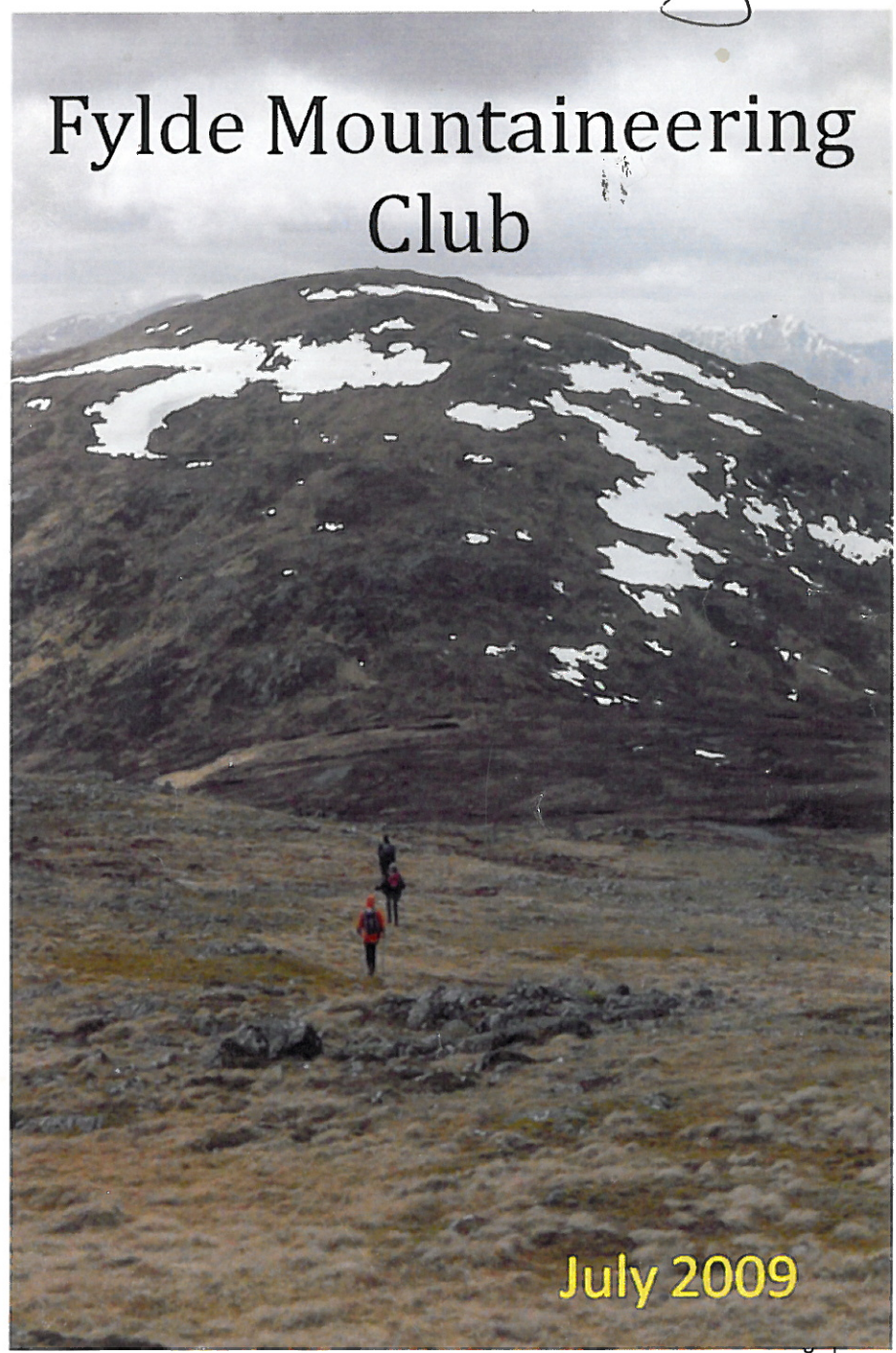


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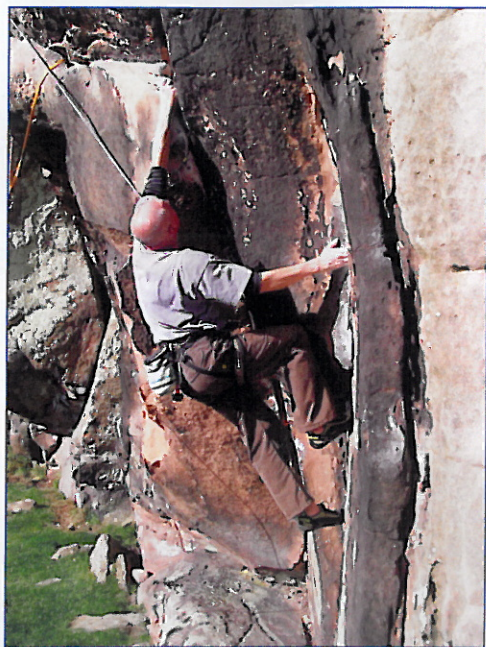
Fylde Mountaineering Club



July 2009



1st place Landscape. Copyright John Wiseman



1st place Action. Copyright Steve Wrigley

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Editorial

The newsletter has a new editor and the club chairman still owes me a pint for stepping into the breach, but his reputation for defaulting on promises is known worldwide so I'm not holding my breath ☺.

It's the start of June and as I write this it is only 5 Celsius outside!! It seems like only yesterday that I was in the south of France suffering in 30 C of searing sun (actually it *was* only yesterday now that I think about it). Hopefully you all made the most of the all too brief hot weather in the UK and are now looking forwards to the long hot summer ahead, or maybe just praying that it won't be as wet as last year?

The intention is to publish the Newsletter twice a year, the first in January and the second in July and whilst I have received several articles for inclusion in this edition from the usual suspects (and one special guest photographer) it would be nice to see some reports on the evening walking / climbing meets, weekend meets, reminiscences from times gone by, etc, etc. Remember that the newsletter will only ever be as good as the articles that it contains.

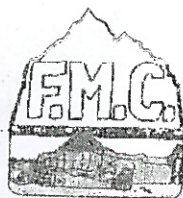
Thanks to everybody who has contributed articles or photographs (take a hint Mr This – see page 6) and in this newsletter we have a broad range of subject matter, from caving in Ireland through to Injury Prevention (very important now that most of us aren't teenagers anymore).

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everybody that the club has an excellent website (www.fyldemountaineeringclub.org) on which to display our activities and encourage new members. During a recent visit to the site it struck me that we haven't got any pictures loaded up for events during the last 2 years!! Come on people we've all be doing something for the last 24 months haven't we?

Both Dave Ball and I have the ability to set up new albums and link photos to them, so load up your pics, let us know where they are and one of us will do the rest.

I hope that you all enjoy this edition and if you have any comments (preferably not too insulting) then please send them to fyldemc@googlemail.com – would you like more/less pictures, more/less colour, more/less complaints from the editor ☺.

P.S. It's now the end of June and a thunder storm is raging outside so normal service has been resumed, personally I wish that they would either stop the 'Wimbledon and Glastonbury' rain dance or move them both to the middle of winter.



