

3000 kilometres and no punctures!

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In August and September last year I cycled from Calais to Athens travelling through France, Germany, Switzerland, Lichenstein and Italy. From Brindisi at the foot of Italy I then took the ferry to Patras in Greece and cycled on to Athens, where I met Dave Bird for two weeks cycling around the Peloponnese. *Report by Geoff Deans*

DIARY AUGUST 11 LUNCHTIME "First things first, get lost trying to find road out of Calais. After 45 mins cycling around trying to find road south out of Calais gave up and sat in a bar waiting for tourist info to open after lunch. Nice people in tourist office who provided a map and directions, after which it was plain sailing to the first campsite about four café stops away."



Geoff finds the cheapest campsite in France

Throughout the trip I seemed to spend hours trying to find the right road out of big towns. Road signs tend to direct traffic onto motorways which obviously weren't an option for me. The 1:200,000 Michelin maps I used for much of the trip didn't always have quite enough detail on them, although not sure if it was a case of a bad workman blaming his maps or not. More than once I followed signs to the next town and ended up at the 'no cycling' sign on slip roads onto a motorway and had friendly car drivers winding down their windows trying to direct me to a cycle route to the next town. I tended to avoid big towns where possible as they can be difficult to navigate through as well unpleasant when the traffic's busy. Athens was the only big city I cycled through and having done it once am happy that I won't need to do it again.

After a pleasant few days wheeling through quiet country lanes in France – I was even able to listen to the Test Match on Radio 4 as I ped-



alled along - I passed through the SW corner of Germany where it started raining and didn't stop for the next six days. I spent one soggy night on a campsite in Germany and then crossed into Switzerland where I got a real soaking over the next few days. In the evenings I was able to relive the day's journey by watching TV as the news showed footage of torrential rain and flooding throughout the country.

DIARY FOR 22 AUGUST. (SWISS ALPS) *"Seems to have been raining non-stop for days. Spent the last four nights in hotels as couldn't face putting up the tent in the rain after cycling all day in it. I was feeling wet and cold so stopped in a gear shop to buy a thermal top. (The one I'd started the trip with I'd cleverly posted home with some other stuff on a boiling hot day the previous week to lighten my panniers!). At lunchtime stopped in a café and, seeing me squelch, in an elderly Swiss couple took pity on me and bought me a coffee and brandy to warm me up. Turned out the guy used to live near St Albans. He warned me to be careful or I could be attacked by bears. I asked if wolves were a problem and, yes, apparently they can be quite nasty too. That afternoon on the climb up to Klosters was told on three separate occasions that the road there over the river was closed due to flooding and I wouldn't be able to get to Davos, my target for the night. I'd come this far now and it would take several days to find another way round so decided to take my chances. Sure enough when I arrived in Klosters the road bridge over the river was closed and covered in mud and debris from the flooding. A swift trip to the tourist info office to find out alternative routes led to a discovery of a footbridge over the river not 50m from the road bridge so I nipped over that and up into Davos"*

DIARY FOR 23 AUGUST (SWISS ALPS) *"At last it's stopped raining and the sun was out. Asked at Tourist info whether the pass I was aiming for today was open and was told that it was closed due to landslides and would be shut for another couple of days and that if I tried to cycle over it I risked being fined/arrested/deported. Ignoring this information as it wasn't what I wanted to hear I decided to rely on what I'd been told the previous evening by a random drunk bloke in a pub that I could go anywhere I liked on a bike it was only cars that had to obey the 'pass closed' signs. I set off up the Fleulapass (2383m). After about two hours I reached the top and was greeted by a helpful woman outside a bar who*



explained to me in English that I now had to go back down the way I'd come as the road ahead was closed as it was covered in rocks and mud. There was a barrier across the road with some foreign words on it that I didn't understand so assumed they didn't apply to me and waited until the woman wasn't looking and sneaked round the barrier and set off down the road. There was still quite a lot debris on the road and at one point a JCB was working to clear it but the driver just waved me through. The village at the bottom was in a real mess with mud, boulders, bits of tree all over the place with houses half buried in the mud"

