

Fylde Mountaineering Club
Newsletter

Sept 1988

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New Socials Venue.

As everybody knows the venue for socials and the Wednesday night alternative to the Thatched House in Poulton at Breck Rd, the Breck Rd Sports Club has closed. An alternative venue has been found, which has been used in the past. It is the River Wire Hotel on Garstang Rd, At the end of Amoundenous Way.

Socials on every first Wednesday of each month up until November, as far as we know, and they are held in the Large room upstairs.

Sheila Roscoe

It was with a very deep sense of loss that the club learnt of the death of Sheila Roscoe.

Sheila had been a member of the club since the mid fifties climbing and walking regularly in the Lake District at weekends. In those days a high degree of dedication and commitment was required, without own transport the journey to Great Langdale took considerably longer than today.

In later years Sheila did not get on to the hill as frequently, while she concentrated on bringing up her family. She did however continue to give great support to Peter. We are all aware of the contribution which Peter has made to the well being of our club and I'm sure that we will not forget the part which Sheila played in our progress. We shall all miss her very much.

The Greenhouse Effect.

Where does one start to account the activities of the club so far this summer? A very broad broad outline of individual climbs by a small crossection of the club is at the end of the editorial, but the clubs activities this year stretch word wide.

There was a very notable introduction to Arran for me, memorable not only for the excellent climbing on the Island, But also for the incredible

greenhouse at the Ormidale Inn, inducing such jovial pastimes as getting completely and utterly ratarsed! Some fine off-piste biking exhibitions were witnessed during our stay with some unusual braking techniques being demonstrated by John Cushnie. The weather and the Greenhouse Effect limited our climbing to just one day, but with my enforced oral interpolation of a toilet roll, a very memorable visit.

The recent development of the Black Hole at the Cathedral Quarry, Little Langdale has been led by members of the FMC and has completely transformed the quarry from containing the occasional aid route, to a good comprehensive free route area, including grades E2 to E4. Although bolting has become a necessity to develop this area along with the existing hardware for the old aid routes, the unacceptable practice of chipping holds has been done by someone outside the FMC and has since been cemented up. A history of the area has been compiled by Martin Dale and is included in this issue of the newsletter. It's well worth a read.

A large, diverse and extremely lucky team of Nobs have got themselves off to the States this summer, climbing in Yosemite and visiting other areas, the team includes Andy Blaylock, Steve Swindles, Martin Dale, Roger Brookes, Phil Morris, Kevin Stevens, Dave Woods and Paul Taylor with Fred Snalem.....Dave Earle and Mike Penn have decided to attack France and mount an offensive on the Pyranese.....Louise Fortune sneaked off to Pau Pau New Guinea without telling anybody and flatly refuses to put pen to paper for the newsletter. The Sunday Sport investigation team are currently inventing (sorry unraveling) stories in Fleetwood!.....

.....Al Peel, Glen Brookes, John and Jenny Parker and Moz all got to the Alps this year and I got a screamed "A'reet Nob", from Henry Iddon in his mothers car in transit the other day, so he's back from his trip O.K.

Here is a selection of rock routes done in the last couple of months by a chosen few;

Andy Blaylock:

Left Wall, Cromlech E3/5c
 Silly Arete, Tromadoc E3/5c
 Vector, " E2
 The Bat (Aid Route) Dovedale
 Pacific Pilchard Wall (Aid Route)
 Nearly all Black Hole free routes

Clare Addy:

Valeries Rib, Tromadoc HS
 Christmas Curry, " HS
 Seamstress, Rainbow Quarry HVS
 Ribstone Crack
 Crackstone Rib
 Oxford & Cambridge Direct, Grey

Dave Cundy:

Agony, Castle Rock HVS
 MGC Shepards Crag E1/5b
 Grasp " " E1/5b
 Little Pink Clare HVS/5b
 (somebody we know?)

Your illustrious editor has now flit his palacial Bispham residence and now resides at 1 Hornby Court, Kirkham, PR4 2UH. Tel Preston 685467

Full Members.

Henry Iddon. Trevor Atkinson. Ian Shearer. Martin Bennet.

Inro Members

Pauline Mc Nally
 3Guilford Way
 Carleton

Jane Westmorland
 19 Watkin Lane
 Preston

Adrian Carter
 60 Devonshire Ave
 Thornton

Ms Susan Lovejoy
 15 Hall Rd
 Fullwood
 Preston

Change of address and telephone No.s

Phil Caley's home tel No. 0204 74859

Bill Mc Crae & Anne Goward's home No. 0204 494313

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Correction to address & tel No.

