

Ceunant Mountaineering Club

December 2007



Adventures near & far



above & cover picture from Dave Rothman's tour - see page xx



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Editorial

Editorial

It's now almost 2 years since John Cole's 50th Anniversary Mag. Looking back through it, John did an excellent job cherry-picking a variety of articles from over the years.

My aims for this Mag have been similar – the key word being variety.

I've tried to mix things upon a bit to retain interest throughout. A bit of humour here & there and occasionally inspire you. Dave Rothman's expedition article certainly did it for me – cover photo & page 9.

Also on a serious but essential note, I learned lots from Jim Brady's Avalanche Awareness information – page 13.

Again, by popular demand I've included a classic Jo Brennan article – always guaranteed to raise a smile or two.

So here it is, a Mountaineering Mag from a club with members doing a wide range of activities in the hills & mountains of the UK & abroad.

Hope you enjoy it as much as I did putting it together.

My thanks to all involved with the Mag. – to the contributors of course, but also to the production team. Jo B & his machine, ably assisted by Elly, Jim B & Steve A.

Hopefully the Mag has provided a few new ideas for the coming year.

Please keep the articles coming – if it's your first attempt, just give it a go – the more variety the better.

Mike (Tanker) Tolson – December 2007

Contacting us.....

Anyone needing more info about the club & our activities, see our web site www.ceunant.org or e/mail us web@ceunant.org

Letters to the Editor.....

A taste of India – November 2007

Bill and I have recently returned from southern India. Sadly no mountains or rock faces.

We were greeted with great ceremony at the airport, as our flight was the first one in of the tourist season. Bill was interviewed by the local TV station.

Does the warm climate make people happier?

We have never been greeted with so many warm smiles, waves of greeting. Everyone wanted their photos taken when they saw Bill's camera. The greeting was always - How are you? What is your name? English is taught in all schools, so they like to practice it.

We based ourselves in Kovalam, almost at the bottom of Southern India. There are the western ghats, as a spine, they rise several thousand feet in places. We had elephant ride. We visited a tea plantation, & the backwaters, where you can hire a house boat fitted out in superior style. We saw more palm trees than you can imagine, every part of the tree is put to a good purpose. We saw ancient ways of fishing & had the Arabian sea to swim in.

The culture was so different, although the western influence is creeping in - TV and McDonalds has a lot to answer for.

We met up with Roger and Nita for a couple of days, (club members) than they left us to travel north. When you have a thousand miles of coastline, there is a lot to see.

We're looking forward to returning to experience more of this interesting country.

I think I can forsake the backpacking for this sort of holiday.

Val Beddard

The Skiing Appentice

Last winter Martin, Eleanor , Edward and I went skiing in Italy.

A very pleasant spot in the Dolomites. The weather was sunny most of the time, no fresh snow for a few weeks so the slopes were a bit icy.

Edward had a very interesting technique i.e. flat out down everything. However he was very considerate and always waited for me.

On Wednesday after ski school he came out with me and Martin. We went down a mogul field, Edward's first. As you know it is difficult to ski flat out straight down a mogul field, Martin went first Edward followed. First turn wipe out, second turn wipe out and so on. I was standing above him with Martin below. When Edward was lying in the snow yet again, I was telling myself I must not look at Martin. Repeat - I MUST NOT LOOK AT MARTIN! So of course I looked at Martin. Martin looked at me and the inevitable happened - fits of hysterical laughter. This of course did not go down too well with the already furious Edward. He picked his ski, flung it into the snow and shouted "I'm not doing moguls again unless they are flat".

Have you ever heard laughter echoing off the mountains?

When we came off the mogul field we went down a long straight wide gentle slope. Edward said "I need the toilet" crossed his legs and fell over.

John Russell

--ooOoo--

The BMC – by Fiona Devine

The BMC is the representative body that exists to protect the freedoms and promote the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers including ski-mountaineers.

It was formed in 1944 and now has over 63,000 members, 3000 of which live in the Midlands. We are just one of 48 affiliated clubs in the Midlands Area.

Through a democratic representative structure the BMC:

- Negotiates access improvements and promotes cliff and mountain conservation.
- Promotes and advises on good practice, facilities, training and equipment.
- Supports events and specialist programmes including youth and excellence
- Provides services and information for members.

Access & Conservation

One of the key aims of the BMC is to negotiate access improvements and promotes cliff and mountain conservation. In addition to the two access officers at the BMC volunteers undertake a lot of the pioneering business. Indeed, it includes Henry Folkard (Peak Area Coordinator). I am sure many of you will have read his regular slot in the Summit Magazine.

For more information on access matters then visit The Regional Access Database (RAD).

www.climbingcrags.co.uk

It contains details of over 700 crags in England and Wales where access issues have been reported and where special arrangements apply.

It is also worth noting that where 'access is threatened' and negotiations have failed the BMC will acquire crags. The BMC now owns or manages 5 crags: Harrisons Rocks, Stone Farm Rocks, Horseshoe Quarry Tremadog - Craig Bwlch y Moch Craig y Longridge and the latest addition Pant Ifan

Promotion & Good Practice

The BMC also Promotes and advises on good practice, facilities, training and equipment.

Last year it produced the Alpine Essentials DVD; held an Alpine Meet in the Swiss Alps; ran a technical and training conference 'Know your Stuff' at Plas y Brenin; produced a 'youth' climbing booklet (to help parents understand the sport) also ran a youth climbing meet in the Peak District and produced Stanage - The Definitive Guide 2007 to name just a few.

Promotion...continued

Personally I'd recommend the BMC's award-winning British Mountain Maps. There are now three maps available, Dark Peak, Snowdonia and the Lake District. The maps are designed for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers, the 1:40,000 scale maps are printed on polyethylene, making them lightweight, tear-resistant and waterproof. Bargain priced at £9.95.

Finally, in response to the nationwide problem of deteriorating equipment (primarily bolts) they established a Bolts Working Group to draw up technical guidance for climbers and bolt installers and to recommend policies for BMC owned and managed crags. The work culminated in the production of several important documents and the purchase of 2500 bolts as the first stage of a campaign to encourage the replacement of poor quality bolts around England and Wales.

Supports Events And Specialist Programmes

The British Regional Youth Competitions Series (BRYCS) is a fun event organised by the BMC and MC of S and hosting walls for young climbers aged between 7 and 15 inclusive. Climbers get a chance to attempt boulder problems as well as routes. The best climbers of each region go through to the national final. The Midlands Area has many youngsters showing great promise. Discussions are taking place to introduce a 16 - 17 year age category.