Crossing the Alps into Italy via the Stelvio pass (2757m) was hard work getting up but now



in theory at least downhill all the way to Brindisi. It was a welcome change not to have to spend my days climbing an endless succession of hairpin bends. It was hard, slow work climbing up the Alpine passes on a bike with nearly 20kg of stuff in the panniers. Carrying that weight made the bike handle a bit like a boat and with the extra wind resistance as well made cycling quickly almost impossible. Sounds like a lot of gear but when you need to carry camping gear, food, water, bike spares and tools, books, maps etc it all adds up. I also carried a spare tyre as a shredded tyre in the middle of nowhere miles from a bike shop could take a while to sort out. Luckily I didn't need it and made it all the way to Athens without a puncture. Books were a luxury item which were heavy and took up a lot of space but worth it. I think the worst thing that happened on the trip was halfway through Italy, when I finished

reading my last book and couldn't find anywhere to get anything in English to read for nearly a week! In Italy it was the end of the holiday season. There weren't many people around and when I was the only diner in a restaurant, with no one to talk to as I was on occasion, having a book to read stopped me thinking 'I'm Billy No Mates', or rather it didn't, but at least I had a book to read.

I was now starting to get fitter and able to manage quite long days in the saddle, typically cycling from 9.30am – 6pm. Just as well as now I was starting to worry that I wouldn't get to Athens on time. I had to meet Dave there on Sept 12 and I didn't seem to be making much progress south. Italy is quite hilly in the centre and the maps I had didn't show chevrons for steep ascents or anything to indicate hills, just the odd spot height for towns so sometimes I'd find myself grinding up what felt like 1 in 6 climbs for what seemed like hours when I'd been expecting it to be flat. After a while I twigged that if you follow roads next to rivers marked on the map they tend to be fairly flat, but roads that go between rivers tend to cross the huge hills between the river valleys and so progress improved.

Tuscany and Umbria were some of the best cycling country of the trip, with very pretty countryside and rolling hills. A very hot 33° was the highest temperature I saw on the roadside thermometers which made the uphill tough, but there were plenty of cafes on the way to recuperate in.

DIARY SEPT 4 *"Prefer to cycle through smaller villages where nothing much appears to have happened for 300 years, with old men sitting outside cafes watching the world, and me, go by. Stopped to ask three old boys sitting outside a hardware store for directions and they insisted I sat down with them so they could really get to grips with the problem. Despite me not speaking Italian and they not speaking English we managed to more or less understand each other. After a few minutes they started arguing among themselves as to how far it was to the next village. Eventually they agreed on the best route for me and finally let me go after I'd shown them my route from Calais, where I planned to go, and had a good look at my now filthy bike"*



From Umbria I headed into southern Italy which seemed much poorer and scruffier than the north. I passed several dead dogs by the side of the road each day, some were quite fresh others had been there a while and were almost completely flat. Fly tipping seemed to be the main occupation here, with rubbish littering

ry. There was still about 250km to cycle once I landed in Greece, so I should be in good time to meet Dave on the 12th Really hot, had a few beers in a bar on my own (Billy NM again) to celebrate the successful end of the Italian stage.

Enjoyed a couple of days cycling along the Greek coast, stopping at beach cafes for refreshment and dips in the sea. Had a rest day on the beach, my first non-cycling day for 16 days. On 12th September, armed with a text from Dave on how to find the flat we were staying in Athens (turn right at Dominos Pizza) I cycled through Athens until I found Dave waiting for me near Dominos and after a quick shower headed out for some food and expensive cocktails.

It was good to have company for the rest of the trip cycling around the Peloponnese. We had more time to enjoy the country, cycling through Tripoli, Sparta and finally to Kalamati, where we hired a car to get back to Athens. On the way we managed to find some more wet weather, apparently the first time it had rained in Greece for five months! We had a quite relaxing time with no particular targets, stopping for extra nights when we found a good spot and soaking up plenty of retsina. Staying in air-conditioned apartments and hotels rather than a

sweaty tent was somewhat more comfortable too. On a rest day we hired mopeds to explore the local beaches and unsurprisingly found them a lot easier on our legs and derrieres, plus they've got a lot more pulling power, if you know what I mean.

Sadly all good things come to an end and so it was good old Easyjet that took us back to Luton from Athens. Thirty two days to get to Athens, four hours to get back.

All in all a good trip. Cycling's a great way to see a country and how it gradually changes as you move through it. Anyone fancy cycling the USA coast to coast next summer?



Dave Bird, Geoff's domestique, takes a well earned break

the side of the road. Cycled through Foggia and then onto the coast about 200km North of Brindisi and the ferry to Greece. I had been looking forward to the coast road but it wasn't particularly attractive or even that near to the coast for much of the way and there was quite a strong headwind which made things rather tiresome. By now I had Greece in my sights and just wanted to be on that ferry so the last few days in Italy were just a bit of a slog.

