

## CHAIRMAN'S T(W)ALK

Hello again. It's the Summer issue of Crux. Many would think mountaineering's a summer sport. The HMC tends to disagree, with the winter meets being the best attended. Winter time makes the hills in UK more difficult, more of an achievement, harder to navigate, shorter daylight brings the added thrill of walk-offs in the dark. The possibility of perfect snow conditions. Summer brings midges, sun protection, bigger ruc-sack loads. (as you still need to pack a fleece, waterproofs, lots of water), and, usually lots of rain! But it also brings rock-climbing, time to do the long mountaineering routes, sunsets, and BBQ's. So we might moan, but we can indulge in our hobby 12 months a year.

Bill



## Cheers, Ann!

Clubperson of the year Ann Peden and the famous tankard. See centre pages for Annual Dinner Photo feature



## Harry Potter and the Stone Philosophers



**I**t's 2.30am and we've arrived at The Kingshouse Hotel. The red deer along the roadside have given us the glare as we drove into the desolate landscape. Someone in the Club had told us there was camping at The Kingshouse. There was, but not what we imagined. We wild camped by a chuckling stream and by 3am we were tucked into our sleeping bags. It's the end of May so the nights are short and there's little sleep. We were up at six and as we looked around there were a dozen other tents with their occupants breaking camp for an early start. I realised that this was a convenient stop along the West Highland Way and a brisk walk would see them into Fort William for a full English breakfast.

We were here on a mission, the Etive Slabs. Adrian Daniels and myself had targetted a route - Spartan Slab VS - for a couple of years having read about it in Bill Birketts "Classic Rock Climbs in Britain". It's 600 feet of smooth granite, a vertical desert with little protection and nowhere to hide. That morning we headed for the Red Squirrel campsite in Glencoe to set up camp for a couple of nights. Unfortunately we'd been beaten to it by Harry Potter! The whole of Glencoe had sold its soul for the

Corporate dollar. Did I say campsite? Make that trailer park. Bunkhouse? Full of computers. Next campsite? One huge marquee for set builders and fibre glass moulders. We were offered the last caravan, or a tent in a sheep field. We took the caravan that even a 'traveller' would think twice about.

Happy that we had got a 'result' we headed down the 'road to nowhere' - the enchanting valley of Glen Etive. It's eighteen kilometres of single track, winding road hemmed in by >



*Adrian's high-wire act*

wild rhododendrons and overlooking a river that would be suitable white water aspirants. The road finishes at the head of Loch Etive where there is a broken pier, a reminder of the days when Victorian travellers took pleasure boats from Oban. We approached the slabs with trepidation. The weather was fickle and the prospect of relying on friction on wet slabs worrying. We stood below the route and looked up. Awesome. The angle varies from 45°-50° which sounds gentle enough but you

*The crux of the pier traverse*



wouldn't want an 'Etive kiss', especially if you are wearing Lycra. It would be like striking a match! There is an apochryphal story of Dave Goodey loosing friction and as he began to slide turned outwards and ran down the slab. He thought he was Don Whillans. As we fuffed around it became apparent that no-one was really up for it and a heavy downpour finally settled it. Happy to have a decision made for us we



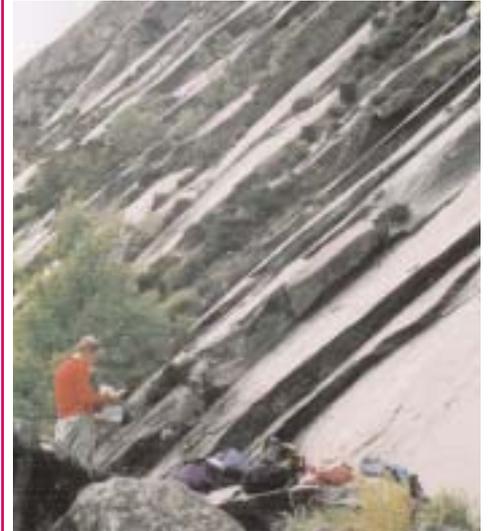
*Julian, our photographer*

played on the broken pier, traversing out over the water and, on the way back, traversed a cable bridge over the river. Oh what fun we had now that the pressure was off!

