



Fylde Mountaineering Club
February 2013

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Langdale hut. Tatts is putting on a Nicorette patch and I ask if they work. “Bloody Brilliant” he says. I ask him if it stops him smoking. Vacant stare. “Give up smoking? Are you joking it gives you a brilliant hit”

Chester Hut Llanberis: Return from pub and no wood for the fire so we set about chopping up the chopping block without success. Morning after we think it could lead to banning so I try to nail it together and Tatts goes to town and comes back with one -from the undertaker! Both in use years after.

Stanage: Sunny Sunday afternoon. Dave Cundy is belaying Tatts up VS with slack rope. This becomes slacker as Dave gets distracted by overhead parapenter. “Take in the rope you XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX or I will XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX the minute I get up this XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX” . “Sorry John”.

Memories of John Tatts from Hal:

CIC Hut: Sometime in the 90's Tats went to the CIC meet – the idea being not only to do some climbing in his fuzzy pink babygrower but also to give up smoking 40 or more fags a day. So on arrival to the hut he'd puffed all his shag, completo, finito. Understandably his first night sat around the wood-burner was very twitchy, giving the hut mouse a menacing stare whenever it ventured out for some warmth. But Lady Luck sided with Tats, the weather was crap and a previous occupant of his bunk had slotted a pack of Rizzla's into the tongue 'n groove above his pit. No shag but we've got caddies full of tea bags. There was no mercy shown as they were ripped apart in desperation and tea leaves neatly cradled in the regimentally aligned Rizzla's. Not the full flavour of Embassy but they burned and smoked. On the morrow the weather was still shite, so now't to be done said Tats but to trudge back to F-W in order to maintain his fitness regime and do 50 laps in the local pool. Everyone agreed knowing too well there'd be a deviation to the Baccy shop for shag, and so it was.



Scene 4. Stair Cottage. Getting up at 4am in the morning to go to the bathroom. Noticing the light on in the lounge and thinking someone had forgotten to switch it off – only to

find Tatts sitting there smoking. He explained he couldn't get through the night without getting up to replenish his depleted nicotine reserves!

What a guy, I still can't think of him without smiling. Jennie Tolley

Memories from Paul Clark:

One of my best memories of Tats was going, one winter Friday night, to his squat in Newcastle to get a lift to the Lakes in the sidecar of his Cossack motorbike (you will remember that was the one with a reverse gear and seemingly square wheels). He was engaged in making some 'repairs' to the main headlight that consisted of cutting up bits of baked-bean cans to replace a key part of the unit that had 'come adrift.' The pieces fitted sufficiently well to get us out of the city but the many sharp bends on the roads over the Pennines had a habit of throwing them out of place, plunging the road ahead into total blackness (but with visions of imminent death) and with the sound of both squealing brakes and my cries of despair. Of course Tats thought it was highly amusing. We survived to join the NUMC in the George in Keswick. I negotiated alternative transport for the rest of the weekend.

As a postscript, one might have been concerned about John's longer-term survival prospects given the unattended fault in the lighting system. However, as so ever in his life, fate intervened and the yard wall of the squat fell over, burying the bike, sidecar and all under a deep pile of bricks!

Memories from Dave Wood:

Caving Meet: Early 1990's. John and I arrived too late to go underground so we decided on Ingleborough with one car in Ingleton and the other at Hill Inn. Big Mistake. "Just one pint to set us up", said John. And another one returned. And one before the meal and one with it and after it and, of course, the dessert and one to wash it down with and wouldn't it be a shame not to have one before afternoon closing? Up Ingleborough in fading light. John lights up on top and asks if I have a head torch. "Me neither," he says. He bumps and rolls and I slide and slither down the south side.

Crowbury Gully. I belay Phil Caley up the last pitch and John arrives placing axe over my boot. Wide eyed, in red romper suit, he pulls over and into slot behind. Lights up and a cloud of smoke and steam envelope the whole crag.

Editorial

We've reached the end of another interesting year with UK activities being unfortunately curtailed by extreme weather...again. First it was the torrential rains causing flooding everywhere, then it was the very heavy snowfall followed by a rapid thaw and more flooding.

I said it last year and I'll say it again...the coming summer has got to be an improvement, I've got to be right eventually.

Don't forget that it will be soon be the AGM - come along, support your club and have your say in how the club should be run.

Sadly, John Tattersall, a former member of the club, died recently and this edition concludes with some members fond memories of him - he may have left us but he is certainly not forgotten.

Caroline

Cover photo: Martin Bennett on Sail Buttress, Birchens Edge

Northumberland 2012

This is the second time we have stayed on the National Trust's Cragside Estate at Rothbury and it was a successful well attended meet. This fantastic estate was created by Lord Armstrong who founded the Armstrong Vickers engineering company in the 19th century. The house was the first in the world to have hydro electric power. The house, which was substantially refurbished last year, is excellent and the extensive grounds offer lots of opportunities for walks.

The retired folk arrived first as usual on Friday afternoon –, John and June Wiseman, Clive. Bell and Dave Walker, Pete and Gillian Llewelyn, Barry Crook and Mike Howe and Dave Earle. This was the not so serious walking team. John and June had been in Northumberland for a couple of days and had the pleasure of sitting in a café in Seahouses watching the tropical storm that hit the North East in late June. You will probably have read about it or seen news coverage on the TV. It was the most amazing storm I have ever seen which brought the region to a standstill for the evening. It took some of my colleagues 5 hours to get home from central Newcastle to Whitley Bay, about 5 miles! Later in the evening Chris T, Caroline and I arrived. We all stayed in the Base Camp which they mainly use for volunteer holidays but rent it out as a Bunk House when not used. The facilities are generally excellent .

On Saturday morning the walkers were up and out early to walk in the hills above the Ingram Valley. These moorland hills are part of the Cheviots and form the border with Scotland. Chris, Caroline and I decided to follow in their footsteps as the weather was not very good. In the event, despite one shower during the day and one later on, it was not too bad.

We went over Reaveley Hill then Dunmoor Hill (the older walkers missed this one out as it was a bit much for them) before descending down to have a look at the impressive Linhope Spout waterfall. The return journey was via the Breamish Valley then over a few smaller hills passing some old settlements and down to Ingram Village.

