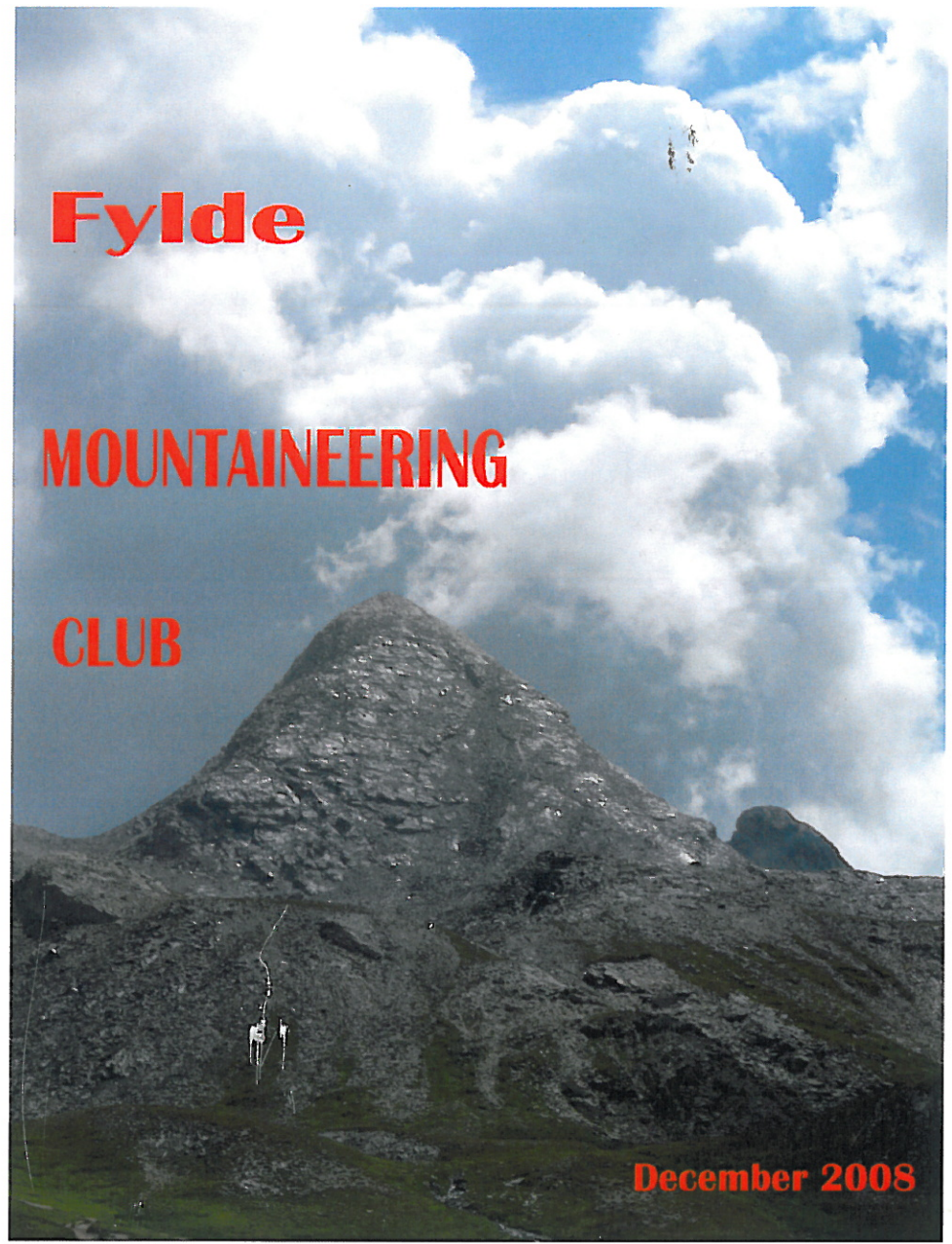


Dec 08

**Fylde**

**MOUNTAINEERING**

**CLUB**



**December 2008**





Looking up



Looking down

# CONTENTS

Editorial	John Wiseman	_____	page 4
Jack Jowett	an obituary by his son John	_____	page 5
Jack Jowett and the safe	Alan Bell	_____	page 8
Roy Bridge 2007	Clive Bell	_____	page 10
Winter Meets 2007	Darren Hartley	_____	page 11
Northumberland 2007	Clive Bell	_____	page 13
FMC "O" meet	John Denmark	_____	page 14
Fell Race 2007	Mark Broughton	_____	page 15
Ice trip 2008 Cognac	Martin Bennet	_____	page 16
Roy Bridge	Clive Bell	_____	page 18
Hut to Hut 2008	Clive Bell	_____	page 19
Whitby	Clive Bell	_____	page 20
Bregaglia	Andy Dunhill	_____	page 21
The Beautiful Ecrins	Clive Bell	_____	page 24
Earth Wind Fire and Water	Gillian Llewellyn	_____	page 27
Family Meet September	Liz Hird	_____	page 28
More Spain	Martin Dale	_____	page 29
Clive's Mid Week meet at Stair	John Wiseman	_____	page 31
Corris	John Wiseman	_____	page 31
Northumberland	Andy Dunhill	_____	page 32
Chester Hut	John Wiseman	_____	page 33
Working Weekend Stair	Andy Dunhill	_____	page 34
Grit Sunday	Martin Dale	_____	page 35
Fell Race 2008	Mark Broughton	_____	page 36
Dry Tooling	Clive Bell	_____	page 37
The Club Dinner	John Wiseman	_____	page 38
FMC Climbing in 2008	Martin Dale	_____	page 39

Front Cover.....Pain de Sucre (Sugar Loaf) in the Queyras. Photo by Clive see his article page 25

Inside front cover... looking ....up looking down Andy Dunhill and Nick Hepburn see article page 22



# EDITORIAL?

John Wiseman 20 Dec 2008

It is nearly the winter solstice celebrations as I put the finishing touches to this Newsletter or Magazine; it is a longer job than What's On.

The last newsletter that drifted through your letter box was in the late spring of 2007 and the most recent meet report in it was for the Orienteering weekend at the beginning of October 2006. Since then a variety of events have affected the editor and his computer that have resulted in the newsletters being lost, stolen or fallen through a rift in the space time continuum.

Eventually the committee having heard "it will be out in a few weeks" again decided to ask for volunteers to try their hand. In a moment of weakness I volunteered to edit a magazine with Andy Hird volunteering to organise the printing and posting. Mike Howe volunteered to edit the next one and by then the AGM should have produced an editor.

It was then I learnt that all the material sent to the editor over the last two years had been lost, when his laptop was stolen. HELP! I have contacted former meet leaders and put a request in What's On and many have searched the furthest recesses of their hard drives and some articles have surfaced and are in this issue...thanks to you all. It was a great relief after I first made requests by e-mail that the very next time I checked my e-mail there were two replies with articles Liz Hird a whisker in front of Andy Dunhill, that cheered me up a lot. Clive found lots of things that he had done, another boost. I have not pursued further 2006 and 2007 meets so there are gaps. As one of the purposes of a Newsletter is to record club events, the solid mountaineering, the humorous and the social it is a shame that there are gaps in our coverage, if any more turn up then they will be welcomed into the next issue. I did pursue 2008 meets more vigorously and after the predictable "What's the point of writing an article if its not going to be published", a sentiment I had been feeling myself, articles began to appear, and now to my considerable relief this offering should land on your doormat with a satisfactory thud. There is one notable gap, look at the Club Dinner report to find out.

It would be nice if we could have some feedback about the Newsletter. Such as:-

Do you think that the colour photographs are wanted? It is likely that using better paper for the cover and having both sides in colour has added £75 to the cost.

Would you prefer an annual magazine or three/ four smaller magazines during the year? The actual "page count" being the same. Financially an annual magazine with colour would be a similar cost as three issues in black and white.

Let us know.

And finally why Editorial?...with a question mark... Well ..I thought it a more printable version of what someone else in the FMC says frequently "I am not the \*\*\*\*\* Social Secretary"

*It is an embarrassment to the club to put it mildly that we have not had a Newsletter for so long, because we have not published an obituary to Jack Jowett who died in July 2007. If you read the FMC fortieth journal or talk to the oldest members you will be aware that Jack was one of founding members, and it was he who put the original advertisement in the local paper calling a meeting to discuss the founding of a Mountaineering Club in the Fylde. He was active into old age Jack was a leading light in the acquisition of the club hut, and has been around and about ever since. All who knew him had fond memories of things he did or said. ; I think that the last club event that he came on was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Little Langdale in 2006.*

*There were many FMC members past and present at his funeral where his son John gave a moving account of his life, which we reproduce below. I then asked Alan Bell to write a few words and tell the story of the safe which he had done at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations at Langdale. It was about Jack and Jack and family were there to hear it. Also I thought that if it was not written down the story could get lost which would be a shame. Alan was the first hut secretary of Little Langdale. If any other older member would like to share their memories of incidents with Jack then we can put them in a later Newsletter.*

## Jack Jowett by his son John

John Jowett, Jack to everyone, Dad or Grandpa to some of us here today, was born in West Yorkshire on 8 May 1914 and died of old age on 8 July this year. It was a long life, and also in many ways a fortunate one. As he used to say humorously, his lucky fairy looked after him. His childhood and most of his life were spent in Cleveleys. At Beach Road school he got to know his lifelong friend Ralph Duxbury; and some of his earliest stories were of boyhood adventures with Ralph and Hubert Ramsbottom. He became a strong swimmer, and Captain of the Cleveleys Life-Guards. When he saved two boys from drowning in the ice-covered canal at Billsborrow he was awarded a vellum certificate for bravery.

Early in life he extended his horizons with cycling trips to Nicky Nook. His horizons then stretched further still to the Lake District. After working at his father's music shop he would cycle from Cleveleys to Langdale on a Friday night, with climbing gear in the front basket, spend Saturday and Sunday climbing on the crags, and cycle home on Sunday night. He had found the most enduring interest of his life.

When war broke out he volunteered for service in the RAF. After serving as an instrument repairer and an instructor in instrument repairing, he volunteered for air crew. He was trained in South Africa and Zimbabwe—scene of his story about



swimming in the crocodile-infested waters of Lake Victoria at night. His time in transit in Egypt was remembered chiefly for another unlikely tale, his ascent of the Great Pyramid. But then in deadly earnest he saw active service as a navigator in a squadron of Boston fighter-bombers in northern Italy, flying highly dangerous missions to disrupt enemy supply lines.

In north-east Italy he found opportunity to get out of military base to climb the Dolomite peaks. To help get around, he learnt to speak Italian. Italy became a country he loved: the food and wine, the climate, the mountains, the opera, the people. When the war ended, he continued to serve in the RAF. He was stationed for a while in Greece. Enquiring about the Greek Alpine Club, he found that it had been disbanded during the war, and his personal efforts to reconstitute the club led to him being awarded life membership.

