

A photograph of two hikers standing on a grassy mountain slope. The hiker on the left is wearing a light-colored checkered shirt, khaki pants, a grey hat, and a backpack, holding a trekking pole. The hiker on the right is wearing a red and black striped t-shirt, grey pants, and a black cap. In the background, there are large, dark, craggy rock formations under a clear blue sky. The ground is covered in green grass with scattered rocks.

Fylde Mountaineering Club
July / August 2014

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Editorial

Let me start by saying, Kalymnos is reet good but it ain't no Wilton One....yeah right, if you believe that you'll believe anything. Fortunately for you all, my own article on the wonders of Kalymnos will have to wait until the next edition because I have simply run out of time to finish it.

Prolific traveller and author Martin Bennett has been out and about again with his latest missive being about Corsica. Elsewhere, David Wood has put 'pen to paper' for his epic adventure in Morocco with the aforementioned Mr Bennett.

We also have the meanderings of a Mr David Hicks on his birthday celebration ascent of Dream of White Horses, ably dragged up by Woody and Hal.

Finally folks, after 4 years of editing the club newsletter I feel that the time is right to hand the reins over to a new editor, so the February/March edition will be my last in charge. It's been a fun job compiling all of your wonderful articles and I will miss doing it - I thoroughly recommend the job to anybody hoo kan spel and use punctuation in a vaguely accurate way.

So all you budding editors out there get your names into the hat for the next AGM. Get in touch if you have any questions about what is involved.

In the words of that great Hollywood icon "Hasta la vista Nobs, I'll be back".

Caroline



Chairman's Remarks

The summer season so far has seen plenty of dry warm weather and the crags have seen a fair bit of action. Kalymnos, The Lakes, North Wales & Cornwall have all seen a few ticks on must do lists, in fact wild horses couldn't keep some folk from fulfilling a lifelong dream at Gogarth & Simon Fenna proved that age is no barrier to fitness by carrying out what is believed to be the first zimmer frame assisted ascent of 'Peel Off' at Witches Quarry early in the season!

Facebook continues to gain popularity among the climbing community and has become the established method for communication and updates on evening and weekend meets so if you've not signed up yet you're missing out!

We have also been out an about walking and cycling too, and we eagerly await Clive's report from Dartmoor. A big thanks to Martin Dale for organising the Guild Wheel evening ride, where a great turnout from all corners of the club met and joined in the fun.

So let's hope the second half of the 'dry' season is as good as the first and we'll have even more good things to write about.

Darren Hartley

Are You Getting The Most From Your FMC Membership?

Several months on.... Scotland is independent and Lancashire is making a bid for freedom. In the spirit of all those almost dead television heroes who have been called out of retirement to do just one more mission, Sir Walter Raleigh has been exhumed. He has been sent out by HMG to reconnoitre the peoples of Lancashire and report back. Here is an extract of his interview, rehearsed with John McEnroe, prior to mass expose. (Apologies to followers of Bob Newhart).

“Tell me Walt, what have you found up there?”

Well John, I came across a tribe called the Filled Mountaineering Club... and get this John.... they go walking and climbing!

Indoors Walt?

No... Outdoors John

You cannot be serious!

Yep John.... and what's more they sit in the pub afterwards and drink real beer and talk!

No kidding Walt?

No kidding John. And then John, get this they don't go prodding their fingers into little plastic boxes that other tribes hold in their hands when they are sitting in public all the time.

So let me get this right Walt.. they go out climbing on real rock.... and walking on real ground and then they go to the pub and drink and *talk* to each other? Astonishing.

But that's not all John, every other weekend in summer they go out to places of great beauty like national parks and stop in cottages and the like for next to nothing

You cannot be serious Walt!

I am John and that's not all. When the rain strikes that god forsaken place with heinous weather, they go to pubs in the evening and hear famous people talk about *their* walking and climbing.

Hey Walt ..your just leading me on now.... Maybe I could talk to them and get in on the racket...?

Maybe John but you know what? When it gets bad all over the place, like down here, they go out of the country on expeditions just like the old days....

They do WHAT Walt?

That's right John, they go to far flung shores and do it for real instead of looking into Your Plastic Tube

OK Walt... so I get all the action and stuff in my plastic box for 88 pence per day. How much do they pay for all this real stuff?

Well John they get the stuff they do for under 8 pence per day.

YOU cannot be serious!

You CANNOT be serious!

You cannot BE serious!

You cannot be SERIOUS!! ”

Dave Wood Membership Sec.



Masters Wood and Bennett at the top of Wings For Life, Telendos

A Hard Day's Night

NEW ADVENTURES IN MOROCCO 2014

We were almost too comfortable to move. The morning sun had warmed the terrace to perfection. The light was picking out the fine detail on crags on the nearby crags as we worked our way through our second cup of coffee. Our attentive host, Sayeed, had just delivered the bread and honey and was commenting on how much we reminded him of the Top Gear boys, 'Going all over the place in their cars and having great adventures'. We looked towards Alan. "Hammond, pass the coffee will you mate".

We did not have the sense of urgency that usually accompanies a big route - well does it ever in the FMC? Perhaps our recce the previous day had totally convinced us that our route of choice – the most amenable line of the crag – would be no more than 4 or 5 pitches of severe climbing. We had to make it today as the three of us, Martin Bennett, Alan Blackburn and myself, had to meet up with Ali Welsh and Robin Andrews the following day.

I hoped it would be good as I anticipated. I had been captivated by the potential of more to come after a solo exploration of the area last October. We were to be the first to set foot on the north east face of Adad Medni. Maybe we were the first to climb on the entire mountain, of which the NE face represented just a drop in the ocean.

We mulled over the photocopied satellite imagery of the track and road structure, hoping that we were to find the entrance that many others had missed in the past. Our recce the previous day had been by way of a slog from the bottom up and our plan on this occasion was to drive in above the crag and walk down.

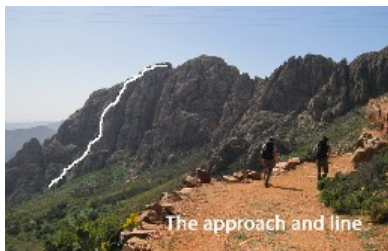
We were not to know that it was to be an examination in 4 parts.

Part One – Twist and Shout.....

Our directions were working well and by chance we tagged onto the heels of a RAV SUV heading through the same twists and turns. Parking up on the col we worked out a line through the entangled bush to our intended starting point – 25 minutes at the most. What could possibly go wrong?

The altitude made the unseasonably warm temperature tolerable and as we picked our way over the old almond and argan groves I saw the crag from a new angle, with the quartzite presenting itself in different colours as verticality increased. I imagined that in the UK it may be compared to a larger version of one of the higher crags in Buttermere but one where perhaps there was scope for fewer long routes than might be expected. From this angle it looked winter had added some greenery to the crag giving it a more vegetated appearance than in autumn.

As the groves shelved off towards the crag, the rumination of the wild boars (or was it the legendary dragon-like Venan?) became evident, increasingly pointing



us down blind alleys. I pondered what might happen if one appeared. Would Clarkson try and ride it to the base of the route? I felt sure that Hammond would show his gaudily coloured trousers to the creature. The sight of his attire had turned around three burkha clad ladies not 30 minutes previous.

This moment's distraction proved troublesome as my landing on the next jump was onto a boulder that turned. With it my foot twisted sideways and it pulled me up sharp. Ouch! We were 100 metres from the start of the climb. It did not feel good. I pondered my fate.

As luck would have it, Hammond, probably the best pharmacist in the whole of Morocco, had no bandages. Clarkson, veteran of no less than a two-day course on first aid in the mountains, had no first aid kit at all. Since the time was right for confessions I let loose that I had no head torch either. We pondered our fate.

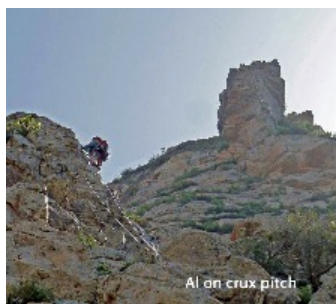
Part Two – It Won't Be Long....

