

July 2011

Fylde Mountaineering Club



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Editorial

From the spread of articles in this edition it looks the club has been having lot’s more fun in places both near and far. Sadly my own activities have been somewhat curtailed this year by that annoying thing called work – something that most of our membership no longer know anything about....lucky b%^&**.

This edition has turned in to a bit of a rush job so I apologise now if there are any mistakes or if I’ve missed including an article but I hope that you will all find something of interest

Caroline



FMC Photo Comp – Landscape Winner, Clive Bell

Summer Evening Walks 2010

Ten walks were planned and nine took place, with a turnout usually of between the low teens and about twenty.

The first attracted two people, the co-ordinators, who sat in their car, in the rain and listened to The Archers before setting off home. A few from the Fylde had braved the weather and set off until they turned onto the M6 when traffic jams began and no way we would get there by 7, and it started to rain. According to the radio there were sheep on the motorway, well there is a novelty. (We did think of phoning the co-ordinator but remembered our phone was at home, in its envelope, where it lives.)

The last attracted a large turnout to the Grapes at Wrea Green, for a walk through the fields and byways of the area. Plenty of time for a good chinwag and, with the early sunset, a return to the Grapes where it was warm enough to sit outside with a pint or two. A large green farm tractor came down the road and parked next to the kerb across the way from the pub. Three men got out and headed for the pub, The tractor began rolling back towards the next parked car, "Hey that's my car" said Martin fortunately the driver realised the tractor was moving jumped back in and stopped it in time. A very relieved Martin reached for his pint.

The other eight walks were in mountains or dales, over moorland or rock - what they had in common was a convivial atmosphere and a chance for a drink afterwards. If you would like to join in next year the program will be out in good time courtesy of Alan and Angela Lovett. If you would like to lead a walk contact them. What is nice is having someone else's favourite walk that take s us into somewhere new.

John Wiseman



FMC Photo Comp – Landscape 2nd place, Chris Packman

CIC Meet 8th – 11th March 2011

The meet this year was for various reasons not as popular as that of previous years, with only three in attendance, including myself, I was joined by Ali Welsh and Alan Blackburn. The walk in on Tuesday evening was made a little easier by sharing the climbing gear three ways, however the high pressure system that had been dictating the weather leading up to the trip was now moving south and the weather had started to play up.

Wednesday started with an exploratory visit to Coire na Ciste where we were hoping to be able to get to Thompson's Route however the deep unconsolidated snow and high winds forced a retreat and we were all back in the hut before lunch time with little choice but to sit out the stormy weather until the morn.



On Thursday I was awoken with Ali exclaiming that all the fresh snow had been blown away and that he had seen a team 'motoring up' Observatory Gully, over breakfast a plan was hatched to head for 'Point 5', as we approached the route we could see a team was already established on the first pitch, this heroic team had set off from the TNF car park and had kindly broken the trail for us while we lay snoozing! Alan led the first pitch

and Ali led the second. I declined to lead the infamous 'Rogue Pitch' having experienced heavy spindrift seconding in the narrow confines of the 'Chimney Pitch' and a naughty crampon which fell off on the approach slopes, this was to prove a wise choice as the conditions Ali was about to face was certainly not the day for me to be pushing my grade.

Ali had up to this point been singing merrily whilst leading, however his song (we're crazy, we're mental, we're off our f*****g heeds) soon disappeared in a 90mph updraft coupled with an almost suffocating amount of spindrift. With us all now safely established above the third pitch it was unanimously decided to



retreat, three abseils and a down climb to Observatory Gully and we were all romping downwards towards the warmth and sanctuary of the hut. This was certainly the wildest day climbing I have ever experienced, full on Scottish winter conditions, come to Daddy!!

The weather improved considerably on Friday and we opted to go and take a look at the Italian Climb, a route on the west side of Tower Ridge. The approach slopes below the Douglas Boulder had been scoured by the strong winds and soon we were all established below the first pitch, today was my turn to lead, an enjoyable pitch which leads to a natural bifurcation where I was to discover there was an in situ anchor, having brought up Ali and Alan, Alan opted to lead the RH variation, this proved to be great a choice, the pitch was sustained and steep and was sporting bomber Nevis ice. We then retreated via two abseils both of which were from in situ anchors, a great choice for a short day!

In summary then the weather on the meet played up yet again, making route choice and sleeping at night rather testing, fortunately we were in good company propelled onwards and upwards by Ali's limitless drive & energy!!

Darren Hartley

Ten Go Into the Mist

18-20 Feb 2011 – Rhyd-Ddu Hut Swap

Back to an OREAD hut, but the comfy one. Ten folk turned up for a weekend in Wales, the hut swap with OREAD to their Tan Yr Wyddfa hut at Rhyd Ddu. The weather forecast predicted rain, almost unknown in this region of Wales.

Friday saw the early arrivers (the Lovetts, Jennie Tolley & Peter Scowfield) heading directly up the Nantlle Y Garn, unrelentingly steep but not too long. What to do next was mulled over the munching of sandwiches. Going straight down was boring so we set along the ridge towards Mynydd Drws-y-coed (this is driving my spell checker nuts!). This is a very fine scramble, much recommended, even when a tad greasy, like then. When we regained grass, we continued to the top of Trum Ddysg (why, because it was there of course, no other reason), and then headed for the woods. From there it was an easy trudge



to the tea shop in Rhyd Ddu (excellent Welsh cakes & Bara Brith). An excellent day out on an unpromising (but dry!) day.

In the evening we were joined by the Ebbrells, the Llewellyns and Pat Bennett and her John.

On Saturday we drove over to Beddgelert, with Moel Hebog as our target. The day was very similar to the Friday, dull with the tops in the clouds. We approached our target around the side, via the excellent path through the Pass of Aberglaslyn.



