

THE FORTNIGHTLY FAFF

The Periodical Journal of the Mercian Mountaineering Club

DEC 2021

KING OF THE HILL

Duncan summits his final Munro

SARDINIA

Climbing, canyoning & kayaking in the med

ON THE WATERWAYS

Mercians set sail on a canal boat journey to remember

KALYMNOS

Dan pushes his grade on the autumn hot rock trip

NICE SHOWER?

The science of Matt's method for describing the quality of the facilities

MADEIRA

Lynn Taylor describes a hiking holiday favourite

BONFIRE NIGHT

The tree burning transcript in full





A word from the editor

Season's greetings! Welcome to this new issue of The Faff, thrown together at the last minute as a small Christmas gift to you all. But with excellent contributions I'm sure you'll agree the quality remains the same that we've all come to expect.

It's been a really busy few months for the Mercians as you can see from the meets reports. We've had some great hut meets in the Lakes and Wales and visited Dartmoor for the first time in ages for the annual dinner. The meets are proving popular with old members and new. I've been really pleased to see so many people getting in touch with the committee to enquire about how to join. We might be small in the grand scale of things, but I'm sure we are one of the most active and sociable mountaineering club's with an exciting meets calendar and a rather diverse schedule of extra-curricular activities.

My thanks to Alan Hardie, Karl Stewart, Paul Rigby, Daniel Hand, Lynn Taylor, Malcolm Imhoff, and Matt Campling for their writing. And there are too many of you to thank for your photos which grace these pages. The Faff would be a rather dull affair without your efforts, so I doff my cap.

On a final note, I'll be forever shocked that Matt Campling managed to not combine the words "shower" and "golden" in a different order somewhere in his article. It beggars belief!

Wishing you and your families a very merry Christmas,

Stew.



KING OF THE HILL

word by Alan Hardie

The King

Duncan Simpson

The Supporting Cast

Murray Papworth, Mirek Zoubek, Jon Massey, Ian Archer, Mike Hogg, Geoff Taylor, Alan Hardie

The Date

Monday 20th September 2021

Towards the end of September a small but select band of Mercian Old Boys and assorted ex-Mercians assembled at a cottage in Tyndrum for Duncan Simpson's Last Munro trip. Duncan had four Munros left to do but had done two of those the day before. So, for his final hike there was Beinn a' Chliebh first and then Ben Lui to finish on, both being adjacent mountains with a connecting ridge.

Weather watching for the best possible day proved futile. The chosen day dawned overcast, drizzly and somewhat uninviting. However, we made a start and walked through the forestry plantation to the Cononish Gold Mine. Not much activity there, so onwards and upwards into the corrie beneath Ben Lui. The Central Gully wasn't in condition due to it being only September so we continued up the path to the North West ridge. Being Mercians of a certain age there were definitely striders and strollers. Only the fittest and fastest were in the party to go on to Beinn a' Chliebh whilst the remainder would go direct to Ben Lui summit and await Duncan's triumphant arrival.

On arrival at Ben Lui summit the weather was pretty grim, wind, rain and limited shelter. We waited and waited and waited. According to some who had done this before it was a mere half an hour or so to Beinn a' Chliebh and back. After nearly an hour with no sign of Duncan's party or an improvement in the weather we retreated back down the ridge and left them to their fate.

Duncan's group took about an hour and three quarters for the trip out and back and so arrived on the summit in the driving rain and wind with no welcoming party. However, they made the best of it pausing briefly for the obligatory photo before making a swift exit.

Several hours later we had all made it back to the cottage for the traditional celebratory wee dram. It was a real shame we weren't all together on the summit for Duncan's arrival but it certainly didn't detract from his achievement and the weather did nothing to dampen our spirits in the evening

King Duncan stood atop Ben Lui, arms raised in celebration



L - R : Mike, Mirek, Geoff, Ian, Duncan (kneeling), Jon, Alan, Murray

The North Face athlete Matt Campling employs the lite-pac urine bottle on his summer expedition to the west coast of Scotland. Weighing 76 grammes, the latex construction and snap-lock seal makes it the go to item for when you get caught short at altitude.



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COPPERMINES

Sept, 2021

BeJesus, we had a hut meet. At last, a meet not under canvas. A meet free of midges. Enthusiasm on Friday night for an epic climbing day on Dow was high, but we woke to mutterings of "that Tomasz Schafernaker is full of sh*t". Indeed he'd got it quite wrong. Rather than being quite good, it was in fact quite rubbish. Wet hill slogs and mountain biking ensued. But the pros certainly outweighed the cons. We'd had a cheese board on Friday night, we all gathered at the Black Bull on Saturday afternoon for pre dinner drinks, Vijay (ok, Vijay's mum) made an amazing meal of lamb and vegetarian curries, Ruth baked a cake and cookies, there was table traversing, there was almost ceiling traversing along an almighty off-width, and Fabian made tea for everyone in their sleeping bags on Sunday morning. And yes, Vicki did go hill walking in a shower cap. On both days. To protect her perm. Apparently.





Vicki making a reasonable job of the traverse



The bikers did Walna Scar road and the Duddon Valley.



The Black Bull for high value drinks



Sunday was slightly drier, so most folk headed up Wetherlam, and once on the summit the heavens opened, and it rained all the way back to the hut.



photofaff by VICKI MOODY

When many had called it a night and gone upstairs to bed the arsing around continued downstairs. This photofaff, taken on the Coppermines meet gets a solid 7/10. After many suitors had successfully traversed the lounge table their slightly drunken eyes started to search for the next objective. What happened next was a surprise for a couple of reasons. First, the ghastly off-width between the kitchen roof beams looked like the sort of jamming crack that would have Tom Randall and Pete Whitaker struggling. Secondly, it was Fabian (pictured) who seemed to be the driving force behind the first ascent, with a little 'support' from Ruth and Adam to get established. Fabian, we salute you sir!



Weekend Warriors

Andy Armstrong cruising the crux overhand of Route 2 (VS 4b) at Windgather.

Photo : Stewart Moody



This really had been a last minute holiday. Although we had been talking about it for several weeks that we wanted to get another one week holiday in before the end of the summer (2020), a last minute change in schedule meant that the date only got fixed a week before. At that time, Scotland was at the top of the list, climbing on Skye, kayaking the Hebrides, that sort of thing. But at the end of September, weather wasn't on our side, or at least reliability wasn't.

Even changing location to Cornwall didn't bring certainty. So it was only on the Wednesday before that we opted for Italy. The air corridor was still open, and the COVID graphs weren't showing any sign of a ski jump profile. But where in Italy. Well, the Dollys was obviously there, sport/trad/via ferrata, plus walking if the weather was no good. Further south, Gran Sasso National Park was a contender, good walking and better weather, but limited info on climbing. Then there was...

SARDINIA

Words and photos by Karl Stewart

DONUTS ON ARRIVAL



In the absence of any exciting photos of Karl looking p*ssed off in the Avis queue, or of Lucy sat in the arrivals hall frantically searching Lastminute.com for hotels, here's a stock image of donuts.



This curve ball was suggested by an Italian friend. Now normally I wouldn't touch a sport climbing venue with yours, but Sardinia had the appeal of multi-pitch sport routes, plus near guaranteed hot sunny weather and a location right on the beach. I was torn, I desperately wanted the mountains, but knew that this came with great meteorological risk. And so the head won, and on the Friday morning dog walk, we made our final choice to go to Sardinia.

What followed was a bit of a whirlwind. Once back in the house, I checked Skyscanner. The most logical flight, and the one that gave us the most bang for our buck, left Heathrow at 7:30am the next morning, in less than 22 hours time. Surely enough time to book everything, pack, shop, plan, and clean the house for the pet sitter? Well, yes, but only just. My day finished at 1am, and Lucy worked right the way through to getty-upy time, at 3am on Sat!

The advantage of an early flight is that you get more of the day on holiday. This would be the case if you didn't then spend two hours in a queue for the Avis car rental desk (way worse than Slovenia for those who remember that!). I have no idea why, but there was no queue for any of the other 10 car rental firms at the airport, Avis had ALL of the customers. This really did sap what little energy I had left. The only good thing was that this gave Lucy time to find a nice hotel on the coast for our first night. I'm not one to normally go into hotels. But I tell you, the breakfast! A buffet! With everything. The only problem was that with COVID restrictions, you had to tell the waitress what you wanted, and they would get it for you. "Another doughnut please... Yes, and another one.... One more please.... And the one next to it...ooooh, pastries, I didn't see them!" was pretty much how the conversation went that morning!

CRAGGING & CAMPING



The Ulassi climbing area. Good for single pitch sport climbing and wild camping.



Now that we were well rested and extensively fed, we could start our holiday in earnest. Our first destination was the village of Ulassai. Considered a recently developed climbing venue, it has a modest number of bolted routes, like only 1000! And more being added by the day. We called in at Nannai's Climbing House to get the low down, and a guidebook, from the host Ruben, before parking the car by the church and walking the 5 minutes into the gorge there, which contains the easier routes. At an altitude of about 800m, Ulassai escapes the oppressive heat of the coast, and the gorge allows you to select sun or shade depending on your preference.

We climbed all day there, stopping only for lunch, gradually increasing the grade of climbs, until exhaustion (and dusk) called time on us. We walked out of the gorge the back way, through beautiful, and surprisingly lush pine forest, and even found a great wild camp spot with views of adjacent cliffs. It being Sunday, we'd failed to find a suitably equipped supermarket (i.e. one with gas that fitted our stove), so had to make a visit to the village to pick up pizza and beer, which we enjoyed on plastic chairs in the village square - classy!

