

An Andorran Adventure

By Ann Peden, Club Member of the Year, in Andorra

featuring Ade Hughes, Adrian Jones, Bill Marsh, Martin Tipper, Matt Akker, Pete Durkin, Peter Hall, Robin Carr, Sue-Ann Hamlyn

It was stated to be a "short skiing break-in Andorra" but turned out to be more like an "escape from Colditz". Ade sent out an email in October looking for suitable recruits for the Andorra job and eventually had himself a posse of ten members. The evening started, as the weekend meant to go on, with most people attending the beer briefing in Hertford the night before travelling to Andorra.

A hearty breakfast set everyone up for the afternoons' travelling and all rendezvoused at Stanstead airport according to plan. "The plan" nearly failed, as two "last calls" for Ryanair flights to Perpignan, saw the posse charging through hordes of people in order to catch the plane. Despite our turn of speed, the plane was delayed for an hour whilst the runways were cleared of ice and the plane sprayed with de-icer solution, ready for take off with an amazing boneshaker side wind. The locals informed us later that all the airports had been

The team from Apartment 1 with Ann (Club Member of the Year) second from left



Two days of snow leave the town car park buried. This is the scene on Saturday morning, change over day! No chance!

closed an hour after our take off so no one else was escaping the country in our pursuit. (Mr Bigg appeared to be at large).

At Perpignan, we loaded up three cars with all the necessary equipment, issued radios, so we had ourselves...a convoy, roger, roger! The insertion phase to Pas de la Casa, was supposed to take two hours, but...everywhere the traffic signs showed snow chains required. A quick pit stop at a supermarket for the usual weekend provisions of milk, bread, tea, beer, beer, beer

and...snow chains were made. It was the latter item that was to save the day with the lads becoming expert wheel (chain) fitters, Michael Schumacher would be proud. We slipped and slid further into the night with one carload being tortured to the sounds of Enrique Iglesias.

Eventually, we arrived at the Spanish border and were suddenly ambushed by a local Spanish family. Everyone scrambled to his or her feet into the insuring battle. We simply had to fight our way out with snowball missiles in every direction. Ade took a direct hit, by a car door to the shoulder, from friendly fire by Matt...Ouch! Robin was seen using his decoy skills by throwing up a screen of snow and diving for the safety of the car. Victory over, we escaped!

Despite the awful driving conditions, the three drivers did incredibly well, although I suspected some skid-pan playing by the first two drivers. Once we got to the toll tunnel, thoughts of a comfy bed were beckoning but when we glanced out the tunnel exit, the snow drifts were three metres high and the road was only just wide enough for a small car...so no margin of error. Upon arriving in Pas de la Casa, Robin decided a closer inspection of a snowdrift was necessary and broke a snow

Continued on page 4

ALTITUDE pt2

The story continues... by Betty-Melissa Bertrund.

Grant turned, a stabbing pain stabbed him in his knee. Looking down he looked and saw a strange bright green crawling spider crawl away from his leg. He rubbed the spot and gazed after Pru. That's a funny spider, it must be a native of the Alpine Alps, he thought, thinking. "I'll be back" he said in a fake Austrian / American accent and started to glumly walk back off the mountain. He suddenly had a thought, "hey sweetums" he shouted, "fancy a cup of tea".

Pru, being a woman, found it hard to resist this most persuasive of chat-up lines and hesitated hesitatingly, but her resolve was great, and continued on. However, Grant had noticed the hesitating hesitation in her step, so called out; "it's using PG tips tea bags from England, not those horrid things you get in those yellow bags in these Johnny Foreigner places".

She relented. And stopped. "gosh," thought Grant "she has brought her momentum to zero by applying a backward force with her feet on the ground". He moved his foot so it could apply a force on the ground that caused a gentle acceleration of his body's centre of gravity, which in order to stop falling over he moved his other foot so, by using his finely tuned inner ear balance mechanism, he moved over to his friend. He would call it walking in future. He noticed something happening to him. Was he going mad? He remembered how he used to think he was a famous psychotherapist, it all started when he was Jung.

He also wondered idly if he was a pair of curtains, but he pulled himself together.

The sun shone, the clouds parted, and fumbled in his pockets and got out his micro stove. She gazed on his expert hands as he furiously worked with his tool and soon he had it all hot and the water boiled. He popped his bag in her hot water, gave it a good stir and soon he had finished. He added his milk, and she sat back with a contented sigh.

