

NEWSLETTEREDITOR'S BIT

Hello There, Members! I hope you have all got square eyes by now from watching the World Cup. Hopefully picking up a few tips to put into good use when we beat the Fylde Ski Club on July 9th at The Rangers' Stadium in Guadalabispham. Kick-off at 7.30 pm..

For a kick-off we've got a great set of articles from up-and-coming literary talents like Andy Dunhill and Jennie Tolley. In fact it's a bit of a Tolley edition with Mick also contributing. There's the usual slop from Dave Earle, but who cares when you can read the second instalment from the Maltese Falcon about the Fylde's domination of the new routes scene on that island. There's plenty of good articles on the subs bench this time so keep up the good work and keep 'em rolling in.

Well, with last Sunday we saw the first day of summer, and what a good summer it may well be! The Club's already got one new route under its belt and Paul Greenland is apparently cruising up E6's with his hands stuck in his chalk bag. The other lads are knocking off an alarming number of lesser grade routes despite the weather. It can only get better.

Big trips abroad will be underway very soon with a lot of people heading for European rock. The Alps and sun-soaked French limestone. Pete Roscoe is already in China, and Andy Blaylock and Al Peel are off to the USA for a crack at The Nose of El Cap in Yosemite amongst other things. Good Luck lads, and all who are going on big hills. Have a good time and a safe return to these shores.

Martin Dale

NEW MEMBERS

The following are welcomed as introductory members:

Garry Hughes	Catherine Elizabeth Harrison
Steve Halton	Guy Wilson
Garry Nuttall	Diane Grundy

Full Members:

Pete Brierley	Carol Stephens
Bernard Skitterall	Barry and Kath Stott.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Mark and Viv Broughton:	13 Parkstone Avenue, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0BX. Tel. 0272 514289
Stuart Gascoigne and Yvonne Williams	: 57 Foxley Close, Blackwater, Camberley, Surrey.
Bill McRae	: 86 Brackenbury Road, Fulwood, Preston. Tel (work) Preston 24826.
Anne Goward	: 84 Angerton Garden, Fenham, Newcastle- upon-Tyne. Tel 091 2748003.

HUT AVAILABILITY

27-28 June	Langdale	Ladies Meet
5-6 July	Langdale	Families
5-6 July	Stair	Beginners rock
11-12 July	Langdale	Raft/Fell Race
18-19 July	Stair	
25-26 July	Langdale	

1-2 Aug. Stair
8-9 Aug. Langdale
15-16 Aug. Stair
22-24 Aug. Langdale
22-24 Aug. Stair Families
29-30 Aug. Stair
5-6 Sept. Langdale
12-13 Sept. Stair.

SOCIALS

As some of you may have spotted in your syllabus'es, we been officially ousted from The Buccaneer as Boddingtons have decided to turn our room into an eating house. The Committee decided that as a lot of people meet in The Thatched House on Wednesdays when there's nothing else on at The Buccaneer anyway, they would make it the informal meeting place for the time being, rather than having nothing in the Syllabus at all. Old Don, our long-suffering Social Sec. has managed to secure six Wednesday nights at The River Wyre Hotel for the winter season of Socials. Details will appear nearer the time. Meanwhile.... Sick of the World Cup yet?

Football and Volleyball Vs The Fylde Ski Club.
Blackpool Rangers' Club Playing Fields 7.30 Kick-off 9th July
Let's have a big turn out for this one and beat those skiers for a change.
Beer in the Mariners afterwards to either celebrate or drown our sorrows.

Boozy Bike Ride 16th July 7.00 pm Buccaneer Car Park.
Phone Louise Fortune on Fleetwood 6547

Mid-Week Climbing

The lads have been so keen this year that there's been people going out on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The weather has been better midweek than weekends!

Contact Dave Wood (keenest!) Tel: Bpl 692829 (work)
Martin Dale (next) Tel: Bpl 856123, Ext.6402
Simon Fenna (next) Tel: Bpl 62251 (work)

or just turn up at the Health Centre on Whitegate Drive at around 5.00 pm if the weather is OK. Beginners and Beerswillers welcome.

Outdoor Meets

28-29 June Ladies Meet Meetleader: Di Norris.
Tel. Preston 715156

Oh No! Judging By the popularity of the last meet, there won't even be room for Dave Earle on this one.

29th June Coach Meet. Meetleader: Derek Smith on Tel.56173.
That champion of the Sunday Coach Meet leads us on this one.
Book early to avoid disappointment.

