

# THE FORTNIGHTLY FAFF

The Periodical Journal of the Mercian Mountaineering Club

March 2015

## MATT KETTLE

An exclusive interview with the club's most prolific hill walker

## SELLA RONDA

The B-team skis around the Sella group in the Dolomites

## TRYFAN AGAIN!

Another mass ascent of the classic North Ridge

## BEN'S LENS

Photos from a stroll around the slate quarries at the Ty'n Lon meet

## THE KRAKEN MEET

Power cuts, rum, floods, and heroic rescues in Cwm Dyli

## WEATHERING STORMS

Nima's tips for surviving the Langdale floods

## SUPER INDIRECT

The Faff's new feature; stories of navigational ineptitude and misfortune



### A word from the editor

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of The Faff, particularly Nima for penning not one, but two articles. Your contributions are much appreciated.

I'd like to thank Matt Kettle for being a bit of a sport and taking a friendly bashing in this issue for his love of bagging Grahams and Corbetts in Scotland. I often wonder what pleasure can be found in focusing on smaller hills rather than the Munros. I don't often get up to Scotland so when I do I tend to head for the most famous Munros - I've been on top of the Ben at least 4 times now, and topped out on Buchaille Etive Mor at least three times from climbs or scrambles on and around Rannoch Wall. But as I looked up a few of Matt's favourite hills on the web when writing up our 'interview' I saw some stunning pictures of some rather pointy looking hills. Maybe there's something in it after all. Maybe I should leave the Ben and the Buchaille alone for a few years and go elsewhere. Maybe.

I certainly enjoyed reading Julie's article on the Cwm Dyli (Kraken) meet in Snowdonia. I didn't have the pleasure of attending but I think it will be a meet that is remembered for a very long time. Possibly for the late arrival and alleged rescue of some of our flock, possibly for the power being off for most of the weekend, or more likely as it was the meet on which the phrase "three and a half doctors" was first coined. Tom Mead mentioned to me a few weeks later that most people mistakenly think that Khyati is the half. It's certainly a name that's stuck, and a story that'll be told for years to come.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to seeing you all on the hills, down the wall or in the pub in the not too distant future.

Stew.

Cover photo  
Stewart Moody topping out of the initial chimney pitch on Bristly Ridge (II) in soft powder snow. Stew, Vicki, Adam and Julie climbed the route on the Saturday of the Cae Groes meet along with Bob Ellis and Rich Greaves of the Ceunant Mountaineering Club.  
Photo: **Bob Ellis**



# WEATHERING STORMS

## A MERCIAN'S TOP TIPS

LANGDALE, NOV 2015

BY NIMA RAI



L-R : In light of the crap forecast Lou, Tom, Anna and Stew set out for the pub



Adam, Jules and Huw scout the road out of Langdale to see if it is clear for traffic to pass. Draw your own conclusion!



**Weather warnings notwithstanding, I set out with Huw and Pete to the Lake district (Langdale) for another weekend with the Mercians after Emma and Tom bailed out. I was thinking, well, how bad can it be? Little did I know what was to follow...**

“Team A” were unusually sedate in their plans and chose to do a pub-crawl under the able direction and advice of Anna on the choicest local pubs. I was desperate for a walk and stretch after weeks of being immobile but am quite incapable of navigating. This called for some desperate thinking for bagging a partner in crime. I finally managed to convince Pete to go on a walk after some desperate pleas and dramatic promises. Huw, Adam and Jules, the three musketeers on their bikes, set out on their own adventure with Huw quite torn about having to miss out on the pub-crawl. On our return we settled in front of the cozy fire after our day’s activities. We were satisfied with our respective achievements of the day despite the forecast and settled in for the night, except for one disgruntled Mercian who was quite put out, having missed the pub time.

After a trip to the local Co-op for some beer top-ups and some table traversing, we all went to bed following a satisfying dinner, courtesy of Tom Morris. I woke up in the morning to some exclamations and excitement expressed by Huw and Jules. After shaking out of my slumber I reached the kitchen to find Adam and Jules busy mopping out the kitchen flood!! A look outside revealed mini water falls and streams surrounding us. Some concerns were expressed but I was too excited to be worried. A look out was planned and I headed out on a risk assessment with Jules and Adam leading the way. We didn’t need to go far before coming to the conclusion that we were potentially stuck for the day, at the very least!! The situation was discussed and a survival plan was drafted to weather the storm in the wake of being potentially stuck. What follows are my top survival tips on how to turn the droll weather into great experiences (and surviving with your fellow Mercians) if you are “lucky” enough to get stuck...

