

Late Summer 2001 & the Wilderness Weeks

Well it's been a strange year so far. Ongoing/recurring access problems resulting from Foot and Mouth have seriously hampered the club's activities. Meets have been cancelled, access websites have been vital for those in pursuit of information and the club's eventful programme has been drastically butchered.

But Good News - the Meets are on again (pending a worsening of the Northumberland situation). The Roaches is next on the calendar, and the Presidents Meet is *fast* approaching. Just time to contact Dave G to secure your place - more details later...

HMC'ers inactive? Never! Deterred? Never! A sample of alternative activities known to date include - house buying (Mark and me, hence the new address but same phone and Carolyn P too), exam success (Helen B' straight "A's" at A level, "Well done from us all me gel"), dissertation hell (Helen T, "Sock it to 'em"), new job and new house (Nick P moved to Guisborough and Helen's to follow - more later ...), New Meets Sec job for Lee L, and Dan P's degree triumph, another resounding success - "Congrats too - our own Climbing Wall designer".

Others have taken to travelling abroad in search of adventure, such as Ewan and Vicky off-roading on their Honeymoon in Cyprus (or was it Crete? Corsica? I'm sure it began with C....), Neil & Emilie Skiing in the Alps then to NZ too, whilst Ian B explores South America (more later), and Alastair P wades around in the snowbound spring hillsides of the Ecrins and Chamonix Alps.

Elsewhere, back in Blighty, Ed and I have been job hunting, whilst Loretta and Andy have a baby daughter Chloe, a sister for James and Stacey & Mrs Stacey have a new addition too (sorry guys don't know the details!). As for the future - undeterred, HMC is back in business again. Alison.

Chairman's Report

As with many other groups, activities have been hit hard by FMD so it's important to get the ball rolling again. What better way could there be - come to the President's Meet, renew old acquaintances, eat drink and get merry... It's vitally important that you contact me ASAP if you do want to go.

The Committee continues to work hard on your behalf, including the continued search for a new club hut site, arranging meets, etc. By the time you read this we may even be meeting at a new venue. For information, The Black Horse is hosting a pool league in our old room (the bar and bench seating have already gone). The Committee felt obliged to turn down the gracious offer to room share on Thursday nights!!! As of now, we are meeting on Thursday in The Railway Inn (the *pub* opposite to the Hinckley *train station* and Somerfield, on the corner of *Station Road* funnily enough). The beers are already being tested at the moment Dave G .

Meets Update - Skye 2002

Plans for a Skye (Glen Brittle) meet in 2002 are being hatched. Note - bookings will be taken from the Presidents Meet. If insufficient interest for Meet by the AGM 2001, the meet will be cancelled as numbers will be vital.

New Meets Sec

The Committee on behalf of the Club would sincerely like to thank Nick for taking on the Meets Sec role so ably; it's just a pity several of the promising venues couldn't be sampled due to the FMD. But thanks again because the work had already been done by Nick arranging the meets. To assist Nick at the Leicestershire end, we welcome Lee L who has taken over the meet bookings (with a little help from Nick still). See page 6 for future meets details.

Cragging Round up

Again, local access restrictions have hampered all but the most determined from climbing outside on the real thing until late on in the season. I'm sure this is only a sample of the routes climbed by club members, as some of you have done routes in parts of the Peak, Wales and the South Coast. Here's a taster of the ones I've heard about:

Richard and Annette teamed up with, amongst others, with Leapy Lee and his mate Mark. On the recently then re-opened Stanage, they ascended a number of "Severes". Richard led Ground Glass (VS4c), Veranda Wall (VS4c), the classic Heaven Crack (VD) and Wall End Slab, both seconded by Annette, and Amphitheatre Face (VS5a). Mark also led this as well as Heather Wall (VS4c), whilst Lee led Outlook Slab (VS4c) and The Confecter (VS5a). Richard and Mark also visited North Wales climbing at both Tremadog and the Ogwen. At Tremadog they completed Christmas Curry, Richard leading the Mica Finish. Mark also climbed most of One Step in the Clouds! In the Ogwen, they climbed Hope on Idwal Slabs and a VS5a above the slabs. On Milestone Buttress they did the Original Route.

