



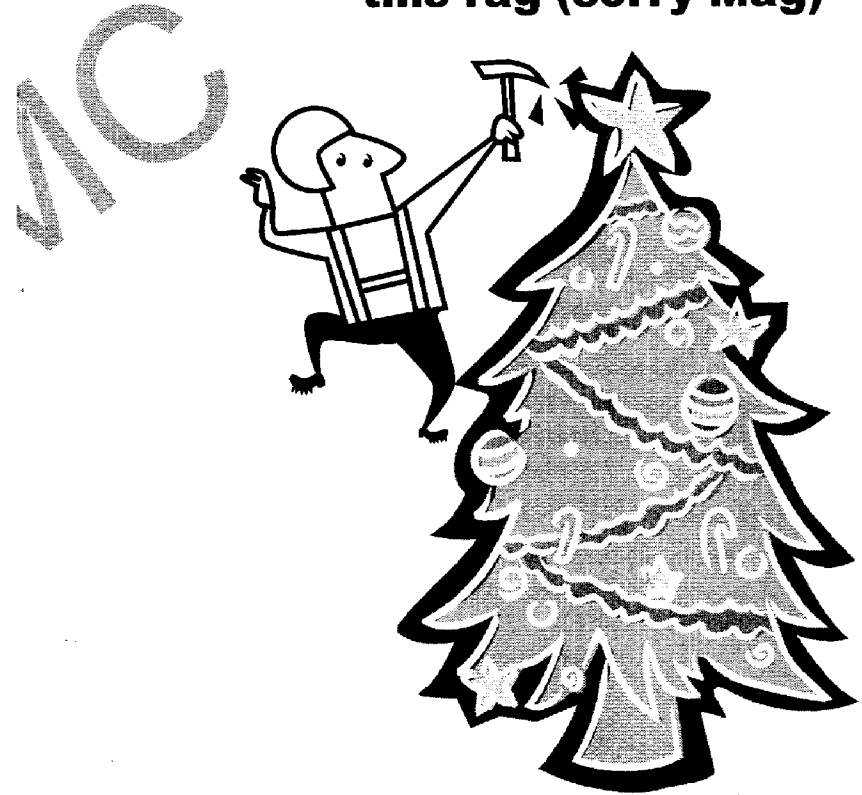
Fyde Mountaineering Club

Founded in 1950

NEWSLETTER

December 2003

**Festive Greetings to all FMC Members,
their families and friends who may read
this rag (sorry Mag)**



Future Meets Information

Update to the Real Ale Supping, Mountain Biking, Winter Walking meet at Stair, 7th and 8th of February: Clive Bell is providing a Bangers and Mash supper on the Saturday (I suppose he'll have veggie bangers as well for those who request it. Ed) Please inform the meet leader, Martin Dale in advance so that Clive can calculate the banger and spud numbers.

Socials for your Diary

All at the Raikes Hotel, Blackpool starting at 8.30 pm.

Wed 10th December 2003

Tim Emmett - More wacky fun from the curly haired one including big wall antics in Yosemite and Base jumping/free fall parachuting!

Wed 21st January 2004

No idea what this one's going to be. More than likely I've lost the information and M Dale will tell me off when this hits his doormat!

Wed 18th February 2004

Members' Slides: Les Ward, Dave Earle, Steve Wrigley and John Wiseman.

Editor's bit

Some meet reports missing at the time of going to press; I'm sure that the membership would like to hear the tales of hardship and derring-do from the troglodytes and the fell runners plus a glowing report of those who rendered the Stair hut spick and span recently. I'm not complaining really or having a go-I found my syllabus and looked at what I could have expected from the respective meet leaders. Perhaps next time eh?

In order to improve the quality of images the club have purchased a laser printer which should prove cost effective in the long run, save me time and improve the quality. I haven't printed in bulk just at this moment in time, but I've had my stop watch on it and it will certainly match me running down to Office World for photocopying, then folding, then stuffing the envelopes and sealing them. I'll be able to do it all as they are printing.

The embedded images slow the printing down a bit but at least I don't have to use the car and wait around for the job to be printed, and...I'm in total control of the finished product. I'm just about to get Sue to proof read this edition, then it's fingers crossed for the printing!

John Denmark

PS I'm happy to carry on as Editor/publisher unless anyone else is eager to take over.

CORRIS MEETS 2003

No. 1

The first Corris meet was at the beginning of July and we nearly had a full hut, that sounds great but it is a small cottage next to a river and officially only sleeps nine.

Saturday dawned fine and the party set off for the hills. Mike found an expedition size first aid kit belonging to the Outward Bound, lying on the ground. Some poor lad would get a right B.....ing! Being Mike he had to add Cadair Idris to the walk and caught us up later but he met a ranger near the top and gave him the kit. He later learnt that an instructor had lost it, no doubt red faces all round (at least), but Mike had a letter of thanks.

