the bush we gained a snow ridge which led



to the top. In places the snow was covered with red ash which had blown across the Tasman Sea from the recent Australian bush fires 1,200 miles away.

As we plodded up the ridge it was obvious we were running out of time and wouldn't make the summit in day light. It was then decided to return to camp, but oddly enough, not by the way we had come. The decision was taken to try and get back to base by descending down the U shaped valley to our left, and then a short walk to camp. Oh the temptations of the 'short cut'! At the time I thought it was a rather peculiar plan, but being the least experienced person in the group, what did I know?

There followed three hours of grappling with sodden ropes, down climbing and abseiling off spikes and rock bollards with just waist loops and karabiners for gear. I had not abseiled before so it was very much a case of getting on with it.

By 10 p.m., in complete darkness, we found ourselves benighted on a small ledge in the middle of a rock face with still hundreds of feet to go. It started to rain, then it snowed! The west coast is not the place to be if a storm comes rushing in from the Antarctic, but someone was looking out for us that night, because by dawn the rain and snow had stopped and at first light we were able to carry on with our laborious descent. We arrived back at camp at two o'clock in the afternoon just as the sun began to shine. We had survived! A lot was learnt from that adventure.

Having recovered from our ordeal we flogged our way up to Harris Saddle on the Routeburn track via Deadmans Track, a vertical climb out of the Hollyford valley, and a tough mission with our weighty sacks. Once again we were caught out in the dark and we bivvied in the new A frame shelter near the summit; to save fuel we cooked our rice in the pressure cooker, using candles once the cooker was up to speed.

We were now behind in our schedule and we had to hurry on down the Routeburn in order to meet the boat we had arranged to ferry us across Lake Wakatipu. It was almost dark when we got to the lake side and our man had been waiting quite a while. The breeze was whipping up a few white caps out on the lake and our open boat did not look very big. Once loaded with eight people and

seven heavy sacks it looked even smaller and the odd wave sloshed over us as we gingerly made our way across to the other shore.

The weather improved on our trek up the Dart valley. Our stores had been replenished and the three day hike up the valley felt almost like a holiday until we hit Chinaman's Bluff, where the river has cut so close to the track we had to climb up high to avoid it. It was here that one of our team went missing. He didn't arrive in camp that evening but as he was the eldest and most experienced trumper amongst us we weren't terribly bothered. Sure enough next morning just as the breakfast rice was ready he stumbled out of the bush saying he hadn't got lost, 'Just temporarily misplaced'.

We used huts where we could. Most huts were very small tin shelters with a fireplace and chimney at one end, but the Dart Hut was better than most. It was here that I spent my 20th Birthday. Unknown to the rest of the team, along with my 50lb allocation, I had carried a bottle of Cherry Brandy to celebrate the occasion. It was surprising how quickly it 'disappeared' and I was glad to be relieved of its weight!

Our next objective was crossing the Cascade Saddle between the Dart and Matukituki Valleys. The views from here were amazing. The Saddle had quite a reputation as it was a steep, trackless mountain side covered in snow grass that is treacherous in wet conditions and in the past there had been deaths caused by trampers slipping and being unable to stop themselves. I recall we roped up to descend this section over soft new snow.

There followed a long descent and plod down to the beautiful Mt. Aspiring Hut owed by the NZAC. Here we met the first fellow trampers of our entire trip. Apart from our ferryman we hadn't encountered anyone for over two weeks.

A day was spent in that comfy hut – but before we got too cosy we set off on our last objective, Mt. Aspiring. The weather was good the day we left the AC hut; we toiled up through yet more bush covered mountain sides to arrive at French Ridge hut at 5,500'. Not the new palatial one there today but an 8' x 10' corrugated shed that only just managed to sleep all seven of us. No gear could be left outside otherwise the Keas would make off with it. These mountain parrots are so cute, but are a real pest. We turned our backs for just

a moment and within minutes a Kea had torn a hole through one sack and was hauling out the contents with its beak. We were woken in the morning to the sound of Keas dropping pebbles onto the tin roof, followed by a bird hanging upside down peering in the window as much as to say 'Did you like that'.

Later clouds were building up in the west and the weather was looking uncertain. The team thought perhaps a storm was brewing and the decision was taken not to venture out across the glacier for the summit. I think we were all rather relieved at this decision following our earlier exploits and were not too disappointed when we descended back into the valley.

All that was left was for us to hike out to the road head and hopefully hitch-hike into Wanaka. Luckily we all somehow got lifts and we regrouped for a final nights celebration together before going our separate ways. A memorable trip in every way. This was to be my last tramp in NZ for some time as two weeks later I left New Zealand on my overseas travels.

## An Introduction to the Central African Mountains of Malawi

*Ken Fyles*

The Central African Mountains are to be found in the south of Malawi. They span an area about the size of the Lake District and rise from a plateau of about 2,500ft to nearly 10,000ft. There are seven huts on the mountain range belonging to the Mountain Club of Malawi (MCM) and one belonging to the CCAP church. The huts lie generally between the contours of 6,000 and 7,000ft.

The normal starting point for a tour of the mountains is Likabula. There is a cheap but comfortable hostel here run by the CCAP (take your own food) or if you want to pay a bit more there is the nearby Likubula Lodge with all the comforts of a small hotel.

It is worth hiring a guide for any trip as the mountains are complex particularly Sapitwa the highest mountain whose summit is protected by a maze of deep channels. A mountain guide costs about 2500 Kwacha per day (420 Kwacha to the pound sterling). Porters cost 2000 Kwacha per day and will happily carry 18Kg – they are just glad of the work. Guides and porters are best hired from the office of 'Infomulanje' in Mulanje town. The cost of their services is 500 Kwacha per group

At huts, there is a warden who will provide wood and light the fire, provide hot water for a bath if you want one, and wash dishes clean after a meal. It is normal to tip the warden 100 Kwacha per person per day for good service. Four mattresses are available at each hut but it's wise to take a Thermarest or Karrimat just in case the hut is busy. Hut fees are about 1000 Kwacha per night including the forestry park entry fee.

You can do a hut to hut trip on good paths or pop off mountain summits along the way. The mountains are of compact syenite granite and most of the higher mountain summits will require some grade 1 scrambling.

The mini-bus ride to Likabula from Mulanje takes about 30 minutes and costs about 400 Kwacha per person. The following



story uses the different starting point of Tinyade about one hour around the mountain range from the town of Mulanje.

Young George's first visit to the Mulanje Mountains – an ascent of Nandalanda and Chinzama Summits.

The most popular summit to visit on the Central African mountains is the highest, Sapitwa at 3002 metres. However, I and my eldest Malawian son Allan had already climbed this peak. It was time to look for new territory.

I arrived at Mulanje with three Malawians, Allan (22), Noel (19) and young George aged 14 years. The plan was to hire a guide and a porter at Infomulanje and make a 4-day mountain trek starting at Tinyade. Allan suggested hiring a taxi to the start point as long as the cost could be held at 7000 Kwacha. I agreed that a taxi at this

price would be preferable to waiting for a mini-bus. Several minutes later, Allan arrived having hired a pick-up truck for 7000KW. All seemed well until the pick-up truck driver turned into the Likubula Road. I stopped the truck and asked what was going on? The driver said he wanted an additional 7000 to continue to Tinyade – we had been tricked and it was the first time I'd ever known this type of behaviour in Malawi. After haggling for what seemed an eternity we agreed to pay a further 3000KW to continue to Tinyade.

At Tinyade, no sign of the porter and guide. A telephone call to Infomulanje suggested there'd been a mix up in the start point. A few minutes later a guy named Arthur arrived by cycle with the message that the guide and porter had been waiting at the Thuchilla Station some three kilometres away. After long delays it was 1:45p.m. before we started the trek to Thuchilla hut. This is normally regarded as a four hour trek and we wanted to reach the hut before



Nandalanda from the Thuchilla Hut. The mountain on the right is Khuto



nightfall. We made haste and actually arrived at a mist shrouded Thuchilla Hut at 4:15pm.

A large UK group containing also Canadian and Japanese residents were occupying all three rooms of the hut. Fortunately the leader asked that one of the rooms be vacated for us, a really generous gesture. The UK group had attempted to climb Sapitwa from Thuchilla (it is normally climbed from Chisepo hut at Chisepo Junction) but they had aborted the climb as late morning mist rolled in.

We slept well in our private room and got up early for the traverse of Nandalanda Peak to Chinzama hut. The guide preferred to descend Nandalanda back to Thuchilla and take the normal path round to Chinzama but armed with my Mulanje Massif map, I was having none of it. The guide agreed a safe traverse seemed possible and we left Thuchilla at 7a.m. Independently, some of the UK group also decided Nandalanda was their best chance of a Mulanje Peak and they met us part way up the mountain.

I'd chosen Nandalanda (8,505ft) as a summit because I'd climbed it before with Ian Craven and knew it to be a safe but interesting rocky ascent for the young George. There are a few tricky problems near the top as you cross over into a cave system but our guide, Grey, had these well thought out so that we could pass in good safety. The UK group was not far behind and met us on the summit. The UK guys were unusual in that they spoke fluent Chichewa (the local language). One of them had worked in Malawi for five years whilst the other had worked ten years with no thought of returning to the UK. The third member of the small UK team was a native Malawian who had worked in the UK.

The views from Nandalanda summit are stupendous. The steep slabs of neighbouring Khuto offer a difficult scrambling challenge, a little bit easier than they look, and reminiscent of the Dubh Ridge on Skye. The distant Chambe mountain looks formidable from all sides but again there is a grade 1 scramble to its summit from Chambe hut. The most interesting fact about Chambe from a rock climbers point of view is that it gives rock routes of 1000ft to 5000ft length. All these climbs are on compact granite where belays are scarce often only vellozia plants. These routes would be transformed

by good bolts at main belays. Descriptions can be found in Frank Eastwood's 'Guide to the Mulanje Massif', printed 1979.

Grey had a good nose for Nandalanda mountain and traversed off by the summit ridge in the direction of Chinzama hut. Eventually, steep ground on the right relented to more amenable gullies and traverses. Even on the wet ground from the previous day of rain and mountain mist the route was safe but needed a non-reliance on slippery footwork and much use of grasping hands on rock and sod to descend. It wasn't long before the contours relented and we were on relatively safe ground. We could see the Minunu – Thuchilla path



Noel, George, Allan and the author on the summit of Nandalanda, with a shrouded Chambe in the background

below and made a short cut on easier ground towards it. A quick right then left turn brought us onto the normal Minunu – Chinzama path and we arrived at Chinzama Hut in extremely quick time at midday. The porter Pompa had not yet arrived so we relaxed while the warden prepared a fire ready for the food to arrive.

Young George was made up with the hut life. He spent much time talking to the guide, porter, watchman and the many forestry workers who were visiting the hut to burn new fire breaks. As an orphan never before had he had so much adult male company laughing and joking in his own language and it enthralled him. Of course we still saw George at meal times, then he was off to hear, no doubt, yet new tall stories of daring and deed. Noel was keeping a close eye on him whilst I and Allan relaxed on the terrace of the hut. A foul smell was wafting our way from the camp fire. I'd no idea what it was then Noel turned up with a couple of mice for us to eat. Apparently everything is eaten except the contents of the stomach – lovely. Allan gave me a small piece of mouse meat to try – it just tasted of smoke.

Chinzama is a lovely hut in beautiful surroundings. The distant craggy ridge connecting Nandiwo, Chagaru and Namasile summits beckons further exploration but this was for another day.

Our next goal was to climb Chinzama Peak (8,748ft). We set off after a late breakfast at about 8am taking the normal path towards Madzeka Hut until a fire break on the right led to easily angled, rocky slabs. These slabs were good training for the steeper ground which lay above. George on his first Mulanje trip was getting nervous but was persuaded to continue with a guard following closely behind him. We reached a subsidiary summit with a steep rocky drop. No descent possible here. We had to descend the ridge until a relatively safe crossing could be made across rocks and potholes to the main part of Chinzama Mountain. We found the normal marked red-paint route and followed rocky slabs, less steep than before, leading to the top of the mountain.

Chinzama has a curious summit, in fact, it takes quite a while to determine where the true summit is amongst the jungle of rocks. I'd been here two years before and knew the true summit was quite difficult to attain being protected by steep unclimbable rock on two sides and deep chasms on the other two sides. Two years earlier, I'd crossed one deep chasm to a rocky slabby ridge but under the possible condition of wet rock, such an attempt was fool hardy. Another way across a gap to a wall seemed more likely. Gingerly I sat down



Dzole, Khuto and Nandalanda seen from Chinzama mountain

on one edge of the chasm and touched the other side with one of my feet. There was sufficient grip and balance to get an upright position to lean over to the rocky wall. A thin traverse of about moderate to difficult standard in the climbing grades followed to the true summit. Allan was wanting to follow but having less experience than me on climbing rock, he wisely decided to leave it for another day.

We spent a good hour on this lovely summit plateau having a picnic lunch and investigating its rocky outcrops and incredible views of the surrounding mountains. The line of Khuto, Dzole and Nandalanda mountains looked stupendous. Then we descended via the normal, marked route to the Madzeka – Chinzama path

below arriving at the hut at about 2pm. George had got over his fright of steep rock and went to join the older guys around their camp fire no doubt to hear yet more funny reminiscences of life. Allan and I went to bathe in the cool waters of the mountain stream until the sun lost its heat of the day.

Our last day took the Jungle Path back to Thuchilla Station (now often called Bengazi by the locals). It was a lovely descent and I never tired of listening to the wind in the trees and the grass, the distant gurgling of the stream in the valley floor, and the changing animal and bird sounds around us. Being stealthily quiet, we saw blue monkeys swinging high in the tree tops before they heard us.

Then to Thuchilla Station – Bengazi? It was Sunday, market day, and the full noise and bustle of the village was around us. We waited for a minibus to Mulanje or Limbe but the very few that came by from Phalombe were full and could take no more passengers. Eventually a truck came by loaded with grain and bicycles and we hopped aboard for a 500 Kwacha ride to Mulanje occasionally stopping to collect yet more bags of produce.

Our four day, three night trek was over, no casualties, no injuries, and a new adventure of life for Noel and especially young George.

## On foot through a peace zone

*Paul Exley*

The sprayed-over, Serbian versions of place names on the road signs were reminiscent of the hooliganism that used to be rife in North Wales. Evidently there was a faction here that wanted to make clear its feelings towards even the language of the former oppressors. The difference here – and it was a huge difference – was that no attempts had been made to ethnically cleanse Wales.

We were in Kosova, a country independent since 2008. It had, until recently, been known as Kosovo and had been part of Serbia. The advice was to use the former, Albanian, pronunciation; the latter was, like the place names, used by the oppressors and, therefore, to be avoided. In fact, the independence of Kosova is disputed by Serbia and many other countries, primarily from the ex-communist bloc. It's mainly countries with western cultures that support its independence.

Our base for the first couple of days was amid lush hills in the town of Pejë, formerly Peć, at the very comfortable house of Lendita, who had organised this part of the trip. To fulfil his ambition to travel entirely on foot from Kosova through Montenegro into Albania, Richard Hargreaves had planned the walk to spend as much time as possible in the Balkans Peace Park, a mountainous area including parts of all three countries. Among the objectives of the Park are

the desire to bring more money into the area by encouraging cross-border mountain trekking and other 'sustainable visitor activities', and to nurture coopera-



Map of proposed peace park area.



tion in the care of the environment between the communities of the three countries.

During the last fifteen years there had been a campaign of destroying or desecrating mosques and 'encouraging' Muslims to leave, leading to over a million Albanian Kosovars, out of a total population of two million, becoming refugees. This was followed four years later by a second campaign of destruction, this one targeting dozens of Serbian Orthodox churches. The country is now overwhelmingly Muslim with the small numbers of Serbs in UN-protected enclaves. None of this was apparent to us except when we wanted to visit the Patriarchate, a Serbian Orthodox monastery. The entrance was guarded by soldiers of KFOR, in a camouflaged armoured car, who checked our passports before allowing us to enter.

And yet, to our eyes at least, the town looked perfectly normal. There were no aspects of dress that identified any of the people as belonging to any specific faith. In this atmosphere, it was weird to be given first hand accounts from people who had been given ten minutes to board this bus to Albania or that bus to Montenegro or else have their houses burned down with them inside. Now it all looked so normal, but the water supply was off for much of the day and evening.

The real journey started with a long walk up the Rugova gorge, a deep, steep-sided, naturally twisting canyon with its slim foot just big enough to accommodate a torrent and a narrow road, fortunately not very busy. Avalanche debris was still visible at the feet of gullies below the road, even now, in June. We were given a huge welcome at our next stop, a lovely, rustic farmhouse half way up the mountain and, after a fine, traditional meal, encouraged to watch the cows being milked – by candle-light as there were problems with the electricity.

Then, on the Tuesday, we started the mountaineering. Up through meadows carpeted with flowers of all colours and varieties until we reached the undulating, steep-sided limestone ridge of Hajla 2403m which forms the local border with Montenegro. We get used to it in the Alps but, as one of an island nation, it still seems

strange to stand with feet in different countries. From here the views were extensive – a lot of Montenegro and Kosova of course but right



Looking eastwards on Hajle 2403m. Montenegro on the left; Kosova on the right

across westwards to the mountains of Albania as well. As we surveyed the serenity of the beautifully rolling uplands and mountains, it was surreal to think of the strife and bloodshed that had been visited on the area only a few years earlier.

A gorgeous day of calm, sunny weather, beautiful scenery and endless flowers. On the descent, we passed a graveyard with many recent graves – a sad reminder of the recent war. We're accustomed to crosses on graves but didn't expect the miniature minarets and crescents on some of the graves we passed on our journey. We finished the day at a hotel on the western side of the valley. This had a central bar and restaurant and several cabins which had evidently been built to a good standard but had evidently not been main-



A new graveyard in Plav. A result of the recent war

tained very much in the past few years. From the terrace, as we were rehydrating ourselves, we had pointed out to us, far below in the valley, a Catholic church that had been rebuilt with donations from the local Muslim people after all the villages in Rugova had been destroyed in the ethnic cleansing programme in the 1990s.. We were told that their ancestors had been Catholic before the Ottoman Empire became dominant. This seemed to us as poignant as it was surprising after all we had heard of the ethnic and religious wars in the area. Perhaps it was a very practical effort to show an intent to live together peacefully.

Wednesday was our last in Kosova and our first in Montenegro. Up initially through steep forest, short, narrow, limestone valleys and spurs to gain the open grassland, once again with a profusion of flowers, springs and clear, gushing streams. At length we bade farewell to Jolë who had looked after us so well and said hello to Admir on the Montenegrin border. We also said goodbye, for the time being, to the Albanian language and exercised our few words of Montenegrin. Richard had arranged official clearance for us to cross the borders away from roads but, nevertheless, we were visited by officialdom at our last Kosovan stop and had our passports inspected at the first Montenegrin town.

On our descent to Bobina Polja, an attractive, narrow, wooded valley and passing a mature forest and a large new house both wrecked by a recent avalanche, we were told that, during the worst of the troubles there had been forty thousand refugees in the valley. Unlike us walking in shorts and tee shirts with light sacks, that multitude had travelled over the pass in the winter snows, poorly dressed and carrying what they could of their belongings. Another feeling of unreality.

We spent nights in a comfortable climbing club hut, a rural hotel and a more luxurious hotel on the shores of the serene Lake Plav. Interestingly, when we asked for a glass of water at the rural hotel, our hostess took a jug outside, filled it from the river (fed by a multiplicity of the vigorous Ali Pasha springs) and used it to fill glasses. She explained that, although they had mains water, they only used it for flushing the toilet or washing!

We passed a 'rest' day pounding the streets of the small town of Plav, exploring its teeming indoor market, an ancient stone tower and a small museum in a private house, filled with a huge variety of domestic knick-knacks. Very pleasant, peaceful café-culture sort of place. In the evening, and from the security of an indoor restaurant, we witnessed a magnificent lightning storm over the lake.

One of our excursions was to climb steeply through a quarry (this in a National Park) onto the almost vertically sided mountains bordering the Grbaje valley. There we lunched on a narrow spur above the precipitous valley face whilst performing a rendition of 'Happy Birthday' accompanied by Richard on his piccolo to celebrate Gail's birthday. Then a circuit of other shapely peaks before finding and examining Neolithic carvings, resembling matchstick men, on a table of rock.

During the next day, with the valley full of cloud, we climbed a subsidiary summit of Visitor 2,210m and were treated to a spectacular inversion as we gained height above the hotel and lake. Steep limestone country with, as ever, a huge number and range of flowers and wide views.

The crossing of the final border, into Albania, was achieved under the weight of our big and little rucksacks, the only time we had to carry them both. The border was an imaginary line across the bed



of a lake, dry for us at this time of year, without any more definite symbol. Our Albanian guide, Pavlin, had arranged a horse and handler to carry the big sacks along a former trade route, now so much overgrown that we had to hack some trees out of the way to allow the horse and rucksacks to pass. After passing a dreary, crumbling army base and weird machine-gun pods – remnants of the Hoxha regime's defensive system – we climbed steeply, partly on track and partly on a confusion of jumbled boulders and snow to our highest and best summit of the holiday – Arapit 2,217m. Well



On Arapit, looking back towards Montenegro

above the tree line, its summit was a lookout in one direction to our Ropojana valley of Montenegro and, in the other, the Thethi valley of Albania and far beyond. Down there, uncomfortably distant, lay

our stop for the next couple of nights. Almost endless zigzags led us into trees, initially dwarf varieties and then, as we anticipated a long valley walk on rough tracks, to a fresh spring and Pavlin's 4WD – most welcome sights.

The next day we explored the idyllic, pastoral upper valley served only by an excessively rough track. We watched men cutting hay with scythes, admired neatly cultivated fields and were shown round a stone-built security tower and then a folk museum by a voluble Jessica, eight years old, and her grandmother. It seems that, back in the days of family vendettas, the tower was used as a sanctuary for those next in line for assassination whilst a friend sought to mediate.

The next day was spent walking over an 1,800 m pass from Thethi at 741 m for another farm guesthouse night in Valbona before being driven up a winding, dusty track to Çerem and then further up to a limestone ridge snaking along for several miles and carrying the obvious remains of wartime trenches, now softened by vegetation. This brought back memories of similar trenches in the same sort of rock high above Dolomite valleys. Then back down to the village for a feast, eaten sitting cross-legged on cushions before the long journey down to Bajram Curri in preparation for an early start for the ferry next morning. This was a ferry like no other. It was basically a single-decker bus mounted on a barge. The driver sat in a traditional bus-driver's seat and steered with the steering wheel. Quite bizarre. For the next two and a half hours, we were taken down the fjord-like upper reservoir of a hydro system with stops to take on more passengers using scary, narrow and wobbly planks for boarding. No health and safety inspectors there!

Thence, by minibus, down to Schkodër and a very comfortable hotel. We had the afternoon available to explore this busy town and found, close beside the large mosque, both Catholic and Orthodox churches – an example, perhaps, of religious tolerance and coexistence in a region where differences are mostly ethnic, not religious. In fact, there is a long tradition of Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims joining in each others' festivals. Finally, the journey to Tirana and the flight home to end a fascinating, two weeks journey of wonder, exploration, new horizons and increased understanding.



## Echo

The moon is almost full  
As it was in June  
More use now: Spain in October  
Where day snaps into dark.

The rock hot to touch,  
The insects loud,  
The whole sky bright.  
We covet wind and mist.

The Cuillin distant now,  
The wet, well-trodden rock,  
False trails, the downhill sweep,  
Of gully and slab and scree.

On one hand, clear air,  
The other, blank cloud,  
And new rain, fast-falling,  
Commanding retreat.

A long, long day.  
And yet in Spain, an echo.  
The ridge, the rubble slope,  
Uncertain rock.

Care when climbing,  
All in our hands and heads.  
Experience being  
What saves us from moonlit climbs.

Happy we picnic on top,  
Testing the echo.  
A cool breeze, view of the eastward sea,  
A knot, a bolt for the ab.

Headlamp in pocket in case.  
We did not plan  
To learn to climb the rope,  
And watch the waxing moon.

*Rosemary Scott*

## Anyone for Sham?

*John Leigh*

I would like to share with you my first climbing trip to France. The whole story is almost true with only a couple of embellishments. The group had a natural divide between 'Top team' Arthur, Jim & John B. and the 'Youth team' Brian, Graham, John and me.

It was Tuesday night in the Railway Arms, Leigh. It was April, 1966, and we had just returned from an evening throwing ourselves at the mighty walls of Brownstones quarry near Bolton which in places reared up to five metres. Arthur's boys were trying to sort out the next two weeks Easter holiday. Above the din Arthur cried out 'anyone for Sham.' 'Yey' came the instant reply, 'right we meet in here Friday night, bring your gear and if you have a passport bring that as well.' A few odd glances at the need for a passport but Arthur knew best, it was in Scotland was it not?

On Friday evening the two teams gathered, dumping our sacks into the back of Arthur's once white Bedford van, Arthur was pleased to announce that the College mechanics had given the van a once over to ease the minds of all the group familiar with the reliability of his van. He then collected our passports, apart from Graham who had not got one. The meeting was called to a close at 11:30 pm and we fell into the Bedford van, top team in the front and the youth team in the back, none of the youth teams noticed we were heading south. Several hours later the sound of the van driving up a metal ramp told us we were boarding a ferry and the next thing was Arthur ordering everybody out. Semi drunk and confused we climbed the stairs only to discover to our joy there was a bar and it was open. Eventually a loud speaker told everyone to return to their vehicles and we climbed back in the van. The sound of the van leaving the ferry, and the motion as it sped away down the road soon had us all fast asleep.

At some point Graham propped himself up to look forward and fell back with a look of terror, Arthur was driving flat out on the wrong side of the road and the other two were fast asleep. We all

had a careful peep and it was Brian that noticed that the road signs where in French. Where was Arthur going?

Calm was restored and the day drifted on until Arthur cried out 'That's ours, don't anybody move.' That was the wrong thing to say as four sleeping bodies leapt up to see what was ours. We where just in time to see one of our rear wheels racing us down the road. As the van drifted to a halt and listed to the side the youth team leapt into action- Arthur ordered us to go get it back. Enjoying the activity we ran down the road, passing several French cars in various states of parking and not really understanding the ancient English sport of wheel running. invented by Boudica. Along with the merry song of 'Three wheels on our Bedford, but we ...' Attaching the wheel was a bit of a problem until Arthur thought of taking a nut of each of the other wheels. The song then changed to 'Three nuts on each wheel, but we....' 'Shut up' said Arthur, so we all went back to sleep. Early the next morning the back doors flew open and Arthur declared we had arrived. We all fell out, already in our sleeping bags and I fell asleep trying to make out the strange star. With daylight a cry of 'you cannot be serious' rang out, as the star turned out to be the light on the Aiguille du Midi.