On Sunday some headed for the coast which is one of the nicest in the country. Some visited the house and grounds and a few rushed off to Seahouses to go for a boat trip out to the Farne Islands to see the birds. Chris and I went for a walk in the central Cheviots from Alwinton. We followed Clennell Street to

bought a house close the coast so that John could pursue his other great interest sub aqua diving. He was a strong swimmer.

There are many tales of his exploits. He made a well-designed tent once that he took on a trip to North Wales one week. It was made of clear plastic so was see through & it was of course prone to condensation. It caused some amusement on the campsite. He was passenger in the car when one Steve Halton drove it into a roundabout in Newcastle at 80 mph, hit a transit van & ended in a ditch. John still had his full glass of whiskey in his shirt pocket when the Police arrived with the question "Have you lads been drinking?". When returning from a meal to the main Hong Kong Island one evening he fell asleep at the back of the small boat & fell into the sea, but no one noticed! He had to swim a fair distance into the harbour & made his way to a local bar for a beer. John was one of life's characters who will be missed by his family & all who had the privilege to know him

Andy Dunhill

December 2012

Tales of Tatts from Jennie Tolley:

Images from the past.

Scene 1. The kitchen at Stair Cottage. Tatts dressed in his ubiquitous navy pile fibre 'all in one' outfit, resembling a giant 'Babygro' – 'Doing Breakfast' – a frying pan in each hand, overcooking them simultaneously with half an inch of ash dangling from the fag in his mouth ready to join the burnt offerings in the pans. Oblivious but happy!

Scene 2. Walking into a crowded pub and encountering the vast bulk of Tatts negotiating his way from the bar – a pint in each hand and a whisky chaser in his jacket top pocket for starters, but at least he had refrained from his usual strategy of draining the first pint down his throat whilst the barman was pulling the second one!

Scene 3. Langdale Cottage, Mike and I arriving at the cottage, discovering that Tatts had been there a while and had found an abandoned cache of home made alcohol, decided it was a Gift from the Gods (rather than the rejected crap it really was) and drank the lot. His eyes were unfocussed and, finding that the only bed space available to us was the one immediately below him, we decided to sleep in the car. A good choice since entering the cottage in the morning we found the 'empty' bedspace was no longer empty, but liberally filled with puke! Phew!

John Tattersall



1953 – September 2012

An enigma in the FMC! John Tattersall is a name many will recognise even if you'd never met him. He joined the Club in his late teens & was an active member for many years. He enjoyed rock climbing, snow & ice & caving. He was never the most agile but was remarkably good on his feet whilst climbing & always very safety conscious. He especially enjoyed the social side of the Club. He had a certain reputation for great drinking feats, sometimes

justified, sometimes exaggerated, whatever the truth he enjoyed a pint.

He lived in Bispham where his parents ran the butchers in the village centre. He was often needed to help in the shop usually making meat pies. He always said that his Dad made the best pies on the Fylde. Sadly his Dad died whilst John was a student in his first year of a Geology degree at Newcastle University where he lived for some time in a squat whose distinguishing feature was that soon, every flat surface was covered in the stood-up fag ends of cigarette filters. He repeated the year & went on to graduate with, I think, a 2.2 Hons degree. Whilst this is an average performance it is remarkable bearing in mind that he hardly ever went to any classes & simply crammed for the exams.

Geology was his passion & he was an expert. In his early professional years he was involved in the design of the tunnels on what was to be the A56 dual carriageway to North Wales so when you drive through them you have John to thank. After graduating he worked briefly in Leatherhead & later Manchester. He was however attracted to the life of an expat & spent most of his working life in Hong Kong where he established himself as a highly respected Geologist. In his later years he was commissioned by the Hong Kong Government to write a seminal book on the Geology of the former Colony which can be found at http://www.cedd.gov.hk/eng/publications/geo/geo_p107.htm. He worked for Aecom & they set up a memorial web site in his memory at the following link: <http://ourmemoryof.com/johntattersall>

It was in Hong Kong that he met his wife, Virge, & they remained together until his death. She already had a young son, also called John, for whom he became Dad. Virge was from the Philippines where they often went for holidays. They

Uswayford then returned down the winding Usway valley. It was quite wet but then it was the 2012 British Summer.

Overall everyone had a great weekend so I look forward to seeing you on the next meet here.

Andy Dunhill August 2012

Evening Climbing report 2012

The summer of 2012 will be remembered for the totally dire weather. The worst in my living memory. Later confirmed by the Met Office!! As you would imagine, the evening climbing calendar was decimated.

The season started on a bad note, perhaps an omen? The Towers at Blackpool were still closed for winter on the two initial meets. The first proper meet to take place was to Denham Quarry on May the 2nd. There were 5 of us in attendance and the usual stuff got done such as Mohammed, Time, Concave Wall and also a pretty dirty End of Time. Beer was had in the Top Lock at Heapey. The next meet to Brownstones was cancelled due to rain. Unbeknown to us at the time many more would suffer the same fate.

Next up, Trowbarrow. An accident on the way out of town delayed us somewhat and cut short our climbing time considerably. We were not involved thankfully! It was a nice evening; shame only three of us made the trip. Terry Robinson introduced myself and Tony Hulme to a VS neither of us had even heard of never mind done before. Aborigine Wall lies in the bay between Assagai Wall and Coral Sea and is well worth seeking out. Its first pitch lies up a pleasant ramp to a tree belay. The main pitch climbs the wall behind via a thin crack. It is definitely a good route, put it on your list. Next up we just had time for me to lead a route before darkness overtook us. I was going well and needed to test myself, an ascent of Sense of Doubt was called for. I had not done it for a couple of years so it should be a test. Despite a false start and some damp holds I soon unlocked the sequence and started the difficult climbing. I was not moving smoothly but managed to pull off the crux and soon found myself in the final fluting of Javelin. I'd stupidly forgot to bring any gear so had to carry on without to the top. Tony followed well but it

was too hard for Terry. We abbed off so that I could have a sneaky look at my next objective Scary Monsters. I reckoned I could lead it but not tonight. This route was to haunt me for the rest of the summer! The Woodlands did not disappoint some of those who chose their beer wisely.

