

OFFICERS

Chairman - MARTIN DALE
6 Oxford Road, Fleetwood, FY7 7EX.
Tel. 01253 772073.

Vice-Chairman - MIKE TOLLEY
50 Sion Close, Ribbleson, Preston,
PR2 6RP.
Tel. 01772 713817.

Membership Secretary -
JOANNA GOORNEY
267 Norbreck Road, Little Bispham,
Blackpool, FY5 1PE
Tel. 01253 826080

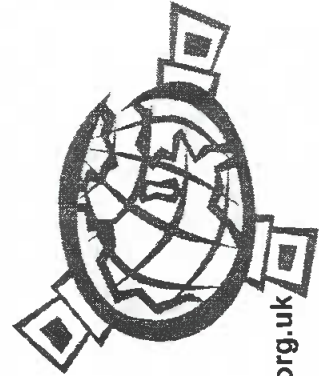
Secretary - MIKE PENN
7 Ribble Avenue, Freckleton, PR4 1RU
Tel. 01772 632579

Treasurer - ANDY HIRD
7 Hacklands Avenue, Lea, Preston,
PR2 1 XY.
Tel. 01772 769337

Booking Secretary -
CHRIS THITSTLETHWAITE
Old Stone Trough Cottage, Kelbrook,
Barnoldswick, BB8 6LW
Tel. 01282 844668

Hut Custodian Stair -
ANDY DUNHILL &
CHRISTINE BARBIER
School House, Church Lane, Riding Mill,
Northumberland, NE44 6DS.
Tel. 01434 682018

British Mountaineering Council
177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB
Tel: 0161 445 4747
Fax: 0161 445 4500
email: office@thebmc.co.uk
website: www.thebmc.co.uk



FMC Website

www.fyldemc.org.uk

Hut Custodian Langdale—CHRIS BELL
10 Hall Road, Fulwood, Preston.
PR2 9QD
Tel. 01772 774072

Social Secretary - HENRY IDDON
104 Bispham Road, Blackpool, FY2 ONN.
Tel. 01253 353916.

Editor - JOHN DENMARK
128 Watling Street Road, Fulwood,
Preston, PR2 8AH
Tel. 01772 700327
e-mail john@denmark.demon.co.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

JOHN WISEMAN
24 Tarn Road, Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5
5AX.
Tel. 01253 826594.

LES WARD
65 School Lane, Newton,
Preston, PR4 3RT.
Tel. 01772 684681.

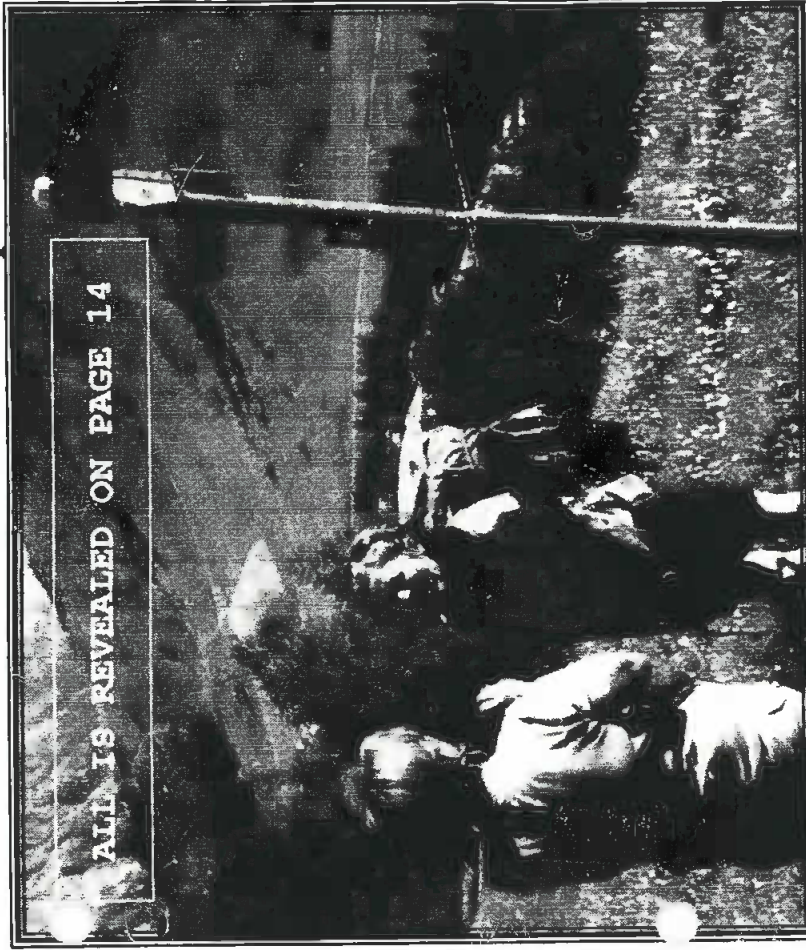
STEVE WRIGLEY
15 East Cliffe, Lytham, FY8 5DX
Tel. 01253 731710

MIKE SISSONS
16 Richards Way, Thornton Cleveleys,
FY5 3TJ
Tel. 01253 857929



Founded in 1950

NEWSLETTER Volume 1 April 2002



ALL IS REVEALED ON PAGE 14

MEMBERS OF THE VON TRAPP FAMILY?