Was really pleased to arrive in Brindisi at lunchtime on Sept 8. I went straight to the ferry port and bought a ticket for that afternoon's fer-



PANEL OF USELESS INFORMATION

Total distance cycled from Calais to Athens

3075km in 32 days

Pedal Revolutions approx 1.5 million

Average speed approx 20km/h

Days camped 24 (21 on campsites, 3 wild/roadside camps)

7 days in hotels (mostly due to wet days in Switzerland) 1 day in hostel

Number of punctures/mechanical failures Calais – Athens None!

Books read – about eight

Dead dogs by side of road – too many to count

Athens to Kalamata 370km, 2 punctures on bike, one in car

One bottle of retsina each per day.



View from Mars (h)

As you all know our Chairperson, Ann Peden, had to stand down at this year's AGM and was succeeded by Geoff Deans. Ann has gone off to Iraq to perform heroic deeds on behalf of the British Government and we all wish her a safe return. Geoff meanwhile has been performing heroically himself. Cycling 3000K across Europe

(see cover story) and also completing the Bob Graham Round.

I must apologise for the long delay in getting this issue of Crux out. I've had a series of personal issues that have taken up 6 months of my life, but now I can see some light at the end of that long tunnel. In fact I became somewhat of a recluse and took myself off to a mountain hideaway in order to finish this issue.

Finally I would like to thank Geoff Sharpe for organising a wonderful trip to the Pyrenees. There will be a full report in the next issue.

Just to return briefly to the subject of naked climbing. I found this old pic of me doing just that in my heyday. Back in the days of black & white (some may say before the age of photography, but I've pre-empted that joke).



Bill

Who wrote this not very famous quote?

“ The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men and cattle, and the common birds of the woods, and fields, the greater becomes in me the Intensity of the feeling of Life.”

HMC HEALTH WARNING

The contraceptive pill and altitude sickness

Females intending climbing over 4000m should ensure they are not on any versions of the combined oral contraceptive pill. It is contra indicated and females are more likely to suffer altitude sickness. Common names are Loestrin, Logynon, Microgynon, Ovranelle, but there are many on the market so read the paperwork that comes with each packet if you don't already know. Most GPs are unaware of the connection, but there are several key books both in travel health and contraceptive health that have the evidence.

Tick Alert

Because of the recent new popular holiday destinations in central and eastern Europe there is a growing risk to travellers participating in outdoor activities of Tick Borne Encephalitis. Countries include Croatia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia (but also include Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Sweden that have a more minor risk). There are 16 countries identified where infected ticks are endemic and can pose a high risk to un-immunised people or who aren't taking bite prevention measures. It can lead to meningitis and in really serious cases paralysis and death. 1 in 30 cases proves fatal. Infected ticks are typically found in rural and forest areas from late spring throughout summer.

For more info. including a map of areas etc www.masta.org/tickalert

Extreme Drying

Report by Adrian Jones

This Easter the club stayed in Fort William at a place run by Alan Kimber, the famous mountain guide, climber and Ben Nevis climbing guidebook author. We had stayed there before, along with the late Jacko (a hound) who spent the whole weekend pissing (and worse) on Alan's floor. The meet was very popular and some members



Tower Ridge: Adrian Sherriff on the little tower

were forced to stay in various outlying hovels and campsites. It rained a lot but we certainly had no problem drying our stuff due to Alan's amazing drying facilities and overly detailed usage instructions.

Despite the rain, there was much snow above 600m or so and several sightings of a strange flaming sphere were reported. Various Munro and sub-Munro summits were conquered



Tower Ridge: Approaching the first steep bit

by the walking factions, with lots of happy snow on top and chances to wave ice axes around and slide about on bums. A small skiing and snowboarding faction discovered excellent conditions on Aonach Mor, which was crowned by huge curly



Curved Ridge, Buachaille Etive Mor

cornices. The climbers found full-on winter conditions on Tower Ridge (Ben Nevis) and slightly less wintry rock on Curved Ridge (Buachaille Etive Mor). Also of note was an epic 12+ hour traverse of the Aonach Eagach in drizzle.



John Moulding approaching Crowberry Tower on Curved Ridge

HMC Annual Dinner 2006 at Llanbedr Youth Hostel



Amanda climbs her first mountain. Seen here on Cader Idris with Bill and Alex.



