

# THE FYLDE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2017



big 40-pager with something for everyone, from sun-soaked to chilly and calling in at cushy, gutsy and thrutchy along the way



# contents

## from the Editor

I'm sorry this issue is a bit on the late side. Pulling this forty-pager into shape has proved more of a struggle than usual. Either that or I'm losing my touch, getting lazy or both.

Anyway, to conceal my unforgivable tardiness, I've made a sly change to the date format and given our magazine a new seasonal air, if that's OK with you.

Confession time: believe it or not, in the moaning, begging-for-sympathy bit that I started off with, I very nearly tried to shoehorn the word 'Sisyphean' in front of 'struggle', until I thought better of it and went for a lie-down.

Preentious? Moi?? - and don't get me started on the problems I'm having with excessive, pointless alliteration. Those silly little word pairs, giggling to themselves just because they sound similar, need kicking up the proverbial. But it worries me what we might finish up with instead - something like a tepid mug of coffee, without the milk, without the sugar . . . and without the coffee!

There! That's another column filled :)

*Incidentally, following a sudden and unexpected furniture failure at the recent Stair Intro/BBQ, you're now free to call me FatArse and I'll no longer be able to disagree.*  
Roy



Deadline for the SPRING issue is the middle of January and as always, your valued contributions are very welcome. Please email your words and pictures to: [arte.roy@gmail.com](mailto:arte.roy@gmail.com) You can also call me on 01253 305 759 or call/text on 07982 137 832

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There's a picture to set your pulses racing.

If you thought that former (and soon-to-be-former) club chairmen went out in a blaze of Nordic glory (you know the sort of thing: Viking longboat on fire, gliding majestically down the Wyre out to sea) think again!

Just rattle a frying pan and they're there, forks at the ready. They even line up in chronological order and, just in case you've not been keeping up with the club's comings and goings over the past few years, here they are: Martin Dale, Clive Bell & Darren Hartley on a recent Working Weekend at Little Langdale.



Wild swimming in the Little Langdale & Loughrigg tarns included a realistic lesson by Rob Lewis on how to avoid drowning if ever you need a nap, and a highly convincing sea lion impersonation from Karen Hicks. Valuable skills that only now you've realised you missed out on acquiring - the first, to not drown and therefore, carry on living and the other, to get free fish.



front cover photo by Martin Bennett of Alan Blackburn on Valmiana in Valnontey, Cogne. photos on this page of the club's August Wild Swimming Weekend are by Caroline Webb

## from the Chairman

Late July already with the long days and short nights that climbers and walkers look forward to the most. As our members head for the heights in good weather, eager to tick the big ticks, it's always great to hear about their adventures on the club's Facebook pages - and that's whether their exploits are high up in the French Alps or just out and about on our local crags.

I called in recently at Little Langdale during the latest working weekend and was reminded - as we all should be - of how remarkable an asset our huts really are to the club and its members.

Both of our properties are in great shape and their superb locations - in that new UNESCO World Heritage Site we fondly call *The Lakes* - remain truly fantastic and quite unbeatable.

Are we lucky . . . or what?

How time flies. This is my fifth year as your Chairman and I've enjoyed every minute of it. It's been a great honour to have been elected by you over the past five years and I thank you all for your support . . . but the time has now come for me to let you know that at the next AGM I shall be stepping down and handing over the reins to a new pair of hands.

The club is in a strong financial position and continues to be active, so I'm happy to know that all's well and I wish the very best to whoever takes on the wonderfully rewarding office I've been privileged to hold.

In the meantime though, our winter social programme will soon beckon and welcome us round to the Old Town Hall in Poulton, so if you have thoughts of presenters you'd like to hear from, please get in touch with our social secretary Tony Hulme who's compiling the winter syllabus right now

I hope you'll make the most of what's left of the summer and as always, make sure you get pictures and tales of your exploits to Roy, so that he can help you share them with everyone else in the club.

Darren  
July 26<sup>th</sup> 2017





# FOUR GO BOLD ON THE BOLTS IN LES CALANQUES

May 16<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, four of us took advantage of cheap Manchester to Marseille flights - only £63.00 return - to enjoy a week's climbing in the glorious sunshine of the South coast of France.

A calanque is a narrow, steep-walled limestone inlet, a mini fjord if you will, of which a number occupy an area between Marseille to the west and Cassis to the east to form *The National Park of the Calanques*. Three of us had visited the area before but climbing only at *En Vau*, the most popular of the Calanques. My own first visit was in September 1980 with, if memory serves me right, Martin Dale, Steve Swindells and Paul and Julie Reid. It was at a time when, along with many other English climbing teams, we were trying to locate crags documented in Pete Livesey's then recent tome: *French Rock Climbs*, better titled *Lost In France with Pete Livesey!*

I now realise why *En Vau* was the most popular. We found that without a Sat Nav and GPS co-ordinates we'd have struggled to find most of the crags. *En Vau* is the only Calanque that's accessible without having to drive through Marseille, and believe me, driving in Marseille is most challenging - maybe even worse than in Italian cities. We didn't visit *En Vau* this time but relied on Martin Bennett's driving skills as well as Nick Dalzell's knack for

A HOT ROCK REPORT from Chris Thistlethwaite with photos from those there

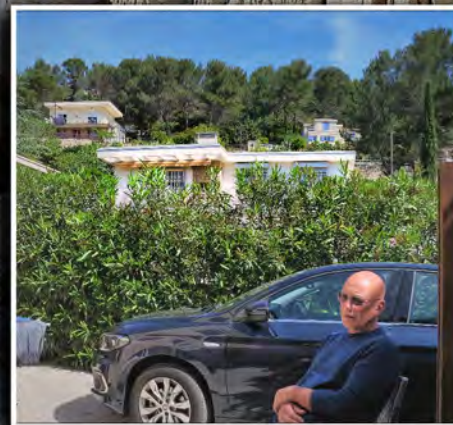
navigation to get us to each of our chosen venues for the day.

Martin had found accommodation in Carnoux, a few miles north of Cassis, and we arrived there early Tuesday evening.

It wasn't the most spacious place we've ever had but it was more than adequate. 'Cheap and Cheerful' would probably sum it up best.

It was however, well situated for easy access to the climbing potential of the immediate area and more importantly, we also had a supermarket and a few local bars within easy reach!

Wednesday morning, we found our way along narrow, bendy roads and steeply over a col to Sormiou (*below*), our first Calanque of the trip.



**who was there?**  
**Martin Bennett**  
**Nick Dalzell**  
**Andy Dunhill**  
**and Chris**

We had a brief look at a couple of crags but eventually opted for *l'Arche Perdue* since it was in the shade and only a 30 minute walk to get there.

30 minutes eh? Well it almost could've been. If only we hadn't had to carry our gear in a 25 Celcius heat and chose to jog all the way - which we certainly didn't - so it took us a fair bit longer.

continues overleaf

photo: Martin Bennett



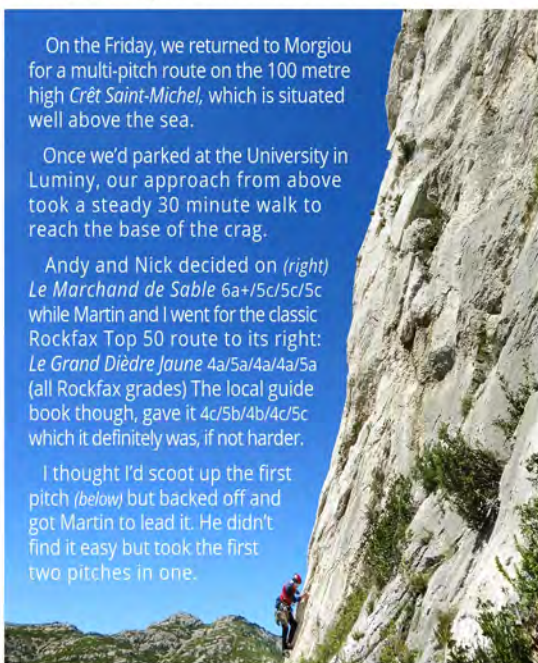


Arche Perdue, Sormiou

Being so accessible, we weren't at all surprised to find that it's quite polished and as it didn't take any shade, we found the grades a bit stiff.



But we managed five or six routes before retiring to a most scenic if expensive bar for a well-earned beer, or in Andy's case, a well-earned fruit juice!



On the Friday, we returned to Morgiou for a multi-pitch route on the 100 metre high *Crêt Saint-Michel*, which is situated well above the sea.

Once we'd parked at the University in Luminy, our approach from above took a steady 30 minute walk to reach the base of the crag.

Andy and Nick decided on (right) *Le Marchand de Sable* 6a+/5c/5c/5c while Martin and I went for the classic Rockfax Top 50 route to its right: *Le Grand Dièdre Jaune* 4a/5a/4a/4a/5a (all Rockfax grades) The local guide book though, gave it 4c/5b/4b/4c/5c which it definitely was, if not harder.

I thought I'd scoot up the first pitch (below) but backed off and got Martin to lead it. He didn't find it easy but took the first two pitches in one.



Port Morgiou

Thankfully, the following morning, Nick was fully recovered, but he wasn't up for hiking so we opted for a second Calanque, Morgiou (above) to climb on *L'Abri Côtier*, only a 15 minute walk from the car. Again, we had to navigate a very narrow, bendy and steep road over a col to get to the Calanque.



The top pitch, and the meat of the route, was a 45 metre corner which Martin led most boldly on widely spaced bolts. Andy and Nick both found the 6a+ first pitch of their route hard, the blustery wind not helping them on an exposed face. This day was perhaps the highlight of our week's climbing.

The guide books strongly suggest avoiding driving down to any of the Calanques over the weekend when everyone and their dog will be fighting for space on the narrowest of roads, so once again, we parked up at Luminy, retraced our steps to the *Crêt Saint-Michel* but cut off down to *La Roche Percée* with its natural arch at the top end. Again, Martin and I struggled on our 4 or 5 routes near to the arch but Nick and Andy, even though they were climbing routes much harder than us, found the grades ok.



