

FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB
NEWSLETTER

August 1989

A BRILLIANT SUMMER

At long last weve got a summer where we can knock the cobwebs off our rock boots and get out on the hill without stuffing our sacks full of winter gear. Just wait untill Lundy you lucky people !!

Unfortunately our chairman had a serious accident in June, breaking his back and six ribs and ended up in Southport Promenade Hospital, but fortunatly he didn't severe his spinal cord and it looks as though he could be back on his feet again this year. In the mean time Mark has perfected the art of filling his bottle without anyone knowing, an outstanding achievement in such a short time. Seriously though, we all wish Mark a speedy recovery and hope he will soon be transfered to Ward G6 (the pub at the end of the road), in his wheel chair.

Activity in the Lakes has been fairly thin on the ground this year with both the huts being almost empty in June, but Intro Meets are doing good buisness this year. Louise Fortune will be doing the one on the 9th Sept, demonstrating all the athletic prowess of a highly tuned rock athelete, to take beginners up the E grades.

Dave Earle has been exhibiting a new fashion in night lingere recently, all will be revealed at the next slide show. Don't miss it !!

The Martin Dale Interview took place on a beer sodden late Saturday night at the Chester Hut last week. Martin seemed uncharacteristically shy at the interview but some heavy editing still had to be done to make it fit for the Newsletter and the end result is as clean as we can get it without wiping out the whole interview !

Loads of people are going out to the Alps this year and Andy and Roger have gone out to the States, I don't know what the've done but no doubt we will find out soon enough.

Anyway have a good rest of the summer and happy mountaineering y'all.

INTRO MEMBERS

Rebecca Hargreaves
41 Yew Tree Drive
Blackburn
Lancs BB2 7DW

Mary Pauline Kindred
15 Ann St
Dalton in Furness
Cumbria LA15 8BG

FULL MEMBERS

Dave Kwik Rob Lewis

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Jon Trevorrow
Boggle Hole YHA
Mill Beck
Robin Hood Bay
North Yorks

Bill Mc Crae & Anne Goward
19 Third St
Barrow Bridge Village
Bolton
Lancs BL1 7NN
Tel 0204 495409

Sean Smith
472 Bourke St
Surry Hill
Sydney NSW 2010

OUTDOOR MEETS

Aug 26 - Sept 2	Lundy	M. Tolley (M. Dale really)
Sept 9 - 10	Intro Members Meet	Langdale L. Fortune
Sept 16 - 17	"Birthday Meet"	Stair Don Nichol
Sept 30 - Oct 1	Falcliff Cottage	Grindleford
Oct 8	Coach Meet	Derbyshire J. Parker
Oct 14 - 15	Tremadoc (10 people max)	M. Dale
Oct 22	Frodsham (car meet)	
Oct	Sun Rock	Spain D. Wood
Nov 11 - 12	Chester Hut	Llanberis D. Nichol
Nov 25 - 26	Beginners Caving Meet	Ingleton S. Halton

SOCIALS (Breck Rd Social Club)

Sept 6th Sale of Climbing Gear (and Record Sale 'Cos Martin has a load he wants to sell!)

Nov 1st Fencing and the Olympics Games Debbie Mabbett

6th dec Visit to Peru Mary Gregory

HUT AVAILABILITY

Aug 11-12	STAIR	SEPT 1-2	STAIR
18-19	LANG	8-9	LANG (INTRO MEET)
25-26	STAIR (FAMILIES)	15-16	STAIR (W. WEEKEND)
25-26	LANG	22-23	STAIR (FAMILIES)
		22-23	LANG
		29-30	STAIR
OCT 6-7	LANG	NOV 3-4	LANG (W. WEEKEND)
13-14	STAIR	10-11	CHESTER HUT L1AMBERIS
20-21	LANG		
27-28	STAIR		

FOR SALE

ROPE 11mm x 45m UNUSED. FOR SALE - BERNARD SKITTERALL
47 LAWSONS ROAD
THORNTON-CLEVELEYS
TEL: 8/POOL 823300

BILL AND ANNE MOVE TO BROWNSTONES

Our very own roving Scottish journalist Bill Mc Crae, and Anne Goward have fairly recently moved to an area near Brownstones and Wilton. They have written to say that anybody that knows them and are in the area are very welcome to come round for a brew and a chat.