With my foot tightly strapped into my rock boots I led off up the first pitch. Way above was a huge T-Rex like tower. The climbing was slabby on delightfully clean and solid rock – a longer and steeper version of Brown Crag Slabs. Occasionally runners would come or could be obtained by a slight deviation. The climbing was never more than 4C but a sense of direction was crucial. As the rope went tight at 60 metres the ground eased and Martin and Al started climbing together up the easy angled start. The sun was on



our backs and the views starting to unfold. Even my foot was not too painful. A pleasure to be climbing again.

Pitches two and three were easy angled linking two large terraces. Pitch four fell to Alan. After fifteen metres he stopped at a big step left onto an arete and said he was having trouble getting his leg over. We encouraged him to free off his iron gusset and soon he was facing what came to be the technical crux – two short but awkward off-widths. After some grunting he made it and following shortly after we thought it might merit 5B, but Alan (I don't climb 5B) was having none of it.



The next pitch fell to me. Moving left up an arete I came to a grass pull move – the sort you get in Lundy or the top of Heron Crag in the Borrowdale. My last and only runner was 15 feet below and I couldn't make out what was above. This was not a good place to fall off. After doing my best to clean off the foothold, I took a deep breath, used the vegetation for balance and pushed up gingerly. A traverse right across a short exposed wall led to easier climbing.

From the belay I could hear talk about abseiling. The shadows were lengthening and an ever increasing worry was the steep gully to the right. This might be too steep to cross if it bisected the summit ridge at a depth greater than our ropes. We looked at each other and upwards. Martin led up left and picked his way over a tricky 4C section and back right to the top. “We're walking off lads!” came the call. We had worked well together.

Part Three - No Reply.....

With ropes coiled and trainers on, we moved along the ridge. I took time out to take photos of the dramatic scenery below the south face and the ridge of 3000 feet or more (yet to be climbed) lit up by the afterglow of the setting sun. Catching up with the boys I could see they were deploying their head torches. I volunteered to strike out ahead needing to make as much



use of the residual light as I could. From our brief look along the ridge the previous day, I reckoned only one bad step was left then easy off.



Two small pinnacles went easily then turning the third on the left I faced a steep wall. Perhaps this is the last one I thought. I was perched on some vegetation with several hundred feet of fresh air beneath. I thought it might go in trainers but decided the better of it and carefully put on my rock boots. I looked up to see stars and realised just how quickly the light had faded. I had expected to see Al and Martin and had whooped and shouted several times. No reply... Perhaps they had gone to the right and had found a an easier way through. Oh dear! What to do?

I thought that if push came to shove I could use the light from my old mobile phone to retrace my steps and was just about to reach into my rucksack when around the corner came the boys. A head torch on the situation revealed the wall was steeper than I first thought so with harness on and roped up, I led off up a 4 A/B pitch to look down another. Time for some abseiling. Martin set up the ab as lights began to flash up from the distant valley below. The muezzin had fired up the speakers on the mosque a mile below us. It seemed a bit late for evening prayers. Was this to going to turn out to be an international incident?

Carefully down, sharing lights, then up another pinnacle and hey guess what? Another abseil. We must now be traversing pinnacles that were hidden from view yesterday. There are lights now on the hill side near the village. Villagers must be interested in our plight.

Another scramble leads to a steep drop. We can see and hear that two men from the village are across the void. This must be the final one but are our ropes long enough for a single ab? We join two together and land in the final gully. Oh Yes!Oh No! The rope is sticking on the pull. Martin walks back as far as he can and hangs on the rope and it gives. Phew! We scramble up the slope to meet the two men we had met the previous day. "Bravo" they shout. Now, as then, the older one insists we speak to his brother on the phone again, as he is sure that there won't be any more Englishmen around these parts for a while. We head

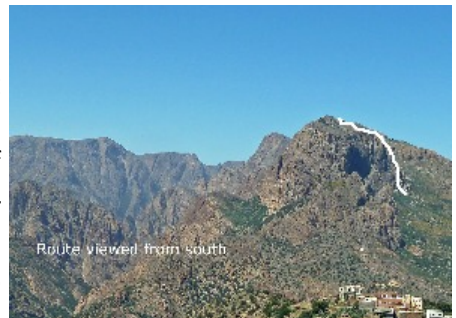
down by torch and mobile phone light to the car. We will be late back but back we will be.

Part Four – The Long and Winding Road.....

The first village looks so different now in the darkness. We think we should go right but it's too narrow so we go left and after 10 minutes find ourselves at the same spot. A local is out with his phone and a torch "Tout droit" he says or does he? So we carry on again and 5 minutes later we are back in the same place. We ask and get the same reply. Is he saying "Tout Droit" or "a droite?" We pass the blue and orange garage door, up and over the bumps, down the track and to ...nowhere. We go back and ...he is there. Same question ...same reply. This is nearly Groundhog Day. We think it must be right at the very narrow track so we take it and find ourselves crossing the hillside. This must be it but there is a left turn somewhere... maybe here. Another car is coming towards us so we stop and ask. It is Ahmed and Sayeed! How lucky is that? We follow them along the dusty road and back to base.

Under normal circumstances it would be a case of a quick drink and to bed as it was leaving one o'clock in the morning. But our hosts were having none of that and had prepared a large meal which they ate with us. As I wrapped my now swollen foot in ice, we related our tale. It transpired that they had also had some English guests in December. It seemed that we were quite probably the first to set foot on the north east face but two of the prolific guidebook contributors had done a ridge on the south side which went at E4 5C!

We reviewed our efforts. We had all contributed something. I found the crag, Martin the route and Alan the crux. It hadn't been 4 pitches of Severe climbing but more like 1000 foot with a crux at HVS or even harder if you strayed from the line of least resistance – and there are no rescue facilities. So we gave it E1 5A/B and it had to be called 'A HARD DAY'S NIGHT'



Dave Wood

My First Weekend with the Club

28th Feb 2014-Bangers and mash!

Well, as I had only just joined in January I didn't know what to expect, but Mike had said what a good weekend the bangers and mash was, so I was really looking forward to it! Martin and Jo were taking me, and we set off at tea time, to get there not long after 7 - it didn't take too long, as I think Martin thought he was Nigel Mansell some of the time!

Our bunks were sorted, we had our tea, and it was soon time for some liquid refreshment, with Tom deciding to come with us! So, torches at the ready, off we went down the river path for Martin and Jo to soon get ahead of us - I think they must have been very thirsty! It didn't help that my torch decided to be temperamental and kept going on and off, and my spare 'wind up' torch had to be kept being wound up all the time! Anyway, we arrived at the pub of choice, the Middle Ruddings, to join Chris and Caroline.

There were 2 lovely blonde real ales (of which I have forgotten the names) but the one I really liked was 4.5 ABV. A little stronger than I usually have but what the heck, I was away for the weekend! An enjoyable night was had by all, with Pete Stridgeon, Simon Fenna and Phil Lee joining us later, coming up straight to the pub in their cars which was a distinct advantage for us as we could hitch a lift back to the hut instead of a wobbly walk back!



Saturday dawned. Oh was I tired, no surprise there then, but no time for being tired as it was time for walking! I love walking and have been doing it for a long time, but never really been up that high, so was wondering what was in store for me! Well, we had breakfast and donned our gear, when Rob turned up-only coming for the day, but he decided to come with us. Off we went by Cat

Bells and onto Maiden Moor...in the snow...never been up in snow before. Well it was all an adventure!!

What a lovely walk we had with more snow covered fells coming into view the higher we went-beautiful!

We arrived at the summit to have a quick lunch and some more photos, where Rob realised he had lost his lens cover-how to find it in the snow and where did he actually lose it? Luckily it must have just happened at the summit, and after looking around for a short while Martin found it, good!



After a quick discussion, we decided to come back down the same way due to the time factor, so off we went with me slipping and sliding a couple of times but fortunately not landing on the snow! At Cat bells Martin Jo and Rob decided to come back over that fell but I decided on the gentler option-down the flank and along the Newlands Valley-enough excitement for one day! Jo did offer to come with me, but I was ok and ambled off just taking my time and enjoying more lovely scenery! I actually saw them coming down the fell just as I got to Skelgill Farm so we all walked back to the hut together!