5-6th July Family Weekend Little Langdale

5-6th July Beginners' Rock Stair Hut Meet Leader: Kevin
Stephens on Tel.711824.

Kevin teaches us how to do the latest dances. His young son won't be burning us all off yet, so now's your chance.
Beginners and Old Hands welcome; even ageing scoutmasters, Donald!

12-13th July Raft and Fell Race

Raft Race - Saturday, Little Langdale Tarn. Start time - after the Pub shuts at dinner (plenty of beer to fend off the cold).
No two man crafts allowed.

Fell Race, Sunday, Little Langdale. Meetleader: Martin Pickup
Start time : around 11.00 am.

Garry Nuttall's Back (who's he?) So the record may go. It would be nice to see the Paul Garners and Brian Wilkinsons, not to mention Dougie Brown there to give him some competition.

26-27th July Wasdale camping - Joint FMC/Chester MC. Meet.
Meetleader: Dave Earle on Tel.890283

Who are these people from Chester who invade our huts now and again? Find out on this joint meet. The first of its kind organised between the Clubs. No silly games, just walking and climbing - and drinking!!

2-3rd August Chester Hut Llanberis. Meetleader: Phil Caley on
There you go - invade their Hut for the weekend. /854521.
And what a good place it is an ' all. Maybe this time Cloggy will be in good nick, or even the slate!

23-25th August Family Weekend, Stair

6-7th Sept. Chester Hut Llanberis. Meetleader: Dave Earle on
Yes! Again. Overkill! /Tel. 890283.
Editor's birthday weekend.

13-14th Sept. Cheshire Sandstone Climbing. Meetleader: Mark
Mark leads us around some of his old /Harding on Tel.52166.
haunts. Frodhsam, Helsby etc. Possibly only a day meet.
Own transport.

13-14th Sept. Ladies Meet, Stair Meetleader: Mary Aspin on
/Tel. Fleetwood 6785.
Where all the real men will be going this weekend!

CONGRATULATIONS

Kevin and Carole Stephens are the proud parents of a boy,
James. 7lbs 14ozs. Arrived on Thursday morning 24th April.

NEW ROUTE

The FMC have been at it again, reports Old 8 Eye. This time not actually manufacturing the line but nicking someone else's! On a visit to High Crag Buttress, Llanberis at the end of April, Sniffer Swindells spied a clean looking slab up to the left of the main crag. With the routes on the main crag all full, Steve with Paul Reid sloped off to have a look. He came back with a good HVS (E) crackline in the bag. The crack required a bit of cleaning and went at a very well protected 5A/B. Nearly everyone else there repeated the route confirming the grade and quality. The line had obviously been cleaned previously by some one else. Another corner to the left was also ascended by some Kendal lads at HVS but the arete to the right proved a different proposition for Martin Dale. Poor gear and bold climbing led to the crux with good death potential if you fell off. After half an hour's gargoyling, Dale gave up and called for international rescue. Scott Swindells in thunderbird 1 soon arrived and the grade could well be E4 5C/6A. Maybe another time. Further possibilities remain. It was not until much later that we discovered who the cleaner was. Doing his work in the dead of winter. He hadn't climbed his lines! So Swindells claimed the first ascent - a fine achievement. As the cleaner said "It couldn't have gone to a better team".

PS. The arete has now been led "clean" by Colin Downer with Chris Bacon at E4 6A (and doubtless all the other lines on the crag have been snapped up by "Bookie" as he's known, ED).

INSTRUCTORS WANTED! FOR GIRL GUIDES!

Don't all rush at once! Yes the Club has had a request from the local Guides troops for instructors to teach the girls (aged 14-19) how to rock climb. The particular weekend in question is in September, 26th to 28th at the Great Tower Scout Camp in the Lakes. All expenses will be paid. Any takers contact Don Nichol - that old Scout himself.

CLUB JOURNAL

The Committee is looking into the possibility of producing a journal to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Club coming up in 1990. Any older members with copies of old FMC journals (apparently the Club used to produce them regularly in the old days) are asked if the Committee may have a look at them to get some ideas. Also anyone with any possible material, articles, club history etc. please send/contact me. Also anyone interested in editing such a publication also please get in touch.

MATTRESS MAN

Our man into foam, flame resistant mattress sniffer, Simon Fenna, has done the club proud providing new flame retardent mattresses for both huts. These will hopefully be covered fairly soon by flame retardent covers.