OR

FMC LADIES SING "THE HAPPY WANDERER"?"

Editor's bit

As I write this on a sunny morning in April I am reminded of some of the club members having a top time in Sardinia. Some people have all the fun!

It is with some sadness, however, that I have had to include obituaries to three prominent and very active members of the club, Sylvia Legge, Brian Osborne and Fred Snaylam. All three enjoyed the great outdoors and their passing is a loss to all who new them.

Dave Earle accuses me of being a 'slave driving swine', making him pen two of the obituary notices while the sun is shining. He should be so lucky; I've got to decipher his epistles and then type! And the sun is still shining!

Chris Bell, the new custodian of the **Langdale hut** has asked me to give the **working weekend** at the hut a plug. So, come on, all you DIYers, give Chris a hand on the **18/1 May**. I've heard talk of free nosh.

Sadly, for my part, I'll have to miss it as my bike and I have a prior engagement with 34 cols in the Pyrenees. I could be prompted into writing a report if anyone is interested.

Chris has also asked me to inform everyone that the dreaded dehumidifier at the Langdale Hut is now working. He would like to know if anyone has any problems with it.

John Wiseman has asked me to point out that the club is a member of an organisation called "Friends of the Lake District", and their publications should be available in the huts for all to read. Not all of the publications .

however, because I've still got some here in Wapping.

On the subject of FOULD, I'm not sure that they promote a friendly face to those of us who like access to the hill and wide open spaces for recreation. Perhaps this could be a forum for some discussion. It's about time we had some debate or controversy.

Lot's to read in this edition but not so many pictures (none!). I fibbed. I wrote this before I added the piccies!

A couple of advertisements from Mike Penn near the back and Steve Wrigley tells me that he still hasn't sold his boots. Come on!! It's costing him a small fortune to keep placing his advert.

All of you will be delighted to know that I have been asked to put on an FMC Orienteering Challenge, to see if anyone can really read a map and use a compass. Format undecided at the moment, but the little wood is booked. I can promise you it will be fun and informative

JD

Dear British Mountaineering Council Club Members,

CHEAP AND AFFORDABLE HOLIDAYS TO THE FRENCH ALPS AND AUSTRIAN TYROL

SUMMER IN THE MOUNTAINS 2002

Mountain Guides walking & Hiking

Paragliding Canyoning & Rafting

Balloonning Summer Skiing

Horse Riding Mountain Biking

Ice skating Adventure Park

Fishing Roller Blading

Sports & Fitness Centres

Scenic rail journeys



If the question of where to go for your summer break presents a conundrum.....the solution could be in the enclosed Club Cantabrica Direct brochure!

Our own club hotels and chalets are ideally located for easy access to all that our beautiful alpine locations have to offer - a seemingly limitless choice whether you are in search of some real action, excitement and adventure, or just looking to relax in breathtaking scenery and take in the clear mountain air.

Travel choices- BY COACH with local departures throughout the U.K.

BY AIR with a choice of low cost airlines from Liverpool, Manchester,

Luton, Stanstead Gatwick etc

SELF DRIVE for a flexible holiday

FLY DRIVE - collect your hire car at the airport

Whether for special interest groups, a truly enjoyable family holiday, action and adventure breaks or that romantic interlude away from the crowds, our destinations provide an eclectic mix of possibilities for everyone.

The ideal solution to that elusive alternative summer break - and with universal appeal

For mountain holidays see pages 14 - 19 of the enclosed blue Club Cantabrica Direct brochure. For further information or reservations:

CALL US ON 01727 815766 quoting reference ALPS/BMCI.

If anyone is interested, I have fore they hit box 13. The holiday brochures. However, as days on offer do look good, usual I am swamped with paper though. and they won't last too long be- JD

Treasurers update

Yes, yes I know money is boring (unless you have pots of it). Some people get to talk about daring exploits in the mountains.....I get money matters. You will all be expecting updates on current affairs next!

At the AGM a number of you queried the expenditure on electricity in 2001 compared to 2000.

A reminder of the total electricity costs, per year for both huts:
Year1999 Year2000 Year2001
£1340.96 £1117.51 £1648.34

In 2001 I paid 10 bills, however in 2000 I only paid 8 bills. This will account for a small discrepancy in amounts. Late bills in 2000 were

actually paid in early 2001. I base the accounts on the date the cheque was written, not the billing date. I am happy to be corrected on this for those budding accountants out there. Please bear in mind that this is my hobby!! I would also like to go climbing occasionally.

If you reduce the 2001 figure and increase the 2000 figure by the same amount, in this case £103.75 (the first bill paid in 2001 for electricity used in 2000), the balance across the three years is clearer. Note that the 1999 costs were also higher than the 2000 costs.

You did ask! And don't leave the fire on at Stair when returning from the local hostelry.

Andrew Hird

Anyone interested in doing the Circuit of Mont Blanc?



Provisional dates 22 June to 7 July
Contact Mike Penn 01772 632575

Sylvia Legge 16th December 1918—24th December 2001

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Sylvia Legge of Lickbarrow Lodge, Windermere.

Sylvia was an Original Member and Honorary member of the FMC and, together with her husband Raymond, staunchly supported the club in all its early mountaineering and money-raising activities.

After the death of Raymond, Sylvia played an active part in interests in and around Windermere. These included Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Ambleside Field Society, The Civic Society, Bowness Women's Insti-

tute and Enjoy your Leisure.