By the time he returned to Cleveleys, his father had died, and Dad took up piano tuning, the trade he had learnt from his father long before the war. He became a founder member of the Cleveleys Royal Airforce Association, and, of more significance for his later life, of the Fylde Mountaineering Club. For several years he was the club's chairman, and he took a leading role in securing the club properties both in Little Langdale and Newhouses. The FMC eventually became the second climbing club to grant him life membership.

One of the early members of the FMC was Dorothy Shaw, whom he married in 1951?? and who remained his wife and closest companion until his death. They moved to the house in Queen's Walk that they made home, the place where all four children were born. It is surely remarkable that, over half a century later, Dad would finally die in that same house. The early years of the marriage were hard financially, but Dad and Mum had bought the small and at first barely habitable cottage next to the FMC hut; we called it, appropriately, the tiny house. There the family spent rushed weekends and long holidays for many years.

Dad returned to the Alps and to Italy many times: with Mum, with small climbing groups, with the family, and later, for 30 years, as leader with the Ramblers Association and Waymark Holidays. But he remained passionate about the places associated with his early years. He acted as a Voluntary Warden for the Lake District National Park. In this and other roles he was an inspiration to a younger generation, helping others to learn a love of the mountains and acquire the spirit of adventure that he valued so much himself. His commitment was deeply democratic, as when he acted as mountain instructor to the unlikely lads of the Fylde Farm borstal school—who, as Dad told us, could never quite work out the difference between 'abseilling' and 'absconding'. Later in life, he wrote a book called *The Lancashire Lakeland Link*; it described a walking route from the Fylde to the Lake District, once again encouraging others to walk in his footsteps to the

mountains. Still, as a grandfather, he told stories, joined in and he led the way, and he would make a wonderful adventure out of something as simple as a walk in the woods of Beacon Fell.

Some of the details I have mentioned come from personal memory, but much comes from Dad's own stories. He was a great raconteur. He told stories that were true, or at least mostly true; they told us about a wanderer and adventurer; but, however desperate the situation, they were told to amuse us rather than to impress. He was also inventive in making up stories of his own; every night we, his children, listened to a new episode in the adventure.

For Dad, life was not only about doing things. He liked to share the moment as and when it happened with others, and to share the story afterwards. His interests took him into the places that stand apart—foreign countries, the sea, caves and pot-holes, mountain tops, the air itself. There was often, of course, physical challenge and the element of danger, though, thanks to his luck fairy, he could always make light of that. Also and just as important was truth and beauty. Dad was excited and moved by what he found out there. He was Quixotically romantic: his own story tells of how when flying in the Mediterranean he used to have a reputation for navigating by clouds, an unorthodox practice that greatly unnerved his air-crew. The principle was that Vesuvius, as a volcano, could be relied on to have a distinctive cloud formation above it that could be seen long before the mountain itself. It is a funny story, and is not actually as impractical as it sounds at first, but also has a typically dream-like quality to it; and indeed he often dreamt of flying.

Dad compulsively needed to bring the adventure back, to talk, to amuse us, to inspire others with the wonder of it. We can see something similar in his love of music. He did not perform much by himself, though we remember him playing piano duets with one of us children—Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, the overture to *The Mikado*, *The Fairy Waltz*, *The Tanantella*. He taught us all the first elements of piano playing. Music and the spirit of music resonate through the family, and when the grandchildren now play the piano, violin, cello, flute or drums they are picking up something that he has indirectly given them.

Here are some things he definitely was not: he was not officious, superior, aggressive, petty-minded, mean. He was, however, strong, gentle, modest, kindly, generous, supportive, humorous, companionable. He led by doing. He shared his experience of life with us. He liked to laugh, and to make other people laugh. He lived fully, and encouraged those around him to do likewise. We remember his love for us his family and friends, and remember him for inspiring us, and sharing with us the places that make the heart sing.



## Jack and the Safe by Alan Bell

I have realised that many current members of the Fylde Mountaineering Club did not have the good fortune to know Jack Jowett who died last year aged 93.

At his funeral his son John spoke of his father, with the congregation often chuckling at some of Jack's famed and outrageous exploits. It was a moving and very eloquent eulogy from his son and his family to a much loved father.

To me Jack was a friend and mentor. He was a man of many interests, a great outdoor man, storyteller and adventurer.

Jack Jowett was of the generation of young men and women who volunteered or were called to service during the Second World War. On their return to England the mundane life of pre war days did not appeal. Having experienced war time adventuring in many countries throughout the world, these young men and women sought the freedom of the mountains at the weekends and so the great outdoor movement began. There was no greater adventurer than Jack Jowett at that time,

From wartime wandering in the Italian Dolomites and forays into the Greek mountains, riding his bike from Cleveleys to Gt. Langdale with tent, primus stove, sixty feet of hemp rope, rope slings and nailed boots was child's play.

Jack had many climbing epics and the derring-do of finding routes on Raven Crag, Bowfell, Buttress with forays into Borrowdale to Troutdale Pinnacle whetting his appetite for more.

After a time, with like minded people from the Fylde coast he met on his travels, Jack was a founder member of the FMC. Within just a few years he was the leading advocate to buy the almost derelict cottages of Newhouses in Little Langdale,

When the cottages were purchased and the club cottage habitable, there occurred the incident which became known as Jack and the safe.

There was a safe in the kitchen of the cottage. (*This safe still exists, the huge museum piece of a safe at Stair Ed.*) Members paying their dues slipped the money into an envelope that was dropped into the safe by way of a slot in the top. All worked well until the day a club official posted not only his overnight dues, but also the safe key. Consternation!

Jack was consulted. He knew a locksmith who would unlock the safe, but the locksmith would not travel to Little Langdale. Hence, the members would have to take the safe to him.

Having volunteered to provide the transport, Jack and a group of the strongest male FMC members gathered at the cottage and maneuvered the heavy safe into the back of Jack's Morris van. With the bonnet pointing to the sky under the weight of the safe, together with Jack and three FMC members, Jack drove slowly into Ambleside. Without mishap to that point, Jack drove confidently through Kendal down the A6 and into Lancaster. By then darkness.

With the head lights of the van lighting up the night like wartime searchlights, Jack decided the safest way to Cleveleys would be over Pilling Sands. In those days before the building of the tidal barrier the road over the sands was under water at high tide. Half way across the sands, the oncoming tide swirled around us but Jack gamely drove on. However, the inevitable happened and the engine flooded.

Jack said we all must push and so with Jack heaving at one door whilst steering and with me pushing at the other door, we made slow progress against the oncoming tide. On stopping for a breather Jack was furious to find the third passenger was sitting calmly at the back of the van. He explained as he was wearing brand new leather boots he didn't want to ruin them in the sea water. The fourth passenger was sitting on top of the safe. She was completely hysterical, sobbing and crying that we would all be drowned. With her cries and the sound of the wind and the sea, Jack muttered under his breath and we pushed on.

After what seemed hours of effort we eventually rolled out of the sea completely exhausted. By this time the head lights had dimmed to a weak glow. It was obviously going to take some time for Jack to dry the plugs and start the engine.

In the darkness I spotted a bright light moving slowly towards us and drawing Jack's attention, we watched as the light grew nearer and brighter. It was a lantern held high by the Pilling village policeman!

The officer looked at the van and our bedraggled state, before remarking that it was not a night for crossing the sands. "By the way," he said in a very jocular manner, "What have you got in the van - a safe?"

There was silence within our group. Jack looked at the officer, paused, and replied in a very calm matter of fact manner; "As a matter of fact officer," he said, "We have."



## Postscript.

Jack and the Safe is only one of the experiences I shared with Jack.

Sadly, I was not with Jack on his many wanderings through the Italian Alps and did not share his alpine experiences.

However, the adventures of Jack will continue with tales of his breaking the ice to swim in a Lakeland Tarn to impress a lady; of him almost dying of asphyxiation in a paraffin fumed summer house attached to a Bothy in Glenshee in the dead of winter ; almost running off the end of the Fourth Bridge ferry pier; driving through a blizzard on the A74 at Beattock; an encounter with his life long friend Peter Forbes and a mysterious Polish countess.

## Roy Bridge in the year of our lord 2007 by Clive Bell

Easysun.com came up trumps for this years Roy Bridge meet with wall to wall sunshine every day, payback time for all the horizontal weather of previous years. Eight pilgrims turned up at Achluachrach for Friday and Saturday night with some of the workers returning on Sunday and two more grafters leaving on Monday with idle retirees leaving two on Tuesday and two on Wednesday. The walkers knocked off amongst others Creag Meagaidh, Aonach Mor and on the way home Schiehallion and Ben Vrackie. There was a good covering of snow over the tops of Creag Meagaidh and Aonach Mor with folk skiing the top couple of runs. Most of the hills displayed fantastic cornices.

The climbers set off before the crack of sparrows on Saturday morning to do White Lion on the Ben. Two teams of two were planned for the great ascent, unfortunately Phil was ill and could not go and spent the rest of Saturday at deaths door in his pit. The three heroes managed the route but three on a rope meant slow progress and a finish in the dark. Ian, not happy with the rout down to the car park elected to go down the tourist rout to Glen Nevis from where he was picked up by the others. They arrived back at base about 1am. We thought they were in the pub!

Sunday our heroes were knackered, Ian and Phil went home Alan and Darren went for a walk. Monday the aforementioned two now fully recovered did Whiteout on Aonach Beag.

The bunkhouse at Roy Bridge is very good and is getting more and more like the UN with Slavs, Germans, French, Spanish, Theis and Geordies passing through. Another thing, we met some Scottish lads on the side of one of the hills, who mentioned a website called munromagic.com. Try it, it's quite good.

## Alan Blackburn - Victim of Global Warming!

Alan's world-renowned powers of drowning all around him with storm and tempest, although evident at the CIC/Lagangarbh meet, would seem to be on the wane. Wherever he now goes he brings glorious weather, as evidenced at the Dolomites and Roy Bridge. He has abandoned the rain dance to become the sundance kid.

Keep up the good work Alan; just don't expect a discount . Clive

## Winter Meets 2007 by Darren Hartley

First up in mid February was the eagerly anticipated Glen Clova meet, Glen Clova is situated about 30 miles north of Dundee and classed as the Southern Cairngorms, the glen is popular both as a climbing area and a walking area. Unfortunately neither conditions nor the weather were kind to us, us transpired to be myself, Alan Blackburn and Les Ward. The hotel was very pleasant and the lights welcoming after the long Friday night drive. Saturday's plan was to crack off the two popular munro's Dreish and Mayer this turned out to be a battle against the elements especially on the exposed plateau, Les had turned back, later to be found by a roaring fire watching the rugby with a pint in his hand. However a particular highlight for us all was the view of Corrie Fee and the lines of the classic's 'Look C' and 'Look B'. Sunday we were up and off early and with the prospect of improved weather in the west we headed to Crianlarich, our route for the day was a circuit round the summit of Cruach Ardrain, Alan required an elusive top to add to his long list, the weather was reasonable, but we found the going rough descending the easterly ridge and opted to return the same way we ascended, the top would have to wait. All in all not to bad then given the forecast.