They live at 19 Third St in Barrow Bridge Village, which is found by taking the first road on the right when driving from Brownstones to Wilton, Longshaw Ford Road. Go down to and through the village and take the first road on the right, Lightbounds Road. Then first right into Louvaine Avenue and so to Bazley Street at the end. Third Street is off this.

HENRY GOT US 10%

When our Henry was working at the Alpine Centre, he managed to up the discount we get for being FMC members from 5% to 10%. He then promptly left their employment. Rumours that this was the reason are completely unfounded!!

T-SHIRT DESIGN

As everybody knows, next year is our 40th anniversary and the committee wishes to have a T-shirt designed to celebrate this occasion. Any ideas for the design must be submitted to a committee member and the best design judged by the committee will be produced for next year.

WINTER SOCIALS

Once again your old brow beaten editor has been instructed to ask.....nay.....beg you all to turn up at the socials at 8-00 pm for a prompt 8-30 pm start. Thank ye.

GIVE THE VAGABONDS MONEY

The Vagabonds have recently learned that their lease on their hut is soon to expire and cannot be re-newed. So they are now in the process of finding a new place in the same area if possible, and of course all donations to aid them in this quest will be gratefully received. Any personal donations can be made by contacting the Vagabond's Club Hut Secretary.

FRIDGE AT LANGDALE

One of the fridges at Little Langdale passed away recently, so if anybody has a working fridge they don't require or knows how they can get hold of one, contact Don Nichol on Cleveleys 869950.

HUT KEYS

If the hut key for one of the huts we have reciprocal right with, is borrowed please could you let our hut secretary (John Wiseman), have the key back as soon as possible. Tracing the whereabouts of these keys is becoming increasingly difficult!

Due to the rising cost of the catering bill for the annual FMC fellrace. The committee have decided that a nominal catering fee of a pound will be levied as from next year, for all competitors.

AND NOW THE LONG AWAITED.....MARTIN DALE INTERVIEW.

A few weeks ago in deepest Llanberis after a heavy session in the Queens, the Chester Mountaineering Club Hut was brim full of FMC members both new and old. Amongst the party was Martin Dale, who consented to be interviewed on tape about his climbing and personal life, past and present, as an old but still active member of the FMC.

Steve. This is the Martin Dale Interview take one.

Martin. Hello!

Steve. How long have you been climbing?

Phil. Three and half feet.

Martin. Well how old am I now? 31? 16yrs about that.

Steve. What was your most memorable lead?

Martin. The one I did today!

Steve. What was your best lead then.

Martin. Don't know really, 'Between Nothingness and Eternity"

Steve. What was the hardest route you've ever done?

Martin. Naked Edge, Elderado Canyon. Cloggy Corner. Preying Mantis.

Steve. Which climbing area do you like best?

Martin. Lake District.

Steve. Which climber do you admire most?

Judith. And why? so you can't say yes or no to that!

Martin. Jerry Evans. He's got a huge potential.

Donald Duck. Is it true you have an affinity for Herdwick Sheep.

Steve. Have you reached your pinnacle of success in climbing?

Martin. No

Steve. Why don't you like winter climbing

Martin. Because it's cold !!.....and it's uncomfortable.....you have to get up early in the morning.....you have to haul a huge sack up the hill.

Steve. Do you have any more climbing ambitions now your over the hill?

Martin. Yeah loads, I'd like to lead E5 every weekend.

Steve. When are you getting married to Paula

Martin. Eh?.....Not for a bitnot till I can afford it anyway.