Our walk continued in fine style, it was warm enough for us to have a leisurely lunch on the tops. For our evening meal Barrie was keen to go to Machynlleth to a pub that had a menu that included faggots and good beer. Eventually he persuaded everyone to go. Having ordered faggots for two and a pint he was happy - but not for long as the lady approached to say they had just sold the last faggots so he had to reorder, and that was just the start of his problems. The rest of us had chosen other dishes, which we enjoyed with the beer.

Sunday was also a fine day so Cadair was mooted. We did the optional extra of walking back to the hut from the top of the pass, only to find that the nice track had become a new black tarmac road. That was nearly a

disaster as we had gone a fair way up the hillside when for no obvious reason I remembered that I had left the hut key in our car in the Cadair Idris car park and we were not planning on returning to the car park, someone was going to drive me to it after tea. Oh the responsibilities of being a meet leader weighed heavy as I headed back down hill retrieved the key and sweated back up the hill - I'm sure it was further the second time.

No.2

Our second visit of the year should have seen me relaxing, but late on the meet leader had to cry off and asked me to take over. However he did persuade John and Claire to go so we had a full hut again. A blast from the past as Donald the duck made the meet - arriving on the Friday night without getting lost on the way. It was also nice to have John and Jenny Parker on a meet. We heard the details of the mechanics of the publication of his book of the Lake District Lakes, and how well it is selling - get your copy quickly before it sells out, John will sign it for you. You never know it might become a collectors item! (This must be the dodgiest piece of investment advice ever put in the newsletter).

Donald does not change, he was one of the first up on Saturday but we had to wait ten minutes for him to be ready to set off and that was after he had had several long visits to the one loo and created a queue for the loo. We had a walk in the foothills north of Cadair, Donald was exhausted - too much beer and he was the first to

go to the pub on Saturday night! John and Jenny did a shorter walk and explored while John and Claire went climbing on a new crag. They might have to amend the guidebook as John removed a few chunks off the rock.

Sunday was also fine, we went for a coastal walk getting back to find that Donald and Tris had done Cadair,

packed up and gone. John and Claire had gone climbing and John and Jenny were packing up. We were staying for a few more days, a bit of rest and recovery after our last holiday.

John Wiseman

Grit Sunday 16/11/03

Ten members attended; a big improvement on the four of last year.

Stanage was the venue and whilst the weather was pleasant when the sun shone, cold hands were experienced

by many climbers. Routes of all grades were climbed and the grit experience (which for some is quite unnerving!) was enjoyed by everyone.

Les Ward

FOR SALE

1 pair Asolo Supersoft plastic boots size 9

1 pair Grivel step in crampons.

Conditions of sale: somebody who will use them !

Price::: 2 pints of Timothy Taylor's Landlord !!!!.

Glenn Brooks 01772 828110

North Devon Meet

Just Melissa and myself made it down on Friday night, in time to crawl all three of Hartland's pubs, in reconnaissance for future sorties, of course. The rest of the meet were made up of the keen Lundy team, who landed back in Ilfracombe on Saturday. They had had a good week so the misty/drizzly weather did not hinder them too much, I think they went for a cream tea.

We set off for a walk, it was that bad. You could hardly see your hand in front of your face. We walked from Hartland Quay south towards Spekes Mill Mouth. On our arrival at the Mouth, the routes on the waterfall wall were decidedly damp and uninviting, so we climbed on to the top of Brownspear Point and had our butties. I then had one of my ideas, surely we could climb the slabby HVS Main Sail in the damp conditions?

The descent to the beach nearly proved too much for Melissa, who had more than one attempt to get down the shale before opting for the bum slide method. On the rock, it was reasonably ok, so I deviated onto a peg-protected E1 called "Steam Power" which turned out to be actually rather hard. We were both glad to have done something. The sun hadn't come out but the mist had lifted and a bit of a breeze was blowing.

Round on Spekes Mill, things were drying out. "Pressure Drop" E3 is a culm coast classic and with great gear was also going to go in the

damp. And so it did. Melissa was chuffed to follow it cleanly. The mist rolled in again as we headed off back to the pub. Mobile phone technology had advised us that the Lundyites were on Screda Point. Whoops from the top told us that it was indeed Mike Tolley. We were soon swapping stories in the pub. After the rather debilitating cream tea the others had managed a route or two at Screda.

