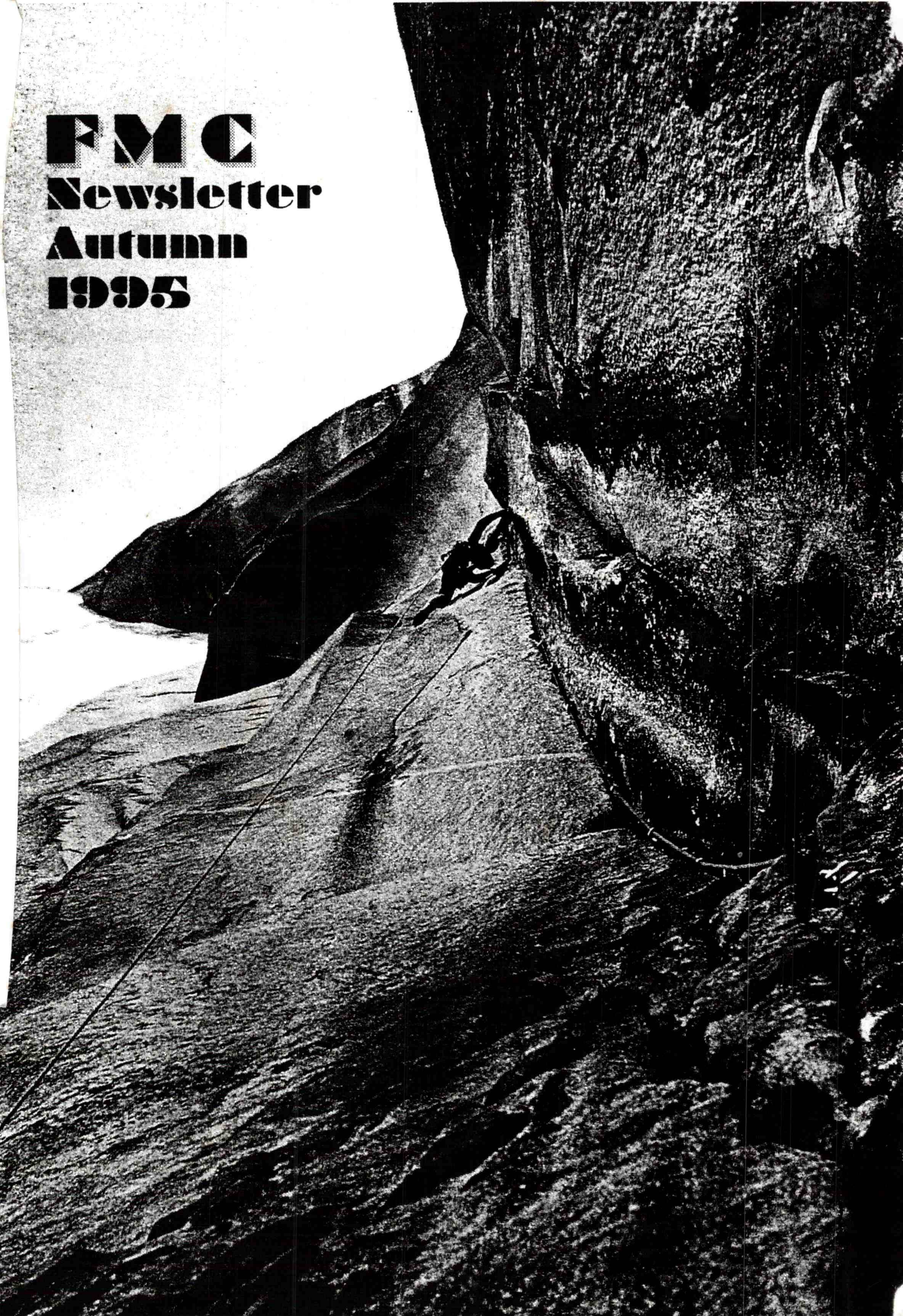


FMC
Newsletter
Autumn
1995



Intro.....

'Newsletter Delay as Editor's Word Processor Melts in Extreme Heat' OK, that seems about right. Who wanted to spend their summer reading anyway?

So autumn is here with the dreaded winter to come - apart from the white fluffy stuff that is. The editor's post bag, recently filled with a flurry of late articles, reveals an active year for some. Nobs who stayed at home had flag-cracking, tarmac-melting summer, with shorts and shades compulsory. Even Andy Dunhill got a suntan.

News.....

The summer got underway with the forging of way gnarly Yosemite dudes, Fenna, Wrigley and Evans. Their four day bash up the monstrous nasal cavities of El Cap will be an inspiration to many and a warning to some. Simon reports that the nobs were kept in a regular motion during the 3000 foot ascent by traditional methods. The boys report on this total olfactory experience in the articles section.

Marathons seem to be popular this summer with Stu Gascoigne casually dropping in to Stair on an impromptu attempt on the three peaks. Having done the Ben and cycled down to the Lakes you might have thought a rest was in order; but no, off goes our man up Scafell and on his bike to Wales the following day. I hope he succeeded but in any event what I'd like to know is: does this guy rust in the rain?

Perseverance of a different sort led Martin and Glenn to seek out and eventually tame a new route in south west Scotland. This was a return trip

for the nobs and as you will gather from Martin's article, the effort was certainly worth while. Back on the Lakeland fells, nobby has been in action again on Neckband Crag establishing a new route which he has called, rather appropriately, 'Stubble'.

Elsewhere there has been plenty of activity in the Lakes on introductory meets, on Lundy and in Wales where the Nobs managed to twice get a dowsing during the driest spell for years. This proved particularly interesting for one introductory member who did his first abseil off the Cromlech in torrential rain!

Generally people have been behaving themselves leaving the editor with few epics to report. This is good news to all but Mr. Dale who is desperately seeking to pass on the Mug of the Year. He has asked me to publish his plea for a super-grass to come forward and divulge all.

November marks the start of the caving / mountain biking / drinking season and hopefully this will provoke some articles for the winter newsletter. Many thanks to the people who contributed to this newsletter, especially those who gave me word processed disks or typed up pieces.

Unfortunately I have to report that we have not dissuaded John Tatts from moving to Hong Kong. Hopefully this will be a temporary stay.

On a brighter note it's good to see Gary Standige in action again. Also I can report that the baby boom has spread Down Under. Congratulations go to Sean and Jane Smith who now have a baby girl 'Annabel'.

Dave Wood **Newsletter Editor**

(Cover: High up on the Nose Route El Cap)

Update.....

Committee Business

Committee business has been steady since the last newsletter with items about access and insurance which will be of interest. A dispute regarding tidying of the CIC hut was resolved by Les Ward who diplomatically informed the custodian that the FMC were not responsible for the mess which was left following a winter letting. Les did well to head off a potential and unjustifiable banning for the Club.

Changes of Address

Frank Lord now at 11 Hindle St, Stacksteads, Bacup. OL13 8LL

Paul Taylor now at 8 Bilsdale Way, Baildon, Shipley, W.Yorks BD17 5DG (01274 588919)

Tony and Wendy Welsh now at 2 Heaton Grange, Longtail Hill, (opp Hawkhead Ferry Rd) Bowness, LA23 9BT (01539 47021). Old friends are very welcome to drop in.

New Routes

**** Stubble E3 6a 35 metres**

Neck Band Crag. Great Langdale

"Climbs the thin crack between Close Shave and Efrafa. Start below Efrafa's corner and move left to below the crack and the first useful protection. Climb the crack, passing a bulge and a bilberry bush and continue with increasing difficulty up the crack until it runs out. Continue up a shallow groove until it is possible to step left into the top of Close Shave's mossy flakes. Finish as for Close Shave up the thin crack and arete to the top

Martin Dale, -Joanne Nelson held the ropes. 5.8.95"

Winter Socials / Hut Availability

Winter Social Syllabus

(all at River Wyre 8.30pm except Wall Meets)

Oct 18 (Wed) Blackburn YMCA Wall
Nov 1 (Wed) Print / Slide Competition *
Nov 15 (Wed) Cliffs Barn Wall
Dec 6 (Wed) Landscapes / Yosemite
Audio Visual Alan Atkinson
Dec 20 (Wed) Preston Wall

Hut Availability

Stair:- Oct 21-22, Nov 4-5, Nov 11-12
Nov 18-19, Dec 2-3, Dec 9-10
Jan 13-14, Jan 27-28, Feb 24-25
Mar 9-10, Mar 23-24

Langdale Oct 28-29, Nov 11-12, Nov 25-26
Dec 16-17, Jan 6-7, Jan 20-21
Feb 3-4, Feb 17-18, Mar 16-17
Both Huts Christmas / New Year

(Meets Underlined Book with Meet Leader)

L. ✂✂cut out and stick into syllabus card✂✂.

Syllabus Errors

Our Chairman's telephone number is 01253 347597. Somehow Martin's number got transposed for Steve's on the meet's card.

