THE FORTNIGHTLY FAFF

The Periodical Journal of the Mercian Mountaineering Club

Nov 2014







A word from the editor

Greetings. Wow, what a summer we've had. I'm not sure what has impressed me more, the weather we've enjoyed or the quantity of great climbing we've done. In retrospect it seems daft that we British opt to leave our islands when the weather is at its best for our foreign trips. We've had Mercian folk in France, Norway and Peru this summer and that only includes the trips that I know about. Thanks to those of you who have written about your exploits in this issue of The Faff and to those of you who sent photos in too.

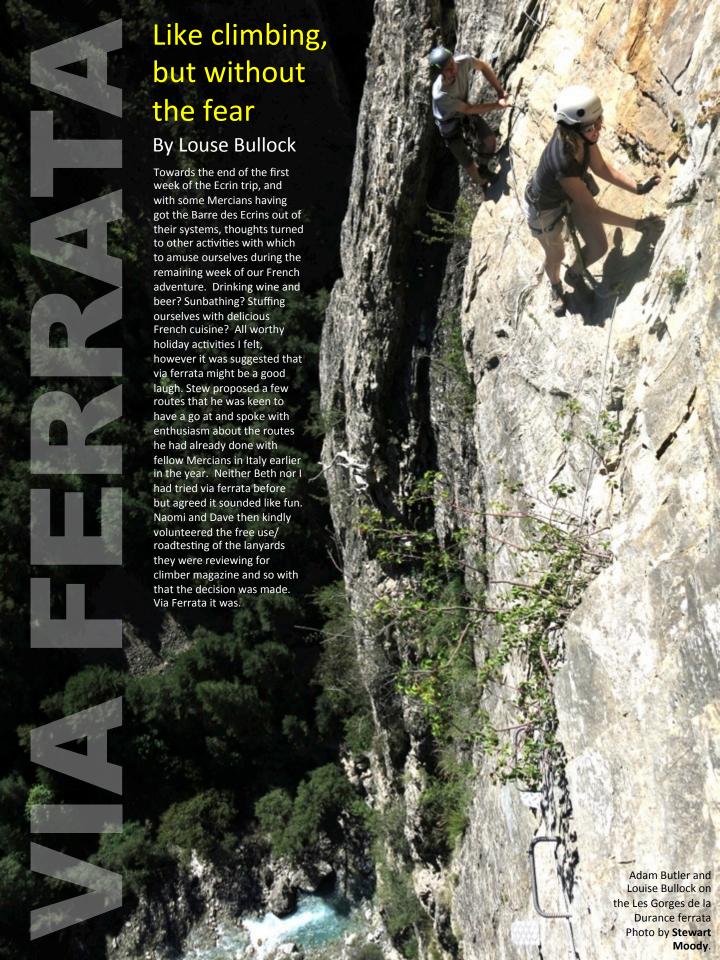
Please do keep your articles coming and remember that it doesn't need to be Shakespearean in quality, or epic in length. Even a single memorable photo with a few hundred words is more than enough to entertain your fellow members and add to the permanent record of the club's activities.

A few reminders; it's the AGM on the 27th of November, that's a Thursday so I hope you can tear yourself away from the climbing wall for one night for what is probably the most important club event of the year. We'll be voting for the new committee (interested in helping out?) and discussing items such as a small increase to your membership fees so please come along and show your support. We'll also have the 2015 calendars on sale too which feature many of the great entries from last month's photo competition. We also have the Christmas dinner on Saturday the 13th of December, if you haven't yet signed up please do so via the forum as soon as possible so we can finalise numbers.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of The Faff.

Stew.







The next day dawned bright, sunny and warm. Perfect. However, the good forecast tempted Stew, Tom and Dan back into trying one more, big mountain route. So, whilst they headed off towards La Meije, Beth, Vicki and I decided that in the name of 'team girl power' we would take the opportunity to carry on with the via ferrata plans but try some easier "ferrata initiation" further down the valley in Pelvoux. Adam decided to join us midmorning, and Naomi and Dave said they As it was would meet us there later too. such a lovely day we walked down into Pelvoux via the tree-lined path which ran alongside the river. The walk took about an hour to complete and was a beautiful way to pass the morning.

On arriving in Pelvoux we geared up and looked for the start of the first route. We found it nestling by the side of the bridge and duly clipped in. Vicki went first and, using her well-honed teaching skills of explaining things simply to them what don't understand, clarified the basics of via ferrata; one person per stretch of cable, leave a small gap between you and the person in front, don't freaking unclip both clips at any point and.....enjoy! From the moment I stepped onto the first stemple I knew I was going to love it. It felt like climbing without the fear.

The route wound its way through the gorge d'Ailefroide and included some stunning views. We mostly traversed along the gorge wall but also went across two small rope bridges. The description in the guide book said the route was suitable for children from 6 years and up however, Beth and I agreed that you'd have to be a pretty hardy 6 year old to do the total length of the course.

