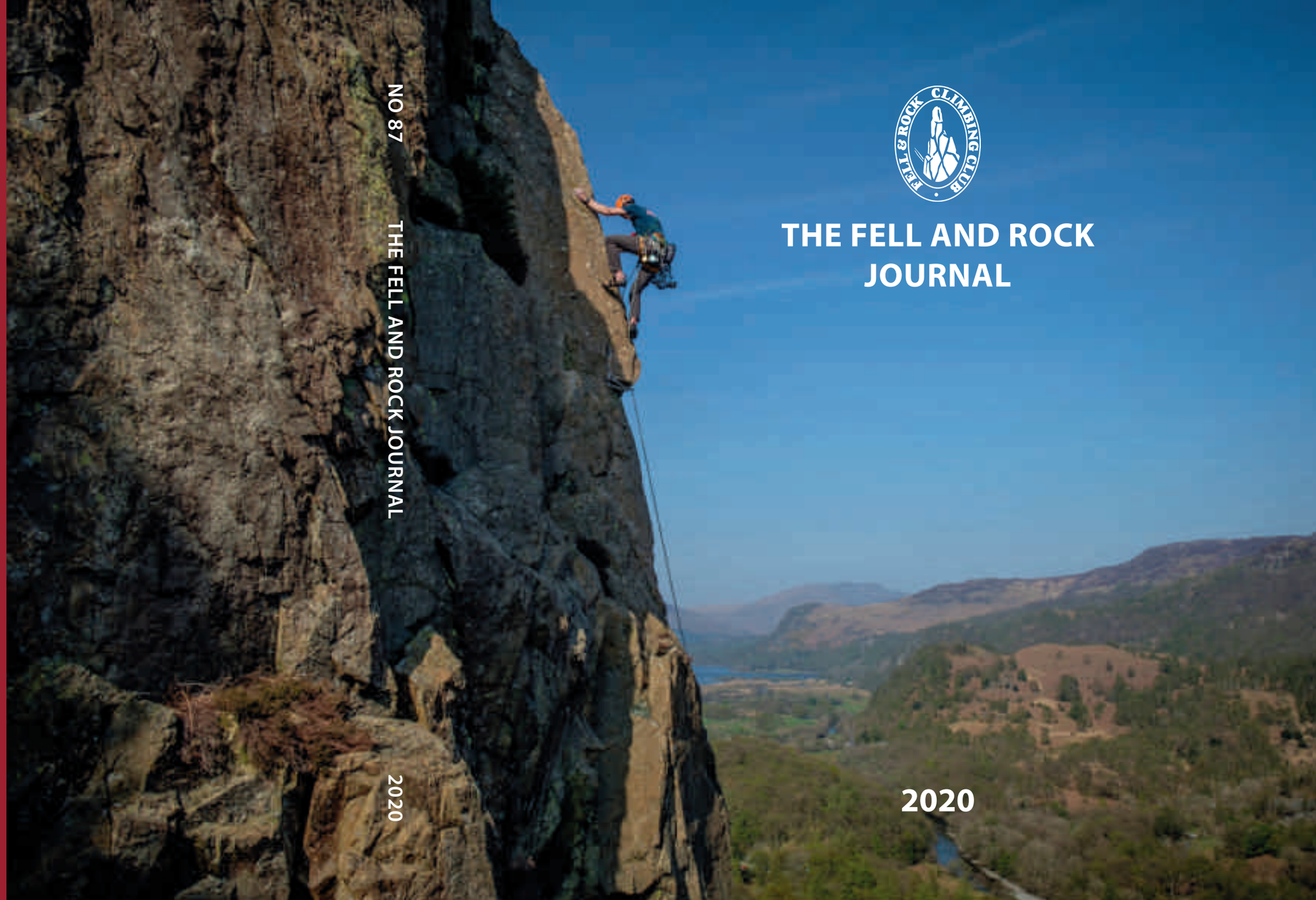
The Fell and Rock Climbing Club

NO 87 THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL 2020



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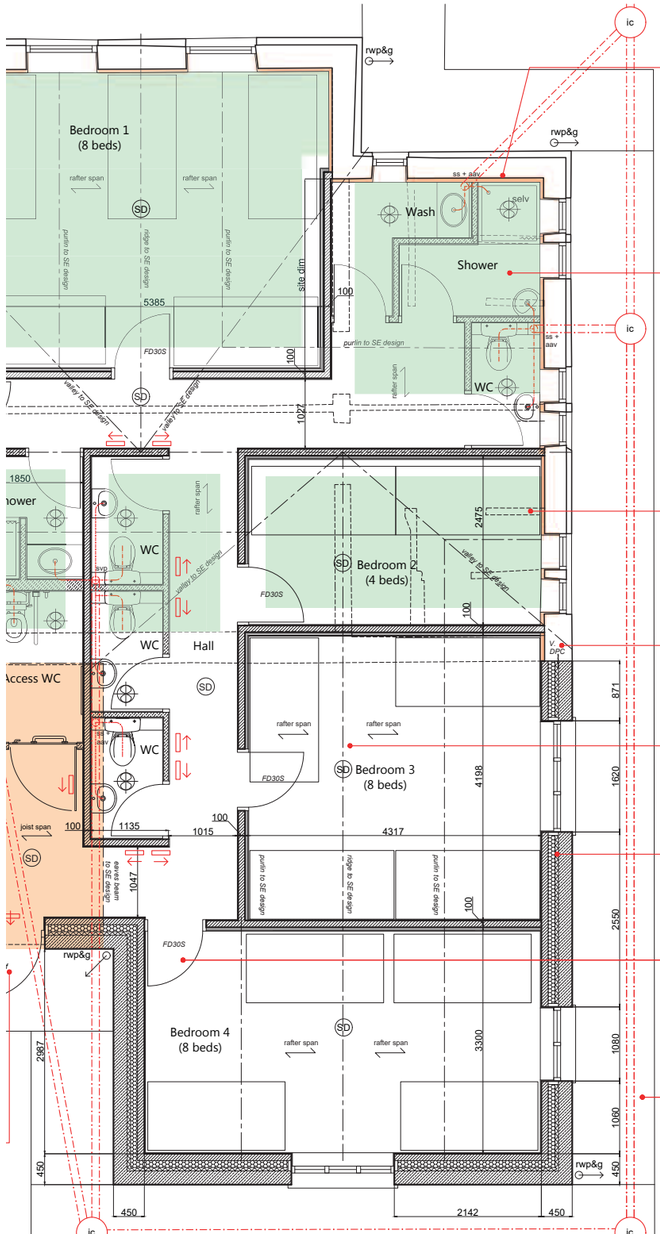

THERMAL UPGRADE OF EXISTING SOLID STONE WALLS (ORANGE LINE)
Hack off existing internal plaster and replace with 50mm thick, (built up in two 25mm coats) Diathonite Evolution premixed thermal plaster, fiber reinforced with cork clay, diatomaceous earth & natural hydraulic lime. The plaster is highly breathable and capillary active, and can be spray or hand applied. Finishing coat to be either Argacem MP for a semi smooth finish, or Argacem MP with a coat of Argacem ultrafine for a smooth finish.
Externally, exposed stone walls should be re-pointed with lime mortar and the stone coated with BKK ECO a water repellent coating for protection against wind driven rain.
Wall upgrade achieves U-value of 0.65W/m2k.
Plaster to be applied in full accordance with manufacturers instructions after first obtaining a site specific specification from the manufacturer;
Ilias Igoumenidis, (technical support engineer), 07939457856 or 01228711511.

Green hatch denotes extent of existing solid floor to be retained. Elsewhere floors grubbed up sufficiently enough to allow installation of new foundations to load bearing walls. Concrete slab to be reinstated over min 1200 gauge Visqueen DPM membrane, on min 50mm sand blinding & min 150mm well compacted sub base. Sub base backfilling to foundations in max. 150 mm well compacted layers.
DPM tape sealed to any existing membrane in floor construction and with DPC's in new internal load bearing walls.

Dashed lines denote demolition of existing walls.

New stone faced cavity walls started against existing masonry using Ancon stainless steel wall starter bars, fixed to existing masonry using nylon plugs and stainless steel screws. New Hyload vertical DPC fitted into 100mm deep slot cut into existing masonry & tape sealed to outer face of Surecav system.

New structural elements noted for structural engineer design.

Zig zag line denotes extent of SureCav cavity spacer system.

Doors marked *FD30S*, to be 30 minute fire resistant door with intumescent smoke seals and self closing device.

New bound surface (flagged, resin or tarmac) path to perimeter of building forming approach to rear door with a gradient less steep than 1:20, with level landings for every 500mm rise.
Final approach to back door to be ramped to a maximum gradient of 1:12, with landing or flat area of path of min 1.2m length and clear of any door swings.

Hatty Harris - President 2018 to 2020 - on Skye

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Edited by Jim Sutcliffe and Tony Walker

Contents

Mountain Adventures

The Lakes and The Club

Miscellany

Front cover: The Lost Boys, Steel Knotts, Borrowdale.
Photo: Dave Rippin (www.photorippin.com)

Inside front cover/folio 1: Relaxing in Buttermere.
Photo: Tony Walker

Title page (folio 3): Rainbow toward the Langdale Pikes.
Photo: Jim Haydock

Acknowledgements (folio 5):
Ron Kenyon on Western Wall, Wallowbarrow Crag.
Photo Dave Simmonite

Inside rear cover:
Plans for the rebuilding of Brackenclose.

The Fell and Rock Journal 2020

Editing
Jim Sutcliffe, Tony Walker

Proofreading
Janet Ashworth, Alison Cresswell, Tim Cresswell, Wendy Dodds, Val Hawksworth, David Wright.

Obituaries
Wendy Dodds

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Editorial

This year's journal is in effect last year's journal and although we haven't checked, that is probably a unique occurrence in the production of our journal. What we mean by that is that the 2020 journal is being published in 2021. The reason for that being two tumultuous events that have affected the club and, one of which, has affected the whole of the world.

Firstly, we had the awful Brackenclose fire and then in early 2020 we experienced, and still continue to do so, a global pandemic – Covid-19. Either of these events individually would have had a serious impact on the day-to-day workings of the club, but together they have presented a significant challenge to everyone involved with the club.

Many of our members have been on the front line in the fight against the global pandemic: some have been affected personally and the club (especially the hut wardens) has worked tirelessly to maintain access to the huts.

Most importantly, we should all recognise the efforts that our NHS friends within the club have made … and we should never forget that.

So … what does all the above mean for this or, rather, last year's journal? The content is broad and indicates a very healthy level of activity but activity during 2020 has been different to usual. A proportion of the recently submitted articles reflect the Covid-19 influence; lock down and restrictions to accessing the hills. It would be easy to say 'lesser' activity but that is not true. Although the traditional meets list has been largely dispensed with, it has been replaced by impromptu or 'last minute' local meets which have been fabulously successful.

Congratulations to the meets secretary and all the organisers. More local meets may deserve more emphasis in the future?

So, in conclusion, we hope the 2020 journal represents the club during two quite difficult years but also demonstrates that, despite some challenges, the healthiness and enjoyment our club gives to all our members.

We hope you enjoy the journal.

Tony Walker and Jim Sutcliffe

President's Report - Flood, Fire and Pestilence

Hatty Harris

My presidency has not coincided with a 'normal' two years in the life of the Fell and Rock, and much energy has been channelled into dealing with each new catastrophe that came along. I owe a big debt of gratitude to the five vice-presidents I have worked with, (Wendy Stirrup, Max Biden, Keith Wright, Helen Elliot and Martyn Carr), the Secretary (Brenda Fullard) and Treasurer, (John Pulford), for constant support and assistance, often with novel and taxing problems. My thanks too to the teams of officers and committee members who have worked beyond the call of duty to keep the Club running – I won't say smoothly, but that is nobody's fault.

Crag and Mountain Activities

The main purpose of the Club (in my humble view) is to facilitate members' activity on and engagement with the hills. Even in a bleak two years, we can celebrate some highlights of excellence. Ron Kenyon received the prestigious George Band Award from the BMC, in 2020, an honour well-deserved. The Guidebooks team, putting particular effort into three guides, produced the innovative 'Sport and Slate' in June 2020, breaking new ground for a Lake District guide while maintaining the highest standards. Tom Randall succeeded in breaking the Classic Rock Round speed record on a particularly hot day, between lockdowns.

Members (and aspiring members) began to benefit from some innovative thinking on meets, with the sociable 'Welcome' meets being popular. The 'Flood' in my title is a bit of an exaggeration, but rethinking of Scottish winter meets was blighted in both 2019 and 2020 by exceptionally mild winters; we had record rainfall in February 2020 (our last month of freedom from restrictions, had we but known) and the Scottish summer 2019 was afflicted by torrential downpours. Some overseas meets, however, notably to South Africa and the Dolomites, were very positively received. Day meets (climbing or walking) have been usefully scheduled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: members are longing to meet up again in person.

The Fell and Rock has been privileged to be invited to some celebratory events of other organizations. I attended the Alpine Club Dinner, celebrating their 150th anniversary. It was also a great pleasure to be one of the Fell and Rock members who joined the Rendezvous Haute Montagnes meet in Langdale. What a wonderfully vivacious group of European women climbers they are, eager to get on our crags.

The Climbing Shop in Ambleside celebrated its 60th birthday. In response to an invitation, Ron Kenyon and assistants submitted names of routes of significance to Lakeland climbing. Wendy Stirrup representing the Club nominated a climb of significance to her family – Nimrod – and was presented with a 'Nut of Legends', now at Raw Head.

Administration

The Rules in your Handbook have a fresh look: they have been rewritten, retaining their meaning, and laid out to be more readable and comprehensible. Very grateful thanks to John Barrett for undertaking this task, with appropriate legal help.

The Secretary reports on the use of Zoom for enabling meetings to happen. Some chairman's comments come from me. The Zoom AGM, 2020, enabled us to keep the Club afloat with elected

officers, and approved accounts, for another year. The format, however, stifles the live debate that characterizes Fell and Rock AGMs, which for controversial issues is a problematic loss. Zoom committee meetings have attracted a larger than usual attendance, often from members with glasses of liquid refreshment in their hands. We've succeeded with discussion and voting, yet these meetings lack the 'body language' signals useful in debate. Losing the committee weekends, at which members meet, eat, talk and walk together and generally get to know each other is also detrimental. However, for small and informal meetings, perhaps Zoom has come to stay: I've much appreciated the informal chats with V.P.s , for example, made simple by the technology.

Huts

Many thanks to Max Biden for undertaking a redraft of the Hut Byelaws, a notoriously convoluted text now clarified and in the Handbook.

An issue in 2019 was that of rights of access to Birkness, following on from the previous two presidents. We and our member-solicitor Trevor Price met with representatives of Buttermere Investments (the owners of Dalegarth) in early 2019 and prepared for settlement through mediation. Mediation was cancelled at the last minute and our rights agreed, with costs paid. We have right of vehicular access through Dalegarth grounds (previously agreed) and also by footpath to the lake, which Paul Exley had put much effort into. While this is satisfying, the location of the Dalegarth estate is such that development of some kind in the not-too-distant future seems inevitable: we need to be careful to retain our legal rights while fostering an amicable relationship with our nearest neighbours.

Another initiative from Ron and Paul on the 'Future of the Huts' was set to continue at a moderate pace. One arm was the improvement of hut insulation and heating where required. The other was the collection of quantitative data on hut usage as a foundation for any further initiatives. 'The best laid schemes of Mice and Members', however, 'gang aft agley', as Robert Burns nearly said. On the morning of April 5th 2019 I received a phone call from Richard Tait at 8.30 a.m. to say that Brackenclose had burnt down in the night. Within a couple of days I'd set up a disaster group called the Brackenclose "Think Tank", which morphed into the "Brackenclose Group" and the rebuilding project took over. Necessarily, many other non-urgent initiatives were sidelined for the present. We've deferred the narrative of Brackenclose until the next Journal issue. As I write, building has just begun. Hopefully there will be a building, at least well under way, by 2022 and the Huts Secretary, Andrew Paul, may have a life again.

We received two prompt offers of alternative accommodation in Wasdale in the wake of Brackenclose fire. The National Trust granted use of their Annex at the foot of Wastwater and the Achille Ratti Club allow us to use Little Ground House, Nether Wasdale. We are lucky to have such good friends.

And then COVID-19 came along, and with it the demanding and frequent changes to hut use described by the Secretary. Time to invent another disaster management group, the "Living with COVID-19" group which met frequently (by Zoom) over the summer. At the time of writing (January 2021) we are all locked down, doing our best to live without COVID-19. Huts, of course, are closed.

Archives and Library

It was with sadness that we saw our joint Archivists, Chris and Ellie Sherwin, depart for Pembrokeshire early in 2019. We owe them a huge debt of thanks for their work, including the loans and displays that bring positive public recognition to the Club. We have an excellent replacement in Deborah Walsh, who brings professional museum and publishing skills to the post plus a lifetime of exploring the Lakes and an informed enthusiasm for local history. She is now working with the Archives Group and others, including collaborations with Bill Birkett. We look forward to the publication of the Arthur Dolphin Diaries, which looks set to be a definitive contribution to the literature of climbing history.

The Fell and Rock Library at the Armitt Museum introduced a book borrowing scheme for members, currently on hold because of the pandemic.

Events

November 2018 commemorated the centenary of the end of World War I. It was humbling to be the President conducting the two minutes silence on Great Gable summit on Remembrance Day that very special year. The crowd was exceptionally large and the silence very moving. Unfortunately, it was a day of mist and heavy rain. By happy contrast, Remembrance Sunday 2019 was all sunshine with a smattering of snow. Brackenclose was out of commission, so the main party trooped up from Honister, enjoying superlative views so that the event had quite a festive atmosphere. We could be truly grateful for the 'gift of summits' to the nation, as they were visible all around. Many thanks to Iain Whitmey and colleagues who collaborated with the priest-in-charge at St. Olaf's, Wasdale Head to hold small services of remembrance there, much appreciated by those who attended.

The splendid events of July 2019 are described elsewhere fully in this Journal. In brief, it was a pleasure to join National Trust representatives and Fell and Rock members, including ex-President Paul Exley, to ascend Scafell Pike from Wasdale to celebrate the centenary of Peace Day. Our group met Peter Smith's team from Langdale on the summit. Warmer, clearer weather would have been appreciated, but meticulous planning otherwise paid off with a memorable occasion. Two days' later, I spoke at the rededication of the original Fell and Rock memorial plaque in its new home in St. Olaf's churchyard, by the Bishop of Carlisle. The service was brilliantly organized, thanks to Iain Whitmey. Mark Scott arranged a splendid lunch at the Wasdale Head Hotel, and the whole event did the Club great credit.

And briefly to the Dinner. I'm confining myself to thanking our speakers. In 2019, we were treated to a light-hearted return to rock climbing topics by the entertaining Wil Hurford. By 2020 we had moved in spirit from Shap Wells Hotel to Castle Green, Kendal and were all set to go until the pestilence once again intervened. Holding the dinner-replacement Party online opened a few windows of opportunity. Peter Sterling gave a great illustrated talk on the new 'Sport and Slate' guide, which older members found quite an eye-opener on the modern tastes in scaling crags. Dan Hamer toasted 'Absent Friends' for us from Saudi Arabia with illustrations from his family's three generations in the Club. Another old friend of mine, Rod Smith, with strong interests in mountaineering history, drew attention to the Club's illustrious past, from his home in Oxford. I certainly spotted members in the U.S.A. and Canada in the audience. New possibilities?

External matters

The BMC raised its per capita levy by £6 in 2019, owing to an exceptional insurance claim. In response, the Fell and Rock raised its annual subscription by £6 to £71 at the AGM in 2019. The BMC position raised comment and criticism among Fell and Rock members. Our AGM in 2020 was given a paper indicating that equivalent insurance at a significantly improved rate was unlikely to be available. The loss of BMC affiliation with its other benefits, that would go with a change in insurers, would also be detrimental. A striking example of this is the leadership and guidance made available by the BMC to its members (including affiliated clubs) regarding hut use and meets conduct during the pandemic. This is a service the Fell and Rock has welcomed.

Matters concerning the conservation of the Lake District landscape continue to be prominent, and many members are understandably concerned by some recent proposals. The committee held a long and thoughtful discussion in February 2020 which brought out a clear consensus that the Club should not involve itself in issues that may become political. The Fell and Rock does not normally support such issues itself, but is happy to pass information to members who may respond as individuals. This stance has been retained.

And finally…

My successor, Wendy Stirrup, has taken office at an exceptionally difficult time. The COVID-19 pandemic demands that under her leadership the Club has to 'reinvent the wheel' continually to conduct business or to keep the members actively engaged together. But perhaps some new ideas will prove productive and gain permanence? I give Wendy my most wholehearted best wishes for her term of office. May we be back on the hills by the time this Journal is in print!

Mountain Adventures

Ron Kenyon

Martin Scrowston

Ed and Dan Hamer

Tony Walker

Mark Gear

Deborah Walsh

Jim Gregson

Ken Fyles

Adam Bannister

FRCC SOUTH AFRICA MEET -2018

Ron Kenyon, with contributions from FRCC and MCSA members

Group in the Mountain Club of South Africa headquaters in Cape Town

South Africa is a country of many contrasts with vast areas of a special wildness; large conurbations but with a broad spread of people with one of the largest income disparities in the world. It is a country of plenty with large fruit growing areas and some of the best wines but not all share in this plentifulness. The Cape Town area is a destination for many visitors and for the rock climbers and walkers there is a wealth of places to visit with the added bonus of a huge collection of plants, birds and animals there to be seen.

In November 2018, the Club had a meet to the Cape Town area organised by Ann-Marie Henderson, which linked in with members of the Cape Town section of the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) and especially Brian Lambourne. Without the work done by Ann-Marie and Brian there would not have been nine other members taking flights out to, for most, a new, unknown country. The MCSA is an affiliated club with the FRCC however links have been tenuous and this meet gave a chance to meet with, at least members of the Cape Town section, and it is hoped that this will lead to closer links, in the future, with reciprocal meets in the UK. A very full itinerary was drawn up for the three weeks planned for the meet and many members of the MCSA went out and led us on various walks and climbs, which gave a very good insight into the area and helped us get a much better knowledge of what was available. The following is a resume of what was achieved on the meet and, hopefully, some useful information for future visits by others.

What is the most southerly point of Africa? Cape of Good Hope - WRONG ! It is Cape Agulhas (34 49 41 s) which is about 50km further south than Cape Point (34 19 52 s), the southern tip of the Cape Peninsula, on the Atlantic side of the continent. Along the length of the Peninsula is a range of mountains culminating in Table Mountain, at the north end, which overlooks Cape Town, which is surrounded by its suburbs and other outlying towns of the area. To the east of the Cape Peninsula is the huge bay of False Bay, to the east of which is another range of mountains, the Drakenstein and Hottentots Holland, which dominate the horizon, with the Kogelberg Nature Reserve to the south. The world-renowned wine area around Stellenbosch nestles below these mountains.

Plant life is abundant in the Cape area with a unique floral system - the fynbos (pronounced fainbos) or “fine-leaved bush”. They have adapted to survive harsh growing conditions with nutrient-poor soil, needing intermittent fire, to propagate, and survive strong winds and drought periods. There are well over 9000 flowering plant species in fynbos and 2/3 of these occur nowhere else on earth and it is the smallest floral kingdom in the world.

They are split mainly between the following types -

Proteas: shrubs and trees, taking many forms from ground hugging to substantial shrubs and trees such as the Waboom of the Cederberg. It is common on most mountains in the Western Cape and further afield. It has multi-flowering heads, mostly in winter months and spring occurring across a wide variety of altitudes and is also grown as a commercial plant for the export and local cut flower industry. It also provides a popular habitat for much bird life.

The protea flower symbolizes change and transformation across cultures. The King Protea (Protea cynaroides) flower is one of the largest and most striking of the protea flowers and is the national flower of South Africa. It earns its name from its striking petals that resemble a colourful crown.

Restios: take the place of grass in the fynbos. They have no leaves, so their tough green stems produce food. They are male or female. Male flowers have sac-like anthers which produce pollen and can often be seen dangling outside the flower. Female flowers produce the seed. Some Restio species are harvested and used for thatching houses.

Ericas: based on the heather family, these heath-like shrubs are an important part of fynbos. There are about 700 species and come in almost every colour except blue. Most ericas have small narrow leaves with edges rolled over - this helps reduce water loss.

For those beach-lovers there are fine beaches around the coast however interestingly there are oceanic water flows which affect the temperature of the water. Water from the Indian Ocean flows around Cape Agulhas and into the area of False Bay whereas water flowing from the Antarctic Ocean goes further north into Table Bay, just north of Cape Town, which can have a substantial effect on the water temperature.

Cape Town's metropolitan population in October 2018 was 3.75 million. There has been a significant increase in the population of Western Cape due to natural migration from very poor rural areas to the cities from across South Africa as well as from further afield such as Zimbabwe and Malawi. Families are seeking a better living, education and work opportunities. This has created significant pressures on the area in connection with housing, transports and other services.

Robberies do occur in the quieter areas especially around Cape Town. During 2018 over 100 people were robbed in over 50 individual incidents whilst in Table Mountain National Park, and sadly, in two of these, people were killed. However, taking into account that hundreds of thousands of people visit the Park each year the chances of one falling victim are slight. To minimise the risk one should hike in groups, not carry and display valuables and avoid known trouble spots. Information on the latter can be obtained from the Table Mountain Security Action Group

Needless to say this is Africa and temperatures can be hot and it is often advisable to arrange a climb or walk to avoid the sunshine, depending on the aspect of the crag or lie of the walk intended. There were however also quite strong winds which helped to cool matters a bit.

Don't forget to get an plug adapter - there are two types of sockets used in South Africa - one being a two-pin and the other being three-pin - there are a mixture of adapters available !

Choice of hire car is interesting - a VW Polo or an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) - there is a saying that hire cars can go anywhere but there can be some chunky sections of track to travel on and an ATV with more substantial tyres and road clearance should be considered.

Various maps, published by Slingsby Maps, are available to areas such the Table Mountain; Silvermine and The Cederberg and also many other popular hiking and touring destinations in RSA. Slingsby maps can be viewed at and ordered from www.slingsbymaps.com and are available from Stanfords, in London. It is difficult to get maps for some areas and local information and maps may be available or on websites.

There is a rail system, however, many years of lack of maintenance, underinvestment for an increased number of people and sabotage (fires and removal of parts, such as copper etc) have left a system of limited reliability so one uses it with warnings attached. The area has a good system of roads many leading into Cape Town itself and around the area, so in theory getting around is easy. However, it is very important to arrange one's travel times and try and avoid 'the rush hour' when many people are commuting to work, which is roughly 6.30am - 9.00am and 4.30pm - 6.30pm - although the situation is greatly eased at the weekend. We were staying at Gordon's Bay, which is about 50km from the centre of Cape Town, so journeys in that direction were sometimes done with 'alpine starts' at 5.30am to avoid the queues.

MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA

The MCSA is the main mountain club in South Africa with a total membership of about 5000 with 14 sections around the country - the Cape Town section having about 2300 members. The Club embraces rock climbers, walkers and mountaineers and is very active worldwide. The Clu was formed in 1891 and was active in all aspects, right from the start. In 1892, the Club raised the issue of an access path to Table Mountain in the House of Assembly (Parliament). It also purchased the first rescue stretcher and installed it in the Ranger's cottage on Table Mountain, and rescues have been carried out since 1895, when a young lady was seriously injured on the mountain there.

The headquarters for the Cape Town section is at 97 Hatfield Street, and we had the pleasure of seeing it, on our first day, when we were invited to a braai (barbecue) there and meeting new faces and now friends. When you remember there are 2300 members in the section, the building is substantial with a large library, catering and bar, a bouldering room, some accommodation and office rooms. There is also a large lecture room at which they have regular and well attended talks - one while we were there was by local geologist John Rogers, on "Geological Adventure in the Fairest Cape: Unlocking the secrets of the Scenery".

There are a relatively small number of non-whites in the Club, however there are other clubs in the area which are popular with the non-whites including the Cape Province Mountain Club. The MCSA has a good age mix in its membership with an average age of 54. A look through its annual Journal shows how active they are. It is interesting to read in the 2017 Journal of the Outreach Programme with 60 hikes with established groups. There were two new

groups from the townships with youngsters from the township, Mitchell's Plain and adults from the township Khayelitsha, who have embraced hiking with infectious enthusiasm – one hopes this will develop.

The MCSA produces an annual Journal. There was an article in its 1922 Journal, entitled 'Lakeland and My Luggage' by S.Y.Ford who had a brief stay in the Lake District but unfortunately lost his luggage, whilst en route from Inverness to Kendal. The luggage finally followed him as far as Holland! He was in a state of damp and depression at a rainy Kendal, which he felt was almost as surprising an introduction to the England mountains as are the far-stretching levels of Basle to the glories of Switzerland. Though he indicated that Kendal is far from being level; but neither mountain nor lake is anywhere within sight of it, though both are attainable by a short train journey. He did however make contact with the secretary of the 'Rock and Fell' – Mr Darwin Leighton – whose climbing boots and rucksack were placed at his disposal. He then went on to Langdale and the Old Dungeon Ghyll – a cosy establishment permeated by a mountaineering atmosphere worthy of the Table Mountain Hut. He finished his stay with continuing by Langstrath to Borrowdale and Keswick – though en route he surrendered to a blistered heel and detachedly attached himself to the elegant company that graced the hostelry at Lodore.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Our first day there was on the 11th November and it was agreed to centre activity on Lion's Head, the prominent summit just North West of Table Mountain. As it was Remembrance Sunday we were also aware of our fellow members on Great Gable but also the amazing link with Signal Hill, nearby.

The practice of the Remembrance Day silence originates in Cape Town where there was a two-minute silence initiated by the daily firing of the noon day gun on Signal Hill for a full year from 14 May 1918 to 14 May 1919, known as the Two Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance.

This was instituted by the then Cape Town Mayor, Sir Harry Hands. At the suggestion of Councillor Robert Rutherford Brydone, on 14 May 1918, after receiving the news of the death of his son Reginald Hands by gassing on 20 April, they adopted into public observance a gesture that had been practiced sporadically in city churches since 1916. The first trial observance was for three minutes on 13 May, after which the Mayor decided that it was too long and published a notice in the Cape Argus that it should be altered to two minutes instead of three.

On Signal Road for Remembrance Sunday

Signalled by the firing of the Noon Gun on Signal Hill, one minute was a time of thanksgiving for those who had returned alive and the second minute was to remember the fallen.

This short official ceremony was a world first. A Reuter's correspondent in Cape Town cabled a description of the event to London. Within a few weeks Reuter's agency in Cape Town received press cables from London stating that the ceremony had been adopted in two English provincial towns and later by other countries, including Canada and Australia.

The midday pause continued daily in Cape Town and was last observed on 17 January 1919, but was revived in Cape Town during the Second World War.

We therefore observed at 1.00pm (11.00am UK time) a two minutes silence on Signal Hill Road which leads to the Signal Hill viewpoint.

Group on top of Lions Head
on Remembrance Sunday

We then made our way up Lion's Head - the walking group following the popular Circular Walk which, you guessed it, circles up to the summit whilst the climbing team climbed the route Rumplestiltskin (15) which found a pleasant way up the crags followed by a scramble to the busy summit, which gave a fine view of Table Mountain and the coastal area.

ROCK CLIMBING

The climbing in the area is well documented by climbing guides by Blue Mountain (Tony Lourens) with selected guides to Trad (Cape Peninsula Select) and Sports (Western Cape Rock) and walks, scrambles and moderate climbs (Table Mountain Classics) as well as definitive guides to various locations. As however with any printed guide these get out of date with new developments of which there is quite a lot - but they are excellent guides giving a wealth of detail about the climbing in the area.

The climbing grades are based on a numerical system, covering trad and sports climbs, from 5 to (now) 36 – where, for example 13 is Sev / F4; 15 is VS/F5a ; 19 is E1/F6a and 26 is E5/F7b.

Lakeside Pinnacle - Muizenberg is an important location passed through en route to various places. Lakeside Pinnacle is described as a popular beginner and rehab crag - so we went there for some rehab - or was it the easy access? Afterwards routes and the trip were discussed at the nearby 'Toad on the Road' pub with appropriate liquid refreshment.

Silvermine Area - just above Muizenberg is a nature reserve accessed by an entrance gate (price for non-SA with appropriate ID is 61 rand - don't forget

the ID). This gives easy access to a number of crags and some delightful walking. Lower Silvermine is very popular and we had a couple of trips there. The rock is quite amazing - there are so many holds you could almost climb blindfolded. The route everyone had to do was Lord of the Rings (16) - an intimidating overhung arête but on huge holds! Brian Watts has been busy bolting new routes here and the newly bolted In Your Dreams (17) was well named with a 13 bolt clip up, just right of Wet Dreams (19-).

Table Mountain - Cape Town and Table Mountain

Ray leading Lord of the Rings (16) at Silvermine Crag

go together and it is evident that the city is a great location for climbers and walkers to be. Access to the plateau is possible by cable car or the routes there can be approached by foot. There is a huge collection of routes from walks, through scrambles to rock climbs of all required grades with the backdrop of Cape Town below.

Kloof Corner via Pinnacle Ridge (Grade C) - due to a slight miscommunication regarding the meeting place, 2 FRCC members had decided to do an easy walk on their own by the time all were assembled on the Table Mountain Road. Mike Scott then led the remainder up the classic right hand skyline rock scramble and climb on the front of the mountain. Kloof Corner was one of the earliest recorded Rock Climbs on the mountain, and remains a popular climb with the prominent features of the 'Poort' (gateway), the strenuous pull up the chains, and the notorious 11 Inch Crack. After lunch the party descended via the India-Venster path.

Right Face-Arrow Face (scramble) - a group met with Penny Brown at the Table Mountain Cable car station at 7.30am. From the Contour Path they ascended Union Ravine branching off right into Yellowstone Gully and scrambling up a series of boulder problems through the various rocky levels to the actual Right Face Arrow Face traverse. This sensational traverse line utilises some unique cave passages and crosses the huge amphitheatre of sheer rock known as Africa Amphitheatre. After sustenance, at the high point, they had fun squeezing their way through the narrow cracks and crannies, with no one losing their shirt buttons! After the passages, a narrow bushy ledge was followed to meet up with Africa and Fountain Ledges directly below the top face of Arrow Face buttress. At this point they met up with the party of rock climbers led by Brian Lambourne. Maurice

and Sarah Birkill joined the climbers for the Arrow Final rock climb to the top, while the remainder of the scrambling party descended with Penny via the India-Venster route with lunch and lovely views at the Venster itself.

Arrow Final (10) - rock cimb - Brian Lambourne, with fellow MCSA members Stefan and Henk, took Maurice and Sarah up this 80m, five pitch route. The route involved climbing cracks, chimneys and slabs then a short scramble finishing at the cable car café and gift shop, on the Table Mountain plateau. On the final chimney pitch, care was taken to avoid being hit by the ascending cable car, from which excited tourists were taking our pictures!

The Apostles - these are the series of buttresses overlooking the coast area above Camps Bay. We had a visit to these one day starting from Teresa Avenue. The popular track to the summit plateau is followed, with the buttresses looming above. climbers' track is then followed through the undergrowth to the crags. Although looking over a pleasant area this is quite a serious area with big buttresses with a lot of trad routes, often weaving their way up. Barrier Frontal (14) makes its way up with interesting and awkward sections with a number of traverses - and had a big route feel compared to single-pitch clip ups elsewhere. Valken Surprise (16) seemed a good choice until the leader parted company from the rock, at the end of a long traverse, and a retreat on serious ground eventually led to a welcome return to terra firma - or at least the overhang at the base.

Montagu is a top-class climbing venue with over 400 sports climbing routes and many trad lines right on its doorstep. The routes range from an easy 13/F4b all the way to tough 35/8c. It is by far the largest section in the sports climbing guide with 132 pages. It is 200km to the east of Cape Town and with a very low average annual rainfall, it is the ideal place for planning a climbing trip and there are also some nice hiking trails. Only Maurice and Sarah took advantage of the trip planned to Montagu and they stayed at Rainbow Glen guest farm, owned by David Webster, who took them climbing. The first day they visited The Farm Crag and did 4 single pitch climbs - Coffee before Jam (19); Marmion Marmalade (16); Black Sparrow (16) and Black Pearl (17). The second day David and Maurice did the multi-pitch climb Magical Mystery Tour (19) plus two pitches of Another Day in Paradise (21) on Cogman's Buttress. Sarah completed the Cogmanskloof hiking trail leading to Cogmanskloof summit, in the company of Patsy Lourens.

Paarl ….and now for something completely different - much of the climbing in the Cape is on wonderful sandstone with amazing holds but here there are huge granite domes which give often featureless slabs with sometimes long run-outs. A warning in the guide is "If you are firing it up on sandstone steep, don't come to Paarl with a fluffy tail!" Paarl is about 60km along the N1 from Cape Town where the domes appear and a track weaves up and around them. Sands of Time (18) is given ***** so had to be climbed. The lack of holds on P1 was a shock but amazing holds appeared on P2 till

Ron Kenyon leading Sands of Time (18) at Paarl

just before the belay! With four excellent pitches it definitely deserves those 5 stars! Weasel Wall has the 5 pitch Hannes's Rebirth (19) - this wall faces south and seems underused but gave a tremendous experience, with a much harder crux pitch – especially when the grey bolts blend in with the grey rock. The final belay was on the very summit of Bretagne Rock. The visit was only a taster and well worth a return visits.

WALKS

Stephen Craven's Industrial Archaeology Walk - Stephen is a mine of information about the history of South Africa and also the MCSA. In the 16th century trading links were established from Europe to the East Indies, by way of the Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch East India Company was involved and voyages could take 90 days with many crew members dying on the way there and back. A search was made, near the Cape, for a location with a fresh water supply. This was found with the Disa Stream, which flows down from Table Mountain to Hout Bay and in 1652 a "refreshment station" was set up in Table Bay - now Cape Town. Stephen's walk showed the development of the water supply, as the population grew with the building of the Woodhead and Hely-Hutchinson Reservoirs with even a Woodhead Tunnel (named after the mayor of Cape Town) built in 1891, taking water through to the north and Cape Town. The walk started and finished at Constantia Nek, with a lunch break in the MCSA hut, and gave us also a better feeling for the Table Mountain area.

The Twelve Apostles walk - the skyline above Camps Bay has 12 impressive buttresses, named after the biblical apostles, by Sir Rufane Donkin, one-time governor of the British Cape Colony. There are really 18 points and some are named with a mix

Twelve Apostles Walk

Walk from Mulzenberg to Simons Town

of apostles and disciples. They make an excellent walk - we started above Camps Bay making our way, with Penny Brown, up Kasteelspoort, to gain the summit plateau and breakfast at Rendezvous Cave. The walk undulated along the plateau and the eyes were bombarded by a huge variety of plants. We skirted Grootkop and headed for Judas Peak, the final and only summit we climbed. It has quite a large and complex rocky summit where a huge overhang on the south side was useful for a lunch break. The final descent was a dramatic finish down Llandudno Ravine and along a terrace to Ruyteplaats – with suitable refreshments, to finish, next to the harbour in Hout Bay.

Muizemberg to Simons Town walk - Steven Craven took us on a rather unusual walk by the sea - meeting at the station in Muizemberg we made our way along the coast. Muizemberg gained notoriety when Cecil John Rhodes built a very modest thatched cottage here and this drew others to the area. We walked to St James which is near the site of a battle with a retreat which is now immortalised by the railway suburb called Retreat. Kalk Bay was a pleasant town with an amazing second hand book shop. Eventually Simons Town railway station was reached but we could not buy tickets as it seemed that the trains were not running - but it might do and we would have to wait and see ! Thankfully a train was later seen trundling along towards us and tickets were obtained and we could savour the "delights" of railway travel in Cape Town.

Muizenberg and St. James Peaks hike - starting somewhat early, a hiking party led by Mike Scott, took the Steenberg Plateau path from Boyes Drive and ascended Muizenberg Peak. From the summit they descended to Farmer Pack's valley and followed the trail to St. James Peak. Several unusual Sandstone Arch formations were passed on the way, and the group were also led through the cave labyrinth under St. James Peak. A pleasant day with lots of flowers.

Silvermine area - this is a fine elevated area gained easily by a road going into the nature park (permits available at gate - take ID for reduced fee) from which one can venture out. On the walking front, walks were made on Constantiaberg, past the Elephant's Eye Cave, and also the Panorama Path,

Enjoying one of the Crystal Pools

over Noordhoek Peak, which gave great views in all directions.

About 6km from Gordon's Bay is the Steenbras Gorge with the Crystal Pools - this is the run-off valley from the Steenbras Reservoir, one of the main water supplies for the area. Permits must be obtained in advance, with maximum of 10 per party and 50 in total per day – present cost R69 per person. Ivor Jardine, who had been a member of the MCSA for 63 years, was with us this day and he knows everything about the plants and flora of the area. Needless to say he is no spring chicken but can certainly stride out. There is a huge diversity here of plants - he commented that with ericas (heathers) - Scotland has 5 different types and the Cape area has 700. Ivor was intrigued by the name of the road where we were staying, in Gordon's Bay, (Bolusi) which led off a road called Restio - and believes it was named after Harry Bolus, a locally famous botanist, with link to the restio family of plants. One plant to be beware of is Blister Bush, which can give a very painful rash, if one brushes against it. The valley is a real haven, just off the main coastal road, leading into the Kogelberg Nature Reserve. There are baboons and leopards in the area and in certain conditions the park is closed to the public. A big draw to the valley are various pools which give delightful swimming, in which the team participated.

Helderberg Nature Reserve - is situated in Somerset West, covering 403 hectares, it is owned by the City of Cape Town and is well worth a visit to see the flora, birds and fauna with the landscape, covered in fynbos, set between towering mountains and the sea. One of the highlights was a tortoise, some 45cm long, which must have been some age.

The Harold Porter National Botanical Garden - was established in the 1955 on the edge of the Kogelberg Nature Reserve with a number of trails with a lot of information about the plants and wildlife. For those interested there is also a Park Run where the turn round point is near the Disa Kloof Waterfall (usual time no doubt for run - 9.00am - Saturday morning!)

Just north of the fruit producing area around Grabouw is Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve. This is some 70,000 hectares and there are various designated paths which go through this huge area. We followed the Sphinx Route which initially went through forest - some of which was being cleared and they stopped work whilst we walked through!! It then followed an amazing mountain path, through lush flora, eventually to reach the Landroskop Hut, with the Boesmankloof Hut nearby. Our return was down the access road to the huts, which is probably better descended, on foot, than ascended. From the track we saw a group leaping off on a zip wire across the nearby valley which was one of the activities available in the area. There is also kloofing which is like gill scrambling (the name kloof means gully) but set in a really wild location.

Aquila Game Reserve - day trip - this is a privately owned rescue game reserve about a 2hr drive from Cape Town and was visited on a day trip, with a very early start. Warm clothes were needed as the morning tour commenced at 7.30am. It is possible to see the Big Five on the 2hr safari although they are not in large numbers. The tour was sufficient for a taster but not for those wanting the full safari experience.

THE CEDERBERG

The Cederberg is about 250km NW of Cape Town and is an extensive mountain range with trad and bolted climbing in somewhat wild and remote locations. The world renowned bouldering venue of Rocklands is at the north of the area . We had booked into accommodation at Kromrivier, a quite amazing place, with access along at least 57km of gravel track (hire cars go anywhere - but not always tyres - beware of punctures!). The area is renowned for citrus fruit production (hence Citrusdal) and Rooibos (Red Bush) at Clanwilliam. There had been fires in the area sometime recently and certain areas were out of bounds - such as Wolfberg Cracks and Wolfberg. There are a number of estates in the area and Kromrivier being one of them, run by the Nieuwoudt family producing its own wine and other fruits. Water is a big issue - plenty in the winter but shortages in summer and they use a system of directing the water usage, developed in Israel, in order to conserve water.

People have lived in the area for many years with rock art, in a number of locations, dating from around 5000 years.

The largest mountain in the area is Sneeuberg (2027m) above the iconic rock pinnacle of the Maltese Cross. Permits are available from Dwarsrivier and a track leads up the valley to a car park. When we were there, there was a ladies' mountain bike event in operation - quite a place for such an event!

Some of the team had Sneeuberg in their sights which was given an 8 hour day tag - so an early start was necessary. The Maltese Cross was the first objective - this is a popular destination located below the towering Sneeuberg. The first team had information that the right skyline was the route whilst the second team took the gully system up the front. The right skyline had been used sometime, due to various cairns along the way, but with one major aspect missing - a path! After many hours they made their way round the back to gain the other approach and by a way through a maze of passageways and tunnels reached the summit, meeting the others on their way. Eventually both teams returned to the car park after a good full day.

Truitjies Kraal is the local crag and is a truly amazing place - a bit like Brimham Rocks on steroids ! There is a mix of trad and bolted routes with lots of virgin rock there still. The various crags face different directions and it is essential to climb out of the sun so pick you routes carefully. There are routes of all grades but the must do route, for us, was Luna Llena (16) - another amazing route through a roof on huge jugs !

The valley of Kromrivier has a number of walks. Disa Pools is a good objective, up the valley, with the possibility of a swim. The ridge to the north has a couple of impressive summits being Sugarloaf and Dwarsrivierberg. These gave good walks and fine views but unfortunately the need to drive back to Gordon's Bay did not allow time to climb them.

Sarah Birkill leading Moulin Rouge (16) at Truitjies Kraal

OTHER THINGS

A visit to Cape Town must include a trip out to Robben Island - the island out in Table Bay. Originally it was a penal colony and has been a leprosy colony but more recently used for imprisoning political prisoners including Nelson Mandela. It is now a World Heritage Site.

Khayelitsha was created in 1983 - in isiKhosa the name means 'new home'. It is now South Africa's second largest township (after Soweto) with about 400,000 population there. It is very humbling to look out over the extent of this vast area. It is possible to go on a tour of the townships.

A quick fix for wildlife is possible at Betty's Bay and Simons Town to see African (or Jackass) Penguins and along the coast, and in particular at Hermanus, to see whales, in particular the Southern Right Whales.

As is evident the botany of the area is world class and the Kirstenbosch Gardens, south of Cape Town, is world-renowned and well worth visiting.

Cape Town itself has a long history and there are guides and a city-tour bus, on which one can get on and off at various locations.

Getting to South Africa is not like hopping over to Spain or Greece from a time and cost point of view. Anyone going should probably look towards going for at least three weeks to fit in as much as possible. The FRCC has its link with our friends at the MCSA and are well worth contacting. There is also a lot more to South Africa than the Cape but we hope this article has given you a better idea of what is out there.

FRCC members attending meet - Ann-Marie Henderson, Sarah and Maurice Birkill, Gail and Ian Craven, Cath and Paul Exley, Humphrey Johnston, Chris and Ron Kenyon

The MCSA's Twelve Apostles - Brian Lambourne, Penny Brown, Stephen Craven, Martin Hutton-Squire, Ivor Jardine, Henk Landman, Tony Lourens, Viv Marais, Patsy Lourens, Stefan Braun, Mike Scott, Brian Watts and David Webster.

An ascent of Korichuma

Martin Scrowston

Korichuma 5,500 m. Quimsa Cruz. Bolivia.

First ascent of the South East Buttress 500m TD 14/6/2019 Martin Scrowston, Mike Hope.

On the 5th of June our climbing gear arrived in Madrid which was a shame because Mike and I had just arrived in La Paz and had been planning to use it on our expedition to the Quimsa Cruz. The airport at La Paz is situated at just over 4,000m above sea level which made our acclimatisation plan simple; 'we can sit in the bar for three days waiting for our gear to arrive, then head for base camp!'

Over the years Mike and I have climbed together on many expeditions and were no strangers to the Americas, having climbed from Baffin Island in the north down through Alaska, Peru and Patagonia. We had selected Bolivia as a fun destination for adventures ideally suited to lightweight expeditions due to the lack of perceived bureaucracy or the need for permits, peak fees, porters or and other formal mountain paraphernalia. The other main attraction was the wealth of unclimbed summits and faces waiting to be climbed before the inevitable impact of global warming and expected total glacial retreat takes effect. As environmentalists, we planned to offset our carbon footprint by planting trees in Cumbria and converting Mike to vegetarianism.

La Paz is a vibrant, wild and exciting city and our accommodation in the Witches Market was ideally situated for picking up the supplies for base camp: gas, fuel, food and climbing gear are all readily available in the markets. You can even purchase a lucky dried llama foetus and various magical potions to ward off evil spirits if required. A visit to the Street of the Butchers was the first step towards Mike's vegetarian conversion.

Korichuma South Face

Falido's Dangerous Bike

Our contact in La Paz was an outfitter named Pablo Escobar whom we thought we had been corresponding with from the UK. It turned out that he was in fact dead (we didn't enquire as to how he met his end). A close relative called Fabricio arranged to transport us by 4x4 land cruiser across the Altiplano allowing us to check out possible objectives on our way before reaching our intended base camp. This involved a dusty seven hour drive south east the last five hours on seriously exciting dirt tracks that made the famous "Bolivian Death Road" look like a stroll in the park.

Bolivia is a fascinating country to travel through; full of dust and dogs and, sadly, much discarded plastic. We always found the locals to be extremely welcoming and helpful though unfortunately we could not say the same about the many stray dogs we encountered. On our approach to the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz the height of the mountains grew taller in stature, as the height of the indigenous Nayans became noticeably shorter. Our Toyota journey ended abruptly several miles from camp due to severe wash out and damage to the track, we were just coming to terms with the prospect of several days ferrying loads when a chance meeting with a local farmer who came to our rescue. The offer of porterage by llamas or better still his motorbike was negotiated. It helps if you not only speak Spanish but also the Aymara dialect (we didn't) so relied on the interpretative skills of our driver with much gesticulation and sign language. Arrangements were agreed so we quickly threw up a tent for the night as temperatures dropped to -15°C. Early next morning Falido the llama farmer returned as agreed, with his extremely dodgy and highly dangerous motor bike and suggested that he could shuttle both of us and our gear up the mountain track on the back of his bike.

'Buenos Dias, moto biko-mucho splendido, gringos walko, muchas gracias' was our unanimous and no doubt unintelligible response.

The morning progressed with Falido demonstrating much skill and absolutely no regard for his own

South Face approach

The South Buttress

safety by negotiating his overloaded wreck across gullies and obstacles, balancing only on an old rotten plank of wood. After several amusing trips we arrived and set up our base camp at Laguna Choco Khota.

During our approach we had checked out Gigante Grande which at 5,748m is the highest mountain in the range. We had been disappointed but not surprised to note that global warming had thawed out the two major ice lines never to return as snow or ice routes again. Atoroma peak at 5,565m appeared to be a very accessible and attractive trekking peak with a fine blanket of snow and ice but with limited potential for technical new routes.

The spectacular unclimbed South Face of Korichuma was calling out to us at the head of the valley. A steep line direct to the summit proved to be largely ice free and I suspect one day may present as a super granite rock route for those with better blood circulation in their fingers. So we turned our attentions to the east couloir and buttress. But first it was time for pancakes. It's a well-known fact amongst expedition mountaineers that in the absence of alcohol, eating pancakes and drinking copious amounts of strong coffee greatly helps with acclimatisation.

Our base camp at 4,400m proved to be a great place to chill out with around twelve hours of daylight and temperatures up to 20°C in the sun, falling dramatically to sub-zero temperatures in the evenings. There were stunning views of the mountain and a fine display as a skein of wild Andean geese returned to their roost on the banks of the Laguna each evening.

The whole mountain range is riddled with old mine workings and access tracks reminiscent of the Lake District Coppermines Valley but on a grander scale. With a pint of Bluebird Beer in your hand you could almost be back in Coniston. The advantage of these tracks would give us easy access to our advanced gear dump and a comfortable bivi site for the night below the south west glacier marvelling at the

Summit Ridge

Mike (L) and Martin (R) on the summit

endless unfamiliar sparkling stars in the southern hemisphere.

It's always hard, and getting noticeably harder at my age, to break out of an ice encrusted sleeping bag hoping to emerge like an alpine butterfly from its chrysalis to start the day's adventure. A snatched vegetarian breakfast of lukewarm coffee provided the motivation to follow a short ice-filled stream bed leading us up through boulders to where the hard work started. Plodding up and across the receding dry glacier mirrored by the feeling of our receding muscles as we traversed under the south face. Steeper climbing then followed, moving up to reach a break in the bergschrund below the couloir. Five full pitches of steep but well protected climbing led to a spectacular pinnacle ridge and good belay ledge.