Second then was the CIC meet. The CIC hut is located at approx 680 metres up the Allt 'A Mullin Glen below the northern cliffs of Ben Nevis. The views of the cliffs plastered in snow and ice are truly spectacular and any aspiring mountaineers will find the place quite overwhelming on their first visit. The team



(Myself, Nick Harrison, Alan Blackburn, Ian Marsden, Tony Mitchell, Dave Hughes) arrived at the north face car park at about 3.30pm and after the team photo's headed up the glen. The trees were moving and we arrived at the top car park at the same time as the rain. The long haul up to the hut with all your kit for 3 days could have been a bit better. The word on the street was a large avalanche had occurred in observatory gully and the cliffs were Cat 4, not very inspiring. We were spooked and opted to try out some winter skills training, under the guidance of a short fat bloke called Ian, aka Marzy. We did get some strange looks as a party of six headed up hill carrying the hut shitting shovels, Marzy shouting 'right lads don't forget, carry yer shovel in the up hill hand and if a slip occurs...' A snow shelter was constructed, snow bollards and stomper belays tested to failure, axe braking, T axe belays set up, all good fun and an enjoyable way to spend a day. The next day teams were out climbing, Tony and Dave headed up to be bottom of No5 and completed Ledge Route, they were chuffed. Myself, Alan and Ian headed up to look at Thompson's and after establishing a good belay Alan started off up the first pitch, heavy spindrift and the prospect of poor ice in the narrows had Alan thinking twice. We promptly retreated and as we were heading down the corrie we had an idea, why don't we do the first two pitches of Two Step and rap off. Alan set off up good snow ice when the spindrift started again, Alan rarely swears but for someone who wears glasses when climbing heavy doses of spindrift are the last thing you want. We got to the belay at the big ledge without problem and I enjoyed the climbing. The next day the weather was playing up and after the usual 'just give it an hour and see if things improve' malarkey we packed up and decided to head to Glen Coe.

We arrived in Glen Coe at the same time as the monsoon season, the team was the same six as the CIC plus John and Claire, Mick Dugdale and Mark Boden. The usual beer drinking on Friday in the Kinghouse got the weekend started. Saturday saw John and Claire heading down Glen Etive munro bagging, the rest headed up the Lairig Gartain from the hut to bag the Buachaille Etive Beag, after an hour of horizontal rain I suggested a refreshment stop in a hollow, it was here a revolt took place, myself, Nick and Mick pressed on and we found the summit ridge entertaining, the others heading back to the warmth and shelter of the hut. Saturday saw the usual Clachaig activities but with the absence of a live band the Clach. didn't live up to the usual expectations. Sunday saw most folk heading home, myself and Mick headed for the Tarmachan ridge near Killin, we had stopped for Sunday papers at the local shops lets face it Alan and Nick needed something to do in the car, apparently completing three sudokus each can leave the windows rather steamy. The ridge was straightforward and free of snow apart from a few drifted patches, the weather was a slight improvement from the previous day.

## COMPETITION



photo John W.

What is our chairman Clive saying on his mobile to his wife?

Tiebreaker.....Where is he?

## Northumberland 07

The end of September and seven soles ventured up to Preston (Northumberland). 40 miles north of Newcastle just off the A1. Andy D. was officer in charge and found a good bunkhouse at Chathill with all mod. Cons. And just about in walking distance of a pub, although we didn't visit it this time.



On Friday we took the scenic route over the A686. I have never seen so many pheasants both squashed and walking, few flying. On Saturday us walkers tackled The Cheviot, 2676ft and a long gentle walk up with a magnificent view from the top, so they tell us. We saw each other and the inside of a cloud. Later we met up with the climbing team and did some quaffing in a pub on the coast. Sunday's weather was not good which meant a visit to Lindisfarn Castle on Holy Island and an early departure.

This is a beautiful part of the country, which not many people visit. There are therefore no queues or crowds. The walking is good and interesting and the climbers reported good crags although only single pitches. The only drawback this time was the weather, just like the Lakes.

Why not come with us next year and do somewhere different.

Clive

*Clive has "forgotten" one comment he made while walking past a field on the way to the beach "Look at those sheep aren't they nice and cuddly" we made a suitable reply.*

## FMC O Meet 27<sup>th</sup> October 07

By John Denmark

Once again we attempted to master Whinlatter Forest. Unfortunately there aren't too many options open due to felling and scrubby impenetrable new growth so essentially I recycled last year's course into a score type event. This is a "find-as-many-as-you-can-in-a-given-time" type of event with severe penalties for being late back.

The weather forecast was not good but we were pleasantly surprised by a pleasant morning. Not quite as many punters as last year with one of the favourites, John Hickman, pulling out through illness at the eleventh hour and Chris Packman being delayed by bicycle thieves.

*Despite the fact that only two younger fit runners actually completed the course and almost everyone else was retired, or with young children John immediately said "that's not good we must make the course harder next year". In fact the navigation was quite straightforward but the distances were impossible in the time*

*without running like a greyhound. I did jog occasionally but consolation was at hand as after an afternoon walk Sue had cooked a superb meal.*

## FMC Orienteering Meet Results 2007

	Time	Points	Penalties	Pts/min	60mins
1 Andy Dunhill	45.19	160	0	3.53	212
2 Sreve Wrigley	46.03	160	0	3.47	208
3 John Wiseman	58.24	150	0	2.57	154
4 Caroline Webb	58.32	150	0	2.56	154
5 Marie Angeles Solera	48.59	120	0	2.45	147
6 Clive Bell & Kevan Ebbrell	59.48	120	0	2.01	120
7 Hird Family	57.38	110	0	1.91	115
8 Dave Earle	59.34	110	0	1.85	111

Course length 4.35k 170m climb  
10 mins/k = 60.30mins

## Fell Race 2007

Another good turn out for the fell race with 7 first timers and most of the regulars. Martin Dale holds the record for participation with runs in all twelve races since we moved it to Stair. Dave Ward had a brilliant run, finishing in 30.48, knocking 28 seconds off Ali Welsh's record that had stood since 2002. How long before someone breaks the half hour barrier? Steve Wrigley won the handicap race for the second time at Stair, coming in over four minutes ahead of Geoff Brindle in second and beating the handicapper by over 8 minutes. (This will never happen again Steve!) Viv Broughton won the women's race in a personal worst of 65 minutes.

As usual Andy and Christine provided an excellent curry in the evening. Many thanks to all who helped out.



Position	Name	Time	Scratch position	Handicap plus or minus
1	Steve Wrigley	43.46	7	-8.14
2	Geoff Brindle	51.26	12	-3.34
3	Dave Ward	30.48	1	-3.12
4	Mark Broughton	42.43	5	-2.23
5	Kevan Ebrell	52.24	13	-1.36
6	Steve Whittaker	34.07	2	-0.53
7	Chris Thistlethwaite	37.35	3	+0.35
8	Nick Dalzell	50.07	11	+2.07
9	Chris Campbell	43.20	6	+3.20
10	Andy Dunhill	48.30	10	+3.30
11	Dave Earle	63.50	15	+3.50
12	Tom Knowles	69.15	17	+4.15
13	Liam Gaston	42.35	4	+4.35
14	Vivienne Broughton	65.00	16	+5.00
15	Martin Dale	60.20	14	+5.20
16	Chris Peed	47.20	8	+7.20
17	Chris Wiles	47.50	9	+12.50
18	Clive Bell	85.14	18	+20.14
19	Christine Barbier	98.24	19	+33.24
20	Geoff Bellingham	118.35	20	+48.35

Mark Broughton

## ICE TRIP 2008 - VAL DI COGNE

After a gap of some four years during which other places were tried it was decided that the icefall climbing meet this year should once again be in our old favourite venue of Cogne. This introduction gives me an excuse to discuss previous venues, Rjukan in Norway, Gressoney, and in particular last year's trip to La Grave; this is good because I've just found the article I wrote for the Spring 2007 journal, but never sent! It's all a bit historical now so let's leave it that a total of 23 climbers and skiers stayed at a grand "gite de tape" or hostel style accommodation in La Grave and enjoyed climbing in the main valley, the astonishingly beautiful (and avalanche prone) Vallon du Diable and as far afield as Fressinieres (pronounced "free sin here" - very appropriate!) and ski-ing at Les Deux Alpes, Alpes d'Huez and Serre Chevalier - all quite close. The memorable

bits? Robin sitting in on harmonica with the blues band in the bar, then jamming with Pete and the bar owner at our last night "gala" dinner; me losing up to £140 worth of ice screws etc by leaving them loose on the ground just before we got hit by spindrift avalanches; (mug of the year material but too late now!) the generosity of the meet in having a whip round to compensate me for my loss; the unique cafe-cum-shop in St Christophe, it's proprietor and her cakes, oh! and much of the climbing and ski-ing.

And so back to 2008 when we had our biggest turnout yet for this the eighth FMC Icefall Climbing Meet. From humble beginnings with 2 present in 2001 this time we had 30 including greatly enjoyed appearances by such debutantes as Terry, Dave and Becky. We had more than the usual complement of guests from the Rucksack Club, a guest introduced by Ali and a rare appearance from the club's Milan chapter in the person of Paul.

The start of the trip was marred by fog at Bergamo causing our plane to land instead at Genoa with all the hassle and expense of renting additional cars - unless like two among us you chose to eschew the pleasure of getting to bed that night and preferred a very long bus ride and an hour on the floor at Bergamo Airport! (more potential mug material and this time not yet out of time! And while we're on the subject does having your rope confiscated at the airport qualify for mug nomination? I think so, don't you?). In the end all but those two got to bed by two thirty or so, and most got money back on the original car hires so disaster it was not.

Thereafter the meet followed a familiar pattern whereby various, mainly ever changing, partnerships of members set off later than expected each day (except Dale & Co who in any case expect to set off late!) to set about climbs and pistes of varying degrees of difficulty and remoteness, from the 5 minute approach to the classic Cascades de Lillaz to a two hour stomp to the upper reaches of the twin Cogne valleys or a two hour drive to ski somewhere different. Everyone seemed to have a good time. In particular I think those ice climbing for the very first time got rather more than they bargained for in one way or another, but I also think they might be back for more. I hope so.

Those attending were: Bennett, Wrigley, Fenna, Brookes, Andrews, Blackburn, Reid, Holmes (g), Hickman, Hird, Clifford, Welsh, Phil (g), Stevens, Hicks, Becky, Lee, Robinson, Dale, Christine, Sissons, Hepburn, Taylor, Rhodes (g), Deakin (g), Ryan (g) Cardus (g), McCombie (g), Phillips (g). Apologies were received from Ward and Gaston - regrettably unavoidably absent.