Wilton was next. The best attended meet of the summer with 7 members in attendance, including our Chairman who managed to avoid us all evening. John Hickman also attended. It would be the last we would see of him all summer. Another lost to the “sickness”. Wilton was trashed. I’ve never seen it so bad. Most of Wilton 1 was dry but covered in a dry flaky slime. It was sad to see. We did Cameo then Tony took a dive off Ann. The Holts was still cheap in the Black Dog. The barmaid called the bitter a pint of “rough”. We still drank it.

The next weeks of June were wet. We had respite on the 12th with a visit to the Towers in Blackpool. The next meet to take place was Giggleswick South on the 20th. Only Tony and I attended. We switched to Gigg North because we could. It was still a bit wet but we had a good night. On the 27th we rearranged to Trowbarrow with eyes on Scary Monsters. Unfortunately it had a wet streak right on the crux. We did Sleeping Sickness then Liam turned up. We were treated to an amazing on sight of Sense of Doubt by a lad from Skem. It was wet and he couldn’t reach on the crux resulting in a thrilling dyno, which he stuck. Very impressive. Liam then led us up Major Tom in the gathering gloom. Beer in the Woodlands was more quaffable for some this time around.

July was no better. The Towers again proving their worth. We switched the July 10th meet to Thursday and visited Gigg South. A good night was had down the Anchor sector by a big team. Good beer in the Harts Head, Giggleswick. The rest of July was pants and was only rescued by continued use of the Towers. We even got rained off there on one occasion!

Into August and the last meet to happen on this summers syllabus. A return trip to Denham on the 8th saw 6 members enjoy a nice sunny night, midge free! I ended up doing Mohammed and Time twice each, once solo and then later with a rope. The beer was on form in the Top Lock. September was no better. We even ended up down at Preston wall early.



On our airport day we once again headed for Marin since it’s handy for the airport, easy of approach and, being a sport venue, unlikely to produce surprises that might mean unacceptable delays. Mind you it still has routes of character as I think is shown by the pictures above, of Alan on the first pitch of “Petreles” We had one final treat in store before the airport. Feeling we’d far rather get a bite in real Spain than rely on overpriced airport fare we veered off the motorway at a town called Novelda and serendipitously found exactly what we were looking for – the best, and best value, beer and tapas of the trip in a typical local bar – at last we’d escaped the diner and Chinese that was all we could find in Benidorm!





Alan and The Puig Campana; Espolon Centrale is picked out by the line of shadow.

Well, what a summer! Out of 19 available meets to non-man made crags, only 7 were successful. I never did get on Scary Monsters and it is about time they changed the routes at the Towers! My thanks to those few who did make it out on the meets. The sickness by the way is running. Under the circumstances probably not a bad sport to take up given the weather.

Martin Dale



Great Hill day walk

Gary Gibson Social Event

Last August I was cruising across the North Sea to Norway when Denise and I sat down to dinner with four companions. One couple announced that they were Gary and Hazel, and shortly afterwards Gary pronounced that *climbing was his life*. I thought that it was a peculiar coincidence that two climbers had been placed together on a cruise with a large number of sedentary travellers. As the evening progressed the conversation turned to climbing. I quickly realized that Gary was climbing at a very high standard, and so I was curious as to who he might be. When I found out his surname all became clear – I was sitting to dinner with *the* Gary Gibson.

And so it turned out that on a Wednesday in January, I was with my partner, Denise, in the Poulton Branch of *Costa Coffee* awaiting the arrival of Gary and Hazel, ready for Gary to address the club.

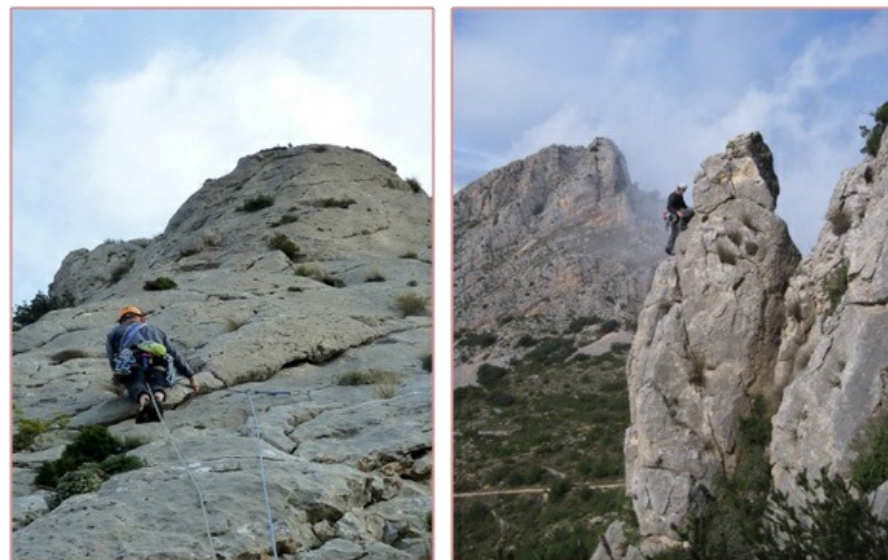
Gary's talk (with slides and music) was a very comprehensive package covering his own development as a climber and his major achievements, but taking in a great deal more. The club responded magnificently to this major social event, and the upstairs room in the *Town Hall* was packed.

Gary began with his early career, developing a thread about his relationship with his brother and the way their climbing together had developed and changed over the years. Needless to say, there was a leavening of humorous anecdotes to accompany the slides and music. Inevitably there was music from *The Stranglers* – as Gary said- he's been to 177 *Stranglers'* concerts because he's not sure he likes them yet.

Gary was frank about his early obsession with new routes and his attempts to find fame in the climbing magazines, and about the ways in which he sometimes irritated other climbers in doing so, and there was a great deal of evidence about his prominent featuring in *High Magazine*. Gary's slides were very much like a tour of the development of climbing in major areas of the country, particularly Derbyshire and the South West. The talk, however, was never just about climbing, but about the thought processes which lay behind the actions which he took and about the prevailing concerns of the climbing community at the time.