Phil. He gets a bit anyway.
Steve. What is your opinion on bolting?
Martin. Serious s**t this innit? I think that bolts should be allowed on limestone, it seems to be allowed on quarried limestone anyway. I know, it should be allowed on foreign limestone !! Slate Quarries I think they should be allowed in slate quarries.
Dave. Yeh, especially as he's got three of my bolts!
Martin. They shouldn't be allowed on sea cliffs.
Unknown Person. Because the sea birds get rust on their wings dont they.
Steve. What is your favourite colour?
Martin. Me favourite colour?..... Blue?
Steve. Date of birth?
Martin. 8/9/57
Steve. Star sign?
Martin. Virgo.
Steve. What do you like in a woman?
Martin. Well she's got to have a head for a start..... and have hairy Armpits.
Phil. Thats because he hasn't got any!
Martin. And I like them to pick their nose.....and have big nostrils!!
Steve. Do you drink?
Martin. What?.....Yeah..occasionally
Steve. Whats your favorite drink?
Martin. Water.....No tea actually.....No honestly its tea I love tea.
Steve. Do you shave your legs?
Martin. No.....its hereditary....me dads like that.
Steve. Are you smooth all over then?
Martin. Yeah.....and no lumpy bits.
Steve. Is V.P.L. (Visible Panty Lines) a problem when wearing climbing tights
Martin. Yeahthats why I dont wear them any more I get embarrassed.
Steve. Rumour has it that you have an addiction to buying rock boots is this true and how many do you own?
Martin. I dont find it a problem in buying rock boots, I have 28 pairs. Ive been to a Psychiatrist, Dave Wood. He helped me buy them.
Steve. Have you done anything unusual with a sheep.
Martin. Well, yeah I have actually.....Ive actually tried to bag one. I got his head in. I wanted to keep it as a pet, it was nice looking. It was at Watenlath. I tried to put it in my rucksac with its little head poking out of the top. I was going to take it home to Paula, she likes sheep, I was going to call it Lamb.
Steve. Well thankyou very much Martin, you weren't very talkative but we will still have to heavily censor the interview. A copy of the unedited version of the interview tape can be bought from the editor.

THE NOSE THA NOS !

The light slowly faded as two people sat slumped amongst oil drums, car parts and sacs. the streets of this Los Angeles district were thankfully quite as Paul and myself awaited the arrival of our hire car. Jet lag and cans of Budweisser soon brought on sleep.

L.A. was far behind when I woke with a jolt outside the first stop - Dennys, one of the many fast hamburger joints which line most inter-states in the USA. Yes! we'd arrived I thought as the dumb attendant fooled with our orders. All I wanted to do was sleep, they could have carried me to my hotel bed that night. We woke late and walked to the Diner over the mile wide freeway for one of my favorite things-the great American breakfast.

Having just jetted away from another "worst summer on record" back in England, the last thing I wanted to hear was claps of thunder as we arrived at our first port of call, Idyllwild. The day continued just as a usual Saturday in Ambleside would, gear shop to cafe to pub as the rain teamed down outside.

We were up early the next day to beat any thunderstorms, so we thought. up at Tahquitz, Andy, (somebody else) and myself were one pitch up Super Pooper when we heard those familiar rumblings and had to head for cover. Several hours later with the worst part we continued up Super Pooper S.10a only to come to grief on the top pitch, our first encounter with a 5.7 friction pitch. We bypassed this and set up with Dave and Paul on the summit for the torturous decent. Tahquitz isa huge cliff with rock of all angles on nearly all sides. We were giving it a day when it deserved a month, if not longer!

Back at the sacks we were hungry but somebody had beaten us to it. Roger pulled his sack from a rock hollow to find that a critter had decided to enter through the lid without opening it first. It liked granola! Andy pulled his bag out and sighed with relief that it had'nt attacked his. He slung it on to his back and the contents dropped out of the bottom. B*****D! he shouted at the top of his voice. Maybe the strange colour of my sack had put this varmit off? We staggered back down to the road, our first incident packed day over.