In the evening we headed for the Clachaig Inn, fearing it would be full of Harry Potter and his mates. Luckily they'd been sent to bed early. We drank seaweed beer and heather ale as we foottapped and nodded our heads to a brilliant band called Little Wolves, with their 'voodoo r'n b'. This is one rocking good pub. When we got back to the caravan we talked long into the night about climbing and the meaning of life and decided on an early start as the forecast was good.

With hangovers we were still up early for bacon butties in the Glencoe cafe. Then the long and winding road. By the time we trogged to the Coffinstone at the base of the climb some of us were very queasy. The route was dry and the sun shone so Adrian, who'd cleverly kept himself sober the night before, eagerly harnessed up and uncoiled the ropes. When he looked round for a partner they'd all disappeared. The combination of fear and beer sent us looking for trees, just like bears in the woods!

It was 10.30am when we finally got going; Adrian and myself first up. We were tentative for the first two pitches with long run-outs and no gear. As a queue formed behind John and Julian a voice with a Scottish accent was heard to say 'we'll be here all day with those donkeys on the route!' The third pitch offers a superb hand traverse at 300ft followed by the crux pitch. Up a groove, overlap and crack to a belay



*John looks for something easier than VS. There isn't.*

on the edge of space. The final pitch offers delicate slab climbing at a sensational height. At the top, savour the route awhile for the descent is perilous.

It had been a successful little adventure so we again celebrated with more seaweed beer and were entertained by a lively folk band called Flint. As the evening wore on talk was of the intriguing girl with the dark hair that so captivated John, and the mysterious Russian girl that so fascinated me. She got up on stage and sang some Russian folk songs and also danced a highland jig. I admired her nerve and wondered how she came to be in Glencoe. Had fate drawn us together?

*Written, produced, directed by Bill Marsh and starring him, Adrian Daniels, John Parrott and Julian Thomas*

## Glen Etive

And so we come to this place, where a giants hand has wiped away the grass. A sweep of rock, the mountain's bones glistening in the light. I reach out, feel the texture of the rock, touching it lightly, like I might the skin of a lover. But it has no concern for me or for those others who come to play their games here. A place to dance, though not for me. I saw one dancer that afternoon. A couple arrived late, lazed in the softness of the day and then when everyone was leaving, lightly danced up the slab. A full rope length without gear. Effortlessly, where I had hesitated, taut with the baggage of fear.

A foot smears on the rock, steps up, trusts, knows that it will not slip. A philosophy for life. The body follows the mind, the mind reads the rock, knows its hollows, and the ripples where a boot will stick. Faith and the confidence to believe. Could we move through the everyday like that, fluid movement, lightly touching the world, living each moment. Moving ever upwards.

The emptiness of this place is weaving its magic. Below the loch sits quietly. Still between the showers. A mirror to the sky. My mind is lost in the vastness of this day, as they were lost in the eyes of the dark haired girl in the Clachaig. Ageless those eyes, deep with the mystery of these hills. From the pathways of myth, shape shifting woman of the faery cave. Imagination spinning, music in the night air, a pathway between the trees.

Soft marsh of cotton grass and vivid green. Springs last bluebells beyond the wood. My boot squelches, a frog jumps across the path. The road to nowhere it's been called, yet it has brought me here and will take me back again to the sterility we call reality. A stag drinks from the river, watches as we pass and breathes a spell into the wind.

*by John Parrott*

# 'The Wall'

Saturday had been a damp drizzly affair with the occasional sleet shower. The sleet showers were timed to perfection each one arriving just as we reached a fresh summit. The landscape and its occupants had resembled an impressionist painting, leaching colour in the rain. The damp had got everywhere. We'd turned the drying room into a dripping living entity. It had all the ingredients for a life of its own. Leaving this life behind hot showers, food, and a night out had beckoned.