Probably the most controversial topic of the evening, and the one in which Gary had played a prominent part, was the introduction of Sport Climbing and the bolting of routes. His explanation of his reasons for introducing bolts brought

A climbing trip to The Costa Blanca is never complete without visiting the iconic



“Puig Campana”, the mountain which dominates the skyline on the drive North from Alicante airport to any point on the coast. On this occasion it's attractions provided different objectives for the four of us. Ali was feeling the need of some strenuous exercise so he ran up it; Rob walked at a more leisurely pace and had time to stop for his picnic and admire the view. This left me and Alan to enjoy what is generally considered to be the route of the district, *The Espolon Centrale*. At 400 metres plus it's a big route, even here. Graded Severe it has an easy start leading to a sustained series of pitches on the “*espolon*” (ridge) proper. This time the weather was kinder than 6 months earlier when Alan and I had last teamed up on this mountain - perfect in fact, and we climbed the route in what felt like good style and in good time to descend in daylight (Messrs Taylor and Wood please note!). The descent across the broken face right of the route has been much improved since I last did the climb with Fenna in 2008 – it's protected, via ferrata style, with sections of wire on the more exposed bits, and these have been replaced and added to in recent years.

The approach means a descent into and across a canyon (complete with the odd fixed abseil point for the canyoneers). Once at the crag you realise you're in for an adventure. The first pitch of our route "Sentinel" was supposed to be V Diff – It was vertical, poorly protected and about 4c! What, we wondered, would the supposed 4c pitches be? As it turned out they were OK at around VS and three of us (Ali went for a run) struggled away all afternoon and got within a pitch of the top before lack of a headlamp between us forced the decision to ab off. Just what we came for though – 4 pitches, a few route finding decisions and no bolts except for the abseil stations.



Next to attract our attention was a route known as Dos Hermanos but it took us two exploratory trips to find it. Pictured left, it's a well known local landmark (the name means Two Brothers) and is visible from the main road if you know where to look. It comprises a pair of pinnacles linked, for the purposes of the climb, by a Tyrolean traverse. But first you've to climb the initial pinnacle – or in our case, not. After spending parts of 2 days looking for it I failed at the first hurdle when faced with dodgy blocks on the first pitch – a return bout is called for, when I'm sure a little cunning will solve the problem.

Between time spent looking for Dos Hermanos we discovered another target, The Pleasure Domes. These are a line of crags in a beautiful location on a col which is easy of approach once you've found the correct track off the main road. Like Dos Hermanos they're in the region of Echo Valley but far less well known. The pictures of Ali and me (below) on "Flying Buttress" give an idea of the nature of the climbing. Supposedly "90m; VS 4c" it turned out to be steady HVS 5a, and not a bolt to be seen. Most satisfactory, having perhaps the best pitch of the week. After our previous experiences on El Lomo and Dos Hermanos we were beginning to learn to take Roland Edwards grades with a gigantic pinch of salt.

back a number of controversies of the past, and Gary told a tale of the bolt hangers from one of his routes being returned to him in the post. The members were clearly able to understand how the Gary Gibson of that time saw his role and justified it, but also how a more reflective older climber was reviewing some of his past actions and re-evaluating them.

On a lighter note, for the fashion conscious, we were treated to a series of slides featuring increasingly more bizarrely patterned climbing tights as Gary ensured that he was fashion conscious on the crags. As he said, sponsorship by a clothing company had much to do with it.

Gary's concluding piece of music was the *Nine Inch Nails'* song *Hurt* sung by *Johnny Cash*. He played this as a series of slides cycled through. This seemed quite a sombre conclusion to the evening, but perhaps he was pointing to the fact that in climbing, as in everything else, every achievement is temporary and transient. We were however, livened up by a few humorous anecdotes to conclude.

What the club saw on 9 January was not just a series of slides and talk of climbing achievements, but observations and reflections on a life spent climbing. Gary has put up more routes than anyone else in Britain and will shortly near 4000. That's quite an achievement.

Denise, who isn't interested in climbing, was fascinated by the human aspects of the talk, and John Wiseman, not a climber, thought that the talk was interesting because it did much more than concentrate on E-Grades.

I'm grateful to Gary and Hazel for travelling from near Stoke after work on a January night to speak to the FMC.

Martin had a number of membership applications after the event – I hope those climbers and walkers have now joined!

Rob Lewis

Ice Meet 2012

Or “How they brought the good news from Fylde to Briancon”

By

Il Chef du Cascatisti (aka “Anon”)
(with apologies to Robert Browning)

1) I flew from Manchester, and Robin and he.
I flew, Alan flew, we flew all three.
Below went the runway; the lights sank to rest
And into the daylight we rose three abreast



2) Off to Briancon with The FMC,
Cold stuff to enjoy – to climb and to ski.
We swung our ice tools with nary a care
At Ceillac, La Grave and Freissinieres



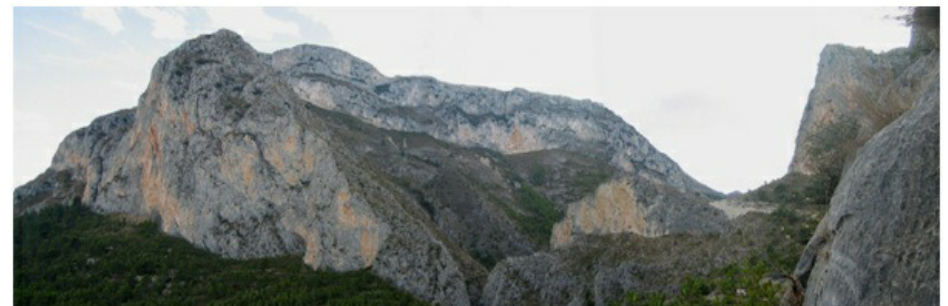
3) It was well that the start of the trip didn't
bore us.
We began with a climb called “Fracastorus”
Where things went badly for first timer Dan
When a huge chunk of ice on his backside did
land.