**Martin Bennet**



## Roy Bridge 2008 Clive Bell

April the 4<sup>th</sup> and the annual pilgrimage to Roy Bridge, with a crew of seven coming and going over the weekend. Some getting there on Thursday and departing on Saturday and others Friday to Tuesday and yet others doing something in between. Kevan and I did Ben Vrackie on the journey north. A nice easy little hill at the back of Pitlochry with a good view and worth breaking your journey for. Darren H. and Alan B. spent Thursday night in Aviemore and got some ice climbing in on Cairngorm then travelled down to Roy Bridge on Friday evening. A stretch of the A9 had a speed limit on it with 'some numpty doing 30 mph' and had to be overtaken. Unfortunately this particular numpty had a dark blue suit and a matching flashing light. Darren was obliged to swap his beer tokens for stars on his card. Ali W. and Simon F. had come up on Thursday and had conquered Smith's route on the Ben on Friday. Already installed in the bunkhouse was a young lady called Kirsty from Aberdeen, she was enjoying a long weekend boarding on Aonach Mor and reported good snow.

Saturday and our various teams went off to do our separate things. Kevan and I drove to the valley opposite Spean Bridge intending to do The Grey Corries but the cloud was down as usual so with a swift mind change decided to go for something a bit lower, Stob Coire Scriodain. Quite a pleasant walk with the weather coming and going giving us alternate beautiful sunny views and opaque snow showers. At the top the weather came and stayed and brought 50mph white out with lumps in it. This triggered my mini epic. Getting my ice axe out I dropped my glove, which shot off into the white, I chased it knowing there was cliff edge somewhere ahead in the swirling crap. Thankfully I caught the glove, but where was the ice axe? Found the axe but where was Kevan? Sorted ourselves out and then came across an emergency tent thingy with people inside! Fortunately it was just three ladies sheltering from the maelstrom and slightly lost. The five of us managed to find the scenery again and could go our separate ways. For us back to the Aite Cruinnichidh, the bunkhouse, food and wine. Alan and Darren had treated Mike, a new member, to climb Tower Scoop on the Ben. That evening a minibus arrived from Ashington Co. Durham with more inmates. They were a collection of students, trainee teachers and teachers/guides Their intention was to do the Ben on Sunday. Their instructor was Spanish, a sociable guy with good English but a strong accent, fuzzy hair 'tache and beard looking like an artist, one of the old masters. He seemed to know what he was doing and with the weather being what it was and the kids not having ice axes, crampons or experience he took them only part way up but they seemed to enjoy it.

Sunday morning and there was an inch of snow on the cars. Alan, Darren and Mike went to Aonach Mor to ski (no speed limits there). For us it was a drive to

Loch Laggan and a walk to the col between Beinn a Chlachair and Geal Charn. A pleasant walk but seemed hard work, nowt' to do wif' last nights wine though. Back to Aite Cruinnichidh for wine beer and eats. Alan and Darren reported good skiing on Aonach Mor, as did Kirsty. A good day was had by all

Monday, Alan and Darren returned to Aonach Mor to climb and then home. We drove to Glenn Chia Aig, the walk started pleasantly up hill through woods by a burn but then turned dismal with snow, bog and low cloud so being true FMC heroes we gave it up as a bad job. Back down to admire the waterfall at the start of the path then drive round to the Caledonian Canal at Gairloch and a stroll by the water.

Tuesday was home day and the weather though not raining was crap. A quick investigation of the church in Achluachrach above the bunkhouse and then south.

All in all a good weekend with good company in a good bunkhouse but the weather slowly worsened as time went on.

## Hut to hut 2008 Clive Bell

This year's hut to hut was well attended with eight pilgrims doing the walk and six climbers climbing. Four of us travelled early to Little Langdale and collected Wetherlam, Swirl How and Little Carrs on Friday afternoon. The other walkers joined us in the cottage and the next day's routes were planned later in the Three Shires. It transpired that all bar two had a bus pass and one of those had left it at home.

Saturday turned up with light rain. The Denmarks set off for their route over Crinkle Craggs and Bowfell. The Wisemans, Tom K, Michael P, Dave E and me set off later after donning our waterproofs to find that the rain had stopped! Our route was via Chapel Style, High Raise and Ullscarf to Watendlath around Derwent water to Stair. We plodded on through the odd shower, but could see thick cloud and rain over the Crinkles, Bowfell, Sue and John. Mugs of tea for all, scone and jam for one in Wathendlath then off to our destination. As we reached the Borrowdale Road we were treated to an air display by two helicopters. One landed, its passengers swapped to the other machine, which started up and took off.

At Stair we met the climbers, Martin D, Andy D, Chris T and Paul Taylor, who had flown over for the meet! (Nice to see you Paul.) Woodsy and Hal turned up later.



We chatted and recounted our day's journey. Sue and John had a good wetting and came back from Rosthwaite on the bus – the shame.

Sunday morning John and June were first off again heading for Little Langdale, the early morning bus as far as Rosthwaite - more shame. However they did then go by Glaramara, Esk Pike, Bowfell and the Crinkles.

John and Sue were next off for their return route catching the later bus to Rosthwaite – shame upon shame, then over Stake pass. This left just four heroes to return via High Spy and Langstrath and a pot of tea in the ODG. This got funny sideways looks from the bar staff, but at least we didn't use the bus.

The real hero of the meet was Mr. Chris Campbell who transported all the gear from Little Langdale to Stair and back again. Next time I meet the Queen I shall mention the honours list (cheers Chris).

Doing the Chapel Style route is all uphill, there are no downhills – honest – a quirk of nature.

Ninety per cent of the walking crew now have bus passes. I propose next year we should have a special category using zimmer frames, buses, maps with large print, stops for changes of underwear and some means of reminding us where we're going.

## WHITBY 2008 Clive Bell

The six of us met up at the Backpackers Bunkhouse, Whitby on Friday evening, the same excellent digs that we have used previously. Our fellow inmates belonged to the folk music fraternity and were in Whitby for the Folk Festival the following week. On our previous trips the pub to visit was the Endeavour but this evening, all though it was full, there was no music. We moved camp to the Middle Earth, which had musicians and beer aplenty guaranteeing over-indulgence.

Saturday and Tom Rainford decided to investigate the Whitby environs. We other five took the train to Grosmont and then on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway to Goathland. Nick and Kate stayed on the train to investigate Pickering, leaving Kevan Eebberell, Dave Earle and me to yomp back to Whitby. The route followed what had been a long dismantled horse drawn mineral railway back to Grosmont

and the NYM engine sheds. Interesting, and they sold ice cream. On then via Sleights and Ruswarp to Whitby. The weather threatened all day but there was no rain, an excellent day.

Fish and chips for tea then out to find the music. Around the centre, plenty of beer but couldn't find fiddles and flutes and so back to Middle Earth – heaven. Music in two rooms inside and another lot outside and Copper Dragon over the bar. We settled in amongst the throng and were entertained with guitars, fiddles, tin whistles, drums, singers and an excellent performance on a squeeze box – where were you Alan?

Sunday morning, big decision, go home or go for a walk in the grotty weather. Fortunately after our long period of vacillating on a decision the weather cleared. Parked at Sandsend and bussed to Staithes. Nick and Kate spent the day exploring the sights of Whitby. Of the four of us bus passengers, three old farts had bus passes, which meant only young Kev had to cough up £3.50 – well we thought it was funny. The bus set off up Lythe Bank, a long 1 in 4 hill. Half way up, the rear passengers ran to the front screaming fire! Clouds of smoke curled from the back of the bus – panic! It cleared when we stopped. Frantic phone calls by the driver then we moved slowly, smokily, to the top. A replacement bus arrived it's driver hopped into 'our bus' and drove off, disappearing in a grey cloud, then off we went to Staithes, shaken but not stirred. We walked south along the cliffs high above the flat calm sea. Stopped for butties looking out across Runswick Bay and the route to come. Passed Kettlewell and down to the old railway back to Sandsend. A hot and very humid day and we had NO beer. Relief at last, an ice cream van, on the bonnet it said "made from cows, not from packets" and it was bloody good ice cream. Ice cream slurped and then home.

## Bregaglia Summer 2008

Nick Hepburn & I were fortunate enough to escape our wonderful English summer in late July/early August for two & a half weeks in Switzerland/Italy where the temperature was never less than 30C any day & the sun shone. It was an odd experience. One down side was a lot of late afternoon/early evening storms however.

We flew from Liverpool on Ryanair to Bergamo & drove to Lecco then onto Bregaglia camping just over the border in Switzerland at a wonderful site close to



the village of Vicosoprano.. The views of the mountains were excellent, the price very reasonable & the lady who ran the site, Gianna, was very friendly, especially to Nick.

The main target here is a route on the Piz Badile but there is a lot of other good climbing accessible from both the Sciora & Sasc Fura huts. All of these require a night in the hut or a bivi as they are not readily accessible from the valley in a day. Just to the east is the Albigna valley, easily accessible by cable car, from where a lot of very good, mainly bolted, multi pitch rock climbing is available for a day out.

In order to get a bit acclimatised & because the weather pattern was almost daily storms in the late afternoon, as a result of the heat, we did several climbs in the Albigna valley during the first week. These included Via Leni VI+ & Tirami-su VII on the Spazzacaldeira. Both were 5 or 6 pitches & only 10 minutes from the cable car. Another day we did Via Micki V+ on the Bio Pillar which was a 2 hour walk in & had more of a mountain route feel to it.

Another good route we did in this valley was the Via Kasper VI (guidebook gives V11 ED Definitely overgraded) a 250 metre climb on the Piz Frachiccio overlooking the reservoir. Then as a short filler in the 5 pitch Water Symphony Fr 5a on the Albigna Hut Slabs which provided excellent slab padding.

In between these mountain routes we crossed the border a couple of times into Italy, where shopping is cheaper, to visit some of the lower level climbing. The Bodengo valley is a superb hidden gem with a selection of crags. We did the 220 metre Inox V on the Placche Del Boggia. You park on the road at the top & abseil down to the bottom of a gorge & do 5 pitches of good quality slab climbing.

In the same valley we did a couple of very under graded Fr 5b/c slab climbs on Scivolo Di Corte Terza before being stormed off by torrential rain. It's a great valley but don't forget to buy a ticket in the bar at the bottom for 5 Euros as it's a private road. A few Kilometres up the road is the very friendly Bar Dunadiv with lots of info on both climbing & canyoning, which is very popular, plus the benefit of a great view down onto the town of Chiavenna

The second half of the trip saw more settled weather so we decided to have a go at the one climb we'd really come here to try – the Cassin Route on the North East face of the Piz Badile. This is TD VI 800 metres with 24 pitches of climbing plus some scrambling both at the start & the finish. We booked into the Sasc Fura Hut & a 4am wake up call. Several parties had the same plan so we all trooped off into the dark.