The girls discuss their frocks whilst Pete tries to look interested



Eddie stands in for outgoing chairperson Ann Peden whilst new chairperson, Geoff Deans, nods off



New MOTY Leigh Singleton together with Eddie Cornell, last years MOTY.



A great day's mountaineering in prospect. Saturday morning at the Llanbedr Youth Hostel.

PHIL'S HANDY TIPS



Phil Whitehurst's brilliantly improvised belay to a grassy hummock at Pembroke.

In order to rescue John Parrott from being carried out to sea Phil used this method.

"It does look worryingly smooth and rounded. Mind you, better than leading up vertical shite with no gear :)" said a grateful John.

Next Issue October 2006



Featuring:
Full report of Monte Rosa tour and other exploits

Pan-demonium in the Pyrenees

Bob Graham Round - another heroic deed by our Chairman

Gower Peninsular - a walker's view

Our War Correspondent, Ann Peden, reports from Basra



It's been a fantastic summer and I'm sure you have all been busy doing something worth telling about. So please write it up and send it to me. I'd like to make the next issue a real bumper one. Also send interesting photos and poems.

Email to BillM@thehmc.co.uk

The magic of New Year in Ullapool

There was magic afoot in Ullapool on New Year's Eve. But sad to relate, the HMC in the guise of Dave Bird, Dave Hall, Geoff Deans, Fran Aynesly, Andrew Price, Geoff Sharpe, Bill Burt, Carolyn Dent and your intrepid reporter failed miserably to exploit its presence. It should have been child's play to conjure up a ceilidh on Hogmanay. After all, Ullapool is small. I thought that the obvious place to start looking was in the hotel over road from our hostel called the Ceilidh Place. But it was occupied



by goblins and, unless you'd stayed there before, entry on New Year's Eve was barred. Soft whisperings suggested that the village hall was the place to go, but only later on. So we started in the nearby Seaforth pub. Once there, mellifluous murmurings reached us that the village hall had been staked out by ten year olds, accompanied by their family pixies and teddy bears. So where was the ceilidh? Seaside semaphore soon alerted us that the Johnny Cash lookalike in the Argyll Hotel was catmanglingly bad. Equally, gentle breezes intimated that there was nothing doing at the Ferry Boat Inn.

At which point, our very own Welsh wizard, Andrew, abruptly leapt into action and accosted Kylie, a good looking apparition on her way out of the pub, and asked her outright where the ceilidh was. Kylie gave a



Geoff Sharpe on Ben Wyvis

straight answer. The ceilidh was in the church hall. Now we could relax. So we did. But then, as if touched by a spell, on the stroke of midnight, we were released from our mesmerised state and immediately launched into a bloodcurdling rendition of Auld Lang Syne that sent the locals scurrying to their boats. As we rose ourselves to begin our trek to the church hall, a fairy godmother intervened and gave us our lucky break of the evening. Before we had reached the door of the pub, we were intercepted by two joyful sprites dressed as eighteen year old girls who absolutely insisted on kissing each of us. But they must have been representatives of evil forces because, after

kissing them, our fortunes inexplicably changed. Perhaps it was because we had abandoned them in our single minded pursuit of the ceilidh. Outside, we inadvertently asked Charlie the jinx for directions to the church hall with the ceilidh. It turned out that there were three church halls. So which one hosted the ceilidh? He didn't know. Undeterred, we set off on foot to look for ourselves and found nothing but the smell of brimstone. Where indeed was the ceilidh? We continued our random walk and spotted the village hall, with an eight year old in tartan still writhing inside, chaperoned by an elf. We even passed something called the Caley Hotel, bursting with the wailing of banshees. So there was no ceilidh there either. Cursed and cursing, we retired to the hostel without seeing the least trace of any ceilidh and, with the aroma of whiskey swirling around the living room, learnt from fellow inmates, the Granite City Hillwalkers, over the crackling coal fire that Johnny Cash had been fabulous, the Ferry Boat was swinging and, best of all, the village hall had rocked. On Hogmanay, Ullapool weaves strange magic.