It was not technically difficult but was quite long. The whole thing took us about half an hour to complete and by the end I was hooked (ha ha)....where was the next one?

Right next door as it turned out. The "ferrata sportive" ran alongside the kiddy one but went further up into the gorge. We took a few minutes to have a drink and something to eat and then feeling pretty pleased with how 'team girl power' was going clipped back in for the second route. We'd only gone a few metres around the first corner before we saw Adam, Naomi and Dave appear at the start as well. So after hanging around (sorry can't help it) for them to catch up we progressed through the rest of the route together. Again it was a really lovely course. More vertical upward climbing sections this time and a couple of slightly overhanging parts which proved a tug on the arms but these only added to the excitement. There were also some great little wire bridge crossings. At the end of the route we had a photo of 'team girl power' (including honourary member Adam), and headed back down the gorge towards the car in Pelvoux. Beth had hoped for a swim in the local pool to cool off post climb but a quick skirt round the town proved fruitless and so we had to return to the campsite without a dip.

A couple of days later, and with Stew and Tom back from their latest and final mountain adventure, we decided it was time for some more Via Ferrata.

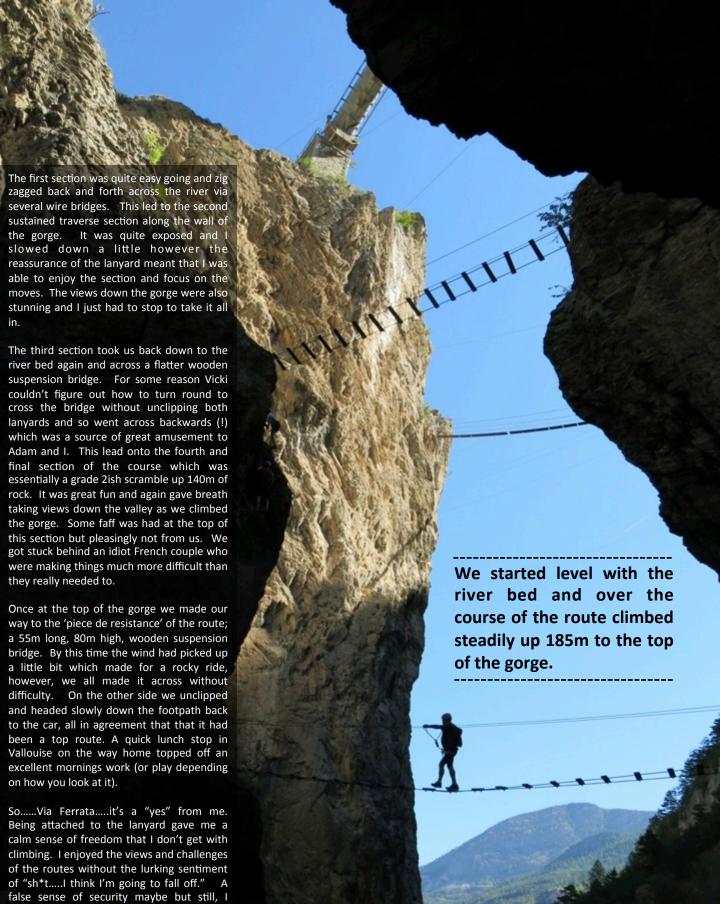
This time myself, Vicki, Stew, Tom, Adam, Naomi and Dave headed further still down the valley to Les Gorges de la Durance in Argentiere de la Bessee. The guide book promised another 'ferrata sportive' but this time a long course, with "sections tres athletiques". On reading this I immediately doubted my own capabilities but as it was another beautiful day, there seemed like the possibility of a zip wire at the end and the pictures in the guidebook looked amazing. I thought 'why not?' and I was not to be disappointed.

As we arrived at the ticket office the very nice lady explained that for the modest price of 7 euros there were actually 3 routes that could be tackled in the Gorges de la Durance; green, red and black (Disappointingly the zip wires were an extra 25 euros each and were separate to the Via Ferrata so we decided to give them a miss). Acting as group translator for the nth time during the holiday I relayed the information to the rest of the group and we decided to go for the green and then the black. Stew and I booked us in (under the name of Judith of course), I bought some via ferrata gloves and then we were ready for the off.

The green route was much the same as the kiddy route in Pelvoux with lots of traversing and the odd wire bridge. It was fun but as we'd done a similar route a few days before it didn't really get the adrenaline going. After about half an hour we all filed down to the start of the black route, ready for something a bit more exciting. I took up my usual position on Mercian group outings of bringing up the rear, and allowed the boys to lead the way. From the beginning the black route was much more fun. We started level with the river bed and over the course of the route climbed steadily up 185m to the top of the gorge.