The next day we travelled on up to Cala Gorone, which is a great base for climbing as it's within a short drive (and sometimes walk) of so many developed crags. We based ourselves at the euro-campsite there. This was a really nice place, tent pitches nested amongst the trees, strangely muffing any noise, and giving shade/guy anchorage depending on whether the sun or wind was making its presence felt. There are picnic benches to commandeer, and the facilities are clean and plentiful. Some odd behaviour we witnessed from our fellow campers whilst there seems to be an obsession with tent equipment cleanliness.

One couple spent the entire morning of departure wiping down all surfaces of their tent, several times. Another couple had brought their own full size dustbin, plus broom, and would fastidiously sweep down their ground sheet, before wrapping their table/chairs/cookset in heavy duty plastic held tight with bungies, and then go out for the day.

On our first day there we visited Cala Fuili, a nearby gorge which opens out onto the beach, and containing single pitch routes at our preferred grade. As expected, it was baking hot. Tall shrubs gave the belayer a little shade, and the climber might feel a breeze higher up the route, but certainly this was a take it easy day, with an extended lunch break whilst cooling our feet in the sea.

KAYAKING & VIA FERRATA

Lucy enjoying the whopping 55m abseil. The photo doesn't do justice to the "uncontrolled spinning". Perhaps not as serene as it looks.

Cala Gorone is situated at the northern end of Golfo di Orosei National Park, a very wild section of coast devoid of any kind of development. Access to this stretch of coast can be had by renting a gommoni (RIB), and you see a constant procession of these heading up and down the coast transporting sun seekers to deserted (but only early morning and late afternoon) beaches. We opted for a quieter mode of transport, kayaks, and made an overnight trip down the coast exploring the fascinating limestone cliffs intimately. We spent a relaxed (if illegal) night on the beach at Cala Sissine, and were blessed with a beautiful sunrise.

One advantage of staying overnight at Cala Sissine was that this was the starting point of the Punta Plumare via ferrata, which otherwise can only be approached via a 2 hour drive followed by another hours walk. Although we'd know about this via ferrata for a few days, it was only at the last minute that we'd actually found directions to the start of it - on a German blog no less. We'd paddled underneath the massive walls of Plumare the day before, but had been unable to determine any possible line across the cliffs. The early start meant we did all of the uphill in the cool part of the day, but it was still 400m of height gain, so we arrived at the start of the cables rather sweaty. The route follows a natural ledge system that cuts horizontally across the cliff, taking you past cave formations that feel totally unvisited. As you progress, the land gradually drops away, and the route culminates with a very exposed step around a corner, with at least 100m of free air beneath your feet. It's impossible not to hang on the cable, but maintaining any sort of traction with sweaty palms makes the whole process quite challenging. The backdrop is amazing, lush jungle beneath and azure blue water behind, it's unforgettable.

But with this crux, the fun isn't over. First, there's a warm up 30m abseil off the ledge system. It was on this that our ropes got stuck, and meant I had to jumar half way back up and make myself safe on a tree root, in order to flip the ropes over the stickage. This ate a little time and put me in a more nervous state of mind for the next abseil. This was a whopping 55m one, which goes down a vertical wall for 5m, and then into free space. This is the longest free hanging abseil I've ever done, and my mouth was bone dry as I was lowering myself onto it. But it's amazing, a definite highlight of not just the trip, but all of the abseiling I've ever done. Big respect to Lucy though, she came over the edge with no hesitation, although was a little put off by the uncontrolled spinning. There are two further abseils on the walk back to the beach, but nothing quite so scary.

CANYONING

The internet came to our rescue again when we were researching canyoning in the area. These activities are offered by some the adventure companies, and we figured we had the kit and ability to do these ourselves, as long as we had the info to get to the start - once in a canyon, no route finding is required. A UK couple we met pointed us to a website with a GPS track for Codula Fuili, a gorge system that spits you out at the Cala Fuili we'd visited a few days earlier. You start in a dry riverbed in a shallow gorge, and simply point down-stream. Some in-situ ropes help you down large jammed boulders, the riverbed continues to fall as the walls get taller. You get to a pinch point where the sides come together to a matter of meters, and find a set of bolts, from where you make where a 20m abseil down a vertical section of riverbed. There's no escape at this point - the smooth sides would impossible to climb. The gorge twists and turns, you can never see more than 5 meters ahead. It's scary to think what would happen in a flash flood, just how quickly could this squeeze fill with water? After another 20m abseil, the sides become more featured and the gorge opens out a little. Other gorges appear to join from the sides, and there's a lot more vegetation. Soon enough you spot goat poo, and hear the clinking of their bells. But the gorge keeps going, perhaps for another 40 minutes, until you finally end up down at the beach. What a great journey that was.

Whetted by this experience, we wanted more. We read about a canyon system just inland, Codula Badde Pentumas, featuring a whopping 12 abseils! Again, we found a blog with a GPS track to the start, which would have been invaluable as it boulder hopped up a mountainside following the occasional cairn. The blog warned us not to under-estimate the trip, expect to spend at least 7 hours on it. Again, it started innocently enough, a vague depression across some grassland, that quickly deepened into a recognisable canyon about 10 meters wide by 10 meters deep. It then took a sharp left turn and seemingly ploughed through the canyon wall. We could see it opened out beyond, and that there were some bolts, but the immediate way ahead dropped out of site. We decided to luncheon before things got serious.

Suitably sated, we harnessed up, and scrambled down to the first set of bolts, and had our first view into the canyon proper. It was a great sight, the canyon really opened up, and the natural course of the now dry river, dropped in a series of scooped ledges until it disappeared out of sight. The first abseil was down a super smooth wall apparently into a near perfectly circular pool. I stacked the free ends of the rope in my bag to keep them out of the water, pulling out short lengths of slack to allow me to



Upper canyon Badde Pentumas

Abseil number...
erm...I forgot...





Badde Pentumenas
abseil 9, or 10. Or is it
11?

descend a little bit at a time. After 12 meters, and just above the pool, the wall cut back, to provide a narrow dry ledge onto which I descended. The rock architecture was amazing, I'd never seen anything like it. The rock was super smooth, and looked like it had been gouged out of the hill by some massive ice cream scoop. There wasn't a hint of any vegetation in this part of the canyon, and I could imagine that during a heavy rain storm then the water would gush down on all sides and this would be the last place you'd want to be. After two abseils, we followed the natural course of the river on foot, again on very smooth rock.

The route twisted and turned, we could never see more than tens of meters in front. Another abseil down a slab took us into a more familiar looking river bed stream, with small pebbles, although the walls above remained smooth and steep. Another abseil. This was great practice in setting them up efficiently and stowing the rope quickly. Another abseil, this one definitely dropping into a pool, and requiring us to remove trainers at a half way ledge. The canyon bottom was only a couple of feet wide at this point, and retreat was most definitely impossible by now. Turning a corner we got to what we expected to be the biggest abseil, at 25m. But it looked a lot longer than that, surely our info was correct, how could two 30m ropes not be enough? I went first on this one, the route taking us down a steep slab washed with a now sizeable waterfall. We'd gave up on trying to keep the rope (and our feet) dry by this point. The green algae underfoot was very slippery, so it was reassuring to know we had prussiks backing up our belay devices. Sure enough, it was only 25m, so I reached the bottom with rope to spare. Now a short walk to another abseil, dry again now as the river had percolated away through the bed.

We had tried to keep track of our abseil count, but there were so many of them we really weren't sure where we are. The walking sections between the abseils were increasing, as was the vegetation in the canyon. But escape up the walls or back the way we came was impossible, the only way was onwards. After 20 minutes of scrambling over boulders we still hadn't come to another abseil. We'd been in the canyon almost 5 hours, and it was finally starting to open up a little. We reached a massive overhanging rockface, and spied some bolts creeping up them. We'd reached the climbing area, and the technical sections of the canyon were now over. But we still had over an hour still to go, until the canyon walls finally sank behind us and we reached the dirt road of the main valley. What a day, we were super stoked from the near continuous adrenaline ride we'd just experienced, and felt chuffed from the fact that we'd done it all unaided.

MULTI-PITCH CLIMBING

And so we came to our final day in Sardinia. The Mistrale that had been battering the island for the past few days was set to come to an end, and although we expected rain first thing, the forecast said dry from midday. With that in mind we drove up the windy road out of Cala Gorone, and headed the 40 minutes inland to a Surtana, a multi-pitch sport venue with some relatively easy routes. We had our eye on Sound of Silence, a 140m 5c classic. Although the forecast appeared bang on by the time we arrived, making the hike up to the valley rather sweaty, by the time we found the route (thankfully written in marker pen on the rock!?), the clouds that had stubbornly sat further up the valley were now rapidly approaching, and soon it was raining enough to thoroughly drench the rock walls. After 30 mins the rain stopped, and the strong wind set about drying the rock within another half hour.

We flaked out the rope and arranged the quickdraws, but then another rain shower started and we had to retreat to the shelter of our dwarfed pine shrub. After a further hour delay, the rock was dry again, and the skies had cleared enough to give us confidence that that was the last of it. But it was now 3pm, and with dusk around 7pm, it was unlikely we could complete the route, especially since the descent was by abseil. We toyed with the idea of retreating to the coastal crags, where we could safely climb into the gloom. And my main concern was actually from the wind, which was still gusting hard and really puts the sh1ts up me. But the advantage of multi-pitch sport is the bolted belays, from which retreat is always possible. So with this in mind, I started up, with the first belay my only goal. And the climbing was amazing. The rock was so sharp, and the holds just juggy enough to make the next move, that soon enough you were 30 meters up a steep


rockface with some impressive exposure below. The route ahead never looked easy, but every time you stepped up, or committed to a hidden jug, then another good hold presented itself. The final 5 meters followed a crack up an overhanging section of face, very intimidating from below, but on wonderful holds. I was relieved to arrive at the belay as the drag from the double ropes (used to allow for longer abseil descents) was becoming unbearable. Lucy made quick work of the route, but when the sounds of her singing drifted up to me when she reached the final wall, I knew she too was finding it challenging. I still knew we would not reach the top, but we had to go on, the climbing was just too good. Another intimidating pitch, climbing out on an exposed arete to a good ledge, then following a rising hand crack up a very steep wall. As before, always intimidating but giving out just enough.