The most recent trip was last month with Ali, Alan and Robin. This time we



stayed in an apartment in Benidorm itself which we won't do again, even though it did mean the whole thing – flight, airport parking, car hire and accommodation - cost only £132 each! First day we went to Guadalest, a tourist village with crags best known for their easier grade sport climbs. It's not in the Rockfax guide book, and the miniguide they produced as an afterthought does not point out that there is also much traditionally protected climbing to be had here. We did two 3 pitch routes of about Severe. Both were enjoyable and one sported a totally unique pitch bridging easily up a fully enclosed chimney – more like caving than climbing, then back out into the December sunshine for the finish and a pleasant descent on foot.

We'd learned of these climbs from the CompassWest website of Rowland Edwards which formed the basis of the plan for the week. Next day it took us to a crag called “El Lomo” on the opposite side of Echo Valley from the popular Echo 1 and 2 etc. It's facing the camera in the picture below. On the right is the profile of “Echo One”



Luckily the final banned crag discovery occurred early enough in the day for a Plan B to be devised and put into operation. We went to Echo Valley and climbed a very good route of 4+ called Via Esther, consisting of a 100 metre ridge in 4 pitches, pictured right.



After that things looked up and we had two excellent days. Espolon De Finestrat on the crag of the region The Puig Campana was approached in mist that we hoped would burn off, rather than turn to rain in order to burn us off! (see picture below). It did and we had a fine climb of 7 pitches at about Hard VS. Right hand picture shows Alan on pitch 2.

This was followed next day with Espolon Pertemba on El Divino at Sella. Never having been I'd always thought this to be a wild and remote crag and, though it feels like that when you're on it the approach is very easy. From "Pertemba" however the descent is a big part of the day involving a couple of hundred metres of ascent then scrambling and abseiling here and there down terraces amid truly mighty rock scenery. And the second pitch was easily the best of the week. We got a bit lost high on the route and missed some of it – good excuse to go back.

For our last day, since it had to end at Alicante airport we chose to visit a sport crag (but one with two pitch routes) so we could well judge when to finish, complete the packing and head for home. We went to a crag known as Marin which proves to have routes typical of easier sport routes climbing lovely grey slabs. A pleasant spot to end the trip, and it least it didn't have cacti or peregrines to spoil the fun.



4) 'Twas the venerable Chef who knocked down that plate
You don't need an enemy when you've him for a mate!
But X-rays and scans at the clinic were had –
Dan's mind put at rest, and the bill was not bad.

5) Two days later Dan recruited a guider
And with Rob led a pitch of "Easy Rider"
To complete his comeback we went to Les Orres
Where he made short work of "Nadia", grade four.



6) On "Pylone" I'm told that the going was slow.
It seems half the team didn't e'en get a go!
As the week wore on their pride was redeemed
As this lot like others climbed like a dream.



7) To ski Serre Chevalier went a party of nine
The sun shone all day and the powder was fine.
In the off piste Adrian showed he was all heart –
Going there again with Glenn, Alan and Mart!



8) Appropriately named is "Holiday On Ice"
And Ali did "Chaos" not once but twice.
A big team made Ceillac a real jolly venue
A pity the bar has a limited menu.

By lunchtime as we drove toward the coast again it stopped raining at least and we happened to pop out of the hinterland precisely at the parking for a via



ferrata on the flanks of the mighty Monte Ponoch. This proved to be just right for a cloudy and cool afternoon. It's very steep and ladders the whole way (see picture below) – a bit tedious to be honest, but good exercise, with a couple of 30 metre abseils on the descent. And they are 30 metres – don't go with a 50 metre rope hoping for the best.
And that was the first trip. We repacked our bags and a few hours and beer and tapas later we were at the airport and heading back for more Lakeland ice.

Ali on El Ponoch Via Ferrata

Trip two didn't get off to the best of starts. This time Alan Blackburn and I landed at Alicante in a late May heat wave to stay in an apartment in Cala Finestrat. Our first 3 days can be summed up thus: Visited 3 areas and found we could climb at none of them! First was Orihuela where we'd geared up before spotting a 6 foot notice banning access whilst "non-native cactus clearing" was in progress – until December 2014!!!

Next we drove miles and miles to Leyva and spent all day driving round the forest looking for it! We did find it – arriving at about 4pm. Did a pitch of "Carillo Cantabella", found the next one "a challenge", realised we'd no time for the following 6 or 7 anyway and abbed off. Nice walk in the woods though.

Lastly we went to Penon d'Ifach to find it banned until peregrine falcons had decamped! In between we'd driven 5 times round The Maryvilla urbanization in a vain attempt to find Toix Est. Four crags sought and none climbed on! Still, the weather was nice!

So in our first two and a half days we'd squeezed in one grade 5 at Toix Oeste : Espolon Limaban, which proved to be very good. Bolted, yes, but at least it has two pitches, is 65 metres and follows features. And after a whole day of travelling in hope our arrival there did not disappoint; it's a good climb.

Next day we headed for the mega popular Toix area but not for us the roadside, polished, heavily bolted routes at Toix West or East – oh no – instead we skirted Toix West and followed the coastline seeking the descent to Toix Seacliff in order to have a look at “Magical Mystery Tour”. On finding the clearing that



Two views depicting the nature of the climbing on Magical Mystery Tour

marks the descent and confirming it was correct by spotting the so called fisherman’s ladder, or at least the remains of one, we geared up quietly wondering who’d be first to commit to the abseil. “Fisherman’s” ladder? They must breed hardy fishermen – it would have been really scary even when new – the cliff overhangs most of it’s height so the ladder, like the ab ropes, hangs free.

Ali intrepidly shot off down the rope so I had to follow. Pulling the ropes down was an act of faith since our route can’t be seen – “having a look” is not an option as it begins with traversing pitches and the meat of it is hidden from view, all very *Gogarth*; but pull ‘em we did and set off, committed, since our route was the only one on the cliffs we might be capable of. It proved to be very enjoyable climbing featuring the odd peg and some of the unique Rowland Edwards inspired “eco-protection”.

Next day was not so nice. We spent the morning driving inland to see if it might be better at Guadalest but to no avail, it was worse but the coffee was good.