Provides Services & Information For Members.

Provides expert advice to clubs, climbing walls, mountaineering instructors and other bodies on youth development and child protection issues

The BMC promotes good practice, provides technical support and encourage knowledge sharing amongst mountaineering clubs.

Benefits of Club Membership

As a BMC affiliated Club the CMC receive the following benefits.

- ✓ Free Worldwide Civil Liability Insurance up to £5 million
- ✓ Free Summit Magazine
- ✓ BMC Information Service. For discounts view the web site on www.thebmc.co.uk.
- ✓ Special Club Rates at The National Mountain Centre, Plas Y Brenin for group-discounted courses, club dinners, meeting room hire, equipment hire and bunkhouse accommodation.
- ✓ Access to BMC Travel Insurance
- ✓ Access to mountain Huts (owned by member clubs) situated in some of the most beautiful areas of Britain
- ✓ Access to Local Area Meetings
- ✓ Access to MLTUK award schemes: Single Pitch Award, Mountain Leader Award and Walking Group Leader Awards.

Getting More Involved with the BMC

Area Committee meetings are designed to discuss some of the issues that are happening nationally within your sport as well as locally within your area.

The BMC is encouraging more clubs to come forward and get involved. If you feel inspired then get in touch with the BMC office or alternatively contact me, the current Midlands Area Secretary.

Fiona Devine

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50th party day - Ascent of Rum Doddle - The Direct Route - by John Cole

"Ascent of Snowdon by routes various to meet up on the top". This was the plan, all official like, listed in the Club's celebratory events for the year. Unfortunately no time to be on the summit simultaneously was ever specified, so encounters ranged from the PYP car park to the not-at all! Funny that our annual programmes are characterised by 'meets', presumably practice so that one of these days coordination actually happens! Not that everyone complained, certainly not Martin and Steve H who were up, down and into the haven of the PYG before others had shaken off the effects of the Enville strong ale from the night before.

Anyway our group of Junior, John B, Phil and Wendy, James and Hilary and I fancied walking directly out from the Cottage at 10am. Ceunant-style, we actually got away at 11.15 striding (wo)manfully across the bus turning-circle to the river. Here I unselfishly took on the role of group clown by falling in. Others removed footwear to wade (boring!) or teetered over the dubious stepping stones. My next opportunity to raise a laugh – Junior and James having commenced an endless series of GPS calculations - was when I whipped out my key-fob with its tiny compass to check we were heading for the right ridge and to build confidence in group safety by demonstrating its even tinier torch and whistle. So sad that a seagull ate it during lunch on the summit cairn!

The delights of our route were eschewed by Phil and Wendy in deciding upon an even more direct route to the PYG ("I'm just going inside, I may be gone for some time"). They later enjoyed telling us about their marvellous lunch – drat and damnation or is it drool and salivation? So our deprived and depleted group started the sporting scramble up the ridge. It was here that Junior and James abandoned sophisticated navigation for more basic methods, ie pointing John B at the hard bits. John responded well -"I'm from Stourbridge and I don't give a" and tackled the challenges head on. Hilary and I however felt no shame in sometimes seeking out more comfortable variations.

We finally gained the railway-bearing ridge near Glogwyn station and entered the wet clag that would accompany us all day. Whilst the others vanished upwards into the murk I struggled unsuccessfully not to be overtaken by parties of school-children, invalids with sticks and smart ladies with heels and handbags (it was mid-summer Saturday after all). Near the top I found Junior kindly awaiting me – although I suspect it was for reassurance from my tiny compass about his GPS calculations!

The summit was an anti-climax with no other Ceunant party to be seen, but more importantly the café and railway were closed. Bother, there goes our last chance of masquerading as touroids, not that they needed reinforcements. We were mortified to have to clamber over bodies to find a lunch spot behind the cairn and then to elbow aside the ascending hordes to gain the relative calm of the PYG track. We timed our arrival for the 4pm bus at the PYP car park but what is this? Richard's group seems unaware of its imminent departure so more heroic deeds are called for. Junior prises Maggie out of the tea room; Hilary, I think in German, engages the driver in complex discussions about the status of Gwynedd in the EU and the tardy enfranchisement of women in Switzerland; the rest of us act as sheep dogs and herd Ceunant members various on board. It was a pity about the touroids who couldn't get on the bus but, as we said regretfully, our need was desperate. Bill would have broached the barrels at Tynlon by now. And he had.....

--ooOoo--

That's High Enough For Me! – by Dave Rothman

One of the first trips I did after retiring in 1998 was round the Annapurna circuit. It's great for trekkers and pretty good for mountaineers as well, but it left me a bit dissatisfied. Although you get about as high as is possible on a trek, and get to see some really big stuff, it's all too far away when you see it. Even crossing the Thorong La, a col at about 17,500ft, the big mountains are either hidden or very distant and the adjacent peaks are only a few thousand feet higher and rounded, so they looked more Scottish than Himalayan. Even worse there were hordes of locals everywhere, including grannies and children going shopping or to school. Very interesting but didn't they know I was trying to have an adventure. So I decided that if I returned to Nepal it would be to go up something rather than to just look at it, and eventually I realised that if it was going to happen it really had to be soon.

I'd had two problems; well three if you count getting clearance from my cardiologist. What would I go for and, the big one, what boots? I wasn't about to commit to anything until I had the boots. It seems that for 6000+ metres you really need double boots and there didn't seem to be much choice anymore. The standard boot for the sort of trip I had in mind is the Vega, but my feet didn't get on with them; the navicular bone since you asked. That is a bone that I know from bitter experience you really do not want to upset. I searched sporadically and the years ticked by.

I was offered the Salomon Mountain Lite in a branch of Brigham's. I already had a pair and reckon that summer Alps would be about their limit. When I said I really needed a double boot the manager got very cross and insisted that such things were no longer made, having been made obsolete by modern technology, like the Salomon. Another branch of Brigham's offered me the slightly heavier Salomon Mountain Expert, another single boot, with the assurance that this boot would be "perfectly adequate even for the top of Everest itself". These chaps were puzzled to learn that although such wonderful kit was available for only £140/£160 the major manufacturers still offered Himalayan boots priced from £500 up, and even more puzzled that people would actually buy them. The solution came suddenly in 2005. First I learned that there was some scope for heat-stretching the Vega even though its Pebax plastic wasn't supposed to be treated this way. Second, when I tracked down the wizard who was going to do this for me, at Lockwood's, he insisted that before I went any further I had myself fitted for Supafeet insoles. The next revelation was that with my new Supafeet I could wear Vega's without any modification. That was mid-March. A month later I was on a flight to Kathmandu. It may have taken over six years but now that I had the boots sorted I wasn't going to waste any more time.