Every time the I heard the sound on the trees far below being moved around violently, I knew I only had a second or two before that gusty hit me, and I always had to time the more bold moves to a quiet spell, sometimes having to wait a good 30 seconds. Another long pitch brought me to the second belay, perched on top of a delicate looking pillar clearly not entirely attached to the main wall. Again, Lucy climbed admirably, although had great doubt about the stability of the pillar, and wanted to get off it as soon as possible. It was so tempting to go on, we still had over an hour of daylight, plus another of dusk, and the pitches only got easier. But my main fear was actually the wind. I've abseiled in the dark before, but I knew that if the wind caught the rope as we were pulling them down, and caused them to jam on the infinite number of sharp spikes, then I may be faced with having to climb back up in the dark, and then with a consequently much shorter rope. With no one else on the crag, and with no reception or suitable clothes to be benighted on the crag, we made the reluctant decision to descend. Back at the first belay I was careful to keep enough tension on the rope to prevent the wind catching up, but not so much that it prevented Lucy from feeding it through her belay device as she descended. Never-the-less, at one point the wind caught it and dragged it round the arete. I waited for the gust to abate, before sending a sharp flick up the rope. Thankfully this brought the rope back this side of the arete, and the descent continued without further incident. With my feet firmly back on the solid ground, I finally relaxed.

A late afternoon epic on the day before you are due to fly home would make a great diary entry, but is still probably best avoided. It's was a shame not to have completed the route, and maybe it's naive to assume that we will return one day. But having sussed out Sardinia, and knowing what it has to offer, we will always have in it our back pocket if we want to escape the drizzle of the UK.

Sound of Silence (5c) on the last day. This might be the first time you've ever seen someone climbing in Gore-tex with the sleeves rolled to the elbow. Must be a Euro-climbing thing, like dressing up like a bird of paradise on Kalymnos.





Karl and Lucy anchored to the rock together on Sound of Silence (5c). Not to be outshone by Lucy, it looks like Karl is rocking the Covid hairstyle that was so popular back in 2020.

OGWEN

Oct, 2021

The Caseg Fraith hut was home to the Ogwen meet in early October. Despite the inclement weather on Saturday, the attendees wanted to send a message to those members who'd jetted off to Kalymnos. To prove the point that the UK is still awesome in the wet, and knowing all too well that several of those in Greece have the classic scramble up the Dolmen Ridge on their bucket list, they ticked it off. Stick it to the man!



Sunday was lovely :)

as in 'Paul Rigby', not as in
'hoist the main sail'

RIGGERS AND THE TERRORS OF THE WATERWAYS



Photo by Vicky Higgins

In late September a group of Mercians including Huw, Anna, Riggers, Beth, Fabian, Zoe, Vicky, Harry, Vijay, Manjit and Matt headed to Tackley in Oxfordshire for a weekend of canal boating. The excuse was a birthday or an anniversary or a bar mitzvah or something...but it matters not as the Mercians need no excuse for a bit of faffery.

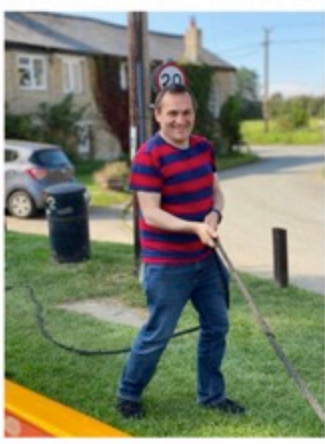
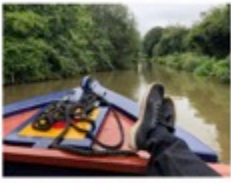
The weekend started on a high note as we all met in a pub which was simultaneously hosting a wake. We mingled with mourners as we ate pizza before heading through some muddy fields to find out boat and our bed for the night.

After a Beth cooked breakfast, we headed south towards on the canal towards overly-educated Oxford on a mission to lower the average IQ of the city with our presence. We had all been kindly subjected to a 'Huwtorial' on lock opening/closing etiquette and good practice but reverted to back to form with screaming and chaos arriving at the first opportunity to lower the boat. Traveling down beautiful locks was only interrupted by a lovely lunch prepared by Vicky and obscene amounts of tea drinking. While people perched on various precarious parts of the boat we all

took in the Oxfordshire countryside and dodged dangerous swans. We took a detour out of the canal later in the day, heading into River Thames when the idea of wild swimming was mentioned.

Most of the crew quickly changed into their unmentionables and took a dip in the pristine Thames water. All of the swimmers enjoyed themselves and Beth is already addicted to the activity but Huw decided to get hooked...literally as he impaled his foot on a stray fishing hook. Despite help from the less squeamish the hook was firmly embedded in the 'meat' of his foot and could not be removed without medical expertise. He took a diversion from the canal boat to visit A&E but was rushed through so that he could later join us at the pub for a meal.

Back on the boat Beth and Vicky celebrated their birthdays before well tucked ourselves up in our beds for another early night. On the Sunday, it was more of the same. Banana bread fuelled the crew and tea lubricated the now practiced canalling team as we made our way north and back out of Oxford. More locks, more chaos and more laughs we shared before we moored up for the final time and made the sad journey home with just the memories of another Mercian outing to console us.



THE 6a DIARIES

A Kalymnos Tale

Words by Daniel Hand

Photos by Stewart Moody, Vicki Moody and Ruth Wragg

I was 22 meters of the ground and I had nowhere to go. I had climbed a metre or two up and to the left from my last clip but could see no way to move back across to the next. I knew I could either take a swinging whipper over classic “cheese grater” rock or try and downclimb the desperate holds and attempt another line. They do say don’t climb up something you can’t climb back down.

This was the second day of our hot rock holiday to Kalymnos. I’d had my first introduction to limestone sport climbing the day before, at a local crag above Massouri, and today we (myself, Huw, Ruth, Stew and Vicki) had decided to head off to the nearby Island of Telendos by boat. Soon we were bouncing across the Channel towards Irox bay with the spray in our faces and quickdraws in our packs. Above us lay the ancient ruins of the fortified settlement of Ayios where 7th century kalymnoians used to shelter from pirates. Like modern day crag raiders, we jumped of a bobbing boat directly onto the rocks of the bay.

One of the ferries departing from Irox Bay. The crag runs across the clean sweep of rock immediately above the boat, with routes getting progressively harder as you move left.



Dan on Astypalea, having overcome the tricky boulder start and getting ready for the 'easy' ground above.



Steep slab climbing was the order of the morning, with us moving over to sector Miltiadis after lunch. After some easy leading I wanted to try my first 5c lead: Astypalea. My wall grade is 6a, so I had set myself a target for the holiday of at least achieving this on real rock. I had my first real summer of outdoor climbing behind me; however, this was largely focused on technically easy trad lead climbing. How would this translate to objectively harder and longer limestone sport?

From the ground Astypalea looked like it would be a boulder problem to start and then ease off, such is the hubris of trying to assess routes longer than you are familiar with on unfamiliar terrain. After the difficult start I had thought the worst was over, but every meter I climbed up had got progressively steeper and the holds smaller. Little sharp nubs of limestone the size of a pea or more generously a Malteser, sometimes conglomerating into what's known as a "chicken head".

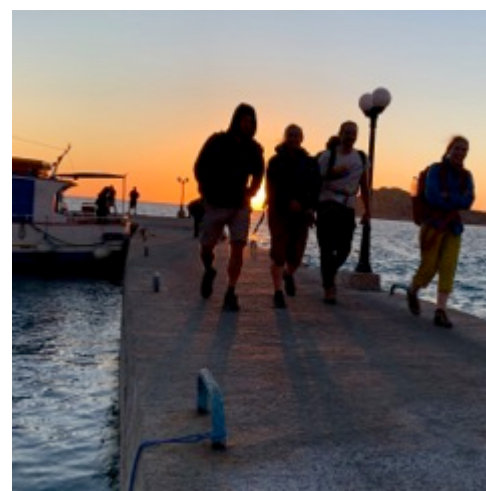
It was these small holds that I now down-climbed, a feat that felt desperate and sure to fail. Nevertheless I made it back to the clip and committed to a rest to regain my composure. Like many false turns the way to the left looked initially easier than the right, this time going right after a few bad holds I could see a line and was shortly at the top, with aching foot arches from my first introduction to sharp edge climbing.

Days later, having 30 minutes round the island on our scooters, Huw and Ruth and I were trudging up in the afternoon sun through a hell blasted landscape to sector Styx above Emporios. In Greek mythology Styx is the river that marks the boundary of the underworld, Hades. While a dam was present (presumably to protect Emporios from flash floods in winter), I have never experienced a landscape of such desolation and ruin. All vegetation was dead or dying, just dust, rubble and oppressive heat as we approached our final climb of the day; Tönerner Krug (6a).

Stew had promised interesting 3D climbing with some of the character of a popular climb from earlier in the week - Jug Parade (5b) at Palionisos bay. Could this be my first 6a lead? Stew remained cryptic; "as good as any other", "It's been a few years". Feeling the pressure when we arrived, I quickly drank as much water as I could and geared up, while the others sheltered as much as they could in the shade of a solitary tree. The climb looked nether straightforward or easy from the bottom, nevertheless I scrambled up to the first clip and started up the airy arête that marked the left edge of a tall cave, some holds on the face, and some in the cave. Again, I found myself away from the clip, this time with a definite ground (or cave) fall if I missed it. To my shame or credit, I decided to bail at this point with the excuse of wanting to watch Huw attempt the route. Had I lost the last chance to bag my 6a on the penultimate day of the holiday?