Dave Cundy: 1 Hornby Court
Kirkham
PR4 2UH
Tel Preston 685467

Socials (Via incredible telephone calls from Louise! I've still not fully recovered!)

7th Sept Australia, Newzealand and a Touch of Nepal.

The every day story of two simple lads from the Fylde who sell their soles to the Devil to go off in search of the truth about Kangaroos, Sheep and Yaks. These heart rendering tradgedies are depicted by Sean Smith and Steve Halton.

5th Oct Something Like Er, Two Over Weight Profesional Ladies in Pau Pau New Guinea.

Trust Louise to come up with the sublimely applicable title for the trip of a life time to this wonderfull country.

2nd Nov Walking in the French Alps. Sun & Snow in the Vanoise.

By Bill Ruthven. Im advised that Bill is a BMC chappy! Could be good.

Return Friends to Wild Country.

All Friends bouht this year must be sent back to Wild Country, either via the shop you bought it at or directly. The problem is the spindle connecting the cams. I have some info and Wild Countries address.

Tel Preston 685467

For sale

Size 8, Kamet Rock Boots hardly used. Only £25 Ring Dave Wood on Preston 684969

Hey, ma naem is a Mario, I edit a news a lettas. Do they call me a Mario the news a letta editor?.....non!

Scrambles in Sky Book

Just a reminder that our illustrious Secatery, John Parker has published an excellent guide book to scrambles, walks and climbs, with accosiated map to the Isle of sky.

This is a really good package to have if you are visiting Sky and john has some at home. It is published by Cicverone Press and is also available at all good climbing shops. The price is £7 (inc map).

Discount Shop

The Outdoor shop at Coniston, Ron Rutlands is offering 10% discount on all stock to FMC members. (With membership card)

Keys to Huts

To aquire keys for both huts apply to the hut Sec John Wiseman. For other club hut keys with which we have reciprical rights, apply to their hut Sec then get the key from John.

Memorial Lecture

Sheila Roscoe's Memorial Lecture will take place on Thursday November 10th at Bispham Community Centre. In aid of Green Peace the Lecture will be given by John Beaty and is entitled Touch the Earth. Like Rock Like Fire.

Paragliding

Anybody who wants to try Paragliding get in touch with the editor.

BMC Technical Committee Report 87/8

Examination of Simond 'Chacal' ice axe pick failure.

Summary :

A Simond 'Chacal' pick has been submitted to the BMC for examination after failure in service. The pick has broken in a brittle fashion with the fracture initiating at one of the teeth. Hardness tests suggest that the material is in an unsatisfactory, brittle metallurgical condition. Tests on the unused replacement pick showed this to be even more brittle.

BMC Technical Committee Report 87/5

Report on broken Salewa 'Classic' Crampon.

Summary :

An incident has occurred following detachment of the front part of a salewa 'Classic' crampon from the wearer's boot. Mechanical failure of the saddle piece securing the adjustment bar is believed to have caused the incident. Design of the component is such that failure can quite easily occur and secure bindings are absolutely essential to prevent loading an intrinsically weak item.

A full BMC report can be obtained for each of the above from the editor.

Tony and Wendy in Australia.

Tony and Wendy Welsh have moved to Australia for 2-3 years, they move in March and reside in Melbourne—4 hours from the Arapiles, Grampians.

There is an open invitation to anyone in the FMC visiting Australia climbing. So call in for a brew if your passing Australia sometime.

Deborah Selected For The Olympics.

"Justholme",

Peel Hill,

Blackpool,

7th June 1988.

Dear Friends,

I had some excellent news last week which I'd like to share with you. I received my official confirmation of selection for the Olympic games for fencing. We will be flying out a week after the able-bodied Olympics end and will be using all their facilities in Seoul, Korea. I am now training 4 evenings a week and 2 out of 4 weekends, mainly in the Manchester/Oldham area, as I am determined to put the Fylde coast on the map, as far as medals are concerned. The fact that I have been able to achieve what I have up to now is a reflection of all the help and encouragement I was given back in '81-'82, of which you all played a large part. Thanks very much.

A couple of weeks ago I visited Larry Evans, the winchman who rescued me back in '81. He was a really smashing chap and I had a lovely weekend chatting to him. It seemed strange meeting him, especially as I could neither remember anything about him, nor even what he looked like.

I'll close now as I'm going to Tarleton school, where I used to work, to give the children a talk and demonstration about fencing; should be fun.