*La Roche Percée* - a most idyllic spot to spend the day



photo: Andy Dunhill





We chose to get away from the Calanques on the Sunday and drove to *Baou de Quatre Ouro* overlooking the port of Toulon.

Another hot day but with shade found on sectors *Tequila* and *Ummagamma* (this photo) where we focused our efforts.

Once more, we did 4 or 5 routes on which, and not for the first time, Rockfax grades failed to truly reflect the difficulties encountered.



Monday was our last day and our initial plan was to climb the Calanques' most prominent route - *Arête de Marseille* on the *Grande Candelle* (above) a six pitch classic starting with a 6a pitch.

However, after a week of struggling on some of the so-called 4s, I was reluctant to attempt it and although I was happy for the rest of the team to go for it, we ended up instead at our third Calanque - and the most westerly of them - *Les Goudes*. Although we hadn't taken a rest day and were all feeling a bit tired, we still managed 5 or 6 routes on *l'Escalier des Géants* (below) a rather better crag than expected.

Andy deserves a special mention here. According to Nick, he climbed in good style two of the hardest routes of the trip - a steep and stunning crack (photo opposite) and a sustained and technical groove.



We had a leisurely journey to the airport on Tuesday, checking out an alternative access to *En Vau* on the way, which would avoid a long coastal hike in the sun.

On my first visit to *En Vau* in 1980 in the height of summer, it was so intolerably hot that we'd drunk all our water by the time we reached the crag and so didn't get any climbing done. It's a mistake I won't make again. In any case, this alternative approach is a far better solution to the problem.

Overall this was a great trip to new crags for all of us and at a most reasonable cost of just under £300 all-in for each of us.

### *a guide to guidebooks*

A number of guide books are available. Rockfax's *France: Côte d'Azur* informs you on what's available in the area but don't trust the reliability of the information provided. We wondered whether or not they'd actually climbed some of the routes . . . or in certain cases, even visited the crags at all!

We also had a local selective guide to the Calanques, *Calanques Climbing*, which we found useful, though the English translation left us a bit confused at times. I always like to obtain local guides to an area and should I return, I intend to buy the three definitive local guides covering the inland as well as the coastal areas of the Calanques.

### *a word of warning*

A note of caution though - and as guide books warn and our hosts were at pains to mention - the area does have a reputation for serious car crime, so it's vital that you leave nothing in your vehicle.

We only touched on what's available to climb here and it's certainly well worth a return visit. Although on this occasion we only climbed, there's also a huge potential for walking in this most scenic of areas.

Believe me when I say there's absolutely loads to go at in the Calanques alone, and that's not to mention the surrounding area.

Chris



photo: Martin Bennett

Andy leading *La Fissure du Géant 6b*



# Climbing on Sandray

Following on from last year's trip to Mingulay, Andy Dunhill joins members from the Fell & Rock and Eden Valley clubs for a week of climbing on another well-off-the-beaten-track island in the Outer Hebrides



Sandray is a small (385 hectares/1.5 sq miles) island just south of Vatersay, itself a southerly extension of The Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides. Although ruined buildings reveal it was once populated, by the early 1930s the last residents had left and the island is now owned by a group of farmers for sheep grazing and has become home for seals and a large seabird colony.

Having paid our £25 return fare, we took the CalMac ferry from Oban to Castlebay on Barra. Once there we met up with Francis Gillies of Barra Fishing Charters\* and owner of *The Boy James*, the vessel that would ferry us on the final leg of our journey to Sandray. He agreed to take us - and our substantial baggage of provisions and camping gear - direct to the island that evening for £50 each return.



The weather on last year's trip to Mingulay was almost tropical, but this time it was more variable, raining during the first night and into the morning, setting the pattern for the week ahead. On most days though, things brightened up considerably, allowing climbing or walking every day. As with all of the islands in this area the rock is very hard-grained, so safeguarding the abseil rope with rope protectors is essential. We also took a length of carpet, which proved useful.

\* <http://www.barrafishingcharters.com/home.html>

Our first day was probably the best day for weather, with plenty of sun and blue sky. We headed for Sea Creatures Walls and climbed on Dolphin Wall. The abseil was relatively straightforward and we did ten single pitch routes that day, ranging from Hard Severe to E1. We reckoned we'd bagged four new ones but later found that three had already been done. The remaining new one - what with the General Election and all that - we called *Mayday, Mayday!*

The slabs on the left side of Dolphin Wall feature a number of 2 and 3 star HVS and E1 climbs and these proved to be excellent. This wall is well worth a visit. There's a large platform, above high tide, allowing easy access along the base of much of the cliff. The routes further left require some scrambling. To avoid having to carry gear up and down the island, we left most of it in a waterproof bag near the top of the cliff.

Day 2 started late because of rain but we went to the south end of the island to climb in the Canal Walk, so named because of a canal created by a small rock island running parallel with the main cliff. Again, the abseil was OK and we managed four routes, the best of which was probably *Homeward Bound* VS, a sustained climb on excellent rock in a superb position.

*The Caledonian* E1 was also a fine climb and either side of it there are a number of other worthwhile routes of a similar standard.

Day 3 was overcast so we went for a clockwise walk round the island and up to the highest points. There's a band of impressive sand dunes on the east coast running south all the way down to a large beach. From here we walked up the eastern ridge to take a look at slabs near the summit. Worth a look for sure, but since it rained hard every step of the way, that wasn't really the day for it. From there we dropped down to the col at the head of Gleann Mor then up to the highest and windiest point, Carn Ghaltair at 207 metres. We then headed a short way down to the west to visit an old burial place, or Dun, and a rather wild place it was. Then it was back to the tent to dry off... and down several cups of hot tea.

Day 4 saw us at the Tate Gallery. This cliff is easily accessed by walking down a rock ramp. We did a couple of good VSs to warm up on, then a challenging HVS called *New Wave* which was really E1. The tide was fairly low but there was a heavy sea running. Ron lead *Clean Sheet* VS. I was busy taking photos of the sea crashing up the wide channel behind when a wave decided to have a go at me and succeeded in soaking me to the waist. So, after squelching my way up the climb, I decided to call it a day!

The forecast for the following few days was more rain and strengthening winds which would make it difficult for the boat to collect us, so we rang Francis and arranged for him to pick us up a day early.

Day 5, and we were on The Rune Stone Cliff at the north-west end of the island, just a hundred yards from the tents. It was cooler and quite windy. This cliff is also accessed by walking down a ramp. We managed half a dozen climbs including the excellent short *Agent Orange* VS. The highlight of the day was *The Future Is Now* a 2 star HVS which deserves 3. It's tidal and accessed over sea-washed boulders. I then threw myself at - and fell off - a steep E1 - *Birth Stone*. A hold broke off and I dropped about 10 feet onto a good runner, before completing the climb.



It began to rain as we started to pack up our gear and waited for the boat to arrive. Loading up was quite a challenge on the wet slippery rock and the journey back to Castlebay was a wet one. There, we stayed in the Bunk House - <http://www.dunardhostel.co.uk/> - and enjoyed the luxury of our first shower for a week!

Sandray is less serious than either Mingulay or Pabay and has a wider selection of grades, with more in the Severe to HVS range, on cliffs that are easier to access. For a future FMC trip, Sandray would be a good choice, especially for those who fancy getting away from it all.

Andy



photos by Ron Kenyon and Andy Dunhill



# Lost in Little Langdale

as approximately recollected by the editor

May 20<sup>th</sup> and with nothing better to do, I couldn't help but recall the old joke about first contact with the Helarwee Pygmies in Africa and how they came to be named.

Stop me if you've heard it before\*, but it seems that missionaries found a group of them lost in the inconveniently tall grasses surrounding their village. Miraculously, they spoke perfect English and introduced themselves as: 'We're the Helarwee'...

... words that echo down the ages, becoming (via a couple of spelling changes) the bewildered cries heard now and then during the two-day navigation course organised at Little Langdale by Tony Jackson.

Mornings on the two days of the course demanded a classroom setting, which meant we completely took over the place and turned the table through 90 degrees to accommodate the projector and allow us all to see what was going on.

Tony had put together a Powerpoint show for us which we could follow in the course notes he'd prepared. It was all very professional - until we found that part of the printing of the notes had gone horribly awry. Something to do with PDFs from Apple computers not liking being printed via Windows. Far too technical for me to comprehend and, since it was me who'd printed them, I stoically stepped forward and carried the can!

The afternoons - which meant afternosh - were devoted to putting classroom-learned theory, into boots-on-the-ground practice. And it was here that I began to see for the first time that there's far more to a map than, quite literally, meets the eye.

Here you see us on our way from Wilson's Place to Colwith, noting how the 'shape' of the land related to map Contours and dividing our route into Legs, with Linear Features, some of which we followed as Handrails, others, called Catching Features that got in our way, while identifying Isolated Features to aim for or to help orient ourselves. In that way, we put together a step-by-step sequence that, in effect, told 'the story' of the Route we were on.

On reaching the Elterwater road at Colwith, we joined The Cumbrian Way to Skelwith Bridge. A bit further along, as we approached Park Farm, the compass magnifier got a well-deserved look-in.

A first glance of the map, suggested that we were following a single boundary line, but under the lens we could now see the two fences that form the narrow passageway behind the cottages. It didn't mean much - NY3355 0325 if you want to bother looking - but it does reveal the detail that can be found hidden on an OS 1:25 000 scale map.

We bypassed Skelwith Bridge by crossing the new footbridge upstream and rejoined The Cumbrian Way towards Elterwater - a lovely part of what we sometimes dismiss as the Pushchair Walk - noting all the while of course, the geographical features and how they appear on the map. *continues overleaf*



\* OK, so you couldn't stop me going round the houses to have a laugh - and yes, as you've probably already guessed, there is indeed another, 'more robust' version of this joke. If it appeared in print though, I'd get the sack!

