

Newsletter - Summer 1996

Hyde Mountaineering Club



"A safeguard in climbing a difficult crack." It will be noticed that the leader has threaded the rope behind a stone firmly wedged in the crack. The rope works behind this during his ascent.

Intro.....

Is summer here or are we forever doomed to spend Bank Holidays sheltering in our favourite hostelry ?

Judging from the increased proliferation of gear shops in Ambleside and Keswick, the effects of global warming are predicted to continue for yet a while. Make sure you keep an eye on the 'sun rock' entries in your new syllabus card!

Unfortunately again this newsletter is later than expected. This is partly owing to my absence in Oz but mainly because we have not received a sufficient number of articles to justify the cost of going to print earlier. Hopefully with clutch of articles about summer meets we will have an autumn edition. If in the meantime we receive copies of the BMC 'Summit' Magazine, we will either retain it to be sent with the newsletter or send it out separately.

News.....

Mindful of the vagaries of the British weather, the majority of our active rock jocks got in some pre-season footage in foreign parts. Jordan proved the most popular destination with a strong contingent of thirteen descending on Wadi Rum. Judging from Andy Dunhill's article the trip was a huge success even in the absence of John Tatts and his wrap around tea towel Yasser Arafat look.

Preferring something distinctly Spanish, Martin, Joanne, Mike and Anna gave the Majorcan 'Rock Fax' the once over. If their form on recent meets is anything to go by, I'd say the trip definitely paid dividends.

Not to be outdone, your globe-trotting editor has been down under Ozy style with some tropical limestone in Thailand on the return. Hopefully an article will come together in time for the next newsletter. Sufficient to say that Sean Smith got well and truly caught out again.

Back on home soil, conditions in Scotland have stayed on the crisp side alluring our winter activist, Phil Lee, to spend much of his waking life attached to crampons and ice axes.

On the Welsh side of the border, the Pembroke meet proved as popular as ever with twenty eight members staying over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. The good weather and the publication of the new guidebook helped to offset the effects of oil spillage from the Sea Empress.

Evening meets got off to a good start with about twenty five nobbs turning up to the Trowbarrow meet. Unfortunately, the weather has taken a hand in curtailing trips to Anglezarke and Wilton. Also, sadly the Aran meet fell by the wayside as members tried to seek out the drier parts of the country. This resulted in club members being liberally sprinkled from north Scotland to south Devon. I have yet to catch up with who did what but having squeezed a walk over Dartmoor, cragging on the south coast, sight seeing in Dartmouth and a night in a micro brewery into three days, our trip was worth the effort - despite the cloud.

Dave Wood *Newsletter Editor*

(Cover: From First Steps to Climbing - George Abraham)

Update.....

Committee Business

The new committee was elected at a well attended AGM on February 14th and has met on two occasions since then.

The club secretary is Kevin Hindle. Thanks are due to Judith Swift for her sterling efforts in previous years. Mark Broughton takes over Stair custodianship from the good job done by Phil Lee. Mike Sissons joins the Committee. Other posts remain as per last year.

The first meeting was given over to formalising the meets and syllabus for the forthcoming year. Generally meets tend to be assigned to committee members unless there is prior knowledge of a particular interest. Therefore if you fancy running a meet to somewhere you think will be of interest make sure that you contact a committee member prior to the first committee meeting of the season (ie. before the end of Feb of the respective year).

The second meeting was held in April when amongst other business estimates were examined for the replacement of the windows at Stair with double glazed units. Also the prospect of marking the Club's fiftieth birthday by publication of members best photographs (say drawn from annual slide competitions) was discussed.

During last committee meeting held on June 11th it was noted that an acceptable quote had been received for Stair windows and the custodian was requested to authorise the work.

The issue raised at the AGM of providing safe storage at Stair for mountain bikes was discussed and in view of the concern expressed by some members, it was decided not to take this idea any further without AGM / EGM approval. The go ahead was given to the hut custodian to install access ladders to upper bunks during forthcoming working weekends. Also it was agreed that Stair should have a big bin to dispose of the volumes of refuse generated by the Club and visitors - no comments please!

Ideas for generating and maintaining membership, in addition to the adverts now appearing in national magazines were discussed.

On receipt of a request from Ogwen Mountain Rescue Team, the Committee approved a donation of £50 towards upkeep of their Landrover.

Ideas for celebrating the Club's 50th birthday (also millennium) were discussed. Regarding the publication of an anthology of member's photos, it was suggested that this should be raised at periodic intervals (via newsletter) to keep the idea alive until such a time that we can firm up a decision. Also, it was thought that the membership might like to let the Committee know of any other ideas that could be considered.

The Committee would like to draw members attention to the reinstatement of reciprocal rights with the Vags Club, the details of which can be found on the syllabus

Next Meeting:- 3 September 1996

New and Returning Members

The Club welcomes the following introductory members:-

Joanna Goorney, 267 Norbreck Rd, Blackpool FY5 1PE

Terry Robinson, Coventry Ave. Blackpool FY3 8ET Tel 396471

Steve Watson, 140 Cornwell Ave. Blackpool. Tel 352001.

