





Paul Exley - President 2016-18, taken on Great Gable on the occasion of the FRCC Act of Remembrance in 2017.

# THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL 2018



**No 85**

**Edited by Martin Cooper and Andrew Paul**

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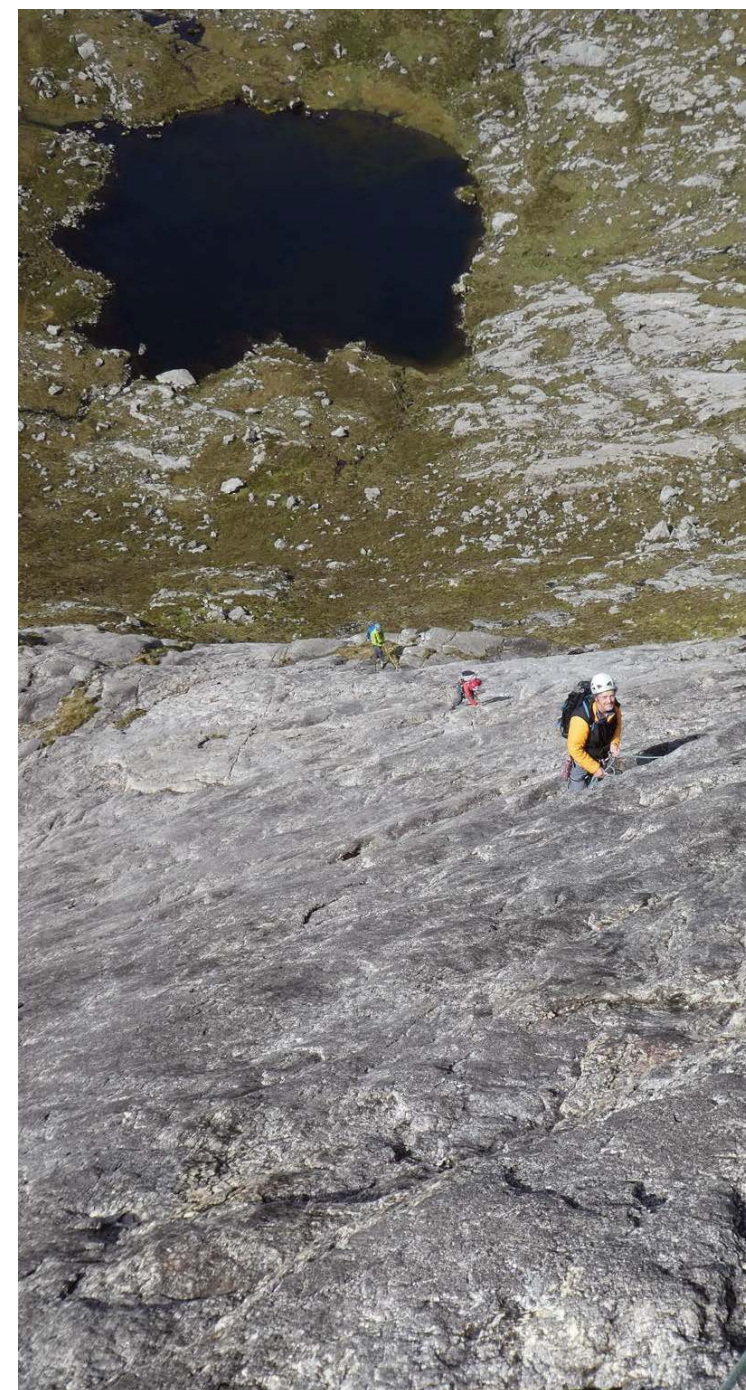
Front Cover: Ben Clarke on Space Cadet, Font 6c/V4, at the Sampson Stones in Upper Eskdale. *Photo: Paul Clarke*

Inside Front Cover/ Half Title: Whiteless Edge - into the clouds, *Photo: Ian Charters*

Title Page: Blencathra, *Photo: Cath Sanders*

Opposite: Lewis 2017 - Griomabhal - Islivig Direct. *Photo: Ron Kenyon*

Inside Rear Cover: Spindrift while descending from Creag an Leth-Choin, Cairn Lochan, February 2018. *Photo: Dan Carron*



## Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journal 2018.

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## Editorial

The most striking feature of this year's Journal is undoubtedly the extremely wide range of overseas locations which contributors have submitted articles about. Although travel mountaineering writing has been a growing trend in the Journal, we have never before had material from such a wide sphere. In this edition you will read about club members' exploits in Tasmania, Iran, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, the Balkans, the Dolomites, Spain, Cape Verde and the Alps. Cheap air travel and more readily available information about worldwide destinations are clearly both factors at play. However, you will find for yourselves in your reading that no lesser part has been played by the spirit of adventure amongst club members, young and old. There is much to inspire here.

As ever, the Journal also contains much of interest about climbing and mountaineering in the UK, with the normal sprinkling of articles about the Lake District and, for once, more than just one article with a humorous note, which we applaud.

2018 will be recorded as a year of extreme weather in the UK. The hardest winter for years was followed by a long heat wave, resulting in huts being closed due to shortage of water and crags as dry as they are ever likely to be. Due to rescheduling of distribution of the Journals until the end of the year, as opposed to at the beginning of November, we are able to include a full record of all the new routing activity which has taken place this summer, supported by some excellent photography.

Finally, as this edition is the last that the current editors will produce for the club, some

reflections on editing the Journal might be in order. First, it has to be said that the long hours of work are a genuine pleasure, mostly because the majority of what is published has been submitted freely, not solicited. It is rewarding to find that many club members still have the urge to write and want to see their words in print. Thank you to all of the contributors. Thanks also to our team of proof readers, whose contribution has undoubtedly enhanced the quality of the finished product.

Now, if that sounds too rosy a picture, you are right. There have been times when we have had to request, beg and ask for contributions and to indulge in some gentle cajoling and persuasion. It goes with the territory, of course. And it works! But we would not be honest if we did not admit to moments of despondency. Then an e-mail or an article appears and soon we are back on track.

The work of producing a climbing journal in the days before word-processing, digital photography and electronic communication is already hard to imagine. We are lucky to have the tools which are now at our disposal and we hope that the changes that we have made to the Journal in the last few years are seen as worthwhile improvements.

We hope you enjoy the 2018 Journal.

*Martin Cooper and Andrew Paul*

Right: Eiger N Face, Photo: Bill Comstive

## Mountain Exploration

*Richard Hargreaves*

*Jim Gregson*

*Mark Gear*

*Norbert de Mello*

*Jim Gregson*

*Dan Hamer*

*Ian Durkacz*





Tilman with partisans, somewhere in Albania. The structure behind is for drying maize, still a common sight in mountain villages

## In Tilman's Footsteps - Trekking in Southern Albania - April 2015

*Richard Hargreaves*

### Tilman and Shipton

We were on the third day of the first of two separate treks through the mountains of southern Albania. Traversing south through villages high above the Zagoria river, in the village of Nivan we met a water point somewhat grander than the usual pipe and trough affair for man and beast. This one had a cut stone façade, a tiled roof, water gushing from four sculpted animal heads, and a plaque: Sheshi Major H W Tilman CBE DSC.



Sheshi is 'square' in Albanian, so this was Tilman Square. Later that day, in the village of Sheper, where we were spending the night, my Albanian was being tested by a man who enquired which country I came from. 'America? Germany?' 'No,' I said, 'English, from England.' 'Ah, England,' he smiled, 'Tilman, Tilman England,' and he gestured warmly to indicate that Tilman had lived here, maybe in the very house we were staying in. Bells rang and pennies dropped as memory overcame my delighted surprise.

This, of course, was Bill Tilman, celebrated, taciturn mountaineering companion to Eric Shipton in the 1920s and 30s, first ascent of Mt. Kenya, discoverer of the route into the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, first ascent of Nanda Devi, leader of the Everest expedition in 1938; then after World War Two a different career as sailor explorer in Bristol Channel Cutters to Patagonia, the Arctic and the South Pacific, until he disappeared at sea near the Falkland Islands in 1977. His war service was equally astounding; he was a gunnery officer in the Royal Field Artillery on the Western Front for the full four years of WW1, including the Somme, refusing promotion above the rank of Major. He volunteered for service in WW2, surviving Dunkirk and the desert war in North Africa until, to avoid promotion away from commanding a battery, he volunteered to join the SOE (Special Operations Executive) in Albania for 10 months in 1943/44. He ended the war behind enemy lines again, in northern Italy where he played a big role in saving the city of Belluno from being destroyed by the Germans. The photo shows Tilman on the left, somewhere in Albania in 1944. The building is probably for drying maize. There are many like it in use in the mountain valleys today.

I did meet Tilman once, when he came to give a lecture 'Mischief in Patagonia' to the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club. He left behind a copy of his famous recruitment advertisement: 'Crew wanted for long and dangerous voyage in small boat in South Atlantic. No pay, no prospects! Our club secretary at the time actually did join the boat but only once. A few years

ago I was giving a lecture myself to the Clitheroe Mountaineering Club on cross-border trekking in the Balkans Prokletije range of mountains, which straddle Kosovo, Montenegro and northern Albania. This is the area of the Balkans Peace Park Project (B3P) which since 2001 has been promoting sustainable mountain tourism and environmental conservation as a cooperative venture between communities in those three countries. After the lecture, one of the audience asked me if I knew that Tilman had been in the Albanian mountains supporting the partisans during the Second World War. I didn't, but quickly borrowed J R L Anderson's *High Mountains and Cold Seas: The Life of H W Tilman*, read it all with great interest, especially the section on Albania in wartime. I noted that the mountains were not the ones I knew in the north but didn't remember enough to link them with where we were going to this year. So, the surprise encounter in Tilman Square in Nivan and the house in Sheper were for me a kind of epiphany.

### 'Where Men and Mountains Meet'

This is the title of Tilman's own book, included in the one volume compendium of his seven mountain travel books. It had long lain on a bookshelf at home, undisturbed until I seized it immediately on our return from Albania, and was amazed to find how much the paths of our trek in April 2015 had criss-crossed with those of Tilman and his partisan guerrillas over seventy years ago in 1943/44. If he had been with us this year I think he would have seen that the ways of life in the valleys of Zagoria and Kurvelesh are much the same as they were in his time there, albeit rather more peaceful now.

### To the South

In 2014 a group of six from the FRCC had supper at a restaurant in Shkodër with Albanian friend Endrit Shima. We had journeyed from Peja in Kosovo, through Plav and Grbaje in Montenegro to Lëpushë, Nikq and finally Thethi in northern Albania, 12 days trekking through the B3P region on parts of the 'Peaks of the Balkans' trail ([www.peaksofthebalkans.org](http://www.peaksofthebalkans.org)). Endrit had played a leading role in setting up this 190km circular PoB trail in 2012 and had his own outdoor adventure company, Zbullo, based in Tirana.

During the supper, for which he arranged an almost overwhelming flow of splendid traditional Albanian dishes, conversation turned to the mountains of southern Albania which I knew had less tourist development than the north and where I also knew that Endrit was keen to organize trekking visits. We quickly agreed that he would put together a trek for us in the south, in April or early May 2015, before the summer heat. It would be a venture less strenuous than in the north, a combination of two separate 3 or 4 day treks with 'culture' days, visiting Butrint and other classic archaeological sites and the historic cities of Gjirokaster and Berat. Over the winter Endrit and I refined the itinerary in a flow of emails. On April 17th 2015, seven of us from the FRCC (Paul and Cath Exley, Pam and Peter Shawcross, Jane and I) and, with Mary Gregory from Oxford as a temporary member, flew to Corfu to catch the 0900 ferry to Saranda in southern Albania next morning.

### Different but still Albanian

After 10 years or so of journeying through the mountains of northern Albania, Montenegro and

Kosovo, this journey in the south would be a different experience. Different mountains, shorter days walking in less dramatic terrain, interspersed with days for 'culture': historic cities and castles, archaeology sites, nature reserves, and even seaside walks and beaches. Unlike the north with its jagged and bare mountain peaks like crocodile teeth, steep sided valleys and rugged paths underfoot, the pattern of Zagoria and Kurvelesh is one of long river valleys separated by mountain ranges in long high ridges at roughly 2000m. These are smoother shaped on the west and southern slopes but sharper, craggy and snow-capped on the east and north. The rock in the south is more varied, more volcanic, with shale-like valley sides heavily eroded and weird conglomerates in the gorges. It is an earthquake zone: we were shown how houses in Berat and Gjirokaster are built with a layer of chestnut wood in the stone walls to absorb some of the shock of earth tremors. The walking lay mostly on mule tracks along high valley sides or beside the rivers with some days of crossing a high pass between one valley and the next. The valley walking took us past living villages, goats, sheep, cows, beehives, barking dogs and more contact with people than in the north. The flora was not limestone rich as in the north but always varied and challenging to identify. And, of course, there were the splendid Ottoman bridges to admire daily, especially in Zagoria.

### People and History

The recent development of mountain tourism in the north, with modernised farmhouses, waymarked trails and walkers' maps, has not yet reached southern Albania. Sleeping arrangements for a group of 8 were 'ad hoc' but there was

usually a shower of sorts and the welcome every day was thoroughly Albanian: raki, çaj malit (mountain tea of dried hillside herbs), tables laden with home grown produce, bread baked daily in wood fired stoves, a feeling that we were being welcomed into genuine, age-old family life.

More than almost anywhere else I have travelled in mountain regions, in Albania and Kosovo I feel that I am walking through recent and poignant history. It is one of the reasons I love going there. In the north the history is all too recent and still sore, the ethnic cleansing and war in Kosovo in the 1990s and early 2000, the rebuilding of the villages in Rugova after the war, treading the paths taken by scores of refugees across the winter mountains from Kosovo into Albania, the haunting ruins of Communist era buildings in Valbona and Thethi destroyed in the 1997 uprising after the collapse of the pyramid selling scheme. The history of southern Albania reaches further back in time, in many places over centuries and millennia, but it is still with you. The 500 years of the Ottomans are all around you, the castles, the town houses, the ubiquitous, anti-Ottoman rebel leader Ali Pasha, the minarets and mosques, and their graceful but unnerving bridges arching high over the rivers, without parapets to stop you falling into them. Ancient archaeological sites take you back past the Ottomans, the Venetians, the Byzantines, the Romans and Greeks to the hazy Illyrians and their wall of massive blocks of stone at Butrint. As you look into the hardly used churches in the mountain villages, with their intensely frescoed walls and cool Byzantine colonnades outside, you can't help but think of them during the years 1945 to 1985 when Communist Albania under wartime guerrilla warfare leader Enver Hoxha declared itself the first atheist state in the world. A total

dictatorship as cruel to its people as North Korea today. Slogans such as, "It is Marxist Leninism that brings you bread" and "Glory to Albanian-Chinese Friendship" can still be seen fading on the walls of derelict buildings.

## World War Two

In Kosovo in the north it is echoes of the Kosovo war of the 1990s/2000 that stay with you. In the mountains you come across memorials with photos of young Albanian men and boys who were killed in the fighting or were tracked down by the Serbs as they ferried guns and supplies to resistance groups. In the south the frequent memorials are for victims or heroes of WW2, for members of the LNC, the Communist partisans who fought the Germans or for villagers who were killed in reprisal raids. For us, however, the most significant reminders of WW2 in this region in the south were the memorial plaque to Tilman on the water point in the village of Nivan and the information that he had stayed in the village of Sheper.

## To Gjirokaster and Zagoria

Arriving in Saranda on the ferry from Corfu we were met by Endrit, who would guide us for the first half of the trip, with a minibus for the drive from Saranda to Gjirokaster. A detour off the main road took us to one of the Balkans' many Blue Pools and a first view of the predominantly purple landscape of southern Albania in April, purple with Judas Trees (*Cercis siliquastrum*) and purple anemones underfoot. Gjirokaster is a UNESCO World Heritage site, a town of tall handsome Ottoman period houses perched on the steep cobbled lanes leading up to the Ottoman castle and with roofs of rounded grey stones.

Like Berat later, Gjirokaster was given special status in the harsh years of Communist rule in Albania, 1945 – 1990, as a showpiece of the regime and, of course, the birthplace of dictator Enver Hoxha. The 'citadel', 13th century but much enhanced by Ali Pasha (1741-1821), boasts immense tunnels and fortifications and a fine view over the flat valley of the River Drinos to the long snow-capped Lunxhërisë mountain range 1745m which guards the southern flank of Zagoria where we were to trek the next 4 days. Had we known it, this is where we were first treading in Tilman's footsteps. From his base in Sheper in Zagoria he made many journeys to Gjirokaster (spelt with an 'n', Gjinokaster, in Tilman's book). It was a six hour journey on foot through 'a wild and difficult gorge' across the Lunxhërisë range. It is now a 4x4 track, difficult even by Albanian standards. He did this journey frequently, to support the partisans' activities against the Germans in the Drinos valley, on the main road from Greece into southern Albania. Once he went to meet the Italian general to negotiate, unsuccessfully in the end, the surrender of all the Italians' guns and equipment after their occupation collapsed. After every journey he had to return to Sheper to report on the wireless.

After a fine hotel night in Gjirokaster we were driven past the town of Tepelene, birthplace of Ali Pasha, to start the 5 day trek at the village of Peshtar above Zagories river. The three rivers which form the landscape of this first trek, the Drinos, the Zagories and th Vjosë, all rise in Greece, flow north west into Albania, unite near Tepelene and emerge into the Adriatic through wetlands well north of Vlora. The first day's walk, 5 hours to the village of Limar, led through forest and pasture high on the southern bank of the



Above: From Gjirokaster Castle, across the Drinos valley and the Lunxherise range, which Tilman frequently crossed from his Shepr HQ

Right: The purple haze of Judas trees

river before descending to cross it on the first of our daily Ottoman bridges, a particularly beautiful feature of trekking in southern Albania. They also meant that each day ended with a 200/300m ascent from the river up to the night's village stay. We walked each day with just day sacks; the main packs were taken by truck or mule to meet us in the evenings.

In Limar we were welcomed with 'çai malit' and 'raki' (every household brews its own 100ls or



200ls of firewater from grapes, plums, pears, even mulberries) in the home of Mani – schoolteacher,

sheep/goat farmer, beekeeper, transport provider (mules or pick-up truck). Then came a typical Albanian farmhouse supper, a huge spread of home produced bread, goat or sheep cheese, yoghurt, lamb or goat meat, 'byrek' cheese pie, cucumber/tomato salad, chips (usually cold). Much the same spread comes for breakfast too but with eggs in various forms.

Limar is high on the deeply eroded south-facing slopes of the long Dhëmbelit/Nemerçkës range up to 2000m. The 'road' to the village is just bare rock. Before leaving Limar next morning we visited the school and Mani in his single teacher role for four wary children in one dilapidated classroom with faded World and Europe maps beside a small blackboard on the wall. We gave each child a Yorkshire Dales National Park pencil to mumbled thanks but no smiles.



Ottoman Bridge over the Zagoria River

## To Hoshtevë and Sheper

A very pleasant 6 hour hillside traverse, on mule tracks or over alpine pastures, past several small villages and short conversations with their inhabitants, always with a view across the valley to the snowy crest of the Lunxhërise mountain range blocking the way to Gjirokaster, led to the village of Hoshtevë. Ladhi and Katerina had worked in Greece for 12 years, now ran the village bar and hosted us in their modern house with whisky bottles on show on a glass topped coffee table. Beer in the bar to welcome us and supper there later. Packs arrived on mules with Mani from Limar, after his day in school. Hoshtevë boasted a fine church, after a long wait for the caretaker. The cool exterior colonnade here was a sensible feature of most churches we saw again later. There were deeply frescoed walls inside, stalls for men in the main body of the church, women at the back behind a screen. As in all villages in the region the church was now only used on the annual saint's day.

It was a shorter day to Sheper, 5 hours, contouring again along the valley side to the village of Nivan and its Tilman Square before descent through fields and woods to a monastery under renovation near the river and a third Ottoman bridge. Then uphill for 200m to the village and the house where apparently Tilman stayed.

The family here were Vlachs, traditionally a nomadic people over much of the Balkans speaking Aroumanian, a language derived from Latin. The old woman in the house was said to still speak Latin; sadly, my Classics degree from over 50 years ago was unable to verify this. Many Vlachs live in Greece and now that Albania is not the totally sealed country, as it was under the

Communists, there is a lot of movement across the border. Our host Roberta was the daughter-in-law of the family who were away on a visit to Greece. We learned that many Vlachs here have dual nationality, Albanian and Greek, thereby getting two pensions, 400 euros a month in Greece, 100 euros in Albania. Roberta's house had two kitchens, modern and traditional. She used the old kitchen, complete with wooden barrels for fermenting raki, and an open hearth, to make our lamb and potato supper.

## Tilman's HQ

It was only when we were back home in the UK that I discovered that Tilman didn't just stay in the house in Sheper; it was his HQ for most of the 10 months he spent in Albania between August 1943 and July 1944. After landing by parachute at the dropping zone near Korça on the border with what is now FYROM Macedonia, he spent a week's orientation at the British HQ in Styllë before a 3 day walk to Sheper, fording the river Vjosë upstream of Përmet and climbing the path up the eastern side of Qafa Dhëmbelit. (Qafa is a col in Albanian.) He was to travel this route between Sheper and Përmet frequently. We descended it once, impressed; it's a rocky, gravelly, zig-zag path on a steep, craggy hillside. At Sheper, then a village of 100 houses on the bare eastern slope of the Zagoria valley, Tilman had his HQ, the only place with wireless contact with the SOE base in Italy. He hired an empty house for one gold sovereign a month. He also found a man who had worked in a restaurant in Tirana and now produced excellent meals though he was nearly executed by the LNC for possessing some parachute silk. The air drop site for supplies by Halifax bombers from Italy was 2 miles from

Sheper up the Zagoria river. From his quite comfortable existence in Sheper, Tilman's many journeys went in 3 main directions, east to Përmet, west to Gjirokaster and west again to the Adriatic coast. The photo on page 8 shows Tilman left and the local partisan commander, Islam Radowicke, outside his HQ house in Sheper

He, of course, had to travel across the grain of the land, over passes up to nearly 2000m, in all weather, sometimes twice in one day, and in enemy held territory. We travelled sedately along the valleys with a pass to cross only at the beginning and end of each trek. Tilman's task in Albania was less the blowing up of bridges and roads to make life difficult for the Italians and then the Germans, which he'd have enjoyed, but more the much trickier business of liaison and support for the Albanian partisan guerrilla warfare groups. These were:

- LNC – Levisja Nacional Climitare – National Liberation Movement
- Balli Kombetar – National Front
- Zoggists – Supporters of ex King Zog, not a significant group in Tilman's time there.

While the British government was determined to even-handedly support all three groups in their efforts against the Axis invaders, in fact only the Communist led LNC were actively engaged in fighting. The Balli, more anti Greeks and Yugoslavs than anti the Germans, were hostile to the LNC, neutral or even siding with the Germans. On more than one occasion Tilman's escort had to pass him off as a German officer to get him through Balli held territory. The British policy of sending supplies to both the LNC and the Balli exasperated Tilman and meant that the LNC never fully trusted him. An LNC escort, more of a 'minder', was with him all the time with instruc-



tions never to let him out of sight. A report from a senior officer at the British SOE base at Stytle noted that the escorts at Tilman's base in Sheper, 1200m, did not appreciate his habit of climbing



every morning to Mt. Nemerçkë 2000m! (see picture above)

## Përmet

The route over Qafa (Col) Dhëmbelit 1500m from Sheper to Përmet, 7 hours, was a more serious proposition but a splendid mountain walk. A long walk on the mule track up a dry gorge led up to a broad col and summer pasture settlement, a 'stan' in Albanian, with a large snake-inhabited dewpond. It was then a steep rock and gravel descent to the town of Përmet beside the river Vjosë. It seemed a long way down. A muleteer, relative of the Sheper family, had brought over from Përmet early that morning two adult mules and a young one being trained. They then returned to Përmet, over the pass carrying our packs.

For Tilman there were frequent journeys this way to and from Përmet where the LNC had an

important base for training and creating new partisan brigades. It was 7 hours by our standards. In January 1944, when the Germans were closing in on his HQ in Sheper, he had to evacuate it, hiding the wireless equipment, then crossing the pass to Përmet in the depths of winter. There was a long column of fleeing villagers with their mules and donkeys from all over Zagoria, including a stretcher party for a partisan with a broken leg. The path which we had found impressive was now iced up. Descending it in total darkness with an

injured man and a column of refugees must have been a nightmare. They did reach Përmet before dawn but quickly had to cross the river and go up into the mountains further east as the Germans arrived in the town. He returned to Sheper 3 days later to see the result of the Germans' advance. 'Only' 5 houses had been burnt but no one had been shot. However, the Balli following the Germans had removed everything movable, taking it away on any animals they found. 'They could not have plundered and ransacked the place more efficiently', though they didn't find the still intact wireless equipment.

Përmet is a pleasant town in the fertile valley of the river Vjose. There are few older houses. As a centre of resistance to invading Italians and Germans in WW2, the town was destroyed four times. A monument in the centre commemorates the Congress of Përmet in 1944 which set out 'democratic' principles for post-war Albania. In fact it meant total dominance by the Communist



The monument in the centre of Permet

partisans under Enver Hoxha. We had two comfortable nights in the Hotel Alvero, with traditional Albanian suppers in a nearby restaurant and a memorable 'rest day' in between. First, by minibus to Benjë in a side valley where the river Lengaricës flows over hot water springs. Concrete pools trap the warm water at c.22°C, so everyone bathed with a background of snowy peaks and a magnificent Ottoman bridge. As some tried a proper pool in the river itself, seeking the minuscule warm spots in the otherwise icy stream, a herd of 200 goats sent rocks cascading into the pool as they traipsed above and then, with their shepherd, spectacularly paraded over the bridge as cameras clicked. Second, a short drive then a short walk up a lane of wild quince blossom and cistus to the village of Benjë itself, another colon-

naded church and the home of schoolteacher Sorti and his wife. The spacious living room seemed to invite some kind of performance, so a tune on Richard's piccolo led to an exchange of Albanian and English folk songs, raki and 'gliko', fruit soaked in syrup. Sorti showed us his school, better equipped than Limar's but now with only one pupil, the last one before it closes for good.

## Birthday celebration – Albanian polyphonic singing

This was Paul's 70th birthday. I had asked Endrit if he knew of any traditional Albanian musicians in the valley to help make a unique English celebration with Albanian music. He did! Adi and his cousins did Albanian 'polyphonic' singing, so it was arranged that we would hear some that evening. After a çaj malit and beers welcome amidst a battery of birthday cards that Cath had carried out in her pack, we sat down in the kitchen to another sumptuous farmhouse supper from a full table, with a month old baby being fed behind us and then cuddled and nursed by three other children in turn. Finally, Adi, his son of 14 and two cousins launched into their singing; Adi and son providing a persistent bass drone, one cousin singing words and melody, the other on percussion by voice alone. Some songs were in celebration of events, the majority were more laments, the sound was intricate, powerful and intense; unique to us, but common in parts of Albania and Kosovo. We contributed a piccolo tune and some songs in English but they didn't seem to be very impressed!

From his base in Sheper Tilman had to make many journeys to the coast. They took him yet again over the Cayup pass to the Drinos valley and Gjirokaster, then past Golem, the poorest of

poor villages, 1200m up in the Kurvelesh mountains, before descending to Kuç in the Shushices valley. Here the LNC had a base. He then passed the villages of Kallarat and Terbaç where we stayed and crossed the Lungarës range from Terbac by the Qafa e Shengjergit pass, 1300m, to the village of Dukati, going up the steep and rocky gorge path by which we descended.

On another occasion, the condenser for the radio in Sheper had burnt out and he needed to send an urgent message to SOE in Italy to ask for a replacement. To get to Vlora to send the message he came again by the Shushices valley but he was able to use the unfinished road, not the pass over to Dukat. The road is probably 'unfinished' to this day by UK standards! Once, after a failed mission to collect stores from a dump on the coast and retracing their steps to Terbaç and the Shushices valley, Tilman and his guide Mehmet found themselves in the middle of a major battle on the pass from Dukat where the LNC were trying to drive out the Balli. It was with considerable difficulty that they extricated themselves from the battle zone and finally reached Kuç and the LNC HQ. Later, in the winter, Tilman had to set out from Sheper to meet a new officer who had come to the Seaview base on the coast. They failed to meet; the officer couldn't get over the pass from Dukat with his wireless equipment. After one of his worst journeys, having to avoid Balli patrols, Tilman found the villages of Golem and Progarat in extreme poverty, under a metre of snow and unwilling to give him a roof for the night. Kuç itself was occupied by Germans so he had to retreat over a pass "in one of the worst blizzards I have ever encountered". For Tilman to say that, it must have been some blizzard.

Our 4 hour walk down the Shushices valley from Terbac to the village of Kallarat was peace-

ful, a far cry from Tilman's wartime heroics. If only we had known about them beforehand. It even included a coffee stop in the village of Vranisht, but there was also a sombre reminder of the German occupation in WW2, a tall memorial to 170 villagers who were killed in reprisal for the assassination of a German officer in Terbaç. Except for those who were able to run away into the forest the whole village was shot. In Kallarat our hosts were Bejo and Vita, still ardent communists. Bejo had been the manager of the collective farm in the area and they proudly showed their scrapbook of photos of 'Enver Hoxha, the Family Man'. There seemed to be exceptional warmth in their welcome to us, supper eaten sitting on the floor.

The walk out of the Shushices valley, up and over to Pilur on the seaward side of the range was to be the longest walk of the trip, 9 hours, and the highest. A rising hillside traverse took us to a steep ascent up a rocky gorge to an extensive pasture. Here the horseman with our packs took us to meet his goatherd brother in his summer cabin, complete with open fire and a recently skinned lamb hanging from the ceiling.

The route continued over a grassy summit, Maja e Zogut 1469m, to a long, gentle grassy descent to Pilur at 700m, a café for tea and a minibus for the ride down to the coast and the Riviera Guesthouse on the shore in Qeparo. The views would have been splendid if it hadn't been for the rain for the first two hours then enveloping cloud all the way down to the high village of Pilur and the end of our trekking. On the drive down from Pilur to Qeparo in Palermos Bay Erenik pointed out a stark reminder of Albania's communist era, a 900m tunnel to house submarines. The base was built by the Chinese for Enver Hoxha's paranoid regime. It was never used but is still

being paid for. The beautiful coastline for many miles in either direction was closed to all but the military. In any other Mediterranean country it would have been ravaged by tourist development.

The 'spare day' between 2 nights at Qeparo was spent on our own tourism. First at yet another of Ali Pasha's castles, in Palermos Bay. (Ali Pasha, born in Tepelene in 1741, served the Ottoman rulers so well he was made governor of Janina, now Iannina in Greece. He rebelled against the Ottomans, established his own huge 'pashalik', replete with castles, as far as Berat, ruled it skillfully but ruthlessly until 1821 when the Ottomans besieged him in Janina, captured him and sent his head to Constantinople. He was much admired by Lord Byron.) After an afternoon visit to spectacular Gjipës Bay for a rough surf swim and short gorge walk we returned to Qeparo for a 1hr evening walk up to the old village, a fine impromptu meal for 5 euros a head and a walk back down to the sea with flickering fireflies all the way.

The final day in Albania took us to Butrint, the UNESCO World Heritage archaeological site, developed by UK based Butrint Foundation. The hill top fortress above Lake Butrint, dating from the Neolithic era, Illyrians (massive stone wall), Greeks (a theatre), Romans (Bath house and Forum), Venetians (triangular fortress) and Ottomans (Byzantine Church), was very impressive. We crossed on a ramshackle ferry for a walk along the lagoon towards yet another but inaccessible Ali Pasha castle. That evening we drove by minibus to Saranda for the last night in the Hotel Brillant, the evening promenade and farewell supper to Erenik. Next day we caught the 1300hrs Hydrofoil ferry back to Corfu, afternoon



Butrint

exploration of the old town and castle with swifts galore overhead, supper at a sea front restaurant and then out to the airport for the flight home, but not without further encounters with Tilman's footsteps. And, indeed, more of him than just his feet.

He had also accompanied us, in a way, to Butrint. What he called a "quick journey on foot" took him from Saranda to Konispol on the Greek frontier to meet partisans there who were anxious about German activity. Looking from a viewpoint from Butrint onto the Greek side, he spotted "a large group of naked Huns sporting in the sea". To return to Saranda he crossed the Butrint channel on an ancient ferry, then by boat to the top of Lake Butrint.

## Grava Bay

A big problem in the winter of 1943/44 was to get supplies, especially boots, when the weather prevented air drops. Tilman needed to go to the coast to find a place where supplies could be landed by ship. Back at the LNC HQ in Kuc, after the battle on the Dukat/Terbac pass, he decided to head over the mountains to a spot called Grava Bay which had been recommended as a good place for ships to land supplies and evacuate SOE personnel at the end of their stint in Albania. Grava Bay is not a name recognized on modern maps but from Tilman's description I think it must be the modern seaside village Qeparo, where we stayed 2 nights in the Riviera Guesthouse. What better way to assess its potential as a landing beach than to have a swim in the chilly November sea, in the dark and with snow pending? He pronounced the beach ideal for landing craft and returned to Sheper to report by wireless. I wish I had known that Tilman had had a swim there when I ventured into the warm sea at the very end of April with the evening sun shining.

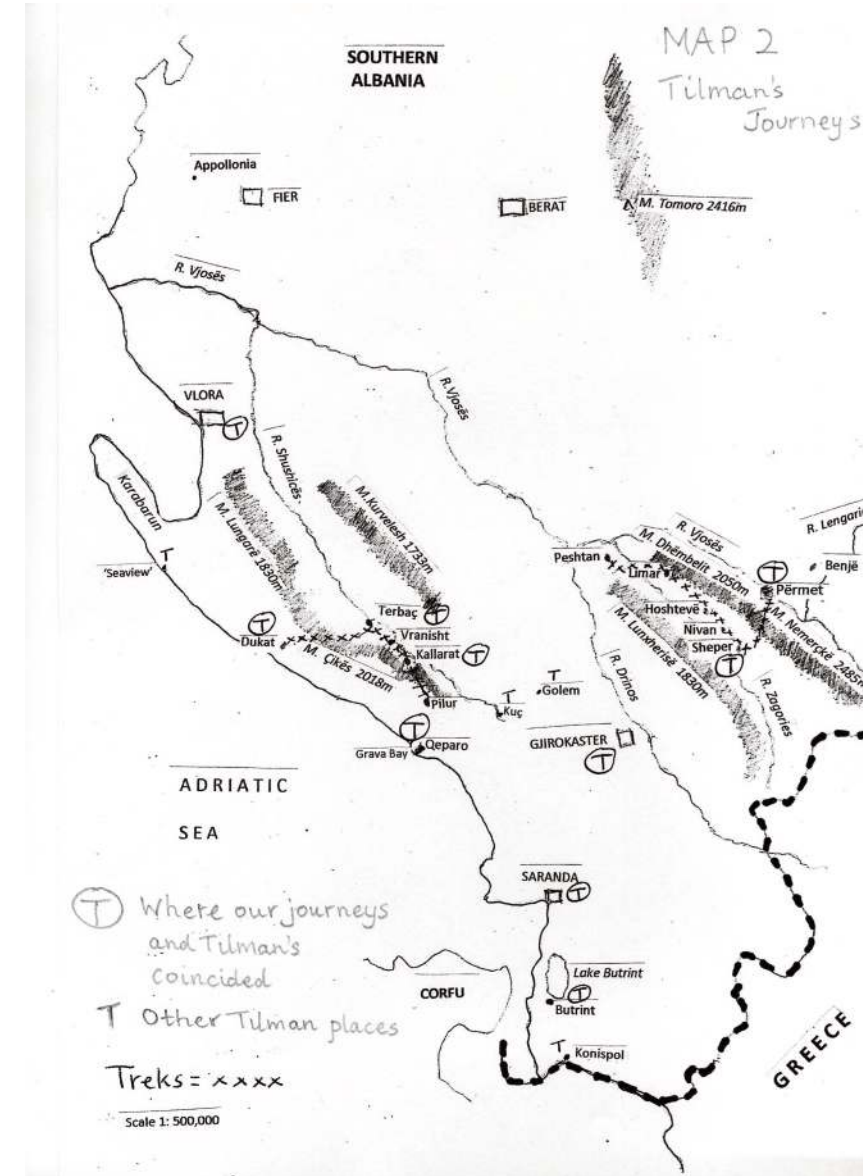
In March Tilman journeyed again to Grava Bay from Sheper for a pre-arranged meeting with a supply and evacuation vessel. With a party of 50 local partisans and mules they spent 7 days in the mountain village of Khudes, walking 2 hours down to the sea and back each night to meet the ship which never came. The Germans got wind of them and they had to get away in a hurry on April Fool's Day. The ship turned up that evening, delayed by storms on the Italian coast.

By May the snow had cleared and 'unrestricted freedom of movement, the sine qua non of guerilla warfare' was restored. The LNC had taken control of Borsh on the coast road and seized several miles of the coast itself south of Palermos

point and Ali Pasha's castle, including Grava Bay. After a mine laying expedition to Gjirokaster, Tilman said goodbye to Sheper, handed over to his successor and walked again to Grava Bay where a great army of men and mules waited on the beach.

'In quick response to our signals a light flashed once far out at sea. We waited tensely expectant, until suddenly the open maw of a tank landing craft loomed out of the dark heading straight for us. As her keel gently took the shingle she looked like some great sea monster coming ashore. Some minutes elapsed before the partisans recovered sufficiently from their astonishment to go on board. Then things moved quickly. An endless stream of excited men leapt up one side of the ramp, rushed to the stern where the loads were stacked, seized one and doubled back down the other side. In thirty minutes thirty tons of stores, neatly packed in 40lb loads, were ashore, and by dawn the beach was clear. As the last load came off, we bodies embarked. The escorting Italian destroyer was picked up, and together we chugged slowly over the calm water while the hills of Albania faded away between sea and sky.'

If I'd done my homework thoroughly before the trip to southern Albania and learned of Tilman's wartime activity there I might have carried a copy of that final paragraph from chapter 12 in "Where Men and Mountains Meet". Then I could have read aloud that concluding passage as we supped our Korça beer and ate our traditional Albanian supper on the patio of the Riviera Guesthouse by the beach in Qeparo – AKA Tilman's Grava Bay.



The routes of the treks undertaken, and the points of encounter with Tilman's travels

## ALPINE ASCENTS IN SLINGSBY'S PLAYGROUND

For want of a direct ferry service, the long and winding roads of Europe had taken us across the Netherlands and northern Germany, to traverse most of Denmark before a short boat crossing into Sweden. Northwards then, we finally reached Norway and thankfully pulled up at the home of a Norwegian friend overlooking the Oslofjord after two days of driving.

Knut Tønsberg was the ideal source of useful information and advice about many of the Norwegian peaks we hoped to investigate during our long holiday, trailing the early pioneer William Cecil Slingsby who is regarded as the "Father of Norwegian Mountaineering". While Sandy and I were being royally entertained by Knut and his wife, Tove, in idyllic early summer sunshine, Knut related how his own forebears had direct personal experience of Slingsby and had in their own turn climbed new routes on some of Norway's best mountains. We were well primed with information as we travelled further the next day into the heart of the Jotunheimen National Park.

The final kilometres along a "grusvei" – a gravel road – saw us moving in a plume of clinging dust along the shores of Tyin Lake to arrive at the DNT hut at Fondsbu to be greeted as so many times before by the sparkling smile of Solbjørg Kvålshaugen, the manager and our friend. Now, in the summer conditions we aimed to complete some alpine climbing ascents on peaks we had not reached in previous ski mountaineering visits over many winters.

To spy out the extent of still-lying snow from the winter and spring, we made our way up to the high viewpoint of Utsikten, a top on the

Skjenegge ridge, from where we could see across the highest reaches of the Jotunheimen, and the more spiky summits of the Hurrungane lying further west. In truth there was even now, in early July, more snow cover than we had expected although we were of course, in the north.

Situated northwest from Fondsbu, the long valley of Koldedalen gives access to a lot of fine peaks. Here stands the striking Falketind, which we had previously climbed, and its close neighbour Stølsnostind. Across from them, beyond the deep defile of Morka-Koldedalen, a long cleft filled with enormous boulders and several tarns, stand Koldedalstind and Hjelledalstind. We would try these two next, and leaving early, we set off to drive the very rough hydro road into Koldedalen. This motorized approach was thwarted after very few kilometres by a washed-out, eroded and damaged section, impassable even for a high clearance 4 x 4 vehicle.

We had no option but to walk several extra kilometres and were further dismayed to find long stretches of the track still under deep snow which in itself would have been undriveable. Condemning ourselves to an inevitable long day, Sandy and I plodded along until we could set foot upon the glacier slopes which took us up onto the ridge of Koldedalstind, thankfully now on good nevé for better progress. The crest narrowed down to a sharp snow arête which took us to the last rocky rise to the summit. From here we realized at last the amount of height we'd need to lose to continue on to the bold top of Hjelledalstind.

*Jim Gregson*

By a mix of snow and rock scrambling we climbed down and then back up to the high point. On the return we investigated the possibility of descending the northern flanks of the ridge into Morka-Koldedalen but gave that up on finding the crown wall of a huge slab avalanche which had bulldozed its way into the depths. Thus we had to go back up over Koldedalstind and along its snow crest until much further on we could take a diagonal line across and down its snowy side into the head of Koldedalen to then trudge back to the car several kilometres through the now-wet snows cloaking the track. We were late for dinner.

Another day, another plan. Uranostind stands proud above its eponymous glacier, one of Slingsby's first ascents back in the 19th Century. This fine peak sports a narrow arête linking the main summit to that of its south peak, the famed "Søregga", reputed to give an excellent exposed climb. We were tempted and we succumbed, even knowing that we'd have to repeat the prolonged soft-snow wade through Koldedalen to get close to the mountain – but alpinists must perforce be primarily walkers simply to gain necessary height, so it had to be done.

Just before Sandy and I got to the point of leaving the track, we were surprised by a team of Norwegians using mountain bikes to do what a car could not, plus they had youth on their side so they outpaced us over the complex ground leading up to the mountain. We caught them up at their gearing- and rope-up halt where we too, took a breather. After that the Norwegians became ever-more diminutive figures as they sped along, but serving as useful route-finding indicators as we made our own more sedate progress. Climbing towards the south peak, the upper heave of Uranostind remains hidden from

view but when it finally bursts into sight it is a somewhat daunting prospect. The upper mountain ascends in a series of stepped buttresses, each one narrower than the previous, and we knew that somewhere along the crests there is a fabled hand-traverse perched high above the glacier on the mountains east side. The route unfolded in an intricate manner, needing some careful handling of typically loose and fractured



Uranostind Søregga - main summit from the south top

alpine rock until a glance over a rise brought us face to face with the long hand-traverse, butting at its far end into a steep corner.

Fortunately the hand-traverse is quite well-furnished with cracks and decent foot placements so it was possible to savour rather than fear the exposure as it unfolded. It also offered good photographic possibilities as a bonus. The upper



Uranostind Søregga - the hand traverse

buttresses finally laid back into a long horizontal ridge decked with a substantial cairn, from where we could head north at first then turn east to climb down the icy east face to reach the surface of Uranosbreen, the glacier highway to take us off the mountain. After such a fine outing the long kilometres back along the snowy track did not really diminish our appreciation of the day – but we were late again for dinner.

We had some other good days out from Fondsbu, but over in the west the mountains of Hurrungane called to us. We bade our farewells and drove the complex route to Øvre Årdal then up the sinuously steep hairpins of the mountain toll road to reach Turtagrø, the famous mountain hotel now rebuilt in a modern guise after a disastrous fire some years ago. Also lost in the fire were the contents of the large “fjellbibliotek”, the

library of mountain books, now painstakingly resurrected. We stopped at Turtagrø for coffee, but also to donate a copy of my own Greenland book to the library, which was very well-received. From the vicinity of the hotel can be seen the impressive peak of Store Skagastølstind, usually referred to by Norwegian mountaineers simply as “Storen” – the Big Thing. Slingsby, climbing solo for the final upper part had made the first ascent of Storen in 1876, dispelling the local myth that it was impossible. This was Slingsby’s most renowned first ascent, which he repeated a few times, once in the company of the lady pioneer climber Therese Bertheau.

We left Turtagrø to cross the high Sognefjell road with its sweeping views across the glaciers and mountains of Hurrungane and the Smorstabbtindane groups of western Jotunheimen, and took up residence at Krossbu Turisthytte, an old traditional establishment well-placed for mountain ascents. On a fine day of sunshine we climbed to the airy summit of Store Smorstabbtind to study the lie of the land. Not long after our return to the hut at Krossbu the weather thickened in with some rain, with later unfavorable influence on our climbing. The continuing rain next morning diverted our attentions into driving back over the Sognefjell road and then right down to sea level by the Sognefjord to visit the ancient 12th Century ‘stavkyrkje’ at Urnes, world-renowned for its intricate wood-carving. There remain in the whole of Norway, just twenty-nine of these impressive, entirely timber-built stave churches, some still in use for services, legacy of a long tradition of amazing carpentry and wood-carving, and still worth seeking out.

Another impressive-looking peak with a Slingsby route, Store Austanbotntind, standing



Store Skagastølstind - "Storen" - winter conditions in the middle of July

on the southern edge of Hurrungane was recommended to us by Knut Tønsberg, a “half-day’s climb” he claimed; he must be a very quick mover. We drove to the high point of the mountain road and gathered our equipment. The mountain’s west ridge eventually narrows down and we

crossed a minor fore-summit then the corniced head of a big couloir to scramble up on to the snowed-up west top. From here we could see not only the remaining snows from winter, but also the freshly-fallen and extensive new snow from the last two or three days of poor weather. This made things a lot more complex and time-consuming to complete the ascent. Also, both sadly and frustratingly we could see the mighty Storen further north, looking now like a gigantic wedding cake, with little chance of it shedding its now wintry raiment in enough time for us to attempt an ascent in the time we had available, as we still wished to go to other areas.

We did try to make a long traverse of peaks in the Smorstabbtindane, slowed down by deep soft glacier snow, before we journeyed round to Visdalen to stay at Spiterstulen, run by a family with whom we have forged a good friendship over the course of many winter visits. Spiterstulen is the most used starting point for ascents of Galdhøpiggen, Norway’s

highest mountain, so it is always busy through the summer months. As we had already skied it more than once, we had our sights on some of the other peaks in the area, more difficult, and which are much less frequently ascended.

Styggehøe – the ugly height – is close to the lodge of Spiterstulen, ever-present from its windows. It has two prominent ridges enclosing

an icy corrie. We have looked at it for years, and now we headed towards it, crossing the raging Visa river by a well-placed quite new suspension footbridge. This was followed by a lot of steep collar-work to gain the mouth of the icy corrie, where further ascent had to be made over some unstable boulders to get established on the right-most bounding ridge. We progressed along the crest in a fine position until we reached a high curving snow spine which ran up to a difficult-looking final buttress.

Local knowledge had informed us that this buttress could be turned on the left, across slabs or snow-ice if present. This white shield was certainly present, and as we had trimmed down our kit a little over-zealously in favour of lightness, we were forced to climb the steeper than expected ice with little or no protection to a point where we could force passage over a cornice onto the main mountain ridge. The summit cairn lay some distance away, but had to be claimed by us for completeness, and as time elapsed hill fog began to envelop us. The descent, over tricky ground, robbed us of more time and yet again we were late for dinner.

There was a repeat performance of tardiness when we went up towards the head of Vidsdalen to climb the north ridge of Store Urdadalstind. We were also rather surprised at the sustained nature of the scrambling on this ridge and its considerable exposure, especially as this time we had decided not to take a rope! The descent certainly had its moments, requiring great care and concentration for safe downwards passage. Lower down we crossed tracks with several groups of reindeer, which certainly seemed more composed and sure of foot than we had been at some points.

Three peaks along a ridge called the Tverråtindane drew our attention, having seen them many times in winter. To traverse them involves a mix of glacier climbing, some good scrambling and at least one abseil to negotiate one very steep descent. For all of this, Sandy and I decide to take a much fuller panoply of kit. At the gearing-up spot, a Norwegian guide working for Spiterstulen who was previously known to me rolled up with his group. I was able to speak with him for up-to-date gen about the abseil pitch which would be useful. After the first glacier approach we had to climb up onto the main ridge, looking for a place with minimal cornicing to exit through. As by now it was mid-July the cornice here consisted of old, bell-hard snow and blue ice where in contact with rock. This made it all but impossible to flog down, so there was some precarious front-pointing to be done, and relief once pulled over the edge.

Crampons off now for prolonged scrambling along the crests, very steep and high crags on the right, and more broken rocky ground to the left. Up and down, down and up, threading between big blocks, over the first two summits. Eventually the location for the abseil became apparent. The rock fell away down a very steep right-angled corner and there was a whole variety of weathered slings, big loops of very thick rope and a few stout and shiny maillon links. Sandy and I carefully rigged up our ropes, casting them accurately down the corner after knotting the free ends. I began the descent, bracing wide with my feet and avoiding now and again sundry precarious-looking perched blocks, until eventually arriving at a decent ledge where safe anchorage could be found. Sandy followed, and thankfully the ropes also followed when pulled. A leftward traverse put us back on the crest, to weave through more

blocks, flakes and small pinnacles with one further re-ascent to reach the final Tverråtind top.

By now we were facing directly into a setting sun as we picked our way along a gold- and rose-tinted snow arête to start coming off the mountain. This lovely scene was all too soon replaced by execrable boulder field which slowed us down again and we longed to set foot upon the smooth glacier far below. When we finally did, we were pleased to find that the surface had enough roughness and give to alleviate the need for crampons again and we lost height more rapidly as we headed down the ice. As evening light started to fade from the enclosed valley floor we moved onto trackless moraine, occasionally stumbling as stones rolled underfoot, until at last we had to travel over and through dwarf willow and scrub, crossing a few hard-to-see streams until guided at last by the lights of Spiterstulen we arrived back, late again.

Our long holiday was not yet over as we travelled on to two more of our favourite DNT huts from where we made further mountain outings. All in all, we reflected on the range of alpine climbing Norway can afford, without the discomfobulating middle of the night starts and objective dangers of the high Alps. So, thank you Wm. Cecil (Slingsby) for pointing the way. Hats off to you.



Abseil from Midtre Tverråtind.

Further reading –  
Slingsby Wm. Cecil,  
Norway: the Northern Playground,  
Publ. David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1904

## LIFE AMONGST THE LAVA

**M**y partner Mark is a great one for planning. Perhaps that's one of the reasons he has been my personal travel agent and tour guide for 20+ years.

After many months of gentle persuasion he finally talked me into going to the Cape Verde islands with him in 2015. My sister Andrea had received the 2011 edition of the Bradt Travel Guide to the archipelago - which lies off the coast of West Africa - as a Christmas present a few years back; Mark had digested it before Boxing Day lunch was on the table. Sis has never found the time, money or inclination to go - and so we borrowed the guidebook.

November was chosen as the best month for us to visit, being shortly after the end of the wet season but before the Harmattan winds start blowing in dust from the Sahara. So the scenery should be green, and the views not too hazy. The only downside was that it would still be quite warm, with the average for the month 28°C by day, 22°C by night. I didn't worry too much about this; I just wanted a holiday from my demanding and stressful day job.

The international flights were booked with TAP Portugal, the domestic with the local airline TACV. The plan was to fly into Praia, the capital of the republic on the island of Santiago - which is one of the secondary trekking destinations - and use internal flights to visit the islands of Fogo and Santo Antao, which are in the Premier League. Fogo is basically a dirty great volcano rising from the sea to a height of over 2,800 metres. Accommodation was arranged in advance too - the Internet is a wonderful tool for the independent traveller - but the results were patchy, and there

*by Helen Goode (ghost written by Mark Gear)*

was no response at all from the two hotels that Mark e-mailed in Sao Filipe, the principal town on Fogo. But he didn't seem too worried. "We'll find somewhere when we get there," were his actual words.

I realise now that my tour leader had been less than diligent in his job, which is quite out of character, blithely assuming that once we arrived on Fogo we would have no problem travelling daily to Cha das Caldeiras, actually within the crater rim, where the two villages of Portela and Bangaeira are the jumping off points for the hiking. Our flights between Praia and Sao Filipe were booked for the afternoon - the schedules had shown two flights each way per day, early and late - and the later option had been chosen for no better reason than a desire not to miss breakfast at our hotel in Praia. "We have paid for it!" said the Aberdonian in him. Then in the week before we were due to leave home we were advised of a schedule change, the two flights of the day being amalgamated into one, taking off mid morning. Mark wasn't much fazed by that either, but in the end it was to be a very good thing.

So we arrived in Praia late on a Saturday night - it was early on a Sunday morning in truth - and had a couple days adjusting to the conditions. The weather was overcast, hot and a bit humid, which meant we were slicked with sweat most of the time, in between refreshing showers at our hotel. Not much happened, which suited me fine, except for a minibus ride up to Serra Malagueta National Park where, at 1,000metres above sea level, it was much more pleasant. Hmm, Sao Filipe is at sea level but Cha das Caldeiras is at

1,600 metres; should be a lot nicer up there... At this point Mark's planning brain was kicked into gear and it only took a short review of the guide for him to see that lots of accommodation options were listed in Portela and Bangaeira, and that the daily minibus servicing them leaves at midday. Good vibes - the lack of response from hotels in Sao Filipe and the rescheduling of our flights meant that staying high was now an option. The best guesthouse in the crater was described as being owned by a congenial Frenchman, so we winged off an e-mail to him requesting a booking for our three nights on the island. No response had been received by the time we were leaving Praia that Tuesday morning, but still we thought there was nothing to worry about; the guy was supposed to have a booking office down in Sao Filipe and, even if he couldn't take us, there seemed to be lots of other alternatives.

Mark had insisted that first thing Monday morning we visit the TACV offices in Praia to reconfirm our flights. Whether this played a part in resolving the mini drama that unfolded on Tuesday morning in our favour I don't know. Anyway, he had heard stories of domestic flights being oversold and taking off early, leaving late arrivals fuming on the tarmac, so we were on a mission to be at the airport just as soon as check-in opened at 7 a.m. Achieving this took a fair bit of work on Monday evening; the English speaking owner of our hotel, who had greeted us on arrival, had now disappeared and was not contactable, even by mobile 'phone, leaving us to negotiate payment for our room, an early breakfast and a car to the airport with her Portuguese speaking assistants. We have only a smattering of French and Spanish! Luckily a relative of one of these ladies, fluent in English, was visiting for the

day from up island and acted as our interpreter. It was with some surprise that we arrived at the airport, fed and watered at dawn the following day.

Just like Garfield, I'm not a morning person, so tend to leave Mark to sort out most stuff while I'm still half asleep. Walking through the door of the airport - and avoiding the ministrations of the baggage handlers outside International Arrivals, who had fleeced us €1 for carrying our bags 10 metres to the taxi rank three nights previously - he saw signs reading "International Departures" to the right and "Domestic Departures" to the left. There was a nice seating area outside the latter; steps led up to locked doors and beyond, we could glimpse X ray machines. It's quite common abroad for your baggage to be scanned even before you check in, and as we were early, the locked door was no surprise. We settled down to wait. Thirty minutes later we had an inkling something was wrong. A quick scout around revealed a smaller sign reading "Check In," below "International Departures", and a bloody great queue from it to the check-in desks. Oh, no... We found ourselves in the snake behind a big group of Swiss, and when it finally came to our turn there was a problem - only ONE seat was left. But luckily my cauliflower headed partner had read enough of the guidebook to know that several seats on every flight are kept back to the last minute for travelling government officials. We stood our ground, remonstrating that we had reconfirmed our flights yesterday, and fifteen minutes later were the proud possessors of TWO boarding passes. Phew!

The flight to Fogo was only 20 minutes. The alternative is a four hour ferry ride, where sick bags are handed out as standard. The Atlantic can be rough! Flying west, and to the south of

the island, we had known to sit on the right hand side of the aircraft for best views of the volcano on approach. Alas, our contretemps in Praia had meant only seats on the left remained. Beggars cannot be choosers.



Crater rim from summit of Pico do Fogo

On the ground, we flagged a taxi into Sao Filipe, and while I minded the big bags, Mark got to work again. There was no sign of the Frenchman's booking office; at the adjacent "Colonial B&B" he rustled up an English speaking German lady who simply said that the Frenchman had "closed down". The Duracell Bunny was directed towards Casa Beira down the hill, where the owner, Mariza also ran what was now the best guesthouse up in the crater. Luckily she was in town, rolling up soon after. In a mix of English,

French and Spanish words - thus is Creole born - Mark was able to arrange a room with her for our middle night. She already knew that a colleague in Portela at "Chez Davide" had a room available for tonight, so that was two out of three sorted.

She also 'phoned the minibus driver to book us seats on the ride up to Cha das Caldeiras at noon. A good lassie to have on our side. Kit was moved down to "Beiramar", 10 litres of water was bought for our planned two days on the hill, and at last there was time for me to explore the black volcanic sand beach below the town and nearby "Dona Maria's bakery". The former was inspiring, the latter less so - hoping for patisseries, I found only biscuits.

Our lift up to the crater finally turned up forty five minutes late, and then at the back door, rather than at the front where we were waiting. It was no surprise when getting out of town took a while, with numerous stops for the driver to chat with his pals and to pick up such things as beans and building materials. In the back of the van was a huge drum of drinking water; it's a scarce resource in these islands. The local buses - known as aluguers - are partly a public service, and it's more fun to use them than to be whisked around like rich tourists in the sealed vacuum of a private vehicle.

At least that's what the Aberdonian tells me. The locals are quite happy for visitors to see how they carry on their lives. We even had a couple of missionaries from the Church of Latter Day Saints in with us at one point, and by telling them all about our visit a few years ago to their tabernacle at St. George in Utah (in truth we were only really there to see some dinosaur tracks

nearby) we left them no time between getting on and off for any attempt to convert us.

Arriving at the crater rim was one of those "Wow!" moments. Pico do Fogo - the summit of the volcano - reared steeply above us. From here we expected a quick whizz along a cobbled road across the centre of the caldeira to reach Portela and were puzzled when the van hung a left onto a dirt track over ash fields round the inside edge of the crater. The journey to the village took much longer than expected two and a half hours from Sao Filipe - and even involved a change into a 4X4. But eventually we were dropped at Chez Davide, and they did indeed have a room available for us. Walking inside, we were confronted with a dining room half filled with cooled and solidified volcanic lava.

Finally it dawned on us what had happened. The guidebook was completely out of date in respect of current conditions up here, and over the next week while the story came out. After nearly two decades dormant, the volcano had erupted only a year ago, a secondary cone on its flank pushing out a lava field that cut the road and filled most of the crater, destroying much of the two villages, along with two vineyards that had been flourishing for more than a century. This must have been a heart breaking time for the locals - many had now moved to houses down towards the coast - but a few hung on and reconstruction was slowly gathering momentum. The Frenchman had not just "closed down", his guesthouse had been destroyed! These facts made our independent visit all the more important. Every cent of the Euros we spent from Sao Filipe onwards, getting to and staying up here, would be a lifeline to people working to rebuild their lives.

Having sorted ourselves out, we walked fifteen minutes back along the track to Chez Mariza, where we confirmed our stay for the following night. Her two previous guesthouses had been completely engulfed by the recent eruption, but she had found the money and backing to rebuild atop a flat area of new lava and had reopened only six weeks previously. The new gaff was huge, and popular with tour groups coming up for lunch or staying the night. She also had a good coffee machine; caffeine is the fuel to



Mark's engine. That's why I call him a four beaner, whereas I can muster only two, or maybe three at a pinch.



Back at Davide we engaged the services of the owner's brother to guide us up the Pico the next day. It's not at all technical, but his knowledge of the whereabouts of the best path, and the easiest way down, would make the €40 of his fee a good investment. He had no English, but we reckoned we would get by. At dinner we sampled one of the remaining bottles of the local wine, now becoming a rare commodity, which was reflected in the €12 price tag. John Coates take note!