Sylvia was such a warm-hearted and hospitable lady. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

She leaves two sons, Adrian and Paul.

Dorothy Jowett

life, along with his kind and helpful manner to all.

Brian started his working life as an electrician for the Tower Company, apprenticed to FMC member Les Lord. He soon learned the trick, when working outside, of falling off the structure onto his harness much to the consternation of tourists and management alike. He later moved to British Aerospace where he worked as a design engineer for electrical systems.

By the mid 1950's he had joined FMC and soon became a fit and experienced fell-walker and climber. He also taught himself to ski and became very proficient in moving through the mountains on planks of wood. His enthusiasm for the hill lasted to the very end of his

At the same time he was an excellent ballad singer and performed both solo and with fellow FMC member Alan Bell, before they joined with two other local musicians and formed the Blackpool Folk Club, and the Blackpool Taverners Folk Group. The rest is, of course, history.

When the Taverners finally disbanded he reverted to solo gigs, plus working with Alan and others on an ad hoc basis. His song writing and clear, beautiful voice were a delight.

He continued to support the club in many fields, particularly the skiing

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

holidays and the "old lags" meets, where he proved to be the youngest looking old lag ever.

Retirement gave him more time both for the club and for the hill, and he was able to give time to such projects as "wardening" the Skye hut along with Frank Lord. On the 25th March, whilst fishing at Port Patrick, he slipped and fell. His struggles for survival faltered suddenly and Gordon Heywood and Frank Lord were unable to recover him, a task performed minutes later by the Life Boat. But it was too late.

The club extends its very deepest sympathies to his wife, Jean, his daughters, Elaine and Diane, his mother, Maureen, his grandchildren and his many close friends, whether in mountaineering, the church, music or elsewhere, but especially Gordon and Frank.

A young life tragically ended prematurely, but a life lived to the full with a mixture of adventure in equal measure.

And personal memories? Skiing down in the dark from a high Dolomite hut after an evening of festivities and song, but especially ski touring in the Valais and Appennine Alps. Glorious mountains, superb weather and snow, peace, quietude, drama and beauty. And companionship of the highest order.

Fred Snaylam

Newly arrived in the North-West, I was directed to an obscure part of Preston on the Friday night trip to the mountains. Out of a small terraced house, seemingly far too small for him, burst forth a figure of enormous energy, with an ear-to-ear grin that made Mick Tolley appear merely amiable. Fred Snaylam was on his way to the mountain once again. His boundless energy and enthusiasm for the hill in particular was huge. It was difficult not to have a good time with him around.

Eventually, England became too small for him and he moved to The United States, where he set up a hamburger stall in Boulder, Colorado. Here he continued to devote his life to mountaineering, climbing in many of the great ranges with undiminished enthusiasm.

He maintained his links with FMC and when last over here gave us a slide show of his world of mountaineering. This had over twice the number of slides for a show of that time span; a typical "Snaylamism".

Just before Easter he was climbing at La Grave with an English friend from the days at the Salutation Inn in Ambleside. They were swept away by an avalanche and Fred did not survive. His memorial service in Boulder was attended by some three hundred, but his burial service was held in Preston, where his mother, a tiny lady with equal boundless en-

(Continued on page 5 col 1)

**ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEW
FEET
PLEEEEEEESE!**

La Sportiva Nepal Extreme

(Those sexy looking yellow technical ice climbing boots which are extremely comfy if you buy the right size !)

