

Fylde Mountaineering Club

Founded in 1950

NEWSLETTER

June 2004

In this Issue:

Tales of members' jaunts to Bonny Scotland, jolly old Lake District, the land of the trolls and midnight sun, sun sea and sangria and, dites donc, les Alpes.

Drew and Liz Hird have been at it again. Congratulations to them on the birth of their daughter, Jessica Anne, on the 28th of May 2004. Now Eddie will have a little playmate and Drew will get even less sleep. Congratulations again on getting a full set at the first attempt!

Stuart Gascoyne has sent an email to a lot of club members regarding accommodation in the northern French alps. More details inside for the unconnected members of the club.

Editor's bit

If this edition looks a bit rushed then the pressure is showing! I had hoped to be relaxing now, following the involvement with the International Orienteering event at Graythwaite Hall in the Lakes at Easter. Sue was overall coordinator and I acted as "man without portfolio" but with many hats. The event was a huge success; the second largest orienteering event held in the UK with over 3500 competitors from twenty or so nations. We grabbed a couple of weeks at Sue's sister's place in southern France to wind down but still seem to have too much to do.

Minor computing problems haven't helped, so I've got about a day to get this done and in the post before heading off to Scotland and Italy.

There's some interesting stuff in this edition. Keep 'em coming. I'll be back from Italy at the beginning of August so let's make the deadline the end of that month for a Newsletter in September. That way I should manage one before I go away again at Christmas.

John

Alpine Accommodation Offer

From Stuart Gascoyne

As a lot of you know Pauline and I have a chalet in France which we are planning to rent out. It probably won't be quite ready until next winter for a formal launch but if anybody is interested in the meantime either for a club trip or just a family holiday, we can do a deal. It is not available in August or the last week in July, but any other dates are free.

The accommodation is modelled on the hut at Stair. All the bunks are not yet finished but the mattresses are there.

There is excellent mountain walking nearby, it is just off the GR5 and large bolted crag is about 10 minutes drive away. Andy Dunhill has a guidebook which covers it. The local mountains are Les Cornettes and Chamonix is just over an hour away. You can find some information on the website which is www.gascoyne.org.uk or more comprehensive info on the old tatty website www.gascoyne.org.uk/old.htm.

Also if there is sufficient interest we could maybe organise a weekend meet there (housewarming party) for which there would be no charge for the hut. October is probably best for that because the flights are really cheap then (around £20 return via easy jet).

Stuart

Roy Bridge

Friday evening (2-4-04) we all arrived at the bunk house named Aite Cru-innichidh that well known unsolved anagram. After settling in we crossed the road to the hotel and its bar for expensive iffy beer in atmosphereless place and resolved to drink cans back at the bunk house on subsequent nights. Saturday morning was drizzly and cloudy and the various parties set off to find routs with minimum cloud, except Darren who was determined to do Stob a Choire Mheadhoin and Stob Coire Eesain come hell or high water and wound up examining the inside of clouds. That evening the bunk house filled up with bikers from the Clyde Valley Motor Cycle Club, a friendly if noisy gang who spoke the same language as Rab C Nesbitt and Russ Abbott, come to think of it some of the lady bikers were a bit Bella Emberg'ish. They seemed to live on beer, Twix's and Wagon Wheels. Late in the evening one of the female bikers produced a box of small bottles which she claimed was schnapps from Cyprus (?), it tasted like some form of undiluted disinfectant. Each of these hairy bikers walked around sporting slippers labelled Clyde Valley M.C.C. (Mike please note- F.M.C. slippers?).

Sunday had the same weather as Saturday and we all set out on our separate ways. Kev, Les, Darren and me set off for the Grey Corries. The top was visible until we were 500ft from it when it disappeared and we were in white out, blizzard, spindrift conditions although we reached the top the unanimous decision was, Knickers!, lets call it a day. Back at the ranch John, June and John, Clare had similar experiences and we all agreed that the inside of all the clouds came up to British Standard Scotch Mist Grade A.

Les and Darren departed south on Sunday night, Claire and John similarly on Monday. This left John, June, Kevan and me to explore a small bump whose summit was just below cloud base and Loch Lochy with a well marked path on the map but not so on the ground. We all got very wet forcing our way through rhododendron bushes, that didn't matter as it came down stair rods before we got to the car. We finished the day drying off with a walk along the Caledonian canal in the sunshine only to get soaked again before we reached the car.