Left: Waiting for the return boat on Telendos having sunk a few ice cold Mythos (I'm going to go with Mythos as the plural of Mythos) at the On The Rocks bar, a favourite of Stew and Vicki who acted as tour guides for the trip.



Left: Arriving back on Kalymnos after a day climbing on Telendos. Time to hit the showers and sample some of the amazing Greek cuisine. Any maybe do some more drunk shopping at the La Sportiva shop.

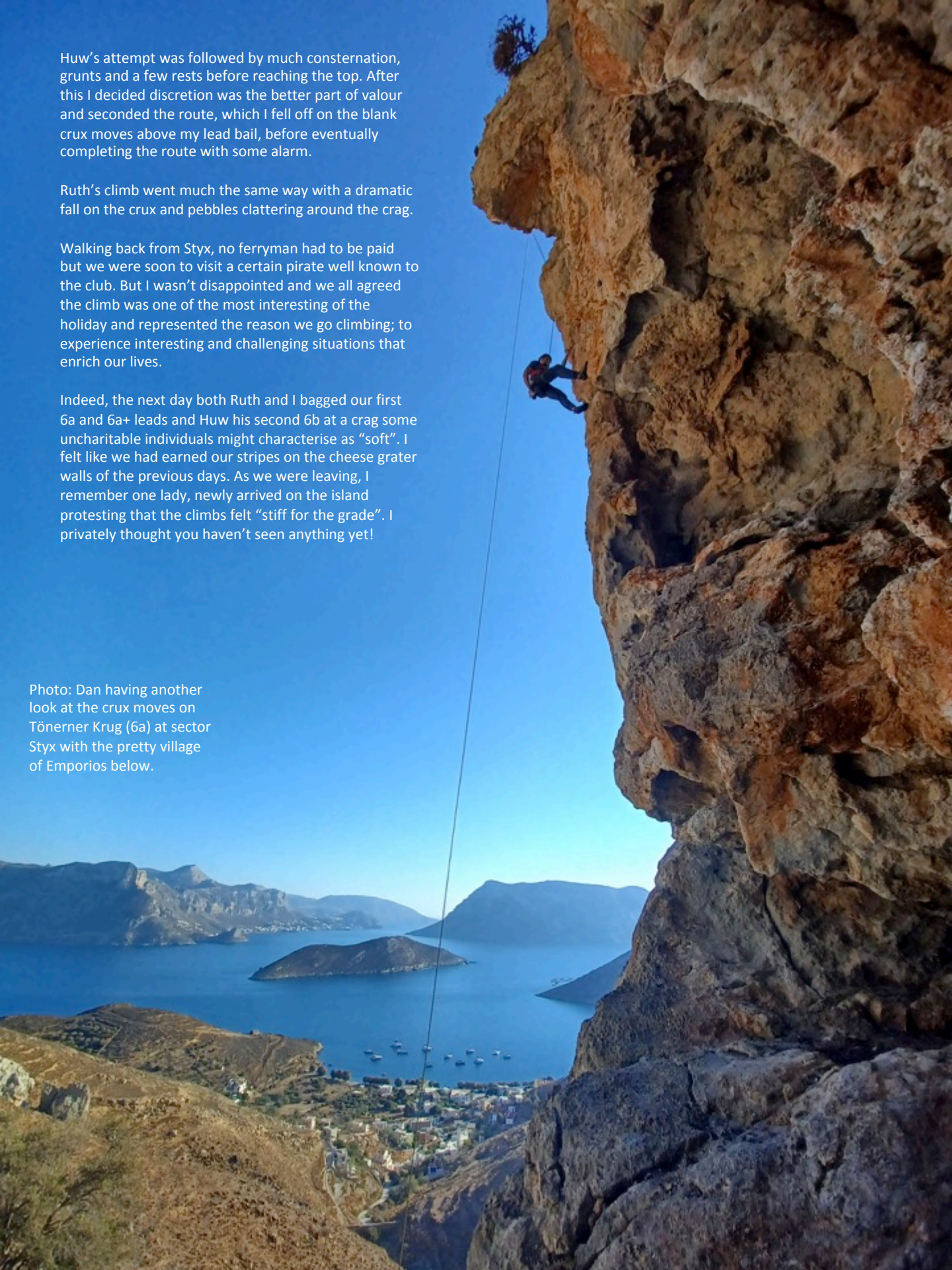
Huw's attempt was followed by much consternation, grunts and a few rests before reaching the top. After this I decided discretion was the better part of valour and seconded the route, which I fell off on the blank crux moves above my lead bail, before eventually completing the route with some alarm.

Ruth's climb went much the same way with a dramatic fall on the crux and pebbles clattering around the crag.

Walking back from Styx, no ferryman had to be paid but we were soon to visit a certain pirate well known to the club. But I wasn't disappointed and we all agreed the climb was one of the most interesting of the holiday and represented the reason we go climbing; to experience interesting and challenging situations that enrich our lives.

Indeed, the next day both Ruth and I bagged our first 6a and 6a+ leads and Huw his second 6b at a crag some uncharitable individuals might characterise as "soft". I felt like we had earned our stripes on the cheese grater walls of the previous days. As we were leaving, I remember one lady, newly arrived on the island protesting that the climbs felt "stiff for the grade". I privately thought you haven't seen anything yet!

Photo: Dan having another look at the crux moves on Tönerner Krug (6a) at sector Styx with the pretty village of Emporios below.



Right: Dan having returned to Earth after leading his first 6a. He went on to lead 6a+ an hour later. Big smiles all round. The photo is taken at Arginonta Skyline if you are interested, a very peaceful crag with incredible views.



Above: Time to celebrate with some seafood, some chicken and some Mythos. All served up by the World's favourite pirate. Although the image was shattered some hours later when Vic saw said pirate driving his dented 4x4 through Masouri. We prefer to pretend it was someone who looked just like him.

PHOTO COMP 2021

The entries were plentiful, but there can be only one winner



But first, the runners up...