Then across the bridge to fight our way up the subsidiary lump of Bryn Banog. It was 'ard. From the top Moel Hebog was nowhere to be seen. There would have been a mutiny, had anyone been keen enough to want to go on, but no one was, so there wasn't.



Just before Beddgelert we were treated to the sight of the steam train, whoo-whooh! The party then split again, into the pub and café sub-groups. Another unpromising day, on tough ground, which was much improved by our collective lack of fibre (and rain). That evening aching limbs were brought back to life by the medicinal application of Pat's excellent malt (internally).

Sunday looked just like the other two days, grey with low cloud. Kev and Glynis headed for the coast, Pat, John, Jennie and Peter for home. There was woolly talk about trains or yet more smaller hills until Gillian fixed her eyes upon the Snowdon ridge with the gaze of a hawk. "Is it clearing?" she asked. Peter waylaid a party heading up the hill and asked if they knew the forecast. They produced a fresh printout (they had good leaders!). The forecast wasn't that good really,



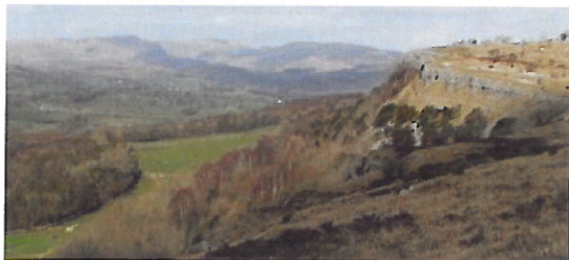
but the slight possibility of the cloud lifting was enough to sow the seeds of hope, so off we set up the big one, on the Rhyd Ddu path. After yesterday's tussocks & bogs, walking up a real path was (almost) effortless. The Bwlch Main ridge was as good as ever, with old soft snow that was easy enough to keep axes and crampons attached to sacks. The only tricky bit was the summit cairn steps, they were lethal. We'd have roped up if we'd had one! The crowds at the top provided good entertainment, several in shorts and jeans, trainers in socks (yes, that's right) and one cyclist, all trudging through the snow in cloud. It must have looked a doddle from the Pen-y-Pass car park. We went down the Snowdon Ranger path, taking the path to the left through the quarry, which saved many road miles and entertained Peter. For one brief moment we even saw the summit (other than when we were on it that is). We arrived in the pub in the failing light, and left it in the dark.

Alan Lovett

Ladies Meets 2011

Langdale 19/20 March

Saturday was mainly mild and dry. Some of the fitter members galloped up Wetherlam. The least energetic followed the Elterwater, Skelwith Bridge round - which was very social and there were stops for refreshments at strategic intervals.



Scout Scar in slightly better visibility

Sunday was low cloud and wet and somewhat discouraging, but we did Scout Scar which was about a 5 mile walk (and near Kendal) with views over Brigsteer valley - but we used our imagination. The mushroom shelter with its view indicator was helpful in identifying what could have been viewed and therefore which direction to face.

Stair 6/7 May

After a fortnight of pleasurable sun the climactic scene changed and the outcome was mainly squally showers interspersed with a little sun. We joined the throng of walkers up to the summit of Cat Bells but did not continue along the ridge preferring to escape back to the cottage with wet trousers and insufficient warm gear. After fortifying cups of tea we went to Keswick and wandered about in a desultory manner before returning to enjoy a curry conjured up by Angela and the odd glass or two of something alcoholic



Sunday we set out purposefully to ascend Blencathra (above) from Scales but after the initial dousing of heavy rain and threatening grey skies we chose to explore the lower slopes dropping down near Threlkeld and crossing the A56 to wander along the river Glenderamackin, visiting the Duxburys en route - originally FMC members - but many decades ago. A good "tea" stop!

Jennie Tolley

A Great Day Out

Darren Hartley & Chris Campbell

A 'phone call to Darren enquiring about the availability of a place on the C.I.C meet was followed by a call back asking if I fancied a trip to The Ben the following week. Darren had been monitoring the weather forecasts and it was looking promising, with High pressure over Scotland. Given the vagaries of British winter weather, you have to take your chances when you can.



After discussing options on the evening of 26th January, Tower Ridge emerged as favourite. Darren hadn't done it - I had but 42 years ago, in thawing conditions. A compromise was reached on reveille; Darren wanted 05.00 but agreed to 05.30.

Thursday dawned with clear skies and no wind. These were exceptional conditions for any time of year on Ben Nevis.

Leaving TNF car park at 07.00, we reached the bottom of East Gully at 09.30 having met 2 French climbers making their way up to Observatory Buttress - such is the appeal of The Ben in winter.

The chimney out of The Douglas Gap was largely clear of snow and ice and once Darren had pointed out protection possibilities for me, it went without any problems. We continued up the Ridge, moving together with excellent vistas all around. To the right we could clearly see the line of Ledge Route which we had done on the Tuesday in mist. To the left Observatory Ridge, the Orion Face and North-East Buttress stood out majestically. At the Little Tower we caught up with 2



parties who had by-passed East Gully and the Douglas Gap. This provided the opportunity to snack and drink. The rock sections on the Little Tower were quite testing but the ice and snow were in good nick.

We continued climbing together to the base of The Great Tower. Back in 1969 I had led a long pitch up the face of the Tower, not fancying the poor snow on the Eastern

Traverse. This year the Traverse was heavily banked - out, producing an impressive pitch which Darren led. He then climbed up the cleft with the jammed boulder. I led the next pitch up steep verglassed rock with one particularly committing move assisted by good axe placements above. Darren followed and led through to and along the knife-edge arête to Tower Gap. The two parties ahead of us were making good progress up the final section to the top so it didn't appear there were any particular problems with the exit from Tower Gap. Darren was now out of sight and as I could hear voices, I assumed he had met up with another party at Tower Gap.

