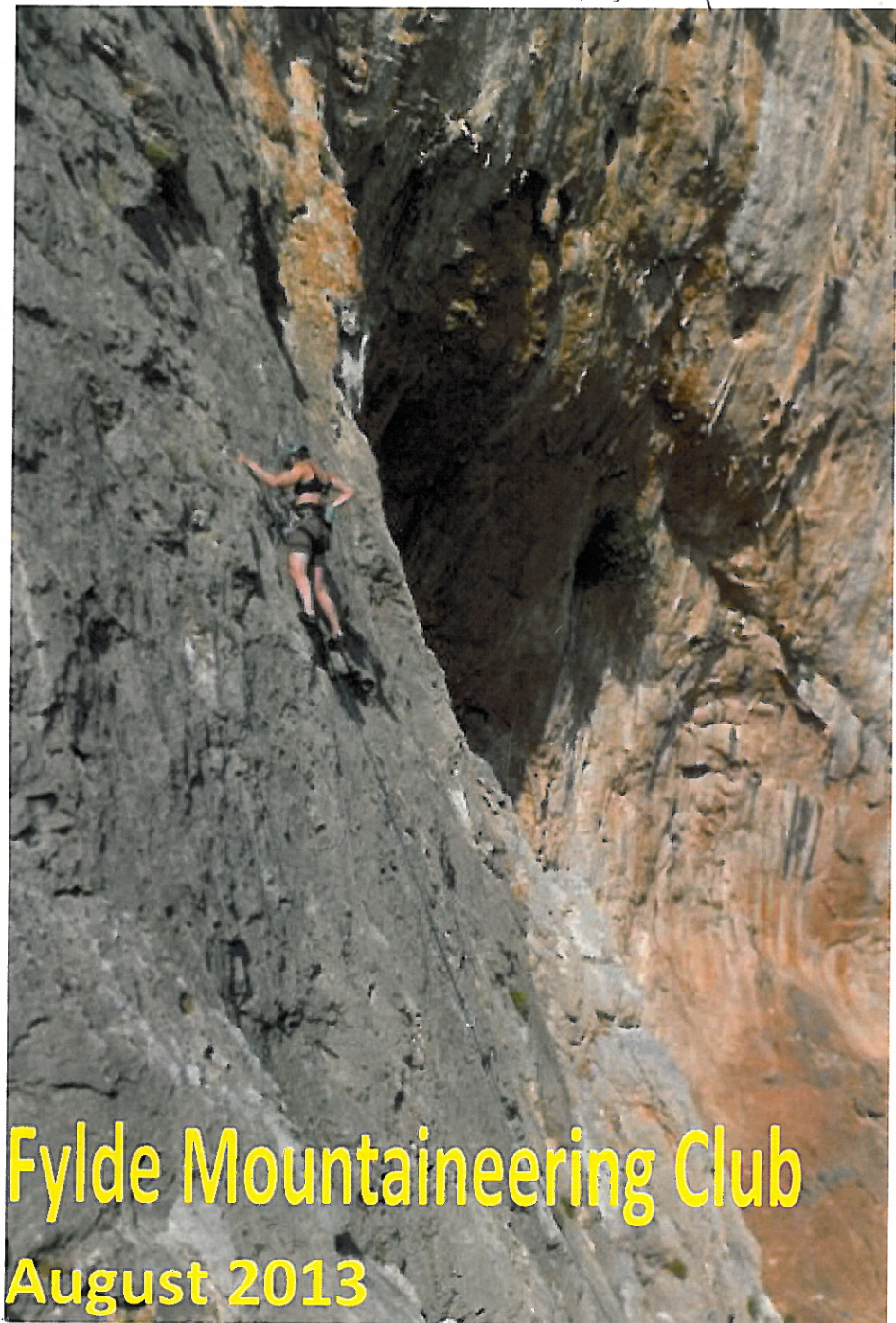


AUG 2013.



Fylde Mountaineering Club

August 2013

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Editorial

I'll leave the intro to our new Chairman this edition. To clear up some confusion, this magazine is totally produced by club members. It is printed and posted via the Northumbria University reprographics department with all costs covered by the FMC, it is cheaper and quicker than local printers.

Caroline

Chairman's Remarks

What a year 2013 as been so far, a long winter season with many mountain areas offering the opportunity for fantastic winter climbing and a dry, hot summer with many of the high mountain crags seeing some of the climbing action too. The FMC activists have been busy!

Something I would like to give a bit of push is the use of Facebook, this has taken off this year and has been extremely popular among the climbing community of the FMC, and it has given the club the opportunity to advertise what we are doing to a wider audience and become more inclusive. Currently we have two groups set up, an open public group (65 members) and a secret FMC only group (21 members). If you haven't signed up yet why not give it a try or talk to someone who has.

On another front I would like to recognise in particular two members, Kevin Ebrell and Chris Campbell who have worked extremely hard in formalising the areas of ownership and responsibility with regard to our property at Little Langdale, this has been done by way of a Deed of Covenant, work started on this approximately 3 years ago and has required a huge commitment to see this through to completion, very well done guys.

Finally if you have any ideas for meets are would like to get involved in organising something special drop me a note.

Darren Hartley

Cover photo: Hal enjoying the best that Kalymnos has to offer

Stair Working Weekend

We had a decent turnout - Chris Campbell, Chris Peed, Mike Howe, John & June Wiseman, Tom Knowles, Christine & me.

Chris C had put some more stain on the kitchen units a few weeks earlier so this job was finished. Mike came up on Thursday to repair the screed on the floor of the Porch so it could be painted on Sunday by John, June & Tom who were staying for an extra night.

We gave the cottage a good clean inside & stocked up with supplies. This included the windows both inside & out. Mike & Chris Peed finished cladding West facing (rotten) barge board. Mike finished boxing in the pipe work from the water heater in the kitchen & Chris C put a new lock on the door of the new WC cubicle. There is a locking mechanism built - in which needs to be used carefully or the new bolt is likely to suffer the fate of the original one. He also put up a rail in the showers to hang the mats from to dry rather than rot. Mike made the kitchen sink more secure. In the garden we cut the grass, cleared around the bushes by the gate so they can grow, cleared out the stream & replaced a few stones that had fallen from the dry stone wall. A dead tree in the car park was taken down & is now sitting in my wood store.

The gap into the wood has been left open to allow the sheep access instead of climbing over the wall & damaging it. I have been concerned that groups staying in the cottage have assumed the wood is part of our ownership & used it for making shelters etc. We put a clear wooden sign across the gap to say Private but at a height so the sheep can still use it. Mike also painted the main gate which needs a bit of welding in the near future.

I provided a veggie meal on Saturday evening, for us, as usual. Thanks to those who helped. I'm already taking bookings for the next working weekend; in fact I'm always willing to take bookings for them.

Sunday was intended to be a no work day so we could all go for a walk in the hills but things don't always turn out as planned. A few of us noticed a lingering smell in the toilets which had to be investigated. So Sunday morning saw us rodding out the pipes from the toilets & sinks. The problem was a build up of grease from the kitchen which has now been removed & the smell seems to have gone but we'll monitor it.

Then we had a quick look at the down pipe on the south west corner of the cottage which is a soak away that has not soaked away for a long time. We tried the drainage rods & the result was air & water coming out of the path indicating a blockage so we started digging.....A few hours later we had a trench 6 feet long 2 wide & over 2 deep plus a lot of water. We removed the pipes to find them both completely blocked with 40 years of mud. All was cleaned out & hopefully we have sorted out the soak away part.

Jobs for the future include: Replace the Fire Exit doors; Build some outside seating in the angle created by the kitchen & Porch walls; Paint the external walls; Cover the floor of the Porch (probably with a single lino cover because the paint we've used only lasts a few months before it gets damaged or the screed breaks up; Weld the damaged sections of the main gate; Take out a couple of dead trees.....plus lots more I have not thought of yet!