Category Winner

Fun

Vijay's massage parlour

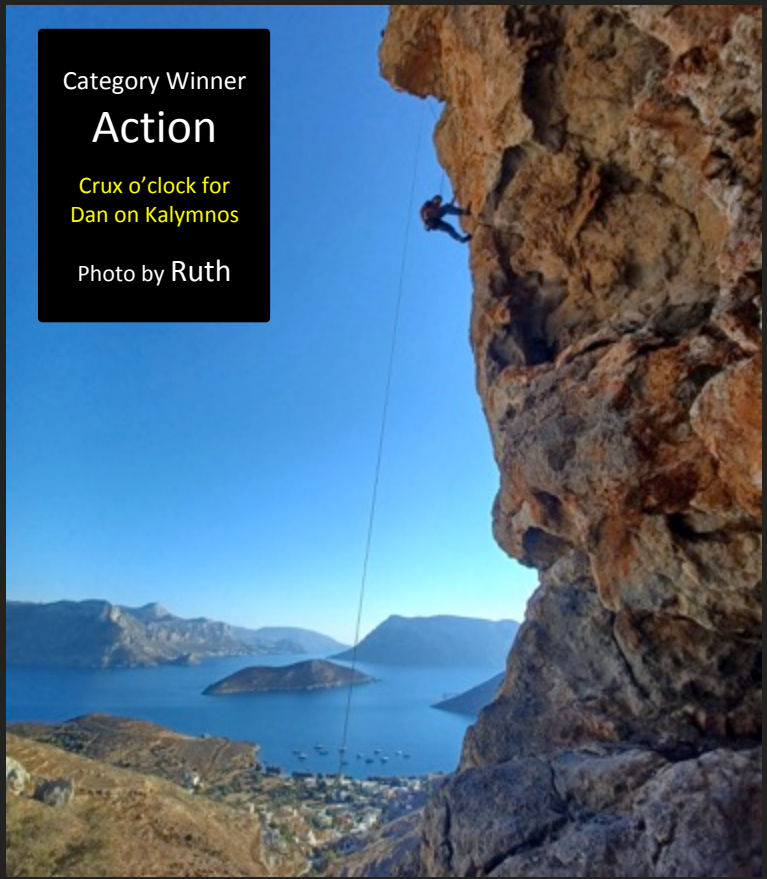
Photo by Ruth

Category Winner

Action

Crux o'clock for Dan on Kalymnos

Photo by Ruth



Category Winner

Meets

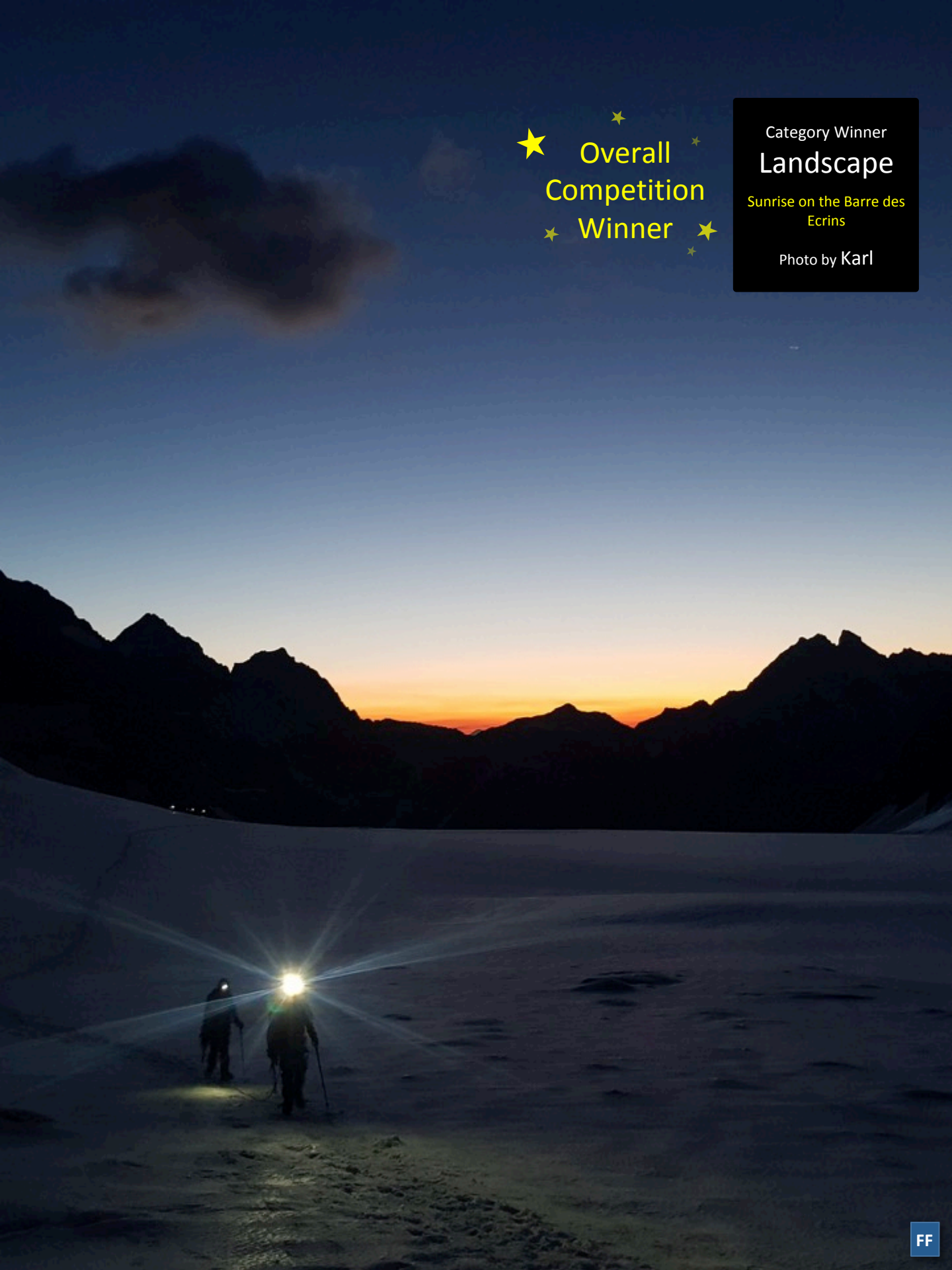
Adam enjoying the view on Great Gable

Photo by Beth



★ Overall
Competition
★ Winner ★

Category Winner
Landscape
Sunrise on the Barre des
Ecrins
Photo by Karl





MAPMAKERS

SINCE 1977

#PAPERMAPWINS

The bl**dy
thing is dead!

I shouldn't laugh,
but so is mine!



BATTERY RUN OUT?

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WALKING IN MADEIRA



Now that we've got the Geography lesson sorted, let's hear from [Lynn Taylor](#) about a trip she and her husband Geoff took some 25 years ago to this beautiful Atlantic island...

"Does it get any worse?" a small voice pleaded for reassurance. The owner of the voice was spread eagled anxiously against the cliff face. We were able to tell the young lady that the path didn't get any worse, but from her point of view it wasn't going to improve. A narrow cliff path 350 metres above sea level with a sheer drop into the sea, is just not the place for anyone who is inclined to suffer from vertigo, but it does mean that you can have some interesting and intimate encounters with strangers!

We were on the north coast path in Madeira on our second visit to the island, and finding it exhilarating. From Boca do Risca (dangerous pass) to the small town of Porta da Cruz one can look out over the island of Porto Santo on a clear day, or down to the waves breaking on the rocks far below. We had a glorious day for our walk; the sea was shimmering and the air balmy; every twist and turn of the path showed us new vistas and it was hard to keep our eyes on the track. We even had good company, with new friends acquired at the bus stop that morning. Some nine miles of walking from Machico gave us such a variety - a stroll beside a stream, a steep uphill pull to the pass, exciting coastal scenery, and a long descent through vineyards and potato fields down to an attractive small town. After refreshments at a seafront bar in Porta da Cruz we discovered that there was a bathing pool tucked into a little bay where waves came crashing in, making for exciting swimming. This little island seems to have everything, so always be prepared for the unexpected.

Boca do Risca



For the less intrepid walker there are 1,350 miles of levadas to explore. These watercourses are Madeira's irrigation system, work on which started centuries ago when the first settlers arrived. Paths run alongside the water, sometimes at dizzy heights, at other times they dive into tunnels, but they can also provide one with a safe and easy stroll if that is the order of the day. Certainly for some of these one needs to be extremely sure footed, but careful study of the guide books will reveal plenty that do not require a head for heights.

Levada Furado painting
by Lynn Taylor



A good introductory walk would be along the Levada do Castelejo starting out from Cruz. The walk up a cobbled lane to the levada is delightful, giving one the opportunity to admire the gardens of the little houses. We almost missed the start of the levada but were put right by a kind old lady who I suspect has helped many a lost walker. Along the levada we saw only a few locals weighed down by enormous bundles of fodder or harvesting willows ready for the basket makers at Camacha. The walk headed into the valley of the Ribeira de Sao Roque ending at a delightful picnic spot with crystal clear pools. If, like us, you get the early bus you can be sure of an hour and a half for private sunbathing before anyone else arrives! The small bar back in the village serves coffee or more fortifying refreshment, and if you are in need of some new wellies or even a double mousetrap (do Madeiran mice go around in pairs?) then this is the place to go to also. If the walk has not been long enough, head back up the hill and join the levada going in the other direction and walk the 2.5 miles to Referta. The bus stop is opposite the village butcher's shop, in reality a ramshackle stall with a tarpaulin roof but otherwise open to the elements and showing scant regard for anything resembling E.C. regulations, Wonderful!

Another good walk, albeit levada-less, is along the peninsular on the Eastern end of the island, the Ponta de San Lourenco. Lovely views can be

had from this walk; to the north you overlook magnificent rocks glowing colourfully in the sunlight, and to the south you look out over to the mysterious Desertas Islands. There's something about the light in Madeira that makes the sea sparkle like the best champagne.

Easter Day saw us at Camacha for another walk but we lingered in the village first to watch the procession round the flower-strewn square. Then it was a steep descent to the levada, which was not kind on the knees and ankles. The track wound down through an almost deserted village perched amongst apple trees on the hillside.

Agapanthus lilies and mimosa trees bordered the stream as it contoured round the mountains. Here and there we could see where local people had struggled to grow crops Himalayan style on terraces carved out of the steep ground. We admired their industry and envied them their rich friable soil and the climate that allows so much to be grown in such tiny plots. The walk ended with another steep descent into Assomada and the coast.

There are high peaks to entice the real mountaineers in Madeira like a good strenuous day up over the mountain from Curral das Freiras to Encumeada. The bus journey to Curral alone is breathtaking and fine views can be had from many points on the walk. In the lower regions flowers and butterflies abound. On the tops the air is sublime and if this isn't enough, the restaurant at Encumeada excels at fish dinners. A taxi back into Funchal shared with fellow walkers is unlikely to break the bank.

For a really exciting day get up early and drive to Pico do Arrieiro, watch the mist evaporate in the morning sun, and set out along the airy paths to Pico Ruivo and Achada do Texeira. If your partner is as obliging as mine is and volunteers to reverse the walk and fetch the car to the end you are fortunate, but don't be tempted like I was to walk down in to Santana to meet him. I developed a funny walk for a couple of days while my leg muscles recovered.

Madeira is an easy island to get around. The local buses are cheap and reliable and taxis and hire cars are very reasonable too. Most of the drivers are polyglots speaking four or five languages with ease. They are also knowledgeable about most of the more popular walks and can point out the starting places and will arrange to meet you at the other end if necessary. Wonderful walking, flowers, birds, geology, good food, friendly people; what more could one ask of a holiday? We used several guidebooks, but the one we found most useful was the Sunflower Guide by John and Pat Underwood. Now we know our way around to some extent I think we will take a large-scale map and try to pick out our own routes next time. Who knows what we will find- the only certainty is that we will be back.



DARTMOOR

Oct, 2021

The annual dinner meet. Always popular. This one was fully subscribed within hours of being announced on the forum, with a few stragglers muttering “wow, that filled up fast!”. It did fill up fast. And for good reason too. Dartmoor is the home of fine granite outcrops, windswept moors, and pretty river valleys. Most of us have little experience of the area so we had plenty to go at, with climbers heading to Hay Tor (which we nearly got blown off the top of) and hikers aiming for a wild swim in an isolated pool high on the moors (where it was too cold to take the plunge). Dinner itself was a grand affair in the Abbey Inn in the small town of Buckfastleigh (yes, it’s where they brew the infamous ‘Buckie’. Confused? Ask a Glaswegian). Everyone looked mighty dapper in their finest attire, even Karl’s dog Dylan got dressed for the occasion. To cap it all off Karl and Lucy cooked up a massive fry up on the Sunday morning, a very good use of that extra hour we got when the clocks went back.



Good man leg from Ian on Haytor



Say hello to the locals.



Wandering down the Dart river valley.



Saturday morning means park run for some, a chilled morning for others.