A strange fellow crossed our path that night. Allegedly he belonged to the 'Footsteps' walking club staying at the Hostel that week. The club that had hired two minibuses from Glossop yet none of them lived there. His comrades disowned him as one of their own. Despite the heavy rain all day. He was drier than the proverbial bone. Not even his cloth cap showed the slightest sign of damp. Oh yes he'd insisted been out all day. He probably meant out all day, unconscious through drink, under a table, a bar, somewhere in the town. We must have missed this slight nuance at the time. He insisted amongst other 'truths' that flying to Belfast for a long weekend was a strange thing to do and that we must have taken the ferry and driven down the A2. He was left soaking in the downpour of his own weirdness.

The HMC three (Bill, Eddie, and I) after some hot food spent the evening imbibing of the silken Guinness. Truly of a different calibre it had that truly velvety taste only to be found in Ireland. For indeed Ireland it was. We were staying at the Youth Hostel in Newcastle, Northern Ireland. It was the HMC Mountains of Mourne B/H weekend.

We had chanced to enter a bar. A stones throw away from our accommodation. A fortuitous choice. A few locals were singing / playing traditional songs. As the night wore on their number grew as more gents arrived with their instruments. Whether that be voice, fiddle, tin whistle or bong. Waves of melodious harmony washed across our senses.

Aided by the Guinness we hatched a plan to walk the 'Great Wall of Mourne'. A circular walk of 22 miles,



*Art in a Glass by Bill Burt*

ascending / descending 10,100ft, and covering 15 summits. Together with the 4 miles to get to the start of the walk and back it would be a twenty-six mile mountain marathon. It seemed so easy as Bill drew a 3D relief map of the route in the creamy head of his sixth Guinness. Our mission for Sunday was set.

Sunday

*"We don't need no super rock boots.*

*We don't need no ropes at all.*

*No dark sarcasm in the outdoors.*

*Climbers leave the hills alone.*

*Hey climbers leave us hills alone.*

*All in all it was just another brick in the wall.*

*All in all you're just another brick in the wall"*

The missing lyrics of a Pink Floyd classic were alive and well. Chairman Bill's voice rang out as surveyed the 'Great Wall of Mourne' with the determined gaze of a man on a mission.

The mission was going well. The weather was set fair and improving. We had at least 11 hours of light remaining. We felt fit. The Guinness had put iron in our legs. Standing on the summit of Slieve Donard (850m). We were at the highest point in Northern Ireland. The whole of the land lay below. This was our Everest. Despite the altitude we had elected not to use oxygen. This proved too much for Eddie. He decided he would amble between Slieve Donard (850m) and Slieve Commedagh (750m). That would be enough that day. After saying our farewells on the summit of Slieve Donard: Bill & I turned south and followed 'The Wall' over the edge.

A steep drop-off and we were away. The wall was substantial hereabouts and so it wasn't long before Bill could be seen on the top striding forth. Given the boggy conditions it wasn't long before I joined him. We continued this way for the next 3 miles or so. We even met a ranger coming along the top the other way. Passing on the wall proved interesting. No face plants into the bog below mind.

At the southern end officially the walk goes down to the road for a short period before rejoining the wall half a mile or so further west. We decided to follow the exact line of the wall and followed it into a forest, down a hill, across a stream, and up the other side.

Another long climb commenced here taking us from 150m above sea level to the summit of S Binnian (747m). Bill ran out of steam here. (Bills words were "I'm a bit bonked"). He'd also ran out of food and so we broke into my bag of mixed nuts, barely half way round.

A step descent skirting to the right of some large granite slabs brought down to Hidden Valley. Here was to be found the first of the reservoirs the wall was built to protect. A visitor centre marked on the map brought the promise of ice cream and teas. Alas it was unmanned. Bill being the engineer set off the automated video that told of the history of the reservoir. Bill also being the engineer was unable to stop it. It droned on and on. "65 billion gallons....at a flow rate.... 13 million people....18 years....2 men and a wall..."