Also at the huts, some heavy based pans and any unused kettles are wanted for Stair especially. If you have any please contact the Hut Secs, Sean or Phil.

GLOBETROTTER RETURNS

That seasoned traveller, Andy Blaylock is back after a year in Australia. Andy travelled back via India, Moscow and Greece and looks like a spare chicken! Welcome back Nob.

NEW BOOKS

The Club would like to express its sincere thanks to Ray Varley for the donation of the following books to the Club library.

1. Zermatt and District. Alpine guide by R.G. Collomb.
This is of the S.M.C. District guide type and is NOT a climbing guide.
2. Annapurna South Face, by Chris Bonnington.
3. The Highland Clearances, by John Prebble.
(And the Welsh think they have grounds for hating us!)
and last but not least
The Adventure Story of the Decade, at least that's what it says on the cover -
4. Everest, the Hard Way, by good old Onward Christian

ADVERT

Full set of winter mountaineering gear and summer rock-climbing gear for sale. Contact Mark Jackson on Sheffield (0742) 241484, for details.

NOBS ON SKYE, New Year 1985/6.

I think its fair to say that this winter has been the best for many years and it began, in earnest, for several of us at New Year. Tired of watching the rain fall in the Lakes, we have, over the last three years, headed north of the border to sample Hogmanay. The venue this year was the Isle of Skye and so after the usual organisational nightmare a total of

14 people plus 3 dogs set sail on 27th December to spend a week in Portree.

The weather on the journey up was but a foretaste of what was to come - snow and ice covered hills drenched in winter sun and marred only by a heavy snowfall from Kintail onwards. We were even aided in a minor breakdown by the kindly vicar of Kyle of Lochalsh and his wife - the gods were on our side. This together with the journey home was to be the only remotely bad weather encountered during the whole week.

The number of people and dogs involved necessitated booking 2 cottages and as we catered on a communal basis, taking the majority of our food with us, the minimum amount of time was wasted in cooking and shopping. More importantly we also took 8 gals. of wine, 3 gals. of barley wine and a small selection of spirits (and paracetamol!). With the safe arrival of all concerned the stage was set for a superb and extremely active week.

The assembled team were, as you would expect, a motly crew from all parts of the country. From Leeds came Mr & Mrs (Paul and Debby) Greensponge with the now recedingly balding Paul Clarke and his long suffering girlfriend, Trudy (when are they going to follow the Greensponges' example?). The Sheffield contingent were mostly drunkards led by the suave colonel Sebastian Jackson, backed up by Andy Abrahams, Ben and the now legendary Zitty Blackspot. Indiana Gascoyne and his definitely better half Yvonne, with friend Carol, represented Surrey's stockbroker belt whilst Tony and Wendy Welsh (plus dogs) came over from Aberdeen. As for me I've lived in so many places, I can't remember where I represent.

After that rather tedious introduction we come to the real reason for the trip (or was it the drinking - I can't remember).

The first day dawned with a perfect blue sky and the sun shone throughout the day. The whole island was covered to sea level by a blanket of glistening snow and ice. Even the sea was frozen in a few places. A 7.15am start saw the climbers heading for Pinnacle Ridge, a long and classic route to the summit of Sgurr nan Gillean. The route approx. 2,000ft. with the lower buttresses, was soloed with the exception of one short abseil and gave rise to one or two anxious moments. From the summit, the whole of the Cuillin and Bla Bheinn ridges could be seen - a spectacular view rarely seen and certainly never forgotten. The day was finished with a quick ascent (or not so quick for me) of Am Basteir and hot tea in the Sligachan.

The remainder of the team spent a more relaxed day exploring the woods around Portree and the day ended with the first of many meals. 2 gals. of wine disappeared that night.

The weather the following day was overcast and the main activities were an ascent of Glamaig and the first visit to the Quiraing, a curiously interesting feature at the north end of the island.

New Year's Eve saw another early start with four of us completing the Traverse of Bla Bheinn, a lengthy and fairly serious undertaking, involving a 9 hour day. The view of the main Cuillin Ridge and the overall atmosphere is quite indescribable and can only be experienced to be appreciated.

The New Year's festivities did not have last year's magic but lots of drink and a good solid meal ensured a successful evening. As usual the pubs closed at 10-10.30 and we retired to the cottages in party mood to see the New Year in.