A delay followed before I was able to move off. In the windless conditions the knife edge arête was exhilarating. With time pressing I didn't waste any time descending into Tower Gap - 2 strategically placed in-situ Dyneema tapes helping. The other party were moving slowly ahead of us, it was clear the second was uncomfortable moving together. As soon as practicable, I took the left-hand exit from Tower Gap which went quickly and brought Darren up to a convenient snow bollard. With the light starting to fade Darren led off up the final slopes, us both moving together. We finished at 17.15 as the sun was setting and we were treated to a fitting end to the best day's winter climbing either of us had ever had. The top of No.4 gully was found without difficulty, headtorches donned and the descent to the Allt a Mhullin thence TNF car park made. A brilliant day in excellent company.



10th Annual Icefall Climbing Meet

February 2011

I can hear it now. The groan from readers as they view that title and think "here we go again, Bennett, in the same way that J J Cale is said to have made the same album every year, has yet again regurgitated the same old words about the same old people in the same old places." Well, if you thought that then you'd be wrong. Prepared for just that reaction (after all I felt it first!) I'm ringing the changes and providing you with nothing but PICTURES of the same old people in the same old place – *Cogne* that is, for the 6th year out of the 10. You can fill in the words for yourselves if you feel any are needed.

The photos come from the cameras of a number of meet attendees: me, AlanB, Glenn and Simon can each be blamed for a number of 'em. Present on the meet were the following members and guests: Bennett, Holmes (g) Hepburn, Thistlethwaite, Hird, Hicks, Hicks, Welsh, Clifford Blackburn, Fenna, Cain (g) Brookes, McGuinness, VanGulik (g) Wood, Reid.



All Smiles 1



All Smiles 2



All Smiles 3



All Smiles 4



All Smiles 5



All Smiles 6



All Smiles 7



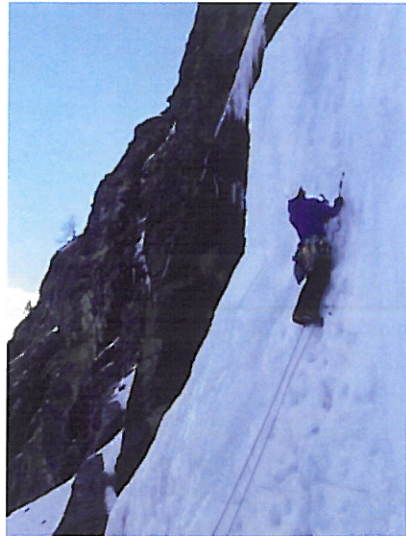
Cascata de Rovenaud (IV) Val Savarenche - the next valley to Val di Cogne



That's what you CALL a beer!



That's not, Alan!



Cold Couloir (IV) 7 pitches and ab off or top out in about 20?? Pitch 1



It was HOW tiring?



You'll enjoy it Becky, I know you will!



I Tutto Relativo (IV)



GranVal (III) pitch 2 - Michiel



I found it a piece of cake



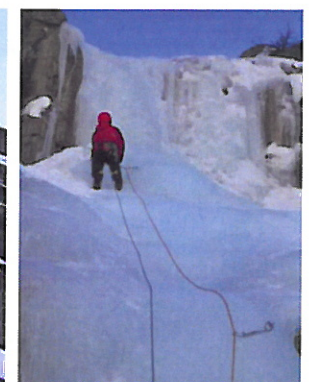
Sentiero Dei Troll (III): (1) Woody's 1st Ice Lead (2) 3rd Stance



Parto Gemellare (IV) Pitch 1



Pitch 2



Pitch 3



Patri De Gauche (Right hand) (IV) - Ali closely pursued by a cave dwelling Austrian!



What's the plan for tomorrow?



Where IS everyone?



You're shrinking Simon!



Aaahhh - Bombardino - cause and effect!!!!



THE END ??

Working Weekend Stair

21 – 22 May 2011

There was only a small select group this weekend as many others were away on holiday sampling some Scottish rain. Thanks therefore go to Caroline Webb & Chris Peed who joined Christine & me. It was a pretty wet & windy weekend so we did not miss much on the hill.

The main work done was – Grass cutting & weeding of the two areas near the cottage; Painting the walls & ceiling in the main room plus the entrance door frame; Painting the walls & ceiling of both lobby areas into the WCs & Dormitories; Panelling the pipe work under the new sinks & washbasins in both toilets making it much tidier; Lagging almost all of the new pipe work; Re sealing the tile floor in the main room; Removed all DIY items from the Kitchen to the new cupboards in the Porch; The shed obliterated by a mini tornado was taken to the tip at Flusco; & some general cleaning.

I provided a veggie meal on Saturday evening for everyone as usual. We did not have the perennial argument about hot or cold pie & hot or cold custard – we just had hot pie & cold Ambrosia custard (Birds did not get a look in).

We also had a couple of impromptu working days before Easter to sort things out after the plumber had finished his work. The main jobs done were: Build cupboards in the Porch; Replace damaged tiles in the Toilets; Painted all walls & ceilings in both Toilets & the Kitchen; Installed water proof window sills in both Toilets & the Kitchen; repaired the picnic bench by the front door.

Thanks to those who helped: Chris Campbell, Mike Howe, Kevan Ebrell, Clive Bell & grand children. Overall we have had some very successful working sessions before & after Easter. I'm already taking bookings for the next working weekend; in fact I'm always willing to take bookings for them.

Jobs for the future include: Build some outside seating in the angle created by the kitchen & Porch walls, Yet more garden landscaping, The electrical appliances need a 5 yearly safety inspection, Paint the Dormitories, Paint all wood work, Panel in the new pipe work above the work tops in both the Gents WC & the Kitchen, Re – seal the remaining floor areas of the cottage, Paint the external walls, Repair the wood under the roof which is clearly rotten, Maybe tile the floor of the Porch because the paint we've used only lasts a few months before it gets damaged, Stain the remaining Kitchen units to match the area with the Microwave on, Fully clean out the Kitchen unit under the microwave to make it useable for utensils,plus lots more I have not thought of yet!