**who was there?**  
Cherry Earle,  
Christine Fry,  
Tony Jackson,  
Hal Rzadkiewicz,  
Dave Wood and  
the Editor





As it so happens, it was about then that map studies began to matter rather less and our lovely surroundings to matter rather more!

Tony proved not only expert with maps but, by identifying virtually every flower en route, was also well up to speed on matters botanical and even, briefly, zoological when a mayfly thoughtfully decided to perch on his finger for a photo-op.



not another euphemism to go on the list. Even so, it wasn't the most polished of debuts.

OK - give the lad a break!

He'd just bought it and was mucking around, figuring out what all the buttons were for. As soon as he finds out what they're supposed to do, we're reliably assured that harmony will be restored.

At about the same spot I also managed to shoot (with my camera of course!) a charming trio of chicks and their mother, the identity of which became part conjecture, part mystery - and was eventually discovered to be *entirely* Goosander!

But there was still some way to go - and a pint to be had at the Britannia - before tackling that rough and steep escape from Elterwater Village and then the easy path down to Little Langdale.

Nothing dramatic then but a great day out and fine back at base too. That was, until Tony whipped out his concertina - and no, as you can see, that's

## Remembering Roger Whittle 1946-2017

Roger, a well-liked former member of our club, passed away peacefully at Furness General Hospital on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January at the age of 70.

His obituary in the Northwest Evening Mail reminds us . . .

*'Loving husband of Angie, devoted dad of Amy, Andy, Rosie and Kate, treasured grandpa of Alfie and Toby, dear father-in-law of James and Joe, cool uncle to Mark, Sarah and Ben and a great friend to many.'*



And it is as friends that those in the club who knew him have come forward, not only to tell of their sorrow at his passing and express their sympathy to his wife and family, but also to remember the Roger they knew as a mountaineer, motorcycle enthusiast, great friend . . . and character.

Former club member, Ray Wigglesworth QC - currently chairing the group reviewing governance and organisational structure of the BMC - first met Roger in 1963 when both were students at Blackpool Tech. Ray found Roger to be

great company and *'had a good sense of humour and an impish grin to go with it.'* Ray was also friends with another former club member, Charlie Cook, who remembers meeting Roger for the first time on a Wasdale meet in 1964.

He and Ray - on Charlie's 350cc AJS - endured an eventful journey in the rain to get there. As well as needing to fix a broken chain, they ran out of road in the mist on the fell above Ulpha and had to rescue the bike from a fast-flowing beck, before eventually arriving and pitching at the Wasdale Head campsite and crawling, dog-tired, into their sleeping bags.

According to Charlie, their hard-earned slumber was broken when *'a group of "rowdies" stumbled through the campsite.'* Roger was one of them and their long friendship began that weekend when they teamed up as climbing partners. They also worked together in London and Ulverston and despite moving around with his work, Charlie kept in touch and well remembers their last climb, *Arderikie Wall*, the classic hard severe on Binnein Shuas in Scotland.


Ray Wigglesworth also fondly remembers when they last climbed together. Roger worked as a technical illustrator at Vickers and lived near Broughton. Ray was in the area for a couple of days on a job, so they met up on a warm summer evening in the Duddon Valley at Wallowbarrow Crag with a VS in mind on the left hand side of the main buttress.

The second pitch involved surmounting a bulge and the gangway above but Ray couldn't get a decent runner in, so he retreated to Roger, on the belay, who suggested that he'd give it a go and proceeded to climb the pitch in fine style.

With our Sunday classroom session out of the way we were eager to get out on the fells but first, along the road just beyond Stang End, we went through a double-step counting rigmarole designed to equip us with the time-honoured means of estimating distance travelled and visa versa, to judge how long it'd likely take to get from A to B on a map. *'Remember your number'* we were told. Well, I've forgotten it already!

The trouble is, I'm not sure I'll ever get comfortable with counting steps while walking, but I guess if ever that horrible moment arrives when I just don't know where the hell I am, I'm sure it'll come in handy.

Anyway, before we knew it we were on our way up Black Fell, halting part way to unlock the mysteries of compass bearings and how to aim for and arrive at points on the map - even when they're out of sight.

Surely, everyone's climbed Black Fell. If you've not, then you're in for a treat. The views were great and we clambered over the tempting summit stile to carry on northwards. Tony had the little tarn at NY 3405 0225 in mind - if not in sight - for the final route-finding exercise which, despite how things looked (right) as they set off, was triumphantly completed - while lazy me had an afternoon nap back at the stile. 

So ended our Navigation weekend. I reckon that even those of us unlikely to get lost in the hills took something from it. Cherry and Chris certainly did, but next time Tony's kind enough to host a course, let's hope that more of us will join in the fun.



Ray writes: *'He was grinning from ear to ear when I joined him at the top of the crag and I realised that I had given him the sort of pleasure that can only be gained from the gentle competitive spirit that exists in sport and in life.'*

According to Charlie, Roger was always interested in motorcycles and was *'an ardent Velocette rider, having several before finally settling with a unique 500cc Thruxton which he built up from a box of parts.'*

Roger's liking for lashing bits and pieces together might go some way to explaining this rather fascinating, if bizarre, story from former club members Guy and Lynn Duxbury:

*'Roger bought a stack of new climbing gear and wanted to test its mountain survival properties. At the Langdale cottage, he concocted a complicated cocoon of slings and things, fastened it to one of the iron bedsteads in the dorm and hung himself out of the window bivouac style all night. It was cold in the night, but he couldn't work out how to free himself safely and had to await a (reluctant) rescue team in the morning. He claimed that his feet were frozen for days thereafter!'*



. . . despite the possibility that passing tourists might think they were witnessing a couple of junkies gearing up for a fix!

Jenny Tolley describes his diabetic coping strategies as *'idiosyncratic to say the least. On one occasion,'* she writes, *'walking in Langdale, Roger began to stagger & reel around in a drunken manner due to sugar depletion. He had no food with him, since he was saving his allowance for a night on the beer in the pub. Spying a troop of Boy Scouts approaching, he staggered up to them and requested food (after all, Scouts are always prepared.) Alarmed by his apparently drunken demeanour they handed over sandwiches which he sat and scoffed before making a miraculous recovery, thanked them kindly and strode off, eagerly anticipating his evening of liquid refreshment!'*



Finally & fittingly, Ray Wigglesworth's list of the things that he will most remember about Roger:

1. His grotty pit;
2. His filthy flat ratting cap;
3. His croaking request (made from his pit) for a brew;
4. His enthusiasm for life;
5. His good humour;
6. His unfailing loyalty and friendship.'



# Easter in Dorset

Andy Dunhill & Nick Hepburn take a 'Hot Rock' trip to the sunny south

Unable to make the dates work for the Club trip to France, we decided instead to head for the UK's 'Sun Rock' alternative. With the sun shining most of the time, it certainly lived up to its name - so a good job we packed the sun cream - and the first few days were also decidedly hot. We paid £160 for the week in a caravan on Portland Bill and although basic, it was serviceable and far better than camping.

Since I was last here, 30 or so years ago, a significant number of bolted routes have been put up, making this perhaps the leading sport climbing area in the UK. Also within reach are the longer-established sea cliffs at Swanage, so the whole area offers a wide range of climbs on limestone with a chalky feel to it.

The Rockfax Guide published in January 2012 is up to date but a landslide on part of the Battleship cliffs on the west has taken out some of the climbs and the recommended descent - though there are now nearby alternatives. It also means you can't walk the full length under these cliffs and must access climbs from one side or the other.



The Bill is an island accessed by a causeway and connected to the mainland by the amazing Chesil Beach (above) extending for several miles west.

The island is interesting in a post-industrial sort of way, is well-populated and offers plenty of holiday accommodation. There's a good Tesco and a range of Co-op convenience stores, lots of Fish and Chip shops, plus a few pubs that can be recommended.

*The George* and *The Cove House Inn* on Portland were both good but *The Square & Compass* at Worth Matravers near Swanage, had a great range of ales in a fine antiquated setting. Parking in the whole area can be an issue so follow guide recommendations.

Most of the cliffs face east or west so the best plan is to climb on the east facing ones in the morning, have lunch in the caravan and then head over to the west for the afternoon and evening. This gives the sun a chance to dry out overnight dew which can afflict the cliffs with damp, soapy holds.

Those on the west coast are much better, more impressive and harder, so the usual FMC day for most would probably miss out the morning bit!

Our first three days were very warm and sunny.

We visited The Cuttings and The Cheyne Weares areas in the mornings and did a few 5s to warm up. The best climbs were probably *Jacob's Ladder* on Godnor Far North and *Amen Corner* on the Cutting Edge area. Both are 2 star and well worthwhile and another good feature of these sectors was that we could walk there from the caravan site.

We concentrated our efforts on the Blacknor and Battleships west coast cliffs where there are many excellent quality routes to go at.

The more popular climbs are a bit polished and although there are a few 4s and 5s, you need to be in the 6s or higher to get the most out of the area. The best routes we did include *Reptile Smile* 6a+, *Monsoon Malabar* 6a+ and *Lazy Days and Summer Haze* 6a+.

Access to most of these cliffs is easy but there are some steep drops so care needs to be taken on the descents and when walking along the bottom. After heavy rain, we'd recommend keeping well clear and we also wouldn't want to be caught out here in a downpour.