Kind Regards,

Deborah

Scotland Without Sleep

by Andy Dunhill

What do you do when the usual active team head south to the great smoke for a weekend of beer and debauchery? (They really went to a wedding in Balham South London).

I decided to balance the scales and head for the North of Scotland—to Sutherland—and so persuaded a local Geordie Dave Wiseman (you may have seen him on a recent working weekend—if you were there!) to come along. He has a firm's Escort XR3i and he even asked if I wanted

a play! I could not refuse.

The chosen objective was the Old Man of Stoer a 200ft sea stack and we went prepared with extra ropes, wet suit, ice axe etc, for a major sea crossing. The journey to Lochinver was quite fast and that night we slept in a sheep shed — despite the invitation they declined to join us.

Morning dawned perfect and we set off loaded with gear only to find on arriving at the stack, 3 people en route and 6 at the bottom! I have never driven 350 miles to queue before! We followed everyone up, overtaking some who, to make matters worse were a school party. We were back at our gear by 3 o'clock. So much for our major adventure — we went for tea and cakes and icecream.

A walk up Stac Pollaidh and a scramble along the ridge entertained us in the early evening. This is a small but spectacular mountain and well worth the effort. What could we do next?

The Cuillin Ridge was mentioned but discounted because it was a 100 mile drive to the ferry and we just didn't have time to do it and get back in time for work in the morning, or so we thought. We decided to drive to the coast for a beer, but the seed was sown and after a couple of miles the question was asked—what time is the last ferry and how long will it take to get there? — The answer was 11pm and 2 hours. It was 8.45pm.

We reached Kyle of Lochalsh by 10.45pm and caught the last ferry. I enjoyed the drive!

We bought lots of chocolate, cans of pop and a map at the Sligachan and set off at midnight reaching the top of Sgur Nan Gilleann at 3am very tired. The view and atmosphere were beyond words. There had been a sunset all night which melted into dawn.

All the while the lads in London were I believe, somewhat the worse for alcohol and enjoying themselves at a party of dubious sexuality.

The final mountain Gars Bheinn was reached at 2.30pm on Sunday afternoon. The sun been blisteringly hot all day and we wore only tea shirt, track suit bottoms and trainers. We soloed everything except a V.Diff up the inaccessible pinnacle and the Erith Gap. We took only one rope and two slings.

Our light weight approach proved successful under the conditions and we passed several parties going the other, normal, way with full bivigear. We did not envy them. The ridge is a superb expedition with very little level ground. In all it took 17 hours from the Sligachan to Glen Brittle.

A decent to Glen Brittle by 5pm and hitch back to the car left only the drive back home to Newcastle and a few beers in Edinburgh. We were tired on Monday.

Strange Fish Swim In Black Hole

Just down the lane from the land of Nobs, across the bridge over the river of Bishops and up through the trees lies the Big Church. A secret place to many, until recently it has sat dormant used only by outdoor pursuits abseilers. Now it houses some fine routes all the work of club members.

People from the FMC have played in the Black Hole for years. Fingers and Lurch forged a route up the right hand side of the hole years before the slate boom of the early 80's. Tats and Dave Earle and numerous others played with bolts and pegs in the Great Hole usually to the tunes of Vivaldi or Frank Zappa played at great volume on the Ghetto Blaster. The editor found out how deep the pool was one dark drunken night, and then remembered he couldn't swim!

It was not until 1981 that Paul Clark, the bald (sorry bold) hero from Leeds fresh from his hairy leads in nearby Hodge Close climbed the striking left to right ramp line just to the right of the hole. With Roger Brookes holding the ropes they actually started well to the right and joined the ramp at about half height. Placing two pegs for protection en route, Paul called the route, Going Underground E3 5c. The 1984 guide described the route as climbing the ramp in its entirety, but this was only climbed in 1988 by Roger Brookes during the probable second ascent. The pegs had gone and thought to be a scary E4 6a. Clarke's 1981 lead was a fine one. About this time Paul Cornforth and Wilf Williamson, local Ambleside youths, climbed an aid route up the magnificent back wall of the Black Hole. This was probably a training climb for Corneys other exploits such as bridges and power station cooling towers. Rumour has it that Nelson's Column only survived because Greenpeace thought the time was not right.

After this the quarry fell into a deep sleep. The use of bolts in Hodge Close by Paul Carling and the activities of the Llanberis Slateheads prompted the then Bangor resident, Roger Brookes, himself a Llanberis slate activist, to have another look. He was amazed at the potential of the place, with the use of bolts for protection there was enough room for a dozen routes. After a disappointing day on Dow, Roger went to work and in the late evening he climbed the rib right of the hole and then traversed left above the lip, passing two bolts and then climbed the groove and crack above the right side of the hole. "The Night of the Hot Pies", E2 5c was named after the trend at the time of making enormous pies at the huts containing everything one could lay ones hands on. The inevitable flour fight always followed. The route which probably takes the same line as that done by Lurch and Fingers was seconded by Martin Dale, whose eyes were also opened.

