

FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB
NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1989

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Mark Comes Out Of Hospital

A couple of months ago Mark Harding had his operation on his back and since then has come on in leaps and bounds to such an extent he has started to walk, left hospital and been out hill walking in North Wales for the last couple of weeks, hoping to see everyone again at the Dinner (although bopping 'till 5am may be out!)..... Anyway he's well on the way to being the old superfit Mark again, he's been cutting his teeth on some 3000's in Wales.

See you all at the Annual Club Dinner on 9th December at the Old Dungeon Ghyll, Langdale. If your not eating at the Dinner then see you at the 'bop and sup' after, the same all night DJ has been hired and a brilliant time is guarenteed!!

The A.G.M.

The next A.G.M. is on the **14th February 1990** at 7-30pm at the Breck Rd Sports and Social Club Poulton-le-Fylde. Official notification will be sent in due course along with the minutes of the last AGM, Agenda and Committee Members Reports.

SOCIALS (Breck Rd Social Club Poulton)

Dec 6th Visit to Peru Mary Gregory
A slide show about Marys recent visit to Peru.

Jan 3rd Members Slide Evening

This Members Slide Show is'nt the competition, its an evening to bring along any slides you like and either impress us with your photographic exptees hanging upside down on Gogarth getting a picture of an E5 ascent, a superb scenic slide or an FMC 'Funny' slide. This is going to be an evening not to be missed!

SOCIALS Cont

Feb 7th The Lake District Bob Alan

This is an Audio Visual of the Lakes. It comes with more than one recomendation of Bob Alans superb photography and presentation.

New Members

Paul Dooley
17 Cleves Court
Marton, Blackpool.
FY3 9SB
Tel B/Pool 697564

Jane Murray
'Fell View' 7 Blue Hill
Ambleside
Cumbria
LA22 0AG

Change of Address

Al Peel
20 Woodseats House Rd
Sheffield

Rebecca Hargreaves
25 Winnipeg Close
Lamrack
Blackburn
BB2 7DX

Andy Blaylock (Same as Al Peel)

Outdoor Meets

November 11-12th Chester Hut. Llanberis. Don Nichol

When everywhere is 6ft deep with snow or having torential rain, Tremadoc is waiting for you in glorious summer weather (well almost!), or join Don on a mourtain wander in this brilliant walking country.

November 25-26th Beginners Caving. Ingleton. Steve Halton

Contrary to popular opinion I can actually bring people out of caves as well as taking them in! as proved last weekend at the highly acclaimed Tolley Student Meet.....anyway unfortunately I'm unable to book any caravans this weekend so this caving meet will be two single day meets. Anybody travelling long distances can be put up locally. Contact Steve Halton during the day on 0772 267236.

December 16th Brimham Car Meet. Martin Dale

Brimham with its celebrated rock is the venue for Martins Car meet on this Saturday and he says we can all go in his car!!!!

January 7th Kirkstone to Paterdale Coach Meet. John Wiseman

As mentioned overleaf this coach meet is a good 'un, so get in touch with John Wiseman or John Parker at the last minute.

January 27-28th 'Bean Feast' Stair. Paul Taylor

Well, what can I say about Mr T's Bean Feasts that hasn't already been said? If you've not been to one, prepare yourself for one of the years most celebrated nosh ups in the FMC calendar. An incredible event!!