The route ahead was barred by an impenetrable labyrinth of huge balanced blocks and spires of Chamonix-like granite; our only chance of progress was to make a 50m rappel descent down a loose groove on a single marginal wire, into the unknown north side of the ridge. This fortunately gave access to a precarious traverse line west over shattered ledges to gain a rocky gully that presented the only possibility of regaining the ridge. Sometimes the skill of route finding is down to pure luck and this proved to be the case as a thrutch up the blind gully gave access once more to the exposed ridge and a comfortable belay. The temperature was dropping fast as the sun swung low to highlight a beautiful fairy tale ridge; all that was left was to follow the line of super hard nevé snaking up to the summit.

The descent

The descent should have been a breeze by reversing the first and only other route on the mountain climbed back in 1992 via the west face. However, to give it some spice and to justify our anticipated pancake consumption, we somehow managed to descend a couple of unexpected ice cliffs and crevasses before reaching the bivvi site just as the sky turned black and the stars came out for us once again.

Trees have been planted at Rydal.

Mike has reverted to eating meat.

Our pancake recipe is available on request.

Bouldering at Albarracin, Spain

Ed and Dan Hamer

The sandstone boulders of the Pinares de Rodeno lie hidden beneath a protective canopy of evergreens at the crest of the Sierra de Albarracin in central Spain. Rated second only to Font in Europe, the bouldering at Albarracin is well worth a look. There's a range of grades to suit all abilities and the quality of the rock is superb. The venue is accessible and affordable. The surrounding area includes abundant Levantine rock art, unusual Roman ruins, a unique flora and fauna and one of Spain's 'most beautiful' Medieval villages. It's easy to see why Spanish enthusiasts rate the place so highly but harder to understand why more Brits don't pay a visit.

Zarzamora 7c+/V10

The rock is a dull reddish sandstone. It's solid and compact. Well-defined layering provides regular, horizontal breaks and vertical joints form prominent crack lines. From a distance, it resembles Derbyshire Gritstone and close up it's as rough to touch. There are over 1,000 problems in 15 sectors, scattered amongst the pine trees. The holds are varied with plenty of slopers, crimps and jams. If you like dynamic and static moves – this is the place for you! There's a spread of grades, from Font 3 to 8b+ with plenty in the middle. In particular, there are some stunning arêtes.

From October to April the maximum temperature rarely exceeds 20°C but it soars to more than 30°C in July and August. The tree cover helps and of course the altitude (±1,000m). December to February is the coldest time of the year with temperatures plummeting to -5°C at night and remaining in single figures during the daytime. We chose late February for our visit and were rewarded with clear blue skies and perfect temperatures. There was one overnight shower and several heavy frosts.

Getting there couldn't have been simpler. We booked a budget flight to Valencia and hired a small car. We were smart and travelled light with our rock boots in carry-ons. The 180km drive from Valencia climbs onto the interior plateau via Teruel and took less than 3 hours. There's a bizarre aircraft 'boneyard' in the outskirts of Teruel. The final approach to Albarracin meanders up the attractive Guadalaviar Valley.

Cosmos 8a/V10

We stayed at and would thoroughly recommend the wooden, self-catering cabins at Cuidad de Albarracin Camping (www.campingalbarracin.com). These are conveniently located and available all year round (abierto todo el ano). They're well-equipped but we were sorry we hadn't taken lightweight sleeping bags to supplement the meagre blankets. Also, the mattresses were coated in clear plastic and my Dad kept sliding onto the floor during the night until he contrived to wedge himself into a corner!

We had reserved crash mats from Albarracin Camping when we booked the cabin but we discovered that they were also available for hire from a local climbing shop. There are a couple of well-stocked mini-supermarkets nearby and the medieval centre of Albarracin has plenty of cafés and restaurants although not everything was open mid-week outside the main tourist season. The Casino Bar opened regularly and became our preferred lunchtime haunt for a plate of 'Calamari Romano' washed down with an Estrella beer. In the evenings, we hung out at the La Zahora climbers' bar on the main road just outside the village.

We used the NoRop.es Boulder Albarracin guidebook. This has self-explanatory photos of the problems. However, we found the individual sector maps hard to relate to the overall site map. This led to some frustrating early morning perambulations and cussing amongst the trees as there were tracks everywhere. Once we had identified a particular boulder, the individual sector maps proved much easier to follow.

Zombi Nation 7c+/V10

We spent most of our time at two of the main sectors – Arrastredero and Techos. Arrastredero is next to the road, whereas Techos is a 20-minute walk through the trees. Both sectors have a wide range of problems, so we had no difficulty finding something suitable to warm up on. Arrastredero Sector hosts classic test pieces like El Varano (7c), Zombie Nation (7c+) and Fuerte a Muerte (8a); the awesome triangular overhang of Cosmos (8a+) is at the Techos Sector, while beside the road in the Parking Sector there's another superb, undercut arête – Zarzamora (8a). However, there are so many more, less well known, equally amazing and of course, easier routes to be tackled.

It certainly wasn't crowded at that time of the year. In fact, we had the luxury of the entire place to

ourselves for the first couple of hours each morning as the Spanish boulderers didn't start to appear until gone 10am. This probably changes in the summer when it will be much hotter during the middle part of the day.

It's important to realise that there are access restrictions in place, designed to protect the rock art as well as the flora and fauna. As a result, we strongly advise prospective visitors to check which sectors are affected and comply with the regulations in order to avoid censure and/or disappointment. There were multiple restrictions in place during our visit but they didn't affect any of our plans or detract from the experience. We were usually done by lunchtime and left as the boulders started to become busier.

There was no shortage of alternative attractions to keep us occupied when we weren't bouldering. First of all, there's the Levantine rock art. These prolific pictographs span a considerable period from at least the early Mesolithic through to the Neolithic (8,000-3,000BCE). This was a time of significant cultural evolution from nomadic hunter-gathering to the development of more settled communities with domesticated animals. The rock art at Albarracin reflects this dramatic change.

The Romans also left their mark on the area with the construction of a 30km long aqueduct following the Guadalaviar Valley. This carried water to the fertile flat lands around Cella to the north east. This remarkable example of Roman engineering can best be seen in the outskirts of a smaller settlement immediately downstream from Albarracin, where the waterway is tunnelled though the limestone crags. It's still possible to walk inside several of the tunnelled sections.

No visit to the area would be complete without exploring the medieval village of Albarracin. It was originally a Moorish settlement which came under the control of Aragon in the 14th Century during the Reconquista. The village is perched on a limestone pedestal within an incised meander of the Guadalaviar River. The neck of the meander is protected by an impressive fortified wall with a series of towers. It's a picturesque setting. The older part of the village is a cultural gem with a maze of narrow alleys and terracotta roofs. It was practically deserted during mid-week in February but is obviously busy at other times. We were pleasantly surprised by the unrestricted access to the ramparts, which we were able to explore in full.

We finished our trip with a night in Valencia prior to our return flight, courtesy of one of Dan's Australian mining colleagues, who was based there with his family. Our timing was perfect, because the Las Fallas Festival was reaching a climax and we witnessed a spectacular firework display over the older part of the City. It was a fitting conclusion to a very successful trip.

Zarzamora 7c+/V10

An Adventure with The Taxman

Tony Walker

All the other meet attendees had been back in the hut for an hour or so and were well into their second pivo, slivovic or caj … except Mick and Neil who had been out on the hill for quite a while now. Although it was warm and cosy in the hut, curiosity got the better of me and I ventured out of hut to see what they were up to – after all we were talking about the Climbing Taxman and Mr Rab so there was no need for any great concern.

Stepping outside it felt rather windy and cold but Zof and I walked across to where we could get a good vantage point of their chosen route for the day. Zof came to get some photos of the renowned twosome. I was thinking that Mick and Neil must have topped out by now but … no … I couldn't see them on the summit ridge. What was that though … a couple of figures traversing off at the top of the first two pitches. Surely not them, they must have summitted? I was getting a bit cool by now so me and Zof walked back to the hut. Ten minutes later a wind and snow lashed Mick and Neil walked in. How was it I asked; Neil replied 'F*****g desperate; Grade 6 but no gear'. Conclusion … they were obviously getting a bit rusty and needed a little more experience of the mountains, perhaps a BMC winter skills course would be good, or maybe not? I wish I had said that at the time … I would have loved to have seen their faces. Nevertheless, they had found my recommendation trickier than I expected and, although I shouldn't say this, I felt fairly smug having 'ticked' the same route a couple of years ago with Vince who hadn't climbed in winter for 10 years or so.

The evening progressed and food and beer preceded discussion of the following days sportsplans. Neil was a little concerned that Mick wanted to return to the unfinished route in the morning – the enthusiasm of the taxman. I suggested that I could team up with Mick and go back on the route. Neil beamed – 'brilliant idea'! So plans were set for tomorrow. Neil had more beer and I didn't.

The morning came and Mick and I plodded up the slope to the foot of the route. It was slow … almost painfully so but the wise Fowler words cautioned against any real exertion prior to the route. Sounded okay to me. After all he had won at least a couple of Piolet d'Ors (whatever they were) so it must be good advice.

Approaching the start of Zlata Nitka (Golden Fibre)

Mick climbing across the 'easy' terrace

At the top of the initial slope it steepened up quite a bit and I said that perhaps we should gear up. Mick didn't hear and plodded slowly on. Eventually we geared up on some horrible snowslope above a big drop … I didn't say anything.

We had decided to traverse across the top of the first two pitches on the terrace that Mick and Neil had abseiled off the previous afternoon. The expected snow plod proved anything but and was an unsettling mix of steep unconsolidated snow and not too much protection. Needless to say I found it quite nerve wracking, whereas Mick seemed completely in his element, but I guess that is what I should have expected – coolness in the face of adversity.

The next couple of pitches were steep but okay then Mick led out across some nicely exposed slabs to a belay on a wee snow slope. Although the pitch and belay were all relatively 'nice' I realised that I would get the big lead up a long turfy groove (I knew this from my previous ascent with Vince - naivety isn't always the best). I did have a plan at the start of the route to sandbag, sorry, graciously offer, Mick the honours on this big bold pitch. I even offered to swap over at the belay and take some hero photos but he was having none of it and gazed out admiring the view as I engaged the spots of turf. I climbed and it steepened … the climbing was good and though not quite as intimidating as I remembered it was still a little sketchy and run out. After a short while I began to feel quite committed and my belayer seemed a long way away.

The last piece of decent protection was well beneath. The groove steepened slightly and the turf patches became smaller. Yes … definitely getting out of my comfort zone. Looking up to my left I spied an in situ peg offering some welcome security and I committed to crossing the groove. Each moved seemed a little trickier and more strenuous

than the previous – though I am sure it was just psychological. The peg came within reach but I had to climb past it to clip. The usual fumbled clip and I began to relax. Looking up the groove it seemed as if that there was another 5m or so of hard steep climbing and then the belay.

Typical Tatry climbing – only a few pitches to go

Looking down to Mick and the chata a long way down

Before committing I quickly checked the peg by hand only to have it come out! The adrenaline kicked in and without bothering to unclip rope or quickdraw I beat seven bells out of the peg. Sort of getting my own back on the deceitful piece of protection.

The stance arrived fairly quickly after that and Mick made it all look like a stroll in the park. Somewhat disappointingly his pitch looked to ease off after about 10m or so. Mick climbed it without any problems and I set off following. It turned out to be quite steep and thinking it would be easier to use hands and feet rather than try and climb the increasingly sparse turf I hauled up on a juggy block only to realise both me and the block were accelerating down at an alarming rate. I came to rest a few meters lower with bits of rock cascading down the pitch below. Exciting! Mick was completely unfazed when I reached the stance. An enjoyable, not too steep and nicely turfy pitch up a groove followed to a stance below a chimney.

Mick with Bruno the hut dog

The topo presented two alternatives here: a steep loose chimney directly above the stance – not ideal for either leader or belayer or some snowy slabs around up to the right – less loose rock and safer for the belayer. Guess which Mick chose … the loose chimney of course.

One aspect of Mick's gear organisation was that he hadn't quite embraced the leashless ice axe revolution where the climber can climb unfettered by leashes and climb more naturally. In fact he had gone the other way no doubt paranoid of dropping anything on some gnarly Himalayan first ascent, using ice axes tethered to his harness plus leashes plus leashless axes … bits of tape and rope attached everything to the climber. As Mick entered the chimney he proceeded to wrap himself up in as much of his gear as he could manage … or at least that is what it looked like to me. I had a little chuckle to myself as Mick swore whilst untangling himself. The wind was getting up by now and spindrift came down from the summit ridge in regular little slides. After the chimney I led a short pitch and Mick got the glory pitch to the ridge. Quite blowy now so we didn't waste any time climbing down the opposite side of the ridge to the 60m abseil that led back to the snow basin and the end of the route. The climb down seemed steeper and more insecure than I remembered from previously but we arrived at the anchors for the abseil. The wind and spindrift was getting quite unpleasant now … it was also getting rather dusky. Mick got into experienced mountaineer 'lets get off quickly' mode and proceeded to back up the ab tat with another loop out of his bag. He had to cut it to length and proceeded to cut through it with his hammer … this took a bit of effort but Mick seemed to be enjoying himself. So much so in fact that I hadn't the heart to inform him it would be easier using the pen knife in my sack. At the bottom of the abseil we stuffed the ropes in the sacks and trudged out through the swirls of snow. It was quite dark when we arrived back and headed inside the hut. We all sat down together and exchanged notes on the days adventures. Mick's summary of our day … 'Well Dr Walker … that was a proper route!'. No higher praise from the man himself … I felt pleased and had another beer.

Meet team in the chata

Dhaulagiri

Mark Gear

Between the ages of 35 and 45 trekking in the Greater Ranges was a big part of my life.

I blame it all on my partner Helen. Before we got together, I had not been outside of Europe, while she was already a consummate world traveller. Initially there was resistance - the British mountain crags were still exerting a strong pull - but in 1997 she persuaded me to commit three weeks of my precious holiday allowance with the Bank of Scotland to a road trip through California and Arizona, taking in Yosemite, the Grand Canyon and Death Valley on the way. Having seen the light, I was easily talked into a month in Nepal, post Monsoon 1998, to trek the Annapurna Circuit and Sanctuary. This was before the Nepalese Government, in its misguided wisdom, bulldozed tracks up the valleys at the start and finish and ruined the experience. Being young and foolish we went unsupported, carrying our own kit from tea house to tea house, although Helen did hire a porter in Manang to carry her rucksack up to the Thorong La pass at approx. 5400m. Admittedly, she had a good excuse, having been sick for a few days on the way in, and I had been obliged to carry half her stuff in addition to my own to keep the show on the road. By the time we had been up Poon Hill she was pooped, so took a rest while I nipped up to the Sanctuary; by then I was so fit and well acclimatised that it was no more than a couple days side trip.

In 1999 we joined a KE Adventure Travel group to the Karakoram in Pakistan, hoping to see K2. Late in the season and on a three-week holiday with only one day at Concordia we did see K2, but only for about 5 minutes. While we were up in the mountains there was a military coup, which expedited our departure from the country on returning to Rawalpindi!

Myagdi Khola west of Beni

A work hiatus ruled out any big trips in 2000, but in 2001 I pulled the wool over the eyes of my boss at work and managed to wangle two three-week annual leave bookings during summer/ autumn. In September we had a first look at the Cordillera Blanca in Peru; again, we were late in the trekking season for that region, and the weather was too

unsettled for the planned circuit of Alpamayo. But we still managed the Santa Cruz trek and some other shorter things, learning valuable lessons about negotiating with donkey drivers and how tiring it is to cook at 4000m bending over a stove. In late November I headed back to Nepal; Khumbu bound. This was only a few months after the Maoist insurgency had come to the attention of the Western World and the Twin Towers had fallen; the Gulf Air flight into Kathmandu was only a quarter full! During the next couple of weeks it almost seemed like I had the place to myself, setting off early, walking a few hours, reaching my 300m. rise in sleeping height limit, going for a higher

Myagdi Khola west of Beni

acclimatisation trek, and then relaxing in the sun outside a tea house drinking in the spectacular views. Again, I was carrying my own kit, although I will own up to hiring a local lassie to carry my bag on the steep climb from Phakding to Namche Bazaar. The weather was magnificent, and in due course I was breathless around 5600m on Kala Pattar gazing upon Everest and its satellites. After, I made a quick trip round to Gokyo to ascend Gokyo Ri; by now rumours of the Maoists disrupting flights into/ out of Lukla were filtering up valley, so I made a rapid return to civilization, and arriving at the airstrip one morning strolled straight onto a 'plane heading back to Kathmandu. Problem, what problem?

In 2002 we made the last of the "big three" tea house treks, hiring a porter to carry our rucksacks through Helambu, over the Ganja La and into the Langtang Valley. Chief excitement on this trip was getting transport out of Kathmandu ahead of a general strike, and staying one step ahead of the Maoists, who by now had cottoned on to the idea of charging trekkers a "tourist tax". Reaching the valley, we paid off our porter and gave him a handsome tip to be spent on lessons to help improve his English. After a couple days exploring above Langtang village, we shouldered our bags and tottered down to the road head at Dhunche, a couple days away, to share a ride in the cab of a lorry (much safer than the local bus!) back to the big smoke.

By now I had realised that I could not do the things that I wanted to do within the strictures of a full-time job and six weeks of holiday per annum. So early in 2003 I looked into job sharing but couldn't find anybody on the same pay grade who was interested in such an arrangement.

Eventually I took the "nuclear option" and told my employer I was going to take a five-year career break. This involved resigning and I never did go back to work full time!

Anyway, knackering the cartilage in my right knee while walking down from the Cromlech in the Llanberis Pass that June put a minor spoke in my plans, but rest and recuperation did the trick and in September/ October I joined a KE group making a month long trip to Tibet, overlanding from Lhasa to Kathmandu and stopping off to trek into the Kangshung Face of Everest. The weather was rubbish going in and coming out, but perfect when it mattered at high camp. Afterwards, we spent a couple of days at Rongbuk before heading to the border. During November I was on another month long KE trip, this time to both the South and North side base camps of Kangchenjunga, with amazing views of Jannu in between, crossing the Mirgin La. The waterproofs only came out briefly one afternoon - during a short hail flurry - in three weeks in the mountains. Dealing with the Maoists on this trek was a hoot - we pretended to be Australians! For some reason they did not want to "tax" Aussies as much as other Westerners - perhaps the government in Canberra was more sympathetic to their cause?

For 2004 I went back to Peru to trek the Cordillera Huayhuash circuit with High Places. On the first night at camp the quality of the tented accommodation was remarked upon; each trekker had a Wild Country geodesic dome to their self! Apparently, the local agency had recently supported the filming of Touching the Void, and payment for their services had been partly in kind. Later in the year I was back in Nepal with KE, soon after the Monsoon (I have never been there pre-

At Dhaulagiri base camp

Monsoon) for the Makalu approach. It was early October, and on the way up valley it rained most afternoons, sometimes heavily, and the other members of the group - sweating along in skins - were envious of my umbrella. Didn't help keep the leeches off, though! The Western Leader on this trip was Chris Townsend - it was branded a TGO reader's trek - and whilst I am in awe of his solo backpacking achievements, it's fair to say that at the time he didn't know much about the Himalayas, and was suffering from "Delhi belly" to boot. Guess who became unofficial deputy leader.

In 2005 I went back to Pakistan with High Places, intent on getting a proper eyeful of K2. I loaded the dice by going earlier in the year and for a whole month, including a week up at/ above Concordia, and was duly rewarded. The trip was advertised as

Tukuche Peak from Hidden Valley

for 12 trekkers, but when there was higher demand, we agreed to this being increased to 16. A mistake, in retrospect; a group of 12 stays cohesive, but 16 splits in half. Matters weren't helped by the local agency claiming to be unaware of the enlarged numbers; having reached Concordia on a starvation diet, the clients revolted! More food miraculously appeared, and a nice fat compensation cheque was received in the post on returning to the UK. Later that year, I went to Darjeeling with KE, seeing the Indian side of Kangchenjunga in relative comfort. At the end of the trip I stayed on for a week to visit Delhi, Agra and Amritsar.

My aspirations were now beginning to outstrip the regular offerings of the adventure travel industry, and in 2006 I branched out on my own, so to speak. During the summer I went back to Peru for the Alpamayo Circuit, arranging this direct with in-country friends of the High Places Huayhuash guide from two years ago, a Kiwi lass from Nelson. The advantages of being a small, flexible party of one became apparent immediately; my early morning KLM flight out of Edinburgh was delayed, and I missed the connection in Amsterdam for Lima! Arriving a day late could have been a major headache if joining a large group, but this wasn't too much of a problem - a few e-mails, and the whole thing was put back a day. Post Monsoon, I returned to India, again as a party of one, contracted to the local agency used by KE, to spend a month over a couple of shorter treks in the Garwhal, including a crossing of scenic Curzon's Pass, and the approach to Shivling from Gangotri.

This brings me, at some length, to 2007 and the Dhaulagiri Circuit. You will appreciate that I now know a thing or two about trekking in high mountain regions. Dhaulagiri has the reputation of being one of Nepal's toughest "circuit" treks, involving not one but two 5000m plus passes, with a high camp above 5000m between. Not really one for the "first timers" then, and best attempted soon after the Monsoon, in October rather than November, in case the winter snows arrive early. By now the Maoists had reached a political settlement with the government, but it came too late in the

year for the trekking companies to organise any of the more "out there" trips; these only started up again in 2008. So once more I was on my own, supported by five porters, a cook, his assistant and a guide laid on by KE's local agent, Himalayan Expeditions ("HE").

Most trips to Nepal start with an overnight flight from the UK, and this one was no exception. Because of the time difference arrival into Kathmandu is late in the afternoon, and I knew the score - try and be amongst the first off the aircraft to be near the front of the queue to apply for a Visa. However, on this occasion the effort was for naught, my bag being one of the last to appear on the luggage carousel - an anxious moment - behind all the TVs returning migrant Nepalese workers were importing from Saudi. I was met outside the airport by the man from HE (no need to haggle for a taxi this time round) and whisked straight off to a smart hotel in the tourist ghetto of Thamel. By now I was extremely tired, as I can never more than doze on a 'plane journey, but I still had the balance of my trek to pay and this was a relief, as all those US$ notes had been burning a hole in my money belt! The next day was free for contingencies - such as "What if my bag had not arrived?" - and I slept for twelve hours straight before indulging in the amenities of the city; principally Mike's Breakfast and the Northfield Cafe. Having been so many times before the likes of Durbar Square, Bodhnath and Pashupatinath were already well known.

It was an early start the following morning, traveling to the road head at Beni. Transport was laid on by HE, but as the minibus wasn't full, we took a lot of time leaving Kathmandu, touting for punters to fill the seats and becoming stuck in a huge traffic jam on the ring road. But eventually we were on our way, with the usual delays for check points, slow trucks and buses, crazy overtaking, big potholes, broken down lorries and even a large boulder half blocking the road at one point. We passed Nepal's second city Pokhara in the early afternoon, but then were held up on the crumbling tarmac of the Bagelung highway soon after as the police and ambulances dealt with the aftermath of a traffic accident. As a result, the last part of the drive was in the dark, along a difficult, muddy and frequently washed out land rover track. The plan had been to camp on arrival, but in the event, we stopped in a basic hotel for the night. Also staying were a couple of Brits, Chris and John, making their second attempt at the trek; two years ago, they had been defeated by a heavy snowfall.

Starting at little over 800m. above sea level the walk into the snowline occupied more than a week. Getting organised on the first morning took a while, but eventually we were on our way, walking west and then north along a rough jeep track and then paths through the jungle, following the course of the Myagdi Khola and switching from one bank to the other as required via long suspension bridges. It was blistering hot, and I sweated buckets, shirt wringing, despite having my umbrella, this time as a portable sun shade. When close to the river the rushing water cooled the air somewhat, but it was largely a case of walk 20 minutes to shade, rest and dry off for 10 minutes, then repeat. I had to drink litres and litres of water each day, boiled at camp the night before. Relief often came in the afternoons as it clouded over, which sometimes produced light showers or longer spells of rain. As the days progressed, we leapfrogged Chris and John, and also a French group of five clients. At the end of the walking day we would often camp in a village, perhaps on the volleyball pitch or school playing field, which would be a matter of considerable amusement for the local kids, who

appeared more and more scruffy the further we went. If outside a village on terraces cut into the hillsides there was a distinct advantage in being the first arrivals, as we then had the pick of the best tent sites.

The daily routine was bed tea at 6am, breakfast of porridge/ pancakes/ omelette/ more tea at 6:30am, and on our way by 7:30am. Cooked lunch was flexible, any time between 10am (!) and midday, and required a clearing with shade for the cook team to "do their thing", although once they suggested stopping in the middle of a 45° landslip! I had to talk them out of that one. For me, this was usually a good time to write the diary or enjoy some reading. There would be a few more hours walking in the afternoon before reaching camp, sometimes a fair way ahead of my guys, but when they turned up things would happen quickly with tea/ juice and biscuits within minutes, followed by warm water for a strip wash and a cooked dinner about 6pm - last light - eaten in the bell end of my sleeping tent. As a small party we had a cook tent, and a chair and stools, but tables and a mess tent were more than could be carried. But we did have a toilet tent, and as there was only one user it never became too wiffy! Normally shattered by early evening, I would be bedding down at 7pm. When camping near the river wax earplugs were a useful aid to sleep. Needing a pee during the long hours of darkness was common, and often the canopy of stars was incredible; there was very little light pollution. Each night it was a little colder, climbing higher, and I went from using just a silk liner through sleeping under my bag to being in it. Sometimes we woke to fantastic clear views of the mountains ahead, often not.

On the second day I discovered that I had to pay a US$15 "tax" in respect of path improvements; going to the "office" to sort this out it was immediately apparent from the red hammer and sickle flags on the walls accompanied by portraits of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao that the Maoist extortion racket remained alive and well. On the same day I encountered a small party that had turned back from the high passes about five days ago in face of heavy snowfalls, which tallied with having heard that there had been some extended rainy spells in the valleys following the end of the Monsoon and before my arrival in country. But I wasn't unduly worried; so long as there were no more lengthy spells of bad weather, we should be OK. Only in a few places was my Trekking Permit - obtained on my free day in Kathmandu - or the receipt given me by the Maoists examined. On the fourth day we approached the last village in the valley - Bagar - via a feint, slippery mud path that zig zagged up the hillside and became quite vertiginous. At one point I was reminded of the scene in the movie "Return of the King", where Gollum says "Climb, hobbits, climb!" Thunder clouds were building to the south, and this didn't look like a good place to be caught out in a rainstorm. My guide - Man was his name - became quite anxious when the rest of our party did not follow, apparently taking an even more difficult lower path. Eventually the route levelled out, then began to descend, on firmer ground, which was just as well because a fall from the narrow walkway would have been certain death. Luckily the rain held off, we arrived in Bagar without further incident, and the rest of our team appeared later. There was more excitement on day five, traversing below a cliff with massive bees' nests under the overhangs, the "path" hewn from the rock or suspended from poles; a slip would have been disastrous. Day six started with some very difficult walking; lots of ascent and descent, mud, wet boulders, slippery tree roots, deadfalls to climb over or under, landslips, and cobwebs or thick vegetation slapping you in

the face. It was a place to take your time and look carefully to each step; hurrying would have been particularly trying. Throughout the trek so far there had been some awesome waterfalls in the side valleys, and by now the negotiation of these deep folds in the land frequently involved much up and down. Crossings of side rivers were by boulder hopping, rickety tree trunk bridges and once or twice by wading, which was bloody cold! As the elevation increased the jungle gave way to pine forest and bamboo. Finally, on the seventh day of the approach, we left the trees behind and reached Italian Camp at 3600m. The altitude was noticeably slowing my pace now, and I was drinking and peeing frequently, despite the cooling temperatures. "Copious and clear" is the mantra that helps you acclimatise, along with staying warm and not overexerting yourself. Here we came upon a French climbing party of four, sorting out a veritable mountain of food and gas canisters. The west face of Dhaulagiri dominated to the right, all rock walls, ribs, snow slopes and hanging glaciers. It was impressive as the sun lit it at midday, but this caused the cloud to form and it was soon hidden, only reappearing at dusk. Day eight had a scary start, crossing the trench left behind by the retreating Chhombordan Glacier, descending a very steep slope of loose, slippery mud. Quite the most dangerous part of the trek so far, and probably fatal in the event of a slip. At the bottom I felt the adrenaline draining from my body, but then had to climb out the other side; longer, steeper and even more terminal! Beyond, the path improved, passing through Swiss Base Camp, and the scenery was incredible, with snow peaks, towering rock faces and long threads of waterfalls all around. Above we took to the glacier itself, covered in rubble at this point, and duly arrived at the campsite of Pakhoban in late morning. However, there was no water supply nearby, so we camped 20 minutes further on where pools offered water for cooking.

Dhaulagiri from French Pass

Sleep was disturbed overnight by the sound of seracs falling not too far away. There was a keen frost by morning; we were now at an altitude of 4,300m, where it is important to take your time climbing further, and a sensible acclimatisation schedule includes a couple nights spent at the same height. So, the next day Man and I headed up valley to explore. The weather was lovely, and we walked for a couple hours, reaching a point only 30 minutes short of our next camp stop 400m higher

at Dhaulagiri Base Camp. I was going strongly, and had not even suffered a headache, which was remarkable. That afternoon I was able to air all my down kit in the sun, and even had a wash; it was likely to be the last for several days.

If anything, it was even colder the next morning, not a cloud in the sky, but we were still away by

Drying maize at Dhampu

7am. Yesterday we had made a recce of paths on both sides of the valley, going up on the right and coming down on the left, which was considerably easier, so the latter was the line we took now. Time spent on reconnaissance is rarely wasted. As a result, we arrived at Dhaulagiri Base Camp in mid-morning. Several expeditions were in residence, clusters of tents occupying cleared areas in the snow that had consolidated to a couple feet deep at this altitude, with worn trenches communicating between. We soon found space enough for our needs, and established camp. The view of the north side of Dhaulagiri was stunning, so close it almost seemed to be in your face, and beside that the western aspect of Tukuche Peak was imposing too. I appreciated it while it lasted - the sun burning hot, reflecting from the snow - keeping a wary eye on cloud rolling up the valley towards us. This arrived after lunch, and during the afternoon there was a light fall of snow. I stayed warm in my pit, patiently letting my body adjust, reading the rest of the day away.

The snow continued overnight, so it was quite warm. We had planned another acclimatisation walk the next day, towards our first objective of French Pass at almost 5400m, but clearly that was not going to happen. Given my good performance thus far I was not too concerned at losing it; two nights "sleeping" at 4700m. should be enough to see me through. More of an issue was the possibility that the other parties heading that way would set off today - it would be safer to move together - but at a mid-morning pow wow (by which time it was too late to go anyway!) all decided to stay put. Very wise. However, we had to move tomorrow, either up or down, as food reserves were beginning to run low. Looking on the bright side, the weather began a slow improvement during the afternoon, and climbers on Dhaulagiri in radio communication with basecamps were reporting that the poor conditions were very localised in this valley.

Thankfully "decision day" came clear and cold, and we were the first team away, before 7am. The walk up to French Pass was four hours, initially behind Man and our cook Chong, but then Man dropped

back to encourage the porters and I was the one doing the hard work consolidating Chong's tracks in six inches of new snow. At first we were able to make out the tracks of previous parties in the underlying neve, but soon enough we had to follow our own noses to find the easiest line, which meant that while correcting one of several wrong turns I was actually out in front for a while. Behind us the view of Dhaulagiri just got better and better; reason enough to pause and let the heart and lungs recover. There was a false crest before the long gentle slope up to the pass proper, and I was grateful at this point to be overtaken by one of the French climbers; Chong had a long stride, and I was having to make intermediate steps, which was very tiring. The wind at the pass was keen and cold, and for the first time today I noticed a sheet of cirrus spreading up from the south.

Beyond French Pass was Hidden Valley, a great bowl in the hills, and an easy descent. I popped a couple Paracetamol to combat a developing headache. We camped a little beyond the usual spot, although still at 5100m, and directly below Damphus Pass, which we would have to cross to escape on the morrow. When Man caught up, he actually suggested we carry on over this pass, but I vetoed the idea; I was knackered. How I came to regret that decision! To get the pegs in when the tents went up, we had to excavate a foot of lying snow, using tin dinner plates. With the wind getting up and a grey murk approaching I had doubts as to the permanence of my residence, so unpacked the minimum of kit - an evacuation in the dark at this height, where everything you do is exhausting, would not be fun. But the wind died away, the other parties caught up, and we settled in. Nevertheless, the mood was tense.

Overnight there was little wind, but a persistent, light snow fall that continued into the daylight hours. Man had told me that the next pass is easy, and that with our food almost gone we had to set out to cross it, come what may. Seemed Chris and John and the French five were in the same boat, so that morning a long straggling line of porters, clients and guides set out into the mist from the campsite. The next three hours was a total farce. We began in what we thought to be the right direction, but the snow was very deep, making trail breaking arduous and progress stuttering. There were frequent halts for the guides to stop and confer, and several changes of direction. Eventually a slight clearance in the cloud revealed that we were heading in completely the wrong direction, back towards French Pass!! The camp of the well supplied French climbers remained visible, and the juggernaut was turned towards Damphus Pass, but then the weather closed in again. At this point the clients rebelled; there was insufficient daylight to cross now, and we were already tired from all the floundering about. So, it was back to camp and the smug French. My tent went back up on the same spot, but the pitch was nowhere near so good and I did not have the energy to sort it out. What's more it was now soaked from melted snow, inside and out, so not a pleasant place to be. Boots and socks were wet through too. My guide was particularly dejected, having never failed like this before, and Chong was very worried by our lack of food too. I had to tell them what to do - we would halve the food rations (few have much of an appetite over 5000m.) and just wait until it was clear before we tried to cross the pass again. There was talk of a helicopter rescue - one of the parties had a sat' 'phone - but it was way too early to be thinking in those terms. As feared my tent did in fact blow down during the afternoon but getting it back up in daylight was not too difficult. To be honest, I was quietly confident that the weather would improve,

and it duly did so, later that afternoon, the wind dropping away and the sun coming out. Good enough to get outside and discuss tactics with John and Patrick, the Frenchman with the best English. The consensus was to leave together at 6:30am tomorrow, agreeing the best route to the pass and that we would each put our strongest trail breakers out in front, so that they could rotate and rest but keep the pace going.

That night it was clear and very, very cold. Someone with a thermometer suggested later that it had registered -29°C, but I doubt that; on the way to Kangchenjunga North side base camp four years ago, at the confluence of two glaciers, I was shivering in my bag at a verifiable -17°C, and this night was not so bad. But I was ready to leave some time before the crew - that's the way of trekking - and spent a long time sitting around in frozen boots, so that my feet were like blocks of ice by the time we set off. This led to a little frost nip and numbness in my right big toe, and to this day the circulation has been poor in it, which I attribute to this trip.

We got out alright in the end, but it was a monumental effort and a close-run thing. Being able to see where the pass was made all the difference in the world, but even so the clients were continually calling to the trailbreakers to alter course and avoid the deepest snow drifts. The Nepali instinct was to make a bee line for the objective, but this really wasn't very clever. At one point I saw John and Chris being led towards a steep, snow loaded and avalanche prone lee slope by their guide and had to shout to them "Come back or you will die!" The porters weren't so keen on the slightly circuitous route, but by now we were beyond caring about their feelings. Eventually the leaders post holed across the wide, featureless Damphus Pass at 9am, with an excellent view of the north east face of Tukuche Peak and of the Nilgiri's on the far side of the Kali Gandaki; this valley was our target for today. But there was no celebrating, as there was still a long way to go. And it was hard going too, having to stay high in the deep snow, spreading out to try and minimise the avalanche risk, eyes on the prize of reaching the SE ridge of Damphus Peak. All the way it was so tempting to descend to the right into the subsidiary valley of the Yamkin Khola, but there was no path marked on the map there and it might prove to be a world of hurt. The cloud rolled in again, up the valley, and we were once more staggering along in poor visibility, but at least this time we had seen where we were going. We were overtaken by members of the French climbing team; they had clearly decided that there was too much snow to make it worth staying in Hidden Valley. After what seemed an interminably long time, during which I passed through a state of exhaustion and out the other side, we had progressed far enough and lost sufficient height to come out below the clouds, with a clear view of the path down to the village of Marpha, one of the nicest places on the Annapurna Circuit, lying two days south of the Thorong La. A scabby intermediate campsite was passed - no way were we stopping now - and all we had to do was put one foot in front of the other, finally descending to reach the cluster of tea houses at dusk. It had been an 11 hour day and I was utterly spent, but having sorted out rooms and got some food down me I treated the crew to an apple brandy and distributed tips. They had done a fantastic job. And Chong revealed to me just how little food we had left - a half empty bottle of tomato ketchup!

The next day we heard on the grapevine that a trekker had died while trying to cross the Thorong La, sometime in the last couple of days. A sobering

reminder that even just walking in these mountains is not without its dangers.

I had a well-earned rest. The team split up; one of the porters, Birsa, was staying with me while Man flew out from nearby Jomson and Chong led the rest of the team down the Kali Gandaki and back to Beni. When I moved on, it was to trek the remainder of the clockwise Annapurna Circuit out to Nayapul over five days. During this time, I saw for the first time the devastation caused by road construction up the valley. The weather was mixed, but moving from tea house to tea house, real coffee almost on tap, was quite relaxing. At Tatopani I soaked in the hot springs, and at Ghorepani made multiple trips up Poon Hill. Dhaulagiri at dawn is the classic view from here, enjoyed by the masses, but few seem to have the time - or the energy - to come back a few hours later when the Annapurnas are lit to perfection too. Lower down the Maoists were active, seeking "donations" ahead of national elections, but I just waved my receipt at them and walked on through. When I did finally reach the road the arranged lift into Pokhara failed to materialise, so I had to negotiate for a shared taxi, and then there was a misunderstanding concerning the payment of Birsa. The deal with HE had been that they would pay his wages and expenses, but as we headed down valley it was soon apparent that he expected ME to pay his tea house bills as they accrued. He claimed to have no money, which was odd, as I had just given him a handsome tip... But I was in no position to argue - I was relying on him to carry my bag! - so kept a record of his expenditure and in due course was able to reclaim this, and the cost of the taxi, from the HE rep in town when I finally met up with him. When I last saw Birsa he was even expecting me to pay his wages, which was all very unfortunate, but misunderstandings like this are quite common in Nepal.

I had a day off in Pokhara and then spent a day traveling back to Kathmandu in a tourist bus. Another day off in the capital, and I joined a two-week KE trip to Bhutan, trekking to Chomolhari and Jitsu Drake. This was very effective at emptying the bank account, but also gave a wonderful insight into what Nepal must have been like before mass tourism arrived.

In 2008 Helen and I spent three weeks in Peru, walking the Inca Trail and making a circuit of little known Ausangate. Post Monsoon I had two more back to back trips, which involved a month in India, on a couple of treks in the Kumaon region close to Nanda Devi, then flying on to Kathmandu to join another KE trip, this time circuiting Manaslu. Fairly uneventful really, apart from the five-hour bus journey to the start turning into a ten hour epic, finishing in the dark, due to mechanical problems and landslides on the road. But hey ho, that's the way it goes sometimes.

At this point my interests turned to other things, principally exploration of the "Stans" of Central Asia with Helen, and occasionally fellow Club Member Peter Standing, now deceased, and his wife Gillian. Oh, and the benefits of traveling to the southern hemisphere during our winter, mainly New Zealand, although a 2014 diversion to Patagonia featured in the 2016 Journal. In 2018 I finally got Pakistan out of my system, joining a KE group attempting the Biafo/ Hispar traverse. We reached the 5,100m. col between the two glaciers OK, but then the guide and our Western Leader were unable to find a way down through the crevasses on the other side. So, we had to retrace our steps back down the Biafo - no hardship in itself, as the scenery is stunning - but then we had to deal with how to return to Islamabad. We had started by flying in to Skardu, but now there were no seats to return

at short notice (if we had completed the trek, we would have been flying out of Gilgit, further down valley; tickets had been booked for that) and there was no choice but to endure two days of hard traveling, each of 15 hours, to traverse the 500 miles of the Karakoram Highway back to the capital. We were held up by officialdom as much as by landslips on the road, although towards the end the owner of the Pakistani agency running the trip for KE somehow managed to arrange a police escort, complete with flashing blue lights, to speed us through the congested towns along the route; no bypasses here. That was a stroke of luck, because we only arrived back at the hotel in Islamabad three hours before the first of the client's international flights was scheduled to depart! The experience seems to have scarred my psyche, because I have vowed to never go back to Pakistan again. Which is a shame, as there is still so much of the Karakoram to see.

And lastly, at some point I would like my squeeze to accompany me to see Everest again, though this time I think we will need porters all the way. We are still foolish, but not so young anymore!

Dhaulagiri at dawn from Poon Hill

Walking off the map: Everest 1921, The Reconnaissance

Deborah Walsh

It is a pleasure to announce the addition of the name of Harold Raeburn to the list of distinguished mountaineers who are honorary members of the Club. He has done much good work in our own district, while of course his selection as leader of the climbing section of the Everest expedition shows that his position among British climbers is unchallenged.

It is as yet too early to know exactly what success has been achieved on Mount Everest, but it is clear that very valuable explorative work along the whole of the north side of the range has been carried out. The most recent reports, which announce that Mr. Mallory has led a party up to 23,500 feet, suggest that a feasible route to the summit has been discovered.

(FRCC Journal 1921)

It would be remiss of any club with a focus on mountaineering to allow the centenary of the beginning of the great Everest adventure, the formation of the Mount Everest Committee and subsequent 1921 Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, to pass unremarked. More particularly so for our Club given its strong associations with the endeavour, through its membership in the years immediately following the First World War. This will be the first of a series of Journal articles marking the centenary of the Club's involvement in early Everest expeditions and exploration.

The 1921 expedition was led by Col Charles Howard-Bury, with Harold Raeburn as mountaineering leader and included George Mallory, Guy Bullock and Oliver Wheeler. Arthur Wakefield, who served as medical officer to the 1922 expedition and as President of the FRCC from 1923-25, was originally chosen for the 1921 expedition but declined due to ill health and depression brought on by his experiences during the Great War. The primary focus of the mission was to discover whether a route to the summit could be found from the north (Tibetan) side. Raeburn, an honorary member of the FRCC from 1921, was a prominent mountaineer in Scotland with a strong record of ascents in the Alps and Himalaya but by the time he reached Everest he was 56 years of age and past his prime. Mallory described him as a 'crabbed and crusty old man'. He later succumbed to dysentery and though he re-joined the expedition, never fully recovered. The deteriorating health of Raeburn resulted in Mallory assuming responsibility for most of the exploration to the north and east of the summit.

The significance of the mission lay in the words Mallory wrote to his wife, "We are about to walk off the map…". The expedition produced the first accurate maps of the region around the mountain, as Mallory, his climbing partner Guy Bullock, and Edward Wheeler of the Survey of India explored in depth several approaches to its peak. Under Mallory's leadership, and with the assistance of around a dozen Sherpas, the group climbed several lower peaks near Everest. His party were almost certainly the first Westerners to view the Western Cwm at the foot of the Lhotse face, as well as charting the course of the Rongbuk Glacier up to the base of the North Face. After circling the mountain from the south side, his party finally

discovered the East Rongbuk Glacier, what was to become the highway to the summit now used by nearly all climbers on the Tibetan side of the mountain. By climbing up to the saddle of the North Ridge (the 23,030 ft North Col), they spied a route to the summit via the North-East Ridge over the obstacle of the Second Step.

Although Mount Everest as a mountaineering objective had been on the horizon of British alpinists for some time the initiative to form the Mount Everest Committee emerged from a talk given to the Royal Geographical Society in 1919 by Captain John Noel concerning his travels in the Everest region. He concluded that '…now that the Poles have been reached, it is generally felt that the next and equally important task is the exploration and mapping of Mount Everest'. Both Sir Francis Younghusband (President of the RGS) and Prof. Norman Collie (one of the founding members of the FRCC and the President of the Alpine Club) in their contributions to Howard Bury's 'Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance 1921' refer to the Polar expeditions. The death in 1912 of Captain Scott and his companions in the Antarctic set a precedent of sacrifice for the generation of young British men

Expedition members 1921. *Back row (left to right):* Guy Bullock, Henry Morshead, Oliver Wheeler, George Mallory. *Front row (left to right):* A. M. Heron, Sandy Wollaston, Charles Howard-Bury and Harold Raeburn.

who, a few years later, would hurl themselves into the turmoil of the Great War. That Scott's expedition was, according to later accounts, doomed from the outset, only makes its failure seem more prophetic.

Permission was granted by the Tibetan government for the British to proceed two years later in 1921. To co-ordinate and finance the reconnaissance expedition, a joint body, the Mount Everest Committee was formed, composed of high-ranking members of the two interested parties, the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society. According to Sir Francis Younghusband, '…climbing Mount Everest was a matter which interested both the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club. It interested the former because the Society will not admit that there is any spot on the earth's surface on which a British man should not at least try to set his foot. And it interested the latter because climbing mountains is their especial province'.

Everest, the North-East ridge, photographed by Sandy Wollaston, 1921.

Younghusband, described as 'unfathomable' by his contemporaries, had under the flag of the Empire, been given the opportunity to follow his maverick tendencies into the desolate and mountainous regions of Central Asia, leaving his own mark on mountains and mountaineering. His early exploits as an officer in the Indian Army included a thousand-mile crossing of the Gobi Desert, and he was the first European to survey the thin air of Mustagh Pass below K2 along the China-Pakistan border. However, his legacy was indelibly tainted by his tragic 1903 military misadventure in Tibet, during which he led a British diplomatic mission to Lhasa that ultimately left 2,700 Tibetans dead. Perhaps Younghusband saw the Everest expeditions as a last bid for his own redemption in central Asia, his last great imperial adventure.

For Mallory, and his generation, the experience of war defined the rest of their lives. Uneasy and restless in civilian life, as climbers they accepted a degree of risk which would previously have been unimaginable. As Wade Davis in his monumental 'Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest' explains, 'for these men war had changed the very gestalt of death. In the trenches they lived it every moment - some, like Wheeler for years…. Death's power lies in fear, which flourishes in the imagination and the unknown.' This is not to say that they were reckless with their lives, but rather, what mattered now was how they lived them, and the moments of being alive. This was most powerfully articulated in the words of one of the survivors as they retreated from the mountain: 'The price of life is death'. Wade Davis concludes with the assessment that while Scott's expedition was, in some ways, an exercise in heroic futility, the quest for Mount Everest became a mission of exorcism and regeneration for a country traumatised by war.

Jotunheimen

Jim Gregson

Our winter ski touring and ski mountaineering trip started as intended on 6 March as we flew over to Oslo and travelled by bus and snowmobile into the splendid DNT hut (lodge) at Fondsbu. There we met some friends we see most years - a German couple from Berlin, a half-Norwegian Aussie and within a few days a bunch of Dutchmen, and oddly not many Norwegians.

There was more snow than we had seen for some years; perhaps two metres depth even on level ground and obviously so much more where drifted, huge cornices, high avalanche risk. We weren't due to return home until 6 April so set about skiing on every suitable day. At first Sandy was cautious as she had done very little since breaking her hip back in mid-September, but she got into the hang of it bit by bit. Then Coronavirus intervened.

Not thankfully anywhere near us, but elsewhere in Norway. The Berliners went home; the Dutchmen shortened their holiday; all Norwegians disappeared. The Oslo government closed all the airports, all flights were suspended, the bus services were vastly reduced. Norwegians were forbidden to go to their private huts and cabins. DNT, the hut operators closed every one of their staffed huts - except for Fondsbu, the one we were staying in; this one was given special permission to stay open and operating, on the grounds that there were foreign visitors already there (i.e. us) who had no means of going back home as the airlines had ceased to

operate. So, what to do? Go on skiing, of course! There was so much snow and so many mountains, why wouldn't we? Perfect conditions and mostly very good weather.

After three weeks we tried to rebook with Norwegian - next flight not until 20 April, two weeks after our original return date! Keep on skiing. Next news, that flight cancelled. Tried to rebook going via London and switching to SAS as Norwegian had no flights even by the end of May! More skiing to be done. Our Aussie friend found he could leave as he could get to Copenhagen and join Qatar Air flight via Doha back to Australia - but then into certain hard quarantine for two weeks in Sydney, and another two to follow in Canberra where he lives. Once he had gone, we were the only two guests still in place, being looked after royally by the four members of staff - 6-star service in a 5-star establishment! Surprise, surprise - after a day or so, SAS cancelled London flight! All further attempts to rebook came to nothing. This went on until we had been away from home for six and a half weeks now, well past our original return date. The weather turned into high pressure with gorgeous sunshine, the snow was still there and in good skiing condition. Sandy was by now fitter and more able to ski comfortably so that is what we continued to do. Meanwhile Mr Johnson became ill and Britain finally reacted - we had contacted a London-living friend who filled us in on the horror stories back in the UK and she advised us not to come back via London if at all possible. We were not worried - we were enjoying the empty mountains and were in arguably the safest location anywhere in the whole of Europe, albeit at the expense of staying put.

Eventually by a contact of the hut manager, a very good friend of ours, we learned that it was possible that Norwegian airline, Widerøe, a smaller operator, might still be flying from Bergen but only to Aberdeen (it seems that there is still demand from travellers connected with oil and gas companies). Worth a try. We rebooked with them, but no flight available until 30 April, my birthday as it happens, but still one week away. Fingers crossed we set about a final week of skiing, fantastic. luckily, no cancellation (bad) news this time.

But flight going from Bergen - how to get there?

Fondsbu manager, Solbjørg, is a great friend of ours - we have been going there for all the twenty years she has been in charge. She came up trumps by offering us a gratis lift right to the airport in case of any problems re buses or train travel. So, come the very early morning of 30 April we got up at 04:00hrs to go 20km by snowmobile across a big frozen lake, then four hours by 4WD vehicle along the highly scenic roads, tunnels and bridges of western Norway - a grand tour of fjords, deep narrow valleys, rushing rivers, lots of waterfalls, masses of mountains new to us - until finally rolling up to the deserted terminal of Bergen Airport. Everything in lockdown apart from two check-in staff and not

a duty-free shop working, a welcome change; we soon had our bags and skis into the system and with less than an hour to wait we boarded a quite small plane, a Dash-8 type, along with perhaps just 25 other people so quite well-spaced among the seats. Rows and rows of moth-balled aircraft all over the aprons.

The flight to Aberdeen took just over an hour, and the airport there at Dyce was also more or less deserted. Fortunately, the buses were still running so we could get into Aberdeen city centre - watching the bus driver spraying any proffered cash with disinfectant before handling it! Then the struggle to the railway station, again just about deserted. The one ticket office operator sold us two highly expensive walk-up tickets to get to Manchester, with two changes needed, at Edinburgh and Preston. This all went swimmingly, as there were hardly any other passengers on the trains. Great views of both the Tay and Firth of Forth bridges along the way. An Aberdeen police officer had approached us at the station asking what we were doing lugging all these bags and skis around the place and smiling at our convoluted tale.

The Preston to Manchester train was the slowest rail journey I can remember over the last twenty years and was terminated early at Man Oxford Road station. Luckily the only black cab in sight was desperate for a fare and we were whisked back to Sale and our own front door in short order. What a relief after eight weeks away and a winter holiday that was twice as long as planned!

Now, even after just a few days we are still adjusting to Coronavirus lockdown Britain and learning what everyone else has been coping with while we were out in the sun on the mountains. Some you win!

Mountaineering in Malawi - Central Africa

Ken Fyles

Malawi - Not the first thought that springs to mind if you are thinking of a mountaineering holiday but in fact it is well blessed with mountain areas the pride of place going to the Central African Mountains of Mulanje in the south of the country ascending to heights of 3000 metres.

Malawi was first visited by the explorer and missionary David Livingstone. He was born in Blantyre, Scotland and the second city of the country still bears the name of his birth place. Further north in the country overlooking the vast lake Malawi he established his mission and university at Livingstonia. Malawi is a country of poor natural resources and has thus escaped most of the greed and oppression of the white man. It is the sixth poorest country in the world but even so is one of the safest and happiest countries on the planet. White faces are seldom seen but a few Americans and young world trekkers are now venturing to the wildlife park of Liwonde and the beautiful Mulanje mountains. Other visitors stay by the shores of Lake Malawi for sun paradise.