March 2-3 meet is at Caseg Fraith and not Blaen-y-Nant. (Should Mug go to proof reader ?)

Winter Meets

20/21 Jan Scottish Meet at Cormorant Cottage, Balachulish, contact Andy Dunhill.

3/4 Feb Scottish Meet at Canmore, Dell Rd. Nevi Bridge. Contact Glenn Brookes.

Hut Bookings

In school holidays or when Mike Tolley is not available, members are asked to book huts through the social secretary

*Print and Slide Competition Rules

- You can enter either or both
- For each section submit up to 3 slides - (scenery, action, humour)
- Prints must not be from slides
- Must be taken since last comp (Dec 94)
- Submit to M. Dale by Wed 25.10.95

Insurance

Les Ward has informed me of alternative packages (to the BMC) for climbing / winter sports. These include Snowcard and West Mercia. Prices depend on requirements.

Access

The Ben- discussions continue re golf club parking.

Bird Bans - BMC working to notify climbers as soon as restrictions lift.

The Lakes- discussions continue re traffic .Watch this space!

Pembroke (Saddle Head)- barbed wire to be removed thank god.

Upper Pen Trwyn - no climbing bank hols -also summer restrictions.

Stanage - increase in car break ins.

Rivelin - use main path and avoid parking on A57

Twistelton- follow well graded farm track from farm (parking £1 !!!).

Staden Quarry - permission must be sought from Cowdale Hall.

High Tor - descend via terrace. No abseil from big tree over Darius.

Hawswick Crag -Access problems.

The Gower - avoid North Hill Tor - farmer on rampage with shotgun.

For Sale

For Sale: A 50m x 9mm Beal furry pink thing. (You may have seen it in Scotland in winter) Could be used for towing cars, burning, S&M

No use at all for any conceivable climbing situation. Apply : The Way Gnarly Realtor (International), (Fenna) Hale, Cheshire.

For Sale A pair of supertape Etriers - barely used by owner - and has little expectation of needing them again. Apply : Alan Peel, Sheffield

For Sale Rachaille RE3 Ski Boots Grey Size 8. Dramatic reduction to £9.99. Also a pair of Trazeta plastic double boots-Vibram Sole. Size 8.

£10 Contact Glenn Brookes (work 01772 751234)

For Sale: Karrimor Condor 70L - New, unused £130 - Dave Wood

Caving Accommodation

The Ingleton Cafe is displaying an advert for accommodation, half a mile from the Marton Arms at 'Westview', Thorton in Lonsdale (015242 41624) for £8 per night with possible group reductions.

Members Address Update

In next newsletter. Please inform F.Towne or J. Wiseman of changes of address or telephone numbers.

Discounts

Available from 'Needlesports' Keswick on non sale items. Also check with Martin about a outlet in the Warrington area offering discount

The Alopecia League

Tired of Fantasy Football, the National Lottery and scratch cards. Then try the Alopecia League. Just guess the current length of the boy's haircuts and send your entries to the social secretary. The nearest correct guess each month wins either a free Paul Taylor haircut or a free bed and a beer at the next working weekend. Current positions:

Chris Thiss.....	Duraglit (Brass)
Paul Taylor	Short number one?
Martin Dale	Long number one?
Trevor Atkinson	Long number two?
Phil Lee	Short number four?
Steve Wrigley.....	Long number four?

Articles.....

Gary Standige - Climbing on Jelly Babies
Steve Wrigley -Nasally Challenged in USA
Simon Fenna - Hauling Ass up the Nose
Martin Dale - On Crag X and in the Culm
George Parker - In action in the Dolomites
Martin Bennett-His Hollies with the Tolleys
Andy Dunhill - All over the place - as usual

Meets >>>>>

Pembroke- May Bank Holiday

Although later than usual because of wartime commemorations, another good bash was had by all twenty eight. Except for Mike Tolley, Jerry Senior and Dave Earle, all the party were too young to remember VE Day! But that didn't stop us downing the 1945 ale! As usual most folks had a smile on their face by day two, either because of the sunshine or the beer. Most people seemed to get some way down their tick lists even if that meant early starts - and there were a few of those from the Sheffield team.

I'm planning a trip next year since the new guide is out. Thereafter it might be better to go bi-annually, as per Lundy arrangements. This would preserve interest and give opportunities for alternative May Day meets. Let me know what you think.

Dave Wood

Portland- Alternative Spring Bank Meet 95

It should have been north to the mountainous Scottish crags but the weather, yet again, sent us scurrying south to find dry rock. Portland is the latest in the bolted limestone areas and is currently the place to be seen clipping. The area stretches west from Swanage past Lulworth Cove to Portland Island itself and is either at sea level or just above it, so no nasty long walks up into cloud covered mountains. In fact most of the walks are downhill, the longest we did being 20 mins.

Portland itself is practically an island joined to the main Dorset Coast by Chesco beach - a real eye catching shingle bank. Several miles long, it reaches a height of perhaps 300' (100m) and has been extensively quarried for its Portland stone for generations. The main climbing is down the west side of the island, which suits the normal FMC afternoon start, but there is climbing on the east coast (not worth getting out of bed for - see Yorkshire Bouldering Guide). No camp site so we stayed in caravans (address in guide book) and then moved to a camp site on the mainland for the last few days (also in guide book).

The climbing is generally steep with slabs being more or less non-existent. The rock is quite good but there are a few loose areas. The bolts are staples and the odd one has been drilled in too far, so carry a thin crab (ask Andy). Routes are predominantly in the extreme range and you could run out of E1s very quickly. As with most sports climbing you can bag a whole bunch of routes quickly and that is what we set out to do and did. There is a 4 star E1 which climbs up the flowstone, really good; a 3 star VS next to it which says it is the best VS in the south! I hope it isn't and more 3 star routes than you can shake a stick at. The grades I thought were a little on the hard side, but that is just probably me and steep rock. Do go early or late in the year for the good weather. Out of the 24 routes I did, I would strongly recommend these:-

- Pregnant Pause E2 - a brilliant arete.....•Reptile Smile E1 - A 4 star flowstone
- Trad Free World E2 - brilliant wall climbing.....• Walking the King E2 - massively overhanging on good holds until the last move
- Turning to Stone E4 - more flowstone but steeper.

Mike Tolley

Hut to Hut

Nine booked in and stayed at Langdale on Friday. Six walked to Stair on Saturday by way of either Crinkle Craggs, Bowfell and Gable or Gt. Langdale and High Raise.

Stair was almost full, 20 sleeping, biggest percentage of which were climbers.

Sunday, three walked back. weather whilst cool had been satisfactory in view of forecast. Good weekend, more walkers please.

Les Ward

The First FMC Motorcycle Meet

Those of you with bikes who didn't make it - you know who I mean - those with 1200cc bikes from Lytham St. Annes and Blackpool and that married couple in Morecambe. Where were you? You missed a stonking day out. Chris Bell and I drove to Hebden Bridge and met Chris Thiss and his mate Adrian. From there we swept down delightful roads to Glossop, over Snake, Hathersage and down to Matlock Bath. Brilliant. Now Chris Thiss who is a bit of a wimp on the rock, is a total revelation on his bike. He goes like hell and takes really good lines. Impressive.

At Matlock Bath pavilion we parked up and had a coffee sat in gorgeous sunshine watching all the other bikes and bikers. It's better than Devil's Bridge. Lock the bikes and up to the crag Wild Cat. This is not a very popular crag but I don't know why. The rock is good pocketed limestone with routes mainly in the lower ranges to E1 and some of these are absolute classics.

Chris and Chris climbed together so that they could remember each others name while Adrian and I tried a couple of E1s. Chris led a good VS so perhaps he's not such a wimp after all.

At 6.30pm we all wandered back down for another coffee (no beer, no biking...you car drivers are dangerous) and then a drive back passing under High Tor with climbers on 'Debauchery' in the evening sun - it was Martin Bennett and that Big Nose man, Jerry Evans. All in all a really good day. We must do it more often.