Mari Angeles Solera 14 Bagot St. Blackpool Tel 01253 347597

Peter & Julie Jones. 14 Blackpool Rd. Bispham. FY2 0HR Tel 595986

Full and returning members:-

Roy Turner, Wave Studios, Park Rd. Lytham. FY8 5LU

Liz Rawcliffe, 8 Rosefold Cottage, Penwortham Tel 01772 741909

Moz Kitchin, 83 Blackpool Rd, Carlton FY6 7QH. Tel 01253 892038

Michiel Van Gulik, The Old School House, Mount Pleasant, Teebay, Cumbria. CA10 3TP Tel 015396 24022

Mike is holding a party on 20/21 July - everyone welcome

Directions - From Junc 38 turn rt at end of sliproad, follow road for 300 m until a sharp right hand bend. At this point turn left and after 5m find a blue metal gate of house (opp bus stop) GR 629045.#####

K2 Chinese Side - Trip Aug 96

The club have been contacted by Daniel Mazur who has asked the following Ad to be brought to the attention of members:-

"I welcome you to join a journey to the Chinese side of K2 in August 1996. The 32 or 47 day trip includes K2, Beijing, the Forbidden City, The Great Wall of China, The Silk Road,

a visit to K2 basecamp, and exploration into the Karakoram mountains, one of the most concentrated group of high peaks in the world. This is a newly opened and beautiful area. Our team members are women, men, novices and experts. Our leader is Daniel Mazur, past leader of 2 successful K2 expeditions"

Tel 0117 987 9444 (mon-fri 9-5) or write to D.I. Mazur., Hebron House, Sion Rd, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 3BD

Mello - Aug - Sept 1996

A number of members have asked for further information about the summer meet appearing on the syllabus as 'Mello'.

The Mello valley lies in the Bregalia Alps at the head of the Val de Massino (San Martino) which runs northerly from the Lake Como to Sondrio road a few kilometres after Morbegno. The valley has some brilliant climbing of all grades, both bolted and traditional adventure style and lies in the rain shadow of the Bregalia. The opportunities for walking are also excellent.

Al Churcher writes: " Val di Mello is one of the most beautiful valleys in Europe and every climber should visit it once. Despite its fame it remains relatively undeveloped both in terms of climbing and tourism, and this is the key to much of its attraction. The waterfalls spilling over the side valleys into the clear pools of the river, the flickering butterflies, the hanging woods of beech, whitebeam, ash and fir that clothe the hillside, the numerous boulders with

their innumerable problems, the silver granite slabs and walls, the ever changing backdrop of cloud, shadow and sun upon Monte Disgrazia - all these make Mello a place to be experienced, rather than just another place to climb"

Late August / early September takes in the bank holiday and avoids the Italian hols but it does start to get cooler then. At the moment it looks like an informal meet of a few members. If interested let Dave Wood know soon.

Members Subs - Standing Order

Members wishing to pay subs by Standing Order should make an arrangement with their bank for the sum (£15 single / £25 joint) to be paid by 1st October to Fylde Mountaineering Club, Yorkshire Bank, 2 Abbingdon St. Blackpool. EY1 1DR. Sort Code: 05 02 57. Acc No. 24504457

Access - Summit Magazine

By now all members should have received a copy of the BMC's 'Summit' magazine which will be made available several times a year and free of charge to the Club provided we distribute it. Hopefully the second issue will be enclosed with this newsletter. For those who by now have not read the first issue cover to cover, the following items might be of particular interest:- navigation on the Ben (p6), abseil stations (p10), equipment failure when abseiling (p24), introducing beginners to a club (p46), the benefits of BMC membership (p48) and access news (p20-21,42-43).

The BMC seems to have done a good job in persuading government to argue in favour of informal restrictions for environmentally sensitive areas thus staving off the bans on crags (apparently widespread in Germany) proposed by the Council of Europe's environment strategy.

The issue of major traffic restrictions in the Lakes appears to have faded away, temporarily at least; but still responsibility rests with individuals to get together and sort out lifts.

Of the many access restrictions affecting the crags, the following should be noted by members:- Pembroke bird bans lifted either end of July or mid August. Bird bans on Upper Falcon, Heron-Eskdale, Chapel Head, St Bees (partial), Warton Quarry and parts of Gogarth.

Other Access:

Black Hole - open to groups soon-Aargh! **Feizor and Twistleton** -seek permission from farmer, use paths. **Craig y Longridge** - access banned

Discounts

The Club has a number of discount arrangements including 'Hitch and Hike' and 'Outside' in the Peak, 'Joe Brown' and 'Outside' in north Wales and 'Rock & Run' and 'NeedleSports' in the Lakes. Recent attempts to secure a discount in 'Call of the Wild,' Keswick proved a non-starter after a letter prepared on the advice of one of the staff was rejected by the manager on the grounds that:- "everyone is in a club". Members might wish to take his attitude into account when shopping in Keswick.