She gazed up at her ex-boyfriend and thought he was a good man, very good with his hands. In fact as she looked at him, he looked less spotty and

whimpy as she wondered how she hadn't before noticed his strong muscular arms.

She took a sip, "Uggh" she spat, "This tea is shite, you said you'd use PG tips, you liar".

"Oh no, don't you realise, Pru", Grant squealed "that it's the Altitude!"

"At Altitude water boils at a lower temperature and affects the quality of the tea".

"Oh yeah", Pru said, notwithstanding Grants rapidly changing looks, she had her doubts about their true compatibility.

"Yes, indeed, babe", at this Grant was shocked he had never before called her Babe. What is happening to me, he wondered?

"It's when the vapour pressure of the liquid equals the atmospheric pressure"

"Oh" she said. Wanting to run away, but she found she couldn't take her eyes off him.

"Yes, at Altitude, the pressure of the atmosphere drops, simply due to the reduced static head, thus as the liquid heats up, the molecules have sufficient energy to break free from the molecular attraction and surface tension, which creates a vapour. Which is the name we give to a gas that is a normally a liquid". Said Grant, as his steel blue eyes ravished her body.

Pru, equally spell bound, noticed a sticky liquid leaking from his body, from a place she had not seen a sticky liquid come from before.... His wrists..... "My god, Grant, you, you are are, leaking....." she stammered.

"So" he continued, it often happened, "at 4000 m, water boils at 86.5C, which is too cold to give you a good cuppa. Check the temperatures in Steam Tables." With that he grasped her by her middle, shot a hot sticky substance onto a rock and pushed her to the edge, then plunged over, as she shuddered in pleasure and pain, when they soared through the air across the chasm to safety.

They held each other, for they both realised that Grant had been bitten by a radioactive spider that had mysteriously dropped out the sky, and he had become

HMC rock climber-Man.

To have Grant die in her arms call 0870 12345, to marry call 0870 12346, calls cost £75 per minute and may last 23 minutes.

CHAIRMAN'S T(W)ALK

Well, it's the end of the HMC Committee year. Thanks to Pete, for his Treasuring, Ann for outdoor meets, Debbie for indoor meets.

Albert for being Treasurer and looking after the web site. Bill M for his wonderful crux, I said Crux. Ian for the climbing walls and Geoff for organising the specialist walking trips.

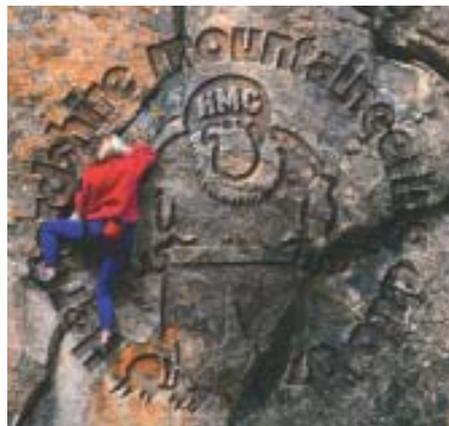
So hope to see you all on 8th April at the AGM and getting involved in your club, in a big or small way, by voting for instance at the AGM. Other ways are by organising a meet, a local walk or cycle ride, (how about the London bridges ride?), suggesting where to go, or joining the committee.

Happy mountaineering

Bill



Ed's Square Box



A friend of mine having fun with our logo



Having made a commitment to the Committee to get Crux out for the AGM, for one awful moment at the end of March I thought I would have to write 8 pages on Andorra.

Fortunately for me I have had a little help from you, the members, for which I am very grateful.

Whilst on the subject of Andorra I would like to thank all the drivers who did a magnificent job of getting us there. My friend, Peter Hall, drove the WHOLE way from Perpignan to Pas de la Casa, nine hours in treacherous conditions.

Our Chairman has expressed his thanks to the Committee over there. It is a hard working team and a pleasure to be part of it.

Bill



Who are those guys?

They claim they were watering to the grapes for last years Beaujolais Nouveau. Can you name and shame them?
Clue: See last issue of Crux



EXAMPLE OF BRITISH HOTELIERY

Synopsis by Alice Whitehead

The film opens without narration or commentary (apart from the faint noise of mountaineers limbering up for a food throwing fight). Stunning, scenic views of the Welsh countryside are presented with magnificent aerial photography – the camera flies in close to the surface of an immense lake in the lap of the sheep-covered mountains. After flying by a small sliver of island in the lake's centre, the

shot dissolves to a God's eye view of a two-lane, mountainous road weaving through tall oaks in the dwindling evening light. The shifting camera angle picks up a tiny convoy of cars on the unpopulated strip of road, all with bikes racks (a plethora of Marins, Scotts and one cheap, green thing with a shopping basket...), penetrating into the paradisiacal, late-winter wilderness. Then the camera pans round to reveal their destination. A lonely motel sandwiched between a parking lot and an abandoned chippy (with enviable views of the Spar and derelict cinema). This is the Red Lion Motel, Builth Wells.