When we arrived back, Clive and the boys were busy in the kitchen preparing the food which looked really good! After a quick wash and change of clothes some of the members went to the pub to partake of a beer or two, but I had my wine so I stayed put chatting and looking forward to the meal! Eventually the pub goers arrived back, the table was set, and we all sat down to enjoy our food!

What a feast-I think we had about 7 courses including soup, chicken skewers, salmon, 5 types of sausages-they were lovely, cheese and chocolates and others I just can't just remember! It was a lovely meal-good food, beer and wine, good craic and a good laugh-I did enjoy the night!



On Sunday the weather wasn't good-low cloud and some rain so we weren't going to do anything strenuous, and Martin suggested we pack up and drive to Buttermere for a walk round the Lake, then home. When we got there the rain didn't seem too bad really, but of course not long after we set off it persisted it down-typical! Never mind the scenery is still lovely! About half way round, the rain eased somewhat which was a bit better, and after negotiating the highland cattle (very large horns they have I noticed) and taking some photos by the waterfall we arrived back soaked to the skin!

Time to change into dry clothes! Jo and I found the toilets and duly changed, much better! We made our way back to the car and found Martin just finishing changing but not in the toilets...in the car park....and he had gone commando too.....Martin!!! Well I guess it was between 2 parked cars though!

We eventually drove out of Buttermere-time to go home, but not before calling in at the Eagle and Child in Stavelly to meet Woody and Hal where there was a lovely roaring fire! What a great weekend I had-I really enjoyed it-thanks Clive and all!

I must say I have had some lovely and fun weekends since, and I can't believe it but Martin, Woody and the gang have had me up a rock face...at my age!! I never thought I would do that again, my one and only time was 41 years ago. It was good though!

Chris (Christine) Fry

Intro Meet ~ 5th/6th July 2014

It is pleasing to report that this summer's Intro Meet was well attended by five introductory members. In fact intro members outnumbered the regulars - a very rare event in recent club history.



Christine Fry and Richard Duerden took their first roped-up steps on rock. Martin Imms polished his leading by assisting Dave Hicks and Karen Purves up a tricky severe and Joanne Leadbetter helped Martin Dale up a particularly hard VD. Another new member, Andy Chambers, joined us and managed to persuade Ash Clarke to make a rare appearance to take him up Gazebo (HVS).

Martin Imms on Gangway

Friday the 4th July had seen close on two inches of rain fall in the Lakes so it was something of a miracle that, by Saturday afternoon, Castle Rock south was dry and covered in blue skies. The members engaged with the excellent V Diff's, Severes and VSs that border the right side of the crag. The rock provided excellent friction and superb views down Thirlmere and St John's in the Vale.

'Intro' member Martin Dale being shown the ropes by Joanne

An evening in the George and a meal back at Stair provided a fitting complement to an excellent day out. Sunday was not blessed with a good forecast or wall to wall sunshine, but those who stayed on got something done and the afternoon turned out clear and bright offering an excellent walk up Langstrath.



Thank you all for turning up.

Dave Wood

Interview with an FMC Leg End

We interviewed Dave Wood after his epic 7c+ onsight in Kalymnos.

Thursday 8 May 2014: Dave Wood and Hal Rzadkiewicz managed to onsight 7c+ in Kalymnos. Whilst not at the leading edge of Kalymnos grades, they had both targeted this steep wall with a fingery crux at the start of the trip - for once two of our most inebriated members shared the same focus to add a new chapter to the history of this club... it was both beautiful and exciting. Dave was the first to succeed, closely followed by Hal.

Intrepid reporter Cazza caught up with Dave shortly after the ascent for this exclusive interview.

Dave, congratulations. Finally!

Yeah, thanks. This route was a really fantastic, long journey! Completing it was a big process for me. You know, I first considered the route that morning and getting to the foot of the crag was a big task in itself, despite all the rock here in Kalymnos, finding the right route isn't easy, it's not something you can just take for granted. If you're going to spend time on something, the line must really be worthwhile and it's difficult to find something that is at your limit and also fits your style.

At first though it seemed as if this was beyond your limit?

Initially I was turned off by the small crimpers, I sort of shied away from them. That first section was great fun and also really different to try something with crimps, instead of holds on the long stamina routes I often do.

There was much hype in the team about who would succeed first, you or Hal. We all felt that this was a winning situation for all concerned, for you, Hal and club climbing in general. How do you see that?

There's no doubt, for me it's really great to climb with Hal. You know, for many years I've only tried the 'ard 4s, but if you do this, you risk losing yourself in your own world. So getting Hal's perspective was really important. I'd practically written 7c+ off and when we decided to climb it together she brought it to life. It was a healthy process for both of us, we fed off each other's motivation and through her I think I've become a better climber myself. And I've known Hal for many years, I've watched her grow and improve and at the end of the day it's nice to think that this route is an important step in her climbing development, too.

In April you spent time in Calpe, how did that prepare you for this route

Yes, that was important mentally because it then completely freed me for 7c+. One of the problems here in Kalymnos is having the focus to dedicate your time and energy to just one route. There's so much Ouzo here, so much Mythos that I

want to drink and at times if you don't focus precisely you risk spreading everything super thin and investing a whole day into something and not succeeding on anything at all.

So after success in Calpe, you turned your attentions to this route...

I must have spent a whole 15 minutes trying the lower section, those 15 moves. Doing this was a really long process, mentally, because there's a really easy move where I didn't fall off and when I finally did this, I then didn't fall higher up either. I needed another 15 minutes to reach the high point... sweaty fingers, feet slipping, being pumped - it was a really long process of progress, followed by setbacks, then more small progress. I seemed to be missing that little bit of luck!

And time was beginning to run out

Yes, beer o'clock was approaching and it would have been bad to have to put everything on hold for another day. Especially since I'd had some really good sensations recently but I began to fear that I'd be in that setback stage once again. I'd had some important windows of opportunities but now it was beginning to get warm.

On Thursday it all came together! How come?

I don't really know. Perhaps I just hadn't drunk too much beer the night before! As I said, in the past I'd had my chances but I'd been unlucky. So I guess I just got really sober, I didn't make any mistakes at all and when I finally did it I felt as if I wasn't really at my complete limit.

Stop. That means that with a bit more luck and this sobriety perhaps there's room for even more...

Let me put it like this: now that I've done 7c+, I can imagine how harder things might be done. There are a few projects I can think of that would be interesting, but I'm not sure if being totally sober is quite my thing. Perhaps I'll do more multi-pitches. Who knows? For sure, I'm happy I no longer have a huge commitment, that I'm totally free, to climb and have fun.

Tell us more

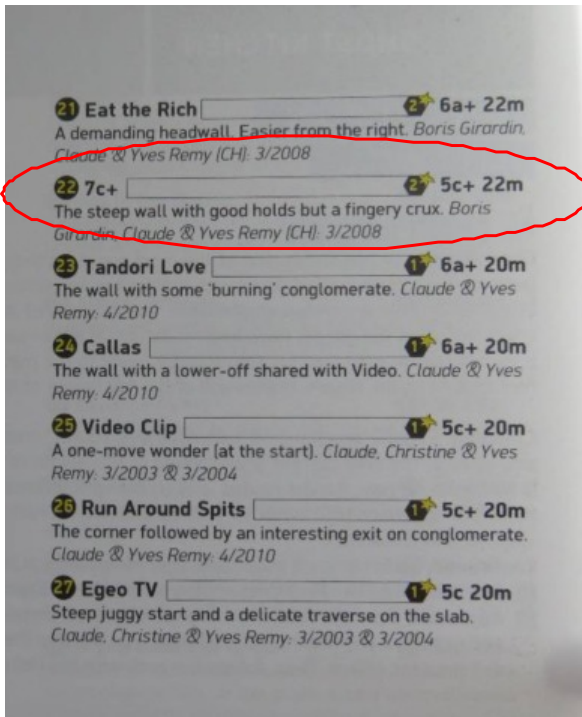
Well, to succeed, to get this level of fitness I had to become more of an athlete, be more strategic about my drinking choices. Go less with the Mythos, be less spontaneous. That's why it's so rewarding: managing to focus completely for such a short time and then succeed.

What's your diet like:

Well, it's very important to me that my diet is as stodgy as possible. I only eat the unhealthiest foods, as in trying to just eat fatty foods and drinking vast quantities of Ouzo. I especially love Mythos, it's the best thing to take just before the big sends.