Members Address Update

This went out with the AGM minutes. There are probably some errors. If you know someone's address or telephone number is incorrect please tell Frank Towne otherwise they will not receive club correspondence.

Hut Availability

June 21/22 Stair - (intro meet)
June 28/29 Langdale
July 5/6 Stair - (working)
July 12/13 Langdale
July 19/20 Chester Swap
July 26/27 Langdale (working)
Aug 2/3 Stair
Aug 9/10 Langdale
Aug 16/17 Langdale (Stair - families)
Aug 23/24 Langdale
Aug 30/31 Stair (obscure crags)
Sept 6/7 Langdale
Sept 13/14 Chester Swap
Sept 21/22 Langdale
Sept 27/28 Stair (intro)
Oct 4/5 Langdale
Oct 11/12 Stair
Oct 18/19 Landale
Oct 25/26 Stair (working)
Nov 1/2 Langdale (bonfire)
Nov 8/9 Stair (fell race-curry)
Nov 15/16 Langdale (m/tain biking)
Nov 22/23 Langdale (working)
Nov 29/30 Langdale
Dec 6/7 Stair (dinner)
Dec 13/14 Stair
Dec 21 - Jan 4 both huts

The Alopecia League

It's hard keeping up with developments among the slapheads these days. A semi permanent first must always go to Chris Thiss,

probably followed by Paul Taylor. However, of recent there has been great competition between Phil (I'm going for bald) Lee and Trevor ('They mek 'em 'ard in Leeds') Atkinson. Martin seems to have receded from the hair challenge and appears more into the billy goatee beard stakes. This item will in future self destruct.

Ferris Wheel for Stair

In considering the best way to celebrate the millenium, the Committee has given serious thought to installing a Ferris Wheel at Stair. Not only would this provide a novel addition to the Newlands skyline, but it would also contribute much needed income to the Club by allowing its use by other clubs and even members of the public. Despite appearances, Stair has for a long time lacked a public amenity. This could be what the area has been looking for. Send your views in a letter to the Editor. Please mark your envelopes 'Ferris Wheel'

Articles

The West Highland Way- Jenny Tolley & Angella Lovett describe the rewards of walking through the Scottish highlands.

Don't say 'Waymark' say 'Nervous Breakdown' - Dave Earle comically narrates how he narrowly misses litigation in Corsica

Jordan Easter 96 - Andy Dunhill recounts adventures from a highly successful trip and finds Dennis.

Norway Easter 96 -Christine Barbier describes the pleasures of skiing in Norway.

OUTDOOR MIDWEEK MEETS

Month	Date	Day	Venue	Pub	Meet Leader
MAY	14	Tues	TrowBarrow	New Inn Yealand Conyers	Dave Wood (01772 684969)
"	15	Wed	Boozy Bike Ride	Thatched 6.30 pm	Mark Harding (01253 352154)
"	22	Wed	Anglezarke	Dressers Arms Wheelton	Steve Wrigley (01253 347597)
"	30	Thurs	Wilton	Black Dog Belmont	Mike Sissons (01253 751249)
JUNE	5	Wed	Twistleton	Marion Arms Thornton in Lonsdale	John Hickman (01253 899282)
"	12	Wed	Boozy Bike Ride	Thatched 6.30 pm	Martin Dale (01253 72073)
"	13	Thurs	Hoghton	Cavendish Arms Brindle	Martin Dale (01253 72073)
"	19	Wed	Rylstone	To be arranged	Gary Bird (01253 701176)
"	25	Tues	Malham	Listers Arms Malham	Mick Tolley (01772 713817)
"	26	Wed	Darwen Moors Mountain Biking	Meet at Contact →	Trevor Atkinson (01254 760533)
JULY	3	Wed	Crummackdale	Game Cock Austwick	Les Ward (01772 684681)
"	11	Thurs	Chapel Head	To be arranged	Glen Brookes (01772 751234 Work)
"	17	Wed	Boozy Bike Ride	Thatched 6.30 pm	Steve Wrigley (01253 347597)
"	18	Thurs	Troy Quarry	Griffin Inn Haslingden	Les Ward (01772 684681)
"	23	Tues	Giggleswick	Black Horse Giggleswick	Mark Broughton (01524 418102)
"	31	Wed	Bridestones	Staff of Life Todmorden	Martin Dale (01253 72073)
AUGUST	8	Thurs	Attermire	Golden Lion Settle	Glenn Brookes (01772 751234)
"	14	Wed	Boozy Bike Ride	Thatched 6.30 pm	Dave Ball (01253 869247)
"	15	Thurs	Scout Scar	Kings Arms Burton	Mark Broughton (01524 418102)
"	20	Tues	Anglezarke	Dressers Arms Wheelton	Mike Sissons (01253 751249)
"	28	Wed	Wilton / Brownstones	Black Dog Belmont	Martin Dale (01253 72073)