Come the morning it was grey and spit spotting with rain. We uhm'd and ah'd for a bit; should we think about delaying our attempt on the peak until tomorrow? But the cloud was up, the owner and her brother seemed keen for us to set off, and so we did. It must be said I do not get as much time to exercise as I would like. So the 1,200 metre ascent of the volcano took three and a half hours, Mark carrying the camera and all the water and food, bless his socks. He's well used to my "tortuga" pace, and manages to hide his frustration - most of the time. Ahead of us was a group of Germans. Every hour we would stop for a nibble of dates, walnuts and chewy sweet cereal bars, plus water, even though it wasn't too hot. In fact, it actually rained, albeit lightly, for an hour as we plodded up. But the air is so dry that this was more refreshing than any sort of inconvenience. The path went up a run of more stable blocks and then zig zagged through a scrambly area to come out at the rim. The smaller crater below was still fuming in places. The summit was off to the right, the rocky approach protected by a 50 metre via ferrata cable.

In Cicerone parlance the grade was only 1A, so no need for the locking krabs here, even if it was a bit "Oo er", and I required some encouragement from my mountain goat. Still, the top proved to be a great place to be, not a breath of

wind - an unusual occurrence - the sun coming through over a marvellous view of the main caldeira. The descent was great, running down huge fields of fine volcanic ash adjacent to the ascent route. We had no gaiters; my long trousers kept the grit out but Mark, in his shorts, had to empty out his boots at the bottom.

Returning to Davide early afternoon we discovered that our big bags had been whisked, as if by magic, off to Mariza. There was a bad moment when we got over there - at first we couldn't find our wine bottle, which was still half full! The rest of the day passed very agreeably in relaxing, a typical Cape Verde shower (quick wetting with cold water, turn off the flow, soap all over, quick rinse), reading, coffee drinking and, of course eating. Even up here fish is on the menu; these islands have probably the most under-fished seas on the planet, although that is likely to change.

Our room was nice, but the mattress very cheap and there were no controls for the under-floor heating... It was a bad night, yet morning came sunny and crisp and all was forgotten. Most of the day went in a long walk back along the track to the cobbled road into the caldeira, a quick ascent of an old secondary cone - Monte Beco, which has a glorious view - and a long walk back again. Mark was confident that an alugueur would come along and pick us up on the return leg - wrong! But at least we had our brollies to combat the bruising midday sun. I was fascinated by the agriculture still thriving on the margins of the crater, Mark more by the play of light on the rocks of the crater rim (once a crag rat, always a crag rat). We both enjoyed being so close to the contortions and wrinkles of the new lava field.

Back at Mariza we were disappointed to find that our big bags were still there; no free luggage transfer this time. We were moving down to Casa



Pico do Fogo from road into Cha das Caldeiras

Fernando in the lower village of Bangaeira, which was a thirty minute stagger away. Luckily for us a tour group had moved out that morning, and we had the place to ourselves. It was the only house here to have survived the encroachment of the lava. The food was good and plentiful, but our double bed had a distinct dip in the middle, and I was guaranteed cuddles all night long.

So to the morning of our departure. We had met the 4X4 driver who would take us back to the cobbled road the afternoon before; departure

time was set for 6 a.m., while it was still dark. Leaving our room at 5:45 a.m., we were puzzled to find a different pick up truck and driver parked outside. Confusion reigned, exacerbated by our lack of Portuguese. But soon enough the right man turned up and we set off. Thirty minutes later we had progressed probably a couple of hundred metres at most, and check-in for our flight back to Praia opened at 8 a.m. But eventually all the passengers for Sao Filipe were aboard and at 7 a.m. we were transferring to a mini-van at the crater rim - a last oppo to admire the Pico.

Rattling off down the mountainside there were naturally more detours and stops on the way to the big smoke, but thankfully we were

dropped at the airport before the run round the town. It was a few minutes after 8a.m., and just as we were sorting ourselves out, the Swiss group tour bus turned up. Mark grabbed our gear and ran for the check-in desk. But in the end, they had the last laugh. Expecting the same flight path, Captain Schemer secured us two window seats on the left hand side of the 'plane, but this time we flew NORTH of the island! Guess we should have taken window seats on BOTH sides of the aircraft - but that's being wise after the event. To be honest, the best aerial view of the volcano was to be had from a picture in the in-flight magazine.

The next day it wasn't so much 'Planes, Trains and Automobiles' as 'taxi, planes, ferry and aluguers' to travel via the islands of Sol and Sao Vicente to the town of Ribeira Grande on Santo Antao. Fairly uneventful, really!

## Mountaineering on the Axis of Evil

Counting out 1½ million in any currency seems like good fortune in the current financial crisis but not if it's Iranian Rials and only worth £100, especially when none of the Farsi numerals make any sense and there is an impatient queue at the exchange counter. I signed forms in triplicate – one at a time – and then gave my pen to the Iranian who was struggling more than me changing money... he only had £20 to change.

I shouldn't have taken advantage of the business class upgrade I strangely gained. Endless beers in the Heathrow departure lounge, several glasses of Shiraz before and after my meal on the plane and two large shots of Jamesons for a nightcap. 4 am at the Imam Khomeini airport and still drunk is not the best way to start a dry holiday in Iran.

I needn't have worried. After a cursory X-ray of my bags, I escaped the arrival area to be met by Iman, my driver. A smiley, gentle and humorous local with a penchant for understatement, fierce driving skills and an unnerving recall of tunes on a memory stick plugged into his car stereo. 'I have hundreds of dollars of music on this 3\$ memory stick'.

By dawn we were out of the Tehran suburbs and in the foothills of the Alborz. Thrust up from the collision of three tectonic plates (Himalayan, Alpine and Arabian) they reach up to a plateau with over a hundred 4000m peaks and one 5000m peak (Damavand) in the North of Iran. The Chalus road woke me up...No need for Alton Towers, Iranian driving is legendary. Iman found a Doors album as we hairpinned up hills and wove through the canyons of the Alborz. I'm not sure how we escaped any number of major collisions.

*Norbert de Mello*

We arrived in Rudbarak, the road end, and pulled into the Mountain Federation office. Big villas that should never have been allowed in a national park ('Arab money' said Iman) gave an alpine resort feel to the surrounding area. I had trouble understanding the official at the desk and was rescued by Marjane, who, with tanned, coppery, glowing skin, blonde highlights and an interest in a strange foreigner, translated for me. She seemed intrigued by my apparent lack of equipment but was less impressed when I managed to spill petrol all over the veranda of the Mountain Federation building testing my stove on Iranian petrol. So much for my worries about speaking to chador clad Iranian women. I paid up my \$50 park fee and set off for the mountains wondering about glam Iranian babes.

After 12 hrs, lots of sweat, two lifts and a lot of flogging (see picture below) I was up at the



Hersarchal Plateau at 3700m and ready to collapse. I'd been adopted by a couple of 'guides' who immediately asked me if I would join them next week to go up Damavand. I declined aware of 'taroufe' etiquette but camped near them. 26 people spoke to me that evening – I counted. They were all concerned that I was on my own (tanhay) and therefore befriended me. Various offers to join groups for their evening meal had to be declined. The best were the three lasses who definitely had the 'glad eye'. Scarves slipped off and much low key flirting ensued... After all mullahs don't go to the mountains! So much for the Axis of Evil!

Zard Gel (4231m) a grade 2 scramble the next day was entertaining, especially when loose and sharp shards of rock tore holes in my clothes and skin and made progress difficult. Back at the campsite the Tehranis were playing in a circle. The rules were: a person stepped into the circle, tagged someone else (hopefully of the opposite sex) and then escaped without being caught, all the time making a 'zeeeeee...' sound. A great excuse for male-female contact without complications. This was gentle, but male-male contact was robust... There were bruises.

Friday and Saturday are the Islamic weekend and there were at least 40 people in the valley. All seemed to be heading for Alam Kouh, at 4851m, the second highest peak in Iran. On Saturday I made an early start at 5 am and set off after them. I was going fine and was able to do a short detour to pick off Marji Kesh (4580m) before carrying on to Alam Kouh. A fine ridge line overlooking a vertical drop and straightforward scrambling led

to the top and a good altitude headache. Views stretched into two more valleys and I could see a range of possibilities for future trips. Takht e-Suleman (of Freya Stark fame) to the north was a possible objective though I'd have to walk round to another valley. I had started with 2 ½ litres of water but had finished it and was quite dehy-



The view from Alam Kouh to Gardoon Kouh

drated, so set off back down after only a few minutes on the summit. Mouthfuls of fresh snow staved off thirst but didn't really do much for the headache. Back at the tent, I collected water from the nearby stream only to find three large shepherds' dogs picketing my tent. Fortunately they responded appropriately to the international gesture of 'picking up a stone' and were gone in moments. They had however liberally marked –

sprinkled - my tent in true doggy fashion. Later I realised this may have been a good thing as there are supposed to be wolves in the Alborz. All the people I met warned me about them!

The best wolf warning came from Hasan, 'The Good Shepherd'. Each time I saw him, he was either holding a newborn lamb or running off down the valley to round up stray sheep. His mime of the wolves was worth an Oscar. He would turn up each evening and try to chat – entertaining since I had very little Farsi and he no English. When he realised I was Indian he fished out his mobile and played me a couple of Bollywood film clips. I showed him a postcard of Otley and got a Farsi lesson. Hasan pointed at the postcard and gave me the Farsi words. Gul for roses, pesar for a boy, but muezzin when pointing to the clock tower in the market square! He seemed pleased with my offer of a cereal bar and we 'chatted' companionably in the evening light. Suddenly he leapt up, shouted "GUSBAND RAFTAM!" and sprinted off downhill... His flock had taken advantage of the distraction and had wandered off down the valley. I worked out a translation – "My sheep have gone!" An hour later in the dark, a tide of sheep swept past my tent followed by Hasan. He didn't seem too fussed but didn't stay to chat this time. On another occasion he arrived covered in blood. Wolves he mimed were the reason, I must have seemed sceptical so he then said it was a fight with his mardy younger cousin (Samat) who he promptly tried to unseat from his mule. Finally he grinned and showed how he'd been marking the ears of a newborn lamb with a large pocket knife. I gathered that Samat would mark any lambs with his own sign should Hasan be slow off the mark.

The altitude and lack of sleep took its toll and I slept in the next morning. Exploring the valley was low stress and I met a pair of ecologists, from



Hasan and his flock

the university in Hamadan, collecting beetles and plants. They stopped to chat again in the afternoon with their booty: a large bottle full of dead beetles and a carrier bag full of strange herbs. I definitely wasn't going to accept any invitations to eat with them! I had planned to walk round to another valley but decided against it. On the way down from Alam Kouh I had spotted several peaks in my valley that seemed worth a visit the next day.

The next morning a leisurely start led to an indistinct path up the head of the valley. A small snowfield forced a detour and I was soon up onto a plateau of scree and glacial lakes. What had seemed like a couple of inaccessible peaks opened up into ridges that stretched for many

km and several more peaks; I had to decide which to aim for. In the end I settled for Lashgarek (4317m) and Gardoon Kouh (4402m). Surprisingly



The view from the col

they were linked by a hidden ridge line and I was able to make some good progress.

The views were spectacular but the biting wind stopped me lingering. A convenient spur led back into the hanging valley and I was only delayed by a band of rock that had a fossil in every stone. In the corrie a km below a herd of fourteen ibex took flight. The moment they stopped moving

they seemed to melt into the scree. Maybe I was being too blasé about wolves!

Back in the valley I walked wearily past the shepherds' camp. Hasan called me in for a 'chay' but the dogs were less welcoming. Yet again picking up a stone worked a treat. At my tent I feasted on every bit of food I could lay my hands on. No point carrying it back down. I had only expected to attempt a couple of peaks but had done five and I slept soundly.

At dawn three huge vultures arrived to send me off. One passed 20 ft overhead and we looked into each others eyes... I sped off down the gorge into the valley. Hasan had sprinkled salt along the path and later the sheep followed licking the salt along the way. They had exhausted grazing on the high pastures and were heading back to the valley below. At the road end I met Iman and Mohammed (the guide whom I had been e-mailing). He was leading a group of Italians heading up to the plateau. Mohammed asked about water and campsites and we chatted. The Italians set off with mules (yabu) and in shorts. It was a reminder that one covers up in Iran. I must have been acclimatised to both air and culture... It didn't seem right; old folk wearing tiny shorts!

Iman set off down the hills and stopped by a mountain stream to go for a swim. I felt a bit bashful but was happy to sit in the shallows and wash the week's worth of grime off. So much for Iranians not baring skin! He really did like the mountains and as he drove he asked me how I was able to visit Iran and climb alone without knowing much about it. It struck me that he not only suffered a stifling regime but also a culture that didn't encourage independence.

The Chalus Rd was heaving and Iman took a detour through Dizin and Shemshak – two ski

resorts . There is a vibrant ski scene in Iran though the slopes at Shemshak are steep.

In Tehran I found accommodation - in the least salubrious area – Amir Kabir Street. I was doing a slideshow for the Alpine Club of Iran and met Afshin by the 'US den of Espionage' the next day. The walls of the compound are painted in various anti-American murals including one of the Statue



of Liberty depicted as a skull. I snuk a photo and then panicked as two uniformed men started to walk briskly toward me. Photos of buildings, metro stations or even advertising boards are not allowed and I had already been reprimanded several times. Crossing the road and diving into a carpet shop seemed to do the trick but the \$900 carpet I pretended to be interested in got me back out onto the street. There are many stereotypes about Iran. The one about people burning flags and waving placards isn't true but the one about carpets is. They have quite a few rather good carpets! Doubling back to the meeting point I found Afshin waiting. We caught a bus and found the Alpine Club of Iran Building. It was just like a British Alpine club slideshow, young hard

climbers, older couples, a few grizzled mountain men and various books and DVDs being signed – just no beer and no plummy voices in earshot.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder and I looked round into a pair of striking green eyes. Marjane was here for the slideshow. She explained how she had been in the Alborz for two weeks when I met her – hence her tan - and how snow had made climbing so difficult. In fact two lads in her group had been rescued off the 300m wall on Alam Kouh. We watched a video of the rescue later that evening. She had only been trying to do the peaks but had been snow bound. Her group didn't seem to have done any of the other peaks I had been on.

There were various talks, videos and people. A video about a group cleaning up the litter on Damavand, one about canyoning a new descent, the rescue on Alam Kouh a couple of weeks earlier, a visit to France by the club secretary as well as my slideshow on UK climbing. A strange part of the evening was when the two very sheepish lads, marooned on Alam Kouh, presented red roses to the helicopter pilot and co-pilot who had rescued them. Also up on stage were the rescuers and two of the oldest club members. Everyone had a few words to say. I don't think they'll dare get rescued again!

All of the evening was introduced and framed by poetry ad-libbed by the MC. I thought this rather odd but charming at the time. A week later in Esfahan I watched courting couples sitting by the river reading from Hafez, Rumi and Ferdowsi to each other. Poetry is essential in Iranian culture. Every household seems to have a copy of Hafez. Omar Khayyam is less revered for his

poetry and more for his contributions to science and maths. The famous, ghazal "A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread--and Thou" is more the work of Fitzgerald than Khayyam.

We ended the slideshow with Iftar - breaking the Ramadan fast and I was treated to some delicious Ash-e-reshte.

Afshin and I arranged to go scrambling the next day in the Tochal hills. We did and I was surprised to see climbers (all of whom knew Afshin) on short climbs. We scrambled further up to a 100m cliff. Band-e-Yak Shal with a steep overhang at the top. We shared lunch looking down over the expanse of Tehran to the south while discussing climbing in Iran and the UK. Afshin was keen to organise exchanges with clubs from abroad. An official invitation is absolutely necessary for any chance of a visa. He offered me a place on the Bisotun climbing meet with all expenses paid. I asked what countries were sending climbers, "some French ones - Catherine Destivelle" he said.



Overlooking Tehran

I left Tehran the next day to head for Mt. Damavand (5610m). The bus cost £5, the driver offered me a seat at the front and some chay. Part way there, we were delayed (only for a few minutes) by a landslide. This was cleared away the next day with no sign of the fridge sized boulders - just smooth new tarmac. By mid afternoon I was at the Mountain Centre above Reyney chatting to the friendly guides. They get less business now as a new hut has opened further down the valley. Hasan drove me up to the low camp; Gusband Sara (Sheep fold) and I reached the hut by sunset. I had planned to camp but it was biting cold and so I stayed in the mountain hut which wouldn't have been out of place in the French Alps. The Iranians coming back down all looked the worse for wear and one old codger seemed to have inhaled rather too much of the sulphuric acid fumes from the fumeroles on the summit. Damavand is a dormant volcano - 'Fuji like' in shape emitting sulphurous fumes all the time. There was only one other person planning to climb the next day - a German lad who had recently done Kili-manjaro. He planned to start at 3am. I opted for 5am. There was a bit of scrambling but it was mainly a flog. A 50m icefall at 5100m was an interesting distraction and the fumes at the summit were a bit of a challenge. Trying to run whilst holding my breath at 5600m was not really feasible even though I was well acclimatised from the week in the Alborz. It had been 40°C in Tehran and it was well below 0°C on the summit. A short rest at the hut was followed by a descent to Gusband Sara. There, I phoned one of the guides, Hasan, and was picked up in 20min. He took me down to the Mountain centre, made me a cup of ubiquitous chay while I had a shower and he then dropped me off at the next village where I was able to wave down a bus back to Tehran.



Mt Damarvand 5610 m

Back in Tehran, I found a tram, sat in the women only section before I realised, got asked the time by a man waiting to break the Ramadan fast and he offered me half of his biscuit. He didn't have much, hadn't eaten or drunk all day but was willing to give it away. I wondered about this as I walked back to the hotel through some dodgy backstreets. Random acts of kindness seem to be the norm in Iran.

In an unlit alleyway I should have been worrying about the large amounts of cash I was

carrying but I seemed to have become accustomed to the relaxed friendliness that abounds everywhere in Iran. "Pssst... Pssst!" women were calling from the dark windows above me... "Hello Meester..." I looked up and could just make out shadowy shapes beckoning me up. The 'oldest profession' still seems to operate in Tehran today - even though it carries the death penalty.

Names have been changed.

## Sunlight and Storm - Ups and Downs of a Greenland Expedition

*Jim Gregson*

Organising and putting together an expedition starts a long time in advance of actually heading for the airport. In a way this 2018 one began as the last one in 2016 came to a conclusion, as some of the group members talked about wanting to return to the amazing part of Greenland where we had just been.

So, the will was there and the enthusiasm – but time was needed to start saving the pounds and pennies that would allow the dream to take form.

Eventually the recruitment phase was capped when I convinced Ron that he should join me and my other friends for another chance to tick off more first ascents from the attractive alpine challenges that abound in the peaks of North Liverpool Land, East Greenland, which had over a few years become almost my private stamping ground. A number of impressive photographs taken during my earlier expeditions to the area were enough to persuade Ron that he could join us for some good adventures. Preparations kicked into a higher gear, amid a flurry of email messaging between England and Scotland.

Kit was assembled and packed, blue barrels and ski bags were stuffed with a plethora of gear, arrangements for all of that to be shipped out in advance were made. There would be six of us, all trying to get fitter and ready as the months and weeks rolled by before the flight dates arrived. After quite a bit of keyboard-bashing on application forms we had some welcome successes in obtaining grant aid from the Mount Everest Foundation, the Gino Watkins Memorial Fund and the Austrian Alpine Club(UK) to augment the large four-figure sums that we were all paying out of our own pockets. There was a longish procedure

to get insurance into place, as unfortunately there are very few insurers who are willing to quote for cover for Search and Rescue, plus Medical and Repatriation expenses for Greenland. By dint of some hard negotiation the BMC insurers finally offered us cover, but at a cost which for the older members of the group was somewhat eye-watering (a consequence of living to a good age and still being adventurous enough to head for a remote destination).

We divided up the organisational workload across the group and felt better as things fell into place. Now for more of that fitness preparation. Sandy and I went to Karn House for the FRCC ski mountaineering meet in February, along with quite a lot of other club friends, and later we had a whole month over in Norway for a really good dose of telemark-style ski mountaineering. Ingrid, Simon and Mark, resident in Scotland, disported themselves on various Bens and Sgurr's and the odd jaunt abroad.

Ron flew off to Switzerland to ski around Andermatt. For him, his swoops and slides came to an abrupt end after just two days when he was involved in a crash with another skier which left him with a bad shoulder injury; to say he was "piste-off" would cover it! As it had taken quite a while to get the group of six finalised, we encouraged Ron to try to get as much physiotherapy as he could and spend two months working hard to get back into shape so that he could still take up his place on the trip. Like a Trojan he put his heart into that and it was great to see him roll up at my doorstep the evening before three of us were heading to Manchester airport en route to Iceland.

A day or two later and we all gathered in Reykjavik, then drove north to Akureyri from where we flew over to the small airstrip at Constable Pynt in East Greenland, where a period of bad weather had just ended. We had a shakedown night there using our tents, before the next morning loading up all of our gear, food and fuel supplies, rifles and other polar bear deterrents onto the big cargo sledges and snowmobiles by which we would be transported north to our intended base camp location in the northern reaches of Liverpool Land.



This 'bump and bang' journey took several hours, across sea ice then through winding valleys and yet more sea ice in Carlsberg Fjord where a number of large frozen-in icebergs sported the large footprints of polar bears – an indicator to our Arctic tyros that we wouldn't necessarily be alone in the area.

We were able to be driven right up onto the small icecap and set down at a glacier confluence with a grandstand view of the striking mountains, just a short distance from where my previous groups had pitched their tents.

Quiet resumed after the snowmobile drivers had left for their own return to Constable Pynt, and we worked to set up the camp, rig up a 'trip-wire' perimeter for polar bear intrusion warning, and then, very importantly set to work on a deep and durable latrine which is always an early priority at the start of a trip.

The familiar – to me – mountains surrounding us are for the most part only of a similar height to Ben Nevis, but would not look out of place in the Alps, save for the fact that these peaks had their feet in the ocean, albeit frozen solid at this time of year, mid-April. We would be here through to mid-May so once we felt camp-organised enough we set off the next day for a lie-of-the-land ski tour to let our first-timers get orientated. The mountains were much more snowed up than I had seen before and in general it seemed noticeably colder this year. There was some mild disbelief when I told others, well-layered up, that I had not even brought a down jacket with me this time, although I had plenty of other clothing choices. The snow on the glaciers was very smooth and even so there was the promise of some good skiing, and we judged that it would probably be safe enough for us not to have to rope up for glacier travel.

Next day we all set off for a fairly short ski approach to Castle Peak, previously climbed but with scope on its north side for new routes, good for testing ourselves and getting a feel for under-foot conditions. In three ropes of two we climbed in sparkling sunshine to put up two new lines, with mixed climbing, to gain the summit. As a favour to Ron for getting himself fighting fit after his accident, we bestowed the name Noynek Buttress (300m PD+) onto the one he climbed with Ingrid.

After that pipe-opener everything went very well for the next ten days; the weather was mostly sunny and apart from some windy periods we did between us do a lot of climbing and ski exploring. Simon and Mark, our 'secret weapon' big guns, younger and fitter, went to town, having picked my brains about what had been done and what was still virgin. They bagged the first ascent of the prominent Tower of Silence by a steep mixed line – Silence is Golden (300m TD); not in truth the direct challenge of the impressive west face as it was too cold for bare hand difficult rock climbing, but a good effort nevertheless. They also collected the The Long Ridge (450m D) of Longridge Peak – comparable to Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis; a big traverse over Kuldefjeld and Høngbjerg (aka Mt Mighty) – two of the higher peaks on which I had already climbed two first ascent lines (450m AD); a long up-and-down traverse across the tops of Hulya, and also picked off two of the unclimbed summits (Grumpy and Bashful) in the Seven Dwarfs group.

The rest of us climbed among other things the new summits of Bloqqortoq, Qaqqaq Jutta and made exploratory ski tours both north and south from base camp. Although our camp location gave us very good access to the Neild Bugt Glacier peaks, we wanted to take a look further afield to see what other possible objectives we could identify. Going north, we discovered that after a few kilometres the glaciers fell away very steeply into complex ground with a lot of very good-looking peaks coming straight up from sea level. To get onto them would be difficult and we would probably need to move camp; plenty of first ascent targets to be had there. On the way back we skied up and over Diamond Peak for a more elevated view. Heading south, we explored up a side glacier, passing below a very large crag,

Scoresby Prow, which seemed to be of good granite and sported two large pillars, a huge hanging slab and a deep gully to one side; more good targets for another time. Higher up the side glacier we came across a very fresh set of tracks, the LARGE footprints of a big polar bear which had just recently gone down this side glacier. As is often the case, the bear track had an accompanying set of arctic fox tracks alongside, as these foxes tend to follow polar bears in the hope of scavenging food from a kill. These tracks gave pause for thought, but Ron and Ingrid were released to ski up to a nearby high top while Sandy and I skied further over to the top of Old Man's Peak to wait for them. Later we all skied back at speed down the glacier to the west on our way back to camp.



Having spied some other appealing peaks bordering the southern arm of the Neild Bugt Glacier, I set off with Sandy and Ingrid to take a closer look. Unfortunately, as we neared one of them we found we had skied into a zone where very strong, very cold winds were blasting the mountains and raising big spindrift banners high up. Deciding against getting frozen we opted to



Top Left: Approach to the seven dwarfs  
Bottom Left: Mt Mighty and the seven dwarfs  
Above: Below the Tower of Silence  
Across: Polar Bear prints

go exploring further down the glacier to look at more new ground. This tour took us below the south faces of the Seven Dwarfs and the Mt Mighty range showing more rock exposures than we had expected or suspected, and a lot of new peaks closer to the sea. To our right lay high northern slopes going up to a number of unclimbed peaks. Further down the glacier we could see the long peninsulas which project out into the ocean with their glittering ridges stretching away from us. Lower down, a side glacier joined the main branch, but promoted a set of very complex and large crevasses which we moved to avoid. The main glacier is mapped as debouching direct into the sea, and so it does, but we found that it now lay quite a lot further inland than the map shows. This retreat is being accelerated by the runaway effects of global warming and climate change, which scientific studies show is a really big phenomenon in the whole of the Arctic region. As we closed in on the glacier front, ice cliffs of varying height, Ingrid spotted a lot more polar bear tracks, and we unshipped and loaded our rifle just in case. Taking care not to position ourselves on a projecting, undercut ice mass we skied along the edge seeking the most dramatic viewpoints for photographs. This was a most impressive piece of landscape. Our long return to camp meant an uphill pull into cold wind.

During an earlier afternoon we had spent some time in constructing a fine "sitootery" as our Scots would say, a circular sun lounge area dug and cut out of the glacier surface snows where we could sit out of the wind and socialize rather than skulking in our tents. At least that was the theory. We had enjoyed a very good and productive start to our expedition activities, and most of us had



mentally earmarked more objectives on our wish lists for later on. Alas, events took a different turn.

Late one sunny afternoon, I was in my tent when I heard a voice saying "We'll soon be in fog!". Before too long we were – not entirely uncommon or unknown if your location is not so distant from the sea – but this time the fog, after a short while, was joined by cold winds increasing in force. Within just one hour these winds had galloped up towards storm force and we battered down - no sun lounge socializing now

for a spell. The storm grew in intensity and we knew we were in for a big blow. In Greenland, bad weather does not normally last for too long, but this episode turned out to be an evil one. The storm and gales of wind blew and rattled the tents and we were all glad that we had stocked ourselves up with food packs and stove fuel within easy reach, plus the precaution - vitally important - of always having a snow shovel inside the tent porch. The severity of the storm took even me, with experience of 18 expeditions, by surprise. It raged and raged, the barometer falling to amazing low levels, and the camp area became drifted up to worse and worse heights. This was exacerbated by the wind changing direction periodically; tents always stand as an obstacle to wind on icecap or glacier and drifting is a fact of life in bad weather. This was really bad, perhaps the worst in my long experience. The full strength of the storm lasted without a break for three whole days - day and night alike. Going outside became less and less welcoming as an idea.

Unusually, this particular storm also brought with it a huge amount of heavy wet snow. As the drifts grew our tents became more and more loaded with a thick mantle of snow, squeezing our living spaces. As time went on this became a serious threat. My own tent, a favourite veteran geodesic type which has served well on many expeditions, began to distort in a worrying fashion as the poles began to bend beyond their normal configuration. I got so anxious that I woke Sandy from sleep and told her that we must get dressed – fully dressed as for the outdoors! – right away. She looked a bit shocked as I explained that we might have to evacuate and seek shelter within one of the other tents. Somehow after getting all toggled up, we actually fell back to sleep, but some time later on I woke to

find the tent fabric just a few centimeters from my face and the tent poles so bent that I feared they would soon break. I did not have the presence of mind to try to photograph this alarming sight. Shaking Sandy, I said that I'd have to get out to try to clear the huge snow burden from the tent, so I set about getting my boots on. When I pulled the tent fly zippers, I found a solid snow wall! I set about excavating a porthole for an exit, just about big enough to get my head, arm and shoulder through. "Give me a push!" I called to Sandy, as I wriggled to escape to the outside, then "Zip it all back tight!"

Looking around me in the maelstrom I could barely see another tent as they were all mostly buried. I set to with the shovel, trying to get the weight of snow off the tent, at the same time as being extra careful not to stand on it and make things worse. Sandy's muffled voice from within told me that it was our duffel bags that were just about the only things preserving any internal volume, so we might have come closer to suffocation if we had not woken.

As fast as I could shovel it was not fast enough, so I called to Ron next door to see if he might be able to come to my aid. Like a true friend and gent, he agreed right away and very soon he emerged, cocooned in down and Goretex wielding another shovel, and we set to like a pair of stokers on piecework, lifting and flinging great clods of snow to the winds. In due course, and after slowing down as we neared the fabric we cleared the tent enough for it to 'spring' back towards its normal shape, although the severe bends in the poles made that not fully possible. Sandy was relieved to find that the internal dimensions of the tent were back almost to full size. Ron's help had been a godsend, and I hoped



he had not done anything to upset his shoulder again.

We found soon after that Ingrid had been out at some point to try to rescue her tent into some semblance of order until such time as the storm relented. We also found that where we had previously had a very well-appointed latrine there was now no sign of it whatsoever – apart from the flagpole from which we were flying a windssock plus some Himalayan prayer flags. I have never before known of a latrine of the size we usually make to disappear entirely. At least it would not now need backfilling at the end of the trip! Fortunately we found that we could convert the sun lounge 'sitootery' into service as a replacement.

As the winds continued to dwindle we could resume a semblance of normal socializing and camp movement, but as the clouds lifted we could see right away that all the mountains were so massively cloaked with fresh snow that the scene looked like the depths of winter rather than its waning. This would mean that the risk of avalanche was now at a seriously high level, and this was to put a strong brake on our activities in the time remaining to us. We decided that it would still be feasible to ski around and explore, avoiding all obvious danger zones, but there would be a limit on what we might do in terms of new climbing.

From then on, the weather did not really return to a steady state of reliable sunshine and clear skies, the barometer remaining stubbornly low, so we would be limited. There were on some days some incidents lightening our mood as we had several visits to camp by small flocks of chirpy snow buntings, and occasionally a pair of ravens – although past experience has shown that these dark strangers were intent on burglary of food supplies.

Despite the poor hand the weather dealt us, Simon, Mark and Ingrid made one opportunistic raid to snaffle another couple of first ascents, but were perhaps a little surprised to be ambushed by a recurrence of severe cold and strong winds with overnight ascents of Mount Reckless and Midnight Peak and 26km of travel, which brought them back to camp looking a bit stressed.

Now, as time was running out, we set to, beginning to sort out and ready all of our kit for the snowmobile pickup which we had arranged to exit from the mountains. A lot of this was completed within one sunny, calm afternoon. A satellite phone call to Constable Pynt got the schedule in place.

That very same evening the weather decided to stick up two fingers again and treated us to another blow; the next morning we found everything buried yet again in almost a meter depth of new snow, so more shoveling was required to try to restore order. During this second fierce blow, Ingrid's tent was again in danger of being totally swamped and she had to take refuge with Simon and Mark after a period of some struggle. We had ample reserves of food and fuel; even Simon's legendary appetite had failed to empty the larder. In weather a bit thicker than was ideal, the snow mobiles arrived from across the glacier; the drivers had worked superbly well for us. In fairly short order we had every thing loaded up and in two shuttles we had everything down to sea level for a bit of re-jigging and load sharing before we all sped off onto the sea ice in Carlsberg Fjord. We had a brief stop to take a very close-up look at some huge frozen-in icebergs, ages old chunks of glacier ice now diamond-hard and glossy blue which will take years and years to finally melt away completely.



Above: There's a camp in here somewhere!  
Bottom Left: Excavated base camp  
Top Left: Carlsberg Fjord icebergs

The return journey to Constable Pynt went more quickly and smoothly than the outward one had and we were a bit surprised to see just how much melt and thaw had taken place there in our absence. With some relief we checked into the so-called "Hilton" accommodation block at the airstrip, which meant we would sleep in beds and have access to very welcome hot showers. In addition we could get some things dry overnight there, notably our tents, and by special arrangement we could

eat in the airstrip staff canteen giving us a break from expedition food.

Next day we were airborne once more heading back to Akureyri in Iceland where we took up overnight residence in a fine apartment above a splendid ice-cream parlour – duly patronised by us – which Ingrid had sorted out for us.

We celebrated with a slap-up meal and for Ron, one of the most expensive beers which he has ever consumed. Then we had a long road journey back through Iceland to Reykjavik, more decent meals and then in dribs and drabs we all in turn headed out to Keflavik for our various flights back to the UK.

A memorable experience for all of us, some 'wins' and some 'losses' but a great chance to be out there in the ever-fascinating High Arctic. 19 expeditions to date for me – will I get the chance to get it to 20? Who knows?

2018 Expedition to North Liverpool Land, East Greenland – mid-April to mid-May 2018

Supported by grant aid from the Mount Everest Foundation, the Gino Watkins Memorial Fund and the Austrian Alpine Club (UK).

Personnel:

Jim Gregson – FRCC & Alpine Club;  
 Ron Kenyon – FRCC & Alpine Club;  
 Sandy Gregson – Karabiner MC & Alpine Club;  
 Ingrid Baber – Edinburgh Ski Touring Club;  
 Simon Richardson – SMC & Alpine Club;  
 Mark Robson – SMC & Dundonnel MRT

## A Journey Across Time - Iceland's Laugavegur Trail

*Dan Hamer*

In the mid-1960s, a mountaineering couple who were long standing friends of my parents spent a month touring Iceland. They were keen amateur photographers and shortly after their return, they came to our house to give my parents a slide show to illustrate their travels. I recall a succession of gloomy and monotonous landscapes. It had obviously rained a lot. Their photographs did little to endear the island to me and although my subsequent career as a geologist should have provided ample justification for a visit, the memory of that dreary slide show positioned Iceland well beyond my radar.

Half a century later, I finally put aside these dismal recollections and took my wife trekking in Iceland. To my embarrassment, I was left struggling to reconcile the varied and stunning landscapes we found with the memory of those lacklustre images from the past. Icelandic geology is 'in your face' stuff. The island is one of the latest additions to the Earth's crust and the sense of new beginnings literally oozes out of the ground. Walking radially outwards from an active volcanic centre in the middle of the island is an evocative journey from a distant, primordial terrain, along a continuum of evolving landscapes, to a more recognisable present. It's difficult not to become philosophically and spiritually transported by this. It certainly relegates man to the margins, both geographically and historically.

The Laugavegur Trail is widely regarded as the most varied of the many multi-day treks that Iceland has to offer and is justly popular. The Trail is challenging without being ridiculous or requiring any specialised equipment and is easily

accessible from Reykjavik. The route begins near hot springs at Landmannalaugar, to the east of Iceland's best-known volcano, Hekla, skirts the western flanks of Myrdalsjokull, one of the smaller icecaps and finishes in Thorsmork beneath another, Eyjafjallajokull. In 2010, a volcanic eruption beneath the latter produced clouds of ash that grounded dozens of flights between Europe and North America.

Access to Iceland and travel on the island has not always been straightforward. My parents' friends took their car on a ferry from Scotland via the Faroe Islands. They found the internal road system at best rudimentary. Today, the combination of budget flights and a network of well-maintained, 4x4 tracks criss-crossing the interior make shorter visits affordable and flexible. Although prices have certainly risen since the financial crisis in 2008, they did not appear excessive, especially if you're prepared to consider hostels and mountain refuges or happy to stay under canvas.

It had been hot and sunny in Derbyshire that summer. It was neither as we strolled out of the Leif Erikson Terminal after the 2.5-hour Easyjet flight and boarded a shuttle bus to take us into Reykjavik. The Capital lies on a peninsula at the south western tip of Iceland. It has a lively, relaxed atmosphere. Few of the buildings exceed two storeys and there are a high proportion of private residences within the downtown area. Many of these are constructed from corrugated iron, have attractive windows and are painted in bright, primary colours.

We had prepared for a grey and damp couple of weeks and our initial experiences confirmed

these expectations. We were forced to don waterproofs for the short walk from the bus terminal to the hostel. The following day dawned equally grey and overcast. We had planned lunch with a cousin who coordinates an Icelandic research project at Edinburgh University. He arrived post haste from a Conference in Akureyri in the north of the island, but instead of taking us to his favourite restaurant, he proceeded to march us off to the National Museum for a lesson in Icelandic history!

For more than a millennium, Nordic seafarers regularly visited the island. There is a strong Scandinavian legacy. After centuries of Danish rule, Iceland became independent in 1944. The remote location has inculcated a laudable drive for self-sufficiency. Approximately 85% of the country's energy is generated from renewable resources – mostly hydro-electric and geothermal. It is also worth noting the entire female population famously went on strike in 1975. Their actions laid the foundation for an enlightened culture of gender equality.

The weather forecast we had gleaned on arrival had promised a brief interval of sunshine from the middle of the week. Accordingly, on Tuesday morning we packed our rucksacks, dumped excess gear in the hostel lock-up and boarded a Reykjavik Excursions' 4x4 mini bus for the 5-hour journey to Landmannalaugar. One minute we were coasting through neat and tidy suburbs with leafy gardens, the next we were engulfed in a chaotic wilderness of moss-encrusted lava. Elongated ridges, decapitated by low cloud, marked the lines of volcanoes from which the lava flows originated. If we needed any further reminder that this was an active terrain, clouds of steam rose into the air from geothermally active springs.

After an hour traversing this elevated plateau, we descended to the narrow, coastal plain, crossed a milky torrent and entered the lush, triangular pastureland around Selfoss. From here, we continued south eastwards beside the ocean on the peripheral highway until we left the bitumen near Hella and headed inland on a well-graded, gravel track. The verdant pastures gradually gave way to a featureless black plain in the shadow of the brooding mass of Hekla.

Hekla is well-known to Europeans. It burst into activity after a lengthy period of quiescence approximately 1,000 years ago and has been intermittently active ever since, often with devastating results. Layers of tephra (volcanic fragments of varying size), ejected from Hekla, cover much of Iceland. In Medieval times, the volcano was known as 'The Gateway to Hell'. The last significant eruption occurred in 2000.

Beyond Hekla, we turned right onto a bumpy single-track road scraped across the northern flanks of Hekla into a narrow corridor between bare, steep-sided hills. There were frequent water-courses to ford and several times passengers were required to descend to remove larger boulders from the track washed down by recent floods. Most of the streams were clear but occasional cloudier water hinted at the proximity of glaciers shrouded in the mist.

At length, we rounded an orange bluff, crossed a swiftly flowing river and saw the trail head camp site before us. Landmannalaugar, 'the place where the farmers stay', is tucked up against the leading edge of a tadpole-shaped lobe of lava that spilled into the valley from a fissure to the south. A geothermal spring (44°C) issues from the base of the lava front and the water has been canalised into a pool for bathers. Icelandic lavas are predominantly dark grey-black basalts but



The trail head at Landmannalaugar

there are a few more acidic rhyolite complexes which weather into variegated colours. Landmannalaugar lies close to one of these and the hills surrounding the trail head are dappled with attractive rusty brown, orange and yellow hues.

There are several route options at the start of the Laugavegur and since it promised to remain dry for the rest of the day, we climbed a steep ridge at the eastern end of the lava flow to the summit of Blahnjúkur, to obtain an elevated view over the first section of the Trail. There were paths to the left and right of the lava lobe and along the spine of the flow itself. I thought the latter looked a poor choice for the first stage of a multi-day trek and decided to recce the nearer, 'left hand' route by descending the south ridge from Blahnjúkur's summit to a steaming fumarole near the fissure from which the lava flow had evidently erupted.

My reservations about the central route proved correct as the surface of the lava flow was a

jumble of jagged blocks through which the path wove a tortuous trail. In contrast, the route beside the stream, along the eastern boundary, was less twisty and for the most part level going. We returned to the main camp at Landmannalaugar satisfied with our reconnaissance and joined a crowd of trekkers relaxing in the hot pool before retiring to our sleeping bags.

As predicted, Wednesday dawned with favourable temperatures, a light breeze and patches of sunshine. We got away at 08h00, following

the eastern track as far as the fumarole beneath Blahnjúkur. From here, the path traced a rising contour above a couloir occupied by the steaming fissure beneath the upper slopes of Brennisteinsalda to a broad saddle and then climbed steadily towards the rim of a higher plateau. It clouded over during our ascent and a thin veil of mist drifted over the plateau as we set off across the first of several extensive snowfields.

The plateau is cut by the deeply incised Stórihver Valley, where there are dozens of active fumaroles. The Trail descended into this sulphurous cauldron and threaded its way between a series of odouriferous pools. Care was needed for any closer inspection as spurts of scalding water were emitted at erratic intervals. Regaining the snow-covered plateau, we followed a line of stakes towards a notch in the distant skyline, pausing briefly at a cairn on a rocky outcrop for a welcome cup of sweet tea.



Descending into the steaming Storihver Valley -  
Day 1

We set off again with renewed determination and soon gained the saddle – the highest point on the trek - between a prominent peak called Söðull on the left and a flat-topped summit on the right. The Hrafninnusker Refuge appeared below us on the far side of the saddle. It comprised a single, corrugated iron building with a cheerful red roof, standing beside yet another steaming fumarole. We reached the Refuge by descending a diagonal track across a slope strewn with shiny black, obsidian fragments. It had taken just three and a half hours to complete the 12km from Landmannalaugar.

We had managed to make a booking at the Hrafninnusker Refuge before leaving the UK, so there was no need to erect our tent on the stony ground below the hut. We checked in and dozed in our bunks for a couple of hours. When we

awoke, we found to our surprise that two 4x4s had appeared across the slopes of the flat-topped summit indicating there was vehicular access to this remote section of the trail. One of the drivers was an Icelandic Mountain Guide providing logistical support to his wife and business partner, who was leading a group from Landmannalaugar that was expected shortly.

In the late afternoon, I climbed to the summit of Söðull. It was worth the effort. The panoramic view from the top was spectacular as the mist had now cleared. I could see the dome of Vatnajökull, Iceland's largest icecap, to the east and Myrdalsjökull much closer to the south. The distinctive outline of Hekla was visible in the west. Our route southwards across the plateau was also obvious, together with several parties labouring across the snowfield towards the Refuge.

As I gazed around, I was struck by a strange sense of familiarity with the picturesque landscape before me. In particular, the mosaic of snow patches on the multi-coloured, uplands immediately north east of Söðull grabbed my attention. The scene bore an uncanny resemblance to one of my late Father's acrylic landscapes of the Cairngorms in early spring.

When I got back to the Refuge, I descended a steep snow bank into the adjacent ravine to examine the fumarole. Super-heated water bubbled from the ground in an atmosphere of unnatural warmth and humidity. The vegetation surrounding the fumarole included many vividly coloured mosses. Pipework leading towards the Refuge indicated it was positioned to take advantage of this source of naturally heated water.

After a disturbed night in the crowded Refuge, the outlook next morning was less promising - thick mist and light rain. Fortunately, one of the



Panorama of snow patches and variegated  
weathering from the summit of Söðull

Assistant Wardens had warned us during the previous evening that heavier rain and strong winds were forecast for later in the day. Armed with this advice, we had risen early and set off at first light, determined to reach the Alftavatn Refuge before the weather deteriorated.

It was hard going across soft snow for the first 2km, until a steep rise brought us to a bare ridge east of Torfajökull, where there were yet more active fumaroles. We stopped beside one of these to remove our waterproofs as the rain eased. At the edge of the plateau, we hopped across a stream above a waterfall and began descending a wide ridge. Part way down, we emerged from the

mist. After two days of bare rock, tephra and snow on the plateau, the valley ahead presented a pleasing contrast.

We descended rapidly to a fast-flowing river and crossed this via a precariously balanced plank which sagged beneath my weight resulting in wet feet! It took a further hour to reach the Alftavatn Refuge on the shores of a circular lake. The Refuge gradually filled to bursting during the afternoon. The wind strengthened and by the time the Guide's wife and her clients arrived, a fierce easterly wind was driving heavy rain before it. We were grateful that we had set off early and arrived dry - except for my feet!

Around 16h00, we decided to get some fresh air and walked across the northern shores of the lake to a ridge with a curious pinnacle of rock

where we discovered a small but dry cave. It was still raining and blowing hard as we made our way back along the lake shore to the Refuge. The 'Phantom Snorer' who had disturbed our sleep at Hrafninnusker was at it again during the night. He proved to be a heavily built fellow from the Guide's party. Fortunately, one of his party in an adjacent bunk had had enough. He leaned across, tapped the snorer gently on the shoulder and said 'Turn over please – you're keeping us all awake!' It was all that was required. He obliged and we slept soundly until dawn.

Next morning, the mist was down to valley level and it was spitting with rain but at least the wind had died down during the night. It was dark and forbidding as we followed the trail beside a gravel road as far as a second group of huts at Hvanngil. On route, we had to ford several rivers, including one by mistake because I had failed to notice the footbridge 100m to our left!

Beyond Hvanngil, we entered a different landscape which consisted of black plains traversed by incised glacial rivers and rimmed by moss-covered, volcanic peaks. Occasional vistas of heavily crevassed glaciers descending from Myrdalsjokull appeared in gaps between the volcanoes. There was a wooden bridge across the impressive Kaldaklofskvísl River shortly after leaving Hvanngil and another in the middle of an extensive plain at Nyrori Emstrua, about half way to a narrow saddle between two sharper summits.

Although the route was well-marked and the going relatively easy, it was extremely difficult to judge distances lacking recognizable objects.

Thus, we stumbled unexpectedly amongst cobble-sized volcanic fragments, that had looked like substantial outcrops in the distance and what first appeared to be mere pebbles were suddenly transformed into sizeable boulders! A snack at the highest point of a second saddle revived our spirits and refreshed our vision. Although the black plains continued on the far side, we were relieved to round a low bluff and catch a glimpse of the hut complex of the Emstrur-Botnar Refuge.

As we had descended towards the Refuge, the number and variety of wild flowers increased dramatically and the cloud began to clear. It was



Day 3 - Black plains and moss covered basalt

illuminating to observe these first vestiges of more advanced plant life. We enjoyed a quieter evening in our tent on a stony platform adjacent the Refuge, after two crowded nights in the huts.

The last day of the trek into Thorsmork took us through the lush and altogether friendlier terrain of the Almenningar Hills and began with a wide detour to the east to cross the Syori-Emstrua River by a narrow, wooden bridge. The vegetation

gradually became more diverse and the cover more complete as the day wore on, until the first grove of dwarf birch trees appeared beside a narrow gorge. The weather had also improved significantly and as we approached the Trail's southern section beneath Eyafjallajokull, the sky cleared and the temperatures became positively balmy.

Shortly before reaching Thorsmork, we leapfrogged another party making the most of crossing the Thronga River - the most serious of the river crossings on our trek - and entered a mature forest of birch and conifer. Here, we were distracted by signs indicating a 'Bar & Restaurant' to the right in Husadalur and the temptation proved overwhelming. We enjoyed a celebratory beer, a glass of schnapps and a nourishing bowl

of lamb soup, before completing the final kilometre to the Langidalur Refuge, where we had a reservation for the night.

We spent two nights at Thorsmork, the first in the Refuge and the second in our tent as the weather continued sunny and unusually warm. This enabled us to enjoy shorter walks in the vicinity. In the morning, we climbed to the summit of Valahnukur, a pyramidal peak with a spectacular view over the confluence of two braided rivers. Later we walked upstream into the lower hills to the north east. It was notable that the river levels rose significantly in the after-

Looking over the river confluence, towards to coast, from Valahnukur,



noon as the daytime temperatures induced more glacial melt.

During the second evening, the Warden confirmed that the early morning bus to Reykjavik would stop at the Langidalur Refuge instead of Husadalur as per normal. This obviated the necessity of striking camp in the dark and retracing our steps to Husadalur and we retired to our tent with the alarm set for 06h45.

An excursion bus landed us back in Reykjavik the following lunchtime. By Icelandic standards, the weather had been extremely favourable for our trek. It promised to be even better for the remaining few days, so we hired a small car and went sightseeing along the Golden Circle. We began at Thingvellir where the world's oldest parliamentary gathering first convened in 930AD. Thingvellir is also a mecca for geologists as it marks the 'official location' of rifting between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates. Straddling the central fissure is a must! A little further inland the touristical hot spots of Geysir and Gullfoss Waterfall provided further attractions.

For our final day, we continued southwards to the coast, which was partially obscured by a rolling sea mist. We stopped briefly at the former fishing village of Eyrarbakki for coffee and again at a lonely church on the strand where Mary Therese Gudjonsson's headstone informs passers-by that 'The rest is silence'. Perhaps she was a notable chatterbox and the stonemason had a sense of humour!

Relaxing at the hostel in Reykjavik before our return flight, we had a short conversation with an ultra-distance runner who was pleased to find that we had just completed the Laugavegur Trail. He went on to explain that the annual Laugavegur Mountain Marathon had taken place the

weekend before our arrival. He had not competed that year as he was still recovering from a race in Norway. It had taken us four days to complete the 55km journey from Landmannalaugar to Thorsmork. We were shocked to learn that the record at that time for the Laugavegur Mountain Marathon was a mere four hours!

However, geologically speaking, the difference between four days and four hours is inconsequential; *Homo sapiens* has been around for just a few hundred thousand years and Iceland less than 20 million. These are all mere fractions of Earth history. A journey from the primordial austerity of Iceland's volcanic interior to the lush greenery of the narrow periphery should encourage a healthy respect for time and space. It's important to maintain a sense of proportion.

## South West Tasmania

Tasmania is an island state of Australia located about 150 miles south of the mainland. Its area is about the same as that of Ireland, it has a total population of about 500,000, and it lies at a latitude of about 43 degrees South.

Travelling due westwards from Tasmania across the Southern Ocean, the next land-mass reached is Patagonia – over 6000 miles away. In this overall situation, Tasmania experiences weather completely unlike the rest of the Australian continent: the 'Roaring Forties' winds bear down on the state, and with them they bring plenty of rain. In the west, rain falls on about 250 days of each year; inland, the total annual rainfall is about 120 inches. On high ground, snow can fall at any time of the year.

About one-fifth of the total area of Tasmania is officially listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Area. That area contains one of the last remaining regions of temperate alpine wilderness on the planet. There, original old-growth forests contain the tallest hardwood trees in the world - *Eucalyptus regnans*, known as 'Swamp Gums' in Tasmania, and 'Mountain Ash' in the rest of Australia - which can grow to heights of over 300 feet. Craggy mist-wreathed mountains provide Australia's only truly alpine peaks. Peat-stained wild rivers flow through rocky gorges. And flora and fauna which occur nowhere else on earth can be found.

Many people will have heard of the 'Overland Track', a 50 mile / 5 day walking route through the Tasmanian central highlands which runs from Cradle Mountain to Lake St. Clair. Whilst a delightful trip and a wonderful introduction to Tasmanian alpine scenery, the Overland Track is - in terms of commitment - a relatively tame affair:

*Ian Durkacz*

there is a network of huts along the route, and, in normal circumstances, it would take a serious effort to lose the track.

For Australian 'bushwalkers' (to use that specifically Australian term), the real attraction of Tasmania has always been the South West. This is a wild, remote and beautiful area. It contains very little man-made infrastructure (what little there is exists mainly for reasons of conservation), so anybody venturing into the South West needs to be entirely self-contained. The walking and the route-finding can be difficult: anybody visiting the area rapidly gets used to rain and mud; and off-track, and in bad scrub, progress of one mile per day might be considered good going. But the rewards for persistence are immense.

In this article, I shall describe three separate trips to the South West which I have made – in the company of my wife, Kate - over the past ten or so years. I shall then return to some general comments about the area, and the continuing conservation threats which it faces.

### Federation Peak via the Eastern Arthurs (March 2006)

Federation Peak, a spectacular quartzite spire, is the highest peak in the Eastern Arthur Range, and the eastern endpoint of that range. Among Australian bushwalkers, it is probably the most sought-after summit. For many years, thick scrub, forests, and cliffs made any access very difficult – and in fact the peak was only first climbed in 1949. Nowadays, the passage of many parties has made access and route-finding easier, but getting to the peak – and then climbing it – still remain

difficult objectives, and many parties will fail in their attempts.

Access is possible from either east or west. Transport logistics meant that we needed to do a 'there-and-back' trip, so we chose to approach the peak from the west. Our plan was to start from the roadhead at Scotts Peak Dam, cross the buttongrass-covered Arthur Plains, traverse the Eastern Arthurs, climb Federation Peak – and then to reverse the entire journey. We had food and fuel (note that the South West is a 'fuel stove only' area – no open fires are allowed) for about ten days.

Crossing the Arthur Plains took us two long and muddy days of mostly open walking, at which point we found ourselves at Pass Creek. People attempting this trip often leave small food dumps at Pass Creek to be collected and used on their return journey. Be warned, however: native Broad-toothed Rats have obviously realized that food is often available at this site – we had some investigate our pots and pans overnight. Wombats are clearly also common in the area: we didn't see any, but their almost cubic droppings are unmistakable once recognized.

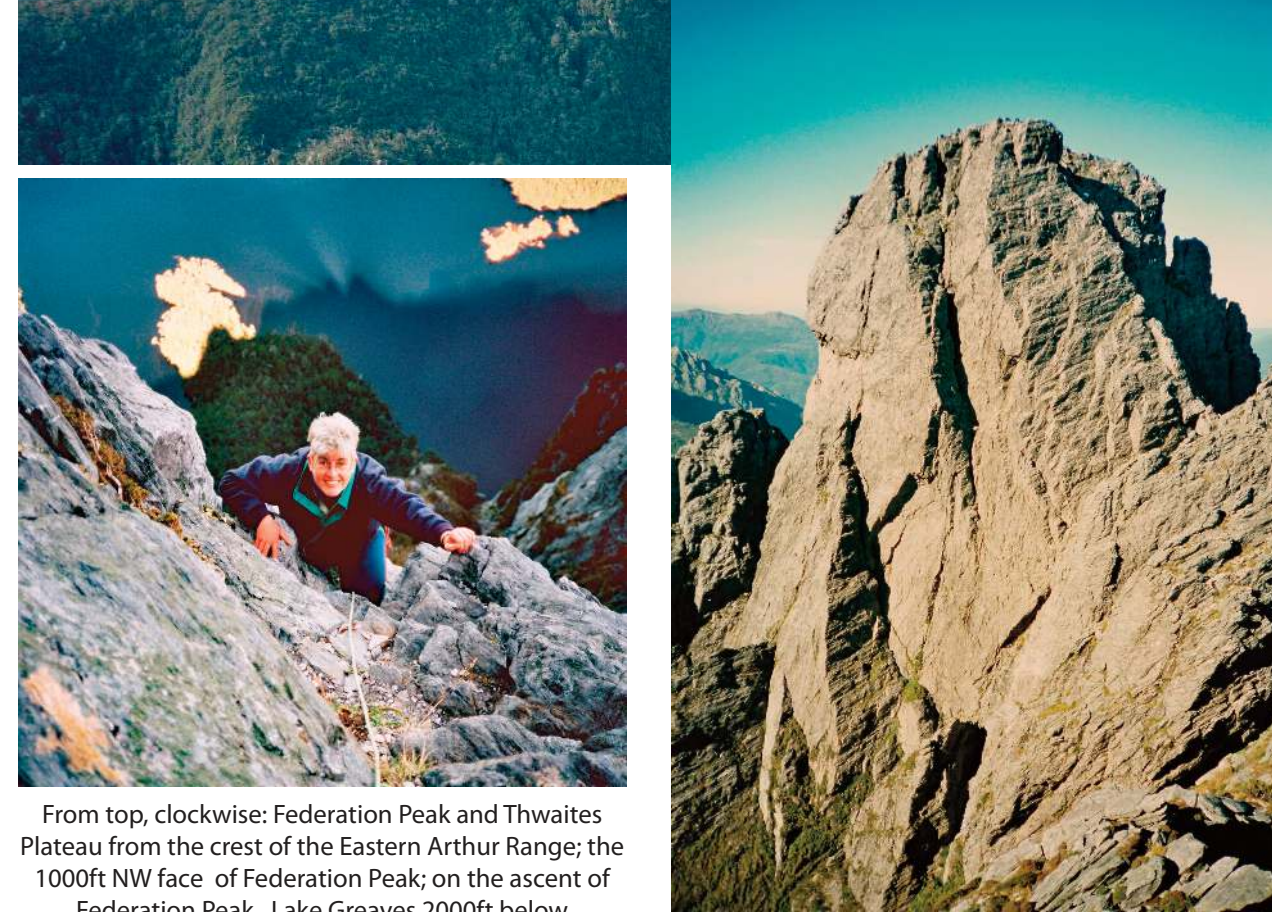
From Pass Creek, the route ascends the spur of 'Luckmans Lead' onto the northern end of the Eastern Arthurs. The open alpine plateau of Goon Moor was the objective and campsite for the third day. Reaching it involved scrambling and the use of rough footpads along the crest of the range, all the while being surrounded by beautiful Tasmanian alpine vegetation: King Billy Pines, Stunted Myrtle, and the remarkable Pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*), a plant unique to Tasmania and one which, owing to its palm-like appearance, always seems slightly out-of-place in the cool wet conditions in which it thrives.



Traversing the crest of the Eastern Arthur Range. Pandani plants in evidence

The fourth day involved the final remaining major obstacle: the traverse of the 'Four Peaks', en route to our final anticipated campsite of Hanging Lake, a high lake formed by the damming action of an ancient moraine ridge. We had expected some tricky route-finding on this section, but in fact the route proved easy enough to follow and allowed some pleasant scrambling, with pack-hauling proving to be necessary at only one point.

So far, the weather had been kind to us. However, by the time we emerged onto Thwaites



From top, clockwise: Federation Peak and Thwaites Plateau from the crest of the Eastern Arthur Range; the 1000ft NW face of Federation Peak; on the ascent of Federation Peak. Lake Greaves 2000ft below

Plateau, it was clear that a storm would be coming in at some point. Another hour or so saw us to Hanging Lake, where we pitched the tent, ate dinner, and admired the fabulous position in which we found ourselves. We were now camped in full view of Federation, which we intended to climb the following day. Nature, however, had other plans: a storm duly arrived, and we spent the next day tent-bound, listening to the rain pelting down, and pleased that we had remembered to bring a pack of playing cards.

The sixth day dawned clear and bright. Evidently the storm must have been associated with a cold front: the overnight frost was so hard that the tent had turned to sheet ice. Being wary of finding verglassed conditions for the final climb, we explored Thwaites Plateau for a while in order to allow the sun to do its work. The views of the 1000 foot NW Face of Federation Peak from Thwaites Plateau were spectacular. There are several established rock climbing routes on this face; all of them on perfect rock. Were access to Federation Peak less challenging than it is, the place would be a rock climbing mecca.

Our own objective was more modest. The normal 'walkers' route to the top of Federation follows the Southern Traverse underneath the south face, then follows a 700 foot line of weakness to the summit. The climbing is not difficult – pushed to give a UK grade for the hardest section, I would say Diff - but it is mightily exposed, and a fall would lead 2000 feet straight down to Lake Geeves. We had carried a 30m 8mm rope in order to deal with this final climb, and were pleased to use it: there have been several fatalities on this route, unfortunately.