The Annual Photo Competition

The photo competition was well supported and gave us the chance to see some superb work. With scrumptious light and excellent viewpoints the landscape competition entertained us royally and there was a strong action section to follow with a mixture of "fly on the wall" shots and distant views demonstrating the awesome space above which our heroes grappled with ice and rock.

On a technical note, not all of the entries made it onto the master disk or whatever it is called and it may be as well in future to check that your entry has indeed been imprinted onto the master disk successfully. The judge it seems went bananas in describing what was right about the pictures and where they could be improved and will learn lessons. But if anyone needs advice I will try to give it. The club will need to decide if it wishes to formally close down the slide category and ponder the viability of the print section.

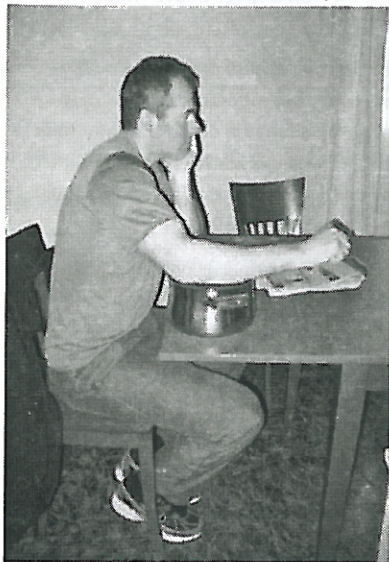
John Wiseman won the landscape section with a superb sky and came second with a beautifully framed picture of the Dent du Midi. Martin Dale was third with a picture of Crummock water and the head of Buttermere bathed in glorious light. June Wiseman won the print competition with a nice shot of the Western Highlands. Martin Dale won the action shot section with Steve Wrigley a close second. Andy Hird won the humour with a picture of, of course, the children.

D. A. Earle

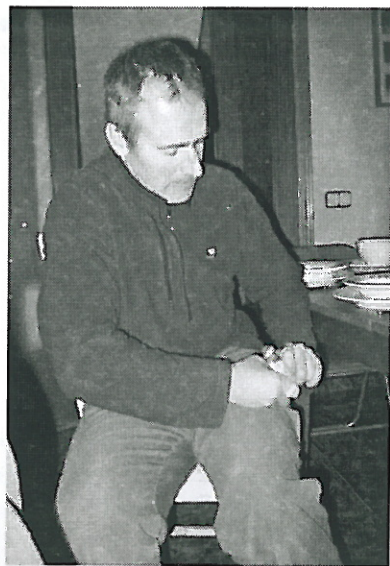
Editor's note: The 1st placed pictures from each category can be seen on pages 2 and 29.

Lost In Space: Hot Euro Rock 2009

There would be an article here about another excellent Hot Euro Rock trip to Spain but nobody has written one so instead here is a picture of Nick 'Mug of 2009 in waiting' Hepburn having a night out Bowling...



...and the truth about how he hurt himself opening a tin of 'Climb On'...



A Date on Slate . By Tony Hulme

I'd been here before, two years previously, got 15 feet up and failed miserably.

My inspiration had come from a black and white photo of John Redhead leading an outrageously bold route on Rainbow Slab in the Llanberis slate quarries.

The route went at E7 with the first gear at 22 metres. Redhead said in order to attempt this route "An unstable relationship is helpful-but preferable to be just unstable."

Obviously, I had no intention of attempting this route, but really wanted to do something on this superb piece of rock.

So which route?

Virtually all the routes are absolutely desperate and the easier routes have no gear. GREAT.

There was one possibility,

Pull My Daisy - E2 5c.

According to the guide it's quite high in the grade but at least it had gear on it.

Two years previous I wasn't up to it but today stumbling across it after spending much of the day climbing just around the corner I was here again.

The late afternoon sun lengthens the shadows and picks out the features which may be the key to success. .

I set off.

The first bit is quite easy with adequate protection, but once I get to the thin crack it requires a lot more commitment. This is where I failed on the first attempt.

Place a small wire, take a deep breath and make the moves.

In no time and after a tricky mantle I reach a niche where I can breathe a sigh and stand in balance.

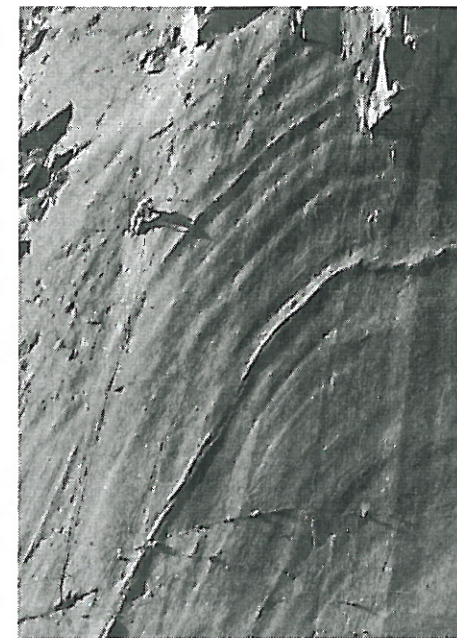
Mustn't hang around here too long I might get comfortable. Keep going.

A few more thin but positive moves lead to a metal spike protruding from the rock.

Place a tape around this because it's the last gear till the top 10 -15 meters away.

Leave the spike but it stays in the mind and in sight when you look down "between your legs". (Not the place to fall off).

The climbing eases off a little now and it's not long before I'm sitting on top of a ledge sorting out the belay.



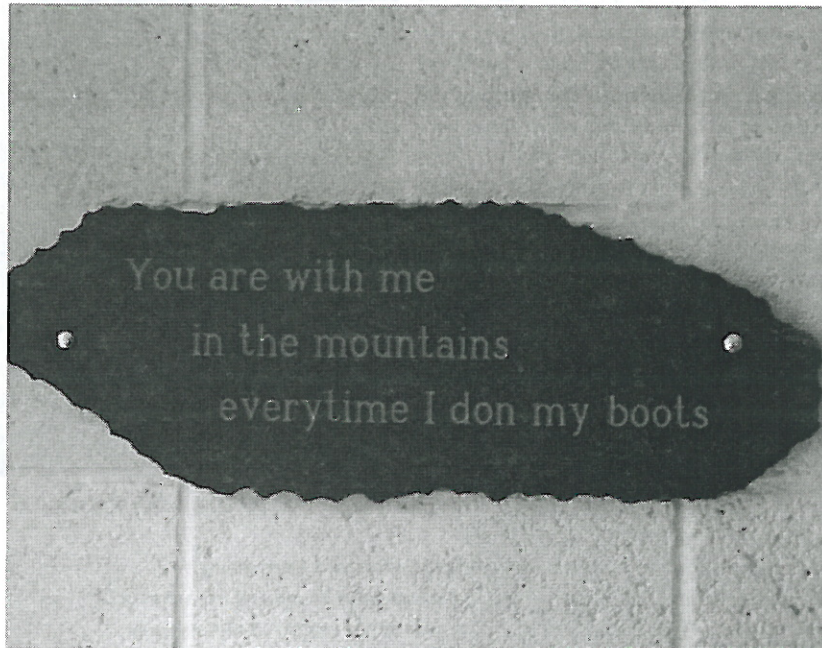
The Haunting of the New Porch

Hardly had the floor paint set when a strange groaning noise was heard emanating from the newly constructed porch. The author, who for reasons snore related was sleeping in the recently resealed lounge area, was awoken at dawn by an alarming whining sound.