9) We stayed in a house called “La Riolette”
Where Michiel cooked pasta and rice and courgettes.

(sorry! - author)

Most comfy and spacious – no defects or damp
But Chris complained of his bed that was camp!



10) By the end of the week our tired legs did urge us
“Do a roadside route” so we went for “Caturgeas”.
It’s three hundred metres, all ice and not mixed
But of the eight pitches we did only six.

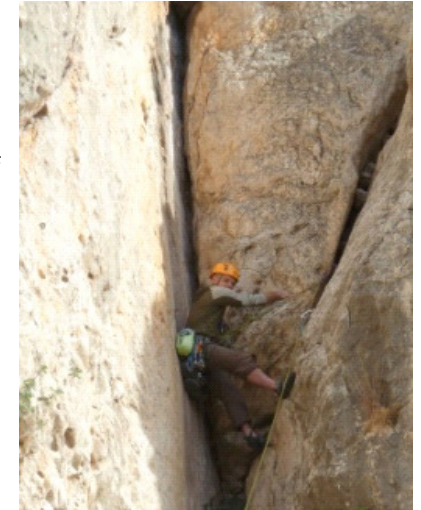
11) If you're wondering who'd book for a trip such as this
I'll do my best to provide a full list.
As well as all those who I've mentioned before
The following nobbs were all on the tour:

12) Liz, Paul, Liam and Dave Cundee
Nick, Dave, Al, Andy and Richard McG.

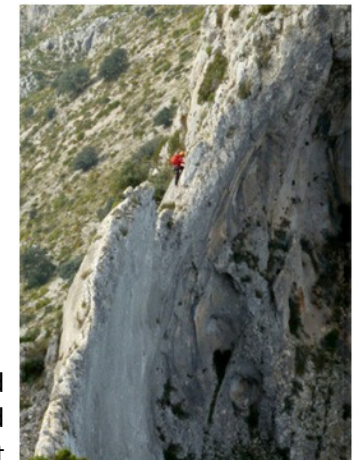
We're all set next year to do it again
At Aosta this time – end of January's when.



The next day we basked in the sun on the seaward side of the Penon climbing Via Valencianos – a very pleasant outing of about 250 metres with a HVS pitch in the middle, which Ali fought valiantly, as illustrated right.



We'd had a recommendation from the well known local expert Steve Wrigley and decided to follow his advice next day by doing "The Bernia Ridge".



This is like a limestone mini Cuillin Ridge and provided us with a pleasant approach followed by dramatic walking and scrambling amidst wonderful scenery with a few abseils and more bolts than we'd seen all week. Bolts? Eh? On a scrambly ridge? The ridge narrows at one stage and a traverse pitch of about F4 has to be negotiated along the crest. (pictured right). A bolt every 2 feet means none-climbers can enjoy the ridge. Of course we solo'd merrily along without a thought. Not! It was led in conventional fashion and one was sufficiently hypocritical to clip a bolt or two along the way.

Boltless in Benidorm

By Martin Bennett

In the last 12 months or so I've taken no less than three "quickie trips" (rapidly organised, late booked and most of all cheap holidays) to The Costa Blanca with a motley crew (none more motley than me!) of club members as partners. The title of my report implies the aim – to try and restore the adventure to climbing along this coast by as far as possible avoiding the all but ubiquitous bolt, or at least do longer routes where they're thinly spread. It has proved almost do-able. We've climbed on big crags and small, some near the road, none all that remote, and to a great extent found a rack of gear essential and a modicum of doubt and uncertainty creeping, as in my view it should, into our climbing. Marvellous. This uncertainty led to the odd failure and retreat but that's all part of the experience.



The first trip was with Ali in early December 2010; five days sandwiched between the icefall climbs of Low Water Beck and Launchy Ghyll in The Lake District. Quite a contrast, providing, as it did, a mixed bag of climbing and ridge scrambling in warm comfort, and a cooler, windy afternoon on a via ferrata before our flight home.

Our first day was the most disappointing due to a poor decision to retreat from Via Pany on the landward face of Penon d'Ifach (pictured, above). We'd climbed the first 100 metres and had just got to the good bit when we realised it was already approaching 4pm. Knowing it was a fair old walk down and not having lamps we decided there wasn't time to finish the route and abbed off.

We were surprised to find, on emerging from the shade of the North side, that the sun was beaming from high in the sky and that it quite clearly doesn't go dark in mid afternoon in December in these parts – doh! We compensated for our disappointment with large beers sitting in the sun outside a Calpe quayside bar.

Three Weeks in Colorado 2012

The distant Rockies cut a stunning profile in the Colorado sky as United Airlines evening flight to Denver made its final approach. This was to be our destination, but not quite yet.

Beyond the crisp cleanliness of Denver airport, complete with its user friendly underground train, lurked a voracious and malevolent predator: Dollar Car Hire. Various described as Big Time Bait and Classic Comedy, we had our misgivings. Did we want extra insurance...car breakdown cover... and surely we would want Toll Road Passes? "No!" "NO? Okay sir take your pick of any car in compound B"... ..and.. for £130 per week we had ourselves a brand new large shiny car. Nearly as good as the Belfast deal of 2006, I thought, when we went in looking for Mondeos and came out with Subaru Imprezas.

With the occasional sharp intake of breath we managed to miss The toll road (where you get photographed on the day and pay a lot later) and locate our basement flat in Louisville. At £30 per night this proved to be real find and the young family living above were pleasant enough and represented an example of young middle class life in America's best small town of 2009.

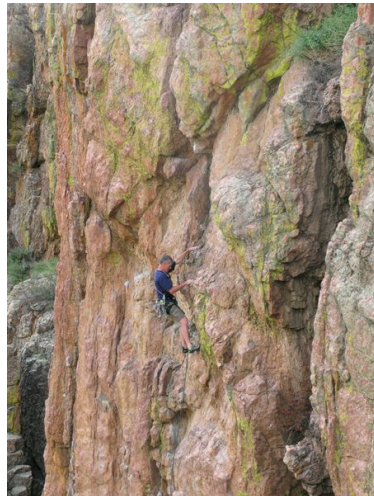
Louisville was a comfortable distance from Boulder City which is bigger but not quite as over-hyped as I had remembered. For us the small town was more a more comfortable option and provided equally good access to Eldorado and Boulder Canyons – both of which lacked camp grounds.