Hal, any final thoughts from you

Oh for forks sake, it was only 5c+ Woody



Ladies Meet - Langdale March 8/9th

BOOTS ? WALKING? THE TRUTH? Ladies and Mountain Endeavour?

WHAT IS LIFE?

OK it was the Ladies Meet - so do we tell the truth? Or not? Well there were 8 of us for a start - and 8 Ladies provide for the possibilities of Adventure, suspense, excitement and Fun - well we managed one of the three - and that can't be bad! (and of course not ALL of the ladies can even count with any accuracy - meaning ME for e.g.!) The weather was - well let's say that Sue Denmark said to John before leaving home that she had forgotten to check the forecast and the response was 'it is a Ladies Meet so it will be KRAPP' and for once a mere Male was Prescient!

Saturday dawned - well doesn't it always? Ah yes but this day dawned with the arrival outside the cottage of a large Tesco van driven by a large Tesco Man. Intrigued we investigated 'can I drive through the ford to X Farm - my Sat Nav sent me this way!' Fancy asking mischievous FMC ladies a question like this! We had a division of opinion some suggested "send him on", others were more sympathetic, or at least didn't want to be involved with knee deep pushing supermarket vehicles, through the rushing river . But all of us enjoyed watching the resultant 57 point turn in the narrow lane!

Saturday was cold and windy . A walk from Three Shires Stone up to Crinkle Crag was planned but , alas there is ere a disjunction twixt plans and reality! Before the walk I was reminded by several members that once, in the past, I turned up for a meet only to discover that I had brought one of my boots and one of Mikes, and improvised to seize the day by wearing my tread free sepia coloured fashion boots! Delphine, on the other hand, went one step further by bringing BOTH of John's boots to wear whilst Mary forgot BOTH of her boots completely. Whist Mary went back from 3 Shire Stone to the cottage to regain footwear, the remainder experienced the unusual experience of being asked by a MALE walker to tell him where he was and where the track to Crinkle Crag went! We resisted the temptation to direct him in the direction of Wastwater or whatever and pointed him into the mist covered windswept hills above the sanctuary of our warm - if Mary - less car. Subsequently we ventured up the fells, eventually picnicking on the first Crinkle summit, where we were met by a stream of descending walkers , (including the aforementioned guy who we had earlier dispatched) , escaping from the dire, gale force windswept upper paths and prophesising doom and despair - so we , with extreme reluctance , retired down to a local farm and the comfort of tea and toasted hot buttered tea cakes..

The traditional Saturday night Ladies Meet communal Feast was - well, interesting - and , as always, 'SUCH FUN'! Women, alone, are AMAZING! Good food, conversation, a modicum of wine and general hilarity!

Sunday weather was little improved - so the group scattered across the Lake District enjoying diverse activities on their way home.

This is now the 40th year of Ladies' Meets! Having attended these SPECIAL Meets for this vast period of time I can affirm that they invariably are a UNIQUE experience which I will treasure in my memory forever. Thank you Ladies!

Jennie Tolley

Scotland – March 2014

The winter season of 2014 has been unusual, a persistent monotonous cycle of one Atlantic depression after another sweeping across the UK. The result has been one of the worst floods in living memory for those living in the south, however the story north of the border is not one of floods but of unprecedented snowfall in the Scottish mountains. The SAIS have had a busy season providing daily updates on their blogs reporting avalanche activity, some of which have been occurring in unusual places such as a full depth avalanche on the south face of Sgurr a' Mhaim in the Mamores visible from Glencoe. There was also some rather scary footage of a large avalanche which occurred in Coire na Tuilich near the Lagangarbh Cottage in Glencoe, the debris filling the lower gorge of the corrie where the descent path follows. The number of accidents reported appears lower than that normally expected, maybe the hazards in the mountains have been much more obvious? Winter climbing has been limited due to the relentless snows and failure of freeze/thaws to materialise in the weather patterns, the only routes being climbed by mere mortals were the ridges, it is hard to believe that we are in the middle of March and the high corries of Ben Nevis have not been accessed for weeks.

I had booked the CIC hut on the Ben for the week commencing 10th March, I was hoping things might settle down and we could get something done, the pattern in weather remained unchanged in the weeks leading up to the meet, but there was a glimmer of hope on the horizon, an anticyclone was developing! Mark Lambert and Adrian Clifford teamed up and headed to the Ben, I decided that the routes I wanted wouldn't be there, either buried or threatened by monumental football stadium cornices. Mark & Adrian were not disappointed, the sun put in



an appearance and they were able to enjoy the best weather available so far this season, Mark was overjoyed with his first acquaintance with the Ben in all its winter splendour. *(Ed: Mark Lambert's report on his adventure on the Ben can be found later in this edition.)*

I had read a couple of excellent articles recently on UKC relating to Ski Touring in Scotland which recommended a few tours for beginners, wanting to give this a try I headed to the Cairngorms instead of the CIC, the first day was spent skiing at Aviemore brushing off the ski cobwebs on the 'groomed slopes' (you must experience Scottish skiing at least once in a life time to further understand the meaning of 'groomed slopes'), the weather was great and in the afternoon following assessment by the SAIS the west wall area was opened giving access to the Coire Ciste area, the slopes were a little icy but with great cover. I had made enquiries as to the possibility of hiring touring gear in Aviemore and had been pointed towards a guy called Rob who runs 'Mountain Spirit' based in the town, I decided with the prospect of a great forecast and excellent cover in the Cairngorms now was the time to dip a toe into this whole new world. Rob fixed me up with a pair of Scarpa 'Maestrale' boots (in the world of touring these are the orange ones), a pair of Fischer 'Watea' Skis with Eagle Diamir bindings, skins and poles for two days at a cost of £65.00, not bad. After acquiring a little of the local beta a tour of the Northern Corries was chosen as a safe bet. The following



morning I headed up to the ski area and acquainted myself to skinning uphill following the line of the tow heading towards Sron an Aonaich, I arrived at the Ptarmigan restaurant and continued uphill to the summit of Cairngorm and basked in the sunshine for a while, the stunning views across the plateau south were a stark reminder of vastness of this arctic arena of plastered faces and glistening icy slopes. The next step of this adventure was to tighten down the buckles and convert from uphill mode to downhill, however I first had to negotiate the water ice and rocks of the summit area so crampons were donned and skis were carried for a short distance in the direction of Coire Raibert, soon good snow was found and the crampons replaced by skis. A little nervous apprehension in the first few turns was soon replaced by euphoria as a fast as you dare schuss carried me across the upper area of the corrie floor. All good things come to an end and I quickly came to a standstill, took a few breaths, a big smile and converted skis to uphill mode for the ascent to the goat track area, more uphill skinning lead to the Cairn Lochan summit, where Ptarmigan were feeding on the bullet hard plateau. The adventure continued now with the descent off Lochan, this was icy and a little steep at the start, the idea here is to carry enough speed to get over the small hump barring access to Lurchers Gully, unfortunately I fell a bit short and wailed around a bit getting over the hump, once into Lurchers proper the skiing was superb, wide, open and at an easy angle, the slope funnels into a wide path lower down and going as a fast as I dare the angle eventually subsides and I glide to a standstill near the stream flowing out of Sneachda. A hop, skip and jump and I am back at the car. The boots I hired were not a great fit resulting in two kingsize blisters and had to be swapped, day two with new boots and feet patched up with Compede I carried boots and skis to the Lairig Ghru via the Chalamain Gap, I was intending ascending the Sron na Lairige to bag Braeriach and then ski out of Coire Gorm however I decided this was a bit too ambitious for a second tour especially whilst soloing, so ascended Lurchers Crag and descended the gully for the second time, this time when I came to a standstill in the same place as the day before and headed up hill to explore Coire an t Sneachda and enjoyed a nice ski out of the corrie.

In the right conditions with good weather I reckon Ski Touring is an excellent way of enjoying the Scottish mountains and would highly recommend giving it a try.

Regards

Darren Hartley

Corsica 2013

Words by Martin Bennett.

Pictures by Alan Blackburn and Dave Wood.

