

FMC

The Fylde Mountaineering Club

NEWSLETTER



SPRING 1995

Intro.....

In vacating his post as newsletter editor, our new chairman, Steve Wrigley, handed me several pieces of paper and the following tip:- "You would be well advised to get some self-sealing envelopes." The possible effect that one hundred and fifty envelopes could have on the taste buds (and the apres crag refreshment) has led to accept his advice willingly.

This issue reflects the efforts of those willing to go into print and we shall be lucky if we can produce another two newsletters this year. Keep the articles coming folks. As a guide to new members, we would be happy to receive interesting articles about mountain activities (any level of climbing or walking - not just E grades and Epics) and occasional contributions about related pursuits such as skiing, mountain biking, caving, fell running and parapenting. Also any *brief* contributions about new climbing areas, good deals on equipment, safety issues and climbing 'top tips,' would be welcomed. Get your pen in action!

News.....

As spring arrives the crags and livers *should* dry out as activity commences and the body recovers from the excesses of the winter social activities.

Foremost amongst the events of the party season was the Club Dinner. Wearing a shorter than usual haircut, Martin told a packed house that it had been another good year for the Club. Members had been active in the Himalayas, the States, Europe and back home. Some new routing had been done up in Scotland and the old fettler himself had managed lead a couple of scary E5s. The 1994 Fell Race trophy went to Martin Pickup for his almost solo effort. The Newsletter Article award went to Mike Sissons. Martin had to content himself with Mug of The Year having narrowly missed picking up Lush of The Year which went to John Tatts.

The occasion developed its usual atmosphere and it wasn't long before hotel staff were seen discretely removing any pliable object which might have potential for being formed into a projectile. Flushed with

the success of having achieved membership of the top twelve fastest 100 mile bike races over all the country, young Henry (iron man) Iddon set about celebrating by accidentally(?) laying waste to Mr Earle's pudding. Dave was definitely not amused at finding himself in less than convivial company and his protestations moved the Committee into words. Fortunately Mr. Iddon is off on expedition to some far flung mountain in Greenland thereby allowing Dave his just desserts and saving the mountaineering world from its first contract killing.

The Club has been in the news again with a recent article in OTE paying tribute to the efforts of Roger Brookes and the nobs in developing climbing on Gozo several years ago. Not to be outdone by his older brother, Glenn Brookes has again been getting himself on the front of climbing mags. His appearance as 'cover boy' in this month's 'High' comes a little over ten years after he was last featured wearing long hair and outrageously wide flares.

Homespun entertainment has again proved popular with Andy Dunhill's curry meet and Paul and Irene's bean feast proving a welcome respite from the grimness of a particularly wet winter. Those who could stand it no longer took flight to the sunny side of Europe. This looks set to be a annual performance although sadly the regular bean feast will be omitted from next year's calendar.

Wednesday Socials have been varied and entertaining. Joyce Foster-Kent gave an interesting and lively contribution on the Himalayas. Martin Dale won the slide quiz. Standing in for Glenn Brooks, Mark Harding showed some excellent slides of the Costa Blanca and was followed with other slides of Spain by Dave Wood and pictures of the Dauphine Alps by Dave Earle. Steve did another stand in for Glenn showing us some great slides of Kenya. Later in the year will be able to see Glenn and Lou's slides of their circumnavigation of the globe (honest) and we are due a talk from that entertaining Lakeland fellow, Tony Greenbank.

The Club has seen a bit of coming and going recently. John Tatts has set himself the task of drinking Hong Kong dry. Hopefully he will see sense and succumb to persuasion from the nobs not to move out

there permanently. Mr. South has gone west - to California that is, on an extended holiday. Evidently having exhausted the possibilities of the Atlantic, he has gone to throw himself in the Pacific a few times. Simon will link up with Steve Wrigley and Jerry Evans during the third week in May with a view to climbing the Nose Route on El Capitan in Yosemite. Also, Mike Tolley has received instructions to grease his chain since it appears that Nils Tremmils is due back on the scene after exile in Cambodia for four years.

It is with regret that I have to draw the Club's attention to the loss of a founder member, Jimmy Baron who died on January 13th. Jim will be remembered by older members of the club for his pioneering activities in the early days of the Club. It is at times like this when we remember the debt of gratitude we owe to members, past and present, who have given their time and effort to the FMC. Jack Jowett, in an article in this newsletter, pays tribute to Jimmy's efforts and extends our sympathies to his family.

On a lighter note, it is good to see that the Club is attracting new members. A welcome is extended to seven new members. There's still a male/female imbalance, but there you are. Members are you locking up your daughters?

And finally, it is a pleasure to report that Al Peel has become a dad. Mandy gave birth to a bouncing baby girl (Alexandra Beth) earlier this month. Since then the couple have been teaching their new offspring to read and write with the result that Alexandra is now the youngest member of the Club ever to have written a piece for the newsletter. Our congratulations go to Al and Mandy and also to Steve Swindells whose wife Michelle, gave birth to a boy (William) in November of last year. Anyone else building a nest or is there something in the air in Sheffield?

AGM.....

The AGM was an unusually well attended event this year with over fifty present. Members were treated to the usual discussions about de-humidifiers, hut fees and the state of the huts. It was agreed that because of difficulties with the use of the Fallclife Hut, the Committee would seek to

terminate the reciprocal agreement with the ULGM club (discussions ongoing). Martin Dale retired from the Chair and took on the mantle of social secretary. Steve Wrigley relinquished newsletter editorship to take over as chairman. Rebecca Hargreaves, Clare Addy and Don Nichol also stood down from their posts. Within the new committee, Judith Swift stays as secretary and hut bookings continue to be arranged by Mike Tolley. John Wiseman continues to keep a beady eye on our finances. John Hickman keeps Vice and Trevor Atkinson stays with Langdale (just in case his bench needs altering).NB. There are still parking problems at Langdale. Phil Lee takes over as hut custodian for Stair. Dave Wood is newsletter editor and Frank Towne is handling membership issues. Mark Harding, Kevin Hindle and Les Ward are joined on the Committee by Glenn Brookes. The retiring post holders were thanked for their hard work and dedication, particularly Martin Dale and Rebecca Hargreaves who have held office and done a good job for some time. For services to the Club, Don Nichol received a Honorary Life Membership.

Update.....Club Meets and Membership. Change of addresses. Hut availability Meet reports. Wanted and For Sale etc..Notices

Goings onMore news about club antics including Martin's haircut, a club trip to Yosemite and parking at Langdale.

Articles.....

Mr South Submerses - Fenna gets a wetting after Glenno puts up new route

Whiteout at Castleton Tower- Gnarly rock dude Evans has been at it again.

Friends in High Places - Will our new chairman be taking up embroidery?

Extra, read all about it - Mark Harding turns into a rabbit as Sec takes the lead.