Coventry MC (who sometimes use our huts) are holding a barbeque on the weekend 27/28 June (presumably Saturday night of the Wasdale Meet) at Eskdale Youth Hostel. Flyde members are invited to join them. Details - John Wiseman.#####

Meets >>>>>>

Caving Meet - November 1995

Another well attended meet which spawned the new mug of the year and helped to consolidate and impress with his capacity the new lush of the year, which turned out to be same person, well done Dave! People came to cave, two groups on Saturday, to walk, to mountain bike and just to drink. The last of these was Rebecca who drove up on Saturday evening, stayed at the Marton Arms and left Sunday morning. Have we had a female lush of the year yet! It's no wonder that she made such a good social sec. The cavers went down Irerby Fell and Large Pot on Saturday and Disappointment on Sunday with Mike Sissons breaking his finger on Saturday and the meet leader getting totally stuck on Sunday. The mountain bikers peddled an unbelievable number of miles with Dave and Chris doing 32 miles off road on Saturday. All of course was followed by a quiet drink on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

Mike Tolley

Lagangarbh - 23 - 25 February 1996

12 people eventually attended. Too much soft snow for good climbing or walking. However, half party climbed half walked. Phil and Frank did Ravens Gully on the 'Buckle', failed on direct finish but good effort in view of the thin conditions.

Less Ward

CIC Hut - 25 - 29 February 1996

Only one person (myself) stayed for 5 nights, one non-member arrived early Thursday 2 am and stayed one night. Heavy snow Saturday left all routes plastered. Many changes in occupancy of hut during week including 3 volatile Italians (no English spoken), Guides with clients and a club from Northumberland who were there in '95.

Climbed many ice smears and frozen waterfalls near hut, good sport, but only one decent route climbed: Waterfall Gully on Carn Dearg. Maybe next year we could be luckier with the elements.

Les Ward

Pembroke - May Bank holiday 1996

Remember the old joke 'Designed by computers, built by robots and driven by Italians'? Catch the headline in the Independent on 27 Feb '96 ?..."Built in Spain, owned by a Norwegian, registered in Cyprus, managed from Glasgow, chartered by the French, crewed by Russians, flying a Liberian flag, carrying an American cargo, pouring oil onto the Welsh coast." Probably not that funny to people who live down there and anybody else for that matter. Rumour and counter rumour circulate amongst the locals about the integrity of the clean up operation. Local gossip has it that the salvage was deliberately delayed in order to ensure maximum profits went to the main salvage contractors and that the idea of sub-contracting the

Chinese tug was scuppered for the same reason.

On the crags there was less evidence of the oil than might have been expected. Huntsman's Leap was out of commission and Stennis Ford looked and smelt decidedly uninviting. The locals had clearly done a fine job in cleaning up the beaches but despite this oil was visible as far up as Marloe Sands and Skomar Island. The disturbance to wildlife caused by the climbing fraternity must almost pale into insignificance in comparison to the outcome of this disaster.

Despite all this it was largely business as usual for the twenty eight members who went down for the either part or whole of the week. So many routes get done that I've long since given up the idea of keeping a log. The weather was true to form with dry but colder than usual days. Some guy I met on a belay at Bosherton Head told me he got sunstroke the previous day! Weather or no weather, plenty of Hancocks HB was put away at the Swan Lake and the locals were pleased to make us very welcome again.

I had briefly entertained the idea of retiring the meet for a year or two but have been persuaded otherwise. So next year I really will do Brazen Buttress and Bon Voyage and hopefully there will be no more Sea Empresses. But if you look through your window, you might just catch a glimpse of a flying pig.

Dave Wood

Corris - June 96

Good beer in the Slater's arms of Friday night. Donald did not arrive.

Good walking on the Saturday. Donald still not arrived.

Saturday evening, Donald arrives having left Saturday morning and got lost. He ended up in the centre of Chester and visited Sealand twice - that's all he can recall.

Beer and food in the pub superb. Sunday wet.

Les Ward

Peaks - Camping - June 96

At last the weather turns good which is just as well since twenty odd nobs turn up.

With camp sites close to overflowing we pitch up at the hill over the Moon which is nice and handy for the lock in. Despite heavy rain Friday night, Saturday dawns clear and bright and some good cragging is in the offing. Stanage is quieter than usual so routes get ticked without the usual waiting around. The two Mikes put in some heavy extreme footage with the two Phils not far behind. Right and Left Unconquerable see ascents by both teams. Meet leader redeems himself for messing up on a naughty VS with an ascent of Right Unconquerable. Paul Taylor and newly returned from USA, Dave Cundy, put some classics in the bag. Jerry, Simon, Glenn, Lou, Kevin and Steve are all their doing the business.

Sunday sees the arrival of the two Martins, Joanne Chris and Stu and friends. Froggat / Curbar is the venue and with a sunny 70 degrees the ticks grow. A stonking weekend. Hope the September camping meet at Alstonfield is as good.