*continues page 18*



Mid-day shade at Godnor Far North



Blacknor South - arête and wall of Love in the Mist 6a



Blacknor South - 3 star Turned to Stone 6c+



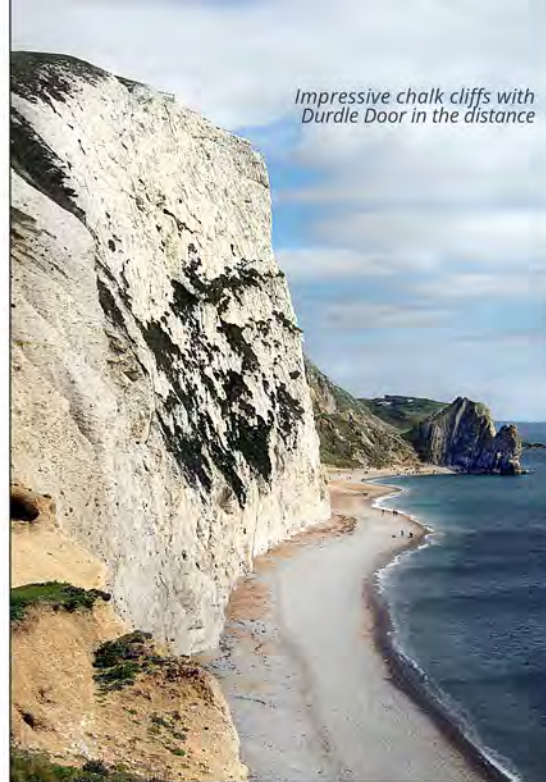




Looking east from White Nothe along the Purbeck Heritage coast

On the Wednesday it was rather overcast so we decided to take a rest from climbing and drove to the National Trust car park above Ringstead Bay on the mainland and walked along the coast to Durdle Door and Lulworth Cove.

Both were very busy but the walking there and back was excellent with a lot of ups and downs especially with our detours to the beaches at Durdle Door and Ringstead via the steep if improbable smugglers path at White Nothe.



Impressive chalk cliffs with Durdle Door in the distance

On the Friday we again decided on a change, so drove to the cliffs at Swanage, which took just under an hour, and climbed on the Boulder Ruckle area. This was traditionally-protected sea cliff climbing which required an abseil approach to the routes.

We did *Finale Groove* HVS and *Elysium* E1. Both are Rockfax top 50 routes and are very good. The latter had a few soapy holds and some loose rock which made it challenging. As the guide says, it pays to drop your grade a bit on these cliffs.

Recollections of Swanage suggest some good climbing . . . wrapped up in more than its fair share of loose rock. Our visit only enhanced that view.

In all then, we managed about 25 routes - plus our coastal walk - adding up to a full week of 7 active days.

Andy and Nick

## SO WHAT'S NEXT?

Because there was still lots more to do in Dorset, the club booked a caravan for the week including the August Bank Holiday. By the time you read this, our second Dorset meet will have been over and done with, so we look forward to a further report and photos in our Spring magazine issue.

Alan Bell remembers his friend

# Gordon Heywood



- one of our club's longest serving members, who died in February.

The crematorium at Carleton on February 23<sup>rd</sup> could barely hold so many wishing to show their fondness and respect for Gordon and express their sadness at his passing to his wife Joan and family.

The warm and affectionate eulogy from Alan Bell, his friend of 70 years, told of Gordon's love of the outdoors and of 'a young man of boundless energy who threw himself into all kinds of projects' with an enthusiasm so infectious that 'he always had a tail of followers to support him and collectively enjoy whatever activity he was involved in.'

Shortly after demob from National Service, Gordon joined up with teams renovating the newly-acquired Little Langdale cottage and Alan remembers him helping to get a new water supply sorted, digging channels for the drains and having a hand in converting the old washhouse into a toilet block.

He reminds us that Gordon, though a great walker, was no climber. Instead, he loved exploring underground and often spent weekends potholing. 'As ever,' Alan tells us, 'his enthusiasm attracted members and soon Gordon was leading the potholing group within the club.'

He especially remembers that Gordon led him and Tony Whiteley to safety after they'd gabbled their way past the exit out of Lancaster Pot. From then on, Gordon would often tease and remind them that they'd 'have been walking round & round those tunnels to this day!'

Alan also recollects the carefree times when 'Ingleton in the 1950s and 60s was like the Wild West.' On Saturday nights, young men from the smoke and industry of Lancashire & Yorkshire towns would gather for the very same dances, crowds and crack that Gordon loved so much. As Alan knew only too well ... 'he was in his element.'

But times were changing ... and Gordon discovered skiing!

To hear Alan tell the tales, these were pretty hair-raising times.

In 1960 for example, on a trip to Kitzbühel in Austria - and though barely competent in this, their new thrill pursuit - they decided to tackle the Hahnenkamm Downhill!! What takes modern racers less than a couple of minutes to complete, took our four-man tyro team more than two hours and at one point they had to help dig their leader out of a vertical snow bank that he'd buried himself in.

It's true to say that progress to the bottom involved far more falling down than skiing down. Alan tells us - 'We swore never to do anything so dangerous and nerve racking ever again - but of course, we did!' And so, they and Gordon continued to enjoy an endless stream of adventures.

Then, a young lady came into his life. Her name was Joan, they fell in love, got engaged and at their March wedding in 1964, Alan stood by his friend as best man.

Daughters Sue and Kazz came along and completed their family of outdoor adventurers. Regular campers on the Isle of Mull, they soon had other families in the club sharing unforgettable evenings, often with beach bonfires and dancing on the sands until the tide came in.

No wonder their Whitsuntide meets became so popular - and it was a popularity that Gordon almost magically maintained on his later adventures - such as skiing in Italy - with Joan looking after the admin and the man himself enthusiastically leading up front.

It wasn't always plain sailing though. Health problems for Joan, and later for Gordon too, meant they could no longer wander, as they would've liked, around Scotland in their camper van. However, whenever possible, they rented a small cottage in the Dumfries area and carried on - rather more gently - with their adventures!



Gentlemen's Weekend meet November 2014



Gordon's lasting legacy to the club has to be his Gentlemen's Weekends at Stair. Now named in Gordon's memory, the next one is on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November when we'll raise our glasses once more.

HERE'S TO YOU GORDON, OUR ABSENT FRIEND!



# The 2016 Borrowdale Guide

**Andy Dunhill**, one of the editors, tells the story of how it was done and of roles played in its production by members of the FMC

It all started at an FMC Dinner in the Coledale, when Pete Latimer asked if anyone was interested in getting involved with producing the next Borrowdale Guide.

Little realising that it would take the best part of six or seven years for it to appear . . . I said yes!

The team started off with lead Editor Pete Latimer and climbing partner Richard Tolley doing the lower grade routes, Matt de Vaal of Needlesport tackling the harder ones and me in the middle.

Our task was to correct errors unresolved in previous guides; to take out crags and climbs dug out of the hillside 30 years ago that had returned to nature; to take into account that much of the valley is an SSSI and, because Lakes climbs have tended to be under-graded, do all we could to apply grades consistent with those elsewhere in the UK.

We wanted to create a guide with crags and climbs that visitors could approach and climb without finding things totally overgrown.

We had to look at all the existing climbs and combine these with new routes done since the last guide appeared. Barry Clarke, who you may have heard of, had been active in the valley, finding many new crags and climbs. Some of these were worthwhile, many were not, but all had to be checked. Our main resource was the New Climbs section on the Fell and Rock Club (FRCC) website. We also referred to the UK Climbing (UKC) website for comment on climbs and grades.

Checking a climb involved reviewing description, grade and length of each pitch, where multi pitch, and overall. *continues page 18*



Andy Dunhill on pitch 4 of Emma Line 5a on Goats Crag above Watendlath

I couldn't have made my contribution as an editor of the guide without the help of members of the FMC. Chris Thistlethwaite & Chris Campbell were the main helpers. They've both had more grass sods thrown on top of them than anyone should have to endure, and yet were always willing to come out to play. Martin Dale was very helpful, both with the climbing and for his excellent memory for detail on some of the photo diagrams. In addition, Caroline Webb, Adrian Clifford and Geoff Brindle spent several days on the hill with me and Martin Bennett provided lots of information on climbs from the

detailed climbing log he's kept for decades. Of course, my partner Christine Barbier also spent many (un)willing days with me on some of the more obscure Borrowdale crags. Finally, I must thank Paul Clarke who some will remember from many years ago when we joined the FMC at the same time. Paul has been a member of the FRCC for many years and during the final two or three years of work on the guide book, has been very helpful in checking some of the harder climbs across a range of crags.

To all of the above, I extend my thanks

photos: Justin Sheels



The use of longer ropes and improved gear has meant that many routes, such as Corvus on Raven Crag, could now be described in fewer pitches and on Goat, many of the hard climbs are now done in one pitch followed by an abseil descent.

We split the crags between us based on who was most suitable grade-wise or where we'd already done a number of the climbs and we also planned to help each other out with climbs we considered to be out of our grade.

We had an electronic copy of the previous guide into which I copied all of the new climbs for the crags I was allocated. I then set out to repeat the climbs, updating the manuscript for each crag as routes were completed and colour coding climbs to indicate what I'd done.

Because the precise line taken could easily be forgotten, I found it was vital to draw the route onto a photo diagram as soon as possible and preferably whilst still at the crag. Decent quality photos would have helped with this. Unfortunately, they weren't always available to us, but I got stuck in and despite weather limitations, did quite a number of routes.

### *the schedule begins to slip*

By mid 2013 though, it was becoming clear that as a team, we were getting behind schedule. Personal circumstances had changed; Matt was now married and had two children so could no longer commit much time to the guide and Pete had also taken on other commitments, so the FRCC found others to get involved, with new lead editor Justin Shiels as well as Ron Kenyon and Trevor Langhorn coming on board.



Ron Kenyon on Apex Buttress, Cam Crag in Langstrath

photo: Andy Dunhill

This gave the project a new impetus and, helped along by fine weather in September and October 2015, work was soon beginning to progress quite quickly.

As was to be expected with a project of this kind, the weather proved to be a major limiting factor. A series of poor summers, especially around August, saw me spending time sitting in Stair watching the rain pouring down.