We were in the middle of the teams on the approach which requires some scrambling & the passing of two snow patches. One of these is quite large & gets the early morning sun. A Polish team in front of us had been stood on part of this when it collapsed taking them 300 feet down the slabs. Fortunately they stopped but one was injured so a helicopter rescue ensued. It was doubtful whether we would be able to continue but a wait of a couple of hours saw us on our way again.

This meant we were well late but the weather was good & no storms were forecast (ha!) so we went for it. There was a back log of teams all fighting for position which was a bit unnerving. We made steady progress not having to wait too often. The climbing is slabby & on generally reasonable rock but with some loose flakes where care was needed. We did get slightly off route at one point but quickly realised it. The climbing was mainly VS or less up to the mid point ledges.

The next pitch is probably the crux following an HVS corner then out onto more slabs leading to the final chimney line. This comprised about 5 pitches of traditional chimney climbing, VS if you know what you are doing but much, much harder if you don't! We finally reached the summit ridge at about 4.30/5pm with thickening grey skies & thunder building up in the distance.

There is a choice of descents. The quickest is to abseil down the Ridge to the hut but the weather put us off that idea. We continued to the summit with the intention of descending down the Italian side but by this time it was raining & the storm was just beginning. The lightning conductor on the summit was making a nice 'buzzing' sound if not a particularly safe belay at that point! This is a common weather pattern on the Badile & many people have been caught out & died as a result in the past so a bivi shelter has been built on the summit. This has mattresses & blankets & provided a much better night's sleep than we got in the hut. It's where Martin Bennett & Phil Caley first met many years ago.

We were lucky. There were two Polish teams behind us; one arrived at the bivi around 9pm totally drenched. The others tried to abseil down the ridge but got half way & had to spend the night sat on a ledge in a raging storm. We made the right decision.

The next day was superb so we went down into Italy & returned to the campsite by 1 hitched lift then by public transport - 2 buses, 1 train & 1 taxi arriving in Chiavenna at the foot of the Engadine valley around 10pm. We tried to get Chris This or Tom Knowles to come & pick us up instead of the taxi but they were pissed by that time of the evening & the battery in my mobile died.



The Cassin Route was first done in 1937 & was a fantastic ascent for the time. It's a committing climb & although not hard by today's standards it's not easy either.

We also met one of the infamous Creag Dubh members now in his 70's, John Mclean, who recounted many funny stories over whiskey one evening of epic climbs in the Dolomites, Bregaglia and Scotland with the likes of Dougal Haston and Jimmy Marshall. In discussion Nick mentioned that 'Torro E2' on Carn Dearg, Ben Nevis was one of his favourite climbs. He replied 'Aye, that's one of mine'. First ascent 1962 along with W.Smith and W.Gordon - awesome! Nick'd read some of these stories in 'Creag Dubh Climber' but they were far more entertaining delivered in a broad Scots accent first hand – no wonder the guy is a popular after dinner speaker for various climbing clubs.

We finished the trip with a weekend stay in Ardesio, near Milan with Paul Taylor & Cristina Prada where we had a couple of days limestone bolt clipping & some excellent wine and Italian ice cream.

Guide Books used:

Swiss Rock: Granite Bregaglia by Chris Mellor Void Publishing. A more up to date version can be accessed on the web & printed out for a reasonable price.

Arampicate... in Valtelina, Valchiavenne & Engadina by Versante Sud Milan

The Schwiez Plaisir books are also very good for this area.

Interestingly we were able to buy almost everything in Switzerland with Euros

Andy Dunhill & Nick Hepburn

## THE BEAUTIFUL ECRINS 2008

In July 2008 a crew of 16 met up in the Vallouise Valley in the French Alps for a fortnight of fun and frolics in the mountains. Six of us, Barrie Crook, Kevan & Glynis Ebbrell, Mike Howe, Jenny Tolly and me flew from Manchester to Turin and then hire car to Pelvoux. Three more Alan Blackburn, Tony Mitchell, Dave Earle and two non members Norman & Sandy drove in their own vehicles, with Tom Knowles on his motor bike. Mike and Carole Penn drove out and stayed over the road in their camper van. The two non-members and friends of yours truly drove

and joined us on Tuesday. Later in the holiday Chris This. on his bike and Adrian Clifford by plane and hire car arrived to join the throng and camped in Vallouise.

The non-campers had half board in La Gite Blanche in Pelvoux with excellent food and a pleasant ambience (that's french) and all served up by Karine and Laurent. Recommended if you ever need to stay in that area.

Sunday was planned as an investigation of the area and started with a walk to Vallouise and food and beer. What was not planned was the weather, we did it in waterproofs and gave up half way. Was this to be the story for the rest of the two weeks?

Monday morning the weather was getting better and the team set of to do the Via Ferrata Mines de Grand Clot (mines of the large enclosure) which took us up past the derelict lead mines and up above the valley to Plateu d'Emparis and eventually to le Chazelet where Kevan, who had explored the area by car with Glynis and Carole, gave us a lift back to our cars.

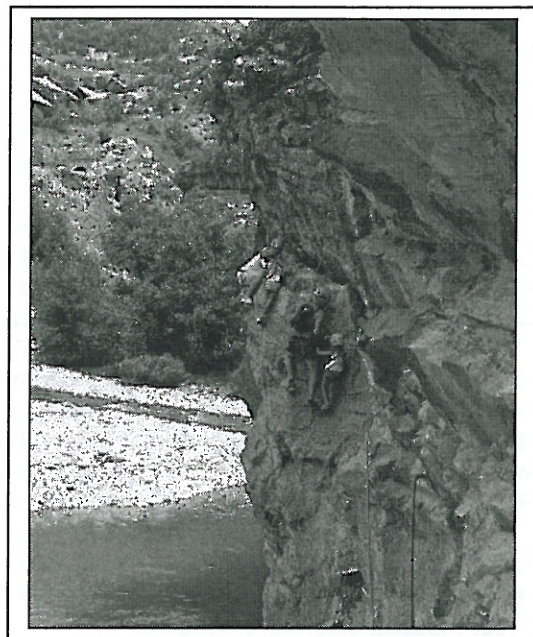
The next day, Tuesday, a crowd of us ventured up Mt Blanche. The first part by cable car, which proved to be extremely cheap, we got a bulk buy at pensioners' rates! Fantastic views from the top.

In this year's trip we repeated many of the VF routes the half dozen of us did last year. These were just as enjoyable and in some cases different in some way. The beer from the local Alphan Brewery was just as good. This year our trip up Lauzet, arguably the best of the VFs in the area, was accomplished in sunshine. Last year the weather worsened and we finished in a snow storm (July). This year we summited to find a French guy pretending to be impaled on the summit cross whilst his wife took photos. He mentioned "La Vie De Brian" which caused much merriment. Dormillous, the village supplied by donkey and visited by our contingent this year was just as "different" as last year. The waitress at the café had changed, last year's was now in New Zealand! Last year the friendly locals treated us to drinks of their home brewed moonshine, this year we were just customers. As they say, never go back. Those who ventured on above the village were treated to wonderful mountain scenery with lakes and woods and a strange area with dozens of small cairns, a place for aliens to land?

As suggested by Mr Dave E, two of the days were spent in the neighbouring area of the Queyras. Visiting the extraordinary but beautiful, Pain du Sucre which just looked like its sugar loaf name. At the top I dawdled taking photos, now there's a surprise, I was left to find my own way down in the gathering cloud and nearly



earned mug of the year with the wrong valley thing. By super navigational luck I managed to catch up with the rest of the gang. Alan B, Mike H and I, along with a couple of climbers, Penny and Dave, from Sheffield who were staying in the gite, decided to give the Gorge de le Durance with its three VFs at grade TD a go. It has three high and long wibbly wobbly bridges, fabulous. Whilst we were doing this three small children of about five or six were doing an easier route with their parents with complete confidence. Above the gorge were two zip wires, which, with screams of delight/fear folk zipped across every few minutes. Alan had a zip the next day.



A second trip to the Queyras and up to the top of Tete de Paneyron with its wonderful panoramas. Mike H and Dave E decided to carry on further down to Lac de Etoile. The rest of us bold mountaineers decided sitting in the sun was a better idea. The Italian border was about two miles away, after about twenty minutes kip Jenny's phone rang, "Welcome to Italy", after another twenty minutes and having not moved one centimetre it rang again "Welcome to France". When it rang a third time it was switched off.

On our way to the start of VF Tournoux there was a young lad of about four confidently bouldering, with a top rope from his dad.

On the second Sunday the plan was to visit Glacier Blanc, but over night there was a humongous rock avalanche, which blocked the road and cut the glacier off from the rest of the world. A rapid change of plan and we plodded to the Refuge Pelvoux. Apart from a fascinating outside loo, it was not the most exciting place to visit, although the weather was good and they did a nice omelette.

On the final Thursday a large gang set off for Glacier Blanc to escort Alan B and Tony M on the first part of their attempt to conquer Le Barre de Ecrins (4302 m). They stayed at the Refuge des Ecrins and set off on their quest early the following

morning. The rest of us idled our time at the bottom of the glacier and the Refuge des Glacier Blanc. With the sun shining and a beautiful view of the glacier and the snow clad mountains what else are you going to do? The following day the two knackered heroes returned. Tony unfortunately had suffered mountain sickness and although they had got to a minor summit the main objective was not achieved. They are still FMC heroes.

I think marmots are getting bolder, they no longer run and hide, from only a few metres they sit and watch passers by with great curiosity. Throughout the fortnight various splinter groups did their own thing and toured the local sights by car, shopped, drank beer, did short walks or just chilled our in the sun. Tony M and Alan B climbed or ferrated for most of the fortnight, but took a day off to watch the Tour de France on the day it passed through the area.

Friday night and the whole gang collected in the gite dining room/lounge for beer, coffee and chats before the long journey home the next day. Chris T and Tom K were off on their bikes to tour Europe and meet up with Paul in Milan over the following weeks.

This was an excellent holiday with first class accommodation in a beautiful part of the world with something for everyone and better still two weeks of wall to wall sunshine. We, the privileged, had a summer.

## Clive

# Earth, Wind, Fire and Water

3 September 2008 by Gillian and Peter Llewellyn

An evening jolly up Clough Pike with John and Claire from the punter's prospective.

All the drama of a classic mountain experience encapsulated in two hours – such is the quality of the FMC's evening walks!

It had been raining hard all day, typical of every day for the previous two months which had celebrated Alan Blackburn's trial retirement. The optimists amongst us hoped to catch the "back edge" (BBC) of the weather system and enjoy some fine evening views over the bay with a glorious sunset. With Alan as chauffeur we arrived just ahead of John and Claire at the Rigg Lane car park and were surprised to be joined by the equally optimistic Jenny and the Denmarks.



Most of us put on full waterproof kit at the car park. Five minutes into the walk saw the one legged performance of donning waterproof trousers on the soggy path by those who had not heeded the fanfare of thunder.

