



# THE FELL AND ROCK JOURNAL

2024







John Holden - President - Explorations on Piers Gill Crag

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2024



No 89

Edited by Tony Walker

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Front cover: Alastair Woodbury and Carolyn Otley on Oxford and Cambridge Direct, Grey Crag, Buttermere. *Photo: Ron Kenyon*

Inside front cover: Snow bridge on Yawash Sar, Ghujerab mountains, Pakistan. *Photo: Nick Hurdall Smith*

Title page: FRCC enjoying themselves in Little Langdale on another wet walk. VP's meet, June 2022

Acknowledgements: Ann Daykin on the summit of Aiguille d'Orny. Plateau Trient and Aiguilles Dorees behind. *Photo: Ken Daykin*

Inside rear cover: Sunset over Pillar after climbing on Gable - a perfect day? *Photo Tim Cresswell*

A climber wearing a blue shirt, dark shorts, a blue cap, and a red backpack is climbing a jagged rock formation. The climber is secured with ropes and gear. The background features a vast, rugged mountain range under a clear blue sky, with a glacier visible in the lower right.

# The Fell and Rock Journal 2024

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## Editorial

The 2024 journal will be our third – that’s 6 years of quite a responsibility when it comes down to it. Although 2 years seems a long time between publications, that time flies by. Journal production is not a linear process by any means, with most articles appearing late in the journal cycle to make everything a little more ‘exciting’, shall we say, for we editors. However, it always comes together, and we invariably have a broad range of interesting articles and, at the end of the day. This year’s journal follows on from the ‘bumper’ guidebook centenary 2022 edition but, although shorter, the articles are just as interesting and it’s another good journal (we may be biased there!).

For the first time since becoming journal editor, I ‘Googled’ the definition of ‘editorial’ – probably something that I should have done previously. There were quite a few fairly similar definitions but the one that seemed most appropriate was: ‘a newspaper article expressing the editor’s opinion on a topical issue’. So, what is a topical issue or issues that affect the club and upon which I have a strong enough opinion to express it? This is a bit of a challenge for me as I am probably one of the most laid back of committee member. However, two issues do come to mind of which I do have quite clear views. The digital handbook and membership. The former controversial and the latter an unequivocal success.

The membership is already great but is ageing. This is being turned around by Jane, Hazel, and everyone else involved in creating meets/events and getting new people interested in the club. Brilliant, successful and we salute you. We have now got an ever increasing number of younger members and, as a result, the club is becoming increasingly vibrant. Lots of new and prospective members in the huts and we must ensure that we are welcoming to these ‘newbies’.

The second item is the replacing of the much loved paper handbook with a digital version. This has been, perhaps, one of the most debated and controversial issues in recent club history but ... unfortunately necessary. Without such a move we could, as a club (that’s each one of us), potentially be in breach of the 2018 UK Data Protection Act. Not a place we really want to be. There are also anecdotal references to previous handbooks for sale in second-hand book shops. We all receive ‘cold calls’ on our mobiles and phishing emails – it is a fact of modern life – ever wondered where the caller got your details from. An old handbook purchased in a second-hand book shop ... may be.

We are going through a lot of changes at present that will secure the long term future of the club. Change can be unsettling but if we embrace it and move forward together then we have a bright future ahead.

Hope everyone enjoys the 2024 journal.

Cheers

Tony and Jim

# President's Report

*John Holden*

2022 now seems a long time ago, but some events stay with one. The first meet of any Club President is the Bonfire/Remembrance Meet. In November '22, Brackenclose was full, and the weather was kind - very kind. The summit of Great Gable, so often the scene of battles with the elements, was in a benign mood. The sun was out, the wind light and hardly a cloud in the sky. A large crowd had gathered for the Address and after the two minutes silence there was no concerted rush for the exit.

A year later the Saturday stayed fine for the fireworks, but the forecast for Remembrance Sunday was poor; strong winds with a frontal system arriving at midday with heavy rain. The forecasters were right. It was too windy to do the Address from the summit rock and once the two minute silence was over there was a concerted rush for the exit ... and the rain started when we were half-way down to Styhead (and got steadily worse).

I have started this report with the Remembrance Meet because it is arguably the defining event of the year, on a par with our AGM and Dinner. And 2024 is a significant year when talking about remembrance; it is the Centenary of The Great Gift when the tops of twelve mountains — Kirkfell, Great Gable, Green Gable, Brandreth, Grey Knotts, Base Brown, Seathwaite Fell, Glaramara, Allen Crag, Great End, Broad Crag and Lingmell, and almost all the land over 1,500 feet, bounding them on the sides facing the Seathwaite to Wasdale track, was given by our Club to the National Trust as a Memorial to the Members we lost in WW1. At that time, it was the largest donation ever given to the National Trust. Now, a century on, that gift to the nation stands as an extraordinary testament to the

vision and generosity of our Club Members in 1924.

There are a number of meets that are constants on our Meets List and mark the passing months; New Year, Burns Supper, Easter at Brackenclose etc. Quite often they get associated with one Meet Leader for a considerable length of time. I remember Eric Ivison running the Easter one for many years. Helen Elliot has been running the Burns Night for a while now and George Wostenholm has been associated with the Skye Meet for quite a few years. Talking of which, the Skye meet of '23 had exceptional weather. George reckoned it to be a once in a decade event (and he should know). Pinnacle Ridge and Sgurr nan Gillian were ascended and the Clach Glas to Blabheinn ridge traversed (and a group from Kendal bumped into). These are, as you all know, long days out, but first place in the longest day out contest goes to those who went to do the Dubh Slabs. They had the good grace to look slightly tired on their return.

The summer of '23 was a pleasant one, but it did seem to be a game of two halves; a splendid start, followed by somewhat indifferent weather. Fortuitously, when it came to the Maintenance Meet season, the rain held off on the Saturday only to return on the Sunday when attendees had a day off. Because of the kind weather a lot was achieved at all the meets with cleaning, painting, joinery, gardening etc. all being undertaken in good humour. Many thanks to all involved. Your efforts make our huts a pleasure to stay in.

Just as the Spring of 2024 was being heralded by the appearance of snowdrops and crocuses, we had some sad news. One of our senior Members,

John Barrett, passed away. As an Honorary Member, Trustee, past Treasurer, Vice-president and President, John dedicated himself fully to each role. He carefully navigated the Club through the process of incorporation. It was a very complex process and John was the right person at the right time. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends.

The Spring of 2024 also saw the publication of the Eskdale climbing guide. It is another superb production and a credit to the team who created it - Chris Fisher, Al Davis, Pete Sterling, Dave Simmonite and Steve Scott (and numerous others lending a hand in smaller, but still important ways).

We may be in the post-Covid era, but our Club has had some challenges to contend with. Some problems are simply the result of having a portfolio of old buildings in constant need of repair, others result from external actions.

### **The FRCC Library**

One of the most concerning issues was the relationship with The Armit. They wanted the Fell & Rock book collection to be reduced by four fifths. There was, as you can imagine, a great deal of correspondence with the Trustees of the Armit. Their Chairman, Tim Cowan, eventually sent an email cancelling our agreement and giving us three months' notice to remove our books if we were not willing to reduce the size of our library. Our position has always been that our Collection is of National importance and should not be split up.

It hardly needs to be said that we worked very hard to find an alternative venue or failing that, in the short term, suitable storage for our Collection.

The vast majority of the work fell on the shoulders

of Deborah Walsh and Mark Scott with Bill Birkett also lending valuable assistance. The Collection was re-catalogued, and many duplicate copies of books identified as being suitable for sale, in the first instance, to members. (To my delight, I managed to get my hands on the first published red-backed climbing guide to Scafell.)

When the time came to move the books, some of the more valuable ones went to be stored at the Mountain Heritage Trust (MHT) and the remainder to storage in Kendal. Artefacts which were at The Armit, ice axes, hob-nailed boots, stuffed penguin, lantern slides etc have been spread around our huts and Kendal Archive have been happy to take a number of items.

This situation can only be viewed as a temporary one; the MHT cannot be expected to provide long term storage and the storage in Kendal cannot be considered suitable for a number of reasons, but the primary one being access to the books. Currently it looks like an intractable problem, but one thing is for sure, the solution will cost money.

### **Huts**

We have a number of old properties and these require constant maintenance (with an associated cost). For example, chimneys have been rebuilt at Salving House and Birkness Cottage and woodworm treated at Birkness Barn.

Planning for future maintenance is being carried out. That is a very short sentence that in no way conveys the huge amount of work that has been done by Nick Harris and the huts team. As an example of things being considered, with an eye on both environmental issues and reducing heating cost, the installation of stoves and more insulation in our huts is quite high on the agenda.

## **IT Systems**

Now there's a title which will get the pulse racing of mountaineers everywhere, but a brief note is required. We haven't had an IT System. A simple statement of fact. We have had a number of computers residing on individual officers' desks. If someone is away or incapacitated, then the information on those machines isn't accessible. Largely driven by our Treasurer, Martyn, we have begun using cloud-based storage for the filing of Club documents and for our accounts, which greatly simplifies the sharing of files and financial information. You will know that our Membership data is now also stored securely on the cloud and the Handbook, Chronicle and Journals are available online. I know that the demise of a physical handbook has caused a great deal of angst amongst Members. We all enjoyed having a book to read, but the combination of General Data Protection Act, environmental issues and cost has made the publication of it not possible to justify. It was, though, a difficult decision.

## **The Committee**

There was a big change in officers and elective members in November '22; new President, Treasurer and Secretary and in 2023 the changes continued. Stepping down from posts during the year and at AGM we have said goodbye to two VPs - Stephen Reid and Andrew Paul, the Webmaster - Ronnie Doctor, the Guidebook Secretary, Roger Everett, Membership Secretary, Amanda Halliwell, two Hut Wardens - Richard Tait and Mark Gear and Elective Committee Members - Ian Bradley, Sue Wales, Stuart Webb, Jane Hodgson and Sue Vaughan. Now we all know that members volunteer for these positions, though to some it may not feel like it, but the work that has been done by these people is truly amazing and they need our thanks for their efforts. I ought to mention that Andrew and Jane have

moved into different roles on the Committee which shows a commitment beyond the call of duty.

The delivery of this Journal will coincide (more or less) with me stepping down from my role as President. I will take this opportunity to give my thanks in particular to Martyn Hodgson, Beatrice Haigh, Wendy Dodds, Andrew Paul, Stephen Reid, Janet Ashworth, Brenda Fullard and Nick Harris for their unstinting support.

I wish the new President well and look forward to seeing the Club continue to prosper with the help of all the Committee and Members working harmoniously together (allowing for the occasional hiccup).



# The Lakes and the Club

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*Buttermere - early morning at FRCC committee meeting weekend*

## A Modest Hill

*Paul Exley*

Winston Churchill is reported to have said of Clement Attlee; "He is a modest man with much to be modest about". The same could be said of Carn na Saobhaidhe.

However, it is a Corbett - the most northerly one in the Monadliath - and since it was the last one remaining for us to climb in that group, it had become important to us. We were working as volunteers down in the Spey valley but didn't feel compelled to work every day, and so it turned out that we found ourselves heading north on the A9. Leaving it just after Slochd summit to drive up one of the most beautiful glens in Scotland beside the River Findhorn on ten miles of quiet single track road. With our folding bikes out of the boot and re-assembled, we almost enjoyed the ride of a further seven kilometres on bikes with miniature wheels on a sometimes rough gravel estate track.

Leaving our bikes propped against the walls of the isolated, but well-maintained shooting lodge at Dalbeg, we set off up a Land Rover track. Steeply



*On the way up*

at first but becoming gentler as we gained height. Eventually we came to the end of the walking-by-numbers description in the SMC guidebook and had to resort to thinking for ourselves and map-reading. Amongst the landscape of seemingly low, rounded hills, it seemed that ours was the one with some sort of structure on top. It served as a good pointer and we set about tramping over the soft peat hags, gaining height only slowly but stopping briefly to watch an eagle soar serenely across a neighbouring hillside.

Fortunately, the day remained warm, fine, and clear so we were content in our tee shirts and with the ever-widening views.

At length, we emerged onto the almost flat top of Carn na Saobhaidhe. Ahead of us to the west, in a great arc north to south, lay a panorama of rugged, distant mountains. We marveled at their almost limitless variety of shapes. The only one immediately identifiable was Ben Wyvis to the north, beyond the Kessock Bridge and the fringes of Inverness, and comfortably remote. We were equally delighted to see behind us, to the south-east, the sweep of the Cairngorms resplendent under a blue sky with the deep corries of Braeriach clearly visible. The ugly paraphernalia of the skiing area was, happily, hardly perceptible.

The structure that we had seen from afar had, by now, materialised as a lattice steel mast which was evidently the support for a radio transmitter. As we approached it for a closer look, the gentle sighing of the wind in the coarse grass became overtaken in volume by the throb of a generator. Any scents



*Crossing the 'hags' to a modest hill*

of grass and heather were soon overwhelmed by diesel exhaust fumes. We were just half a mile north of the boundary of Scotland's Wild Land Area number 20, the Monadhliath.

We found ourselves despairing of a planning system that allows the desecration of a mountain top by transmitter tower, diesel generator and a broad access track (from the other side, fortunately) of bright yellow crushed limestone. Almost at the level of the summit plateau lay two wind farms: one to the north and the other to the west. As usual, all the turbines were painted a brilliant white to aid their visibility from a dozen miles away but also ensured their maximum detrimental visual impact on a pleasantly undulating and unassuming mountainscape.

Carn na Saobhaidhe is the highest mountain for miles around - one of the reasons for its inclusion in the table of Corbetts despite its gentle roundness and lack of dramatic features. A cynic may well suggest that the reason for leaving the summit plateau out of the Wild Land Area was so that it could be despoiled, as it had been, without the inconvenience of objections by erstwhile organisations dedicated to protecting wild land.

Looking at the two wind farms was a reminder of the Scottish government's renewable energy policy. The gist of which is that by 2030 it aims to generate 50% of Scotland's overall energy consumption from renewable sources, and by 2050 it aims to have decarbonised its energy system almost completely. Evidently the two highly visible wind farms are a



### *Wilderness?*

contribution to this laudable aim. The problem is that, whilst many people understand the need for these turbines, there is also a widespread feeling that they should be 'Not In My Back Yard'. Or, in this case, not on mountains that we want to climb, and which would, without the wind farms, be a lot more attractive both to climb and to see from afar.

Perhaps the undoubted need to reduce atmospheric pollution should be seen as some sort of validation for degrading mountaineering value from a few humble hills. During the recent Covid pandemic, we have heard much about the value of getting outside and letting the natural world help to heal the stresses caused by the effects of the virus. There is an evident pecking order here; stress relief doesn't come at the top of it.

With these thoughts in mind, we found somewhere to sit and have our butties, out of sight, sound and smell of the transmitter, its generator, and the rotating blades.

The bike ride back down the glen was more enjoyable than the upward one on account of the helpful gradient and the day's success. By Scottish standards, our achievement was only modest, rather like the mountain.

# Brackenclose fire and rebuild – the Club’s original hut rises from the ashes

*Wendy Stirrup, Hatty Harris, Andrew Paul and Richard Tait*

From the fire in April 2019 to the reopening in 2023 this article charts the highs and lows, and most importantly, the huge amount of work and members’ support that was required to rebuild Brackenclose, especially during the Covid years.

## ***My time as Brackenclose Warden 2016 to 2023 - Richard Tait***

Ask any FRCC member which of our seven wonderful huts most embodies the spirit of the club, and the chances are that quite a high proportion would answer quite simply – ‘Brackenclose’. The Club’s original hut and one that is in a unique location, with a special place in British mountaineering history.



*After the fire*

It was against this backdrop that I took over the job of Warden in late 2016 from Mike Carter. Quite a daunting task but made easier by the tireless help and advice from Mike and Paula, and from Mark Scott, the Warden who handed over to Mike in 2007. All have stayed on as part of our team of Assistant Wardens, for which I have been very grateful.

I soon became used to the life of an FRCC Warden, and even became acclimatised to that unique

and particularly loathsome Brackenclose chore - emptying the dreaded Fat Trap on a monthly basis. An item it seems omitted from the Warden's job description for fear that no one in their right mind would take over as Warden if they knew!

The biggest project in that early period was a rerouting of the water supply which draws from the Lingmell Gill. This involved using an excavator in the beck and on the riverbank. Obtaining permissions from various authorities including Cumbria CC,



*Internal damage*

National Trust, and Environment Agency seemed to be nearly as tiring as the actual physical work.

Whilst this work rectified the problem of airlocks in the underground pipe due to uneven levels, the perennial Brackenclose water supply problem (dating it seems back to 1937!) remains a problem to this day as our water intake wages an unequal battle against flash floods in the Lingmell Gill, reputedly the fastest flowing watercourse in the country.

On the Meets front, Brackenclose continued to host the very popular and long established traditions including Easter, Bonfire and Remembrance meets, and of course our well supported Maintenance meets.

And then suddenly the events of 5 April 2019 changed the peaceful life at Brackenclose at a stroke and will forever be imprinted on my mind.

At around 02.30 am that night I woke to the insistent sound of my mobile phone going off. I generally count myself lucky in being a deep sleeper but for the next few minutes I genuinely thought I was in the middle of a nightmare. On the end of the phone was the West Cumbria Fire Officer and I had some difficulty focusing my mind that he was trying to make me understand that Brackenclose was on fire. I simply could not grasp what I was being told.

I was dissuaded from setting off for Wasdale immediately, but there was to be no more sleep that night.

At around 05.00 it was confirmed that the fire was out and that "it looked like we had lost two rooms." Prompt action by the fire teams from Seascale and

Egremont had prevented what would otherwise have been a total loss.

As the building was now declared unsafe, my initial visit was to be accompanied by the Fire Officer who also gave his preliminary report. So Assistant Warden Mark Scott and I met on site at midday to survey the scene, and it was then that reality set in.

In the meantime, I had the chance to advise senior FRCC officers of the terrible news, starting with Hut Secretary Andrew Paul, who was on a Club trip to the Alps.

The rest of that very long day included organising immediate securing of the building (sincere thanks to local Joiner Alex Jones), innumerable phone calls, an initial visit by the insurers' representative, contact with the Police, and talking to our immediate Wasdale neighbours, not forgetting thanking the helpful couple camping at the NT campsite who had raised the alarm around midnight.

To everyone's relief, and particularly to those long standing members with a keen interest in the club's history, most of the valuable and historical contents were saved as they were all located in the lounge area, unaffected by the fire, except for some smoke damage. Removing these and organising safe storage was a task in itself, and thanks go in particular to Mike and Paula Carter for listing and stocktaking these items, and to Mark Scott for his help.

Work was then done to thoroughly secure the building, but then for 20 long months Brackenclose must have appeared as a forgotten and derelict building to the steady procession of walkers passing en route to Scafell Pike.

Even so, regular Warden visits were needed to check the building and site, and to maintain the grounds. The fire didn't stop the bracken at Brackenclose from growing!

Although Brackenclose looked a sorry and lonely sight, there was in fact lots going on....

Those 20 long months were actually taken up with preparation, planning and fundraising, as well as meetings with insurers, architects, and other professionals.

This led to awarding a formal contract to the club's appointed builders, Roland Hill Ltd of Aspatria, who began work preparing the site for the long anticipated Brackenclose rebuild during the last week of November 2020.



*The result of a lot of hard work - the rebuild*

## *Brackenclose Fundraising - Hatty Harris*

### SCENE SETTING

The day after the fire I visited the shell of Brackenclose. Mark Scott, assistant warden, was usefully employed there. He showed me the damage. The dormitory interior was denuded of roof and bunks, the hall blackened and soaked, but the living room surprisingly unscathed. Much of the essential atmosphere of Brackenclose might surely be recreated?

On my drive back to base over Birker Moor, I pondered. It was a beautiful sunny evening – good pondering conditions. I felt that the immediate need was for a very small group of people who could discuss the complex problems posed by the fire freely and constructively. In my mind, it was the ‘think-tank’ but it morphed into something like the ‘Brackenclose Group’. Andrew Paul lists the participants in his article. In the early days VPs Max Biden and Wendy Stirrup played important roles too. More specialised participants were invited later. The group, as Andrew has said, worked brilliantly. It was a forum for developing ideas and agreeing on processes amicably and collectively. The group reported to the main committee.

### FUNDING

We never doubted that we would rebuild our flagship hut. With hindsight, it seems a bit odd that this was never ‘Item 1’ on the think-tank agenda. But during the week or two after the fire I was almost overwhelmed with messages of support and sympathy from numerous members. No doubts expressed there, no philistines suggesting creating a campsite instead of rebuilding. Furthermore, murmurs about ‘windows of opportunity’ and

reshaping dormitories and washrooms were plentiful, right from day one.

Funds for the restoration, as Andrew Paul elaborates, were needed from three sources. Making the decision not to rebuild like with like in the dormitory wing meant we sacrificed some insurance funding. John Pulford (FRCC Treasurer) agreed £50k from Club funds. The remainder needed to come from fundraising.

Committee approval for asking members for money was granted in July through an email vote. All 28 respondents agreed. Seeking money from members is a longstanding accepted practice in the Club, although infrequently used. Donations from members built the original Brackenclose and contributed to the start-up of other huts.

### PRINCIPLES

I wrote a paper on fundraising and how we might go about it. The think-tank cheerfully but unhelpfully said ‘Go ahead’ and went back to discussing architects. This was a bit daunting, until the wonderfully clear-headed Chris Wales generously offered to be ‘Brackenclose treasurer’ and overall administrator for fundraising. Brilliant. There was a dedicated account, all monies were ring-fenced for Brackenclose, and the spreadsheets are immaculate.

Some people get very tetchy about being asked for money, so we laid out a few principles:

1. Brackenclose belongs to all members, whatever

their means, and no one should feel that they are excluded, whether or not they contribute and however small their contribution.

2. The giving of money will be entirely voluntary.
3. It is not the custom of the Club to name donors.

## PUMP-PRIMING AND LAUNCH

Club members were eager to start donating as soon as the news of the fire circulated. But we held off the 'launch' until we had some idea of roughly how much we needed to raise and could show the donors what they would be paying for.

The exceptional generosity of a very small handful of members made it possible to do a little 'pump priming' in advance. We received a very few large gifts in the immediate aftermath of the fire. This enabled us to go the membership in January 2020 able to report that we already had £20k in the pot. Immediately, raising £100k looked feasible and success was in sight.

Chris Sherwin (archivist) produced a stunningly eye-catching leaflet for the launch of the campaign, circulated to every member in January 2020. It laid out the best guess financial position (rather over-optimistically), how to donate, and a plan of the proposed renovated building.

## RESPONSE

Money poured in from the moment the launch leaflet was received. It was that ill-starred year when Covid-19 arrived as a blight on our lives. But by a great stroke of good fortune, the fundraising account hit £90k before the first lockdown, encouraging the reaching of the first milestone of

£100k. By 7th June 2022 we'd had received £165k. A great tribute to the generosity of our members and their affection for the hut.

As President, I had privileged access to the (confidential) names of donors. I was touched and humbled by the wide breadth of members who chose to donate. There were members I first met at Brackenclose in the 1960s, alongside new Associates, and all points in between. A rough count later suggested that about a third of the membership contributed directly.

We also have to thank other clubs, including Kindred Clubs and some of their individual members, who recognized the iconic status of Brackenclose and the use they have made of it in the past.

## EVENTS AND SALES



*Official clothing*

There are more ways of raising money than direct donations and these had a very positive effect on raising the profile of the fundraising campaign. Richard Tait (Hut Warden) and Karen Goodyear organised a trail run, in collaboration with the Lake District branch of the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDLWA). The first date had to be cancelled thanks to Covid, but on the second attempt the run went ahead, raising our largest event income at £2,800 – and the LDLWA gave the Club a donation too! For many runners, it was their first event for over a year and enthusiasm was high.

Sales of kit and clothing and other stuff, organized by Mark Scott and Tony Halliwell, went online in an orderly manner. Books were left, marked with prices, seductively in huts, as irresistible temptations. Picture sales were popular and remunerative. Eric Shaw's fantastic photos raised over £700,

### ***Brackenclose rebuild - Andrew Paul***

I must confess that when asked to contribute to an article about the Brackenclose project, I was not overwhelmed with enthusiasm. What on earth could I add to what I have already said/ written? There is the Brackenclose special edition of the Chronicle which gives a pretty comprehensive overview. Then I have the specification which went out with the tender documents, all 250 pages of it, and the 13 incredibly detailed drawings. There are records and documents for each of the phases – Initiation, Concept Design, Planning Permission, Building Regs Design, Tender Document, Construction, Handover. On top of this layer the many reports, both which I generated myself, and which I received from contractors. I have enough paperwork (in electronic form) to keep our archive

George Harris's raffle over £600. Donated prints and originals, including some lovely watercolours by the late Jill Aldersley, were auctioned by Tony Halliwell usually for £100 plus. And there were so many small contributions: surpluses from communal meals went into the money pot, as did overnight hut payments by committee members; bespoke climbers' key rings will surely become collectors' items, and several lucky members are now proud owners of handmade Brackenclose mugs. All of these activities created a buzz of social interaction that not only made money but provided the stimulation of purpose as the Club fought a tortuous way through the pandemic and its aftermath.

Finally, a hearty vote of thanks to every person who contributed even in the smallest way to making the restoration of Brackenclose a reality.

team busy for a long, long time! Where to start?

At the outset a number of things fell into place, whether by good judgement or good fortune, which set us up well for the whole project. The first was that we stepped outside the normal committee structure and formed a small working group (which really did work); this consisted of Richard Tait (hut warden), Hatty (president), John



*BCM Nick and Clare*



Looking beyond the first stages, when we were looking for a builder, up popped another of our club members, Paul Cook, who pointed us to Wasdale Mountain Rescue and CC member Martyn Young; he had managed rebuilding the Wasdale Mountain Rescue centre. Again, thank you Paul. Martyn was able to give me invaluable advice on structuring the management of the build, and point me towards his builder, Roland Hill of Aspatria, who was the company we ended up using. At the time we chose the builder we were also wondering how to manage the build stage of the project. It was not realistic or reasonable to manage it ourselves; the architect had bid to do the work, but however you look at it geography gets in the way. Richard and I both found we were spending the best part of four hours on the road for each site meeting, and the journey wouldn't have been much better from Cartmel. More important, we could envisage a conflict of interest, if ever the architect's design



*BCM baton Scafell Pike Richard and Karen*

was found to be wanting, and the same company was managing the project. Therefore, we employed Baker Mallett Ltd, of Whitehaven to oversee the builder, and act as QS when the builder's monthly requests for staged payments were received. Again, that relationship worked well.

The above constitute the core of the project, but others also contributed. We needed a structural engineer, initially to tell us which parts of the shell would need to be knocked down, and later, to approve the structural integrity of the roof design. We were required to organise a measured survey of the site, which could be used as the basis for the technical drawings – particularly with respect to drainage; this survey also mapped out all the trees – this was important, as interfering with the wood could have jeopardised planning permission. A related activity was the bat survey, which, thankfully, concluded that there were no resident bats in any part of the building. This was quite a relief, as the building stood for over a year before any construction activity took place, and it was quite conceivable that what was left of the property might have acquired some new residents.

So how did the project proceed? Initially the site had to be secured with Herras fencing. This was all organised through Aviva our insurers, who were on the whole, pretty good to deal with, and organised a third party construction company to do what was necessary. Then we had to leave the ruins standing there, open to the elements, looking very forlorn, for many months. The remarkable thing is that the fire was limited to the dorms, wash-rooms and corridor, with the living room and kitchen being virtually untouched, apart from some smoke damage; so we were able to leave them without too much anxiety.

Having chosen an architect, he then came up with a number of concept designs for our consideration, and the one which we chose then went through to our planning application. The discussion of the design options was fascinating, throwing a number of subsidiary design requirements which were not immediately obvious; for instance, having direct access to the larder from the front door, and the sanitary areas not being immediately accessible from the front door. Some of these options were displayed at the club dinner weekend 2019. The planning consent, when given (28th January 2020) was very straightforward, the only constraints being the requirement for vernacular exterior stonework, and a slate roof, which is exactly what we were proposing.



*BCM baton arrives - Richard and Karen*

Moving on, the design then had to be worked out in detail, leading to a monster of a document, the Project Specification, which, as stated earlier, ran to nearly 250 pages, indexed alphabetically, commencing at C: 'Demolition/ Alteration/ Renovation', running through, with many sub-sections, to Z: 'Building fabric reference specification'. Hardly bedtime reading! Reviewing this tome took Pete Lord, Richard Tait, and I several days, and generated loads of questions – see the attached photo of the mark-up tabs. This document, and attendant drawings, then provided the basis for the project's approval under the Building Regulations (which we obtained on May 19th 2020), and for the invitation to tender document.

So far, so good. We had a design and approval, but we had to find a builder, oh ... and we had to work out how we were going to pay for the project. Finding the builder was relatively straightforward. We started off with a list of six, names mainly supplied by the architect, of whom four expressed an interest, and the lowest bid was from Roland Hill, which was fine, as they were our preferred choice, coming with good recommendations, based on the west coast, and who used primarily their own staff, rather than sub-contractors.

The money also worked out fine but was a cause of anxiety until it was resolved. Our insurers were open to settling directly after the fire, but at that point we did not have any idea of rebuild costs, whether just reinstatement of the old layout, or the new enhanced design. All we did know was the amount for which the whole original building was insured. Later we had the builders bid to work with, and a fully costed detailed specification, courtesy of our architect and QS. We had to work on assumptions of what the insurer might give us in the best, and worse cases, and plan accordingly. It was clear from



*Official Opening of Brackenclose*

the start that we would need additional funds, and again worked on assumptions regarding what you, the membership, would be prepared to fund directly, and what we would need to draw down from reserves. Lots of modelling – I can't imagine how I would have coped without a spreadsheet; at one point I calculated a best case in which the insurer paid us £290,000, and a worst case £228,000. The agreed figure was £255,000, so somewhere in the middle. The cash offer was agreed on 20th October 2020, roughly 18 months after the fire.

Wrapping up the subject of funding, when we moved on to the actual build, the benefits of

the detailed drawings and project specification made themselves apparent. Builders are often characterised as bidding low, then, when work commences, finding all sorts of reasons for extra costs – and to be crystal clear, I'm not saying that Roland Hill would be like that – they were a reasonable company to deal with. But that's a common caricature of the behaviour of some in the business. Anyway, the point is that the drawings and the specification together nailed things down so well that there was really very little left up for debate. I recollect only one instance where the plans went substantially wrong, and that concerns the flat roof at the rear. The plans showed the new

roof being an extension of the old concrete roof over the larder, but reality indicated that there wasn't enough space between the bottom of the pitched roofs to permit this to happen, once a join had been allowed for. The solution was to demolish the old concrete roof, and have one continuous flat roof, without any join, which was probably a better solution.

After all the planning, and passage of time, it was a bit of a shock to see a real builder on site. Roland Hill vans have a distinctive livery, so it is quite evident to any passer-by that something is afoot. This happened in November 2020, but it all turned into an anti-climax, as very little happened over the winter (with hindsight I guess this was to be expected). Then, in March 2021 they sprang into action. I had never observed the progress of



*Official Opening of Brackenclose  
- Alan, Andrew and Richard*

groundworks before (why would I?), and it was quite a revelation. Firstly, trenches are dug where the walls will be, and they are half filled with concrete. Next, walls are built on the concrete base, so that you can see the shape of the rooms emerging. These walls take the structure up to ground level. The spaces between are then filled with hardcore, and the whole lot topped, like icing on a cake, with a concrete layer, which constitutes ground level within the building.

With the foundations in place the walls seemed to gallop ahead, blockwork initially, then stonework on the outside. One of the things which really impresses me, and I hope you agree, is the quality of the stone facing on the extension – apart from the freshness of the stone it is hard to distinguish from the original. Then the gable ends, followed by the roof structure – all built on-site, we decided bringing pre-made roof trusses up the valley and on site was not really feasible. The roof was then covered in sarking board (a northern thing apparently, designed to ensure roof stability in bad weather) and then a layer of membrane. We then found ourselves in winter again and work slowed (at least on the roof), but we had enough weather proofing to start creating the internal structure. The slating was eventually completed in January 2022, and the first four months of the year saw a dash to finish the project – plastering, painting, flooring, all the electrics (the building was completely rewired) and fitting the ceramics in the wash/ toilet areas, and clearing the site. The project was signed off in April 2022 – quite a bit later than initially planned by the builder, but an ideal time for Richard and his team to start restoring all the contents, which had been sitting in a shipping container for the last two years.

## THE OFFICIAL OPENING AND ALL HUTS CELEBRATION - *Wendy Stirrup*

During my time as President the biggest question I faced was not about covid, but instead how we were going to celebrate the re-opening of Brackenclose. There had been so much support from members, especially in relation to the fundraising, that we wanted to give everyone the opportunity to join in the celebrations.

We decided to hold a small formal event on 17 June 2022. Guests included Mike Darwell & Will Norris from John Coward Architects, Stephen Jackson our Quantity Surveyor and Billy Mitchell from Rowland Hill Builders. Martin Young from the Wasdale MRT, who had provided a lot of useful information and recommendations also attended.

Club representatives included Andrew Paul, Richard Tait and Alan Strachan who had overseen the project and refurbishment of the hut with assistance from Assistant wardens, Hatty Harris who was President at the time of the fire and a few of our senior or active older members.

Guests had a tour of the building whilst I took a devious route via The Dales, due to the M6 closure, arriving later than expected. John and Carol Barrett unfortunately were stuck on the M6 for several hours. Andrew said a few words to thank those who had been involved and with rain trying to interrupt proceedings Hatty joined me on the steps for the official ribbon cutting.

After the formal cutting of the cake and photos we enjoyed food and fizz.

Our primary celebration was the all hut event at the end of September 22 which proved to be a mammoth planning challenge, especially for our

Meets Secretary Hazel Jonas. The club centenary was the last time we had a meet incorporating all club huts. Many ideas were considered and detailed plans, with a competitive element were drawn up by Nick Harris. John Leigh made a Brackenclose Celebratory Meet (BCM) baton for the planned hut to hut relay, now on display in Brackenclose, and we had different clothing options with a design by Chris Sherwin featuring the hut and an alternative design that Hazel commissioned reflecting the multi activity nature of the event. Initial plans had teams of runners, climbers, and walkers at each hut but this proved too complex to balance numbers. Humphrey Johnson meanwhile was planning catering and working out how many of the 20 large lasagnes, and 260 potatoes needed to be distributed to each hut.

The weather provided the first challenge of the weekend with the road to Salving House being impassable for a while. Brackenclose found itself at risk of no water as high river levels had impacted on the intake so emergency supplies were collected from the beck.

Special mention to Stephen Reid and Geoff Lyons who, walking from Birkness, managed to climb on Pillar Rock, Richard Hargreaves who ascended Scafell 80 years after his first ascent and Richard Tait/Karen Goodyear who ran with the baton from Raw Head to Brackenclose taking in Scafell Pike.

The bad weather impacted most on those planning to climb so the Raw Head climbing team had to get creative to try and maximise points. There was a WhatsApp debate on how many points an ascent of Jack's Rake with 2 dogs warranted (double points for extra legs?). The Scottish teams used

pedal assistance (thin and thick tyres) to maximise points by increasing the number of lochs visited whilst Graeme Ralph cycled from Waters to Karn House. Some late dropouts meant Nick and Clare Harris took on 2 relay legs running from Birkness via Salving House to Beetham, taking in numerous tops and tarns giving Beetham a very healthy points balance.

Peter Sharpe produced a valley level Treasure hunt for Brackenclose attendees, with some grid reference questions to test map reading skills (essential membership criteria) There was also a quiz, a photography competition and for huts with wifi, another first, a zoom meet-up.

A huge amount of planning ensured the success of the event, but it was unfortunate that for some the Brackenclose celebratory meet has been renamed the Brackenclose covid meet.

This was an all ages (from children to those in their 90's) Club event with a range of activities undertaken. A weekend of fun and celebration with activities to suit everyone and people enjoying themselves despite the weather.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

These combined reports show the exceptional commitment from members for the benefit of the Club. People helped in different ways, generously giving their time, money, expertise or donating items for sale. The collaborative efforts show the Fell and Rock has a caring and committed membership. Thank you to everyone who had any type of involvement after the fire which resulted in our redesigned and improved hut. Special thanks to those who gave significant amounts of their time to achieving this successful outcome.



*Official Opening of Brackenclose - Andrew Paul*

# Bumblng round the Birketts

Chris Kenyon

The Birketts, as I am sure many of you will know, is a list of 541 tops over 1,000 ft in the Lakes as compiled by Bill Birkett, basically the Wainwrights plus whatever other fells Bill fancied putting on the list. For those who like ticking away at lists they are very satisfying as many are close together giving several ticks per day (Place Fell has 6!).

More importantly they take you to some of the more obscure (some very obscure) parts of Lakeland, give some different and often stunning views and are often quieter than the main tops.

One of the most obscure and seldom visited tops must be Birch Fell next to Gummars How above Windermere. I went to try and find it and got lost in a boggy forest. I came back with Ron and a GPS. We found the approximate area of the summit and visited several rocky knolls until we were happy, we found the right one. As we had forgotten to calibrate the GPS it wasn't much help, pointing us determinedly 180 degrees in the wrong direction!



*Birch Fell*

A good example of a stunning viewpoint is Border End above Hardknott Pass - we walked up from the Pass and as I came up onto the ridge all of Upper Eskdale and the Scafellls came into view, lightly dusted with snow - apparently this was a favourite view of Heaton Cooper. We then dropped down into Upper Eskdale and again saw hardly anybody.



*Upper Eskdale*

Finding some of the Birketts is very good for practising navigation - we drove up to Stephenson Ground between Coniston and Duddon, Ron stated he was not going to drive up there again as the road was very narrow, twisty with a weak bridge (which really did look weak and tottery) and a lack of passing places – meeting a tractor didn't bear thinking about! So, in spite of damp and misty weather we set off and found Caw and four other tops – Ron's navigation was spot on , very satisfying. On a good day the views would be lovely.

One Easter bank holiday Monday when staying at Brackenclose we went off to Devoke Water to escape the crowds and met very few people all day – saying that, in the morning, it was thick mist so we wouldn't have seen anyone anyway. Once the mist cleared, we enjoyed excellent views up into the southern and western fells.

I thought I knew Borrowdale well, but discovered another Blea Tarn just above Watendlath which I had never been to on the way to Shivery Knott (the ground shivers as it is in the middle of one of the biggest bogs in the Lakes - it helps to be good at long jumps). This would be an excellent walk in winter when the bogs are frozen. A bog trot takes you to Middle Fell and on to High Tove .

Some can be quite a short walk and a quick tick. Knipe Scar overlooks the Lowther valley with the High Street fells beyond and give a pleasant walk with views stretching to Blencathra in the north and only the sheep to keep one company.

Still to do - the sting in the tail for me will be Pillar Rock, which obviously can't be ascended without rock climbing. I need a sunny day, a rope and a stout and jolly party to get me to the top - actually I am looking forward to it.



*Ennerdale from Brown How*

“Doing the Birketts” certainly takes you to some interesting and out of the way parts of the Lake District and gives you a different perspective on familiar fells. Finishing the list provides a challenge for people who like that sort of thing and gives you views and photos of fells which few people have heard of. You can also annoy people who think they know the Lake District well by telling them you have been up Yoadcastle, Kitty Crag or Birch Fell which they may never have even heard of. I recommend doing at least some, if not all, of the Birketts.

Note – Full details are in the book “Complete Lakeland Fells” by Bill Birkett – there is a useful smaller companion book “The Lakeland Fells Almanac”.



*Top o'Selside area*



*Approaching White Pike near Devoke Water - Chris Kenyon*

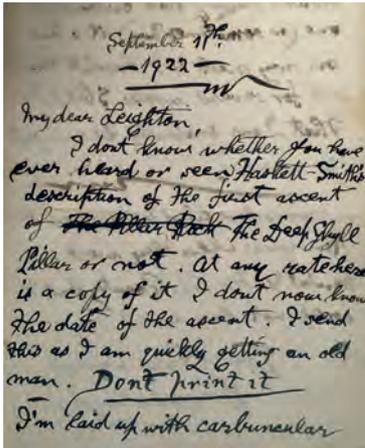


*Yoadcastle, with Whit Fell behind, from Woodend Height*

# A Bon Gaultier Style Ballad by W P Haskett-Smith

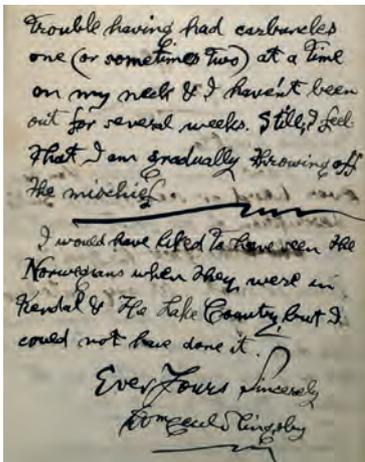
Mike Cocker

The following text is an abridged version of a transcript Cecil Slingsby sent to Darwin Leighton in September 1922. At the time Leighton was president of the FRCC. In his covering note Slingsby writes 'I don't know whether you have ever heard or seen Haskett-Smith's description of the first ascent of the Deep Ghyll Pillar or not. At any rate here is a copy of it... I send this as I am quickly getting an old man. Don't print it!'



September 17<sup>th</sup>  
-1922-  
My dear Leighton,  
I don't know whether you have ever heard or seen Haskett-Smith's description of the first ascent of the Deep Ghyll Pillar or not. At any rate here is a copy of it. I don't now know the date of the ascent. I send this as I am quickly getting an old man. Don't print it.  
I'm laid up with carbuncular

Unbeknown to Slingsby a longer version of this ballad had already been published six months earlier in The Songs of the Mountaineers, compiled by John Hirst of the Rucksack Club. The shorter version recorded by Slingsby may be the original composition and other verses and variations added over time.



Trouble having had carbuncles one (or sometimes two) at a time on my neck & I haven't been out for several weeks. Still I feel that I am gradually throwing off the mischief.  
I would have liked to have seen the Norwegians when they were in the Lake Country but I could not have done it.  
Ever yours sincerely  
Cecil Slingsby

Slingsby's note and transcript were recently discovered by Deborah Walsh, the club archivist, in a notebook belonging to Mary Fitzgibbon, who was the FRCC librarian from 1936 to 1966. These documents had presumably been given to Fitzgibbon in her capacity as librarian either by Leighton or by his relatives after his death in 1943.

The humorous Bon Gaultier ballads were popular in the Victorian era. Haskett-Smith's version describes the first ascent of Steep Ghyll and Slingsby's Chimney (97m, VD), on Scafell Pinnacle, which Slingsby, Haskett-Smith, Geoffrey Hastings and Edward Hopkinson made on 15th July 1888. The crux of the climb is an awkward undercut chimney high on the Pinnacle face that leads to the summit of the Low Man.

The true summit of the Pinnacle, the High Man, was first reached by Haskett-Smith in September 1884 when he made a solo ascent of the short side from the Jordan Gap. Two previous and unsuccessful attempts had been made on the long face of the Pinnacle overlooking Hollow Stones, which are alluded to in the poem. The first, in September 1887, by Edward, Charles and Albert Hopkinson with their cousin Wilberforce Tribe, when they descended the upper section of the Pinnacle to a prominent ledge, which ever since has been known as Hopkinson's Cairn. The second, a bold attempt, in full winter conditions, by Charles Hopkinson and three others in December 1887.

For many years it was thought that this party had climbed someway up the line now known as Hopkinson's Gully, but it is much more likely that iced up slabs at the start of Hopkinson's Gully forced them leftwards into the lower section of Steep Ghyll, where they retreated. On a personal note, my wife Philippa and I enjoyed climbing this route with Cecil Slingsby's great grandson and great-great grandson, Richard and Sam Hargreaves, in 2007, one hundred and nineteen years after the first ascent.

## W.P.H.S. Aug 16 1888

Have you heard of Cecil Slingsby  
Slingsby of the manly chest,  
He who climbs the Deep Ghyll Pillar  
In the region of the West?  
Every day that mighty column  
Reared its still unconquered face.  
Back it drove the clan Mc Hopkins  
Smith Fitz Haskett shunned the place.  
Riled, I mean was Cecil Slingsby  
Their complete repulse to hear  
For one climber owed him money  
And the other loved him dear.  
Straightway leapt the valiant Slingsby  
With that gruesome rock to cope  
And he fastened to his middle  
Two score yards of Alpine rope.  
“Come thou with one, Smith Fitz Haskett  
Come thou with me - come I pray  
Be the Honour of the battle  
Which I go to wage today.”  
So they went along conversing  
In their loud and martial tones  
Till they neared the Deep Ghyll Pillar  
Frowning over Hollow Stones.

In a trance of sickening anguish,  
Cold and stiff and sore and damp  
Half an hour did those three suffer  
Agonies of cruel cramp.  
Always peering at the sky line  
Always waiting in the hope  
Soon to hear the voice of Slingsby  
Shouting “you can trust the rope”.  
Then the rope began to tremble  
And the stones to sound at last  
As if some prehensile stomach,  
O’er the slabs was crawling fast.  
Till at length a spasmy vomit  
Shook the mountain through and through  
And as if from out a cannon  
To the summit Slingsby flew.  
Crushed and conquered was the Pillar  
Victory was in his grasp  
But he seemed so much exhausted  
That he scarce had strength to grasp.  
“Swarm up Hastings, swarm Mc Hopkins  
I can hold you all and more”  
And our feet were straightway planted  
Where no feet had stood before!

# Poetry

David Wynne-Jones

## Handshake

I suppose it was the conditioning  
you know, snow, Snowdonia  
and the ubiquitous bloody sheep  
leaving their bones all over the landscape

So, there on the Bossons,  
practising ice techniques  
in old crevasses,  
amongst odd bits of other debris,  
it took a while to register  
the identification of wrist  
and finger joints  
amongst rags of freeze-dried gristle  
softening in morning sunshine.

Handing it in  
to the authorities  
produced a search but no body,  
as the glacier continued  
its grinding journey  
into water.

## Shaking Hands

*In Memory of Denis Mitchell*

Shaking hands became a rite of passage  
into adulthood, formal, infrequent,  
a ritual of mutual respect  
acquiring actual warmth within  
a loose-knit community of climbers  
who placed our lives into each other's hands.

But the first time I held his hand  
was in Intensive Care  
after the catastrophic head injury  
that left him in a coma  
and the nurse told me -  
"Touch is the last sense to leave."

His recovery was remarkable,  
but fitting in the shallows on a beach  
left him comatose a second time  
with too much sandy water in his lungs,  
and me sitting holding his hand again  
talking as another nurse instructed -  
"He's not likely to respond but  
that doesn't mean he can't hear you."

Another unbelievable recovery!  
Years later, in hospital again,  
his wasted body gripped by pain,  
our final farewell handshake became  
another holding of his hand, although  
better by far than reaching into that  
heavier than expected plastic bag  
for handful after handful of bonemeal  
ashes to scatter on a bleak fellside.

# The Fight for Everest 1924 and the Fell and Rock Climbing Club

Mark Scott

This short article, written to coincide with the centenary of the Everest 1924 expedition, concentrates on the FRCC and the two members who were involved, Howard T Somervell and Bentley Beetham. Edward Norton, Noel Odell, and Charles Bruce were made Honorary Members after returning from Everest. Mention must also be made of Norman Collie, a member of the Everest Committee.



*Members of the 1924 Expedition. Back: Irvine, Mallory, Norton, Odell, Macdonald (translator). Front: Shebbeare, Bruce, Somervell, Beetham.*

The 1924 Everest Expedition was built on the experience and lessons learned from the two previous expeditions of 1921 and 1922. The route taken was the same, from Darjeeling to the Rongbuk Valley and then onto Base Camp. The use of oxygen was still a subject which caused much controversy with some members of the climbing party, as was how many porters and Sherpas should be used on the higher slopes and to what advantage.

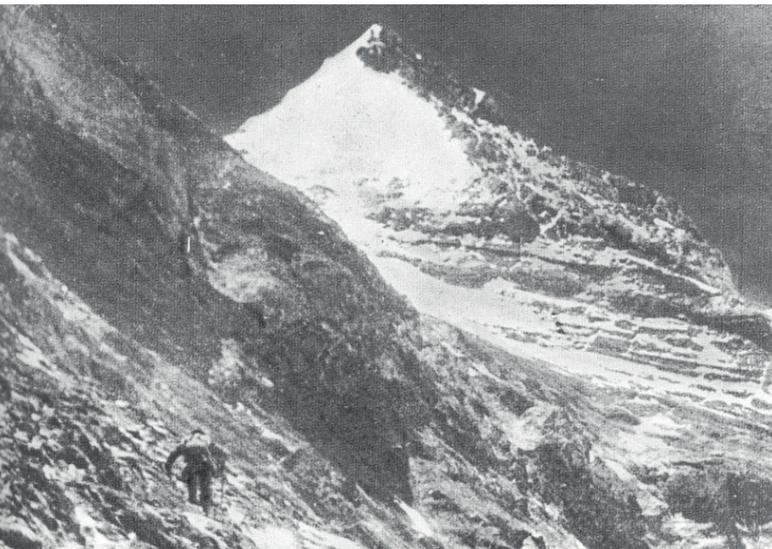
To put the 1924, and also the 1921 and 1922 expeditions into context we should look back to

those times. One hundred years on and it is easy to be critical and parody, this and other expeditions (as did WT Bowman in his book 'The Ascent of Rum Doodle'). But it should be remembered that the summit of Everest was not reached from Nepal until 1953, after great strides had been made in the understanding of: acclimatization, human physiology, clothing, reconnaissance, communications and of course, the use of oxygen. Everest, by the North Ridge was first climbed 36 years later, in 1960, by a Chinese party and, it was not until 1978 that Reinhold Messner was the first to reach the summit without the aid of oxygen. We will never know if George Mallory and Andrew Irvine reached the summit of Everest but what we do know is that Somervell and Norton reached an altitude of approximately 28,000ft, without oxygen. Given the 'great strides' mentioned above and a fair wind there is every possibility that they would have attained the summit on a future expedition.



Dr Howard Theodor Somervell joined the FRCC in 1915. A devout Christian he volunteered as a surgeon on the Western Front. He was appalled by the suffering he witnessed and when it was all thankfully over, and despite offers of a lucrative position in Harley Street, he travelled to India with £60 in his pocket. Eventually arriving at Travancore in southern India, he joined

the staff of a missionary hospital spending 40 years there before returning home permanently to live in the Lake District. He was a member of the 1922 Everest expedition after which he was made an Honorary Member. In 1924, with Norton and no 'oxygen apparatus', he reached an altitude of 28,126 feet. Unable to ascend any further because of an uncontrollable cough, Somervell urged Norton to carry on. Norton was only able to climb another 100 feet, which took an hour and with 900 feet still to climb to reach the summit, he admitted defeat and turned around. It was at this point Somervell took a photograph of Norton (probably with his 'Vest Pocket Kodak' which had been issued to all the climbing team members), the highest ever taken at that time. It was during the descent that, unable to breathe, '...he was able to choke up the frozen lining of his larynx!', thus solving the problem. Only few days prior to this episode, by a supreme display of coolness and skill, he managed to rescue several porters in difficulties of threatened avalanches on the slopes of the North Col.



*Norton just before he turned round at 28,126 feet photographed by Somervell.*

During the expedition Somervell painted several memorable watercolours in a style of quite minimalist simplicity emphasizing the bleakness and grandeur of the landscape, in a way that no photograph could ever do. His obituary in the 1975-76 Journal was written by Noel Odell.



Bentley Beetham joined the FRCC in 1919 and like other expedition members was also a member of the Alpine Club. Yet, as a teacher principally of natural history at a minor public school, Barnard Castle, he lacked the social and academic cachet of other party members

and was to some extent seen as the 'outsider'. More significant perhaps, he had not served in the Great War being exempt through his reserved occupation. The saving graces were his mountaineering qualifications and his great skill as a photographer. An experienced rock climber and alpinist. In 1923, with Somervell, he had climbed 35 peaks in the Zermatt area, and it was Somervell who proposed him for the Everest Expedition.

In his obituary of Beetham (FRCC Journal 1963) Howard Somervell recalls: *In 1924 Beetham was selected for the Everest expedition and had very bad luck with a severe attack of sciatica which came on just as the serious climbing was about to begin. He managed to limp up to Camp Three, with great pain, in time to see the first attempters coming down, and the whole expedition was severely handicapped by having our best climber forced into inactivity while we second-raters did our poor best with the mountain.*

What Somervell fails to mention is that Beetham suffered a severe bout of dysentery on the approach march at Khamba Dzong. He was so ill

that he was almost sent back to Darjeeling. Noel later wrote 'Beetham who is one of the strongest men of the Alpine Club, a man with a marvel of pace and endurance on mountains, a climbing companion whom Somervell himself could not out rival in the Alps... nearly died of dysentery through the sudden change of climate and food.'

Beetham, who had reached Camp Two, had more bad luck when succumbing to a severe bout of sciatica. On returning, in great pain, to Base Camp he was under strict orders from Norton not to leave. The pain had eased slightly, and clearly frustrated by his inactivity, Beetham disobeyed orders. He told Hingston, under whose charge he had been put to '...go to the devil...' and that he '...would do anything to pull some weight with the team... be it cook or carry a small load.' Limping and hobbling whilst taking some wonderful photographs on the way, he reached Camp Three on May 30th only to be met by the wrath of Norton, who later wrote in *The Fight for Everest*, 'I regret to say it was simply a case of mutiny ... I sent him, volubly protesting and

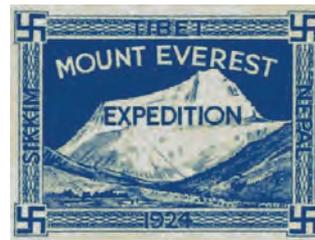


*Everest from Basecamp 1922.  
HT. Somervell.*

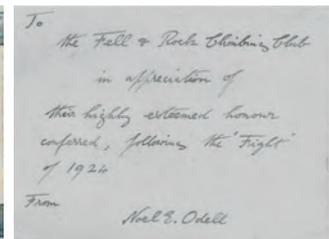
limping like a cripple down the glacier.'

The fact that he was needed at Base Camp saved him from immediately being sent packing back to Barnard Castle. In his role as 'stills' photographer he took hundreds of beautiful images throughout the expedition, not only of mountains but also of the indigenous Tibetans and their buildings. Many of these were developed under very trying conditions at Base Camp. He contributed three chapters to *The Fight for Everest 1924*, chapters which display an admirable sense of humour, somewhat absent in the rest of the book. Perhaps it was his background, lacking the constraints of military discipline and ultimately being 'an outsider' that allowed him such freedom of expression. Whatever, he was obviously a popular member of that party along with his good friend and fellow FRCC member Howard Somervell. A lifelong bachelor he left a legacy to the club with the wish that it was spent on a property. In 1964 Brothers Water Cottage was purchased and in gratitude, the name changed to Beetham Cottage. His ashes were scattered at the top of Shepherds Crag, Borrowdale.

In a third and final attempt to reach the summit before the monsoon broke, on June 8th, Mallory and Irvine left Camp Six after a late start. They were



*The 'stamp' from the book  
*The Fight for Everest* 1924.*



*Inscription in the FRCC Library  
copy of *The Fight for Everest*  
1924, donated by  
Noel E. Odell, after being  
made an Honorary Member.*

last seen by Noel Odell at 12:50 pm '...going strong for the top'.

Enveloped by cloud they were never to be seen again. By the morning of the 9th there was still no sighting, and at 4.30 pm, Odell, who had spent a lone vigil moving between Camps Five and Six decided all hope of Mallory and Irvine was lost and began to descend the mountain for the final time.



A memorial cairn was built in a conspicuous position above Base Camp on a moraine plateau. The cairn, not too dissimilar to that on the summit of Coniston Old Man, or the original cairn on Scafell Pike, stands on a plinth of stones fifteen feet square and three feet high with a pyramid of smaller stones seven high above. Between these stones are the names of those who had perished on Everest. Howard Somervell supervised its construction whilst Bentley Beetham organised the simple inscriptions on flat, slaty stones using screwdrivers and chisels. These two good friends may have volunteered for this, after all, they may have built the odd cairn or two in their beloved Lake District.

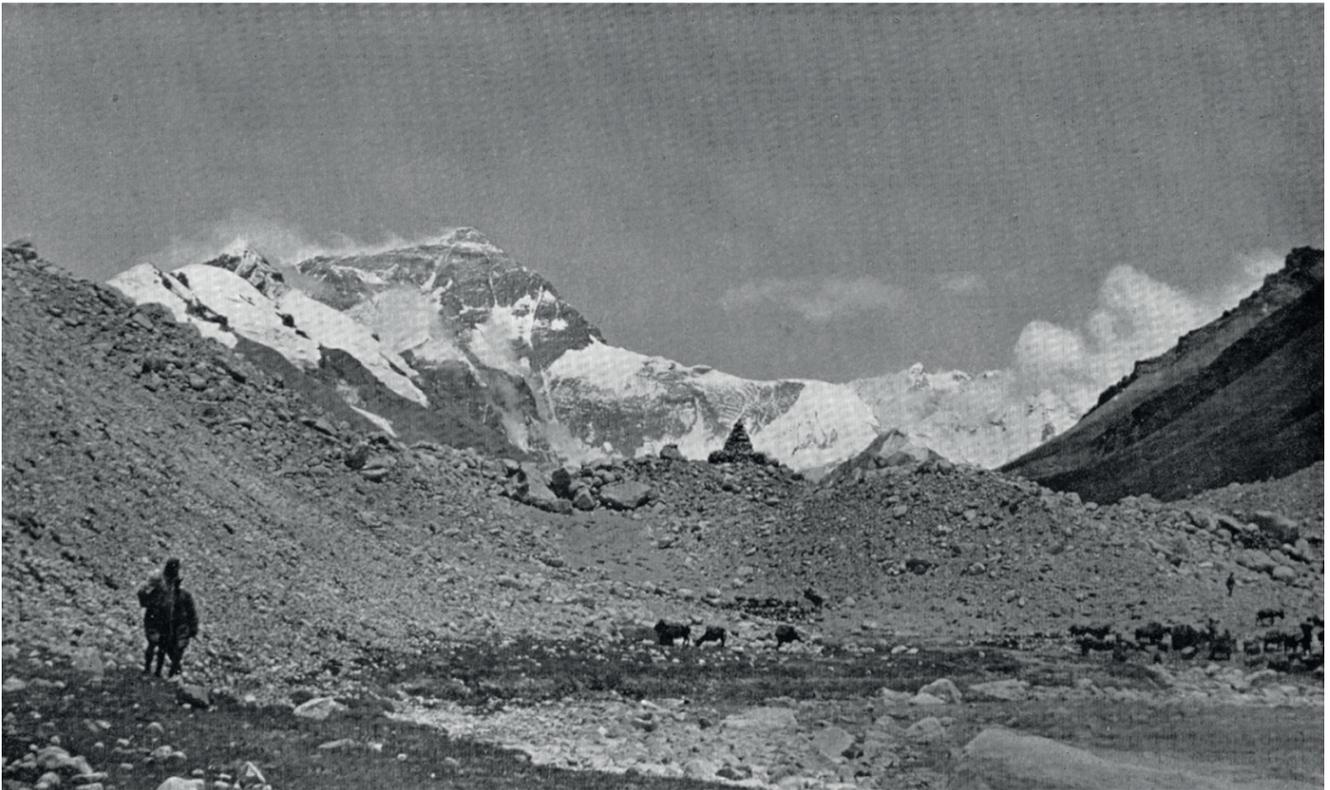
The highest inscription reads 'In memory of the three Everest Expeditions', and below this are the names of those who had died in those three expeditions: 1921, Kellas, 1922, Thankay, Sangay, Temba, Lhakpa, Pasang Namgyn, Norbu, and Pema, 1924, Mallory, Irvine, Shamssherpun and Manbahadur, thirteen in all.

On June 8th, the day that Mallory and Irvine were last seen, a group of men and women converged on the summit of Great Gable to witness the unveiling of the Memorial Plaque to those 20 members of the FRCC who had died during the Great War. They would not know the fate of Mallory and Irvine or how the expedition was progressing until a message sent by Norton via runner to Phari and then by telegraph to London, arriving on June 16th. Despite the solemn occasion taking place on Great Gable that day, Everest will have been in the minds of those who were there, especially three of them. Arthur Wakefield, the President who was on the 1922 expedition, serving as medical officer, Leslie Somervell Club secretary, brother of Howard and finally Geoffrey Winthrop Young who was mentor to Mallory and had been responsible putting his and

Wakefield's name forward for the expeditions.

June 15th saw the evacuation of Base Camp and the Everest party gathered at the Memorial Cairn to pay their respects before departing for home.

Would Somervell and Beetham have in their minds eye the summit of Great Gable where they knew that at about the same time another memorial service would be taking place for lost friends? Probably.



*The Last to Leave. The memorial cairn in the centre against the backdrop of the North Face of Everest. Ave et Vale.*

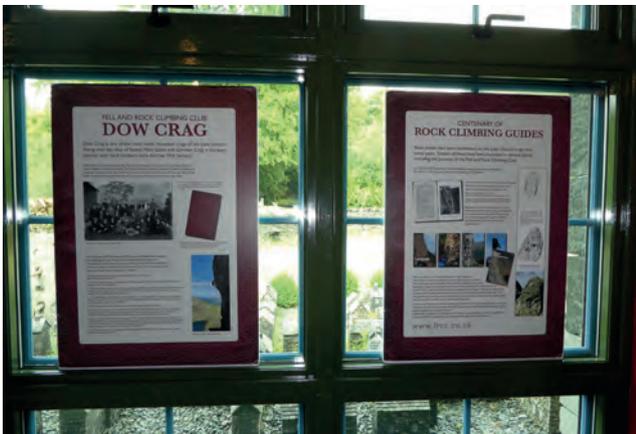
# FRCC Guidebook Centenary

*Ron Kenyon*

The first FRCC guidebook was the Red Guide to Doe Crag which was published in 1923. This followed the publication of the details in the 1923 FRCC Journal. A large chunk of the last FRCC Journal, published in 2022, was dedicated to the FRCC guidebooks.

2023 was not only the centenary of the guidebooks but also, on 17th June, the centenary of the first ascent of Eliminate A by HS Gross and G Basterfield and also saw the publication of a new guidebook for Dow and Coppermines area - so a special celebratory event was necessary and what better date than 17th June 2023.