Disturbed into a state of near terror I opened the inner porch door and was amazed to witness a recumbent figure groaning with mysterious pleasure. Close inspection proved it to be 'The This' who claims yet another first for being the originator of the 'porch dorm' concept.

When interviewed later 'The This' claimed he had been forced out of his traditional pit by excessive nasal vibrations in the form of a jazz symphony, with Martin Dale on lead snozelhorn.

Geoff Brindle for Snorers Anonymous



The Mick Tolley Memorial Plaque in situ in the new Stair porch.

Working Weekend Stair 30/31 Jan 2009

This was the clear up after completion of the Porch & was another productive weekend. The weather was very good on both days, although cold & windy. This allowed some outside work together with a focus on internal cleaning.

Externally we did yet more repairs to the dry stone wall adjacent to the wood. This will be ongoing as stones continually fall off but we need to keep it built up to deter the sheep from jumping over. Some work was done to tidy up a few trees that were nearing the end of their useful life. There are a few more that really do need taking down but will be a bigger job as they are large & close to the electricity cable & the fence so we may need to seek professional help. All the leaves were cleaned off the car park & the grounds were generally tidied up. A new hedge has been planted on the roadside boundary so we'll see if it grows. Many of the cracks around the windows were filled.

Internally we gave the dorms a thorough clean together with the toilets. Some painting was done. All pillow cases were washed. The main room got the same treatment. The kitchen was also cleaned & we generally re-stocked things.

In the Kitchen we took out the old gas appliances & put in a new electric Hob which looks a lot better. The electrician needs to come & put in the wiring etc. All of the old gas fittings were taken out.

We had a clear out of some of the older things which were taken to the tip at Flusco. This included three of the old mattresses, the old safe, the portable de-humidifier, several surplus chairs, redundant light fittings & other odds & sods.

In the Porch the walls & floor were given two coats of paint. A new smaller safe was installed temporarily on the floor adjacent to the drying room door. A long discussion took place about how to fit out the Porch. This lasted much of the day on Saturday, during the meal in the evening & on into Sunday. The net result was a single scrap of A 4 paper with a very rough sketch showing what we might do, & then again, what we might not do!

This work of art has been passed to Chris Campbell who has kindly volunteered to try to put something a bit more meaningful together & then make it. I provided a veggie meal on Saturday evening for everyone together with some wine. There was the usual moaning about the lack of dead animal but they all stuffed their faces & we had the usual argument about hot or cold pie & hot or cold custard so compromised with a mixture. There was no choice in the custard it was the world's best – Devon Ambrosia & not a packet of Bird's anywhere to be seen.

The Memorial Plaque for Mick Tolley was placed on the inside wall to the left of the door above the storage heater.

In Safe Hands

Or "The Safe Removal of the Safe from Stair – a stage by stage action replay"

- 1) Messrs Earle, Knowles, Thistlethwaite and Brindle look at safe in drying room and make many unintelligent and implausible suggestions.
- 2) Members Thistlethwaite and Brindle roll the safe onto the oblong local stone and clumsily bundle safe out of the new porch area supervised by Earle and Knowles (*Ed: Is that a local accountancy firm?*)
- 3) Messrs Howe and Brindle then rolled the safe along the gravel path to the corner of the building where it was rolled onto the grass pending further intellectual (*Ed: Really!!*) musings.
- 4) Mike Howe then removed the door using a grinder of angles and, joined by Mr Brindle, heaved the safe into a waiting wheelbarrow and thence to the back of A Dunhill's trusty Peugeot Estate. (*Ed: I'm sure that I heard Andy Dunhill say "You're only supposed to blow the bloomin' doors off" at this point*)
- 5) Andy D and Geoff B then made their way to the Flusco recycling plant near Penrith where the dynamic duo made short business of ejecting the safe and disposing of it in a convenient skip.

At no stage in this operation were teams of hulking rugby players or bristling gorillas present. However the safe was made in Burnley and although no member of the club lives in Burnley Mr G Brindle shops there occasionally.

P.S. it was decided that the vast amount of sawdust in the safe was actually the remains of a mouse nest!

A true and factual report from your Lancastrian correspondent, Geoff Brindle.

The Kitchen

As featured in Ideal Hut Magazine

Recent and dramatic improvements to the kitchen facilities at Stair have been inaugurated by the doughty Dunhill, present custodian of the hut.

Stunning new worktops, double electric ringed cooker and devilishly smooth sealing have raised the standard to an impressive ½ star, although plans to spray the cobwebs silver have been disputed by some of the more 'green' members of the club.

Current dress code for kitchen users specifies black oven gloves and black nylon slippers, other clothing optional (*Ed: not more nudity Geoff!!*).

Chefs are reminded that use of cheap poly-unsaturated fats will not be tolerated; only triple virgin double pressed olive oil should be used for tossing, organic of course.

Andy has ongoing plans for upgrades and seeks personal advice from female members as well as ideas on the kitchen. Stories circulating that Heston Blumenthal is to offer Andy advice are incorrect, he planned to give him a vice apparently to secure his dentures overnight.

So buy 'Ideal Hut Magazine' for further insights into the staggering culinary visions of this well known veggie chef about the fells.

Your Lancastrian correspondent, Geoff Brindle

The Landscaping of the Club Grounds

An ambitious scheme conceived by old cronies Thistlethwaite, Brindle and Dunhill (*Ed: sounds like a firm of undertakers*) to improve the appearance and efficient usage of the land adjoining the hut at Stair.

The team, led by the irrepressible Dunhill, began their efforts in Oct 2008 (*Ed: aided by other members present at the working weekend*) using brute force to chop down offending trees and bushes, and shovels to create three new levels for camping on. The lower level was conceived as a summer relaxation site because of its stunning view of Skiddaw and close proximity to the stream where beer and wine may be cooled, but Mr D Earle's suggestion of a nudist facility was considered a step too far in view of health and safety issues.

Once the Thistlethwaite Stone had been named and shifted the gang quickly unblocked the effluent pipe and the serious landscaping began. Grunts and groans increased as huge loads of subsoil and clay were shifted to form the new levels and Chris This was witnessed frenetically attacking innocent trees with an aged axe like an Orang-utan on amphetamine, sweat spraying the dehydrated brambles. After much perspiration and perspicacity the levels were finished off with top soil and seeded – a successful working weekend.

Some 6 months later the team inspected the landscaping, post septic tank rebuilding, to find the levels carved out by tracks and the general state of the grounds was such that it appeared that a Moto-cross competition had just been held in the grounds. The This was inconsolable and had to be helped to an 11th ale that sad Saturday night.

Your Lancastrian correspondent, Geoff Brindle

Ed: Update –during Tony Mitchell's fell walking meet an impromptu working day was held at which Andy Dunhill, Caroline Webb and Chris Thistlethwaite repaired the damage to the upper levels whilst Geoff 'Percy Thrower' Brindle continued to lay out his herbaceous border round the lower level and reseeded the damaged areas with additional grass seed.