Sunday was a much better day, and was spent climbing and swimming down at Vicarage Cliff. This was not before Andy Dunhill and his team had visited the Vicar in his tea room. The tide was on its way in but this did not deter Mike and Andy who traversed out above the briny to get to a Severe and a HVS. Both me and Melissa and Andy and Mick ascended the E2 "Harpoon", whilst the others, Andy Drinkall (great name), Paul Taylor and Christina did a severe. After the swimming, we all did an E1 called "Atomhead" which resided at the back of the cove, well away from the sea. Andy and Mick also did a new route up some tottering rubbish. We hauled our way out in the gathering gloom and managed a pint in the Morwenstowe Inn before fish and chips in Kilkhampton.

Mick set off back on his motorbike in the morning, whilst the rest of us divided ourselves between Foxhold Slabs and Blackchurch, or should we go to Oldwalls Point? Andy et al had a good day at Foxhold doing most of the routes on the main slab including "Zambia" E2 which I had done back in the early eighties with Steve Swindells but had not bothered to record

(must have been a first ascent!). I decided to go somewhere where I may actually get up a route rather than somewhere where I may not, so we went to Oldwalls. We'd been before and done the classic "Matchless". The descent was straight forward and the abseil from the brèche was down grass and shale to a nice secluded beach and the sun was out! I sorted out the line and to my horror it took a very wild looking overhanging start. The rock was very smooth and wave washed. Fortunately the holds were large and the useful slot mentioned in the guide did indeed take a bomber nut.

The climbing was, however, distinctly uphill. After several attempts I pulled over to the "good rest" again mentioned in the guide, my arse! I looked down to see Melissa dodging waves. The tide had come in quicker than expected. With the thin crack above not giving any really good belay possibilities there was only one option, reverse the crux. This I did but had to jump off onto the nut in the useful slot. On my way down I had sussed an undercut ledge to the left above the overhangs but to get to it lay an awkward overhanging off width chimney affair. A relatively easy looking traverse above the overhangs regained the line. With the sea fast encroaching, I set off up the slimy orifice. The ledge was gained ungainly, the belay was set up and Melissa was brought up. There was only one problem, the ledge was covered in thick black tar which had

melted in the heat. Whatever we did we could not help the ropes coming into contact with it.

I set off to do battle with the rest of the route, knowing that the crux had been passed. The thin crack gave unrelenting difficulties with reasonable protection until I reached a bit where the guide said that it was bold, at first. Thirty precarious feet later, I was able to get a decent runner in. A more recently cleaned crack followed until I felt the warmth of the sun again and it was over. Melissa followed, again in superb style; she loved it. We traversed the top of the fin back to the sacks and reflected on what we had just achieved. "More than a match" E3 5c proved to be a tremendous route, probably the best I've done all year. The grade was a bit sandbag. The first bulge was definitely 6a, not 5c and the rest of the pitch was steady 5b/c. The big scary run out pushed it up to E4 for me, but definitely the route deserves more attention in its newly cleaned state. Goodness knows what else lurks beneath the rolls of turf further left. We walked back to the car well chuffed with our day.

Driving home, I realised that this bit of England was definitely one of my favourites. Shame that more members did not turn up to appreciate it.

Martin Dale

FMC ORIENTEERING CHALLENGE 2004 HAWSE END, DERWENTWATER

We had a full house at the Stair Hut this year and twenty members and guests had a thrash round the pleasant open woodland bordering the western shores of Derwentwater. It certainly adds to the fun having a full hut with a great feed on the Saturday night. There's plenty of wit and repartee (what a diplomat I am!) and these meets combining loosely organised activity with a social gathering are proving to be a great success. The Fell Race meet a fortnight later was just as good; masses of curry courtesy of Andy Dunhill and Christine Barbier combined with a competitive race organised by Mark and Viv Broughton. (No results as yet I'm afraid). As a reminder, Clive Bell is providing a Bangers 'n Mash night on the weekend of Marin Dale's "Real Ale Supping, Mountain Biking and Winter Walking" Weekend at Stair on the 7th/8th of February.

I had to make some revisions this year as I probably made the challenge a little too difficult last year.

The course I planned this year had some constraints, the area being frequented by the general public mainly, which meant that I had to keep the control sites away from obvious feature such as path junctions to prevent interference from curious passers by.

Orienteering is not a "flag hunting" exercise, it's the navigating between the controls that is the important part, i.e. the planner setting a navigational

challenge. The control feature and the kite placed there should be obvious if one has navigated precisely to the correct spot.

With some good runners but relatively inexperienced orienteers in mind I pitched the length and technical difficulty at a standard about right for experienced schoolchildren. This isn't meant to be patronising; not too difficult, not too easy and not too long is a good way of describing it. A good orienteer would manage sub 30 minutes and would have a good, hard but shortish run. Those who walked round would still manage in less than two hours so I wouldn't be collecting the equipment in the dark! (I do get to do the course twice myself, although this year Steve Wrigley kindly offered to help collect the kites despite the pouring rain).