The next day it was the turn of Suicide. A better day and a easier angled cliff, home of Piasanos Overhang and The Pirate. We decided to attempt another classic upping the grade each route. We passed below the gob smacking line of the Pirate, which looks like a thinner version of London Wall but six times as long, climbed by the God like Tony Yaniro. We were to marvel at more of this brilliant climbers

routes over the next week. Our chosen route was Sundance 5.10b and it didn't give up without a fight. The first pitch was an off width layback, typically American and awkward, whilst the second pitch required seiging. The familiar rumblings were almost overheard as Andy led the top pitch a non existant crack. What a brilliant route! It packed in the goodies and our first experience with 'Chicken Head Mantles'. We managed to find shelter as the heavens opened prematurely ending our day. Paul and Dave emerged and we decided to find the Red Neck drinking hall which the guide mentioned. 30 cans of Bud, 10 Taco's and the World Jet Bike Champ later we emerged larrupped.

With gnarly heads we headed north through the wide open spaces of the Mojave Desert in search of Truck Stop Girls, Captain Beef Heart Joshua Trees. After a thoroughly bewildering days drive we arrived at the Ponderosa Lodge, home of the Needles and Dome Rock in the Sequoia National Park. The next day after breakfast with the local fire fighters we walked in to the Needles, the other climbers used mountain bikes. The Needles were intimidating, strange and quiet, very quiet. We spent the day dodging the continous barrage of showers and only as the rock turned a golden orange with the rays of the evening sun were we able to do a route. Me and Dave went for the Classic Magazine front page 'Spooky' 5.9 whilst Andy and Roger did Valley Guy 5.10a. We all finished up the Lady Off The Needles 5.7 to grab the summit of Charlatan before the next rain closed in. Wonderful colours rainbows tranquil beauty, thats the needles. We vowed to return.

The following day we were again troubled by showers, but the friendlier Dome Rock allowed us to play on it's knobs and slabs. I'd seen a photo of this place on the Chouinard catalogue, a climber spread eagled in a sea of knobs! I had to do that route! So it was that that I set off on this impossible climb, the trip photographers amassed at my sides. The first ten feet were desperate and failure looked on the cards but with the encouragement from Andy, I reached the easier higher reaches of the pitch. The bolts were very spaced and the last few moves to the belay were heart stopping. Two hours after leaving the ground I reached the belay, a very relieved nob. Andy followed his eyes popping with excitement at the sheer class of the climb. We followed up the easier upper pitch and then rapped the route. Between Nothingness and Eternity 5.11a/b was one of those 'once in a life time' routes. I will remember it for the rest of my days as one of the finest I have had the chance to do. The rest of the boys had a good day particularly Paul Taylor who starred with Roger on 5.10a. we left the area not with out incident,

Andy leaving his passport and money on the car roof. We returned hours later to find it still there laying on the free-way such was the quietness of the place.

Labour Day was upon us as we slipped into into a very over crowded Yosemite and headed for the more peaceful surroundings of Toulome Meadows. Peaceful, we thought, not so! Every campsite was full to the brim. so to obtain our place in this beer desert Woodsy had to barter with the Los Angeles Chinese Take Away Association Representative. This was OK but landed us between a set of Gods Children and Fried Rice for breakfast, Dinner and Tea. We set off next morning for Daff Dome where me and Andy did the clasic Crescent Arch 5.9 whilst Roger who was having difficulty coming to terms with Granite did Condor 5.7 with Paul. Mr Wood hurt his back on Spooky back in the Needles so he took off for a walk. We met up later for some routes up bolt protected slabs on the sunny side. We all starred here with Woodsy making his come back on a 5.10c.