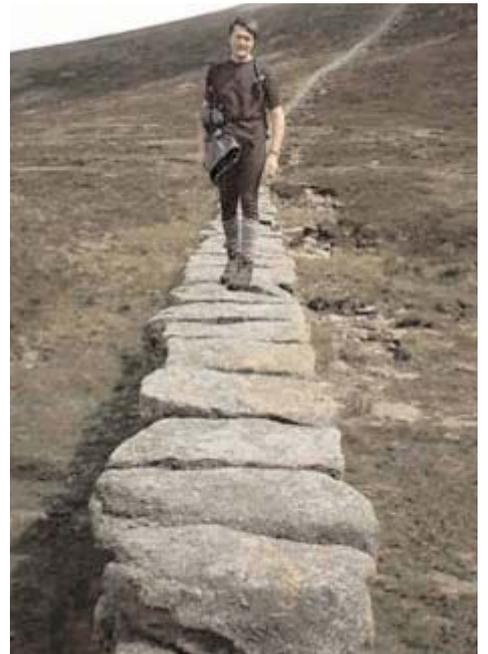
We left after refilling our water bottle / platypus combinations. The route once more climbed back up onto the watershed. We entered a marshy area. After losing and regaining our limbs from the sucking mass we once more reached dry land. The wall wasn't substantial enough hereabouts to walk on.

After crossing the next peak we met a local guy connected with the YMCA. We talked for a while. He was looking after a group of kids on a Duke of Edinburgh Silver Expedition. They were due soon and were the same kids we'd seen just before reaching the wall at the start. They'd taken a more direct route to this point than us, but then they had huge rucksacks and tents to contend with. I pulled ahead of Bill on the next peak and as I waited for him the first signs of the DoE group putting up their tents could be seen. Bill was pretty knackered and so we agreed he'd miss out the next 2 peaks and I'd see him in the col. beyond.

I ran on ahead down the wall and then pushed on up

the next peak. Over to the west I could see the hills we'd walked on the day before. Unlike yesterday they were now bathed in a soft evening glow as the sun sank lower. Downhill again and another little run to the col. Sweating pouring into my eyes I climbed the next peak. Running down to the next col. I realised it would be a steep ascent for Bill. Waiting awhile it was obvious he wouldn't come up that way.

Pushing on up my third peak I still couldn't see Bill but assumed he'd be waiting at the next col. I could see a solid path heading up that way from the valley floor, along the line that Bill would be taking. Half-jogging down the other side I caught sight of Bill about 400m away. He set off up the next peak immediately. Only 4 more peaks go and about 8.30pm. The running up and down the extra peaks had slowed me down a bit and the water ran and food ran out after the next 2 peaks. Nothing for it but to keep on going. Near the summit of our last peak, Slieve Commedagh, we found a pipe coming of the hillside with water flowing. We supped



*Routefinding made easy (for Mick and Pat)*

greedily from it. Reaching our final summit we mentally ticked it off at done. Downhill from here, no problem. Alas tired legs and bodies meant it wasn't quite over.

With the time around 10:30pm Bill rang Eddie to let him know we'd virtually completed the wall and would be down in the next couple of hours. Eddie informed us the Pizza place would be open till Midnight. A deadline had been set!

After putting our head torches on at the late time 10:45pm. For N.I. is fairly north and also west compared to our usual haunts. We staggered on down, and stumbled on through the Tollymore forest.

We met a Welsh man heading up to bivvy (divvy) on Slieve Donard at about 11.30pm. Shortly after we met Eddie near the bottom where he proceeded to produce some most welcome cans of Guinness.

A quick sprint to the Pizza place for 11.45pm and a dash to the Youth Hostel to scoff them. The pizzas lasted about 5 seconds as we gorged ourselves. A shower then to bed for much needed rest.