On the summit of many European Alpine peaks, one might expect to find either a cross, or a Madonna. Emerging onto the summit of Feder-

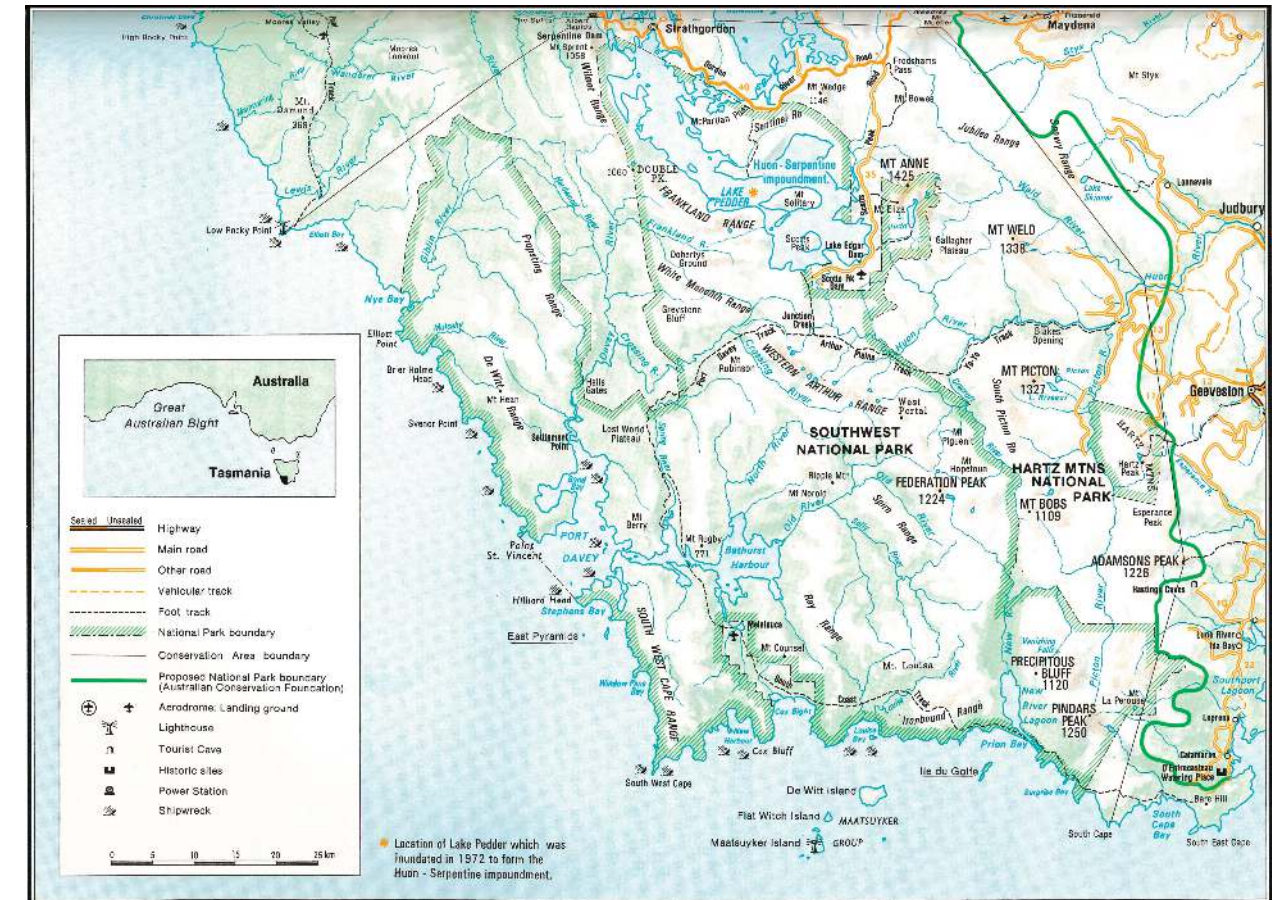
ation Peak, and searching for the promised logbook, we found a garden gnome. Very Australian!

We completed the return trip to Scotts Peak Dam in a further three and a half days. The weather broke badly on the morning of the second last day: the mountains from which we had just descended were now covered with snow, and rivers on the Arthur Plains which we had easily waded on the outward trip were now raging torrents. We got away with crossing them – just – but it might have been wiser to have waited for the weather to pass, and for the rivers to subside again.

### Traverse of the Southern Ranges (April 2010)

The Southern Ranges are a series of high glacial ridges close to the south coast of Tasmania which link four significant peaks: Precipitous Bluff (universally known as just 'PB' to all Australian bushwalkers), Mt. Victoria Cross, Pindar's Peak and Mt. La Perouse. Approach to the western edge of this ridge system is usually made via the 'South Coast Track': either from the west, having started from the airstrip at Melaleuca; or from the east, having started from the roadhead at Cackle Creek.

'Melaleuca' is the site of the only permanent settlement in the South West. It exists only because the legendary Tasmanian bushman Deny King made his home there, and it has a small airstrip only because Deny built that himself over the course of three summers. For fifty years, Deny King (who died in 1991 at the age of 81, and whose actual name was Charles Denison King - 'Deny' being the nickname he acquired from army mates during World War II) lived self-sufficiently at Melaleuca. He was a tin miner, a painter,



an environmentalist, a plant collector (Banksia kingii is named in his honour), a natural historian, a friend to all animals, and a friend to all men and women who passed his way. The buildings at Melaleuca are now primarily used by Parks and Wildlife workers and bushwalkers, as well as by volunteers involved in the conservation of the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot, the decline of which species had been highlighted by Deny.

We started our trip by flying into Melaleuca from Hobart (the capital city of Tasmania) in a four-seater Cessna. The flight itself was a great

adventure, and we got perfect views of both Federation Peak – which we had visited four years previously - and of the Southern Ranges themselves. The weather was hot and sunny as we set off along the South Coast Track. That wasn't to last.

Three days of relatively uneventful walking saw us camping on the coast at Little Deadman's Bay, having previously walked along some idyllic deserted beaches, and across the Ironbound Range. At Little Deadman's, we came across two other people who were camping there: they had sailed a yacht round the south coast of Tasmania



to get to that point, and they were the only other people we were to see for the entire duration of our trip.

For us, the main action was due to start the following day. Our plan was to follow the South Coast Track for about 6 more miles to the outlet of the New River Lagoon at Prion Beach, to cross the New River Lagoon using the rowboats which are left in place at the crossing (one on each side) by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, and then to wade up the eastern side of the New River Lagoon for about 5 miles until we reached Cavern Camp, located directly west of the ramparts of PB. Why wade? The scrub in this area of the South West is notorious, and, whilst the wade can normally be done in a few hours, a scrub-bash along the shore would take at least a couple of days.

We commenced wading. With lowering clouds, thick vegetation on shore, and the threatening cliffs of PB rising in the distance, the whole venture started to acquire a rather disturbing 'Heart of Darkness' atmosphere. But the wading went surprisingly well: at points where streams enter the lagoon, it is necessary - in order to locate the sandbar - to go further out from shore than you would expect, but on only one occasion were we forced to go back on dry land and detour a few hundred yards into the scrub in order to find a fallen tree on which to cross a particularly large stream. The sight of Black Swans on the lagoon lightened our moods somewhat: I had not realized that those birds occur so far south.

We camped at Cavern Camp that evening. It rained heavily overnight, and in the morning we noticed that the water level in the lagoon had noticeably risen.

From Cavern Camp, the route picks its way steeply up the side of PB. The total distance covered is short – only a couple of miles – but the route is complex, in some parts difficult to follow, and the overall terrain is quite tough. However, in due course, we made it to the base of the PB cliffs.

The dolerite cliffs on PB are over 1000 feet high, and run for several miles. The potential for rock climbing here is clearly enormous – currently, there are only a couple of recorded routes – but, on account of both the access and the weather, any new-routing would need to be undertaken with an 'expedition' mindset.

At the base of the cliffs, the walking route turns northward, the cliffs are outflanked by various gullies and ramps, and one emerges onto PB's summit ridge with the summit itself about half an hour away. When we thus emerged, the weather – which had been threatening all day – was clearly getting beyond threats and was about to break, so our priorities were to find as sheltered a place as possible to pitch the tent, and to prepare for the inevitable. We did that – and the inevitable duly arrived: for the next day and half we were huddled in the tent, being pummelled by driving rain and vicious gusts of wind.

When walking in the South West, one expects to be made tent-bound by the weather every now and again. However, this seemed worse than usual. As we assessed the situation on the morning of what was now the seventh day of the trip, the facts seemed to be these: this storm wasn't going to stop any time soon, and we had two choices: reverse the route we had just taken to the New River Lagoon boat crossing, and then continue along the South Coast track to its finish at the Cockle Creek roadhead; or continue with our original plan, forge on into unknown ground, and attempt the traverse of the Southern Ranges.



Above: The author beginning to wade up the New River Lagoon. Precipitous Bluff looms in the background. Right: Looking back to New River Lagoon from the ascent of Precipitous Bluff.

There were two problems with reversing the route. First, the ascent route up PB had been distinctly difficult and, in storm conditions, it seemed like an accident waiting to happen. And secondly, since by now a lot of rain had fallen, the likelihood was that water level of the lagoon would have risen enough to prevent us wading it – thereby forcing us into a multi-day scrub-bash along the shore. So we decided to continue the traverse, with all thoughts of PB's



summit now forgotten.

At this stage, my recollections become rather hazy, and the entire affair transforms into three further days of non-stop rain, cold, high winds, poor visibility, awkward route-finding, mud, unexpected cliffs, rationed food, increasingly-desperate attempts to keep our down sleeping bags dry, nights spent shivering for twelve hours when those attempts proved unsuccessful - and swollen and increasingly dysfunctional hands caused by forcing the route through thick groves of spiky *Scoparia* scrub.

However, by the end of the ninth day, we did finally make it past Pindar's Peak to a sheltered campsite at Pigsty Ponds. It was still raining and blowing hard, but we knew that, from there, the route would be more open, and the route-finding easier.

Needless to say, the following morning dawned still, bright and clear: the nicest day of the entire trip! We enjoyed the opportunity to finally divest ourselves of full wet weather gear, and to remember what the sun felt like. One final long day brought us to the roadhead; from there, a nocturnal road-bash led us to the small settlement of Ida Bay where we were able to borrow the use of a friendly fisherman's phone (thanks again, Steve!), and to make arrangements to be collected Hobart-bound by a chartered bus service the following day.

This trip took us a total of eleven days. In dry summer conditions, finding adequate supplies of drinking water along the course of this route is known to be difficult; we, however, experienced the reverse problem.

Over the course of more than forty years of activity in the mountains, I have soloed countless British rock climbs, have been scared and half-frozen on Scottish Winter routes, and have made

multi-day ascents of Alpine north faces; but I have never felt as strung out as I did on this, a mere 'walking' trip. At the time, I vowed that, if we made it out in one piece, I'd someday write up the experience. So here it finally is.

### The Mount Anne Circuit (December 2014)

Mount Anne is the highest mountain in the South West, and the 'Mount Anne Circuit' is an established route which is 'South West Tasmania in miniature': the trip can be completed in a few days, and presents craggy dolerite peaks, alpine vegetation which is unique to Tasmania, and lonely glacier-carved tarns.

I had previously done this trip in the early 1980's, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to revisit the area: for a short trip to the South West it is ideal.

Our plan was to drive from Hobart to the carpark at Condominium Creek, to then gain the high Eliza Plateau via Mt. Eliza, to camp at the exposed 'Shelf Camp' and from there climb Mt. Anne, and then to continue the circuit via Mt. Lot, Lake Picone, Lot's Wife and Mt. Sarah Jane, finally returning to the road via the muddy Lake Judd track.

En route from Hobart to Condominium Creek we stayed overnight in the town of Maydena. There, in a chain of ponds linked to the Tyenna River, we were able to watch several platypuses feeding and going about their daily business. These animals are notoriously shy and difficult to observe in their native environment and, on the mainland, mainly nocturnal - over the course of many trips to the Australian bush, I had never seen one before. It seems that the Tasmanian variety have adapted to being active during the day, and it also seems that there is a healthy popula-



Above: Mt Lott from Judds Charm. The descent takes the left skyline ridge.

Right: Typical South West Alpine vegetation: Cushion Plants, Pineapple Grass, *Scoparia*

tion of these animals in both the Tyenna and Derwent rivers.

The walk itself went more-or-less according to plan. The weather was a little colder than we were expecting, but I had forgotten what a beautiful area this is. The cushion plants on the Eliza Plateau are huge - many are several yards across -, vividly colourful, and quite stunning. Close inspection of these plants reveals a delicate microcosm of interdependent species, with carnivorous sundews, for example, taking their place between the individual rosettes of the underlying plant. The rock architecture of the individual peaks and ridges is spectacular: the East Face of Mt. Anne presents dolerite cliffs of some 1000 feet height and, once again, the new-routing potential is huge.

This trip took us the expected four days. We failed to summit Mt. Anne itself - lack of a rope meant that the final summit climb was judged a little too precarious given the damp conditions - but I was pleased to note that not much had



changed since I was in the same area about 35 years ago: there is little evidence of any track-work (save for some track-hardening on the initial ascent of Mt. Eliza from the carpark); no real evidence of degradation by over-use; and no obvious attempts to sanitize or 'dumb down' the experience, despite the fact that this must be quite a popular circuit.

### Tasmania and the South West in general

The above descriptions will, I hope, give some idea of the general ambience of the South West,

and of the challenges and experiences to be found in this unique area. And there is plenty more: the traverse of the Western Arthur Range is a classic mountain trip requiring 10 or so days; the South West Cape Circuit can be recommended to lovers of lonely beaches and seascapes; the almost-mythical Vanishing Falls can be visited by experts in navigation and scrub-bashing (I haven't done this trip – but I am advised to allow 11 to 14 days); Frenchman's Cap provides a short (2 or 3 days) round trip to a spectacular quartzite peak on which there are many established big-wall free climbing lines; and so on.

Certainly, the South West is a real jewel. So why are some Tasmanians still so keen to wreck it? As usual, we need to examine the history – and also to follow the money.

The first European settlers to arrive in Tasmania (then known as 'Van Diemen's Land') in the late 1700's were privateer sealers and whalers. The first official British colony followed shortly thereafter, in 1803; its principle intention was to forestall any claims to the island by French explorers who had been exploring the southern Australian coastline. Although convicts were indeed sent with the first settlers, penal settlements were not built until twenty or so years later. However, when they were built, they were intended for the very worst of the recidivist convicts – and the very worst of those were sent to the isolated and feared settlement of Macquarie Harbour, in the far west.

The French explorer Labillardière had remarked of Southern Tasmania in 1792 that 'The eye was astonished in contemplating the tremendous size of the trees, amongst which there are some myrtles more than 150 feet in height', but the practical frontier approach soon overshadowed

any such romantic musings, and the prevailing attitude in the colony was that Van Diemen's Land was an island whose dark recesses were to be feared, and whose natural resources were to be ruthlessly exploited. The giant trees were sought to satisfy the colony's growing demand for timber, and pursuit of the Huon Pine (*Lagarostrobos franklinii*) – a slow-growing but long-lived tree, which, unfortunately for it, turned out to be perfect for boat-building – brought loggers to the South West in earnest.

In the twentieth century, attention was turned to the hydro-electric potential of the river systems of the South West. The Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC) was set up by the Tasmanian State Government in 1914, and its long term vision (along with that of the state politicians – of all political hues - who supported it) was the utilization of all of the state's water resources, and the hydro-industrialization of the entire state, irrespective of any conservation values. The underlying intention was to attract industry to the state by making electrical power available at essentially no cost.

The worst example of the HEC's excesses was the impoundment of the Huon and Serpentine Rivers in the South West, which led to the loss of the original Lake Pedder in 1972. This took place despite world-wide condemnation; despite the fact that the area affected was within an existing National Park; despite the fact that no environmental impact study had been made; and despite the findings of a Federal Government inquiry which recommended an immediate moratorium on the flooding so that alternatives could be explored, along with an \$8 million payment to the HEC in compensation. In rejecting the outcome of the enquiry, the then Premier of Tasmania Eric ('Electric Eric') Reece made clear the

frontier mentality which still prevailed in the minds of the Tasmanian establishment when he said that he'd 'tolerate no interference from Canberra [the Australian capital] or elsewhere ... that's the end of it.'

A later proposed scheme which would have destroyed the Franklin River - one of the last remaining wild rivers in Tasmania - was fortunately stopped in 1983 after one of the most significant environmental campaigns in Australia's history. Stopping the proposed scheme required the passing of new legislation by the Australian Federal Government, followed by a judgement in the Australian High Court as to the constitutionality of that legislation. And, once again, the attitude of the Tasmanian Premier at the time, Robin Gray, can be seen in his description of the Franklin as 'nothing but a brown ditch, leech-ridden, unattractive to the majority of people.'

It might come as no surprise that Gray was later to take a seat on the board of 'Gunns', the principal Tasmanian forestry, sawmilling and woodchipping company.

Enlightened Tasmanian voices have been arguing the environmental case for years – concern about the effect of rapacious logging practices was raised as early as 1840 or so, for example – but the overall battle is not yet won, and the same malpractices are still taking place. Original old-growth Gondwanan forests are still being clear-felled – in many cases, for the woodchip industry - and replaced by monoculture plantations of fast-growing Shining Gum (*Eucalyptus nitens*).

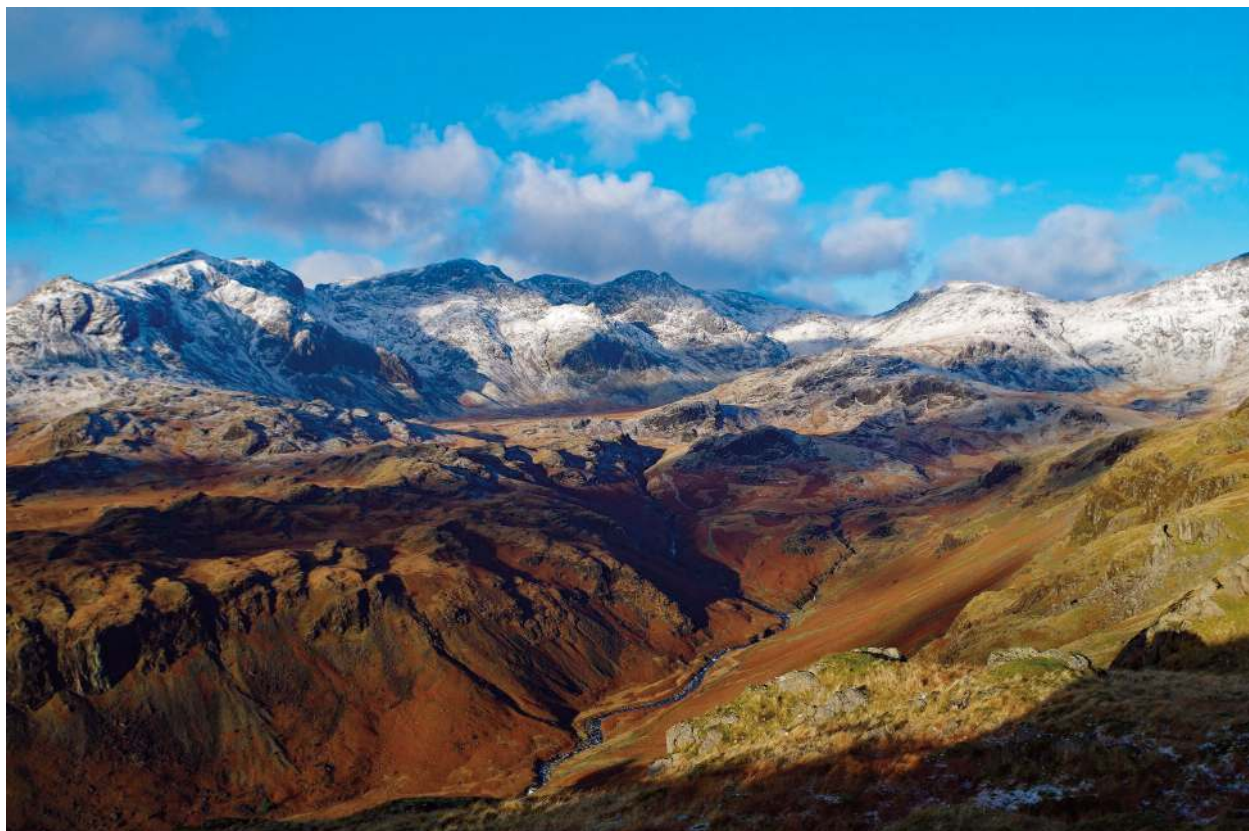
Just as dangerous, the money-men now have their eyes on the economic potential of tourism to the South West: outline approval has very recently been given for a series of commercial huts to be

built along the route of the South Coast Track, a proposal which is at complete odds with the wilderness values which the South West represents.

When travelling around Tasmania, it is impossible to avoid depictions of the now-extinct Tasmanian Tiger, or Thylacine. Such images have been used to sell everything from beer to boat trips; and indeed the official logo of the Tasmanian Government depicts a Thylacine. It is ironic that the Thylacine is aligned with the governance of Tasmania in this way: there were few official moves to protect the species until its members were close to extinction. The lesson of the Thylacine to Tasmanians should be: it's gone; we killed it; we must now do our best to fully protect what's left of the natural richness. Should you have the opportunity to walk or climb in Tasmania – and I thoroughly recommend the experience – please give your support to the brave voices speaking up in favour of the environment.

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Upper Eskdale. *Photo: Ron Kenyon*

## The Lakes and the Club

*Ian Charters*

*Dick Courchee*

*Lis Cook*

*Leslie Shore*

*Ellie Sherwin*

*Rosemary Scott*

*John Moore*

*Ron Kenyon*

*Anon*

*Paul Exley*

## Half a Bob Graham Round

After being beaten by the weather some years ago, Pauline and I left Dick Courchee's Cumbrian Traverse to languish in a dusty corner. Every now and again I tripped over it and wondered about another attempt. Struggling back to some sort of hill fitness in early 2017 I realised it might make a grand day out on a, not terribly significant, birthday later in the year. Pauline's interest in another attempt couldn't be stretched much beyond road support but a solo celebration wasn't what I had in mind.

The Club isn't short of like minded people, fortunately, but Peter McNulty's interest was alarming. Such enthusiasm must be handled with care because it makes backing out later so much more difficult. Schedules and support requirements were compared, refined and finalised. Peter's wife, Sheila, was happy to help Pauline and they both intended to join us on the fells for part of the day. My birthday is in the middle of June which always seems a good time for such activities but history shows it to be on the cusp of the heavy rain which, all too frequently, marks midsummer in Cumbria.

With everything agreed and in place we met at Raw Head on the Thursday night. A mixed but almost entirely dry day with a following wind was the forecast for Friday 16th June.

### Broughton Mills to Wrynose Pass

Early breakfast and out so quickly we are able to set off from Broughton Mills at about six thirty, some 30 minutes ahead of schedule. The clouds are high and the day looks promising. More importantly we can see the summits we are look-



The start - fresh and keen!

find the second and even allowing for fresh legs this summit appears quickly. We are through the least familiar part of the route and start to reverse the Duddon fell race route towards White Maiden. Trods round Caw Moss make it less of an obstacle than it might appear but they all vanish, of course, before the climbing starts so we pick a shoulder and head for the summit. As we climb the cloud base drops to meet us on the summit and route finding is about to become more interesting.

We are travelling quite comfortably and staying 'just ahead of the schedule'. We know it probably won't be like this all day but it is good to enjoy it while it lasts. Brown Pike arrives so quickly in the clag we use the GPS to confirm our location. Dow Crag is cold, slippery and with a

*Ian Charters*

ing for, as well as the trods in between. The first two summits, Great Stickle and Stickle Pike, are reached quickly and the trod to Kiln Bank Cross appears just where it should. Park Head Road climbs to a hause where a faint trod towards Caw might be found, if we are lucky I thought. We miss the first trod but

treacherous descent before the climb to Coniston Old Man. Low clouds hug the ridge ahead producing wonderfully atmospheric conditions which rob us of both views and body heat in equal measure. This often seems the coldest ridge in Cumbria and today is no exception. It is also a place with too many paths - most going to the wrong place. Shunning the Old County Tops race route to stay on the ridge we pass false summit after false summit until Swirl How finally appears. Next is Great Carrs where we are 20 minutes ahead of our schedule and ready for the descent to Wrynose Pass. Once below the cloud base we pause to try to find the path climbing away from Red Tarn for Cold Pike and while we may see something it is far from convincing at this distance.

### Wrynose Pass to Honister Pass

Pauline and Sheila make sure we have plenty to eat and drink but the cold wind ensures there is no temptation to linger. Despite sheltering inside the car we can't keep warm and so it is good to get moving again. On the way towards Red Tarn Peter spots a faint trod to one of the many false summits on Cold Pike. Just like Swirl How, Cold Pike offers a selection of false summits but now visibility is so poor we need the GPS to confirm when we reach the real thing.

Looking for a north-bound trod we find ourselves in heavy rain, a strong cross-wind and on the main path but, at least, going in the right direction. The heavy rain is earlier than forecast and the helpful tail-wind is nowhere to be found.

More or less reversing the Langdale Horseshoe race route takes us to a path climbing back to the

summit of Crinkle Crag. Despite the rain and very poor visibility we find the summit without difficulty and next we have to find Bowfell.



The summit of Caw

Almost immediately and equally inevitably we go wrong, we go left to return to the point where we gained the ridge only to find it isn't there. Visibility is poor, the rain is heavy, and the wet rocks underfoot are treacherous. We are less than completely sure where we are going and so it must be almost time to check a compass. When Peter does so we find, unsurprisingly, we are going the wrong way by about 180 degrees. Retracing our steps wouldn't really help because we are already too far down into Eskdale for our own good. The ground is almost devoid of features until we reach Lingcove Beck which confirms our location, beyond any doubt, and



Looking towards Brim Fell

provides a handrail back to Crinkle Crag. A bit of a climb takes us back to just about where we were 45 minutes earlier. This time we are heading in the right direction, having managed to keep warm and not fall out with each other. Passing the Three Tarns provides reassurance and Bowfell beckons.

Beyond Bowfell, in the clag, we cross the trod we want without noticing it and reach Lingcove Beck again before climbing back up to Esk Pike. Sty Head to Windy Gap is the "final problem" in these conditions - keeping moving and keeping warm matters more than keeping to time so the long looping path to Great End is better than the

direct route over the rocks. Similarly the long grassy descent to Sty Head almost via Esk Hause is preferred and probably no slower than any of the more direct routes.

The 300 metre climb to the top of Great Gable is the last big effort on the route, nothing as severe comes afterwards and we should, finally, enjoy the following wind the forecast suggested. Almost every step is familiar from fell races and long days out but the climb doesn't ever get easier. At long last, the summit appears but without the following wind. The rain has gone but this isn't a place to linger and I am happy to find I can still run when we reach the path into Windy Gap. Easier now on Bob Graham Round trods over

Green Gable, Brandreth and Grey Knotts before dropping in to Honister Pass. We are still wearing full waterproofs and the increase in temperature as we descend is something of a surprise.

### Honister Pass to Keswick

We are well behind our schedule so it must have been something of a relief for Sheila and Pauline when we finally drop out of the clouds to join them in the car park. After eating and drinking enough for the last leg we fail to notice how much conditions are improving and, regrettably, unpack our cameras along with the other kit we no longer want. After agreeing 21:30 at the Moot Hall is achievable we start the climb up Dale Head.

Walking poles make a big difference on the climb out of Honister, such a difference we climb higher than we need to for the trod to Dale Head Tarn. Then, failing to realise we are already on the best of the trods we abandon it for the rough, wet ground on the far side of the beck - route finding is going to pieces! Fortunately things are easier from here on. High Spy is, essentially, the final climb and the grassy trods are a pleasure. Over Maiden Moor and on to Cat Bells where we take a little time to enjoy the view and prepare for the last few miles along the road to Keswick.

Pauline and Sheila are waiting by the Moot Hall as we trot up the hill to finish two minutes before 21:30. A passing runner stops to ask if we have just done what he thinks we have but we come clean - "only half a BGR" we confess - before returning to Raw Head. A chorus of "Happy Birthday" welcomes us to the very lively New Members Meet and marks the end of a thoroughly enjoyable birthday on the fells.



Thanks to Peter for his congenial company and his compass, and to Sheila and Pauline for providing the hugely appreciated road support.

## The Rolling Lakeland Road

Before the Romans came to Rye or over Hardknott strode,  
The rolling Lakeland drunkard made the rolling Lakeland road,  
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,  
And after him the runner ran, the biker and the squire,  
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread,  
The night we went to Birkness Barn by way of Humphrey Head.

When cragsmen came to Wasdale Head, adorned with snaky ropes,  
And shiny springy steely things, to bolster up their hopes,  
They made their way from hut to hill, sustained by juicy fruits,  
And Andrew climbed with catlike skill, without his sticky boots,  
While wiser folk went down the lane with alemugs in their hands,  
The night we went to Brackenclose by way of Bootle Sands.

The walkers and the scramblers, when they have had their fill,  
Will spy a sunbaked terrace, beneath the beetling hill,  
No more the zigzag path to tread, or boulders still to scale,  
Or stumbling onward through the mist, or worse the raging gale,  
And Jeff and Susie will be there, with copious wine and beer,  
The night we go to Coniston, by way of Wigan Pier.

My friends, we will not go again, or ape an ancient rage,  
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,  
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that says hello,  
And see in dim and dusky light the way that we must go,  
For there is good news yet to hear and girls will make latte,  
Before we reach the Preston road by way of Wilf's café.

*Dick Courchee, with thanks to G K Chesterton*

## 'Doing a worthwhile job while having fun': a Short History of Fix the Fells

*Lis Cook*

Saturday 5th December 2015: most of us will remember where we were that day. I was on the Temperance Meet at Birkness and walked from the hut into Buttermere, a distance of less than a mile but a considerable challenge in the wet and wild conditions. The drying room at The Bridge Inn was kindly offered and gratefully accepted. After mulled wine and mince pies we opted for the road back to the hut, where the water was up to our knees in places. Later on that afternoon FRCC members also seeking refuge at The Bridge helped to bail out the cellars. Storm Desmond was upon us and wreaking its havoc.

Before we had reached the shelter of the pub we came across a trio of heavily-waterproofed figures, whom I later came to know as Dave, Anna and Chris, shovelling away at the path. I could not understand what they were doing or why. Despite the driving rain we stopped, chatted, and I learnt they were volunteers with Fix the Fells and 'on a drain run' (more on this term presently, with an explanation of why these are important and best undertaken in bad weather....)

This was to prove the longest drain run in the history of Fix the Fells. It finished around lunchtime the following day, since the trio were benighted at The Bridge (there are worse places). In their attempt to return home to Cockermouth they drove in Dave's Landrover through Lorton, came to a large dip in the road and could not assess the depth of the water gathering in it. They turned around to try the route over Honister, but here the volume of water streaming down the

road completely obscured the tarmac from view. It was not to be third time lucky; over Newlands (blocked) they encountered the lights of a reversing tractor and decided to beat a similar retreat. Buttermere for the night it was to be.

Storm Desmond damaged countless paths and footbridges in the Lake District that weekend, as well as major roads. Government money to aid repair work came through some time later, and making good the damaged paths will be ongoing for quite a time. If there is a silver lining to all this, it is that an effective infrastructure was already in place to deal with the immediate impact of these ravages. For more than ten years, volunteers supported by the Lake District National Park Authority, the National Trust and other organisations, have maintained and repaired Lakeland paths. From modest beginnings, Fix the Fells now boasts more than one hundred volunteers, and celebrated its tenth anniversary in the summer of 2017. But there is more to the story than this. Fix the Fells won the 'Campaign/Campaigner of the Year' award in the Great Outdoors Reader Awards at the end of 2017, and its volunteers received the 'Extra Mile Award' in the same poll. A month earlier, in November 2017, one of our long-standing volunteers - mastermind of much of the technological infrastructure that supports the organisation - received the Prime Minister's Points of Light Award. This recognises 'outstanding individual volunteers ... who are making a change in their community'. Author and local MP Rory Stewart, who came out on a drain run with volunteers in July 2017, described Fix the Fells as 'a fantastic

organisation', adding that 'this level of local participation could easily be replicated for other voluntary groups and I hope Fix the Fells can act as a catalyst for other organisations to preserve our precious local landscape'. What Fix the Fells does is certainly worth celebrating, but just as interesting is how the organisation goes about its work and how it all started.

In the 1990s the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) carried out a detailed survey of eroded paths and identified 180 as requiring repair: 'the huge scale of the problem highlighted the need for a long-term management solution'. The Upland Path Landscape Restoration Project was launched in response to this, a 10-year plan with an estimated cost of around £5 million. A grant of £1.46 million was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund and match funding obtained from several organisations (including LDNPA, the National Trust, Nurture Lakeland, Hawkshead Retail Outlet, Friends of the Lake District and Natural England). And so began stage one (2001-06), during which 102 paths were repaired. A further 103 paths were attended to in stage two (2007-11) and, to ensure that this work could continue in a more self-sustaining way, Fix the Fells came into existence. The voluntary force this has gradually developed has enabled work on the fells to be now as much pre-emptive as reactive.

Fix the Fells volunteers are known as 'lengthsmen', an 18th-century term describing local people who would tend and maintain a length of road in their neighbourhood. In their first year, 2007, lengthsmen contributed 24 days in total; in 2017 this figure was well over 2,000. The major part of the work comprises the pre-emptive drain run. Drains, judiciously built into paths, encourage the water to flow away from where you walk.

Footfall and incline of path conspire to move material downhill, so drains become blocked with silt, stones and vegetation. Water will then follow the line of the path and groove into it, starting the process of erosion. Walking and checking a route and ensuring that drains are clear is a simple but effective way of keeping the paths in good condition - and, while it's infinitely more pleasant work in dry weather, the effectiveness of your labours is more immediately evident in the rain. In 2017 Fix the Fells lengthsmen polished off 644 drain runs, a massive increase on the 11 runs completed in their first year.

This is one part of their task. In conjunction with National Trust staff, volunteers contribute to work parties undertaking more significant projects and thus learn from professionals. The National Trust employs 16 upland rangers who operate across four geographical areas within the Lakes and lead work parties covering a range of activities: repairing paths, rebuilding drains, landscaping (disguising the short cuts that encourage the 'spread' of a path), hedge laying, drystone walling and tree planting. After volunteers have clocked up a number of supervised work parties they may work unsupervised. Residential work parties attract large numbers: on one day of the Tenth Anniversary Blitz in June 2017 over 60 people were working across a half-mile stretch of the Tongue Gill path up from Grasmere. The volunteer force enables far more to be achieved than if the work were undertaken by rangers alone.

Training for lengthsmen has evolved over the years but mentoring and practical learning have always been strong features. Potential volunteers are assigned a mentor (an experienced 'Fixer') and spend three days in the field, usually on drain runs. They then attend an indoor training day

with National Park staff followed by outdoor path maintenance training and, if needed, courses in navigation and first aid. Once fully-fledged, the minimum requirement is for 12 days each year: in practice many volunteers offer far more. Most live within or close to the National Park. I am not alone in having a distance to travel, but my volunteering is much easier to plan with access to FRCC huts. Choosing your days is made simple through an online calendar which lists all activities months in advance, usually three or four each week and always something at the weekend to accommodate those still working. Volunteers just log in and sign up.

Indeed, the technology underpinning the administration of Fix the Fells is one of the most impressive parts of the organisation. Another is the spontaneous welcome and camaraderie of the volunteers - as one long-standing volunteer and fellow FRCC member puts it: 'we're doing a worthwhile job while having fun'. The technological infrastructure is notable in having been created by the volunteers: the calendar and schedule of events for the year which enables everyone to plan and contribute flexibly; the lengthsmen's map of the Lakeland paths; a path tracker sheet which is kept scrupulously up to date with information on when each route was last worked and any problems along it. All the 268 paths we cover are colour-coded according to how often they require attention: red (four times a year - heavily used routes to popular summits), amber (three times a year), green (twice a year). A sign of the times is the recent designation of some paths as double-red.

Volunteers are also working on archiving the ever-growing photographic library, through the Flickr Gallery which can be sampled on the Fix the Fells website. This currently hosts over 6,000

photographs, some of which are 'social' or 'scenic' in nature. Increasingly, however, photographs are being collated to create a visual history of each path, and each will eventually have their own folder. This work is in its early stages and the longterm plan is to bring together the disparate collections of photographs gathered by volunteers and rangers over the years.

The work of Fix the Fells is supported by many organisations and one of the hardest things for me to get my head around, as a newcomer, was what each of these did and how their work dovetailed. Simply put, Fix the Fells is a partnership project. The National Trust is currently the major funder/fundraiser and the National Park Authority also provides financial and professional support - we work frequently with rangers from both organisations. Assistance with fundraising is provided by Natural England, the Lake District Foundation (formerly Nurture Lakeland) and the Friends of the Lake District. Together, these organisations enable Fix the Fells to have a dedicated fundraiser (affiliated to the Lake District Foundation) and a programme manager who is responsible for community engagement, fundraising, budgets and all the practicalities of keeping the show on the road.

While drain runs are organised and prioritised entirely by the volunteers, decisions relating to fell path repair work are made by the Fix the Fells Programme Board. This brings together all the above organisations and representatives from the volunteer body - an important mix which gives volunteers a strong voice. Major repairs are undertaken on a project basis (sometimes as residential work parties) where volunteers join Park and Trust rangers. The website details 20 such projects planned for 2018. Two examples below, close to Birkness and the Salving House, provide



an idea of the nature of the problems and the planned solutions:

**Scarth Gap Buttermere.** This is an old pack-horse route that suffered moderate damage along a long length of the route. Work planned here is for short sections of pitching and landscaping to address gullied damage and building new stone cross drains to reduce the water flow. In a couple of locations the path edge has collapsed, which will require revetment and stabilisation in addition to drainage.

**Maiden Moor Borrowdale.** The Maiden Moor path is in urgent need of repair. Not only is the path itself in a poor state after Storm Desmond, the runoff from the past is causing significant damage to the Manesty bridleway, Catbells Terrace bridleway and a large swathe of the hillside above Manesty. Water is currently gathering on the path surface on Maiden Moor, then running and increasing for 700m before it all cascades down towards Manesty. The path needs machine work, although there is little subsoil in areas, to turn the water at every opportunity to both sides. In addition, where possible, the path needs to be narrowed and landscaped to reduce future trampling and therefore reduce the potential gather.

Path repair techniques are varied and depend on the nature of the terrain and the underlying problems. Some attract controversy, stone pitching for example - though far more dismaying is the quite devastating erosion (examples are captured in the Video and Photo Gallery in the 'What We Do' section of the website). The website has a section on path repair techniques, where you can read about the angle of stone-pitched paths having changed in recent years. Another construction technique is the 'floating path', used to great effect where a path crosses peat and/or bog, for example along Martcrag Moor. The base

layer of these paths is provided by sheep fleeces which prevent the aggregate and gravel layered on top from sinking.

Maintaining the paths of the Lake District inevitably comes at a cost. In round terms, this is about £350,000 a year, the bulk of which goes towards outdoor staff, tools, machinery, seed and vehicles (helicopter lifts bringing rocks to work sites cost around £40,000 a year). Now that lottery funding has come to an end, the work of Fix the Fells is supported entirely through fundraising activities. The recently redesigned website encourages donations and, in its news section, gives a flavour of the range of local companies, clubs and charities who contribute. The FRCC, BMC, Ramblers and the Fell Runners' Association are among the outdoor organisations who donate and a Visitor Payback scheme operates across the Lake District. One B&B has supported Fix the Fells by selling homemade Plum and Rum Jam. The cottage letting company Heart of the Lakes has raised £250,000 for footpath repair over the last 20 years and, since 2012, these contributions have funded 'Our Woman at the Top' - the Lakes' only female Upland Ranger, Sarah Anderson. Donation buckets at work sites bring in valuable revenue, as one volunteer remembers to his cost when returning at the end of the day - he tripped, spilled the entire contents and spent the next hour scrabbling around the hillside in search of coins. Everyone who contributes, whatever the amount, does so to an organisation that is exceeding its targets: 2017 was a record-breaking year in terms of planned activities and volunteer days donated. Yes, volunteers also compile and analyse annual activity charts!

As the website says, the story of the Fix the Fells volunteer scheme has only just begun. It is an exciting story supporting a very necessary endeavour, since around ten million people visit the Lake District each year and UNESCO World Heritage Site status is only likely to see footfall increase. This is a much-cherished landscape for so many people, rich in history and personal experiences for us all, but we should also remember that it is not one that looks after itself.

Lis Cook

Visit the Fix the Fells website at [www.fixthefells.co.uk](http://www.fixthefells.co.uk) to find out about current path fixing projects, watch Fix the Fells volunteers in action, view ranger profiles and, if you wish, to donate.

## An Old Man's Century

My first ascent of the Old Man of Coniston, in January 1988, served to kill two birds with one stone. I added to my number of two thousand foot mountains topped in England and Wales and as a recent resident of a Furness District market town, Ulverston, I considered it a duty to climb the highest point of High Furness in the old county of Lancashire.

Windy conditions, with snow on the ground above 1,500 feet, prevailed when I tackled the mountain the first time. I started with Dow Crag. At Goat's Hause, taking a refreshment halt, I was approached by Peter Palmer and Dave Kenyon. Both men hailed from Barrow-in-Furness, and they were strangers to me. After a chat, as a party, we stepped up an icy slope to the cairn atop the Old Man, and then proceeded on to do Brim Fell, Swirl How, Black Sails, and Wetherlam.

My second ascent took in place in June 1989. I led my wife, Pamela and our young sons, Gavin and Alistair, up what Wainwright calls the 'way the crowds go'. In mist, we sat down at the summit cairn for rest, food and drink. Sheep pestered us for titbits of food. Pamela was wearing a red woollen pullover patterned with sheep silhouettes in white.

During the Nineties, at Fell & Rock Coniston meets, I made two further ascents. One, in 1998, began by scaling a wet C Ordinary on the east face of Dow Crag with Brian Cosby. Back at the toe of the crag, I agreed with his suggestion to pack up our gear and walk up the Old Man. At 2,631 feet, the height of the summit given on my Ordnance Survey One-Inch map, we had a richer, convivial conversation than if we'd done another rock climb together.

*Leslie Shore*

However, my later devotion to the Old Man of Coniston conflicted with my appreciation of its scenery. In my opinion, the mountain is not as attractive as its western neighbour. Dow Crag's aspects, its east facing crag and fin-like crest, are to me beguiling. Although the scars of human toil on the Old Man can engage my interest, the disciples of John Ruskin might deem them ugly. However, such pilgrims to his former Coniston Water home, Brantwood House, when gazing westwards from its fine gardens, might share my approval of the rugged terrain around Levers Water.

I should also mention that I'm not fond of the name Old Man of Coniston either. The term 'Old Man' may have arisen as a remark about the effect miners had had burrowing out the mountain's seams of copper ore. As a Silurian Celt, I entertain that the local Celtic tribe, the Brigantes, called the mountain *Mynydd Copr* —Copper Mountain—to trumpet ore equal to that mined by the Ordovices in North Wales.

Regardless, my devotion to topping the Old Man arose in 2005 when Steve Riley challenged me: was I up to doing training runs with him on the fells? Even before I got to know him, at least a dozen years earlier, fell running was a part of his training. His tally of ascents of the mountain was probably over a hundred by the end of 2004. Nevertheless, I accepted the challenge by doing a jog-walk up Wetherlam with him. Days later my knees still ached painfully, but with persistence, and soaks in chilly beck water after fell runs, I began to raise my pace above that of a shuffle. As my fitness grew, Steve, who lives in the Furness District's hamlet of Gleaston, added new courses

to run. Thus, the Old Man of Coniston's summit cairn became a run's milestone, or a millstone around my neck.

For a tour of the Old Man and Dow, one course began and ended near Torver. A course stage tackled the Old Man's south ridge. At a place on the previous stage, I would call on Steve to halt so I could indicate to him a notable point on Earth. We crossed the line between two geological systems, the Silurian and the Ordovician. My ploy, so I could delay his rise up the hillside, never worked. Just north of the summit, a strip of rhyolite rock is linked locally to Paddy End surfaces. I stumbled a number of times running on the fells to suffer bruises and grazes. The one fall of Steve's I witnessed saw him land with a bang on Paddy End rhyolite. My hoped for chance to get ahead of him had arrived. Yet, his wailing, and reluctance to stand up, made me stop. Incidents, of course, enrich a day's experiences on a hill.

Also concerning the Old Man-Dow course, two further incidents may be thought amusing. In August 2012, we met a Wigton man fixed on contouring around the Old Man just below the base of cloud. We learnt that he was apprehensive about entering into cloud on his own. So we led him to the summit where tens of walkers sat. I hope that a walker guided him off the hill. Gleaston man and I fled to Dow. On another run of the course, the morning of my birthday, I trailed Steve. As I approached Brown Pike a man in a group of walkers bawled: "Your mate said to tell you to pull your finger out!" "I'm sixty-four today," I gasped. "Marvellous," he replied, "I'm sixty-four also."

One of my Gleaston trainer's ambitions for me was a run around the Copper Mines Valley's skyline to tick Wetherlam, Swirl How, and the Old Man, from a start near Coniston. The round was

undertaken after he judged that I was fit enough to cope with its rigours and dangers. Around lambing time, having run nearly a mile from Coniston, I read a message on a board: stray dogs will be shot. A short time later, having veered uphill to take a grassy path through fern, my fear was an adder's bite.

On a day of fine weather, the treadmill-like rise up Wetherlam and the jog to Windy Gap gains a prize, beautiful views. From Wetherlam, Windermere looks like a painter's brush stroke of blue paint whilst the High Street range and Fairfield feature a light-rusty hue. The prospect of a fall from the thin path that skirts high above the valley drained by Greenburn Beck always lifted my pulse. Yet, treading the path one crystal clear day, my attention was distracted by the sight of a nick into Scafell, the East Buttress. During that moment the Scafell- Scafell Pikes backdrop surpassed the majesty of the Langdale fells that lay to the north.

One mid-June day, on my own, I quit the Copper Mines Valley round at Windy Gap due to poor weather. Nearing Levers Water I saw a large dog scuttle up the hillside to disperse a flock of sheep. At the tarn I asked a man and woman if the dog was theirs. On hearing that it was I said: "The dog should be on a lead." When I set off to run again, after a debate with the irate couple, the woman shouted after me, "I hope you break a leg."

Perhaps it would have been less risky for my health to have struggled up Prison Band to Swirl How. On 2nd July, 2011, under a bright sun, in shorts and singlet, smelling of sweat and copious amounts of 'factor 30' sun lotion, I met a Fell & Rock party descending the Band. I exchanged hellos with Paul Exley and had a chat with Mark Scott. About forty minutes later, as I trotted down

to Miners Bridge, I heard the sound of a calypso band issuing from a marquee pitched near the Copper Mines youth hostel.

For me, the run from Swirl How to the Old Man's summit was a chore, but had merit in being generally dry underfoot. My trainer called me a wimp when moaning about having wet feet. Luckily, although runs in mist were not uncommon, I rarely got soaked due to rain. Once, though, heading to the summit, a dog rushed me. The punch of its front paws on my bare quadriceps hurt. The sight of saliva trickling from yapping jaws terrified me. I bawled at the owner that his animal ought to be on a leash. He pooh-poohed my remark. Outraged, I complained in rough language. He called me an idiot and walked off northwards.

I was ever wary dropping eastwards from the Old Man's cairn into the valley for Miners Bridge. The shambles of a path initially taken was a booby trap. My inbred rugby skill for sidestepping enabled me to cope with most hazards. Nonetheless, many ascending walkers here appeared to be either in a trance, or blind to a plummeting human being. However, in late spring one year, on this the Copper Mines Valley round's penultimate stage, my sense of smell was aroused by a rich scent given off from a may tree in blossom as I approached the Miner's Bridge.

My times for the round would not impress the fell running fraternity. The record for the Coniston Fell Race, that tracks the Copper Mines Valley's skyline, but is a longer course, was set by Ian Holmes in 1996 at 1 hour 3 minutes 29 seconds. Usually it took me that time on a run to spy Wetherlam's summit cairn for the first time. However, events occur that make a preoccupation with timekeeping facile.

On 2nd June, 2010, at around eleven o'clock, Steve and I raced down from the top of the Old Man for our finish near Coniston. Unbeknown to us local villagers had been advised to stay in doors. Motoring amok in the lanes of Lakeland was a murderer. During our run a Cumberland taxi driver, Derrick Bird, had shot and killed 24 people. The despair that the 'Cumbria Massacre' caused made trivial pain felt running on the fells.

Fortunately, on the whole, my runs on the fells of High Furness were not marred by tragedy. On the contrary, nearly every run had a comic aspect. And there was my obsession: to keep a tally of a ritual, touching the cairn atop the Old Man of Coniston. The Walsh footmarks of my trainer led me to the spot at least sixty times, and I felt the need to go there thirty times on my own. Also, on 15th October, 2016, a group of people joined me at the Walna Scar car park for a walk up the Old Man. Like me, most of the party, comprising Margaret Armstrong, Peter Evans, Cheryl Lee-Appleby, Steve Riley, and two other members of the Fell & Rock, Judy Adams and John Holden, were members of an Ulverston yoga club. Dave Wearing, a climbing friend, completed the group.

Oddly, I'd never been up the mountain via the Goat's Water path before. A number in the party had never rock climbed. We took a halt by the tarn for John Holden to describe to them the east face of Dow Crag from a climber's standpoint. As shreds of cloud stealthily drifted across the crag, adding a dramatic effect, his witty review proved to be a hit.

At noon we gathered at the summit of the Old Man of Coniston in heavy drizzle. Steve handed out strawberries. I poured champagne into plastic cups that were passed around for the party to celebrate my century of ascents.

One member of the yoga club, Elaine Essery, was recovering from illness, and hill walking had been postponed until full recovery. However, she fulfilled her intention to be present at Walna Scar car park when the party returned. Elaine also handed me a string that had tied to its other end a bobbing balloon displaying the number '100'. And aloud for all to hear, she related that when paying for the gift a shop assistant had asked her: "Who was the person that had lived to such a great age?"

*Leslie Shore October 2017*



The summit of Coniston Old Man, Scafell behind. *Photo: John Holden*

## Mountain Rescue Special Services

Calder Control to Search Dog Ellie – pass your message – over” “Search Dog Ellie to Calder Control – missing casualty located at grid reference SD figures 987123. I request the following assistance...”

Bonnie, my border collie, did very well. This was her first call out a week after our four day assessment, in the Lake District, where we had been awarded the Novice Shield for the best new handler and dog. After three years training to get to this point of finding someone and finding them alive on our first call out was just the best possible outcome that anyone could conceivably have. The missing man was located sheltering behind a wall on the moors near the Pennine Way above Ripponden in Calderdale. Following this we featured in a re-enactment of the scenario on a TV programme - ‘Potty about Pets’.

But the story behind how we arrived in this situation starts a long, long time ago and has a connection to the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. The Club, along with the Rucksack Club in 1932, had formed the Joint Stretcher Committee, which was charged with producing both a stretcher and a list of first aid equipment suitable for incidents. This continued until by the 1940’s Mountain Rescue Teams were established in Coniston (led by Jim Cameron) and Borrowdale (led by Rusty Westmorland) and in 1950 the Mountain Rescue Committee was formed from the First Aid Committees of the Mountaineering Clubs.

This development has continued until today where Mountain Rescue Services are provided throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland not forgetting the Isle of Man where Search and

*Ellie Sherwin.*



Ellie & Bonnie with the Novice Shield

Rescue Dogs assist the Civil Defence service, who provide a similar service to that of other regions. Many developments have taken place over the years in line with the accelerating pace of change which creates the society we live in today. The modern Mountain Rescue Volunteer is often not only a good all round mountaineer, but also a specialist in several other disciplines. This could be treating casualties by providing first aid - anything from escorting them off the hill to delivering strong analgesics for the relief of pain, or splinting injuries with specialist equipment. Very recently water rescue has been included with mountain rescuers trained to assist in the evacuation and safety of people during periods of flooding. This could be both near fast flowing water in rural areas or from flooded homes and streets in towns and villages. This is particularly appropriate in areas like the Lake District, or my home town of Todmorden after the recent flooding episodes. Another specialism - the air

scenting search and rescue dog is my particular interest.

In the mid 1960’s Dr. Hamish MacInnes OBE, BEM, founder of Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team, visited Switzerland and saw avalanche search dogs in action, and since then this aspect of Mountain Rescue too has flourished. Hamish had the foresight to realise that the dogs scenting ability could be put to good use at home to search for missing mountaineers. Shortly after returning from Switzerland he, along with his wife Catherine, organised a course in Glencoe, inviting interested local people and their dogs to join them. From that beginning the current search and rescue dogs associations have developed, so that now there are dog groups in all regions where there are Mountain Rescue Teams operating. In addition, other groups work in what are termed as “lowland” areas.

Maybe it is understandable that several Fell and Rock Members have a foot in both camps, combining their passion for the mountains with an interest in helping fellow mountaineers through membership of a Mountain Rescue Team. I fit into this category, as I joined the Fell and Rock and became a member of the local Rescue Team at about the same time during the 1980s. I had always had a love of the outdoors and had walked extensively in Scotland, the Lakes and have also enjoyed mountaineering trips to the Alps, Tatra’s, Picos, Himalayas etc. I had also spent several years helping with the training of search and rescue dogs by acting as a “body” waiting to be found.

Lying out all day, in all weathers on the hill is a vital though not always entertaining occupation. It is a good way to catch up on sleep and do some serious reading; weather permitting. It is also an excellent way to appreciate what people in real

life incidents must feel. Even as a fit, healthy, well equipped individual sheltering in a carefully selected location it soon becomes apparent that you are cold, often wet and uncomfortable and time goes by extremely slowly. It didn’t take long for me to decide that I would like to put the boot on the other foot, so to speak, and train a search and rescue dog of my own. I had an elderly dog at the time, so had a basic understanding of how a dog worked, so thought it would be an easy step to start to train a young dog from scratch.



Lake District winter training - a ‘body’ waiting to be found

### Wrong!!

The reality is that it takes hours and hours of dedicated work, beginning with basic obedience, socialisation and ‘sheep sense’ before ever considering starting to train your four-legged friend to find other people and more importantly to tell you they have found them and lead you back to their location.

Having made the decision, I was determined to persevere with training my first search and rescue (SARDA) dog, Bonnie, a border collie from a local

farm. On many occasions it felt as though I was going backwards with my training and I was never going to get to the ultimate point of passing an assessment and being able to take Bonnie on searches as a fully operational SARDA dog. Following the obedience test the next step is to play a game of hide and seek, with a bark to indicate that the dog has found and a squeaky toy or some food as a reward for the dog. For Bonnie, who was not that interested in a squeaky "chicken leg" this often meant jumping up at me and tugging – ultimately, tearing my jacket. This was not a good idea for future call outs in extremes of weather or steep terrain! Starting as a short fun activity this hide and seek game is gradually extended to a point where a full hillside can be searched and any people located in the area found. The assessment was on a four day course based in the Lake District, where several areas had to be searched and at any point, up to the last search you could fail. Causes of failure include the dog failing to let you know that they have found someone, the dog chasing sheep, or you as a team not searching the area thoroughly enough. This is definitely much worse than sitting a driving test as the pressure is on for the whole four days.

### Success!!

As described in the opening paragraph we not only passed but were awarded the Novice Shield, for outstanding performance on the assessment. However, unlike Bonnie and myself, not everyone is fortunate enough to find the person they are looking for on their first call out and many dogs will not find anyone during their working career. However, all will perform an equally important role in identifying that a missing person is not in the area searched and that the search should

therefore be concentrated elsewhere. In fact Bonnie only found one other person during her working life, although she was part of a three dog team, when fellow Fell and Rock Member and dog handler Simon Adams, located renowned physicist Sir Fred Hoyle (also FRCC), in Shipley Glen, near Bradford. Sir Fred who grew up in the area and was on a family visit, had slipped down a steep banking and was very cold and barely conscious, after spending several hours, unable to extricate himself from the stream in the base of the glen.

Sadly Bonnie died at 10 years old after a short period of illness. I began to train her successor only to realise that "Billabong", another collie, was never going to make the grade, as although she possessed boundless energy she didn't have any affinity for human beings. Not all dogs have the right aptitude or temperament to be successful, just as some people have an ability to understand and to train dogs while others don't. Fortunately Billabong was able to find her niche as a sheep and cow dog on an isolated farm where people were a rare occurrence.

Not defeated by this failure, "Pepper" soon joined the family. Unlike Billabong she proved to be a willing student in the art of search and rescue. She has always been a relatively easy dog to train and work as she loves people and will do anything for a squeaky toy. Pepper is very steady and, during the 10 years she has been actively working, she has covered many square miles of ground and located five missing people. She has also made several TV appearances including on Waterloo Road, the One Show, Emmerdale, and the local news, but she is quite modest about her fame.

Over the years Search dogs have played a vital role in several very traumatic and public tragedies

such as The Lockerbie air crash. Happening, 29 years ago on 21st December 1988, (before I had a qualified search dog) handlers from throughout England and Scotland dropped everything and headed to Lockerbie to help with the aftermath of the crash of Pan Am Flight 103. It was a traumatic event for many, but the camaraderie and support for each other helped to overcome at least some of the stress. Having said that it will never be forgotten by anyone who was there, and several struggled for a long time afterwards to come to terms with scenes they had witnessed. Rescuers were given a couple of days off to return and "celebrate" Christmas with family and friends before re-convening the search on Boxing Day.

Pepper was available to assist in the search for April Jones in Machynnlech in October 2012. This distressing search started off involving local teams, but quickly escalated, calling on dogs, handlers and rescue teams from far and wide. A lot of lessons were learnt from this incident, particularly about communication, deployment and recording of data. This information has been used to develop a system for dealing with incidents on this scale in the future, linking in with the other emergency services, to co-ordinate and control situations more effectively and efficiently.

Nowadays most hill goers set off armed with a mobile phone, which although not always providing a perfect telephone signal, provides the possibility of locating a person, by triangulation of where the phone signal is being emitted from. Even if the person is incapacitated it is possible to narrow down the area to be searched to a likely position.

This was the case with an incident on Helvellyn in January 2015, when Pepper along with other SARDA England dogs were called to Patterdale to continue a search by the Lake District Teams,

including 5 dogs, from the previous night. The missing person had failed to book out of his hotel in Windermere generating a full scale search a few days after he had last been seen. The weather both the night before and on the day was atrocious, with snow, strong winds and driving rain. So bad in fact that two of the search dog handlers received minor injuries during the search. As I drove up with Peter Farnell (another Fell and Rock Member), from the Calder Valley, I actually remarked that I had changed my mind as the weather was so bad, that I didn't want to have to



Ellie and Pepper, after Helvellyn search

venture out in it. Just a remark, but typical, of the thoughts that go through your mind as you anticipate the search and conditions to come.

Similarly, a major search took place in October 2017, in Wasdale, just before Hurricane Ophelia was due to arrive. All teams were advised to be off the hill by 2.00pm for their own safety. In this case the missing person was located in Piers Ghyll, shortly before the deadline. These occasions highlight one of the hazards of this sort of work, as rather than venturing out in favourable conditions to walk on footpaths, the nature of a call out is that you are more likely to be called out in bad weather to search the worst ground possible, quite probably at night. However, this is also where a dog has an advantage as it can use its nose to identify the origin of scent, without having to explore every inch of the ground and can work equally effectively at night as during the day. Unfortunately, the dog cannot work on its own, so however bad it is, the handler has also to be able to withstand those conditions. Teamwork is key to success with the handler both directing and supporting the dog, and the dog following commands to learn the nature of the "game" which means actively seeking the human scent and being in control when the scent is found.

Other notable Fell and Rock Members who are or have also been search and rescue dog handlers are Joy Grindrod, Nelson Clarke, Elly Whiteford, Eric Spofforth, Ian Spreckley, Nicki Lyons, David Warden, Peter Farnell. Apologies to those who I may have omitted. They will all have their own experiences and tales of extremes, highs, lows, successes and continuing mysteries, but all will feel that they have done their best to help others and put extra effort in to achieving a positive conclusion to searches for missing people in whatever circumstances they occur.

### So what of the future!

Despite developments in technology and communication, it hasn't been possible to replicate the ability of a dog to both scent and discriminate between scents, so it is likely that they will have a very useful role to serve for some time to come. True, fewer people tend to get genuinely lost and personal equipment is much better, making calls to look for missing walkers nowadays a small part of the work undertaken both by Mountain Rescue Teams and dogs and handlers. The personal requirements of being competent on the hill and able to look after yourself in adverse situations is a quality held by many Fell and Rock Members so it is likely that candidates who are both Mountain Rescue and Club Members will continue for some time to come.

### What I did in my holidays

I have offered myself to the gods.  
Moving from steep to steepening rock,  
I step from stone to stone in the sky.

With gentling grasp, time after time,  
They place my feet; they do not mock.  
I have offered myself to the gods.