Contact was made with the Coniston Sports and Social Club on edge of Coniston which is a great venue with bar and social area next to the playing fields and campsite as well as extensive parking and was booked for that date. Invites were then sent to guidebook writers, as well as officials of the Club and general invite to members of the Club.



*Exhibition at Ruskin Museum*

This date also coincided with the Vice Presidents Meet held at the MAM hut with its usual dinner, moved to the Friday night, at the Crown Inn where the new Vice Presidents for the coming year were announced.

The Club has a display at the Ruskin Museum, in Coniston, and it seemed appropriate to have this updated for the occasion. Deborah Marsh and her team worked on this and produced an interesting display. Particularly thanks also to Chris Sherwin for producing the special display boards.

One thing we could not book was the weather, but we were fortunate to have a very dry June and conditions at Dow Crag, on 17th June, were perfect. Ascents of various routes were made including Arete, Chimney & Crack, Leopards Crawl, Sirius and of course Eliminate A.



*Arete, Chimney & Crack - climber Helen Lagoe*



*Dave Menadue.  
Anniversary ascent of  
Eliminate A - on the Rocher  
Perches pitch*



*Scott Quinn  
on The Shining Path*



*Hanna (from Canada) and  
Martin (from Austria) - just  
about to make anniversary  
ascent of Eliminate A*



*Tony Walker and  
Janet Ashworth  
on Leopards Crawl*

In the evening members and guests arrived at the Coniston Sports and Social Club and needless to say the crack and chatter was intense as friends and acquaintances, old and new, met up. President John Holden welcomed all and spoke of his many years and involvement with Dow Crag and the FRCC Guidebooks and introduced the various speakers.

We were really pleased that John Cook attended and took us back to the 1940's and climbing with Arthur Dolphin as well as producing the 1950 Langdale guidebook. John Wilkinson took us forward to his time as guidebook secretary and the spearheading of the phenomenal publication by the Club of nine guidebooks at the end of



*FRCC Guidebook writers and editor with their guidebooks*



*Below Dow Crag - Helen Lagoe, Stephen Reid, Dave Dixon, Geoff Lyons*

the 1960's. Steve Scott then gave an up to date perspective of the guidebook world. Rob Matheson then talked about his lifelong link with Dow Crag starting with his father, Murdoch, and now his son, Craig. To finish off who else but Al Phizacklea whose imprint on Lakeland crags, with his many new routes, as well as in the FRCC guidebooks is immense.

The climbing world is a different place to that in 1923 and the world of climbing guides is ever changing however looking at the new Dow & Coppermines guide it not only helps to show where the routes go but also inspires one to get up there and climb.

Where will it all be in another 100 years?!



## 'Spaces of Power and Light' - The Great Gift 1924

Deborah Walsh

The 1916 FRCC Journal opens with an article by Lieut. C. T. (Charles) Holland entitled 'Pictures in the Fire'. It is a striking piece of writing, a meditation on memory, and an expression of grief, concluding with a quiet resolution. Describing his return to Wasdale after two years active service on the Western Front, he finds that little there has changed, and the 'endless fatigues and dangers' of war are as 'a day that is quickly passed'. But in truth, for Holland, everything has changed. Memories crowd in, memories of the 'dear, dead days... days when the rock was dry and warm, and nothing seems too difficult' and other days when the '... the rain lashes down unmercifully... bent on washing us away'. Finally, these 'pictures in the fire' fade into a single image 'the face of one who will never again be seen on the rocks he loved so well'. The face was that of Siegfried Herford who had died in action a few months earlier. A few pages on in the same Journal is John Laycock's obituary of his friend Herford. It closes with the same sentiment, however great the climbers that are yet to come they 'cannot love the mountains more than Herford did. And that is the thing that matters.'

In concluding the 1916 Journal,

*Siegfried Herford on top of  
Great Flake first ascent 1914  
(FRCC Archives)*

the editor, William Palmer of Kendal, wrote an apology for its delayed publication and, reflecting on the fate of the nation and the sacrifices being made by club members, wrote, 'Yet, in this hour of gloom and pain, one cannot but think again and again of the Eternal Fells ...' From the rawness of that moment in 1916, emerged a visceral understanding that landscape itself is the most powerful place of memory, and these three pieces set the tone for all that was to follow.

In the years leading up to the First World War climbers had become familiar with the presence of death in the landscape. One of the most shocking



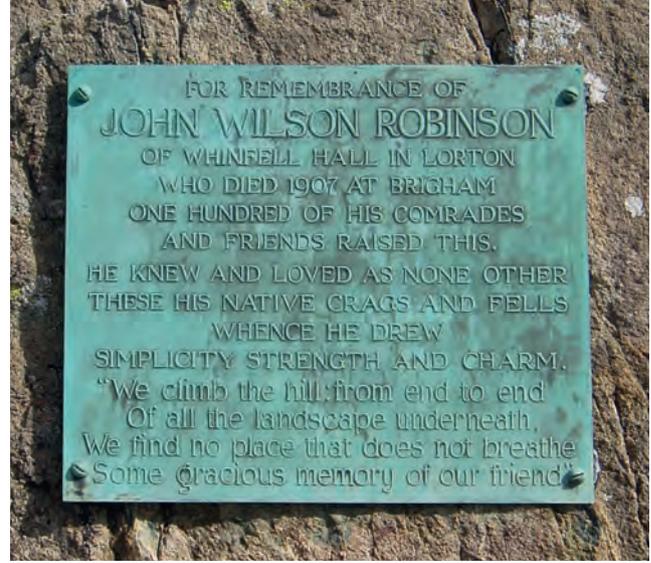


*Great Gable evening*

events occurred in September 1903, when Richard Broadrick and three colleagues fell to their deaths from Scafell Pinnacle, the worst accident in British climbing until 1954. Broadrick was buried in Windermere, while the others were interred in the little churchyard of St. Olaf, Wasdale. This was not without precedent, but they were the first climbers who had died in Wasdale to be buried there, the birthplace of British rock climbing. Mountaineering has a strong sense of its own history and inevitably deaths on the fells leave a psychological residue, largely only recognised by those within the climbing sub-culture.

The impact of the graves at Wasdale was not lost on the actress Nancy Price, visiting at night sometime before 1914:

‘Five graves rest in the little churchyard. Beneath one of them lie the bodies of three young men who perished together on Scafell ... I looked up at the giant who had slain them. Proudly he lifted his head to the stars, stretching himself in the calm of that peace ... This was his hour. He forgot the little tracks



*Plaque, Robinson's Cairn, Pillar*

which have been worn on his sides; forgot that his majestic purity had been polluted at the hands of miserable creatures who scratched his sides, and then boasted of their prowess’.

However, the burial of climbers in a valley bottom churchyard is one thing, memorials to them on the fells quite another. For British climbers the erection of summit crosses and memorials, like those which litter the Alpine regions, was considered entirely inappropriate in a landscape defined by Enlightenment and pre-Romantic ideas of the sublime. This attitude was reinforced in the years leading up to the First World War with concepts of stewardship and conservation beginning to take root and leading almost inevitably to what then must have seemed like almost revolutionary forms of collective land ownership. The fledgeling National Trust and Canon Rawnsley's honorary membership of the Club, had formed a link with other conservationist organisations and common cause was found over such threats such as the proposed Styhead motor road; indeed, the Manchester Guardian reports that opposition came

largely from the rock-climbing fraternity.

Controversy also surrounded the proposed memorial to climbing pioneer John Wilson Robinson just a few years before the war in 1907. It was eventually agreed that a bronze tablet be inscribed and affixed to the rock at the end of the High-Level route to Pillar Rock which Robinson had himself pioneered. Hostility to the scheme was overcome through Robinson's exceptional significance, however this deep ambivalence was to resurface in the aftermath of the First World War.

If the Fell and Rock Climbing Club were unanimous in the principle of linking the memory of fallen club members with the place that they loved, they were less harmonious on the exact form that it should take. The 1917-18 issue of the FRCC Journal contained a letter from ten club members suggesting that the route Central Buttress on Scafell should be renamed after one of its first ascensionists, Siegfried Herford. Another proposal was put forward for the erection of shelters at the foot of each of the principal crags and led to heated letters being published in the Manchester Guardian, where it was described as the 'intrusion of the work of the plumber and the bricklayer upon those solitary places.'

A number of other proposals

*Dedication of War Memorial Great Gable Whit Sunday 1924  
(FRCC Archives)*

included the purchase of a building for a clubhouse in Coniston, a permanent club room at Wasdale, and for the carving of members' names on a suitable crag. However, the most ambitious and prescient suggestion came from the Club's Librarian H. P. Cain, for the purchase of a crag, to be placed in the care of the National Trust, as 'a memorial to last as long as the everlasting hills.'

In the Autumn of 1919, it was announced in the press that Lord Leconfield had created a memorial to the fallen of the Lake District by declaring commoners' rights on all land over 3,000 ft on Scafell Pike, the symbolic summit of England, and donating it to the National Trust. The idea had unsurprisingly been instigated by Canon Rawnsley. A slate memorial was eventually erected on Scafell



Pike, set into the summit cairn, with a dedication ceremony on 24 August 1921.

By 1921 the FRCC was actively pursuing a land purchase option despite objections from George Seatree, who viewed the whole project as potentially financially ruinous. Failing to purchase Pillar Rock from Lord Lonsdale, and subsequently Napes Needle, an attempt was made to acquire Row Head Farm in Wasdale, which included Great Gable, but the club was out-bid at auction. Refusing to give up, they approached the new owner, Mr. Herbert Walker, of Seascale, a former Club member, with a proposal to purchase all the land on the estate over 1,500 ft. The price eventually agreed was £400. The call went out on the 19 May 1923 to club members for donations.



*Great Gable plaque  
1924 (FRCC Archives)*



*Howard Somervell and Arthur Wakefield 1922 Sun Hotel  
(FRCC Archives)*

In October 1923, at the Black Bull Hotel, Coniston, Arthur Wakefield, the newly elected president, handed over the title-deeds of 3,000 acres of high mountain fellside to the National Trust. In his speech he said, 'It is impossible to realise that these fells and mountains are ours and our children's forever... these title deeds represent the lives of those of our members who died for their country. The cost is great indeed.' Considering this in the light of the battles that had rumbled on in the Lakes since the 1870s to maintain and enshrine rights of access to the countryside, it marks a fundamental turning point. Not only were these land donations by far the largest in terms of acreage, but they also contained some of the most significant crags in the history of the development of rock climbing in Britain. It was a hugely symbolic moment.

This sentiment was echoed by the Barrow News which reported on the 14th of June 1924, 'by this purchase of 3,000 acres of highest Cumberland, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club has made history'. At the unveiling of the bronze tablet on the summit



of the 8th of June 1924 it reported that practically every mountaineering club in the world was represented. 'There were climbers famous for high work in the Himalayas, in the Alps, the Rockies and Norway'. The significance was not lost on them.

Arthur Wakefield, the club president referred in his address to the land as a 'National Park' twenty-seven years before its eventual foundation. The anonymous author of the article 'The War Memorial', in the 1923 Journal, developed the conservationist message further: '...they have found an eternal monument among the everlasting hills ...They gave their lives to save a heritage, and in their deaths, they have secured that something of that heritage shall remain inviolate from vandalism'.

In the aftermath of the First World War remembrance and memorialisation became part of a collective landscape, but for The Fell and Rock Climbing Club the hills themselves would be left to speak for the dead; memory is the landscape, ingrained into the bare bones of the earth and wrapped in sky. As Geoffrey Winthrop Young, in his address at the unveiling of the memorial in 1924 put it, 'this rock stands, a witness, perishable also in the onset of time, that this realm of mountain earth is, in their honour, free.'

Perhaps what is most important, and indeed implicit in this century old gift, is that with memory and recognition comes responsibility, the responsibility to protect what is closest to our hearts, and to the hearts of those who died over a century ago on the battlefields of Europe. To love the mountains, 'these spaces of power and light', as Herford did.

# A Joss Naylor Challenge or 'How I became a Fell Runner'

Anne Daykin

The Joss Naylor Challenge leaves Pooley Bridge in the northeast of the Lake District and traverses 48 miles and 17,000 feet, to Greendale Bridge in Wasdale to the southwest. It climbs 30 summits and has only two road-crossings. The inaugural run was made by the well-known Lakeland fell runner Joss Naylor in 1990 at the age of 54. In poor weather conditions and a time of 11 hours 30 minutes, he instigated what has become known as the 'Bob Graham Round for the over 50s'.

My own 'Joss Naylor journey' began as a tiny seed, the year I turned 50. Not, as you may imagine, because now I was old enough to be eligible. No... at age 50 I wasn't even a runner.

In the winter, if I felt a bit stir-crazy, I'd nip round a 4 mile road-loop from home after work, but that was less than once a week. I hill-walked, rock-climbed, cycled, but didn't run, on or off the fells. However, I decided that a suitable challenge to mark my fiftieth birthday was to run a marathon. I chose Windermere, because I love the Lake District, and I began training. I started a running diary and found a schedule that allowed one long slow run, one medium

tempo run, and one short fast run, in a week.

I'm not very good at training. I ditched the short fast run in favour of a short steady run, because running fast makes me wheeze. I ditched the long slow one because I simply didn't have the time. But I did keep the diary, and I ran every week. My average, for those of you who like stats, was 18 miles per week, and I ran all of them at 8 minutes per mile. According to my official schedule I was woefully under-prepared, but on race day I trotted round the 26 miles with a big smile on my face and was amazed to find I'd won my age category – ladies over 50! Legendary fell runner Joss Naylor



Scrambled egg at Kirkstone. Photo Teresa de Curtis



In the wind on Fairfield. Photo Teresa de Curtis

presented the prizes, and the thought entered my head that a Joss Naylor Lakeland Challenge would be a suitable way to celebrate turning sixty, though I'd no idea what it actually entailed.

Friends told me I should enter some more races, but who wants to spend their free time pounding the pavements? I'd done it, I'd won it, time to move on.

So, 10 years later, approaching 60, I was still neither a road runner nor a fell runner when I looked up the details the Joss Naylor Challenge and found that it was WAY out of my comfort zone. For a start, there's the physical challenge, 48 miles and 17,000 feet of ascent, within a time limit. Secondly, you have to be accompanied on each leg and I didn't know any fell-runners. Thirdly, you have to collect £100 for a

charity of your choice, and I hate asking for money. So, I didn't bother with a particular challenge for my 60th .... but it didn't quite go away.

The following year I found myself Googling to see if Joss Naylor was still alive(!) and looking at how the route broke down into four stages. I chatted to a climbing friend who told me his wife ran off-road on a Thursday evening with some other ladies, slow and steady, finishing with cake. I could manage that. His wife gave me my first pair of fell-running shoes, a pair that she couldn't get on with. In the summer (2019) I took myself to the Lake District and went for a long run from Rawhead, sandwiches in a rucksack, like a hiker. I was pretty stiff the next day, but not too stiff to stop me going to Patterdale and looking at Leg 1.



*In the wind on Great End. Photo Nikki Hamerton*



*Heading up Great Gable. Photo Abby Tighgeal*

I left my bike at Beetham Cottage, drove to Pooley Bridge, and ran to Kirkstone Pass. 16 miles, 3000feet. It took me 3hours 39 minutes, which I thought was auspicious since this was my Marathon time eleven years previously! Down the valley back to Beetham to collect my bike, and cycle back for the car. Great day out; just need to be able to do that four times over!

Next stage was to meet some more fell-runners, so I joined the Clayton le Moors Harriers. My Thursday evening running group were all Clayton members, but I started going out with the faster running group on a Tuesday evening too.

I joined the Clayton ladies' team in the Hodgson Brothers relay race around Patterdale, and I entered

the Tour of Pendle, a tough local race, and won the F60 category. What fun! I wondered why I'd never been a fell runner before! I thought I would be ready for my Joss Naylor Challenge the following year, 2020. I had a great time, running through the winter in all kinds of weather.

Well, we all know what happened in 2020. I was fit and strong, had looked at each stage of the route, and was ready to pick a date in June, when everything was thrown in the air by the Covid pandemic. Then at the end of July, walking down from the crag after a day climbing, I slipped off the footpath and broke my leg! What a disaster! Instead of spending the winter ticking over and waiting for Spring of 2021 for my big run, I was spending the winter rebuilding from the ground up after being



*Still in the wind, on Middle Fell. Photo Abby Tighgeal*

unable to weight my leg for six weeks. I couldn't believe how much muscle I had lost. I clearly wasn't going to be doing anything major that year.

Summer 2021 - I felt slower than two years previously and my weaker leg was still noticeably skinnier. I think it's hard to build back up to strength when you're over sixty, but I was feeling quite positive about consolidating through the winter and getting my act together in spring of 2022. Then came another sledgehammer blow: out of nowhere I developed severe and debilitating vertigo. Probably caused by a virus, I was so dizzy I could barely walk, let alone run. The brain adapts to the confusing messages it gets from the ears and eyes, and eventually I was managing to run, slowly with a weird gait, like I was carrying a tray of wine glasses. But my reactions were slow, and I kept falling over - not ideal for a fell runner! I certainly couldn't run in the dark, or fog, or even heavy rain. The Autumn and Winter of 2021 were a write-off. 2022 was no longer going to be the year of the Joss. I was beginning to feel jinxed! But 2022 turned out to be an okay year. I got my confidence back, ran a few races, ran on my own, ran with friends. By winter of 2022 I was finally feeling myself again!

Suddenly we were heading for 2023, and I was determined that I had to get on with it. I was 65 in March '23, so I was now allowed 24 hours for my Challenge rather than 18, but that felt like a bit of a cheat. 18 hours should be plenty. I started getting a team together. Two runners in support on each leg, and ground-support at the two road-crossings and at Styhead. Three of the Clayton Ladies, two of the guys, my son Matthew (whose comfort-zone is a 19 minute park-run, but he's a fit hill-walker), a caving club friend who also runs, and a climbing friend who runs. That's eight in total. My husband Ken was on ground-support, my sister and husband

volunteered, and another friend helped take runners back to their cars at the end of a leg, which made things quite a bit easier. It's a real team effort!

So here is a summary of my day:

Leaving Pooley Bridge at 4.00am, all is quiet. Up through the caravan park no-one stirs. On the fell, around Loadpot Hill, a badger trundles across the path in front of us. I hate early starts, but this is great! Not long after this the raincoats go on, then the hat and gloves. We pause behind the wall at Thornthwaite Beacon, appreciating a brief respite from the strong wind. It's not yet 6.30 and we're well on our way.

Soon we're down at Kirkstone, and I sit on a towel in Teresa's van drinking a pint of tea while she makes me scrambled eggs. Off up Red Screes, into the weather again. The cloud is down and it's confusing on Hart Crag, so Katy gets out the map and compass. No hanging around on Fairfield, the wind is ferocious, and the cloud is still down. From Seat Sandal, Teresa sprints off to Dunmail Raise to let them know we're coming.

Leg 3 and the wind is getting worse. Strong enough to impede walking and blow you off balance. "We won't be running much in this" I say, at the top of Steel Fell. It is what it is, the time doesn't matter, we just have to keep moving and we'll get there in the end. I take the lead, though Nikki warns me when I'm veering too far to the right up High Raise. I planned to follow the grassy trod all the way below Rossett Pike and just nip up onto the summit from directly below, but I head into the rocks instead. Everything is greasy in the wet, and I paid for my lapse when my foot slipped and a boulder savaged a large area of skin from the side of my leg. I'm lucky it's just a surface wound. After Bowfell it doesn't

feel far to Styhead, in spite of the wind. We choose the direct route off Great End and Matthew sprints ahead, but they've seen us coming anyway.

I've developed a craving for Kendal Mint Cake ("I've got some!" pipes up Abby) and I forgot to ask for more Ribena here ("I've got some!" pipes Abby again). The ticklist for Leg 4 has gone AWOL, but Jean has the map marked up from her (sub 12 hour) Joss two years ago, so we don't have to think about it. A good team! I tuck in behind Jean and we set off up Great Gable, still no let-up from the wind. At the col beyond Gable the rescue helicopter is sidling in to pick up a casualty. Rather apt, as I've chosen Northwest Air Ambulance as my charity. Over Kirk Fell and down to Black Sail, where I'd scheduled another brief stop. I know that I struggle to drink enough cold liquid, so Linda and Dave, hunkered down behind a boulder, were ready with more pints of tea.

Onwards towards Pillar, my legs feel strong, but my pockets are filling up with things I've taken a bite of and can't finish. Abby keeps passing me squares of Kendal Mint Cake, and we keep on going. It's so nice to get past Steeple, off the rocks, and suddenly we're running again, down the lovely grassy descent off Scoat Fell. Either by good luck or good judgement, we avoid all the bogs between Haycock and Seatallan (I hadn't been able to recce a good line because it's been too dry recently) and suddenly here we are on Middle Fell. Steady away on the final descent, same as we'd done the last 16.5 hours. Now isn't the time to fall over, and I don't want to overdo it and feel like a mess at the end. Lovely little group waiting on the bridge to cheer me home – what a great day out!

Official finishing time is 16 hours 32 minutes, which I'm quite happy with since we were running into a

blustery headwind all day. I'm even happier when I'm told I've set a new record for females over 65.

The third prerequisite to officially complete the JNC is to raise money for charity. I set up a 'Just Giving' page, and the support rolled in. I chose the Northwest Air Ambulance as my charity because they provide all the helicopter support for the Mountain Rescue Teams as well as fast response to accidents and emergencies in urban situations, and they are funded entirely by donations.



*Coming down to Greendale Bridge. Photo Ian Charters*

# Karn House Beta

*Ken Daykin*

The Northern Cairngorms in the vicinity of Aviemore are renowned for their winter climbing, but what about the summer rock climbing and what do you do if you are on a climbing holiday at Karn House and the weather is not playing ball? Here is my 'Karn House Beta'.

First the Classic Rock routes. Clean Sweep (VS \*\*\*) is a fantastic route and if climbed early in the year makes for a very atmospheric day with the snow left in Garbh Uisge Beag resembling the snout of a glacier and the waters of the Feith Buidhe rushing down. The scenery is dramatic and it feels much more remote than it actually is. Even in summer, a steep field of neve guards access to the rocks and you need to be prepared for this. However, there is more to Hell's Lum than just Clean Sweep. I can recommend Hell's Lump (VS \*\*), a Jimmy Marshall route and nearly as good as Clean Sweep. Auld Nick (S\*\*\*) also provides a great adventure. Check if there is a big snowfield above the finish. One sunny day

we made the mistake of leaving the route to dry out and went off to do another first. When we got back it was wetter than ever because the sun had melted the snow and so the crux was under a waterfall! The crux is probably always wet but it can be avoided by a variation on the right.

Despite the fact that many say Savage Slit (S \*\*\*) is better in winter, it is actually an excellent summer rock climb, with much less chimneying than you might expect. The start is often wet; if you are not confident on wet rock, use the 'old-timers' trick of putting some socks over your rock shoes. It really works. Also, it is always a cold route. We climbed it recently in a heat wave but made the mistake of resting too long at the base, got very cold and nearly gave up. My advice is to get on it while you are still warmed up from the approach walk and take extra layers. At the top of pitch three, there is a good platform and abseil tat, you can abseil off from here, but make sure you abseil down the line



*Camp by Loch Avon. Shelter Stone Crag*



*Pygmy Ridge*

of Prore (VS \*\*), which is to the left as you look out. If you abseil straight down your ropes will probably get stuck in the slit. Andy Nisbet says 50m ropes work fine for the abseil. However, abseiling off is not in the right spirit, is it? If you want to tick the route, you should go to the top. The guidebook says, 'finish up the left slanting gully and a short wall', which is all a bit disappointing. However, there is a much better alternative, which provides a fitting finish to this classic climb and at the same grade. Climb the left slanting gully and then look up right, you will see a steep intimidating looking corner. This provides more excellent climbing, is well protected and in dry conditions provides an enjoyable finale that deposits you right on the lip of the plateau.

Coire An T-Sneachda has loads of rock but what about rock climbing? Here on Aladdin's Buttress, you will find one of the best HVS routes in the Cairngorms, Magic Crack (HVS \*\*\*). Further left, on Mess of Pottage, lies Pot of Gold (S \*\*). This is an



*Auld Nick*



*Ken approaching Hell's Lum*

excellent climb, but I suggest avoiding the first pitch as it is only there to make the route longer and will see you teetering around on gravel covered ledges, possibly being put off Cairngorm Climbing for good. Instead start directly below the main line and in the vicinity of the winter route The Melting Pot.

Also, the corrie provides the beginning of one of the best easy mountaineering days anywhere. Start-up Pygmy Ridge (M \*\*), one of those routes that seems

to have been made just for climbing, on lovely rock and well protected. Try to use Friends for protection because the rock grips nuts so well they are difficult to remove. Pygmy Ridge is guarded by a large apron of grass and vegetated rocks, which is off-putting at first sight, but if you start at the right hand side a nice staircase of steps takes you up easily with a tricky traverse to get to the start of the route. Next, walk over to Stag Rocks and climb Afterthought Arete (M \*\*\*), also a delightful climb in a dramatic setting. Once back on the plateau, aim for the huge cairn at the top of Fiacail a' Chais and descend this very pleasant ridge, with good views ahead.

If the weather is dubious there are plenty of alternative cragging venues. One of the best is Huntly's Cave. This is a sheltered crag, near the road, approached from above and with a pleasant ambience helped by the bubbling brook below. It is very steep and slightly intimidating to look at, but the routes are liberally endowed with big jug holds and usually good protection. Also, there are several crags just west of Inverness and you may have noticed that Inverness always has better weather



*Anne on Crystal Ridge*

than the surrounding areas. See the Highland Outcrops guidebook for more information on these roadside crags.

I want to point out a slightly more remote venue that becomes very accessible with the help of mountain bikes: it is southeast facing and lies in a sheltered valley on the Aberchalder Estate, a good track runs all the way to the crag and mountain biking is allowed. The Estate is very welcoming to climbers and walkers but doesn't want you to park on their land. We parked on the approach road at an area of rough ground where the road turns sharp right and only a track goes straight on. Alternatively, park before the gate across the road near Wester Aberchalder. The crag is quite high and has a range of routes in the lower grades but is a bit adventurous, with several of the descents by abseil. It is a pleasant very quiet setting, and you will be unlikely to find anyone else there, let alone a busy crag.

Finally, what if the weather is bad around Aviemore or you want a short days on the way home? The



*Anne on Clean Sweep*

answer is Craig a Barns, near Dunkeld, only 5 minutes from the A9 on the old road. Easy to find and the first routes are literally 5 to 10 minutes from the car parking. UKC has this to say, "Craig a Barns and Polney Crag offer some accessible one and two-pitch routes covering all grades, in a weather oasis that seems to stay dry even when the rest of Scotland is wet!"

Polney Crag has excellent easy and middle grade routes, while Myopics Buttress has some hard sport routes, and Upper Cave Crag offers some superb, steep trad and overhanging sport routes.

I would be interested to hear other members' tips and beta.



*Anne on Savage Slit*



# The History of a Climb

*Paul Ross*

## Kipling Groove Hard Very Severe, Gimmer Crag, Langdale Valley.

First ascent Arthur Dolphin, J B Lockwood May 1948

Well into the next 20 years after Dolphin and Lockwood's first ascent, Kipling Groove was still considered to be one of Lakeland's greatest climbs. Much of my information comes from my old climbing partner and close friend the late Peter Greenwood. Peter climbed a lot with Dolphin, climbing first ascents with him such as Hells Groove and Pegasus on Scawfell in 1952. It was in 1955 that I started climbing with Peter and we soon were doing first ascents together such as Thirlmere Eliminate on Castle Rock and opening up Lower Falcon Crag with Funeral Way and other new climbs in the Borrowdale area.

I was introduced to Peter one day in 1955 on Shepherds Crag by Robin Scot, a Carlisle Club member. I had just turned 18. I guess to see what I was about, Peter suggested a trip to Langdale to do what he said would be the fifth ascent of Do Not in White Ghyll and the 12th ascent of Kipling Groove (KG). Peter had already done what was then thought of as the third ascent of KG but much later was found to be the fourth. I was a bit nervous as at that time these climbs had a big reputation - long runouts with just sling protection!

We walked from Borrowdale with camping gear to Langdale and the next day swung leads on Do Not. I was chuffed to bits as I found it relatively easy. That night I had my first experience of the bar in the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. In the mid 1950s, to say it was like the Wild West was a vast understatement. Here were groups of the Scottish Craig Dhu, Wallasey

lads, Langdale lads etc all very pissed up and much in competition as to who was the toughest bunch. Friendly on the crags during the day but deadly enemies at night in the pub!!! Say no more. We escaped from the bar just ahead of the fighting climbers who were spilling out of the bar now heading for more such fun in the Wallend barn.

The next day, with the usual hangovers, it was Kipling Groove. Peter asked if I wanted to lead it. No way - I was sure my luck on Do Not would fade on this climb. Peter led up it, doing his thing by not clipping a piton that had been placed just below the crux by Joe Brown on what would turn out to be the third ascent and not the second as thought for many years. Peter spat on it, as he climbed passed, in memory of his friend Arthur who had by then been killed in the Alps. I followed and once again could not believe that I had so little trouble with the difficulties. Generally in the 1950s, Hard Very Severe was the most popular top grade with a few rare exceptions, not surprising as the protection at times was pretty much not existent. Only thin slings over spikes of rock (if there was one) being used. Hence the saying ... the leader never falls. Piton protection was being used but still rare and frowned on by the old timers. After reaching the top of KG I was flying high with confidence (18 year old!) and impulsively took off back to the start of the climb with the intention of soloing it.

I was on the first pitch when Peter appeared and shouted what are you doing and sounded very angry? I sheepishly said "I am going to solo it" to which Peter replied "Oh no you are not! Come down

now. I do not mind you getting the chop but if you do manage it then you will ruin the reputation of Arthur's climb". I did not understand at first but did eventually realise his friendship and respect for Dolphin was still very strong. I meekly complied as the Greenwood Group (Bradford Lads) were pretty tough blokes that you did not mess with, and here I was just breaking into the big boys' club.

Back to Kipling Groove. As information came out about the first ascent it appeared that Dolphin had top roped it a few times before leading it, which was still frowned on by most climbers of that time. Nevertheless, it was still a very brave lead as a fall from the crux would have been at least a 100 feet. The second ascent was by a scots lad called George Shields and maybe hushed up somewhat as it was quite a few years later before this ascent became known. What I heard was that George and his friend came down from Scotland and went up to Gimmer Crag. George spotted what he thought was an unclimbed line, climbed it and came down to the DG pub and asked Sid Cross, who ran the hotel, for the new climbs book to record their route (Sid was an active FRCC climber). Sid asked about it and said that it had been climbed very recently by Dolphin and was called Kipling Groove. There would be no sign of a previous ascent as it was a clean area of rock, and nothing had been left on the climb. George was obviously disappointed and as communication in those days was rare, no one heard much about it after his visit. Then came Joe Brown doing what he thought to be the second ascent. Joe knocked in a piton close to the crux and this protection piton was used for many years after, as the fall from the crux would be very serious. So, folk accepted its placement, until years later when nut protection arrived on the scene. Patsy Walsh from the Scottish Creag Dhu club did attempt the climb without the protection piton but took a fall



from the crux and the length of his fall was recorded in a folk song. Greenwood did the following fourth ascent and as the tale goes refused to clip the piton and spat on it as he passed by, being upset by his perceived desecration of his friends climb. So, all in all, the on sight lead by George Shields of Kipling Groove stands out as remarkable in the history of this classic and beautiful climb.

Kipling Groove named because it was Ruddy-ard.

# So, What Exactly is a Database Administrator?

Les Meer

Peter Simcock, overworked Membership Secretary for 8 years, resigned back end of 2022. His role was split into three (Membership Secretary, Database Administrator and Handbook), 'cos no bugger was daft enough to take on the whole shebang especially with the complication of online aspirant applications.

The conversation between Pete and I went something like this:

*Les: I might consider the database bit 'cos can work quietly (?) in the background as committees and I don't get on; but can put my oar in (aka chuck in a hand grenade) from time to time!!*

*Peter: Yeah, database administrator straightforward, pretty much occasionally updating member details on a laptop.*

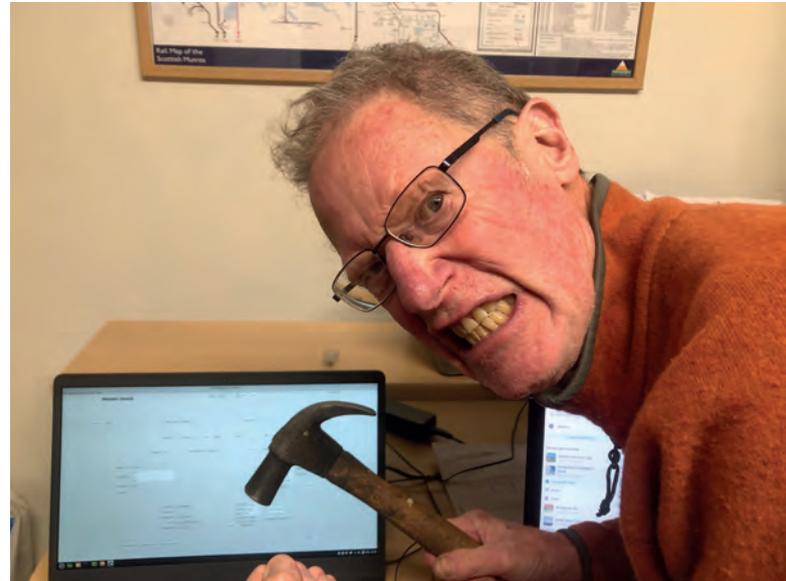
*Les: Sounds ok, Windows based stuff then?*

*Peter: Er no, it's on Linux – but it's similar, a few quirks.*

Linux (yup, I also thought blanket sucking pianist kid from Peanuts) is wot they call an operating system. So is Windows. And like most relationships they often don't get on. Linux doesn't know owt about Word and Excel, it has Liber Office which, is on roughly the same wavelength for some of the time. Ergo Peter's quirks warning.

*Les: Err ...???*

*Peter: I've written Procedures for the 3 roles (note we're talking of more than a Chronicle's worth here) to get you and the others started. There's also a manual somewhere which tells you how to use the ten year old database (belatedly arrived 8 months after Les took on the job when Pete was having a clear-out).*



*Les: So quite straightforward?*

*Peter: Oh yes - but err, like I said, a few quirks*

*Les: Oh – do I need to know about them?*

*Peter: Nah, you'll soon sort it, can always ask me. Sign here ....*

*Les: Well, sounds straightforward; Presumably not much else other than updating member details?*

*Peter: Umm, well, err - not a lot. (Takes deep breath.)  
Just preparing Handbook Members list, setting  
up / collecting / chasing Direct Debits, cheque  
payments for subs, BMC affiliation, adding new  
members, sending membership packs, chasing  
data protection, dishing out hut keys, change  
details for Chronicle, address lists to various  
Printers for publications, reports for AGM .....  
(Les's eyes glaze over about now)*

*Les: Hang on .....*

*Peter: (interjecting) Database generates reports for all  
that, just select from a menu. I'll always be on  
the end of an email to help (to be fair he was –  
generally) so ... sign here.*

*Les: Err ok*

Sometime later Les finds out that the menu indeed generates a shedload of reports – all with quirks - weird file types, messed up formats, empty lines etc that most of the universe using Windows (especially Printers) can't work with. By then it's too late – Les has received heartfelt welcome emails from the Exec before accepting the job, Peter has taken a holiday at the other side of the galaxy and there's no money to be spent on upgrading the database as plan is for it to go web based.

By way of example. BMC affiliation costs us nearly £24 grand. Their MSO d'base ain't singing from the same hymn sheet as ours and has its own quirks, including randomly reintroducing resigned members. So, I have to knock it into submission – and until every member's little outline black star turns black all over, can't 'submit' the whole caboodle into their system - and if I can we may get overcharged. Luckily, they have a helpful lady.

Lovely bits. Calls from older members to change contact details, all with stories. Robin Ellison – “Let me tell you about the time I heard Bentley Beetham discussing the best food for Everest...” - so have put him in contact with our Oral Archivist. A lady whose member husband died a while back wanting to find a local handyman – I have contacts from cycling in that area – sorted!

Tearful bits too. A member has sadly died. With one click of the mouse, this person, who maybe had an amazing mountain life, is 'Archived' in the database. Name, age, and club roles held clinically for posterity, but achievements, personality and life stories often gone for eternity. Just that one click of the mouse ...

So ... to the future. Our Treasurer who possesses an IT brain the size of a planet is singlehandedly (this is in addition to doing the money thing) introducing something called Infoodle, which he promises will securely transfer all membership data from the existing one and be handed to me oven ready.

.... by the time, gentle readers, you fasten your eyeballs around this diatribe (scribed October 23) Infoodle (all being well) will have a place in your increasingly digital hearts.

# Moving Mountains - The Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library

Deborah Walsh - FRCC Librarian/Archivist

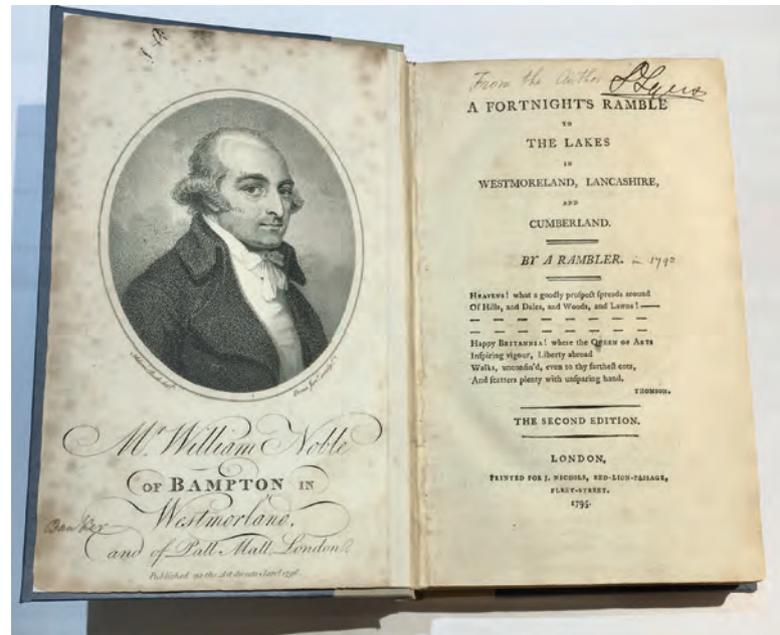
It all began with a single bookcase at the Wastwater Hotel. Today the private library of The Fell and Rock Climbing Club runs to over 2,000 volumes, ranging from the Bolivian Andes to the Lofoten Islands, the Southern Alps of New Zealand to the Himalaya, and all the mountainous regions in-between. As a mountaineering library it is considered to be second only in importance to that of the Alpine Club in London. However, it is at heart very much a local collection, rooted in the Lake District, its crags, and mountains and three centuries of literary and physical endeavour.

of the Lake District. Sadly, at the request of the Trustees of the Armit, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library has been removed and is once again in search of a permanent home.

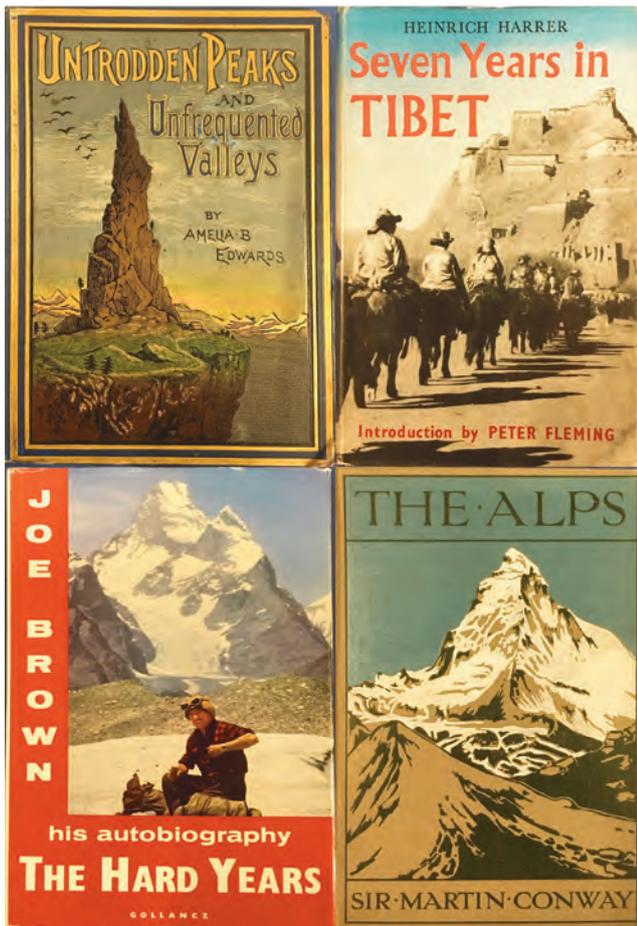
The provision of books and maps at different centres or 'headquarters' as they became known was one of the attractions offered by the newly formed Club. These 'headquarters' were the focal points of Club life before the acquisition of the present huts and included: the Wastwater Hotel, the Sun Hotel, Coniston, Middle Fell Farm, Langdale, the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel and Thornythwaite Farm, Borrowdale. Times and circumstances have changed, and the library grew significantly during the post First World War years. For fifteen years it



In 2014 it was brought together with the Armit Library in Ambleside in what seemed to be a perfect coalition, uniting two extensive and significant collections as well as two prominent Lakeland institutions. The roots of both have not only sprung from the same ground, but also from a shared concern for the landscape and cultural heritage



Thomas Budworth's *A Fortnights Ramble to the Lakes* (1795)



was housed in a room at the Conservative Club, Ambleside, and later found a generous home for half a century until 2014 in the Special Collections Department of the University of Lancaster. A few books still remained at Langdale in the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel until proprietors (and Club members) Sid and Jammy Cross retired in 1970.

The Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library is a remarkable testament to the work of previous Librarians as well as those many bibliophilic minded members who left their books to us; from George Seatree, Graham Sutton, W. G. Collingwood, and

William Heaton Cooper, to, more recently, Harry Griffin. The earliest accounts are those first forays into the Alps, with Windham's 1744 Account of the Glaciers or Ice Alps of Savoy, Bourrit's rare Des Alpes, published in 3 volumes in 1787 and William Coxe's Travels in Switzerland published in 1791, all embellished with copious 19th century annotations. Then there are the first explorations of the Himalayan regions, the mountains of South America and the Southern Alps of New Zealand in the 19th century, and everything that followed from every mountainous corner of the globe. Many books were given by their authors or inscribed by expedition members.



In our copy of the definitive Everest 1924 there is the inscription, 'To the Fell and Rock Climbing Club in appreciation of their highly esteemed

honour conferred, following the 'Fight' of 1924' and signed 'Noel E. Odell'. Odell was a member of the ill-fated 1924 Everest Expedition and will always be remembered as being the last person to see Mallory and Irvine alive, during a brief clearing of the mists as he approached Camp 6. A fine mountaineer himself, he acted in support of the two climbers, going up twice on successive days, to over 27,000 feet in search of them. The 'honour conferred' on Odell was honorary membership of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club.

Previously as curator of the Armit, and presently as librarian and archivist for the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, I have immersed myself in this collection, safe behind a window hammered with rain. From the realms of 'Rum Doodle' to the accounts of the hard-living climbers of the 1950s and 1960s,

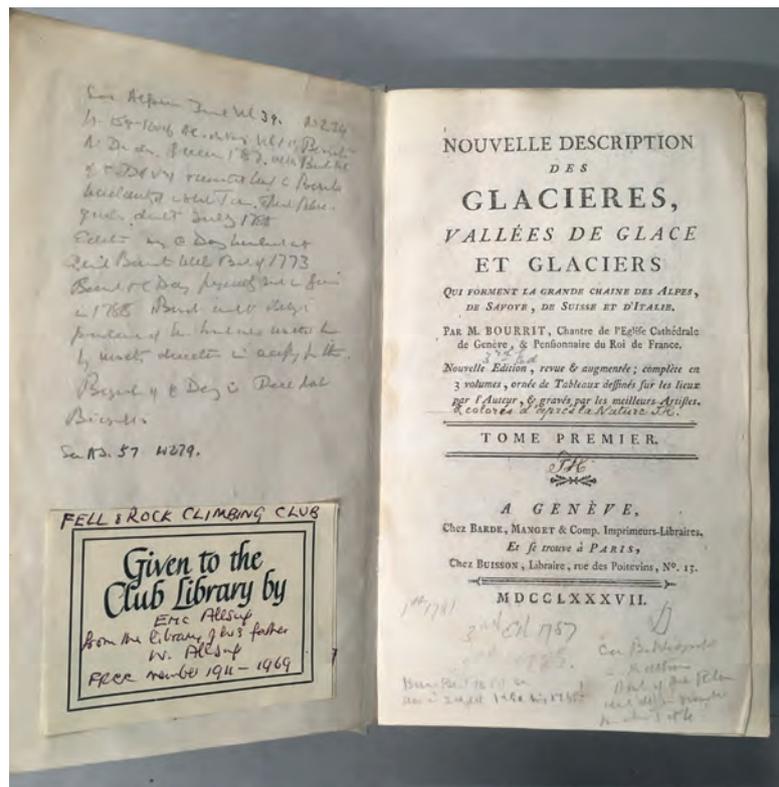


FRCC hardware and books  
(courtesy of Dayve Ward photographic)

I have ventured to Siberia and the mountains of Tartary, through Norway and the Lofoten Islands, starting in Tibet, a place I have at least some knowledge of, and beyond to regions whose names no longer survive on the map. But mostly I return to the Lakes and the Library's significant collection of early Guides. To sit in comfort on dark days and read Thomas Budworth's own copy of his Fortnight's Ramble in the Lakes annotated in his own spidery hand, is the most delicious pleasure. For a military man who had lost an arm at the Siege of Gibraltar, Budworth displays the most admirable good humour during his perambulation of 1792. This 240-mile ramble included ascents of Helm Crag, Helvellyn via Fairfield and Dollywaggon Pike, Coniston Old Man and Skiddaw, echoing Wordsworth's excursion to the Alps two years earlier. It is in fact the first documented walking tour of the Lakes and Budworth enjoyed himself immensely. Written with warmth, self-deprecating humour and most evidently an intense curiosity, not just about the landscape, but also the people

who inhabited it. On leaving Keswick he ends his account with the words 'I declare, although I have been a tolerably great traveller, I never met so unassuming or obliging set of human beings before; and I congratulate my country on their belonging to it. ... had we chosen, we might have got introductions to the first gentlemen in the counties; but we preferred a more humble walk, and were amply repaid for it'

Boxing up the books for their move from the Armitt, we could not help but recall the celebration for the opening of the FRCC Library at the Armitt almost a decade earlier. Our guest speaker was Alan Hinkes OBE, and it was a moment of great optimism and opportunity. That moment has gone, and those



M. Bourrit's *Des Alpes* (1787)

opportunities lost. However, I keep in mind our former Librarian Molly Fitzgibbon, author, and authority on Lakeland, who maintained the Library for thirty years often in the face of great difficulty and dissent. Her purpose was to preserve the integrity of the collection, not only as the legacy of our Club, but in recognition of the fact that these are books were given, inscribed, and annotated by some of the most important and influential figures in the climbing world. As individual books they are valuable, as a collection, they are invaluable.

Not long ago I came across one of Molly's notebooks from the late 1930s in the archive of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. It was an account of conversations with Herbert Bell, a man of rare wisdom and knowledge, who was for decades custodian of the Armit Library. These exchanges covered a range of local subjects, from packhorse bridges, peat-houses and Roman roads to Mr. Bell's fascinating and perceptive assessment of the notable inhabitants of the Ambleside area. When Molly died in 1971 her large and valuable library was bequeathed to be divided between the two institutions and though Herbert Bell had died some twenty-five years earlier, I feel certain that his influence remained with her. Both believed that those things which give real depth and meaning to life must be preserved against an uncertain future with all its short-term imperatives and indifference.

So, when I am told that libraries are no longer relevant, I think about Thomas Budworth and his 'Fortnight's Ramble'; its grainy, veined paper, its spidery annotation in faded sepia ink, its immediacy. We know such books have historical and research value beyond their textual content and recognising those values will in the future become increasingly important, but beyond this there is that increasingly rare sense of personal

connection. Books are patient, they wait in their long queues to be noticed. Often, they wait for years for those singular, chance, and always unique encounters which stay in the mind for a lifetime. The Fell and Rock Climbing Club Library has been 'put to bed' for a while, and we will miss it, but I have little doubt that it will survive and indeed flourish again while there are still those who recognise the value of things almost impossible to quantify within the narrow constraints of our times.



*Molly Fitzgibbon (left) with Muriel and Bobby  
Files, Gimmer Crack 1948*

# Wainwrights Without a Car

Ron Kenyon

The Eden Valley Mountaineering Club (EVMC), based in Penrith, set itself a challenge, in 2023, to ascend all the Wainwrights in the Lake District without the use of a car. Many of us are manacled to the steering wheel when going off somewhere but often, with some planning, it is possible to use public transport to access places which usually enhances the trip as well as cutting down on the use of fossil fuels.

Railway links are available to Windermere via Oxenholme as well as West Cumbria, via Carlisle to Whitehaven and Ravenglass with links to bus services and also the La'al Ratty.

The Fellrunner bus service links villages in the Eden Valley, which includes a bus to Burnbanks, next to Haweswater, on a Thursday and this was used to gain access to the far, Far Eastern Fell.

The Wasdale Shuttle bus is a useful summer service to help gain access to that remote valley.

There is also the Blueworks bus service operating during weekdays between and Coniston, via Ulverston.

Hotels and a tent were used for overnight stays as well as Birkness, Rawhead and Brackenclose.



The first summit, on 17th January, was Latrigg on a clear, crisp day with snow underfoot. 213 summits remained and these were ascended over the year, some individually, but usually as a collection of summits with some necessitating overnight stays including a couple of nights under canvas.

The X4/X5 bus to Keswick or 508 bus to Ullswater were regularly used taking one to the start of walks or Keswick bus station, which is an amazing hub linking to other buses (and the Derwentwater Launch).

*EVMC Wainwright Challenge - The Bus Bible*



*Camping on Haycock*



*La'l Ratty*

Many people were met and interesting tales from them including a chap who lives on the Norfolk/Suffolk border who was also climbing all the Wainwrights without a car in a year - a somewhat different challenge to the EVMC members who live on the edge of the Lakes - but he was well on with them.

The fells around Lank Rigg necessitated taking the train to Whitehaven, then bus to Cleator Moor and walking in from there with camping in a glorious location on the side of Haycock. Next day the Wasdale Shuttle bus was used to go up the valley and watch Wimbledon at the Wasdale Head Inn before catching the last bus, down the valley, to Ravenglass and camping there before catching the train the following day.

Kirk Fell, Pillar, Steeple etc were approached from the top of Honister Pass with an overnight planned in Brackenclose. The day was somewhat cloudy, and Chris left the bus at Seatoller and went over Sty Head Pass and I continued to the top of the Pass and greeted with cloud well below the Drum House col above. I don't use GPS and it was an interesting navigational exercise in finding the tarn at Beck Head. Various texts were sent off to Chris and the group to plot my progress with the clouds gathered

and evening approaching fast - I was pleased of the warm fire in the hut.

The ridge south of Buttermere is a bit of a trek and, as I had to attend the September FRCC Main Committee meeting, I thought this would be useful to link with an early start, from the hut, the day after. So it was the Buttermere bus which dropped me at the hut, before the meeting and it was a glorious morning. Following the meeting, with a few folk about to enjoy the reflections in the lake - and even some preparing to go for a swim. It is a bit of a flog out to Great Borne but a great ridge along and back to Gatesgarth and the hut and the bus back to Keswick and home.

A stay at Rawhead gave a good base for the Langdale fells, with access, by railway to Windermere and then bus to Langdale. The forecast for the first day did not look good - and it wasn't! So we hopped on the bus and had a day in Ambleside, including a look around the Armit Museum. The following day was a stunner with some snow on the tops and we headed off for Pike o'Blisco, Crinkles, Bowfell and Esk Pike.



*Buttermere bus*

A recent trip was made to Coniston by train to Windermere then bus to Coniston, staying at the MAM hut, from where Black Crag and Holme Fell were climbed as well as the main summits encircling the Coppermines Valley. On the return by bus to Windermere then train it was possibly to have a quick blast up the somewhat busy Orrest Head, where it all started for AW.

There was only one route which used bikes which was to ascend Carrock Fell and High Pike. A recent discussion, with FRCC member Eric Shaw, mentioned that when he was living in Preston, many years ago, he cycled, one day, from Preston to Coniston, climbed on Dow Crag, and then cycled home arriving somewhat knackered at midnight. Subsequent trips were made by train to Ulverston and then cycling from there!!!

The ascent of Wansfell used three modes of public transport. The 508 bus was taken to just over the top of Kirkstone Pass, with a walk along the summit

ridge and down to Ambleside, where the steamer was taken to Bowness. We tend to avoid this busy part of the world and walked up to the station to catch the train back to Penrith.

The final summit had to be Blencathra and on Saturday 16th December EVMC members gathered for the 9.00am bus to Keswick, getting off at Scales and Threlkeld (one came on the X4 from Cockermouth) and ascended the mountain by various ways to complete the 214 summits.

Not everywhere is feasible by public transport but it has certainly been enlightening to make use of public transport with all its benefits. The £2 per trip charge has certainly helped encourage bus usage. It will often take longer but not always and also opens up more possibilities of linear walks.

Next time you are going out don't just grab the car keys!!



*Heading off from bus at Seatoller*



## AP Rossiter: An Unfinished Story

Steve Blake & John Spencer

Not much is written about climbing in Northumberland between the first and second world wars bar the odd note or letter in sundry mountaineering club journals. One major reason was that there was no individual or group undertaking systematic development of the crags, as was the case in other crag-bound areas of the country. That is, until the appearance on the scene of one Arthur Percival Rossiter, or AP as he was known in both academic and mountaineering circles. For a decade after taking up a position as a tutor at Durham University in 1934 he climbed extensively in Northumberland, with particular focus on the Wanneys group of crags.

This much was the 'received wisdom', articulated in just three sentences in the history section of later editions of the guidebook. And, although research for a forthcoming book on climbing in Northumberland revealed a little more about him, he proved to be a mysterious and enigmatic character. He was also something of a polymath: a linguist and notable Shakespearian scholar, a sportsman, an enthusiastic motorcyclist, a bold and talented climber with a penchant for soloing, with a



*AP the academic, the sportsman and above, the climber*



couple of intriguing gaps in his biography thrown in for good measure.

He was born on 27th July 1903 into a well-to-do West Country family. His father was a wholesale grocer, and an Arthurian enthusiast to boot, hence 'Arthur Percival'. He was educated at Bristol Grammar School then won a place to read Natural Science and English at Selwyn College, Cambridge from which he graduated with a first. He was active in the Selwyn Boat Club, in which he was known as 'Tishy', where he earned a rowing blue and did some coaching.

At some point whilst an undergraduate he was probably introduced to climbing by Ivor Richards and Dorothy Pilley. Richards was literary critic, poet and rhetorician of some note, and a Fellow of Magdalene College, as well as a talented and experienced mountaineer. His wife Pilley was also a gifted and bold mountaineer and something of

a proto-feminist, perhaps best known as one of the Founder Members (and, later, President and Journal Editor) of the Pinnacle Club<sup>1</sup>. There are a few mentions of Rossiter in Dorothy's letters and diary entries, but the contents refer to mutual acquaintances and matters academic, and in particular there is no mention of climbing. During his time at Cambridge, it is likely, given his boldness, that AP may have partaken of a spot of night climbing (aka 'buildering') on the rickety spires and ramparts of Cambridge University, something that Richards himself indulged in<sup>2</sup>. Whatever, his approach was unconventional in that he never developed an interest in the Alps and 'higher ranges' and was content to develop his skills as a cragsman on home soil.

After graduation he taught in Cambridge for a while and got married to Phyllis, herself an academic who was later to publish a textbook of geology<sup>3</sup>. Around 1928 they moved to Japan, and, on the recommendation of Richards, AP took up a teaching post at the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy in Hiroshima. Here he learnt Japanese and taught 'Basic English', possibly the first to do so in Japan. The latter is a simplified language, its name a backronym for 'British American Scientific International Commercial (English)'. It was created by the linguist and philosopher Charles Kay Ogden, another Cambridge don from whom Rossiter learnt it directly<sup>4</sup>. Whilst in Japan Rossiter apparently also wrote a novel, his one and only, a satire on student life set in 1920s Cambridge called 'Poor Scholars'.

They returned to Britain in 1934 and AP took up his Durham post. It was during his tenure there that he started climbing in Northumberland, probably travelling back and forth on his motorcycle. His particular focus was on 'The Wanneys', located near Ridsdale in mid-Northumberland, which comprise a group of sandstone crags: Great and Little Wanney, Aid Crag and East Woodburn.

Great Wanney is nowadays the pride of the bunch, a grand traditional crag, sitting in an imposing position with views to the northwest towards the not-so-distant border ridge, Windy Gyle, Hedgehope and the Cheviot. The rock is a hard, compact Fell Sandstone and the crag is home to many excellent, easier climbs. Moreover, the more contemporary harder routes are amongst the finest in Northumberland. It was one of the earliest crags climbed on in the County, Geoffrey Winthrop Young and friends climbing the classic 'Great Chimney' (V Diff), an 'old-school' exercise in back-and-footing, around 1902<sup>5</sup>. Over the next thirty years many of the easier lines were tackled by this group. Despite its northerly aspect, the somewhat physical nature of even the easier climbs, and its attraction for midges, Great Wanney remains a popular venue today.

However, in the early days, Little Wanney and Aid Crag were equally popular, if not more so. One of the main reasons for this was that, before its closure to passengers in 1956, climbers would often take the train from Hexham to the nearby market town of Bellingham a few kilometres to the west<sup>6</sup>.

1 [https://www.ukclimbing.com/articles/features/climbing\\_days\\_-\\_the\\_life\\_and\\_climbs\\_of\\_dorothy\\_pilley-8503](https://www.ukclimbing.com/articles/features/climbing_days_-_the_life_and_climbs_of_dorothy_pilley-8503) Natalie Berry, UKC, 7th September 2016

2 Climbing Days, Dan Richards, 2016

3 'Basic for Geology' published in 1937.

4 Basic English consists of 850 English words which, together with its five fundamental grammatical rules, was intended to do the 'work' of the approximately 20,000 words used by the average English-speaker and was first described in Ogden's 1930 book *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar*. It was also used as an aid for teaching English as a second language. Its use declined in the late 1930s/early 1940s

5 Climbers Club Journal, 1902

6 The Border Counties Line, running from Hexham in Northumberland to Riccarton Junction on the Waverley Line in Roxburgshire, was known by some as 'The Beer Line' since one of its regular cargoes was... beer!



*Drone shot of Great Wanney*

The hour-long walk to Great Wanney would take them past these lesser crags, both of them comprising a scattered series of buttresses with much vegetation and areas of doubtful rock. Nevertheless, the crags eventually accumulated a significant number of climbs between them, descriptions of which featured prominently in the legendary visitors' book at the Armstrong Arms, Ridsdale<sup>7</sup>.

Meanwhile East Woodburn is a Wanneys 'outlier', sitting on a hillside a couple of kilometres to the

north of the main group. Although small and compact, it is south-facing with good clean rock and is clearly visible from Great Wanney and from the Armstrong Arms, and was certainly visited by early climbers.

Unfortunately, no diary or climbing journal survives, if Rossiter ever kept one, thus there is no record of what he climbed in Northumberland, and with whom, with the exception of a handful of entries salvaged from the visitors' book. These are written in a neat and delicate script, hinting at a fastidious

<sup>7</sup> The visitors' book at the Armstrong Arms – now known as The Gun Inn – unfortunately disappeared following the death of Mrs Nesbitt, the landlady tenant of the time, but some pages were photocopied in time to inform the history section of the 1979 Northumberland climbing guide. The entries paint a picture of a tough, fit and courageous bunch of enthusiastic explorers.

character and demonstrating great attention to detail, and span the years 1939 to 1942.

From May 1939 there are two detailed reports of first ascents of girdle traverses, in the company of one 'P. Orkney Works', one on Great Wanney, the other on Little Wanney. Both are accompanied by meticulously detailed diagrams.

A couple of contributions refer back to entries from thirty years previously, in one case pointing out anomalies over description of the route then known as 'The Raven's Nest'. This was first climbed by Jack Longland<sup>8</sup> in the early 1930s and involves a bold traverse at the top to escape from the confines of a cave, nowadays graded Hard Severe (4c). It was eventually renamed 'Idiot's Delight'<sup>9</sup>. Elsewhere AP noted the first ascent of an '*awkward and acrobatic crack*' by Rossiter and Longland. They named it 'Dove's Nest Crack', today graded VS 5a. The UKC Logbook entry for the route suggests it provides '*a character-building battle...*'

An entry for August 9th-16th 1941 lists four Rossiters present: AP, his wife Phyllis, and their children Pamela and Richard. There is a note in Rossiter's hand that Richard '*climbed Big End, Aid Crag, unassisted.*'<sup>10</sup> During this week AP famously blitzed the Wanneys group: '*Excellent week's holiday, including 57 climbs large and small on Great and Little Wanney, Aid Crag and East Woodburn.*' Some of these were first ascents, and many were climbed solo.

In April 1942 he reports '*five most enjoyable days*' hereabouts. At East Woodburn he climbed nine routes, 'all short', at least one of which he was sure

was new; the description fits the route now known as 'Capstone Traverse' (Severe 4a). He also did several new lines and variations at Little Wanney and Aid Crag.

The final entry is from mid-August 1942 when the week was '*very bad for climbing – cold, wet, gales and so forth, but the Armstrong Arms as good as ever.*' He goes on to recommend the '*East Wanney Fault Crawl*' for occasions '*when the weather is wet or windy or you are tired of plain ascents.*' The so-called Great Wanney Fault lies a few hundred metres behind the main cragline<sup>11</sup>. Rossiter advises one not to attempt this alone unless one is prepared to stay! '*For sheer strenuousness – and dirt – it takes some beating. Wear a hat – and a gas-mask if you like – and no clothes you care about.*' Most of the entry points are blocked up nowadays.