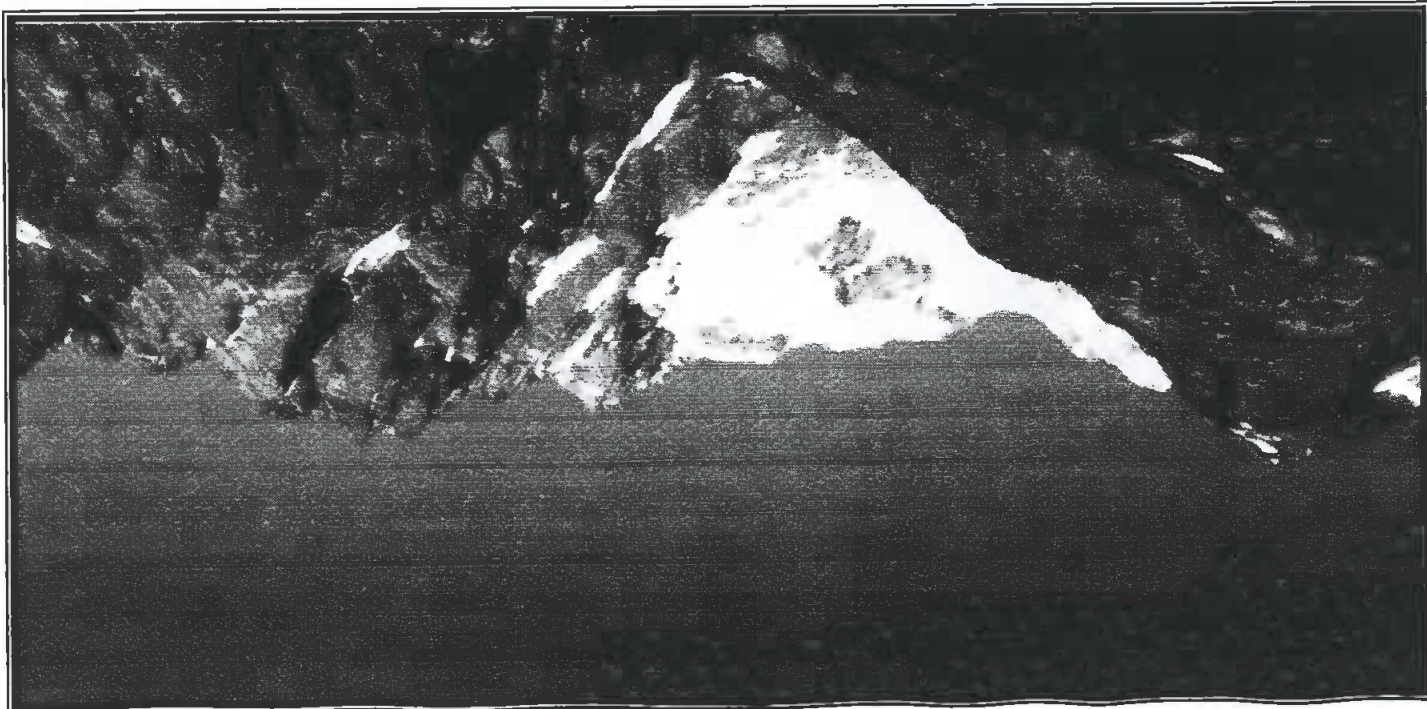
Size 46

As New (Too Small)

£120

Contact S. Wrigley

**BUY MY
BOOTS**



Another fine photograph of the scenery on the Tour of Mont Blanc. Mike Penn is inviting members to see it all in the flesh so to speak. Details are on page 22.

GONG for FMC MEMBER

Stewart Ainsley Sykes MBE

Stewart was awarded the Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Years Honours List for his work with young people in the area through the "Windmill Group".

Stewart founded this group during his career as a police officer and the name is derived from its first equipment store which was in one of the surviving windmills which characterize the Fylde. He has continued to head the group in his retirement

and many youngsters in the area have benefited from the spirit of adventure which is the ethos of the group.

I'm sure that Stewart won't mind a little plug here for funds; charitable donations are always welcome, as well as helping him to introduce young people to FMC.

So, if you are able to help in any way, you can contact Stewart on 01253 761598

(Continued from page 4)

ergy, still lives. The club sends its condolences to his family for the premature end to a life lived to the full.

Dave Earle

DOWN HEARTED?

BORED STIFF?

CHEER YOURSELF UP

BY BUYING...

(wait for it!)

FMC T SHIRT!

An

Contact Mike Penn

BONFIRE MEET REPORT 3rd and 4th November 2001

Bring your own fireworks and have a good display. A team got onto rock on the Saturday then headed for the pub, where the advanced shopping group (led by Dave Earle) was waiting. Your meet leader eventually left them there and went to prepare the bonfire. In the evening the fire sent its sparks to the sky and the bangs of the exploding rockets lit up the Newlands valley, the whole celebration being helped by Phil on the saw and axe, and Team Sissons on the mulled wine. At half time we went to

John

the Swinside for more refreshments and when they would sell us no more we returned for the rest of the fireworks. Phil demonstrated his mental ability by bending metal Uri Geller style and the next morning Dave showed true craftsmanship by carefully and accurately unbending the same metal! While all this was going on and people were gradually leaving for the hills Martin performed his chairman's role by gently snoring in his pit seemingly oblivious to the cups of tea being offered.

Macintyre Hut, Onich: CIC Hut, Ben Nevis 15th - 20th February 2002

Twelve people attended the Onich meet but only three ventured up to the CIC hut. Due to poor conditions and a cold, I did nothing of merit for the whole visit, except to watch England destroy the Irish on the TV in the pub. Along with many others I got VERY DRUNK in the Clachaig on Saturday evening. (I am reliably informed that Les

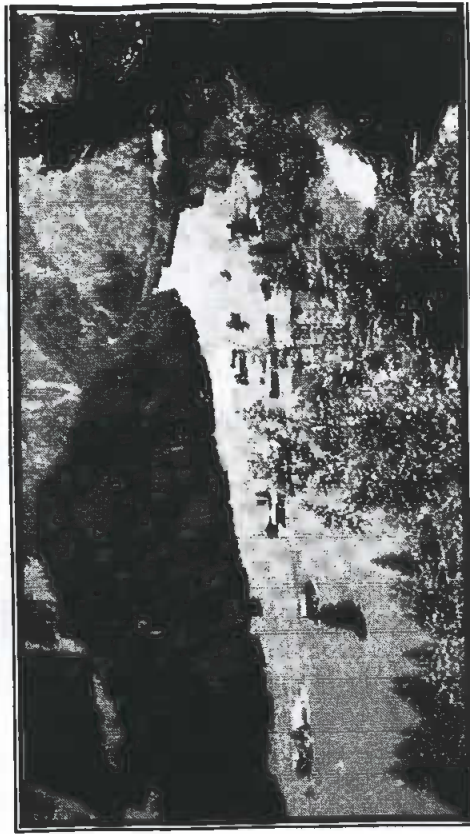
Les Ward

ings - the last day. Looking forward to being home but also loving the walking and the scenery. We climbed north east to the Col de Balme. It was very cold and misty on top so we were glad of the hot chocolate at the refuge up there. This col is the border so it was back into Switzerland and down the valley, past the most amazing old cattle barns built into the shelter of the hillside, to cross the Trident river at le Peuty. We had our lunch on the hillside overlooking the village. After le Peuty we had one last ascent to finish at Col de la Forclaz. Will and I finished together holding hands and big hugs all round. We had done it. All that remained was a shower, put on normal clothes and repacking for the journey home. We had a last meal together with far too much

alcohol on my part. So what's new!!.
Ascent 921m, descent 865m, 6 miles.