Deciding what to go for had been easy. For me mountaineering has always needed an element of higher, or further, or harder or else it can become just exercise and scenery; and mainly I like to get high. Any Himalayan peak was going to have the first two, for me, and being a devout coward precluded me from chasing all three simultaneously. My debut would therefore be Mera Peak, selected on the basis that it is a great viewpoint, technically easy, and the highest of the "trekking peaks"; so called allegedly because of the type of permit needed rather than because they are necessarily simple. I was risking the discovery that I couldn't cope with the altitude and would thereby fail to get up anything at all, but if I did get up it would be a good basis to go back for more. Perhaps! It was also easy deciding which outfit to go with as Jagged Globe are pretty much the UK market leaders, and although a bit more expensive than most, seemed to offer the best back-up and most importantly, for Mera the best approach/acclimatisation route and a relaxed itinerary, with a rest day every three or four days. Perhaps! Jagged Globe also offered an attractive alternative to a simple there and back. So the route I signed up for would, after following the usual approach up the Hinku valley to do Mera, drop down the far side into the remote and wild Hongku valley, go north up this to its blind end and escape over a high and slightly technical pass to Island Peak base camp. After taking in Island Peak (which would obviously be a doddle because although more technical it is comfortably lower than Mera and we would be fit and acclimatised wouldn't we?) we would drop down into the Khumbu valley and follow the Everest trail back to our start at Lukla.

Flying in and out of Lukla was as exciting as expected. The landing strip is cut into the face of a mountain, and I do mean into it; not across it. So to land you fly straight at the mountain with absolutely no chance of a "go-around" if something goes wrong. Taking off is just as good because at that end of the airstrip the ground just drops into an abyss. From Lukla we had to get over into the Hinku valley. The

direct way is over the Zatrwa La. This is the way that those of our party not doing the circuit would come back, and the way the cheaper operators go in. Fit and acclimatised you can make the crossing valley to valley in a couple of days, but we had just flown straight in to about 9000ft, and the Zatrwa La is over 15000ft. I was looking forward to Jagged Globe's cunning alternative. This would be a pleasant three-day stroll along the valley, sleeping each night at about 10,000ft. Comfortably adjusted to that altitude we would nip over into the Hinku by a much lower pass than the Zatrwa La. It was supposed to be six days before we had to sleep above 10,000ft. Of course it didn't work out like that. With a little more research I might have realised that from the off we would be working hard on a steep roller coaster of a track, but it is unlikely I could have predicted that when we eventually struggled up to our chosen pass we would not drop down the far side. Instead we trekked on up the ridge for several days, eventually crossing only about 700ft lower than the Zatrwa La. This alternative was sold to us on the basis that it would save a day. True, but only by cunningly deleting a rest day. With hindsight I am sure that it would have been much more effective had we just kicked around Lukla quietly for a few days doing day walks, and then gone for the short crossing; and I wouldn't have been half as trashed when we got down into the Hinku.

The Hinku was much quieter and less developed than the Nepal I had seen before, and now we were heading up into a wonderful cirque of 6000m peaks. But those boulders with the painted symbols were clearly not Mani stones. Although we couldn't read the writing there was no misunderstanding the hammer and sickle, even if it was blue instead of red. This was Maoist territory. The comrades visited next day when we camped at Kote and the tariff had risen sharply since any of our crew were last here. At about £25 each it was still not particularly painful for us Europeans, but the big change was that they now wanted a day's wages from the crew as well. Negotiations on this were handled by our sirdar and Big Ed, the Jagged Globe rep. Things were apparently going well until Martin and Barry inadvertently gatecrashed the meeting with their video cameras running. Eventually things calmed down and the AK47s were put away again, a price was agreed, and we were given a receipt for our voluntary contribution to party funds.

On up the valley to Tangnag at about 15000ft. Here the mountains felt right up close and personal, just what I had come for. But I had never had so much trouble at this altitude before; no mountain sickness, just shattered and losing weight fast. This surprised me because on my previous trip I had actually put weight on, but here we seemed to be getting inadequate food and at inappropriate times. Someone who did have mountain sickness was a freelance Swiss who had somehow tagged onto an earlier party. He had got up to Mera base-camp where he developed the symptoms. He had come down this far and was advised by our team leaders, and another group who were there, to keep going down while he could, but he didn't and later had to be carried down in a very bad way. A foretaste of things to come but later we heard he survived. Two more days and we were at Khare, well above 5000m and with a good close view of the tremendous northwest face of Mera. Fortunately we weren't going that way. We would sneak round the back where the going was gentle; one more day to base camp at the Mera La, the pass over to the Hongku, where we would have a rest day broken only by a little ice and rope practice on the nearby glacier. How I was hanging on for that rest day.

Of course we didn't get it. What we actually did was go most of the way up to the Mera La for the ice and rope work and then come back down again. Everyone suffered that day. The next day we went back up all the way to camp at the Mera La, and then up to high camp the following day; twice the effort and no rest day. To make sense of this you have to understand two things. First, although you may have booked with a UK outfit and have their rep there, and not all UK companies bother with one, he doesn't have a lot of control. The operation is sub-contracted to a Nepalese trekking company and run by their sirdar. Second, the interests of the clients and those of the trekking crew are more or less incompatible. The trekking formula was, not surprisingly, developed for and works well on treks, so that even on a fairly hard trek like the Annapurna circuit the differences would hardly matter, except for the occasional client and the more frequent porter who dies of acute mountain sickness (AMS). Probably on an expedition to a major peak where you have a clear distinction between the trek in and the mountain phase it also might not matter. But on this trip it seemed to me that the clients' interests definitely came a very poor second.