Working through the list of “places I must go” I found myself organising a trip to Corsica. The first thing was to get hold of guide books to ensure my impressions were correct and there was indeed lots of the type of climbing we like, at grades we can do. This was achieved by contacting Steve Stout, a friend from The Lakes, who I knew had done a lot of guiding on Corsica. Sure enough he has an extensive library of information, much of it hard to come by, which he generously lent us.

Next, who would come with me? Robin Andrews and Alan Blackburn have been stalwarts of my retirement trips of the last few years and were instantly co-opted. Dave Wood couldn't manage the whole fortnight but joined us for week two.

Reading around the topic of Corsican climbing we decided to concentrate our efforts in just two of the many areas available. We would spend a week in the South, as near to the Col de Bavella as possible, followed by a second week in or near Corte, in the centre of the island and handy for a number of valleys, most notably the Gorge de Restonica. Arriving on the island by air at Bastia in the North and after the usual fuelling (both man and machine) stops on the way from the airport we arrived at our flat in Zonza, a pretty little town a few kilometres below Bavella, to be warmly welcomed by our elderly hosts Nelly Orsini and her husband, who from his manner and appearance we expected to introduce himself, sotto voce, with “*It is I – Le Clerc*”. Our 1st floor apartment was quaintly old fashioned and very spacious having for the 3 of us a double bedroom each and two bathrooms. The kitchen and dining area were perhaps a little rustic, but had all mod cons and were quite functional.



Robin at the front door of Casa Orsini, in Zonza



Pork brochettes and stir fried veg anyone?

Our objective for the trip was to seek out and find longer routes at around VS/HVS but we began in what we hoped would be a gentle way on a climb called Capricciosa, a 3 pitch bolt protected route at Bavella. Graded 4+ for each pitch it sounded an ideal and easy way to sample the granite and the gradings. Not so; we felt it to be HVS on each pitch. Good though, if a little disjointed.



Three views of the Capricciosa showing the diverse nature of the climbing

Thus it was that next day, for our first mountain route we modified our plan from a grade 5 or 5+ to a four pitch grade 4+ (with a move of 5) on Punta Caletta, The North West Arete. This proved to be very pleasant with a beautiful 45 minute approach through a forested glade. Best of all we found it almost too easy and realisation dawned that the island has two grading systems, one for sport climbs and one for mountain climbs which confusingly for first timers share the same nomenclature. The route also introduced us to the delights of Corsican granite's unique feature – tafoni, which allows some very steep rock to be overcome with ease. The grade 5 move turning out to be about V Diff.



Among the tafoni on the so called grade 5 pitch on NW Arete, Punta Caletta

Heartened by our findings in the hills we put our No 1 objective for the week, the 450 metre Arete de Zonza on Punta di L'Acellu back on the agenda and spent the next 3 days trying to get onto it.



Punta di l'Acellu showing the E Face and Arete di Zonza, the left hand skyline, more or less

At our first attempt we got to the base of the climb (the approach, incidentally, follows part of the famous GR20 itinerary) in a howling wind and very low temperature so after agreeing with an Italian couple who'd arrived before us, ran away to a pleasant sport crag at Chisa, near the coast. Here the weather was perfect for climbing and some nice routes were done in very pleasant surroundings.

Next day we set off again for it but bad weather forced a "rest day". Attempt three saw us at the base of the climb 5 minutes after the arrival of Paddy, Chris and Patrick from another group of Brits we'd met at the airport, and, it seemed, just before the weather let us down yet again as cloud shrouded all the surrounding mountains and thunder rumbled around. The 6 of us spent an hour umming and aaghing about the wisdom of continuing. In the end two opposing views were demonstrated as we chose to at least begin the climb and the others took the alternative option and descended to what they hoped would be more amenable conditions in the valleys below. At that stage it could have gone either way. Happily for us we were blessed by mostly good, warm conditions on the mountain, though there was a half hour spell when jackets were donned, visibility deteriorated, a few drops of rain fell and we each secretly began to count the abseils which might well ensue. However the clouds rolled away, the jackets were once more consigned to the rucksacks and a successful ascent of a very good route was made. Unfortunately for the others it seems we were enjoying some kind of odd inversion that left us above the bad weather whilst they got wet below. On meeting them again that evening we tried but failed to suppress our sense of schadenfreude!



Arete di Monza – the 1st crux (6a)

Jackets on during a brief weather deterioration

2nd crux – a 5+ slab near the top



Before the climb –Martin, Alan, Robin

Atmospheric conditions at the summit

We'd a day left at Bavella and spent it well on the excellent SW Pillar of Castelluciu d' Ornucciu on a route named La Perrilat. Graded TD and 6a it's in a beautiful valley reached by a 40 minute descent, through the all but ubiquitous forest, from the road a mile or two below the Col de Bavella and proved a beautiful and varied climb on which to end the first innings at Bavella.



La Perrilat pitch 1

La Perrilat - In the tafoni of pitch 2

3rd pitch Crux of La Perrilat

Next day we said goodbye to our quaint but very roomy flat in Zonza, but only after we had to remind Nelly, our most charming elderly landlady, that we needed to pay her for our stay. We drove to Corte, via the airport to pick up our 4th participant Woody, to find what had been described in the advert as a bungalow in Corte. We were most impressed as we approached a fine granite built bungalow via its extensive garden, only to be ushered around the back where was located our home for the week in a miniscule wooden “holiday chalet” style timber construction that can only be described as a “shedette”:



Our shedette in Corte

The pool is next in door garden, not ours!

After a mediocre beginning on the first day of the second innings caused by mixed weather (too hot then too wet) we got going in the gauntly dramatic Restonica Valley with an ascent of 8 of the 10 pitches of a route called Alta Voce on Pointe 1670, rather scrappy to where we got to – it seems the point of the climb is the last two pitches which we had to miss due to an “FMC” start (!) exacerbated by some route finding problems. Instead we enjoyed 5 or 6 long abseils and were glad for the 10 minute stroll from the base to the car in the gloaming.



On and off “Alta Voce”, Pointe 1670

The next day Candela di l’Oro on Punta Spenicaccia provided an altogether more positive experience on perfect rock in the sunshine. The 55 metre vertical wall of tafoni that is the fourth pitch must be among the World’s best VS pitches.



Above: Approaching Punta Spenicaccia

Right: The tafoni pitch of Candela di l'Oro

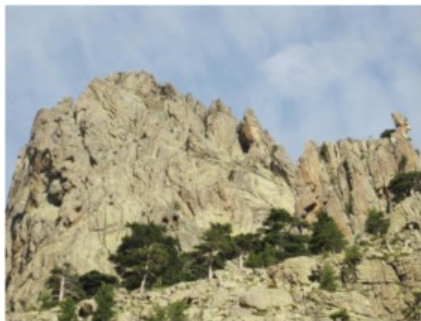


Whilst Dave and I were enjoying this route Robin and Alan had a break from climbing and went for what proved to be a strenuous walk up to Lake Oriente, one of the many small lakes (tarns?) surrounding the Gorge di Restonica, it nestles beneath Monte Rotondo, at 2622 metres the 2nd highest summit on the island. Strenuous but picturesque:



The trip ended for us with Woody and I enjoying a sport climbing afternoon at Sorbellu, just opposite Punta Spenicaccia, where Robin and Alan went, having heard us rave about Candela di l'Oro, and next day the highlight of the week, the 8 pitch route "Robenise" on Pointe de la Touffe near the head of the Restonica Valley, which had been on the list of targets made at home before the trip. It's a very varied route with a big mountain feel on a complex face which reveals its secrets only slowly, including the enigmatic start. Among a number of highlights the crux above an

overhang of tafoni provides the most fun, though Alan's lead of the technically easier but worryingly crumbly final corner had its moments.



The East Face of Pointe de la Touffe with its glowering guardian overlooking Val di Restonica. Robenise climbs the centre of the face

An early pitch of "Robenise"



For descent a bolted "abseil piste" has been recently installed so we were back at the sacks at the base of the wall in four very long swoops followed by 20 minutes of scrambling; half an hour later we were enjoying bottles of the excellent Pietra Brune (the best Mediterranean beer I've ever had) at Chez Teo, the little cafe at the Restonica roadhead, served by Teo himself, a charming old man with a sympathetic approach to climbers. Though not one himself, the local climbers have named a face and a route above his cafe in his honour.