Hut Availability

November	3 & 4th	Langdale (Working Weekend)
	10 & 11th	Chester Hut Llanberis
		Langdale (Families Meet)
"	17 & 18th	Langdale
"	24 & 25th	Stair
December	1st & 2nd	Langdale
"	8 & 9th	Langdale (Club Dinner)
"	15 & 16th	Langdale
Dec 22nd -	Jan 6th	Both huts available
January	12 & 13th	Stair (Working Weekend)
"	19 & 20th	Langdale
"	26 & 27th	Stair

For Sale

Ski Boots size 4 Suitable for beginner or intermediate :- 1 Pair Nordica
1 Pair Raichle

1 Pair of Shaggy Moon Boots. Size 4-5

1 Pair of plain navy Moon Boots. Size 4-5

All in One Ski Suit. Thinsulate. Berghaus. (Cyclonic material) Strawberry pink, white and grey. £90. Size 14

1 Pair of Navy Ski Salopetes. Size 12-14. £10

1 Green and Navy padded ski jacket size 12-14. £10

Shocking pink Angora Jumper + hat + ski gloves + belt + socks, all in shocking pink, all for £15, or will split.

Heavy Scarper rigid sole mountaineering boots size 4. Offers.

Contact Louise Fortune on Fleetwood 6547 after the Dinner Meet or at the Dinner.

The Club Photographic Competition

Whenever the Social Secretary decides to hold the next Photographic Competition there will be a new category. In addition to 'landscapes' and 'action' there will be 'humour'.

The Judge will be a committee member and he or she will be looking for humour connected with the club or its members. So don't delay, snap today!

Jan 7th Coach 'Kirkstone to Patterdale'

The coach to Derbyshire this October was cancelled because only a few people had booked.

As we have to confirm our booking with the coach company in advance we need a solid core of definite bookings. So if you wish to go, book with John Wiseman before Christmas. For any last minute details contact John Parker who will be running the coach as John is going on Holiday.

In previous years this coach meet has proved to be successful in a mountaineering sense and socially. You can see who has survived Christmas and New year, who has become obese and who has got new gear. Also you can chat to those who you have not seen for a while. With luck you can do this with the snow crunching under your feet and blue skies overhead.

CAPTAIN ESOTERIC GETS THORNY

Bored with those endless evenings at Wilton? Tired of Trowbarrow? Jaded with Anglezark or just pissed off with Denham, Warton or Farleton? Yes? Well why not try a mountain crag? Climb aboard the Starship RUSTY BLUE MARINA with CAPTAIN ESOTERIC and his faithful sidekick MUCH VEGETATION for a truly wild trip to the outer reaches of that galaxy we know as Lancashire.

We were soon passing through the ASTEROID BELT of Scorton and heading for the Trough of BLACKHOLE which as far as we know leads to an inhospitable place known as YORKSHIRE when I read the ancient guide to our destination. "A must for the Gritstone aficionado, situated in some of Lancashires most inspiring yet bleak landscape. First class bouldering to full blooded routes." Yes I thought, well have a good time here! We soon landed in a sleepy hamlet as two flat capped and clogged old timers staggered passed us with shepherds crooks and wrinkled brows. From here we would have to go on foot. We slipped quietly onto the moor, only disturbing the odd sheep and wandered briskly towards our goal on the skyline. The path wandered along aimlessly gaining height gradually. Soon we were out of sight of the Hamlet. We blacked our faces and ventured out across the moor, treading carefully so as to not disturb the villagers below. Every now and again strange birds would flutter out from beneath the heather startling us and awakening us from our trance—like step. We rounded a slight rise and ascended directly to the first line of crags. We stopped exhausted and bathed in the stillness and tranquility. It was as if we were the first on this a virgin territory in another world. "UUARGH!!" cried Paul, breaking the silence. "They're out" he said clawing at his growth. He was referring to the midge. 'Hell' I thought, this must be one of their best breeding grounds south of the border. Paul moved quickly but his spray can was empty. 'Jesus!' we could die here and no one would know. Eaten by midges!