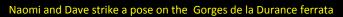






found the whole thing very liberating and thoroughly enjoyed it. Dolomites next year

anyone??





Jealous of the attention the girls are getting, Adam offers the photographer an enticing down the shirt shot of his cleavage



Naomi crosses the photogenic setting of the gorge moments before Vicki reverses across it



Louise silhouetted against the sun drenched rock face of the gorge







Top - Stewart on one oif the man ferratas Photo by **Vicki Cox** Bottom - Team Mercian. L-R : Stew, Tom, Vicki, Beth, Adam, Lou. Photo **by Naomi Walker**



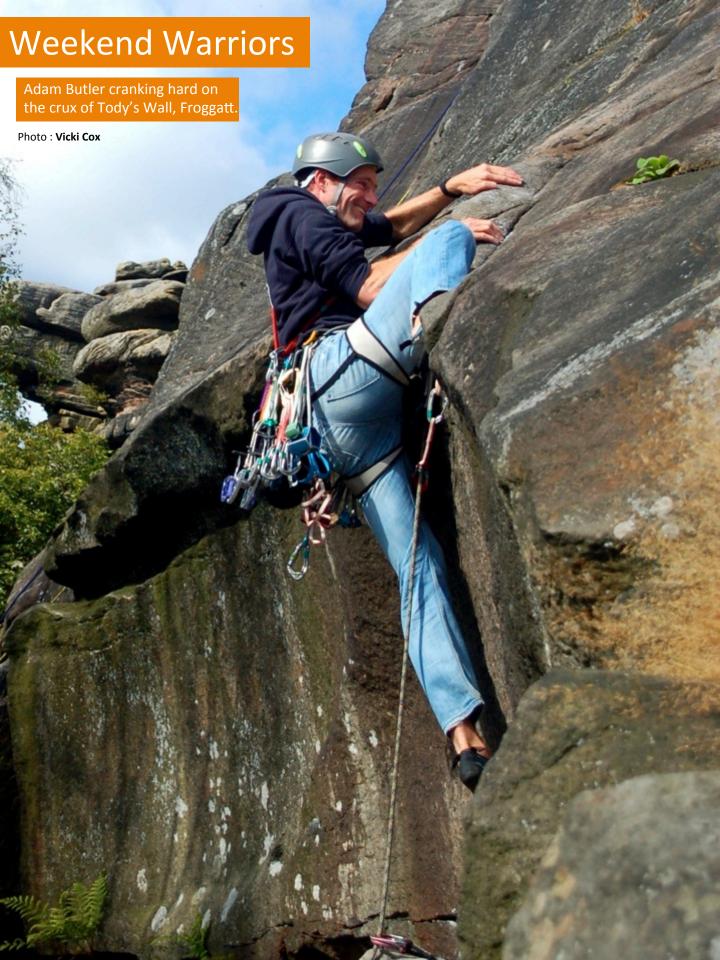


Top - Early morning on the camp site with Tom Lon in the foreground. Photo by **Adam Butler** Bottom - The only photo taken inside the exclusive VIP area of Tom Lon. Photo by **Dan Ashfield**









ANNUAL DINNER

Me: "Girly question, Vic: what's the dress code of the dinner? Casual, smart casual, smart or formal?"

by Naomi Walker

photography by **Stewart Moody** unless otherwise stated

Vic: "wear what you'd wear to a wedding"

Me: Gulp!

I'm not quite sure what it means when a girl packs her climbing gear before her frock but that's what I did. This was my first Mercian annual dinner and packing for climbing was easy. But just how many opportunities to get dressed up do us climbers get?

All 18 of us arrived at Tan Y Garth on Friday night and after a lesson in how to park as many cars as possible in a tight space, we quickly headed to the pub. With thoughts of getting up to go climbing the next day, not too many pints later were consumed and we headed back. Lights were out at a relatively early hour and with Jim's instruction to 'go sleep' I was surprised that we actually did what we were told.

Saturday morning proved to be a bit of a damp squib. Still we all headed out to Ogwen and the café. Stew had an objective for the weekend (Flake Crack on Gribin Facet) and he would not be dissuaded otherwise. The majority of the group headed in that direction only to find dripping rock and sanctuary was found at Little Tryfan. David and I had other thoughts: a quick tea with friends at Ty'n Lon and shopping in Llanberris allowed the rock to dry out. Up we headed to Carreg Wastad and Sun Valley (HVS) was our route for the day.



Top - (L-R) Naomi, Dave, Beth, and Tom enjoying pre-dinner drinks at the Tyn Y Coed.

Bottom - Before the party started and perhaps to get a thirst on Adam climbed Slab Route 2 (S) on Little Tryfan in his trainers.







We returned to Tan Y Garth to find our climbing friends transformed into handsome men in suits and women in beautiful dresses and heels. Did we know these people?? Jim and Joe looked particularly splendid in Irish and Scottish kilts. Later on Jim decided to share with us exactly what was under his skirt!