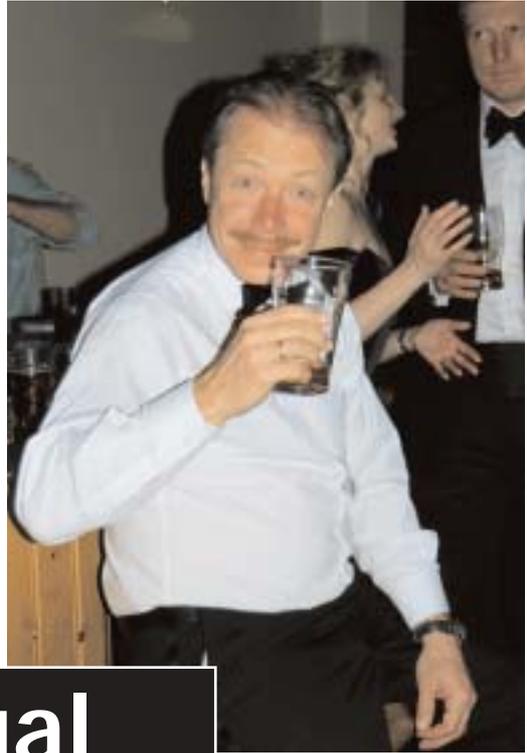
Sunday we tried and failed to hire some mountain bikes. So a short walk round Tollymore forest. Off to the Airport and the flight back to Luton. Thence home. An excellent location and weekend.

Phil Whitehurst

**You smoothie, Eddie**



**And that's magic!**



Pictures from the Annual Dinner & disco at Dalesbridge Centre, between Ingleton & Settle, Yorkshire Dales. Fine weather with some members walking the three peaks, a good meal, a long speech from Bill and some disco dancing.

**Annual Dinner 2003**  
*Pictures by Anita Hutchings*



**Ladies Man!**



**Dave and the Siamese twins**



**Wrong shoes , Gary**

## Ed's Little Box



I have had to indulge myself with the front page article this issue. Between myself and Anita Hutchings we have contributed about 50% of this issue, so thank you both. Thanks also to Phil's last minute effort. There was a lack of articles for this issue yet the club members are more active than ever. So come on guys tell us about it. I have continued with my policy of showing pictures of as many members as possible so group shots will always be welcome. Congratulations to Ann, who deservedly won the Clubperson of the year award at the Annual Dinner. Some of you may not know but the award is decided by our Chairman and I'm sure you all agree with him. Enjoy the Summer it's a good one, so far.

*Bill*



### Spot the Odd Man Out



### Nice frocks, girls!



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# The Priest's Hole.....

The first May Bank Holiday 2003. Rain was predicted to flood the land. Staunch members of the HMC wimped out of the trip to Pembrokeshire. But Anita wanted to try out her newly acquired, red Gortex Terra Nova bivvy bag and sexy Mountain Equipment Lightline, 1.1Kg down sleeping bag. A bivvy trip HAD to take place!

At the last minute Dave remembered a cave mentioned in Trail Magazine (Gary Bebb's favourite read). Situated on the 11 mile long Fairfield Horseshoe in the Lakes is Dove Crag, where The Priest's Hole Cave sits. It's marked on the map and 'just a short scramble from the path'.

Friday night. The mugs were weighed (Anita's new double layered steel Aztec mug is twice the weight of her old one so must be left behind – 'am I becoming as obsessed with gear as Dave', she worries!). The rucksacks were packed. The route was sussed. An early night ensues.

Six am, Saturday morning sees us heading up the M6 (via a stop at the Little Chef) and towards the Lake District. We arrive in Ambleside around 11am, and a little gear fondling takes place. The phrase 'you don't need one' rang around the village. Major purchases took place, including a full can of gas for the evening meal.

After a 30 minute tour of Rydale car parks someone kindly looked like they were planning to leave, after a little encouragement they did and we secured a space. Packs on our backs, we set off uphill to start the Fairfield Horseshoe.

The sun was shining. The clouds were hardly in view – a pleasant surprise after the weather forecast! After climbing for about 45 minutes we stopped for a spot of lunch. Fifteen minutes later we were donning our packs when an obscenity flew into the sky – Dave had realised we hadn't packed the recently purchased gas canister!

After not much discussion Dave was selected to run back to the car (minus rucksack). He passed three lots of walkers who had previously seen us having lunch, then on the way back up the hill he passed them again – strange looks were upon their faces.