I moved quickly up the ramp of the first and last route in the guide. A long stretch and violent swing and I was atop 'Ride a Wild Aardvark' HVS 5a. Paul followed and I stumbled into the crevassed area beyond. The midges had disappeared and I was in another world. Deep chasms separated huge lumps of perfect Grit set at all angles. Like some enchanted graveyard, I wandered in and out, the silence deafening. We thugged our way up 'Pinch and Pull' 5a, and then turned to complete 'Flying Pleb' 5a, but we couldn't turn on 'Button Moon' 5c, our unsightly white marks stretching further and further up the vital slab. We left for future inspiration and sloped off through the great plynths of this far flung outpost. The next piece of cliff took a turn for the worst unless you are into arm burning and chaffed thighs. Grimly Fiendish and New Rose are aptly named. Damned good looking often with horrors which are

definitely at home in this foreboding place.

Just around the overhanging prow lies one of Lancashires best looking unclimbed lines and also evidence of possible earlier explorers. A 1/4 inch crack snakes up the slightly impending wall, too thin even for a child's fingers, tell tale dabs on its initial moves told us we may not be alone in the knowledge of this place. To its left the outlook was more amiable and my partner in esoterism was already to grips with the fine and bold 'Toro Toro Aardvark' HVS 5a. Too bold by far was the next arete along, 'Kissing The Pink' E4, looked back in desperation and the landing cried out for broken limbs. Paul retreated off Toro Toro and was already half way up Pelvic Thrust Sev, before I realised where I was again. A further unclimbed line later brought us to the centre piece of the upper tier. A truly wonderfully named route, 'The Firemans Slippery Pole' VS is well worth the walk for any Gritstone VS man. The initial moves are a bit hard with ball bearing covered rock but they soon lead to good protection (if you have any with you!) in the upper crack. Certainly 5a, I thought.

The sky was turning orange/red as we turned our attentions to the lower tier. We stepped up a gear and 'The Fallen Madonna With The Big Boobies' E1 proved to be no tough tittie. I balanced delicately up 'Long Shore Drift' E2 5c and committed myself to an ankle snapper with the final step up. Holdless slab greeted me, and two minute bold finger pockets had to be thought up before the comforting holds of 'Termination' Sev were in reach. I strayed into the boulders on the left and amused myself with seemingly endless problems, one in particular which started in a chasm and lurched outwards on a wall of alarming angle to a scary rock over way above the abyss. I was lost in a totally strange place! Folds of clouds bubbled over the horizon and turned fire engine red against the setting sun like a dust storm in the Sahara or a strange weather phenomenon on Mars I returned to find evidence of history on 'Prior Visit' VS. An old peg sticks out, I avoid touching the relic in case I destroy it for good. The next buttress along provided our finale. 'Aardvarks Dont Dyno' E1 5b is a brilliant little route up the right side of the wall with the last move proving one not to dyno. The boy Veg was trashed and he picked my landings as I made tentative in roads onto 'Epee Edge' E4 5c. Up to a hanging nose, a swing to the left, balancy undercut, thin edge, one finger pocket, feet on smears, slap for the top! Yes! It's a jug!! Worth the work? You bet.

Mists were now swirling, red turning orange to purple. Hands throbbing and worn red raw, it was time to space hop back into the Vale below.

We scampered down unpathed heather, grouse flapping at our fee. Looking back our paradise was engulfed in mist, dark and foreboding, it's ghosts now out to play, following new chalk. Two prophets of esoterism having plundered its treasures bounded down to the lights below. The boulders returned to silence to await their next rude awakening. The mist swirled in the headlights as we slowly picked our way onwards through

a plague of rabbits, throwing themselves kamikaze like in front of the machine. Time was running out as we hit civilisation. We walked into the Thatched just on last orders, our throats dry and our hands burning. We were quite elated. No one questioned where we had been, no one seemed to care. We sat and stared into our beer, the same colour as the sky earlier. We knew we'd be back soon — in isolation on Gods Rock.

Yo ! THORN CRAG !! Check it out Y'all !

Capt. Esoteric.

There were many personal best performances :

Don Nichol has improved at each of his 4 attempts, this time by 3mins 39secs. This pales into insignificance when compared with Bob Travis who improved over 19 minutes on his previous (1984) time.