If you visit Malawi you will generally fly in to the city of Lilongwe. This is a city of two parts, "Capital City" much like any other capital city of the world and the far more interesting "Old Town". The old town is crowded with shops run by Asian entrepreneurs, markets and all the hustle and bustle of African life is there. Perhaps the most interesting feature for European eyes is 'the walled market'. This market sells everything arranged into sections, vegetables, fish, meat, wood, tin plate where dustbins, watering

A small African village at the bottom of Nkhoma's solitary peak

Ndirande Mountain as viewed from SOS Michinjiri

cans and buckets are made in front of your eyes, vehicle trade and all the second hand spares you could imagine, and a lively atmosphere as you squeeze through the narrow alleyways separating the stalls. But we are here to talk about the mountains.

Only 25 miles south of Lilongwe is the tiny village of Nkhoma. It is surrounded by mountains but the double peak of Nkhoma mountain is the highest. Easily ascended within two hours via a scramble between the peaks. The lesser of the two peaks requires easy rock climbing. Baboons roam this mountain.

There is a third solitary peak which is harder to get to and would require a rope to get to the highest point. The wonderful thing about Nkhoma is that it is off the tourist map, has a fine guest house where European nurses stay as they train at the large hospital, and there is a bustling market. Not a good place for the drunkards because it is on Synod land and the only pub where you can buy a 'Carlsberg Green' is a mile out of the village. As you continue south on good tarmac roads you realise this is a mountainous country where summits are very rarely if ever ascended. There are however good paths up Dedza Mountain, Zomba Mountain, and a multitude of granite peaked mountains around the Blantyre region.

Ndirande Mountain (Blantyre) is worth an ascent from the village of Machinjiri. Head straight for the col and climb the right hand peak first via a trace of a path. To ascend the main peak, return to the col and follow the access road to the transmitter and

The way to Sipatwa from Chambe mountain

Ian guards the steep scramble of Chambe

head up to the main peak. A wall of rock seems to impede further progress but follow a tiny path below it until a break in the rock barrier is seen. This leads with scrambling to the summit. Descent is by the same scramble but when you reach the col at the end of the rock barrier you can make a direct, steep descent though fields towards Machinjiri.

Other mountain peaks listed in some guidebooks around Blantyre include Michiru (mainly forested paths and difficult to get to even with a four wheel drive the road is so bad) but Soche and Chiradzulu are probably worth a visit.

Those mountaineers having a short stay in Malawi will head directly for the Mulanje mountains in the south of the country. These mountains rise up to an impressive 3000 metres.

The principle start point is Likhubula a pleasant community where vervet monkeys are swinging through the trees and there are huts to stay the night. You can hire a mountain guide here and porters, but the price is high about $25 per day for a guide and $20 per day for a porter. A cheaper alternative is to drive further around the mountain massif to a village on the road called Bengazi and hire porters and guides there about half the price.

Whichever route you choose to ascend the massif you normally start via good, wooded paths to a plateau at about 1800 metres altitude. At this level seven huts belonging to the 'Mountain Club of Malawi' surround the mountain. You don't need to book the huts but remember to pay your fees of about £2 per night and tip the Hut Warden who will very happily supply you with wood for the fire and

Liquid refreshments transported to the huts

Scramble to the summit of Chinzama mountain

plentiful supply of water for 30 pence per person per night. The Warden will even supply you with a hot bath if asked.

The most popular mountain summit is Sapitwa at 9847ft. In the native Chichewa Language it translates as 'Don't go there' so many Malawians are frightened of it. They have good reason to be scared - up high it develops into a series of tiny valleys with impossibly steep sides so you cannot see the tops. Getting lost is easy so take a guide for this peak. The final steps to the summit are a grade 2 scramble for about 40 ft.

The second highest peak is Nakodzwe at 9724ft. It is rarely ascended because it is wise to carry a rope to complete the final tricky section giving climbing up to severe standard.

Many other fine peaks well above 8400ft altitude abound and nearly all require long 1000ft scrambles at about grade 1 standard. Some are harder like Khuto, Dzole and Chambe going at about grade 2 scramble. There are easier peaks such as Namasile, Chilemba and Manene for the mountain walker.

Rock Climbing in the Mulanje Mountains is a formidable challenge - the syenite granite is so uniform and free from cracks that it is difficult to get good protection. Nevertheless, many fine routes giving more than 3000ft of VS climbing have been made on the massively impressive face of Chambe Mountain. "Big Monolith" a 2000ft severe climb is one of the easiest and the time to ascend is about 11 hours. You need to have nerves of steel to climb here as many main belays may be just a vellozia plant sticking to the rock. The shortest routes here are about 1000ft in length. Other climbing regions that have been explored are Manga Peak and the Lichenya Face. But rock climbing is still in its infancy in Malawi and a line of bolts would greatly increase popularity and decrease climbing times.

Apart from mountaineering there are many other attractions for the tourist. There are eight wildlife

Pig to market

Kayaking at Senga Bay, Lake Malawi

reserves the largest of which is at Liwonde in the middle south of the country where elephant, hippo, buffalo abound but sightings of rhino and lion are rare. A national park I have visited is Vwasa in the north of the country. Many, many hippos were wallowing in the lake almost too close to the shore for comfort and later in the day a herd of elephant with young came to drink at the river less than 100 yards from us. Needless to say, we had to hire a wildlife expert with a rifle for this trip.

Lake Malawi: A visit to the lake is almost essential on a trip to Malawi to relax and soak up the sunshine. The end of May to end of September is the dry period and the Malawian winter. Midday temperatures are normally about 24 degrees perfect for us Europeans. There are many expensive hotels by the lake shore but there are also huts to be had and food to be prepared for you at cheap prices. My preference is Senga Bay where there is a thriving fishing village. But others prefer Nkhata Bay in the north or Cape Maclear in the south. You can hire boats and kayaks at most locations. A passenger boat runs the whole length of the lake - about 300 miles.

Language: Not a problem in Malawi. English is the second language and all school children going into secondary education have all lessons taught in English.

Food: Vegetables, potatoes, tomatoes, eggs, fruit are abundant in the village markets and sold at a very low and fair price. You don't need to barter here. Other large shops such as 'Shoprite ' and 'Peoples' sell just about everything from fresh-made bread and pies to beverages, beer and spirits. You can buy most foods you find on the shelves in England but, they will be slightly more expensive.

Problems: None of any significance. Tourist will always be given a high price for trinkets they want to buy. Look disinterested and the price comes tumbling down. You will see people begging in the larger towns (no different from Liverpool really) except some will be blind, infirmed, or just so damned poor there is no other way to feed. If you do not like the idea of giving money just give an item of food and they will be happy. In Blantyre you will meet groups of street boys of young age begging but all they want is food and there will be no harassment. Considering their circumstances these orphans are gentle in nature.

Transport: The minibus is the quickest way to get from place to place and cheap but there is a high accident record. Nevertheless, they are fun, and all life is there. I say when the minibus is full, another three people get in. Do not be surprised if live chickens and pigs are by your side. The big buses are safer but most depart only when they are full so you could be sitting in the bus for a long time before it even starts the journey. AXA buses run to a schedule. They are great if travelling from Mzuzu or Blantyre but their arrival in Lilongwe can be an hour or more behind schedule.

So, there it is. A fine country for mountaineers and the adventurous to visit. Still in its infancy as a tourist destination you are sure of a warm welcome.

Off-peak in The Oberland: the Lauteraarhorn

Adam Bannister

In any peak or route-bagging endeavour there are usually a few outliers that you secretly wished were not there: an indistinct peak or route, or one where the effort to enjoyment ratio is stacked the wrong way. There are a few such examples amongst the 4000 m peaks of the Alps, but probably none more so than the Lauteraarhorn in the Eastern Bernese Oberland. Overshadowed by more famous neighbours, with a minimum 20 km approach, a night in a bivouac hut and a fickle south-facing 'Normal Route', it is rarely found at the top of anyone's Alpine summit list, mine included.

Written information on the Lauteraarhorn is scant, and what little there is tends to focus on its remoteness and the effort required. Spring now seems to be the preferred season to tackle the peak. Richard Geodeke's now rather dated 4000 m peaks guidebook (1990) sells the mountain rather short, stating that it lies way beyond all main valleys, way out of sight of Grindelwald, way down in height and way down on anyone's list of desirable summits, hardly glowing praise. I suspect he had a bad experience on it or had left his skis at home. Even Will McLewin in his book 'In Monte Viso's Horizon' (1991) describes it as being longer, more awkward, and less inviting than its near neighbour the Schreckhorn, recounting his ascent as having given him 'grim satisfaction'. In contrast, the more recent Italian 'Idea Montagna' 4000 m peaks guidebook

The approach to the Aar bivouac hut

(2015) notes that it is the most isolated 4000er in the Alps and that it would make a great and challenging ski-mountaineering trip. I was intrigued by these contrasting descriptions that sounded like it might be a chore but could equally be a delight.

The most desirable way to climb the Lauteraarhorn is from its famous neighbour the Schreckhorn via the '' ridge. At grade D+ and often requiring both a start and finish by headtorch it has quite a fearsome reputation. One of the hardest linkups of the 4000ers, I had attempted it in summer with mountain guide and long-time friend, Manoach Schonthal, who lives nearby in Interlaken. We reached the Schreckhorn but the previous night's new snow put paid to any plans of a traverse and the Lauterarrhorn remained out of reach.

Late Spring ski touring in the Alps with a long walk-in and heavy rucksacks, to climb what most would consider an indifferent peak, is a rather fringe activity and I failed to find any takers, so during the winter I contacted my friend in Interlaken once more regarding our unfinished business. A spring ski trip in the form of an east-west traverse from the Grimsel Pass to Rosenlaui, via the Lauteraarhorn, quickly took shape and in early June 2016 I was pitching my tent on the Grindelwald campsite with a perfect view of the famous Eiger Nordwand. Being between seasons there was only one other camper in residence, Alpine flowers were appearing through the remnants of the winter's snows and the town was deserted. It was certainly off-peak.

Driving up the 'closed' Grimsel Pass, workers were still clearing snow and rocks from the road before its official summer opening but in a local's car we were waved though, saving several hours of extra walking. With food for three days, climbing gear, avalanche safety equipment and skis we left the Grimsel Hospiz with heavy packs to negotiate the maze of ramps, bridges and dam walls that would take us to the path along the Grimselsee and, eventually, to the snout of the Unteraar Glacier. The route along the lake crossed numerous avalanche cones and passed under the famous granite slab climbing paradise of Eldorado Dome.

After two hours on the track, followed by two hours of endless moraine and grey ice, we finally reached the snow of the Unteraar Glacier where, with skins attached, we could actually use our skis for progress rather than carry them. This glacier featured strongly in the early studies of glaciology in the mid-1800s, when Swiss mountaineering academics Franz Hugi and Louis Agassiz, together with Scottish physicist James Forbes, spent their summers camping out on the moraines observing the glacier. The Swiss academics' efforts are now firmly on the Oberland map in the shape of the Agassizhorn and the Hugisattel below the Finsteraarhorn, while Forbes' name can be found in France in the form of his Aiguille at the foot of the Chardonnet. Back in the present, the rhythm of skis skinning on snow was a great relief, and after a few more hours

Skinning up to the Aar bivouac hut with the Finsteraarorn in the distance

On the summit of the Lauteraarhorn with the Schreckhorn beyond

through spectacular and wild scenery we reached the Aar Bivouac Hut at 2731m. Unsurprisingly, there was no-one in residence. With wood-panelled walls, duvets, solar power, gas cookers, pans and even a radio, this was far from my usual definition of a bivouac.

The hut's location above the Strahlegg Glacier was spectacular, with the Finsteraarhorn north east face directly in front and the Lauteraarhorn up behind the hut. The water supply was DIY, so we set to shovelling snow onto the sloping steel roof designed to funnel the meltwater into huge pans. We could only find one radio station, a Swiss one specialising in 1980s New Romantics, so our evening was accompanied by Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet, taking me back to my youth. A few hours of this was more than enough. As night fell a thin mist descended, followed by drizzle, and then, as we tried to sleep, by heavy rain. I convinced myself that this was simply the hut roof amplifying the sound, but it was far from the moonlit freezing conditions we had hoped for. I wondered whether this was falling as snow higher up and whether the effort of the arduous approach was already wasted. The answers to which, I would later find out, were respectively yes and no.

We delayed our start by an hour until the stars were out and the rain had stopped. The snow was still soft and it would have been slow going on foot, sometimes it is good to travel by ski. We made a rising traverse above the glacier across a mass of avalanche debris to the base of the couloir followed by some steep skinning before changing to crampons. The route involves 900 m up a 45˚ snow couloir to reach the rocky south-east ridge which leads to the summit with a few hundred metres of height gain on firm gneiss. The couloir can be skied in its entirety in good conditions, and Manoach was keen to do so, but I suggested we kept an open mind on this, the reality of a cold dawn on a remote peak had already tempered my plans. Icy runnels scoured by recent wet-snow avalanches made conditions good for crampons and we soloed the first two-thirds of the couloir before fresh wet snow slowed the pace. Mindful that I had to ski what we had just climbed, a convenient rock buttress proved too good to ignore. We left the skis and roped up.

Alternating leads up through the new snow to the ridge was hard going, more like ploughing than climbing. The scene changed once we were out of the couloir, the flanks of the ridge curving away on either side and snow-covered slabs on the apex leading up and out of sight. The slabs were fine after a bit of digging, but the linking soft snow arêtes between them felt very exposed. I was glad to be seconding the rock sections, ski boots with crampons do not lend themselves to nimble rock footwork. Longer and more delicate than I had expected, we finally reached the last of the rocks

from where I belayed Manoach across the final snow crest as he put in a single line of footprints to the pristine summit at 4042 m. It was a stunning mountain to be on. The views across to the famous trio of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau still in winter condition were spectacular, while the Lauteraargrat connecting ridge to the Schreckhorn was covered in fresh snow and looked even more daunting than last time. I decided that this ridge could now be removed from my to-do list. The full power of the June sun was a reminder not to linger too long and we feared for the snow conditions lower down.

Our footprints made route-finding down the ridge easier, but it was further down where the hard work began. The now sun-drenched snow was almost bottomless and we sunk above our knees and our boots filled with snow. Getting back onto skis was a relief, although this was not the ideal place for those essential first warm-up turns; losing height quickly was the main aim as the risk of avalanches was increasing rapidly and the slopes above us were loaded with wet snow. Once out of the upper couloir we could enjoy some good skiing and the stresses of the previous hour were quickly forgotten, so much so that we skied too far down the glacier. The price was a tiring ascent back to the bivouac hut where we took off our boots, poured out the water and simply sat warming our sodden feet in the sun.

A restful afternoon was well spent drinking tea, snoozing, and watching avalanches stream off the faces of the Finsteraarhorn and Studerhorn in the afternoon heat. We had over-estimated our pasta requirements but were determined not to waste the effort of carrying it up, so dinner turned into a spaghetti-eating marathon. Despite our best efforts we failed to find our favourite radio station, which was probably for the better. After our experience of the afternoon snow conditions and with mid-day thunderstorms forecast, we decided a 2am breakfast to start our third day would be wise. The plan was to continue west towards the Wetterhorn, ski down via the Rosenlaui glacier and out by foot to the road above Meiringen, completing our traverse. We cleaned the hut, filled in the book, and had an early night.

After a hard overnight frost, the ski down a frozen Finsteraar Glacier by headtorch was a rude awakening. An abrupt turn west and we could lose ourselves in our own thoughts for several hours of skinning up to the Lauteraarsattel as the stars gradually disappeared under increasing cloud cover. This small col provides the key link between the Aar and the Grindelwald sides of the Bernese Oberland. We were greeted with cloud, wind and snow blowing in from the west. We cautiously skied down in heavy snow and poor visibility, guided by careful map-reading and GPS waypoints as visibility was next to zero.

We roped up and made our way up the heavily crevassed and untracked glacier towards our last col near the Wetterhorn, from where it would all be downhill. Not far from the col we both agreed it was too risky, we could only just see each other through the blowing snow and mist. We would have to re-trace our steps back to the Grimsel pass; it was going to be a long day, and judging by the forecast, soon to become a very wet one as well. We turned around and crept back down in the whiteout. Initially we kept the rope on, but downhill roped skiing belongs firmly in the theoretical chapters of books and added more risk than it solved, so we un-roped. Fixing the skins back on skis to retrace our steps was a low point for us both, but words were left unsaid as we started our return ascent. On cue, it stopped snowing and the sun showed up in

the form of a faint brightening through the mist. We discussed options and the thought of those endless Grimsel moraines sealed the deal in favour of our original plan. Heading back up in our original direction for a second time, we reached the final col in improving, but far from good, visibility. I was running out of steam and hoped the way down would be simple.

The hidden side of the Wetterhorn, in contrast to its rock walls above the Grindlewald valley, revealed itself as a wild glacial bowl as the mist thinned. We enjoyed a 2000 m descent of great mountain skiing on a north-facing glacier, skiable snow for the first time with small couloirs and big wide slopes leading to a series of narrow gullies which we pieced together to the very end of the snow drifts.

We shook hands, shouldered our heavy rucksacks and walked out under the huge limestone cliffs of the Wellhorn as the thunderstorms arrived and waterfalls sprang out of nowhere.

We had covered over 50 km in total solitude, crossed three cols and traversed six glaciers, skied occasionally good snow, but more often poor, eaten kilos of spaghetti and revisited some memorable music from the '80s. Almost as a bonus, we also climbed the Lauteraarhon. It had been a stunning trip, despite the indifferent expectations I had built up from my background reading. Returning home, I revisited the varying guidebook descriptions of the Lauteraarhorn and decided that while there was an element of truth to them all, that of 'grim satisfaction' was probably closest to reality.

Summit of the Lauteraarhorn looking towards the Grimsel Pass

When the Wind Blows Cold

Dan Hamer

At the beginning of my career, I spent two Austral summers working as a geologist in Antarctica. My job was to collect samples of volcanic rock for a regional geochemical study. Field work in the polar regions was - and still is - a serious business. My previous mountaineering experience certainly helped but it wasn't essential as the bulk of the responsibility for the management and safety of the British Antarctic survey's field parties (BAS) fell to a team of General Assistants or 'GAs' as they were popularly known.

I've always felt the term General Assistant was misleading, because the GAs were extremely capable, multi-skilled personnel. As well as being experienced polar travelers and/or mountaineers, they possessed a thorough knowledge of logistics and were proficient mechanics. They were adept at performing all manner of vital tasks necessary to the smooth running of a challenging field programme in an isolated and extreme environment. They formed an elite cadre within the organization and it was made clear to all scientific staff before going into the field that in matters of safety and travel, the GA's decision was final.

In the late 1970s, BAS field work on the mainland of Antarctica was carried out during the brief summer months by autonomous, two-man parties comprising a scientist and a GA. The field parties travelled by motorized toboggans (skidoos), towing essential equipment including a pyramid tent; sledging boxes containing food, cooking gear, Tilley lamp, Squadcal transceivers and personal gear and jerry cans of fuel, on wooden 'Nansen' sledges. Field parties could be self-sufficient for weeks at a stretch, supported periodically by De Havilland Twin Otter aircraft equipped with skis, operating out of the main base at Rothera Point on Adelaide Island.

GAs enjoyed working with geologists because their programmes involved lengthy periods of independent travel and exploration. The facilitation of safe access to precipitous outcrops on remote nunataqs required more than mere familiarity with winter mountaineering skills. This provided the GAs with a succession of diverse and interesting challenges. Also, unlike many scientists from other disciplines, geologists carried a minimum of specialized equipment – 'clatch' in BAS parlance - namely a hammer, a compass-clinometer and a hand lens.

I was fortunate to be assigned a couple of highly competent and personable GAs for the two periods of my field work in Antarctica. During the initial season, I was very much the new boy and my GA was an experienced Antarctic operative with multiple field seasons behind him and a comprehensive knowledge of what was required. For my second season, I was privileged to be allotted a new recruit. Although he had minimal polar experience, he was a well-respected UIAA Mountain Guide with an impressive list of accomplishments. He went on to add to these in Antarctica.

From the few available maps at BAS HQ in Cambridge, I had carefully pre-selected a number of promising outcrops, scattered across the proposed study area. The plan was to establish a series of temporary camps from which we could make daily excursions, either on skis or with the skidoos, to sample nearby rock outcrops. It had all seemed

straightforward sitting in the comfort of an office on the Madingley Road in the western outskirts of Cambridge.

The field programme began in earnest in September 1978, with a lengthy sea voyage from Southampton via Mayport in Florida, Montevideo in Uruguay and Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, aboard the larger of BAS's two logistical support vessels, RRS Bransfield. It was an appropriate and lengthy introduction to a polar venture. After almost two months at sea, I was eventually put ashore at Hope Bay, at the northernmost extremity of the Antarctic Continent.

Crevasse training in Antarctica 1981

Hope Bay lies at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula - a 2,000km chain of glaciated mountains which snakes away from the western half of the Continent towards Tierra del Fuego in South America. It forms part of the volcanically active, Circum-Pacific Rim. The northern half of the Peninsula rarely exceeds 60km in width and comprises a narrow, discontinuous, ice-capped plateau, up to 2,100m in elevation. A series of glaciers tumble dramatically from either side of this plateau, descending westward towards the Pacific or eastwards into a large embayment in the Antarctic Continent called the Weddell Sea.

Before reaching the coastline, these glaciers frequently merge to form ice piedmonts. These relatively level and crevasse free terraces can be used by field parties to facilitate access along the Peninsula. On the eastern flank, they coalesce to form the Larsen Ice Shelf. This enormous mass of floating shelf ice is several hundred metres in thickness and extends a considerable distance from the shoreline into the Weddell Sea.

The British had established a base at Hope Bay during the Second World War. For a number of years, this served as the principal mainland base for the Falkland Islands Dependences Survey (FIDS), the precursor of BAS. The Base was abandoned in 1964, as the locus of field operations progressed southwards. However, several important exposures of the volcanic rocks I was to sample, outcropped near Hope Bay. It was here, therefore, that the real business of Antarctic field work for me began.

Our field party was to operate in tandem with a second party working in substantially the same area but on a different aspect of the geology. Like me, the other geologist was a new recruit who, together with his experienced GA, had arrived at Hope Bay by sea, direct from the UK. In contrast, the GA I was to be partnered with had been part of the previous overwintering party at the current operational base further south. He had been flown to Hope Bay by Twin Otter, together with our equipment and supplies, a few days in advance of our arrival and was waiting to greet us when we stepped ashore. We were to be the first British parties to carry out a renewed phase of exploration in this area since the mid-1960s

The former Base, Trinity House, was still in a remarkably sound state of repair, despite being of wooden construction. It provided a comfortable home for my Antarctic initiation as the four of us

spent the next few days examining outcrops in the vicinity. Once these preliminary investigations were complete, we took advantage of a favorable turn in the weather and set off along the east coast of the Peninsula as two independent field parties.

It took a week of travelling, pitching and striking camp, plus mapping and sampling, for me to become familiar with the basic routine. If there were no crevasses, GA and geologist travelled as two independent units, each towing a sledge behind their skidoos. When the terrane was crevassed or the visibility restricted, we could link the two units together for added safety. Maneuvering our skidoos and fully laden sledges across heavily crevassed terrane could be a slow and tortuous business. It was only undertaken if absolutely necessary.

All went well for the first half of the season. We were able to visit each of the localities I had earmarked for sampling by zig-zagging our way along the flanks of the Peninsula, making use of ice piedmonts wherever possible. By mid-January, our party had reached Longing Gap, a low, snowy saddle in a tongue of land extending south eastwards from the Peninsula into the Weddell Sea. To the South of us was the Larsen Ice Shelf, which was relatively free of crevassing and could be used as a convenient 'highway' from which to make sorties onto the adjacent mainland. However, in order to reach the main section of the Shelf, we had to cross the Larsen Inlet.

On our right, half a dozen, heavily crevassed glaciers plunged steeply from the interior plateau. They merged into a chaotic jumble of seracs which funneled into a linear trough – the Larson Inlet – lying between Cape Longing and a second, snow-capped finger of land, the Sobral Peninsula. It would be necessary for us to make our way diagonally across this ice-filled depression to a saddle at the landward end of the Sobral Peninsula, in order to gain access to the Larsen Ice Shelf proper. It was a distance of approximately 45km. In favorable conditions, a field team could accomplish this comfortably in a single day.

I had read several accounts of winter crossings of the Larsen Inlet during the 1950s and 1960s in BAS's Archives. In those days, field parties had used dog teams to pull sledges and the crossing had presented few difficulties. However, I had found no records of any previous crossings of the Inlet during the warmer, summer months or with skidoos. As a result, my companion was uncertain whether we would be able to make the crossing but he was willing to give it a try.

The going was level at first, as we made our way cautiously from Cape Longing onto the Shelf Ice in the Inlet. There was a small crevasse or tide crack at the flexure point which marked the junction between the land-based glacial ice and the floating shelf ice. This proved to be a minor obstacle and we made good progress for the first three hours, travelling at a steady 4-5kph.

As we approached the middle section of the Inlet the surface became more uneven and we found that our intended route was intersected by regularly-spaced, transverse crevasses. We were obliged to link up as one continuous unit for extra safety. In winter, these crevasses would have been well-bridged by snow. Under the warmer, summer conditions, the bridges were thinner, softer and in places had already started to collapse.

The crevasses gradually increased in magnitude and frequency, while the solidity of the bridges became more questionable. This forced us to dismount

and probe the route ahead on foot. Subsequent manhandling of our skidoos and sledges across narrow snow bridges, as we threaded our way diagonally across the crevasse field was strenuous and nerve-racking work. We continued to make slow progress well into the evening, until it became clear the crevasse field extended much further on the southern flank of the Inlet. My companion called a halt and we pitched camp on a secure pedestal of shelf ice between two huge, arcuate crevasses. We passed an uneasy night in the tent with the worrisome sound of the ice crackling around us.

It was much colder the next morning and this encouraged us to continue as the remaining snow bridges would be firmer. I lost count of how many times we had to unpack the sledges in order to manhandle them in the confined space between crevasses but eventually they began to peter out. It was with a mixture of satisfaction and relief that we crossed the tide crack and left the shelf ice behind. We were both utterly exhausted and mentally drained when we pitched camp late in the evening of the second day at the crest of Muskeg Gap.

I am only aware of one other summer crossing of the Larsen Inlet which was made by a geological party during the following season. It will not be repeated any time soon because the shelf ice in the Larson Inlet has since parted company with the mainland and drifted out into the Weddell Sea as a sizeable, tabular iceberg, along with a much larger section of the Larsen Ice Shelf. Any future travel between Longing and Muskeg gaps will be accomplished across the seasonal sea ice forming there during the winter. Otherwise, it will require the use of a boat!

Other excursions on foot or with skis provided some of the more memorable incidents. For example, I recall spending an eventful day sampling a razorback ridge a couple of kilometers from one of our temporary camps. We'd approached the ridge on linked skidoos across a relatively flat and crevasse-free ice piedmont and had left them at the foot of a steep snow slope leading to a string of outcrops just below the crest of the ridge.

The snow was crisp underfoot in the shade of the ridge and we had gained height swiftly. Once we reached the upper outcrops, we accumulated a sizeable collection of rock samples. When I judged we had enough, we packed them into our rucksacks and began the descent to our skidoos parked on the piedmont approximately 250m below us.

The sudden and potentially devastating impact of avalanches needs no introduction for seasoned mountaineers. Route selection is important and when checking the weather forecast, it's worth taking note of what the conditions had been like the previous day. The choice of equipment appropriate to the circumstances requires careful attention. Finally, if the snow starts squeaking beneath your boots, get the hell out of there and sharpish!

End of field season pick-up by Twin Otter, Nye glacier, Antarctica

The weather had been stable for several days prior to our visit and the snow did not squeak as we made our way upwards. It had seemed pretty solid underfoot. However, the sun had come around onto the slopes during the collection process and the rock samples we were now carrying made us considerably heavier for the return trip.

Part way way down the slope, there was an ominous, muffled sound - like the crack of a gunshot from a revolver with a silencer – and a fissure opened a few meters below us! We froze in our tracks and watched with alarm as the fissure, like some malicious smirk, rapidly extended into a hideous grin across slope beneath us, before an enormous wedge of snow collapsed downwards in an avalanche of icy debris!

We were left perched precariously on the lip of a 2m face of scooped névé and watching helpless as the avalanche we had generated gained momentum and rumbled towards our skidoos. For a second or two we thought it was going to engulf both of them. Happily, it missed one by a whisker but knocked the other clean over and carried it several dozen meters across the piedmont.

Descending more cautiously in a wide circuit to our right, we reached the piedmont safely without dislodging any further avalanches. We extricated the stricken skidoo and found it to be undamaged. The engine started first time but we spent a fruitless hour probing the now re-frozen lobe of icy debris searching in vain for the contents of the seat compartment which had flown open as the skidoo had rolled. Our stock of chocolate bars was irreplaceable. Fortunately, there was another toolkit in the other skidoo.

Early in the second field season, our field party experienced considerable difficulty getting onto the mainland from an island on the western flank of the Antarctic Peninsula. The island was connected to the Peninsula by the seasonal sea ice. Grabbing our day sacks, we had set off on skis around the perimeter of the island to reconnoitre a potentially skidoo-able track we had observed through binoculars up a crevasse free corridor to one side of the glacier. We were successful in identifying a suitable route and had set off back to our camp in high spirits.

Instead of re-tracing our tracks around the shoreline of the island to our camp, we had decided to take a short cut across the middle via a low saddle at the head of a tiny glacier. My companion led off and I followed, connected by a doubled 50m rope. He took great care threading his way cautiously between the few crevasses we encountered. However, near the crest of the saddle, he glanced calmly over his left shoulder and said. 'It's pretty shitty here - like Swiss cheese - take a good stance and be ready!'

I was in the act of turning my skis at right angles to the rope between us when he suddenly vanished from sight! I was pulled vigorously to the ground and dragged forwards across the névé towards the lip of a jagged opening in the snow. With some difficulty, I managed to twist sideways and dig the edges of my skis into the snow. Thankfully, I began to slow down and came to a halt about 15m from the gaping hole ahead.

I shouted but there was no response. The intense cold from the névé bit deeper into my right hip. Was my companion OK? Was he even conscious? I had no idea. I realised immediately that I had to use my ski poles and ice axe to engineer a belay and quickly. Unfortunately, each time I tried to move

I slid a fraction of a centimetre closer to the lip of the yawning chasm. I had to spread eagle myself as wide as possible to prevent this happening and lay motionless on the glacier not daring to move.

The combination of cold and pressure was just beginning to numb the side of my pelvis, when a ski was suddenly ejected vertically into the air from the hole. It was followed shortly afterwards by a second and then by two ski poles. I breathed an immense sigh of relief. There was silence for a couple of minutes, until the distinct guttural sound of the GA, cursing freely, echoed from within as he struggled to work his jumars towards the lip of the crevasse. Finally, his head and shoulders appeared and he hauled himself out onto the surface of the glacier like a pregnant seal coming out of a hole in the sea ice.

'Jesus H Christ!' he said standing up and dusting the snow from his over trousers. 'Thanks for the arrest! That was a deep bugger! Are you OK?' 'Fine', I replied, somewhat shaken and vigorously rubbing my thigh to get the circulation going again. He calmly put on his skis as though he'd only removed them to grab a cappuccino from a café on the slopes of popular ski resort and we continued without further incident to our camp.

Some years later, when I read Joe Simpson's vivid account of his harrowing escapade with Simon Yates in the Peruvian Andes, I recalled this incident. If my companion had been knocked unconscious by the fall, or worse, what would I have done? Could I have engineered a solid belay? If not, would I have been able to summon up the courage to cut the rope? I seriously doubted it. Fortunately for both of us, my companion was uninjured and a master of the situation.

At the end of the second season, our field party was heading back overland to the main operations base with a full load of samples. Approximately 40km out, the weather changed for the worse and we were obliged to halt, set up camp and seek refuge from a violent storm in our pyramid tent. We were tent-bound for the next two days, warm and snug in our double sleeping bags, content to sit out the blizzard reading and chatting.

Part way through the second morning, there was a lull in the storm. I was desperate to relieve myself and this required exiting the tent. Since the wind appeared to have abated somewhat, I foolishly chose not to don any wind proof clothing. I reasoned this would only prolong the business unnecessarily and I was eager to get back to the warmth of the tent as quickly as possible. The only concession I made to the elements was to put a geological sample bag over each foot. Thus, clad only in long johns and my ridiculously inadequate footwear, I crawled through the igloo-like entrance of the tent and stood outside.

Above me the sky had cleared at last. However, the wind from behind the tent was beginning to strengthen, so naturally I ran downwind to put a dozen paces between myself and the tent. I scooped a hole in the snow and crouched briefly with my back to the wind. Then I stood up again, turned around and prepared to retrace my steps to the tent. To my absolute horror, I couldn't see it. The wind was gusting fiercely once more and was so heavily laden with tiny ice crystals, I couldn't open my eyes - even for a fraction of a second. It felt like I was being sandblasted in the face. I blinked several times in acute agony, desperate to see something – anything. I could not.

Instinctively, I dropped onto my haunches and

Geological Field Camp, Antarctic Peninsula

bowed my head, hugging the ground in an effort to shield myself from the stinging ice crystals and the biting cold of the wind. How the hell was I going to find my way back to the tent if I couldn't see it? How stupid I'd been! Why hadn't I attached a rope around my waist? It was only a few paces. It might just as well have been a dozen kilometres!

The realisation of the seriousness of my predicament chilled my soul. I had minutes only. 'Think, think!' I urged myself. 'Above all, don't get disorientated!' This would quickly have proved fatal.

There was little point in shouting for help. My companion would never hear me inside the tent over the noise of the wind and roar of the Tilley lamp. Then, suddenly I had a sobering vision. It was a headline in the local paper - 'Mossley Man Frozen in Bizarre Circumstances'!

With this image flashing through my mind, my head drooped forward, forcing my shoulders and arms a few centimetres further out into the snow. It was only a few centimetres but it was enough. The fingertips of my right hand suddenly curled around the lip of a hole in the snow. I knew immediately what it was and instantly my mind became alive again. The snow had a thin crust on the surface but it was still soft and powdery underneath. As I'd rushed down wind away from the tent, my sample bag-clad feet had punched holes through the crust into the powder beneath. These foot holes were my lifeline to safety.

On my hands and knees and with my eyes shut tight, I swept my arms carefully in front of me across the surface until the fingers of my left hand crimped around the edge of the previous footfall. Repeating the process, I found another and so on. Gradually, I inched my way forward, blindfolded by the elements, until my frozen fingertips touched the valance of our pyramid tent. I have never been so grateful to crawl inside the warmth and security of a tent!

My companion explained subsequently that when I had re-joined him in the tent he had been mystified by the change in my appearance. For some inexplicable reason I appeared to have aged about 10 years in a matter of minutes. For the better part of an hour afterwards I'd been incapable of providing a coherent account of my brief excursion. When I finally did so, he had a good laugh at my expense, called me a 'Daft bugger!' and added 'Rope up next time'.

When the weather finally cleared, we made our way towards a narrow corridor at the side of the Shambles Glacier. The Shambles is well named. Several widely-spaced crevasses at the edge of the ice piedmont signal the approach to a major break of slope. From this point, the slope steepens rapidly into a chaotic ice fall which cascades into Marguerite Bay. From the corridor it was feasible to escape right over a low saddle and continue more easily across level terrane to the operations base at Rothera Point.

When we reached Rothera, the story of my unfortunate escapade caused much amusement at my expense, until the Base Commander reminded everyone that several years previously a two-man field party had been less fortunate. In what were presumed to have been similar circumstances, one member of the party had exited the tent during a blizzard and had failed to return. His companion was found by a rescue party frozen to death in the entrance of their tent, where he was presumed to have been shouting unsuccessfully in an attempt to guide his colleague back to safety. Future generations of polar travellers and mountaineers may care to bear this in mind before they nip outside the tent to pay a call.

Accidents, especially fatal ones, are thankfully rare in Antarctica. This is largely due to the extreme care and attention taken by all concerned, not least by BAS's GAs. However, a crevasse on the Shambles Glacier claimed the lives of two colleagues at Rothera a few months after my departure. One of the survivors of this tragic incident subsequently wrote a book describing the circumstances. It's a graphic account which also discusses the psychological trauma suffered by the survivors of fatal accidents.

Looking back across more than half a lifetime, it's becoming increasingly difficult for me to appreciate that these experiences, so vivid in my imagination, happened to a younger and quite different self. In an era when change has become the order of the day, we still struggle to come to terms with the concept. The English novelist Thomas Hardy put it more succinctly, "Time changes everything, except something within us which is always surprised by change."

Mount Flora, Trinity Peninsula, Antarctica

The geological fraternity is sometimes criticised for a perceived lack of wholehearted support for the principal of climate change. Geologists are not climate change deniers; far from it. We are merely surprised that everyone else has only just noticed! When I look at current satellite imagery indicating open water in the Larsen Inlet where I travelled across a stable ice shelf more than 250m thick in 1979, I'm shocked by the rapidity of change and I'm alarmed at human complacence in the face of unequivocal and potentially devastating transformations.

The Lakes and The Club

John Cook

Simon Jefferies

Leslie Shore

Jim Sutcliffe

John Wilkinson

Brenda Fullard

Peter Smith

Richard Hargreaves

Chris and Eleanor Sherwin

Graham Hoey

Hazel Jonas

Ron Kenyon

A Welsh Outing

John Cook

The four of us were enjoying the attractions of the otherwise deserted, iconic Climbers' Club hut, Helyg. Arthur Dolphin was my regular climbing partner then and the other friends, Des Birch and Joe Griffin used to join us frequently at either Brackenclose or the recently opened Raw Head hut, just the cottage part, of course, at that time. We were all climbing to a similar standard.The war was over and that autumn we were keen to see how the Welsh climbs compared with the Lakeland ones we knew so well.

We had persuaded ourselves, to my mind not entirely conclusively, that the nature of Welsh rock lent itself to climbing in nailed boots at any level, so there was special interest when I invested in a set of the newly promoted Gable nails for my boots before our first visit. These were supposed to combine the benefits of both Clinker nails and Tricounis as, being made of mild steel they could, like the former, grip the rugosities offered by the coarser rocks and, IIke the latter, bite into nicks in most rocks and provide confidence in that way. Our first objective with me in such boots was Lot's Groove, a classic one pitch climb at the upper end of the VS category in those days. It did indeed seem perfect for this trial and, on reaching the top, I was called on by the others to send down my boots so that they could check the benefits for themselves. On reflection, it seems surprising that they all managed to use my boots despite taking very disparate boot sizes but, in spite of whatever amount of suffering they endured, they all declared the nails a great success. The reason why none of them bought Gable nails afterwards was perhaps because we found that they wore down quite quickly.

One very wet day we read or did parlour tricks with a matchbox until Arthur announced he was going out and disappeared into the rain wearing his oilskins and wellingtons. When he returned, we learned that he had climbed the nearby Soapgut having heard that it was always a wet thrutch and so, he thought, would be very suitable that day in his motorcycling gear. After several more classics we tackled a more recent discovery, already with the reputation of being the most difficult route in the country, Preston's Suicide Wall on a short but very steep crag near Idwal. We were joined then by Jim Birkett who happened to be in the area. He came up last man, in his usual clinker shod boots, showing us just what a unique climber he was. He and I exchanged notes over the following years whenever a new route was discovered and I remember particularly an occasion when he had sent me a note about a new route he had climbed on Swine Knot on the left hand side of White Ghyll. After scrambling up an introductory pitch to inspect the crux, I stepped backwards forgetting where I was and took a long fall, fortunately on to the steep grassy slope below. I couldn't blame Jim for my broken wrist.

We now had just two days left in our holiday and decided to try the finest crag of all, Clogwyn d'ur Arddu, 'Cloggy'. The weather was clearly beginning to deteriorate and we didn't want to miss this opportunity. On reaching Llanberis we walked up to the East Buttress where Pigott had put out the first route on the crag and climbed both that and the nearby Chimney Route. In the conditions then they were both ideal routes, strenuous in places but with good stances and belays. We looked across at the adjoining West Buttress with its 600 ft. overlapping

slabs and decided that we had to include at least one climb there on our last day. Unfortunately, when we woke up the next morning the weather was far from promising and we took our time over breakfast, hoping for an improvement. It didn't happen so we eventually set off, far too late as it turned out, thinking we would manage to climb one of those slabs before the end of the day. There were only four routes on the slabs described then in Menlove Edwards's idiosyncratic guide book and he had singled out Great Slab as the best expedition on the crag. Eccentric as that brilliant climber and writer was, we had no reason to doubt the accuracy of his description. So that was to be our route.

The first 120 ft. pitch of Great Slab involves a tricky traverse to get above the large overhang protecting the huge slab. It's followed by a steep groove beside what used to be the hanging turf of the Green Caterpillar, most of which had disappeared when we were there. The weather was murky but still fine when Arthur set off and, for him, took quite a time solving the first problems and eventually reaching a belay at a large stance high above us. I followed not much more quickly and Des was almost on my heels leading Joe. When we were all together, our predicament became apparent. It was beginning to rain quite heavily and, what was worse, it was beginning to get dark. Climbing down was not an attractive proposition, neither was a very long abseil over the overhang from a far from perfect anchor. While we pondered, the decision was suddenly made for us. Arthur set off up the unknown rocks above, calling for us to tie on our second 120 ft. rope if he failed to find a belay before he ran out of the one I was sharing with him. After what seemed an age we were obliged to fasten the second rope to the first one and some time afterwards heard a distant shout asking us all to somehow tie on to what rope was left and start

Arthur Dolphin climbing Great Slab
on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu

climbing. The position now was that the three of us were tied on at very short intervals, all in effect being held by Arthur as we felt our way upwards, trying to move in unison so as to avoid too much slack rope developing. There was no question of removing any running belays as there hadn't been any since we started the climb. Eventually we found ourselves together again, secured as best we could while I once again paid out Arthur's rope. So it went on, stage by stage, until Arthur shouted that we seemed to be at the top of the climb as there was no more steep rock immediately ahead. With relief, once we had joined him, we all started to move, or rather stumble, slowly across the mountainside towards where we knew we would come across the upper reaches of the Snowdon Mountain Railway.

We stayed roped together Alpine fashion as we followed the track alongside the railway, perhaps so as to preserve a sense of bonding but more probably because our chilled fingers couldn't undo the knots in our sodden hemp ropes. On reaching the outskirts of Llanberis, we found some shelter and managed to put ourselves into some sort of order before recovering our motor bikes and, very thankfully, at last reaching Helyg, a hastily put together meal and our bunks. We all knew we had been very lucky. Three of us knew that, but for Arthur's skill and determination, we would not have got off the crag that night. It was a year or two before I went back to Cloggy. Then it was to lead my Swiss friend, Alfred Tissieres, up Longland's route, a superb climb on a perfect day, a far cry from that never-to-be-forgotten day on Great Slab.

200 Corbetts without a Camper Van

Simon Jefferies

I lay restlessly on my bunk in Karn House. It was 4.30am, still dark. We'd have to be away in an hour or two. There was a short drive, 35 miles, no trouble. I didn't expect our chosen hill to present any difficulties: the return walk should take seven hours including ample rest and refreshment time.

For Carn na Saobhaidhe, a rather remote and unfashionable Corbett, what the Good Book called 'limited parking space' should not have been a worry, but in 2020 different rules applied. An early start had to be made to find a tidy slot for the car. I've never had difficulty getting up early but what kept me awake periodically was not the prospect of finding that someone had beaten me in the dawn race up the A9, but an irrational fear that the small parking area had been occupied since the previous evening. By camper vans. This was 2020, and to stay ahead in the game you had to have a camper van, locked and loaded and firmly embedded in the best parking spots.

There was nothing new to me about the appeal of a camper van. As long ago as a wet day in September 1983, getting off the Inverie passenger ferry at Mallaig, I glared daggers at an older couple who sauntered back to their big dormobile, Romahome, call it what you will. They were going spend the night dry, warm and comfortable: if I found somewhere to camp I would endure another sleepless night in my torn and leaky one-man single-skin mini-hovel.

Forward now to around 2010. During a repeat traverse of the Strathfarrar Munros we'd come across a man who had left his camper van at the far end of the ridge, below Sgurr na Muice, cycled four miles back to the start, and was doing the same walk that we were. He went ahead and I didn't expect to see him again, so imagine my joy and expectation as we dropped down to the road at the end of the day and found him busying around in the layby. The reward for my impudence

was an instant lift back to the car, leaving Sheila languishing on the road some way back. I got my lift; the man retrieved his bike; I did remember to retrieve my wife (some elderly men actually forget!) before heading back to our base in Cannich: everyone happy.

I'd also grilled the man as thoroughly as four miles of winding single track would permit about the pros (not so much the cons) of owning a camper van. He was an effusive and committed enthusiast and could find no fault with his machine: a man at ease with his comfortable, nomadic lifestyle. I was semi-hooked, and for several weeks my dinner table talk regularly featured the pros (though not the cons) of camper van ownership. Where to store the thing for ten months of the year was a thorny issue, agreed, but CV plus small runabout car offered a tantalisingly flexible future. However …

The popularity of the NC500 began to rise exponentially, generating a torrent of bad press and adverse comment on traffic flow grounds (with, admittedly, many more car motorists driving round and filling the available accommodation, often for one-night stays). The cliché about being stuck for hours behind lumbering beasts on single track roads frequently rang true: there seemed to be no way past these monolithic monsters. I began to think that to own one was to sacrifice the speed and flexibility we cherished and took for granted.

I hold no antagonism towards camper van owners. Some good friends, and people I love dearly, own or used to own them. I've envisaged driving one myself, so this article is not an intended polemic. True, I suffered mild anguish at the sight of them filling – almost to capacity – the small car park at the far end of Glen Etive; we found a space, just, but only at the price of breathing one driver's diesel

fumes as we put our boots on; for some reason he found it necessary to keep the engine running (why?) Never has Beinn Trilleachan been attacked with such urgency: never has fresh air smelled sweeter.

On another occasion, there were no fewer than twelve vans filling a layby on the shore of Loch Arkaig. Twelve. I didn't stop to see if the engines were running.

When our Munro ambitions were satisfied (completed!), or nearly so, I started to pay more attention to their lower cousins, the Corbetts. I'd come late to the Munros: in 1983 I had only the vaguest idea what a Munro was; hills were then simply hills, and the higher, bigger and butcher the better. Friends had started firing off into the wintry wastes of Wester Ross, grabbing distant and elusive three-thousanders, often in the dark. Information was then quite sketchy but in due course (1985) the shiny new SMC guide ("The Munros") appeared in my Christmas stocking and I found I'd done 76 of them and a lifetime of excitement lay ahead.

I discovered – again, late in life – that the Corbetts were named after one J Rooke of that name who was the fourth Munroist and therefore further responsible for this obsessive madness. A second SMC Good Book ("The Corbetts") found its way into my 1990 Christmas stocking. I'd done a handful of these too.

The Corbetts are great fun and certainly harder to tease out than the Munros. They can be far from habitation, though there's usually somewhere to stay or camp. Access to climbing huts helps to alleviate the need for homes on wheels, and the proliferation of holiday cottages and bunkhouses eases logistics still further. Club meets have proved ideal! Accommodation sorted, one can plan the day's expedition. Several Corbetts, rising alongside popular roads like the A83, are straightforward: those that hide deep in the fastnesses of Knoydart and upper Feshie require stretching of the grey matter. But I've never been disappointed. They're all good.

Early morning darts across the Corran ferry from Waters; from Karn House, Ealasaid, Morven, Corryhabbie and Rinnes, the last-named sporting a man whitewashing the newly repaired trig point and, near the bottom, a chance meeting with Graeme Ralph starting an after-work run. Climbing more than a couple in a day is a big ask; everyone loves the three tops of Quinag, and if time and conditions permit, one can bag five in a long, sweeping excursion north of Tyndrum (I took a more leisurely approach, enjoying them over three days in full winter). There was big, bold Foinaven in 1992, once touted as a Munro contender; classic sea views from Rois-Bheinn; lonely bothying to Beinn Bhreac; biting winds on Fuar Tholl; baking heat on Canisp. Leum Uilleim offered a charming half day by train to Corrour followed by a comfortable night in the lonely Loch Ossian YH. Countless hares scampered freely over Creag Uchdag, their unfortunate cousins culled across Mount Battock in the belief that they posed a threat to grouse nests.

Technical difficulty? Precious little, it's true, although the highest inches of Ben Arthur (The Cobbler) required careful handling. Bits of Arran, maybe. There were startling measures of steepness on Streap, Beinn Iaruinn and Stob Dubh, depending on the routes taken. The Corbetts of Rum, Skye and Jura were more rough and exhilarating than technical. And few British mountains lived up to their name better than the three Rough Hills, Garbh Bheinns all, one an outlier of Blaven in Skye, one the pride of Ardgour and a third above Loch Leven, towering impenetrably behind Waters Cottage. None of these are a "climb" like the In Pin. "What is the hardest Corbett?" might offer a good pub discussion!

The journey has occupied 45 years already and I've just a few to do, including some far flung stinkers. I'd love to finish in style on Ben Aden. If the 'heighters' with their Garmins would leave them alone, we could rely on the present 222 being The True List, but in recent years some (Beinn a'Chlaidheimh and Sgurr nan Ceannaichean) have been added because they apparently no longer pass muster as Munros. Anomalies involving adjacent similar heights seem to have been resolved, notably summit pairs near Shiel Bridge and Corrieyaraick. At least one (Beinn Talaidh on Mull) has dropped off the list at 761m, and one (Cnoc Coinnich) has been added. When will people stop mucking about?

It should be a badge of honour to have done most of the Corbetts – and all the Munros – without recourse to a motorised home to get me around, which explains the faintly Muriel Grey-esque title of this article. But camper van, hut, holiday cottage, bunkhouse – what does it really matter? Only the true purist, self-propelled and independent of home comfort and other props, can genuinely claim such a level of ethical high ground. To climb hills in a truly purist manner was never the intention - in fact, it reflects a lack of imagination on my part that I never sought easier ways of doing things. Feet of clay. When the Corbett quest is over (God, weather, health, Covid, transport and access permitting), there will always be climbs to climb and hills to bag and they will have to be enjoyed according to fitness and ability. Soon, in due course, it may be time to look more seriously at that camper van.

An Encounter East of Glenshee

Leslie Shore

In 1976, I took a week's holiday to tally many Munros. My holiday began by staying at Ratagan YH and one of my walks thereabouts included the Five Sisters as the final stage of a western traverse of mountains from Aonach Mheadhoin, by starting at the Cluny Inn. The day's misty weather anticipated a poor weather forecast and upon hearing it, I opted to drive to Speyside's Kingussie YH for walking in the eastern Grampians. Next day, when motoring south down the A 9 to climb Beinn a' Ghlo, I was stopped by a police road block. A constable asked me who I was, and where I was going. After giving satisfactory answers, he told me two dangerous convicts had escaped from Peterhead Prison scores of miles away. None the less, the news troubled me for the rest of my drive.

That evening, I stayed at Glen Isla YH, which was a round building with distinct window features. In 1983, the SYHA ceased using the building as a hostel and it became a base for an adventure holiday organisation.

On 3rd June, I was the first to park a car at a closed Glenshee Ski Centre. The bleak surroundings starkly contrasted with what the location looked like on Easter Sunday the previous year. Parking my car at the Glen Shee Ski Centre was a bane. Ministers at some churches in Scotland would have addressed fractionally smaller congregations. The parking area was alive with happy sounding groups of skiers sorting out equipment. Snow lay in abundant quantities. A well trodden path in snow, aside a ski toll, eased my climbing up to 3,003 ft Càrn Aosda (Ancient Peak). Mountain hares scuttled away from my course. From the Munro, I headed south to a col having a grandstand's view of hillsides swarming with skiers. More than likely, no skier noticed me as an absurd figure lying on snow at the col attempting to take a photograph whose composition included a ptarmigan and a St Bernard dog. On what was my second visit to park here, there was no snow, the hillsides looked ploughed and idle mechanical machinery looked like wreckage. Perhaps the transformation was due to a magic spell having being cast by a fairy since one idea for the meaning of Glenshee is 'Fairy Glen'. The place was silent, which supported another proposal for the meaning for the place, 'Glen of Peace'.

I strode off in a general north-eastern direction to contour into Gharbh Coire. After passing by a ruined bothy, then getting wet feet tramping through marshland, I squared up to the first slope of the day. The slope's steepness had not deterred heather from carpeting its lower parts, but quartzite scree covered its upper parts.

