

Ten Days of Climbing (and Fish)



A view of Henningsvær in evening sunshine from the top of Lundeklubben.

A climbing trip to the "Magic Islands" in June over the Summer Solstice had been high on my agenda for far too long and so this year, with my old mate Nick, we set off for the Lofoten Islands, located off the west coast of Norway, over 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle. It was surprisingly easy to get to. Leaving the UK at 1pm on a Sunday, we were pitched up overlooking a fjord by 10pm, feasting on Jamaican Ginger Cake, Malt Loaf and Johnny Walker Green Label. The latter had been a freebie for buying so much whiskey in the duty free shop.

The first thing that we noticed was that everywhere seemed to smell of fish. Nearly all of the climbing is on the island of Austvågøy, about two thirds the way down the island chain and, since we'd landed in the north, this necessitated a bit of a drive. It was well worth it though – the scenery is utterly mind-blowing – and we arrived at the town of Svolvær by 11am. The main thing here, from a

climbing perspective, is something called the Geita, or Goat, a big pinnacle of rock high up the hillside, complete with two horns. I was content to look up at this appreciatively and wonder where the supermarket was and what we were going to have for tea, but Nick was having none of it. "Hmm, I reckon we can be up there in an hour. Bit of a slog in this heat though". It was already well over 20°C, not bad for the Arctic. Sure enough we were up there in an hour and it was a slog. Still, it was good to be doing our first route within a day of leaving Letchworth. The classic way up is the "1910 Rutta", a 3-pitch jaunt ending with



The Svolvær Geita (Goat) showing the North Face and the jump between the two horns.

a jump between the two horns! This was a tad more exciting than Adam & Eve on Tryfan, with a straight 300m drop to the Svolvær cemetery if you should miss. After another route, even better than the first, it was time to do some shopping and find a campsite. Dinner was grilled fish with a sauce made from packet asparagus soup, washed down with Côte du Rhone, under a panoply of snow-capped jagged peaks.

At these latitudes in summer the 24 hour daylight is full-on. Luckily I'd brought some eye-shades, but the sun was on the tent before 5am and it was soon unbearable. Today we went to Piannokrakken, a roadside (by Norwegian standards) crag, with soaring multi-pitch climbs. Again the scenery was stunning. A lovely valley, looking out over the slabby face of Presten and then out to sea over rocky islets to distant snowy mountains. After the climbing we drove into Henningsvær, a small fishing village over two narrow bridges, and visited the Klatrekafe'en (Climbers' Café) for a mooch around the gear shop and a coffee. Here we were promised live music if we came back on Friday evening. The fish smell seemed to be getting stronger.

Day three and a bit cloudier but

continued overleaf

Walking the Coast to Coast (with a Bike!)

Last September the HMC team of Alex, Allyn, Eddie, Helen, Paul and Phil set off on a rather interesting Coast to Coast crossing on Mountain Bikes. The route taken was not the popular Sustrans (wimps) route but one which follows as closely as possible Wainwrights legendary walk.

Despite months of training nothing in Hertfordshire prepared us for the bike carrying on the first 2 days over the Lake District. (And you would look a bit of a prat walking through Hertford with a bike on your shoulders!).

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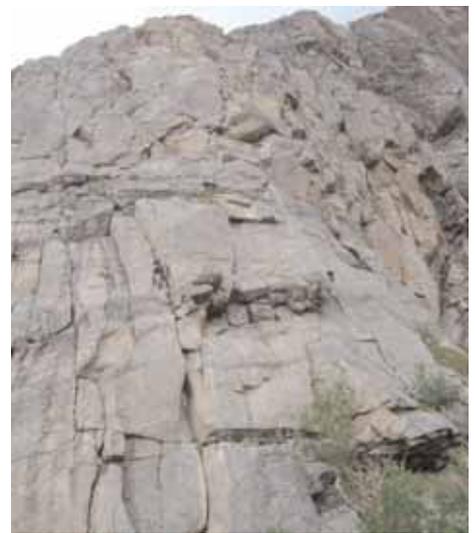
Thousands of cod hung up to dry. Since it rained quite a lot, we never did understand quite how this works.