The day after we had to move campsite again. This was becoming a bind and the lads were getting pissed off with it. We spent the afternoon on Pywack, Andy, Dave and Paul doing Needle Spoon 5.10a whilst me and Roger took on Golden Bars 5.11b. Roger pulled out his Granite block to lead the first ungraded pitch which was at least 5.10a and I the reach the belay on the second pitch screaming for mercy. The last pitch involved one of those specialities, the runout and belay on nothing - nice. Another beerless night round the camp fire was followed by another glorious day so we decided to attack the mighty Fairview Dome via The Fairest Of All 5.10c. Pitch after Pitch of wonderfully varied climbing brought us to the last crux pitch. With light fading rapidly Roger pulled up the rib and stepped right to complete the job. We staggered down through the woods in the darkness, very satisfied with our big day out. Woodsy and Paul had spent the day grovelling up Great White Book 5.7 on Stately Pleasure Dome. They arrived as we were on our way down, Whoopsthrough the gloom signalling their arrival. They sneaked off to try and get some take away beer, and returned with some good news. Paul had picked up some impressive scars so the evening was spent patching him up and tucking in to some beer for a change. A late rise the next day meant we could pack up and slip down into the valley hopefully in time to get established in a campsite and rendezvous with the Hot Dog Salesman from Boulder, Kevin and Phil from England.

It might as well have been Labour Day in the valley, everywhere was packed. Kevin and Phil had managed to gain a place on camp 4. After much wrangling, red tape and computer antics we managed to secure a place but only for a few

nights. I for one was getting annoyed at all the campsite hassles which were unfortunately the sour point of the whole trip. We hit the bar for a good session and met up with Kevin and Phil who told of their week of non-activity. It was not that they had not been up to much, they had, but had picked some wrong routes, Live Steck Salathe on the Sentinel with its pitch after pitch of chimneys, and Middle Cathedral Apron, with its poorly protected slabs. Kevin was also having trouble with his feet which hadn't helped matters. However they were as determined as ever and were off to have a crack at the North West Face of the Half Dome the next day. We'd had enough of climbing so we spent the day festering, swimming, sunning ourselves and indulging in junk food blow-outs. The next few days continued like this as the King of Good Times - Steve Swindles - arrived from San Jose to join in, but there was still no sign of Fred Snalam from Boulder. The big wall boys were getting restless and Andy quitly and methodically prepared for the first outing, scrounging water bottles and taping them up. A wet day saw the return of Kevin and Phil from the Half Dome, defeated only a few pitches up. Later on that afternoon we managed a couple of routes on Glacier Point Apron our first for a couple of days. Weather forecasts showed a fine spell so Andy decided that the time was right for a big wall. We reconitered the situation and Salayne was decided upon. I to opt out and wait for the Nose so Andy and Roger got sorted out for an early start despite the non appearance of Fred, the other big wall boy. That night just after we had retired Whoops from outside the tent signalled the arrival of Fred Snalam, larger than life as usual. Fred joined the big wall party with the boys having switched to the Nose. That of course is another story. We checked on them at dinner time then went off to slip and slide on the Apron again. Me and Kev chose the glass like smoothness of Misty Beethoven 5.10d. Not only was it extremely thin it was also a long run out. Kevin's first 5.10 and his first Apron route. He was impressed and wa sheard to mutter "ES 6b at home". He changed his judgement when he reached the deck though. The other boys were fighting with the light with Steve out front on Point Beyond Direct 5.8. The light won as we wandered down to the curry village for a pizza and beer.

Paul and Dave were getting itchy for Tuolomne again, within easy reach in a day from the valley so we passed the Nose team penduluming into Stoves Legs and made for the Meadows. Paul Dave and Phil went for the popular Stately Pleasure Dome whilst me and Kev hiked into the remote Hammer Dome for more Chaunard Catalogue routes. We were rewarded with the superb crystal pulling of Shadow of Doubt 5.10c. Kevin's feet were

playing up again so one more pitch for him was enough. I finished off Barbery Coast 5.11b and then we hiked out again and hitched down to Tenaya Lake were we bumped in to Rock and Run Proprieter Andy Hyslop. Five weeks in the Meadows - lucky bugger! Back in the valley I decided to pit my wits against a crack, so we got up early and went to Reeds Pinnacle to avoid the heat. Phil and Paul seemed to float up the classic Reeds Pinnacle Direct 5.9 but I was certainly having problems with my chosen route Lunatic Fringe 5.10c. After several rests and re-racking with bigger nuts half way, I panted up to the crux which was easier that what had come before. Kevin and Dave both followed up in much better style but that was it for me. I festered for the rest of the afternoon by the river.