If it is of any interest I carried all the kites round and checked the punch code in a time of 40(ish) minutes, suffering greatly from the previous evening's drinking session. Perhaps this excuse could also be used by some of the competitors but certainly not all!

In orienteering the age class is usually listed in the results, e.g. I am 56 this year and run in M55 (Men not Mug) and will do so until I'm in my 60th Year. Dave Ward is 28 (I think) so is an M21 and will be in that age class until his 35th year. After M21

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Mike and Jenny finishing in style

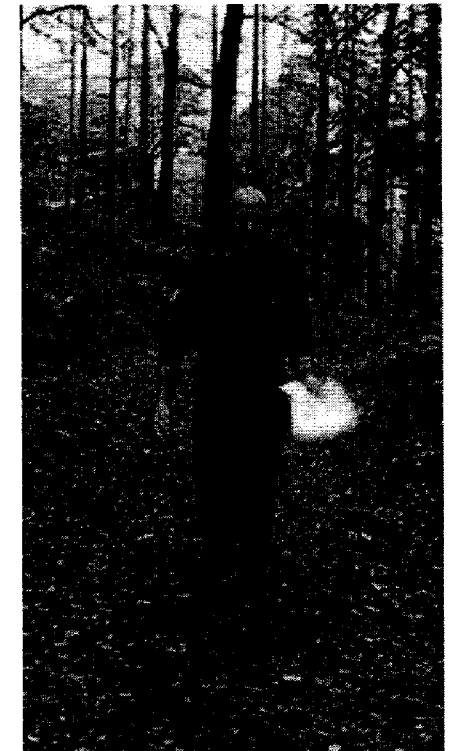


Feast in the hut



Most of the crowd

EMC
ORIENTEERING MEET



The WINNER!!

the classes are in 5 year increments with no upper limit. (Junior age classes are more complex and not relevant here).

Our little event only had the one course and it would be classed as "Light Green" standard. Competitors can claim a badge if they achieve a certain standard in three events or more. The standard time can be calculated in two different ways; the one which applies here is Winner's Time x 150% which is 52.55 *(see below). Congratulations to those

who gained it.

It was noticed that training had been taking place and that some competitors were finding it a bit easy. Therefore, assuming the demand is there, I shall offer a long and short course on more demanding terrain. I'll try to plan it so that the estimated winning time will be 50-60 minutes on the long and 30-35 on the short. This should sort out the men from the boys, so to speak!

John Denmark

RESULTS

Hawse End Course Length 3.540 k Climb 130 m

1	Steve Wrigley	35.17
2	Dave Ward	38.32
3	Andy Dunhill	40.10
4	Chris Packman + Tish	44.53
5	Mike and Jenny Tolley	48.07
6	Joanna Goorney	48.25
Colour Standard *(see above)		52.55
7	Chris Thistlethwaite	54.25
8	Drew and Liz Hird	57.42
9	Les Ward	59.11
10	John and June Wiseman	63.19
11	Adrian Clifford	70.20
12	Mike Penn, Dave Wood and Hal	70.59
13	Roy Nisbet	86.53
	Retired Christine Barbier	
	Disqualified. M Dale	DNS (DNF)

Thanks go to Carol McNeill, North-Western Orienteering Association Land Access officer for arranging permission to use the wood with the National Trust, Roger Jackson of West Cumberland Orienteering club for printing the maps and South Ribble Orienteering Club for loaning some kit.

Bouldering - Its the old rock n roll!

Everyone's a boulderer, aren't they? Years ago, the FMC had a great tradition in bouldering. Every Sunday throughout the winter teams used to go out to Yorkshire in all weathers searching out boulder problems. These trips usually followed heavy nights out on the town down the Kings and Charlie's Bar accompanied by awesome hangovers. Brimham and Almscliff were favourites following copious brews and grease fixes in the likes of Tommy's Cafe in Otley.

Ah! Those were the days.

Nowadays, its just me, still often complete with hangover. Actually, I don't know why I'm bothering to write this article. No one goes out bouldering anymore. Nobody's really interested, that probably explains the poor turn out for the slide show by ex FMC bouldering guru, Simon Panton, currently flying the flag in North Wales. No, maybe this will relight some fires, rekindle some old flames? I could do with a spotter or two now and again, even a bit of company would be nice. To all of you out there with dodgy ankles etc., there's now these things called bouldering mats that break your fall. The more people that bring one along, the

safer it is. I've been doing a lot lately, mainly due to the lack of climbing partners. I'm going to tell you about it anyway, whether you like it or not, 'cause most of what I've been doing is AWESOME!! I could go on for ages, but I really became hooked on seeking out new stuff following a visit to Mytholm Steep over near Heptonstall.