Mist-veiled, ice-cracked, streaked with slime,  
Transient stacks of slab and block,  
We step from stone to stone in the sky.

Cooling my fear, they let me climb,  
My footing slips; they take the shock.  
I have offered myself to the gods.

I only follow the script of the mime,  
Crabwise, hand-jam, finger-lock,  
I step from stone to stone in the sky,

We move in concert, rhythm and rhyme  
We gods, my world, stop the clock.  
I have offered myself to the gods.  
I step from stone to stone in the sky.

(Cuillin Ridge, Skye, June 2017)

*Rosemary Scott*

## Crags in the Desert of Eden

The popularity of the annual FRCC geology meets over a period of almost a decade reflects Members' continuing enthusiasm for knowledge about the rocks and landforms on which our mountaineering and rock climbing activities take place. There have been geology meets in places as far away as West Cornwall and Glencoe but the strongest interest is the hills of the Lake District and Pennines.

The FRCC guide books describe climbing routes and hill walks on a variety of rocks. These range from volcanic lavas and ashes to slates, granite to limestone and even gabbro. There is climbing on sedimentary rocks in areas flanking the Lake District. These include limestones and water deposited sandstones of Carboniferous age and 'New Red Sandstone' strata in the Vale of Eden and West Cumbria (Eden Valley & South Lakes Limestone Guide, 2012 and the 'in press' Sport Climbing Guide). The main Eden red-bed crags are natural outcrops and quarries at Armathwaite, Lazonby, Scratchmere Scar, Cowrake Quarry, Coudy Rocks and The Hoff. They vary from hard and soft sandstones to pebble beds and are commonly criss-crossed by veins of calcite and quartz which weather as ribs in the softer matrix. Many of the natural crags were created as the River Eden and its tributaries cut down through glacial drift deposits and into bedrock in response to lowered sea levels following the last major glaciation twenty to thirty thousand years ago.

The Vale of Eden red strata were deposited during the earlier part of the Permian Period, a time interval of about 70 million years which

*John McM Moore*

began about 299 million years ago during which the valley was a desert. Plate tectonic and palaeo-magnetic reconstructions reveal that the area was in the interior of a very large continent, in the trade wind belt, north of the equator. The red colouration derives from iron oxides coating grains and in the matrix of the rocks. Geological mapping has allowed researchers to construct simple maps of the desert from Brough and Kirkby Stephen to beyond Penrith.

About half way through the Permian Period a shallow hypersaline sea resembling the Aral Sea, known as the Zechstein Sea, formed in Northern Europe. Its western coast lay in County Durham. Potash deposits which are mined at Boulby in Cleveland were precipitated from the saline Zechstein seawaters. On occasions a marine inlet extended westward beyond what is now Stainmore and formed lagoons, salinas and playa lakes in the Eden Valley.

A variety of rocks were deposited in these arid environments.

### Brockram Pebble Beds and Breccias

Flash-flood wadi watercourses are a characteristic feature of deserts. In early Permian times, large quantities of rock debris were washed down wadis from Stainmore and the Pennine hills bringing pebble and boulder deposits into what is now the Brough and Kirkby Stephen district. These rocks, known locally as brockram, are made up of rounded pebbles, cobbles (conglomerates) and angular fragments (breccias). The debris includes Carboniferous age limestone and sandstone with a few pebbles of igneous dolerite thought to origi-



Brockram conglomerate and breccia pebble beds overlying sandstone and dislocated by a small fault. Belah, Brough. *Photo: Dale Bloomer*

nate from the Whin Sill which has outcrops along the Pennine Escarpment. Brockram commonly occurs as lens-shaped bodies which are cross-sections of fossil wadi channels with their debris fill. The brockrams are interlayered with sand and mud (shale) of the alluvial flats over which the flash floods flowed. The Hoff crag near Appleby is brockram breccia and conglomerate.

### Sandstones and Shales.

Red, brown and grey alluvial sandstones and shales are the most common Permian rocks in the

lower Eden Valley. For long periods, much of the area northward from Appleby was sand plains and mudflats. The mud and sand were transported by sporadic floods and laid down as regular layers. Larger fragments had been deposited nearer to the upland source rocks. After burial, the sands were cemented by ground waters carrying dissolved silica, calcium carbonate and iron minerals, percolating through the pore spaces between the grains. The result is a sequence of compact, well-cemented strata, known as Penrith Sandstone. This durable stone has been quarried for building purposes for many years. There is good climbing on hard sandstone at Scratchmere Scar and nearby quarries. Guidebook photographs of Scratchmere climbs show the regularity of layering and the sharp, broken edges in the well-cemented sandstone.



Scratchmere Scar: well-cemented Penrith sandstone strata fractured by joint cracks. The characteristic 'blocky' appearance is created by vertical joint fractures and sedimentary layering inclined downward from right to left *Photo: Ron Kenyon*

In areas with weaker cementation of grains, the sandstones are soft, friable and allow passage of percolating groundwater which locally re-surfaces from the top of the water table as springs on valley sides. Weakly-cemented, permeable sandstone is common in the Armathwaite and Lazonby crags, Coudy Rocks and outcrops around Appleby.

Close examination of quartz grains in the softer sandstones, reveals them to be rounded, 'frosted' in appearance on the surface and 'millet seed' shaped. These are characteristics of wind-blown sand. The softer sandstones composed of this type of grains must have experienced wind as well as to water transport.

### Dune Sands

Many of the Eden Valley sandstone beds have a curious internal structure. Among the features in several crags, remarked upon by the FRCC guidebook writers, is 'dune bedding'. This is clearly visible in guidebook photographs of Armathwaite, Lazonby and Cowraik Quarry. 'Dune bedding', known technically as cross-bedding, consists of fine laminations inclined at an angle to the orientation of layering of the host strata. The laminations are commonly truncated at the top of a bed and missing from the stratum above (Photo 3). Cross-bedding laminations form as sand is blown from a dune and the crest tumbles down the leeward face. Piles of 'dune bedded' strata at Armathwaite, Lazonby (Photo 4) and elsewhere are preserved remnants of dune swarms which at times filled the centre of the valley from Brough to Penrith and beyond (Photo 5, p96). The dune sands are weakly cemented and soft, making them brittle and susceptible to erosion by wind, water and climbing.

Dunes migrate with the prevailing wind. The direction of slope on leeward dune faces indicates downwind direction. In the Eden Desert the wind has been interpreted as consistently from the east (relative to the current magnetic poles). The forms of dunes have been reconstructed from measurement of cross-bedding lamination orientation. Evidence in Bowscar Quarry was good enough to allow reconstruction of an individual 'barchan' (crescent-shaped dune).

The orientation of the leeward faces of the dunes, interpreted from foreset bedding orientation shows that both dunes migrated westward across the plains.

### Lagoon and salina deposits.

In mid-Permian times, the desert was partly inundated by lagoons, salinas and mud flats which covered the dunes, mudflats and sand plains. At times, the saline lagoons, fed from the Zechstein Sea to the east, evaporated and precipitated calcium sulphate as anhydride and the gypsum seams on which the British Gypsum mine and processing plant at Kirkby Thore are based. Thin layers of dolomite were also deposited together with shales containing leaves and plant fragments.

The oblique aerial image (Photo 6, p96) shows an area of desert terrain remarkably similar to how the Eden Valley may have looked in middle Permian times. The stratified terrain on the right side of the image corresponds to the Carboniferous limestone strata of what was to become the Cross Fell Escarpment. The Pennine Boundary Faults would follow the foot of the escarpment into the distance. In the foreground is 'brockram' pebble and rock debris. The hypothetical position of Brough is in the lower right image. In the middle distance is a lagoon similar to the one in

which the gypsum beds were deposited and at the top of the scene are sand plains and mud flats.

The lagoons dried and were in turn buried by more mud and sand, some derived from Penrith Sandstone outcrops. The younger strata include well-cemented St Bees Sandstones which form the climbing cliffs of the Cumbrian coast.

### Faults

The Vale of Eden is a type of rift valley known as a half-graben, similar to Death Valley in California. It formed when rocks on the west side of the Pennine Boundary Faults dropped relative to the Cross Fell block, creating a trough with an inclined floor. This trough filled as it formed, with desert sand, mud and rock debris. Evidence of faulting is widespread throughout the red-beds. Penrith Sandstones are commonly dissected by joint fracture cracks created as the pressures and stresses of faulting were relaxed.

The sandstone strata are cut by numerous veins of calcite and quartz. In some places these veins have weathered out from their sandstone matrix to form fins or ribs which form parts of climbs in crags like Lazonby. Veins are common in areas near the Pennine Boundary Fault System (Photo 7, p97). The vein minerals were deposited from waters which passed through joint fractures. Faulting activity induces mass movement of water under enormous hydraulic pressure and it is common to encounter swarms of mineral-filled veins in frac-



Photo 3. Dune sands with cross bedding. The inclined laminations are a preserved succession of windward flanks of a dune. *Photo: JMcMM*

Photo 4. Lazonby: the lower part of the crag is a complex set of inclined laminae formed by preservation of the windward (slip) faces of dunes. The upper crag is regularly layered sandstone strata. *Photo: Ron Kenyon*





Photo 5 (above). An active dune field migrating on mud and sand flats (Empty Quarter, Arabia). The view is representative of how the terrain between Appleby and Penrith may have appeared in early Permian times. (Photo JMcMM)

Photo 6 (right). Arid terrain resembling the Eden Valley Desert landscape looking towards Penrith, as it was at a moment in Permian times when waters from the Zechstein Sea to the east had created saline lakes in the valley. *Photo: JMcMM*



tured rocks near fault lines. High pressure water linked to faulting, escapes to the surface as transient springs near active faults like the San Andreas in California before, during and after seismic activity. Many of the veins in the Eden sandstones, are probably related to seismic activity on the Pennine Boundary fault system.

Permian igneous activity did not directly affect the Eden Desert apart from intrusion in late Carboniferous or early Permian times of the Whin Sill, which may be a source for the dolerite pebbles in brockrams.

This description of the Eden Desert is two 'snapshots in time' during the Permian Period: the first when the rocks of the Eden Valley climbing crags were created. The second, shown in the oblique aerial photograph, shows the situation after the lagoons and salinas had formed towards the end of the dunefield desert episode. The Permian Period lasted longer than the building of the Alps and Himalayas and ten times more than the total evolutionary history of hominids.

These landscape reconstructions would not have been possible without the research of numerous academics and geologists of the Geological Survey whose papers and reports provide an invaluable source of information.



Photo 7. Dune sands with calcite veins. George Gill, near Appleby. *Photo: Dale Bloomer*

## BMC Youth Meets

Back in 1997, at one of the BMC Lakes area meetings, the idea of organising a Youth Meet weekend was discussed. Mike Gibson, myself and also Dave Staton took the idea forward, however I suspected there would be lots of hoops to jump through, and certainly there were, but none too onerous. Nick Colton, at the BMC, was the chap to sort this out and help set up a framework for the weekend.

The underlying issue was, and has always been, to get young climbers outside onto the crags, to hopefully develop their skills there as well as at climbing walls. For many these weekends were their first ventures onto crags whilst others had been outside quite a lot.

The grounds for the weekend were as follows

Youngsters are aged 12 to 17

Adult helpers had to -

- Be reasonably experienced but need not have any qualifications
- All were DBS checked for child protection issues
- There should be at least two teams together at a particular crag and be within contact over the day.

Whilst climbing

Both the youngsters and adults should be climbing well within their abilities.

The youngsters do not now lead unless either

- protection is pre-placed, or
- there is someone on a rope beside them checking their gear placements, and
- they are climbing well within their climbing wall ability.

The FRCC gave permission to use Raw Head - initially both the Barn and the Cottage - but latterly

*Ron Kenyon*

just the Barn. This would also introduce these youngsters to the Club and staying in a mountain hut - with the potential of joining the Club in the future.

The first Youth Meet was in 1998 and we all gathered with some trepidation for the weekend. Administration was split between Mike, Nick and myself and as we all gathered at Raw Head, on the Friday evening, there was great excitement, especially from the youngsters, about the weekend ahead. We set out the ground rules. We had collected a good bunch of adults and split these off against youngsters of similar abilities.

Memories are somewhat sketchy, however, in 1999 I remember (a younger) Angela Soper and (young) Emma Twyford at the start of Gimmer String and showing Emma a very much younger Angela, in a photograph in the guide on KG. Later I took some photos of Emma leading and cruising up the top pitch of Gimmer String. Nick Colton had been paired with a 15 year old Dan Varian, who had never been to Langdale before and spent the weekend leading Nick up one E1 after another and finished with something a bit harder with Paladin!

The following are a number of tales from that time to give a flavour of what was done -

A 12 year old Simon Platt (from Kendal area) appeared in 2002 keen to get out onto the crag. It was glorious weather and Dow Crag was decided upon. I mentioned that it was 'not a roadside crag' but Simon was keen to go to Dow. The first route we did was Murray's Route and then he fancied leading something so I let him lead Giant's Corner. There was still time in hand and he fancied something a bit harder so, with

John Temple, we climbed Murray's Direct on which he was rather intrigued by the name for the first pitch - Tiger Traverse ! Not a bad day for a 12 year old - back in the car, on the way back to Raw Head, Simon was soon fast asleep after his day on Dow.

Come the following year Simon appeared again with a number of pals from the Kendal area, including a similarly young George Ullrich. He had a tiger suit and he fancied going back to Dow Crag and climbing the Tiger Traverse (which he did - see photo overleaf)

Black Crag on Wrynose is a great venue for a youth meet, with a collection of short routes of varied grades - we headed up there with ascents of The Needle and various other routes. George Ullrich was one of the young promising 'hotshots' at Kendal Wall, but had never been outside; after having protection placed on the route Skye Ridge we allowed him to lead the route - grade V Diff. Later, whilst we were having lunch, George and Simon multi-pitched a small (30 foot) slab below the crag in two pitches - two small steps but the beginnings of a path which was to lead to many hard routes including the 6th ascent of Indian Face on Cloggy.

James McHaffie (Caff) came along to help - one weekend he had met up with Dave Birkett who was in the process of developing his super-routes on Scafell Crag. This was a very dedicated time for Dave, with having to drive round to Wasdale and then walk up to crag, to these somewhat awkward routes, to check out and eventually climb them. He welcomed the company of Caff and Robert Gledhill, to go round and up there - where Dave inspected one of his new lines whilst Caff and Robert climbed Trinity, Hells Groove and Leverage - what a day to be with two Lakeland legends !

Another tale is recalled by Joe Williams - he and Aaron Nattress (another regular at the Kendal Wall) were climbing with Caff. The pace at which they approached the routes impressed him - he'd never walked so fast with a pack on! He recalls they went to Pavey Ark on one of the days and thinks they did either Aardvark or Golden Slipper - can't recall which. He remembers it very fondly though as it was very exciting to climb with someone like Caff. He remembers Emma Twyford was there (they were friendly during the youth competition days) climbing with Angela Soper. Joe is now working for his family business - Cicerone Press.

In 2006 Colin Downer came along and helped with the weekend - what a character to add to the mix for the weekend. Much of the group was focused on climbing on Pavey Ark, though Colin, with Robert Dean & Simon Platt, and Nick Colton with Jonathan Freeman, started at White Ghyll (climbs including Man of Straw). On Pavey a combination of Capella and Golden Slipper was waiting - I was climbing with George Ullrich, who could now have easily led it, together with Matthew Murgatroyd, who had not been on anything of this scale before, but was not daunted. I led and the lads followed, without too much problem. From the top we descended by an abseil (youngsters secured by safety rope) to the left of the top of Golden Slipper, back to Jack's Rake. All quite safe but spectacular - great day!

There were concerns about the safety aspects of the weekend - there had been two accidents over the eight years of the youth meets to 2006 - both of these involving adults, one of which, on Middlefell Buttress, was serious and needed helicopter evacuation. In 2006 it was decided to stop the meets - we had had eight good meets with a wide mixture of individuals, both youngsters and

adults, and helped forge some good links and stepping stones for the future.

James McHaffie (Caff) was a regular helper at the Youth Meet and it was good to have him along to inspire all and help at the weekends. Caff qualified as an instructor, was working at Plas y Brenin and later joined the BMC, becoming involved with youth development. We had a discussion about the Youth Meets which we had run in the past – and the idea of resurrecting the weekends was raised. Why not – we had Nick Colton to oversee the health and safety issues; Caff with his outdoor education knowledge, from Plas y Brenin, and boundless enthusiasm, and myself to help bring it together. So we set to and organised a Youth Meet in 2015.

Contact was made with the walls around Cumbria and generally getting the message out to the young climbers. A search for suitable adults with DBS checks was made, and we all gathered at Raw Head in 2015 for another youth meet.

Emma Twyford and Caff went up to Pavey on the Friday where they climbed Impact Day. The weather was not good and the Wrynose area seemed the place to go – swirling clouds were daunting, but Long Crag and Black Crag gave a good start to the weekend – especially for some not used to outdoor conditions. As the day went on the sunshine enticed more ascents including what is a regular route, Glass Slipper. Meanwhile there was a group at Raven Crag, Walthwaite where they climbed a new route – Chance – graded E4 (6a) – the name is a rough combination of the names of the first ascensionists – Caff, Holly (Harper), Adam (Jackson), Nina (Stirrup) and Ellie (Cox). Back at the hut the communal meal was enjoyed by all – followed by impressive illustrated talks by Caff and Emma.

On the Sunday the weather was much better – I went to White Ghyll with Jenny Dixon and climbed Slabs Route. I had been climbing with Jos Carrick on the Saturday, which was the first day he had been on a crag – on the Sunday he went off, to Raven Crag, with Caff where they climbed Trilogy – not bad – an E5 on your second day outside – oh to be young !!

A great weekend with a new generation of climbers.

The weather on the Saturday in 2016 was not good !! As in the previous year it gave Caff a chance to explain about belaying and rope techniques while in the shelter of the hut – a very useful session. Someone had come along from the BMC to make a film. We went along to a rather wet and windy Scout Crag – the normal mortals climbed on the Lower Crag – whilst with Erin Cox and Erin Bell, Caff dispatched Elvis (E5) – which the girls lapped up, also in front of the camera, to which they talked later. The weather went off - and we all went off to the climbing wall at Adventure Peaks at Ambleside - talk about ducks to water !!

Sunday was back to what is probably the most popular crag for the weekends – Black Crag at Wrynose – a mountain environment with short routes of all grades. This enabled some to lead on pre-placed gear as well as place their own, with someone (Caff) next to them on a rope checking the placements. A very important transitional stage.

2017 - some familiar young faces and parents together with the helpers appeared, along with new faces. Some parents stayed for the weekend to help and the weather was kind.

Scout Crag, as we know is popular – somewhat polished on the lower crag. The upper crag gives great routes at easy grades and a great starting



point for going outside, incorporating the need to multi-pitch and to belay on the crag. Nearby is Sticklebarn Crag – I had never been here before and we climbed the excellent Main Wall Crack (VS) which all enjoyed – Andrew Paul then delved into the Left Chimney (S) which is a somewhat different style of climbing.

On the Sunday some went to Raven Crag – whilst others set off for Gimmer – some knew the way to Gimmer whilst others got lost near Raven Crag (new fences !!). As a policy for the weekend, we avoid traverses, however Holly Tree Traverse (VD) is a pleasant and well protected route and I went up there with two young climbers (Eva and Caitlin). There had been some miscommunication in that Eva was going to go third and take out the protection. When I belayed I took in what I thought was the rope for Caitlin but then Eva appeared – and had taken out the protection – so we could not belay Caitlin safely. We then abseiled (I hadn't realised how complicated the crag is round there !) to get back to Caitlin below the runnerless pitch.

Meanwhile others were gradually finding Gimmer Crag – with Nina enjoying routes there, having gone the correct way. Caff arrived with Adam Jackson and proceeded to blitz the crag with ascents of routes including Intern and Eastern Hammer. This must have fired up Adam as later that week he led his first extreme – Devil Alternative (E6) at Shepherd's !!!

In 2018 numbers were down for various reasons, but we all gathered again with new and old faces. We were in the middle of the drought in the Lakes and there were restrictions on the use of water in the hut, and we had to avoid the sunshine (for once) ! On the Saturday there were trips to Kettle Crag with the excellent Red Slab (Sev) etc., as well as White Ghyll, and a plethora of

routes climbed. On the Sunday Sticklebarn Crag gave an excellent venue for top roping, including The Pillar (E3), as well as allowing some to 'lead' and place protection but protected by a top rope – a great way of simulating leading. The rest went to Pavey Ark with ascents of Cascade and Capella.

It is so important to get youngsters out onto the crags – so many do not get the chance to see what it is all about. Not all will become crag rats and will perhaps be happy to stay indoors or go bouldering or sports climbing or do something else. It is important to give them a taste. If you know of a youngster (and need not be that young) who might be interested in climbing on a crag take them out and let them see what it is like. People go on about there being fewer climbers on the Lakeland crags – well it needs new climbers to continue the tradition of climbing on these and other crags – and you should do your bit to help with that.

These youth meets don't happen on their own – I would especially like to thank the many people who have helped over the years, and say what a pleasure it is to see those youngsters, now and then, who have been on the meets over the years.

Ron Kenyon

## Suggestions to Hut Wardens

Without our huts the FRCC would be a completely different club, and the wardens who (voluntarily) look after them deserve our support. At times they have to respond to 'helpful' suggestions; if this is done with a light touch then nobody comes off worse. The following extracts were taken from a hut comments book which provided great entertainment one winter's evening.

Heater in men's dorm only partially working. Warden informed. The 'Do not switch off' water heater was found to be switched off on arrival!!!  
*Not too difficult to switch on I hope!!!*  
*Heat loss – Wear a hat!*

Brilliant hut. Well done to all the wardens. A question – in these days of sexual equality, why is there only one hair dryer? And that is in the ladies? Being follically challenged it does not matter to me.  
*Because I only bought one.*

Regarding the fire – a lot of heat seems to go straight up the chimney. Would it be worth fitting a back boiler to heat the hall and possibly the dorms?  
*No!*

Re the blackthorn at the back of the hut. This needs layering in the winter without delay as it must be reaching its max height in this soil. You need a farmer who can lay a hedge, not a stone waller. Hedges are layered every 10 to 12 years and in time will provide some screening and shel-

Anon

ter. The blackthorn should not be pruned like a garden shrub.

*Ta but we don't want a hedge!*

I will post your comments and suggestions to the warden

*Please don't – the warden!*

Kitchen extractor fan on all the time (the one high on the back wall) , and is very noisy. Need to climb on the sink to reach the pull cord.

*Sorted, don't touch – automatic – linked to humidity.*

Also the wall isolator spur switch to right of two fridges – is it the fridge supply?

*Don't know – don't touch.*

The bush the handheld shower sits in is broken in two. It may cause the head to fall ( it did when I was soaped up)

*Don't disturb it! – not meant to be handheld!!*

The paper towel rail above the toaster does not appear to be a good idea.

*After assembling a consultative team, and many hours of deliberation, we finally solved this difficult problem -we moved the toaster 18" to the right.*

How about a stone and oak porch to sit under and smoke in the rain?

*Anything else, a power socket for a kettle, a footstool perhaps?*

No hut handbook

*Oh yes there is!!!*

*Would the person who ploughed a furrow in front of the hut please bring some seed potatoes next time they visit, should have a good crop by summer.*

1st large tree on R of drive after gate has a broken branch hanging over the car park patch.  
Needs removing – hut ladder too short  
*OK. Will bring trampoline*

Men's dorm – the 'night light' has a normal white light bulb.

*What colour would you like? A pale magenta perhaps, or ice blue?*

## Reflections on the Presidency

*Paul Exley*

When Ron Kenyon told me, at the Birkness committee weekend in May 2016, that I had become the committee's nominee for President he said, "I'm glad. It will be good for you and good for the club." I can't say whether or not it's been good for the club but it has certainly given me a couple of very interesting years, mostly very enjoyable.

After many years on the committee, including nine as Secretary, I knew pretty well how the club worked. All the same though, there is no real 'job description' for President. Partly it's a matter of setting an overall strategy and then dealing with whatever comes along, but in line with the strategy. Generally, most work is done by the officers who each have a specific role which they all carry out extremely well. (As an aside, many organisations - including FRCC - have found that volunteers work harder, better and longer than many paid staff.) I have seen the President as one who keeps a general eye on what's happening overall and directing where necessary and appropriate. And sometimes dealing with the unexpected.

Apart from my previous experience of the committee, I had one other major advantage - the committee itself. I have always described the committee as a group of competent and dedicated friends who collectively sort out the running of the club; any problems, the future, detailed organisation, huts and much else. In Martyn and now Brenda, I have had excellent secretarial support and John Pulford, with his background in Management Accounting, has continually produced detailed forecasts and analyses that have allowed us to make informed

decisions. With the number of members that we have, all of our properties and our publishing interests, we are a lot bigger than many small companies.

I never anticipated any problems chairing committee meetings for that reason. We're all singing from the same song sheet with the best future for the club in mind and rarely need to disagree. AGMs may be another matter, depending what's on the agenda and who's there.

We continue to seek younger, active members to sit on the committee and bring along their enthusiasms and fresh ideas. The hope is that we develop a committee with younger members to bring current thinking and attitudes to the club but with some older members to temper any over-enthusiasm with the voices of experience.

Our youngest committee member for many years, Nina Stirrup, was nominated by the BMC as its Young Volunteer of the Year for her work with young climbers. Well done, Nina and also well done Angela Soper who was elected to Honorary Membership of the BMC for a lifetime's work in supporting its objectives.

We are fortunate to benefit from significant numbers of high calibre new members - a result of a lot of hard work by several members. Of course, as a club with a high average age, we're bound to be reading more obituaries but we are one of the few senior clubs managing to maintain our membership numbers. We would like to think that this is because of our welcoming tradition, the quality of our huts and the wide range of meets throughout the UK but also in France, Switzerland, Slovakia and Italy. These have been

enjoyable and generally well supported. A new venue for us is a three weeks meet in Capetown.

Many non-members will have heard of FRCC because of our publication of high quality rock-climbing guides. These represent a significant financial outlay for the club and we know that some guides will not cover their production costs but, overall, they do provide a return. We are currently working on several more guides of which one for the Duddon and Wrynose is expected next year, reflecting the huge amount of exploration in that valley. Sport and Slate will be out soon, featuring Chapel Head Scar and the relatively new Bram Crag Quarry. A new edition of Lake District Rock - the selective guide - is in preparation as is a revised and extended Dow, Coppermines and Eskdale. So we have a lot to look forward to in terms of fresh guides, the team being as busy as ever.

Access to Birkness has been a long-running issue. The new owner of the Dalegarth Estate, Buttermere Investments, gave notice that it would like to extinguish our established pedestrian and vehicular routes to the hut. These are the footpath down to the lake shore and the track for cars and walkers between Birkness and Dalegarth. A long series of emails and meetings took place to try to resolve matters as amicably as possible without having to resort to a Tribunal with its potential expense and uncertain outcome. I had an eNews sent out, asking members for their experiences of using the two routes. I was almost overwhelmed by the response! Almost 300 members replied, of which well over 200 had been using the routes for over 20 years. This was an excellent and valuable response. We briefed a barrister to prepare our Statement of Case for the Tribunal, in case it proved to be necessary. This was sent and now

we have received the respondent's Statement of Case. Other legal documents have passed back and forth but BI has now conceded that we do have a right to use the track between Birkness and Dalegarth, even if they do occasionally block the track with parked cars. I have been in touch with staff from the Ramblers (who now own Hassness) and the Lake District National Park Authority, the former owner of the Dalegarth estate. It transpires that the LDNPA installed the kissing gate at the lower end of our car park because they knew that the footpath was used by walkers to access the lake shore. There is still the possibility of formal mediation by the Land Registry but we hope to avoid this as we believe that we have a very strong case for continuing to use the footpath, as we have since 1952.

One of the valuable features of our club is that we have three Vice Presidents who carry out important work for the club. Apart from chairing meetings of the six sub-committees, they bring their wide experience of the climbing world and the club to bear in advising on a range of issues and managing specific tasks.

Richard Tolley continued the work that he had started under Ron Kenyon in examining the future of our huts over the next ten years. This has been an invaluable exercise and has unearthed many statistics which will help in the future planning and management of huts. I was asked to be part of the team and, because of my background in electrical design, became involved with a few others in suggesting improvements to the huts' heating systems. All this work culminated in a report to the Huts sub-committee and Main committee in May of this year. The Final Report has been published. One of the actions directly resulting from it is installation of insulation in the Cottage and Coach House at Birkness

and updated heating. We're hoping that all this will be completed before the heating season starts.

Pam Shawcross and Dale Bloomer were active in the area of membership, helping to pave the way for easier membership by removing some unnecessary procedures, thereby making the joining process simpler without dropping our standards. This has been effective as evidenced by the numbers of people joining.

When we had continuing poor attendance at the Annual Dinner last November, I asked Wendy Stirrup to form a small working party to look into the problems and suggest solutions. Her report was presented to the committee at its May meetings and we are actively working on increasing numbers at this, our premier social event of the year.

A letter from a younger member suggested that we might award travel grants to some members, especially younger ones, to help with costs of adventurous trips. Apart from possibly attracting more young members, it might provide interesting articles for the Journal. Max Biden agreed form a small team to put some flesh on the bones of this proposal and the committee, soon afterwards, gave outline approval for more detailed work to be done. The committee has now agreed on formal procedures for awarding grants.

Many of you will have enjoyed the presentation at last year's Dinner weekend by Norbert de Mello when he described his visit to Iran and his time amongst the mountains there. One outcome of this was a request from the Iranians to visit our Lake District, stay in our huts and climb some of our fells. Pam Shawcross agreed to manage this and, along with Norbert, dealt with a host of issues including insurance, travel arrange-

ments, hut bookings and help with visa applications. She spoke to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the BMC amongst others to make sure that we, as a club, might avoid any pitfalls. Very sadly, the Iranians' visa applications were refused by the UK government but good work has been done and we hope to be able to welcome them to our huts before too long.

A piece of new national legislation relating to Data Protection reared its head. I wasn't directly involved, apart from passing on some sources of help, but I was keen to know that it was being dealt with effectively. This has now happened and our procedures have been changed to comply with the new regulations.

When we became a limited company our huts, previously held on our behalf by Barclays Bank as trustees, became vested in us. Nevertheless, ownership in that sense and possession of the deeds are, apparently, two different legal issues. Zedra, who had taken over the responsibility from Barclays, were very keen that we should formally register all of our huts with Land Registry (English huts) and Land Registry for Scotland for the two Scottish huts. We had intended to register them over a few years to spread the costs but Zedra wanted us to register all of them soon. Following much writing of letters and emails (mostly by John Pulford as Treasurer), we agreed that we would pay to register the English ones and Zedra would pay to register the Scottish two. It's satisfying to be able to report that all five English huts are now formally in the name of FRCC. The Scottish huts are being progressed and we are expecting completion soon.

I have found that the President is occasionally called on to sort out what are, in essence, private quarrels between members. More often than not,

these relate to inconsiderate behaviour by members rather than any breaking of Rules or Bye-laws and a degree of calming and diplomacy is called for. Modern communications have allowed me to deal with these and many other issues whilst in far-away places.

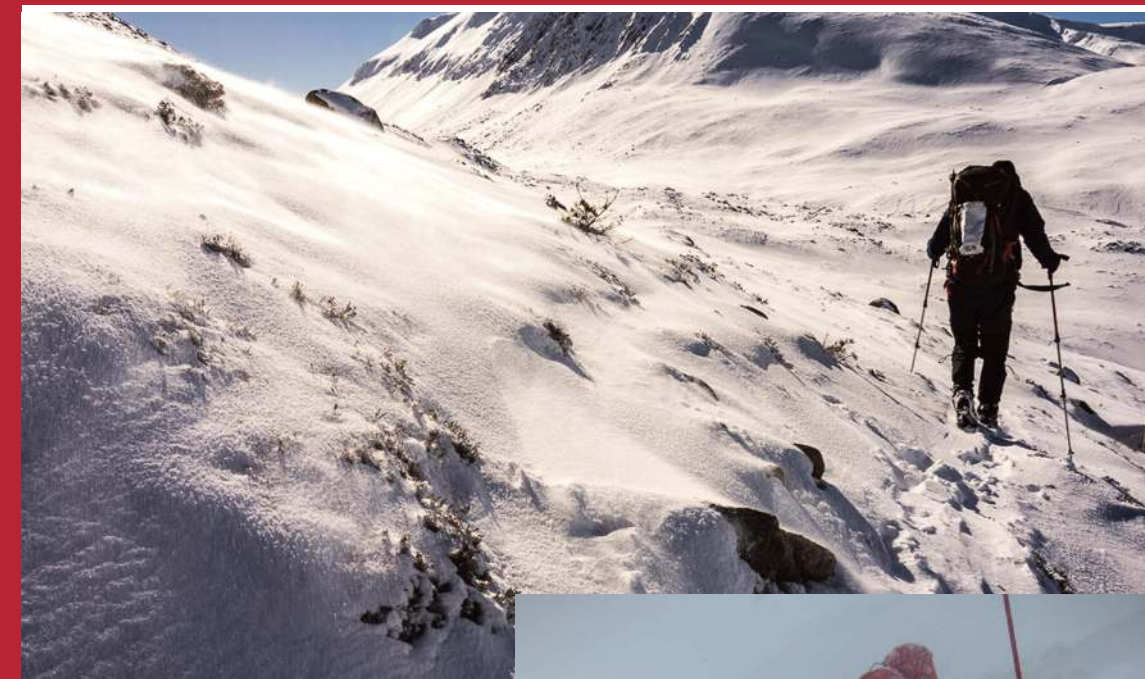
So, after a lot of years of helping to manage the club, it's finally time for me to retire into other activities at home and outdoors. I've enjoyed my time on the committee and feel confident that the club will be very well managed into the future by an excellent team.

## Images of the Life of the Club

Right: Braeriach, Cairngorms,  
March 2018  
*photo: Ian Charters*

Lower Right: Roger and Jane  
digging, Waters meet  
Jan 2018  
*photo: Dee Gaffney*

Below : Pillar summit,  
Brackenclose meet  
Jan 2018  
*photo: Steve Goodhart*



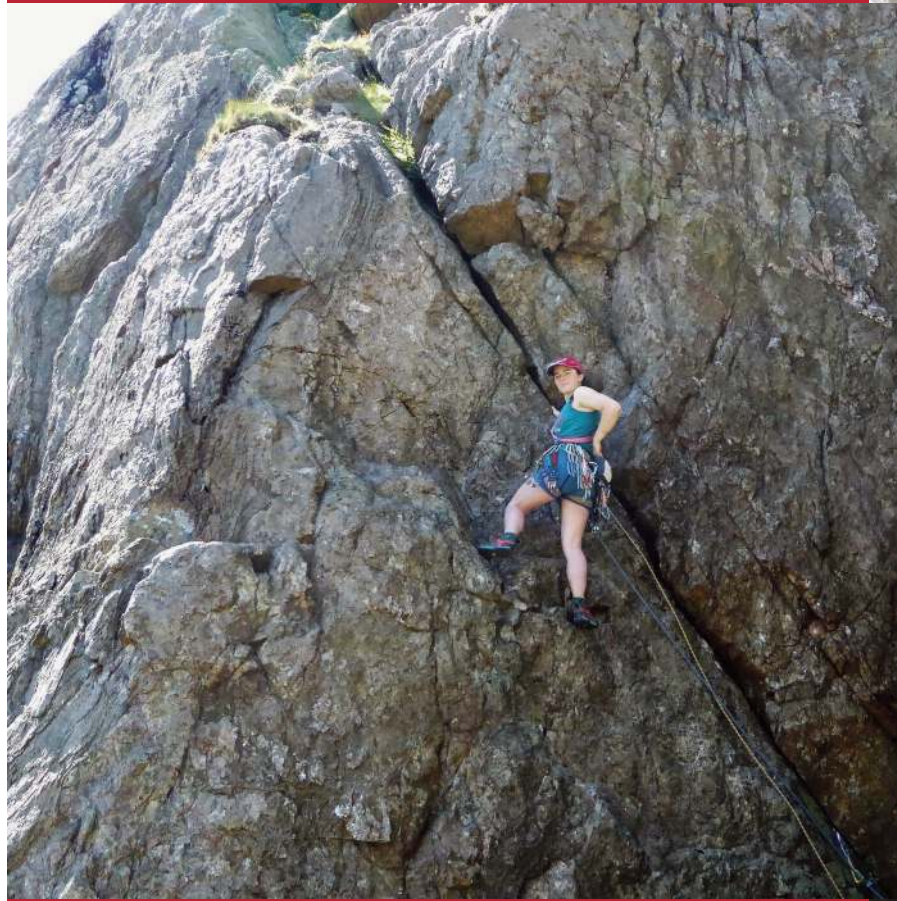


Left: Summit of Hardknott, Duddon meet, April 2018 *photo: J Wainwright*

Lower Left: Nina Stirrup on Eliminate C Dow, VP Dinner meet, June 2018 *photo: W Stirrup*

Below: Making the most of the driest summer for years - Piers Gill - climber Ron Kenyon - *photo: Rob Lewis*

Right, Upper & Lower. Dolomites Via Ferratta Meet 2018



Above: Shetland - FRCC Meet, June 2018 , Grind of the Navir - Groove of the Grind (VS) , climber Andy Dunhill , *photo: Ron Kenyon*





Above: Wetherlam Summit, Coniston Dinner June 2018 , Photo: W Stirrup



Maintenance Meets -

Above: Salving House

Left: Karn

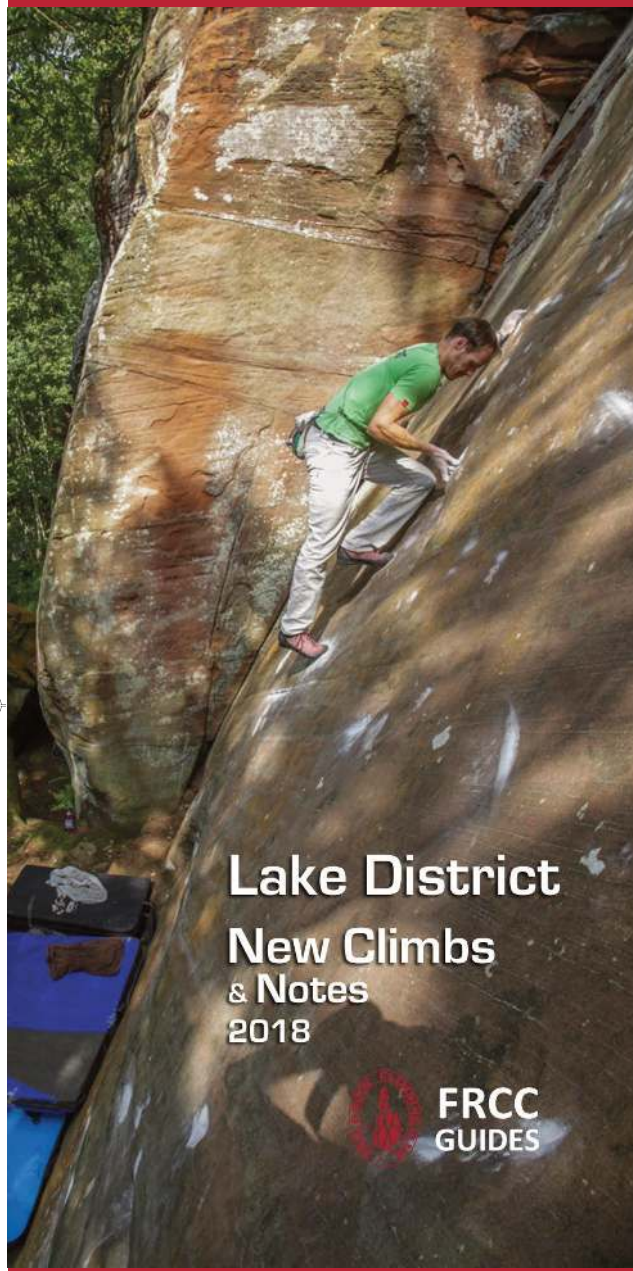
Below: Sweeping the chimney at Beetham Cottage



Left: Geoff Lyons and Rob Jones at the summit of the Dent Blanche, Joint Alpine meet 2018

Below: French Easter Meet, Entrechaux, 2018





Lake District  
New Climbs  
& Notes  
2018  
FRCC  
GUIDES



Above: the Bonfire Meet, November 2017

Left: The cover of the latest output from the Guidebook team. The climb is Scallop, E7, at Armathwaite.

Below: The New Year meet in the cottage at Rawhead - 2016 and 2017



### Miscellany

*Les Meer*

*Mike Cudahy*

*John Moore*

*Phil Behan*

*Simon Jefferies*

*Dave Hume*

*Alan Dickinson*

*Rosemary Scott*

*John Spencer*

## Benighted in Calpe

### Calpe Winter Sun!

Sounds delightful doesn't it? Warm beds, cheap seats, copious plonk! In truth, Ruth's and my little adventure wasn't actually in the Costa Blanca town itself, where we spent a few weeks in February 2017, along with an ever-increasing FRCC contingent. Just North of Benidorm, Calpe is the place to walk, climb or cycle in the winter sun and it's affordable - don't knock it!

Arriving the previous evening from a damp Cumbria, and waking to a gorgeous day, our plan was to drive about an hour west and do a walk extracted from the excellent [walksinSpain.org](http://walksinSpain.org) website (a different route to the Rother guide #9 and latest Cicerone #45). This would take us to the 1400m/4500' Pla de la Casa in the Sierra de Serella, to see the lovely summit snow pit.

We'd heard about the worst local floods for twenty five years, which three weeks previously had caused several roads to be blocked or washed away. Some Fell and Rock members had even been confined to barracks for a couple of days. Fortunately, there was scant evidence, as we drove beyond Callosa. Enticingly, there was a sprinkling of snow atop the distant sunny peaks which comprised our goal. The roads were remarkably empty – explained by our screeching halt at a concrete road block. Our sum total of fifty words in broken Spanish was enough to ascertain that the main road was washed away, with a diversion 'Arriba a la derecha'. 'Up to the right' meant a winding, unsigned single track, but thirty minutes driving, various wrong turns and



*Les Meer*

gesticulations to the locals, got us back to the road - until the next intriguing diversion. Persevering, we arrived at the start of the walk some ninety minutes behind schedule.

It was a longish walk-in, initially losing height (rarely a good idea), then a long pull to what was now evidently the snow line, rather than a mere sprinkling.

"Ooh, fun!" I exclaimed to Ruth, who smiled indulgently, if not eagerly, as our tooties sank into the soft, slushy, melting porridge. The sun shone invitingly on the summit plateau about 700 feet higher (yes, we were in Europe, but being old

school you'll have to indulge me, gentle readers, in good old-fashioned feet). Snow progress was so slow that reluctantly we decided to abandon a summit bid.

Instead, we followed the girdle path shown on our map to the col beyond, and thence our descent. That path soon disappeared in snow-covered rock and scree, all evidence of previous punters having melted away in the six foot deep blanc-mange. Any evidence of signs had been swept away by the winds of a few weeks earlier.

We struggled on, me first-footing manfully (personfully?) at less than one mph. At last, we made it down to the col and waded on through trackless forestry in the general direction of the descent route. At about five o'clock, we arrived tired but relieved at the path junction – which should have meant only forty-five minutes to our car. Except that the steepish, gully descent was now a raging torrent of meltwater, more akin to Dungeon Ghyll than a guidebook path. I could probably have down-scrambled and slip-slid to arrive soaked, yet intact at the car. But for Ruth it was canyoning a step or thousand too far!

We were faced with two choices - and some less than encouraging facts. Our walking map, though adequate, was not overly-detailed. We hadn't brought Ruth's antiquated Garmin GPS. My smartphone's 'OS locate' and 'GridpointGB' apps wouldn't play because we weren't in the UK. There was only one space blanket in the medical kit. Our leather boots were soaked through by



constant immersion in the deep slush. We couldn't feel our frozen feet in the by-now near zero (OK, 32°F) temperature at 4000 feet. Apart from a few biscuits, we had no spare rations and just a spare mid-layer each. C'mon! This was supposed to be a lovely warm toddle in the Costa Blanca hills. Who carries bivvy bags, survival shelter, down jackets and all the cumbersome paraphernalia of a Scottish winter outing?

So these were our choices. Retrace our steps for five or six hours, half of which would be in darkness. We had but one head torch and no spare batteries between us. Or we could struggle on for over a mile in the gathering gloom through the pathless, tree-infested glen, hoping to identify a rough vehicle track shown on the map, which we reckoned we'd come across the previous year on a different walk. That would take two hours, so the obvious decision, if all went well.

It didn't! I was becoming exhausted from first-footing. The traditionally less adventurous Ruth, as always when the chips are down, found remarkable inner strength and didn't twine (complain in Cumbrian), as she dogged my sinking footsteps. Forty-five minutes later, we called a halt. Although we were vaguely following a depression and saw various plate-like dents in the snow (several day-old animal or human?), there was no end to the forestry, nor sign of a track.

"Sorry darling" I said. "Looks like a night out. We can't hole up, it's too cold. There's no shelter and our feet are frozen. Best retrace to keep some warmth and just see how we get on."

Though not voiced, I was considering calling for rescue - we were simply not equipped for what was effectively a winter night on the hills. We did have a weak phone signal, so could try to contact one of the Calpe Fell and Rockers or emergency services direct. It could cost a pretty Euro (or thousand) to get rescued - unfortunately we hadn't taken out specialist insurance - we were day walking on marked trails in the Costa Blanca hills, for goodness sake!

As we started to retrace our steps, in the near-darkness Ruth called from behind, "Is that a wide sort of track outlined under the snow over there?" Warily and worried, I peered over. "Tell you what, we'll try and follow it for twenty minutes in the direction we reckon the vehicle track down will be, and if we don't get anywhere definitive, definitely retrace."

We plodded on. The night darkened. By now it was nearly 8 pm. The forestry began to thin, then under the snow we heard the crunch of gravel - though our frozen feet couldn't feel anything. The aspect of the ground felt as though we were rising to a col. We reached a tree-free plateau and could make out, under the now open sky a wider

snowy track - with footprints! If we were in the right place, half a mile further and we should find the vehicle track down.

We did.

At 9.30pm, after 10 hours on the hill, we slogged wearily back up a mile of oh-so-welcome tarmac road, and with steadily-thawing feet we returned, at last, to our car. And an hour later, a warm, comfortable and alcoholic benightment actually in Calpe!

So where did we (that's 'I' really,) get it wrong?

## Sheep may safely graze

*Mike Cudahy*

Reading the two very interesting mountain rescue accounts in the 2016 Journal gave me pause to reflect on my own very modest achievements in this area. My interest in mountain rescue began and ended while attending an MI course at Glenmore Lodge way back in hrmphhh ... when I was quite young. The course was most interesting and it confirmed my suspicion that I would be unwise to pursue a career as a Moutaineering Instructor.

Perhaps it was the MR component that did it. First we tyro's had practised staggering down a steep slope of sharp scree on a most inhospitable hillside hauling a 'casualty' lashed to a stretcher. My opinion that, if someone had been foolish enough to get into that awful locality in the first place, they should have been left there, was not well received. The next exercise looked rather more promising - we were introduced to the Tragsitz. This is a kind of tandem straitjacket or body corset built for 2. The casualty is wrapped in the corset which, like a baby bouncer, can be sat in. The rescuer dons corset complete with casualty rather in the manner of hefting a heavy rucksack - but a rucksack having legs protruding at one end and arms at the other. The rescue situation envisaged might be, say, a climber stuck half-way up a cliff with, say, a broken leg. Rescuer is lowered bearing Tragsitz and words of comfort. Somehow rescuer, casualty and Tragsitz enter into an intimate embrace and the whole ensemble is lowered smoothly down the cliff to safety and applause.

Having at that time recently recovered from a broken leg myself (over-enthusiasm in a non-contact sport) I shuffled modestly to the back of

the queue. Unfortunately, this was noticed and I got re-shuffled to the front. The selected stooge was a bonny, buxom Swiss wench of agricultural proportions - she outclassed me by about 2 inches, 2 stones (13kg) and a very jolly smile.

We were at the top of a very shattered cliff N of the A9, but the Lodge were using massive steel links from rail trucks and the anchors were reassuring. Amid giggles from my 'casualty' whose legs were stuck out, but whose arms were wrapped lovingly round my windpipe, I began walking backwards down vertical rock. If you've ever been strapped to a grand piano or trapped inside a slowly revolving cement mixer while descending a lift shaft you will appreciate my predicament. Mercifully, the ground eventually appeared and I made a perfect 2 point landing. Unfortunately, the landing pad was tilted at about 35° and with my centre of gravity way outside my base of support all of Newton's laws came into effect. We toppled over still locked in the Tragsitz and proceeded in roly-poly fashion until halted by deep vegetation.

I lay, as Beryl Reid used to say, prostitute on the ground, face down with hot breath down the back of my neck and my body shaking with each convulsive giggle - hers, not mine. Lying there, under this shapely piece of Swiss architecture, I suddenly knew it could never get any better than this; so I abandoned all further thoughts of rescue or instructorship.

However, those who venture onto the hills for as many years as I have, cannot entirely escape the rescue role. Sooner or later, one's hard won experience will come to the aid of less fortunate hill-goers or, in my case, sheep.

I recently saw a newspaper article concerning a man who had been presented with an award for rescuing our woolly friends. He was warmly praised; his courage, humanity and resourcefulness rightly lauded. But what about me?! I feel quite resentful recalling the number of times, when proceeding about my lawful occasions, my progress has been arrested by plaintive eyes staring at me from a smelly bog hole, notably on that succulent marsh between Martcrag Moor and Stake Pass. Have you ever tried unsticking a full size ewe, immersed to the eyeballs in a sphagnum bog, with, not infrequently, only half a horn to heave on? Well, I have; also not infrequently.

I've recently been catching up on the metaphysics of free will. I'd just argued myself into a position where I decided free will is possible, when I recalled my perverse inability to walk past those strangely beseeching eyes positioned with geometric precision plumb in the centre of a bog, whose juice is equalled only by its smell and whose diameter is always sufficient to provoke a topple and involuntary plunge into the black ooze. Despite being several IQ points above the average ewe, I have never been able to work out why, once its front legs begin to sink, the ewe does not engage reverse gear. There again, I don't recall ever seeing a sheep walking backwards. However, such 'rescues' have usually occupied a good hour of my time and have resulted in me subsequently entering the Salving House somewhat riper than usual.

Uncorking sheep from bogs is perhaps the least pleasant form of sheep rescue. More common is the head through or under fence situation. Nature has endowed most sheep with a barbed head. The head goes through, but the 'barbs' aka horns means it won't come out – particularly when the fool has rammed its chin

along the ground under a tight strand of wire. Of course it becomes aware of its predicament as you walk past and it recoils in alarm. Naturally, you feel guilty and ... yes, another rescue call out. A word of advice here. If you don't want to lose a finger between horn and wire, get over the fence and sit firmly on the beast. Its legs will splay and it is rendered impotent. You should also have a coherent story handy to satisfy the curious passer-by or suspicious farmer.

The rescue which sprang to mind when I read of that chap getting the award for humane service to sheep (or whatever it was) took place in my more agile days. It was, I modestly claim, a thing of skill, daring and initiative. And I think it definitely demonstrated I really do have several IQ points advantage over even quite a smart sheep.

The place was Dow Crag and I had some students under my tutelage (no, I was not instructing, at least one of them was far better than me). I can't remember the climb, it might have been Murray's. About halfway up I looked across and saw a sheep occupying a large ledge. It wasn't on a recognised route, so it was a mystery how it had got there. Clearly, it was not going to get off without a parachute. My second asked me what we might do. Assuming the practised frown and wrinkled eye of the experienced mountaineer, I said, "Nowt!". I explained any rescue attempt would entail roping down awkward ground, securing the animal and getting it and the rescuer down to the ground some 60m below. I recalled the trauma of the Tragsitz, shuddered and climbed on.

Ten days later, I was back with another group. Looking across from the same position I was astonished to see the same sheep still occupying the same ledge. However, time had wrought changes. The once abundant ledge, about 5x2m,

was now a brown tangle of heather roots. The robust Herdwick was now a woolly skeleton. What was worse ... it had that look in its eyes. In one further and potentially fatal demonstration of the implausibility of free will I sighed and gave in.

Exposing oneself to danger in the cause of one's fellow humans may be considered noble. Exposing oneself to danger in the cause of a wantonly reckless sheep may be regarded as emulating the animal's foolhardiness. The prospect of a spot of glory and a NFU medal might ameliorate such issues a bit, there again, most VCs are awarded posthumously. However, I had to admit to a sneaking regard for this animal. It must, unless falling from above, have employed considerable skill to get where it was. Unlike most sheep (and camels, too, I believe) it must also have possessed a steely will not to succumb to exposure and starvation. It had, however, neglected that important climbing dictum: don't reverse what you can't climb up.

I was fortunate to have in my team several competent young climbers well versed in rope techniques. We traversed across B Buttress and set up anchors some 100ft above the stranded sheep. I sent a second team to occupy another ledge 50ft below it; the ropes we had were not long enough to reach the ground in one lower. And now for the interesting bit.

We did not operate under the guidance (did I hear you mutter 'restrictions?') of your current Elf'n'SaveTea rules. One was left to make independent but informed decisions for oneself. So I decided my young and adventure-loving charges, much as they might want to take the sharp end, should remain safe and well anchored. Accordingly, it was I who whizzed down the rope to

introduce myself to the now rather mangy Herdwick.

It was not pleased to see me. Looking somewhere between astonished and petrified it skittered to the end of the ledge. Now, it is my belief that, if you pursue any normal sheep along a ledge, it will, when it reaches the end, just jump off. If there is another ledge it can jump onto, all well and good. If not, it will shout 'Geronimo' and jump off anyway. They're all fatalists at heart. As I had already expended time and effort I really hoped it would buck the trend and not fling itself into space, not yet anyway.

I now appraised our communal ledge. About 15ft long and 6ft wide, it was fairly flat with a kind of 3ft sloping wall at one end. The playing surface was not good – a tangle of chewed heather roots. I reminded myself I was circa 150ft above the scree and stayed tied on. I guessed the starving animal would be so feeble as to stagger weakly into my arms. I was mistaken. This was a determined, adrenalin-fuelled individual. As I moved towards it, cooing gently, it shot past me with the agility of a Welsh scrum-half. I watched with interest as it approached the other end of the ledge at terminal velocity; but no! It stopped abruptly.

Nietzsche said, if you stare into the abyss for long enough, the abyss will stare back. This mangy creature had been staring into the abyss for 10 days and decided it didn't like what it saw. It wasn't leaving its ledge. However, I still proceeded with caution: tippy-toe forwards, still cooing, then a swooping 2 arm grab as it flew past. I was still playing sport back then and was rather miffed when this sheep sold me a dummy several times, then stood glowering triumphantly from the far reaches of the ledge.

Now, hubris raised its dangerous head. I decided I had become fully cognisant of the

spatial dimensions of the sporting arena. As the rope I was attached to was hampering my movement, I unclipped. This time, as I made another unsuccessful but extra vigorous dive, my rear foot at the outer edge went through an unseen gap. The abyss greedily investigated my flailing limb and my stomach made a brief journey to my mouth. I clipped back on.

I sat on the heather for a time out and engaged in a little reverie of an eschatological nature. Quite unexpectedly, metaphysics gave way to empiricism; I recollected that, each time this wily animal had run towards the end of the ledge with the sloping wall, it bolted to the top, then fell, not over the other side, but back down under the force of gravity. Eureka!

In games playing, if you can predict your opponent's next move, you win. Following our now well established pas de deux, I manoeuvred my adversary to the wall end of the court. Gathering speed, the ewe shot up the wall and then .. fell back. Captured by gravity, the beast was momentarily powerless. At this precise moment, with the speed of a racing snake, I flung myself astride its bony back. Its legs splayed out in a most satisfactory manner and - remember Beryl Reid - it lay prostitute beneath me.

I rapidly deployed full length slings lark's foot fashion fore and aft to ensure it could not slip out. Up to now the beast had resembled a fighting bull without the horns, but once flattened it seemed to say 'fair cop, Guv'.

The rest was almost a formality. Though trussed like an insane psychopath, still this stubborn bag of bones glared at me from the edge of the abyss. I really enjoyed the next bit: I kicked it off the ledge and into space. Rapidly it was lowered to the team below and from them to the screes near the stretcher box. . Safely belayed, I

watched its release from captivity. Once free, it shot like an Exocet missile to the nearest patch of grass. I have never seen a more rapacious herbivore. After a few minutes gorging it turned and threw a look of the utmost disgust and contempt at its deliverers before trotting off towards Goats Hawse.

I wish I could say that I have resolutely abstained from sheep rescue ever since ... alas for free will! I do remember, however, consuming my lamb chop with extra relish that night.

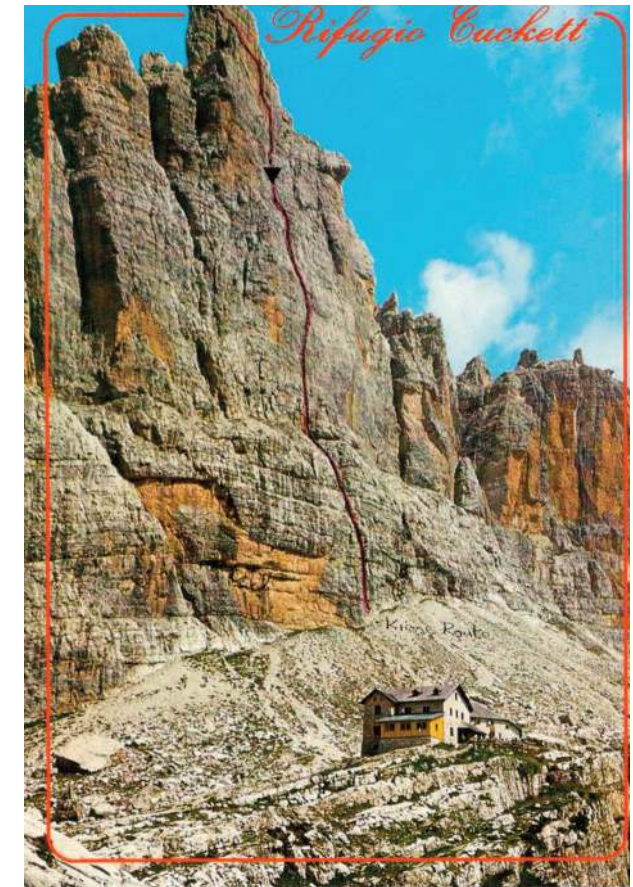
Addendum: An internet search suggests the famous escapologist Harry Houdini would have liked the Tragsitz. It was designed in the 1950's for lowering casualties down big rock & ice walls in the Alps. Endless training with this piece of kit by Mountain Rescue teams came to an abrupt end in the 1970's when a fatality occurred during an exercise in North Wales - the episode related here dates from 1975.

## A Lucky Escape in the Dolomites.

Memories of intense experiences, even in days long ago, remain vivid. In August 1993, during the FRCC Brenta Dolomites meet, Barry and I set out from the Tuckett Hut to tackle the Kiene Route, a popular classic on the south face of the Castelletto Inferiore. We were feeling confident having rung the Campanile Basso summit bell at the end of the (for me), intimidating 19 pitch Fehrman Route a couple of days earlier. We anticipated an easier outing on the 12 pitch Kiene since according to the guide book\*, the only grade five climbing was on the first couple of chimney pitches - although slight worries in my mind were the five minus slabs which awaited just below the summit. Most of the route is diédres, grooves and walls, made less serious by a couple of ledges which cross the face. Classic Dolomite climbs are exhilarating but at the same time, a little disturbing because although Italians generally secure stances with well-cemented rings, one is never quite sure whether the awkward moves are protected by a shiny bolt or a rusting piton.

The chimney entry pitch was dank and slightly greasy but Barry took it in his stride. We were the only climbers on the route and progress was steady as we moved up to easier grade four ground. Unlike the Fehrmann which is consistently steep and exposed, we were relieved at the top of pitch three to reach a blocky terrace, a welcome tension disperser on a face climb. Pitches five and six, a large flake, followed by grooves went well and led to an airy stance. I established myself, protected by a couple of cemented rings and Barry tackled pitch seven, which according to the guide book, was a 45m

John Moore and Barry Chislett.