The weather was beginning to turn. After 38 minutes Dave reappeared, looking a little wet – was it the rain or sweat?! We started off on our journey once more. The rain got harder and

harder, the wind got windier and windier, the cave got more and more appealing!

At the Summit of Fairfield the wind and rain were giving it large, visibility was down to about 10 metres and Robin would have been proud as we took our first compass bearing of the day. We made our way around to Hart Crag, checking bearings all the way and wishing we could remember pacing.

From Hart Crag we aimed for Dove Crag. Less than 1km to go, it's 6pm and dreams of hot tea and comfy sleeping bags were filling our minds. Dave had read that finding the cave on a clear day should be okay, but finding it in the mist could be troublesome. The wind got stronger, the rain got harder, visibility reduced to 5m. We searched. And searched. And searched. Dave dropped his pack and scrambled up and down rocks, following the direction set by the GPS and instructions from above.

The cave had disappeared. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't find it. Dreams of cups of tea and warm sleeping bags were waning. As the hands of time crept to 7pm we had to make a decision. There was no sign of shelter and bivvying where we were would have been a hell of a night. Any fool can be uncomfortable, so retreat was the only cause of action.

We followed the Great Wall of China all the way down the ridge to Ambleside. Apparently the views from this ridge are stunning. We have yet to be convinced. We eventually made it on to the road and a very bedraggled wet couple walked along to find their car. We almost got distracted by a dry bus shelter 5 metres from the car. It was the first dry spot we'd seen in over 6 hours. Dave had his sack off and was ready to kip on the bench when I rounded the corner. Common sense prevailed and we dived into the shelter of the car. It was 9.25pm.

By 10pm we'd driven round Ambleside five times and found 'Poppins Café' open for business. Steak Sandwich and chips twice and two teas please! Where were we going to sleep that night? We drove on to Brother's Water Campsite and found a spot to pitch the tent. Dave got out of the car .... and got straight back in again, soaked. We drove round to a secluded car park, grabbed our dry clothes and sleeping bags and put the front seats down. The trees all around shook to the sound of snoring!

You just couldn't make it up!

*Hutch and O'Snorman, Dove Crag, Patterdale.*

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# Vodafone wins HMC sponsorship deal!



The following is a transcript of some printable text messages sent by mobile phone on Good Friday among various members of the club who went camping in the Lake District over Easter.

*Caroline:* Hi Matt, Where are you?

*Matt:* Hi Caroline, Just passing Keele services. Where are you?

*Caroline:* Not far from the campsite. Traffic slow over the last section. Weather fabulous.

*Matt:* Traffic slow for us too. ETA about 2pm. Wait for us and we'll join you for a walk after lunch.

*Matt:* Traffic really slow. Go for a walk without us. See you later.

*Caroline:* Geoff. You stupid fool! The campsite is full. There are no places reserved for us. Call this organizing a weekend? Get out of that pub garden and find us somewhere to camp!

*Caroline:* Matt, The campsite is full. There were no places reserved for us. Does Geoff call this organizing a weekend? Stupid fool. Help!!!

*Debbie:* Hi Eddie, Where are you? Campsite's full.

*Debbie:* Hi Caroline, Matt's driving. Rich says there are loads of campsites off the A66 to Keswick. We'll try there and let you know.

*Geoff:* Sorry Caroline. All my fault. What can I say? Sorry. Garden centre, by the way. Looking for a composting bin. Sorry.

*Eddie:* Hi Debbie. We're near Birmingham. What are you going to do? Go on or turn back?

*Barbara:* Hi Debbie. Caroline's furious. Geoff's in a garden centre in St Albans. Keswick? That's the other side of the Lakes. It'll take us ages to get there.

*Rich:* Geoff, You big pansy. Another fine mess you've got us into.

*Debbie:* Eddie, We're going to look for a campsite off the A66. What kept you?

*Caroline:* Geoff, You stupid fool.

*Barbara:* Hi Debbie. Caroline's still furious. We're going for a therapeutic walk on the hills in the sun. Let us know.