The travellers decamp, full of hope for a weekend of adventure, little knowing that it will soon descend into mountain-biking madness.

The hotel has a dubious past; some say the caretaker Pat O'Driscoll – racked by loneliness and an incongruous Irish accent reminiscent of Father Ted – killed his wife and all cleaning staff and buried them behind the mountain of rubbish in his crumbling fireplace (which is never lit, no matter how cold). Here he spends his days and nights drinking himself into a stupor with only a strange, caged creature (believed to be an ex-parrot) for company, plotting how he will dupe his guests into believing he is capable of any level of responsibility. Local legend has it that this man possesses a special Gift, which some call The Shining Example of British Hotelieri, a rare inability to meet your guests' needs, maintain the shambles of a hotel and heat any food to above freezing (particularly breakfast). This special gift has enabled him to ignore gaping holes in the roof and windows and allow two-

year-old vomit to form a crust in the communal bathroom, while his dwarfish, 18-year-old slave girl Vickie (masked in a 10-year-old's body) single-handedly attempts to clean, cook and cater for all visitors.

Unperturbed, the hardy HMC ignore the stains on the bed linen; the watery beer; the arctic breezes through the holes in the floorboards, and set about exploring the hotel's labyrinthine corridors, and the barren countryside outside. But, when they find their bedroom selection of stale biscuits used up and the entire region's pubs drunk dry, the real horror begins to dawn on them. As the terrified group realise they face the prospect of NO CHRISTMAS DINNER, there comes a cry for the hallway: 'Heeeeeeere's Anneeeeeeeeeee'. Ann Peden stands defiantly in the hallway brandishing 300 prawn crackers.

Meanwhile, in the empty motel dining room Bill Burt sits at a typewriter, repeatedly muttering to himself: "all work and no play makes Bill a dull boy", and contemplating the enormous task before him, the task he fears will send him insane - the after-dinner speech....

Released at hotels nationwide since 1985. No Gary resigns himself to an evening of frivolity



Philosopher's Chat

Obsession

By Calvin Burt

Have you ever read "fever pitch" by Nick Hornby?

It's a football autobiography of Nick as a soccer fan and his obsessive following of Arsenal FC. Attending all the home and away matches, the FA cup encounter in Plymouth, on a Wednesday night, when the result is in little doubt. How many can relate to this as regards the club and mountains. Do you try to get to all the meets? Think about it. An 8 hr drive in a weekend, to walk up a hill in the fog and rain and cold, not see a thing for 4 hrs, get cold wet, sore feet, stinging eyes, climb a wet VD, with rucksack, in the wet, with the wind howling so that when you belay up the second, you start to FREEZE, for a CLIMB/WALK YOU HAVE DONE BEFORE!!

This is obsessive behaviour. But obsession is not bad, Einstein thought about his theories of gravity and time space for years and years, every day working and reworking his theory. The most famous people are obsessives. Athletes, footballers, football fans.

Of course, Olympic Athletes have to be obsessives. In fact I always think that Einstein and Olympics are connected. Like the old James Burke programme connections. Where would the Winter Olympics be without Gravity? Mind you we mountaineers don't like gravity. Makes it hard to climb mountains and makes falling painful. But would we climb them if it was easy? Isn't THAT the reason we walk up hills in the rain and snow and wind and fog and push our grades rock climbing?

We should include mountaineering in the Olympics. Rock climbing, that would be easy. But walking, we could have technical difficulty, artistic impression and speed. Who would win Artistic impression? Dave in his Lowe Alpine Look? Or Albert in his red socks and plus fours? Perhaps Clare and Marion with their cross your heart slings and detachable heels on rock boots?

Mind there is walking like Geoff....Speed walking? I liked the commentator quote: "I have never seen walking like this. Such form. It's like the competitor from Cameroon has been walking all his life."

Well, he probably started when he was 1.