(IV+) groove/crack system, ending with some short walls. Climbing steadily but not fast, he had run out about 35m of rope when I heard a whine and saw a single rock, about the size of a water melon, whistle past about 5 metres out in space. Then there was silence and no more movement above. I waited as the minutes ticked by. Then I shouted: no response. After perhaps 20 minutes a feeling grew that something was seriously wrong. There had been no shout, no fall - the rope had

not even twitched in my stich plate. Everything had just stopped. There we were, alone in the middle of a 250m face.

Now it was a matter of what to do. There was still no sound or movement above so after a fair amount of thought, I secured Barry with one rope then carefully untied the other and threaded it through the belay stance ring then re-tied so in theory either of us could fall something less than a rope length before the load came on some combination of the runners and ring. Then I put a prussik loop from my harness on to one descending rope and set about following it up with the free rope dangling as a loop below me. I climbed to Barry's first runner and leaving his rope still clipped in, I transferred the prussik above the runner, continued to the next runner and repeated the exercise. Eventually I reached Barry who was dangling limply from a peg. Luckily for both of us, he must have just clipped both ropes into an extender on a peg when he was hit by the stone, and frictional drag and rope jam had shielded me from the impact of the fall. He was semi-conscious. I clipped him on to the peg.

At that point things took a turn for the better. By good fortune we were not much more than 10 metres from the next stance and above that I could hear people on what turned out to be the traverse ledge of the descent route from the summit across the upper face. Leaving Barry secured to the runner, I continued, carefully, taking the rope attached to Barry's harness with me, to the next stance. When I reached it, I took in the slack and tied him off then untied and recovered the ropes one at a time by drawing them back up through the abandoned runners and the lower stance ring.

Now I had two ropes available and a very dazed companion 10 metres below. Above the

stance was an easier, twenty metre pitch to the descent traverse ledge above. I climbed to the ledge where I encountered a couple of Italians who set about helping me to untangle my cat's cradle and extricate Barry. My memory is hazy but he recovered enough to be brought up on a tight rope. We all drew breath. There was a lot of discussion about what to do next. We decided since Barry was groggy but mobile the best thing was to get him down the grade two descent climb as quickly as possible and in a combined climbing and lowering effort that is what we did. Eventually, we got a very shaken but apparently recovering, although as I now realise, seriously concussed man down. One makes some strange decisions under pressure – common sense tells me now that we should have tied him on and summoned help but in the heat of the moment one does not always do the sensible thing. Barry was courageous throughout and never complained in what must have been a painful experience.

Another piece of good luck was his helmet. It was an almost brand new red Petzl which he had borrowed from someone on the campsite and which now had a hole in it, big enough to put a couple of fingers through. He recovered after a few days rest at the campsite. I don't remember feeling shock until the following day – such is the power of adrenaline. It seems likely that the single rock that did the damage was dislodged by someone traversing the descent ledge. It is a sad twist of fate that the only stone to fall should have done such damage.

Sometimes fate deals us a good hand. In Barry's case, the good fortune lay in an almost new red Petzl helmet and the descent ledge with the Italians on it. In mine, adrenaline turned me into a 4+ solo climber in the middle of a Dolomite

face. I am very grateful and count this experience as yet another of my nine lives. I need to conserve carefully the few which remain. We also offer our thanks to the unknown Italians and whoever lent Barry the helmet.

Barry is a great companion and I am grateful to have enjoyed his company and benefited from his skill on rock. I admire enormously his stoical fortitude throughout the experience.

Footnote.

I must have been in a strange state of mind because two days later, I persuaded Allan Hargreaves to come with me and we re-climbed the descent route to the rescue ledge and completed the last three pitches to the summit. The top five minus slabs were not as bad as I had feared.

Photo: Castelletto Inferiore, Kiene Route, Brenta Dolomites. Incident point marked.

\*Classic Dolomite Climbs. Köhler and Memmel: Bâton Wicks. 1999. ISBN 1-898573-34-4

## Alpine Road Trip - Chasing the weather

### A brief flash back

My partner (Clare) and I tried something new last year (2016): rather than using a car we hired a van for a road trip to the alps. As with many such things the idea came from necessity. We were simply looking at carrying too much luggage to afford flying out. We wanted to carry a range of gear that would let us do whatever route or climb we fancied on any given day. A long story made short - As a foot passenger on P&O there is no luggage limit and you can hire a van at the ferry terminal in Calais. Neither of our small cars seemed right for the job and a van gave us the option of emergency shelter. So we set off across Europe following the weather forecast in a Renault Traffic. We crossed the Alps East -West over the narrow passes in our van and it proved to work out really well.

### Itchy feet

After spending a month of 2015 and again 2016 in the Alps, Clare and I couldn't quite manage on just a long weekend in Chamonix this summer so needed to think of something more. We quickly settled on a van-based road trip being needed again as we wanted a cheap trip where we could get more committing routes done. We also wanted to have the flexibility to go where the weather was good. So started the planning, guide book trawling, UKC stalking, questioning people at walls, interrogating guides, examining maps and general excited prep of such things.

One country stood out for us - Switzerland. We'd driven through it in 2016 and fell in love

*Phil Behan*

with a couple of areas. That year the weather had limited us to cragging from the Furka Pass and in Saas Fee. It wasn't hard to find guides who agreed with us about the places to go either which added to the feeling of unfinished business!

And so we set off...

### Furka what?

After the best part of three days behind the wheel of (mostly in a giant Iveco Daily) we were somewhere useful. The Furka Pass forms somewhat of an East - West divide in Southern Switzerland, while forming a steep wall at the end of the Rhône Valley. There's also some decent climbing to be had here. The nearby Grimsel Pass gets a little more British footfall, but we were the only Brits we saw over a few days.

Our first route was the SE Grat of Galenstock: a lovely AD+ route approached from the road or Sidelen Hut. It proved to have better climbing than billed across online forums - the much complained about choss was easily avoided in favour of good solid rock. There was a great measure of exposure on the rock, that contrasted well with the snowy summit ridge. Descending down the 'normal route' is definitely pretty, if much longer than the alternative abseils, but mostly gave us the chance to get up close and personal with the labyrinth-like Rhône Glacier.

Having been thirteen hours on our feet the day before, we took a more relaxed day sport climbing near Gletsch at the base of the pass the following day. Good rock and fine routes taken at

a very leisurely pace proved just the antidote to sore legs and renal failure from the day before (until we got chased off by a thunderstorm).

Fancying ourselves as proper fast and light types, our next target was the Gross Furkahorn ESE Grat (IV). After a depressingly early start we made our way back up onto the glacier and up to the route. Sadly as the alpenglow faded so did Clare's will to fight the bug she'd been harbouring since the start of our trip. At this point we were a short way into the climb and moving quite well, having taken a harder variation - the decision to descend was not made easily. We abseiled off and headed for the van. It seemed better to retreat and look after ourselves, but it was shaping up to be another great route. Sadly the weather was on the turn as we got back to the van - so we decided to drive for several hours across Switzerland, as you do.

### Bregaglia to Italia

The next day started with bleary eyed views of Piz Bernina and the famous Biancograt from the Julier Pass in the far East of Switzerland. This wasn't something that went unnoticed as we had Piz Bernina on the list of 4000ers to tick off on the road trip. The Biancograt in particular had taken our fancy and so we eyed the forecast keenly.

We took the opportunity to go and explore a new area. We chose to have a look at Albigna and it turns out half of the Northumbrian Mountaineering Club (NMC) as well as the FRCC have climbed here (see previous NMC & FRCC articles for useful and interesting write ups). For those that haven't, the area is accessed by a cable car from the valley floor leading up to a dam with some stunning views. The climbing is made up of a good mix of long bolted multi pitch routes with



Clare on the snowy summit ridge of the Galenstock

a great atmosphere - it also catches the weather well so you can get no lovely views at all! We managed to get the complete spectrum of weather conditions, which was starting to become a theme to the trip. In fact it was enough of an issue that we decided it was best not to have an epic at 4000m on Piz Bernina in the coming days. Having put aside three days to do the Biancograt there was one obvious alternative



in the area to take its place - the Piz Badile. Although it also required three days it was also at a lower altitude and offered a low level return to the car on day three should the weather turn.

After a night over the Italian border eating far more than is reasonable (and for next-to-no expenditure) we squeezed (a little too literally) our van up the little road to the car park for the north side of Piz Badile. If this road is still accessible and hasn't been destroyed by the recent landslide the walks from the Val Bondasca would be highly recommended as the area is stunning. If you believe the guide book, the Sciora Hut also gives access to a wealth of nice routes (we heard the approaches were iffy with loose rock at the time). We chose to walk in to the Sasc Furà Hut (our base) more directly giving access to our target without putting ourselves in the way of potential rockfall - our target being the Nordkante (3305m, D), which also turns out to have been done by half of the NMC!

The climb got off to an inauspicious start. Rain was pouring down as we dragged ourselves into the breakfast room for a 4 a.m. start. Thankfully things settled by 5 a.m. and with a delayed departure we headed for the route. Despite this we were rapidly upon the the teams that had suffered the last of the rain. Clare gets a special mention at this point for impressively rapid change overs and impeccable belay organisation. The issue with starting late is that you're at the back of the queue and this impacted us in two ways: we were slowed by the other groups and victim to the guides following up with clients that tied us in knots. All said and done the climbing was great. The 750m ridge is brilliantly exposed and the rock lovely. The only hardship was the 10+ abseils to get back down the other side to our chosen bivvy site... don't worry there's

another very nice hut you can use instead and carry far less gear too!

The following morning we made an unconventional decision. We chose to descend into Northern Italy and take 2 buses and 2 trains back around the mountain. The normal way is to go over a pass to the West back to the Sasc Furà Hut or to take a torturous abseil back down the Nordkante. Our choice descended a pleasant valley to a popular tourist trap and picnic spot for Italians and did not require us to carry the ice axe and crampons we'd have needed for the pass. We also skipped the pass because reports were that it was in bad condition and that there had been a recent fatality because of this. I'd say that our choice was a good one (only to be improved upon by having a car at each side like one Italian group or by getting a helicopter home like another - this actually happened).

### Oops

Okay so the next bit was a bit of a booboo - we mistook the weather forecast in Western Switzerland as being good for a couple of days. Keen to tick off a couple of routes at the top of the Klein Matterhorn lift in Zermatt we set off through Northern Italy and over yet more alpine passes back to Switzerland. In actual fact the French, Swiss, Austrian & most of the Italian Alps had a chance stormy weather. As we approached Sion the inevitable happened. Thankfully a quick check showed that the Aosta Valley was clear. Clare was very keen to try Gran Paradiso so we hot footed it there over the St-Bernard Pass (the tunnel is €75 for a van). The huts on Gran Paradiso were full on the night of our planned attempt, which was an opportunity of sorts: this is the only circumstance in which you can camp or bivvy in



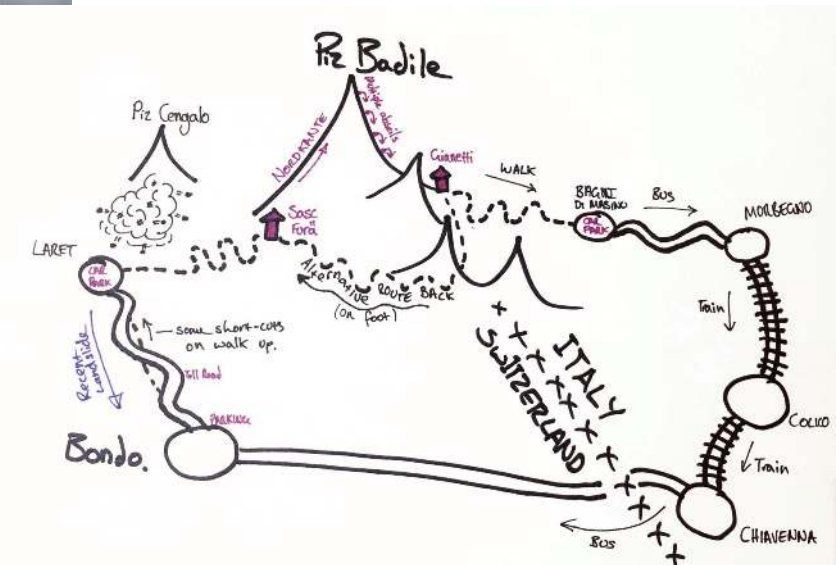
Above: North Ridge of the Piz Badile.

Right: Map of the complete route

the Parco Nazionale Gran Paradiso... bring on another chilly night under the tarp half way up an alp!

The day started colder than expected, but after coffee and porridge the overnight gear was stashed away before the first head torches appeared from the Chabod Hut below. We met the first party from the hut on the path and walked with them to the glacier under torch light.

This year the glaciers have been pretty open and there has been talk from guides of avoiding some routes. This was evident for us with some pretty awkward crevasses to cross and circumvent as we climbed, but no major difficulties under foot. The weather had other ideas - the temperature dropped quite markedly and the wind gradually built with the odd flurry of snow. It's at times like this that the tourist industry surrounding these routes becomes most obvious. At approx. 200m from the top we were in weather and visibility that was, at best, poor. Some of the clients with guides clearly had little or no experience with their kit and were suffering. To continue in the snake to the rocky top would have been easy, but had we lost them the navigation would have become exceptionally challenging. Paid to do so, the guides around us pressed on, but remarking how rubbish it was and how this was a day they wished they



could be at home (especially the one with hot aches). We decided to call it quits - this was not a day to be at 4000m unless someone was paying you a substantial sum to do so. Sitting in the Chabod Hut drinking coffee and hot chocolate neither of us regretted our decision as we watched the clouds and wind pummel the summit. And so we happily trotted down yet another alpine path back to the valley floor and our now beloved van... to do another long drive.

### Back over the St Bernard

Recognising that the time remaining for our trip was limited (and the cost of the Zermatt lifts required a multi day expedition - e.g. 100 CHF for the Klein Matterhorn!), our Zermatt plans were shelved for another year. Instead we headed for Saas Fee and a better forecast than that in Italy. More importantly it took us a step closer to Calais!

Having been either climbing or driving every day of our trip we thought it time for more of a rest in Saas. Our first day started after a well-earned lie in. The via ferrata on the Jegihorn fitted the bill nicely for a stretch of the legs and a bit of interest - we especially enjoyed the rather high suspension bridge that can be bypassed if one isn't a fan of exposure. We also encountered a first for me: one or two places had pieces of rock bolted to the cliff face to make holds. All in all this was a fun route, taking about half of the billed time and with great views. A useful note: staying in Saas gets you a tourist pass that gets you on all but a couple of lifts for free - including the one to the route mentioned here.

For the last day of our trip we didn't feel like just jumping straight in the van so we stayed in Saas and played on a local sport crag ticking off a few nice routes. Clare even upped her lead

grade! The routes here aren't all easy to find in a guidebook. Throughout our trip we relied heavily on the Schweiz Plaisir guidebooks and this day was similar. There is also a useful guide/pamphlet produced by the local guides in Saas (available in the tourist office). There are abundant warnings of the dangers of hydro-electric releases at some of the crags - ours had a couple over our last day and they were well contained within the channel, but definitely off-putting the first time and worth keeping an eye on! We found the shaded spot and cool air off the water a comfy spot that was well worth a visit.

What followed was a lot of driving back to Newcastle, but we can assure you it was most definitely worth it!

### Central Buttress

Trembling, breathless heave  
alone, through fabled castles;  
whisper, eyes betray;  
joyful sprint in upward weave,  
hush, till accolades bestowed.

### Botterill's Slab

You were poised, cat-like,  
assured, while harbour beckoned,  
pawed over scant holds;  
uncoiled, sprang up to the light,  
firm haven beneath your feet.

### Moss Ghyll Grooves (1926)

Alluring groove, quit  
for sunlit edge, rough-hewn,  
elegant side-step,  
a dizzy finesse ventured  
that faith alone can undo.

*Simon Jefferies*

## Nowt but a droning thing.

'The next day we tramped for nine hours through drizzle, Duncan joshing Phil about looking like 'an old bumbly from the Fell and Rock Club, out for a wet weekend in the Lake District'.

Higher than the Eagle Soars, Stephen Venables, 2007, p250 1.

### The Origin of Bumbly and a concise field guide.

The climbing term Bumbly is of course derived from the Bumble Bee. Its origins may be clouded in the climbing literature, being more of a vernacular label appearing on web forums, in some esoteric articles, (e.g.'Turoids, Bumblyes, Punters and Players' by Mick Ward, On the Edge magazine, 1990's) and as a term of abuse or self-deprecation at the crag. Like all definitions – 'Difficulty', 'Character-forming', 'Training' to name a few, it covers a wide spectrum, but to get to the heart of the concept you only have to skim the Web for 5 minutes to get the etymology of the entomology – or vice versa? Posterior about face or not, here's a few lesser known facts and some spurious analogies with those well-meaning, oft-despised but generally harmless climbing Bumblyes.

The Bumbly bee or *Bombus* is a tribe of the family Apidae (pronounced Happy Day, of course, why would it be other?). They are generally plump and densely furry, are larger and more stout-bodied than honey bees, and more rounded in the abdomen. Some sport a 'pollen basket' – a bare shiny area surrounded by a fringe of hairs, their hind legs are hairy and they use long hairy tongues to lap up nectar liquid. Many

*Dave Hume*

of the species have evolved "Müllerian Mimicry", where the different Bumblyes in a region begin to resemble each other, so that a young predator need only learn to avoid them once.

One species, the Cuckoo Bumble, can mix relatively unobtrusively with the leaner, faster and more agile Honeys and even wasps (Lepidoptera).

Bumblyes are active in conditions where honey bees stay at home, and can readily absorb heat from even weak sunshine. This explains why Bumblyes are found in higher latitudes and altitudes than the sleeker, more agile honey bees.

Bumblyes do not have ears, and it is not known whether or not they can hear. They must warm up their bodies considerably to get airborne at low ambient temperatures. There has been much academic aerodynamic debate to say that Bumblyes should not be able to fly.

*Bombus* and their close relation *Meliponini* (stingless bees) are reckoned to be between 81 and 96 million years old.

The word *Bombus* derives from the Latin to hum, buzz, drone or move ineptly or flounderingly. The earliest literary reference appears in 1486 in "A Treatyse of Fysshynge with an Angle" by Juliana Berners, referred to as the 'Humble Bee'. Modern Bumblyes do not have this attribute, so the term has fallen into disrepute.

If you think that all of the above is an invention, a literary ploy to enable the writer to make fun of the Climbing Bumbly, please visit Wikipedia to find that the facts stated are not fake.

### Characteristics.

Where does that leave us? – with a worryingly close description of the modern climbing Bumbly. Read it again if you must. In summary – millions of years old, stouter than average, hairy, slow to get going, avoided by young predators, possibly deaf, needs a long time to warm up, not designed to fly, evolved to lap up amber liquids, inept of movement and a tendency to hum or drone endlessly. Consider this extract which describes an encounter with a classic Bumbly:

"The word Bumbly had passed me by. Now it passes as my identity. I belong to a category. The characteristics are supposedly "male pseudo-climber, grey beard, male pattern baldness, (sometimes an all-over pattern), a 44 inch waist, (more laundry than washboard), XXL harness loaded with Hexes and prized MOACs, red socks, hairy cannonball calves, checked shirt. The star Bumbly also has a tubular woolly hat, and a giant sandwich box smelling of Scotch eggs."

I met such a specimen a few years ago on Shepherd's Crag before I knew I was one myself. I was doing what Bumblyes often do - introducing a young person to real climbing up to a Very Difficult standard. Thanks to 19th Century climbers, Bumblyes have access to suitably flattering descriptions of severity with which to impress lay people. It was my son's third day climbing, and I had decided he was ready to lead his first route. Admittedly this is not typical Bumbly behaviour - a 2 year apprenticeship watching the mentor go through his repertoire of Diffs and V.Diffs is preferred, even if it involves climbing the same routes several times.

However, back to the anecdote. (A speciality of the species). I had talked my impatient youth up the first pitch, insisting on at least 12 runners, just for the practice you understand. Arriving at a tree

belay, he met what I now recognise as a Grand Master Bumbly. This huge silverback male was comfortably ensconced on the ledge with 4 points of attachment, one for each of the apprehensive group below. The result of this Masterclass in safety was that the tree was fully encased by a giant sling condom. The helpful King of the Bumblyes took over the instruction of my lad and before half an hour of detailed demonstration had whizzed by, my son was ready to take in 40 metres of slack and bring me up on a correctly tight rope, none of this 'slacklining' rubbish I hear about these days.

By mid-afternoon we had verbally prepared our now shared trainee to set off on the second pitch. A gentle sparring conversation ensued between we two stalwarts, each of us dropping in increasingly outrageous suggestions of what we had (allegedly) done and how much of a sacrifice it was to be here on this mere V. Diff, when we were obviously better suited to flashing up "classics" like Footless, White Noise, or having a look at Fear of Failure (what a wimpish name eh?). By now my new friend had produced an accessory which out-bumbled me completely - a magnificently carved Meerschaum pipe. This polished chimney emitted clouds of Rough Shag. I have since been told that this still refers to a popular climbing activity, but none of my contemporaries seems to know what it means.

In a cloud of aromatic exhaust, I chatted on in a mildly competitive way, hinting that I too might have known Joe, Don (what a character, eh!), various Rons, Pete, Al, Ray, Bill and Dave, young Johnny and Jerry, Sir Chris, Trevor ..... and wondered just how much of a risk to take. What about coyly asking if he knew my name? Had he done any of my routes? Did he know I had a gully named after me?

Suddenly I remembered my trainee leader. Apologetically I interrupted the bullshit session to yell in a deliberately understated way "You might get something in about there...I seem to remember a Rock 6 will do..." The youth hung off a remarkably instinctive-looking two finger lock-off, (hard to find on Brown Slabs) one foot on a smear and looked down at me 70 feet below with a tolerant smile. He vanished over the top, and one minute later he's taking in, no proper calls or anything. I looked at King Bumbly - Kids, eh? How do they ever hope to become like us? He nods disapprovingly at my liberal weakness, disappears in a fresh cumulus, and starts instructing his own flock as I am jerked off my perch, scrabbling to release the belay before I'm upside down.

#### Range and Habitat:

It was inevitable that the above encounter took place at one of the Honey-pot sites for Bumblebees. Their classic habitats used to include more mountainous crags, such as Gable, Bowfell, Pavey, Combe Ghyll and Pillar but the declining state of the species has limited their range. Nowadays you are only likely to encounter a brace of them at Shepherd's, Middlefell Buttress, lunching and giving advice at Wallowbarrow, Castle Rock or fondling the hardware in Needle Sports.

Thanks to localised global dampening and cooling, Bumblebees have increasingly indulged in seasonal migration. It is now common, and many of them are indeed so, to find them as far afield as Greece, Sicily, Spain, France, Croatia, Morocco, Italy, or Jordan in the Spring and Autumn, and in their winter plumage in Norway, the Alps, Scotland, and even Northumberland in the coldest months.

In locations such as Kalymnos or Sicily, they can be heard before they are seen, droning on.

Listen for the sound "-oscopy" as they exchange tales of multiple intrusive medical procedures, or the term "replacement" in relation to joints. You can also detect them by smell, if you are familiar with Sloane's Linament or Germolene. Sittings are mostly of small assemblies, extracting the health benefits from amber nectar. The entomologist's hypothesis that they cannot hear is borne out by the shortest of observations – individuals vie to make more noise than others, and none appear to listen carefully. This hearing impairment is, however, an evolutionary advantage during the sleep cycles that take place in shared quarters. The debate about whether Bumblebees should be able to fly can be settled in sport climbing settings – they can. It is possibly the only habitat where they do so, and a fully airborne Bumblebee is an awesome sight to behold, but something to evade at all costs. (Avoidance and evasion are apparently two different actions). At airport security, their cover is quickly blown by scanner alerts as they walk through the metal detectors waving their medical clearance letters, or when hand luggage is examined and half a trad rack is disgorged amongst the quickdraws – "Brought it just in case".

It is not clear if the incidence of Climbing Bumblebees is distributed equally across nationalities, ages and genders – to date, the author has never seen a female Bumblebee, or an Italian one. If any readers have new information on this, please report any sightings and associated behaviours.

Closer to home, their famed Müllerian Mimicry has led to reports that some have been seen Bouldering. Others have exchanged their old plumage for Honeybee lookalike attire and gear, although a few recidivists have sloughed neither outer nor inner garments for years. Nor indeed their equipment. Or their habits.

#### Mating habits.

Not any more. (This may explain the steady population decline.)

#### The Future: (See Mating Habits)

It is highly likely that Climbing Bumblebees are an endangered species. Regular visits to climbing and bouldering walls show few signs of a revival of the type. Easier trad routes have been trashed into submission or neglected, despite valiant efforts by volunteers and those who cannot climb anything else. The international climbing community does not seem interested in building on our tradition and the younger generation is simply getting too good, too fast. The most positive outlook is that medical and orthopaedic advances may prolong the active lives of the Last of the Droning Things.

Apidae everyone.

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2. "A Treatise of Fysshynge with an Angle" by Juliana Berners
3. Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bumblebee>
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5. Pocketbook of Orthopaedics and Fractures (Churchill Pocketbooks), Ronald McRae

Above: *Bombus Originalis*  
Below: Unknown Bumblebee ritual during seasonal migration



## Central Buttress of Beinn Eighe

Some SMC types were staying in the hut. "We should learn a thing or two from these boys," Dave whispered. "They seem to know what they're doing."

They were certainly motivated. Their plan for the next day was to climb a mixed route in the Cuillin and be back in Aviemore in time to have dinner with the rest of their club. From Karn House, Glen Brittle is a three-hour drive, each way.

And they seemed to have form. A year or two before, they had been to Torridon on a similar day trip and climbed Beinn Eighe's Central Buttress. We marvelled at their energy, their commitment, their optimism.

Dave was right: we should take a leaf out of their book. They were probably right to head to the northwest where the weather was set to be better. These routes they were talking about were known to be classic climbs. We weren't afraid of an early start or a bit of driving. We mulled it over.

"Maybe we should go and do Central Buttress like they did", one of us said. Before we could talk ourselves out of it we had packed our bags and headed to bed.

The alarm woke us at 3.00am and we stumbled into the kitchen and forced down porridge and tea. The SMC boys were up ahead of us and shot out of the hut while we were still eating. Our admiration for them grew. By 3.30 we were in the van and slithering along the snowy roads. A drunk staggering home along the centre of Aviemore's main street briefly delayed us, but we negotiated him cautiously and were soon on our way north and west.

*Alan Dickinson*

The large number of cars already parked at the start of the walk-in was slightly dispiriting, but we tried not to let it trouble us. "Those SMC boys wouldn't be put off by this sort of thing," we told each other and struck out along the path. "No doubt they'd have been jogging this part," we mused. Our idols' powers were ballooning by now in our imaginations. They probably trained throughout the autumn by carrying anvils up the 'down' escalator, and doing one-arm chin-ups under cold showers.

As we came round and up to the corrie lip the day was dawning, and the Triple Buttresses appeared in all their glory. Torridon is magnificent in the summer, but even better under snow, and the cliffs of Beinn Eighe are some of Scotland's finest. With the first light of a clear winter's morning now reaching them, the view across Loch Coire Mhic Fhearchair had never been finer. We pushed on round the loch and up to the cliff. No-one was ahead of us on our route.

Pigott's Route on Central Buttress takes what the guidebook calls 'a magnificent line up the crest of the buttress'. It is a dramatic, conspicuous route. For readers who have not visited Beinn Eighe, as well as there being three huge cliffs that dominate the corrie, each one is split further into three tiers: one of sandstone below, and two of quartzite above. Large terraces define these. Stunning winter routes of all grades tackle the buttresses and come into condition reliably. We waded up the steep soft snow that led to the toe of the cliff.

A disappointing first pitch on turf that was not well frozen succumbed to a confident approach

by Dave. That part is best forgotten, as the rest of the route was superb.

The second pitch involved enjoyable climbing of about Grade V up a groove that was never too steep and had helpful chimney positions in places. Stretching our 60m ropes brought us just to the top of the First Tier. It was Dave's turn to lead again on Pitch 3, which again covered enjoyable mixed terrain. Relatively easy ground lay ahead, and we moved together on a long pitch to the top of the Second Tier.

I took a belay on the terrace and started pulling the rope up. While I did so I drank in the scenery: the clear cobalt sky, the snow-covered sandstone hills of Torridon, the bright sea and lochs. That view contained no hint of human activity. I glanced above me as a large bird soared into view over the cliffs. A buzzard, perhaps? No, this thing was colossal. And look at those outstretched finger-like feathers on the wingtips. We watched in amazement while the golden eagle soared round in circles just above our heads.

The route was going about as well as it possibly could but there was a tier still to go, and the SMC Boys had spoken darkly about the chimney that lay above us. Dave approached it tentatively via a couple of corners, and entered its tight embrace.

I've always been a fan of chimneys. I like the extra dimension of having rock on both sides; I like the intense exertion to wriggle just a few inches higher, then accidentally landing in an unexpected position of complete rest. I like the bit where you realise you were facing the wrong way up until this point and have to make desperate manoeuvres to perform a 180° rotation; I even like the realisation five minutes later that you had been facing the right way the first time and decide to turn around again. There's security in a

chimney: comforting protection from the exposure and the weather.

But Dave is a tall man, and tall men hate chimneys. They lose sight of the ends of their limbs, and they can't get their bodies into comfortable positions. Extra reach is no help to you when you're wedged and unable to move.

And so it was with a measure of trepidation that he slid his right shoulder inside and began to uge. It was with a note of concern in his voice that he called down to say that it really was rather narrow. And it was with every appearance of nervousness that he went up and down the thing three or four times.

I hoped he'd hurry up. I could see him still but this light was not going to last for long. I willed him to get on with it, and after another attempt he did.

We pushed and pulled the sacks up it and then I followed. It tried to swallow my axe for a while, but I wasn't standing for any nonsense like that and fought with it to get the tool back. There are good positive hooks on the left wall and without too much difficulty I was up on the ledge to join Dave.

For some reason it was the SMC Boys' description of the chimney that had lodged in our minds but I later dimly recalled them saying that the crux was above it. That certainly turned out to be true, and the excellent final pitch fell to me to lead. You outflank an overhanging groove by a nifty sequence of moves first diagonally right and then horizontally left across a steep wall on delicate little hooks. Fortunately the protection on this traverse is excellent and plentiful, so there is no undue cause for concern. Now climbing by torchlight I completed the traverse, joined and climbed the groove above, and led on to reach the plateau just before the rope ran out.

Dave joined me and we congratulated each other on a stunning climb. We coiled the ropes, packed our gear and then turned off our lights to look at the stars. The night was still and moonless, the sky completely clear, and a million twinkling diamonds put on a breathtaking display. The stripe of the Milky Way arced above our heads lighting up the snow beneath our feet and everything was silent.

We shouldered our sacks and stomped off to find the descent, thinking things couldn't get any better. As it turned out we were wrong, because a huge glissade lay ahead, taking us down from the mountaintop to valley level in no time.

We were back to the van around 8.00pm, about the time that the SMC Boys were getting cracking with the washing up back at Karn House and beginning to turn their thoughts towards how to fill the rest of their evening. Some caber-juggling, perhaps. Bench-pressing a snowplough. That sort of thing. We would never be able to live up to heroes like these, but maybe by thinking a bit more like they did we could get more from our winter trips. We determined that we would try.

FRCC members Alan Dickinson and David Menadue climbed Pigott's Route, also known as Central Buttress (VI 7) on Beinn Eighe on 6th January 2018. The 'SMC Boys', who included FRCC member Steve Elliot, climbed Gully D (V 6) on Sgurr Thearlaich the same day.

You won't remember him.

You won't remember him. He wouldn't have left  
A note to say where he's gone, not ever.  
He'd say: if they find me they find me.  
I remember him.

Another beer? Won't say no.  
I said I knew him well, in the days  
at Duddon Farm. We climbed a lot  
together, in those days.

After the War. On hawser-laid ropes, of course,  
but nylon. They'd take a fall.  
He took a few falls. I caught him  
more than once. 'Never take your hand  
Off the dead rope'. I went away;  
he stayed, but went for harder routes.

Then Alps, then the Greater Ranges.  
Climbing career, just like a job.

You didn't know him? No, but you've heard?  
Read some of the books? Not his books.  
He couldn't write to save his life. Not even  
letters home. He had a wife. His son,  
Malcolm, I think, grew up and went  
into a bank. Not like his Dad, he didn't  
really know his Dad.

Yes, another half. Dry stuff this talking  
about the old days. It's like  
he never grew old. We all grew up,  
went into jobs, to college. Climbed a bit  
at weekends, after doing the lawn.

The Greater Ranges! Africa, Peru,  
Himalaya. Days when you couldn't  
just hire a guide to drag you up  
the voie normale on Everest.

No he didn't try the big one.  
Saving it up. Or perhaps not really  
one of the crowd. Not a team man,  
but a great climber. A friend.

He died young. Well he was forty five.  
Not a youth, but never old.  
I'm twice his age. I guess you know.  
You looked up the year I joined  
The Alpine Club. Can't lie about my age.  
Wouldn't want to. I used to leave  
a note to say where I'd gone  
when I went out alone. More in hope  
of luck than hope of rescue.

I suppose I had my luck. Not sure  
what I did with the years since.  
Forty five years. Where I'm going now  
you don't leave a note. Yes put that down.

Put it all down. I'm not one  
to dwell on memories, but put it down:  
I didn't try my luck, not like him.  
But you don't remember him?

*Rosemary Scott  
November 2nd 2017*

## The Hills are Alive

A hundred metres or so ahead of me on the track contouring the southern flank of Sgurr Eilde Beag, John had stopped to put on his crampons. 'Reckon we should just head straight up from here, rather than follow the track.' We were on the way to traverse Binneins Mor and Beag in the Mamores. A directissima seemed like the obvious thing to do, though likely to be something of a grim slog.

I followed suit and set off after him making a beeline for the summit.....crunch, crunch, wheeze, wheeze. And then it kicked in, 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic'; not the whole tune, just eight bars or so of the damned thing. Not any old version, either, but a stripped-down rendering originating, I think, from a Fisher-Price musical box we had when our children, all now grown adults, were young. My default 'earworm'. I can't explain precisely why 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic'. The tune itself holds no particular memories, although I would have heard it in the background many many times thirty-odd years ago. That's just the way it is, my regular companion 'on the hill'.

We finally arrived at the top of the ridge to be met with a stunning Alpine vista. The traverse of the Binneins that followed was fantastic but hard work in the circumstances, what with calf-deep snow, by times crunchy sugar or soft powder and a biting wind. The Teddy Bears' Picnic was with me on and off through the day, mostly hovering somewhere in the background, but at other times very much in the foreground, occasionally crowded out by other ditties including a short segment of 'Polly Put The Kettle On', another regular earworm, from the same source. In fact it probably helped here and there, either through

*John Spencer*

distracting me from weariness or helping coordinate the rhythm of tired legs. It was a long day.



Binnein Mor

On the drive home I started to think about the relationship between mountains and music. I should at this point declare my musical 'credentials'. I was brought up in a musically-inclined household, sang in choirs and play piano and guitar to a modest level of competence, indeed can get a vaguely harmonious squeak out of most musical instruments (a notable exception being the didgeridoo!). I spend a lot of time listening to music and think, read and talk about it a lot. I even had a regular music slot on an internet radio station for a few years. Finally, I go to a lot of gigs and the occasional music festival. In several parallel Universes I am a virtuoso jazz pianist, an acclaimed DJ and performer, and/or a very cool bass player. I tell you this not to boast, simply to highlight the fact that music plays an enormously

important role in my life, and has done for as long as I can remember.

So, I decided to explore music and mountains from three perspectives: the phenomenon of earworms; music to play in the mountains (or on the crag); and music about, or inspired by mountains.

### Earworms

Earworms, also known as 'sticky music', 'brainworms', or 'stuck song syndrome', and more prosaically as 'involuntary musical imagery' (IMI), will be familiar to virtually all readers. They are short catchy pieces of music that usually 'pop up' unbidden, and are seemingly, mostly, out of one's control.

I've experienced earworms for as long as I can recall, not least when taking exercise of one kind or another, whether walking, climbing, or cycling; however I also get them when I'm doing nothing in particular, just distracted or 'hanging loose'. In fact I have music playing in my head most of the time. I took the phenomenon for granted and was not aware of the label 'earworm' and any of the neuroscience behind it until I read Oliver Sack's fascinating and entertaining book 'Musicophilia. Tales of music and the brain'. The author draws on his own experience and the literature to reflect on the centrality of music in human life and culture. We are, he argues, 'a musical species', and although there is no specific 'music centre' in the brain, our auditory systems are 'exquisitely tuned for music' and it apparently engages more areas of our brain than language. However the complexity and highly developed nature of the ways in which we respond to music makes it 'vulnerable to various distortions, excesses and breakdowns'. Sacks, ever the consummate storyteller, uses case studies to explore some of the

strange ways these 'distortions etc' manifest themselves, for example the case of a middle-aged man who developed musical talent after being hit by lightning, the phenomenon of 'amusia', musical savants and so on, as well as describing the therapeutic potential of music, for example in patients with dementia. He dedicates a chapter to earworms. Daniel Levitin also briefly discusses earworms in his book 'This is your brain on music' (Levitin has an interesting background – he was a music producer then changed careers and became a neuroscientist!) as does Victoria Williamson, a music psychologist in 'You are the music'. Finally there is a small but growing research literature on the subject.

So what do we know about earworms? They are very common, most surveys showing they are experienced at least once a week by around 90% of the population, with 33% experiencing them daily. Interestingly, references in popular literature are few and are relatively recent. In this respect Sacks asks whether earworms are a consequence of the musically saturated environment in which we now live. Mark Twain wrote a short story in 1876 ('Punch, brothers, punch!') in which the narrator is rendered helpless after hearing some 'jingling rhymes'. He then passes them on to a pastor friend who, in turn, passes it on to his own congregation! The 'infectious' nature of earworms as described in Twain's story is characteristic and is exploited with irritating effectiveness by advertisers. However they need not necessarily be annoying, indeed may be pleasurable and comforting. I certainly often find them so....well, maybe not Teddy Bears' Picnic.

They are usually fragmentary in nature, typically shorter or equal in duration to the capacity of what is called auditory short-term memory, i.e. 15-30 seconds. There is some similarity in this

respect to the neurological circuits underlying small, sudden-onset epileptic seizures, also to the tics of Tourette's syndrome.

Earworms have a preference for simplicity – as with my 'stripped-down' version of Teddy Bears' Picnic – and for repetition. Nonetheless they can also be complex, involving longer segments of music, possibly whole pieces. Indeed, there seems to be a continuum between the classical, episodic earworm, and a more-or-less continuous 'soundtrack' under a greater degree of conscious control (i.e. voluntary musical imagery), which is what I often experience. Interestingly IMI can also accompany some specific neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, and can be made worse by some drugs, for example lamotrigine, used in the treatment of epilepsy.

Women appear more likely to experience earworms than men, and there is a decline, as with most things, with age. Interestingly musicians are seemingly no more likely to experience earworms than people who 'simply' listen to music; the crucial factor is musical engagement.

Surveys have shown a number of potential triggers for earworms including, unsurprisingly, recent exposure to the music in question, especially when it is repetitive (as with advertising jingles); memory triggers, either by association, through recollection or in anticipation; various emotional states; and situations of low attention, such as when day-dreaming or perhaps when one is in one's stride, on 'autopilot' in the hills.

The classical reference to earworms in mountaineering literature, of course, is Joe Simpson on his epic crawl down Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes. In his own words 'Somehow I couldn't get its insistent chant out of my mind as, irritably, I set to work on my Karrimat, trying to forget the words,...'Brown girl in the ring....Tra la la la...'

Stephen Venables also mentioned an earworm, on summit day on Kisthwar Shivling in the Himalayas, 'To add to the confusion, I was troubled day by a theme from Mahler's Fifth Symphony, hammering strident and persistent in my head.'

I thought it would be interesting to find out how fellow climbers and walkers in more mundane settings experienced earworms on the hill or crag. I posted a couple of 'survey' threads on UKClimbing and the Northumbrian Mountaineering Club Facebook page and searched forums on UKC and SuperTopo, its US equivalent. The results were interesting and amusing, and resonate with what is known about earworms. The quotes that follow are selective, but, I hope, illustrative.

### Earworms are common

'When I'm walking I have a pretty frantic and crashing internal commentary of thoughts and music, I suppose it goes with keeping a pace....'

'Yes, too many, especially when really pushing hard uphill.'

'Earworms are something I experience when walking especially so when going uphill and I'm knackered! It doesn't happen much when I'm feeling strong and moving quickly.'

Earworms can be irritating and persistent, and their source puzzling

'I get them all the time when trekking, repeating on and on throughout the day. Sometimes a totally random song out of the blue.'

'A rather more random one...was a couple of lines from the chorus (I think) of a song called (I think)

'Mamas don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys' by (maybe) Willie Nelson...literally no idea where that comes from and didn't even know I knew those words!'

'Sometimes when I'm slogging up some mountain with a big sack I get stuck on one song in my head. Sometimes I have to mentally stop it because it's driving me mad!'

'Madonna's music one of the worst episodes, eating away at me for a whole weekend in the Lakes a few years back. I am not particularly a Madonna fan!'

'One recent one seemed out of the blue and only when I tried to work out why the hell I had it in my head did I realise its title rhymed with the hill I was doing!'

### Earworms are 'infectious'

'My partner has a couple of earworms that he gets regularly. It's really easy to give them to him by humming a couple of bars. The Antiques Roadshow theme and theme from Wallace and Grommet are favourites for that!'

'Very rare is it a song I would ever actually like...'Karma Chameleon' by Boy George is the most common torment! Interestingly the mate I'm usually with 'catches' this from me and it becomes an intrusive song for him also!'

Finally, from one older respondent:

'Yes I frequently hear the popular songs from 'The Sound of Music' running through my head as I trudge up a mountain these days, particularly if it's sunny. But there again I used to fancy Julie Andrews in 1965 when she was pure and innocent.'

Most of the responses about earworms related to hillwalking or running. However one thread I found

on SuperTopo asked specifically about 'music in your head on a hard scary climb'. A long and diverse list of earworm tunes was proffered starting with '(a tune) from an old surf movie, the wipeout sequence. This happens every time.' Other tunes included 'Rocket Man' by Elton John, Strauss' 'Blue Danube', 'Speed Dirt' by Megadeth (worth Googling the lyrics of this song if you're not acquainted with them!), and 'I scare myself'...and '...for some reason the voice of my high school German teacher, Herr Webking' (!).

A few other comments:

'Whilst attempting a solo attempt on Cerro Solo in Patagonia I had Bowie's 'Sound and Vision' to keep me company.'

'I had 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' running through my head whilst tussling with a rather esoteric gritstone route today, somewhat distracting.'

'Sometimes I find that music I was listening to in the car on the way to the climb plays over and over in my head whilst I'm climbing. I quite like this, it's calming and actually helps me focus.'

However several posters echoed the sentiment expressed by one, as follows: 'when the going gets serious, there is nothing in my head but the here and now, total focus.' Silence, for many, is golden.

### Music in the mountains

A good few years ago, on a traverse of Luinne Bheinn and Meall Bhuidhe in Knoydart I lost my bearings –literally – in thick cloud. Having fooled myself into fitting the map to the landscape that I momentarily glimpsed in a rare clearing of the clag, as well as ignoring the compass (it must be wrong I thought), I ended up heading in completely the opposite direction to the one intended and climbed Sgurr a Choire-bheithe, a



neighbouring Corbett. Although the fact I was totally lost had dawned on me, I was still mildly surprised to find myself descending to Barrisdale out of the clouds. This left me with a 14km slog back to Inverie over Mam Barrisdale. Cue the iPod! Off I strode in the light drizzle, and there's no doubt, again, that the music – this time an eclectic mix of blues, jazz, World music and reggae – helped keep my legs moving and spirits from flagging. I arrived nearly 3 weary hours later at The Old Forge in Inverie exhausted, wet and hungry, but too late for a meal. The barman watched with bemusement as I wolfed two Mars Bars, a packet of peanuts and a pint of Guinness standing in my wet clothes at the bar before slumping in the corner with another pint to await the arrival of my wife to collect me.

On only one other occasion when walking in the hills have I played recorded music, and never whilst climbing. I enquired about people's use of music in the mountains in my UKC and Facebook surveys but also searched forums and threads on UKC and SuperTopo, as well carrying out a Google search. Again, the results were fascinating. There were several relevant threads with suggestions for music to play at the wall, on the way to, and at the crag, music to boulder to, even 'music to abseil by' (!).

### Music at the climbing wall

Music is usually playing at the wall I most often use (Newcastle Climbing Centre) and on the whole I enjoy it. Many posters were positive about music playing at climbing walls, although some found it intrusive and irritating.

'I have noticed that I occasionally climb more fluently at climbing walls when certain music is

playing – AC/DC definitely has a positive impact on my performance when I'm on the sharp end!

'Dubstep that's a bit downtempo is what I love to listen to while bouldering in the gym.'

'Depends where I'm climbing. Indoors, love rocking out while climbing, outdoors I do like the quite tranquility.'

### Music on hill or crag

Fewer people reported purposefully listening to music outdoors, whether running, walking, bouldering or climbing. Most often it seemed the music was a 'private' thing, for example unobtrusively using an mp3 player.

'I do like soloing outside with some headphones midweek. I've had some magic moments listening to favourite tracks, just myself, the tunes, the rock and beautiful scenery.'

'When running I listen to a playlist of songs that match my desired pace, and it really does help. I have Primal Scream's 'Country Girl' near the end for when I start to flag and it certainly ups my pace again.'

'You can't go past the soundtrack to Rocky IV. 'Hearts on Fire' is the way to the top and 'No Easy Way Out' is ideal for the crux when panic and fear are defeating you.'

Others commented on music being played for all to hear, which was not always popular.

'When I was free soloing I carried a tape deck in my pack that blared out Jimi Hendrix.' – 'Me too, though I found that baroque and Ravi Shankar got in the groove too.'

'If I'm out bouldering I'd often have some music quietly playing if no-one else is about....it affects us in a positive way for sure, gets us in a good mindset.'

'Climbing at Millstone Edge when there's a rave on is an interesting experience.'

'In 1985 when I was climbing in the Picos de Europa the warden of the hut at the foot of Naranjo de Bulnes had rigged up large amplifiers pointing at the north face which boomed out Spanish pop music all day. It was a novelty but somewhat intrusive.'

However, many felt there was no place at all for recorded music, whether at the climbing wall, in the hills or on the crag, personal or 'public'.

'The only music that I really like while climbing is the sound of a gentle wind in the trees, a nearby stream, the birds as they fly below me....I prefer nature-music.'

Indeed one UKC thread carried a somewhat tetchy exchange between two elder statesmen of British mountain life about this issue, best summed up in the two following comments:

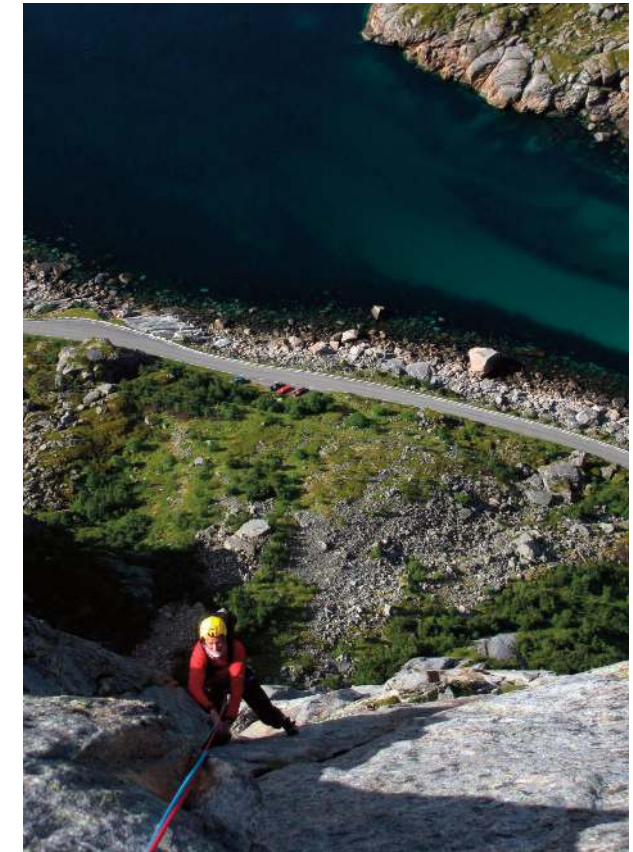
'Yes, quite fantastic that anyone would want to cut themselves off from one of the huge sensual aspects of nature when climbing.'

'Listening to music or not in the outdoors is a personal choice, it may heighten the experience, it may lower it.....as long as you do not spoil the enjoyment of others.'

### Home-made music

I occasionally sing out loud when walking or climbing, and confident that no-one else is in hearing distance. One of my regular climbing partners

hums when he's 'in the zone' and cruising on a climb, which is reassuring (his other climbing noises include a deathly silence when he's very focussed, a kind-of grunt when he's struggling, and a loud, blood-curdling howl should he part company with the rock!). So what did people have to



John Vaughan on Vestpillaren, Lofotens here – a climb on which he exhibited the full range of his climbing sounds

say about 'home-made' music, singing, whistling and so on?

'I distinctly remember I was humming (or gasping fragments of) 'Heart of Glass' by Blondie all the way up Vector.....certainly it was going round and round endlessly in my mind, though not sure how much was coming out of my mouth!'

'On the other hand a few years ago I was struggling a bit and recall my partner singing 'Top Cat' to make me laugh which helped a lot (because things are better if you smile at them).'

'I sometimes find that when I've passed the crux when leading I break into song....it's a rather embarrassing habit.'

'I have a bad habit of singing whilst leading climbs, belting out a classic cheesy song does help, but as I said to a friend who was seconding 'Bet you'd hate to be stuck on a big wall climb with me'....he nodded.'

'I really like whistling when leading an absorbing but not too difficult pitch. Only ever had pleasant remarks from others on the crags. Find singing quietly a great way of maintaining rhythm when running downhill or skiing.'

Finally:

'I don't take recorded music into the hills but I have been known to take a musical instrument with me!'

Is there any hard evidence that music actually helps performance in physical exercise? Well, yes there is. According to Victoria Williamson a large body of research has shown that music can aid exercise effectiveness, including strength, power and endurance, rather in the fashion of performance-enhancing drugs.

A variety of mechanisms are thought to be at play: signals of tiredness are blocked; emotions are evoked and inhibitions reduced; there is both psychological and physiological arousal; and

rhythmic movement is encouraged and synchronised. Athletes often find music useful as a motivational tool, including during 'warm-up' and/or before competitions – cue video clip of footballers arriving off their bus at the stadium on match-day, all plugged into their mp3 players - perhaps by boosting confidence and blocking anxiety. There is even some evidence of music helping improve team performance in some sports.

A word about the myth of 'multi-tasking'. Neuroscience tells us that the pre-frontal cortex, the 'executive' part of the brain, does not have the capacity to undertake more than one intensive task at a time. It might not ultimately be a good idea to be distracted.

'I've tried listening to music while climbing but I either found it distracting or I didn't actually 'hear' anything as I got too focussed on the moves I need to do.'

'And the tinkle of gear is a reassuring noise.'

'I struggle to walk and chew at the same time; if I went out in public with an iPod I'd be dead within minutes.'

Finally, an historical reminiscence:

'In the late 60s a musical highlight was to climb mid-week in the Pass with music provided by Al Harris. He would park his van in the Grochan layby, open the back doors, turn up the volume, and make his way to the crag, while the music drifted you up the routes.'

Aside from people's suggestions about particular tunes to listen to 'on the hill' a simple Google search reveals of playlists, for example from 'pastemagazine' the promise of ten workout

songs 'perfect for rock climbing'. If you want more, try 'Rock Climbing Music' on Spotify which lists 148 songs, or 8tracksradio.com which offers no less than sixty such playlists!

## Music of the mountains

I don't write music, but if I were a climber who composed or a composer who climbed, I would certainly find inspiration in the hills. As one might imagine, mountains have long been a source of inspiration to composers and song-writers, although this is a relatively recent phenomenon. From the Greeks onwards most European cultures expressed reverence for and love of the mountains through art, literature and poetry. It wasn't until the Romantic period, however, that composers started to look to the hills for inspiration. Of course mountain-dwelling societies all over the world had their folk music, invariably inspired by their surroundings.

For example, cattlemen in the European Alps played a melody on an Alphorn to summon their beasts from the high pastures, the 'Ranz des Vaches' (literally, rows of cows!) or 'Kuhreihen'. In a comprehensive and learned article for *The Music Quarterly* published in 1945, music scholar A Hyatt King describes how the Ranz, with its many regional variations, or at least fragments of the melody, was incorporated into the works of many European composers, for example Beethoven in his *Pastoral Symphony*. According to Hyatt King 'Many of the Ranz have a remarkable power....of calling up the sights and above all the sounds inseparable from the high and lonely places of the earth.' Indeed it was supposedly forbidden to play or sing the Ranz in earshot of Swiss soldiers for fear of invoking such a profound yearning for their native land that they might desert!

In due course many of the great European composers were moved to write music inspired by and about mountains. Perhaps the best-known example is Richard Strauss' 1915 tone poem, 'Alpine Symphony'. It tells the story of an alpine ascent, apparently based on the composer's own experience as a young man when he and a group of friends got lost on their way up a mountain, were caught in a storm and got soaked on the way down. We've all been there! It begins in the pre-dawn darkness, but sunrise raises spirits, as does the ascent through a forest, across an alpine meadow, then onto a glacier. However there are some 'dangerous



Richard Strauss

moments' and a vision or two. The climbers reach the summit as mists rise and the sun is obscured. There is calm before the storm, followed by thunder and lightning and heavy rain, but as the

climbers descend nature stills itself, the sun quietly sets, night follows, and all is at peace again. It was scored for a large orchestra, possibly one of the largest orchestras ever assembled. Over 125 players were involved, with lots of brass and woodwind, and a huge percussion section including a thunder machine and a wind machine, cow-bells, and an 'aerophor', a wind contraption intended to enable a prolonged note to be played by means of foot pumps and air tubes!

I'm not a classical music buff, but as well as a long list in Hyatt King's article, including operas, orchestral and choral works, an internet search or two revealed yet more composers who have written music inspired by the mountains. The titles alone are evocative, for example: 'Night on Bald Mountain' (Mussorgsky), 'A Mountain Mood' (Bax), 'Over the Hills and Far Away' (Delius), 'From the Steeples and the Mountains' (Ives), 'The Land of the Mountain and the Flood' (Hamish McCunn, a Scot). Hector Berlioz wrote a rather sad piece, 'Harold in the Mountains' for solo viola (Harold was a melancholic).

There are also unfinished works, some of them of considerable scale, for example Charles Ives' 'Universe Symphony'. This highly complex work, with twenty independent musical lines, was intended to be performed by multiple orchestras located in valleys, on hillsides and mountains, with the music mimicking "the eternal pulse ... the planetary motion of the earth ... the soaring lines of mountains and cliffs ... deep ravines, sharp jagged edges of rock". It was never finished, pages of the score are missing or were never written, let alone actually performed. Or Scriabin's 'Mysterium', again unfinished, but intended it to be performed in the foothills of the Himalayas. And Messiaen's 'Et expect resurrectionem

mortuorum' (And I await the resurrection of the dead) inspired by the Haute Alps and to be performed on a mountain summit!

American 'old-time' folk music was intimately associated with mountains, albeit celebrating life amongst them rather than their ascent, so much so it is often referred to as 'mountain music'. There are numerous regional styles, the best known being from the Appalaichans using fiddle and harmonica (imported by European settlers) and the banjo (adapted from African stringed instruments brought over by slaves).

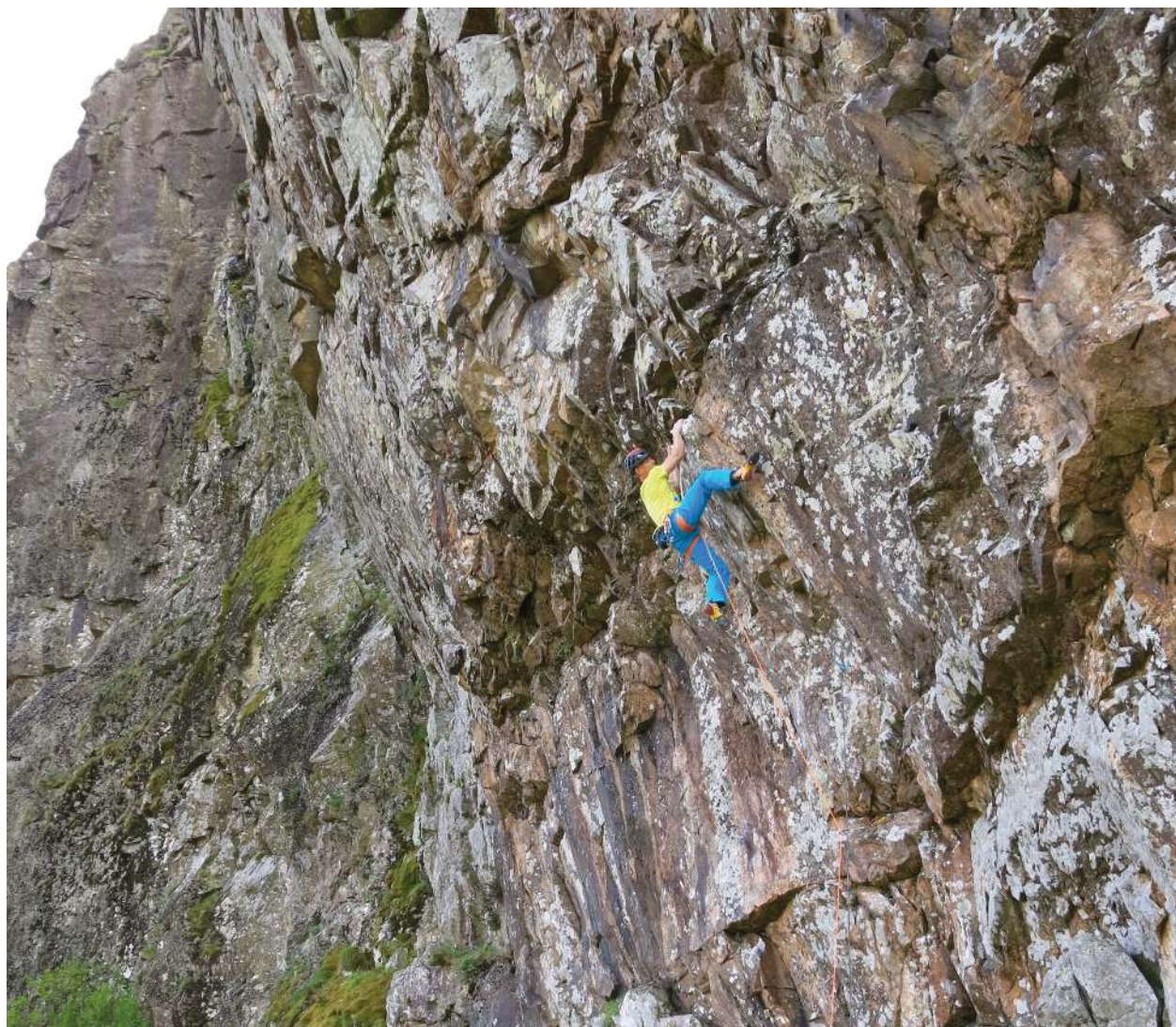
Modern 'popular' music has also produced a wealth of songs about mountains in all genres: country and western, arguably the love-child of old-time music ('Old Man from the Mountain' by Merle Haggard; 'High on a Mountain Top' Loretta Lynn); folk ('Rocky Mountain High' by John Denver; 'Thunder on the Mountain', Bob Dylan); soul ('Ain't No Mountain High Enough', Marvin Gaye; 'River Deep, Mountain High', Ike and Tina Turner); rock ('Misty Mountain Hop', Led Zeppelin, 'Mountain Woman' The Kinks), 'easy listening' ('Climb Every Mountain', Shirley Bassey) and jazz ('The Mountain', Abdullah Ibrahim). Mountain, a New York-based hard rock band called their debut album 'Climbing', although none of the songs, which include the hit 'Mississippi Queen'?, are about climbing. Finally Geoffrey Love, a British arranger and composer and doyen of 'easy listening' music in the 1950s went as far as to adopt the stage name 'Manuel and His Music of the Mountains'. Again, the internet is a rich source of suggestions about mountain-inspired songs, and the Guardian ran a feature in 2015, including readers' offerings.