Mike Tolley

Working Weekend - Stair 15-16 July

When I arrived at the hut on Friday night I was met by three other people: Dave Wood, Paul Taylor and some parapenteur who had turned up by mistake. Nobody else came on Saturday morning and the parapenteur - despite much persuasion to stay - deserted us. Disappointed but not disheartened we set to work clearing heaps of filth out of the dorms, repairing holes kicked in the ceiling(!), scraping ancient food off the kitchen, etc.

In the afternoon, after dropping off mattress and pillow cases at the launderette, the three of us - way gnarly rock dudes that we are - went shopping for new pillows and curtains (we failed on the curtains).

Eventually the hut custodian managed to persuade the workers to come climbing and we all did Dedication at Lower Falcon.

Reinforcements in the form of Martin Dale and Joanne Nelson arrived on Saturday night and another mega work session was had on Sunday. Again it was hard work but

I eventually managed to persuade people to down tools and head to the crags. Ascents were made of Bleak How Buttress, Brush Off and The Reiver.

A big WELL DONE to those who turned up and did so much work, a big UP YOURS to everybody else - especially to those on holiday at the time.

Phil Lee

Lundy 1995

With the heatwave hanging on in there for another week, this year's meet looked to be a scorcher. A full team sailed out, with a few campers arriving on Tuesday. The island was flooded out with FMC types.

After a superb evening spent in Bideford's one and only beer guide tick, The Joiners Arms, we assembled for the crossing on Bideford quay. The sea was like a mill pond. the sun was already very hot prompting several members to go forth and buy the silliest headgear available. Everything went smoothly until the climb up the hill from the landing bay. In the excessive heat this proved very thirsty work. Luckily the pub was on hand at the top, with some quality ale on tap to quench our thirsts.

After the usual scrabble for beds, food and gear, most folks headed for Landing Craft Bay to do some climbing. I was with my girlfriend, Joanne, who had done quite a few routes before but had not really experienced the full sea cliff trip. She was a bit apprehensive about going down that first abseil. Thankfully it was one of Lundy's easier ones. A warm up on Formula One was called for, I thought. Warm, Yes! Absolutely bloody boiling was the reality. Too hot to climb! Joanne was more concerned about getting my nuts out. Unfortunately she had to leave a couple and got a bit tired trying to get them out. Not a good start! Everyone else arrived back at the Quarters in time for a tea of bangers, beans and mash, courtesy of Martin Bennett. The island was short of water and also beer, it seemed, so the Spitfire in the Marisco had to be enjoyed while it lasted.

Sunday dawned hot and sunny, surprise! We headed for the Devil's Slide to hopefully get off on a better foot than yesterday. By now everyone was well ensconced working their way through their respective lists. As the week progressed it was that hot that most people were out early in the morning then returning at noon for a siesta and going out again later for the evening session.

The campers arrived on Tuesday and raced headfirst into the proceedings. The weather stayed fine until Thursday afternoon, when at around lunchtime rain struck and remained on and off for the rest of the day. Friday was very bright and then fortunately by Saturday the sea had calmed down for the return to the mainland. A brilliant week was had by all. The food was excellent throughout for both carnivores and veggies. The beer lasted until Tuesday when it was replaced by passable slop. Joanne befriended almost every kind of animal on the island, except the stinking mountain goats. The Sukifish amazed us all again. Everyone did their own best routes and to list them here would be boring. Many people also reached climbing milestones with a couple of nobs and nobesses leading their first E1s. A number of us stayed down in Devon for another week but that's Another Story. All in all a wonderful trip was had by all. See you in 1997. Book early!!

Martin Dale.

Climbing as Metaphor - (the indiscriminate use of jelly babies in modern free rock climbing)

"I will pick you up at nine o'clock!"

"Nine O'clock !!!" I said in a mild panic, "where's nine o'clock - I've never been there. Is it anywhere near ten o'clock?"

"Yes, it's just next door"

"That sounds more familiar - I think I have been *there* but I vaguely remember sleeping through it."

"Ten o'clock it is then!"

I quietly smiled to myself knowing that ten o'clock was very close to opening time and I definitely knew where that was!

It was Parker on the telephone arranging to pick me up to go climbing. Parker, for those of you who don't know, is Lady Penelope's chauffeur of Thunderbird's fame. He has been given the day off. Lady Penelope was taking Mr. Woodentop and Spotty Dog to visit her two nephews, Bill and Ben. They were all worried about Weed who had been given a severe dose of paraquat and was very unwell. Her misfortune was our gain. Thus demonstrating once again that all things are connected and circular.

Parker rarely discussed his employer, partly out of loyalty, but mainly because he knew I constantly fantasised about her body. I would imagine myself lying next to that ash white tan and getting hopelessly tangled up in all those strings - heaven; and what a car!

The climbing plan was to straighten out the big Japanese route on Lindale Slabs, a huge expanse of rock rising to fifteen metres which dominates the village where I live. But first, a little expedition shopping. It was off to see Doris. She ran the local village shop and had kindly put aside for us, an economy packet of jelly babies with extra black ones for expedition use. Then on to the chemist for a large roll of blue sky, a packet of assorted showers and a starter box of comfortable bivouacs. These were the warmest available without a prescription - non addictive - and made by Mothercare from an original idea of the Pampas Nappy Company. The only detectable side effect being that of chronic flatulence - but this was said by many to be an advantage in certain circumstances. With Doris' last words of support ringing in our ears, 'What is madness but the nobility of the soul at odds with surrounding circumstances,' we set off.

The crag looked awesome - the whole thing seemed to rear up at about thirty degrees and absolutely dripping in sunshine. Huge buttresses soared like Gothic columns, fan-vaulting a tinsel sky - a huge blue dome out glittering the

stars. It was our cathedral. I touched the first few holds of the route and felt an electric thrill that immediately reminded me of the touch of God to Adam on Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. It was the touch of life itself. It represented eight long years of absence.

Parker quietly settled down at the foot of the crag and rather smugly took out of his sac his brand new purple and yellow Everest plastic climbing mug and proceeded to pour himself a drink. He had purchased it in the new craft centre at the foot of Khumbu ice-fall. I had to confess it looked very smart! When not being used as a mug it folded down into a knife, fork and spoon set which could be worn on the wrist as a watch or travelling lavatory brush, with cleverly concealed cuppa-soups in the handle. Impressive by any standards. It came with its own matching lanyard but I didn't know what that was, nor did Parker. Somewhat demoralised, I leaned back against my sac and contented myself with my non digital, slightly chipped Ming Porcelain translucent beaker, and quietly mused on whether climbing increasingly represented a metaphor for the Human Condition and the continuing importance of wilderness in feeding the human spirit.

Suddenly the air became foul with the full language of Parker clearly in some distress. He was attempting to uncoil my climbing rope. I couldn't understand the problem - it was only coiled eight years ago! However, he did manage to give a practical and somewhat elegant proof of the Chaos Theory and its principle of the underlying predictability of all things. Apparently this included my climbing rope.

At last we were all set to go. With a final check on all out gear, it was back down to the car. We had made a very successful start and pushed the route far enough for one day. Without saying a word we turned, faced the crag with arms outstretched and fists clenched in defiant gesture, and screamed at full voice at the sky ... "Eat your heart out Martin Dale.... WE'RE BACK!!"

Gary Standige.

PS. Many thanks to all those members of the FMC who helped and supported me through the worst years of my illness.- Gary

My Nasal Passage

Music, it's amazing how we tend to associate a time, a place, an action with a certain song or in this case an album.

Cruising around the "Valley" in our air conditioned Pontiac, two Way Gnarly dudes listening to a tape of Portishead's DUMMY album. Peering up out of the sun roof at the vertical granite walls with their omnipresent waterfalls spewing forth, cascading down to earth.

Oops! sorry about that lapse into Dave Earlists, back to some gritty down to earth prose. Gerry refused to let me drive the hire car as we approached "THE VALLEY" insisting that it would be impossible for me to concentrate on driving whilst peering out of the window, drooling at the granite walls. He was right I was like a child at christmas; amazed, excited, wanting to touch those wonderful rock faces. It was just like the first time I saw AN ALPINE MOUNTAIN driving into Chamonix nearly fourteen years ago, Orgasmic Excitement!

Walking into Camp 4 we were greeted by a loud Whoop as Simon and Gill welcomed us to a cold and damp Yosemite and the third wettest spring on record. Tales were swapped, draught Boddies drunk and the Yuppies R.V. checked out. The snow level was at 6000ft, Toulome meadows was closed and Glacier Point was under 20ft of snow. But Hell the FMC had arrived, there was no snow on El Cap and we were ready to "Kick Ass".