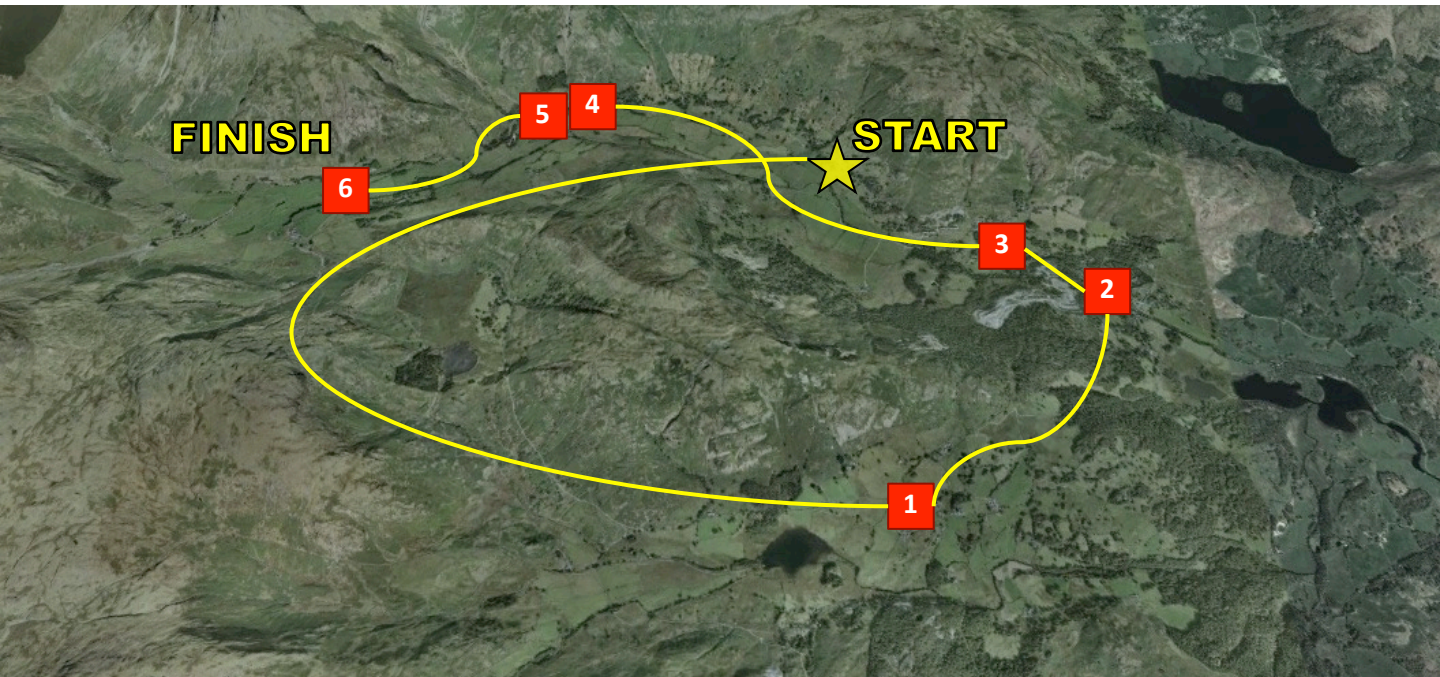
1. Stock up on the alcohol (this priority cannot be emphasized enough)
2. Beware of the pub monster (Huw Davies)
3. Ban all cakes with any fruit (or you would be wishing you were out in the storm)
4. Vegetarians take extra food on the meets (unless you wish to eat the plentiful grass)
5. Park your car on high ground
6. Listen to the locals (a helpful tip from the friendly neighborhood local gave us the heads up to escape from our hut)
7. Stay in touch (now is a good time to talk with and email family, and tell work about your enforced day off)
8. Do not drive your car into high water unless you wish to be stranded (this may not always be obvious to some)
9. Wear short-legged trousers under your water proofs (a top practical tip from Julie; I’m happy to report it works)
10. Have a canoe handy to make the best of your presented opportunity (you could be playing Noah for the day)
11. Be prepared for a hasty get away--- (10 min is our record, includes packing and cleaning), or...
12. Just chill!!!! With the fellow Mercians being great at rescuing, help is always at hand-----!!

“Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating. There is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather” - John Ruskin



# LANGDALE TRAIL

With the worst forecast in living memory upon us a few intrepid Mercians, including veterans of the Centurion Challenge (see Faff, Sept 2014) set upon a Lakeland rite of passage, the Langdale pub crawl. With Anna leading the charge Tom, Beth, Vic, Lou and I set off in the pouring rain for the slog round to Little Langdale to warm ourselves by the fire of the Three Shires Inn and enjoy a pint of their fine draught ale. Five or so hours later, and after more miles than I can recall we walked into pub number six, the Old Dungeon Ghyll where we gave ourselves a pat on the back and had one last well earned beer.