A Great North Ridge

Way before modern developments like Friends and Climbing Walls, Gaston Rebuffat had already distilled the European mountain ranges into 'Six Great North Faces'. Each epitomised the challenges facing alpinists in the post-war era. It was rumoured that he also identified 'Six Great North Ridges' – not, perhaps, as difficult as the North Faces but still classics in their own right.

Modern climbing equipment and clothing, together with clinical attention to nutrition and hydration, now mean that the Rebuffat classics no longer require the multi-day sieges of yester-year. This modern approach to climbing has allowed some Rebuffat classics to be completed in little more than a morning's work.

A Fylde 'dream team' recently ascended one such north ridge in just a few hours. Such was their underlying fitness and mental preparation that, the evening before the ascent, they even felt able to consume alcohol at an 'Annual Dinner'. During that ascent (in winter conditions), the wind was so violent that they were first forced to link arms and then to crawl on all-fours from the 'North Col' to the summit cairn.

Doubt-less the rock-jocks in certain quarters will try to rubbish the ascent, pointing out its lack of stature, or its proximity to the ascensionists' hut. They may decry it by pigeon-holing its style ('head-pointing', or some such nonsense) purely to underline that that others have done it better. But the ascensionists are not so naïve as to court the adoration of others – in their eyes it remains a classic ascent and a worthy addition to their repertoire. And it may even have been endorsed by Rebuffat himself!

David Cundy

January 2009



Ice Climbing Meet

January 31st to February 7th 2009

L'ARGENTIERES LE BESSEE, MASSIF DES ECRINS

For the club's annual icefall climbing meet 2009 a new destination was decided upon. We'd heard great things about the Ecrins Mountains from club members who'd visited in recent summers, Ali had spent a couple of winter days there, and various websites extolled its virtues so the village of L'Argentieres le Bessee, 10 miles South of Briancon, was selected as a good centre for a range of icefalls as well as other activities. A large band of members and guests finally booked in and had an uneventful journey via a Jet2.com flight and rental cars by way of the Col du Lauteret. The road was clear of snow but it was evident passing through the La Grave gorge that much had fallen in recent days and also that many of the icefalls were in climbable condition. Encouraging for climbers skiers and snowshoe walkers alike.

Our arrival at the gite d'etape we'd chosen for accommodation showed rather less of the military precision one had hoped to plan into it thanks to the proprietor having double booked some of our rooms meaning we had to shuffle around to suit her – not a good start to Anglo-French relations! The place was just acceptable however and we were certainly not going to let a small contretemps of this type get us off to a bad start – after all, to paraphrase George Dubya, the French don't even have a word for "contretemps"! Paul Reid however has a word, or rather four, for them! We had booked in for dinner that first evening but planned to self-cater the rest of the time. This was made possible given the cooking facilities available only by the generosity of our resident chef, "guest member" Michiel in offering to cook for all.

We were all up with the lark on day 1 and heading for the hill by 8.00. The skiers and walkers chose Puy St Vincent as their initial venue whilst most climbers headed for the valley of Freissinières, only 5 miles from our home for the week. There were the expected mistakes in route finding here and there, we being altogether new to the area, but eventually routes were correctly located and fun and success were had on such climbs as Fracastorus (200m, III, 3+), Paulo Folie (180m, III, 3) Ice Pocalypse (100m, III, 4).

Did I say "all"? Unfortunately we'd two in sick bay that day – Nick Hepburn and Alan Blackburn had succumbed to some lurgy that laid them low on the first day of their holiday. Each was up and about the next day however, when they were the first to visit the Ceillac valley and shared an ascent of the classic Les Formes du Chaos (300m, III, 4) with Liam Gaston. I think by the end of the fourth day all the climbers among us had been attracted to and made an ascent of this route, and others at Ceillac such as Holiday on Ice and Easy Rider.

This is a highly recommended venue – it is high (valley base at 1850 metres), the routes have 10 minute approaches, and you can enjoy other people's efforts with a grandstand view from the bar!

No trip like this is complete without the inevitable benightment adding to the entertainment of those not directly involved in almost equal measure to that of those who are. This year it was Alan Peel and Stuart Gascoyne who decided they'd climb all 200m of a route in Freissinières called Directe des Ombres (III, 5) rather than the usual first 3 pitches with a traverse to an abseil descent. It proved too much to be achieved in daylight and led to a harrowing 8 abseil descent in the dark, but only after a 2 hour search for the initial abseil point. A party was despatched (not without complications on snowy roads that demanded the fitting and subsequent removal of snow chains) to make contact to establish that there was only discomfort and not immediate danger. Eventual faint contact by lamp flashing and whooping showed that such was the case. The pair finally made it back at 4.30 in the morning. Their greatly appreciated mugs of tea may not be the only mugs they see this year, do you think?

To add more excitement Andy Holmes tried heading a large chunk of falling ice on the 2nd pitch of "Chaos". Happily he was only just leaving the stance and was able to slump back to it and seek first aid from Simon, Michiel and Paul. Despite wearing a helmet he was bleeding heavily and Simon descended with him to visit Briancon Hospital which he left with 5 staples in his head!

He was back out on the ice next and each subsequent day!

Later Robin and I joined Simon and Andy on "Chaos" when they went back for a rematch. Climbing side by side on the upper pitches of this wide stretch of ice we found ourselves following a (relatively) young couple. On the top pitch I was climbing alongside the second when he stopped, clipped in to an ice screw and proceeded to take photos of me. At the top I asked for a contact so I could email him and ask for copies. Turns out he was Adrian Berry who's fairly new to icefall climbing but is a pretty eminent rock climber – have a look at his website - www.positiveclimbing.com and the accompanying photo.

By the middle of the week a pattern of activities was established, though the early start of the first day was rarely matched. The skiers visited a variety of resorts including Serre Chevalier and Montgenevre. Angela Lovatt and Jenny Tolley ("racketeers") must have got fitter than most by their chosen activity of walking with snow shoes each day, usually accompanying some or all of the skiers to their chosen destination. The roles were reversed on some days – climbers skiing and vice versa. On the day most of the climbers chose to ski a large party went South to Risoul 1850, the sun came out (at least till mid afternoon) and a great time was had in this unsung but charming ski resort, where, when all eventually managed to meet up at what was to have been the 1.15 pm rendezvous in a mountain restaurant by 2.15, we even found an affordable lunch, and wine that was cheaper than the beer. More beers were had before leaving the resort where everyone (some with reluctance) "went up Sunshine Mountain" (don't ask! You had to BE there – those who weren't were subjected to the ordeal a day or so later at the gite).

Among those that couldn't make it this year was our usual 'A team' of Phil Lee and Steve Wrigley. Several aspirants to their position emerged in their absence, beginning of course with the aforementioned ascent of "Directe des Ombres". In addition Simon Fenna, Glenn Brookes, Ali Welsh, Nick Hepburn and Liam Gaston climbed grade 5 and 5+ routes such as Cousin Hubert and Hiroshima with aplomb.