still lovely weather. We had decided to explore further up yesterday's valley, to do a route called Blare Blåbær (Only Blueberries). The walk in was no joke and took 1.5 hours through huge boulders sat in a swamp, with intricate navigating. On eventually arriving at the route, we found that the start was barred by a snow slope and a bergschrund! Rather cunningly, we started by crawling through a snow tunnel to reach the climb. The climbing was awesome, with the 2nd and 5th pitches being nicely sustained hand cracks, although nothing harder than English 5a. On the way in I'd had a good laugh at Nick when he went up to his knee in the bog. Now it was his revenge. While we were on the climb there were two mini-avalanches, the second one wiping out my rucksack at the bottom with a telly-size block and carrying it

down the slope. Shite! The descent was interesting: multiple abseils, on every one of which the ropes got stuck. After the 3rd ab, we got fed up and down-climbed, followed by a jump over the bergschrund and an out-of-control bum slide in rock shoes down the snow slope. At the bottom, my rucksack was intact although my sun cream had contrived to explode all over the inside. Tea was tuna fish with fried courgettes and Uncle Ben's, washed down with Cragganmore.

And so it continued. The weather next day was even hotter and so we went sea-cliff climbing in an area called Paradisset (Paradise – says it all really). After bumbling around for a few hours it got too hot to climb and lots of lazing on rocks ensued. That evening we camped next to a huge group of Czech climbers in a Hippy bus. They were doing 5 day big wall routes on the Storpillaren (Storm Pillar), in between wandering around in their underpants with binoculars. Nice bunch though. Tea was 'tuna surprise', this time in cheesy pasta sauce with ginger, washed down with port.

The next day I woke up at 5am with the sun on the tent. By 5.30 my clock/thermometer said 28°C so I went for a swim. Let's say the water was quite cold. I had to wade in and out 3 times before my feet stopped going numb. Soon it was Friday and time for a wild night out at the Klatrekafe'en with live music. Walking through Henningsvær we noticed dried fish hung up outside people's doors and windows. That might explain a few things. The music turned out to be a Norwegian Beatles tribute band. After a couple of pints costing over 5 quid each we beat a retreat. On the way back to the campsite the sky was totally clear and we saw the midnight sun between two peaks. It was a bit of a surprise then, when it rained during the night, although a relief not to get baked in our sleeping bags at 5am. It cleared up after mid-morning so we went climbing at Festvågvegg. This turned out to be the best day's climbing of all. We'd now made it into the esoteric Norwegian grade of 6/6+ (roughly E1) with ascents of Skiløpperen (The Skier), Gaukerisset (Cuckoo Crack) and



Climbers on the left-facing corner of Gandalf (VS 4c). Guns 'n' Roses goes through the overhang on the right at HVS 5a.

Lundeklubben (Puffin Club).

The weather went downhill from then on with perpetual drizzle and temperatures around 12°C. We managed a few more fab routes, including Guns 'n' Roses, before resorting to tourism, and taking up dry-fish-spotting as a serious hobby. The Cragganmore had run out and we were now on Caol Isla. After a week of rain it was time to come back. I was beginning to wonder how I'd sleep without constant daylight and the sound of rain hammering on the tent all night. Perhaps sleeping in the shower with the light on would work.

Report by Tim Gledhill



The imposing slabby face of Presten (The Priest). The Vestpillaren (West Pillar E2 5b) goes up the front. This was high on our list for the second week, but it pissed it down.

Getting there is surprisingly easy: a 2 hour flight from Stansted with Norwegian.no saw us at Oslo, where we caught a 2.5 hour internal flight to Evenes, not actually on the Lofotens but close enough. There we picked up a hire car with Budget. It's pricy though – flights were around £400 return and car hire is around £500 for two weeks. There are lots of campsites in the Lofotens plus wild camping is allowed. Everyone speaks English. As well as climbing, there is loads of scope for hiking and cycle touring. For the climbers check out the Rockfax web pages.



View from Mars (h)

OK girls you've made your point. You've been climbing in Portland, doing Welsh 3000's, CMD on Ben Nevis, C2C and

even building walls for heavens sake! I'm very impressed, but would be even more so if any of these had been done naked.

Just to prove I'm not chauvinist my photo of the month is from Julie Bowler, taken on our walk in the Lake District. I can

also say from experience, she's a bloody good driver too.

So put away those knitting needles and keep those articles coming.



Bill



View from Venus

Well, a lot has happened during this Crux period, with all the climbing stories, club trips and biking madness; but I could also refer to it as, 'Three Weddings and a Birthday'.