In the gathering gloom from over Heysham Power Station, accompanied by the roll of thunder and the flash of lightening the team surged up paths like rivers and boulder hopped towards the top of the Pike.

Comforted by the thought that lightening strikes the tallest object we all followed John to the top. He was taking the job seriously by enquiring about our comfort and encouraging us all to proceed quickly as darkness was gathering fast under the thunderclouds. By this time the wind was howling and driving the rain horizontally, testing everyone's wet weather gear.

At the trig point John laid on one of several entertainments, this one being hunt the spectacles, which had been whipped off his head by the wind just at the time when buckets of water were being hurled at us and we could not see our feet for the darkness, cue for hilarious hysterics.

:"Does anyone have a touch?"

Amazingly the spectacles were found intact and undamaged after a fingertip search of a small boulder field. This concluded the little diversion allowing us to squelch on down to Rooten Brook Farm – home of numerous dogs barking a welcome as we walked though the farmyard in the dark. A warm glow over the sea was replaced by lights around the bay, a fine few point.

"This isn't how I remember it" said John as he patrolled the perimeter fence. Not to be out done we climbed over fences, under fences, down a lamppost (yes!) and forded our way along the flooded road back to the cars and the welcoming Fleece Inn serving Westmoreland Beer and hot chocolate.

The wimps who ducked out missed a treat.

## Family Meet September 2008 Stair

After a rather disappointing summer we were not holding our breath for good weather but we were lucky. Fifteen individuals attended – seven aged six or under. Saturday saw the whole group walking up Cat Bells and all fifteen summited in just over two hours. The weather was a bit inclement during the final scramble to the top but that was soon forgotten and the walk back down involved lots of hiding in the ferns. After some 'snack' back at the hut some of the

group went in to Keswick whilst the rest took the children to the Swinside beer garden. By now the weather was glorious, the children were playing happily and the pint glasses were emptying merrily. Andy stopped by on his way back from Keswick and ferried the children back to the hut for a communal tea of sausage and mash prepared by Chris Bell. (Leaving the ladies of the party to wander back in their own good time!) Once the children were in their bunks the adults enjoyed a Mexican meal before retiring.

The kids were all up early on Sunday and following a late breakfast the majority of the group went biking along the old railway track from Keswick to Threlkeld whilst the rest walked along the side of Derwentwater and went on a boat trip; everyone met up later in the afternoon and went swimming. We finished the weekend with tea at the hut before packing, tidying and heading home.

It was a great weekend which everyone (hopefully) enjoyed. The family meets are now becoming popular with a core of regular attendees. It is not cliquey and we love to see new faces. We are trying to plan the events before hand so that we do as much as the children can manage each weekend and it's easier to pack if you know what's planned. We are also trying to organise shared meals on Saturday night if people want to join in. We'd also love to hear from members who attended Family Meets in the past with ideas of places to take the kids walking or things to do. The next Family Meet is 10/11<sup>th</sup> January 2009 at Langdale; unfortunately snow is not guaranteed but you never know.

**Andy & Liz Hird**

## More Spain

Martin Dale

Winter was on its way and the weather had already turned crap. I had some leave left and fancied some sun on my back for the last time this year. I needed somewhere to go to and someone to go with. My mate, Andy Wadson from Lancaster pitched in with a possible trip to the USA for two weeks but I didn't have that long. Dave Wood was also interested, so a plan was hatched. Fly to Girona, north of Barcelona, from Blackpool. Nice and cheap, hire a car and head inland.

And so it came to pass that Woody and myself flew to Girona. Andy dipped out after taking a bad fall off his mountain bike breaking ribs etc. Hire car obtained, we set off for the nearest crag, Sadernes. When we got there it was going dark and trying to rain. We drove up the gorge. It did look to offer some excellent hard routes and the possibility of some great walks and mountain biking but did seem to lack stuff to do in the 5 to 6 grades. We needed somewhere to lay our heads and there was nowhere in the vicinity so we drove on to Olot and found a great hostel. We did consider going back to Sadernes the next day but it was raining,



so we decided to truck on up to Ripolles and have a look at the main crag in the area, Montgrony. It never stopped raining all day, so Montgrony had to wait.

The following day was fine, if a little cool. Montgrony has a reputation of being a hard crag. The lower tiers are well endowed with wild looking tufa's with grades to match. We wandered up to the top crag to kick off on some easier angled stuff. I thought I'd brought a right turkey with me when Woody proceeded to fall off the first route (a very polished 5), then back off the next two. The first was not surprising given the shock of the fall, but the second one? I was soon to find out why. Tenuous pulls on rib-like holds with nothing for the feet, well committed above the last bolt, I only just made it. We left, after checking out the real action on the lower tier.

After a brief stop at a hostel, we arrived at our base for the week. The one horse town of Artesa de Segre. Just a one main street kind of place with a few bars and shops, it had a good hostel though. We booked in and set off to our first crag. The sun was out as we made the very short walk up to Cal Cari at Alos de Balaguer. A slabby affair with short but quality routes. It was too hot and fortunately the base was slightly shaded. Suitably warmed up in every sense, we quit for another sector back down the road. A bit of a bushwhack led us up to L'Estret. This crag is so new that there isn't a path, and the routes are still freshly brushed and bolted. Time was getting on, so a couple of quick ascents of harder routes followed. Rushing produced my first fall on the last one, a tough 6c. We retreated to the bar as the sun went down. There are loads more crags down this valley just waiting for development. That evening we found the best bar in town. A smoky affair full of old fettlers playing cards, and not spending much money at the bar. No draught ale either!

Thus a pattern developed, breakfast in the hostel (Bocadilla Tortilla), then off to the crag. Back in the evening for tea in the hostel, then down Bar Old Fettler. We visited every venue in the guide, "Salvatge Oest De Catalunya". All were excellent. Os de Balaguer was a secluded valley, also very hot. A series of buttresses with strange scallop holds low down. We were directed at an easy 6c here by the locals, which proved the highlight. Fortunately, it rained again all day Wednesday. Just when we needed a rest day. We went on a drive up to the nearby St Llorenç de Montgai and then Terradets, and then checked out a new area in the Camarasa Gorge. It looked very promising, but would probably be cold this time of year. The next day dawned dry but misty. We visited Santa Linya, sector Futbolin. This was probably my favourite crag, steep and juggy red limestone. I rattled off two 6c's, then a 7a, followed by another 6c, only faltering on the final move. We were somewhat blown away by a local lass, who proceeded to saunter up the 7a like it was a v diff, totally disregarding the tree rest, located conveniently two thirds of the way up. Something I grasped with both

hands and sat in for some long minutes. So did Woody! Next day's crag, Santa Ana, proved to be probably the most extensive crag of the trip, being in another gorge, dammed off at one end. Here, we employed the clip stick for the first time, and Woody made a top effort at leading his first 6c, only really backing off because of a gnarly clip above a ledge. The last day we visited Tartareu. This was the least encouraging crag. Short, steep and very hard. It also went into the shade very early on.

We finished the trip with a night in Calella, an old haunt of Dave's from his student days. The Golden Glove heavy rock bar was a great change to what we had been used to in Artesa. Although, I'll never forget the sea of grey heads sitting quietly in front of the big screen tv in Bar Old Fettler on champions league night, a complete contrast to the Thatched in Poulton on a similar night. Another area of Spain unlocked; there's something for everyone here. What an amazing country!

## Clive's mid week meet at Stair

We met Clive and Kevan in Patterdale and promptly retreated into the car. As the rain slackened we headed out to Place Fell. We got to the top before the next shower came, then dinner not too bad sat under our umbrellas, but Clive had forgotten his so he sat hood up with the rain dripping from his hood and into his tin of fish.

Arriving at Stair we spent an hour or more cleaning the kitchen it, well the building work was being done. We woke up to the sound of rain, eventually we went out round Derwent water. It rained all day, there was variety as it varied from drizzle to downpour. The next day we got high up before the cloud descended again. All this had been a familiar occurrence this autumn. Younger people don't know how lucky they are to be at work in the warm and dry!

## CORRIS

Taking advantage of our retired status we left for this weekend meet on Thursday morning and had an afternoon walk in the showers. Friday was an old favourite in the sunshine, along the cliffs from Borth to Aberystwyth and return.

Friday night John and Claire arrived and we all had a good day on Cader Idrys, it was warm enough to sit and enjoy it. We met some people who had spent the night in the shelter on top and had an amazing sunset. Sunday more sun and cloud and wind. Considering the weather this autumn we did well.



## Northumberland Meet September 2008

This was the club's annual visit to one of the country's best but most forgotten climbing & walking areas. The weather was booked & we were rewarded with blue skies & hot sun on both days with Sunday being the better of the two. This was probably the first time we'd had two consecutive days without rain for several months.

The meet attracted ten members this year which is a record. I was able to arrange some accommodation at Annsteads Farm midway between Seahouses & Beadnell on the coast. This comprised two fixed large tents sleeping 5 in each. They were fully equipped & were ideal. Located in the walled garden of the farm added an appropriate touch of class. The additional benefit was that the farm is in easy walking distance of a real ale pub in Martin's Camra guide!

Saturday dawned bright so the walking team of Tom Knowles & Geoff Brindle set off for the biggest hill in the area – The Cheviot. They had a great day seeing very few other people & although there was some cloud on the summit as they set off this lifted by the time they reached the top. After all the rain we have had recently the ground, normally boggy, was especially wet but the main path has been paved to make it reasonable. After the summit they continued along the top & descended down the valley back to the car. Fish & chips in Wooler made a welcome end to the walk.

The climbers went to the main crag in the area – Bowden Doors. This is an extensive yellow/orange sandstone crag facing west on the top of an escarpment thus catching any sun & wind. The grading in the county is a bit on the hard side so it pays to be conservative about the choice of route. The team concentrated on the classics of the crag ranging from Severe to HVS.

Steve Wrigley teamed up with Martin Dale & Nick Hepburn. Phil Lee guided Chris This for the day & Christine & I did a few climbs. Nick Dalzell arrived in the early afternoon so he & I did a few more routes. Martin decided to have a go at a teasing E2 called The Big Splash but fell off & narrowly missed hitting the ground banging his knee on the way. Eventually Nick managed it after several attempts & one fall. A more realistic grade would be E3 6a.....to near on impossible.

Some of the other classics done included: Main Wall HVS, Tiger Wall VS, Lorraine VS, Scorpion HS, First & Second Leaning Grooves HVS & VS etc. The day ended around 7 with a wonderful view west to The Cheviot. We all headed back & met at The Old Ship Inn Seahouses for a pub meal & a few beers.

Sunday dawned even brighter so the walkers set off from the campsite for a coastal walk. They got as far as Low Newton by Sea, a very attractive & old hamlet where ice creams were had. It was so warm that Tom & Christine went paddling in the sea. It was a very relaxing day & all got sun burnt.