Despite this, we managed to get the lower crags sorted reasonably quickly but inevitably, scheduling higher North-facing ones remained something of a challenge. In the summer of 2015 for example, when I did Raven in Combe Ghyll, we only just managed to climb the last few harder routes before the weather closed in.

I also took on a few new crags - including Long Band, Long Crag and Cam Crag - mostly with hard climbs I was unable to do, so I checked things out with as many of my contacts as I could.



Andy Dunhill on Now for Something Completely Different, Sergeants's Crag

a 100 metre route following a Via Ferrata-style line of iron spikes.

photo: Ron Kenyon

Adam Hocking, based in Keswick and a mine of information, was particularly helpful on this.

Having done the climbing, we then had to put all the information we'd gathered into a format suitable for production of the finished guide.

So that we could all see what was being done, we used the online Dropbox tool, uploading manuscripts and photo diagrams which were reviewed for consistency. We used Harvey maps to indicate location and access to the crags, with Grid References and altitudes included, plus annotated photographs of some of the valleys showing the crags. Our IT expert Trevor Langhorn was very good in helping us with this.

### *a bit of help for The Wired Guide*

The first deadline was to provide information for the crags being included in the Lake District Rock Wired Guide - a selected climbs guide to the whole of the Lakes - which has already sold well.

Obtaining quality crag and action photos was crucial. The unenviable role of picture editor was taken on by Richard Tolley with whom we spent several days purely taking action shots, some of which were stage-managed, and so that we would feature a broad range of climbers in the photos, we got our friends out to help - with several FMC members in the spotlight.



Adrian Clifford on Ullscarf Edge (V.Diff) Lining Crag  
photo: Geoff Brindle

Chris Thistlethwaite on The Slab (Diff) Goats Crag Upper  
photo: Geoff Brindle

photo: Geoff Brindle



Martin Dale on Yule Be Surprised Christmas Crag Lower Tier (first ascent HVS 5a)



photo: Andy Dunhill

Richard had some very early starts to get good photos of crags with the sun on them. Eagle for example, is high up and faces north east and was one of the crags that presented us with unique problems. There's a bird ban until the end of July and so, depending on the weather, a realistic climbing period for it is rarely more than six to eight weeks in a year.

Sadly, because it's not visited all that often it has become dirty. Just getting to the bottom is a challenge in itself and most of the climbs, especially the harder ones, will need cleaning before they can be repeated. But of course, it's one of the valley's major crags, so we had to include it - with descriptions and route lines on a photo diagram.

We also labelled it as *'an adventure crag for those seeking something different!'*

Summing up: It was a very interesting project to have been involved with and which, overall, I thoroughly enjoyed.

What would I do differently next time? Well, a consistent climbing partner with shared aims would be more efficient and before doing anything else, I'd make sure I got hold of decent photos of the crags!

Andy



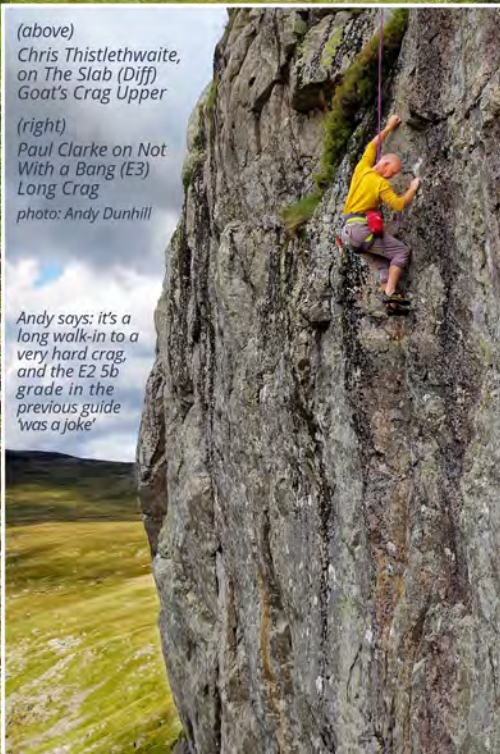
photo: Geoff Brindle

(above)  
Chris Thistlethwaite,  
on The Slab (Diff)  
Goat's Crag Upper

(right)  
Paul Clarke on Not  
With a Bang (E3)  
Long Crag

photo: Andy Dunhill

Andy says: it's a long walk-in to a very hard crag, and the E2 5b grade in the previous guide 'was a joke'



**a few notes from Caroline Webb**

- Quote, from my experience of helping Andy check routes: *'Have you actually found any ruddy rock under all this soil you're dumping on my head!'*
- Our most hazardous bit of gardening: dropping a full-size dead tree - and I don't mean a full-size bonsai - off the top of Castle Crag and scaring the bejeezus out of a couple walking their dog below.
- My Advice: If Andy invites you to climb on a crag you've never heard of...there's a reason why you've never heard of it!

photo: Geoff Brindle



# Intro Meets in May aren't supposed to start like this...



... not just any old intro meet either, but an intro meet hosted by Joanne!

Though Joanne Leadbetter's very first crack at organising an intro weekend may have started on the damp side, things soon brightened up. Her report though, starts on the day before...

After the usual slow F.M.C interest, my first Intro Meet as Coordinator witnessed a sudden flurry of last-minute bookings on the Friday we set off for Stair. Martin and I picked up our one and only Intro member, Chloe, after assuring her parents that we'd bring her home on Sunday in one piece.

Chloe though, is no stranger to the outdoors. She recently completed her Mountain Leader training and regularly takes part in activity weekends. I only hoped she'd be able to cope with Mr Dale's eclectic taste in music for the next couple of hours on the road!

Well, she survived and Friday night saw the three of us meet up with Chris, Tom, Caroline, Karen and Dave at the Middle Ruddings, for a fine traditional start to our FMC weekend together.

Saturday morning dawned and a bleary-eyed Steve Clark, having driven overnight from Glasgow, tumbled out of his van after a few hours kip. With breakfast over, and the weather still a little dull for climbing, Chris suggested a yomp up Catbells to clear the cobwebs.

So, a small group of us: Chloe, Chris, Martin, Steve and I set off with Tom, going at his own leisurely pace, as back marker. Halfway up, the heavens opened, the rain came down and the wind howled around us.

Even so, wet and chilled though we were, we still enjoyed ourselves and after taking the photo (above), I thanked Chris for his inspiration and Steve surprised us all by admitting that this was his first time up Catbells.

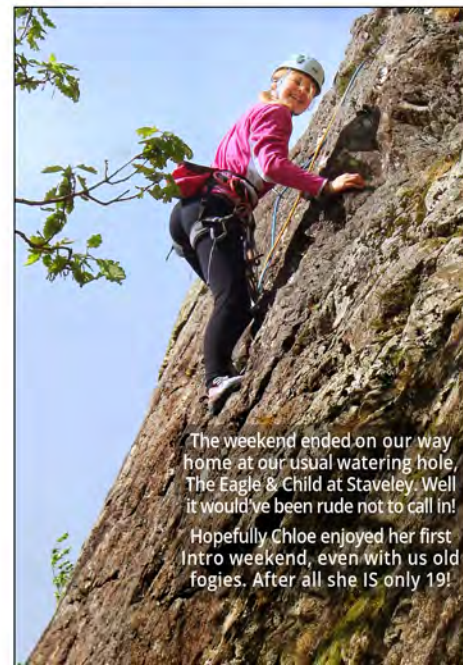
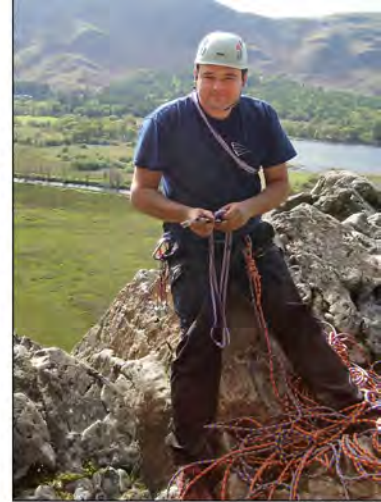
While the five of us were getting thoroughly soaked and wind-dried, retail therapy was being sought on the streets of Keswick by Karen, Dave and Caroline, but once we were all back at the hut for mid-morning snacks - and dry clothing - they helped the brains of the outfit come up with ideas for where we should take Chloe for a bit of trad climbing.

Shepherds won the day, so Martin, Chloe and me in one car and Karen, Dave and Steve in the van set off, leaving the rest to do their own thing.

We were blessed with a bright, sunny afternoon - ideal conditions not only for us but also for the biting ants that decided their sunny slabs were territory worth defending. Martin paired up with Chloe on *Brown Slabs Direct* while Steve and I climbed *Brown Slabs Ordinary* and Dave and Karen forged a line up to the right of the crag on a route of unknown name... unknown, even to Martin and Dave!

The masses were going to need feeding so Martin and I left the crag early to get things going, leaving Chloe with Karen, Dave and Steve (right) who by then was busy tutoring her on how to build belays.

Back at the hut, Andrina and Carl had arrived and it was all hands on deck getting tables up and laid for our feast of chilli and rice, veggie pasta, lots of nibbles and dips, followed by strawberries and cream and cheesecakes that went down a treat, allaying my earlier fears of there not being enough to go round.



After a man-team did the washing up, and we'd bid farewell to Steve, who was off home that night, a few of us strolled up to the newly refurbished Swinside for the usual great banter from the Hicks and, because it was a while since we'd enjoyed their company, it was nice to



catch up with Andrina and Carl again. Us girls also caught up with the 'new and fashionable trend' of large G&Ts! (ed: trendwise, it's a bit late in the day, but I heartily approve!)

Sunday morning, and after cleaning/packing up and our goodbyes to Tom, Chris, Caroline, Andrina and Carl, the remaining five of us headed for Bram Crag for a bit of sport climbing. Again, most of the rock was dry so Karen and Dave took Chloe under their wing(s). A fine selection of routes was climbed that afternoon; *Fargo*, *Blencathra Badger*, *The Comfort Zone* and *The Rookie*.