By the beginning of the 1940s he had become the undisputed local expert on The Wanneys. His notes and sketches for this period, including those from visitors' book, became the basis of the descriptions and diagrams in the relevant section of the first Northumberland climbing guide published by the Northumbrian Mountaineering Club in 1950. Over 100 routes were described at the Wanneys group, the hardest being the aforementioned 'Dove's Nest Crack'.

On 22nd May 1940, some seven months after the outbreak of WWII, Rossiter enlisted into the 11th Battalion of the Home Guard affiliated to the Durham Light Infantry. This situation was apparently to pertain until he was called up for military service, which he never was. Nevertheless,

8 Longland was also a don at Durham University during this period, having originally climbed in the County as a visiting member of a group 'led' by Geoffrey Winthrop Young which included members of the Trevleyan family based at Wallington Hall.

9 The route now named 'Raven's Nest' is a 3-star V Diff at the western end of the crag.

10 'Big End' is mentioned in the 1950 guide thus: 'Two easy routes possible' but no grades are given.

11 It isn't actually a fault in strict geological terms, more a 'slump' or 'mass-movement' feature whereby the Fell Sandstone has slid over the softer sedimentary rocks lying underneath it.



*Idiot's Delight Great Wanney, Russell Clark climbing*

he was appointed the 'Officer Commanding of a Company' suggesting he had attained the rank of Major<sup>12</sup>. Although we know nothing about his service, intriguingly, the paperwork records

that he reverted to the rank of Private, 'at his own request.' He was discharged on 31st December 1945. One of the mysteries about AP is that, despite his remarkable academic prowess, Japanese language capabilities, personal experience of and knowledge about the Japanese Navy, and having friends employed in 'intelligence' who knew about his talents, he was not apparently recruited into the national effort.

Rossiter was a member of the FRCC and an occasional contributor to the journal. His first article, published in the middle of WW2 in 1942, describes a visit to Great Wanney in the company of a friend named Paul<sup>13</sup>. His prose is prolix and somewhat convoluted but persevere and you are rewarded with an evocative description of a day's cragging and reflections on what it all means.

Tension on the approach, with the crag looming ahead, looking *'severe and harsh, scowling away into the moors and turning its long heather back to the thin sunshine.'* The warm-up climb, in this instance a fun traverse of 'The Pharaoh's Face', a distinctive feature of Great Wanney<sup>14</sup>. *'We clinked nails all over the Pharaoh and I even found I was kicking him in the eye-socket, but he showed no resentment.'* Then, after another couple of easy climbs, a harder challenge: *'We felt like looking for something more troublesome. We found it all right.'*

The climb chosen was the aforementioned 'Raven's Nest/Idiot's Delight' for which AP changed from nails into rubbers. His description of the mental machinations one goes through when working out a challenging sequence and pushing one's

<sup>12</sup> One rank above Captain Mainwaring!

<sup>13</sup> Fell & Rock Climbing Club Journal, 1942, p162

<sup>14</sup> The first ascent of a more direct route named 'Pharaoh's Face' was by Hugh Banner and Dave Ladkin in 1970; they graded it Very Severe, and it appeared in the 1979 Northumberland guide as 'VS 5a'. It took pride of place as the County's hardest VS until it was more sensibly graded as E3 5c in the next guidebook edition in 1989! It is a bold undertaking.

limits will resonate with most climbers, including the inevitable *'I wonder why one does these things.'* The climbing was taxing, and he tried to reverse a sequence; *'When I saw it was next to impossible up came those tingles of nervous tension that register the physiological conviction that your place is a tight one.'* Then a hold snapped, possibly because the rock was wet<sup>15</sup> and he almost barn-doored off the crag - a ground-fall would have been very nasty - but he pulled out of it and finished the route.

As he lay on the grass at the top, after filling his pipe, he reflected on what it's all about and in particular the nature of 'escapism' and the risky nature of his enterprise. This was of course in the middle of WWII when *'a fantastic world of violence opens up with every paper or siren; yet men snatch days from front-line cities through needless danger.'*

For Rossiter climbing offers *'a satisfaction over and beyond that of coordinated muscular activity and risk successfully carried, when the mind's self-management is echoed in the movement and poise of limbs. It includes a sensual delight akin to dancing: but different, in that misjudgement of skill is attended by something more than a jar to social self-esteem. Conceit cannot cover a false step; nor is good taste uncertain when you know by direct physical sensation the grace of ease and its opposite.'*

He argues that although climbing may be escapist *'there are good and bad escapes. The essence of a good escape...is that it should confront you, in disguise, with problems similar to those you need relief from;*

*so that mastery in little can be carried back to places where confidence and courage were ready to fail.'* He concludes that, whilst climbing is indeed a form of escape, it is not an escape from life but back into it.

He was elected to Fellowship of Jesus College, Cambridge in 1945, and moved south to take up post of Tutor and Director of Studies in English there later that year. At some point during this period his first marriage ended and on 25th May 1947 he married one Barbara Bloch, daughter of the German expressionist painter Martin Bloch<sup>16</sup>. Their first son Peter was born in 1950.

Rossiter got involved in guidebook writing in the Lake District as he had in Northumberland, notably contributing to a volume covering Wasdale, eventually published in 1948<sup>17</sup>. He wrote an article for the 1947 journal entitled 'Yewbarrow Revisited'<sup>18</sup> in which he describes recent developments on Overbeck crag, a small south-west-facing outcrop on the west flank of Yewbarrow. The current Scafell and Wasdale guidebook notes that it *'provides good sport for a short day.'*<sup>19</sup>

He detailed a number of completely new lines, done either with his wife Barbara or solo, including a girdle traverse which he named 'Roosters' Ramble'. This was noted to be between 370ft and 470ft long, and V Diff to Severe, *'to taste'*. He also described several variations on existing climbs, and what would nowadays be listed as 'boulder problems', including on the 'Bowderdale Boulder' below the crag<sup>20</sup>. He concluded: *'With something over 1,000*

<sup>15</sup> A perfect illustration as to why one should not climb on saturated sandstone!

<sup>16</sup> Martin Bloch (1883-1954) was a German-Jewish artist who came to Britain as a refugee in 1934, becoming a citizen in 1947. A colourist, well-known for his landscape paintings, and architectural and city portraits, he latterly taught at Camberwell School of Art, where he influenced a new generation of British painters.

<sup>17</sup> Rock Climbing Guide to Great Gable, Green Gable, Kirkfell, Yewbarrow, Buckbarrow, FRCC, date?, Ed HM Kelly

<sup>18</sup> FRCC Journal, 1947, p18

<sup>19</sup> Scafell and Wasdale, Centenary Edition, FRCC, 2014, Al Phizacklea & Ron Kenyon.

<sup>20</sup> OG Jones and friends may have deserted themselves hereabouts at the end of the 19th Century. Nowadays Bowderdale Boulder offers over a dozen short boulder problems in a fine setting.

*feet of new climbing added, Yewbarrow should provide even more for days shortened by rain than has generally been assumed. Though the longest single climb is relatively short, the crag has a great variety of types of route, and may prove a welcome ground for those who are passing on the English climbing tradition to others less experienced.* The girdle, now graded VS 4b, is described in the current guide as *'An interesting expedition...The climbing, although never really hard, does involve reversing some awkward sections of existing routes, often out of sight of one's partner – this all requires competence with ropework and protection.'* Rossiter climbed the route solo.

His second reflective piece for the FRCCJ was published in 1947. In *'On Climbing Alone'* Rossiter considers the pros and cons of soloing, arguing from both rational and moral perspectives. As with his essay on escapism, the prose is elaborate, even drawn-out, and most certainly erudite, with many literary allusions and references including The Bible, Byron, Shakespeare, Dickens, Horatio Nelson, Caesar, Robert Gray, Coleridge and Felicia Hemans!

He starts tentatively, acknowledging that it is a sensitive subject, indeed wondering whether his *'notes, or confessions, on so improper a subject... should be suppressed in the public interest.'* Notwithstanding, he observes that the *'modest little word 'solo'* tends to appear periodically in the new routes section of the journal, *'often above eminently established initials'*, and that a modest inquiry will reveal that *'For worse or better, many people do climb alone.'* In fact, during the war, when partners were often hard to come by, people often resorted to climbing alone especially when the alternative might have been to climb with a *'completely chance-*

*met and utterly untried ad-interim second'* which could be more trouble than it was worth. Indeed, one's responsibilities to one's second, he opined, were considerable - remember this was the era of *'the leader must not fall'* when the consequences of such could be catastrophic for all concerned. Yes, having a second below and a rope dangling from your waist might provide psychological support, but it was illusory. Further, with a second to follow, the leader might feel *'the mysterious current of moral pressure'* which runs *'like electricity up ropes'*, compelling them to proceed in territory when the wisest option would be retreat.

In any case, the solo climber can protect himself with a rope just as effectively as with a second belaying him from below. Another advantage is that there is no need to be concerned about the proficiency of the rest of the party or about one's slow progress. Finally *'you have next to no conscience about what you throw down...The delectable gunpowder smell of rock ruination can be enjoyed without apology..and instead of covering some patient being with dirt, grass-tufts, heather, bilberry-bushes and even gorse-prickles, bombarding him with bits of juniper, moss and bluebells'* you can in due course direct said companion to a climb with the *'modest instruction: 'There's a little thing here – I did it solo the other day – I think it's reasonably clean and decent.'* In an interesting aside he talks about discussing such issues with *'an old leader of mine, one who has got as high as Everest – which seems to me more than high enough'*<sup>21</sup> in which they came up with the idea of a *'friction-glove'* for belaying: *'If the Kletterschuh, why not the Kletterhandschuh?'*

In his next piece for the journal published in 1952, writing in advance of the publication of a

21 This is almost certainly a reference to Jack Longland who indeed did go high on Everest. On the 1933 expedition he and eight sherpas established Camp Six at nearly 8400 metres then had to retreat in whiteout conditions, Longland leading the party to safety, long considered one of the great epics in the Everest story.

forthcoming guide to Scafell, he reminded the editors that the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge should be credited with the first descent of Broad Stand, not its ascent, as was sometimes the case<sup>22</sup>.

In his final piece for the journal, published in 1954<sup>23</sup>, Rossiter stuck with the subject of Coleridge. He felt the poet's contribution to the canon of the Lake Poets had been somewhat overshadowed by that of Wordsworth and others, yet in his opinion *'No writer has more often or more sensitively recorded the effects of sun and cloud, the unanticipated beauties of rain and storm, and the evanescent panoramas of the night-sky.'* One likely reason for this apparent neglect was that most of Coleridge's musings during the relevant period (1799-1803) were recorded in notebooks and had not then been published. For Rossiter, who wished to set the record straight, *'the story can be pieced together only from the complete survey of his letters, poems and his unpublished notebooks.'* However, another explanation might have been a consequence of *'the demands of Victorian discretion'* since, as is well known, Coleridge, although married, was deeply in love with Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson. Could this have made *'editors and even scholars pass by what they would have published if only Sara had never existed.?'*

Whatever, Rossiter argues that Coleridge essentially saw the Lake District through the lens of his unrequited love: *'He fell in love with another woman, and, through her, with a world of lakes, mountains, clouds, light and waterfalls which was to remain intimately attached to his thoughts of her for the*

*next twelve years of his life.'* Regardless of his secret passions, and in contrast to the other Lake Poets whose reflections were largely penned from the valley bottoms, Coleridge actually rolled up his sleeves and engaged with the mountains<sup>24</sup>. Having discovered, at the age, of thirty *'a genuine and original taste for dangerous scrambling'*, Rossiter suggested he has *'some slight claim to be called the earliest of English rock-scramblers'* (or at least one of the earliest). Further *'by the Spring of 1803 he was writing on footgear with the authority of a man who knows his wants'*, in this instance a specification for the ideal spacing of nails on a boot sole! Rossiter ended by hoping the time may come when *'the Note-poet of the notebooks is recognised as the most sensitive apprehender of the Lakes who has ever left 'pieces of his mind' to acuminate the sense of the future.'*

Little is known about the rest of Rossiter's time on the crags, and it is not known if he revisited Northumberland after his pre-war glory days. He and Barbara climbed and walked a lot in the Lakes District. Peter recalls that Great Gable was *'a very special place for the couple'*, so much they bestowed upon him the full name of *'Peter David Gable Rossiter'*<sup>25</sup>.

However his academic career flourished, he published prolifically and delivered a series of lectures for the BBC Home Service, and a collection of his lectures on Shakespeare, *'Angel with Horns'*, published posthumously, is still to be found on University reading lists<sup>26</sup>. In the opinion of John Constable, a leading authority on the philosophy of language and aesthetics, who has written

22 Note on 'First Ascents (Scafell)', FRCC, 1952, p198

23 'Notes from a little-known Coleridge', FRCC, 1954, p30

24 Coleridge is often credited with the first use of the word 'mountaineering'.

25 Peter Rossiter, *personal communication*

26 *'Angels with Horns, and other lectures on Shakespeare'*, AP Rossiter, Graham Storey (editor), Longmans, 1961

extensively about Richards during the course of which he compiled a bibliography of Rossiter's published works, AP's place *'in the standard accounts of the Cambridge English school... deserves more emphasis. His students included some of the most notable names of subsequent decades.'*

But life and career were to end tragically in 1957. He died in Huntington Hospital as a result of a motorcycle crash, having already been quite badly injured in an earlier crash<sup>28</sup>. Perhaps the boldness and approach to risk aversion for which he was well known, not only as a climber but also in academia<sup>27</sup>, might have played a part in his accidents.

An obituary appeared in The Times on 9th January 1957, and another short one in the FRCC Journal written by WG Stevens<sup>29</sup>.

Barbara was pregnant with their second child at the time of Rossiter's death; Adrian was born six weeks after AP's accident, in the words of Constable *'giving the accident a particular poignancy that persisted in Cambridge for long afterwards.'* Neither Peter nor Adrian took up any serious mountaineering (or motorbiking) but Peter, who, like his grandfather Martin Bloch is a painter, still enjoys walking on, and painting mountains.

As a relatively unknown contributor to climbing history and culture, this short review of Rossiter's life suggests he was something of a romantic, a man who was happy with his own company, confident, fit, bold and technically able, particularly on the rocks: *'Rossiter was a man of fine physique, and — to quote a friend who had frequently climbed with him in*

*recent years — on the rocks he could use his strength when it was needed, but delighted in extending a subtler technique of movement and balance; he excelled on delicate face climbs, but was scornful of young climbers who could not fight an old-fashioned chimney or crack. He was a superb leader, who could climb second with equal grace.'*<sup>26</sup>

He led an intriguing life, leaving us with a number of questions unanswered, a life worthy of further study. Final words to Peter<sup>25</sup>: *'My feeling that something was concealed from me in my childhood may well stem from my parents wanting to keep their rather complicated "private lives" private. All the same, when I look at AP's remaining journals (and see that the crucial early volumes that I remember seeing years ago as a child are missing) I can't help feeling some facts about him may now never be known. Perchance the hints in this account of his life might possibly prompt someone, at some point, one day, to fill in some of those tantalising gaps.'*

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Peter Rossiter, Dan Richards, Dr Sarah Lonsdale and Dr John Constable for help with our research into Rossiter's life.

27 <http://libellus.co.uk/index.php/blog/391-a-p-rossiter-1903-1957-a-biographical-note-and-a-checklist-of-works> John Constable (last updated 25th February 2022).

28 Peter, who adored his father, recalls spending time with him during his convalescence from the accident.

29 FRCCJ, 1957, p97

# A Dip Into the Oral Archives: Interview with Ernest Wood Johnson

Lis Cook, Tony Walker and Mark Scott

The oldest recording we have in the FRCC Oral Archives dates from March 1981 and is of Ernest Wood-Johnson: guidebook writer in the 1930s, stoic member of the team working on the original Brackenclouse and Vice President (1963-64). Many would have liked to see him President, wrote Sid Cross in his obituary, 'but he would not agree to be considered'.

Ernest was present at the Memorial Service on Great Gable in 1924, probably his first contact with the Club. It was at this time that he, in the company of his younger brothers George and Arthur, began their adventures in the Lakes. They hadn't a clue how to start so were pointed in the direction of George D Abrahams' First Steps in Climbing (a 1923 Mills and Boon publication).



The interview can be heard via a tablet or mobile phone by scanning the QR code. It's fascinating and well worth listening to.

In the interview Ernest recollects buying his first pair of boots.

***'Well, I wrote to Abrahams' shop. And George Abrahams, who became a friend of mine later, who I wrote and asked him if he could tell us about this climbing business and how do you start? Now, George Abrahams, bless his heart, he wrote us a lovely letter telling us just what to do. We could get our boots from Mr Harden in Keswick and so on. And the ropes we could get the Alpine Club Rope if we wanted from Beals in London. And he just published a little book called First Steps to Climbing, which I think was 5 bob, it came from Mills and Boon. So, we bought that. And it gives you a whole lot in the little, tiny pocketbook from rock climbing to climbing the Alps and so on. Now, that's all we knew. '***

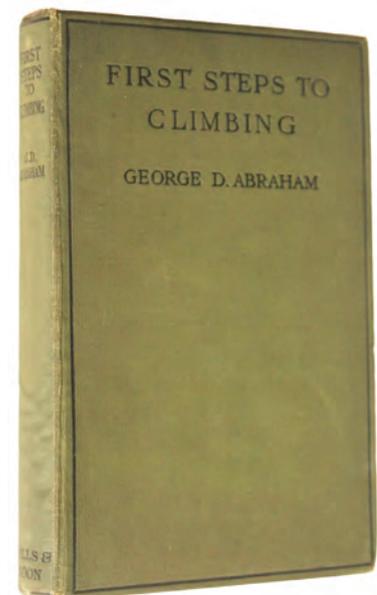
Opposite:

1742: The Great Flake, Central Buttress, 1933

1671: George W-J and ANO, Wasdale Head

1745: Central Buttress, on top of the Great Flake, 1933

1738: Central Buttress Scawfell - 'Botterills, C.B., M.G.G'



1742



1671



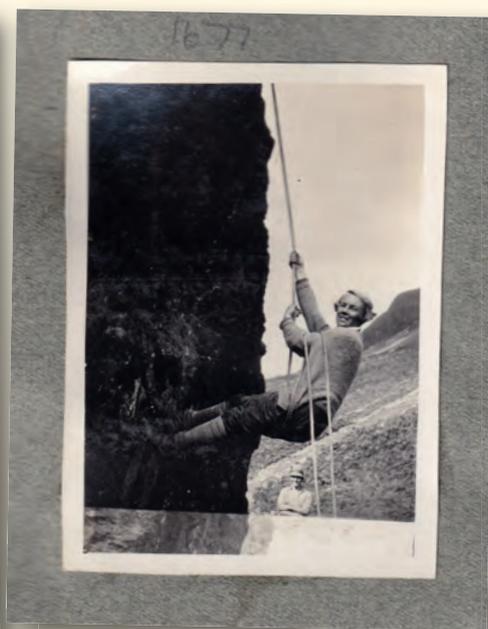
CENTRAL BUTTRESS. SCAWFELL  
1738



19

↑ BUTTRESS ↑ C.B. ↑ P.M.S.F.





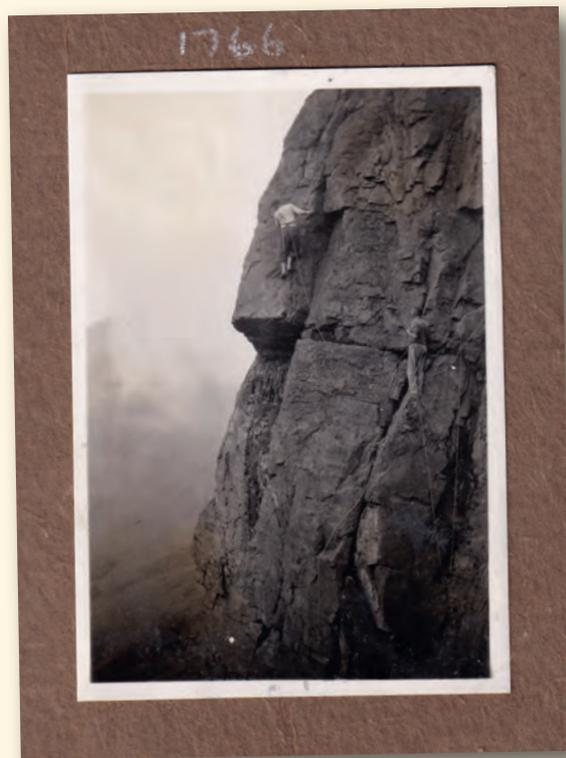
*'Now by then, we'd still got tweed jackets and, so on, but we got plus twos made in the same material, and so on. And we had our boots, And Jock said, 'Don't get your ropes from London there's better ropes at the Edinburgh Ropery which Kelly used'; and so on. We'd heard about Kelly. So, we got these ropes. Eighty foot was the length then, so we got a couple of these. And we had a marvellous weekend.'*

1747: CJ Astley-Cooper on 1st pitch of Kern Knotts Buttress, 1933

1677: Nea Morin - famed female climber and alpinist and first ascent of the classic 'Nea' in the Llanberis Pass

1680: George Wood-Johnson in front of the Napes

1673: L-R. Unknown, Arthur, Edith and George W-J outside Wilson's Temperance Hotel.



At Whitsun 1926, at Coniston, Ernest came across a lot of nice people .. all chatting in the Sun Hotel and realised he had inadvertently walked into a Fell and Rock meet. He became a member shortly afterwards. In those days, it seems, one was told over a handshake, in Ernest's case by Club Secretary John Appleyard. He was immediately sucked into Club History: how many members, on the day they join, get to ask G. A. Solly in person how he found the first ascent of Eagle's Nest Direct?

*'And now we've always heard, by the way, that the Eagle's Nest Direct, when it was climbed by Solly, which is a very hard climb. I still think it is. The top bit. He did it in about 1895 or 6. In April, in a cold, miserable day. Now how on earth a fellow did that then? He could climb alright. So, we asked Bernard, who we call Tiara, if he'd if he'd introduce us to Mr Solly.'*

*1773: Gillercombe Buttress, climbers unknown*

*1766: Tower Buttress, Black Crag. Arthur in the lead belayed by Ernest.*

*1724: Tophet Wall, 2nd pitch. Ernest at the top belaying CJ Astley-Cooper with Arthur as 3rd man. Great Gable 1933*

*'Kelly, without knowing it, and Bentley had taught us how real mountaineers and climbers do it'*



At the Eskdale Meet later that year (accommodation - barn; bedding - hay) the Wood-Johnson brothers met and climbed with Arthur Wakefield (Ernest became a lifelong pipe smoker as a result of this encounter). More importantly, all three brothers were seized by the spirit of adventure. Growing up in the era of Scott and Shackleton and having now met a member of the 1922 Everest expedition, there was only one thing for it: 'we'd better go and knock Everest off'. Their strategy was 'to get jobs in the Himalayas'. Life got in the way for Ernest, but brother George did get very close to realising his dream as a member of the 1933 Everest expedition.

Much climbing in the Lakes followed for Ernest. In the late 1920s he teamed up with C. J. Astley Cooper and both contributed much to the second series of guidebooks under H. M. Kelly's editorship. But the best, most epic, day of Ernest's life was on Scafell in the company of Kelly, Bentley Beetham, and younger brother George where they bagged all the major climbs - except Central Buttress - in a day ending at midnight (well, that was when they started on their motorbike journey home).



*1660: Edith and George W-J on Pillar  
1755: FG Balcombe and JA Shepherd, 1st ascent  
Engineer's Slabs - Unfinished Arete, June 1934  
1702: Snowy top.*

## Rock-climbing in Skye

ELIZABETH KNOWLTON

WHEN I think about climbing again, in that far-off world after the war, the Coolins of Skye are among the mountains I am most eager to revisit. But Skye after the war will be changed from the place where I used to stay, the place the pre-war generation of British climbers knew and loved. There was so much of color made the Misty Isle attractive, beside the fascination of the 25 black peaks of the Coolins, with their unequaled rough solid gabbro and multitudinous interesting routes.

Since I was last there, I have read of the death of Dr. Norman Collie; and John Mackenzie, the famous old Skye guide, his friend, went earlier. How can Sligachan ever seem the same without the sight of Dr. Collie's saturnine face at his well-known table in the Inn dining-room, or a glimpse through the distant mists across the moors of two tall figures in weather-beaten tweeds, striding side by side in silent companionship?

At Glen Brittle at the other end of the Coolins, Mrs. Chisholm too is dead, and who will keep open house, and heart, for the "real climber," as she did? No substitute article could fool her keen eye and gain accommodation in her popular cottage—she could see through their spurious enthusiasms in a moment, and for such her rooms were always "full." But for the true mountain-lover, whether expert or neophyte, nothing was ever too good. Who, like her, will rise at dawn, or stay up after midnight, that climbers' clothes may be dry and ready, and climbers' empty stomachs happily filled? And can a wandering American hope to find again those groups of cheerful shabby young Englishmen with bulging rucksacks, who so hospitably used to offer the solitary climber a place on their ropes?

Yet whatever losses the war may have brought to Skye, some of the things that gave that island its unique and unforgettable quality as a climbing region will still remain. There will still be the local color of the Highlands—the primitive *tighe dubh* (black houses) by the roadsides, the shaggy-faced Highland cattle on the moors, and the red deer among the crags. There will be the evenings by the peat fire, with Gaelic songs and legends, and perhaps a tune on the pipes, or tales from Skye's rich history, of

*'A fascinating account of rock climbing in Skye with Ernest Wood-Johnson by Elizabeth Knowlton. First published in the American Alpine Journal 1945 and reproduced by kind permission of the American Alpine Club.'*

### *Rock-climbing in Skye*

Prince Charlie and Flora MacDonald, or of Dr. Johnson's memorable travels.

And there will always be the typical Skye weather, that rainbow weather, with its play of storm and sunshine across the landscape.

"If you are a delicate man,  
And of wetting your skin you're shy,  
I'll have you know, before you go,  
You'd better not think of Skye,"

wrote Sheriff Nicolson many years ago; and it remains just as true today. The weather will always be of primary importance, never to be forgotten or disregarded. Bad weather, and marvellous rocks—they are the two outstanding characteristics of Skye climbing.

The Black Coolins rise almost directly from the sea—some two dozen peaks, as sharply pointed as a child's drawing of mountains—not high, only a little over 3000 ft., but clean dark rock almost to their bases, and with only one summit that can be reached without real climbing. The volcanic gabbro of their faces, cracks, and chimneys is so rough that, as I soon learned by vivid experience, one can do difficult routes in nails even on the wettest days, clinging like a fly to the solid crystalline surface.

My first climb in Skye, a very typical one and a good one to begin on, was a traverse of Sgurr na Gillean, up the Pinnacles and down the Gendarme Ridge. Sgurr na Gillean, the Peak of the Young Men, rises just up the Glen from Sligachan Inn, and is the regular barometer of Sligachan walkers and climbers. About nine or half past in the morning, after a leisurely breakfast, the guests stroll out of the Inn in ones and twos to have a look at that mountain, and if the clouds hang too dark and low over its sharp peaks, they postpone their trips, hoping the omens may become more propitious later.

On the particular day planned for our climb, however, all signs were favorable—the sky light clear grey, and the clouds high and open, with glints of sunlight moving over the distant hills. So we started off across the heather, carefully skirting the bogs, and scrambled up over the screes above Eagle Crag into Basteir Corrie, from which we would reach the Pinnacle Ridge.

It was a very jocular party—the continual jokes and laughter centering on "Willie," the leader of the group of four Liverpool men with whom I climbed. "Willie" was a sturdy, jolly, redfaced

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chap, wearing an old jacket patched with as many shades of tweed as Joseph's coat—a jacket which was the subject of many of the pleasantries, he cherished it so fondly through all the rough work on the rocks, and was so proud of the details of the variegated effect, and seeming to value it as a real collector's item.

In Basteir Corrie we put on the ropes, and mounted easily the steep face of the final Pinnacle, up whose convenient irregularities one could move with speed, thanks to that wonderful gabbro. Leaving the summit, we followed the spectacular knife-edge narrowness of the Gendarme Ridge, that dropped away on both sides into corries deep with dark-blue shadow in the grey light. The Gendarme furnished the high point of the climb, where it stood, slender and tall, a sentinel holding the whole width of the ridge. It could be passed only by embracing it boldly with both arms, and swinging a leg wide out over depths of empty space, to an invisible foothold on the far side. After the Gendarme, the rest of the ridge seemed tame, and soon we were down again into the corrie, and racing home with giant's strides down the steep lower slopes deep hidden in springy heather.

On various visits to Skye, I was lucky enough to have the chance for several more climbs in the Black Coolins with hospitable climbing parties—there were pleasant days on the Window Buttress, the Inaccessible Pinnacle, Sgurr Tearlach, the Cioch, Blaven and others. The last and best of all was a new route on Mallory's Buttress.

The climb must be made from Glen Brittle, and I was invited to join the others there. But it was a grave question if I could ever get in, for the tiny clachan accommodated less than a dozen tourists, and everything was full. Then one evening two men appeared at Sligachan who had just come from the Lodge at Glen Brittle. Full of hopes, I quickly packed my rucksack, and started off next morning to take their place.

It was a pleasant day's walk, over the moors and up the low pass of the Ma'am, following a little burn with its crystal-clear pools set like jewels in the heather, then down the long length of Glen Brittle to the settlement at the sea.

I reached the Lodge late that afternoon, and was greeted with disconcerting news—two more guests were to arrive that evening to claim the quarters of those that had left! I already knew that Mrs. Chisholm's cottage, that favorite haunt of climbers, was full

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to over-flowing. So it was suggested that I try the third and only other possibility—"Mary Campbell's the Post Office." She was known to have two rooms, and at the moment only one lodger. Mary Campbell proved completely unhelpful—the lady had engaged the second room as a sitting-room. It was almost evening now, I was rather tired and very hungry. In desperation I sought Mrs. Chisholm, to tell her my sad tale and seek counsel. She had never seen me before, but she listened with eager sympathy, and delivered judgment.

"The Lodge, I understand—she's a newcomer in these parts. But indeed, I am surprised at Mary Campbell! Could not her lady do without a sitting-room for a day or two!" The rights of other guests had short shrift with Mrs. Chisholm herself, when it was the needs of a "climber" that were in question. "Don't worry," she cheered me, "I'll take you in. One of the men will just have to make do on the living-room sofa." Which, in spite of all my efforts to take this hard and narrow couch for myself, he just did.

The next day we woke to rain dashing against the windows, wind howling around the eaves, and breakers pounding the rocks of the cove below the house. Not auspicious weather for climbing. All the morning we huddled close to the little peat fire, listening to the disheartening chorus, and by mid-afternoon when the rain began to slacken a little we were ready for anything for a change.

"Let's go and have a look at it anyway." By the time we had reached the foot of the cliff, after an hour's approach up Corrie Laggan, the rain had stopped entirely and the wind had almost dried the rocks.

"Come on. Let's go." And we started.

My climbing companion on this route was Ernest Wood-Johnson, who had made many climbs and first ascents in the Lakes, and some good ones in Skye, with his younger brother George, who was later to take part in Kanchenjunga and Everest expeditions. So as we tied on the rope, he asked me if I minded being addressed as "George." For, he explained, "Miss Knowlton" seemed a little formal and unwieldy on the rocks, and George was the name he was used to calling his climbing partner. I modestly accepted the honor, hoping only that I would not disgrace my namesake too conspicuously, and "George" it was thereafter.

The route we planned to follow (note that I say "planned") was made by Mallory up the Sron na Ciche.

### *Rock-climbing in Skye*

"The guide says," reported Wood-Johnson cheerfully, "that this is a climb of the fourth grade of difficulty"—the guide listed only four grades—"that it offers interest all the thousand feet of the route, and that it should be led only in rubbers (sneakers)—that it is not a climb for nails. But this isn't a day for rubbers."

We found easily the start of the climb, a short pleasant chimney. As I came up it, the rain began to come vigorously down. Behind Wood-Johnson rose the next pitch, a high steep slab, that had at its very beginning a few minor irregularities that might be considered footholds, nothing for hands except pressure holds, and things looking even smoother above. Sneakers would have been handy, but not at that moment, as already the rock was bathed in a thin film of water. Wood-Johnson looked at it dubiously a bit, then started slowly up, and vanished into the mist and rain. When I came to follow, I found a useful tiny rounded crack. But it petered out part way up.

"What are the holds after this?" I called.

"There aren't any," answered Wood-Johnson helpfully.

By the time I reached the top of the slab, the weather was definitely wet. The rain was pouring down heavily, and we were in clouds so thick that we could see neither the valley floor below nor the rocks above. It was somewhere on this part of the climb that we got off Mallory's route. Not for lack of consulting the guide—I have frequent memory-pictures of Wood-Johnson braced on narrow ledges with his head bent over its fast-soaking pages, as the rain pelted down on him. There were examinations to the right and left—"It doesn't seem quite right here. No, perhaps this is it." During the time of heaviest downpour we negotiated a right-angle crack which must have acted as a drain for the whole upper part of the face, for it had become a lively mountain torrent. As hands must go above the head to grip the holds, a flood of water would flow down through both sleeves, to emerge under the bottom of the climbing jacket. This was the most completely aquatic climb I have ever taken, and we were both enjoying ourselves thoroughly—it was so undeniably an experience!

Having done its best for us, the rain at last began to grow milder, and the mists driving by now let us see around a bit. The guide was again produced. Nothing checked. Nothing was right or familiar. We were unquestionably lost.

The obvious and, in fact, only route up from where we stood

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was a long chimney leading out of sight above. Leaving me wedged in a little corner, with my toes on the edge, and a glorious view beyond them of clouds shifting and opening to give glimpses of the corrie floor far below, Wood-Johnson started up. It was a long time that I waited, and there were many moments when the rope did not progress at all. Then came the longest pause of all. I wondered what had happened. Finally the rope quickly moved a few feet. In a minute the slack was taken up, and I started to follow. The chimney was nowhere too easy, and at the top I found the explanation of the last delay.

"See this little projecting edge of basalt. You have to use it for hand-holds for both hands, to get out over the overhang at the top of the chimney," Wood-Johnson explained, as he held the rope just above me.

"But is it solid?" I queried dubiously.

"I looked at it a long time myself, and wondered. But there's no other possible way. So I finally decided to try it. And it held for me." Obviously it had held.

As I came out over the overhang, I emerged from that damp, dusky chimney into the glowing light of a clearing sunset after storm—bright gold, under a band of ink-blue clouds, and a far outlook over a pale shining sea, on which floated the dark islets of the lesser Hebrides.

Another pitch or two, and we were at the summit, surrounded on all sides by wonderful views—ahead, the sea and islands, behind, the crowd of sharp Coolin peaks clustering black against the fast-fading sky, and just below our feet the dark rolling moors and the first appearing lights of Glen Brittle.

There was scant time to enjoy this beauty, however, and with all our haste it was night before we were off the scree. But the really appalling lateness of the hour for a Highland village did nothing to dim Mrs. Chisholm's eager interest in listening to all the details of our success, as she fed us a most delicious hot dinner at 11.30 p.m.

# Sketches of Somervell by Francis Helps

Roderick A Smith

On 4 June 1924, one hundred years ago, Norton and Somervell made their summit attempt on Everest from an advanced camp on the North Ridge at 26,800 feet. Without oxygen, and fatigued by the altitude, Somervell was the first to stop. Norton got only slightly higher to 28,126 feet before turning back, having established an altitude record. Now it was Somervell's turn to be the strong partner as he guided the exhausted and nearly blind Norton down the slopes. Then Somervell dropped his ice axe and collapsed unable to breathe. He coughed up the entire lining of his throat, before continuing to shepherd Norton back to the safety of Camp IV on the North Col.

On 8 June Mallory and Irvine disappeared after Odell had reported seeing them through a break in the clouds, 'Going strongly for the top', but alas they were never to be seen alive again. Thus began one of the great Everest mysteries. Did they reach the top? On balance, I think it extremely unlikely, nor was the puzzle solved by the discovery of Mallory's body in 1999.

Somervell was, arguably, the most illustrious of the Fell and Rock Club's Everest members. I was therefore delighted to find two sketches of him in the catalogue of a recent exhibition of mountain paintings in London. These sketches are from the 1924 expedition and attributed to the artist Francis Helps. Although we know something of Helps' subsequent career, his involvement with the expedition is less than clear. Helps was a friend of John Noel, the photographer and film maker. Noel had, whilst a member of the 1922 expedition, made a film *Climbing Mount Everest*, which was widely shown and reasonably successful. Seeing

a commercial opportunity for 1924, he formed a private company which offered to fund £8,000 (nearly £1 million today) of the estimated £9,000 total cost of that year's Everest expedition. Provided that he was allowed to make a second film and retain all the rights to it and other photography. This was an offer that the Everest Committee and even the difficult and opinionated Secretary, Arthur Hinks, could not refuse. Thus, Noel was with, but not of the Expedition, and not directly under General Bruce, the leader. So, although Helps has been described as the official Expedition artist, his actual position as a guest of Noel was ambiguous.

In the event it is unlikely that Helps travelled as far as Tibet. There is a suggestion he had medical problems. The route lay north-east from Darjeeling into the Chumbi Valley before turning west over and into Tibet. Chumbi seems the limit of Helps' journey and, in all likelihood, this is where the sketches were made, despite being signed Tibet 1924. In them Somervell looks considerably less worn and haggard than in photographs taken after his climb.

The film was made, *The Epic of Everest*. Noel ran one of the very first expedition money raising ventures by selling post cards from base camp to prior purchasers from all over the world. A famous rumpus arose when Noel brought to London a group of Tibetan monks. They performed, before screenings; the performances of the 'Dancing Llamas'; offended Tibetan religious sensibilities and caused a breakdown in diplomatic relations between Britain and Tibet which became known as the 'Affair of the Dancing Llamas'. Helps exhibited some 80 drawings and paintings of Himalayan

people and landscapes at the Alpine club in 1925. He did not return to the mountains, but held posts at the Royal College of Art and Leeds College of Art. He died in 1972.

Somervell returned to his medical missionary work in the south of India, finally returning to Kendal, the town of his birth, in 1961. He was President of the FRCC from 1954-56, and died in 1975. He was a great polymath: surgeon, painter, mountaineer and pacifist missionary and Olympic Gold Medallist.

Events of a century ago seem very distant. But I sat next to Odell at a dinner in Cambridge, hoping to hear more about his sighting of Mallory and Irvine. Sadly, he was too old to have good recall. He died in 1987. At another much more recent dinner, my companion on the left turned out to be Norton's son William. He died 2023. My optician brother-in-law in Kendal remembers testing Odell's eyesight on at least two occasions. Another brother-in-law, much longer ago, when Somervell had left for India, was given some of his camping equipment.

Odell wrote in his obituary of Somervell:

'Howard was a singularly humble-minded and self-effacing man, one who would return salute and obeisance even to 'outcast' Indians in like kind. No wonder he was loved and adored by thousands of them, when with his friendliness and unstinting kindness went such supreme skill in his hospitals, and the curing of so many apparently hopeless cases'

Notes: I found the Somervell sketches in *Peaks and Glaciers 2024*, Exhibition Catalogue, John Mitchell Fine Paintings. They are reproduced here with Mitchell's permission. His horrific experiences as a surgeon on the Western Front are described in,

*Into The Silence*, Wade Davis, Vintage 2012. His career as a missionary surgeon in India is in his autobiography, *After Everest*, T Howard Somervell, Hodder & Stoughton, 1936. A reference to Helps and the 1924 Expedition can be found in the monumental history, *Everest*, Walt Unsworth, 3rd Ed., The Mountaineers, Seattle, 2000. Odell's obituary of Somervell was in the FRCC Journal 1976, pp.291-4.



Sketches of Howard Somervell signed and dated Tibet 1924 by Francis Helps.

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*Ben Loyal from Ribigill approach*

# Adventure on the Isle of Arran

Leslie Shore

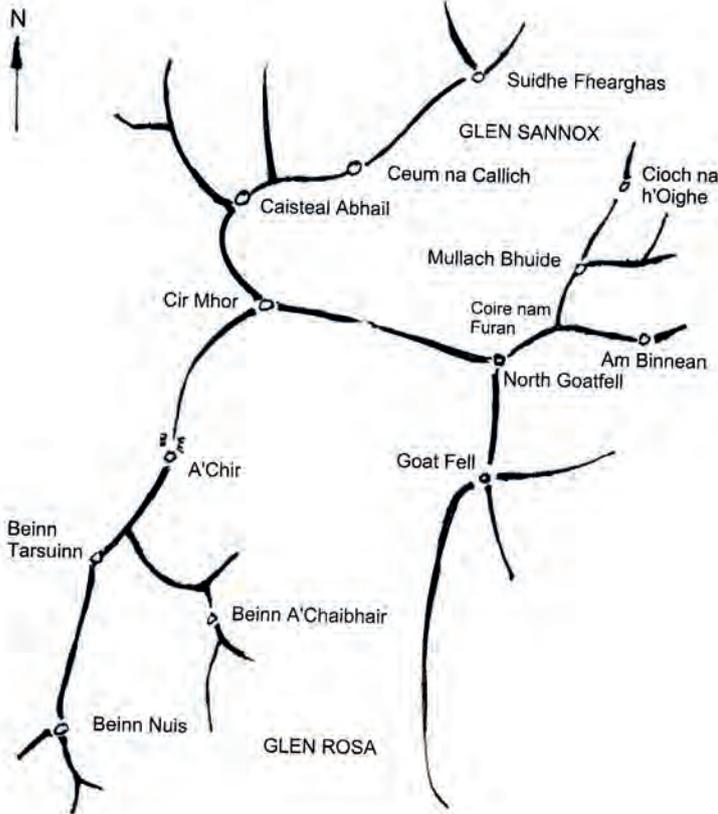
The 'legendary island of Kings', Arran, offered an escape for a weekend of adventure when I resided on Clydeside. After work on a Friday, Pamela and I dashed from our Paisley home to catch the train from Canal Station, Causeyside Street, for Adrossan. After arriving at the Firth of Clyde town's station, we rushed to board a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry and sailed to Brodick, the chief port of call on the Isle of Arran. Ashore, we marched just over a mile to the outskirts of Brodick to stay at the youth hostel, long

since closed. The hostel was well-ventilated since its sash windows were wide open. Chickens ran around our feet next morning in the hostel's kitchen when we made our breakfast. Our day's plan was to ascend Goat Fell (2866 ft).

In 1889, the mountain attracted notice initially as the scene for 'The Arran Mystery', but weeks later the story became 'The Arran Tragedy'. That year, by 15th July, Edwin Rose, a Londoner, and John W Laurie, a native of Coatbridge, lodged together at Invercloy, near Brodick. On that date, the pair climbed Goat Fell. Compared with Laurie, Rose was 'a much more slenderly-built young man'. Alone, Laurie returned to the lodgings, where he had registered in the name of John Annadale, and early next morning, without paying his bill, left Brodick on a steamer.

After an alarm was raised about the disappearance of Rose, an extensive search for him began. On 4th August, his decomposed body was found high up on Coire nam Fuaran, above Glen Sannox, at the northern end of Goat Fell, buried under a heap of stones. Regarding his left hand side, an examination of his body found the skull fractured and the shoulder blade broken. Concerning clothing, a trouser pocket was turned inside out. The accused murderer of Rose, Laurie, was not arrested until 3rd September.

During the trial, held in November that year at the High Court of Justiciary, Edinburgh, the surgeon representing the police considered Rose's injuries were not due to a fall. Whereas Dr Heron Watson, Edinburgh, called by the defence counsel, judged



Northern Hills of the Isle of Arran  
(East of Glen Iorsa)

Rose's injuries were 'extremely probable' due to a fall. Lawrie was found guilty of murdering the Londoner and sentenced to death by hanging.<sup>1</sup>

Petitions for Laurie's reprieve from hanging were successful and his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He died in Perth Prison in 1930 after 41 years behind bars. What lessons could hill walkers learn from the Arran Tragedy? Perhaps there was only one lesson: a trust-worthy walking companion is priceless.

Sitting on the summit of Goat Fell, Pamela and I viewed a chain of saw-toothed peaks connected by narrow ridges arranged, in plan, like the letter 'H'. Goat Fell stood at the centre of the eastern leg. Our rest at the summit, the highest point on the island, placed us upon a tiny part of the 'Outer Granite' of a plutonic intrusion dated to the Tertiary period. Unbeknown to us, in 1840, a British Association party of 80 people attained the summit 'for a general survey of the geological features of the island'. My reflection about our ascent, noted in my mountain log, was: 'The remainder of the hills to be done look fierce but a challenge is there for them to be done'.

Pamela and I enjoyed our weekend's trip to the island and so we booked in for a fortnight's stay at a Brodick boarding house the following year. I was also captivated by a challenge as described by Tom Waghorn in a Climber and Rambler article, 'A Hard Day in Arran'.

On the first Sunday of our holiday, 20th July, I reced the southern part of the western leg of the 'H' of ridges and so did 2597 ft Beinn Nuis first before proceeding northwards to 2706 ft Beinn Tarsuinn before advancing to the threshold of the



*The Old Man of Tarsuinn*

A'Chir ridge. The SMC Climbers' Guide to Arran (1970) claims: 'This fine ridge ... is one of the best in the British Isles outwith Skye'. J. H. Gibson and party pioneered the course in January 1892. The apex of A'Chir (a crest or comb) is a large, granite boulder. A number of strides northwards on bare granite, from the boulder, brought to me an edge, with below, a steep, deep drop into Glen Rosa. Aware of much exposure, I descended first a short wall of rock on to the upper end of a sloping, wet, trench cut into granite. After shuffling down the trench, I clambered finally down an awkward corner on to terra firma. The climber's way around the 'bad' way, or as it is called in the guidebook, mauvais pas, had been accomplished. Elated, I headed back to Brodick.

On Wednesday, 23rd July, with Frank Sharp, a cheerful and lively companion, Caisteal Abhail (Castle [at the] Fork or Stronghold of the Ptarmigan)

<sup>1</sup> 'The Arran Tragedy', Glasgow Herald, 8 & 9, August, 1889, p.9 and p.7 respectively, and 11 November, 1889, p.9.



*Cir Mhor and The Castles from North Goatfell*

and Ceum na Callich (The Witch's Step), which has also been called Carlin's Leap, were explored. These peaks stand on a ridge forming the upper part of the western leg of the H. Glen Sannox lies to the south of this ridge. With him holding my rope, I led the 150 ft Witch's Step (Difficult) and he followed.

After these two interesting days on Arran's ridges, I set off on Friday, 25th July, with an ambition to do most of the challenge set by Tom Waghorn. On a slope up to Ben Nuis, having seen cloud gathering on some of the mountain tops, I looked in my rucksack for my compass. Oops, I had left it on a seat in our bedroom at the boarding house. The summit of the ben was crossed over in clear weather, but cloud enveloped me atop Beinn Tarsuinn. Map reading enabled me to travel in a south-eastern direction for 2217 ft Beinn A'Chaibhainh (cliabh, a basket or cradle). Two veteran women walkers were

met on the way. During a brief friendly conversation with the ladies, the ethics of taking school parties onto the hills was discussed. Standing surrounded by a thick fog, carrying no compass, which I did not reveal, made me the phoney contributor to the discussion. After separating from the ladies, I headed to Beinn A'Chaibhainh and stepped down out of the mist. Sitting at a cairn, I believed marked the top of the mountain, were a young couple. I sat down near them for a refreshment stop and was heartened to hear them decide to abandon their walk because of the rapidly falling cloud base. On hearing their decision, my request to join them included me admitting not having a compass. With frowns of disapproval on their faces, they agreed to my request. A most unsatisfactory day's walk ended in pouring rain.

On Wednesday, 30th July, a very good weather

forecast pressed me to make a second attempt on Waghorn's challenge. This time I began at Corrie, a seaside hamlet situated about four miles north of Brodick, and quickly ascended westwards to the summit of Goat Fell. Oddly, the ridge running north from Goat Fell's summit was named on the One-Inch OS map as 'Stacach'—stac, a steep conical hill. The ridge has the appearance of castle battlements due to a series of stubby, towers of rock, with the gaps between them as notches. My traverse northwards along the ridge involved easy, joyful, scrambling. After reaching 2659 ft North Goatfell, I treaded carefully north-eastwards along the edge above Coire nam Fuaran, where Edwin Rose's body was found in 1889. Then I made a diversion south-eastwards to 2172 ft Am Binnean, a spur, before returning to the main ridge escorted by a flight of croaking crows. From the ridge's 2678 ft Mullach Bhuidhe, with care, I crested northwards a sharp arête of rock to the tiny apex of 2163 ft Cioch nah Oighe. The rugged, rock scenery skirting this peak gifted it an imposing presence. With three hours of walking done, I lunched in profound silence gazing eastwards out across the Pacific blue of the Firth of Clyde, with the Paps of Jura prominent to the north.

With the northern part of the eastern leg of the H of ridges done, after lunch, I descended a steep, very rough, hillside northwards to the 300 ft contour coincident with the floor of Glen Sannox. It was hot. Ahead to the north, lay an equally steep hillside carpeted in deep heather, which boded ill for climbing. A gruelling ascent led me to the apex of 2081 ft Suidhe Fheargas (the resting place of Fergus), the northern end of the western leg of the H. Legend has it the mythical Fergus (330-305 BC), said to be the first king of Scotland, has an association with the mountain. Several sheep, wearing bedraggled, thick, fleeces, lying on the ground as if ready for a royal's visit, snubbed my arrival.



*Cir Mhor*

I teetered along a ridge south-westwards. Half an hour after seeing the sheep, in a near stupor, I shuffled my body up an eight-foot slab on to the crown of 2300 ft Ceum na Callich. My joy was cut short upon looking down gaps between the upper rocks of the Witch's Step. My descent began by down-climbing a vertical crack. All went well until my right boot became trapped vice-tight in the crack. Frantic antics of mine got the boot out of the crack but my right leg's hamstring suffered a pull. My scream due to the pain in my hamstring, followed by cursing, may have been heard afar. Long John Silver-like, I shuffled down to the upper edge of 'an awkward sloping slab'. After pushing my rucksack down the slab, I slid on my backside to join it. After slinging the rucksack on to my back, I made a number of clumsy moves down a crack to land on safe ground. Such a descent, no doubt done in a better style, had been the tactic used by the route's pioneers, TFS Campbell and WR Lester, in July 1889. In the SMC's Arran Climber's Guide, the route was identified as the earliest recorded on the island. Possibly only Scotland's small mountaineering fraternity knew about this notable event at the time. A month later, the disappearance on Arran of a hill walker, Edwin Rose, certainly stirred greater public interest.



*The Castles and Cir Mhor from the A'Chir ridge*

Onwards and westwards I limped, whilst mooting in my mind options for escape from the walk. Eventually I made the summit of 2817 ft Caisteal Abhail having said hellos en route to two walking parties heading in the opposite direction. Viewed from Glen Sannox, in 1889, the mountain was considered to be a 'magnificent mass of Cyclopean granite'. The classical analogy went unappreciated by me. Here, being parched, my doom and gloom was compounded. On a hot day, rationing the amounts of water sipped from an aluminium bottle had had a downside. Without slaking my thirst, the odds were against me completing my planned course. Just under a mile ahead, to the south, lay the centre of the western leg of the 'H' as 2618 ft Cir Mhor (cir, crest or comb; mòr, great). On the southern side of this granite spire-like mountain was Glen Rosa drained by a torrent of a stream. By accessing the glen, quenching my thirst with stream

water, a five mile walk down the glen would lead me to Brodick.

When descending a mossy, easy angled slope southwards for Cir Mhor, a tiny cairn attracted my notice. There I discovered at the foot of the cairn an oasis, a spring, and knelt down to gulp mouthfuls of the water until satiated and topped up my water bottle. I had travelled for seven hours and clocked nine miles of walking. A quick snack was taken at this tranquil spot. In the west could be seen Northern Ireland, where the trauma of the 'Troubles' continued. The weather was satisfyingly good and settled. My hamstring's pain had eased.

Shortly after resuming walking, I met near the Caisteal Abhail - Cir Mhor col a man, who was slightly older than me, with maybe his son. I learned they were bound for the Witch's Step, although not

for climbing. Believing the pair would complete their walk long before me, the man kindly accepted my request to take my Brodick contact details as a precaution in the event of misfortune. Getting carried away, my message for him to relay to Pamela was 'I was safe and preparing for the Grand Finale.'

After bidding them goodbye, my failed attempt to catch a straggler of a walking party ahead, did cause me to quicken my pace for getting to the top of Cir Mhor. Nearing my goal, I heard cheering greeting the straggler. Although I was a gatecrasher, the party's evident joy made it easy to join in pleasant conversation. Afterwards, the party proceeded to Goat Fell, while I strode southwards to A'Chir by sticking to the top of a connecting ridge until stepping down into a gap, or wide notch.

At the gap, after spotting a red skull and cross bones painted on a rocky buttress, I swiftly turned the mauvais pas by climbing the Moderate route. Having clambered up on to the top of the boulder, the true summit of A'Chir, like an athlete standing on a rostrum after receiving a medal, I waved my arms in triumph. Sitting at the foot of the boulder for a refreshment halt, I realised Pamela would have finished her evening meal at the boarding house.

The final stage of my walk began with a visit to Beinn Chliabaidh. From the mountain's highest point, I looked down to see the cairn sat at days earlier in the company of the couple. In clear visibility, this time, the compass was stored in my rucksack. Beinn Tarsuinn was reached next, where reaffirmed was truth in an English translation for its name—the crossing or joining hill. At one point striding from its summit in a southern direction, I saluted the Old Man of Tarsuinn, whose western, rocky face was basking in bright evening sunshine. A glance westwards, over a wide Glen Iorsa, the tops

of a pair of 2000 footers, Beinn Bharrain and Bheinn Bhreac, were seen attracting cloud. The glen's hue was a dark, eerie, blackness.

As I marched towards the day's final high point, my mind echoed with the sound of the scherzo of Bruckner's 4th Symphony, the 'Romantic'. In my opinion, the symphony's movement depicts a mountaineer's experience: restrained sections representing struggle, which are complemented by fleeting triumphant melodies depicting brief moments of success, like scaling a peak.

A herd of deer sped off from grazing as I stepped up to top Beinn Nuis, which is maybe a corruption of Beinn nan Oisean, with oisean meaning corner. Several minutes after 8 p.m., sitting by the mountain's cairn, I relished a rich sense of satisfaction if only for a moment in time. Except for the hum of wind, the croaking of two crows, the hush surrounding me was one of many memorable moments of the day's walk.

Ignoring discomfort from my toes being pinched inside my 'Fitzroy' boots, I strode down into Glen Rosa. Near the mouth of the glen, I found Pamela sat at the wheel of our car. The time of our rendezvous was punctual in terms of my estimated time of arrival given to her earlier in the day. Although I was weary, smelly, and hungry, my only moan was about badly blistered toes. She drove me to the boarding house.

The owners of the boarding house ran a mean operation. Pamela had an amused look on her face watching me sit down for a late meal. She knew my first course comprised the thinnest slices of spam, with a leaf of lettuce and a just half of a tomato. The final course was a bowl of unpalatable fruit salad. After a bath, in bed, I heard a quintuplet of loud



*Beinn Tarsuinn from Beinn Nuis, Cioch na h-Oighe ridge in the far background*

knocking on the door of our room.

“Are you there Mr Shore?” loudly asked the wife of the boarding house’s owner.

“Yes”, I just about audibly replied.

“Good—the police are on the phone wanting to know if you are all right.”

I politely asked her to thank the police for the question. At least the man met south of the Castles had shown concern for a fellow human being. Pangs of hunger disturbed my night’s sleep.

My 17 miles tour of Arran’s ridges, with 8,500 ft of

ascent, took me 11 hours 20 minutes. Although Tom Waghorn had not included Beinn Chliabaidh during his ‘A Hard Day in Arran’, his walk had taken in the bens of Bharrain and Bhreac. At the time, I was unaware he had at least two decades mountaineering experience not only in Britain and the Alps, but also the Himalayas. Nevertheless, as a relative newcomer to hillwalking, the day’s undertaking was for me a milestone adventure. Alas I never met Tom Waghorn to thank him for his inspirational article.

# Adventure Skiing - Scotland; Black Mount Traverse

*Dave Wynne-Jones*

Some adventures can be sprung on you.

The telephone rang. It was Denis Mitchell; "Do you have anything planned for the May Bank Holiday this weekend?"

"Not really. I've had a few ideas, but the weather's been a bit changeable so nothing definite."

"Right, then do you fancy some skiing?"

"Oh, aye, great idea, but it's a bit far to the Alps for a long weekend," I was winding up my sarcasm.

"In Scotland?"

I lapsed into stunned silence, then, "You are joking? Scotland? The land of torrential rain? And this is May we're talking about."

"No seriously. I've been following the weather patterns and there should still be plenty of snow high up in the west of Scotland and there's frost forecast for this weekend."

Now I had to take this seriously. Denis was an inveterate weather-watcher. He studied the subject over weeks, piecing together an ongoing picture of developing conditions for winter climbing or making canny suggestions for rock-climbing in the Lakes, Wales, or Peak District, based on the movement of weather fronts across the country. Taking notice of his recommendations had meant that we'd often salvaged some excellent days on the hills from weekend forecasts of foul weather. His opinion was to be respected. But this was still Scotland we were contemplating.

"You still there?"

"Course. Have you phoned the ski centre in Glencoe?"

"Yeah. There's snow and they're open all weekend."

"Ok, what's the plan?"

"Well, we can get back our ski-legs with a few hours on the tows at the White Corries, then ski the Black Mount traverse. It's light till late at this time of year and we can stay at the FRCC hut, Waters Cottage."

I hesitated for a moment; the proposal still seemed a little crazy but, hey, so was most of my life at the time. "Ok, I'm in!"

So it was that Denis and I pulled into the White Corries car park and were hoisted above muddy moorland on the first chairlift, then trudged across more mud and slush to a further chair and tows. There was a chill in the air.

Suddenly we were stepping into our skis and sliding off on good snow. A couple of short runs from the chair loosened up our legs and we turned our attention to the higher tows. Only one was open, with the cable towing us along horizontally at about hip height because of the depth of snow, instead of running metres above our heads; we could have jumped over the cable and the top of the pylons was no more than two metres above the surface snow. The other tow was closed because there was so much snow that the crossbars of the pylons, from which the cables should have been suspended, barely cleared the surface. That meant

there was a depth of an incredible 4-5 metres of snow. It wasn't evenly distributed though.

At the top of the tow, we had to carry skis along rocky tracks windswept clear of snow to access runs in the Flypaper area but there was no problem about skiing every available run, several times. The weather held and by mid-afternoon, Denis and I were gazing from Meall a'Bhuiridh at white ridges stretching towards Clath Leathad and Stob Ghabhar.

"Time to give that traverse a try?" Denis queried.

"Why not?"

We slid off west where walkers' tracks descended narrow snow tongues to a col, then rose to Point 1068m on the ridge from Sron na Creise to Clath Leathad. At the col Denis shouldered his skis and set off ahead of me, climbing between rocky outcrops, following in the footsteps of earlier walkers. Gaining the snowy crest of the ridge and fixing skins to the skis, we could skin easily south towards Clath Leathad. The cliffs of Coire an Easain to the east were capped with huge cornices which in one place seemed to be on the point of collapse. A crevasse-like cornice break-line was given a wide berth as sunshine touched the snow with brightness. Far below the tawny expanse of Rannoch Moor reminded us of the contrasts found in the Scottish landscape in May.

Snow lay deepest along the eastern edge of the ridge, away from the rocks and scree laid bare by prevailing westerly winds. This was underscored by the descent from Clath Leathad, west towards Bealach Fuar-Chathaidh, carrying skis again and booting through thin snow, following traces of a rocky path.

Then we came upon the head of a steep gully dropping direct to a point a little east of the bealach. Within minutes, we were back on ski, carving tight turns down perfect spring snow, finishing with an adrenalin high so that we scarcely cared about having to remove skis again to traverse past a rocky knoll in the middle of the Bealach. Carrying skis, climbing the virtually snow-free ridge beyond, up to its junction with the ridge named Aonach Mor, I looked back to see a rainbow arcing out of the most unlikely of stormy skies with its base placed firmly at the foot of that gully - a pot of gold to us!

Back on ski, the undulations of Aonach Mor offered no obstacles to continuous skinning for a couple of kilometres before climbing the north-west flank of Stob Ghabhar in bright sunshine under clearing skies. East of the summit, the evening's drop in temperature was crisping the snow as we cautiously lost some height on the ridge bounding Coirein Lochain.

The classic Black Mount Traverse involves a descent south-east from Stob Ghabhar to Victoria Bridge with transport waiting there to return skiers to the White Corries car park. With only one car back at the ski centre, Denis and I had been unable to make such an arrangement. This was the one point about which Denis had been a bit vague in describing the plan. Now he reckoned we needed to descend into Coirein Lochain and that was why we were hesitating above the cornices. Trying to find a way through to the slopes beneath without triggering an avalanche that would sweep one or both of us away was no easy task. Despite the scepticism of continental skiers, avalanches are a very real hazard in Scotland.

After much traversing and peering at the cornices

from different angles we decided on the safest line, and I plunged over in a flurry of displaced snow to drop onto a steep traverse underneath the cornices. On closer inspection these proved less threatening than we had feared. Their shelves were buttressed by a build-up of snow beneath them. Nothing was triggered, I was in a position clear of any cornice collapse, so Denis followed, exactly on the line. We then watched each other ski pitches of the corrie headwall one at a time, noticing how much of each other's ski bases we could see from below as we edged on steep névé.

As the slope eased above the Lochain, hidden in deep snow, we followed the course of the Allt

Coire Dhearbhadh stream, flowing out of the lochan under the frozen surface. Fortunately, snow conditions remained good enough for some technical weaving between boulders emerging from the snow and exposed tufts of grass and heather, but in places the purity of the surrounding whiteness was sullied by dirty slides of melted earthy debris. Near where the stream burst out from under the snow, we ran out of the snow patches that we had been linking to stay on ski. There was nothing for it but to lash skis onto our packs and walk out.