Saturday morning was clear and cold when the climbers walked into Haytor for some short granite climbs. The ponies were a nice distraction, but not while belaying!





Amandeep and Sunny won the prize for best dressed.



Thank you to Naomi for giving a speech.



In a word - tidy.



After dinner drinks in the Globe Inn.



BONFIRE NIGHT

A large bonfire is the central focus, burning brightly at night. A wooden chair is perched on top of the fire, its back to the viewer. The fire is intense, with bright orange and yellow flames reaching upwards. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some wearing red jackets and others in dark clothing. The scene is set outdoors at night, with a dark sky and some distant lights. The overall atmosphere is festive and dramatic.

When it comes to the 5th of November the Mercian's are well known for putting on a big show. This year was to prove no exception.

On the run up to the big night Zoe had been busy skip diving in the streets of south Birmingham to source a massive pile of wood to build the club's biggest ever bonfire.

A veggie chilli with all the trimmings was served to the hungry hoards who waited expectantly. And as our fireworks lit up the sky we couldn't help but notice what appeared to be 3 or 4 old Christmas trees lashed together length-ways in the corner of the garden. They looked a bit totempole-ish. Stranger still was the wooden prop hinged onto them. Clearly we were in for a treat.

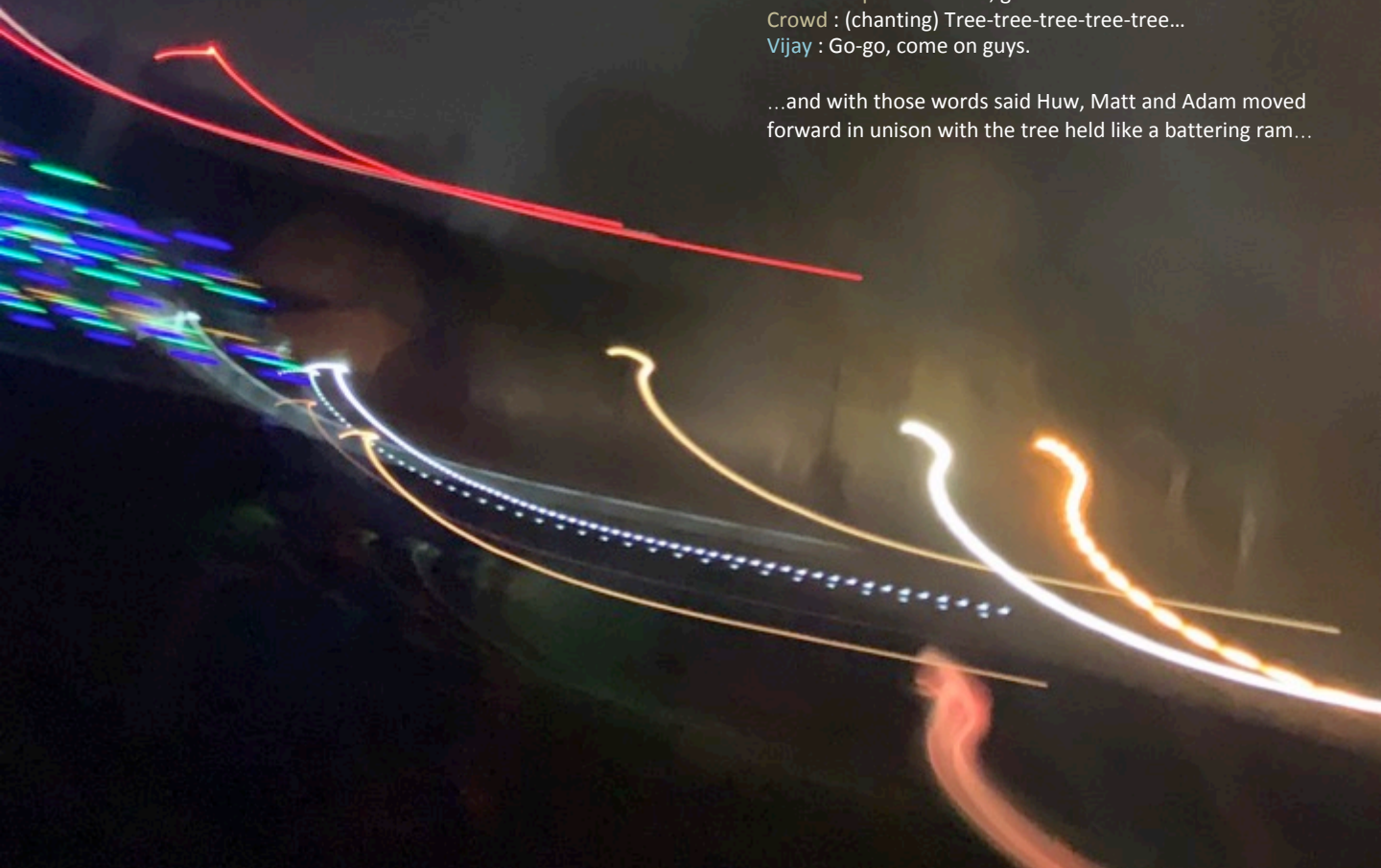
With the last rocket fired the bonfire was lit in a slightly unorthodox way. Moments later the flames began to lick at the feet of the guy as he sat statesman like atop the 9 foot high pyre.

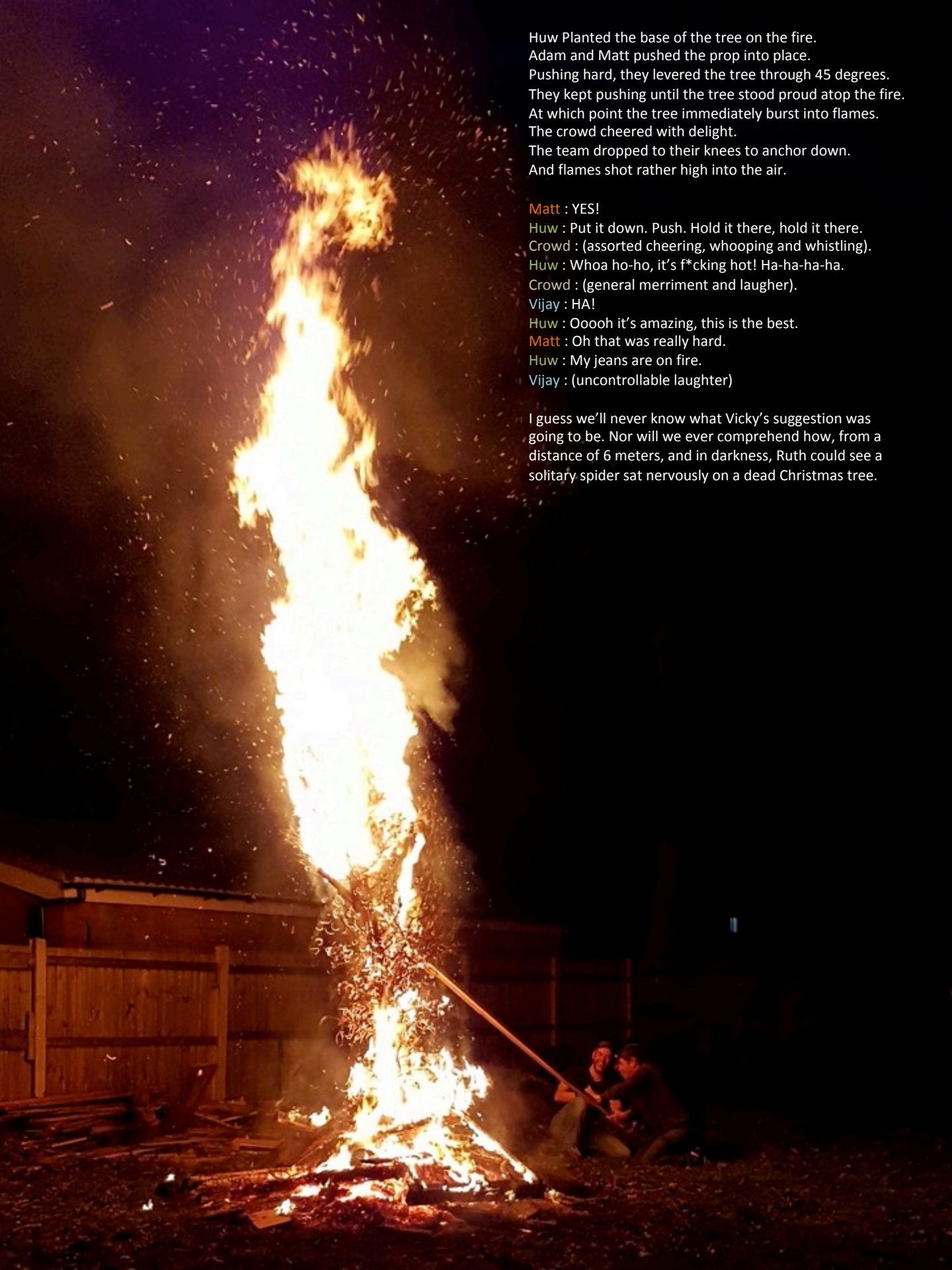
Later that evening, with the fire roaring and the guy all but vapourized, Matt and Huw turned their attention to the Christmas trees. The crowd swelled, and with cameras rolling the dialogue was captured as our heroes wrestled the trees towards the fire and paused to figure out exactly how this was to be done...