A View from the Pram - An article from a three week old baby - it's a miracle!

3 Wheels on My Wagon - Finds Dave Earle on his skis in the Pyrenees.

Send contributions to Dave Wood, Newsletter Editor 5, Station Road, Wrea Green., Preston PR4 2PH Tel 01772 684969

Update.....

New Members

The Club extends a welcome to the following Introductory Members:

Paul Kendall
13 Coniston Rd
Blackpool

Paul Rowlands
2 Langfield
Avenue
South Shore
Blackpool

Nigel Stock
9 Grange Court
15 Crofter's
Mews
Blackpool
FY1 2EE

Paul Forrest
25 School Rd
Thornton
FY5 5AW (Tel
860427

Dave Stott
11 Troon Drive
Thornton

Nicola Walker
25 Perth Street
Moorlands
Lancaster

Moz Kitching
83 Blackpool
Rd
Carleton

Full Members

Tim Culkin
11 Quernmore
Avenue
Blackpool

Alan Paul Dooy
Ash Villa
Blackpool Old Rd.
Little Eccleston

Changes of Address/Telephone Numbers

Glenn Brookes and Louise now at 78 Preston St. Kirkham 01772 687938

Paul Taylor now at 3 Spinney Mews, Raikwood Rd Skipton tel 01756 794957

Phil Caley now on 01204 415567
George Nisbett now on 0973 359326

BMC now at 177-179 Burton Rd. West Didbury, Manchester M20 2BB (0161 445 4747)

Hut Availability

Langdale free on
May 6/7 & 20/21,
June 3/4, 10/11,
17/18 & 24/25
July 1/2 & 22/23
Aug 5/6 & 19/20
Sept 2/3 & 16/17
23/24 & 30/1 st

Stair free on
May 13/14 & 27/28
June 3/4 & 17/18
& 24/25
July 1/2 & 15/16
& 29/30
Aug 12/13 & 26/27
Sept 9/10 only

Summer Outdoor Syllabus Arranged by Social Secretary

(All Boozy Bike Rides start at 6.30pm from the Thatched House (unless stated). There are alternatives for those who can't make Wednesdays. Anyone who is lush enough to be into a boozy bike ride every week contact Gordon Heywood. Also teams go cragging every week, sometimes more. Contact Martin Dale for possible details if you're keen. 'Meets of the Month' are shown in bold)

May 3 (Wed) Prom Run-Climbing/Boozy Bike Ride (meet 6.30 at Sunken Garden opp. Pleasure Beach South Shore, finish in Thatched)

May 4 (Thurs) Brownstones / Wilton (Blackdog-Belmont)

May 17 (Wed) Boozy Bike Ride (Meet Leader Tel. Dave Ball)

May 18 (Thurs) Anglezarke (Dressers' Arms, Wheelton - Tel. Mike Sissons)

May 24 (Wed) Giggleswick South
June 6 (Tues) Crookrise (Elm Tree at Eastby)
June 8 (Thurs) Mountain Biking -Trough (meet 6.30 Dunsop Bridge)

June 14 (Wed) Malham (Listers Arms)

June 15 (Thurs) Boozy Bike Ride (Tel Steve Wrigley)

June 21 (Wed) Earl Crag (led by George Nesbit)

June 27 (Tues) Twistleton Scar (Marton Arms)

July 5 (Wed) Scout Scar (Kings Arms Burton)

July 12 (Wed) Boozy Bike Ride (led by Gordon Heywood)

July 13 (Thurs) Bridestones (Staff of Life, Todmorden)

July 19 (Wed) Crummackdale (led by Les Ward)

July 27 (Thurs) Widdop

Aug 2 (Wed) Trowbarrow

Aug 14 (Thurs) Chapel Head (led by Glen Brookes)

Aug 17 (Thurs) Boozy Bike Ride (Martin Dale)

Aug 30 (Wed) Longridge

-OBITUARY-

JIMMY BARON

The name of Jimmy Baron will not be familiar to many of the present FMC membership, but some older climbers will remember his work for the club in its formation.

Jimmy died on the 13th of January at the age of 72 after sustaining a severe stroke from which he never recovered.

He started climbing, before the war, on the gritstone of Laddow Rocks, the training ground for many climbers such as Joe Brown and Don Whillans.

At the outbreak of hostilities, he joined The Royal Navy, but as soon as demobilisation came, he returned to the mountains to continue his climbing activities.

He was then living in Cleveleys and it was at his house in Beach Road that a preliminary meeting was held in order to discuss the possibilities of forming a climbing club. His future wife, Olive, was also there and they both served on the first committee.

On every meet, Jim and Olive were present and they climbed extensively in Langdale and Borrowdale.

My happiest recollections are of the camp we joined as guests of the Italian Club, along with Jack Fairburn. Between us, we completed all the major peaks of the Ortler Group from Solda on the north side of the range.

Jim was slightly built and a neat rock climber. He was of a quiet disposition, always keen to help in all efforts to establish the Club and often attending the weekend meets at the H.F. hut which was rented by the Club for winter use. These were in Great Langdale at Wall End Farm.

His daughter, Catherine, became a popular member of the Junior FMC.

We extend our sympathies to Olive and the family, Catherine, Janet, Janet and Andrew.

Jack Jowett

Underground...>>>

Caving Meet 1994

Again a very popular meet which I would like to think is due to the magnificence of the underground scenery, the high quality accommodation and the well organised debonair meet leader. Alas no, the main attraction was yet again the Marton Arms which is undoubtedly one of the most welcoming and best stocked real ale pubs in Britain.

Saturday found 19 cavers eager to enter the bowels of the earth - well perhaps eager is too strong a word. Steve Wrigley and John Tatts were sent off to take one party down Tatham Wife Hole whilst Ali and myself took parties down Ease Ghyl. All the trips were successful apart from Tatts leading from the rear on the way in and from the front on the way out, thus not having to carry anything and being first to the cafe. Steve did really well seeing as how I had not given him enough gear and it was his first trip in charge. He did try to lose the bolt spanner twice though, the second attempt being a success. This seems to have set a trend and we have since lost two more. The mountain bikers seemed to do the same with computers and chains being lost as well as the odd bike if you believe the stories.

Mike Tolley.

On the Hill...>>>

Individual Efforts

As mentioned in 'News' the club has seen plenty of activity during 1994 with trips to the States, Himalyas and Europe featuring in the summer months. Members have been encouraged to briefly record their activities for inclusion in newsletters. Les Ward and Jerry Evans have let me have the following notes.