Corsican roadside attractions and rest day pursuits



In two weeks we'd barely had time to scratch the surface of the plethora of rock climbing to be had on the island, having briefly sampled only two of the many centres, let alone the wonderful mountain walking, which we later learned was at the same time being enjoyed (not for long, but that's another story) by club members John and Claire. We had however done some great climbing, seen some wonderful sights, had great meals and perhaps best of all, enjoyed one another's company. As a friend of mine once sagely pointed out "there's more to climbing than climbing".

Martin Bennett

A “Dream” Birthday Day Out

The weather was perfect as we walked across Holyhead Island from South Stack, over the shoulder of Holyhead Mountain and down the winding path to Gogarth, then down the scramble to the promontory where Wen Zawn came into view. I was heading out to live one of my long standing dreams of climbing A Dream of White Horses at Gogarth’s Wen Zawn. I had had a poster of this impressive route on my office wall for years but had never plucked up the courage to “go for it”. Today was going to be my day thanks to a beer fuelled birthday gift offer from Woody a few days previously.

We had dumped the gear in a shallow cave opposite the walk-in path before dropping down to the promontory at the exit of the route, as we would have to go back up again after settling Karen in at what would be her home for the next few hours in her role of official photographer. The view of the Zawn was absolutely breath-taking, and I got my first look at this legendary route I had come here to do. Many climbers do say it is best not to look from this side as it will probably put you off. This may be so in other circumstances, but with the sun shining on the white granite and reflecting off the blue, calm sea, the setting looked idyllic. I’m not so sure that this was Karen’s initial impression as the sheer drops all around made her feel quite ill at first, and it took her a while to settle in to her new environment. It was not long though before she settled in and was admiring the seals, the bird life, and of course the climbers.

Now Karen was safely settled in at her viewing station, Woody, Hal and I went back up to the gearing point to get ready to set off. At this point a couple of guys approached having just finished Wen and asked us what we were planning to climb. They also intended to climb Dream and so in typical British fashion we invited them to go before us, which they gladly accepted and offered us the use of their abseil rope. This was good for us as they would be faster than us and this also saved us carrying, rigging, and de-rigging our own abseil rope. We did not however realise that they were going to plonk themselves down for 40 minutes to have their butties!

Off the guys finally went, and they gradually disappeared down the descent path. We gave them a few minutes to sort themselves out at the abseil station and then we too set off. By now it must have been 4 O’clock and the day seemed to be whizzing by. What followed was the most frightening approach/descent path I have ever experienced. Already slightly (healthily) nervous, the walk along the path became more and more exposed with a huge drop off to my right down into the Zawn a long long way below. At the moment where I could not have been more uncomfortable, the path ended at a vertical scramble down to the small abseil platform. I was not seeing the funny side of this at all and I really did feel like kissing the ground, pope like as I touched down onto solid ground and clipped into the anchor.

Our friends had still not set off down to the starting ledge and we hung around yet again. Finally, Woody set off down first and I readied myself for my big adventure.

Unfortunately there was a traffic jam on the ledge and it was another 30 minutes before the call came from Woody for me to abseil down and join him.



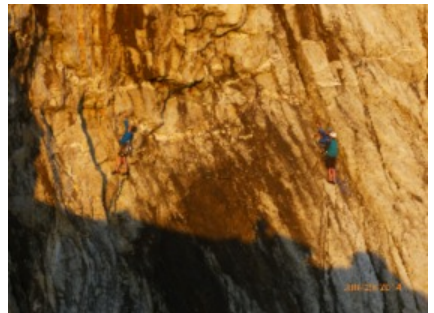
The trip down the face of Wen Zawn was spectacular and on the way down I soaked up the whole atmosphere of the place, admiring close up this time, the white granite, the blue sea, and blue skies. What a perfect day!

I found out next that my prowess at arranging ropes and tying on in such a confined and exposed space is not as good as it could be and there followed much rope arranging and multiple efforts to tie-in in my repeated attempts to get the ropes the right side of each other. Woody was an absolute star and demonstrated the patience of a Saint whilst he talked me through what I needed to do. The making safe and getting ready to climb must have taken us 45 minutes and by now it must have been 5:30 and Hal was still up at the belay station! Our plan was for Woody to get to the next belay point before Hal abbed down and made herself safe, as there wasn't a great deal of room on the ledge.

At last Woody set off up the first crack line and headed off up and along the flake line to the belay. Once he was safe I called to Hal for her to come down and join me, where she made herself safe and we made a reasonably quick job of sorting out our ropes in readiness for her to follow me.

My moment had now come and I set off up the route that I had literally dreamt of, on and off for the past 15 to 20 years. The rock was fantastic and I made steady progress for the next 15 metres or so really enjoying the whole feel of the rock and the atmosphere. Then the holds suddenly disappeared, and all of a sudden my progress was halted, my arms were feeling a little pumped at this point but Woody assured me I only had a couple of stiff moves to do. I called on my tried and tested technique of grunting loudly, heaving with my arms, and flapping around with my feet, with the odd yelp thrown in for good measure – I was across. Better holds followed and with a few more whimpers I was safely at the belay. Woody now had a second cunning plan which was to continue to the next belay (the one we were on was a hanging belay and rather uncomfortable), as Hal was on a 60 metre rope, it should just about be long enough.

Off Woody went and I belayed him along the long rising traverse, which rather worryingly looked a little stiff as he approached the last few metres where he needed to drop down to the next belay point at the junction with Concrete Chimney. Soon it was my turn and away I went up the huge rising flake which was absolutely fantastic, perfect for my technique of pulling on the arms and skipping across



with the feet. Soon, it happened again, nothing to put my feet on, and minimal for my hands, and arms pumped once more. I had to dig deep here and pull out my best grunts and whimpers, and after some scuffling around I made it to the belay point.

At last, (at around 8:00pm) Hal began climbing and at last she reached her climbing buddies after so long in her enforced exile on the ledges. She climbed in her usual understated style and hardly broke into a sweat as she ran the two pitches into one completing a full 60 metres in one go. With Hal safely secured on the belay it was time for Woody to start out on the extremely intimidating final pitch. The sun was low giving the rock an amazing golden glow, and the tide was low giving the impression of an even greater amount air under the feet. The final pitch traverses across the seemingly bottomless end of the Zawn through a series of blocks, corners, and overhangs. It is one of the most intimidating, but beautiful places I have ever been. The beauty of the place, with the fantastically unusual nature of the rock had the effect of soothing away some of the terrors that I should have been feeling, and I was much calmer than I thought I would have been.



Woody finally topped out and I was my time to go. I navigated the so called “desperate” move described in the guide book, across the overlap in the corner and started across a series of good holds, navigating myself with a new found confidence, around a series of corners to the final slab. This was desperate, I couldn’t find anything for my feet, and not much positive for my hands either. The gear required many extenders to prevent it being pulled out and so although I felt safe to a point, if I were to come off I would not necessarily be able to get on back on route. I think at this point, I had convinced everyone within 10 square miles that I was actually coming off here, and Karen had now stopped taking photographs, and had probably stopped breathing as well. As usual, I was being a drama Queen, and I managed to pull it out of the bag and make the moves to the sanctuary of the final juggy holds leading to and up the exit chimney. I topped out at around 10:00pm leaving Hal to follow in a very dim light indeed. It was of some comfort to note that she did admit to having to struggle a little at the point of my drama.

It was with an incredible feeling of elation that we all had a group hug by moonlight at the end of what was certainly the best climbing experience I have ever had. Our celebrations had to be put on hold for a while though as there was a couple still on the route who still had the final pitch to do, in the dark. We felt it was the right thing to do to hang around and give them some moral support as it would have been especially daunting and probably felt like they were the only people on the planet whilst struggling across the final pitch in the dark.

It was therefore 11:45 before we set across the island back to the car. Embarrassingly, we did not have a head torch between us and so we had an interesting walk back with one or two detours thrown in. At 12:45 we made it back to the cars and had a celebratory couple of swigs of wine from our left-over's from the previous night to toast Dave's Grand Birthday Day Out.