Andy Dunhill, Oct 2012



Fell Race and Curry Meet 2012

There was a good turnout of 16 “runners” for the 2012 edition of the FMC fell race at Stair. First over the line was Stuart Eve, a guest, with Chris Bell the first FMC member to finish. The fastest male with a time of 41.34 was Ben Cunningham who was also the youngest competitor. Hal Rzadkiewicz was quickest of the women finishing in just over an hour. No records were broken but a jolly time was had by all.

This year’s race is in early November & it would be good to see more “competitors” taking part. No previous experience is required nor is the ability to run a necessity. The course is up & over Cat Bells which is short & sharp. Most then wander into Keswick to do some shopping in the afternoon

As usual Andy provided hot soup after the race and an excellent veggie curry in the evening.

Results

Position	Name	Time	Scratch position	Handicap plus or minus
1	Stuart Eve	49.00	5	-4.
2	Chris Bell	45.00	3	-2.
3	Kevan Ebrell	55.00	8	+0.
4	Andy Dunhill	51.00	6	+1
5	Mark Broughton	46.00	4	+1
6	Adrian Clifford	51.00	6	+1
7	Ben Cunningham	41.34	1	+2
8	Chris Thistlethwaite	41.38	2	+2
9	Vivienne Broughton	65.00	11	+5
10	Martin Dale	66.00	12	+6
11	Hal Rzadkiewicz	63.00	10	+8
12	Dave Wood	58.00	9	+8
13	Dom Fearon	69.00	14	+14
14	Christine Barbier	94.00	15	+19
15	Dave Earle	93.00	13	+23
16	Clive Bell	106.00	7	+26

CIC Meet 2013

This years CIC meet was held slightly later so a couple of Nevis regulars unfortunately just missed out on the opportunity to join in the fun, instead they ditched their axes and crampons and headed to the sunny climate of Morocco! The six in attendance then were myself, Matt Reed, Chris Campbell, Adrian Clifford, Dave Cundy and Liam Gaston. We all travelled up on the Sunday evening utilising the comfortable facilities offered by Alan Kimber, and arriving in plenty of time to enjoy a pint or two in the ‘Grog’ where plans were laid for an early FMC style start in the morn. We hitched a lift up to the dam in Alan’s 4X4 and fought our way to the hut in a gale and blizzard, excellent start then bah! We soon sorted ourselves out into two teams and headed out.

Myself, Matt & Chris headed for the lower CIC cascades and after half an hour of swimming to get to the route we got geared up and made a start. After a few moves it became apparent that the route was not in good shape and we decided to bail and head back to the hut. Liam, Adrian and Dave however had a more eventful first day and did a mixed route variation up around Moonlight Gully Buttress which, late in the day as darkness fell, saw them top out somewhere near the top of No5 Gully. They managed to descend this safely and just as we were beginning to get a little concerned about their whereabouts, we were relieved to note three head torches heading down the corrie towards the hut. Dave looked somewhat relieved to have got back in one piece and be somewhere a little less hostile!



Day 2 – Myself, Matt and Chris headed up to the bottom of West Gully with eyes on the SW Ridge of the Douglas Boulder (the top of which is as high as anywhere in the lakes!), the snow slopes below the gully were heavily loaded and looked spooky, we therefore opted to belay below the start of ‘Gutless’ and hug the rocks up to the belay at the start of the route proper.

Once established on the ridge the avalanche hazard could then be dismissed. Matt lead the 1st & 3rd pitches and Chris lead the 2nd, having done the route with Alan Blackburn in 2008 I opted to second. The route is excellent value and

has some 'moves' which are a bit stiff for the grade 3 given in my guide. The views from the summit of the boulder into Observatory Gully were superb with all the classic lines easily identifiable. A quick rap down to the gap and we were soon scampering down a scoured East Gully and back down to the warmth of the hut. Dave after his Ben Nevis initiation ceremony yesterday decided to have a rest day so Liam and Adrian climbed the Curtain Rail (IV,4) and then rapped down to the top of the first pitch of the Curtain (IV,5), Liam opting to lead the 2nd & 3rd pitches in a long run out. The weather was much improved, with little precipitation, lighter winds and clear summits.

Day 3 – The weather was back with very strong gusting easterly winds. Matt and I headed up to Waterfall Gully (IV,4) and met a party who were already on it. We geared up and after a little waiting we were able to get going. The initial ice pitch looked in great nick, solid blue featured water ice. After a few moves and a couple of solid ice screws later the initial steepness relented and the intermediate belay stance was reached. I clipped the in-situ tat and lead on up the ramp. The ice had deteriorated here and was brittle in nature. The obvious belay stance was soon reached and after clipping in and making my acquaintance with the young lady who beat us up the route the hot-aches set in, how embarrassing!! Matt enjoyed the route too, however due to poor snow conditions higher up and the severe updraft we opted to rap off and head to the hut for a brew or two. Adrian, Liam and Dave had opted to head a little higher up the mountain in Coire na Ciste. There they spotted Bruce Poll, a mountain guide who was taking his two Dutch clients for a romp up Jubilation, a good grade 4 on the Trident Buttress area. They decided to follow on and found good conditions, nice ice and scoured slopes, the easterly wind working in their favour, good for them. Chris decided not climb today, wanting to get some good piccies he had a walk up past Observatory Gully and into Coire Leis.

Day 4 – Myself and Matt opted for a short day and chose 'Curtain Rail' - two pitches of good climbing which finishes on Ledge Route. Chris decided not to climb but kindly offered his services as cameraman taking some nice shots of us on the route. Matt led the first pitch which follows a runnel/ramp, lower but parallel to the line of the Curtain and just managed to reach the belay before



running out of rope! When I met up with him the dreaded hot-aches set in again, time for some new gloves I think!! I lead the second pitch up a nice bit of easy angled ice and belayed to some sound rock up on Ledge Route. The descent down Ledge Route from this point is straight forward. The climb goes at grade 4 according to my guide however is a soft touch, but recommended for those after a short day or could also be linked with other lower routes on the mountain when the higher routes are not accessible. Adrian and Dave went to have a look at Waterfall Gully but when they got there found it a bit busy so opted to follow us up the Curtain Rail, Adrian leading the pitch he missed out on earlier in the week. Liam, he soloed the Orion Face Direct.



On reflection it was pleasing that we were all able to get routes done on all days, even though our choices were a little limited due to the avalanche hazard. Generally there was little in the way of precipitation but the winds were strong and from a cold easterly direction, one of the MWIS forecasts stated it will feel as cold as -26 degrees! The hut was always a warm and welcome sight and we were all able to enjoy the further improvements which have been made, these now include a fully refurbished sleeping area, new bunks with comfy mattresses, improved insulation, new windows and doors and fully clad in pine too, absolute luxury can't wait to get back up there!

Darren Hartley

Dow Crag

My first multi-pitch ascent was on Dow Crag, on a route called Arête Chimney and Crack which is a very imposing 96 metre climb, first climbed in 1910. There are five pitches to this particular route, each differing in height from 10-27 metres.

We arrived at the car park with a view of the Old man of Coniston, time for photo call. I had no idea what was in store, apart from Dave saying that we were going up (to) Dow Crag and I'd be climbing with him and Hal, ok I thought sounds like a good idea. I arrived at the tarn quite out of breath thinking 'can't be far now' only to look up and see this enormous Crag, and Dave pointing to where we would be going. Bloody hell that's huge, I'll never make that I thought. After some food and drink I felt a little more energised and so up the undulating scree slope I went. (Took about an hour)

I scrambled on my hands and knees up to where Hal and Dave were, I was shaking, and felt queasy, and thought well this is it, no way was I going to climb, Hal took one look at me and just told me to breathe. As I sat there I started to get my bearings, and my brain started to right itself! Ok, this is it, am going to do it? Yes I thought.

Hal took me through safety procedures, and I practiced retrieving gear from a nearby rock whilst Dave went up placing gear as he went. He called down that he was safe, and then it was my turn. As I ascended, panic struck, and the brain started to go in overdrive, which in turn made me climb like a monkey "feet not

knees" Hal shouted in a nice way, "ok ok" I said, and with encouragement from Hal I made it to the first pitch, Dave smiling as I neared the top, phew! I'd made it.