Ruth : Is it going on like that?
Vijay : It'll never go like that on the fire.
Ruth : That's not realistic.
Matt : (to Huw) How are we gonna get it close to the fire?
Huw : Don't worry about that, you just hold the pole.
Ruth : (points to tree) Can I point out there's a spider here.
Crowd : Assorted chuckling and cackling, led by Vijay.
Vijay : As you can see it isn't gonna bloody work.
Matt : How are we gonna get the base of that tree on top of that fire?
Huw : Guys...
Matt : Show me. Show me how you're gonna do it.
Huw : Guys, guys...
Matt : Listen to me, right
Huw : If...
Vicky : (very politely) Can I make a suggestion?
Matt : (to Huw) No-no-no wait, let me finish right. HUW!
Huw : Yeah?
Matt : Imagine the fire is here (points to ground), yeah...
Crowd : (assorted laughter).
Matt : And it's this high (holds hand level with rib cage), how are you gonna f*ckin' lift it up onto that fire?
Ruth : It's not gonna happen.
Vicky : (with hand raised) can I make a suggestion please?
Huw : Matt, Matt, as soon as I put it on it'll start going and you have to erect it straight away.
Matt : Demonstrate it to me.
Vicky : (still politely) Can I make a suggestion?
Matt : Demonstrate it.

Huw : (to Adam) You understand? You understand, yes Ok.
Adam : (nods).
Huw : Do we need to get Matt out of the equation?
Vicky : (still very politely) Can I make a suggestion?
Matt : Demonstrate it.
Vicky : (with much patience) I've got my hand up.
Matt : Right, demonstrate how you're gonna f*cking do it.
Huw : So, Matt, Matt, I've just had a chat to Adam and he understands.
Crowd : (chanting) Tree, tree, tree...
Huw : As soon as I put the bottom of the tree on the fire it's gonna go.
Matt : (smiling) Show me, show me.
Adam : (to Matt) It's going right in the fire, just here.
Matt : It's not gonna work.
Huw : (speaking to Vijay) It is, it's massively gonna to work.
Matt : (turns to Adam, laughs) Come on then, let's just do it.
Vijay : Right, right, right.
Matt : Let's just f*ckin' do it then.
Vijay : Matt, Matt, Matt. What Huw's gonna do is pick it up and drop the end on.
Huw : And then you're gonna walk forwards to erect it. Are you ready?
Matt : Go on then. Less talking, less....yeah...yeah, f*cking come on!
Huw : (looks at Adam) You got it?
Adam : Yep, we're good.
Huw : It's gonna have to be quick guys.
Vijay : Hold on guys, hold on, hold on. STOP, STOP.
Huw : Have you got the video running?
Crowd : (chanting) Tree-tree-tree...
Unknown person : (chanting) Whoop-whoop-whoop.
Unknown person : Yeah, go on.
Crowd : (chanting) Tree-tree-tree-tree-tree...
Vijay : Go-go, come on guys.

...and with those words said Huw, Matt and Adam moved forward in unison with the tree held like a battering ram...





Huw Planted the base of the tree on the fire.
Adam and Matt pushed the prop into place.
Pushing hard, they levered the tree through 45 degrees.
They kept pushing until the tree stood proud atop the fire.
At which point the tree immediately burst into flames.
The crowd cheered with delight.
The team dropped to their knees to anchor down.
And flames shot rather high into the air.

Matt : YES!

Huw : Put it down. Push. Hold it there, hold it there.

Crowd : (assorted cheering, whooping and whistling).

Huw : Whoa ho-ho, it's f*cking hot! Ha-ha-ha-ha.

Crowd : (general merriment and laughter).

Vijay : HA!

Huw : Ooooh it's amazing, this is the best.

Matt : Oh that was really hard.

Huw : My jeans are on fire.

Vijay : (uncontrollable laughter)

I guess we'll never know what Vicky's suggestion was going to be. Nor will we ever comprehend how, from a distance of 6 meters, and in darkness, Ruth could see a solitary spider sat nervously on a dead Christmas tree.



Note from the Editor

Hello. For some of you the notion of an AV (Audio Visual) may be foreign, and a whole show of AVs even more foreign (foreigner? oh, hang on, I should be looking for Beatles references). Anyway, Malc is an award winning maestro in his field and has even been known to present his AVs on hut meets when many of us come together. Being a man who is free as a bird, he has climbed some amazing mountains with a little help from his friends. Anyway, to get back on topic, Malc often features people and faces in his AVs that you might well recognise. Goodbye.

The Magical Mystery Tour

by Malcolm Imhoff



Photo: Kate Nicholls



Photo: Keith Leedham

Putting on an AV or Video show is an excellent way of raising funds for your favourite charity. Twenty years ago I started giving an AV (Audio Visual) show in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Initially with Maggie it eventually became an annual and much anticipated event. In addition to the show we also organised a meal in the interval, baked potatoes with various fillings such as chilli, and more recently a fish and chip supper. After Maggie died I carried on, with the indispensable help of three good friends.

Last year (2020) it didn't happen of course, but this year it was a very special event, a Beatles themed evening. I have made quite a few Beatles AVs, and so have many of my AV friends, whose arms I twisted to let me show their sequences, which ranged from photographs set to Beatles tunes, interpretations of Beatles songs, to full length documentaries about the Beatles themselves.

We got well into the spirit and the "Fab Four" as we became known, dressed up in Sergeant Pepper costumes for the night. Several of our regular supporters also dressed to impress too, and it was nice to see a few Mercians in the audience of nearly a hundred.

This was our fifteenth show, and over the years we have raised thousands of pounds for Macmillan. This year we were not able to accommodate as many people because of the need for social distancing, but we managed to raise over £1,500. Some of this was money sent by our supporters who could not actually attend, usually because they live a long distance away. Such is the amazing generosity of people.

It is still possible to donate if you wish, either via my Facebook page (Malcolm Imhoff) where if you scroll down to the post with the green Macmillan logo, there is a "Donate" button. Alternatively, there is a page on the Just Giving [website](#), which can be found by searching for "Malcolm Imhoff" and "The Magical Mystery Tour".

For the benefit of our younger members, The Beatles were a band who were quite famous in the 60s and 70s.

Peace and Love,

John

ACCELERATE YOUR CAREER AS A MECHANIC

Courses starting in September 2022, **enroll now**

Guaranteed 10 hours
per week face-to-
face 'Huwtorials' on
our purpose built
Korotane Campus

Ok, only kidding about this advert. The real story behind this photo is that one Thursday evening Stew didn't make it to the climbing wall because he got a flat, and had to change his wheel. A few of the wall crowd realised they didn't know how to change a wheel, so Huw arranged a social meet to fill the knowledge gap. Here you can see everyone hard at it, in a safe controlled environment rather than the side of the Aston Expressway with cars zipping by. Good job Huw.



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

#IAMBCU

NICE SHOWER?

Matt Campling applies the principles of science to measure the quality of a shower



censored

censored

Hello Mercians. My name is Matt Campling. I've not been a club member for long and this is my first article for the Faff. I hope you all enjoy it and that it leaves a lasting legacy for present and future generations of Mountaineers.

Some of you may have observed that the facilities I use to perform the daily task of washing are extremely important to me. Spiritual and community rituals around bathing have existed for millennia, and I believe that our capacity to appreciate the atmosphere and surroundings of this daily act and to take mental nourishment from it is what separates us from the animals.

Things have admittedly moved on over the centuries and these days the simple act of "showering" means many things to many people. For me, it's a time to reflect and meditate on time passed and think about the future whilst I clean myself. The humble shower is also an essential part of a Mercian day out,

whether it is the relief of a toasty soak after a failed summit attempt in horizontal rain, or the quick splash-n-dash before a summer camping night of BBQ & beers. Sadly though, the bleak reality of a hut or campsite shower so often falls short of our expectations.

I strive for order and a systematic approach in all aspects of my life, so when it comes to the showering environment, I believe it's now time to do away with subjectivity. I've therefore developed a system for the Assessment & Rating of Shower Environments (ARSE).

The ARSE system is points based and is comprised of positive and negative attributes. Simply add up your positives, take away your negatives, 1 Point for each. Maximum score of +13. Minimum of -13. No longer when asked "nice shower?" do you need find the words to describe the crushing disappointment or relaxing bliss after a cold dribble or a hot blast respectively! Here comes the science part....

the **NEGATIVES**



Privacy

- Communal shower or no lock

Usage

- Pay per use or token system
- Push-in button shower

Temperature and Pressure

- Erratic temperature fluctuations
- Low pressure
- Lukewarm, cold, or just not hot enough

Environment

- Lack of dry clothes storage
- Loud screaming children or disruptive and rude people
- Broken items
- Communal drain

Cleanliness

- Mud, mould, hair, grass or used plaster
- High quantity of living or dead insects
- Bad Smells

the **POSITIVES**



Privacy

- Shower physically exists

Usage

- Unlimited & free access
- No queue

Temperature and Pressure

- Fire hose water pressure
- Adjustable temperature - up to scalding

Environment

- Ample space for hanging and storing dry items
- Optional seat that remains dry throughout
- Warm, pleasant ambient air temperature
- Dry Space for changing
- Caddy or rack for shampoos, gels & conditioners
- Bonus leftover toiletries
- Adjustable shower head angle or height

Cleanliness

- Ability to clean up after oneself with mop & bucket or squeegee

Understanding your ARSE score

13 to 10

This is a gold standard shower with hotel or home levels of comfort. Compliment the owner, shake their hand & give them a big hug.

9 to 6

This is a very good quality of shower. If a campsite or hut scores in this range you've experienced above average. Leave a positive Google review.

5 to 1

Average. Unfortunately for shower connoisseurs like me, this is what I've come to expect from most venues. Find time to leave concise & constructive feedback to the owners.

0 to -4

Below average. Serious consideration needs to be taken with regards to a return visit to this venue.

-5 to -9

Very, very poor. Complain to the owners and seek compensation for wasting your time.


-10 to -13

Danger to health and wellbeing. This shower may cause serious distress. Consider a river, lake, pond or solar shower alternative, and warn others.