Martin managed a couple of very recent new routes - a 6b+ and 6a+. So recent though that we haven't a clue what their names are yet!

Joanne



# HOT ROCK

## a sizzling Easter for five in the sunny South of France

Another report from Chris Thislethwaite, pictured here with his four sun-seeking compatriots; Dave and Karen Hicks, Christine Fry and Tony Jackson.

Unkind rumours that our Hot Rock organiser has never been caught smiling on a photo are wildly exaggerated... and here's the proof!



Our base was at Uzès, a medieval town in the Gard valley just north of Nîmes and we'd booked to stay in a 2 floor apartment in an old converted farm just 600 metres from the town centre.



Once more, I'd chosen to ride down there on my motorcycle. It took me three days and was not without interest, while the others flew from Manchester to Marseille where they picked up a hire car for the one and a half hour drive to Uzès.

Unfortunately, they got caught up in a 'Deviation' which more than doubled their journey time, but luckily for them, I'd arrived earlier that afternoon

and had a big salad and chilli ready to welcome them, together with some much-needed liquid refreshment.

The limestone crags of Seynes featured prominently in our climbing during the six days we spent there. Within their 1.5 km of south-facing crags, there are numerous sectors (11 in all) which provide different types of climbing, often on slabby or vertical grey rock as well as on tufa - in fact, there's something there for everyone. We didn't visit every sector, since we didn't have the time or the ability to get up routes in some of them. The Seynes crags were certainly conveniently situated for us though. It only took about 20 minutes to drive there with approaches averaging out at about 10 minutes.

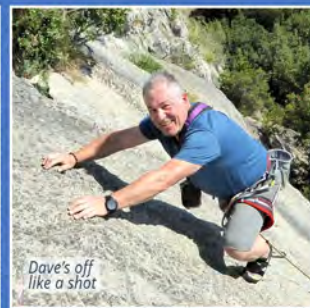
**Day One** started as we meant to go on, at Seynes, with a visit to *Sector Initiation*, a predominantly slabby crag. Dave and Karen climbed together, as they did throughout the trip and, Tony and I also climbed together. Christine moved between our two pairings, sometimes reluctantly climbing lines that she didn't always fancy but which she was persuaded to do. Once she'd completed the routes her sense of achievement was visibly obvious, nicely setting her up for future successes during the rest of the trip and Tony and I ticked off ten routes up to grade 5b. So, an all-round excellent start to our Uzès visit!



Let's get this show on the road!



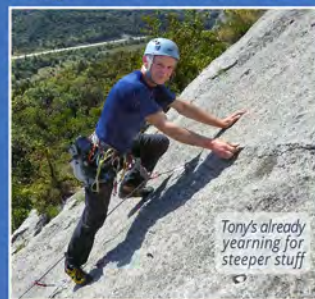
So, what's the plan captain?



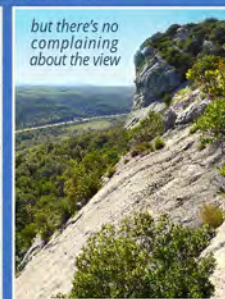
Dave's off like a shot



and Chris is soon on his way



Tony's already yearning for steeper stuff



but there's no complaining about the view



and before you know it, it's time for butties and banter before starting off again on a great first day of climbing

**Day Two** was also spent at Seynes, this time at *Sector Rouge Gorge*. It turned out to be a seven-route day for Tony and me, and on a much steeper crag than the previous day.

Since it was more akin to his experience on climbing walls, things were more to Tony's liking, rather than on the slabs of *Sector Initiation*, which were quite alien to him.

### Day Two at Seynes, Sector Rouge Gorge

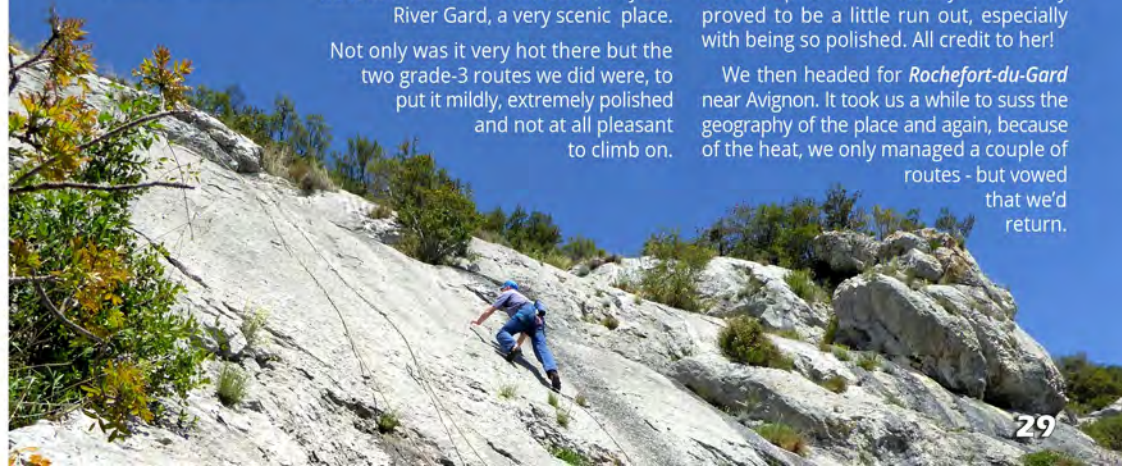


**Day Three** was a two-crag day. We first went to the slabs of *Collias* down by the River Gard, a very scenic place.

Not only was it very hot there but the two grade-3 routes we did were, to put it mildly, extremely polished and not at all pleasant to climb on.

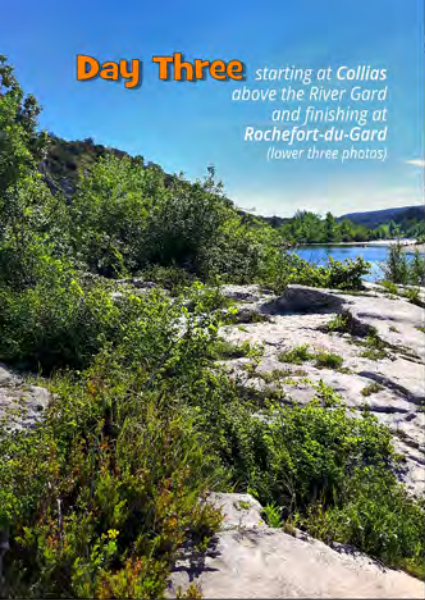
It was here that Karen led her first climb of the trip. It looked steady but initially proved to be a little run out, especially with being so polished. All credit to her!

We then headed for *Rochefort-du-Gard* near Avignon. It took us a while to suss the geography of the place and again, because of the heat, we only managed a couple of routes - but vowed that we'd return.





**Day Three** starting at Collas above the River Gard and finishing at Rochefort-du-Gard (lower three photos)



**Day Four** was a Saturday and we decided to make it a rest day. The crags were going to be busy and also, it was market day in Uzès which provided us with a good few hours of colourful bumbling and buying.

**Day Five** took us on the long drive to *Orgon*. The crag has well over 300 routes to go at but there's a campsite below it and with it being Sunday, there were lots of people about. We did eight routes and though the climbing was good it was not the most pleasant of venues. Up until then, we'd usually had crags to ourselves, so maybe we we're becoming a tad selfish.

Many of the routes at *Orgon* are polished, especially low down, but with so many parents winning their offspring up and down the same routes time after time, this was hardly surprising.

**Day Six** was a return to *Sector Initiation* at Seynes. It was Easter Monday so there were quite few folk around but the ambience was far better than on the previous day, and we ticked off a good ten routes.

Up until then, Dave, Tony and I had been doing most of the leading but Karen's confidence was building by the day and soon she was leading many of the routes. Was she made up or what? And talking of confidence, Christine was ticking off climbs too and thoroughly enjoying herself - more so than she ever expected.

**Day Seven** and it was back to *Sector Rouge Gorge* at Seynes where we polished off another seven routes.

**Day Eight** was our promised return to *Rochefort Du Gard*. We managed only four routes but they were much harder than we'd tackled so far, and although bolted, were more traditional in character.

One particular so-called 4b proved most entertaining. I set off up it first, managed to climb the crux but ran out of steam on the top-out moves. Both Dave and Tony were ecstatic when they both managed to lead it clean. It was certainly 5+ at least, proving that you can't always rely on the grades in the guide books. This was the route of the week so far - and a thrutchy day all round for all of us.

**Day Nine** we went to *Sector Princesse* at Seynes, a crag that Dave and I thought had the best quality routes, especially after our previous day's battles.

Tony also agreed . . . until I reminded him that he prefers walls. He did however succeed in leading a '5c' which Dave could lead only by resting on a bolt or two along the way. Karen and I top roped it but even then, we still had to take several rests.

We all agreed that this was the first 6a of the trip. Well done Tony. Here the routes are on steeper slabs and full of character. We climbed seven of them and this was, in my book, the best day of the trip.

**Day Ten**, our last day's climbing took us to *Sector Nouveau Monde* at Seynes. We eventually burnt ourselves out on the six easier routes at the right hand end. I say easier, but this is also where Tony ticked off his first book-graded 6, a valiant effort for which he should be justly proud.

Dave and Karen wandered over to *Sector Initiation* to mop up climbs missed on previous visits. Our approach took us past the numerous three-star 7s and 8s scaling the most amazing tufas and rock architecture that only the likes of Ghost Kitchen on Kalymnos can match. (see back page)

**Day Four** a rest and shopping day in Uzès





Of course it wasn't *all* about climbing. A bit of R&R was also enjoyed. We followed the 'law' to the letter and après climbing, made absolutely sure to quench our thirsts in the local bars of Uzès.