The second pitch went without much drama, although it was a little grassy and untidy, I felt quite confident, and I sat quite happily watching Dave put his gear in and then suddenly he was out of sight, which I felt was rather unnerving. The 3rd pitch was 15 metres, which I thought would be ok until I started climbing up the flake crack, and yes there was a huge crack, I suddenly stopped



and thought where now!, Hal was ready and talked me through the moves, smooth lovely rock, lovely foot holes she kept saying to me, latching onto those words of comfort I arrived at pitch number 4.

Hal and Dave read the guide book, and I could see from where I was what was to come, not a pretty sight, traversing on a narrow ledge into the centre of the buttress; however I decided the best way forward was to just grin and bear it, and not to look down. By this time Hal had been removing most of my gear due to my nervous disposition. I then had 10 metres to go which involved Gordon and Craig's traverse, followed horizontally right across an exposed ledge (yikes!) into the centre of the buttress and finishing at a tiny grass ledge where I remained for about half an hour scared to death. Just in front were some other climbers happily sitting with their feet dangling over the edge, not on your life I thought, I cowered and began digging a hole with a tiny bit of rock to take my mind off where I was, then I shouted that I was going to cut the tiny blades of grass, anything to take my mind of the drop. Dave disappeared to place the gear for our last pitch 24 metres, (last stretch I thought and I'm still alive)

Pitch 5, unknown to me the start was going to be hard. As it was, however another climber guided my steps until Hal was able to, and I reached what I thought was the top, but no, there was still a long scramble to the top, and Hal decided that I should be roped up, and all I can say is thank goodness I was as in places it was very scary.

Eureka! I had made it to the top, but now all I could think of was, how on earth



I was going to get down? Hal and Dave looked at a couple of gullies before choosing one which seemed to be less steep, and thank goodness, we made it down, albeit very very carefully. As I slithered and slipped the way down I let out many screams and expletives, but after what seemed like an eternity I did finally arrive at the bottom in one piece, YEAH!!! I would like to say that had it not been for Hal and Dave's encouragement, patience, and understanding, I would most certainly

not have made it. Although I found this a very scary experience, it was also one of the most enjoyable days I have ever had.

Karen Purves, July 2013



It is sometimes said that to be tired of London is to be tired of life. Maybe the same can be said of climbers and Pembroke. Few, if any, would be able to say that they have done 'em all, not least because new ones are invented as soon as old ones are done. Or even re-invented as old ones fall down.

Had I kept a diary I would have been able to say that this was our 15th or 20th or even 25th trip, but perhaps the truth sits somewhere in the middle. So, armed with

bits of the new five part guide, our team of 9 set out on another encounter with ozone and sunlight. Our ranks would have been larger had it not been for the end-on-end Kalymnos trip.

Those with adequate powers of reasoning will have concluded that there is one fundamental difference between sea cliff climbing and cragging/mountaineering. When mountaineering (outside of earthquake zones) the ground rarely comes up to meet you. The phenomena of tides affects climbers in many ways not least determining when and where you can climb. For climbers, early afternoon low tides provide most options, giving the wet rock time to dry out. But they are often 'spring' tides with the highest tidal range and Pembroke has one of the highest tidal ranges in Europe. On top of that outgoing tides can produce big waves as well, so care is needed.

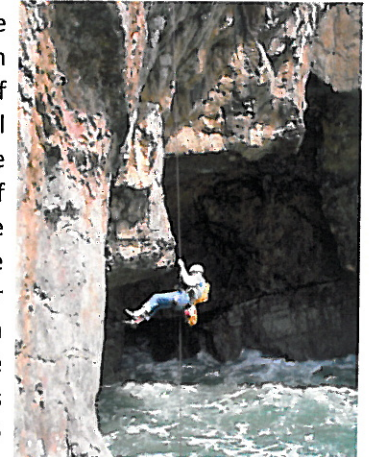
The tide provides the 5th element to any successful trip to Pembroke, the others being weather, company, accommodation and beer. On this occasion we scored four out of five, lacking only timely low tides. Fortunately we did not have anyone in the team who thought that the Range East sentry box was in fact a Tardis with powers to expand time. This meant that no hapless second had to dwell in the pit of fear and grief that is an incoming monster tide.

Aside of the esoteric art of tide-dodging, the real pleasures of Pembroke to me are less cerebral and to do with the sights, sounds and smells: the play of light across the waves, the roar of the sea through the blow holes, the virtuosity of the birds and inquisitiveness of the seals.

Having the facility of the new guides we explored pastures new and old. Saturday was a typically sunny day with a breeze that cast doubt on our ability to hit the

Crickmail Point high-tide platform without a soaking. The old faithful of Crystal Slabs proved a handy standby with everyone doing a route they hadn't done before. Sunday was brighter and warmer and disinclined to have got up with the dawn to catch the tides, we opted for a new venue: Thunderwave Buttress. Not without the excitement of a crowded stance and the waves just below your feet, the amenable routes gave everyone something to aim at.

Monday continued to provide easy to mid grade climbing in yet another new location: Hippo Zawn on Battleship Buttress. Under the watchful eye of Chris This, who was convinced that the free abseil would land me in the sea, I dropped onto a high tide ledge. I landed just next to a discarded pile of friends and quickdraws evidently left by someone vacating the ledge in haste (unclaimed despite adverts). It was worth the trip just for that. Our exploits at HS, VS and HVS were well rewarded on largely sound, but sharp, rock. Don Sergeant (the Pembroke and Morocco guide photographer) was on hand to take pictures – not least of Martin who was helmeted for the first time.



Intent on a two-venue day we decided that the time was now right for Crickmail Point. Mark descended in what was soon to turn out to be a re-make of the Hitchcock classic 'The Birds'. A menacing gathering of hundreds of gulls had colonised the descent and platform and made their presence known on the abseil and at the bottom. Suitably chastened we made our excuses and left for a pint.

Another fine trip and many thanks to the The Team who were: Dave Cundy, Martin Dale, Tom Knowles, Mark Lambert, Matt Reed, Pete Stridgeon, Chris This, Hal and myself.

Dave Wood

Postscript- August Bank Holiday

We had the tides and the weather so why not? Four excellent days camping at Broadhaven overlooking the sea and superb beach. Busy but we found four quiet remote locations that we had never climbed at before. Did four routes all in dramatic situations:- Goodge Street HVS 5a * (Chance Encounter Zawn), Wishful Thinking E1 5b *** (The Castle), The Gong E1 5b** (Madman's Point) and there is actually a gong in place that you ring halfway up! Lastly, Never Say Goodbye HVS 5b* (Mewsford West) and of course, we won't. In the words of that great philosopher Arnold, "we'll be back".

A Pensioners Outing

(My apologies to Dave (Woody), as for all he is retired, he is not yet old enough for George Osborne to be sending him a regular cheque, so strictly speaking not yet a pensioner)

On Sat 21st of July Dave and I jetted off from Manchester with Singapore Airlines, a vast improvement on the usual choice of carrier, for Munich, where we hired a car for the pleasant journey through the Bavarian Alps bound for Austria. The plan had come together after Dave had seen a line advert in the Austrian Alpine Club's Newsletter, promoting a week long Alpine Skills course. After much discussion we decided to apply for the course and to submit an application for the grant that we were told may be available. To our surprise places were still available and we were also accepted as suitable candidates for the grant which reduced the already reasonable price by a further fifty per cent. Not being ones to turn down a bargain, and seeing an opportunity to polish up on existing skills, the trip was on. More discussion centred round how we could best take advantage of being in the Alps and a decision was taken to extend the trip by an extra week in order to make the most of our freshly honed skills, the acclimatisation, and the possible increase in fitness levels that the course would give.