It was at this point that my faith in Denis's planning suffered a blow when he revealed that there was

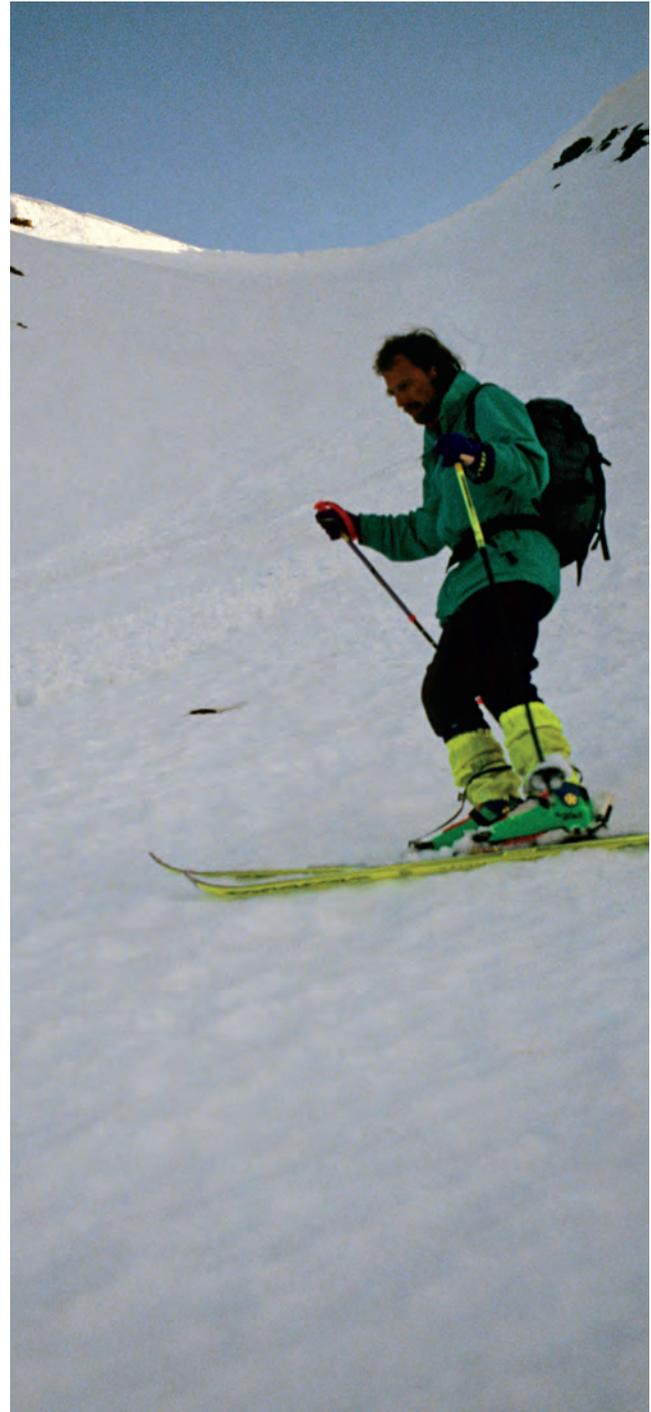


five miles of bog, moorland, and old military road back to the car park. To be walked in ski boots. I made a mental note to check the details better next time. Clouds were colouring up as the sun set out of sight behind a ridge while we bog-hopped across an area ominously named The Moss, following the general course of the River Ba to meet the military road, now designated the West Highland Way, at Ba Bridge.

The first of the military roads had been built by General Wade in the 1720s and 1730s to enable the English army to control the Highlands after the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion in 1715 but resistance continued until the Battle of Culloden in 1745. Despite other officers being responsible for building later military roads, the network was also known as Wade's Roads. The West Highland Way has since become a way of bringing people together rather than a means of repression. Now the stony track, rolled unpredictably through rough moorland as light faded from the sky, and it was after 11pm, in full darkness under a few twinkling stars, before we reached the car, alone in a deserted car park.

Eating late meant sleeping late next morning, so there was nothing for it but to wimp out and go cornice jumping into the eastern corries of Aonach Mor ski area, unashamedly making use of the lift system. There were more crevasse-like cornice break lines, but we steered clear of those and followed the tracks of previous skiers over safe, established cornice jumps.

By Monday it was raining for the long drive back home.



## Getting the Lowdown

*Jim Gregson*

At the beginning of March 2001, in a feat of astonishing political myopia, the government closed down public access to the countryside as foot and mouth disease spread on British farms. Climbers and hillwalkers were deprived of the main venues for their leisure time activities. The young, weaned on a diet of plywood and fibreglass, retreated to their sweaty dungeons. The rest of us, craving fresh air and daylight, had to divert our energies elsewhere.

For three weeks I escaped to the white wilds of a Norway winter to ski over the Hardanger icecap and the dramatic Hallingskarvet mountains, but on returning home was a little dismayed to find access restrictions still in place. Those of us with bikes began to rack up the mileage in order to stay sane and fit, until we could resume our uphill progress.

It was possible to make use of the cross-country routes opened up along the former railway routes traversing the limestone areas of the White Peak, thus on one day I found myself linking the High Peak and Tissington Trails. Pedalling along the ballast surfaces it was at least outdoors.

Every so often these trails cross a minor road where there is an entry and exit point. Each of these intersections had been furnished with an anti-foot and mouth device, in the form of a timber-built trough affair three or four metres long, lined with plastic sheeting then filled with a disinfectant-soaked layer of wood chips, sawdust and straw. The trail users, on foot, horseback, or bicycle were sternly warned and enjoined to pass through these troughs to hopefully decontaminate their boots, their hooves, or their wheels before proceeding on their way.

At first these obstacles had a certain novelty value - not enough to totally dispel cynicism about their efficacy, but sufficient to require a degree of attention. On a bike it only needed a little bunny hop to get one's wheels into and out of the troughs, with not too great a loss of momentum. In between them there was ample time to ride along and admire the view, thinking about the times when the hills and crags would be available again. When would that be? we thought, as news bulletins continued to broadcast a gloomy outlook. At least we were outside taking healthy exercise.

The reverie was not to last. At one of these troughs, a moment's loss of concentration ran up against an anomaly of carpentry. I had successfully bounced my wheels over the entry board at one end of the trough but inexplicably slowed while passing through. Perhaps the exit board was set a little high for at the speed I was going my front wheel rebounded off it, leaving me failing in the fight to retain balance. Before I had managed to free my feet from the pedals, I keeled over sideways and measured my length into the evil slurry of DEFRA-approved timberyard waste and powerful disinfectant.

As I lay there temporarily disorientated, literally soaking up my surroundings, I swore for a while, cursing the authorities whoever they were, until I became calm enough to form this more welcoming thought - "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills .... and the sooner the bloody better!"

# China 2013

Chris Sowden

Technology isn't it wonderful? Perhaps! It allows words to travel several times around the world. Sometimes these words appear, as if by magic, in the form of emails onto one of the many devices a lot of us own. Some emails are more interesting than others. A particularly good one arrived from New Zealand last year. It resulted in an entertaining adventure to Southwestern China.

Subject: Winter 2013

From: Tony Burnell

To: christophsowden@btinternet.com; Jane Spreadborough

Date: July 2012

Hi Guys

Fancy somewhere totally different next winter? How about Getu. It's in China by the way. Could be good. Petzl opened the place up a couple of years ago. There are loads of crags with around 250 routes.

Tony

Me: Err yeh, ok why not? I'll see if Jane fancies it.

Tony: You speak Mandarin?

Me: Nope. Do you?

Tony: Nope. Think Jane will?

Me: Nope. But she was a teacher so she's good at mimes. Happen they might understand us anyway cos we is from God's own county.

Tony: See you in Guiyang then, February alright?

Me: Sure whatever. What time?

Tony: Dunno, we will fly in from New Zealand then catch a train across from Yangshuo. Should be there by mid-night.

So it came to pass that four of us met up at the Green Inn, Guiyang, more by chance as it turned out. We were standing outside the hotel like two

lost souls wondering where the others were and if they were actually coming, or if it was just a good hoax, when they appeared out of the entrance.

We got a beat up old taxi to a very busy railway station. Lots of gesticulations, and a fair bit of



*River outflow from one of the Getu caves*



*Impressive Getu rock architecture*

pushing resulted in four tickets to Anshunshi a couple of hours away, though in the end it took about five. Loads of buses around the station but none going to Ziyun where we wanted to go, so off we walked in search of a bus station and got hijacked on the way with the offer of a lift. We get the price down from 1600 to 400 for a taxi to Ziyun, part way to Getu. However, the transport also changed from a 10 seater luxury minibus to a four seater Chinese version of a Micra. Bit of a squeeze with us and the bags, but no matter we are getting there.

I got pushed into the death seat without a blind fold as I had used Google translate to print out the Chinese characters showing where we needed to be. Another four hours and we arrived at yet another bus station. It's cheaper to board the bus outside the station cos there's a local tax on the bus fare if paid inside. So, we all sit outside in a minibus waiting for the proper empty minibus to arrive. We all transfer, the gear, us, and eight locals. Everyone seems happy having cheated the system, apart from two of the locals who wanted to fight each other. They are calmed down and off we go further



*Hidden village in one of the caves*

into the unknown.

We made it at long last. It's taken two days since we entered China and a little bit of hassle, but we have arrived in Getu.

It's not been possible to book any rooms in advance, so we hope there are places available. The Petzl article said there were quite a few rooms about, and lots of people visited during the road trip.

'Muuurm ... don't fancy that room! Did you see the state of that loo, and the shower, yuck! Let's try the other one.'

'Ah-so, how much for room? OK we look yes; OK it's good, we stay; OK, two weeks; OK, yes sorted.'

Beer and food next up. Back up to the other lodgings which doubles as an eating house. No choice really but it's adequate. What you see growing in the fields around you is what you get! There are also quite a few other climbers eating there.

Let battle commence. Wow, seen the size of those caves? There's a river going into that one, look at those tufas, they are massive. We are well impressed. They make Malham look tiny. Some of the routes have several pitches with hanging seats in alcoves. Alas we wouldn't be going up there as they're premier league stuff, mainly 8's. It's a bit of a noisy place as there's a generator running in the top cave for some reason. We later discover there's a gondola being erected; tourists will sail down the river, travel through the bottom cave and catch a ride up the back way into the top cave.

We could see why people would want to go there. I have never seen limestone shapes like it, lots of scoops, a bit like massive bowls stacked sideways one on top of the other. They just asked to be climbed. We failed in our attempts at the harder ones; they needed acrobatic manoeuvres, flexibility, and youthfulness in order to succeed: this OAP had little of those capabilities.

But then not many of those with the right abilities seemed to succeed either!

Having been slapped down, we retreat for a beer and a cold shower not having worked out hot in Chinese as yet. Went back to the same food stop, only this time we watched the cabaret, which was the food on offer having their throats cut, decapitated, or gutted as the case might be.

Things got better. We got used to the rock and found our way around the various crags. There is just about everything you would want, from easy slabs and steep walls to overhanging tufas.

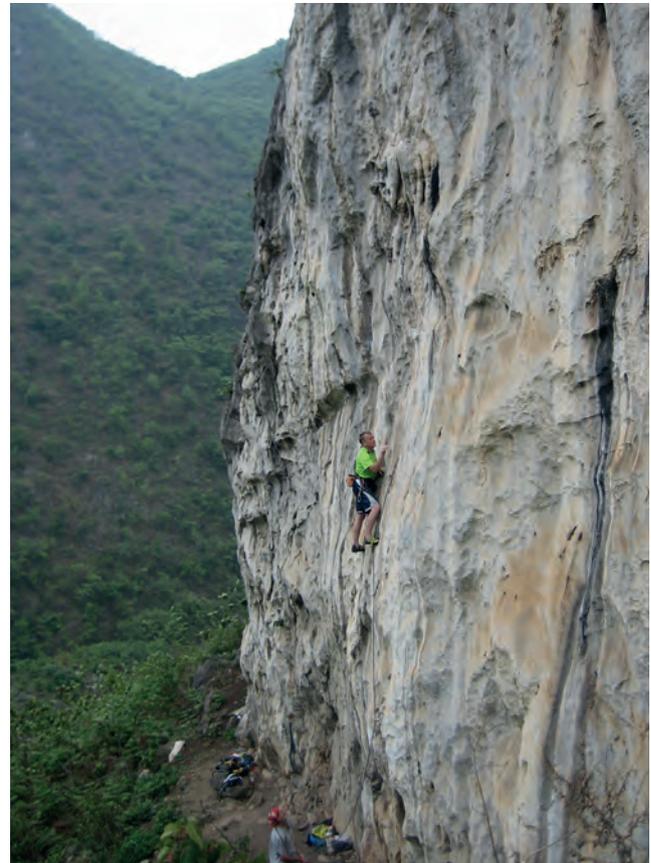
A meal for four including beers cost us less than £5. You sometimes didn't get what you ordered but that didn't matter too much, as it was all filling anyway. Quite a few of the locals cannot read

printed symbols, it took us a while to work that out. It always seemed to be when the café owner was away that we got the wrong food –his wife couldn't read! Once realised, it was into the kitchen to point at what we wanted.

Those visitors who don't like using chop-sticks need to take a spork, and if you don't fancy fried rice or noodles for breakers take your own muesli.

All in all it's a great place to visit, good rock, not polished, friendly people, cheap food and beer.

A few suggestions and need to knows should you



*Tony Burnell on one of the shorter ... 35m routes*



*Jane Spreadborough climbing the amazing Getu formations*

fancy a visit to China

The two main sports climbing areas in the Southwest are Yangshuo, and Getu.

Yangshuo is easily accessible via Guilin airport. There are lots of hotels in the town but the climbing is getting a little polished and it can be quite humid at times. But it is still a spectacular place to visit. Moon hill cave Yangshuo, yes you can climb across the roof, its climbed in both directions

Getu is in quite a remote part of the country, it's also one of the poorest areas. Getting there can seem tedious at times as it involves trains and buses. Treat it as an adventure and enjoy the travelling. It's well worth the effort.

Air Asia operate cheap and cheerful flights into China from Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

There's a full Petzl guidebook download available google 'Getu valley guide'.

You need a visa for China, to get this visa a return air ticket and a hotel address for your stay are required. We used the first nights' accommodation address. It's a closed currency and money can only be obtained inside the country, so get some cash at the airport. You may have to use the currency exchange booth as not all ATM's accept foreign cards. Look for Bank of China machines as they seemed to work.

Use Google Translate and printing out translation next to the English saves time and confusion.

There's not much to do on rest days, but one walk worth taking is to a hidden village in the hills behind the big caves. There you will find a whole village complete with basketball pitch and school all built within yet another massive cave.

## Keeping this Lark Up

*Jim Gregson*

For more than twenty years I had been fortunate enough to make a series of expeditions to the remote and untouched mountains of Greenland, and over time I had worked very hard to write and complete my long-term project to encapsulate my experiences into a book. My concept for this book also involved clear ideas about how my photographs should be integrated into the final layout and design. This, of course, made it more difficult to get the thing published in a form in which I could take some pride and satisfaction.

My mother, knowing of my literary labours, took a keen interest in this book project and regularly asked me if there was any news about its progress. As I was preparing for yet another trip to the Arctic, I was able to tell her, in her 90th year, that the whole thing was complete and away in China for printing and binding and that she would see the finished item before too long. I reflected on the writing

and re-writing, the correction and proof-reading. I thought of the long hours spent on making the photograph selection and the time spent on scanning my slides into digital files. As I signed off the final proofs, I was happy that it had got so close to fruition.

I went off for my northerly venture in what proved to be a (relative) heatwave summer in East Greenland. The surroundings of the small airstrip at Constable Pynt already had a rather scorched and crisp look as I oversaw the marshalling of my group's equipment and supplies to be loaded into the two inflatable boats which would transport us to the fascinating island of Milne Land lying deep inside the enormous fjord system of Scoresby Sund. Local weather vagaries made it more propitious to make this sea journey during the night-time hours - there being no shortage of light - as we would take advantage of the dying down of winds which



had a calming effect on sea conditions. Soon all was ready, and we kitted up in full survival suits as a safeguard in the event of going overboard into very cold water. I had made similar journeys before, in larger and faster boats, so this time it was interesting to be so close to the waves and swells and to be more conscious of the limited freeboard separating us from the deep.

We chugged along, watching the coastline slip by, occasionally slowing and detouring to get by areas of drift ice, aware of big icebergs further offshore. The survival suits made the travelling a somewhat clammy experience and had the disadvantage that they had to be opened right up to allow cameras to be manipulated. Numerous birds and the occasional sighting of seals added interest to the journey as the hours elapsed. After putting ashore at one point, to eat and drink and attend to personal ease, the boat pilots after conferring put it to us that there was a way to shorten the journey by several hours. That is, if we were willing to go away from paralleling the mainland coast to making a straight run across the width of Hall Bredning, an



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open inner reach of Scoresby Sund, to go directly to the eastern shores of Milne Land. This would entail crossing a body of water about as wide as the English Channel, with presently a benign and calm demeanour. We agreed and altered course and watched as our objective grew larger in our vision as we approached, and we measured our tininess against some impressive icebergs.

Map scales for this part of the world are such that really helpful detail is lacking, and we found that our pre-selected landing point was off-putting and inhospitable, consisting of jumbled boulders and no obvious water supply, let alone suitable terrain for pitching tents. Fortunately, we were able to backtrack for just a few kilometres along the coast to where the mouth of a river valley with a gently sloping beach and some obvious level terraces held greater promise. Putting ashore here after being on the move for thirteen hours we were soon able to establish our camp on more comfortable ground with a fine outlook towards the spiky outlines of the Bear Islands. From here we would be able to make forays inland.



After a few hours rest the boat pilots re-launched and left us to that enveloping Arctic silence and solitude which makes Greenland such a special place. Over the next couple of weeks, we explored terrain which was more complex than the map suggested and also proved to be rugged and hard going. Nevertheless, we were happy to thread our way up and down valleys, climb onto ridges and wander over boulder fields. It never proved possible to move about very quickly and required good ground memory to devise routes back to camp each day. The summer heat meant that the vegetation cover, where it existed, was varied but past its best for the season. There was though, abundant bird life to be observed, for the Arctic attracts many species for the breeding season. We watched a variety of ducks, geese, and divers. Gulls, terns and skuas traversed the sky. Ptarmigan and ravens, wheatears and snow buntings added other colours and shapes. A particularly memorable visitor to camp was a stoat, showing up on most days in a fearless way and amusing us with displays of quicksilver tumbling and acrobatics among the tents. The

higher than expected temperatures made life very pleasant and even tempted us to make swimming sessions in the iceberg-studded sea to close off long warm days spent up on the mountains.

The landscape we moved through, up and down the mountains, was very raw with much evidence of patterned ground in the form of stone stripes and polygons, streams which vanished below rocky valley floors then re-appeared as dashing torrents and falls. Many tarns we found were ringed with richer haloes of greener vegetation than more open slopes. The backdrop to all of this was the higher mountain and glacier world further inland and across the sounds to other islands and parts of the mainland, and the ever-present and changing tapestry of the sea punctuated by flotillas of massive icebergs. Compared with the entirely mountainous scenery of the main icecap and larger glaciers, the coastal areas have a different sort of colourful beauty to delight the eye.

All too soon time slipped away, and we waited for



*Twin Otter landing strip and glacier landing.*



*Skidoos and sleds*

a more complex return involving the boats and an aeroplane to return us to home surroundings. After a week or two of settling back into familiar domesticity I received a telephone call from my publisher. "We have some advance copies of your book here if you'd like to see them. The main supply will very soon be on a ship heading to the UK".

Even though I'd known what the book should look like, it was thrilling and satisfying to be able to handle the real, complete artefact, and reflect on the lengthy processes which had gone before. I looked forward to seeing my mother's reaction when I placed a copy in her hands. "Here it is" I said "after a lot of work and waiting". She sat down and began to turn the pages. After a while she looked up and then said, "These pictures are lovely, but it looks as though you go to some very cold places". "Well yes, but we always wrap up properly". As she continued to leaf through more pages, I wondered what was going through her mind, as she was not yet absorbing the text but letting the photographs tell the stories. Eventually, looking up once more, she fixed me with her eyes then asked me "And how much longer will you keep this lark up?"

A good question I thought - having earlier in the year seen my state pension come on stream - and we laughed about it. The book went on sale, and I became involved in promotional lectures, signing copies, posting off parcels to various parts of the world, persuading booksellers and outdoor retailers to stock it. Whenever I turned the pages myself, the photographs took me back to the fascinating landscape of the Arctic and I recalled with pleasure the many adventures I'd shared with interesting people during my Greenland expeditions. Would I get back there myself to see it with the naked eye again?

In the way of things, after report writing and so on appearing in various journals, I was contacted by two women from Australia, asking for some additional information about one particular location in Greenland to which I'd been a few years back. These two ladies eventually crossed the globe and had their own very rewarding adventure involving a few first ascents and some paragliding flights off the summits. They also made a film of their activities. In due course I was able to see this film, very well-shot and edited into a lovely production, and I was transported back to my own earlier visit. I knew that I wanted to go back. Could I get a group together to share another expedition?

In some way, despite my own book drawing attention to the Arctic, the sheer cost of mounting an expedition to Greenland acts as a brake on the numbers who actually do go, so it did take a while to get my plans up and running but at last a team coalesced and an international group gathered in Reykjavik, Iceland, travelling from the UK, France, and Canada. We flew across the ocean to land at Constable Pynt in the gripping cold of tail-end winter. The next day we loaded up sledges for onward travel by snow mobile to the small icecap at the northern end of Liverpool Land on Greenland's east coast. Journeying this way is relatively quick in good snow conditions, which is just as well for it is not always comfortable and is never warm. We banged and bumped our way our way northwards, swathed in layers of clothing, glad to stop once in a while to stamp feeling back into our feet.

Our progress was enlivened at one stage as sharp eyes spotted a sizeable moving shape, oddly rather dark against the surrounding snowfield. As we watched the dark shape suddenly divided into three components and we realised we were seeing three Polar Bears, a female with two cubs, running

pell-mell to distance themselves from us. These were the first live bears I'd seen in more than twenty years of visits to Greenland so for me the trip was already a success. The snow mobile drivers took us high up the glacier accessing the icecap and left us not quite at our intended base camp location. A thankfully short bout of heavy pulk-hauling on skis led us to a very well-situated glacier shelf with a superb outlook and here set to and established our camp. Once the tents were up, I could re-orientate myself to the area I'd last seen five years previously. Among my companions the ones who had not been to Greenland before were trying to get a mental fix on the sheer size of the landscape.

All of us were experienced enough to look after ourselves, and we would operate as three climbing teams. The bear sighting was a salutary reminder of where we were, and another potential hazard. Objective dangers we all knew from experience but here this extra one had to be factored in. We had the camp area rigged with a tripwire alarm system and each team kitted with various flares and pepper spray. But permit regulations for this area required us to have firearms too, and we needed a practice session with the rifle and shotgun we also had to hand. The rifle was fine, reliable, and easy to operate, and its safety mechanisms were

straightforward. The shotgun, a pump-action type, proved itself a little prone to jamming so was less reassuring. Neither weapon was called into serious use during the trip.

Now we were free to explore, and do as we wish, and we took full advantage. Peaks were climbed, peaks were skied, glaciers were travelled. Conditions were very snowy as the winter had been prolonged and it was certainly colder than when I'd been here before. The magic of the Arctic was there, as ever, and it was a great experience to share it with friends old and new. In a perverse way it was also instructive to get a little bit of poor weather in the form of freezing fog and some very cold wind which helped to drown the camp area in spindrift. But nobody was downhearted. In the end we ran out of time, but we'd had a rewarding and interesting trip. We went home friends.

There remain many very exciting-looking and attractive unclimbed mountains in the area. When I remember them, and when I re-examine my photographs, my thoughts begin to turn over the possibility of going back. I smile to myself as I think of my mother's question, and I start to ask myself "How soon might another lark be managed?"



*Dog sled*

# Like the Skye Cuillin, but on Steroids!

## AKA The High Tatra mountains of Slovakia

Mark Gear

OK, so there are a few differences between the High Tatras and the Skye Cuillin. They are nowhere near the sea for starters, and whilst on the Cuillin ridges you can pretty much wander at will. In the Slovakian Tatras you are expected to stay on the path network unless you have hired a Mountain Guide to take you up one of the eleven recognised Guided peaks in the area.

But the scale is 2 ½ times that of Skye...

The Tatras are the highest part of the Carpathian Mountain chain. Most of the peaks in this range do not exceed 1000m, but in the Tatras they rear up to the highest point of Gerlachovsky Stit, 2654m.

The Tatras are built of granite and are made up of three sub ranges. To the west are, unsurprisingly, the Western Tatras. The scenery here is reminiscent of the Mamores, but on a 70% larger scale. Approaches from Slovakia are long, but from the Polish side are quite short. The Western Tatras, and the western half of the High Tatras, make up part of the border between Slovakia and Poland. Access from both sides to the latter is straightforward. The eastern half of the High Tatras lie wholly in Slovakia, and again the distances from southern trail heads to peaks is short. Finally, to the northeast of the High Tatras are the White Tatras; lower, more rounded hills wholly in Slovakia with few, long approaches into them. This area suffered environmental damage in the past but is now something of a haven for wildlife and nature.

And the wildlife is out there; I saw chamois on two separate occasions during my trip.

The High Tatras are a well-known mixed winter climbing destination, but that is outside my area of expertise!





*Baranie rohy from descent of Tatranska Magistrala*

I first came to the Tatras in mid-May 2022. The MWIS Friday forecast for the week ahead in the Western Highlands was disappointingly driech. What to do? In April I had visited Croatia for three weeks to see some of the old towns on the Dalmatian coast - Dubrovnik, Split and Zadar - and experience a selection of the national parks. While there I made a friend, a Polish lassie who, on learning of my predilection for mediaeval architecture, suggested I should check out Krakow. Anyway, within a couple of hours of looking at the MWIS video I had a working plan; flights with EasyJet and hostel beds were booked.

Admittedly, I spent most of my time in the city centre, plus making tours to the UNESCO listed salt mine at Wieliczka (amazing what is down there!) and the sobering remains of the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. I also squeezed in two nights in Zakopane, which is the hub town for the Polish side of the range. Luckily, the weather on the day in between was good, and I went up an outlying hill of the Western Tatras called Giewont, plus the viewpoint below it, Sarnia Skala. What I saw that day left me wanting to explore more.

## When to go?

Late August to mid-October is widely recognised as the sweet spot when the crowds and risk of afternoon thunderstorms have passed, yet all the facilities and services are still open, the weather is often settled, and the cold and snow of winter has yet to arrive. Skiing is big business here. But remember, mountain weather is fickle, and the white stuff could come early. My kit list was what I would normally use in autumn in Scotland. Also, worth bearing in mind that the higher paths on the Slovakian side of the range are closed 1st November to 14th June due to the risk of avalanche, and to leave nature undisturbed at what is a crucial time. In Poland, they reopen mid-May.

## How long to go for?

If you are lucky with the weather - as I was during my own visit in 2023 - and focused on the mountains, you can get a lot done in two weeks. If unlucky, then you might wish you had three or four, but there is a good argument for making a longer stay anyway.



*Prostredny hrot from Hriebienok*

Not far away is Slovensky Raj National Park, an area of wooded hills, ravines, and river valleys, carved out of limestone bedrock. It is also known as the 'Slovakian Paradise', and for good reason. Lying at an altitude between 600m and 1000m the weather is often better here than in the High Tatras. A thorough exploration could occupy a week; the Tourist Information Office in the Slovak hub town of Poprad has an A4 brochure that gives a good steer on what to do. Basically, there are three ravines to ascend - Sucha Bela, Piecky and Velky Sokol - the river valley of Prielom Hornadu to follow, and the waterfall of Zovojoy vodopad to discover, hidden away in the wild heart of the NP. All these excursions involve ladders, enlarged stemples, chains and cables to some degree. There is also an ice cave here, but when we came to look into it, we discovered that it closed for the season in mid-September, and we had missed it by a few days.

If like me you have a bent for old towns, there are some cracking examples not far away from Poprad; Kosice, Bardajov, Spisske Podhradie, Levoca and Kezmarok. More UNESCO World Heritage Site listings than you can shake a stick at! Each has its own Tourist Information Office and free maps/ brochures highlighting what to see. Add in the attraction of the murky brown thermal springs at Vrbov, where I enjoyed a good soak in the 38°C pool, coming out wrinkled like a prune, and you have another week filled. Two, three or four weeks, it's up to you; personally, I opted for the month, early September to early October, and was never lacking something to do.

Interestingly, the weather became much colder the day after I flew home, with snow and -10°C forecast on the summit of Rysy (2501m). I had timed my exit to perfection!

## How to get there

The best option is likely to be a budget airline from your nearest regional airport direct to the capital city, Bratislava. An alternative is Vienna, capital of Austria, which has far more connections and is only a 60km. bus ride to the west. (Editor's note: Wizzair fly direct from Luton to Poprad-Tatry).

## How to get around

If your focus is purely on the High Tatras, then public transport is very workable. There is a dozen or so trains per day from Bratislava to Poprad, taking either 3 ½ hours or 4 ¼ hours. Worth booking a seat in advance, either way. Once in Poprad, there is an electric train every hour, leaving on the half hour, starting early and ending late every day, serving the resort towns that line the south side of the range. Popular trail heads are Strbske Pleso (1 ¼ hours, €2 single); Stary Smokovec (30 mins., €1.50 single) and Tatranska Lomnica (45 mins, €1.50 single). The Sunday service is identical to Monday - Saturday. Getting to many of the old towns is easiest by train or bus too. But Slovensky Raj has poor bus connections, and a hire car is advisable.

## Car parking

Having a car is great for flexibility, but the downside is the high car parking charges, particularly in the resort towns. €10 per day is commonplace, and the choice car parks tend to fill up early. Best to find one where you can pay an attendant in cash; the card only ticket machines are indecipherable at first acquaintance, having no English language instructions option! I found €8 per day in Strbske Pleso and €5 per day in Tri Studnicki, the starting point for Krivan. At Slovensky Raj car parking costs €5 per day but some of the car parks are free midweek from October onwards.

## National Park entry fees

Although the Slovak High Tatras are protected as a NP there is no entry fee. Contrast this with the NP on the Polish side; €5 per day and Slovensky Raj at €1.50 per day.

## Currency

Euros and credit cards widely accepted. Editor's note: don't expect to pay by credit card at the high mountain huts (chata) – cash may be the only option.

## Where to stay

Just like the Western European Alps, there are refuges up in the mountains (chata), offering refreshments by day and beds by night. Typical altitude is just below 2000m. I didn't stay in any during my trip. There are also numerous options in the resort towns, but I wanted to stay in Poprad, for flexibility and better/cheaper services/food. As I had taken the car option, I wanted a place where I could park for free nearby, and the best rated and cheapest place available on booking.com fulfilling my requirements was Penzion Evka, which is close to the most appealing part of Poprad, the old town square of Spisska Sobota. Evka offered a wee single room and a nice double room, both en suite and sharing a small kitchen. Appliances are limited to a single hot ring, kettle, washing machine (€4 per load), microwave and fridge/ freezer, but there is a vast supply of cutlery, crockery, pots and pans and other utensils. During my stay I became adept at one-pot meals; the favourite was pork goulash, a local delicacy. The only real quibble for a caffeine hound like me was lack of a coffee machine.

When the weather is warm, there is a pleasant, paved garden seating area outside round the



*Gerlachovsky stit and Vychodna Vysoka from Slavkovsky stit*

back with tables for relaxing/ eating. The nearest supermarket is Lidl - 20 mins on foot. English is understood at Evka, if not well spoken, and payment is by cash only. My stay started off in the single, moved to the double when I was joined by my partner and fellow FRCC Member Helen Goode for ten days, and finished up back in the single when she went home. There is also a 5-bedded self-contained apartment on site.

If you want to eat out, Spisska Sobota has several bistros, a pizzeria, a burger joint and fine dining at Vino & Tapas. There is also a nice cafe, where I can recommend the hot chocolate with whipped cream. It comes in a cup, but is so thick that it has to be

eaten with a spoon...

The main downside to Evka is that it is 30 mins walk from the railway station. However, I found a large, free gravel parking lot next to the town's main tourist draw - Aquacity - which cuts the walk time in half. Not to be sneezed at, come the end of a long, tiring, footsore day!

There are places to stay closer to the railway station, such as Penzion Fantazia and Hotel Slavia, but this area is rather less salubrious, the tone being set by a pole dancing night club nearby. Another factor to consider is the noise from all-day and all-night trains clattering by on the adjacent tracks.

## Crowds

The highest point of the official path network is the mountain Rysy. The Polish summit is 2,499m while the Slovakian summit, just a short scramble away, is slightly higher. It can be climbed from either country. I went up it early in the first week of my trip, and shared the experience with hundreds, perhaps thousands of other people. But it wasn't so bad; I had started very early - it was hot - so that I was sauntering down while most other folk were still struggling up. Contrast that with a day in the



quiet, wild heart of Slovensky Raj, during the last week of my holiday, when I saw not another soul for most of the day.

## Weather forecasts

I use The Norwegian Weather Institute ([www.yr.no](http://www.yr.no)). The summit of Rysy, Strbske Pleso, Slovensky Raj and Poprad are all featured weather stations. Sometimes they get it wrong, but more often than not they get it right. I first encountered this forecast service at the refuge that is the starting point for the ascent of Mount Toubkal in Morocco. I was doing the circuit and climb of the mountain, and the day we were walking to the hut banners of cirrus were pouring across the sky from the west. The next day was claggy and snowy. Many people still went to the summit, and saw not a thing, but luckily, I had the wriggle room of a contingency day, and this forecast stated that the next day would be sunny and clear. It was spot on, with the added bonus of yesterday's snow still lying. I've relied on it ever since.

## Guidebooks

The best I have come across is *Walking in the High Tatras* by Colin Sanders and Renata Narozna. It covers both sides of the range, with recommended routes - guided routes in Slovakia, detailed path descriptions and much more. Your local library may have a copy; alternatively, buy it from Amazon, or direct from the publisher, Cicerone Press.

## Maps

Can be bought in advance from Stanford's or acquired for a fraction of the price locally on arrival. The map I used in the mountains was two sheets, printed both sides and weather proofed,

covering all parts of the range at 1:25,000 scale. Walking times between path junctions is given, both uphill and downhill, and the same convention of waymarking paths on the ground - Red, Blue, Green or Yellow flashes - is shown. A similar map is published for Slovensky Raj. Widely available locally, at the Tourist Information office in Poprad or at nearby Rysy Sports.

## Recommended routes

The guidebook lists twenty-three suggested itineraries on the Slovak side of the range. All are straightforward walks or mild scrambles; one, crossing a high pass, involves a Via Ferrata, but it is so easy that VF kit is not necessary. Whilst these routes are a good starting point, a number of them are shorter versions of longer, more satisfying described routes, so suitable for a less demanding or wet weather day. Some of them can be improved upon, and one particularly good day out - the ascent of Slavkovsky stit from Stary Smokovec, which is roughly equivalent to the effort involved in climbing the Ben from Glen Nevis YH - doesn't make the list at all!

## Paths

The word 'path' covers a multitude of sins; everything from a metalled refuge access track through a created natural rock paved path to a boulder hop in the forest with trip-me-up tree roots to a smooth forest track in Slovensky Raj. The colour code does not relate in any way to the quality of the path.

## Vegetation zones

Forest of pine and birch lower down, giving way to dwarf pine - some of it 10 ft tall! - and grass

above that. Beyond, bare rock and scree. Virtually impossible to lose the path in the first two zones, possible in the third, and quite easy above it, if you don't pay attention or the waymarking is spotty.

## Uplifts

A funicular railway from Stary Smokovec to Hrebienok in the centre of the range is very useful. Hours of operation are 0730 to 1730 every half hour during September, starting later at 0800 in October. To the west is the chair lift from Strbske Pleso to Solisko, from which the subsidiary peak of Predne solisko is a short climb. At the east end of the range is a two-stage gondola system originating in Tatranska Lomnica and terminating at Skalnaté pleso, via Start. Beyond, there is a cable car to Lomnický štít, the second highest peak in the range at 2,634m, but this is very expensive. An economy option is the return chairlift from Skalnaté pleso to Lomnické sedlo, from which the 10 mins walk to the subsidiary peak of Vel'ka Lomnicka veza gives the reward of a stupendous mountain view.

All these uplifts are cheaper if bought Online, after registering with [www.gopass.travel](http://www.gopass.travel). Discounts are available for the over 60's. However, check the forecast carefully before buying; the uplift may not be able to run if the wind speed measured at Rysy summit exceeds roughly 4 metres per second. If the service doesn't operate for a period of an hour or more a refund of the ticket price can be obtained, though if bought Online a claim has to be made by e-mail.

## Hut-to-hut multi-day trips

The only option is the Tatranska magistrála, which runs for 46km. in Slovakia from the Western Tatras to the most northerly part of the White Tatras.

This normally takes 3 - 4 days to complete, the altitude range being approx. 1300m to 2,000m. Accommodation is available in the refuges, or in the resort towns with a diversion. It would be easy to take twice as long over the walk, as each overnight stop has side trip options, either to summits or interesting corries and passes. During the course of my day walks I covered much of the route, one way or another. The north end of the walk is served by a daily cross border Flixbus which runs in the afternoon between Poprad and Zakopane, or by Tatra Express coaches in Slovakia; see [www.tatry.sk](http://www.tatry.sk) / transport and infrastructure / buses. The west end is more problematic, requiring a taxi ride to Strbske Pleso, followed by the electric train.

## Tatranska Bora

Finally, worth mentioning this phenomenally powerful wind event that happens roughly once a century. It occurred in 1922, and again in December 2004. About half the trees in the forests on the Slovakian side of the range were knocked down. The felled trees were largely left to rot down in situ. In the interim period there has been new growth, but still paths through the forests give more open views than one might expect.

The accompanying photographs will give you a good idea of the scenery.

Go in 2025!

*Vysoka from Tatranska Magistrala  
above Popradске pleso*



## Exploring la Pedriza

Janet Ashworth

Faced with a couple of free days at the end of a trip to Madrid, we opted to take the 35 minute drive north to Manzanares el Real to explore a little in la Pedriza, never having been in the area before. It was mid-October, and we were going into the National Park on a weekday, so avoiding the time limits on when one may enter the park, numerical limitation on entrants and the wide restrictions related to 'bird-bans', which mostly run from January to the end of July.

We chose our time with great skill, coinciding with the wrath of Storm Babet. While it was causing much worse flooding at home, it nevertheless made the '35 minute drive' from the airport interesting, driving through floods on motorway slip roads more akin to Borrowdale at its worst! I know that a neighbour travelling a few hours later found her taxi flooded to mid-way up the doors and had to



*By the Rio Manzanares as it sets off towards Madrid*

get herself and her sodden luggage out, wading waist-deep. Nevertheless, we made it in one piece to Manzanares, though the sun was just setting when we arrived, under-lighting glowering clouds which shrouded the tops, and which were in turn being hurtled across the sky by the winds. Welcome to sunny Spain!

Morning dawned to much reduced winds and light drizzle, with many of the tops now clearing intermittently, as walls of showers travelled through. Waiting until after 11, with a clearing forecast, we headed up to el Tranco and dumped the hire car. We were using a 1:50,000 map, purchased in the UK, which made path-finding tricky. We would have been much better off with the 1:15,000 map purchased the next day from the local outdoor shop in the town square! We located a path towards el Yelmo (painted on a rock at the head of a concrete road between 2 houses just across from the parking area) and headed off. Though easy enough to find the way, with occasional white and yellow way markers, it was wonderfully involved from the off; a single track winding its way up, between and over the granite boulders which cover the whole hillside,



*Elephantis*

occasionally interspersed with a tiny meadow or stream, here and there. Today, of course, much of the path was a stream as the unusual downpour rushed its way towards the nascent Rio Manzanares below us. As we ascended, vultures circled languidly above us, sometimes feeling close enough to touch. Once they had checked we were still ambulant and not up for consumption, they drifted away, gaining height effortlessly as we weaved and scrambled below them.

The path gained height efficiently, bringing us into a wider meadow, where we met the path which had ascended from the main road head, further up the valley. From here paths continued along the meadow to a col to our right, as well as straight across the meadow to head up onto the ridge of seemingly impenetrable granite slabs and walls in front of us. We turned right and after a short way, took a less distinct path on the left, marked with occasional red blobs, which wound us up a shallow valley to the left of an intermediate ridge. Towards the top of this, to our right, was the much-photographed Elephantis, his trunk trailing the base rock in front of him. Today he looked more petrified

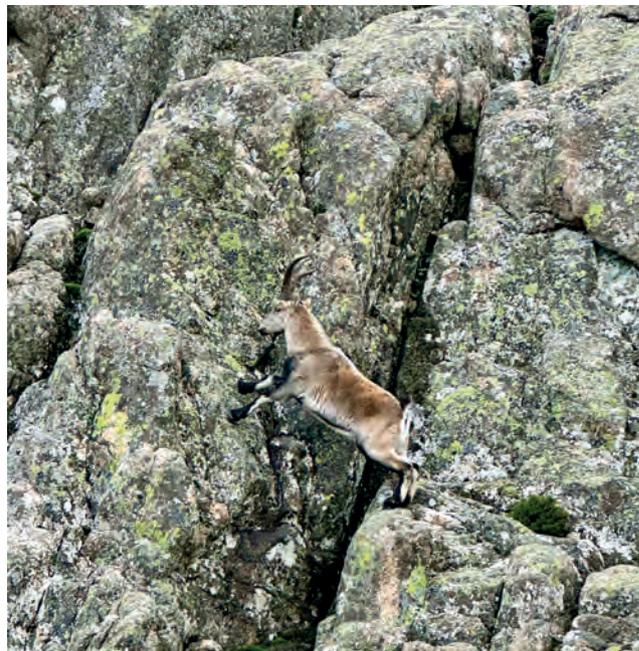


*Heading onto the summit ridge of El Yelmo, looking West*

than tropical, braving the cold, wet onslaught on his high perch.

Having passed the elephant, we joined a path marked again with yellow and white stripes, which climbed improbably through the steep boulders and slabs over the ridge to our left, until we were looking at the south face of El Yelmo. Following this path was tricky at times, and losing it meant a few reversals of tricky moves on the smooth, wet granite, quite steep in places.

According to the map, there was no obvious route to the summit of El Yelmo. We followed an indistinct path leftwards to the western end of the summit ridge, up to a col and passing the ridge of granite gendarmes between us and the summit ridge. A route up an easy-angled (wet...) gully brought us to a narrow, rising ledge, with a slightly bulging wall increasingly pushing one out, until the comfort of



*Iberian ibex*

a right wall to bridge off reached out its helping hand. I would not have fancied reversing that in the wet conditions! We paused at the small bowl above this, to put on even more clothing and wolf down a welcome sandwich, contemplating our options. We were considering a sensible mountaineering retreat, until Tony spotted a safer descent continuing to the left of the summit. Always keen to complete a job, I then saw an easier and safer line that appeared to approach the summit from the traverse, and soon we were reeling in the wind on top, so strong it nearly stole my beanie. The rain had the good grace to stop at this point. We scrambled back to the safe descent and dropped to a col with a marked path (red and white stripes) running off rightwards down an easy gully, to bring us back under the south face of El Yelmo. As we approached the gully, a slow movement on the right caught our attention. A rather disgruntled-looking male Iberian Ibex slowly got to his feet and moved away, initially stiffly, looking most unhappy to be moving from his sheltered spot. He wandered up onto the ridge, heading back up towards the summit, and as we finally regained the col from which we had started the summit traverse, we spotted him on the skyline near the summit, gazing down to check that we had indeed gone and left him in peace.



*Heading onto the summit ridge of El Yelmo, looking West*

The marked path we were now on drifted us back down to the broad meadow we had popped up into on our initial ascent, but this time we could lean against a boulder in the sun to eat our oranges. At the end of the meadow the path divided, and we took the one marked as NOT the red/white route, with a cross, which wandered off left and dropped us onto our initial ascent path. It was so lovely to finish in the evening sunshine, on drying rock. We saw the first person we had seen all day as we dropped the last few hundred metres towards the road head.

The day was rounded off with a simple meal in a local bar, filling with garrulous locals as the Friday evening progressed.

Sadly, we had to fly home the next day so were limited to a short walk up more slab and boulder-covered slopes in the woods on the other side of the Rio, but we shall surely be back to climb and to explore this area more!



*Descending from the El Yelmo Summit in Storm Babet*

## A Prelude to Xmas

Tony Walker

Somewhat inconveniently, Stu had decided to get a job and would be starting work in January which rather scuppered our plans for a summer road trip around Europe and warm, sunny rock. In lieu of a pleasant time moving between quality rock venues we decided on a week in the Cairngorms in December. Not quite the same but we were both enthused. The weather looked a bit mixed and blustery but we were confident that we could find something to climb and have a bit of adventure before Xmas.

The drive up to Karn in the camper seemed a long one but we had the place to ourselves and we soon spread out and occupied a disproportionate amount of space ... just made ourselves at home. When we arrived we hadn't any definite routes in mind just 'something' in the Norries. The days were short, sunset at 3pm, so we decided that we shouldn't be getting up too late and so decided on a 7am start from the ski tow car park.

Arriving at the ski tow car park the following morning ... we discovered that it was pitch black and blowing quite hard at 7am in the morning and so decided to stay in the van until it got light and we could see what we were doing and where we were going. Too early! Although the walk in to the Norries is fairly flat and benign by Scottish standards, it took a while through all the fresh overnight snow and getting to the start of the route was quite an effort. We alternated who was in front to create a path through the powder filled boulders and eventually we arrived at the bottom of our chosen route – 'Haston Line'. First route of the season – a modest III – and something pleasant to warm up on. Of course, it proved to be anything but



*Stu after Haston Line*

straightforward. In fact, a lot more challenging than we anticipated with everything covered in lots of unconsolidated snow and no sign of anyone having climbed it recently. Nevertheless, a bit of digging revealed the holds and the runners and we finished in sunshine. A pleasant start to the week.



*On the top after Haston Line*

Back at Karn, thoughts turned to tomorrow. There was a slight issue in so far as storm Barra was due to arrive on the west coast sometime during the day. Over a beer, we consulted various weather forecasts and decided that most likely it wouldn't arrive until well after dark in Coire an t-Sneachda. In hindsight this was the usual self-delusion that seems to be a feature of planning winter trips. Ah well ... it's good not to let experience and common sense get in the way of an adventure every time!

The walk in seemed more straightforward as the paths we created previously hadn't been covered with fresh spindrift. Stu met a couple of friends from Leeds on the way and we had a good chat. It was all quite sociable and, although, the sky was grey and overcast the cloud level was above the crags and not breezy at all. All looked good.

We'd decided on a route called 'Honeypot' and, in the fairly lean conditions, we expected something about V, 6 ... Stu's hardest winter lead to date. Honeypot was three pitches long, sustained, crux at the top and the finish was on the left side of the crag. We chose the route for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it got 3\* in the guidebook and, secondly, it finished on the left side of the crag. So, in the unlikely event of the weather turning troublesome, we were close to our escape route. Not that we had really planned it all through mind!

The first pitch went well and a good lead from Stu. A few tentative moves on wobbly hooks but then Stu cruised the rest of the pitch. I followed. An awkward mantel onto a ledge with the ropes going horizontally right, through no runners, proved a little exciting for his second but ... dads are a dispensable item after all. Pitch 2 and the mist was coming in and the occasional snowflake falling.



*Barra is starting to move in*

I felt a slight sense of doubt creeping in but that's a natural accompaniment to most winter climbing experiences. A quick swap over of gear and superb climbing up an open chimney led to the last belay before the top. Whilst I was belaying, I couldn't help but notice that the wind was getting up a bit and the spindrift was becoming more noticeable. It'll



*Back at the van*

be fine I told myself. Stu arrived, geared up, styled his way up the crux pitch disappearing over the top onto the plateau. Despite the increasing cascades of spindrift, the last pitch was lovely ... steep but with good hooks. However, arriving on the top all was not so good. The shelter we'd enjoyed on the route was replaced by the full-on storm. Barra had decided not to heed the forecasts and came a little early. Stu was hunkered down behind a boulder, and I was being well and truly battered by snow and wind. We had somewhat underestimated Barra ... my initial thoughts are certainly unprintable!

Barra was quite impressive in its force and after having been blown over several times the seriousness of our predicament was becoming obvious. Visibility was 2m and we couldn't stand up for long before being blown over. Mmmm .. interesting. After a shouted, but barely heard, conversation we kept roped up and decided to get off ASAP still fully geared up as there was no real possibility of stopping to pack the sacks in the force of the storm. Stu got the compass out and the bearing was simple ... due north to the ski pistes. I backed this up with an iPhone app (yes, I know I shouldn't do that, but it was brilliant). Between us we stumbled into the storm.



*Chill day at Morrison's cafe in Inverness*



*Last day and Aladdin's Buttress Original Summer Route*

Every few steps we'd get blown over and each time we'd become completely disoriented. Only by trusting the compass and ignoring our own intuition did we maintain our course off the mountain. During one particularly strong gust, I managed to stick my ice axe into my knee closely followed by Stu standing on my foot with his crampon. Not the best day for my left leg. Stu later remarked that I left a very noticeable trail of red droplets in the snow ... 'like something out of a horror film'. After what seemed an eternity, we gradually started descending and could even make out the occasional boulder through frozen eyelids. Headtorches on, we could begin to make out the snow fences on the ski slopes through the wild weather (pew). The sense of relief was enormous ... nearly back to safety and the van. We were, of course, the last vehicle in the car park. The weather was still wild, and snow had drifted around the van. Opening the doors, we climbed out of the storm into a safe cocoon of non-windiness ... only spoiled by a very bloody knee print on my lovely carpets. Stu had to push a bit; but we eventually got out and onto the road back to Aviemore.

Back at the hut I looked at my knee ... quite bloody. This was remedied with a 4-fold kitchen roll dressing and finger tape. It's good to be prepared!

Quite sensibly ... the following day we (and my knee) had a rest. The day after that enthusiasm I overcame common sense and we climbed another great route. This time the weather gods shined on us, and we climbed a superb route.

So ... what to make of all the above? Stu and me had a typical great day out in winter. Not textbook and with slightly smaller margins than we would have liked but completely brilliant. As climbers, we all do things that may seem bizarre and even reckless to people not accustomed to such things ... but that is one of the appeals of climbing. Is it not?

One final thought ... must get a proper first aid kit.



*Stu on Original Summer Route*

I also recounted this story to a non-climbing friend who set our adventure to verse:

*Tony and son went off in the van, to Scotland they did go*

*To yon bonny bank and to yon bonny brae,  
With the promise of climbing and drinking, they say.  
Storm Barra was brewing but a few flakes of snow,  
were not going to stop our intrepid duo.*

*As they climbed up the ice, pitch one then pitch two,  
The climbing got harder, I tell you it's true!*

*The flakes became flurries, the wind it did howl,  
the summit was reached but the weather was foul.*

*Now in this situation a cool head is a help,  
and Tony's "Oh Shit" seemed more like a yelp.*

*And so in the blizzard they did set forth,  
but to get to low ground, they had to go North.*

*The rest is a farce, hard to foresee, Tony's ice axe did pierce his knee.*

*Crampons trod flesh and a sprained ankle too,  
Our Batman and Robin were in very deep pool!  
But worry not, dear reader, we know Tony's the bleeder,*

*but after a mile, they managed to smile,  
and Tony became the life-saving leader.*

*The valley was found, the snow left the ground,  
and our unfortunate duo were safe in their van,  
back to where their adventure began.*

*Now there is a moral to my tale,*

*If you want to stay safe at home and Tony he may scoff,*

*Let your common sense prevail and tell him to  
"F..k Off!"*

# The Bridestone: An account of the ascent of the gritstone pinnacle

*Jim Sutcliffe*

There is a little street in the centre of the Lancashire industrial town of Burnley called Nicolas Street, where, in the 1960s I worked in a small office at one end and my boyhood friend John Hartley, worked in a similar one at the other end. We were handily placed to confer and plan climbing projects. One day in the early part of the decade, I called on him.

“What do you think about going out on the gritstone this evening?” asked John. I sensed that he was up to something.

“Why? What’s going on?”

“Well, how do you fancy making the second ascent of an amazing pinnacle?”

“What pinnacle?”

“It’s on Bridestones. It’s called The Bridestone.”

“You forget; I have never climbed on Bridestones.”

“Well, it’s completely free-standing, a bit like some you see in photographs of pinnacles in Arizona, but smaller. Don Whillans came over with one of his friends to try it. His mate got up it even though he himself didn’t.”

John, by this stage was already a member of the Fell and Rock, having been proposed by John Wilkinson who was in close contact with Don Whillans through the British Mountaineering Council.

“Sounds interesting. I’ve never been to Bridestones. How about going up there?” My curiosity was definitely stimulated.

“Great! I could call round about 7.30. Ok?”

“Right. I’ll be ready.”

So that was how, a few hours later, we were speeding over the Long Causeway towards Blackshaw Head. The moorland in this area rises very gently towards a high point at Black Hameldon, a little over 400m above sea-level, but on its edges are two small outcrops of millstone grit (Gritstone, as it is universally called in the climbing world). The obvious edge just above the road is locally known as Keb Cotes (Kebbs) and has long been climbed on, but now forms part of the land belonging to a private house. The rocks belonging to the group called Bridestones lie on the other side of the road, down a farm track. John pulled his van off down this track.

“Right. Here we are.”

“Where are they, then?” I was puzzled. No rocks in sight.

“You can only see the tops from here,” John replied.

So, we got out, taking our rock shoes with us.

“The Bridestone lies more or less right at the other end of the rocks, but this is the closest parking place.”

Off we set, walking over the moor. I was surprised at their extent. Eventually John pointed ahead.

“It’s just over there,” he said, pointing over a small rise. He led the way down, then I saw it.

Sure, enough it was a pinnacle, completely free-standing, quite separate from other rocks. We walked round it to examine it from all angles. From the point where we arrived there looked to be a slight easing in the otherwise completely overhanging appearance. John made ready to make a first attempt. All holds, whether for the feet or hands, looked equally sloping and unfriendly. John tried to bend his tall frame to fit the shape of the rock. It was an unlikely possibility, and he quickly ran out of grip and jumped off.

So now it was my turn. A sloping handhold high up for the right hand was the first point of possible attachment, but there was precious little for the feet. A slight wrinkle appeared to be the only hope, but it was too far to the left to be really useful as a point of aid. Nevertheless, I tried it, in conjunction with the sloping right hand hold. I was then in a slanting position with my right hand starting to slip off. I badly needed something for my left. I brought it up to the left end of the sloping hold, but quickly realised that I needed to jump off before I fell off. So ended my first attempt.

John had a second go, but once again, his long frame was against his attempt to fit into the overhanging rock. Although the gritstone tends to be quite rough up there, any holds are so sloping that nowhere can you get a good grip so as to exert a strong pull.

I prepared to make my second attempt. On the first, I was made very aware of the tendency for my body to fall off to the right. I had an idea about trying to smear the rubber rand on my left foot to stop my feet tending to swing off, whilst I tried to move my left hand up onto the very edge of the hold, next to my right. This was just successful, but all the time I was worried that both hands would



*Bouldering at the Bridestones in modern times  
- Jim Hulbert on Cleopatra*

slip off. I brought my right foot along and up to the right, although no hold was there. But I felt it to be, temporarily held in place. I quickly reached up to the right, hoping for a reasonably good hold, instead it was another sloping one. But it was holding and, before I slipped off, I managed to find a slight rugosity for my right foot. A quick snatch with my left hand and I had reached the top. I nearly fell off with shock. Before this could happen, I had hauled myself up and, with a triumphant yell, stood on top. I could hardly believe it. I had made the second ascent of the 'Bridestone'. John, unfortunately failed in his subsequent attempt, although I believe he was successful eventually.

Of course, nowadays we are all aware of the advantage of using chalk to maximise grip for the hands and with the prevalence of training on artificial climbing walls it is climbed regularly. It is now generally known as 'The Bottle' although the main edge is still called Bridestones.

We walked back along the edge to the van. It had been a very successful visit for me. The edge had been regularly climbed on by John Wilkinson and fellow FRCC member Jack Umpleby and others. A local nearby watering hole called the 'Shoulder of Mutton' became an important local centre for climbers, including Don Whillans himself. He became a regular contributor to the Thursday evening climbing scene and showed me how to tackle some problems on which I was repeatedly failing. I had been singularly fortunate in climbing the 'Bridestone'.

As we drove along on our way back home, John eventually broke the silence.

"Rod and I are going up to the Lakes this next weekend ... to be continued ..."

# The Whillans Effect: An ascent of 'Delphinus' on Raven Crag, Thirlmere

Jim Sutcliffe

As we drove along on our way back home, John eventually broke the silence.

"Rod and I are going up to the Lakes this next weekend to have a look at a route on Raven Crag Thirlmere. What are you thinking of doing?"

"We're going up to the caravan."

My wife and son and I were intending to spend the weekend very close to the Lake District at our old caravan situated at Seatle, a small farming hamlet between Newby Bridge and the village of Cartmel.

"What route are you going to look at?" "It's called Delphinus. The Fell and Rock Eastern Crag's Guide book lists it as the hardest route in the Eastern Crag's. It was put up by Don Whillans. He had to use several pegs for aid on the first pitch, so we are going to take Webby with us." Webby was the appellation Barry Webb was known as to frequenters of the limestone crags of Derbyshire. John and Rod (Brown, Fell and Rock) had both climbed with him in Derbyshire. He was known as an expert in the use of direct aid, using pitons placed in cracks in the rock. At that time, small aluminium-runged ladders called 'etriers' were also used.

'The top pitch is also a bit of a problem. Although it isn't as difficult, it rises in a traverse to the left above the massive overhangs in the centre of the crag. Anybody falling would be left hanging free over the overhangs. There would not be enough slack rope to lower off to the ground below and it would be impossible to pull anyone up. So we would all have

to fix prussik loops.'

At that time, most climbers tied onto the rope by a karabiner fixed to a belt provided by a length of light-weight rope wrapped round the waist several times. So anyone left hanging on a rope would slowly be asphyxiated by the pressure from the fastening round the waist. This was before Whillans came out with his eponymous sit-harness, to be followed by many other designs of sit and full-body

**DELPHINUS.**—290 feet. Very severe. A route with some atmosphere, making a way out of the right-hand side of The Cave and passing between the upper overhangs and those of The Cave roof. It is perhaps the most serious undertaking in the area: forethought is required in protecting the party. The start is beneath the left-hand side of The Cave, about 20 feet left of the start of Communist Convert. It is best reached by climbing the first pitch of Necropolis and scrambling up to the right.

- (1) 40 feet. Climb the leftward-slanting gangway, step back right and ascend to a small tree in the left-hand side of The Cave.
- (2) 40 feet. Cross the debris-strewn ledges to the right-hand side of The Cave.
- (3) 45 feet. From the right-hand end of the ledges, cross a bulge (piton and sling) and pull up to some blocks beneath an overhang. Traverse left for 10 feet to a v-chimney (piton on left) and ascend to a recess.
- (4) 15 feet. Move round rightwards to a grass ledge.
- (5) 80 feet. Ascend the little wall behind the belay and move left along a narrow ledge. Climb a steep shallow groove to a second ledge. Traverse left, ascending slightly, following the interrupted ledges (insecure blocks in places) to pass above The Cave roof to a grass ledge.
- (6) 30 feet. Scramble up the grass to the foot of a corner-crack. Jammed-knot-belay or chockstone down to the left behind a huge perched block.
- (7) 40 feet. Climb the corner-crack to the top.

*Delphinus route description from the 1959 FRCC guidebook*

harnesses. Prussik loops were, and still are, loops of rope of a thinner diameter wrapped around the main rope then clipped to a separate sling which you can stand in, to take your weight off the waist. Whist the climber's weight is on it, it won't slide down, but when weight is taken off it loosens and can be slid up the rope. Thus with two prussik loops with slings attached a climber can work his (or her) way upwards.

'Any chance you could get over to Raven Crag Thirlmere from where you'll be, at Seattle?

'Well, I suppose it would be possible, although it is on the other side of the Lake District and it would be busy with tourist traffic; but I might well try it.'

'Well, if you do, make sure you get to the small car park below the crag by 11.0am at the latest.'

'Ok, I'll do that.'

'Remember, we'll be starting as soon as we get there. If you're not there, we shall make a start. We won't wait.'

Unfortunately, at that time, I had a habit of being late. I was being warned!

So that weekend we set off in my second-hand Morgan Plus Four for the caravan, which was situated on a small hamlet of farms called Seattle, with all our clothing and food and my climbing equipment. The day in question was the Sunday. Although I felt to be doing my best, I knew that I had left myself too little time to get to the meeting place. As I drove along the east shore of Windermere, the holiday traffic was sluggish, everyone taking in and enjoying the surroundings. Coming out from Ambleside I was hoping for a nice



## RAVEN CRAG THIRLMERE

					<i>Grade</i>	<i>Page</i>
E	EXODUS	..	..	..	vs	27
V	VALEDICTORY	..	..	..	s	26
N	NECROPOLIS	..	..	..	vs	25
D	DELPHINUS	..	..	..	vs	24
C	COMMUNIST CONVERT	..	..	..	vs	24
A	ANARCHIST	..	..	..	s	23
G	GENESIS	..	..	..	s	23
TXX	THE RAVEN TRAVERSE	..	..	..	vs	27

*Delphinus route diagram*

clear run over Dunmail Raise, but it was not to be. I swung left to follow the narrow road along the west side of Thirlmere, but again my plans were thwarted. On arriving at the small car park, there was John's van, with no sign of my friend and his companions. I quickly donned my boots then loaded my rucksack with my personal climbing equipment. We had agreed that I would need to bring one rope and as many slings, karabiners and nuts as I could find.

The nuts, in those days, were just that - hexagonal nuts without their bolts, threaded onto slings, with their screw threads filed off as much as possible to smooth them.

I had never before walked up to this impressive crag. Now, as I rose above the surface of the lake, I could see that it was very steep. The section chosen was on the left of the crag and as I rose higher, I could make out the massive overhangs and the cave area below it, which marks the start of the main difficulties. The good news was that there was no sign of activity on this upper section. I called out a greeting and this had the effect of attracting three inquisitive heads to sprout out from the recesses of the cave.

'Hi, guys. I've arrived at last!'

'Er, Jim, you're going to have to solo the first pitch. But don't worry, it's only ordinary VS. We, more or less soloed it. It's straight forward.'