## In Conclusion

The hills truly are alive with the sound of music, though perhaps not quite as Rogers and Hammerstein imagined it! Earworms, according to Oliver Sacks 'the clearest sign of the overwhelming, and at times helpless, sensitivity of our brains to music', are ubiquitous. Here's a thought: imagine simultaneously playing the earworms of all those people you saw on the hill or at the crag the last time you were out, what a glorious cacophony it would be! Listening to music, especially 'in private', when on the hill or crag, is not unusual, although obviously a personal thing and music played out loud for everyone to hear is controversial. Finally, the mountain environment has proved a rich source of inspiration for musicians and composers alike over several centuries.

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Above: Neil Gresham on *Fearless*,  
Dove Crag, Patterdale

## New Climbs

*Trevor Langhorne*

New routes continue to be added; unsurprisingly these are normally short climbs on clean outcrops which are fairly close to the road. However the incredible weather in 2018 has resulted in a few much more substantial additions on the mountain crags. Earlier this year we published the latest in our irregular series of New Climbs Supplements - it updates all of our current guidebooks and is an absolute bargain at only £5; if you haven't got one why not? A new guide to Dow, Duddon and Eskdale is in an advanced state of preparation so details of new routes in this area were not included in the supplement. In this report I have tried to pick out the more significant developments and have only included descriptions for such routes that have been added since the publication of the New Climbs supplement. Page references refer to current guidebooks.

Details of all the new routes can be found at [www.frcc.co.uk/routes/](http://www.frcc.co.uk/routes/). The website also allows users to give feedback on routes in our guides; these can include observations on grades, star ratings, route descriptions and photodiagrams. We encourage its use as the information collected can help make future editions of guidebooks even better.

## LANGDALE

The big action here has been up on Black Wars where Craig Matheson has crafted half a dozen fine routes. While most are in the E3 – E6 range he also found a top notch HVS which had been overlooked. Elsewhere Martin Scrowston, often accompanied by Paul Bennett, has continued to explore the valley adding some quality mid – grade routes, of these the stand out route here is Fear and Loafing, a three star HVS that had been hidden in plain sight on Middlefell Buttress, it goes to show that with a good eye and imagina-

tion there are still plums to be plucked. Subsequently Ted Rogers and Rick Graham added an equally fine but more difficult direct version, Fear Control. Upper Scout Crag has given up a few more secrets including a two star HVS, The Catch. When dry this is a worthwhile venue for climbers operating in the VS – HVS grade range. On Thrang Crags Rick Graham and Ted Rogers have added a few routes in the low E grades making these crags an even more attractive option at the drier end of the valley with routes ranging from D to E2, a visit makes a nice change from Raven Crag Walthwaite. Elsewhere in the valley numerous other short routes have been added. Over in Easedale the Scrowston – Bennett team has added a couple more worthwhile VS's to Helm Crag which has grown into a useful venue in a lovely location.



Fear and Loafing  
Climber: Paul C Bennett, Photographer: Martin Scrowston

## THRANG CRAG WEST (page 17)

Direct Route 20m E1 5b \*\*

T Rogers, R Graham – 25 Mar 2018

A direct line crossing the traverse of Random Drift. Start 1.5 metres right of Random Drift. Climb straight up until past the traverse line then trend slightly left to the top.

> Thrang Crag > Thrang Crag West

Genetic Equilibrium 18m S 4a

F Scrowston, M Scrowston - 01 Apr 2018

An escapable but pleasant line that ascends the hanging slab directly below an obvious large detached block and crag top holly. Start just left of Old Genes. Follow shattered rock to a heather ledge and sapling. From directly behind the small tree pull up steeply to gain a rightwards sloping ramp leading to the large detached block. Step left and ascend the fine steep wall to finish just right of the holly.

## UPPER SCOUT CRAG (page 38)

The Catch 34m HVS 5a \*\*

M Scrowston, PC Bennett – 26 Jun 2018

More fishy related adventures on this fine crag that features some super rough unpolished rock. Interesting climbing with an exhilarating crux. Start 4m left of Sid The Sardine at a large flat-topped block. From the top of the block step up and right, follow a short diagonal groove passing a mini hawthorn to access the main wall. Climb the rough wall, passing a substantial tree on the right, to a rightwards slanting ramp; follow this until below a steep hanging groove. Climb the groove (crux) on improving holds, stepping left at its top to finish.

Gravadalax Groove 34m VS 4c \*

M Scrowston, M Withers - 02 Jul 2018

A route of two halves with some very pleasant climbing interrupted only briefly by a grassy ledge. Start just

left of The Catch at a recess below a left slanting groove. Pull up steeply to follow the groove on monster holds. The wall above leads directly up, passing between the two small trees on the dusty ledge. From behind the trees climb diagonally left and up to gain a fine right slanting groove to finish.

Footnote. As a matter of interest, the Yew tree mentioned as a reference point on both Route 1 and Zero Route (Upper Scout Crag) is in fact not a Yew tree but a very impressive large Juniper bush, Juniper being known locally as Sevings.

## MIDDLEFELL BUTTRESS (page 135)

Rebounder 27m VS 4c \*

M Scrowston P C Bennett – 25 May 2018

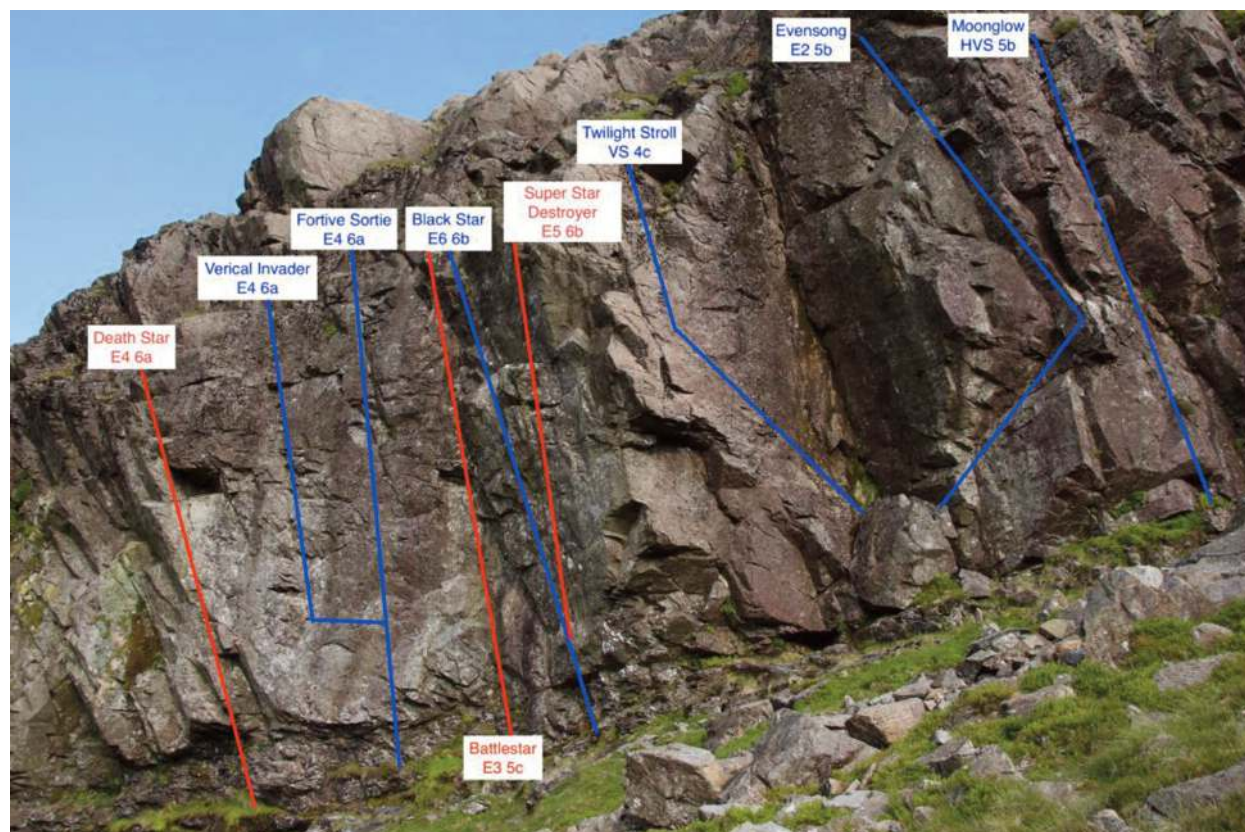
An ingenious line that avoids the vegetated chimney crack with a steep start and exit. Start 1m left of Trambiolina at an obvious narrow green chimney. Climb the right edge of the narrow chimney for 6m until a bridging step across left gains access to a good ledge (possible belay). Follow the broken slab above to its apex, a committing step up and left leads to a short diagonal crack through the final headwall.

Fear Control 30m E2 5b \*\*

T Rogers, R Graham – 11 May 2018

The direct line of Fear and Loafing. Start and finish as Fear and Loafing, where it moves right climb straight up, just right of the blunt arête, to join the parent route at the left end of its hand traverse at the overhang.

Repeat ascents have confirmed quality to be on a par with the parent route, Fear and Loafing! But only just worth the second E point. The tricky bit is reading where and what gear might be coming up.



BLACK WARS (page 364)

**Death Star 25m E4 6a \*\***

C Matheson, R Matheson - 06 Jul 2018  
Left of Vertical Invader is an obvious hanging groove. Start directly beneath the hanging groove and climb boldly through the roofs and lower wall up to the base of the groove. Commit yourself to the arête before pulling back into the groove and a welcome rest beneath the roof. An awkward move hinders access to the continuation crack with is followed on flat holds to the top. Finish easily up ledges.

**Battlestar 25m E3 5c \*\***

C Matheson, I Cooksey – 30 Jun 2018  
The shallow overhanging corner in the centre of the crag. Follow the corner passing a poor in-situ thread at half height and into the upper crack. Climb this on good holds to ledges and easier ground.

Route Comment: Black Star. Reported to be a well-protected little gem which should get more attention. (Posted by Craig Matheson)

**Super Star Destroyer 25m E5 6b \*\***

C Matheson – 10 Jul 2018  
Takes the right hand crack in the Black Star wall. Start as for Black Star but ascend the thin crack (mono) and short groove to gain the ledge at ¾ height (short

blade peg). With sufficient fire power at your disposal, the stubborn right trending seam will eventually yield.

**Photon Torpedo 20m E6 6b \*\***

C Matheson – 19 Jul 2018  
The undercut and overhanging arête to the right of Black Star. Powerful and bold climbing (no protection) will lead to either the break, or a painful landing.

**Twinkle 25m E1 5c \***

C Matheson – 14 Jul 2018  
The direct start to Twilight Stroll. Ascend the crack direct through the roof (hard pull) and follow to the top of the crag.

**Black Wars Corner 20m HVS 5a \*\***

C Matheson – 14 Jul 2018  
A classic introduction to Lakeland corner cracks. Climb the attractive square cut corner between Twilight Stroll and Evensong. Sustained.

**DOW CRAG**

Craig Matheson has added one short but substantial new route to B Buttress, Prowess, E7 6c, no other new routes have been reported.

**Prowess 15m E7 6c \*\***

11 Aug 2018, C Matheson  
A thought provoking excursion taking a direct line up the overhanging arete of Woodhouse's Pinnacle (as shown on the front cover of the 1994 FRCC guide). From the base of the arete (2 peg runners, 1 poor blade and 1 appalling) commit yourself to a sequence of wild and slappy moves passing a further peg at half height.

Two comments have also been submitted.

Route Comment: Trident Route. The text in the



Craig Matheson on Photon Torpedo, Black Wars

1994 guide is confusing, that in Lake District Rock is better. There is a short (8m) scramble from pitch 1 belay to get to pitch 2. This reference is easily missed and the leader may automatically look at the description for pitch 2 missing the scramble comment. It would be better if the reference to a scramble was included in the description of pitch 2. (Posted by I Bradley)

Route Comment: Intermediate Gully. Lake District Rock describes this route as 'one of the greatest of classic struggles' and it lives up to that billing. The awkward crack on pitch 1 is described as being so tight there is little room for upward movement while the top two pitches are most conveniently done as one. (Posted by Andrew Paul)

## COPPERMINES

A couple of route comments received.

### GREAT HOW CRAG (Page 101)

Route Comment: Original Route. Variation pitch 5, given 10m S. Unless you have large cam, size 5 or similar, the wide crack is unprotected after the start and pretty serious. Definitely at least HS 4a and we thought more like VS 4b. Good though, possibly the best pitch of the route. From the belay at the top of the crack, an additional pleasant pitch can be added: Using the "short vertical crack" at the top of Copper Dragon, pull up left and climb just left of the arête to the top. (Posted by Simon Caldwell)

### SUNLIGHT CRAG (Page 104)

Route Comment: Port Sunlight. There isn't much gear on this pitch although the hardest climbing was fairly near the bottom and protected with a good nut. No protection after that and the suspect flake noted in the description is still there but not one you would want to touch let alone put gear behind it. (Posted by Simon Caldwell)

## SLATE

All the routes on slate will be included in the forthcoming guidebook, Lake District Sport and Slate. There have been no new routes, only the usual warning about protection and the stability of some routes.

Route Comment: Death Warrant (Tilberthwaite Quarry). Rick Graham notes that a large loose flake has been removed from this route; the grade is probably unaffected but worth inspecting before trying an on sight. The top bolt is in a

detached block and all the left side of the crack will eventually come away. It is a slate quarry, what do you expect? (Posted by Rick Graham)

Route Comment: The Main Event (Hodge Close Quarry). It has been suggested that an "excellent" skyhook placement that protects the "pull up onto the upper slab". Unfortunately the only hook I found before the move through the steep section to gain slab was behind poor rock and only sat maybe 2mm deep. There is a good hook to protect the rock over for the peg but that is after the hard move. (Posted by Lakeland Climber).

## DUDDON

Lots of small crags and so many new routes; as most are less than 15m in length, descriptions and many photodiagrams are on the website. Tom Walkington has explored two outcrops (Fox Crag and Upper Fox Crag) which have yielded about fifteen routes. These crags are very close to Stonestar making this an attractive location to spend a day. A few longer pitches have been added to Pen in the Wallowbarrow Gorge. This crag now has a good selection of routes across a wide spread of grades, it deserves to become popular.

### PEN (Page 225)

Penned in No More 40 m HVS 5a \*\*  
M Scrowston, PC Bennett – 02 Oct 2016  
A good variation link pitch that creates a fine long pitch on excellent rock. Start as for Penned In. Climb the right edge of the slab and follow the arête to the overhang (good thread). A rightwards ascending hand traverse leads to a cracked slab; follow this to a junc-

tion with Mightier Than the Sword. Finish up the fine rough slab above.

### Quiet Noise 40m S \*

M Scrowston, PC Bennett – 02 Oct 2016  
An enjoyable low grade route up the left edge of the South West Face. Start by a large embedded flake and rowan sapling 6 m left of where the dry stone wall abuts the crag. A bulging wall and broken slabs lead to a large ledge shared with a rowan tree (possible belay). Follow a series of ledges and slabs moving right to a steep wall, ascend the cracked wall stepping right to finish. Heather ledges lead to the peg belay at the top of the crag.

### An Even Quicker One 25m VS 4c \*

PC Bennett, M Scrowston – 30 Jul 2016,  
A good and well protected line that follows the right edge of the rippled slab right of A Quick One. Start as for Fat Controller. Climb the wide crack for 5m until an awkward move left gains access to the slab, move up to a good ledge and then follow the right edge of the slab on delightful rock.

## SCAFELL

Despite this year's fantastic weather new route activity has been minimal with only four new routes since the last journal report, all climbed by the Al Phizacklea/John Holden team. They found an interesting HVS on the often overlooked Upper Pinnacle Slabs, they recorded it as "To be Decided" - I am not sure if this is its name or a statement that they have yet to decide on a name. On the other side of Hollow Stones they straightened out Juniper Buttress to give Juniper Buttress Direct at HVS.

While down on Piers Ghyll Crag they made a Half Girdle Traverse missing out crossing the main wall of the crag – there's a challenge for someone! The

fourth new route is a very minor addition (13m VS) to the SE side of the East Buttress.

### SCAFELL PINNACLE (Page 59)

Route Comment: Left Edge. The Line shown on topo photo is wrong for pitch 2. The line misses out the stance at the top of pitch 1 by carrying on up at the left side. This totally avoids the huge flake crack featured in the description. Route description for pitch 2 is wrong and misleading. Suggest: "...good holds can be reached on the right, follow these up rightwards and then go diagonally left and round the corner into the Waiting Room". The guidebook description which suggests using the good holds on the right to move diagonally leftwards is also used for pitch 2 of Bushwacker so that needs changing as well. (Posted by Dave Rogers)

### SCAFELL CRAG – UPPER PINNACLE SLABS (Page 72)

#### To be decided 50m HVS 5a \*

A Phizacklea, J Holden – 14 Jul 2018  
The first 9m are in common with Bold Eagle, but note the line on the diagram is wrong. That shows the route starting up a small left-facing corner 3m above the start, but this holds some Starry Saxifrage plants and is avoided.

1 23m 5a Start about 2m right of that little corner and climb up to a good hold (friend under overlap on right), step onto the slab up left to a higher overlap. (Bold Eagle steps up right from here), step left and climb up to the blocks on Central Route. Although these have been used as a belay for a century, they seem a little unstable, so step 3m left to a more solid belay.

2 27m 4c Climb directly over the overlap just left of the niche of Central Route and continue to a large sloping

ramp. Move up this to runners, then pull directly over the roof above, about 3m left of the end of this feature, and cross the slab above to a short corner which leads to the edge of the buttress just below the top of the High Man.

### DEEP GILL BUTTRESS (Page 76)

Route Comment: Grey Bastion. It has been suggested that it would be more appropriate to give this route a HVS grade. Pitch 2 is poorly protected unless you make use of the "dangerous looking flake". You are not in a position to test how well wedged the flake is and attaching a runner could well pull it off on top of you in the event of a fall. For somebody who is just leading VS this could be a very scary pitch. (Posted by Dave Rogers)

### THE EAST BUTTRESS SE FACE (Page 125)

Far Far Eastern 13m MVS  
A Phizacklea, J Buck, J Holden – 10 Sep 2016

At the furthest left you can go on the East Buttress, beyond Smeghaigh, the crag turns through 90° and forms a steep clean wall (a new unclimbed wall on Scafell!). This route climbs the short arête on the left side of this wall. Climb up to a diagonal crack and follow the left side of the rib to the top

### PIKES CRAG (Page 155)

Route Comment: The Steeple. A really good route. Perhaps worth 2\* Route description is accurate. Appropriately graded. (Posted by Dave Rogers)

Juniper Buttress Direct 80m HVS 5a \*  
A Phizacklea, J Holden, Dan from Sheffield, J Holden – 06 May 2018  
Rather indifferent in its lower half, this route has a very good finish. Start below a vague rib 6m right of the block of Juniper Buttress. (J.B.)

1 26m 4c Climb the rib where it eases, then traverse left using a good flake just above a prominent roof, then continue left to the left arête. Climb this directly to the blocky ledge on J.B.

2 12m 4c Pull up the wall on the right to stand on a small spike. Follow a vague groove right of the crack on J.B. to pull onto a ledge using a wedged flake – it is evidently quite solid as we all pulled on it! Belay just above on J.B.

3 24m 4c Climb directly up the left side of the wall behind, aiming for two small grooves which lead directly to the big recessed belay on J.B.

4 18m 5a An excellent pitch. Follow the thin seam in the block above to a ledge, then the thin continuation crack to the top.

### PILLAR ROCK & ENNERDALE

Stephen Reid has continued his exploration of Pillar Rock producing a string of worthwhile long routes in the company of (variously) Chris King, Brian Davison, Luke Jones, and Cal Reid. The area of grooves and ribs around North Climb on the North Face of Low Man has proven to be particularly productive area yielding Lambda (E1 5b \*), Savage Rib (E2 5c \*), Cyclotron (E2 5b \*) and Rib and Tunnel Climb (E2 5b \*\*). They found a Hadron (HVS 5a \*\*) on Shamrock while on the short but steep crag above Shamrock Traverse a prominent rib and groove became The Riders (HVS 5a \*). On the sunnier West Face the arête to the right of SW Climb became Sou' Sou' West Climb (HVS/E1 5b \*). Apart from the three desperate routes recorded elsewhere this collection of routes is possibly the most significant development covered in this article.

On Raven Crag Chris King and Stephen Reid went North-Westward Ho! at (HVS 5a \*). There are

detailed photodiagrams for these routes on the website.

### PILLAR ROCK

#### SHAMROCK (Page 218)

Hadron 107m HVS 5a \*\*  
CJ King, SJH Reid (alt) – 12 Jul 2018,  
Excellent climbing – a companion route to Lepton but a complete contrast in style. Microwires are very useful on pitch 2. Start as for Boson, just right of Tower Postern, below a short square-cut groove.

1 32m 4c Climb the square-cut groove and slabby rock above for 10m to a hanging flake – avoid it by stepping right into a short groove and up to a ledge. Continue up the fine corner to a small grass ledge and climb the thin crack above to belay under the arête on the right.

2 35m 5a Descend grass for 3m to the left edge of the slabby left wall of the huge corner. Make tricky moves up the left arête to a ledge and traverse left along it to jammed blocks in a corner. Climb the corner and offwidth crack above (junction with Lepton) to a narrow grass ledge. Follow a thin crack up the wall above until it peters out, whereupon bold moves out left and up lead to a fine position on the arête. Further balancey climbing attains an easing in a scoop and thence a belay on a ledge. A very good pitch.

3 40m 4a Traverse right on grass, overcome a short wall and traverse right on grass again to the foot of a stunning rock tower. Climb the arête on huge holds and continue more easily on excellent rock to the top of the Shamrock. (This last pitch may be as for Tower Postern or it could be that that route takes the rib further left – it is really hard to say looking at old descriptions and diagrams. However, it is an excellent pitch on tremendous rock and makes a fitting finish.)



Chris King on P2, Hadron  
Photo: Stephen Reid

### UPPER SHAMROCK:

This is the short but steep crag above the Shamrock Traverse.

The Riders 30m HVS 5a \*  
SJH Reid, B Davison, N Foster – 01 Jul 2018,  
The obvious grooved arête above the start of the Shamrock Traverse proves tougher than it looks. Climb the arête to a pillar under the groove. This is hard to start but eventually eases – continue up to a good diagonal crack belay. An easy 30m traverse left leads to a scree descent.

### NORTH FACE OF LOW MAN (Page 244)

Rib and Tunnel Climb 112m E1 5b \*\*  
CJ King, SJH Reid (alt) – 24 May 2018,  
A series of variations on North Climb with a particularly entertaining penultimate pitch (not recommended for the stout!) and a final pitch that involves a new way of overcoming the Nose – quite a



find after all the years of exploration by numerous climbers ever since the 1890s. The lower part follows the rib just right of North Climb. Start just left of North Climb at a short groove.

1 10m 4b Climb the groove and belay at the start of pitch 2 of North Climb.

2 35m 4c Move right into a groove on the right and climb it with increasing difficulty to a grass ledge. Overcome two short walls and then a longer wall via a sustained jamming crack. Follow the rib above directly (bold) to a pinnacle belay above Twisting Chimney.

3 33m 5b Gain the short offwidth crack above and climb it. Traverse right a move or two and climb a chimney and from its top make a very awkward move into a crack on the right and hand traverse a detached block rightwards. Follow the superb layback flake above to belay at the top of the Stomach Traverse. The difficult crack and block can be avoided by climbing grass at the top of the chimney to the foot of the Stomach Traverse pitch, then descending diagonally rightwards to the layback flake. This reduces the grade to HVS (5a).

4 15m 5a Traverse right to small pinnacle. Stand on this and climb the blunt rib above with difficulty. Go up leftwards to the Split Blocks.

5 8m 4b Harder, if not impossible, for the fat. Climb into the Split but instead of turning left continue straight on (best done on one's stomach) to squeeze out the far end into an open chimney. Climb this, exiting leftwards to belay just before the Nose on North Climb.

6 11m 4c/5a Harder for the short. Step left and descend 3m to a ledge under the Nose. Traverse left and make a long reach left for a good hold on the arête. Swing across to pull up into the upper part of the square chimney of the last pitch of Savage Gully and finish up this.

Cyclotron 85m E2 5b \*

SJH Reid, CJ King (var) – 06 Jun 2018

The pillar to the right of Sheol's first pitch and the cracked wall right of the upper pitches of The Black Widow form the substance of this good but rather intimidating route. Start from the stance at the top of the first pitch on North Climb (10m).

1. 20m 5b Traverse left on grass and climb hollow stacked flakes to a groove which leads to a ledge under an overhanging hand-jam crack. Climb the crack (well protected by Camalots 3 and 4) to grass and a chockstone/spike belay.

2. 20m 4b Step right and climb a short rib to grass and a junction with North-East Climb. Follow this up a chimney/groove and belay up left under the arête of Tapestry.

3. 35m 5b Continually interesting (read tricky!) and with spaced protection. Climb downwards 2m then traverse a mossy slab to gain a cracked wall. Go rightwards across this to the jagged arête and climb the cracked wall and/or arête above to a point where the arête must be left and sustained climbing up cracks in the wall gradually eases. Take a stance just below a block on the ledge system above.

Savage Rib 104m E2 5c \*

B Davison, SJH Reid (alt) - 01 Jul 2018

This direct version of the Variation Start to Savage Gully has a steep and strenuous crux section, though thankfully it is soon over. Start as for North Climb.

1 & 2 35m Follow pitches 1 and 2 of North Climb to the foot of Twisting Chimney.

3 35m 5c Drop down a little and move left up slabs to below a steep crack, the left-hand of two. After a hard start, climb this for 10 metres to a ledge (the Variation Start goes right here and up a groove). Make a series of sustained moves up steep rock above until a pull out left brings a welcome rest. Climb to the top of the rib and belay in a recess below a wide crack.

4 14m 5a Step down and move left onto a rib. Tenuous moves up this lead back up right to above the wide crack. Follow the broken groove to belay below a pillar under the wide undercut final chimney of Savage

Gully.

5 20m 5b Drop down a little, traverse right, and step across to a jagged crack in the wall. Climb this (part of the Girdle) to a ledge below a detached flake, the top of which forms the Nose Traverse of North Climb. Jam or layback up the flake and mantel onto its top (resisting the temptation to step right!), then make the last moves of the Nose.

4. 10m 4c Climb on to the block and climb a deep V-groove just right of the arête above. This ends with no belay after 10m but a further 20m of scrambling up grass leads rightwards, across Stony Gully, to a good belay at the top of North Climb.

Lambda 95m E1 5b \*

SJH Reid, B Davison (alt) – 08 Jul 2018

A direct line up the crag from the start of North Climb. Although from below it appears somewhat grubby the climbing is surprisingly good and worth doing in a dry spell. Start from the top of pitch 1 of North Climb. Quite low in the grade.

1 25m 4b Climb the left rib of the groove of North Climb to a ledge. Traverse horizontally round left into a broken groove and then step up right onto a grass ledge. Climb a groove on the right to exit right onto grass. Step back left across another groove and thence to a slab which leads to grass on the left and a pinnacle/chockstone belay.

2 50m 5b A good pitch. Step right, climb up to gain a short rib and follow this to its top and an exit left onto grass. Pull out horizontally rightwards into a niche and climb out of this on its right to the foot of a groove (taken by Sheol pitch 2). Traverse horizontally left round the arête to the foot of a V-chimney/groove and follow it directly to a very steep exit at its top (Sheol joins this groove a third of the way up but then quits it on the right). Belay immediately.

3 20m 4c Make a rising traverse rightwards and up a groove, stepping right into a cleaner groove, to gain the foot of the narrow chimney taken by the top pitch of Savage Grooves. Stride out left onto a grass ledge and climb the steep cracked wall. Belay immediately.

60m of heathery scrambling up and then slightly leftwards leads to a way off under Great Chimney.

## RAVEN CRAG (Page 203)

North-Westward Ho! 55m HVS 5a\*

CJ King, SJH Reid – 08 May 2017

An intimidating but well protected and juggy lower section soon gives way to easier pleasant slabs.

1 35m 5a Follow Roadworks up its easy initial left-slanting ramp to under the right-slanting groove. Sidle round the arête to the left and follow a crack up the wall to exit into a niche on the left. Continue up the crack in the slab until big jugs lead leftwards to a belay under a vast poised boulder.

2 20m Traverse right, crossing a grass patch, then up and right to the belay.

## BUTTERMERE

Only one route reported here but what a route! At the time of writing this is one of the two block-buster routes added since the last journal (see Dove Crag for the other).

## EAGLE CRAG (Page 147)

Blood Eagle 26m E9 6c \*\*

Adam Hocking – 31 May 2018

Situated in the Gully Wall area opposite a rocky shoulder. Climb the innocuous looking ramp to a small ledge. Arrange some good wires before embarking on some physical climbing up to some pegs; now venture up the headwall above taking care not to blow it!

Note: A 60m semi-static rope was used to abseil in to the top to create a lower off point from ledges.

## NEWLANDS

Dave Bodecott and Guy Widdowson have climbed a couple of good routes on the upper part of Miner's Crag. Medea (S \*\*) is described as a minor classic while Messalina (VS 4c \*) is "a real strumpet of a route". During their explorations they repeated Counterbalance, an unstarred VS and reported it to be a fine route being worth one or two stars. Perhaps these routes will remind climbers of the fine climbing available in Newlands which has a feeling of solitude while only being a stone's throw from the crowds of Borrowdale.

## EASTERN CRAGS

### THIRLMERE

No new routes have been recorded on the website, development continues in Bram Crag Quarry which has become a major sport climbing venue with attendant popularity; some believe it to be one of Lakeland's most popular crags! Full details are currently only available on the smartphone app (see our website for more information). At nearby Castle Rock North Crag the crack splitting the upper left side of the crag continues to widen. In early 2018 there was an unusually large movement that may have been caused by a local earth tremor. It remains to be seen if the prolonged dry weather has any effect on the crack. The advice remains the same, avoid the North Crag, especially the area left of Mayday Cracks.

### ULLSWATER AREA

The big news here is Neil Gresham's route Fearless (E9 6c) on Dove Crag's outrageously overhanging North Buttress, this is the second blockbuster new

route of the past couple of years.

Fearless E9 6c 40m

Neil Gresham 22 May 2018

This route takes a direct start to Fear of Failure, thus providing the most direct line up the centre of the crag. Start at an obvious twisting groove at the base of the lower wall (approximately 7m left of the shared start of Vladimir the Impaler and Fear of Failure). Climb the groove to the large ledge, step 2m right, summon your courage and launch up the blank bulging wall to the obvious break. From here, steep well protected climbing leads into the crux of Fear of Failure and onwards to the easier upper reaches.

There have been other developments. Tom Walkington and Leo Walmsley have developed a new crag above Kirkstone Buttress which they have named Kirkstone Upper Crag. About fifteen routes have been climbed with grades ranging from VD to E3. The proximity of this crag to both Kirkstone Crag and Kirkstone Buttress has produced a worthwhile venue for a day's climbing. At Gowbarrow M March added Catherine (E2 5b \*) to the Upper Tier. There has even been a new route on Hutaple Crag in Deepdale! (We did it Our Way HS 4a \*).

### SWINDALE AND HAWESWATER

Neil Matthews and Charles Dobson have added more routes to a crag in Swindale that they have named Dog Crag. However on the 1:50000 OS map it is called Outlaw Crag, I know which name I prefer! The routes are all about 20m long and graded between VS and E2. Charles Dobson also added Blood Sweetening (E1 5b \*\*) to the Bloodhound slab on Fang Buttress. Following the sad demise of "Eddie", the Lake District's only Golden Eagle access to Whelter Crags has been restored

subject to no new routes outside of the currently climbed area and no gardening. The crag offers a dozen routes most of which are long (40 – 45m) single pitches on superb rough rock, grades between VS and E2. Feedback from a recent visit by Ted Rogers and Rick Graham suggests that the approach is long, 75 minutes even with the benefit, thanks to the drought, of a short cut through Mardale village. It is difficult to find due to the plethora of rock in the valley and although the routes are impressive they are currently dirty. Also in the valley a couple of small crags have been developed; Piot Crag and Brant Street Crag. The former is said to be disappointingly loose and dirty with the routes tough for their grades; both have long approach walks and between them offer a dozen or so routes of less than 20m.

### GOUTHER CRAG, (Page 346)

#### FANG BUTTRESS

Blood Sweetening 25m E1 5b \*\*

C Dobson 21 Jun 2018,

A more logical and sensible variation on Blood Poisoning. Ascend the right hand side of the Bloodhound slab using the crack for gear and holds as required. At the overhang move delicately up left to join Bloodhound. Finish up the final groove of Bloodhound, or directly up as for Blood Poisoning. Excellent route, gear is not great for the crux moves hence the grade, very good gear lower down though.

### BORROWDALE

In the months after the publication of the 2016 guidebook there were inevitably corrections and clarifications, those not included in the New Routes Supplement are given here. Colin Downer earned the distinction of being the climber to

make the guide out of date when he added Border Reivers (E2 5c \*\*) on Bleak How. The slabs of Hind Crag North Gully received a lot of traffic on the new classic Borrowdale Stare, the slab to the left now offers another two long pitches, The Botchergate Glare (HVS 5a \*) and Deerest (HVS 5a \*\*). Repeat ascents suggest that these two climbs are very close together and a single hybrid pitch may make the best use of that section of slab. It has also been suggested that they may be VS once properly clean, time will tell. There was a surprising find on Black Crag South Buttress, Troutdale Flake (HVS 5a \*) which starts up Troutdale Ridge before continuing directly when the latter moves left after its crux.

The recent dry spell has encouraged visits to Aaron above Stockley Bridge with visitors reporting good quality climbing. The two original routes have been repeated (see comments below) and two further routes have been added by Rick Graham - Seigfried Splitter (E1 5b \*\*) and Ted Rogers - Hindenburg (E2 5c \*\*).

Finally, on Shepherd's, Vesper on Brown Crag has been re-cleaned and restored to its former glory; regular ascents may keep it clean and this is a case of use it or lose it. The grade is top end VS or just HVS depending on how bold you feel. Care is needed to protect both leader and second as the ground is uncomfortably close and the landing nasty. As this route was omitted from the 2016 guide its description from the 2000 guide is included in these notes.

### SHEPHERD'S CRAG (Page 50)

#### BROWN CRAG

Vesper 48 m VS 4c \*\* 1955

An interesting excursion, starting at the left end of Brown Crag just left of the overhanging base of the

crag at a rib. The first pitch is quite serious for leader and second.

1 18m 4c Ascend the rib to below an overhang then make a short traverse right until stopped by a bulge. Move below this and into a corner. Move up rightwards across the wall to a scoop. Climb up the wall above to a tree on a narrow ledge on the right.

2 30m 4b Move right along the ledge and up above an old oak. Climb the overhang on the left and continue right to below a bulging wall. Ascend it leftwards and finish up a steep groove.

The party who cleaned the line suggest the following description:

Start on the left by a massive tree. Skip up and right, clean holds and gear for free. Traverse under the nose towards the brushed wall, it gets a bit bold as the incuts appear so fix some good gear (in the horizontal slot) before launching. Boldly right and up to a thank God flake and two big placements (wires and friends). Reach right for the sharp block (sound as a pound) and pull onto the ledge and right to easier ground. Take care with belays, they are good but fiddly. Finish up the juggy wall, options for all

## CHAMONIX AREA

Route Comment: Monolith Crack. The photodiagram in Lake District Rock (page 353) incorrectly marks the first section of Monolith Crack (line 3 on the diagram). The line shown is actually Hippos Might Fly (E1 5a but see comment below). Monolith crack starts up a slanting break left of the line on the diagram before stepping right to reach a tree and junction with line 3. The line (numbered 17) shown on the photodiagram in the Borrowdale guide (p53) is correct.

Route Comment: Hippos Might Fly. It has been suggested that at E1 5a Hippos Might Fly is undergraded given the likelihood of a 10m+

ground fall if you fluff the top moves. The only meaningful gear below the tree are two pretty poor microwire placements. May be worth E2 5a or 5b

## BLACK CRAG (Page 108)

### SOUTH BUTTRESS

Troutdale Flake 65m HVS 5a \*

A and H Boothman – 07 May 2018,

A more direct version of Troutdale Ridge taking the steep ground above its crux wall.

1 23m Troutdale Ridge pitch 1.

2 30m 5a Follow pitch 2 of Troutdale Ridge to the ledge above its crux wall then move up and right onto an obvious curving flake. Follow the flake as it steepens into an overhanging corner. Climb the corner to the ledge above on the right – crux. Climb the wall above stepping left across a slab to belay as for Troutdale Ridge.

3 12m Pitch 3 Troutdale Ridge.

(n.b. no pitch lengths provided, lengths calculated from guide description of Troutdale Ridge.)

## UPPER GRAINS GHYLL CRAG (Page 281)

Marginal Grains 16m E2 5b \*\*

D Sperry, J Fotheringham, G Widdowson – 25 Jun 2017

A bold route with some good climbing: On the left hand edge of the buttress, follow Y Grain for 4m. Arrange protection in the groove on the arête and then step right into the open-book groove. A series of delightful but unprotected moves (possible marginal micro-wire) up the groove lead to welcome protection (small wires) and an easier finish. The rock is clean and solid. Note: a fall from the top move of the open groove would probably result in a ground-fall. Style of ascent: single abseil inspection and a cursory brush-off with a towel. A 4m, protectionless, direct start would be possible at possibly 6a/6b.

## AARON CRAG (Page 288)

Route Comment: Maginot Line. This route has had traffic recently and is currently fairly clean. On this and the other routes on this wall, the crack climbing is as good as it gets at the grade. Friendly featured rock, good protection and excellent friction. Most of the crag is overgrown but where the rock pokes through it really shines. (Posted by Rick Graham)

Route Comment: The Rasp. This route has had a few ascents recently and is worth the hype. Not for any VS leader, E1 is nearer the mark. The clean line is probably best climbed in one 50m pitch, which may finish further right than implied by the original description but following the topo line. (Posted by Rick Graham)

Siegfried Splitter 28m E1 5b \*\*

R Graham, T Rogers – 07 Jul 2018,

Start just left of Maginot Line/Hindenburg the central of three cracks in the wall left of Hindenburg pitch 1.

1 18m 5b Climb the central crack until thwarted by overhanging grass, move left (thin) to gain a ledge. Move to a higher ledge and climb another splitter crack to the ledge/ belay of Hindenburg. Move right to avoid the capping grass on this section.

2 10m 4c Climb the shallow chimney on the left to gain the block belay above pitch 1 of Maginot Line.

Hindenburg 52m E2 5c \*\*

T Rogers, R Graham – 04 Jul 2018,  
Start at the foot of Maginot Line.

1 17m 5a Climb the crack left of Maginot Line to an exit left to a ledge. The "L Hand crack" mentioned in the guide.

2 10m 5c Gain the truncated flake from the left and make a long move to the flake crack above.

3 25m 5a Climb the layback crack then move right to the rib. Up this to finish up a short off-width.

Pitch 3 starts with the original layback of Maginot Line pitch 2 but probably finishes more directly.

If the second pitches of Hindenburg and Siegfried Splitter are swapped (i.e. p1 Hindenburg followed by p2 of Siegfried Splitter) it will give an excellent HVS on perfect rock.

## EDEN VALLEY & SOUTH LAKES LIMESTONE

No new routes have been added in the Eden Valley but three more top rope routes at Armathwaite have now been led; Black Russian (E4 6b) and Field of Dreams (VS 5a) by Pete Gunn and Bubbles (E3 6a) by Davina Mouat. Down in the South Lakes J Dickinson added Sky Wall (E1 5b \*\*) to Whitestone.

## WINTER CLIMBS

No significant additions.

## Hodge Close Deep Water Soloing

Subject to your choice of spectacles, Hodge Close quarry in the Lakes is either a pokey, chossy hole in the ground or a quirky treasure trove filled with esoteric gems. This venue surely joins a list of crags, which we might struggle to sell to any visiting internationals other than Caroline Cavaldini. Yet the hallmark of British climbing is that books shouldn't be judged by covers and the richest climbing experiences can sometimes be found in the most unlikely settings. It was on that premise that I set off to Hodge Close earlier in the year, armed only with an open mind and an appetite for something different.

I picked my way down the scree slope and descended into a forgotten world. Dashed at the base, the twisted rusty evidence of a 1970s insurance job was slowly surrendering to the ivy. A conspicuously chipped bolt ladder lay next to an un-protected chop-route, showcasing the whacky, 'anything goes' ethics that were coined for the slate quarries during the 80s boom. It made sense precisely because it made no sense at all. The whole place was a symbol of conflict between man and nature. An expression of art and the anarchic defiance of uniformity. A contradiction of beauty and ugliness. In the modern arena, this was the antithesis of a stereotypically 'good crag', and for that reason I fell in love with it instantly.

I had always dreamt of doing a new route on slate, but like most climbers, I'd figured that the best lines had all been found. But here I was in sleepy old Hodge Close doing double takes as I stared at the back wall above the pool. Was I imagining things or was this not a blatantly obvi-

*By Neil Gresham*

ous target for DWS? The height was perfect, maybe 40feet to a broad terrace. There were some clear lines, corners, grooves, a flake-crack and an impressive 'showcase', overhanging wall. The only snag would be getting in there, though it was nothing a dinghy wouldn't solve. The water might be on the chilly side but a 'shorty' wetsuit would take care of that. My climbing partner, Anna Taylor confirmed that, other than a few bits of traversing here and there, she'd never heard of anyone DWSing on this wall. It was a devious notion and I couldn't lay it to rest, so I returned and abseiled in wielding an array of brushes and garden tools.

On reaching the wall above the pool, my excitement soon dissolved into anti-climax. It was covered in thick dust and most of the holds came straight off in my hands. However, after prizing away the surface layer, a solid base was revealed and it scrubbed up pretty well. Perhaps it was still on. I set to work and after two full days of intensive 'gardening', I had unearthed what appeared to be a promising DWS playground by anyone's standards. It just so happened that this coincided with the arrival of a major heatwave, which was surely a sign.

### The First Order 6c+ (S0)

I came back with my trusty dinghy and the obligatory selection of shoes, chalk-bags and beach shorts. The scene was set - DWS comes to the Lakes! My first target was a slim vertical groove in the centre of the back wall. It had looked technical from the abseil rope and wasn't quite the warm-up I was hoping for. I pulled out of the boat and launched straight into a

testing bridging sequence, laughing to myself at my shameful display of over-gripping. I fumbled onto the ledge at half height, re-grouped and the easier upper groove provided a welcome chance to find a semblance of rythm. On reaching the top, I spun on my heels and ejected into space before I had the chance to think twice. Why had I been so tense on a mere 6c+ above bottomless water? A new venue? Concern for the water temperature? Was I out of practice or maybe it was just that inexplicable fear that hits us sometimes? Perhaps, as DWS guru, Mike Robertson says, you never fully relax until you've been in the water. I'd taken the plunge and now it was time to get down to business.

### Clone Wars 7b (S1) & Rebel Alliance 7b (S0)

On cue, it clouded over and the mood changed completely. The pool turned into a cauldron of boiling black tar and the walls looked like some sinister, gothic cathedral. Psyche-out potential was high, but I managed to stay in the frame. The two lines that I'd cleaned on the overhanging wall both appeared to have the makings of DWS classics. Big holds, burly moves and sustained 'out-there' finishes. But which should I try first? A communal start at a conveniently positioned spike, lead me to a point where the lines split. I pause, procrastinated, draw breath, then launch up a series of flat, spaced edges and sloping flakes on the right-hand line. I glance down to the ominous rock shelf, which protrudes below. It appears to be too close for comfort but I'd worked out that you'd just miss it. Soon I'm at the top punching the air, then before long I'm back up at that junction and committing to the left hand line. A slopey traverse, a tenuous undercut move and I'm shaking out on buckets at the base of a hanging groove. I know all the holds but I just can't read it. I try out left, get shut down and just manage to reverse. I try again, this time direct, but I'm wrong handed and the pump escalates as I attempt to stave off the panic. A final desperate attack, the gaston is my last option, it turns the key but I still have the final slopers to contend with. An all-out fight ensues

and I manage to crawl onto the summit ledge. It had felt 7c but on the day, but I climbed Rebel Alliance again the following week and realized that it was 7a+/b and also what a chump I'd been.

### Kyber Crystal 6b+ (S0) & Crystal Maze 7b (S0)

I simply couldn't wait to get back to attempt the two prominent lines on the left wall of the corner. I had hoped that the crag would reveal a quality easier route and the compelling right-to-left flake-crack had the potential to deliver. Sure enough, Kyber Crystal 6b+ is the ideal 'first DWS' being relatively short and straight-forward, although you still have to pull in a few places! This route has already had load of ascents and received numerous comedy splashdowns, including one from me, the first and only time I broke a hold off whilst climbing any of the DWS's at Hodge. If you climb Kyber Crystal then you can't fail to notice the sloping ramp that leads out rightwards across the blank wall. Crystal Maze is perhaps 'the line of the crag', a wolf-in-sheep's-clothes, which requires a potent combination of powerful slapping and tenuous heel-hooking. I'd guessed it would be 6c but it turned out to be bouldery 7b (or V5/6). A great party piece to impress your pals if you're feeling strong, or to skid off sideways and take a body-slap if you're not! I'm going to stick my neck out and put this in my DWS top-10, for sheer novelty factor and strength of the line.

### Shock Treatment 6c (S0) & Sinking Feeling 6a+ (S0)

The next routes to go were the short, steep burly corner of Shock Treatment 6c and the surprisingly awkward slim groove immediately right, Sinking Feeling 6a+. These aren't the best DWS routes in the world but they are good choices for those looking for something a little lower in height. The names are a tribute to a friend who warned us of a condition called 'cold-water shock', where your lungs spasm in cold water

and you sink like a stone. Needless to say, I won't be returning in January to test this out!

### Leo's traverse and down-climb

The final addition to the crag was a fantastic full-width right-to-left girdle traverse, which was made by none other than climbing royalty, Leo Houlding himself. Leo had first looked at the traverse back in his youth, but my recent DWS activities enticed him to finish it off. Note that this includes the ramp of Crystal Maze, so it's as hard as anything else on the crag! Leo also added a useful but tricky-ish down-climb, Second Order 6c, which reverses the top part of First Order and then the broken slab just right of Sinking Feeling. This now means that, theoretically, you don't need to use a dinghy and it is possible to climb all the routes without getting wet, provided you're as good as Leo!

### DWS party time!

Sure enough, the heat-wave continued and after my ascents, Social Media did its thing and Hodge DWS seemed to gain a reputation as the place to go on a hot day for a bit of climbing fun in close proximity to some water. On a few occasions, there have been 3 or 4 dinghies out on the water and gangs of climbers hanging out on the beach! Top marks go to some enterprising local boulderers, who launched a D.I.Y raft made from two crash pads! It certainly seems to be a tempting option for those living inland, who otherwise face a long drive to the coast. Clearly the style is very different to the conventional DWS spots on limestone sea-cliffs, and it certainly makes for a new experience that you won't forget in a hurry.

### Safety tips:

DWS is no different to any other type of climbing in respect that there are associated risks. There are a few obvious do's and don'ts. The list below is not comprehensive.

Always climb in groups and be on standby for others.

Wear a wetsuit if you're concerned about the water temperature.

Practice jumping from low down before jumping from a height.

If you're not confident about jumping from the top of the routes then climb as far down as possible before jumping, or try the designated 'down-climb'. The water is deep. A few people have checked for protruding metal spikes and none have been found, but always make your own risk assessment. NEVER jump from higher than the top of the routes as you risk serious injury.

Behave responsibly. Don't allow DWS to be pigeon-holed as tomb-stoning. Use safe practice in the interest of access arrangements and maintaining good relations with other users of the quarry.

### Other tips

The easiest way to access the routes is by dinghy. Alternatively, attempt the girdle traverse. It is possible to abseil down to the terrace above the routes but this is a faff, as well as being potentially hazardous.

If you don't have lots of pairs of shoes and chalk-bags then climb with a small roll-up dry bag clipped to your chalkbag belt.

Have fun and take the grades with a pinch of salt.



### HODGE CLOSE DWS

1. Kyber Crystal 6b+ S0 \*\*
2. Crystal Maze 7b S0 \*\*\*
3. Shock Treatment 6c S1 \*\*
4. Sinking Feeling 6a+ S0
5. The First Order 7a S0 \*
6. Rebel Alliance 7b S0 \*\*\*
7. Clone Wars 7b S0 \*\*\*

#### Notes:

Access: by dinghy or abseil with care to the terrace above the routes.  
Descent: jump.  
Season: June - September.  
Safety: The water is very deep but always make your own risk assessment.

FAs: Neil Gresham June 2018



Neil Gresham on Kyber Crystal, Photo: Alistair Lee Photography

## Book Reviews

*Geoff Allen, The Scottish Bothy Bible – Lis Cook*

*Steve Birkinshaw, There is No Map in Hell – Ian Charters*

*Chris Bonington, Ascent: A Life Spent Climbing on the Edge – John Spencer*

*Ed Douglas, The Magician's Glass – Rod Smith*

*Simon McCartney, The Bond – David Matthews*

*Bernadette Mc Donald, The Art of Freedom – Nick Hinchliffe*

*Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia – Simon Jefferies*

*SMC Highland Outcrops South- Ron Kenyon*

*SMC, The Grahams and The Donalds – Karl Nelson*

*SMC, Highland Scrambles South – Steve Scott*

*SMC, Outer Hebrides, Climbers Guide – Steve Scott*

## The Scottish Bothy Bible - the complete guide to Scotland's bothies

Author: Geoff Allan

Publisher: Wild Things Publishing

ISBN: 978-1910636107

The Scottish Bothy Bible is described by Jamie Andrew, in his foreword, as 'a labour of love ... an engaging and extraordinary reference work'. It is certainly that. Geoff Allan has visited all the 99 bothies he includes in this book and captured the landscapes of each and every one in four times as many photographs. All the current MBA bothies and a number of 'lesser-known gems' are featured.

An opening section introduces us to the world of bothies and bothying, touches on the history of these places as one-time homes before the depopulation of rural landscapes, and then covers the creation of the MBA, bothy etiquette, what to expect and what to bring. There is an apt reminder that, ultimately, 'it is how you make yourself at home that will shape your bothy experience'.

The bothies are divided into eight geographical sections and an introductory map shows their distribution across the country. Opposite this map, an alphabetical list of bothies by region (with page references) makes it easy for the reader to dip in and out of the volume, rediscover old favourites and contemplate new possibilities. Each geographical section is prefaced with a more detailed map and bothies are then dealt with alphabetically. Entries include some historical background to the area and the bothy, its location, facilities (size, sleeping arrangements, fuel supply, any restrictions on staying in the bothy) and key attractions nearby. Routes in to each bothy are described - often a



choice, with biking and kayaking possibilities also covered - and potential difficulties with river crossings are flagged.

We learn that many of these places were once homes to shepherds, stalkers and crofters but that some were stables, byres or deer larders and others schoolhouses, the local post office and even a youth hostel. Keen readers will discover which bothy has its own electricity supply (metered), where Scotland's first community buy-out (in 1908) took place, and which bothy has panoramic views and opportunities for whale and dolphin watching from its spacious bay windows.

Some may feel that this book opens up a world that is better left shrouded in mystique, and those who already love bothying may want to pick the time and destination of their travels more strategically in future. The mix of solitude and camaraderie that inspires mountain journeys, and what we want to encounter on these, is different for us all. Allan points out that in 2009 the MBA made all details of their bothies available online and his work shows that there is plenty of choice across Scotland's many wild and beautiful regions. He also reminds us that the richness of this world would not exist without 'the commitment, team spirit and camaraderie' of the MBA, the catalyst for many renovations and restorations. These, we learn, have often been inspired by and dedicated to the memory of fellow mountaineers who have died in pursuit of activities they have loved. Those who have lost their lives in the course of military service and in aid work overseas are also remembered.

You are more likely to dip in and out of this book than to read it from cover to cover, but whatever time you spend between the pages will be absorbing, enhanced immeasurably by the range and immediacy of the accompanying photographs. This bible may well inspire your planning; it should certainly enrich your future travels. Bothies, after all, are places where friends and strangers find common ground and share their tales.

*Lis Cook*

## There Is No Map In Hell

Author: Steve Birkenshaw

Publisher: Vertebrate

ISBN 978-1-91024-94-6

This is a story of an extraordinary achievement told with some reluctance, great humility and a complete lack of hubris. Many readers will know the outcome of Steve Birkenshaw's attempt on the Wainwrights record before opening the book but just in case they missed it, the sub title "the record-breaking run across the Lake District Fells" provides a clue. The interest in the book is not the destination but the journey, and what a journey it is - all 214 of Wainwright's High Fells in less than a week. Not only will readers know the outcome, many are also likely to know the main characters, even if only by reputation, because this is almost a roll-call of the Lake District's elite fell runners. The locations too will be as familiar to most readers as they are to the author and to the previous record



holder, Joss Naylor MBE who provides the Foreword.

The book tells the story of Steve Birkenshaw's life starting at the 1976 British Orienteering Championships in North Yorkshire where as a 7 year old he finishes last in his class by some 20 minutes. Finishing, though, is what matters because it means his Club wins the team competition. From then until the 14th June 2014 at the Moot Hall this is an account of the development of an elite orienteer and an extreme-distance fell runner. Both successes and failures are here, along with lessons learned along the way. The author reveals himself to have some not unexpected characteristics, he is - competitive, self-motivated, more than a little determined/stubborn, as well as being inquisitive, highly analytical and utterly obsessive about details. Despite being so driven he is a thoughtful individual, sensitive to and highly appreciative of the lengths others go to for his benefit and is equally aware of the impact his adventures have on his family.

The second part of the book deals with the run itself on a day-by-day basis and then goes on to explore the aftermath. The scale of the challenge isn't easy to grasp until you look at the routes for each of the seven days and realise how few people could complete any of the days individually and then consider what would be required to complete them on consecutive days with barely enough sleep in between.

An outsider might imagine such undertakings are well planned and highly organised and, of course, they are - until they start. Steve's recollections are punctuated by comments from supporters at the roadside as well as on the fells and these comments reveal how much has to be done in response to changing requirements and

conditions, no matter how good the initial plans were. This provides a real insight into what really happens and why experience is so highly valued.

Fell running is usually considered a solitary pursuit. At least some of the intrinsic attraction is in travelling light, fast and often alone over the fells but this undertaking shows another facet of fell running. Here is a small community, developing through the week, which is absolutely dedicated to doing whatever is required to enable Steve to succeed so that all he has to do is keep running, fast enough.

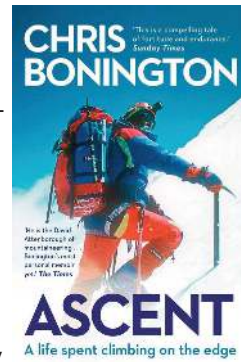
The book is a painfully honest account of what happens when you push yourself very close to or, perhaps, even beyond your own limits. Many will thoroughly enjoy vicariously travelling round the Lake District with Steve and his support runners while others will revel in the day to day details and route choices. I doubt anyone will be unmoved by Steve's suffering as the week wears on and the uncertainty of reaching the Moot Hall on schedule, or at all, grows. Steve's struggle with the aches, the pains and the doubts that, inevitably, develop when the going gets tough is compelling.

While the appeal of the second part of the book is more obvious it shouldn't overshadow Steve Birkinshaw's own fascinating story leading up to the Wainwrights run itself. Few elite athletes' autobiographies are as candid as this and I admired him more than I expected to, perhaps in part because there is nothing in the book to suggest he seeks admiration for this achievement or anything else. This is a very accessible account of the life of an extraordinary runner as well as a piece of Lakeland history which should be enjoyed by all who are familiar with Wainwright's fells.

*Ian Charters*

## Ascent

Author: Chris Bonington  
Published by : Simon & Schuster UK  
ISBN 9781471157578



I started climbing when I was in the lower sixth, in 1966 or thereabouts - it's difficult to pinpoint at exactly what point the fell-walking and scrambling morphed into actual climbing. We had an enlightened librarian at my school, and the 'Outdoors' section contained a number of mountaineering classics which we consumed with a voracious hunger, feeding our nascent rats and inspiring us to get out onto crag and hill. Bonington's first book, 'I Chose to Climb', published that very year, was one of them. In the ensuing half century or so I've read most of his subsequent books and magazine articles, as well as books and articles by others describing his exploits, often in praise, sometimes critical or in caricature. I've listened to him lecture and watched him being interviewed, narrating, opining and/or climbing on the TV on numerous occasions. I've climbed some of his routes, and even briefly shared a belay ledge with him (Gowder Crag, Borrowdale, c1970). In short, 'Bonners' has been part of the backdrop of my own climbing and mountaineering life and I thought I knew pretty much everything I wanted or needed to know about him. Thus I was doubtful whether his most recent book, 'Ascent. A life spent climbing on the edge', necessarily a fairly superficial resume of his life and major achievements, would hold much interest for me. How pleasantly surprised I was, then, when I finally sat down to read it. The first thing to say is that Bonington is a very good writer, in this instance

working under the editorial gaze of Ed Douglas, himself no mean wordsmith; 'Ascent' is without doubt a jolly good read. Naturally, since the book is indeed a synopsis of his life, all the familiar stories are there - accompanying MacInnes on the first winter ascents of Agag's Groove and Raven's Gully on his first winter trip to Scotland as a teenager (routes now graded V, 5 and VII, 6 respectively!); serving time in the Army and as a failed margarine salesman; the numerous Alpine and Himalayan conquests, epics and tragedies; dealing with the opprobrium directed at him for (in his words) 'exploiting the media's thirst for stories' and making a living out of mountaineering (such an attitude seems ludicrous nowadays), and criticism of his leadership style on expeditions; through to new-routing in Morocco in his seventies and an ascent of the Old Man of Hoy at 80 (an account of which constitutes the first chapter). Each ripping yarn is neatly packaged in a short chapter, each around 15 pages long, presented in four sections: Beginnings; Apprenticeship; Peak Years; and Beyond Everest. So what marks the book out as a genuine and worthy addition to the mountaineering canon, something I believe it to be?

First and foremost, although I knew most of the component parts, when revealed as an unfolding story, from the very beginning to getting-near-the-end (he is 83 after all, and by his own admission getting a bit creaky) one is reminded, over and over again, actually, of the contribution he has made to the development and, for want of a better word, the cause of mountaineering, particularly in the Higher Ranges, and that he really has had a most remarkable career. Secondly, I knew relatively little about his background other than, by his own admission, that he had an emotionally unstable and rather lonely

childhood, so Chapter 2, 'Who Do I Think I Am?', was a revelation and proof that life is often stranger than fiction. In the chapter he describes his Irish and Danish ancestry, and a rich and colourful heritage that involves assorted forebears who variously joined in the Australian Gold Rush, were shanghaied then shipwrecked, spent their childhood up in the jungle of the northern Andaman Islands, fought with the SAS in North Africa, underwent lobotomy for severe depression, cohabited in a same-sex relationship with the editor of the Soviet Weekly News, and much more.

Thirdly, linking the mostly familiar stories about his major exploits and achievements there are brief descriptions of the many 'bits' in between: smaller trips with 'mates' whether back to the big peaks or onto his local Lakeland crags; photographic and journalistic assignments; and his extensive 'extra-curricular' charity work. Notwithstanding that, he seemed always to be busy between the expeditions, often under considerable pressure (he was earning a crust from all this after all), writing up and lecture-touring about the last trip and plotting and planning the next one. Fourthly, although Bonington has always worn his heart on his sleeve in his writing, the personal and emotional aspects of his experiences, by and large, have been overshadowed by the descriptive and technical elements. However, in 'Ascent' the 'human' dimension is a constant theme, for example his reflections on his upbringing and possible childhood influences on his chosen path, reactions to the loss of friends in the mountains, and the trials and tribulations faced by his two surviving sons Joe and Rupert growing up in such unusual circumstances (spoiler alert: they both turned out fine in the end!).