Our first day was a trip to Clear Creek Canyon and a touch of bolt clipping. Not the most scenic of venues and the 5.9s and 5.10s proved a little testing but 'early days' I thought. By way of a scenic retreat we headed north on Highway 119 with the intention of catching a beer and a pizza in the micro brewery at the resurgent hippy colony of Nederland. The town was running a music festival with a few good names on the list.

However we hadn't bargained for the Highway Patrol and Officer Brian (I had another name for him). This time I was determined not to pull the old excuse

of the speed limits back in England. The last time I tried it on in the Arches National Park, the laconic, laid back highway patrol officer just lifted his glasses, gazed loftily at the rock architecture and said “Yep sure does look like England around here”. However, Officer Brian was of entirely different stock and after admonishing us for doing 53 mph downhill in a 45 mph area, added that it was also state law to have lights on an hour before sundown and it was 50 minutes to go. Letting us off, Officer Brian handed us his business card (!!??) and departed. So the micro brewery was closed, but we had a sample of some of the best brews at the Pizza shop and that proved adequate compensation.

After surveying the famous Eldorado canyon from Rattlesnake Gulch on day 3, we returned on day 4 to set foot on the three pitch Windy Ridge (5.8) which surprisingly enough was on Windy Butte. It was windy. Pleased with our initial efforts we looked at Martin Bennett's loaned guidebook and set about the classic Bastille Crack 5.7 which topped out on pitch 5 just as the thunder arrived. With the air clearing rapidly we walked up through the fields of best Eldorado hops to the start of Yellow Spur. This was one of The classics at 5.9/5.10 and one which Martin and Phil Lee had turned their attention to on their first day in the canyon some 12 years previous. Fired up with enthusiasm they had elected a 6.00 am start and hadn't found it a pushover. Hal and I thought it a desirable prospect if we saw the light of day at such a time that week - but we didn't. As the dusk descended so did Mike from a 5.12b adjacent to the road and catching our accents said we really should touch base at the Hungry Toad and meet up with his girl friend Naomi Guy - one time UK female top climber. He knew all those best Brit exports that Martin (D) had talked about from years ago – Strappo and the legendary Dirty Derek whose soloing habits knew no boundaries. Truly a 'No Fear' deserved T shirt but sadly one that he will never wear.



Boulder Canyon is another 'must do' but let's not get too hasty. We take on a 'straightforward' 5.7 but one with a sting in its tail. Leaning over the top I hear

bailed out into a motel and sampled the brew pubs. It was time to start the journey home but not before taking in Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs. It was a busy tourist Saturday in the Garden, with a wedding and classic car competition taking place against the red sandstone backdrop of the National Park. I signed-in for climbing and the lady asked me if I wanted to be a junior ranger? In a country of 10% unemployment I had just landed a job! However, I suspect unpaid and I made my apologies and we just did the tourist thing marking out routes to return to.

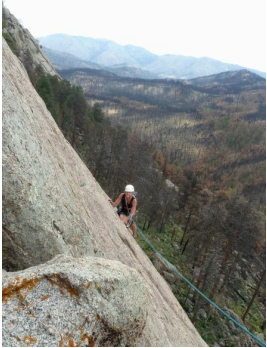
Two hours of free-way saw the lights of Denver and more sharp intakes of breath as we make sure to avoid the toll road. We now had the comfort of Best Western's airport hotel in which to relax before the morning flight.

The States may not be everyone's cup of tea. Overweening optimism seems to happily co-exist with a kind of blind insularity. Anomalies are plentiful. Motorcyclists seldom wear helmets in Colorado but push bikers mainly do, but they don't have lights on at night whereas motor bikers always do. All water bottles carry calorie information (0%) but beer bottles seldom carry the alcohol content - they didn't even know at the brewery! Climbing guides have plenty of topo pictures but no route or pitch length – unforgivable really. Despite, or perhaps because of these features, and the landscape and ambience of the place, the USA is a place that everyone should visit at least once in their life if they can.

Dave Wood

(See the back page for a couple of photographs from Dave's trip)

it our warm up route. Pumpy little number with thought needed at the crux section. It went and we give way to a clutch of young climbers who recommended the 5.10a arête. It was convoluted and blind in places and I needed two rests. Around the side they had set out on Jester but only one got up it free, the rest doing multiple hang dogs for hours. A storm came and went, so we took on a detached pinnacle – good fun at 5.10a then and drove 3 hours to Eleven Mile Canyon where we met up with our friends at Springer Gulch camp site.



Although it's often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, I have yet to come across a photo topo guide that gives the place where the photo was taken. This means that in USA, in particular, it can be hard to locate the bottom of routes. A case in point was a 5.7 classic on one of the bigger domes. We had found what we thought was the start and after 70 foot of easy, but protection less climbing, I picked up the line which was a vague scoop.

September 5th. Alone now on the camp site, we tick off 3 sport routes, break camp and head north through Fairchild to Alma. We had picked out a number of 14,000 footers on the big map gazetteer and it looked like the road might just be good enough to get up to Kite Lake. The lady in the 'highest saloon in the USA' said we would find camp sites up there but two and a half miles up in failing light and on a very rutted dirt track, I park up. A hundred yard walk reveals the lake and a number of tents. We pitch up and make a quick fire. On slanting ground and at 12,000 feet, it was never going to be a comfortable night. A 9.00 am start revealed a map at the trail head and we set off passing a number of people on the way who had thought that simply living in Denver at 5000 foot would acclimatise them. Mount Democrat was followed by Mt Cameron, then Mt Lincoln and finally Mt Bross and a long Lakes-like scree descent. At 2.30 pm we had five 14,000 footers under our belt and were back in the car and heading south towards Buena Vista.