Andy

Johnny Walker's Tales

Some years ago, when tweed was still popular, a local window cleaner was going about his duties, when, gossiping to a resident, he slipped off the ladder and fell into a herb garden. Unfortunately the soft plants failed to absorb the full force of his landing and he suffered a dislocated shoulder.

The concerned householder aided our shaken hero across the road to the maternity hospital, where two stout nurses set about returning his arm to its rightful position. Unfortunately the joint showed little or no inclination to adopt its previous situation and the window cleaner bellowed loudly, in some pain. An Irish matron appeared and severely reprimanded the man for his lack of courage, "We have a wee woman in here who's just given birth to twins who made a lot less noise than you!"

*Expressionless the man of glass replied,
"Yes, but have you tried stuffing 'em back in!"*

Lagangarbh Weekend Feb 2011

Meeting Mark Gibson just by junction 3 of the M55 at 4pm on Thursday marked the start of our 'extended' Lagangarbh meet. Our plan was to make the most of the long journey north by adding two extra days to the weekend by heading up on Thursday evening and returning Monday evening. We were due to rendezvous with Darren (meet co-ordinator) and Alan Blackburn at Alan's home in Kendal. Piling all our winter gear into the roof box and the back of Darren's car, the four of us headed north in Darren's car to the strains of Chris Rea. As the miles flew by conversation started to centre on food and a decision was taken to find a 'fish supper' and a choice of two 'Fish and Chicken' establishments in Auchterarder was the

cause of some indecision. Selecting the busiest on the assumption that the locals knew the best place (or should that be place?) to go we discovered the assistant had failed her exams at a Borstal charm school!, and was anything but obliging. Perhaps it was because we demanded chips with our fish not chicken or just because we had arrived from south of the border!! It certainly didn't prove to be one of our better decisions. However supper over we pressed on to Kingussie and the Topsy Laird for a pint (or two) before turning in for the night in the Laird's Bothy.

With Darren's alarm set for 06.00 we were hoping to take advantage of the promised good conditions. At 06.20 with no one stirring I announced the time much to Darren's consternation who later discovered that someone (?) had buried his alarm under their clothes. Breakfast over, the car packed, it was time to head for the Grey Corries. The day was overcast with low cloud and a strong cold wind but conditions were considered fair as we headed into Corrie an t-Sneachda. It was decided that Mark and I would tackle The Runnel, a two star grade II climb and would be Marks first lead at that level. Darren and Alan would head over to Hells Lum to face up to Deep Cut Chimney a Cold Climbs classic three star grade IV. After having a cold but very successful day we left the Coirè Cas car park for the drive across to Lagangarbh for the official start of the meet.

First of the additional group members to arrive were Tim Worrall and Pete Sridgeon who had travelled up earlier in the day having enjoyed a low level stroll among the glens and several visits to the Clachaig Inn. Soon their arrival was followed by Chris Bell and Mark Boden, the final two of the eight attendees. With their arrival came a marked escalation in banter as Chris and Darren went into overdrive, a situation that was to prevail throughout the meet. Talking of banter, if anyone fancies poking a stick in a hornets' nest, just whisper the word 'runner' in Chris Bell's shell like, then be prepared to stand well clear!!! The evening passed without too much to recount, in fact by FMC standards it could be classed as mundane with a few sleepy heads making for the dorms soon after midnight.

With Saturday breakfast came the usual discussion making process which ensures plenty of time to enjoy plenty of extra brews. Finally a decision was reached and all eight of us set off in two cars and headed up Glen Etive. As we walked into Lairig Eilde a little light sleet began to fall and the forecasted 'fair' day began to rapidly disappear! Just below the Sron na Lairig Arête the group split into two with the fitter, more adventurous making for the ridge and the injured, aged, less fit or just plain knackered opted for the easy option of a stroll down the glen and an early return to the hut. Falling somewhere into the second group (no prizes for guessing which) we thoroughly enjoyed our easy descent, several river crossings and an ever brightening sky (the forecast at last fulfilling its promise). After returning to the hut for a quick brew, we headed for Glencoe for some food shopping, managing to pass the Clack' without stopping, although I did notice Tim having trouble controlling the car! Having stocked up for the group evening meal we headed to Ballachulish for the tail end of the England v Italy game and an unearned pint.

Back at the hut the two Marks set to work on the catering with a dual curry on the menu. The adventurous party returned with tales of success and with Pete having had a great first ascent of a Scottish mountain, claiming both the Sron na Lairig arête, a three star Grade II, and the summit of Stob Coire Sgreamhach at 1072m. The two Marks excellent meal was enjoyed by all and thanks to them we were well re-fuelled with starters, main course and cheesecake afters. Coffee or tea was next before five of us made our way to the Clack' where we not only enjoyed a pint or two but the excellent entertainment that was provided by 'Mak-A-Din', a very accomplished Scots male duo with a great sense of humour and the spontaneous entertainment provided by several of the drunken Clack' clientele that had us all falling about with laughter. Back at the hut the evening passed without incident. With Sunday morning came a cloud of despondency - we were all heading home early!!

Scotland's weather had let us down with soggy wet snow falling heavily and no improvement forecast, it was time to go. Travelling south to the strains of Chris Rea once again, I heard Alan comment that he could have saved the money he has just spent on a 'Chris Rea Greatest Hits Album' as he now knew all the songs by heart. 'Such a waste of money A!!!' I'm convinced that our journey home was timed to coincide with the opening time of Darren's favourite chippy as we pulled into Callender at 11.50 and found ourselves, that's Darren, Chris, Mark, Mark, Alan and me, queuing outside the upmarket Mhor Fish, fish and chip restaurant (chippy to you and me) for the official opening time of 12.00 where our fish were apparently landed in Scrabster by local fishermen the day before. The excellent food and service was an amazing contrast to our earlier experience in Auchterarder and its reputation as 'best chippy' was endorsed by all six of us before finally making for home.