So with Maggie and Malcolm joining us there were 20 of us for dinner. There could be no complaints about the amount of food and just what we needed was a ceilidh to burn it all off. I'm not much of a dancer but this was so much fun. And exhausting. But predominantly fun. With the swinging getting ever more energetic (I won't mention names (Anta and Adam)) I was quite pleased to sit some of the dances out.

The following morning we all got up and the majority of Mercians headed back up to Gribin Facet. Stew got his route ticked; Tom, Adam, Beth, Fran and Matt fell for the sandbag of Monolith Crack. I'm not sure I've ever heard so much swearing on a single route! Joe and Pierce had their own challenges on the traditional climbing styles of this particular crag. Me? I only climbed on Saturday but I got to have another cracking weekend with the Mercians, and to make new friends. Thanks to Tom from all of us for organising the dinner and the ceilidh.

Speaking of the ceilidh...



Top - (L-R) Laira, Lou, Beth and Tom having a pre-dinner drinks at the Tyn Y Coed.

Middle - (L-R) Joe, Paul, Fabian and Adam having a natter over a pint at the Tyn Y Coed.

Bottom - (L-R) Fran, Joe, Beth, Tom, Vicki, Anta, Adam, Lou, Dave, Pierce and Naomi shelter at Ogwen Cottage café.



photos by Rab

THE CEILIDH



August 2014, some brave, intrepid Mercians went on holiday with what can only be described as "a massive gang on Ceunants".

Here's some things we learnt along the way (in list format – for the engineers):

- 1. It's a long drive across France.
- If you're camping in the Alps for two weeks you need a big tent, an air bed, a good chair and a decent stove.
- Make sure your big tent has walls. Don't do what the silly Ceunants did and only bring a roof.
- At the end of the day meet up at the shop with the plastic chairs outside, beer is only 1 Euro a bottle.
- 5. The shop also sells chicken and chips which was
- When it gets dark it gets cold. On the plus side the clear skies and low light pollution give a really good view of the stars.
- 7. The best French food is called Tartiflette.
- 8. It's a long drive back across France.
- Formula un hotels look like there, has recently been/is currently/will very shortly be, a murder taking place.
- 10. The French police have no control over the thousands of immigrants climbing on to HGVs.
- 11. Don't catch a ferry on the busiest day of the year.

Based on what I saw over there here's my top 10 steps to becoming a dirty French grimpeur:

- 1. Harass climbers in front.
- 2. Attach yourself to other peoples belay point.
- 3. Smell bad, while on someone else's belay point.
- 4. Cross ropes at every opportunity.
- 5. Pull on gear.
- Throw ropes down without looking or shouting first .
- 7. Kick stones down.
- Abseil on to people.
- 9. Shrug your shoulders.
- 10. Be French.

Only one of the above can be condoned by any well-mannered English man, can you guess which one it is? Answers on a postcard.

So long suckers

Adam

P.S. we also did climbing, it was rather good.





"Your name?" asks the hut warden.

"Stewart Moody."

A pause.

"No, no Stewart Moody, I have Judith Muder..."
"Erm...".

"...for eight people?".
"Er yeah, that'll do!".
Judith it is.

Following two days of walking up the valley from Ailefroide, including a night in the Glacier Blanc Refuge and an alpine start, we have reached the Ecrins Refuge, where we will eat and sleep (unless Judith Muder and her party really are on their way) before tackling the Barre des Ecrins. We play scrabble, drink tea, suffer the breezy outdoor long-drop toilets before discovering the much superior indoor facilities, eat a hearty meal, and hit the hay early.

A nudge in my back wakes me and I frown, unhappy to be woken and confused as to why. Then I open my eyes and realise the room is quickly transforming from a room of snoring mountaineers into a hive of activity lit by the flashes of numerous head torches. It's 3.20am and it's time for breakfast!

I momentarily wonder why I wanted to do this, but there's no time for wonder, we've got a long hard day ahead. I quickly change into my clothes after applying my deodorant (the only member of the team to take any, spot the only girl!) as Judith emerges from his sleeping bag fully dressed. Downstairs the dining room is already half full and it's elbows out, no awards for manners, as people hurry to fill their bowls with tea and cereal. Between sips of tea harnesses are slipped into, head torches strapped onto helmets, and haribo stuffed into every available pocket. "Where do girls go to the loo on a glacier?" I ask, "the same place as everyone else, next to the track". Wonderful.



to the point that Judith expects me to pass out. The gap is too wide to step across, and the other side is maybe two feet higher than us. Dan wishes he had longer legs. We have to teeter on the edge and let ourselves fall forward, driving our axes into the snow on the other side before bringing our feet over, kicking into the snow and slowly climbing out onto safe (safer!) ground. I know that if I stop and think about it I won't do it, so I don't hang around; I lean forwards, terrified, over what feels like my own grave... and live to tell the tale!