We just couldn't get enough of Tuolomne Meadows, so off we sped again to breakfast at the Lodge and breathe the cool, clear mountain air. This time Phil Dave and Paul decided to go for the biggie, The Regular Route on Fairfield Dome. Me and Kevin trekked off again to find Scorpion 5.11b on Medlicott Dome. Our route was in the shade but the going soon hotted up as the standard increased to take in the 5.11 bulge. That over the sun warmed us and on to the next pitch. Kevin had a go, but his feet were already playing up. Another 5.11b series brought slightly easier ground in reach and eventually the belay. Above now lay the sting in the tail, another 5.11 pitch in the shape of a bulging and rounded crack. After yesterdays show, I was determined to make a good job of it. Fortunately it took good runners and was soon over. Wonderful moves remained round the cupping roofs, what a brilliant route! we walked back to the car beating the boys who had seen the sunset from the summit. If the night's had been a bit warmer we would have dossed out in the Meadows, but they were sub-zero so we drove up again only this time, stunned by a poster of Mono Lake we decided to take a look. We were greeted by an unnatural landscape of Tufa Pillars and an uncanny stillness, like something from another planet. Me and Dave slipped off to do Table of Contents 5.10d on the just as serene Stately Pleasure Dome, whilst Paul and Phil did a short walk across the meadows in search of Hetch Hetchy, the lost Yosemite? After Table of Contents we tried another route but the dust around the bolts suggested it was very new and I soon got committed on a run out above the bolts. We both abbed down our new/early ascent and pondered over the grade, 5.11c? We returned for Dave and Pauls last day befor flying home.

Kevin's feet were pretty bugged but when Dave suggested a go at Green Dragon 5.11b on the Apron, he seemed to forget. After a few tumbles from the crux, I was successful. so I continued what turned out to be one of the hardest pitches

I had done this trip. Dave and Kevin did really well following. Dave and Paul got off rather later than expected and me and phil went along to visit Steve Swindells in San Jose and also pick another hire car for the others. We slipped into the Bay area through a sea of wind generators as far as the eye could see, tuned into Ffog, the local Rock and Roll Radio and hit San Jose for a welcome change. One day doing San Francisco is not enough and it was obvious that Dave and Paul wanted more but flights home beckoned. Maybe they would be back in the future? Me and Phil ate out at Subways, Steve's current place of employment. We all know Steve's knack for concocting sarnies, but these were monsters! We then took in a Bruce Willis movie at the local flix. 'Oh no' we thought, 'Moonlighting for two and a half hours!' But Diehard proved an absolutely riveting picture. We left Steve's vowing to return with the Nose boys the following weekend and Kfogged our way back to the valley.

We arrived to find the successful Nose party still festering by the river and thinking of their next big wall. Fred had gone, to another great adventure, was it the Andes or Para Gliding in Utah? The man is amazing, always off somewhere! After a day I managed to blag Phil into doing a route. Andy, Roger, Stan (the token Yank), and a recovered Kevin were off to try Half Dome, so we dropped them off and then sped down the valley to Cookie Cliff. We soon dispensed with Catchy 5.10d as we didn't have enough time for Nabisco Wall. The crack climbing was certainly coming on. Typical, with only a few days left. Two more climbing days remained and about 1 year's worth of routes left to do, so it was a difficult choice. A nice day so we hit the sun-drenched Royal Arches to try Greasy But Groovy. Two pitches later I paused just too far above the last gear for comfort. The sun expoliates the granite making the holds brittle in places so for the first time this trip with another 30ft to go to the next piece I retreated with my tail between my legs. I made up for it with a rapid ascent of the Violent Bearit Away 5.10c and then we rested with burgers and milkshakes before returning for the brilliant Serenity Crack 5.11a. The crack climbing was definitely coming on! The last climbing day was supposed to be classic bashing, however when Phil pulled over the overhang on pitch 3 of Central pillar of Frenzy on Middle Cathedral clutching our only three and half friend, I knew we were in trouble. The crack runs upwards at the same size for 50ft so down we came to the sound of distant thunder and gathering gloom over Half Dome. The storm was brewing to herald the arrival of the boys on the summit. We knew they may be in trouble but there was little we could do about it. We abbed off just as the curtain of rain advanced past Sentinel Rock. We decided to go up to the Apron and see what