Dave Wood

The West Highland Way -Oct /Nov 1995

The train journey from Fort William to Glasgow was a bonus. Blue skies and sun made the scenery truly spectacular. Angela sat with the OS map on her knee and traced our return trip. Nothing can detract from that smug feeling of having walked the 95 miles north, 6 days ago. I couldn't resist a self satisfied smirk!

I've had the West Highland Way map-guide for about four years but it was only recently we decided to actually get organised. Fitting in with the October half term holiday proved restrictive when booking B & B as the season appears to be from the beginning of April to the beginning of October. We did sort out a plan of action but out of season meant we couldn't avoid a couple of long days. A big incentive to keep walking was not to have to share the emergency bivvy bag - as our 'T' shirts became extremely smelly as the walk progressed!

The weather proved to be very considerate. We did need waterproofs and used them but the Thermal wear gloves and hats were not necessary. The route is well way-marked and proved straightforward. We had dire warning from the Landlady, Mrs Ross at Drymen to avoid Conic Hill at all costs. We sorted out an alternative should the ascent seem impossible - steep sided 1,000 foot mud bank - giving little upward and forward momentum but with a great deal of backward slide? No problem. It was at the top of Conic Hill that we encountered a rucksack sitting on a rack - but once on the other side we met Teresa from Alabama. This rucksack was enormous and towered about four foot above her shoulders with a distinct lean to the left. She also managed a smaller rucksack attached to her front. I think all her worldly goods were about her person. She too was doing the West Highland Way but as Angela and I left her to her painful stagger our minimum gear seemed to weigh nothing so we skipped.

On our last day we met 8 very amicable Liverpudlian lads, who were doing the walk (in reverse). They aimed to complete the walk in 4 days and were raising money for Cystic Fibrosis. If sheer ebullience and a positive assumption of success was anything to go by - they would have completed the walk. We did feel somewhat dubious at the lack of special gear - like rucksacks and anoraks. They were either carrying armfuls of clothes or an amazing arrangement of sweaters tied about their person.

I wonder if they succeeded?

The people we met - the view of the Mamores from the top of Devils Staircase - the Autumn colours - the deer at the lochside early in the morning - and the sheer ecstasy of a well earned G & T whilst soaking in the bath at the end of a long day.

Magic. Good fun. Good trip. Good company.

NB: Chris Brasher boots - No Blisters.

Jenny Tolley, Angela Lovet

Don't say "Waymark" say Nervous Breakdown

With injuries received from a road traffic accident getting worse rather than better what it seemed I needed was a nice low grade holiday just about being able to keep up with a dozen or so little old ladies. Waymark had just the thing; one week in the mountains, followed by a week on the coast, on the warm, happy and sunny island of Corsica. And they had a vacancy as a leader. It was just the ticket, as we used to say down south.

All in good time the maps and notes arrived on my door mat and were devoured with interest. Apparently there was more information on how to handle the hoteliers than there was on how to find your way round the island. The first it seemed was a Corsican Basil Fawly who unfortunately didn't speak French or Italian, or English, or slowly: which led to some intriguing if one-sided conversations. Perhaps it was just as well I never really knew what he had to say about the manic depressive whose holiday and clients was slowly disintegrating around him.

And so half the party landed at Ajaccio Airport and splashed through the puddles to baggage reclaim. With 6 people still missing some investigation was needed. The Gatwick flight, due first, was apparently late arriving but eventually 5 more clients were reclaimed from the baggage hall. The sixth had gone to ground and was eventually found half an hour later wandering around outside. At least this gave some of the coaches time to disperse making the job of finding our one easier. At least it would have been if it hadn't had a different name on the outside and displayed a board to the effect that it was on hire to a German Tour Company. Still, these local eccentricities are all part of the total holiday experience and make foreign travel so interesting.

The journey to the hill town of Evisa, situated on a low ridge with views out to the mountains in all directions, was a delight and two hours later I was face to face with Corsica's Basil Fawly. Punching from the shoulder I stepped briskly up to the reception desk, announced who we were and requested one double room, two twin rooms and six singles. It was as if I had mentioned the war. A torrent of highly excitable conversation cascaded from his lips, accompanied by hysterical arm waving, which went on for 10 minutes or more and was made worse by his confusion over having two clients with the same name. Difficult enquiries like the time of dinner would have to wait.

The hotel with its swimming pool and surrounding nymphs was excellent, as were the views down the valley. The mountains were dutifully recorded that evening and again the following morning. They were not to be seen again that holiday. However the first morning dawned fine and I led the clients on a circular walk from the hotel, visiting a few beauty spots en route. After a while one of the clients complained of feeling a little unwell so I sat her under a tree with my water bottle and told her to wait until we returned from a nearby summit. However, like old Mother Hubbard, I too found the cupboard bare on returning. A search of the surrounding countryside failed to produce any sign of her and so we returned off the hill one client short. Perhaps Waymark wouldn't mind too much as they could get their money back from the hotel and increase their profit margins. Still it was a problem none the less and there was always the chance that they could get quite grumpy about it. Eventually she was located in the Gerndarmarie and the meet leader got some gentle stick from the Constabulary about not telling his charges where they were going next until he explained that they were staying in town and had arrived yesterday.