Roger was soon back and climbed the groove into which Hot Pies traverses passing another couple of bolts and up a delightful slab at the top. The route was climbed with the Maltese boys, who commented that

they were glad the rock on Malta was Limestone. Rogers name for this route offended the Fell and Rock hierarchy who changed it to "An alabuse" E3 5c. Not long after this a "Sport Rapping" afternoon in the quarry uncovered the left hand groove above the hole. Kevin Stephens was hooked! The winter of 1987 set in and activity was kept to a minimum, usually by the Golden Rule.

One last route of 1987 was "Murder in the Cathedral" E3 5c which was climbed by Jim Cooper but this appears to be the original route taken by Clarke and Brookes on Going Underground. It has never the less sneaked into the new Scafell Eskdale and Dow guide.

1988 was to see renewed activity and also an unwelcomed visitor. The first really good weather occurred at the same time as the two Little Langdale working weekends. Dale and Brookes had other work to do! Both set to work on different lines, cleaning and bolting them on Saturday. On Sunday Roger attempted his line of grooves just right of Going Underground. Three bolts marked the way. On his first attempt, Rog reached the second one just above a small roof. He eventually bypassed this on the left stepping into Going Underground in the process. Fortunately this did not detract from the quality of the route. Long reaches, blind moves into grooves make it a fairly well protected technical route. Whilst all this was going on Dale had led his route. The line of ramps above Going Underground gives the line passing two new bolts and starting up Hot Pies, passing the second bolt provides a puzzling crux. "Rim Fister" E3 6a is a fine addition, followed by Brookes and Trevor Atkinson, who used peddle power to pass the crux. Back on Rogers route, the top was eventually gained. "Ring Piece Activist" E4 6a was seconded by a very tired Dale and is probably the hardest route in the Hole.

There then followed the antics of some fame and fortune hungry Yorkshire raiders which I'm sure most of you have read about in the mags. John Dunne turned up mid week and bastardised the magnificent back wall which contains Cornies aid route "Pacific Pilchard Wall". He drilled out some enormous buckets and deep finger pockets supposedly for a speed climbing competition. Al Phizacklea did the job of filling in the holds with cement, ably assisted by Rob Knight and Bob Wightman. One day in July saw Kevin Stephens fulfil his ambition when he traversed leftwards out of Hot Pies and down across the lip of the Hole to gain the perfect groove on its left side. On his first attempt he was unsuccessful, but determined as ever he returned the day after with Phil Morris to gain a belay in the groove. Sustained back and footing leads to a bolt before a hard move brings the top in reach and "The Drifce Fish" E3 5c,5c swims off into the history books. Not long after this one day in the hole saw nearly all the routes receive repeats. Drifce Fish by Andy Blaylock and Mick Van Golik who also did Hot Pies and An Alabuse confirming the Grades. Al Phizacklea was also present and accounted for Rim Fister and reached the top bolt on Ring Piece before retreating because of wet

rock. Roger was at work at the time and succeeded in climbing the wonderful corner at the top right hand side of the quarry. This went at E2 6a and packs it in its 40ft. An abseil in to a bolt belay adds to the spice. It was the top pitch of Pacific Pilchard Wall and soon received a repeat from Andy and Mick the same day.

The last chapter in the Hole history was completed only recently. One dodgy day in August the boys visited the hole for some jumar practice. Martin and Roger had other ideas though. Roger beavered away on the slab just left of "North Sea Cod (the 40ft corner) whilst Martin attempted to equip the central line through the mass of overhangs right of Going Underground. Meanwhile Rim Fister and Ring Piece saw ascents by Andy Dunhill and Kevin Stevens with Andy Blaylock along for the ride. Kevin actually managed to pass the second bolt on Ring Piece on a top rope, a problem that must be 6b and will probably be led by someone soon. Rogers line was proving desperate as Andy and Andy finished what may well be the second ascent of Pacific Pilchard Wall, Andy training for big walls in the States. Dale finished his mammoth bolting task and called upon local youth, Richard Kirby, who just hapopened to be passing, to hold his ropes for an attempt. The route begins up Murder in the Cathedral / Going Underground, breaking right to the central bollard. From here it takes an audacious line through the roofs passing two bolts before gaining the upper easier grooves. "Darklands" E4 5c is a fitting climax to the present development. A tremendous pitch wandering through some impressive rock scenery, its not as hard as it looks and deserves many ascents. Care should be taken with the ropes to avoid drag, over a few sharp edges, the reason it is E4. The Vector of slate stated Kevin. Well its probably not that good!