You will have worked out by now that Sham was in fact Chamonix. The Biolay was a piece of waste land between Chamonix and the railway. It was wasted even more by the motley collection of climbers of all nationalities existing there in various states of uncouthness. The police called in regularly but wanting no trouble they always switched on their siren as they approached, giving time for the really naughty people to clear off.

After a day's rest Arthur decided that the youth team would do the route Albert on the M, or was it the M route on the Albert? Anyway a piece of scribbled paper was produced with a description translated by Arthur from a German guide which in turn had been translated from a French guide. To make absolutely sure he had bought a postcard and had drawn a line on it for us.

The next morning we wasted good beer money on a train ride to the top; there was a valley full of ice to our left so we headed off right. The postcard was a waste of money as it was taken from the air and we where looking up at miles of rock. Eventually a majority deci-

sion was made about which bit of rock was ours, and we prepared to climb. It was noticed that it was now 1 o'clock and the guide suggested it would take six hours, however that was French Guide time and we had been honed in Anglezarke and Langdale.

Another majority decision was taken which meant that I was to start off with my new rope. The sacks were emptied of all unnecessary items, the rope tied on and with a few bits of tat with some engineering nuts and tapes the fun began. After what seemed a long way I found a peg, which meant we where on some route at least. Calling down about my discovery the cry came back, 'Clip it you plonker', and so the afternoon was set in motion. Progress was steady and at one point after an impressive pull through an overhang I decided that a jump was called for (this was pre-dyno days), the resulting fall left me in space about 20 feet out and horizontal from Graham. Having his back to me he called up the crag 'are you cruising mate'. The reply, from just behind his head surprised him. The system in those days was to belay round the waist, but due to a tangle in the rope he had the rope in one hand and was shaking the tangle with the other. Two lessons in one, gravity and friction.

Very late in the day we all arrived at a sort of ledge, no progress could be made up and the sun had gone down. At this point Brian decided that he had a toilet function to perform. Again a majority decision was taken that he would not do it on the ledge, so placing ultimate trust in a peg he braced himself out over space and we all held our noses. This ruled out any idea of retreat down the route. He did however find a good use for Arthur's route guide.

The air was crystal clear and as we gazed out into space from our ledge we could see the inhabitants of the Biolay site filter across the bridge to participate in a few bevvies. Much later they made their way back across the bridge but this time they where being rather silly, walking along the bridge railings, jumping cars (and failing), climbing lamp posts (the easy ones with holes in them).

Safe in the belief that a helicopter rescue was not imminent, we settled down for the evening, each of us trying to eat what food we had without letting the others know we had any. With daylight, a traverse line was spotted and within the hour we where all safe on top of very rocky summit. Coiling the ropes, we took in the magnif-

icent view and then looking at each other said 'well, how do we get off?' Brian confessed that it must have been on that paper!

Eventually the problem was solved when voices were heard below us, and a rope of three was spotted coming up a ridge. A short abseil and a long down climb had us in a gully and eventually back at the base of the climb. The walk down through the meadows got us back to the Biolay by late afternoon, to be greeted by Arthur saying he hadn't enough food for you lot, so go shopping. Arthur sent Brian and myself down to the shop for nine eggs, I paid for my nine eggs, it confused the assistant but *neuf oeuf* was the only French they would trust me with. Brian came out of the shop with a 3 kg. bag of potatoes up his sweater.

That evening as we crossed the bridge the four of us turned to look up into the sky at the dark summits. Comfortable in the knowledge that we were safe for the moment, but not knowing that in the following days the *Grepon* would spit us off.



From the Aiguille du Midi at dawn : *Tony Simpkins*

## Crossing the Tempo La

*Hattie Harris*

The root cause of our ill-equipped crossing of the Tempo La lay with the nervousness of the Indian Government, of course. A flurry of activity on the border of Ladakh with Pakistan precipitated closure of all but the most standard Ladakhi destinations, and our planned trek was re-routed at the last minute by the Delhi expedition company to Lahaul. The new trek seemed reasonably unchallenging, except for its culmination in the crossing of an unfrequented pass. The altitude of the Tempo La was not great, 4,920m, and the pass was reported to have been a standard short-cut before the motor road from Manali to Leh was built. The illusion of a zig-zag pony track was created – from where? – and we left England comfortably equipped for gentle trekking.

When we arrived in India and purchased trekking maps we found on the back an ominous warning in a note of guidance, indicating that the Tempo La was straightforward, except that after August 12th the crevasses on the glacier would have opened. We were due to cross on August 13th (and Friday as well) and were not equipped for glaciers. We found the comment interesting. A second surprise, interpreted as sinister only in retrospect, was the arrival of an elite, freelance mountain guide, Tashi. We discovered mutual friends, he was an entirely charming companion, but for ten days or so his presence seemed perhaps surplus to requirements. He lightly adopted a position of intellectual superiority by attempting to teach us the Latin names of Himalayan wild flowers, and was happy to take two of us on a reccy up a side glacier on a rest day.

Other expedition clients included Fell and Rock member Paul Roberts, a seventy five year old of enviable fitness, my tent-sharer whom I will call Ruth, who brought with her all the freshness of vision of the first-time trekker and some slower members. Our capable leader was a quiet mountain man from the Garwhal, with an Indian cook and assistants. The Nepalese porters were headed by an elderly man of great character, whom we referred to as Gumboots (we never discovered his name), to whom we all deferred. It was the



usual social and racial mix of a trekking team on the Indian subcontinent and the quality of all the staff was excellent.

August 12th found us slogging up a moraine-covered glacier between cliffs, enjoying the waterfalls cascading down on either side. At the valley head, we pulled up to a shelf with enough flat for all the tents. It was cold and bleak, with a view up one of the most desolate glaciers I'd ever seen. Tashi was always on top of life: 'I am always happy' he said, but admitted to me that the glacier on the far side was likely to be crevassed and we would have to find ways around. He was also full of stories about the wisdom of pushing ahead over a pass in poor weather, and not waiting on the wrong side while a foot of snow falls ...from which I suspected that he anticipated a challenge.

My diary notes the next day, the fateful 13th, as the toughest in my mountaineering experience. Paul ranked it as his toughest in the Himalayas. At 6 a.m. the surrounding mountain tops were clear, but with the sky ominously, weirdly grey. The barometer had plummeted. We moved off early, all together in line for 300m of steep uphill. The situation was not one of great objective danger, but there were about thirty of us, with two ice axes and a short piece of rope. We had to stand and wait, poised, for long periods while Tashi and Khem chipped and cut. And then the bad weather came in: an icy, biting wind, making you bend down and hope not to be knocked off balance on the frozen slope. Huge snowflakes whirled past thickly and the mist obscured both ends of the line of people from my position in the middle. On and on. No pause at the summit, just a desperate wish to get over into better shelter. Soft snow on rocks was not difficult to descend. Was it about 11 a.m? The smallest porter, very young and cold, dropped his bag, which bounded down alarmingly fast and far, but was recovered without damage. An easy and enjoyable snow slope brought us to the big test of the glacier. It was still snowing hard, cold and misty. Paul and I were near the back together and we looked down at the long line of porters, green transparent covers over their loads, snaking around like a bizarre congo circumventing crevasses. We congo'd on down in a fairly orderly fashion as it grew steeper and more difficult. I particularly disliked narrow bridges between crevasses where a slip

would be a tumble to eternity, but Paul let me put hands on his shoulders and I followed. There were long halts while, from the rear, we saw Tashi with the rope around his waist move forwards prodigally. (Whether the rope would have been any use is dubious. Later in the evening Tashi laughed: 'Those porters have no idea about belays! I would turn around, and they would just hold the rope up so!') And there were two or three crossings, with a rope to hold, and down and along and up...the co-ordination and helping hands in the right place were wonderful teamwork, so morale and confidence remained high.



Suddenly, the sun came out and in a few minutes we were in a crowd of laughing, joking porters on an island of moraine at the junction of two glaciers. It looked fearsomely steep behind where we had come from. The mountaineering team went off to prospect the route. Gumboots took charge of both us clients and his Nepalis, commandeered meagre residual morsels of food, mostly nuts and

raisins, and passed them round. The Nepalese were all highly amused by our application of suncream. Jollity prevailed.

We got off the glacier and, astonishingly, there was a path, traversing above the snout. The porters skipped ahead confidently, the mountaineering team held back with the slower members and Ruth and I pushed on steadily enjoying the view down the valley, though the campsite, as ever, was thought to be just out of sight. Shouts from below drew our attention to the portering team and Gumboots, now on the moraine, waving wildly and giving directions (but not in English)...Ah! we had to pass over these rock cliffs and then across and then – great disappointment, the descent route was a long landslip of wet, unstable mud and scree. Dangerous it was not, difficult – not really, as gravity would bring you down whatever, but dignity was not an option. And we had an audience. Twenty pairs of Nepalese eyes gazed up with solicitous amusement. Following Ruth's admirable example, we played for laughs as we floundered down. As we stepped with grateful relief onto terra firma at last, there was an enthusiastic burst of applause, to which we responded with a bow.

Then it was no longer difficult, just quite a long way and we arrived at the porters' tent, still just in daylight, tired but not exhausted. 'Pudding now off the menu' says my diary. 'Brilliantly starry night'.

Next morning was gloriously sunny, with a hard, hard frost. Everyone was keen to get going quickly and some staff went ahead early. It was Alpine scenery, with glaciers behind us, crags all round, meadows of flowers in a steep, narrow valley. Paul, Ruth, Tashi and I trundled along in a foursome as moraine gave way to shepherds and sheep, and then a little encampment where a family party were collecting roots for incense. We were invited to tea. The three smiling ladies were highly amused by our questions. No, indeed, no other trekkers had come over the Tempo La that year! The lunacy of the English travellers was clearly implied!

On down we went, and were among fields when the cook boy (of the advance party) came up to meet us with a bottle of water. 'One piece of good news' said Tashi, 'is that the bus is just down there out of sight.' 'Two pieces', I replied, 'I see a bridge over the stream below'.

'And three pieces' said Tashi, coming out of a field a few minutes later with a handful of pods, 'There are fresh peas to eat' and he distributed them.

Finally and miraculously at the bottom was Mr. Fix-it from the trekking company, with our bus. Mr. Fix-it, who was not a mountain man, had had an unpleasant night. The blizzard that had caught us on the Tempo La had engulfed him and the bus temporarily on the Rohtang La, adding fuel to his uncertainty about the fate of us, his trekking clients. Mutual relief added to the euphoria of success and a lavish picnic made a celebratory party.



Kathy Grindrod on Kipling Groove: *Dave Willis*

## NEW CLIMBS

Below is a summary of developments in the last few years of new routes, crag developments and guidebook production.

### LANGDALE

The new guide appears in 2013 which helped reset the scene in the valley. Routes continue with in particular the development of Pike Howe.

#### THRANG CRAG (Page 20)

Beatnik E6 (6b)

Start to the left of *Pollster*. Go straight up the wall to the overlap, and join *Pollster* middle section for gear. Place a sling over a spike just below the chimney and step back down. Make moves across the slab to a good hold below the headwall. Climb up the headwall heading rightwards on small holds and side pulls to an obvious undercut a hard move gains the right arête and the top

FA: (11/04/2014) Peter Holder, Craig Naylor

#### SWINE KNOTT (Page 78)

Porker's Direct 30m E1

Climb the arête of *Porkers Parade* directly from the base. Clean rock all the way and E1 5a of anybodies money. Climbed by mistake to avoid the wet vegetation on the left and not looking closely at the guidebook until after climbing a route (as usual).

FA: (01/10/2011) Rick Graham, Bob Windsor

#### RAVEN CRAG (Page 167)

Confidence Trick 40m HVS (5a)

Starts from a grass ledge 12m to the right of the top of the first pitch of *Centipede* beneath an obvious right facing corner crack at 14m. The ledge is accessed from the right. Gain a large spike at 8m then continue up the bulging wall to gain the corner crack up to the left. Climb the corner crack and then continue directly up easier ground.

FA: (04/05/2013) Tom Walkington, Leo Walmsley

No Confidence 40m E1 (5a)

Starts from a grass ledge 15m to the right of the top of the first pitch of *Centipede* and 3m right of the obvious right facing corner of *Confidence Trick*. The ledge is gained from the right. Gain a short arête at 5m from the left (poorly protected and problematic). Climb the arête and continue directly up less steep ground to the top.

FA: (02/05/2013) Tom Walkington, Leo Walmsley

PIKE HOWE GR: NY 289 069

This fine miniature pike has two rock facets, south-west and south-east; divided by



a pale overhanging wall with a slanting groove on its left-hand side (uncannily resembling Shifter, Burnt Crag, Duddon). The south-east facet is steeper and compact, but mossy. The south-west area is more broken, but protruding buttresses have provided a few opportunities which may be worth the 30 minute walk. The first four routes are to the left of the pale overhanging wall and are described working leftwards (i.e. r to l). Belays well back. The remaining routes are described from left to right.

### Eustacia Vye 18m HS

Start 14 metres down and left of the pale overhanging wall at the left-hand and cleanest of a series of ribs.

1 9m. Climb the rib and follow easier ground to a terrace. Block belay on the right below a slab split by a thin crack.

2 9m Climb a subsidiary block and continue up the thin crack in the slab to the top. FA: (20/10/2007) BJ Clarke (solo)

### Orford Buttress 14m VD

25 metres left of *Eustacia Vye* a slab slants left under an overhang. Start below the right-hand end of the overhang at a small rib. Ascend rightwards past a flake to gain the foot of the buttress on the right. Follow this pleasantly to the top.

FA: (20/10/2007) BJ Clarke (solo)

### Senta's Rib 15m S

10 metres left of *Orford Buttress*, at a higher level, is a two tier arête, identified at its base by a small block overhang, cut by a thin crack on its left. Climb the thin crack and continue up the arêtes to the top. Nice climbing.

FA: (20/10/2007) BJ Clarke (solo)

### Pamina's Pillar 13m MVS (4B)

The final, and shortest rib lies a further 10 metres left. Gain the rib from the left and follow it daintily to a ledge. Continue up easier rocks to finish.

FA: (20/10/2007) BJ Clarke (solo)

### Kiln Corner 20m E3

The steep corner to the right of *Short Shift*. Well protected by skilled use of super rocks, wallnuts and superlight rocks. Technical bridging with a sense of urgency.

FA: (01/09/2013) Ted Rogers Rick Graham

### Sixes and Sevens 20m E2

The steep broad arête right of *Kiln Corner* is gained from the right. Follow the rake for 4m then hand traverse a sloping ledge to gain a shallow groove just right of the arête. Steeply up the groove past an obvious hex slot to gain a ledge. Launch left across the wall to a jug on the very tip of the arête. Best belays well back.

FA: (01/09/2013) Rick Graham Ted Rogers

### Short Shift 20m E3

*The Shifter* lookalike is just as troublesome as its big brother. Well protected especially if you take extra 3 4 and 5 rocks.

FA: (01/06/2013) Rick Graham, Ted Rogers

### Left Cheek 15m E1

100 metres to the right of *Short Shift* etc is a steep wall split by an impressive central crack line. Scramble up and left to gain the ledge below it. A short buttress 20m left of this crack contains two routes - *Left Cheek* is the thin crack up the left wall.

FA: (01/08/2013) Rick Graham, Ted Rogers

### Groove and Rib 15m HVS

Just right of Left Cheek climb the central groove and right rib.

FA: (01/08/2013) Ted Rogers, Rick Graham

### Exit Stage Right 30m HVS

Start about ten metres left of the central crack (No Country for Old Men) and climbs the right trending ramps on the left edge of the main wall. Gain a higher ledge at 3 metres. A well protected move rightwards across the lower half of the diamond shaped wall gains the ramps.

FA: (01/06/2013) Ted Rogers, Rick Graham

### Lunching Stone 30m E2

Step off the lunching stone to climb the crack and left wall to a ledge. Trend right to join the top of No Country for Old Men and finish direct.

FA: (01/06/2013) Ted Rogers, Rick Graham

### No Country for Old Men 25m E4 (ungradeable – this is a guess)

The central crack line. Think you can climb cracks? Try this one for size. Good locks and jams from tips to fist with gear on demand, how hard can it be? Climbed with gear in place, (apparently is called greenpointing ) - an on sight ascent awaits.

FA: (01/06/2013) Rick Graham, Ted Rogers

### Rib on Right 30m HVS

Start 7m right of No Country for Old Men. Climb rib direct, wall above traverse left across slab and up steep wall on left to finish. Belays well back.

FA: (01/06/2013) Ted Rogers, Rick Graham

### Slab and Wall 30m VS

Start on a higher ledge right of Rib on Right by a big spike. Climb slab to a steepening, traverse left 3m and climb steep headwall just right of Rib on Right.

FA: (01/06/2013) Ted Rogers, Rick Graham

**HARRISON STICKLE** (Page 130)

Double Eye 40m E2

The logical extension to *Super Eye*. You will have to wait for the new guide for a full description of this route and other developments. Start as for Dry Rain. Follow Dry Rain to the ledge then take a sweeping line up and leftwards on the upper edge of the overhanging wall. The block at 6m is for stepping on only and not a runner. It has withstood the passage of 12 feet so far and is probably far more stable than it looks. Stand on the spike in the last groove then traverse the wild ledge to join Wallers Crack just below the top.

FA: (13/06/2013) Rick Graham, Ted Rodgers

**HANGING KNOTTS** (NY 243073)

Left Corner 72m HVS

Situated on the rightmost large buttress beneath the large grassy sloping section which separates the upper and lower crags. The buttress is about 150m right of the main easy long gully (Angle Tarn Gully). The rock is rough and sound, but the corners are slow to dry.

- 1 10m Start at lowest point of the crag beneath a broken rib. Climb the rib to a grass terrace beneath a well defined rib.
- 2 25m 5a Climb a thin crack 3m right of the rib up the steep initial wall. Gain the corner up to the left and follow this to an alcove beneath a steep blank corner. Up a short wall, then use a good hold out to the left to swing round the rib to gain a sloping ledge. Continue up leftwards to a ledge and a flake belay.
- 3 20m Up rock and grass to a block/thread belay.
- 4 17m Directly up the pleasant slab.

FA: (23/05/2010) Tom Walkington, Judith Neath

**GIBSON KNOTT** (Page 399)

Rickenbacker 66m MS

A good climb on excellent rock which goes past a multi-stemmed oak which can be seen about 16 metres up towards the left side of the crag. Start at a short corner below and slightly left of the oak.

1. 20m. Climb the corner, then move 3 metres left along a ledge above a large juniper. Climb the wall above until it is possible to traverse right to belay behind the oak tree.
2. 23m. Step up and left, then gain an awkward gangway up to the right. This leads to jammed flakes, which are exited up a wall to the left. Scramble up to a large grass ledge to belay in the middle of a row of four junipers.
3. 23m. Gain the wall above the belay and make an awkward move left into a short groove. Climb straight up towards the highest point of the crag, moving right into another short groove at the top.

FA: (28/04/2011) R Smithson, H Beanland

**DOW, COPPERMINES AND SLATE**

The new guidebook is currently being put together and looking to be published in 2015. A number of crags continue to produce new routes including Goats Crag North (GR: SD 307 005) is a small crag with several pitches on good rock. Route details either on FRCC website or in the new guide when published.

**DUDDON AND ESKDALE**

The many outcrops in the area have been scoured for new routes by in particular Jim Loxham, Martin Scrowston, Paul Bennett in preparation for the new guide – in particular Upper Buck Crag (SD 226993), Black Scar (SD 252977), Birks Bridge Crag (SD 234 993), Stonestar South. Details are available on the FRCC website or new guide when it appears.

**GREAT CRAG, ULPHA FELL**

Serb Wall 15m E4 or E5 (6b)

The thin crackline in the overhanging wall left of War Crime. A good line on perfect rock. Start at the base of War Crime. Follow the thin crackline straight to the top. One pre-placed wire at 8 metres.

FA: (06/08/2012) Tom Walkington (unseconded)

**SCAFELL AND WASDALE****SCAFELL**

2013 had one of the driest summers for many years and Scafell saw a large number of teams returning – shades of the 1970's – in fact many were there in the 1970's as well. A number of fine new routes were also climbed – on one Sunday on 20 July 6 new routes were climbed following – *Back to Black* (E7) – Dave Birkett; *Black Rider* (E5) – Andy Mitchell; *Rise of Angmar* (E3) – Rob Matheson; *Thy will be done* (E8) – Craig Matheson; *Red Gill Edge* (Sev \*\*\*) and *Red Gill Corner* (Sev \*\*) – Al Phizacklea. The Phizacklea / Holden team had also added the three star HVS of High Man by the Central Line – following on from Low Man by the Jubilee Line (HVS) in 2012.

**SCAFELL CRAG**

Black Rider 38m E5

Start 1m right of a small boulder below an obvious large crack mid way between *Shadowfax* and *Subaudition*. Climb to a large hold, rock over to reach the crack and friend placement. Boulder up the crack to join the *Shadowfax* ledges and more wires. Climb the wall to the small right facing corner immediately right of

the *Shadowfax* groove and the left hand end of the overlap. Balancy moves lead to the friend and wire placement at the good hold on *Shadowfax*. From here climb rightwards across the overlap using a broken hold and small footholds to reach a jug on the right hand side of the overlap. Climb directly up from the jug to join *Subaudition* and belay

FA: (20/07/2013) Andy Mitchell, Nathan Pike



Andy Mitchell on Black Rider, Central Buttress: *Al Phizacklea*

## EAST BUTTRESS

**Thy Will Be Done** 60m E8

A pulse racing excursion up the hairline seam between *Trinity* and *Incubus*, involving finger searing sequences and RP protection.

1. 30m. 6c. Climb to the overlap at the base of the seam and arrange protection. Upward progress from the overlap is bold, technical and sustained, a poor rest can be attained at the break. Further tenuous moves lead to the salvation of a large detached flake. Move leftwards from here under the overlap and pull awkwardly onto the wall above to reach a sloping ledge. From the ledge step right to gain the base of a rightward facing corner which leads to good belays in a recess.

2. 15m. 5c. The shallow groove above is followed with interest to easier ground and a large shelf. Belay at the left hand end, beneath a short steep crack

3. 15m. 6b. Climb the crack with a hard move to finish. Scramble to the top.

FA: (20/07/2013) Craig Matheson, Rob Matheson

**Rise of Angmar** 58m E2

An enjoyable open wall climb on superb rock, taking the obvious apex in the overhang on the wall to the left of *Edge of Eriador*. Although utilising some common ground with existing routes and variations, the crucial new link makes for an excellent long and sustained top end E2.

1. 40m. 5b/c. Follow *Mayday* and *Edge of Eriador* into the fine "open groove". Ascend this to the 'hollow' flake and step up leftwards onto the sloping balancy ledge. Pull directly into the groove and up to the apex in the overhangs; exit left and up to a comfortable position at the overlap. Step left again and move up and back right to gain the fine twin cracks which are followed all the way to the top of the wall. Belays (and / or abseil points) on the right.

2. 18m. 4c. The arête on the left as for *Edge of Eriador*.

FA: (20/07/2013) Rob Matheson and Craig Matheson

## WESTERN BUTTRESS (Page 154)

**CB Centenary** 30m Sev

Climbed on the weekend of the centenary of the FA of CB. Start to the left of *Western Corner* at the blunt arête and follow this to gain a ledge then finish up the protruding nose of *Western Corner*. Not in the same vein as 'the CB route' across *Hollow Stones* but worth doing.

FA: (18/04/2014) Ron Kenyon, Mike Cocker

## BUCKBARROW (Page 275)

**Queen Vic** 38m E6 (Around F7b)

A good pitch taking the slim groove and crackline on the steep right hand side of the pinnacle. Small wires protect.

25m (6b) Follow *East Enders* up until it traverses leftwards under the overlaps at 6



metres. Arrange protection and commit to the shallow groove above, reaching a hollow undercut towards its top, use this to make a long reach to a hidden hold on the lip (wire) and a difficult rockover onto the slab above. Easier ground leads to the top of the pinnacle.

13m (4c) As pitch 2 of Witch.FA: (29/09/2013) Chris Fisher, Ken Ode

## GABLE AND PILLAR

### PILLAR ROCK

Touching Cloth 70m E6

A fine piece of modern art worthy of its position hanging next to *Tapestry*. A phenomenal middle pitch on solid rock with fabulous moves.

1. 25m. 5b. As for *Tapestry*.

2. 22m. 6b. Follow *Grooved Wall* for 3 metres to a grassy ledge. Step right and gain a left-trending groove system which is followed on good holds. At the final jug arrange gear and then a traverse right on underclings gains a crimp. Head straight up (gear) and commit to the long crux (useful pocket on right) passing a good slot / undercling. A jug brings welcome respite. Step up to a couple of slots and either finish direct or traverse right to avoid the grass cornice.

3. 23m. 6a. The Bayeux Tapestry Pitch: from above the in-situ belay at the foot of the blank wall left of the final pitch of *Tapestry*, a rising line of good holds lead up the left-hand side of a black streak to a tough crux move off a poor crimp. Rejoining at the finishing crack of the original route brings relief and gear. A single very poor RP can be placed before the crux, but it is unlikely to prevent a failed ascensionist from crashing to a defeat similar to the one that befell King Harold at Hastings.

Pitch 3 had been climbed previously by the same pair (30/07/2011).

FA: (26/05/2012) Simon Litchfield, Graeme Read

The Raiders 45m E4 (6a)

The left side of the strikingly obvious arête soaring above where the Shamrock Traverse meets the High Level Route. A great line neglected for many years, possibly owing to its serious and exposed start. Follow the scrappy groove for 20 metres to gain the base of the arête (possible belay). From the left, gain the arête semi-dynamically. Climb up with a worrying lack of gear until naturally forced left to the centre of the face. Arrange protection and traverse back to the arête which is followed directly to the top. High in the grade and sustained - small gear essential.

FA: (26/05/2012) Simon Litchfield, Graeme Read

## BOAT HOW CRAG (Page 186)

### Numenor with Direct Finish and Fanghorn

Note by Simon Litchfield - *Numenor* has received extensive cleaning over a couple of visits. In its current clean state it is one of the greatest E3 pitches in the Lakes. More traffic will greatly help to further improve the route. *Fanghorn* (and to a lesser extent *Flagship*) were also cleaned on abseil with *Fanghorn* receiving ascents. The walk in from Honister is closer to 1h40 (especially if a short cut is taken so as not to gain height after Great Gable stream). Furthermore, the quality of the rock and routes at Boat How cannot be stressed highly enough.