On behalf of the group I would like to express our appreciation to Darren for his successful role as meet leader and the overall success of the weekend. Also the thanks and appreciation from myself, Mark and Alan for his long hours behind the wheel. Just one last thing, has anybody got any spare CD's they could pass on to him? I'm sure anyone travelling with him in the future would really appreciate them!!

Steve Longworth

Little Gnone Facts

The current leader of the puce revivalist's movement, Andy "Ginger Mullah" Dunhill, is helping to keep the common flea in the public consciousness, as puce means 'Flea coloured'. I received a severe visual shock recently, when, looking through some archive climbing party photos, I spotted two people sporting the same model of fleece, the colour so vile I believe it must have been distilled from essence of tinned salmon left to fester on nuclear waste pile for a considerable length of time!

The "Barbie" doll just about carried off this challenging shocking pink number, but I'm amazed her toy boy A.D. was allowed through customs. He should have been severely censored for bringing the Club in to 'disrepuce'!

Spain – Easter 2011

After the infamous Egyptian idol adventures of last year the organisers of the annual Easter pilgrimage to 'somewhere hot' chickened out of going anywhere that wasn't on the European mainland and so it was that tour operators Thistlethwaite & Webb opted for a return to northern Spain.

Locations were chosen, the best laid plans were made and the Usual Suspects of Chris This, Martin D'Ale, Dave Wood, Hal, John Hickman and Tom Knowles were rounded up. Joining this illustrious group were Nick 'The One' Hepburn, Andy Dunhill, Liam 'Liar Liar' Gaston, Nick Dalzell, Fireman Sean, Fireman Suttly and my good self.....but just who was the mysterious Keyser Soze?

Intro Members Meet

13th/14th May, Little Langdale

I headed up on Friday evening, picking up Liz Cain from her preferred house of residence in Halton. Now Liz is not yet an Intro member but she has a nice van.

We stopped at the Three Shires and waited for the rest of the meet to arrive – Steve Swindells! He did not disappoint and arrived before closing time. Some discussion took place as to where we were going to go on the morrow as the forecast was not great.

The morning dawned dry and bright. Our only other attendee, Simon Duffy arrived and plan A, or should that have been plan S as it was Steve's idea, was put into action - a traditional route on a mountain crag. Steve's idea was Bowfell Buttress but we soon talked him out of that one. Too far to walk! Dow Crag was the substitute. We all drove round and parked up at the end of the tarmac on the Walna Scar road. The weather was still ok if a little breezy. We made it to the rise before Goats Water before all hell broke loose and we had to don our waterproofs. We soldiered on against driving wind and rain and finally took shelter in the gully beside A buttress. Simon produced his stove and proceeded to cook up his lunch. The climbing idea was thrown out as far too uncomfortable a pastime for such a day. A scramble up the usual descent followed then a windy crossing of the summit. We then walked over the Old Man and had lunch at the top where we watched the attendant mouse population scurrying about.

The weather was not improving so off we headed down to the car through the slate mines. We got to within a few hundred yards of the cars when the heavens well and truly opened. It was so heavy that we saw Nick Hepburn getting into a van but didn't stop to talk to him! At least my new Gore-Tex was getting a good testing! There was only one thing for it, the pub! We dried out in the Black Bull then eventually went back to the hut to cook tea. Steve and Simon had to go home to their respective wives but Woody and Hal showed up for the evening's entertainment. A trip to Ambleside and some beers in our old haunt The Golden Rule. No sign of that Lockley chap though. Then it was back to the Three Shires for an audience with George and landlord Ian.

Sunday was very rubbish. The only thing to do was to go shopping. Liz tried very hard to spend loads of money on a jacket, but failed (*Ed: how does a woman fail to spend money?*). We ended the weekend with a beer in the Eagle and Child, Staveley.

Martin Dale



There were the usual accommodation complexities of who would arrive when but Thistlethwaite Holidays managed to come up with two excellent villas in our chosen locations of Tobed and Camarasa which even had enough capacity to cope with the person who realised he had booked the wrong week off work at the very last minute.....now who could that have been?

A great trip was had by all but it wouldn't be an FMC trip without some mishap. This time the final departees contrived to miss their flights home and whilst there may be many opinions on how this happened I will leave it to Mr Wood to explain:

"Easy Jet seem to have come up good this time. A three way set of co-incidences. I got somehow Steve Longworth's itinerary in my bag which gave a flight time later than ours (which is unusual), the car hire company took a while to get us to the terminal, then it was 2B not 2L - a problem which you probably encountered. This last bit made the difference and clearly the airline recognised this since they posted signs but in arrivals! Check-in was closing and we were invited to buy tickets for the next flight but they didn't put my details in properly and said I wasn't on the Monday flight anyway. We paid full whack and are getting it back. They still owe us 60 euro but no doubt that will follow. AND I shall seek an upgrade from Auto Europe for France. All's well that ends well"

High Crags Meet

10th/11th June, Little Langdale

Well, you'd expect to be climbing on high crags in the Lakes in June, but not with multiple layers on and woolly hats on!

Up on Friday night again, this time meeting Dave Cundy who was up from Bristol. We stopped in the Shires as usual and waited for Woody and Hal. They arrived just in time for a pint or three.