New Year's Day saw a lot of delicate people and so we all tried to walk off the night's excesses by exploring the Old Man of Storr. It probably did some good but enthusiasm was not very high.

During the remainder of the week many of the non climbers were persuaded to venture onto the hills and several notable mountains were ascended, including Bruach na Frithe, Sgurr Alasdair and The Storr, together with a variety of coastal and low-level inland walks.

The holiday ended, as it began, with brilliant weather leaving us all with a strong desire to return. Skye is an island of contrasts ideally suited to family or climbing holidays and the accommodation was good. As you can imagine the cottages were generally untidy and the expression on the owner's face at the sight of the number of people and three dogs was quite a picture. I would, however, add that he had the courtesy to write and thank us for leaving them in such a clean and tidy state on our departure (copies are available on request for disbelievers).

Having now had superb weather on two highly successful New Year trips we are concerned that a third may not be so successful - luck has its limitations. Other venues being considered include rock climbing and sun-bathing in Spain or skiing in the Alps. But the cost is so much greater. It's really up to whoever is prepared to organise it!

Andy Dunhill
(King of Squalor)

WHITE MAGIC

No, not a travelogue for South Africa, but a comment on February 86. A month to go down in the connoisseur's collection of dates to remember and drool over a super cold spell with a fair amount of snow gave a good grounding, though conditions high were often disappointing as the snow did not thaw or freeze enough.

My favourite day was the first one out. The usual winter baptism - 'Christ, it's in condition - Let's do it!!' So off to Bowfell Buttress set Frank Pearson, Andy Dunhill and myself. No sign of anyone in front on the Band so a gentle walk up with Frank explaining English derivation and quoting Ted Hughes at any opportunity to me. This keeps him talking, and enables me to keep up. On the Climbers' Traverse I catch Stella Adams up, an old associate of the Club; quite a capable lass who is also going for the Buttress.

The whole crag is plastered with snow, with hardly any rock showing, but not a lot of ice. We are in the cloud, which restricts views, but increases the apparent size of everything. There are two guys already at the top of the first pitch, and Stella and a friend to follow. So this allows me to remember how the crampons fit on, and swarm off around the corner and remember what it's all about by soloing a variant start to the first pitch. The whole insecurity kick comes back as I pull up on bits of frozen turf.

Our turn and I lead the first pitch with an awkward groove low down, and the chimney hard until I place a high nut (I stood in a sling but I don't think anyone noticed).

Frank takes the second pitch, which starts by teetering up and left with the front points on tiny ribs, and the ice axes hooked on snowy ledges. Very scratchy and a good lead by Frank. The rest of the pitch was superb.

The third pitch is a bulging crack with no snow and even less

placements so Andy aids this and then bridges a snowy grove. Another good lead.

Again my turn. Up and left into a corner. The summer route goes out right and back in higher up, but the snow route goes straight up. A good runner; both tools in the corner; a heave up with crampons scratching frantically to a long bridge to the right, and then easier climbing to a funny landing on the belay. I hog the lead and take the last pitch to finish on top about 5 mins. before dark. Just enough time to get to the Sac's, where a sandwich, a drink and a few whoops were followed by a headtorch descent.

A superb mountaineering day out which fulfilled a long-time ambition, but what about that slight line that ran off!!!! Another day.

Mike Tolley

EASTER 1986 - GLEN COE AND THE BEN

After the finest winter for years demand for places on this meet was high and exceeded supply by some 100%. Many of the disappointed members found themselves at Glencoe Youth Hostel and the club hopes they had at least as enjoyable time as the 'official' party, which was considerable.

The new B.M.C. hut at Onich was found to be well situated and occupied a virtual suntrap. Daffodils were weeks ahead of those at home and sensible members would have just lain on the beach for the holiday, popping back for occasional brews. Unfortunately there were no sensible members present. The hut is not well signposted but is bang next to the road between Creag Dubh and Creag Mor hotels. It can sometimes be located in dead of night by the sight of the meetleader sitting on the pavement outside, waiting for his meet to arrive. Accommodation is excellent with hot water available in dorms and kitchen, showers, adequate drying room (just) and plenty of flush bogs. Heat is by a real fire plus Calor back-up.