Voyager Direct Start 50m E6 (6a)

The coveted direct start to Voyager mentioned on p38 of the current guide. Cast off and gain the obvious ledge by a thin seam in the centre of the face. Step to starboard (right) and climb direct to reach an obvious undercling. Reaching a good foothold above and left brings calm and small gear. Layback the square flake to reach a high sidepull to the left. Further sidepulls and crimps gain the slab above and the sanctuary of the end of the Voyager traverse. Low in the grade but a memorable journey.

The first ascensionists apologise for breaking their new route curfew imposed after the 2012 'Pillar Raiders Incident'\*. In sentencing they wish to appeal to the Cumbrian jury for clemency, arguing that community service was already served by cleaning Numenor and Flagship. \*Climber Magazine (October 2012)

FA: (05/07/2013) Simon Litchfield, Graeme Read

## BUTTERMERE AND ST BEES

### ST BEES (Page 283)

Way Out West 70m E5

Tackles the central line of the buttress to the left (looking up) of the Fisherman's Steps descent. The route is most suited to those looking for adventure and is not for the faint of heart. Begin at the toe of the buttress, just right of a large leaning block.

1. 20m. 4b. Climb the obvious corner and the crack in the wall above to reach a band of poor rock, traverse the band leftwards until its end and gain the ledge above (ancient bolt belay). Loose.

2. 20m. 6a. Climb the steep cracks to the left of the belay to reach a large jammed block, negotiate past this with care and follow the groove line up and right to exit onto the grass ledge above. 330m (6a) Ascend the slanting crack directly above the belay until it steepens and peters out. Make committing and difficult moves rightwards on crumbling holds to reach the huge detached flake, climb onto this and move up and rightwards, eventually reaching sanctuary in a crevasse between the flake and the mainland.

Easy scrambling leads to the top.

FA: (11/05/2013) Will Sim, Chris Fisher (climbed onsite)

## MAIDENSTONE BUTTRESS (Page 68)

Maiden Britain 15m E2 (5b)

The wall left of *Maiden's Chimney* is taken direct. A friendly climb - one bit of gear in the undercut (first piece at almost half height), two in the higher flake. Good fun.

FA: (21/07/2012) Neil Smith, Andy Cannon

## MOSS CRAG (Page 103)

Ephialtes, May You Live Forever 25m E4 (6a)

This pleasantly tricky and bold route takes the blank-looking wall between *Beyond Therapy* and *Flake Out*. Start left of *Flake Out*. Climb the first bulge up to a deep pocket on the left (Wallnut 2 and skyhook), move up and right on side-pulls to a good hold and from here move up and left to a tiny crimp. A long reach over the above bulge leads to a good hold, pull up over the bulge (skyhook) and gain easier ground and better gear. Ground fall potential from the upper bulge.

FA: (02/09/2012) Mike Dunne, John Timney

## BORROWDALE

## SHEPHERDS CRAG

Edge of Trust E7 (6b)

The overhanging pillar left of *Stone Tape* and above the square block on *Little Chamonix*. Climb from the *Little Chamonix* groove up two flakes to a difficult traverse right. Climb the right edge of the pillar to a good hold then, using a pocket and the left edge of the pillar, climb to a good thread. Climb the overhang direct (skyhook protection) to finish on good flakes just right of The Bludgeon.

All gear was pre-placed.

FA: (10/08/2012) Mike Przygodzki, Chris Swanepoel

## POWTERHOW BUTTRESS (Page 72)

Horiferous 15m HVS (5b)

Start just round the corner to the left from The Emigrant. Climb the wall left of the overhang, starting on pockets and passing a large loose flake.

FA: (18/09/2012) Mike Dunne, John Timney

## CAM CRAG (Page 272)

Cambodia 20m E7 (6b)

Start at the right of the crag below the roof. Climb through the roof using a fist jam and a heel/toe lock to gain the lip. Make dynamic moves up to a small cam placement (00), then move left to better gear. Now balance your way up the wall to a final bold and tricky move to further gear. Step right onto easy ground and belay

on the tree above.

FA: (22/03/2012) Adam Hocking

The Genocide Extension 22m E7 (6c)

Follow *Cambodia* to the good gear before the move right into easy ground. Step back down and move out through the overhang via some powerful moves. As you move upwards the holds get smaller until a final and very fingery move leads left to better crimps at the top. Possibly the hardest climb in the valley.

FA: (20/06/2012) Adam Hocking

Campagnolo 22m E6 (6b)

The obvious line from bottom left to top right as shown on the photo.

FA: (22/08/2009) Keith Phizacklea, Craig Matheson



## STEEL KNOTTS (Page 333)

Rashōmon 25m E3 (5c)

The fractured-looking arête just left of *Ambling Ant*. Start from the obvious block at the bottom right of the steep wall taken by *Samurai Jack*. Climb the arête on its left side, trending leftwards with the large diagonal edges to a deep but not particularly satisfying pocket. Move up to better holds and the first piece of decent gear. From here ascend a pair of cracks with ease, passing to the left of a concerning hollow-sounding flake (do not use) and up to the finish. Bold at its start but soft for the grade.

FA: (06/10/2012) John Timney, Mike Dunne

**Loss Adjuster** 30m E1 (5c)

A series of variations on the arête of Lost Boys. Climb just right of the arête apart from the very first move on the left. The section at mid height is very good and surprisingly well protected.

FA: (31/05/2013) Rick Graham, Peter Graham

**Un-named** E3 (5c)

A new route between *Free Falling* and *BMC 1*. More room between the two than indicated by the guide. Not done a bad route on this crag, an overlooked gem....

FA: (31/05/2013) Peter Graham

**EASTERN CRAGS****BRAM CRAG QUARRY** (Page 49)

Colin Downer and friends have been hard at work, with a bolt drill, transforming Bram Crag Quarry. The climbing history goes back quite a long way with bolted routes being established there initially but not becoming popular. More recently routes were established with limited use of bolts. Colin has set to and transformed the venue for climbing. There are good relations with the owners however at the time of writing details of the development have not been made public due to concerns about parking with the limited parking available, and stability of some parts of the crag.

**CASTLE ROCK OF TRIERMAIN** (Page 69)

The crack at the top of Overhanging Bastion is getting wider. This extends from the top down and across the ramp on Overhanging Bastion, along the wall across North Crag Eliminate and up the wall on the left side of the crag. Needless to say the routes on the left side of the North Crag, around here are now not recommended.

**The Obvious Craic** 38m HVS (5a)

The obvious crack between the initial groove of *Gazebo* and the pillar of *Via Media* provides the start of this eliminate. Climb the crack and bulge above. Traverse right 1.5 metres and climb the left-hand side of the slab of *Gazebo*, continuing directly up between *Via Media* and *Gazebo* and finishing direct up the upper head wall between the two.

Although it is squeezed in, and although the guidebook pleads for no more variations, and although most, if not all of it has probably been climbed before, it does provide another pleasant climb on great rock for those who have done everything else.

FA: (09/08/2012) SJH Reid, J Kinnaird

**UPPER SWIRL CRAG** (Page 108)**Jacko's Beard** 18m HS

Start about one metre left of *Ballet Mecanique* at a slight overhang next to a holly tree. Follow the arête to a platform, step across to the wall and continue up the arête to a grassy finish.

FA: (04/07/2013) Martin Jess, Brian Smith

**HARROP TARN CRAG** (Page 122)**Where No Ronhill's Have Gone Before** 15m E5 (6a)

A sharp, crimpy route that takes the steepest section of the crag between *Too Baldly Go* and *Sea of Knobs*. Start as for *Too Baldly Go* and climb the crack to the obvious small ledge at 3m. From the ledge place a good nut and step left 1m into the centre of the steepest section of the wall. Climb this on sharp crimps, knobs and small pockets till the angle eases and you reach the break. At the break it may be possible to arrange some protection; however, due to the lack of footholds it's easier (but bolder) to continue to the sloping ledge at 12m. Mantle onto the ledge and place a cam at your feet. The angle eases again from here. Lay-back and climb the rightwards sloping crack that crosses the slab until the crack runs out. Hold your breath, and top out with two handfuls of heather.

FA: 26/06/2013 - Craig McMahon, Vickie McMahon

**No Nuts (Just Balls)** 15m E7 (6c)

A sharp, crimpy and protectionless route that takes the steepest section of the crag. There is no need to take any nuts on the outing; balls are your only required accompaniment. Start on the blank wall between *Sea of Knobs* and *Too Baldly Go* and climb direct up the centre of the steepest section of the crag on sharp crimps, knobs and small pockets till the angle eases, breath and top out with two handfuls of heather. Ensure that you do not stray into the crack with hands, feet or protection!

FA: (15/07/2013) Craig McMahon (solo)

**SHEFFIELD PIKE** (Page 202)**Tip Off Arete** 20m E3 (5c)

The obvious vertical arête 2m left of the crackline of *Tip Off*. A good line on good rock, but for a couple of suspect holds (and protection) in the first 10m. Climb the arête directly after an initial entry from the right to sloping footholds up to the right at 10m. A hanging groove at the left side of the arête is entered from the left. Follow large flake holds to the top.

FA: (14/08/2013) Tom Walkington (unseconded)

**SWARTHBECK GILL AND RAVENS CRAG BOULDERS** (GR: NY 455 206)**Left Hand On The Crimp** 8m E6

This climbs the right side of the right tower. Thin, powerful and bold climbing up the steep wall starting on the right, moving to a thin crack then left to a tiny pocket



(sky-hook used on the FA). Further powerful moves now lead past a poor peg to the top, where you can now breathe again!

FA: Pete Gunn (Headpointed)

### United For Strength 10m E3

Start below the steep groove on the right hand tower. Steep awkward climbing up the groove leads to an unusual finishing move.

FA: Pete Gunn

### Frugal Variation 10m E3

Climb as for *Penny Wise* to the easing and poorish gear. Then go left and up a steep groove.

FA: Pete Gunn

### Penny Wise 10m E5

Start below a thin crack in the left-hand tower. Climb the crack to a thin ledge then follow the thin groove to a slight easing and some poor gear (reasonable RP up and right). Now climb the steep wall above moving slightly left to start then straight up.

FA: Pete Gunn

## CAUDALE CRAG Alt: 500m GR: NY 409116 Aspect: SW Approach: 30mins

A small crag on the South West slopes of Hartsop Dodd. It is a half hour walk from the road starting just South of Brothers Water Inn. The routes are described from left to right. **Caudale Left Groove** 15m E3 (6a)

The left hand overhanging groove in the headwall. Climb directly up the slab and continue up the overhanging groove (micro wires and a micro cam required). One wire was pre-placed.

FA: (25/05/2013) Tom Walkington, Leo Walmsley

### Caudale Right Groove 15m E2 (5c)

The right hand overhanging groove in the headwall. Climb straight up to beneath the overhang which is then taken directly (hidden rock 4 at the lip).

FA: (25/05/2013) Leo Walmsley, Tom Walkington

### Broken Groove 15m MVS (4b)

Follow *Caudale Right Groove* for 4m and then move up rightwards to finish up the wide broken groove.

FA: (06/05/2013) Leo Walmsley, Tom Walkington

## KIRKSTONE BUTTRESS Alt: 500m GR: NY 400 085 Aspect: SE Approach: 15 mins

This buttress can be seen from the Kirkstone Inn car park and is not to be confused with Kirkstone Crag (Eastern Crags page 197). It is located 150m below and right of Kilnshaw Chimney. On the upper right of the crag is an impressive open book cor-

ner, (this can be seen from the summit car park) and to its left a splendid rectangular wall. At the top of the crag lies a large erratic boulder, which makes an immaculate belay, although there are adequate belays nearer the top of the climbs. The rock is generally good, especially in its upper half and houses some of the roughest and sharpest rock in the district. Although the crag is only 25m high, there is a big crag feel, coupled with excellent views and all the sunshine that's going.

Approach: Follow the Red Screes path for approx 150m to where three erratic boulders are perched on a rock plinth close to the path on the right. Turn right by the boulders and follow a small rising indeterminate sheep trod for another 150m, to an undulating grass and rock terrace. The crag lies up and right from here (100m) and is reached by a diagonal traverse up and right crossing a small scree patch and boulder field.

The climbs are described from left to right.



### Deviant 25m VS

Start at the left end of the crag, at a vertical broken groove with a triangular overhang at 2/3 height. An excellent but deviant line, which makes sense when on the route. Climb the steep groove on good holds for 4m to a rounded flake (good runner). Make a wide horizontal step left into a corner groove and flake crack. Make a few moves up these, before climbing up and left into a hidden corner. Follow the rugged slab on the right to the top.

FA: (25/08/2013) M Scrowston & P C Bennett

**Conformist** E2 5C

Another good route that accepts the true challenge of the overhung groove. Start as for *Deviant*. Climb the steep groove to the overhang. A committing move right gains better holds, pull up steeply left, excellent holds lead to the big ledge above. FA: (12/6/2014) Paul C Bennett & Martin Scrowston

**Nocturn** 23m HVS

Start 2m right of the *Deviant* at a rightwards leaning open groove, with a Holly tree near the top. It contains some bold and energetic climbing with good protection. Climb the groove to a steep slab; ascend this by making some difficult moves to gain a small ledge below the holly tree and the narrow chimney above. Make athletic moves up its right edge (crux) to gain the magnificent "thank god" finishing holds.

FA: (07/07/2013) M Scrowston & J Loxham

**Wall in the Sky** 22m S

Start 6m right of *Nocturn* at a small bay. An interesting and satisfying climb with good protection. Climb the wall and groove above for 5m to a ledge. Step left to ascend a short corner groove, before moving right into the obvious corner above. This is followed to finish on the left of a mini dry stone wall at the top of the climb???

FA: (07/07/2013) M Scrowston & J Loxham

**Sereno** 25m HVS

Start 7m right of *Wall in the Sky* beside an embedded spike. The superb upper wall is worth the walk alone. It is sustained but adequately protected by small runners. Move up the wall to gain a left slanting groove, follow this and the short corner above to gain the base of the wall. Ascend the wall by sustained climbing, first trending left, then directly up for a few moves, before trending right (crux) to reach the small 'V' groove at the top of the wall; all on amazing rock with some very sharp holds!

FA: (26/07/2013) M Scrowston & J Loxham

**Isorhythm** 25m VS

Another excellent route which is also worth the walk. Start 1m right of *Sereno*, at the right end of the crag, by a short (3m) left facing open corner. Climb the corner for 3m, before moving up and left onto a slab and into a short corner. Ascend this to gain a grass ledge. Move left into the superb open book corner and climb it directly on immaculately rough rock to the top. Ace.

FA: (26/07/2013) M Scrowston & J Loxham

**Kirkstone Passive** 25m S

Another worthwhile route with some massive sharp holds on the upper section. Start 1m right of *Isorhythm* at an easy gangway. Ascend the gangway to reach a thin right facing corner crack. This is climbed to a thin corner groove, which is tackled directly to gain rock ledges. Climb the headwall enjoyably to the top.

FA: (03/09/2013) F Scrowston & M Scrowston

**SWINDALE** (Page 336)

Freya Scrowston on Sereno

**Torsus** 35m VS

The first pitch although short, offers good climbing on clean sound rock. Start 4 metres to the right of *One Hang Low* at a tall flake / spike.

1 12m (4c). Climb the right side of the flake to its top. Step boldly left (no protection), then pull up into a groove (good runners). Trend left up the slab to gain the arête (junction with *Truss Buttress*). Follow the arête for a few metres to a stance and belays.

2 23m (4b). Follow the slab to finish up the obvious groove as for *Razorback*.

FA: (23/05/2012) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke

**Stress Test** 29m E2

This is a variation start to *Times of Stress*. The route follows the obvious slanting cleft / groove to the right of the original start (clearly visible on the crag photo on page 344 of the latest guide).

1 6m (5c/6a). Begin 4m right of the original start, below the right end of the smooth cleft / groove. Climb up and attain a standing position in the groove with difficulty (awkward, balancy and on tiny edges). Compose yourself, then escape into the grassy groove of the original route.

2 23m (6a). Finish as the original route.

This variation may only be short, but it certainly packs lots of "interest" into those few metres! FA: (23/05/2012) Tony Marr, Mike Tooke.

## RAVEN CRAG, THRESHTHWAITE (Page 228)

### Baby Driver Direct Finish E4

A fine direct line up this part of the crag and more in keeping with the other wall climbs. A good bold pitch. (6a). Do not climb the grassy groove, as in guide book description, but take the wall just to its right. Go up to a sloping ledge, then left up a break to below a block overhang. Climb the tricky and strenuous short groove on right side of overhang to a peg, then move right across the wall and step up to ledge (junction with *Grand Prix*). Climb the steep wall directly on small flakes and layaways to the top.

FA: (16/09/2012) Keith Phizacklea, Ian Cooksey, Rob Matheson

## EDEN VALLEY AND SOUTH LAKES LIMESTONE

### ARMATHWAITE (Page 79)

#### Back from Bezengi 30m E1 (5b/5c)

A one move wonder - but what a move! Start as for *Ituna* and either climb up the corner and traverse right to a ledge or gain the ledge direct. Move up and gain a ledge, up to the left, with an overhung base. Place protection in the cracks above. Move to the arête on the left (small cams in arête) and make a desperate move across the slab, to gain a ledge, on the left. Climb up the slab above, keeping right of an overhang, and up a short buttress to finish at the tree belay, as for *Bullgine Run*

FA: (23/08/2013) Ron Kenyon and Mark Westerman

#### Full Frontal 23m E5

Previously Not Led. The direct start to *Soft Touch*, which takes the three stepped roofs below the arête. Climb the sandy slab rightwards. Pull left below the first roof and climb directly through the overhangs on snappy holds to gain and finish up the airy arête.

Poor small wires protect the crux, strenuous to place or easier if placed from *Soft Touch* and reversing, reducing the grade to E4.

Superb airy climbing but please be cautious of the fragile flakes and dubious gear. Care should be taken with the hollow flake above the crux.

FA: (06/12/2013) Pete Gunn

#### Sailing Shoes E7 (6b)

Now led - (08/2013) Dave Birkett

#### Lenny Limpet 13m E7

This route now supersedes *Smear or Die*. Start as for *Andy's Slab* but trend leftwards up to a good hold in the centre of the slab and a small flake. Step left and up to another small flake, once stood up finish diagonally rightwards via the two shallow pockets and finishing rail, avoiding the crack of *Barnacle Bill*. (Placing side runners

in BB would reduce the grade E5?)

FFA: (13/03/2014) Pete Gunn (Solo with two mats).

## SCRATCHMERE SCAR (Page 154)

### Scratch Arete 7m E3 (6a) V4

Right-hand arête of the left face of The Block containing Spiral Stairs. Climb the right hand arête using a good hold half way up on the left arête, before committing to a final slap to the top. Excellent.

The right hand arête only (without the hold on the left arête) still awaits.

FA: (08/06/2012) Pete Gunn

## WINDMORE END (Page 216)

### Windy Pops 7m E3 (6a)

Right of *La'al Wall*, which is to the right of *Fern Crack*, there is a thin hairline crack. Climb this using holds either side, easing towards the top. Small RPs protect.

Soloed after climbing ground up (two falls) then one go on top rope.

FA: (24/07/2010) Pete Gunn

### Jetstream 8m E3 (5c)

Start one metre to the right of *Speeding Like a Jet*. Follow the blank wall in between *Speeding Like a Jet* and *April Fool*. Very Bold.

FA: (04/10/2012) Simon Woolley

## HEBBLETHWAITE HALL GILL (Page 260)

### Petite L'Arsony 9m E1 (5b)

Strenuous. Take the rightward slanting crack 2m right of Mighty Micro to its top (well protected crux), then straight up via a layback edge to the right-hand side of the top section. Belay on the stakes as for the other routes.

FA: (23/09/2012) Steve Leahy - lead, Neil Davies -second ascent on lead

## WHITE STONE (Page 351)

### D 23m E1

1. 12m. 5a. Climb the left side of the arête on the left of *Stag* to the tree, then move right on grassy ledges above the tree to the tree belay of *Stag*.

2. 11m. 5c. From the blocks at the belay, reach a small high handhold and use this to make a difficult step onto the blunt arête on the right. Continue straight up to an easier-angled finish.

FA: (16/03/2003) Dave Cronshaw, Les Ainsworth



## WINTER ROUTES

The winter of 2013/14 did not really happen – there was much promise but not the conditions.

There have been various issues about ethics about winter climbs and damage to summer rock climbs – this was raised at the local BMC area meeting, in 2013. This was discussed at a number of meetings of local activists to eventually produced a booklet “Winter Climbing in the Lake District and the avoidance of Damage”.

### BOWFELL – NORTH BUTTRESS (Page 62)

Super Storm 50m IV

Climb the turfy corner on the left of the buttress that lies to the right of *The Flying Gimp Trick*. Start 10m right of this route in a corner below a steep headwall above. Climb the corner to a good snowy ledge below the top headwall (possible belay). Climb the crack above.

Variation finish - It is possible to step left here around the corner and finish steeply to the top, same grade.

FA: (04/02/2014) Mark Thomas , Kate O'Donoghue

### DOW CRAG (Page 88)

F Gully 170m II

Climb the shallow snow gully running up the right side of F Buttress to finish just right of the summit of Dow crag. Variation finish - traverse out left at mid height to finish up the rocky ridge of F Buttress.

FA: (27/02/2010) J Daly

### SCAFELL CRAG (Page 143)

Lost in Time Like Smoke on the Wind 160m III

The route starts to the left of Shamrock Icefall. This has almost certainly been climbed in some form before but worthwhile recording.

1 40m Take a rightwards rising traverse across turf ledges onto the ice formations. Follow these to a snow field and a belay.

2 30m Head up the snowfield to an open icy groove follow this to a belay at the base of a steep buttress.

3 30m Turn the buttress on the right and pull up onto an easy angled ramp.

4 60m Finish up the easy ramp to a small col just above the bottom of Lords Rake.

FA: (26/01/2013) Donald Willey, David Willey

### DROPPING CRAG (Page 157)

Maid of Honour 25m V

Climb the left hand of the two steep ice pillars found on the right side of the crag. An easy slope leads to block belays.

FA: (29/03/2013) J Daly, N Harvey, R Purdy.

Ice Maiden 25m IV

Climb the right hand of the two steep ice pillars at the right end of the crag then an easy slope to block belays.

FA: (13/03/2013) J Daly, R Purdy, K Bruce

### SCOAT FELL CRAG (Page 169)

The Faux Pas 60m V

Under winter conditions this character building summer VS is transformed into an excellent outing.

1 30m (6/7) Climb the turf filled chimney to join Easy Gully and follow this for 10m until an obvious large diagonal crack in the left sidewall is reached (belay possible). Open your can of tricks and traverse boldly left along wide crux crack until sanctuary is reached under an obvious corner. Chockstone belay.

2 30m (4/5) Climb the fine corner / chimney to a ledge, before tackling the short groove / slab on the left to the arête. Continue easily to the top.

FA: (08/12/2012) Simon Litchfield, Andrew Suttie and Karl Wood

### GABLE CRAG (Page 188)

TIMNIAN 70m V

Climbs the thinly iced slabs to the left of *Summertime Blues*

1. 20m (3) Start left of Summertime Blues, follow snow and ice to belay on the ledge.

2. 50m (4) Climb the thinly iced slab, poorly protected.

FA: (16/02/2014) Tim Millen, Ian Armstrong

### GREEN GABLE CRAG (Page 199)

Genesis 80m VI

On the left crag. Start as for *Garden of Eden* and really a variation finish to *East of Eden*.

1. Easy climbing leads to the snow bay and a belay at the base of the main chimney pitch of Garden of Eden.

2. 30m (7) Start up *Garden of Eden* for a few meters until it is possible to traverse out left on bosses of turf under the overlap that runs across the slab to the left. Traverse leftwards under the overlap and gain an obvious thin crack running through the centre of the overlap, climb this and get established on the slab, follow cracks directly up the slab towards the hanging corner at the top of the slab. Climb the corner to a ledge and belay. A brilliant pitch of delicate climbing in a great position.

FA: (12/02/13) Paddy Cave and Tom Hodgkin-



Genesis, Green Gable Crag: Tom Hodgkin

## BROWN COVE CRAG (Page 283)

Jet Stream 40m VI

Climb the 1st pitch of Two Grooves to arrive on the snowy bay beneath the top pitch of this route, belay on the right, below a square cut, short groove. Climb this to a snowy ledge, then the thin steep wall/crack above to a sloping turfy ledge, bold. Now attack the crack in the wall above on amazing hooks and torques to the top.

FA: (11/02/2014) Mark Thomas, Kate O'Donoghue

The In – Between 120m III

Start at the bottom of 'Central Gully' on the left side, at a sloping left facing open groove/ramp, about 15m from the start of 'Left Branch'

- 1 30m, Thread belay at the start, climb the ramp, then up the snow crest above, towards an obvious iced up corner, belay at the left of this.
- 2 30m, Climb the corner on awesome ice, and the snow above and into the next corner, mixed and tricky, with a hard move left over the jammed block. Follow the snow ramp to a headwall with a flake spike protruding out of it, belay in the crack beneath it.
- 3 60m - Climb over the headwall, left of the spike using a crack, then up and to the right of the obvious pillar above. Follow the right side of the ridge, overlooking Central Gully.
- 4 Follow the ridge to the top of the buttress. The route was climbed under amazing icy conditions. I think if it was climbed in anything less, the grade would possibly be harder.

FA: (13/02/2014) Mark Thomas, Kate O'Donoghue

## ANNIVERSARY ASCENTS

With the centenary of the first ascent of CB in April 2014 other centenaries came to mind with Troutdale Pinnacle and Bowderstone Pinnacle in May 2014. With World War 1 climbing activity was curtailed till after the War. Something to "look forward to" is the bi-centenary of the ascent of Pillar Rock in 2026 !!

Another milestone is however 50 years and it is interesting to view these and a list is attached below for 50th anniversaries in 2015 and 2016 is for your consideration.