Tuesday was going home day, Kevan and I took a pleasant walk in the hills and woods behind Dunkeld. John and June climbed some snow covered bump at the back of Pitlochry all in pleasant sunshine. Then home to Glen Fyldre, proper beer and proper prices.

Clive Bell

Winter Climbing stuff from Adrian Clifford and Ali Welsh.

Second newsletter in a row for Adrian, a rival to the incessant jottings of our Chairman?

It's refreshing to see new contributors to the newsletter. Let's have more and more.

A Rjukan Recce

The wonders of the Internet.

Arrived at work at 07:30, to an email from Ryanair announcing a sale on flights, including Stansted to Oslo Torp. It had been 5 weeks since Cogne and the rat needed feeding.

By 10:00 we'd booked flights for £32 return, car (from Rent-a-Wreck), log cabin accommodation and parking at Stansted. We even downloaded topos and descriptions for the 150 odd climbs in the area. Th' internet, it's brilli-ant.

We were going the following Tuesday until Friday. The times of the flights were good, we'd be able to get a route in on Tuesday and a full day on Friday.

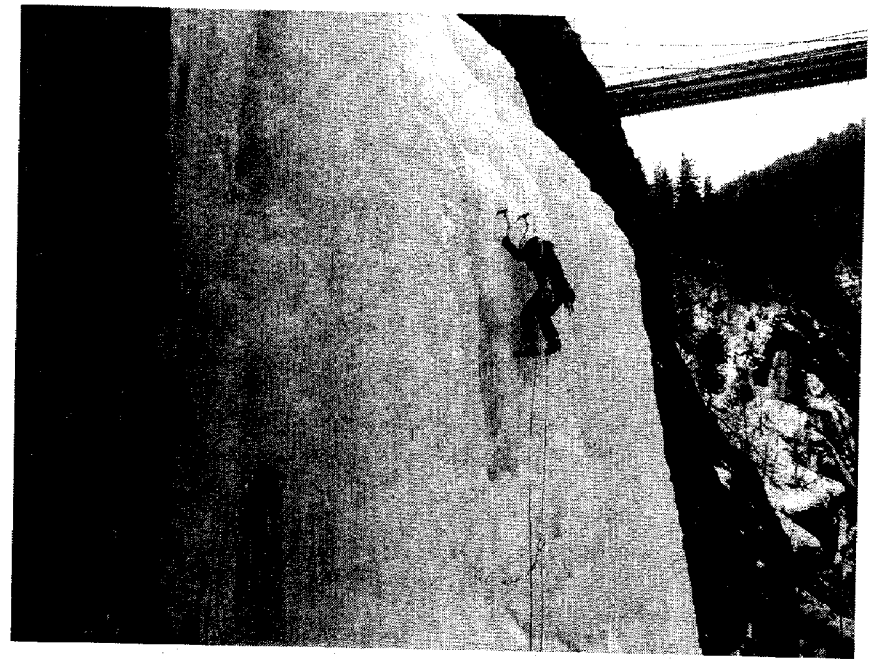
Landed at Torp, the edges of the sea were frozen, which just added to our excitement. The name Oslo Torp is a bit of a con really. It's about 100 miles from Oslo, but that didn't really bother us as we were going the other way.

Our car turned up for us and it really was a wreck. An old red Fiesta that smelt hot. It had been a long time since I'd driven a car where you can turn the steering wheel from side to side and nothing happens down below. However, it had studded tyres, and as everyone in Norway sticks to the 50 mph speed limit, we managed to keep up with the traffic.

It took about 2.5 hours to drive the 120 miles of iced up roads to Rjukan. We'd driven past many small roadside ice falls and were truly gagging for it by the time we reached Rjukan.

We parked at the car park to the Vermork museum. It's the heavy water factory that 'starred' in the Heroes of Telemark film, and apparently some of the climbs that we did during the week can be spotted in the film.

A 50m free-hanging abseil off a bridge brought us to the bottom of two Grade IV falls, 2 pitches each, Vemorkbrufoss East and Host.



We polished these off quickly – bomber ice led to confident climbing. It was getting dark so we packed in and found a supermarket and our digs. The log cabin was comfortable and warm. Pretty cheap too, £29 a night and it could have slept 4 nae bother.