Training climbs came and went as did the rain storms. The shiny Glacier Point Apron was ascended via The Crack Marginal at 5.9 which ended up as a sprint to the belay as the clouds rolled in. Serenety Crack 5.10d and the continuation Sons of Yesterday 5.10a gave eight pitches of superb, painful crack climbing.

Up on the Higher Cathedral the twelve pitch North Buttress at 5.9 gave a good day out for Gerry and myself, as did the excellent Central Pillar of Frenzy another Valley 5.9 classic.

Anyway enough of this cragging, we were there to climb "The Nose". Gerry our mentor on all things aid climbing had Simon and myself suspended from trees practising our "Juggling", visiting small crags to get to grips with this aid stuff and of course DUCT Taping everything in sight.

Initially Simon and myself were sceptical about Gerry's DUCT tape fetish. However come the end of the trip we were both totally converted and we will now enthusiastically expose our DUCT taped hardware to anyone showing interest.

It has to be stated at this point that Gill was only allowing Simon onto "The Nose" because of the hoped for restraining influence of the club chairman. However the international property dealer Evans turned out to be the restraining member of the team! Twice Gerry persuaded Simon and myself that the time was not right for a full blown attempt on the rote and we delayed our start accordingly.

On our first attempt we got as far as the road beneath El Cap, all packed up and ready to go. Gerry however was still suffering from a bad chest and the

attempt was called off. On our second try we got a little further, one pitch up! However masses of other teams, an overcast sky and a few words from Mr. Sensible Evans saw us abseiling back down to the valley.

Third time lucky and we were off! No one else at the start and a blue sky. The first four pitches are some of the most technical, rated A2, especially when your grappling with all that aiding off Friends stuff and learning how to haul a sack containing 15 gallons of water, 3 sleeping bags, stove, food and spare clothes.

We got to Sickle Ledge in good time, secured our haul bag then began the four abseils back to the valley for our last night of creature comforts (for Simon that is , Gerry and myself had to make do with a beer and a chapter of our books!)

We started jugging back to Sickle Ledge at some crazy time the next morning reaching our haul sack as the sun began to rise. Pulling onto Sickle we found a couple of Yanks rapidly sorting out their gear. Having spent the night up there we thought that they would at least be a couple of pitches in front of us.

They soon got their act together and moved up out of our way. A couple of pitches later I found myself dangling from the end of the rope and running wildly across the wall trying to slot my hand into the Stoveleg Crack. So this was penduluming Great! Having slotted in the required hand jam it was then just a matter of moving up to the belay, aiding off my two number two Camalots, the only bits of kit that would fit the parallel sided crack.

About this time I became aware of what initially proved to be a nuisance but latter provided us with a great amount of entertainment.

"HAUL ASS TONY"

Looking down I saw a team rapidly moving up the wall. The leader was a cool looking dude, long flowing locks, leopard skin day sack and obligatory Oakley shades. It turned out to be a Yosemite Guide and his client "TONY" from "INGERLAND". Tony was paying \$2000 for the privilege of jugging up "THE NOSE" spending his days being verbally harassed by his guide.

"Don't think about anything else just Haul Ass"

"If you don't hurry up"

" you'll be spending all night hanging from your jugs"

"So Haul Ass!"

Well you get the picture. Somehow the guide managed an overtaking manoeuvre in the Stovelegs that would have done Damon Hill proud. They held us up for an hour then disappeared upwards accompanied by the now comic words of "HAUL ASS, don't think about anything else but Hauling Ass."

This little escapade had put paid to our plans of reaching the EL Cap Tower bivi site that day and we stopped at the slightly more cramped Dolt Tower bivi. With just about enough room for three we settled down for the night

hoping that the extremely loose boulders we were sleeping amongst didn't choose that night to visit the valley floor, taking us with them.

Our first dawn on the wall was a pleasure to witness, however we were soon brought back to reality when someone mentioned bodily functions. A new law had just been passed in the Valley making it a Federal Offence to throw Number Two's off the wall, a pastime enjoyed by our big wall predecessors! I was first on the starting blocks to try out our cunning plan.

1. Larks foot a sling around waist, clip into belay.
2. Harness off and drop trollies (arse away from rest of team.)
3. Crap into paper bag (half torn open to ease access)
4. Pass paper bag to Nightsoilman.
5. Nightsoilman places paper bag in plastic zip-lock bag.
6. Encased "Jobbie" now placed in a used water bottle cut in half.
7. Top of said water container reconnected with lower half.
8. Whole assembly firmly DUCT taped up
9. Repeat 1-8 for other two team members.

It has to be pointed out that with absolutely no prompting whatsoever Mr. Fenna volunteered to be our team nightsoilman, a job he did with much enthusiasm. I'm sure he's got a very bright future in the world of waste disposal on his return to the U.K.

Our third day of climbing saw us ticking off some of the major features of the wall. The Texas Flake, Boot Flake, King Swings, they were all brilliant and the other two teams were by now well ahead. As we were aiding every pitch our progress seemed slow, we now had about twenty pitches behind us only another fourteen to go!

Our third night saw us climbing well after the sun had set. Every evening we had a stop at 9pm for Simon to signal all OK to Gill down on the meadow below. That night we duly signalled then carried on climbing for another three hours trying to reach camp 4. We eventually made it, but not without incident and Simon did a sterling job aiding up tottering heaps of loose rock nearly taking Gerry out at one point when part of the cliff decided to detach itself.

Camp 4 was wonderful, just enough room for one or two the guide says, and it's right! After strapping ourselves to the belay we settled down to an uncomfortable night, legs dangling over a 2000ft drop, trying to stop ourselves sliding off the sloping ledge.

Day four arrived and our now well polished routine saw us back on the rock by 7 am. Above loomed the Great Roof. Boy was it Great. The rock above now took on a totally different look to the broken disjointed wall below us. We all stared in awe at huge blank sheets of rock and curving dihedrals.

The Great Roof was Gerry's big lead, he'd been as far as the King Swings on a previously aborted attempt and was looking forward to this one. We were all totally gobsmacked it's where the route seems to get serious. Gerry made short work of the thin aiding under the roof using thin TCU placements and rotting fixed gear. I followed cleaning the pitch working my way out horizontally right, under the roof, to the small stance up to which Simon was juggling his way on a free hanging fixed line. We all stood or was it hung? from the

cramped stance all lost for words, freaked by the exposure. Somehow the cliff had just disappeared below us as we'd traversed and we were now looking straight down about 2500ft to the valley floor GULP!

Above lay the Pancake Flake another A2 pitch which Simon cruised. Up we moved on past Camp 5 trying to reach Camp 6. Again we ran out of light as I started up the last pitch that led to Camp 6. A short traverse right over a black chasm did not get me in the right frame of mind. Then up a thin crack where unbelievably I had to resort to aiding off a Number 2 RP! It moved. I got scared. But eventually pulled onto a ledge about twenty feet short of where I thought Camp 6 was. The ledge was festooned with pegs and had obviously been used as a bivi site. To me it was Nirvana. Only 20 ft long and 2ft wide at its widest it was as far as I was going that night!

The others soon joined me and immediately I could tell they were mightily disappointed. "Why hadn't the soft bugger carried on up to the proper bivi site?" I could sense their disappointment. I pointed up at the horrible offwidth that lay between us and the proper Camp 6 and said "I'm not going any further!

It took a lot of organising, but we eventually got sorted, had a brew, something to eat and turned in. Simon's rope cocoon that attached him to the belay impressed Gerry and myself so much that we tried to uprate ours, but we never quite seemed to achieve the impressive rope coverage of Simons attachment method.

That night our third on the wall was a long one. Sat bolt upright legs dangling over the edge we all drifted in and out of sleep waiting for the sun to rise so that we could make our bid for the horizontal world of the top.

Our last day, only six more pitches to do. The true Camp 6 turned out to be more roomy, however it sloped badly and was quite damp. The rock architecture was amazing, granite walls shooting up, only one way to go, a system of dihedrals and cracks wending their way up to the Harding Roof.

It was late in the day as Simon aided up the Harding bolt ladder over the last roof. The belay was right on the lip, a final gesture, allowing you one last chance to taste the 3200ft of exposure. The sun had sunk below the horizon as we padded up the final slabs to the bivi sites on FLAT ground. It was three extremely happy chappies that crawled into their sacks that night.

A partnership that had first seen the conquest of Orion Face eighteen months earlier had now topped out on "The Nose". Just as on the Ben we'd gelled as a team each taking an equal share of the leading and trusting implicitly in each others abilities.