After a tip off from the afore mentioned Mr Panton, I sought out Mick Johnson's mighty "Moonbeam" V6. It was cold and frosty but well worth it. An amazing traverse line across a hanging beam of grit, it had me thinking how many other lines are there knocking about hidden away in obscure corners of the land?

The first place I looked was up at Clougha Pike, that evening walk venue behind Lancaster. Here I found numerous problems and a couple of fairly hard traverses. The landings here are a bit dodgy to say the least, but my problems do mostly have safe drop zones. I was particularly pleased with the traverses. However, I have since been told by the locals that "they were all done years ago". I'm not so sure because of the amount of (soft) brushing I had to give one of them. Never mind, the up problems are mostly new. The best one being a superb sit start crank off a flake for a thin rail, which you have to match on before snatching rightwards for a slightly better hold before groping

for the rounded top. V4, 6b. The traverses are superb, and one of them must be at least V7 or even 8. It comes out of a cave using all the foot lock techniques, before an awesomely powerful jump/slap maybe gets you the very sloping top. Hanging this is bad enough but you then have to somehow release the feet and retain contact so as to hook the top with one of them. If you get that far, move rightwards on increasingly poor slopes until another powerful sequence gets you the edge of a crack which enables you to pant/belly flop breathlessly over the top.

Just around the corner is Thorn Crag. there's some superb bouldering here and some readily available topo's. On the evening meet, again on my own, I ventured into the unknown above the existing crag boulders and came away with a stunning arête, which is probably worth E2 because you are well above your mat on the crux which is at the top. There are a few more lesser problems here which also got an ascent. More significantly, I repeated Gareth Parry's " Here I am again" V5 or E3 6b. This is a slab above a nasty overhanging drop. I didn't make it first go either, falling off the slab due to overstretching and missing my mat. Somehow, I escaped unscathed.

The day after I was due to fly off to the USA/Canada! There's heaps more here with the far group beyond the main crag still untouched. What was going on in North Wales had me wondering, what about the Lakes? Surely there must be huge untapped potential up there. So, off I went in

search of virgin boulders. My first find lies on top of Wrynose Pass. Park on the very top of the pass and then walk towards Hardknott and when the road starts dropping down strike diagonally up the hill to the south. Hidden away over a rise are two boulders with good landings. The left-hand one contains the classic here.

From a sit start off the obvious hold, the severely overhanging arête is climbed via a monstrous move to gain the next sloping hold, V3 for the sit down, V1 from standing. This is known as Wrynose. Just right is another arête which is also pretty good, again from a sit start off the obvious thin edge. The slab to the right can be climbed direct and also up its right edge. Next, I turned my attention to a boulder just off the road down on the Cockley Beck side of Wrynose. This is known as the Dubs boulder. So far, I've managed to do the left arête at V4 sit start, V2 standing, the right arête which is a classic at V6 sitting, V3 standing and also the back rib at V5 sitting. There's at least two more lines to go here which need cleaning, and maybe some traverses. They all have names which I won't bore you with.

More recently I visited Gillercombe, where I was amazed to find numerous well brushed problems on a series of boulders in a flat field below the crag. There's some superb stuff here at amenable grades as well as some very hard no's too, and the landings are nearly all good. However, I was drawn to the boulders below the crag, especially one with

an amazing vertical arête with very small holds. This required no cleaning and went at old school 6a, probably V4. Above this another leaning arête gave a good V2 sit down. To the right, a really leaning block grabbed my attention. Sat down at the bottom right, I made my way tentatively across the wall to the top arête. Imagine my surprise when I found myself able to reach up and hold the sloping edge itself. Not first go though! The beast spat me off. Numerous tries later, I unlocked the complex series of slaps and slopers and latched the top. I still had to link it from the bottom. After a rest, I got it in one go, power draining away as I just about held that top sloper and somehow held it together to top out. Very satisfying! V4/5 I reckoned.

There's more here too, must get back up there soon. Innocuous Wall, just over the dry stone wall. Only three moves long but could I link it? No!! Most frustrating.

Well, anyone out there interested? Let me know if you fancy accompanying me this winter. On a more positive note, Mark Harding tells me that he has recently successfully traversed Red Wall at Trowbarrow. This mighty problem weighs in at French 7c, which must be at least V7. There's life in the old dog yet!

Martin Dale

SEPTEMBER LADIES' MEET

We managed to choose the weekend when the stupendous summer weather broke for our September meet. It was therefore a damp (though cheerful) party which ascended the path beside Rigg Beck and scrambled through the heather to the top of Sail. By this time the rain was horizontal, even the birds had taken cover, and we hurried down to the delights of hot tea and showers at Stair. Sunday saw us parking at Brotherswater, then following an excellent path on to Hart Crag. Here we enjoyed the couple telling us firmly that we were on top

of Fairfield. However, we decided not to push our luck by continuing onto Fairfield and down St Sunday, as planned, given the thick mist, so retraced our steps to the car park, and departure.