Lee L and co have also been out and about, climbing on the Limestone of the Peak and Pembroke. Elsewhere, Swampy and Pete H have had trips to Stanage, and were joined, rumour has it, by James A. What about the rest of you? Let me know and I'll spread the word...

Rugby MC Skittles Triumph

Back in May about forty took part in the almost annual Skittles Match between members of Rugby and Hinckley Mountaineering Clubs. It was a close fought challenge, but Hinckley conceded the battle, and consequently the trophy, to the Rugby team. Thanks to Elvyn for arranging the fixture. Better luck next year HMC... best get those skittling muscles honed for the rematch!

Patagonia 2001

I flew into Buenos Aires for the start of my two-week trip, and spent a few days there seeing the sights and visiting friends. I then headed for the Iguazu falls (remember them from the film *The Mission*?), on the Brazilian Argentinean border. The falls were very very beautiful - half as wide again as Niagra falls, and well worth the visit. The promotional burnf just doesn't do them justice. I then flew onto Patagonia, El Calafata. I visited the Moreno Glacier, a huge *BIG* glacier, in fact one of the few advancing glaciers in the world. I then moved on to the Upsala Glacier which I viewed from a small boat - huge *BIG* "bergs"! Before leaving the UK I'd hoped to visit Ushuaia on the tip of Argentina but it seemed too far to go during my limited stay. To my surprise on the flight back, the plane landed there for an hour - the most southerly town in the world! It was quite a trip. Ian B.

Ski-touring Haute Ubaye, 24 - 31 March 2001

Where is this, you may well ask. Somewhere south of the Ecrins is the Queyras region of the French Alps reaching 3400m above sea level. Nearby are the ski resorts of Serre Chevalier, Vars and Risoul. I met with four others for a ski tour of the Haute Ubaye, based in the Refuge de Maljasset, which lies at the end of the road up the Ubaye River at 1910m. The snow level was just at the Refuge.

Since Sunday started wet, we abandoned ideas of the piste and a tour. By the time had we had been driven to the Refuge, courtesy of two of the party, the precipitation had ceased and we managed to give the skis a short outing to 2200m in about three or four miles up the Vallon du Mary. Considering that the touring skis hadn't been out for a long time, they were desperate to set off, and behaved themselves reasonably well.

The improvement continued through Monday, so on a warm sunny day we retraced our steps past our highest point of the day before and up steeper ground to a col looking up to the Aiguille de Chambeyron (3411m). A short walk took us to the summit of the Aiguille Large at 2857m. The return was a superb ski on untracked hard snow with a 50mm fresh cover back to the main valley, concluded by a short walk to the refuge.

Our third trip up the Vallon du Mary gave us 1000m ascent on skis and a finish on foot to the Tete de Cialancioun, 3023m, in perfect conditions. The high quality of conditions for off-piste skiing was as good as on the previous day.

We were more adventurous by Wednesday, seeking a more distant valley. This gave a long meandering plod that led to a couple of difficult river crossings, a narrow valley full of avalanche debris. Unfortunately, the cloud lowered and the snow began. We made a mountaineering decision and retreated when the terrain became steep and icy with several centimetres of fresh snow cover and we couldn't see the route ahead.

