



The Newsletter of the Hertfordshire Mountaineering Club

Winter 2008

Dear HMC'ers

It's great to see the first Crux of 2008, thank you for your contributions and photos. Thanks to Bill Marsh for his hard work on Crux over the past years and welcome Carolyn as the new editor.

It's positive to see that we already have 98 members joined up for this year, perhaps we will reach a record membership this year?

This is a special year for the HMC as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. We will be celebrating this in style at the Quality Hotel ("Quality" it's got to be good!) on the 17th May. We hope to see many of our old members as well as new.

Happy mountaineering,
Pete (HMC Chairman)



Silly Games at Bangers and Mash

By Deborah Cole

It somehow fell upon me - I must've said too much at a committee meeting - to organize some silly games as entertainment for the Bangers & Mash meet in Snowdonia in November. With some help I came up with a list of games for after dinner, which would hopefully get people out of their seats and slow the inexorable slide into drunkenness.

So we divided into four teams, only really by herding people into the four corners, and the first game involved threading a climbing rope up the trousers of the first person, down the trousers of the second person, up the trousers of the third, etc. A couple of the teams had the brilliant idea straight away, that the real trick to this game was easy access to the trousers, and I was surprised at the readiness with which entire teams dropped their trousers. I just wish I'd had a camera as Bill Marsh, John Parrott and Geoff Deans were all in a row with their trousers round their ankles.

After that we had names of famous people in a bowl, from which a member of each team had to pick names out and describe the person to their team without mentioning the name. Nick and his wife Ali's team won this easily, as Nick and Ali seemed to have some sort of psychic connection, where they didn't even have to really use any words. Nick just had to think the answer and Ali would guess it.

After that was the cardboard box game, where the idea is to pick a cardboard box up with your mouth, with only your feet on the floor, as the box gets smaller and smaller. Ann Blandford was quite a winner at this one, with the crossed legs technique, as the box became a mere sliver of cardboard. Paul Dormer was not far behind. However my splits technique won out in the end.

Then we had the chairs game, where a person lies across two chairs, one under their head and one under their feet, with their torso unsupported. Dave Hall managed a good minute or more, although NZ Nick was the winner.

No matter how good any team were though, no matter how intelligent, how strong, how supple, how resourceful, only one team was going to win. Because Geoff was doing the scoring. And he was cheating. Three points for last place if it was his team, one if it was anyone else's. After heckling from the floor the scores were adjusted. A bit. But with only a couple of bottles of wine and bars of chocolate as prizes who cared.

In this issue:



Ireland Easter 2007

Walking, Climbing and
Guinness on the
Dingle Peninsula



USA Summer 2007

The HMC hit Utah and
the Grand Canyon

HMC sea-kayaking course weekend - August 2007

Phil Toovey reports from the surf

In mid-August, 5 HMC members and 2 partners went to Surf Lines in Llanberis to take part in a 2 day sea-kayaking course. For once, the likelihood of continual rain and low cloud would not affect our plans. At the Surf Lines centre, our friendly instructor Jim briefed us on the course. Day One would be on the reservoir where we would learn or refresh our skills (three of the group had not kayaked before) such as stopping, turning, edging and rescue drills. Day Two promised the chance to go out and do a sea voyage.

We put our kayaks into the water and began to learn their characteristics. Our sea-kayaks were up to 17 feet long, which made going in a straight line easy but significantly reduced our steering. We practiced the skill of 'edging' which involves leaning to one side to aid the kayak to turn more efficiently. This proved quite a laugh as we fell in one by one, some more than others. You know who you are! In the late afternoon, we returned to the centre wet but happy after a good day.

After 10 hours of rain on Saturday night, Sunday brightened up but the Force 4 wind on the coast meant that we were limited to kayaking in the Menai Strait.