Mountain Areas Visited - Les Ward

Dauphine Alps south of Grenoble and part of Ecrin's National Park. Argentierre and Chamonix - Mont Blanc; Pennine Valley leading to Zermat; Arolla and Evolene; Stubai Valley in Austria and Mayrhofen and Pyrenees near Cirque de Gavarnie (*Gets around doesn't he ? Ed*)

Alpine and Ice Climbing / Rock Climbing Jerry Evans

Canadian and US Rockies; French Alps; Pakistan; British Columbia; Cascades Sierra Nevada; West Coast; France and Spain.

Arrocher

Five members attended the meet on March 24th and 26th. The actual centre was Lochgoilhead National Scout Activity Centre. More of a water sport's base than mountaineering. Two walks completed on Saturday with weather and conditions poor. Would not recommend that we go again.

Les Ward.

Muir of Inveray (Easter 1995)

A superb hut and magnificent mountains were enjoyed by a handful of members. Thursday was superb in the Cairngorms and was enjoyed by the writer in the east of Scotland and by Andy and Christine in the west. Friday too was superb in the east and was used to great effect amongst the high tops by the writer. Barry Crook arrived at the hut Friday evening via four Munros at the top of Glenshee while Andy and Christine had a slightly poorer day en route from the west coast.

Saturday found Mr. Crook pedalling up Glen Ey towards some more ticks in his little red book. Christine, Andy and the writer, using two vehicles traversed the Eastern Cairngorms from Lochnagar to Glen Shee via Craig An Dubh Loch and Glen Callater visiting a few 'listed mounds' en route. Saturday evening saw the arrival of Chris Ikin and Alan Blackburn whilst tea in bed on Sunday morning was presented by the newly arrived Andrew Hartley, who was immediately found guilty of not replacing the milk in the fridge by a somewhat grumpy member.

Anyway, Barry and Chris plus Andrew and Alan set off to traverse the Lairig Ghru and a day of snow showers with a promise of collection from the other end later. Meanwhile the author enjoyed an introduction to mountain biking after some much needed adjustments to Mr. Crook's bicycle by the proprietor of the hire shop patronised by Chris and Andy. Having rebuilt much of the offending beast to make it vaguely rideable, the proprietor hoped it would be condemned at the end of the day's entertainment. The author enjoyed this introduction to the new sport of kings, especially the bit where he had to climb over the deer fences one handed with the machine tucked under his other arm. Still, driving the Crook's powerful car over the windy and hilly Tomintoul road to Aviemore made up for the suffering and took him back to the heady days of motor racing and the original Nurberg ring and Spafrancochamps circuits.

Monday found the snow gently falling all day and the whole team explored Glen Quoich and Glen Dorry, being particularly taken with a small linking path via a chain of lochans.

Tuesday was much better and most people ground the mighty Cairnwell and its satellites under the FMC boot before returning home after a superb Easter weekend, enhanced by good accommodation, bountiful supplies of wine and excellent Gillespies on tap at the pub in Braemar.

And the local snow plough? It remained totally unmarked and completely unattached by the aforementioned Miss Ikin who gained her Mug of The Year on the very same Muir of Inverie to Braemar road some years ago.

D. A. Earle

On the Crag...>>>

FMC - In the News Again – a blast from the past

Following mention of the Club in the recently produced 'Lakes Rock Fax' for our activities in the Black Hole and references elsewhere to keeping the *spirits* of mountaineering alive, we have been duly recognised for the pioneering work of Roger Brookes and friends for their efforts on Gozo. Spotted in the last edition of 'On the Edge' is the following extract from an article by John Codling entitled 'Going Gozo' (pages 27 - 29)

".....Serious development only began in January '85, when a group from the Fylde Mountaineering Club arrived, spearheaded by Roger Brookes, Andy Lewandowski, Stuart Gascoyne and Nigel Brooks. They soloed some slabs near the Inland Sea, then roped up for the Gozo Connection, an exciting seacliff E3. In Dwejra Bay, Phoenicia, a multi pitch E1 slab, must have caused the occasional bowel movement during the 90 m abseil approach to a sea platform down vertical cheese. An apparent yearning for even more adrenalin must have prompted their return in April to produce Mycenaean Cosmic Dancing and Drybone Sand, both up the outrageous 150m prow of Wardija Point.

On a skinny - dipping break to Mgarr Ix-Xini bay (pronounced imjar ishini, and from now on referred to as MIX), they pulled their car in next to an old water pumphouse and walked down to the edge of the ravine. What they saw impressed; what they couldn't see beneath them was even better. Beautiful white pocketed limestone walls 25m high, ranging from just off vertical to ferociously steep. They had found what was to become the finest locale on the islands. Futile Gesture and the predictive Unfinished Business, an immaculate E4, marked the start of the gold rush. On the same trip, the team added The Black Adder, an E3 crack up what must be the smoothest limestone in existence, near Kerzem....."

Fame at last boys!

Ed.

On the Run...>>>

The 1994 FMC Fell Race

The non event of the year, I'm afraid. People used to arrange their holidays so as not to miss this event. This time everyone I rang seemed to be in The Alps, Boulder or Cornwall. It was disappointing also that a number of members stayed at the hut but could not be persuaded to run. Les Ward had booked for the race and it must have been disappointing for him not to have more opposition. Phil Lee was eventually cajoled into running.

So there we have it, the lowest turnout in the races' 17 years. As I'd only had one booking there was no beer and hot dogs and the course went unmarked. John

Tatts took charge of the timing and Les and Phil were given eight minutes start. Phil got in front but took the wrong turn somewhere near Tilberthwaite. I passed Les as he was going down the wrong side of the wall to Tilberthwaite and the finishing order was:-

1) Martin Pickup 38.45 2) Les Ward 50.36 3) Phil Lee 52.43

So I claim the Jack Fairburn Trophy for the first time in 17 years. It's a sobering thought that Phil was about nine when the first race was run and I was older than he is now. In view of the recent turnouts 1992 - 6; 1993 - 5; 1994 - 3 compared to the very successful earlier events 1986 - 36; 1987 - 15; 1988 - 12; 1989 - 26; 1990 - 24; 1991 - 22 perhaps the Committee should consider a) changing the timing - perhaps late summer or b) getting a new organiser more in touch and better able to persuade / bully etc the 'active' element of the Club - or both.

It would be a pity if the event were to disappear from the calendar but unless there is better support, I'm afraid it might as well.

Martin Pickup.

(Taking account of Martin's comments, the Committee has arranged for the Fell Race to be moved to November. Ed)

In the Huts...>>>

'No Classic FM Please'

We have a new hut custodian in the shape of Mr. Philip Lee. How will this quiet, enthusiastic character ensure that Stair continues to survive the ravages of weather, wear and tear? Your editor, combing the hut journal for printable anecdotes came across the following:-

"Working Weekend" (or should this be entitled 'Captain's Log Stairdate 21.11.93'? Ed.)