Langdale	-	Man of Straw, Pokerface
Dow	-	The Balrog
Scafell	-	Holy Ghost, The Nazgul,
Gable and Pillar	-	The Tomb, Puppet, Electron
Buttermere	-	Carnival
Borrowdale	-	Praying Mantis and Goat Crag development
Eastern Crag	-	The Last Laugh



Autumn, Buttermere Fells: *Rennie Barnes*

## In Memoriam

Bob Anderson  
George Bintley  
Marie Blake  
Aubrey Brocklehurst  
Thelma Brown  
Ted Dance  
Ronnie De Court  
John & Ellen Fleming  
Peter Fleming  
Mollie Hamer  
Peter Johnson  
Dave Kirby  
John Lagoe  
Jack Lancaster  
John Loy  
Ursula Milner-Wright  
May Pickles  
Tom Price  
Trevor Roberts  
John Thompson  
Gilpin Ward  
Margaret Wild

### BOB ANDERSON

Robert Shield Anderson was born in 1934 in Newcastle upon Tyne but the family moved to Newcastle under Lyme when Bob was young. His love of the outdoors was developed as a sea scout at Rudyard Lake and on a schoolboy walking holiday to the Pyrenees.

After serving his National Service in the RAF, he studied to become a Chartered Civil Engineer working for various local authorities. He joined the North West Water Authority at its inception in



1973 and when he took early retirement he had become their chief technical officer.

Bob didn't start mountaineering until his forties when he started climbing with his son Steve. After Steve went off to university, Bob joined the Karabiner Mountaineering Club in 1979 with his main activities centred on their Ty Powdyr hut in North Wales, a time when I regularly climbed with him. After the day on the hill, we would walk down to the Royal Victoria for refreshment then climb



the 200 vertical metres back up, bouncing off the walls of the zig-zag path to arrive back at the hut still not too sober.

Although he went to the Alps, his favourite memories were ice climbing on Ben Nevis grade fives with Tony Dilger of the KMC and on crags such as Cloggy with Neville, a university friend of Steve. Other memorable climbs were Vulcan Wall, Dawn Grooves and The Prow in the Skye Cuillin with Phil Ramsbottom.

Phil will tell you that he would sometimes read the guide book without his glasses and consequently find himself lost. Whenever, his climbing partner joined him in these situations, he would calmly hand over the book with 'Here! You sort it out!'

Although Bob never held any official position with the KMC, he always went out of his way to welcome and encourage new members attending meets. Many members will tell you they did their first climbs with Bob.

After early retirement, he joined the midweek Down Hill group along with Derek Seddon, Iain McCallum and Jim Taylor. This group

of pensioners demonstrated that age did not slow them down on their Thursday walks in the Peak District. When I first joined them, I likened it to chasing old men round Derbyshire.

In 1997, Bob became a member of the FRCC, climbing with Tony Field and others from the Leeds area. It was round about this time we met up again as a climbing partnership. Both retired, we were free to make frequent visits to the Lakes and Snowdonia during the weekdays when climbs were less crowded. Into his 70's, Bob was regularly still leading up to Hard Severe (4c) or scrambling in his usual ebullient style or charging passed other hill walkers of half his age.

Bob regularly attended FRCC meets and especially enjoyed the company on the midweek events at High Moss, Glan Dena and those in the Dales.

Unfortunately, he developed a problem that resulted in a lack of feeling in his feet together with a loss of balance. This put a stop to climbing and scrambling, but showing his characteristic determination, he learnt to walk with poles and continued to visit the Lakes. In the last couple of years he completed a 3 day hut to hut, 10 miles a day, which delighted him as for the previous five years he had not been able to do this.

Then, tragically, he contracted cancer last autumn. Initially appearing to win this fight, he finally succumbed on 23 February this year.

Bob was a enthusiastic, determined and cheerful companion in the mountains, and a larger than life character in the huts. He earned the title 'Uncle Bob' for his avuncular manner. He is survived by his wife, Elaine, his children Steve, Helen and David as well as 6 grandchildren. He will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him!

GEORGE BINTLEY

*(This was written for the CC and reproduced with kind permission of the author, Ben Stroud)*

With the death of George Bintley in April 2013, the British climbing world has lost one of its most active, best-known and popular characters. For nearly 60 years – apart from an interlude for sailing adventure during the 1980s – his cheerful and friendly face could

be found almost every weekend in one or other of the barns, bothies, club huts or pubs in which climbers congregate. He seemed to know everyone; yet he was no extrovert, he never put up a new route, he wasn't a writer, he had no connection with education or administration. He was just a thoroughly nice guy who loved the mountains.

George began his climbing career in the 1950s with that slightly controversial Wirral-based club known to outsiders



simply as "the Wallasey". This was one of those groups of townies – the Bradford Lads, the Creag Dhu and the Rock & Ice were better-known examples – who went to the hills to escape authority, to climb hard, to booze when funds allowed and to make merry. There are folk tales of what – depending on one's age and outlook – some called high spirits and others hooliganism, and in which George certainly played his part. Yet only a few years later he was invariably welcomed with open arms by two of the supposed "victims", Sid Cross and Chris Briggs, of the ODG and Pen-y-Gwryd hotels respectively, and it's hard to believe much harm was done. It was in the Wallasey MC that he met Cora Baker, a climber whose good-natured tolerance helped to sustain a happy marriage which ended only with George's death.

In 1958 George traded up, with other ex-Wallasey refugees such as Roger Salisbury and Alan Minett, to the respectability of Merseyside's senior club, the Wayfarers. There, with a wider circle of climbing partners, particularly Allan Stuart, he climbed consistently at VS/HVS and occasionally harder (much more difficult to achieve

then than now) and ticked off a long list of Welsh and Lakeland Classics. It was Allan who introduced him to the Alps, and although George invariably suffered from altitude sickness on the first route or two of each trip, they completed an impressive list of middle-grade routes, including the North Ridge of the Peigne, the Traverse of the Drus and the Frontier Ridge of Mont Maudit.

I joined the Wayfarers in 1966, and George and I immediately clicked. He was a superb climbing partner, with a calm confidence and unflappability which more than made up for my nervousness. He was much the better rock-climber but, by chance, I was more confident on snow and ice, so that in the Alps we became quite a useful team and thoroughly enjoyed knocking off the classic mixed routes at Chamonix, the most boast worthy being Route Major and the Innominata Route on Mont Blanc. However, while retreating from the East Face Direct on the Requin in 1978, we stupidly slipped on the steep slope of afternoon slush below the rocks and, but for the good fortune of hitting an isolated boulder some 500 ft. lower, would have undoubtedly ended up very dead on the Mer de Glace, a long way below. George, though much battered, very gallantly crawled to the hut to initiate my rescue.

That episode put an end to alpine climbing for a time, but George had long been an admirer of fellow-Wayfarer Bill Tilman, of mountaineering and sailing fame, and he sought, in admittedly pale imitation, to learn a new set of ropes. So that, during most summers in the 1980s he was to be found more often at sea than in the hills. In pursuit of mountains near the sea we did once reach northern Spain but found that it just took too long. Home waters were more productive and in one memorable 6-week cruise from the Wirral to the Hebrides and back, George knocked off no fewer than 25 Munros/Corbetts as he went. The 'sea interlude' did not last but Munro-bagging did and he duly completed the list; a feat made the more impressive as he had never owned or driven a car, and consequently became an expert on Scottish public transport. Not that he had ever normally suffered from a lack of lifts; as an electrician at the local shipbuilders he had been known as "the only Sparks at Lairds with six chauffeurs."

Despite such distractions it was always rock-climbing which was George's first love, and as a summer evening habitu  of Helsby crag – much more important as a training ground then than now, in these days of indoor walls – he had befriended some of the Climbers' Club "Cheshire set", particularly Hugh Banner and Derek Walker. They introduced him to the CC and a yet wider circle of friends. Later, with a promiscuity which was really just a tribute to his popularity, George was induced, additionally, to join the Fell & Rock CC and the Merseyside CC. As he had long been an Alpine Club member as well, it can be seen how the word 'clubbable' might have been especially coined. Few men holding down a full-time job in industry, and with a close and loving family, can have used their weekends and limited holidays to better advantage. His life was full of action, adventure and kindness to others and the climbing world is much the poorer for his passing.

*Ben Stroude*

In his later years, George's favourite place to visit was Langdale and he would always call into Rawhead to chat to FRCC members and see if someone would lead him up a route. He was still climbing in his 70's and always had a 'wish list' of climbs. One of his favourite crags was White Ghyll and I spent many trips with him there climbing Slip Knot, Moss Wall, White Ghyll Wall, The Gordian Knott and Haste Knot - probably his last climb in 2010. He was always highly appreciative of this extension to his rock climbing career.

*Ken Fyles*

#### MARIE BLAKE (NEE BALL)

Marie was born in Barnsley but the family soon moved to Bradford where Marie grew up. After leaving school she read an article in the local newspaper about Ilkley Moor which prompted her to go there for a walk during which she discovered the Quarry and its gritstone crags and saw and talked to some climbers.

She was attracted by climbing and began to go out regularly to the local gritstone and soon became one of the group of climbers

known as the Bradford Lads (albeit of the wrong sex). This quickly developed into visits to the Lake District, Wales and Scotland and she joined the Fell and Rock in 1995.

She became engaged to Arthur Dolphin and was soon climbing at a high standard and with Arthur became the first British woman to take part in the first ascent of an E grade rock climb.

Then tragically Arthur lost his life in an accident in the Mont Blanc Range. Marie retained her love of the mountains and of climbing and fell walking, mainly in the Lake District, but also elsewhere in Britain and abroad. She became a well-known Member of the Fell and Rock, being elected to the committee and becoming Assistant Warden at Rawhead.

Around this time she met Brian and was married to him in Chapel Stile, Langdale. After the birth of our daughter, Louise, Marie did less climbing but retained her love of the mountains and hill walking. The family spent many years exploring Scotland in their motor caravan and also enjoyed visits to the Alps and Norway.

Marie was diagnosed with cancer and after a long illness died in January 2012

*Brian Blake*

#### AUBREY BROCKLEHURST

Aubrey Bernard Brocklehurst died on 12th May 2012, aged 98, having spent his last few years in a nursing home as a consequence of a bad bone breakage. There he still wore the amazingly polished





shoes which were the hallmark of his immaculate turn-out, even in hills scoured by wind and rain.

He was already aged 72 when he joined the FRCC in 1985, encouraged by his friends Ruth Gelder and Alistair Gebby. When Hilda Brown, a few years younger, asked him if there was an age limit for joining he replied after a pause 'I believe you have to be 18'. He was a strong hill walker and a cheerful and gentlemanly companion on the fells. He led walks for the London Section, always arriving in a car which had to be long enough to take grandfather clocks, for Aubrey was a horologist. He chaired the London Section from 1986-88 and latterly hosted committee meetings in his flat in Kensington where tea was served in dainty yellow china. As well as being a mountaineer, Aubrey took up skiing at quite an advanced age.

Although as a boy he was interested in clocks and watches, he learnt his clock repairing at home but developed these skills in Strangeways Prison where he was sent as a conscientious objector during the war. He was given the prison clocks to repair. Later he rented a workshop in Bloomsbury then bought a business on the Cromwell Road in London where his long name strode confidently above the entrance. He dealt also in antique clocks and had a showroom and large basement, employing two cabinet makers to make and restore clock cases and six clock repairers and apprentices. For the showing of presents at Buckingham Palace for the wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer, Aubrey was asked to get all the clocks going. He held office in several Horological Societies and in 1973 was a member of the British Antique Dealers' Association.

Aubrey and his wife adopted twin boys in 1943 and in 1955 had a daughter Ruth who lives near Wokingham in Berkshire. Ruth recalls that membership of the FRCC formed an important part of his life and that he felt privileged to be part of it. He always told her when he was going to attend events and recounted them when he came home. He particularly liked Lake District meets and loved Borrowdale but also enjoyed AGMs and the social life.

He is remembered with great affection and respect by members of the London Section and by others who knew him through the FRCC.

*Anne C Hartley*

### THELMA BROWN

Thelma was born in Harrogate in 1932. At a young age she showed an interest in outdoor pursuits. These were furthered when she went to Manchester University from 1950-1956, gaining BSc and PhD degrees, specialising in plant genetics. She joined the Women's mountaineering Club at a time when there were separate unions for men and women. She met her husband to be (Peter) and they were married while they were both students.

Many trips were made to the Lake District, staying at FRCC huts. They travelled on Peter's motorcycle, an AJS. Pillion riding did not suit Thelma, which she found to be cold and uncomfortable. In 1953 she joined the FRCC being proposed by Sid Cross. Her first climb was Ash Tree Slabs on Gimmer with Peter and they both were wearing clinkered boots. The climb



was memorable with the onset of a rain storm starting half way up. In 1956 they moved to Tanganyika where they made some adventurous bush safaris. During one night they were patrolled by a pair of leopards who hoped to make a quick meal of their petrified dog.

Their first son was born there, establishing them as a family. Health problems forced a return to the UK, with Thelma spending several months in hospital for tropical diseases. They moved to Sheffield, staying from 1960-1972. These were happy times with many days spent climbing on the gritstone edges and many long lasting friendships were made. During this time their second son was born.

A further move was made in 1973 to Aberdeen, where Thelma took up her first interest joining the Genetics Department at Aberdeen University, then moving to the Medical Genetics Unit at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Her mountaineering interests continued with long days on the Scottish hills and regular trips to the Lakes, with Birkness cottage being a favourite for family holidays. Slioch was a notable ascent at a time when her health was deteriorating, preventing further activity.

Thelma was a friendly and happy person who showed great determination and enthusiasm to all that she tackled. Her performance on the scientific front was notable with numerous papers being published.

It was with regret that for some years she was unable to visit the Lake District and other places which had meant so much to her in her more active times.

Thelma died at home on April 12th 2013.

*Eric Iveson*

#### TED DANCE

I have known Ted, first and foremost as a good friend, since 1955, when he was President of the MUMC, and I became secretary. We walked and climbed frequently since then, and shared family times. In looking back over his life I imagined I knew enough to write a good obituary without referring to the literature, or other mountaineers, as although I did not join him on most of his long hard competitive walking trips, he often shared his thoughts with me. But on hearing the recollections of the many who shared those times with him, three things became clear: the first how inspirational his friends found him as an innovator, and a major force in shaping their interests; the second that his activity was always worthy, and something to be proud of; and the third that each person he shared time with had enough material to write a good obituary with that material alone! And that would be without the 101 amusing anecdotes that are an important part of Ted, and would make a complete article in their own right! So this obituary includes many contributions, as befits a man with the stature of Ted.

Ted was born in Bangalore, where his father worked as a chemist in the textile trade, spending summers in the hill stations of the Nilgiri hills. He was 9 years old when the family moved to the UK, setting up home in Manchester.

In 1939 Ted and Geoff Eglinton were in the first year pioneer group at Sale Grammar School, both shunning physical activities as far as possible! As the war years advanced they graduated to the 6th form and undertook serious science, a memorable part being the near electrocution of the science master, and the amateur production and testing of explosives. In modern times their careers might have ended there, as a recent copy of 'The Times' noted that a 15 year old school boy suspected of similar enterprising activity has been arrested and his home surrounded by 'scores of police, fire-fighters and paramedics, and his neighbours evacuated'. What a lot of fun has gone out of life! Not to mention common-sense!

On the physical side, early practice as sub-mariners, breathing under water through a hose pipe, proved a failure, and did not excite the interest of the Royal Navy.

After their schooldays Geoff went on to Manchester University to study Chemistry, and Ted joined ICI to take on laboratory work. Ted would join Geoff at weekends with the MUMC, rock climbing, mountaineering and pot holing, often using the MUMC hut, Tyn y Weirglodd, in the Quellyn valley. Here they put together the first climbing guide to Quellyn, published by the MUMC in 1954, and Ted carried out perhaps his first substantial mountain walk, a grand circuit of the peaks surrounding Snowdon, recorded in the TyW log. It was on the basis of this activity with the MUMC that Ted was elected to the Presidency of the Club. He was a good President, but blotted his copybook with an eminent past member, Professor Mordell of John's College, Cambridge, when Ted shared his priceless bottle of College port among the undergraduate members, on a President's Meet in Wasdale!

During the 1950's and early 60's, in parallel with rugby, water polo, cross country running and sitting his Chemistry exams, he was climbing rock to a good standard, hard walking, particularly in the Pennines where he did all the classics, climbing on snow and ice in Scotland, where he became skilled with his long handled single axe,

and early seasons in the Alps. He never moved on to technical axes, and in later years proved as adept as ever at cutting his way up steep Alpine snow with a single axe and pillar box holds! On his last Alpine season he was still using the same axe and crampons, albeit with spikes of half the original length.

It was during this time that he probably did his best rock climbing, much on gritstone, often in bendy boots and very little protection, and many Welsh, Lakeland and Scottish routes. There is a photograph of him halfway up Phoenix, on Shining Clough, in bendy boots, no runners, and a bowline waist loop. On one inspired day he soloed all the Very Severe climbs on Kern Knotts, up one then down the next, until he had completed them all, in a time of little more than an hour. Dennis Weir also remembers being awestruck as Ted floated up rock with no apparent contact!

So Ted became thoroughly well established as a leader among the hard men of the Rucksack Club. Notable walks included a winter crossing of the Colne-Rowsley in his first year as a member (1952), his first Marsden – Edale in the same year in a club record of 4 ½ hours and, in the following year surpassed these by repeating Ted Courtenay's Tan Hill to Cat and Fiddle walk. In 1956 he completed the second round of the Oread Club's Derbyshire Horseshoe (in winter, often in knee deep snow, with a heavy rucksack full of apples!), and the Colne-Edale in early 1958.

With Dennis Weir, Ted gained an early record for the Pennine Way, later regarded as a record for softies as they chose to rest overnight! Two things stick in Dennis's mind; discussing Schubert's C minor quintet at the halfway point, and Dennis's infant son Robert reading to them, after the first 29 miles, the whole of the complete Ladybird Book 'Snow White and Rose Red'. Ted's response was to lie back on the grass and say "Thank you, Robert, that was a lovely story". An important glimpse into Ted's soul, for Ted would see beyond the surface and recognise the importance to the small boy of his contribution. Dennis later partnered Ted, with no disagreements, on three Karrimor Mountain Marathons.

Ted was never averse to overt competition on the fells and the mid 50's, interest in the amateur forms of fell racing was growing apace. Ted took an interest in the Lake District Mountain Trial, inau-

gurated in 1952 by the YHA. He competed and performed well in 1956, missed the following two years, one of which was spent on Masherbrum with Joe Walmsley, but returned triumphant in '59, winning the event by a clear ten minutes.

Ted was one of those athletes blessed with a very low resting heart beat rate, which had an amusing consequence. On one trip to the Alps he was hospitalised following an accident on his motor bike. On enquiring why the hospital would not discharge him, he was told they were waiting for his heart beat rate to recover! He was quickly discharged.

Of particular interest is the style in which he climbed the Coutourier Couloir on the Verte, with Ron Mosely. In crossing the couloir they were caught by a small avalanche, and saved by the rope snagging. But the delay necessitated a bivouac for the night, with boots off and feet in sacks. With little feeling in his toes the next morning, Ted put his boots on the wrong feet, the descent being further complicated by periodically falling asleep!

In 1957 Ted was a member of Joe Walmsley's expedition to Masherbrum. Although the summit was not attained, and sadly Bob Downes died from what is now known as pulmonary oedema (HAPE), it was a good expedition and Ted pulled his weight to his best extent, as all who knew him would expect. Because of a communication error from India it was mistakenly thought that it had been Ted who had died and so Ted's first obituary appeared in the Manchester Guardian and Evening News. The latter was based upon his Landlady's opinion, and was much the more interesting!

The extent of Ted's activity during his 20's had left him with little time for what most people would call a normal social life although, as his landlady remarked to the Evening news, he was not without trips to the local dancehall. But he was not at that time ready for commitment. That time arrived in his late 20's when he met Kath, his future wife and long supporting companion. This was the start of a new phase in his mountaineering life.

To begin with, they lived in Atherton with Kath's mother, but were soon to buy the major part of an old farmhouse, Martinside, high above Chapel en le Frith. From there Ted commuted on his bicycle to ICI in Blackley, Manchester, a round trip of some 50 miles on top



of a day's work. Ted's children, Catherine, Janet and Ruth, arrived during the Atherton years, Janet in particular arriving early (or was Ted late?) at a set of traffic lights in Ted's A35 van, fairly standard climbers transport for the time. But they were fortunate to enjoy a childhood in such a unique place. Life became complicated when ICI transferred Ted to Teesside, and his life of shuttling between Chapel and Guisborough began. That he retained his fitness can be seen from the way he regarded the Lyke Wake Walk as a good walk for a summer evening after work! But they were not easy times, either for Ted, or Kath, who accepted it with great stoicism.

When, in 1968, the idea of a two day Mountain Marathon was mooted, Ted was keen to take part. Together with Bob Astles, and Dennis Weir at other times, he made meticulous plans, putting careful thought into selection of lightweight equipment. John has a vivid memory of Ted at the start of the first event in Muker, standing aloof as competitors scrambled to transfer checkpoint grid references onto their maps, and calmly taking photographs of the 'historic event' before jogging past the entire field during the first mile or so. He had persuaded Len Stubbs to sponsor the event with a few prizes, two of which he and Bob promptly won back by taking first place in an event that was to become one of Ted's annual favourites. At the overnight camp a small crowd of those who had made it thus far gathered around the Dance/Astles tent. The rumour spread that it was in fact a children's play tent borrowed from Ted's daughters for the event. Ted was ahead of the field in thinking light; for ordinary competitors it was a case of 'look and learn'. Bob and Ted won again the following year but in attempting a third victory they managed to mark a check-point ten grid squares out and paid the inevitable price though still finishing very well placed. In one Karrimor International Mountain Marathon, Ted teamed up with Don Talbot for the event, this being reorganised into 3 courses with handicaps based on age – which was favourable for them. Don speaks highly of Ted's navigational skills, and his strength on tough uphill sections. On one long climb from Haweswater back onto the ridge Don recalls Ted taking his sack as well as his own, and still having to struggle to keep up. He also remembers, with amazement, Ted leading them,

on another occasion, and in fading light, unerringly to the overnight camp. Over the years they won several veterans' handicap prizes.

A few years later he again rallied the troops for the High Peak Marathon, long known within the Rucksack Club as the Derwent Watershed walk, a circuit first accomplished by Eustace Thomas in 1919. Ted was determined that a Rucksack team should acquit itself well and indeed the RC managed to win that first event (a pretty gruesome affair, taking place as it did almost entirely through the long hours of a winter night) and he went on to lead his team to six consecutive victories.

With his seemingly boundless enthusiasm for new challenges Ted had completed, in 1968, along with John Eastwood and Stan Bradshaw, and assisted by Dennis Weir, a circuit of the 2,500 ft. summits of the Lake District – a walk which JE calculated as 105 miles and 43,065 ft. of ascent. Dennis recalls the 4 of them, on a completely flat top, trying to locate the exact summit. Their time was 70 hours. Again, in the winter of '79 Ted was heavily involved in planning an attempt on the Tan Hill to Cat and Fiddle trek. Conditions could hardly have been more wintry and deep snow slowed progress over Boulsworth Hill and Hoof Stones Height to Todmorden, where Ted, very sore of foot, reluctantly pulled out. In a typically generous gesture he turned out again to meet the others later in the walk with flasks and butties.

Probably the boldest of the classic long walks that Ted pioneered, the North Wales Horseshoe, almost certainly came about as a result of a map reading error. Mike Cudahy records, "In 1955 a youthful Ted Dance was a little puzzled to note looks of dismay being exchanged between his hard walking peers in response to his suggestion of a new club walk." I believe he had spotted the line on the OS quarter inch map of Wales, mistaking it for a map of twice that scale. The Horseshoe gives a walk of some 140 miles and 40,000 ft. of ascent. Whether or not the story is true, Ted never gave up on the idea and the route became a sort of Holy Grail for that generation of ultra-distance walkers. A first serious attempt was made in 1978 starting in Prestatyn and heading towards Cader Idris with the intention of linking in with the Rucksack Club's scheduled Barmouth to Aber walk for the second half. On this occasion the schedule proved to

be too ambitious, but the following year, taking the route in the reverse direction, and unencumbered by a deadline of joining up with a scheduled Rucksack Club walk, Ted, Mike Cudahy and Geoff Bell started from Aber, knocked off the threes, and progressed over the Moelwyns to Rhinoggi to Barmouth. There, sad to relate, Ted was forced to retire because of very sore feet. Mike and Geoff went on to complete a circuit which had been Ted's magnificent idea and inspiration.

Ted retired early, and his life entered another phase. The children were grown up, and summer holidays need no longer be determined by school holidays. And so Ted returned to Alpine climbing in addition to all his other mountain activities. For some 15 years or so, an annual trip to the Alps was a regular part of Ted's life. He had signed on to lead Ramblers parties, and in those days, before bureaucracy had caught up, no formal qualification was needed and trips such as the High Level Route from Chamonix to Zermatt and Saas Fee could be part of his responsibility. He always claimed that these ramblers trips made him very fit at walking very slowly, but it meant that once the trips were complete he was well acclimatised for bigger mountains. And so, year after year, Ted and I, often accompanied by my son, John Allen, and Richard Jones, spent a few weeks doing whatever the conditions allowed.

During these years most of the Alpine 4000ers were climbed, although the focus was, for many years, on doing good routes on good mountains, whatever they happened to be. Routes completed were of a respectable grade, the bulk being about AD (ZS in German), a few being a grade harder, and a few easier. When the weather was bad, rough mountain walking in the smaller peaks between Switzerland and Italy made a very enjoyable alternative, being quiet, although the loose shale nature of many of the summits made traversing the valleys and passes often preferable. In later years Ted became keen to complete the 4000m peaks. Sadly, if that had been an aim at the outset we would without doubt have completed them, but in the end he was timed out just a few peaks from the end. Our last big Alpine day was to traverse Mont Blanc de Tacul, Mont Maudit and Mont Blanc, from the Aiguille du Midi, descending over the Dome de Gouter, then by train and cable car to

the valley. A good day in his 70's! And a holiday in which 10 of the 4000ers were completed. In total we must have ascended somewhere between 100 and 200 Alpine peaks during this time, all worthy, if not all of 4000m!