In reviewing this book of his life, special mention must be made of his first wife Wendy. She always made a 'guest appearance' in his previous books – as well as providing emotional support and encouragement she often played an important practical role 'back home', not least having to break bad news to the wives and girlfriends of friends who had been killed in the mountains – but here he paints a richer portrait. She was clearly something of a colossus, selflessly bringing up the boys in his absence and supporting him, as well as carving out a fulfilling life for herself. He acknowledges that his obsession 'stretched the woman I loved to breaking point' and he 'marvelled at her rare combination of sensitivity, even vulnerability, and her extraordinary inner strength which allowed her to cope with a long marriage lived in the shadow of constant danger'. He even asks at one point how he could have claimed to love her when his passion for climbing threatened her 'with a cruel and catastrophic loss', tossing her around like 'a little cockleshell boat...in the wake of the great liner that was Chris, ploughing remorselessly through life' (her words).

It felt like there was an element of 'the confessional' in some of this, but however guilt-ridden and in her debt he may have felt about the demands made of her over the years, he was able to repay her, as it were, when she developed Motor Neurone Disease. In the penultimate chapter, 'The Cruellest Challenge', he poignantly describes the onset and progression of this wretched disease as it affected Wendy, her stoical response, and his own devotion to her in her final months of life as he stepped up to the plate, stretched in a way that no Himalayan expedition could ever have done. There was, of course, a happy postscript when he found new romance

with an old friend, Loreto, Ian MacNaught Davies' widow, described in the final chapter 'Love after Love'.

As a result of a 'growing maturity' which, by his own admission may have only come about in his sixties, once he had put Everest 'to bed', he was able to see that what it was ultimately all about was being in the mountains 'with friends one knows and trusts'. For example, in relation to abandoning an attempt on Sepu Kangri in 1998, he writes that 'the well-being and inclusiveness of the group were as important...as success', something he recognises the younger Bonington would not have done. More recently, the climbing on his visits to the Anti-Atlas with old pals provided him with some of the best climbing of his life.

Christopher Booker posited that, in storytelling, there are only seven basic plots. 'Ascent' has them all, in spades: Overcoming the Monster (Everest of course); Rags to Riches (making a living out of mountaineering); The Quest (just about every expedition); Voyage and Return (ditto); Tragedy (sadly a recurrent theme, both 'on the hill', starting with the death of Barry Brewster on North Face of the Eiger on his second attempt with Don Whillans, thereafter the death of many close friends on expeditions, and domestically, with the loss of his first son Conrad and Wendy); Comedy (for example, the antics of Old Etonian Sebastian Snow on a remote Ecuadorian volcano); and Rebirth (finding love again).

The (hardback) cover notes say it all: "Open, honest and full of hard-won wisdom, 'Ascent' is the epic saga of an unrepeatable life of adventure", and however much you feel you already know about Bonners' life and times, I think there will be something new for you.

*John Spencer*

## The Magician's Glass

Author: Ed Douglas,  
 Publisher: Vertebrate, 2017  
 ISBN: 978-1-911342-48-9

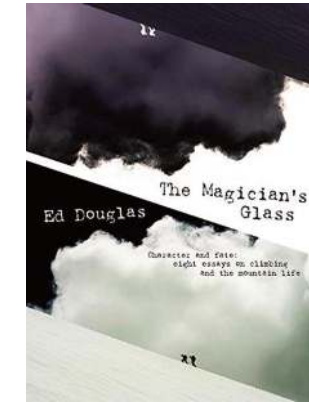
Shortlisted for the 2017 Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature, subtitled, Character and Fate: 'How much risk is worth taking for so beautiful a prize?' The Magician's Glass by award-winning writer Ed Douglas is a collection of eight recent essays, published Rock and Ice and The Alpinist, on some of the biggest stories and best-known personalities in the world of climbing.

In the title essay, Douglas writes about failure on Annapurna III in 1981, one of the boldest attempts in Himalayan mountaineering on one of the most beautiful lines – a line that remains unclimbed to this day.

Douglas writes about bitter controversies, like that surrounding Ueli Steck's disputed solo ascent of the south face of Annapurna, the fate of Toni Egger on Cerro Torre in 1959 – when Cesare Maestri claimed the pair had made the first ascent, and the rise and fall of Slovenian ace Tomaz Humar. There are profiles of two stars of the 1980s: the much-loved German Kurt Albert, the father of the 'redpoint', and the enigmatic rock star Patrick Edlinger, a national hero in his native France, who lost his way.

In Crazy Wisdom, Douglas offers fresh perspectives on the impact mountaineering has on local communities and the role climbers play in the developing world. The final essay explores the relationship between art and alpinism as a way of understanding why it is that people climb mountains.

And the title? In Melville's novel, Moby Dick, Captain Ahab transfixing his crew with a gold



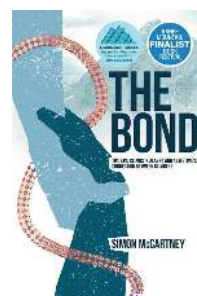
doubloon nailed to the mast—as prize for raising Moby Dick—to which each man brings his own meaning, 'There's something egotistical in mountains and towers, and all other grand and lofty things...which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own self'.

This collection is a great read for any mountaineer, and Douglas writes extremely well. This piece from the Foreword by Katie Ives is bloated sufficiently to be worthy of Pseud's Corner in Private Eye, 'There's an indescribably numinous quality to the flow of Douglas's prose, a sense of radiance in the pauses between words in the moments when a thought unfolds like a curled leaf, appearing suddenly translucent, golden', but elsewhere others on the back cover get it right, 'Final proof that Douglas wields a magicians pen. Thoughtful, provocative and well crafted', and from Andy Kirkpatrick, 'A man with a mind like the teeth of a brand new ice screw. Ed's words are never dull'. Exactly so.

*Rod Smith*

## The Bond: Two Epic Climbs in Alaska and a Lifetime's Connection Between Climbers

Author: Simon McCartney  
 Publisher: Vertebrate  
 ISBN: 978-1-911342-55-7



What gets buried in Alpinism does not stay buried forever' quotes Mark Westman in the foreword to this riveting story of two epic mountain adventures. The main action involves a two-man, alpine style team comprising Simon and Californian Jack Roberts. The pair accomplished two outstanding, multi-day, extreme ascents in the Alaskan Range---the North Face of Mount Huntington in 1978 followed by the SW Face of Denali in 1980. A measure of the accomplishment is given by Simon's comment during the early stages of the Denali climb - 'On Huntington I felt as if the mountain itself was actually intent on killing us violently. Here on Denali I feel so insignificant that I fear we may simply expire and fade away into thin air.'

Simon and Jack form a close and enduring bond of friendship through their combined experiences on the two mountains - hence the title of the book.

During their second big climb, Simon became ill following five days extreme climbing, at around the 17,000ft mark. Over the next few days they managed to climb to an escape point at 19,000ft on the Cassin Ridge whence a combination of Simon's developing cerebral oedema, starvation and exhaustion made further progress problematic. But for a series of fortunate chances and much selfless help from other climbers in the vicinity, we would be unlikely to be reading this book. This extreme experience led Simon to turn

his back on climbing and disappear into the southern hemisphere---attempting to deal with the emotional aftermath whilst hiding away from the climbing scene.

Some 30 years later, through a series of apparently small but significant events, Simon eventually overcomes his buried emotional overload sufficiently to undergo the cathartic experience of relating his story to Mark Westman (another extreme Alaskan Climber who could empathise with Simon and what he endured on these climbs). Simon's story, to the moment of leaving hospital in Alaska, provides the central material for this book.

There is however far more to this book than the two Alaskan climbs and the bond between Simon and Jack. The early chapters give some insight into the making of a climber who can cope with constant objective danger, such as on the Ochs ice climb when constantly threatened by annihilation from overhead seracs. The ability to survive prolonged high altitude storms is proven during an epic return over the summit of Mont Blanc from the Central Pillar of Brouillard with Dave Wilkinson, rescuing several other climbers on the way. Other chapters cover Simon's trips to the Eiger North Face, culminating in success at the second attempt in winter.

The epic stories in the book are filled out with much extra information from other climbers and supporters who were involved in these exploits---not least Jack's journal relating to the two Alaskan climbs and Bob Kandiko's record of the rescue on Denali. The whole is illustrated by an excellent set of photographs of the mountain landscape and the action.

The Bond is not just between Simon and Jack but a bond intertwined between the many

climbers that the two have met and shared experiences with - good, bad and frightening. A bond that transcends the passage of the years.

In summary, a well written, gripping and insightful book that we are fortunate to have before us, on several counts. A highly recommended read!

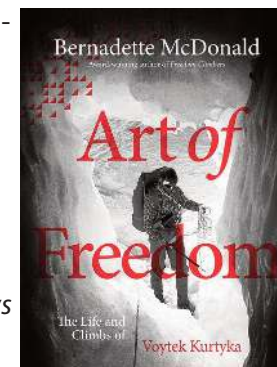
*David Matthews*

## Art of Freedom: The Life and Climbs of Voytek Kurtyka

Author: Bernadette McDonald  
 Publisher : Vertebrate 2017  
 ISBN: 978-1-911342-52-6

Poland has produced some highly accomplished mountaineers, and Bernadette McDonald tells the tale of a particular cohort active in the Himalayas in the Seventies and Eighties in her previous book, Freedom Climbers. Here however is the story of just one of those, Voytek Kurtyka, a name familiar to any student of Alpine style Himalayan climbing in that period. His list of partners reads like a mountaineering Hall of Fame-Alex MacIntyre, John Porter, Erhard Loretan, and Jean Troillet to name but a few, and his long standing partnership with the famously strong Jerzy Kukuczka before they drifted apart. As for his achievements, read the book ! He is one of the handful of climbers who developed Alpine style Himalayan climbing, pursued it for a long period of time and lives to tell the tale. This is the man of whom Messner said "No doubt he was the best."

Kurtyka is notoriously shy of the Press, fame and all the trappings of the modern sponsored modern elite climber, and McDonald is to be



congratulated on gaining his trust and cooperation to document this extraordinary individual. The book is very readable, with excellent photographs and sits well alongside "One day as a Tiger" (Vertebrate Press, 2014), the biography of Alex MacIntyre by John Porter. The occasional false note

occurs when Kurtyka is reflecting on his past and sometimes these comments sound a little too Zen master for my taste, but the odd lapse in style is a very small niggle in what is overall a fine book.

Kurtyka was a gifted rock climber and Alpinist from his earliest climbing days, a sort of Polish Al Rouse if you wish. The complexities of life for a Polish climber in the Sixties and Seventies are well explained here, and Kurtyka is honest about his choice to live by smuggling rather than stay within the constrained system in a command economy which was not really working.

From his first visit to the Hindu Kush in 1972 Kurtyka was clear that Alpine style was the way he wanted to climb, and on this trip he made what was arguably "the first alpine style big wall ascent over 7000m", the North face of Akher Chioch. From there the list goes on and on, small teams, acclimatising carefully (on one occasion this involved an ascent of Broad Peak !) then moving right and fast. Bold, high stakes mountaineering and some eye opening climbs.

Whilst doing this he did not neglect rock climbing, and the book notes a couple of his significant rock climbs in Poland, for instance Shock the Monkey, 8a+ put up at age forty-six.

The theme which runs throughout the book is however one of style. Not just the style in which he chose to climb, (leading to the sundering of his partnership with Kukuczka who became more interested in the 8000m peaks by any route whilst Kurtyka could see no attraction in simply climbing a peak to tick it off) but the style in which he chooses to live. His views are generally (with the odd exception noted above) clearly expressed and one feels that there is real integrity here. Kurtyka has lived according to these views and this book clearly evidences that. It is a note of authenticity in a field where many writers make grand claims about their tormented souls and promise to reveal deep inner truths but fail to do so. Here is a book which claims simply to be biography but is also an elegant essay on the costs and rewards of living according to exacting self imposed rules. It is a book one could easily read over more than once, and find much to think on.

*Nick Hinchliffe*

### Rock Climbers In Action In Snowdonia - The 2016 edition of the 1966 classic

Authors: John Cleare and Tony Smythe

www.mountaincamera.com (2016)  
First published by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd  
ISBN: 978-1-84546-805-7

The early 1970s were good times to receive initiation in the Dark Arts of Welsh climbing, despite the appalling beer. Joe Brown still dominated the talk and The Hard Years occupied the bookshelves along with that definitive Cloggy history, The Black Cliff. There was also this book, Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia, written by

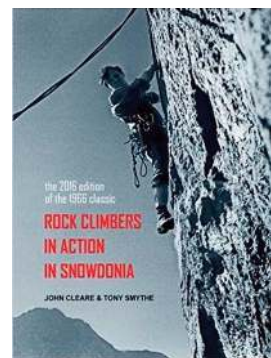
Tony Smythe and illustrated by John Cleare. It has been long out of print though available online (at a hefty price!)

Now suddenly, in 2016, along comes this reprint of RCIAIS. The question 'Why?' is answered by Cleare who tells us that he and Smythe had been approached frequently concerning potential reprint. Cleare further confesses to seeking an outlet to re-hang these and other plates which missed the cut first time round.

Tony Smythe was one of the most lucid climbing writers of his time (read his account of Vember in Hard Rock). RCIAIS was his, too, and encapsulates a time when climbing was simply fun; when epics and madcap adventures brought gasps of admiration and wonder.

Lucid, yes, though the text and tone seem slightly outdated now. Remember that the book is a vivid snapshot of the climbing scene in Wales in the late sixties, and fifty years is a long time in respect of writing styles. Even so, the opening paragraphs convey much of the thrill and anticipation of an approaching Welsh weekend, and Smythe's pen portraits of the main personalities and climbing venues are really rather good. There is, inevitably, dutiful homage to Brown – though surely this was appropriate in its day and no worse than the modern media adulation given to today's heavily-sponsored superstars?

Smythe's narrative sets the scene, while Cleare's photographs – many of them ageless classics – pinpoint 'how it used to be' with accuracy. Eyes will pop at the primitive protection carried by the leading men of the day, as in the 'simian approach' photo of Crew on Erosion Groove Direct and of the same Crew seen



languidly holding the ropes across his shoulder as its loops cascade across to his leader on Hang-over. This, young man, was climbing 'cool', sixties-style.

Somehow this production doesn't have the same 'jizz' as the original, though the extra pictures will satisfy many. Some of nearly 120 photographs – of varying quality – are marred by the use of cheaper quality paper which causes 'ghosting' of images on to a reverse page. My copy features an otherwise impressive picture of Boysen leading Troach against a shadowy background of Crew on Great Wall – in reverse. Minor typos remain, despite author assurances, and it is frustrating to refer constantly to pages 184-194 for descriptions of the plates. I'm mystified as to the purpose of the five-page appendix, Dramatis Personae.

The saleability of the book will be directly proportional to the age of the buyer/receiver; many will see it as antiquated, passé. But if you, like this reviewer, enjoy a reminder of your formative climbing years, the revival of this book will certainly please.

*Simon Jefferies*

### Highland Outcrops South

Publisher: The Scottish Mountaineering Trust  
ISBN : 978-1-907233-22-7

Any rock climbers staying at Karn or Waters or just climbing in Scotland must buy this guide !!!

This publication from the SMC for Highland Outcrops South is a real cracker covering a vast number of crags from the Mull of Kintyre to Strathspey. In there are the well established Dunkeld, Glen Nevis and Creag Dubh. The word



outcrop implies shorter and accessible crags however it covers the crags not included in the surrounding "mountain crag" guides but the division is somewhat moveable – one particular oddity is Indian Slab on the north east side of Garbh Bheinn in Ardgour – this is not at a road side crag being 1hr 45mins with a bike ! and this four star VS route is 220m long - definitely one to put on "the list".

The guidebook is the now well established A5 size which is suitable for the shorter, one pitch routes but can be rather large for the multi-pitch routes so either take a photograph or buy and use one of the larger guide pouches to help preserve and prolong the guide's life.

There are eight areas with excellent maps to set the scene and maps for each crag to focus and help show how to get to the sections of the crag. The routes are described in two columns per page helping to maximise use of space – even so the guide is 448 pages long. The first ascensionists are now included at the start of each route rather than in a first ascents list at the end of the guide - I like to see this as it highlights who did the first ascent without having to delve into the back of the book. Against that one does not get an overall feel for the developments on the crags and area – this would have been helped by having a history of the climbing in the area – however with the aforementioned 448 pages the guide is big enough !

Loads of photos and photo diagrams – both large and small sufficient to show the crags and the routes. Many action photos are first ascents

and one wonders how often that route is climbed – against that I appreciate the difficulty of getting such action photos and it is better to have them in and show off the route than nothing.

There is very little of the dreaded “white space” which shows how well the guide has been laid out and the pages used.

There is no bookmark, which I find useful, or the fold on the cover could do with a crease to help use it as a bookmark.

I find it is useful to have an overall crag guide to summarise what each crag has to offer.

Many inspiring areas – I must get to Ardnamurchan and enjoy the Ring there – the rock looks delightful and what a backdrop .... and what about Binnein Shuas with the classic tick of Ardverikie Wall but lots more ..... and Dirc Mor – I wish I was climbing at E5/6 level ! ....and loads more – in fact there are about 2550 routes !!

A plea from me and the Club - don't remove the copies of guides in the huts – they are Club property and also help to promote the guides !

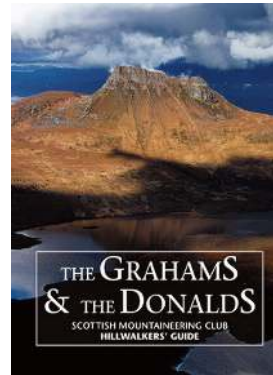
This guide feels good - well done to all involved – now looking forward to the sun-kissed days on these crags.

*Ron Kenyon*

## The Grahams & The Donalds - Scottish Mountaineering Club Hillwalkers Guide

Edited by Rab Anderson & Tom Prentice  
 Publisher: SMC/Cordee  
 ISBN : 978-1-907233-19-7

As someone who has already completed the Grahams and Donalds (including tops) and only has 7 Grahams and 1 Donald/Graham left on a second, I am probably well placed to review this book especially so as I have been using it for over



2 years. Previously, many will have used “The Grahams” by Andrew Dempster which gave routes up all the Grahams but only those Donalds which were also Grahams. That book had no route maps and few photographs so this new book is a big improvement on Dempster's book. It looks very

attractive on the bookshelves with a striking photograph of Stac Pollaidh on its front cover. Unlike, previous SMC guides it is wider, presumably to be able to include all the hills on fewer pages than if they had stuck to the previous page size. The decision to include both Grahams and Donalds in one book was quite an undertaking so it is no surprise that there are 15 contributors.

When the list of Donalds was first published, its author also included and defined both Donalds and Donald Tops and these are both included in this book. When the list of Grahams was first published, its author made no mention of Graham Tops which has been a modern invention and one which I will have no truck with. One wonders where the people who “create” new tops and lists will ever stop. Will we, one day, have Ant Hills and Ant Hill Tops!!! To its credit this book does not include Graham Tops unless they are part of a sensible route to the actual Graham. Believe it or not, there is a so called Graham Top amongst the South Glen Ridge of Munros yet no actual Graham within miles!

For those not sure of what Grahams and Donalds are then Grahams are hills in Scotland over 2000 feet but under 2500 feet with a drop of at least 500 feet on all sides. Donalds are hills over 2000 feet which lie south of the Highland

Fault (Glen Artney), including the Southern Uplands. Unlike the simply defined Grahams, the drop needed for Donalds is more complicated. All Grahams south of Glen Artney are also Donalds but not always vice-versa. Donald Tops are subsidiary Donalds and require less drop. According to this book there are 224 Grahams, 89 Donalds and 51 Donald Tops but recent surveys are changing this. In 2017, some Grahams were promoted and demoted and there are currently 220, for now!

This book is good for its layout, its often excellent photographs, clear maps and interesting background information and many will enjoy using it most of the time. To its credit, it informs the reader where it is possible to include neighbouring hills especially Corbetts and Munros. Like many guidebooks, some of the routes will have changed between the date of research and publication often because of new wind farms and their access roads or forestry clearance and replanting. It would be good to see guidebooks give the date the route was last walked by its author but none seem to do. Some routes appear “glossed over” in places such as the Blackhope Scar round in the Borders. Often, too little attention is given to the type of ground which has to be walked much to one's annoyance at times. Some routes are now so overgrown as to be almost impossible such as Beinn Bheag by Lock Eck and, worse still, the route given for the ascent of Creah Tharsuinn from Glenbranter which is very seriously overgrown when there is a much more straightforward route using the Cowal Way from Glenbranter. To balance this criticism, the book gives a very good route up Beinn Ruadh which, from below, looks quite an awkward and steep hill. The book usually locates any paths which help with the ascent but does not find

them all such as with the ascent of Beinn Dearg from Glen Artney where an estate path which leads to the top is not mentioned and, instead, an unpleasant field crossing is used on the approach. The most common complaint I have heard from fellow walkers about this book is that the timings are often understated for average walkers so do allow extra time if using this book.

The inclusion of the rocky gash of the Dirc Mhor after climbing Meall nan Eagan (Dalwhinnie) is to be commended and they do flag up the boulder field which walkers have to pick their way through carefully. The book is up to date in Glen Roy where the old wooden bridge at Cranachan, formerly used to access Leana Nhor (east), is correctly stated to no longer exist and an alternative, but longer, route is given. The ascent of Stob Mhic Bheathain, in Ardgour, still goes up the Cona Glen. It used to cross a wire bridge – a looser version of the one at Steall in Glen Nevis – over some rapids but the wires now have almost no tension which is why the book, correctly in my opinion, does not mention it. Again, the book is up to date with the new ascent route up Druim Fada from Glen Loy. Surprisingly, the book makes no mention of the access problems to Glen Pean Bothy from Loch Arkaig which has been going on for some years and made the former easy track access very difficult in places because of tree felling debris on very boggy ground. The timber lorries have also wrecked much of the Loch Arkaig road which is not mentioned either. The remotest Graham of all is An Cruachan which is also claimed to be more remote than any Corbett or Munro although using a bicycle helps a lot so it is easier to access than the Munro of A' Mhaighdean. The book sensibly offers a route combining its ascent with that of Carn na Breabaig which is walked past on the way to An

Cruachan. Like any guidebook, the occasional route could do with some more detail being supplied such as the start of the difficult to locate stalkers' path from the Bridge of Grudie cottage to Beinn a' Chearcaill with its unique and remarkable summit.

Where the book seems to disappoint the most is on Jura and Mull. The route over the Paps pleasingly includes the Corbett of Beinn an Oir but the usual approach is quite wet with multiple paths and it would be good to have advice on which is the best approach path to use. On Mull, the combined ascent of Creach Beinn and Ben Buie is well described until the final descent back to the road which goes through some horrendous vegetation. The ascent of Beinn Fhada from Scarisdale is, again, quite well described but refers to "short scrambling" to gain the final ridge leading to the summit. In mid 2017, no such scramble was encountered!! However, routes on the other islands are very well described and should encourage people to visit Rum and climb Trollabhal (Trallval) as part of a longer route which includes the Corbetts of Askival and Ainshval not to mention the unlisted peak of Hallival. This is one of the finest mountain days in Scotland when the weather is nice.

So overall, this is a book well worth buying despite the hefty price tag but don't expect it to be 100% perfect! Most of the Grahams and Donalds are described on my free web site: [www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk](http://www.getlostmountaineering.co.uk).

*Karl Nelson*

## Highland Scrambles South and Easy Rock Climbs

Author: Iain Thow

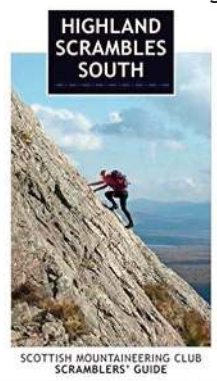
Publisher: Scottish Mountaineering Trust 2017

ISBN: 978-1-907233-23-4

This, the third volume in the SMC Scramblers' Guides, completes the trilogy that includes Skye and the North. At over 400 pages and describing over 200 routes this is a bumper edition covering a huge swathe of Central and Southern Scotland from Galloway to Knoydart and the Cairngorms to Ardnurchan, together with the islands of Mull, Rum and Arran. It is a relatively easily accessible area offering very wide appeal.

Casual visitors would be forgiven for choosing to buy a selective guide, but I would argue that buying this book, covering so much classic and esoteric ground as it does, is a much better option. The sheer variety and breadth of terrain is monstrous, with big mountain days and shorter scrambles all described in sufficient detail to get you to the start and then up the route. Alternatives are mentioned and enchainements abound. There is a lot to like...

The most noticeable difference from the previous two guides is that the plastic encapsulated cover has gone, to be replaced by the ubiquitous card. Opening the book a logical geographical layout is presented with each mountain boldly appearing in an area context. Icons characterise the route as a scramble or rock climb, with a familiar 1,2,3 grading for scrambles and from Moderate up to Very Difficult, the hardest grade



included, for rock climbs. Unsurprisingly the line between a grade 3 scramble and a Moderate rock climb is blurred and sensibly the author has presented these, and anything harder, as climbs. Standard location information—Altitude; Height gain; 6 figure OSGR and the whereabouts of the map and diagram head each route description. A comprehensive description follows using text, the sketches used previously now replaced by much clearer and expansive photo diagrams for virtually every route. Users are expected to 'know the mountains' and, usefully for visitors, approaches are described. Generally descent information is deliberately omitted, the notable exception being Ben Nevis where a more detailed description together with a map is provided, although this is small and omits to indicate the crucial bearings mentioned in the text. This underpins the need, and expectation, that users will carry a map and compass. All of this information is presented in a chunky pocket sized package enhanced by, sometimes inspirational, action images and comprehensive notes relating to the landscape, wildlife, weather, history, safety and local amenities.

So what didn't I like? Having been in use for over 15 years, the cover design is dated and the chosen card weight seems flimsy and probably won't survive many outings. The area covered is vast and disparate, including readily accessible and popular mountains with all amenities and services lying at their feet only an hour or two away, to remote areas and islands with more difficult access and limited facilities. The resulting amount of ancillary supporting information is difficult to manage, although the author has made a valiant stab at this and the salient information is all there—providing more bulleted links to web pages would have done the job and often

the same information is repeated, particularly in the area introductions, where it is more useful. Careful dieting for these 50 pages of introductory text would provide a slimmer volume.

Getting into details, whilst very welcome the photo diagrams lack the precision and sharpness that has been achieved in other SMT publications, notably Skye Sea Cliffs & Outcrops, this is possibly down to the heavy route lines and reproduction quality. Despite the inclusion of many routes characterised as rock climbs and the amount of loose rock encountered on many scrambling routes, there is an almost complete absence of helmets in the images and using a helmet is not mentioned in the Safety notes.

Although these are standard SMC/SMT fare, the use of consistently basic open source mapping is disappointing. Nevertheless, these diagrams do show the whereabouts of the routes and the publisher does emphasise the need for mountain craft and proper equipment. With a gap of six years since the publication of Skye Scrambles the significant changes, without doubt, improve the practicality of this guide enhancing the user experience. However, it seems that in an effort to harmonise a series this is a missed opportunity to modernise these popular scrambling guides.

For anyone who revels in the challenge of moving over rough steep ground in the mountains this book offers a lot. You may also feel that it can be improved, but you won't be disappointed.

*Steve Scott*

## THE OUTER HEBRIDES - Climbers' guide

Authors– Rab Anderson, Kevin Howett and Colin Moody

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ISBN: 978-1-907233-23-4

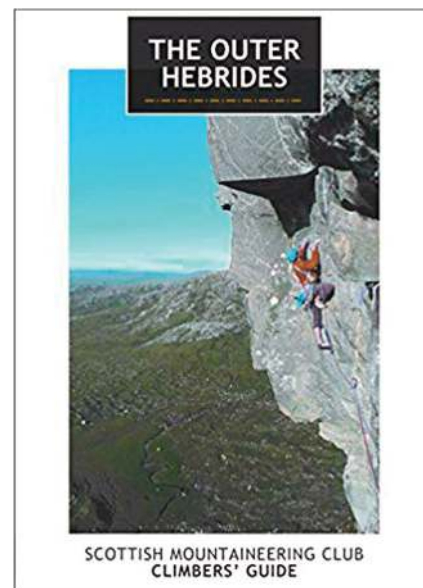
There is something magical about the Outer Hebrides – when viewed from Skye across the sea there is a line of isles on the horizon beckoning. They stretch from Berneray in the south to Lewis in the north and from a climber's point of view they pack a huge collection and variety of routes. Tales of the climbing there and many major crags have made their way into the climbing world over the years.

Well away from the fleshpots Sron Uladail first attracted climbers in the 1960's. In particular Doug Scott and his team climbed The Scoop (A3\*\*\*) – 30 hours of very difficult aid climbing spread over several days. Its "popularity" was ensured by this route being included in the book *Hard Rock*. This has proved quite a stopper for those wanting to tick all the routes in that book and this can be particularly frustrating as the last pitch is the crux!

In the 1980's a new generation was on the scene with the likes of Crispin Waddy, Johnny Dawes and Paul Pritchard. Crispin, in particular, made a number of visits but, with his casual approach to climbing and life, he was not concerned about recording the routes. In the 1990's he built the climbing wall in Penrith and one day, when going to St Bees, we had a discussion about these routes. Mick Tighe had given a talk in Penrith, about climbing in Scotland, and had mentioned the upcoming Hebrides guide and was keen to know about the routes of Crispin. Eventually Crispin agreed to write up the

routes which he did (I wish I had photocopied it!). This was passed on to Rab Anderson and then Dave Cuthbertson to try and decipher the information – it was rather like a spider had walked over the page. Anyway eventually it produced details of 12 routes of mainly E5 and above with loads of stars. I see he returned in 2018 and climbed another 9 new routes – what a guy!

In 1993 a select bunch of climbers – Kev Howett, Graham Little, Chris Bonington and Mick Fowler paid a visit to Mingulay and were well rewarded with a good tally of routes climbed including Silkie (E3 \*\*\*) and Voyage of Faith (E3\*\*\*\*).



In 1995 a group of German climbers paid a visit to Pabbay, and climbed a number of routes just before Howett and Little went there with Andy Cunningham and Grahame Nicoll to see what this island had to offer and amongst others climbed The Priest (E2\*\*\*) and Spring Squill (E2\*\*\*\*).

During this time in the far north the more accessible crags on the NW coast of Lewis were being developed to give a huge selection of routes of all grades – together with some inland crags with, in particular, the 270m Islivig Direct (HS-VS\*\*\*\*) on Tealdasail Slabs.

The new guide arrived, in the post, and I was enthralled and glued to it for ages. It is the now usual A5 format with double column script and a big effort has been made to squeeze so much information into its 480 pages. Bringing together this guide has been a huge task, by the three writers – a visit to many of the crags is, on its own, quite an adventure necessitating ferries before the walk to the crag starts. As mentioned in the guide it is impossible to check all the routes but what has been produced is quite outstanding.

There seems to be diagrams for most of the crags along with descriptions. It is important for the quality of the photo diagrams to get the right time of day with angle of the sun and shadows and this has been done really well. Most of the diagrams are just half or quarter pages but are more than adequate – and their size helps to keep the page count down.

Each section has a map of the area with the crags indicated. Access to many of the sea cliffs is by abseil and on first acquaintance it can be quite daunting abseiling into the void and have your figures crossed that (a) you are at the right crag and (b) you are at the right route! I would have welcomed bigger scale maps for certain areas – in particular for Uig Central - split between around the lighthouse and near Screaming Geo - but that takes away the adventure!

The collection of photographs is generally of excellent quality and really inspires one to go and climb in these areas. As you will gather many of the routes are on sea cliffs and without the use of

a drone it is often difficult to get photographs. There are a few bum shots and head shots but these still give a good feel for the routes - but in general - the photos are WOW!

Saying that – the front cover photograph does not look as good as others in the guide - however it is one of the most prestigious lines on British rock - The Scoop (E7\*\*\*\*)

I like the idea of four star routes to highlight the really good routes – and there are certainly many in the guide which deserve \*\*\*\*.

The guide is split into the various islands starting with Lewis which is split between the sea cliffs around Uig; Bernera, North & East Lewis and The Uig Hills; then Harris: Barra & Vatersay; Sandray; Pabbay; Mingulay & Berneray (Barra Head looks gobsmacking !!) and then St Kilda (for those who really want to get away from it all).

Information about the climbing on The Shiant and The Uists & Erisay are held online – a useful and likely growing alternative.

There is useful information about the Environment, Technical Notes together with Safety which highlights the remoteness of these crags. I could not however see anything about abseiling into the routes and the need to protect the ropes from abrasion. This is a major issue and needs to be highlighted. A photo of a damaged rope would have helped with this!

The Outer Hebrides is made mainly of Lewisian Gneiss – one of the oldest and hardest rocks about - there is however a useful and interesting piece about the geology of the area.

Recent visits to some of the locations in the guide have highlighted what I have been missing – so with the new guide I am looking forward to catching one of the ferries out there – get your own copy and get out there as well !!

Ron Kenyon



The Napes in late autumn sunshine - Bonfire Meet 2017

## In Memoriam

*Brigid Ackerley*

*Hilda Brown*

*Alan Brook*

*Betty Cain*

*Eric Flint*

*Livia Gollancz*

*Mary Greenbank*

*Joe Grinbergs*

*Peter Hay*

*Brian Holden*

*Alan Jackman*

*Ken Jackson*

*George Lamb*

*Peter Metcalfe*

*Tim Pickles*

*Enid Roberts*

*Monica Shone*

*Stan Thompson*

*Caroline Whitehead*

*Dr Frederick Paul Williams*

*Norah Winter*

*Alick Woods*

*Ronald (Ron) Young*

## Brigid Ackerley

**B**rigid, who died on 26th February 2018, was a Life Member of the FRCC, which she joined in 1951. Her father Graham had joined the Club with his brother Arthur in 1919 and on his return from the Second World War he determined to introduce his children to the Lakeland Fells. All three joined the Club, as did their mother Anne. Summer holidays were spent in Buttermere, Coniston and Borrowdale, while the trip to the ODG at New Year became a regular fixture. More than 300 miles from the family home in Southampton and before motorways, it was sometimes quite a challenge to make it in the day. The most memorable winter journey was surely in 1956 when the Suez crisis and petrol rationing meant a rail and bus journey. The last leg from Skelwith Bridge had to be done on foot – with Brigid carrying an embroidery frame under her arm, determined not to lose the chance to complete the fire screen designed for her parents' Silver Wedding.

She was a strong hill-walker but never a rock climber, and completed the Lakeland 3000's with her sister, Elspeth, one Whit weekend, travelling up from London by coach. She worked with young people from her church, both as a Guider and a Youth Leader. She introduced several groups to the hills of the Lake District and pass walks in the Austrian Alps.

Having studied Classics at Oxford she trained as a teacher and after short spells in Croydon and Southport spent the rest of her professional life at the Central Newcastle High School where testimony from old pupils shows she was an inspiring teacher.



Together with her friend Joan Clarke, who joined the Club in 1965, she bought a cottage on Arran – an ideal holiday spot for nephews and nieces who were introduced to the Arran hills, raised beaches, geology, standing stones, swings in every parking place and life in a farmyard.

On retirement Brigid moved to Edinburgh where she was able to enjoy the International Festival and once again provide a base for friends and relatives. She continued to come to the Dinner Meet regularly until 2002. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease shortly after going to Edinburgh, she moved into St. Raphael's Nursing Home in 2003 and spent the rest of her life there.

*Elspeth Ackerley*

## Hilda Brown

**H**ilda Brown was born in China in January 1917 of missionary parents, the eldest of 5 children and was often the 'little mother'. The family returned to England when she was 9 and the children went to boarding school. Aged 14 Hilda visited a social change project in London and became interested in social issues. She read Sociology at the LSE and while there started a lifelong delight in walking in the Lake District.

Her jobs included Personnel officer, Factory Inspector (wearing hat and skirt, with khaki knickers for climbing ladders) and Senior Lecturer. Married to Kenneth, they moved to London for Ken's job in 1960 and sadly he died suddenly aged 51. She brought up her daughters, Jean and Ruth, coping with friends' help and her own innate capacity to get on with whatever needed doing. They lived at Mill Hill where she was a generous host for 51 years, only moving to Devon in 2012 to be nearer her family.

In 1996, age 79, she joined the FRCC, first asking Aubrey Brocklehurst if there was an age limit to membership; he thought for a while and then said he believed it was 18. I met Hilda when I joined the London section of FRCC in the 1990s and later she became meets secretary when I was secretary, producing most efficient walks' programmes and reports. Whatever Hilda did was well done and I believe that she contributed a chapter to a book on women in the business world, as did Livia Golancz.

Hilda was a wonderful companion, both on the long drive up to the Lake District and in the hills. We once joined a Scottish Hotel meet walk led by Paul Roberts which was supposed to be 10 miles long but was in fact 15. Hilda asked me what happened if you could just not go on: 'Do you just



fall over?'

She was part of a 5-person trip over the western foothills of Annapurna in Nepal. She was of a very slight build and had difficulty keeping warm. We gave her hot soup in bed and in true 'Hilda fashion' she rallied and off we went as energetic as ever. Back in the UK on a reconnoitre for a London perimeter walk, she tripped over a bramble and fell heavily. She went very white but carried on, but asked to forgo the afternoon recce. Later, after a four hour wait in hospital it was found that she had a broken wrist. 'Stoic' should have been Hilda's middle name.

Well into her 80s she joined a tall ship Sail Training voyage, being on four hour watches, learning ropes and even climbing to the crow's nest, a swaying overhang.

Hilda's other interests included travelling, particularly to her sister's family in China,



campaigning with the Fawcett Society on behalf of women and girls, school governorship, bell ringing and piano lessons.

Her last mountain climb was Cat Bells when aged 92, supported by her daughter and son-in-law.

My lasting memory of her is as she lifted her head to almost breathe in the mountain scenery, the companionship and the physical rewards of getting there.

*Ruth Brown / Anne Hartley*

## Alan Brook

I first met Alan in spring 1963, while learning to climb in Wilton Quarries. We were 6th form students at different schools and he appeared with a nylon rope over his shoulder, a good sign in those days. We were just beginning to enjoy climbing and became lifelong friends. A group of us would meet most weekends climbing on the local quarries and outcrops, regardless of the weather. He died in March 2017 of a cancer he had been fighting for some time. The following has been adapted from the eulogy given at his funeral in March 2017, compiled by Dave and Liz Wilson, his wife Julie and a few of his friends from different walks of life.

Alan (Koochie) was a man of many parts and known to many. First and foremost a climber, he was also a sailor, skier, motor cyclist, and real ale enthusiast.

He started climbing while at Wardley Grammar school where an enlightened PE teacher took pupils on camping and hillwalking weekends in the Lake District. He soon started climbing and by



the age of seventeen was hitch-hiking to the Lakes or Llanberis with friends, including Ray Evans, Pete Furniss and Malc Berry, doing what climbers did in those days: sleeping under boulders. While studying Maths at Manchester University, he joined the University Climbing Club being rechristened 'Koochie' making lifelong friends, including Julie who later became his wife.

In 1970 Alan and Julie made their first trip to the Alps during which Alan and Pete Furniss used paraffin instead of water to make soup – resulting in a fireball being ejected from the tent. Only rain saved the situation.

During the 70s he climbed throughout Britain: the Peak District, North Wales, the Lakes, Cornwall and in the Alps, mostly with Mike Harris and University friends.

In 1978 Alan married Julie and they went on a skiing honeymoon, having prepared with a couple of lessons on the dry ski slope at Rossendale. Then it was straight to the top of the piste armed with the Sunday Times Book of Skiing. From then on they went skiing every year, becoming accomplished skiers.

That year, his Alpine holiday was shortened by an accident on the walk up to the 'M' resulting in a helicopter rescue and two weeks in Chamonix Hospital.

Alan and Julie moved to New Mills joining the Mynydd Climbing club, which became a substantial part of their lives and the source of long term friendships and climbing partnerships. Alan became Treasurer and then Chairman of the Mynydd. He began following the club tradition of sea stack climbing, most recently an ascent of North Galton Castle on Orkney.

In the 80s he joined 'Team Tuesday' club for evening climbing around Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. The combination of climbing, fast driving and bonhomie suited him and led to him joining the Climbers' Club in 1991, FRCC in 2005.

In the 90s Alan teamed up with Chris Sutton laying siege to the big rock walls of Central Switzerland. He climbed in America with Derek Peterson and Chris Sutton and loved to go for climbing holidays to Kalymnos (which he and Dick Williams discovered before it became popular).

A first holiday on the Norfolk Broads in the 70s started a holiday pattern for 45 years. This led to coastal sailing with Bob Bowdler's Lancashire team and with a group he met while studying for his Coastal Skipper's Certificate. Alan acquired his Yacht Master's Certificate in 2014 and sailed with friends from the Mynydd round the west coast of Scotland and the Med.

Alan's career was in computing. After University he did a 2 year apprenticeship at Rolls Royce Derby, then worked for the Co-op as a computer programmer. In 1973 he joined Fraser Williams as a Systems Analyst (meeting Steve Worthington, who tells of Alan's participation in a presentation skills course, where Alan had to give a talk:

'He chose to talk on the subject of D.P. It was assumed that this meant Data Processing - but it was not - it was about Death Potential! Alan gave a graphical representation of the escalating dangers of his various hobbies, which by now included sailing, windsurfing, climbing and hang-gliding. But at the top of this list was travelling as a passenger in a work colleague's car! This brought the house down! Mind you, travelling as a passenger with Alan could sometimes be described as thrilling to put it mildly.'

He later worked for Anite Systems before joining CSC, until retirement in 2011.

Alan was small but powerfully built; he was appreciated for his ability to not take himself seriously and take no offence at jokes at his expense. He was always cheerful and friendly in the face of taunts regarding his stature and dress sense which owed little to current fashion. His role as Fairy Godmother at the Mynydd annual dinner show will long be remembered.

Quotes from friends paint a picture of a man who was a staunch Lancastrian with entrenched opinions, some of them frankly unpalatable and with no shades of grey, but who continually exuded good cheer; a generous man, warm and friendly, who had a great sense of mischief and fun.

Alan was a friend to everyone he met; if you met him on a crag you would be more likely to use his nickname, 'Koochie'. I shall miss him.

*Ray Evans*

This appeared in the Climbers Club Journal in 2017 and we are grateful for permission to reproduce it.

## Betty Cain (nee Leighton)

4/12/1915 – 17/4/2018

Betty Cain died peacefully in her home at Sand-side, Milnthorpe on April 17th 2018.

She was born on the 4th December 1915, second daughter of Darwen and Elizabeth Leighton and had 3 sisters, Mary, Francis and Jean, who are all deceased.

Betty's father Darwen Leighton was one of the founder members of the Fell and Rock climbing club. He is listed as having a first up Gimmer Crag, and was President of the club from 1921 to 1923. When Betty was 21 her father made her a life member of the club.

The family lived in and around the Kendal area and when Betty was 9 she went to Kendal High School until she was 18. After school she spent a year at Edinburgh College of Domestic Science.

When war broke out she worked in her father's grocery shop for 2 years. In 1942 she went to Cradley, near Malvern to look after mothers and children from France and other parts of Europe, who were escaping from the Hitler regime.

Whilst in Malvern she met her husband Stan Cain, who was working for the Friends Relief Service. They married in 1946 and spent their honeymoon in Buttermere, which was always a special place for her. She spent many holidays at Buttermere in the Fell and Rock accommodation.

They had 4 children, Michael, Roger, Graham and Lorna and lived most of their married life at Ackenthwaite, near Milnthorpe.

Betty loved children and was heavily involved in developing playgroups in the area. She loved the Lake District and as a child spent many days walking the Lake District fells with her father, often speaking with fond memories of these happy times.

Betty's hobbies were to do with the countryside, natural history and walking. She kept very active all her life and managed to climb Great Gable at the age of 80! She also continued her love of camping holidays well into her eighties.



Unfortunately in 1973 her husband Stan died suddenly at the age of 55. A year later she moved to Watersedge, Sandside, with her daughter Lorna. Betty loved the view from her flat window. She had wildlife around her, the ever changing estuary and a wonderful view of her beloved Lake District hills.

Devastation hit the family again in 1989, when her eldest son Michael was lost at sea in a fishing accident off the coast of Oban. Although Betty never got over this, she remained very positive in life.

Her close friends were mainly from the Friends Relief Service, whom she had met during the war years. Betty became a Quaker over 70 years ago, regularly attending the Friends Meeting House at

Yealand and had many friends within the Quaker Society.

Betty always felt she was a very lucky old lady; she had a wonderful family, friends and the best view in the world from her flat window, her beloved Lake District Fells.

Betty is survived by her 3 children, 11 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

*Roger Cain*

## Eric Flint

Wendy Partington reminisces:

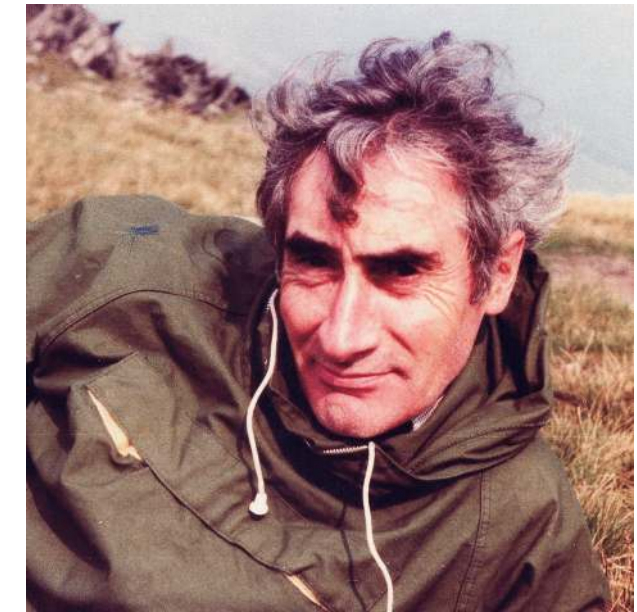
In pre-FRCC days, a group of Oldham area lads and lasses would meet on the bus out to crags and moors at weekends – as did most of our era, as there were very few people who had transport apart from those with motor bikes.

If we had trips further afield, to the Lakes or Wales, we would usually meet people we knew from Manchester and Lancashire, climbing or walking in the same area, usually on a high mountain top. There weren't so many of us getting around in the early fifties.

Stan Clough, who joined the FRCC in 1954 goes on to say:

Eric and I started climbing together in 1947 at Laddow. We had a rope and Timpson's boots with clinkers hammered in by ourselves. A group of similar pairs came up to Greenfield on Sunday mornings on the bus from Manchester to climb on the gritstone and we all learnt from each other. In 1950 I was mostly away at university so Eric was climbing with various partners. One day

we met Don Whillans and his first climbing partner, Eric Worthington. The incident is memorably described in the book Don and Alick Ormerod wrote together:



'Don was impressed: these lads wore anoraks, their ropes were coiled neatly round their shoulders and their boots were heavily decorated with nails.'

Eric Worthington was soon to go off to do his military service so Eric Flint and Don teamed up together in a partnership which lasted until Don met Joe Brown and Eric gracefully dropped out. Don and Eric went to Glencoe where they had an exciting time in Raven's Gully in bad weather and to Skye where, according to Don's account, they had an equally exciting time on Sron na Ciche in bad weather.

Time passed and Eric joined the FRCC in 1953.

Happy memories from Peggy:

I met Eric at a rugby club dance in Altrincham in 1960. We agreed to meet again the next day for what I expected to be a walk in the park, literally. Instead, I found myself roped up, ascending a crag in Stoney Middleton, having no previous experience of rock climbing whatsoever! He had brought along a pair of climbing boots, size 6 (previous owner unknown!), which fitted me perfectly; I christened them my "Cinderella" boots.

Eric was an old hand on the rocks long before I met him. In his teens, he had abandoned cricket, his other great passion, because weekend matches were invariably rained off. Always a lover of the outdoors, he turned to the hills. He cut his climbing teeth on the Roaches and Stanage Edge; he knew the Lake District like the back of his hand; the Isle of Skye, the Cairngorms, North Wales and the Alps were all his playgrounds.

FRCC opened up a whole new world for Eric. Many thanks.

*Peggy Flint*

## Livia Gollancz

Livia Gollancz's father established the book publishing company of Gollancz. She was the eldest of 5 daughters and the only one to enter the company, taking it over after her father had a stroke in 1966.

Before that she was a professional musician, having learnt the piano aged 6, studying at the Royal College of Music at 16 as a viola player, later changing to the French horn. In the 1940s she rang Sir John Barbirolli and offered to play with the Halle in Manchester for £2 per week. This was

accepted but she later resigned, in part due to the effect on her teeth from playing the French horn. One of her best memories was playing for the troops at the front during the war. She also played chamber music and once told me that this was the purest form of music.



She joined her father's company in 1953, working on all aspects of the business, including designing book covers, for which she had a particular flair. Livia had a strong forthright personality perhaps taking after her maternal grandmother Henrietta, a suffragette who looked like Emmeline Pankhurst and would sometimes switch clothes to help the Suffragette leader escape from the authorities, once using her grandfather's car to escape. She was always very careful with money, refusing to take on authors who needed large advances, but did take on Chris Bonington, having met him out walking. She scorned expensive literary lunches, even electric typewriters, never mind computers. Later Gollancz was sold to Houghton Mifflin, then acquired by Hachette, where it continues as a sci-fi imprint.

Livia had many talents, including walking and mountaineering. She was known to turn up at the office in a summer dress and walking boots. She walked in the Dolomites, Nepal and Crete as well as in the UK; in her earlier years she had climbed the Matterhorn. She was at one time the meets secretary for the London section of the FRCC but eventually had to give up walking with them in her late 80s as her feet were so painful. She was also a yachtswoman and I remember a video show at one of the Scottish hotel meets where mountains were viewed from the sea and Livia could recognise many of them.

She also sang and was a member of the Ealing opera group. She was said to empty the office when practising with her fortissimo contralto voice. She owned an allotment (she was a vegetarian) and attended lectures at the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institute, close to where she lived. Livia was unmarried and enjoyed her own company but was a most interesting companion. She resigned from the FRCC in 2008, after 20 years of membership, when she could no longer take part in club activities.

Extracted from the Times obituary notice of 9th April 2018.

*Anne Hartley*

## Mary Greenbank

Mary liked this picture, standing in the door of our mobile home at Kettlewell with rope slung over a shoulder. It reminded her that baby Heather was asleep in her cot. The rope, too, reminded her of Lakeland classic climbs recently ascended when we had lived at the Outward

Bound School in Eskdale. Here, on my free Sundays, we scaled magnificent routes like Gimmer Crack, Hiatus, Botterill's Slab, Moss Ghyll Grooves, the North-West and Gomorra on Pillar Rock, Eliminate A on Dow, Eagles Nest Direct and the Needle (she led) on Gable. Plus – in Skye – Mallory's Route on the Sron na Ciche above Corrie Lagan, along with Cioch Direct, Integrity, the Crack of Doom AND Crack of Double Doom. Egged on by her support my somewhat fearful, volatile style of moderate climbing was boosted no end. "Great stuff," she would say and her support was just that. Great stuff was also how she also boosted my fledgling attempts at freelance journalism. Who else would sell their Morris Minor to help buy the caravan and live up a remote lane in the Yorkshire Dales when she was pregnant? Especially after an illustrious career, first as a staff nurse at St Mary's Hospital Paddington, then as secretary to the managing director of Thomas Hedley in Newcastle, the firm that makes Daz, Tide, Ariel and other detergents you see in Booths, Sainbury's and Morrisons AND then as personal assistant for the MD of the Marchon detergent factory at that time in Whitehaven.



We had lived at Kettlewell for three months before Heather was born. The ambulance took ages, being icy in the lane. The driver put Mary in the front and told me to sit in the back with my old Velocette 350cc so I could eventually ride back home from Skipton. I sat on the bed holding the bike against my knees. The fumes and lurching round bends made me so sick that at Skipton hospital I staggered out green to the gills, in a much worse state than Mary. While she was giving birth to Heather I was in the sick bay with projectile vomiting.

Sadly we parted company after a dozen years; we remained friends and Heather asked me to write this farewell. Following our time together Mary became a valued member of the FRCC with many tributes paid on her sad departure. Maureen Linton remembers her as "a very feisty lady who left her friends many happy memories". One of these included: "Alan and Jean Lawson with Jack Carswell were roping up on the 60th anniversary of Jack's 1st ascent of Pillar Rock. Mary said, 'Can I come too? It's my 60th birthday!' Without hesitation, she tied on the rope and did the climb. Alan had carried up wine glasses and champagne in his rucksack for a summit celebration. Next step: the abseil into Jordan Gap and a return to the Birkness elated". Basil Butcher, a long-time friend, also recollected happy, hilarious days walking in the Lakes and Cheviots with Mary and club members. Audrey Plint said: "Mary enjoyed the social life of the FRCC and was an active walker for as long as she was able. We met in 1968 and I remember her being vivacious and her beautiful blue eyes. In the 1970's, we had a gourmet club. This entailed 16 people meeting in a climbing hut, everyone cooking a course. Mary and I did the meat course – we followed Delia Smith's ham recipe, a great success! Mary was

resolutely independent until the end". The late Mollie Hamer, wrote: "I have so many happy memories of good times with Mary. Memorable, happy days in beautiful mountains, including horrible wet ones in huts, with brag, crib, dominoes and bottles of whisky. Boozy Halloween and New Year's Eve parties and evenings after glorious days on the fells with sumptuous dinners at the Old Dungeon Ghyll and the Royal Oak." Great stuff indeed. Bless you Mary. Born 16th June 1922; passed away 26th October 1914.

*Tony Greenbank*

## Joe Grinbergs

José Robert Grinbergs, who was born in 1950 and died suddenly from pancreatic cancer last year, played a prominent part in the Penrith climbing scene in the 1980s.

His father was a Latvian who had arrived in England as a refugee after the war and his mother was a Liverpoolian of Scottish and Portuguese descent, which explains his somewhat un-Cumbrian names. They settled in the Eden Valley where his father worked on a large country estate and Joe, the eldest of six children, lived an idyllic if impecunious rural life. He excelled at sports of all sorts and played rugby for the county under 21s but had to stop due to injury. Much of Joe's working life was spent at British Gypsum where he was production manager by the time he retired.

Climbing and walking in the Lakes and Highlands soon took over from rugby and Joe's name figures in some hard Lakeland winter first ascents in 1986 and '87, most notably Gommorah (VII) on Pillar Rock, where he seconded Dave Kay who recalls, "He was a great guy to be with on the hill,

even in difficult conditions, when he just got on with the job, never complaining. Being on a rope with Joe always gave me an enhanced sense of security, even when things were getting out of hand. You hardly needed a belay with Joe holding the ropes."

Trevor Price recounts a tale that is Joe to a 'T': "I climbed with Joe many times and he was always good company and a reliable partner. He could also be very determined and single minded. On one occasion we had arranged to climb on Gable Crag. The weather in Penrith that morning was vile, with rain lashing the windows, and I had just settled down with a good book when I was horrified to see Joe's car draw up outside the house. Argument was futile so we set off for Honister. We arrived to a very empty car park in driving rain but it was only when the wind threatened to tear his car door off that he conceded a north-facing mountain crag might not be a good idea. We did however have to do something, so headed for Gillercombe, which was, not surprisingly, very wet and greasy. Given that Joe was the driving force, I was somewhat put out when, standing at the foot of Grey Knott's Face, Joe pointed me to the sharp end of the rope. No amount of whining made any difference and I resigned myself to the inevitable - apparently it was going to be good for my character. Climbing in socks it was not actually too bad and the letterbox once gained gave security. And some retribution - as I am skinny it was no problem for me - Joe however had the barrel chest of a rugby player and was also wearing a brand new Gore-Tex jacket which he did not wish



Photo: Joe Grinbergs at the Backhill of Bush Bothy, Galloway Hills, in 1991

to tear - his discomfort in the crevasse provided endless hilarity (for me). Joe's mood improved when he later found both a Friend and a guidebook (he was a notorious swagger of lost and abandoned kit with a garage full of odd gloves and hats found on the hill). We romped up the rest of the route and both agreed we had had a grand day out."

Al Davis too recalls, "Joe was in his element in wild conditions. On Goucher Crag, having just led Hindleg Crack in a howling gale, he belayed at the top hollering his delight into the full force of the wind. Another fond memory is the year I did the Bob and needed someone to pace me on the last leg - to meet me at Threlkeld at 3am and cajole/bully me over the Northern Fells to Keswick. Despite not being a runner, Joe was the obvious choice - if things got really bad, he could have picked me up and carried me (this was not necessary!)"

On rock Joe was a very competent leader in the lower Extreme grade. Together with the writer of this obituary, he put up Remembrance (HVS) on Gimmer Crag in 1990 and the following year we climbed a dozen new routes on the remote Dungeon of Buchan in the Galloway Hills, including his Bannockburn (E1), a pitch of extremely tenuous 5b jamming and a lasting testament to Joe's tenaciousness. Shortly after that Joe bought a newly built house on the outskirts of Penrith and set about turning his portion of pasture into a terraced garden. What was predicted (by Joe) to be a 6 month project ended up taking two and a half years and only came to a conclusion when his wife told him quite firmly that enough was enough. And that more or less marked the end of Joe's climbing days though, he would occasionally venture forth if some long sought after winter route was "in", but mainly he stuck to his new love, golf. He was also a very active cyclist and walker and one of his last big adventures, undertaken in the summer before he died, was cycling the Camino de Santiago de Compostella, over 500 miles from St John Pied de Port, over the Pyrenees, to Santiago.

As Ron Kenyon writes, "Whatever he did was done to the full – at work with First Aid competitions; being Captain, and later Chairman, of Penrith Golf Club; and in community work with the Penrith Lions. The last time I saw him he was helping the people of Appleby following Storm Desmond in December 2015."

Joe is survived by his wife Anne and his three children and will be remembered with great fondness by all those who knew him, not least myself who will have another very good reason for climbing Remembrance each year from now on.

*Stephen Reid*

## Peter Hay

I first met Peter when joining the Ceunant MC in 1961. He was an experienced climber with some Alpine seasons to his credit and despite an age difference of 5 years we got on very well. Gear was sparse but Peter was always enthusiastic to get out whatever the weather. We worked our way through many of the classic S&VS grade routes in North Wales with occasional visits to the Lakes usually wearing 'big boots'. I remember being caught out in the dark on Brandt on a November night thinking we could 'squeeze' another one in after an already full day's climbing. Peter led the last pitch in inky blackness, typical of him that he would see it (or not!) through.

Together we taught ourselves the new-fangled game of 'Artificial Climbing'. It seemed real to us two novitiates as we spent endless exhausting hours struggling to ascend with a tangle of gear and masses of poor technique. Again we were benighted retreating, leaving most of the gear to be retrieved at a later date. But never a cross word between us – that is how it always was. We both had strong opinions but they never got in the way of our friendship.

In 1964 we met in Chamonix. I was on an extended tour of the Alps and Peter was out for his two week annual holiday. We revelled in climbing on the Moine, the Requin and the Traverse of the Charmoz-Grepon. Another year of unsettled Alpine weather saw us endure an enforced bivouac without gear on the Ago de Sciora in the Bregalia, with lightning flashes all around for much of the night. Again Peter took it all in his stride and went on to climb with other friends in the Alps, ascending peaks such as the Matterhorn.



In the late 1960's he was promoted in his profession as a Quantity Surveyor, to the senior QS position in Stockton and then began a long association with the Cleveland Mountaineering Club (CMC), loyally serving as a committee member for at least 40 years. He was an excellent President, attending practically every meet.

Peter enjoyed organizing, quickly becoming a focal point in the CMC leading regular trips to the Lakes and Scotland to walk, climb and develop his passion for skiing. With a group of friends he traversed The Haute Route when spring was winter and skis were planks, developing a style of skiing which, although not textbook, enabled him to get safely down anything, in any condition. His Christmas Munro bagging and February ski mountaineering expeditions were legendary. It was noticed that Peter was both 'a culinary dunce and a mechanical incompetent', rising early to cook breakfast but still struggling to ignite the stove an hour later!

A memorable occasion typifying Peter was a CMC 'Old gear and clothing competition' to mark a milestone in the club's history. Peter didn't own any 'old gear' so turned up in his usual attire becoming the surprised winner.

Skiing continued to excite him and even in 2017, whenever there was snow, he was above Weardale or Teesdale. He would 'rub-in' his good fortune to those who had missed out, accompanied by one of his gleeful smiles. He was a 'collector' and made detailed notes of weather, partners and rock conditions for all his exploits, but unfortunately his wife, Rosemary, reports that his writing is illegible!