Many wheelbarrow loads of quartzite rubble had been moved to build the massive cairn found atop 3,340 ft Càrn an Tuiric (Peak of the Wild Boar). Roaming boars might once have been at home on this barren spot, but I was immediately baffled by the surrounding tableland. Where was the next mountain I wished to do? Although in clear weather the Cairngorms could be seen to the north, map and compass work was needed for navigation. Before leaving the summit on an eastern course, I picked up a motor vehicle's crank lever from off the ground and threw it on the cairn to gather more rust.

An hour later, I arrived at 3,143 ft Tolmount (A Valley Hill?). On my way to the Munro, a track suitable for

a Landrover was seen, as was another bothy ruin. From the Munro, my eyes picked up, less than a mile to the east, as tiny silhouettes, two people heading towards me from 3,014 ft Crow Craggies. Were they the convicts on the run from Peterhead Prison? I fled south to 3,140 ft Tom Buidhe (Yellow Hill), and got there in half an hour.

Tom Buidhe's cairn had a wooden stake driven into it. Could the stake be used as my Excalibur to fend off any attack? From the cairn, around 13 miles away in the eastern compass, a blue-tinge hung like a window's net curtain before the unprepossessing outline of Mount Keen. My eyes, though, scanned the vastness of the surrounding tableland, which I found overbearing. My route led west-south-west to try and claim another Munro.

Around mid-way to the Munro, I met the two people seen earlier. For decades afterwards, I recalled approaching them by zigzagging to test whether, or not, they were the convicts. Frankly, this was a delusion. Their gait and clothes, even when they were remote from me, identified them as hillwalkers. On encountering them, it was remiss of me not to ask their names but I learned from the husband and wife team they were from Gloucester and had retreated south from a wet Dundonnell in the Northern Highlands. The man was an able mountaineer having traversed the Cuillin Main Ridge twice, and completed the Greater Traverse in 36 hours. We exchanged good wishes upon separating. Although the walk was my fifth of the week, they were the first people met on a mountain.

By following a fence, whose course aligned with the county borders of Aberdeenshire, to my right, and Angus to my left, just before three o'clock, I stepped up on to the summit of 3,484 ft Cairn of Claise (Peak of the Hollow). The tedium of tramping across tableland vanished in a flash. Was I standing on the finest viewpoint in Scotland? All round me, within an area of hundreds of square miles, were a host of mountains. Around 70 miles away in the south-western compass, Ben Lui's top poked above lower hills and served as the most faraway point. Nearer and prominent in the same compass were: Ben More and Stob Binnien; then Ben Lawers; and with the nearest being Schiehallion. Munros, the other side of Glenshee, spread out extensively from south to north but with the exception of The Cairnwell and Carn Aosda, the mountains there were unfamiliar until my next day's walk. The Cairngorms dominated the northern scene. Although in the eastern compass, twenty or so miles away, the bulk of Lochnagar was noticeable. Glen Clova's highest peaks, Driesh and Mayar, due to their upper reaches standing boldly above lower ground, captured attention.

Reluctantly, and despite the discomfort of sore feet, I quit the Cairn of Claise summit a half hour later to visit its south top. On mounting the large mound of Druim Mòr my eyes surveyed the ground. A cairn on a spot height on the map of 3,144 ft was as a ritual touched, and I noted having taken 24 minutes to cover just over a mile from the mountain's summit. The cairn stood near the edge of a crag overlooking the head of Caenlochan Glen, whose waters were one of two glen sources for the River Isla. During my survey, I registered the top's highest point lay at a different spot and as a die-hard peak bagger homed in on it. The 1969 Munro's Tables carried a footnote: 'In the Eastern Grampians it is specially difficult to decide what are separate mountains, tops, or merely shoulders. Little Glas Maol, Druim Mòr, Creag Leachdach, and Cairn of Gowal are all very doubtful tops'. As a sufferer of Munroitis, I have ticked the four tops, but one of them was subsequently deleted from the Munro's Tables.

After a swig of water taken on Druim Mòr, a toast to pedantry maybe, I made my way west by taking an arc of a line around the head of Caenlochan Glen to tick the highest point of the day, 3,504 ft Glas Maol (Grey-Green Hill). The view from the summit was a disappointment after Cairn of Claise's. Here I changed to a southern course, and prior to descending a slope, spotted a walking party heading to Glas Maol.

My course led to a ridge, maybe made of quartzite rock, whose crest oscillated up and down to give me a pleasant traverse. A stone-wall guided me to the summit of 3,238 ft Creag Leacach (Slabby Rock). I lingered at this spot for refreshment, and to scan the scenery surrounding the River Isla to the south-east. I then retraced my steps expecting to meet the party but it chose to avoid the ridge's crest.

The line of my return to the car included the apex of 3,019 ft Meall Odhar. I then fought the ghosts of skiers in my mind when dropping down the hillside to unlock the door of the only car parked in the vicinity of the ski centre. My spirits had been low setting out on the walk. Was this a penalty for a sustained period of seclusion in pursuit of Munros? I've no answer. But my soul was refreshed having spent eight hours and 45 minutes tramping 18 miles, with a seemingly unnoticed 3,700 feet of climbing.

Forty years later, the Fell and Rock Journal 2016 contained the obituary of Les Swindin (1938-2015) and a review of a book, All But One: one woman's quest to climb the 52 highest mountains in the Alps, by Barbara Swindin. Both were Club members, and clues in the obituary moved me to write a letter to Barbara asking her if they were the pair I met on my approach to Cairn of Claise. Her letter of reply confirming our meeting gave me an emotive moment. Modest about her achievements as a mountaineer, she had sound grounds to be in awe of her late husband's feats. However, having read her book since, I agreed with John Holden's review about 'Barbara's magnificent achievement of climbing' and that she 'is an extraordinary person'. Unwittingly at the time, encountering the Swindins in 1976 was one of the great privileges I've obtained through mountaineering.

Brackenclose Remembered

John Cook

Writing this while the Coronavirus quarantines me and there is a strange stillness all around, I am inevitably reminded of the wartime years. Yet there is a considerable difference. Back then we could still walk or cycle where we wanted, even use a car or motorcycle if we owned one and had some petrol coupons. We could be as sociable as we wanted, inhibited only by restrictions of supplies which confined us to a basic but healthy diet. A strict blackout at night was relieved by double summertime which for much of the year allowed for delightfully long evenings. There was concern for family and friends who were away in the armed forces or might be bombed in one of the cities.

I am thinking of a particular year, 1943. I was 17, aiming to win enough scholarships to pay for a university education when the war was over and expecting to be 'called up' in a year or so. Climbing had become my main relaxation, discovered a couple of years earlier while fellwalking across a near deserted Lakeland and meeting some real climbers in a Borrowdale youth hostel. 'Til then I had enjoyed such scrambles as Pillar's Slab and Notch and Great End's gulleys, courtesy of descriptions in Abraham's book, but now a climber called Alan Alsopp invited me to come out to Almscliff the following Saturday when he would show me what climbing was about. A Harrogate bus from Bradford and a short walk duly brought me to the crag where Alan was waiting. He led me up increasingly difficult routes, none of which gave me any trouble till Alan, no doubt so as to curb my confidence a little, chose Parson's Chimney. He must have known what would happen. At the crux, having no idea how to deal with the bridging technique required, I took a pendulum swing to the amusement of the spectators below and was lowered ignominiously down to try again. No matter, this was to be my new interest. I was accepted as one of the small Saturday group headed by Arthur Dolphin who rapidly became a close friend and climbing partner. Cycling out to Almscliff regularly and then often on Sundays to Ilkley, and occasionally to other Yorkshire crags, became a routine. One day a stranger arrived, wearing plus fours and shining boots nailed with tricounis. To our surprise he proceeded to climb smoothly up Pothole Direct and Traditional, two of our test pieces. We were impressed.

This was Denys Fisher, later to achieve fame and wealth through his invention of Spirograph. Meanwhile he became one of our group, a talented precision engineer who could supply us each with a karabiner or two, unobtainable commercially and the only bit of ironmongery we ever thought we could justifiably use. He was a very competent, meticulous climber working out new routes at Almscliff like Jacob's Ladder and his eponymous Stride. One day he invited me to join a small party going to Wasdale for the forthcoming Whitsuntide weekend. He would be taking us in his car, a great treat. The others would be John 'Pug' Ball, the outstanding Ilkley climber who had ventured into Wales earlier and climbed all the routes then documented on 'Cloggy' and Nancy Heron, as she then was, later to become one of Britain's foremost women mountaineers. Nancy was a medical student at the time and had just become a Fell and Rock member, able to book all four of us into Brackenclose. Now that was for me a name to conjure with, the first purpose built climbing but in the UK, situated in the most perfect of places at the foot of Scafell above Wastwater and only completed

a few years previously. For the lucky few it provided the ideal base. I couldn't wait.

It was around midnight that Friday when we arrived at Brackenclose after a late departure. There was no immediate sign of any others staying there in fact, although we subsequently discovered that we were not alone, so far as I can remember we never actually met the other occupants. The reason was simply that we went on as we had started, retiring for the night in the early hours and getting up very late while the others did the opposite, setting off from the hut early each morning and sensibly retiring for the night at a normal time. It could also have been, of course, that in the glorious weather of the whole of that weekend, with double summertime lengthening the daylight hours, we simply couldn't bear to leave the sunwarmed crags till the last minute. When we first arrived, our attention was mainly on getting the Primus stoves to work and not learning how to use the roller board. That was to amuse and frustrate us equally on subsequent nights when we tried to improve our skiing technique on it and avoid shooting headlong to the opposite end of the room. And so eventually to the dormitories and their rows of tiered bunks to settle into one for a long sleep.

The sun was blazing down the next morning when we eventually started to walk up Brown Tongue. The track was clearly marked but in no way comparable to the broad highway it became in later years. The clean, inviting rocks of Pike's Crag soon appeared ahead, a place to visit another time but then the glorious sight of Scafell crag itself took all our attention, stretching from Tower Buttress to Mickledore. The others began to talk about plans for the day whilst I, as very much the baby of the party, simply listened. It was proposed that we should all climb Botterill's Slab first with John and Nancy pairing up. To my surprise, it was suggested that I should lead Denys as apparently, despite his prowess at Almscliff, he was reluctant to lead longer routes. So that was how we proceeded both that day and afterwards. Botterill's proved to be a great choice. I watched the others work their way up the edge of the impressive slab and eventually followed, noting the way they had chosen to go and feeling increasingly confident in the reasurring feel of the rock and the tight fitting Woolworths plimsolls. We all ignored the usual easy finish on the right and continued up the edge of the slab to the top. What a route for my first Lakeland VS!

Once down at the foot of the crag, John said he and Nancy would try something on the East Buttress while Denys suggested that we should head for the Pinnacle face and climb what he said was the best route there, Moss Ledge Direct. It was certainly very fine and I thought more difficult than Botterill's. Perhaps that was because there were no comforting friends above or perhaps it was just that, towards the end of the main 90 ft pitch, with no chance of a running belay, I was losing confidence in the dried moss covering the overlaps and, out of sight and hearing of Denys, had a distinct feeling of insecurity. Anyway, there was really no major problem and before long Denys joined me mouthing congratulations and we continued happily over the Pinnacle and down the West Wall Traverse to wait for the others. They had climbed Morning Wall and so we all felt it had been a good day with no need to hurry down in the still warm sunshine to a hut that now felt like a second home.

For the next day the plan was to go to Pillar and for Denys and me to start with South West climb, a rather different proposition from the route on my previous visit, Slab and Notch. I forget what the others started with, a VS on the north side. We were

to regroup eventually at the foot of the west face where, after some discussion, it was agreed that we would all climb Kelly's Route 2, the hardest route on the crag apart from the Girdle. South West proved straightforward but totally delightful. For me the easiest of our routes so far but so attractive that it became a favourite especially for a warm summer evening. That day we had serious business as Route 2 was no pushover. John took a considerable time on the crucial open chimney pitch and, when it was my turn, I soon accepted the offer of a rope from above and still found it awkward. Once again, we had a happy walk back to Brackenclose, knowing now what we would find there and able to look forward to a meal and relaxation in what, for us then, was real comfort. We were too late, of course, to call at the hotel as it then was called, for a drink, which was just as well, as I discovered on a later visit to the dark, inhospitable public bar when any drinks, if available, were pushed silently through a hatch which was then closed. No, our hut was just fine.

For our last day, the choice was Scafell again this time to climb Central Buttress, CB, generally considered then the most challenging route in the District. I was apprehensive about the prospect of leading the notorious Flake Crack pitch but reassured with the knowledge that the others would be ahead, ready to drop a rope down if necessary. So, we were soon, but still late in the morning, at the foot of the crag, and quite easily up the introductory pitches to the Oval. There a surprise awaited us, another party attempting the same. The leader was at the Flake and, as we watched he decided to have a rest and called on his team to lower him down, using a sling which he had tied around the Flake. To our horror and amazement, his sling parted and he hurtled down over the Oval. His Manila climbing rope bit deep into the turf and he was invisible, swinging clear of the rock as we later found. The situation we then realized was bizarre. His second and third men were jammed tightly into the crevice at the back, holding tight onto the climbing rope which they had threaded through a cotton sling to form a kind of direct belay. We later saw that two of the three strands of the sling had burned through. Enough to say that, several hours later, we had got the fallen climber back to the Oval and were all at the foot of the crag. Amazingly and thankfully he did not seem to be seriously injured, apart from obvious concussion, and was able with help to walk slowly down to the valley. It was just as well since at that time, of course, there was no organized mountain rescue.

So, our holiday had an unexpected end but our memories were of a fantastic weekend in a superb hut. It was a while before I was prepared to go for CB again, probably because I was still traumatised by the events that holiday. When I climbed CB, it was a lovely evening at the end of a day's climbing and it was simply a great experience on a magnificent route. I was determined to join the Fell and Rock and planned to climb at least the qualifying number of routes as quickly as possible. Langdale proved the easiest area to get to by hitchhiking with a friend or two ready to try out climbing with me there. I just needed a member to propose me and he would arrange the rest of my application for membership. It was much easier in those days. It wasn't long before I was elected to membership with thoughts now of returning to Brackenclose but, then, I was almost immediately called up into the Royal Navy.

The Ben: Little Brenva

Jim Sutcliffe

Two young men were making their way into Coire Leis, on the northern side of Ben Nevis. They were in a semi-arctic environment: snow, ice, rock and spindrift swirling around.

John: "Right. I think I'll just put my 'long Johns' on here."

Jim: "Already got mine on, as you very well know."

John: "Yes, well, I've stayed nice and cool on the walk up. These boulders might protect me a bit."

Jim: "Well, I'm staying nice and warm, John. Feel free to entertain me."

Just exactly when and where to don these extra garments had been the subject of an earlier discussion, around our tent pitched in Glen Nevis. Neither of us had had any doubt that they would be needed once we were on the freezing upper slopes of the mountain, but our opinions differed as to just when, and more importantly, where to don them. In my experience of winter climbing on the Lake District fells the climate in the upper corries tends to be uncomfortably cold, with such inconveniences as spindrift being blown around as was exactly the case here. Just the sort of place where you don't want to expose your nether regions by taking your britches off.

However, my friend was of the opposing view - that the walk in wearing the extra garment would result in unnecessary heat and consequent sweating resulting in reduction of the insulation provided by clothing just when it was most needed.

So he was about to perform the uncomfortable part of the plan: the removal of his britches in order to don the warm undergarment.

I sat down on a nearby icy boulder whilst my friend took off his boots and danced around trying to shake off his britches with snow blowing round his bare legs. Then dragging on the warm long Johns before clambering back into his wind-proof britches.

We had arrived in Glen Nevis the previous night. It was part of a plan, hatched like many others at the time, in the bar of the Shoulder of Mutton in Blackshaw Head, above Hebden Bridge. We belonged to a group of climbers who used to meet on Thursday nights after climbing at Bridestones, the gritstone outcrop closest to the pub. Our inspiration and ringleader was none other than "Wilky", Dr. John Wilkinson, an inspirational climber and leader and, of course, former Guide Book Editor and Club President. We recently had read about some new winter routes on a part of the Ben above Coire Leis, on the face to the east of the North East Ridge. It was known as Little Brenva, in homage to the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc. So John and I decided to 'have a look' at it one weekend that winter.

The only event of note on our journey north, was the providential appearance of a fish and chips van on a street in Glasgow. Whilst we had some tinned food and a stove with us, we weren't looking forward to starting cooking in the dark after setting up the tent in Glen Nevis. The fish and chips would sustain us until the morning.

We awoke to a cold start. Although it had frozen overnight, a few clouds over to the west introduced an element of doubt. However, fortified with porridge together with mugs of tea, we felt confident in setting off. We had decided to carry bars of chocolate and biscuits to provide energy during the day. We hoped to find the odd burn running to provide water for drinking. We were clad in traditional costume for climbers in that era; wool knee britches, knitted pullovers, Black's anoraks and leather boots with Vibram soles. The choice of undergarments and whether to wear them was hotly debated, as I have already mentioned.

We carried short ice axes made by Hamish McInnes at his little cottage factory in Glencoe. John knew Hamish quite well and Hamish had sent them to us, separately by post. This was before he had started to make the Pterodactyl axe with the angled pick and before curved picks achieved such justifiable popularity.

A relatively new- comer to our local climbing group was Don Whillans. This was shortly after his rapid, and in some ways controversial ascent with Chris Bonington of the Central Pillar of Freney on Mont Blanc. John had learned how the pair had gained access to the face above the chaotic Glacier du Freney from the Brenva Glacier by rapidly climbing the steep icy flank of the Aiguille Blanche de Peterey, a short axe in one hand and a long ice piton or ice dagger in the other. We therefore thought that this would be the best way to move quickly on steep snow and ice, so that was what we would do. We also had with us twelve-point crampons which are still popular today. We carried two half-weight ropes of 45 metres in length. These were hawser-laid nylon and were about the equivalent of two 9mm ropes today.

We drove down the glen and parked close to the youth hostel, where a path rises steeply to meet the tourist track part way across from Fort William. The going was fairly easy at first, but we soon came across patches of old ice and since the temperature was still sub-zero it remained hard. We could avoid most of it and eventually some was snow covered so we had no need of our crampons. We made good progress to the area around the Red Burn, where there were a few tiny Lochans. We quickly located the track which slants down into the Allt-a-Mhuilin Glen, just below some of the lowest crags on Castle Ridge.

Snow and, in particular, ice ruled over this otherwise rocky kingdom. We were amazed at how blue much of it was, denoting a thickness and age which reminded both of us of glacier ice in the Alps.

"I wonder how much higher the Ben would have to be for glaciers to develop in the Coires," said John.

"Yes. And look at that ridge, the way it soars up. That must be Tower Ridge." I was really gobsmacked.

But our goal for today lay further up the Allt-a-Mhuillin Glen. We were interested to see the C.I.C hut, situated just below Tower Ridge and which still belongs to the Scottish Mountaineering Club. But time was pressing and we forged on past.

We rounded the foot of the North East Ridge and started to rise up into Coire Leis. It was here that we saw our target come into view: the 'Little Brenva.' The wind was starting to strengthen and everything contributed to the deep chill of winter. And so did my friend. It was here that John made his sartorial decision. He had chosen to change in an area of boulders of various sizes, lying where they had come to rest after falling from the crags

above. Many were covered in snow and ice. The wind was rising and any loose snow lying between them was being picked up and swirled around. The sight of my friend hopping around as he dragged his britches back on was too painful to be comical. The clouds which had been hovering around the western skyline had gathered thickly over us. The weather suddenly looked threatening. I decided to put my over- trousers on.

"It's only going to get worse up there," I said. John grimly agreed.

"You see that slanting line over there," said he, pointing towards the crags. "That's how we gain access to the 'Little Brenva.'"

Sure enough I could see that, whilst the face in question was guarded by formidable and icy crags, a natural diagonal line slanting up from left to right could lead us to our goal. It was gleaming with thick ice but compared to the vertiginous rocks directly below the face, offered a feasible, if delicate, alternative. A steep slope of hard-frozen snow, the consistency of ice, led to the foot of the diagonal ramp. We strapped on our crampons then moved up the slope together on our front points. We excavated ledges in the snow-ice where we could stand to sort out the gear. We would be climbing using double ropes and carrying a selection of pitons, both rock and ice, as well as a variety of slings and carabiners.

I took a look up at the sky. My attention had been attracted by a rising wind which was starting to pick up loose snow and swirl it around in a slightly disconcerting way.

"What do you think of those clouds John?" Lines of seriously dark clouds were lining themselves up from the west.

"Let's hope they clear," he called as he searched the compact rock. Eventually he found a crack which might take a peg and banged one home. I clipped onto that and prepared to belay him. He inched out following the ramp, mainly bulging ice, occasionally a rocky slab. Before long he was out of my sight. A few distant hammering noises followed by a distant call signalled my turn to advance. Every foot gained along the diagonal ramp increased the drop below me down the vertical wall. I found John belayed to an ice peg.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"So far, so good," I replied, and set off along the continuation of the line, to arrive at a rocky ledge which would form a good stance. The only belay I could find was my axe driven into the bank of ice and snow at the right end. I called for John to come across.

We found ourselves in a system of steep grooves, liberally decorated in varying quantities of snow and ice. Our eyes were inevitably drawn upwards to where the heavy clouds were flying across the summit rocks, whipping spindrift around. The icebound crags, the scudding snow and the leaden clouds racing overhead, lent the scene an inhospitable air. We felt like small creatures in an alien world.

Quickly, with a glance at my rudimentary belay and before demoralisation could set in, John led off up the groove above, wielding axe in one hand and a sharpened ice peg in the other and progressing quickly. Further sight of him was curtailed by the gathering gloom as well as whirling snow. I glanced at my watch. Two thirty and it was already starting

to get dark. This was , I realised, one of the problems at these northern latitudes. I had read extensively of the dangers which can occur (and have occurred to many parties) attempting to cross the summit of Ben Nevis in the dark. The difficulties could only be increased in the conditions. As if to confirm my worries large flakes of snow had started to fall from the dark clouds, to join those which were already being blown around.

We changed leads. The higher we climbed, the stronger blew the wind. Snow slides started to join the snow falling from the clouds. The daylight seemed to drain away.

"It's going to be nasty crossing the summit," I said, as we met briefly at belays.

"Yeah. What do you think?"

"Retreat from here would be feasible. But higher up; we can't tell."

"I'll just try another pitch then we'll see," John replied, setting his jaw. His vague form faded upwards into the swirling snow. Slowly and in spasms the rope ran out and I heard his call to climb.

"I think we'd better get the head-torches. I can hardly see a thing here," John said, when I reached him. We swung our sacks off and delved inside. I pulled mine out and switched it on. Only a dim glimmer.

"Oh hell! The battery'a knackered. I should have a spare in here." I searched the pocket in the top.

"Blast! I forgot to replace it."

"Mine works ok," said John, casting the beam around as of to emphasise its efficacy.

"I can't see us crossing the top in these conditions," I said, aware of my technological weakness.

"Yeah! I think you're right. We'd better go back. I suggest that we go back to that ledge where we belayed following the diagonal traverse. See if we could get a peg in, then we could abseil over the lower rocks directly onto the ice slope below."

"Yeah. Great idea!" I agreed.

That was how we found ourselves huddled on a narrow ledge in the dark, with the wind blowing snow everywhere, searching the incredibly compact rock for the slightest indication of a crack.

"I can't find anything here," said John.

"Well there's nothing this side," I replied.

We had heard of the very shield-like nature of the rock on the Ben. John reassessed a small section of rock to his right.

"Hang on. There's a little crack here where there's a small fold in the rock. I might get a knife blade in there."

He took a piton off the carabiner on a sling which held a small selection. This was one of the pegs made specially by our mutual friend and superb climber Jack Umpleby, Fell and Rock member. John had played an important role in their design, marketing and manufacture. He tentatively poked the knife-blade at the vague crack then carefully tapped it. It held. We held our breaths. John tapped it slightly harder. It still held. It's tip was in! He gave

it two good swipes. It vibrated disconcertingly.

"That's as far as it's going in,", said John. "It feels firm. But I'll tie it off as close to the entry-point as I can."

Up till then we had balanced precariously with only a tentative belay with my axe rammed into a pile of icy snow on the right corner of the ledge.

"I placed it; I'll test it," said John. Very bravely, I thought. Our plan was to abseil over the 150 feet of intervening rock onto the steeply pitched snow-ice below in order to avoid the long diagonal traverse which we had followed on our approach. This would save time and some effort. Having no sound belay, I pondered the idea of clipping onto the peg, but immediately cancelled the thought. If the peg came out whilst John was abseiling from it, not only would John be cast into the void but I would follow inevitably.

Slowly and with infinite caution John committed his weight to the rope. My eyes were glued on the peg, as far as they could be in the waning vestiges of light. The successful outcome of our retreat, not to mention my friend's life, depended on it. I could sense the strain. It vibrated slightly as John slid over the edge. But it held. The light from John's head torch disappeared. I was left in my own dim and icy world.

If my eyes had been glued to the peg before, they were cemented to it now. It vibrated a bit now and then, as John negotiated some obstacle or another. My heart was in my mouth at such times. The weak light from my head torch revealed only a small section of black rock streaked with ice crystals. As if to emphasise the hostile nature of my resting place, a wuthering wind sent icy granules down my neck.

More modern times on the Ben:
Susan Jensen approaching Vanishing Gully

"Come on John," I silently implored.

Suddenly the rope went slack. I listened intently. A distant voice filtered through the tormenting blasts of wind. "Come on Jim."

I did not hesitate to respond to the invitation. So, taking in the slack rope, clipping it into the carabiner on the sling which I had arranged around my legs as a sit harness, and slinging it over my shoulder, I prepared to abseil over the 150 feet of rock to where John would have been standing at the top of the steep ice leading to boulder ground below. After fastening my axe to my sack and making sure all slings and carabiners were attached, I very gently lowered myself onto to the knife-blade piton. I was on my way down.

The fading glimmer of my head torch revealed the icy rock slowly passing in front of me. Very, very carefully I paid out the rope. I could not take any risks by bouncing on the rope. The marginal nature of the placement of the blade piton was always to the forefront of my mind. Eventually John's head torch came into view, the light flickering as snow flakes were whirled around. The wind seemed to have increased its strength as my crampons bit into the hard-packed snow-ice. John was only a shadowy figure in the gloom.

I unclipped from the ropes and started to pull them down. To my relief they ran perfectly. Eventually down came the loose end. It hit the ice and immediately slid out of sight, leaving me holding the knot joining the two ropes. I started to haul them in, but John said, " Let them slide down. We'll sort them out lower down." I agreed and, holding the ropes in one hand and my ice axe in the other, I took a step down. I immediately felt the front prongs of my crampons catch on my over-trousers. I was pitched straight forward onto my front, setting off like a bob-sleigh on the Cresta Run. My one concern was to roll onto my stomach and start easing the blade of my ice axe into the icy surface. I had successfully done this before in the Lakes. Involuntarily I left go of the rope.

A stentorian voice yelled out, amplified by the crags above. "BRAKE WITH YOUR AXE!" John's advice was unnecessary. I was battling with my axe to get it under my shoulder to increase the weight on it, but it was not having any noticeable effect.

At this time, I had a vivid flashback. The previous week I had been reading an article in a magazine, written by Gwen Moffat, about self arrest techniques. In it she warned against being tempted to apply the front points of the crampons. It could cause you to flip head over heels and so lose control of your ice axe. In my mind I could see the rocks which filled the hollow below me, awaiting the breaking of my bones. I cautiously tested touching the front points into the ice. I kept the axe planted as firmly as possible. I immediately slowed down. One more careful press and I stopped.

"I've stopped, John," I shouted, as loudly as I could.

"OH, GOOD MAN!"

Once again the crags had acted as an amplifier. The formality of my friend's reply belied his relief. He very quickly descended to me and together we cramponed down to the boulders in the hollow below. There we found the ropes, separated them and coiled them. The weather seemed to be getting worse.

"If we get a move on we still might be in time for a pint in Fort William," said John.

With everything packed we moved rapidly down the glen in spite of the darkness. Over past Red Burn where we picked up the tourist track which helped us keep up our speed. We arrived at the car, threw our gear into the boot and set off for Fort William. It still was not 10 o'clock. The pub was still serving, not only beer but also FOOD! We were starving! We ordered 4 pints and 2 portions of fish and chips. Luxury!

On Sunday we decided on an easy day. We followed the track up the Allt-a-Mhuilin and parked the car on the golf course. We chose an easy route: Number 2 Gully. This way we could more or less guarantee getting to the summit. We moved together solo. The neve was still hard- frozen. Passing under Comb Buttress we noticed a team of 2 who appeared to be progressing well on one of the routes there. We had just completed the gully and were on the easy-angled finishing slopes when we were startled by sudden shouts and crashing noises from the direction of Comb Buttress. It sounded serious. John said: "We'd better go down and see if we can help."

On arrival below the buttress we saw the leader hanging on the rope. He had fallen the full length of the rope. He was being approached from the side by other climbers, presumably friends. The fallen climber started to move. His injuries were fairly light, we realised as he was helping in his friends' rescue efforts.

When the rescuers and the fallen leader arrived on the easy slopes, we helped to stagger down to the CIC hut, where we were refreshed by cups of hot tea.

After that all that remained for us to do was descend to the car then tackle the long drive home which I did in between brief snoozes on lay- byes.

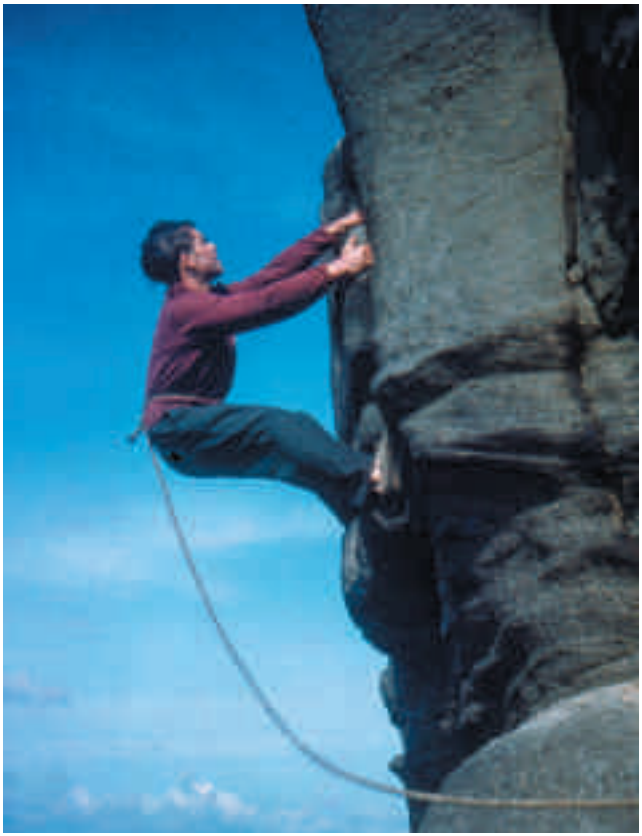
Although we had not succeeded on the Little Brenva we had plenty of tales with which to regale our friends at the Shoulder of Mutton on the following Thursday.

To add a footnote, John did eventually succeed on this route on Ben Nevis, climbing with John Wilkinson (Wilky). I was unavailable on that occasion.

Widdop and the Club

John Wilkinson

High in the hills of Calderdale in the South Pennines, at the head of the beautiful valley of Hardcastle Crags, lies Widdop Reservoir. The surrounding heather-clad moors with their gritstone edges have, for many years, been the focal point for climbers from many of the surrounding Yorkshire and Lancashire towns. This was particularly notable during the Second World War years 1939–45 when Widdop and its crags were easily accessible on foot, by bicycle and the occasional car.



Ken Heaton on 'The Flake' (MVS).

Widdop Rocks, as they are now known (originally called The Cludders on old maps), lie on the ridge to the south of the Reservoir. In 1928, members of the Manchester University Mountaineering Club, led by the great climber Maurice Linnell, discovered what they then called Mystery Buttress, one of the tallest buttresses (at about 90 feet) of gritstone in the Pennines. Over the years some of the best climbers in Britain have visited Widdop and made new routes: Maurice Linnell, Arthur Birtwistle, Arthur Dolphin, Don Whillans, Allan Austin, John Dunne. Routes of all grades up to E9 7a, together with a large selection of boulder problems and the adjacent crags of Gorple and Scout, provide the modern climber with a choice of extremely good routes.

In July 1941,after having spent my first fell walking holiday in the Lakes, I visited Widdop, a seven-mile walk over the moors north of my home in Todmorden. This established a routine for every Sunday until I went off to university in 1944. The climbers who frequented Widdop were, during the war years, a mixed bunch of men, some of whom were unfit medically for military service, those in reserved occupations (mainly engineers), students on university vacations and a few schoolboys like myself. We all used to meet up for lunch at the Widdop Waterman's cottage, run by Midgeley Barrett and his wife who provided tea and refreshments. I was fortunate that four of the regular climbers at Widdop were members of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. They took me in hand and taught me the basics of climbing, rope work and belaying, and took me up my first climbs. The club members were Ronnie Jackson from Burnley, Alan Fisher from Nelson, Bryan Greaves from Halifax

and David Jackson from Todmorden.

Alan, a regular soldier in the 1st Air Assault Brigade when on leave, taught me how to abseil in the fashion of the time just using the rope and a thick pair of trousers (no slings, harnesses and karabiners in those days). Alan was lucky to survive the war, having fought in Sicily and Arnhem when, of the140 men of D company, he was one of only five soldiers who escaped unwounded across the Rhine.

Ronnie Jackson, a highly qualified engineer who eventually ended up as a director of Lucas Aerospace Engineering, was an excellent climber

Alan Allsopp on Centipede, pitch 1 of 'The Three Cs' (VS)

in his young days. His great strength and mental tenacity enabled him to solo many of the hardest climbs of the day, often in nailed boots. Climbs such as the Dow Crag Eliminates and an epic winter ascent of an iced-up Hopkinsons Crack, probably at that time the second hardest winter climb in Britain. He even climbed the Flake on the Main Buttress of Widdop with Vince Wiggin of the Rucksack Club strapped on his back, well roped up of course.

David Jackson's eyesight was so poor that he was unable to take up his university place and was deemed unfit for military service. He subsequently developed as a fine artist, specialising in oil paintings of Lakeland and Scottish mountains and held several well received exhibitions. David accompanied me every Sunday on the walk to Widdop from Todmorden.

Bryan Greaves from Halifax was a senior draughtsman at Blakeborough Engineering in Brighouse and, as he owned a motor cycle, was a dispatch rider in the Home Guard. In the summer of 1942 Bryan took me on my first climbing holiday to the Lakes, staying at Middle Row Farm, Wasdale Head (FRCC Journal no 81, 2008 p58). Bryan took me to Wasdale again in 1943 and laid the foundations for my lifetime of climbs in the Lakes. In 1945, at the age of 18, I was proposed for membership of the FRCC by David and Ronnie Jackson.

It is interesting to see that over the years a substantial number of climbers who began climbing at Widdop joined the FRCC and have served the Club in various ways as committee members, hut wardens and officers of the Club.

There has been an almost constant contact with the Club by these members from the early 1940s right

up to present day, as listed below:

Eric Betts	Hut Warden
David Evans	Young Persons' Meet Co-ordinator
Bryan Greaves	Assistant Hut Booking Secretary
John A Hartley	Vice President
Harry Ironfield	Huts Secretary, Meets Secretary, Vice President, President, Advisory Trustee
John Jackson	Honorary Member
Ron Jackson	Hut Warden
Peter Lord	Hut Secretary
Jim Loxham	Guide Writer
Tom Parker	Hut Warden
Bill Smith	Hut Warden, Hut Secretary, Vice President
Jim Sutcliffe	Chronicler, Journal Editor, Vice President
Rod Valentine	Guide Writer, Vice President, President
John Wilkinson	Guide Books Editor, Vice President, President, Honorary Member, Advisory Trustee
Adrian Wiszniewski	Meets Secretary

Sadly the years have taken the their toll on some of the above named members but their past contribution to the Club's affairs and their patient mentoring in my early years of climbing at Widdop did much to inspire in me a love of Lakeland climbing, which of course led to my joining them in becoming a member of our FRCC.

I am sure that reading this short account will lead others to explore "the Cludders".

John Wilkinson on 'Wrinkled Wall' (VD)

2020 - The Year Covid-19 'drove us up the wall' instead of climbing it!

Brenda Fullard

Back in January 2020, 'zoom' was a camera setting and social distancing was about being polite. Bubbles were found in washing up liquid bottles and face masks were used by bank robbers. We were looking forward to another year with a vibrant FRCC meets list full of exciting national and international activities.

Even on our first FRCC Coronavirus update on 9th March 2020 we were pledging that we weren't going to cancel any club meets as the government advice was that most people could continue to go to work, school and other public places. However, we were learning what 2 metres looks like, how to wash our hands and how to recognise Covid symptoms.

Then things started to get serious. Italy was seeing high levels of Covid cases, then Spain and France. People were returning from 'super spreading' ski holidays with the disease. British people were now dying and by the middle of March we felt our responsibility was to cancel all forthcoming meets. One of the meets affected was the French Spring meet which could not go ahead in any case because of Foreign Office restrictions. In the end every meet, from March 2020, was cancelled.

So, when did we close huts? Only a week later, at the end of March, a rapidly changing situation meant that huts were closed. That could have been the end of club life for the foreseeable future, but the FRCC must go on!

Lots of suggestions for maintaining some sort of club life were suggested. Suddenly social media raised the game. There was an increase in the use of Face Book with lots of photos posted from past adventures in the hills. Zoom meeting technology was embraced for Committee business and for keeping members in touch with one another. YouTube was used for slide shows and lectures.

We still had our website, the BMC website, quarterly Chronicle, enews and, of course, plain and simply phoning up our older members who lived alone.

Plans were drawn up for day walks, climbing, and cycling.

By May the Club Committees embarked on a steep learning curve when the first set of meetings took place using Zoom. It was so wonderful to see and speak to everyone. Even after a short time there was a realisation about how important it is for members to meet one another in person.

Nationally things were easing a little and on 28th May there was an announcement allowing groups of up to six people (in England) and eight people (in Scotland) to meet outdoors. We were very conscious of the potential influx of people to the Lakes where many local people were fearful of disease brought by 'outsiders', and so the Huts stayed shut. Wardens were tasked with getting the huts ready for reopening with Health and Safety considerations as paramount. The Wardens put so much effort into this and from July 31st all our huts were open. Something to celebrate with good news at last!

So how were huts used in this new world? There

were two key differences. Firstly, the number of people who could stay was limited to two households. The cottages were simpler with one household per booking. The second related to availability: the BMC advised that clubs allow 72+ hours between visits, by which time any residual virus on surfaces should have died. Huts were therefore open for long weekends, but closed during the week.

Club life was returning with day meets and weekend camping meets arranged and attended. Many of these were reported in the Chronicle.

The October Annual General Meeting and Annual dinner was next on the horizon and we were not going to be defeated! No "damp squibs" to quote our then President, Hatty Harris. With the help of Hazel Jonas, we recruited one of our members, Laura Shields, whose technical competence gave us confidence to go forward with the AGM using Zoom, and with a postal voting system. This was to be followed by an 'evening party' again using Zoom (notice how the word Zoom keeps cropping up!).

In the end over 200 members registered to attend the AGM and 341 members returned their votes on the agenda items. Even with the limitations of Zoom technology, members reported on the meeting positively. It certainly gave opportunity for members who live abroad to take part and, also for those members who would have been unable to make the journey to the Lakes for that weekend.

The 'party' was attended by over 100 members with some dressed up in evening attire (black tie!) for the event. It included a 'slide show' by Peter Sterling; a raffle draw of G.H.Harris pictures; a speech from our President, Hatty Harris with a presentation of the President's plaque to her by Martyn Carr; our usual Toasts; and guest speaker, Rod Smith. A surprise presentation of the Honorary Membership certificate to Paul Exley was duly carried out by his wife, Cath Exley, at home whilst 'on screen'. Similarly, the hand-over of Presidency to Wendy Stirrup was carried out by Marc Stirrup at home whilst 'on screen'. No-one can say the FRCC is not adaptable!! Auld Lang Syne was played at the end but no-one heard it as everyone was chatting so loudly to each other! Lovely!!

It is now November and sadly back to doom and gloom. Covid-19 started its winter reappearance as predicted. All Lake District hut and cottage bookings from 5th November to 2nd December were cancelled. This followed Government announcement that 'Hotels, hostels and other accommodation should only open for those who have to travel for work purposes'. We had planned alternative arrangements for the Act of Remembrance on Great Gable and these had to be enacted. All members were invited to a virtual Act of Remembrance at 10.55 on Sunday 8th November to observe the 2 minutes silence. This had been pre-recorded by our new President, Wendy Stirrup, and so the recording could be viewed at a later time. Once again the technology skills of Laura Shields and Hazel Jonas made this possible.

After a brief and limited reopening of huts leading up to Christmas, the massive increase in Covid -19 infections finished 2020 with the closure of all huts and meets cancelled

The FRCC is still not defeated. The club YouTube slideshow programme continues.

Members have remained active. Face Book posts showed members making the most of the winter conditions. For those members living in Cumbria

there have been ascents of Helvellyn including Striding Edge, Blencathra via Sharp Edge, High Street tops from Haweswater, Loweswater Fells and biking around Ennerdale. Meanwhile other areas have also had snow and ice with members sharing pictures of walks in The Peak District including Hope Valley and the Roaches; The North-East including Durham Moors and Ingleborough, and from Lancashire Pendle Hill and Clougha Pike.

So what about 2021? There was good news on the vaccine being available. Day meets are planned and a full meets list is ready to go. Our huts will reopen. All will be well in the end!

Centenary Commemoration of Peace Day

Peter Smith

Across the whole country we saw galas, parades and exhibitions. The Fell and Rock Climbing Club marked 19th July by repeating the event of 1919 when the club was honoured with an invitation from the Peace Celebration Beacons and Bonfires Committee to mount a beacon and the Union Flag on the highest summit of England.

Our route, as in 1919, stretched for seven miles from Langdale along Mickleden to climb up Rossett Gill, dip past Angle Tarn, then rise steadily through Esk Hause to cross the rough ground of Broad Crag before the final ascent to the cairn on Scafell Pike.

In preparation for our Peace Day Centenary Commemoration the Rangers for the National Trust had undertaken, in May 2018, to re-build the summit cairn. It had to look good for this landmark occasion. The 1990s work was re-built up to the height of the capstone inserting more substantial through-stones.

The plaque and the adjacent original stonework were left unchanged.

Our prospects of good weather ended at the top of Rossett Gill as we entered cloud so dank that members baulked at repeating the leisurely lunchtime of 1919. Other club members ascended from Wasdale along with friends from the National Trust.

The flag party, keen to meet the target of 1 o'clock, moved into action. Very astutely the pole was in sections with every length measuring four feet. The assembled pole, therefore, could have a height of

Departing the Old Dungeon Ghyll

Banner across Scafell Pike summit dais

4 feet, or 8, or 12, or 16, or 20 feet depending on the fitness and navigational skills of the five-man party. Being good Fell and Rockers they managed to erect the full 20 feet. Whilst the plan, according to Geoff Lyons was to mount the flag pole on top of the summit dais the wind proved to be too strong for this to be practicable so following assembly of the five sections of pole and the threading of the halyard through the pulley at the top, which proved quite fiddly with cold fingers, the pole was lashed to the side of the dais and secured with three guy ropes. With the flagpole in place it just remained to attach the flag in time for the planned flag break at 1 o'clock; what could possibly go wrong? The top of the rolled flag was duly attached to the halyard but, in the process of doing so, someone who shall remain nameless let go of the other end of the halyard which was promptly swept skyward by the wind. For a few moments the escaping end of the halyard twisted around the section attached to the flag while frantic attempts were made to re-capture it using a walking pole. Alas, and perhaps inevitably, the halyard slowly unravelled and snaked its way up the pole before running through the top pulley, now twenty feet aloft, and falling to the ground. Fortunately, the flag party were now quite practised at erecting the pole so it didn't take too long to take it down, re-thread the halyard, and put it back in place; this time with a spare pair of hands holding onto the loose ends while the flag was attached.'

It was no better in 1919: 'We fixed the flagstaff but forgot the flag, so down came the pole again, and very securely the Union Jack was nailed to the mast.'

The 1919 Victory Plaque had, amazingly, been

salvaged from the fire that ravaged Brackenclose in April. The summit crowd, hushed in anticipation, gathered as Flag Master Graeme Ralph and his team successfully raised the flag.

Loud cheering rang out from the assembled throng as the Union Flag floated out over the summit of England. It flapped wildly in the strengthening wind but remained attached to the halyard – and, YES, the flag was flown correctly with the broad white band uppermost.

Wendy secured the summit banner across the dais. The legend blazoned across the Union Flag for the benefit of other hill walkers and the expected hordes of Three Peakers informed:

19th July 2019: Centenary Commemoration of Peace Day

11th November 1918: The Armistice halted fighting in the Great War 1914-1918.

28th June 1919: The Versailles Treaty of Peace settled the peace terms for the countries of Europe.

19th July 1919: A joyous nation celebrated Peace Day. The Fell and Rock Climbing Club was officially requested by the Peace Celebration Beacons and Bonfires Committee to undertake the lighting of beacon flares on Scafell Pike.

September 1919: Lord Leconfield gifted this summit of Scafell Pike to the nation in perpetual memory of the men of the Lake District who fell for God and King, for Freedom, Peace and Right, in the Great War 1914-1918.

The 1919 Journal records: 'The flares that were supplied for this purpose are composed of magnesium powder contained in zinc cylinders eight inches in diameter and three feet in length; they weigh with wooden crate about 100 pounds' and that, after the magnificent sunset had faded, 'the parachute rockets looked especially fine as the little parachutes holding their red or green light floated slowly down into Eskdale.'

Nick Millward, our Flare Master, was most grateful for modern technology. His flares weighed a mere 9 oz, were 11 inches long by 1 inch wide, and rose to an altitude of 1000ft burning for 30 seconds with 90,000 candelas of light intensity. He fired five white peace flares – one for every year of the war. Instead of a bugler sounding Reveille, as in 1919, we were honoured to have Piper Iain Gray repeating his performance of eight months earlier marking the Centenary of the Armistice. The mountain summit was the same. The forceful wind and stinging rain were the same. The tune was the same – Battle's

Iain Gray piping Battles O'er on Scafell Pike

O'er – very fitting for Peace Day.

Battles O'er

March no more my soldier laddie,
There is peace where there once was war.
Sleep in peace my soldier laddie,
Sleep in peace, now the battle's o'er
In the great glen they lay a sleeping,
Where the cool waters gently flow.
And the grey mist is sadly weeping.
For those brave lads of long ago.

Everyone applauded the piping of Battle's Oe'r as a fitting conclusion for this memorable commemoration. The occasion was important and we felt proud of our involvement. The summit conditions deteriorated.

The strong wind increased markedly and the low temperature dropped further. We packed away and the rain set in with a vengeance as we stumbled in poor visibility across the boulder field and down to the valley where, for a while, the rain eased to a drizzle. The Old Dungeon Ghyll hotel was reached just ahead of a deluge. Our replication of the events of 1919 did not apply in the pub. Beer then was 4 pence a pint; today it cost us a massive £4 a pint. We didn't dwell upon that. We drank and we refilled. We had earned it.

A lovely welcome greeted our return to Raw Head; a blazing fire and a warm room arranged neatly with tables draped by crisp white cloths on which cutlery, serviettes and wine glasses had been attractively arranged by Alys Strachan, Audrey Plint and Tina Smith ready for the evening buffet: salads, garlic bread, pizzas, chillies, rice, baked potatoes, fruit crumble, fruit salads and various sweets.

Tina, Audrey and Alys ushered in the Centenary Cake to be cut by organiser Peter Smith.

The Book of Signatures for Peace Day 1919 contained such luminaries as Arthur Wakefield, Edward Scantlebury, Darwin Leighton, Theo Chorley and Herbert Cain; eighty names in all. Brenda Fullard collected seventy-seven signatures for our 2019 Book; some of them gathered in the rain without a single smudge. The book contains a splendid watercolour by Chris Sherwin.

Buffet at Rawhead and Peter cutting the Commemorative Cake

Chris Sherwin watercolour

Singing The Hills – For All Time

Richard Hargreaves

In July 2018 Richard and Jane Hargreaves took part in the final weekend of the National Trust 'Songs on the Summits' project. A celebration of the FRCC's 1923 WW1 memorial 'Great Gift' to the NT and the nation of twelve peaks and their surroundings around the head of Wasdale so that we could all walk and climb there "in perpetuity".

In Autumn 2017 some musically inclined members, especially aficionados of the annual Music Meets, received an e-mail from then Club Archivist Chris Sherwin. It alerted us to yet another WW1 memorial event, something about joining a community choir to sing on some Lakes hills in the summer of 2018. "I'm sorry, Chris, I'm ashamed to say that I didn't really grasp what it was all about; I didn't give it much thought".

A surprise phone call in February 2019 put me right. The call was from Jessie Binns, recently appointed NT Visitor Experience and Engagement Manager (North Lakes). With infectious enthusiasm and the eloquence to go with it she gave me details of her ambitious project to celebrate the Great Gift with a mass "sing-in" by a pop-up community choir on all, or nearly all, of the 12 peaks donated by the FRCC over three weekends in early Summer 2018. More specifically:

- Dave Camlin, singer, musician, composer and leader of choirs in Cumbria and the North East, would create a song cycle of 12 or more songs old and new to be performed on weekends in May, June and July on the summits of peaks donated by the Fell and Rock and engraved on the club's memorial plaque on Great Gable.

- May: the Gables Great and Green, Brandreth, Base Brown and Grey Knotts.

- June: Lingmell, Broad Crag and Great End (Scafell Pike not included as a summit because that had been gifted to the NT in 1917 by Lord Leconfield, though the cairn was going to be rebuilt as part of

Inauguration of the FRCC memorial plaque on Great Gable in 1924

The Fellowship Choir on Scafell Pike on the wet June weekend

the whole project)

- July: Glaramara and Allen Crags.

- The singers, sixty or more each weekend, would be the "Fellowship" choir, the words "fellowship of hill and wind and sunshine" being taken from the speech by Geoffrey Winthrop Young in June 1924 at the inauguration of the plaque on Great Gable. Singers would be recruited from the Remembrance Day on Great Gable in November 2017, from Dave Camlin's choirs in Cumbria and the North East, and from NT members, the FRCC and others.

- Dave is a Natural Voice Practitioner, which means that singers learn their parts orally from him and always perform from memory without their heads buried in music or scripts. For non-choir members Dave would provide scripts and digital recordings for learning at home before everyone who had booked in for one of the weekends would spend the Saturday practising in a community hall in the Lakes.

- For the hill walks on the Sundays the 60 or more singers would be organized into walking groups led by NT rangers and other volunteer leaders.

- Additionally, a team of students and lecturers from York University would accompany the Fellowship Choir on the Sunday hill walks, recording in full 360° video the singing on the summits. More earthbound visitors to Keswick Museum would thus be able to share the experience of mountain top singing in Virtual Reality in a research project to compare how it felt to be taking part in the real thing and "virtually".

- Having sung on all or nearly all the hills the project would conclude with a "Singing Picnic" in October on Peace How above Grange in Borrowdale. Not marked as such on any map I could find and more of a roadside pimple than a genuine hill this is a site donated to the NT by Canon Rawnsley in 1917 as a place of peace and beauty to refresh and soothe the minds of servicemen on home leave from the trenches during WW1.

- By the time Jessie had briefed me so fully on the details of her project I was pretty well hooked. Jane and I were ready to sign up for the July

Rehearsal on Thorneythwaite Fell

Peace How, Grange, Borrowdale,
and the Canon Rawnsley seat

weekend, the only one we could do because of other commitments in May and June. I call it "her" project because it was her idea in the first place. She had persuaded her NT bosses to back it. On her head be it if it didn't work out in the end. Quite a feat of creative thinking, passion and persuasive power. Not bad for someone, as I learned later, born and bred in the faraway Home Counties and who had never set foot on a proper hill in her life. I could see why she got the job!