It was a total mind and body experience. All three of us spent the next few nights dreaming of "slipping off ledges", "juggling up ropes", then waking up with a start from our fitful sleep.

There are still, as write this, vivid memories of those 5 days; elation, fear, exposure, granite walls, trashed hands, tiny bivi ledges, juggling, thirst, mackerel in mustard sauce, the haul sack, ancient bolt belays, brown paper bags, The Nightsoilman and of course TONY.....

Steve Wrigley

HAUL ASS!

Forging of Way Gnarly Big Wall Valley Climber Dudes

I suppose that the other dudes have written volumes about The Nose, so I'll not repeat the whole story. Here's a few moments from my memory of a really big event for me - I've never done anything like it.

A low point : stuffed onto an awkward belay on The Stovelegs in a queue on the first day on the wall. I'm not enjoying the climbing at all, I'm feeling exposure and we're only 900 feet up. Will we make the first bivvy at Dolt ? Spots of rain..... Should we bug out ? At the time I really wanted to, but correctly we kept going and made Dolt Tower.

A low but good time : it's pitch dark on pitch 21- the end (nearly) of day two. (9.30pm 'ish). The pitch is 5.9 loose on the topo, meaning A1 aiding. So, surprisingly I'm standing on a poor RP2 and the next piece slips as I test it. But Cooool, the lamp beam picks out a great runner just on the left. Rock 4, clip in the et', ease my weight onto it BANG ! A block 10 foot by 5 foot blows out - glancing off my face.

Gallons of adrenaline. Move down. I'm OK. I shout down to the Boys somewhere below. Headlamp beam picks out the ropes - they're uncut (unlike my lip). I spot a bolt head. Wire over it, clip and get stood on it - all in super quick time. I love my fifi hook, it was money well spent. I spot a new line off left and a loose flake and flared Friend above it. From the top step I just push 3 cams of the unit in - which then moves lots as I load it - but then I'm above it and zoom up 20 ft to (Jerry tells me afterwards) 5 totally bomber pieces in one spot. 15 ft. to the bivvy.

Nice A1 dude !

It was another 1½ hours of adventure to haul the Pig and get Steve up - but that's another story - after which our hands were so wrecked that we couldn't even clip crabs. Sleep 1.00 am.

After this there was no way I was chickening out on the rest of the route.

A high point : Jerry led The Great Roof - doing an awesome job. I 3rd it (ie. clean free jugging). Here at c.2,000 ft The Nose gets properly steep. I lower out waaaay right and the exposure smacks into my guts. The steep jugging is awful with the big wall rig - can I ever make it up this pitch ?

Eventually I reach the Belay on the Edge of the World - eyes wild. I clip in and carefully put on rock boots. My mind is starting to feel seriously blown (a cliché, but it well describes the feeling) - so I stuff my head into the belay to wedge it, closing my eyes for a while so I can conceive of leading the A2 Pancake Flake (Pitch 24).

It's a 150 ft vertical flake crack starting at 1½ going down to RPs at the top. I make steady progress, keeping calm. Ration the gear. Put in a piece, clip it, test it, get on it, fifi hook - rest. Strip out the last piece, then untangle the daisies and ets. Get the next piece.

The dudes below call up encouragement now and again as I asked - it makes me feel less isolated - (Thanks Boys !) and, with a couple of easy free moves to avoid poxy RP1 placements, I reach the belay.

Of the 11 pitches that I led this was the best of only 4 that I enjoyed.

Two Fun Bits :

1. Being Mr Night soil Man - look out for the photos for proof of the depths that it is possible for a human to sink to using only brown paper bags, zip bags, Coke bottles, duck tape and lots of warm shit.

2. The guide, Paul, is above us, and he's one pitch short of El Cap Towers. There is only 10 minutes of twilight left. The client, Tony, is starting to jug and clean : he only learned to jug at 7.00am this morning - 12 pitches ago. He's shafted - big time.

We are sat on Dolt Tower wishing the worst on the bastards above who stuffed our schedule.

Tony's two way radio comes alive from the meadow below and he starts to fiddle with it. Paul hollers down (in a very Yank accent) "Are you juggling Tony?"

Feeble reply.

Paul again - in a more 'urgent' tone - " Hey Tony ! Don't play with the f***ing radio now - just concentrate on the juggling "

Pause, then very urgently

"Don't do anything except f***ing jug ! HAUL ASS TONY !!!!"

3 Nobs on Dolt Tower wet themselves as this now immortal phrase is introduced to the English language.

That's nearly it. I spent the lower 40% of the route wanting to go down, and the upper 40% wanting to be on top. It's BIG, scary, tense, exhausting and most of the route seemed to be unpleasant (offwidth) climbing. Afterwards we were utterly done for : we had nightmares and dreams for several days - Gill says that one night we were all shouting, writhing about or even juggling in our sleep.

However, at the top of El Cap at dusk after 4 days I wouldn't have missed being there with Jerry and Steve for the world.

Also, for those who would think of trying this epic, it is vital to have the music from Portishead's ' Dummy ' album on the brain at all times.

Finally, I may have found it tough, (but if the photo can be reproduced) it seems to have forced Steve and Jerry to look to each other for solace and comfort in a San Francisco motel.

Simon Fenna

Crag X Revisited

The phone rang, someone lucky enough to catch me in! It was Glenn. Crag X this weekend!!

The thought of a return trip galvanised me into action. Stakes were needed and I remembered some rusty angle iron lying in my dad's backyard - leftover from building the garage. After commandeering a hacksaw from Steve Wrigley, I set to work. Two sweaty hours later I'd produced 3 stakes.

With stakes, brushes etc. me and Joanne set off on Friday afternoon, destination Port Patrick. We arrived with time for a few beers in a power cut. Glenn had recruited Andy Dunhill and Christine and gnarly rock dude valley climber Jerry Evans. Lou, of course was also there.

We decided to go straight down to Cranberry Point on Saturday while the going was good, have a day somewhere else on Sunday and then clean up at Cranberry on the Monday. Andy, Christine and Jerry decided to visit Portobello and then maybe pop along later to crag X. This time the tide was out far enough to allow us access along the beach so no heroics were necessary with the sledge hammer and our very heavy sacks. The girls accompanied us and when we got there sorted themselves out a nice spot to view the proceedings.

I first decided to re-clean my project while Glenn cleaned the thin finger crack near the arete to the left. This posed a problem in that as fast as I cleaned, debris from Glenn's route landed. I gave it up as a bad job and waited for Glenn to finish. He soon did and was ready for an ascent. A little diagonal break slanting up from right to left under an overlap gave access to the crack. This was well protected but reasonably tricky. The left arete was also used a couple of times. Glenn was up and 'Dick Turtle Space Pirate' was born. We all followed so as to get our names on the score sheet and check the grade which we thought would be HVS. The name came from a lucky bag!

After a break, we put a stake in on top of the middle slab and resumed work on my project while Glenn started to clean the right hand line of three on the middle slab. I was getting nowhere with my shunt, so as Joanne was falling asleep in the sun I decide to employ her to hold a top rope. At first this too proved fruitless, with the crux still holding out. I was getting frustrated !!

I took a break to have a look how Glenn was doing. He was getting bored! I took up the rope again and after several more abortive attempts I was going to give up when I tried a new smear. My feet stuck, I crossed through with my right foot, rocked up with my left and snatched the reasonable hold. The crux was cracked but only on a top rope! I tried it three more times to embed it in my memory . Three more success so it was leading time. The climbing was so difficult that it would be virtually impossible to place on the lead. I could not find peg placements so pre-placed wires was the only option apart from soloing it. That was definitely not an option with the crux 50 feet up! Glenn and Lou got ready with the camera, Joanne held the ropes and I set off. The first thin crack went OK, a bit shaky moving up to the traverse left. Move left, rest then launch up the next section of poor finger pockets, very thin edges and smears to the next step left and the crux.

All was going OK until I messed up a clip just before the crux sequence and although I nearly got it, it was never to be. A further five attempts ended when the crux nut, a zero RP, sheared from repeated falls. Amazingly the RP1 and RP2 below held and I lowered off. Fortunately we had 2 zero RPs, so I abbed down and replaced the broken one. A short rest and off again, my finger ends now getting a bit shredded. So close this time, but not quite! I started to get a bit negative but shouts from below spurred me on. The next go was the one! I was actually amazed to be there eyeballing the reasonable hold. I snatched it and cruised to the top. It was in the Bag! Glenn followed it really well but only with instructions. He too could not remove the wires as he climbed. The verdict very hard, certainly 6b, certainly E5, maybe harder? We stuck the other stake in while we were there then retreated back to Port Patrick for a barbecue in the back yard.