Going up to high camp was a glacier trudge, but though easy angled and short I was even more exhausted; but not so much that I couldn't see how good the views were becoming. Chamlang and

Baruntse, both 7000+m came into view across the Hongku valley, and the really big stuff was starting to show further north. Summit day was more glacier trudge and more exhaustion. If I hadn't been so utterly wasted I might have noticed that apart from the marvellous location and views, this route could easily be the most boring ascent I have ever done. We seemed to meander about with little idea of where we were headed, on very easy angle snow with the few crevasses only inches wide. Near the top we did come out in exciting position above the imposing NW face, and our summit, one of the three tops available, was a fairly steep-sided dome where the sherpas set up a fixed rope. Here the final act of a sad drama was played out by a Japanese team on the hill with us that day. Some of them were using skis and were having so much trouble that I actually managed to catch up with them occasionally, and their last man arrived below the summit dome at about the same time as me. He must have been in even worse shape because he lay down in the snow. While I was slogging up the last yards his team decided to haul him up. While I was having my photo taken at the actual summit, a few yards from the top of the fixed rope, they were busy congratulating him and taking his photo. It wasn't until they tried to get some coffee into him that they realised he had died during the haul. It was getting late, we were all tired, it was starting to snow and there wasn't anything useful that we could do, so we headed back to the Mera La where the six of us who were carrying on said a subdued goodbye to Martin. He was the only one of the five who had come out just to do Mera to get up it. The others had turned back early on summit day and he now headed back down into the Hinku to join them. All six of our round-trip team got up. We had another night at the base camp and then went down the other way into the Hongku valley.

I had wanted wild and this was it. No inhabitants, no buildings, no walls, no proper trails, no kharka (yak pens) and definitely nobody hoping to sell us coca-cola in bottles with moss growing under the cap or snickers bars six months past their sell-by date. Just a line of 6000m peaks up the left of the valley, a string of frozen lakes in it and Chamlang to the right, looking so close that you could just boulder-hop across the river and start climbing. Ahead past Chamlang was Baruntse, throwing down its fine long west ridge to block our exit. Looming above this barrier were Everest and the Lhotse group. Our way out would be over the col called the Amphu Labtsa, more technical than anything we had done so far but about 700m lower than Mera Peak. The Jagged Globe itinerary looked sensible, as always; one day down into the valley bed at about 5000m, then one day up the valley to a rest day below the col before crossing. As you may have guessed there was no rest day. The sirdar's itinerary showed us taking three days to the camp below the col, and we needed it. The next day we headed up to cross the Amphu Labtsa. This was a wonderful climax, with a pretty icefall coming down from the col and increasingly dramatic views back down the valley, but I hadn't recovered at all and this was our eighteenth straight day on the go; so much for "a rest day every three or four days". If I had thought I was at my limit on Mera I learned differently today; still no mountain sickness, just utter exhaustion. There was no pain but absolutely no energy either. Eventually it dawned on me that this had stopped being fun and that even if I could get up Island Peak this way I just wouldn't get any satisfaction from it. So I promised my body it wouldn't have to do that, and that got me up a bit further. Then the events on Mera summit came back to me and I started wondering just how tired you have to be before you fall over and don't get up again. I decided that it probably wouldn't hurt and that there wasn't anything I could do about it anyway, so eventually I got to the col and then down the steep stuff on the other side. There was still an endless slog out to Island Peak base camp and the weather had closed right in and snowing hard. We had become very strung out and some of the guys at the front were really worried because they didn't have anybody with them and thought they had overshot the tents. I was at the back of course, with Big Ed shepherding me, but he hadn't been here before, and the kind sherpa who had taken my daysack for the last few hundred feet on the way up had disappeared into the distance with my spare clothing and food. Eventually I made it to camp and a rest day.

Obviously during the rest day I started to think that I ought at least go up to Island Peak high camp with the team, but there had been so much snow the day before that it was deemed unsafe and nobody went. We baled out the next day. Within half an hour we seemed to be back in civilisation, with good tracks, villages and tidy, painted, stone-built lodges every few miles. We camped under Ama Dablam and joined the Khumbu valley at Pheriche. I took a good long look up the Everest trail there because I didn't think I would be back again, and then we headed down to the flesh-pots; Namche Bazaar, Lukla and that flight out to Kathmandu. I needed the flesh pots because when I found a mirror in Kathmandu I saw a famine victim. Most of the others seemed happy to have lost two or three stone, but if you know me you know I just don't have that to spare.

I hope I haven't put anybody off because it is a wonderful trip and the individual days were fairly easy in terms of miles and feet climbed. Had I gone twenty or even ten years earlier maybe it would have been a different story, but I guess you can't beat your age, and on this trip I was giving away fourteen years to the next oldest. But then maybe it would also have been a different story if some of the promised rest days had appeared, or if the food had been better or more plentiful, or just available at times when there was a better chance to digest it. However I suppose that overall I couldn't have had a better result. I had scratched the itch, I had got up the main objective and travelled through some stupendous mountain terrain, and I had found it so hard that I won't be going back for more.

--ooOoo--

The Art of Climbing Avoidance – by Liz Asquith

It has long been recognised that the principal reason for joining a climbing club is to avoid doing any. It is, after all, a sport where one first gets far too cold and wet on far too long a walk-in, before getting far too scared on something far too dangerous and then getting far too lost in far too much darkness on far too long a walk-out and finishing far too late for far too much beer. It follows, therefore, that, having joined an organisation which allows one to continue to describe oneself as a climber, suitable excuses for avoiding anything even remotely approaching vertical are highly desirable. To assist new members of the club, some examples are given below.

1. The weather.

Pretty much inarguable, this one. If it is raining so hard that the Vaynol Arms has floated off down the Pass and the local farmers are hurriedly equipping the sheep with water-wings, even the most hardened mountaineer would be forgiven for a long lie-in followed by a day of extreme kit shopping. To blame the weather on a gloriously sunny day, however, is rather more of a challenge. This is a good time to comment on the lack of friction, the family tendency to skin cancer, or the probability of crowds. By the time the resulting argument has finished, it will probably have started raining again.

2. The conditions.

If it's gritstone, there isn't enough friction. If it's limestone, it's too cold. If it's a mountain, it's facing the wrong way. If it's a mountain with snow on, it's not enough snow, too much snow, or the wrong sort of snow – it is, of course, totally unthinkable to go out on a day when the avalanche risk has been assessed as having a value of 1 or greater.

3. Injuries.

Climbing is a sport. Sportspeople get injured. The usual recommendation for sports injuries is to rest. It is, therefore, unthinkable that you should even think about going climbing while suffering from a badly sprained ear, blocked nostril, sore navel, swollen toenail, or, in the case of the more mature members of the club, all of the above. Having made the decision to rest, you can then spend the entire day sunbathing in the garden and waiting for someone to bring you a beer. If this doesn't happen, then you can conclude that no-one likes you, diagnose a compound fracture of the ego . . . and rest it.