**1** The Three Shires Inn  
Little Langdale



**2** The Britannia  
Elterwater



**3** The Wainwright Inn  
Chapel Stile



**4** The New DG  
Great Langdale



**5** The Stickle Barn  
Great Langdale



**6** The Old DG  
Great Langdale



# SUPER INDIRECT

## STORIES OF NAVIGATIONAL INEPTITUDE AND MISFORTUNE ON AND OFF THE MOUNTAIN

I'll be honest here, I once climbed a 6 pitch route on Tryfan and loved every minute of it. It was only when I got back to Ty'n Lon and was sat, pint in one hand and guide book in the other, that I realised I'd actually climbed a totally different route to the one I'd planned. Huh! How'd that happen?

And so I thought it'd be fun to ask you for any stories you might have of getting lost or finding yourself in the wrong place. To get the ball rolling, I can think of one. I cast my mind back 3 years to the annual dinner meet in Great Langdale. We had a member in our midst who wanted to go out for a walk, let's call him Mike Smith (for that is his name and this wouldn't be fun if it was anonymous; it's ok, he's not a member anymore and he has a good sense of humour). Mike took his girlfriend Lou for a walk up Bowfell – I think it was Bowfell if memory serves. Anyway, later that evening the Mercian's had gathered in the dining room of the Old DG dressed in dinner jackets and gowns and waited patiently to be served our meal but two people we were still missing – Mike and Lou. They were, at this point, several hours over due. We eventually received a text from Mike telling us they were alive and well in Eskdale. Eskdale! How'd that happen? A navigational mishap had landed them in the wrong valley and a £50 taxi ride back around to the Old DG. Lou must be a woman of a forgiving nature though as they got married in 2014. All is well that ends well eh?





## POWER CUTS, FLOODS AND HEROIC RESCUES IN CWM DYLI

Undaunted by a forecast of storms, torrential rain, high winds and inspired by the promise of slow cooked pulled pork, 10 hardcore Mercians refused to bail on the Cwm Dyli meet and duly slogged up the A5 to the foot of Snowdon. Deciding early that only the foolish would venture into the hills on Saturday, the first arrivals settled down with a few beers on Friday night, listening to the torrential rain and wind lashing outside the hut. As Vijay was describing his scary experience of finding the remote hut - down some deserted, twisting tracks and across a raging stream, the electricity promptly cut out (and didn't come back on until Sunday morning, winner). Atmosphere was set for the weekend. Emergency measures were instigated: candles, coal fire, crisps, Kraken rum. A lot of Kraken. And we waited for the final four to turn up. And waited. And waited.

In the very small hours, racked with concern for our fellow mountaineers, most of us decided to sack it and go to bed. Huw and Vijay, meanwhile, decided that they couldn't leave the previously named '3 and a half doctors' (Emma, Khyati, Nima, Tom) to fend for themselves in the wilderness and selflessly risked not only a dry pair of socks, but valuable head torch battery to head off down the track to the road to find them.

Meanwhile, unbeknown to the Krakeners, 3.5 doctors had battled admirably to Snowdonia. Leaving Birmingham at 21:30, the odds were against them but they made good progress until they turned off the main road

and faced the confusing maze of rough tracks to the hut.

After heading through various gates, dead end tracks and avoiding dozy, rain soaked sheep, they eventually reached the safety of the hut car park. Only 60 metres remained, through a gate, across a bridge and up a short slope to the safety of the hut. Total time taken to get to this point = approx. 3 hours. Time expectation from car park to hut = approx. 3 minutes.

This is when the situation became serious. Unable to set eyes on the gate from the safety of the car and faced with the knowledge that waterproofs were packed firmly in the boot, the 3.5 decided that the risk of getting a bit wet was far too high. The warm, cosy, spacious bunks in the hut, which they could almost touch were too risky to get to. With stakes this high there was no other option but to sleep in the car. Sleeping bags were rapidly deployed and the team proceeded to get 'the best 2 hours sleep ever'.

That is, until the rescue party staggered into the car park and spotted the lost Mercians. Heroically dragging them from the comfort of the warm car at 3am, they shepherded them to the hut, unsure as to whether the 3.5 were grateful or disgruntled at their rescue. Luckily, to aid morale once back in the hut, Vijay proceeded to recount his scary experience of reaching the hut, not once, but many, many times. Eventually, at late o'clock, the excitement of the rescue mission was over and the group headed to bed.





Rain and high winds on Saturday provided the right conditions for a review of the previous nights activities. Lesson learned – always sit on your sleeping bag in the car for a potential crisis situation, nothing else required. And so, after a lazy start, the rest of the day was spent at the Beacon Climbing Centre followed by navigating through flooded roads for a pub supper – the lack of electricity having scuppered the pulled pork plan. Mulled wine, mince pies and Werewolf by candlelight completed a fine evening.