Dave 'Birthday Boy' Hicks



Hot Rock, Easter 2014

For me, this year's Hot Rock trip started on Saturday 5th April when I took the Chunnel to Calais and proceeded to ride my Beemer down to Calpe, the venue for our regular Easter foray on to Euro Rock. It took me 3 uneventful days to ride the 1100 miles. The weather was kind to me and the campsites, especially the ones in Spain were very good. The only time I felt pressured was on the Sunday in the south of France. All the campsites seemed to be closed, as were most of the petrol stations and I ended up riding 450 miles to stay on a closed municipal site with little fuel to spare.

I camped about 20 miles from Calpe on the Tuesday night so was able to pick up the key to the villa I had booked first thing on the Wednesday morning. The villa had 5 bedrooms each with 2 single beds and was walking distance to the beaches, shops and restaurants of Calpe. It also had 2 kitchens, 2 living rooms and a swimming pool. All in all spacious and most comfortable, if a little Spartan in the utensil department although the agent did provide us with a free Wi-Fi setup. This was all for a little as £11.30 per person per night.

Andy Dunhill and Nick Hepburn arrived early afternoon and after settling in we wasted no time to go climbing at Toix Oeste and ticked off 3 grade 5's which we had not done on previous visits. The following day we climbed some 5's and 6's at

Guadalest and on the Friday climbed 6 routes at a recently developed sector of Alcalali.

Saturday saw the arrival of the rest of the team to bring our total to 9 in all. So, with Dave Wood, Geoff Brindle, Tom Knowles, Steve Wrigley, Martin Dale and Liam Gaston we all departed to Murla, another crag none of us had previously visited. Throughout the next week we all tended to go the same crag although Steve and Liam occasionally went off to do their own thing. Craggs visited were L'Ocaive, Guadalest again, Bellus, Sax, Font D'Axia, Echo 1.5, Penon de Ilfach and the Puig Campana. The weather was excellent if a little too hot but a word of caution if you decide to go to Sax - I remember climbing there many years ago with Adrian Clifford, the weather was glorious when we arrived but we both got cold on the crag. The same happened on this visit; we arrived in the blistering midday heat but an hour or so later we were all in windproofs, well those of us who had heeded my warning.

Steve left us on the Saturday, Andy and Nick on the Sunday and Liam on the Monday leaving the 5 of us to visit Salem, Olta, Alcalali again, Toix, Reconco and Pego although we all didn't go to all these crags.

We left the villa on Saturday 26th April leaving Tom in Benidorm to spend another week or so in the sun. I took another 3 days to get back to Calais. This time my ride up through France was in non stop rain which only ceased 50 miles south of Calais. The joys of Bikin'.

Overall we had an excellent time. Thanks should go to Andy who, as usual looked after the cooking whilst present although Steve, Dave and myself also showed off our culinary skills. Also to Dave who sorted the Hire cars out. Finding the best deals over Easter is not as straight forward as one might think.

Next year (2015) Easter is early again, Good Friday falling on 3rd April so the weather may not be suitable for a Hot Rock trip in most places however Sicily is perhaps geographically suited for this time frame. You may remember we went there at the time of the dust cloud from a volcanic eruption causing flights to be cancelled a few years ago. There has been some development climbing wise at San Vito on the NW tip of the island and there are many crags on the island we did not visit due to the fact that they are quite spread out. If you are interested or have any suggestions for an alternative venue please let me know.

Chris Thistlethwaite

Northumberland Meet 7 & 8 June 2014



This is the fourth time we have stayed on the National Trust's Cragside Estate at Rothbury and it was a successful, although poorly 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 a couple of years ago, is excellent and the

extensive grounds offer lots of opportunities for walks. The meet was – Chris Thistlethwaite, Geoff Brindle, Tom Knowles, Christine Fry – Up, Christine Barbier & me. A few others had expressed an interest but were put off by the poor forecast which is a shame because the weather was not that bad.

Saturday morning was very sunny & warm although it was due to rain hard later. We decided to go onto the Simonside Hills & walk around a few crags to do an easy route on each one.

The first was Selby's Cove over on the south side of the hills, about an hour's walk from the car park. We arrived as the cloud built up. Chris & I fought our way up a slightly greasy/green Holly Tree Wall Severe but we did get to the top as the rain started. The rain put an end to our plans so we trudged back over the moors in the cloud & rain. I suggested a late afternoon tour around some real ale pubs which seemed like a good idea. The first one in



Eglingham was closed. We then went to Alnwick to the John Bull which was also closed! Geoff managed to sniff out one that was open & sold real ale – Timothy Taylors which was acceptable they said. After a few pints we returned to Cragside for food, more beer (bottled) & wine. Christine F held her own on the drinking front just about keeping pace with Chris & Geoff. *(Ed: Not something to be proud of Christine!)*

Tom tried to match her but it seems he failed as he woke up on Sunday with a bad hangover and had to head home - drunk under the table by a little old lady!!!!

Sunday was very nice so Chris, Geoff, Christine B & I went for a very pleasant walk up Windy Gyle to the Scottish border. There was one minor shower on the top for a few minutes but otherwise sun & great views. This is a very quiet & remote part of the country. Christine F had an enjoyable walk around the grounds at Cragside and a leisurely drive home.

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

Andy Dunhill

The CIC Meet.

(or, The Old Man and the Mountain)

The booking was for six but in the event there were only two of us. My partner-to-be and I had never met and it seemed that we might be something of a mismatch - he is vigorous, youthful (*Ed: yeah, right*), highly experienced and extremely fit, whereas I can boast only decrepitude. I feared I might acquit myself ignominiously. I can't be doing with ignominy at my age.

We were unable to set off until late afternoon so it was nearing closing time when we reached the locked gate to the 'top car park'. Darren had warned me of the high-tech intricacies of the padlock but I was quite unable to overcome them, and simply couldn't get the thing undone. Nasty modern contraption. Perhaps there was another gate... maybe if we drove around the woods for a while we might find it. There wasn't, and we didn't, and soon we were back at the same old (locked) gate. This time my technically minded young colleague mastered the padlock with ease, so we were able to get lost in the Leanachan Forest without any further delay. I was adamant that at every junction in the track the uphill one was ours, and due to this misconception we visited several sylvan dead-ends before eventually fetching up at a hydroelectric intake where a large sign warned us of its many dangers.

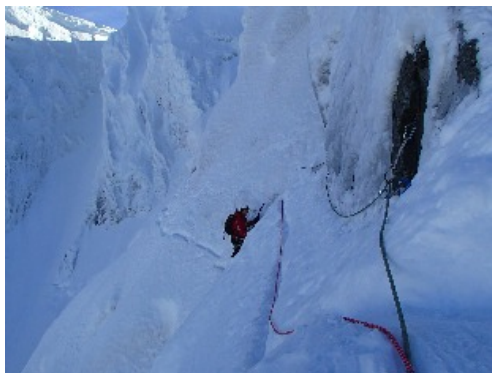
It was time to phone the President. He was comfortingly sympathetic to our plight. Yes, finding the way through the forest could be very difficult. Yes, it was something like a rabbit warren. Labyrinthine, even. We needed to head towards the edge of the trees. Above the hydroelectric station. No, he couldn't say precisely which turn we ought to take, but was confident that we would find our way to the car park. Maybe before dawn. Thus reassured, we practiced simple Brownian movement for a further few miles before finding ourselves back at the locked gate again. Again we set off into the darkness, my colleague spotting at once the correct track which had eluded us so far. We parked up, shouldered gargantuan packs and headed up the Allt a'Mhuilinn by the light of a gibbous moon and a starry sky. Our head torches were scarcely necessary. Magical.

My companion was much slowed by an intestinal battle with the mediocre fish and chips we had snatched in Fort William and, feeling seriously unwell, had to stop from time to time. This was fortunate for me as it meant that I could just about keep up with him though when we reached the hut, well into the small hours, I was in a state of near exhaustion. We burrowed into spaces on the bunks between the cocooned forms who snored, wheezed and farted in distinctly foreign fashion.

A six heures du matin, les Francaises sprang to their feet – the hut was full of ‘em - to enjoy Cordon Bleu breakfasts before rushing off to climbs of cinq, six and sept . But we lingered fitfully and were amongst the last to leave the hut.