Friday was dull and gloomy everywhere except right outside the hut. The meet set off over the Corran Ferry and two-thirds set off up Garbh Bheinn only to be turned back by a blizzard. Lunchtime pints followed the retreat and the entire meet toured the Ardnamurchan and Morven coasts. Evening refreshments were provided by the Onich hotel, purveyors of excellent real ale served in sumptuous surroundings. The evenings revelries were somewhat disturbed by a roving band of christians who gave a sort of son-et-lumiere performance about the meaning of Easter to an embarrassed or otherwise indifferent audience. For our pains the bar stayed open long into the night.

Saturday dawned a little brighter. Louise and Chris went skiing, Mike Penn went in search of General Wade, Barry and George searched out coastal munroes and Pete, Gerry, Barbara and myself had a look at Creag Mheaghaigh. Two avalanches whilst we admired the mural precipices reminded us of the folly of setting foot on the buttress in the prevailing conditions. Sunday found teams enjoying the stunningly clear views from Arisaig, searching out more coastal mountains, or enjoying themselves hugely in Glen Nevis. By evening the weather cleared dramatically. Would it hold?

Monday dawned cold and stunningly clear. Louise opted for skiing, George Barry and Chris climbed Garbh Bheinn; Barbara Peter and Gerry did Ledge Route on the Ben and Mike and I traversed Bidean. The day was hot, extremely clear and quite

windless. It took a tremendous effort to drag oneself away from the summit cairn and force a way down into the valley and the journey home. A hugely successful meet noted for its good nature and excellent bonhomie. Various trips to the Nevis Sports Coffee House lent an air of sophistication to the proceedings and we were delighted to meet Bill Ruthven there searching for a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " map of Garbh Bheinn so he could work out where he had been the previous day. Cuisine at the hut was largely of a high order but fresh sea trout baked in almonds, wine, herbs and spices was just plain showing off and a failure to appear at the pub on any of the nights of the holiday certainly ought to be a bannable offence. The incumbent mug of the year may wish to note that Eddie Craig (the only non-active committee member) has appeared, dormouse like, to have slept through this entire superb winter, visiting the Lakes only once on the worst weekend so far this year. He has, of course, gone back to sleep and missed a classic Easter.

Dave Earle.

THE GREAT PEMBROKE DISASTER, EASTER 86.

With the new guide just out, full of colour pictures of sun-baked cliffs and multi-starred routes, Pembroke seemed just the place to go to avoid the worst of the weather at Easter.

A large team of crazy FMC members assembled on the wind swept field of Buttylands camp site for a taste of just about every sort of weather you can think of. Friday dawned very windy and several heavy showers saw everyone crammed into Chris Thistlethwaite's camper van in their duvets trying to keep warm. Dave Whitmore and Dave Cundy were made of sterner stuff though and set off early for Crystal Slabs at the north end of the firing range. Everyone else made a later start, gingerly checking out Chapel Point for dampness before waddering off up the firing range clad in full winter gear. The sun was now out but the biting cold wind had a desperate chilling effect. The majority found themselves at Crystal Slabs, the easiest angled bit of cliff on the coast. Several routes were climbed and the first international rescue call-out ensued. Glenn Brookes having a minor altercation with loose rock and incoming seas. Mark and Viv Broughton and Kevin Stephens turned up and joined Martin Dale and Al Peel down on Crickmail Points upper tier. The sun was out but ones hands were so cold from the wind that they soon became bereft of feeling. A nasty rain belt and hail put paid to activities and everyone retreated to St. Govans Tea Rooms. The rain set in for the rest of the day. The Swan Lake took some hammer that night with a good extention and courage directors. Many of the lads were larrup headed in the morning. A good job it was pouring down. Shopping in Pembroke was followed by a pub crawl round some of the areas good beer guide ticks before a slight lull in the rain enabled us to have a look at St. David's Head. Martin went soloing, Al and Sean Smith managed a couple of routes including an E1 on Craig Coetan, Simon Fenna took photos, and sweets off old ladies and the rest walked round the headland. A crawl then followed back to the Swan Lake in Jamestown. On the way Sean had budgie and chips for tea in Solva.

Sunday proved to be the best day with the wind dropping but rain threatening. Phil Caley led Army Dreamers at St. Govans, Kev led Manzuku at Stennis, Dave and Dave stormed up VSs at Saddle Head and Stennis, Chris had to be top roped out of the descent chimney at St. Govan's by a disgusted Paul Reid. Al spent an hour peering down between his legs before giving up on

Tactician whilst Veterans Boysen and Carrington cruised E3's for fun on either side. The FMC must be a bunch of wimps, I thought. One consolation, Geraldine Taylor was quiet and Simon led an impressive HVS on Saddle Point with Steve McDonald.