the weather had done. No rain yet so we hot footed it up Cat Dancing 5.10a and retreated just as the first drops turned the slabs into a skating rink. Our thoughts were now with the lads up on Half Dome. Fortunately there hadn't been much lightening. We bumped into a wet and tired looking Kevin at camp 4. Stan and Kev had made it before the storm had reached its peak and as Kev was getting really cold he had set off down to get warm with Stan returning to the summit to watch for Andy and Roger. We drove round to Curry Village and couldn't have timed it better as the lads emerged from the woods. They were shaken but OK. We all got drunk that night in celebration and relief.

We said our goodbyes to Stanimal, the 'Yosemite in a box' Yank from Boulder and quit the valley, some of us with realised ambitions, others who will have to return to have another go and Kfogged it to San Fran for a night out with Steve in the 'Rumours' of San Jose. Another bash round San Francisco and we were off down the coast sampling our last Coronas. We stopped briefly in Santa Barbara where Roger announced he had just missed his flight. Watching the Pelicans swooping down for fish, we were all soon on board the 747 Pelican bound for Manchester and rainy England, the end of another trip of a lifetime.

Martin Dale.

Summary : USA 88 Trip Dave Wood Paul Taylor Phil
Morris Kevin Stevens Andy Blaylock Roger Brookes
Martin Dale.

CONFESSIONS OF A NON-MUNRO BAGGER OR THE MOUNTAINEERS GUIDE TO NON ACHIEVEMENT

Oh dear : Its nearly that time again : Clunie I mean. I suppose Pickup will be there again trotting up everything listed in his precious tables like a demented administrator, clad in only his shorts and wellies and clutching his trusty alpenstock. I really admire his fitness and dedication, I just doubt his sanity. Since two books were published almost

simultaneously providing picture book ascents of the Munro's for the worlds two legged sheep everybody and his wife/dog has been running about like demented ants, ticking things off. What is it all about, what is it all about, what does it all mean? What on earth is there to be gained by rushing up boring hills in the rain and mist (or even worse, good hills in the rain and mist) just to tick them off on a list? Is it really an achievement to have visited 250 summits, many of them tedious in the extreme, in the pouring rain? Scotland provides so many opportunities of enjoyment. Superb coastal scenery and magnificent through walks for when the tops are misty and all manner of magnificent hills at all altitudes to be enjoyed and savoured when conditions are good. A full spectrum of joy, adventure and romance. And what do we do with it. Plod up Fionn Ben in the mist instead of having a cracking day on the coast or exploring Inerewe Gardens.

Nobody in his right mind, not even the infamous Mr Penn, would set out a list of 250 ladies over 5ft 5in to seduce, many of dubious quality, to the exclusion of all else. It defies all reason to think that the delights of the Avrils and Claires of this world would be ignored on the grounds of lack of height until the list was completed. Why treat mountains any differently. Some, like some ladies are superb and inspirational, others dull as ditch water. At least we all get the chance to enjoy the inspirational hills. [as should inspirational ladies be nationalised for the common good].