The three weddings belonged to; Anita Hutchings & Simon Bates (May); Phil Whitehurst & Helen Bishop (June); and Rupert Priestnall & Joanna Croxson (August). The good news is, Phil's wedding guests all managed to arrive at the correct venue for the ceremony, unlike the stag party to Cork, where some stags ended up in Shannon...I'll let you work out the geographical differences in locations!

Is Pete Durkin now over the hill? Having attained the massive age of 30, he doesn't look a day over 29.5 years...Happy Birthday, Pete. Still looking young.

Anyway, aside from the social scene, the club has been climbing in the Ecrins National Park (France), Peak District, Yorkshire and several trips to the south coast, in particular, Portland.

The Ecrins trip, organised by Chris Cook, was enjoyed by everyone who attended and, hooray, no falling's out this year. Richard Goodey was a little confused as he thought he had turned up to the local OAP

summer trip, being the youngest to attend, although it transpired he was a great nurse maid, at making the tea. The adventurous party members even managed a few summits, including the Dome du Neige and... return safely (so no epic mountain rescues this year).

Gary is trying to go down in history as a great explorer, after he discovered a new mammal... a Rab-dog (part rabbit – part dog). He has been trying to patent the discovery ever since.

The trip to Portland, one of many during the summer, organised by Adrian Jones, attracted a good mix of climbing abilities...of course, there were some who only turned up for the ice cream and toe dipping.

August Bank Holiday saw some last weekend sunshine, with a great turnout of climbers, bikers and walkers.

For me one of the best news story refers to the disappearance of Dave O'Gorman's mountain bike from right under his nose, and the amazing "Operation Santa" to recover it, including the arrest of two criminals. Unfortunately, there is not enough script space to recount the full tale so I suggest that you buy Dave a beer and he'll give you all the juicy details in his usual witty style.

Finally, it is time to fly back to Venus and deal with other Club duties...until next time...stay safe, stay amused!

Ann Peden, Madam Chair

Day 1 St. Bees to Borrowdale

Down on the beach an array of digital cameras appeared for the obligatory photo-shoot.

Then we got a few miles under our belt on a smooth disused railway track out to the first major climb – from Ennerdale up and over to Buttermere, it was here that Paul and Phil separated from the Peloton. They defied gravity and cycled up some of that 25% gradient first climb.

Over the top and looking forward to a technical descent ahead of the main bunch, their reward involved err...lifting, pushing and bouldering - not much riding, this led them to the edge of Buttermere lake, where they walked with the bikes to find the track that led us to the Honiston Pass. By this time these two were out of contact with the rest of the team and did not realize that Helen had taken a fall and was developing an ankle the size of a football, and had become slightly lost. After another couple of hours and much sunbathing on Paul and Phil's part the HMC group were all re-united at the foot of Honiston and set off over the next climb on the road. Allyn took the Green Jersey here



for a superb ascent pedalling all the way up. His 'bridleway cred' let down only by the fact that he went into the wrong YHA at the top of Honiston, checked in, had a shower, made a new 'friend'. But when the rest of the team reached the top Honiston YHA they broke the news to Allyn that this was the wrong hostel and off they rolled at about 40mph down to Longthwaite YHA.

Day 2 Borrowdale to Patterdale

As the previous day had been such a nightmare and Helen was now injured, Eddie, Alex and Helen opted for an alternative route to Patterdale. Allyn, Paul and Phil head off over Greenup Edge, literally carrying their bikes all the way to the top. Phil does a disappearing trick and Paul and Allyn, stop for a while, pick up a grid ref and get moving down to Grasmere, again having to carry the bikes for much of the steep descent. (In hindsight this bit coming up wasn't a good idea) but Paul and Allyn decided to have a large lunch and a siesta in Grasmere, after the knacker morning –

little did they realise what was coming up in the afternoon. Yes the next climb of the day was up to Grisedale Tarn. It was bloody steep (1950ft) and on a good day the first half of the climb would have been cycleable. Time was dragging on for Paul and Allyn. The rest of the team were now sitting in the pub in Patterdale drinking and contemplating calling mountain rescue when at about 6.15pm, the last two rolled into town. (good 3k descent to Patterdale though!!)

Day 3 Patterdale to Kirkby Stephen

Cycling was the order of the day today,



with the whole team back together. The first 5 miles were some of the best single track riding to be found, skirting around Ullswater even though there was the first puncture of the trip. Paul the unlucky one. The Coast to Coast today really provided some superb off road and twisty hilly lane riding – superb! After crossing the M6 at Shap and onto the Moors Phil decided to get a puncture and mde a simple puncture into a 45 minute epic slime-faff which meant that Paul and Phil had to ride in pursuit mode to find the rest of the team. We all made Kirkby Stephen in time for last orders and Alex pulled a waitress!