Mark Broughton improved by 32 seconds and should have gone faster if he hadn't made such a scorching start.

Stan Stephenson, George James, Phil Morris and Mike Dagger also ran personal bests.

11 runners out of the 25 beat the handicapper, so I shall have to get really evil in future.

Altogether a very enjoyable day, beer and hot dogs after the race and a feeling of having deserved it. Thanks to Kevin Stephens and Dave Wood for help with the Start, Finnish, Hot Dogs etc.

Incidentally, I have full records for all the previous races except 1979. If anyone can let me have a copy of the appropriate 1979 newsletter this would be appreciated.

12th Annual FMC Fell Race 9th July 1989

Martin Pickup

A good turnout and good conditions underfoot suggested that a course record was a possibility for this years fell race. The dry spell did however put an end (or prevent a start) to the raft race and the Golden Duck Trophy will again need to bear the laconic inscription "No Water".

Apologies are offered that last years Fell Race results didn't appear in the newsletter. I presume my witty, well constructed literary masterpiece must have given great pleasure to whoever moved into the Editors old address. Better late than never the 88 & 89 results appear at the end of this article.

On then to this year and in the event the Course Record remained intact, though there were some excellent individual performances.

Firstly, congratulations to Viv Broughton on breaking Barbara Sealeys Ladies record of 46mins 47secs set in 1980. Viv's time of 46-32 was 3mins 16secs faster than her previous best.

Congratulations also to our esteemed Secretary John Parker who ran a splendid 41-54 to win the race and the Jack Fairburn Trophy at his first attempt.

The course record of 33-49 eluded me by a mere 15 secondsce la vie. Dave Earle and Martin Dale showed their masochistic tendencies, both running for the 8th or 9th time. Dave ran 4mins 25secs faster than last year so there's life in the old dog yet. Some young puppies also put up some good times ie Ben Slinn, William and Mat Lorat.

FMC Fell Race 1988 Results

Name	Time	Actual Position	Handicap Position
Dave Earle	50-10	12	9
Don Nichol	44-30	5	1
Mike Penn	49-10	11	7
Phil Morris	46-38	8	4
Roger Brookes	39-53	3	8
Sean Smith	45-45	6	2
Dave wood	48-28	10	12
Andy Blaylock	41-24	4	11
Steve Halton	45-46	7	10
Martin Pickup	36-57	2	5
Michael dagger	36-20	1	3
Barrie Crook	48-05	9	6

FMC Fell Race 1989 Results

Handicap Position	Name	Time	Actual Position
1	John Parker	41-54	9
2	Ben Slinn (Guest)	51-02	18
3	Peter Cooper (Guest)	41-40	7
4	Phil Morris	41-41	8
5	Don Nichol	40-51	6
6	Michael Dagger	35-03	3
7	Stan Stephenson	43-10	10
8	Martin Pickup	34-04	1
9	William Lovat	59-05	21
10	Alan Lovat	44-05	11
11	Vivian Broughton	46-32 (Ladies Record)	14
12	Goerge James	35-00	2
13	Dave Earle	45-45	12
14	Bob Travis	61-05	22
15	Paul Taylor	46-09	13
16	Linda Slin (Guest)	49-33	16
17	Mark Broughton	36-36	4
18	Dave Laddeman (Guest)	39-19	5
19	Sue Jelleyman (Guest)	52-55	19
20	Mike Penn	53-01	20
21	Pete Collard	50-02	17
22	Martin Dale	48-41	15
23	Matt Lovat	76-13	23
24	Liz Rawcliffe	108-40	24
25	Liz Stephenson	108-47	25
—	Ben & Rosie Lovat	Retired	

Despite the rumoured weather forecast of Thunder and more Thunder I was determined that this Welch Meet would be the first one with brilliant weather for years.