On a personal note I found it the hardest thing I had ever done. It wasn't the distances, but the steepness of some of the climbs. At times I had my doubts about whether or not I would get round, so I was only too happy to use the cable car when the opportunity arose thereby missing the climb out of Courmayeur and the ascent of le Brevant.

Sue Denmark



who had aspirations to build it all the way to the top like the one on Snowdon. After the ice cream we carried on down through the woods to Les Chavants. A charming walk, today, where we saw harebells, campanula and huge snails. This large refuge was good with excellent food and good beer, although noisy at times. We sat in the evening and watched the last of the sun change the snow covered slopes of Mont Blanc to a beautiful pink colour. Jenny by now was going down with the flu bug.

Ascent 745m, decent 1195m, 6 miles, time 8 hrs.

Day 11

From les Chavants we walked to Les Houches for the shopping and phone calls then began the extremely long and steep climb up to le Brevant, past the Christ Roi statue and the Parc animalier at Merlet. It was then a steep descent through snow to Planpraz. From there it is the most wonderful walk along the Grand Balcon Sud to la Flagere, with wonderful views across the whole Mont Blanc range. We saw beautiful star-flowers on the way. This is a small refuge, close to the top of the telepherique. The accommodation was good but the ambience was not brilliant. Drank a bit too much leading to slight hangover the next day.

Ascent 1575m, descent 648m, 6 miles, time 9hrs

Day 12

Set off along the Grand Balcon Sud

with views to the north of the Aiguilles Rouge and to the south of the Aiguilles Verte and Les Dru, together with the enormous Mer de Glace and the Glacier d'Argentiere. We also saw blue mountain asters, marmots and an ibex. From the end of the ridge we descended very steeply to the Col des Montets past a nature reserve that had specimens of all the different alpine plants. We ate our picnic lunch at the reserve before climbing over the end of a ridge to drop down to le Tour. From the ridge you see the memorial and ruins of houses destroyed by an avalanche that swamped part of the village of Montruc killing 22 people in 1998. The refuge at le Tour sits directly below the Glacier du Tour that is used for glacier practice by a lot of outdoor activity centres. The accommodation and food here is excellent.

Ascent 500m, descent 910m, time 6hrs.

Day 13 – Rest Day

It felt strange having a rest day here so close to the end but the weather was stunning and we all found things to do. Activities included a telecabine and walk up to the ridge above the village, shopping in Chamonix, a visit back to the nature reserve, a sleep by the river or just sitting on the balcony soaking up the sun with a beer. Excellent!! We finished the day with a celebratory meal for Derek's 50th birthday.

Day 14

Left le Tour with very mixed feel-

IL CASCATISTI

By Martin Bennett

Following a brief exploratory trip made last year by Stefano Wrigolio and Martino Beneto (at the suggestion of Kevin of Leigh) to the Val di Cogne near Aosta, and due to their VERY favourable findings, a meet was organised for January 2002. The object of the exercise was to climb frozen waterfalls which form in abundance on either side of a pair of steep sided glaciated valleys which descend Northwards from the Gran Paradiso towards Cogne. Now the objective word here is 'frozen'. It never occurred to us that there may be seasons when they weren't!

In 2001 in temperatures down to minus 15 degrees C in the village these falls were indeed frozen. Solid. In 2002 we were lucky if it froze overnight down in the valley and with typical FMC 'early' starts often found ourselves with extra problems (and fear) to overcome due to the copious quantities of water

cascading behind, through, or over the ice. This was well felt on the afternoon of our arrival.

We hired cars at Turin and found our apartment block (this description does not do justice to the palatial accommodation provided for us by the lovely Sara at 'Maison Pierrot'). We were not of course content to go for a gentle exploratory stroll in the 3 hours of daylight remaining to us after our £3.49 (6 Euros) each way Ryanair flight. We must get a route in! Arriving in numbers at the foot of adjacent falls called L'Auson and Thoule, graded 3 or 4 depending on precise route followed, we chose four separate lines and attacked in force. Tollo and Beneto even persuaded D'aleo to leave his snowboard behind and kick some ice to bits. And that's what we did. Kick it to bits. Our considerable expenditure on state of the art super ice screws was to no avail; alas their security in the hollow ice was but illusory. As Mike and Martin followed me up

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this supposed grade 3 the hollow booms of their cramp-poned boots hitting the thin sheet of ice separated from the underlying rock by air and water echoed round the valley. This made me more aware of the tenuous nature of the climbing than when I was on it. The other teams (Wrigolio and Brookio; Fenno and Gasconi; Leo and Sissoni) fared rather better than us regarding quality of ice but had to contend with steeper gradients.