Another instructor joined us as we put in near Britannia Bridge where our kayaks immediately felt more unstable due to the current and the waves. The tide was moving fast and we paddled one by one under the bridge span where the water was being constricted. We shot through precariously except for Tony who capsized and ended up hundreds of metres away because of the strong currents. We paddled South West hugging the shore and trying to avoid wash from large cruisers. Twice we crossed the Strait and our paddling became more rhythmic and controlled. We ate lunch and rested on the bank whilst we waited for the

tide to turn so that we could take the 'conveyor belt' back to Britannia Bridge. A grey seal appeared and followed our boats just metres away surfacing only to breathe and blink at us.

Back at the centre we did the obligatory sea-kayak gear shop trawl.

All in all, we had an excellent and enjoyable weekend, and we all wanted to do more. So the next time you're in North Wales and the weather's bad, head to Surf Lines and get out onto the water.

Course participants were: Tim Gledhill, Linda, Paul O'Reardon, Katherine, Barbara, Tony, Phil Toovey.

HMC 50th Anniversary Dinner

Hot Buffet. Speakers. Dancing 'til late...

date - May 17th 2008. time - 7.30pm. venue - Quality Hotel, Roehyde Way, Hatfield, AL10 9AF



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Dingle Peninsula, Ireland

Easter 2007

Leigh Singleton tries to remember...

Easter 2007 saw over 20 of us head to our neighbouring island of Ireland for some walking, climbing and Guinness quaffing recreation. We were all ready for a weekend of wind, rain, drizzle and mist, Ireland having such a reputation for being the Emerald Isle, but we were greeted with four days of glorious sunshine and Tshirt walking weather!



In addition to booking such fine weather, Caroline did a grand job in finding us a superb hostel along the scenic north coast of the Dingle Peninsula in the village of Brandon. Our hostel was based below the so called Misty Brandon Mountain (no mist that we saw).

The first day most of us headed up from the hostel to do Brandon Mountain (at 952 meters the second highest mountain in Ireland). The hill takes its name from St. Brandon "The Navigator", who legend suggests climbed to the summit around AD530 to view the Americas, before setting sail.

We split into about three groups and set off in glorious sunshine, the route with breathtaking views out to sea starts uphill, then winds through an amphitheatre gully and finally up the rugged Fara ridge to reach the summit. Our three groups by passed each other several times en route.

The next day, with the forecast for more of the same mini heat wave, having done the 2nd highest mountain - a group headed off to walk the highest, Carantoulhill (1,039 metres). Carrantuohill forms part of the Macgillycuddys Reeks, and makes for excellent walking with some easy scrambling.

We also managed time for some sightseeing around the beautiful coastline of the peninsula, driving the wonderful Irish A roads that are about a car width wide, and 'out of GPS territory!', and enjoy a Guinness... or three.

Welcome to the first edition of Crux for 2008.

Firstly, many thanks to Bill Marsh for the excellent job he has done over the past few years, transforming Crux into a professional looking HMC publication. He has set a high standard, one which I shall aspire to maintain.

Secondly, many thanks to those members who have contributed to make this issue possible, and especially to Leigh, who made the effort whilst waiting in the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport!

As for future Crux: I will be sending out a call for articles about two weeks before I intend putting the next issue together – so be warned! I will be looking for trip reports, advertising future trips, and anything else that you might find relevant or amusing.

Happy reading!

Carolyn (the new crux editor)



Proof that the sun does shine in Western Ireland!



Once Upon a Time in the West

Following the HMC's successful foray into California in 2003, aided by our (then) local HMC resident Carolyn Dent, my thoughts turned in 2006 to another trip to see our colonial cousins. The seed was sown when my thoughtful kids bought me a book for Christmas, entitled "Unforgettable Things to do before you die". Amongst the exotic and improbable activities were some that I had done and some more attainable ones still to do. Two caught my eye: "Hiking through Arches, Moab, USA" and "Glamour & Glitz, Las Vegas, USA". Add these to my ambition to hike in the Grand Canyon and the trip began to take shape. As I would be 64 in 2007 I may have been running out of time! "Tasting Warrior Life in Mongolia" and "Diving for pearls in French Polynesia" I can do later!