Sunday dawned bright so eventually we all headed off to Llagantuiloch. Deserted cliffs greeted us, seals bathed in the sea below, dark clouds loomed overhead. Andy lead 'Freewheelin' a brilliant slab pitch but by the time Christine and I had seconded the pitch it was spotting with rain. Glenn and Jerry bagged a couple of routes also before a retreat to the brew shop was called for as the rain persisted. And what a lovely brew it was coupled with some scrummy cakes. Joanne and I then went for a walk around the Mull of Galloway (more potential here for new routes?) whilst the others returned to Port Patrick. For Andy, Christine and Jerry, it was home for work the next day. For the rest of us, it was work of another kind. The girls decide to potter around the port, so me and Glenn went back to Cranberry Point to plunder more new lines.

Again the sea was kind to us. I prospected the slab on the far right while Glenn contemplated cleaning his route on the right side of the middle slab. The right hand slab proved to be very blank, almost unclimbable, but maybe on the right hand side it could be just possible but very bold! Not for today. Glenn finished his route and prepared to lead it. Good thin climbing up a crack, well protected E1 5b was the consensus. Another reason to visit this maturing crag. Next off for me was cleaning the left hand line of the middle slab whilst Glenn had his eye on a line between my project and his previous route, 'Ace is Low' on the seaward side. This looked like a potential classic.

After a lot of work cleaning out a pod full of earth my route was ready for a try. A problem start then pleasant climbing led to the crux. Thin well protected moves led to the pod near the left arete. Odd climbing up this and a scary run out up the arete and the slab above and another one was in the bag. E3 5c, we thought. Unfortunately there was not enough time for Glenn to have a go at his route which I have no doubt may well be the best there, probably at E3/4 6a.

The weather for the drive home was marvellous and wonderful views of the lakes were had. All that remains is to name the routes. Any ideas ?

Martin Dale

Another Story

Following Lundy, a number of us stayed down in north Devon for the week.

Off the boat at Bideford, we were greeted with a note from Mike and Anna Sissons: "See you at Hartland".

With a bank holiday tagged on to the weekend, almost the whole Lundy meet ended up in the Anchor at Hartland on Saturday night to sample / drink dry the excellent Mainbrace ale from a local brewery at Bideford.

More sun the day after found us all at Screda Point, Hartland Quay. For some this was the first apprehensive altercation with the culm. Glenn hated it, Joanne loved it. It wasn't everybody's cup of tea, but mostly it was very enjoyable. Simon Fenna and Steve Wrigley both put in good attempts at of Nose Decay, which since losing its peg must be at least E4. Anna got very wet retreating before the advancing tide from the Outer Fins. I also repeated Macho Duck which was also missing its peg runner and now warrants E2, at least. The tide was coming in so we all retreated to the cream-tea shop to get totally stuffed. So stuffed that we could not cope with any more climbing.

Bank holiday Monday was spent away from the madding crowds at 'Gull Rock', Marland. It was hot work boulder hopping round to the headland from Welcome Mouth. Suprisingly on rounding the corner onto the crag a very cold wind whipped up threatening to spoil the proceedings. Luckily on the landward end of the promontory I found a sheltered warm spot between two nice looking routes. Mike Sissons had already lead the classic 'Walking on the Moon', HVS, when Mark and Viv Brought gave up when Mark was nearly blown off by the strong wind. I set about the very attractive 'Haile Sellasie E2 5c', a very thin crack line with superb protection. The top was a little dodgy, typical CULM rubbish, the belays laughable. I could not help notice the widely spaced pegs in the slab to the right. A handy abseil thread was in place holding the rock together more like. However I trusted it, so abbed down to inspect the loose looking top section.

Mean while after Joanne had cruised 'Haile Sellasie' Glenn decided to try to redeem himself with an ascent. A bit of disco leg followed, which is usual for Glenn, before success. Lou followed in a more composed fashion.

Further investigation revealed the pegs to be the line of a recent route called 'Bear Necessities', E5 6b. I could not resist an attempt safe in the knowledge that the top section as relatively solid and straight forward. Several thin moves brought the first peg into reach, More thin climbing to a shallow depression followed and then a scary clip with good deck-out potential if I messed it up. Then followed the crux section up to the third peg. One blind alley later and I was clipping the peg. Wonderful climbing as thin as you can get!. I sat at the top and got ready to belay Mike up it. But no! First Joanne decided she would have a go. And she did! cruising the whole thing without so much as a foot slide!!. Amazing stuff! She was made up and the gauntlet was well and truly laid down for Mike and Glenn who both followed well, but with the odd foot scabble.

The tide had by now cut off our retreat so the only out was up the decaying ridge of shale at the back of the promontory. This proved to be Alpine and I'm sure that the girls really enjoyed it. They were certainly relived to get to the top. We were treated to amazing views of Lundy as we hiked back to the cars and then to the Pub.

The next day was to be a rest day, but first we had to visit Blackchurch. Glenn had an appointment with 'Sacre Couer' E2. It was a bit dull and slightly damp. I was

convinced that it had rained during the night . Glenn and Mike tossed for the lead, Mike won but for some reason passed it over to Glenn. Meanwhile I was preparing to do battle with 'Jamaican Dub' E3 to the right. Glenn did well, having to fight it all the way. I could not believe how sustained my route was and soon found myself also fighting it all the way. The rock felt just slightly greasy which may have been the reason that we were hanging on tighter? We both made the top almost together. Mike seconded stating that he was glad that he had not lead it. Joanne turned in another impressive performance on the end of my rope, but was heard to mutter a couple of expletives along the way. She felt it was harder than the previous days. I agreed. In the present conditions it was worth E4. That was it for the day and a pleasant stroll down Clovelly was followed by beer in Woolfardisworthy. Then a barbecue back at the campsite.

Wednesday saw our numbers dwindle still further as Glenn and Lou headed home. We headed for Bude for a real rest day. Surf shop a go-go. More beer and then a visit to compass point where Mike led the excellent 'Crymptyphon' E1, and I sprinted off for my shortest hair cut yet, a No1!! Outrageous!!

A new campsite with palatial toilets - Not! We visited our local boozier and then retired for the night. Thursday was supposed to be a fullbore day on the crag, however we had to negotiate Bude again as it was pay-day. We eventually managed to get to compass point where Mike took Anna up 'Westerlation', Sev. I did 'Crymptyphon' again and Joanne enjoyed it thoroughly but suffered a knock to her elbow whilst I was lowering her off. It was time for a swim + paddle for the not so brave. Afterwards Mike blagged me into leading Detroit -an E2 which I had done before, but could not remember it. I wished I had ! It was a very scary experience which I will not repeat again. All the gear was shite, the holds felt like they would snap, the leader must not fall! To finish off the day I did 'Caravanserai' HVS, and then dragged the bags out. This was a mistake as loose rock rained down on Joanne and one scored a direct hit. I didn't realise this at the time. Joanne seconded the route Ok and we rushed off to Stratton for wonderful beer and food in the Kings. It was like being in heaven. Really good beer !! Also just the up the road was another pub with equally good ale. Bude Jazz festival was also in full swing and cool Jazz drifted out of a back bar.

Friday was definitely a tourist day. Joanne was nursing her injuries so a nice tour along the Cornish coast from Port Isaac through Tintagel, Boscastle was the order of the day. Mike and Anna went climbing visiting Vicarage Cliff. We all met up at the Kings again for more excellent beer and food. This pub was definitely my pub of the trip and a visit must be made by any visiting party. I HAVE SPOKEN!!!

Saturday was wet so after grabbing one of Auntie Vis Submarine Sandwiches we headed for Baggy Point. It was a bit choppy and the tide wasn't out far enough to wander over to the promontory so me and Joanne went down Longrock Slab and enjoyed the 'Long Rock Eliminate' HVS, in the evening sun. For Joanne it was the perfect end to a great fortnight's climbing. I nipped down again with Mike who had forgotten his rope so I raced up another E2 and was greeted with an amazing sunset over Lundy. This was the perfect end to my two week's holiday. An amazing Skyscape!!

Martin Dale.

Pensioners Outing

On 19th August, Ted, Brian and I left Manchester airport bound for the Dolomites with the intention of walking the 75 mile North south route known as the Alta Via 1 from Villabasca near Brunico to Belluno.

Unable to obtain bed and breakfast in Verona due to the opera season, we decide to take an overnight train north and after changing at Fortezza to a local train followed by a bus journey, we started the walk from Lago Di Braiet about 9.30 am.