'Oh!' I examined the vertiginous wall leading to the cave. It was quite steep, about vertical. I could make out various rugosities, slight indentations and protuberances which would have to serve for holds. Wisps of grass grew here and there. I reached up to find a first hold with my left hand. I stretched my left

foot up to locate a rounded hold and swung across to lodge on the wall. Straight away I was aware of the drop below, another of the characteristics of climbing on Raven Crag, Thirlmere; as soon as you step off the ground, the drop below exerts a fascination. I found a small foothold to my right then carefully felt the steep rock above for another hold for my right hand. A rounded grip would have to do. I moved my weight across to the right and searched for another left hold. The weight of the rope over my shoulder made movement awkward, as well as the weight and encumbrance of the karabiners and slings clipped to my waist. I advanced with infinite caution only too aware that one mistake could well be my last. In this way, I gradually grew closer to the overhung, cave-like ledge, harbouring my friends. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of Thirlmere Lake, now far below to my left. It emphasised my vulnerability. To my right, the ground swept down and out of sight of the crag. I felt very alone as though in space. The exposure was total.

A head popped out. It was my friend John's.

'Jim's nearly here!' he said.

I carefully moved onto the broad but slightly sloping ledge to join my old friend John, my almost as long-term friend Rod Brown and met for the first (and only time) Barry Webb.

John explained the organisational arrangements for the climb. "We plan to climb in two ropes of two, you and Barry as one team and Rod and me as the second. Are you ok with that?"

I felt that I had little choice, so I greeted "Webby." He explained his tactics. "The aim is to get into that horizontal break above the first overhang, on the

right. That should let me traverse left above the first belt of overhangs to access that groove that leads through the main roofs. I intend to rest on the rope in some places, so I'll need you to give a tight rope at times, then slack again when I'm ready to move. So as soon as I shout 'slack!' pay the rope out quickly!"

The peremptory way he emphasised the need for alacrity in this matter, left me in no doubt about its importance. I felt his lack of trust rather poignantly.

"Yes, ok. I understand," I stuttered.

Both teams roped up with double ropes between each climber. I found a safe belay to lash myself to at the back of the ledge. Webby now advanced to the attack. From a position to my right, he managed to work his way up the smooth wall guarding access to the horizontal system above him. It was here that Whillans had used a piton for aid in order to get into the horizontal crack and ledge system leading leftward to the vertical groove. Webby selected a peg from the bunch hanging from his waist, carefully introduced its sharp end into a small crack, then gently tapped it until it held. Then gave it three strong blows. Quickly clipping his red rope through the karabiner attached to it, in one quick, athletic move, he launched himself up into the horizontal break. He clearly had made this type of move before.

"More slack!" he yelled, as I desperately tried to keep up with him. He managed to arrange a small sling into a chockstone in a crack and clipped the blue rope onto it. "Remember, feed the slack through quickly when I shout for it!" I felt duly reprimanded.

Almost immediately he started to traverse left towards the vertical groove. For us troglodytes

comfortably ensconced in our cave, it was becoming ever more difficult to see our bold leader, perched as he was above our heads. This was particularly problematic for me, in charge of handling his ropes. As if reading my mind, the ropes suddenly started to move out. Webby was on the move again!

"Slack, slack!" came the cry from above. Quickly I fed out the ropes. I heard the click of a karabiner gate. "There's a peg here," yelled Webby. "It must be one of Whillans'. Tight rope, tight, TIGHT!"

The call was peremptory. Webby needed to rest on the rope. This was now his mode of progression; tight rope then suddenly SLACK! As he gained height it became increasingly difficult for me to judge his movements just by the feel of the rope. But eventually more rope was dragged out and, after a pause the call came for me to "climb when ready."

As soon as I set foot on the rock, it's steepness became doubly apparent. I manage to reach the sling that Webby had fixed to the first peg. Calling him to "Take In," I pulled up to the karabiner, then, with a desperate heave, I found a small hold for my right toe. Using this, I managed to squirm up into the horizontal ledge system. Although constricting, there were cracks providing occasional holds. I worked my way along to my left and eventually found myself at the foot of the steep grove leading to Webby and his belay ledge. Judging from the paucity of good holds, I was going to need to take rests on the rope. I made a tentative squirm upwards.

"Tight rope!" I shouted. A short amount of rope snaked upwards. "Pull!" I yelled.



*Ken Jackson on a early ascent of Delphinus  
(photo courtesy of Tony Marr)*

This had more effect. I sank down until the rope tightened round my waist. I could only let it hold me steady, whilst I located something higher to hold me in place whilst I made my next move. In this way I gradually managed the moved up the steep groove, and eventually to pull out onto the ledge where Webby had belayed. "Steep, isn't it!" he said with a grin.

"Yes," I agreed, "and now we've this long, exposed diagonal traverse where we need to fix Prussiks"

At that moment, Rod pulled himself over the top of the groove. "Wow! That was a bit uphill!" he exclaimed. He set about arranging a belay, then taking in John's rope. As Webby and I arrange our ropes for the final pitch, John's helmet appeared at the top of the groove.

"Now," said he, in masterful fashion, "we have to prepare for the possibility of self-rescue if one of us falls over the overhangs below."

"Yes, John," I countered. "That's why we're fixing Prussiks!"

"Ah, right. So I see"

Webby advanced to the obvious starting point for the slanting traverse. Slowly, his delicately balanced form moved outwards and up along the natural ramp. I had to admire his precision and poise, also the accuracy of his footwork on the sloping, slabby rock. Footholds were very small and sparse. The angle of the rock was too steep for the climbing ever to be easy. Eventually he disappeared from my view. I could only judge his progress by the rate at which the rope snaked out.

"Watch me here, Jim" came a call from his direction.

I guessed that he had encountered a problem. I quickly cast my eye over the belays I was fixed to. Everything looked firm.

The rope jerked suddenly. Instinctively I gripped it tightly. Sudden pulls and a loud shout of "Slack!" told me he was ok and still attached to the rock. Whatever difficulty Webby had encountered, he was still ok and, judging by the rate at which the rope was moving out he was on easier ground.

"It looks as though he's cracked it," I called to John and Rod. "Yes. Good guy is Webby," said John, laconically. Eventually a distant call could be heard. "Ok, come on!"

So, I stepped out of the comfortable ledge onto the edge of the void. Small, widely spaced footholds were all that separated me from clear space. It was like tip-toeing on the edge of the world. All of a sudden, the holds seemed to have run out. I was confronted by an apparently blank section. I realised that this was where Webby had hesitated and instructed me to "watch the rope!" I searched around for handholds. Eventually I found an under grip quite low down on the left. I was going to have to make do with a combination of this and simple friction with my feet on the slabby surface of the rock.

"Watch the rope!" I yelled, hoping that Webby would realise whereabouts I was. I would have to go for it. Realising that delay would only make matters worse, I committed myself to the problematic move. Speed and accuracy were essential. As the slack rope rapidly tightened, I moved as catlike as possible across the impasse. When my left foot landed on a tiny flake, I breathed a sigh of relief. A few more moves and Webby came into view.

"That was a bit thin, eh?" were his words of greeting.

"Wow! Are we actually at the top?" I asked.

"Yep. Looks like it."

I looked around. Behind the ledge on which Webby was standing, heather-clad slopes, dotted with trees, offered a welcome from the unremitting verticality of the crag. Whilst we were coiling the ropes, first of all John appeared at the end of this aerial pitch then shortly afterwards Rod arrived to complete the successful team.

"I think we descend over there to our right," said John.

"Well, I'll tell you what!" I exclaimed. "Whillans didn't half like steep rock!"

And with that remark, we all wended our way down the forestry trails back to the cars. We had succeeded in climbing what at that time was regarded as the most difficult climb in the eastern crags and now simply listed as Hard VS, potentially loose.

# The Magic of the Munros

*Dan Hamer*

One of the many benefits of my recent semi-retirement, besides strimming the allotment and painting the ceiling in the kitchen, is the opportunity it provides to take short breaks around the country, to visit places I've never been to before, to revisit favourite haunts and to catch up with friends, both near and far, old as well as new. My long standing but sadly neglected interest in bagging Munros is firmly on the list and between you and me – well above the necessities of domestic maintenance and home improvement. A long-awaited trip to the 'Northeast', to reunite with friends, residing near the Cairngorms, ticked all the boxes and looked like the chance for me to pick up where I had left off Munro bashing, almost a decade ago in Torridon.

The couple, my wife and I, were to stay with for the bulk of the trip, rank among our oldest friends. The husband was a former colleague of mine from my days with the Antarctic Survey and his then unacquainted wife-to-be, was teaching at the same primary school as Denise, before the two of us had met. We have been diligent about staying in touch with them over the years but sadly, have only spent quality time with them on a handful of occasions since we all left Cambridge in the early 1980s.

We set off northwards in a mood of keenness and expectancy on a Wednesday afternoon in order to avoid the weekend traffic. Breaking the journey at Beetham Cottage, we spent a pleasant day in the Lakes. Our destination, however, was Bridge of Alford, nestling quietly in the Don Valley, approximately half an hour west of Aberdeen by car. By sheer good fortune, we had chosen a favourable spell of midge-free weather, unusual for late-July in the Highlands.

We spent the first couple days deep in conversation, sharing stories about our various activities since our last meeting and the progress of each other's offspring. Their son, daughter-in-law and grandson were also visiting at the time from Bulgaria and it amused me to think that I had once spent a day in the Cairngorms with this enormous bearded fellow when he was in his early teens. We were especially interested to hear news about our friends' daughter, who had just completed a solo traverse of the 864km Scottish National Trail, from Kirk Yetholm in the Borders to Cape Wrath. She had abandoned her post-doctoral seabird research and embarked on a promising career as a folk singer. Those interested in folk music are recommended to check out her musical adaptation of Nan Shepherd's celebrated book about the Cairngorms - *The Living Mountain*.

I told my buddy that if he was up for it, I'd be really keen to spend at least one day out on the hills, and if possible, tick off another Munro. Although my friend is a regular hill walker, he explained that he'd never been tempted to adopt the systematic approach of the dedicated Munro-bagger. I asked him how many Munros he had done, and his initial response was - 'Oh, just a handful'. A few brief queries indicated a total somewhere approaching 100! I was too embarrassed to tell him that this was better than my own tally.

He had evidently not lost any of his former playfulness, because he duly suggested an isolated, heathery prominence, to the south of Aboyne, for our excursion. The irony of its name - Mount Keen – was not lost on me. I soon learnt that at 939m, Mount Keen has the distinction of being the most easterly of the Munros. Naturally, I jumped at the

opportunity to renew my acquaintance with the rarefied atmosphere in the Highlands above 3000', only to find that in this particular instance it would involve a lengthy trudge up and back down a forested glen. Such are the delights of Munroing!

A guidebook he had to hand, informed me that the shortest route to the summit of Mount Keen begins to the south of the mountain in Glen Esk. However, the approach from the north via Glen Tanar, is considered by most authorities to be the more attractive, if considerably longer, ascent. My friend went on to explain that Glen Esk would involve a lengthy and tortuous drive from Bridge of Alford, so I resigned myself to what were enticingly described as 'the magnificent pinewoods' of Glen Tanar.

A favourable forecast for the middle of the week settled matters, and early the following morning we drove across the watershed to Aboyne on Royal Deeside under a scattering of fluffy cumulus clouds, interspersed with bright sunny patches. The forested entrance to the Glen is marked by the Tower O'Ess, the former four-storey gatehouse to the surrounding Glen Tanar Estate. This curious building, which dates from 1870, has now been converted into a 'luxury romantic hideaway' and even boasts an outdoor hot tub!

We parked at the charged car park by the Bridge of Tanar, opposite the Visitor Centre, shouldered our rucksacks and set off under the pine trees. The route continued along the west bank of the river on the tarred, single-track road towards the complex hosting the Glen Tanar Estate Office, an Equestrian Centre and the Glen Tanar Ballroom, widely regarded as 'one of Scotland's finest wedding venues'.

It was an odd start to a walk into the remote

Highlands, but we saw little of any of these buildings through the dense foliage of the pinewoods. The tarmac finished after approximately one kilometre and became a gravelled track. Within a couple hundred metres, however, it began to dawn on me that the track ahead was not going to be as easy a stroll as I had anticipated.

I had elected to wear my approach shoes and despite being super comfortable, I have to admit that the soles are worn practically smooth and in consequence, rather thin. I began to feel every rough pebble through these, especially with the ball of my right foot and had to select each footfall with care, straying into the bracken at the edge of the track at regular intervals. There was nothing soft about the crunch of my footsteps as I made erratic progress up the Glen in an effort to keep up with my companion.

We emerged from the pinewoods at the 8km mark into the full glare of the sun and continued along the open valley beside the Water of Tanar to a metal footbridge. The dome-shaped profile of Mount Keen, rising high above the surrounding plateau, had appeared abruptly in front of us and a sinuous track through the bracken leading towards the heathery uplands was plainly visible.

I had long since ceased to complain inwardly about the gravel on the track. At some point along the Glen behind us, we had both reached that significant threshold on lengthy walks over easy terrane, when conversation tends to become more relaxed, revealing, and profound. This is one of the purest joys of hillwalking and mountaineering in general. I seem to lose all my inhibitions and am able to express myself freely on a range of subjects and perhaps more importantly to listen intently to what I hear in response. The kilometres simply

rolled away, and the sudden appearance of the summit had come as a complete surprise to both of us.

Once across the metal footbridge, it was slower going as we gradually mounted the track through the heather, which had been engineered into a staircase of huge granite blocks over extended sections. On reaching the rim of the plateau, we had a short rest and got our first sight of the surrounding, purple-clad moorlands, with Lochnagar immediately to the west and Ben Avon a little further away to the northwest, hiding the more elevated summits of the distant Cairngorms.

Resuming our ascent and intimate conversation, we climbed the staircase of granite blocks towards the summit cairn. Nearing the top, as the incline finally began to ease off, we were suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, enveloped in thick, scudding mist. This totally obliterated the 360° panorama we had been looking forward to viewing. It took several minutes seated beside the cairn before irregular, fleeting windows appeared through the mist, affording discrete and random views of our surroundings.

After a sandwich and a cup of sweet tea, we set off back down again. It was well passed 2pm by this time and we had to retrace every one of those kilometres we had trodden since leaving the car. Once again, our conversation obliterated any awareness of my being footsore. I barely registered that we crossed the river by the Ballroom complex and, therefore, reached the Bridge of Tanar on the opposite bank to the car park by the Visitor Centre. As we dumped our rucksacks beside the car, my companion proudly exclaimed that we had clocked almost 32km. It had been a thoroughly enjoyable tramp to the summit and back! The longest day out

on the hills that I had experienced for some time.

I had been more than a little concerned about how my feet would stand up to such a pounding, especially at the start. In the event, I managed to keep going, although the soles of my feet – the right one in particular – were tender, long before we had reached the metal footbridge on the outward leg and begun the climb to the summit. I certainly wouldn't be stepping out onto the dance floor of the Glen Tanar Ballroom any time soon, although I did briefly think about sneaking into the grounds of the Tower O'Ess and blissfully lounging in that hot tub as drove passed.

It has to be acknowledged that both of us spent most of that evening hobbling about like the couple of old crocks we pretend not to be - much to the amusement of our respective partners. It was only later in the evening that my companion informed me that the normal mode of ascent from Aboyne via Glen Tanar is to cycle along the track to the foot of the mountain, leave your bike in the heather, make a quick dash to the top and back, and then freewheel down the valley! Nursing my bruised feet, I listened aghast. "Then again...", he quipped, "...we've only got the one bike!"

On reflection, I think it was our conversation that had got me to the top and back, distracting me from any bodily pains once that critical threshold had been passed! In the process, I believe we covered just about every conceivable topic and had definitely set the world to rights. Mount Keen had been my first Munro in ages, but I was supremely content and above all, confident that it wouldn't be the last.

# Three Weeks Late One Summer

Mark Gear

I really don't like being rained on. Which is a problem, given that my favourite activity is scampering up and down hills in Scotland. My aversion to rainwater falling from the sky means that opportunities to get out on multi day trips to access those more remote Munros and Corbetts are as rare - and precious to me - as golden goose eggs. So, when the weather was settled for most of three weeks at the end of August/beginning of September 2021 I made the best of it and notched up six overnights.

This is their story, which would have been very different - in fact it wouldn't have happened at all - but for the Mountain Bothies Association reopening the Scottish bothies they maintain on August 8th. To my mind, only one thing is worse than rain, and that's camping during midge season!

## Day One

The initial weather window was short; just two days, but that's all I needed. Fortunately, Helen was away overnight visiting a pal in Edinburgh, so there was no one else about to object to my 4am alarm clock. I was already wide awake, so I didn't mind in the least. This saw me away up the A9 in darkness, persistent low cloud, and drizzly showers. With little other traffic on the road, I made good time.

Dawn became day, and at 6am I made a minor diversion into Aviemore to top up my caffeine fix. It was only when crossing the Cromarty Firth that the drizzle eased off and the clouds began to brighten. Over Struie Hill - no view of Ben More Assynt today - and on through Ardgay, up Strath Carron, and a short stretch of tarmac estate road to the large car

park above Glencalvie Lodge.

Surprisingly, the midges were nae too bad as I prepped the bike for the ride up Glen Calvie. I only cycled for 30 minutes and could have gone further to shorten the walk into my chosen hill (Carn Chuinneag) but decided to hop off early so that my 'walking legs' would be warmed up before the steep - but wonderfully constructed - stalker's path rising almost to the summit. This is still in very good shape, a hundred plus years after it was built in Victorian times. On the shoulder halfway up, the grass was a distinct orange tinge; autumn was on the way. Alas the cloud blew in as I reached the stone-built trig, but it didn't rain, and on the way down there were lovely views of Glen Calvie, and a surprising look northwest through a gap in the hills



*Sgurr nan Each - Lapaichs in distance  
- from descent of Sgurr nan Clach Geala*

to Cul Beag and Cul Mor. A quick neb at the fishing beats on the River Carron, and I was back to the car after 4 hours.

I continued north, stopping at 'The Caley Café' in Bonar Bridge for takeout beefburger, coffee, and walnut cake, and of course filter coffee. Veering west, I reached Oykel Bridge and turned onto the gravel estate road leading to the The Schoolhouse bothy at Duag Bridge. It's about 5 miles off the tarmac, and I was half prepared to cycle it, if the track had become too rough for my little car. I wasn't sure the clearance would be sufficient! But all was well driven in 2nd gear and at up to 20 mph. Only at the very end, where repairs had been made to the surface with large chunks of aggregate, did I have to slow down to below 10 mph to avoid wrecking the undercarriage as the stones flew about. Toyota Aygo vs. Glen Einig track – no contest!

The Schoolhouse is one of the few MBA maintained bothies where it is officially permitted to drive to the door. In fact, a big new parking area has been built right by it, the Corriemulzie Estate moving the hill walker's car park a couple miles back down valley from its original spot near the lodge. This would be a problem for walkers heading in to Seana Bhragh - my principal objective for tomorrow - but it makes little difference to 'bikers.

I settled in and was soon joined by a lassie I had passed walking along the track. She hadn't put her thumb out, so I had assumed she didn't want a lift. For some people being self-propelled is a thing. And this was definitely the case with Jackie; she was on her way back south having just walked the Cape Wrath Trail! She is well known to the police near her hometown of Dumfries for leaving her car parked in remote laybys and taking off into the hills for months at a time, telling no one where she is going

and causing consternation for the locals! I helped her with repairs to her old tent - it had ripped and blown down in a storm a couple days ago - and happily brewed up for her; coming in by car, I had brought lots of nearly empty gas cannisters to use up, while her cooking fuel supply was limited. Later, we were joined by a mountain 'biker riding the 'Highland Trail 550'. Conveniently, the bothy has three rooms, so nobody had to share. As first arrival, I had of course bagged the best, which is wood lined and cosy.

## Day Two

I was up at 5AM to cook my sweet black tea and sugary porridge breakfast. Having wielded the bothy spade and cleaned up down at the stream – a tugging east wind keeping the midges at bay - I was off just over an hour later. It was now daylight, and dry, but cloudy. I rode the 'bike for an hour up Strath



*Beinn Dearg Bheag and Loch Toll an Lochain  
from ascent of Beinn Dearg Mor*

Mulzie. The gravel estate road is good as far as Corriemulzie Lodge, but then deteriorates to a 4WD track with some steep gradients, rough bits, and plenty of large puddles and streams to cross. To my surprise I handled all this with aplomb, taking my time, finding my bike wrangling skills had suddenly improved. Eventually I came to a wider side stream and ford which I was only going to get the bike across if I was prepared to suffer wet feet. As this was only 500m. from another, wider and deeper ford over the Corriemulzie River, where my route became the circuit of Coire Mor, I decided it was time to transition into 'walking mode'.

I had brought river crossing sandals - flip flops with a securing strap fashioned from an old bike inner tube - for the larger ford. A lot safer than bare feet, but still bloody cold! The track continued on the other side, up to Loch a' Choire Mhoir, with stunning views of the spire of Creag an Duine on the north side of Seana Bhraigh. 'SB' is a lesser version of Ben Nevis; a boring looking lump if approached by the tourist route from the southwest, but revealing a stunning construction of ridge, corrie and gully to the connoisseur who comes at it from the north.

Now for the hard part of the day; a steep, grassy ascent onto the northwest ridge of the Corbett Carn Ban. But it was worth the effort, as from the levelling at the top all the hills of Coigach/Assynt - Ben Mor Coigach, Stac Pollaidh, Cul Beag, Cul Mor, Suilven, Canisp and Quinag - were revealed, shrugging off overnight cloud caps. To the north, the Ben More Assynt massif was stubbornly stuck under piling cumulus. A pleasant stravaig over gentle mossy slopes led to the summit cairn; a 4-hour approach.

Having crossed Carn Ban's south top there is a long, slanting descent to the true col between the two

hills, and then a line south of the Coire Mor rim, the grass strangely short, teases out nicely via a couple of lochans to a plod up SB's 906m. top. From this point there is a short descent, a grand view of the cliffs, Creag an Duine and Loch Luchd Choire nestling far below, followed by an easy reascent to the summit shelter. And what a view! All those Coigach/ Assynt hills were now joined by the Beinn Dearg group to the south, and Fisherfield Forest/ An Teallach in the southwest. Beyond 'The Forge' I could see cirrus in the sky; the next Atlantic front was on its way.

The descent is easy, following a worn path down the northeast ridge and then trending away left down long slopes of grass to pick up an ATV track leading back to the fording point for the Corriemulzie River, but on the dry side of it. It was now 'all over bar the shouting'; cycle back to Duag Bridge to complete an 8.5-hour day; drive to Aviemore and Karn House for restorative coffee and a soak in the tub; the drive



*An Caisteal, Ben Loyal*

back down the A9. At home, we had a soya bean curry already cooked and stashed in the fridge - it had been a long day, and time, before hitting the hay, was of the essence.

### Day Three

It rained.

### Day Four

Today the weather was improving, and it was a day for getting into position for the properly better day to come, when I planned to walk the remote hills of the West Affric estate. The forecast suggested a dry interlude late morning/early afternoon, so at 10AM I rocked up at Morvich and cycled the rough track up Gleann Lichd to Glenlicht House. There were puddles aplenty, some too deep to ride through, plus sheep and Highland coos on the track. I soon learned to ignore my wheels clogging with sheep shit, but the cow patties were another matter; they might splatter all over the place if hit at speed, so I steered around them.

The track ended at the house, where I reloaded my clobber from panniers to rucksack and continued on foot. Once across two smart NTS wooden bridges the excellent old path - a well-established through route between east and west coasts - made a gradual climb beside the Allt Grannda, with views of the north side of the Five Sisters of Kintail. Past this spectacle the route continued to the watershed; to the east, the hills were cloud free. It then wove in and out through a maze of streams, drumlins and roche moutonnées to reach the remote, lonely building of Camban bothy. The place was deserted, and I soon settled into the room with the best light to brew tea.

The previous occupants had been here for three days, and only departed this morning. Rather misguidedly, they had left a huge quantity of food for the next arrivals, laid out on one of the worktops. This would have been OK if it had been tins, but it was all in packets. And it was high-quality expedition grade dehydrated meals, which I conservatively valued at about £50. I couldn't just leave it there, as it would attract mice and rats, and added it all to my own hanging shopping bag stash. The downside came on day six, when I had to totter out under a heavier rucksack than I had carried in!

Dinner was at 6PM, rice cooked with a minimum of water and a tin of chicken curry added to warm through. Tinned food is worth its weight compared to dehydrated crap; it tastes better and doesn't need boiling/simmering to make it palatable. Eating the whole lot from the one pot minimised the washing up; a serious consideration, if your doss is besieged by midges!



*Beinn Tarsuinn from ascent of Mullach Coire Mhic Fhearchair*

## Day Five

I was away this morning soon after 6AM, a mega yomp in prospect. It was just light, and walking west, I arrived at the Alltbeithe Youth Hostel. I continued up the stalker's path into Coire na Cloiche, rising into the cloud. As the corrie burn reduced to a trickle, I filled my 'Platypus', and left this and my food hidden at the col to nip up the day's first Munro, An Socach. At the cairn I was surprised to have company, a guy who had slept in the Youth Hostel annexe, and we walked together back down An Socach, retrieving my supplies, and on into Coire nan Dearcag. During this short time, I learned that he was Munro bagging, lived in Perth like me, and we had a neighbour/friend in common. It can be a small world!

The cloud dispersed, then formed a higher cumulus layer as I climbed gently onto the ridge leading over the Top of Cac na Con Dhu to Mullach na Dheiragain. Again, I hid my platypus and booty box for this out and back diversion. This top is notable for having one of the best examples in the Highlands of an ongoing landslip on its east side.

Back to my sustenance dump, and I headed up the impressive NE ridge of Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan. The cloud was dispersing, and the rest of the day was sunny. On top I chatted to two fellas with yet another approach - canoe camping. They had reached this spot by paddling along Loch Mullardoch, camping by the shore, and walking from there.

Even with my planned four hills 'in the bag' my day was far from over. The descent to Gleann Griomhaidh is brutally steep and having refreshed my feet in the Allt Gleann Ghlamhaich I had to make a rising traverse around the east ridge of Beinn Fhada to return to base, completing a 10 hour day.

Again, a wonderful anti-midge breeze was blowing, and the southwest facing gable wall of the bothy was a suntrap. I brewed tea and sat shirtless, putting my socks and boots on the washing line to dry. Another early dinner, eaten al fresco, but eventually the sun lost its strength and the wind died, the midges driving me indoors.

## Day Six

Early to bed means early to rise, and the dawn light on the Five Sisters of Kintail from the watershed was exquisite. The downside of the lovely calm weather was that the midges were truly awful when I reached the bike, so I pulled on my hood, covered my exposed flesh with 'Smidge', put on the blinkers and got down to repacking my kit from rucksack to panniers. Thereafter, the ride down glen was a delight!

I had time to burn, so once back to the car I played



*Ben Loyal from Ribigill approach*

tourist. First stop was the War Memorial at Clachan Duich Burial Ground, where the elevated position above the Morvich road causeway gives great views in all directions. Then on to Eileen Donan; ignoring the car park attendant who wanted me to pay and display for a 2-minute visit.

My pootling continued, on to Achnasheen, where I couldn't resist stopping at the new café on the site of the old petrol station, which has a great name; 'The Midge Bite'. But this afternoon the little devils were nowhere to be seen as I parked the car in welcome shade and enjoyed more coffee and Wifi. This place epitomises the good that can come out of the NC500; local employment, which is surprisingly just about year-round. The real problem with the NC500 is RVs clogging up the single-track roads further up country. I wonder if there will come a time when RVs are banned north of Laxford Bridge/Lairg? The writing is already on the wall - I have heard rumours that Cal Mac will no longer take bookings from RV drivers on some island routes, requiring them to go on standby, only getting onto the ferry at the last minute if there is space.

The approach to Lochivraon is pretty short, and the five-star estate bothy in the old byre well hidden behind the whitewashed stalker's cottage. Late afternoon and having unpacked my kit there wasn't much to do but cook dinner and write my climbing diary. This stretches right back to March 1984, so I can hardly give up the chore now... I almost lasted until 8PM before crawling into my sleeping bag.

## Day Seven

Dawn revealed low cloud, a cloud inversion. My path took me west then north, on the Right of Way to Achneigie, and soon after infamous Shenevall bothy.

At a suitable point I turned left and followed a stream up into the clouds. It was a typical Torridonian slog - rough grass, luxuriant grass, heather, seeps, and boulders. Soon after, I emerged from the clouds into blue skies and sunshine. The inversion ceiling was at about 750m., which was perfect.

Reaching the north ridge of Beinn a' Chlaidheimh - I again turfed the water and food out of my sack and continued up the broad sandstone ridge to the shapely cone of the quartzite summit. The views were splendid; south to where I was going, north to the spires of An Teallach.

Returning to my provisions, I dipped into the cloud to reach the col before Sgurr Ban. Now firmly in quartzite country, I seemed to spend a long time clambering over blocks to get above the cloud again. Thereafter the climb to the summit, past a small deer watcher's cairn/shelter, was



*Druim Reidh and bridge over outflow of Loch a' Bhraoin*

straightforward.

I could now see the ceiling of the cloud sea was rising. Down the south ridge and back into sandstone for the rest of the day, I traversed the good path below the northwest face of Meall Garbh. The path is sketchy at first, the slope steep and grassy, not so good for tiring legs. From the top I looked out over the cloud lapping over the continuation west ridge - the ceiling had risen so much - and Slioch nearby was quite bold.

## Day Eight

The sunny weather distracted me, and at the Commando Memorial I swung off the A82 to drive the back road, Gairloch to Banavie, seeking out photo stops for the North Face of Ben Nevis.

## Day Nine

I caught the first Corran ferry of the day, leaving from the Nether Lochaber side of the narrows at 6:30AM.

My walk for the day was basically to follow the right skyline of the corrie over two Grahams, Sgorr Mhic Eacharna and another Beinn Bheag. The wonderfully rocky Garbh Bheinn - another Corbett - forms the left side of the corrie, and the views of the Great Ridge (Diff) and the rock climber's playgrounds were fab. There was a bonus Graham to collect a bit further west, Sgurr nan Cnamh, and a return to the bike down the corrie, followed by the ride back to the ferry at Ardgour. 6.5 hours on foot, and 2 in the saddle.

## Days Ten and Eleven

...

## Day Twelve

The weather was looking good again, which meant that Helen and I had to go to Skye.

We didn't leave Perth until well after lunch, and immediately had a pleasant surprise - the extension of the A9 dual carriageway north of town to Birnam gap had finally opened, 4 months ahead of its (delayed) schedule.

Approaching Kyle of Lochalsh my attention was drawn to a sign beside the road, 'Stop! Coffee' and I swerved left - lucky that - into their car park. Again, I rarely come this far west on my travels, and this combined coffee shop/experimental gin distillery (?) was a welcome break to our journey.

Our B&B at Kenmore House on the outskirts of Portree was easy enough to find.



*Dun Dornaigil broch*

## Day Thirteen

Our arrival in Glen Brittle was delayed by stops for pix at the lochans beside the Dunvegan road, the north Cuillin beautifully reflected in the still waters. As a result, we didn't get underway until 7:45, and only returned from the round of Coire Lagan again at 7:45 - but 12 hours later.

Parked at the Glen Brittle Memorial Hut - closed by the pandemic – I wasted some time finding the path past the waterfall of Eas Mor, but thereafter our tramp to the base of Sron na Ciche was uneventful. We followed the bottom of the crag leftwards, rising steadily, until entering the Sgumain Stone Shoot. This is steep but relatively stable and leads via the impressive East Buttress to a col south of Sgurr Sgumain. Here, three hours in, we finally emerged into the sun, but that was the plan. As we scabbled up the first peak of the day cloud brewing in Coir' a' Ghrunnda blew up to engulf us, meaning we were even cooler!

The cloud proved to be of the 'coming and going' variety, so it didn't interfere with navigation in the slightest. The ridge off to the top of the Great Stone Shoot is straightforward and moving down the other side a little to get easier access to the southeast ridge of Sgurr Thearlaich. We decided it was time we put on harnesses and helmets. The descent off 'Charlie' via the sensational north ridge was enlivened by a couple of short abseils; last time here I'm sure we just pitched down a short step.

On Collie's Ledge we were overtaken by a lass who was guiding a fella on a two-day ridge traverse. When they emerged from the Ledge and went haring off down Sgurr Mhic Choinnich's northwest ridge. By now the weather had cheered up considerably, with the return of blue skies and

sunshine. So, Helen and I had a wee wait to get onto the Moderate E Ridge. Four runners in each of the two pitches was the most I could wangle in with what little kit I had available; this included a decent two wires and a Friend for the mid-way belay.

The descent down the west ridge back to the road took a very long time; my partner was knackered, despite me carrying all the ironmongery. Still, we reached Eas Mor just before the sun went down behind An Cruachan, and the lighting on the bowl of the falls was to die for. Our dinner plan tonight was at 'Seamus' Bar' in the Slig.

The pub stops serving food at 9PM, so we were in plenty of time to order prime beefburgers and two pint glasses of tap water. The latter went down barely touching the sides.

## Day Fourteen

Today Helen just wanted to visit the craft shops! For me, it was rewind and repeat, this time my objective being the central Cuillin, with a traverse of Sgurr na Banachdich, a' Ghreadaidh and a' Mhadaidh.



*Goats in the mist, Sgurr Fiona*

The visibility was crystal sharp, and the best scrambling was in the middle part of Banachdich's southeast ridge, up Sgurr Thormaid - a Top of Banachdich – and on Ghreadaidh's summit ridge. Between 'Greeta' and 'Vatee' lies the notch of An Dorus, which is a tricky descent when travelling north to south.

Along the way I had yo yoed with a couple of old boys we had seen yesterday round Coire Lagan, attempting a two-day ridge traverse, and now, as I returned to An Dorus from Mhadaidh and they started up it, I donated the little water I had left in my platty to them. 15 minutes later, having quickly descended the shady scree path on the west side of An Dorus, I was slaking my thirst at the highest spring in the corrie. Thereafter the walk down beside the Allt a' Choire Ghreadaidh was one waterfall and plunge pool after another, but the best was saved for last; a huge pool virtually on the doorstep of the temporarily closed Youth Hostel.

## Day Fifteen

I must be a glutton for punishment. The forecast in the northwest was brilliant again, and I was away from Perth soon after 5AM to tool up the A9. The now obligatory coffee stop at Karn, and I carried on towards Ullapool and then the Destitution Road once more.

## Day Sixteen

Today the MWIS forecast was for a cloud inversion with a ceiling at 700 – 900m., gradually dispersing as the day went on. Sounded like a recipe for an early start to me, so come 6:45AM I was shouldering my heavier sack at Corrie Hallie and taking the track/path to Shenevall.

After an hour or so I hid my overnight kit behind a boulder near the summit of the path and headed off lightly laden for the circuit of Loch Toll an Lochain. The loch proved to be just below the clag, and I headed up the very steep slope to the north, aiming to come out on the ridge of Glas Mheall Liath. This achieved, I turned left and plodded up for the first Munro of the day, Bidein a' Ghlas Thuill. As I climbed higher, I could see the sky above turning from grey to blue, but it took an awful long time to finally break free of the mist, and then only on the last few hundred feet below the trig! The inversion ceiling was actually at 1,000m, which made all the difference in the world to what I could see; just Sgurr Fiona, a few Fannichs and Beinn Dearg poking above it. No view of the pinnacles for you today.

On I went, disturbing the local wild goat population to pop out again on Fiona, but then be swamped all the rest of the way round. So, I just did it the easy way, sticking to the sandy paths below the sandstone pinnacles, and finding my way off the final peak – Sail Liath – by compass bearing. Gear retrieved, and 5 hours spent on the round, I staggered on to Shenevall, another hour. The path was as dry as I have ever seen it. On arrival at this, the second worst bothy in Scotland, I found it deserted, but I quickly staked my place in the loft upstairs, had a quick wash at the stream - midges temporarily elsewhere - and awaited developments. Waifs and strays began to drift in and, at dusk, the place was comfortably full, with more people camping outside.

## Day Seventeen

6AM reveille.

Away an hour later it was another cloudy day, but this time with the cloud base above the tops. I

walked down the path towards Loch na Sealga, and then followed a line of higher ground, above the bogs of the strath, to reach the Abhainn Srath na Sealga just before it flows into the loch. The river was incredibly low, but still required sandals to cross.

I half-filled my platty at the outflow of the Loch Toll an Lochain, and then headed up to the col between them. Dumping the sack on a prominent slab of rock, I tackled Beinn Dearg Bheag first, for variety. Up and down in 45 minutes, I then turned my attention to Beinn Dearg Mor. It's a bit steeper, and there is a good, worn zig zagging path, so this one took longer, and was gathered in within an hour.

The drive home was reasonably relaxing, featuring the now customary coffee fix while splashing about in the bath at Karn".

## Days Eighteen and Nineteen

The anticyclone had pulled away eastwards, allowing fronts to edge in from the Atlantic. I thoroughly enjoyed a couple of days rest at home.

## Day Twenty

Summer's last hurrah. The high pressure rallied for a few days before finally collapsing. The catch was that now the wind was from the southwest, which is usually bad news in the West Highlands. But I knew what to do - go North! MWIS suggested a 30-hour weather window, midday today through to 6PM tomorrow, when the chance of cloud free Munros was 80 - 90%. That'll do nicely.

And for once there was no need for an early start. Leaving the flat in Perth at 7AM was a rare luxury, which saw me to Karn before 9AM for coffee and

a chat with the Elliots and the Daykins. On past Inverness and the sun was breaking through, even if the cloud was still low on the hills. Once more I found myself photographing Carbisdale Castle, but this time in sunshine. Approaching Lairg, a livestock auction of sheep was in full swing; I really should have stopped to have a look around. But I was a man on a mission, and at 11:45AM was off up Ben Klibreck, starting in Strath Vagastie.

There is a path all the way, starting out as an ATV track, which has the reputation for being very boggy, but today the peat was crumbling to dust under my boots. But the forecast proved to be way off beam. When I started, the summit was beginning to clear, and with further improvement expected, I thought I was in clover. It was a surprise when the cloud came lower, became thicker, and wetted everything it touched. The top duly reached - it is a graveyard of broken trig pillars - I returned the same way.

## Day Twenty One

I had the bothy to myself and enjoyed a decent kip. Up at 6AM with the light, I was away an hour later, walking back to the car.

Here I discovered that the temperature was already clocking in at 16 deg C; later, listening to the news, I discovered that today had been the warmest September day in Scotland for 115 years!

The sun was breaking through the clouds as I started walking at 8AM towards Ben Loyal, taking the standard route past Ribigill farm. It's 45 minutes to where you start to ascend, and a fair part of that would be cyclable, but it's not that far and the early morning midge assault had dissuaded me from taking the time to assemble the 'bike from the back

of my car.

So, it was hoofing it all the way, following a well-worn path past some aircraft wreckage. The path died before the north – south spine of the hill, gained by wading through thick vegetation. There are several granite tors up here, and the actual summit, An Caisteal, is a great fin of rock, split by several crack lines. Checking later, I found that these are not recorded as climbs in my old 2004 edition of the SMC's 'Northern Highlands – North' guidebook, but my growing excitement quickly dissipated when, on checking with 'UKC', I found that they had already been climbed, at E2 and E3 respectively. Clean, unclimbed rock is so rare in Britain these days that climbers will lug their kit up from sea level to 2,500 ft. just to climb a couple of 10m. crack lines!

The sun was shining on top, but the air was very hazy. A few snaps to prove I was there, and then back the same way, returning to the car at midday.

I headed west. At Hope I turned off onto the minor road that runs above Loch Hope past the foot of Ben Hope and on to Altnaharra. The parking below the short way up Ben Hope was crowded, and I had to wait a few minutes while the driver of a big-arsed RV tried to fit his vehicle into a space too small to take it. Subsequently I met him on the path, coming up while I was going down; he had been obliged to park a mile away! Serves him right for bringing his pride and joy to an unsuitable place. I, on the other hand, slotted my tiny Aygo onto the verge right by the sign reading 'This way up Ben Hope.

Starting at 1PM, I was up and back down by 4PM, though I cannot claim not to have broken a sweat. It was warm and humid, and I drank the better part of two litres of water in the process. The initial path

doesn't look too bad from the road, but it's well hidden in rank vegetation. The fact is, it's heavily eroded, wet - even now, three weeks into a drought - and altogether unpleasant. On the plus side, it passes some lovely wee waterfalls, and hawthorn trees groaning under their weight of berries; perhaps we're in for a hard winter. Higher up the path opens out, and after some wandering about to get past the first steepness, makes a beeline for the summit trig. While I was going up, everybody else was going down, so I had the top to myself. The weather was slowly going off, this morning's sunshine and blue skies replaced by a grey - but bright - overcast.

The car park was virtually deserted when I moved on south again, taking a photo stop at Dun Dornaigil broch.

On the lonely, quiet road to Altnaharra my car thermometer peaked at 24 deg C. More coffee and Internet at the hotel, then I headed for home, the roads becoming quieter still.

Before going to bed, I felt the hairs on one of my legs moving. Looking down, I was horrified to see a gigantic deer tick crawling up, in search of a good place to latch on. With a shudder of disgust, I plucked the bastard thing off and crushed it. Unbelievably, the same thing happened again – twice - before I went to bed at midnight.

In the morning I had been religious about spraying my shorts clad legs with 'Smidge', and that usually keeps the nymph and sheep ticks off, but apparently not these buggers.

What a day – what a three weeks!

## TV Review: “Snowflake Mountain” (Netflix)

Mick Harris

My knowledge of reality TV is somewhat limited, but by pure fluke I ended up watching an extract from a new series called ‘Snowflake Mountain’ and, from a glimpse of some familiar fells in the background, rapidly inferred that it takes place in the Lake District! The premise of the series is that a bunch of excessively entitled young people, expecting to be pampered in a luxury resort, are dumped instead in the savage wilderness. Through their over-privileged eyes this presents a vision of unspeakable purgatory. Actually, their campsite-from-hell beside a beautiful tarn looks pretty idyllic to me, somewhere south of Grizedale Forest by the look of it, and with views to the Coniston Hills and Langdales.

The narrative is clearly being set on a course towards ultimate redemption, as the bitterly resentful ‘snowflakes’ are initially put through a series of tasks by a pair of American ‘survival experts’. The tasks include such gruelling challenges as ‘walk half a mile with a small rucsac’, ‘paddle across a lake’, and ‘climb up a tree’. Also evident is a nasty exploitative element typical of the genre, but hey, we get to enjoy the spectacle of hapless chubsters humiliating themselves by falling over in the mud! I must admit I skipped quite a lot of the series at this point, going straight to the penultimate episode which promised excitement in the form of the final challenge: ‘climbing a mountain’ ... the prospect of which struck genuine terror into the hearts of those for whom the shopping mall was more familiar territory.

So, which mighty peak would be chosen to provide the ultimate test of their rigorous boot-camp training? It turned out this was... er, Pike

o’Stickle, and it was to be conquered via a two-day expedition involving a ‘Base Camp’ near the top of Stake Pass. Reaching the camp was far from straightforward with plenty of histrionics from the snowflakes in the face of unrelenting hardship: the mountain unexpectedly turns out to be fairly uphill; it rains a bit; lip gloss is mislaid; many tears are shed. The mountain rescue is called out for a tantrum-induced self-inflicted injury...

Eventually, spurred on by a possible large cash prize, the team succeed in reaching the top of ‘The Mountain’ and there is some nice drone footage in lovely weather. At this point, despite my hardened cynicism, I was quite touched by the reaction of the snowflakes as they seemed to sincerely appreciate their achievement. And earlier there had been genuine delight in the emergence from their base camp tents into a world of sunshine and sparkling peaks. I doubt if any of the participants experienced a sufficient epiphany to cause them to renounce their vacuous consumerist ways, but at least they now know the outside world exists. Their initially woeful level of ignorance of the natural world is actually quite scary.

Any volunteers to participate in series two?

*The author celebrates his own conquest of Snowflake Mountain (aka Pike o’Stickle), achieved in a single push from the valley and without porters or bottled oxygen.*



# Walking With Friends

Mike Cudahy

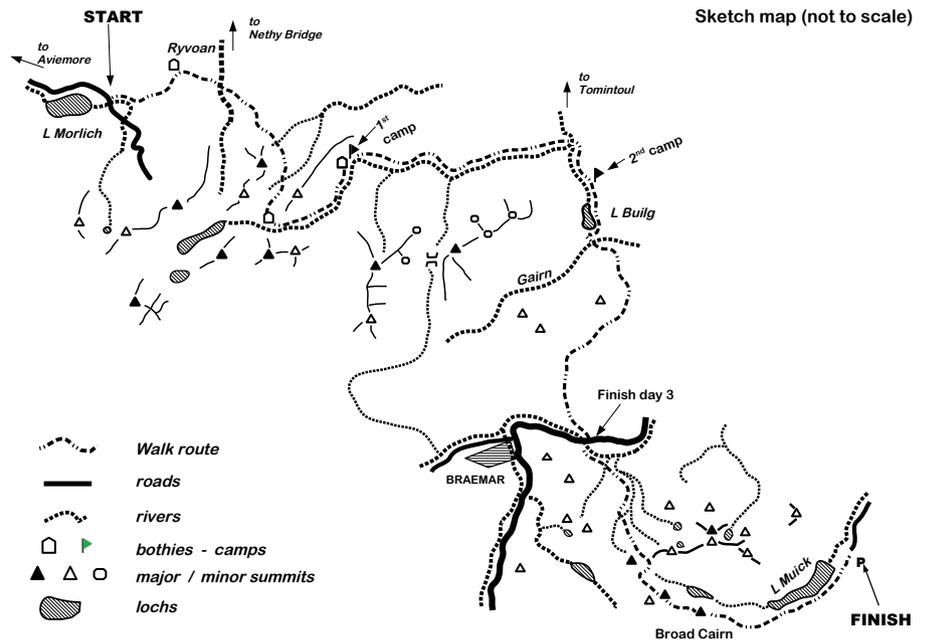
This particular walk was the echo of a distant love affair. In 1977, with friends, I'd walked over the four-thousand-foot peaks in Lochaber and continued across country to climb the Cairngorm 'Fours' as a long continuous walk. In 1988 the love affair deepened as a friend and I added the Grey Corries and Ben Alder before going further east beyond the Cairngorm Fours to Beinn a'Bhuird and Ben A'an, again as a continuous venture.

Old loves never die and, after doing a multi-day (I stopped overnight) 80 mile walk to celebrate my 80 years, that distant echo sounded once more. I obviously couldn't manage the Scottish 'Fours' anymore, but perhaps I could follow the west to east line of the route at low level? In 2021 I completed just such a traverse from Lochaber to the Cairngorms connecting routes along the valleys. Now, I had planned an extension, as in 1988, which would take me a little beyond the central Cairngorms to Glen Muick below Lochnagar.

It was a perfect early morning at Glenmore, tourists were yet abed and under the trees the air smelled green and fresh. By Lochan Uaine cheerful dogs exercising their owners were beginning to appear. The track out to Ryvoan and Bynack Stables is popular. Goodwill to all, but I don't much like 'popular'. At the long vanished Bynack Stables the Allt Garbh flowing down Strath Nethy was crossed, folk melted away and the landscape stretching to far horizons lay under the blue vault of the heavens.

The trail I followed was the line of an ancient Drove Road. Shaggy Highlanders in their plaids would have driven their shaggier cattle over this shoulder of Bynack More. Their final destination might well have been the distant markets of Callander or Crieff but, like me, they would be making shorter stages. At the Fords of A'an they might have spent a night under the stars, resting on the heather, wrapped in their plaids and probably sustained by a dram of 'uisge beatha' ('water of life'). At the Fords I would part company with the Drovers. They would have continued S along the Lairig an Laoigh (Pass of the Cattle), I would bear E following the course of the River A'an.

Dropping from the shoulder of Bynack More the path undulated pleasantly past Lochan Bhainne beneath the dark tors of the Barns of Bynack. A



less pleasant totter over some boulders of Bynack brought into view the Fords of A'an Refuge.

Loch A'an lies in a deeply incised glacial trough between Macdui and Cairngorm – it is at once symbol and essence of the Cairngorms. Towards the far end of the loch, Shelter Stone Crag presents an adamantine wall of rock. At its foot lies the



*Support crew in Glen Avon*

eponymous Shelter Stone howff. If you have not yet spent a night under the Shelter Stone, you are not yet a true mountaineer! I have imperative memories of the place; in fact, I nearly died there one winter 54 years ago.

I made a small detour to poke my nose into the refuge; quite an improvement from the turf-covered, earth-floored hen-house I'd nevertheless been pleased to escape into on several occasions. Emerging into the bright sunlight, I found I'd lost the path. As sole navigator this was embarrassing. After floundering through bog and boulders without finding the path I experienced a senior moment; no path must mean I'd turned west - a 180° error! Fortunately, a few synapses managed to synchronise and I turned to my compass ... I asked it where it thought east was. Its wise old needle told me east lay in my direction of travel and to adjust my glasses. The onward path was a snare and delusion, marginally better than elsewhere but very much a sometimes thing, up and down switchbacks with pitiless bottoms of bog and rock. At last, it debouched onto a sort of flood plain, still full of bog and boulders but mercifully horizontal.

Engrossed in plotting the convolutions of this mad path I was startled to see a kind of gnome approaching (poor eyesight and a lively imagination contribute much novelty to my inner life). It wasn't a gnome; it was a short German with a large sac – a dour German with short English at first. Thawing under my ancient charm, he eventually smiled (twice) and with an expansive gesture physically and verbally embraced the landscape. He had set off from Tomintoul which meant he'd already covered 18 miles, including 7 miles of tarmac, in heavy boots. It seemed unfriendly to warn him of what lay ahead, so I didn't ('Deine Wanderung ist schrecklich', perhaps). Chuckling merrily, it was in

high spirits that I spied the buildings at Faindouran.

At Faindouran the results of my meticulous planning bore fruit. On turning 80 I'd bought an electric mountain bike. I have more cunning plans than Baldrick and the relevant one was that my support team could use it to ferry out supplies. IB (aka the support team) had loaded the yak trailer, harnessed it to the eMTB and, like the gnome (sorry, German), had proceeded 16 miles from Tomintoul with only 2 unplanned dismounts (once in a ford, though). To recover her dignity, she had taken to the hills when I arrived, but had thought to leave out a profusion of goodies to restore the corporeal function. With the recent explosion of MTB's (disturbingly ubiquitous at times) I'd expected others to use the bothy on this rare weekend, but not even midges were in attendance. We ate inside but felt safer sleeping outside in a tent gifted to me by a friend – not so long ago, the gable end of the building had collapsed.



*An Caisteal, Ben Loyal*

There are conjunctions of time and space within which, briefly, we become the music in the harmony of Nature – such a morning was now tuning up. Blue arc of sweeping sky, limitless expanse of hills and the very waters singing, I distinctly heard a voice:

'Up lad, up, 'tis late for lying,

Hear the drums of morning play,

Hark remembered voices calling,

Who'll beyond the hills away?'



*Resting at Faindouran*

It was to be track tramping all day but counterbalancing the lack of underfoot challenge was the opportunity for full appreciation of the charms of the upper A'an. The vigorous waters of the river were constantly in view for the first few miles. Through the delicate foliage of birch and rowan, the froth and spume of turbulent rapids could be glimpsed. Intent on these eye-grabbing scenes I nearly stepped on a small, snake-like object. It 'froze'. Peering short-sightedly like Mr McGoo, I bent closer. This caused alarm and with some clever wiggles the object wiggled away. I decided it must have been a young adder. It had the appropriate 'jizz' but was only half adult size. Feeling unaccountably pleased I strode onwards, distant songs from the dancing waters rising and floating along with me.

Soon the dilapidated wooden structure of the 'Pony Hut' was reached. Its position offered the opportunity to pause and contemplate the



*Upper Glen Feardar*

elongated bowl of the Slochd Mor. Three miles away, at the termination of the Slochd, Mitre Ridge rises towards Beinn a'Bhuird. For years, Mitre Ridge was on my 'bucket list'. Age wore a hole in the bucket and some dreams dropped through. However, some bright cove once said, 'A man is never old until regrets replace his dreams.' I'm not proof against regrets, but I still hear the music, andante sostenuto. At this point, my eMTB, affectionately known as 'The Beast', hove into view, IB astride holding the reins, the yak holding assurance of further comfort.

The June sun was climbing higher when on cue a mitigating breeze wafted towards me from the E. Also wafting upwards was a busy gentleman, not on an eMTB. He was obviously on a mission and had pedalled past before I could satisfy my curiosity. He never re-passed me, so he must have been intent on following the short German up Death Valley ('Bon courage, mate', I thought). Surprisingly, but gratifyingly, on this perfect weekend he was not followed by anyone else.

The weather continued superb, the walking was easy, the solitude wrapped itself around and it was, I'm afraid, all growing a tiny bit tedious, when infant birch began to pop up at the side of the track, a susurration of murmuring waters tickled the receptors of my hearing aid and I remembered the Linn of A'an.

At this time of year, the Linn of A'an is both beautiful and spectacular; far lovelier than the Linn of Dee which exudes a perpetual air of menace. The crystalline granite over which the A'an flows reflected the gleam of the sun, and the white cascades of dancing turbulence heightened the water's blue purity. All this I viewed from above through the almost translucent greens of birch and



*Looking down Broad Cairn*

rowan.

Shortly after the Linn I strode on with sprightly step to where the A'an takes a sharp northward turn, a striking example of river capture. Approximately ten thousand years ago, the river continued S and E to join the river Don, then a moraine to the N was breached and the A'an escaped to join the river Spey.

In contrast to the A'an, I turned sharply S into the narrowing slot of Glen Builg.. Where the track crossed a ford, IB had set up camp. It was definitely hot now and, in accordance with the calamities common to man, I found the only place I could recline comfortably was sheltered from the cooling breeze. After the consolation of a pleasant paddle and a bit of indecent exposure I was about to address the problem of a brew, when I spotted herself returning to duty.

A certain jauntiness of gait spoke of a rewarding foray. Over a reviving brew she made me quite envious; braving some trackless and heathery slopes, she had tracked down a corrie espied on the map. On winning through, the corrie was revealed, spanning the hillside with a wall of granite. It was riven by a long cascade of spectacular plunging waters nourished by snowbanks lying high on the E flank of Ben A'an. Furthermore, it came complete with matching eagles. My maggot of envy melted in the joy of her relating.

Next day I awoke to a mug of tea held below my nose. The tent was in shadow. By the time I'd reached the tea leaves the slant of the rising sun made exit imperative. The day's walk began with a wade across the ford. With the ground very dry and the tracks hard, I find it helps to keep my feet well lubricated. Napoleon said an army marches on its

stomach. But he always rode a horse.

How tiresome, another perfect morning! There has been a heartening regrowth of trees in the narrow upper reaches of Glen Builg. This was early summer, the time of year when the greens seem to glow. The glen was a microcosm of wild beauty. I tried to enfold it into my wee camera. But nothing could capture that three-dimensional early morning ambience which called to the spirit through the gift of the senses.

At the head of the glen the Feith Laoigh, the burn falling from the hidden corrie, is crossed on large boulders, one of which tried to wobble me off. In times of meltwater spate, this place could be what a friend calls a 'Granny-stopper'. Being not only a Grandad, but also a 'Great', I merely wobbled. Glen Builg ends/starts at Loch Builg nestling in a col. Placid and serene today, it can be dark and brooding; you feel a hand waving 'Excalibur' would not be out of place. From Builg I had extensive views southwards as far as the blue ramparts of the Lochnagar massif. In the middle distance lay the uniform cone of Cullardoch and below me lay the attractive Gairn valley. The river Gairn flowing NE-wards makes in its infancy a determined, but ineffectual, effort to be captured by the Builg Burn before being deflected eastwards to join the Dee.

There was an estate vehicle parked on the bridge over the Gairn. There was also a pot of paint and a recently used paintbrush. The man previously painting the bridge was sitting on the bank admiring the view. This immediately disposed me to him. His Labrador, obviously not a guard dog, greeted me first. We were soon having a good blether. His enthusiastic knowledge of the environment, both particular and general, was impressive. It was laced with sufficient knowledge

that prompted me to surmise he perhaps had a degree in matters ecological. He was English and my guess, that he was escaping yon overcrowded place, was strengthened when, with a gesture reminiscent of the short German, he spread his arms and said, 'This is my office.'

I left him to his stiffening paintbrush and headed towards Culardoch; not, however, by the ancient drove route heading over the W side by the Bealach Dearg. I'd discovered a little used and therefore pleasantly grassy track across Culardoch's eastern flank. It was rougher and tougher but nestled modestly into the landscape. Eventually, it would have taken me to Inver on the A93, once an ancient hostelry, now sadly gentrified. I peeled off to the right and began a long descent to re-join the route coming from the Bealach Dearg.

As rough tracks go, it wasn't bad, but my knees were beginning to protest. At last, I stopped and reached for my painkillers. After probing every nook and orifice I realised I'd left them behind. 'Through suffering shall the spirit be released', as I might have said to Reinhold Messner (if I'd had the opportunity). To forestall self-pity, I found a comfy niche and broke out the day's rations.

Four days ago I'd packed 3 slices of wroughty home-baked bread and 3 lumps of 'mousetrap' cheddar in three separate daily packets. Today's was the last ration. It had not travelled well. The separately packed tomato was fine. The cheese had undergone interesting developments, but the bread had lost its charm. I munched away and was not reluctant to leave a generous lump for the busy ants.

On rejoining the main track my mind was diverted by the mixed woodland on either side. Completely dead old Caledonian pines stood like stiff sentinels,

stark against the clear sky. In lush contrast, a vigorous re-wilding at their feet beguiled the eye. Against this vibrant background my route rose ever before me. A last climb, then below lay the valley of the Dee; the Dee, whose waters flow from everlasting springs on the highest plateau in the country.

A warm descent through yet more vigorous regeneration led to the Invercauld estate road. Here I was able to mount the Beast and canter easily to the support vehicle on the A93. I was fortunate to have a good friend in nearby Braemar, who had offered shelter for the night. The shower and comfortable bed were much appreciated. However, the sudden transition from silent miles to tourist bustle seemed to disturb the echoes in my mind. In a vague kind of way, I felt I'd been walking the avenues of memory. I needed to get back to them.

I was up early next morning anxious to re-connect with my journey. Each day seemed to vie with the previous one to produce the perfect morning. The setting for this final one was Ballochbuie forest by Balmoral. The area is dedicated to regeneration of native Caledonian pine. There are still many mature trees and, with a temperature inversion, it was invigoratingly fresh under their canopy. Penetrating shafts of sunlight gave promise of a warm day to come.

Climbing steadily, I glimpsed Queen Victoria's 'Chinese Bridge' spanning the falls of the Garbh Allt. It was her whim to peer closely at the falls from a place of safety (thank goodness she didn't fall in!). I climbed steadily to where the track levelled out. Even at this height (ca. 1500-1750 ft), there are sturdy Caledonians, short in stature but broad in girth, tempting banks of moss beneath. Gradually leaving all trees behind I arrived at another pony



*Last lap alongside Loch Muick*

hut. Here the sun was so hot, I had to ungird the loins and apply sun cream. Smelling unusually exotic I wafted along the Feindallacher Burn, looking for a spot to cross where I was least likely to fall in. Thus engrossed, I was startled to feel something warm and wet poking my leg. I turned to find a happy hound under the partial control of a well-spoken gent. He was anxious to get my opinion of where best to cross the burn. There was so little water he could have crossed anywhere, but it gave me a chance to practise my experienced mountaineer's frown. I pointed at some rocks and, when he was safely across, I followed him.

He was another man on a mission, hoping to do a circuit over Lochnagar and return to his start point. He was experienced, but unfamiliar with the area. His intention of coming down the SW flank of Lochnagar rather appalled me. This would give him a thousand feet of boulders and heather, but, as I said, he would pass Sandy Loch, an attractive bivvi spot. It would have been far less trouble to retrace his steps entirely, but why spoil his fun? Safely across the burn I followed a good but eroded stalkers path beyond a cairn at 2400 ft and then more faintly to the broad col at 3000 ft between the twins of t'Sagairt Mor and Beag.

I now had an immense sweep of country opening up before me. Just six weeks ago, from this very spot, I could have skied for miles. Overall, the land is high but the angles forgiving. In another life I'd skied with a friend from the Glenshee ski centre to Glen Muick. However, I now noted clouds gathering in the south and the wind was rising from somewhere north of east, not a good direction in these parts. It was a reminder that this high, barren landscape could in winter become a howling desolation. The wind, curving keenly round the shoulder of t'Sagairt Mor, eased as I struck south

for Cairn Bannoch. The walking was easy and I got into a pleasant rhythm. I might have threatened the 20min/mile barrier had not Cairn Bannoch thrown blocks of granite across my path.

With no mist around I could plainly see Broad Cairn ahead. I was once up here with three friends in a white-out. There was no problem; we were all elite mountain marathon competitors. After a time, we came across footprints going our way. As they were breaking trail for us we followed them. It was, after all, comforting to know other folk thought this was the right way to go. Then, someone remarked on the coincidence that their footwear seemed to match our own. You know the saying, 'The man who hasn't walked round in a circle must have used his compass.' I'm afraid we were more amused than embarrassed.

The memories floated away as the summit defences of Broad Cairn tested the power of the NHS's finest replacements and Leki's recently repaired fibreglass. They carried me to the top where, to my surprise, a pair of fellow wrinklies were sheltering from the now impertinent wind. 'I was here 30 years ago,' remarked the aged crone. 'So was I,' I responded, 'but I didn't see you.' In view of the rising wind and maybe ditto blood pressure, they had decided on an immediate return to Loch Muick. They would be grateful for directions to the 'Flash of Lightning' path. A short Q & A session revealed the 'Flash' had been their route of ascent. (I suppose 30 years is a long time and they had not walked in a circle, yet.)

While I was peering down at the murderously descending boulder field that wasn't here 30 years ago, a young woman underdressed for a jog in the park, likewise asked directions to the 'Flash'. Though an apostate, I had a superstitious feeling that I might just have been offered the opportunity

of, if not a last act of contrition, at least a last act of kindness. I bit my tongue and gave clear directions, even pointing to the pathway below. I teetered off slowly. When, after a moment, I glanced back, the angel, sorry ... young woman, had vanished. I reached the path eventually, geriatric intacta so to speak. At the col leading to the 'Flash' were neither young woman nor wrinklies. There was, however, an impressive young man, who having ridden, unassisted, from Glen Clova was launched into a Billy Bunter sized meat pie. He said he would look out for my missing trinity on his way down the 'Flash'. I asked him what it was like. He said he'd soon find out. I suddenly felt very old. I then reflected that by not riding down vertiginous slopes I was still around to be old.