Week 1

Our rendezvous point was to be the Steinbock Hotel in Mittelberg at the head of the valley in the heart of the beautiful Pitztal region of the Otztaler Alps. Here we met Robert, the first of our two guides, along with the other ten members attending the course. We made a fairly mixed bag of trainees consisting of seven Brits, one of which lives and works in Lienz, three Canadians, one Dutch and a Texan responsible for security at the American Embassy in Vienna. The group was predominantly male with just one of the Canadians being female, and ranged in age from 22 to 65. Leaving the Steinbock with heavily laden sacks in 28 degree temperatures was not easy, however much to our relief, we only had to walk for around twenty minutes to the cable cargo lift where we met the second guide Hannes, and our sacks were loaded for the 868m lift to the Braunschweiger Hut making for a much easier walk in to our accommodation for the week.

The hut, perched at 2759m overlooking glaciers and mountains, is owned by the German Alpine Club. A wonderful hut that proved to be efficiently run by the Auer family, providing great service a friendly atmosphere and very welcome restaurant quality meals. In all a superb base for the weeks activities due to its' superb location and service.

Tuition began on the Monday morning within a few hundred yards of the hut. We looked out over a glacier to the surrounding mountains, assessing the dangers of venturing into the high altitude mountain arena. Avalanche risk, glaciers, crevasses, both visible and invisible, rock fall, icefall etc., all to be considered, then it was on with the crampons for some practice steps before some slip sliding about doing self arrest both with and without ice axe.

As the week progressed we built on our previous experience and on earlier lessons to reinforce the knowledge gained and it wasn't long before we were crossing a glacier and heading for the nearest summit, the Linker Fernerkogl at 3278m. From our vantage point the view was fantastic, taking in numerous glaciers and mountain peaks, including the regions highest, the Wildspitze at 3772m. Before the week was out we had built an assortment of belays, practiced crevasse rescue, attempted self rescue by prussiking up a rope attached to the fire escape!!, climbed various routes on rock at around HS in mountaineering boots, (not easy, but a great exercise in what it possible without rock shoes). Our final day found us heading up to the Pitztaler Jochl where an incredibly precarious rock ridge, that looked as though the slightest touch may cause the whole thing to slide onto the glacier below, led onto the summit of the Karleskogel at 3107m. Once again the exercise reinforced our previous lessons in protecting the fractured arête with running belays, testing each foot and hand placement etc. We eventually topped out at 3107m before our decent and a final exercise in abseil technique.

All too soon the weeks training, (which in many respects reinforced our existing experience, although many new ways of doing the same thing were also explored), was over and at around 7.30 on Saturday morning we were heading down the mountain, after being serenaded by the hut custodian Cilli Auer and her daughter, with a typical Austrian yodeling song.

Week 2

Saturday morning and we're back in the valley with decisions to make. Do we remain in this beautiful region or do we move on to where the higher summits beckon? After much discussion we decide that it's worth the travel to attempt the nearest peak over 4000m, the Piz Bernina, straddling the Swiss/Italian border. The route we favoured was the classic Biancograt route from the Swiss side. However, the guides had previously suggested we would probably find that it was not in the best condition as the superb snow ridge had melted away and was now protected with fixed ropes and would probably be incredibly busy, so we decided to head for Chiesa and make our attempt from the Italian side.

By Sunday afternoon we were checking out the weather in the Tourist Office and with much rain forecast for the Monday our start was postponed until the Tuesday morning. However, we did go up to Campo Moro to check out the start of the route

and get our bearings. Whilst there, we spoke briefly with a group of four Italians from Turin who were leaving for the start of their attempt on the summit. Monday came, and as promised so did the rain. We were so glad that we had not been tempted to make a start on the route. The day was spent dodging the rain, exploring the lovely village of Caspoggio and making preparation for our summit bid the following morning.

Tuesday dawned with the usual clear blue skies and the warm temperatures that had become the norm throughout the trip. With sacks packed and several easier days behind us, we began the start of our ascent to the first of two huts. Well outside the guide book time but inside the sign-posted time we made it to the Marinelli hut (2813m). As we arrived we noticed two of the four climbers we had spoken to on the Sunday afternoon. Sadly they were returning early having met with an accident. The other two in their group had slipped in the icy conditions, one breaking an ankle, the other dislocating an ankle and both being helicoptered off the mountain to the hospital in Sondrio. The two remaining climbers were heading down, but before leaving filled us in on the prevailing conditions which sounded grim. The approach to the next hut involved some serious Via Ferrata and was completely iced over and much new snow and ice on the route above. The prevailing conditions had also rebuffed an attempt on the summit by a strong eight man Slovenian team. However we took consolation in the fact that we were not in any great rush and felt that the current warm settled conditions would resolve many of the problems that they had encountered and favour our summit bid.

After a breakfast of coffee, cereal and stale bread and jam (yummy!) we ventured out for the next section of the ascent, 780m of glacier and rock. After negotiating the glacier, and with a steep ascent to the rock face, we found a very difficult bergschrund crossing that involved swinging across the gap from a precarious stance on the edge of a steep snow slope. Moving onto the Via Ferrata section left us wondering how we might reverse the action to regain the glacier in decent! Arriving at the Marco e Rosa hut (3610m) we were informed that as it was fully booked for the night we might find ourselves accommodated in the small wooden hut that was strapped to the rock some 50m away. We had previously been assured that a booking was not necessary by the staff in the Tourist Office. Eventually we were offered a slot on the sleeping platform and after a sleepless night we indulged in a breakfast of tea and stale bread and jam before leaving the hut and heading for the South Eastern Spallagrat ridge. With me doing most of the leading on the glacier and Dave the leading on rock we reached the summit at around 11.00hrs after about four hours on the go. The views were spectacular and well worth the effort. All we had to do now was make it safely back again. I was particularly concerned about reversing some of the difficult moves we had had to make on the ascent and

in particular the decent of the steep snow and ice slopes, before reaching the easier terrain.

Most of my fears were unfounded and the decent to the Marco e Rosa hut proved to be relatively straightforward. Our original plan had been to return to the Marinelli Hut to spend the night, however, short on cash and feeling the need for a shower, shave and a proper bed, we decided to continue down to the car and head for Chiesa once more where we would also be assured of a decent breakfast!! After a short break and picking up the gear we hadn't taken to the summit, from the hut, we ventured once more onto the downward route, briefly breaking the trek out at the Marinelli hut for more water and a rest. We finally reached the car park at Campo Moro around 21.00, some 14 hours after leaving our hut in the morning, with only the stale bread and jam breakfast to sustain us for the day.

A quick drive back to Chiesa saw us booked in, showered, changed and out to the local Pizzeria for food and liquid refreshment. It proved to be the first time in my history with the club that I finished a pint before Dave! I've still not discovered what was wrong with him as he can usually manage around 3 pints before I've finished one!!

All that remained was the Friday scenic drive back through Switzerland and Austria to Munich airport for an early Saturday morning flight home.

In all a fantastic time, one heck of an adventure and certainly one that beats the average pensioners outing offered by Wallace Arnold or Saga!! Where's to next?

Steve Longworth



A Reet Gud Do!

The long awaited FMC 40th Anniversary Ladies meet which had dominated the National Press for most of the summer finally arrived. Hordes of people (well 20 Special Ones!) homed in on Stair Cottage from far flung corners of Britain – from such esoterically diverse areas as Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Inverness-shire, North Eastshire and , of course, Lancashire and the mountains of Fylde. A varied program of activities was agreed (in most cases) via negotiation and discussion. Friday night some people enjoyed a performance at Theatre by the Lake, whilst the majority got stuck into the main function – eats and wine accompanied by much chat!