Our evenings were spent entertaining ourselves at the gite, over indulging in supermarket beers and wine as we took turns to assist Le Chef du Cuisine in his preparation of evening meals by shopping, vegetable preparation or washing up. A word of warning for anyone who decides on a holiday in this village at this time of year – one evening a number of us walked the 2km into "town" to enjoy the ambience of a bar for a change – at 10.00 pm not a place was open! I think we saw three youths and a man and his dog all the time we were walking round!

The weather had been mixed, starting off very cold then getting warmer and snowing on and off. The snow began in earnest about mid afternoon on Thursday. As Alan Blackburn and I started our ascent of Happy Together (120m, III, 4) at about 1.00pm (no early starts for us) it was snowing steadily but finely. By 3.30 when we were at the top the flakes were enormous and falling thickly and spindrift had begun to slide all around us. We made 2 long abseils to the ground – this was not without interest as we had arrived at the base of the route with only one harness and belay plate cum abseil device between us – and were sloughed over by spindrift several times. At the bottom we'd just finished packing the sacks to go home when a fall of snow rather heavier than spindrift knocked me down the slope 10 metres, buried my axe, and took my rucksack about 50 metres down the hill. It was time to go.



Martin & Robin on Les Formes de Chaos, Ceillac, Top Pitch. Copyright Adrian Berry).

The snow didn't cease for 24 hours. The next day was our last. Among the climbers it was generally felt that, not really knowing the area, it was too difficult to try to assess which climbs might be safe from avalanche, so, having already spent a day joining the skiers at their game, this time we reckoned we'd find out from the "racketeers" about snow shoeing. A large party (some on touring skis) therefore found itself going round in circles (literally) in

the misty snowy woods of Vallouise. Happily for us we inadvertently arrived at the village we set off from just in time for a lunchtime beer and savoury pancake. Unhappily we didn't check prices before ordering and found we'd been drinking a local speciality beer at €7.50 a bottle!

Since we'd by now only completed a fraction of our intended distance, most chose to retrace their steps to the cars even though we were only a few yards away if approached by walking up the road. And before you say it, the fact of us failing, with hundreds of years of mountain navigation experience between us, to follow our chosen route along a valley bottom can't put us in mug of the year contention – there were 14 of us – there aren't enough mugs to go round!

Present on the meet were: Bennett, Holmes (g), Hepburn, Brookes, Clifford, Van Gulik (g), Blackburn, Andrews, Fenna, A Lovatt, A Lovatt, W Lovatt (g), Tolley, Welsh, Reid, Gaston, Stevens, Taylor, Peel, Gascoyne.

MARTIN BENNETT aka Il Chef du Cascatisti

8th FEBRUARY 2009.



Last Day - snow-shoeing team in heavy snowfall in Vallouise. Copyright Martin Bennett.



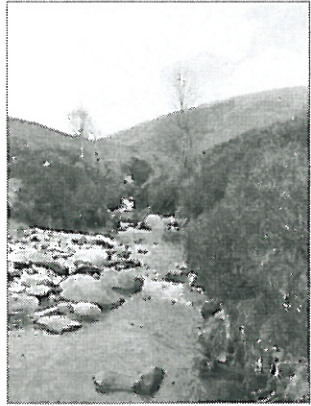
Newlands Valley at New Year 2009. Copyright John Wiseman



Copyright Clive Bell

Roy Bridge 2009

Friday 4th April and five of us made the annual pilgrimage to Achluachrach near Roy Bridge. Les Ward beat us all there, going up on Thursday. Les's plan was to meet old



friends and make a trip to the CIC hut for old times' sake. On the journey up the A9 Kev and I stopped off at Pitlochry, parking at the back of town near Moulin. We stretched our legs by walking up Craigower on a tourist path, a pleasant walk up a small hill with a nice view. The weather was fine with a distant mist. At the bunkhouse we met the Wisemans and Les. In the kitchen above the sink was a sign saying all drinking water must be boiled. The health and safety man had deemed it dodgy as it came from up the mountain and did not have all its paperwork. Apparently people have been drinking it for 150 years.

Saturday's weather dripped on everything, which meant a low level walk. John, June, Kev and I walked from the bridge at Oich to Invergarry using two cars. A nice walk, even if it was a little damp. We lunched on soggy butties sitting on a soggy log under a soggy tree by a soggy lochan with a rather nice soggy view. The bridge of Oich is an early suspension bridge and a fascinating example of early engineering.

Sunday was a better day and we ventured to Loch Arkaig and the Fas Chia Aig waterfall. With a long climb up a steep path beside the burn up to the Glean Cia-Aig, then a yomp up the 2616 ft pathless to Geal Charn then Bienn Chraoibh with their windy misty views. Down to the road and a three mile tarmac trail back to the car by the waterfall and then to Achluachrach via the Commando bar in Spean Bridge. That evening we were joined in the digs by a gaggle of students from Aberystwyth university, including a girl from Treales, here to do kayaking. They were delighted when it started raining?????

Glen Roy was the venue for Kev and I on Monday, while John and June went south collecting Benn vrackie on the way. The kayakers left early to find exciting water, we passed them later halfway down Glen Roy, setting out on their wet adventure. We parked in the car park about 4 miles down the valley and walked from there up and over Leana Mhor and Coire Stochdhaich and dined in the shelter of a peat hag on Meall an Driuchain. What an interesting place, with its isolation and the 'parallel roads' which are really beaches from



times when sea levels were much higher. On our way back we found a real ale pub in an unlikely looking hotel on the outskirts of Roy Bridge. Back at the bunkhouse the kayakers reported a good day. Three guys, originally from Glasgow but now based far and wide were installed in the bunkhouse and there to climb the hills. It turned out that one of them was an engineer in the paper making industry, working world wide. He reckoned that the UK was the only country in the world to have coloured bog paper! Not many people know that.

Tuesday was the day to pay the bill and drive homeward. With a short stop at Dunkeld and a pleasant stroll by the river in the sunshine eating pasties.

Clive

The White Challenge

This particular ski trip to Bormio nearly fell at the first hurdle. Ryan Air's overzealous check-in procedures led to much "illegal" kit shuffling and the arrest, at security, of "butter would not melt in his mouth" Edward Craig who was found in possession of Christine Bell's long dress, a pair of high heeled ladies shoes and Alan Bell's false teeth complete with the appropriate glue. It's as well all this took place at an amiable airport like Liverpool rather than somewhere more aggressive.

An uneventful flight to Bergamo was followed by an increasingly more interesting coach journey to the resort. Apparently a loose widget was sliding about in its spindle and at the second breakdown the offending part was firmly clamped into place by Alan's false teeth and a liberal coating of Steradent. The problem solved the bus roared up the hill to Alfredo's new hotel where his wife Elizabeth, a long standing friend of Frank Lord, poured a welcome drink for us all.

The hotel is at the edge of town and the lifts are accessed by bus, Alfredo's Land Rover, or a 20 minute stroll along the river. Skis are usually left in town. The snow was plentiful and the weather good and we were soon on the summit at 3000 metres surrounded by glorious mountains.