With low cloud, snow, wind and the prospect of 25 cm snow at 2000m on Thursday, we held a conference over a leisurely morning coffee and decided to bale out. Two left by car and three of us climbed out of the valley to the Col de Tranch at 2687m. Navigation was difficult on steep rocky ground, with the path buried under snow and the visibility deteriorating, but at least the wind was behind us. We kicked steps on the final section to the col, carrying skis, and arrived in whiteout conditions. The skins, on removal from the skis, were soon flapping like whips around our ears. Then we realised that the following wind was causing the accumulation of deep windslab on the other side of the col, our descent route. We could not see the ground, but it was steep and gave a few anxious moments, especially when I tottered over an unseen edge, slid into a gully, landing 3m below in a slough of snow and shouting to the others not to follow! Eventually we reached the trees and continued down the valley in deep fresh snow with no obvious route. Ours took us across a snow bridge resting on a tree trunk with pools of water below! However, we made it safely to the pub at the end of the road and on to a Gites d'Etape at Briancon.

The clouds and wind departed during our last day, spent 'on piste' at Serre Chevalier. One of our group had, on occasions, been the representative here for the Ski Club of Great Britain, so we had our own guide to the best off-piste skiing and tree skiing in the area, all covered in a foot of light, fluffy powder snow! Elvyn Haigh

The Biker Boys

Nick Barr and I went to Rutland Water on Good Friday, a beautifully sunny day, to complete two circuits of the reservoir. One clockwise, the other anti-clockwise! A total distance of over 29 miles.

The following Sunday we had a ride in the Peak. From a start at Tissington Station we cycled by road to join the High Peak Trail at Longcliffe. We then followed the Trail northwards to take refreshments at the Royal Oak in Hurdlow. The return journey southward took us along the Tissington rail into a strong, freezing cold head wind. Overall we'd cycled about 29 miles again.

As Foot & Mouth has seriously curtailed the off-roading exploits, I'm keen to get out and about again as the bans are being lifted. If you want to join me, the rides are usually leisurely and enjoyable through fine countryside, often in the Peak or the Cotswolds. David P.

Onich Meet - May 2001 (Munro Bagging)

Despite being rather depleted in numbers, the Nicks (P and B), John T, Mr President, Dave P, Mick S-no-longer-a-porter, Mark, Alison and Cheryl enjoyed Onich and its surroundings. With a mixed week of weather the group made the best of it. Nick P arrived a day before the others and had a day out on the Buchaille (1022m), followed by an outing to the impressive looking Ben Starav (1078m) which was the objective for most of the group on Sunday. It was a demanding descent though which took its toll on the legs, particularly the thighs!!

On Monday, Mark, Cheryl and Alison were joined by Nick P for an ascent of Creag Meagaidh (1130m) which proved to be a "third time lucky" summit attempt for A & M, although it still turned evil (again!) on the featureless summit plateau. After Nick P's departure and a rest day to dry off the kit Mark, Cheryl and Alison headed to Fersit. Before departing from the car park they each had to clean their boots which involved submerging them in a sunken disinfectant trough. Dry boots are over-rated anyway ... wet boots and all enjoyed a circuitous route ascending Stob a'Choire Mheadhoin (1106m) and Stob Choire Easain (1116m) to return via Meall Cian Dearg to Fersit.

Mick completed an ascent through the forest to the col between Sgurr Dhearg (1024m) and Sgurr Dhonuill (1001m), both of which he duly climbed (part of the Ballachulish horseshoe). A rather interesting descent down a scree slope returned him to the roadside back to Onich. Approximately 10 miles and 3,500 feet of ascent.

Other outings by various groups included trips exploring Fort William's gear shops and pool, the Moidart "peninsular" with its castles and seals, Oban with its seafood produce, and off-roading in Mick's new 4x4. Alison.

New Meets Secretary

Firstly a very big thanks to Nick P for his valiant efforts to devise a balanced variety of meets for 2001/2002. FMD has put a proverbial spanner in the works, but the diary is still pretty full and growing.

Unfortunately for the Club, Nick has taken a job "up North" and the lucky chap has moved to Guisborough, on the edge of the moors (and crags!). Helen plans to move there after completing her dissertation later this year.

Lee L has offered to step into Nick's place (just with the bookings Helen -don't panic!) So to contact Lee for future bookings and information.

And Finally

Don't forget - we're now meeting at The Railway, Hinckley (back room) on Thursdays 9.00 pm!