After some months planning the trip, September 2007 saw Eddie Cornell, Linda Powell, Suzanne Murphy and I flying on one of Sir Richard's 767's to Las Vegas, Nevada. Leigh Singleton and Mike Hulse followed from Heathrow to Phoenix, Arizona where they would collect Mike's four seater private plane and fly up to Utah to join us at Zion N P.

We arrived on the first night at the Watchman Campground, Zion National Park at 10.00 pm in a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit! Next day we picked Mike and Leigh up from St. George and did the Angel's Landing Trail with its narrow crest protected by fixed chains over 1,000 foot sheer drops to the canyon floor. Other days saw groups doing the Hidden Canyon Trail and Observation Point. Zion was a stunning location with green canyons, red cliffs and blue skies. Some of us also did a trip to Bryce Canyon National Park with its fantastic rock formations known as "Hoodoos". One down point was our run-in with some guys on the neighbouring pitch. After one of us (guess who?) told them forcefully to shut up at 2.00 am they proceeded to vandalise Leigh and Mike's tent zip whilst we were out on the hills the next day. A discrete filming



The team at Angels Landing, Zion National Park

by Mike provided evidence of the culprits' aggressive attitude to us and convinced the hand-gun and tazer armed Federal Officers to evict them from the campground forthwith!

Our next port of call was Moab in Eastern Utah. Eddie, Linda and I drove up through some spectacular canyon scenery and Mike, Leigh and Suzanne flew up in the plane; both groups getting differing views and experiences of the canyons and desert scenery. Moab has every claim to its self appointed title of outdoor capital of the USA. As well as being close to Arches and Canyonlands National Parks it has white water rafting, rock climbing, hiking, canyoneering, horse riding, mountain biking, off road driving trails, fishing and hunting activities. It also has some fine micro breweries, frequented by various raggy armed outdoor freaks of all types! Needless to say we sampled many of these activities with memorable trails in the National Parks, rafting on (and in) the Colorado River and a flight with Mike over Canyonlands. Only Linda and I had the nerve to do the horse riding at Red River!



Canyonlands National Park (Mike, Keith, Leigh, Eddie, Suzanne and Linda)

The Team then split up for a few days. Eddie, Linda, Suzanne and I driving down to the Grand Canyon via Monument valley in the Navajo Nation. Spectacular scenery where many famous films were shot. Down side – no drink in the Navajo Nation! Mike and Leigh flew off to Colorado to see his Mum and then met up with us again later.

After stopping off to see Lake Powell (I wonder why Linda?) we then went to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. At over 8,000 feet above sea level it was almost alpine after the desert. Cold too at night, almost down to freezing point. Mike has a close encounter with possibly a mountain lion in the middle of the night, but it was so surprised at him "performing his ablutions" that it legged it! As they say, the

area was "awesome" and we went down the North Kaibab trail into the Canyon. Also celebrated Suzanne's birthday in style at the Grand Canyon Lodge with great views of the sunset over the Canyon. The evening before Mike and Leigh left to fly back to Phoenix we went to a lecture called "Death below the Rim". Alarming for them as was all about air crashes in the canyon!



Mike, Keith and Leigh at Bryce Canyon National Park

Our final night was in Las Vegas staying at Bill's Gamblin' Hall and Saloon on The Strip. One night was enough for us, but still an experience not to miss. Luckily Eddie and I were escorted by Linda and Suzanne so were not pressed to have a "Girl in our hotel room within 20 minutes" by the many Filipino touts.

All in all, a most enjoyable trip in fantastic surroundings with great company. It's what the HMC is all about!

Keith Hirst

(Now nearing 65 and getting expensive to insure!)