The alternative route down to Loch Muick lay some 800ft above the lochside path. It provided spectacular views towards the head of Loch Muick and the glen's continuation to the cliffs of Creagan Dubh Loch where lurk classics such as 'The Mousetrap' and 'King Rat'. On one wild March day I'd attempted to reach the Dubh Loch. Bending ever forward against the furious wind I was surprised to find myself airborne, glider fashion. I wasn't aloft for long, after a bumpy landing I retreated like a windblown leaf.

A gentle airborne descent to the loch would have been nice, but wings are not yet available on the NHS. This was the end of my journey. I concentrated hard and with my best eye and skilful play of poles made it to the broad track which encircles Loch Muick. I was screwing up the wotsits for a last and now tourist strewn mile, when a whinny revealed the Beast hitched to an information post. How it got there is another story, but it was wearing a combination (lock). A slow rolling of mental tumblers was required before with a 'Heigh-ho-

Silver' I was away and soon cruising past footsore pilgrims (at least I hope they were, it's a very stony track).

As I sped along borne inexorably back to the quotidian, the rushing air began to scatter my celebration of memories. In the past few days of solitary travel I had not been alone, friends had been with me always; always their voices in the wind, their laughter in the living waters and always their presence on the shadowed horizons of memory. Rest in peace.

## Yawash Sar I

*Nick Hurdall-Smith*

More than 1,400 people had died in Pakistan and millions forced from their homes due to terrible monsoon flooding: three times the usual rainfall. Under local advisement, it we decided our expedition to unclimbed peaks in the Ghujerab mountains could still go ahead. The post-monsoon season proved an excellent time to visit; in the main we had cloudless skies with little wind. Karim Hayat, our guide, had been before in September 2013 and also had good weather. The monsoon itself doesn't seem to affect this area much.



From Shimshal, we walked north for several days towards the Chinese border. Once past the 5,000m Boisum pass, we headed down (and occasionally up) through persistent snow and, after endless plodding, reached a shepherds' hut where we stopped to regroup. Our differing pace had led to gaps in the procession, and we felt a little out of touch in the clag. Squeezing inside the tiny hut

with the porters, we ate hot food and talked to Jalal and Bulbul whilst they heated water for chai. Wakhi is their language, also spoken in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and Kashgar in Xinjiang.

'Chiz hol he? How are you?'

It was nerve-wracking to see one's bags carried for three days over mountain pass, river, and snow. I saw my donkey refuse a number of times. On its back were all my diabetic supplies, bar my insulin, which I was carrying. The donkeys carry 40kg, which I'm told is a reasonable weight. Karim told me privately that he much preferred human porters as kit can so easily be damaged. But the porters prefer donkeys as they are paid for two loads. In fact, we only had one real porter who carried 20kg.

Karim, now an AC member, had been a porter for Victor Saunders and Mick Fowler in 1992. He was also in the team that supported Tom Ballard in 2019 but, with forebodings about the conditions, he descended before Tom was tragically killed. He was later flown out to Turkey to take part in the film about Tom and his mother Alison Hargreaves. In June 2013 he had been at camp two on Nanga Parbat when terrorists gunned down 11 climbers. As he descended to base camp in the afternoon, the army were flying in and out. Later that year on a trip to the Ghujerab he soloed a 5,836m peak, which he named Umeed Sar. Umeed means 'hope': his response to the Nanga Parbat tragedy, which proved difficult for him personally. It was from there he took his photo of our current objective, Yawash Sar I, which sowed the seeds of this expedition.

Bulbul, our sirdar, had climbed K2 earlier in 2022.

He had also been there in 2021 with Rick Allen and Jerry Gore, when Rick died. He had helped to bury Rick's body with Jerry. The mountaineering community is a small one.

Base camp was located near a cool clear river running down from the West Ghidims glacier. Our five climbers' tents quickly formed a clump amongst a series of side streams, closer to the centre of the valley. Speeches were made, tips paid, and our trusty porters retreated. I spent the next few hours trying to put my tent into some semblance of organised chaos. We took turns to enjoy the 'shower'. Karim set up the toilet, complete with booby trap: a large rock intended to offer the



chance to stand or crouch. A fortnight later this collapsed into the (now less deep) pit with me on it. Luckily, I was switched on, and performed a dyno to safety.

Tom Bell, paramedic, and AC member went on for days about putting all our mountain food in a barrel to deter the mountain mice. I was sceptical.

There was little wildlife up there besides yaks and a solitary eagle, alpine choughs, wagtails, and the odd spider. Yet Tom was right. Soon there was evidence and then sightings of a 'mountain rat', as Karim called it, mostly in the mess tent. I spotted the culprit making its entrance and spontaneously grabbed it with no clue what to do with it. As I threw it outside, the scoundrel sank its teeth into my finger, drawing blood.

Some of us recovered sufficiently to do some exploratory climbing. And what a mountain we had above us! Our first task, once the weather and snow conditions improved, was to explore access to Yawash Sar I from the south. We recced and then with heavy bags set up a camp at 5,200m. No one, as far as we knew, had ever stepped into this valley. Our high camp was on a moraine below and to one side of an icefall, which we then climbed in three easy pitches. Above was a huge bowl of pristine firm snow whose lower section was heavily crevassed. Our eyes were drawn by a snow gully on the left that led to a long and involved ridge. Karim was keen on attacking the south face front-on, but the start looked steep. We returned to camp at dusk, happy to have got to a high point of 5,400m.

It was cold during the night. With the door open to avoid condensation, the temperature in the tent was about -6°C. Feeling parched, we drank as much hot water as possible and at 4.20am headed back up the icefall with the moon and stars ablaze. A steady pace kept the cold at bay and soon the sun rose, though we remained in shadow. Approaching the face and the steep ice leading to it, the route started to look more amenable. It was 8.30am when the sun hit us, just as I was about to lead the steep lower section of the south facet.

The belay at the top of the ice slope that led to the

first rock section was not pleasant or safe. When the first rays of the sun hit the face high above, rock and ice started to come loose and occasionally a real 'whizzer' went past, uncomfortably close. In my mind there was no sensible reason to continue. We called a halt at about 5,550m, feeling disappointed. Nigel Bassam, who had been the least keen on this route, now seemed the most frustrated. Having been hit in the face and chest by smaller missiles, I was glad to be out of the line of fire. We were back at our tents by 11.30am and Karim headed down to base camp, complaining of a bad headache.

Sleep helped to raise morale. Everything in this valley was unclimbed apart from Karim's Umeed Sar and we hoped that with more climbers at the high camp, we could change that. Nigel and I left at 4.20am next morning for another summit bid. We took the same route to the upper glacier, but this time turned right to climb over a bergschrund and up a steep snow and ice slope, hoping to get on to the south spur of the south-east ridge. It felt like classic north face climbing up several hundred meters, something neither of us were really in practice for. But we made steady progress moving together, huffing, and puffing, with the altitude weighing heavily on us. As the angle eased, ice and névé turned to softer snow and I made a bucket seat to belay Nigel up to join me at the col just after 9am. After a short break, we crossed another bergschrund and finally reached rock.

From here I had planned to tackle the ridge direct, steeply at first, in the hope we would reach some easy ground. The ridge certainly looked flatter higher up. We had also hoped that stepping onto rock would be a pleasure. It was not. We had expected loose rock, but this was dangerously so. Climbing the south ridge of the Strahlhorn three weeks earlier had been great training for this.

We slowly and gingerly gained height to 6,000m, tiptoeing through the choss and my heart was in my mouth committing to steeper moves. Every hold was suspect. Where possible I tossed bread-bin sized rocks far down onto the glacier to help clear the route for Nigel.



We soon had more problems. Light snow was falling, and we had lost our good rhythm moving slowly up with 15m of rope between us. There was still no wind. I started to contemplate a night out; there was still so far to go. I also looked down the other (eastern) side of the col and wondered if that might offer a good line of descent. As 1pm approached, we decided the dangers were too great, the ground we needed to cover too involved and our progress too slow. The best option was to back off and go down the way we had come, a much harder prospect than climbing it.

Nigel climbed down first, placing gear where possible, with me following. Solid gear placements were few and far between. We managed to set up two abseils lower down, the first from a block that looked large enough to stay glued to the mountain.

It was a huge relief to get back to the steep snow. Even after this the descent was not plain sailing. After lowering Nigel from the top bucket seat, we made seven 60m abseils from Abalakovs. It felt endlessly long and tense, as tiredness and dehydration set in.

Plodding slowly down, weaving our way through the snow-covered crevasse field, I was grateful for the tracks we had made there. We felt deflated yet happy to be on easier ground. Luckily it was cool again and the snow bridges felt solid. We reached camp just before dark at 5.40pm, welcomed by mugs of tea and cheery faces. It had been an intense and exhausting 14 hours.

On the first attempt, it was me who had made the decision to turn round, with Nigel wanting to continue. On the second, the opposite was the case. Both were the right decision. With two attempts behind us we were starting to appreciate the scale of the mountain. It was bitterly cold that night: -20°C outside the tent. The stars were shining, and we had one more good day forecast before snow was due. I finally got warm wearing all the clothes I had inside my sleeping bag with my insulin stashed safely in my pocket. A Nalgene hot water bottle by the toes was a game changer.

The weather held and sunshine hit our tent soon after 7am. I was suffering from mountaineer's foot, which Tilman describes as the inability at times to put one foot in front of another. We agreed to go down to base camp to rest and ponder our next move, arriving back in time for the most lavish lunch prepared by our outstanding cooks Abbas and Waseem: mutton korai cooked in milk cream and fresh tomatoes with chillies and spices, pasta, apples, and coffee.

Snow did indeed come, and the weather set in properly. The slopes were clagged in and snow flurries swept across camp. Paul Winder described it as 'a grim Tibetan wind'. I tried to keep us off the topic of what to do next for a day, so that all could have a proper breather. I knew I needed one.



We had time and a weather window ahead for one more attempt on Yawash Sar I. As we approached high camp once again, we spotted Karim and Wasim descending after the first ascent of Peak 5742m, which they named Uncle and Nephew Peak. Karim and Wasim were over the moon. This was the first success for the team, and I was delighted for them. Nigel and I puffed our way back up the icefall to drop some kit and make a plan. Hope and doubt seemed in balance. The weather was due to turn again soon so we had to make the most of the window. Back at high camp, we set the alarm for 1am and were in bed by 6pm.

The temperature inside the tent was -10°C when we woke and much colder out. These felt like conditions for frostbite. Putting on crampons that we'd left at the bottom of the icefall wasn't

easy with cold hands. Once underway again we gradually felt better and began to move well. In fact, we moved so well we were in a position by 4am to start the steep ascent to the point where we'd turned back the previous week. Except we couldn't see the face and made the mistake of going too far left. I followed what I thought were our tracks, now rendered less clear by the previous day's sun, but they turned out to be the imprints of a falling boulder.



Sensing our position wasn't right, we hollowed out a seat with our axes to await the imminent dawn. I reached for my blood glucose sensor, switched it on, fumbled and dropped it. Down it went, its light visible in the darkness as it slid down over 100m onto the glacier below.

The first glimmers of dawn revealed the error of our ways: we had gone too far left and were at the foot of an inviting gully leading to the south-west ridge. We'd spied this as a potential option beforehand and now it seemed too arduous to traverse right over steep ice and snow to our original line. Next my insulin pump began its tell-tale squeal,

indicating it had failed. This would continue for the next five hours until we reached easier ground, allowing me to intervene. I would have to rely on injections today, thanks to the backup insulin pen safely stowed in my inner pocket.

Up we went, moving well together over crisp névé and a lovely section of mixed ice and rock. When we were able to stop, we turned to admire the beautiful dawn colours, accompanied by the scream of my failed pump. As we gained height, conditions underfoot gradually worsened, definitely worse than the slope opposite that we'd climbed five days before. We also realised our line was threatened by a large cornice, so we opted for an even steeper line to the right. Névé gradually turned to powder, and we found ourselves swimming and digging for placements. Our pace slackened and our calves burned. Then the sun hit our backs. That took the chill off but made the snow even worse.

I felt ready to give up, but Nigel's encouragement kept me going. We finally reached the ridge at 8.30am and sat exhausted to warm ourselves on the sunny rocks at the bottom of a vertical but amenable looking wall. The view to the south-west was beautiful, with every peak for miles visible, so many unclimbed. And I now finally had the chance to remove my squealing insulin pump and silence it with my knife.

The continuation of the ridge was a series of rock towers many of which we hoped to bypass on snow and included a significant descent before the final steepening to the summit. We were close to 5,900m and even more aware of the vertical distance down to the glaciers either side of the ridge. Gearing up, I launched myself at the first steep pitch. The rock was sturdier and more inclined to stick to the mountain. I placed some good gear and arrived at

a shelf of precariously balanced frisbee-sized rocks. Knees before crampons, in the hope of not braining Nigel, I made a belay to the side and Nigel followed.



We knew this was only a taste of what was to come, and our fatigue suddenly felt all the greater. Hope was replaced with doubt and, after a short discussion, resignation. We had managed just one pitch on rock and given the hours it had taken us to get to this point, we both agreed it was game over. We cut some tat and abseiled from a solid block back to our pleasant rock perch above the cornice.

The descent became a trial. The ice was too rotten for Abalakovs and the snow too loose for bollards. So, I returned to the ridge and descended further to find better ice. It soon became clear we would have to abseil down the rock to the left of the ridge below us. This became an adventure in itself. The ropes kept catching on loose rock, so we looked for the steepest line of descent to make things easier. By the fifth abseil we'd reached steeper ground but one of the ropes got caught and as I

tried to free it, the rope prised a block the size of a car wheel off. The air was filled with the reek of cordite and the rope was damaged, requiring some nimble but time-consuming rope work to tie it off and continue. I warned Nigel, while he was still in earshot that he would have to abseil past a knot.

Another three abseils with the same issues of falling rock and snagging ropes got us to the glacier and we returned to our small gear stash. Nigel, for whom nothing is too much trouble, ignored his fatigue in a vain search for the reader I had dropped earlier. I sat slumped on a solitary rock. Then we began the steady plod down to our high camp after a punishing 16-hour day.

I studied photos taken from the slopes opposite and realised how far we still had to go when we turned around. We were way too far left and had been better placed to attempt Peak 6027m (which I'm sure is higher). A harsher critic might have said we were on the wrong mountain. I was even more convinced that the best route up Yawash Sar I was up its south face, preferably with a higher camp below it and the ability to locate the start of the route in the dark. And perhaps a double helmet.

I woke at 6am to find light snow falling. Karim popped a cheerful face through the door to ask what our plans were. We decided to leave our camp in place, descend to base for a rest and return to explore and bag a new but easier peak. As for Yawash Sar I, the joke was over for this year. The mood in base camp was subdued with lots of chat about going home. We spent the morning chewing the fat, practising knots, and teaching each other different ways of tying them.

Nigel, Wasim, Karim and I dragged ourselves away at 2.15pm next day for high camp and were in bed

by 7pm. When the alarm went off at 2am neither of us felt like getting up but an hour later we were marching up the Ghidims glacier and towards the col marked at 5,644m on Jerzy Wala's map. Nigel and I both felt super-tired. The weather was glorious but incredibly cold and all of us had cold feet. I was tempted to turn back as mine simply would not warm up.

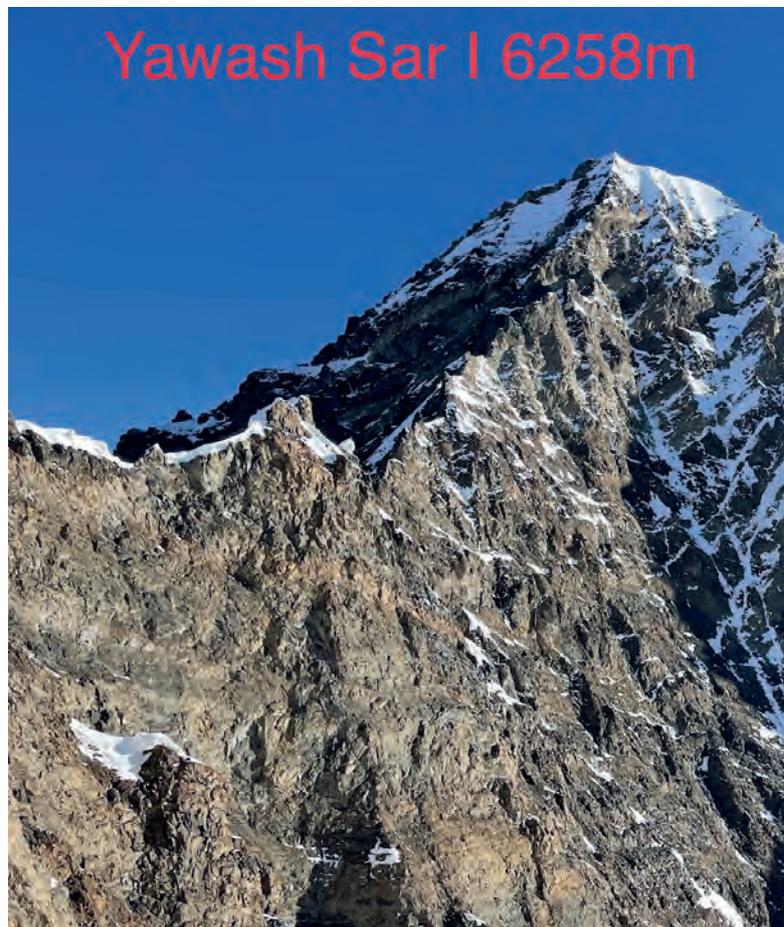


Once at the col we turned left and taking care to stay away from cornices to the east we headed to the summit in shade, swimming through deep snow. Our feet got even colder but we pressed on and reached the summit at about 8am, too tired and cold to feel elated even though the moment felt significant. Karim suggested we name our peak KNN Sar. Views were spectacular, of Yawash Sar II peeping over Peak 6072m and numerous others. There was no question of continuing along the corniced ridge to the next peak. We were simply too cold, and energy was lacking.

Back at camp soon after 9.30am, Nigel and I retreated inside the tent, now like a greenhouse, to thaw out and snooze the day away, still exhausted from our earlier attempts. It snowed in the night,

and we woke at 5, having been horizontal for nearly 20 hours. We delayed a decision about what to do but then the heavens opened, and snow really started coming down. We did all we could to pack from within as the snow built up and a big avalanche rumbled. Then we emerged to cram everything into our sacks and, by the time we were ready to go, the weather had started to brighten.

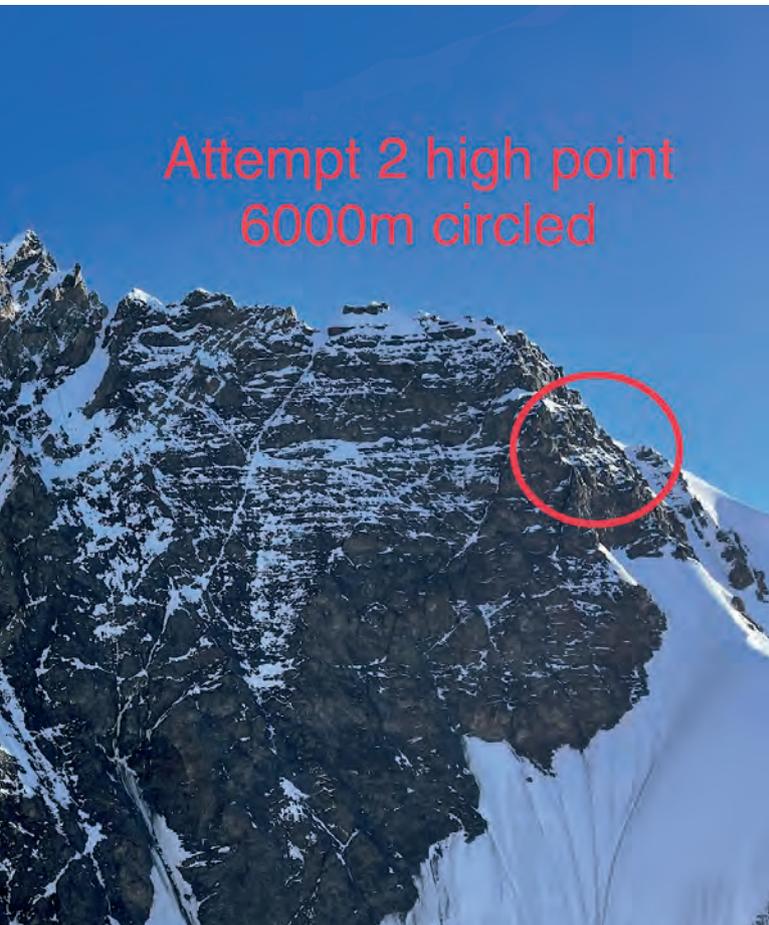
Our descent was beautiful, even warm, and gave us a chance to bid farewell to our home, on and off, for the past week or so. The sun did its best to burn through the clag and with the fresh snow gave us some atmospheric views. We got a final glimpse of



Yawash Sar I. Maybe we will be back.

Winter had come to base camp, bringing blustery snow flurries, and biting cold. It was the first time snow had settled there. The forecast suggested it would not be radically better in the morning, so it made sense to start our return a day early. Thankfully we woke to blue skies to start the journey home. It was no less stunning in reverse: the scale of the landscape was immense and at the Boisum pass we met a herd of yaks we'd seen before from the valley.

On the way we stopped at the base camp of an



Austrian couple and their team. Karim knew the guides and were given a warm welcome with tea and biscuits. They were at the beginning of their trip, hoping to climb some established routes nearby but were struggling with altitude. Then we continued. Light snow was falling on our last day, but the weather improved, and the sun came out. We met a friendly shepherd who made us tea. He was on his way to the shieling at Mandikshlakh (4129m) to tend his 50 sheep. He told us how he had seen a snow leopard here the previous year and also a pack of five wolves. Eagles, he said, were a threat to the sheep.

Almost three weeks after leaving we were back in Shimshal. The village was more autumnal, colours that contrasted beautifully with the snowy peaks above. Back in Hunza, we discovered that disaster had struck the Austrian team close to the Boisum pass; an avalanche had left one dead and another injured. We had been the last to see them and it was hard to process the news. The route they were climbing involved a narrow valley with snow on both sides, which must have been loaded by the recent falls. After dinner Karim produced some Hunza water, made from apricots and mulberries, which we drank with two of his close friends. We raised a glass to our Austrian friends.



# Images of the Life of the Club



1. FRCC Committee Meeting at Birkness - September 2023

2. Stuart Bradley, Wendy Stirrup and Dave Hyslop on the exposed traverse after the abseil on Pinnacle Ridge, Sgùrr nan Gilleann, shortly after rain. May 22 Skye meet

3. Mark Gratton in the Slovak Tatras (unusually without his chainsaw)

4. Wendy at Pillar

5. Janet climbing the Onedin Line Jack Scout Cove on a splendid November afternoon



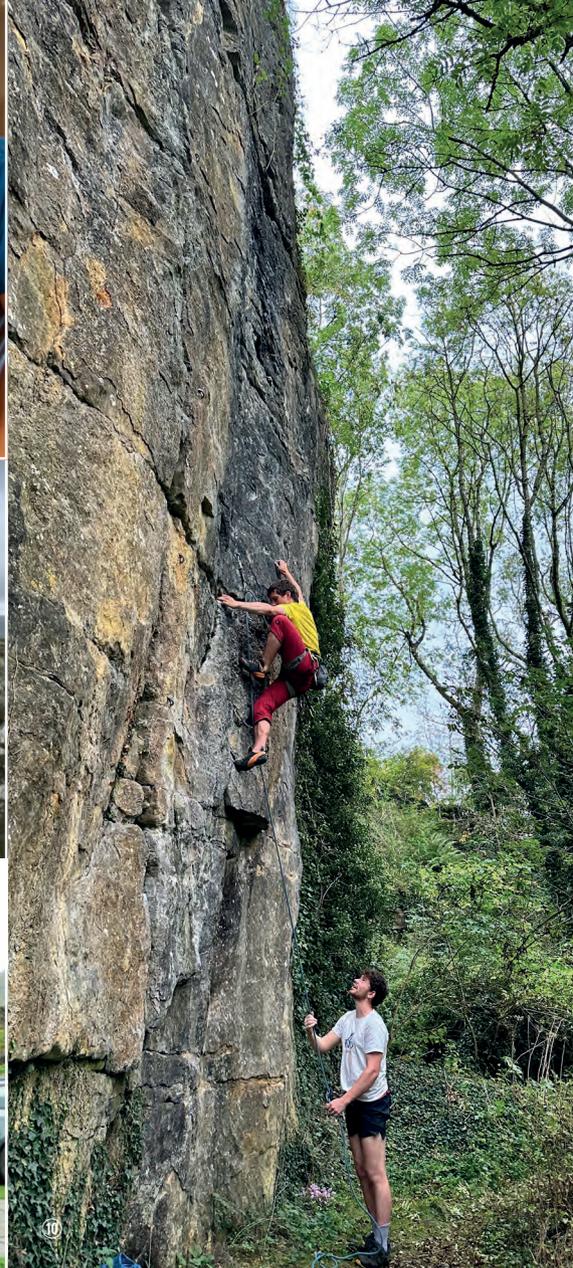
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10



9

- 6. Rawhead welcome meet, July 2023, with masterchef David Dixon on the right
- 7. Welcome meet Rawhead July 23
- 8. FRCC 2023 meet at High Moss, Duddon Valley
- 9. New Year's meet - Merrie, Stu, Wendy and Nina at Kendal wall
- 10. Alasdair and Stu on a tricky little number at the aesthetic Coalhill Quarry



11. Pie

12. Brackenclose Easter 2024

13. Dan McCrerie on Bosigran Ridge

14. Richard and John - the Great Gift meet June 2024

15. Ian sorting out the star gazing

16. 2023 BMC Youth meet at Rawhead

17. Helen and Ian on Honister Wall

18. Cornwall meet 2023

19. Aspirants meet at Birkness

20. VP on Boomerang Gully, Stob Coire nan Lochain -  
Winter meet at Waters 2024









23



28



29



31



30

21. Dave Till on the East face of Cajavilca, Cordillera Blanca.

22. Young members meet 2022

23. Jes, Dave and Chris (Mr IT) at Awesome Walls

24. Senja ice climbing - Nick Phillips

25. Jake Everett leading Valkyrie at the Roaches on the 'School's Out' meet

26. Rawhead woodpile 2024

27. Morocco meet 2024

28. Ian Bradley and James Gregory at Intake Quarry

29. Nikki Hamerton climbing Hibiscus Market (6a) on Spartan Wall, Kalymnos, October 2023

30. The Great Gift meet - summit of Great Gable, June 2024.

31. Winter wall meets



*New Routes*

*Ron Kenyon*

*50th Anniversary Ascent of Barnacle Bill, Armathwaite -  
Ron Kenyon pointing at crucial cam (5 cams used instead of two points of aid on first ascent)*

Boogie Wonderland (E4),  
Chapel Crag, Buttermere



New routes continue to appear around the Lakes and even new crags are being developed. A lot of the activity for new routing has been quite a long way from the road but often on fine rock is great locations. Closer to the road there has been a lot of bolting of new routes and retrobolting at crags, particularly by Keith Phizacklea and Pete Whillance

There have also been a number of 50th anniversary ascents over the last few years by Rob Matheson. These include Paladin, Holocaust, Catacomb, Tarkus and Pink Panther. Another name from that era - Pete Whillance - has continued to be prolific over the years but has now been wielding a drill and involved, with others, in the bolting of the slate quarries around Coniston, some 43 years after the joint discovery of Hodge Close by Pete and Rob and their teams.

The FRCC continue to produce a series of free, downloadable PDFs on the FRCC website. These cover a wide range of crags throughout the area and are well worth looking at. They are useful for the newly developed crags, but also other crags now not included in the FRCC guidebooks. These are available on the Club website, in the Climbing section, for all to use.

### **LANGDALE**

Interest for hard routes has continued on Pavey Ark with the ascent of **Magical Thinking** (E10 7a) which gives a stunning direct finish to Eclipse, taking the wall right of Sixpence and climbed by Mat Wright.

Martin Bagness found the Dead Oak Close area, left of Middlefell Buttress on Raven Crag and climbed **Peregrinations** (E3 5c) and **Kestrel Cracks** (E3 5c)

Further up the valley Martin Scowston and pals have developed another Black Crag - this one located on Rossett Pike and being a small buttress providing some very pleasant, low grade routes on immaculate Langdale rock.

Craig Matheson climbed the ludicrously overhanging **Black Hole** (E6 6b) at Black Wars in the hidden, recessed bay at the left end of the crag.

### **SLATE**

Pete Whillance, Keith Phizacklea, Alan Towse and gang have been busy bolting at various crags, providing some high class routes.

Runestone Quarry, in its newly bolted state, was included in the Lakes Sport and Slate guide and has proved very popular. There has been further development in the lower section of the Middle Quarry with **The Gin Palace** (F6c); **Mother's Ruin** (F6c) and **Lawless** (F6c). Investigating the Upper Quarry has produced another collection of fine routes, in particular **Casting the Runes** (F7a+), **White Lighting** (F7a) and **Moonshine** (F6b+). Unfortunately, quarrying activities have recommenced at the works above producing noise as well and liquid runoff. Ged Campion has been busy as well as at more amenable grades

Above Runestone Quarry, High Fell Quarry has a fine wall and it was thought that quarrying had stopped here and an excellent collection of routes were bolted but sadly a new tenant took over the quarry and it is now closed to climbing.

Nearby at Moss Rigg Quarry there has been a lot activity. There are two companion routes to Titanic Arete - **White Star Line** (F6c+) a worthwhile two pitch 6c, 6b on its right and the four pitch **Heart of the Ocean** (F7a+) to its left. There are also well over twenty routes on three sectors on the sunny side ranging from F6a to F7b, all very worthwhile, with dynamic three-dimensional climbing with impressive friction.

At Saddlestone there has been rebolting of the old routes there, with still more to complete, but recreating a good venue.

**Brown Mamba (E5 6a),  
Greenhole Crag, Eskdale -  
climber Chris Moore**





Brough-Diamond (F7a),  
Brough Scar -  
climber Steph Marshall

Bursting Stone Quarry is on the side of Coniston Old Man and has a good number of newly bolted routes and is well worth the walk up there. Sadly, it looks like renewed quarrying activities may restrict access.

Hodge Close - Pete Whillance climbed the superb **Blade Runner** (F7a), taking the wall left of, then crossing, Joie de Vivre, to climb a superb, slabby arête. Unfortunately, with the nature of the rock, there is a good chance it will not stay up too long. Keith Phizacklea climbed **Mr Peabody** (F7b) starting left of Café Boys.

### ***DOW AND COPPERMINES VALLEY***

The new guide to this area was published by the Club and this coincided with the centenary of the first FRCC guide to Doe Crag in 1923, as well as the centenary of the first ascent of the classic: **Eliminate A**. This has been well-received, particularly in its small, pocket-size format.

Nick Wharton produced the impressive **Orla** (E6 6a) up the impending arête on Ravens Tor Pinnacle.

### ***DUDDON VALLEY***

The new guide to the Duddon Valley was published by the Club in 2022 and raised the profile of this area with the many crags scattered along its length.

Since then, a number of climbers, in particular Rick Graham, Ted Rogers, Martin Scrowston, Paul Bennett and John Daly have been busy producing new routes; needless to say, some are good, some not so good. These are at Little Blake Rigg, Long Crag, Grassguards Buttress, Browside, Sunny Pike, Horse How, Nettle Slack and Foss How North - PDFs are available on the FRCC website.

Of particular note, Chris Fisher climbed **Poacher** (E6 6c) on Birk's Bridge Crag - a direct line up the shield right of Snip Trip.

## **ESKDALE**

A new guide has been produced and published by the Club in 2024.

Much development has taken place throughout the valley, with particular intensity around the North-West side of Harter Fell and the moorland around Green Crag. At one point over 100 new routes were developed in as many days!

Of particular note were ascents on Greenhole Crag, by Chris Moore, of **Brown Mamba** (E4 5c) and **Ring Sting** (E5 6a).

## **SCAFELL**

The Mathesons continued their assault on the East Buttress with Craig making ascents of two fine routes - **Adrenaline** (E7 6c) gives a direct entry to **Ichabod** and **Hell's Teeth** (E5 6b) giving an impressive pitch taking a rising traverse line above the overhanging wall left of The Almighty.

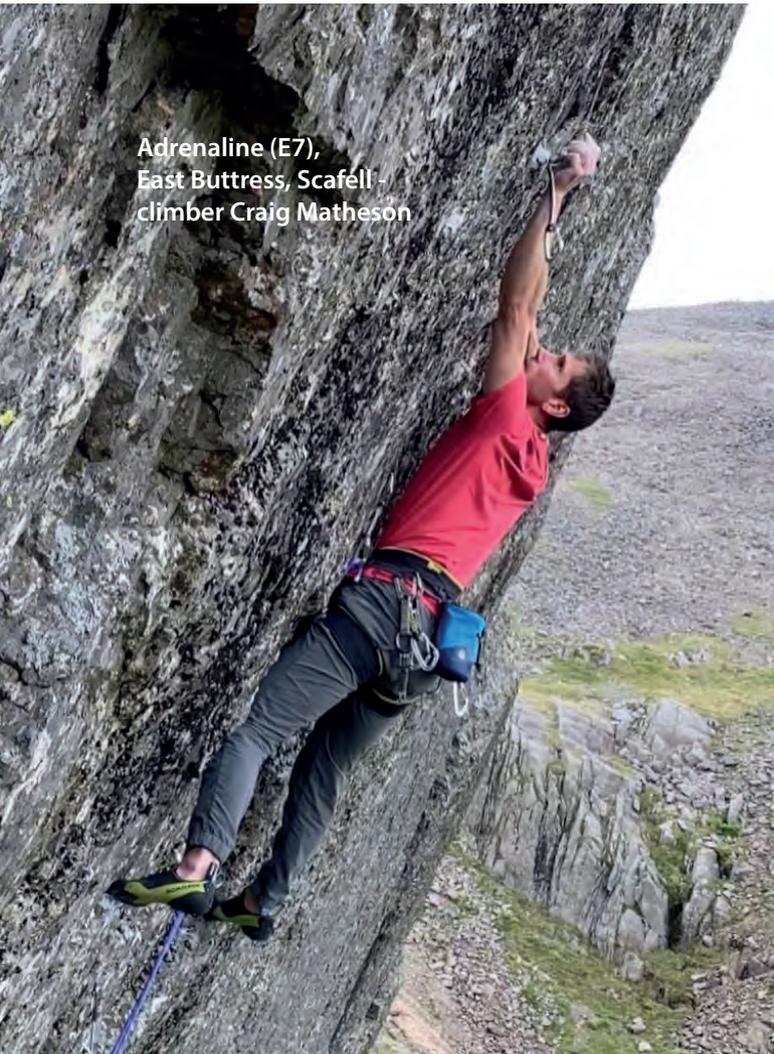
## **WASDALE**

Blackem Headwall is tucked well away up Mosedale, above Wasdale Head, and has a lot of rock. It is being developed by a keen bunch of climbers. Rob Matheson and Ian Cooksey climbed **Mosedale Groove** (E5 6b) - a superb pitch in this fine mountain setting - the long walk being part of the overall experience!

Later, Chris Moore and Scott Quinn climbed **Mutiny** E5 6b, which starts up Mosedale Groove before stepping left and climbing up with a hard crux at the top, above a nest of small RPs.



Nasal-Passage, Pillar Rock -  
climber Pete Winterbottom



Adrenaline (E7),  
East Buttress, Scafell -  
climber Craig Matheson

### **PILLAR ROCK**

Stephen Reid continues his quest with Pillar Rock, and with Peter Winterbottom climbed **Nasal Passage** (E1 5b) which is a sort of North Climb Direct with an off-width crack, which is 'great fun!' They also climbed **Wild West** (E2 5b) on the excellent rock of the West Face of High Man.

### **ST BEES**

A couple of impressive lines were climbed near Sea of Sands, in the Fleswick Bay area, with **Marooned** (F7c) by Will Sim and **Infinite Horizons** (F7b) by Chris Fisher

### **BUTTERMERE**

High above Buttermere is Chapel Crag, which has been the preserve of winter climbers in the past but the dedicated group of Scott Quinn, Tim Millen and Ben Kent have developed the superb Disco Buttress with a number of hard routes, in particular **Born to be Alive** (E6, 6b) and **Stayin' Alive** (E6,6b).

### **SCAWGILL BRIDGE QUARRY**

Colin Downer and pals brought this quarry to the attention of climbers when they started bolting here in 2021. Peter Winterbottom produced the sustained **Monkey Magic** (F7a) on the right wall. Further routes have been added to produce a very popular venue with its easy access and southerly aspect.

### **BORROWDALE**

The rather forgotten Paper Crag received a visit by two heroes - Tim Mullen and Scott Quinn - who climbed **The Daily Plant** (E3 5c). The crag was missed out of the last guidebook, which will not help with its popularity. Will this route draw it back into the limelight!

### **EASTERN CRAGS**

Iron Crag - Adam Hocking climbed **The Flying Phoenix Finish** (E8 6c), which climbs Phoenix in Obsidian to where it meets The Committal

Chamber, and rather than finishing up the groove, it traverses left and finishes up the headwall.

Raven Crag, Threshthwaite - Rob and Craig Matheson climbed **Full Throttle** (E4 6a) taking a direct line into the impressive groove system left of the top pitch of Liquid Engineering.

### **EDEN VALLEY**

There were a number of 50th Anniversary ascents at Armathwaite (the crag opened up in 1973), with the likes of Flasherman, Glenwillie Groove, Time and Motion Man and Barnacle Bill.

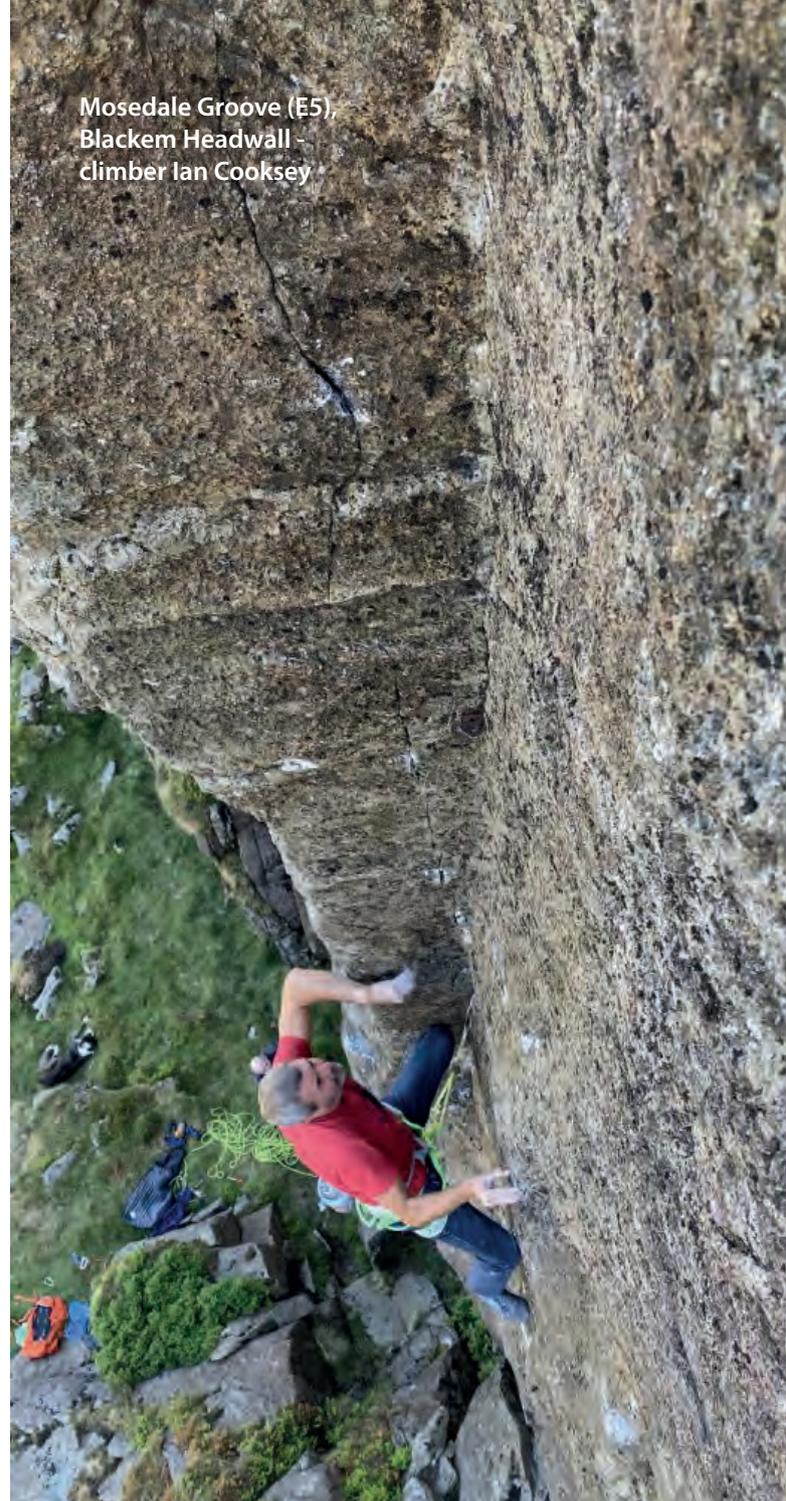
Kings Meaburn - Tony Mawer climbed **Who You Kidding** (E4 6a) which makes a way up the wall right of Marik.

At Coudy Rocks - Iain Turnbull has continued his campaign here with **The Red Garden** (F7b) which climbs Pelham Wall just left of Perfect Weather to Fly.

Brough Scar is a limestone crag above Brough, which was developed by Robin Curley and friends, from Appleby, in the 1980's. The crag never became popular, being both somewhat steep but also protected by pieces of tat. It has recently been fully bolted to provide a collection of sports routes in a tremendous setting. Steph Marshall and Tony Mawer climbed **Brough Diamond** (F7a) which is based on the original line of Roxanne Shante. Later Pete Gunn added a harder direct 'on the diamond' with **Platinum Hard** (F7b+)

Mallerstang Edge is located high above the Mallerstang valley, and John Proctor and friends have been developing this gritstone edge over the last few years with a number of routes at the lower grades in a stunning location.

Mosedale Groove (E5),  
Blackem Headwall -  
climber Ian Cooksey



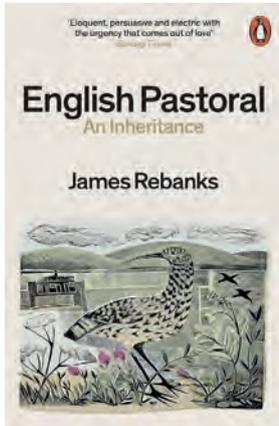




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## English Pastoral. An Inheritance



Author: James Rebanks  
Publisher: Penguin Books 2021  
ISBN: 9780141982571

For the 2016 Journal I wrote a review of James Rebanks' book 'The Shepherd's Life' because, as he is a fell farmer in Miterdale, I felt it would help members to enjoy walks, knowing what was happening, to

farmers, in their place of work, and why certain practices took place, and when. Since then, he has written four more books: 'The Illustrated Herdwick Shepherd' 2015 (James judges Herdwick sheep); 'The Shepherd's View' 2016; 'English Pastoral' 2020 and 'Pastoral Song' 2021. I have just read 'English Pastoral' and realise the huge changes that have occurred in agriculture since the 1950s and how they impact on fell farming.

After World War II, in the USA and Australia first, there came a surge for much larger productions in both arable and livestock farming. Supermarkets brought down prices, so farmers needed to produce more. Everything became bigger: machinery, field sizes, seed rates, pesticide, artificial fertiliser use, milk yields and livestock housing. Crop rotations ceased; monoculture degraded the land and flora and fauna suffered. James' family followed this new way to some extent - their bank manager was worried that the farm was too large to be a hobby and too small to be a going concern - but there were drawbacks.

James came to realise that there was no longer a sensory contact of being close to and 'knowing the land'. Animals ceased to be individuals; gulls and crows no longer followed the plough because there

were no worms - changing from hay to silage and its acidity had killed them. Seeing his father's sadness, he turned to people with environmental knowledge for help. Over the next years his soil was analysed; trees and hedges returned (and the art of hedge-laying); and rotations restored. The river running through the farm, which had been straightened, had its bends restored and with that its natural slower rate of running with wild crop-free banks. Eventually curlews and corncrake returned; spring crop drilling allowed autumn birds to scavenge the fields for seeds; hay began to replace silage, and more rotation took place not only between crop and livestock but also between different animals. In James' case, between belted Galloway cattle and Herdwick sheep. Back too came the grasshoppers, moths, beetles and grubs, orchids, swallows, and rooks. Manure from livestock was spread over the fields and less artificial fertiliser used.

Farming in the fells will always be difficult. There are the disadvantages of hills and rocks; they are in a northern latitude and high above sea level, but English grass is good and tough livestock can flourish. James welcomes visits from schoolchildren and teaches them about farming, food, and nature. He and his wife have four children and they all share the chores. There is movement and noise on the farm.

How can farmers be helped in the future? James feels there should be more contact between them and society, including fell-walkers. There should be greater willingness to pay real prices for food. A revealing statistic is that in the 1950s, 35% of UK income paid for food, now it is 10%. Another one is that 80% of farming is still done world-wide, successfully, by small mixed farms such as the Rebanks' in Miterdale.

Farmers can and do prop up their incomes from

tourism: taking other part-time jobs; or like James writing books. And there are subsidies.

I feel 'English Pastoral' is an important book. It mirrors the haste towards profits and the leaving behind of the slower things of life. Someday I'll go in search of those belted Galloways, and perhaps find nature there.

*Anne Hartley*

## The Scaffells. A Grand Tour



Author: Guy Richardson  
Publisher: Lakeland Views  
Publishing (2023)  
ISBN: 978-1-3999-4126-6

Part guide, part history, this well produced small book is a fund of fascinating information and I defy any member of the FRCC to claim that they already knew of all the intriguing facts and legends concerning the Scafell massif that appear therein – I certainly didn't!

The tour takes the form of a walk that starts in Santon Bridge, proceeds up Wasdale to Styhead, ascends to Scafell, and then traverses Scafell, Scafell Pike, Broad Crag, Ill Crag and Great End, before descending via Esk Hause, Upper Eskdale and Moasdale to Cockley Beck. The downside of such a walk of course is that it is not circular and one would need two cars or to be impossibly fortunate with public transport and/or hitchhiking to complete it in a day, though the hale and fleet could no doubt start at Wasdale Head, substitute Eskdale for Moasdale, and return to their starting point via Burnmore Tarn.

However, one suspects the walk, though indeed "grand", is mainly a frame upon which to hang a panoply of historical snippets relating to the area. These introduce such early visitors as 'Christopher North' and William Wordsworth, locals like Auld Will Ritson and Dan Tyson, and long vanished farms and settlements, including Down-in-the-Dale, now little more than a place name on the map. During the walk further facts (or in some cases possible facts) are introduced geographically rather than historically. Thus, Moses' Trod sits side by side with

John Musgrave's plan to build a road over Styhead, and a chapter on the locality's geology is set between a 13th century ghost story and description of the Corridor Route, all of which makes it very 'dippable in able'. There is a competent chapter on the early climbing on Scafell, much of which will be familiar to FRCC members, though personally I had not seen that particular photo of Scafell Pinnacle before – gleaned from an old postcard. Perhaps the most interesting section is the one concerning early maps and surveys and what finally decided the OS on Sca Fell (or Scafell) rather than Scawfell, and how (and why) Scafell Pike was named. This has involved some original research in the National Archives in Kew and the book is worth buying for this chapter alone, as it is also for the interesting tale of the spat between the FRCC and Arthur Benson over his purchase of much of the Scafell range as an adjunct to Lord Leconfield's 1920 gift to the nation of all of Scafell Pike above 3000'. Forestry, mining, wildlife, and the regrettable Three Peaks Challenge all add to the mix, along with a host of other engrossing bits and pieces, but rather than list everything, it would be much easier if you just bought the book!

The whole is beautifully illustrated, and one wishes in a way that it was in a bigger format to show off the pictures to their best advantage, but then it would not be £11.95. Many of the photographs not taken by the author are the work of Graham Barron – those of the Wasdale Head Inn and a full moon over Scafell Pike are particularly stunning.

I have a few small gripes. The photo of OG Jones on page 43 is uncredited, but it should be, as not only is it the work of the Abrahams, it is still in copyright; besides being an author, Lehmann Oppenheimer was far better known as a mosaic designer and painter than as a sculptor; and the

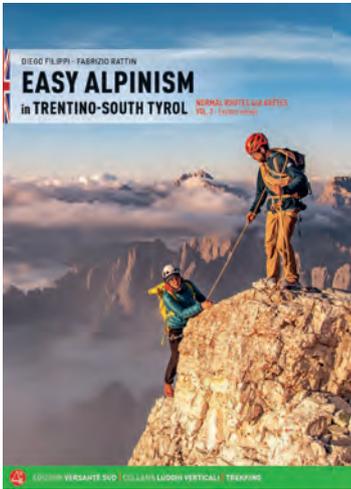
assertion that Moses'Trod is "named after Moses Rigg an 18th quarryman" surely needs qualifying with the revelation that this was a pet theory of both Auld Will himself and of George Abraham, neither of whom were inclined to let truth get in the way of a good story. But these are mere quibbles - a more major one, though perhaps not to be expected in a work of this size, is that both a bibliography and an index would have been useful. On the plus side, the book is well and clearly written and I only noticed one minor spelling mistake – major publishers are often guilty of worse.

To sum up, this is an excellent and interesting publication and worthy of a place on the bookshelves of all those who love the Lakes; moreover, it has been endorsed by no less an authority than our very own Bill Birkett – like him, I heartily commend it to all the club's members.

*Stephen Reid*

PS. The review copy will be added to the library at Brackenclose.

## Easy Alpinism in Trentino - South Tyrol. Volume 2 Eastern Valleys



Authors: Diego Filippi and Fabrizio Rattin.

Publisher: Versante Sud  
(available in English from Cordee)

ISBN: 978-88-55470-735

Now here is a nice idea: a selected guidebook to easy alpinism in what us Brits would call 'The Dolomites'. The book is subtitled Normal Routes and

Aretes. In the UK it would be called Easy Climbs and Scrambles. There are so many worthwhile routes in this area that the guidebook has been split into two volumes, East and West. There are 43 mountain groups in this area, which is neatly divided into two by the Valle Dell Adige, which runs North to South. I am reviewing the guidebook to the Eastern Valleys but most of what I am writing applies to both volumes, only the names are changed.

I chose the Eastern book because I thought that would be the area I was least familiar with, but as it turned out two of the three areas I have visited before are in this volume: the Marmolada Group and the Pale Di San Martino. Naturally I read these first and of course I don't know them at all. There is a wealth of peaks and ascents to be made in these two areas that I wasn't even aware of. As I read on, I knew I wanted to go back and investigate further.

This is no dry guidebook; the authors are in love with the area and their enthusiasm and ongoing delight shines through. From the introduction 'Every page is an unforgettable memory of beautiful days spent in the mountains, the true mountains,

in a no-frills way, the way of the normal routes: an environment I have learned to appreciate deeply. No ambitious aspirations for us. Simply the enjoyment and satisfaction of giving passionate mountain goers a guide which has soul, the soul of the territory in which we live, an amazing and complete region that we are proud to be able to give homage too.'

This guidebook describes 250 peaks in 43 chapters. It is a modern guidebook, A5 size, with text, photo-diagrams, photos, and maps amounting to 590 pages. You are not going to be carrying it up any of the routes unless serious training is your aim! However, like me you may spend hours browsing, dreaming, admiring, and making mental or physical notes.

These days Versante Sud guidebooks are beautiful productions; this one lives up to the promise of the gorgeous photograph on the cover. Notice the beautiful lighting, the outstanding scenery and the couple appear to be alone. Again, and again the authors emphasise not only the beauty but also the wildness and quietness of the peaks they describe.

The book is a very thorough job: area maps and descriptions are followed by all the important statistics for each route, laid out clearly at the top of the page. Then some descriptive and inspirational words, access details, ascent, descent, a map, and for many of the routes a photo or two with the route marked on. The authors have thought of everything you need to know to choose and to plan a route.

There are walks, scrambles and easy climbs (up to alpine D in standard). Some routes involve sections of via ferrata. The beauty of this type of mountaineering is that you can travel lightweight, unhindered by heavy sacks and lots of gear, making the whole experience much more pleasurable,

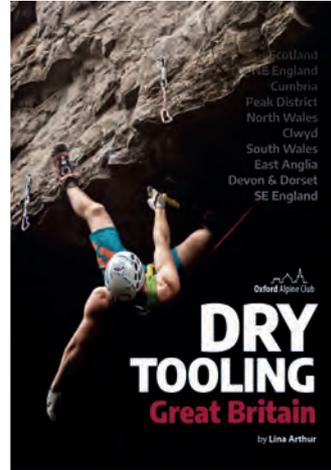
something I have come to appreciate more as I have got older. On many of the routes, experienced mountaineers will not need a rope. Full advice is given about what equipment is needed for each route. Between them the two authors have ascended all of the routes in the guidebook, which has been many years in preparation.

The price maybe off-putting, but if you like the area or this type of guidebook, it will serve for many holidays in the future.

A beautiful and inspirational guidebook that I can thoroughly recommend.

*Ann Daykin*

## Dry Tooling Great Britain



Author: Lina Arthur  
Publisher: Oxford Alpine Club  
ISBN: 978-1-913167-15-8

Let's get this clear: I am not a full-blown and regular exponent of the sport, I do not live anywhere near a dry-tooling venue, and I only really dabble in it from time to time, but when

I have, I've enjoyed it. Because of this somewhat limited experience and knowledge, you could say I'm ideally positioned to carry out a review of this guidebook, so... here goes.

This past decade and a half have seen the emergence of a healthy dry-tooling scene across Great Britain, with established venues continuing to be developed and new ones being discovered. Various on-line blogs, Facebook (Meta) pages and minor sections in existing guidebooks have catalogued the sport over the years, but this book has now put dry-tooling on the map - loud and proud.

It wasn't a surprise when the package landed on my door mat; after all I had got wind of the book some months back and had eagerly placed a pre-order. At first, I thought it could be my 2024 FRCC Handbook, but then I remembered we don't now have them anymore: phew! Tearing open the brown padded envelope revealed a very glossy, colourful, and not so weighty tome - I couldn't wait to get stuck into it.

I speedily flicked through all 192 pages of A5 and quickly concluded that it hit the mark and had done the sport justice, a triumph, a celebration, huzzah!

Then having been asked to carry out this review I thought I'd better take a closer, more objective look at what I had just bought.

Firstly, the book comes from a respected publisher: the Oxford Alpine Club. They have produced many well thought of climbing guidebooks for continental destinations and have established themselves in the market. I can certainly vouch for their Rjukan - Selected Ice Climbs (2nd Edition). Lina Arthur, who compiled the book, has successfully authored other climbing guidebooks too; in the making she engaged and consulted closely with a large group of dry-tooling activists so all in all it comes with a good pedigree.

The guidebook covers a wide range of established dry-tooling venues with a fair amount of esoterica thrown in for good measure, all the way from West Scotland to Southeast England and many places in between. It must have been quite an undertaking, but the editorial team has pulled this challenge off with clarity and confidence – one book to rule them all as they say (not that there's any challengers).

The Introduction section is great. Even if you don't like Marmite (see below) I can highly recommend just reading through this section alone. The paragraphs on: What is Dry-Tooling, Techniques, Style, Grades, Equipment, Getting Started and History to name but a few are all informative, practical, and encouraging; you never know, you may become 'hooked'.

It seems standard practice now, but the use of colour coding works really well in this book and helps the reader easily navigate through the pages, seamlessly linking up the overall map of Great Britain, contents page, crag selector and page headings, making the book very user-friendly. There is even a section called 'How to use this

Guidebook' to help you get the best out of it; all very welcoming.

The standard of photography is exceptional and it's hard to spot a duff one; the cover photo is certainly eye-catching: Greg Boswell powering out of the shadows with the shaft of a horizontal axe mysteriously vanishing into the gloom. But it's not all muscles and gymnastics; there are many other images throughout the book that show folks simply having a good day out. Check-out Page 83 with Lina herself on the more amenable Steve's Corner at The Works. Many dry-tooling venues are disused quarries, scruffy holes in the ground so to speak. Despite this, many of the action photos help to illuminate the locations and brighten up what would often be seen as a damp and dark place.

I do love a good map (GPS too, mind you) to help with location, access, parking etc. so was pleased to see the generous use of OS type maps throughout, the start of each area section cleverly showing the associated map as 'wallpaper'. A particular favourite of mine is East Anglia. Want to know where to dry-tool in Cambridgeshire. Checkout page 152.

I can't vouch for their accuracy, but the lines of routes and projects are clearly shown on the many crag photos, if becoming a little crowded at times, Masson Lees Cave and Upper Wall being a particularly difficult area to annotate. Nevertheless, all images are ably supported by clear and inspiring route descriptions. The front cover has a flap showing route description and topo symbols and provides a practical page marker. Ideally I would have liked the symbols to be a tad larger so the embedded text could be more easily read, although after a number of passes you quickly become familiar with the symbols.

Here and there, there are a few ads from retail outlets and equipment manufacturers. They aren't

intrusive and actually seem to enhance the book, the images confirming wider support for the sport across Great Britain.

It currently retails at £28.99; this seems a fair price for a guidebook of this size and scope. It also feels well-made and pleasingly flexible/tactile in the hand. It should be able to take a good bit of physical abuse at the crag or down the back of a rucksack, even withstanding a spot of precipitation: typically a dripping cave roof.

To many folk dry-tooling is a bizarre sport, they just don't get it, or they've tried it and simply don't get on with it, a bit like Marmite I suppose. This will obviously limit sales, but good quality guidebooks such as this will do well and can only help to promote and increase the appetite for the sport. After all, said yeast extract has been around for well over 100 years now and I expect it will be around for some time to come.

So, what does this book deliver? For those at grass roots level this is without doubt a long awaited, much anticipated and significant publication; it seems to represent a coming of age for the sport in Great Britain and for many is the culmination and recognition of a lot of hard work over many years. For the root and branch participants it will affirm their involvement in the sport, providing an inspiring 'go to' guidebook and encouragement to explore new places and do more, and for those inquisitive and budding seedlings it will open up a whole new world of climbing that they never knew they were missing.

*Neil McAllister*

## Lit Only by the Sun



Author: Chris Manasseh  
Privately published,  
available from  
[www.chrismanasseh.com](http://www.chrismanasseh.com)  
(price £5).

Despite the vast libraries of climbing and mountaineering literature, novels with climbing as their backdrop are quite rare. Perhaps they are also difficult to get published and this may be the reason that

the author has published the book himself.

So, climbing novels are unusual and this story is unusual, about a character who is distinctly unusual. Nigel, the protagonist in the book, has avoidant personality disorder, he avoids contact with others unless absolutely necessary. This is possibly brought on by his broken home life, distant and cold father, bad experiences at school, etc. He finds escape in the mountains and begins to scramble and then rock climb, teaching himself as he goes and always solo. He finds peace and tranquillity this way and an escape from his self-loathing.

Inevitably though he meets other climbers and joins the Rock and Ice club, who have huts in the Lakes and Scotland (sounds familiar) but also in North Wales (less familiar). A sequence of dramatic events lead him to reject club life and go back to soloing and searching out places where he is less likely to meet others. However, he starts to look back with warmth on the adventures and relationships he had in those days and on a special relationship that dramatically faltered.

The story is told through a sequence of solo

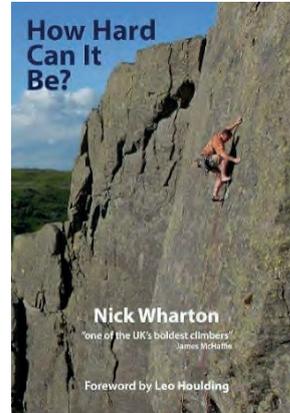
ascents: on each one Nigel reflects on some part of his life and gradually the story unfolds. The climbs are all fictitious, as are the cliffs, but have familiar aspects. May be a good hut game would be to guess which climbs and cliffs they are based on? This is unsettling at first, but I found I soon got used to it. In a similar way I found it difficult to settle into the book at first, the author often using what I considered overly long sentences. However, soon I was drawn into the story and had a few anxious moments waiting for the climax of a dangerous climb or two. Also, I found that towards the end of the book I had sympathy for the character and was willing him on and hoping for a happy outcome.

A worthwhile read and at £5 it will not dent your pocket too much.

As for the ending, well it would spoil it if I gave the game away, wouldn't it?

*Ken Daykin*

## How Hard Can It Be?



Author: Nick Wharton  
Publisher: Nick Wharton  
ISBN: 978-1-8384-281-0-5

Nick Wharton is a highly respected figure in the insular world of Lake District climbing. His reputation is based on his passion for rapid, on sight, bold trad ascents achieved through determination fuelled by

conviction in his ability. Although he has significant first ascents to his name, this has never been his primary focus so he has avoided the publicity and wider recognition this brings.

His book looks very modern in concept, matching the current vogue for A5 guidebooks, and would not be out of place on the shelf alongside current Wired/Rockfax publications, sharing their high quality production values. A first flick through is visually sumptuous with many striking and inspiring images. Utilising digital publishing techniques, a major innovation is the placement of images throughout the book so that the photos are relevant to the text alongside them.

In addition to Nick's text, a range of personalities across the local climbing scene add their voices to flesh out the story, adding colour and perspective. It's a measure of the esteem in which he's held within Lakeland climbing that local legends including Leo Houlding, Caff and Dave Birkett contribute text. The value of these friendships is exemplified by the warmth expressed by these voices. Further amplification is provided after each chapter, where a range of questions posed by friends allow Nick licence to develop his thoughts and motivations. The book is packed with a wide

cast of characters and attendant anecdotes, all delivered in a highly engaging manner.

This is the story of a lifetime of adventures centred around climbing, but taking in cycling, caving, kayaking, skiing, sky diving and fell running, always driven by a competitive commitment to achieve at the highest level. This competitive streak pervades all aspects of Nick's life. In his climbing and cycling he trains obsessively to improve performance, but also at work, to achieve 'the best sales figures'. He has a meticulous approach – having worked with him to co-author guidebooks I can vouch for his attention to detail to deliver the best product possible.