But why me? Why was I targeted for the special phone call? Some readers of the Journal will already know the answer but for others who don't, please prepare for some illustrious name-dropping from the annals of mountaineering history. My mother was a granddaughter of William Cecil Slingsby (1849 – 1929), "Father of Norwegian Mountaineering" and of Slingsby's Chimney fame on Scafell and other early climbing exploits. The H L Slingsby on the Gable memorial plaque was his son and would have been one of my great uncles had he survived the war. One of Slingsby's daughters was my grandmother Katharine and the other was Eleanor who married the then doyen of British alpine mountaineering Geoffrey Winthrop Young (GWY), pacifist, poet, author, teacher and educationist, and, of course, the man who along with Arthur Wakefield gave the speech at the inauguration of the FRCC memorial plaque on Great Gable in 1924.

GWY was therefore my great uncle. To complete the litany of mountaineering great names behind me, my father was A B Hargreaves, rock star companion of Colin Kirkus, Menlove Edwards, Alf Bridge and other luminaries of the North Wales and Lakes climbing scene in the 1920s and 30s. Incidentally, he was the Fell and Rock Treasurer between 1934 and 1948, very much involved in the purchase of Brackenclose Wood and the building of our much-loved Brackenclose hut in 1938. The inspiration for his determined backing of the Brackenclose project had been his experience of Helyg, converted from a "hovel" into the Climbers Club hut in the Ogwen valley in North Wales in 1925. It had been the availability of this simple and cheap accommodation that led to the great development of rock climbing by non-hotel goers, the base for Kirkus, Longland and others as they created the great routes on North Wales cliffs from 1925 onwards. Back to the litany of great names behind me, I married Jane Wager, daughter of L R Wager, eminent geologist, interpreter of Greenland rock phenomena and, of course, a member of the 1933 Everest expedition when he and Wyn Harris picked up the Mallory/Irvine ice axe. With all this honourable mountain lineage on my slender shoulders it is no wonder that I never aspired to great heights in the climbing world and chose to enjoy hills and mountain ranges in my own and sometimes musical way.

It was some of this lineage which prompted President John Barrett to invite me to speak at the 2013 November Remembrance Sunday gathering on Great Gable, the occasion for the dedication of the new replacement memorial plaque. Before quoting from GWY's 1924 speech I told the story of his ascent of Gable that day from Gatescarth in Buttermere. It was his first real mountain walk on the wooden leg he had designed himself and had built for him by Italian craftsmen. His left leg had been amputated above the knee, shattered by Austrian shelling of his Friends Ambulance Unit in the Dolomites on the Italian front in 1917. Despite fierce opposition from military top brass but with Quaker friends in high places in London he had spent WW1 creating and commanding Friends' Ambulance Units on the Western Front and Italy. The wooden leg had a screw device so that he could

shorten it going uphill and lengthen it for downhill. It was still, a slow, long and arduous day, as much for his companions as for him, on that raw June day of cold, rain and wind. By the time the party got back to Gatescarth from Gable they had been out for 11 hours. I then read out just the first paragraph of the long and florid speech he had composed for the occasion:

"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."

The next time I heard these words again was in the Friends Meeting House in Keswick on Saturday July 21st 2018. It was the end of a day's practice of songs to be sung on Glaramara and Allen Crags on the Sunday: "Dear Native Regions" (an early Wordsworth poem set to music for the event by Dave Camlin), "Meet on the Ledge" (Dave's arrangement of the Richard Thompson/Fairport Convention 1960s folk-rock classic) and 'Old Straight Tracks' (Dave Camlin's own new song, walking the hills in the company of pre-historic ghosts):

In the heat of the summer when the sky is big
We walk straight tracks as we dance our jig:
Long Meg, Mayburgh, Castlerigg;
The old straight track back home.

For Jane and I, having signed up for the July weekend finale of the project, it had been a big challenge to become familiar with the words, notes and rhythms of the three songs, sitting in front of the computer at home, trying to sing along to Dave Camlin's backing tracks of the tenor line. The warm welcome in Keswick from the veterans of the previous weekends were a comfort and helped us to engage adequately enough as the rehearsal day progressed. After intensive rehearsal of these three songs the veterans enjoyed relaxing a bit into the repertoire of the previous weekends, ending with a powerful rendering of the Fellowship Song which they had sung on Great Gable in May. I was astonished to hear how Dave Camlin had transformed the prose of GWY's speech into a rousing, rhythmically intricate song in four- part harmony. We also heard Ewan McColl's "The Joy of Living" which they had sung on the foul weather June weekend.

Les and Ruth Meer had been Fell and Rock reinforcements for that weekend, as walk leader and singers, as the choir sang on Lingmell and at a dripping Dropping Crag above the Corridor Route before a photo-opportunity on Scafell Pike itself. They had to leave out Great End but managed another wet song by Sprinkling Tarn.

At 8 o'clock on the Sunday morning, 22nd July, 60 or more singers met their walk leaders in the National Trust car park at Seatoller. We were arranged into groups of about 10 people in categories from slow to fast so that there was a staggered start from 8.30 onwards for the walk towards Combe Ghyll and the route over Thorneythwaite Fell to Glaramara. It was a fine Lakes day of sunny spells and occasional clouds blown around the hills by a cool wind. The first objective was Thorneythwaite Fell where we stopped to rehearse the songs again while the BBC and National Trust crews were arriving to set up their respective drones and recording equipment. The classic view down Borrowdale to Derwentwater and Skiddaw beyond made a perfect and

memorable setting for the mass sing-in amidst all the paraphernalia of drones, cables, and recording crews.

Forewarned by being asked if as a great-nephew of GWY I would be willing to be interviewed by the BBC I waited my turn after Jessie Binns and Dave Camlin had been interviewed while the main body of singers began to move on uphill. The well-known professional interviewer Robert Hall had done his homework. After prompting me about memories of GWY and whether there was a spiritual dimension to my hill going he asked what the Great Gift meant to me. I had to confess that for most of my life I had rather taken for granted the freedom to walk and climb in the hills but that involvement in this National Trust project had made me realize what a truly inspirational gesture the FRCC gift had been. That was the clip which appeared on BBC TV Breakfast on the Monday morning and on national news during the day. Thank goodness it made sense!

At the end of the lunch stop a bit below Glaramara top the singers, widely scattered over the hillside, began to gather together and break into song with an impromptu rendering of a round, "Peace be with you, peace before you, peace all around you". Another quietly memorable moment in the day.

On Glaramara summit there were more technological high jinks as the York University crew did their video recording of all our three songs of the day for the future benefit of more earthbound visitors to the museum in Keswick. It felt mildly ironic that with all the talk and feelings about freedom in the hills we should be dragooned, albeit with gentle persuasion, into ranger-led walking groups with leaders trying to keep their wandering souls together. By the time the increasingly informal line reached Allen Crags the uniformity had quietly melted away.

It was evening by then and dark clouds were drifting across the looming bowler-hatted shape of Great Gable as we perched among the rocks on Allen Crags summit to deliver to the hills a last rendering of Dear Native Region, Meet On the Ledge and Old Straight Tracks. Finally, I don't know if Dave Camlin asked for it or if by some kind of osmosis the idea became reality but somehow everyone broke into the Fellowship song for the last time on a Great Gift summit. I found myself enveloped in the sound and words of Dave's incredible musical expression of Geoffrey Winthrop Young's words from 1924, words which I had also spoken on the top of Gable five years before. I was half remembering that moment while also tangling with trying to sight-read the music and words from someone's copy beside me. The impact of those few minutes, a fusion of the sheer sound around me of 60 voices singing a momentous song on a mountain top, the cloud veiling and unveiling Gable's black outline against the evening sky, memories of Gable Remembrance Days, and the personal struggle to combine words and tenor part in time with everyone else, is probably greater now as I write than it was at the time on the top of Allen Crags. It is good for the soul that spine tinglings can happen more in recollection than they did at the time. After the short walk to Esk Hause and the long descent down Grains Ghyll to Seathwaite and the road to Seatoller we said our goodbyes and thankyous in the car park 13 hours after setting off. A unique day, if ever there was one.

For Jessie Binns there were further happenings to organize but as a way to celebrate the 1917- 1923 gift of hills to the National Trust and by extension to all of us her dream of singing the hills for all time

had come true. Her ambitious project had been thoroughly vindicated.

Epilogue 1

Perhaps inevitably the planned mass sing by 200 people on Peace How in Borrowdale on Saturday October 12th 2018 was washed away in the torrential floods of Storm Callum. A much-reduced group of singers had to make do instead with singing in a school hall in Keswick. However, after a nervous, watery drive to the Salving House for the night Jane and I walked down a slightly drier Borrowdale to Grange on the Sunday to try to locate Peace How. Unnamed on any map that we could find it is a grassy mound, embedded with rocks, beside the road opposite the Borrowdale Gates hotel and graced with a stone bench in memory of Canon Rawnsley who donated the field in 2017. A magically beautiful spot with views up Borrowdale to the higher hills beyond and down over Derwentwater to Skiddaw. It would have been further magic to have had the big sing-in there on an autumnal day as a conclusion to the Songs on the Summits project. It wasn't to be, but credit to Jessie and Dave for imagining it in the first place.

Epilogue 1.5

A different conclusion did come about with an event called the "Great Gift of Freedom" at the Kendal Mountain Festival in November 2018. Presented by Paul Rose in the absence of Chris Bonington, the Fellowship Choir assembled again to sing in the Kendal Leisure Centre, National Trust rangers and volunteers showed the reconstruction of the summit cairn on Scafell Pike, Jonathan Westaway from Lancaster University gave a talk on "Mountains of Memory – Landscapes of Loss", and a trio of National Trust manager . . . . , an NT ranger and an FRCC member (me), took part in a live sofa-seated discussion on stage with Paul Rose on the achievements of the project. The Great Gift had been well celebrated, widely publicised and recognized as a pivotal moment in the development of the freedom to walk the hills which we all enjoy today.

Epilogue 2

GWY – Geoffrey Winthrop Young 1876 - 1958

Involvement in this project prompted me to read again the excellent biography, "Geoffrey Winthrop Young" by the late FRCC member Alan Hankinson. It is both a sensitive, sympathetic but not uncritical biography of a complicated man and his remarkable marriage but also an important record of GWY's very significant role in the history of mountaineering and outdoor activity in the UK. Four things stand out in his legacy:

1. Rock climbing guidebooks to individual crags. GWY was the driving force behind the concept, the writing and the publication of Archer Thompson's Climbers Club Guide to Lliwedd in 1909. The very first such guide to a single cliff, pocket-sized or easily carried in a rucksack. It was GWY's own more literary, poetic guide to the roofs of Trinity College in Cambridge in 1900 that had given him the idea of a guidebook for the climbs on Lliwedd.

2. Foundation of the BMC in 1944.
   As President of the Alpine Club 1941 -1944 he was able to launch his dream of an organization to represent all UK mountaineering, overcoming the deeply entrenched hostility of Alpine Club die-hards to get the movement started. This was a bit like his having to get round the military top

Geoffrey Winthrop Young (with wooden leg) climbing with AB Hargreaves at the Teryn Bluffs, North Wales

brass in 1914 to allow Friends Ambulance Units and nurses near the front lines in Belgium and France in WW1.

3. National Parks.
   In 1938 he was in a delegation to the meeting of a Parliamentary Committee to advance the concept of National Parks in the UK.

4. Outdoor Education
   His profound belief in the value of outdoor experience in the lives and education of young people came from his lifelong buzzwords: Vitality, Freedom, Initiative, Responsibility. They led him to support the work of Kurt Hahn in Germany, helping him to escape from Hitler's Germany and establish Gordonstoun School for private education and the Outward Bound Schools at Eskdale, Ullswater and elsewhere for young people from other walks of life. I think it is probably not just coincidence that the first UK Local Education Authority to open its own outdoor education centre was Derbyshire at White Hall near Buxton when Jack Longland was its Director of Education. He was one of many young climbers at Cambridge in the 1920s who were much influenced by GWY and his wife Len living in Cambridge at the time.

A Personal Recollection

In my childhood Gruncle Geoffrey and Graunt Len, as they were to me and my sisters, were distant but well-recognized members of the wider family, particularly important on our mother's side. Geoffrey famous because he had lost a leg in the war, though nothing was ever said about his pacifism, and famous as a climber who still climbed with a wooden leg. I remember having to write thankyou letters to them at what seemed a strange but memorable address: The Two Queens, Cambo, Northumberland, the disused pub which they rented for several years. My clearest memory of him is at 16 in 1952 when my parents were allowed to take me away from boarding school one day to meet Geoffrey and Len who were staying at one of their favourite haunts, the Hill Inn, Chapel-le-Dale, under Ingleborough. Genuinely avuncular and smiling he gave me a copy of his famous book "On High Hills" which he inscribed there and then to me as his "great-nephew and hereditary mountaineer". I don't think I ever managed to read it all through; I much preferred the more readable "Mountains with a Difference" published in 1953. I don't remember what he said that day but Len must have talked fluently as always. She is famous for a phrase worthy of Mrs Malaprop, "Don't talk to me while I am interrupting!"

Thinking inside the box

Chris and Eleanor Sherwin

As the club archivists we are often in receipt of fascinating imagery and artifacts relating to our members and the development of the club but there are times when something really special comes along. This happened during the summer of 2017 when Pam and Peter Shawcross brought along a cardboard box for us at the Birkness committee meeting. This unassuming box contained a donation from their good friend and CC member Frank Fitzgerald. Frank in turn had been a friend of Eric Ivison (hut warden at Brackenclose for many years) and thought that the club took care of its history so may have a place for certain items. So, we were really taken aback when we opened the lid and read a short note attached to the underside.

- 3 pairs of crampons: 1940's early 1950's (Austrian North Wall).
- Edelrid adjustable crampons.
- Simond walking crampons as those used on Everest (1951, '52 and '53), given to him by Tom Bourdillon.
- Chouinard Camp ice axe (unused) which is unusual with a bamboo shaft, one of the last of its type.
- Tom Bourdillon's Grivel ice axe used on a Kangchenjunga Expedition given by John Clegg, the expedition doctor.

So, this box contained a small piece of history which would happily accompany other Everest items in the club archives. Our member Alf Gregory had been a team member on that memorable expedition as Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans were just 300ft away from the summit but turned back and saved their lives. Two years later, in 1955, Charles Evans led the expedition that was first to climb the world's third-highest mountain, Kanchenjunga, India. The backbone of the team was made up of key players from the victorious Everest expedition: George Band, Jack Jackson, Tom Bourdillon and Charles Evans with the key addition of Joe Brown alongside Norman Hardie and Tony Streather.

We thanked Frank on behalf of the club and prepared to photograph and record the items when a further donation of a Kanchenjunga 1955 expedition rucksack was made… superb! These artefacts not only give us an insight into equipment, often specifically developed for these expeditions, but open the door into that time of exploration and endeavour within living memory.

After his tragic, early death, Tom Bourdillon's name lived on in the mountaineering community but only recently was honoured again – as a scientist. Educated at Oxford where he was president of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club, Tom made his career as a physicist working on rocket research. It was only as a sideline and personal passion that he designed equipment to help mountaineers breathe at high altitudes. Convinced that apparatus in use was inefficient, he developed a system in which a mask was clamped over the mountaineer's mouth so that no oxygen escaped. A second cylinder was added into which the mountaineer breathed out and filled with soda lime to absorb carbon dioxide.

Tom and his father Robert (a medical researcher) designed and created the closed cylinder system,

which they built at Stoke Mandeville Hospital (Aylesbury) and tested in Snowdonia. The prototype equipment did not have much chance to benefit from this testing and had short comings - the details of which are well documented but it got the original two lead climbers, Tom and Charles, to the south summit of Everest as the temperature dropped to –25˚C; Hillary and Tenzing alternatively used the lighter open circuits all the way to success three days later.

Recently, a project at University College London studied medical techniques in extreme environments and found that Bourdillon's equipment had allowed the climbing team to ascend very quickly. Scientists on the Cauldwell Xtreme Everest project established the world's highest laboratory at 26,000ft and sought to create a new version of Bourdillon's equipment. Research also includes a work on a miniaturised system for sufferers of the increasingly-common disease, COPD, which restricts breathing, making it hard for sufferers to go out because they must be near to an oxygen source. The equipment could return their mobility.

Tom Bourdillon died on 29 July 1956, aged 31 ascending the east buttress of the Jagihorn, Bernese Oberland. But clearly, his legacy continues and so we can look at these possessions and remember Tom as a premier mountaineer, scientist and visionary.

Who knows just what might be inside the next box?!

The Day the Music Died

John Allen 10th October 1958 - 18th May 2020

Graham Hoey

On Monday 18th May 2020 John Allen tragically lost his life in a fall at Stoney West.

He was a well-loved legend within the climbing World and well on his way to becoming a National Treasure - a title which would have amused him but one I feel he would have accepted with his usual humility.

John started climbing around the age of 10 being mentored by the family friend and experienced gritstoner Les Gillott. On their early forays from his home in Sheffield John would imagine he was his hero Joe Brown and when he was just 12 years old he led arguably Brown's hardest gritstone route the Dangler (E2 5c) at Stanage. A year later he was adding his own routes and went one step further than his hero by leading Soyuz (E2 5c) at Curbar Edge, a line attempted by Brown some twenty years before. These were pre-Ondra days when climbers didn't step out of nappies onto a climbing wall and for a schoolboy to be working his way through the hardest gritstone climbs of the day was simply unprecedented. Then, in 1973, Allen stunned the local climbing fraternity with his ascent of the 'impossible' east wall of High Neb Buttress at Stanage Edge. Old Friends (E4 5c) was a serious route with poor protection and a strenuous, technical, committing crux an uncomfortable distance above the ground. Along with his equally demanding climbs, Constipation (E4 6a) and Stanleyville (E4 5c) also done that year, Allen had added three of the hardest routes on gritstone at the age of just 14. Only Green Death (E5 5c), Edge Lane (E5 5c) and Linden (E5 6a (aid)) were harder. The following year, Allen demonstrated his increasing maturity as a climber by making the first

John at Llandudno Pier

free ascent of The Moon (E3 5c, 5b) on Gogarth. He was clearly no mere crag rat and more and more climbers began to take notice. But the best was yet to come as the 'Shirley Temple of British rock' (as Crags Magazine dubbed him) went on to set gritstone alight over the next two years. His best routes from this period are amongst the finest outcrop climbs in the country and took gritstone climbing to new levels. In 1975 he added (amongst others) Moon Crack (E5 6b), Reticent Mass Murderer

(E5 6b), Hairless Heart (E5 5c), White Wand (E5/6 6a), Profit of Doom (E4 6b), and London Wall (E5 6b), the last four of these being climbed within a two week period!

London Wall... at 16... unbelievable!

He also found time to pop across to Cloggy to make the (credited) first free ascent of Great Wall (E4 6a, 6a), although, as Mountain magazine laughingly qualified, his ascent did use chalk!

In 1976 the assault continued; Artless (E5 6b), Moon Walk (E4 6a), Nectar (E5 6b, 6b), Strapadictomy

A 17 year old John Allen leading Edge Lane (E4 5c)

(E5 6a) and Caricature (E5 6a) all simply stunning climbs. Of Caricature it was written that "Allen stepped over the threshold of the possible" and in a way this summarised John's attitude to climbing which made him and other pioneers before and after him so visionary. He was completely unfazed by the apparent difficulty of a line, nor by any reputation it may have acquired from the efforts of earlier 'greats' or his older rivals. He revelled in the challenge they represented at the time. Even today with cams, sticky boots and 'modern fitness' these routes from 1975-1976 still present a considerable challenge and on-sight ascents are rare.

Then, late in 1976 John left with his parents for New Zealand. First ascents here and impressive repeats of hard routes at Arapiles in Australia kept John ticking along. During this period he also proved his worth on big walls with a phenomenal (non-jumared) ascent in 1981 of The Nose on El Capitan with Simon Horrox in a day. Between them they lead and seconded every pitch; the first time this had ever been achieved, the locals were amazed.

In the early eighties John developed a recurrent dislocating shoulder which was so lax it could pop out when he rolled over in bed awkwardly. He eventually had surgery on it early in 1982. The recovery from this was quite slow, especially as the surgeon didn't believe in physiotherapy! He had difficulty trying to regain flexibility but typically he didn't make a fuss about it despite it affecting his climbing for a number of years. After surgery, John returned to England to find that things had moved on somewhat. Beau Geste had been climbed by Jonny Woodward and the grades were increasing. He found it hard to catch up. E7 was the new top level and the heir apparent Johnny Dawes was about to push standards even higher. Nevertheless, John carried on new-routing adding a plethora of

routes all over the Peak. Although no longer at the cutting edge, he was actually climbing technically at his best during the mid-eighties and produced some superb climbs including Chip Shop Brawl (E5 6c), West Side Story (E4 7a), Shirley's Shining Temple (E5 7a), The Fall (E6 6b), Boys Will Be Boys (E7 6c), The Children's House (E6 7a), Feet Neet (E5 6c) and Concept of Kinky (E6 6c - his last hard route on grit, in 1989). Some of these have become classic highballs whereas the others have yet to receive even a handful of repeats. Boys Will Be Boys is modern hard while The Children's House has in my view one of the finest technical sequences on grit.

Eventually John's business commitments and, it has to be said, increasing girth, led to a slowing down of his climbing activity but he never lost the bug. Along with most of us he came to embrace sport climbing and regularly holidayed in Spain. More recently he had become enamoured once again with new routing and had been enthusiastically developing a number of sport climbs on the limestone quarries in the Peak District. This was not without excitement, however. On one occasion, to avoid being caught trespassing by the local farmer, John quickly threw himself to the ground and lay as flat and as still as possible in the long grass just metres away!

As a young grit-obsessed teenager climbing in the early 1970s I had heard of John Allen, "the next Joe Brown", but it wasn't until 1975 on Millstone Edge that our paths crossed. A young man walked up to Edge Lane, put on his helmet, tied on to his rope and promptly soloed it. It was a captivating sight as the climber calmly and smoothly made his way up one of the hardest routes in the Peak - I had never seen anything like it. "That's John Allen" my friend said. Allen was just 16, unbelievably a few months younger than myself, but looked considerably older with his strong physique and confident climbing style.

On his return from New Zealand in 1982 I got to know him through our shared love of gritstone climbing. We were kindred spirits, both 'children of grit' who had learned the subtle nuances of gritstone climbing and we both loved talking about it! On one occasion we came across each other in Chee Dale and spent ages discussing in minute detail the holds and sequences of some routes we had done on Stanage. After some considerable time John's climbing partner, Mark Stokes looked at us despairingly "Oh come on, that's enough 'Pockets

John Allen: Technical Master

and Pebbles' for today he said.

John had a wonderful calm temperament and would always treat you as an equal whereas I always saw him on a higher pedestal than myself, feeling the warmth and joy you get when talking to someone who is a master of that which you are passionate about. He was always a pleasure to climb with, wonderful to watch with superb balance and technique. I remember doing a first ascent with him on Rivelin Edge. I was going well on the grit managing 6c (english!) pretty consistently. He was not in the best of physical condition but casually stepped up to a break, rocked into it using a pebble and stood up. Looks OK I thought, standard grit move, but it was only when I got on it I realised the sheer steepness of the face. On a slab I might have managed it but … I needed a bit of tight on that one! John also had a fantastic sense of humour and a mischievous streak. We were once climbing on Ramshaw Rocks with the gritstone jedi Martin Veale. Coming up as third man on John's new route I was astonished to find my car keys buried at the back of a break. It was obvious how they must have got there but when I accused John his absolute denial along with a completely deadpan face was so convincing that I was left flummoxed. It was over 30 years later that he admitted, amongst fits of laughter, that he'd put them there - still found it funny even then - lovely man. However, despite his mild nature and patience John didn't suffer fools gladly which meant most American climbers he met in Yosemite! On one visit to the USA he fashioned a pair of aerials from coat hangers, attached them to his head and wandered into a local bar. Eventually someone was 'hooked' and asked him what they were for. "Communication with Aliens" he said matter of factly. Most people would have got a punch but John had the charisma to get away with it.

He became in the course of his life a rich man but no one would ever have known it to see him out and about or to hear him talking; John was never 'flash', always a warmhearted generous man. He was also very modest about his achievements but he was understandably quite proud of them; when interviewing him for Peak Rock he jokingly said he rather hoped one day to see a chapter in a book entitled 'The John Allen Years'!

I regret I was not in the traditional sense a closer friend of John's. We would bump into each other at parties, at guidebook launches, out at the crag or go climbing together occasionally but we had a strong bond and respect for each other born from our love of climbing on gritstone. I will never forget his smile, his soft lazy Sheffield twang, his childish mischievousness, his grace, poise and strength. I will miss the "Pockets and Pebbles" greatly. He leaves behind a fine legacy of climbs; "So Many Classics, So Little Time" (E4 6b John Allen 1984).

I will think of him as I solo along Stanage on warm summer evenings, the rising sound of the curlew behind and he will be there. No longer an old man but the young man I watched all those years ago floating effortlessly up a gritstone arete.

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Meets Secretary: Covid 2020

Hazel Jonas

I became Meets Secretary in November 2019. Since then, the average monthly meets tally has been 0.8. This puts me on a par with the current R number. I have no qualms about level pegging. At some point though, it would be nice to outstrip a virus.

So, when asked to write my bit for the Journal, I had a crisis. What could I write about? Should I write anything at all? Superimpose an image of a crystal ball instead? Would a tweet not suffice? After all, the number of characters in a tweet exceeds the number of meets.

Still, who needs a self-absorbed Meets Secretary? In my Covid bubble, I had forgotten about the 'Two Years in the Life of a Club' bit. We have had a myriad of successful meets in that time. Before my kiss-of-death tenure, Dave Wilkinson ran a very varied meets programme.

Climbing-specific meets have been a huge success. Aspirants and longstanding members have formed new climbing partnerships. And, our Welcome Meets lived up to their name. All in all, our Meets List is a reflection of the inspiration and experience of our members. From Classic Rock to Ski Mountaineering to marking the centenary of Peace Day 1919, we had it all; Brackenclose remained noticeably absent from the Meets List, but Birkness filled the gap.

Then came March 2020. Hut-based meets ground to a halt but we didn't stand still. Regional day meets have made an appearance. We have even had the dizzy delights of weekend camping meets. In the ever changing world of Covid, these were snatched moments of course.

Zoom has become the norm. And YouTube. For the first time ever, our Act of Remembrance was not on the top of Gable, but in front of our PCs, tablets and phones.

Who knows what the coming months will bring. There is a strong possibility, that our Meets List could be a serious contender in the Women's Prize for Fiction 2021. No mean feat for someone with a Lancashire Hamster Federation certificate for coming fifth out of five. One thing is certain. There will be more chopping and changing of plans.

As we edge towards more optimistic times with our vaccination programme I am hopeful. We still have plenty of Zoom plans up our sleeve, but... It is only a question of time before you hear my dulcet tones on the hill and in the huts, 'Fancy doing me a meet'...

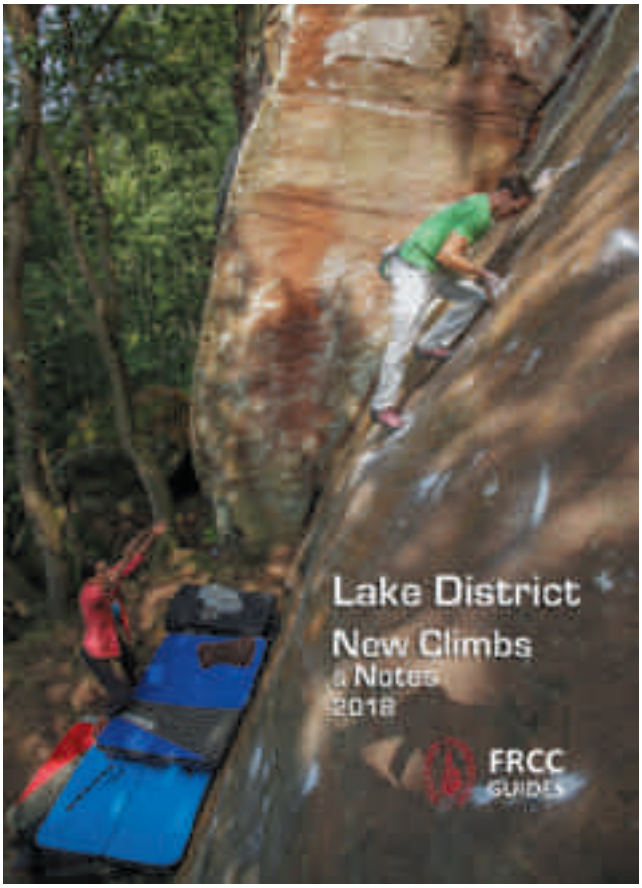
In the meantime, from a linguist not a physicist:

'Think like a proton, always positive'.

FRCC GUIDEBOOKS in 2019 and 2020

Ron Kenyon

FRCC GUIDES are an important and very visible part of the Club's activities.



In 2018 the Club produced a 'New Climbs and Notes' supplement which recorded new routes climbed in the Lakes since the publication of the last definitive guides, excluding the forthcoming guides noted below. The 63 pages covered summer and winter routes.

Guidebook work over the last two years has mainly been focused on the following guidebooks –

Lakes Sport & Slate FRCC/WIRED GUIDES 2020

The Lakes has a number of sports crags with the two most important being Chapel Head Scar and Bram Crag Quarry. It was felt that these bolted climbs deserved comprehensive coverage and link this to incorporate Lakeland Slate, where there are a number of sports crags. With the prospect of a new guide and following its publication there has been increased interest in the rebolting and retro-bolting of existing routes and also establishing new sports routes, especially at Scout Scar and Runestone Quarry. The guide was co-published by FRCC/WIRED Guides in July 2020 – despite being in the middle of the Covid 19 epidemic the guide has been well received.

Duddon and Wrynose

The Duddon valley is a rock climber's paradise with many, mostly compact single pitch, crags scattered throughout the valley. In the 26 years since the publication of the last guide an enormous amount of exploration has taken place and this warrants

the publication of a guide solely for the Duddon that will also contain crags on Pike o'Blisco which are in the Duddon watershed. Much work has been done, checking text, climbs, preparing photo diagrams and taking photographs. With the Covid 19 epidemic everyone has become used to communication technology such as Zoom and What's App - and a What's App group was set up for people checking out the routes etc. This is a very useful system and will no doubt be used in the future. Publication is expected in the Spring of 2021.

Work has also been progressing on the Dow, Coppermines & Eskdale guide and Lake District Rock 3. The award winning second edition, published in 2015, is unsurprisingly the Club's most popular publication having sold over 9,000 copies. Rockfax produced Lake District Climbs in late 2019. This selective guide to trad climbs competes with our own publications and, with the Covid 19 restrictions over the summer, recent sales reflect this, yet are proving resilient, reinforcing the quality and value our guides provide.

Photographs

Photographs make and sell guidebooks!! Over the years the use of photographs has increased and now they are an integral element of the guide. Clear photo diagrams delineate routes and the action images inspire, informing plans. Digital cameras now give increased flexibility and the development and the recent use of aerial photography adds a totally new dimension.

FRCC Access and Conservation Fund

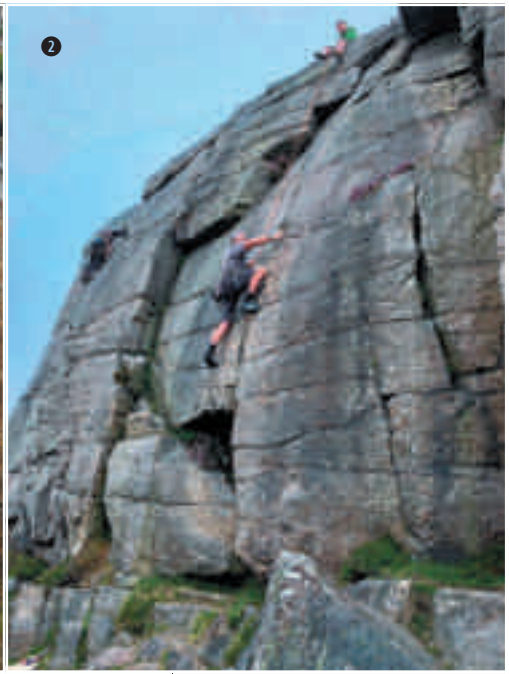
Set up some years ago this is funded by a dividend from guidebook sales. This has allowed the Club to make donations to conservation and improvement activities in the Lake District, including footpath maintenance and bolting of crags in the area. To support the increase in bolting activity over the last two years the Club has donated £3,250.00 to the Cumbria Bolt Fund.

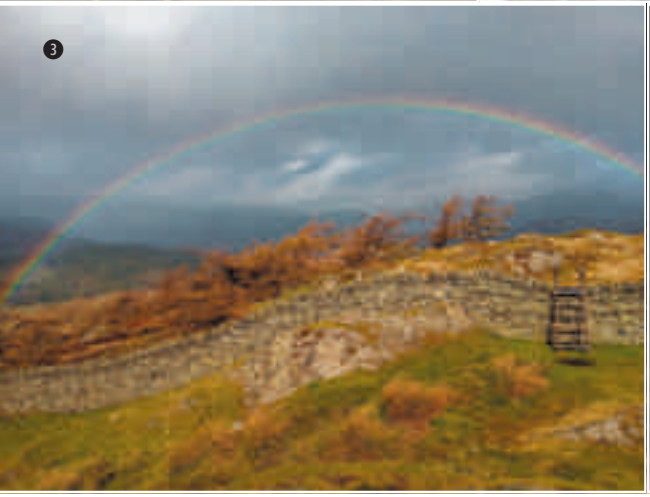
Digital Guides - Crags Database & Crags Apps

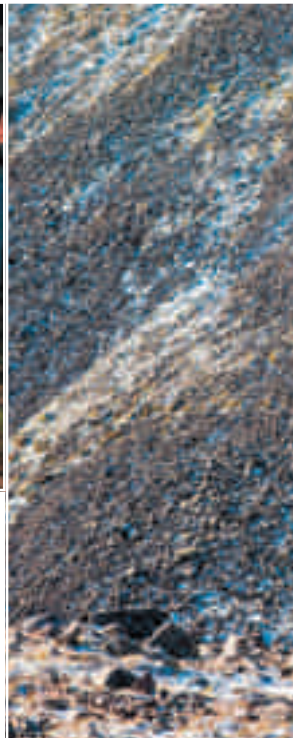
The database developed by The Climbers' Club has been enthusiastically and effectively adopted by the Club for recording climbs. It also drives our online shop and supports guidebook production prior to publication, speeding this process. We believe this is an extremely important tool for use in the future. It is constructed to accept current descriptions and photo-topos together with archive material, such as images and original route descriptions. The recent Lakes Sports & Slate guide is the first of our guides which we have published using the database. Our ambition is to populate the database with all of the current material. This includes all of the guides that we have published since 2007. By doing this the Club will be able to selectively publish information using any channel, digital or printed, in the future.

It is so difficult to predict the future of guidebooks in this digital age – we are so used to having a printed guidebook to look through and use, but for many the mobile phone now has all the information. It will be interesting to know what the reader of this report will be doing and thinking in 10, 20 or more years time!

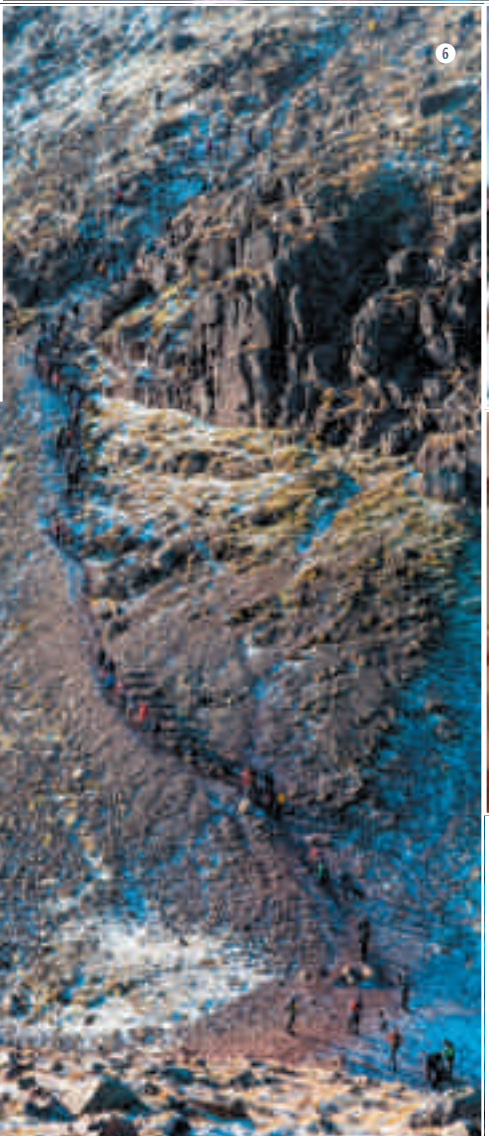
Images of the Life of the Club







1. Journal editor on Supercrack, Wilton 1.
2. Steve Lunt's day meet at Stanage Edge.
3. Rainbow from the summit of Black Crag, Tarn Hows. Photo: Peter Johnston
4. The last bonfire meet before Brackenclose was destroyed, November 2018. Photo: Simon Jefferies
5. A sorry scene at Brackenclose.



6. View across Windy Gap, Remembrance Day meet 2019. Photo: Pete Farnell
7. Remembrance Day meet 2019. Photo: Pete Farnell
8. Dave Wilkinson's welcome meet at Beetham, June 2019.
9. In the kitchen, Dave's welcome meet at Beetham, June 2019.
10. Andrew Paul at a very windy Black Crag.
11. Lockdown 2 Dry-tooling on a waggon way bridge near Whitley Bay. Photo: John Spencer

12. *Jim and Audrey at Raw Head Cottage.*

13. *Birkness working group, July 2020. Photo: Jackie Brindle*

14. *Alasdair Cresswell, Stanage bouldering meet, July 2020*

15. *Stu Walker on Bowel Howl, Upper Great Blake Rigg. Photo: Tony Walker*

16. *'What happens if I poke at this bit?' Geology meet, Austwick, July 2019. Photo: Dee Gaffney*

17. *Wendy Stirrup climbing Mick the Marmaliser, Dodd crag, Duddon. Photo: Marc Stirrup*

18. *Rejuvenating Runestone Quarry. Photo: Ron Kenyon*

19. *Great Gable memorial plaque, St Olaf's. Photo: Philip Powell*


17


18

19

Miscellany

Mike Cudahy

Jim Gregson

Tony Walker

Trevor Langhorne

Wendy Dodds

John France

Nick Hinchcliffe

Jim Sutcliffe

DIY (account of ingenious improvisation of equipment)

Mike Cudahy

Back in the days of my tigerhood, teeth were long but cash was short. Few specialist outdoor equipment shops existed and, anyway, their wares were beyond my pocket. However, within a decade of the end of the 2nd World War unwanted military clothing was being sold off. Very soon there flourished 'Army & Navy Surplus' stores. Here, you could buy a pair of ex-army boots, highly polished and heavy with hobnails for 15 bob. So, not exactly cheap but possible. I bought a few pairs of these always hoping to get a waterproof pair but never did.

A superior item was a rubber-backed kapok sleeping bag - 30 bob; expensive, but good on damp ground until the rubber flaked off, which it soon did. Also popular were the anoraks with hood and fashionable under-crutch strap to stop it flying over your head as you performed the 'bum-burner' classic abseil, hoping to reach the deck before the ex-WD karabiner at the anchor point straightened itself out. Of more use were the Navy serge and thick Cavalry twill trousers. I persuaded my mother to cut them off below the knee so I could adopt the baggy but craggy mountaineering attitude of heroes such as Gaston Rubberface. One's main concern was getting gear that could keep out the rain. In good weather you could wear almost anything, even a pin-striped suit, as a friend of mine actually did. It was good material and the bequest of a much-loved uncle – no good in the wet, of course. For the wet you could get something rubberised like the orange Helly-Hansen. This kept the rain out and the sweat in. Or you could go for the army surplus cagoule over an oiled wool sweater. In an economy drive I tried oiling my own sweater. I must have used the wrong oil. There was a material called 'ventile', whose technical specifications and price were beyond my comprehension. A keen cyclist friend suggested a cycle cape. This worked quite well until a gust of wind blew it over my head and I fell into a stream. I made an anorak out of a US army bivvy tent. As a tent, it was very waterproof; as an anorak, it worked well … until it rained.

If you are of a certain age, you may remember the 'Pac-a-Mac' – a light, semi-transparent plastic 'mackintosh', fully waterpfoof, unbreathable but … cheap! The Pac-a-Mac material appeared in other guises. Quite popular was the full golf suit. Its unsuitability for the hill was demonstrated on a day out on the Crib Goch ridge. A college lecturer friend had asked me to do a bit of hill-walking with a group of his students – hairy-bottomed Irish rugby players. Knowing the Irish love a bit of tough fun I thought Crib Goch in a howling gale would amuse them. One of the boyos was sporting the aforementioned plastic golf suit. The wind seemed intent on investigating its tensile properties. A small tear developed in the groin area. As the group lurched pale-faced along the most interesting part of the ridge, they began to utter largely unintelligible Irish imprecations. Cometh the wind with a boisterous buffet and I hear an agonised wail. Sure enough, flying high through the storm wrack was Seamus' trouser leg; sans Seamus's actual leg I was disappointed to note. When I got them down, a bit wet of course, I thought they would thank me for the experience – after all, their sport is a licensed form of GBH. Instead, they complained about certain matters of life and death. What a bunch of sissies.

But the search for the ultimate solution went on:

light, weatherproof, cheap. I suppose this marked the start of what I think of as the 'DIY quest'. In the '60s the sports of orienteering and fell running combined to produce the 'Mountain Marathon'. I'd completed the first of these 2 day events carrying far too much gear and wearing boots. At the finish of a very wet weekend my boots and socks alone weighed in at 10lbs – more than the total load carried by the winners. It was time to act! I first turned the mighty brain to the sleeping bag problem. Apart from the flaking kapok which had served through my scouting days, I'd only used lumpy feather-filled bags. I suspect the feathers had once belonged to hens and the lumps were their beaks and claws. In the remote kind of way you know Lamborghinis exist, I knew down sleeping bags existed. I did not torment myself with their more objective reality. Trawling through the remnants stall at Stockport Market, I encountered, rather surprisingly, a length of foam rubber. It was perhaps intended for upholstery work. It was ¼" (6mm) thick with obviously high insulating properties. I was able to purchase at an appealingly low price a yard-wide (90cm) roll of this. It wasn't too difficult to sew (with nylon wool) two lengths together and leave the top open. Lo! A warm and very light sleeping bag. Being mostly air, it rolled up beautifully. Obviously, it needed a cover and, convinced the idea was worth backing, I dug deep and bought a length of rip-stop nylon, bright red for extra heat. With the next mountain marathon round the corner I sweet-talked a dear lady into expertly machine-sewing the nylon into an outer cover for the bag. This exhausted my spare funds, but the foam was delicate and also needed an inner for protection.

Now, there are occasions when you can be too bloody ingenious. About this time, early '70s, there was a fashion for ladies' unmentionables to be made out of a kind of tough but soft paper (the lower ones, the upper ones had mostly already been burned). I'm not quite sure how I came by this knowledge or how I came by a large piece of this material. It was not by any form of legerdemain or subterfuge I must add. However, I soon stitched it into an inner for my bag. The idea behind using this material was that it was disposable. (It might even have been bio-degradable, but who cared in those days?) Furthermore, the organisers of the MM were offering rubbish disposal sites at the overnight camp. You get my drift? Come the overnight camp I insert myself snugly into my paper inner and fall blissfully asleep. Naturally, I am still wearing the stuff I have been competing in. Naturally the paper unmentionables were meant to be worn next to the skin. As I turn in my sleep the fibrous paper adheres to my clothing and turns with me. After a few turns I am pinned as in a straitjacket, by morning I resemble a tightly bound Egyptian Pharaoh and have to be cut loose by my hysterical partner. At least the disposable bit worked and my bag was even lighter on the 2nd day.

I wasn't the only nutter. One creative pair had pre-cooked bacon & eggs which they wrapped in silver paper and attempted to re-heat using a couple of solid meths blocks inside a ring of pebbles. They spent much time touring the camp trying to cadge a brew from the more sybaritic competitors.

For me, back to the drawing board. Obviously, the answer was an inner of more rip-stop nylon. Once this was in place, the bag worked a treat. It was warm (enough), rolled up small and barely troubled the scales at 1½lb (750g). Emboldened by my success I knocked up a lightweight rucksack (thin nylon bag with shoulder straps made from car seat belts – no vandalism occurred in the making); and, rather splendidly, a small 2-man tent.

There are those who believe in Evolution and those who believe in Creative Intelligence. As I lack the two essential prerequisites for the latter, I adopted the evolutionary approach for my tent design. In fact, I have the utmost respect for Charles Darwin who I believe once slept in a tent. I did read somewhere that expecting evolution to work was like expecting a whirlwind to blow through a scrapyard and assemble a Boeing 707. A fair point, but I was only expecting a piece of nylon to evolve into a tent. I gave it a push start by getting a length of TV aerial and sticking it into the material (I had some vague image of a wigwam). A shorter piece of aerial held it up at the back. Evolution now took over. Obviously, the thing fell over. Guy lines were needed. Here, I have to admit to a bit of creative intelligence. I ran the lines inside the material then out at a height which created (note buzz word) a low sidewall. The rear end was a little constricted so after a few trials I evolved the notion of 2 short rear poles. As time went on, a process of trial and error, produced a viable tent which no one in their right minds would have designed. It got a few more bits of aerial and a few miles of nylon guy. In a nod to lightness and creativity, I drilled holes in the larger diameter main pole. Stuck out of the sac in a high wind, this produced quite pleasing musical cadences. My tent had no attached ground sheet. The material was proofed (unbreathable) nylon. I'd seen the effects of 2 people sleeping within impermeable material during mountain marathons. Re 'Evolution v Design', some intellectual giant had designed and manufactured a stout polythene tent. Imagine an envelope with side panels; totally waterproof, outside and in. You get in dry. Outside, the rain lashes down. Inside, you cook, sleep, sweat and breathe. Morning dawns and you emerge marinaded in your own vapours. These envelopes were used, less and less, in MMs and became known as 'coffins'. Conferring no survival advantages they ceased to breed and became extinct. I therefore foreswore the sewn-in groundsheet.

One fine April weekend I thought I'd get in a bit of fitness training and give the gear the old once over. The idea was to trot round the 'Derwent Watershed' with a halfway camp. The route is around 40ml (64km) and was pioneered by Eustace Thomas and his 'grough hounds' of the Rucksack Club. It describes a big circle over the moors of Kinder and Bleaklow, follows the many tors of the Derwent Edges above the River Derwent and Ladybower Reservoirs and cruises high above the Vale of Edale via Win Hill, Lose Hill and Rushup Edge. A race had been organised around this noble bog-trot. It did not involve camping, but a lightweight tent and sleeping bag had to be carried. Here then was a fine invitation to escape the last dregs of a reluctant winter. At the last moment I remembered I'd not solved the groundsheet problem for the tent. Then I noticed a rather new looking tablecloth laid out at home. It was about the size of my tent floor, had a nice pattern and was made of plastic – ergo waterproof.

'What's that?' I said to my wife, pointing at the tablecloth.

'It's called a tablecloth,' she replied.

'Not cloth though, is it?'

'No, it's plastic. One & sixpence from Stockport Market.'

'A very astute purchase. Do you mind if I borrow it to keep the damp from my bones?'

'Not at all, but don't let the dog put a hole in it before the kids do.'

With no more ado we were off; chugging down to Hayfield in the old Landrover (1 part diesel to 2 parts engine oil).

Soon we were ascending William Clough hopping back and forth (or, in the dog's case, in) the stream to reach Ashop Head. Here, the Ancient Right of Way, launch pad for the Kinder trespassers of old, makes its way below Kinder North Edge to the Snake Inn. Not a gamekeeper in sight as I swung off the path and picked up the Pennine Way over Featherbed Moss. The place has been tamed now with great slabs of Millstone Grit from the once Satanic Mills laid over the treacherous bog. Back then, a slight miscalculation could see you up to the very vitals in Kinder's vintage ooze.

Across the A57 Snake Road and soon we were trotting along the infamous Devil's Dike, a slimy ditch through the peat. The Dike is said to have been built by the Devil to ensnare the unwary and carry them to a grisly fate in the Bleaklow wastes. At Bleaklow Head, we turned sharp right along the blunt crest of the moor. By now we were up to the ankles in a mixture of bog porridge and slush. The dog didn't care, but my feet in thin cotton socks got painfully cold, then satisfyingly numb. Yet, all in all, it was a fine, free place to be, both of us going well with the miles slipping by. Then my sac suddenly felt lighter. Ah no! The bottom had dropped out of it. Actually, the stitching had given way and my sac liner (a bin bag) sat unperturbed on the bog. Using the draw cord from the top I tied up the bottom of the bag and pressed on. Good job I'd noticed.

Concentration was now needed. A web of small N-trending groughs with their easier going tempt the careless with a siren call. A cold mist came sliding in on a strengthening wind. It was time for the compass, not that I knew exactly where I was, but by keeping East I had a chance of hitting Bleaklow Stones. From there, by picking up NE running groughs and avoiding a myriad of others, I would drop into Far Black Clough with its sweet waters.

There may be no true wilderness in our land, but if you were dropped into a Bleaklow grough in thick weather you might have a contrary notion. I know this because, for interest, I used to run over Bleaklow in peasoupers playing at getting lost and unlost without a map or compass. I became quite friendly with some interesting groughs and peat hags. Some are not so fortunate. There are tales of lost souls who have wandered aimlessly east until they enter that forbidden land of darkness and demons, otherwise known as Yorkshire. But I found Bleaklow Stones, had a slurp of Far Black's waters and began to think about camp and a brew. I climbed out of Far Black and made my way on the Watershed route to Swain's Head. Next was Shepherds Meeting Stones. As usual, not a shepherd in sight, but the clough below led to the splendid River Derwent. Already a vigorous stream occupying a generous valley, it was a favourite route to or from the moor. It has many a twist and turn and many a flat and grassy nook irresistible to the lightweight camper. I jumped over a braid in the stream and took possession of an uninhabited island. To say I soon had the tent up would be, if not an untruth, a mistruth. It was still evolving and I had trouble remembering which bits went where. Precise structural geometry was elusive. However, it went up, flapping bravely in the breeze with the odd flute from the pole. Comfortably ensconced in my sponge rubber bag I soon had a brew going on my picnic stove. This was really a round tin with holes in, but it did have one of those ingenious Trangia meths burners. They were efficient and fool proof providing you made sure they were

out before pouring in more fuel. Just 6oz (170g) of meths would do me several brews and a main meal of 'Beanfeast'. This latter constituted what one might call a mess of pottage – W.H. Tilman would have called it 'belly-timber'. It may well have contained beans, but the 'Feast' bit was debatable. However, belly well timbered I stretched out on my tablecloth, wriggling to get the tussocks 'just so' (Karrimats had not yet been invented). I've always been a good kipper and was soon 'stacking the zeds'.

I awoke to the sensation similar to that of lying in a pool of water. Investigation revealed that this was probably because I was lying in a pool of cold water, albeit shallow. The feeble light of my torch revealed the tablecloth had snuck out under the side wall. Outside, it was snowing heavy, wet flakes. A portion of those were busy sliding down the plastic into my sleeping hollow. I emptied out the melt water and wrung out the bag. As an afterthought I placed the map under my hip as extra insulation. All this performance the dog had observed rather smugly, I thought. I soon changed that. He was a large Alsatian with a pelt like a husky. Grabbing him firmly, I pulled him lovingly into a warm embrace. He wasn't very pleased to be ousted from his comfortable bell-end and was unconvinced by my apparent affection. I was soon warm and cosy again, but as I drifted into the 'Land of Nod' I noticed a prickly sensation above the heel.

Sticking my head out next morning I saw the world had changed. All was buried under a foot or more of snow. After a brew from the comfort of the now merely damp bag I began to prepare for the off. As I pulled a clean sock over my right foot I got a generous dose of pain. I was perturbed to see that a large area of skin had been removed from above the heel. Owing to my feet being numb yesterday I hadn't noticed anything amiss. Now I saw a sliver of skin the size of a (current) 50p piece had been sliced off above the heel. The wound was red and raw and needed attention if I was going to progress. A medical friend had once told me that meth's was a good sterilising agent. So, full of the spirit of DIY, I applied a generous dollop. The results were immediate and invigorating. When I'd unclenched my jaw and dried my eyes I tried thinking. My first aid kit was bereft of morphine - or anything else for that matter. I was, however, carrying an old pair of jeans. Necessity is the mother of improvisation. I tore off a patch pocket and made a thick pad to raise the wound above the level of the hard edge of the moulded sole football boots I was wearing. (Dedicated fell trainers had yet to be developed.)