Saturday was good, even warm. We decided on White Ghyll as there were routes up there that we hadn't done. The walk was as gruelling as I'd remembered and as soon as we arrived under the tree at the gearing up spot the weather changed. The sun disappeared and the wind began to blow. Off went the shorts and on went the woolly hats. Dave fancied Ethics of War, so that was to be route one. Woody and Hal wandered up to look at the slabs. Dave led off and made short work of the pull round onto the upper slab and arête. I followed but because of my old Spanish injury had to do the wide bridging move leading with the wrong leg. Tough I thought. We wandered down the descent route and bumped into Alan Blackburn and Rick Gordon, about to embark on The Veil. They had been repulsed from higher up the hill behind Pavey by the cold and damp. We followed Woody and Hal up a route on the slabs called "Forget-me-knot". I was sure that I'd done it before but couldn't remember. Nice moves led up the wall to a cruxy pull to a spike. Moving left brought me into contact with some old guys doing the severe. I was to meet one of them again later on another weekend. The crux followed. Woody had skirted it as it was dirty. It was instantly familiar to me. It had small but perfectly shaped RP slots and soon led to better holds. Yes, if the guidebook description was followed it was dirty. I skipped left to avoid it. Dave followed then led through to the top. Back at the tree we contemplated another route but rain beat us to it. We escaped back down the ghyll and reassembled in the Old DG for some great Yates's.

Sunday was again disappointing and shops had to be visited, if my memory serves me right!

Martin Dale

Harry Edge? .. Harry Who??

By Martin Bennett

Not Harry Edge; or any edge, but Ariege. Not who but what? And where? What it is is a river valley and a climbing area. Where it is, is in South West France, between Toulouse and Andorra. It's provided me and Robin, and on the second occasion, Alan and Ali too, with two excellent autumn climbing trips.

It came to our notice at the time I began to look at the UK Climbing website. At that time, in 2007, there were frequent adverts on the forums for a British run gite style accommodation in the area. The ads extolled the virtues of the region for walking, biking, caving and climbing. It sounded great but I'd never heard of it, knew no-one who'd been there and couldn't find any guide books. Not an encouraging start to planning a trip, but a bit of trawling around the internet dug up the website www.cafma.free.fr which has a wealth of very well laid out information; a look at the map of France showed not one but two budget flight destinations within very easy reach – Toulouse and Carcassonne. Tourist sites suggested it should be sunny and warm in mid October. A phone call to Rob confirmed he was on for our by now usual autumn week in the sun and the trip was on.



Less than 2 hours from Toulouse (or Carcassonne) airport

We went with Jet2 Manchester to Toulouse, picked up a hire car and drove the short distance to Foix, the nearest large town to the climbing area, in a village near which was the aforementioned gite, where we'd arranged to stay. In fact we knew it to be full the night we arrived so the proprietor had arranged for us to stay one night in a tiny cottage across the road. Or had he? Arriving in Foix at 10pm we brought FMC logic to bear – only a few miles to go, let's have a beer. Or two. This we did then headed for the village and sought out our 1 bed cottage. Following the instructions to the letter we found it all locked up and in

darkness, as expected, but not the key! Search as we might it was not there. What's more the weather was not what we'd hoped for – a beautiful starry night but well below freezing and with frost forming everywhere – not the time to try and get some sleep in a small hire car with no sleeping bag.

What to do? The lights were on in the gite we were to occupy the next day so we ventured to approach via a French (appropriately enough) window through which we could see a couple of guys having a beer. They saw us peering in, opened the door, invited us in, handed us a beer each and opened a conversation. A little later we had another beer and snacks were provided. Only after that did the guys venture to ask "who are you anyway? Why are you here?" After a brief explanation they suggested we sleep on the settees in the living room, apologising in advance for the fact we'd be woken early by two families worth of kids. Needless to say this wholly laid back attitude (and the kindnesses that went with it) to total strangers arriving at midnight unannounced was not British. Or French. The guys were the Dad's of two families of Aussies over for the Rugby World Cup and seeing a bit of the country at the same time.

Next day we cleared out for long enough for them to pack and leave, met our hosts, who'd been away whilst the house was let to the Aussies, and returned to the gite for breakfast. Of course they were embarrassed that the plan to house us in the hovel across the street had gone awry as the old bird who owned it had forgotten to leave the key out, and couldn't do enough for us – this included loaning us guide books and offering us a nice roast dinner that night to compensate.

Eventually, a bit short of sleep and feeling slightly bewildered, we sallied forth to seek out a crag and do some climbing. Incidentally by now the sun was up, the frost had melted away and it was a beautiful warm day. And so it stayed for the rest of the week, with the odd damp interlude – the night of frost must've been unseasonal I guess.



Rob at top of a 5 pitch route at Calames

That first afternoon was spent at a limestone sport climbing crag called Calames, one of the most popular areas of the region, we were told. It was a Saturday and we were the only ones there. The climbing suited us down to the ground, or should that be "up from the ground"? Clean, unpolished limestone the right side of vertical and a choice of single or up to 5 pitch routes.

Next day we went up a different valley and sought out the granite of Auzat. It isn't only the rock type that's in contrast here but the whole ambience – rather than the light, open aura of Calames the crags here are shrouded in trees. We found ourselves on an upper buttress that had only recently been opened up with bolted routes. As is often the case in such circumstances we found the grades to be very tough here – one F6a proving to be perhaps the hardest I've done at the grade anywhere.

Single pitch sport not being our favourite style of climbing we spent most of the next few days on routes of 80 to 200 metres at Calames, Le Roche Ronde and Orlu. The last of these is a valley in the foothills of the Pyrenees and home to one of THE crags of the region – the main face is 1000 metres high! Not all the routes go to the top, but an early start is advised



if contemplating all 30 pitches. And perhaps an earlier season; on the two occasions we've been up there in October it's been a bit nesh. Here too the rock is granite. On the last day of that first trip we got to sample yet another rock type on the gneiss of a crag called Appy which again has a different feel to it. A little further from the road and with vegetation types unexpected in this part of Europe we thought it had a Scottish feel to it.