We usually walk about 5/6 hours each day starting on subsequent days about 8.00 and this proved to be a good policy as after a bright early start each morning clouds had gathered by midday to give rain in the afternoon. By then, however, we had usually booked into a Refugio to spend the rest of the day in a leisurely fashion.

The route maintained height at above 2000m for the first half of the walk (undulating more later) usually on good tracks although the waymarking was a bit erratic at times. Any doubts we reconciled by reference to a map, guide book and Brian's trusty compass. The terrain was usually stony with some mud after rain and several steep ascents and descents.

The scenery throughout was spectacular as expected, photographs which I have seen rarely do justice to the scale of the Dolomites. We didn't see much in the way of flora and fauna apart from a few chamois and marmots. Flowers were past their best and the absence of prolonged sunshine didn't help. However, the rock scenery was magnificent as we passed the mighty Tofane and Monte Pelmo and the 1200m west face of the Civetta. Later came the soaring rock towers of Torre Venezia and Torre Trieste. The superb early morning views from Rifugios Lagazoui and Tissi were particularly memorable.

The route in common with much of the Dolomites is well supplied with rifugios, many owned by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI), some privately owned. We had no trouble in obtaining accommodation but took the precaution of booking ahead on the first few days when there were plenty of people about. As members of the Austrian Alpine Club (OAV) we obtained discounts at CAI huts and OAV membership also gave us valuable insurance cover in the event of accident, search and rescue and repatriation.

Kompass Carta Turistica 1-50,000 maps (sheets 55,57-77) were adequate for the route. (However, beware contour lines at 100m intervals). The guide book Alta Via by Martin Collins contains a wealth of information although some of it may have been overtaken by events since reprinting in 1990 and we found the timings to be a bit ambitious for our old legs...

The last lap of the route by Forcella Del Marmol on the Schiara Ridge to Refugio 7th Alpine is more committing than what has gone before and regrettably we were not able to complete due to bad weather and lack of time. Night rain at Refugio Pramperet was followed by sleet and snow delaying our start until 12-00 and we decided to descend to Refugio Furio Bainchet after crossing Forcella Sud Del Van De Citta. Dave Archer and Glynis, whom we had met earlier, went up to Marmol to have a look at the Bivi but found the metal descent ropeways iced up and wisely retraced their steps to join us in a glass or two of wine bringing our super holiday to a very pleasant end.

PS

Earlier in the year, whilst on holiday in Mayrhofen, I managed to fulfil a long held wish to traverse the Berliner Hohenweg. This runs roughly east-west at a height of 2200-3000m traversing the heads of the valleys to the south of Mayrhofen and just below the Italian border. It links with the Kasseler Hutte, Greizer Hutte and Berliner Hutte with Furtschaglhaus and Olperer Hutte and I varied the route by then going to the Friesenberg House before descending to Mayrhofen. The scenery throughout is magnificent with good views of the glaciers of the Grosser Loffler and Grosser Moseler in particular and the added bonus of a 3000m peak in the Schonbichlerhorn 3134m. In mid July there is considerable residual snow above 2500m on the Lapenscharte 2701m, the Morchenscharte 2872m and the Schonbichlerscharte 3080m and a ski pole was useful.

This is a superb tour which can be extended at either end if time / inclination permits and which I hope to repeat in the future.

George Parker

Our Hollies with the Tolleys

Shortly after booking our family holiday to the Costa Brava, a thought occurred to me. An idea came into my mind. The possibility of a coincidence. One which would mean packing my climbing gear as well as my cozzie!

A phone call was necessary: "Hello Mike, where did you say you and Jenny were heading for on your bike this summer? - When?" Thus the scene was set and two "better halves" were left wondering about the convenience (for some) of this genuine coincidence.

In fact it took some effort to create the "coincidence" of Mike and I being in the Sierra De Guara at the same time. A glance at the map of Northern Spain showed we'd be on the same latitude but longitudinally speaking, a gap of some 250 miles had to be closed! No problem. The hire of a Seat Marbella and a dawn start saw me Maggie and Laura meet up with Mike and Jenny exactly as and when planned at the Rodellar camp site near the Mascun Gorge.

Mike had been sussing the area and reckoned it wasn't ideal - mainly because all the "French" 6a's we'd spotted in the guide turned out to be British 6a's! And also, as we were planning to climb later at Riglos, maybe some familiarisation with conglomerate was called for. So off we went to a parallel North-South valley, close to Huesca, known as Vadiello. The five of us spent the afternoon exploring and checking out the crags and, to tell the truth in my case becoming quite intimidated by the desolate, isolated nature of the area with its "other world" rock architecture and ominous soaring vultures, not to mention rock which looked like pebbledash!

Next day, we got to grips with the place and began with a two pitch E1 called "Suerte Negra" (does this translate to "Perspiring African Gentleman"?) which proved to be quite amenable once you'd convinced yourself the rock would hang together long enough for you to pass over it. Vadiello has very fine grained conglomerate rock - most moves are on pebbles like those found occasionally protruding from gritstone crags only here they're bigger and there's more pebbles than bed-rock. Its disconcerting to realise that the initially comforting two finger pocket you're clutching once contained a pebble just like the two you're standing on-----!

Our next route was called something unpronounceable and unspellable like "Oxomoxo" (HVS). It was also unremarkable and "unfollowable", there being so many bolts on this section of slabs you could go almost anywhere.

Each of the last routes were abseiled in descent, being only two pitches long. Our last route here was the best and longest and demanded a fairly lengthy walk off - in retrospect an abseil descent might have been better. "Excalibur" is a hard E1/E2 with moves of 5c. At least it is the way we did it - the guide book topo lacks a tree so we got off route and followed the wrong bolts on pitch 2. Above are two pitches with moves graded "Ag" which we found to mean Ao - in each case 2 or 3 closely spaced bolts for aid. The free climbing was excellent though. As on the other routes here it looks and feels steep, but provides delicate and technical moves rather than strenuous climbing.

We then got picked up by the girls and drove to Riglos via the small town of Ayerbe which serendipitously provided us with the quaintest B & B you can imagine. In gathering darkness and with thunder rumbling it was "any port in a storm" and having drawn a blank at the obvious places, we resorted to the advice of the tourist information office. The guy

there directed us to a "hotel". We followed the directions- couldn't find it. Next time he led us there, but for some reason absented himself before we approached the old codgers sitting in the doorway of what seemed to be a terraced house. "Hotel ?" I asked. "Si", they said and we'd found our billet in the Fawly Towers of the Pyrenees. Our hosts were Marie Lou and Geraldo and could have been Manuel's grandparents. They showed us the rooms. Mike and Jenny drew the short straw and got the camp beds in the kitchen - get down off the gas cooker Granny, you're too old to ride the range - Laura, Magi and I had the Daddy Bear, Mummy Bear and Baby Bear beds next door. The room we had breakfast (cold toast, cold coffee, cold milk) in was neither dining room, living room or kitchen, and provided the opportunity to learn old Mari-Lou's family history. (stifled yawn)

Ayerbe will also linger in our memories as having been the venue for the best booze up of the holiday. From humble beginnings searching for a half decent restaurant in the rain the evening developed via beer before, wine with, and whisky after the meal followed by beers elsewhere, into "one of those nights." No detail though - I think you had to be there.

The booze up, another thunderstorm and hangovers were not the best preparation for the main event. Thus, having dragged ourselves out of bed at seven and wandered around aimlessly for five minutes, we refused the old couples offers of breakfast and went back to bed. (So that's why the coffee was cold at 9.30?)

Later it was better (and so were we!) so the plan was belatedly adhered to and leaving the families to sight-see and horse-ride, Mike and I went to the Mallos di Riglos to do "El Puro" (E1 5c) a 700' route to the summit of an amazing pinnacle loosely attached to the west fact of the Mallo Pison, the biggest of the Riglos Towers. Still slightly dithering but no longer with headaches Mike led off up and left, following the guide book's pitch one to get onto the line of the route. Here the English guide book is badly at fault - it omits the true first pitch which we later abbed down and which looks very very good. The second pitch is a long HVS crack and groove line then an easier pitch leads to the first crux. A steep wall demanding some fairly strenuous layback moves (5b, bolt protection) lands you in the easier gully with pleasant climbing for 200' to the col between the main face and "El Puro", which means The Cigar - a more dignified title than the blatantly phallic pinnacle would undoubtedly enjoy had it been named by your typically squalid Brit climbers!