"Saturday morning, Donald Duck and Dave Earle trim tree branches from roof of hut using cheating stick. John and Jenny Parker undertake immense cleaning job in kitchen. Phil Lee dons Iraqi army surplus chemical warfare gear and irradiates evil mould from gent's and ladies' bog walls. Afternoon, lots of painting, cleaning and repairs. Evening, who else should turn up but the hut custodian himself ! Work continues and only just catch last orders at the pub.

Sunday - five and a half pairs of hands (Mr. Cundy having knackered the other wrist) continue with titanic effort. Phil Lee escapes slave drivers (and Classic FM) and snatches snowy diff on Grey Crag, Buttermere. The others finish work late Sunday evening.

Phil Lee

Helpers needed. Don't forget to sign up for this year's working weekends! Ed.

Wanted... For Sale.....Lost.....or.. Found

Wanted

Mike Tolley would like some gear. "As the caving section does use up a lot of gear in one way or another we are at the moment really short of carabiners, screwgate or plain. If you have any old gear that you could be parted from then please contact me".. *Mike Tolley*

For Sale

Lancashire to Lakeland Link

This new publication by founder member Jack Jowett describes a walk from Bowland to The Lakes with maps and illustrations by the author. The route follows public footpaths through the best scenery in North Lancashire, past castles and pele towers, over the limestone hills of South Cumbria to finish above Windermere.

Copies obtainable from J.J. (Tel 01253 853039)

Equipment

Rachaille RE3 Ski Boots Grey Size 8.....£10

Trezeta plastic Double Boots- Vibram Sole .Size 8½.....£10

Glenn Brookes

Lost

One small green 'Mar Kill' water bottle, probably in huts *Ed.*

Found

Nothing ?? !!

Notice Board

Torridon Spring Bank 1995

A number of places are still available in the Ling Hut during the spring Bank holiday meet (Sunday 28/5/95 to Saturday 3/6/95). Contact *John Hickman* (01253 899282)

Mello Summer 1995

I am thinking about going to Mello again in August and would like to hear from any member who might be interested in getting a meet together. Mello is situated at the head of the Val di Massino which is about forty minutes drive north east of Lake Como. The area has great potential for walking or climbing and often gets better weather than nearby Switzerland. (Also it's cheaper!) The climbing is very varied ranging from roadside crags (bolted) through run-out granite slabs to 2000 ft multi day aid routes. The rock is absolutely brilliant and there has been considerable development recently on the big faces (see the last few issues of High). The area is (or at least was in 1993) very beautiful and unspoiled. The plan would be to use Mello Campsite (alt. 3000 ft) as a base for climbing in the valley or for excursions to the Bregalia (eg Piz Badile) which overlooks the valley. The timing of the meet could be arranged to link in with Lundy. *Contact Dave Wood.*

Lundy Summer 1995

The meet is now fully subscribed but in the event of any 'drop outs', anyone wishing to be put on the reserve list can do so. Camping is also available where facilities in the hut can be used. *Contact Martin Dale.*

Goings On...

Sweet Talk

(Behind the scenes with the FMC Committee)

As if your hard working committee hasn't already got enough on its plate, every so often members throw up grievances which provide much food for thought. At times like these initial gut reactions must be pushed to one side and the details of any accusations carefully chewed over and fully digested. Only then can we dish out a satisfying response rather than just a few half baked ideas. To give you a flavour of this side of the committee's work some recent (genuine) correspondence has been reproduced below.

Dear Madam,

I am sorry if this complaint seems about a trivial matter but it was not trivial to me and raises important issues of civilised behaviour.

Out of my income of £**** per annum I find it difficult enough to afford the Club Dinner and was thus incensed to find that in my absence from the table my sweet course had been consumed by Mr. Henry Iddon. Whilst I expect pretty stupid behaviour at the Club Dinner, I was extremely annoyed when he refused to speak with the Head Waiter and offer to pay for its replacement, if necessary.

If it wasn't for his ***** for ***** ***** and ***** ***** I would have had no hesitation in smacking him in the mouth. Common sense and gutlessness prevailed but it won't next time.

I wish to be assured that Mr. Iddon will not be allowed to attend the next Club Dinner; I realise that you cannot ban him from Borrowdale or the adjoining public bar.

D.A. Earle

Dear Mr. Earle,

Thank you for your letter regarding an unsavoury incident at the Club's dinner meet, it was most leguminating. However, we must admit that the accusations were a bit of a bombe shell and coming from anyone other than a seasoned and long serving member such as yourself would have been rather hard to swallow. Having said this, please do not consider your course of action a trifle over the top as it does leave a nasty taste in the mouth when your meat and two veg are interfered with during an inter-course break.

Having had the thyme to mull over your little wine it is clear that there has been an injustice and we must try to a-peas the situation. However, we would recommend that giving the boy a beating should not be the main course of action. For starters, most guests at the dinner are fairly well oiled and this is often a recipe for food related japery, which if overdone can strike a raw nerve, particularly if your modest celery makes it difficult to cough up enough dough for the meal in the first plaice. (After all, £13 is not peanuts).

Taking stock of the situation, perhaps we need to a-portion the blame as Henry cannot be held solely responsible if he was egged on by others. Your suggestion of banning him from further dinners only just stops short of burning at the steak. We would gingerly suggest that the committee dishes out a verbal battering. Henry clearly needs to be torte a lesson and leaving him to stew over the fact that he is not exactly flavour of the month should reduce his somewhat unpalatable behaviour.

Bon Appetite, The Committee (Jan 1995)

(PS. Dave's agreement was obtained in publishing the above. He realises it is all in the best possible taste and has accepted it in good spirits without carping at all.. Ed.)

Head Job.....

(or should this be entitled 'Chair Loses Hair but Gains Mug?')

In any event this was vintage entertainment with the evening having all the hallmarks of a classic FMC escapade. A Dunhill curry, sponsored by Andrex and as usual superb, set the scene for the main event.

It was with a clear points lead in the pre-Christmas Lush stakes that Martin D'ale set about replenishing his tank. Disposing of Mr. Penn's Languedoc anti freeze, off went our boy to sample more of the tincture of golden throat warmer. This undoubtedly proved the catalyst in the extraordinary display of abandon which was to follow.

The return from the Swinny conspired with the presence of more duty frees to land Martin in the barber's chair. Aided by his lookalike partner in polish and shine, the barber from Skipton commenced his dastardly deed. "A number four sir?"

This might have been the point at which a rescue could have been effected since, members having observed the barber negotiate the pool table, might have questioned his dexterity with the razor. Alas, rarely does one inebriate question the sobriety of another and it was with an expression entirely absent in concern that Martin bent his head to the cold steel of the shears.

A few light strokes gave the feeling of re-assurance and a smile of relaxation spread across Martin's face. This was not going to be a painful experience after all. The floor gained a light coating of hair as the barber got into his stride.