Now I had mentioned to my partner that I'd love to do Tower Ridge – doesn't everybody? - but I did feel that its length and difficulty might be a bit much for my geriatric frame. So he chose for me a pleasant bumble of grade II or thereabouts up one of the gullies on the west side of the Douglas Boulder. The sky was clear, the sun shone, the snow was crisp and lovely and I was really enjoying myself when I arrived on the snowy knife-edge a little way above the Douglas gap. And here it was that his cunning plan was revealed.

“The good news,” he said, “is that we are already a third of the way up Tower Ridge. The bad news is that there are still two thirds left to go.” Now my hearing is regarded as quite good for a man of my years so I was unable to pretend that I hadn't heard. I couldn't really back down (nor actually climb down either) without revealing the wimp inside, so up I had to go. The conditions were superb and the climbing fantastic -- pitch upon pitch of peerless perfection towards a clear blue sky. There were a number of parties ahead of us so there was good excuse to stop



and rest at every belay, where I failed to conceal my exhaustion behind affected nonchalance.

At one such pause we heard the roar of Number Four Gully avalanching and soon saw the team, with their dogs, searching the debris field. The helicopter hovered above. We later learned that Paulo, one of the French Guides from La Grave, had been standing on the cornice when it collapsed.

He dropped, in a sort of uncontrolled standing glissade, 400 metres or more, then, almost incredibly, picked himself and walked painfully down to the hut!

We cruised up to the Great Tower in fine style and I peered around the corner to the left. Now, my eyes are considered quite good for a man of my advancing years but the sight that met my gaze would have made many a younger fellow defecate involuntarily – this was the Eastern Traverse. Fortunately my continence is regarded by my contemporaries as exemplary.... But, eventually, I felt duty bound to follow my colleague and savour the void. The snow was perfect, the traverse line was well-banked and the climbing was, in truth, a delight. The last pitches after Tower Gap were completed in the evening sunshine and on the summit plateau my leader could find no safe belay (our deadman was in my rucksack) so he ran – sprinted, even - across the summit plateau, pulling the rope tight behind

him and obliging me to leap at high speed up the last pitch. Leaping, at my age! I ask you.... I flopped at his feet, exhausted. "Didn't want you to miss the sunset." he explained. And what a sunset! We lingered, exalting in the glories of the golden glow over the Cuillin of Rum. The guide books are right - Tower Ridge has to be 'the finest mountaineering expedition in Scotland'.

Because of all the cornices there was no safe way directly off the plateau, so we set off down the zigzags to the halfway Lochan and got round to the hut, more CAF than CIC, at about 10 o'clock. I was too tired to eat and crawled wearily into my pit. Henriques, my next-door neighbour on the bunk was already snoring in a rhythmic fashion which might have been quite soothing but for his frequent, explosive realignment of limbs which resembled copulating deckchairs. I didn't care. I slept like a brick.

The French were up early again in the clear dry morning but we were again the last out of the hut. I had been both pleased and surprised not to have woken up quadriplegic and I begged my youthful mentor to give me a more gentle day. So we set off towards the Brenva face to see if any of the short climbs were in condition but we found them all threatened by sun-warmed cornices. No go. Lurching back toward to the hut, I got myself set for a snoozy geriatric afternoon. But rest and recuperation were not a part of my colleague's plans for me; he was sure that the four stars of Ledge Route would be a useful



addition to my CV. So up this splendid route we soloed, again in excellent conditions and clear skies. The route was crowded with Everesters. Molly was being filmed training for a sponsored attempt on the world's highest mountain and a little higher we met Peter Bowker, a young soldier who had lost a leg in Helmand and who was climbing with a spring prosthesis. He is a tough cookie and we shall both sponsor him (and Help for Heroes). We reversed Ledge Route and were back in time for an early dinner.

After another night beside the deckchairs I was still able to stand up, and to eat my muesli unaided, so my sprightly young friend suggested upping the ante to a Grade IV. The weather was starting to change; clouds were rolling in and the thaw was apparent as we made our way up to Pinnacle Ridge on the Trident Buttress. The rocks of the arête itself trickled with meltwater. This was my first real mixed climbing, and as my colleague led on out of sight up a rocky groove, climbing slowly and positioning frequent runners, I covered under a dripping overhang and began to experience The Fear. (Or, more accurately, The Terror.) As

I progressed from shivering to quivering and then to quaking I cast about for an excuse to avoid having to climb this frightening and possibly very dangerous route. It was too late now to feign a broken ankle, and an attack of the lightning alopecia wasn't likely to convince.... I had just managed to remember the presenting symptoms of yellow fever when he went and took in all the slack, so I had no choice but to follow.

Now, when you actually get to doing this mixed climbing stuff it is really quite a jolly wheeze. 'Cos if there aren't any footholds in the rock then you kick at it with those spiky things on your shoes and make holds wherever you want. And you can whack your ice tool into tiny nubbins of moss and lichen and stuff for handholds. Or you can stick your pick into cracks in the rock that you couldn't ever get your fingers into (this is apparently called "talking", although all I could hear was the chatter of terrified teeth). Enjoyment gradually began to oust The Fear and I was soon having so much fun that I actually got to lead a pitch or two. I got the last (short and easy) pitch and clambered up onto the summit plateau with a genuine whoop of glee. I think it may have been a recurrence of the old Alzheimer's. Or hysteria. Age, you understand.

And this time we knew the easy way down – Ledge Route again, but night was approaching and I became frightened of descending in the dark so I offered to go all the way around by the Halfway Lochan again.... My companion assured me that he would not let me die. And that he would NOT go round by the Halfway Lochan again. So down the Ledges we went again. I had a feeble little headtorch but my pal's mountain rescue headlamp lit up most of the Ben so I slithered down happily, bathed in artificial daylight and with a rope for confidence. My comrade cooked a vast Spag. Bog. con chorizo, of surpassing excellence, just to make the Frenchmen jealous.

Friday dawned warm with low cloud, 60 mph gusts and driving rain. All nationalities fled as one, until only lunatics were left on the mountain. Following my impeccable directions we found a somewhat unusual track back to Fort William. My young companion dropped me off at the station before expending more of his boundless energy on the Torridons.

These young fellows - they retire very early these days.

Thank you, FMC, and thank you, Adrian, for giving me the three greatest mountain days that I can remember*.

Mark Lambert

*(My memory is considered by my contemporaries to be exemplary... etc., etc.)

Working Weekend Stair 25 - 26 July 2014

We had an excellent turnout - Chris Campbell, Kevan Ebrell, Mike Howe, Chris Thistlethwaite, Geoff Brindle, Dave Wood, Hal R, Christine Fry, Dave Cundy & friend Mark (he's not even in the club), Richard Duerden, Caroline Webb, Dave Earle & me.

The main job was to paint the outside of the cottage. Mike & Kevan arrived early on Friday so made a good start. A few of us had been up all week enjoying the superb weather so got stuck in late afternoon. The job was finished by the time we stopped on Saturday & looks a lot better



The rubbish bin that sits outside the gate tends to be blown around by the wind so we created a secure area for it within the boundary fence but accessible from the outside for the bin men. A few days later they did empty & return it to the secure area.

We gave the cottage a good clean inside which included wiping down all of the mattresses & cleaning the chairs plus most importantly a thorough clean of the kitchen. We threw out some of the utensils in the kitchen that are unusable & rearranged things a bit. Mike put an electric socket in the Ladies dorm so you can now dry your hair. He also split the lights in the main room so each one can be switched on separately. One of the outlets in the kitchen sink was blocked so we dismantled it & cleaned out many years of gunge. In the process the holding screw disintegrated so we replaced it with a temporary one

In the garden we cut the grass & replaced a few stones that had fallen from the dry stone wall. A dead tree in the garden had fallen so was fully taken down. We removed the old concrete base that the LPG cylinders sat on as it was a trip hazard when exiting the fire stairs from the small dorm.

I provided a veggie meal on Saturday evening 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. Mike Howe tasked me to prepare a list of jobs to do in the cottage which I've done & there is a lot to keep us busy.

Andy Dunhill

Photo Memories From Kalymnos



Looking good: Stridgeon on Lestrygon (6c, Odyssey, Kalymnos)

If I pull hard enough I can get this flake out of the way...



...but now I'm knackered