A sort of mountaineering sport is the Biathlon. Biathlon in the Winter Olympics, cross country skiing and shooting. Now, why is that in there? Shooting! What do we think they are shooting? It's gotta be wild animals, like deer and other horrid creatures like mountain lions... how non-PC. Rock climbing, it must be a greater participate sport than that, or that other odd Olympic sport....synchronised drowning. I think we should lobby hard for the BMC to get it included. Who would win the Mountaineering world cup? Would it be the French? It's interesting about the French, we invented most sports, football, golf, rugby, tennis - but the French wrote up the rules... it's so they can break them.

But if we didn't have rules, what would we have...anarchy. I read that Anarchists have an organisation? What? It's called the International League for Anarchists!. Anarchists, surely you can't HAVE an organisation of Anarchists? They want to vote! How, er....democratic! The very opposite of anarchy. They had a conference! Yes, a conference of anarchists! One of the topics discussed was whether avowed anarchists should vote. Some said that voting would betray the very spirit of anarchism, while others insisted that voting could be a tool of anarchy, with each person voting for the candidate they thought would do the most to further the anarchist platform. I wonder if they wear one of those little badges with your name on it. Complete with their job or speciality? Such as Pete "dangerous" Durkin, Dave "Molotov" O'Gorman, Debbie "riots" Smith. Next there were probably a series of workshops with titles like, Time-Management, and the how to blow up a power station: and Never a Wrong Time for a Molotov Cocktail. Then a light lunch of humus and beans. On their way out of the AGM there would be corporate sponsors, where participating anarchists could pick up stuff like free t-shirts, pencils, petrol siphons, and detonators.

But we don't have anarchy in the club do we? Who mentioned the Christmas dinner?

Continued from front page

chain in the process. Everyone bundled out to assist. Brrr! It was minus 62°C (with the wind chill) and the blown snow felt like sand in your face. Finally, all the cars were parked where they stopped (in the nearest snowdrift) and abandoned for the night.



Ade invents the new sport of Snowdiving

Amazingly, we had managed to struggle through the night when meeker souls would have quit much earlier. Some three inches of snow had brought Britain to a standstill but we had had to endure three metres of snow. However our problems were not quite over yet. There was still the matter of finding a bed to sleep in, as it was still the middle of the night, when we arrived at the apartment block. Ade cheekily persuaded the security guard to call the owners, who in turn very kindly came out and completed the paperwork with key handover at 03.00am. Despite the late hour, everyone was still in good spirits and no teddies had been thrown. What next? Well, with nine hours of treacherous driving in a snowstorm and endless hurdles to overcome, the only possible option wasto pop open the wine and start a party. Hic!

Surprise, surprise (what no Cilla), the resort was closed the next day...due to too much snow. The locals said this was unheard of and did not think the resort would open again until Monday!!! Having seen the local villagers, Jonesy recommended the attire for Pete, "Get your hat, your coat, your gloves, your scarf and don't forget...your face mask, you've pulled!" Most of the day was spent having massive snowball fights and rugby tackling people into piles of snow. Beer induced, Pete, Matt and Ade decided to climb up a small building and jump off into large snowdrifts...as you do???

Later, it was necessary to begin the arduous task of digging the cars out of three metre high snowdrifts but first; they had to locate which mounds represented our cars. Since no one had any snow shovels, they had to improvise by using the apartment broomstick, but this

eventually gave up the ghost and snapped in two. Some locals gave Bill a verbal telling off because his car had blocked the whole entrance to the car park..."No hablo espanol!" he claimed in ignorance and smiled his best moustached grin.

On Saturday we woke to clear sky and sunshine. There was a mad scramble for clothes, boots and skis, so that everyone could practice their honed skills. Robin tried out the latest in lip salve fashion..."Lips of a Clown" unmistakable. Ade found an excursion into powder too deep and scared the local children with his impression of the Abominable Snowman. Jonesy was the only one that felt brave enough and helped to dig him out. In the afternoon, Ann set up the Ecole d'Anngrenade and offered some private lessons to Bill and Sue-Anne. However, Sue-Anne decided it was time to demonstrate the strange method of "Zen and the Art of skiing"...balance she insisted. Later in an accident, she tried to break her nose stating it would be cheaper than plastic surgery but ended up with a lovely bruise on her nose...most attractive.

That evening Bill introduced a new friend from the local resistance to the group – a Polish bottle of vodka – everyone welcomed the new friend but it was a quick "Hello" and "Goodbye!", before heading into town for more surveillance on the local talent.