It was while inspecting his work at close quarters, that the barber seemed to stumble and with the shears at an acute angle to the chairman's head, executed a full dislocate dyno. Missing the ear by an inch, the shears cut a swathe of hair from the back of the head. The barber took a step back and surveyed the damage. "Hmm.....perhaps....." said the barber in quiet and reassuringly modulated tones, "we ought just to take a little off the other side Martin, to even it up so to speak."

The chairman looked to the audience, most of whom were incapable of speaking, for reassurance. Finding comfort in the presence of Jenny Tolley, he sat back and accepted his fate with a helpless grin. In another moment of temporary inattention, the barber imparted a careless lunge to the left side of the head. The chairman lifted an eyebrow and rotated an eye. He was now beginning to resemble a zebra at a watering hole.

The barber took stock of the situation and suggested that if perhaps the chairman wouldn't mind a number two, the problem would resolve itself. The audience nodded and recommended that Martin go for broke. More sudden movements followed like an out of control mower on a well manicured lawn. Soon the floor was covered in hair and Mr. Dale was left to inspect the condition of his scalp. The absence of a double mirror prevented Nobbo from fully examining the carnage. Opinions from the nobs varied. Those who could speak suggested a scull cap; others found it difficult to summon words at all. John Tatts shaved off his beard in sympathy.

The rest of the evening took on an equally wild atmosphere resulting in the barber receiving a premature shower. Fortunately, Martin took it in good grace and I understand has recently been back to the Barber of Skipton for more of the same treatment!..

Dave Wood

(PS. I hear that Mr. Knowles has some superlative tools which he uses to good effect on the greens at the Royal Lytham Links Course. Worth a try Martin?)

Nose Job

A team comprising Steve Wrigley, Simon Fenna and gnarly dude Jerry Evans, are set to attempt the Nose Route on El Capitan, Yosemite, California in May of this year. Despite being recently freed at 5.13b, the Nose is still a serious and major undertaking requiring three or four days or more to complete the thirty odd pitches that make up the 3000ft granite wall. Great endurance and fitness are required and the boys are likely to develop a big thirst on this one. Good Luck Nobs! *Ed.*

Paint Job....

Problems have surfaced again with parking at Little Langdale as one of our members found out to his surprise. The incident occurred following Bonfire night celebrations, when returning late and finding the car park full, the said member left his car in the lane outside the cottage. He was wakened at 4am to the sound of much noise and on investigation found that his car had been pushed a fair way down the lane. The culprit is believed to own/drive an old 'K' reg Land Rover and apparently uses this route regularly and probably on return from the pub late on. He has since been heard 'passing through' at great speed with radio on and volume up.

The police have an idea who the culprit is but lack the evidence to proceed. The damage amounted to over £1000. Fortunately the insurance coughed up and our member got a new paint job. The Committee can see no way of extending car parking at the hut so it is very much a case of exercising care. If there is no space then park on the other side of the stream. Better still, if you are on your own and know in advance you are going to Langdale, team up with someone else, split the costs, save the environment and avoid the hassle! *Ed*

Wall Job...

Although it's leaving the winter season, members might like to know that the Blackpool Climbing Wall is now open and is located at the Stanley Park Leisure Centre. This features an a fierce bouldering cave, a slightly overhanging leading wall and an easier section suitable for beginners.

The Club is represented in meetings with the Sport's Centre through Martin who will keep you updated about changes. Elsewhere, Blackburn wall has seen the addition of a leading wall making this a good alternative to the quarries on a wet night. The Ingleton Wall has been re-equipped and is worth a visit, prior to the Marton arms, if the Dales are under water. Penrith has opened a wall in the Sport's Centre featuring a Slab (!) as well as a realistic sandstone 'effect' bouldering wall and the usual sinew tearing (four Shredded Wheat for breakfast), overhanging leading wall. *Ed again!*

Bottom Job...

I would be grateful if any member with a gift for languages could help me out with a spot of translation. During a visit to a remote village in southern Spain earlier this month, we came across the following on the menu :- 'Chines in Lard', 'Bottom Consommé' and 'Consommé with Yoke'. Any ideas? *Ed.*

Articles

Mr. South Submerges

Late November 94 and the quiet harbour village of Portpatrick played host to Nob's and Nobess' crag X meet.

Portpatrick lies on the hammer head shaped peninsular of south west Scotland. Facing west directly onto the Atlantic and within view of Northern Ireland, the area enjoys better weather than might be expected. The Southern Upland Way begins at this point. However, the aim was to climb both documented and new routes.

Simon, Gill, Lou and I made a successful Thursday night last orders M6/A75 dash to begin the weekend's consumption of intoxication liquors.

Friday dawned, (somehow we missed the dawn?) with sunshine. The Scottish Lowland guide consulted and we were off to Laggantulluch. A pleasant drive down close to the south west tip of the hammer head took us to Portencorkrie. One farm, a deserted croft, not a person to be seen, and a beautiful coastal view - until the shoreline was reached where Britain's shameful beach pollution showed its ugly face. No Water Board beach cleanups in operation here, probably no shareholders to placate!

The guide suggests "Follow the coast north and the main cliff is reached in 20 min". It fails to inform that the cliff is almost invisible from above. After much thrashing around, Dragon Cave is spotted and sparks off the enthusiasm.

Lou and Gill decide to go for a walk. The OS map is consulted for the Nearest 'PH' and we arrange to meet at Port Logan. Meanwhile the slab of metamorphosed greywacke called Dragon's Cave beckons. High tide dictates the abseil to a small stance above the true start. I set off back up but soon start to tread carefully. The metamorphosis mustn't have been completed as small holds were falling off left, right and centre. A delicate ascent followed. I was glad it was only HVS 5a* Heart of Darkness. Still enjoyable though, especially as we were in T shirts and Mr Peel was at work.

A retreat to granite at Laggantulluch Head revealed a lovely little cliff with deceptively hard routes. Simon lead Seal Song E1 5b*** (20m) while the storm clouds brewed. Excellent route. More good looking routes around here but low tides would be advantageous. A beer front had obviously come in at the same time as the rain, so off we headed for the PH.

Soon we found the girls returning from Port Logan wet, bedraggled and covered in cow do - the pub was boarded up. PH's no longer in existence are seeming to become a common occurrence!

Back to Portpatrick for tea time. Simon and I are sent out for provisions so we had to join the locals in introducing the plastic bags to the bar to contemplate the afternoon's grocery shop. The rest of the team, Martin, Al, Mandy, Dave and Hal arrived throughout that evening's beverage consumption.

Saturday awoke overcast but dry. I had my beady eye on virgin slabs discovered some months before and was keen to point cleaning wizard Martin

at them.. Al, Simon and Dave chose Portobello whilst the girls went to Stranraer and the old fashioned sweetie shop. Off we went equipped with wire brushes, stakes and Tolley's (or is it Lancs University's ?) sledge hammer.