Thus ended the first round of the campaign. A very pleasant restaurant was found for an evening meal, now in the company of Alpeelio who had arrived from a business trip in Brescia (Not content with £3.49 each way air fare he had to arrange his affairs so it went on expenses!). Then all to bed except the meet leader who had the sole privilege of waiting up for the arrival of 2 more latecomers expected in the valley at around 1.00 am. Did I say sole? When it was realised that the waiting was to be done in a bar instant compan-

ions were found in the shape of D'aleo and Leeco! The late arrivals were guests on the meet by the names of Cec Rhodes(io) and Bill Deakin (io), friends of mine from almost as far back as Tollio.

Next day the team spread itself out all over the region in search of longer routes with better, drier and thicker ice. And we found it. It turned out our venue for the day before, chosen for it's single pitch routes and short approaches was about as bad as it got. Mike and I headed for Il Cascata di Lillaz. We had to begin early as the walk to the foot of this 250 metre route is all of 15 minutes! It proved an ideal first full day out. Steep pitches up to 80 degrees interspersed with walks up a picturesque gorge to reach the next pitch. Each pitch was wide enough to permit the passage of 2 or more climbers simultaneously and in this way we finished ahead of 2 other British parties already there when we arrived. And Mike grabbed the last lead in the sun. Excellent. We even had time to locate a ten metre

Chapieux where we ate our picnic. After this we had a long, hard climb northwards up to the Refuge du Col de la Croix du Bonhomme. Saw Marmots on the way over the Col de la Seigne. Arrived cold and very, very tired. Bonhomme is enormous and is run by three really nice, but eccentric French guys. It was the highest refuge we visited and has no road support so everything has to be carried up apart from one helicopter drop at the beginning of the season. Having said this the food was excellent all accompanied by the most wonderful home-made bread.

Ascent 1375m, descent 1095m, 11 miles, time 9.5 hrs.

Day 8 - Rest day

We were all glad of the rest especially Will and Derek who were the latest to go down with the sore throats and coughs. We were also glad because the weather had turned atrocious with high winds and driving sleet. Later we heard that four climbers and their guide had died on Mont Blanc that day. We used the opportunity to do some washing, write postcards and sleep. Bonhomme looked after us very well. Tried Gentian, a local liqueur. Mmm!!

Day 9

Left Bonhomme with great sadness. It was a wonderful place and we were leaving the more remote parts of the Tour. The Swiss and Italian sections are where you feel that you are among the mountains

whereas in France you feel as if you are viewing them from afar. Back to the trip, we contoured to the Col du Bonhomme then a long descent to la Balme for coffee then on to Contamines for shopping and a sumptuous picnic Sunday lunch in the main square. Stocked up on cough medicine for the invalids and made phone calls home. Leaving Contamines we climbed steeply out of the town and on up through the woods to Chalets du Truc. This was a tiny Refuge on a working farm. There were no showers but its situation and the views more than made up for this. We finished off the meal with 'fromage blanc' a cross between yoghurt and cottage cheese - wonderful. The sleeping arrangements were very cramped but after watching the most wonderful sunset we got our usual excellent nights sleep.

Ascent 620m, descent 1390m, 12miles, 10hrs.

Day 10

From le Truc we walked over the shoulder of Mont Truc and down to Miage, a picturesque hamlet with a lovely looking refuge. From there it was a killer climb up to the Col de Tricot and from there down to the snout of the Bionnassay Glacier. This is crossed on a scary suspension bridge. It was then up the hill a short way for the picnic and then down to the Col de Vosa for ice creams and a good look at the Tramway du Mont Blanc. This amazing little train climbs up from St Gervais les Bains to high up on the slopes of Mont Blanc and was built by an eccentric English man

down the ridge and road to Arnüva. Here there is a bus terminus and restaurant. Then a steep climb and fantastic balcony walk took us to the shepherds hut at Gioè. It was then a long walk through the snow and the Alp Superior di Malatra. From there up to the Pas entre deux Saux for a lunch stop, down to the Armina Torrent, up to the Col Sapin followed by a killer climb over Tete Bernard and down the long ridge of Mont de la Saxe to Rifugio Bertone. From the ridge we could look down on the entrance to the Mont Blanc tunnel now a construction site following the fire and the fantastic new road that is being put in to join it to the rest of Italy. A long day but a delightful small refuge that has been run by the same family since the 1930's. Here we had views down to Courmayeur and up to the pinnacle of Mont Chetif, which is topped by a statue of the Madonna. The day was overcast with some sunny periods.

Ascent 1170m, descent 1095m, 10.5 miles, time 9 hrs.

Day 6

Leaving Bertone we descended steeply through the woods to Courmayeur. Here we had time to shop and make a phone call home. Courmayeur also has the headquarters of the Italian Alpine Guides and there is a very moving statue to one of the early guides who died on the mountains. His dog was found close to the body faithfully guarding it and it also features in the statue. Leaving Courmayeur it was a very steep climb up to the Plan

grade 4 ice wall beside the descent to test our ability on steeper (90 degrees) ground. And were still in the bar by 4.00 pm.

The other teams had fared as well as us and success was had on routes such as L'achéronte (a 400 metre grade 3 gully "like Scotland but with a 1 hour approach, perfect ice throughout, 2 bolts at each stance and an abseil descent) and Mur di Patri (A four pitch grade 3 approach to choice of 3, 4, 4+ or 5 final pitches (or do a few - you can ab off one to reach another). The snowboarding/skiing team had a fine time at Pila, a resort above Aosta and reached from there by a long telecabin ride itself a half hour drive from Cogne.