4. Missing kit.

It's vital and you haven't got it. Well, fairly vital in that while you could solo the route naked if you really wanted to, there are some items of kit that are usually considered indispensable. Ropes are a good option to accidentally leave behind. Alternatively, if you have somehow slipped up so far as to have actually arrived at a crag before realising that this wasn't a good idea, a reliable but expensive method of escape is to wait until your partner has gone for a pee before hurling one rock boot very hard towards the horizon. It is, however, necessary to ensure that the walk-in has been performed in footwear blatantly unsuitable for climbing, such as flip-flops, stiletto heels or wellingtons, as many classic routes were originally led in walking boots and some partners have far too much respect for history.

5. No transport.

Best left until the last minute, or you may be in danger of being offered a lift. Ring partner and claim to be stuck on the hard shoulder with a seized waffle-bearing, broken Thropley nuts or a clogged gunge filter. Make sure that the background noises are suitably authentic, since it gives the game away a little to have your earnest description of rain, heavy lorries and slow breakdown services interrupted by ice-cream vans, Aston Villa scoring the equaliser or your spouse finding the g-spot.

6. No partner.

There is a partner. Sort of. But since they don't have your phone number, address, email address or even any inkling of which direction to launch the carrier pigeon, they won't be able to find you to suggest climbing. And if they really are so desperate as to track you down, they probably don't have any other friends, which means that no-one will notice they're missing until long after they have been safely concreted into the patio.

7. Too many other commitments.

You'd really like to come climbing. Honest. But little Tarquin needs taking to his nuclear weapons club, the cat has gone missing again, the tortoise has sprained its tail, the missus wants you to paint the bathroom ceiling purple and now that Emma is crawling she needs constant supervision in case she tries to set fire to any more little old ladies. Maybe next week?

8. No time left.

Five o'clock. Getting dark. Not a good time to be starting on a route. But now that you've eaten a slow breakfast, gone round the shops for a vital bit of gear you needed, decided where to go, gone round the shops again for a guidebook, gone round a completely different set of shops for some food, gone to pick up a mate, waited while said mate has breakfast, eaten a second breakfast, tried to find the crag, got lost, decided on a different venue, gone back to shops for a different guidebook, walked in, discovered that the crag is shut due to a nesting widgeo-hawk, walked out, and walked in to yet another crag you can be confident that all necessary faffing about has been thoroughly done.

9. Training for something else.

You'd love to go climbing. No, really, you would. But it's the Little Piddle bog-snorkelling championships next week and you really must get some training done . . . anyone fancy a wander up Kinder Scout?

10. Hangover.

Fifteen pints of Double Hop is a bad idea. Actually, fifteen pints of anything is a bad idea, but at least with the Double Hop you can blame the beer for being evil hangover-juice rather than the fact that there were fifteen pints of it. You will look and feel like death warmed up and allowed to congeal, but at least when you eventually manage to ooze out of your pit no-one will even think about asking you to hold their ropes.

All the above excuses may be used singly or in combination. Thus armed, there is no excuse whatsoever for going climbing.

--ooOoo—

The Joker.....

Sherlock Holmes & Watson were camping in the Lakes, laying in their sleeping bags & looking up at the stars.

Holmes says to Watson – “What do you think of when you look up to the stars – Life? The fantastic universe? What are you *really* thinking of?

We've forgotten the tent Holmes.

ooOoo—

Patagonia January 2007 – a tramp with Roger Stanton & Dave Jones – by Joe Brennan

A few notes.....

After three air trips and 450 kilometres in busses we finally arrive at start of the Torres del Paine circuit which is supposed to take eight days.

Roger became self appointed quartermaster which means porridge, porridge, porridge. Roger likes porridge. With his mighty frame and his black beret he was more Fidel Castro than Che Guevara.

Day One started with a gigantic mound of porridge. This sustained us all the way to Campano Seron. It quickly became apparent that our sacks were excessive and some off-loading was necessary. This meant swapping some gallons of our favourable whiskey for chocolate from some other trekkers. Already we seemed to be getting some funny looks.

On to Lago Dickson and the daunting prospect of a Lago that stretched for ever. On we went to Campamento Los Peros Muertos (which was named after the dead dog as it tried to cross the raging stream). The same almost happened to us on a high wire traverse above the threatening stream. The whiskey was now gone but the porridge was not. Further days continued, all long but pretty easy. The promised maelstroms did not arrive. The normal rainfall was supposed to be three times that of the Scottish Highlands.

One of the problems of travelling with two architects was the jargon-riddled conversation. For example: outside a rotting corrugated shack back in Puerto Natales:

“Dave, have you noticed the double cantilever, vector with a mutual dispersal of stress, enabling a more efficient use of the vertical components?

Roger, this is only practicable by using a tri-stress tension converter, integrated with average wind velocity as part of the material performance integers.

Joe: “We have masses of porridge”.

On past Refugio Pehoe with huge icebergs collapsing from the glaciers, more global warming evidence for those who wish to see, Mr President !!!

Our last day was in pouring rain as we tramped out and up towards the Campo Italo. This traverses past the Campamento Britanico with its vast mountain of rusting cans of beer, a legacy from the 1970 British expedition.

The next day we jumped onto a boat and started the long way home.

Roger and Dave would do it again. Me ? No.

--ooOoo--

The Joker.....

What do you call a climber who climbs with no protection?

“Balls but no nuts!”

Avalanches, Skiing & Risk – by Jim Brady

An avalanche is not a random event...

.....they happen in the same places in the same conditions year after year.

With 55 people killed by avalanches on the mountains in the French Alps, the winter of 2006 was the worst for 35 years. The vast majority of those killed, in that and other winters, were off piste skiers and ski tourers rather than climbers. This is unsurprising when you consider that **90% of avalanche victims trigger the fatal avalanche themselves** with the cutting action of their skis or boards. Many theories have been put forward as to the reasons why the numbers were so high in 2006, but two things emerged as being the most significant: the peculiar snow structure that had formed through the autumn and early winter, plus, thanks to improvements in equipment, an increasing number of skiers and boarders venturing into the backcountry, often lacking the skills and knowledge necessary to assess dangerous situations.

What can you do to reduce the risk of being avalanched?

The most important decisions by far, will be those that you make before you start out; once on the hill your options can be limited and temptation strong.

The avalanche risk scale on display at lift stations is a useful starting point.

The risk scale runs level 1-5.

1. **Low.** This will be posted on only a handful of occasions through a whole winter and accounts for just 7% of fatalities.
-safe days.
2. **Moderate.** This is posted for about half of the winter season and accounts for around a third of fatalities.

Above level 2 flashing lights and a yellow and black chequered flag warn of a significantly higher level of risk.