The story begins with Nick's early life – absent father, boarding school from an early age and then a place at the Royal Grammar School, Lancaster. It was here that Nick was introduced to climbing which immediately became a driving force in his life. Early beginnings many of us will identify with - an introduction through school games lessons graduating to exploits in local quarries leading to early epics and significant falls, fortunately emerging unscathed, if a little wiser. After university, Nick took an interesting career path through life, beginning with a varied army career. Sandhurst beckoned, where drill, constant training routines, more drill and mindless boot-polishing was an interesting choice for someone with an anarchic climbing outlook. This led to a tour of duty in Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles, a posting to Zimbabwe training Mozambique recruits and finally leading adventure training in the Rockies, allowing time for sky diving training.

After the army and a period of working in management training, he then went back to university to train as an Environmental Health Officer. This led to work as a health and safety

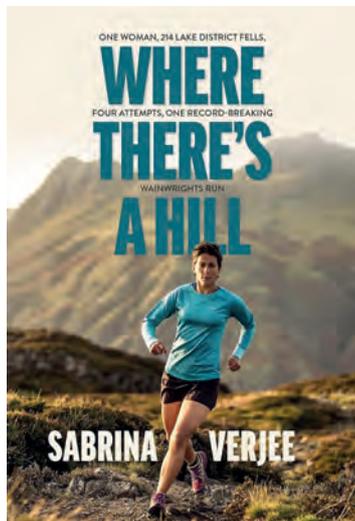
consultant, which might seem counter-intuitive for someone renowned for bold ascents of dangerous routes. Nick is very analytical in his 'Reflections on the Nature of Risk' (chapter 15). He draws widely on his working life, from his time in the army to work at the Royal Opera House. His climbing style balances the need for placing gear with saving energy by going for the top. Trust in his ability allows for his bold approach. He bemoans a risk averse culture which deprives young people of the opportunity to develop essential life skills.

The book's final chapter concludes with thoughts on lessons learned from a lifetime of climbing. All lifelong climbers will have similar ideas – there must be a reason why we keep on doing it. He includes a few thoughts on life lessons and, as in the preface to the book, encourages readers to push their limits and overcome self-doubt- 'Just ask yourself: how hard can it be?'

*Alan Davies*

## Where There's A Hill

One Woman, 214 Lake District Fells, Four Attempts, One Record-Breaking Wainwrights Run



Author: Sabrina Verjee  
Publisher: Vertebrate  
Publishing  
ISBN: 9781839811463

I was looking for a book where I could escape into the hills and expected this one to be all about fell running. As an occasional (and very slow!) off-road runner, I was unsure – wrongly so. What surprised me was

how many of the experiences in the book can relate much more widely to our approach to our own activities and goals – even if we're not aiming to break any records or run the Wainwrights.

The book is about determination – adversity in earlier life did not dampen enthusiasm for sport or learning and Sabrina is constantly adjusting to overcome challenges or to find what she really wants to do. She is not someone prepared to give up or sit comfortably, knowing she wanted something different. She wasn't afraid to swap a well-paid city job to muck out stables and then train as an equine vet!

The book is also about values – considering her values and ethics and impact on the local community may have increased the challenge but made the result more authentic to what mattered to her and to people living in the hills.

I also like the way the book is not afraid to question her approach and is able to say that (with hindsight) she might have done something

differently – and she then gets straight back into training for the next challenge!

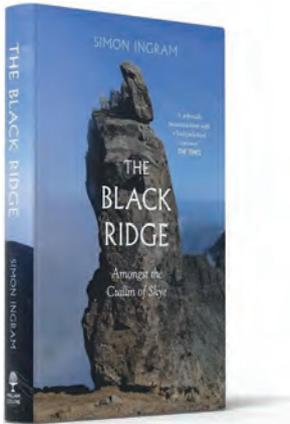
Her analysis of the attributes that contributed to her success reveals that it's not all about physical fitness or even being the fastest runner. Finding the best way to get round all the Wainwrights in the fastest time (the challenges are not just the navigation, the weather, the team logistics, adapting to conditions on the day, dealing with asthma (I could go on!)). There is something there perhaps about being honest about our capabilities so that we can make the most of our strengths to identify what will contribute to success.

Her experience of not being picked for sports teams may be familiar to many people but I wonder how many of us then go on to excel in their chosen sport; this book perhaps helps explain what it might take to do that!

For me, the book was a great escape into the hills but with lots more too. I'd recommend this book to anyone who likes reading about someone taking on a massive challenge and who keeps coming back for more, whatever gets thrown at them in the process. I recognised some of our members mentioned for their role providing support; lovely to see that link to people in the club, and it brought the book even closer to home.

*Susan Marvel*

## The Black Ridge: Amongst the Cuillin of Skye



Author: Simon Ingram  
Publisher: William Collins,  
London 2021  
ISBN: 978-0-00-822623-7

Simon Ingram first came to my attention as a gifted writer of mountain literature with his excellent book 'Between the Sunset and the Sea'. He was for some years the editor of 'Trail'

magazine and writes often for the Guardian and other publications.

Introducing himself in his new book he writes, "I climb mountains, but I'm no climber" and so *The Black Ridge* will appeal to many in the same position and to others who may have done some climbing but for a range of reasons have not had the time or single-mindedness to become all round competent mountaineers.

In this extremely well-researched and fluently written book, Ingram covers much of the history, geology, geography, and folk lore of the Cuillin ridge, and the working out of his need to at least attempt a traverse of the ridge. He introduces many of the men, and a few women, who pioneered the routes on the Cuillin and then eventually worked out and completed the traverse. It comes not quite up to date by noting the winter traverse made by Tom Patey and Hamish MacInnes.

There is also a review of the development of Mountain Rescue after his own need for help following a simple slip with serious consequences whilst descending from Coire Lagan.

This big book [541 pages] is seldom less than engaging as he introduces us to the ridge and some of the well-known people, some local and

some from the usual group, of academics, clergy and wealthy business men who explored and discovered the gems of the ridge. It is not until page 204 that Ingram begins his own attempt on the ridge, with a guide he very quickly comes to trust. The guide is not only capable and knowledgeable about the ridge but also cares that his client enjoys the experience as much as possible. When weather and pace of progress become an issue he aborts the attempt in order to keep them both safe.

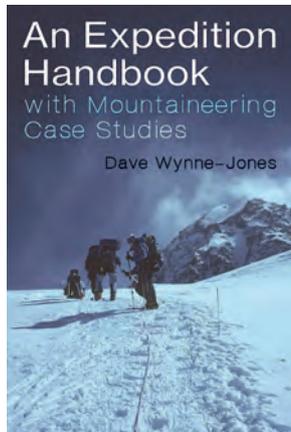
For me the book really came alive when Ingram was describing his own walking and climbing; discussing his relationship with his guide and especially the experience of being helped from the hillside by a mountain rescue team. He is open about his fears, not just when dealing with exposure, and presents as a fit, intelligent man determined to give it a go despite his fears.

For anyone not completely familiar with the island, a map of Skye would have been helpful and another more detailed map of the Cuillin Ridge useful for reference. I am not sure that the black and white photographs at the beginning of each chapter were necessary, although there are one or two which convey the atmosphere very well.

I recommend this book to members for filling long dark winter evenings, for those, like me, with memories of Skye and for others who have yet to make the journey to the 'Misty Isle'.

*Martin Carr*

# An Expedition Handbook



Author: Dave Wynne-Jones  
Publisher: Whittles Publishing  
ISBN: 978-184995-535-5

Dave Wynne-Jones' 'An expedition handbook' is a testament to his many years of leading climbing expeditions all over the world. The book has several chapters of well-written advice for those undertaking

an expedition, whether as a novice, or as a first experience in leading. It covers, step by step, all the main stages and aspects of researching, planning, executing, and reporting on an expedition. Experienced expeditioners will also find it useful as a reference book. Dave's experience has been hard-won and gained through years of grounding in the European Alps (which included ascents of all the 4000m peaks), before he headed to the Greater Ranges.

The book has been used on Mountain Medicine courses run by the University of Lancaster and Dave's experience has also been called on at symposia on expedition planning run by Plas y Brenin. There is no doubt that it contains information which cannot fail to help readers achieve safer and more successful trips.

After reading the first section covering all aspects of organisation, one might think, 'what could possibly go wrong?' Surely such a methodical approach is a recipe for complete and consistent success. The detailed case studies which follow show this is not the case. As Dave writes: 'Expeditions are a lot about attrition. The cold and hardship wear you down until you begin to focus on going home instead of the summit. There is

such a lot of time spent sitting in tents waiting for the weather to come good. And then there's the altitude: you arrive keen but unacclimatised, then by the time you're fully acclimatised the enthusiasm has ebbed away.'

A life of expeditioning is bound to include some near misses, and Dave discusses these in detail, rather than dwelling on his significant successes (such as his ascent of Danesh Parvat 5490m with Mick Fowler). No expedition seems to go smoothly. Sometimes he seems quite critical of other climbers, but the idea here is to learn from events, in order to come back stronger and wiser. The studies are extremely honest about the squabbles and clashes of personality which can occur, and thus the importance of team selection and building. They also detail mishaps with political unrest (and civil war), local superstitions, unhelpful aggressive monks, thieving locals, carbon monoxide poisoning and equipment failures, the effects of altitude sickness and debilitating stomach upsets, avalanche dangers, the difficulties of harsh conditions encountered on uncharted territory, not to mention challenging weather and the danger of frostbite. There is a negative theme amongst many of these, but there are lessons to be learned in each case. As humans, we improve by getting things wrong.

Of the case studies, the best chapter is entitled 'Incident creep and team problems: Oman'. Wherea not in the Greater Ranges, here the dangers of climbing as a pair in a remote region are highlighted. Dave almost died as a result of errors of judgment caused by falling into a heuristic trap and the ensuing 'incident creep'. One bad decision led to another, before the pair of climbers became separated by mistake. The lesson learned here is that a good partner should always challenge as well as support his teammate.

Dave's book refers back to Eric Shipton, WH Tilman and Frank Smythe (amongst others), and he quotes liberally from their writings which still ring so true. On leadership, adopting a hierarchical approach can be counter-productive, as Shipton pointed out, because a team is usually most effective when it plays to the strength of every member. Dave has many constructive tips on how to achieve a cohesive team approach.

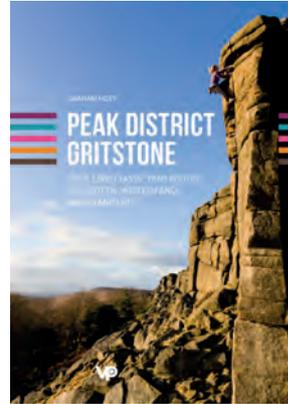
Some useful appendices provide suggestions on food rations, personal and group medical kits, and advice on hauling. Throughout the book Dave refers to the richness of the cultural experiences, as well as the natural beauties encountered during a life of exploration. These might not seem necessary in a traditional 'handbook' but go a long way to explaining Dave's insatiable desire to return to the fray again and again.

Suggestions for a second edition might include a chapter to support women, who certainly experience different challenges to men - for example with hygiene, safety, and acclimatisation. There is an unfortunate chapter about relationships which mistakenly refers to 'gender issues'. As leader of an expedition, you need to know the character of your team before going, regardless of their gender. To be genuinely useful as part of an expedition handbook, this chapter could be replaced by an account by a woman about the unique challenges faced by women who climb at altitude. Having said that, Dave does offer some great relationship advice for male climbers ....

If the case studies do not deter you, then this book is a great resource to help plan your next trip.

*Nicholas Hurdall-Smith*

## Peak District Gritstone



Author: Graham Hoey  
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing  
ISBN: 978-1-911342-00-7

The case for the curator

...

Whilst waiting for other members of the family in Outside - in this case my daughter trying on clothes - I find it is generally better for my wallet to peruse the

guidebooks instead of the climbing gear.

This time I ended up walking out (after paying) with a copy of Peak District Gritstone by Graham Hoey. So, why would the owner of a full set of BMC definitive guidebooks hand over cash for a selective guidebook to an area they have climbed in for a quarter of a century?

By the time we are back at home, my daughter has a new tick list for the summer and, once the drive is over, I'm starting on my own. Enticing new photos of familiar bits of rock seen many times before provide the inspiration. This is probably justification enough for the purchase.

The route descriptions are well written and match up well with the clear photo-topos. I like the addition of having the first ascensionists name - it's nice to know whose footsteps you are attempting to follow. Unfortunately, it's raining, so I'm not going to follow in anybody's footsteps this week...

Selective guides such as this are a great introduction to an area and will often tempt people into buying definitive guidebooks - just as two editions of Lake District Rock have done in my case - and this is an excellent example.

Inside the front and rear covers are area maps

1

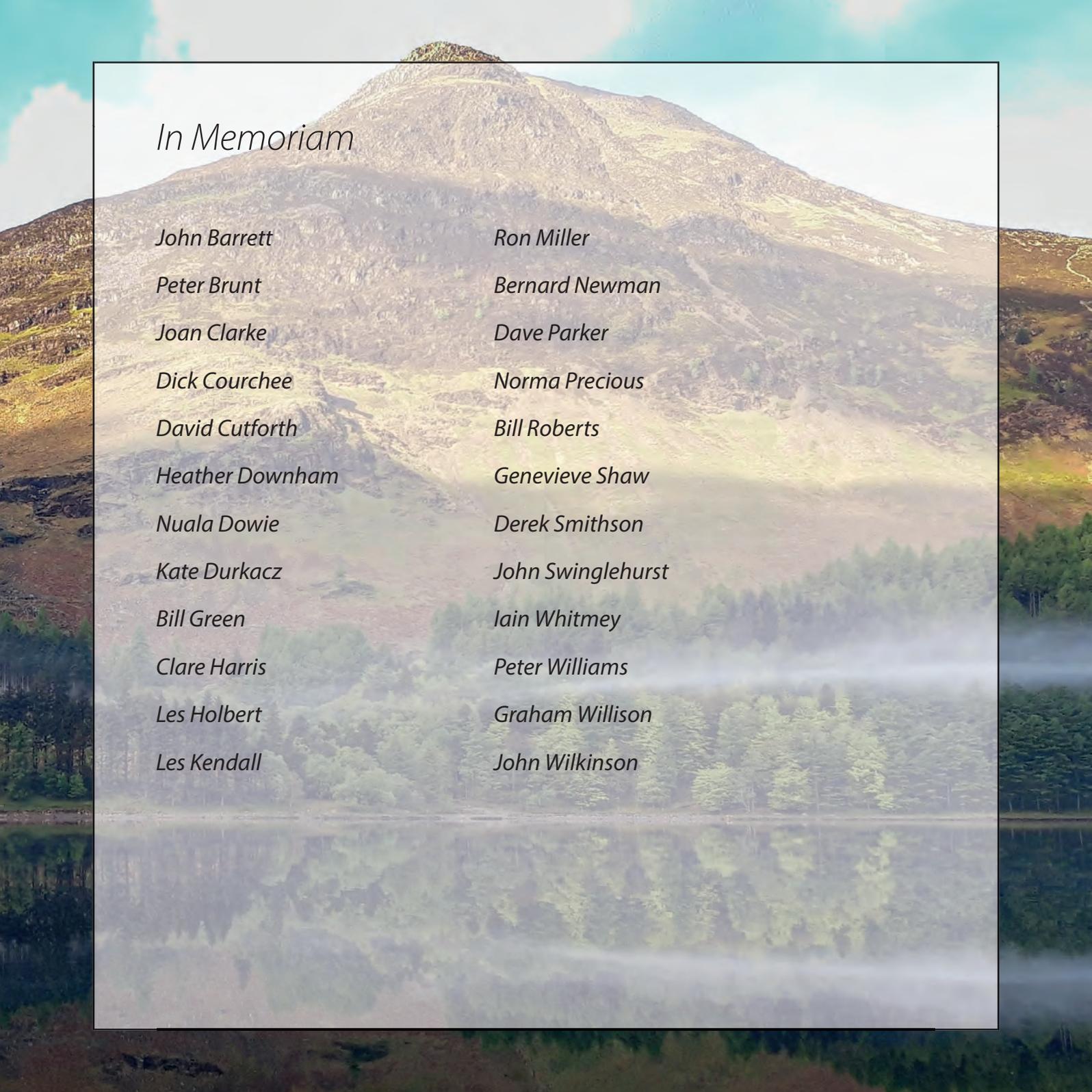
details on the number of routes, grades, and other useful information. There are then three different scales of map to aid approaches and help find the part of the crag you are aiming for. So, this guide will do an excellent job of tempting you out the house and getting you to the route. However, it's more than that; it is a labour of love from someone who clearly knows the Peak very well (and has climbed an amazing 95% of the 2000 plus routes it contains!) and an advert for an excellent style of climbing, showing a curated selection of the best it has to offer.

Update – it's a nice evening and although I'm back from work slightly too late I get a message from a friend who is out soloing at Froggatt and has a harness in the bottom of his bag. A quick scan through the new guide and I spot Brookside Buttress, always ignored by me on the walk in before it seems like a perfect way to make more use of the short time available. A couple of quick routes later and I can't believe I've never climbed here before. I also have a hard summer project to think about on the drive home...

Case closed.

*Jake Everett*





*In Memoriam*

*John Barrett*

*Peter Brunt*

*Joan Clarke*

*Dick Courchee*

*David Cutforth*

*Heather Downham*

*Nuala Dowie*

*Kate Durkacz*

*Bill Green*

*Clare Harris*

*Les Holbert*

*Les Kendall*

*Ron Miller*

*Bernard Newman*

*Dave Parker*

*Norma Precious*

*Bill Roberts*

*Genevieve Shaw*

*Derek Smithson*

*John Swinglehurst*

*Iain Whitmey*

*Peter Williams*

*Graham Willison*

*John Wilkinson*

## JOHN MACFARLANE BARRETT (1943 – 2024)

John Macfarlane Barrett was born to parents, Arthur, and Vera in Colne on the 29th of November 1943. The family, consisting of John, his brother David and sister Gwyneth moved to Padiham when John was 7 years of age. It was during this time that he met Carol and they immediately became friends.

John attended Simonstone Primary School. He was a bright boy who took advantage of all the opportunities presented to him, especially as a member of the scouts, which gave him a love and understanding of the outdoors as well as many other skills. He went onto be a Queen's Scout. John attended Clitheroe Royal Grammar School and then Bede University, Durham where he obtained his Teaching Degree.

Carol and John's friendship from being very young continued, and they married on the 16th of September 1967. Meeting and marrying Carol led to them developing the most wonderful life together and indeed a true partnership. They were partners in everything they experienced together. Maybe it was fate that brought them together – we all look at things differently

– but one thing is clear: this was the greatest partnership that John built in his whole career.

Sons Chris and Paul were born in 1968 and 1970. John was extremely family orientated and they meant the world to him; feelings which were and are so reciprocated.

John was also delighted to see the family expanding with new members and he was



extremely proud to become a grandad to grandchildren, Jennifer, Alice, Rachel, and Tommy.

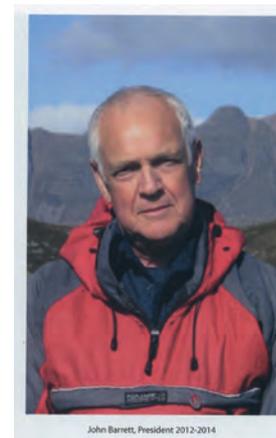
John was also well loved and respected by many children that he has taught over the years.

His first teaching post was at Edisford Primary School in Clitheroe. He then became Deputy Head at St. James Primary School in Clitheroe. His final post was Headmaster at Coal Clough Primary School in Burnley. He was the only headmaster to be President of the National Association of Headteachers twice. He retired in 2002.

John, who joined the FRCC in 1987, was an all-round mountaineer; from leading routes like Central Buttress on Scafell, Point Five Gully, Ben Nevis (with John Hitch) to classic Alpine routes, with Steve Parr. He was also a very good fell runner. Many of his Munros, his first, in 1955 with his father and the final one, Ben Nevis in 1993, where he was met by Carol and friends on the summit, and Corbetts, were completed solo with just a bumbag and determination for company. With Carol, he enjoyed attending Club meets, especially maintenance meets where his DIY skills were appreciated by the hut warden.

Club Treasurer from 1999 to 2009, despite the fact that he claimed to know nothing about accounting, he was proud of his involvement in three historic events in the history of the Club: the purchase of Karn House in 2001, the Club centenary in 2006 and the change of the Club name to '...FRCC Ltd.'

As President from 2012 to 2014, he was always active in Club affairs. Leading from the front, but always aware of his responsibilities to the members and also the history of the Club,



John Barrett, President 2012-2014

he acknowledged that he was part of a team and consensus with other committee members and also the opinions of all Club members were important to the successful running of the Club. John, on completion of his two years as President. He became an Honorary Member, a member of the Archive group, and an Advisory Trustee, for which his experience in Club matters was often called upon and, also when it was not!

*Celebrant's eulogy (edited by Mark Scott)*

The three eulogies below were spoken to a packed Burnley crematorium where John's family, his friends from the FRCC, teaching colleagues, fishing club, and also many friends, with no affiliation to any organisation were there to say a final farewell to a man who was loved and highly respected by so many people.

*I met John well over 30 years ago, shortly after I had moved up here, and we have been very close friends ever since. Our friendship was so deep that I often called him Dad, and he called me son!*

*We met at a keep fit class, and John suggested I come along to Clitheroe Mountaineers, one of my best decisions as I met my wife there, John always joked that Veronica had never forgiven him.*

*John remarked that as I was a southern lad, I had done very little in the great outdoors, so he soon got me into rock climbing and fell running, I clearly remember doing my first proper rock climb with him on Tryfan in Wales, and my first mountain marathon with him some time later. This led on to both Veronica and I joining the Fell and Rock club in the Lake district and had many years of great adventures. Some of the many highlights with John were doing Tower Ridge and Deep Cut chimney in Scotland as winter climbs, both of which were 15-hour days. We were a lot fitter then!*

*During John's long membership of the Fell and Rock club he became treasurer, vice-president, president and then a trustee, and was deeply honoured to hold these*

*roles.*

*John greatly enjoyed the social side of life in mountaineering club huts, we have all spent many a happy New Year's Eve together in various huts and cottages in the Lakes, with John acting a DJ, and refusing to go to bed much before 2 or 3 in the morning, as time went on he did start going to bed a bit earlier! He always enjoyed a pint; a particular favourite was the Old Dungeon Ghyll in Langdale where we managed a couple after climbing in the valley.*

*As we started slowing down, just a little, John got back into fishing, and for his 60th birthday Carol dispatched us off to the local tackle shop to buy him a set of fly-fishing gear. This was to become John's next passion; he had fished as a lad, but mountaineering had taken over. I had always fished so was delighted that he became so involved as we fished the local rivers and lakes together for trout. John then got into salmon fishing, and after some early success this became an obsession! Sadly, his trip to Scotland last July to fish the Royal Dee was the last time he fished, as he ended up in Aberdeen A&E, which started his final decline.*

*John was a lot more than just a climbing partner and fishing friend, he was a real friend and somebody I could always look to for wise council no matter what the issue. We had very different political views which always made for interesting discussion, and he could be described as cantankerous in the nicest possible way. His dry sense of humour was legendary.*

*Rest in Peace John, you were one in a million and will be sadly missed.*



**Nick Millward**

*I joined the FRCC in 1990 and met John and Carol, along with other members of the Club from Clitheroe soon after that.*

*It was not until 1998 that I got to know John much better. At a Brackenclose maintenance meet, John asked me what it was like being on the committee. He had been asked to become treasurer but said that he had no experience of handling other people's money. After a short chat, he decided to become treasurer and the rest, as they say is history.*

*In 2004 I booked four lodges just north of Sligachan on Skye for a group of friends. I asked John and Carol if they would like to join us. John had two Corbetts to do on Skye, one of them was Glamaig. On the way up I found a fossil ammonite, which I showed John on*

*reaching the summit. I have been asked why we call each other Bro. It's a long story so I won't mention it now, but it revolves around the ammonite.*

*Other Corbetts were ascended on the northwest coast of Scotland during the next few years, often with other*



*Club members. This left two more – Sgurr an Fhuarain from the shore of Loch Arkaig and finally Foinaven. In 2017 we attempted and failed on Sgurr an Fhuarain twice, first time too hot, second time too wet and windy. In 2018 at the end of April we camped on the shore of Loch Arkaig. Setting off early, there was no rush; we eventually reached the top at 1.00 pm. The return was much quicker; John's celebratory pint was waiting.*

*I booked four lodges at Lochinver for May 2018. Besides being in a beautiful location, the main reason was John's final Corbett, Foinaven. On May 28th, a group of thirteen, mainly Club members and friends and Fern, my border collie set off early and eventually congregated on the summit in glorious sunshine with an unbelievable panorama of hills, lochs, and sea. A very memorable day, on which John finally completed an exceptionally long journey.*

*But John's journey was not yet over. John was the President in 2014 when the library was moved from Lancaster University to the Armit Museum in Ambleside and with and Peter Lucas and Deborah Walsh, Armit Curator, the main part of the library was put on display in a well-designed prominent position on the first floor at the Armit.*

*In 2023, Deborah, no longer employed by the Armit had by now joined the FRCC and was librarian and archivist and decided to update the library inventory. Deborah, John, Maureen Linton Lee, and I completed the audit in time before we had to remove the library at the end of November from the Armit.*

*I spoke to John on the Sunday before he passed away, he was on good form. One of the things on his to do list was to write a letter of support for the proposed Library and Archive store at Raw Head, which members of the Archive Group had been asked to complete. Sadly, he never did complete it.*

*Goodbye Bro, see you on the other side.*

**Mark Scott.**

*I've known John for about 44 years. We first met in Witches Quarry when Paula and I were climbing there. I had no idea who he was, but we had a chat about the climbs, and he wandered off as there was no one else around. We soon met again once Paula and I joined Clitheroe Mountaineering Club and we were off on a merry go round of rock and ice climbing, mountain walking, camping and Mountain Marathons - in the Lake District, Wales, and Scotland. This inevitably led to getting involved with the Munroes and then adventures to Chamonix, Courmayeur and beyond.*

*On the Chamonix trip in 1990 was another FRCC member – Steve Parr, with whom John had formed a formidable climbing partnership. They made a superb Alpine team. It was Steve who introduced John to the FRCC.*

*John never got over the loss of Steve later in the Himalaya.*

*I also had a lot of professional contact with John after I took early retirement from teaching. I did quite a lot of supply work. Much of it at the school where John was the head. The school, Coal Clough Primary was in an area of Burnley where there was a fairly high rate of unemployment. It was a challenging school to work in, but it had its rewards. John's ethos was that the school must be a warm, welcoming and above all a safe place. He was greatly admired by his loyal staff and was respected by the children. That was in spite of the sign on his desk which read 'Unchanged by progress!' That must have raised a few eyebrows when Ofsted visited.*

*As our thirst for adventure lessened, John began to go fishing more frequently. I hadn't fished since I was about 16 so I knew very little about modern techniques. He was determined to put that right. Ever the teacher he initiated me into the intricacies of fly fishing- and I loved it. I was hooked! Many happy hours on the local rivers were to follow.*

*In recent years visits to a local pub became a prominent feature of the week for a gang of us. A 'quick pint' or two would last quite a while as we discussed*



*how to put the world to rights. John would chat eagerly and freely to anyone willing to listen - of whatever age. It always delighted him to get an intelligent response from children!*

*To conclude I have a little tale from Scotland. We had gone to Banchory. A pleasant little town on the banks of the river Dee in pursuit of salmon. We were fishing quietly about 30 metres apart when I heard a sudden shout and a simultaneous splash. John was in the water on his back heading feet first, downriver, to the east. I hurried as quickly as chest waders and clumsy wading boots would allow. I splashed in and grabbed him. We quickly got back to dry land. As we sat there recovering John said in a very concerned way: 'Eee ... I've never been to Aberdeen! I were right looking forward to it!'*

**Mike Carter.**

**The compilers of this obituary are grateful for the notes provided by Margaret Foxley, Celebrant at John's funeral.**

## **PETER BRUNT** (1936-18/07)

The Reverend Professor Peter Brunt was considered a towering figure in medicine and gastroenterology.

His love of the open air and mountaineering were inspired by one of his early teachers and remained a passion throughout his life, becoming a member of FRCC in 1980.

He was described as a big man in many ways. Tall and well built, he was charming, radiating a confidence that inspired trust in patients and colleagues. Beneath a gravitas, there was a man of great warmth and kindness. His anecdotes are fondly remembered, not only for their humour and timing, but also his skill at mimicking regional accents.

He was born in Prestatyn, the son of Harry, a bank clerk and Florence, nee Airey. He attended Cheadle Hulme school then King George V



Grammar School in Southport when the family moved there

After qualifying in Medicine in Liverpool and doing local training posts, 2 years were spent in the USA at John Hopkins in Baltimore. There he studied medical genetics and wrote an MD thesis. He returned to Edinburgh where he developed his

interest in gastroenterology (conditions of the gut), then moving to work in London with Dame Sheila Sherlock who at the time was considered the doyenne of gastroenterology, in particular liver diseases. He was appointed a Consultant in Aberdeen where he worked for 31 years, covering clinics on Shetland. In 1996 he was appointed as a professor.

He became an advisor to the Scottish

Government and chairman of several national bodies dealing with alcohol and its misuse.

He was a Vice President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

He was Physician to the late Queen Elizabeth for 18 years, visiting her and the Queen Mother on many occasions at Balmoral. One claim to fame which reached international attention was when he was responsible for organizing the Queen Mother's care in Aberdeen when she had a fishbone stuck in her throat.

In 1994 he was appointed OBE and in 2001 he was made a Commander of the Victorian Order.

After retiring to Edinburgh, he moved to Watermillock to the west of Ullswater.

After a 2-year training course he was ordained into the Episcopalian Church as a non-stipendiary minister, continuing this role in Cumbria

Much of this obituary appeared in The Daily Telegraph on 24/08/2023 and is reproduced with kind permission of the publisher.

## **JOAN MARY CLARKE**

I first met Joan at Birkness where my sister, Brigid Ackerley, and she were spending the weekend. I can't remember what she said, but she made me laugh – and I choked over the mug of tea I was drinking! A friendly, happy person, who was often assumed to be a third sister.

Joan was born in Bilston on June 26th 1928 to Vera and Ernie Clarke.

She was educated at Villers Junior School, Bilston Girls High School, and Birmingham University where she gained a BA in French and a Diploma in Education.

She taught French at Friary Girls School in Lichfield, Southport Girls High School and Gateshead High School.



Joan enjoyed the outdoors, both walking and riding, and after she met Brigid at Southport Girls High they spent weekends in the Lake District, sometimes with groups of schoolgirls or Guides, and Joan was introduced to the Fell and Rock, which she joined in 1965. Joan was a walker, never really happy on rocky

ground. She regularly attended the Wasdale Meet and the Dinner.

In 1966, Ardifuir, a cottage in Pirnmill, was bought by Brigid and Joan and became the base for holidays where there was always a welcome for friends and relatives.

She took early retirement in 1985 and went to live at Ardifuir with frequent visits to Edinburgh where Brigid was then living.

In 2006 she left Scotland to relocate to Ludlow, near relatives, where she spent the rest of her life.

After a short illness she died peacefully in Hereford County Hospital on 26th January 2020 aged 91.

*Elspeth A Smith*

### **RICHARD (DICK) COURCHEE** (1939 - 2022)

Dick was a fiercely independent and private man. A proud Cumbrian, born in Millom, he commenced his climbing and mountaineering career whilst studying Civil Engineering at Trinity

College, Cambridge and then joined the FRCC as a life member. He met his future wife, Sue, who also became an FRCC member, at Cambridge and soon after they moved back to Cumbria when Dick took up an appointment as an instructor at Eskdale Outward Bound School. He worked there for 5 years under the leadership of Tom Price and John Lagoe, also past members of the Fell and Rock. Whilst there he served as Assistant Warden at Brackenclose for several years. He loved his time at Eskdale, where he encouraged young people to develop through being challenged in the outdoors. Throughout the remainder of his life, he espoused the values of the Outward Bound - to seek, to strive and not to yield.

From Eskdale he moved to Yorkshire to work as a Civil Engineer for the Environment Agency. He continued to be very active as a climber and fell runner and was instrumental in developing the new sport of orienteering with the local club, Airienteers. He was also an active member of the Gritstone Club and was warden of The Smithy at Thirlmere for a number of years. He set himself the challenge of completing all the routes in Classic Rock, which



he successfully achieved, and he was particularly proud of his ascent of the Old Man of Hoy with John Hollingworth.

Dick's determination and tenacity also shone through in his fell running exploits including his successful completion of the Bob Graham at his third attempt. At 65 he completed the Joss Naylor Challenge and that gave him the impetus to develop his own challenge - the Cumbrian Traverse - an excellent navigational route across quality terrain from Broughton Mills to Keswick crossing 21 peaks in 48km. It has become a recognised challenge and is a fitting tribute to him.

He was an active member of the Lake District Mountain Trial Association, undertaking planning of the courses and coordinating the event before becoming the President of the Association and working closely with Wendy Dodds. After planning the courses for several years, he reverted to competing in the race again and wryly remembered it being suggested by fellow competitors that he was 'getting a taste of his own medicine'.

On retirement, Dick and his wife moved back to Cumbria to live in Lindale, and later, after the sudden death of his wife, he moved to Staveley. He became a member of Kendal and Windermere bridge clubs where, according to his former bridge partner, he played enthusiastically but somewhat unconventionally!

In amongst all his other activities he also managed to squeeze in several long cycling adventures, such as the Mull of Galloway to Cape Wrath, and in his later years his e-bike, fondly christened Pegasus, enabled him to keep active.

Sadly, Dick's health declined after suffering a stroke three years ago which curtailed somewhat his adventures. However, he remained steadfastly independent for as long as he was able. After spending 12 weeks in Barrow hospital, he was moved to a nursing home in Grange where he was cared for during the last two weeks of his life.

I would rather be ashes than dust!  
A spark burnt out in a brilliant blaze rather than  
stifled by dry rot.  
The function of man is to live, not to exist.  
I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them.  
I shall use my time.

JACK LONDON

A great contribution - a life well lived.

*Sue and Chris Wales*

### **DAVID CUTFORTH** (1923-2022)

David Ecroyd Cutforth, who died on 8th April 2022 at the age of 98, was a widely respected classical conductor and teacher, and a much-



loved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. In his final years, David distilled his remarkable life and career into a memoir entitled 'Music, Mountains and Memories'. Those first two M's were undoubtedly David's passions in life, and where he chose to dedicate much of his

time. The final M is itself hugely significant, too – David not only had a remarkable memory but was a meticulous planner and notetaker, meaning that many of the details of his rich life have been preserved for us, his family, as well as the friends and colleagues he leaves behind.

The second child of Alizon (née Ecroyd) and Sir Arthur Cutforth, David was born on 31st May

1923 in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, where he spent the first six years of his life. He grew up in Hertfordshire and Essex with his sister and two brothers, before being sent to boarding school in 1930.

Unlike many of his generation, David was lucky enough to spend the second world war years at university rather than being called up to serve, owing to his status as a scientist and his extremely poor eyesight. David gained a degree in Natural Sciences from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and later a first-class BMus from the Royal Academy of Music.

Following graduation from the Royal Academy, David's first professional appointment was as Director of Music at Strathallan School near Perth in Scotland, a boarding school with around 200 pupils. During his time at the school, he developed the music department a great deal, including the establishment of a chapel choir, choral society, and the staging of Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore and The Mikado in successive years.

After three and a half years at Strathallan, David was appointed Director of Music at Maidstone Grammar School in Kent. Music already played a central role in the ethos of the school which allowed David to deploy his talents and those of the students and staff to the full. This included the recruitment of many leading and promising soloists who regularly performed alongside students and staff. Particular highlights included the annual Choral Society concerts, performances of Bach's St Matthew Passion (1957), Handel's Messiah (1959), Hayden's The Creation (1962) and J.S. Bach's B Minor Mass (1968).

During his time in Kent, David also played a lead role in the formation of the Maidstone Opera Group, including several performances of Mozart's 'Così fan tutte' in 1959. This was a hugely collaborative venture, not just the artistic demands, but also the complex logistics involved in staging such a large and much-loved opera in the town. Feedback was

universally positive, including this from Michael Tillet, future Director of Music at Rugby School, who said: 'The first production of the newly formed Maidstone Opera Group gave cause for rejoicing - Kent should take pride in this new venture.'

David's next career move in 1970 took him to North East Essex Technical College in Colchester, initially as a music lecturer, and later as deputy head of department. During his time in Colchester, he taught many students preparing for careers in teaching and on the BA (Hons) Music degree. He also took charge of the College Orchestra for several years as well as staging annual opera productions involving college students and talented musicians from the surrounding area. Performances included Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro and 'Così fan tutte' (again!), The Consul and The Telephone (Menotti), Sir John in Love (Vaughan Williams), The Bartered Bride (Smetana) and Gianni Schicchi (Puccini).

Following the retirement of the head of department, the opportunity for promotion presented itself. An opportunity David decided to forego, partly because, at his own admission, he would have found it difficult to lead the introduction of more progressive forms of music (electronic, pop, etc.) which were emerging at the time. This was a decision he never regretted.

David retired from full-time work in 1985 at the age of 62, and in 1987 he retired completely. In his final year at North East Essex College, the students put on a special show as part of their annual extravaganza which culminated with David appearing on stage dressed as superman. Sadly, there is no photographic evidence of this momentous occurrence – perhaps it was secretly destroyed for fear of embarrassment!

The Lake District was a hugely significant place for David; he spent many happy summers there from early childhood. It was here that he discovered his lifelong passion for mountaineering; in addition to reaching many peaks in the Lakes, he later conquered the Matterhorn in Switzerland and

Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak. During the 1970s, he enjoyed several walking holidays in the UK with his sons Nicholas and Christopher, including The Pennine Way, Offa's Dyke and the Coast to Coast Walk.

David met his beloved wife Margaret in 1951 through mutual friends. He was impressed by her portrayal of Carmen in a game of charades, while she admired his kindness and modesty. The initial attraction was solidified when they found they shared many friends and interests, not least music and the outdoors. They were married in August 1956 at St. Barnabas Church on the outskirts of Gloucester, before departing for their honeymoon in Salzkammergut in Austria.

David and Margaret's marriage was admired by many friends as being extremely loving and remarkably equal for the time. They lived happily in Kent and Essex where they raised their three children, Nicholas, Sonya and Christopher, and later relocated to Warwick to enjoy their retirement.

After Margaret passed away in 2011, David made the difficult decision to leave Warwick and the home they had shared and relocated to Huddersfield to live nearer two of his children.

Here he spent his final years, continuing to enjoy the pleasures of reading, music and watching sports, and spending time with his eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, many of whom lived close by.

Having passed away just weeks before his 99th birthday, David lived a great deal longer than his three siblings, all of whom died in their early sixties. During his life, he witnessed many great changes in the world, both positive and negative. Concluding his memoirs, David expressed the hope that '... in days to come, the problems of today will be faced squarely and that future generations will enjoy a safer and more equal world.'

Amen to that.

*Chris and Katie Cutforth*

## **HELEN DOWNHAM** (FRCC member 1956-2022)

In her younger days, Helen and her husband, Ralph, spent many years climbing at weekends and holiday times in North Wales and the Lake District, particularly in Langdale, and their holidays were often taken in Europe, where they climbed in the Alps.

When Ralph's work as a Civil Engineer took him abroad, Helen turned to joining the WRVS, setting up and running the day centre at Horton Psychiatric Hospital in Epsom. Helen's work for the WRVS continued for more than 40 years and during that time she became Surrey County Organizer, then headed up the south-east area organization of the WRVS. For this work, Helen was awarded an OBE by HM the Queen.

*Valerie Pitt (niece)*

## **NUALA SIOBHAN DOWIE** (1959 - 2022)

Nuala joined the FRCC in 1994 and later served on the committee. She grew up in Carlisle and studied geography and economics at Lanchester Polytechnic (Coventry) from 1977-81.

We met in the poly mountaineering club and enjoyed regular weekend meets, mostly to the Lakes and North Wales with some longer trips in Scotland. During this period a group of lifelong friendships developed, leading to meetups and holidays over the following years. I have fond memories of climbing trips to Skye and Arolla in Switzerland.

Another small group trip in 1982 was to South Greenland where we explored the then relatively unknown mountaineering possibilities at the head of the Tasermiut Fjord and the ice-sheet in that area. Later, Nuala often laughed and chatted

enthusiastically about how very formative that trip was, due to various epic situations that cropped up. Again, in 1983 Nuala was a key member of a similar small group of friends on their first Himalayan trip, venturing to Karakoram and traversing the Biafo and Hispar Glaciers via Snow Lake. Exploration and new experiences in the mountains became ever more essential and intertwined in her life.

After graduating Nuala went to Y Coleg Normal in Bangor to do a PGCE in Teaching and Outdoor Education, this led to several teaching roles followed by 2 years VSO in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. It was towards the end of



the VSO assignment that she got together with her lifetime partner and wife Susan; on returning to Cumbria they joined members of Susan's family in the running of the Royal Oak Hotel at Rosthwaite in Borrowdale. Soon after, their children Meghan then Ross were born and went to Borrowdale School. Over the decades (they ran the hotel for nearly 40 years)

many friends will have enjoyed Nuala and Susan's hospitality at the hotel, whether calling in for a chat over tea and scones in the kitchen or being given accommodation on a visit to the Lakes. On my visits to the hotel, it struck me how the management and staff seemed to operate more as an extended family rather than in an employer/staff relationship.

It was in 2014 that Nuala took her big step in the gender jungle and transitioned, with the support of friends and understanding of her family. Nuala had been affectionately referred to as 'Dowie' by friends and colleagues prior to transitioning, this was a name she was quite ok with so Dowie or Nuala were

used equally by close friends.

Nuala was a highly committed and valued member of Keswick Mountain Rescue Team from 1988 up to her sudden death, attending 968 callouts and serving as Team Secretary for 5 years. The obituary in the MRT annual report comments on her adept people skills with Team matters and casualty care, also that "Nuala was never one to shy away from arguing her case, with passion and an enthusiasm. Often, or indeed usually, this included wit and a sense of humour!", a characteristic that I'm sure will resonate with many of her wide range of friends.

In 2005 we did our first mountain marathon, the LAMM on Mull where her map and navigation skills in thick cloud put us among the prize winners. In addition to walking and mountaineering activities she was an experienced skier (on and off-piste), she sailed smaller yachts with her brother-in-law and other friends and cycled. However, over the decades her interest in Classic cars took an increasing amount of her free time; the inception of this hobby was probably when her father ran a motor business in Carlisle. She collected three Triumph Spitfires and a GT6 and was meticulous in researching how these vehicles could be optimised for rally performance without radically changing the models' characteristic appearances. She was a skilled driver and did many Classic car rallies and time trials in the UK and Europe; Susan turned out to be a very good navigator so it was a pastime they enjoyed together, when an escape from the hotel could be fitted in. She made many friends in Club Triumph where she is remembered as an 'infectiously enthusiastic participant in Club activities' and took her 'yellow peril' Spitfire on the 2020 Monte Carlo Classic Rally, which started in Glasgow.

Nuala approached all her interests with great enthusiasm; she always wanted to make the most of the day, whatever the activity. She was well read and had a point of view in any conversation.

She will be remembered for being one of a

special kind of person in many ways. She was very sociable and outgoing but also enjoyed exploration of wild places like the Scottish Munros with her sheepdog as company. She loved the Lake District fells and the Borrowdale Valley. She had interesting and knowledgeable observations on nature, wildlife, geography, and changes to the environment. But most of all I think Nuala will be remembered for being really good and usually amusing company.

She is sadly missed by her many friends and family.

*Robin Smithurst*

## **BARBARA DUXBURY**

As we go through life, we can be susceptible to a life changing event; something that sends you off in a completely different direction. This was certainly true for Barbara Duxbury who passed away in August 2018 after a long illness. Barbara was born in Darwen in 1952 and spent the first part of her life married to Bill and together they brought up three children. After divorce, the event that changed her life completely was meeting Andrew Duxbury.



She and Andrew worked for a medical company in Darwen and, with her children grown up, she was then in a position to enjoy what life had to offer. Little did she realise, I suspect, how her life was to change once she was introduced to sporting activity

by Andrew. He had walked with the Ramblers for years and led alpine holidays. He and I had attained full membership of FRCC in 1986 so, having met Barbara in the early nineties, he was anxious to introduce her to walking.

Walking was not the only activity that Andrew introduced her to. He suggested they take up skiing, at first with practice at Ski Rossendale, which was conveniently close. She became an accomplished skier, probably better than Andrew. Despite her balance on the slopes, she did not particularly take to mountain biking, though she gave it a good try.

Having married in 1996, and Andrew already being a member of FRCC, it was natural that she should start attending meets and did so from around 1997, becoming an associate member. She became a full member in 2001 and the same year she became an assistant warden at Birkness for three years under Tony Simpkins. She must have impressed for, in 2004, she took over as warden of Beetham Cottage for a wonderfully successful ten years. Apart from the normal care and attention that was required she insisted on the relaying of the car park in Lakeland stone chippings and the installation of new hardwood sash windows. In her final year as warden of Beetham she oversaw the cottage's 50th anniversary celebrations and this was deemed to have been an outstanding success, an eminently fitting finale to her term of office.

Associated with the walking were the camping weekends that Andrew and Barbara were to share with me in Swanage in Dorset. As lovely as it is to camp in Lakeland, we simply found that venturing south some three hundred miles gave us lovely balmy nights, some four degrees warmer than Cumbria! When not walking on the Purbecks or along the Southwest coastal path we would go to the beach at Studland Bay and meet up with long-standing friends. Barbara was a real sport as my tent was only a Vango Mark 5 albeit with an extension, where we were able to store all the chairs, tables, pots, and pans. I know the memory plays tricks

on you, but the weather was more settled in the nineties, and we enjoyed many sun-blessed weekends on a small campsite near Swanage.

Other than time with the FRCC and holidays in the UK, Andrew and Barbara took a trekking holiday to Nepal and Ladakh and cruised the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. They enjoyed some twenty holidays or so with fellow members, Michael and Christina Basten and other members of the FRCC. We also enjoyed city tours to Barcelona, Madrid, London, Paris, Andalusia, New York, and Boston. So often mountain people see no further than the hills, but I was always pleased that both Andrew & Barbara were equally at home on the coast or enjoying the buzz of city life. After annual weekend trips to London, we switched our attention to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Barbara loved people, loved places with atmosphere and so loved our four 'o' clock retreat to the House Shoe Bar in Glasgow which has the longest continuous bar in the UK with its wonderful, vibrant atmosphere.

After retirement she stepped up sessions at the gym but also supported Andrew in his new consultancy. She was a tremendous asset to him as she had developed an interest in computing and developed skills that were extensively based on Apple products. Despite all these interests in the second part of her life she remained a family person, extremely proud of her three children and six grandchildren.

For those of us who knew her, Barbara's passing left a void in our lives. She was a person of great fun, good organisational skills and of strong character. She brightened our lives whether out on the fells, on our weekends and holidays or at the many social occasions we were able to share. Over the last year of her illness, I never heard her complain once. There was absolutely no bitterness about what she was going through.

Barbara is survived by Andrew, three children and six grandchildren.

*Fred Guilfoyle*

## **KATE DURKACZ** (1962 – 2023)

My wife Kate Durkacz, who has died of secondary oesophageal cancer, loved the hills. Kate was born Catherine Anne Woodham, in London, the eldest of three children. She was introduced to hillwalking in the Lake District and Scotland by her father while still a young girl, and she continued to pursue the activity for the rest of her life.

Kate and I first met in 1984 while working at GEC Avionics in Rochester, Kent, and we quickly



became a devoted couple. A move to Sheffield in 1988 in order to allow us to be closer to the upland areas of Britain gave Kate the opportunity to study for a PhD in Applied Mathematics at Sheffield University, after which she embarked on a varied academic career.

Together with me and others, Kate climbed rock up to VS standard in the Lake District, climbed snow and ice in the depths of the Scottish Winter, and scaled peaks in the French Alps. But Kate would never have described herself as a 'climber.' Rather, she simply enjoyed being out in the hills in all seasons and in all weathers and was a permanent enthusiast for doing so. Together, we walked and climbed throughout Britain and Ireland, in the Alps, the Dolomites, the Pyrenees, the Picos de Europa, the Polish Tatra, Norway, and, probably the most demanding of all, in Southwest Tasmania. I described some of our Tasmanian adventures in an article published in the 2018 edition of the club's Journal: the traverse of the Southern Ranges was a particularly tough trip, and, in appalling weather, it was Kate who found the way through a key section of the route.

Kate and I eventually married in 2005. Following many happy years in Sheffield, we moved to Edinburgh in 2007, and joined the Fell and Rock that same year. We were regular attendees on maintenance meets for the club's two Scottish huts and, in the course of completing a round of the Munros together, we spent many convivial evenings in those huts. Our final Munro was Slioch and, having been determined to save that final hill for a day of reasonable weather, we climbed it on November 5, 2011, while based at Karn House. Walking into the centre of Aviemore that evening in search of a celebratory meal, we pretended to each other that the large fireworks display in progress was being held in honour of us.

Kate took her work seriously and, in her final job, rose to become Head of Mathematics at Napier University in Edinburgh. While she continued to pursue her own programme of research, she was unusual among UK science academics in having a principal interest in, and a passion for, teaching. She realized the importance of mentoring the next generation, and promised her students that, if they put the work in, she would make sure that they got through the course. Kate loved her students – and her students loved her in return.

Away from the hills and her work, Kate enjoyed wildlife, gardening, reading, listening to music, and playing music. She played piano at home, played fiddle in informal bands made up of friends, and played trombone in organized wind bands. We both retired from work in the Summer of 2022, with big plans for many years of future adventures together.

For the final ten years of her life, Kate was dogged by various health conditions which progressively limited what she was physically capable of doing. These culminated in a diagnosis of terminal cancer in September 2022, which shocked us both. But throughout all this, Kate continued to be active in the hills. She never complained about her lot, and she carried on with stoicism, optimism, and dignity right to the end. She died in my arms on

the 30th of October 2023.

Kate was kind and compassionate, yet strong and determined. She was optimistic, fun, and adventurous. She was great company, she was a very easy person to be with, and she lived life to the full. I am a lucky man to have had such a loving and supportive partner for more than 38 years. Her death – at the age of only 61 – has robbed her of the many plans and dreams she had for our joint retirement years, it robs me of my lifetime partner and soulmate, and it robs many others of a wonderful friend.

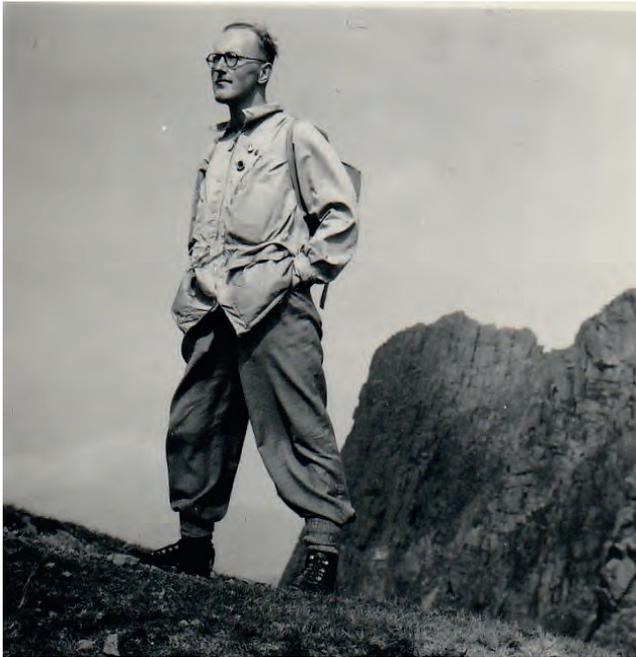
*Ian Durkacz*

### **WILLIAM (BILL) GREEN** *FRCC Member (Life), 1953-2021*

Bill was born in Liverpool in 1926 and lived through the 1941 May blitz of the city acting as a fire warden whilst a schoolboy.

Bill's first visit to the Lake District was in 1949 and this was the start of his great love affair with the English Lake District. Staying in Threlkeld he ascended his first mountains, Clough Head, Skiddaw and Blencathra, commenting that he wished he had had his shoes studded!

On one of his visits, he fortuitously met Fell and Rock members George Fitter, Frank Alcock and Ron Brotherton who took him under their wing and literally showed him the ropes of mountaineering and climbing. Frank and Ron proposed and seconded him for membership of the FRCC whilst A B Hargreaves was President, and this was achieved in 1953, when he attended his first club dinner, where the speakers were Sir John Hunt and Eric Shipton. Bill's mountaineering continued apace for the next 8 years until marriage and a young family curtailed his exploits for a while. However, as soon as I was deemed old enough to climb



my first 2000-footer, at the age of 7, visits to the Lake District became a regular occurrence and my brother and I had some wonderful walks with Dad on the Fells. He did like to try out new routes, however, and this did lead to some very interesting and occasionally hair-raising descents!

When my mother died after a long illness in 1999, Bill began a whole new phase of fell walking at the age of 73. He was now living in Penrith and went out on the fells as often as weather conditions would allow, often phoning me from the top of a mountain to let me know where he was! He loved meeting people on his walks, and I am sure there are many people who are still walking the fells who will remember talking to him. His final ascent (his 80th) was Blencathra, at the age of 84; after this he kept to low level walks, but always looked upwards to his beloved fells. His ashes are scattered at Tetwet Tarn, somewhere quiet and restful surrounded by his favourite mountains. He was a true gentleman.

I share with you his final diary entry for 1956 entitled 'Another Good Year'.

"During the year I got to know much better many people I had already met and made some new friends. I feel I belong to the Lake District as much as to Liverpool - spiritually more so. Pleasant memories live on long after the mind has banished to the shadows the pain and disappointments, the pain of witnessing the drabness of the muck heap left behind by an unordered industrial revolution, the pain of experiencing embittered human relations in urban communities divorced from nature.

So, in my memory will live on the vision of The English Lake District, the gem set in the crown of England's heritage, a priceless possession, the preservation of which, against the depredations of a materialistic society, has as its price eternal vigilance and the peaceful application of the spirit, which the British People displayed in *their finest hour*."

*Fiona Winter*

### **Climbing with Bill in the Fifties**

*Comments from Malcolm Fitter (FRCC Member since 1957)*

Bill started climbing regularly at the start of the fifties. I am told Doug and Stan Wright and maybe Bill were introduced to fell walking as members of Crosby Tennis Club, when they had group trips to the Lakes and North Wales. In 1953 he joined the FRCC and about that time the Liverpool climbing Club, 'The Wayfarers'.

Along with my father, in 1953, I started going on the hills with Bill and other Liverpool climbers. The Liverpool contingent of the FRCC consisted of Doug and Stan Wright, Bill, and my father. They arranged to car share, Bill with a Ford Popular and my dad with a Morris 10. At times other climbers would join us, including our Past President Hilary Simmons (later Moffat), David Ferguson and Jack Duckworth.

The group between 1953 and 1960 attended many year-round Lakeland and Dinner meets plus working parties at Brackenclose. Bill particularly enjoyed winter conditions and the quieter areas of Lakeland.

At that time Bill was assistant manager in the Liverpool University Branch of Martins Bank. Even whilst working he had a mountaineering colleague in Ken Tarbuck, the inventor of the knot used with stranded nylon climbing rope.

Bill was a man of figures (a mathematician) and was meticulous in recording his many visits to the hills in great detail. This was before the advent of Alf Wainwright, but very much in the same ilk. Copies of Bill's journals are now held in FRCC archives and make very interesting reading.

I particularly owe a lot to Bill. Using a modern term, he was my Mentor, who taught me mountaineering skills and navigation. Sometimes he would drop me off with map and compass and strict instructions to find certain hills and where to meet up later in the day. This was a skill that has served me well in a lifetime of mountaineering. With the encouragement of Doug Wright and Bill they proposed and seconded me for Club Membership at the age of 16.

The experience of climbing with Bill and the other Liverpool climbers leaves me with happy memories and a sense of great achievement.

## **CLARE HARRIS** (1960-2023)

*Member 1994 - July 2023. Obituarist 2022 – 2023*

When John Holden was giving his El Presidente speech at the 2023 dinner Clare would not have expected to be amongst those members he mentioned as having died during the year. Clare was a lifelong lover of the outdoors but wouldn't have thought that she stood out from the crowd.

Brought up in Plymouth, Clare enjoyed hacking out, swimming in the sea, and gained her DoE before University in Nottingham and a move to the Northwest, had a short marriage, joined the Achille Ratti, and took up walking the mountains and fell running, for which she is best known. Clare was a butterfly, rarely settling in any town, job, any

club, or activity. At various times she undertook hut to hut tours, open water swimming, various forms of skiing; XC, road and bike touring; with a bit of climbing, kayaking, orienteering, and horse riding thrown in for good measure. Her forte was endurance undertaken with random training for the most part and, as much as possible, with no planning by her!

She was a great socialiser leading to many instances of club members commenting on her enthusiasm in her various activities, and the support that she gave them. Photos normally have her with a big smile.

Just after joining the FRCC Clare latched onto a friend's plan for a multi month bike tour of the far east, and they went off for over 18 months. By this time Clare and I had met twice on a couple of fell events and after my wife Marcia died, we got together, marrying on the Pennine way in 2013. Clare introduced me to the bigger mountains, mainly in Europe, where we spent most of our holidays, to cycling and also to the FRCC. We jointly started XC skiing in Norway, an activity we continued yearly from 2002.

Clare managed to run for six clubs, mainly on the fells, getting about 100 top 4 finishes and over a dozen national team medals. However, she always regarded her best achievement as being a high placing in the Scottish Island race. She was one of the first women to complete a Bob Graham round



and has a Joss Naylor round and a Tea Round success.

Readers will have noticed I've not covered Clare's work. She had many jobs, and it would be true to say that she regarded work as a necessary way of funding her activities. She retired in 2015 and her activity

levels increased to a peak of 21 weeks away by 2021.

Following a winter in our new van in Spain we returned in early 2023 with even more plans but sadly she started to feel ill, a stroke led to a cancer diagnosis, and she died about 8 weeks later.

*Nick Harris*

## **LES HOLBERT** (1955 - 2022)

Les was a devoted family man who is sadly missed by his wife Gillian and daughter Emma.

Les was an active member of the Leeds Mountaineering Club since the seventies and was a regular visitor to the huts in the Lakes and Scotland after he joined the FRCC in 2000.

I regularly visited the mountains with Les since the mid-eighties until his sudden death in 2022. He was always strong on the hill and was always ready to assist others, someone you could rely on if you found yourself in difficult situations.

He was always a great companion in the hills, whether on day trips to the Yorkshire Dales, hut trips to the Lake District, Snowdonia and Scotland or on longer holidays to Scotland and Iceland. On longer trips Les had a knack for finding wonderfully located properties from which to explore the hills.

In addition to mountaineering at home he also participated in three exploratory climbing expeditions overseas. These were to the Shimshal Valley in the Karakoram in 1991, the Apolobamba in Bolivia in 1993 and Ulaangom in western Mongolia in 2002.

During these expeditions he was noted to be quiet, reliable, and stalwart, always in the thick of the things that needed doing and often taking the lead in organisation on the ground. He was always there to support others, for example by getting up one night to welcome back a group with soup, drinks and pancakes and rising early to dig out the

tents from an overnight 18" snowfall as the group stirred and those with bad backs waited for tea.

Two notable mountaineering achievements by Les on these expeditions were:

- Pioneering a route across the Malagutti Glacier in Shimshal to open up a route to the summit of 'Straker Sar' at 5,550m
- Making the first British ascent, probably only the second ever ascent, of Corhuari 5,668m in Bolivia.

He enjoyed the challenge of these climbing expeditions to remote areas with his fellow expedition members. However, for Les these expeditions were much more than mountaineering trips, as he was keen to explore unknown areas and experience the differing cultures and food.

Away from the mountains he liked travelling to areas like Svalbard and Africa and in later years developed a love of sailing, with trips to Scotland, Orkneys and Lofoten. One trip I will always remember was to Shetland, where we enjoyed watching the dramatic 'Up Helly Aa' fire festival in the streets of Lerwick followed by some lovely winter walking. He also developed a successful market gardening business and was popular with those that he worked with.

Les fought hard against his cancer since first diagnosis in early 2016, refusing to let it stop him visiting the places he loved. In later years when cancer was badly affecting his walking, he still loved visiting the Lakes. I remember a trip to Salving House in February 2022 where his illness restricted him to walks in the valleys, rather than traversing the tops.

He will be remembered as a tough but gentle man of many interests including reading, live theatre, and music concerts, in addition to his love of the mountains and travelling. He always had a drive to get things done; he was often the one suggesting new adventures and was still planning future trips until his sudden death.

*Paul Spinks*

**LES KENDALL** (1938 - 2023) FRCC member since 1974

Leslie Kendall, who died in 2023, aged 85, was born in Carlisle in 1938, one of six children. From a very early age he was drawn to climbing trees and from his garden could see the Northern Fells, which he repeatedly tried to reach, usually by playing truant. He eventually cycled to them, aged 11, with two friends, and thereafter spent every possible weekend walking in them. A fellow school pupil was Ray McHaffie, and when Les discovered the Fell Bus, which left Carlisle every Sunday at 8am, usually bound for Borrowdale (though once a month it went to Buttermere), Mac was always seated in the back of the coach expounding on his

latest climb as the "Hardest thing he'd ever done!" Les was naturally drawn to this character and Mac soon took him on his first route, Harrow Buttress. Mac became a great influence, though not always in ways which were appreciated by the authorities. Once, when maintenance was being undertaken on the famous Carlisle landmark of Dixon's Chimney, Mac and Les climbed the barricade under cover of darkness and scaled ladders to leave locals bemused the next morning by the



sight of a set of pyjamas flying from the highest point.

Les was a good artist and began an apprenticeship as a signwriter, but eventually settled on a career in the fire brigade. He proved a star recruit, winning the coveted silver axe at training college, and rose to become an Assistant Divisional Officer in North Lancashire, where he became renowned as a superb manager and a forensics expert, much respected by those who worked with him. He was twice commended for bravery shown in rescuing people from burning buildings – and a picture of Les exists on one of these rescues, climbing out of a third-floor window with his hair smouldering! That such commendations were not given out lightly is illustrated by a local newspaper report of the time that states that when he won the second honour in 1983, the previous recipient of a commendation was one Les Kendall in 1974.