More late-comers were to be met that night in the shape of Kev Stevens and another guest Colin Matthews. This time the meet leader's privileged wait up was a short solitary sojourn for we had found an even nicer restaurant with a lively cellar bar so most were still around until shortly before their arrival.

The rest of the meet went on in similar vein. All would rise for breakfast (served by the apartment proprietor, this being an "apart hotel" - best of both worlds) at sevenish (not the skiers!) with several climbing parties and always a board/ski team heading off down the valley each day to eg Pila, La Thuile/La Rosiere, Cervinia. On the Saturday D'aleo and Sissoni arrived back from Pila with our Milanese candidate Paulio Taylori, who stayed the night before skiing next day and then back home to Milan.

For those determined to take their ice climbing fixes in the true Scottish manner there are plenty of more remote venues. Two parties made the two and a half hour approach to a grade 3+ called Flash Estivo, only one of a number of three star routes in the vicinity. Even with the abseil descent, since the walk home is scarcely quicker than the approach, this makes for a pretty strenuous day. Yet further afield is an area which the guide book promises will

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give "assured tranquillity"

Some of the most exciting experiences seem to have been had in an adjacent valley (about an hour's drive) called Val Savaranche. This isn't in the UK available French guide book but all is revealed in the locally obtained Itie version. This valley offers medium to long routes with very short approaches. In the too warm conditions of late Jan 2002 they provided some 'melting moments' for those who ventured over there. The A team of Leeo and Wrigolio, not content with an experience on an undergraded 4+ which demanded rests on ice screws, returned for the full monty. This was a grade 6 with 2 pitches on wet overhanging ice mushrooms followed by over 1000 feet of say grade 3 which wasn't completed until dark. Inevitably with only one head torch between them the stumble through the unfamiliar pine forests was quite time consuming!

For our Val Savaranche ex-

perience we finished up on a rope of five on the crux pitch of Cascata di Rovinaud - a so-called grade 4. Most of the pitch was so wet we were forced to follow a steeper line to find solidity (?). After bashing away at a load of fragile stalactites one realised one had created an overhang. This was passed with one foot on a projecting rock and the other in the noonday mush of the main stream! The rest was excellent even in those conditions and in a good year must give a three star route with a 10 minute approach and a pleasant stroll down through the forest to finish.

And that's the story of the trip really. Except to say there's a newly developed sport called "Doing a Fenna". This entails moving fast up easy angled ice (the more pitches below the easy bit the more exciting) until you find some unexpectedly diamond hard ice which your casually administered tools bounce off. Now the good bit. You then find yourself flat on your back accelerating past your second towards the

milk. We walked down to Issert for coffee, then to the charming hamlet of Praz de Fort, passing ruined fortifications in the cliffs left from the last war. At Prez de Fort we had a picnic by the river. After that it was a very steep climb up the Crete de Saleina then steadily up the valley among small hamlets. Here the houses were three stories and built on stilts. The family lived at the top over the hay store. Often the cattle were housed in the bottom during the winter months. All the houses had fabulous vegetable gardens. In the summer the older members of the family and the young children took the cattle up to the high pastures whilst the younger more active members stayed in the valleys cutting the hay and growing the vegetables for the winter. However this way of life is slowly dying out and a lot of the houses are now summer homes for the people from the cities. Eventually we reached La Fouly at the head of the valley and the nights rest. La Fouly has a lovely looking campsite, gear shop and small supermarket. It gave us our first glimpse of the high mountains with Mont Dolent and the Glacier de l'A Neuve. The weather was superb with wall to wall blue skies and 80 degrees. Here we settled into our usual routine of showers, clothes washing and a beer before the evening meal. The flow-ers had again been stunning with Turks Head Lilies and Alpine Cowslips.

Ascent 690m, descent 550m, 9.6 miles

Day 4

From La Fouly we walked south along side the river, the banks of which had been badly damaged during the winter, and then climbed up into the meadows above the hamlet of Ferret. We then continued along the mountainside to La Peule. This path was much higher than the traditional track taken but meant that we had superb views and saw the stunning carpet of flowers in the meadows. At La Peule we had coffee at a traditional high summer farm which was also a fromagerie. Nothing here was wasted. The whey from the cheese making was fed to a number of piglets kept on the farm as well as the cattle. We were able to buy cheese for the picnic. After that it was a steady climb to the Grand Col Ferret. We had lunch on the way up at Creux de la Chaudiere. The climb also gave us our first walk in the snow. Once over the Col it was into Italy and a very steep descent to the Rifugio Elena. This was a large, new refuge, built 6 years ago, as an avalanche had destroyed the old one. From the terrace we could gaze over the snouts of the huge Pre de Bar and Triolet glaciers. The facilities were good with excellent showers, spacious sleeping area and wonderful pasta. The flowers we saw that day were Pasque, tiny Fritillaries, Moss Campion and Edelweiss. Also lots of Choughs around. We still had the good weather.

Ascent 1065m, descent 620m, 6 miles

Day 5

After leaving Elena we walked

The ladies do the Tour du Mont Blanc - Clockwise

30/06/01 - 14/07/01

Participants - Delphine Stockton, Jenny Tolley and Sue Denmark from FMC together with Gill, Val, Will, Miles, Chris, Barry, Ted and Derek.