3. **Considerable.** Forecast for about a third of days, but accounts for half of fatalities
-care needed.
4. **High.** This again will be posted for just a handful of days through a season but still accounts for 12% of fatalities
-stay on piste.
5. **Very High.** This is unusual, maybe posted only one day a season and accounts for very few fatalities on the mountain as the lift systems will generally be closed, but avalanches will pose a risk to roads and houses!
-stay at home.

These figures are based on Swiss stats; the French are more cautious in setting levels and designate more days as 3 and 4.

A more comprehensive source of information is the detailed avalanche bulletins available on the internet (links below). These, in addition to giving an overall risk level, will also give info on the aspect/s (the way the slope faces) at most risk and the altitudes at which the risk is highest. The real dilemma is that the ultimate skiing experience the "powder day" will be rated a level 3 or 4.

Other important information sources in your decision making include the weather forecast, and local info from hut wardens, piste patrol etc who are usually a mine of information and happy to help.

Knowledge of the structure of the snow pack is very valuable, in assessing risk. Avalanche awareness courses always feature lots of snow pit excavations (hopefully filled in again) to examine the layering in the snow pack. With the exception of teams skiing in remote areas like Alaska or actually on a course, it is unusual to ever find skiers digging pits! The key thing a section through the snow will tell you is the presence in the snow pack of **adjacent layers of snow of markedly different hardness**, i.e. a powdery layer adjacent to an icy layer, this type of conjunction is prone to sheer and therefore cause an avalanche.

Slope angle is one of the most critical factors to use in planning a route, it can be gauged in advance from the contours on the 1:25000 map; **30°+ is the point at which slopes become dangerous** on "Considerable" plus days. Also important is the angle of the slope above you on a traverse, especially if it is likely to have other skiers on it. As a rule of thumb for judging angles, 30° is where you need to start kick turns; steeper ground with rocky outcrops is likely to be 40°. In planning your day, avoid passages in your route that are too steep for the prevailing warning level or on the wrong aspect-**shady slopes are worst**.

Slopes above 55°- 60°+ don't tend to accumulate large amounts of snow as it tends to slough off gradually. When climbing on this steeper ground, the main danger areas for avalanches are: on the snowy approach to the cliff; when climbing in gullies fed by large areas of mountain face; from collapsing cornices and seracs, and from snow slopes above the cliff.

There are a number of different types of avalanche. The main avoidable danger in the Alps for skiers is the slab avalanche which will generally occur when there has been **new snow with wind**, rapid temperature rise, and weak layers in the snow pack. Determining the wind direction when the snow fell, by observing sastrougi (the shapes on the snow surface) and the build up of wind driven snow on rocks and trees, will enable you to identify the likely aspect of dangerously loaded slopes, the ones facing into the wind when it was snowing. The wind, while scouring snow from ridges and making them safer, can also deposit accumulations of snow just below ridges making that area very unsafe. **The first sunny day after snowfall is particularly dangerous as is the first run down a steep untracked slope**. Warning signs of wind slab are: cracks in the snow, a woomph sound, and/or the snow cracking between your skis. Recent naturally occurring avalanches are also very important warning signs of dangerous conditions.

Wet snow avalanches are common in the spring and can occur at quite low angles. Large powder snow avalanches are common in Canada and other areas after prolonged snowfall in cold weather. Other types of avalanche are less predicable such as serac and cornice collapse or ground avalanches in the spring where the snow slides off the grass.

The terrain can make even insignificant small slides dangerous, and **care must be taken when traversing above cliffs** not to be swept over.

Terrain traps like gullies, valley bottoms, lake edges and dips where there is no escape are dangerous places to be in an avalanche.

Once on the move it's possible to reduce the risk through good group discipline, training and careful choice of terrain, plus a willingness to make detours if necessary. The weather forecast and the weather are often different and plans may need to be altered accordingly.

When off the marked piste, **always carry the holy trinity: transceiver, probe and shovel**, it will enable a buried skier (you!) to be located and dug out, but the time taken is critical. Regular training with this safety equipment is vital to speed the rescue. **Avalanche victims are rarely recovered alive after 15 mins**. You can check this out yourself by trying to hold your breath for longer!

When skiing through **risky areas**:

- Never ski directly above each other**. If people are, stop them or move, quick!
- keep well apart, but in view.
- have a strong fully equipped skier at the back, not the one struggling to keep up!
- have a leader.

If you find yourself in a **particularly dangerous area** in addition to the above;

- move one at a time.
- watch one another.
- move from safe place to safe place.
- stay high on the slope.
- zip up jackets.
- remove leashes if you also have ski brakes.
- have a plan.

On a powder day, especially after a heavy snowfall i.e. 30cm+, choose lines with great care:

- ridges are safer than bowls.
- trees (big ones) safer than open ground.
- gentler slopes i.e. 20° will be safer than steeper ones.
- concave slopes are less likely to slide than convex ones.
- areas below gullies are particularly dangerous.
- on glaciers, crevasses can be hidden and snow bridges unconsolidated.
- frequently skied slopes are less likely to release, but may still do so.

Mature trees normally indicate areas not prone to regular avalanches, however if a forest is open enough to ski through, it can still be subject to powder or wet snow avalanches. Very early in the season after the first big snowfalls, rocks are often covered in unconsolidated snow and potentially dangerous, i.e. 29.5cm rock + 30cm of powder + a skier = a broken back.

Psychological factors can also affect the risk. Groups, while in many respects safer, will often be bolder than pairs or individuals. Each time you successfully negotiate a tricky section you tend to be more willing to take a higher risk next time. Fortunately the clock tends to be reset each time you witness an avalanche, particularly when people are caught up in it. There is also a transceiver effect - only a third of those completely buried under the snow in an avalanche survive; of these survivors, a third are rescued by their pals, that adds up to about a 10% advantage, which is not bad. However if wearing a transceiver makes you feel much safer and therefore bolder you could very well end up worse off! The moral is, always wear a transceiver but don't let the fact encourage you to take greater risks. The desire to put the first tracks down a slope in powder can be irresistible.

If the worst does happen, and you are caught in a slide, try to ski out to the side, if you can not; by far **your best chance of survival is to keep your head above the snow**. Airbag equipped rucksacks (ABS) which, when deployed, keep you up in the snow, are now regularly worn by guides and are effective but expensive. Avalungs with a breathing tube into your rucksack are also available but you need to have the presence of mind to get the mouthpiece in your mouth, and keep it there. A swimming motion with the arms is often recommended to try and stay above the surface, however while this could be useful, in a recent article written by an experienced rescue worker, he suggests that it is more important to keep your hands in front of your mouth creating an air space. He supported this change of tactics by saying that, everyone he had dug out alive from an avalanche had their hand in front of their mouth, the choice is yours. Avalanche survivors have commented that they had been unable to even blink once buried. Getting rid of poles (don't use straps) and skis (more difficult) will reduce injuries. A well led and organised rescue by your well trained pals will also improve your chances.