It worked surprisingly well. But trying to finish the route with a foot of lying snow and a foot of dubious health was not a good idea. Knowing that the Snake Road (A57) would be closed, I set off on an abbreviated return to Hayfield. First of all, I cut over the moor and dropped into Westend Dale. Then another slog over the moor to reach the landslip of Alport Castles and down to Alport Dale. This is one of the Dark Peak's longest dales, running from the A57 into the heart of Bleaklow at Grains-in-the-Water. Grains is a great grassy bowl; a meeting place of streams. Benign in good weather, it is a trap for the unwary in thick conditions, capturing them as they come south off Bleaklow. A mile or two above Alport Castles Farm where I came down is a scene of tragedy. In the 1960s a group of youngsters doing the Four Inns Walk were caught in a spring blizzard, such as I had just experienced and perished. They were in my thoughts as I reached the Snake Road with its untroubled snow. In an hour I'd ploutered along it to the Snake Inn, likewise shut.

By now the sun was shining bravely and white

fluffy things were scudding across a blue sky. The trail along Ashop Clough was arduous, but high above loomed the dark ramparts of Kinder North Edge, commanding and imperious. Not a soul had I seen since leaving yesterday. Soon I was slithering down a much changed William Clough. As I was approaching my snow covered Landrover at the road end I met a farmer unloading fodder for his hard pressed sheep. He asked me what I'd been up to and I gave him a brief account. He chuckled and said, 'You must be a right hard case!'. I think that's what he said, but the engine was running; it is possible he said 'head case'!

Back home, as I was unpacking the gear, my wife said,

'The police came round, they'd seen the Landrover and wondered if you might be in difficulty on the moor.'

'What did you tell them?'

'I said you were experienced, sensible and very well equipped.'

'Quite right,' I said, handing back the tablecloth

Close encounters of the bird kind

Jim Gregson

A small-town childhood in the 1950s before the widespread advent of television often led me and my friends out of doors, largely unsupervised by adults, into countryside areas where fishing in farm ponds and hedgerow hunting for bird's nests formed a fair part of our wholesome pursuits.

At some point I came into possession of a copy of the Observer's Book of Birds which became a treasure, much-thumbed in the acquisition of identification skills in those days before The Silent Spring. I have carried with me all through adolescence and adulthood my interest in birding which married in nicely with my passion for climbing and mountaineering which was launched during my teenage years. Fortunately my two great interests could be adhered to in complementary fashion rather than one excluding the other by blinkered obsession.

The hills, crags, moors and mountains - and occasionally sea cliffs - all held their populations, both perennial and seasonal, of walkers and climbers alongside a variety of avian fauna. As a beginning rock climber I was often startled by jackdaws bursting from cracks at Holwick Scar or Shepherd's Crag, observed from belay ledges as ravens tumbled and croaked through the air. From many a summit I tried to will soaring buzzards into being golden eagles. I confused the call of the wheatear with that of the ring ouzel. I almost stepped onto many a protesting grouse flying out from heather. With the passing of years my knowledge of and familiarity with birds grew, and my experience of more and more different climbing locations expanded. The one went hand-in -hand with the other, almost a "two birds with one stone" phenomenon - where I climbed or walked there would often be birds to see and watch, a duality of pleasures.

When my mountain activities eventually took me beyond the shores of Britain, not only did my climbing horizons widen. So also did the range of bird species that might be encountered and more of the pages of the bird books, now numerous, were consulted. It has always been satisfying to see in flesh and feather a new species to add to the life-list. When in mountain and crag nostalgia mode I often recall memorable climbing occasions and companions, some frights and near misses, but also those bird encounters which are lodged in the memory bank. I have written before (in Loose Scree) about a variety of mountain adventures in different parts of the world and even crafted an account of one particular episode centred on one tiny bird (see Loose Scree Issue No.79, May 2014), so now indulge myself with a few more meetings with various feathered friends.

Skiing through the magnificent ancient pine forests of eastern Norway with friends, we passed what we took to be a snow-covered boulder. As the third person came by, the "boulder" suddenly exploded becoming a huge cock capercaillie hurling itself into the air with a screech of indignation at its disturbed slumber. That was the closest I have ever been to this impressive bird.

On one of my very first alpine trips we were threading our way onto the lower end of the Glacier de Trelatete, having to cross a slabby band of dust-covered rock. A fluttering movement caught our eyes, looking rather like a giant butterfly, with flashes of black, white and deep red colour. A closer look revealed to us that what we were seeing was what the French call "le tichodrome echelette" - the wallcreeper, a well-camouflaged bird when at rest. The only other time I have seen it was when passing through the huge gash of the Breche de Roland above Gavarnie in the High Pyrenees.

Genuine golden eagles I have seen in Scotland, Switzerland and Norway, but only in the Pyrenees have I watched the flight mastery of griffon vultures and only once, en route between the Refuges de Larribet and d'Arremoulit crossing the rocky slopes of Balaitous in thin fog we were very closely inspected by an enormous lammergeier, the bearded vulture, looming over us like a stealth bomber. This is one of Europe's rarest birds.

During various of my many expedition trips to Greenland, fabulous experiences of first ascents of pristine mountains and wild treks have also revealed a variety of bird life, sometimes in striking numbers. I think of boat journeys passing through pack ice with rafts of hundreds and hundreds of little auks, which only dived at the final second to avoid death by propellor. The white morph of a gyrfalcon seen by the cliffs above the airstrip at Constable Pynt was another special rarity. On the island of Milne Land we were astounded to see great creches of not-yet fully fledged pink-footed geese youngsters attended by only one or two adult birds fleeing frantically on foot from ambush by an arctic fox.

Another favourite recollection comes from a passage through a wild valley holding a string of tarns where we spied a pair of great northern divers. We were even more amazed and pleased when these large birds glided across the water, apparently to inspect us, and swam just below us by a few metres, cocking their heads to one side revealing scarlet eyes. This proximity gave us superb views of the striking pattern of blacks, whites and iridescent greens of the divers' full breeding plumage, making me think of the "dazzle camouflage" of Great War naval vessels. Apart from this visual spectacle, we were also surprised at the apparent lack of timidity in the behaviour of these beautiful birds.

Memorable for a different reason were the behaviours of ravens during one expedition to the peaks of Paul Stern Land, not far from the main icecap. We had left a depot of food and fuel on the big glacier where we had landed by ski plane while we moved camp a bit further inland for a while. A solitary raven had flown around this camp. Some days later we returned on skis over the crevassed glacier to the depot site, to find that the food boxes had been raided. There were raven footprints everywhere in the snow and plentiful droppings. The stout cardboard of some of the boxes had ben attacked and once breached the flimsier packaging of our food had obviously proved no match for raven beaks and the debris of our rations was widely scattered on the glacier. We could only grudgingly admire such opportunism as the ravens had shown as we spent a few man-hours in trying to pick up and bag all the litter our black-winged burglars had strewn about the scene of their crime, as we strove to try to leave the place as close as possible to how we had found it on our original arrival.

Elsewhere abroad, other memorable species I have been blessed to see include three-toed and black woodpeckers, red-backed and great grey shrikes, raucous nutcrackers and high-speed alpine swifts scything through the sky.

Closer to home have been sightings of woodcock in the dusk of Glen Rosa, a ghostly barn owl in the Glen Trool forests of Galloway, and the daylight flight of a short-eared owl quartering the heather near Carbost on Skye. I've seen dotterels on migratory passage in the Peak District, but also watched them at close quarters on the Cairngorm plateau of Beinn a'Bhuird and on some Norwegian summits.

When I was quite young I went to a crag in Langstrath which even then was probably not visited by many teams. Many years later I returned to this same crag in late spring looking for a day away from more crowded venues. Repeating the route done in my youth I noticed that vegetation had made considerable encroachments onto the rock. Well up the crag the rock also became more unclean and slimy with odd assorted fragments of strange matter. Imagine then my surprise at one pull-up to be suddenly face -to-beak with a very fierce-looking and loudly-hissing peregrine falcon. The well-built bird gaped its hooked beak and spread wide its wings to shield two incredibly ugly nestlings clad only in lumpy down at the back of the far from fragrant ledge. Fortunately for me the falcon did not try to attack me as I tried to traverse away from it in a hurry, noticing as I did that the ledge was "decorated" with sundry bits of bone and feather plus a few leg rings from what might well have been racing pigeons. Apart from wanting to get away from this bird in a rush, the worry of third-party observation also crossed my mind, for the law is stringent as regards birds of prey and disturbance at the nest. There had been no warning notice at the foot of the crag or anywhere on the approach, and as my rope-mate and I beat a hurried retreat from the scene we were relieved not to be challenged in the thankfully quiet valley.

I am fond of my mountain and crag days, and sharing them with the birds has usually enhanced them in times of recollection. For me the hills are not always places of emptiness.

I Heard the Owl Call my Name

Tony Walker

It was one of those delightful September evenings – warm, dry and somehow comfortable. The sort of evening to make the most of and enjoy the simple delights of moving over warm rough rock until next year. I suspected that the Doctor, true to form, would be slightly late but no problem it would still be a great time on the Tor and there was, of course, plenty of daylight to play with. Slightly later than expected we set off for High Tor amidst the Doctor's mutterings of 'hard long day', 'tired', 'you can lead' and so on and so forth. I was having none of it and assured the Doctor that the classic 'Original Route' would be well within her capabilities – even if a little fatigued – and I was looking forward to basking in the lovely sunshine in hoody and shorts whilst she effortlessly dispatched said classic. Arriving at the bottom of the crag we were faced with at least two teams on or waiting for Original Route which was slightly disappointing. However, I suggested that Debauchery may be a suitable alternative … apart from being twice as long and a grade harder. The Doctor looked unconvinced and muttered something about having enough day light. Anyhow I was having none of it and pointed the Doctor at pitch 1 as the sun continued its regular descent in the West. Despite the tiredness, the Doctor despatched pitch 1 in fine style whilst I made the most of the ever weakening sun. Seconding pitch 1 I arrived at the stance carrying our little rucksack containing my crocks and other appropriate items of mountain attire. The Debauchery stance is a fairly bijou affair and the belay a bit tricky but nevertheless it's a nice place to relax and admire the view. The sun was definitely beginning to cast fairly long shadows by now but we still had plenty of daylight left. Enough in fact, to swap over so the Doctor could lead the next pitch too and tick one of the UK's premier rock climbs. A faultless plan. The Doctor was beginning to yawn after her long day. Nevertheless, I gave some reassurances such as 'You'll be fine' and she wandered off up pitch 2 with a slightly worried look. Pitch 2 of Debauchery is actually quite hard but the Doctor made steady progress as the sun set in the West and darkness began to fall on High Tor. At the end of all the hard climbing the Doctor was nicely silhouetted against the final rays of the sun … bats began circling around pitch 2; I began to feel a little chilly and the Doctor spoke with a steadily rising voice 'I can't see the f*****g holds!' Somewhat disconcertingly the Doctor fell off the easiest but entirely unseeable last few moves and dangled in space 7m to my left .. this also coincided with most of the belay being ripped out. So darkness descended on High Tor; the Doctor dangled and I looked at the one wire left in the belay … so much for a relaxing evening out!

After a little discussion and some hasty belay reconstruction, we decided that lowering to the ground was not possible (not enough rope); prusiking the ropes wouldn't make the final moves any more feasible so we decided on throwing a loop of rope across and pulling the Doctor back to the stance in Rambo style. I was convinced it was a daft idea but remarkably it worked and we were soon back on the stance together … in the pitch black. The Doctor untied and we carefully pulled the ropes through leaving all the gear in place. The Doctor suggested that this was the safest plan but I suspect the fact that it was all my stuff may have had a slight influence on her willingness to leave several hundred pounds of gear behind. Of course, we didn't have a head torch with us so the trusty iPhone torch provided a suitable replacement

whilst setting up the abseil anchors. The Doctor held the torch; I held the Doctor into the ledge with one hand and placed gear with the other. It's remarkable how tricky placing gear is by torchlight! Eventually all was set for the descent except we only had one torch between us so … I abseiled into the dark and the thorn bushes whilst the Doctor kept the torch to faff around on the belay. After a little while the Doctor came down to join me, spinning on the ropes , iPhone in tee shirt, like some large otherworldly firefly. Once back on the ground there was a general sense of relief with the light hearted banter that comes with a fairly close call. I recovered the gear the day after.

So what of the evening on High Tor? Well it was a memorable climbing experience on a local crag but … far too close to a real epic for both of us. In some ways it is a testimony to our combined experience and our straight thinking and calmness to get out of a fairly epic situation. In other ways it was a testimony to being over confident and getting it, almost quite catastrophically, wrong. I guess that both of the above are why climbing is such a fabulous and interesting thing to do and the reason for never tiring of it.

Stalag XV

A story with a (tenuous) link to FRCC

Trevor Langhorne

The War had started well for Leutnant Heinz Schnabel, he had survived the Battle of France and become a Luftwaffe Fighter Ace. He was escorting bombers during The Battle of Britain when his luck finally ran out on 5th September and his ME 109 was shot down by British fighters. After crash landing in Kent he was taken prisoner and, after a period of time in hospital, was transferred to a POW Camp 13.

Oberleutnant Harry Wappler was a bomber pilot, his luck ran out a week later. Having completed his sortie over Ellesmere Port he was heading back to France via his secondary target, Newport. Low cloud meant he had to fly below 7000 feet. Approaching his target he flew into cables strung from Barrage Balloons, his Heinkel HE 111 immediately started to disintegrate, luckily he was thrown from the aircraft and managed to open his parachute before losing consciousness. The next morning he woke in hospital, the remainder of his crew were not so fortunate. His plane was the first confirmed as having been brought down over the UK by barrage balloons.* After discharge from hospital he was also sent to Camp 13 where he met Schnabel and they became friends. Both were moved to Camp 15, situated on a tract of bleak moorland in the north of England.

Camp 15 was no ordinary POW Camp, it housed officers, mainly Luftwaffe aircrew and Kriegsmarine submariners. Conditions were much better than in a 'normal' Camp, in fact they were so good that it was known locally as 'The U-Boat Hotel'! It was assumed that the inmates were officers and gentlemen and that if they gave their word of honour they could be trusted not to attempt escape, some were even allowed to go for walks on the local hills! History does not record if any considered applying for FRCC membership. Despite the relatively good conditions, Schnabel and Wappler tired of captivity and started to dream of freedom and getting back home.

Slowly a plan started to take shape. They had noticed a number of training aircraft in the area, there must be an airfield nearby, from the direction they flew it was most likely to their north. The plan was absurdly simple, escape from camp, find and break into the airfield, steal an aircraft and fly to freedom. There were numerous obstacles to success, not least of which was how could two Germans in Luftwaffe uniforms and speaking little English blend in with the general population? Luckily there were many men and women in uniform, including foreign servicemen in differing uniforms and speaking a range of languages. The pair decided to modify their flying jackets to look like Dutch uniforms but were careful to wear their Luftwaffe uniform underneath, if captured out of uniform they could be executed as spies. Creating forged Dutch identity papers completed the disguise.

After over a year in captivity they escaped on Sunday 23 November 1941, in true Hobo style they made their way to a nearby rail line and rode a freight train north, getting off when it stopped at a yard in Carlisle. Needing to 'disappear' they did what any escaped POW would do, go to the cinema. After the film they left in a crowd that included airmen from the local airfield, thus RAF Kingstown was located. Their forged documents were readily accepted at the gate, once inside they spent the night hiding in a hangar. A hapless air apprentice was then approached and, by claiming to have been told to do some taxiing tests, persuaded to start the engine of a Miles Magister trainer. Without doubt they were master con-men. The apprentice was surprised when they taxied to the end of the runway and then took off! The plan was to head for Eire, a neutral country and only about 150 miles away; however poor weather over the Irish Sea forced a change of plan, the decision was to head for occupied Holland, over 350 miles away across the North Sea.

Once in the air it became apparent that the aircraft's fuel tanks were only half full, flying to Holland wasn't possible; even on full tanks the journey was at the absolute limit of the plane's range. Ditching in the sea wasn't an option so there was no choice but to return to the safety of land where they put down in a field near Great Yarmouth. What to do? Carry on the deception! Their arrival attracted the attention of local residents and the police. Having shown their papers to a police sergeant they asked if he could help by contacting a nearby RAF base so they could get more fuel, this he dutifully did. It was too late for any fuel to be delivered that day, however the RAF sent a car and put the pair up on the base in unoccupied officer's quarters. By this time news of the escape and aircraft theft had been sent nationwide, the game was up. The Military Police arrested the fugitives, one of whom was, at the time, enjoying a bath. Once back in captivity they had dinner in the Officers' Mess where, apparently, the station commander complemented them saying that their audacious plan deserved better luck. Then it was back to Camp 15 and 28 days solitary before being shipped to Canada for the rest of the war.

So, you may ask, what has this to do with the Club? Simple, when you sit down to table at the Annual Dinner, remember the bold adventure of a couple of previous residents of the hotel.

* Records show that barrage balloons claimed 155 aircraft, 26 enemy and 129 friendly, remember that there were many more friendly aircraft in the skies over Britain compared to the number of enemy planes.

The 2019 Skye Meet, where I learnt the value of a whistle

Wendy Dodds

I had been on several Skye meets in the late 90s when the late Charles Rhodes and his wife were doing their regular month as wardens. Indeed, my very first FRCC meet was there, with the late George Wright meet coordinator. The hut is now much improved, particularly the kitchen and washrooms.

On the first full day I did one of my favourite scrambles up the Dubh Slabs after crossing the ridge via Bealach Coire na Banachdich. The return, after skirting round the summit of Sgurr Dubh Beag, was via Sgurr Dubh Mor. While sitting on this summit admiring a magnificent view of the ridge, I encountered 2 men, the first people I had seen all day except those on distant peaks. This was their first visit to Skye and they were uncertain which peaks they had been to or indeed where they were when we met. They had not enjoyed their ascent, making me nervous when I knew that was my planned initial descent, but all was straightforward and much as I remembered. It was then the contour path between the TD Gap and Sgurr Alasdair to the top of the Great Stone Chute, a bit more unstable than I remembered, relieved that I had it to myself for fear of tumbling rocks.

One of the longstanding items on my 'to do' list on Skye was to go to Sgurr nan Gillean via Pinnacle ridge, somehow evading me on my numerous previous visits to that summit. Early in the week I had asked around for a potential 'guide' or others interested in this route and a potential group of four were interested, with Thursday being the planned day. The day before I was looking for a quiet day so Peter (Shawcross) and I meandered up to Coir a Ghrunnda. We ate our lunch overlooking the Loch whilst sitting on a large boulder, discussing which route to take back to Glenbrittle. We decided on Sron na Ciche and down the spur, looking for a gully descent to the north west. After a few false starts we eventually found an 'interesting' route picking up the path of our initial ascent.

Unfortunately, our main guide decided that a day of climbing would be preferred to Pinnacle ridge so half the group decided to join George going to Clach Glas, which being another of my favourite scrambles, I arranged to join. With everything settled, said guide had another change of mind so I abandoned the Clach Glas route and Ron and I set off for Pinnacle ridge. We passed Ding and Graham resting on the lower slopes before reaching the base. I thought that we moved well and were eventually following another pair who seemed to be the only other people in front of us, despite perfect conditions. The pinnacles were easily traversed, abseiling off the third to almost meet the pair in front and finding a bit of gear which I presumed they had dropped. They set off a little earlier than the route description suggested, putting in some gear, a little worrying as we had only a few slings and the recently found gear. Picking up the route to the west of those ahead we had no difficulties but this new gear did come in useful. Once over Knight's Peak it was on to the summit, which we had to ourselves with magnificent 360° views. We decided on the longer, easier route to the east, ending the day with the obligatory drink in the Sligachan Hotel. Thank you Ron for an excellent day out with an ambition achieved.

The final day of the meet was my shortest outing in terms of distance but the longest in terms of time.

After a magnificent week, I decided on an easy day and went off to Sgurr nan Eag, following the route that Peter and I had followed to Coir a Ghrunnda 2 days before. I was continuing to Gars-Bheinn with a planned turnaround at 2pm when I decided to return at 1pm for an even more leisurely day than intended. I could not decide whether to return by my ascent route or via the Great Stone Chute. Having seen no one all day nearby but many in the distance heading towards the Great Stone Shute and remembering the loose rocks at the beginning of the week, I decided on reversing my outward route. Being perhaps the hottest day of the week I had a quick dip when passing the southern shore of Loch Coir Ghrunnda, before continuing towards the boulder that Peter and I had sat upon 2 days earlier. One minute I was walking upright and a fraction of a second later I was horizontal, sliding and bouncing down gabbro slabs. I remember little until coming to a stop and immediately checking my watch and seeing that it was 3.20pm. On long reflection in the ensuing weeks I can only assume that near to the Loch outflow, I may have stood on some slippery basalt.

Although covered in blood from somewhere, I could move all my limbs and felt OK, I had severe rib cage pain which made me doubt my ability to descend, a journey of 2 hours or so in the uninjured state, but who knows how long when having difficulty moving and perhaps having to crawl over what was initially a boulder field. Having noted the time and taking a couple of pain killers, I got out my mobile phone but no signal. Thus, I got out my whistle and started blowing 6 long blasts every minute and within 60 minutes I saw a helicopter fly past and assumed a message had somehow got through. I then saw the helicopter fly past in the opposite direction and disappear, so I started blowing the 6 long blasts each minute once again.

Helicopter hovering above the starting point of my fall

After sometime I again saw the helicopter, this time disappearing above me. Each time it had passed I put my arms out in the advised 'Y' position to advise that I was in need of help and also tried to make my red pack visible. At one point I moved a little north to improve my visibility and the pain around my rib cage confirmed that it would be hard for me to get down without assistance. Eventually some walkers descended past me but they had no signal. It was only some ascending walkers who eventually passed who had a signal and were able to provide a precise location to the MRT. The descending walkers had spoken to the helicopter crew on its 3rd 'fly past' when it landed near them, above where I was and out of sight, but at that time they had not

Getting ready to be winched

yet reached or seen me. Interestingly after the descending and ascending walkers had reached me, a climber in helmet approached and said, tongue in cheek, I presume, 'Don't I know you?' Having never seen said climber wearing a helmet I did not immediately recognise Peter with whom I had been there 2 days before. I am sure that he thought that I may have bounced on my head but in that case I doubt that I would be speaking! Pam arrived soon afterwards.

I later learnt that my emergency whistle signals had been heard by climbers on Sron na Ciche, above me and who were able to get a signal when they reached the top of their climbs. They alerted the emergency services that there could be a casualty in their vicinity, though they did not know exactly where and they had not seen anyone who might be injured. This produced the initial 'fly past' by the helicopter but I was not seen. My continuing whistle blowing each minute resulted in the return of the helicopter when it landed above me. It was because I could not be seen and they still did not have an accurate location that they again flew off. Pam and Peter had also heard my whistle but in the middle of a climb could do nothing.

In current times we often rely on technological devices, including mobile phones when we are out on the hills. The purpose of writing this is to remind us all that their whistle could be one of the most important items of kit that they are carrying. Indeed, I hear that a number of FRCC members have altered their carrying of a whistle after hearing my tale.

Postscript: I would also like to mention thanks to Skye MRT, the coastguard helicopter for a free ride(!), new pilot on his first outing with the service, Dave Webster for breaking into his unused first aid kit to stem the flow of blood from my broken elbow, Pam Shawcross for showering and dressing me for bed, chauffeur Ralph for getting me back safely to Cumbria, Dave Knowles the surgeon in Lancaster who put the pieces of my elbow back together again and the many friends who 'minded' me on the hills during a long journey back to fitness.

Avalanche and Bivouac

John France

Avalanche

The last footprint turned liquid
Solid snow egg-timers beneath my soles
Falling like cut timber
The yellow axe torn from me
Tumbling, tumbling dice
Snow ,sky, snow, sky,
I spy with my jagged eye A rock.
It roars up to meet me
Oh holy stone do not forsake this street fighting man.
Arms windmill and feet kick
I snare the stone with rasping claws
Winded ,I wallow upright
I am alone.
Days pass. The wolf finds me , howls and lets me pass.
In forgiveness.

Bivouac

My gloved hand brushes away the condensation from the storm shelter porthole
A child's view of space aboard a 1950s rocket ship piloted by Dan Dare
The stoves blurting roar the rocket motor pulsing me through the galaxy
From my asteroid bivouac, I calculate my trajectory
From sea level to 3000m over 1000 km that's 333.333rec barley seconds of a degree
You wouldn't break your stride on this gradient
But here it's saved up for the spike of the last mile!

About huts

Nick Hinchcliffe

Birkness

Every hut should surely have a ghost.
Old buildings converted yet full of history,
their pasts should faintly resonate.
Footsteps in empty dorms,
blankets fallen to the floor,
a shadow jumping on the wall.
Yet here all is open and airy,
spacious rooms, light corners.
The ghosts here are not resident.
Banshee winds shriek up the dale,
slamming doors and rattling windows.
Weather spirits howl their scorn
and blast Birkness in winter storms.
And some ghosts are imported.
Packed without your knowledge,
slipping out of your luggage
and joining you at the fire.
Ghosts of those you sat with here,
laughed, told tales, swigged beer.
Ghosts of those lost on the fells,
Ghosts of your own younger self.

Brackenclose

A squall barrels up the lake,
ignored by the nuthatches
who have nestlings to feed.
Oaks for a weather vane,
wildly cavorting leaves.
The fire sputters
heating up the eaves

Quiet dormitories wait
Counting out the decades
as generations pass through.
Unnoticed or feted,
by the ordinary route
or a new eliminate.

Further up the dale,
off a thick walled lane
Saint Olaf's church
hunkers under Kirkfell,
and yews stand vigil
over the climbers graves.

Dark outside now,
rain tattoos the windows
Draw near to the fire
and watch the shadows.
Snug at days close
beneath the roof of England.

Brackenclose - 82 not out

A well played innings, decent score,
No shame in being caught.
We'll miss you, sure,
but you'll be back - and better than before.

Rebuild we must, improve we should
and turn disaster to some good.
So here's to hope, and new beginnings
best wishes for your second innings !

Raw head

The West wind comes over Rossett Ghyll
and blusters down the dale.
Damp westerlies, warm Atlantic winds
and fractious howling gales.
The East wind sneaks in over Shap
and taking a contrary path
it chills with each successive blow
and ushers in the silent snow

Waitresses : Migrations

Jim Sutcliffe

The Enchantment

There dwells a damsel in the dale,
Her glance would lift the clouds from off the hills,
Her wish: to serve you sir,
The singular moment when the light spills
It's voluptuous contents on the vale.

A flash of light! She's drawing near
Like the sun's rays when the clouds dip their brims;
She asks: your choice today?
The watery vision of my eye swims
Towards the deepening nightmare of my fear.

She holds the warmth of succour close,
It's radiance floods my anxious, hungry heart;
Your meal sir, I believe.
The earth tilts its axis; with a start
I rejoin the aura which my hunger chose.

These small things hold great prospect;
Restoration and mellow wholesomeness;
Was everything all right, sir?
My fancy leaps ahead to guess
The level at which our minds connect.

The Carer: Metamorphosis

She stalks the room like a careful crane
Propelled on long stilts with infinite care,
To perceive any tell-tale movement is her aim;
Will she notice my attention?
As she tracks across the sanction of my stare.

Oh, searching crane, you know full well where
Your eye might fall, what victim you might spy
To fall writhing helpless to your bare
Talons; contentedly I lie
Anticipating your merciful, awaited strike.

But a star-shell burst has eclipsed our world,
Our gawky bird has morphed her feathers,
Attending our intent, we await as she unfurls
Her transformation to find whether
The haughty pride bears sustaining succour.

My mind is entranced by the stately whirl
Of her courtly dance, a fleeting furrow
Of primal feathers that confuse and swirl.
Is this some fabulous creature
Or my dear young friend, my wonder girl?

The Gathering

Within this dale the geese are gathering,
Drawn by elemental forces, their hunger
Driving wings to rise with languorous longing
Over the becks and the willful river
To their pasture lands. These wanderers
Arrive from the clouds, their eyes
Aswirl with passing wonders to alight
Among lands where their happy haven lies.

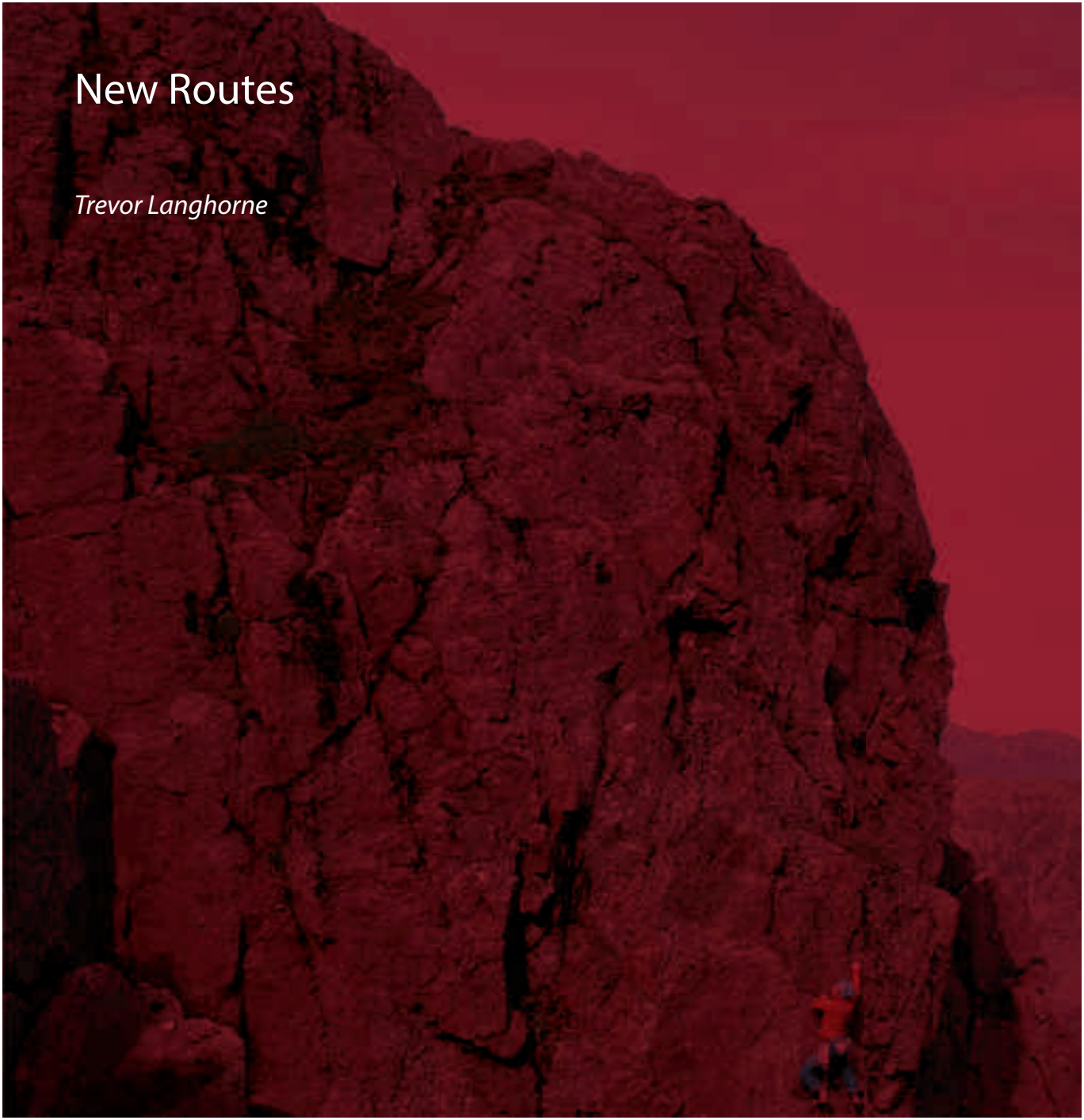
How we welcome their return. They stagger
With the splendour of their vision;
Look there as that line across the sky wavers.
We feel the proximity of their migration;
Their voices rise, organising waves of sound
To channel their wing beats. Hark, are those
Footsteps, drawing steadily about us, around
Where where heady aromas carry their offers close?

These welcoming minions busy their order
Behind us; potent pungence, heavy in the air
Precede their presence; they bear their altar
Laden with fine comestibles. Sit there,
We attend your order. Your deepest need
Has our attention; my profound fear
Returns, of loss, the irretrievable deed
Which sweeps the festive table clear.

The Sunshine Gang,
Bram Crag Quarry
Climber Steve Long

New Routes

Trevor Langhorne



Slim pickings is a fair description of the new routing since the last Journal, in part this has been due to the Covid-19 lockdowns, but there is also a finite supply of quality rock awaiting exploration. The majority of new routes are short, only seventeen exceed 25m and four are multi-pitch. The descriptions of the more substantial routes recorded since the publication of the 2018 New Climbs Supplement are included in this report.

Please note that the 2018 Supplement is available as a free download at https://bit.ly/3bSyT63 (shortened URL).

Full details of all the recorded new routes and feedback on pre-existing routes can be found in the climbing area of our website (https://www.frcc.co.uk/rock-climbing/).

Please make use of the site to give the guidebook teams and remember that none of the information in this report has been checked—exercise caution!

LAKE DISTRICT CLASSIC ROCK ROUND

On a rather different note, over the last couple of years there has been a battle for the record to climb all of the Lakes routes that are in the book ***Classic Rock***. In addition to the 34 miles that has to be walked/run between the crags, this super challenge entails 70 pitches/4300m of climbing up to VS. At the start of April 2019 Chris Fisher held the record with a time of 15 hrs and 25 mins. Since then, over four and a half hours have been shaved off this time. In May 2020 Will Birkett and Callum Caldwell-Storry set a new record of 12 hrs 54 mins, in July Tom Randall reduced this time to 12 hrs 2 mins. Three weeks later Will Birkett reduced it to 11 hrs 50 mins, despite this remarkable time he suffered through lack of food and water and knew he could do better. On 18th September Tom returned and beat Will's record with a time of 11 hrs 10 mins. Next morning, he was rudely awakened at 4.30am by a message from Will saying that he was going to try to break the record that day. In perfect conditions Will's journey started from Walna Scar car park and finished with the classic Little Chamonix at Shepherd's Crag only 10 hrs 41 mins later. His dad Bill was there to welcome him and a few minutes later Tom arrived to offer his congratulations and give him a lift back to his van at Walna Scar. Now what about ***Hard Rock*** and ***Extreme Rock***!

LANGDALE

Thrang Crags above Chapel Stile continue to provide a steady stream of new routes, useful additions at the drier end of the valley. Tom Walkington has developed a couple of small buttresses, one on the left side of Tarn Crag yielded five short routes and the other beside the tourist path up Pavey Ark about 150m past Stickle Tarn, so far it has yielded one route. A further three routes have been added to the short and sunny Birk Knott Crag which is a mere five minute walk from Blea Tarn Car Park (see the 2018 Supplement for details of the other routes).

THRANG CRAGS

Details of these little crags are in the 2018 Supplement, a number of routes have been added since its publication.

THRANG CRAG EAST

Three Wise Monkeys 15m E3 5c ★
M Bagness, J Exley – 5 Jul 2020
The overhanging prow left of *Frantic*. Clip the new peg on *Frantic* (hidden). Step back down and left. Make a reachy moves up left to a bendy flake (sling) and continue.

UPPER SCOUT CRAG

Something Fishy 32m MVS ★
M Scrowston, M Hope 16 Apr 2019
An intriguing line with some good climbing. Start 2m left of *Salmon Leap* at a triangular block.
1 4a Climb up to gain an obvious deep right-slanting crack. Follow this to a junction with the large block on *Thing Fish*. Belay or your life will be a drag.
2 4b Traverse immediately right across a clean pocketed slab to gain a groove at its right end. Ascend the groove (often damp but always climbable) stepping left to follow the clean rib to finish.

WHITE GHYLL - LOWER CRAG

Touch me Knot 45m VS 4c ★
M Scrowston PC Bennett – 15 Aug 2019
A good long pitch with some fine exposed climbing in its lower section. Start 4m left of *Shivering Timbers* at a short pillar below twin grooves with a small overhang above. Climb the pillar moving right into the left-hand of the two grooves. A move up and right gives access to the second steeper groove, climb this by its right edge to a small ledge below the overhang. Swing left and follow the wall and slabs above to finish directly at the abseil anchor.

WHITE GHYLL – UPPER CRAG

Going Viral 45m VS 4c ★
M Scrowston, M Withers – 29 May 2020
Enjoyable climbing that seeks out the fine hanging slab left of *Route 2*. Start below a large block about 3m left of the variation start to *The Slabs, Route* 2. Climb up to gain the block, ascend the fine steep slab direct (crux) to an overhang. Pass the overhang via a short dark groove on the right. A step left gains the rough walls above, follow these to grassy ledges and an in-situ belay. Abseil, or follow the usual descent route.

MIDDLEFELL BUTTRESS

End Ever 22m E1 5b ★
M Scrowston, M Hope – 20 Sep 2020
A route of sustained interest at the extreme right edge of the buttress. Small wires will prove useful above the overhang. Start as for *Bitter End* (2018 Supplement p 33) After 2m move diagonally right crossing a short blank slab to an overhang. A committing pull over the overhang gains a ramp below a steep wall. Climb the wall moving right to a small ledge on the edge of the buttress. Move up and left to finish up the thin vertical crack.

GIMMER CRAG

Three Tiers Alternative Pitch 3 20m HVS 5b ★
M Bagness, J Kelly – 5 Oct 2020
Just left of the 4c pitch. A few tricky moves up a thin, well-protected crack. Up left into an alcove, then pull out right to easier ground.

SOUTH LAKES LIMESTONE

A couple of routes have been added to Scout Scar since the publication of Lakes Sport and Slate, rendering it out of date!

SCOUT SCAR

Eat My Shorts 12m F5+ ★
S Halford, K Jaques – 2 Oct 2020
Start about 10m left of *Wheelbarrow*, and about 5m right of *Cute Route*). Climb onto a ledge immediately left of a tree then trend left up good rock past five bolts to a lower-off.

Cute Route 10m F4+ ★
S Halford, I Wilson – 29 Sep 2020
Meg's Wall is about 10m beyond Main Buttress and contains two routes at present (October 2020). The leftmost is *Cute Route*. Start about 15m left of *Wheelbarrow*, and 5m left of *Eat My Shorts*. Climb on

to blocks, once home to a long-deceased Yew, and follow good rock and four bolts to a lower-off.

SLATE

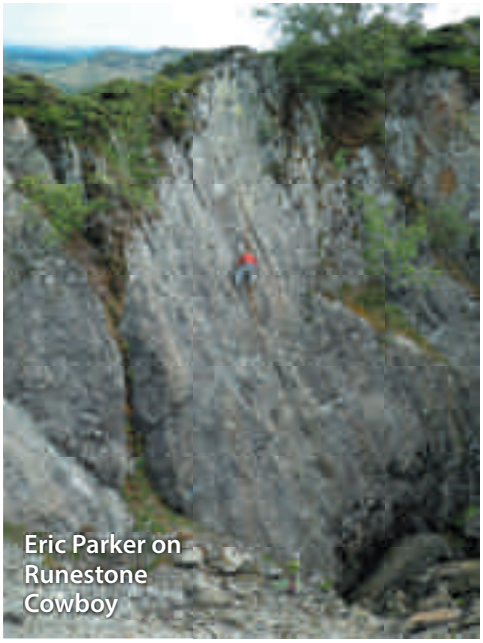
The slate crags are covered in our new *Lakes Sport & Slate*, there have been a few additions since its publication.

TILBERTHWAITE LOWER QUARRY

Lanty Slee 8m E3 6a ★★
Scott Quinn, Tom McCluskey – 26 Aug 2020
Significant rockfall has destroyed the off-width *Big Crack* (VS) and has revealed a small but perfectly formed flared corner which is surprisingly good for such a small route route.

RUNESTONE QUARRY

This quarry has seen a lot of activity at the end of 2019 and in early 2020, new routes have been bolted and existing routes have been re-bolted/ retro-bolted making this an excellent sport venue.


Eric Parker on Runestone Cowboy

COPPERMINES

The Bell has seen the addition of four routes between VS and E3, courtesy of Tom Walkington, whilst three apparently high-quality pitches have been added to Great How Crag.

THE BELL (SD 288 978)

The crag is to the right (east) of the scramble on The Bell (details in the scrambling guidebook). It forms the shape of a shallow amphitheatre. Approach from the Walna Scar parking area.

GREAT HOW CRAG

Hill Street Blues Direct 20m E4 6a ★★★
K Phizacklea, I Cooksey (both led) – 26 May 2020
An excellent direct version of the original route. Follow the original route up the strenuous crack but instead of climbing to rest on top of the pedestal, move up the wall directly overcoming a steep bulge to regain the ledge on the original route. Climb the unrelenting wall as described in the guide.

The Days of Pearly Spencer 12m E2 5b ★★
K Phizacklea, D Geere – 12 May 2018
Starts just to the right of *Hill Street Blues*. A unique feature for Lakeland climbing, an off-width crack! Climb the obvious crack threading two chockstones as you go and employing the chicken-wing technique where appropriate.

Jimmy Hill's Blues 15m E4 5c ★★★
K Phizacklea – 20 Jun 2020
Climb the photogenic arête right of the off-width. Start up the wall in order to place a small wire, bold. Traverse right on to the arête in a great position (small wires), climb this to a bold but straight forward finish.

DOW CRAG

There have been a couple of additions, an impressive multi-pitch E4 on B Buttress and a one pitch S in The Amphitheatre. Blind Tarn Crag has seen some action with one new route claimed although this may be a hybrid of existing routes, time will tell.

DOW CRAG: B BUTTRESS

Didyoudie'doe 85m E4 5c ★★
C Moore, S Quinn – 11 Aug 2018
Starts directly above the stretcher box, climbing the wall between a rightwards slanting corner and a flake.
1 35m 5c Pull onto the steep wall from the left end of the box. Move boldly up and right to reach an undercling. Move left and follow the shallow groove to the top where an awkward move rightwards is rewarded with a small wire. Step back left and climb directly up to easier ground. Follow the rib to belay on the left underneath the imposing roof.
2 40m 5b Climb the initial crack of *Murray's Rout*e. From here climb directly up to a niche at the left end of the of the roof. Pull steeply into the groove of *Eliminator*. Once established in the groove above, traverse 5m right across the wall entering another vague groove. Follow this on easy ground to belay below Easy Terrace.
A 10m scramble leads to Easy Terrace

BLIND TARN CRAG

Blindingly Obvious 35m E3 6a ★★
C Moore, J Flanagan – 16 May 2020
Start below the obvious line of overhangs, about three metres to the right of the start of *Blind Vision*. Climb directly up to and through the overhangs heading for the large detached block. From the block, traverse left to join *Goldscope Direct*. Head up and tackle the steep thin crack in the wall directly above.

DUDDON

The new Duddon and Wrynose guide is due out in Spring 2021—here is a selection of recent additions.

WALLOWBARROW CRAG

Utopia 14m E2 5c ★
P Makinson, W Reed – 25 Jun 2019
Climbs the left-hand wall of the open corner below *Nirvana*. Climb a short mossy ramp to the clean rock on the left. Move up to the overlap and gain the rib on the left. Balance your way through the overlap (crux) to better holds above. Belay from the pinnacles above or continue up the upper wall by following *Nirvana* or *Parallel*.

PEN

Penetrate .40m VS 4b ★
M Scrowston, M Withers – 08 Jul 2019
3m right of *Jim Sli*p is an obvious arête asking to be climbed. Climb the arête to a ledge at 6m. Move left through the overlaps to a steep wall, climb this via the blunt rib right of the overhang. Step right to gain the heather shelf (possible belay). Finish up the delightfully rough wall.

TOWER OF FLINTS

Earl of Groan 30m E5 6b ★★
C Moore, S Quinn (both led) – 30 Aug 2020
From the obvious gearing up spot directly under the tower a large embedded flake can be seen on the left. Climb the flake and follow the groove in front until a step right onto a large pedestal/ledge, from here delicate moves left gain flakes atop the pinnacle abutting the steep wall above. Powerful moves up and right are rewarded with a peg runner and good holds which are followed in a fine position to the top of the overhanging wall, follow easy ground back to a large thread belay.

BURNT CRAG

Double or Nothing 20m E4 6a ★★
C Moore, S Quinn (both led) – 30 Nov 2020
Variation finish to *Double Trouble*. Climb the first half of *Double Trouble* to reach big holds on the right hand edge of a large ledge (remnants of a nest on the left). Arrange protection here and step left onto the ledge before committing up onto the arête directly above. Steep, exposed pulls lead to an awkward top out. Continue easily to the top

Fiery Jack 28m E6 6b ★
I Cooksey, K Phizacklea – 26 Feb 2019
A good left hand finish to *SPC*. Climb the shallow groove of *SPC* to below the bulge. A long reach on undercuts enables a good jug to be reached. Arrange protection and launch leftwards via some insecure and strenuous moves to a flake. Hastily arrange protection and climb the technical wall above directly. Peg runner out left which is difficult to clip.

FAR HOW

Eight Miles High 8m E1 5b ★
D Geere, K Phizacklea – 20 Sep 2020
A direct line up the centre of the slab to an awkward finish up the prominent crack. A perfect (little) route!

FAR HILL CRAG

Paradiddle 20m E3 5c ★★
S Quinn, A Towse – 17 Sep 2020
The obvious gap between *Olive* and *Drum Roll (DR)* which climbs directly up the centre of the flake. A more sustained and balanced alternative to *DR*. Follow *DR* to the base of the large downward pointing flake and make hard moves to a horizontal jug (crux of *DR*) from here move immediately left onto the steep fingery face and follow a direct line in its centre passing a good but shallow peg.

GAITKINS

Purple People Eater 12m HS 4a ★
M Stirrup, W Stirrup – 28 Jun 2019
Start 2m right of *Clean Stepped Arête*. Climb the short, clean wall then stepped ledges to below the mossy groove (runners). Make a bold step right on small holds to enter the scoop and follow this to the top. This could be the line implied by the name *Clean Stepped Arête* but is completely independent of this, as shown in the Lake District Rock topo.

ESKDALE

There has not been a definitive guide to this beautiful and quiet valley since 1996. Work on a new definitive guide (Dow, Coppermines and Eskdale) is underway with an expected publication date of 2022. Several high quality and technical pitches have been added to Hare Crag.

HARE CRAG

Harebrained 22m E5 6a ★
J Read, M Scales – 18 Jul 2020
The steepening wall between *Butterballs* 2 and *Slit Wall*. Finish as you wish on the upper slab. Bold, not helped by sugary granite in places. Could be E4?

Vital Spark 15m E6 6c ★★★
K Phizacklea, I Cooksey (both led) – 6 Jun 2019
Superb climbing taking a direct line up the centre of the face. Start up the groove of *Magnetron* to just below the obvious blocky foothold on *Alternator*. Step right below this and place RPs, technical and committing climbing up the front of the wall allows a good side hold to be reached. Finish up the shallow hanging corner of *Magnetron*.

Black Death 15m E7 6b
M Edwards, T Thompson – 16 Aug 1997
Starts just right of *Alternator* beneath a long black

undercut, and goes direct, utilising this and poor holds above to gain an undercut flake,RP's.Then up and rightwards to the good side hold. Finish up shallow hanging corner of *Alternator*.

Right Hare, Right Now 5m E7 6c ★
C Fisher, P Apps – 5 Jan 2019
A technical and insecure undertaking up the wall to the left of *Hare of the Dog*, partially tamed by small gear. Begin on the left end of the grass ledge, below the curved overlap in the middle of the wall. Climb directly up to the bottom of the overlap (RP 4), from where a difficult step left gains the wall above. A sequence of moves up from here may reach the relative sanctuary of a sharp 'ear' (Friend 0 and 0.5 Alien). Step right and up to gain good holds and thence the top.

SCAFELL & WASDALE

No new routes have been recorded but some feedback on existing climbs has been received. The most significant events have been Craig Matheson's repeats of Dave Birkett's 'big' Wasdale and Scafell routes: *Hasty Sin Oot Ert Hoonds?* (E9 6c), *Nowt but a Fleein' Thing* (E8 6c), *Lookin Lis*h (E8 6c) and *Babyface* (E7 6c) on Wasdale Screes, plus *Welcome to the Cruel World* (E9 7a) and *Another Lonely Day* (E8 6c) on Scafell's magnificent East Buttress.

PILLAR ROCK & ENNERDALE

Thanks to the efforts of Stephen Reid and friends Pillar has continued to provide new climbs. However, the main additions have been on the North/East side of the Rock with *The Likely Lads* and *V for Victory* plus a few shorter routes on Shamrock including *Pyroclastic Fantastic* (VS 4c) and a possible extension to *Walker's Gully, Walker's Chimney* (VS 4c).

EAST FACE OF HIGH MAN

The Likely Lads 22m E2 5c
B Davison, S Reid – 7 Jul 2019
Takes the impressive wall between North-East Chimney and North-East Arête.
1 16m 5c Follow North-East Arête up the jagged crack to a good spike at 3m then go straight up to gain a thin crack (or climb the wall just left on pockets). Climb this until not far from its top, then make a thin traverse left to a foothold in the middle of the wall and climb the crack above to slabs. Belay under a shallow chimney with a chockstone.
2 6m 5c Strenuous and unprotected. Traverse right and gain a niche in the blunt arête above; pull out of this on the left with difficulty to gain a ledge and belay.

V for Victory 30m E1 5a ★
P Winterbottom, A Daly, SJH Reid – 14 Sep 2020
Quite a serious route but with fine positions. It takes the arête above the start of Slab and Notch Climb and starts as for that climb. Climb directly up to a ledge on a pinnacle. Make hard moves up and left to a brief respite and some gear (if you search), then continue up the steep wall to a turf ledge on the right. Follow the easier shallow depression above to the top, taking great care with loose rock.


Peter Winterbottom on the first ascent of V for Victory

Pisgah East Traverse (Crowley Route) 10m MS
Aleister Crowley – 27 Apr 1894
From the highest point of the Jordan Gap, traverse leftwards on grass to the leftmost corner. Make an awkward move up this and hand traverse leftwards to gain a ridge which leads to the summit.

The description of this climb on Pisgah, which was soloed by Aleister Crowley in 1894, was unearthed from the Wasdale Climbing Book by Mike Cocker. It has never appeared in a climbing guide and the recent ascent by Stephen and Sally Reid may have been the second ascent!

BUTTERMERE, NEWLANDS & ST BEES

RAVEN CRAG HIGH STILE
Spearhead Buttress
Apatura 30m E3 5c ★★

T Millen, D Armstrong – 11 Aug 2020
Start up *Emperor*. Once over the first bulge move out left on flat holds then steeply up the right side of the arête to a flake at the base of the right slanting crack of *Alpine Ringlet*. Climb the arête direct to finish.

BORROWDALE

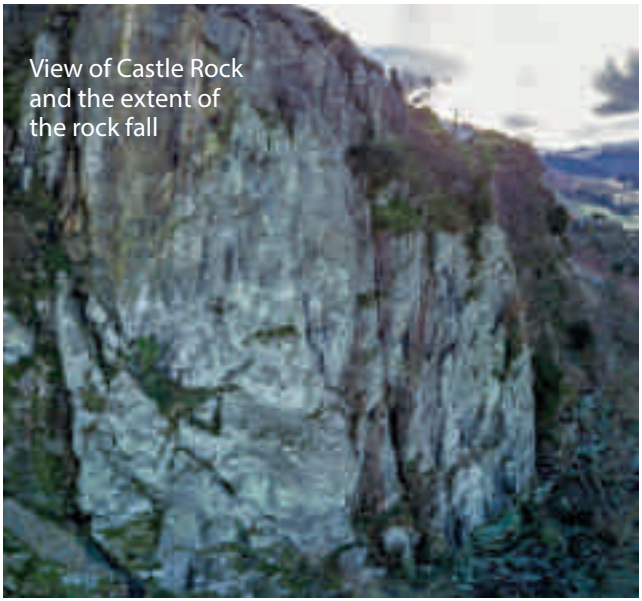
Apart from one addition to the steep and clean walls of Steel Knotts the only recorded new routes are Dave Armstrong's five short offerings, between MVS and HVS, on Dovenest Slabs.

Perhaps the most significant development has been the closure of the parking at the Lodore Farm beside Shepherd's Crag - the climbing fraternity has been very grateful for this facility over the years and this is an unfortunate loss.

EASTERN CRAGS

There have been two significant events on the Eastern Crags.