Our next meet is the Christmas one, 12-14th December, featuring a communal feast on Saturday evening. All women members and guests are very welcome. Please book places and arrange transport with Pat Bennett (01772 681126)

Angela Lovett

Stuart Gascoyne sent this piece to me a little while ago, and as I, and several other members are fairly keen

cyclists it deserves a slot in the newsletter. A good read and food for thought. Ed

THE IRISH MUNROS DUATHLON

Munros with a bike, but without a beard

Climbing the Scottish Munros requires colossal amounts of time, commitment, and for those of us based south of Edinburgh, mind-numbing tolerance of vast distances of monotonous motorway travel, weekend after weekend. All those car miles make Munro-bagging a very environmentally unfriendly activity. Of course, there is always the green alternative, a continuous Munro traverse by foot and by bike which will just take up the best part of 3 months, but few of us get that much holiday.

The Irish Munros are a less time consuming and much greener prospect, and a lot more achievable. For a start there are only seven of them, and rather than being scattered around liberally, they string out to form a neat line across the island, from SW to E. Most of Ireland has been conveniently flattened by glacial activity, with the mountains protruding as isolated lumps, so its fairly bike-friendly.

As a bike/run duathlon, the Irish Munros offer an excellent short blast across the island, a blast which can be as short as 24 hours from summit to summit!

More realistically and without attempting to break the record (less than 24 hours from summit to summit), they form an excellent four day adventure, with an extra day at each end for travel from Britain.

Cycling in Ireland

Before embarking on this adventure, there are some things you need to know about cycling in Ireland. It's a big coun-

try, and a small population, so the roads are relatively empty and some are superlatively over-engineered, for Ireland has embraced Europe and euro-lolly with enthusiasm, and received massive amounts of cash to improve the under-used trunk road system. However, while the main roads are brilliant, the shortest distance on a bike usually means using minor roads. This is not a good idea. The lanes which meander through the Irish countryside have evolved, but not very far, from manure encrusted farm tracks. It is a surprising fact that Ireland has precious few footpaths – anything worth its salt has become a lane. Cattle and tractors are common users, and, what with the things that cattle leave behind, its no wonder, grass sometimes flourishes in the middle. Repairs are effected one pothole at a time - and that's a continuous process; tractors turning out of fields leave dollops of dried mud as a traffic calming rollercoaster. All of that makes for lumpy cycling.

The main roads have their hazards, big fast buses. Beware of buses. There are lots of them, conveying tourists at great speed, or simply ferrying the locals around, those who don't travel by tractor. Now, Irish buses regard bikes as solitary revolutionaries who threaten the public transport system, and their mission in life is therefore to eradicate dissident cyclists. To do this they rely on terrorist tactics; they pass terrifyingly close, usually signalling their arrival on your rear wheel by a spooky whoosh of air brakes, then nudging past a few millimetres from your elbow. And that's in the country! In Dublin, buses are even more menacing, and hunt in packs. On the shared cycle/bus lanes, its pretty obvious the buses don't want to share, and several queue up

behind to form a convoy, then perform some scary synchronised swerving as they overtake.

Weather

We chose late June 2000 for the best chance of settled weather. However, the spell of good weather came too early, and broke a week before we set off. Consequently we drove west across North Wales through a series of savage squalls which hit at cyclical intervals. Fearing the worst we boarded the ferry with ample waterproofs. And that was the end of it, for the next week. As we arrived in Dublin it brightened up, and the next day saw wall to wall sunshine, blue skies and a heatwave which followed us across the emerald isle.

The Ultimate Irish Duathlon

So our epic Duathlon took place in gorgeous weather in June 2000. Escaping from dreadful rainstorms in North Wales, Stuart Gascoyne and I dumped the car at Holyhead, cycled onto the very impressive Dublin Swift which took under 2 hours to reach Dublin Ferryport, then cycled along the River Liffey to Dublin Heuston station. We were there for lunch, and by late afternoon we were in laid-back Tralee in SW Ireland, enjoying a truly foreign country with late evening sunshine till well past 10.00.

On the way we learnt a bit about Irish uncertainty and probability theory. There was certain to be a wildcat strike on the railways that afternoon, and our train from Dublin to Tralee would certainly end at Mallow. Perhaps we could get the bikes on the link bus? Sure, there'll probably be no problem. In the event, there was a connecting train and no-one looked like striking.