You may think the FMC are a load of Fish Faced Bum Bandits reading this, but as many of you will no doubt know the Nobs are a bunch of pretty strange fish at times anyway. Go take a look, there's more to be had in this Hole of Plenty.

Martin Dale.

A Summary of Recent Black Hole Development.

The Wye Valley.

A bright orange glow filled the tent, it was before eight o'clock on a saturday morning, but the FMC were stirring. After weeks of dodging showers at Stoney Middleton and sheltering in dusty Pen-Trwyn caves, I had chanced a trip to the Wye Valley and amazingly it seemed to have paid off. Outside, the sky was cloudless and the local populace were preparing to enjoy the day. The girls at the far end of the campsite

removed all superfluous clothing to take full advantage of the rays. The comments this elicited from Phil Morris were as predictable as Blackpool councils annual announcement of surprise that bad weather comes in winter. Marietta Higgs would have been appalled.

Dave Earl and Rohna Giles were already in the pub when we arrived on Friday night. As were Bennett, the shy and retiring salesman from Preston and, by chance, two friends of Phil Morris. A Lake District activist called Ted Rogers and his climbing partner who I automatically assumed to be Dusty Bin. Though, he did appear to be slimmer and more animate than he does on T.V. The FMC climbing team were Steve Halton, Dave Woods, Martin, Phil and myself. The weather was phenomenal and we had just two days to check out the local scene.

Dave and Rohna were first away in the morning. Dave talking of horrific milages. We checked the guide book and decided on Wyndcliffe followed by Wintoures Leap. Wyndcliffe is obvious from the road but not so obvious as you are hacking through the bush to the start of the climbs. Eventually we found the best buttress and ticked off the classics which (fortunately) are all in the easier grades. Next venue, Wintours Leap, far more impressive if a little dirty, with steep routes of over 300ft. The afternoon sun blasted the white rock as Steve and myself headed for Kangaroo Wall which the guide book declared was the classic of the cliffs. The other three had decided on a route on the neighbouring Fly Wall and were already getting established on the rock.

Half way up the first pitch of Kangaroo Wall and out of the tree cover the heat struck. Completing the route became an endurance test similar to seeing who can stay in the sauna the longest. A cave at the top of pitch two provided a brief but welcome respite. Steve recovered immediately and shot off into the cavern like a ferret up a trouser leg. As he was obviously speliologically inclined he would lead the next pitch. I of course, got jammed and worked up even more of a sweat squirming myself free. At the top we decided that we were both dehydrated and should seek immediate fluid intake to avoid a serious electrolytic imbalance. I am not sure what this actually means but I once heard a medically qualified member of the FMC use it to describe a particularly horrendous hangover. So I assumed it was also applicable in this situation. We headed for the pub. Crossing the top of Fly Wall the strains of "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" drifted up from below. That quite and introverted salesman was in fine voice. Phil, who had just reached the top explained to me that this was not a Tom Cruise song but was originally recorded by The Righteous Brothers. I was endlessly impressed when he named one of them. Up at the pub Steve bought another round then we headed off into Chepstow in search of food

and the local pub scene. We were impressed.

Next morning everyone was pleased that they had avoided the local cider despite John Wiseman's recommendations and reassurances. Another immaculate day, semi-naked females strewn around the campsite and two more crags to check out. It was to be Shorncliffe and then, if there was time, Simonds Yat. The description of the route to Shorncliffe read more like the scenario from a Dungeons and Dragons game. "Climb past the Devils Pulpit, crossing the bog of eternal stench then turn left by the hooped trees just before the magic pool". The mention of The Devils Pulpit initiated raucous Ian Paisley impressions from Martin, quite a surprise from such a shy and retiring man. Another glance at the guide book recommended the use of a mechee on the final push to the crag. Japanese soldiers hid in the shadows under the impression that the war was not yet over. The local climbers did not talk much but just grunted acknowledgement as they emerged from the undergrowth. Obviously, quite embarrassed that they too were lost. Finally the crag appeared together with the torrent of derogatory comments comparing this 'bag of ****' with Malham, High Tor, Windy Buttress or any self respecting Northerners garden rockery. The locals just grunted as the locals condemned the IRA and demanded that Thatcher withdrew the troops from Northern Ireland. I soloed the classics and then headed down for some sunbathing soon to be joined by Steve and later by the rest of the team who had all enjoyed the tremendous pocketed HVS's that the crag offers.