Would you prefer not to receive a printed Crux by post? If so e-mail me and I can arrange to e-mail you the pdf instead.
CarolynIdent@yahoo.com



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Mountain Biking the South Downs Way

By Paul Dormer (mountain bike rep)



For the last 3 years some of the HMC mountain bikers have undertaken multi-day routes, these September meets are fairly unique in that they use different accommodation after each long day in the saddle and provide a great sense of covering distance and achieving a journey across wonderful English countryside, be it mountainous or just plain hilly.

In 2005 we completed the epic Coast to Coast (Wainright route) over a week

2006 we completed the Ridgeway with a superb group of 11 riders (search youtube for HMC + Ridgeway to see the video), then in 2007 we completed the South Downs Way.

For 2008 we are hoping to cycle the Penine Way Bridleway. Keep checking the HMC website for more details.



Day 1

Sept 8th 2007 a group from HMC set off to cycle the South Downs way from Winchester, to Eastbourne, this was the third long distance bridleway tackled by the HMC mountain bikers and long may it continue. We started this fine Saturday morning after meeting up at Winchester Station, surprisingly little faffing before the off too.. 40 minutes into the ride they were still not on the South Downs Way, if we had been we'd have been shot. For the first few miles of the

Long Distance Path is through an MOD Danger Area, we could hear the shots, the Red flags were up. We eventually got back on route and away from the bullets after several miles of detours.

On the South Downs way there were lots of hills and very few flat parts at all, so the riding was either the der der de der, funeral march uphill slog, or the whoa-hey down hill single and wide tracks, enjoyable riding, with time to chat, times of excitement and a good sense speed. Wasn't long though before my bike just serviced, decided to snap its chain during a long climb (must have been the power), Simon was well prepared with a emergency link and we were back pedaling. We met Helen with the support car at a the very pleasant Queen Elizabeth County park, had lunch and set off into the hills again, the sun was beating down and the cover of the trees in this dense woodland was welcome.

The Shed

Phil did us proud finding accommodation in Cocking, we were staying at 'Moonlight Cottage' in the 'Chalet', it was in fact a shed with an outside tap, and you had walk across the garden to outside toilet. Even better we walked a mile or so down the road out of the village to go to the Pub and it never appeared, a local said it closed years ago and asked us not to 'duff' him up before recommending somewhere else miles away. By this time the only other pub in the village had opened, so we piled in there drank 5 pints of stella whilst watching Englands woeful attempt at qualifying for a European Championships, ate scampi and chips and went back to the shed, slept well ...

Day 2

After the obligatory 'flinlsh' I worked out that the reason my chain has snapped was that a tooth of my



chainset had been bent out of shape sometime between the service and the start of this ride. Using the Moonlight Cottage hammer to reshape it resulted in the tooth snapping off, oh well who needed the middle ring anyway (I still don't use the middle one) we started with a big hill to get back to the Path. Once riding the Ridge here the views were stunning, I've tried to show some in the photographs.

We passed over Glatting Beacon and then a full day varied riding all the way to Truleigh YHA, high up on the Downs. On the final climb of the day I thought I was hearing things, we were cycling up a baron hillside in remote countryside but could hear a 'rave', I wasn't going mad, at the top there was a mini rave going on in and around a Van; amp, lots of base, and booze, I just hoped I would not be sharing a dorm with them down the road in the YHA. Truleigh YHA is an experience, quite '60s' modern, superb views, in the evening the beers were retrieved from Helens car and we found an entertaining game of giant Jenga, and a few of went our for a walk. Alex however had other ideas, he offered to put any of our sweaty clothes into the washing machine, having kindly offered to take everyone's and soon had a massive pile of washing, on asking the YHA

warden for the guests washing machine was told that there is not one but if he would remove and fold all the YHA's weeks worth of towels, he could use theirs, he appeared much later after we had finished all the beer and he had finished his duties!



Day 3

for anyone who has cycled the London to Brighton you will know this hill, we found the off -road route of Ditchling Beacon is far less demanding and there were considerably less people on the top, in fact just Helen was there waiting with supplies of water. It was another beautiful day. The cycling continued to be superb, past Lewes., many more 'Beacons' and 'Downs' of 200-300 meters in height each time.