Onwards and upwards. Judith remarks about how quick Tom and the others must be as we can't see them ahead, and is surprised to hear that we passed them at the start. We pass seracs and more crevasses, and squeeze our way past a descending party on a short steep snow bridge before reaching the relatively safe col.

At this point the majority of the parties that have followed the path up the glacier break off towards a somewhat inferior peak, the Dome de Neige. Sure, it's a 4000m peak, and pretty enough, but it lives in the shadow of the main man, the Barre des Ecrins, and from this point is just a short snow plod to the summit. In a way it looks appealing; on one side a nice, easy plod up to a 4000m peak, on the other a wall of icy rock guarding a narrow rock ridge that leads to another 4000m peak. It's cold, cloudy, and windy and a party ahead of us are having a faff on the rock, holding us up. I'm not the only one who is having such thoughts; to my surprise Judith suggests to me that we could just do the Dome... Straight away I decide against that; we've come this far, and Christ, we've all climbed Scottish munros in winter, the weather can't be that bad! We spot Tom, Alex and Olly nearing the

top of the glacier, as surprised to see us ahead of them as we are to see them. (No offence guys, but we weren't sure if any of you were man enough to lead the way over the bergschrund; nice one Alex). We start traversing along the edge of the wall of rock and up to the ridge, and soon enough Tom, Alex and Olly are on our heels.

The ridge is a true knife edge arête with some terrifyingly exposed sections that have me in tears (not for the first time today!). Having hardly ever scrambled in crampons before this is a baptism of fire. To throw in a bit more spice we cross several narrow snow sections, corniced on the right and dropping off steeply to the left. We move steadily as a team, flicking the rope around spikes of rock to offer some natural protection should one of us fall.

After several hundred metres of ridge scrambling all six of us reach the summit. We huddle around the summit cross for a couple of photos and a few hugs. Sadly we aren't rewarded with vast mountain vistas; it's cold and cloudy, not a place to hang around. We set off back the way we came, our team behind this time, and slowly make our way back along the ridge. I dither and dather as I do (sorry guys...), and Tom, Alex and Olly press on. We reach the first abseil point as the others are finishing their abseil, they share some beta with us, and then they're on their way. Dan takes the first abseil, followed by myself, with Judith bringing up the rear. We abseil straight down to the col, then pull the rope down to continue on our way. Only the rope has other ideas; it catches, and no amount of tugging, huffing, and swearing will bring it down. I look away as Dan solos up the icy wall towards





The Annual Mercian

PHOTO COMPETITION

2nd October, 2014



Winner of the landscape category and overall competition winner. Sunrise on the Barre Des Ecrins was taken by Stewart Moody on his ascent of this Alpine 4102m peak in France during the summer with Tom, Beth and few friends.

The runner up of this category was Louise's photo of La Meije in the Ecrins National Park. Louise was particularly pleased with this photo was it was snapped out of the window of the car. Good job Lou.

LANDSCAPE





FUN



The clear winner of the fun category and one of the most popular photos of the night was this superb entry by Simon. It shows Adam, Tom and Stew in their caving garb in late November 2013 when a group of Mercians made a descent of White Scar Cave near Ingleton.

The runner up in the fun category is a great photo taken by Naomi (controversially on Louise's camera, no fighting for the glory now ladies) of Stewart, Tom, Vicki, Beth, Adam and Louise trooping the colours at the Ailefroide campsite during this summer's trip to the Ecrins national park. It's such a good photo that it appears in this edition of The Faff twice!



ACTION

Huw took this winning photo of Julie kayaking in Naeroyfjord near Gudvangen in Norway on their summer trip. Wish you were here!

A forced perspective photo of Karl and Graham Perry's son Luke taken by Stewart on Cairngorm was the runner up. It was a day of poor visibility and howling winds but the trio successfully ascended Terms Of Endearment (III) in Corrie an t' Sneachda. This photo was taken on the descent once they were back in sight of the car park.