After a quick "Mon Dieu" the client was wheeled out of the cells to face an uncomprehending future. She knew who she was but not where she was or why she was there. Or who I was, or where she was staying. It seemed she had suffered a minor stroke and so commenced a series of telephone conversations with tour companies and

insurance companies which was to last the rest of the holiday. I never found out how she ended up in the police station but at least it was now raining heavily with plenty of lightening so I would not have to fight off any temptations to learn to swim in the hotel pool.

Tuesday was alive with electric storms but unfortunately we were unable to hire a minibus to the coast which left the option, not on the itinerary, of walking through the Spelunca Gorge to the Cafe at Ota. The gorge protected us from the lightening and the sun terrace at Ota protected us from the rain sweeping Glen Coe-like across the hills. So I suppose it counts as a successful day.

Wednesday was quite appalling and I nearly persuaded the clients to stay in the hotel: Nearly but not quite. Some at least saw sense after a couple of hours and returned to the hotel, but others did not. The path ran entirely through thick vegetation and with the rain lashing down it was like the Borneo rain forest. And then there was the bridge! It did get a mention in the notes but being on a main footpath I was fairly sure it couldn't be as bad as Waymark made out. Eventually it appeared out of the gloom, or at least what remained of it did! On a bridge difficulty scale of one to ten it scored about thirty three. One side of it was missing altogether as were most of the planks. It hung at 30° to the horizontal and rose up at about 45° at the far end. Access was by a vertical ladder up a tree trunk and the technical crux was transferring oneself from the tree to the one remaining wire handrail, although ascending the far end of the bridge and climbing down the tree to which it was fixed was the more frightening. The waist deep foaming torrent below invited the fullest concentration.

Survivors were eventually awarded the Waymark Burma Star and the meet leader was duly grateful not to have lost anybody else for two whole days running, a track record soon to be blemished.

In poor weather we got a taxi next day to the top of a pass, in thick mist, with a view to walking back to the hotel by the path. The Waymark notes casually refer to starting by a sign post but give no compass readings from the summit of the road as to where it is. Presumably it is usually sunny. Shortly after emerging from the hill fog into an indifferent day one of the remaining clients complained of feeling dizzy and was found to have a pulse rate of 200 per minute! Out came the casualty bag and in went the client. After 10 minutes or so there was a little improvement, but not much so the rest of the team took my maps and made their way back to the hotel, whilst I and one other remained with the client. The next visitor was a mountain rescue man complete with radio, (I always arrange these things properly), and the client was soon being winched away by helicopter, a green cocoon dangling vertically outside the helicopter waving goodbye to the meet leader. Must remember to take the photograph vertically in case Waymark want it for the cover of their next brochure. Still, at least it's Thursday and these are only 10 more client losing days to go. Almost one for each client.

With two clients down already Uncle Basil back at the hotel lost no time in telling the meet leader what he thought of the follies of taking little old ladies into the mountains of Corsica, and kept it up for the rest of the week. By now the phone lines were beginning to melt.

By contrast Friday was a bit of a let down. It proved fairly pleasant and gave us a nice walk along a ridge. The bus fare was collected by parking right over a vertical drop half way through the journey, presumably to encourage ready and willing payment. I did think of demanding to be taken to the airport but thought better of it. We would probably have crashed en route the way things were going. The local hotelier where our walk commenced assured us the bus always arrives 30 minutes early in the evening which gave us time to have a couple of beers before the bus arrived exactly on time.

Waymark rang to say the client had been released from hospital and was already back at the hotel. Just as well I didn't take this too seriously as she did not reappear until the following Tuesday!

Saturday was OK. We had a long walk from the Col de Vehrigo over the Monte Tozzo and like the previous day the clouds did not roll in until after we left the tops. The insurance company rang to ask me to take the client's E111 round to the hospital as they would not release her without it. As I was on foot, the hospital was 130 km away and the E111 was out of date, I declined.

Transfer day was merely awful and remembering to pack the missing client's gear I led the remainder of the troops to Porto, on the coast, giving us another chance to watch the rain from the terrace bar at Ota, the sick and the lame travelling with the luggage. Basil Fawly was still put out that geriatric Anglo Saxons were walking all over his Island but at least we were out of his hair.

Monday gave us a superb coastal walk from Porto via the Calanches to Piana, returning on the bus. Still no sign of our missing client.

Tuesday gave us a monstrous electric storm below us in the gulf of Porto which swept northwards along the coast. This time we hardly noticed the rain and the lightening, protected by the surrounding hills from its worst effects, so we were merely wet through when we got back to the hotel in time to greet our long lost friend from emergency ward 10 at Bastia General Hospital. At least they didn't drop her from a passing helicopter.