The run was open back to the village at 1200 metres and once there banners invited us to take the "White Challenge". As all of the men qualified we rose to the challenge and were impressed to sail through the first round by remembering who we were. Round two was more difficult and only Edward could remember the names of everyone present, but then he did have a list with our respective medications on it. Interestingly everyone could remember the names of the pretty ladies looking after us. Gordon Brown may not have eliminated boom and bust but someone somewhere does seem to have phased out little old ladies with white hair and replaced them with everlasting "Sweetie Pies".

After two days of bashing Bormio it was time to move over to the other side of the valley out of the way of the real White Challenge, a top to bottom race completed by the winner in 4½ minutes. Alfredo took 6½ minutes and for people like me it takes just over half an hour if I do not stop to look at the view. Oga proved somewhat more rustic but provided some excellent runs and was even quieter than never busy Bormio. We met up with a young Italian lad who was living with an Irish girl in the next street to one of Dave Laycock's daughters in SE London and occasionally drinks in the Silver Cross pub at New Cross. It's a small world! The lifts and ski buses throughout worked perfectly well and there were other places to visit if one so wished, but Oga at the weekend and Bormio at other times provided more than enough sport.

The evenings were enlivened by groups of strolling players with guitars, whilst Bernie had smuggled in his flat pack mandolin by pretending it was an MFI wardrobe. Some songs were humorous, covering such subjects as naughty nuns and randy vultures and others were more serious. I can remember my knees creaking to the sound of a windmill as I got up for another pint.

We were eventually joined by a minor celebrity who hid her true identity behind a pair of dark glasses. Some said in the final white out she had fallen over without realising it up until the moment she hit the ground, the only bit of the environment not in motion if you exclude the 24,000 MPH it is travelling in at an Easterly direction. But I still think she was a celebrity and a star for organising such an excellent holiday.

The final day brought heavy snow. Most skied but I walked into the attractive town centre through astonishing levels of snow and took a few pictures before retiring back to the hotels log fire and a quiet pint.

D. A. Earle

Doolin Cavers

By Martin Bennett

Last winter's caving exploits for the most part followed the usual pattern of a number of well attended "official" weekend meets, ably led by our "Chef de Speliologie Fenna" or his equally capable substitute "Wriggly Wriggley" as well as the usual evening trips normally attended by 4 or 5 out of a band of 8 or 10 who like this sort of thing, or at least suffer it till it's time to go to the pub! This winter however the pattern was interrupted in November at the suggestion of Ali Welsh who, being acquainted with the area and noticing that Ryanair were doing a £10 inclusive return flight to Shannon, motivated us all to book up and head off to Doolin on the West coast of Ireland where he assured us there are a number of easily accessed rewarding caves.

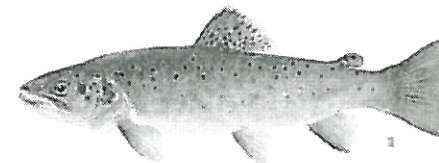
We flew early on Saturday morning, picked up hire cars at Shannon airport and drove the short distance to our destination via an excellent breakfast at The Snack Shack, adjacent to Abbey Street Car Park in Ennis - highly recommended to any future travellers in this direction.

At sometime early in the trip the theme for the weekend was set by Alan Blackburn who, apropos of absolutely nothing, said "Don't you think it's strange how all SOLE (sic) singers have names like fish?"

"What?" we said, "who, for instance?"

SALMON Dave was the example.

The next effort was the fairly lame James BROWN TROUT. This was improved upon when it was pointed out he was the COD-father of SOLE! The rest of the weekend was punctuated by one or other of us shouting out our latest addition to the list whilst simultaneously chortling at his own brilliance.



(Barry WHITEBAIT)

We easily found the house Ali had rented for the weekend. This was well chosen for it's position very close to our first objective.

(MARLIN Gaye) (Aretha FRANKLING)

This meant we were able to get changed into caving gear in the comfort of "home" instead of the usual torment of undressing in freezing wind, rain, snow and everything else the British (or in this case, Irish) climate normally throws at us.

(Fontella BASS) (RAY Charles)

Getting ready in double quick time our leader Ali, with Glenn, hurried off to hang a ladder in the exit pitch in the open shaft at the bottom of our planned "through" trip in the Doolin River Cave system. This was necessary to ensure our safe exit from the system - not too much of a chore for them as this is less than half a mile from our home for the weekend.

(SPRATs Domino) - (Little PILCHARD) - (Ben E KING PRAWN) (Joe COCKLE)

They were coming thick and fast now! Notwithstanding this aberration, which threatened to take over the total intellectual capability of the team (not difficult, do I hear you opine?), this turned out to be very good underground excursion, during which we were only once "temporarily unaware of our position" (not lost, you understand!). The trip has varied terrain and attractive formations and a smashing long duck pitch - on emerging from this, as well as being covered in the typical "cappuccino" type muddy foam Alan had a leech stuck to his suit! I was astounded. Until that moment I'd had no idea there were leeches in our home islands.

(TUNA Turner was found to be very funny, but we almost fell over at our comedic talent when this was extrapolated to PIKE and TUNA TURBOT)!

At about this time it was decided to expand the genre to include more mainstream recording acts, since none of us were exactly soul music fans and our inspiration was waning. This blew the whole thing wide open. (Nat King COLEY) (SHAKEin Stevens) (Jon Bon ANCHOVIE)

As the trip drew to a close it was casually mentioned by the advance team who'd earlier arranged our escape that the trip might have a sting in the tail. "How can that be?" we said "We can see daylight already". "All will be revealed" they said, just as we approached the carefully placed exit ladder only to find it was some 4 metres short!

(Bob MARLIN and the WHALERS)

There was, admittedly, a rope draped alongside the apology for a ladder but though this might provide holds of a sort for the climb out it would provide little security since there was no-one at the top of it. But, as the song and legend have it – when the going gets tough the tough get going – whilst the rest of us were staring at one another and preparing to lynch the leader who'd brought the too short ladder, our saviour stepped up in the shape of one M Van Gulik. He was up to the foot of the ladder in a trice and manned his station at the entrance above whilst top roping the rest of us to the surface. Phew.

(SHELLFISH Presley) (Fleetwood MACKEREL) (Bay City ROLLMOPS)

We were soon back at the ranch, showers were had and thoughts turned again to what we'd begun to anticipate prior to our little surprise in the exit chamber – beer! Or rather, in this location, Stout.

(Walter TROUT) (Blue OYSTER Cult)

The first 3 or 4 Guinness's slipped down while we waited for our meals to be served. These were excellent and, had we been there 2 months previously, would have been good value but this was our first exposure to Euroland after the collapse of Sterling! The venue too was exactly as I expected having listened to a million clichéd descriptions of "THE IRISH PUB" – it didn't disappoint in any way, providing as it did excellent Guinness, or whatever was your tippie, good grub, not one but two bands playing simultaneously and, above all a warmth and friendliness rarely seen these days in it's UK counterparts.

(CHUBBY Checker)

The other pubs we visited weren't far behind in all respects and in any case we got less and less discerning as we got more and more, shall we say, relaxed. I was so relaxed by the end of the evening I forgot which side of the street we'd wound up on and was all for turning the wrong way in the hope of finding our house. For the second time that day Michiel (for by now there was only him and me) came to my rescue and gently pointed out my confusion!