Luckily, Snowdonia was kind on Sunday, which more than made up for the previous day. Calm, clear skies by mid morning meant that we made the most of being based at the foot of Snowdon. Pete, Lloyd, Nima and Emma enjoyed the amazing views on the Snowdon Horseshoe, possibly the best route on the mountain. Adam, Huw and myself cycled most of the way up the Miners path then hauled our bicycles to the summit before returning the same way. Difficult, exposed riding but great fun and a rapid final descent back to the hut. (I won't mention the 'education' given to us by a local lady who clearly didn't have a great love for mountain bikes).

Another fun meet despite the winter storms. With the Langdale and now Cwm Dyli meets experiencing the worst of the British weather, we are now surely owed some fine weather. Snow and cold temperatures for New Year perhaps?



# Weekend Warriors

Vicki Cox cross country skiing in the Telemark region of Norway on a long weekend visit with past club members Simon Hodgson and Jody Munks.

Photo : JODY MUNKS





# Weekend Warriors

The Mercian Christmas meal at the Digbeth Dining club. From a drinking perspective we were warriors that night.

Photo : KHYATI PATEL







## Weekend Warriors

Joe Norris leading The Runnel (II) in Coire an t-sneachda, Cairngorm.

Photo : **MATT KETTLE**

louise bullock sulla pista nailing a blu



# SELLA RONDA NEL DOLOMITI

## SCIARE - SOLE - ALCOHL - MERCIANS

le jibber-jabber e le  
fotografie di STEWART  
MOODY

Until I arrived in Italy in January I didn't even realize it existed - The Sella Ronda - the circular ski route that goes around the Sella massif. I saw it first on a piste map the day we arrived and I knew instantly that it was something I wanted to do. The only problem was I'd only skied once in my life, 4 years ago on a soggy Cairngorm mountain. I put it from my mind and went to ski school instead.





Lou was equally keen and I was pleased at the prospect of having company. After 5 days of lessons our ski school instructor, Marion, warned us off it, speaking of a particularly steep descent into the village of Arabba, busy pistes, dull skiing, big moguls and long queues at ski lifts. But our friends in Mercian A-team said we'd be fine and so our minds were made up – we'd have a go at it on Friday, the last day of the trip.

Our route would take us clockwise from Selva, over the Gardena pass into Corvara, then over the Campolongo pass into Arabba. We'd then head across the Pordoi pass to Canazei before finally going up and over the Sella pass to arrive back in Selva. It looked like a good challenge, made up largely of red runs (not too easy, but not too hard). It also came with a deadline; the ski lifts all start running at 8:30am, and if we didn't make it onto the lift up the Sella Pass by 4:30pm when they stop we'd be stranded in the wrong valley facing an expensive taxi ride and the eternal taunts of our friends.

Friday arrived and I was feeling pretty confident. The skies were clear, the air was crisp and I had a belly full of eggs and bacon. Lou and I had been doing red runs all week with vary degrees of speed and stability. At exactly 8:30am, along with the A-team, we were scooped onto the Costabella chair lift which lead onto the Dantercepes cable car to the top of the Gardena Pass.

And so it began. We knew the pace of the A-team would outstrip our own; Sandy had notched up over 100kph the previous day so we arranged to meet them for lunch at 1pm. We all pointed our skis (or snowboards) downhill and set off. We never actually said goodbye to the A-team, they mostly accelerated into the distance and were gone in minutes except Huw and Fabian who, in a situation still cloaked in controversy and confusion, are reported (by Lou) to have harassed Lou on the upper slopes with a spot of Kettle-esque tailgating before blasting off down the mountain side.

The morning snow was crisp and mercifully mogul free. The piste was broad too and there weren't many other folk about. I set a good pace down the long red run, which turned into a delightfully sweeping and seamlessly never ending blue (easier than red for the uninitiated). I made Corvara in about 15 minutes, checked my position on the map and waited for Lou who was a couple of minutes behind me. We'd already agreed that either one of us (well, me really, I skied faster but tended to crash more) could go on ahead so long as we waited for the other at any point when we need to jump on a ski lift, or when the route wasn't obvious.

The must have "pointy" shot next to one of the many route signs. The green goes clockwise whilst the orange goes anti-clockwise. Lou and I did the green which apparently the more interesting of the two.



Reunited, we caught a cable car that took us high up onto the Campolongo pass and then descended more red runs. We checked the time and we were doing well, "we're flippin' nailing it!" I said with a smile. This was turning into a great day. The signs to continue the Sella Ronda pointed right but to our left was a fine looking pair of runs bathed in glorious shine and with no one on them, one red (for me), one blue (for Lou). "What the heck..." we said as we took ourselves off route to bag them, "...it's only a 15 minute detour". And what a detour it was! I flew down the red route (if I don't blow my own trumpet no one else will), a broad sweep of snow lined on both sides by thick green forest. I was the only one on it. As I reached the bottom the blue joined from the left and there was Lou right on time. Nice!