Taking full advantage of this Dale, Reid (Yes! Paul Reid!!) and Evans slipped off early Friday afternoon arriving in the Pass after a sweltering drive. We slowly hiked up to the relatively deserted Cromlech. We arrived to find Prestons Dave Parker stalking around in his underpants. He'd had a bad day and warned us of a possible confrontation with a raging, angry Bobby Winsor. Up popped Bob, happy as Larry. He'd done Sabre Cut one too many times but that was OK, every thing was cool, We slipped up to the waiting room below the Cenotaph. There was a youth upping and downing on 'Lord', making climbing 'Right Wall' a decidedly dangerous affair as one Scotch Climber was to find later. We plumbed for 'Left Wall' E2 5c which was dreamily cruised and followed in fine style particularly by Jerry Evans. We traded nut Keys with one Johnny Dawes wizzed down stripping 'Lord' and headed for the Padarn. A tremendous start to the weekend.

Saturday had to be Cloggy Day. The hut was now brimming with Fylde MC members young and old. We wandered slowly and leisurely up the railway track followed closely by a good proportion of the meet. The crag was strangely quiet but someone had beaten us to our chosen line, so we started on 'Serth' E2 5c. Slowly but surely the on coming events of the next week and the pokey nature of the climbing got to the Meet Leader and he soon scuttled off up 'Llithrig' dispensing with the traditional pendulum at E1 5c. This left some biscuits for the hungry Morris/Stephens team. However, over on the right they too were leaving the odd crumb with an ascent of Silhouette E3 5c. Phil had taken several falls from the crux and was not over happy with his performance. Kevin on the other hand was coming on in leaps and bounds following his leg shattering fall at Preston climbing wall. After lunch we swapped routes and devoured each others crumbs. Phil leading Serth but taking a fall, on the top pitch and myself leading Silhouette without taking to mid air. By this time Dave Laddiman and Pete Cooper had struggled with the masses on 'White Slab' E1 and were sun bathing along the path. We wandered back down to the hut for an early bath, a wonderful day all the same.

We were closely followed by a sweaty and red faced John Parker who could just about mutter something about getting the horn and 40 minutes from the top of snowdon to the hut. Himself and Dave Earle had indeed got the horn! They had managed an ascent of 'Horned Crag Route' Diff on Llewess. John had slipped in a couple of Severe variations as well but when questioned as to whether or not he had seen the legendary Llewedd Soloist, he said, "We might have seen his pushbike". We

GODDAMN BEACHBREAK

The summer holidays arrived. Myself Andy Blaylock, John Cushnie and Dez Barnett (Honoury nob) joined together to do battle with the sea cliffs of Cornwall.

Having just done an E2 at Anglesarke quarry a few days before, I was ready to take on the world. I was soon stopped in my tracks by granite that was at one minute wonderfully rough, then soapy, then crumbly. Coupled by my reluctance to insert and twist my beautifully manicured hands into painful cracks and finally the inspection of Thin wall Special on Bosigran Cliff at terminal velocity on John's new rope, I admitted defeat.

Meanwhile Dez and Andy were cruising all the classic extremes culminating with Dream Liberator connection at great Zawn — a mega route. Dez followed Andy using a particularly spectacular method to overcome the overhanging crux. Obviously the rumours about being signed up for competition climbing is true!

By this time I had sold all my climbing gear and bought a Malibu surfboard.

Sitting in the pub that night, Andy mentioned the name of a beach near Lands End. John cut in "That's a fantastic peak!" "Peak?" I said. "Yes, about 6ft, an outstanding peak, 60ft a long right and left slide with a bow section that's unbelievable, it's tube city!!" replied John enthusiastically.

Next morning we raced down to the beach, dressed in our hired designer wet suits and Malibu boards we popped out, cut back and wiped out and did other thing that hurt, and when the surf was up, we went surfing.

The best day of the holiday.

Jerry Evans.