This gave us all the chance of a boat trip on Wednesday which although expensive was very rewarding and gave superb views of the stunning coast line. We were able to travel out on the morning boat and back on the evening boat giving us 5 hours to do some walking along a remote section of a very beautiful coastline, all in superb weather.

Thursday was indifferent but not poor and gave us an excellent day exploring the Lonca Gorge. Helping some of the little old ladies across the river the meet leader managed to inflict a nine inch gash in his leg, offending their sensibilities with his cries of pain before nearly passing out. Still, a few butterfly stitches and a tube of Savlon soon sorted that out, and with the thought of being able to claim a new tube from Waymark, I was positively cheerful by the time we got back to the hotel, only to find we had received no message from the bus company about times of transport back to the airport.

Flight times had been altered frequently, by as much as 6 hours and I wanted to be sure things were right. Telephone calls to the bus company at Ajaccio and Porto remained unanswered, and a note to the Porto Office had failed to produce any information. All the local drivers denied any knowledge. I would have to guess when we were to leave and hope for the best. By now I was beginning to get quite good at being totally demented.

On Friday we got a bus to the Col de Palmorrello and walked back along the tops. The weather was poor but the bus driver assured us that there would be little chance of electric storms and he was almost right, leaving Saturday for the "Big One", the ascent of Copo de Orto. Good weather prevailed although an overnight storm caused a last minute change of plan of route of ascent. The summit was warm and windless and gave us superb views all around; up and down the cost and across the main mountains.

On Sunday morning I got up at 6 am just in case, but the Gatwick flight bus arrived at 7 am, just about the time I guessed. The Manchester bus arrived half an hour after the estimated time at 14.30 but by then I was passed caring. I was just looking forward to spending a few days in a darkened room before writing my reports to Waymark.

D A Earle

Jordan Easter 96

'Where's Dennis?'

This was the most eventful trip I have been on for a long time, with people falling over each other to compete for this year's **mug of the year award**. The trip came together quite rapidly in Jan/Feb and eventually a total of 13 FMC members took part - an auspicious number!

The plan was for 8 of us to go for 2 weeks and 4 for one week in the middle. Dennis Carrigan (Where's Dennis?) made a late 13th entry for the first week. The cheapest route is to fly to Ovda in southern Israel and cross the border into Jordan. It was there that Glen, Lou and Dennis (Where's Dennis?) put in the first **mug** effort by taking a taxi to the border into Egypt. They then had to pay 35 Dinars (£35) to reach the Jordanian border crossing.

Travel is either by bus or taxi, and is reasonable. We went by taxi, first to Aqaba to buy a few provisions, and then to Wadi Rum, the main climbing area. It is spectacular, with a flat, hot desert punctuated by towering and highly complex red sandstone mountains, up to 5,500 ft.

We camped at the Rest House and ate most meals there at fair prices. Beer and hot showers were available. Much of the climbing is within a reasonable walk or camel ride of the Rest House. The climbing is of the adventurous type and most routes range from 5 to 15 pitches. Doing one route per day was the norm. Descents varied from exciting abseils down the route, to even more exciting forages across the highly complex domed summits. Early starts were vital.

In the first 3/4 days Martin Bennet, Mike Tolley, Dennis (Where's Dennis?) and I completed/tried 4 or 5 routes. The best was Pillar of Wisdom, a 10-pitch HVS/E1, with a crux final pitch and entertaining descent. The rock was generally OK but required some care. Day time temperature was around 35°C, so lots of water was needed.

This period saw the 2nd and 3rd **mug** contenders. Mike and Jenny set off on a long, easy route up Jebel Rum, but Jenny cut her thigh and they had to descend. She was whisked off to the nearest doctor by a friendly Bedouin, had 9 stitches and was told to take it easy for a week or so.

Whilst descending, they passed Glen, Lou, Simon and Gill making the 3rd and very strong attempt for the **mug of the year**. They set off on Eye of Allah, a 1km 400m route at around 9.30am, just as it was getting hot. That night, sat in the rest house, the rest of us tried to decide whose fault this benightment was likely to be. We concluded that the four of them sat in T-shirts and shorts would not have blamed Gill and Lou. We were right. They said it wasn't too cold.

We all left for Petra to meet the other four (Steve and MariAngeles, Jerry and Christine) and to have a rest. Petra is spectacular, well worth seeing.

Simon Fenna made the 4th **mug** attempt there. He scraped the scab off a Scottish winter wound and within a few hours it became infected. He was

rushed off to the doctor and then the hospital. He needed constant injections of anti-biotics and it completely wiped him out. On a serious note, he was very lucky to receive rapid and high quality medical assistance. Had this happened away from civilisation, the consequences would have been unthinkable.