Saturday highlight was planned to be a 'Grand Picnic Event'. Tickets had been pre booked on the Keswick Launch, the intention being to hop on the ferry, laden with a super abundance of fantastic food and delectable drink, with 'Famous Five' Lashings of ginger beer and a gingham table cloth to spread out on the grass in some secluded glade beneath the shade of Sylvan trees. Unfortunately it was summer – so it was chucking it down with bloody rain wasn't it? So, ever resourceful our heroines



resorted to a Launch Lunch, scoffing whatever nosh they could manage on the wind and wave lashed deck of the pitching and rolling weather imperilled vessel. (I exaggerate slightly for poetic effect – or should that be 'defect'?) A careful head count subsequently established a 100% survival rate – a tribute to the hardy and resourceful nature of the select band of FMC Maidens! The evening BBQ was inevitably affected by the torrential rain, being cooked just outside the door sheltered by strategically held umbrellas more intent on keeping the fires burning than sheltering the

fearless cooks. An evening of raucous laughter, food, wine chat and more wine followed in traditional vane. Such fun!

Sunday dawned (not that many observed it!) with showers (outside and inside). People headed off to do their own thing – some to walk the hills, some to stroll the valleys and others just going home or anywhere to give their ears a rest!

It was a memorable Anniversary Meet organised and executed in style – FMC women know how to party with panache and make the most of opportunities to meet old (sorry!) friends and renew acquaintances and reminisce over days of yore. It was particularly good to see people who had made the considerable effort to travel so far to be a part of the joyous company. A vote of thanks for the many Ladies who contributed in many different ways to make the weekend such a success.

Jennie Tolley

A Crook's Tour of Cork

When informed, by Mike Howe, that we were to undertake a trip to Cork, with a Crook, I imagined meeting burly Irish villains, wearing rough-tweed fedoras, snorting "pocheen", from fluted Waterford crystal glasses, while watching sweet, scantily clad Colleens dancing scenes from "Ríverdance", wearing emerald green undies, supplied personally by Ethyl O'Austin herself, but, Barry Crook's tour of Cork was to be far different! For an investment of 15 Euros we were provided with return tickets to Cork, by a charming lady, at Killarney Station, who may well have been wearing emerald undies, (The Duke of Earle claimed that she wasn't, wearing undies at all!) and set off on an exciting trip to this ancient city. As the Irish Rail Company was upgrading the track, we disembarked at Mallow, where a coach was waiting to transport us to Cork, thus avoiding a 40 minute delay, for the connection by train. Arriving at Cork railway station, by bus, we went to check the precise times of the return coaches, and spent some time inspecting, and photographing, the ancient steam locomotive, regally mounted in the entrance area of the station. Then, we set off, our pulses racing, for a Crook's tour of Cork. Now y' man Barry is a cultivated guy with a knowledge of many subjects, so, we were in safe hands. Thus we

followed our distinguished leader to the church of St. Annes, Shandon. His cap set at a particularly jaunty angle, Barry led us along various back allies and dubious thoroughfares, weaving our way amongst the Poles, Lithuanians, Turks and Africans, and, the occasional Native Irish, to the church of the "pay as you go bells", where Monsieur Bell et "Mon Vache", paid to play the bells, and provide the long suffering locals with yet another rendition of a barely recognizable classic tune. (I didn't hear, "Smoke On The Water"). Meanwhile, Barry, Dangerous Dave Earle and I, wandered the local terraced streets, breathing in the atmosphere of this history laden community. Then, after the "7 bells experience", we regrouped and made our way to Shandon Street, the oldest part of Cork, dating back to the 13th. Century, where we inspected the native businesses, native African mainly, with the occasional Irish bar squeezed in between; Neil's Bar boasted Soup and Home Made Bread, for 3.50 Euros! (I must go back there!).

Many of the party were checking out the prices of the Thai Massage Parlours, but, despite my many aches and pains, I found them a trifle on the expensive side! We sidled down Shandon Street, in the blustery wind, but welcome sunshine, to meet Cork head on, by the River Lee, at Pope's Quay. Here we were approached by several motorists asking us the way to particular places in Cork. Unable to supply the relevant information, we crossed the river, full of optimism for the treasures to come, but, we hit showers on the south side and had to shelter in the doorway of a massive book and music store, as we passed along by Kyri's Coal and Lavitt's Quay, to gain the cultural protection of the Crawford Art Gallery. We were able to leave our excess baggage in a storage area, free of charge, and commenced our tour of this illustrious building.

The gallery houses some notable Irish paintings in various genres, much of which was of interest, and, some technical merit, the problem arrived with the Contemporary Art; it was a con, and it was only temporary, but, none of us actually found it interesting, or stimulating! So, reclaiming our paraphernalia, we headed down Oliver Plunkett Street, full of interesting small businesses and shops, and, eventually found the Tourist Information Office. Here we were treated to a voluble and enthusiastic lecture, on some of the many unique attractions of Cork, by a charismatic Irishman who appeared to physically expand with his desire to broadcast the historic features of his beloved city! So, armed with an array of maps we set forth, under Barry's strict tutelage and supervision, to take on the continuation of the

Crook's tour of Cork. Firstly we visited the famous English market, where we sampled some excellent ice creams, and, several touristy type purchases were made, Barry buying up a vast quantity of emerald green umbrellas, then, off on the "orange route", to St. Finbarre's Cathedral. En route, severe wintry squalls forced us to seek refuge in an interesting riverside pub, where we felt honour bound to sample the local stout. Clive's spontaneous exclamation of, "what have we come in here for?", was manfully ignored as we proceeded to dampen ourselves internally with some creamy headed Beamish, after shoving Sir Clive back outside into a ferocious precipitational peppering! Then, internally refreshed, we made our way up the hill to the splendid, ecclesiastical edifice of St. Finbarre's Cathedral, a fine building of great architectural merit, standing high above the town.

I was surprised to note that this is an Anglican cathedral, as one assumes that Catholicism is by far the dominating religion. After the usual round of photos, we entered this impressive building to enjoy an interior of the highest quality. An added interest was the sight of two traditional harps being set up for a concert later that night. Then back to the historic trail, which led us back downhill, taking in the Elizabeth Fort, with it's commanding position over the river, to the Red Abbey, with many interesting areas in between. As we approached the riverside again, our thoughts turned to food, and we considered eating in the French Quarter, in the middle of town, Frogs legs in Beamish or Moules Rory Gallagher, being possible delicacies. Lack of time caused us to articulate towards the Railway Station, so, we crossed St. Patrick's bridge and made for McCurtain Street, home of the Everyman Palace Theatre and some impressive hotels. We decided on fish and chips, but after deciding to eat in, we noticed that there was a chair short, the patron calmly instructed us to sit in The Cork Arms, across on the other side of the road, and he would send the piscatorial delicacies across.

So, cosily ensconced, with yet another round of Beamish, our food arrived and we manfully strove to demolish it! The Owners were extremely friendly and gave us a card for our next visit. So, we just had time for one more pint, to support the local economy, and we found a restful haven just down the road, to drink a toast to fine city of Cork. We then had to make a brisk pace, walking back to the station, where the coach was waiting to return to Mallow. Safely in our seats we had our last view of an interesting and charismatic town, a place I will definitely visit again. So, with it's impressive waterside developments, fine municipal buildings, cathedrals, museums, galleries,

fine traditional bars, The English Market, etc. we had, on our Crook's tour of Cork, thankfully missed out the City Gaol, on Strawberry Hill. Our return journey was smooth and peaceful until a party of schoolgirls joined the train at Mallow and gradually the screams and giggles increased in volume and intensity, making the eventual arrival back in Killarney all the more welcome. Thanks to Barry Crook for an excellent day out! The Tourist team consisted of Dangerous Dave Earle- Security- trained in mortal combat by the Kray triplets, Sir Clive of Carrauntoil- the Killarney trip Advisor, Mike Howe- Barry's minder, Geoff Brindle-volunteer classic bar spotter and beer quality control adjudicator and Barry Crook-intellectual, Traveller and world authority on the Smart car.

Geoff Brindle

FMC Visits The Emerald Isle

Saturday the 4th May 13 members met up at the Railway Hostel in Killarney (bottom LH corner of Ireland). We had all come by road via Holyhead and Dublin, some came directly from home others toured Ireland before coming to Killarney. We all collected in Murphy's bar for Guinness and eats then settled in to the hostel's bunks for a good night's sleep. Unbeknown to us, this weekend was the all Ireland motor rally in Killarney. The people partaking could only be described in medical terms as back passages. They got drunk and did everything possible to disrupt the rest of the guests' sleep.