Day 4 Kirkby Stephen to Grinton Lodge

Hot hot hot! The team ride together for most of the day today, a good mixture of



road and off-road in blazing heat, and a chance to cool off in the Swale.

The C2C's crossing with the Pennine way could not be missed. In the afternoon there was a 3-way split in the group. Allyn and Phil going over Melbeck Moor (martian landscape), Paul going over Harkerside Moor, Eddie, Alex, and Helen following the beautiful Swale to Reeth. Grinton Lodge YHA was stunning, and served good food, and, although licensed, had no beer, thanks to some partying Germans the night before!

Day 5 Grinton to Osmotherly

A rapid 35 mile road ride via Richmond, was covered quickly and before the team knew it they were having afternoon tea and waiting several hours for the Osmotherly



YHA to open. Paul, Eddie and Phil went back to town for the local entertainment - first the Mrs. Thompson's shop (a step back in time 100 years) and finally, a bunch of mountain bikers 'faffing' for half an hour at the back of their cars (spraying oil on disk brakes etc) only to see them go off for a 25 minute ride – unbelievable. I thought Alex and Allyn fuffed until I saw this bunch!

Day 6 Osmotherly to Robins Hoods Bay

It was agreed that because of the 50 miles that needed to be covered today a shortcut road route would be taken to gain time on the first climb. Only problem was that Paul and Allyn did not hear the radio message from Phil and they went over some pointless climb, once the groups were back together, fast continuous progress was needed to make Robins Hood Bay in daylight. The team worked hard all day, over varied terrain, good tracks, steep forest ascents, and rutted moorland tracks. This day had everything that was good about mountain biking. The last few miles were proving a bit of a slog so the route was altered to bring us into Robin Hood Bay at illegal speeds – a great way to finish. Hard as it was the weary HMC cyclists rolled into the North Sea for the photo's and then a celebration followed in out hotel, Alex drank 12 pints of lager to make up for his teetotal week.

Many Thanks go to Phil and Alex for organizing the trip.

Report by Paul Dormer

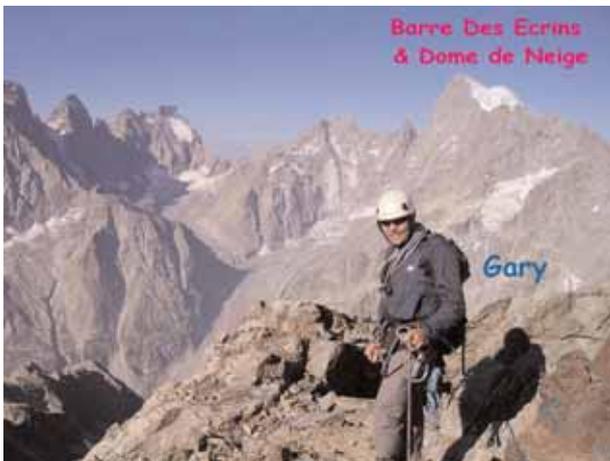


Alps 2005

This year's Alps trip saw us head for La Grave, in the Ecrins National Park, France. It was my first experience of the Alps in summer, and the views on arrival driving up to the village were spectacular. These were *BIG* mountains. We were staying in an apartment right in the centre of La Grave, with a view overlooking The Meije (3983m); not the highest, but one of the hardest mountains to climb.

Gary, Richard and Charles had already spent a week camping in La Berarde and bagged a few peaks, hut to hutting.

On our first day we ventured out with the intention of doing some glacier walking practice. We took the cable car up to 3211m. It was Cold! We explored around some of the local tops before descending. This turned out to be a little adventure. Four of us coming down on a rope and suddenly within about a minute, three of us were down to our hips (eek!). Skills



were learnt quickly of the necessity of keeping distance, ropes tight, and soon we were all smiling again heading back to the cable car! A happy ending!