It was now 9:30am and our daily routine dictated that we have a sit down and a Coke at 10:00am. But with the steep descent to Arabba still ahead of us we agreed to push on and get that out of the way before stopping. Truth be told it wasn't too bad, not that much steeper than the other reds we'd skied and certainly more pleasant than the slushy, narrow and overcrowded blue it eventually merged with. Our arrival in Arabba marked the halfway point of the circuit and we still hadn't stopped for our Coke. Being people who enjoy the finer things in life we wanted a view with our Cokes so we dutifully followed the Sella Ronda signs onto a massive cable car that deposited us 10 minutes later onto Porta Vescova (2478m) where a cracking new cafe with outdoor couches gave a fine panorama of Marmolada. We paused to 'make nice photo' before cracking on with the task at hand.

We reached the slopes on the Belvedere, high above Canazei, at 12noon, an hour ahead of schedule. A text from the A-team told us they'd been messing around on the slopes near Corvara but were now on their way with Huw, the vanguard, leading the charge. That suited me as the red runs off the Arabba side mountain were big and fast, and not even the sight of someone being stretchered off the piste could curb my enthusiasm. I'd like to think I got somewhere close to rivaling Sandy's 100kph an hour and it really did feel like I was going like a train, but the reality is I probably didn't break the 40kph barrier!



We gave up skiing as our legs grew tired and grabbed lunch at a rifugio from where Lou texted the A-team our location. Huw had a nightmare finding us, citing misinformation on our part. The others had no such issue, "yep", said Sandy, "you're exactly here you said you were". I suppressed an "I told you so". Huw chuntered on and Lou, with slightly ruffled feathers, cast a sideways glance.



We'd finished lunch by the time the A-team sat down but took the time to exchange stories about our day so far. It was now 2:00pm. Time was on my mind and we needed to crack on as there were only 2.5 hours left before the lifts shut down. I stepped into my skis and looked across at Lou. "I think Pierce wanted to come with us" she said. I looked over at the table and saw Pierce still had half a pint and most of his lunch in front of him. I turned to Lou and said (and I do apologise for my behavior, but Pierce is a much faster skier than Lou and I and capable of catching us) "I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that Lou" before pointed my skis downhill towards Canazai and shoving off.

Not long after I hit a narrow stretch of piste with big moguls. I bounced off the first, hit the second with a bit more gumption, losing a lot of balance and bit of nerve. The third caught me right off guard and I foolishly leaned back. The fourth threw me into the cargo net strung across the side of the piste. I clattered awkwardly onto my side, losing a ski in the process which mercifully came to rest nearby. Damn! I dusted myself off as Lou came down the slope in a much more controlled fashion.

The pistes came and went and with a sense of achievement we reached the top of the Sella Pass just before 3:00pm and detoured onto a few nice sweeping blue runs. We'd done it; with no other uplift between us and Selva success was guaranteed. But no sooner was one deadline vanquished another arose. A text from the A-team told us the rendez-vous point for the first après ski beer was a rifugio back up on the Dentercepies. The clock was ticking again - we needed to get into Selva to catch the last lift at 4:30pm.

Off we went, down some nice sweeping blue runs with the sun setting casting dramatic shadows on the magnificent Sella towers which we'd climbed in the summer of 2015. The temperature was falling but we were skiing well, never too far apart. Tick-tock, tick-tock. We spotted a sign "Sella Ronda (Alternative)". I wasn't sure what the alternative referred to but in the absence of any other signage we followed it up a chair lift, and then up another. At the summit was a rifugio and a "Sella Ronda" sign pointed around the corner to the left. I shoved off and was about to hit the slope when a black disc in the corner of my eye stopped me dead in my tracks.

"You're kidding me" I thought. Lou arrived behind me. We'd hit the top of a black run. Tick-tock, tick-tock. I looked at my watch and it was about 3:30pm. We shuffled backwards towards the rifugio in that ungainly way that only novices can. Checking the map we couldn't see where we'd gone wrong but the solution was clear, ski back down to where we'd gone wrong under the two lifts we'd used. This was a red run and it was pretty fantastic - broad, steep, deserted and mogul free.

We found our way back onto the Sella Ronda and covered the last few kilometers in good time, reaching Selva at 4:15pm. By 4:20pm we'd got across to the Dantercepies and jumped into a cable car. As the doors were closing there was a burst of activity outside as three unruly snowboarders and a skier flung themselves bodily into our cabin as it pulled away from the station. "I thought it was you" said Julie as she lifted her goggles from her face. Fabian, Huw and Sandy were with her. 10 short minutes later we were sat outside the rifugio where Pierce, Matt, Tom and a few of Tom's mates joined us. After one drink common sense told us to ski the red run back into town from where we made a bee-line to the Luiskeller bar. None of us are sure how it happened but within the space of 80 minutes we were roaring drunk as the DJ blared out "Hey baby" by DJ Otzi and other Austrian après ski classics. We left at 7:00pm, it was time for dinner. I was in bed by 9:30pm. It was an incredible day; one the best ever. Thanks for the memories Lou. See you on the piss piste in 2017.