Sunday dawned and the rectums went on their way. The world was lovely again, but the weather was not looking so lovely, overcast but not much in the way of rain. We went en-mass and walked along the beach around the Mamarees peninsula, a headland off the Dingle peninsula. A pretty place with fields of horses, not cows!, and views out to sea. The sun eventually make an appearance. That evening one of our number could not find his vehicle which he had parked in the street. After last night's goings on, STOLEN!! This was duly reported to the Garda. Later the aforementioned went for another look and there it was right where he had left it. Should have gone to Specsavers. A possible mug?

The highest mountain in Ireland is Carrauntoohil 1039m (3414ft) and was perhaps the main reason we chose this part of the world to visit. According to the forecast Monday was the best day of the week and although the hills all had their bonnets on the weather was reasonable, so we tackled the big one. We parked at Cronins yard and walked the 3 miles to the devil's ladder a steep 300m of scree, blocks, water and all the shite the devil rejected from hell, and just at the top when you thought it could not get any worse, it did. Slime and squelchy mud. Then the last 300m of 'normal' fairly steep high mountain path. June was feeling off colour so she and John retreated at this point. Everybody else reached the summit cross in the swirling mist, except me. My fundamental pump complained bitterly, the hand of the devil? We found an easier way down via Heaven's Gate back to the cars. Whilst gasping my last just above the top of his dreaded ladder a mob of 150 people approached. Were these the flights of angels to take me to my rest? Fortunately they passed me by on their charity walk.



Killarney sits by the side of Lough Leane which has a baby lake to the south called Muckross Lake. Six of us walked around this beautiful lake with its small rock islands and views of the mountains in the background, the sun coming and going. Sitting on Brickeen Bridge whilst the world passed by, we ate our butties.



Then on through the waterside trees to the impressive Torc Waterfall and thence to the cars parked next to the Jaunting Carts. Horse and trap that you can hire to take you around the local sights, you see them everywhere, somehow very Irish.

A crap forecast for Wednesday's weather. Train and bus to Cork for Barrie, Mike, Geoff, Dave and me.

What a beautiful city. We saw, the Firkin Crane with its Butter museum? But never went in. We did however pay the small fee to toll, the bell in St Anne's Church next door. We did the sights and on the way back to the station we fancied fish and chips but the shop had only four seats and there were five of us. The man said go over the road to the pub and I'll bring them over to you and he did. Fish chips and Beamish (not Guinness), bloody good. The trip back was by bus then train. We settled into a quiet carriage which was then invaded by 1000 jabbering schoolgirls playing games and generally being kids. Thanks for Killarney station.

During the week Barrie suffered bites on his legs. He went to the chemist, got some cream, which didn't work. On the next visit the chemist drove him to the doctors – Bed Bugs! – Antibiotics and no booze. But no Cellulitis which could have been the result otherwise!

Just down the road from Killarney is a small peninsula in Lough Leane called Ross Island. An interesting place to visit with the remains of Bronze Age copper mines and a much later castle renovated by some Yank several years ago. We looked inside but didn't enter not at that entrance fee!

Wednesday June and John repeated the Muckcross trip with Gillian and Peter and then on Thursday the four went off to Garinish Island and its gardens south of Killarney in Bantry Bay. Friday was a day for John and June to climb the Torc mountain (535m) with its panorama across the lake, the big mountains and Killarney. Peter and Gillian drove the ring of Kerry a trip which Peter and Jennie had done in the middle of the week.

The week went so fast, we were at Friday our last day in Killarney. Mike, Geoff and I hired some wheels and pedalled off to do a circuit of Lough Leane taking in the Gap of Dunloe a 3 mile beautiful narrow gorge with four small lakes which comes to a col at 239m. It seems a popular place for people to hire jaunting carts for the experience. From the top there is a 1 mile Wheeeee! down the road to the Kerry Way then across the marsh where it started raining, this was Ireland after all. Through the woods to the road and 10 miles back to Killarney, past the Torc waterfalls that we saw on Tuesday. A trip of about 25 miles – Knackered.

End of the week, time to go our separate ways. Wisemans and Llewellyns off for a week further north to the Burren, an area of limestone pavement between Shannon and Galway. Jennie and Peter to explore the same area but a different lodging, Dave E off to tour the land and Geoff with the Ebbrells set off for home. Mike, Barrie and me off for 3 more days using B&B's and exploring further north.

Doing the tourist thing in the car gawping at the view, north over the ferry at Tarbert, following the coast to Galway and its bay. On the way visiting the Cliffs



of Moher the highest sea cliffs in Ireland (214m). Apparently there is good single pitch climbing here with grades VS to E7 6c. We looked for a B&B for the night to suit three gentlemen. After several tries we were advised to try the Waterfall Lodge at Oughterard. Wow! A big old house with 19th century furniture a bedroom with two single beds for me and Barrie and a four-poster for Mr Howe. A fantastic spread for breakfast. All for E100 for 3 of us. The plan

was to steer a northerly course using 3 separate B&B's.

North to Westport and another big house, Plantation House (entrance fee, HOW MUCH?). Then through Connemara past the 12 Pins and the Maamturks, nice looking 700m hills with their heads in the clouds. Then back south to sample the Waterfall Lodge again.

Monday night was a new B&B at Carrick-on-Shannon, very nice but no four-poster. We got there via lakes and hills, Castelebar and Sligo. The intention was to visit the art gallery in Sligo, but would you know it, it closes on Mondays. Tuesday was home day, back to Dublin and the ferry to Holyhead.

Ireland is a beautiful green place with friendly people, although the weather was not so good whilst we were there with cloud, showers and wind, bit like home. The first impression was of affluence with no old properties, all the houses freshly painted and several new motorways, so new they were not on the cars satnav. Even the minor roads had good surfaces, not potholed like home. Was this the EU tiger economy that's now gone wrong? There are quite a few half built constructions where work has stopped completely.

The pubs seem well patronised, not like home where they are closing. The town centres have lots of small shops, like it used to be here even though there is a Tesco and an Aldi in Killarney.

Would I go to Ireland again? Definitely. If you have never been there then give it a go, you will not be disappointed. There are lots of hills to be explored and it is such a beautiful place with fairyland names like, Carrauntoohill, Maccillycuddy's Reeks, Crossmolina, Lisdoonvarna.

Did you know that Killarney is the anglicised spelling of Cill Aime, which means Church of Sloes.

All the journeying that the Howe, Crook, Bell team did was by courtesy of Barrie who, because of insurance etc. did all the driving. Thanks Barrie.

Kalymnos May 2013

One of the benefits of travelling abroad is that just occasionally you come across somewhere that seems to have all the elements. The Chinese may call it Feng Shui. We call it ambience or atmosphere and recognise it when the seascapes, landscapes and architecture combine in an agreeable manner. If the local community is welcoming, so much the better and then it draws you back time and again.

Kalymnos is one such place. Its mountainous landscape overlooks the blue Aegean Sea and the rocky profile of its smaller sister island, Telendos, sits as a rugged western backdrop to the setting sun. Only one ferry hour from the fleshpots of Kos, Kalymnos never really cut it as a tourist destination in the early days. A lack of big white beaches and the extra travelling time put many tourists off. In the last century the inhabitants survived through sponge diving and this in turn resulted in a great loss in the men folk. Widows, dressed in black, were a common sight until recent times when synthetic sponges displaced demand. The companies responsible for the diving failed to tell the divers about the 'bends' leading to many unnecessary deaths.



I first visited Kalymnos in 1980, well before the popularity of sport climbing, and was well impressed with it's scenery. Several years later a handy Italian sport climber visited on his honeymoon and tried his hand at climbing there. Following arrest by the local police, he apparently suggested that they were looking a gift horse in the mouth and by 2000 the island was established as a world class sport climbing destination.