After a few days climatising, Tuesday,



we set off on a glorious hot day to Ailefroide. It was a hot walk up to Refuge du Glacier Blanc. If you have never stayed at a mountain hut before, then do. Dinner was fab, three courses too. This hut slept about 100. However, breakfast at 3am was not so good. Feeling half awake, head torch on, I set off behind the others! There was a line of head torches lighting up the mountain. Eight hours later,

we were back at the refuge. Gary, Richard Goodey, Caroline, Geoff Sharp and Andy continued on for another 700m to Refuge des Ecrins. Richard Goodey and Gary were set on making the Barre des Ecrins, the highest peak in the park. They left Refuge des Ecrins at about 2am and made it to the foot, but due to the conditions had to decline and bag the Dome de Neige instead (4015m). Well done guys!

The rest of us descended for beer and cakes. Geoff and Richard Bailey wanted to do some serious biking the next day, Chris and Elspeth some Via Ferrata, me

and Sally, a local walk.

The rest of the week, saw us doing more Via Ferrata (a fantastic route up a river gorge). Geoff Deans and Richard Bailey cycling up to Alp D'Huez, another hut route, and some local climbing.

The apartment was great, and many thanks to Chris for his work organising. Also everyone for their culinary expertise during the week! A good trip!

Leigh Singleton



The 'gorgeous' via ferrata

The HMC Committee Guide

Committee member; Geoff Deans

Post; HMC member since 1999, ex-walking rep, now secretary and Member of the Year. Role; Collecting money from you in the pub and wearing an ostentatious satchel (never call it a handbag) to keep all the dosh in. Not to be confused with; Geoff Sharpe, Hazel Dean

Interests; Hill walking, alpine mountaineering, road biking

Which one is Geoff? You'll know him as a small dot on the horizon, about 2 miles ahead of everyone else.

He's a fast walker then? More of a fell-runner than a walker at times, and the only HMC member to have done both the Welsh and the Lakes 3000's.

An equipment freak? Not too bad, he's even been known to get his maps from Oxfam-which could explain a lot.

Are you suggesting he gets lost sometimes? He is a tad directionally challenged but its nothing that he can't solve by checking his GPS every few minutes.

So that's why he walks ahead of everyone else? Exactly!

Cottage for rent in the West Highlands of Scotland

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Large sitting/dining room, kitchen, bathroom, two bedrooms.

Prices start from £150 a week off season (Nov-March). Discount for HMC members.

For more details see www.bartlet.modelsolutions.net or contact Dr and Mrs Bartlet (quote HMC membership) Telephone: 01962 855026 Email: subart@btopenworld.com

Balders reaches Half Century

It was with great anticipation that 11 members of the HMC crossed La Manche in August 2005 and ventured south through the French hinterland, avoiding the onion sellers on their bikes, to reach the sleepy hamlet (cue music) of Villard Reculas, close to Alpe d'Huez & the Ecrin mountains.

The occasion was the 50th birthday of Michael Baldwin, ex chairman of the HMC, raconteur and owner of the La Source ski chalet since 1999. (see www.lasource.f9.co.uk for pictures of the chalet).

Most of the HMC members arrived & booked into local Gites, however the Edwards Bros, Tony & Geoff, decided to camp on the terraces of Michael's mountain garden, accompanied by Duncan Wilson (ex HMC secretary).

Michael's father, mother, brother, cousins & various children also arrived, as did half of Villard Reculas (including the Right Hon Mayor), plus friends of Michael's from the local villages. A five piece jazz band entertained the party group on the Saturday evening, starting on the patio deck next to the Jacuzzi, moving inside when the weather turned cold, and eventually finishing at 2am. Dick Enstone (an HMC ex-chairman) arrived from Geneva for the



evening party, but having left the next morning, he missed the photo call of the ex HMC chairmen present, which included Michael, Dave Goodey, Dave Nicholson & Albert Sillwood.

It was an excellent weekend party, well catered for by Michael (being an ex catering manager).

Albert Sillwood

Caption Competition

Madam Chair, Ann Peden, has awoken from a dream after a hard day off-roading. What was she dreaming? Answers by email please to BillM@thehmc.co.uk



PURCHASE DISCOUNTS

HMC has obtained discounts with the following 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

Leisure Wheels
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Shop on line: www.complete-outdoors.co.uk

Scotland May 2005 by Sally Snowdin

On 29 May, I set off to Luton airport for a long weekend in Glencoe with the HMC. We were flying to Glasgow then picking up a hire car for the weekend. Linda, Kevin, Paul & I were sharing a hire car so from that moment on Linda decided that we were her family. Once we got to Glasgow, we headed to Asda for a large family shop then on to Onich near Glencoe where the Inchree Hostel was.