By now it was getting late and there was just time for a quick look at Simonds Yat. Steve and Martin quickly soloed a polished classic in their trainers. An overweight instructor type in the obligatory briches and itchy tartan shirt announced to his flock that I was a tourist and their were points for hitting tourists with loose rocks. His client on the top rope made a token gesture to oblige then, with feet spinning like a demented hamster in its wheel he made a desperate lunge for the next jug before taking to the air once again. I bought another ice cream like tourists do.

Later that day, on the return journey, Dave Woods displayed a totally uncanny sixth sense in directing us off the M6 and into a little square in Sandbach containing at least five immaculate pubs. He claims he has never been there before and it just came to him in a sort of paranormal vision.

The verdict. The Wye Valley may not be Malham, High Tor or Windy Buttress but on the hottest weekend of the summer you cant beat it.

The Meet Leader.

FORTY EIGHT HOURS ON THE CUILLIN

The weather forecast for the May weekend was fine for the north and west with a high between Iceland and Scotland. It was agreed that Dave would take Lewis in the BMW and they would pick up Alan Blackburn at Kendal. I was highly elated at 5.30 when Duncan and myself, after all the uncertainty, were actually off.

We plodded on in the Gilbern taking turns at driving and me exhorting Duncan to go slower, I was convinced the 18 year old car would break down and we would never do the 500 miles to Skye. We got to the South of Glasgow but couldn't get on the M8 and finished up, after an enormous traffic jam, heading back towards England. Going up Loch Lomond there were black clouds, this wasn't part of the script. We finally arrived at our rendezvous of the Inverbeg Hotel at about 10.00 and the others clocked in five minutes later. The bunkhouse at Bridge of Orchy was full but we were in luck at the King's House and left the Inverbeg at 11.00.

Further up Loch Lomond it rained quite heavily but by the time we got to the King's House at midnight it was fine. Lewis bought us a quick whisky served by the famous Ian Nicholson - Talisker in my case because Christine had enjoyed it so much the previous weekend at the same place, to say nothing of John Wiseman!

We were all up at six to see a beautiful morning, Sron Na Creise where I was the previous Saturday looked superb with just the remnants of snow. We decided not to eat until 9 o'clock and at half past eight after a superb journey through Glencoe and Lochaber and Kintail and past the ancestral home of the McRaes we were straight on the ferry. By 9 o'clock we were at Broadford and Dave had the wonderful idea of asking at a hotel for a breakfast. We ate porridge and bacon, eggs and sausages and Keiller's marmalade on toast, we said we wouldn't be eating so well for a while. Duncan's car was loaded up with all the spare gear and then we were away down Glen Brittle on a brilliant morning. We chose our boots at the last possible moment, I decided to risk my old Skye boots with a hole in the left toe, I had last used them with Terry O'Neill on that wonderful holiday 3 years ago and I chose them out of sentiment and comfort. Dave and Lewis chose plastic boots, what a blunder that was to prove.

I had my 2 pint water bottle into which I added some Accolade to give it a horrible green colour. Duncan had a Ribena bottle slightly less in capacity, whilst Dave had 2 enormous lemonade bottles and a water bottle as well, I was relying on some snow on the Ridge. We left the car at half past eleven, what an emotional moment for me, this was my fourth attempt and what a sense of adventure on leaving the world behind with only John Parker's map to guide us.

We plodded on at a sensible pace in the heat, drinking as much as we could at each stream we came to. The water was far from ice cold. Eventually after superb views of acres of dry rock in Corrie Lagan and Corrie Ghrunnda we began to ascend fairly rapidly always managing to keep off the screes. We contoured quite a long way south and were rewarded by only having to negotiate 100 feet of scree. All at once there was a fresh breeze and we emerged on to the ridge about half a mile south of Gars-Bheinn. A pleasant walk with perfect views of the whole ridge, Blaven and the hills round Loch Houran and we were soon on the summit but not yet on a Monroe, Gars-Bheinn is 2935 feet. The heat was taking its toll and I was trying desperately only to sip my water. Alan had produced a white baby's bonnet and Duncan had resorted to a knotted handkerchief and looked like he'd just got out of a deck chair at Blackpool.