Matt stands by in case Ade needs a hand

With money to burn, Robin and Jonesy headed off before breakfast the next day, to buy some ski boots. Robin had deeper pockets and got all patriotic buying some red, white and blue skis as well. Everyone had some superb skiing and many pistes were "ticked off" before lunchtime. Matt tried out a new braking system for his snowboard by using his face for stopping power. Pete demonstrated some hors piste but wiped out big style and thought he had broken a binding. He huffed, puffed and sweated his way down the piste, until Ann pointed out that it was simply twisted and corrected it. Humph! Eventually we had to return to Pas de la Casa but the two Adrian's almost did not escape, until they were interrogated by the Lift Police to prove their innocence, before letting them onto the last chair lift of the day. Pheeww close call!

Tall tales of skiing were accompanied by tall beers in the bar that evening which included a water fight and a mammoth game of Table Football. There was much singing of "You're

sh*t*te and you know you are" and "Its all gone quite over there", when goals were scored. Afterwards, Jonesy and Pete decided some early season climbing was in order and began soloing the inside of the staircase "Apartment direct route" in their sock-soles.

There was a showering frenzy and Robin was seen to try out a new line in male underwear but was soon "busted" by the girls. A bottle of Absinthe was added to the events that evening,



Met cop gets busted!

where Ann discovered that alcohol and tablets do not mix as she staggered around the spinning room...so much for all the temperance exams in her youth. Having had too much drink, Father Jones, was seen "holding" onto his bottle, grizzling...drink, girls, feeck off! But, that's... an ecumenical matter!

The morning after the night before saw some bad heads at breakfast and Jonesy displayed a blackened toe – source unknown, but probably a fight with a table. For those that were leaving they had to play hide and seek first because the police had managed to "move" two cars from where they were last seen, into a car park and had parked them perfectly. Once loaded up with the duty free, the party pulled out heading for the airport with a planned lunch stop in "Les Angles". It was here that Robin noticed Pete had a habit of hovering up food remains and promptly announced "Dyson - A legend in his own lunchtime"! Even when boarding the plane it was observed that Pete was the only one not carrying any bags of snacks but then...a Dyson is after all "bag less".

A successful mission was declared with much celebrating. Followed by everyone nursing their injuries; Ade – bruised shoulder, Robin - mark on chest, Ann – torn knee, Sue-Anne – bruised nose, Matt – cut face, Jonesy – blackened toe and Pete - best effort produced...a paper cut!!

Bill, Peter and Martin attend to Matt's every need



Number 3 Gully Buttress, Coire na Ciste, Ben Nevis (III***), 14/3/03

Climbers: Ian Gibbon, Steve Ng, Adrian Jones



7:40am: Looking up at the Tourist path zig-zags. No bumslide evident in Red burn! We'd driven up from Hertfordshire overnight and were all feeling pretty shit.



11am: It's taken 5 hours to get to the start of our route from the car! Do a quick calculation: 3 snow and ice wieners, 5+ pitches - when does it get dark? We didn't perform this sum and carried on regardless! And the route looked so small from below compared to the enormity of the Corrie!



I fed Steve Snickers bars then wasn't quick enough with the camera - this is silly enough though. Belays were all shit by the way and there was no gear to speak of. Time now 15:04



Ian still playing with his warthog (disgusting!) Well as you can guess it went dark. Another party abseiled off in despair with the soft snow on the last pitch. We've no idea what happened to them but hopefully they got home OK. All I can say is it's bloody lucky it was moonlit. After faffing around on



several exit routes we eventually made it up the soft snow (all very exposed). A truly Scottish epic. And if one benightment is not enough Ian and Steve did it again the next day on Tunnel Vision, Anoch Mor. I couldn't stand up straight...



...but Ian was fine until we found that half the Red burn bumslide was complete. Who could resist a moonlit bumslide? Ian discovered that in his exhausted state it's extremely difficult to stop oneself with a walking pole when shooting down the side of Ben Nevis in pertex pants. At approx Mach 2 after nearly taking Steve out he caught a crampon and came to a halt with ankle twisting hilarity.

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Stevie Haston eat your heart out!

Steve's Idea of going ice climbing in Italy had us rushing into Ambleside to purchase the latest edition of Climber. A quick scan through the article 'ice climbing in Italy' had our hearts and minds racing.

"Climbs for all abilities"

"Ideal for beginners"

"Easy approaches"

What the article didn't say was the flights to Turin were extortionate.