An effective search will have a leader, who will:

- take command.
- ensure the area is safe to enter.
- safeguard the survivors.
- gather all available information, i.e. affected area, "estimated" number of victims, place last seen, etc. (information from affected witnesses is often unreliable).
- have a plan.
- designate the search area.
- have all transceivers changed from transmit to receive.
- allocate roles to the searchers.
- ensure the entire area is searched properly.
- summon additional help if required.

And do it very quickly. Fortunately when a slope has avalanched, it is unlikely to do so again, so searching in the debris is usually safe. The exception is where a gully is fed by a number of other gullies and only one has slid.

Joe Brennan once told me regarding avalanches, "all news is bad news", while I would not completely agree; it is about reducing the risk, rather than ever being completely safe. Have fun.

Further information- Avalanches, Skiing & Risk -

Books

- Avalanche Safety for Skiers and Climbers *by Tony Daffern (former CMC member)*
Authoritative and Technical
- Avalanche Awareness *by Martin Epp and Stephen Lee*
Handy and Simple
- The Avalanche Handbook *David McClung and Peter Schaerer*
Definitive and Scientific

Internet Links

- www.pistehors.com *in English, excellent, mainly France*
- Europe wide links incl. Italy
www.lawinen.org *in German*
- Switzerland
www.slf.ch/avalanche/bulletin-en.html *in English*
<http://www.slf.ch/avalanche/rb82-dec.html> *in French, good graphic*
- France
<http://pistehors.com/backcountry/wiki/Avalanches/Avalanche-Bulletin>
links to English translation of regional bulletins
- Austria
www.lawinen.at/austria/ *in German links to regional bulletins*
- USA
www.avalanche-center.org/Bulletins/ *in English with international links*
- Canada
www.avalanche.ca/

--ooOoo--

The world's best Roadside Crag – by Steve Coughlan

“Yo big up respec, Dude, You still up for doin’ Squamish? The question posed by no other than Seamus O’Daly, alias Jimmy D, the voice on the other end of the telling-bone. “Err, erm well err, yeah, yeah OK, go on then“. So here we are yet another episode of beer fuelled enthusiasm and promise come home to roost, I had trouble remembering even talking about it. Nothing new there then! How many of the best trips have seen their birth in the once smoky atmosphere of some too often frequented pub? Probably most of them I would like to imagine, or would like to believe.

In fact there is an interesting phenomena that seems to manifest itself when adding alcohol to the climbing brain. More so, if not limited to this particular activity within the sporting world. Not only does the ability and time to travel anywhere in the world become limitless. The fact that you will climb at least two grades harder than your reasonable limit in these far off places is also guaranteed. Well at least till closing time anyway.

So still reeling form the effect of being well and truly kippered my flight was booked within the week, notwithstanding the complications and logistics of coordinating movements with several generations of the Daly family. So the deed was done, all that’s left is to get hold of the info and get revved up.

I have in the past heard many things about Squamish, some good, some fantastic even Aweeersome!! However there has always been a common thread - that being the weather. When it’s good it’s good and when it’s bad it’s f**king wet, no problem for a way honed team. As it happens when we arrived it was 29 degrees and possibly too hot, well nearly.

The nearest airport is Vancouver, flights are plentiful and relatively cheap. Canadian Affair is a good bet for value travel. Squamish is about 60km. North of Vancouver on Highway 99. We elected to take the Greyhound bus, a journey of about an hour and a half with some spectacular views along the way. We did end up hiring a car, although most crags are not too distant they’re not that close either.

Squamish a small coastal town is situated at the head of the dramatic Howe Sound. The town is an interesting blend of a post-logging community with it’s colourful mix of Asian and oriental inhabitants, interspersed with the growing influx of tired out townies and outdoor types. There are some good eating and drinking options with wholesome and/or trendy foody spots along with traditional diners with an ever sizzling griddle. Howe sound Brew Pub has home brewed beers and a good menu. There are some other interesting places to visit in the environs, try the Grizzly Bar in Garibaldi Highlands, it’s an experience!

It is even possible to go climbing, should you grow tired of cakes and caffeine. The Chief is the dominant rock feature and rises up to 2,000feet above the town. The climbs on the Chief vary greatly in character, however consisting of amazing granite, as you would expect the dominant features tend to be friction slabs and a fine assortment of soaring cracks.

We stayed in the Squamish Hostel, now renamed “The Inn on the Water”. It’s just below Highway 99, the “Sea to Sky” Highway and is well positioned for access to crags and pubs. There’s also a campsite at the base of the Chief that is well equipped and reminiscent of those to be found in North America.

Apart from the Chief there are a number of other climbing options dotted about, including the Squaw a fantastic crag with an away from it feeling with loads of multi-pitch classics. A good place to get a feel for the area is the Smoke Bluffs. There’s a huge number of moderate grade single pitch routes at the Bluffs. Don’t be put off by the housing developments close by.

Our first foray was to the Bluffs, the Burgers & Fries area, had to be done. We started with the five star route of the same name, described as the classic crack on the cliff, but a little runout at the top. “No bother Jimbo, it’s only 5.7, piece of piss” sneered Mr. Confident The initial crack was challenging but safe, the top slab was challenging but unsafe. Teetering 10 feet above the last gear on shiny friction holds the delights of the granite slab and memories of many previous slippery encounters were all too evident. “Only 5.7....Donkey”!

During the course of the holiday we did manage to progress to 5.10b slabs, albeit complete with comedy bolting, in this case a total of five. Having strolled up Klahanie Crack a classic 37 metre jamming fest I did suggest that Jimmy, on the way down should clip the first bolt on the slab, thus ensuring safe engagement with the first fifteen feet for my lead. This was a purely unselfish act on my part as I was concerned that carrying a 14stone Paddy with a broken ankle to the Road might not be good for Jimbo's back.

If you fancy a change from all of that granite then there is some sport climbing to be had at Cheakamus Canyon. The rock here is volcanic and completely different in character, being steeper and more featured. Oh and there are lots of shiny bolts too! We also ventured to an obscure crag rising out of the raging torrent that was the Cheakamus River. We were searching out a four pitch route not in the guide but a recommendation from George the proprietor of the climbing shop, himself from the Czech Republic. The route is called Star Czech, certainly worth finding, however getting to it was probably more challenging than the route. We might try the path next time!