As a companion, if you enjoyed the arguments and differences of opinion, and the odd reminder that decades earlier you had said something completely different, he was great company. We passed nearly six fruitful decades in such a manner, and even on our last Alpine routes were still arguing about the safest manner to cross a wet glacier when there were just two of you! One member of the Rucksack club once remarked I deserved a medal for the time I spent with Ted, but in the many hundreds of days we walked and climbed together, and passed happy family days, I cannot think of a single instance when a day ended other than happily, and the next began without a hint of resentment! Each day was filled with something constructive and worthwhile, and despite the risks of Alpine climbing we invariably achieved our goals in a timely and safe manner. Ted was a very measured and steady mountaineer, very careful and delicate on loose exposed ground. He was the nearest to the ideal companion that I could have had. Being nearly ten years older he gave me much in my early years, and I was able to return the favour in his declining years. In between, we coasted along easily, knowing all we needed to know about each other, and enjoying so many days of effortless companionship and friendship.

*Tom Gerrard*

This is an edited version of the obituary prepared for the Rucksack Club Journal and provided by the main author (with permission of the editor of the Rucksack Club Journal) . written by Tom Gerrard,

## RONNIE (VERONICA) DE COURT

Ronnie was born in Kent, 8th September 1940. She became a teacher, married Dick de Court, also a FRCC member and moved to Barrow-in-Furness. For a short time Ronnie taught at Alfred Barrow Secondary Modern school and the Greengate Infants school. She was also involved in the formation of a crèche for young working mothers at Thorncliffe School.

I first met Ronnie when I joined Barrow Ramblers in January 1983. Always up for a challenge a small group of us would leave the 'A' party and find a 'different' way to a summit via a scramble; Ronnie was often the perpetrator of this revolt. Ronnie loved long distance walks and completed the Lake District 3000 foot round on at least 5 occasions and also the 40 mile Keswick to Barrow Walk several times raising money for charity.

During the excellent winter of 1986 a group of Barrow Ramblers, which included Ronnie went to Scotland, staying at Ballachuilsh. Moderate routes to grade 3 were done including the Aonach Eagach above Glen Coe in fantastic conditions. In the Lake District the easier classics such as Low Water Beck, Great End and the corries of the Helvellyn range. were tackled.

In the March of that year Ronnie was involved in an accident that confined her to a wheelchair for the remainder of her life. Ronnie with three other members of Barrow Ramblers went to Greenhow End on Fairfield. I should have been there but much to my annoyance had to go to work at short notice. The weather was very cold and conditions were good. An easy route was done first on which Ronnie broke a crampon, preventing her from climbing again that day. Another member decided not to climb again to keep Ronnie company. The remaining two members decided to climb Greenhow Gully, a 100m grade III \*route, despite a warning from Peter Fleming, who with Les Swindin had done the route the previous weekend and decided that it was possibly a grade V+ and much harder than the guide book description in the prevailing conditions.

The pair began their ascent, Ronnie below taking photographs. Without warning the two climbers fell down the icy gully and landed on top of Ronnie knocking her unconscious. The third member of

the group ran down to the nearest phone box and summoned Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team. By the time the rescue team arrived it was dark and snowing heavily, the helicopter brought in by the team was only able to go as far as the valley bottom. In appalling conditions Ronnie was carried to the road and then transported to Whitehaven hospital by the waiting helicopter.

A week was spent at Whitehaven while her condition was stabilised; a broken neck was diagnosed. She was transferred to Hexham Hospital Spinal Injuries unit where she spent three weeks. I visited Ronnie there several times. She attached no blame to the climbers, she was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Above Ronnie's bed was her climbing helmet she was wearing at the time; it had a large hole in the side, the result of the collision with the climbers. The specialist surgeon told me that due to the severity of her injuries she would develop pneumonia and not live for very long. Ronnie proved him wrong.

Eventually Ronnie went home to Rosside near Ulverston; they had moved from Barrow two years previously. The cottage was her and Dick's 'dream house'. The house was adapted to meet Ronnie's needs in a wheelchair. Dick retired early from teaching to look after Ronnie who in the early days often returned to Greengate School to assist in the classroom but due to 'certain restrictions' unfortunately had to stop visiting the school.

Ronnie and Dick enjoyed their retirement, gardening, reading, playing computer chess and going for drives in the Lake District. Always welcoming hosts they asked for news of Barrow Ramblers and the FRCC.

Dick died in 2009 and from then onwards Ronnie had to rely on family, friends and full time carers. She kept her garden going and was always keen to show anybody her latest plantings.

Ronnie was always cheerful, great company and never had a bad word for anybody either before and after her tragic accident.

Jack Lancaster took me on my first rock climb, Peter Fleming proposed me for the FRCC membership and Ronnie was my second. All three had a great influence on my life in similar but also different ways. I was a privilege to know them. They are all deeply missed.

*Mark Scott*



## JOHN HARLOE FLEMING AND ELLEN META FLEMING (NEE HAUSMANN)

Ellen was born in 1920 and died October 2013. John was born in 1923 and died in April 2008. John and Ellen first met on a mountain-side, Ellen was climbing in Valais when she met John in a Swiss Alpine Club hut near Arolla. John was on the way up the mountain and Ellen on the way down. They were married in Switzerland in 1952, where both were working at that time. Four children, three grandchildren and many walks and climbs later their love of mountains endured throughout their lives and passed through to the following generations.

Ellen began her enjoyment of walking and climbing in the mountains near Hanover where she grew up. This stayed with her through moves to Switzerland, meeting and marrying John, then via Scotland to Pakistan and Jordan before returning to Britain, rearing four children on the way as the family moved with John's work as a civil engineer. The Lake District was a constant throughout, and Ellen was persuaded to move from associate to full member of the Fell and Rock in 1986 with the argument that she had certainly proved herself eligible in her own right.

John joined the Fell and Rock in 1945; his early mountaineering experience is best recounted by John Judson.

'John and I joined the Imperial College Mountaineering Club in the Autumn of 1941 and during the following vacation we went with the club to North Wales; staying in the Idwal Youth Hostel. We had our first experience of rock climbing on Idwal Slabs and Tryfan. For the next two years we settled down to a routine of N Wales in the winter and the Lakes in the Spring. Much of our travel was by hitch hiking. During term time there were occasional visits to Harrison's Rocks and in the Summer of 1942 John and I had a vacation Job in Saltaire and one day climbed the three Peaks – Ingleborough, Whernside and Pennyghent.

In the final Summer, after leaving university, five of us made our first visit to Scotland to spend about six weeks climbing peaks in the Trossachs, Ben Nevis, Glencoe, Cairngorms, Wester Ross and Sutherland. This most ambitious and successful programme was worked out by John. All went well and we spent a freezing night in the Shelter stone in the Cairngorms, but were turned back from reaching the peak of An Teal-lach due to bad weather. At the end only John and I were left and even

we gave up eventually at Achiltibuie as the rain never stopped and our boots were wearing out. We hitched a lift on a herring lorry from Ullapool and parted company in Edinburgh. Since our 70th birthdays the five who went to Scotland went on some sort of expedition until a few years ago.'

John's retirement opened up mountain walking possibilities, an earlier accident that damaged his back stopped his climbing career. From 1986 to 1993 he was the Secretary of the FRCC London



John and Ellen in the Lakes, 1995

Section, known for their more mellow walks. John and Ellen continued to visit and walk in the Scottish Highlands and the Lakes, in John's words 'our old love, the mountains'. Their trekking in Sikkim with friends in 1988, was, as John put it, the 'high spot of the year', and for John was a return to the area he had trekked and climbed in 1946, whilst stationed with the army in India.

By the mid 1990's there was a slowing down of their mountain exploits, less hill walking and more hill gazing. In John's description of his 1996 reunion with John Judson and other mountaineering friends at Onich, he points out with his usual humour, that 'the longest walk was the circumambulation of a wee bittie hillock at Port Appin'. The 1990s though was also a time of expanding the mountain walking experience of their growing grandchildren. The photo of Ellen and John was taken in 1995 during one of their family gatherings in the Lakes.

John died in April 2008, and Ellen in October 2013. Ellen paid her last visit to the Lake District that year, at the age of 91, enjoying the company of her family, the sociability of the huts, and the beauty of the lakes, valleys and hills.

*Sue Fleming*

#### PETER FLEMING

Peter Fleming was born in Barrow-in-Furness in 1936. His parents did not own a car, however his grandmother did although she could not drive. His father, acting as chauffeur, drove the family around the Lake District and these trips were the beginning of a life-long love of the area and all wild places.

Although Peter was not a 'sportsman' at school he excelled at gymnastics and his neat wiry frame later proved an excellent asset for rock climbing. At the age of fourteen and very keen to walk the fells of the Lake District, Peter joined Barrow Ramblers under the wing of Tom Cornforth. With Barrow Ramblers he visited all parts of the Lake District and soon built up knowledge of the area, often turning a ramble into a scramble or even an easy rock climb. Peter remained a member of the Ramblers all his life and was elected Honorary Member, something of which he was enormously proud. With members of Barrow Ramblers Peter put up new routes in the Wallabarrow area of the Duddon Valley to VS standard during the 1950's

Peter served his apprenticeship as a marine engineer at Vickers Shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness followed by five years as engineer in the Merchant Navy with the Blue Funnel Line. The years he spent at sea travelling around the world, especially in the far-east, influenced him deeply. Peter sailed the world but could only stand on deck and admire the mountains of the Far East, only walking and climbing on rare holidays at home.

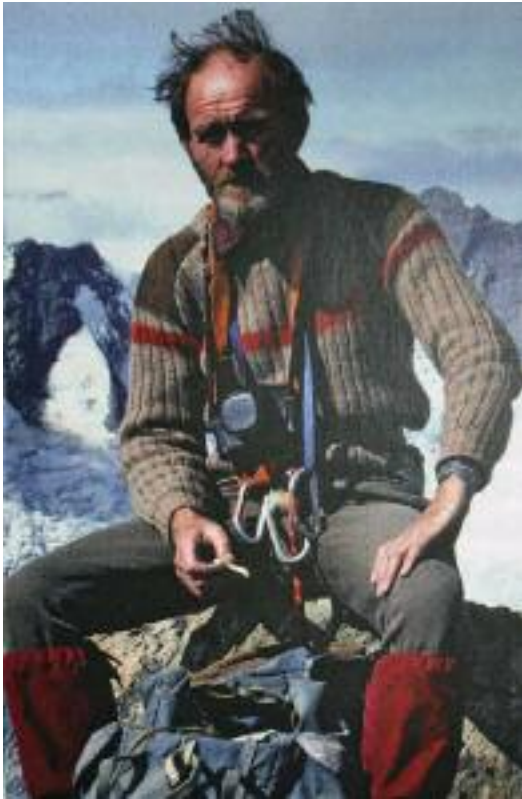
Soon Peter was climbing standard winter routes in Scotland with friends, mainly on Ben Nevis in preparation for Alpinism. One of Peter's favourite sayings was 'The Alps are good training for Scotland in winter.' In 1953 Peter, with no previous experience of fell

running, entered the first Vaux Mountain Trial. Starting from the ODG in Langdale and covering a course of 23 miles he finished 3rd. After several other fell races he decided that his time could be better spent by walking, climbing and Alpinism.

In 1956, at the age of twenty, travelling with friends in a Ford Prefect he visited Zermatt and climbed the Matterhorn by the Hornli Ridge; during the same holiday the group climbed the Dom and several lower peaks. In Chamonix, en route to Zermatt, they traded a reel of Viking nylon hawser laid rope for more up to date equipment at Snell Sports. Another memorable visit was the traverse of the Matterhorn via the Italian and Hornli ridges in 36 hours from Zermatt, followed soon after by the Weisshorn and the Dent Blanche. He eventually climbed the Matterhorn four times, his favourite route being the Zmutt Ridge.

After leaving the Merchant Navy in 1963 Peter took a short break from work and with a friend set up a small business in Windermere servicing Hoover appliances, mainly for hotels in the area. He then moved to Barrow-in-Furness and with his brother Maurice acquired the Hoover and Meile franchises for the area. Peter retired from the business in 1996 and with his wife Margaret travelled the world 'before he slowed down'.

Peter climbed many of the 4000m peaks solo due to lack of what he considered suitable partners, having been let down several times with 'casual introductions'. This changed when he met Mike and Sally Westmacott. Peter was intending to solo the Shreckhorn, 'in hindsight a stupid thing to do'. He joined the couple and the peak was successfully climbed after some difficult route finding because of poor conditions. Mike proposed Peter for the Alpine Club which he joined in 1975. In 1979 Peter led a meet for the AC at Wasdale where he met Les and Barbara Swindin. They had much in common; Les and Peter had completed approximately half of the 4000m peaks on Collomb's list and eventually by the end of the 1986 summer season they had completed all of the fifty two 4000m peaks guideless. The fourthousanders were rarely their only objective; quality routes on lower peaks, such as the Piz Badile North Ridge, were also climbed, and the 4,000m peaks were tackled by other routes – for instance the Kanzelgrat on the Zinalrothorn and the North Face of the Brei-



thorn; Peter and Les both revelled in such routes. Peter's final 4000m peak was the Finsteraarhorn.

With Les and Peter, Barbara Swindin was slowly 'ticking off' the 4000m peaks. 'All But One', Barbara's autobiography is dedicated to Peter. The trio tried three times to climb the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey but failed due to very poor conditions. When Peter realised that he did not have long to live he persuaded Barbara that she must complete her memoirs and publish them as a

book, which she did. Peter's wife Margaret was also a valued member of the 'team' often waiting patiently and nervously for their return to the valley campsite; never envious of the route they had completed.

Peter was intimate with all parts of the Lake District and in the early 1970's began to explore its archaeology, taking a special interest in the mineral mines. With a group of friends they methodically visited most of the mines initially using electron ladders and later single rope technique (SRT), often being the first into the mines since they were abandoned. Coniston was his speciality and over many years, using original plans and ingenuity, most of the mines were visited and recorded. In 1979 with a group of friends he formed Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society (CAT) and later was

one of the early members of Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue. Long before this Peter had been a member of Furness Fell Rescue.

A modest person he was often reluctant to talk about his exploits but was always willing to offer advice. If somebody asked about a route or peak, Peter had probably done it. A selection of the routes climbed include: the Skye Ridge, routes up to grade V on Ben Nevis, Sticil Face in winter, Great Gully on the Wasdale Scree, Steep Gill in winter, CB, most of the routes on Dow Crag to HVS+ and many more.

Peter was not interested in completing the Munros; to him many were just rounded lumps of bog. He loved Scotland, the Isle of Skye, Torridon and Glen Coe and was especially fond of the west coast, often sailing with friends around the islands in a friend's yacht. Two trips to the Himalaya with FRCC members and early round of the Annapurna Circuit with friends were memorable trips.

An early member of Barrow Mountaineering and Ski Club, Peter was a member of several clubs including the, BMSAC, Barrow Field Naturalists & Photography Society, Furness Geological Group. His collection of mountaineering books, all of which he had read, was possibly one of the best private collections in the country.

Peter became a member of the FRCC in 1965; proposed by David Miller and seconded by Jack Lancaster. Typically he soon became involved with the club and was elected to the committee not long after becoming a full member. His first committee meeting was at the Wasdale Hotel. Arriving at Bracken Close to drop off his sleeping bag before the meeting, he was confronted by the then Hut Secretary Horace Baxter who told him that this was private property and to leave immediately! Not a good start. All went well after that.

Having an interest in mountaineering books, Peter was Assistant Librarian in 1978 to 1988 also assisting with the Archive and collating the Abraham slide collection with Muriel Files. He became a Vice President in 1989 and was offered the position of President on several occasions, which he reluctantly declined due to other commitments, one of which was the time consuming but rewarding Joint Editorship of the Valais East AC guide book. He was involved with the Napes Needle centenary, commissioning the bronze cast of the Needle and also one of Haskett-Smith.



In retirement Peter with Margaret travelled to the Far East, visiting Mongolia, Tibet, Cambodia, China, Thailand, Nepal, Alaska, Egypt and sailing in the Caribbean. I was privileged to travel with Peter to Arizona twice, once descending to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and to Mexico, Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego and the Picos de Europa. Each of the trips was self-organised and lasted at least a month with no time wasted. No time was wasted when out with Peter Fleming!

I had many memorable days on the Lakeland fells and Scottish hills in all conditions with Peter, again none of them wasted. Looking for fox traps, an old abandoned mine or a direct scramble away from paths to a summit were the norm in a day out with Peter. I learned a lot from Peter as did so many others.

In such a short obituary it is impossible to write about the life of Peter Fleming, a book would be needed. Peter lived life to the full, never cut corners, never wasted time. He had a dry but never sarcastic sense of humour. Always willing to give and take advice; knowledge for Peter meant sharing.

Since the mid-1980's a group of friends would book somewhere on the west coast of Scotland at the end of May, when the weather is usually settled. In May 2012 we had booked some cottages near Eilean Donan Castle. At the last minute Peter and Margaret cancelled due to Peter's health. For some time he had been having breathing problems and decided it was best not to go. Upon our return I called to see them both; Peter looked well and proudly showed me the scar from a recent exploratory operation on his chest. He asked many questions about our trip and also asked to book for the next year. The following Sunday morning as I was about to leave my house to walk up Scafell Pike from Eskdale, one of Peter's favourite valleys, the phone rang and I was told that Peter had died during the night in hospital. Peter died on 16th June 2012. I put the phone down and walked to Scafell thinking of times past spent with a good friend.

Peter is sadly missed by all, especially Margaret with whom he had a loyal and loving marriage.

*Mark Scott*

### MOLLIE HAMER

Mollie Hamer's Family lived the Saddleworth Valley in the central Pennine town of Mossley. She was born while her father was undergoing military training at the start of the First World War. After leaving school aged 15, she worked her way through a series of clerical positions and immersed herself in the busy life of a flourishing textile town. In the mid-1930s, she went on a CHA walking holiday to Scotland. She enjoyed it so much that she started walking regularly in Derbyshire with the Buxton Peverils.

Her first trip to Snowdonia took her to the foot of Idwal Slabs, where someone threw her a climbing rope and said 'Hey Ginger, tie into the middle of that!' To her surprise, she discovered that not only did she enjoy rock climbing she was rather good at it. A lifelong passion for mountaineering began, although at first these activities had to be carried out in secret. She confessed to me once that when she had begun climbing she had had to hide her boots at work. If her Father had known that she was no longer rambling in the countryside, he would have burnt them!

Throughout the Second World War, she worked at S & J Watts, a wholesale clothing distributor in Manchester. She was independent and strong minded. For example, her way of dealing with the office 'bottom pincher' was simple. She warned him politely but firmly not to do that again and when he persisted, she grabbed the offending hand and pinned it to her desk with a dart!

When she wasn't working or doing her bit for the war effort on the telephone exchange in the local Town Hall, she was rock climbing and her natural abilities brought her to the attention of a group of Welsh-based climbers that included Chris Preston and Dickie Morsley. Under their mentorship, Mollie soon became an accomplished rock climber.

After the war, Mollie worked on the railways at 'Gorton Tank'. On one of her frequent trips to the mountains, she met a young rock climber from Bolton, recently demobilized from the RAF and training to be a Surveyor with the Ordnance Survey - Dan Hamer. It was one of those rare, yet perfect climbing partnerships. They fell in love

and were married in 1949. Trips abroad together, to bigger mountains in Austria and Switzerland, followed.

Mollie went back to work after my belated arrival in 1955 and spent the rest of her working life as a Part-Time School Secretary. The Headmaster is normally in charge of a school, but I suspect that this was not always the case in Mossley. She devoted much of her spare time to a host of worthy causes focused on the social and pastoral well-being of people both in Mossley and in the wider community. The list is enormous, but mention must be made of her extensive contributions to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Mossley's Civic Society - of which she was Chairman in 1992.

It was her mountaineering exploits that defined Mollie for me from an early age and although a fading colour slide, taken at Froggatt Edge in 1969, is the last evidence I have of her rock climbing seriously, she continued mountain walking and scrambling well into the 1990s in the Lake District and Scotland and she never missed the opportunity of going back to North Wales. She was an active member of Lancashire Caving & Climbing Club between the 1940s and 1960s and the Fell & Rock for more than 60 years. An Elective Committee Member and regular Meet Leader, she was an Assistant Warden at Beetham Cottage for almost a decade in the 1980s. When I last spoke to her in late April 2013, she wanted to know where the Scottish Meet was going to be held and was already looking forward to the Club's AGM and Annual Dinner Weekend - a function she had only missed once since the early 1950s.

She passed this love of the mountains on to me and encouraged my interest in a geological career. She lived to see her grandchildren excel at climbing and was immensely proud of the youngest, who had won five National Titles and a Silver Medal at the IFSC World Youth Climbing Championships in Austria in 2011.

In 1948, my parents went to Zermatt, where they made speedy ascents of the Zinal Rothorn, the Obergablehorn and the Dufourspitz. The summit they really wanted, however, proved more of a challenge. Heavy snowfalls on the upper slopes had made the Matterhorn unclimbable for several weeks. Finally, conditions improved sufficiently for them to make a successful ascent of the

Hornli Ridge. It was notable because Mollie did it without an ice axe. Evidently, her sure footedness did not go unnoticed. As they walked back through the meadows towards Zermatt, one of their Guides looked round and said 'Magnificent!' Everyone turned to stare at the Matterhorn, but the Guide explained that he didn't mean the mountain - he was referring to the young lady!

That was more than 60 years ago, but I can't think of a better description of Mollie. She will be sadly missed by Club Members, her many friends and Family alike.

*Richard (Dan) Hamer*

#### PETER JOHNSTON

Peter Johnston, who died in 2012 aged 70, took up climbing later than most, being in his thirties before he made his first forays to the hills from a rather unsuitable base for a mountaineer in Norwich. Prior to becoming a climber he was a keen and very gifted golfer, winning numerous trophies in his youth, as well as a cricket and rugby player in his university days at Cambridge.

He joined the FRCC in 1996 and became a full member in 2000. By that stage of his life he had moved north to the Lake District where he worked for over twenty years as a partner in Beaty & Co of Wigton, and was known locally as a lawyer of considerable renown, indeed it was the opinion of most of us that he had a brain the size of a planet.

He did not play a prominent part in the life of the club, holding no office, nor attending many meets; his busy life as a solicitor precluded taking on many other responsibilities, but he was very interested in the history of climbing and was very proud of his complete set of FRCC Journals that had once been the property of Mabel Barker. These he devoured from cover to cover, along with his collection of hundreds of climbing books, and his scholarly interest and retentive mind gave him the ability to recall at opportune moments many fascinating facts about our mountaineering past.

Locally he was a great joiner in and taker on of voluntary duties and, in his adopted home of Hesketh Newmarket, he became a gover-

nor and a fund raising treasurer of the local primary school as well as secretary of the local allotment society and a prime mover behind the setting up of England's first co-operative pub, The Old Crown. He was also a keen supporter of local mountain rescue teams, acting as the "body" on practice dog searches and raising money from the small fees charged to clients making an affidavit under oath. Keswick MRT were the surprised recipients of the first of many cheques for over £100 from what Peter termed his "swear box" – their treasurer was initially puzzled as to just how bad the language at a locally respected legal office could be!

Perhaps Peter's most lasting contribution to climbing was the founding, in conjunction with his great friend Arthur Walby, of a local climbing club, the Heskett Spiders, which boosted the takings of the aforementioned hostelry by adopting it as its headquarters, had no membership fees (and membership was by invitation only – though everyone was invited) and boasted such luminaries among those members as Chris Bonington, Doug Scott and Tony Moulam. The Torridons became a regular venue for Spiders' meets with Peter taking a cottage there twice a year for a decade. In the Lakes, climbing plans were generally decided over a leisurely brunch at Shepherd's Café, sometimes so leisurely that later benightment on the chosen crag was only narrowly avoided - which stimulated plenty of conversation at the next leisurely brunch.

He was not a climber with great ambitions as to difficulty or to making new routes, he was far more concerned that everyone should be included in whatever mountain day was planned and of course he was always at the centre of all the arrangements, much taken up with formulating those plans and somewhat obsessed with the weather. Nevertheless he was a mountaineer of considerable competence and traversed An Teallach, a long held ambition, in the same year that he died. Climbing though was but one of many interests in a long list that included literature, music, cooking and wine – he was in many ways a true Renaissance man who could discourse on numerous topics from the correct way to cultivate courgettes in Cumbria to the Gaelic poetry of Sorley Maclean, from the music of Mahler to the best Grand Crus of Bordeaux – all with an in depth knowledge. Indeed his interest in wine was of the sort that soon



becomes quite expensive due to an appreciation of the finest vintages, the type that need laying down for many years before being ready to drink, and it is indicative of his faith in the future that, after his death, the Wine Society kindly returned a cheque for a considerable sum that he had sent them not long before (and well after his diagnosis with terminal cancer) for wines to be purchased en primeur in the forthcoming year.

I think it was always Peter's intention to become more involved in the FRCC when he retired but he never did retire, working up until a few weeks before he died. He was not a workaholic so much as a man who, like so many climbers, had no intention of growing old gracefully or indeed growing old at all, being far too busy and too full of plans to contemplate pipe and slippers. But that did not mean he could not put his feet up and enjoy life when the occasion demanded and his legendary group get-togethers in the North-West Highlands seem set to continue for many years to come, and, though without their central character, many a raised glass and appreciative "Sláinte" will doubtless ensure he is there in spirit.

He is survived and remembered by his son Miles from his first marriage, his first wife Annabel, his second wife Audrey and a host of friends from many walks of life and many parts of the country.

*Stephen Reid*



## DAVID KIRBY

I first met Dave Kirby in April 1960 when we were both just 18 years old. I gave him a lift from Coniston to the Walna Scar track, in my old Austin 8, and then I continued up to Cove Hut. After having a meal, I went up to Dow Crag and met him again at the foot of the crag. Although we both came from Barrow, I was unaware that he climbed. After a chat, we agreed to climb together, and did Great Central Route, followed by Leopards Crawl, which were the hardest climbs on the crag at that time. Dave was clearly a very competent climber, and we agreed to meet up again to climb the following weekend. A few weeks later, we went to Gimmer Crag to do Kipling Groove, only to find another 'Barrow boy', Tony King, climbing it ahead of us. From then on, the three of us teamed up and did many of the hardest climbs in the lakes at that time, such as Hells Groove, Deer Bield Buttress and North Crag Eliminate. That was the start of a long climbing partnership, with many trips to venues both at home and abroad, and a lifelong friendship.



Dave also climbed with other local activists and made frequent visits to Scotland in the winter, where he did such routes as Orion Direct and Point 5 on Ben Nevis, Ravens Gully in Glencoe and Parallel B gully on Lochnagar.

He then took on the job of writing the Gable section of the Gable and Pillar guidebook that was published in 1991. Living in Gosforth at the time, he was handy for the crags, but with work commitments it was still a big undertaking. However, he received the support and involvement of his wife, Penny, in all aspects of the guidebook work.