**The absolute joy of the Luiskeller's après ski. How on Earth did we get so drunk within such a short space of time? L-R : Huw Davies, Sandy Hennis, Stewart Moody.**





Lou in the afternoon sunshine shortly after leaving the Canazei area with the Sella pass in the background



**Louise Bullock** @Louise1967

We just bagged the Sella Ronda, and then some!  
#beeroclock

 Follow





"Oh dear" said Tryfan as it rose from a pleasant night's sleep and glanced down the Ogwen Valley, "here come the Mercians again". Tryfan yawned and rubbed the sleep from his eyes. "It hasn't been more than a month since their last assault on my north ridge, and here they are again. Tryfan sighed. Look down there, in that layby by on the road, there they are, getting ready to climb all over me. It's not like I'm the only mountain in Snowdonia that's worth climbing". And so it was that Tryfan, once again on a cold February morning, was the focus of Mercian attention...

## a saturday on TRYFAN'S NORTH RIDGE by Nima Rai

After our last memorable arrival (rescue) at a meet, we, the 3.5, were very keen to redeem our reputation or at least not make it any worse!! So to everyone's surprise we arrived at a reasonable hour on the Friday night, and even managed to get ready on time on the Saturday morning with a textbook amount of faff that Pete and Lloyd might have something to say about. Barring a very lazy 0.5. the remaining 3 of us set off with the rest of the troupe; Pete, Lloyd, Vijay, Joel, and Matt.

The walk almost ended before it started for me, I slipped on the ice but managed to save myself in the nick of time without embarrassing myself, Phew!! Following the discussion after our arrival at the layby at the foot of we were all well prepared with crampons, ice axes and sandwiches packed with Lloyd leading the charge. The first bit was fairly good going. All of us thoroughly enjoying our scramble and the snow ball fighting. But then it got trickier. Crampons or no crampons? After a brief discussion it was decided the conditions were not crampon suitable so we carried on enjoying the walking in the snow.





Bit trickier further on and so out came our ice axes. Me, Emma and Khyati felt a bit nervous as we were using them for the first time but we got bolder by the step. Vijay was on fire, inspired by the previous night Kraken nothing could hold him back. He was going for it and Matt was simmering. Not having climbed since his injury, this was Matt's first foray and the green monsters were eating away to him, which spurred Vijay on.

We then came to our first sketchy bit. Ropes out to be safe we decided, but it was fairly straight forward at this point. We arrived on a ledge with Vijay leading the way – with a call off “RELEASE THE KRACKEN!!” and with an impressive high splits on the ice, which would have given any *dancing on ice* star a run for their money. More sighs from Matt. And this was when a disaster nearly struck. A climber from a group in front of us was negotiating the icy rocks and slipped 10 feet, nearly taking me, Emma and Matt with him as we waited on the ledge below. But thanks to the collective blessings of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and a few other Hindu gods too added to the mix from me and Khyati we all managed to survive. We were shaken but not stirred from our goal to reach the summit. But it was decided ropes was definitely the way forward.

This proved not a small problem as this spot became a bottle neck and we waited nearly 90 minutes before we could all move up the bad step, while Matt twittering away the whole time about how he will never know how Vijay managed to get up there without ropes while me and Emma were shivering. The effects were telling on Emma and me the most as the pain in our fingers quite left us in tears but for a chivalrous effort from Joel that saved us. By then a few of us were wondering why we were doing this on a free weekend and decided we will never attempt Everest even if we were capable of it!! Lloyd, Vijay, Joel and Pete in true Mercian style kept the



flag flying and supported us to the summit, and with a collective “I don’t Adam and Eve it” we made it!! We savored the moment with a photo shoot and right on time the clouds cleared for a brief minute to give a rare view of the Ogwen Valley. Then, to avoid a night decent, a warning from Lloyd announced that we had 15 minutes rest before we moved again.

A quick bite later we were on the path down. Going down was such fun and we sledged a good 50% of the way and we had so much fun and we were loving it and back to snow ball fighting. So all the pain was forgotten and we laughed over why we do this, and how much we enjoy this blah, blah, blah whilst moments ago we were certain that this was surely type 2 fun.