The climbers went to Kyloe Crag which is another sandstone venue comprising a series of buttresses. Apart from one other team in the afternoon we had the whole crag to ourselves. Martin & the two Nicks did 5 of the classic HVSs without any mishap or epics. Phil & Steve did a selection of VS/HVSs the last one giving Phil a bit of a surprise at a rather large overhang. Despite several valiant attempts, including a very dramatic heel hook manoeuvre, he finished up a nearby Severe. I guided Chris T for the day with the usual cries of: "My arms aren't strong enough; I'm knackered; I can't do this....." You definitely get value for money climbing in Northumberland!

The weekend ended with an excellent sunset & after a pot of tea the team headed off home promising to come next year, maybe you could join us?

Andy Dunhill

## Chester Hut Llanberis - a four day weekend

A strange weekend of weather, The forecast was bad for Thursday, good for Friday and dire for Saturday so we went down after tea on Thursday, which had been a bright day with cloud on the Fylde. The journey was windy but dry until we crossed the river at Conway where we met lots of rain and more wind. At the hut cloths and boots were drying as it had been very wet all day. We later heard that the Lake district had also been wet, the mountain marathon was to start on Saturday..

Friday we had a good day on Snowdon sun and fluffy cloud and wind. Saturday was so wet that we went visiting. The rest of the team was celebrating Nicks 40<sup>th</sup> birthday by going mountain biking in the rain and mud.

Sunday was cloudy, we went to Anglesey for sun, showers, and good long walk. On the way we heard the dire news about the Lakes Marathon which we later found out was all media hype.

Monday was another very windy day. When the rain hail or snow came we had to shelter behind rocks or walls, but the squalls were only 10 minutes long. The squalls were so localised that many, but not all missed us on the Carneddws we could see them coming from far out to sea. .... John W

John Hickman volunteered to write up the "goings on" of the biking/climbing group and the two nights in the pub. Hopefully it will make the next issue.



# Working Weekend 11th & 12th October 2008 Stair

Andy Dunhill

We had hoped the work on the Porch would have been finished so we could tidy up & redecorate etc. but it was not so we were a bit limited on work inside the cottage. We did do some general cleaning in the kitchen & removed most of the dead bug life from around the windows. We took all the curtains down & got them washed at the Launderette in Keswick together with all the pillow cases & tea towels. The curtains looked a lot better when we re-hung them but they are getting a bit old so may need changing soon.

The outside light over the car park has not worked for a while so we re-wired it into the one above the kitchen & it now works. This is only intended to be temporary until all the electrics are sorted in the Porch.

The builders had dumped a load of soil, dug out to do the foundations, at the bottom of the garden by the outlet from the septic tank thus helping to block it. This earth was moved & the blockage sorted. A better outlet channel with stones etc was created which should be OK for a while. Unbloc Cumbria will completely re-do the tank & outlet after the builders have left so we only needed to get it working & can look at it again once it's re-done.

This earth was landscaped to create a decent level area looking out onto the fields towards Skiddaw & the intention is to put a seat there when the ground has settled & we can put a solid base in.

Many of us have thought for a while that the garden area is under used so we decided to do some digging. The result is two level areas that can easily be used for camping when necessary. The builders had put a lot of stone & earth in a skip in the car park most of which we took out & re-cycled in the garden to help this landscaping. All of the areas were grass seeded so they should hopefully become useable in the foreseeable future.

Probably the most useful task completed was taken from the skip. The builders had put the nice new door we had installed a few years ago into the skip so we took it out. The fire door from the large dorm has been rotting for some time so we took it off & put the old front door in after a bit of adjustment. It's now varnished & looks good.

The overflow from the hot water tank has had some water coming out of it slowly for a few weeks but we were unable to resolve it so I'll need to get the plumber out. The urinal had been leaking & we think we managed to fix that.

The stone wall between us & the wood needs constant repairs & a bit more of that was built up. A few branches were taken off some of the trees to tidy things up a bit.

We provided cakes, crumpets & lots of tea during the day plus a meal in the evening. Thanks must go to Chris Campbell for providing lots of wine, beer & fruit juice.

Thanks to the usual team of Chris This, Geoff Brindle, John Wiseman, Dave Earle, Caroline, Chris Campbell, Chris Peed, Alan Blackburn & Geoff Bellingham for their full day's work on Saturday almost into the dusk plus Nick Hepburn, Martin & Christine for Sunday morning.

## Grit Sunday by Martin Dale

The day dawned sunny and cold, very cold! Everything was covered in a white frost. Perfect! It was a hard frost because I broke my scraper trying to clear the car windscreen. I phoned Adam, his team was keen. Text from Chris This, his team were keen. Further text from Nick Hepburn (at 10am!!!!), he was keen too. Nothing for it but to head off to Yorkshire.

Crookrise was the venue. On my way, Martin Bennett was also in touch. As I arrived in the car park, I was also met by Andy Dunhill. We had a bumper team! The crag and hillside were devoid of frost cover, the sun was out and all was lovely. We arrived at End Slab to find Adam and James already there but it was their mates from Blackpool, Dan and Thomas, who were in action, already up the VS! It was glorious, even warm in the sun. We all warmed up and tackled some of the problem starts. It was two years ago that Adam Dunderdale and James Morrison had first accompanied the Sissons and me to the crag as fresh faced youths in inappropriate footwear. They were only 16 then. Now full members, they both wanted to get some revenge on a certain problem that neither could get anywhere near last time, and were also keen to try some harder ones. They both excel down the wall, especially in the art of dyno'ing so it would be interesting to see how they fared.

We moved along the crag to the Sole area. Martin Bennett showed up and this was the call for the rope to come out. Nick and Martin set off up "Old Lace". The



rest of us basked in the afternoon sunshine and ate our butties. The call of "that problem" was too much, so we headed over to the Hovis area to have a crack at "Crease Direct", V3. I bumped into my old mate from Barrow, Keith Phizacklea, and we both watched and offered encouragement as first Adam, then James dispatched the Crease in fine style. Then, impatiently, they wandered off round the corner to check out the hard problem. Leaving me with Keith to sort of spot whilst I tried my hand at "Hovis Super Direct", V5. It spat me off a couple of times but the friction in the dishes was superb. I knew there was no excuse. I got it next go and continued up Hovis to finish. I just had to relax and stare at the hold for long enough for it to come to me! The hard problem round the corner involves a dyno at the top. It can be done statically but our young friends were going to dyno. Fortunately, another team arrived and offered us their mats, as the landing is somewhat dodgy. With five or six mats down it was like being in the gym. Our mat mates demonstrated the various methods of doing the problem with consummate ease, no excuses. Despite all our dynoing and crimping, "Barry Kingsize" V7, remained unascended by our team. We pressed on up to Sadco's boulder to finish the day off. No more heroics up there though.

The sun had dropped down behind Pendle Hill to provide an amazing skyscape. It was getting very cold again. We called it a day and wandered homeward via the "Woolly Sheep" in Skipton, where we found Maggie and Martin Bennett nursing a roaring fire. Pint of Timmy Taylor's Landlord in hand, what better way to end a superb day out. Cheers to all those who attended. For those who didn't, look what you missed!

## Fell Race 2008 by Mark Broughton

After a second place last year Geoff Brindle went one better to win this year's fell race from a field of 15 runners. Andy Dunhill thought he'd won when he arrived at the hut, thinking he'd passed all those who started ahead of him. Imagine how pleasantly surprised he was when Geoff wandered out from the dorm. It is rumoured that Geoff had already showered and changed but people aren't renowned for their honesty during the fell race weekend. Steve Wrigley didn't turn up to defend his title, thus preventing the handicapper from giving him the worst handicap in fell race history! Joanna Goorney was quickest of the women coming in just under the 40 minute mark and was second fastest overall; a great effort. Chris Thistlethwaite was fastest of the men with a 36.59 and even more impressively managed to finish only 1 second inside his handicap time. Many thanks to Les Ward who did an excellent job of the timing, the various photographers/hecklers and most of all to Andy Dunhill for providing soup after

the race and a superb evening meal. Andy may have come second in the race but he remains the FMC curry champion.

Position	Name	Time	Scratch position	Handicap plus or minus
1	Geoff Brindle	47.50	7	-3.10
2	Andy Dunhill	44.35	5	-2.25
3	Kevan Ebrell	51.11	10	-1.49
4	Chris Thistlethwaite	36.59	1	-0.01
5	Nick Dalzell	47.13	6	+0.32
6	Martin Dale	58.40	11	+0.40
7	Mark Broughton	43.15	4	+1.15
8	Joanna Goorney	39.57	2	+1.57
9	Chris Peed	48.00	8	+2.00
10	Vivienne Broughton	63.04	13	+3.04
11	John Hickman	41.06	3	+3.06
12	Chris Campbell	48.20	9	+5.20
13	Dave Earle	66.30	14	+6.30
14	Dom Fearon	62.30	12	+12.30
15	Clive Bell	81.48	15	+16.48

## Dry Tooling (For dry read wet)

The Blackpool outdoor wall has now converted one set of walls for 'dry tooling', the first in England, and they hope to hold competitions there. You can now practice 'lack of ice' ice climbing. Three of us turned-up on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> Nov, not for the bacon butties and the free lunch, but to show the FMC flag.

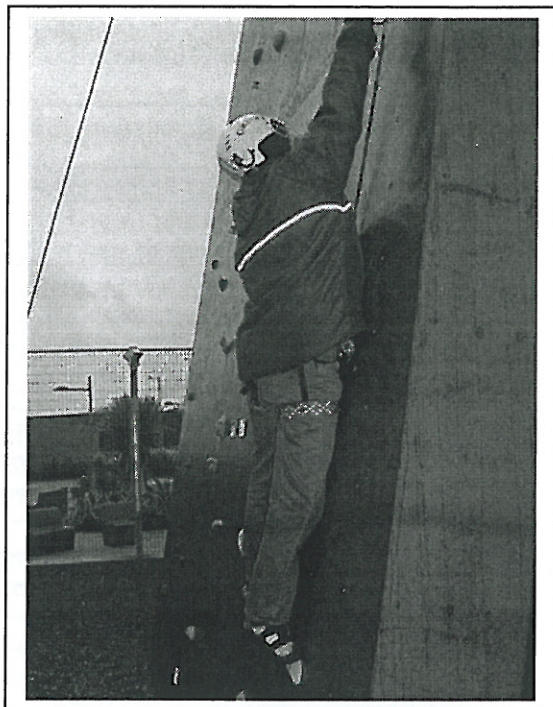
The holds were positioned on the walls to be more amenable to the use of axes, ie. further apart. The same blobs were used as those for 'rock climbing.' The technique was to lodge the axe behind the hold or to place the point on the hold at right angles to the wall. Easier said than done. You still need prayers at times but from a different book.

About 30 people from clubs, shops, the BMC and various other organizations attended. The wall was opened by Gaz Perry who went 'rat up a drainpipe' on the overhang wall making it look easy.