After Petra, Dennis (Where's Dennis?) went home; Simon and Gill convalesced for a couple of days; and the rest of us returned to Wadi Rum. Some visited the Dead Sea on the way, the lowest point on earth. You really do float - even me.

In Wadi Rum some people went for walks through the extensive Rakabat Canyon, camels were ridden and some routes were done. Christine and I did the 9/10-pitch Rum Doodle, a classic Hard Severe/VS. It was hot. On the same day Martin and Jerry spent several abortive hours trying and retreating from more adventurous routes. They eventually did Gold Finger a 4-pitch crack climb.

We were all then taken out into the desert for a night by Toyota Land Cruiser. This was excellent and peaceful. A few walks in the nearby canyons were done and routes spied for future trips. Mike Tolley and I did the classic crack Merlin's Wand, a stupendous 5-pitch route. Steve, Martin and Christine did Jogging, a loose, serious and epic route.

The next day Martin, Jerry, Christine and I did Ocean Slabs, a long and mostly scrambling route to the East summit of Jebel Barrah. It had one somewhat undergraded pitch but took us to a superb summit with extensive views all around.

It was whilst in Barrah Canyon that Glen and Lou made the 5th offering for **mug of the year**. Glen proposed to Lou on the top of a sand dune in Wadi Um Ishrin and she accepted. We were not sure who was daftest so a dual effort for the **mug** seems fair. Congratulations to both of them.

Some returned home and others to Aqaba to do some touring. Glen and Mike made the 6th and last **mug** attempt on Pillar of Wisdom. They missed the final 3 pitches up a straight corner crack and were overtaken by nightfall. We thought they were out for bed and breakfast but Glen's earlier experience on the same descent enabled them to return just after the bar had closed.

Martin and I did another two routes then joined the others in Aqaba for some snorkelling in the coral reefs, which was wonderful.

Jordan is an excellent venue for combined touring and adventure climbing. Two weeks is ideal. It's best to take your old gear as ropes become trashed quickly. Eating at the Rest House is easiest and only bother cooking when in the desert. Treat the routes with respect, especially those by the Remy brothers which are best avoided. Agree all prices before doing anything. Take lots of films and a bottle of duty free whiskey.

How about a club meet Easter 97 - walkers and climbers?

'There's Dennis!'

Andy Dunhill

Norway Easter 96

Cross country skiing in Norway was the plan, and Mark and Viv Broughton were the organisers. Having skied in Norway several times before, they knew where to go - the Hardangervidda plateau, altitude 1000m, and where to stay - the Sundet farmhouse by the side of the Møsvatn lake.

Mike Turner, a friend from Bristol, Mark, Viv and I flew from Manchester to Oslo, hired a car and drove to the head of the Møsvatn lake - 3.5 hours from the airport, due west. We could have travelled by public transport, but the car was only marginally more expensive and far easier with all the skiing gear. To reach Sundet, we skied for 10 km on the frozen lake. This was my first long distance, flat skiing experience with a full rucksack. The next day I decided to learn a bit more about moving on snow efficiently!

Sundet in itself was an experience. It is owned by Philip (English origins) and Maiken (Danish origins). They cater for both Waymark organised holidays and independent travellers. The hospitality, accommodation and food were superb. We stayed full board - nearest shop is 10km ski away, and had day trips from the house in just about all compass directions.

There was plenty of snow in Scottish terms, but fairly little in Norwegian terms. The winter had been very cold (-30°C) for weeks, so the lake was over 1m deep frozen but the snow was only 20-30cm deep (normally it would be 2-3m). We had splendid weather the first few days and it remained very good for the rest of the week, except the last day when we skied back to the car in the rain. It was very hot in the sun (20°C+) and cold at night (-15/+5°C).

We skied everyday, going up to the summit of the surrounding mountains, or staying lower down in the trees on rest days. We had fun skiing down the course of frozen streams - none of this beck-bottoming nonsense, but without the heels of the boots attached. So I reverted back to the good old snow plough method. Mark and Viv enjoyed themselves practising their telemark technique when the snow conditions were right - I watched from a distance....

The weather having been very good, there is no epic to report. I suspect that in bad weather it would be easy to get lost: a lot of the valleys and hills are similar and the Hardangervidda plateau extends for miles northwards with nothing but reindeers, beavers and a few mountain huts.

One nice aspect about the trip is that during the whole week we did not see anybody else skiing - and we were in peak season; a refreshing change from the Scottish queues!. Also, on the way from Oslo we spotted some very large and impressive frozen waterfalls. In Rjukan, the nearest town to the Møsvatn lake, it would be possible to ice climb in the morning on the north face of the valley, and rock climb in the afternoon on the south face.

I was told by Philip that there are large granite crags, unclimbed, at the western end of the Møsvatn lake. So maybe, next time, it will be a summer trip...

Christine Barbier



BETTER THAN SEX II

by Steve "Crag Rat" Wrigley



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AND FINALLY

Following a recent mountain biking meet, Mike Tolley reports that he spotted this new road sign on the side of Blencathra >