"When shall we go?"

"What gear do we need?"

"Do I need to take an ice axe?"

"What colour under pants shall I wear" etc etc.

After numerous phone calls and a realisation that flying to Turin for the weekend would break the budget, a decision was made.

We would go to France.

We flew from Stansted to St Etienne with only a few mishaps, excessive baggage charge, mobile left at security desk and a lost Steve, who was soon to be found in the departure lounge. We picked up the hire car and headed off to our destination, La Grave. Dave had a little difficulty getting used to a left hand drive, hand slipping off the gear stick onto my knee on more than one occasion and he'd only been away from Anita for a couple of hours. We arrived at our Gite in La Grave safely despite a close shave with a road sign, a verge, ice and snow and numerous parked cars. Luckily we met two Brits who explained the guidebook grading to us so we could avoid any near death experiences over the next few days.



On day two, after poor interpretation of the French speaking guidebook, we headed in the direction of a climb.

"Ideal for beginner's" a grade 2 equal to a Scottish III.

We should have been a little suspicious that we were heading for the wrong climb when we had to tackle a gully of Scottish grade I/II for the approach. To our surprise the ice above looked quite easy. Steve took the first lead and was climbing quite slowly, what could be the problem? Steve set up a belay and Dave set off climbing and led through to another stance letting out the odd "whoop" as he proceeded.

When Dave and Steve were at the stance it was my turn to follow, the ice was deceptively steep, no surprise they were climbing slowly. It was now my lead, again it looked easy angled but the ice was near vertical, my blunt walking style crampons were skating off the ice. I managed to place an ice screw moved up another metre then in a split second I was back down on the snow standing a little shaken next to Dave and Steve who both had their mouths wide open and a look of surprise on their faces. I had taken a leader fall. I stepped forward and continued back up the ice, what a plonker! I placed one more screw, before climbing over a lip to a stance. I felt sick and shaken. Dave and Steve followed up.

Dave took the lead for the final pitch of the day

again deceived by the angle. Near the stance Dave dropped his last ice screw. He was now left with only two axes for protection. There was very little room at the top stance so Dave abseiled back down to us. From here two long abseils saw us safely back at the bottom. It had taken over 6 hours to climb 150m.

"I hope that wasn't a grade II" I said "Other wise it might be the end of my ice climbing career"

After studying the guidebook properly we realised we were on a grade III (Scottish V), not bad for beginners even though I found it scary. We headed off to town that night for a few large ones and to look for some Brits who would be suitably impressed by our efforts.

Day three we tackled the "Pylon" grade 3, a three star classic. Needless to say I left the leading to Dave and Steve. The climbing was excellent but again very steep - and it looked it from the bottom. We were above the tree line and had splendid views over towards La Grave and of the mountains surrounding the valley.

Day four we parked the car for the third and final climb of the holiday and only had 100m walk in so no chance of Scottish epics on the approach to this one. The climb was two long pitches with me leading the first pitch and Steve the top pitch. Once the morning mist cleared we could clearly see our previous two climbs across the valley and had superb views towards the Meij, the highest peak of the area. Two 60m abseils and we were back at the bottom and ready for a few final beers before an early morning start back to St Etienne.

"So where next year?"

"Italy?"

"You bet"

Gary Haston, Dave Lowe and Stevie Moran. ("We wish!")



The Crux of the issue

No 1. PUB pub, (slang) n. short for Place to Utter Baloney

It was psychologist Carl Rogers who, in the 1940s and 50s, developed Talking Therapy to allow people to open up and purge themselves of their daily stresses and festering anxieties. Though he died in 1987, it is heartening to know that Rogers' legacy lives on, every Tuesday, in the Place to Utter Baloney, Welwyn Garden City. The main protagonists of this focus group are a motley bunch of climbers, walkers and cyclists who have all ascended (and descended) the slippery slope of mountain

madness. Though numerous treatments for their condition have been sort, including EKN (Extreme Karaoke Nights), the group have found that weekly injections of LPA (Local Pale Ale) or HFSDD (Highly Fizzy Soft Drinks for Drivers), as well as large doses of Talking Therapy can significantly relieve their symptoms. Furthermore, the group has reported even bigger benefits if their Talking Therapy nights are centered on ANI (Absolutely Nothing of Interest) or TTG&S (Techy Talk about Gear 'n' Stuff).