The accommodation was self catering and we ate in every night, each of us cooking at one time or another. We dined like lords and on one night Dave even organised a BBQ in the court yard of our apartment.



I remember the excellent lamb casserole Tony made one night and the pork casserole on another. He also planned to make a treacle tart but they don't seem to have heard of Golden Syrup in France. Last minute substitution with honey however, was a great success – much to everyone's surprise.

Karen made a pasta dish one night and was most efficient at using up the leftovers on other nights. We must also thank her for taking on the task of morning Butty Monitor.

Christine's chicken dish went down a treat as did her meat and potato pie, not to mention the rock buns, lemon drizzle cake and her bread and butter pudding. Well, what can one say - except . . .



Costs were a bit more than in Spain, which is why we've returned there so often. Accommodation worked out at about 12 euros each per night and food came in at just under 10 euros a night for each of us. Alcohol consumption was lower than on previous trips and we split costs according to how much each of us consumed.

Car hire and fuel cost, though a bit more than in Spain, was acceptable. Thanks to Dave for sorting that out and for being our chauffeur. Overall then, not as costly as I thought it might have been.

**So, to sum up:** well, we all thoroughly enjoyed our climbing, managing over 50 routes and some of us more than 60. Although this was Tony's first venture onto 'Sun Rock', he took to it immediately. Karen established herself as a 'Leader of Men' while Christine - ticking off 29 ascents - earns, and deserves, our 'Most Improved Climber' award.



At 9:00 am on the Saturday, after cleaning up the apartment, we said our goodbyes and I set off north, taking a couple of days to get to Calais, while the others revisited Uzès' market before heading south to the airport and home. *Chris*

## WHERE TO NEXT?

It might be too early to be thinking about next year's trip but if this one is anything to go by, then another club visit to the south of France might be well worth considering - perhaps to the Cote d'Azur or the crags in the vicinity of the Dentelles de Montmirail and Buis-les-Baronnies (far too hot to visit during the summer though!) Give it some thought folks and get back to me when you can.

# THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE!

**And just to set the record straight, when the Working Weekend call goes out, most of those living it extra-large in the pages of this magazine are among the first to volunteer!**

They've long since discovered that the Magic Clean-Up Fairy doesn't exist after all, and that our two Lakeland cottages are perpetually in need of the dedicated TLC that only they can provide.



## January at Stair

The Saturday weather was excellent so we focused attention on work in the garden. More of the fence posts had started to rot so we replaced six of them and made sure boundaries were secure. Leaves were cleared from the car park & grassed areas and the stream was unclogged to help it run more freely, while a further area of the garden was levelled, to be seeded in spring, and the hedging cut back to encourage growth of a denser barrier.

Leaves were cleared from gutters and drains, dry-stone wall running repairs were carried out as usual and fallen tree branches laid on the wood side to discourage sheep from jumping over.

Inside, Martin was tasked with sorting out the bookcase and disposing of magazines from the last century. Miss Fryup project managed cleaning in the kitchen, a laborious but important job and some of the older pots and pans were taken to the tip. Toilets, showers and Drying Room were given a thorough clean, as were the curtains, at the laundrette in Keswick. Unfortunately, this affected the linings, but they're still serviceable.

Miss Fryup, Richard and Chris Campbell brought a few cakes and biscuits to keep us going during the day, as well as the usual rounds of tea and coffee.

Most of the team made an early start for the pub, while a couple of keener ones went for a walk and as usual we made a meal for everyone on the Saturday evening – a veggie curry - and also supplied a bit of wine.

The following morning, a few of us finished with the clearing up, some went for a walk and others headed home. It was another successful weekend but there's plenty of work for the future including: more work in the garden to make it look as though it actually is one; sort out the floor in the porch; tiling the WCs ... and so on!



Martin, and his 'Let the Book Burning Ceremony Begin' face.

## who was there?

Chris Campbell, Martin Dale, Richard Duerden, Dave Earle, Christine Fryup, Tony Jackson, Carl Pennington, Chris Thistlethwaite, Andrina Vandenberg, Caroline Webb and John Wiseman, together with hut custodians Christine Barbier and Andy Dunhill, who submitted this report.



# Cold Ice in the Valle d'Aosta

**FROM DAVE HICKS:** This year's Cold Ice Meet at the end of January saw us returning to the fabulous Cogne area in the Aosta valley in northern Italy. The six of us: Dave Wood and Hal Rzdakiewicz, Adrian Clifford, Dave Cundy and Karen and me, were staying in a quirky apartment in the little village of Epinel, a mile or so down the valley from Cogne and about a 2½ hour drive from Geneva airport.

Despite our late arrival and after just five hours sleep, Adrian and Dave C were up and about early on the first morning to head out for the 1½ hour walk-in up the Valnontey valley to their objective. True to the old chestnut of "do as I say, not as I do" the pair neglected to tell us exactly where they were going and which route they planned to tackle once they got there.

The remaining four of us took things more leisurely and after stocking up with provisions for the next few days we headed for the beautiful village of Lillaz, the location of an iconic frozen cascade named after the village. As Hal and Karen were new to ice climbing, and Woody and I were a bit ring-rusty, we decided to tackle the easier gully serving as an alternative start to the first pitch of Cascades de Lillaz. We had a fabulous couple of hours there and the girls took to the sport extremely well. Post-climb beers were enjoyed in the

village at a superb little bar with a brilliant host who plied us with all sorts of tasty nibbles to go with our drinks. Back at our digs we had a visit from Simon Fenna, Matt Reed and Al Peel who, along with Martin Bennett, Al Blackburn and Andy Holmes were staying a couple of miles down the road from us. We shared our tales of derring do over a brew and as the light began to fade, had to make up our minds whether or not to worry about the fate of our companions who'd not yet returned. We, the Hicks group, decided to do all our worrying from the comfort of our apartment while washing down a huge plate of pasta with beer and wine, telling ourselves that they really ought to have told us where they were going and not have us - between mouthfuls of pasta - worrying ourselves sick like this.

Fortunately, the Fenna group gallantly drove out to the valley to see if there was any sign of our missing pals (there is a bar there!). All was well and the guys returned some time after dark. They'd made the most of the day and, knowing the path back was a good one, had abseiled down as the light began to fade.

Since their previous day had been such a big one, Day Three for Adrian and Dave C was a rest day. Woody and I aimed to lead Cascade de Lillaz which we'd decided was one of our 'must-do' climbs in the area.

The four of us toiled up, which as anyone who knows my able assistant, included multiple pees, and I set off up the 1st pitch - an impressive 70, 80, and at the top 90 degree ice. I got a bit carried away with myself and took the steeper central line at the mid-way section and was soon sweating like a good-un. In true Hicks style my technique was accompanied and aided by the usual series of manly grunts. It was a fabulous climb and my first decent lead on ice at this standard. The obligatory beer and medals were enjoyed in our favourite bar in Lillaz and we returned beaming after a great day out.

The next day was spent at Pilla after spurious reports of a fantastic dump of snow persuaded Adrian that this was not to be missed. Although the reports were a bit on the creative side, we all had a good day there - the sun shone and various levels of skiing were enjoyed by us all.

The weather began to warm and conditions for what we wanted to do became less than ideal, so we decided to explore the valley - Valeille from Lillaz to familiarize ourselves with potential climbs for 2018. We also checked out accommodation in the area and have identified a superb place to stay in Lillaz for next year's Ice Meet.

**FROM KAREN HICKS:** This was my first ever ice climb/trip and because it was so completely alien to me, I was feeling apprehensive to say the least. However, Dave and I did have one session on Keswick ice wall and that allowed me to get to grips with the ice axes and clothing required for cold conditions.

On our first day in Cogne we travelled to Lillaz and walked to the Cascades. What a wonderful sight! The frozen waterfall had a lovely blue tinge to it and looked in great shape, although I did think SHIT!! Am I going up that!? Well, we had a play on a smaller icefall to the side of the Cascades (*below*) which was great fun with Hal & me taking turns, tying in and having a play. Great stuff I thought and now, feeling a bit more confident, was looking forward to the next day's climbing.



The following day, Dave decided it made sense to take on the smaller, grade 2 fall before tackling a grade 3. No complaints from me on that, so Dave went up, belayed me and then made the top pitch which was angled at about 90 degrees. I loved it!

Hal and Woody followed. Coming off was fun, as it required us first to walk up a tree trunk in crampons and then make our way down a steep bit of ice - all very good experience for a total novice like me.

Next day we were up early, eager to tackle the Cascades de Lillaz. Once there though, with Dave part way up, I could feel



the worry beads coming down the rope when he inadvertently strayed off course and got the ropes crossed. By then my head was pounding as well and I decided it'd be too much for me. Adrian though, kindly took me up to the start of the 2nd pitch (top of the 1st) where I then became chief photographer, and managed to take a few shots (*above*) of Dave and Woody as they topped out.

I did however, go up the second pitch on a top rope, which was exhilarating, especially with being able to hear the waterfall under the ice and in fact, I got rather wet with the jets of water spraying out.

What a great place for a beginner like me to start ice climbing. 2018 here we come!!!

After speaking to locals, it would appear that we'd improve our chances of enjoying the best climbing conditions if we hold our annual trip a week earlier. So, we've provisionally booked accommodation for eight, staying in Lillaz from January 20th to 27th next year and members who are interested in joining us are advised get their names down early.

photo by Martin Bennett of Mont Blanc from Val di Cogne



# Ladies late June meet at Little Langdale



Report from Meet Leader, Pat Bennett

Tarn Hows

*The previous week having been one of the wettest on record for June, the forecast of sunnier weather for Ladies Meet met with sighs of relief. We gathered on Friday evening determined to make up in merriment what we lacked in number. Things were starting to look a bit pear-shaped when the Meet Leader had to check which hut it was, and then, didn't know the latest door entry number - but, hey ho, nobody's perfect.*

At dawn next day we were up, ready and raring to go. A long and arduous route was unanimously decided upon and we set off at a brisk pace in the sunshine.