We set off on easy walking and were soon on Sgurr nan Eag (3031) with the superb view of the Ghrunnda lochan backed by Sgurr Sgumain and Sgurr Alasdair. We didn't bother to climb Caisteal A'Garbh Choire traversing it on the East in the shade. I was delighted to find my first patch of snow, and after scraping off the top, I drank as much as I

could out of my bottle and then filled it up with ice. Lewis said this wasn't good for me, but I couldn't see what harm it would do and I wasn't in a position to turn down one of nature's blessings. We stopped on the col before the TD gap and it was 7 o'clock and some were getting exhausted, it had been a long day in a blistering hot sun.

We decided regretfully that the gap would be done better first thing next morning and set to work making a bivouac on the Bealach Coir' an Lochan (2800). We built a wall out of nearby stones and Lewis instructed us in the finer points of making things comfortable by lining the floor with moss. Onto this we uncoiled the ropes and finally laid Alan and Dave's Karrimats transversely. By about 9 o'clock we were all laid down and ready for a good night's sleep!. I produced a half bottle of Dalmore whisky and rationed everyone to one top full because of fears of dehydration. The silhouettes of the Sgumain pinnacles were superb in the twilight. The whole experience was so peaceful and profound. It wasn't without its problems though, Alan who was one of the two to bring a Karrymat was at the end of the line and was unimpressed when the Karrymat didn't extend to him. We got some sleep. The Plough was high in the sky and Lewis must have been awake at some time because he saw a shooting star go right through the middle of it.

It was light by 3 o'clock but nobody suggested getting up until 6. My total food consisted of a Dundee cake, a packet of homewheat plain chocolate biscuits, a large bar of fruit and nut chocolate and several Mars bars and small Kendal Mint cakes. We set off on a perfect morning and by 7 a.m. were on the abseil into the gap, having roped up on the small steep pitch going up to it. The notorious VD pitch was perfectly dry for once. Leaving my ruck sack behind I got stuck in and with the aid of a few runners I was able to make the thrutch in the crack and grab hold of a big ledge on the left. With a big pull I was up the worst. There followed another rather tricky move up a scoop and then I was on the belay. Using 2 ropes we were able to haul up sacks whilst people were climbing and by 8 o'clock we were all up. From the top of the climb you more or less walk off onto the top of the Great Stone Shoot.

We took the opportunity to visit the summit of Sgurr Alasdair at 3257 feet the highest point in Skye. The views were brilliant, particularly looking across to Collie's Ledge. On returning to the stone shoot we scrambled up the awkward wall onto Sgurr Thearlaigh (3208) and then down the exhilarating 'roof'. We remembered to turn right here because the Corrie Lagan traverse down to Mhic Choinnich is very exposed whilst it's easy to scramble round the other side.

Alan was soon leading King's Chimney but then he moved a chockstone which put the wind up Dave. 'If that comes down we will all be killed' he said. It has probably always been like that and although wobbly is probably quite safe. From the summit of Mhic Choinnich (3111) there is a long scramble down to the bealach and at one point a horrendous drop on the right down to Coireachan Ruadha where the rock looks steep even by Skye standards.

Fortunately we arrived at the foot of the Inn Finn with nobody in sight, and so were able to return briefly to the An Stac summit (3130) for a superb view of the Pinnacle (3209). Lewis soloed up behind the 2 ropes. Here we met more or less the first people we had seen on the ridge, a dozen or so underneath the top of the Pinnacle, I thought it was a bit overcrowded.

It was now getting on for noon, and I couldn't see how we were going to reach Sgurr Nan Gillean before dark, I had done all of the section between Banachdich and Bruach Na Frithe before and appreciated how long and sometimes difficult it was.

The three tops of Sgurr Na Banachdich (3166) passed without any

great difficulty as did Sgurr Thormaoid (3040). Incidentally nobody bothered about the Teeth, although Alan is going back to do them sometime. The ridge becomes very narrow on Sgurr A Ghreadaidh, the south top is at 3181 feet and the level summit ridge curves gradually to the higher northern one at 3192 feet. On the summit we met a nice old boy from Windermere, another one in a baby's bonnet. We were so hot and spent from 3 till 3.30 just trying to sit in the shade. The only thing that kept us going was the snow water which was now being shovelled into bottles at every opportunity, morale was at a low.

We said goodbye to our friend at An Dorus and went on to tackle the four summits of Sgurr A Mhadaidh (3012). Duncan was adapting very well and was the first to tackle the direct way which proved to be the correct one. To get to the second summit Alan pioneered a way on the right leaving a ledge and climbing a rather pleasant slab near a corner. To get off the third summit proved difficult and a rope had to be used. I think we had missed the correct descent route. And now on to Bidein Druim Nan Ramh.