But during our week there, other magical things happened. The cooker in the hostel exploded on us. Fran fell waist deep into a mysteriously unfrozen bog seconds after Dave Bird had charmed his way across its icy crust. The sun shone repeatedly. After observing us at close quarters for several days, the GCH miraculously accused us of being organised. And every time that we wanted to pay for our stay, successive hostel wardens dematerialised. The first one vanished to "India". We never discovered what happened to the second. A third, supposed brother of the second, also keen to collect our money, apparently wrapped himself in a cloak of invisibility, had the gift of a silent footfall and walked through closed doors. It was just too bad that after all that effort, he was unfortunately struck dumb on meeting us and we were left unaware of his presence.

To console ourselves in the middle of all this sorcery, we climbed mountains with witchlike names and weird shapes. In the circumstances, it was uncanny that the hill of terror (Ben Wyvis) provided the best day. It was sunny, spookily still, a fabulous ridge walk and furnished the only opportunity to don crampons. Sgurr Breac (speckled hill) and A Chailleach (the old woman) offered fine views and varied scenery. Beinn Dearg (red hill) sent a freezing multi directional wind that kept us from stopping for lunch or, indeed, anything else. It was also the name of a decent pint of local ale, pronounced Ben Jerrag. Cul Beag (small hill) was absurdly steep. Glas Bheinn (grey hill) was naturally covered on top by clouds. The last two especially were atmospheric, lonely, crooked hills looking out to sea that towered over limestone hummocks. But in icy mist the only explanation for their allure was magic.

Matthew Taylor January 2006



Seaforth pub, New Year's Eve 2005, taken by Bill Burt. Innocent victims of photographic mischief left to right are: Carolyn, Dave H, Fran, Andrew, Dave B, Geoff S, Matthew. Note spectral blue imposter of Geoff Deans between Dave (Honestly, is it that late?) Bird and Geoff (I'm sober really) Sharpe

Slippery Fun on Grooved Arête

Maybe it was because Richard Goodey wanted to finish on a high note before setting his sails for Canada, or maybe it was his natural exuberance that found a party of four on the Heather Terrace, roping up ready to climb, early on the Saturday of the Bangers 'n' Mash meet last November. I, for one, had had Grooved Arête on my 'to-do-list' for far too long and a little bit of wind and rain was not going to stop me from enjoying what has been the scene of many an epic and numerous benightments.

Normally struggling to encourage people on to rock once the weather turns wintry, I was pleasantly surprised to find someone even more enthusiastic to go climbing on a day that was forecast as less than clement. Before long, we were joined by two more keen souls, in the shape of Alleyn and Phil T, prepared to brave the elements and climb with us. We split up into two ropes, with Alleyn and I taking the lead and Richard and Phil sweeping up behind us. Well aware of the potential for doom and darkness towards the end of the route, we had made an almost Alpine start, leaving the bunkhouse at 7am and reaching (and finding!) the bottom of the route by what should more sensibly be called breakfast time. Not wishing the momentum to be lost and other considerations such as mugs of tea and cafés to take over, we geared up quickly, donned the full waterproofs and were quickly on our way.

Alleyn set off confidently up the first groove and was quickly out of sight as he rounded a corner and swiftly continued upwards behind a large pinnacle. Before long, the rope was nearly fully out and I called out to Alleyn to set up a belay before following up myself. The first section of the route turned out to be broken in places as the rock petered out into occasional grassy patches and flatter areas. I quickly realised that Alleyn had set off more confidently than I had at first thought, as some of these lower sections of rock were as greasy as Great Gully at its slickest. Alleyn didn't seem too worried about placing much gear either, though, to be fair, some big suckers may have been more appropriate to fit onto the wet rock than the more traditional forms of protection we possessed. Nonetheless, the climbing was still good and before long, the rock improved and proved to be quite climbable (if not a tad wet).

The next pitch, I led, stepping across left onto a ledge and precariously proceeding up a beautiful, easy-angled corner with a groove in the back that took gear easily. If it weren't for the wet, this may have been a bit more straightforward, but would still have involved a bit of thinking and some good moves. In the wet it became thoroughly enjoyable! One more technical rock step and we were up at the halfway ledge with the sound of Richard and Phil following us up, a pitch behind.

At what could be described as a veritable picnic spot it transpired that Alleyn was determined to do this route in super-light Alpine style and had neglected to even bring a lunch with him. Never one to bother weighing myself down with too many accessories, such as sandwiches,

we discovered that we would now be completing the ascent fuelled entirely by mince pies. Unperturbed, Alleyn continued up the next pitch in true dogged style, climbing up another fabulous corner which could more accurately be described as a funnel for the entire east face in wet weather. Setting up a block belay in an awkward position at 90ft, he belayed me up and past to finish the corner, moving left out of the corner by a tricky step and up to a point called The Haven below the crux part of the climb: The Knight's Slab. Nobly, I left this one for Alleyn to lead.