Firstly, the inevitable happened at about 2pm on 26 November 2018 with the long-anticipated collapse of part of Castle Rock North Crag. The led to the demise of the classic North Crag Eliminate and others but, fortunately, *Overhanging Bastion* is still possible.



View of Castle Rock and the extent of the rock fall

Secondly, Neil Gresham has added a stunning pitch to the Right-Hand Buttress of Iron Crag: *Final Score* at a mighty E10 7a! The climb is effectively a direct start and finish to *If 6 was 9* (E9 7a), taking in all the difficulties of that route and then adding more hard climbing to finish.

CASTLE ROCK OF TRIERMAIN

North Crag

Following the huge rock fall on the left side of the North Crag Colin Downer and C Fowler climbed the classic *Overhanging Bastion* in January 2019 (with slight variations).

The Birkett family got in on the act in April when Dave Birkett (Great-nephew of Jim Birkett) and Will Birkett (Grandson of Jim Birkett) climbed the impressive right hand side of the upper wall with *Primrose Day Dihedral* (E6 6a ★★).

IRON CRAG THIRLMERE

Neil Gresham has completed his three-year project on Iron Crag in the Lake District to create *Final Score*, E10 7a.

Final Score 40m E10 7a
N Gresham – 26 Sep 2020
Climb directly the lower wall in the centre of the crag to the ledge (just left of the original indirect start of If 6 was 9. From the ledge follow If 6 was 9 to the break of *The Committal Chamber* at two-thirds height (hard, bold etc). Good runners and a knee-bar rest in the break. Pull diagonally leftwards into a faint scoop and then trend back diagonally right before a final hard move leads to a good hold by a peg and the easier upper wall.

EDEN VALLEY

Pete Gunn has continued his campaign against Armathwaite's "Not Leds". At Windmore End Chris Gilbert added Helm Bar Traverse a 70m low level bouldering traverse at F7a. Coudy Rocks now has another short but good sport route.

WINTER CLIMBS

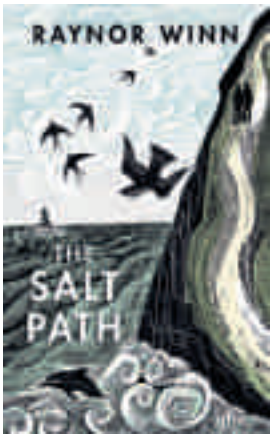
After several very lean seasons three routes were added on the penultimate day of 2020. The summer VS, Leftovers, on Scafell Pinnacle was climbed in four pitches and graded VII (7), the route has been given a provisional three star status. Over on Browncove Crags a groove line gave Too Groovy at grade V (6), no pitch lengths were provided for this route and a much easier route was added on Scrubby Crag.

The line of Final Score, E10 7a

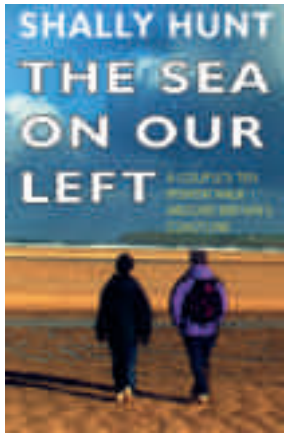
Great Blake Rigg

Book Reviews

Compare and contrast



The Salt Path
Author: Raynor Winn
Publisher: Penguin
ISBN: 978-1-405-93718-4



The Sea on Our Left
Author: Shally Hunt
Publisher: Summersdale
ISBN: 1 84024 105

Quite by chance I read these two books in quick succession and was struck by some obvious similarities and by huge, conspicuous differences. Both are true stories about walking all, or a large part, of the British coast and are written by the female halves of the two couples who undertook these challenging expeditions.

Surprisingly, perhaps, these two books have little else in common except for the quality of writing which, whilst in quite different styles is, at times, emotively descriptive or caustically analytical of people they meet along the way.

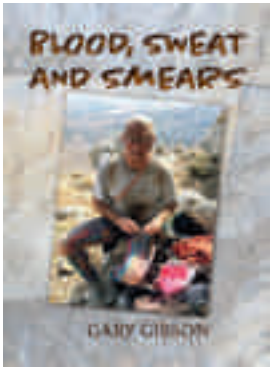
In one, a professional couple let their house for a year to walk right round the coast of Britain for charity. They receive a huge amount of support from fellow Rotarians and family members who meet them frequently along the route. They camp, at times, especially in Scotland but spend many nights under sound roofs. The husband does all the route-finding from Ordnance Survey maps covering the whole route, and almost always walks well ahead of his wife. They are able to keep themselves well fed, clothed and presentable.

The other couple have lost their farm and set off penniless and self-supporting with basic and mostly poor equipment. They use only Paddy Dillon's book about the South West Coastal Path; they walk and take decisions together all the time. They buy a cheap tent and two £5 Tesco sleeping bags which they soon find entirely inadequate for that sort of journey. Their income is meagre and they often go for days at a time living on just noodles, fudge bars and wine gums. Occasionally, they push the boat out and share a bag of chips. They wild camp wherever they can, as they can't afford campsites, and sometimes arrive late and leave early - to avoid paying - when they have to use a campsite. As well as all this, the husband is suffering from corticobasal degeneration, a rare and progressive disease that will, sooner or later, result in his death. They have few means of keeping themselves clean and decent and are often mistaken for down-and-outs which, in a way, they are. Their fortitude in keeping going is unimaginably moving and yet they show no self-pity.

These books are not the sort usually reviewed in these pages but their stories tell of at least as much bravery and tenacity as those that tell of shorter, more technically demanding expeditions. Many readers may relate more to these accounts.

Paul Exley

Blood, Sweat and Smears



Author: Gary Gibson
Publisher: 2QT Publishing
ISBN: 978-1-913071-09-7

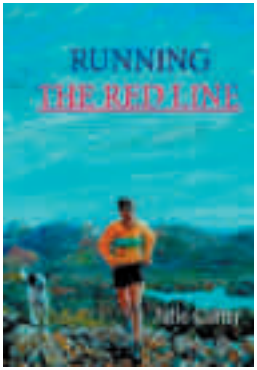
Blood, Sweat and Smears is the autobiography of the UK's most prolific new router – Gary Gibson. Gary has been a somewhat controversial character at times - often pushing the boundaries of acceptable ethics on rock – but his output of new routes is beyond question. Arguably, he has had a greater impact on rock climbing in the UK than any of his contemporaries. Whilst Gary may not have pushed the rarefied boundaries of the possible in the manner of Ben Moon and Jerry Moffatt and their forebears, he has established a legacy of many fine routes and almost singlehandedly developed sport climbing for the average climber in the UK.

His autobiography is written with a very refreshing honesty. Sure, he has a few demons and has committed a few faux pas in his long and prolific rock-climbing career but he does not gloss over such things. I found it a very human account that's easy to read (the chapters are short which suits me!) and it endeared me to Gary. It's all in there: early life in Stoke; career as a podiatrist (something he is very proud of); prolific and sometimes controversial climbing career; near fatal accident and his obsession with the Stranglers. The latter being something worth reading about as it underpins Gary's slightly obsessive character.

Overall a really good book and well worth a read and … don't forget … at least some of the proceeds will go into Gary's next adventure and the bolts that quite a few of us will gratefully clip.

Tony Walker

Running the Red Line



Author: Julie Carter
Publisher: Mindfell
ISBN: 978-1-9999554-0-3

Flow. An almost tangible description of the utter joy of running over a fell-side when everything comes together and you move effortlessly over the terrain, as if one, starts this book. In it Julie Carter takes us to the highest and lowest points in the psychology of a fell-runner and mountaineer.

'Running the Red Line' explores the influences of lives and mind-sets upon adventures and vice versa through her life-story, intertwined with her development as a fell-runner. The experiences and upland descriptions in themselves, told with the empathy of deep familiarity, would make a thoroughly readable piece, but the addition of thoughtful psychological expertise to her analysis makes for a fascinating short book.

A GP and psychologist, Carter had a number of difficulties to contend with, told of matter-of-factly and without appeal for sympathy, yet critical to the understanding of the enormity of her achievements. Probably the highlight of the book is the combination of second and third chapters, taking us through the bone-achingly awful loss of a close friend in a momentary error during an abseil, to her (at the time) extremely ambitious determination to complete the Bob Graham round. Her practical response to loss was eye-opening for me: 'I realise that I have never known anyone to recover from grief and trauma….without doing something. Psychological recovery is a practical matter…not about sitting in a seat and being empathised with'. Relatively new to fell-running at the time, she was somewhat taken-aback when

an experienced and highly-regarded friend told her 'I think you'll find…there is a limit to what you can achieve'. The combined drive of these two events drove her preparation for the Bob Graham. The meticulous planning and reconnoitring are described in enough detail to be fascinating and informative, but fall short of the level of detail which would interest only those planning an attempt themselves, a judgement of inclusion and exclusion typical of the rest of the book.

In contrast to her tremendous successes, the self-determination of failure is honestly explored, and makes difficult reading when potentially applied to one's own experiences. A quite painful exposition of the interaction of personal demons with performance, and how poor self-esteem becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy is applied to the racing fell-runner with touching honesty.

Friendships, particularly those centred around common interests and drives, play a major part, but there is a chapter reserved specifically for heroes: who they are and what makes them such. This thoughtful and considered chapter ends with a fitting climax: a testament to our own Wendy Dodds, including the explanation of the fell-runner's term 'to be Dodded'. You'll have to read it to find out what this means, unless it has happened to you!

And the red line of the title? That is the line of maximum effort, that demarcation between the body using every physiological adaptation to continue, and failing, where 'nothing existed in the world except the race…every heartbeat…the space between the in breath and the out breath. Immersed in the act of running a race, living a life'.

Janet Ashworth

The Pen y Gwryd Hotel - Tales from the Smoke Room

Author: Rob Goodfellow
(edited by Rob Goodfellow, Jonathan Copeland and Peter O'Neill)
Publisher: Gomer Press.
ISBN: 978-1-78562-149-9

A fellow member handed me this book with the recommendation that I read it. I hadn't read a review and didn't know of the book's existence but I'm so grateful that he passed it to me. It's a terrific read and will surely be of interest to all members who have spent any time in Snowdonia.

In essence, it is a collection of over sixty articles, each by a different author. Many are names that are well known in the mountaineering community while most are not. The common thread is the PyG which has been visited by all of them at one time or another - often many, many times.

Although the mainstay of the book is a building, its real heart is the people who have used it whether for accommodation, food, refreshment, socialising, celebrating, planning or employment. There are multiple insights into all of these activities giving us a rich, multi-faceted analysis of the social scene over several decades. A quite astonishing variety of folk have passed through the doors and the mountaineers amongst them have had profound influences not only in British but in international mountaineering.

Some articles are barely a page long; others are several pages and they are written from a wide range of perspectives. Between them they provide a fascinating history of the PyG and its various owners and managers, sometimes also the staff.

There is a great deal of Snowdonia's mountain history recorded here.

The PyG is famous for many reasons, not the least of which is the unique collection of signatures on the ceiling of the Everest Room. Over forty pages are dedicated to abbreviated biographies of the signatories but only when there is a public biography available. These range in length from a few lines to several pages for the likes of Edmund Hillary, John Hunt and Tenzing Norgay, as befits an Everest Room. It reads almost like a mountaineers' Who's Who and a wide range of names from the past may be found here.

The PyG may claim to be the spiritual home of North Wales' mountaineering. Few who read this book will want to dispute that.

Paul Exley

The Uncrowned King of Mont Blanc

Author: Peter Foster
Publisher: Baton Wicks
ISBN: 978-1-988573-82-1

This is a biography of the mountaineer and physiologist T Graham Brown. The book is painstakingly researched but, apart from being a detailed factual account of his exploits, also manages to capture the character of a truly interesting and, in his day, controversial character.

I had heard of Graham Brown when a mere youth who avidly read anything in our local library about alpinism but, apart from knowing his first ascents of the great routes on the Brenva face of Mont Blanc (Sentinelle Rouge; Route Major and the Pear), I knew nothing of the man. This book filled in my considerable gaps of knowledge in his mountaineering career, but more intriguingly gave depth to the person. His alpine routes were bold and full of confidence, but the book conveyed a sense of personal striving for acknowledgement and acceptance in all his mountain exploits that was never quite fulfilled. A tormented though successful person. All very fascinating and the details of his strict upbringing allow one to understand the man himself and his motivation. Even when appointed as a Professor of Physiology at Liverpool University his father was dismissive.

Graham Brown was an enigmatic character who achieved great things in mountaineering and in his career as a Professor of Physiology but at the same time managed to alienate himself from many of his closest comrades and colleagues. This book is well worth a read both from a perspective of alpine history but also to understand the societal pressures on him and the mindset of a gifted man of his time.

Tony Walker

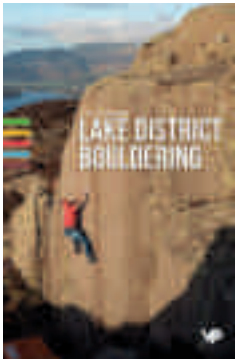
Other Notable Books (not yet fully reviewed)

Alone on the Wall
Author: Alex Honnold with David Roberts
Publisher: Pan Books
ISBN: 978-1529034424

Alex Honnold, the world's greatest solo climber tells his own story with humour and honesty.

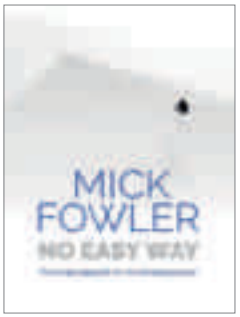
Bothy Tales
Author: John D Burns
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing
ISBN: 978-1912560462

John D Burns accounts of travels and experiences in the wilderness uplands of the British hills.



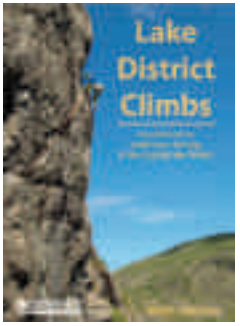
Lake District Bouldering
Author: Greg Chapman
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing

ISBN: 978-1910240731
A comprehensive, and well-illustrated guide, to bouldering the Lake District.



No Easy Way
Author: Mick Fowler
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing
ISBN: 978-1911342748

More adventurous tales from the, now retired, climbing taxman.

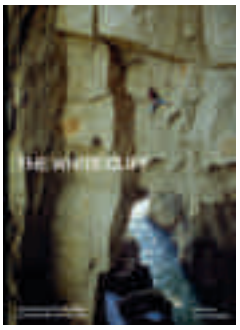


Lake District Climbs
Author: Mark Glaister
Publisher: Rockfax Limited
ISBN: 978-1873341537

Rockfax selected guide to the mountain crags of the Lake District.

Waymaking
Editors: Helen Mort, Claire Carter, Heather Dawe, Camilla Barnard
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing
ISBN: 978-1910240755

An anthology of women's adventure writing, poetry and art.



The White Cliff
Editor: Grant Farquhar
Publisher: Atlantis Publishing Limited
ISBN: 978-1999960001

A climbing history, routes and characters, of Gogarth.

In Memoriam

Michael Ackerley

Robert Fenwick Allen

Albert Ashworth

Peter Heys Benson

Des Birch

Jeremy Charles Daly

Colin Fearnley

Peter Gerrard

Tony Greenbank

Philip 'Pip' Hopkinson

Malcolm Ibberson

Eric Ivison

Christine Kennett

Frank Major

Patsy Mayers

Tom Meredith

Peter Moffatt

Cynthia Roberts

Trish Sorrell

Peter Standing

Anthony Strawther

John Swinglehurst

Roger Wallace

John Ward

Mary Waters

Jeremy Whitehead

Beryl Yates

Michael Ackerley

Michael was born in Birkenhead in 1933, the eldest child of Graham and Anne, both members of the FRCC. It was after the Second World War that Graham began to introduce Michael and his sisters, Brigid and Elspeth, to the Lakeland hills with summer holidays spent in Buttermere, Borrowdale and Coniston and New Year at the ODG. This involved long car journeys from the family home in Southampton. All three siblings subsequently became FRCC Life Members.

Independent visits to the Lake District were made possible when Michael became the proud owner of a motorbike named 'Benjamin'. One such visit commenced on 29th June 1953 with the 300-mile plus journey north to Birkness. Early next morning, Benjamin was parked at the Salving House after an 'uneventful' journey apart from 'coming across a flock of sheep lying in the road round a fast bend on 'Honister'. Thence began the first of his three successful Lakeland Three-Thousander rounds with 'dawn just colouring the eastern sky'. Despite feeling 'absolutely finished' when ascending the lower slopes of Skiddaw, the 'job was completed' in 21h51m. Keeping the neck of his shirt open to keep him awake, he was taken back to Birkness by Benjamin, which he had to break into to get to his bed! Subsequent rounds were completed in 1978 and 1997.

Like his father before him, Michael introduced his own family to the Lakeland hills. In the late 1960's the annual summer holiday was spent at the ODG, then changing valleys to Borrowdale in the early 1970's. Aged fifty, he made radical life-style changes when warned by his doctor that, like his male antecedents, he wouldn't live to sixty! He took up running, competing in the Snowdon Mountain Race in 1985 and the London Marathon in 1988. But the mountains beckoned…… Later the same year, he attended the YRC Pontresina Meet and experienced an eventful day of 'epic proportions' (ref YRC Journal Vol 12 No 6) with his brother-in-law, David, and another YRC member who commented that 'it was like taking two Alsatians for a walk' (Michael and David both being six-footers and long-legged)! Undeterred, a trip to Ailefroide followed to gain more experience for the Fell & Rock trip to the Himalayas in 1991 where he was one of the party who reached the summit of Mera Peak.

In 1992, Michael moved over 500 miles to a new home overlooking Loch Na Keal on Mull. The ascent of Ben More became a Christmas Day ritual, whatever the weather! Here, he enjoyed his pursuits of walking, cycling and sailing as well as continuing to run the family business. A strong walker with great powers of endurance and an unusual ability to block out pain, one long remote walk to the head of Glen Rosa became known by his friends as 'The Broken Ankle Walk' after an incident at the mid-way point. Mull also proved to be a good base from which to attend Scottish Hotel and Annual Dinner Meets.

The raised beach in his garden provided a suitable venue for practising abseil technique ahead of a scrambling trip in 1995 to the Skye Munros with

his elder son and David. This inspired 'challenges' with Michael's sons, including the UK Four Peaks, the British Isles Five Peaks, the Welsh Three-Thousanders and the Irish Three-Thousanders. On one such walk a passer-by commented 'how nice to see three brothers out walking together', Michael's youthful looks betraying his years!

Running replaced challenge walks as he continued to be physically active into his eighties. Often supported by his younger son, he was a regular participant in Lakeland half marathons, fiercely competing for age category awards. In 2016, limited by ill-health, Michael moved to 'The Beeches' in Brentwood to be close to his daughter. He settled in quickly, making many new friends. He died peacefully on 17th September 2018.

Roger Ackerley

Robert Fenwick Allen *1936-2018*

Bob was a man for all seasons, a steady rock-climber, a bold and accomplished ice-climber and an experienced all-round mountaineer; moreover, he was a talented musician, a landscape artist, a successful businessman and a well-known author of a best-selling series of walking guides.

Brought up in the suburbs of north Manchester he took to exploring the crags of the Peak District with his future wife Marjorie Fairclough. Initially equipped with his mother's washing line they survived early forays on Yellowslacks, Windgather and the Roaches. Further experience was gained in the Lake District, North Wales and Scotland, but National Service in Germany and Korea, and reading for a history degree at Cambridge interrupted climbing for several years.

After graduation Bob and Marjorie moved back north and their climbing centred on North Wales, Scotland and particularly the Lake District, with annual vacations spent in the Alps where they did such climbs as the Traverse of the Meije and the North Face of the Tour Ronde. Bob made many rock climbs in the HVS/E1 category but really came into his own on steep Scottish ice where he climbed classics such as Point Five and Zero gullies with relatively primitive ice tools.

In the early 60s he joined the Gritstone Club, through which he met Reg Atkins who had been at School with Trevor Jones. Trevor was a very experienced and enthusiastic rock-climber and mountaineer who had climbed in the Alps and in the Himalayas. Bob had many attributes that appealed to Trevor, not least of which was a company car, and they became regular partners both in the UK and in the Alps. They formed an unlikely team; Trevor was notorious for his absent mindedness and chaotic preparations for any climb, whereas Bob was meticulous in all things, frequently customizing mountaineering equipment and garments to meet his needs. Despite this they accumulated a very respectable list of ascents in a few years, always on the short holidays available to Bob. These included the NW Pillar of Piz Cengalo, the Cassin on Piz Badile and the Frendo Spur on the Aiguille du Midi.

Bob was a keen walker

and early retirement from the carpet trade gave him the time to explore the Lake District thoroughly. On High Lakeland Fells, his first guidebook covering both walks and scrambles, illustrated with his own sketches and photographs, sold so well that it displaced James Herriot's books from the top of The Yorkshire Post's best-sellers list. He followed this with more best-sellers such as the inevitable On Lower Lakeland Fells and Walking the Ridges of Lakeland. Moving further afield he added Escape to the Dales and On Foot in Snowdonia. After his death his widow Lin received many letters from people informing her how much these books had changed their lives.

During the last decade failing health restricted Bob to shorter and shorter days on the fells and he spent much of his time painting; he was particularly proud of being elected President of the Ambleside Art Society. He also became a well-known member of the Grasmere community contributing to its activities. The fact that the local parish church was more than full for his funeral service indicates the degree to which he will be missed.

Michael G Mortimer

Albert Ashworth *21/5/1928 - 25/7/2018*

Born in Burnley, son of cotton weavers, Albert attended Burnley Grammar School and first glimpsed the possibilities of the moors and their gritstone edges when he and a school friend rode their bicycles up the hills out of town as young boys. As a sixth-former he and friends achieved anonymous notoriety climbing the tallest mill chimney at night to hang a banner reading 'coffee club'. A place to read a chemistry degree was usurped by conscription as a radio mechanic in the RAF in Germany, with the return to England necessitating earning a living. Having become accomplished gymnasts during national service, Albert and others took to climbing locally. Riding his suspension-free motorbike to Widdup after work, oft with a bouncing pillion, such as young Jim Sutcliffe on the back, became the norm, and new and existing routes were climbed in nails, then later Woolworth's black plimsoles. He teamed up with Don Whillans, after the latter spotted him climbing in Wales; versions vary as to whether this was on the first scent of Cenotaph Corner after it lost a critical chock-stone, or reversing a traverse on Cloggy after his second bottled it. As a management trainee with Brook Bond Oxo, he regretfully turned down the offered opportunity of an alpine season.

He joined the FRCC in 1958, and was a member of the Rucksack Club. He climbed extensively in the Lakes and Wales and eventually did manage a trip to the Alps, climbing with Neil Mather. Routes included the Aiguilles du Diable on Mont Blanc du Tacul and the Aiguille Noir de Peuterey,. He also described happy memories of a trip to the Brenta Dolomites with Ian Macnought Davies, John Wilkinson and Neil Mather. He took his climbing and rope-work skills into potholing, many of his trips being with the Northern Speleological Group. His skills were invaluable in the days before SRT and he was invited on the Wedgewood-sponsored exploration of the Gouffre Berger, where he and the advance team were trapped by flooding for some days. The photos show grizzled

faces and exhausted men huddled together for warmth.

Later in life he took up running, initially to train with his daughter, but then as a dedicated member of Clayton-le-Moors Harriers, and became a successful veteran fell runner. He even ventured onto the roads and competed in some marathons, including the first London Marathon, which he completed in around 3 hours 15 minutes, having had to walk in the crowds for much of the first mile! He competed in the first British triathlon one freezing January day in Clitheroe. His other passions included sailing (he built his own Mirror dinghy, which he raced at Glasson Docks), diving (with Clitheroe sub-aqua club and with his great friend Alan Fothergill in the Western Isles), and cycling. After retirement he learned to play golf and to ski, which he continued into his 80's, including with a bionic knee.

He leaves his wife, Margaret, who nursed him through his final illness and continues to get younger every day, and his two daughters, both FRCC members and mountain-lovers, thanks to their father.

Janet Ashworth (Hogan) and Alison Cresswell.

Albert Ashworth - Supreme rock climber

With sinuous and flowing movements over the steep, friction-intensive gritstone of the rock at Widdop, the lithe, muscular form of Albert would mould its self into the tiny wrinkles, his fleeting form appearing round a corner of Mystery Buttress before seeming almost to levitate, hawklike towards his eyrie above the Flake Crack.

This was Albert, the master of his medium and my personal climbing guru.

On one occasion he may well have saved my life, when I 'froze' in the middle of the little wall which forms an alternative pitch to "The Bull's Horns". Here, some sixty feet above the ground, climbing solo, I managed to reach the ledge above with my hands, but suddenly lost the confidence to complete the mantle shelf move, unable to see my foot holds. My take-off point, the ledge below, was narrow and too under-cut for me to risk a jump. How long I hung there I have no idea and I was not aware of anyone else being around. Suddenly Albert was on the ledge above me, like a guardian angel.

"Now, don't let go of the rock. I'm going to take hold of your wrists, one at a time, starting with the left," he said. In this manner, he grasped first the left, then the right wrists, and I felt myself being pulled strongly up onto the ledge where he was standing. I had no idea that he, or anyone else was around there.

On another occasion, at the age of seventeen, it seems now as though in a dream, three of us soloed up the "Artificial", the VS route which follows tiny holds chipped into the steep slab. It was a balmy summer afternoon when first Albert, followed by Bill Smith and finally me, flitted up this delicate route. When I came to the final overhang, I found Albert waiting for me, making sure that I was able to find the crucial handhold. I knew where it was, but it was very reassuring to see Albert there.

So for me, the world is a poorer place without Albert, the finest rock climber I have ever known and a great friend.

Jim Sutcliffe

Peter Heys Benson *19 August 1930 – 17 May 2018*

My father, Pete, loved the great outdoors and climbing was his passion. He joined the FRCC in 1995. He was also an active member of the Rucksack Club since 1976 and was an "honorary" member of the Pinnacle Club.

He was born in Eccles and his youth was spent there. He had his first experience of climbing in the school scout troop. As he says in the Introduction to his book 'Rucksacks at Dawn!!', "From the day in 1944 when our scoutmaster threw a rope down Owl Gully at Cratcliffe, Derbyshire and invited anyone to climb, I was instantly hooked, and knew I wanted to be a climber".

Pete attended Salford University and took a degree in chemistry, followed by national service as a stoker in the Royal Navy. He worked as an industrial chemist for all his working life.

Pete's glory days of climbing were in the 1950s & early 60s with some of the tough, scruffy Manchester climbers who slept under boulders, climbed in all weathers and put up many of the classic hard rock routes, particularly in North Wales. During this time, he had to his credit, ascents of such iconic routes as Cenotaph Corner, Vector, White Slab, and, with Ron James, the first ascent of Grey Arete on Glyder Fawr.

Apart from climbing, my dad had another passion: rugby. He had played for Eccles, and also played for Wasps.

Pete married my mother, Jane in 1956 and they lived in Solihull, where they started a family. In 1966 we moved to Brazil for 5 years, and then returned to Scotland where he resumed his love of the mountains. In 1977 he started a new job in Coventry and the family moved to Nuneaton. In 1979, sadly, he and Jane parted.

In 1983, Pete led a joint Rucksack Club /Pinnacle Club meet to High Moss and it was here that he met a member of the Pinnacle Club, Sally Keir. Sally lived in Dundee and the romance rapidly gathered momentum in spite of the distance between them. Eventually this challenging arrangement was resolved when Sally moved to the Midlands to join Pete. They eventually decided to settle in Conwy around 2000.

Pete took up cycling and undertook some epic journeys, notably his cycle ride to Prague (as described in 'The Czech Run' in 'Rucksacks at Dawn!!'). He also attempted to cycle from John 0'Groats to Land's End, but circumstances were not favourable and he had to abandon the challenge. He tried again, this time from Land's End but unfortunately the mission was aborted due to being knocked off his bike.

Sally passed away in 2002. Unfortunately, around this time his mountain activities and cycling became limited as he suffered from knee and hip problems.

About a year before he died, he was running into serious health problems and finding it increasingly difficult to manage at home alone. As a result, my husband and I moved to Conwy to live with him and he had a happy and comfortable last year.

He was a great raconteur and many of his stores are collected in 'Rucksacks at Dawn!! Escapades of a Lancashire Climber'. If anyone would like a copy of his book, I have a limited number of copies available.

Catherine Tapley

Des Birch

Des seconded my application to join the FRCC, but I cannot say much about his early climbing days other than he regularly climbed with Arthur Dolphin and they put up a number of new routes in the Lakes, mainly in Langdale.

In the mid 1950's Des joined Ilkley Grammar School as a junior Maths teacher. In 1958 I, together with David Priestman (Head Boy of IGS) were both in the School's Upper Sixth and together with 2 members of the 1st Ben Rhydding Scout Troup had been planning a through trip of Dowber Gill Passage, a classic caving trip from Providence Pot to Dow Cave in Wharfedale. The four of us had

been planning the trip for some time and had been exploring it from either end in a number of reconnaissance trips. In July 1958 we set off to complete the through trip. Unfortunately, whilst on "The Terrible Traverse" a rock fall killed David. Des felt so helpless when he heard the news that he immediately applied for membership of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association (in the Yorkshire Dales the three rescue teams are responsible for both fell rescue and cave rescue in their patch irrespective of their title. Having been accepted into membership of UWFRA, Des's abilities were soon recognised – he had earlier Mountain Rescue experience whilst working at Eskdale Outward Bound. He quickly put his climbing skills to caving and soon rose through the ranks of the team to become underground leader and eventually one of the team's controllers. I also joined UWFRA at a later date and eventually served 15 years as secretary.

In 1986 Des was elected a life member of the team in recognition of his services and we often shared the caves and Dales on rescues. We were called on a number of occasions to assist the Cave Rescue Organisation in their patch – the Yorkshire 3 Peaks.

Back in the 1970's, I had just read Ken Wilson's "The Black Cliff – Clogwyn Du'r Arddu". There is a chapter on rescues on Cloggy and the final line is: 'However, none of these can compare with Des Birch's rescue of Ian McNaught Davis'…….nothing more.

A couple of weeks later, I was in Des's local in Addingham and spotted him. What's this about your rescue of Ian Mac? He just laughed and walked away. 10 minutes later he returned and said he had been climbing on Cloggy on a parallel climb to Ian Mac when the latter fell landing on a ledge and sustaining serious leg injuries. Having secured his wife Jean, Des traversed across to Ian Mac who had landed much nearer the top of the climb than the

bottom. He decided to try and complete the climb by getting Ian Mac onto his shoulders and gripping his legs (presumably above the injury) Apparently, Ian Mac was known for having great upper body strength and Des was known for having strong legs. Using Ian Mac's arms and Des's legs they completed the climb to the top where a stretcher party were waiting.

Peter Miller

Jeremy Charles Daly *18/8/1966 – 23/9/2019*

My brother Jeremy has passed away after a short illness at the age of 53. In August 2019, he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He met his diagnosis with the same fortitude and pragmatism he'd shown with a previous bout of cancer, having been diagnosed with melanoma in 2013. Despite surgery the cancer had already spread rapidly. He was admitted to Queenscourt Hospice in Southport where he passed away peacefully with his wife Carol at his side.

Jem, as he was affectionately known, was born in Huddersfield, the youngest of three boys. When he was 4 the family moved to Rochdale. It was here that Jem first got a taste for the outdoors when he was old enough to venture further afield. Living on the northern edge of the mill town, playing out saw him fishing in the local reservoirs, camping with the Scouts and roaming the Pennine hills near home.

In 1977, the family moved again, to Seascale on the Cumbrian coast. Not long after settling in, Jem had his first day on the fells when Dad took him up Scafell via Lords Rake and Deep Ghyll. He was unfazed by the exposure at such a relatively young age. He attended Wyndham School in Egremont where there was a small climbing wall and a handful of teachers who encouraged his passion for walking and now climbing. The long school holidays were ideal for exploring the high crags around Wasdale Head and by sixteen he was climbing routes like Botterill's Slab, Buttonhook Route and Gormenghast. By this time he had also taken up winter climbing, tackling the Great End gullies.

After completing his A-levels, Jem went to Bristol Polytechnic to study building. He joined the climbing club there and spent evenings climbing in the Avon gorge and weekends on trips to Cornwall and Pembroke. It was during this period that Jem joined the Fell and Rock, in 1985. After graduating in 1987 he worked for a variety of large construction companies, moving around the country working on various projects. From a supermarket in Wellingborough to a shopping centre in Leeds, and the second terminal at Manchester airport, he rose

to be a senior project manager. He still had time for the outdoors with climbing trips to Skye, Torridon, Spain and Mallorca.

By 1993, Jem was living in Liverpool and it was here that he met Carol, in March of that year. They settled in Carol's home town of Ormskirk and married in September 1995. Their first daughter Hannah was born in September 1996 followed by Caitlin in July 2002. Jem loved family life; there was always a DIY project on the go, a concert to take the girls to and he was a dab hand in the kitchen. The girls were his pride and joy and he took them camping, walking and surfing. One of his last days on the hills was when he guided Hannah when she did the Three Peaks challenge.

He was great company on the hills, had a great sense of humour and was a witty raconteur. Evenings with him were always a convivial affair. He will be fondly remembered by the family and his many friends.

Cris Daly

Colin Fearnley *1932 - 2018*

Colin was born in Halifax, Yorkshire and in his early years he developed an interest in photography, ornithology and climbing, maintaining these interests throughout his life. In his teenage years he teamed up with local

like-minded young lads and some from Bradford, visiting the crags at Ilkley and Widdop and being more adventurous at weekends and holidays, hitchhiking to Scotland, Wales and The Lake District. There was no transport in those days.

I met Colin at Widdop when we were in our late teens and there he introduced me to climbing, mountaineering, birdwatching and his love of classical music. In the 1950s he was called up for his two years National Service and was lucky enough to serve as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, which took him to many interesting places such as Finland, the Norwegian fjords to the Arctic circle, down to Gibraltar and all around the Scottish islands.

When he finished his National service he started work at Calder Hall which came to an abrupt end in 1957 when the fire there occurred. He returned to Lancashire where I lived and started work at Joseph Lucas engineering as a precision engineer where he remained for the rest of his working life.

By then we had transport and started visiting the lakes every weekend with holidays abroad climbing in the Alps and the Dolomites.

In between, with a love of cars he joined the Clitheroe motor club and started rallying, completing the Tour of Mull.

In the early 80s his friends persuaded him to join the FRCC. So began many skiing holidays, Easter meets and Munro bagging, to name but a few.

In his late 50s a love of sailing took over with the late Bill Smith and Brian and Jill Fuller. They sailed all around the outer Hebrides and later he sailed with Duncan Boston many times in the Greek Islands.

Colin retired in 1991 and we moved to the Eden Valley where he spent many happy years still walking and enjoying many of his outdoor interests until he became ill during the last ten years of his life.

He died peacefully in November 2018, having enjoyed a happy and busy life along with the great fellowship of the FRCC.

Flo Fearnley

Peter Gerrard *1933 - 2019*

Peter was one of my closest friends. In 1964 he was my Best Man and in 1971 when he married Anne I was his Best Man

I first met Peter in October 1961 when I joined ICI in Runcorn. We were soon talking about weekends in the mountains, although after playing hockey on Saturdays he often went to see his Mum and Dad in Conwy.

We soon had a group of us heading for the hills, if not for the weekend, certainly on Sundays.

In the great winter of 1963 we were in the mountains every weekend. Peter was focused on climbing, whilst I went off skiing.

I introduced Peter to skiing when a group of us went to Niederau in February 1971. He learnt to ski and that introduction set him up for his sacrosanct week every year until his last trip in 2018. Anne joined us in February 1973, but it was not for her. It nearly wasn't for Peter when we had to walk across a well frozen snow slope to reach our chalet. Peter was in black leather soled brogues and found it rather slippery!

Peter was a great companion in the mountains and a strong climber. He climbed extensively in North Wales and the Lake District, not to mention evenings on the local Frodsham and Helsby sandstone cliffs. Perhaps his most notable climb was in the early sixties on Scafell Central Buttress with Peter Stephens and Reg Pillinger.

In 1962 he and fellow Cambridge University Mountaineering Club member, Charles Hale, encouraged me up Piz Morteratsch, Piz Roseg and finally the Biancograt on Piz Bernina. The Swiss affectionately call it the Ovomaltine Grat, as a picture of the lovely white ridge (well it was in 1962!) was widely used in their advertisements.

Of course when we arrived in the afternoon in the neighbouring resort, St Moritz, after a long drive from the UK, we had to enjoy coffee and cake. Peter insisted his two helpings were accompanied by doppelsahne (a double helping of cream).

If we were ever in Frodsham over the weekend Peter would always make a delicious cake, always with an ample helping of cream.

In subsequent years Peter, Alan Jones and I skied many times with the Ski Club of Great Britain, particularly with their pre-Christmas Instruction Group. Peter became a serious ski mountaineer and one epic tour we did together was a Ski Club Tour from Verbier to Zermatt through Grimentz, along the northern side of the Pennine Chain.

For many years Peter was a member and Treasurer of the Climbers Club. In later years he skied with the Snow Safari Group headed by Club member and erstwhile Outward Bound Instructor, Roger Putnam. Peter was a regular on the monthly Thursday morning Ski Club of Manchester Instruction Groups at the Chill Factore, his inimitable style easily recognised. He will be sorely missed. Peter was in all senses my Best Man.

Paul Herbert

Postscript from Ted Maden

Peter and I did our first climb together at the Cuillin Ridge on 25 June 1956. We were both members of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club at the time. There were many more climbs that we later did together, including Scafell East Buttress, Pegasus and Hell's Groove in 1964-5. We also climbed in the Dolomites in 1964.

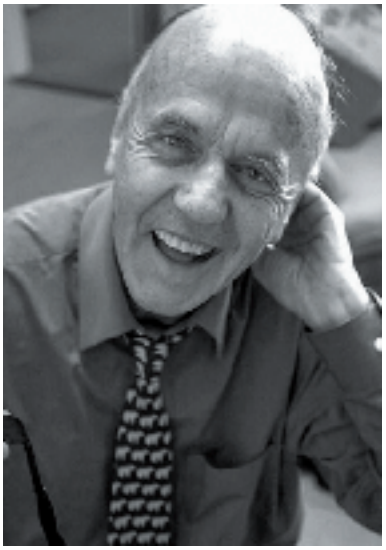
We climbed Lochnagar with Reg Pillinger in 1971 which was my last climb with Peter. In the 1980s there was a memorable ski holiday in North East France with the Gerrard family. We climbed well together throughout these years. Our personal friendship lasted till Peter's very end.

Tony Greenbank

Tony Greenbank, a freelance journalist at Newsquest Cumbria, previously Cumbrian Newspapers, has died at the age of 86.

Mr Greenbank was originally from Yorkshire, but spent many years in Cumbria, living in Ambleside and latterly in Keswick.

As a journalist he wrote for The Mail in Barrow, Cumbria Life and was known for his popular Bar Spy column in the News & Star, as well as covering sporting events in the county. Mr Greenbank also wrote the Country Diary for The Guardian. He was described as a brilliant raconteur and a versatile writer always looking for a story by his former colleagues. A keen climber, he was a close friend of mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington.



Mr Greenbank also spent time in the United States and worked as an Outward Bound instructor.

He leaves four children, Mark, Hannah, Heather and Rebecca. Hannah said: "He was a unique person, he was one of a kind and a very quirky man. He had a wicked sense of humour and would always encourage our love of reading. He was always there for me."

Mark said: "He would spend a lot of time with me and we would ride bikes, he would teach me about maintaining bikes and how to use a cricket bat or play bowls. He was very sporty and he used to take me climbing."

Mark recalled a day when the family had gone to Bingley for a kayaking trip. One the way back, the car stopped at a traffic light and the canoe flew over the roof. He said: "It was just so funny. He always supported me in everything I did."

Heather remembers her father for his adventurous spirit. "When I was really young, he used to say to me: 'Do you want to go on an adventure?' We used to go in the car at night and he would take me to a field looking at caves.

"I always found it very exciting, that was what he did. I loved that he wanted to do those things with his little girl."

She also recalled his love of photography, which is also a passion of hers.

Rebecca said: "I really love how he showed me the Lake District mountains, the walks and all the things I loved doing.

"He showed me how to love the place, he was a great teacher.

"He had a wicked sense of humour and he was very sharp and switched on."

Mr Greenbank will be missed by his grandchildren Harry, Billy, Ishbelle and Josh.

His close friend Andy Hyslop enjoyed many climbing trips in the Lakes with Mr Greenbank and the pair spent many Christmas days going climbing.

He said: "He was larger than life, a real character."

Andy said Mr Greenbank has spent time in New York and London, frequenting exclusive clubs and

mingling with artists and high-profile personalities.

"He would get in because of his personality."

Andy recalled a time when Mr Greenbank wanted to fly in a fighter jet over the Lake District. "He got in touch with the RAF and convinced them to take him, but he realised soon what a big mistake he made – he was terrified and the G-force was unbelievable."

Sir Chris said: "Climbing was his first love. He always had a wonderful enthusiasm, he was just fun to be around and he was a very thoughtful man."

Keith Sutton, former editor at The Mail and the News & Star, said: "He was very close to the people who read his stuff. He was the absolute opposite of people who write for Twitter, who haven't got a clue who's reading it. He was very knowledgeable.

"He had an entertaining way of writing and it was spotted by The Guardian."

Times & Star Journalist John Walsh said: "He loved his football and I'm pleased to say he gained a lot of pleasure in watching Workington Reds, particularly enjoying his visits to Borough Park and the craic in the bar afterwards."

Former journalist Nick Turner said Mr Greenbank could turn his hand to any story.

"He was extremely popular in the newsroom and he had a lot of time for other journalists.

"He could turn his hand at anything, but everyone remembered him for Bar Spy – we used to joke he went to Cumbria's worst pubs so we didn't have to.

"He loved talking to people and then he would come back with all these interesting stories."

Mr Turner recalled that when Mr Greenbank had hip surgery, he decided not to have general anaesthetic so he could watch the operation and write about it.

"We would always seize an opportunity for a good story."

Photographer and friend Phil Rigby said: "He was a great bloke and he always had a generous spirit, he was always on the lookout for stories.

"He was just a really funny guy, with some really funny stories to tell, I'll miss him."

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Philip, 'Pip' Hopkinson.

Known to his family as Phil but 'Pip' to all his climbing friends, Phil Hopkinson died of a sudden heart attack on 25 August 2018 in a pub and in the company of his brother and good friends.

Pip was a founder member of the Rugby Mountaineering Club, a secretary of the Climbers Club and a valued member of the Nottingham Climbers Club. Having met Doug Scott as a teenager, he was involved in the origins of the charity which grew into Community Action Nepal and he remained a Trustee until his death. He was chief electrical engineer at Stanton and Stavely steelworks and was able to contribute expertise as well as common sense to CANs projects in Nepal where he was known as 'the big man'. Thanks to him, I was able to visit Nepal twice and when word got out that I was related to him, I was given status and respect way above anything which I earned.

His other talents will not be so well known to climbers but he was a good amateur artist and musician with a love of classical, jazz and traditional music. He edited a book of music for the English

Concertina "Dancing with Ma Baby" with his usual attention to detail. It is sought after as a window on an aspect of music hard to find elsewhere.

Phil had no children but to all his family, he was a generous and supportive brother, uncle and friend who will be missed in many places and many ways. His family would like to thank the climbing community for the many messages of good will which they have received.

Nick R. Hopkinson

Malcolm Ibberson

Memories of a Day in the Lake District with Richard, from Gerard Hurst's journal, Saturday 26 November 1988

Walking with: Dave Richards, Malcolm & Richard Ibberson

Weather excellent, very light winds, broken cloud with sunny spells.

We started from Malcolm's home (Buttermere) on Friday night. Drove to Gatescarth car park, began walking approximately 9:30 am.

We followed the path southwest to Buttermere Fell, then south up to Scarth Gap. The pull up to the gap is quite hard and the relief on reaching the top was very welcome. The views are always worth the effort.

The path directly to Black Sail pass follows the forest edge but we chose to head towards Pillar Rock which on such a clear day was a strong attraction. The path goes through the forest and descends into the Valley. It is a very gentle descent, just as well as the climb to Pillar is the equal of that to Gimmer Crag.

The ascent to the foot of Pillar gives time to contemplate the significance of the area. We left the rucksacks near the first aid post and walked around the base of Pillar, the climbing looks really attractive and I hope to come back next year.

We continued to Robinson's cairn and along the high traverse path SE to Black Sail pass. A good path, but tricky if under winter conditions. On reaching the pass we stopped and sat in the warm sunshine taking in the views of Ennerdale and Wasdale valleys. By now the sky was clear and reluctantly we set off down the valley to Mosedale Beck.

We reached the Valley about 4:00 pm with the sun setting down the valley, such a beautiful sunset with a red dusting on the mountain tops of Gable the Napes and Scafell. We reached the Fell and Rock hut just before dark. An excellent day, combining good weather beautiful scenery and good company.

The night was clear and cold, the following morning was clear, another good day in prospect.

We set off from the hut at Brackenclose about 9:00 am and went through Wasdale, past the little church. Easy walking until we turned up towards Napes. This became quite a killer climb; regular stops are required but these gave opportunity to take in the view.

You could see the piles of stones in the fields, apparently washed down during a flood. Having gained enough height we traversed under the Napes to the gully below Napes Needle. Dave and I climbed up to view the Needle

from the side, a classic view. Richard wasn't happy with the exposure, so he and Malcolm carried on and Dave and I watched some climbers on the Needle. We caught up with them at Kern Knotts. The traverse path is a little exposed and will be difficult in winter conditions.

We continued to Sty Head, the weather had changed with heavy cloud and a gusty wind. We headed to Aaron Slack and up to Windy Gap.

We headed on towards Brandreth and then turned right towards Honister quarries and Honister pass. We followed the road home to Buttermere, getting back at 5:00 pm. Tired but satisfied with an excellent day out.

'Oh dear, if you're reading this, I must have given up the ghost.

I hope you can forgive me from being such a stiff unwelcome host.

Just talk amongst yourselves my friends and share a toast or two.

For I am sure you will remember well how I loved to drink with you.

Don't worry about mourning me I was never easy to offend.

Feel free to share a story at my expense and we'll have a good laugh at the end.

Life is like a mountain railway, with an engineer that's brave, we must make the run successful from the cradle to the grave. Heed the curves and watch the tunnels, never falter, never fail, keep your hand upon the throttle and your eye upon the rail. Blessed Saviour, Thou will guide us till we reach that blissful shore where the angels wait to join us in that train forever more.

Gerard Hurst

Eric Ivison *1931-2020 Life member, Warden Brackenclose 1966-79, Vice President 1978-80*

Born and brought up in Workington Eric was involved with the hills from a very early age. His uncle Austin Barton (a member of the FRCC) was

a very keen climber and skier and took Eric out walking from the age of 10. Eric felt he was almost born into the Fell and Rock family as Austin had many friends in FRCC circles; Jack Carswell, Bert Beck, Bill Peasecod to name but a few. In those days climbing boots had nails, rope was hemp and you climbed in whatever old clothes you had. This was the world in which Eric started climbing. His mother insisted he went to Sunday school so he missed the Sunday climbing most weeks, which he said made the atmosphere at home difficult! His first climb was the Pulpit Route on Pillar. As the routes grew harder Eric became more proficient until he was climbing and skiing all over the UK and in the Alps and a lifelong obsession was born.

In 1952 Eric became a graduating member of the F&RCC and a full member in1955.

Eric`s time as warden of Brackenclose saw him overseeing the enormous task of installing electricity, a huge improvement on the oil lamps and Calor gas previously used. With Jim Huddart he also oversaw the planting of trees, including the Presidents` trees, and he and Jim made a plan of all the planted trees. This plan used to be in the men`s dorm at Brackenclose.

He also thoroughly enjoyed his time as VP; the meets, dinners with other clubs, socialising with other climbers.

Eric spent his working life with British Steel, finishing as Head of the Metallurgy Dept. He was awarded the Fellowship of his Institute for his work

in the steel industry.

He was married to Helen, a long and happy marriage which produced two talented sons, Philip and Neil, and they and the subsequent grandchildren gave Eric much joy.

During all this time Eric continued climbing, meeting with friends every May in Scotland and from this our personal May meets evolved.

I first met Eric in 1956 climbing in the Lakes and in 1959 he seconded my application for the F&RCC.

For more than 30 years a group of us had 2 meets a year (February & September) in the Coach House, Birkness, arranged by Eric and attended among others by Pete and Hilary Moffat, Ollie Geere, Jim Huddart. These were wonderful occasions helped along in the evenings by drinks and slide shows of past glories! We also had a May meet in Scotland every year particularly, but not only, to climb Munros.

In 1992 the May meet went to Mull in glorious weather to climb Eric`s final Munro, Ben Mor, and to drink champagne on the summit.

After Eric`s accident he was unable to get to the hills and attend our meets but he kept in touch, still organising our Birkness gatherings. Even when he was unable to join us, he always wanted to know who had been there and what we had done. As he said of himself, he was `a man of the mountains`, but he was also a good friend, a kind and generous man.

He is much missed by us all, especially when we raise a glass to him on our meets in Scotland and talk about times past.

Our sympathy goes to Helen, Philip and Neil.

MaryRose Kearney

Christine Kennett *1953-2020*

Although Christine's time in the FRCC lasted scarcely six months before her shockingly sudden death she was already well-known to a wide circle of members. This was in no small part due to the several years during which she was a popular participant in what is sometimes called, not entirely jokingly, the best-attended non-Meet of the FRCC year, the annual winter exodus to Calpe on the Costa Blanca, where she climbed, walked and socialised with an ever-widening circle of friends. Many of the tributes after her death mentioned the ready smile and easy laughter which made her such a popular companion there both on and off the hill. She was also my almost constant companion in producing my walking guide to the Costa Blanca and provided several photographs as well as being 'Duty Foreground' in many others,

She was also a regular visitor to Kalymnos, her favourite place to climb, to which she returned year after year, often in both spring and autumn.

By the time I met Christine ten years ago, she was already an experienced walker, having made countless visits to the Lakeland Fells, Western Scotland and the Islands, often making solo ascents of the hills. After we met she started rock climbing and, despite already being in her sixties, took to it with all the zeal of the convert. Over the following years we climbed hundreds of routes together,

in the UK and abroad. Her primary interest was always sport climbing in pursuit of which we made multiple visits to Catalunya, Majorca, France and the Canaries. She was proud of the fact that despite her late start she had climbed up to 6b+ and would in all likelihood have gone on to climb even harder.

Closer to home, she climbed on Dales limestone as well as occasionally on Yorkshire grit and in the Peak. Although sport climbing remained her first love, since joining the club she had taken to Lakeland trad and was looking forward to working her way through the classics in the coming years. But it was not to be. She was diagnosed with cancer shortly after she returned from Calpe in early 2020 and died at home in York just two months later.

Away from the crag Christine was a fascinating, multi-talented woman. A gifted linguist, she had studied at universities in Paris and Valencia and taught in France, Germany and Malaysia. She startled waiters in one Calpe curry house by addressing them in Urdu, earning free drinks all night. After returning to live in the UK she became a nationally-recognised psychotherapist and trainer with a thriving private practice and derived great satisfaction from helping clients. She was also a black belt martial artist and Aikido instructor. Her other great pleasure was dancing, particularly the tango, which she loved mainly for its sensual passion – but also for those spectacular shoes she collected and always insisted were essential to dance it properly.

Terry Fletcher

Frank Major *17th July 1944 – 9th October 2018*

"The fleeting hour of life of those who love the hills is quickly spent, but the hills are eternal. Always there will be the lonely ridge, the dancing beck, the silent forest; always there will be the exhilaration of the summits. These are for the seeking, and those who seek and find while there is still time will be blessed both in mind and body." Alfred Wainwright

Frank had a longstanding passion for the great outdoors and particularly for the Lake District. This began when, in his late teens, he would take the bus from his hometown, Liverpool to Ambleside in order to spend as many weekends as he could rock climbing and walking. Back then he was an active member of the Liverpool based Wayfarers' Club and remained so. However, he had a longstanding ambition to join the premier mountaineering club, the FRCC. He became an Associate member in 1981 and then spent the next 3 years attending meets, dinners and recording all of his summits in all corners of the Lake District, North Wales and Scotland in order to secure his full membership in 1984. My sister and I have many fond memories of staying at the cottage right on the shores of Buttermere and spending New Year's Eve at the ODG where my sister danced with the late Tim Pickles at the ceilidh! Frank's passion for the Lake District was infectious and my family and I continue to spend very happy holidays there.