A drive down the farm track revealed a desolate coastline. High tide prevented an easy beach approached and the scrambling 25 ft up above the water with the balancing aid of the sledge hammer strapped to the sack was worrying.

I was relieved when Martin was not disappointed with my find - three smooth slabs lying at 90 degrees to the coast and with non tidal starts. After a few hours cleaning we were ready to for a go. Martin's route looked hard, and even though he managed to wheedle in the entire contents of his RP rack, the top rope shunt ascent was most sensible. He got close but not quite. E6 6b ?? Next time nob.

My choice was thankfully more friendly. The right edge of the left hand slab to a pedestal then a crack protected the top 15ft wall. At the pedestal I was wishing I knew how to clean routes properly. The disco leg managed to be controlled sufficiently to complete 'Ace is Low' E2 5c and named after my crap attempts at card games that night (a case of 'you had to be there'). Next thing we know is 'incoming' and an attack from the Peel/Fenna/Woodsy team who snook up on us. They weren't so impressed with Portobello and after a couple of routes had come to see what we had found. Al and Simon subsequently made the second ascent, Dave spied what might be a HVS, and the general opinion was that E5+ climbers would enjoy the crag.

Low tide now permitted an easier return to the car, except for Simon who was incapable of negotiating the small amount of boulder hopping required. We all fell about howling as his first foot, then steadying arm, the torso and finally the head, went for TOTAL SUBMERSION. In an effort to regain some dignity, he ran about in the sea only to stumble over a stone and go under again. Certainly a different way to test out the waterproof capabilities of his new sack.

The evening's debauchery, fuelled by a 1.00am lock in, ended in Woodsy's stomach cramp from laughing at Mr. Dale's co-ordination skills in shovelling fish fingers and mash from the grill to the floor, onto the butty and into his mouth.

The Sunday morning's hangovers were evil, particularly Dave's all-dayer. Strong winds (internal and external) dictated a walk. The Southern Upland Way was followed before it turned inland and provided plenty of new crag inspection and Tenant lager can recycling for the team. Simon's bum repeated its attraction to water on the path to soak his last clothes (I'm sure he just wanted to wear Gill's).

A very pleasant weekend in a beautiful uncommercialised area, marred only by the beach pollution. This could easily be cleared (*Next working weekend?? Ed.*) The lure of virgin rock and the publication of the Lowland Outcrops guide may produce more route development but the area will never end up like Stanage on a Sunday thank god.

Glenn Brookes

Whiteout at Castleton Tower

A two week trip to Colorado, Utah and Nevada in November provided me with logistical problem of what the hell to pack. With images of desert spires, ice climbing in the Rockies and pulling babes in the local Brew Pub, I staggered to the check-in at Manchester Airport with all manor of jangly, clanging bits and my leather thong stuffed in my plastic boots.

I arrived at Denver Airport to find a foot of snow and freezing temperatures. Shortly after being picked by a good ole boy in a pick-up called Andy Blaylock, I found myself eating pizza and drinking beer in one of the local drinking establishments. After hanging out and shooting pool for the evening I crashed out.

Next morning I was back on my travels again meeting a Canadian buddy of mine called Brant up in Fort Collins, Co.. The plan was to base myself there for the remainder of that week and then go a road trip to find some fun rock and gnarly ice climbing experiences.

Having got over my jet lag I decided to have a go at finding some ice in Estes Park. With a nice early Alpine start and big American Breakfast, I left the trailhead at 10.30 a.m. and hiked towards the diamond Face of Long's Peak (14000ft plus). Without any thought of altitude factors I found myself alone, shagged out and out of breath attempting a couloir on the N.E. face of Mt. Meeker - just to the left of the Diamond. An excellent line, but with extremely hard black ice I found even the lower, easy, grade two section of the route exhausting. Back at the trailhead a local ranger told me of all the locations of the gnarly ice routes. From what I had seen there were some excellent alpine and pure ice climbing possibilities to be had.

I began the road trip a couple of days later with my mate Brant and a local guy called Jim. A seven hour drive over the Rockies found us in the Telluride region of south west Colorado. We had come for the fabled vertical ice routes such as Ames Falls and Bridalveil Falls. We knew we were early for the ice climbing season, but our optimism was soon shattered as we found teasing glimpses of what would be in another month or so.

The area is reminiscent of the Canadian Rockies and conducive to the development of extreme ice. The local guidebook is written in the enigmatic style of yesteryear in which the spirit of adventure and the unknown is fostered. Needless to say the possibilities are great and varied, from mind blowingly steep icicles to 3000ft couloirs. More importantly there are no two to three hour approaches through foul smelling bogs.

However, after consulting with the locals we were directed to the only piece of ice that was in nick. A one pitch high forty metre wide cascade of ice in a narrow gorge with grades from 4 to 6. The main water supply pipeline to the

town of Ouray flowed above. Apparently the local climbing school instructor opened the nearby inspection valves to encourage route formation!

After a great day's climbing we wearily began the five minute walk back to the car. Back at the motel we began the apres-ice session by soaking in a piping hot outdoor hot-tub and drinking wine in a snow storm. Bizarre but fantastic.

A day later, with Jim saying his farewells to go skiing with his girlfriend, myself and Brant drove on to Moab in search of what was to prove to be very elusive, warm sun rock.

Desert sandstone was beautiful and totally awesome, but it was bloody cold. A day spent trying to climb in a biting icy wind in wooly hats and Goretex was enough for us. Yet another long night drive found us in the garish neon nightmare of Las Vegas, the fastest growing city in the States. Sad really.

Red Rocks of Nevada is impressive. Mega face routes of a long and sustained nature were in evidence but with day time temperatures of 5 or 6 degrees, there was only one low level area climbable. We shared this with a large number of locals. We soon discovered that our climbing prowess on ice was not replicating itself on rock. After two days of hang dogging, usually on the first bolt, we had a go at one of the long routes up Indian Canyon around the famous Levitation 29 area. These are long routes in a mountain environment. The rock was good and the views wonderful and it was warm and sunny. Three pitches up clouds came rolling in at great speed. This elicited a rapid series of hurried rappels from the local teams. We followed !

With time running out on our holiday we decided to run ahead of the weather front and head back to Moab with the hope of better conditions. Castleton Tower, one of the most well known desert towers was the target. Biviing out under a clear desert sky with the tower silhouetted by the moon was just dreamy man!

At daybreak the clag was coming in, but nothing serious looking. After an hour's hike up to the base of the route we were enveloped in a snow storm verging on whiteout conditions. A last glimpse of the imposing tower and a rapid descent, along with the locals, on the increasingly treacherous path down the screes.