Once we had arrived and settled in, we headed to the bar to plan our walk for Saturday. The weather forecast said it was to be the best day of the weekend, so we decided to go up Ben Nevis via the Carn Mor Dearg Arete.

Saturday morning arrived and we set off to



Girls on top: Caroline Cook, Linda, Debbie Smith and Sally
our start point at the golf course north of Fort William. Our first challenge was to successfully navigate our way through the golf course, we managed this with the help

of a few friendly golfers, then we started our ascent.

As we walked, the weather improved and we made our way to the top of Carn Mor Dearg. From there we made our way across the Carn Mor Dearg Arete, some more enthusiastically than others. By now it was clear and sunny and the views were fantastic. Once we had got to the end of the Arete, we then continued to work our way upwards. By now we were finding snow amongst the rocks.

Once at the top, we were greeted by a giant playground of snow and hundreds of people. We stopped for the obligatory photo at the top and then began to head back down again. After a quick glissade in the snow, we found the tourist track and headed down with the other masses of people. We left the tourist track half way down then headed around Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe. Then onwards back to the car and the hostel for a well deserved meal!

Sunday was a rainy day so we had a quick walk up the Pap of Glencoe then found a café and drank tea and ate cake!

On Monday we were revived and ready for another walk. We all headed for the Mamores, half then went off to do the Ring of Steall and the rest planned to do a shorter walk with the possibility of extending! I had foolishly forgotten to bring any walking socks along in the car, so I chose to leave the rest of my family (Linda, Kevin & Paul) who were going to do the Ring of Steall with Geoff D and opted for the short-



Linda (centre) with her family. L to R Kevin, Paul, Sally and Geoff

er option wearing a spare pair of Geoff Sharpe's socks along with Caroline, Debbie, Geoff S, Eddie and Matt. We set off from Glen Nevis and headed up Sgurr a Mhaim. It was a long walk upwards but we eventually made it to the top, and from there we made our way along Devil's Ridge. Again we were lucky and the weather was sunny. We stopped for a break at the decision point on the route. From here we could carry on along the ridge up Stob Ban or head down to the car. As it was such a lovely day, we decided to carry on. Fortunately the socks were fine and my feet were not suffering. We carried on around the ridge, up Stob Ban and then round to Mullach nan Coirean before heading back down to the car park. By the time we got back the others had already finished and had headed back. Luckily for me, my family had left me a message to say they were going to the shops to buy food for dinner. All I needed to do was go back and eat it!

All in all it was great weekend with some excellent walking and some surprisingly good weather. I'm looking forward to the next one already!

The Welsh 3000s; two successes and an heroic failure



At four o' clock in the morning, exhausted after 23 hours of walking, and too sleep-deprived to figure out the route onto Yr Elen, my first attempt at the Welsh 3000s ended in failure. As Geoff Deans

and I struggled back to the car, I swore that I would never attempt anything like that again in my life.

A few weeks later though, looking at a map, I was struck by how close we'd come to doing it. The Welsh 3000s challenge is to walk all the Welsh peaks over 3000 feet within 24 hours, a feat that involves 33 miles and 14,000ft of ascent. We'd done 12 of the 15 peaks-and most of the ascent and mileage. Then, Dave Bird, Barbara Davies and Geoff Deans successfully made it round in 18 hours (from first peak to last) and I felt inspired to have another go. Geoff was foolish enough to say he'd come with me again

and we decided to improve our chances by;

- 1) Climbing up Snowden the night before and bivvying on the summit-not an easy option but it does give you valuable extra hours of daylight walking time
- 2) Being fitter (this applied to me and not Geoff!)
- 3) Enlisting support-so that we could carry less
- 4) Increasing the pressure to succeed by getting everyone to sponsor us
- 5) Banishing navigational problems with a programmable GPS

Matt Taylor and Chris Cook both offered support and so one Friday in June we found ourselves settling down for a night on Snowden with all the other W3000-ers. At 4.10am we touched Yr Wyddfa's triangulation pillar and the clock was running on our attempt. Luckily, the wind and rain dropped long enough for us to scramble down Crib Goch in relative safety.