On the second day, Sunday, an early start was neither necessary or desired, no-one was on the sparkling form of the previous day, but all, surprisingly you might think, showed willing

and were keen to make the best of the day. Ali's plan was to visit Faunarooska Cave. This was a more conventional trip in that it involved driving out from our base and getting ready beside the car in the aforementioned biting wind. The discomfort was mitigated in this instance by the wonderful view across the fields and cliffs to a windswept Atlantic Ocean. One advantage of such discomfort is that on reaching the target everyone is mad keen to get underground to warm up. It wasn't long however before this initial enthusiasm turned to a feeling that the entrance series was pretty dull – one long twisting passage, only wide enough for sideways movement

(CRAB Calloway).

The description had prepared us for this but it's monotony, added to growing Guinness induced lethargy proved too much for some. After what seemed an eternity of it a discussion was held about whether we had the enthusiasm for any more. Some decided not and set off back.

(Julian BREAM)

Those of us who chose to believe Ali when he said the guide book promised better things were almost instantly, within a further 100 yards anyway, rewarded by a widening passage and very pretty decorations in the way of formations which just got better and better, though the backers off wouldn't believe us!

(Simply Red SNAPPER)

In fact the best was saved till last – after an unroped descent, the wisdom of which was called into question, the chamber that presented itself was as spectacular as anything I've ever seen – second only to Otter Hole was what Michiel said – I can't comment on that as I wasn't on that trip . . . the less said about that the better! Well worth the effort AND a second bout of nakedness in the biting Atlantic gale as we changed our clothes again.

(SKATE Bush)

Our 2nd pub night was a more subdued affair comprising a pleasant meal and a few pints enjoyed with a general air of tiredness combined with the feeling of satisfaction brought on by knowing we'd had a very good return of fun for our investment of time and cash. No-one even seemed capable of coming up with any more fishy musicians!

A relatively early night was had in preparation for an early start on Monday to catch the 7.30 flight to Liverpool and work for those of us who had work to go to. And that was that.

Those attending (each of whom can be blamed for at least one entry into the fishy music acts debate) were: Welsh, Bennett, Fenna, Brookes, Van Gulik, Blackburn, Holmes, Ally also RAN (and how!)

An Evening on the Hill with John Tattersall

Many of you will remember John from years ago before he moved to work in Hong Kong – a larger than life character! He came back to the UK for a week in mid June & spent the weekend here in Newcastle. Most of the time he was at a University reunion for the Geology course he did in the 1970s however we met up on the Sunday & he stayed overnight.

He is even larger than the last time I saw him, about 6 years ago, now weighing in at around 21 & a half stone. He still smokes like a chimney & is even more in need of some serious exercise. We met up in the city centre & after a bit of shopping returned home for a bite to eat. The weather was not very good but we decided to brave the elements & go for a walk around one of his old stomping grounds – Peel Crag on Hadrian's Wall.

We had a look at the crag where he pointed out some of the climbs he did & he could even remember the names of some from 25 years ago. It was only a short walk mainly because he's not very fit. The walk descended at first & he was struggling a bit on the way back feigning tiredness to stop for a smoke. The views were



excellent & to round it off we got overtaken by a heavy shower but that's English weather.

On the way back I suggested stopping at a pub for a pint but he said he wasn't bothered – I couldn't work this one out but we did manage to drink some wine that evening. He then refused some whiskey. The world was a bit upside down – those of you that know him will understand.



After a walk around the village the following morning, with a few smoke stops, we had lunch & it was time for him to head off to the airport.

Andy Dunhill

June 2009

Mid-week meet 26/27 May 2009, Stair.

As there are more members with free time during the week, last year we introduced mid-week meets/walks. As part of our continuing programme of mid-week events this meet was suggested and co-ordinated by John Wiseman. Apart from providing the opportunity to get out and about with other members the main reason for this meet was to celebrate with John his 65th birthday on Wednesday 27th of May and the stated aim of the ascent of Scafell Pike just to show the world that he is not past it (June please note).

There were ten people in attendance, John and June, Peter and Gillian Llewellyn, Phil Caley and partner Maggie, Chris Campbell and his friend Neil, my wife Glynis and myself. The attendance of Chris and Neil was a bit of a surprise as they were supposed to be climbing on the Isle of Skye but as the weather forecast was pretty grim for the Isle they decided to cut their losses and spend their time based at Stair. In the event the weather in the Lakes wasn't good and finding dry rock nigh on impossible so they made the best of it by keeping Kendal Wall in business.

On the Wednesday morning we awoke to find the weather was not on John's side in his wish to tackle Scafell Pike on his birthday so the initial feeling of let's get up and go faded rapidly. Still on the positive side this gave John more time to open his birthday presents and cards and reflect on officially becoming old. In addition to his presents John was presented with a surprise birthday cake made by the expert hands of Gillian. Now this may come as a surprise to most people but John's favourite sweetie was and still is Smarties and it was Smarties that set the theme for the cake with it being surrounded by them and adorned with huge replicas, it even had a replica round Smartie tube on top made from marzipan (the tubes are now hexagonal without the plastic ends due to H&S concerns, so we are told). The cake, which took Gillian three days to make looked and tasted great.

With Scafell Pike definitely off the programme we decided after long debate and several brews to walk to Whinlatter and take a look at the Whinlatter Visitors Centre where they have live transmission from the Osprey nest via a camera set above the nest. We got there damp but in good spirits and were lucky to see two of the Osprey chicks with one egg still to hatch, Phil and Maggie had even more luck as they had arrived before the main party and had seen the male bird arrive at the nest with a fish for the female. Our next destination was going to be Dodd



Wood on the north side of Bassenthwaite Lake where the Osprey have their nest this year with the intention of viewing them from the special viewing point that is set up each year. The weather was still against us as the cloud and accompanying rain would make it impossible to see anything from the viewing point so we had our butties and then had a not to unpleasant walk around the forest and then back to Stair for birthday cake and beer, in posh quarters it would have been called High Tea. In the evening we were treated to an excellent three-course meal provided by June, this was accompanied by more beer provided by John and there was of course the odd glass of wine consumed.

All in all and weather apart it was a very enjoyable and sociable meet and it was nice to be able to celebrate someone's special day with them (with cake and beer) so thanks John and June and we look forward to his 66th next year.

Kevan Ebbrell.

Mountaineering Injury Prevention Attempts

(and the reason I haven't been to the club for ages and become very boring and hate writing essays!!)

During January 2008, 18 mountaineering tutors at Plas-Y-Brenin volunteered to take part in a research study to investigate the effect of wearing a rucksack on their balance. The reason behind this being that **carrying a load and poor balance** in both sporting and occupational environments have been **linked to a higher incidence of lower limb injury**.

A recent questionnaire survey of mountain guides, 165 of whom returned their questionnaire, concluded that 48% of them reported long-term lower limb problems following occupational injury (Hillibrand, 2007).