At about this time, when he was in his fifties, he started climbing with Andy Jones and together they did much harder routes up to E5, in various parts of the UK, such as The Cumbrian on Esk Buttress, and Risk Business and Space Walk in Glencoe. At the same time, this pair did the Nose on El Cap in Yosemite and the Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses. Subsequently, his enthusiasm for and commitment to his career made his climbing trips less frequent, but he could still put up a good performance, even when out of practice.

Dave was born in Barrow, and after studying at the Technical College, he obtained an engineering apprenticeship with Vickers Armstong Shipbuilders, who were the principal employer in the town. But he had ambition, and as soon as he was qualified, he got an engineering post with Norweb, and subsequently as Works Engineer for a number of other manufacturers. This led to a senior position with a company carrying out major works at the Sellafield Nuclear plant and finally the Managing Director of that company.

Dave Kirby died at his home in Gosforth on 12 November 2012, at the age of 70, after a long illness. He leaves a wife and son from his second marriage and 2 children from his first.

*David Miller*

## JOHN LAGOE

John Christopher Lagoe, who died in February 2013 at the age of 85, was a member of the Fell and Rock for 58 years, having joined in 1955.

He grew up in Yorkshire, attended Heckmondwike Grammar School and read French and German at Leeds University.

As part of his French studies he went to Grenoble, where he managed to do a few guided ascents in the Dauphine Alps. Because of his French degree, he spent his National Service in the Education Branch of the RAF. On his discharge, in 1952, while sitting on a train reading 'The Times' he spotted an advert on the front page for an instructor at the Eskdale Outward Bound School. He got the job and spent ten years there, eventually becoming Warden, a period which included 18 months as deputy to Eric Shipton, after Eric had been

turned down in his own ambition to lead the 1953 Everest Expedition. It was at Eskdale that all his three children were born.

Those ten years were of vital importance to his future career, giving him access to a wide business world and specifically to the steel industry, leading him to a job in Personnel at British Steel in Workington and a home in Cockermouth.

He had met his future wife, Joan, while he was at University and she was taking a teacher-training course at Becketts Park in Leeds and (beat this!) got engaged on top of Scafell Pinnacle.



In 1968 the family moved to Sheffield, where John worked for British Steel in Human Resources, eventually becoming Personnel Director in one of the Divisions. After taking early retirement he led a small group of colleagues in buying a small business from British Steel, in which he continued as part-time Chairman until he finally retired at 60. He moved to 'his own bit of heaven' in

Easedale, Grasmere, where he lived in great harmony with Joan until his death.

He did all the Munros, Joan doing 215 of them with him. He managed two treks in Nepal and did quite a number of Alpine ascents, including the Grand Combin and the Weissmies. At 65 years of age he climbed the Matterhorn, although he modestly claimed that he never did any 'serious' mountaineering or climbing.

As part of a long-lived interest in ski-mountaineering, he had a number of tours in the Alps and did the classic ski-mountaineering 'Haute Route' from Chamonix to Zermatt. When those days ended, he continued to enjoy downhill ski holidays with Joan, which did not end until he was 80 years old. At 66 he completed the great Joss Naylor Traverse of the Lakes, from Pooley Bridge to Wasdale.

Then, one year later, he did his third traverse of the finest mountain day in the British Isles, the Cuillin Ridge on Skye. In between times he did a lot of cycling, including several long tours. One of his abiding interests was the Lake District Mountain Trial and in 2011 he was presented with a framed picture of Wasdale to commemorate his 55 years service to the MT Association.

I first met him at Rawhead sometime in the '70's, but did not really catch up with him again until I too was able to come and live permanently in my own bit of Grasmere, so I was not able to get out on the hills with him until then.

However, I do cherish a personal memory of him, when he was over 80, joining me on the excellent scramble on Cam Crag Ridge which, unusually, was new to him. I puffed up the approach slopes with my joints creaking, my valves rattling and my engine misfiring and then watched in amazement as he effortlessly scampered up the rocks, chatting as we went. He did the chatting; I just tried to stick with him. He regularly rushed up Helm Crag, his local hill, for many years and was still doing it into his eighties when, while running (yes, running) along the ridge towards Calf Crag, he tore his Achilles tendon. That put him out of action for about eight weeks but it was, I believe, the only medical incident in his entire life and he never needed any medication for any other reason until his final illness. A charmed life, you might think.

He was, in fact, altogether a charming man, modest, friendly, cultured and sensitive. He loved classical music and poetry and was particularly knowledgeable on the Romantic Poets, whose 'head-quarters' are, of course, based in Grasmere. He lived a full life, in which his family and the mountains played major parts.

*Bob Allen*

Helen Lagoe adds her own tribute:

My Dad, John Lagoe, instilled in me and in many others a great love of wild places, mountains and, most of all, adventure. He had an infectious and boundless passion for new experiences in rugged and beautiful places, among the mountains of Scotland and the Alps and on the fells of his beloved Lake District. He was a gentle and

patient guide, treading carefully ahead of those small ones in his care. His kindness ensured that even a 5-year old could return exhilarated from a blizzard in Coire Cas or a downpour on Gable. He had a deep emotional connection with mountains and his closest companions were those who understood this love and shared precious time with him on the hill. Family and friends now joke that he is now enjoying a great Outward Bound reunion in the sky, with his best friends who have already passed away. Let's hope they are setting out on new adventures, uplifted by the beauty of ethereal mountains. I'll meet you on the top, Dad.

#### JACK LANCASTER

I first met Mr. Lancaster or Sir in 1963 at Alfred Barrow Secondary School, Barrow-in Furness. Jack taught physics, chemistry and history. Jack was a strict disciplinarian and woe-betide any pupil who stepped out of line. I was only 13 at the time and like most other pupils I was terrified of him but he did seem fair and as far as I can remember he did me no physical harm!

In 1966-67 I was in the 5th Form where Jack taught my form history. Until that time I was not very interested in the subject but Jack changed all that. He brought the subject alive and engaged with the pupils encouraging us all to debate the pros and cons of 20th century fascism, the fall of the Empire and the two world wars etc.

I was in my final year at school when Jack took me rock climbing on Dow Crag. Jack took pupils fell walking in preparation for their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze medal at weekends, usually around the Coniston, Langdale and Wasdale fells. One day we were heading for what we thought was a standard walk to the Coniston fells when he announced that we were going rock climbing on Dow Crag. Our group split into two, one group going to Walna Scar and the other to 'C' Ordinary. Fortunately I was in the climbing group. I don't remember much about that climb, just four young kids on the end of a rope being encouraged by a bearded teacher for whom I now had the greatest respect. Teachers DO have a life outside of work. Other climbs followed on various crags in the Lake District, all of

which I thoroughly enjoyed despite being terrified most of the time but I knew I was in safe hands. In a recent conversation with Al Phizacklea, Al told me that his first winter route was with Jack in a Swirl Howe gully.

Jack was born in Kendal in 1930 and for a short time lived in Bowness. He spent part of his National Service instructing at the Outward Bound School in Ullswater. Jack taught at Millom for a short while and then Barrow where he spent the rest of his career. A keen rugby player he coached a very successful Barrow school boys team for several years as well as playing for Windermere.

Jack joined the FRCC in 1947 at the age of 17 as a Graduating Member and became a Full Member in 1955. In his application for Full membership he apologises for the delay; this was due to National Service and training to be a teacher. His proposer L J Patterson writes 'This youth is most keen and in my opinion if his proposal is accepted he will become a very worthy member of the club'. Attached is a worthy list of walks and climbs for a youth. Jack was also a long standing member of Barrow Mountaineering and Ski Club.

A badly broken femur sustained whilst playing rugby with pupils limited his walking and climbing but he still managed easier climbs and walks despite this handicap. In later years his legs, worn out by years of walking, climbing and rugby began to fail and he eventually had to leave the fells to his younger pupils.

*Mark Scott*

#### JOHN LOY

Perhaps the most illustrative memory of John Loy (who died in June 2013) is of an ascent of the Fehrmann Route on the Campanile Basso in the Brenta Dolomites, which I made with him during a Fell and Rock alpine meet. I say ascent but the part that stays in the memory and sums up John's character as a climber actually occurred on the descent. All had gone well. We had made good time and abseiled back down to the base of the Normal Route. Having left our sacks at the bottom of the Fehrmann and not wanting a long walk in climbing shoes we followed the guide book advice and decided



to abseil down a gully back to the sacks. Ropes were fixed and John disappeared. Time passed and then more time. I couldn't see what was going on but every time I felt the rope it was tight. After what seemed like an age the call came and I clipped in and started off down.

John came into view and shouted to me to be careful when I reached the end of the rope. As I slid closer I could see why. He was standing on a ledge about six feet below the end of the rope, which he could just reach with his hand.

There was obviously going to be a difficult manoeuvre to gain the ledge and be able to thread and pull the rope. John had it all sorted. Directing which slings to clip and hold so that we both remained in contact with rock, a piton by the ledge and the rope. The manoeuvres were safely carried out and we fixed the next abseil to the bottom. Everything was carried out as if nothing peculiar had happened. It was really only at the bottom when I started to think about the relatively safe manoeuvres I had made and then to think what John must have gone through when he had gone down and had to figure out how to get on the ledge beyond the end of the rope!

But it was calmness, an ability to keep thinking no matter the situation and to come up with the safest solution, which typified John on the rock and fell. I was eternally grateful that he went down first and not me!

John joined the club in 1983 but already had a substantial and varied climbing career behind him. John had started climbing in 1947 as a relatively young teenager. One of his early climbing memories was of spending his summer holiday hitching to Skye and climbing there. But it was in the Peak District where John would make his mark. Although he made first ascents on many Peak crags, two places are particularly associated with him; Millstone and Ravensdale. On both crags he was at the forefront of exploration, cleaning and opening up new climbs on large crags that were relatively untouched. The outstanding routes for me being Via Vita and Amein at Ravensdale and Satan's Slit and Crew Cut on Millstone. The former being the first E graded route on the crag and the latter, which he did with Alan Clark, being a race off between themselves

and Crew and Ingle. John went on to write a number of editions of the guide for both places.

While the Peak was John's home ground he climbed extensively throughout Britain. In the 1950's he climbed at Avon and Cheddar, while completing his national service as a photographer in the RAF, based in Somerset. (The photography remained a life long interest.) His early visit to Scotland was the first of many. Returning to climb on the Ben and later to do routes such as Yoyo and Big Top and to make several more visits to Skye.

Despite having limited time and resources John visited the Alps whenever he could. In the early 1950's he was already making trips by train to the Dolomites. These trips were a very different experience to that which you would have now. Roads were unpaved, there was no bus service to the passes and no summer lifts. A day walk to the hut was the norm. You then picked up what information you could about the routes to do. I remember him talking about one great chimney crack they were encouraged to do by a hut warden. The climb was around grade 5 but let's say that by the time they reached the top most of the route had joined the scree at the bottom. John loved to climb in Switzerland and was a member of the Swiss Alpine Club for many years. He climbed many 4 000 metre peaks but his favourite and probably his best ascent was the Mittellegi Ridge on the Eiger. His love of the Alps was also reflected by his garden at home, not only in his choice of plants but in its steepness.

As with many climbers of his era John was a great walker completing long walks in the Peak and later in Scotland, which he had particularly enjoyed in recent years, as a regular attendee at the Scottish hotel meet, from which he had returned not long before his death.

John married Margaret (club member) in 1957 and had two daughters Denise and Helen (also a club member) and later two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He continued to climb well into his 70's but eventually a succession of operations on hips and knees took their toll on his abilities and he spent more time walking. John was a climber, walker and alpinist of immense experience and great ability and with a fund of stories to tell, which

always made him good company. It was a privilege to share many excellent routes with him.

But to finish where we started with the calm ability to just do it. We were making an ascent of Agony (E1) on Castle Rock. By this time John would have been in his sixties. At the top of the long second pitch I couldn't find the belay and kept climbing expecting it to be just a bit further. I was conscious about the rope length but eventually found somewhere and tied on. I shouted to John to come up. A short while later he arrived at the stance to calmly tell me he had climbed the crux while I was still climbing.

Happy (and thankful) memories of a good friend and great enthusiast for the fells and rocks.

*John Skelton*

#### MISS URSULA MILNER-WHITE

Ursula was born in India where her father was a member of the Indian Civil service. Women and children spent each hot season at a hill station in the Himalaya where the snowy peaks made a commanding backdrop to our garden. Her father retired in 1935 and the family lived in remotest Devonshire until she and her younger sister were evacuated, without parents, to Canada in 1940. Ursula stayed there until 1946, gaining a first class degree from McGill University. One long summer vacation she spent driving round northern Manitoba with a missionary taking Sunday school teaching to lonely settlements which were inaccessible in winter.

These early experiences combined with our mother's love of mountains gave Ursula a lifelong attraction to high places. In 1950 while in her first job as a trained librarian in the University of London, she decided she wanted to join the Fell & Rock. She thought her application would be strengthened if she had ascended more peaks and we spent a happy Easter climbing some of the major mountains in spring sunshine and with the ridges outlined by a dusting of snow. Her application was successful and she remained a member for 64 years until her death.



She tried a little rock climbing near the beginning and some expert climbers were kind enough to lead her. But she was not talented on cliffs, though she liked the feel of rock underfoot, so she soon settled for extensive fell walking. This she did all over the world, as holidays allowed and more especially during a fourteen year sojourn in New Zealand. She had gone there 'for a year or two' for a change of working environment but she looked up an old acquaintance from the FRCC (where else?) which led to her housekeeping and caring for two motherless girls until they grew up. Even then she kept up her membership and when in London joined in local walks with the FRCC. On her return from New Zealand, she settled in Salisbury but made a point of coming, whenever possible, to London to attend FRCC dinners or events. She was keen to keep up with her friends and until 2012 went to the annual meet in May. Her ability to walk at these decreased over the years until she went for little more than the company in the evenings, but she was still determined to go and when, for health reasons, she had to miss 2013, she thought that she would be back the following year.

On behalf of Ursula and her family, I would like to thank the Fell and Rock for all the pleasure and companionship they gave her.

*Rhoddy Wood*

## MAY PICKLES

Local historian, demographer, author, archaeologist, wife, mother and good friend to many

As a researcher of historical demography from parish records, May would have been amused by this record of her own:

Born: 21 July 1922 at Crossflatts, Leeds, the only child of Herbert Bowling, director of an iron foundry, and May Foster.

Accepted into membership of the Methodist Church: 25 June 1944 at Wells Road, Ilkley

Married: 23 May 1951 at Wells Road Methodist Church, Ilkley, to Charles Pickles, a local solicitor

Died: 29 October 2013, at Abbeydale, Ilkley

But May knew well that a life well-lived is made up of the rich social fabric of relationships and contributions, not just this catalogue of anniversary dates. Born into a Yorkshire family, one of her earliest memories was of standing on the steps of Leeds Town Hall when her maternal grandfather David Blythe Foster was sworn in as the first socialist Lord Mayor of the city in 1928.

Shortly afterwards, in 1931, the family moved to Ilkley, living first at 'Thornacre' on Bolling Road and then at 'Overbrook' on Victoria Avenue. May attended Winton School in Ben Rhydding before moving to Prince Henry's in Otley, travelling there by bus each day. Walking and cycling around the Dales with her parents started her interest in the outdoors, followed by holidays with friends with the Holiday Fellowship (now HF) in the Lake District and elsewhere. On leaving school, May took a shorthand and typing course at Ilkley School of Commerce. Her first job was with the newly created Wool Control in Menston, set up on the outbreak of War. In 1941, she moved to Martin's Bank in Ilkley (where the Santander branch is now located) and where John Spensley was the branch manager.

She met Charles at Ben Rhydding Tennis Club after he returned from active service in Africa and Burma. Charles was a sole-practitioner solicitor in the firm of George Turnbull and Son in Bradford, the firm later merging with others to form Wade and Co where Charles eventually became senior partner. May maintained the

family homes – always named 'Brackenclose' after an early climbing club hut in Wasdale in the Lakes - first in Lower Manley Road and later at 78 Bolling Road. Tim was born in 1952 and Helen in 1954.



May and Charles bought a Vauxhall Wyvern car in 1955, shortly followed by a caravan which became the base for regular weekends and holidays until the 1980s. For several summers it was parked at either Thorneythwaite in Borrowdale or Elterwater in Langdale whilst Charles went climbing and May took the children on gentler adventures. There were grand

tours to Scotland, London, Norfolk, France and the Alps with mountaineering adventures on Ben Nevis and the Aiguille Verte, Chamonix.

As Tim and Helen grew up and spent more time away from home, May began to re-engage in learning and discovery. She attended adult education classes in art and literature and became increasingly involved in the Workers Educational Association in Ilkley. She found her particular interest in local history and this was to occupy her for the rest of her life. Under the tutelage of Prof Jean LePatourel, she became involved in archaeological 'digs' across Yorkshire; boxes of 'finds' started to fill the house. From archaeology her interest spread into parish histories, local demography and parish boundaries. There were numerous trips to walk and explore historic boundaries uncovering the changing historic settlement patterns of Yorkshire's villages. Parish registers, hearth tax and poll tax returns became rich



sources of information from which to construct, often revelatory, maps of the changing population structures within regions. May made significant contributions to this emerging field of local demographic studies. The hamlets of Denton and Asquith were always of particular interest as May's family had owned land in Asquith.

These interests led May to active roles in the Olicana Historical Society and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (YAS). She served as an officer on their committees for many years, becoming Olicana's Honorary Vice-President. She was a co-editor and member of the editorial board of the Cambridge-based Local Population Studies (LPS) from its earliest days and regularly attended its conferences in Cambridge and elsewhere. She contributed papers to LPS, the YAS Journals and elsewhere on Wharfedale in the 17th and 18th centuries. She co-edited Yorkshire Boundaries for the YAS and published work on population migration from a national perspective. Together with Moira Long, May founded a series of publications under the Mid-Wharfedale Local History Research Group detailing aspects of Yorkshire history; her own titles in this series include *The Early History of the Society of Friends in Mid-Wharfedale and Craven and Pre-Victorian Ilkley 1672-1811* ("a very mean place").

With Charles's long-standing interest in rock climbing and mountaineering, May came to know more of the Lake District through caravanning and fell-walking. In 1980 she eventually joined Charles in membership of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and went on to enjoy many meets in the Lakes, Wales and particularly Scotland, finding a whole new circle of friends. Later she joined the Spring Greens walking group in Ilkley, and continued her interest in walking and the mountains until the end.

Charles died in 1991 just after their fortieth wedding anniversary. Saddened but undeterred, May set about finding a more convenient house in which to live. When nothing suitable was available, she commissioned a purpose-built house in the garden of the family home on Manor Rise. The maturing garden continued to be a source of great joy until her increasing infirmity necessitated a move to Abbeydale in recent years.

Family and friends were of central importance throughout her life. The successes and achievements of her husband and children were

a source of constant quiet pride. Friends came to appreciate her sharp mind, her liberal views, her keen sense of humour, her inspiring cheerfulness and her generous nature. She loved a good party and regularly hosted small suppers and parties in her home and garden. She greeted friends at the church, at society meetings, in the climbing and walking clubs, and in Ilkley town centre. Her extensive networks of excellent friends and neighbours have been regular visitors as she became older and less mobile.

May was a lifelong Methodist attending Ben Rhydding church, Ilkley church, and more recently Christchurch on The Grove. Her quiet faith was a constant source of comfort and peace to her.

*Tim and Helen Pickles*

#### TOM PRICE

Tom was a mountaineer, explorer and educator, and much else besides. He was a member of the Club for over 60 years and served as a Vice-President from 1980-82. He was born in 1919, the son of a railwayman, and spent his early years in rural South Yorkshire, where he first acquired a love of the outdoors by roaming in Wharnccliffe Woods. The family then moved to Liverpool and he won a scholarship to Liverpool University where the mountaineering club there introduced him to rock climbing. He quickly became expert, with his confident approach and wiry build, in the days before sticky boots and even nylon rope. The Second World War interrupted his studies and he volunteered for the Navy, later remarking that he felt safer at sea than on the crags. Others might dispute that, but he ended the war successfully as captain of a rocket ship assisting in the barrage of Juno beach in the D-day landings.

Returning to his studies he made several trips to the Alps with very little money, living off the land and often without a tent. He thus developed a minimalistic approach to gear for which he became famous. For example in later years he would set off for long ski trips with only a day sac and when questioned about his ski clothes said 'I'm wearing them'. And when giving a lecture to Glen-

more Lodge staff his only visual aids were a sawn off toothbrush and a mini collapsible mug. After graduation he joined the teaching staff at Workington Grammar School and with his naval background became coxswain of the local lifeboat. He and Jack Carswell became regular climbing partners, their total gear comprising a shared rope and one sling each. They would get from Workington to Buttermere or Ennerdale using a combination of train and bike, which sometimes meant a very late finish.

During this period Tom was also allowed time off to join the survey expedition to South Georgia led by Duncan Carse (better known as Dick Barton on the radio). On one occasion he was in charge of a team of surveyors and climbers in glacier country and involved in a crevasse rescue. The successful outcome of the rescue led to him leaving South Georgia with the Price Glacier named after him.

Back in Britain a chance meeting led to his applying for the post of Warden of Outward Bound Eskdale and his climbing, sailing and adventure credentials ensured his appointment. He proved a worthy successor to Eric Shipton and John Lagoe and put his own stamp on the way adventurous and unsupervised trips could be a powerful force in education. In those days health and safety rules were not so restrictive, and the job still carried a heavy responsibility for the well-being of his charges. When the Board of Governors thought about restricting the standard of climbing on the courses, he vigorously opposed any limitation on the grounds that it would stifle the initiative of his instructors, and this might rub off on the students. He won. He also continued his personal canoeing and climbing and at a time when the top standard on rock was the present E2 he was in a strong group on Hell's Groove on Scafell. Then aged about 50 he still climbed like a cat and was able to hold his own with instructors half his age. He continued to climb into his eighties and his last route was on Castle Rock at 85, still carrying just one sling (but he did then have a harness as a concession to the times).

Leaving Eskdale in 1968 he continued in education with the then West Riding Education Authority, ending up as Dean of Students at Bingley College of Education, which attracted many talented climbers among staff and students. He naturally continued to



promote outdoor activities, leading by example. When a student prank resulted in a Christmas tree being tied to the high clock tower, was the Fire Service called to remove it? No, a roped ascent was made by Tom, assisted by Dennis Gray.

In 'retirement' he continued to make very adventurous trips, including a descent of the Hanbury and Thelon rivers in northern Canada with only one companion who had almost no canoeing experience! Even Tom had some misgivings about this trip, as they were both poor swimmers and hence candidates for hypothermia. He later wrote that he was going to have to do all the worrying, as rescue facilities were non-existent. Mobile phones and GPS devices had yet to be invented.

So had Tom time for any non-outdoor activities? Emphatically yes! He was a very competent painter (chiefly in oils) and at least half his little house in Threlkeld was stuffed with works in various stages of completion. He reacted readily to requests from his friends. For example when in 1999 I needed a picture of the Old Man of Hoy (commercial prints being then unavailable) I sought his advice. He thought for a few seconds and then said 'Maybe I can help; I have some photos to work from'. Two weeks later the finished work, signed and framed, was ready and is in prime position in my house, insured for an adequate sum! Tom's autobiography 'Travail so gladly spent' is a very funny, informative and easy read and got high praise from the reviewers, being shortlisted for the Boardman/Tasker award. He was also a compelling public speaker, using 'the pause' to

great effect to lull his audience into thinking he had forgotten his lines and thus make them even more attentive.

Tom was a gentle and amusing man, who made friends easily whether in the work environment or at leisure. His ability as a teacher sprang in large part from a genuine interest in people. He always preferred freedom of action to the acquisition of wealth and lived very happily in his later years, with his companion Jean, on half a teachers' pension. Duncan Carse is known as 'Dick Barton-Special Agent'. So Tom should be known as 'Tom Price- Special Friend'.

*Richard Courchee*

#### TREVOR JONES ROBERTS MA

Trevor Roberts has died at the age of 92 in Keswick. He became a member of the Club in 1965. Enid, his wife, who survives him, a life member, joined in 1945. They were regulars on Scottish walking meets and Enid was assistant warden of the Salving House in the early 1970's.

Trevor Roberts was born on the 15th January 1921 in Liverpool. After his father died the family returned to North Wales. He attended Wrexham County School for boys (Grove Park). He won an open scholarship and went up to St. Edmund Hall Oxford in 1940 where he read French and German (Joint Honours).

He joined up in February 1942 serving first with the Royal Fusiliers and then spent 14 months with the Corps of Military Police before joining the Intelligence Corps in August 1943. He served in Europe between August 1944 and October 1945.

After the war he returned to complete his degree graduating in 1947. He completed his teacher training in 1948, and in that year studied at the Sorbonne. He obtained a post as modern languages teacher at Workington Grammar School in Cumberland where he taught for over 30 years.

He joined the staff in the autumn of 1948 and oversaw the introduction of French as a modern language to the school. Later he introduced Spanish, which he taught to 'A' level. He was also, for a

time, careers master. He retired in 1981 and moved from Low Seaton, Workington to Keswick, in the Lake District.

His funeral was held at Isel Church Cockermouth in September and was attended by a number of former teaching colleagues and school pupils, three of whom were in his first French class in 1948.

He was a natural linguist and studied many languages including Russian and Mandarin Chinese (taking an 'O' level in the latter in the 1960's).

Enid, who he married in April 1954, still lives independently in Keswick. He and Enid had a love of the mountains and he continued to walk the fells into his 80's.

He had an interest in Geology and was a member of the Cumberland Geology Society for many years. He joined the Playgoers at Workington soon after moving to Cumberland.

He is survived by his children; Caroline, who taught Geology and Geography; Julia, who studied English and is now a successful writer of books on teaching English as a foreign language; David, who is Coroner for North and West Cumbria; and Roland, who is a Professor of Geophysics at Uppsala University in Sweden.

*Caroline Allott, Julia Alexander, David Roberts, Roland Roberts*

#### JOHN W THOMPSON

John was born in Barrow-in-Furness in March 1928. We were childhood pals, went to the same schools and when he started training as an engineer in Vickers Armstrongs at the age of 16 we would take the train to Foxfield and walk the hills in the Duddon and Conis-ton area. He procured a copy of George Abraham's book British Mountain climbs and with that as our 'bible' and a short length of hemp rope obtained from Vickers shipyard, we started climbing the easier routes on Dow Crag. On meeting Don Atkinson and his climbing pals we started sharing weekends with them in the old gun-powder hut at Cove Quarries on the Old Man. Some of the wider climbing fraternity referred to us as 'The Barrow boys'.