Back to the Chief, the apron is a massive triangular shaped slab of rock that sweeps down towards Highway 99. There are a couple of tracks leading up from the parking, it may only be a hundred meters or so but failure to locate your route first go through the jungle is a distinct possibility. It has numerous multi pitch routes, and is around 800feet in height. We managed to tick a few of the classics including Diedre a 6 pitch 5.8 following a right facing dihedral - a corner in Blighty- at a friendly angle all the way to Broadway ledge. Snake at 5.9 is a brilliant and varied route and so it goes on.....

We even managed to get right to the top of the Chief on our last day through skilful use of numerous rock climbing techniques. It is possible to combine Calculus Cracks, Memorial Crack and the Ultimate Everything to give a 17 Pitch outing taking around 12 hours round trip....Get it done.

So it's got it all it's not too far from the Road, the sun does shine, there are loads of options and well, as a roadside crag it's nearly as good as Stanage.

--ooOoo--

Slovenia 2006 – by Maggie McAndrew

Triglav National Park borders Austria, Italy & Slovenia. Overland through Belgium Germany Austria -

1 st night Ostend	8 Bohinj Slavici Slap
2nd night Near Salzburg bicycle race	9 Triglavski Lake Koca
3,4&5 Hotel in Krasnaya Gora	10 Dom Planikov
6 Postarski Dom	11,12&13 Rednaya Vas
7 Lake Bled	14 Rudesheim
	15 Bruges

In the early days of my courtship of Jim, a mutual friend told me "you'll be alright with him; he always knows where to get a good cake". A testimonial that has stood the test of time and travel, and was proved once more as I sat in a my first Slovenian bar and watched the biggest cake either of us had seen in a medium sized career in patisseries wobble towards us. Quickly followed by another one for Jim. Gibanitsa is the national cake of Slovenia, and like so much of Slovenia, it has taken the best of its neighbours – Austria and Italy and added a little local something from the Ottoman period. This cake was layers of flaky pastry, filled with nuts, apple, cream cheese, poppy seeds and cream. The best of at least three other cakes. Our forks quivered...

Hang on, I've just been reminded that this is an article for a mountaineering journal, not my usual publication, *Cakes of the World*.

We'd arrived in Kranska Gora on a wet morning, having driven from Ostend via Salzburg into the Triglav National Park – at the junction of Austria, Italy and Slovenia. The park covers most of the Slovenian Julian Alps. This is an extensive limestone mountainous area, providing Slovenia's main winter skiing, dotted with lakes, forests, peaks and a network of mountain huts. There is little development, a traditional alpine culture of small farms with agricultural methods which look unchanged for centuries and a well established walking and mountaineering culture. At weekends it seems as if the entire population of Slovenia is out in the mountains; one Saturday we shared a dorm in a mountain hut with about 30 members of the Ljubiana Diabetic Mountaineering Club.

--ooOoo--

Characters Corner – a chat with **Martin Jolley** – by Tanker

“Well!” said Martin, in typically forthright & energetic fashion.

I'd just asked him what got him into the outdoors scene & in particular the climbing bit. Of course that was the only thing needed to trigger him off.....

“Like many young city people, my first introduction to hiking & the mountains came through my local Scout Group. Nothing too scary at first. I just liked the freedom of being in the hills & the challenge of a good route. Sometimes battling in bad weather with not the best waterproof gear. Then having the satisfaction of achieving something at the end of the day.

I guess that's what has always driven me on over the years & always will.

I was also fortunate to have had an excellent Outdoor Pursuits teacher at secondary school. Inspiring me to widen my horizons, working through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. After a bit of a struggle on the final expedition, next thing I know I'm down at 'Buck House', looking up at the big Duke himself, shaking his hand & picking up my gong.

By age 15 & a half, although I'd moved on into the Venture Scouts, I was itching to do much more than with a rope than just abseil – I really wanted to climb. Doing an Outdoor Pursuits course at Ogwen Cottage, a mountaineering club was recommended. This just happened to be the Ceunant.

How fortunate I was that the first person I met was John Beddard senior. A giant of a man with lots of mountain & skiing experience. He could see I was keen as mustard so he sort of took me under his wing, quietly guiding, encouraging & building my experience. John was a big pipe man at the time, so being pretty impressed by him I must confess to taking to the pipe myself for a while.

By 16 I'd become a Ceunant Junior Member & was on my first Sye meet that year. Whilst still at school I did my first lead climb – One Step in the Clouds – graded VS, a bit of a soft-touch. Nylon rope was in but the protection not that great. Mainly old engineering nuts filed up a bit to better shapes. And in my teens I tried to get away somewhere most weekends, doing lots of gardening after school to raise the cash.

There were some great summer tours to Europe. My first was to the Pyrenees & Andorra with some of the Ceunant. Celebrated my birthday 18th there with John & Marg Beddard, & Clive Powell.

At Plas-y-Bran, on an MLC course, I met up with a north London group - among them were Sooty & Big Ray who went onto become Ceunant members & they joined in later Alpine tours. In those days the travelling there & back was always an adventure too, with little money & patched up old motors. On one tour, Sooty was famous for living off cans of meal balls for the whole holiday!

On a Skye meet organised by Jim Brady in the early 80's we had a most fantastic weather window. Dry & sunny for a whole week. The famous Sky Ridge challenge just had to be attempted. I had a strong partner in Jock from the Cave & Crag club. After a bit struggle & major dehydration we made it, celebrating long & hard with the rest of the gang at the famous Sligachan hotel.

In to the 80's, with a bit more cash in our pockets after serving our skiing apprenticeships in the artic conditions of the Scottish resorts, there were many big Ceunant piste skiing holidays to various well known alpine resorts with some pretty big apex ski parties. My best claim to fame was being a human ventriloquist's dummy sat upon Steve Coughlan's knee!

Ski mountaineering was our next challenge – Fred Harper's Alpine Awareness course taught us all a lot – some of the Ceunant going on to compete the famous Chamonix to Sans Fee High-Level route”.

So there we have it – 'the Jolley' in his early 50's – as enthusiastic for his sport as ever. Regularly, climbing 6B on the Moseley Climbing Wall – encouraging the younger members & still trying to get away to the proper hills whenever he can – happy to do a bit of everthing – climbing/scambling/walking/skiing – even a bit of mountain biking, but the latter not too often!

Long may he continue to enjoy the great outdoors.

--ooOoo--

Sketch – by Elly Jolley

Sketch – by Elly Jolley



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