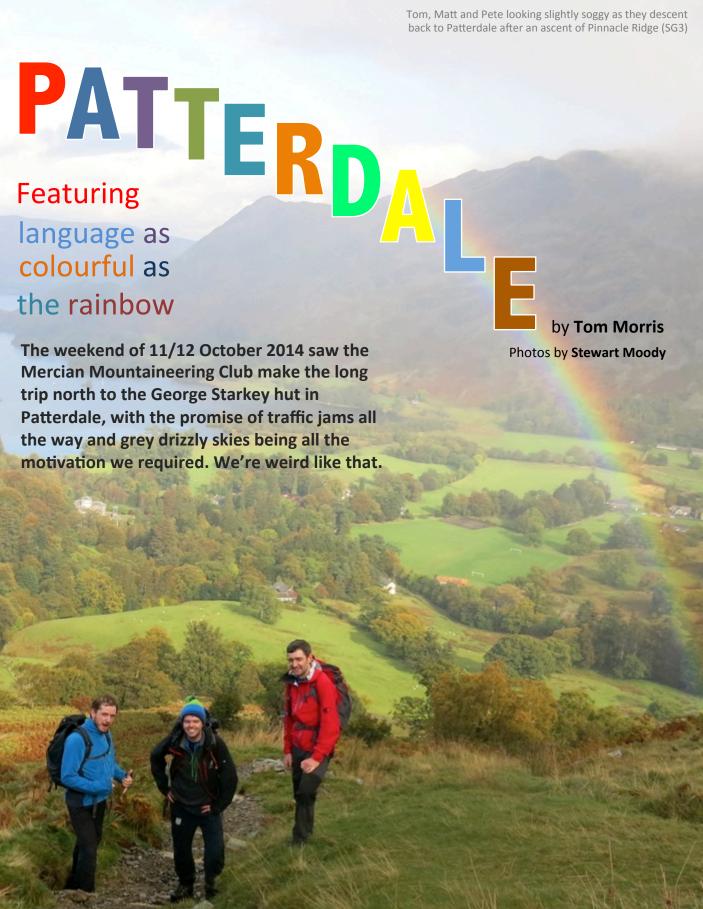


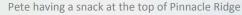


MEETS

This year's winner of the meets category was Stewart's photo of Tom after an ascent of the Terrier's Tooth at Chair Ladder. Even though a good chunk of the route had fallen down after the storms in early 2014 the summit of the pinnacle proved too much of an attraction.

The runner up was Huw's photo of Beth's mate Anna lobbing a snowball at Tom on the Newlands Valley meet in March.. We can only hope that the snowball found it's target – no offense Tom.







Beth and I secured spots in The Volvo as Huw tried to justify its continued existence by offering to drive. A convivial journey up was had with much regaling including a memorable story from Huw where he made a valiant effort to achieve the greatest profanity:normal word ratio that had ever been seen in a single monologue. Seriously, it was like being told a bedtime story by Malcolm Tucker. After suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous 50mph limits on the M6 we arrived at Patterdale with time for a beer and a natter. The George Starkey has a large comfortable living room which makes for easy lounging and everyone was soon in good spirits. After seeing Joel polish off half a pint of rum in one sitting we retired to bed in case we all suffered from psychosomatic sympathy voms .

Saturday morning rolled around with the traditional Mexican standoff over who would break and get out of bed first (the first person out of bed of course being the one that makes the tea). Vicki nobly volunteered and soon returned with a massive pot which Joel then ably distributed. After the ensuing Teagasm had faded we all rolled out of bed and set about preparing for our daily exertions. Beth took charge of the egg and beans on toast with Huw as sous chef whilst I loafed decadently. I could get used to this.

Saturday saw us split off into groups with Geoff, Duncan, Malcolm and Roland off for a walk, Beth, Adam, Joe, Pete and Joel off climbing at Shepherd's Crag with Stewart, Vicki, Matt, Pete and myself heading off for Pinnacle Ridge on St Sundays Crag.

Huw and Louise stayed in the hut before slinking out around 12 for a "run". Training hard for the Birmingham half marathon there guys. Pinnacle Ridge is a wonderful grade 3 scramble with good rock and great positions. I'd done it before but hadn't brought my climbing stuff with me in anticipation of poor weather. However, I was more than happy to do it again anyway having enjoyed it previously..

The hardest thing about Pinnacle Ridge is locating the bugger as it hides itself away up a grassy slope in the midst of a big craggy outcrop. Eventually we spied it and set off slogging cross country up towards it from the path. I believe this was Vicki's highlight of the day. The ridge itself offers superb scrambling from the word go with the only complaint being the relatively short length. Vicki, Matt and Pete elected to pitch one section (the short steep wall for those in the know) which Matt used as an opportunity to practice placing some gear Stewart had brought along for this purpose.



We reached the top of the ridge in good time and went off to top out on St Sundays crag, whereupon we were reminded of Stewart's selective, temporary insanity (he really likes Strictly Come Dancing). A rousing debate on the merits of Strictly vs The Cricket was had as we set off down the hill trying to outrun the drizzle that had turned us off from continuing over onto Fairfield. For a man that purports to hate sport in general Stewart knew enough to confidently call Kevin Pietersen a complete twat! Mostly due to his haircut apparently. We didn't manage to avoid the rain entirely and did get pretty damp but we stoutly refused to waterproof up (spending huge wads of cash on kit you consider yourself honour-bound not to use; mountaineers eh?) We were rewarded with an extremely picturesque rainbow near the valley floor, proper arch on it and everything.