Woody at Rack & Ruin had told us about the swimming pool complex in town and it was a top tip. We spent all our evenings there, relaxing in the outdoor Jacuzzi, watching the sunset. It also has a good gym, sauna, steam room and pool. All for the price of a Norwegian pint.

On Wednesday, it was -14 centigrade. Five minutes walk led to an area that had 10 routes in a line, all between 30 and 60 metres, all IV and V. We did the lot. The climbing was good, but felt like cragging, rather than 'feeding the rat'.

We wanted something a bit bigger on the Thursday and chose Rjukanfossen, the classic 4 pitch IV frozen waterfall in the area. This is set in a very impressive gorge and is a tourist attraction in Summer. The route was excellent and it was hard to believe we saw no-one else on it all morning.

We finished Rjukanfossen and still had some daylight left. We walked a short distance to another 'cragging' area. Here we met some Swedish guides assessing aspirant guides. We'd met the same lads at Cogne 5 weeks earlier, suppose the ice world is still a relatively small one. Climbed

2 more routes then shot off for a sauna.

Our last day was a bit of a let down. We'd been eyeing up a large route on the North side of the valley from the outdoor Jacuzzi every night. It was quite a slog to get to it (20 minutes!). After 1 pitch it was obvious that it was too late in the season for a south facing fall and we abbed off some dodgy gear.

Our salvation was Svingfoss, a 30 metre V fall, right next to the road in a hairpin. Hard to imagine a more accessible steep fall. If it was in the Lakes it would be battered to death. Had a bit of fun on here then steeled ourselves for the icy return to the airport.

We'd climbed 16 routes, about 20 pitches of IV/V ice and hadn't queued once. We'd definitely be going back next year to chip away at the other 140 routes in the valley.

Reflections

- the nightlife in Rjukan is almost non-existent. The locals don't go out till Midnight and that's way too late for us ice climbers. It's about £6 a pint in a boozier, and £4 a pint from the supermarket. Probably best to take a wine box or two in hand luggage.
- the cabins were very good, but were about 6 miles out from the town and swimming complex. There were some other cabins right in town, next to the complex.
- apparently there was excellent skiing to be had at Gaustablikken, about 5 miles from the town. Many routes finish on the hairpin road to this resort.
- the mountain, Gaustatoppen 1883m, which keeps the sun from Rjukan for 4 months looks good for a day out. You can see a quarter of Norway from it's summit ridge. You can drive fairly high up it but snowshoes are needed for the ascent.

Ali Welsh

Ladies Meet 5/6th March 2004

Unfortunately I suffer from an advanced taste for long convoluted anecdotes with excessive parenthesis, numerous asides and full of profitless irrelevance.

I will therefore endeavour not to indulge in animated reminiscences of people you've never met or what they said to people you've never heard of. Simplicity is the key and not to get side-tracked. For instance - how I was doomed to walk in a pair of fashion boots (Vogue would have been proud of me) mincing about the Fells - as did Sir Andrew Aguceek in The Tempest. He "minced" according to the stage directions. I "minced" because I had failed to take a complete pair of Walking boots with me and so was reduced to unsuitable footwear.

I will keep the report succinct and to the point.

No fruitless mental meanderings.

A positive and precise approach.

So here goes -

Eight attended

Scafell was ascended

Jennie Tolley

Easter Spain Trip

So where do we go this Easter? With no driving force sorting the trip (Dunhill was absenticos domesticos?) I tried to think of somewhere we hadn't been before. I couldn't. Then Woody came up with some article he'd seen in some glossy climbing mag about a forgotten corner of Spain where the bolts were plentiful and the grades were amenable, the angle too was of the more acceptable type. I checked it out and it looked ok. Plenty of mid 6'es for me and some steeper stuff for me too. I was hooked, I just had to convince the other interested parties that there were loads of easy, pleasant 4's and 5's for them too.

So, the convinced went to Morata De Jalon, which lies just south of Zaragoza in the province of Aragon. We headed for the hub of the area, a town called Calatuyud. On first appearances the place looked pretty uninteresting, being a

bit industrial on the outskirts, with lots of uninspiring blocks of flats, however we were to grow to love the place very quickly as we embraced the tiny streets of the old town, not to mention it's great inhabitants and bars.