ALPINE ADVENTURES PART I

I unzipped the tent door and peered outside. Brilliant blue skies, fantastic mountain scenery, cascading glaciers, the whole works! Yes, we were in Chamonix.

Myself, Steve and Judith had arrived the night before, after a tedious drive from the Fylde. That day I walked up a ridge flanking the Bossons glacier, which claims to be the steepest ice fall in Europe. It certainly looked spectacular with huge seracs and gaping crevasses. Having

woofed down our tea's and ran to Llanberis to escape the venomous midges which were in profusion in and around the hut. Every one had had a great day. Jerry and John Cushnie had been on the 'Fortress of the Giant Mot' doing the 'Diagonal' HVS and 'The Mole' HVS. Over on the Cromlech, 'Cemetery Gates' E1 had seen some hammer with ascents and falls from Simon Fenna and Glenn Brookes and also Davie Wood and Paul Taylor were rumoured to have passed that way. Fenna and Brookes were also responsible for 'Super Direct E1 on the Mot. Steve Halton and Judith Swift however for reasons best known to themselves went to Tremadoc. They were rewarded with the crag and Erics Cafe to themselves. Mike Penn, D. Duck and Steve (Shez) Sherrington walked their legs off up Snowdon, Tryfan, the Rivals, Carnedd Dyfed, Moel Siabod, Tryfan, Glyded Fach, some other Welch sounding hill and Cribhoch to boot. Wherever they went it sounded like a long way anyhow!

The Sunday dawned remarkably the same as Saturday, very sunny, hot and cloudless — perfect. The only difference being the smiling Blue Grassed face of Andy Blaylock, who'd arrived from a 'Picking' festival on the coast. Again a lot of folks went up to Cloggy. 'Vember' E1 5b was the most popular route and saw ascents from Dave Wood, Paul Taylor, Simon Fenna and Glenn Brookes.

Phil Morris and Dave Laddiman made the 'Mostest' E2 5b of the situation (apologies to everyone from the ed!) a rarely done route. Down on the West Pete Cooper took Claire Addy and John Parker up 'Longlands' VS and Stuart Gascoyne and Jill got a few pitches up 'White' before having to retreat because of feeding time. In the Pass me and Paul were crapping ourselves on Cynr Las. The lower pitches of 'Great Buttress' E2 5c were dangerously loose, with a crocodile of people 'Main Wall', helmets were in! Jerry and John made a fine ascent of 'The Grooves' E1 5b and were just topping out behind us when the weather took a turn for the worst becoming very cloudy, cold and spotting with rain. The crag totally emptied, we beat a retreat as did the folks on cloggy. This proved to be the wrong move as an hour or so later the sun came back out. We'd had enough anyhow but with time to spare we wandered round the slate quarries, the place Paul had hoped to do some routes. Shame the weather was too good!

We spent the rest of the evening sat in a traffic jam near Conway — a sign that the North Wales coast road has a long way to go yet — We narrowly managed a pint in Llandalas so a great end to a great weekend was had.

Martin Dale.

walked up about 4,000ft of the ridge, it gave me an idea of the magnitude of the mountains around me.

For the next two days I did what you normally do in Chamonix. Stare out of your tent at the rain, go shopping in the rain and get pissed off in the rain. Steve and Judith, were adapting well to the conditions, I couldn't figure it out myself!

By this time I had read the guide books many times over and had decided on a route. Having no climbing partner this was to be a solitary undertaking, and with no Alpine experience I had to find a route which avoided most of the dangers — crevasses, rockfalls etc. The route was the Spencer Couloir on the north face of the Blaiere, one of the Chamonix's Aiguilles. Graded AD (Scottish II approx). The walk in sounded fairly easy. Uncrevassed section of the glacier onto Rognon (rock buttress in ice field), steep but easy, back onto glacier below hanging seracs! Over steeper crevassed ground to the bottom of the Couloir. 800ft to the top.