The 65+ climbing sectors are laid out over four miles on the islands west coast and at least 500 of the 1000+ routes are condensed within one mile. They bear a combination of Greek names (Iannis, Zeus) and English names (Ghost Kitchen, The Beach). It is possible to walk or catch the bus to them all but we prefer to hire scooters. In an attempt to popularise the island, the route setters and guidebook writer have made the bolting safe and have even given each crag kid-friendly descriptions.

Our visit in May marked the third FMC visit and my fifth. Believing that we just might be one of the four percent of Ryanair passengers who may not arrive in time for the 9.45 ferry, we had sensibly booked a hotel in Kos town. It transpired that we had "taken off heavy" and needed to "pick up more fuel in Croatia" which would mean that we were to be "15 minutes late". Quite possibly fiction and they knew it. In reality we had a one and half hour delay probably to pick up cheap fuel at their base in Croatia. But there is no real competition so it's grin and bear it.

We established ourselves at a dated looking, but comfortable, set of hotel studios set atop a hill overlooking the village, some 165 steps lower. Great views but a struggle at night after a few beers. Our host, 'Saw', proved very helpful and not at all like the protagonist of the horror film (Saw) which he facially resembled. Our only doubt for a moment was when we thought we saw flames shooting out of a pipe above our head. 'Saw'

laughed and produced a blowpipe to say he had just be drying out a section of wall.

And so, the 'Game' did commence with an afternoon walk to sector Poets and various leads of routes from French 5A to 6A+. Everyone got a chance to lead something with holiday getting off to a fine start. As the week progressed we made use of our fully laden scooters to re-explore the coastline. Friday, the 10th May saw us at Arhi, a popular destination with families and one that offered a collection of 'easier' routes. That much said I find little easy these days – they're all hard, but I was pleased that the hand that I had fractured at the end of January (another story) was improving well. Again everyone led something and we finished off with a superb meal at Katerina's, where the waitress took more than a passing fancy to Tony (or Antonio as he was now to be called). I renewed my acquaintance with Retsina and found the road back even steeper.



Sunday saw us at the centre-piece of Kalymnos climbing – The Grand Grotto. Routes here are staggeringly steep and start in the upper 7's with two exceptions – a 5C+ that thinks it's a 6C and a 6A+. Most of us managed the 5 and sporting a Retsina hangover, I declined the 6A+ that Tony and Hal took on. Monday led to Arginonta

where the incessantly braying donkey provided background entertainment. Again we all led something and Hal and Dave Hicks were now racking up leads well into double figures, with Chris was not far behind. Tony and I pointed ourselves at the 6's and in attempt to atone for the indolence of the 'hangover day, ' I set off up he overhanging arête of Climate Change 6B+. I didn't think it was that easy for the grade. Having been told that Kalymnos grades had been subject to revision because they were considered a bit on the 'soft' side, I was pleased to learn that

it was one of those that had been downgraded from 6C in the last guidebook.

Tuesday was hot so we headed for Symplegades where the breeze was cool and views across to Telendos stunning. There were no give-aways here so we were happy to take what we could which was a clutch of 6As and the occasional 6B.



Wednesday saw the departure of Chris and Tony leaving Dave Hicks, Becky, Hal and I. We indulged ourselves in a seaside lunch then went for a walk to sector Styx. Thursday saw a return to Arginonta and more cranking up the 6s. It was busy and a bunch of Italians had colonised a section of the better routes. They let me use their quickdraws for the classic 6A of the crag then suggested I might like to recover their draws from the 6B+ that they had all been struggling on. Since it looked a mean undertaking I jokingly declined on account of advancing years, whereupon one of the bunch said quite loudly "me 65" and from the other side of the crag came the shout "67"!

Friday was a short walk in to Summertime (so called because of the shade) and more leads by Hal and Dave (H) and an excellent 6A and 6A+ by us all. We dined again at the very excellent Maria's for another Stiffado (stew). It was pleasing that she had remembered us from years back. The end of the trip was upon us so the next day Hal and I ventured up to Ivory Tower. Some very strange noises were coming from a Brit attempting a 7C. So weird were the noises that the local goats joined in. His partner said they had spent most of the holiday up there. At precisely the same time, a bunch of Americans arrived, who jet lagged from having arrived the same morning, couldn't resist throwing themselves at the steep stuff. Hal and I were deterred by the slippery nature of the rock so I parked my ambitions to get on a 6C and we contented ourselves with two 5s.

In summary the team (Dave Hicks, Becky Hicks, Tony Hulme, Chris This, Hal and I) had an excellent time on an island where there is something for everyone, including non-climbers. The scenery is splendid and rock is generally sound and well-bolted though sharp in places. Views are superlative and post climbing refreshments excellent.

We are going back again in October with a group of 14!

Dave Wood



Annual Dinner

The awards season is approaching again and it's time to get your nominations for Mug of the Year to the Master of Ceremonies, the Right Dishonourable Andy Dunhill.

To find out who the winner is and to hear the stories relating to keys, trips, green men, locks, snow business, Alzheimer's and navigation skills, then you need to come to the FMC Award Ceremony Annual Dinner.

Saturday 16th November 2013 - be there or be somewhere else

Working Weekend Stair

29 - 30 June 2013

We had a decent turnout – Chris Thistlethwaite, Geoff Brindle, Adrian Clifford, Martin Dale, Dave Hicks, Nick Hepburn & me

There was not a great deal to do so on Saturday we gave the cottage a good clean inside & stocked up with supplies. Chris T cleaned the cooker to the point of being spotless so he expects it to remain like that. Anyone who dirties it will be in trouble! The weather was reasonable so we went climbing in the afternoon to the upper section of Bleak How. This is one of the crags I'm checking for the new edition of the Borrowdale Guide. Martin & I have done a fair amount of cleaning enabling us to do all of the climbs on this section of the crag including a new E1

On Sunday it was very windy so climbing anywhere high was not really an option. We decided to cut down a dead tree in the car park next to the entrance gate & it's now forming a useful boundary to the car park. The right tools would help but we managed with a blunt bow saw, a hammer & a chisel. We had to put a rope round it to ensure it did not fall on the electricity cables. We managed this but those pulled almost pulled it onto themselves, but that's another story

Jobs for the future include: Replace the Fire Exit doors; Build some outside seating in the angle created by the kitchen & Porch walls; Paint the external walls; Cover the floor of the Porch (probably with a single lino cover because the paint we've used only lasts a few months before it gets damaged or the screed breaks up); Weld the damaged sections of the main gate;.....plus lots more I have not thought of yet!

Andy Dunhill

Red Rocks, Nevada.

Autumn 2012, by Martin Bennett.

Photos by Martin Bennett and Alan Blackburn

A long time target of mine has been Red Rocks Nevada - ever since we passed within a few miles of it on our way from Death Valley to Zion Canyon some years ago, at which time in my ignorance I deemed it not worthy of my attention as I thought it was just another desert sandstone venue with all that that implies (off widths, loose rock, off widths, poor protection, off widths, . . .). How wrong can one be? A couple of weeks after that, as we were finishing our circular tour of the SW States, I met some blokes at Joshua Tree who'd just come from Red Rocks - What!? They said, you like long VS/HVS (5.7/5.8/5.9) routes and you didn't stop at Red Rocks? Are you mad? It's perfect for you!



Four or five years on, the Red Rocks itch needed desperately to be scratched. I cast around for a likely partner and my eye fell upon Alan Blackburn, with whom, he being partly retired as I am wholly, I've shared quite a few trips in recent years. Upon my initial enquiry as to whether he fancied it his enthusiasm as usual knew no bounds as he answered

in his inimitable way "I don't mind". Thus was he roped in.