Accommodation sussed, for a couple of nights at least, we went to the crag. Morata is a series of crags centred around a river, surprisingly called the Jalon, and a railway track. Apart from the latter, it was very idyllic. The first place we encountered was the Grand Placa, a big sweep of slabs set at a high angle. You had to use your arms!. We had a nice afternoon there warming up in the sun. We did venture round to the right to the next crag along the way. This proved to be even steeper and more to my liking. After numerous routes, we went to the bar.

The next day the team, oh I forgot to tell you about the team!!! Myself, of course who needs no introduction, was accompanied by Melissa, this years lush champion. Also along was the very shiny headed Chris Thistlethwaite, and the injury prone Mr Fixit in Espania, Davey Wood. The rookies of the team were Bill Clarke and Elaine Scarles, who we rescued from the clutches of Calpe at the last minute with stories of even better stuff to climb at Morata. None of us had been before!!! The team went to Jaraba, another major cliff in the area. It was too hot to climb!! This was what we wanted!!! Trouble was it was also very hard, and steep. Yes please!!! We did manage a few routes at what is known as Spain's little Verdon.

The pattern began to take shape, get up late, go to bar for coffee and Tortilla Bacadillia and/or visit bread shop for a little pastry, go climbing, go to bar, go to Hotel Fornos for menu del dia, go back to bar, go to bed late. By this time the second wave of Nobs had arrived. Mick Tolley, Tom Knowles, and Hal Rzadkiewicz arrived straight to the crag and proceeded to climb. They then corrupted other members of the team and stayed out very late drinking.

We did visit other crags in the area, Torralba de los Frailes (terrible for the weak?) which was ok, and Calcena, which wasn't. One crag that came with a recommendation had a ban on it. The weather became colder but it never rained. Bill and Elaine had to leave on the Saturday, Bill finally overcoming his fear of the panza to get up a 6A+. Panza turned out to mean bulge in Spanish. They were sorry to depart and vowed to return.

We had problems finding accommodation for Easter Saturday night and had to move out of the area to a town dubiously called "La Almunia De Dona Godina". After a pleasant meal in the hotel we ventured forth into the very dead looking town in search of entertainment. Loud rock music belched out of one very small bar. A life-size mural of the cover of the first Ramones album adorned the wall. This was it, the rock music bar. 5.30am later we staggered out having danced

with the locals, and drunk far too much. Take note:-Chris This, and Tom were both caught dancing. In the morning several of the team were unwell, including our current lush champion. It is unlikely to challenge the present favourite for this honour but it was a good try. we chose to use the day as a rest day.

More climbing days later, the Tolley teams holiday came to an end. We all decided to have a change of scene and the rest of us headed for Prades. On our last day I let the girls choose the final route. They chose probably the steepest route of the holiday on the right of the arch at Morata. I enjoyed it thoroughly, however I somehow think the girls didn't.

We enjoyed our first rain of the trip at Prades, and then a very cold damp day at La Mussara, before flying home. The Brits we encountered at the crag had suffered a miserable week in Prades. We had obviously been to the best spot.

Summary: A trip to Morata De Jalon in Aragon, Central Spain. This was a good spot, however the grades were a little on the stiff side, so although there are a lot of easier climbs they are not all easy for the grade. Something else to consider is that two of the bigger crags had bird bans on them, however there is enough to keep any one busy for a week without visiting them.

Martin Dale

Cogne 2004 by Adrian Clifford

For proper ice climbing it would be hard to beat the excellent week the club had in Cogne in February. Ice routes graded between Scottish III-VII were climbed by various parties, including Chandelle Leveure IV+(Scottish V), Acheronte III 400m, Vertigine Porcellana III. & Thoule III+.

Phil Lee and Steve Wrigley perform particularly well on the steep Repentance Super VI despite the latter eating a candle the night before the climb while under the influence of Grappa!