The trick of the Knight's Slab and the root of its name is the method by which you cross it. Starting at the bottom left corner of the slab (more accurately wall at this point) progress is made by attaining the steep crack in the left and heading directly up this until a step to the right can be made. From here, a series of upward moves are made, interspersed with steps to the right whenever they can be made, to finish at the top right of the slab. Gaining the crack at the left and progressing up it proved tricky and Alleyn did a great job of protecting the moves and getting into the foot-wide line of polish. I was not too envious at this point, as he worked his way up the smoothed-down crack-line and out on to the slab. Even with the generous donations of gear we had found abandoned on the route, we used up all our gear at this point and would require one more pitch to get us out on to the top of the route.

Following up Alleyn to the top of the Knight's slab I found him

perched on a superbly airy ledge looking down a razor-sharp rib back to where we had originally started. Looking up, I was greeted by an unwelcoming sight of dirty darkness and slippery rock. Oh well... You win some; you lose some. After much thrutchiness, scrabbling, heavy breathing and anxiety I found myself officially "topped-out" and quickly proceeded to lasso a boulder and bring my partner up. Dear reader, for those of you on the Bangers 'n' Mash weekend you may be surprised to hear that at this point, with it still being light, I was still entertaining the notion that we may be down before dark. This did not prove

to be quite the case... With the light fading, Richard having topped out and Phil on his way up, we banded together to fight with the last pieces of gear, scoff bits of food, coil ropes and pack gear, and change shoes which more resembled sponges than the high-tech rock shoes they were meant to be.

I was thoroughly impressed by the way my companions got on that day. It was roughly 13 hours later once we had returned to the car and the previous two hours had been done in total darkness with failing torches, a difficult mountain to pick a way off of and treacherously slippery ground underfoot. We were all tired but in high spirits after our mini adventure and satisfied by a full day out on the hill. Just one final thing to note is that if you are trying to pick your way down a mountainside in the dark, Guy Fawkes Night is definitely the best night to do it - we had the aid of fireworks and mountain rescue flares to guide us the whole way down!



The three wise men, Jon, Richard and Phil. (Digitally enhanced otherwise it would have been a meaningless black blob.)

Ménage à trois in the Lakes!

On the 28th of December 2005, myself, Leigh Singleton and Gary Bebb headed up to the Lake District for an adventure of wild camping. We parked the car in Seathwaite and packed our rucksacks ready for our two night expedition. My back pac is only 40 litres plus 10, so fortunate for me Gary and Leigh carried most of the heavy gear including the tent. We walked for 1 hr 30 and pitched the tent at Sty Head Tarn.

The wind started to pick up early evening and we sat in the tent that evening cooking ration pack meals courtesy of one of Leigh's army friends. I had a lovely Lamb Hotpot with fruit cobbler and custard for afters; what more can a girl wish for!

Throughout the night the wind started picking up, I was quite scared and said to Leigh that I thought the tent might blow away but she reassured me that Gary's tent was a four seasons tent and it would be fine. However the tent was flapping in my face so much that I nearly suffocated in the middle of the night, so I had to turn and cuddle up to Leigh instead.

We woke up the next morning (not Leigh though as she recons she didn't sleep a wink all night not even 10 mins!) and looked out of the tent to see a blanket of snow, the snow had even got under the fly sheet during the night. We ate our breakfast and packed up quickly as it was getting quite blizzardy outside with poor visibility.

We walked down the hill to Wasdale pitched the tent and went in the pub to dry off and of course have a glass of mulled wine as we were damp from the melting snow. It

then poured with rain and didn't stop all night. We packed up the next morning, New Years Eve, and ascended up and over the hills back to Sty Head Tarn to pick up the car. We walked most of the day and eventually arrived at the car, drove to Keswick and had dinner in a Bistro. We then drove to an official camp site in Brotherswater, pitched our tents, dived in the bar to meet up with Snorbie, Robin, Angela and Ann Peden for plenty of red wine and Champagne at 12 o'clock. That night I slept in my own tent and the following morning we did a lovely walk with Ann and Dave joining us up Dove Dale, to Hart Crag, onto Fairfield, and back down Deepdale. It was a stunning sunny snow topped day! Excellent start to 2006.

Linda Powell



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Photo: John Norris