There are two pitches from the col to the summit and these constitute the crux of the route. There's a hard 5b move on the first of these pitches but the 5c move comes appropriately enough within 30' of the top, and more comfortably within 3 feet of a bolt. It's a super "true" summit too - incredibly exposed on one side yet close enough on the other to feel the immensity of the main face. A suitable venue to prematurely celebrate the "significant" birthday I was to enjoy on the morrow.

Then all that's left is 5 or 6 abseils - beware the penultimate one, its still giving me nightmares even tho' the blisters have healed!! Take a "shunt"! Incidentally the abseils are as well equipped as the routes here - no need to carry anything except a dozen quick-draws; and you won't need yer walking boots - you can drive to the foot of the wall.

It's worth mentioning that our conglomerate experience of the day before at Vadiello proved to be irrelevant. There the average pebble was say an inch across. At Riglos they're more like bricks! Or as the guide book puts it - "vertical potato fields". Once you're used to it though, the climbing is superb - one day of it was definitely not enough so Mike and I are sworn to return. Anyone coming?

Martin Bennett

Jersey

Sun soaked beaches and granite sea cliffs - or so the brochures say. Christine and I decided to sample the climbing on Jersey for the week following August Bank Holiday. Travelling there is easy. You can either drive to the South coast and take a ferry or, as we did, fly direct. Flying is cheap and quick. If you book long enough in advance the price is approximately £120 return from Newcastle/Blackpool. The disadvantage is you must hire a car. Prices are similar to the Mediterranean Islands - approximately £100 per week.

Accommodation, at least in the high season, is a problem. It is very expensive. We could not find anything under £200 per week which for two people was too much. Camping is the only alternative and is reasonably priced. We stayed on a large camp site near the airport. Although the facilities were good it was a bit like a Butlins holiday camp. I would recommend going out of high season when accommodation prices are lower and realistic.

We had quite a lot of rain which definitely restricted climbing activities. When the sun came out it was hot but on the rainy days it was decidedly cool. Overall the weather was disappointing but perhaps we were unlucky.

There is one guide that serves the whole of the Island and also includes Guernsey which we did not visit. The guide is well laid out and clear and easy to follow. The majority of the climbing is situated on the North West corner of the Island - in Les Landes area - with some additional areas on the South West Peninsula. The majority of climbs are single pitch, on generally good quality granite in an excellent position looking out over the sea.

Some areas are tidal and as with Cornwall there is a big tidal range of which you must beware. We did various routes mostly in the lower grades. The best was a HVS 5a called Perihelion which is a 130 ft route on superb rock in a tremendous position on La Tete D'Ane. Other good areas we visited include :- Rouge Nez ; Dangle Dell & Sorel Point (on the north coast). The largest cliff is Le Pinnacle which has a number of longer & harder routes. It looks good but more serious than the other cliff. There are several other good looking cliffs which we did not climb on due to bad weather.

During the whole week we only saw one other climber who was there only for one afternoon. I am pretty sure we had the whole island to ourselves, at least as far as climbing is concerned. This raises another issue. Jersey is a very popular holiday location so if you go be prepared for crowds.

On some of the not so good days we went coastal walking which is very well organised and the scenery is excellent. It is thoroughly recommended.

You do need a hire car to reach all the places of interest. Although there is public transport it all radiates into and out of the capital St Helier.

The cost of food and other general costs is broadly similar to mainland UK although there are some tax advantages particularly in relation to alcohol. On this important subject I am pleased to report that proper beer is to be found.

Andy Dunhill

Switzerland

The Grimsall Pass area of the Swiss Alps offers lots of climbing potential for all grades & all abilities . Armed with two excellent new guide books - SCHWIEZ PLAISIR & SCHWIEZ EXTREME - Christine & I set off for two weeks of climbing & walking

The best laid plans do not always work! We planned to take a Sally ferry to Austen. Due to a cock-up of their making we failed miserably as did a lot of other people that night. The chaos could only be seen to be believed. After a mad dash to Dover we boarded a much more relaxed ferry to Calais .

Innertkirchen at the foot of the Grimsall Pass is popular holiday venue but with surprisingly few campsites. These are also expensive & cramped but better than being fined for wild camping!

The weather was excellent . It only rained on two days & the sun shone for the rest of the holiday. The climbing offers a mix of granite slabs with shiny bolts everywhere or steep. The main areas we climbed were - Handegg; Gelmerfluh & Raterichsbodensee on the Grimsall Pass & Platten on the Susten Pass all of which were Granite. The Swiss use a grading system similar to the French where bolt routes are given a pure technical grade . These are comparable to the French grades.

Although there were a lot of other climbers queuing was never a problem. It is advisable to wear a crash hat. Most of the climbs range from 2 to 10 pitches . All were good & I would particularly recommend Jugendweg on Platten which is a 8 pitch severe. All of the routes on Gerstenegg are worthwhile providing 2/3 pitches at reasonable grades

We had several days walking which tends to be busy but by adopting the usual FMC starting time the problem was avoided . The Kev Reynolds book we used was not very good as it had no really useful maps .You can purchase an excellent series of Ordnance Survey standard maps called - Leisure Series The main walk we did was the Faulhorn on the Grosse Scheideg which has superb views of the North Face of the Eiger - maybe another year!

The low level rock climbing potential , at all levels of difficulty , of this area & the other areas in the two guides is vast . A trip to this region can easily combine mountaineering, rock climbing, walking, eating etc. - given the weather. It is recommended .

Having visited this & other continental bolted venues it is interesting to read the current heated debate in the magazines on the bolting issue . It is my opinion that this a very serious debate which should concern anyone who climbs . The continental cliffs are littered with bolts regardless of the existence of natural placements . Slowly but surely British crags are coming under more & more pressure from the bolters - West Penwith , Cornwall ; some lowland Scottish crags; Yorkshire Limestone etc.

Although I accept that there are valid arguments for bolts in limited cases - Quarries & some softer rocks e.g. limestone at it's softest - we are under serious threat of bolts spreading out of control . I do not advocate their general use & I am particularly opposed to them in a mountain environment . Do you have any views that we should put forward as a member club of the BMC ? **Andy Dunhill**

Scotland

The 94/95 winter season was a disappointment from a climbing point of view being dominated by deep snow & high winds . In the hope of salvaging something Stu. Gascoyne & I spent the week leading up to Easter in the Glen Coe area .

On the Sunday we did a short but exciting route on Anach Mor climbing ice that got thinner & thinner the higher we got. Fortunately it remained in tact & so did we. The descent to the route was interesting as it looked in danger of collapsing but was O.K.. The route itself was really the only ice we could find . A blizzard & the lure of the ski lift cafe ended a short climbing day. We had , however left my house in Newcastle at 5a.m.

The next day we went to Craig Mhaigie but it had melted ! We had a cursory look at a route called Pumpkin but there was no chance at all. Stu. fell into a Bergschrund & was only saved from a longer fall by becoming wedged in-between the rock & snow, above a 15ft. drop, by his newly acquired big fat belly! We made a getaway following an attack of common-sense whereupon a substantial avalanche of ice came down the route where we had stood! We went for a walk .

That evening we met two of Stu's friends who planned a 2 day mountain bike ride so we joined them . Starting at Kinlochleven we followed the West Highland Way to Fort William in torrential rain where we stopped to put our clothes in a tumble dryer . That night we stayed in a B & B . The next day we cycled down Glen Nevis , past Steel Falls , & continued for a further 5/6 miles (pushing mostly) until we were able to follow a track around the east side of the Mamores back to Kinlochleven . A good trip .

We stayed in the Fell & Rock hut that evening & learnt that the top 800ft. of the Ben was in good condition . The next morning got up early & parked at the Distillery in sunshine . This was Thursday & it turned out to be a spectacular day , one that only happens to you every 10 years at best .

We flogged all the up Gardyloo Gully heading for Smith's route Grade V 5. Stu, suffering from overweight ('a fat bastard'), was miles behind me which I found highly amusing. There were two people in front of us but they did not hold us up. The first pitch was straightforward Grade 3/4 with good ice leading into the main belay cave where Stu made himself comfortable. I set off up the crux pitch on good steep ice & with blue skies & sunshine above . The ice took 3/4 ice screws & steepened towards the top. I reached the belay without incident & Stu. followed

The view (not a normal phenomena on the Ben) & atmosphere were. Stu lead the next pitch & I finished the last short section over the cornice onto the summit plateau. We sat at the Observatory eating our food, admiring the view & sunbathing before heading off back to the car. A gobsmacking day !

Andy Dunhill