Later in his life, Frank discovered the sport

of Orienteering which combined his love of the outdoors, his enjoyment of fell running and the need to think carefully about which route to take. He remained very competitive and secured Gold badges in all the age classes he participated in.

In business, Frank had a distinguished career in the ports and shipping sector, spending 25 years at the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, where he became their youngest director and was responsible for the opening of the Seaforth Container Terminal. He went on to take this expertise around the world to Hong Kong, the UAE, the Philippines and the Gambia. In 1984, he secured the role of General Manager of the Port of Sunderland and being local authority owned, was able to provide leadership in public sector bodies like the Environment Agency and Gateshead NHS Trusts. He was awarded an MBE in 2013 for services to coastal erosion and flood management and was a Deputy Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear.

He greatly valued being part of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and its community; he attended many annual dinners with Pat and participated in the Hut to Hut Centenary Walk in May 2007.

Frank passed away in October 2018 after a two year battle with brain cancer. He is greatly missed by his wife, Pat, children Esme and Andrew and all his grandchildren.

Andrew Major

Patsy Mayers *14/12/1944 – 18/8/2018*

Assistant Journal Editor 1972 - 76

Including Don Harding's memories …

In November 1968 Don Harding met Patsy at a Birkness maintenance meet, along with A B Hargreaves and other notable members, and she subsequently joined the Club in 1970. At that time she was teaching Latin and Classics at the Carlisle County Girls High School, but as her interest in outdoor activities was keen, she helped out with some of the courses he ran at the Venture Forth Centre for Scouts in Cartmel in the early 1970's. Always a kind and considerate character, Patsy could be relied upon to mentor young people. As a result she joined them in taking a 3 week trip to Iceland for D of E students on their Gold Expedition, thus kindling a love of the area which she revisited many times with her best friend, Helen. She and

Helen were exceptionally strong walkers, despite their slight physique and would regularly outwalk anyone else brave enough to go with them. Together they explored Greenland and Norway enjoying these remote places. In 1973 she visited the Alps, again helping with D of E students, and in 1974 she went to work for the Outward Bound Girls School, 'Rhowniar' at Tywyn in Wales. She was there for around 3 years before permanently settling in Oldham working for Oldham Education Authority in various capacities, until her retirement in 1994. Don's memories of her

include climbing some of the easy multi-pitches in Burtness Combe and on Great Gable, roped in the middle of 3. Always cheerful and positive, she was an asset to any party on the hill.

I met her myself in 1987 when she was one of the people who kindly gave me lifts between FRCC Meets in the Lakes and Manchester. A mutual interest in mountain walking led to invites to join her on walks, including some with the Long Distance Walkers Association. A particularly memorable walk in the Peak District included a 30 mile circular walk around Bakewell. That evening my muscles all stiffened up and I struggled to move! She was well known to the local Rambling clubs and in later years she enjoyed holidays with the Ramblers all around Britain. She was also very active with her local Church and often provided the music for the evening services.

Another of her enthusiasms was for birds, in particular budgies, and she became Secretary of the Rochdale Budgerigar Society, working hard to keep it going. For many years she sponsored a Great Grey Owl called Malamut at the Chestnut Centre, near Chapel en le Frith, where she also adopted an otter, as a birthday present for my daughter.

Sadly and suddenly, in spring 2018 she was diagnosed with a cancer which quickly spread and led to her passing away peacefully in the Hospice in August.

Heather Hardy, Hilary Robertson

Tom Meredith

Tom died on 3rd February 2019

He was warden of Rawhead from 1966-1976 and after a well-earned rest as Vice President from 1975-1977, he returned to Rawhead as Assistant Warden from 1979-1981.

At the time of Tom's tenure Rawhead was the most popular of the Club's huts and was well patronised by climbers, with Tom's efforts greatly appreciated.

When I was elected to become President in November 1970, I was confronted by a difficult situation: the organisation of the traditional New Year's meet. For many years this splendid event was held at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. Unfortunately Sid and Jammy Cross has just retired and the tenancy of the hotel had been taken by a man who made it clear that the Club were not welcome at the hotel, nor were any other climbing clubs who used to have functions there. Sid scoured the district to see if alternative accommodation could be found for the meet, to no avail.

Tom came up with an ideal solution to the problem.: we could hold the New Year meet in Rawhead Barn. Tom arranged for tressle tables to be borrowed from Chapel Stile Church and invested in new cutlery for the hut. Members were organised to provide various courses for the dinner and act as cooks and waiters. The Sun hotel in Coniston provided a bar with a good selection of wines and beer.

The evening started with a sherry reception in the Cottage, followed by a 5 course dinner. A slide show was followed by dancing, with punch served at midnight to welcome in the New Year. The meet was a huge success due to Tom's efforts and was repeated every year until 1985. This event was the forerunner of many such meets to be held in the huts, continuing to the present day.

Tom began his climbing as a member of Preston Mountaineering Club and enjoyed seconding climbs up to VS standard, mainly in Langdale.

In his professional life Tom was a local government officer and eventually became the

Chief Public Health Inspector for Preston.

Tom was a very good friend to all who knew him and we offer our condolences to his daughters, his wife having predeceased him.

John Wilkinson

Peter Moffat

Peter Moffat was born in Smithy Cottage and lived there in Seascale, apart from his final year or so. His van advertised him as a joiner but his ecclesiastical furniture, to be found in churches in Cumbria and Yorkshire, together with benches and bookcases in FRCC huts speak of a master cabinet maker.

At the age of 6 Peter walked up Pillar, from whence he progressed to using a window sash cord as a climbing rope. His association with the FRCC began when, as a boy, he assisted his father in building Brackenclose. His father determined that if Peter was going to climb, he should join the FRCC and learn how to do it properly. He became a member in 1946 and his work as New Climbs Co-Ordinator in the 1950s helped keep the club's guidebooks alive when threatened by a lack of publication.

Peter was extremely well coordinated – he was in the latter stages of training as a fighter pilot on Harvards and later Spitfires when the war ended - and he was physically strong to go with it.

Early on he climbed with Peter Hogg. Peter Moffat was a candidate for the successful 1953 Everest Expedition, though his performance at altitude and, against the standards of the time, his class would have made him an unlikely choice.

Peter ski-toured in the Alps with John Wilkinson and Gordon Dyke for many years, and with Margaret Miller in Scotland. Peter did the Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt with Ron Miller and Don Atkinson in 1959, almost a decade before the widely recognized first British guideless ski-crossing. In 1961 in Iceland Peter, Norman Ennis, John Thompson and John Bull, with a sledge built by Peter, crossed the Vatnajökull, the largest icecap in Europe. They barely survived.

In 1962 Peter and Hilary Simmons did the Eiger's Mittellegi ridge; they also traversed the Grands Charmoz and Aiguille du Grepon. They had started climbing together at a Salving House meet and married in 1963. Family holidays with their daughters Joan and Ruth took in the Maritime Alps, The Dauphiné Alps, The Pyrenees and even when the girls were very young some challenging via ferrata in the Dolomites.

Peter became an Honorary Member (1981) and President (1980-82).

In 1990, Peter joined a FRCC expedition to the Asan mountains in the Pamirs. He climbed the impressive rock spire of Usan and other minor peaks. I was privileged to have Peter's experienced company on numerous summer Alpine seasons, Alpine ski-tours with John Coates, a bitterly cold FRCC expedition to the Sub-Polar Urals and a ski-tour in Canada's Selkirk Range.

David Miller recollects climbing Central Buttress on Scafell with Peter and a visiting USSR Master of Sport. David found Peter to be a very reliable second, never failing to get up a route, such as

Mayday Direct, Red Edge and Saxon. Younger climbers were often amazed to see him climbing, particularly when informed of his age. The last time David Miller and Peter climbed together was when Peter was 81. As well as the tough walk up to Scafell, he climbed the Direct route on the Pinnacle, together with Hilary, and then Botterills Slab, two of the greatest routes on Scafell.

In later years Peter and Hilary went on a second FRCC visit to the Pamirs, to The Tien Shan, and with the Canadian Alpine Club to The Fairy Meadows. They climbed the Exum Ridge on the Grand Teton, the East Face of Mount Whitney, and they trekked round the Torres in Chile. Peter climbed Lobuche in Nepal. He celebrated his 90th Birthday on Scafell.

His friends could identify Peter on a crowded ski run just by his style, never taught in any ski-school. Peter could be sparse in deploying any running belays, while his ambition for the length of a pitch was not always equalled by the available length of his climbing rope. This disparity, worsened by the difficulties in communicating on some Lakeland crags, led to some challenges for Hilary as his normal second.

Peter was extremely modest, as evidenced by so many of his mountaineering achievements only becoming widely known after his death, and by his self-description as a joiner. The sparsity of new routes recorded against his name is almost certainly wrong. He was free with his information and very kind, as evinced by his climbing the Needle at the request of an unknown photographer, despite being under strict orders to return to Smithy Cottage on time. He was taciturn, yet could readily share a thought by his grin or a glint in his eye, a delightful trait by which his great many friends will remember him.

Andy Coatsworth

Cynthia Roberts.

I first met Cynthia in the 1960's when Dave invited her to a weekend in the Lakes.

Unfortunately, he didn't explain what that entailed, so she arrived, elegantly dressed, probably expecting to stay in a nice hotel, only to find that she would be staying in Raw Head and would have to look after herself during the day whilst Dave went climbing! Cynthia came from a close-knit family, and although she had no experience of outdoor activities, she adapted well, and it wasn't long before she started joining me on walks. She was very determined to learn as much as possible to share Dave's hobby, and even took up camping, in spite of one of her earliest experiences of their tent being flooded at Ynys Ettws. She continued to expand her mountaineering ability and included some alpine routes. A regular user of the huts and cottages, Cynthia took part in the social life of the Club, became a competent rock climber and climbed with Dave for many years. She also took up skiing, joining other club members on several informal club trips.

Cynthia, as is well known in the Club, was always a good companion on the fells, and a very caring person. She was particularly supportive of Dave, with his long-standing health issues and was a great source of strength to him during his difficult times.

Christine Miller

Trish Sorrell (NÉE MURRAY)

We lost Trish on the 6th August, 2019 at the Weston Park Cancer Hospital in Sheffield. FRCC members may remember Trish as our 'tall lass,' carving her own distinct path through life, and bringing joy and laughter to all those around her. She bravely confronted a deteriorating breast cancer prognosis throughout the spring and early summer of 2019. It will be no surprise to those that knew her that despite the physical challenges at the time, Trish remained active; climbing, cycling and walking throughout.

Trish pursued a career in science, predominantly working in Higher Education and supporting teaching. Initially, she studied Geography at the University of Hull, and it was here that she first acquired a taste for canoeing and climbing. Moving from Hull to Bangor University to complete, first a Masters and then a PhD in Oceanography, was a logical academic choice that provided the perfect opportunity for her to walk and climb amidst the majesty of the environment in North Wales.

Between studies, Trish won a place on an 'Operation Raleigh' expedition to Guyana. Her boundless enthusiasm and cheerfulness are characteristics that her many FRCC friends will recognise and cherish, and were undoubtedly beneficial during what was at times an arduous expedition.

Trish held a number of posts at universities, including Cambridge, Durham and Sheffield working as a freelance consultant on tidal flow and sedimentation dynamics. In her final role she supported learning and teaching at the University of Sheffield's Faculty of Engineering.

As an accomplished climber and fell walker, Trish joined the FRCC in 2006. Her infectious enthusiasm and unswerving optimism in the face of our unpredictable British weather will be missed by the many friends she made through her active involvement with various outdoor groups. Certain friends will recall her talent for encouraging the less confident to excel themselves on climbs that they might have considered to be beyond their comfort zone. Many will remember her more renowned adventures, perhaps from the Costa Blanca and tales of benightment on the Bernia Ridge or the number of Alpine 4000 metre summits that Trish ascended over the years.

Trish was a skilled co-ordinator and organised a number of formal and informal meets for the FRCC. She had an ability to bond with members of all ages and all sectors of the membership. At home (Hathersage) in the Peak District, Trish was no less active, contributing both to community and family life with vigour and devotion. She is hugely missed by those closest to her, and her absence will be felt by many further afield who came to rely on her boundless energy and zest for life.

Julian Sorrell

Peter Standing *16.02.47 – 16.11.19*

Peter joined the FRCC in 1992. His family comment that he was an inveterate 'list ticker',

collecting summits not only in the Lake District but much further afield. In the UK that list included climbing the Munros, Corbetts, Wainwrights and the 91 County Tops.

In his earlier life he participated in a Speleological expedition that discovered and then descended 751 feet into one of the world's deepest caves, Ghar Parau, in Iran in 1971. He was a onetime 'hippy' traveller to Kathmandu via Iran and Afghanistan. A thirst for travelling and climbing led him to visit and climb in some 120 countries. His climbing partner for 40 years recalls expeditions to Namibia, South Africa, China, Nepal, the States, the Pyrenees, the Arab Emirates and Greece.

The family played a very important part in Peter's life. Ruth, his daughter, recalls that "Whilst my classmates were being taken to Centre Parcs or Disneyland, we were off on backpacking trips through Central America or South-East Asia spending long hours crammed into overcrowded public minibuses with mad drivers". Peter with his wife, Gillian, together combined medical practice with visits to remote parts of the world.

He described, "an overnight identity change" from 29 years running a GP practice in Bury to Academia (with 148 eighteen-year old first year students) leading to a first-class honours Geography degree at Lancaster University, followed by a Masters in Cumbrian landscapes, studying GIS mapping, Geomorphology and the human history of local limestone landscapes. From this background he developed his own photographic exhibition, 'Fifty Shades of Grey Limestone'. There followed a sequence of comprehensively researched Geotrail walks which have been well received. The Landscape Trust would like to pay tribute to his work as Events Officer for the Trust from June 2010 to November 2018 when he retired due to advancing pulmonary disease and from which he died a year later. Peter organised extensive and very successful annual programmes of lectures, walks, exhibitions, tours and workshops. These shifted the emphasis of events firmly toward education which proved very popular with members. These culminated in the illustrated Landscape Walks around Sandside, Storth and Carr Bank, covering the 'Geography, Geology, History and Ecology of the village and estuary', published days before he died. They will serve as an enduring tribute to Peter for years to come. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to people's understanding of the Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), he was awarded the prestigious AONB Bittern Award 2015. The Trust extends their sincere condolences to Peter's widow, Gillian, his daughter Ruth, his son Oliver, and their young families.

Even when seriously ill last autumn Peter undertook an expedition to the Orkneys, to ascend the 1,570 foot Ward Hill on Hoy. He was supported by his "Sherpa" Gillian gallantly carrying a heavy oxygen cylinder up the slopes through thick heather. Reaching the top he completed a long-term objective of climbing all the UK County Tops mentioned above. On the summit he looked toward the Old Man of Hoy which he had climbed 45 years before – only a few years after it was first conquered by Chris Bonington. Whilst, sadly, Ward Hill was to be Peter's last serious hill climb, the accomplishment demonstrated a level of

determination and tenacity that few could have matched.

This is a shortened version of an obituary that was originally published in Keer to Kent, Journal of the Arnside/Silverdale Landscape Trust, issue 101, Spring 2020 and reproduced by kind permission of the author, Adrian Walker and the Journal Editor James Deboo.

Adrian Walker

Anthony Strawther ("Tony") *01/02/33 - 03/07/28*

Tony was born and brought up around Chesterfield, an only child. After the Second World War, the family moved to Barlow in the Peak District. Living here Tony discovered "The Great Outdoors".

He explored the Peak District with a friend and then with the local YHA group.

After leaving school, Tony was an apprentice upholsterer when a colleague asked if he would like to try rock climbing. At the end of the day at Black Rocks, Cromford, Tony was given an old 60 foot rope by his mentor. He had many exciting "run outs" with that rope, it being too short for many of the routes he was climbing, remembering that one tied directly on to the rope.

From 1951-1953, Tony did National Service in the RAF and following basic training, was stationed in Egypt. He enjoyed this, with training exercises in the desert and in the mountains of Crete. When returning home by ship to Trieste and train across Europe, Tony saw the Alps for the first time. Seeing what he had read about made an influential and lasting impression.

Tony left his original trade to work at Markham and Co., Heavy Engineering Works, in Chesterfield, remaining until retirement. Work for Tony provided the means of going to the mountains as often as possible.

1959 was Tony's first Alpine season, joining the Swiss Alpine Club, and remained a member of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club all his life.

That first season he went to Zermatt, to the Hotel Bahnhof, and like many climbers of this era, met Bernard Biner and sister Paula, the owners. The kitchen at Bernard's was the meeting place for climbers; swopping stories and getting up-to-date knowledge of routes.

For Tony, this was a great joy of climbing: the diversity of people he met - people from all walks of life - the one commonality being their love of the hills. Climbing clubs were something that Tony valued, a way of meeting people with the same passions.

In 1969, Tony was elected to the Alpine Club, a huge honour and privilege; he was conscious of the place the AC holds in mountaineering and exploration. Being part of that meant a great deal.

In 1987 he joined the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, enjoying the warmth and friendship of the people met, on meets, in huts and at club dinners. Tony loved going away to the huts; a day out on the tops, then sitting round, laughing and chatting,

with friends old and new being a perfect day for him.

I met Tony in 1971 at a symphony concert in Sheffield. In accepting a coffee in the interval, I little realised at the time what a lifetime of adventures would ensue. Having passed the test of a wet weekend's camping in North Wales, Tony took the time, trouble and patience to teach and nurture my climbing and mountaineering skills. Our first Alpine season together was in the Bernina, and it did not get off to an auspicious start, since I managed to burn the tent down. Tony was very stoical about it, and it was far from the end of a beautiful friendship. We went on to marry a year later, and have many subsequent climbing trips and Alpine seasons.

We repeated many of his previous climbs; he enjoyed taking me on peaks he had enjoyed, but also we explored new areas. Tony liked to traverse a peak, to see another valley or pass; we both did. This often led to very long days. His boast was that we never had to spend the night out unintentionally, but we came close on occasions.

Tony never boasted about climbs, or bragged about achievements, it wasn't in his nature, but if he did mention what he had done and where he had been, in the midst of a story, the listener was left in amazement at his exploits; but that was Tony, a modest man.

On the hills he was a careful climber and a solid companion. He was caring for others less able or competent than himself. He would always ensure that the party stayed together in all weather. He was a great companion in the hills, with experience that others could rely on and the stability never to get into difficulties.

Elsewhere we had many shared interests: mountaineering literature, history and art, visiting many exhibitions and latterly some of our holidays were visiting archaeological sites in Italy and Turkey.

Tony was always conscious how vulnerable we were climbing as a husband and wife. I was gung-ho, "let's do it?" whilst he the safe one, "let's weigh it up?" We balanced each other on the hill, as in life. Tony lived the fullest of lives.

Suzanne Strawther

John Swinglehurst

John was born in Woodhouse, Sheffield, on 10th February 1951 and died at home after a long illness, in December 2020

Intelligent and well educated, he gained degrees in Chemistry and Psychology, firstly becoming an industrial chemist and later a Social Worker on Nottinghamshire's Child Protection team, before retiring with ill health around 2010.

I first met John in 2000 at the inaugural meeting of the Bassetlaw Hill and Mountain Club in Worksop and soon found that he was an incredibly fit, long distance hill walker with a thirst for adventure. It was at this time that we became friends and began climbing and walking together. He was a popular member, being kind and funny with a boyish mischievousness, who played the occasional prank on fellow members but he did not suffer fools lightly.

His awareness and understanding of a wide range of subjects always made for interesting and

lively conversation be it on the hill or over a pint or a pot of tea. He had a particularly eclectic taste in music and was particularly fond of Captain Beefheart, the folk band Show of Hands and most kinds of psychedelic Hippy music

In 2004 I introduced him to the FRCC where he found satisfaction in volunteering as Assistant Warden at Salving House. Over the next 10 years we climbed many routes together on both rock and ice, mainly classics and sometimes in tough conditions ranging from wet ascents on Dow Crag to the snow and ice of the Lake District, Glencoe and Ben Nevis, with memorable days on Castle Ridge, Green Gully and an undocumented new route on the Clogwyn y Garnedd face of Snowdon. Living close to the Peak District we walked and climbed together often enjoying the warm evenings climbing on the gritstone edges until the midges drove us to the pub, but also making winter forays there after any prolonged cold snap to climb any decent bit of snow and ice around Mam Tor, Kinder Downfall and the Chew Valley. Further afield we shared mountaineering holidays in Chamonix and the Dolomites. He also enjoyed his time trekking the full GR20 in Corsica.

Away from the mountains he had a passion for vegetarian cooking and was happiest in the kitchen of Salving House cooking for friends with a gin and tonic in hand.

John had no family but as his health deteriorated during the latter years of his life and the mountains became distant, he kept himself busy by doing gardening jobs for the elderly, reading and listening to the radio.

He will be missed by all who knew him but will also be remembered by us for all the right reasons.

Dale Bloomer

Roger Wallace *7/1/33 - 19/1/17*

Born in Bourne, by the pumps
manned by father George
Whilst Marjorie sells groceries
from her pristine parlour.

Diving off the plants at the gravel
pits at weekends and a week
By the sea every summer, jaunty
in shorts and shirt.

The impact of the war
bewildering with a new brother
to boot
And commands in school to keep
writing small, save paper!

As full-back he fetches down two
men in one tackle, stops them
From scoring a try, the glory
coinciding with Dad dropping by.

A prized place deferred as he hitchhikes through France
To Cannes, an old rucksack on his back and £40 in his pocket

Then settles like Byron before him in the castle ramparts at Lerici -
Home cooking for his literary leanings, if not his belly.

Reluctantly rubbing shoulders with the Cambridge callow youth
He gains a certificate, more information, only to abscond again

To Sicily, where he makes common cause with another teacher.
A telegram is dispatched: Coming home engaged. R & R.

The fierce winter of '63 sparks freezing pipes in their caravan
and a girl Anna. A year or so later a second daughter, Lucy,
a redhead like Mum.

A plot of land and a dwelling for the grand sum of a ton,
then a third
Daughter and a giant teddy bear, named William
instead of the child.

As the Mill Lane menagerie grows Roger tends the artichokes
Goosegogs, raspberries and bees but draws a line at a goat...

Magic tricks in the garden with mystified youngsters and indoors
Chess, Battleships and Horsey Manure.
Warmth and patience galore.

Vegetarian cuisine on the Aga every night
then traditional teas at Hello
And Papa's on a Sunday along with giggling fits and TV.

Summers twinned with Vence, France - boules in the squares,
eel soup and wine.
In winter skating on the Welland with the ice fairies,
holding hands.

To Seathwaite, writes Roger, then up Grains Gill to Esk Hause.
Mist sweeps in to envelop
Us with rain, as we approach Scafell Pike summit.
Thunder which the dog doesn't like.

A stone extension with a woodburner, dormer windows in the roof
Spaces for tweens to grow into their own.
Star Wars, Grease, Tolethorpe.

The London Marathon in close to 3 hours,
not bad for a veteran and
4,000 further runs recorded... As the health slogan ran:
If dodos had jogged indeed...

A last trip for Rona to beloved Birkness
where her erstwhile log book entry
Charts a climb when pregnant - hands on hips, slow, small steps.

Buzzards and red squirrels rally to ease the injustice of her loss
As Parkinson's Disease stumbles in with tremors and trips.

Smitten again at Buttermere by musician, gardener,
lace maker, cook
Rog and Avril go for it - the whole shebang!

Then Dominic, dreamy yet daredevil like Granddad
His first steps steadied by walkers, his first words by grief

When, at an impasse, eldest Anna overdoses. Bereft, Roger
Returns to John Clare's birthplace and poetry
His crossroads in the Fens.

Lisa Wallace

John Ward *14.8.1946 - 31.8.2020*

John Ward was one of my closest friends whom I was privileged to know for over 30 years. I met him when my brother and I joined the Craven Mountaineering Club in 1980's. As novice climbers he took us under his wing and with his encouragement started an enjoyable chapter of our lives, enduring ever since.

John started walking and climbing with Burnley Mountaineering Club in 1979. It wasn't long before he joined the more active members, by 1980 embarking on the Wasdale round followed by his first Mountaineering trip to Scotland. Going in his red Fiat Camper Van with two Burnley members they tackled Ben Nevis via the CMD arête and Cuillin summits, where exposed terrain and the the Inaccessible Pinnacle persuaded John that rope work skills would be helpful, providing the catalyst to learn to climb. A climbing course at Pen-y-Pass in 1980, with a few books on the subject, with one of his Burnley companions they were ready to embark on 40 years of mountain adventure.

Climbing trips to Wales, the Lakes and the French Dauphiné Alps followed, resulting in Johns first 4000m Alpine peak in 1981, The Barre des

Ecrins via the North Face, then Fissure d'Ailefroide a 900ft 9 pitch VS climb. A year later they climbed Mont Blanc via the Gouter Route. Over the years, Aiguille d'Argentiere, Aiguille du Tours, Wetterhorn, Matterhorn and the Cosmiques Arete were conquered.

He soon joined Craven Mountaineering Club becoming a stalwart member, with roles on the Committee, Chairman in 1995. That was an active year with Club trips to Rhum, the Welsh 3000s, Alps trip and the national three peaks challenge.

His competence and skills were appreciated by many in Craven; few could match his level of stamina.. Many became familiar with John ahead or waiting while we caught up. He said on one very wintry Lake District outing 'They went out as walkers but came back as mountaineers'. He derived pleasure seeing someone achieve their goal or the enjoyment they got out of attaining it as much as anything else.

As a safe pair of hands his presence was appreciated and his emergency rope work was second to none. John personified being a mountaineer, not only doing classic climbs on the Ben, but also completing the Munros and was on the way to completing the Corbetts.

The Gritstone Club was joined in 1993 and he enjoyed GC and CMC holidays climbing on the crags and peaks of the Alps, Pyrenees and the Picos. He once gave a lift to a Chamonix guide who said: 'Monsieur, I have seen you before... Skipton... Crookrise'. Once seen!!

John became an Associate Member of the Fell and Rock leading a Hut to Hut meet and winter meets, the last one in February 2020. He enjoyed communal meals managing to perform successful miracles, with limited ingredients. His enthusiastic approach on these occasions and maintenance meets, where we ribbed him Mr Precious!, made him many friends.

In the clubs he joined, his company was in demand and he had more holidays than most, only having a few days at home before setting off on another. He travelled to France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Greece, Norway, Slovenia, Morocco, Holland, Canada and New Zealand, in pursuit of climbing walking, skiing or cycling. Known for his corned beef hotpot, pancakes, his blue fleece climbing suit, his love of his bits of tat, and 'I'll have another brew', but not time keeping. Fascinated with nuts, bolts and lathes he was in his element; anything mechanical he loved, tinkering and chatting about bikes and cars with a knowledgeable air. He enjoyed adapting things; his anti theft device for one of his vehicles was to remove the gear stick! Mobile phones were another conversation gambit and many an hour was passed on this front often accompanied by great amusement or groans.
He liked buying head torches, gaining a national collection, along with camping stoves and tents, and he loved driving, be it in his Berlingo or on his motorcycle, exploring the Dales for lanes to cycle, or finding the best bench for eating fish and chips.

A gentle giant with a great sense of humour, calm and measured in his thinking, an asset to anyone he was out with, climbing walking or cycling, a unique friend and a true gent, he will be very greatly missed by all those who knew him.

Thanks John for all the memorable adventures; you've left a legacy of happy memories for all of us.

Compiled by Fiona (Burnett)
with help from his friends Keith, David, and Chris.

Mary Waters

Mary was always very happy, friendly, full of laughter, colour and fun. Her knitted, striped socks, leg warmers and hats all fitted in with the pigtails and ribbons

Born on the kitchen table in Oundle, Northants in 1946. she was a bit of a rebel in primary school, crawling under the table to tie the teacher's shoe laces together and was almost expelled. In 1965 she started a teacher training course and was asked to leave after a year, thinking that school and teaching should all be fun! She then tried jobs as a clerk in the Inland Revenue, a taxi driver and a barmaid. In 1969 she tried at a different training college and qualified as a PE teacher. She worked the summer at Aultguish Inn, near Inverness, went home via Glasgow where she bought her first motor bike, strapped her suitcase to the pillion seat and drove down the motorway.

Mary started teaching in Bradford in 1971 and during this period started climbing with the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club (YMC). This also led to caving and skiing. She had a year out in 1976 and taught in Barbados. Always being a water baby she would have a 5 a.m. run to the beach and a swim before school. She returned to her job in Bradford, getting more powerful motor bikes (which lived in her lounge) and joined the Pinnacle Club and also took up skydiving with over 200 free fall jumps. Along with serious running she did the London Marathon. She was a talented photographer, producing all her own cards. In 1985 she met Mike whilst climbing in Italy but that was put on hold as she had been planning another year out with Sheila McKemmie: a world trip trekking in the Himalaya, Thailand, New Zealand and biking across the Nulabore Plain in Australia

Back home, Mary and Mike married in 1988 and she moved to Sheffield. She never forgot the YMC; it had been such a large part of her life with many epic tales to tell. Mary started teaching in Staveley, often cycling the twelve miles to school and also spending time teaching swimming after a day's work.

In 1997 Mary was diagnosed with ME/Chronic Fatigue. She had to give up her beloved job and only left the house to visit the doctor. With no cure available Mike and Mary started their own treatment very slowly. During this time as she was propped up in bed she learned to play the flute, remarkably getting to grade 8, also learning the piano. Eventually she got back to a bit of cycling and climbing.

By 2008 life was getting back almost to normal. Then, competent on the flute she joined the Abbeydale Orchestra. Mary was so glad to be well again and after many years of mixing with the FRCC they joined the club. Mike retired and they both enjoyed life again with lots of climbing and cycling.

It was lovely to see them in the huts and

reminisce about old YMC days. Mary never changed over the 50 years that I knew her; the hair turned grey but she still had the fun, laughter, pigtails and ribbons.

Jane Wainwright

Jeremy Whitehead

Jeremy was an unusually private person and in all the 40 years since I met him, I never heard him speak about anything except mountaineering, ski mountaineering, rock climbing and mountains. He was close to the definition of an 'obsessive' in the most sympathetic use of the word. He organised and led ski tours for groups of Eagle Ski Club members for many decades and many Eagles who would not be competent to ski tour alone owe their experiences to Jeremy's self-styled, 'amateur guide' status. He was of his time and many of the things he did in terms of leading parties of novices on serious alpine ski tours would be illegal in these bureaucratic and litigious days.

He was a member of CC, AC and FRCC and very active in the Preston MC where he was for some time, Chairman.

He was a lifelong bachelor with no obvious social interest beyond his mountaineering activities, though he apparently enjoyed classical music.

He was brought up in Lytham St Annes, spent his working life as a Physics Master in public schools – notably Monkton Combe in Somerset, in the later stages of his life living in a mobile home near Garstang.

Jeremy continued to take part in Alpine Ski Club day touring meets in the Alps until his last meet at Reschenpass on the Austrian-Italian border in spring 2018. Even there he asserted his independence by leaving a party which had 'run out of steam' in a whiteout, to attempt the summit alone – a sign of the wilful aspect of his character. This characteristic was shown by his reputation for never staying with someone else's party but always 'jumping ship' to make his own way down. He was a martinet in making members of his own party follow everywhere in his footsteps.

I owe Jeremy a debt of gratitude for his warm welcome to me as a new member of the Eagle Ski Club who knew no-one at a Lake District meet in the early 80s when everyone else had chosen their company and objectives and began to depart for the hills, Jeremy volunteered to climb on Gimmer with someone who was almost a stranger – I will always remember him for that with appreciation.

In belated appreciation, a friend and I invited Jeremy, then in his 70s to tie on with us for the Portjengrat traverse. He acquitted himself superbly in a rope of 3 that was climbing fairly quickly. He kept up the pace despite quite a physically demanding outing. Jeremy tied on when I climbed Central Buttress on Scafell by the Flake Crack classic route and Tophet Bastion on Gable with Peter Kaye.

Jeremy wrote two short privately published ski touring guide books to areas in the southern French Alps. He also contributed to several books on ski mountaineering.

Jeremy was a law unto himself in terms of his tour leading and helped many to enjoy and engage in ski mountaineering through his personally guided tours on behalf of the Eagle Ski Club. He was a remarkable and memorable character, much talked about by his friends and acquaintances and that is a compliment in itself.

Jeremy was vice president of the Eagle Ski Club 2003-08.

John Moore

Beryl Yates (NÉE COATES) *22/09/1934 – 23/12/2019*
FRCC member 1958 to 2019

Beryl was born in Liverpool, where she later attended Aigburth Vale High School for Girls. Encouragement from her school and parents led her to gaining a place at St Hilda's College at Oxford University to study physics. At Oxford she took to punting on the river, playing netball and involvement with the Oxford University Women's Mountaineering Club which gained her many lifelong friends.

The interest in mountains had previously been kindled by another school friend – Hilary Simmons (later Hilary Moffat), whose mother had taken both girls fell walking. At Oxford Beryl was introduced to rock climbing when she and her friends were taken up a climb by Denise Morin. At the top of the climb Denise apparently informed them that they now should know what to do, so carry on. To get to the mountains they would often hitch lifts. When hitching in winter, to look less intimidating, they would need to hide the ice axes in their sacs. As well as trips round the UK (including a one day traverse of the Cuillin Ridge), she also travelled further afield with ascents such as La Meije in the French Alps.

After university her enjoyment of mountaineering continued as she joined her friends June Newby and Hilary Moffat in the Fell & Rock Climbing Club. While working in R & D for Pilkingtons she met her future husband Allan Yates, whom she married in 1961. Beryl started to attend the meets of Allan's club – Lancashire Caving & Climbing Club, were they were involved in the renovation of the club hut – Tranearth above Torver in the Lakes. The enthusiasm for mountains led them to weekend trips to Scotland – leaving work on Saturday afternoon and returning in the early hours of Monday morning in time for a few hours' sleep before work.

Beryl played the piano, but when her children started learning to play the violin she decided to try too. This led to a new lasting interest in music – culminating in her involvement with three different local amateur orchestras in Ormskirk, Southport and Crosby.

As the children grew up she started teaching physics at Scarisbrick Hall School. While there she started a Science Club, communicating her love of physics, along with other activities such as outings to Malham Cove in Yorkshire and Great Orme's Head in Wales. After retiring she took up painting. Soon paintings, prints and calendars of local landmarks were being produced in her small business.

For many years Beryl led a busy life with her music and painting, and along with Allan, U3A (including the Science and photography groups). There were also many holidays including walking and sight- seeing in the French Alps, Pyrenees and Mallorca. All this extremely full life she combined with her sense of duty, honesty and love of her family. She is survived by her husband Allan, daughter Heather, son Ian and grand-daughter Ruth.

Heather Hardy (nee Yates)

Officers of the Club 2018-2019

President	Hatty Harris
Vice Presidents	Max Biden, Keith Wright, Wendy Stirrup
Secretary	Brenda Fullard
Archivists	Chris Sherwin and Ellie Dale-Sherwin
Treasurer	John Pulford
Chronicler	Simon Jefferies
Compliance Officer	Graham Gill
Dinner Secretary	Margaret Skelton
Guide Books Secretary	Ron Kenyon
Joint Journal Editors	Jim Sutcliffe and Tony Walker
Librarian	Peter Lucas
Meets Secretary	Dave Wilkinson
Membership Secretary	Peter Simcock
Website Editor	Philip Powell
Huts Secretary	Andrew Paul
Hut Wardens:	
Beetham Cottage	Humphrey Johnson
Birkness	Peter Haigh
Brackenclose	Richard Tait
Karn House	Graeme Ralph
Raw Head	Alan Strachan
Salving House	Christina Paul
Waters Cottage	Mark Gear

Elective Members of Committee

Janet Ashworth	David Dixon	Wendy Dodds	Andrew Duxbury
Graham Harkness	Hazel Jonas	Mark Scott	David Stephenson
Nina Stirrup	Veronica Varley-Millward	Chris Wales	

Other positions – not a member of the main committee

Child Protection Named Person	Angela Mellor
Guide Books Editor	Steve Scott
Obituary Notices	Wendy Dodds
Oral Archivist	Mark Scott
eNews Compiler	Phillip Powell

Advisory Trustees	John Barrett, David Miller, Stephen Porteus

Meets List 2019

	Date	*Meet Location*	*Meet Co-ordinator*
E	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve - Raw Head	Ros de Fraine
	11/12 Jan	Winter meet – Waters Cottage	Dee Gaffney
E	25/26 Jan	Burns supper meet - Raw Head	Martin Tetley
CM	1/2 Feb	Committee meeting - Raw Head	John Pulford
T	8/9 Feb	Winter Walking - Beetham	John Ward
	8/9 Feb	FRCC/Oread MC Joint Meet – Karn House	Susan Jensen
FM	15/16 Feb	Family meet - Raw Head	Carrie & Gary Hill
T/W	15/24 Feb	Scottish Ski Mountaineering – Karn House	Jim Gregson
T/W	17/21 Feb	Ben Nevis CIC Hut	Martin Cooper
W	16/27 Mar	Anti-Atlas Mountains, Kasbah Tizourgane	Steve Lyon
E	22/23 Mar	Music meet - Raw Head	Calum Barrow
W	7/11 Apr	High Moss- Duddon	Jane Wainwright
WE	12/13 Apr	Welcome meet - Birkness	Sue Fox & Trevor Brewster
W	6/20 Apr	French Spring meet. Camping, Mas de Nicholas	Andrew & Christina Paul
BH	19/21 Apr	Easter Meet - Brackenclose	John Barrett & Mark Scott
	25/28 Apr	Glan Dena, Ogwen, Snowdonia	Phil Elliot
MM	26/27 Apr	Maintenance meet - Beetham	Humphrey Johnson
FM/BH	3/5 May	Family meet – Raw Head	Rob Muirhead
BH	3/5 May	May Day Holiday meet – Salving House	Dave Dixon
MM	10/11 May	Maintenance meet - Birkness	Peter Haigh
	10/11 May	Young person/young members - Salving House	Holly Rippin
CM	17/18 May	Committee meeting - Birkness	Mark Scott
BH	24/26 May	Bank Holiday meet – Salving House	Janet Ashworth
W/BH	25/31 May	Glen Shiel cottage meet	Stuart Webb
FM/W	24/30 May	Family meet - Birkness	Gael Watson
W	28 May/4 Jun	Phoenix Scottish Hotel Meet, Inchnadamph	Ron Lyon
MM	7/8 Jun	Maintenance meet - Karn House	Graeme Ralph
T	7/8 Jun	FRCC/Karabiner Club Joint meet. Hut to hut. Beetham, Salving House return	Andy Stratford

	Date	*Meet Location*	*Meet Co-ordinator*
W	9/16 Jun	Orkney, Peedie Hostel, Kirkwall	Ron Kenyon
WE	14/15 Jun	Welcome meet - Brackenclose	Dave Wilkinson
	14/15 Jun	FRCC/CC Joint meet – Raw Head	Debbie Marsh
W	16/23 Jun	NWScotland – Oldshoremore, Kinlochbervie	Ron Kenyon
W	22/29 Jun	Skye – Glen Brittle hut)	George Wostenholm
MM	21/22 Jun	Maintenance meet - Salving House	Christina Paul
T	21/22 Jun	Ullswater Skyline - Beetham	Ged Cudahy
D	28/29 Jun	Coniston meet and dinner	The VPs
	28/30 Jun	Joint FRCC/Alpine Club camping meet Acton Fields, Langton Matravers, Dorset	John Kentish
T	5/6 Jul	BMC Youth meet – Raw Head	Ron Kenyon
T	5/6 Jul	Geology meet - Ingleton	John Moore/Dale Bloomer
	12/13 Jul	Salving House	Tony Womersly
W	6/27 Jul	Joint Alpine Meet AC, FRCC, ABMSAC, CC, SMC, LSCC, Wayfarers, Pinnacle Club. Benasque, Maladeta Massif, Pyrenees	
T/W	18/19 Jul	Walk to Centenary re-enactment of Peace Day on Scafell Pike on the 19th. Raw Head	Peter Smith
T/W	18/22 Jul	Re-dedication of original Great Gable Plaque at St Olaf's Church, Wasdale Head	Mark Scott, Iain and Brenda Whitmey
T	26/27 Jul	Wasdale Skyline - Brackenclose	Ian Charters
W	26/31 Jul	Northumbria – Wooler YH	David Stephenson
	2/3 Aug	FRCC/Oread MC Joint meet Tan Yr Wyddfa	Simon Willis
W	16/23 Aug	Joint FRCC/CC – May Cottage, Bosherton, Pembrokeshire	Tony Womersley
BH	24/26 Aug	Eden Valley/Cross Fell. Camping etc	Les Meer
MM	30/31 Aug	Maintenance meet - Waters Cottage	Mark Gear
W	September	Joint FRCC/Mountain Club of South Africa return meet	Ann-Marie Henderson
T/W	2/10 Sep	Via Ferrata - Dolomites	Dave Dixon
CM	6/7 Sep	Committee meet - Birkness	Brenda Fullard
MM	13/14 Sep	Maintenance meet - Raw Head	Alan Strachan
T	13/14 Sep	Young person/young members - Birkness	David Menadue

	Date	*Meet Location*	*Meet Co-ordinator*
T/W	15/22 Sep	Watzmann Extravaganza - Bavaria	John France
MM	20/21 Sep	Maintenance meet - Brackenclose	Richard Tait
WE	27/28 Sep	Welcome meet – Raw Head	Hazel Jonas & Trish Murray
T	04/05 Oct	Raw Head 75th Anniversary	Alan Strachan
FM	11/12 Oct	Family meet - Birkness	Denise Andrews
T	11/12 Oct	Scottish Autumn meet - Waters Cottage The FRCC in Scotland	Simon Jefferies & Dave Wilkinson.
T	17/19 Oct	Hut to Hut. Raw Head, Salving House, Beetham, Raw Head	John Ward
WE	25/26 Oct	Welcome meet - Beetham	Shirley Emptage & Fiona Burnett
D	1/2 Nov	AGM and Dinner	The President
T	8/9 Nov	Bonfire meet - Brackenclose	Mark Wilkinson
T	10 Nov	Act of Remembrance, Great Gable summit	The President
CM	22/23 Nov	Committee meet - Raw Head	Simon Jefferies
	29/30 Nov	Temperance meet - Birkness	Geoff Lyons
	6/7 Dec	Beetham	Graham and Kath Willis
E	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve – Raw Head	

Officers of the Club 2019-2020

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Archivist	Vacant
Treasurer	John Pulford
Chronicler	Simon Jefferies
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Birkness	Jackie Brindle
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Karn House	Graeme Ralph
Raw Head	Peter Haigh
Salving House	Christina Paul
Waters Cottage	Mark Gear

Elective Members of Committee

Janet Ashworth	Bernie Bradbury	Lis Cook	David Dixon
Andrew Duxbury	Amanda Halliwell	Graham Harkness	Gerard Hurst
Nina Stirrup	Veronica Varley-Millward	Chris Wales	David Stephenson

Non-voting observer Deborah Walsh

Other positions – not a member of the main committee

Safeguarding Named Person	Angela Mellor
Guide Books Editor	Steve Scott
Guide Books Photos Editor	Vacant
Obituary Notices	Wendy Dodds
Oral Archivist	Mark Scott
Young Persons Co-ordinator	Nina Stirrup
eNews Compiler	Phillip Powell

Advisory Trustees John Barrett, David Miller, Stephen Porteus

Meets List 2020

	Date	*Meet Location*	*Meet Co-ordinator*
ET	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve - Raw Head	Ros de Fraine
T	03/04 Jan	Winter Meet - Waters Cottage	Dee Gaffney
ET	24/25 Jan	Burns Supper Meet - Raw Head	Helen Elliot
T	04 – 06 Feb	CIC Hut, Ben Nevis (6 places)	Martin Cooper
T	07 – 15 Feb	Ski Mountaineering Meet – Karn House.	Jim Gregson
T	16 – 22 Feb	Winter Mountaineering – Karn House	Anne Salisbury
T	14/15 Feb	Winter Walking - Birkness	John Ward
CM	21/22 Feb	Committee Meet - Raw Head	Chris Wales
F	21/22 Feb	Family Meet - Birkness	Carrie Hill

FRCC eNews 571 (16/3/20) announces cancellation of hut based meets due to Corona virus.
Original 2020 Meets List replaced by day meets

Day walk	19 Jun	Staveley Moorland Walk via three tarns; Potter Tarn, Gurnal Dubs and Skeggles Water	Anne Salisbury
Day walk	25 Jun	Ingleborough	Sue & Chris Wales
Day walk	25 Jun	Pembroke	Chris & Ellie Sherwin
Day walk	26 Jun	Pendle	Brenda Fullard
Day walk	26 Jun	Peak District	Helen Elliot
Day walk	29 Jun	Kinder Scout	Simon Jefferies
Day walk	2 Jul	Wild Boar Fell	Graham Harkness
Day walk	9 Jul	Bleasdale Moors	Geoff Lyons
Day walk	10 Jul	Bowland Fells	Sarah Birkill
Day walk	16 Jul	Bowland Fells	Geoff Lyons
Climbing	17 Jul	Bouldering Meet, Stanage	Janet Ashworth
Day walk	26 Jul	Nicky Nook	Geoff Lyons
Day walk	30 Jul	Fiendsdale and Totridge Fell	Geof Lyons
Day walk	1 Aug	Whitbarrow Scar	Mark Scott
Climbing	5 Aug	Climbing Meet, Stanage	Steve Lunt
Day walk	12 Aug	Wasdale Wild Camp	Humphrey Johnson
Day walk	18 Aug	Blawith Fell	Hatty Harris
Climbing	12/13 Sep	Duddon Guidebook Climbing Meet	Rachel Somerville
Climbing	16 Oct	Runestone Quarry, Climbing Meet	Anne Salisbury
Day walk	17 Dec	Staveley – Potter Tarn	Deborah Walsh

On behalf of the club – a big thank you to meet coordinators
who stepped in and helped organise such a good series of events under difficult circumstances.

Key free emergency exit door, thumb turn type.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

All items requiring engineering as described on drawings and specification notes, to be designed by a structural engineer (SE) with all details, calculations and a design certificate forwarded to LABC for approval prior to works commencing.

Refer also to structural engineers condition report for works to existing/retained structure.

VENTILATION

Kitchen - Openable window and mechanical extract of 60 L/sec rate.
Drying room - mechanical extract of 30L/sec rate.
Bathroom / WC / Wash - mechanical extract of 15 L/sec rate, served by Vent Axia multi vent units installed in full accordance with manufacturers instructions.

Rapid ventilation provided to all habitable rooms with clear ventilation area of min. 1/20th of room floor area.

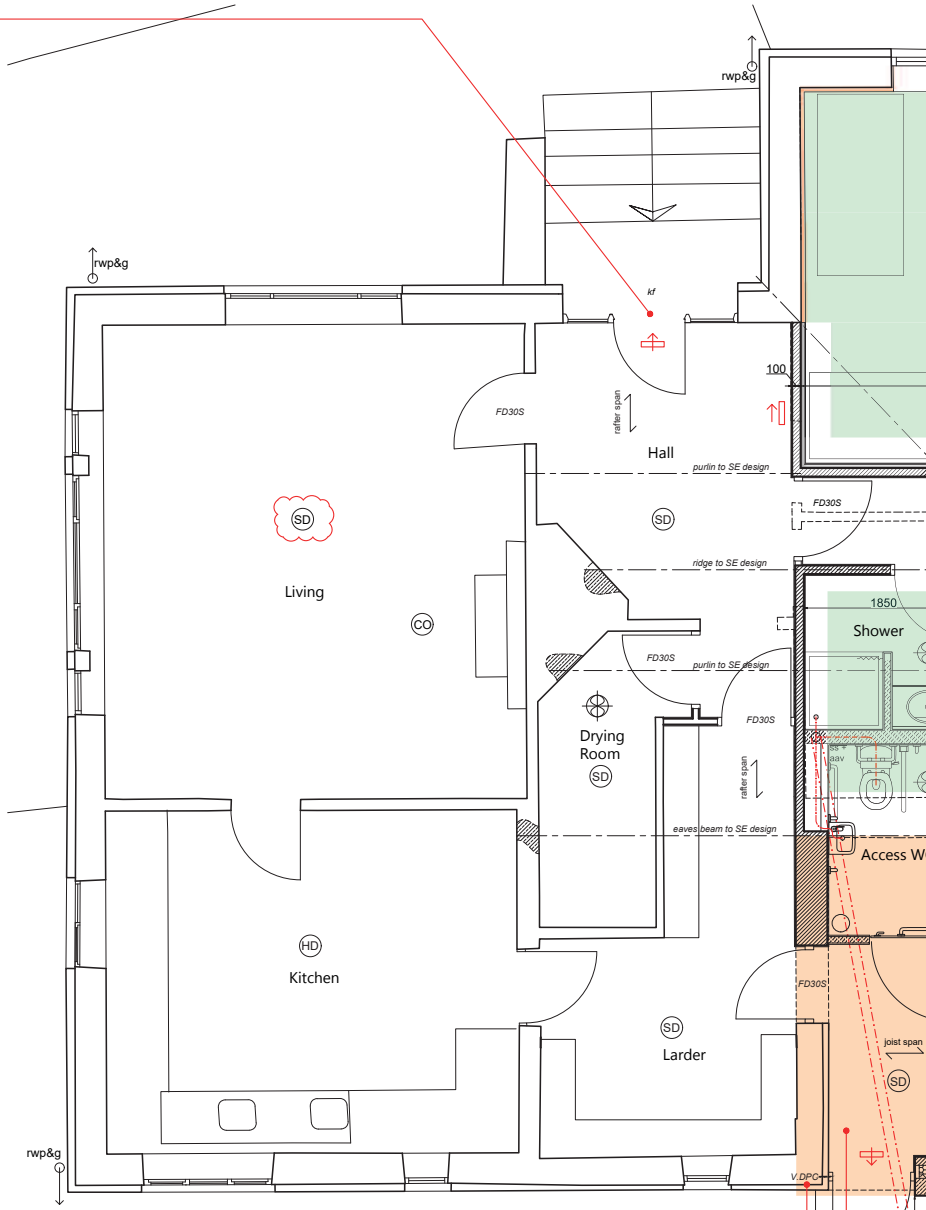
All windows to include trickle vents providing background ventilation of 8,000 mm sq per room.

ABOVE GROUND DRAINAGE

UPVC pipework to BS 5255:1976 installed in accordance with BS 5572:1978 Code of Practice for sanitary pipework.
All sanitary ware (including sinks) to be fitted with 75 mm anti-syphonage deep seal traps.
Wash hand basins connected to soil stacks via 32 mm dia wastes.
Sinks & showers connected to soil stacks via 38 mm dia wastes.
Wastes over 2.0 m long to be 50 mm dia.
Bends in branch pipes to have a min. centre line radius of 75 mm.
Junctions in branch pipes to be made with a sweep of 25 mm or at 45 deg.
Access to branch pipes to be provided at start of runs and at all changes of direction.
WC wastes to be 110 mm dia connected to soil stacks.
Soil stacks marked to o/s to be 110 mm dia. terminating with proprietary slate soaker vent a min. 900 mm above window heads. Soil stacks noted with aav are to terminate with air admittance valve at level above highest floor plane.
Rainwater goods to comprise half round elliptical gutters and 68 mm dia round downpipes, in black plastic.

BELOW GROUND DRAINAGE

Foul water to discharge to existing septic tank, current capacity sized for 30 persons, proposals reduce this number to 28. Drainage via 110 mm diameter uPVC pipes laid at max. 1:40 and min. 1:80 falls with inspection chambers at each connection and each change of direction and access to be provided at start of runs.
Storm water to discharge to soakaways via 110 mm diameter uPVC pipes laid at max. 1:40 and min. 1:80 falls with inspection chambers at each change of direction and access to be provided at start of runs. Soakaways to be 1.0 m dia x 1.0 m deep large stone filled sited min. 5 m away from any building to agreement with Building Control.



New stone faced cavity walls started against existing masonry using Ancon stainless steel wall starter bars, fixed to masonry using nylon plugs and stainless steel screws. New Hyload vertical DPC fitted into 100mm deep slot cut into existing masonry & sealed on line of door frame rebate.

Orange hatched area denotes extent of new flat roof structure.

Key free emergency exit door, thumb turn type.