Then we, the VIP's, could have a go. Dave Westby went up a red route, then my turn on the same one. I've never done ice climbing before. It's so different! It seemed hard and a bit wobbly but I managed the top with only one fall and a few cheats. When I landed the guy belaying me said it was a hard one and the easy one was the yellow around to corner – thanks a bunch!

The weather was overcast, damp and crap but it only drizzled now and then. Every thing was wet, including my trousers. This didn't stop it being good fun, better than I expected and there was free food. Give it a go. For two hours with axes and helmet (with wire visor) supplied it's a tenner (it is Blackpool!). Don't know how much if you take your own gear. Clive.



## THE CLUB DINNER

This years diner was, we found, far better than last years. The food was good and we could mix far more easily with more room to move about and sit down and a disco to jig about to. All this after a brilliant day on the hills in the snow. We had been on Skidaw and another team went up Scafell Pike. Thanks to mark and Judith for organising it.

The after dinner speeches had there moments Andy entertained us by trying to present trophies to the fell race winners, none of whom were there to receive them, however his comments kept us amused. Which set the scene for Lliam to present the Lush of the year to John Hickman and the mug of the year to Nick Hepburn. I got a bit lost as to what each did, probably because of the excellent cider and beer that the Middle Ruddings has, so maybe Lliam could write something for the next newsletter.

Eventually in the we small hours we walked back to the hut, it was beautiful, frost on every branch and bush and the stars were exceptional.

## FMC Climbing in 2008.

Well, Mr Wiseman has asked me to write a report about FMC climbing in 2008. I could just say that 2008 was cancelled due to lack of interest, but that wouldn't be true. Cancelled due to the weather, yes! We did have an appalling summer in this country, but we're the FMC, of course we went climbing!

As early as the 6<sup>th</sup> of January I was climbing up at the Bridestones. I guess there were others out there doing something in warmer climes like Spain at that time too. The annual ice climbing meet this year to Cogne in Italy was exceptionally well attended with over 30 folks doing everything from ice climbing, skiing, snowboarding, langlauf and snowshoeing. The conditions for ice climbing were not the best but lots of good routes were ascended, albeit of a more moderate level of difficulty than in previous years. I was on strike on March 18<sup>th</sup> and again visited a very cold Bridestones. I could hardly get to the top before my fingers turned to wooden lumps, so spent most of the time running around keeping warm. I did however manage to slap the top of "A mouthful of crystals" but couldn't hold it, a very long term project, and also managed an ascent of "Small and Smart" the first time since I was last able to do it in 1996. The friction was awesome!

The early Easter really did mess up the usual trip to warmer climes. Two trips emerged instead of the usual one. Chris Thistlethwaite's trip went back to the ranch in Murcia. By all accounts they did do a fair bit of climbing up to about 6B in standard, despite one team failing to find the crag even though one member had been to it before and they could clearly see it from the road below it. See "Mug of the Year" for more details. The other trip went to the coast just south of Barcelona, from where we were able to access the crags in the area, and also the Costa Daurada crags. Andy Dunhill, Nick Dalzell, Steve Wrigley and myself climbed every day visiting such new and wonderful areas such as Gelida, Subirats, Margalef, as well as the usual Prades stuff. The highlights for me were doing a 7A at Siuriana, meeting Chris Sharma, and flashing a 7A+ at La Mussara on the last day. Hal Rzedkiewicz and Dave Wood went one better, going down under, however only did one days climbing in Tasmania.

Back in the UK, some reasonable late season conditions allowed Darren Hartley and team to do something up in Scotland on the ice. I seem to remember that some climbing did take place on the Intro meet in April. Pembroke happened. A good number of us did some routes and the weather was kind. Kevin Stephens and myself did some top routes on the east face of Newton Head, and I lead "Quiet Waters" with its direct start down in Huntsmans. The weather in May was good and the mountain crags were in condition, it just needed to get a bit warmer. The first day meet to the Roaches was cancelled because it was too warm for grit!



Down in Llanberis we were blessed with excellent weather. Mark Harding and Kev Stephens renewed their partnership and visited Tremadoc on Saturday and Clogwyn Yr Gafyr up the Pass on Sunday. I had meet leader duties to perform and Bochlwyd Buttress in Ogwen was the venue for Saturday and Tim Worrall's first tentative steps on real rock. Mike Parkinson helped out and also proved he is no slouch by seconding me up "The Wrack", a tough E2 in fine style. Sunday saw us up the Pass, even Craig Ddu was dry! The Whitsun meet to Skye was cancelled but Steve Wrigley and Alan Blackburn still went and had a great time doing the much sought after "King Cobra " amongst other things in perfect weather. Some of us plumped for the Lakes. Andy Dunhill made a good lead of the obscure but excellent "Just and so" on Bowderstone crags in Borrowdale, but read E3, and not E2 as the guidebook suggests and probably 6A too. A few of us also got blown off Bleak How too.

By this time the evening meets were up and running, however the rain affected the first meet at the Blackpool Towers, beginning a similar depressing pattern throughout the season. The first few meets did happen with Liam Gaston displaying a fine run of form, especially on the Robin Proctor meet, which was bloody freezing, however this did not stop him climbing every route on the crag, or so it seemed to his knackered partner, John Hickman. The usual stuff got done at Denham, Trowbarrow and Anglezarke. "Major Tom" got a rare ascent at Trowbarrow, I also made my annual lead of "Shadows of Doubt". My second, Tony Hulme is out there now working it on his shunt ready for his lead in 2009. I don't think we will be rushing back to Farleton in a hurry will we Darren, as some top lads struggled with a severe, or should that read polish. In July it all started going downhill and more meets were cancelled than took place. Warton Main was a survivor and was visited by a large number, who cheated the ever threatening rain to climb on the recently bolted upper tier. The routes here are very pleasant and not on the difficult side. The topo can be found in a tin at the base of the crag. We ended up visiting the Towers at Blackpool every week towards the end of the season. The only place dry enough for some sport. Wetherspoons also profited from our regular curry runs afterwards.

Most with any sense escaped abroad during the monsoon season. Andy Dunhill and Nick Hepburn went to Bregalia, where they were successful on the Cassin route on the Piz Badile, as well as doing some excellent multi pitch sport climbing. Hal Rzakiewicz and Dave Wood visited the Picos in northern Spain and were blessed with excellent weather resulting in two routes on the fabled Naranja De Bulnes, including the classic "Amistad Con El Diablo". They also visited some very good sport crags. Claire Addy and John Hickman went to the south of France, but unfortunately the weather wasn't kind. They did manage some sport near Mont Ventoux, Combe Obscura being the best crag. Christine Moylan and myself also visited this area later on in the summer. Again, Combe Obscura

proved to be the highlight. Clive's trip to the Briancon area of France was very popular and some climbing was done there up at Ailefroide. Chris Thistlethwaite and Tom Knowles went on their annual motorbiking tour round Europe and climbed all over the place as usual. Kevin Stephens and Dave Cundy went to the Marmolada in the Italian Dolomites in September with big plans, but as far as I know they were thwarted by the weather on their main objective. Maggie and Martin Bennett, newly retired, went stateside. It was mainly a touring around trip in a massive camper van but they did do some climbing in Yosemite.

Meanwhile, back in this country, the only places seeing any action were the quicker drying Yorkshire limestone bolted venues. Consequently, Foredale was visited more than once. The Blue Scar meet did take place but Blue Scar was far from in condition. Three teams did do a route apiece, then quit for Panorama Crag, where Mr Gaston again excelled, throwing himself at anything that wasn't wet. The other team that turned up were from Yorkshire. They took one look at Blue Scar from the road, then cheekily rang me up on my mobile for the real score before running off to Kilnsey, the big boys crag, and beasted themselves on some overhanging horror with a big grade. They weren't successful but I hear they returned at a later date to beat it into submission by the red point method. Another day meet from this time saw five of us go mad in Derbyshire. We arrived at the bottom of Staden at the same time as the rain. We went mad in cafes and shops. I'm not sure I will organise any more day meets. Things were so bad that when the weather forecast predicted a good Friday, loads of people took the day off and joined the retired on Stanage. More FMC members climbed on that Friday than on many other meets this summer!

The autumn came along. Surely the weather would improve. It did and there was a large attendance on the Northumberland meet. Lots of great routes were ascended. I managed to crock myself falling off an E2 on Bowden Doors. Nick Dalzell persevered and was successful but not without a similar fall to mine. He escaped injury because his belayer (the meet leader) was better positioned and alert. Kyo out the Wood was visited on Sunday. A great weekend! Llanberis, often the scene of some late season hot slate action, proved to be a bit of disappointment weatherwise and 40<sup>th</sup> birthday piss up wise too. Some routes were done in Dali's Hole on Sunday but Saturday was a write off. It should have been the other way round but Nick Hepburn didn't turn up for his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on Saturday night. Woody and myself had already escaped to Spain for a weeks fouging (see article), which leads me to the fell race. Some bouldering on a very cold Carrock Fell was done. Actual success on many problems was minimal.

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November. I look outside my window to see a thick pea souper. Fleetwood Town are at home in the second round of the FA cup, and folks from Hartlepool are already parking up outside my house. It's 11.30am. I go to the



corner shop. The "Monkey Hangers" are already woofing down the fish and chips and asking me where the nearest pub is. I check the weather on the computer. Bridestones might just be poking out the top of the cloud. I text Christine, whose supposed to be in Manchester. She confirms that the weather is lovely there, wherever there is. I have to get out of the Cod as trouble may well brew if they lose, so I set my controls for Worsthorne. I pop out of the fog at Padiham and make my way up to the Keps. I'm late but it is fantastic being in the sun above a sea of cloud in the valley. I warm up and do a few regular problems, then I pop down to "Crystals" and feel the friction. It's amazing and devoid of chalk. I go for a walk to let the temperature drop. 4.30pm, sun well down, I pull on. Awesome power unleashed, I hold the top with my right hand, bring the left up more smoothly and hold it. Grind over the top and it's done. My first ever V7. Highlight of the year? Tomorrow is Grit Sunday, maybe not yet. Can't wait!

Above lies a summary of the FMC climbing in 2008. I'm sorry if I have left anyone's exploits out, but if I didn't know about them then I couldn't let you all know what they've been up to. I also apologise if it reads like a "What I did in 2008", but then he shouldn't have asked me to write it should he!

**Martin Dale**

**My thanks to all who contributed, It's done and I am going to have a BEER. John**

Photographs

Jack Jowett saying a few words at the 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations, with Dorothy, Margaret and Christine to his right. Behind Margaret is John Cooper the treasurer who signed the cheque to buy the hut.

Going up Skidaw before the club dinner this year

The Glacier Blanche in the Ecrans taken by Clive (see article)

Again at the 50<sup>th</sup>. Alan Bell has told us the story of the safe and presented a copy of his song "the key above the door" to the club.