He completed the Munros in 2008, reaching the summits of over 70 on skis, ticked off the Wainwrights by February 2017 and was working through the Birketts. Peter remained an enthusiastic rock-climber enjoying classic Lakeland routes and could still be seen on Cleveland outcrops in 2017.

He joined the Fell and Rock in 1976 encouraging fellow members to join him on many of his schemes.

After a busy professional life Peter embarked on an even busier retirement and gave up much of his time to voluntary work, leading countless, popular U3A walks - all carefully planned and recorded. Peter also became BMC Access Officer for the North East and in this arena he could display his talents for quiet, non-confrontational argument. In his understanding of the conflicts of interest he steered a path through them gaining the respect of all and his unselfish efforts benefited the climbing scene of Northern England.

Peter's walking slowed in recent years but he was as fast as anyone on his electric bike and enjoyed sharing many adventurous excursions with Rosemary, as always, living life to the full.

Thanks Peter for all the happy memories.

*Peter Holden and friends*

## Brian Holden (1933-2017)

Brian was born on the 22nd September 1933 in Nelson. During his school years he was influenced by the interest of his parents in the rugged countryside of the hills, dales and moorland in the north of England as a result of motoring and camping trips.

On leaving school he trained and became an engineer tackler, maintaining machinery used in the cotton industry. This was followed by 2 years National Service, mainly in Germany enjoying outdoor pursuits and skiing.

In the 1950's Brian became a member of the Nelson Clarion Cycling Club and Burnley Mountaineering Club. Among many highlights were cycling from Coylumbridge through the Lairig Ghru to Braemar and spending leisure time with his grandfather who had retired to Coniston in the Lake District where Brian learned to fish, sail a 22 foot masted sailing dinghy and rock climb on Dow Crag. This was the period when Donald Campbell was attempting to break the water speed record. Campbell acknowledged Brian and me while he was sailing his dinghy to a race down the lake and back. This was accepted and he and his crew were soundly beaten. The final comment from Brian was that if you have a thorough knowledge of the effect of the strong westerly winds influencing your sailing, as they are reflected off the hills, then you have the advantage. We all parted company with a handshake and smile. Throughout the 50's Brian was climbing regularly up to HVS standard and spending most weekends in the Lakes, Scotland, and Wales. In the winter months there was snow and ice climbing, climbing at Malham Cove, Gordale Scar and Kilsney Crag and mid-week sessions on local gritstone.



On the 1st July 1960 Brian, on a rope with John Hartley and Peter Grindley with Edwin Leggate, spent a glorious day on the Dow Crag girdle traverse. This never to be forgotten experience convinced Brian of his desire to become a member of FRCC and to join the ranks of the BMC as a mountaineering instructor. He was initially based on Skye and then in the Lakes. He met Cath his wife to be on one of his courses in Langdale and they were married on the 25.9.1963. In 1965 he was proud to become a Fell and Rocker. In his own words "he was elected to be a part of the elite rock/mountain world which included Lords, Lake District Business Leaders, University Graduates and now a Tackler".

In the 70's he took up running in an effort to quit smoking and get fit enough to keep up with Cath and their family, Andrew, Christine and Robbie. He became a member of Clayton-le-Moors Harriers the new passion in his life becoming road and fell running and triathlon.

Brian and I met through the Burnley Mountaineering Club in the mid 50's, the beginning of a long and glorious friendship. I was in the right place at the right time and we needed climbing partners. He was working but I was still at school. He wanted a pillion passenger for his 197cc Triumph Tiger Cub motor cycle and I had no transport.

Brian loved being outdoors in the fresh air. He was an active, energetic and all round sports man who enjoyed skiing, sailing, cycling, rock climbing, road and fell running and became a veteran triathlete.

He was a skilled mechanic excelling at tinkering with old cars and a passionate bicycle wheel builder. He enjoyed driving swiftly down the twisty lanes of Cumbria and North Yorkshire in his 2 seater Jensen bodied Ford 8 engine special with a spare 10 engine which was installed for the longer journeys to Skye, Glencoe and to be competed at the Rest and Be Thankful hill climb in Scotland and the Barbon hill climb in Cumbria.

On a personal level he will be sadly missed. He became a great pal and his company was something I always looked forward to and enjoyed with the happy memories of those early years spent together lingering for all time.

Brian enjoyed a life that was well lived, courtesy of an understanding wife and family.

*David Evans*

**Alan Jackman** 2 April 1942-17 May 2016, FRCC 1972-2016,

Alan Jackman was a founder member of the Pillar Mountaineering Club, and in a period when the club was haemorrhaging members he

joined the Fell & Rock in 1972. He was part of a group that started climbing in the late 1950s and early 1960s when training started as a session in the pub, and the next day's activities were care-free and impromptu. Alan acknowledged how lucky he was to be climbing at that time when things were more informal, there were still new routes to be found at reasonable grades, and the golden rule was 'the leader must not fall'. Alan never did, but he kept pace with the surge in standards brought on by specialist footwear and protection, and he climbed on rock and ice at the then highest levels.



Alan was a brilliant technical climber, but also an excellent skier and runner. He was also a traveller dedicated to seeking new experiences. At a local level, living in Keswick, he continually made fullest use of his bus-pass to start or finish outings throughout the Lake District, and he was expert at finding the cheapest rail fares to get about Scotland. However his exploits were world-wide and he climbed in the Alps, Africa, and America

together with numerous trips to different regions of the Himalaya. Friends knew Alan would immediately say yes to any opportunity to participate in their plans, leading to so many exceptional experiences. All can recall events when Alan's companionship made a good time even better.

Alan served an apprenticeship to become a highly skilled instrument mechanic, but he could turn his hand to many trades which allowed him to build an extension to his house, to fit a new kitchen and bathroom, and even design wrought iron gates. He was a perfectionist in everything except timing, and his friends never understood how he got away with taking so long to finish anything. Alan pulled together a magnificent collection of climbing and mountaineering books, and in addition to fabricating slip cases for volumes methodically arranged, he bought a second-hand press and carefully rebound damaged copies.

A few years ago Alan contracted bladder cancer and underwent major surgery, leaving him with a stoma and a bag. Nothing was allowed to prevent him climbing, and together with his surgeon they positioned stoma and adapted bag to suit Alan's harness. Alan was happily following up 'very-severes' to the end. It seems unbelievable that he collapsed and died whilst walking the Newlands fells on 17 May 2016 at age 74 years. Alan was the fittest of his contemporaries and he seemed destined to outperform the rest forever. After first registering shock at the news, all who knew him referred to him as a true gentleman and all hold him in the highest regard. It is a privilege to have known Alan and climbed with him over 50 years. Alan is greatly missed.

*Doug Elliott*

## Kenneth Jackson

The eldest of three brothers, Ken was born in Calderbrook in 1937 and lived in the Rossendale region all his life. Being practically inclined he began a joinery apprenticeship after leaving school. This was interrupted by his two-year National Service with the RAF maintaining and repairing aircraft, a task he so enjoyed he volunteered for an extra three years of service.

Following his RAF service he returned to joinery and building work, studying at night school for an HND. After several years "on the tools" he moved to a building design partnership as a project manager. Later, with two colleagues, he formed his own group partnership designing and managing large commercial building projects across the country. The firm had offices in Manchester and London employing some eighty people.

Ken loved the outdoors, climbing and walking in the Rossendale area and beyond. A keen rock climber he regularly visited the main climbing venues in England and Wales leading to a very respectable level of difficulty. He enjoyed climbing with Roy Buffey and John Leigh, fellow members of FRCC. His mountain walking experience was equally extensive; in England, Scotland and Wales throughout the year. In 1960 Ken joined the Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club spending some fourteen years serving on the committee in a variety of positions. He maintained membership of the club throughout his life. Through climbing with the LCCC Ken met Joan, later to be his wife, marrying in 2004.

Ski-mountaineering and cycling were other activities close to Ken's heart. He had considerable ski-mountaineering experience in the Alps, Norway and Scotland usually accompanied by



Brian and Joyce Cosby also Gill and Neil Mather. In 1986 Joyce proposed Ken for FRCC membership.

Ken's cycling trips took him to Scotland, Ireland and much of England. For his 65th birthday Ken and Joan cycled the 750km Camino de Santiago over 21 days, a trip Joan described as "interesting".

Ken's knowledge of the building world was recognised by the FRCC when he was appointed Huts Secretary in 1995, a position he held for ten years. He was meticulous in his planning, with an eye for detail, a knowledge of building regulations, planning rules, fire regulations and all the other unseen aspects of building maintenance. The result, coupled with the outstanding practical help of his brother Frank, can be found in a quality of accommodation rarely found in climbing club huts. Ken loved "projects"; the purchase of Karn House in 2002 gave him the opportunity to use all his skills to the full. A former guest house, Karn needed transforming into a Club Hut. This involved much detailed planning and practical work; a task Ken managed with great professionalism.

In 2000 the FRCC made Ken an Honorary Member in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Club life; he was deeply moved to receive such an honour. He served as a Club Vice President from 2006 to 2008. The BMC recognised Ken's skills and approached him to serve on the Huts Group offering advice, guidance and support to BMC affiliated clubs on the running of club huts.

Ken's lasting legacy to the FRCC is to be found in every Club hut, often unseen or unnoticed. The rewiring, fire protection, new windows, insulation, bunk beds, major structural maintenance ... ..; the list could go on. Ken Jackson was a quiet, gentle man; a man who made things happen rather than sit on the side talking. He cared deeply for the FRCC giving many hours of his time for the benefit and well-being of its members. However, he also enjoyed his time with the Club, climbing, walking, cycling and skiing with his many friends. This is what the FRCC was for him.

Ken Jackson was proud to be a member of the FRCC, and the FRCC was proud to have him as a member.

*John M Barrett*

## George Lamb, 1949 – 2016

George was a native of Hornby in Westmaria (as he insisted) where his parents ran the local garage. He started at Lancaster Royal Grammar School in September 1960 where he met Jim Rigg and an interest in mountaineering developed. They joined the Lancaster Mountaineering Club and often on Wednesdays would miss school to enjoy chips and a chat with Harry

Robinson in his climbing gear shop. For several years George and Jim played in the school 1st. XV. Jim says George played a good game, but was a better rower. A few years later George rowed for the Derby Rowing Club at Henley. George went to Leeds University graduating in mechanical engineering, developing his early promise of practical engineering skills.

He and Jim did a lot of mountaineering together, in the Lakes and Scotland, and he was proud of his ascent with Jim of Agag's Groove. George loved Skye spending many holidays in an annual pilgrimage to the Sligachan Hotel in his A35 van.

I first met George in 1980 when we were serving 'apprenticeships' for the FRCC. We developed a strong friendship and soon George, Harry Robinson and I were off to Scotland Munro bagging.

In 1983 George became warden of Birkness and I was assistant. Kathleen, George's wife, became the patient and tireless 'home support' between them the hut prospering with good attendance and bumper maintenance meets. George's outgoing personality made him many friends amongst the locals and the regulars at the 'Fish'. In December the 'Temperance Meet' was established, a tradition which goes on to the present day. His wardenship carried on to 1989.

During this time – and beyond – George devotedly brought up his family of Sarah and Robert with Kathleen progressing his career via Rolls Royce, British Leyland, Leyland – DAF, Mayflower and Bombardier where he was Engineering Director at his retirement.

Munro bagging continued and with Harry, we made frequent trips, often with other FRCC friends. The post-stalking 'Octoberfest' became a

regular fixture and we would occupy some remote hostel.



In 1988 George, Harry and I finished our Munros within a few days of each other. I remember sitting with George on his final summit. We sat in silence with our hands on each other's shoulder shedding a silent tear at the end of a long quest, remembering the joys, hardships and solid friendships of the journey.

He and his family had moved to Rugeley. I still met up with him for the odd Corbett and cycle ride. He was concentrating on his railway modelling, forestry biking with son Robert and to my amazement photography. Although he hardly took a photograph on the mountains, now, typical George, he took photography enthusiastically, becoming a member of the Royal Photographic Society.

My last trip with him a couple of years back, we did a three day trek from Glenfinnan to Inverie in Knoydart. It was rain, mud and discomfort. But George was up for it and my lasting image is of George, pint in hand, half hidden by a platter of

seafood in the most remote pub in Britain – the Old Forge, Knoydart.

George was a skilled, knowledgeable mountaineer and dedicated lover of the mountains. He was ever popular in the FRCC for his fun, larger than life persona and contributions to the running of the club.

He was a dedicated husband and father, popular and supportive in the local community. He was a great friend, fun guy and will be sadly missed by we who knew him. Our condolences and sympathies go out to Kathleen, Sarah, Robert and families.

Finally, when I look at the MCS book of Munro Tables I see my name in the completed list at 755 and George at 756. How can I ever forget him?

George died on 23rd. June 2016. Rest well RA1

*Stan Roberts, with thanks to Jim Rigg*

## Peter William Metcalfe

(1971-2018)

On 22nd April 2018, Peter and his girlfriend Mary Saunders climbed on Raven Crag Langdale in good spirits. But as they descended, Peter fell suffering fatal injuries. He was 46. To die doing something relatively routine is especially tragic; like many of us, he had descended that way countless times. Yet knowing that he spent his last hours doing the thing that gave him the most uncomplicated joy is comforting.

After he was introduced to climbing by Wyn Clayton in 2001, love of climbing defined Peter. Wyn taught him ropework and gear placements and he was always grateful to her for those gifts. After climbing with Keswick Mountaineering Club, he became a member of Kendal Moun-

taineering Club and then joined the FRCC in 2010. I met Peter in 2009; we climbed together for many years, living together for three of them. I did some of my best, and worst, climbing with Peter. Particularly memorable were the Old Man of Stoer, done to celebrate Peter's 40th, with Shaw Brown and Judith Neaves and an unusually dry summer in which Peter and I climbed Lakeland classics such as Eagle Front and Engineer's Slabs in warm, snuff-dry conditions.



Peter had many climbing partners; constant psyche making him uncharacteristically gregarious. As we reflect on his characteristics as a climber, certain themes crop up. One is boldness and determination. Peter was unflappable as a climber, facing unexpected difficulties and unforgiving conditions with toughness and inventiveness. With these attributes he excelled at adventurous climbing as Shaw Brown, who first met Peter through the Keswick club, recalls. Being much keener on bolt clipping than Peter,



Shaw was surprised when he agreed to go to Mexican bolt-clipping mecca El Potero Chico in 2006. Once there, Peter engineered a detour to climb El Pico Orizaba, Mexico's highest mountain. Shaw recalls how, in that environment Peter came into his element and notes that his mountaineering went from strength to strength afterwards. In 2015, Peter was pleased to climb the Cassin Route on Piz Badile. As will not surprise those who knew him well, he did this in the midst of a particularly difficult time in his life and with a stranger from UK Climbing. Katie McKay recalls her first Scottish winter trip with Peter; a tale from three years ago, beginning with disorganisation and a disappearing crampon but finishing with Peter boldly completing a serious pitch in brutal conditions. The 2017/18 winter was Peter's best Scottish season yet. At Easter he and Katie enjoyed four marvellous days of pristine ice, ticking off routes that Peter had wished to climb for years, including Hadrian's Wall, Compression Crack and The Pumpkin.

The FRCC was important to Peter. He was a committed and active member and was passionate about the club, appreciating our history as much as the practical benefits of membership. I remember one evening in Birkness, after we climbed Grooved Wall on Pillar, Peter pored over the old journals and was excited to find, within those pages, an account of the first ascent of the route we had just climbed. Another force in Peter's life was his ongoing health issues, which he faced with the same determination and bravery as he did his climbing. For Peter, the huts were a base for climbing and running but also offered sanctuary; a place of solitude away from the noise and difficulty of life. Climbing was a huge solace and source of enjoyment for Peter; he felt a sense of control, skill and mastery that he believed he

lacked in other areas of his life. As Mary puts it, when Peter climbed it was like everything came together for him.

To those who knew him best, Peter was a complex character who was sometimes troubled and could be difficult to know. But his passion, determination and terrific sense of humour touched many people. These qualities of Peter's will live on in our memories of the days that we had with him on the hill and the crags and will continue to offer us inspiration for the future.

*Cath Sullivan (with contributions from Shaw Brown, Wyn Clayton, Katie McKay and Mary Saunders).*

Raven

Those moments shared,  
And sometimes not,  
Were precious.

Bonds were formed,  
And ties were made,  
And often there was solace.

As rock was touched,  
A calmness fell,  
All that mattered was the present.

You told me once,  
Of how you hummed a tune,  
A management of fear.

A placement good,  
A foothold there,  
Another over here.

And on you climbed,

A mind entirely focused.

In these rocks, and ice,  
You found a home,  
It was a place where nothing mattered.  
It was somewhere you could be yourself,  
The noise and chatter all subsided.

And now you climb on again,  
In peace that's everlasting.

On pristine holds,  
The gear good,  
Each placement almost perfect.

And as you disappear from our gaze,  
You look down to us and say,

"Cry not for me, my treasured friends,"  
"Climb on."  
"Climb on."

*Mary Saunders*

### **Tim Pickles** (1952 – 2018).

The sudden death of Tim, due to an undiagnosed heart condition while he was in Thailand, was a great shock to all who knew him for he always seemed so full of life and energy.

Tim was born in 1952 in Ilkley, Yorkshire, where he attended Ghyll Royd School before going to Bootham in York. He then attended Bristol University where he gained a degree in Geography and a PGCE qualification. After teaching for a time at his former Ilkley School, he became an associate lecturer at the Bristol School of Education. From

then on, his professional life was devoted to various forms of social and community work. From 1974 to 1979 he co-ordinated youth social work activities in Bristol before moving to Newcastle for some years as Director and Head of Programmes with the North East Work Trust. In 1985 he became youth policy consultant for Save the Children in Glasgow. In 1989 he joined a management consultancy group where he specialised in training and leadership coaching and from where he was invited to become Communities Director at a pioneering IT company based in Bristol.

As he could do this work remotely, Tim moved to Keswick where he had previously bought a small property during the 1980s. From now on



Keswick became his permanent home and he subsequently moved to larger premises "The Archway". True to form, he involved himself in local activities. In addition to joining the Keswick Street Players, he was a volunteer at Theatre by the Lake, a member of the Keswick Film Club and a local book club. His own extensive book collection reveals an exceptional interest in antiquarian books and maps. For most of his adult life, Tim was a Quaker and he regularly attended the Keswick Meeting House.

In 2005 Tim retrained as an Interfaith Minister, later, as a shiatsu therapist. He became Practice Advisor to the Interfaith Ministers Association and, as an ordained minister, he provided services to various communities as mentor and teacher.

For over 40 years, Tim was active in addressing the impact of discrimination on the LGBTI community and in supporting individuals within it. He met his first long-term partner Alan Brown while working in Scotland and although the relationship ended in 2002, after 15 years together, they remained good friends. Tim now began to travel more, particularly to Thailand where, in 2011 he met Sittichai Pumpo, known to his friends as AOD. Two years later, AOD moved to Keswick and, in 2014, they were married at the Quaker Meeting House in Keswick.

But the constant background to this full, varied and active life was Tim's love of the fells.. Walking and climbing were very important to him. From a very early age he and his younger sister Helen had been taken on caravanning holidays in the Lake District by their parents who were both FRCC members his father Charles being President (1976-78). Tim became a member himself in 1971 as soon as his age permitted and he quickly involved himself fully in Club activities. He enjoyed mountaineering in Scotland, especially

winter trips to the Cairngorms with Club friends and he completed the Munros in 1992.

Throughout his membership, Tim's contribution to the Club was outstanding. As meet co-ordinator he delighted in leading teams over familiar fells but by unusual routes and nobody ever got lost. He was Assistant Warden at Salving House (1980-88) and overlapped this with the role of Dinner Secretary (1986-91). He always liked to share his interests – or perhaps this is another way of saying that he was good at delegating. As co-editor of 'The Lakeland Fells' he involved over 80 members and if anyone modestly offered to do a little proof reading they would find themselves presented instead with two or three mountains to tramp over and to write about.

His most memorable achievement must surely be his masterminding of the Club's Centenary celebrations which took place during 2006 and 2007. The planning had begun four years earlier and during this time, in 2005, Tim was elected Vice President. Many were the Centenary planning meetings held at 'The Archway' added to which, at very short notice, he shouldered those arrangements for the Centenary Dinner which the sad death of Dinner Secretary Reg Atkins had unavoidably left incomplete.. Again, in his wish not to leave any part of the Club out of the celebrations he involved the Scottish huts by re-introducing the once-traditional President's New Year Meet with New Year Meets at Waters Cottage in 2006 and at Karn House in 2007. The Club was a very important part of Tim's life.

On a certain Club meet, when Tim was still a very new member, as the result of a joke he addressed me as "Auntie". The name stuck and was used so frequently that, years later, members have asked if I really was his aunt. I valued this

special bond and I will always remember him in the way that he signed his correspondence with me as my "ever-loving nephew"

*Maureen Linton-Lee*

## Enid Roberts

Enid Roberts, who died on 17th July 2017 at home in Keswick at the age of 93, joined the club in 1945. She was Assistant Warden of Salving House from 1966-1975. She and her husband were regulars at Scottish Meets, particularly in the 1980's.

She taught French at Workington Grammar School from September 1952 to March 1954, and at Kells and Lillyhall Schools from 1965 to 1966, then transferring to Newlands Girls School at Workington, retiring in 1980.

Enid was born in Aberdare, South Wales, on the 15th March 1924 to Arthur Jenkins and Blanche (nee Aspey Hough). Her father died of pneumonia in December of that year. Luckily, Blanche had trained as a teacher before marriage, so was able to teach and bring up four children on her own, insisting that they should all go to university, Enid graduating with Honours in French from Cardiff in 1944.

Enid's older brother Fred, who became a priest in the Church of England, was a notable scholar and linguist. He was Padre and a qualified Parachutist with the 6th Airborne Division. Fred was an active explorer who, after the war, became a noted map-maker and highly-regarded member of the Swiss Alpine Club. It was through Fred that Enid met her first husband at 19. Fred had taken her to Scotland to climb on Ben Nevis, stopping

at Brackenclose on their return. Fred had to get back for Sunday services in his parish in Bishop's Castle, walking over Scafell to Styhead Pass, then down Borrowdale to the train at Keswick. He left Enid with his friend Elwyn Banner Mendus, a club member since 1941, with instructions that Elwyn look after her. Fred later said he was astonished and proud to read the postcards Enid sent, telling of the climbs she had done with Elwyn on Scafell and Great Gable. Elwyn was a partner in the Solicitors' firm of Milburn & Co. of Workington, where in 1948 he became H.M. Coroner for West Cumberland-the youngest Coroner in the country at that time.

Elwyn and Enid married on the 1st August 1945, living first in Cocker-mouth, then moving to Grove House, Low Seaton in 1949. They had two daughters, Caroline (teacher and musician) and sometime member of the club, and Julia (author).

Elwyn was a keen rock-climber, and first climbing-partner of the legendary Bill Peascod (some 10 years his junior), with whom he ascended and documented many climbs, particularly in Buttermere. Once travel restrictions were lifted after the war, Enid and Elwyn climbed with the Club in the Swiss Alps in 1947, travelling by motor-cycle. The trip was co-ordinated by Lyna Kellett, the Hut and Meets Secretary. Others travelled by train to Martigny and Sion, ending at Arolla, and over-nighting at the Bertol Hut. Their mountain guide, Maurice, visited them in Cocker-mouth in 1948.



Elwyn became ill in 1950, and died of Tuberculosis at the age of 35 in 1952.

Going out to work as her mother had done before her, Enid met Trevor Roberts, later Head of Modern Languages at Workington Grammar School, whom she married in April 1954. Trevor, who joined the club in 1965, was a brilliant man who had served with the Intelligence Service in Europe from 1944-1945. Trevor wanted nothing more in life than a normal, happy family, setting himself to create that for his two step-daughters and their two natural children: David, HM Coroner for Cumbria and, Roland, Professor of Geophysics at Uppsala University, in Sweden. The family grew up doing a lot of fell-walking, map-reading, camping and other outdoor pursuits.

Enid and Trevor retired to a bungalow at Field-side, Keswick in 1982. Trevor died in 2013. Enid spent her last two years at Greta Gardens, Keswick, where she was very happy.

Enid was a natural explorer: infinitely curious about history, geography, geology, languages, politics, travel, and extremely energetic. She enjoyed her physical fitness which continued well into her 80's. She had a finely-attuned visual sense, and would travel miles to art exhibitions. She was a member of the Cumberland Geological Society for many years.

She is survived by her four children, five grandchildren and three great granddaughters.

*David Roberts*

## Monica Lloyd Shone

'This hill is superb for running wherever you please!' - Xenophon, the Persian Expedition

A 1989 newspaper cutting featured the sporting exploits of 63 year old Monica. Headed 'The Iron Lady can't resist a challenge'; it profiled Mon's sporting history. At that time there were references to another Iron Lady making headlines for less laudable achievements. Mon's list of sporting achievements illustrated her determination and single mindedness for new challenges, many more subsequent to that article.

I first met Mon and Col spectating at the Wansfell race in 1979. We subsequently became firm friends and I discovered that there was more to this mountaineering/climbing/fell walking lady, who already had a legendary sporting history. Born in Cardiff in 1926, educated at Llandaff School she showed an early talent in team sports and as school swimming captain. After training at Anstey P.E. College she taught at several 'good' girls' schools (good schools for girls as opposed to schools for good girls). She captained Sussex Ladies Cricket Team, played lacrosse for Reigate, was Vice-Captain of the Welsh national lacrosse team and was a member of the successful 1954 GB and Ireland Lacrosse Team touring the USA (when as amateurs, members paid their own passage, out on the Queen Mary, returning on the Elizabeth).

Following the establishment of Plas y Brenin in 1954, Mon became a voluntary instructor, adding rock-climbing to her repertoire, Crackstone Rib on Carreg Wastad being her first 'proper' climb. She progressed and with Johnnie Lees of RAF Valley and Ron James, the Welsh guide, her later routes included Munich and Belle Vue Bastion on Tryfan, Avalanche and Red Wall on Lliwedd and Mousetrap on South Stack. On an Alpine trip in 1958 she climbed on one of the big slab routes on the Miroir de l'Argentine. After retiring from teaching she was a voluntary instructor at Loch



Eil, O.B., adding winter climbing and leading students on Skytreks from Loch Eil via the Rough Bounds and Sleat to Glenbrittle, with the opportunity of climbing the In Pin.

In 1959 she met Col and in a small, mainly Welsh group, they went to Skye. Their vocal renderings of Cwm Rhondda and Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn from the Cioch were reportedly appreciated on the far side of Coire Lagan. After marrying in 1960 they moved north and Mon became Senior Lecturer in P.E. at Sedgeley Park College, Prestwich. She joined Col in Chester M.C. and they climbed extensively in the U.K. Meanwhile they started sea kayaking, covering much of the British coast, combining this with mountain activities over the next 30 years.

Mon first skied in the late 1940s and by the end of the 60s Alpine then Nordic skiing became the main winter activity, in Austria, Norway and Canada. Mon competed in the Koasalauf in the Tyrol, on the third occasion covering the marathon distance on her 70th birthday. Her 72nd was celebrated in a different fashion, a tandem paraglider flight from the Sennagratt above Schruns in the Vorarlberg.

Following toe surgery in 1981 she could no longer wear PAs and climb but fortuitously she was able to enrol as one of friend Chris Brasher's Guinea Pigs for the London Marathon. She joined Altrincham & District A.C., with her first race being the Coniston 14 in 1983 and a week later winning her first running prize in the Great Cumbrian half marathon. There followed many road races, including 8 marathons, with an FV60 record at London in 1986 and second FV60 in Honolulu.

Realising that hill running was more attractive than tarmac, Mon began fell racing and, encouraged by Wendy Dodds and myself, joined Clayton-le-Moors Harriers, her first race being Pendle in 1984. She competed at all distances, including the Langdale Horseshoe aged 60 in just over 4 hours, many years before this was a recognised age category, being classified as an FV40. She ran many of the classic races in the UK, including the 1988 World Championship race at Coledale Horseshoe, where again her age group was not acknowledged. This was rectified when at 79 she won the FV75 silver medal in the 2005 World Masters Mountain running championships in Keswick. As an enthusiastic Clayton member she was delighted to be in the teams for the Ian Hodgson and Coast to Coast relays. Competition in the British XC championships reaped rewards with age group successes as FV55, FV60 and FV65.

Mon's thoughts turned towards the Bob Graham Round and in 1990 at 64 (the oldest successful completion by a woman at that time was at age 50), supported by a strong Clayton team, she set out on an anti-clockwise attempt. After initial heat, by Dunmail there was dense cloud, high wind and torrential rain. At Threlkeld the schedule was awry and it took firm diplomacy to persuade Mon to retire. Soon afterwards Col noticed details of a new challenge from Pooley Bridge to Greendale Bridge, the Joss Naylor Challenge, exclusively for the over 50s and roughly 2/3 of a Bob Graham. An engraved tankard for the first 20 was an added incentive. After Joss the first completion was by Clayton member, Don Talbot. With 24 hours for Mon's age group she left Pooley Bridge on a perfect summer's evening with Wendy and Border collie, Skye, supporters relaxing at Beetham cottage. It was so warm that there was a skinny dip in Lambfoot Dubh before meeting myself with Wendy's second collie, Sally, at Sty Head. With Mon going well she reached Greendale in 21 hours 47, completing the first female crossing at 66. In the relaxed celebration at Brackenclose Mon was delighted to receive congratulations from Syd Clarke, then Club President, putting a club seal of approval on the success.

Subsequently Mon became co-ordinator for the challenge, being the centre point for notification of attempts, completion reports, arranging of 'meeting and greeting' en route by previous contenders, arranging an annual dinner and procurement of tankards after the first 20 were given out. She continued in this role for 21 years with another FRCC member, Ian Charters, taking over.

In the early 90s Mon concentrated on sprints after encouragement from the Altrincham club

coach. This led to a plethora of UK age group wins at distances from 100m-5000m. This progressed to European and World Championships, winning FV70 400m in 1996 in Malmo in a new British record and winning FV75 200m in 2002 in Potsdam in another British record and 400m in a World record of 88.17.

Mon became an Honorary member of Clayton in 2011 and of the Fell Runner's Association in 2016, in recognition of her achievements.

The first signs of her debilitating illness were the final cause of her withdrawal from the activity of her earlier years and her death in August 2017, while a sad and great loss to Col, to whom she had been married for almost 57 years, was in reality a relief for her. This talented lady... 'I am a little bit older than the Queen',... was long an inspiration, particularly to women runners and beginners who may have considered themselves too old to start running... and it is some comfort that she had at least a short spell of enjoyable retirement in her native Wales. She is missed by many in the running fraternity but of her many achievements I think that being the second person and first lady to have completed the Joss Naylor challenge is the one for which she would most wish to be remembered.

*The above is an abridged version of Linda Lord's profile of Mon which appeared in the Summer 2017 edition of 'The Fellrunner', with additions from Colin Shone and Wendy Dodds*

## Stan Thompson

(Horace Stanley Thompson 1921 - 2017, FRCC member 1941 - 2017)

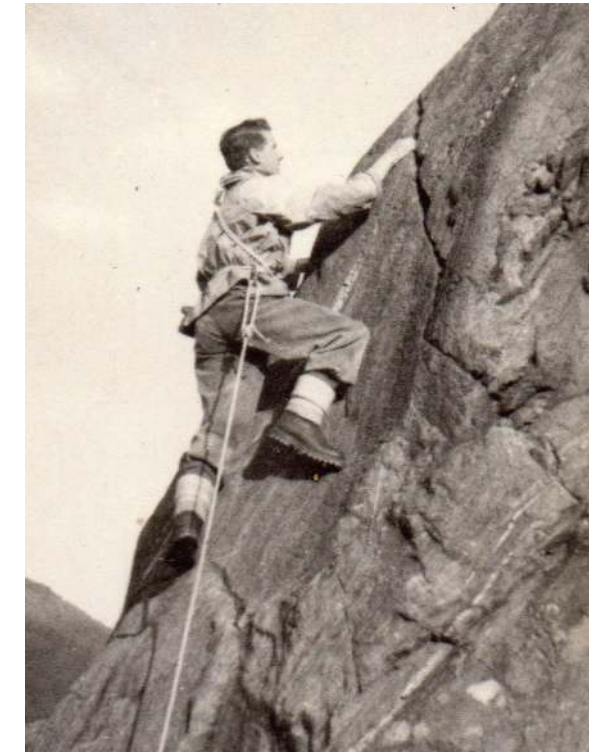
Only a hill but all of life to me,  
Up there, between the sunset and the sea.

[From 'A Hill' by Geoffrey Winthrop Young]

From boyhood Stan loved being among hills. He lived in Harrogate, the youngest of ten children. He began caving in Nidderdale, with two of his brothers, but they quickly decided that they liked the climbing element best and began cycling to their local gritstone crags like Almscliff.

When his brothers got motorbikes they started to visit the Lake District to climb. At the beginning, they stayed mainly at Coppermines YHA, having concealed the motorbikes in the village. No motorised transport allowed for youth hostellers in those days! Dow Crag was their main objective. They assiduously practised climbing down routes to the surprise of those climbing up. This, they assured their fellow climbers, was good practice for the Alps. Keep in mind that they were climbing in heavy nailed boots, with the occasional use of plimsolls, poor quality rope and little protection. As they got to know fellow climbers they began going to the central fells starting from Wasdale Head or Seathwaite. Stan met Peter Moffat and his father on the site where Brackenclose was being built and eventually got to know some of the FRCC members such as A T Hargreaves, joining the club with his friend Vince Veevers in 1941.

When the Second World War began Stan's brothers joined up and he had a job at Drigg in West Cumbria as a trainee civil engineer. War work was being done and he was in a reserved occupation. He regularly cycled to Wasdale Head



Stan on Pinnacle Ridge, Polldubh, Glen Nevis June 1950, Photo: Jimmy Ness, Fort William

to stay with the Naylor's at weekends and climbed with people such as Jim Birkett and Billy Peascod. He was released to join the forces and served briefly in the RAF before being called back to West Cumbria to work at High Duty Alloys. He met his future wife Margaret at Mrs Naylor's and they married towards the end of the war by which time Stan was serving in India as an engineer in the Madras Sappers and Miners Regiment. After being quickly released from the army he returned to West Cumbria to work on more factory building schemes and resumed climbing. He and other climbers had always helped out with mountain rescues, especially with crashed aircrew and mountain rescue teams began to

develop in the Lake District. Stan joined the team organised by Rusty Westmorland to cover Borrowdale. This later became Keswick Mountain Rescue Team.

It was in this early post-war period that Stan got the chance to go with the Combined Services skiing organisation to St. Moritz and developed the love of skiing which stayed with him until he had to give up skiing at the age of 82. In 1965 he skied the Haute Route with André Roch and friends including Des Oliver, Tom Price, Roger Putnam and others. He and Margaret also started to go to the Alps regularly in the summer. One of their early trips involved Margaret and a friend hitchhiking to the meeting point while, later, Stan, and others who had shorter holidays, drove there in an old Land Rover, camping en-route. They then climbed the Aletschhorn from Belalp with 60 feet of rope and one ice axe between them.

In 1949 they moved to Fort William where Stan worked for the aluminium company. They had a happy time climbing and skiing on the Ben and, again, Stan became involved in mountain rescue. With the friends they made among local climbers like Jimmy Ness and Miles Hutchinson they helped to develop the climbs on Polldubh in Glen Nevis. Later, in 1959, Stan joined the Scottish Mountaineering Club having got to know and climb with people like Graham Macphee in the Lakes and Scotland.

By the time he returned to work in England in the 1950's, the FRCC was beginning to acquire more huts and Stan became warden at Birkness for 14 years. He also became a Vice President of the Club and took a keen interest in all activities. In his later years he was astonished at how luxurious the huts became and he loved calling in and having a chat with anyone who was about.

In 1958 Stan and Margaret bought a house near Threlkeld living there until Stan retired when they moved to a smaller house in Keswick. He worked abroad in Canada, India, Australia, where he met up with Bill Peascod again, and for a number of years in the Middle East. He always tried to keep up their skiing and mountaineering visits to the Alps as well as returning to the Lakes and Scotland whenever he could.

After retiring, he and Margaret added Mallorca into their regular trips abroad and helped June Parker with her book on walking in Mallorca. However, Margaret's health deteriorated both physically and mentally and Stan had several years of looking after her when visits abroad became too difficult. After her death he managed a few more trips to the Alps and Mallorca but he began to suffer from loss of balance and poor mobility and required care at home for his final years. He still loved to hear about skiing, mountaineering and mountain rescue and, with help, was able to attend various celebrations with the Fell and Rock and Keswick Mountain Rescue Team in his final years.

He died peacefully at home and donated his brain to the brain bank in Newcastle to assist research into the various forms of dementia.

*Jean Robson*

### **Caroline Whitehead**

From Sue Logan: I have a nice memory of Caroline-it is quite a few years ago now, I am sitting in Raw Head on a FRCC music meet and the room is absolutely packed. Caroline stands up with her guitar and starts to sing a lovely song called

'Where Ravens Feed'. It has a very wide range and is quite difficult to sing, but Caroline's pure, clear voice just soars effortlessly over the high notes and there is not a sound from the audience apart from those who join the refrain. The song is a traditional favourite on the music meets and Caroline did it more than justice.

From Angela Soper: I remember climbing with Caroline on White Ghyll in 1985! 'Chimney Variant' E1, no problem. Caroline enjoyed the annual FRCC music meet at Raw Head many times and she sang a solo one year at the FRCC dinner, a talented musician and very brave.

From Felicity Manning: It was great to be with her and chat on meets – she was always so determined and good company.

From Margaret Clennett: What stands out about Caroline for me is her doggedness and persistence and the way she got things done, despite being rather scatty at times.

From Suzanne Pearson: I met Caroline through the Pinnacle Club and in 1989 we shared a trip to the Dolomites together. It was not an easy holiday! We flew to Munich, took the train to Bolzano and taxi to the head of the Sella Pass where we camped wild and hitch hiked into town for supplies. On our big climbing day the leader above us on our route on the Sella Towers suffered a fatal fall and we stayed with the second until the helicopter arrived. Caroline climbed up first as her German and French is much better than mine. We finished the route but it was not until we were safely back amongst the whistling marmots that we hugged each other in relief.

Moving on to a new area, we were snowed off the climbing and decided to travel to Innsbruck where we hired bikes and enjoyed sightseeing.

I have always valued Caroline's skill in climbing, her knowledge of several languages (she was

latterly adding Gaelic to her repertoire), her ability to play several musical instruments and to sing like a blackbird. She had a real zest for life, enjoyed a wide range of interests and above all, believed in having fun.

I will remember with fondness our regular meals in a pub at Castleton before each Christmas and the bike ride on my birthday last year when we cycled the Tissington and High Peak Trails and shared enormous ice creams at Carsington Water.

*This first appeared in the 2016 Pinnacle Club Journal and reproduced here with permission of the contributors*

### **Dr Frederick Paul Williams**

Known to most as Paul Williams, a Club member for almost 60 years, he actively pursued his interest in the outdoors until his death at 89 years old on 17 December 2017.

Born in Leeds in 1928, it was whilst attending Leeds Grammar School for Boys that his passion for the Lake District began. This continued



through his attendance at University in Leeds (as an undergraduate, whilst obtaining his PHD and lecturing) and was where his passion for climbing began. Along with John Street, Pete and Pat Shorter and Geoff Cram, they ventured to the Lakes taking part in many Club events. When he wasn't in the Lakes he would escape to the Scottish Highlands for mountaineering or Wales for climbing and walking.

Unfortunately, many that knew Paul well are no longer with us. However, his legacy and love for the outdoors has passed on to his daughter and 3 grandchildren who will forever be indebted to him for introducing them to the majesty of the hills. In his proposal letter for the FRCC which was found within his papers Mr Doug Penfold wrote as follows: 'he has unbounded enthusiasm for most branches of our sport and a very definite love of the Lake District'.

*Helen Williams*

**Nora Winter**, 13th August 1925-17th August 2017

**A**t school she was a highly adept mathematician with a passion for literature which stayed with her all her life.

She survived the Germans' 39-45 European tour, being bombed by the Luftwaffe and as a teenager was in the WVS, meeting Ron who was in the fire service. He had a great passion for the outdoors to which he introduced Nora and which they shared throughout their lives.

In the 1940s cycling was a way of getting around and they were both members of the CTC thinking nothing of riding 200 miles or more in a weekend to get to the Lake District. This led to her discovering one of her main passions in life, mountaineering. They became lifelong friends of

Alick and Eleanor Woods who ran Coniston Coppermines Y.H. They cut their teeth on Dow Crag. Ron was a natural climber and Nora was very able and learned quickly. They spent most of their free time in the Lake District climbing and they both became lifelong members of the FRCC.



The wanderlust to discover wilder mountain country led them to Skye and Rhum and the North West Highlands. The sense of freedom and space they found in the N.W led them to return for many years to come and when I came on the scene in 1963 apart from a brief hiatus of weaning a baby they continued the mountaineering lifestyle. Before I arrived Nora had discovered another passion, Boxer dogs, of which she had many.

Nora was a woman of many qualities: impatient, intolerant, bossy, domineering but was kind

and generous and sympathetic to the injustices of this world and those who suffered them! She was a good mother, loving and kind though we had a challenging relationship. She loved fast cars and motorbikes, particularly Harley Davidsons and old British bikes. On driving North for a holiday, she told me she'd never been over 100 mph so on the A9 north of Calvine I put the foot down up to 110 and she wanted to go faster but we were running out of dual carriageway in licence losing territory!

Music was also a big part of Nora's life, a lover of classical music, particularly symphonies by some of the world's great composers like Tchaikovsky and she would have liked to play the French horn, unlike Ron she also had a liking for pop and rock music. She also had a wacky and great sense of humour which she shared with Ron and me. After being widowed in 2003 she moved to Forres and stubbornly and determinedly remained active until she was past 90, but her physical mobility went into a steady decline when she stopped riding her bike at 85. She never recovered from a broken arm almost two years ago and spent the last year of her life in Cathay Care Home, well looked after, amusing to varying degrees most of the fine staff.

I shall miss her, she was one of a kind and I loved her.

*Bevis Winter*

### **Alick Woods**

**A**lick was born 100 years ago on St George's Day, 23 April 1917 at Leamington Spa, died 30th December 2017.

His early interests included scouting and he attended a world scouting jamboree in Budapest in his teens.

He married Eleanor in 1940 and they were happily married for 70 years until she died in 2010.

They started married life in Leamington Spa where Alick worked in a shoe shop until he was called up for war service in the army. He was soon promoted to the rank of Sergeant and served as an instructor at the D&M army driving school based at Keswick. There he instructed Army Officers in driving and maintaining half-tracks and Bren Gun carriers.



After the war his wife and young daughter Gillian moved to Keswick where he started his career as a Youth Hostel Warden at Keswick Hostel.

He enjoyed climbing and fell walking and was soon accepted as a member of the Fell and Rock Club of the English Lake District, enjoying a life membership and being Assistant Warden at Birkness from 1963-1969.

Over his working life he and Eleanor were wardens at Coniston Coppermines, Higham,

Penrith and Derwentwater youth hostels, until his retirement in 1982 when he moved to Aspatria, where he lived until 2015, when he moved to the Good Companions Care Home, Silloth.

His interests included rock climbing, fell walking, photography, bee keeping, swimming and cycling.

*Gillian and John Rayworth, daughter and son-in-law*

## Dr Frederick Ronald ('Ron') Young

31st July 1925 – 5th November 2017

Ron was born in Chorlton, South Manchester to Bertha and Fred and four years later his brother John was born. He was raised in Stretford attending school there. Sadly when Ron was nine years old his mother died, leaving Fred to bring up the two boys. During the summer holidays they went to Weymouth and here Fred met Louie, who became his second wife.

Ron was fourteen when war started and his school was evacuated to Macclesfield. Ron wasn't prepared to miss out on home comforts and cycled twenty miles back home, to enjoy Sunday lunch. Ron was in the school's fire watch brigade, sitting in the attic as the bombs reigned down. The roof caught fire on one occasion and he was proud to have helped extinguish the flames.

He did well at Stretford Grammar School, winning a place at Cambridge to read Physics. At Cambridge, he developed a love for mountaineering and climbing, eventually leading to him reaching Everest Base Camp when he was in his fifties.

After graduating, Ron worked for two years at English Electric in Stafford, which was a form of

"National Service". He then went to teach physics at Harrow Weald Grammar School. There he met and fell in love with Nancy, who taught classics. They were married in 1952 in a Registry Office, which at the time was thought to be daring and modern! They were also forced by their colleagues, to submit to a classical Roman wedding – wearing white sheets as togas!

Ron and Nancy lived in Wembley but their ambition was to have their own house in Harrow Weald. Showing enterprise and determination, Ron designed and built a house, Newlands, a family home where Ron and Nancy raised their children Nick and Diana.

Ron's love and compassion for Nancy shone through, when during the severe winter of 1962, her mother came to stay for the weekend, remaining with them for thirty years! His children never heard him complain, despite her being a 'character'!



Ron was one of the first "new men", supporting Nancy's full time career rising from a teacher of classics, to Principal. He shared parental responsibilities, taking Nick and Diana to their activities, doing the weekly shop and cooking midweek

meals. There was only one area they were out of sync, their sleeping patterns. Nancy would work into the night preparing lessons, Ron would be up with the lark, on one occasion, Ron getting up as Nancy was preparing for bed!

Ron was great at buying presents, brought back from research trips. He encouraged their various interests, with a weekly delivery of the Railway Modeller for Nick, and Shoot for Diana, fostering, a lifelong interest in railways and football respectively.

Despite a busy home life and career, Ron still had the energy to take the family on some incredible holidays. In 1961 he loaded their car onto an old military freight plane to Brittany, where the car promptly got stuck in the mud on the beach, having to be towed out! He drove to Greece, so Nancy could explore ancient sites, involving fourteen one night camping stops proving to be exhausting, even for Ron!

His mischievous nature was revealed on a trip to Hungary. He made himself a mock-up of a KGB identity card, with him looking sinister, beard and all. During the holiday, he joked that he was carrying the card in case it was needed to get them out of a tricky situation. The family were less impressed with this, becoming very nervous at check points, with the thought of the card being found and being arrested for taking the micky!!

In 1958 Ron became a lecturer at Watford College, becoming interested in the physics of bubbles. He did research at Imperial College, gaining a Ph.D. He wrote two technical text books, then after retirement he produced a more accessible book on bubbles, F I Z Z I C S.

When Nancy became ill, Ron was constantly at her side, and it was a huge blow when she died in 1990. It took time for him to rebuild his life and continue to enjoy his interests by walking with

the FRCC, attending acoustic conferences, writing books and holidaying with friends.

Ron celebrated his eightieth birthday, flying the flag of St George outside Newlands, enjoying much love and attention from family and friends.

Ron was incredibly sociable talking to anyone he came across. He always picked up hitch-hikers because he had been one himself. He never managed to kick this habit and during a family holiday in Majorca to celebrate his eightieth birthday, even without a car, Ron picked up an unsuspecting Belgian couple and brought them back to the villa.

At eighty-five Ron had a serious illness which necessitated him moving to Birmingham, to be near Diana. He initially had the energy to travel by train to London, to visit his lifelong friend Joan, as well as walking to the White Swan for a swift half before lunch, but later he settled into a quieter life.

On 5th November Ron died peacefully in the QE Hospital, after living a long and fulfilled life. A life led with enthusiasm, steadfastness, humour and above all kindness and compassion for his fellow beings.

*Taken from the eulogy compiled from memories and stories told by his family*

## Officers of the Club 2017

President	Paul Exley		
Vice-Presidents	Dale Bloomer, Pam Shawcross , Richard Tolley		
Secretary	Martyn Carr		
Treasurer	John Pulford		
Membership Secretary	Peter Simcock		
Joint Journal Editors	Martin Cooper and	Andrew Paul	
Chronicler	Helen Elliot		
Guide Books Secretary	Richard Tolley		
Guide Books Editor*	Steve Scott		
Librarian	Peter Lucas		
Archivists	Ellie Dale-Sherwin and	Chris Sherwin	
Oral Archivist*	Mark Scott		
Dinner Secretary	Margaret Skelton		
Meets Secretary	Brenda Fullard		
Website Editor	Philip Powell		
Compliance Officer	Graham Gill		
Huts Secretary	Keith Wright		
Hut Wardens:			
Beetham Cottage	Humphrey Johnson		
Birkness	Peter Haigh		
Brackenclose	Richard Tait		
Karn House	Graeme Ralph		
Raw Head	Alan Strachan		
Salving House	Phil Elliot		
Waters Cottage	Mark Gear		

## Elective Members of Committee:

Wendy Doods	Joyce Evans	Ian Grace	Hazel Jonas
Steve Lunt	Angela Mellor	Sue Preston-Jones	Mark Scott
Wendy Stirrup	Stuart Thompson	Jane Wainwright	Dave Wright

\*Not a member of the main committee.

Advisory Trustees John Barrett, David Miller and Stephen Porteus

## Meets List 2017

	Date	Meet Location	Meet Co-ordinator
E	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve - Raw Head	Christina Paul
	13/14 Jan	Waters	Chris Ottley
	20/21 Jan	Brackenclose	Stephen Goodhart
E	27/28 Jan	Joint FRCC/YMC Burns Night - Raw Head	Martin Tetley
CM	03/04 Feb	Committee meeting - Raw Head	Brenda Fullard
	03/04 Feb	Joint FRCC/KMC - Waters	Andy Stratford
FM	10/11 Feb	Family meet - Raw Head	Gary Hill
W	16/25 Feb	Rjukan/Hemsedal - Joint FRCC, Climbers' Club, Alpine Club, SMC	Smiler Cuthbertson
	17/18 Feb	Salving House	Lis Cook
	24/25 Feb	Beetham	Deirdre Collier
W	26-28 Feb	Ben Nevis - CIC	Jeff Breen
W	26 Feb/4 Mar	High Tatra, Slovakia - Chata pri Zelenom Plese	Tony Walker
	03/04 Mar	Karn House	Jim Lothian
	10/11 Mar	Raw Head	Rod Anderson
E	24/25 Mar	Music meet - Raw Head	Ron & Ruth Chambers
	25 Mar/04 April	San Vito Lo Capo, Sicily - Joint FRCC/MAM	Maurice Birkill
BH	14/16 April	Easter meet - Brackenclose	Les Meer
W	08/22 April	French Easter meet - Hat Var, Provence	Rob & Christine Smitton
BH	14/16 April	Easter meet - Brackenclose	Les Meer
M	21/22 April	Maintenance meet - Beetham	Humphrey Johnson
W	23/27 April	High Moss, Duddon - 20 places	Jane Wainwright
FM	28/30/April	Family meet- Raw Head	Carrie Hill
T	28/29 April	Old County Tops - Salving House	Ian Charters
CM	05/06 May	Committee meeting - Birkness	Maryn Carr
MM	12/13 May	Maintenance meet - Birkness	Peter Haigh
T	15/16 May	Duddon and Eskdale guidebook meet Brackenclose	John Holden
W	13/19 May	Scottish Hotel meet - Inchnadamph Hotel, Assynt, Sutherland	Andrew Hall & Anne Hartley
	19/20 May	Climbing meet - Raw Head	Anthony Womersley
T	19/20 May	Young Person/Members - Salving House	Alan Dickinson
W	20/26 May	Skye - Glen Brittle Hut (20 places)	George Wostenholm
W	27 May/02 June	Harris and Lewis - Camping at Uig, Lewis	Ron Kenyon
FM	26 May/01 June	Family meet - Birkness	Denise Andrews



	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meet Location</i>	<i>Meet Co-ordinator</i>
T	02/03 June	Cairngorm 'Classic Rock' - Karn House	Stuart Thompson
MM	09/10 June	Maintenance meet - Karn House	Graeme Ralph
	16/17 June	New members meet - Raw Head	Peter Simcock
D	23/24 June	Coniston meet and Dinner	The VPs
T	30 June/01 July	BMC Youth meet - Raw Head	Ron Kenyon
T	30 June/01 July	Geology meet - Derbyshire	John Moore/Dale Bloomer
MM	07/08 July	Maintenance meet - Salving House	Phil Elliot
W	15 July/05 Aug	Alpine meet: Vicosoprano, Bregaglia, Switzerland - Joint FRCC, AC, ABMSAC, Climbers' Club, SMC, LSCC, Wayfarers, Yeovil MC	Keith Lambley
W	21/25 July	Wooler, Northumberland -	David Stephenson
	04/05 Aug	Beetham	Sue Stirrups
	11/12 Aug	Salving House	Peter McNulty
	18/19 Aug	Brackenclose	Cath Sanders
	18/25 Aug	May Cottage, Bosherton, Pembrokeshire - Joint FRCC,CC	Ron Kenyon
CM	01/02 Sept	Committee meeting - Birkness	Peter Haigh
MM	01/02 Sept	Maintenance meet - Waters	Mark Gear
MM	08/09 Sept	Maintenance meet - Raw Head	Alan Strachan
T	08/09 Sept	Buttermere Tri/Open water swim - Birkness	Mark Goodings
	14/17 Sept	Fairhead, Northern Ireland	Ron Kenyon
MM	22/23 Sept	Maintenance meet - Brackenclose	Mike Carter
	29/30 Sept	Raw Head	Norbert de Mello
	13/14 Oct	Brackenclose	Jenny Hawkin
M	13/14 Oct	Family meet - Birkness	Gary Hill
	21/22 Oct	Raw Head	Simon Jefferies
D	03/04/Nov	AGM, Shap Wells Hotel	The President
	11/12 Nov	Bonfire meet - Brackenclose	Mark Scott
T	12 Nov	Remembrance Ceremony - Great Gable summit	The President
CM	24/25 Nov	Committee meeting - Raw Head	Margaret Skelton
	01/02 Dec	Temperance meet - Birkness	Mark Wilkinson
	08/09 Dec	Beetham	Andrew & Barbara Duxbury
E	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve - Raw Head	Christina Paul

## Officers of the Club 2018

President	Paul Exley		
Vice-Presidents	Max Biden, Pam Shawcross, Wendy Stirrup		
Secretary	Brenda Fullard		
Treasurer	John Pulford		
Membership Secretary	Peter Simcock		
Joint Journal Editors	Martin Cooper and Andrew Paul		
Chronicler	Simon Jefferies		
Guide Books Secretary	Ron Kenyon		
Guide Books Editor*	Steve Scott		
Librarian	Peter Lucas		
Archivists	Ellie Dale-Sherwin and Chris Sherwin		
Oral Archivist*	Mark Scott		
Dinner Secretary	Margaret Skelton		
Meets Secretary	Dave Wilkinson		
Website Editor	Philip Powell		
Compliance Officer	Graham Gill		
Huts Secretary	Keith Wright		
Hut Wardens:			
Beetham Cottage	Humphrey Johnson		
Birkness	Peter Haigh		
Brackenclose	Richard Tait		
Karn House	Graeme Ralph		
Raw Head	Alan Strachan		
Salving House	Phil Elliot		
Waters Cottage	Mark Gear		

### Elective Members of Committee:

Alan Dickinson	David Dixon	Wendy Dodds	Ian Grace
Hazel Jonas	Angela Mellor	Mark Scott	David Stephenson
Nina Stirrup	Stuart Thompson	Veronica Varley-Millward	Chris Wales

\*Not a member of the main committee.

Advisory Trustees      John Barrett, David Miller and Stephen Porteus

## Meets List 2018

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meet Location</i>	<i>Meet Co-ordinator</i>
W	6/13 Jan	Joint FRCC, CC, AC, SMC L'Argentière-la-Bessée (Briançon)	Smiler Cuthbertson
	12/13 Jan	Waters	Dee Gaffney
	19/20 Jan	Brackenclose	Stephen Goodhart
E	22/23 Jan	Joint FRCC/YMC Burns Night - Raw Head	Helen Elliot
CM	05/06 Feb	Committee meeting - Raw Head	Angela Mellor
FM	09/10 Feb	Family Meet - Birkness	Gael Watson
	16/17 Feb	Salving House	Diedre Sanderson
W	18/24 Feb	Scottish Ski Mountaineering - Karn	Jim Gregson
	23/24 Feb	Beetham	Graham Willis
W	04/08 Mar	Ben Nevis - CIC	Neil McAllister
	09/10 Mar	Waters	Kate & Ian Durkacz
	16/17 Mar	Birkness	Dave Dixon & Alison Read
E	23/24 Mar	Music Meet - Raw Head	Ron & Ruth Chambers
	23/24 Mar	Dan-y-Mynydd, (Blaenau Ffestiniog)	Phil Elliot
W	26 Feb/4 Mar	High Tatra, Slovakia - Chata pri Zelenom Plese	Tony Walker
BH	30/31 Mar	Easter meet - Brackenclose	Les Meer
W	2/16 April	French Easter Meet - Camping Les 3 Rivières, Entrechaux	Marje Smith & Steve Foxley
W	15/19 April	High Moss, Duddon	Jane Wainwright
MM	20/21 April	Maintenance Meet - Beetham	Humphrey Johnson
	27/28 April	Raw Head	Steve Barrett
FM	04/06 May	Family Meet- Raw Head	Carrie & Gary Hill
CM	04/05 May	Committee meeting - Birkness	Brenda Fullard
MM	11/12 May	Maintenance Meet - Birkness	Peter Haigh
W	18/25 May	Scottish Hotel Meet - Invercauld Arms, Braemar	Ron Lyon
	18/19 May	Young persons/ members meet	Alan Dickinson
W	19/26 May	Skye - Glen Brittle Hut	George Wolstenholme
FM	25/31 May	Family meet - Birkness	Rob Muirhead
W	01/08 June	Sail Loft, Voe, Shetland	Ron Kenyon
T	08/09 June	Joint FRCC/ Rucksac Club	
		Old County Tops - High Moss, Duddon	Ged Cudahy
MM	08/09 June	Maintenance Meet - Karn House	Graeme Ralph
	15/16 June	New members meet - Raw Head	Peter Simcock

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meet Location</i>	<i>Meet Co-ordinator</i>
M	29 June/ 01 July	Joint FRCC/ AC camping - Action Field, Langton Maltravers, Dorset	John Kentish
T	08/09 July	Geology Meet: Ingleton, Yorkshire	John Moore, Dale Bloomer, & David Stephenson
W	07/28 July	Alpine Meet: Camping Attermenzen, Randa, Valais, Switzerland	Keith Lambley
	13/14 July	Raw Head	Tony Womersley
	13/14 July	Peak District - MAM Star Cottage	Elen Rees & Bill Boley
T	20/21 July	Buttermere Long Skyline Walk	Ian Charters
	03/04 Aug	Beetham	Steve Lyon
	10/11 Aug	Salving House	Peter & Sheila McNulty
W	10/17 Aug	Joint FRCC/CC - May Cottage, Bosherton	Tony Womersley
CM	31 Aug/01 Sept	Committee meeting - Birkness	John Pulford
MM	31 Aug/01 Sept	Maintenance Meet - Waters	Mark Gear
TMM	07/08 Sept	Maintenance Meet - Raw Head	Alan Strachan
	14/15 Sept	Young person/ members Meet - Raw Head	Alan Dickinson
	14/15 Sept	Joint FRCC/ Craven meet - Salving House	Dave Wilkinson
MM	21/22 Sept	Maintenance Meet - Brackenclose	Richard Tait
	28/29 Sept	Raw Head	Norbert de Mello
	05/06 Oct	Birkness	Dave Walsh
FM	12/13 Oct	Family Meet - Birkness	Denise Andrews
	19/20 Oct	Beetham	Sue Fox & Trevor Brewster
D	02/03 Nov	AGM, Shap Wells hotel	The President
	09/10 Nov	Bonfire Meet - Brackenclose	Iain Whitmey
T	11 Nov	Remembrance Ceremony - Great Gable summit	
	10 Nov/ 01 Dec	Joint FRCC/ Mountain Club of South Africa Cape Town	Ann-Marie Henderson
E	16/17 Nov	Warden's 80th Birthday Bash - Raw Head	Alan Strachan
CM	23/24 Nov	Committee meeting - Raw Head	Steven Lunt
	30 Nov/01 Dec	Temperance Meet - Birkness	Charles Skeavington
	07/08 Dec	Beetham	TBC
E	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve - Raw Head	TBC