In the early '60s Kendall was involved in a number of new rock climbs, mainly in Buttermere, including High Crag Buttress, Samson and the High Crag Girdle. Many of these new routes were as notable for the escapades surrounding them as for the climbing, and included a motorbike crash, and jammed ropes necessitating a solo to the top in appalling weather. An early new route was the first winter ascent of North-West Climb (VI 6) with Mac in December 1960. They had spent a cold night in Dubs Hut and made an early start over Scarth Gap and up to Pillar Rock. Here, they kicked steps up a huge snowfield covering the slabs of Nor' Nor'-West Climb, then with more difficulty climbed the short crack leading to a junction with North-West Climb. Later, Kendall was to record in his diary,

*'Above, the rock seemed free of all but a sprinkling of ice, a sad deception as we were soon to discover. Mac set off on the initial groove which was Very Severe. Now followed the first of the main pitches, Le Coin, which went nicely though I had to clear every hold of snow and chop one hold in the ice. As we made height, it*

*became readily apparent that things were becoming increasingly severe. Where we had been able to avoid or clear ice below, it now became impossible to advance without painstakingly chipping away verglas. At Lamb's Chimney we found the crux. Half an hour's chopping holds from an ice bulge, combined tactics and a piton for direct aid, finally saw us up with stick-like fingers to a safe stance near the final chimney. The pitch, led by Mac, was extremely severe yet was carried out with an adequate margin of safety.'*

Having overcome Oppenheimer's Chimney and Slingsby's Crack, the pair hared back to Scarth Gap and the Fell Bus, pausing only to collect a couple of stray climbers on the way: they made it minutes before the 6pm departure.

Les was a very fast mover on the hill (at one time it is thought he held the record for the Cuillin Ridge), and he carried on climbing well into his 80s. He enjoyed most the long high mountain routes, which were tackled with panache and frequent pauses to light his pipe. Peter Brown recalls, "Going out with Les always led to some sort of expedition. The party would decide where we were going and Les would tacitly agree, but within 10 or 15 minutes we were being led off in entirely different direction to inspect some stream bed, quarry, mine working or any feature of possible topographical interest. It might or might not involve some sort of rock climbing, usually a greasy and unprotected scramble."

Les' final climb, Middlefell Buttress, was made at the age of 84. He is survived by his wife Morag and his son Neil.

*Stephen Reid*

## **RON MILLER**

Ron was born in Barrow in Furness, starting walking in the Lake District with a friend shortly after the war, going to Coniston on the bus from Barrow. On one visit, camping by Goats Water, he met some climbers from Barrow who were staying in a quarry hut on the Old Man, and they invited him to join them climbing on Dow Crag. He started going up to Cove Hut regularly to join them, soon becoming a competent climber. They were in the habit of ascending one route on the Crag, then descending another, rather than walking off; undoubtedly good training in the days of little protection.

This group of active climbers began to climb in other areas. Ron worked most Saturday mornings, his weekend starting by catching the afternoon bus to Coniston, then going up to climb on Dow Crag, or walking over to Langdale to join his friends staying in Wall End barn. Some weekends they continued over Esk Hause to Wasdale, climbing routes on Kern Knotts in the evening. After climbing on Scafell on Sunday, they had the long walk back to Coniston to catch the last bus home.

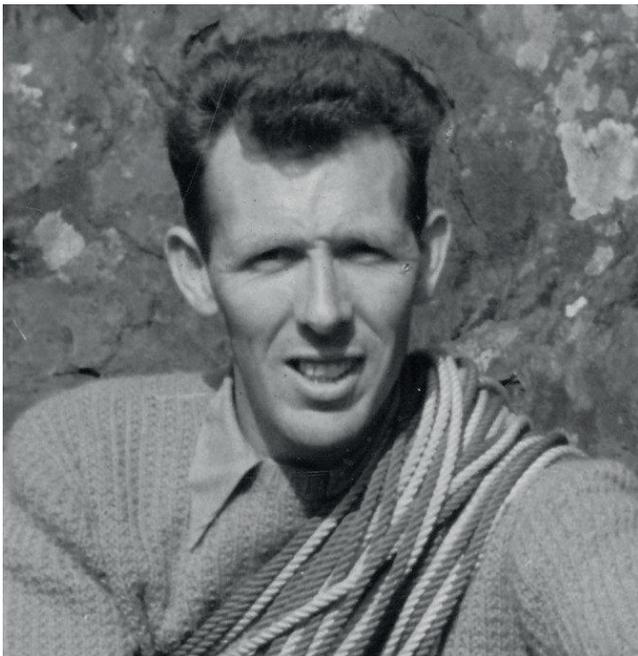
He was a very good technical climber, climbing a number of Very Severe routes in nailed boots. By this time Ron was climbing some of the hardest climbs in the Lakes, and in 1948 he joined the Club. He made an early ascent of Kipling Groove, and later, in the 1950's, was asked to revise the Scafell guidebook for the Club. This involved climbing some of the hardest and most serious routes in the Lakes at that time, even now graded Extremely Severe. Climbing equipment was primitive, and only the few most competent and bold climbers did such routes. During this time Ron did some climbing and ski mountaineering in the Alps, including the Haute Route ski tour from Chamonix to Zermatt, with Peter Moffat.

In 1955 he got a post as a Mountaineer with the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, for a 2 ½

year term on an Antarctic base in Grahamland. Ron was a joiner, and his first task there was to build the wooden hut that he and his colleagues would be living in over the winter. They lived in tents, often in bad weather, for the 3 months this took. They were provided with huskies that had to be trained to pull sledges for exploration and surveying trips. The following summer, he joined another group to establish a new base on the mainland, where he was the base leader. In that era, access to the bases was only by sea, in the summer, when the sea ice had melted. All building materials, supplies and food had to be brought in to last at least 12 months. When the boat had departed, there was no means of access and communications were limited.

On his return from the Antarctic, he made the adventurous overland journey back through South America, from Argentina to Columbia, with a fellow Club member, John Thompson, who had also been with FIDS in the Antarctic.

*David Miller*



In 1959 Ron had a year at home, and it was in November when we first met, climbing the Needle. We continued to climb together until the end of the year when he had to leave for a second spell with FIDS in the Antarctic. He was to setup a new base further south, but their ship became beset in fast ice for sixteen days until an American icebreaker could reach them. Plans then changed, Ron going to an established base for a year, where he was able to lead a number of sledging expeditions for surveying in remote areas. Ron was very modest and unassuming about his time in Antarctica, but as a result of his work there, in 1963 he was awarded the Polar medal by the Queen and had Miller Heights named for him.

When he returned home in 1961, we married and lived and worked in West Cumbria. After a few years we moved to Grizebeck, then two years later bought a field. Ron designed a bungalow, obtained planning consent, and built it. Being a perfectionist, it took two years to finish, taking priority over climbing.

From 1961 to 2009 Ron's life was very active, mostly mountaineering and skiing but also windsurfing and building a wood and canvas canoe which we used to access remote Munros and islands. In 1989 he took early retirement, enjoying the freedom to travel year round to Scotland, the Alps, Dolomites, Pyrenees and Norway, using our camper van, all interspersed with visits to Australia, NZ, North, South and Central America. Expedition cruises to remote wilderness areas such as the Arctic and the Ross Sea in Antarctica to visit Shackleton's and Scott's bases were very special to him. Exploring was in his blood! Climbing and skiing came to an end in 2009 but he continued fell walking until 2016. He was pleased that brother David, niece Wendy, and great niece Nina are following the Miller climbing tradition. He always looked forward to FIDS Reunions and seeing old friends at Club Annual Dinners.

He died at home on 20 October 2022, aged 94.

*Margaret Miller*

## MOUNTAIN MAN BERNARD NEWMAN - A RETROSPECTIVE

Bernard was born in Birmingham in April 1950, and, until his tragic death in Spain in February 2024, his thoughts never strayed far from the mountains he loved. He was an FRCC member since 1995.

Bernard went up to Leeds in 1968 and enthusiastically immersed himself in two of his major life passions: geology and climbing.

Whilst there, he thrived in the melting pot mix of old and new climbing talent, keeping a watchful eye over the emerging stars in the shape of John Syrett and Alex McIntyre, to name just a couple. Considerable strength and climbing ability had him well placed to parallel, and at times emulate, the new wave.

Bernard's natural literary skills and eye for design, made him an ideal candidate to edit the Leeds University Union Climbing Club journal, and his production of the now legendary 1973 edition gave strong hints of what was to come.

Bernard was also an extremely gifted photographer, and his pursuit of excellence, not just making do with happy snaps, was mirrored by a steady rise in the overall standard of climbing photography. His collaboration with Ken Wilson, on *Extreme Rock*, gave rise to a series of iconic images, one thinks immediately of Steve Bancroft on Strapadictomy, capturing the true zeitgeist of the era.

As his career matured, Bernard made major contributions at *Mountain* magazine, *Mountain Review*, *Climber*, and the *Alpine Journal*. In addition, he produced two excellent short walks guides in collaboration with Janine, his partner of over forty years.



Throughout these years, in various positions, Bernard's work had a purity of vision that few aspire to, and even fewer emulate. He expected, rightly, accuracy and professionalism in the work of others, and he demanded it of himself. Often his direct approach shone a bright light in places others would have preferred to keep dark; fortunately, he would never change.

As others turned to him for advice, making their way in the world of climbing literature, he gave

it freely in the most genuine of ways. His enthusiasm was infectious, and his desire to be in the hills, to be climbing, whether at home, trad climbing in the Lakes, Cornwall, or Scotland, often in the NW Highlands from Ardmair, never abated. Bernard climbed extensively abroad, from bouldering at Fontainebleau in the early years, to regular visits to Spain and Greece as those areas opened up. From this point of view, as from many others, Bernard was a font of first class knowledge and advice.

Away from climbing, Bernard's interests were many and varied, he acquired expertise easily, a true polymath. Music from Pentangle and the Incredible String Band, shared place with classical music. A shared addiction to Goon Show humour was always likely to keep us chuckling. He was mad about military aircraft, and knowledgeable. Ask him anything and you would get a measured, accurate response. But, above all, he came alive with Janine and friends, in the mountains, or on the crag, a true Mountain Man.

mountain man in word  
and spirit, bright mind, and kind  
heart, gone too soon

*David Wilcock*

## DAVE PARKER

I've known DP (Dave Parker) for 60 years, and we first met at White Ghyll when I was just beginning to climb. He very kindly led me up a severe on the slabs. I eventually got to leading and climbed with Dave many times in the Lake District, Wales, and Scotland. Then we had a couple of trips to the Alps and Dolomites.

Dave, at the age of 16 made a trip to the Dolomites, with Dave Vose, Jack Roby, and Jim Heyes, (all Wiganers) and survived it. On a later Dolomites trip they had a bad time on the Marmolada, having got benighted with little or no bivvi gear. Afterwards, one of the team (actually JR) vowed never to climb again and ceremoniously burned his climbing boots.

In our early thirties we got into fell running, mainly for climbing endurance fitness, and did many of the Lake District classics, plus quite a few Karrimor Mountain Marathons. I remember one in the Rhinogs when, on the second day, he completely bonked, and resorted to eating our last remaining emergency rations ... sugar! He quickly recovered, but then it was my turn, laying almost dead in the heather (saved by a Twix bar!).

I had done Tanky's Trog in the Peak District (Marsden to Edale – 23 miles) one year in December. DP had missed it. But come February he suggested doing it together, but how were we going to get back to Marsden? 'We'll hitch'. We got to Edale after 4 hours, running over snow but good snow. The hitch hike didn't seem such a good idea, so after chips beans and endless pints of tea with sugar, he persuaded me to run back, into the snow! Dave's night navigation, in snow, was impeccable. (No GPS then!). We got back to Marsden at 9:30pm, absolutely cream crackered. So much for the guests who had been invited for dinner at Dave's that evening. But that was Dave, such a great character, and often relying on providence even when other things had not (yet) failed.

Then, when our dear (late) friend Bob Bowdler got into sailing, we had an annual jaunt off the west coast of Scotland, at least half a dozen trips, sometimes boring, others a bit terrifying. One year, in heavy seas off Mallaig, I was beginning to feel seasick, and was clipped in for safety. DP was at the wheel in his new Aldi all yellow sailing suit, heavy rain, strong winds, and both sails up, tearing along, up and down, up and down. Then John S came up, looking a bit green. DP had both hands in his pockets



and had it on auto-pilot and I was a bit perturbed and told him we shouldn't be on auto in these conditions. Dave just shrugged and said it's not a problem. Then 15 minutes later we jibbed, and the boat's nose lurched up into the air. I was sure we would go over, and Dave (not clipped in) was thrown into the corner of the cockpit! Somehow, we got out of it by getting the engine back on and we didn't lose DP overboard.

Dave and Lynne used to attend meets regularly, until his illness got the better of him, and many members will remember him fondly, being such a friendly all-round character.

Lynne wasn't a lifelong climber/mountaineer like the rest of us, but showed some fantastic grit and determination in the Alps when Dave got her into some hair-raising situations (on walks, not climbs, but what walks!).

Dave was a brave man. He wanted to do a 4-day mountain bike ride in the Cairngorms, which I had done at least twice before. On day 2 going through

the very rooty tracks of the Rothiemurchus forest he fell off quite a few times and screamed out with severe back pain and I had to help him back to his feet. He didn't know then that it was the beginning of his myeloma (bone marrow cancer). We had to abandon. Dave had a lot of motivation, even when the dreaded was hunting him down.

We will all miss Dave deeply; so irreplaceable.

'It seems to scatter the snow, the storm that in the garden makes the flowers fall! No! What falls and passes is myself...'

R.I.P. Dave

*Eric Robinson*

### **NORMA PRECIOUS** *FRCC member 1976 – 2023*

Norma Precious joined the Fell and Rock in 1976, three years after her husband Roy. Like Roy, she was a thoroughly experienced hill walker and an active member of the Peak Climbing Club. The mountains very important to them: they had no children and very little family. Norma worked full time for many years at Firth Derihon near Matlock. Thus, Peak CC took the place of family and a prominent group from that club who were also in the Fell and Rock were nick-named 'the Sheffield Mafia'. Ron and Madge Townsend were the senior couple; the Preciouses two of the most active in leading and organizing days out, often in the company of John and Margaret Loy. The 'Sheffield Mafia' was a wonderfully inclusive group; Norma's welcoming, sociable nature encouraged many a loan Fell and Rock member at a meet to join in a fell walk which often took them to surprisingly unexpected places. Norma was very familiar with the Lakes and adept at leading, with no nonsense about Wainwright's tops or routes. She was also very fit, and we joked about her curiously heavy rucksack, speculating

that she always carried her crampons in summer as well 'just in case'.

Along with Roy, she explored much of Scotland; both were regulars at the Scottish Hotel and Camping Meets. At the latter, their battered dormobile was taken over as a midge - and rain-proof saloon bar in the evenings, although Norma was herself an abstemious individual, with a curious partiality for hot cocoa, made without milk or sugar.

As well as Scotland and Wales, the Preciouses were well-travelled in mountains in Europe, Canada, New Zealand and the Himalayas. On their last Himalayan trip, in Ladakh, Norma unfortunately suffered loss of appetite from the altitude but showed immense strength of will and determination in making the summit of Stok Kangri, at 6,000m, in a group of 9 Fell and Rock members. She did not give up easily!

After retirement, Roy and Norma joined the Sheffield branch of the CHA Rambling Group, organizing the Coach Rambles from 1998. Norma kept up this task until 2018, long after Roy's sad death in 2004. In recognition of her services, the CHA Group honoured her with life membership.

In later life, Norma moved away from the Fell and Rock, which had perhaps meant more to Roy, a rock climber, than to her. She kept up with her local clubs for a while, maintained an active social life and took up line dancing. Keeping up exercising was always

important. However, she was experiencing heart problems by the 2020s and died in spring 2023.

Norma relished being outdoors in the mountains, for the sake of being there. Someone



once foolishly asked how many Munroes she and Roy had done. 'Munroes?' she exclaimed. 'We don't bother to count them. We just like a good day out!'

Thank you Norma, for so many great days out in your cheerfully invigorating company.

*Maggie Skelton and Hatty Harris*

With thanks to Val Hawksworth for information on Norma's involvement with the CHA.

### **W G 'BILL' ROBERTS** (1931-2022)

Aged fourteen, Bill Roberts hitch-hiked from London to stay at a farm in the Newlands valley. This began a life-long love of the fells. The impact that the Lake District had on him is clear in his immaculately written and illustrated notebook from 1949, recounting the 'valiant expedition' he made with two school friends by overnight train, camping in Little Langdale and walking up Wetherlam and nearby fells.

Arriving at Exeter College, Oxford to read English in 1952, Bill became a member of the Oxford



University Mountaineering Club (OUMC). In 1955 he was part of the OUMC Expedition to Oksfjord ascending many previously unclimbed peaks in the far north of Norway. Then in 1958 he was a member of the OUMC Expedition to Chitral, Pakistan, attempting the unclimbed peak of Saraghrar (7349m). Tragically, fellow climber Peter Nelson fell to his death, and the demoralized expedition, determined to take no further risks, returned home.

In 1960 Bill collapsed and spent over two weeks in hospital before being rushed to London for a major heart operation. It was characteristic of him that a few months later he ascended Mont Blanc with university friend Gilbert Murray to check that the operation had been a success. 1961 brought another unnerving experience with a fall whilst climbing Mount Assiniboine. He nevertheless went on to climb Mount Robson. Tragedy struck again in 1963 when climbing partner Gilbert Murray was killed in a rockfall as they slept at the Pioneer Hut, high in the New Zealand Alps. Bill had a two day walk down the Fox Glacier in search of help for a companion with serious injuries and had to return with Norman Hardy to bury his best friend in a crevasse.

Returning to England, Bill carried on teaching in Cumberland. Together with Eskdale Outward Bound, this provided opportunities for him to introduce young people to walking and climbing in the Lake District at venues such as Pillar Rock. He married Anne at Frizington in 1964, with whom he had children, Gilbert, and Elizabeth.

Bill joined the FRCC in 1968, regularly attending maintenance meets, especially at Raw Head, the nearest hut to home in Ulverston. Between 1971 and 1981 we had a dozen family holidays at Raw Head, Birkness and Brackenclose, walking the local fells each day. Particularly memorable was a stay at Raw Head in 1975; twenty-eight of us, fathers in the barn, mothers, and children in the cottage, walking the Langdale Pikes. As well as leading the family on fell walks, he introduced me to climbing Lake

District classics such as Little Chamonix and Corvus.

A move to a position as Deputy Headmaster at Nelson Thomlinson School, Wigton, shifted focus to the Northern Fells. High Pike became his favourite, as reflected in his log of over 300 ascents of the Caldbeck fell. His passion for the Northern Fells is also evident in his seven entries to the FRCC guide to the Lakeland Fells.

Bill gave his family some of the most formative experiences of their lives, leading a 12-year-old me up the Pigne d'Arolla in 1977, followed by several other ascents of classics such as the Weissmies and Breithorn. These and a family ascent of the Allalinhorn were before the construction of uplifts made them so well frequented. He also retained contact with FRCC, Outward Bound and OUMC friends, climbing the Petit Dent de Veisivi with Eric Plumpton and the Portjengrat with John Lagoe and Bill Hunter, all of whom are now much missed.

Following an unplanned early retirement, Bill devoted himself to academic research, taking an Open University Masters succeeded by a PhD from Newcastle University. He became an author, writing several books including 'A Dawn of Imaginative Feeling' and Thomas Gray's 'Journal of a Visit to the Lake District in October 1769'. In these, he contributed to our knowledge of how mountains that had once been considered 'rude and awful' became admired and appreciated. Yet, as he wrote: 'There is an underlying anxiety that we have lost the awe and magic that Gray found, and a belief (that is part hope) that it is still there to be retrieved, if you know where and when to look'.

Bill was also a prolific writer of poetry, dedicating many poems to close friends and family, whilst also taking inspiration from the natural world.

It was fitting that we should return as a family to Birkness for Bill's 80th birthday. Despite it being an exceptionally wet weekend, he enjoyed looking back over old hill-walking slides and walking around the lake with his grandchildren.

Being diagnosed with heart failure provided a

welcome impetus for a solo train trip back to Saas Fee at the age of 86 to walk from the Felskinn to the Britannia Hut. Through "grit or just cussedness" he battled through wet snow. Similar determination got him up to Bowscale Tarn just a few years ago, before deteriorating mobility saw him deprived of the ability to climb the fells, something he bitterly regretted. The FRCC remained dear to him, indeed his last email to me was about reading the latest FRCC journal.

There is an inscription on the memorial seat on his beloved High Pike (a quotation from Auden) which reads: 'He is a portion of that loveliness which once he made more lovely'. I can't think of a better way to remember Bill Roberts too.

*Gilbert Roberts*

## **GENEVIÈVE ÉDITH SHAW** (1951 – 2022)

Geneviève Édith Shaw, née Billy, was born in western France in 1951, the daughter of schoolteachers. After reading English at university she moved to Yorkshire, often in later years citing the influence of having read *Wuthering Heights*, to work as a schoolteacher herself. Here she met her husband John, also a schoolteacher, who shared her deep love of reading and of the mountains. In her forties, after raising their two children, Geneviève joined the Leeds Mountaineering Club and later the Fell and Rock.

Among Geneviève's many mountaineering achievements is a round of the Wainwrights, completed with a celebration atop Causey Pike 'avec du champagne à la table', cheerfully portered (table and chairs included) by faithful fellow club members. She also visited every trig point in the Dales, many via several different routes, all meticulously recorded on her intricately

fluorescent-penned OS maps. Often fiercely proclaiming herself the slowest of any walking group, she routinely, in her later sixties, walked the best and rest of us off our feet.

A few months after Geneviève's death, several of her mountaineering friends were gathered together at Brackenclose and shared their recollections. Particular recurring themes were Geneviève's warmth, energy and vitality; her love of people, of laughter and of life; the pleasure she took in the mountains, in arthouse film, in language, and in reading novels (French, English, Russian...); her

enjoyment of a group trip to Iceland in 2014 (she read the Sagas too); her passion in debate (often talking with her hands, even when behind the wheel); and her absolute devotion to family, both English and French.

And this obituarist's particular recollection? – the final line of Angelou's poem 'When Great Trees Fall', read at her funeral: that we can 'be and be better' for having known her.

Geneviève

died on 14th February 2022, pre-deceased by John by two months. They are survived by their son and daughter – who continues the line of schoolteachers – and by three grandchildren.

*S Fielding*

## **DEREK ALAN SMITHSON** (1929-2023)



Born in Redcar, Derek was introduced to the moors above Teesside by the Scouts at the age of eleven. At twenty-three his initiation into climbing was at Scugdale by the Cleveland Mountaineering Club, on their first meet. Hooked, he bought nailed boots and a hemp rope then struck up a climbing partnership with Cliff Fielding who introduced Derek to the FRCC and Yorkshire Ramblers' Club through fortnightly weekends away in the Lakes and Scotland. Derek became a member in 1959 and was a Life Member.

Summers from 1955 to 1962 saw Derek climbing in the Alps, usually the Bernese Oberland. His last trip there was in 1972 but in the 1990s he traversed ranges in northern Spain and Iceland. Later a minor medical problem meant he could neither take flights nor climb so high.

Derek's attendance on FRCC meets lapsed in the mid-sixties around the time of his marriage to Pat, who tried climbing but was not enamoured of it nor of mountains. However, Derek continued to use club huts. From Raw Head and Birkness, he took his two children climbing, as a single rope of seven when joined by Elspeth and David Smith and their children.

After the local grammar school, Derek graduated in marine engineering from Durham University's King's College Newcastle before being apprenticed

to Middlesbrough's 'Messrs Smiths Dock and Co', following his father into membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. In the iron and steel making industry he managed projects in South Africa, northern Sweden and Canada. These provided new mountain experiences: the Drakensbergs; Canadian canoeing and cross-country skiing; and solo trips into the Swedish arctic mountains.

Abhorring the bustle of ski resorts and queueing for climbs, Derek relished moving through quieter mountains and sleeping out, often alone. Backcountry skiing took him on many trips to Norway. He was the YRC president during their 1992 centenary for which he devised the Norsk Project – ascents of many of William Cecil Slingsby's Norwegian mountains. He maintained ongoing links with Norwegians and their Slingsby Trust.

Much of my introduction to multi-pitch classic rock and winter climbing in the Lakes and Scotland was with Derek. His calm, confident technique using minimal gear impressed me. We shared twenty February weeks out in the Highlands, occasionally resorting to Waters Cottage in extremis. In his eightieth year we climbed on Grey Crag's Mitre Buttress. Seeing himself on video, he was annoyed with his loss of technique from his old economical, precision of movement on rock.

Derek's health declined following a stroke in 2021 and a series of falls. He kept up his mountaineering vicariously by reading, settled in his favourite armchair in a Teesside care home. This October, I visited Derek after climbing at Scugdale. Unable to speak or move much, his eyes lit up at mention of the climbs.

Derek died on November 10th, just short of his 94th birthday. He outlived his two brothers, and wife, Pat, who died three years ago. Children Peter and Gillian carry forward their father's interest in the outdoors.

*Michael Smith*

## **JOHN SWINGLEHURST**

John was born in Woodhouse, Sheffield, on 10th February 1951 and died at home after a long illness, in December 2020

Intelligent and well educated he gained degrees in Chemistry and Psychology, firstly becoming an industrial chemist and later a Social Worker on Nottinghamshire's Child Protection team, before retiring with ill health around 2010.

I first met John in 2000 at the inaugural meeting of the Bassetlaw Hill and Mountain Club in Worksop,



and soon found that he was an incredibly fit, long distance hill walker with a thirst for adventure. It was at this time that we became friends and began climbing and walking together. He was a popular member, being kind and funny with a

boyish mischievousness, who played the occasional prank on fellow members, but he did not suffer fools lightly.

His awareness and understanding of a wide range of subjects always made for interesting and lively conversation, be it on the hill or over a pint or a pot of tea. He had an eclectic taste in music and was particularly fond of Captain Beefheart, the folk band Show of Hands and most kinds of psychedelic hippy music

In 2004 I introduced him to the FRCC where he found satisfaction in volunteering as Assistant Warden at Salving House. Over the next 10 years we climbed many routes together on both rock and ice, mainly classics and sometimes in tough conditions, ranging from wet ascents on Dow Crag to the snow and ice of the Lake District, Glencoe, and Ben Nevis, with memorable days on Castle Ridge, Green Gully

and an undocumented new route on the Clogwyn y Garnedd face of Snowdon. Living close to the Peak District we walked and climbed together, often enjoying the warm evenings climbing on the gritstone edges until the midges drove us to the pub, but also making winter forays there after any prolonged cold snap to climb any decent bit of snow and ice around Mam Tor, Kinder Downfall, and the Chew Valley. Further afield we shared mountaineering holidays in Chamonix and the Dolomites. He also enjoyed his time trekking the full GR20 in Corsica.

Away from the mountains he had a passion for vegetarian cooking and was happiest in the kitchen of Salving House, cooking for friends, with a gin and tonic in hand.

John had no family but as his health deteriorated during the latter years of his life and the mountains became distant, he kept himself busy by doing gardening jobs for the elderly, reading, and listening to the radio.

He will be missed by all who knew him but will also be remembered by us for all the right reasons.

*Dale Bloomer*

## **Iain Whitmey** (1936 – 2021)

Iain was born in Wimbledon in 1936, but because of the War he was evacuated age five, on his own, to Lancashire. After a short period, he returned to Wimbledon, but when the family were bombed out again his mother, grandmother and aunty all moved to Nelson and then Reedley near Burnley, as his father was away serving in the Navy.

He attended Walter Street Primary and Junior School in Brierfield then onto Colne Grammar School, as rugby was played there, not football. A school trip to Langdale was his introduction to what

became his life-long love of the Lake District, and also the Yorkshire Dales. In his teens Iain joined the local church Scout troop, enjoying camping trips and eventually becoming Assistant Scout Master. He became the proud owner of a DOT scrambler bike and a Tiger 100 motorbike enabling further adventures to the Northern areas of the Lakes, Scotland and Skye with his climbing buddies Bill Smith, Brian Holden, Brian Gee and his brother Stuart who were all members of the Burnley Municipal College Mountaineering Club, which is where we first met. We were married in 1960.

Due to asthma attacks since childhood his period of National Service was served in Croydon as a cartographer with the Royal Engineers. Unfortunately, his restricted eyesight prevented him pursuing his love of maps and making cartography his career. After various jobs in retail sales, he finally worked in the motor trade for Brown Brothers which necessitated moving around the North of England, living in Preston, Carlisle, Newcastle, Bradford and finally back to Preston when his two daughters had to get settled into Secondary School. There he opened his own business, Motorist Discount Centre, until his retirement in 2001.

During all his moves he somehow managed to keep up his enthusiasm for walking, climbing, some potholing with his brother and nephew,



water skiing on Ullswater and skiing (member of Pendle Dry Ski Slope). Other activities were rally driving (member of Lighting Motor Sports Club), photography and model making, which in retirement led to the building of a 00-gauge model railway lay-out of Coniston Station of which he was very proud.

A cherished possession was his 1998 Rover Mini, which he enjoyed taking to local shows. After retirement he indulged in his love of travelling, especially to New Zealand, where our two daughters and sons-in-law lived. He was in his element with mountains, lakes and long treks, not to mention the numerous vineyards!

Being accepted as a member of the FRCC in 1992 was something he never dreamt he would achieve so he did his best to give something back to the Club, over the years becoming Archivist, Assistant Hut Warden at Brackenclose and Vice-President 2010-2012. One of his last comments was that the FRCC is not just a club - more like one big family, which was emphasised by the numerous cards and letters received at his death in May 2021.

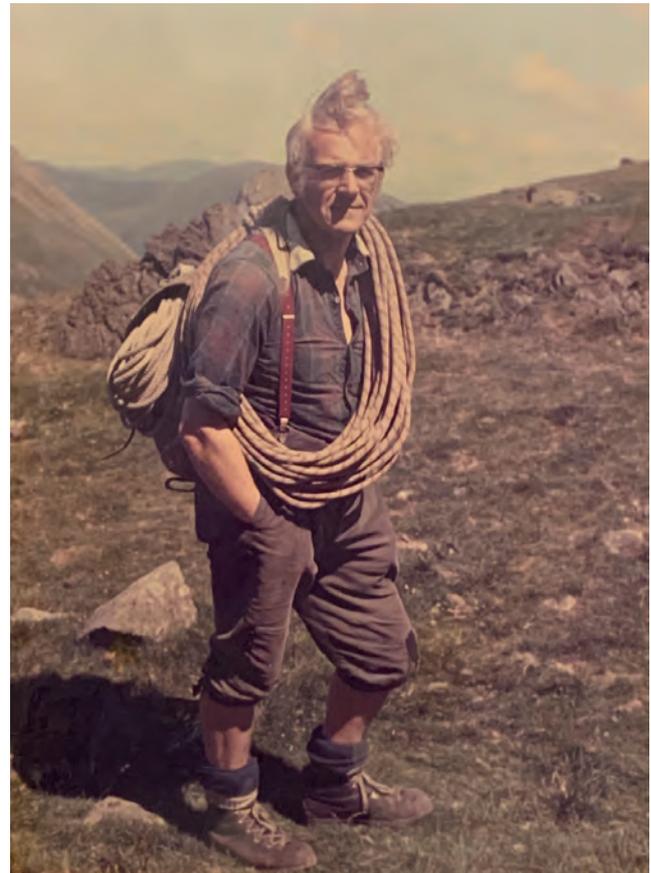
*Brenda Whitmey*

## **JOHN WILKINSON**

John Wilkinson (Wilkie) died on 14th May 2024, aged 97. John had been a stalwart of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club since joining in 1945. He was a rock climber, mountaineer, alpinist, alpine skier, and ski mountaineer. He spent most of his life in Todmorden, a South Pennine mill town straddling the borders of Lancashire and West Yorkshire, which was the town of his birth. Born on 19th January 1927, he was the youngest of three children (Geoffrey, Barbara, and John) of Henry Wilkinson, a Master Painter and Decorator, and Ruth Wilkinson

(nee Crowther) who had worked as a weaver.

From his early teens, John tramped the fells around Todmorden from end to end. He started rock climbing on the local crags at Widdop when he was 14 years old in the company of a group of young lads who lived locally. He attended Todmorden Secondary School. This school, in later years, produced two Nobel Prize winners, one of whom was John's older brother, Geoff, also a FRCC member. In 1944 he left Todmorden to study chemistry at Imperial College, London. He finished these studies with a BSc in 1947 and was then conscripted into the army for two years National Service with the 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. He spent most of that time as a Research Officer in the Chemistry Division of UK Atomic



Energy at Harwell. In 1949 after demobilisation, he went to the Chemistry Department at Edinburgh University and graduated with a PhD in 1952. This was not just a period of academic study as John used his leisure time to join with members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club in hill walking and rock climbing in the Scottish Highlands. In 1952 he was appointed as a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Chemistry Department at Edinburgh University. From 1953-54 he was a Post-Doctoral Fellow in Chemistry at the Canadian Research Institute in Ottawa. On his return to Britain, he spent the years 1954-56 at the University of Durham as a Senior Research Fellow in Chemistry. In 1956 he was appointed as Senior Lecturer at the Royal Technical College, Salford, which later became the University of Salford. This enabled him to return to the hills and crags of his youth and to living in Todmorden. He stayed there for the rest of his life.

He joined the Fell and Rock in 1945 and subsequently became an Honorary Member in 1979. This was in recognition of the long service he gave to the Club. He was Vice President from 1968-70, President from 1970-1972, and Guidebook Editor from 1967-1978. He took over this latter position at a time when the writing and publication of the guidebooks was sorely needed. He did much to help put guidebook production on a firmer financial footing and make them of practical value to the many rock climbers who operated in the Lake District. In later years he was an Advisory Trustee from 2003-14.

John was married three times. His first marriage was in 1954 to Ardys Alferoff. Ardys was a FRCC member, and her father Basil had also been President of the Wayfarer's Club. John and Ardys had two children, Joe, and Beatrice. Joe sadly died of a brain tumour in 2020. Beatrice joined the FRCC in 2001 and is currently the Club Secretary. John and Ardys' marriage was dissolved in 1967. His second marriage in the late 60's was to Mairi Mackenzie. Tragically, she was killed in a road

accident in 1989. His third marriage in 2000 was to Pam Baldwin who sadly died from a severe stroke in 2023. John had three grandchildren, Louis and Ella Haigh, and Jack Wilkinson.

John climbed widely in Britain, Western Europe and North and South America. In Britain, for over 30 years he repeated many relatively difficult rock climbs and contributed a considerable number of first ascents, particularly in the Lake District. He was especially proud of his record of climbs in the European Western Alps. Whilst there are some 82 peaks over 4000m in the Western Alps, about 50 are considered to be the most serious undertakings. John had done about 20 such ascents, either as snow, rock, and ice climbs, or in his long career as a ski mountaineer – he had done the Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt on a number of occasions. He was also an experienced downhill piste fan and was the originator of an unofficial FRCC ski meet held in the Bourg-Saint-Maurice ski area in France over Christmas and New Year for some 35+ years.

Not long before he died, he told me of three climbing ascents which gave him both strong memories and much pride. Not in any particular order of importance to him, the first was the initial British unguided ascent of the Pear on the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc. The first British climbers to ascend the Pear were Charles Tilly, Jack Carswell (both FRCC members) and Ian Charleson. They were accompanied by André Roch, a Swiss climber and photographer, who was considered to be a mountain guide. As such, their ascent was not accepted by the British Alpine Club to be the first British, or an unguided ascent – this accolade went to John and his climbing partners as some years later he climbed the Pear with Ian McNaught-Davis, Jimmy Marshall, and George Ritchie. The second climb which he said stuck in his memory, was the first British ascent in 1953, again with Ian McNaught-Davis, of the Comici Route on the North Face of the Cime Grande in the Dolomites. Third,

was a Cassin Route, the Northeast Face of the Piz Badile, which he did with Rodney Valentine, another long-standing friend and FRCC member.

John became an Alpine Club (AC) member in 1953. Around that time, a number of 'young Turks' in Britain (including John) were very interested in harder and more serious alpine climbing than that undertaken by the bulk of AC members. They found the tradition and structure of the British Alpine Club to be somewhat outside their climbing interests and ambitions. They formed the Alpine Climbing Group (ACG) and John was a founder member. The ACG was not in competition with the AC. It was simply that they had a different outlook from what they saw as a staid and traditional organisation. Indeed, a membership qualification for joining the ACG was to have led routes graded as TD (Très Difficile) in the context of alpine climbing but without guides. However, in the late 1960's the ACG and the AC merged into the Alpine Club and traditions did become updated. John was a strong supporter of the 'new look' AC. So, even though he came from a very traditional climbing background, he was not a 'traditionalist', but had a modern attitude and interest in many styles and types of climbing activities.

I would like to end with what I believe is the best I can say about someone I have known and climbed and socialised with for 67 years. He was a good bloke!

*Terry Sullivan*

## **PETER WILLIAMS**

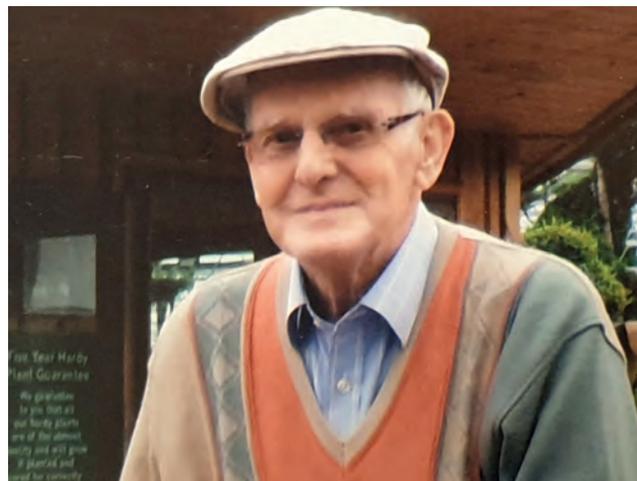
Peter Williams was a devoted member of the Club from 1967 until his death on the 15th of March 2022. Naturally outgoing, he relished conversation with people. Principled, he was also fearless at raising issues not only with officers of the Club

but public authorities and commercial concerns. Probably his greatest pleasure, as a mountain rescuer, climber, and hill walker, was roaming in the outdoors chatting with people.

He was born at Lostock Hall, a village situated to the south of Preston, on 24th September 1937. When aged eight, his father purchased a motor car and thereafter, for many years, family camping holidays were taken in the Lake District on a Loughrigg farm.

As an 18-year-old he joined the Royal Air Force for National Service. His initial year was spent at Taunton. He was next assigned to RAF Valley, Anglesey, to be 'housed in some of the coldest and gloomiest buildings on camp' when he became a member of its Mountain Rescue Team. The Valley team's leader was Flt-Sgt John ('Johnny') Lees (1927-2002), a legendary figure in British mountain rescue history. Lees led the development of mountain search and rescue techniques, training programmes and specialised equipment, and was alert to the need to be adaptive to circumstances. Supervised by a demanding leader, Peter received a standard of mountain rescue instruction second to none at the time, and thus accepted teamwork as crucial for effective and efficient rescue work.

After completing National Service, he re-joined



his family and obtained employment with the Commercial Union (now Aviva) based at Preston. He was clearly an astute personal financial planner, since he was able to retire from the insurer aged 52. A tragedy, the death of two brothers, aged 11 and 18, trapped on the Bleasdale Fells, North Lancashire, in a March 1962 blizzard, was the cue for Peter and a friend, Jim McVeigh, to form the South Ribble Mountain Rescue Team (today Bowland Pennine Rescue Team).

My first encounter with Peter, in April 1987, coincided with a meet held in an area of the Lakes he loved above all others, Buttermere. Following an ascent of Eagle Front, with Andrew Carlin, Peter suggested we stayed as his guests at Salving House. We ate a delicious Lancashire hot pot that evening, which had been cooked the day before by Pat, his wife, whom he had married in 1963. He later officially adopted Pat's son, Andrew, who tragically died in December 2021.

Before leaving Salving House the next day, Peter brought future Club meet dates to my attention and urged me to attend. Thus, I turned up in July at The Sun Hotel, Coniston meet. Ready to greet me, like a watchman, he stood at the front of a large huddle of people. Then he led me at a trot to weave through tiny gaps among chatting people for introductions to all the Club officials, past and present, in attendance. The flood of names heard was overwhelming. Later that same year, Peter acted as my seconder for associate membership to the Club.

Peter encouraged my attendance at the AGM and Annual Dinners by booking me into a room at Shap Wells Hotel. At such weekends, he was always concerned not only about my well-being but about others' as well. Years before my attendance, he observed an unknown elderly man sitting alone in a corner of an outer room. Peter approached him with an invitation to arrange for them to sit next to each other at a table. After sitting for dinner, he sought his dinner companion's name. 'Odell', was the terse

reply. His guest was the last man to photograph George Mallory and 'Sandy' Irvine before they made their ill-fated attempt to climb Everest in June 1924. Aware of this, an astonished Peter fell profoundly silent.

Peter, in my opinion, operated unselfishly and conscientiously, for over half a century, as a vital 'bond of union' as a Club member.

Jean Gregson, his sister, is thanked for supplying me with vital biographical information about her 'lovely brother'.

*Leslie M Shore*

### **GRAHAM WILLISON** (1936 – 2022)

Graham died on 11th August 2022 at the age of 85 after a long illness .

He was an all-round mountaineer, equally happy on rock, snow, or ice (in the days when step-cutting was the norm) although his main focus was on hard rock-climbing. He met his wife Brigid at Durham University, and as newlyweds in the late 1950's they back-packed the GR20 on Corsica and the Pyrenean High Level Route.



After graduation Graham taught at Emmanuel School in London, before moving to West Cumbria in 1966 to be head of geography at Whitehaven Grammar School. He and Brigid had a son, John, and a daughter, Andrea. After moving north, Graham's commitment to climbing intensified. He was extremely active in North Wales, Scotland, the Alps and particularly the Lake District. During this period, Graham was an E-grade climber in the Lake District. He climbed hard classics elsewhere, like 'Cenotaph Corner' and 'White Slab' in North Wales and 'Centurion', on Carn Dearg Buttress, Scotland.

Graham was fun and a patient and trustworthy partner on the rope, with a wry and acerbic sense of humour: when asked whether he wanted to do the Great Central Route on Esk buttress, he replied: 'No, it is neither great nor central'.

In routes and venues, he was flexible and willing to compromise. He was an active member of the Midland Association of Mountaineers, becoming Vice President and Journal Editor, was co-editor of the 1984 FRCC Scafell, Dow and Eskdale guidebook, which he finished from his hospital bed in 1983.

Graham encouraged boys from school to participate in outdoor adventures, particularly climbing. They enjoyed Wednesday afternoons on West Cumbrian crags, travelling in Graham's van, in which he had fitted an armchair with sawn off legs in the back. Two pupils, Tony Stephenson and Tony Edwards remained climbing partners with Graham for many years. Together with Chris Sice, Bill Young and Tony Stephenson, Graham was on the first ascent of 'Tapestry' (E4) in 1980, at that time the hardest climb on Pillar Rock.

On a trip to Chamonix in the early 1980's, Syd Clark remembers climbing various TD rock routes with Graham, including the Aiguille du Midi SE face and the Couzy route on Aiguille de L'M. Syd remembers that Graham used to pick him up after his morning work shift at 2pm. They would drive up to the car park in Ennerdale, cycle up the valley track, walk up to Pillar and climb until dark,

descending on the bikes just in time for the last pint in the Fox and Hounds. Graham and Syd also enjoyed good weather at Carnmore crag in 1978 where they climbed 'Fionn Buttress', 'Dragon', 'Gob' and 'Carnmore Corner' (E2).

I came to know Graham in 1979 when he coordinated a MAM meet to the Pyrenees. Using Gaston Rebffat's bumper fun book as our guide, we climbed many excellent routes together including NW Face of Pointe de Chausenque on the Vingemale, South Face of the Sarradets, and the Grand Diedre on the Spijeoules. On one occasion I was secretly terrified when we needed to cross a very thin and scary snow bridge. I remember Graham stating very firmly: 'In this situation, it is customary for the lighter person to go first!' Two years later we climbed the Biancograt on Piz Bernina, and in the same trip, the South face of the Allievi, with two others. In the Lake District, 'Hubris' on Deer Bield Buttress is probably the hardest route we shared, (HVS/E1).

On a midsummer's day in 1983, Graham fell fifty feet to the ground from Hard Knott Crag and sustained life-threatening injuries. The mountain rescue arrived taking him to Whitehaven hospital, where he stayed until September. Whilst there, his wife Brigid said jokingly that it was the first time she knew exactly where her husband was! The accident forced Graham to give up climbing and to retire from teaching. True to form, he turned to other interests with the same unreserved commitment he had previously invested in climbing.

Graham and Brigid purchased multiple bikes and enjoyed cycling holidays, both in the UK and abroad. They both became accomplished book binders, setting up their own equipment at home enjoying working together, restoring books to a high standard. Graham took up snooker, rarely missing the Monday night game for many years. He also became a successful share dealer, investing in technology (which he hated) to facilitate his dealing.

My overriding memories of Graham include the fact that he always encouraged young people in outdoor activities, particularly climbing. On an alpine trip, it was typical of him to fill his car with several young passengers, sharing his enormous family tent, camping chairs and all his camping equipment. This was a luxury to those of us accustomed to public transport, hitching, and tiny tents. Graham was a keen wine collector, and at the end of a foreign trip he would buy numerous wine bottles and then wrap them in our dirty socks to conceal them from the border authorities! Brigid frequently admonished him that he would never live long enough to drink all the wine he bought! When he was no longer able to participate in outdoor activities, Graham loved to talk about his adventurous son John, who pursued ever more daring deeds. When John died in an avalanche in 1987, aged only 25, Graham set up the 'John Willison Award' for pupils of Lancaster Royal Grammar School. This was a prestigious award for the pupil who had completed each year's most adventurous challenge. For many years, Graham and Brigid continued their interest in the activities of staff and pupils of LRGS, the school that John attended.

Graham will be remembered as a very good climber, with a wry sense of humour. He often climbed with people much younger and less experienced than himself, but he always treated them as equals.

Graham is survived by his daughter Andrea, son-in-law Andy and three grandchildren. They have plenty of opportunities to raise a glass to Graham's memory from the substantial wine collection he left behind.

*Sarah Birkill*

I would like to thank FRCC members: Chris Sice and Syd and Eileen Clark, together with MAM member John Scarborough, for their contributions to this article.



## Officers of the Club 2022-23

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Treasurer  
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### Hut Wardens:

Beetham Cottage - Humphrey Johnson  
Birkness - Jackie Brindle  
Brackenclose - Richard Tait  
Karn House - Graeme Ralph

Raw Head - Peter Haigh  
Salving House - Christina Paul  
Waters Cottage - Mark Gear

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Nina Stirrup \*

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John Pulford  
Phillip Powell  
Paul Hudson  
Jim Sutcliffe

Helen Elliot  
Steve Woollard  
Les Meer

\* Non-voting.

## Meets List 2023

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meet Location</i>	<i>Meet Co-ordinator</i>
TE	30/31 Dec	New Year's Eve – Raw Head	Amanda Halliwell, Helen Lagoe
	06/07 Jan	Salving House	Paddy Feely
E	20/21 Jan	Burns Night – Raw Head	Helen Elliot
	27/28 Jan	Winter Climbing – Waters Cottage	Roger Everett
T	27/28 Jan	Fell & Moon – Raw Head	Ian Bradley
	03/04 Feb	'La Dolce Vita in La Bella Borrowdale' - Salving House	Sarah Ross-Shaw, Kate Woodrow
	06/12 Feb	Winter Climbing – Vysoke Tatry, Slovakia	Tony Walker
FM	10/11 Feb	Family Meet – Raw Head	Gillian Lomas
	18/25 Feb	Winter Mountaineering – Karn House	Anne Salisbury
CM	18 Feb	Committee Meeting - Zoom	
Wel	24/25 Feb	Welcome Meet - Beetham	Geoff Lyons, Mark Wilkinson
	03/04 Mar	Snowshoeing or Wading - Beetham	Elizabeth Wilson, Ellie Howarth
	04/18 Mar	Anti-Atlas Morocco Climbing Meet	Steve Woollard
	07/09 Mar	Raw Head	David Burnett & Karen Stock
E	10/11 Mar	Music Meet – Raw Head	Sarah Ross-Shaw
	17/18 Mar	Climbing, Walking/Winter Walking –Salving House	Chris Wright
	24/25 Mar	Fell Running & Walking - Beetham	John Boyle, Philip Rowell
T	31 Mar/01 April	REC Outdoor First Aid – Beetham Cottage	Hazel Jonas
	30 Mar/02 Apr	Ogwyn Valley Meet – Glan Dena	Phil Elliot
BH	07/09 April	Easter Meet - Brackenclose	Les Meer
T	14/15 April	Refresh your Ropework - Raw Head	Rob Stone
	15/29 April	French Spring – Narbonne Area	Rob and Christine Smitton

	16/20 April	High Moss - Duddon	Dave Hyslop
Wel	21/22 April	Welcome Meet - Birkness	Fiona Stephenson, Simon Willis
	21/22 April	Rhinns of Galloway Sea Cliff Climbing	Roger Everett
FMBH	28/30 April	Family Meet – Raw Head	Rob Muirhead
	05/06 May	Back on Rock - Birkness	Alison Read
	06/12 May	Inchnadamph Hotel Meet	David MacGillivray and Joanne Webster
	06/12 May	Munro/Corbett Bagging or General Hill Walking Week - Woodlands Cottage – Glen Shiel	Anne Salisbury
W	08/11 May	Making Langdale Great Again... (Climbing) – Raw Head	Neil McAllister
CM	12/13 May	Committee Meeting – Raw Head	
	12/13 May	Salving House	Steve Barrett
	19/20 May	Waters Cottage & Ardnamurchan	David Henchcliffe
	19/20 May	Younger Members Meet – Raw Head	Katie Farrell
	20/26 May	Glen Brittle Hut - Skye	George Wostenholm
BH	26/28 May	FRCC/Wayfarers - Waters Cottage	Stuart Hesketh
FMBH	26/31 May	Family Meet - Birkness	Gael Watson
	09/10 June	Maintenance Meet – Karn House	Graeme Ralph
	09/10 June	Canyoning – Raw Head	Steve Barrett
	16/17 June	Cairngorm Summer Climbing – Karn House	Stuart Walker
T CV	16/17 June	Dow Guidebook Centenary (campsite & Low House bookings via Hazel Jonas)	Roger Everett, Ron Kenyon
MM	23/24 June	Maintenance Meet - Birkness	Jackie Brindle
	23/24 June	BMC Youth Meet - Raw Head	Ron Kenyon
CV	23/24 June	AC/FRCC - Wye Valley	Nigel Buckley
Wel	30 Jun/01 Jul	Welcome Meet – Raw Head	Dave Dixon
	24 June/15 July	Joint Alpine Meet – South Side of Mont Blanc – Val Veny or Val Ferret	Keith Lambley
	07/08 July	Glan Dena	Toby Forrester
MM	07/08 July	Maintenance Meet – Salving House	Andrew Duxbury
W	11/13 July	Mid-Week Climbing - Salving House	Steve Lyon

	14/15 July	FRCC/PC - Brackenclose	Rachel Somerville
FM	14/15 July	Family Meet – Raw Head	Carrie and Gary Hill
	23/27 July	Braemar – Muir of Inverey	Steve Woollard
	28/29 July	Brackenclose	Steve Woollard
	28/29 July	‘School’s out for summer’ – Don Whillans Hut, Roaches	Tim Cresswell
	03/04 Aug	FRCC/CC – Raw Head	Rachel Somerville
CV W	16/21 Aug	Pembroke – Climbing, Coasteering	Tony Halliwell
	18/19 Aug	Climbing – Salving House	Paul Russell
	25/27 Aug	Gerry Charnley Round - Raw Head, Salving House, Eskdale Youth Hostel	Clare & Nick Harris
CM	01/02 Sept	Committee Meeting - Birkness	
	02/14 Sept	Via Ferrata & Walking - Dolomites	Paddy Feely
MM	08/09 Sept	Maintenance Meet – Raw Head	Peter Farnell
	15/17 Sept	Duddon Climbing – High Moss	Ben Heinrich
W	15/23 Sept	Climbing Meet – Count House, Cornwall	Rob Stone
MM	22/23 Sept	Maintenance Meet - Brackenclose	Richard Tait
	29/30 Sep	Class of 21/22/23 - Birkness	Hazel Jonas
	06/07 Oct	Autumn Walking – Waters Cottage	Roger Everett
MM	06/07 Oct	Maintenance Meet – Beetham Cottage	Humphrey Johnson
FM	13/14 Oct	Family Meet - Birkness	Denise Andrews
	14/28 Oct	Sardinia - Climbing	Steve Woollard
W	16/18 Oct	Breezy October Walks from Beetham	Martin Heming, Karen Stock
Wel	20/21 Oct	Welcome Meet – Salving House	Lis Cook, Jude Jones
MM	27/28 Oct	Maintenance Meet – Waters Cottage	Mark Gear
	27/28 Oct	Communal Curry Meet - Birkness	Cath Sanders
	03/04 Nov	AGM and Dinner	The President
	10/11 Nov	Bonfire Meet - Brackenclose	Rob Jones
	12 Nov	Act of Remembrance, Great Gable Summit	The President
Wel	12/13 Nov	Welcome Meet	Geoff Lyons
	17/18 Nov	Fools with Tools (FRCC/Oread MC Dry Tooling) – Raw Head	Neil McAllister
T	17/18 Nov	Day into Night Navigation - Birkness	Simon Willis

CM	24/25 Nov	Committee Meeting – Raw Head	Jane Hodgson
	08/09 Dec	Temperance Meet - Birkness	Charles Skeavington
	15/16 Dec	Pot Luck Christmas – Salving House	Nikki Hamerton, Helen Dunnet

- CM = Committee Meeting Meet
- BH = Bank Holidays
- D = Dinner
- E = There may be music at these Meets
- F = Family Meets
- MM = Maintenance Meets
- Wel = Welcome Meets
- W = Midweek Meets,
- T = Themed Meet. Those attending are free to choose whether or not to join in the themed activity.

## Officers of the Club 2023-24

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Beetham Cottage - Humphrey Johnson

Birkness - Jackie Brindle

Brackenclose - Paul Littlechild

Karn House - Graeme Ralph

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Salving House - Andrew Duxbury

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Nina Stirrup\*

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Steve Scott

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Steve Woollard

Chris Wright

David Simmonite

Lis Cook

Les Meer

\* Non-voting.

## Meets List 2024

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Meet Location</i>	<i>Meet Co-ordinator</i>
E	29/31 Dec	New Year Meet – Raw Head	Janet Ashworth, Tony Walker
T	05/06 Jan	Twelfth Night Poetry Meet - Beetham	John Holden
T	19/20 Jan	Fell and Moon – Raw Head	Ian Bradley
	19/20 Jan	West Coast Winter Climbing/Mountaineering - Waters Cottage	Nigel Hooker
	26/27 Jan	New Year Irresolutions – Salving House	Amanda Halliwell, Jonathan Shaw
E	26/27 Jan	Burns Night – Raw Head	Helen Elliot
	02/03 Feb	FRCC Welcomes the AACUK – Salving House	Jude Jones, Kate Woodrow
FM	09/10 Feb	Family Meet – Raw Head	Gill Lomas
	16/22 Feb	Winter Mountaineering – Karn House	Andy Mathers
Wel	23/24 Feb	Welcome Meet - Beetham	Geoff Lyons
	24 Feb/01 Mar	Cross Country Skiing - Norway	Dan Morgan
	27/28/29 Feb	Pre-Music Meet – Raw Head	Karen Stock
E	01/02 Mar	Music Meet – Raw Head	Sarah Ross Shaw
	01/02/03 Mar	Hut-to-Hut Running – Salving House, Brackenclose, Salving House	Seth Kennard
	02/16 Mar	Anti Atlas Morocco Climbing Meet	Steve Woollard
	12/13 Mar	'Make a - Beetham	Sue Fox, Trevor Brewster
	15/16 Mar	Week of it' - Beetham	Flora Marriott, Philip Rowell
	22/23 Mar	Winter Climbing – Waters Cottage	Dan McCrerie
	29/31 Mar	Easter - Brackenclose	Nick Philips
T	05/06 Apr	Day into Night Navigation – Raw Head	Nick Philips
	05/06 Apr	Start of Season Climbing – Salving House	Kevin Bowser
	14/18 Apr	High Moss - Duddon	Valerie Hawksworth
Wel	19/20 Apr	Welcome Meet – Raw Head	Fiona Stephenson, Simon Willis
	19/20 Apr	Younger Members Climbing Meet – Salving House	Joe Spoor
	20 Apr	Arthur Dolphin Appreciation Society Meet 1 - Almscliffe	Paul Winder
	21/25 Apr	Midweek Meet for Silver Surfers – Raw Head	Paddy Feely

	25/28 Apr	Ogwen Valley – Glan Dena	Phil Elliot
	03/04 May	Raw Head	Laura Fox
FM	03/04/05 May	Family Meet - Brackenclose	Rob Muirhead
E	03/04/05 May	Second Inauguration for 85 Year Old Hut Warden – Waters Cottage	Alan Strachan
	04/11 May	Woodlands Cottage – Glen Shiel	Richard Craig
CM	10/11 May	Committee Meeting – Raw Head	TBC
	10/11 May	FRCC/Pinnacle Club - Birkness	Annette Smith
	10/17 May	Killin Hotel Meet	Sara McIntyre, Mike Shields
	10/17 May	The Stables, Cannich	Anne Salisbury
	15/16 May	‘Happy Wanderers’ - Beetham	Sue Burkinshaw, Elizabeth Wilson
	17/18 May	Younger Members’ Meet – Salving House	George Chapman
	18/24 May	Glen Brittle Hut - Skye	George Wostenholm
FM	24 May/01 Jun	Family Meet - Birkness	Sarah Ross Shaw
	25 May/01 Jun	Pabbay	Joe Dobson
	27 May/01 June	Ronnan Cottage - Aultbea	Steve Woollard
	31 May/01 Jun	FRCC/CC - Brackenclose	Andy Cairns
	07/08 June	The Great Gift - Brackenclose	TBC
	07/08 June	The Great Gift - Birkness	TBC
	07/08 June	The Great Gift – Salving House	TBC
	07/08 June	Ty Gwyn - Snowdonia	Neil & Mary-Ann Mahon
MM	07/08 June	Maintenance Meet – Karn House	Graeme Ralph
T	13/16 June	80th Anniversary KMC/FRCC Hut to Hut -Salving House (13/14,16), Raw Head (15)	Andy Stratford, Brenda Fullard
MM	14/15 June	Maintenance Meet - Birkness	Jackie Brindle
	14/15 June	FRCC/Wayfarers - Brackenclose	Stuart Hesketh
	19/24 June	Classic Rock – Waters Cottage	Nikki Hamerton
	21/22 June	VP Dinner/Coniston Meet – Low House	Hazel Jonas
MM	21/22 June	Gardening Meet... - Beetham	Humphrey Johnson
	28/29 June	Climbing Meet – Salving House	Mark Gration
	02/04 July	Scrambling Meet - Beetham	Keith Wadsworth
	05/06 July	BMC Youth Meet – Raw Head	Ron Kenyon
	05/06 July	Fell Running – Salving House	Andy Poole

	05/06 July	FRCC/MAM - Ogwen Valley – Glan Dena	Toby Forrester
	07/08 July	Gogarth/North Wales Limestone	Darren Saxton
MM	12/13 July	Maintenance Meet – Salving House	Andrew Duxbury
	19/20 July	Mountain Biking – Raw Head	Simon Willis
	30 July	Arthur Dolphin Appreciation Society Meet 2 - Ilkley	Paul Winder
	8/11 Aug	Eden Valley	Les Meer
	10/16 Aug	Lundy	Susan Marvell, Norman Clacher
CV	14/19 Aug	Pembroke – Climbing, Coasteering	Tony Halliwell
Wel	16/17 Aug	Welcome Meet – Salving House	Keith Butterfield, Jayne Moss
	16/24 Aug	Culm Climbing	Ed Walker
T	22/26 Aug	Boggarts and Bats - Birkness	Jackie Brindle, Hazel Jonas
	30/31 Aug	Peak District – Heathy Lea	Geoff Nichols
	02/19 Sep	High and Western Tatras, Zakopane, Poland	Mark Gear
	06/07 Sep	Committee Meeting - Birkness	Geoff Lyons
	06/07 Sep	Peak District – Heathy Lea	Geoff Nichols
	07/13 Sep	East Tirol – Barmer Haus	Ellie Howarth, Jude Jones
MM	13/14 Sept	Maintenance Meet – Raw Head	Peter Farnell
MM	20/21 Sept	Maintenance Meet - Brackenclose	Paul Littlechild
	20/21 Sept	Climbing & Curry – Salving House	Norbert de Mello
	22/23/24 Sept	Fix the Fells - Beetham	Steve Charles
	27/28 Sept	Mallory's First Lakeland Ascents - Brackenclose	Nigel Buckley
MM	04/05 Oct	Maintenance Meet - Beetham	Humphrey Johnson
Wel	04/05 Oct	Young Persons' Welcome Meet	Freddy Dorling, Jane Hodgson
	04/05 Oct	Family Meet - Birkness	Denise Andrews
	11/12 Oct	Langdale Fell Race – Raw Head	Seth Kennard
	18/19 Oct	Recent Members Meet - Birkness	Hazel Jonas
MM	25/26 Oct	Maintenance Meet – Waters Cottage	Alan Strachan
	01/02 Nov	AGM and Dinner– Castle Green Hotel, Kendal	The President
	08/09 Nov	Bonfire Meet - Brackenclose	Dave Burnett
	10 Nov	Act of Remembrance – Great Gable	The President

Wel	10/11 Nov	Welcome Meet - Brackenclose	Geoff Lyons
CM	22/23 Nov	Committee Meet – Raw Head	TBC
	06/07 Dec	Temperance Meet - Birkness	Geoff Lyons
	13/14 Dec	Krimbo at Karn – Karn House	Steve Lunt
E	28/31 Dec	New Year Meet – Raw Head	TBC

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- Wel = Welcome Meets
- W = Midweek Meets,
- CV = Campervan Friendly, DM = Day Meet
- T = Themed meet. Those attending are free to choose whether or not to join in the themed activity.
- BCM = Brackenclose Celebratory Meet; a mass-hut meet to celebrate the re-opening of Brackenclose.







**The Fell and Rock  
Climbing Club**