Mountain Rescue (England and Wales, 2006) documented that 997 people were assisted in England and Wales of which 443 people were injured, 354 of them whilst hill walking. Of these injuries 40% were due to a slip, trip or stumble, with 40% of the people assisted having lower leg and foot injuries and 10% having upper leg and knee injuries.

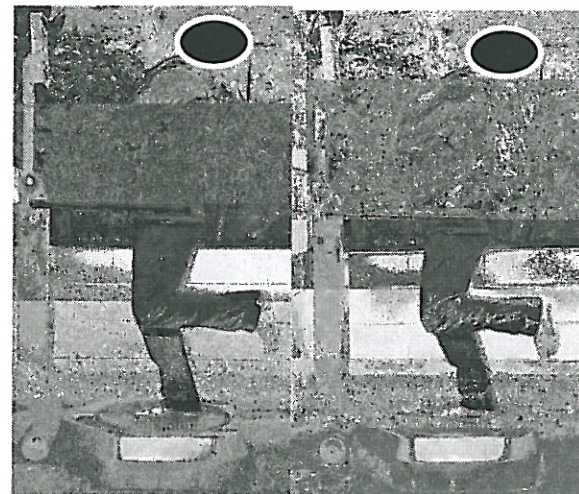
The majority of research on mountain activities revolves around cardiovascular fitness and altitude although there are also a few good articles on the use of walking poles. There were no studies investigating the relationship of the weight of a rucksack on the postural balance of mountaineering instructors so thanks to the staff at Plas-y-Brenin, a start on trying to show that boring balance exercises would be useful for preventing injury has been made.

For those of you who may have had a lower limb injury and a rehabilitation programme, balance exercises are also known as proprioception exercises and proprioception exercises are the new core stability exercises for mountaineers for the future.

Determining a link between the effects of a rucksack load (variable depending on the activity) on the balance helps to identify a training component that may be added to a training routine in order to decrease the risk of injury.

Tutors were tested at 3 levels of balance stability with and without a rucksack of 30% of the participants' body weight. The weight was a little excessive but necessary because, as with most research, time constraints did not allow many tutors and their rucksacks to be weighed to gain an average load :bodyweight percentage, so a research paper using military rucksacks at 30 % body weight was used.

Defining a mountaineering rucksack would also have been a problem, as it would depend on the specific activity to be pursued, experience and the amount of money available to spend on lightweight items. As you may have guessed the heavier the rucksack and the more unstable the surface the worse balance will be so you might as well start your balance exercises now.



Try this!!! (at your own risk)

Balancing for 20 seconds on one leg, on grass, stones, rocks, boggy bits or at home on the floor, edge of a stair, the settee or bed or a cushion.

Keep trying for about 5 minutes a day, it doesn't have to be all in one go.

The easier it gets the more unstable the surface needs to be, so try in on a flat floor first!

Notice the bare feet for indoor exercising, supportive shoes will probably make it easier.

It a good exercise for hips and knees as well

Enjoy !

Diane Lord

Chartered Physiotherapist

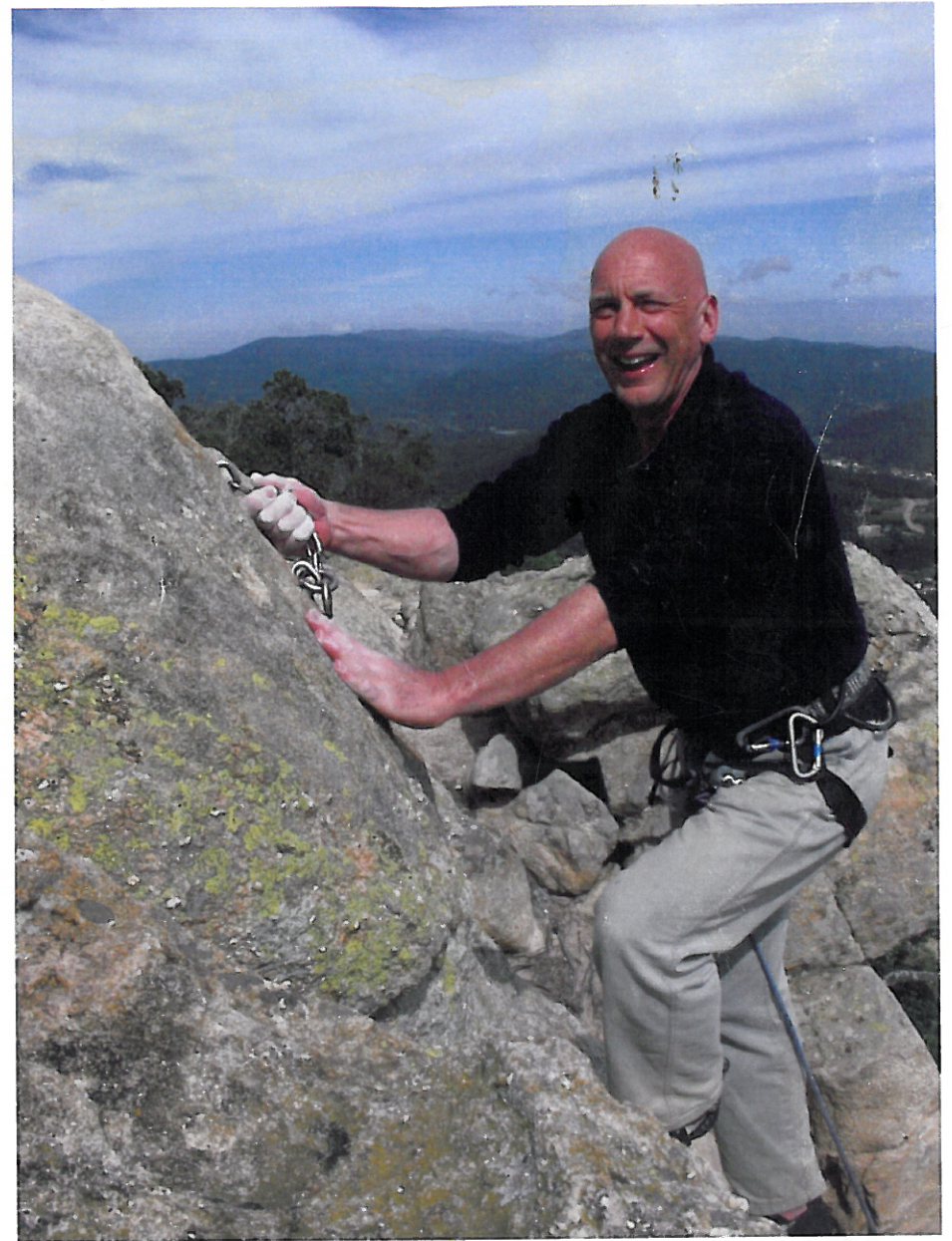
Obituary

Tony Whiteley.

It is with regret that we have to include the sad news that Tony Whiteley recently passed away.

Tony was a former member of the club and a lot of folks will remember him. The committee understands that Derick Smith, Gordon Heywood, Alan Bell, Brian Wilks attended the funeral.

Martin Dale (Membership Secretary)



Chris Thistlethwaite reaching the top of
'Mocs de Gos' (5+) at Cellects, Spain 2009 (Copyright Caroline Webb)