The ascent up Elidir Fawr was every bit as exhausting as I remembered but Y

Garn, the Glyders and Tryfan seemed to sail by and we were chuffed to reach Ogwen just after two. We had made much better time than I'd hoped but, as I looked up at our next hill, my heart sank. I was shattered, and we still had seven peaks to go. The weather had been bad all day but at this point it got really grim; 40-50 mph winds and driving rain made the awkward, muddy clamber up Pen yr Ole Wen a real trial. Tired, and with very low visibility, we started to make exactly the same navigational mistakes as we had before; time to get out the GPS. Following its instructions to the letter, we reached the last summit of Foel-fras, where Chris met us with peppermint tea and led us back to Matt's car. It wasn't till Sunday breakfast that I had enough energy to be pleased-we'd done the Welsh 3000s in 17 hours, 1 minute and raised £540 pounds for Amnesty International-not a bad day's work. Thanks to all those who supported and sponsored us.

Elsbeth Bartlett

Diary of a Stag Weekend

Friday 22nd April 2005

7am Wake up – then realise day off and go back to sleep.

10am Alarm goes off, and get up and dressed. Look at big pile of clothes for the weekend and small bag. Decide to leave most at home and hope for good weather.

2pm Leave flat and get in car and wonder which pocket passport is in. Cannot find passport. Remember passport is with Euro's. Cannot find Euro's either. Bugger. Open flat door and accidentally step on passport with Euro's in, left where I would not forget it.

2.30pm Arrive at Phil's to meet him for the train to the airport. No sign of Phil. Start to worry I wrote down the wrong time.

2.55pm Phil arrives muttering something about a work lunchtime do, and three pints of Guinness. Get more concerned as I cannot remember when I last drank three pints of Guinness. Phil asks if I have the accommodation details, I assure him I do.

3.20pm Arrive at train station courtesy of Helen, in time for train. Phil tries to buy tickets. Man asks Phil to put card in pin reader, Phil explains card not pin active. Man asks again. Phil puts card in reader, and card rejected as not pin active. Man swipes card and gives tickets.

3.50pm Train arrives. Train makes up time, and catch connection. Tube goes extra slow forcing bladder control exercises. Realise I did not print off the email with the name of the accommodation. Admit to Phil and get instant drinking fine.

5.30pm Arrive at Heathrow and check-in. Get food while waiting for Charles.

6pm Walk half a mile to departure lounge. Wonder where Charles is. Suggest phoning – Phil just laughs at the idea.

6.15pm Check in closes. No sign of Charles. Hoping he is walking from check-in desk.

6.20pm Charles appears with boarding card, not sure how he got through check-in. Had got half way to airport and realised he had forgotten passport – déjà vu. Get on airplane ok.

7.30pm Plane coming in to land at Cork when suddenly front of plane lifts sharply. Hope Leslie Neilson is not on flight deck. Engines kick in and there is no impact, and plane climbs above clouds. Pilot says he couldn't see runway for fog. Decide not to fly again. Pilot decides to fly to Shannon. Phil wonders if pilot has been invited to a party in Shannon. Visions of stag weekend by mobile conferencing.

8.30pm Get on coach for Cork with cans of Guinness for trip, wonder if will make closing time. Best man dishes out drinking fines for landing at wrong airport. Driver spends most of journey swapping between two mobile phones and ignoring speed limits. Arrive in Cork as beer runs out.

11pm Get off coach in Cork and Charles finds the drunkest local to ask for directions. Don't understand any word except river. Get scared, and suggest taxi.

11.15pm Find The Happy Scholar pub and Phil's brother. First round bought, result.

11.20pm Jon arrives having caught later flight. Fog has buggered off. Much drinking ensues.

Saturday 23rd April 2005

Get up and go down to breakfast. Wonder what lies ahead. Depart B&B for a cultural tour. Explore University and Phil finds a shortcut grade 1 wall. Climbers scamper over, only just made it. Mental note, stick to mountain biking. Then go to a historic church and Phil and Jon work out climbing routes up the outside. Walk back into town and on lap three find a Moroccan eatery. Bus to Blarney Castle to kiss the stone. Wonder why stone is up on the battlements while hanging upside down trying to kiss it. Miss bus, find pub. Miss next bus, find another pub. Return to B&B change for the evening, Phil's brother blags us into a posh eatery. More drinking games ensue, and much Guinness and Murphys was consumed.