A great holiday but an almost non event in climbing terms. I can't wait to get back. The tick list is enormous.

Jerry Evans --- Way gnarly, bad ass climbing dude !

Friends in High Places

To much snow to go climbing so what else is there to do on this beautiful sunny Saturday morning ? I'd brought my ski mountaineering kit, so after a quick chat with John Parker it was time to point my skis at 'Shoelace' - well that's how John pronounced the unpronounceable name of the 2800 ft hill behind the Kingshouse.

I could have skied from Lagangarbh hut. However, a lift down to the Glen Etive road was gladly accepted from Phil and Mike. The snow was incredibly deep but I made good progress to a col at 600m from where I had to swing around in an anticlockwise spiral up to the summit at 857m. I calibrated my altimeter then set off up the broad ridge.

By now the cloud was beginning to close in and visibility was rapidly decreasing. However, I was only 100m or so from the summit and well hell, the cloud could just as easily disappear! At 800m the ground started to level off and after checking the map, I thought that I must have strayed off my bearing and was on a flat piece of ground due west of the summit. I thus took a bearing east being sure that this would get me back on the ridge leading to the summit.

Visibility was now atrocious as I slowly skied on my bearing. Suddenly I was no longer skiing but plummeting down at a great rate of knots. I remember hitting 'solid ground' then starting tumbling. Time seem to be suspended and I realised that I'd skied over a cornice and was now cartwheeling down a very steep slope.

Silence, where am I? A few seconds to get my brain in gear. Lucky sod! I thought as I sat half buried in deep snow looking up at the cornice I'd just skied off. I was only about 30ft. below the ridge but it had felt like a much bigger fall. Slowly I moved legs, arms and head making sure that all were functioning correctly. Nothing broken and amazingly I still had two planks attached to my feet and a pole in each hand.

Now if I was a crack French Alpinist I would have stood up, dusted myself off, and skied down the 55 degree slope below, back for a Vin Chaud in the Kingshouse. I am, however, a crap skier who was on an avalanche prone slope, on my own, looking up at a 10ft vertical wall of soft snow that separated me from the ridge. (*Is there potential for a banning here? Ed*).

It's at times like these when you wish you pursued a more sensible pastime like stamp collecting or embroidery. I immediately decided that the cornice was too big to get over at the point of my aerial activities and so started to traverse below the cornice on my skis hoping that I would find a weakness somewhere. After a couple of hundred metres or so of scary traversing watching the snow slough off my skis, I decided that trying to cut my way through the cornice might be a safer option than going much further along this very unstable slope.

Now I was always impressed by that photo in Hamish MacInnes Scottish bumper fun book. You know the one I mean where a climber is emerging onto the summit plateau from a tunnel dug through the cornice. Well I didn't have the balls to attempt such esoteric mountaineering skills. I went for the more cavalier approach of hacking a huge notch through the cornice with my ski, a very useful tool in situations like this giving me a two metre reach above my head.

The hour I spent hacking away at the snow was one of the loneliest I have ever spent. My first attempt to escape upwards nearly ended in disaster. I had put my

skis on my sack after briefly wondering if I should abandon them for the sake of safety (I must have been worried). I then got a poor axe placement, kicked a couple of steps and gingerly pulled myself up into the notch. The skis were pulling me off balance and then suddenly my axe started to move. Shit! Slowly I lowered myself back down .

Again I wondered if I ought to abandon my skis. Then I hit on my cunning plan. More hacking away at the notch and I'd cut a horizontal platform at head height. Skis off the sack then plant them vertically down into the platform. Hey presto, two rigid anchors on which I could haul myself onto the platform and from where I could then plant them above me on the plateau. I crawled on my hands and knees away from the edge and thought how nice that pint in the Kingshouse was going to taste.

Now at this stage I should have pointed my skis downhill and got the hell off that mountain. However, the clouds cleared and I saw the summit trig point about 50 metres away. Ten minutes later I was tucking into my Mackerel in Mustard sauce; Yum-Yum (what you've never had them?)

Appetite satisfied, I tightened up my boots and went into downhill mode, relishing the thought of 2000ft of linked turns in deep powder snow ending at the back door of the Kingshouse and its welcoming bar staff. After skiing about 100ft the wind suddenly hit me, a right old maelstrom, cutting visibility down to the tips of my skis. Having already proved my inability to ski safely on a compass bearing, I decided the best approach would be to remove the skis and plough down on foot.

Well, I won't beat about the bush, it was hell! Thigh deep snow, a gale force wind in my face and a journey that seemed to take for ever. I was on several occasions seriously considering crawling into my bivi bag and waiting it out, but somehow managed to keep going with the help of some home-made undercooked Christmas cake which I had to force myself to eat to keep my sugar levels up.

After what seemed to be an age following my compass, I eventually spotted the telegraph poles above the Kingshouse and knew that the road was not far away. The storm was still making its presence felt and I was able to ski along the road back to the hut trying to keep out of the way of the cars skidding their way along the A82.

There are some salutary lessons to be learnt from this little escapade. Never go ski mountaineering on your own in bad visibility and when in a pair make sure you're roped up with ice axe at the ready (clenched between your teeth?) in case your mate goes over the edge. Better still go to the pub !

Later in the week a phone call from a close climbing companion living in Middlesbrough allowed us both to swap uncannily similar horror stories. He'd been caught in the same storm on Craig Meagdaidh and had an epic descent after a memorable ascent of Staghorn Gully in which he was avalanched 150ft, miraculously stopping in steep snow just above a large drop. But that is another story.....SPOOKY!

Steve Wrigley.

Extra, read all about it

I eased my arm from behind my back and managed to get the dislocated shoulder back into place. Jenny Tolley had just *suggested* that I should write something for the newsletter *immediately* and I didn't think she was prepared to take no for an answer.

The weighty goings on that so urgently needed immortalising in print took place in Spain over Christmas but before I get to the main issue, a word about Christmas and New Year on the Costa Blanca. Firstly, if you weren't there you seriously missed out. Fortunately, a big team was there enjoying two weeks of sun, plentiful food and drink at give-away prices, and, of course, an awful lot of perfect bolted limestone. For those of a more adventurous disposition, the serious routes are there too. Dave Wood and Steve Wrigley delighted in a number of the *biggies*, 1000 ft., ten pitch routes on the Penon, Campana and Mascarat Gorge. Steve even persuaded George Nesbit to go for it on the Toix sea cliffs; seriously overhanging and a bit deficient in the bolt department (the cliff that is, not George). The rest of us headed for the *clip joints*. The local crags at Toix and Dalle d'Ola are compact and convenient; at Gandia you are guaranteed a good workout in positions of extreme safety, but the best place for me was up in the hills behind Benidorm at Sella. Which brings me back to the main issue.