The local character and climbing guide Jim Cameron would often join us on the crags and would encourage us to lead some of the more severe routes and John could now lead any of the V.S. routes on Dow. It was Jim who proposed us for membership of the Fell and



Rock Club. John became an active member, frequenting all the club huts and meets, climbing in north Wales and Scotland and for a while he was Huts Booking Secretary.

When we rented a cottage in Glen Brittle, Skye, John who enjoyed a little angling, took his rod up the burn one evening and returned hours later, covered in midge bites, but bearing a good bag of trout.

These fed all the party the next day.

As a result of Alpine experience gained in the Scottish, Swiss and French mountains John applied for a position as Mountaineer/General Assistant in the British Antarctic sector of Antarctica and was employed for 30 months on the glaciated Anvers Island, working with surveyors and geologists, sledging both by man-hauling and with husky teams. Included were the first ascents of Mount Francais at 2700 metres, the highest in the area and other peaks necessary for completing triangulation. In the second year he was appointed Base Leader, a post which included representing the Queen as Magistrate, Postmaster and Harbourmaster. The surveyors named a prominent local feature 'Thompson Peninsula' for him.

In Barrow his employer took him back in his engineering design capacity and he progressed to a position of authority which he enjoyed until retirement.

At Home he resumed his climbing and skiing and a year later was again pulling a sledge, this time doing a crossing of the Iceland ice cap 'Vatnajökul' with Peter Moffat and two other friends.

After marrying Kathleen and settling in Kirkby-in-Furness they continued to walk in the local mountains with visits to Scotland and the Alps. He became a family man with first a daughter and then a son and they spent many happy holidays in Scotland, in particular on various small islands in the Inner Hebrides.

At home there was always the garden and fishing plus his keen interest in watercolour landscape painting, evidence of which can be seen on the walls of relations and friends.

Their daughter Stephanie married, had three children and moved to Canada but on numerous visits John was able to enjoy spending time with his grandchildren especially at the weekend cottage in the country.

More recently his son Adrian, now married with twins, lives in Buckinghamshire and John loved to visit these members of his close family.

In his last years John had serious medical problems and he and Kathleen moved from their home in the north to live near Adrian.

He died on 26th March 2012 and I was honoured to be with his family when his ashes were deposited on Dow Crag at the top of Easy Gully where we did our first climbing, looking across to Cove Hut the scene of many happy times.

*Ron Miller*

#### GILPIN WARD

B G S (Gilpin) Ward passed away on Monday 19th September 2011 in his 92nd year.

He was born in Cumberland where many of his family were associated with the Merchant Navy. The loss at sea of a near relative effectively de-barred Gilpin from following this as a career and thus he joined the Civil Service, within the Scottish Office, primarily in the Crofters Commission and later with the White Fish Authority.

Gilpin, a very enthusiastic motor cyclist, joined H M Forces at the outbreak of the Second World War and after repeated requests he succeeded in getting a posting to become a dispatch rider in Africa – apparently he frequently remarked that it wasn't the Germans who worried him, it was the lions and tigers.

Gilpin was a very enthusiastic mountain man, happy anywhere in the hills, and as comfortable on snow and ice as on rock. In the days of hemp ropes and Woolworths' gym shoes, he climbed extensively in the Lake District before the outbreak of war, including climbing several new (first ascent) routes on the hitherto unexplored crags of Dovedale. He was also the first Teenager to lead Central Buttress on Scafell.

In the late 1930's he climbed on the Isle of Skye, at a time when travel was much more difficult and more expensive. On more than one occasion he came home (from Scotland) unscathed after difficult and serious mountain incidents.

After the war he climbed all over the UK and in the Alps, completing his Munros and then completing a second round, repeating the mountains and including all the 'tops'.

Later he went on to complete the Corbetts. However steep the slope or bad the weather, Gilpin always had a story to tell and thus you would always hear him coming – he never had a bad word for anyone.

Margaret, his wife of many years, predeceased him and he leaves a daughter, two sons and grandchildren.

After returning from the war, Gilpin was one of the founder members of the Carlisle Mountaineering Club. Living for many years in Inverness and Edinburgh he was a well known and respected member of the Inverness Mountaineering Club and the Scottish Mountaineering Club (holding the office of the Hon. Meets Secretary for several years).

He was a life member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, (joining in 1937) until he resigned from the Fell and Rock, and from the SMC in 2007, to make room for younger members.

*Ken Brannan*

## MARGARET WILD

At a FRCC meet in Northumberland in the early eighties Nesta and I met up with a couple with whom we shared many interests. They were also FRCC prospectives and, during the course of the meet, relationships were cemented and so started our long lasting friendship with John and Margaret Wild.

Margaret was born in Derby in 1940 but when a few months old the family moved to Leeds where she stayed for her formative years. She became a fully qualified secretary and worked as P.A. to the secretary of Leeds Hospital Management Committee. In 1959 she met John and they were married two years later and subsequently had two daughters.

As a girl Margaret spent many days with her parents out on the moors around Leeds, and further afield at holiday times when the 'rucksack express' ran.

This love of the outdoors continued when married and she and the family spent many weekends and holidays in the Lakes and Scotland. When they moved to Manchester in 1967 their scope broadened to include the Derbyshire Peak and north and central Wales.

Around this time John joined the Karabiner Club and Margaret, although not a member took a full part in its activities.

Margaret joined the FRCC in 1983, and became a popular member, fully participating in the mountaineering and social activities of the club.



Later, many holidays were taken in the Highlands and Islands where Margaret developed an extensive knowledge of the Scottish mountains in summer and winter.

Although slightly built, Margaret displayed a great deal of strength and determination in her mountaineering and was an extremely competent and knowledgeable mountaineer. Her love of the countryside and outdoors was enhanced by her deep interest in flora and fauna, and in particular the flora of the Scottish hills.

In 1985 they purchased a property in Gap, France where they would eventually live in retirement. They became members of the local CAF group through which Margaret became very experienced in the Ecrins, Queyras and Briançonnais massifs and, although not a rock climber, she regularly reached the summits of many of the peaks of the region. The area also provided opportunity for her to ski, langlauf and snowshoe in the countryside.

Cycling also became part of her outdoor activities and she toured extensively in the UK, France and Spain, determinedly conquering all the major continental cols.

Margaret spent an increasing amount of time in France and in 2006 her health started to deteriorate, gradually restricting her activities and enjoyment of nature. She died in France on 11th January 2013 after a long illness. We will always remember her as a charming, quiet mannered lady of considerable intellect who loved the countryside and our mountains. She will be sadly missed by her family and all friends in the FRCC.

Our condolences go out to John and his family.

*Stan Roberts*



Rising Cloud, Buttermere : *Rennie Barnes*





Bob Murdoch leading Kern Knotts Crack: *Dave Willis*

## In Review

Hattie Harris, Frank Smythe Biography  
 Trevor Langhorne, Froggat Guide  
 Phil Elliot, High Moors Guide  
 Steve Scott, Cape Wrath Trail  
 Jim Gregson, Kev Reynolds Autobiography  
 Peter Simcock, Alan Hinkes: 8000 Metres  
 Karl Nelson, Corbetts Guide  
 Martin Cooper, Joe Simpson: The Sound of Gravity  
 Martyn Carr, Wade Davis: Into the Silence  
 Ron Kenyon, Inner Hebrides and Arran Guide

### MY FATHER, FRANK: UNRESTING SPIRIT OF EVEREST

Author: Tony Smythe

Publisher: Baton Wicks, Sheffield 2013

My first encounter with the writings of Frank Smythe came, as perhaps it did for other FRCC members, on a wet day at Brackenclose, where I found some of his prolific literary output in the hut bookcase. Smythe was one of the foremost British mountaineers of the years between the wars. His stature is illustrated by the achievements that led to his selection for the 1933 Everest expedition. Hugh Ruttledge, the leader, noted that by this date, Smythe was established as a strong performer at altitude, with the successful first ascent of Kamet in 1931, and additional experience from the 1930 Kanchenjunga expedition. His Alpine successes included two very difficult first ascents on the Brenva face of Mt. Blanc. Ruttledge's choice was fully justified on Everest, as Smythe, pressing on alone after Shipton turned back, reached, perhaps surpassed, the height record of Norton in 1924. His friend Raymond Greene, the expedition doctor, commented that Smythe was transformed at altitude with a new strength, both mental and physical.



Smythe's writings opened mountaineering to a very wide public. He wrote in an expansive, easily readable style, with considerable emphasis on his personal feelings. "Mountaineering is a search for beauty" he affirmed in *Spirit of the Hills*, and this aesthetic creed penetrates even his more objective expedition accounts. The mountaineering readership was not always impressed. Part of the narrative of his life that Smythe presented to the public was a sickly childhood and unsuccessful school career. He linked his mountaineering success to overcoming these obstacles, but the tenor of this writing can seem rather too self-righteous and didactic for modern taste. Nevertheless, Frank Smythe was a highly successful man as mountaineer, writer and, increasingly as his life progressed, photographer.

There were, of course, contrary opinions. Frank Smythe had some unfortunate failures to get on with people, his technical ability was questioned – he was never an elite rock climber – and impulsive decisions caused problems on the mountains and with the mountaineering establishment. Tony Smythe barely knew his father, whose first marriage to his mother failed, but has written this book to examine the factual record of Frank's life and thus gain some understanding of the contradictions.

The great strength of 'My father, Frank' lies in the new objective information provided by the author's comprehensive research, notably into correspondence and by interviews with personal contacts. Furthermore, Tony Smythe is very even-handed about his father, not seeking to eulogize but to clarify. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tony Smythe provides evidence for exaggeration in Frank's portrayal of his own youth: the sickliness was not so great, while academic failure at school was offset by a place in the 1st eleven at cricket. But I can forgive Frank for writing for his reading public. Of greater interest is Tony Smythe's clarification of a notorious feud with Professor T. Graham Brown, Frank Smythe's climbing partner on the Brenva face climbs noted above. Smythe's ill-judged letters are printed in full: Graham Brown never forgave him. The quarrel caused much distress in the Alpine Club and very likely damaged Frank's professional reputation with the mountaineering community.

Frank Smythe nevertheless got on well with small groups of mountaineer friends, as described in two particularly appealing accounts of trips that opened up new territory. In the first, Smythe returned to the Garwhal in 1937, with four favourite sherpas and, later, Peter Oliver, achieving first ascents of Nilgiri Parbat and Mana. Ten years later, with a small team that included his second wife Nona, he penetrated by hydroplane into virtually unexplored territory in the Lloyd George mountains of the Canadian Rockies. Tony Smythe here shows his father as the fulfilled mountaineer-explorer, relishing the flora as well as the hills, and happy in his chosen environment.

A criticism is that this biography does not stand on its own: it is best appreciated as a companion volume to Frank Smythe's own writings. The bigger expeditions in particular are unsatisfyingly shallow in description. A related drawback is the lack of maps and diagrams in this book: I couldn't cope with the 1933 Everest attempt without recourse to plans of the 1920s assaults.

Where I think that Tony Smythe has undersold his father is with reference to the photography. The text does not do justice to Frank Smythe's work. His mountain photographs show a brilliant aesthetic sense for composition, which is revealing about the nature of the man. Perhaps if the heart problems, hinted at when he was dismissed from the RAF, had been rather more evident, Britain would have lost a mountaineer but gained a mountain artist.

Frank Smythe died prematurely of cerebral malaria in 1949. He contributed much to an ambitious period of British mountaineering. This book has novel contents that make useful additions to understanding its history.

*Hatty Harris*

## FROGGATT TO BLACK ROCKS

Publisher: BMC, 2010

The groaning shelves of my bookcase stand testament to my love of guidebooks; within their covers are countless dreams of days to

come and memories of great days out. Can any climber resist browsing the pages of a new guidebook when it hits the shelves?

On first acquaintance the sheer size of this definitive guidebook is surprising; crammed between rather flimsy looking covers are in excess of 520 pages; the page size is a large 19cm by 13cm (for comparison our new edition of Langdale is 17.5cm by 12 cm); this is no pocket size guide! The liberal use of colour images ensures shelf appeal; but will it entice you splash out the asking price (£24)?

At a basic level any guidebook must get you to the crag, allow you find and follow the route and have grading that is reasonably consistent (internally and with other areas), unquestionably Froggatt to Black Rocks achieves these objectives. Clear maps and text cover the approaches and comprehensive photo-diagrams show the routes. Grading is always a thorny issue, doubly so on Grit. The grade inflation seen in the previous edition (actually two, Froggatt [1991] and Chatsworth [1996]) has been, quite rightly, reversed; remember that this guide includes some 'proper' gritstone crags (e.g. Chatsworth, Black Rocks, Curbar and Cratcliffe) where the climbing is more engaging than that found on Stanage, in other words users should be prepared to suffer for their art!

Like most modern guidebooks this one is a re-packaging of familiar routes, new routes are few in number and generally of stratospheric difficulty. In comparison to earlier editions this one is visually a quantum level better being in the now familiar format of colour photo-diagrams, written descriptions and action photos. The colour reproduction of many of the photographs is too saturated for my taste, often with an over-emphasis on the orange-green segment of the spectrum that makes them look over-processed. The bulk of the action shots are workmanlike, similar to those we see in climbing magazines, while they look nice none stand out from the crowd. There are also some old Black and Whites photos illustrating some of the past masters (e.g. Puttrel, Harding, Brown) at work, personally I would have liked more of these as they help to show the rich climbing history of these crags.



Despite the use of photo-diagrams which make it easier to find a route and follow its line, I was surprised to discover that the written descriptions are often longer than in previous edition; to take a simple example, the description for Froggatt's classic Severe Green Gut has increased from 12 words to 27 (surely "Climb the corner" would suffice?). The welcome inclusion of bouldering may provide new/additional interest for some users; however I struggle to understand why boulder problems need both a photo diagram and a written description, no wonder this guide is so bloated! The page count is increased further by the inclusion of historical notes, lists of first ascents (including the first ascent of boulder problems!) and various tick-lists (e.g. editor's favourite routes); while it is important that we retain historical information I believe that the best place for it is on-line.

Unlike the Lakes, the Peak Guidebook market is highly competitive and this book faces stiff competition from four other volumes including Rockfax's big selling Peak Gritstone East which is a selected crags guide covering all the major routes and crags in the Froggatt to Black Rocks area at a cost of £21 (and with Stanage, Burbage & Millstone thrown in for good measure).

To sum up, Froggatt to Black Rocks is a fine guide that will be essential for those who either live close to the crags or get to the Peak most weeks. However, for the majority of climbers one of the selective climbs books will probably suffice and will save money.

*Trevor Langhorne*

## OVER THE MOORS. CLIMBING GUIDE BOOK FOR KINDER, BLEAKLOW, CHEW, MARSDEN

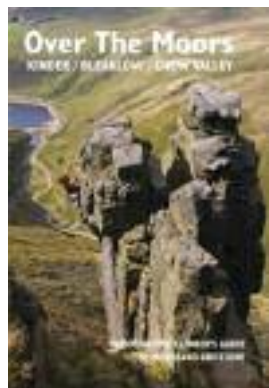
Edited by :Martin Kocsis

Publisher: BMC

I have climbed on a large number of these crags over 20 years though not extensively. I more frequently visit these moorland areas fell running and walking. A large number of these crags are 1000ft above sea level, so they have experienced quite wild weather condi-



tions, which is obvious from the weathered nature of the rock. Access to these crags usually includes a cardio vascular workout carrying the climbing gear to the foot of the crags, for some of us this adds to the quality of the outing. What makes these crags attractive is their wild location; quite often no one else will be climbing on the same crag,. for me the remoteness and beauty of these moors adds a heightened sense of adventure and satisfaction when compared to the popular Peak District honey pots of Stanage and Froggatt.



The book is presented in 8 different sections defined by geography plus a section on winter climbing, connoisseur's crags and death traps(places to avoid). Each of these sections has a presentation on the crags featured which provide details on the general location, range of grades, access, parking , public transport and importantly pubs and cafes. In addition there is a schematic map showing the locations of the crags relative to roads, summits, streams and other geographic features. At the end of each

crag's description are details of the first ascent

When comparing the earlier guides with this one, a great difference is the good quality of crag photos with drawn lines showing the routes. It is not only more attractive but they are much easier to follow than sketches with numbers at the bottom along with a written description As a result of these improvements the guide concentrates on describing the quality and specific details of the route, rather than the starting point of the route and where it goes. There have been routes added on most crags mainly in the higher grade. The new guide is more extensive it includes Chew Valley, Saddleworth, Cracken Edge and Marsden areas. Plus a short section on winter climbing. But does exclude Windgather, Castle Naze and crags in the Goyt and Sett Valley.

The routes in the guide book cover a wide range of grades, The editor has listed an essential selection which he feels are some of the best routes, the largest number being in the VS to E1 grades.

.Some of the climbs are long by gritstone standards for example the classic three star Mermaids Ridge HS 30m. The grades can sometimes seem comparative to other Peak district grading but can also feel hard when a particular style of climbing is necessary. Some of the Almscliffe enthusiasts tell me the Peak District is over graded after they have had a few trips to Stanage and Froggatt. My response is to have a day on Upper Tor. The editor comments, 'the routes are served up in a giant helping of rounded gritstone, breezy vistas and random brutality'. The perfect challenge for an Almscliffe enthusiast, who is not daunted by the prospect of a 45min walk in and 1000ft of ascent. Nevertheless the crag offers some stared routes and a classic three starred HS ,Upper Tor Wall.

Looking more closely at the book and the presentation; it is slightly bigger in size than the old Kinder guide book and has a heavy duty water proof cover. The photographs lead the reader in to inquire on the location of the routes featured and their grade, whetting one's appetite for visiting the crag.

All the routes have a description and most have a photo showing the route. The photos have been taken in good light and weather showing all the distinguishing features of the climbs. This must have taken months of patience.

Information introducing the guide on grades, acknowledgments, guide book team, history and index of climbs are included in short sections at the front and rear of the guide book. Martin Kocsis wrote the introduction and a comment he made stands out, which I shall leave with you: 'For many years Over the Moors dominated my climbing. Had it not been for my involvement with the book, I would certainly have achieved great things in my life.'

*Philip Elliot*

## THE CAPE WRATH TRAIL: OVER 200 CHALLENGING MILES ACROSS SCOTLAND

Author: Iain Harper  
 Publisher: Cicerone

Published in 2013, replacing the dated 1999 guide by Denis Brook and Phil Hinchcliffe, this completely new guide is presented in the style, size and quality that typifies the current Cicerone stable. It is immediately clear that Iain Harper has spent a lot of his time on the ground to bring this guide to press; and what an improvement it is...

Following the familiar layout of Cicerone walking guides, bound in a plastic encapsulated cover and using high-quality paper, it's a fairly slim book of 176 pages. The preface and introduction immediately inspires the reader to become engaged with the trail, describing its challenge, charm and complexity. Short informative sections covering the basics – what, where, how, and when, are bolstered by accommodation, hazards, fauna and geology and most usefully money, comms. and supplies along this, the most remote and tough of Britain's treks. A warning that it is not for the novice would be well-heeded.

The meat of the book follows, divided into sections using geographical and commercial, rather than daily, itineraries. Unfettered, this gives the walker far more flexibility to break the journey as and when they want, implying wild freedom that fits well with the adventurous spirit of the crossing. The most successful routes mostly follow stalkers paths, tracks and bridleways with less off-piste walking than reported in earlier books and the accepted popular variations are well documented. This to some degree relieves the endurance and navigational skill required.

Each stage is introduced by an illustrated sub-title page with the distance and anticipated time, followed by a short introduction covering the character of the stage and illustrated with charming



sketches. A functional summary: start, finish, ascent, distance, duration, terrain etc. together with a descriptive overview follows. Ubiquitous step-by-step directions and profiles are neatly dovetailed with clear OS 1:50,000 mapping. Although to get out of danger on this terrain it would certainly be prudent to carry a selection of appropriate area maps. This detail is cleverly presented in a subtle tabular format highlighting helpful information and useful comments.

The major accepted alternatives are covered in their own sections with the same detail and care and minor variations are mentioned, but left for the individual to discover. The author has created a sense that whatever route is chosen, the validity, challenge and beauty are all equal, as one is always travelling towards a grand, wild and romantic destination.

Other useful information is contained in the appendices, including a tabular route summary, useful for planning. I was pleased to note that a tent is considered mandatory safety equipment and that the sympathetic use of mountain bothies is actively encouraged, with their locations indicated. Some notable omissions are the coastal weather links, camping at Kinloch Hourn (although this is mentioned in the text) and the availability of Smidge ...

The whole book is illustrated with the intention of providing inspirational, rather than informative, photographs, although with a couple of exceptions these are generally of poor quality with little human interest. This is a svelt book, the large margins will be useful for notes although in my view the profiles take up too much space. It would have been easy to trim a few pages saving valuable weight. Other gripes are the lack of a scale on the maps and insufficient gutter spacing obscuring details in the centre. On the plus side the maps are 1:50,000 scale and correctly orientated: North up. Unusually for Cicerone, the review copy end paper binding had already failed due to poor glueing.

Overall this is a very well-researched and clearly presented, non-sense guide to some of the most challenging, remote and scenically lavish trekking that you could undertake. It is an essential companion for planning and walking this magnificent route.

*Steve Scott*

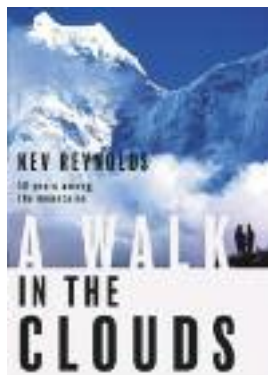
## A WALK IN THE CLOUDS: FIFTY YEARS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

Author: Kev Reynolds

Published: Cicerone

Given the level and extent of ambulatory activity throughout the membership of FRCC, it would not be surprising if the name of Kev Reynolds was already familiar as he is one of Britain's most prolific guidebook writers, with over 40 titles in his output over a more than 50 year odyssey of walking and trekking. He is surely the man to consult if you wish, or need, to know 'Where does it go from here?'

However, 'A Walk in the Clouds' will not answer that question - it is NOT a guidebook. In its pages, Reynolds provides insights and backdrop to the more utilitarian content of his other titles. Here he relates anecdotes, incidents, encounters, impressions, humour, sadness, characters and personalities - those things that most of us are more likely to recall from our own outings, our own travels through, among, up and down the hills and mountains.



The settings for these tales criss-cross the globe, as indeed Kev has done while researching and writing his guidebooks. As the author freely admits - and invites - it is not at all necessary to read this book sequentially from front to back. There is no compulsory or functional chronological framework. This makes the book ideal for dipping into at random. Perhaps as you flick the pages you will spot the name of somewhere you have been; now, slow down - see what Kev tells about the very place you recall. Notice a placename unknown to you? Maybe Kev's story might prompt you to go there.

The pieces are short and self-contained. Ideal for bedtime reading; suitable for wet days in tent or FRCC hut; even OK for smallest room perusal if that's your choice. Nice tales, easy to read.

The only quibble I have with it myself is the fairly meagre treatment of the photographs. All in black and white (which can work well with high quality repro - but not here), all concentrated into one

central section. Considering that Cicerone over the years have given their main guidebook list a house-style with much use of colour and clarity of layout, this book almost gives the impression that they have done one of their most reliable authors a slightly cheap favour.

*Jim Gregson*

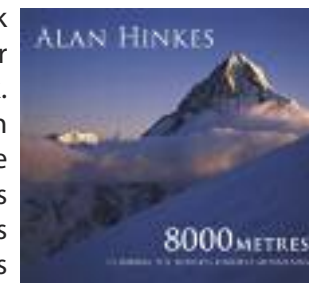
## 8000 METRES: CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS.

Author: Alan Hinkes

Publisher: Cicerone

Having known Alan for a few years through contacts with him at the BMC, attending his lectures, and meeting him occasionally on the crags of his childhood on the North Yorkshire Moors, I was wondering if I would enjoy reading his new book.

I am sure if asked to describe the book, as a self proclaimed Yorkshire man, Alan Hinkes would say 'it weighs 1.5kg and measures about 1 sq foot'. It is a not a book to pack into your rucksack, to be read on a trek or an approach to a Himalayan Peak. However it is a book to be enjoyed, when in armchair mountaineer mode, by the fireside, at home or at a hut, with a glass of your preferred drink, while the winds howl outside on a winter's evening. Its 200 pages are packed with photos as Alan tells his the story of his odyssey to climb the world's highest mountains.



The book itself is divided into fourteen chapters, plus an introduction, and an epilogue (title Aftermath). The introduction explains how Alan became interested in climbing, and how he graduated from local crags to Scottish Winter climbs before testing himself in the Alps, and on the Greater Ranges. The main chapters are dedicated to each of the fourteen 8000m mountains, taken in the chronological order in which he succeeded in climbing them. Each chapter is about ten pages long and is self-contained, so you can put the book down, to pick up again without losing the thread.



At the end of each chapter is a one page insert, either a cameo of a mountaineer who has influenced Alan, or a few of Alan's pearls of wisdom, such as the 'incident pit' or 'dressed to survive'. It is through these inserts that the reader can get an insight into what it takes to be a high altitude mountaineer. Throughout the book, Alan conveys the sense that high altitude mountaineering is a risky business: he tells the tales of surviving avalanches, jumping crevasses with snow bridges collapsing after him, cannon ball size rocks whizzing past, and references to the dead bodies of climbers he passes on the way. In one of the avalanche episodes he has to be dug out by other mountaineers. He also tells how one summit ambition was sacrificed to help rescue a fellow mountaineer.

What is clear is that while Alan set out to minimise the risk, he accepted that there are objective dangers that you cannot avoid, and therefore you minimise the exposure by fast ascents and fast descents. Certainly on the last two big mountains, you get the feeling that Alan was pushing the envelope, accepting a higher degree of risk than he would have in his younger days. Was this because of his experience or just an acceptance of nothing ventured nothing gained?

One feature of the book that is outstanding is the photography. Alan has used the visual medium of photographs to tell his stories in his lectures, which more recently included video sequences. The quality of his photography has drawn praise from renowned landscape photographer Joe Cornish. In a short tribute in the book Joe talks about the quality, and also highlights that doing this at altitude, with thick gloves, very cold temperatures and snow and wind is an achievement. I, too, was impressed how Alan has embraced the changes in photograph technology as it moved from film to digital, from cine to video, during the period from his first 8000m summit, Everest 1984, to his last Kanchenjunga 2005.