If you think you would benefit from a visit to the Place to Utter Baloney please feel free to attend our regular 9.15pm meetings throughout the year. Please note that the PUB can only hinder weight control as part of calorie uncontrolled diet.

Ice Climbing California Style...

Winter is coming to an end here, like it is for you guys back at home. Life is getting kinda tough, and some hard decisions need to be made. The last of the ice is in (just) Lee Vining Canyon, the snow has not yet melted at the resorts of Tahoe, the sun is shining in Yosemite, so what on earth do I do at the weekend?? As I bought myself some nice shiny new ice tools this winter it was a no brainer, so off to Lee Vining for what will almost certainly be our last trip of the year...



Carolyn poses on Chouinard Falls

It is Friday, I left work nice and early and met friend and climbing partner Scott Johnston at my apartments at 4 for the long drive across the Sierra Nevada mountains. The sun is shining and we are both warm in our t-shirts. I make some irreverent comment about sun melting ice, but Scott is confident it will still be in. We take rock gear with us in case it isn't. Eleven pm and we are at the Best Western motel in Lee Vining. One motel room for 6 ice climbers – but it is a big motel room with a kitchen and 3 double beds, so comfy kip for all... Too comfy for some judging by the snoring!

Six am the next morning, and we are up for breakfast. Scott has cooked a huge pile of pancakes, I clear up, the others eat and are still faffing around half an hour behind us as we depart for the canyon. A short drive, followed by about half an hours walk in, and we know that we won't be needing to resort to the rock gear this weekend. Some climbers are already on the ice, but it is relatively quiet – the warm weather must have put people off. We gear up, me eyeing up all this fat ice, but that is too easy for Scott – he has his eye on this scary looking thin line up to one side of the face. I look on, convinced the whole lot is going to come down on top of us, but it holds. Next it is my turn, so I tie in and head up the snow to the bottom of the ice. It is thin, I can hear water running underneath it, and I re-consider whether I should let the others climb first before I destroy what little there is left of the climb. There are two Mexican climbers on the fat ice to my right. Every move on their route seems to bring down huge chunks of sun-rotten ice. Get on with it is the call from my colleagues, so I do.

After my initial trepidation I start climbing the thin line of ice, leading to more substantial ice above. Going is easy. The ice is plastic and takes my tools well, easy angle makes for good foot placements. I am just starting to think I am getting the hang of this game when the ice steepens to near 90 degree chandelier ice. I get onto this, and again there are plenty of spots to dig in with feet and axes, but eventually the continuous swinging of tools gets the better of me, and I need to take a rest before continuing on up to the top. The top of the climb is in the sun, and it is getting warm already!

The next day was even warmer. We walked in up the canyon and again set up on the Chouinard wall. I was to belay Chris, who was going to do his first ice lead on an easy WI 2-3 ish line. Steve, another of our party, was casually gearing up wearing a short sleeved Hawaiian shirt.



Ice playground

A far cry from Scotland – Ice Climbing California style indeed! By the time I got on the ice I had discarded my fleece, and was positively sunbathing. Someone from another party was climbing topless (male I hasten to add) and regular sunscreen applications were de-rigueur. I STILL managed to give myself the screaming hot aches though – someone had the stupid idea of climbing the easy angled ice without axes – doable but painful, confirming my view of ice climbers as masochists. The hot weather was just too much, so they just had to find some way to make it hurt!!!

So that is it until next year. I will hopefully get one last day in at my local ski resort – Kirkwood at Lake Tahoe. I followed the advice of those Karrimor adverts a couple of weekends ago, and phoned in sick (!!) to enjoy some fresh powder with my sister -in - law who was visiting from Britain. There has to be some way of getting around pathetic US vacation allowances...

So that is winter in California. Next weekend I am off to Yosemite to get back into practice on rock, but rain is forecast...just to make you feel better!!!

Yosemite & Joshua Tree October 2003

Try something a little more exotic this year and join us for a two week climbing and walking trip to California. Carolyn (see above) will be on hand for local knowledge.

Famous for it's outstanding beauty, the area has some amazing climbs. The locals are also very polite, 'Have a nice day' (said in an American accent) is frequently heard. Camping is likely to be our

main form of accommodation as it is amenable, flexible and provides access to a wider variety of areas.

We can now confirm that the dates will be 11th October - 25th October 2003.