For reference, here's an example I've scorecard in for the shower in Vicky's house.

Below is a cut out and keep score card for you to laminate and keep in your kit bag. No laminator? No problem! Pre-laminated versions are available directly from me with a dry wipe marker included for only £5! (plus £24.99 p&p)



ASSESSMENT & RATING of SHOWER ENVIRONMENTS

(ARSE)

LOCATION _____

<p>PRIVACY</p> <p><input type="radio"/> SHOWER EXISTS</p> <p>USAGE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> UNLIMITED & FREE ACCESS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO QUEUE</p> <p>TEMPERATURE AND PRESSURE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> FIRE HOSE WATER PRESSURE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> ADJUSTABLE TEMPERATURE - UP TO SCALDING</p> <p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p><input type="radio"/> AMPLE SPACE FOR HANGING & STORING DRY ITEMS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> OPTIONAL SEAT THAT REMAINS DRY THROUGHOUT</p> <p><input type="radio"/> WARM & PLEASANT AMBIENT AIR TEMPERATURE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> DRY SPACE FOR CHANGING</p> <p><input type="radio"/> CADDY OR RACK FOR SHOWERING ITEMS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BONUS LEFTOVER SHOWER GELS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> ADJUSTABLE SHOWER HEAD</p> <p>CLEANLINESS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> ABILITY TO CLEANUP AFTER ONESELF WITH MOP</p> <p style="border-top: 2px solid green; margin-top: 5px;">POSITIVE TOTAL</p>	<p>PRIVACY</p> <p><input type="radio"/> COMMUNAL SHOWER OR NO LOCK</p> <p>USAGE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> PAY PER USE OR TOKEN SYSTEM</p> <p><input type="radio"/> PUSH-IN BUTTON SHOWER</p> <p>TEMPERATURE AND PRESSURE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> ERRATIC TEMPERATURE FLUCTUATIONS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LOW PRESSURE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LUKEWARM, COLD OR NOT HOT ENOUGH</p> <p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LACK OF DRY CLOTHES STORAGE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LOUD SCREAMING CHILDREN</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BROKEN ITEMS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> COMMUNAL DRAIN</p> <p>CLEANLINESS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> MUD, MOULD, HAIRY PLUGHOLE OR USED PLASTER</p> <p><input type="radio"/> HIGH QUANTITY OF LIVING OR DEAD INSECTS</p> <p><input type="radio"/> BAD SMELLS</p> <p style="border-top: 2px solid red; margin-top: 5px;">NEGATIVE TOTAL</p>
---	--

TOTAL ARSE SCORE =

Wash Up

Looking forward to the future, I see great benefits of adopting ARSE for the club. Part of a post meet debrief could include collection of scores for a particular venue which could be used for future reference when choosing meet locations. Much better to choose a venue based on a sophisticated rating system, rather than the sketchy and fragmented memory of the Meets Sec. Leaving a strategically placed laminated score card in the hut or campsite shower could also help send a positive message to owners and other users. The potential net effect of this cannot be overlooked.

Hope you've enjoyed my first and probably last article for the Faff, I'm off for a shower!

WEEKEND AFTERNOONS AT

THE

DEPOT

BIRMINGHAM

BIG
SMILE →

← PUMPED
ARMS

In early November the weather crapped out and the days got shorter. We shed a collective tear as the chances of day hits to the Peak or Wales diminish. But dry your eyes folks! Bouldering at The Depot proved a hit, giving a blend of great routes, great coffee, great couches, and great local pubs to toast our successful high-balls and onsights.



TWINKE-TOED
SLAYER OF THE
BLACK NEMESIS



BOULDER NOW

BEERS LATER



HERO OF THE
DREADED
PURPLES



Enoch (left) proved to be a regular with his annual pass, and was leagues ahead of the rest of us. He ticked a few purples which most of us wouldn't even think to try.

PATTERDALE

Nov, 2021

Hola b*tches! This was the fastest selling meet in history. All spaces were booked within 16 minutes of this meet opening. Such is the popularity of our meets in the Lakes, and the Agnes Spencer hut which is really cosy. It was great to see so many new faces mixed in with veterans on this meet, and enthusiasm to get out in the hills was high. A quite un-Mercian 8:30am start saw 5 groups head out separately, but many bumped into each other by the Helvelyn summit cairn, which was lucky as the drizzle ("Active-cloud" as Dan would call it) had set in for the day. Saturday evening saw a few people head over to the Kendal Mountain Festival to join the audience watching Anna read from her entry in the Environmental Essay award. Others headed to the White Lion Inn for some high-value beers before a huge vegan curry was served. Sunday was a beauty as you can see in this photo of Anna hiking on High Street with a cold wind and incredible views. She's got a sprint on as she is being bought a roast dinner in Grasmere later in the day, a fact she took pleasure in mentioning at every possible opportunity. Bon appetite Anna!





The White Lion Inn, always a good shout



Lou on Striding Edge before the clag got worse.



Lou and Naomi taking shelter on Helvelyn summit.



How many chefs does it take to make rice for 24 people?

The sun briefly shone on Saturday, and the autumn colours were awesome. Best shared with your favourite hill friend



The beacon on High Street.





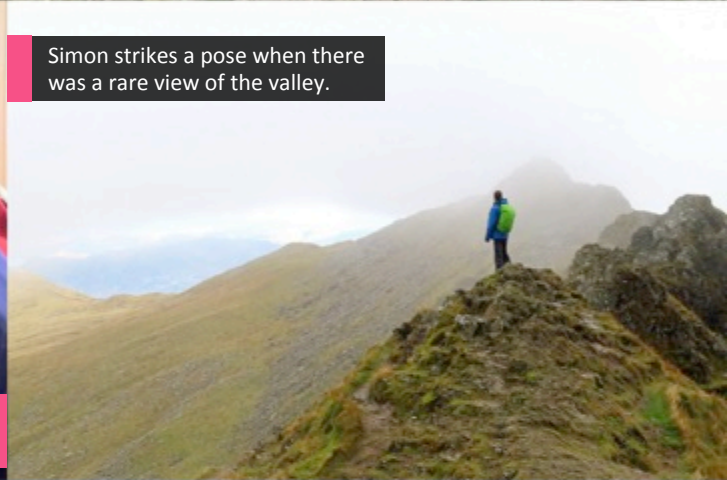
Owen on Striding Edge



Anna, Beth and Tommy.



Jules and Naomi heading back to their bunkhouse.



Simon strikes a pose when there was a rare view of the valley.



Almost everyone on Helvellyn?



One of the cairns on the Sunday hike over High Street



Descent from High Street.



Oops, I included the same photo twice. But what a lovely shot.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

GOVERNANCE ISN'T SEXY, BUT IT IS NECESSARY. WE EXTEND OUR THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED AND HELPED SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR BELOVED CLUB

As well as discussing how to accommodate meets when they are incredibly popular (a nice problem to have at the end of the day) we elected the new committee who are tasked with steering the good ship Mercia on a steady course for the next 12 months. So who are these selfless few who have volunteered a little of the time to run the club? Let's find out...



Vijay
Chair

Is he a good cook? Don't know. His mum is a fabulous cook, and has supplied many an incredible hut meet meal to the delight of the members.



Ruth
Promotions

All round mountain woman. Victim of one of the club's most notorious crimes - who did steal her apple on Kalymnos?



Vicky
Treasurer

At home on land and water. Lover of camper van conversions and kittens named after water features. The World's most polite fire marshal.



Dan
Librarian

La Sportiva's most loyal customer. Let's hope that he proves to be as committed to his librarian duties as he is to committing to rests on lead.



Adam
Meets

Lover of club merchandise. Great at taking prospective members out in the hills for their first climbs. Rubbish at making proper tea on a campsite.



Huw
Secretary

We'd normally take the p*ss out of Huw. But his efforts to help newbies merits a huge amount of respect. Likes Kalymnos. Loves an apple!



Zoe
Social

Tends to stay up late, so think about that when deciding where to pitch. Always smiles. Even when her garden fence is about to burst into flames.

DEINIOLEN

Dec, 2021

The Ty Gwyn hut set on the hillside near Deiniolen became a bit of hit with some members last time. Ok, so we are talking specifically about Adam, our meets secretary. On our first visit he was hugely impressed that the owners of the hut, the Lincolnshire Mountaineering Club, had their initials woven onto the oven gloves. Being a son of Lincolnshire himself, he positively glowed with pride. A return visit to the hut was therefore always on the cards. And so on a slightly grey weekend with more than it's share of 'active cloud' a merry bunch made the return trip. Come Saturday, the glass-is-half-full people went hunting for snow gullies, whilst the glass-is-half-empty people settled for a trip to the pub via the summit of Y Garn. On a very damp Sunday a gang hit the quarries for Snakes and Ladders.





The Vaynol via Y Garn



One of the many dubious ladders.



On Y Garn.



Thumbs up for the oven gloves



Beautiful day for exploring the quarries

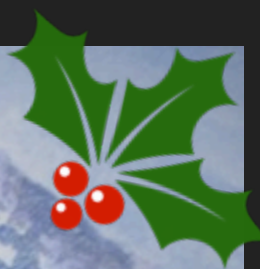


Strong posing from Andy (second from right). We commend you.



Just happy to be above the snow line.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas...



Painting of Black Rock Cottage (Glen Coe) courtesy of Lynn Taylor who extends her season's greetings.

...and may your new year be wild and wonderful.

Julie Taylor on the approach walk to the famous CMD Arete which we scrambled last time we stayed at Black Rock Cottage. Our objective, the imposing summit of Ben Nevis looms ominously in the background. Is it time to call mountain rescue yet?



HIKE | BIKE | CLIMB