Getting from Tralee to Brandon, our first Munro, required a crack of dawn start and a 70 kilometre cycle ride on virtually empty minor roads. Well,

virtually empty, except for the occasional transporter lorry carrying road mending machinery to the next site. Stopping to enjoy the view, well actually to effect mechanical repairs, proved unpopular with us, though very popular with hungry midges. Despite the empty minor roads we soon came across the ubiquitous road mending gangs, doing a bit of pothole patching. Again, and again and again.

Brandon Mountain

Wild and windswept, Brandon is the most westerly Munro in Europe, with St Brendan the Navigator's oratory on the summit, gazing west to America. For many, this is a favourite mountain, as only a mountain by the sea can be. Just as in the Cuillin in Skye, so here too there is something magnificent about the close triple juxtaposition of oceanic expansiveness, the coastline's abrupt vertical emergence, and sweeping mountain slopes, together combining all that is glorious in landscape.

And the Pilgrims Path provides a nice green introduction to Irish Munros. The tarmac road leads past a couple of small farms – 'Yes, surely, you can leave your bicycles outside my house. There's no need to lock them' – to a small and newly built walled shrine, wired up with a large cable. The large cable (another EEC grant?) suggested that it may light up at night!

The Pilgrims Path is remarkably untrodden, and green, but clearly delineated by white plastic posts every hundred metres or so. The posts bear some resemblance to road markers, and I'm sure that's what they were manufactured for before St Brendan called them to a higher duty. The route is broken into the 14 Stations of the Cross, each ending at a wooden cross. The pilgrimage to the summit took 1:10 hours, and a lot less down. St Brendan may have been a fine navigator

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and may well have discovered America, if it was ever lost. But I'd swear that the disciples who way-marked his Pilgrims Path have deviated from the straight and narrow line which it surely had at one time. The contemporary translation meanders in a gently contouring long zig and zag where true pilgrims would never have dithered from the difficult and steep direct ascent. Which we took!

Naturally enough, there was a cross on top.

And a broad rolling summit.

The minor roads of Dingle made the next cycle stint a tad arduous, starting with a long flattish flog along the south coast of the Dingle peninsula to Castle-maine. We wouldn't have given a XXXX for anything except a cold Guinness and this was paramount in our thoughts as we pressed on up a steady uphill grind to the foothills of the Reeks. Fortunately we had earmarked a village close to our intended overnight stay, and surely all villages in Ireland have a couple of pubs...? Unfortunately, this was the village with no pub whatsoever, not even a shop. Ever seen a mirage shimmer away?

Fortunately, we found a nice lady who was willing to sell her husband's private stock of the black stuff for black-market prices. She was later seen to be laughing all the way to the supermarket...

The MacGillycuddy Reeks

Featuring in The Big Walks as one of the best mountain days out, this was not to be a disappointment. Not quite Skye Ridge or Aonach Eagach quality, but close. The horseshoe around Hags Glen takes in Ireland's highest summit,

passing first over Beenkeragh, then over the highest point, 1039 metres high Carrauntoohil to outlying Caher, then back and along a switchback ridge to Cummeenapeasta. An early start saw us underway as early morning mists rose, and up onto the ridge on a sunny windless day while the rest of the country was waking up from a heavy Saturday night. You might imagine that one of the finest mountain walks in Ireland would be popular on one of the rare sunny days of the year, and a Sunday to boot, yet we only saw one person, and this was a Scot on the summit of Carrauntoohil!

In fact, he was the only person we saw on any of the Irish Munros.

Makes you think, doesn't it? Can you envisage climbing Scotland's highest summit on a perfect summer Sunday and seeing no-one? More likely, you'd be trodden by hordes of sponsored peak-baggers. But then, like Carrauntoohil and much of Irish legend, this is fairy story stuff. Can you imagine grassy paths up Scafell?

Our circuit from the road head in Hag's Glen was clearly not a popular route, as we could neither find a clearly defined path up or down. A tally of four Munros were easily notched up, the airy ridge traverse from Beenkeragh to Carrauntoohil being not too tricky in perfect conditions.

Naturally, there was a cross on top of Carrauntoohil.

And a broad rolling summit.

The MacGillycuddy Reeks circuit took just 5:45 hours, followed by a brisk 50km cycle ride to Mallow for an overnight stay.

Galtymore

After some desperately challenging navigation along very minor lanes we eventually found a promising route which ended at a 'Marie Celeste' farm yard. Looking for permission to park our bikes we found no-one at home, just a solemn faced dead sheep in the shearing yard and a car with its door and boot open, seemingly abandoned centrally in the farmyard. More spooky!

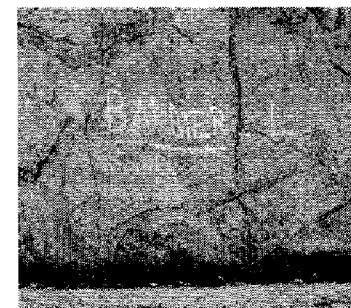
Again, we couldn't find a path after the first few hundred metres, so it was a bit of a meander across grouchy peaty moorland towards the inevitable cross on the summit.