Rather than commit our whole time (about 18 days) to the one venue we hedged our bets, deciding to fly in to Los Angeles and out of Phoenix Arizona in order to have a few days at Tahquitz in Southern California on the way to Las Vegas, and finish up at an esoteric gem in Arizona called Cochise Stronghold, as well as using the opportunity for Alan to look up an old Blackpool chum who lives in Phoenix. We opted for a 4 wheel Drive hire car and left Los Angeles later than hoped so it was late when we arrived at Silver Pines Lodge in the peculiar mountain resort that is Idyllwild California. Late, and cold! Next morning we

woke to more cold; and drizzle! Our first view of Tahquitz Rock was not the one we'd envisaged:



Tahquitz Rock, Idyllwild California

Too late we realised that even in Southern California the weather's not always conducive to climbing at 8000 feet in October. Our first American breakfast of the trip was not rushed, a little time was spent receiving the town and crag approach and in improving conditions we slogged up to the crag in the afternoon more to suss out the complications of route finding on a thousand foot tower with climbs on three sides than in the hope of getting a route done. Just as well as our hopeful probe onto the crag ended with an abseil from the ledge at the top of pitch one of "Left Ski Track".

Thus at the end of our first day the mood was not light-hearted, the general thoughts being along the lines of "we didn't come all this way to climb on cold wet slippery granite - could have done that in The Cairngorms". A couple of pints, a good nosh and a comfy billet improved the outlook and sure enough we got up in the morning to blue skies and sunshine, if not tropical temperatures. The slog up to the crag was this time rewarded with a successful ascent of the excellent "Left Ski Track" on the sunny South Face.



Left Ski Track, Tahquitz Rock on 2nd day in improved weather

Next day we'd hoped to do a route on the 1000 foot North Face but arrived there to find it cold and windy so, despite feeling inferior to the two girls committing themselves to a classic 5.10 despite the conditions, ran away to the sunny side where we enjoyed the five pitch route Fingertrip but only after a false start saw me having to retreat from an off-route excursion.



Crux pitch of Fingertrip

Tahquitz is as good as they say (Royal Robbins et al are said to have cut their teeth here before exploding onto the scene at Yosemite in the fifties) but if I went again it wouldn't be in October. The bizarre spot of Idyllwild is worth a visit at any time.

Next morning we were on the road to Las Vegas ^{Nevada} ~~Arizona~~ which we reached at sunset (and what an utterly fantastic one) after a leisurely sightseeing drive taking in Big Bear Lake and The Mojave Desert. Arriving at our pre-booked hotel we found we were not expected. It turns out the La Quinta group has two properties on the West side of the city, and I'd mistakenly booked the other one! Happily it turned out to be a good two miles nearer to the crags, a block or two away from the climbing shop, and shared it's street corner with an excellent brew pub which became our second home – what price serendipity? After a late start and ~~and~~ ^{and} prece on our first day there we opted for some easy, accessible one pitch climbs to get the feel of the climbing. All went well and the grades seemed OK so next day we went on to a longer climb at the famed Black Velvet Canyon. This too provided no surprises so next day we began trying to tick off as many from our list as we could, starting with "The Cat In The Hat", a really entertaining and varied 500 foot 5.6 where all went well until I cocked up

the first abseil of the descent and got the rope stuck - luckily a party was climbing beside us and chucked it down when they got to the point it had hung up - a constant danger here due to the juggy, "chickenhead" nature of the rock.



The 1000 foot tower of Mes-calito, dominating Pine Creek Canyon; The Cat in The Hat goes up the left flank

En route on The Cat in The Hat :

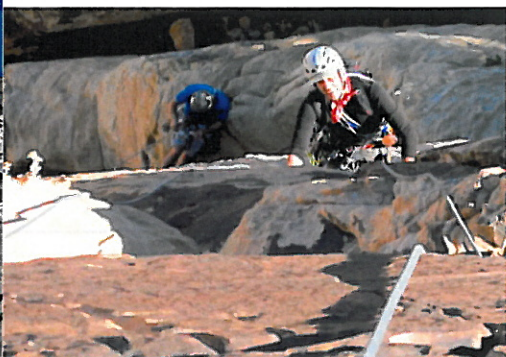


The longest climb we did was the excellent combination of "Johnny Vegas" and "Solar Slab" giving 1300 feet and 10 pitches of great fun. If you prefer it you can add a further 500 easy feet to a long walk off but we chose the 10 abseil descent which took long enough.

Two views of Jonny Vegas/Solar Slab, Oak Creek Canyon, Red Rocks, Nevada



Just long enough as it happens. After a fatigue induced near loss of both ropes



with 4 abs to go, I chose wrong on the penultimate ab, leaving us 100 feet from the ground in the gloaming without the fixed ab point we should have found. I grovelled into a bush, wrapped some tat round a bundle of the thickest twigs I could find, tied the ropes into it and (without describing the belay to Alan) set off down into the dark:



And dark it was - as pitch, by the time we'd coiled up and packed the gear. Of course I discovered my head torch was "as dim as" (and so was I for letting it be so) so I followed Alan on our foray to seek out the faint desert paths that wind thru the scrub back to the road a couple of miles distant. 2 miles? Not the way we went it wasn't. Too late I realised that tho' Alan's lamp was good he needed his glasses to walk and only had prescription sunglasses so it really was a case of the blind leading the blind! No paths were found; and me in shorts which meant that for over an hour of desert meanderings my legs were being scratched and mauled by a wide variety of desert flora.

That was our longest day but there followed many more on fabulous routes with names like Lotta Balls Wall, Birdland, Black Magic and, best name of all and, for me anyway, the best route - Jubilant Song. This was recommended to us by Larry de Angelo, a legendary Red Rocks pioneer who we met at 1st Creek Canyon, where at the same time we met the British (well, Rhodesian) legend Rusty Baillie. It's on a cliff different in character from others, not in a canyon but high and proud on the flanks of "Windy Peak" necessitating an approach by a 4 wheel drive track and a 90 minute hike uphill for once. But it's so worth it for the climb, the name, the mountain feel, the view from the summit and the lovely walk off.

On "the balls" pitch of Lotta Balls



The Balls! Birdland pitch 5





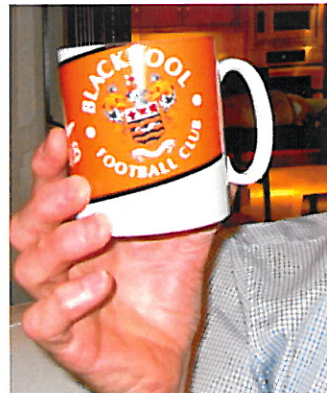
Jubilant Song pitch 1 Jubilant Song – the roof traverse

So much were we enjoying Red Rocks that on our rest day (trip to Hoover Dam) at the end of a week there we had a council of war and decided to stay longer, at the expense of the planned trip into the unknown of Cochise Stronghold, Arizona. Via a part of the fabled Route 66 and a pleasant overnight (in what the booking system termed a "Two Queens Room" in a motel on "Girlie Street"!!!) at Prescott Arizona, which houses a truly excellent brew pub, we still got a couple of nights in Phoenix, and Alan had his reunion with his friend Ian, now a prof. at Arizona State University. A couple of pleasant evenings were spent with Ian and his wife and friends, with a climb in The McDowell Mountains squeezed in, and that was that - flight home next morning. A great trip - Red Rocks altogether lives up to it's reputation. I'd go back like a shot.



Sundown at Red Rocks

Finally, here's a picture of an item on display in Ian's apartment in the Tempe district of Phoenix Arizona that shows you can take the boy out of The Fylde but you can't take The Fylde out of the boy!



Obituary - Karen Barker

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Karen, a club member that many of us knew.



Three years ago Karen had been given only months to live after being diagnosed with Leukaemia, but she defied the medics and went on to receive a transplant in January 2011. The transplant was a success but she developed a side effect which unfortunately left her with a very suppressed immune system that led to an ongoing niggling chest infection.

At the end of July this niggle evolved into a vicious bout of pneumonia that saw her admitted to Blackpool Victoria hospital from where she was moved to Trinity Hospice.

Karen passed away peacefully at 1am on Monday 29 July with her family and close friends with her. She never lost her high spirits, daft grin and mad giggle. She is survived by four children and three and a half (number 4 on the way) grand children.

Our heartfelt best wishes go out to all who knew and loved Karen.