Buena Vista is, at it's name suggests, a lovely place surrounded by rock and 14,000 footers and a white water park to boot. Do visit if in the area. We camped above it all, explored the rock on the banks next to the Arkansas River, then

a god's own country accent “Just waatch me Fiona... this wun is aaaardd!” and over edge comes Keith from Barnsley. We get to know each other as the days pass and meet up at various locations over the next two weeks.

As days passed our thoughts turned to the week ahead and a visit to Estes Park, gateway to the Rocky Mountain National Park. We aimed to reconnoitre Long's Peak - one of the fifty five 14,000 footers. However, our departure from Boulder would not be complete without an ascent of the Flatirons - those broad swathes of granite just pleading for a smear of five-tennie rubber. And so it was that we chose the one day when the whole of Boulder and Denver turned up to watch the high altitude bike race which, according our host, was too high even for Wiggo to win.

The Classic route – a mere 5.6 or so, has a run-out pitch with one bolt at 60 feet followed by many other less scary pitches. But such was the flush of Fresher pride that our steady efforts were eclipsed by young men of just school-leaving age, keen to demonstrate their soloing prowess. Two got kitted out in a Yeti suit on top on which was emblazoned 'We Love the Peloton' and waved furiously at the helicopter whose passing nod was sufficient for them believe that their 15 minutes of fame was to about to arrive on the evening news – and it did - well for 15 seconds.

Arriving at Lake Mary camp ground was like being transported to Peter Jackson's New Zealand and we knew this would be a place to return to. Hardly settled at our new base, the alarm drove us out of the tent and up to the 9,400 trail head of Longs Peak. Monday 27th August 4.15 am. Already ten people signed in the log - all eager to miss the afternoon storms. The sunrise spoiled us at 11000 foot as we left behind Goblin's forest and set out over ever opening ground to the Keyhole and exposed slabs and slog up the boulders to the ridge. A few of the super-fit were on their way down but we passed many young ascensionists including the boys from Cincinnati, who just couldn't believe that we had not, like them, camped on the boulder field. Summit views were rewarding but less so than the stunning rock architecture of the Diamond Face that held a clutch of hardish thousand foot climbs. Maybe someday. Pictures taken, we hit the trail with intent and just reached the car at 4.15 pm prior to a deluge. Fifteen miles and nine thousand foot of ascent and descent, not exactly Mont Blanc but not The Ben either and the altitude has a away of making its presence felt. Time

for a sample of the local brew - well why not?

Mañana and a survey of Lumpy ridge spoiled only by the onset of ever greying skies and a soon to be retreat to the shops in the face of heavy rain. A visit to the climbing shop and advice about why, like Martin Bennett's annotations in his guide book, the grades seemed understated. As here when 5.8 or VS became The Grade, they were only displaced by routes in the modern idiom and the grades became more realistic. However few felt it their birthright to change what had already been written in stone leading to Martin's occasional comment "and the rest".

Wednesday – The Pear and Magical Chrome Plated Semi Automatic Enema Syringe – 5.7 five pitches. Had to be done for the name let alone the stars. For 'walk a long mile along the path', read 'two and a half and get lost'. Well we got there and up the long dihedral ...stance...two bomber nut belay... and up to meet two lads on the third pitch. "You've done it before, Great and it goes up there?" Shout to Hal...Oh Dear! Belay won't come out? Never mind. Bring up Hal, down climb and re-climb pitch ..and.... the boys are in the same spot! Cloud bearing westerly and not from Dogger or German bight. "We're off guys see you around". Off to the Lakeside for some gnarly clipping but it ain't happening ..so micro brewery - you need no excuse this time around.

Labor Day weekend lies ahead when all America goes camping and every square inch of camp ground is occupied. I do my homework in the library on Mountain Project.com and learn that Craig Luebben had extensively developed Poudre Canyon west of Fort Collins. We had spent some good days climbing and late night times with Craig in Cuba and were saddened to learn of his death on winter terrain practising for his final professional alpine guiding exam. The local mountaineering school guide was philosophical "if this sport can take Craig it can take any of us". A touch pessimistic we thought, but Craig had authored books on mountain safety and he was on extreme ice at the time.

Keith and Fiona had battled to find a site for us all in Poudre. All America was on the move and watching the onslaught was like watching a circus hit town. BIG vans arrived with pull out bay windows and out of those came more bay windows. Tents came out of the back. In a corner of the camp site lived the hosts, usually genial, avuncular types with vans at least 25 foot long. Their job

was to advise campers about dishwasher liquid and when the bow and arrow hunting season gave way to the rifle season.

We sough refuge in Americana folk music on krfc 88.9 FM and contemplated Grey Rock. Recently opened after extensive fires, Grey Rock was a good hour and a half walk through a desolate landscape. The route of choice Grey Rock (on Grey Rock) proved elusive to pick out until two locals headed up to the start. We followed ..but whoops.. no draws (Mug stuff Eh?). I borrowed a couple of slings from Keith and followed them up at a safe distance. A barn door start then right up thinnish cracks to to the belay ..and ...run-out 5.8 just like the old days andrain.

Seeking solace in a quick beer we came across DAN. Dan had a lived-in face and was a cross between a 50 year old Tony Curtis and Jack Nicholson. When giving emphasis he had the uncanny ability of seeming to make his eyes stand out on stalks like Jack did on 'One Flew Over...' Anyway he had stayed put during the fire and said if forced out he would have searched out distant roots in Ipswich where, who knows, he might just find some royal links and apply to be king. Better than Charles he thought and at least *his* wife didn't look like road kill. Onwards and upwards to the Mishawaka Bar, bikers retreat, and a Grateful Dead tribute playing that night. We gave it a miss but the place held pedigree having seen the likes of Johnny Cash and Eric Clapton.

Next day and up to Mineshaft Wall on the Palace. But first a river crossing. Two sticks, a steady head and a diagonal path definitely needed. We swap warm-up routes with our new found friends. Our's worked out a 5.9, their's 5.10c – a bit tough for a warm up I thought, but we hadn't checked the grades. More clipping on the front face and farewell for the moment to our companions for the last week.



Hal and I return the next day after overnight rain and steady ourselves across the now deeper water. Jester 5.10b** is half an hour from full sun so we make