At this point we should have a large banner headline "**FMC Girl Leads Limestone Extreme**". No, it wasn't Jenny, it was Judith Swift. After warming up seconding a couple of E4's in an irritatingly nonchalant manner (I had found them a little more taxing), Judith did what she had been threatening to do all week and lead **Chusmaniatica** (French 6a). For those who are not intimate with the routes on the Sector Culo de Rino at Sella, this one's like M.G.C. at Shepherd's but with 4 bolts in it. I would have had some photos too, except I was told "If you let go of that rope to pick up a camera there will be serious trouble."

On our return to Britain we headed for West View Leisure Centre to assess the effectiveness of the Spanish training where it really matters, on the wall. A quick boulder around to warm up and the TV crew arrived. Naturally, I assumed that Jenny had been in touch with the BBC but it actually turned out to be Cable North West making a promotional video for the Sports Centre. However, true to form, they ignored me and the other lads and asked Judith to lead a route. Jude lead the black route in the left hand corner (at least French 6a), which is probably more significant than the route in Spain. Not only that but she didn't threaten the cameraman once.

Mark Harding (Meet Leader and Belay Bunny)

(I hope that those threatening letters from Preston stop now)

A View from the Pram

My mum and dad tell me it all started in a summer paradise near Boux in France, amongst those pleasant surroundings of the Luberon region.

Between climbing sessions at Boux, while consuming large amounts of local wine and food around the pool in the grounds of an olde farmhouse and constantly under siege from a water pistol toting pair called Fenna, aided by international property consultant called Evans, was where it all began.

Sat here now amongst the pleasant surroundings of Nether Edge, Sheffield while my dad sits consuming that same Luberon wine, contemplating a few hours bouldering on the Stanage Edge after relaxing from a run around Burbage, you might wonder: What has changed?

WAH..WAH..WAH..WAH. -- No time for bouldering dad, I want my nappy changed!

I arrived at 12.16 pm on Wednesday 5th April after giving my mother a 30 hour experience she will never forget and one that would make many a hardened climber, biker or pot-holer run for the morphine ! I arrived ! You thought my dad had bad wind, well you haven't seen anything yet!

Having checked out the local climbing shops for the latest in 'Kids on the Crag' range, I'm now fully kitted out and ready to go. I've also conned my old man into buying a pack that will carry me up to 4 years old. If he can! (Thanks for the tip everyone - "get someone else to carry everything")

Anyway time to go and have another kip, or feed, or nappy change or even get my Guinness fix. Hope to see you all at Pembroke. I'm sure my dad will want another 'wetting the baby's head session' !

Alexandra Beth Peel (with a little help from her dad).

PS. Remember to bring your ear plugs.

3 Wheels on My Wagon

A ski mountaineering trip to the Pyreneese with the sartorially challenged. After an eventful trip, the team sat in the hot sunshine outside a cosy bar at Viellha in the Val D'Aran basking in the cosy glow of San Miguel.

An afternoon inspection of the pitch revealed a substantial ski area and it was decided to warm up on the pistes before tackling the Aigue Torte - Encantados mountains followed by a hoped for ascent of Pico Aneto. This was the highest point of the Pyraneese and like the rest of the area, lay wholly in Spain.

Thus they found themselves, after a strenuous day ticking off every lift, looking south to the promised land. Every peak was clearly delineated in the evening sunshine and several routes were traced through the Aigue Torte. Pico Aneto seemed intimidatingly high, the broad sweep of its glaciers leading to the rocky cone of its icy summit

A shambolic start eventually got underway from the south portal of the Viellha tunnel, with the Transit due to be driven back through the tunnel to Tredos, the hoped for pick up point, by the non combatants. A beautiful walk through a stunning valley eventually disintegrated into some serious scrambling before gentle skinning across the upper snow fields gave easy access to the exquisite Port de Ruis. It was good to be really amongst the mountains, dependent on no one but yourself to find a way through the range and down to the vehicle at the Tredos. The mountains were magnificent and the weather stunning.

So commenced a long and undulating decent of very many miles, past haughty cliffs and frozen lakes, until the vertical girt forest below the Nestanca Hut proved difficult for some. A further two to three miles of 'easy riding' down the lower valley eventually re-united the team.

By way of a break, the following day found the whole team skinning up into the Aigue Torte from Salardu, where the non combatants were put through their paces below the Colomers Hut. Unfortunately the local hut dog, a huge Pyrenean Mountain Dog, felt the whole experience had been put on for its benefit and pursued the non combatants relentlessly, leaping on top of them with great gusto whenever they bit the snow. The surroundings and weather more than made up for the canine attentions however.

The following day the first moves were made towards Aneto and the team installed themselves in the hospital de Benasque in the Esera valley by lunch time followed by a ski up to the valley head to spy out the superb scenery and enjoy the hot sun in magnificent surroundings. Next morning

the ski area of Benasque proved elusive but was eventually located and conquered, the best non combatant making enormous strides in technique. 4 pm found all six back at the Hospital (*Dave is this skiing on the National Health ? Ed*) where the two non combatants were to stay while the rest of us set off for the Renclusce refuge below the Pico Aneto, having variously been told the climb to the hut could take 30 minutes or two hours.

Two and three quarter pole-axing hours later, the refuge finally came into view not a moment too soon as the last of the daylight drained from the sky. A good tucker up and a bottle of wine failed to take away the pain of the broken ribs one of the combatants had been given by a ski lift at Benasque that morning.

A ghostly light permeated the corrie above the refuge as they set off the following morning on the relentless climb to the Ponteillon Superior, but soon the surrounding peaks flamed into morning glory before settling down to another superb day. The Ponteillon reached, skis were abandoned for the descent down the other side followed by a rest while they admired the local army lads zooming down the hill from a helicopter drop.

With the objective of the day in front of them throughout, the relentless grind across the glacier got underway until in various stages of exhaustion the final snow and rock cone was reached. Here skis were abandoned in favour of crampons and the final rock arete was protected by a rope heroically carried by the party's youngest member (at last we have a use for the younger generation). The warm, windless day was enjoyed to the full unlike some of the descent on breakable crust. Refreshment back at the Nencluse Refuge was greatly welcomed, leaving a steady hour's skiing back down the valley to the hospital reached at dusk.

With no time lost due to poor weather a couple of days remained and the team visited Gavarnie where the author skinned up to the Col de Boucharo and Col de Tentes for the views of the Taillon, Mabone and Cirque Gavarnie having given the team a conducted tour of the Cirque from below. The final day was spent lounging by the Lac du Gaube, below the north face of the Vighmale, still in superb weather, watching people walk on water and reflecting on their fears of crossing frozen lakes earlier in the holidays. But then with their lack of experience, caution at least gave them a good chance to return next year. And the title ? You've guessed it--one of the wheels fell off the van on the way down.

Dave Earle.