*Eddie:* Debbie, Anne says there's a nice one near Castlerigg. Steve went for a 45 mile run this morning, so we couldn't start before nine.

*Geoff:* Caroline, Sorry. All my fault. Very sorry.

*Geoff:* Rich, Sorry. All my fault. Very sorry.

*Debbie:* Hi Eddie. Two sites at Castlerigg are full. We're trying a site in Borrowdale.

*Matt:* Hi Barbara. Finally got a place on a mountainside in Borrowdale. Can't reserve, but have saved some space. Tea's brewing.

*Debbie:* Hi Eddie. We've got a site in Borrowdale.

*Debbie:* Hi Robin, Campsite at Wasdale full. We're in Borrowdale.

*Debbie:* Hi Chris, Campsite at Wasdale full. We're in Borrowdale.

*Debbie:* Hi Elspeth, Campsite at Wasdale full. We're in Borrowdale.

*Debbie:* Hi Geoff. Call this organizing a weekend? We're in Borrowdale.

*Geoff:* Hi Debbie. Sorry. All my fault. Very sorry.

*Matthew Taylor*

## ALTITUDE PART 3

The continuing saga of Pru and her techie partner, who, in the last episode was bitten by a radio-active spider and turned into Mountain Man. Which was fortunate as it saved them from certain death from falling. Or more correctly hitting the floor after falling.

Location: top of mountain, somewhere.

Weather: misty.

"by golly" MM thundered, whipping out his enormous compass, "we're lost, but never mind, the earth's magnetic fi...."

"I can use my GPS." Interrupted Pru.

Deftly turning it on, she turned to MM and said

"You see, 24 satellites on a 12 hr orbit send time signal from atomic clocks. The hand sets calculate the distance from each one based on the time taken for the signal to reach the handset. The signals travel at the speed of light, so time taken multiplied by Speed of light equals distance. 4 signals are required, with 4 simultaneous equations used to solve the error between the handset time and the atomic clock time. It can then compute to find bearings and altitude and time. Intersection of 3 distances give location relative to satellites. Satellites position very accurately predicted using formulas devised by Newton, Kepler, Einstein. (They even allow for the relativistic adjustment of time due to the speed the satellite is travelling). You can also get your own travel speed (not used on walking GPS, but on car/boat/plane GPS) using the Doppler effect. The hand sets are so small due to using signal using spread-spectrum communication with pseudo-random code technology performs a sort of "amplifying effect" on the signal so that it can be recovered by the receiver. (removes need for big dish), but due to atmospheric noise the band width is very small (about 50 bits per second.) The maths is incredibly complex with correction software, to allow for "wobble of earth", diffraction of the signal as it enters the atmosphere at differing angles, changes in earth's rotation due to moon and sun location. Software took over 100 man years to write, but basically paid for by US defence. Now written into specialist chips and copied many millions of times. Satellite position is minutely corrected twice a day from the "earth stations" at US Naval bases around the world. Which is why it takes a long time to get a reference once turned on, but after that the handset time is accurate and so can give almost continuous read-outs."

"but, but Pru, wh, ho.... Whi.... when...." he stammered

"There, we have our grid reference now. See, accurate to 10 m". She turned and strode off into the mist.

The end.

# The Back Page

## Caption Competition Free tickets for Everest IMAX film



The HMC has received 3 pairs of free tickets from the Science Museum, to see the Everest film on the large IMAX screen at the Science Museum in London.

The committee has very generously not taken them for themselves, me especially, as I should be reviewing it in this newsletter, but offer the tickets to the wider membership.

I have selected a photo of Julia taken at the Annual Dinner and all you have to do is send a suitable caption to me, preferably by email. I am told that Julia has a great sense of humour so be as witty as you like but keep it legal, I don't want her suing me.

The Committee will decide on the best caption, and allocate the three pairs of tickets.

The winners of the competition, and some of the captions will be published in the Autumn CRUX.

email to [BillIM@themc.co.uk](mailto:BillIM@themc.co.uk)

## 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  
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Tel: 01438 353086

### The Complete Outdoors

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