The book also highlights some of the conflicts that Alan has had to resolve, the risk to achieve his ambition versus his concern for his daughter and grandchildren. He was prepared to turn back if the risks were too great: his mantras have been 'no summit is worth a digit' and 'the summit alone is not success'. However, I think he has acknowledged that he needed a degree of luck, to complement his

ability. Breaking an arm on one descent was painful, breaking a leg or knee while descending alone in the dark would probably be fatal.

I did enjoy the book; one of my favourite photos reflects Alan sense of humour. A picture of Alan with Reinhold Messner, at a reception. Reinhold has a pint. Alan has not, the caption for the photo 'Where's my pint'. There are other humorous anecdotes to lighten the serious nature of the book.

So I would recommend the book. If you come from Yorkshire ask a friend to buy it for your birthday/Christmas present.

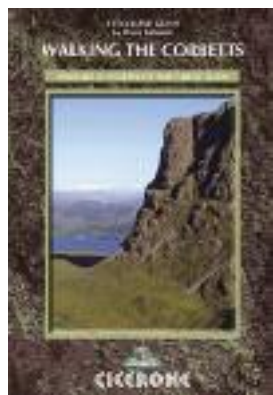
*Peter Simcock*

## WALKING THE CORBETTS. VOLUME 2: NORTH OF THE GREAT GLEN 2013

Author: Brian Johnson

Publisher: Cicerone

As someone who has already completed the Corbetts, the first thing which struck me was that the sections do not correspond with those in Munro's Tables by the SMC or on the Harvey's map of the Munros and Corbetts. The author has arranged his sections according to access so that one can complete a whole section in a '1 -2 week holiday'. However, do not be put off as this is a fine little book which is well laid out and small enough to pop in your rucksack. The areas covered are well shown in a clear map. Each section also has a useful 'overview' map. The introduction covers the remarkable geology of the region in an easy to understand way. The author makes the point that he has not written a book for peak baggers but for 'the walker who wants an interesting day out on some of the less well-known but most spectacular peaks in Scotland' - a philosophy with which many will agree. There is useful advice on when to go, the terrain (often tough), the weather, access, the mountain code, camping, bothies, navigation and safety. The book seems to be up to date (reviewed November, 2013) in that it includes the new Corbetts of Sgurr nan Ceannaichean (next to Moruisg in Glen



Carron) and Beinn a' Chlaidheimh (opposite Shenaval in Fisherfield). These are 'demoted' Munros. There may be more such 'demotions' in the future so if you are aiming to climb all the Corbetts you will need to periodically check the SMC web site for any future changes. If you have already climbed the Munros, you may already have ascended these demoted peaks.

The routes are well laid out although the grid references of the summits are surprisingly omitted. There is a very clear and useful

OS style map for each route as well as a photograph of most peaks. If the book has a weak point then it is the quality of the photographs. There are some excellent photos but some don't convey the topography of the hill as well as they perhaps could and some peaks have no useful photo of the mountain itself. This is probably due to the author having bad weather on the day of ascent. I know from experience how many days can be spent trying to get good photos of mountains especially in the north and west of Scotland! However, one has to ask whether better photos exist in the Cicerone archives or could have been independently sourced.

How does this book compare with the SMC 'Corbetts'? The SMC book is about twice the size of the Cicerone book but there are two Cicerone books to the one SMC guide. The Cicerone book is much easier to pop into a rucksack. Both are very good for maps and routes but the SMC guide is the clear winner on photographs. The SMC book also contains some extra walks which are not Corbetts such as Suilven, Ben Venue, Pap of Glencoe, Bennachie, Ben Hiant, Meall Fuar-mhonaigh, Beinn Ghobhlach, Ben Mor Coigach, Stac Pollaidh, Ben Stack, Ben Griam Mor & Ben Griam Beg, An Sgurr (Eigg), The Trotternish Hills, and some lovely hills in the Western Isles. On cost, you need one SMC book at about £23 but two Cicerone books at £16.95 each so you save about £10 by buying the SMC book. If you want a good solid reference book with bonus hills, go for the SMC guide; if you want a book to take on the hill with you, go for the Cicerone book. If you are rich, buy both!

What next? There seems to be only one guide book for the Grahams (Mountains over 2000 feet but below 2500 feet with 500 feet drop on all sides) which is not laid out anything like as well as either the Cicerone Corbett's or SMC Corbett's books. There is a gap in the market here which one hopes will soon be plugged by either the SMC or Cicerone or both.

*Karl Nelson*

About half the Corbetts, plus many Munros and Grahams, are described on my free web site: [www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk](http://www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk).

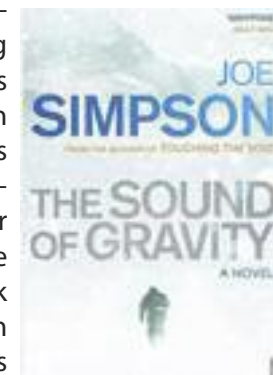
## THE SOUND OF GRAVITY : A NOVEL

Author: Joe Simpson,

Publisher: Vintage Books, 2012

Few would dispute that Joe Simpson is one of the most highly regarded climbing writers of his generation. 'Touching the Void' instantly became a classic of the genre. Five more mountaineering books further established Simpson's reputation and yet, since 'The Beckoning Silence'(2002), there has been nothing. Was the title of that book a clue? Was Simpson giving up on major climbing challenges as well giving up climbing writing? 'The Beckoning Silence' debates the validity of other adventure sports as well as climbing. Joe Simpson has lost close friends. The book itself recounts an unsuccessful attempt on the Eiger North Face. Simpson and his companion witnessed two climbers falling to their deaths.

'The Sound of Gravity', published in 2012, is Joe Simpson's second novel and his first publication for ten years. It is an ambitious project but one for which Simpson's earlier writing career had clearly



prepared him. When 'Touching the Void' was published, so many people said that the experience of reading the book was like that of reading a gripping novel. The narrative thread was so strong and the quality of writing was exceptional. Simpson had a degree in English from Edinburgh University and he had been lucky enough to nearly die three or four times. Most aspiring novelists have only been on a weekend course.

Simpson divides *The Sound of Gravity* into two parts. In Part One we are instantly plunged into familiar Simpson territory as the main character Patrick's wife slips, falls and dies.

'He held his breath as she died. She vanished with a swiftness that unbalanced him.'

Soon we are told that, 'He had to find where she had gone to and tell her what he had done.'

Patrick survives a catalogue of near-death experiences searching for his wife's body on a steep Alpine face in winter, before reaching the safety of a hut. Here Simpson writes about what he knows best and with a psychological exploration of Patrick's mind which makes for compelling reading. It did take some time to make the necessary adjustment and to accept that this time he was actually writing fiction.

The setting for Part Two is the same mountainside, some years into the future. Simpson has had to work harder here, with much less direct climbing action and a focus instead on a developing relationship with a second woman, in a harsh and unforgiving mountain environment. For me, this was ultimately more interesting than Patrick's solo battle against falling, avalanche, hunger, cold and exhaustion in part one.

'*The Sound of Gravity*' is a much greater achievement than Joe Simpson's earlier novel, 'The Water People'. He should be congratulated on redirecting his talents as a climbing writer into a different branch of the genre. Would I recommend 'The Sound of Gravity' to you? If you are a keen reader of fiction and you are wanting to read a climbing novel, the answer is a resounding yes. There are relatively few publications within this branch of climbing writing to keep you going. Simpson's imaginative powers are exploited to the full.

However, you will need to be prepared for an occasionally over elaborate style.

'The white noise of snow rustling against him began to unravel his mind. A vast demonic generator seemed to be humming and fizzing around him. The incessant pandemonium battered at his brain, ripping him from a delirious slumber to an abrupt, demented wakefulness.'

If this just means that Patrick was woken by a violent storm, readers of Joe Simpson should not expect such simple, pared down, blunt language from him. It isn't what he does. This time, however, the reader cannot go with the writer simply because they know his tale is true. It is necessary here to buy into Simpson's fictional world.

You will have to make up your own mind. '*The Sound of Gravity*' is an unusual book. For my own part, I am glad that, even if Joe Simpson has stopped taking part in major climbing adventures himself (he had a few), he has not stopped writing about climbing and mountains. In this book he has turned his undoubted talents as a writer to a different form. He has produced a thought provoking book which is a significant contribution to mountaineering literature.

*Martin Cooper*

## INTO THE SILENCE

Author: Wade Davis,

Publishers: 2011 by The Bodley Head and in paperback by Vintage Books in 2012.

'On the very day that George Mallory and Sandy Irvine disappeared on Everest, another party of British climbers slowly made their way to the summit of a quite different mountain and in very different circumstances.' So begins chapter 1 of Wade Davis' great book. That other party of climbers were Fell and Rock Club members and friends heading for Great Gable for the dedication of a plaque commemorating members of the club who had died in the First World War.



Davis has researched thoroughly and written movingly of the appalling savagery of the war and the subsequent involvement of some of the men profoundly affected by that slaughter in seeking a way to and finally attempting to climb Everest. Central to the story is that of George Mallory but Davis rightly reminds us that many other exceptional men were involved.

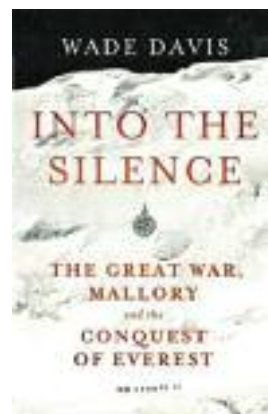
After a first section that chronicles the almost impossible demands put on officers and men involved in the military action and the heart breaking choices doctors in field hospitals had to make about who they could try to save amongst the wounded, Davis moves on to describe the complex story of finding and establishing a route to the mountain and the expeditions set up to climb the highest peak.

It is a story of political power, colonial attitudes, class divisions and the beginning of the end of Empire. He writes of the men whose names mountaineers will know in a way that respects them as individuals, highlights their characters and does not shy away from revealing their 'feet of clay'.

George Mallory is in many ways the central figure of the book and Davis writes sensitively and at length on his character and ability. He quotes regularly from letters between Mallory and his wife, Ruth, giving warmth and life to his portrait.

Amongst the others on the various expeditions I was particularly drawn to Oliver Wheeler a Canadian, and Howard Somervell, of Kendal and a member of FRCC. In my mid-teens I briefly met Dr. Somervell when he was on leave from India and came to preach at the church I attended. I did not know much about him at the time but quickly realised I was in the presence of a remarkable, brilliant man. His role in the attempts on Everest was significant and had things been a little different he could well have been the first to reach the summit.

Oliver Wheeler was a Canadian surveyor and during the 1921 expedition spent a long period working alone mapping the approaches to Everest. It was he who spotted the significance of the Rongbuk Valley approach to the mountain, a discovery Mallory found hard to accept until much later. Davis describes Wheeler's lonely work, his determination and his toughness. It is humbling to



read of the work that he and others did with the support of local porters in the early days of the 20th century, especially when viewed against a background of modern roads, GPS and instantaneous communications.

The book would not be complete without a discussion on the question of whether Mallory and Irvine reached the summit. Davis gives the impression that it is highly unlikely that they did achieve their goal. However at the end there is still enough room for continuing speculation.

As part of this discussion it is noted that Noel Odell believed that he saw the two climbers above the worst of the obstacles and heading for the summit, a belief he maintained all his life.

In an epilogue Davis writes of an expedition to Everest in 1999 with the specific aim of looking for the bodies or equipment of Mallory and Irvine. Conrad Ankers, a member of that expedition, found Mallory's body and there followed a sad, undignified media circus. Ankers went on shortly after finding the body to attempt to climb the Second Step without using the ladder the Chinese had fixed there. He, a well equipped, very experienced and strong climber, wearing crampons and using oxygen, which Mallory and Irvine were probably not, failed to get over the obstacle without briefly using the ladder.

Unless there had been a huge ramp of snow making the Second Step possible at the time of Mallory and Irvine's attempt [which has happened], Ankers believes they could not have reached the top.

This is a substantial, well-written and fascinating account of a period long past and not just the history of attempts on Everest. It is a significant contribution to mountaineering literature.

*Martyn Carr*

## INNER HEBRIDES AND ARRAN

Authors: Colin Moody and Graham Little

Published by: Scottish Mountaineering Club

The west coast of Scotland is a magical place and with its many islands it has been a sailor's paradise – the Hebrides. For many years Skye has been a magnet for climbers and mountaineers and the other islands have often been overlooked. Over the last thirty years or so however these 'other islands' have been and continue to be developed. The whole of the Hebrides and Skye were covered by a combination of two guides and Arran was combined with the Arrochar area. Skye is now covered by two guides and this guide covers the Inner Hebrides and also Arran. I am not sure why Arran has been included or what will happen to the Arrochar section. Arran has its more established routes in a mountain environment whereas most of the rest of the crags, in the guide, are of low lying outcrop type crags. The guide is now A5 size – a change from the slightly smaller format which has been used for some time. A5 is alright for the outcrop guides whereas the smaller size would be seem more appropriate for the multi-pitch routes of Arran – a large guide pouch is available to carry the guide, though many now seem to take photograph of the guide on one's phone and use that.

Any new guide is always exciting however this one is especially so with Arran, Rum and Mull, but also the likes of Eigg, Islay, Muck and Canna having been included. I have climbed on Arran and Mull but none of the other islands. I keep meeting up with Graham Little and he mentions the latest area of development he has been involved with. Graham and co-author Colin Moody have been very active with others in developing crags throughout Scotland and this guide draws together that development on these islands.

Arran has been a popular climbers' destination for a long time. The likes of Sou'wester Slab, South Ridge Direct and West Flank Route have drawn many up the Glen Rosa valley – the guide and its



photos however entice ones to other crags such as Ciogh Na h-Oighe and Beinn Tarsuinn.

Mull is often visited to tick off its one munro – Ben More – however there is a great variety of scenery there. For the rock climber the Ross of Mull, on its south side, leading out to Iona and Erraid is a great place. The campsite at Fidden must be one of the loveliest places around with its golden sands and view across to Iona. Erraid, with its granite crags, nearby is a climber heaven. Not a place for those looking for multi-pitch mountain experience but spot on for those looking for lots of single pitch quality routes.

As mentioned in the guide – Rum, after Skye, is the most mountainous in the Hebrides – its greatest attraction is the opportunity to climb characterful routes in a wonderful mountain setting. The routes tend to be at an amiable level which is not the case with routes on Eigg – with that prominent An Sgurr. The Nose, now taken by an E8, is probably unrepeatable with a succession of hollow columns and an in-situ RURP!

---- and the rest of those islands !! - the guide is full of places which are 'a bit out of the way' on the various islands – and a scan of the guide and the photos makes them look very inviting.

Points about the guide production –

The extra size of the guide is able to contain much more information in the usual SMC professional way.

The cover feels rather flimsy and not sure how it will fare over time, especially if hauled up routes on Arran.

There is no ribbon in this guide – interestingly with the new Scafell guide no ribbon was included due to technical reasons but I feel that a ribbon is well worth including at its minimal cost and is much better than using the flaps in the cover, even with the fold part way in.

I like the indication of the area/island down the side of the pages, which are colour coded throughout most of the guide. This could perhaps have been extended to the first ascents section.

I like the idea of having two columns for the route information now possible with the A5 size of the guide.

The climbing in Mingulay, Pabbay and the other Outer Hebrides island will presumably be laid in a forthcoming guidebook – these Inner Hebrides however are more accessible. This guide is well worth acquiring and one will probably soon find oneself on a CalMac ferry to one or more of these islands.

Have all the lines been climbed – unlikely – there will be more no doubt discovered and climbed however there is more than enough in this guide to keep one happy for many trips.

*Ron Kenyon*



An alternative method of transport when the CalMac ferry is not running



Martin Scrowston on Heart of Darkness, Pembroke: *Paul C Bennett*





Great Langdale, Raven Crag: *Martin Packford*

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## MEETS LIST 2013

Note	Date	Venue	Coordinator
E	New Year	Waters Cottage- Hogmanay	Hazel Jonas
	04/05 Jan	Raw Head	Tim Hogan
	11/12 Jan	Ridge Roaming -Beetham	Jim Gregson
	18/19 Jan	Karn House	Eve Diran
E	25/26 Jan	Raw Head – Burns supper joint YMC	Martin Tetley
CM	01/02 Feb	Raw Head Committee meeting	Dave Dowson
	08/09 Feb	Waters Cottage	Kimberley Moore
	15/16 Feb	Brackenclose	James Hoyle
	17/21 Feb	Ben Nevis - CIC	John Oaks
	22/23 Feb	Ski Mountaineering - Karn	Ken Fyles
	01/02 March	Waters Cottage	Penny Clay
	01/02 March	Birkness	David Dixon & Dave Wilkinson
	08/09 March	Joint with KMC - Salving House	Chris Tickett
MM	22/23 March	Karn House – Maintenance meet	Graeme Ralph
E	22/23 March	Music Meet - RawHead	Ruth Chambers
BH	30/3 -12/04	French Easter Meet - Alpillis	David Miller
	29/31 March	Brackenclose - Easter	Les Meer
	12/13 April	Rawhead - Young Persons Meet	Dave Evans
	19/20 April	Birkness	Cyril Joyce
	19/26 April	Killarney	Karl Nelson
	21/26 April	High Moss	Richard Ivens
MM	26/27 April	Beetham Maintenance Meet	Barbara Duxbury
	03/05 May	Lakes 3000' tops - Salving House	Phil Elliot
	03/05 May	Family Meet - Raw Head	Chris Haighton
CM	10/11 May	Committee Meeting - Birkness	Martyn Carr
	11/18 May	Balmacara Hotel - Kyle of Lochalsh	Hatty Harris
	17/18 May	Maintenance Meet - Birkness	Norman Haighton
	17/18 May	Introductory Meet - Rawhead	Pam Shawcross
	24/25 May	Raw Head	Mary Lothian
W	01/07 June	Glen Brittle Hut - Skye	Peter Latimer
PM	07/08 June	Salving House	Rob Rawlinson
W	14/15 June	Rawhead - Guide Book Meet	Ron Kenyon
		- Dow, Slate and Duddon	
	16/20 June	Glan Dena	Norman Clacher
	21/22 June	Waters Cottage	Richard Courchee
	21/22 June	Geology Meet - Low House	John Moore
D	28/29 June	V P Dinner Crown Inn, Coniston	Vice-presidents.
	05/06 July	Brackenclose maintenance meet	Mike Carter
	05/06 July	Beetham Cottage	Steve Lyon
F	07 July	Mickle Fell Day Walk	Chris Ottley
	12/13 July	Family Meet - Birkness	Chris Lane
	12/13 July	Maintenance Meet - Salving House	Phil Elliott
	12/7-10/8	Joint Alpine Meet AC/CC/FRCC	
		ABMSAC –Attermenzen, CH	Marian Parsons
	19/20 July	Salving House	Wyn Mason

Note	Date	Venue	Coordinator
	26/27 July	Younger Members Meet - Rawhead	Louis Haigh
WF	02/08 Aug	Family meet - Brackenclose	Andrew Sugden
	09/10 Aug	Beetham Cottage	Graham Harkness
	16/17 Aug	Joint FRCC/Pinnacle -Brackenclose	Cath Sullivan
	23/24 Aug	Birkness - committee meeting	Malcolm Grout
	30/31 Aug	Joint KMC -Ty Powdwr	James Hoyle
	31/8 -13/9	Joint AC/CC/FRCC/ABMSAC	Jeff Harris
		Solden, Austria	
CM	06/07 Sept	Committee Meeting - Birkness	Gail Craven
MM	13/14 Sept	Rawhead Maintenance meet	Alan Strachan
MM	20/21 Sept	Waters Maintenance meet	Mark Gear
	04/05 Oct	Scrambling Meet - Birkness	Stuart Thompson
	04/05 Oct	Waters Cottage	Michae & Clare Aldridge
	11/12 Oct	Karn House	Simon Jefferies
	18/19 Oct	Family Meet - Birkness	Heather Hardy
D	01/02 Nov	Shap Wells Hotel - AGM	The President
	08/09 Nov	Brackenclose Bonfire meet	Iain Whitmey
CM	22/23 Nov	Raw Head – Committee meeting	Phil & Helen Elliot
	06/07 Dec	Birkness –Temperance meet	Brenda Fullard
	13/14 Dec	Beetham Cottage	Simon Guilfoyle
E	New Year	Hogmanay	Karn House

OFFICERS 2014

President	John Barrett	
Vice-Presidents	Paul Exley Hatty Harris John Holden	
Secretary	Martyn Carr	
Treasurer	Bernie Bradbury	
Membership Secretary	Pam Shawcross	
Joint Journal Editors	Martin Cooper Andrew Paul	
Chronicler	Helen Elliot	
Guide Books Secretary	Ron Kenyon	
Guide Books Editor	Steve Scott	
Librarian	Peter Lucas	
Archivists	Chris Sherwin Ellie Dale-Sherwin	
Oral Archivist	Mark Scott	
Dinner Secretary	Jane Spreadborough	
Meets Secretary	Brenda Fullard	
Website Editor	Richard Tolley	
Compliance Officer	Simon Jefferies	
Huts Secretary	Keith Wright	
Hut Wardens:		
<i>Beetham Cottage</i>	Barbara Duxbury	
<i>Birkness</i>	Norman Haighton	
<i>Brackenclose</i>	Mike Carter	
<i>Karn House</i>	Graeme Ralph	
<i>Raw Head</i>	Alan Strachan	
<i>Salving House</i>	Phil Elliot	
<i>Waters Cottage</i>	Mark Gear	
Elective Members of Committee:		
Dale Bloomer	Ken Fyles	Philip Powell
Alan Bradfield	James Hoyle	John Pulford
Gail Craven	Chris Vernon	Peter Simcock
Bill Hargreaves	Nick Millward	Humphrey Johnson

MEETS LIST 2014

Note	Date	Venue	Co-ordinator
BH	New Year	Hogmanay – Karn House	Tim Hogan
	03/04Jan	Waters Cottage	Alan Warwick
	10/11 Jan	Rawhead	Chris Vernon
	17/18 Jan	Karn House	Cath Sullivan
E	27/28 Jan	Burns supper -, Raw Head	Martin Tetley
	31/01-01/02	Beetham Cottage	Nick and Veronica Millward
CM	07/08Feb	Committee – Raw Head	John Pulford
	14/15 Feb	Waters Cottage	Tim Hogan
	16-20 Feb	Ben Nevis - CIC	John France
	21/22 Feb	Brackenclose	Joanne Webster
	28/02-01/03	Karn House	Ken Fyles
	28/02-01/03	Joint meet with KMC - Birkness	Chris Thickett
	11-20 March	Morocco	Trevor Good
	14/15 March	Brackenclose	John Leigh
E	21/22 March	Music meet – Raw Head	Ruth Chambers
	28/29 March	Salving House	Sue Wales
	04/05 April	Birkness	Dave Wilkinson
	06-11 April	High Moss	Jane Wainwright
MM	11/12 April	Maintenance meet – Beetham Cottage	Barabara Duxbury
	12-26 April	French Easter Climbing meet – Ariege, Grottes de Niaux	Graham Townsend
	18-20 April	Easter -Brackenclose - CB Centenary	Ron Kenyon, Mark Scott
	02/04 May	Family meet - Raw Head	Andrew Sugden
	02/04 May	Lake District 3000' tops - Salving House	Phil Elliot
CM	09/10 May	Committee Meeting - Birkness	Gail Craven
MM	16/17 May	Maintenance meet – Birkness	Norman Haighton
	16/17 May	Young Person's meet Raw Head	David Evans
	16/17 May	Guide Book Meet - High Moss	Jphn Holden, Jom Loxham
		Eskdale & Duddon area	
	17/23 May	Scottish hotel meet	
		Caledonian Hotel Ullapool	Angela Mellor
	23/25 May	Rawhead	Alan Strachan
	30/31 May	Waters Cottage	Graham Harkness
	06/07 June	Joint YMC/ FRCC meet - YMC Coniston	Martin Tetley
	06/07 June	Salving House - joint meet with CC on Borrowdale Guidebook	Rob Rawlinson
	06/07 June	Geology Meet - Waters Cottage	David Stephenson
MM	13/14 June	Maintenance Meet - Karn House	Graeme Ralph
	15-19 June	Glan Dena	Norman Clacher
	20/21 June	Beetham Cottage	David Dixon
	20/21 June	Introductory Meet - Rawhead	Pam Shawcross
	27/28 June	Coniston Meet and dinner	VPs
	04/05 July	Brackenclose	Cath Sanders
	11/12 July	Family Meet - Birkness	Chris Lane
W	11/12 July	Maintenance Meet - Salving House	Phil Elliott
	18/19 July	Younger Members Meet - Salving House	Jame Hoyle

<b>Note</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Co-ordinator</b>
	19/07-09/08	Joint Alpine meet Gran Paradiso - based in Cogne	Keith Lambley
	25/26 July	Birkness	John & Margaret Skelton
	01/02 Aug	Joint with Pinnacle Club - Cwm Dyli	Cath Sullivan
	02/08 Aug	Lundy	Steve Lunt
FW	01/07 Aug	Family Meet - Brackenclose	Roy Lemmon
	15/16 Aug	Birkness	Eric & Catherine Mansfield
	24/08-7/09	Tende - Maritime Alps	Paddy Feely
CM	05/06 Sept	Committee meet - Birkness	Gail Craven
MM	12/13 Sept	Raw Head - Maintenance meet	Alan Strachan
MM	19/20 Sept	Waters Cottage - Maintenance Meet	Karl Nelson
MM	26/27 Sept	Brackenclose – Maintenance meet	Mike Carter
MM	03/04 Oct	Waters Cottage	Simon Jefferies
MM	06-09 Oct	Joint FRCC/YMC Coppermines Hut - Coniston	Jenny & Neville Hawkin
W	10/11 Oct	Salving House	Mark Barron
F	17/18 Oct	Family Meet - Birkness	Roy Lemmon
	24/25 Oct	Beetham Cottage	Tim Hogan
D	31/10-01/11	AGM - Shap Wells Hotel	The President
	07/08 Nov	Brackenclose - Bonfire meet	Mark Scott
	14/15 Nov	Rawhead	Howard Telford
	21/22 Nov	Karn House	Stuart Thompson
CM	21/23 Nov	Committee – Raw Head	Keith Wright
	05/06 Dec	Temperance meet - Birkness	Charles Skeavington
	05/06 Dec	Beetham Cottage	Alan Bradfield
E	New Year	Hogmanay – Waters Cottage	TBA