We arrived back at the hut to find Rab slaving away over a hot stove with Jim snoozing on the sofa. Business as usual there then. At least he had his trousers on. We had time to get showered and have a brew before strolling into Glenridding for some beers to have with dinner. Jim, Rab, Pete, Matt, Stewart and I then took a stroll to the pub for some afternoon liveners. Unfortunately, Patterdale is not blessed with hostelries of any great quality but we made the best of it. A couple in the White Lion and one in the Patterdale Hotel whet our whistle sufficiently for us to head back to the hut to begin salivating over the curries that Rab had been preparing.

I hadn't previously had one of Rab's curries but the likes of Vicki and Malcolm were fulsome in their praise and certainly had everyone looking forwards to their dinner. Rab gave Vicki and Beth a masterclass in samosa folding whilst I helped myself to the bhaji offcuts. We cracked open a few beers and sat down to a cracking feast of bhaji's, samosas, three types of curry and naan. Lynn had prepared a delicious apple crumble for pudding and of course it would have been rude to refuse, even if we did have to crowbar it in a little!

After dinner, we were promised a rare treat in the form of some of Malcom's award-winning Audio Visual presentations. We successfully re-arranged the furniture in the living room (apparently alarming some of the members of the Club who own the hut who were also there this weekend) and cracked open a bottle to watch. I should clarify what I mean when I say cracked open a bottle. When we were in the shop earlier on to get some beers for the evening, as well as several ordinary, garden variety ales, Matt had spied a 10% Russian Imperial Stout which he couldn't resist. Although we had initially declined, after he finished his first he somehow (I suspect mind control) convinced me and Huw to go back to the shop to get some more! Whilst it was a "life-experience" as Huw as succinctly put it, it's not necessarily one I will be in a hurry to replicate. In short, it was god-awful.

Nevertheless, we put on a brave face as Malcolm began his AVs. If you've already seen these then you will know how wonderful they are with a section on Malcolm's attempt to summit 10 4000m peaks in a single week a personal highlight. If you haven't seen one yet I would urge you to get yourself down to the next meet where they might be on offer.

The living room was soon put back to normal, and conversation began to flow again. Matt's however, was flowing with slightly more difficulty. It's worth noting at this point he'd had a 7.3% Old Rosie in the pub, two bottles of 10% stout and another 7% cider concoction, along with 4 or 5 'normal' beers. We learned, amongs other things, that, "Warhorse is a twat!", "what, the horse?", "Yeah, the actual horse that played Warhorse in the film, he's a twat!", "He's a horse Matt, can they be twats?", "Yeah I was playing a concert when he was there, everyone was going mad for him but he was a right twat". There we go then. There were 14 separate horses that played the eponymous "Warhorse" so we don't know for sure which one Matt met that night. Be advised, if ever you go on to meet one of these fateful 14...one of them is a twat.

We finished the evening with some readings from Lynn's frankly shocking book about people's stories from when they lost their virginity. I don't know about anyone else but I was appalled and didn't know where to put myself. The only way I could deal with the shocking offense I felt was by continuing to read more and more bits out loud and giggling like a schoolgirl. It's an unusual coping mechanism but it works for me.

Sunday morning rolled around with Matt's sick bucket mercifully unused and nobody's hangover particularly debilitating. Most of the group chose to climb and Castle Rock near Thirlmere whilst Matt, Huw, Beth and I went to meet them at the crag.