Dave Wood, John Hickman and Phil Spink had arrived and wimped out of camping, staying in the chalets in Jamestown. They ticked off VS's at Stennis and Saddle Point. Everyone got totally helpless again on Directors, Chris This. decidedly so and Monday's hail, sleet, snow, wind and rain was the last straw. Chris, nursing a throbbing head, decreed that the only way to go was home. So off we set with our tails up our backsides. The majority of the team heading off following Glenn Brookes, Ale Activisit, in search of a dinnertime pint. The two Daves and the chalet section stayed on and went down to Saddle Point. Dave Whittmore was traversing on to the upper tier when a massive freak wave plucked him from the rock. Fortunately Dave was OK despite his hands being cut to shreds by the razor-sharp rock. Flying Doctor Wood whipped him off to hospital. The biggest disappointment for Dave was seeing his brand new £10.00 guidebook floating off up the Bristol Channel.

This virtually ended a rather disastrous trip. Who would have thought we'd be back at Whit for more punishment?

Martin Dale.

LADIES' MEET, 17/18th MAY '06

It is amazing how the threat of no longer having Ladies Meets on the syllabus galvanizes the Ladies (and Dave) into activity. Eleven Ladies in total (and Dave) desisted from rearranging the goldfish, wallpapering the bath etc. to escape to Little Langdale for another pleasurable weekend and typical "Ladies' Meet" wet weather (why do we always bring shorts?/and Dave?/ with us).

Saturday morning, we left the cottage by 9.30 am. (please note, June!) with the promise of a sunny morning. The rain started as we parked the cars in Patterdale. The showers forecast for the afternoon proved to be one continuous downpour. Straggled up Helvellyn, some of the party beating a hasty retreat (not Dave) as sudden gusts lifted them off their twinkling little feet. The members with better ballast (sorry Sue!) continued over Striding Edge and down Grisedale to meet the remaining bedraggled party - coffee-ing it in Patterdale. Retreated to the cottage where the more selfish members bagged the showers and we hung vast amounts of wet gear in the drying room. We were somewhat revived by sherry and wine. By the time we made our evening meal there was very little wine to accompany it.

Sunday - the rain sweeping across the valley did little to motivate the Ladies (or Dave). Decided on a bumble to Skelwith Bridge to admire the waterfalls and so round to the "Brit" for a lunchtime pint. It was then as the weather improved the group divided - the continued bumble back to the cottage - the walk via Loughrigg, and the keen group, Lang How, Jacks Rake, Pavey, Dungeon Ghyll returning via Blea Tarn.

A strenuous or bumbling weekend - whatever you want to make it - but as always, a nice boozy one.

Hope to see more Ladies (and Dave) on the next meet.

Jennie Tolley.

MALTA II

My second visit to Malta took place over New Year 1985. This time I had two weeks to do all those new routes we spotted on our last trip but this time I was accompanied by Andy Lewandowski and family, and Nigel Brooks an old friend of Tats, and ex-Sheffield man. I made sure we were well equipped this time too, having several hundred feet of rope, peg hammers, wire brushes, jumars and God-knows-what else. We must have looked highly suspicious as we staggered through customs under all that loot!

Our first route was Continuation Wall (VI-) on the 300ft high sea cliff around the coast from Wied Babu. The weather was superb and we abseiled down to sea level in shorts and rockboots only. A pleasant slabby wall pitch then brought us back to the halfway ledge above which the direct finish takes a steep corner and fine slab. I led the first hard pitch which went at a stiff 5a and led to a semi-hanging belay on an old rusty peg which had a brass plate tied to it commemorating the route's first and second ascents. These forces climbers must have had a lot of spare time on their hands! Andy then took over for the final slab pitch which was good 5b and worthy of the Extreme grade (E1). Not bad for a route first led in 1953.