Rob on the granite at Orlu

We did get rained off for the odd few hours but largely speaking the weather at this time of year proved to be fine for climbing. In 7 or 8 days we'd only picked away at the edges of this little known but very extensive climbing venue – the big crags had yet to be enjoyed. Another trip was clearly needed. Two years later we recruited Alan Blackburn and Ali Welsh and went back for more. Our first accommodation had been a gite near Foix – good for the proximity of Foix which seems to be the only town with a decent array of bars and restaurants, but not quite at the centre of things, climbing wise. This time we had an apartment in a village near Tarascon which is ideally placed at the hub of the various valleys housing the crags.

We went back to show Alan and Ali some of the crags we'd sampled first time around but also got to grips with some of the bigger crags along the "Sinsat" escarpment of the main valley, The pick of these is Sector Le Quie where we did the classic of the crag, a 1000 foot 4 star route called Peppermint, mostly F5b and c with an F6a crux. We did this route on a rope of four which went surprisingly well.



Quie de Sinsat. "Peppermint" climbs in 300m up the middle of the photograph

The most eventful route for me was on the last day when we set out very late on a 200 metre route called Histoire de Maud. Ali and Rob called it a day on the halfway ledge after a good lead each on dodgy rock, but I thought the upper buttress looked better so persuaded Alan we should press on. The climbing was much better but the fourth pitch proved too much for me and I took a fall from just below one of the widely spaced bolts. Given the diagonal nature of the pitch and the fact that I'm about 4 stone heavier than Alan, who shot up a bit as he held my fall, I must have gone all of 25 feet – as always it felt like more! Recognising it was getting late it took only a moment to decide to "frig" the move next time



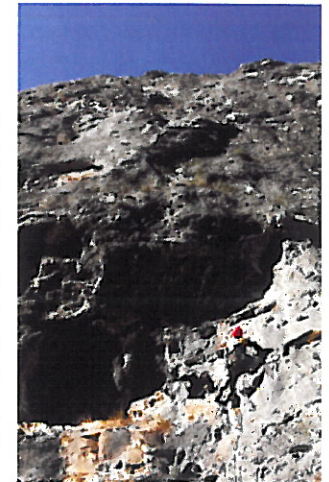
Crux pitch of "Peppermint"

and we were up in a trice. Alan led the top pitch, once again on questionable rock, when perhaps we should have begun to ab off but instead found ourselves at the top of the crag as darkness approached with little idea of the descent route except there was an abseil somewhere. Dashing down ledges through undergrowth we found some tat and abbed a full rope length and found ourselves still on very steep ground but in undergrowth in the dark. Which way? As concern gave way to worry salvation arrived as a familiar voice was heard to say "Eh up nob, over 'ere". Ever alert, Rob had become aware we'd need directions, and in the last of the daylight had ascended the descent route to meet us and show us the way off. The beers were on us!



The big one; Dent d'Orlu - 30 pitches anyone?

So there it is – climbing in the Ariège valley of SW France. I can thoroughly recommend it and it seems I'm not the only one. The Brits seem slowly to be becoming aware of the existence of this backwater, to the extent that a number have taken up residence there. Our apartment near Tarascon was part of a holiday property run by a well known climbing couple, Anne and John Arran (<http://www.chezarran.com/index.php>). One of their neighbours is Stevie Haston, and a couple have opened a gite in a very good location near the crags of Calames. I haven't stayed there but it looks worthy of investigation if you're planning a trip. Have a look at <http://www.basecalames.com/>.



Alan sport climbing at Sinsat

It's rumoured that Adrian Berry and Chris Craggs have been seen lurking suspiciously around the crags with notebooks, laptops etc and a Rockfax is planned. Nice to have got there ahead of the rush.

Nant Peris meet - Vagabonds MC swap

1st/2nd July

Many years ago, the club had a reciprocal agreement with the Vags. Their hut above Nant Peris was visited many a times by our members. It was a bit on the squalid side, but had character. The roof leaked, it had a real fire and an outside bog. There are many tales to be told of previous meets there, such as the one about an ex member, now Vags member, cutting off the end of his finger with the wood chopping axe. About three years ago, I received a letter from the Vags inviting us to come and stay at their wonderful fully refurbished hut. Well, three years down the line we finally managed to organise a meet there!



Some of us lucky ones were able to get away early on the Friday afternoon. Myself, Tony Hulme and Terry Robinson were speeding down the coast road when I was awoke from my nap by my throbbing mobile phone. It was Woody, slightly ahead of us. "Meet us at the Gwasanaethau Services, just after the white church". Unbeknown to Woody, all services in Wales are called Gwasanaethau because that is Welsh for services! We plumped for the services after the white church at Bodelwyddan, and sure enough there were Hal and Dave waiting for us. A venue was decided upon. Penmaen Head, Old Colwyn. A newish bolted limestone spot above the A55. A nice sunny crag greeted us and we set about tackling the various routes on the Flowstone Wall sector. Tony's first lead proved troublesome and he took an upside down nosedive from just above the first bolt, landing very close to the deck. This was probably caused by over exuberance rather than lack of technique as he got back on it and despatched it with ease. We all did about 5 routes each before retiring to the Red Lion in Old Colwyn. A wonderful pub and well worth checking out if you are in the vicinity.

Over in the Vaynol, we met up with Martin Bennett and Alan Blackburn who'd also been down early enough to do a route. They'd dived with loose rock with a full ascent of Brant on the Grochan. Steve Swindells also showed up, but where was Slow Nick Hepburn, or Araf Nick, as he is known in Wales, and Liam Gaston?