When we arrived at Alfriston, which was very pretty, set at the bottom of

an absolute screamer of a descent, the group was to split. There were those who were staying in Alfriston and taking the leisurely return to Hertfordshire the following morning, and there was Pete (Charman), Simon and myself who needed to dash for the finish and get home cos we oh so wanted to get back to work the following day, not.

The final 8 miles or so were covered in mid 20's late afternoon heat, excellent riding just one faller and the only crash of the meet, Pete tumbled trying to avoid some walkers, whilst cycling in ruts, never a good idea. Eventually we met Helen for our lift home. Alex, Phil and Nick stayed over in Alfriston and enjoyed ice cream on the beach the following morning.

Special thanks to Helen, Alex, and Phil for booking the Shed.



The Stats

Day 1 - 48k. Day 2 – 42k. Day 3 – 64k (inc. Day 4 of 15k)
Average speed 14.4 km/hr, ascent over 3 days: approx 4000m

You always wanted to know this - The meaning of down as in South Downs:-
Etymology: Middle English *doun*, from Old English *dūne*, short for *adūne*, of *dūne*, from *a-* (from *of*), *of* off, from + *dūne*, dative of *dūn* hill

The team (left to right):

Alex Pender, Simon Jordan, Pete Durkin, Paul Dormer, Phil Whitehurst, Nick Urry,



Fancy some Via Ferrata?

There is one bed available in a chalet for 4 or 5 in Arabba (Italian Dolomites) from June 28th to July 5th. We can accommodate a single person or a couple.

Contact Carolyn Dent or Bill Marsh if you are interested.



Hertfordshire Mountaineering Club - Meets 2008

| Date | Location | Organiser |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Tuesdays | Climb at Hatfield Wall 7-9pm, social meet at the Sun Inn, Lemsford | Climbing contact Deborah Cole |
| March 1-2 | Annual dinner, Youlgreave YHA, near Bakewell, Peak District | Jenny Gould / Mary Brady |
| Easter March 20-24 | Scotland trip, staying at the Glen Feshie Hostel, near Aviemore in the Cairngorms | Geoff Sharpe |
| April 18-20 | Lakes Trip, staying at the Sykeside bunkhouse, Patterdale | Gary Bebb |
| Bank Holiday May 3-5 | Cornwall camping meet | John Parrott |
| May 17th | 50 th Anniversary dinner. Quality Hotel, Hatfield | Geoff Deans |
| Bank Holiday May 24-26 | Gower Peninsula, camping at Three Cliffs Bay Camping and Caravan Park | Ann Blandford |
| June 13-15 | Herts Snowdonia Centre, Nant Gwynant, North Wales | Gary Bebb |
| June 28 – July 5th | Italian Dolomites, staying in self-catering accommodation in Arabba | Bill Marsh |
| July 19- Aug 3 | Alps Trip: Camping in Bernina and the Bregaglia Alps | Gary Bebb |
| Late July | Camping trip to Llangollen, Abbey Farm Caravan Parks | Eddie Cornell |
| Aug 8-10 | Sport climbing at the Horseshoe Quarry, Peaks | Deborah Cole |
| Bank Holiday August 23-25 | North Devon camping trip | Linda Powell |
| Aug 30 – Sept 6 | Lundy trip, staying at The Barn bunkhouse | Carolyn Dent |
| Sept 18 - 20 | Lakes trip | Leigh Singleton |
| October | Yorkshire Meet | Eddie Cornell |
| Oct 31 – Nov 2 | Bangers and Mash at the Snowdonia Centre, Nant Gwynant, North Wales | Gary Bebb |
| Nov 21 - 23 | Brecon Beacons, staying at Star Bunkhouse | Vicky Wood |
| Dec 12 - 14 | Christmas party meet, Peaks | Andre Knirsh |



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Simone Moro, Courmayeur, Italy. Photo: Scott Markewitz

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