It was now after 5 and a bit cooler and peoples' spirits were recovering somewhat. The 3 peaks of Bidein Druim Nan Ramh (2850) proved as hard in ascent as Mhadaidh, in descent the middle highest peak required an abseil. On scrambling off the third peak we had already got to 9 o'clock and Duncan noticed the most divine little bivouac already constructed for us on a grassy col, the Bealach Harta (2500). An overhanging rock faced west and in front someone had constructed a semicircular wall. Out to the west a red sun was setting over McCleod's Tables whilst in the foreground Loch Harport was all silver. I wish I'd had my camera, at least 3 people had so I'm expecting some classic photos. I reckoned it would take us another hour to reach Bruach Na Frithe, and after a brief discussion we agreed to spend the night in this superb situation. A bit of moss gathering was necessary and we hadn't much food left but the defeatist talk had disappeared and the weather was perfectly settled. We were soon led in our second home on the ridge, the only problem was there was only room for 4 pairs of feet!

There was a correspondingly beautiful sunrise and by 5 o'clock we were up. To beautiful dawn colours on the ridge we set off on what I remembered as an easy ascent to Bruach Na Frithe. We were within hours of doing it, the weather was still superb and everybody, despite the blisters was in it to the end. But how could I have completely forgotten getting off An Caisteal!. I had remembered the jump across the chasm when George caught me but had no remembrance of the enormous drop into the gorge before Sgurr Na Bhairnich. A rope was necessary and as usual Lewis did the masters job coming down last. After this it really was straight forward and by 7 o'clock we were on the top of Bruach Na Frithe (3143) and the sun was already quite strong. After vast amounts of snow water we were off again and Lewis and Alan had a quick diversion on the wedding cake, Sgurr A Fionn Choire.

And now there was The Basteir Tooth (3005) and Naismith's. At eight o'clock I was off on the bottom ledge. Everything was perfectly dry. The few feet from the second ledge to the next flake don't have many footholds and the last crack is superb with very good holds and a superb sense of exposure and I quickly rolled over the top. My old boots were still in one piece although you could see the left sock and more seriously the lace had snapped, I wonder what would have happened if my boot had become undone half way up the climb.

I remembered how to get onto Am Basteir (3069) from the Tooth, you traverse right and ascend some yellowy slabs to a corner. You then climb up a gully by using a traverse, we were all up in a few seconds. It once took myself, Alan, Mike and George an hour to get up here using a severe crack which we had to push and pull people up. We were soon off Am Basteir and Lewis suggested we better get up the west ridge of Gillean before the sun became unbearable. We traversed left and then climbed up a chimney to be confronted with the remains of the gendarme.

And now no more problems. A Crawl through the little triumphal arch and then we were on the summit (3167), we had done it even though it might have been a record long time!. The weather was still brilliant, three fantastic days. It was about 11 o'clock. We all shook hands in the best of spirits. I reckon I had drunk about 8 pints of water.

Happily we hobbled down the tourist route, it seemed to take an eternity. We saw a few people, mainly just in shorts it was so hot. Eventually about half a mile from The Sligachan we came across a superb pool with its own waterfall. Lewis was the first to chance it with nothing on, then Alan and myself had the same thrill. Duncan restrained himself to just paddling his feet, he was still wearing his knotted handkerchief. Again it was elemental, just sun and cold water and wonderful rock. Nothing else had any meaning. We finally got back to the car at about 2 o'clock. We had been in motion for 31.5 hours and it was 50.5 hours since we left Glen Brittle.

A celebration meal was called for so whilst Duncan and Dave drove off down Glen Brittle, in perfect conditions Lewis and myself tried The Sligachan, no luck the wretched man had no staff on and even the climbers bar was closed. My dreams of a bottle of champagne in the Slig would never materialise. We drove through Skye and Kintail in magnificent conditions but nothing much seemed to be happening at Cluanie. So on to Onich which we reached at 7 and had the usual fine menu. I had beef bourgignon for '4 and it was superb. Myself and Duncan had to press on and we left our friends sat out on the lawn enjoying a well earned pint of shandy.

We left Onich at 8 o'clock and the journey back home was epic because we were so tired. Duncan had hallucinations on the M6 and I thought it was safer to return via the side roads, it was easier to stay awake. We finally arrived home at 2 a.m., a 21 hour day. Everyone turned up for work the next morning, in body at least, in spirit we were still high up there in the Cuillins. A week afterwards we have only come slightly down.

BARRIE B. CROOK

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