## *lies, all lies!*

Lies, all lies! We got up late, lingered over a leisurely breakfast and managed (just) to stumble out of the hut at a disgracefully late hour not to be disclosed.

The walk to Tarn Hows was glorious in the sunshine.

Aching hips, sore knees (no longer strong and stable but weak and wobbly) were all forgotten as we tramped ever onwards. Some failed the IQ test posed by sticky farm gates, others tried to rewrite the map, noting that those idiots at the Ordinance Survey had got it all wrong, while yet others struggled with notions of left and right. The cowardly leader decided it was not much fun being a Chief and demoted herself to Indian.

## *alien invasion!*

Harmony nevertheless reigned and the hut successfully regained. Shock horror! - and not for the first time - an ALIEN VEHICLE was parked outside the hut.

We shamelessly boxed them in, appointed Jennie Tolley as Meet Rottweiler to harangue them when the driver showed up and settled down to some serious haute cuisine. Any latecomers would not have been able to park. Five courses and fine wines later, we retired to bed in a state of euphoria, with all problems of the world definitively resolved.

Another dawn start, similar to the morning before, saw us looking forward to running enthusiastically up and down the hills. And 40 years earlier that is just what we would have done. However, this time, the Voltarol and Ibuprofen were copiously applied or consumed, breakfast was leisurely partaken and eagle eyes scanned the lane for the ALIEN DRIVER who had not had the gall to face us. Oh if only our WITAN had counselled provision of a notice (in the alienese language) PRIVATE PARKING FOR COTTAGE No 2 ONLY.

## *a timely change of plan*

The alien hunt having failed, we were about to set off on another gruelling trek when someone, possibly the Meet Leader, whispered that there was a sale on at the Rohan shop. A quick reorganisation of priorities ensued. With the faffometer on full blast, the hut was cleaned and closed up . . . and four intrepid hunters, armed only with their credit cards, set off to hunt down **THE ULTIMATE BARGAIN!**

## *it's in the bag*

It didn't put up much of a struggle and was soon bagged - well, *IN* the bag. Hunting being thirsty work, it demanded teashop beverages which were duly consumed. One of us then had to depart to tend her spouse, and we three remaining stalwarts set off at a brisk pace on a tour of Rydal Park and Rydal House, returning via the Loughrigg path to Ambleside.

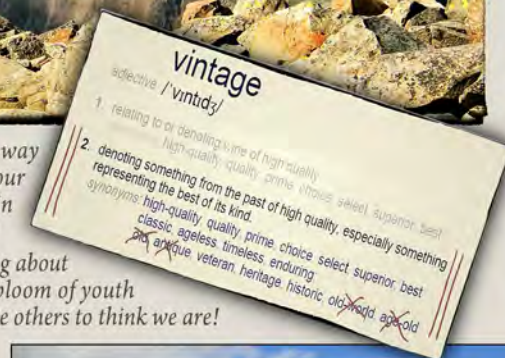
And so it was that this very enjoyable Ladies Meet reached it's satisfying conclusion.

## **LADIES - WHY NOT JOIN US?**

The many ladies in the club are reminded that these are joys that we are always keen to share and that A-walks; B-walks and walks for the cream-crackered can all be perfectly well accommodated on our meets.

# VINTAGE MIDWEEK at Stair

Our inaugural meet for those with midweek time on their hands and a liking for the Great Outdoors in the company of others who yearn to be out and about among the hills



OK, so let's get the dictionary definition out of the way first. We're talking adjective and clearly there are four on the list that couldn't possibly apply to anyone in our club . . . and 'veteran' only got in by a whisker!

Some of those synonyms though, do have something about them - an inner truth that those of us past the first bloom of youth recognise as 'who we really are' - or at least, would like others to think we are!

But these week-long meets - brainchild of Club Treasurer Mike Howe - are quite different to the club's usual syllabus fare. For a start, they're not as rigidly organised, the point being that whenever a Vintage week is scheduled, whoever wants to show up can call in at any time and stay any night from Monday to Thursday in the week, knowing all the while that there's someone else there as well. That 'someone else' will be whoever has agreed to be available for the week they wish to share with other members.

Understandably, these meets are likely to appeal rather more to retired and non-working members than to our usual weekenders but all club members will be welcome and it's hoped momentum will build and help re-kindle old friendships.

Vintage meets may be publicised via What'sOn or specific emails and Mike has already received positive feedback from members who hope to attend in the future. Mike acted as host for this first Vintage Meet and he and three others - Rob Lewis and Peter and Gillian Llewellyn enjoyed fine weather for their 'assault on Scafell Pike' by what is surely the finest way up, the Corridor Route. Thrilled by the fine views, they then completed the circuit via Broad Crag and down Grains Gill. Rob's pictures capture the day well.





July  
15th

# NICE DAY FOR SHOVELLING GRAVEL

and we just couldn't wait to get stuck in



but maybe thirteen is an unlucky number after all!

... because that's how many of us showed up at Langdale to help Hut Custodian Andy Hird with resurfacing the car park. Trouble is, Jewsons, the supplier of the stuff for the job, couldn't get their wagon down the lane, so for now at least, the car park must carry on looking a bit tatty.

That's a job now entered on the 'To-Do' list, but what about the there and then? Persuading bods to show up on Working Weekends is never easy and Andy wasn't for wasting any of the eager enthusiasm he saw around him. It was time to regroup and reorganise.

OK, so not everyone got the job they were hoping for, but somehow or other things started to happen and before long the washroom had been given a bright new coat of paint, the kitchen had taken on the smug antiseptic gleam of the kind that only daytime TV adverts can match and the windows were no longer festooned with cobweb muck.

It's doubtful though that the hut spiders enjoyed the attention quite as much as we now enjoy the view.

(left) Mike & Clive preparing to squeeze a new ceramic hob into the ever-so-slightly smaller space vacated by the old one.



The so-called Black Mould Remover didn't do its job but may have knocked back the infestation a notch or two, while the gap in the kitchen ceiling, tight up against the meters, has continued to defy a workable solution. There's talk of re-plastering the main room walls, which will also involve some rewiring, and this could include lowering the meters, which would allow us to extend the ceiling all the way up to the wall. It's another on the 'To-Do' list.

Our Club Chairman arrived on two wheels, popped his head round the door to tell us what a splendid job we were all doing and promptly got roped in to help Chris with the drains at the back. That'll learn him!

Jess and Ed Hird joined in, as cheerful and enthusiastic as ever while Liz, as on previous WW meets, laid on grub far better than we deserved and our first pint at the Three Shires tasted all the better for going on the club tab. This fine old - if unofficial - club tradition was greatly appreciated by us all.



# intro BBQ meet

Doesn't time fly. It seems like only yesterday, we were gorging on fillet steaks and sipping fine wines.

Well, some of us were, but it wasn't at the Annual Club BBQ, splendid though that always is. No, let's face it, we are definitely talking spare ribs, burgers and whatever ale and plonk happens to be around.

Come to think of it though, Dave Hicks's assured talents over the red hot charcoal did serve up some rather good grub, the sausages a stand-out highlight, and there's nowt wrong with Aldi's *Toro Loco* - not after sampling his home-crafted 'Barolo' there isn't.

Watch out wine world, once he gets the fancy labels sorted, you won't know what's hit you, 'cos we didn't!



But hang on a mo., as well as a BBQ, isn't this also supposed to be an Introductory Member's Meet? .. and how come Jo always seems to pick the juicy-looking one you had your eye on? But back to the main question. Who were we meeting for the first time, did they get any decent climbing done and is there anything we should know about how well or badly they were treated?

Rumour has it that 'it's complicated'. Well, our new member is Martin Riley. That's him on the right in the group photo and yes, climbing was indeed done .. at Shepherds of course, with Martin D taking Martin R up Little Chamonix and Chamonix. All good so far, but then confusion with who was providing transport left them abandoned on the Borrowdale road. Nice one!

It all got sorted of course and as usual everyone else did a bit of this and a bit of that. Miss Fryup and the Editor, who's writing this drivell, ambled down to the



newish cafe in Lingholm Gardens. A bit twee but nice enough and there's a vegetable plot-cum-walk-around experience with stronger connections to Beatrix Potter than you'd expect. A walk around the lake was on the cards but there's a convenient jetty just there so the easy option was chosen and they travelled in style to Keswick on the anti-clockwise boat - the fine views of Falcon and Walla crags (above) a bit of a surprise but the ales at the George, a sorry disappointment.

Back at base, things were all sweetness and light at the BBQ ... until the Editor's substantial rear proved too much for the frail fabric of a perfectly innocent item of garden furniture, the sorry remains of which Hal is holding aloft on our group photo. Rest assured though that when his bum hit the deck, not a drop of the large G&T in his grasp was lost!



There's just enough space remaining for us to remember someone many of us will have known. On the 20th of January, George Birkett died at the age of 86. Those of us who remember him in the Three Shires will probably have also known him as the head of a farming dynasty. He was tenant at Birk Howe Farm in Little Langdale with his wife Amy - who still lives in the valley - from 1961 until 2000 when his son John took over and in turn, he and his wife Maureen handed things on in 2015 to their son Andrew, the present tenant.

My own memory of George dates back exactly to the day he took on the tenancy. It was Easter and it snowed. I was camped on their land waiting for my school pal, Guy Duxbury to show up on his Bantam 125.

It cost a shilling to camp there. On the first day an oldish chap came for the money, but on the second day I paid it to George himself.



So who knows? Was my shilling the very first income that George earned from his new tenancy?

If it was, then might he have gone and got himself a pint with it at the Three Shires? That's about how much a pint cost in those days.

I reckon that would be a nice way to remember him.

Roy Turner



Crag architecture at Seynes in the South of France  
photo: Tony Jackson



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