Deciding to do the route in two sections. I set off from Montenvers and contoured around to the mouth of the glacier I passed two Brits coming down through the terminal morane. They looked at me quizzically and I greeted them with my best 'bonjour'. I didn't see anyone else as it was getting late in the afternoon. The weather clagged in and I felt very small and alone.

Reaching the Rognan I was perturbed to find a 3ft wide gap between the rock and ice which was at least 50ft deep. I find a narrow section, bridging over into mixed ground I get an axe placement and step over. After about 30ft of climbing I pull on a large flake which gracefully peels away from the rock face, almost taking me with it. The flake thunders down into the black hole. Regaining my composure I mentally attempted to recall whether I packed some spare underwear. I'm on easier ground now but it's not long before I'm faced with a bulging section of rock. I peer above it to see abseil sling. My resolve is beginning to crumble. Packing away the ice gear I spot a slightly easier looking off-width crack which isn't really, because it fits my plastic boots perfectly. I find small holds on the rock face and after 20ft grab hold of another abseil sling and heave myself onto easier ground.

Standing on a small plateau at its summit I look around for the Stone shelter mentioned in the guide book. Expecting a nice pitched roof, double glazing, c.h. etc, I find a boulder strewn wilderness. Teach me to use a book published in 1967. A little searching finds a flat slab with a large rock which affords some shelter. Bivi gear out and brew on. I'm snug in my sleeping bag, it's not very cold.

As the night progresses the skies begin to clear. Suddenly the Blatiere appears with swirling cloud, following around and through the needles of rock which make its summit. This at the same time scares me and yet strengthens my resolve. I could see the foe.

That night was the most memorable part of the climb. The eerie glow of moonlight on the peaks, the silence interspersed with the groans from the ice cliff above. The notes of brass band playing in the valley wafted up on the air currents for a few minutes. the surreal vapour trails from airliners, arcing slowly across the night sky, driven by the wind and illuminated by moonlight.

I was off before sunrise, but the deep snows of the upper glacier, without a good freeze, were just crusty and soft underneath. Which made for very hard work. Halfway along the traverse below the ice cliffs, there was a large crack and noise of falling objects. I dived into the snow slope and tried to make myself as small as possible. There was a terrible silence for what seemed to be an age. It was dark and I was certainly not going to look up. A sudden rush of objects to my right. Something rock or ice explodes at the side of my helmet. Shaken by this I complete the traverse in double quick time.

It's at this point that the footprints I had been following from back down the glacier explained the strange looks from the Brits the afternoon before. I carried on up, I'm finding it really exhausting as the slope steepens, my lungs feel raw. I almost turn back at this point, but it's getting light and I can see the Spencer Couloir and the top. 2 hours after leaving the bivi site I'm at the Bergschrund. I feel invigorated now. 600ft up the Couloir and it doesn't look too bad.

The conditions soon change my opinion. Soft snow on hard ice base gives you that insecure sensation experienced when climbing powder snow on rock. However, enthusiastic front pointing with plenty of back swings, whilst daggering with my axe heads got me to the top in an hour.

Straddling the snow arete at the top, I had no enthusiasm for climbing the final needle of rock, about 50ft to the summit. A couple of quick photographs and I reverse my line of ascent. In good conditions it would have been a rapid descent, but it took longer than the ascent.

From the Bergschrund I descend rapidly in great lopeing strides. I just wanted to get to nice safe ground. Past the ice cliff to the top of the ice fall which I had avoided by using the Rognon. The trouble was I didn't fancy reversing what I had done yesterday. I spotted some tracks going into the icefall. I followed these with trepidation and find myself through in 15 minutes and in 3 hours down in the valley.

After a couple of days rest me Steve and Judith enjoyed the cragging in Chamonix Valley which was on brilliant rock with lots of nice bolts to clip into. It was warm sunny and safe in the valley, why bother going up there again. But inevitably the itch began to take hold again.

JERRY EVANS