Naturally, a broad rolling summit.

The promised streams, which looked so convincing on the map, failed to deliver any water when we reached them, so by the time we reached the farm (still deserted, but an abandoned tractor had now appeared) we were running on empty. In keeping with Brandon, this was also a 2 hour trip.

Another gruelling flog on the bikes in the heat of the day took us 70km to Waterford. We chose this slightly longer detour for the certainty of fast roads and easy gradients, with a minimum of lumpy bits. By now we had grasped that the larger roads had very good hard shoulders which gave cyclists plenty of space to keep away from buses.

Lugnaquilla



This is the image that photocopied poorly in the last issue. As I explained before, it was as if an FMC member had beaten me to it at the top of the Col de la Croix de Fer in the Alps. Christine herself or those well-known graffiti (****) artists Earle and Penn?

A solid seven hours of pedalling was required for this 150km stage, the final 15km taking us up the delightful and remote Glenmalure. We dumped our bags at the very welcome Inn, and resolved to test a couple of Guinness's later. A few more kilometres of cycling were needed to reach the Youth Hostel where we left the bikes and sweated up an unmapped but 'bound to be there' forest road, deteriorating into a disappearing path which we failed to follow to the summit. Another rounded grassy plateau unfolded to meet us as we scrambled up and over the third short sharp slope, like an assault course, and before long we were on the summit, admiring the distant but slightly hazy views and celebrating a cumulative Peak to Peak time of 32 hours of bike/run.

Naturally it was a broad rolling summit.

But no cross?

Without any guilt whatsoever we cracked open a couple of cans of the local brew, by way of a small celebration. Not what we would normally do on the summit of a Munro, but honestly, it felt quite all right in Ireland. Its really green and more laid-back there. Try it.

Mike Browell

June 2000

Mountain Biking - Little Langdale

Way gnarly biker types gathered in the Shires on Friday night ready to do battle the next day. Saturday saw the arrival of even more gay bikers, some even sporting hot new machines. The numbers swelled to eight, which is pretty good for a biking meet, the best for a number of years. There were several first timers. Chris Thistlethwaite had never ridden off road in anger before. His mate, intro member Adrian Clifford also produced an old steed, as did Chris Packman, however he did look the part so I reckoned he was a seasoned biker deep down. It was Andy Dunhill who produced the shiny new machine but could he actually ride it?

I took a back seat and let Mark and Viv Broughton sort out the ride. The sun was out so it had to be High Street. We rode out of Hartsop but were soon pushing, then carrying up The Knott. Andy got seat post problems on the ridge, Viv did a spectacular up and over, so did I - the difference being that no-one saw my effort. We stopped for lunch where the ride turns back towards Patterdale, myself and Dave Ward already vowing to get full suspension bikes soon! We were all glad of the dry conditions though.

The next section down the side of Ullswater to Martindale was the best bit for me. We then climbed up and over into Boredale before struggling

up the last climb of the day over Boredale Hause. The last descent proved disappointingly too steep to ride. We finished the day off with some well deserved beer in the Kirkstone Pass Inn.

Sunday was duller and colder. Me and Dave had sore butts but we still went out undeterred. The team was one down on the previous day, Adrian not able to make it. We set off through Tilberthwaite to Coniston, then up the Walna Scar road, before swooping down to Torver where it rained momentarily. The next bit of the ride was new to me, over Tottle Bank then up the far side of Coniston Water into Grizedale Forest. By now I for one was getting pretty knackered, so the descent back down into Coniston was well received. Teas, pies, peas and gravy followed. I couldn't get them in the pub, these fit gnarly athletic biker types. Back through Tilberthwaite via Hodge Close brought us to the end of the ride and the usual ford antics. Mark cruised through, Andy on his new horse didn't and Chris Packman on his sturdy steed just about made it to the nearest bit of dry land before dipping one foot. The rest of us sensibly took the bridge.

A great bike meet, thanks to all who came for making it such a success, especially the Broughtons for sorting out the routes and pushing us all along when we started flagging.

Martin Dale

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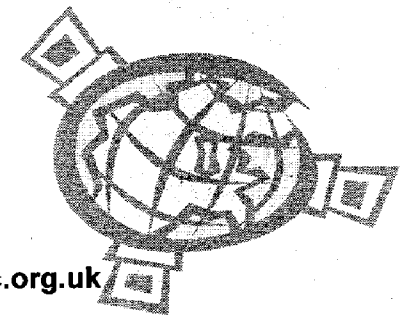
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