Sunday 24th April 2005

Drag myself out of bed and down to breakfast, wonder how much liver function remains. Try to work out how long it will take before I will be safe to drive, give up and finish breakfast. Get taxi to Cork airport. Charles loses all colour and turns green, blaming the taxi driver. Phil and brother drink hair of the dog in the departure lounge, Charles and I try to focus on Sunday paper. Jon just tries to focus on anything with both eyes. Go to departure lounge and say goodbye to Phil's brother. Charles is stopped at the x-ray machine and asked to unpack his washbag. No explanation given. Wander round duty free trying to find anything to buy for 3.45 euros. Give up and decide to keep coins for someone going to Europe soon. Charles mutters something and disappears. Appears as boarding queue starts to move, with big grin and perfume. Stewardess stops Jon, and asks him a few questions to see if he is sober enough to fly. Jon passes test without realising what's happening. Land at Heathrow and met by Helen. Phil offers us all a lift. Three happy passengers, one less happy car.

From the diary of Alex Pender

Phil and Charles warming up for the weekend



Dry Stone Walling (Part 2)

Any member wishing to have a dry stone wall in their garden need not look any further than the undermentioned who are now qualified dry stone wallers.

One weekend in May we went to the Cotswolds and camped in the very quiet and pleasant site at Folly Farm.

Our instructor for the weekend was James Bent. He met us at the Kilkenny View Point and took us to a nearby missing length of wall – the length of a now no longer used gate. Our job was to fill in the gap. That's when the hard back breaking work started. After two days we finished 13 courses, about half the required height. Our instructor was well pleased with our expertise. Other students were due to finish the wall in a couple of weeks time.

We all enjoyed the weekend and were pleased with our achievement. Those taking part were Albert, Alex, Norman, Linda, Claire and Chris, Lucy and Andre, and Eddie, who organised it.

Reporter: Eddie Cornell

Battle with the Conger

Christmas 2001 Santa brought me the 'Under the sky, Above the sea' deep water soloing video. Bronzed Dorset folk climbing unroped on overhanging limestone sea cliffs. Must be bonkers I thought, yet I was keen, or some would say crazy, enough to give it a go myself.

My first taster was in 2002 on an HMC trip to Portland. Whilst others were on the more famous bolted routes, me and Kev (white van man) were whooping with delight soloing the lip traverse inside the Octopus Weed cave. Now I had the bug and I'd been told any DWS aspirant had to have a go on 'The Conger' E2 5C (I guess the E grade is irrelevant) at Conner Cove, Swanage.

It's taken all these years later to finally have the balls to attempt it. After peering gingerly over the ledge several times and running away thinking it's much higher than the top board of the swimming pool, I thought there's no way I'd jump off this let alone fall off it!

This year's DWS festival was being held at Swanage, so when Pep phoned me about it I knew this was the time to do battle with the Conger. (Saying that we still carried all our trad gear in case there was a last minute change of mind!) On arrival quite a crowd had gathered, with many familiar faces I recognised from climbing walls as well as some of the top boys, Neil Gresham, Steve McClure and Jack Osbourne! HMC member Richard was getting into the spirit of things, looking totally drenched but none the less still smiling each time I saw him. After warming up on 'Troubled Waters' 5A I joined the queue for the Conger. It's an unusual route traversing out above the lip of a sea

cave until a bottomless chimney forces you up and out on to a short wall that leads to the top. All was going fine until reaching the base of the chimney where you need good technique and composure

to pull round the rib. After seeing my friend Paul take a splashdown I was not full of confidence. Reaching high for a sharp edged finger slot I tried to pull up on this but failed to find any purchase for my feet. Unable to hold my weight I took an inevitably dip in the sea. (Pep flew up this route!) Undeterred I couldn't wait for another go. After a change of shoes and armed with makeshift plastic carrier chalk bag embarked on another attempt. This time I was totally focused and when reaching the finger slot, quickly used it as a side pull, feeling the rock bite into my finger as I leaned round the corner. Adrenaline pumping, I managed find an edge for my left foot and rocked round into the chimney. After some very steep moves and bit of bridging I found a nice ledge to regain my cool and let the heart rate decelerate! A few moves later I stood buzzing at the top with a big cheesy grin. Apparently after first success you are supposed to throw yourself off the top ledge! No chance mate!



Neal on the Conger

A day out with the boys

In the summer I went down to the South Coast to Portland with Pep and Neal Jobling to experiencing my first outdoor climb of the year and my first attempt at sport-climbing. It was an overcast day and we had rain on the way. But when we arrived the sun came out and stayed all day. It was so nice to climb with the sea rushing below. I had a fabulous day and completed three routes in the Blacknor South area. Pep and Neal were very patient with me and also showed me some good rope techniques. It's good to see that the experienced climbers are still willing to help us novices.

Linda Powell



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