Somewhat stung after being harangued continually for my laid back approach to Munro bagging (30 years intensive mountaineering and the end barely in sight) after last years Clunie meet I too reached for a copy of butlerfield and looked up the descriptions of some of the hills I had ignored for repeated ascents of such treasures as the Torridan hills, Sky and the mighty midgets of the far North West. Meall Chuaih "a boring hill with an equally drab outlook". "Rounded featureless hummocks". Meall Buidhe "This undistinguished mound". Meall Ghaordie "Quite the dullest hill in the Southern Highlands". Need I go on? I'd sooner tick off A.A. British Villages. At least they are hand picked for their charm and beauty [In fact I'm doing quite well with them!]. Munro tables are O.K. for the locals who are up there all the time, as a guide to something different now and again, or as an indicator to hills that might be suitable for an ascent on Ski, but to the Sassenachs with limited access I say cast aside your tables, open your eyes and your maps, and re-discover the true joy and romance of mountaineering.

I curled up in a little hollow just below the summit cairn and decided to sunbathe for an hour or so under a cloudless

sky. The air was warm and calm and very very still. Below me the silver shot lock wound it's sinuous way into the hills. Beyond it, over the other side of the moor the Ben and it's satellites marched their icy way across the horizon. To the left the Glen Coe summits wheeled about the Buachille. It was strange to see so many friends from this unusual angle, to the right Ben Alder bulked massively. Mc Cook's cottage was just visible by Loch Ericht and the rim of the world was marked by the snowy crest of the Cairngorms. Life was good and it was pleasant indeed to be able to lie here absorbing the peace beauty and tranquility of the hills as the scales fell from my brutalised and care worn soul.

"Number eighty" announced the arrival to the recumbent and disinterested audience of one. It seemed churlish to point out that I had visited over 200 different Munro summits in superb conditions so I nearly mumbled a few suitable words of congratulations. It transpired that he had only started collecting Munro's last July and as it virtually hadn't stopped raining since we left Scotland last year in mid June after Clunie, it meant that the previous 79 had been done in conditions that had ranged from bad to appalling. Not for him the joys, pleasures and the quite contemplation of mountaineering. "yes" he said, "at times it's been tough". A primevil struggle against the elements with little reward at the end of the day except another summit ticked off. But what an achievement!! and against all odds, he glanced around somewhat incomprehensively at the view, and marched off towards No.81. Achievement: All day, every day I'm having achievement rammed down my throat at work.

I returned to the quiet contemplation of the general scene and focused my attention on the Ben. The memories came flooding back. Bendy booting up the magnificent rock climb Centurian with Dave Archer and Mich Tully willing me to fall off all the way up, whilst Cherry took tea at the C.I.C hut.

Striding along the Carn Mor Dearg Arete with P.R.H. the mist gradually lifting all around us, revealing first one part of the icy buttresses, then another, until the whole of the North face was revealed to us in its winter glory. Dancing along the Mamore Ridges in the February sunshine. These are the sort of things that make up the joys of mountaineering, you can keep your Meall Buidhe's and your Mullach Ghorms.

As the sun's rays took effect the Ben faded and I found myself up before the Beak in the guise of Falconcrest, my most hated and despised H.E.D. "David" he said, "the computer printout shows only achieved 4.2 Munros this weekend, compared to 5.7 Munros the weekend before last". I was on the carpet and I had to think fast, "I was ill sir I had a bad

attack of the flu and I have been depressed". "Pickup had double pneumonia and his leg fell off and he still managed 7.4 munros" barked the reply. "If you dont improve your achievement standards you will find yourself sacked from the Ministry of Munro Bagging and down at Queen St looking for another job". I looked at him gloomily and thought of the times spent watching the wagtails down by the river and observing the Dipper feeding her young. The loch had been burnished gold and the cloud shadows drifting silently across the hills, had captivated the heart. I decided he wouldn't understand and he had no computer box on his achievement print out for such affairs. He wasn't a bad old stick really. No doubt the Permanent Secretary would soon be down on him like a ton of bricks if things didn't improve, I was dismissed.

I awoke to find the evening shadows coming up to meet my, I hurried down to the loch hoping to spend an hour or so looking at the red throated divers that nested on one of the Islands. Stuchd An Lochain hadn't been such a bad munro after all.

P.S. I've only got 40 to do, If I go away every weekend from now to Christmas I could get them cracked. If anyone fancies a boring weekend by the A9 give me a ring.

Dave Earle.