The new two days the weather was uncharacteristically bad for Malta with heavy rain and strong winds buffeting the island. However, we felt a bit better when we saw snow falling on the beach at Nice on the TV, and heard of arctic conditions in the rest of Europe. As soon as the weather improved we set to work on cleaning up some lines on the elegant 100 Yards Slab. First I led the shallow groove just left of Red Red Wine, Andy Dunhill's route, to produce La Vallete (HVS 5a), named after one of the leaders of the Knights of the Order of St. John. Nigel Brooks followed this up with a fine lead of Chilli Wind (E1 5b) which takes a line of rugosities up the slab right of Red Red Wine. We then retired to the nearby H.T. Slabs where Andy had spotted a thin diagonal line across a very smooth looking slab. This was duly climbed to give us one new route each and the Island its first E1, The Punic Wind (5c) a fine achievement under the blustery conditions. We were then surprised to meet some other English climbers who were also over for two weeks, as guests of Evan Trends whose parents live on Malta. We arranged to meet up later for a few beers in a local bar and be introduced to some of the Maltese climbers. Meanwhile we retired to our apartment for a bath and something to eat, ah, the luxury of a package holiday!

The following day we went to explore the jutting headland which lies to the south of the famous Blue Grotto which is an impressive 200ft arch through which one can take a boat trip. We were not here to day-trip though, instead we began a three-man gardening operation on what we thought was a 150ft virgin face. (It later turned out to have been climbed in 1983). While I was dangling on the rope fighting with the vegetation, Andy scouted round the far side of a small zawn to get a view of the other side of the headland. To his amazement he saw a classical corner rising the full height of the cliff from a convenient wave-cut platform at the cliff's base. We promptly abseiled down and enjoyed a warm, sunny spell in this natural suntrap while Nigel tried to lead the corner. Unfortunately he got stuck at half height and had to belay. Andy then finished off the route naming it Lampuki (HVS 5a) after the fish which is a popular local delicacy. (Alas this route also turned out to have been done before by two Navy chaps in 1973, but we did not know that at the time.)

A couple of days later we met the other English lads again, at Shakka, and learned that they had pinched our gardened line on the

150ft face, thinking we had already climbed it. I was none too pleased having waited a whole year to do this particular route. Still, we were ahead on the new route stakes at Shakka with Andy Lew. sticking his neck out again on a very smooth, slabby groove which was once ascended by the Royal Marines on motor-bikes belayed from above! He very aptly called the route Motopsycho (E3 5c). Nigel also got a good route in here with the pleasant Breezy Rib (MVS), proving that new lines are available in the easier grades too. My route here turned out to have been soloed the previous day by Phil Bocking who had also stolen the Blue Grotto route. Such competition on an Island with less than a dozen climbers!

We then decided to go to Gozo while Bocking and friends stayed on the main Island. We climbed first on the slabby walls of the Inland Sea producing a number of pleasant routes between 70 and 200 feet high at grades varying from V.Diff to HVS.. We then set up our bivvy site in a convenient garage amongst the holiday chalets which suggle in the hollow of the Inland Sea cliffs. The next day dawned cold and wet so we went shopping, returning in the afternoon to snatch a 300ft arete at Dwejra Bay calling it Phoenicia (E1 5a,5b) after one of the many races of people that have invaded the Maltese islands over the years. Our last day here was again rather windy and we were restricted to the sheltered walls of the Inland Sea. However, this resulted in a very good route being produced, The Gozo Connection (E2 5c) which I led after Andy had cleaned and envisaged the line - nice boy Andy!

Back on the main island again, we learned of Phil Bocking's exploits at Victoris Lines, a short inland escarpment where he had climbed a large roof first by artificial means, and then free to give Little Red Riding Hood (E2 5). His partner, Hugh Mullen, also claimed to have repeated The Punic Wind at E2, but this turned out to be another line which he had accidentally made an on-sight first ascent of! We did not have time to repeat any of these climbs and remained ignorant till after the trip of the other routes they put up, including the fine Ostrebogulous (E2 5c) which takes the thin slab between Red Red Wine and Chilli Wind. Instead, we channeled our energies into the little exploited west side of Wied Babu, a valley crag about 70ft high. Here Andy soloed Potho (VS) which climbs into and then out of a curious hole in the cliff, and Co-opego (HVS 5a) which proved unexpectedly hard and gave an exciting solo. Meanwhile Nigel and I were gardening two steep crack lines on a wall to the left. Reciprocating Andy's gift of the Gozo Connection, I offered Andy my line which gave Caravaggio (E1 5b) back to the Maltese. (Their original masterpiece having just been stolen from the art gallery!) Andy then retired to the cafe while Nigel and I unsuccessfully battled it out on the overhanging start to the lefthand crack. Eventually we gave up with torn and bleeding hands - it would have to wait for another trip, or someone else since this was our last day. We had come to climb as many new routes as possible and this we had done, but in the process we had seen so many more that needed doing - another trip was surely in order!

Roger Brookes.