An early start was called for to get a car ensconced up the Pass. The weather was perfect. We ferried gear and folks up to the Cromlech car parking in readiness for an assault on Dinas

Mot. Just as we were leaving the Vaynol, his Arafness drove past with Liam. The meet attendee's were all now present and correct. The Mot was busy but me and Steve managed to get on Diagonal and resume old acquaintances. Tony and Terry did West Rib, then moved over to do Diagonal. Woody and Hal got stuck into Plexus, whilst Liam and Araf did Ten Degrees North. We wandered over hoping to get on Plexus but there were queues, so we joined a short one under the recently cleaned Garrd. This route proved to be a very pleasant and more like HVS 5B than the reported VS. Elsewhere, Martin Bennett and Alan Blackburn climbed Munich Climb and Belle Vue Bastion, steeped in historic ambience!

We hitched and walked down to the Vaynol for some well needed refreshments before Steve had to leave for home. Liz Cain had arrived and joined us. The Vaynol is good probably only for the fact that it doesn't shut until 12pm allowing you to make a leisurely tea then wander down for a pint before closing. The beer, I'm afraid is fairly bland Robinsons.

Sunday dawned beautiful. Liam was dragging Araf Nick up to Cloggy, whilst Martin and Alan were going for Llechog. It was ML training for Liz in readiness for her assessment on the Monday. Terry had to be home at a reasonable hour so we decided on Bochlwyd Buttress over in Ogwen. A short walk in. Dave and Hal joined us. Tony led us up Bochlwyd Eliminate. Myself and Terry followed. Woody and Hal did the severe on the left of us. They stayed on to complete an ascent of the Eliminate before heading off to Rhoscolyn for another night.

We set off back home stopping for the obligatory pint in the Helter Skelter, Frodsham. Later I found out that Liam and Araf had done Troach, then fought the midges on Great Slab. They too visited Bochlwyd on the Monday and did the Eliminate and also the Wrack. Martin and Alan did Resurrection on Llechog. Oh, and Liz passed her ML!

The hut? Well, you'll have to come on next year's meet to see for yourself. The transformation is incredible, and the hut is very pleasant indeed. And in a great position!

Martin Dale

Club meet to Llanberis

June 2011

The weather forecast was good so we set off on the Friday and headed for the Great Orme, after a good walk we headed for the Chester hut expecting to find some climbers headed by Nick arriving soon after a good day on the hills. The Chester hut was strange, there was a drink in a glass on the table, a cream biscuit on the table as well, lights were on but nobody was there and no kit was in the dormitory – a ghost in residence?

(In fact it was late Saturday when Nick arrived, he had got involved with the kitchen sink.)

The rest of the group gradually arrived and made plans for the Saturday, another good forecast. Climbers talked of Cloggy and the pass while we planned to leave a car at Nant Perris and drive to Pen-y-Gwryd to take the miners track that crosses the Glyder range.



After a slight navigational error in amongst the fields (the orchids were good) we reached the open hillside on track and at the high point of the path left it and turned to go to Glyder Fach. In the sunshine we had a leisurely explore along the tops, Cantilever, castle of the winds and Glyder Fawr. We had seen people with number on them walking or running about in various directions, on Glyder

Fawr there was a checkpoint, people with clipboards and radio links. It was the day for the Welsh 1000 meters contestants try to go up all hills over 1000 meters. Quite why Glyder Fawr is included at 999 meters is a puzzle - they claim it's been resurveyed and promoted, in the fullness of time rising sea levels may push it back below the magic figure. The old Welsh 3000 had more hills in the day as 3000 feet was the benchmark.

Leaving the crowds behind we descended to Llyn y Cwn, the paths being a lot looser than I remembered them years ago, then up Y-Garn and just before Foel Goch we headed down a ridgeline and wall that led us to Nant Perris. There was then a sting in the tail as Dave Earle, Clive Bell and June went into the pub and Tim Worall and I set of to get the other car. We did get a pint on our return - three! Sunny all day, especially for Clive who would be 70 a few days later.



Nearly 70 and dreaming of.....

Sunday was cloudy at first and the walkers headed for South Stack for a walk with added views of the birds on the cliffs, including several Chough and puffins, as we stopped for a break the climbers went past heading for the cliffs. We enjoyed the walk and the sitting watching the sea and the cliffs, disturbed only by one of our group starting to snore. We tried out the café just down the road from the hut; they do a nice bottled beer as well as the usual non alcoholic drinks a bonus for the drivers.

As a bonus, being retired, we had arranged to stop Sunday night so could get an extra day which was a good one then to the chippie in Llanberis and home.

John Wiseman

Rothbury

We had joy, we had fun, we had climbing in the sun.



FMC Photo Comp

The landscape category winner and runner-up can be found elsewhere in this edition but here are the Action and Humour category winners and runners-up.



Humour Winner – Steve Wrigley



Action Winner – Dave Wood



Humour runner up – John Wiseman



Action runner up – Steve Wrigley

Unclassifieds

Climbing Partner Wanted

Matthew Leeson is seeking similarly aged (i.e. young) climbing partners to go in to the mountains with him. So if you are enthusiastic and fit please get in touch with him via email - matthewleeson28@gmail.com

Gear for Sale

Nick Harrison has got an assortment of winter climbing gear for sale – axes, ice screws, crampons, pegs, etc. Give him a call if you are interested – 0151 652 8832

SteepEdge

STEEPEDGE.COM has been 2 years in the making by Brian Hall and John Porter, the original founders of The Kendal Mountain Film Festival. Continual requests for access to good mountain films gave them the foresight to move with the times and develop this idea of an interactive film site for the climbing and outdoor communities. HD / high quality films at your fingertips – no more endless searches for filmmaker sites or being side tracked or buffered on YouTube!

Our focus at present is climbing, mountaineering and trekking but very soon we plan to show Mountain Biking, Skiing and Kayaking films. WE want to know what YOU want to see more of. Let us know - get on the site and have a look. Read the blogs, watch the trailers, follow us on Facebook and twitter and tell your friends - this site has been built for you.

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