The idea of attempting the TMB came about one rash moment on a Ladies meet in the summer of 2000. Gill, a friend from the Chester Club had done it once and fancied another go. The idea caught on and so three sets of sisters set off for an adventure. We went with Ramblers Holidays, which was great because they make all the arrangements. I know the idea of a 'led' holiday doesn't appeal to some but for me who had not done any walking in the Alps or hut to hut trips before it was great to have someone to 'hold my hand' as it were. However for anyone wanting to put their own trip together I have a full list of the refuges we stayed at.

Day One

Flew Manchester to Geneva with Jenny, Delphine, Gill, Barry and Ted. Met up with Will on a flight from Bordeaux and Chris, Miles, Derek and Val from London. Paul, the leader was already there. We travelled by train to Martigny, then

by kami kazi taxi to the first nights accommodation at Col de la Forclaz. The taxi was late arriving so we had a beer in Martigny. It was a good icebreaker while we all started to get to know one another. The dormitory was aptly nicknamed 'The Black Hole'. We spent the evening repacking our sacks and weighing them. Most weighed between 18 and 25 lbs.

Day Two

Up at 6.30 a.m. which became the pattern and after breakfast started walking at 8 a.m. The items for the picnic lunch were shared out among us. We contoured up through woodland and high alpine meadows to Alpage de Bovine. This was a working cattle farm where the family and the cattle move up into the high pastures for the summer and supplement their income by serving refreshments to passing walkers. After coffee here we carried on down to meadows at Pocreu for a sumptuous picnic lunch which became the norm, on down to a restaurant at Plan de l'Eau for a beer and eventually to Champex for the night. Very pretty spot with shops and bars. Good accommodation and good food. The weather was excellent with blue skies. There were lots of fabulous alpine flowers and the sound of cowbells all the way.

Ascent 750m, descent 1230m, 9 miles.

Day 3

Up early again. Fabulous breakfast of muesli soaked in full cream

yawning void of the steep below. Your second (in the case of the first known game of this exciting activity, one M Tolley) now joins in the fun. He has been fortunate enough to arrange a (slackish) belay rather than choose to move together on the easy angled part. His fun consists of also turning onto his back as he hangs from his belay head down the slope fielding his partner with a waist belay! All very funny (and 'Mug' material?) we thought until in turn almost all of us had occasion to pass by the very large quantity of deep red ice beneath the Mur di Patri final pitches. This, we learned from locals, resulted from the death of a climber some days before in very similar circumstances. Clearly he had not been sufficiently aware of the consequences of a slip in these surroundings to take belays on the easy stuff. Here endeth the lesson!

A further 'mug' experience was had at the ski resort of La Thuile. Lining up in the middle for a 3 man chair lift Stuarto Gasconi failed to realise the speed of approach of the chair. Whilst companions Alpeelio and Beneto sat neatly down said mug candidate had his feet taken from under him, sat on the snow and was conveyed along it for some distance sliding on the shiny material covering his arse. Confusion reigned. Companions showed due sympathy - Not! Incidentally La Thuile may not be the best ski venue in the world but for views of the incredibly close-up S face of Mont Blanc, Grandes Jorasses, Geant, Gran Paradiso and distantly, The Matterhorn, it has no rival.

All agreed, even in a lean year, we'd had excellent sport and most are already muttering about doing it again next year. As was arranged this year there'll probably be a one week team (off season mid week to mid week to get the air fares) and a long weekend (Thur to

HUT AVAILABILITY

As both myself and the new booking secretary, Chris Thislethwaite will be in Sardinia over Easter, here is a list of hut availability.

April 6-11	either hut
April 12-13	Stair
April 13-18	either hut
April 19-20	Chester swap so only the Chester hut is available plus Heathy Lea in Derbyshire with Joanna Goorney
April 21-25	either hut
April 26-27	Stair
April 28-May 2	Stair
May 3-9	Langdale or camping in Dorset
May 10-11	Stair

It would be advisable to book in to check if you are going midweek as late outside bookings may take place. This is only when both huts are available.

MIKE TOLLEY



Working Week-end, Stair, 2/3 February 2002.

This was a well attended working weekend with 9 people working very productively during a weekend of driving rain and gale force winds. Most of us were glad to have an excuse not to go on the hill since just standing out of the front door involved some effort against the wind.

On Friday evening, Andy & I arrive at the hut to find a Chester Club member who though this was an exchange meet weekend. Fortunately, this was the only Chester member to turn up on the ghost meet. I thank the Chester member who work very hard alongside the FMC members, when it was made clear that he was under no obligation to do any work whatsoever.

Work carried out includes:

- * All doors re-varnished, including fire doors
- * All kitchen woodwork re-varnished, except food box area which was done previously
- * Walls in drying room repainted
- * New panel to inside of front door
- * Lady and Gent loos: full clean up
- * Kitchen and main room windows cleaned
- * Light fitting in main room replaced
- * Skis fixed onto wall
- * Old furniture cleared out
- * Outside drains and gutters cleared out
- * Outside gravel raked

The team comprised of (some for part of week end):
anon (Chester Club) (everyone has forgotten the name, sorry)
John Denmark, Sue Denmark, Dave Earle, Clare Kenny, Martin Dale, Mike Penn, Andy Dunhill, Christine Barbier.

Christine Barbier