On a serious note this was what we love of the Mercian's and being a part of it. A good team effort by Pete, Lloyd, Vijay and Joel supporting the rest of us in our endeavor apart from just enjoying it for themselves and making it all fun and safe. Kraken driven Vijay was definitely the surprise of the day but Matt wasn't a happy man and threatened to take Vijay on a 10 mile run. We ended the day on a high with a great dinner cooked by Emma and Tom and dessert by Khyati. Over dinner, Matt was busy plotting ways of getting one up over Vijay and planning a Mercian pool competition with Vijay seeded fifth despite many pleadings from him of how he had beaten Pierce “many, many times”. So did Matt yield? Will Vijay get a better seeding?!! Something to look forward to alongside the next meets.





# BEN'S LENS

The Mercian Ty'n Lon meet, as seen through the camera of Ben Thompson

FF



## an interview with MATT KETTLE



**The Faff :** I see from Facebook that you're up in Scotland with Joe Norris. Have you been out in the mountains?

**The Kettle :** Yes, we did Fiacail Ridge (grade I) in the Cairngorm's Northern Corries a few days ago and then did The Runnel (grade II) in Coire an t'Sneachda yesterday.

**The Faff :** Cool. What was that miserable looking pimple of a hill you posted a picture of on Facebook? Have you been out bagging Corbetts, or Marilyn's, or whatever you call them?

**The Kettle :** That was a Graham, it was called Carn Glas Choire which was obviously hill of the week, an absolute belter.

**The Faff :** Did Joe join you on that hill as well?

**The Kettle :** The weather was dreadful when I set off so Joe sacked it off. But for a moment I got a view over the Cairngorms which was stunning. That's what the Grahams are all about!

**The Faff :** Erm, that sounds great Matt, but let's talk more about climbing, have you done any other routes?

**The Kettle :** We did an absolutely unbelievable route today, literally one of the best things I've ever done. It was Central Left Hand (grade II) in Coire an t'Sneachda. There was a guide

Just behind us with a couple, one of whom dropped an ice axe which I had to go and get. So we then took a slightly harder variation than the normal route but it was totally awesome. It was supposed to be a straightforward gully but we took a couple of mixed pitches which were superb.

**The Faff :** That's more like it, what did Joe reckon of the route?

**The Kettle :** He did the leading. He took mixed ground to the right of the groove lower down. One or two moves of around hard II on soft snow and turf and then some rock hard névé once in the groove itself. He thought it was a cracking route with great atmosphere at the top.

**The Faff :** What's in store for you next then Matt, more of the same style of winter climbing or are you ready for a bit more hard-core flat track bullying?

**The Kettle :** I'm psyched for Easter in Scotland, do you fancy the Hills of Cromdale with me, two Graham's with a 17km peaty ridge between them which are top of my agenda for that trip? Or the Graham and Corbett double header up Glen Feshie that I need to do for a bit of mopping up?

**The Faff :** Wow, those sound amazing, keeping you company whilst mopping up minor peaks sounds like a good way to spend the winter season.



**The Kettle :** Of course, it doesn't get much better, the Mercian's would love it. I'll tell you the best 10 hills in Scotland if your like, they ar...

**The Faff :** Erm, that's not really necessar...

**The Kettle :** The Hills of Cromdale are amazing, these two Grahams need to go at Easter for me and they're stunning. Then there's An Cruachan. This is a Graham and is Scotland's remotest hill. It's something like a 54km hike there and back and is stuck right in behind the Mullardoch lot that I did the other year with my mate Dan who...

**The Faff :** Yes, this is all very interesting but can...

**The Kettle :** And there's Beinn Iair. That's a Corbett, one of Scotland's absolute best and I think a majority of people would agree with me. Next up has to be Gathersnow Hill, a fine 688m Graham in the Scottish borders. It's south of the main Glasgow/Edinburgh belt of Scotland.

**The Faff :** The Scottish borders? Isn't that where all the wind farms are and the land is pretty flat? We usually fly past that in the car on the way to the bigger mountains further up north don't we?

**The Kettle :** I love Faochaig, and so does Cameron Mcneish. Cameron's a really famous wilderness hiker from Glasgow and he thinks this is one of Scotland's most desolate places. It's a long way from anywhere.

**The Faff :** Funnily enough I've not heard of him!

**The Kettle :** Another of the great ones is Sgurr dhomnuill. It has a lot to offer those not tied to the rat race of Munro bagging. It'd would definitely be on my list too. And at 888m it's not a push over. I've also got to mention Binnien Shuas and Binnein Shios. These two Grahams are high on my list. It's a long way to do the pair. I'd love somebody to do Ardverikie Wall with me round the back of Binnien Shuas. It's a 100m climb that goes at HS I think. Joe keeps on about it and says it was epic when he did it. Maybe Easter if it is dry and there's good weather?

**The Faff :** That's more like it! Tell me more about Ardveriki...

**The Kettle :** And then there's a wee Corbett on the Isle of Harris called Clisham. But I'm not sure if your readers would be willing to go the Outer Hebrides just to bag a Corbett all the way out there.