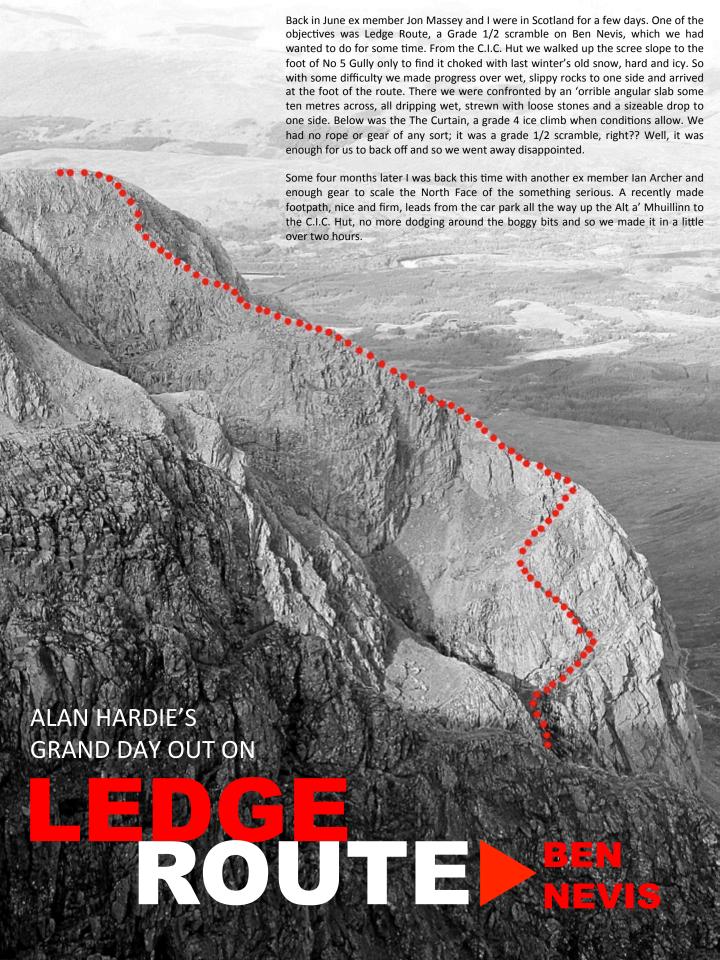
I had no climbing gear with me, Beth fancied a walk and Matt and Huw are easily led so off we went marching cross country up nearby Watson's Dodd. We took the direct route up from the crag with no paths and fairly difficult terrain which proved to be something of a slog. The full heat of the day was on us at this point and the Huwb's (Huw boobs) were released again. A demoralising false summit was reached and we all agreed that a little lie down was definitely on the cards. After 10 minutes, with the sun having ducked behind some cloud we were feeling much refreshed and set off with renewed vigour. The rounded, grassy summit of Watson's Dodd was soon reached and we were rewarded with excellent views over Thirlmere and over to the Skiddaw and Blencathra. We've done lots of climbing this summer taking advantage of the good weather (for which nobody is complaining!) with the hillwalking/mountaineering taking a back seat. It was nice to be reminded of just how rewarding this can be and we set off along the ridge towards Stybarrow Dodd with a spring in our step. This was knocked off in short order with strict instructions from Beth to mind our language as we were in public! We told her to **** one and **** her **** right in the ****. (Note, sequences may have been dramatised, please don't hurt me)

We found ourselves back at the car in order where Matt's exertions had caught up with him and he decided to head over to Keswick where he was staying for the night with a concert in Skipton the next day. However, Huw, Beth and I had eyes on Loughrigg Tarn for a swim to put the wind back up us and wash the sweat away. Beth had swam here earlier in the year and confirmed it was lovely and warm. Like a bath she said, you could drift off in it, you've never felt anything better. Needless to say it was brass bloody monkeys and within 20 seconds I couldn't feel my Huw and I both had long conversations with ourselves before putting the boys in but eventually managed to cowboy up and get involved. ourselves a bracing paddle before the sun went in and the temperature dropped past what I considered to be humane. We decamped back to the bank and dried off. Huw started running laps and air-boxing to warm up whilst Beth did her best to get changed decently with only a travel towel as equipment and for reasons unknown declining mine and Huw's gallant offers of assistance.

We got a wriggle on back to car with thoughts of sweet sweet, hot air blowers on our minds only to find tha we'd left one of the doors wide open. Whoops. Fortunately, everything was present and correct and we were soon on the road. The journey back to Birmingham was pretty grim with the 50mph limits rearing their ugly heads and some serious instances of Sunday driving. We managed to get to the pub in Moseley in time for dinner before staggering home. We said our goodbye's with Beth and Huw bemoaning the working week to come. I was in much the same boat, "Yeah Monday's going to suck I know what you mean but then SCREW YOU I'M GOING TO KALYMNOS AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA.". Ahem.

EE





Number 5 Gully was now clear of all the snow, we simply had to negotiate a way over or round all the boulders and we duly arrived at the previously mentioned 'orrible wet slab

Number 5 gully





It still looked intimidating but emboldened by a fearsome array of weaponry we tooled up, found a dubious belay and lan proceeded to lead across. In spite of the wet the friction was good and very quickly he was across. I soon followed and continued up a grassy ramp. This led via another groove to a broad grassy shelf. From here there was a rocky ridge leading straight up the Carn Dearg Buttress.

The 'orrible wet slah

Here the scrambling started properly. The rope became superfluous and was packed away. The remainder of the route was delightful, easy scrambling (but no place to fall with an impressive vertical drop on the left). The most exciting bit is to keep right on the crest.

Into proper scrambling territory





The sun had appeared, it was blue sky all the way. Up and up we went and in what seemed no time at all we topped out on the Carn Dearg Buttress. It seemed rude to do a route on the Ben and not go to the main summit on such a glorious day and so we did. From the summit we see could beyond Tower Ridge to the Carn Dearg Buttress and our route.

The top out

It was still only one o'clock and so after a lunch break we went for home via the Carn Mor Dearg Arete, a must for any Scottish hillwalker, in winter on a fine day this must rank as one of the finest walks in the area.

The CMD arete from Ben Nevis





At the summit of Carn Mor Dearg fine rain with the first tiny flakes of winter blew in but only for a few minutes. It drifted away leaving us to descend back down to the footpath in the late afternoon sun. Truly a grand day out!

Ren Nevis from the CMD summit

HIKE | BIKE | CLIMB