Kevin Stephens laid on a good end of trip Cabaret according to unnamed sources (Tolly & co !) at the start of Chandelle Leveure when a fridge sized ice block nearly took him out and he was kind enough to bleed everywhere and have a helicopter called in, all of which will apparently look very good on film! (Seriously- all the best for a complete recovery Kevin. It took ages to wash all the blood out of your climbing helmet!). Martin Dale and I were

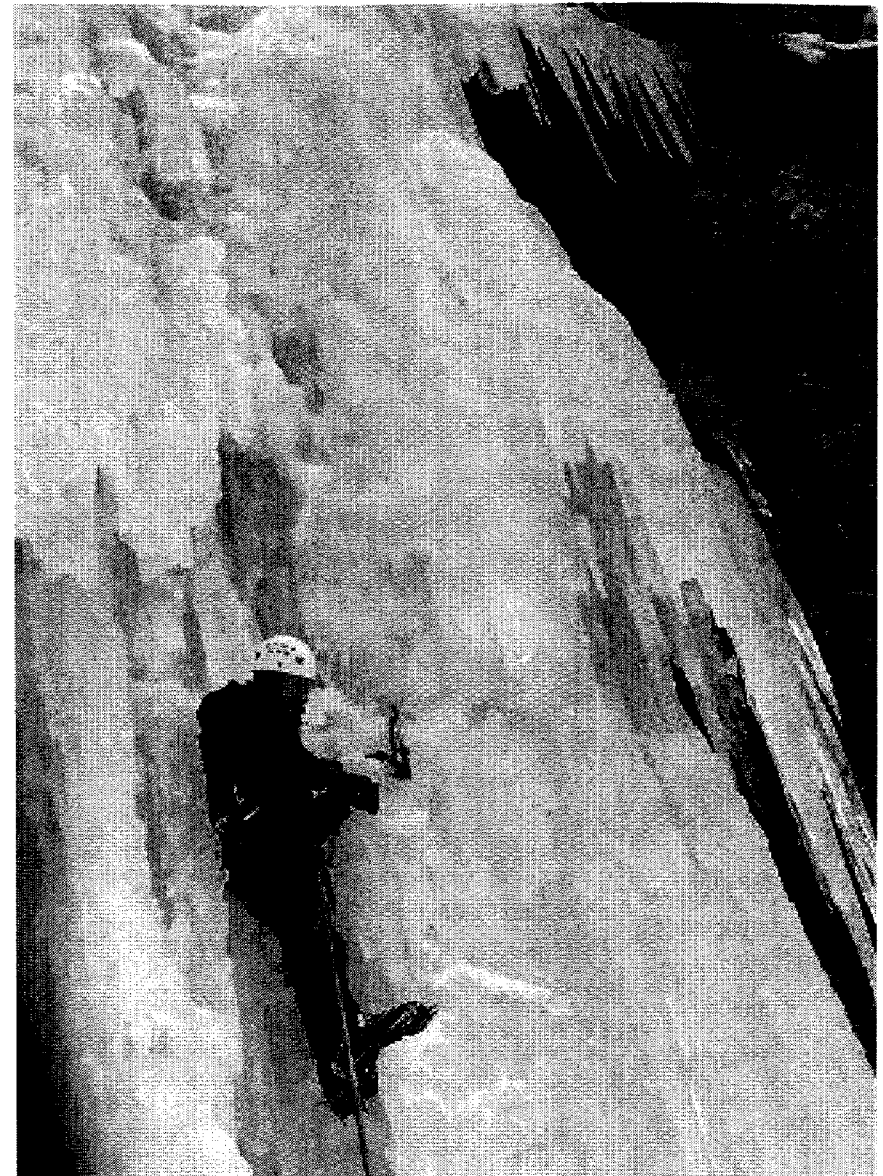
boarding/
skiing in Cervinia when all of this was going on and we had the diamorphine with us (for emergency purposes only!) so poor old Kevin missed out.



Let's hope next years trip is just as much fun but has a little less drama, the latter observation referring in part to the B team's (or should that be A?) epic and delayed flight as Geneva airport was shut for a few days because of heavy snow.

Perhaps some of the female members might want to go next year, as there is excellent skiing nearby if the climbing doesn't appeal.

Adrian Clifford



Photographs supplied by

Adrian Clifford pages 10 and 11

Ali Welsh page 5

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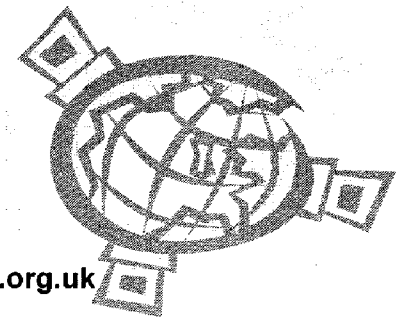
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