**The Faff :** I'm pretty sure they wouldn't.

**The Kettle :** How many more can I list? Is that 8 so far? So Sgurr Mhurlagain and Fraoch Bheinn are two Corbetts at Loch Arkaig that can be done in a day so I'll group them together. Obviously I'd knock the 3rd one off as well that's right next door but I can't remember what it's called. And finally I'd offer up Baoshbheinn, the Corbett above Gairloch.

**The Faff :** Well, thanks for sharing Matt. One last quick question; you sent in a photo of Joe Norris the other day. Care to elaborate?

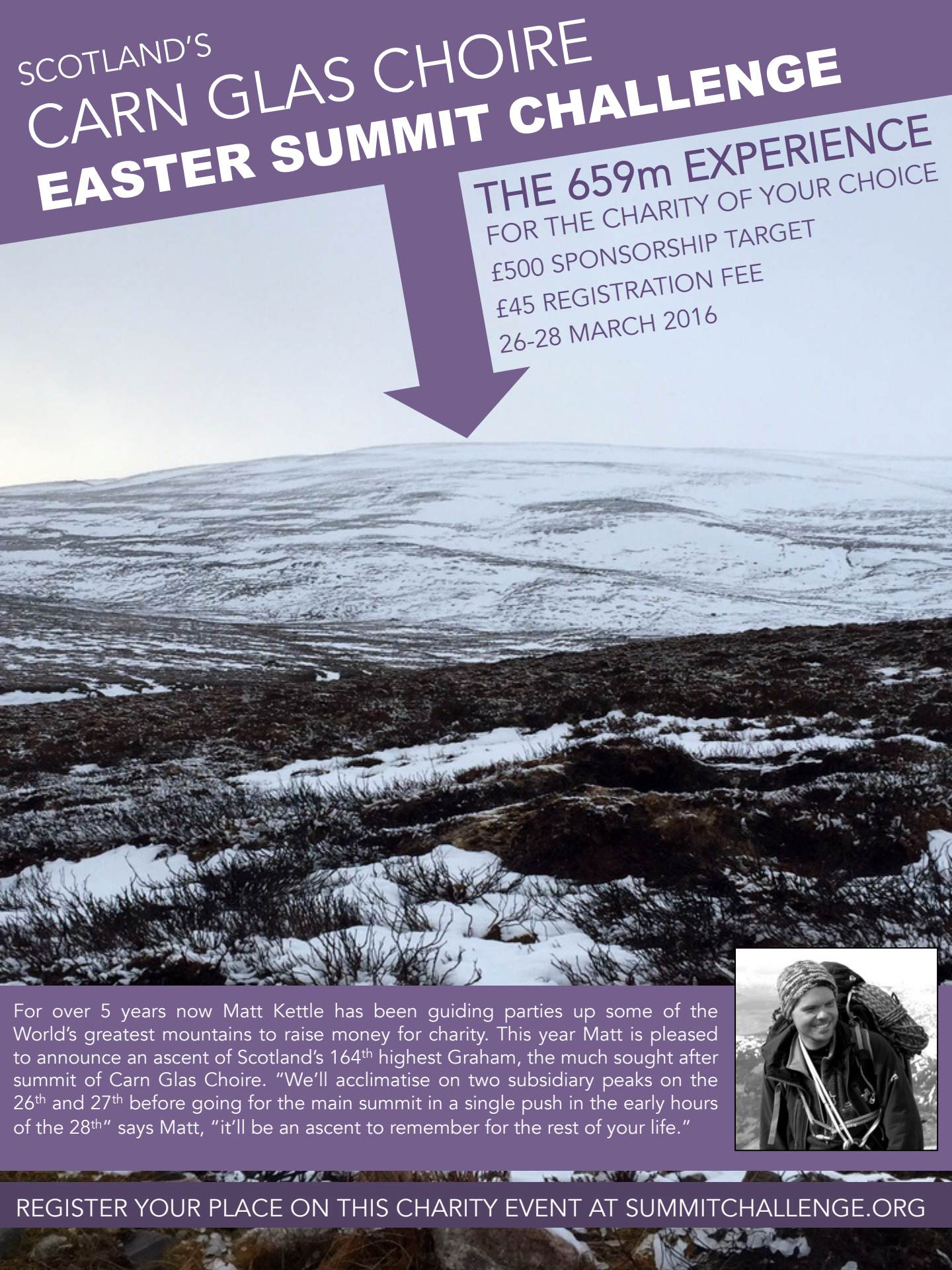
**The Kettle :** It was a taken on a Corbett we did the other day. I'd gone head under in the river behind us out of shot. It was belting it down and Joe absolutely hates that kind of terrain and getting through the thick branches and stuff. I love it but Joe was a broken man.

**The Faff :** Well that's sold it for me. Thanks for taking the time to chat.

**The Kettle :** Your welcome. Up the Villa!







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