This will allow you to book off your holiday etc. We are likely to hire cars to get us from A to B. A possible itinerary is outlined below*:

Sat	11th October	Fri	Drive to airport
Flight	San Francisco	Sat	25th October
Sun	Arrive Yosemite	Flight	San Francisco
/Sightseeing	San Francisco	Accommodation is likely to be mostly camping due to it's flexibility. We will book the campsites where necessary.	
Mon	Yosemite	For further information speak to trip organisers Pete Durkin or Adrian Jones	
Tue	Yosemite	*flights and destinations may vary	
Wed	Yosemite		
Thu	Yosemite		
Fri	Tuolumne		
Sat	Tuolumne		
Sun	Tuolumne		
Mon	Drive to JT		
Tue	JT		
Wed	JT		
Thu	JT		

The Back Page

Members patiently await their bangers & mash



PURCHASE DISCOUNTS

HMC has obtained discounts with the following outdoor clothing, climbing and camping equipment shops:

Cotswold
91 Victoria Street
St Albans
Tel: 01727 847888

Countryside
118 High Street
Stevenage
Tel: 01438 353086

The Complete Outdoors
Bourne End
Hemel Hempstead
Tel: 01442 873133

urban Rock
20% discount at urban Rock for all HMC members at the Castle and Westway climbing centres.

A current Membership Card must be shown.



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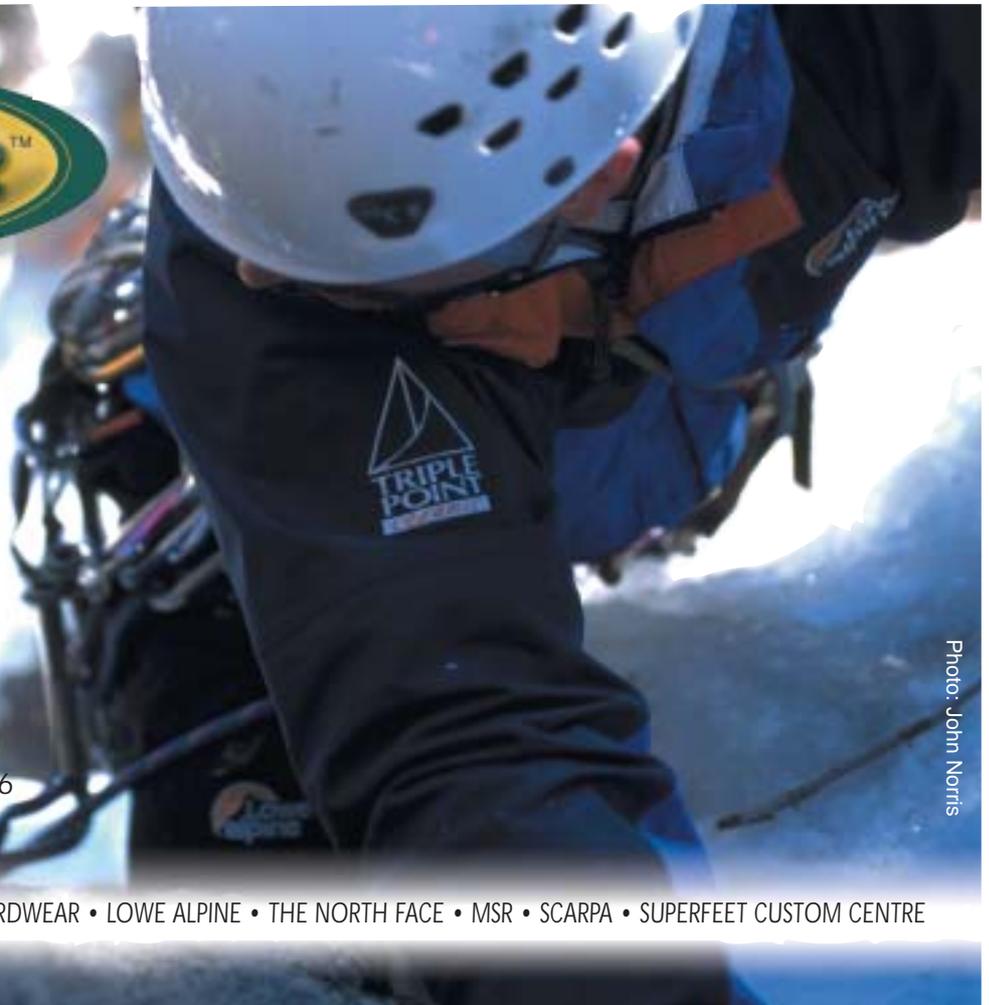


Photo: John Norris

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